

Relative clauses, or clause-sized nominalizations?

A consideration of Blackfoot

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In this paper I argue that Blackfoot (Algonquian) relative clauses are not nominalizations. I show that relative clauses are not agent nominalizations based on their morphology and the availability of non-agentive relative clauses. I show that relative clauses are not nominalized clauses based on the impossibility of possession and adjectival modification. After situating Blackfoot relative clauses in the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977), I present a preliminary proposal that Blackfoot relative clauses are full CPs. I hypothesize that these constructions have a nominal superstructure that always contains a (possibly null) N projection, because they are always countable.

1 Introduction

In Blackfoot, a Plains Algonquian language spoken in Alberta and Montana, the verbal complex in a relative clause realizes both verbal and nominal functional categories. Consider the following example, in which the imperfective verbal stem *áyo'kaa* 'to sleep' bears the nominal inflectional suffix *-iksi* (1).

- (1) Om -**i****k**s**i** á- yo'kaa -**i****k**s**i**
DEM -AN.PL IMPF- sleep -AN.PL
'Those sleeping ones.'¹
- (Frantz 2009:114)

1 Abbreviations used in this paper: 1 – first person; 3 – third person; 3S – third person singular agreement; 3PL – third person plural agreement; 4S – fourth (minor third) person agreement; AN.SG – animate singular; AN.PL – animate plural; BEN – benefactive; DEM – demonstrative; DIR – direct; FUT – future; IMPER – imperative; IMPF – imperfective (Dunham 2007); IN.SG – inanimate singular; IN.PL – inanimate plural; INT – intensifier; INTR – intransitive; INVS – invisible; MOD – modal; NEG – negation; NMZ – nominalizer; OBV.SG – obviative singular; PERF – perfective; PL – plural agreement; POSS – possessive; PRO – pronoun; PROX.SG – proximate singular; THM – theme.

Frantz (2009) analyzes this type of construction as a nominalization; that is, the verbal stem is reclassified and the resulting nominal bears the predicted nominal inflection. Relative clauses are constructed using this type of nominalization.

Based on the morphological composition of relative clauses, non-agentive constructions, and the unavailability of both possessive constructions and adjectival modification, I propose that this analysis does not hold for relative clauses. While there are deverbal nouns in Blackfoot, I argue that relative clauses are *not* deverbal, but are full CPs with a nominal super-structure. I propose that the nominal super-structure is the source of the nominal inflection on the verbal stem, which I consider to be due to concord.

1.1 Outline of this paper

This paper is organized as follows. In §2 I present evidence that Blackfoot relative clauses are not nominalizations. In §3 I consider Blackfoot relative clauses in light of the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie 1977). In §4 I develop a preliminary proposal that Blackfoot relative clauses are full CPs, and in §5 I consider the structural nature of these constructions. I conclude in §6.

2 Blackfoot relative clauses are not nominalizations

In this section I argue that Blackfoot relative clauses are not nominalizations. I begin with a background consideration of Blackfoot roots, which are not category-neutral (Armoskaite 2010). I return to Blackfoot relative clauses in the subsequent sections, first by demonstrating that they are not agent nominalizations (§2.2). I then present evidence that relative clauses are not nominalized clauses (§2.3).

2.1 Blackfoot roots are not category-neutral

Armoskaite (2010) shows that Blackfoot roots bear categorial information (nominal and verbal). The following example is instructive: note that nominal roots are incompatible with transitivity suffixes, and verbal roots are incompatible with plural suffixes. Armoskaite demonstrates that this pattern holds across a large number of roots.

