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**Predication in disguise:  
*Which*-constructions in Hong Kong Cantonese code-mixing speech\***

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**Abstract:** This paper discusses an understudied, emerging type of relative constructions (RCs) in Cantonese code-mixing speech, featuring the use of the English relative pronoun *which* (*which*-RCs). They apparently constitute a relative construction that introduces an atypical, post-nominal modification of the antecedent in Cantonese. It has been characterized as an instance of lexico-syntactic transference or structural borrowing. Despite its superficial parallels with English RCs, I argue against a modification account, and put forth a predication account on such “relative constructions”. I suggest instead that (i) they involve no syntactic borrowing of modification structures, and that (ii) the relative pronoun *which* is best regarded as a functional morpheme establishing predication relation between a null Topic and a clause. It is lexically borrowed from English to introduce non-at-issue content, on a par with appositives and parentheticals.

**Keywords:** relative constructions, code-switching speech, parentheticals, post-nominal modification, predication, *which*, Hong Kong Cantonese

## 1. Introduction

Nominal modification in (Hong Kong) Cantonese is pre-nominal in most cases (indicated by brackets).

- (1) a. [liksi (ge)] gaaufosyu  
history GE textbook  
‘History textbooks’  
b. [Ginhong ge] sailou  
healthy GE kid  
‘Heathly kids’  
c. [Ngo hou zungji ge] syu  
I very like GE book  
‘The books that I like’

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In code-mixing speech, there appear to be some exceptional cases (Chan 1993; T. C. Leung 2001; K. W. Leung 2010), where a clause introduced by the English relative pronoun *which* modifies a preceding noun, as shown in (2) and (3). The  $\Delta$  indicates the position where the head noun is interpreted in the modifying clause.

- (2) Sailou faangung zau jau munzukungam [**which** keoidei fannhok jatzik  
Kid work then have satisfaction WHICH 3PL study straight  
dak-m-dou  $\Delta$ ].  
gain-not-able  
'The young people at work usually get a sense of satisfaction, which they don't get any at school.'
- (3) Keoi zihau sau-dou dai-jat fung seon, [**which**  $\Delta$  hai seonjungkaat gongsi  
3SG then receive first CL letter WHICH be credit.card company  
gei  $\Delta$  lei jiu keoi waan cin].  
send come request 3SG pay.back money  
'Then s/he received the first letter, which is sent from the credit card company to request payment.'

Since the signature property of these clausal structures is the usage of *which*, I call this emerging type of relative constructions ***which*-RCs**. Earlier characterizations suggest that *which*-RCs involve a post-modifying structure (e.g., Chan 1993). K. W. Leung (2010) explicitly argues that "[t]he relative construction follows English grammar, forming a post-modifying relative clause with an English relative pronoun which preposed to the beginning of the clause" (p.63). It has thus been taken as an instance of *lexico-syntactic transference* (Li 1999; K. W. Leung 2010; Chan 2022). Particularly, the constructions are thought to involve both (i) lexical borrowing of the relative pronoun *which*, and (ii) syntactic borrowing of the post-modifying relative structures of English.

Such a modification account gains some support from a set of restricted cases where post-nominal modification is indeed allowed in Cantonese. It is possible when the head is an indefinite NP (Luke 1998, p.48). One may construe *which*-RCs as an extended usage of post-nominal modification.

(4) Post-nominal modification in Cantonese

- a. Ngo soeng wan go saimanzai [ $\Delta$  feifei-dei ge].  
I want find CL kid chubby GE  
'I want to find a kid who is chubby'
- b. Ngo tai-gwo jat-bun syu [ $\Delta$  gong ni-go mantai ge].  
I see-EXP one-CL book talk this-CL question GE  
'I have read a book which talks about this question.'

The goal of this paper is, however, to argue that *which*-RCs do not serve as a post-nominal modifier. Rather, *which*-RCs are best regarded as *clausal parentheticals*, a stand-alone clause syntactically independent of the matrix clause. The expression *which* is lexically borrowed into Cantonese and serves as a functional morpheme, introducing predication on a null topic.

