# Relative Clause Constructions in Turkish Sign Language (Türk İşaret Dili - TİD)

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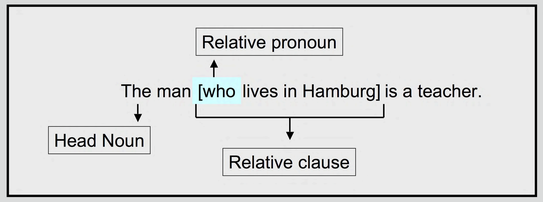
## INTRODUCTION

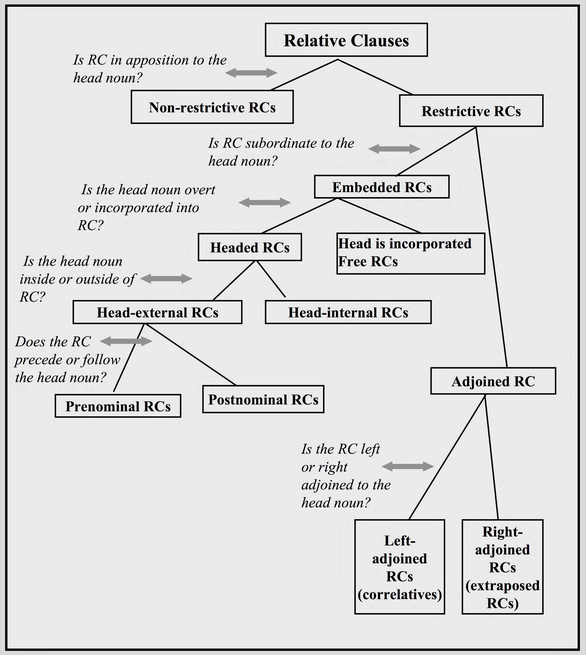
- **Goal:** description of **Relative Clause** (RC) Constructions in Turkish Sign Language (Türk İşaret Dili - TİD)
- Current literature suggests two types of RC-constructions in sign languages
  - **Internal** Headed Relative Clauses, ***IHRC*** (ASL: Liddell, 1978; LIS: in form of PE-clauses Branchini, 2006)
  - **External** Headed Relative Clauses, ***EHRC*** (ASL: Liddell 1978 and 1980) and post-nominal *EHRCs* (DGS: Pfau & Steinbach 2005)
- **Use of specific non-manual elements**: raised eyebrows and/or tensed upper lip

## BACKGROUND

**RC- working definition**: "*A Relative Clause (RC) is a subordinate clause which delimits the reference of Noun Phrase (NP) by specifying the role of the referent of that NP is in the role of the referent of that NP in the situation described by the RC*" (Andrews 2008)




**Syntactic Classification of Relative Clauses** (Chang & Wu 2006)




## THREE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What type of RC-constructions does appear in TİD?
   - Are RCs subordinate Head Nouns?
   - Are Head Nouns phonetically expressed independently or incorporated into RC?
   - Do Head Nouns occur inside or outside of RC?
2. Do relative pronouns/relativizers appear in TİD?
3. Which linguistic elements lead to different relativization strategies?

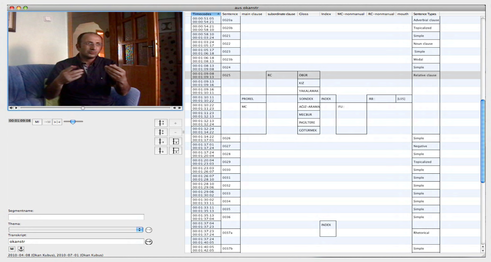
## METHODOLOGY

### Participants & Data collection

- 14 participants : 7 F, 7 M; Mean Age = 33.43
- 4 native, 8 near-native and 2 non-native (fluent) signers
- Naturalistic data: monologues in various discourse modes

### Annotation and Transcription

- development of TID corpus (based on 4 film hours)
- monologues (in different discourse modes)
- transcribed using iLex (Hanke 2002),

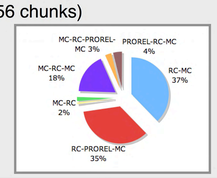


**Nine Tiers:**

- *(1) Discourse Chunks*: ID of each chunk
  - Detailled transcription of each chunk consisting of RC
- *(2) Main Clause & (3) Subordinate Clause*: The boundaries of clauses
- *(4) Gloss*: Glosses of both main clauses MC and subordinate clauses SC.
- *(5) Index*: positions of index or relative pronouns
- *(6) Nonmanuals in RC and (7) in MC*
- *(8) Mouthing*: mouthing (‚mundbilder') and gestures
- *(9) Sentence types (e.g. declarative s., y/n questions, negation etc)*