- (2) NOMINAL ROOT *KSÁÁHKO* 'LAND'
- a. PLURALIZATION
Ksááhko **-istsi**
 $\sqrt{\text{land}}$ **-IN.PL**
 'Lands' (Frantz & Russell 1995:118)
- b. TRANSITIVITY SUFFIX

*Oma	á-	ipott	-aa	-ø	ksááhko	-aa
DET	IMPF-	fly	-INTR	-NMZ	$\sqrt{\text{land}}$	-INTR

 Intended: 'The airplane landed.' (Armoskaite 2010:29)
- (3) VERBAL ROOT *OTTAK* 'GIVE A DRINK'
- a. PLURALIZATION

*Ottak	-iksi
$\sqrt{\text{give.a.drink}}$	-AN.PL

 Intended: 'Bartenders' (Armoskaite 2010:30)
- b. TRANSITIVITY SUFFIX

Áak-	ottak	-i	-wa
FUT-	$\sqrt{\text{give.a.drink}}$	-INTR	-3s

 'He will serve drinks.' (Frantz & Russell 1995:145)

Thus we see that nominal *phi*-feature morphemes such as animate plural *-iksi* cannot select verbal elements (3a) (see also Frantz 2009, Johansson 2007). While deverbal nouns do exist in Blackfoot, they exhibit different syntactic behaviour than relative clauses, which I argue are not deverbal stems.

In addition, there is no evidence of derivational nominalizing morphology in a Blackfoot relative clause.² Compare this with the overt morphology in the following event nominalization³ of the verb 'to bake' (Grimshaw 1990) (4).

- (4) EVENT NOMINALIZATION

Nit-	ihkiitaa	-n	-istsi
1	bake	-NMZ	-IN.PL

 'My baked goods.' (Frantz 2009:116)

However, it is important to recognize that null nominalizations of *verbal stems*, i.e. verbal roots that bear transitivity suffixes, appear to be possible in

2 Compare Yine (Arawakan), in which the primary relative clause strategy is overt nominalization of a clause, with different morphology indicating the relativization of different grammatical roles (Hanson, in prep).

3 In the terminology of Frantz (2009) this is an abstract nominalization.

Blackfoot; though I will argue that not all of the verbal stems that appear to function as nouns are truly nouns, but pattern with relative clauses (5).

(5) NULL NOMINALIZATION OF BLACKFOOT VERBAL STEM

Á-	ottak	-i	-ø	-iksi	
IMPF-	√give.a.drink	-INTR	-NMZ	AN.PL	
	'Bartenders'				(Frantz & Russell 1995:12)

The question for us here will be how we can distinguish between a deverbal stem and a (still-)verbal stem, which I will pursue in the next sections.

2.2 Relative clauses are not agent nominalizations

Based on a survey of 78 languages, Baker & Vinokurova (2009) propose that agent nominalizations (such as *sing-er* in English) are nominalizations of big V, and therefore lack clausal functional categories. A resulting prediction is that a number of functional phrases are not projected within agent nominalizations, such as AdvP (assuming that AdvP is not Merged within VP, cf. Cinque 1999), Neg P (Pollock 1989, Zanuttini 1997), Comp/epistemic modals (Bliss & Ritter 2008, Cinque 1999, Speas 2004), and Tense.

Johansson (2010) shows that all clausal functional categories are available in relative clauses, with no known exceptions (6).⁴

- (6) a. ADVP
- | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------|---------------|------------|-----|--------|
| Nit- | ii- | ino | -aa | -wa | ann | -wa |
| 1- | ?- | see | -DIR | -3S | DEM | -AN.SG |
| á- | sstsim- | | yo'kaa | -wa | | |
| IMPF- | reluctant- | sleep | -AN.SG | | | |
- 'I saw that one that doesn't want to sleep.'⁵
- b. NEGP
- | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|--------------|-------|--------|---------------|
| Ann | -wa | maat- | á- | yo'kaa | -wa |
| DEM | -AN.SG | NEG- | IMPF- | √sleep | -AN.SG |
- 'That one who is not sleeping.'

4 Unless a citation is given, all of the following examples come from my own fieldwork.

5 Verbal and nominal inflectional morphemes are ambiguous in the singular. I analyze these morphemes as nominal based on the contexts in which the forms can appear, and the translations/comments of my consultants. Where possible, I provide plural forms.

- c. COMP
 Om -iksi **ná-** sinoi'sskip **-iksi**
 DEM -AN.PL MOD- kiss **-AN.PL**
 n- ínsst -yi n- i's -aawa
 1- older.sister -OBV.SG 1- older.brother-PRO
 'Those ones that kissed my sister are my brothers.'
- d. TENSE
 Ann -wa **áak-** yo'kaa **-wa**
 DEM -AN.SG FUT- sleep **-AN.SG**
 'That one who will sleep.'

