

RELATIVE CLAUSES IN SESOTHO¹

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1.0 In this study I propose to make a syntactical analysis of relative constructions in Sesotho. In spite of some grammars written on the language there appears to have been very little, if any, rigorous analysis done on relative sentences in Sesotho (cf. Doke and Mofokeng 1957, Guma 1971). This study is therefore a direct contribution to African Linguistic Scholarship as a whole. To general linguistic theory, language universals and language typology, however, the paper will have a useful but indirect contribution in the sense that it will provide 'ready-made', analyzed data for establishing certain universals. After all, if Comrie's message is accepted, "linguistics is about languages." (Comrie 1978 forum lectures - LSA at Univ. of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana). The pattern which my analysis will follow will be more or less based on the NP Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie 1977) (see appendix for an outline of this hierarchy). An attempt will be made to relativize on each of the possible syntactic positions in Sesotho and, perhaps most importantly, to show the role of the modified head noun in the matrix sentence. Needless to say, it is the role of the head noun that will shed light on the claims made by Keenan and Comrie in 1977.

2.0 Sesotho is a Bantu language spoken in Lesotho and other parts of southern Africa. Like all Bantu languages, Sesotho is characterized by the concordial system whereby the head noun or subject determines the phonological shapes of the agreement prefixes in the language. This can be exemplified by the following:

- (1) Lesaka la morena le letle le halehile
 Kraal(Subj) PossM Possr AdjM 'nice' SubjM fall-Perf

The beautiful kraal of the chief has collapsed.

Subj=Subject, PossM=Possessive Marker, AdjM=Adjective Marker,
 SubjM=Subject Marker, Perf=Perfective, Possr=Possessor,
 Obj=Object, etc.

In terms of word-order types Sesotho is a nominative/accusative language with an SVO word-order. Traces of SOV do occur in the language in those cases where the object of the verb is pronominal. Examples:

- (2) SVO: monna o ja nama
 Subj SubjM V_{tr} Obj
 The man eats meat

Bana ba tsamaile
 Subj SubjM V_{intr} -Perf
 The children have gone

- (3) SOV: Monna o a n-toma
 A SubjM Obj-V
 The man bites me

It should be noted that once (3) has a noun in the context, i.e. once a verb is followed by a noun as object without deleting clitic object, then it is an emphatic sentence. In other words, the object is emphasized.

- (3a) Morena o a mo shapa ngwana
 Subj SubjM Obj-M 'beat'-Pres 'child'-Obj

The chief beats the child (almost like he enjoys beating the child).

The "a" between the SubjP and Obj would also have to be deleted once the nominal object is placed after the verb without the object marker. Hence, it seems quite logical to claim the language is basically SVO in terms of word-order type.

3.0 Traditional grammars of Sesotho have always grouped relative clauses in Sesotho into two groups: relative clauses of direct relationship (RCD) and relative clauses of indirect relationship (RCI) (Doke and Mofokeng 1957). The difference lies mainly in the role played by the noun modified by the relative sentence in the relative clause itself. If the head noun is the subject of the relative verb, then we have an example of RCD. All other roles which a head noun could play in the embedded sentence would be cases of RCI. Morphologically the two are indeed different.

Examples of RCD are:

- (4) Lesaka le heleh-ile-ng le m-phoq-ile
 Subj RelM 'collapse'-Perf-Relr SubjM Obj 1st pers. V-Perf
 The kraal which has collapsed has disappointed me.
- Bana ba lahleh-ile-ng ba hole
 Subj RelM 'be lost'-Perf-Relr SubjP 'far'
 The children who have gotten lost are far
 (Relr=Relativizer, RelM=Relative Marker)

In (4) the head nouns lesaka and bana are subjects of both the main sentence and the embedded sentence. Hence, these are instances of RCD. Once the head noun plays a different role in the embedded sentence the construction changes significantly. Examples:

(5) $\overbrace{\text{Banna} \quad \text{bao} \quad \text{morana} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{ba}}^{\text{Dem}}$ $\text{rom-ile-ng} \quad \text{ba} \quad \text{ile}$
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP ObjM 'send'-Perf-Relr SubjM 'go'-Perf

The men whom the chief sent have gone

$\overbrace{\text{Metsi} \quad \text{ao} \quad \text{ke} \quad \text{a}}^{\text{Dem}}$ $\text{nw-ele-ng} \dots$
 Head N Rel Pr Subj ObjM 'drink'-Perf-Relr

The water which I have drunk...

Pr=Pronoun, Dem=Demonstrative (indicates formation of relative pronoun using the demonstrative)

In (5) the head nouns banna and metsi are not subjects of the relative verbs. There are many other syntactic roles other than object that can be played by the head noun. All of them will be grouped under RCI, since the head noun will not be a subject of the embedded sentence.

