

Aspects of Relative clauses in Portuguese as a Foreign Language by Chinese learners

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Introduction

- The acquisition of (restrictive) relative clauses is a very well-studied topic crosslinguistically, both in syntax and in L1 and L2 acquisition.

- Definition:

«The head [of the restricting clause] in itself has a certain potential range of referents, but the restricting clause restricts this set by giving a proposition that must be true of the actual referents of the over-all construction».

(Comrie 1981: 143)

Introduction

Types of relativization across languages:

- Non-reduction type → the head noun appears in full, unreduced form, in the embedded clause (e.g. Diegueño, Bambara);
- Pronoun retention type → the head noun remains in the embedded sentence in pronominal form (e.g. Persian);
- Relative pronoun type → involves greater deformation of the structure of the embedded sentence, because it involves *wh*-movement of the head from its base-position to the left of the sentence, binding a (null) gap left behind. The relative pronoun may be preceded by a preposition and it may show Case morphology (e.g. Romance languages, English, Russian);
- Gap relative type → it does not provide any overt indication of the role of the head within the relative clause, and therefore is the less explicit relative clause type (e.g. Romance languages, English, Mandarin Chinese).

Introduction

- Crosslinguistic generalization:

«(...) whenever a language has both a more explicit and a less explicit way of forming relative clauses (...), then the more explicit type will be used lower down the [syntactic] hierarchy and the less explicit type higher up the hierarchy.

The generalization thus has a functional basis: the more difficult a position is to relativize, the more explicit indication is given of what position is being relativized, to facilitate recovery of this information» (Comrie 1981: 163)

- Hierarchy of accessibility (Comrie 1981: 156):

Subject > Direct object > Non-direct object > Possessor

Goals

This study is based on error analysis and we aim at:

- Focusing on the impact that crosslinguistic influences have in the L2 acquisition of Portuguese relative clauses acquired by Chinese learners;
 - To analyze strategies of avoidance:
 - Does their avoidance correspond to the Comrie's Hierarchical Accessibility, reflecting degree of typological markedness?
 - Is there a preferred type of Portuguese relative clauses for Chinese learners?

Goals

- **Avoidance** is a strategy that L2 learners might resort to when:
 - they perceived that it was difficult to produce a target language word or structure, (Schachter, 1974; Kleinmann, 1978; Laufer, 2000; Liao & Fukuya, 2004);
 - a structure does not exist in the L1 (Benson, 2002).



Learners choice to replace it with an alternative which is perceived as less difficult and less error prone.

Goals

(1)

eu estou a passar férias numa praia. Esta praia é muito bonita.

I be to spend holidays in.a beach this beach be very nice

'I'm spending my holidays at a beach that is very nice.' (zh004CVMTD)

Goals

- To evaluate the Full Transfer/Full Access Hypothesis (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996) for the relative clauses strategies used by (intermediate) Chinese learners of PL2.
 - Chinese PL2 learners present difficulties in RCs structures due to the transfer of the Chinese grammar settings.
 - Chinese PL2 learners have full access to UG to readjust the relative clauses parameters in order to match the grammar of the L2.