Based on this evidence, I draw the interim conclusion that relative clauses are not agent nominalizations. This conclusion is supported by the availability of non-agentive relative clauses. While we predict that non-agentive *-er* nominalizations are at best rare in any language (consider the English unaccusative *-er* nominal, "That turkey is a good broiler." cf. Lieber (2004)), there is an additional language-specific factor to consider in this case. Blackfoot places a restriction on external arguments, which must be both grammatically and logically animate. This excludes constructions like (7), the grammatical form of which is, 'Those branches were cut off *by means of* that knife' (Frantz 2009).

- (7) *Oma istoánaikahksínima annistsi ikkstsíksiistsi.
 That knife cut off those branches. (Frantz 2009:46)

However, relative clauses can contain unaccusative verbs and be headed by grammatically and logically inanimate nouns (8).

- (8) Om -istsi áak- omatap-**ikokoto**-istsi aohkíí -yi -aawa
 DEM -IN.PL FUT start- **freeze** -AN.PL water -3PL -PRO
 'Those ones (inanimate) that are starting to freeze are water.'

I take the above evidence as sufficient to conclude that Blackfoot relative clauses are not agent nominalizations. However, there is another possibility: they could be nominalized clauses. I address this possibility in the next sub-section.

2.3 Relative clauses cannot be possessed or modified by adjectives

As mentioned above, there are deverbal nouns in Blackfoot which function like nouns in the grammar. These deverbal nouns are listed as nouns in the dictionary (9) and can be possessed and modified by adjectives (10).

(9) DICTIONARY ENTRY FOR 'WAGON'

*áínaka'si**nan*; wagon, lit: it rolls

(Frantz & Russell 1995:7)

- (10) a. POSSESSION
Nit- áínaka'si **-im** -wa
1- wagon **-POSS** -AN.SG
 'My wagon.'
- b. ADJECTIVAL MODIFICATION
Pok- áínaka'si **-iksi**
little- wagon **-AN.PL**
 'Little wagons.'

In contrast, relative clauses can be neither possessed nor modified by adjectives, which I demonstrate in the next two sub-sections.

2.3.1 *Relative clauses cannot be possessed*

When used in a relative clause, verbs like 'cook' (11) cannot be possessed. In (12a) I show that it is ungrammatical to possess the verbal stem; but in (12b) a nominal form 'cooking woman' is possessed without issue.

(11) DICTIONARY ENTRY FOR 'COOK'

*ooyo'si**vai*; prepare food for a meal, cook

(Frantz & Russell 1995:170)

- (12) a. POSSESSION
 * **Nit-** á- ooyo'si **-im** -wa
1- IMPF- cook **-POSS** -AN.SG
 'My cook.'
- b. POSSESSION OF A NOMINAL FORM
Nit- á- ooyo'si **-aakíí** **-im** -wa
1 IMPF- cook **-woman** **-POSS** -AN.SG
 'My cook.'

However, note that the word for 'bartender' is listed as a noun in the dictionary (13); but only one of my consultants found possession of this noun to be grammatical (14). One possible interpretation of this finding is that the transition from verbal stem to nominal stem is gradual, and that deverbal nouns in the Blackfoot lexicon began their lives as relative clauses. This, we might say,

is one form that is in transition.

(13) DICTIONARY ENTRY FOR 'BARTENDER'

áóttaki

nan; bartender; lit: one who serves drinks (Frantz & Russell 1995:12)

(14) POSSESSION

? / *	Nit-	á-	ottaki	-im	-wa
1	IMPF		give.a.drink	-POSS	-AN.SG
'My bartender.'					

2.3.2 *Relative clauses cannot be modified by adjectives*

Before considering adjectival modification in Blackfoot, some background is necessary. Blackfoot does not have a class of adjectives *per se*, but rather a set of attributive roots (cf. Armoskaite 2010, Frantz 2009, Frantz & Russell 1995). These roots are interpreted as adverbs when modifying verbal stems and as adjectives when modifying nominal stems.

