

Gilaki Relative Clause Formation

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Abstract

This study investigates relative clause (RC) formation in Eastern dialect of Gilaki, a Northwestern Iranian language. Gilaki has two RC formation strategies. One is the post-nominal strategy with the head NP to the left of the restricting clause; all Gilaki head NP positions can be relativized by post-nominal RC. The focus of this study is on the pre-nominal strategy which only occurs to the left of the head NP in subject position (1), object position (2) and oblique position (3).

- (1) [dərs buxond-ə] mərdək-rə bid-em
lesson read man-ACC PST.see-1SG
'I saw the man who has read lesson.' (lit. 'I saw the literate man.')
- (2) [mi diruz-ə nə-ʃkæn-e] livon-on- miz-ə sər næh-æn halə
I.GEN yesterday-EZ NEG-breaking glass.NOM-PL table-EZ on be-3PL still
'The glasses that I did not break yesterday are still on the table.'
- (3) [guft bin-i] tʃayru-rə bær
meat cutting knife-ACC bring
'Bring the knife with which the meats are cut.' (lit. 'bring the meat-cutting knife.')

In (1-3), the structural adjustments inside RC, such as modification in the case marking and the absence of tense, aspect and agreement markers raise the question of whether Gilaki is using deverbal nominalization as an RC formation strategy. Basilico (1996) states that internally headed relative clauses (IHRC) are essentially nominalized sentences. Jany (2011) considers clausal nominalization as a relativization strategy, particularly for internally headed relative clauses, headless and free relative clauses in many languages. However, Gilaki does not have IHRC as the head NP in (1-3) is not the constituent of the subordinate clause. The evidence for this comes from the case on the noun which is consistent with the matrix clause. Inspired by Toosarvandi (2014), this study shows that Gilaki prenominal RCs pass the test for being nominal and argues that the syntax of these RCs contains a nominal functional category which has a verbal projection embedded inside a nominal one. The nominal functional head, which Toosarvandi (2014) calls Poss, takes a vP complement and makes genitive case available when it projects a specifier position. Given that, the RC in (2) can be represented as in (4).

- (4) [DP [PossP mi [vP bəʃkæne]]]

According to Toosarvandi (2014), nominalization describes either an event (when all the verb's arguments are saturated) or an individual (when one of the verb's arguments is gapped). This study proposes that the nominalization in Gilaki has an event interpretation when the nominalizer assigns genitive case to an external argument like the data in (2). This supports Jany's (2011) proposal that nominalization is not derivation of noun from verb and represents an entire clause. The individual interpretation arises when the nominal functional head does not project a specifier and binds the

verb's event variable like the data in (1) and (3). This aligns with Shibatani's (2009) claim that what has been identified as a relative clause in some languages is in fact the instance of grammatical nominalization which creates referring expressions.

References:

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