To develop an understanding of *which*-RCs, I briefly trace the discussions on *which*-RCs in the literature, and then focus on the following two properties of *which*-RCs, namely, the non-restrictive meaning (section 3), and the non-integrated syntax (section 4). I sketch a clausal parenthetical analysis on *which*-RCs in section 5. Precisely, I take *which* to be a functional morpheme that introduces predication on a null topic. The predication introduced by *which*-RCs enjoys a special epistemic status (i.e., conventional implicature *à la* Potts (2005, 2007)). In section 6, I further show that *which*-RCs more similar to clausal parentheticals, rather than appositive RCs. I conclude in section 7.

## 2. Backgrounds

*Which*-RCs receive very limited attention in the literature, but examples have been noticed no later than 1990s.

- (5) a. Ngo m-tungji keoi ge jigin, [**which** Δ does not mean ngo zang keoi].  
 I not-agree 3SG GE opinion WHICH does not mean I hate 3SG  
 ‘I do not agree to his opinions, which does not mean I hate him.’  
 (Chan (1993), p.9)
- b. Keoi gin-dou bou dinwaa [**which** keoi waa soeng maai Δ] wo5.  
 3SG see-ASP CL telephone WHICH 3SG say want buy SFP  
 ‘He has seen a telephone, which he says he wants to buy.’  
 (T. C. Leung 2001, p.58)

K. W. Leung (2010) is the first attempt to document *which*-RCs. He collected 20 spontaneous/naturalistic examples in a diary kept for three months. He also ran a small judgment survey on 8 instances of *which*-RCs. The sentences are judged as 2.24/4 by 22 college students. Speaker variations, and *which*-RCs are most acceptable among college students. As he reports, the sentences may be “rated with low scores in acceptability judgment task even by participants who use this construction” (*ibid.*, p.23). This may be due to the conformity to a prescriptive norm (K. W. Leung 2010).

Recent internet searches reveal that the prevalence of *which*-RCs are underestimated. I collected more than 200 instances are collected in Nov-Dec, 2022, from the internet of different sources, including forums, social network services, blogs, interviews, etc. Most of the reported data in this paper are based on these instances, with or without slight modifications. Unacceptable cases are based on three native speakers who self-identify themselves as users of *which*-RCs.

Two basic properties are worth mentioning. First, while most cases of *which*-RCs are sentence-final, medial positions are possible for *which*-RCs, a position suggested to be unattested in K. W. Leung (2010). In (6), the *which*-RC can be inserted in the middle of the sentence.

- (6) Janwai haa-ci [**which** jatding wui jau haa-ci], moujan zi zung  
 because next-time WHICH for.sure will have next-time no.one know still  
 wui-m-wui gam gaandan.  
 will-not-will so simple  
 ‘Because next time – (I am) sure that there will be next time – no one knows if it  
 will still be simple.’

Second, the *which*-RC can be separated from its modifying heads, as shown in (7). Such kind of separation is strictly disallowed in Chinese RCs and all other modification structures.

- (7) “Loeng Seoi” gaunin zoudak hou sanfu, [**which** ngo gokdak Δ hoji  
 ‘Leong Seoi’ last.year work very exhausting WHICH I think can  
 zoi zou houdi].  
 again do better  
 ‘Last year it was very exhausting to work on the project “Loeng Seoi”, which I  
 think (we) could have done better.’ (K. W. Leung 2010, p.74)

In other words, the distribution of *which*-RCs is considerably flexible in code-switching speech. Anticipating a clausal parenthetical account in section 5, these properties follow straightforwardly, to which we return shortly.

### 3. Non-restrictive meaning

In terms of interpretation, *which*-RCs behave similarly to non-restrictive RCs rather than restrictive RCs in English in four aspects.

#### 3.1. Proper names

Proper names can serve as the antecedent in *which*-RCs, suggesting that the clause does not further restrict the referent of the head noun. This is illustrated in (8).

- (8) Ngo m-mingbak dimgaai jaujiu coeng dou-ci “Dinjingyun Laijikuk”  
 I not-understand why again sing once.more “It’s time to enjoy the show”  
**which** nei jiging waan-gwo Δ.  
 WHICH you already play-EXP  
 ‘I don’t understand why (you) sang “It’s time to enjoy the show” again, which you  
 have already sung.’

