

Focus and relativization: Head-final relatives in Thompson Salish

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This paper presents previously unreported data on relatively rare head-final relatives in Thompson River Salish. I show that head-final relatives are used in discourse contexts where narrow focus falls on the relative clause itself, excluding the final head noun. As a result, this is the first report of narrow focus marking within a nominal domain in Salishan; previous accounts of focus marking in Salish have observed that the focus is always associated with the matrix predicate. While focus marking in both the nominal and predicate domain can be characterized as following a linear FOCUS >> BACKGROUND order, focus sensitive expressions (*only*) cannot associate with in situ nominals. This suggests that there are two focus marking strategies at work in the language: a syntactic strategy (focus=predicate), and a prosodic one (left alignment). Only the former is relevant for truth-conditional uses of focus (e.g. association with *only*).

1 Introduction

Why do we use relative clauses? Pragmatically, restrictive relative clauses provide a more specific referent relative to some discourse alternative (e.g. Weinert 2004; see also Wiltschko, this volume, on descriptive relative clauses, which cannot serve this function). As Downing and Mtenje (2011) observe, this satisfies common definitions for focus (e.g. Rooth 1992). Processing studies have shown that nominal modifiers, including relative clauses, are inherently related to focus (Sedivy et al. 1999, cited in Downing & Mtenje 2011, on modifiers and contrastive focus; Ni et al. 1996, Liversedge 2002 on the focus sensitive expression *only* facilitating relative clause processing). It is from this information structure perspective that I wish to pursue the distinction between head-initial and head-final relative clauses in N̓eʔkepmxcín (Thompson River Salish).

In this paper I have two modest goals. The first is to provide some examples of (relatively rare) head-final relatives in N̓eʔkepmxcín, from recent original fieldwork. The second goal is to think about what factors condition the use of head-initial versus head-final relatives. I shall suggest that the variation is related to focus. When focus falls on the entire noun phrase containing the

relative clause, head-initial relatives are used. However, when narrow focus falls on the relative clause itself, excluding the head noun, head-final relative clauses may be used. The effect is to linearize FOCUS before BACKGROUND, parallel to previous focusing strategies observed in N̄eʔkepmxcín. However, this focus marking occurs inside the nominal domain, whereas previous work on Salishan has described the focus system as purely predicative (Kroeber 1997, Koch 2008, Koch & Zimmermann 2010; Davis 2007 for St'át'imcets, Benner 2006 for Sencóthen, Davis & Saunders 1978, Beck 1997 on Nuxalk (Bella Coola)).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews previous work on N̄eʔkepmxcín relative clauses, and introduces new data on head-final relatives. Section 3 examines the broader contexts in which head-final relatives arise, with specific reference to focus marking in N̄eʔkepmxcín. Section 4 concludes.

2 Relative clauses in Thompson

N̄eʔkepmxcín is an endangered Northern Interior Salish language. The data in this paper come from original fieldwork with two speakers of the Lytton (*ʔ'q'əmcín*) dialect. Like all Salish languages, N̄eʔkepmxcín is predicate initial (Thompson & Thompson 1992, Kroeber 1997, 1999, Koch 2008, to appear).

There are three types of relative clauses: head-initial and headless relative clauses are quite common, while head-final relatives are relatively rare.¹ Paul Kroeber's (1997, 1999) excellent account of the morpho-syntax of relative clauses treats head-initial and headless relatives in detail. The basic form for head-initial relative clauses is shown in (1a): a determiner precedes the head NP, while a second determiner precedes the relative clause itself. The head NP and relative clause are joined by the LINK proclitic *t* (what Kroeber calls the "attributive" marker). A head-initial relative is shown in (1b), and the structure that I am assuming in (1c). This follows previous work by Kroeber (1997, 1999), Davis (2004), Koch (2006), and most recently Davis (2010), which argues for a matching analysis of relative clauses in both St'át'imcets (Lillooet) and N̄eʔkepmxcín Salish. Under this account, the head NP₁ is generated external to the relative clause, while fronting of a relative-clause internal DP generates the second determiner that precedes the relative clause itself. The relative clause internal NP₂ is deleted under matching with the head NP₁ (Sauerland 2004, Hulsey and Sauerland 2006), shown by strikethrough.

¹ I don't discuss locative relatives here, a variant of the head-initial and headless varieties. See Kroeber 1997, 1999, and Koch 2008b.

