1. Relativizing and nominalizing markers: outline of the problem

It is generally believed that different types of complex clauses are formed with different types of deverbai forms (and different conjunctions) – complements are formed with verbal nouns or infinitives, relative clauses with participles and verbal adjectives, and adverbial clauses with converbs. Most often, the decision which class a particular form (infinitive, converb, supine, etc.) belongs to is taken according to the type of complex clauses it usually appears in. However, many languages do not show the one-to-one correspondence between the verb form and the type of the dependent clause. For example, it is a well known fact that participles in Uralic and Altaic languages can be used both in a relative clauses, and in complement clauses, see the examples from Komi-Żyryan:

**Komi-Żyryan (Uralic, Finno-Ugric): active-passive participle on -əm**

(1) a. [mama-liʃ vur-əm] dərəm me kofal-i.  
   mother-GEN2 sew-PART shirt I tear-PST  
   I’ve torn the shirt mother gave.

   mother-GEN1 shirt sew-NZR I.DAT like-PRS.3  
   I like the way mother has sewn the shirt.

In the first sentence (1a) the active-passive participle on -əm serves as an attribute of the head noun dərəm ‘shirt’, and hence builds a relative clause. In (1b) it is used as a subject of the verb kazifə ‘to like’ (Experiencer is marked with dative, and Stimulus with nominative), and has dərəm as its own argument. Hence, the whole phrase marked with the square brackets is a nominalized sentence “mother has sewn the shirt” (lit. “mother’s sewing of the shirt”) and functions as a complement of the main verb kazifə.  

The same distribution pattern is shown by participles in many Uralic and Altaic languages, cf.:
DUNSYAN (ALTAIC, MONGOLIAN): PAST PARTICIPLE IN -SEN:

father-POSS son come-PART-DAT/LOC+POSS rejoice
The father rejoiced at his son’s arrival. (Todaeva 1961: 47)

b. [Učusu ire-sen] kunni enede šinladži ire.
yesterday come-PART man here invite come
Call the man who came yesterday. (ibid.: 48)

Linguists dealing with the syntax of Uralic and Altaic languages give different analysis of such verb forms: a number of linguists treat them as participles (see Cypanov 1997 on Komi, Sunik 1947 on Tungus-Manchu languages e.a.); another point of view is to call them participles in the relative clauses (1 and 2a), and verbal nouns in complement clauses (1 and 2b) (see Bubrix 1949 on Komi, Cincius 1947 on Even e.a.).

The property of participles to function as names of situations has been observed by typologists in many languages of the world (see, for example, Lehmann 1984, Noonan 1985 e.a.). Less attention has been paid to the fact that the same polysemy pattern is demonstrated by the complementizers:

ENGLISH that
(3) a. the meat [that we eat]
   b. You see [that we eat].

In (3b) the complementizer that forms a relative clause, which modifies the head noun meat, while in (3a) it functions as a complementizer. The same is true for Lele referential marker go:

LELE (CHADIC)

(4) a. bāyndi [go ḋèy kòyò ko-nop]
   person REF 1SG give-3M hoe GEN-1SG
   a man to whom I gave my hoe (Frajzyngier 2001: 445)

b. ḋèy sēn [go mé gɪrbì kòjò kèrè].
   1SG know REF 2F forget hoe GEN-2F
   I know that you forgot your hoe (ibid.: 384)

The relativizer/nominalizer polysemy ¹ is wide-spread in the languages of the world: it is found in the languages of the Caucasus, in languages of Indo-European, Uralic, Altaic, Australian, Tibeto-Birman, Polynesian, Tupi-Guarani language families etc.

Roughly speaking, it is common for relativizers to serve as nominalizers/complementizers. This phenomenon, though noted by typologists, has received only an intuitive explanation, see Lehmann 1984: “Der Unterschied zwischen Relativ- und Substantivsatz… besteht… lediglich darin, dass der R[elativ]S[atz] eine freie Variable enthält, wo der Substantivsatz eine gebundene Variable oder eine Konstante hat” (Lehmann 1984: 153). The restrictions on this polysemy have not yet been worked out. In particular, the following questions arise when considering the data in (1)-(4) above:

1) whether all the nominalizers and complementizers function as relativers;

¹ Here and below we are not considering complements of perception verbs, as it is not always obvious, what kind of construction they form in a given language. It is also not obvious, what exactly is the semantic argument of a perception verb – the whole situation, or an object involved in this situation (see Letuchiy, Serdobolskaya 2005).
2) whether all the relativizers can function as nominalizers or complementizers;  
3) if not, what are the syntactic/semantic restrictions on the markers allowing such a polysemy.  
These questions constitute the goal of this paper. The first two questions denote the universality hypothesis of the polysemy pattern, which is going to be dealt with in the next section; the final section treats the problem of the syntactic restrictions on the polysemy observed.  