(15) a. ADVERBIAL MODIFICATION

Ikkina-	í'poyi	-t
soft/slow-	speak	-IMPER
'Speak slowly/clearly!'		

b. ADJECTIVAL MODIFICATION

Ikkina-	i'ksisako	-istsi
soft/slow-	meat	-IN.PL
'Soft meats.'		

(Armoskaite 2010:26)

If relative clauses are nominalizations, the interpretation of an attributive should be ambiguous between an adverbial and an adjectival interpretation, as schematized below (16).

(16) a. ADVERBIAL INTERPRETATION

[Attributive + verbal complex] + nominalization

b. ADJECTIVAL INTERPRETATION

Attributive + [verbal complex + nominalization]

What we find, however, is that only the adverbial interpretation is available (18). To get an adjectival interpretation we need an overt nominal (19) This is evidence that Blackfoot relative clauses are not nominalized clauses.

(17) DICTIONARY ENTRY FOR 'SLEEP'

*yo'kaa**vai*; sleep

(Frantz & Russell 1995:270)

(18) ADVERBIAL MODIFICATION

Om -iksi omahk-á- yo'kaa -iksi n-oko's -aawa
 DEM -AN.PL big- IMPF- sleep -AN.PL 1-offspring -PRO

'Those big sleepers are my children.'

✓ Adverbial: They sleep a lot, during the day for example – habitual sleepers

✗ Adjectival: The sleepers are physically large

(19) ADJECTIVAL MODIFICATION

Om -iksi omahk-saahkómaapi -iksi á- yo'kaa -iksi
 DEM -AN.PL big- boy -AN.PL IMPF- sleep -AN.PL
 n- oko's -aawa
 1- offspring -pro

'Those (physically) big boys who are sleeping are my children.'

2.4 Summary

The findings in this section do not support an analysis of relative clauses as nominalizations. This is schematized in the following table.

Table 1. *Summary of nominalization findings*

DIAGNOSTIC	PREDICTION: AGENT NOMINALIZATION	PREDICTION: NOMINALIZED CLAUSE	FINDINGS
Clausal/functional morphology	✗	✓	✓
Non-agentive/ unaccusative	✗	✓	✓
Possession	✓	✓ / ?	✗
Adjectival modification	✓	✓	✗

3 Relativizing various grammatical roles

The Blackfoot construction under investigation in this paper is the primary relative clause strategy of the language, following Keenan and Comrie (1977). Their noun phrase accessibility hierarchy is given below (20).

(20) NOUN PHRASE ACCESSIBILITY HIERARCHY

Subj. > Dir. obj. > Indir. obj. > Oblique > Genitive > Obj. of comparison

A primary relative clause strategy must relativize subjects; but need not relativize any lower grammatical roles in the hierarchy. The strategy we are considering here can be used to relativize subjects and direct objects. The head noun is optional (21)

(21) RELATIVIZATION OF VARIOUS GRAMMATICAL ROLES

a. SUBJECT

Om -iksi (n-i's -iksi) á- yo'kaa -iksi
 DEM -AN.PL (1-older.brother -AN.PL) IMPF- sleep -AN.PL
 'Those ones/My older brothers that are sleeping.'

b. ANIMATE DIRECT OBJECT OF A TRANSITIVE VERB

Ann -yi ot- sinoi'sskip -aa -yi
 DEM -OBV.SG 3- kiss -DIR -OBV.SG
 'That one that he kissed.'

This strategy is possibly also used to relativize the secondary object of a ditransitive verb. Important to consider here is the fact that the following ditransitive verb is what Frantz (2009) refers to as a PARADITRANSITIVE verb. The direct object of a transitive verb is demoted to secondary object when an applicative argument (cf. Pylkkänen 2008) is added to the verb. This secondary object does not enter into an agreement relation with the verb; and note that the verbal complex in this relative clause construction does not agree in *phi*-features with the head noun as we expect; rather it agrees with the subject of the verb 'the boys'. The example given is also significantly degraded when the head noun is omitted, something that does not occur with the relativization of subjects and direct objects (22). More work is needed on the relativization of secondary objects in Blackfoot, but I leave open the possibility that this construction should receive the same analysis as those given above (21).

