

Pôle des langues et civilisations  
65 Rue des Grands Moulins  
75013 Paris

**Lundi 17 octobre**

Salle du Conseil 4.24

## Relative clauses and areal typology: American Indian Languages

- 10h00 **Fernando ZUÑIGA** (Université de Bern)  
*Conservatism and innovation in Algonquian relative clauses*
- 11h00 **Marine VUILLERMET** (DDL)  
*Les propositions relatives en Ese Ejja*
- 12h00 Buffet**
- 14h00 **Evangelia ADAMO** (CNRS – LACITO)  
*Ambiguous relative clauses in Ixcatec (Otomanguan, Mexico):  
An experimental and a corpus-driven approach*
- 15h00 **Michel LAUNEY** (Université Denis Diderot, Paris 7)  
*Entre parataxe, épithétisation et construction de syntagmes définis :  
y a-t-il de vraies propositions relatives en nahuatl classique ?*

## Résumés

Fernando ZUÑIGA (Université de Bern)

### *Conservatism and innovation in Algonquian relative clauses*

The Algonquian languages of North America show a remarkable homogeneity, but also a substantial and occasionally intriguing heterogeneity, in several areas of their phonological, morphological, and syntactic structures. Relative clauses are no exception to this generalization; whereas the proto-language shows a fundamental distinction between verb forms used in matrix clauses and those used in subordinate clauses, some of the present-day languages keep this --possibly robust-- division of labor intact, while others form and treat relative clauses in interestingly diverging ways. The present paper surveys the unity and diversity of form and function via three case studies. One variety of Cree is used to illustrate a situation close to the one reconstructed for the whole family, which is indeed not at all rare; here, relative-clause verb forms appear in the inherited so-called conjunct order and make use of agglutinated subordinators called preverbs in Algonquian studies. One of the deviant languages is Blackfoot, where new matrix-clause-like forms have been created to cover some, but not all, subordinate clauses, and different kinds of nominalizations play a central role in the coverage of the relative clauses. Lastly, Arapaho has probably been more innovative than most Algonquian languages in showing different waves of repurposing both former subordinate-clause forms and nominalized ones. The picture arising from this selective survey is one of formal and functional stability at perhaps a more abstract level than is sometimes assumed for close-knit language families worldwide."

Marine VUILLERMET (DDL)

### *Les propositions relatives en Ese Ejja*

There are two main strategies for forming relative clauses (RCs) in Ese Ejja, falling into a verbal type and a nominal type of subordinate clauses. The verbal type, illustrated in (1) and (2), is called the "headless relative clauses" by one of its major traits; the nominal type, illustrated in (2), is called "participial relative clauses".

The main features of the headless relative clauses are the following:

- they lack a head;
- they tend to take a left boundary relativizer (see (1)a-b vs. (2)) and a right boundary clitic (allative in (1)a, plural marker in (1)b, and locative in (2));
- their verb is finite and obligatory final;
- the argument encoding follows that found in main clauses in term of choice of Erg/Abs markers.

(1) a. *E-me wo-ka-ani ma [tajakaka e-ani-sowa-ki ani]=asijje*  
NPF-hand raise-3A-PRS DEM2/RELZ frog RES-sit-go\_up-GO\_TO\_DOSit.PRS=ALL  
'(He) points in the direction **where the frogs have gone up to sit.**' {SoFWA.076}

b. *Kuama=tii=ya=pa kua [owa=kekua-ka-je]=kuana=Ø jia-ka-na-'io-ani-naje*  
there=INTS=FOC=REP RELZ 3ERG=hunt-3A-FUT=PL=ABS leave-3A-DO&RETURN-TEL-IPFV-PAS  
'There he used to leave behind **all that he had hunted** (before going home).' {KaBem.037}

(2) *[O=ani]=jo oya tajakaka y-ani beka.*  
3ABS=sit=LOC 3ABS frog EXS-sit two  
'Where he<sub>i</sub> is, there are (*lit. sit*) two frogs, two of them<sub>j</sub>.' {KaFWA.156}

A general trait of the headless relative clauses is that they are more frequent with obliques as in (1)a or (2) than with core arguments as in (1)b.

Participial relatives are extremely different with regard to all the parameters listed above for the headless relative clauses:

- they tend to have a lexical head;
- they have no boundary markers (neither left nor right);
- their verb is non-finite;
- the notional A argument is encoded by a genitive, a clear indication of participial nominalization type of clause.

(3) *Jamaya jikio ekuanaja baba=kuaa=ka, dejja=a (wosho-ka),*  
 so DEM1 1EXCL.GEN grandfather=PL.ERG=CTRS men=ERG wear-3A  
*wosho-ka-ani-naje ba'a daki=nei [oja=sipi]; [e-wanase=ja=kuia]*  
 wear-3A-IPFV-PAS SEE cloth=REAL 3GEN=weave NPF-wife=GEN=press  
***nojjava;*** ***nojjava*** *[e-wanase=ja=sipi].*  
**plant\_sp** **plant\_sp** NPF-wife=GEN=weave

'So our ancestors, the men, they used to wear this, *dakinei* (lit. *very/real cloth*) woven by them; (made of) *nojjava* (*plant sp.*) pressed by their wives, *nojjava* woven by their wives.' {KaBab.014-15}

Example (3) shows that the participial may either precede or follow the NP head in bold.

The two relative clause types will be described in turn according to a number of parameters commonly used for the description of relative clauses, starting with considerations of the nature of the NP head, followed by a study of the clause boundary marking, and then the various elements of the relative clause itself, such as word order, finiteness of the verb and treatment of the relativized NP.

