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# The Syntax and Semantics of Antecedentless Relatives in English*

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This work is concerned with two related problems: how to explain the derivation and interpretation of English relatives whose head nouns are missing and how to teach these relatives to L2 learners in relation to learnability. A descriptive account of the external distribution of antecedentless relative clauses, called ARCs, and the grammatical functions that the relative pronouns can take in these ARCs naturally leads to a claim that all examples of ARCs involve base-generated empty head nouns whose semantic contents are later fully recovered at the Logical Form. Given the learnability problem, it is further claimed that ARCs in general must be learned after fused relatives are learned and ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from linguistic antecedents must be presented before ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from the meanings of the constructions themselves.

**[Antecedentless relative clause(ARC)/Ellipsis of head noun/Morphosyntactic identity/Contextual recoverability/Learnability]**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I would like to discuss a special type of antecedentless relative clause, hereafter called ARC, in English, exemplified by the italicized expressions in (1).

(1) a. This hotel is *the closest that is within walking distance to the famous Neuschwanstein castle*.

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The present paper is a revised version of Lee (2012), which discusses the ARC for the first time, as far as the author knows. The author gratefully acknowledges helpful comments from Jeong, an anonymous reviewer, and the audience of the 2014 LSK Winter Conference.

b. What is *the farthest that we can see with the naked eye*?[1]

The construction in question has the typical form of *the* + *farthest/closest/nearest* + *(that* or *wh*-relative pronoun*)*, where the superlative of an adjective of distance is optionally followed by a *wh*-relative pronoun or the complementizer *that*. What is most striking about the ARC is that the expected antecedent head noun is missing. As their paraphrases in (2) show, the missing head nouns (1a) and (1b) probably are *hotel* and *thing*, respectively.

(2) a. This hotel is the closest *hotel* that is within walking distance to the famous Neuschwanstein castle.
b. What is the farthest *thing* that we can see with the naked eye?

Careful examination of a range of ARCs reveals several more interesting facts. First, the empty relative operator is the most favored. Second, different syntactic environments favor different complementizers or *wh*-relative pronouns. For reasons that remain unknown, the *wh*-pronoun *which* sounds more natural than the complementizer *that* in (3a), but the empty relative operator or *that* is favored over *which* in (3b).

(3) a. John Wayne Airport is the closest which/?that is in Irvine.
b. What is the farthest ø/that/?which we can see with the naked eye?

Third, *wh*-relative adverbs such as *where* and *when* are disallowed in the ARC, as turned out by (4).

(4) a. *The nearest ø/that/*where they could get* was about 15 miles from the summit.
d. *The closest ø/that/*when they came to winning a major trophy* was in the 1967–68 season.

Fourth, to replace *wh*-relative adverbs with a preposition followed by *which* cannot save the ungrammaticality of (4).

(5) a. **The nearest to which they could get* was about 15 miles from the summit.
d. **The closest at which they came to winning a major trophy* was in the 1967–68 season.

[1] Otherwise indicated, all the examples of ARC are from Google or Google Scholar webpages.

In addition to descriptive details noted above, in the macro levels the ARC casts a challenge to grammatical theory as well as theory of language learning. From the grammatical viewpoint, it has to be explained how the construction is derived and how it receives an appropriate interpretation. From the perspective of language learning, especially in the L2 learning environment, it is necessary to have an answer to the question of how the ARC should be introduced to learners. These are the main purpose of the present work although some of the proposals made here may sound too intuitive or not fully worked out.

The organization of this paper is as follows. A descriptive account of the external distribution of ARCs in Section II is followed by a discussion of the grammatical functions that the relative pronouns or operators can take in these ARCs in Section III. Comparison of ARCs with fused relatives in the previous two sections naturally leads to a proposal about the derivation of ARCs in Section IV, where it is claimed that all examples of ARCs involve base-generated empty head nouns whose semantic contents are fully recovered later at LF. This unified analysis of ARCs is shown to be superior to the deletion approach that assumes deletion of the head noun after a fronted *wh*-pronoun or complementizer *that* is deleted. In connection with the learnability problem, it is argued in Section V that ARCs in general must be learned after fused relatives are learned and ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from linguistic antecedents must be instructed before ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from the meanings of the constructions themselves. The paper is closed with a brief discussion of some theoretical implications of ARCs.