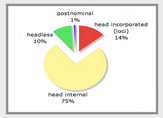
### Token Analysis

- 106 RC-constructions (out of 2456 chunks)
- occurences:
  - 77 % RCs precedes MCs
  - 21 % RCs within MCs
  - 2 % RCs after MCs




## ANALYSIS and RESULT

### RC Types



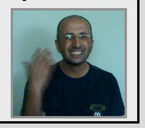

1. 80 RCs: IHRCs
2. 15 RCs: headless RCs
3. 11 RCs: head incorporated RCs

### Occurence of Prosodic Properties

(Nespor & Sandler 1999, Wilbur 1999)

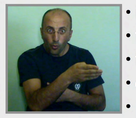
- raised eyebrows,
- raised cheeks
- chin (head) draw back

(ASL: Liddell, 1980, Swedish Sign Language: Bergman, 1994).



### Relative Pronouns

- co-occur with raised eyebrows and optional mouthing /o/ (i.e. with open lip)
- different from pronominal-like pointing
- not obligatory, i.e. optional ( 44 % of RCs)



- index:
- flat(1):
- flat (2):
- dual form:
- plural form:

### Subject Constraints (in Terms of Animacy)

If referent: animate → Subject Relativization preferred

If referent: inanimate → Object Relativization permitted

### Relativization strategies

#### 1 IHRC with Relative Pronoun

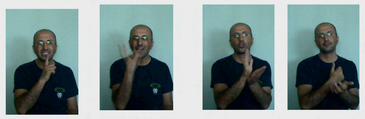
[ İKİNCİ ÜÇÜNCÜ EVLİ EVLİ AYNI ] O(iki el) SOHBET
[ *SECOND THIRD MARRIED MARRIED SAME* ] *PROREL(2h) CHAT*
*Second and third women, both of whom are married too, were chatting.*

Basic properties:
- IHRC - frequent (compared to EHRC)
- Nonmanuals and relative pronouns usually appear in IHRC

**Tests**:
i) *Is RC subordinate to the head noun?* ***YES***
ii ) *Is the head noun overt or incorporated into RC?* **Overt**
iii) *Is the head noun inside or outside of RC?***inside**

- **Discussion**: the main relativization strategy in TİD?

#### 2 Free RC-constructions



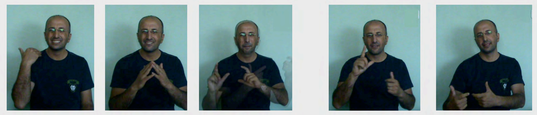
[ İNGİLİZCE BİLMEK] ÖDÜL KAZANMAK
[ *ENGLISH KNOW* ] *PRIZE WIN*
*The one who knows English very well won the prize.*

Basic properties:
lacks nominal domains: Head Nouns are not phonetically realized
- head nouns are omitted because the referent has been introduced in the previous discourse chunk.

**Tests**:
i) *Is RC subordinate to the head noun?* ***YES***
ii ) *Is the head noun overt or incorporated into RC?* **incorporated**

- **Discussion**: role of relative pronouns here?

#### 3 Relative locations (Head Nouns are associated with loci)



[ESKİDEN EV $_i$TAŞINMAK$_j$ ] LEVENT $_k$TAŞINMAK$_i$
[ *IN-THE-PAST HOUSE $_i$MOVE$_j$* ] LEVENT $_k$*MOVE$_i$*
Head Noun
*Levent has moved to the house, from which (I) moved out.*

Basic properties:
- relative loci
  - role of coreference
  - interact with agreeing verbs / spatial verbs
  - permits object relativization
  - functions as gap-fillers

**Tests**:
i) *Is RC subordinate to the head noun?* ***YES***
ii ) *Is the head noun overt or incorporated into RC?* **Overt**
iii) *Is the head noun inside or outside of RC?***inside**

- **Discussion**: can accompany with relative pronouns?

## CONCLUSION

Restrictive RCs in TİD

Embedded RCs

Head Internal RCs | Free RCs

## DISCUSSION

1. Issues:
   - Use of referential loci
   - Discourse modes and their effects on relativization strategies
   - Discourse chunks (not limit to sentence level)
2. Cross-linguistic differences? If none, why? Relativization: modality-dependent?

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