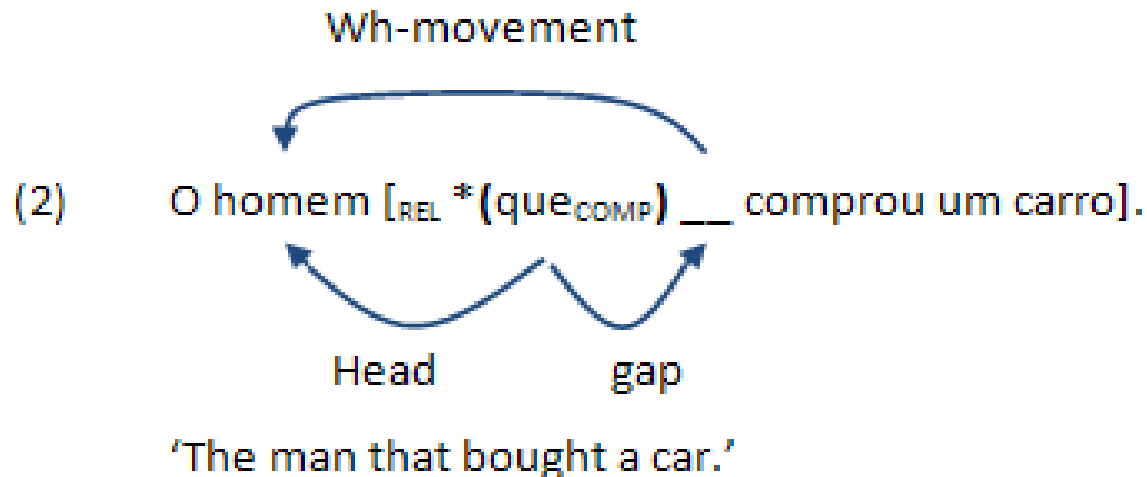
Goals

- **Full Transfer/Full Access hypothesis (FTFA)** (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994, 1996; White, 2003) posits that:
 - the learner's L1 grammar constitutes the initial state of L2 acquisition (= full transfer);
 - the L2 learner has access to UG in its entirety and, hence, parameter resetting is possible in L2 acquisition (= full access) in the subsequent and final stages of the L2.

Portuguese restrictive relative clauses

Properties:

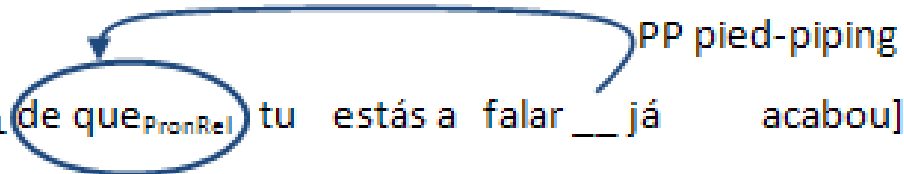
- N-initial (the head precedes the relative clause)
- All syntactic positions can be relativized (SBJ > DO > IO > OBL > POSS)
- 'Gap type', without complementizer deletion (for SBJ and DO – (2))



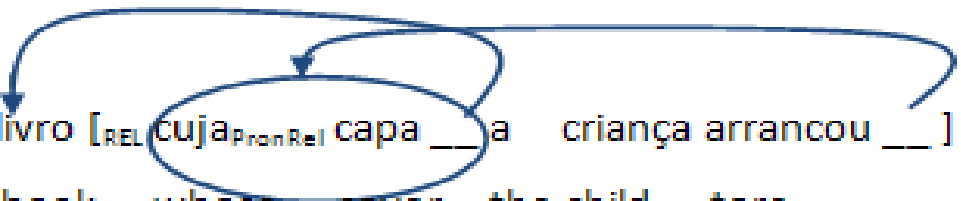
Portuguese restrictive relative clauses

- ‘Relative pronoun type’ (for IO, OBL and POSS – (3-4))
- Obligatory wh-movement (a wh-Operator binds the head and the gap within the relative clause, forming a wh-chain)
- Canonical PP pied-piping (3), not allowing P-stranding

(3) A peça de teatro [REL de que_{PronRel} tu estás a falar __ já acabou].
the play of theater of which you are to talk already finished
‘The play that you are talking about is already over.’



(4) O livro [REL cuja_{PronRel} capa __ a criança arrancou __] era uma raridade.
the book whose cover the child tore was a rarity
‘The book whose cover the child tore was very rare.’



Portuguese restrictive relative clauses

- Non-canonical P-chopping (5) and resumption (6) (Alexandre 2000)

(5) Custou-me ouvir da boca do Octávio um insulto
cost-me to.hear from-the mouth of-the Octávio an insult
[REL \emptyset_{com} que eu não contava __].
that I didn't count

'It was hard for me to hear from Octávio an insult that I didn't expected.'

(Alexandre 2000: 56)

(6) Há técnicos muito bons [REL que as pessoas não sabem os nomes deles].
have technicians very good that the people not know the name of-them
'There are very good technicians whose names people don't know.'

(Alexandre 2000: 58)

Chinese restrictive relative clauses

Properties:

- (Consistently) Head-final (Hu & Liu 2007) (7)
- All syntactic positions can be relativized (SBJ > DO > IO > OBL > POSS)
- ‘Gap type’, without complementizer deletion (“Relative clause marker “的” (DE)”, Cui (2013: 26))

(7)

玛丽喜欢 ϕ_i 的狗_i追猫。

Mali xihuan de gou zhui mao

Mary like DE dog chase cat

The dog that Mary likes chased the cat.

