Ancient Greek relative clauses from a typological perspective

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Introduction

Relative clauses in Ancient Greek: 2 constructions

> **Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.5.11**
>
> (1)   *dedegmenōn **to**   xenikon***
>   receive.PTCP DEF.ACC mercenary.force.ACC
>   ***hou   Polytropos   ērche***
>   REL.GEN.N.SG Polytropos.NOM rule.AOR.3SG
>   'After they had received the mercenary force that Polytropos commanded'

- **Domain noun** + **relative clause**, introduced by **pronoun**

       ↓   ↓

- Case from main clause   Case from relative clause

Introduction

Second construction:

> **Xenophon, *Hellenica* 3.4.4**
>
> (2) ***hois   enetuchon   hierois***   *dierripsan*
>   REL.DAT.PL find.AOR.3PL offering.PL throw.AOR.3PL
>   'They threw away the offerings that they found'

- **Domain noun** INSIDE **relative clause**!

- Both rel. pronoun and noun: case from relative clause

Existing literature

- Construction 2 generally treated as subtype of 1

- Domain noun "moves" into relative clause

- Many different terms:
  - Kühner & Gerth (1963 [1904]): **Umstellung** (transposition)
  - Schwyzer & Debrunner (1953): **Verschränkung** (entanglement)
  - Smyth & Messing (1956): **Incorporation**
  - Rijksbaron (1981): **Displacement**
  - Cooper & Krüger (1998): antecedent **taken up** into relative clause

Typological perspective

Constructions $\approx$ 2 well-known cross-linguistic strategies

See e.g. Keenan & Comrie (1977), Keenan (1985), Andrews (2007), Dryer (2011)

- 1 = External relative clause
    - ➜ Domain noun outside relative clause
- 2 = Internal relative clause
    - ➜ Domain noun inside relative clause

Ancient Greek has not just one but 2 strategies

➜ What is the difference between them?

External vs internal relative clauses in Ancient Greek

- Corpus study of *Hellenica*, *Cyropaedia* and *Anabasis*
  - → Works from 4th century BC by Xenophon
  - → Search for relative pronoun *hos* using Thesaurus Linguae Graecae

- Internal relative clauses = less frequent than external ones
  - → Only 58 instances

- Three domains of differences:
  1. Semantic
  2. Discourse-related
  3. Syntactic

Semantic difference

Internal relative clauses = semantically more narrow

→ Can only be interpreted as restrictive relative clauses

→ Delimit the reference of the domain noun (Andrews 2007)

> The boy who is sitting over there

External relative clause = broader range

→ Can also be interpreted as non-restrictive relative clauses

→ Only add a comment about domain noun (Andrews 2007)

> The Nile, which is full of crocodiles, …

Restrictive vs non-restrictive

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 5.5.31, 2.3.12

(3) *ei tis*   ***hous***   ***sy***   ***ēgages***
if INDF.NOM REL.M.ACC 2SG.NOM bring.AOR.2SG
Persas   *therapeuseien*
Persian.PL.ACC flatter.OPT.3SG

'If somebody would flatter the Persians whom you brought here...'   **internal: restrictive**

(4) ***Kyros***   *ho krinōn*   *estai,*   ***hos***
Cyrus.NOM DEF judge.PTCP.NOM be.3SG REL.M.NOM
ou phthonō krinei
NEG envy.DAT judge.3SG

'The judge is Cyrus, who does not judge through envy'   **external: non-restrictive**

Form – meaning

Form – meaning correspondence:

- Internal relative clauses: tight integretation between domain noun and relative clause (Rijksbaron 2002 [1984])
  - ➜ relative clause interpreted as directly modifying the domain noun = restrictive

- External relative clauses: more loosely attached to domain noun
  - ➜ relative clause can also be intepreted as a loose comment about the domain noun = non-restrictive

Discourse-related difference

Discourse-related difference between internal and external relative clauses:

- Internal relative clause = backgrounded information
    - → Does not contribute to point being made
    - → Often a generic verb such as "receive", "have"

- External relative clause = neutral in this respect

Backgrounded vs not backgrounded

Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.4.26; *Anabasis* 2.5.39

(5) ***hēn   eiche   stolēn*** *dounai tini*
REL.ACC have.IPFV.3SG cloak.ACC give.INF INDF.DAT

'He gave the cloak that he possessed to somebody'

internal: backgrounded

(6) ***tous   andras   hois   ōmnyte***
DEF.ACC.PL man.ACC.PL REL.DAT.PL swear.IPFV.2PL
apolōlekate
destroy.PRF.2PL

'You have destroyed the men to whom you swore'

external: not backgrounded

Syntactic difference

External relative clauses: domain noun can have any function in the restricting clause

- Subject: | The girl who plays the piano |

- Direct object: | The girl whom I met yesterday |

- Indirect object: | The girl to whom I sent a letter |

- . . .

Internal relative clauses: impossible when domain noun functions as subject in the subordinate clause!

- Surprising: subject position most easily accessible to relativization cross-linguistically (Keenan & Comrie 1977)

Explanation for this restriction

Ancient Greek uses an attributive participle in this case!

- NP: Definite article + participle + noun → *the fallen trees*

> **Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.7**
>
> (7) *tēn*   *polin*   *kai*   *ta*   *enonta*   *panta*
>   DEF.ACC city.ACC and DEF.ACC be.in.PTCP.ACC everything.ACC
>   the city and everything that was in it

This construction is in complementary distribution with internal relative clauses (see also Rijksbaron 2002 [1984])

- Participle can only agree with noun when it functions as subject of the participle

- When this is not the case, Ancient Greek resorts to internal relative clause

Attributive participle vs internal relative clause

2 formally different constructions → similar function

- Participle construction: participle as dependent of noun

- Internal relative clause: noun as dependent of verb

Asymmetry ≠ absolute:
internal relative clause can behave like participle-NPs

- Noun functions as head, instead of dependent
  - → Case from main clause instead of relative clause
  - → Dependency reversal (Malchukov 2000)

- Because of the functional similarities?

Internal relative clause behaving like a participle-NP

Xenophon, *Hellenica* 7.7.37

(8) *axios   dokoiēs   einai **hōn***
     worthy.NOM seem.OPT.2SG be.INF REL.GEN.PL

     hoi   theoi   soi   edōkan
     DEF.NOM.PL god.NOM.PL 2SG.DAT give.AOR.3PL

     agathōn
     good.GEN.PL

     'You might seem worthy of the good things the gods have given to you'

Expected: domain noun + rel. pronoun in ACC (direct object of "give")
Instead: domain noun + rel. pronoun in GEN (genitive after "worthy")

Conclusions

- Ancient Greek: 2 types of relative clauses

- Correspond to internal and external relative clauses as described in typology

- The scope of internal relative clauses is more narrow than the scope of external ones
  - Can only be used in restrictive contexts
  - Represent backgrounded information
  - Cannot be used when domain noun functions as subject of the restricting clause

Questions

- How close is parallel with attributive participles?

- Dialectal differences?
  - Xenophon = Attic Greek
  - What about Ionic?

- Diachronic development of both constructions?
  - How and when did they arise?
  - How and when did the internal construction disappear?

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