Syntax

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Relavivization Accessibility

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This essay will touch upon the accessibility of relativization (also abbreviated to RA) of NPs in a number of languages and the way in which constraints, with which relativization strategies must comply, can be defined in these languages.

When trying to generalise the patterns observed when studying relativization accessibility, the two hierarchies below have been devised (Hengeveld, 2020b, p. 37, p. 38). The first based on syntactic functions, the latter based on semantic features. Using either one of these hierarchies should follow from a decision on whether RA is determined based on syntactic or semantic constraints. From this, it could also be inferred that, were one to observe a contradiction to either one of these hierarchies, this decision could be made based on this evidence.

Subject ⊂ Object ⊂ Indirect object ⊂ Oblique ⊂ Possessor

Agent ⊂ Patient ⊂ Recipient ⊂ Oblique ⊂ Possessor

Based on collected data (Hengeveld, 2020a), it is clear that most of the featured languages adhere to the hierarchies. Upon further analysis however, additional data shows that not all languages adhere to the hierarchies mentioned above. A possible example of these languages, Hinuq (Doyle, 2020), shows a discrepancy when it comes to RA based on syntactic functions. In Hinuq, RA based on syntactic function shows a pattern as illustrated in table . While NPs with both Oblique and Possessive function can be relativized—relativization of the former is illustrated in example 1—NPs that function as an Indirect Object are not relativisable. Using the less strict accessibility hierarchy (Hengeveld, 2020c, p. 56), which only distinguishes between Subject, Onject (not relevant in the case of ergative languages like Hinuq) and anything else, Hinuq would not be an example of possible violation.

	Sub	*Obj*	*Ind.Obj*	*Obl*	*Poss*
Hinuq	+	*not relevant*	-	+	+

Table 1: Relativization accessibility for NPs with certain Syntactic functions in Hinuq

(1) [coy ∅ b-icǐ-yo goìa] aže cěq-i goì
eagle(III) SPR III-sit-ICVB be.PTCP tree forrest-IN be
'The tree where the eagle is sitting stands in the forest'
(Forker, 2013, p. 476)

Another possible example of a language which is in violation with one of the two hierarchies is Hup. Hup's semantic RA properties show a clear hierarchical divergence when it comes to the relativization of Recipient NPs. This is illustrated in table . Recipient NPs can not be relativized, but Oblique and Possessive NPs can. These properties also violate the semantic constraint hierarchy defined in the lecture slides (Hengeveld, 2020c, p. 55). This inability of Recipients to be relativized can not be explained syntactically, for no syntactic function maps directly on the function of Recipient. As such, this constraint on RA in Hup can only be explained semantically.

	Ag	*Pat*	*Rec*	*Obl*	*Poss*
Hup	+	+	-	+	+

Table 2: Relativization accessibility for NPs with certain semantic functions in Hup

Until this point, the constraints by which RA is detirmined in Hinuq and Hup has not been labelled formally. Taking into account the constraint categories defined in the lecture slides (Hengeveld, 2020c), It is clear that in the case of Hinuq the constraints at play are syntactic functional constraints and in the case of Hup these are semantic functional constraints. While the presented data might not be able to provide a definite answer for the question whether RA is constrained based on syntax or semantics, it does show us which broader type of constraint is involved in determining RA. For both languages, it is true that RA is determined based on functional constraints, whether they are syntactic or semantic.

References

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