(Cui 2013: 22)

Chinese restrictive relative clauses

- No relative pronouns
- No wh-movement (in Syntax, only in LF)
- No PP pied-piping

Chinese restrictive relative clauses

- No Preposition or Postposition-stranding (Djamouri, Paul & Whitman 2013) (8)

(8) a. * $[_{NP} [_{TP} \text{Wǒ} [_{PreP} \text{gēn} [e]] \text{bù shóu de}] \text{nèi-ge rén}]$

1SG with NEG familiar SUB that CL person

‘the person I’m not familiar with’

b. * $[_{DP} [_{TP} [_{PostpP} [e] \text{shàng}] \text{pā-zhe yī zhī mǎo}] \text{de} [_{NP} \text{nà liàng qìchē}]]$

on lie-DUR I CL cat SUB that CL car

‘that car that a cat is lying on’

(Djamouri, Paul & Whitman 2013: 7)

Chinese restrictive relative clauses

- Obligatory resumption in IO and POSS relatives, optional in DO relatives (Hu & Liu 2007) (9)

(9)

a. ni jiao Ø de xuesheng
you teach Ø C student
'the student that you teach'

b. ni jiao ta de xuesheng
you teach RP C student
'the student that you teach him'

c. ni gei ta shu de xuesheng
you give RP book C student
'the student that you gave him the book'

d. ta muqin shi laoshi de xuesheng
RP mother is teacher C student
'the student whose mother is a teacher'

(Hu & Liu 2007: 269-270)

Summing up...

Table 1. *European Portuguese vs. Mandarin Chinese: restrictive relative clauses properties*

Restrictive relative clauses properties		European Portuguese	Mandarin Chinese
Head	Initial	+	-
	Final	-	+
SBJ, DO, IO, OBL, POSS relativization		+	+
Gap type		+ (only SBJ, DO)	+
Complementizer deletion		-	-
Relative pronoun		+	-
Wh-movement		+	-
PP-pied-piping		+	-
P-stranding		-	-
P-chopping		+ (non-canonical)	??
Resumptive pronouns	Optional	+ (non-canonical)	+ (DO)
	Obligatory	-	+ (IO, POSS)

Corpus

- *Corpus de Português Língua Estrangeira/Língua Segunda* (COPLE2), FLUL, Project LeCIEPLE (FCG, 134655);
- Written and oral texts produced by learners of Portuguese L2 .
- Learners aged between 18 and 40 years old, with a wide range of native languages.
- Texts digitalized, transcribed according to the *Text Encoding Initiative* (TEI) guidelines, described in terms of metadata and tagged with error annotation.
- Subcorpus:
 - 111 texts from 64 Chinese learners of PFL, at intermediate level.

Corpus

- Sample of an XML text produced by a Mandarin Chinese learner of PFL.

```
A minha mãe <del hand="corrector">soube</del>  
<remarks>professor: marca</remarks> essas  
palavras<add hand="zh001">não</add> foram normais  
imediatamente e <add hand="corrector">"</add> abraçou  
<add hand="corrector">"</add> a bolsa dela.
```

For ease of exposition, we've decided to present sentences without the annotation marks.

Data

- Relative clause **Avoidance** (complementizer omission and/or parataxis):

(10) *Nós dançamos com outras Pessoas. as pessoas são simpáticas.*

we danced with other people the people be nice

Lit.: 'We have danced with other people. The people are nice.'

'We have danced with other people, who were very nice.' (zh004CVMTD)

(11) *Eu já fiz fotocopia recibo no outro lado de carta.*

I already did copy receipt in.the other side of letter

O numero do recibo é 278307.

the number of.the receipt be 278307

Lit.: 'I've already copied the receipt in the back of the letter. The receipt number is...'