This property patterns with non-restrictive RCs in English. Only non-restrictive RCs can take proper nouns as their heads.

- (9) a. \*John Smith [that grows peaches] (Baker 1996)  
 b. Ronald Reagan, who began his career as a radio announcer, came to hold the  
 nation’s highest office. (Baker 1996)

#### 3.2. Non-nominal relativization

Furthermore, *which*-RCs can be associated with non-nominals, e.g., adjectives and VPs. In (10), the gap corresponds to an adjective/predicate, whereas in (11) it corresponds to the verb phrase.

- (10) Ceoifei zanhai housik, **which** sap-gaan dou mou jat-gaan Δ, fauzak  
 unless really delicious WHICH 10-CL DOU not.have 1-CL otherwise  
 douhai zoinaan.  
 be disaster  
 (Lit.) ‘Unless (the dish is) really delicious (which there is none in 10 restaurants),  
 it would be a disaster.’
- (11) Gokdak dongjat go joeng m-houtai, [**which** houndo jan dou wui Δ].  
 think that.day CL face not-look.good WHICH many person all will  
 (Lit.) ‘(One may) think that (s/he) doesn’t look good that day, which many people  
 will (think so).’

Non-restrictive RCs in English allow clausal/predicate relativization.

- (12) a. At least Robert is considerate, [which none of his friends seem to be Δ].  
 (Baker 1996)
- b. John helped me move, which Mary avoided despite promising to Δ.  
 (p.c. Adam Woodnutt)
- c. No one showed up on time, [which Alex didn’t like Δ very much]. (Baker 1996)

### 3.3. Exhaustivity

*Which*-RCs also give rise to an exhaustive, hence stronger, reading, differing from a canonical RC that restricts the NP and weakens the meaning of the sentence. Compare the canonical RC in (13) and *which*-RC in (14). Only (14) entails that *all* the letter s/he received are written in English. (13) does not convey this exhaustive reading.

(13) Restrictive interpretation; non-exhaustive

Keoi sau-gwo m-dou-gwo ng-fung [jung jingman se ge] seon.  
 3SG get-EXP no-more-than five-CL use English write GE letter  
 ‘S/he got no more than five letters that are written in English.’

(14) Non-restrictive interpretation; exhaustive

Keoi sau-gwo m-dou-gwo ng-fung seon, [**which** hai jung jingman se ge].  
 3SG get-EXP no-more-than five-CL letter WHICH be use English write GE  
 ‘S/he got no more than five letters, which are all written in English.’

### 3.4. Internal heads

Notably, “gap”-less *which*-RCs are attested (e.g., resumptive pronouns, demonstratives). Furthermore, they may contain an internal head, a head within the RCs that is identical or co-indexed with the external head. In (15), the clause contains a copy of the head noun.

- (15) Keoi giu ngodei tai album, [**which** go album zijau sap-gei zoeng soeng].  
 3SG ask us look.at album WHICH CL album only ten-several CL photo  
 ‘S/he asked us to look at the album, which the album contained only several  
 photos.’

This is again reminiscent of a property of non-restrictive clauses in English, where they can contain CP-internal heads (Fabb 1990; Citko 2008), as in (16) and (17).

- (16) a. The LAGB, which organization meets tomorrow, is based here.  
 b. \*The LAGB which organization meets tomorrow is based here.  
 (17) Oxygen and fire are related, which fact I long ago pointed out.

#### 4. Non-integrated syntax

We have seen that *which*-RCs exhibit parallel behaviors as English non-restrictive RCs. Now we move on to the syntactic properties of *which*-RCs. As we will see below, they have the syntax of root clauses, and show almost no formal dependencies on the host clause.

##### 4.1. *Which* for all antecedents

First of all, the choice of relative pronoun is not grammatically constrained by the head nouns. Unlike English RCs, even the head noun refers to human beings, *which* is allowed.

- (18) Keoidei jiu ceotsin dak B/C loeng-zou honang dai-fan gwo keoidei  
 they need promote only B/C two-group may low-mark than them,  
 [**which** keoidei gamjat dou daa].  
 WHICH they today also attend  
 ‘If they want promotion (in the match), only Group B and C may have lower marks than them, but they will also attend a match today.’