RCD in Detail

Syntactically RCD sentence appears as follows:

- (i) The head noun, which must be a subject of the relative verb
- (ii) A Relative Pronoun which, in fact, is derived from the Demonstrative indicating position - 'there' - as opposed to 'here' and 'yonder' relative to the speaker.
- (iii) The Relative Verb, which will be marked by a relativizer -ng just in case it is not nonverbal predication.

In (4) above it can be seen how the elements are arranged in a sentence.

The head noun as the controller of agreement system comes first, then the relative pronoun and the relative verb. No other structure can be

found operative in the language where the head noun is the subject of the relative verb, and the organization of syntactic elements differs from the above principles. Needless to say, this strategy is the easiest and most common in the language. The strategy is employed for ordinary qualification as one would qualify nouns in English by using adjectives.

Examples:

English

- (6) A big man ...
A running car ...

Sesotho

- (7) Monna e mo-holo ... (non-verbal)
Head N Rel Pr AdjM 'big'
Dem
Koloi e matha-ng ... (verbal)
Head N Rel Pr 'run'-Relr
Dem

In short (6) is rendered as a relative clause in Sesotho, whereas in English 'big' and 'running' are clearly used attributively. In Sesotho the following English forms are equivalent:

- (8) The man who is big ...
The big man ...
The car which is running ...
The running car ...

This equivalence is only possible with RCD. Hence, there is reason to believe it is the most common and the easiest to form.

RCI in Detail

Since there are many roles a head noun can play in the sentence of the embedded clause, it is clear that the discussion here will be longer.

All the possible syntactic positions suggested in Keenan and Comrie (1977) will be tried. Generally, an RCI will demand the following:

- (i) The head noun, which must not be subject of the relative verb. This head noun is necessary since it is the one modified by the relative sentence. (Head N)
- (ii) A demonstrative, which will agree with the head noun and will always be the one indicating a position captured by the word 'that' in English relative clauses. (The relative pronoun, where formed with the demonstrative in the examples, is indicated by 'Rel Pr' with 'Dem' underneath.)
- (iii) Subject: since the head noun cannot be a subject of the relative verb, it is necessary to have such a position in the relative clause, because the verb still needs a subject. (Subj)
- (iv) Relative verb with the relativiser -ng suffixed at the end of the verb. (RV & Relr)

In addition to (9) the following examples will illustrate my point:

(9) $\begin{array}{cccccccc} \downarrow & & & & & & & \downarrow \\ \text{Bana} & \text{hao} & \text{worena} & \text{a} & \text{tsama-ile-ng} & \text{le} & \text{bona} & \dots \\ \text{Head N} & \text{Rel Pr} & \text{Subj} & \text{SubjP} & \text{'walk'-Perf-Relr} & \text{Prep} & \text{'them'} & \\ & & & & & & & \text{Dem} \end{array}$

The children with whom the chief had gone away ...

$\begin{array}{cccccc} \downarrow & & & & & \downarrow \\ \text{Echobe} & \text{hoo} & \text{ke} & \text{jelelia-ng} & \text{ka} & \text{bona} & \dots \\ \text{Head N} & \text{Rel Pr} & \text{Subj} & \text{'eat' Relr} & \text{Prep} & \text{'it'} & \end{array}$

The bread with which I eat ...

In (9) as in (5) the head nouns are not subjects of the relative verb but oblique objects. In both (9) and (5), however, the head noun is still a subject of the main verb, which I have not included in my examples. I shall now proceed with a discussion of sentences of (5) and (9) type. This will enable me to determine the extent to which one can relativize in Sesotho. To complete the general features of both the RCD and RCI, however, it should be stated that implicative verbs and tense-forming verbs, instead of the main verb, will be marked by the relativizer -ng. By implicative verbs I mean verbs that precede the ordinary verbs in a serial verb construction in order to carry some adverbial meaning. The tense-forming verbs are verbs similar to implicative verbs but which are used to place the action in time. Examples:

(10) Bana ba batl-ile-ng ba lehleha ...

Head N Rel Pr ImplV-Perf-Relr SubjP 'get lost'

Dem

The children who nearly got lost ...

(11) Bashanyana ba ne-ng ba bapala ...

Head N Rel Pr TenseV-Relr SubjP 'play'

Dem

The boys who were playing ...

(ImplV=Implicative Verb, TenseV=Tense-forming Verb)

In (10) and (11) above it is clear that the implicative verb and the tense-forming verb are the ones marked by -ng.

Since I have shown that there is a marked difference between the strategy for relativizing on subjects as opposed to other syntactic positions, I

shall now proceed to describe different syntactic roles (other than that of subject) which a head noun can play in the embedded sentence.

Head Noun as Direct Object (DO)

In Sesotho the object of a relative verb is characterized by a clitic, which is a copy of the nominal prefix of the noun playing the role of object in the relative sentences. The general features of RCI are, of course, kept the same. Examples:

(12) Bana ba morena a ba shapa-ng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP ObjM 'hit'-Relr ...
 Pat Dem Ag

The children whom the chief beats ...