## II. EXTERNAL DISTRIBUTION OF ARCs

Before providing an account of how ARCs are derived and interpreted, it is necessary to examine the distribution of ARCs. To this end, let's first look at the syntactic environments where the following relative clauses occur:

(6) a. *What happened* upset Judy.
b. They took *what the chairman offered them*.
c. Here is *where I met my wife for the first time*.
d. You can give it to *whoever you'd like to*.

The italicized clauses in (6) are called nominal relative clauses by Quirk et al. (1985) and fused relatives by Huddleston, Pullum and Peterson (2002), and they are structurally close to ARCs in that they also lack antecedent head nouns for *wh*-relative pronouns or

adverbs. These fused relatives serve as subject, as in (6a), or as object, as in (6b), or as subject complement, as in (6c), or as prepositional complement, as in (6d). The paradigm in which ARCs occur shows that they can have the same grammatical functions as fused relatives.

(7) a. *The nearest that they came to making a challenge* was just before the election of Giacomo da Carrara in July 1318.
b. She tried to stand up again and *the farthest she went* was hitting her chin on her cold chest.
c. *The closest that you can get to the sun without burning up* is approximately 69 miles.

(8) a. If you want to explain *the farthest they've reached*, that's fine. too.
b. Calculate *the closest they will be, in subsequent motion* and the time this will occur.
c. He tossed the brightly colored magazine in the trash, thinking of *the closest they'd gotten.*

(9) a. About 3-4 feet is *the farthest you can go to have clean audio.*
b. This is *the closest that you can come to flying an old plane.*
c. Point Nemo is *the farthest you can get from land without being in outer space.*

(10) a. I'll take you farther than to *the farthest they've been.*
b. These are pictures taken from *the closest they would let me get.*
c. One of *the closest they have come to success in the European Championships* came in 1996.

In (7) the ARCs serve as subject. As the sentences in (7) suggest, the most favored clauses in which they serve as subject are ones whose verbs are copular verbs. In (8) the ARC serve as object. As far as selectional restrictions are met, they can be naturally used as objects of any verbs. The sentences in (9) illustrate the subject complement use of ARCs. More specifically, they can be complements of copular *be*. The sentences in (10) show that ARCs can be objects of prepositions. They can be objects of thematic prepositions like *to* or *from*, as in (10a) and (10b), or objects of dummy ones like *of*, as in (10c).

## III. WHAT CAN BE RELATIVIZED IN ARCs

The way the relative pronoun or operator functions within the ARC is also similar to the way the relative pronoun does so in a fused relative clause. Compare the (a) sentences with the (b) sentences in (11)-(15).

(11) a. *Whoever wins this game* wins $100,000.
b. This capture software is probably *the closest that is free*.
(12) a. They tasted *what I bought*.
b. Scenery like that is *the closest you can imagine to the definition of heaven*!
(13) a. He's happy with *what he is*.
b. Every material unit is at its peak usefulness at the center of its symmetry, and at its least usefulness, *the farthest it is from its center of symmetry*.
(14) a. *Where they went* was San Francisco.
b. *The nearest they can get to a dessert* is by eating a fruit in season after the main meal.
(15) a. I have never thought of *what they solved it with*.
b. They say *the closest they can do it for* is £829.

In the fused relative clause in (11a), the *wh*-element functions as subject, and in the ARC in (11b), the relative pronoun or operator is supposed to function as subject. Just as *what* is considered the object of the verb *bought* in (12a), the relative pronoun or operator is thought of as the object of the verb *imagine* in (12b). Note that the subject complement can be relativized not only in the fused relative clause, as in (13a), but also in the ARC, as in (13b), even though the latter case is much more difficult to observe. However, the examples in (14) show that adverbials are quite easily relativized not only in the fused relative clause but in the ARC. It can be said that the adverbial of goal is relativized in (14a), but the adverbial of manner is in (14b). Likewise, the examples in (15) illustrate that the prepositional complement can be relativized in both types of relatives. Note, however, that it is not common to relativize the prepositional complement in the ARC.