(22) RELATIVIZATION OF A SECONDARY OBJECT

Ann -**yi** -hka ?(napayín-yi -hka) ann -iksi
 DEM -**IN.SG** -INVS bread -IN.SG -INVS DEM -AN.PL
 saahkómaapi -**iksi** ná- ihkiit -o -yii -**iksi** -hka
 boy -**AN.PL** MOD- bake -BEN -DIR -**AN.PL** -INVS
 ann -yi w- iksisst -oaawa -yi niitá'p- yááhsii -wa
 DEM -OBV.SG 3- mother -PL -OBV.SG really- good -3S
 'The bread/?thing that the boys baked for their mother was delicious.'

Benefactive arguments and possessors are not available for relativization in Blackfoot. This sets this construction apart from similar constructions in related Algonquian languages. For example, possessors may be relativized in both Anishnaabemwin (Valentine 2001) and Fox (Goddard 1987).

Conservatively, Blackfoot can relativize subjects and direct objects using the primary relative clause strategy of marking a verbal complex with nominal agreement morphology.

(23) Noun phrase accessibility hierarchy (Blackfoot)

Subj. > **Dir. obj.** > *Indir. obj.* > *Oblique* > *Genitive* > *Obj. of comparison*

In the next sections I develop a preliminary proposal about the structure of this primary relative clause strategy.

4 Blackfoot relative clauses are full CPs

Evidence that relative clauses are full CPs comes from the Blackfoot system of obviation, which is used to distinguish between two animate third person arguments *within a single clause* (Bliss 2005, Frantz 2009). The more prominent argument in the clause is morphologically marked as proximate, while the less prominent argument is morphologically marked as obviative. This is exemplified below, where the agent, 'my son', is marked as proximate, while the patient of the verb 'your daughter' is marked as obviative (24).

(24) BLACKFOOT OBVIATION

Ik- waakomimm -yii -wa n- ohkó -**wa**
 INT- love -DIR -4S 1- son -**PROX.SG**
 k- itan -**yi**
 2- daughter -**OBV.SG**
 'My son (proximate) loves your daughter (obviative).'

(Frantz 2009:54, ex.1)

While obviation is obligatory in clauses where there are two animate third person arguments, it is not required where there is only one animate third person argument.⁶ I take this as evidence that relative clauses are full CPs, because proximate/obviative marking is decided within a relative clause. It is not possible to construct a transitive relative clause with two animate third person arguments in which both arguments are marked as proximate (25b). I hypothesize that this is because the head noun originates within the relative clause, and is raised out after obviation has been applied.⁷

(25) OBVIATION WITHIN A RELATIVE CLAUSE

- a. Nit- ik- waakomimm -aa -yini
 1- INT- love -DIR -4S
 ann **-yi** ot- sinoi'sskip -aa **-yi**
 DEM **-OBV.SG** 3- kiss -DIR **-OBV.SG**
 'I love the one that he kissed.'
- b. *Nit- ik- waakomimm -aa -wa
 1- INT- love -DIR -3S
 om **-wa** ot- sinoi'sskip -aa **-wa**
 DEM **-PROX.SG** 3- kiss -DIR **PROX.SG**
 Intended: 'I love the one that he kissed.'

The above examples warrant a bit more explanation before moving on. What they demonstrate is that the head of the relative clause forms a constituent with the relative clause CP, not with the matrix CP. This is schematized below. Note that (26a) and (26b) are representations of (25a) and (25b), respectively.

(26) RELATIVE CLAUSES ARE FULL CPS

- a. [_{MatrixC} NP_{1st person} VP [_{RelC} NP_{proximate} VP NP_{obviative}]]
- b. * [_{MatrixC} NP_{1st person} VP NP_{proximate} [_{RelC} NP_{proximate} VP]]

Note also that recursive relative clauses constitute separate domains of *phi*-feature agreement, which is consistent with my suggestion that every relative clause constitutes a new CP (27).

