The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages
LING3204 Second Language Acquisition
Tutorial session for Lecture 2
First term, 2022-23

Problem

Structure:	Relative Clauses
Native language:	Japanese, Thai
Target language:	English
Data source:	Sentence combining
Learner information:	
Age:	Adults
Learning environment:	Students in an ESL program, U.S.
Proficiency level:	High intermediate to advanced
Number of participants:	2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Relative clauses (hereafter RCs) can be ordered in what is known as the Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie, 1977, Noun phrase accessibility and Universal Grammar, *Linguistic Inquiry*, 8, 63–99). The basic principle is that one can predict the types of RCs a given language will have based on the following hierarchy:

ACCESSIBILITY HIERARCHY: SU > DO > IO > GEN > OCOMP

Subject relative clause (SU):	That's the man [*who* ran away].
Direct object relative clause (DO):	That's the man [*whom* I saw yesterday].
Indirect object relative clause (IO):	That's the man [*to whom* I gave the letter].
Genitive relative clause (GEN):	That's the man [*whose sister* I know].
Object of comparative: (OCOMP):	That's the man [*whom* I am taller than].

Two claims are important here: **First**, all languages have subject RCs. **Second**, predictions can be made such that if a language has a RC of type X, then it will also have any RC type higher on the hierarchy, or to the left of type X. Thus, if we know that a language has object of preposition relatives (*That's the woman about whom I told you*.), we know that it also has subject, direct object, and indirect object relatives. There is no a priori way to predict the lowest RC type. But when the lowest type is known, we are able to make claims about all other RC types that language has.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Sentence Combining: Participants were told to combine two sentences using a relative clause. They were told to begin with the FIRST sentence.

Part One
The following are the sentences used in the sentence combining task.

Sentences:

	First sentence	Second sentence	RC that is being targeted	
1.	The boy fell.	The boy's girlfriend left him.	GEN	The boy whose girlfriend left him fell.
2.	The girl laughed.	The boy is bigger than the girl.		
3.	The girl laughed.	The boy gave the girl a book.		
4.	I saw the girl.	The boy gave the girl a book.		
5.	The girl slept.	The boy hit the girl.		
6.	I saw the girl.	The boy is bigger than the girl.		
7.	I saw the girl.	The boy hit the girl.		
8.	I saw the man.	The man came.		
9.	I saw the boy.	The boy's girlfriend left him.		
10.	The man fell.	The man came.		

The data below are from two learners of English on the sentence combining task.

Learner 1 Native Language = Japanese

	Learner sentence	Are there learner errors?
1.	The boy whose girlfriend left him fell.	No
2.	The boy is bigger than the girl who laughed.	
3.	It girl whom the boy gave a book laughed.	
4.	I saw the girl whom the boy gave a book.	
5.	The boy hit the girl who slept.	
6.	The boy is bigger than the girl who I saw.	
7.	The boy hit the girl who I saw.	
8.	I saw the man who came.	
9.	I saw the boy whose girlfriend left him.	
10.	The man who came fell.	

Learner 2 Native Language = Thai

	Learner sentence	Are there learner errors?
1.	The boy fell then the boy's girlfriend left him.	
2.	The girl laughed at the boy who is bigger than her.	
3.	The girl laughed while the boy gave her a book.	
4.	I saw the girl whom the boy gave her a book.	
5.	The boy hit the girl who slept.	
6.	I saw the girl who the boy is bigger than her.	
7.	I saw the girl whom the boy hit.	
8.	I saw the man who came.	
9.	I saw the boy who his girlfriend left him.	
10.	The man who came is fallen.	

QUESTIONS

1. Categorize each of the pairs of sentences according to the type of relative clause that is being targeted. An example has been provided.

2. Mark those sentences in which there were learner errors. (Recall that instructions stated that they were to form a relative clause, beginning with the FIRST sentence. They were explicitly told not to use words such as *because*, *until*, *before*, etc.)

3. How do the student errors related to the Accessibility Hierarchy [SU > DO > IO > GEN > OCOMP]?