A few more words seem to be necessary on the relativization of the adverbial in the ARC. Consider (16).

(16) a. *The farthest they can make it outside their offices* is inside a transit station.
b. You can stretch the fingers to *the farthest they can go*.
c. *The nearest they came to publication before the present century* was when Rheticus set up a few pages in type, around the year 1557.

d. *The nearest they approached to the idea* was through their descriptions of a few disconnected groups of animals.
e. *The nearest they came to such an explanation* was to refer to either an offender's poor health or low intelligence.

In the ARC in (16a), the adverbial of location is relativized, but in the ARC in (16b), the adverbial of goal is relativized. In the ARC in (16c), it is the adverbial of time that is relativized. What is relativized in (16d) is the adverbial of means, but in (16e) it is the adverbial of purpose.

## IV. DERIVATION AND INTERPRETATION OF ARCs

I have so far shown that the ARC is on a par with the fused relative clause with respect to the external distributions in which they occur and the way the relative pronoun or operator is interpreted internally. Besides these similarities, there is in fact a wide range of evidence in favor of the claim that whatever mechanisms are responsible for fused relatives are also applicable to ARCs. Consider (17) and (18).

(17) a. *The closest they say this asteroid could come* would be 19,000 miles.
b. *The nearest we can say we have been to that* is the 3-0 win over Russia.
(18) a. *The nearest you believe has this service* is Doetinchem.
b. **The nearest you believe that has this service* is Doetinchem.
c. **The nearest you believe the claim that has this service* is Doetinchem.

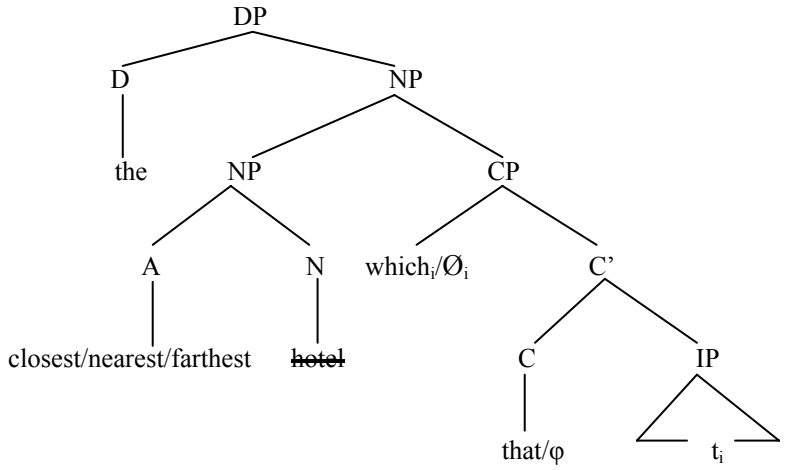
In both (17a) and (17b), the relative operator is said to originate from the complement clause of the verb *say*, which suggests that the dependency between the relative operator and the gap in the ARC can be unbounded. The ungrammaticality of (18b) and (18c) indicates that the dependency in question is governed by whatever constraint or principle is supposed to govern the dependency observed in the adnominal or fused relative clause, whose derivation is said to involve movement of a *wh*-relative pronoun or operator.[2]

Based on these parallel behaviors of fused relatives and ARCs and the idiosyncratic property that the ARC is a DP headed by a determiner D and contains an adjective like *nearest*, *closest* or *farthest*, Lee (2012) proposed that the ARC be derived in the same

[2] The ungrammaticality of (18b) illustrates the *that*-trace effect, and (18c) is in violation of the Complex Noun Phrase Constraint, and thus Subjacency. For more details, see Chomsky (1981).

fashion that adnominal or fused relatives are, but with subsequent deletion of the antecedent head noun up to recoverability, as depicted in (19).