⁶ One exception to this pattern is possessed nouns, which are obviative (Frantz 2009).

⁷ See also Johansson (2011) for more discussion of a raising analysis of Blackfoot relative clauses.

(27) RECURSIVE RELATIVE CLAUSE *PHI*-FEATURE AGREEMENT

[Om **-iksi** ii- ohpommattoo -m **-iksi**
 DEM -AN.PL ?- buy -THM -AN.PL
 [ann **-istsi** -hka ónnikis **-istsi** ii- oka'pihtsii **-istsi**]]
 DEM -IN.PL -INVS milk -IN.PL ?- spoil -IN.PL
 ákaa- o'too -yi -aawa
 PERF- arrive -PL -PRO
 '[Those ones who bought [those (cartons of) milk that were spoiled]]
 arrived.'

With this structural hypothesis in mind, in the next section I consider whether it is possible to capture relative clauses with an overt head noun and free relatives with a single structure.

5 Two constructions, or one?

Blackfoot relative clauses appear to be CPs with a DP super-structure. Overt head nouns are optional, as shown below (28).

(28) OPTIONAL HEAD NOUN

Om -iksi (n- i's -iksi) á- yo'kaa -iksi
 DEM -AN.PL (1- older.brother -AN.PL) IMPF- sleep -AN.PL
 'Those ones (my older brothers) who are sleeping.'

It is possible that these two formulations represent different syntactic structures, with and without an NP projection. However, I propose that even free relatives contain a null head noun, because they are countable (29).

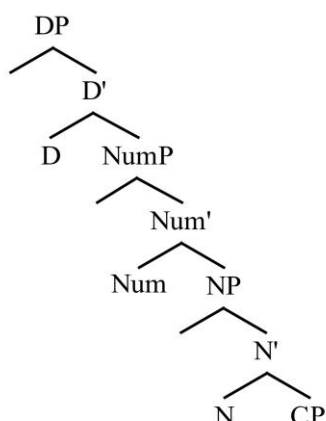
(29) COUNTABLE FREE RELATIVE

Om -iksi **naat- itapi** **-iksi** (aakííkoan-iksi)
 DEM -AN.PL **two- be.person** -AN.PL (girl -AN.PL)
 á- yo'kaa -iksi ann -wa
 IMPF- sleep -AN.PL DEM -PROX.SG
 n- ínsst -wa w- oko's -iksi
 1- older.sister -PROX.SG 3- offspring -AN.PL
 'Those two ones (girls) that are sleeping are my older sister's children.'

The assumption that even free relative clauses contain a null head noun raises an issue for the present analysis. Why is it that a free relative with an NP projection cannot be possessed or modified by adjective? A possible solution is that this is a morphological restriction: the morphology associated with both possession and adjectival modification is dependent. I assume that only an overt

noun can bear this morphology. If this assumption is correct, both headed and empty-headed relative clauses contain an N projection. This is sketched out below (30).

(30) PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF BLACKFOOT RELATIVE CLAUSES



6 Conclusions and future work

In this paper I have argued against an analysis of Blackfoot relative clauses as nominalizations based on the morphological composition of relative clauses, the availability of non-agentive constructions, the impossibility of possession and the impossibility of adjectival modification. I have proposed that Blackfoot relative clauses contain full CPs based on obviation and agreement facts.

I assume that nominal functional categories like Num can only be Merged above Ns. Following from this, I propose that all relative clauses contain N projections because there is evidence for Num: empty-headed relative clauses are countable. That is to say, empty-headed relative clauses bear nominal number inflection which I assume is in Num. However, further evidence is needed for the assumption that N is present whenever Num is. Further evidence is also needed for the assumption that null N stems cannot be possessed or adjectivally modified for morphological reasons: Is this restriction possibly syntactic?

In his work on similar relative clause constructions in Passamaquoddy (Eastern Algonquian), Bruening (2001) identifies these constructions as relative clauses on the basis of long-distance extraction and island effects. I leave the elicitation of this type of data to future work.

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