Indeed, no relative pronoun other than *which* is allowed in *which*-RCs.

- (19) Ngo sik Lei-lousi [**\*who/OKwhich** Δ jicin hai ngo ge mentor].  
 I know Lee-teacher WHO/WHICH in.the.past be I GE mentor  
 ‘I know Mr. Lee, who is my former mentor.’

The use of *which* is thus insensitive to the head in the matrix clause and is free from the grammatical requirement observed in English.

##### 4.2. Genuine “gap”-less relative structures

We have seen that *which*-RCs can be used without a gap (e.g., with internal heads). Indeed, *which*-RCs allow the head and the RC to be merely semantically associated. In these cases, *which*-RCs are genuinely “gap”-less. For example, in (20), the embedded subject *go singgwo* ‘the outcome’ can be construed as being semantically related to the matrix subject *heoi hok coenggo* ‘go learn singing’.

- (20) Heoi hok coenggo zangkoeng zigei coenggo ge nanglik [**which** go  
 go learn singing improve self singing GE ability WHICH CL  
 singgwo zanhai hou minghin].  
 outcome really very significant

(Lit.) ‘(I) go learn singing to improve my singing ability, which the outcome is really significant.’

More importantly, there are also cases where the host clause and the *which*-RC are merely discourse-related, as if they are two separate clauses. In (21), it is impossible to identify the head in the host clause that is modified by the *which*-RC.

- (21) Keoi m-hai hou sik cyulei ni-di si [which keoi wui gei  
 3SG not-be very know handle this-CL thing WHICH 3SG will quite  
 sitdai].  
 disadvantaged  
 (Lit.) ‘S/he doesn’t handle these things well, which s/he would be quite  
 disadvantaged.’

Such cases are not found in English RCs, nor in Cantonese RCs. *Which*-constructions have thus developed usages that are not typical of relative structures in the two languages.

### 4.3. Island insensitivity

Furthermore, *which*-RCs allows a gap to be associated with the head noun from within a syntactic island, suggesting that the gap and the head are not related by syntactic dependencies (e.g., movement). For example, the gap in (22) is embedded in a complex NP island, whereas the gap in (23) is embedded in an adjunct island, but neither of them gives rise to unacceptability.

(22) Complex NP islands

- Ngo tung keoi dou zungji sik [laaulin] [which ngo jatzou zau teng-gwo  
 I and 3SG also like eat durian WHICH I already then hear-EXP  
 [<sub>NP</sub> keoi bei ngo gang zungji Δ ge gongfat] ].  
 3SG than I more like GE saying  
 (Lit.) ‘We both like eating durians, which I already heard the saying that he like  
 (durians) more than me.’

(23) Adjunct islands

- Sailou faangung zau jau [munzukungam] [which [<sub>Adj</sub> janwai keoidei faanhok  
 youth at.work then have satisfaction WHICH because they at.school  
 jatzik dak-m-dou Δ], soji keoidei tungsoeng dou hou jau dunglik].  
 long gain-not-able so they usually DOU very have motivation  
 (Lit.) ‘The young people at work usually get a sense of satisfaction, which because  
 they cannot obtain (it) at school, they are usually self-motivated.’

These observations support a base generation of *which*-RCs, and the gap inside is not syntactically dependent on the host clause.



#### 4.4. Cross-sentential association

Interestingly, K. W. Leung (2010) (p.35) reports a case of co-construction, allowing cross-sentential usage of *which*-RCs. In (24), Speaker B utters a *which*-RC after Speaker A's utterance, and the gap in the *which*-RC is associated with the clause *jung-gwo jatci* 'using it once'.

- (24) a. A: Ngo teng-gwo nei jung-gwo jatci wo3.  
           I hear-EXP you use-EXP once SFP  
           'I heard you using (it) once...'  
       b. B: [**which** is Δ mou honang ge3].  
           WHICH IS not possible SFP  
           '...which is impossible.'

Also, clausal intervention is tolerated. The head noun and the gap can be intervened by another full clause, as shown in (25).