(19)




where ~~hotel~~ represents a missing head noun, φ, an empty complementizer, and Ø$_i$ and t$_i$, a *wh*-relative pronoun or operator and its trace, respectively

Suppose the CP in (19) is headed by *that*. Then the *wh*-relative pronoun *which* moves from its situ position within IP to [SPEC, CP]. Because of the Multiply Filled Comp Filter of Chomsky and Lasnik (1977), at least one of the complementizer *that* and the fronted relative pronoun *which* has to be deleted up to recoverability. Suppose further *that* is deleted. Then subsequent deletion of the head noun *hotel* results in the expressions such as *closest/nearest/farthest which*…. Suppose instead the fronted *wh*-relative pronoun is deleted. Then subsequent deletion of the head noun *hotel* results in the expressions such as *closest/nearest/farthest that*…. These do not exhaust all the possibilities. Suppose both *that* and *which* are deleted. Then subsequent deletion of the head noun *hotel* results in the expressions such as *closest/nearest/farthest* ….[3]

The deletion approach mentioned above has some problems, though. The first problem is a theory-internal one. As Chao (1987) points out, within the theoretical framework assumed here, deletion rules are taken to apply at the Phonetic Form where phonological construal takes place, and this level and the Logical Form where semantic interpretation is computed have no access to each other, which makes a deletion

[3] Although the empty relative operator analysis requires a slight modification to the *wh*-relative pronoun analysis, the basic mechanisms, especially deletion of the head noun up to recoverability, remain the same.

approach untenable because it would require a PF representation, in which deletion has applied, to be the input to a LF representation, in which semantic rules would then apply. The second problem of the deletion approach is that it is not clear how the antecedent head noun of an ARC is deleted. The question of under what conditions this kind of deletion is possible should be clarified. The third and most serious problem of the deletion approach is that it can cover those ARCs where an elided head noun has a linguistic antecedent, as in (1a), repeated as (20a), but not those ARCs where no linguistic antecedent for an elided head noun is provided, as in (20b), repeated as (20b).

(20) a. This hotel is *the closest that is within walking distance to the famous Neuschwanstein castle*.
b. What is *the farthest that we can see with the naked eye*?

In (20a) the *hotel* of the subject DP serves as a linguistic antecedent for the elided head noun in the ARC, but in (20b) there is nothing that can do so.

What remains to be accounted for is how to explain the missing head noun of the ARC and its interpretation without having recourse to the deletion mechanism. Before doing so, let me first briefly discuss two general approaches to ellipsis: the syntactic/semantic one and the contextual/pragmatic one.

The syntactic/semantic approach states that every constituent marked for ellipsis must stand in a certain relationship with a linguistic antecedent. In the syntactic approach, the relevant relationship is morphosyntactic identity, and in the semantic approach, it is mutual entailment. Cf. Hankamer and Sag (1976), Merchant (2001), Potsdam (2003), and Frazier (2008). Consider (21).

(21) Speaker A: (attempts to stuff a 9-inch ball through a 6-inch hoop)
Speaker B: It's not clear that you'll be able to.
(22) Speaker A: I'm going to stuff this ball through this hoop.
Speaker B: It's not clear that you'll be able to.

In (22) the elided VP in speaker B's utterance has a linguistic antecedent, *stuff this ball through this hoop*, in speaker A's utterance. In (21), however, there is no such linguistic antecedent for the elided VP in speaker B's utterance, resulting in the incompatibility of the utterance with the indicated context. Given this contrast, Hankamer and Sag (1976) propose that VP ellipsis is allowed only when an elided VP has a linguistic antecedent.

Let us now consider (23), which illustrates the contextual/pragmatic approach to ellipsis.

(23) a. Water, please.
b. Give me water, please.

Suppose a customer in a restaurant utters (23a) to a waiter. Even though it is uttered out of the blue, the waiter will be able to understand utterance (23a) as a directive like (23b). In other words, the common background of the conversationalists fills in the missing part of utterance (23a).[4]

Given the fact pointed out in the discussion of (20), the review of the two general approaches to ellipsis naturally suggests that some instances of the ARC can be best dealt with by the syntactic/semantic approach, and others, by the contextual/pragmatic approach. To be more specific, I take an interpretive approach in which the missing head noun is a null pronoun *pro* that must be identified in the syntax and its semantic content is fully recovered at LF. To implement this idea, I propose the following identification condition for *pro* and recoverability conditions:

