

RELATIVELY SPEAKING (IN CIRCASSIAN)

Keywords: relative clause, complementation, embedded clause semantics

Languages standardly distinguish relative clauses, embedded interrogative clauses, and embedded declarative (complement) clauses both at the syntactic and semantic level; in particular, they differ in internal structure, islandhood, and denotations. We present and analyze new data from Adyghe (Circassian), a Northwest Caucasian language of Russia, that challenge this cross-linguistic pattern. We show that: **(a)** Adyghe lacks embedded interrogatives or embedded declaratives; **(b)** it uses only a headless relative clause to convey the meanings that in other languages would require complex DPs, (yes/no or wh-) embedded interrogatives, or embedded declaratives; **(c)** these different meanings can all be derived from the same construction by means of analytical components that are independently needed in the grammar.

Syntax. Example (1) illustrates the baseline matrix declarative. Examples (2)-(5) illustrate the various uses of the derived bracketed construction: **(i)** as the complement of a propositional attitude predicate, thus interpreted as an embedded declarative (2); **(ii)** as the complement of an interrogative predicate, interpreted like a yes-no embedded interrogative (3) or a wh-embedded interrogative (4), and **(iii)** as the subject of a predicate selecting for an individual-denoting expression, interpreted like a complex DP (i.e. a headless/free relative or a headed relative with a silent head) (5). All the bracketed clauses in (2)-(5) exhibit the following properties: **(a)** they are DP constituents (in (2)-(5) they are all in a position to which absolutive is assigned and are marked the same way as a nominal DP is marked, by the determiner marker *-r* at the right edge); **(b)** they are all syntactic islands—in contrast to nominalizations and DPs, which allow for extraction in Adyghe; **(c)** their predicate carries a wh-agreement marker (*zə-*) indicating that a constituent has been extracted out of that clause. We account for these similarities between (2)-(5) by arguing that they are all headless relative clauses with an overt D taking a CP complement (6). The relative clause syntax accounts for the island effects (b). The appearance of the morphological marker associated with wh-agreement (c) also follows from the relative clause account: wh-agreement signals the presence of an empty category bound by an operator. We show that Adyghe wh-agreement is directly licensed for core arguments (4)-(5), while it requires a licensing applicative for all other constituents. In (2) (interpreted as a yes-no embedded interrogative) and in (3) (interpreted as an embedded declarative), we argue that the empty category, signaled as usual by the marker *zə-*, corresponds to a variable *w* over worlds that is located in a high topic position and licensed by the high applicative (*v°*) *-re-*.

Syntax/semantic mapping. How is the same relative clause mapped into three meanings as different as an individual (“relative clause” interpretation), a set of propositions (“interrogative” interpretation), and a proposition (“declarative” interpretation)? The first step is the same for all the semantic derivations: a set is formed by lambda-abstracting over the variable in the gap position of the relative clause. The differences emerge in the steps that follow. If the variable ranges over individuals (as signaled by various applicative markers) and therefore the result of lambda-abstracting is a set of individuals, then two options are possible. If the relative clause occurs as the argument of a predicate selecting an individual-denoting expression, then an independently motivated type-shifting operation applies to the set of individuals and returns the unique (maximal) individual (cf. Jacobson 1995 and Caponigro 2004). If the relative clause occurs as the complement of an interrogative predicate, a further step needs to apply in order to solve the type mismatch between the predicate, which selects for a questions (i.e., set of propositions) and the relative, which after type-shifting denotes an individual: a concealed question interpretation (cf. Heim 1979, Romero to appear). If the variable in the relative ranges over worlds (as signaled by the applicative marker *-re-*), then the result of lambda-abstracting is a set of worlds, i.e., a proposition. This is the denotation required by a predicate like *say* or *think* for its complement clause, and no further step is needed. If the proposition-denoting relative clause occurs as the complement of an interrogative predicate, then an interrogative operator licensed by the interrogative predicate turns the proposition into a set containing the proposition itself and/or its negation.

Final remarks. Adyghe has a (silent) relative C° , but no complementizers introducing complement clauses; this lends further empirical support to the notion that relative and non-relative complementation are different (Rizzi 1990; Lasnik and Saito 1992). Adyghe shows that “embedded” propositions (or sets of propositions) do not need to be syntactically realized by clausal complements (or clausal nominalizations), but can be expressed by DPs (via relative clauses) as well. Their appropriate semantic interpretation is achieved using independently available semantic mechanisms.

RELATIVELY SPEAKING (IN CIRCASSIAN)

Keywords: relative clause, complementation, embedded clause semantics

- (1) š'ale-m mə mašine-r a-q_wəta-ɤ
 boy-ERG this car-ABS 3SG.ERG-break-PAST
 'The boy broke this car.'
- (2) [_{DP} [š'alem mə mašiner zə-rɛ-q_wəta-ɤ]-er] s-š'e
 boy.ERG this car.ABS WH-APPL(ICATIVE)-break-PAST-ABS 1SG-know
 'I know that the boy broke this car.'
- (3) [_{DP} [š'alem mə mašiner zə-rɛ-q_wəta-ɤ]-er] *pro* a-qeɤežax
 boy.ERG this car.ABS WH-APPL-break-PAST-ABS 3SG.ERG-asked
 'S/he asked if the boy broke this car.'
- (4) [_{DP} [mə mašiner zə-q_wəta-ɤ]-er] s-š'er-ep
 this car.ABS WH.ERG-break-PAST-ABS 1SG-know-NEG
 'I don't know who broke this car.'
- (5) [_{DP} [mə mašiner zə-q_wəta-ɤ]-er] məš'əne
 this car.ABS WH.ERG-break-PAST-ABS is.afraid
 'The one who broke this car is scared.'
- (6) [_{DP} [_{CP} Op_i [_{TP} e_i] C°] D°], where C° is obligatorily null and D° is overt

REFERENCES

- Caponigro, Ivano. 2004. 'The semantic contribution of Wh-words and type shifts: Evidence from free relatives cross-linguistically.' *SALT 14*: 38-55.
- Heim, Irene. 1979. Concealed questions. In R. Bäuerle, U. Egli, A. von Stechow (eds.), *Semantics from different points of view*, 51-60. Berlin: Springer.
- Jacobson, Pauline. 1995. 'On the quantificational force of English free relatives.' In. E. Bach, E. Jelinek, A. Kratzer, B. Partee (eds), *Quantification in natural language*, 451-486. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- Lasnik, Howard, and Mamoru Saito. 1992. *Move α*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1990. *Relativized minimality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Romero, Maribel. To appear. 'On concealed questions.' *SALT 16*.