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Re-examining the relative clauses in Amis^{*}

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1. Introduction

This paper examines two types of relative clauses in Amis, a Formosan Austronesian language spoken in Taiwan. These two types of relative clauses (RCs), the internally-headed and the genitive-as-the-head types, have received little or no discussion in the literature. From the perspective of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG), I would like to argue that there actually are two sub-types of internally-headed RCs: an internally-headed type and a headless type. As for the genitive-as-the-head RCs, I suggest that they should be accommodated through a constructional schema that is pragmatically driven. This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 offers a brief introduction to Amis and the previous studies about the RCs in this language. Section 3 presents the new findings of Amis RCs. Section 4 offers an RRG account for these new findings and Section 5 concludes the discussion.

2. Brief introduction to Amis relative clauses

Amis is currently spoken by 210,839 speakers¹ in Taiwan. It is classified as one of the Eastern Formosan branch languages (Blust 1999) and is reported to consist of five dialects (Tsuchida 1988). The following discussion is based on the data collected from the Central dialect and the Northern dialect (aka the Nanshi dialect).

2.1. Some notes on Amis grammar

Amis is a predicate-initial language. Verbal predicates are usually affixed with a voice marker (e.g. *mi-*), followed by various numbers of arguments that are marked by a case marker, be it a nominative case (for the PSA argument), a genitive case (for a non-PSA actor or a possessor), or a dative case (for an oblique core argument or adjuncts), and a locative argument or adjunct is marked by the preposition *i*. See (1) for illustration.²

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¹ <https://www.apc.gov.tw/portal/docList.html?CID=7AD36169AB07E1D0>

² The phonetic symbols used in the transcription generally follow the IPA system, with the following exceptions: /e/ stands for schwa [ə], /d/ for voiceless lateral [t̪], /ʔ/ for glottal stop [ʔ], /q/ for epiglottis stop [q̠], and /ŋ/ for [ŋ]. The glosses in this paper in general follow Wu (2006), which adopts some of Liu's (1999) morphemic analyses (e.g. the separation of noun classifier and case markers) and Bril's (2023) glossing with some slight modification. Unless specified in the following, the abbreviations used in the glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules:

- (1) a. *R<om>akat kako i lalan.*
 <NEUT> walk 1S.NOM PREP road
 ‘I am walking on the road.’
- b. *Mi-palo Ø-ci Sawmah ci Mayaw-an.*
 AV-beat NOM-PPN Sawmah PPN Mayaw-DAT
 ‘Sawmah is beating Mayaw.’; ‘Sawmah is going to beat Mayaw.’
- c. *Ma-palo n-i Sawmah Ø-ci Mayaw.*
 UV-beat GEN-PPN Sawmah NOM-PPN Mayaw
 ‘Mayaw was beaten by Sawmah.’
- d. *Pa-nanom kako t-o wawa t-o sayta.*
 CAUS-water 1S.NOM DAT-CN child DAT-CN soda
 ‘I gave the child soda to drink.’ (Causative, AV)

As shown in Table 1, Amis distinguishes two voices: actor and undergoer, and the latter can be further divided into the plain (or non-applicative) UV and applicative UV, including the instrumental applicative and the locative applicative.

Table 1 *Voice Markers and the Applicative Markers in Amis*

Voice		Semantic Role of the Subject	Affixes
Neutral Voice ³		Unspecified	<i>mi-</i> , <i>ma-</i> , < <i>om</i> >
Actor Voice		Actor	<i>mi-</i> , <i>ma-</i> , < <i>om</i> >
Undergoer Voice	Plain	Undergoer (unmarked choice)	<i>ma-</i> , <i>ma-...<om></i> , <i>ma-ka-</i> , <i>-en</i>
	Applicative	Undergoer (marked choice)	<i>sa-</i> , <i>-an</i>

As pointed out by Wu (2006), one of the distinguishing features between the plain voice forms and the applicative forms is that while the latter can serve as an argument nominalization form, the former has to appear with special TAM forms such as being suffixed with the factual marker *-ay* or being partially reduplicated⁴ to indicate the future tense. Table 2 below displays part of the nominalization forms of the verbs with different voices.

AV: actor voice, FAC: factual marker, INA: instrumental applicative, LA: locative applicative, LNK: linker, NCM: noun class marker, NEUT: neutural voice, NFIN: non-finite, PPN: personal proper Noun, UV: undergoer voice

³ This voice marker is used for the intransitive verbs of which the only macrorole is not specified. Such verbs used to be termed as actor voice (or agent voice/focus) by most of the previous studies of Amis and other Formosan languages.

⁴ This is known as Ca- reduplication (Ca- in Table 2), which refers to the process of copying the first consonant of the root or stem and adding the vowel /a/ to the reduplicated consonant. This reduplication form is commonly found in Austronesian languages (Blust 1988). In Amis, this form serves many functions. One of them is to indicate the irrealis mode of the verb, which is usually interpreted as “future tense”.