(24) Identification Condition for *pro*
The null pronoun *pro* must be identified by Spec-head agreement.
(25) Recoverability Conditions
The semantic content of *pro* must be recoverable in one of the two ways:
a. by means of morphosyntactic replacement of it with a coindexed material
b. by processes of discourse interpretation

Assuming that the missing head noun of any ARC is in fact *pro*, the Identification Condition in (24) requires *pro* to stand in the relation of the Spec-head agreement. Only representations on which (24) is met can be input to LF. Following Chao (1987), I take LF as the interface between syntax and discourse. This enables us to explain the semantic contents of the missing head nouns of ARCs in a unified manner. (25a) is intended to account for the ARCs whose missing head nouns have linguistic antecedents in the sentences they occur in, as in (20a) and (26a), but (25b), for the ARCs whose missing head nouns do not, as in (20b) and (26b) (= (8a)).

(26) a. This capture software is probably *the closest* ~~*capture software*~~ *that is free*.
b. If you want to explain *the farthest they've reached*, that's fine. too.

[4] For a discussion of the contextual/pragmatic approach, I would like to refer the reader to Quirk et al. (1985) and Merchant (2004) and the references cited there.

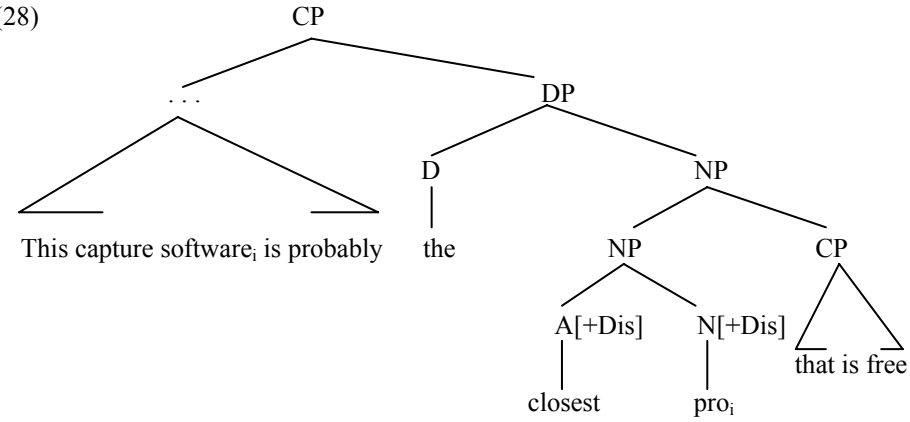
Unlike (26a), (26b) provides no linguistic antecedent whatsoever for the missing head noun of the ARC in it. In fact, most of the ARC examples discussed here are of this type. Consider the examples in (16), repeated as (27).

(27) a. *The farthest they can make it outside their offices* is inside a transit station.
b. You can stretch the fingers to *the farthest they can go*.
c. *The nearest they came to publication before the present century* was when Rheticus set up a few pages in type, around the year 1557.
d. *The nearest they approached to the idea* was through their descriptions of a few disconnected groups of animals.
e. *The nearest they came to such an explanation* was to refer to either an offender's poor health or low intelligence.

In each of the sentences, the missing antecedent head noun does not have a linguistic antecedent.

As an example of how the conditions in (24) and (25) can be applied, consider (28).

(28)




In (28) the $N^0$ category *pro* and *closest*, which occupies [SPEC, $N^0$], share the same feature specification [+Dis(tance)] in terms of Spec-head agreement, thus meeting the Identification Condition in (24).[5] Then the syntactic representation in (28) is sent to LF, where *pro* is reconstructed as *capture software* in accordance with (25a). Since the missing head nouns of ARCs are always non-quantificational and free from the

[5] Stipulating that Feature Dis is an agreement feature that must be visible at LF reflects two interrelated facts. First, adjectives that seem to license the missing gaps of ARCs must be adjectives of distance. Second, the words that can fill the missing gaps are ones that have the notion of distance in their semantic representations.

distinction between the sloppy and strict readings, I assume that their recovery is by morphosyntactic identity.