2. Universality hypothesis  
The hypothesis that all the complementizers and nominalizers can function in relative clause construction is disapproved; cf. deverbal nouns in -iti- in Sanskrit (Zalizniak 1978), or the complementizer kē ‘that’ in Beng that cannot participate in any relative clause:  

**BENG (SOUTH MANDE)** kē  
(5) ó wé [kē à nú e]  
1SG:PST+ reply that 3SG:PST- come Neg  
He answered that he wouldn’t come  

(6) sây [ff (*kē)ây à yê nâ]  
person REL 1PL:PST+ 3SG see Rel  
the person who we saw  

Japanese and Ainu languages (see Josephs 1976, Refsing 1986) seem to present another counterexample to this hypothesis. These languages can form complement clause constructions as a relative clause modifying a head noun with the meaning ‘the fact’, or ‘the way’ etc. (cf. English the fact that… construction). So, nominalization constructions in such languages don’t show relativizing usages, though they contain a relative clause. Similarly, in Dravidian languages nominalizations are formed adding a special morpheme to a relative clause marker (Rajendran 2001)  

We can also refute the hypothesis that all the relativizers can function as complementizers and/or nominalizers.  
There are attested relativizing units that do not serve to form a complement clause. For example, the relativizing suffix -(a)n in Basque can only appear in relative clauses; the same restrictions are demonstrated by relative pronouns kotoryj in Russian, lequel in French, a in Irish, si- and ni-relativizers in Nias (Polynesian) etc.:  

**BASQUE**  
(7) [arratčalde-an horre-taz hitz egin dud-an] gizon-a  
afternoon-LOC this-INS word do AUX.1SG.A-REL man-DEF  
the man I talked to in the afternoon  

**RUSSIAN**  
(8) Ищете подарок, [котор-ый их обраду-ет]?  
look.for-PRS.2PL present which-NOM.M.SG they.ACC make.happy-PRS.3SG  
You are looking for a present that would make them happy? (National Corpus of Russian)  

It also has been argued for some languages that they lack complementizers and regular nominalizations at all (see Dixon 1995 about Dyirbal; the same is indicated about the Alutor language by the data in Kibrik, Kodzasov, Muravyova 2000).  
Hence, the universality hypothesis of the observed polysemy pattern is refuted. Then, the question arises, if we can predict relativization/nominalization polysemy by the syntactic/semantic
properties of the subordinative marker: hence, which syntactic/semantic properties favour the polysemy and which do not.

3. Syntactic properties of the relativizers demonstrating the REL/NOM polysemy

3.1. Positions in the Accessibility hierarchy

3.1.1. Quite often units used in nominalization relativize a wide domain of positions in the Accessibility Hierarchy. This is the case in Lele (Frajzynger 2001, ‘referential marker’ go; see also examples above), and in Pitta-pitta (Blake 1979):

**LELE**

(9) bayndi [go na áy kùnáy gúyé]  
   person REF HYP take uncle-3M spider  
   the person who would take his uncle Spider

(10) jàw di-ngà [go ngà gol-ge]  
   enemies GEN:PL-1DU:INCL REF 1DU:INCL see-3PL  
   the enemies that we were going to see (Frajzyngier 2001: 438-440)

**PITTA-PITTA**

(11) [TätYi-ka-inYa], mutYi-ka ṇari ṇanYiYa.  
   eat-PST-ABL sleep-PST now I  
   After the dinner he has slept (lit. after he has eaten). (Blake 1979: 218)

(12) Tipu-na ṇa-ju ṇatYi-ka [tarrì-ka(-maru)-inYa-na].  
   rock-ACC I-ERG see-PST jump-PST-CON-ABL-ACC  
   I saw the rock he had jumped from. (ibid.: 218)

In standard Russian, *chto* can function as a complementizer or relativize the subject and direct object positions:

**RUSSIAN (NATIONAL CORPUS OF THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE) chto**

(13) Я знаю, [что земля врача-ет-ся вокруг Солнца-а]  
   I know-PRS.1SG that Earth go.round-PRS.3SG-REFL around Sun-GEN  
   I know that the Earth goes round the Sun.

(14) Кондуктор-а, [что выда-л-а ему фальши-к-у], он увидел  
   conductor-ACC that gave-PST-F.SG he.DAT fake.ticket-ACC he see-PST.M.SG  
   after day in bus-LOC other-ACC.M.SG route-ACC  
   He met the administrator who gave him the fake ticket the next day in a bus of a different route.

