Maximalizing Internally Headed Relative Clauses in Abaza[*]

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In this talk, I am going to describe the semantics of a relative clause construction found in Abaza, a polysynthetic Northwest Caucasian language. The relative construction in question is an internally headed one with the head noun marked by an adverbial suffix. This construction exhibits a maximalizing[1] semantics: rather than restricting the reference of a nominal head (restrictive relatives) or adding the information about an already identified participant (appositive relatives), it established the reference itself (i.e., it denotes the maximal amount of entities that satisfies the proposition) (Grosu & Landman 1998).

The data presented in this abstract was collected during a field trip to the village Krasny Vostok in Karachay-Cherkes Republic, Russia in May 2021.

The Basics of Abaza relativization

Relative clauses in Abaza are formed with the means of verbs. A verb in Abaza contains prefixes that correspond to (all of) its arguments. When an argument becomes the target of relativization, the prefix corresponding to this argument gets replaced with a relative prefix. The choice of a relative prefix depends on the syntactic position of a target: it is either *j(ə)-* for absolutive participants or *z-* for non-absolutive ones.

Head noun can be located before (1b), after (1c) or within (1d) a subordinate clause. RCs of different relative–head orders are the same in terms of the morphological mechanism described above, as well as in terms of semantics (however, there are several important syntactic differences that are connected to the syntactic position of the head and that I will not discuss here).

(1) a. fatə́jma áẑ l-χ'á-d
F. DEF-cow 3F.ERG-milk-DCL
'Fatima milked the cow.'

b. a-ẑ fatəjma jə-l-χ'a-z r-č'a.
DEF-cow F. REL.ABS-3F.ERG-milk-PST.NFIN CAUS-eat
'Feed the cow that Fatima milked.'

c. fatəjma jə-l-χ'a-z a-ẑ r-č'a.
F. REL.ABS-3F.ERG-milk-PST.NFIN DEF-cow CAUS-eat
'Feed the cow that Fatima milked.'

d. fatəjma a-ẑ jə-l-χ'a-z r-č'a.
F. DEF-cow REL.ABS-3F.ERG-milk-PST.NFIN CAUS-eat
'Feed the cow that Fatima milked.'

The head in (1d) linearly locates inside an embedded clause[2]. In (1d) it is preceded by an ergative participant. Apart from that, it can also be preceded by other non-absolutive participants, as well as various adverbials belonging to the subordinate clause.

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[1] This type of relatives is sometimes also called 'degree' or 'amount' relatives (Carlson 1977; Grosu & Landman 1998).

[2] However, the syntactic position of the internal head is yet to be clarified. Whereas linear order points to the internal position, the head cannot attach any morphological marking neither from the matrix clause nor from the embedded one; the presence of a relative prefix instead of a personal one also indicates that the head somehow does not remain *in situ*.

IHRCs with an adverbial head

The adverbially marked construction is different from ordinary IHRCs both semantically and morphologically. For now, I will concentrate only on semantics of this construction, which is maximalizing-like: it refers to all the members of a set denoted by a predicate ('x that she will lift', 'x that Aminat planted'), and restrict this set by a nominal ('ten kilos', 'tree'), creating a kind of a singleton. The resulting sentence has definite (3) or universal (4) reading.

(3) ẑa-k'əjl-ḳ-ta j-š'ṭə-l-χ-əwa-š d-g'a-š'-əwa-šə-m
10-kilo-UNIT-ADV REL.ABS-lift-3F.ERG-INC-IPF-FUT 3H.ABS-NEG-kill-IPF-FUT-NEG
'The ten kilos she lifts won't kill her.'

(4) ámәjnat ɕla-ta jə-la-l-ɕa-kʷa-z sə-r-ba
A. tree-ADV REL.ABS-PVB-3F.ERG-plant-PL-PST.NFIN 1SG.ERG-CAUS-see
'Show me (all) the trees that Aminat planted.'

Despite being non-quantificational and lacking any plurality or definite markers, this construction seems to denote some definite plurality. Moreover, this type of relative clause manifests a property that is sometimes referred to as "homogeneity effect" (5-6). As L ̈obner (2000) describes it, it is "a presupposition that a plurality X is homogeneous with respect to a predicate P: either every part of X is P, or none if". This property is only known to arise with definite plural nouns or generic bare plurals.

(5) a. The boy solved the problems he was assigned.
→ He solved all of the problems.

b. The boy didn't solve the problems he was assigned.
→ He solved none of the problems.
↛ He did not solve all of the problems.

b. The boy didn't solve all the problems he was assigned.
→ He did not solve all of the problems.
↛ He solved none of the problems.

(6) a. məwrat χaǯə-ta j-ʕa-jə-r-tə-z g'-jə-m-č'pa-d
M. task-ADV REL.ABS-CSL-3M.IO-3PL.ERG-give-PST.NFIN NEG-3M.ERG-NEG-make-DCL
'Murat didn't solve the problems he was assigned.' (lit. that were given to him)
→ Murat solved none of the problems.
↛ Murat did not solve all of the problems.

b. məwrat χaǯə-ta j-ʕa-jə-r-tə-z jə-č'pa-d
M. task-ADV REL.ABS-CSL-3M.IO-3PL.ERG-give-PST.NFIN 3M.ERG-make-DCL
'Murat solved the problems he was assigned.'
→ Murat solved all of the problems.

As with definite plurals, the presence of a universal quantifier suspends the homogeneity effect (7).

(7) məwrat χaǯə-ta j-ʕa-jə-r-tə-z zəmʕʷa g'-jə-m-č'pa-d
M. task-ADV REL.ABS-CSL-3M.IO-3PL.ERG-give-PST.NFIN all NEG-3M.ERG-NEG-make-DCL
'Murat didn't solve all of the problems he was assigned'
↛ Murat solved none of the problems.

References

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