Let's turn our attention to how to interpret ARCs like those in (20b), (26b) and (27), where no intrasentential or extrasentential antecedent for a missing head noun is provided. Note that even if any of these sentences is uttered out of context, the meaning of the sentence or the way it is used makes it possible to retrieve the missing part of it. For example, in whatever context (27a) is uttered, we can infer that the missing head noun will be *place* although it is not entirely clear whether the recovery involved is triggered semantically or contextually. This is possible just because of the Recoverability Condition in (25b). Consider (29), which is the syntactic representation of (27b).

(29) You can stretch the fingers to the $[_{NP}\ [_{NP}\ [_{A}$ farthest$]\ [_{N}$ pro$]]\ [_{CP}$ they can go$]]$.

In (29) the $N^0$ *pro* is identified by Spec-head agreement with respect to [+Dis]. This representation is sent to LF for semantic interpretation. Since nothing is coindexed with this *pro*, (25a) cannot be applied. But by means of discourse interpretation, it is reconstructed as *position* or *place*. In collaboration with our background knowledge, the meaning of the rest of the sentence forces this interpretation.

## V. LEARNABILITY AND ARCs

In the previous sections, I identified the two types of ARCs and showed how each type of ARC is derived and interpreted in the interpretive approach. In this section I discuss how to teach ARCs to L2 learners in relation to the learnability problem.

It has been generally accepted in the L2 learning literature that instructing grammar can be useful only if the learner is developmentally ready to use structures he or she is being taught. This is what is called Pienemann's (1984, 1989) Learnability/Teachability Hypothesis. Elaborating on this hypothesis, Ellis (1993) claims the following:

(30) a. Grammar instruction directed at a grammatical feature that learners are not ready to acquire as implicit knowledge does not succeed.
b. Grammar instruction directed at a grammatical feature that learners are ready to acquire as implicit knowledge is successful.

In Sections II and III, I noted that ARCs are very similar in form to fused relatives. As comparison of (31a) with (31b) and (31c) shows, however, the grammatical features of ARCs are more complex and marked than those of fused relatives.

(31) a. This school is *the closest that is within walking distance here*.
b. This school is *where many good children are educated*.
c. This school is *the place where many good children are educated*.

(31b) has the same meaning as (31c), and the fused relative in (31b) is presumably derived from (31c) by deleting the antecedent NP *the place*. It is certain that this deletion and its recovery at LF are simpler and more straightforward than the mechanisms that are responsible for the derivation and interpretation of (31a), namely, the identification of *pro* and its reconstruction at LF.

These two considerations naturally lead to claim that ARCs in general must be learned after fused relatives are learned. This means that grammar instruction of ARCs can be successful only when learners are ready to use them after they have learned to use fused relatives. The grammatical features of fused relatives that learners have acquired help facilitate the learning of the grammatical features of ARCs. On the other hand, if learners have not acquired the grammatical features of fused relatives, they are not ready to use ARCs, and so grammatical instruction of ARCs cannot be successful.

While discussing the syntax and semantics of ARCs, I categorized these constructions into two types. From the grammatical point of view, ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from linguistic antecedents are easier to understand and thus more basic than those whose missing head nouns are recovered from the meanings of the constructions themselves. There is empirical evidence in support of this claim. Consider (32).[6]

(32) a. Lee's youngest son ran away with Dawn's oldest ~~son~~.
b. Although John's friends were late for the rally, Mary's ~~friends~~ arrived on time.

In both sentences, the ellipsis of a head noun is allowed by the occurrence of the same lexeme. Giannakidou and Stravrou (1999) note that the sentences are instances of genuine ellipsis. They further argue that this kind of ellipsis is productive, while the type of ellipsis triggered contextually or pragmatically, as in (23), is not and thus limited to conventional situations. It follows then that ARCs derived by syntactic/semantic operations are more productive and thus more basic than the ARCs derived by contextual/pragmatic considerations.

The dichotomy between the two types of ARCs has an implication for grammar instruction. Since ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from linguistic antecedents are

[6] (32a) is from Yakubovich (2004), and (32b), from Lobeck (1995).

more basic than those whose missing head nouns are recovered from the meanings of the constructions themselves, grammar instruction of the latter can be successful only when learners are ready to use them after they have learned to use the former. It is very doubtful that learners who have not acquired the grammatical features of the former are ready to acquire grammatical features of the latter.