- (25) Keoi sik saangcoi si hou ginghei, man ngo dimgaai hang lok gam-dou  
       3SG eat lettuce time very surprised ask me why will use that-much  
       jau ge, [**which** keoi gokdak Δ houhousik].  
       oil SFP WHICH 3SG think delicious  
       'S/he was surprised when s/he ate lettuce, and asked me why I will use that much  
       oil, which s/he thinks (it is) very delicious.'

*Which*-RCs are far more syntactically independent than canonical RCs.

#### 4.5. The occurrence of SFPs

A final property concerns sentence-final particles (SFPs). Not only can *which*-RCs occur after SFPs, but more importantly, they can also contain a different SFP than the host clause. This can be illustrated with (26) and (27). *Which*-RCs should thus be regarded as independent utterances.

- (26) Nei di sausai m-gongzeng wo5 [**which** nei zigei jiging singjing-zo Δ laa1 ].  
       You CL skill not-clean SFP WHICH you self already admit-ASP SFP  
       (Lit.) 'Your skills are not good enough. Which you also admitted already.'  
       (27) Keoi zanhai hou zungsi keoi ge sijip lo1 [**which** is Δ hai ngo hou  
       3SG really very treasure 3SG GE career SFP WHICH IS be I very  
       jansoeng ge2 ].  
       praise SFP  
       (Lit.) 'S/he really treasures his/her career. Which is I really praise.'

### 5. Analysis

All the observations in section 3 and 4 speak against a (post-nominal) modification account (K. W. Leung 2010; Chan 1993, 2022). The *which*-RCs bear minimal relations

to their antecedents (if any). Also, the *which* does not fully function as a relative pronoun as it does in English. The desiderata are two-fold: we need an analysis that capture both the non-restrictive meaning and the non-integrated syntax.<sup>1</sup> I propose that *which*-RCs are indeed *clausal parentheticals*.<sup>2</sup> In particular, I suggest that *which* in *which*-RCs is lexically borrowed from English, but it is semantically bleached, and is used as a functional morpheme that introduce predication. To illustrate this idea, consider (28), repeated from (5b).

- (28) Keoi gin-dou bou dinwaa [which keoi waa soeng mai] wo5.  
 3SG see-ASP CL telephone WHICH 3SG say want buy SFP  
 ‘He has seen a telephone which he says he wants to buy.’

I suggest that (28) involves a predication structure as in (29b), rather than a modification structure as in (29a). The *which*-RC represents a separate clause and is not syntactically integrated into the preceding clause. In (29b), *which* can be regarded as (i) a topic head or (ii) a relator (den Dikken 2006). Since Cantonese allows null topics, the topic can be realized as a *pro*. The “gap” (if any) can be another *pro* that is co-indexed with the topic or derived via Argument Ellipsis.

- (29) a. ✗ Modification:

He has seen [NP a telephone [CP OP<sub>i</sub> **which** he says he want Δ<sub>i</sub> ] ].

- b. ✓ Predication:

He has seen a telephone<sub>i</sub> [TopP *pro*<sub>i</sub> [**which** [ he says he want ∅ ] ] ].

This suggestion finds support from the **clausal size** of *which*-RCs. Given the root clause syntax of *which*-RCs and the peripheral status of *which*, we expect that they can accommodate CP-level elements, such as Focus projection. This is indeed the case, as shown in (30). The *which*-RC can contain a Focus construction involving *lin* ‘even’.

- (30) Haa-jat-bou zauhai maai daancong, [TopP *pro*<sub>i</sub> [**which** [FocusP *lin* daancong  
 Next.step be buy jumping.bed WHICH even jumping.bed  
 dou jau review]]].  
 also have review  
 (Lit.) ‘The next step is to buy jumping bed, which even jumping bed has reviews.’

Additionally, speaker-oriented adverbs, presumably heading the EvalP in the CP periphery, can appear within *which*-RCs as well.

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that *which*-RCs involve borrowing of a particular lexical item, rather than a whole paradigm of relative pronouns in English (see also section 4.1.). There are indeed some variants in *which*-RCs, e.g., *in which*, *which is*. But all of them contain *which*, and appear to be lexicalized as one item, and there is no variant involving other prepositions or plural agreement such as *\*by which*, *\*which are* (see also Lee 2024 for examples).

