

Relative clauses in Tojol-ab'al [toj] Mayan

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Abstract

Aim of the talk is to present a general picture of the relative clauses in Tojol-ab'al. In order to do this, it will be discussed which parts of the accessibility hierarchy are filled, which relativization strategies are used and the position of the relative clause with respect to the head noun.

Keywords— Mayan, Tojol-ab'al, relative clauses, accessibility hierarchy

Aim of the present talk is to offer a general description of the relative clauses in Tojol-ab'al [toj] a Mayan language of the Western Branch spoken in the Southeastern Mexican State Chiapas by no less than 40,000 speakers. It is a head-marking language exhibiting morphological ergativity.

Examples in (1)¹ show the position of the relative clause w.r.t. the head noun. These examples also show the three relativization strategies exhibited in the language: zero, the proximal demonstrative *it* and the indefinite/interrogative human pronoun *ma'*. Examples (1a) and (1b) show the zero strategy. Examples in (1c) to (1e) show the strategy with the proximal demonstrative *it*. Examples in (1f) to (1h) show the strategy with the indefinite pronoun *ma'*. Finally, all strategies have the possibility of including the determiner *ja* as showed in (1)².

- (1) a. *Cham-ta ja winik* [\emptyset *jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
die-already DET man REL come yesterday=DEF
'The man that came yesterday died already'
- b. *Cham-ta ja winik* [\emptyset *ja jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
- c. *Cham-ta ja winik* [*it jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
- d. *Cham-ta ja winik* [*it ja jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
- e. *Cham-ta ja winik* [*ja it jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
- f. *Cham-ta ja winik* [*ma' jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
- g. *Cham-ta ja winik* [*ma' ja jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.
- h. *Cham-ta ja winik* [*ja ma' jul eke'=i*]_{RC}.

Example in (2) merely shows that there is no difference in the internal structure of the relative clause when the nominal phrase containing it changes its position w.r.t. the main predicate.

- (2) a. *Ja winik* [\emptyset *jul eke'i*]_{RC}, *chamta*.

Example in (3) simple show that it is agrammatical to put the relative clause between the determiner and the head noun regardless of the strategy and or the inclusion or not of a determiner within the proper relative clause.

¹All examples come from the author's fieldwork.

²**Abbreviations:** DEF=definite, DET=determiner, IV=intransitive status, POT=potential mood, REL=relativizer, TV=transitive status NEG=negation, COMPLZ=complementizer

(3) a. **Ja* [\emptyset *jul eke'i*]_{RC} *winik, chamta*.

Example (1) above showed the possibility of relativizing the subject. Examples in (4) to (7) show the relativization of the direct object, indirect object, instrumental oblique and genitive.

(4) *Wanto jak-i ja winik* [*it k-il-a eke'i*]_{RC}
 just COME-IV DET man REL A1-see-TV yesterday
 'The man that I saw yesterday just arrived.'

(5) *Ja ixuk-i* [*it j-man-a y-i' jun s-juna*]_{RC}, *wanto jak-i*.
 DET woman-DEF REL A3-buy-TV A3-take DET A3-skirt just arrive-DEF
 'The woman for whom I bought a skirt just arrived'

(6) *Ja tan pico* [*it j-poj-o sok lu'um-i*]_{RC}, *oj makun-uk k-uj*.
 DET MASC pickaxe REL A1-romper-TV INST LAND-DEF POT work-IRR A1-AGENTIVE
 'The pickaxe with which I plowed the land, will work'

(7) *Ja ixuk-i* [*s-b'aj y-e'n-a ja s-tat-i cham-ta*]_{RC}, *wanto jak-i*.
 DET WOMAN-DEF A3-REFL A3-PRONDIST DET A3-father-I' die-ALREADY just COME-DEF
 'The woman whose father died, just arrived.'

One example of spontaneous discourse is presented in (8) to illustrate a possible case of a prenominal relative clause.

(8) *Y-al k-ab' ja Israel=i ke ta mi=b'i jaw-a' k-i'-aj* [*ja b'a wa*
 A3-say A1-hear DET I.=DEF COMPLZ COMPLZ NEG=REP A2-give A1-VT DET LOC INC
x-mak'-x-i sok chenek'=i]_{RC} *ja koxtal=i*'.
 INC-hit-MIDDLE-VI INSTR beans=DEF DET bag=DEF
 'Israel said/ask me whether you are going to give me **the bag** [(that is used) to hit the beans]_{RC}'

This example was obtained in a conversation and was checked afterwards with other speakers. It is important to notice that for the elicited examples, the speakers rejected the prenominal varieties.

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