The conclusion arrived at just above is strongly supported by grammar instruction of fused relatives. Compare (33a) and (33b).[7]

(33) a. He knew *where Henry Carter had gone*.
b. It's not hard to see *where she got her feelings about herself*.

Just like the fused relative in (31b), the one in (33a) specifies a place in which something is situated or happens. So it is reasonable to say that (33a) is derived from (34) by deleting the head NP *the place*.

(34) He knew *the place where Henry Carter had gone*.

On the other hand, it is not clear whether the fused relative in (33b) specifies a situation, a stage in something, or an aspect of something. The identity of the missing antecedent NP can only be contextually computed. Thus, (33a) is a typical fused relative, and (33b), a marked one. Given this, anyone who is serious about learnability will introduce learners to fused relatives exemplified by (33a) earlier than ones exemplified by (33b).

## VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this work is two-fold: to give a formal account for the derivation and interpretation of ARCs in English and to seek an answer to the question of how to introduce L2 learners to ARCs, given the learnability problem. For linguistic analysis, I first observed that ARCs and fused relatives in English share virtually the same external distribution, and that they also show practically the same range of possibilities of what can be relativized in them. I then identified two types of ARCs: The first type of ARC has a missing head noun whose antecedent is present in the sentence it is part of, and the second type, a missing head noun whose semantic content is only recoverable from the meaning of the rest of the sentence it is part of. Despite this difference, I proposed a

[7] The examples in (33) are taken from *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (2001).

unified account on which a non-arbitrary *pro* occupies the position of a missing head noun in all ARCs, and claimed that to be visible at LF, *pro* must meet the Identification Condition in (24), repeated as (35), and to receive the well-formed interpretation, the semantic content of *pro* must be recoverable by the Recoverability Conditions in (25), repeated as (36).

(35) Identification Condition for *pro*
The null pronoun *pro* must be identified by Spec-head agreement.

(36) Recoverability Conditions
The semantic content of *pro* must be recoverable in one of the two ways:
a. by means of morphosyntactic replacement of it with a coindexed material
b. by processes of discourse interpretation

Although some of the facts concerning ARCs remain unaccounted for, I showed that the unified approach to ARCs is superior to the deletion approach that assumes deletion of the head noun after a fronted *wh*-pronoun or complementizer *that* is deleted. As for the learnability problem, I argued two things: First, grammar instruction of ARCs in general can be successful only when learners are ready to use them after they have learned fused relatives, and second, ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from linguistic antecedents must be instructed before ARCs whose missing head nouns are recovered from the meanings of the constructions themselves since the former are simpler and more basic than the latter.

In concluding, I would like to make some final remarks on what I have presented here in relation to ARCs. First, the two types of ARCs I have discussed raise a couple of theoretical questions. One is the question why two different types of mechanisms are involved in the otherwise structurally uniform relative clauses. Is it accidental or is there a more fundamental reason for it? The other is about the way the missing head noun is recovered when there is no plausible antecedent for it. We cannot simply say that the full form is recoverable from the extralinguistic situation. The most important factor in this recovery process is the meaning of the rest of the sentence the missing head noun is part of. That is why we cannot say that such ARCs are examples of situational recoverability in the sense of Quirk et al. (1985). I think the ellipsis process associated with such ARCs is a new type of ellipsis that has never been addressed in the literature, but I leave its exact nature as an open question here.

Second, the claim that ARCs involve null head nouns whose semantic contents are later recovered from their linguistic antecedents or from the meanings of the rest of ARCs strongly suggests that the best way to teach ARCs to learners may be through interpretation tasks, proposed by Ellis (1995). In order for learners to master ARCs, they

need to be able to first identify the meanings realized by these null head nouns, among other things. However, this form-meaning mapping may be too difficult for learners since the relevant element is missing and there are two different ways of recovering this missing element. Hence, learners must be provided with interpretation tasks that are composed of sequences of activities that help them identify (antecedents for) missing head nouns. The more learners are induced to notice the most crucial grammatical feature of ARCs, the more ready they are to produce the constructions.

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**Examples in: English**
**Applicable Languages: English**
**Applicable Levels: Secondary**

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