<sup>2</sup> See section 6 for reasons not to treat them as conjoined clauses (T. C. Leung 2001) or appositive RCs (Schlenker 2023).

- (31) Di namjan ciudaai dungzok fing sau, [TopP *pro*<sub>i</sub> [**which** [EvalP houzoi  
CL.PL man great.extent motion wave hand WHICH luckily  
keoidei mou lo-zyu penlight] ] ].  
they not.have holding penlight  
(Lit.) ‘The men are waving their hands at full, which luckily they are not holding  
any penlight.’

It should be remarked that the Topic-head-initial utterance might seem implausible, but it is indeed attested in some languages. One example comes from Particle Stranding Ellipsis in Japanese (Sato 2012; Sato and Maeda 2019). In (32b), the topic followed by the topic marker *wa* is allowed to be elided, and *wa* appears sentence-initially. While further comparison is in need to determine the precise nature of *which* and *wa*, at least on the surface, both *wa* in Japanese and *which* in Cantonese are similar as they must (i) be sentence-initial, (ii) be in root clause, and (iii) occur only once.

- (32) a. A: John-wa kyoo nani-o siteiru-no?  
John-TOP today what-ACC doing-Q  
‘What is John doing today?’  
b. B:  $\emptyset$ -**wa**, Mary-ni d aigaku-de atteiru-ne.  
TOP Mary-DAT university-LOC meeting-TAG  
‘Intended: (John) is meeting Mary at a university.’

There are, admittedly, a few loose ends in this analysis. First, the native topic marker *ne* in Cantonese does not serve this purpose. Second, the null topic in *which*-RCs can never be recovered/overt, unlike the Japanese case. Third, T. C. Leung (2001) indeed hints at a possibility to take *which* to be a coordinator. He suggests that the closest translation of *which* is *ji* ‘and’. (33) below is truth-conditionally the same as (28).

- (33) Keoi gin-dou bou dinwaa [**ji** keoi waa soeng mai] wo5.  
3SG see-ASP CL telephone and 3SG say want buy SFP  
‘He has seen a telephone and he says he wants to buy.’

In the next section, I specifically address this possibility, and argues that *which* differs from *ji* ‘and’ in that the former expresses *non-at-issue* content. I further speculate that the other restrictions are linked to the epistemic status of the predication introduced by *which*.

## 6. Epistemic status

I argue that the role of *which* is to introduce semantic content best characterized as conventional implicatures (Potts 2005, 2007). This function is also noted in Chan (2022): *which*-RCs “[introduce] a personal assessment on a situation or entity expressed in the first/matrix clause” (p.7). The content so introduced displays the following three properties: (i) not-at-issue, (ii) scope-less properties, and (iii) the triviality condition.

### 6.1. Not-at-issue content

The proposition introduced in a *which*-RC is non-at-issue in discourse, as it exhibits non-deniability. Only the proposition in the host clause can be felicitously negated. (34) introduce two propositions, one in the matrix clause, and the other in the *which*-RC.

- (34) A: Cyun-coeng dak jat-zoeng toi hai ji-jan-toi, [which keoidei  
whole-venue only one-CL table be two-person-table WHICH they  
zung sik-gan zyucoi].  
still eating main.course  
(Lit.) A: ‘There is only one table for two people in the venue, which they are still  
having the main course.’

Importantly, only the former can be denied in an immediately following continuation of the discourse.

- (35) (Im)possible continuations  
a. #B: M-hai aa3. Keoidei sik-gan timban. (Denying the proposition in *which*-RC)  
not-be SFP they eat-ASP dessert  
‘No, they are having deserts.’  
b. B: M-hai aa3. Go-dou jau leong-zeong toi. (Denying the matrix proposition)  
not-be SFP there have two-CL table  
‘No, there are two such tables.’

### 6.2. Scope-less properties

When embedded under intensional contexts with an epistemic agent, the propositions introduced by *which*-RCs are still oriented to the speaker, but not the matrix subject. This can be shown in (36). (36) involves attitude reports of the matrix subject *Aaming*. Within the intensional context, a *which*-RC introduces a proposition that contradicts the attitude report, i.e., *Aaming*’s worry would not be reasonable if he is committed to the proposition in the *which*-RC. However, (36) turns out to be felicitous. It still indicates that the speaker thinks that Peter won’t be elected as chairperson. The *which*-RC is interpreted beyond the scope of *daamsam* ‘worry’. In other words, the proposition introduced by *which* takes widest scope even when embedded under intensional contexts.

