

Production of head-final relative clauses: New data from Wenzhounese



Shenai Hu^a, Carlo Cecchetto^b, Maria Teresa Guasti^b

^aUniversità degli Studi di Verona ^bUniversità degli Studi di Milano-Bicocca



AIM OF THE STUDY

- To examine *the distribution of different types of Wenzhounese relative clauses (RCs)*, a topic that has never been studied.
- To investigate *whether there is a subject/object asymmetry in the production of Wenzhounese RCs*, as it is a matter of debate whether head-final subject RCs are easier to acquire and process than head-final object RCs.

BACKGROUND

Wenzhounese

- A *variety of Wu* mainly spoken in Southern Zhejiang province of China, and one of the most spoken varieties used by Chinese people overseas.
- A *VO language*, with a higher frequency of OV word order compared to Mandarin.

Relative clauses (RCs) in Wenzhounese

- Head-external RCs:** they are head-final; the head noun follows the relative clause and the relative marker.

- (1) __ ho21 ηα52 bo21 kəʔ0 na42 η33
draw grandma REL child 'the child who draws the grandma'
- (2) ηα33 bo21 ho342 __ kəʔ0 na33 η44
grandma draw REL child 'the child who the grandma draws'

The relative marker is not always realized in our data. When it is not,

a. the non-canonical VOS order in (3) → subject RCs

- (3) η34 s142 cy33 [ho21 ηα52 bo21 na42 η33].

V O S
I like draw grandma child
'I like the child (who) draws the grandma.'

b. the occurrence of a demonstrative and a classifier in (4) → object RCs

- (4) η34 s142 cy33 [ηα33 bo21 ho342 hai33 kai na33 η44].

S V that-CL O
I like grandma draw that child
'I like that child (who) the grandma draws.'

- Head-internal RCs:** the head noun is found inside the relative clause. Head-internal RCs involve either doubling of the head noun as in (5), or no external head as in (6).

- (5) ηα33 bo21 ho342 na42 η44 kəʔ0 na33 η44

grandma draw child REL child
'the child who the grandma draws'

- (6) ηα33 bo21 ho342 na42 η44 kəʔ0

grandma draw child REL
'the child who the grandma draws' or 'the grandma who draws the child'

METHODS

Participants

- 56 children** (aged 3;0-6;10, M = 5;3) whose dominant language was Wenzhounese
- 26 adults** (aged 25;1-44;11, M = 34;10) who were Wenzhounese-Mandarin bilingual speakers with Wenzhounese as their first language

Materials

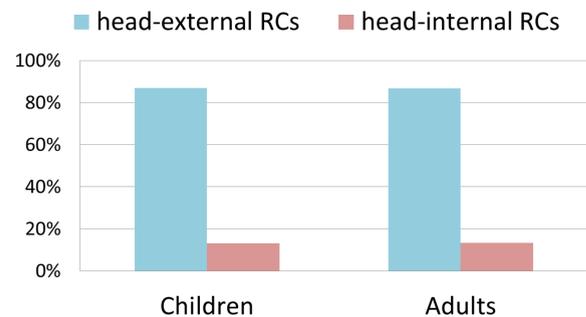
- A *preference task*
- 10 items eliciting subject RCs.** "There are two children. *One child kisses the mother. Another child kisses the father.* Which child do you like?"
- 10 items eliciting object RCs.** "There are two children. *The mother kisses one child. The father kisses another child.* Which child do you like?"

Analyses

- Mixed-effects models on Sentence Type and Group

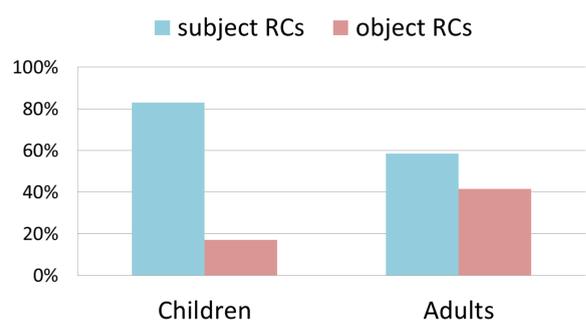
RESULTS

Result 1: Head-external RCs are much more frequent than head-internal RCs



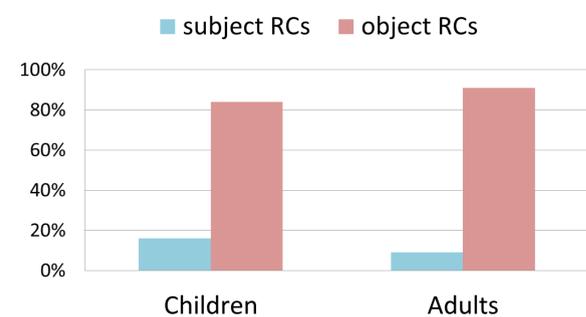
- A significant effect of Sentence Type ($p < .001$)
- A significant effect of Group ($p < .001$)

Result 2: A subject RC preference in the production of head-external RCs



- A significant effect of Sentence Type ($p < .001$)
- No significant effect of Group ($p > .05$)

Result 3: An object RC preference in the production of head-internal RCs



- A significant effect of Sentence Type ($p < .001$)
- No significant effect of Group ($p > .05$)

DISCUSSION

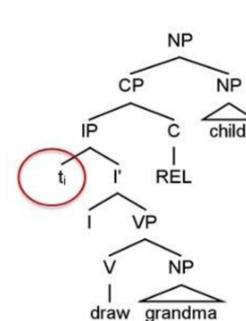
Why are head-internal RCs possible in Wenzhounese?

- The co-existence of head-internal and head-external RCs in the same language is cross-linguistically attested. This has been also observed in a Mandarin study (Hu, 2014).
- Head-internal RCs with doubling suggest that both copies of a chain can be spelled out. Although cross-linguistically rare in adult grammar, this possibility is attested with *wh*-copies (Branchini *et al.* 2013).

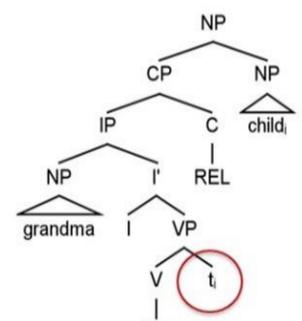
Why is there a subject RC preference in the production of head-external RCs?

- According to the *featural Relativized Minimality approach*, the difficulty of object RCs is explained in terms of the hierarchical intervention of the subject in the chain connecting the head noun and its trace (Friedmann *et al.* 2009).

(7) Subject RCs



(8) Object RCs



Why is there an object RC preference in the production of head-internal RCs?

- If the head noun does not move and is interpreted in situ, using head-internal RCs is a strategy to avoid the intervention effects with object RCs.

