

**The role of accessibility in a grammatical resumption language:
Cantonese relative clauses in cross-linguistic perspective**

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Resumptive pronouns bear the morphology of ordinary pronouns and are used in many languages as an alternative to gaps for forming a syntactic dependency within a relative clause, as in the corpus example from English in (1a). The corresponding gap variant is given in (1b).

1. a. We need **players** who we can count on **them** in a crisis. (Radford 2019: 75)
- b. We need **players** who we can count on ___ in a crisis.

Among languages that have resumptive pronouns (henceforth, RPs), two major language types have been identified: grammatical resumption languages and intrusive resumption languages. In grammatical resumption languages, including Cantonese, Hebrew, and Irish, RPs are grammatically licensed and may be required in some contexts to avoid violating a syntactic movement constraint. For example, Cantonese speakers tend to use an RP in sentences like (2) to avoid ‘coverb stranding’ (Francis et al 2015: 63).

2. ngo5 bong1 **keoi5** maai5 ce1 go2 go3 **neoi5jan2** hou2 hou2jan4
 I help **her** buy car that CL **woman** very kind
 “The woman who I bought a car for her is very kind.”

In intrusive resumption languages, including English and French, RPs are not grammatically licensed and are typically judged as unacceptable. However, speakers of these languages do sometimes use them in spontaneous speech, as in (1a) above. For both types of languages, the use of RPs has been linked to the notion of ‘accessibility’ -- the degree to which the relativized element (RP or gap) is cognitively accessible for integration with the head noun (Ariel 1999; Hawkins 2004; Keenan & Comrie 1977).

In this presentation, I explore how the effects of accessibility are manifested in quantitative data derived from acceptability judgment tasks and elicited production tasks. I then ask whether it is possible to distinguish between grammatical resumption and intrusive resumption languages on the basis of such data. To elucidate these issues, I present data from our previous and ongoing work on Cantonese relative clauses in comparison with related findings on English, Mandarin, and Hebrew as reported by other authors. Specifically, I discuss Cantonese data suggesting that RPs are preferred but not required in coverb object relative clauses and possessive relative clauses, and suggest that the relevant grammatical constraints governing the use of gaps and RPs are best understood as ‘soft constraints’ rather than as strict grammatical constraints (Francis et al 2015; Francis 2022).

In addition, I present preliminary results from a new experiment (Lam, Sheu, and Francis in progress) showing that acceptability judgments for RPs and gaps in simple and embedded object relative clauses pattern similarly to those reported for English (Hofmeister & Norcliffe 2013) and Mandarin (Chen & Fukuda 2018), but differ from those reported for Hebrew (Farby et al 2010). I conclude that although grammatical resumption and intrusive resumption show distinct patterns for some constructions, effects of accessibility may be manifested similarly across the two language types, especially in contexts where gaps are generally preferred.

Short Bio:

Dr. Elaine J. Francis is a professor in the Department of English at Purdue University, where she has been teaching linguistics and directing the Experimental Linguistics Lab since 2003. She completed her PhD in linguistics at the University of Chicago in 1999 and taught for three years in the Department of English at the University of Hong Kong. In her research, she investigates syntactic, discourse, and processing-based factors that affect the realization of syntactic alternations. Her research articles have been published in journals including *Cognitive Linguistics*, *Journal of Linguistics*, *Language and Cognition*, *Linguistics*, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, and *Lingua*. She is a co-editor with Laura Michaelis of the edited collection, *Mismatch: Form-Function Incongruity and the Architecture of Grammar* (CSLI Publications, 2003), and is the author of the recently published book, *Gradient Acceptability and Linguistic Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2022).