'The copy of the receipt, whose number is 278307, is in the back of the letter.' (zh004CVMTF)

Data

– Complementizer **omission**:

(12)

Este cidade é muito pequeno mas há muito pessoas ∅ moram lá.

this city be very small but have many people live there

‘This is a very small city, but there are lots of people living there.’ (zh074CVMTD)

(13)

Também há escritores famosos ∅ expressam as suas ideias para...

also have writers famous express the their ideas to

‘There are also famous writers who express their ideas in order to...’ (zh079CVMTF)

Data

- **Chopping** relative clauses

(14) *este é uma das razões \emptyset que vim a Lisboa...*

this be one of.the reasons that came to Lisbon

'This is one of the reasons why I came to Lisbon.' (zh022CAMTD)

(15) *Todos os empregos \emptyset que eu trabalhava são para receber*

every the jobs that I work be to receive

mais experiência e estudar.

more experience and study

'All the jobs I've worked on are to get more experience and to study.' (zh008CVMTF)

Data

- **Onde** ‘where’ as a universal relative marker for [+Locative] RCs:

(16)

eu tenho bebido café no bar onde perto de praia.

I have drink coffee in.the bar where close of beach

‘I’ve been drinking coffee in the bar that is near the beach.’ (zh004CVMTD)

(17)

é uma vila de pescadores onde fica norte de Lisboa.

be a village of fishermen where stay north of Lisbon

‘It is a fishermen’s village that is in the north of Lisbon.’ (zh008CVM3TD)

Data

- *Quem* ‘who’ as a [+Human] RC marker:

(18)

Antigamente, só queria ser a pessoa quem estava nas fotos.

formerly only want be the person who be in.the photo

‘In the old days, I just wanted to be the person that was in the picture.’ (zh072CVMTF1)

(19)

Com certeza, há pessoa quem escreve bem a sua língua.

with sure have person who write well the his language

‘Certainly, there are persons that write well in their own language.’ (zh079CVMTF)

Data

- Relative pronoun **insertion**:

(20) *Entretanto, quando eu fui ao estabelecimento, o qual também estava fechado e não havia
nenhem aviso na porta.*

'... to the establishment, which was also closed...' (zh070CVMTF2)

(21) *Ele apresentou um telemóvel o qual está no período da promoção.*

Lit.: '... a cell phone which was in promotion.'

'... a cell phone that was in promotion.' (zh072CVMTF2)

Discussion

- **RC avoidance** (see Flynn 1989, Man 2007)
 - (Relative) complementizer omission (related to completive COMP omission, Matos & Leiria 2010/2011)
- (22) *Descobri \emptyset o telemóvel estar com uma avaria técnica.*
found the cell phone be with a breakdown technical
'I found out (that) the cell phone is damaged.' (zh075CVMTF2)



Chinese learners of PL2 produce RCs without an overt complementizer because they are interpreting *que* 'that' only as a complement marker and not as a relative marker. → Transfer from L1

Discussion

- **RC chopping**
 - It is a strategy to escape PP-pied-piping (Alexandre 2000)



Chinese learners of PL2 produce chopping RCs because they are avoiding pied-piping (since Mandarin Chinese does not allow it) → Transfer (?) from L1

Discussion

- **Use of *onde* and *quem*:**
 - They are used in contexts where we would expect the complementizer ***que*** ‘that’ to occur.



Chinese learners of PL2 overgeneralize the use of *onde* and *quem* because they have acquired their semantic features [+Loc] and [+Hum], respectively → Full Access to UG

Discussion

- **Use of *o qual* ‘which’:**
 - It is used in contexts where we would expect the complementizer ***que*** ‘that’ to occur.



Chinese learners of PL2 overgeneralize the use of *o qual* because they have acquired its formal feature [+Cat_relative pronoun] → Full Access to UG

Final remarks

- The avoidance strategy observed in our data does not reflect a degree of typological markedness (Hierarchical Accessibility)
 - SBJ RCs are the preferred target of avoidance (see similar cases in Portuguese L1 RCs acquisition, Vasconcelos 1991)
- We may have evidence supporting the FT/FA Hypothesis, since it may explain why sometimes learners transfer their L1 properties (here, the relative marker reinterpreted as a complement marker) into PL2, yielding COMP omission; and in most of the times learners build their interlanguage grammar based on direct access to UG (see the use of *quem* ‘who’ as a [+Human] relative clause marker or *onde* ‘where’ as a [+Locative] relativizer).

Final remarks

- In this study we have shown that Chinese learners of PL2 do in fact avoid some relative clauses structures, but we cannot say that they avoid more than other PL2 learners (with different L1s). This will be the topic of further research based on the COPLE2 metadata.

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