Table 2 *The Nominalization Forms of Amis Verbs*

Voices and Forms		Event Nominalization		Argument Nominalization	
		Forms	Meaning	Forms	Meaning
Neutral or Actor Voices	mi-Root	pi-Root	the action/ state/event denoted by the root	Voice marker- Root-ay	the actor that does or did the activity or the undergoer that bears or bore the property denoted by the verb
	ma-Root	ka-Root		Ca-Voice marker-Root	the actor that will do the activity or the undergoer that will bear the property denoted by the verb
	<om>Root	ka-<om>Root			
Plain Undergoer Voices	ma-Root Root-en	ka-Root	the action/ state/event denoted by the root with a passive reading	ma-Root-ay	the undergoer of the activity denoted by the verb

				Ca-Root-en	the future undergoer of the activity denoted by the verb
Applied Undergoer Voices	sa-pi-Root sa-ka-Root	--		sa-pi-Root sa-ka-Root	the instrument or reason of the activity/ state denoted by the verb
	mi-...-an pi-...-an ka-...-an	--		mi-...-an pi-...-an ka-...-an	the patient or location of the activity/ state denoted by the verb

2.2. Relative clauses in Amis

There have been quite a few studies that investigate the RCs in Amis, such as Wu (1995, 2006), Liu (1999), to name just a few. Common findings shared by these studies can be summarized as follows. First, the non-restrictive RC precedes the head, with an optional linker *a* that intervenes in between. Second, the verb of the RC has to be an argument nominalization form. Third, the RP coreferential with the head is gapped in the RC, indicated with “_____” in (2). Fourth, a grammatical relation is found in the formation of RCs. As exemplified in (2), from Wu (2023), the pivots (i.e. the gapped RP) in the RCs are restricted to an actor of an actor-voice verb, an undergoer of a undergoer-voice verb, an instrument of instrumental applicative verb, and a location of a locative applicative verb.

- (2) a. *Ma-patay=to* *k-o-ya* *mi-kalat-ay* ______i *ci* *Aki-an*
 NEUT-dead=ASP NOM-NCM-that AV-bite-FAC PPN Aki-DAT
a *waco_i*.
 LNK dog
 ‘That dog **that bit Aki** is dead.’
- b. *Tati’ih* *k-o-ya* *ma-kaen-ay* *n-i* *Aki* ______i *a*
 bad NOM-NCM-that UV-eat-FAC GEN-PPN Aki LNK
tali_i.
 taro
 ‘That taro **that Aki ate** was bad.’
- c. *Ma-pitek=ako* *k-o* *sa-pi-cikcik* *n-i* *Aki*
 UV-break=1S.GEN NOM-NCM IA-NFIN-cut GEN-PPN Aki
t-o *dateng* ______i *a* *po’ot_i*.
 DAT-NCM vegetable LNK knife
 ‘I broke the knife **with which Aki cut the vegetable**.’
- d. *Tayra* *Ø-ci* *Panay* *mi-ladom* ______i *pi-ladom-an*
 go NOM-PPN Panay AV-fetch.water PREP NFIN-fetch.water-LA
n-i *Aki* ______i *a* *tefon_i*.
 GEN-PPN Aki LNK well
 ‘Panay went to fetch water at the well **where Aki fetched water**.’

3. New findings of the relative clauses in Amis

Two types of RCs that have been found in various Amis dialects after further investigation challenge the above summary. They will be referred to as the internally headed type and the genitive-as-the-head type and discussed respectively below.

3.1. The internally-headed RCs

The above-mentioned features of Amis RCs are not found in following example from Northern Amis reported in Brill (2023), which manifests an internally-headed RC, where the modified noun *ina* “mother” stays inside the clause.⁵

- (3) *Bekac* *sa* *cira* *a* *tayra* *i* *ni-pi-sa-sinabel*
 run do NOM.3SG CONJ go LOC NMLZ-NFIN-do-dish

⁵ Brill (2023), cited from: <https://referenceworks.brill.com/display/entries/HFLO/COM-305010.xml>, original glosses, highlight mine.

n-u *"ina.*
 GEN-NM mother
 'She ran to her **mother who was cooking the meal.**'

More examples of internally-headed RCs can be found in the textbook of Northern Amis.⁶

- (4) a. *Aluman=tu* *k-u* *mi-liyas-ay* *n-u* *kapah* .
 many.people=ASP NOM-NCM AV-leave-FAC GEN-NCM young.man
 na *i* *niyaru*'.
 from PREP tribe
 'There have been many **young men who left the tribes.**'
 b. *A=tusa* *k-u* *ni-kerid-an* *nu* *vavainay* *t-u* *lusid.*
 FUT=two NOM-NCM LA-bring-LA GEN-NCM men DAT-NCM thing
 'There will be **two things that men bring** (when they marry to a woman).'