- (1) a. Head-initial relative clause template:
 DET NP LINK DET RELATIVE CLAUSE
- b. e=cítx^w t=ǰ=s=cuw-éǰx^w=s ǰ=Jóhn²
 DET=house LINK=DET=NOM=build-house=3PoCl DET=John
 ‘the house which John built’
- c. [DP e=[NP [NP₁ cítx^w] [CP t=[DP ǰ=~~NP2~~]; s=cuw-éǰx^w=s ǰ=Jóhn t_i]
 DET= house LINK=DET=NOM=build-house=3PoCl D=John t_i
 ‘the house which John built’

The basic form for headless relatives is shown in (2a), while (2b) shows a sentence containing a headless relative DP. Inside the DP containing the relative, there is no overt NP corresponding to the noun ‘question’ in the English translation. The link marker and second determiner are also not used, presumably due to a morphological restriction preventing the linear cooccurrence of two determiners (Davis’s 2010 *Double Determiner Filter*).

- (2) a. Headless relative clause template:
 DET RELATIVE CLAUSE
- b. sew-ín’-t-iy-e t=[DP k=s=cúw=kt x^wúy’].
 ask-RPT-TR-1PL.O-2SG.IMP OBL=DET_{IRL}=NOM=work=1pl.PoCl FUT
 ‘Ask us (some questions) that we’re going to work on.’

On the head-final/head-initial distinction, Kroeber observes that “the relative clause normally follows its head” (1997: 385). Head-final relative clauses are much less common; in fact, Kroeber provides only a single case of a Thompson head-final relative (the intransitive stative *ʔescaʕ* shown in 3), which he suggests may not be a relative clause at all, but some sort of adjectival

² See Thompson and Thompson (1992, 1996), Kroeber 1997, Koch 2008, for keys to the orthography and further details on glossed morphemes. ‘-’ marks an affix, and ‘=’ a clitic; acute stress marks word-level stress. Abbreviations used in glosses are: 1,2,3 = 1st, 2nd, 3rd person, AUG = augmentative reduplicant, BG = background, CLEFT = cleft predicate, CnCl = conjunctive subject clitic, C(OMP) = complementizer, DEM = demonstrative, D(ET) = determiner, DP = determiner phrase, FOC = focus, FUT = future, IM = immediate (intransitive), IMP = imperative, IMPF = imperfective, InCl = indicative subject clitic, INTR(ANS) = intransitive, IRL = irrealis, LINK = link marker, LOC = locative, MDL = middle (intransitive), NEG = negation, NOM = nominalizer, NP = noun phrase, O(BJ) = object, OBL = oblique, PL = plural, PoCl = possessive subject clitic, Q = yes/no question, RC = relative clause, RFM = reaffirmative, RPT = repetitive, SG = singular, STAT = stative, S(UBJ) = subject, TR(ANS) = transitive, TS = transitive suffix, VP = verb phrase.

In (12), the wh-question *swet* ‘who’ targets a narrow subject focus. Since predicates are always initial in Thompson Salish matrix clauses (Koch to appear), and DPs are not predicates, B’s reply uses a cleft predicate *c’e* to mark the focus on the DP *Sam*. The cleft structure thus maintains a predicate-initial form, and also the generalization that the predicate (here the cleft VP containing the cleft predicate *c’e* and the focused subject DP *Sam*) is marked with a FOCUS feature. BACKGROUND information is in a cleft remnant clause following the focus (see Koch 2008, 2008b for discussion). The generalization for focus marking is thus a syntactic one: the focus is (part of) the matrix predicate (here, VP).

(12) Subject DP focus after a wh-question: DP cleft

- a. *swét=meǀ=xeʔ k=xáǀʔ -m u=cíʔ u=ǀe=syép ...*
 who=indeed=DEM C=climb-MDL to=there to=DET=tree
 ‘Who climbed the tree (to get the ball that was stuck there)?’
- b. [_{VP} *c’é he=Sám*]_{FOCUS} [_{u=cíʔ e=xáǀʔ -m}]_{BACKGROUND}.
 CLEFT DET=Sam to-there COMP=climb-MDL
 ‘It was [Sam]_{FOCUS} [that climbed (the tree) there]_{BACKGROUND}.’ [761gPM]

A second common diagnostic for focus is a contrastive configuration where two symmetrical phrases, differing in one element (the focus), stand in opposition (e.g. Rochemont 1986, Rooth 1992, Féry & Samek-Lodovici 2006). In (13), speaker B contrasts the subject *Patricia* with the subject *Flora* in speaker A’s yes/no question. This subject DP focus is marked via clefting, like in (12). (Note that the contrastive symmetry is not under syntactic identity, since A uses an auxiliary/verb-initial form, while B uses a subject DP cleft. Rather, the symmetry is on the level of focus/background structure.)

