1 Relative clauses

The formation of relative clauses

A relative clause is something like a \textit{wh}-question attached to a noun and acting like an adjective.

(1) The book I bought
   a. the book
   b. what did I buy?

(2) The dog that bit me
   a. the dog
   b. what bit me?

Categorizing relative clauses

There are two ways that you can categorize a relative clause (construction) in a sentence. One is by the role it plays in the sentence (not interesting):

(3) The dog that bit me ran away.
(4) I chased the dog that bit me.

The first serves as the subject of the sentence, the second serves as the object.

Categorizing relative clauses

The other way you can categorize them is based on the role the “question word” would play in the question-version of the relative clause. (more interesting)

(5) Subject relatives
   a. I chased the dog that bit me
   b. What bit me?

(6) Object relatives
   a. I like the book I bought
   b. What did I buy?
Different kinds of relative clause

Six kinds of relative clause, categorized by the role the head noun seems to play in the relative clause.

**SU** I saw the boy [who likes the girl]

**DO** I know the man [who(m) Mary loves]

**IO** I saw the girl [who(m) John gave a flower to]

**OBL** That is the pen [that John did the homework with]

**Gen** I know the man [whose son goes to college]

**OComp** I met the only person [who(m) Mary is shorter than]

2 Relative clauses crosslinguistically

Strategies

In German, there are two different ways that something we could call a relative clause can be formed.

(7) *der Mann, der in seinem Büro arbeitet*
    the man who in his study works
    ‘the man who is working in his study’

(8) *der in seinem Büro arbeitende Mann*
    the in his study working man
    ‘the man who is working in his study’

The first type can relativize on a bunch of different NP roles—the second can only relativize on the subject.

Where the head is

Languages (or strategies within a language) can be classed into at least three types, based on where the relative clause appears with respect to the head. *Prenominal* relative clauses are like the first German example (7), *postnominal* relative clauses are like the second (8). A third option is *internal*, as in Bambara.

(9) *ne ye so ye.*
    I PAST horse see
    ‘I saw a horse.’
(10)  tye ye ne ye so min ye san.
     man PAST I PAST horse which see buy
glt ‘The man bought the horse that I saw.’

**Resumptive pronouns**

The relative clauses we have seen so far generally have a *gap* in the grammatical position identified with the head. But there are also relative-clause(-like?) constructions where a pronoun appears there. Hebrew:

(11)  ha- isha she- Yon natan la et ha- sefer
     the woman that John gave to-her DO the book
     ‘the woman that John gave the book to’

**The noun phrase accessibility hierarchy**

Keenan & Comrie (1977) look at relative clauses in about 50 languages, and observe that

- Languages vary with respect to which NP positions can be relativized
- The variation is not random, but is organized in a hierarchy.

(12)  Accessibility Hierarchy
     SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > OCOMP

**Hierarchy constraints**

With respect to the hierarchy, if a language can relativize on any position low on the AH, it can relativize in all higher positions.

- A language must be able to relativize subjects.
- Any relative-clause-forming strategy must apply to a continuous segment of the AH.
- Strategies that apply at one point of the AH may in principle cease to apply at any lower point.
Toba

You can relativize on a subject, but not on an object.

(13) manussi abit boru-boru i.
    wash(active) clothes woman the
    ‘The woman is washing the clothes.’

(14) boru-boru na manussi abit i
    woman that wash clothes the
    ‘the woman who is washing clothes’

(15) * abit na manussi boru-boru i
    clothes that wash woman the
    ‘the clothes that the woman is washing’

Toba

To form a relative clause on an object, you must first turn it into a subject.

(16) disussi ni boru-boru abit i.
    wash(passive) by woman clothes the
    ‘The clothes were washed by the woman.’

(17) abit na nisussi ni boru-boru i
    clothes that washed by woman the
    ‘the clothes that were washed by the woman’

Welsh

In Welsh, subjects and direct objects can be relativized—other positions use a different strategy and have a resumptive pronoun.

(18) y bachgen a oedd yn darlien
    the boy who was a’ reading
    ‘the boy who was reading’

(19) Dyma ’r llyfr y dalienais y stor ynddo.
    here-is the book that I-read the story in-it
    ‘Here is the book in which I read the story.’

Korean

In Korean, the relative clause comes to the left (on one strategy at least), with a gap, all the way down to obliques. But for genitives, a pronoun is used.
(20) hyensik-i  ku  kay-lul  tayli-n  maktayki
    Hyensik-NOM  the  dog-ACC  beat-REL  stick
    ‘the stick with which Hyensik beat the dog’

(21) caki-uy  kay-ka  chongmyengha-n  ku  salam
    he-GEN  dog-NOM  smart-REL  that  man
    ‘the man whose dog is smart’

French

French can relativize on all position except the object of comparison.

(22) Marie est plus  grande  que  le  jeune  homme
    Marie is  more  big  than  the  young  man
    ‘Marie is bigger than the young man.’

(23) * le  jeune  homme  que  que  Marie  est  plus  grande
    the  young  man  that  than  Marie  is  more  big
    (‘the young man than whom Marie is bigger’)

A bit of Keenan & Comrie’s table

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3 Second language acquisition

A big question in second language acquisition

The NPAH has been part of quite a number of studies of second language ac-
quisition, in an attempt to address the big question that so often occupies those
who study second language acquisition.
Second language acquisition
Is the language knowledge that a second language learner has of the language being acquired the same kind of knowledge as that of a native speaker of their native language?

Universals and L2A
Where language universals fit into the picture is this: If native languages are constrained by language universals, and if knowledge of a second language is language knowledge, then the language knowledge the second language learner has of the target language (the “interlanguage”) should also be constrained by language universals.

In particular, even if the L2’ers language knowledge is not target-like, it would be predicted to be language-like.

Doughty 1991
Doughty (1991) looked at this question (and another) for ESL learners from a variety of L1s (French, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Turkish). One of the tasks was to combine two sentences, another was to do a grammaticality judgment.

(24) Combine the two sentences, starting with the first one, and not omitting any information.
   a. The book is very interesting.
   b. The book is under the chair.
   c. The book that is under the chair is very interesting.

(25) Grammaticality judgment
   a. The woman ran away whose sister came.
   b. I saw the girl who the boy hit her.

Doughty 1991 and instruction
In addition, Doughty (1991) wanted to test the effects of language instruction. So, the subjects took a pre-test, and then underwent 10 working days of “treatment” (exposure/instruction on OPrep) then took a post-test. Three groups:

• Control group: heard marked relative clause constructions
- MOG: Meaning-oriented instruction
- ROG: Rule-oriented instruction

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**The idea**

Though the data aren’t perfect, in general there are a couple of noteworthy things: Doughty (1991) was particularly interested in the fact that the instructed
groups improved more. But it is also quite interesting that only \textit{OPrep was instructed}, but the results tended to show that the other, less marked, kinds of relativization were “filled in.”

The idea, then, is that—if we can rely on L2’ers interlanguages to conform to language universals, teaching a more marked structure will result in the acquisition of the less marked structures “for free.” (Of course, “for free” is kind of relative—it’s also been shown that marked structures are harder to learn.)

\textbf{Transfer}

Do (2002) did an experiment looking at English speakers learning Korean, to look at the question of transfer.

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\textbf{Transfer results}

What she found was that people seemed to be acquiring things in order, not transferring the English “setting” for the NPAH.

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