Using linear mixed models, we found:

Exp1 (Figure 2) • No significant difference between SRs and ORs in Exp1.
• No systematic significant interaction with skills in French as a Second Language in terms of usage, proficiency and age of acquisition.

Exp2 (Figure 3) • Presentation of the linguistic input was speeded up to enhance processing load (PPATAF factor 80).
• Significant SR advantage: p.<0.01 (1000-160ms).

Exp3 (Figure 4) • No significant difference between SRs and ORs in Exp3.
• Faster presentation does not seem to be enough to induce processing difficulty for ORs in a monolingual environment.

Using linear mixed models, we found:

A slight SR advantage for relative clauses with a relativizer (fig. 5): p.<0.05 (700-1000ms) and p.<0.001 (1000-1400ms).

A strong SR advantage for RCs with a demonstrative and a classifier (fig 6): p.<0.01 (700-1000ms).

RCs with relativizer harder than RCs with demonstrative and classifier: p.<0.05 (1500-1800ms).

CONCLUSION

• Experiments in Mandarin showed a slight but not robust SR advantage consistent with the proposition that RC processing involves a competition between linear distance and frequency/structure based factors.

• The two structures with relativizer in Mandarin and in Cantonese have also been argued to be more competitive (Chen & Sybena, 1999). However, in our experimental design, the context only favored a restrictive interpretation (and a definite reading).

• Cantonese relative clauses with relativizer are syntactically similar to Mandarin relative clauses and the results are in line with the hypothesis of competition between the factors.

• However, Cantonese relative clauses without relativizer showed a strong advantage for SRs, and appear to be easier to process than relatives with relativizer (especially at the end of the sentence, before the head noun).

• It could be argued that this feature is analyzed as an adjunct (Ye, 2006). In this case, only frequency/structure based factors are at stake leading to a strong difference between SRs and ORs.

• The hypothesis of the combination of the factors also explains the clear and robust difference between SRs and ORs in languages such as English where the two factors are confounded and predict the same pattern in processing (see Figure 8).

REFERENCES