

## Towards a semantics of Atchan relative clauses

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This project investigates the semantics of relative clause formation in Atchan (Kwa, Côte d’Ivoire). Atchan relative clauses have their syntactic heads on their left edges, usually followed by the particle *kě* REL:

- (1) a. [lo ka *kě* mē má ná lé] mē má ná ndu  
DEF time REL 1SG FUT sleep PART 1SG FUT drink water  
‘Before I go to sleep, I will drink water.’  
b. [gba *kě* a we] *é* ɲwa  
dog REL 3SG.INAN bark.PFV 3SG.PFV run  
‘The dog that barked ran away.’

Although these clauses at first appear externally-headed, I propose that they are actually internally-headed (i.e., left-headed IHRCs in the typology of Hiraiwa et al. 2017); a head-internal analysis is consistent with relative clauses in neighboring Gbe and Gur languages (Aboh 2005, Hiraiwa 2005 et seq.). In Atchan, evidence for internally-headed relative clauses comes from topicalization: an item from within the relative clause can be topicalized and surface to the left of the relative-clause-head:

- (2) (\*mɔja) mē p<sup>h</sup>i dja [(mɔja) ka *kě* a kã mē hwã]  
(Moya) 1SG laugh (Moya) time REL 3SG.INAN tell 1SG story  
‘When Moya told me a story, I laughed.’

Note that this topicalization is internal to the relative clause, i.e., the topic is not attaching to the matrix clause. On the assumption that this topicalization is clause-bounded, the linear order of topic and head suggests that the head must, too, be contained within the relative clause.

In this talk, I explore possible semantic analyses of Atchan internally-headed relative clauses. Accounts of the semantics of IHRCs generally can be split into three types: accounts that posit full covert movement of the internal head to a relative-clause-external position at LF (Cole 1987, Lefebvre & Muysken 1988, a.o.); ones that posit partial covert movement of the internal head into the periphery of the relative clause (Williamson 1987, Culy 1990, Bonneau 1992, a.o.); and E-type approaches that do not involve long binding of the head, with no covert movement of the head itself (Basilico 1996, Watanabe 2002, Hanink 2020).

At first blush, Atchan relative clauses might appear to be an overt manifestation of the partial-movement approach: the head clearly overtly surfaces in the clause’s left edge. However, I suggest that this approach cannot work for all Atchan relative clauses. On a partial-movement approach, the landing site of the head is where predicate abstraction occurs. In Atchan topic-less relative clauses (1), such a view might be plausible. However, this account does not straightforwardly extend to relative clauses with peripheral topics (2). On the standard assumption that topics semantically associate with a proposition-type element (Reinhart 1981, a.o.), abstraction over the relative head cannot occur in the head’s overt syntactic position, lest the derivation result in a type mismatch.

Time permitting, this talk will also touch on other topics related to the semantics of Atchan relative clauses, including the (lack of an) Indefiniteness Restriction (Williamson 1987) in Atchan. While IHRC heads in many languages must be indefinite, Atchan RC heads can occur with the post-nominal demonstrative *lókõ*:

- (3) [ɔje lókõ *kě* mē mpɔ jí] e-p<sup>h</sup>i dja  
girl DEM REL 1SG give.PFV thing PROG-laugh  
‘The girl who I gave a gift to laughs.’

I explore the extent to which other accounts of definite heads in IHRCs (Hanink 2020) can be extended to Atchan.