

Relative Clauses in Michif

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This paper argues the typology and structure of relative clauses in Michif, a contact language derived from Plains Cree (Algonquian) and French. Johansson (2011) argues that Relative clauses in Algonquian languages can be typologically classified into two groups: participle constructions (e.g., Blackfoot, Fox) and preverb constructions (e.g., Naskapi, Plains Cree). In the former group the verb in a relative clause carries nominal morphology, whereas the latter group employ a preverb to form a relative clause with an inflected verb in the conjunct order. As shown in (1), Michif Relative clause belongs to the latter type, a verbal complex being headed by a preverb *ka*. (*kaw-* in examples in (1) and (2) is the result of the spelling variations of the corpus, *the Turtle Mountain dictionary*.)

- (1) *Wiya kaw-weehtamawkay-t daen asawnblee*
3.S REL-names.it.to.people.AI-3CJ in.the assembly
'He is the announcer in the assembly' (Laverdure & Allard 1983: 23)

The puzzle is that a relativizing preverb *ka* is also used to nominalize a verbal predicate as in (2), which suggests that Michif relative clauses are derived through agent-nominalization.

- (2) *Kaw-weechih-ikou-t dawn la pital ayaw-yiw.*
REL-help.TA-inv-3→3'CJ loc DET.f hospital be.TA-3→3'
'Her helpmate is in the hospital' (Laverdure & Allard 1983: 131)

We propose that Michif relative clauses constitute a full clause (CP) rather than a reduced or participle form. Namely, relative clauses are not agent-nominalization. First, Michif relative clauses are not restricted to subject or agent; direct object (3) and indirect objects, and object of a preposition are also relativizable (Bakker 1997, Laverdure & Allard 1983).

- (3) *kawkuy magray kaw-kenawawpahtam-ihk*
something still REL-keep.looking.TI-indef.CJ
'attraction' lit: *who keeps looking at something* (Laverdure & Allard 1983: 18)

Second, relative clauses contain elements that are not observed in nominalized verbal complex. Baker & Vinokurova (2009) claim that cross-linguistically agent-nominalization occurs below the Voice level (Unfortunately, Algonquian languages are not included in their study, though). This view predicts that, if Michif relative clause is a nominalized verbal complex, phrases that appear at or above the VoiceP level may not appear in relative clauses. Examples in (3) and (4) show that this prediction is not borne out; relative clauses may contain an adverb (3), tense morpheme (4a), and negation (4b).

- (4a) *la promayr yayr kaw-hkee-pouni-noutinikay-hk*
The first war REL-PST-Stop-takes.part.in.war.AI-indef.CJ
'armistice' lit: *which one stops taking part in war* (Laverdure & Allard 1983: 14)

(4b) *awiyak le bon dieu nô kâ-kiskêyimâ-t*
someone.3 God NEG REL-know.TA.3-3'-C
'Someone who does not know God' (Laverdure & Allard 1983: 131)

Lastly, we argue the structural location of *ka*. Contrary to Cook (2015) and Johansson (2011), who argues that *ka* is the functional head in the CP domain, we argue that the relativiser *ka* is located in the lower position (e.g., inside TP as a verbal prefix). This does not mean, however, that relative clauses are to some extent reduced; rather, the example (4b) shows that a relative clause is headed by the C head element (negator *nô*), i.e., the clause is a CP. Thus, we conclude that relative clauses in Michif are formed as a subordinate clause (CP) headed by a preverb *ka*, in which a verb is fully inflected in person and number of arguments, theme, and order.

References

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