

The Forgotten Relative Clause of Ikalanga

Rose Letsholo

University of Botswana

Demuth and Harford (1999) contend that in Bantu relatives, the verb raises from I-C if the relative morpheme is a prosodic clitic/bound morpheme while the subject remains in spec-IP hence these languages have subject-verb inversion in relatives (see Shona ex. (1)). Although some authors point out the rarer relative clause of some Bantu languages such as Luganda in which no subject-verb inversion occurs despite the fact that the relative morpheme is a bound morpheme, no one really discusses this particular structure (see Luganda example (2)). In fact, Demuth and Harford (1999) discuss this structure in a footnote noting that this particular method of forming relative clauses is marked in Shona (see example (3)). However, Ikalanga, a Bantu language spoken in Botswana (and parts of Zimbabwe), employs the Luganda type of relative clause as the canonical method of forming relative clauses. In other words, Ikalanga has no subject-verb inversion in relatives although the relative morpheme appears to be a bound morpheme (see ex. 4). This observation challenges the conclusion reached in Demuth and Harford (1999) that when the relative is a prosodic clitic the verb must raise to C resulting in subject verb inversion. This raises the question, 'What then is the structure of the Ikalanga relative, and possibly, Luganda?'. This paper explores this question arguing using evidence from selectional restrictions between the relative marker and the verb, the lack of co-occurrence between the relative marker and other left periphery-occurring elements, island constraint tests and tone marking, that Ikalanga relative clauses are located in the left periphery. The paper further argues that although the relative marker displays left periphery characteristics, evidence from adverb placement suggests that the Ikalanga relative clause is not a CP structure as in English type languages but is a sub-CP structure (see Pak, ms, for a similar proposal for the Luganda relative).

Further, the paper proposes that the relative clause structure of Ikalanga (and Luganda) projects a Relative Phrase (RelP) below TP where the relative feature of the relative clause is checked (See Sabel & Zeller, 2006 & Ndayiregije 1999, who propose that there is a FocP layer below TP). Since RelP is below TP, the relative feature is checked below TP. The verb, which hosts the relative marker, checks the relative feature and moves to T to check tense and agreement. The subject of the relative clause moves to spec-TP, its final landing place, just like in any other sentence. This accounts for the lack of subject-verb-inversion (predicted in Demuth & Harford's analysis) in Ikalanga although its relative marker is a prosodic element. The relativized NP is merged in spec-DP of the relative clause phrase. The structural differences between Ikalanga type of relative and the types found in other Bantu languages such as Shona can be accounted for if we recognize that there is a parameter in Bantu relatives regarding where the projection that checks the relative feature in these languages projects: it can project lower than TP, for example in Ikalanga & Luganda, or it can project higher than TP, e.g. in Shona.

- (1) Mbatya dza-va-kason-era vakadzi mwenga
10clothes 10RL-2AGR-sewed-APL 2women 1bride
'Clothes which the women sewed for the bride' (Demuth and Harford 1999: Ex. 12b)

- (2) Emikeeka a bawala gye-ba-a-luka te-gi-gasa
 Mat₄ girl₂ REL₄-SA₂-past-plait neg-4-be.of.use
 ‘The mats the girls plaited are unsuitable’ (Ashton et.al. 1954:144)
- (3) ?mbatya vakadzi dza- va-kasonera mwenga
 10clothes 2women 10REL-2AGR-sewed for 1bride
 ‘Clothes which the women sewed for the bride’ (Demuth & Harford, 1999 Ex (i))
- (4) Ngumbá Lúdo ya-á-ká-báka
 House₉ Ludo_{1a} REL₉-SA₁-past-build
 ‘The house that Ludo built’

References

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