

DECONSTRUCTING CLAUSAL NOUN MODIFYING CONSTRUCTIONS

Comrie (1996, 1998, 2010) and Matsumoto (1997) argue for the existence of a class of languages, including Japanese and Korean, where relative clauses (RCs) and clausal noun complements (NCs) have the same structure. The hallmarks of these “general noun-modifying clause constructions” (GNMCCs) are claimed to be surface similarity in the formal exponence of NCs and RCs, and lack of evidence for extraction (“relativization”) in RCs. We show that in the main subset of the languages surveyed in Comrie, Matsumoto, and Sells (forthcoming), including Japanese and Korean, NCs and RCs are structurally distinct and confirm that the latter are subject to island effects. Properties such as the distribution of major subject constructions (MSCs) account for microvariation with respect to apparent island violations, while prehead RCs and NCs are clearly distinguished by phenomena such agreement in the nominal domain and N’ Ellipsis.

Microvariation with respect to apparent island violations

Comrie and Matsumoto cite well-known data to argue that GNMCCs lack island sensitivity:

- (1) [[e *kawaigatte ita inu*] *ga* *sinde simatta*] *onna no ko* **(Japanese; Kuno 1973)**
care.for was dog NOM die end.up girl
‘*the girl that the dog that *t* was caring for died’

Yang (1990), Han & Kim (2004), and Kim & Sells (2009), and Sakai (1994) and Hoshi (2004) point out that such apparent island violations are analyzable as relativization from major subject position in Korean and Japanese respectively.

- (2) a. *Sono ko ga inu ga hoete iru.* **(Japanese)**
that child NOM dog NOM barking is
‘It is that child whose dog is barking.’
b. [[e *inu ga hoete iru*] *ko*]
dog NOM barking is child
‘the child whose dog is barking’

(2b) is an apparent left branch or subject island violation, but (2a) shows that the major subject provides a source for relativization. More interestingly, the MSC analysis accounts for microvariation between Korean and Japanese. Han & Kim (2004: 325) point out that MSCs are disallowed in Korean with activity verbs (3a). Relativization is disallowed in exactly the same context (2b); thus the contrast with Japanese holds in parallel for RCs and MSCs.

- (3) a. **Ku ai ka kangaci ka cic-ess-ta.* **(Korean; Han & Kim 2004: 325)**
that child NOM puppy NOM bark-PAST-DEC
‘As for that child, the puppy barked.’
b. *[[*kangaci ka cic-nun*] *ai*]
puppy NOM bark-ADN child
‘the child such that the puppy was barking’

The RC pattern corresponding to (1) is disallowed in Turkish and Sakha altogether (Kornfilt & Vinokurova, to appear). As predicted, these languages lack MSCs. Under the GNMCC hypothesis, there is no particular requirement that RCs contain gaps; thus the ill-formedness of Korean (2b) and the absence of RCs like (1) in Sakha is unaccounted for.

Noun complements trigger agreement; relative clauses do not

Comrie (1998) situates Ainu within the class of GNMC languages. However Bugaeva (to appear) shows that Ainu marks the distinction between RCs (4) and NCs (5) by allowing possessive marking on NCs head nouns (4), but not RCs (5):

- (4) [ku=roski a] inaw opitta hácir wa okay
 1SG.A=stand.PL PERF inaw.prayer.sticks all fall.down and exist. PL
 ‘All the *inaw*-willow prayer sticks which I had erected fell down.’ (Ainu; AB 187-8)
- (5) [sísam mosirta po poro-n-no a=e-toy-ta p
 Japanese land LOC even.more be.many-EP-ADV IND.A=with.APPL-land-dig thing
 usa aep-i, ne wa an kor ene, wakka mes-pa] asur-u
 various food-POSS COP and exist.SG and like.this water smash-PL rumor-POSS
 ‘A **rumor** (that) the water has smashed it like this, (those) crops that were even more abundantly grown in the land of the Japanese and various foods.’ (Ainu; TS1 48)

In the possessor agreement paradigm in Ainu, a bare possessive suffix with no pronominal prefix marks 3rd person agreement. This patterns with Turkish complex NPs, where 3rd person possessor agreement is realized on the head noun of NCs, but not RCs (Comrie 1998, Kornfilt & Vinokurova forthcoming). Japanese and Korean lack overt agreement in nominal projections, but the distinction between NCs and RCs can be demonstrated by N’ (or NP) pronominalization:

- (6) [[Ryoosi ga yaita] sakana] wa nakunatta ga, [[kimi ga yaita] no] wa nokotte iru.
 fisherman NOM grilled fish TOP is.gone but you NOM grilled NO TOP remaining is
 ‘The fish the fisherman grilled is gone, but the one you grilled remains.’ (Japanese)
- (7) *[[pro sanma o yaita] syooko] wa kieta ga, [[pro iwasi o yaita] no] wa nokotte iru.
 saury ACC grilled evidence TOP is.gone but sardine ACC grilled NO TOP left is
 ‘The evidence for grilling saury is gone, but that for grilling sardines remains.’ (Japanese)

Japanese *no*-pronominalization (6) substitutes for material in the lexical NP projection (Saito & Murasugi 1990); the facts in (6-7) are duplicated by Korean *kes*-pronominalization. The contrast between (6-7) shows that NCs reside within the NP projection, but RCs need not. Likewise, the Ainu contrast in (4-5) indicates that possessor agreement is triggered by arguments – material selected by the head noun in the NP projection – but not by RC modifiers generated above this projection. We conclude that prehead RCs and NCs are structurally distinct. Gaps in the former are constrained by island conditions, subject to independently motivated language-particular properties such as the existence of MSCs. NCs reside in lexical NP projection, RCs outside of it.

Selected references

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