**Evangelia ADAMOU** (CNRS – LACITO)

### ***Ambiguous relative clauses in Ixcatec (Otomanguan, Mexico):***

#### ***An experimental and a corpus-driven approach***

Keenan and Comrie (1977) show that subjects are more accessible to relativization than direct objects, indirect objects, oblique objects, possessors, and objects of comparison. Since then, there has been a great amount of work confirming the original explanation that subject preference in relative clauses "directly reflects the psychological ease of comprehension" (Keenan & Comrie 1977: 88). Indeed, experimental studies offer ample evidence for the fact that subject relative clauses (SRCs) are easier to process than object relative clauses (ORCs). In most of these studies, however, the processing advantage of SRCs is influenced by language-specific morphological and syntactic confounds. Following Polinsky et al. (2013: 275), we suggest that an unconfounded result should be looked for in the interpretation of ambiguous relative clauses. While temporary ambiguous relative clauses have been investigated (Frazier 1987, Mecklinger et al. 1995, Carreiras et al. 2010), little research has been done on fully ambiguous relative clauses (e.g., Clemens et al. 2015).

In this talk I present evidence relevant to the discussion from Ixcatec (ISO code: *ixc*), a critically-endangered Otomanguan language of Mexico, that has ambiguous relative clauses in the third person. This is illustrated in (1).

(1) *ndi<sup>2</sup>ra<sup>2</sup> ki<sup>1</sup>?i<sup>2</sup> sa<sup>1</sup> k<sup>w</sup>a<sup>2</sup>-?i<sup>1</sup> [la<sup>2</sup> te<sup>2</sup>ngi<sup>2</sup>?e<sup>2</sup> sa<sup>1</sup> mi<sup>2</sup>-tja<sup>2</sup>]*  
 where LOC DEF CLF-little COMP follow DEF CLS-woman

SRC: 'Where is the girl who follows the woman?' *or*

ORC: 'Where is the girl that the woman follows?'

(high tone <sup>1</sup>, mid tone <sup>2</sup>, low tone <sup>3</sup>, COMP: complementizer, CLS: class, CLF: classifier, DEF: definite article, LOC: locative)

It can be seen that there are no syntactic or morphological cues that would allow the Ixcatec speakers to disambiguate between SRCs and ORCs. More specifically, Ixcatec SRCs and ORCs are formed with the gap strategy and an uninflected complementizer *la<sup>2</sup>*. Subjects and objects both appear in the postverbal position within the relative clause. Also, Ixcatec is a head-marking language with a single series of subject verb suffixes restricted to first and second person, and no indexing of object arguments.

Three studies were conducted in order to investigate subject preference in Ixcatec relative clauses. First, Study 1, a translation task supported by visual stimuli, establishes that ambiguous SRCs and ORCs are the most frequent option in Ixcatec, representing 79% (N=204) of the responses. This study also reveals that speakers may use word-order changes in order to disambiguate between SRCs and ORCs (N=53). Study 2, a picture-matching comprehension experiment, shows that 63% of the ambiguous RCs are interpreted as SRCs (N=401). Results from reaction times show that SRC interpretations are numerically faster than ORCs although this difference does not reach significance. Analysis of a three-hour, free-speech corpus (Study 3) indicates that transitive and intransitive subject RCs are the most frequent, but transitive subject RCs are only slightly more frequent than object RCs (19% vs. 17%).

In conclusion, the Ixcatec data support universal subject preference but also lend support to frequency and experience models of processing (MacDonald 2013). The Ixcatec study also illustrates how lesser-known, under-described, oral-tradition languages can contribute to the theoretical discussions that have mainly been addressed for well-described, written languages.

## References

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Michel LAUNEY (Université Denis Diderot, Paris 7)

### ***Entre parataxe, épithétisation et construction de syntagmes définis : y a-t-il de vraies propositions relatives en nahuatl classique?***

On trouve en nahuatl des constructions qui se traduisent par des propositions relatives et en ont les caractéristiques générales : subordination à un nom, coindexation entre deux positions syntaxiques (dans la principale et la subordonnée), présence d'une marque de subordination, en l'occurrence *in*, qui sert par ailleurs de déterminant défini. Par exemple :

- (1) *Xicui inon āmatl in pani câ* Prends ce livre qui est en haut  
Prends-le ce livre IN dessus est
- (2) *Motēnēhua in huentli in quichīhuayâ* On raconte les offrandes qu'ils faisaient  
Se-mentionne IN offrande IN ils-la-faisaient

Il faut les replacer dans le cadre général d'une grammaire omniprédicative (ou : à dominance du rhème), que le nahuatl représente de manière typique. Non seulement noms et verbes ont le même comportement en tant que prédicat de phrase, mais ils se prêtent de la même manière à la construction de syntagmes actanciels définis (avec *in*) : on trouve à la fois des phrases unilexicales **V** ou **N** (3a-b) et des constructions avec un syntagme **in N** ou **in V** (4a-b), dont une approximation plus exacte et plus générale serait *celui/celle/ce/ceux/celles qui...* :

- (3a) *Coyōtl* C'est un coyote  
(3b) *Tzàtzi* Il hurle  
(4a) *Tzàtzi in coyōtl* Le coyote hurle (« celui qui est coyote hurle »)  
(4b) *Coyōtl in tzàtzi* C'est un coyote qui hurle (« celui/ce qui hurle est un coyote »)

Il y a donc une parenté évidente entre les relatives et les syntagmes actanciels définis. D'autre part, les relatives sont parfois concurrencées par l'épithétisation d'un verbe :

- (5) *Quimitta in màältiâ cihuâ* Il regarde les femmes (qui) se baignent  
Il-les-voit IN elles-se-baignent femmes

On réfléchira sur ces convergences, mais aussi sur les contraintes qui permettent ou empêchent la construction de relatives, de syntagmes définis et d'épithètes : nominalité, prédicativité, longueur, définitude, personne.