Relative clauses as appositional nominals

This paper presents an analysis of relative clauses in Katcha, a Kadu language spoken in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan. Almost all nominal modifiers in Katcha are introduced by a morpheme of the form *j-/m-/n-* (according to the gender of the head noun). The first part of the paper argues that this morpheme is best analysed as a demonstrative pronoun and that all nominal modifiers are therefore either appositional demonstrative pronouns (1) or appositional phrases headed by a demonstrative pronoun (2). In the case of relative clauses, as in (2), an additional demonstrative also appears at the end of the modifier, which has historically been something of a puzzle, with differing analyses having been offered by previous researchers (Stevenson 1941; Gilley 2013).

(1) mʊsa asáːsá   fɪjɔ **mɔ́**
     Musa 3SG.want cow PROX.F

     'Musa wants this cow' (= 'Musa wants a cow, this one.')

(2) mʊsa asáːsá   fɪjɔ [**m**-akú   ɔːjɔ **mɔ́**   ]
     Musa 3SG.want cow PROX.F-eat grass PROX.F

     'Musa wants the cow which is eating grass' (= 'Musa wants a cow, the grass-eating one.')

Based as it is around the concept of apposition, the analysis argued for here is inherently incremental and dynamic. Lexical nouns project complete structures and cannot therefore be modified from within the phrase. Modification must be by appositional phrases referring to the same entity, each phrase contributing to the build-up of semantic information as it is parsed. The second part of the paper therefore seeks to formalise this analysis using the tools of Dynamic Syntax.

The Dynamic Syntax account of relative clauses generally is to treat them as propositional subtrees LINKed to a *Ty(e)* node projected by the modified noun (Kempson *et al.* 2001:103-149). In the case of Katcha however, the modifier is not a clause but a phrase headed by the demonstrative pronoun. As such, the sub-tree projected by the relative 'clause' is not a propositional tree, but a tree of type *e*, an epsilon term with a restrictor whose value is provided by the modifier.

Central to the analysis is an adjustment to the lexical entry for demonstrative pronouns, construing the pronoun as projecting a partial ϵ-term rather than merely a metavariable. This innovation has two effects. Firstly, it creates an open propositional node allowing the subsequent verb and the rest of the relative clause in (2) to be parsed successfully. Secondly, the fact that the lexical entry for demonstratives includes the construction of an epsilon binder is reflective of the fact that the demonstrative in (1) is not merely an anaphoric device but also has a determiner-like function. The theoretical analysis thereby supports Stevenson's (1941) descriptive analysis that the clause-final demonstrative in (2) functions as a 'definite article'.

The analysis offered in this paper is based on the insight that the relativising morpheme in Katcha is in fact the proximal demonstrative pronoun. By adjusting the lexical entry for the demonstrative such that it not only projects a metavariable, but also builds semantic structure, both the pronoun's syntactic functions can be easily modelled: in utterances like (1) it contributes definiteness; in utterances like (2) it acts as the 'relativiser'. Both cases are best construed as modification of the head noun by the incremental parsing of appositional nominal phrases.

References

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