The RCs exemplified in (3) and (4) are interesting as they show at least two features different from the externally-headed type in addition to the position of the RC and the head RP. First, the verb form inside the RC can be either an event nominalization form (e.g. *nipisasinabel*⁷ '(the past behavior) of cooking' in (3)) or an argument nominalization form (e.g. *miliyasay* 'one who left' in (4)). Second, the modified noun does not have to be a PSA of the RC based on the information from case marking though the argument nominalization form of the verb still follows the morphological restriction that is found in externally-headed RCs; that is, the verb is AV-marked when the modified noun is an actor and UV-marked when the modified noun is an undergoer.

However, in spite of sharing the feature of having an internal head, the examples in (3) and (4) actually show two important differences among themselves. First, while those in (4) can have external versions, either headed ((5a) and (5c)) or headless ((5b) and (5d)), the one in (3) cannot as shown in (5e-f).

- (5) a. *Aluman=tu* *k-u* *mi-liyas-ay* *na* *i* *niyaru*'.
 many.people=ASP NOM-NCM AV-leave-FAC from PREP tribe
 a *kapah.*
 LNK young.man
 'There have been many **young men who left the tribes.**'
 b. *Aluman=tu* *k-u* *mi-liyas-ay* *na* *i* *niyaru*'.
 many.people=ASP NOM-NCM AV-leave-FAC from PREP tribe
 'There have been many **(ones) who left the tribes.**'
 c. *A=tusa* *k-u* *ni-kerid-an* *nu* *vavainay* *a* *lusid.*
 FUT=two NOM-NCM LA-bring-LA GEN-NCM men LNK thing
 'There will be **two things that men bring** (when they marry to a woman).'
- d. *A=tusa* *k-u* *ni-kerid-an* *nu* *vavainay.*
 FUT=two NOM-NCM LA-bring-LA GEN-NCM men

⁶ From <https://web.klokah.tw/twelve/learn.php>.

⁷ The form *ni-pi*-... is a past tense variant of the *pi*- nominalization form (or non-finite form in Brill's (2023) analysis).

‘There will be **two (things) that men bring** (when they marry to a woman).’

- e. **Bekac sa cira a tayra i ni-pi-sa-sinabel*
 run do NOM.3SG CONJ go LOC NMLZ-NFIN-do-dish
a ina.
 LNK mother

Intended: ‘She ran to her mother **who was cooking the meal.**’

- f. **Bekac sa cira a tayra i ni-pi-sa-sinabel*
 run do NOM.3SG CONJ go LOC NMLZ-NFIN-do-dish
 Intended: ‘She ran to (someone) **who was cooking the meal.**’

As shown in (5e), it is ungrammatical to place the head out of the RC in the RC with an event-nominalization form.

Secondly, while the forms of the RCs in (4) can still help to decipher the semantic role of the modified noun, the event nominalization form in (3) does not serve this function. In fact, a further investigation of the internally-headed RC with an event nominalization verb shows that every argument can be a possible modified noun of the RC, though the actor is a preferred choice.

- (6) *Vekac⁸ sa cira a tayra i ni-pi-sa-cacak n-u*
 run so 3SG.NOM LNK go PREP NMLZ-NFIN-do-cook GEN-NCM
ina t-u sinavel.
 mother DAT-NCM dish.

‘He/she ran to (his/her) **mother who was cooking a dish.**’ (preferred)

‘He/she ran to the **dish that was being made by (his/her) mother.**’

As shown in (6), both arguments of *nipisacacak* ‘the (past) behavior of cooking’ can be the modified noun of the RC, but the actor RP as the head receives a preferred reading. This ambiguity is similar to the case discussed in Van Valin and LaPolla (1997: 502) for the internally-headed RCs in Lahokta. When all of the RPs inside the RC can be interpreted as the arguments of the matrix clause, then all are qualified to be interpreted as the head of the RCs.

3.2. The genitive-as-the-head type of RCs

Besides the internally-headed RCs, another type of RCs that violate the features discussed in Section 2 is found in the Amis Bible:

- (7) a. *O malininaay n-o-ya ma-krit-ay n-i Pitiro*
 NCM relative GEN-NCM-that UV-cut-FAC GEN-PPN Peter
k-o tangila ____i a tamdaw_i.
 NOM-NCM ear LNK person
 ‘It was the relative of that person **whose ear was cut by Peter.**’
- b. *Ira maro’ i Yirosalim ko talolong-ay*
 exit live PREP Jerusalem NOM-NCM pious-FAC
k-o faloco’ ____i a Yotaya a tamdaw_i.
 NOM-NCM heart. LNK Jewish LNK person
 ‘There were the Jewish people **whose hearts were pious** living in Jerusalem.’