- (36) Aaming daamsam jyugwo Peter zou-zo wuizoeng, [which keoi m-wui  
Aaming worry if Peter be-ASP president WHICH 3SG not-will  
syun-dou], wui ling go zouzik mou-saai zicize.  
elect-able will make CL group lose-all supporter  
‘Aaming worries that if Peter is elected president, which he will not be elected,  
will make the group lose all its supporters.’

Regarding this scope-less property, *which*-RCs also find a subtle difference with *ji* ‘and’ conjunction when embedded in *counterfactuals*. (37) below is modelled after Schlenker (2021). It involves a counterfactual event in the speaker’s future. However,

only *ji* ‘and’ but not *which* can be used to introduce the proposition ‘he then called the Boss’. This contrast can be attributed to the fact that *which* involves matrix scope, and fails to be interpreted under the counterfactual contexts. It is thus different from the clausal conjunction introduced by *ji* ‘and’.

- (37) [Context: someone made a big mistake at the department.]  
 Jyugwo ngo tengjat daa-zo bei Aatau, [#**which**/<sup>OK</sup>**ji** keoi ganzyu  
 If I tomorrow call-ASP to Head WHICH and he then  
 daa-zo bei Loubaan], gamzau daaiginsi.  
 call-ASP to Boss then in.trouble.  
 (Lit.) ‘If I called the Head tomorrow, #which/<sup>OK</sup>and he then called the Boss, then  
 (we are) in trouble.’

The embeddability is reminiscent of the contrast between clausal parentheticals and appositive RCs in English (cf. Schlenker 2021, 2023).

### 6.3. The triviality condition

Last but not least, *which*-RCs obey a triviality condition, which allows us to differentiate the propositional content introduced by *which* from presupposition. Note that presupposition allows the presupposition to be trivially true, as shown in (38). Although the presupposition is trivially true in (38) (as it is already part of the knowledge of the speaker), it is still felicitous.

- (38) [Context: The speaker said that Mr. Wong is a linguist.]  
 Ji tungbok dou **zidou** Wong Lousi hai jat-go jyujinhokze.  
 and student all know Mr. Wong be one-CL linguist  
 ‘And all students know that Mr. Wong is a linguist.’

However, when the proposition introduced by *which*-RCs is trivially true in (39), it results in infelicity or give a sense of redundancy.

- (39) [Context: The speaker said that Mr. Wong is a linguist.]  
 #Dong geize fongman Wong Lousi, [**which** hai jat-go jyujinhokge],  
 when reporter interview Mr. Wong WHICH be one-CL linguist  
 geize ge taaidou hou jausin.  
 reporter GE attitude very friendly  
 (Lit.) ‘When the reporter interviewed Mr. Wong, which is a linguist, the attitude  
 of the reporter is pretty friendly.’

Although more need to be said on the difference of the epistemic status between preposition and the propositional content in *which*-RCs, the above at least make clear that the two should not be conflated.

## 7. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I report empirical properties of *which*-RCs in code-switching speeches in Hong Kong Cantonese. I have discussed their non-restrictive meaning, and non-integrated syntax. I then argued for a clausal parenthetical analysis on *which*-RCs. I suggest that they are standalone clauses, and they do not involve modification, but rather predication. As such, *which* is lexically borrowed as an overt functional head, introducing not-at-issue content.

There are two relevant implications. First, there is no evidence of syntactic borrowing in Hong Kong Cantonese code-switching speech, at least not from *which*-constructions. The relative pronoun *which* is lexically borrowed, with considerable degree of semantical bleaching or grammaticalization, and serves as a functional morpheme that introduces predication (*pace* K. W. Leung 2010; Chan 2022). Second, neither English-style relative structures nor post-modification gets into Cantonese grammar. It does not defy the Matrix Language Frame Model (Myers-Scotton (1993, 2002)), *contra* Chan (2022).

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