(15) …если учесть те крохи, [что получа-ет основная масса пенсионер-ов]?  
   if consider those whom that receive-PSR.3SG main-F.SGbody pensionary-GEN.PL  
   …if we take into account the whim of money that most of the retired people receive…
Colloquial Russian, unlike standard Russian, allows the complementizer *чтo* to relativize any argument position, including oblique argument (быть влюбленным ‘be in love with’ takes an oblique argument in Russian, like in English):

(16) Где эт-а девушка, [чтo я влюблен]? where this-F.SG girl that I in.love.M.SG Where’s this girl I’m in love with?

This is also the case for subordinative markers in Ulithian (Ho-min Sohn 1973), Woleai (Ho-min Sohn 1975), Tamil (Rajendran 2001), participles in -ți in Archi (Kibrik 1977), complementizer *je* in Bengali (Bykova 1966), relative markers in Australian languages such as Watjarri (Douglas 1981) and Gumbaynggir (Eades 1979), subordination markers in Tibeto-Birman languages e.a.

3.1.2. There also exist nominalizers/complementizers like French *que* that relativize DO position only:

**FRENCH**

(17) la femme [qui m’ aime] the woman who me loves the woman who loves me

(18) la femme [que j’ aime] the woman that I love the woman I love

(19) Je sais [que cette femme m’ aime]. I know that this woman me loves I know that this woman loves me.

S —— DO —— IO —— Obl —— POSS —— OComp

| E |

3.1.3. There are also nominalizers/complementizers that are used to relativize all the positions on the Accessibility Hierarchy except for the subject. One such language is Mari:

**MARI (DO AND LOWER POSITIONS ON THE HIRARCHY)**

(20) [javə petr-ən kor-əm-ən] def’ lyd-ef.
Ivan Peter-GEN beat-PART-POSS.3SG from is.afraid-PRS.3SG
Ivan is afraid that tomorrow Peter will beat him.

(21) [koka-ən kalas-en kod-əmo] legend-ənə
aunt-POSS.1SG-GEN tell-CONV leave-PART legend-POSS.3SG
the legend told by my aunt

(22) [məj-ən kup ə-ʃ] ajdeme
1SG-GEN swamp from-ABL help-PART man
the man whom I helped to get out of the swamp
The village where I need to go is not too far.

I need a key for the apartment where money is situated.

### 3.1.4. One example of a nominalizer relativizing the Subject position only is the English ing-form:

#### ENGLISH -ing

(25) [The actual writing] would be easy.

(26) Audience much amused by shots of a great huge fat man [trying to swim away with a helicopter after him] (G. Orwell, 1984)

3.1.5. Finally, if we consider markers of that are specializing in relativization of lower positions on the Accessibility Hierarchy such as: French dont that relativizes Possessor and some Oblique positions, a special relativizing strategy for the instrumental argument in Tukang-Besi (Donohue 1995) etc., we find no examples among them that function as nominalizers or complementizers.

### 3.2. Distinguishing between A and O relativizers

It is interesting that some markers that can relativize the subject and the direct object are restricted to intransitive subjects (S + O relativizers, not A-relativizers). This is the case in Komi, cf. (1), Udmurt (Besermjan dialect), Beng (a Mande language) and in some Australian languages:

#### BENG

(27) ɡ-ó [zrĩj kãsĩẽ-ẽ] lá.

1sg-ST corn fry-NZRbuy

I’ll buy some fried corn.

(28) [drẽ wó-ẽ] ó gẽj.

work do-NZR 3sg:HAB+ good

It’s good to work.

(29) [ŋ gà wí-ẽ] ó ʃí sè

1sg foot swell-NZR 3sg:PST 1sg ache

My swollen foot ached.

A ——— S ——— DO ——— IO ——— Obl ——— POSS ——— OComp

| E |

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4. Conclusion

As we have noticed, a huge number of languages have some relativization marker that can function as a nominalizer. It is quite common that such a "nominalizing" relativization marker operates in a very wide domain on the Accessibility Hierarchy, like -əm- suffix in Mari.

If, however, such a relativizer in a given language functions in a restricted domain, i.e. relativizes only one or few positions of the Accessibility Hierarchy, this domain is not random: nominalizers must relativize S or DO position². Of course, this generalization needs to be explained. For the subject position the explanation could rely upon the definition of the subject as a privileged syntactic position; and for the direct object position, upon its closest semantic relation to the verb. We will try to develop such an explanation in our further research.

References


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² An apparent exception in Adygh is analyzed by Gerasimov & Lander (to appear).


Gerasimov, D. V., Lander, JU. A. to appear. “Reljativizacija pod maskoj nominalizacii i reljativnyj argument v adygejskom jazyke [Relativization under the guise of nominalization and the relative argument in Adyg]”.


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