⁸ This is the same predicate that appears in (3), but Bril (2023) used the old orthography.

As shown in (7), the pivots in the RC is a possessor instead of the RP that agrees with verbal marking in the RCs. If these gapped RPs show up in the clauses, they would appear in the genitive cases such as (8):

- (8) a. *Ma-krit-ay* *n-i* *Pitiro* *k-o* *tangila* ***n-o-ra***
 UV-cut-FAC GEN-PPN Peter NOM-NCMear ear **GEN-NCM-that**
 tamdaw.
 person
 ‘That person’s ear was cut by Peter.’
 b. *Talolong-ay* *k-o* *faloco*’ ***n-o*** *Yotaya* *a* *tamdaw..*
 pious-FAC NOM-NCM heart. **GEN-NCM** Jewish LNK person
 ‘Jewish people’s hearts were pious.’

In fact, these examples not only challenge the earlier analysis of Amis RCs as the possessor does not belong to the restricted set of roles specified in Section 2 but also the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy proposed by Keenan and Comrie (1977), in which genitive is placed at a less accessible position of relativization than subject, direct object, and indirect object; the latter two are impossible to be relativized in Amis unless they become the focused RP in the RC.

4. The RRG Analysis for the New Types of Amis RCs

Based on the above discussion, two analyses are proposed for the internally-headed RCs in (3) and (4). While (3) is treated as an instance of internally-headed RC, those in (4) are analyzed as headless RCs that constitute an RP on its own. For the internally-headed RCs, there is no way to place the head outside of the clause or remove the head from the clause, but for the headless type, it is possible to remove the seemingly internal head outside of the clause and remove it. In fact, the verbs in those headless RCs can simply function as a headless RP on its own and some of them have even become lexicalized in Amis such *mato'asay* 'old men or the one who is old'.

Regarding the RCs with a genitive head, they should be treated as a pragmatically-marked type of RCs. In fact, (7) can be paraphrased as (9) below, which better fits the restricted neutralization requirement of Amis RCs.

- (9) *O malininaay n-o-ya ma-krit-ay n-i Pitiro*
 NCM relative GEN-NCM-that UV-cut-FAC GEN-PPN Peter
t-o tangila ____i a tamdaw_i.
 DAT-NCM ear LNK person
 ‘It was the relative of that person whose ear was cut by Peter.’

In (9), the patient of *makritay*, which is the argument nominalization form of the UV verb *makrit* ‘cut’, is marked with the dative case and thus is a non-macrorole core argument. The undergoer of the verb should be the pivot according to the case pattern of Amis UV sentences. Although the role of this missing argument is a possessor, it can also be understood as a patient whose body part is affected in the event. (9) appears to be a marked undergoer choice, but at least it does not violate the restriction mentioned in Section 2. As structures like (7) seem to only appear in limited contexts such as translated works like the *Amis Bible*, where the faithfulness to the input languages is deemed

important and may override the syntactic rules, they should be handled through a special construction schema like Table 3.

Table 3 *Construction Schema for the Genitive-headed RC*

Construction: the genitive-headed RC in Amis
Syntax: Template: default Linking: default
Morphology: the argument nominalization form
Semantics: PSA is a possessor.
Pragmatics: Illocutionary force: unspecified Focus structure: PSA=unspecified Discourse: translated texts

Similar grammatically exceptional examples can also be found in other Amis translation works such as the official Amis textbooks, which are translated from a common Chinese version shared by all the Formosan languages.⁹ I suggest that such exceptions should be treated as a sub-set of the grammar but not deemed as basic rules.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented two types of RCs that have received little or no discussion in the previous studies of Amis RCs: the internally-headed types and the genitive-as-the-head type. I have proposed the following analysis for these RCs by using the RRG framework. The internally-headed types actually consist of two subtypes: the internally-headed one and the headless one; while the former does contain an internal head, the latter can serve as an RP. As for the genitive-as-the-head RCs, they are accounted for through a special construction schema for pragmatically-marked contexts.

As the two sub-types of internally-head RCs are both found in the Northern dialect, it is worthwhile to investigate whether such structures are also found in other Amis dialects. Regarding the genitive-as-the-head type, it will be interesting to survey on to what degree the source language can influence the Amis syntax in translated works.

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⁹ For example, Amis expresses the novel idea ‘X o’clock’ with a clause (e.g. *enemay ko toki* ‘6 o’clock, literally ‘The time is six.’. To express the idea ‘I get up at 6 o’clock.’, the Amis sentence will put a whole temporal expression (i.e. a clause) in another clause, which results in the occurrences of two nominative RPs. This is not allowed in the regular Amis syntax.

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