(13) Subject DP focus in a contrastive context: DP cleft

- a. *ʔéx=nʔ=meǀ=xeʔ=neʔ ǀpʔ-əím e=Flóra*
 IMPF=Q=indeed=DEM=there hang-MDL DET=Flora
t=e=x^weʔpít-s u=cíʔe, k’éx-es.
 OBL=DET=clothes-3POSS to=there, dry-TRANS.3OBJ.3TS
 ‘Did Flora hang up some clothes, to dry?’ [819kFE]
- b. *téʔe. [_{VP} *c’é e=Patricia*]_{FOCUS}*
 NEG. CLEFT DET=Patricia
[e=ʔéx k’éx-es e=stákn-s.]_{BACKGROUND}
 COMP=IMPF dry-TRANS.3OBJ.3TS DET=sock-3POSS
 ‘No. It’s [Patricia]_{FOCUS} that [is drying her socks]_{BACKGROUND}.’

While the focus marking system here is characterized as syntactic (a focus feature associates with the matrix predicate), there is also a linear phonological

effect: the focus is the first lexical information, while backgrounded information follows the focus. Thus, there is a general FOCUS >> BACKGROUND order (see Mithun 1987 on other North American languages with FOCUS >> BACKGROUND order; Ariel 2010: 209 for discussion).

Now let's look at some discourse contexts where head-final relatives are used. We'll use the same diagnostics for focus to see what effect there is on relative clauses. Example (14) is from a discourse describing two mice in a picture. The relevant contrast set for (14) is {the mouse that is standing on the ground, the mouse that is sitting on the boxes}.

(14) Wh-question targeting narrow focus on a relative clause:

- a. hén' kə=ses-q'wíλ' .
 which COMP=STAT-smile
 'Which (one) is smiling?'
- b. c'é=ne? [DP e=[RC ?éx ?estéix n=e=λ' əp']_{FOC}
 CLEFT=there DET=IMPF stand in=D=ground
 t=e=[NP k'wətn'í?]_{BG}] [e=?éx ?es-q'wíλ']_{BACKGROUND}
 LINK=DET=mouse COMP=IMPF STAT-smile
 'It's the [mouse]_{BG} that [RC is standing on the ground]_{FOC} [that is smiling]_{BG}.'
 (more literally: 'It's the [RC is standing on the ground]_{FOC} [mouse]_{BG} [that is smiling]_{BG}') [631eFE]

In (14), speaker A asks which mouse is smiling. *Mouse* is backgrounded in the prior discourse context – in fact, the speaker does not pronounce it all. The wh-word *hen'* targets the focus, a nominal modifier, in this case a relative clause. In speaker B's answer, we see that, when the narrow focus falls on the relative clause (RC) itself, excluding the head, a head-final relative is employed. In addition, the entire DP containing the relative clause is clefted. The effect is that the focused relative clause is the leftmost lexical content of the utterance, while all backgrounded information, including the head NP and the final cleft clause, follows the focus in the linear string. This head-final relative clause, notably, also violates the Same Side Filter (Ross 1973), which mitigates against relative clauses whose main predicate (here the verb 'stand') is separated by additional lexical material from the head NP modified by the relative clause.

Note that the syntactic focus marking that I have provided in the bracketing in (14) is rather different from that in (11-13), since it is associated with the relative clause (RC), and not with the matrix cleft-VP predicate. We may well wonder if this is truly grammatical focus marking, or just pragmatically inferred, given that Koch and Zimmermann (2010) showed that the truth conditional operator 'only' must associate with the focused predicate. An alternative, which maintains the focus=predicate generalization, is to focus mark

the entire cleft predicate as before, but mark ‘mouse’ as backgrounded within this. Here we may follow Aloni and van Rooy (2002: 26), who assume that “a which-phrase gives rise to the presupposition that the set over which it ranges is already given as a topic,” where topics are backgrounded. In (14), ‘mouse’ is the set being ranged over by the *hen*’ phrase. Under this analysis, the FOCUS and BACKGROUND marking would look as in (14’):

- (14) b. [_{VP} c’é=ne? [_{DP} e=[_{RC} ?éx ?estéix n=e=λ’ əp’] t=e=[_{NP} k’w’etn’í?]_{BG}]_{FOC}
 CLEFT=there DET=IMPF stand in=D=ground LINK=DET=mouse
 [e=?éx ?es-q’w’íλ’]_{BACKGROUND}
 COMP=IMPF STAT-smile
 ‘It’s [the [mouse]_{BG} that [_{RC} is standing on the ground]]_{FOC} [that is smiling]_{BG}.’
 (more literally: ‘It’s [the [_{RC} is standing on the ground] [mouse]_{BG}]_{FOC} [that is smiling]_{BG}’) [_{631eFE}]

I won’t mark the focus/background distinction as in (14’) in the rest of this section; rather, I’ll stick to the marking in (14), to illustrate what we (at least pragmatically) understand to be the narrow focus in these examples: the relative clause itself. Just bear in mind that this pragmatic marking may not correspond to a formal syntactic FOCUS or BACKGROUND feature.

Let’s turn to another discourse that produces a head-final relative. Example (15) comes from a context in which various cuts of meat at a butcher’s shop are under discussion. Relevant discourse alternatives for (15) are the set {the meat that is lying on the table, the meat that is hanging}.

(15) Contrastive context targeting narrow focus on a relative clause:

- a. e=Róss, ník’-es=n’=xe?e e=smíyc ne? n=e=típl.
 DET=Ross, cut-TR.3O.3TS=Q=DEM DET=meat there in=DET=table
 ‘Is Ross cutting the meat that is on the table?’ [_{840fE841cPM}]
 b. té?e. c’é=ne? [_{DP} e=[_{RC} ?es-ǀwáqs]_{FOCUS} t=e=[_{NP} smíyc]_{BG}]
 NEG. CLEFT=DEM DET=STAT-hang LINK=DET=meat
 [e=?éx ník’-es]_{BACKGROUND}
 COMP=IMPF cut-TR.3O.3TS
 ‘No. It’s [the meat]_{BG} [_{RC} that’s hanging]_{FOC} [that he’s cutting]_{BG}.’
 (more literally: ‘It’s the [_{RC} hanging]_{FOC} [meat]_{BG} [that he’s cutting]_{BG}’)

In (15), speaker A uses a yes/no question to ask if Ross is cutting the meat that is on the table. The head NP *smíyc* ‘meat’ is backgrounded in the context, being overtly given in A’s question. Parallel to (13), speaker B employs corrective focus to say that it is the meat that is hanging that Ross is cutting (not

the meat on the table). This gives rise to narrow focus on the relative clause itself. The target structure once again employs a head-final relative, and again the whole DP containing the relative clause is clefted. Once more the effect is for narrowly focused information to linearly precede all backgrounded information.

The final example I will look at is the relative clause from (10). Speakers were provided the discourse context in (16), which they then translated into N̄eʔkepmxcín. In the target clause, *then he ate some huckleberries that weren't even ripe*, the head noun *huckleberries* is backgrounded from the previous sentence, while the relative clause *that weren't even ripe* is not. This contrasts huckleberries that are ripe (which we typically eat) with huckleberries that are not ripe.

(16) CONTEXT: Tom picked and ate some huckleberries. He was very hungry though, so then he ate some huckleberries that weren't even ripe. [742fFE]

(17) ʔe s=[_{VP} ʔúpi-s e=[_{RC} tetéʔ
 and NOM=eat-TRANS.3OBJ.3TS DET=NEG
 k=s=q'wíy-t=s=iʔ]_{FOCUS2} [t=e=[_{NP} c'əl-c'ále]_{BG}]_{FOCUS1}
 C=NOM=ripe-IM=3PoCI=yet LINK=DET=AUG-huckleberry
 'And then he [ate the [huckleberries]_{BG} that [weren't yet ripe]_{FOC2}]_{FOC1}.'

In (17), the final utterance of this context is shown in N̄eʔkepmxcín. Consistent with the previously observed pattern, the speaker produces a head-final relative, such that the focused relative clause precedes the backgrounded head NP *c'əlc'ále*. Unlike the cases in (14) and (15), however, the entire DP containing the relative clause is not clefted here. In fact, it appears in a verb-initial utterance, which marks a focus on the VP (11). Conceivably, this utterance thus contains two foci, FOCUS1 and FOCUS2 as I have indicated: the speaker firstly marks the VP (that Tom *ate the huckleberries that weren't ripe*) as focused new information, and in addition marks the relative clause as contrastively focused (i.e. unripe versus ripe huckleberries) (see Koch & Zimmermann 2010, Koch 2011, on focus marking within a speaker's discourse turn). The use of the head-final relative here may thus signal focus marking within the in situ nominal argument (see Rooth 1992 on the focus operator attaching to the N' level of syntax in "farmer" sentences). This again raises the question of whether with FOCUS2 we are dealing with a different sort of focus marking than the strictly matrix VP-oriented focus marking of FOCUS1 and in (11-13).

4 Conclusion

Previous work on focus in Thompson and other Salish languages has shown that focus is associated with the matrix predicate (see 11-13). Head-final relatives

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