Lesale leo ke le bona-ng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj ObjM 'see'-Relr
 Pat Ag

The earring which I see ...

Mama so banna ba ja-ng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP ObjM 'eat'-Relr
 Pat Ag

The meat which men eat ...

(Pat=Patient, Agent)

Head Noun as Indirect Object (IO)

The notion of IO does not seem to be a relevant notion for the description of the syntax of Sesotho. Different tests that one might employ will

show that IO behaves syntactically in the same way as DO. The difference between IO and DO seems to be a semantic difference. This assertion, however, can be shown to be incorrect.

Examples:

- (13) (a) Morena ofa bana dijo
 Subj SubjM 'give children food'
 Ag Ben Pat
 The chief gives food to the children
- (b) Morena o bon-tsha bana pere
 Subj SubjM 'see'-Caus 'children' 'horse'
 The chief shows the children a horse
- (c) Morena o fuman-etse koloi mokganni
 Subj SubjM 'find'-Appl-Perf 'a car' 'driver'
 Ag Ven Pat
 The chief has found a driver for the car
 (Ben=Benefactive, Caus=Causative, Appl=Applied form)

Although there is a high correlation between benefactive with humans it can be seen from (13c) that word-order counts more than semantic content in the choice of object in Sesotho. In other words, semantic differences between IO and DO do not determine the forms used. Instead, proximity of the noun to the verb in a sequence of two objects determines which noun will be the IO. However, there are no markers for this syntactic position other than this word-order. The behaviour of IO in the matrix sentence is exactly the same as that of DO. Hence, my claim that there is just no need to separate this syntactic position from DO stands.

Examples:

(14) $\overbrace{\text{Lesole} \quad \text{leo} \quad \text{morena} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{le}}^{\downarrow}$ f-ile-ng $\text{moseme} \dots$
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj Pr ObjM 'give'-Perf-Relr Obj
 Ben Ag Pat
 The soldier to whom the chief has given a mat

$\overbrace{\text{Bana} \quad \text{bao} \quad \text{morena} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{ba}}^{\downarrow}$ bon-tsha-ng pere
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj Pr ObjM 'see'-Caus-Relr Obj
 Ben Ag Pat
 The children to whom the chief shows a horse

$\overbrace{\text{Bana} \quad \text{bao} \quad \text{mosuwe} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{ba}}^{\downarrow}$ bapal-la-ng bolo
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj Pr ObjM 'play'-Appl-Relr Obj
 Ben Ag Pat
 The children for whom the instructor plays football

(14) above will still be grammatical in the language even if the patient (the object) is relativized.

Examples:

(15) $\overbrace{\text{Moseme} \quad \text{oo} \quad \text{morena} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{o}}^{\downarrow}$ f-ile-ng $\text{lesole} \dots$
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP ObjM 'give'-Perf-Relr Obj
 Pat Ag Ben
 The mat which the chief gave to the soldier ...

$\overbrace{\text{Pere} \quad \text{eo} \quad \text{morena} \quad \text{a} \quad \text{e}}^{\downarrow}$ bon-tsha-ng $\text{bana} \dots$
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP ObjM 'see'-Caus-Relr Obj
 Pat Ag Ben
 The horse which the chief shows to the children ...

↓	↓							
Solo	eo	mosuwe	a	↓	bapal-la-ng	bana ...		
Head N	Rel Pr	Subj	SubjP	ObjM	'play'-Appl-Relr	Obj		
Pat		Ag				Ben		

The football which the instructor plays for the children ...

(14) and (15) are exactly the same in meaning in spite of the difference in the order of Patient, Agent and Benefactive arguments. One might expect a difference in these constructions since (14) relativizes on the IO and (15) on the DO. When one is relativized, however, the other one remains inert, that is, 'en chomage' in Relational Grammar terms. Hence, these constructions are instances of doubling of objects in the syntax of Sesotho. It is both the word-order constraints and the semantic constraints that help in determining which of the two objects can be regarded as IO. Sesotho has therefore an empty slot in its syntax.

Oblique Object (Obl)

The head noun can also be an oblique object in the embedded sentence. The prepositions which will precede the pronouns agreeing with the nominal prefix of the head noun will usually be carriers of semantic features like instrumentality, locative, associative, etc.

Examples:

(16)	↓	↓						
Lesole	leo	morena	a	↓	buang	le	lona ...	
Head N	Rel Pr	Subj	Subj Pr	'speak'-Relr	Prep	'him'/'her'		

The soldier with whom the chief speaks ...

(17)	↓	↓						
Lesole	leo	morena	a	↓	buang	ka	lona	
Head N	Rel Pr	Subj	Subj Pr	'speak'-Relr	Prep	'him'/'her'		

The soldier about whom the chief speaks

- (18) Motse bo morena a ya-ng no wola ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP 'go'-Relr Prep 'it'
 The village to which the chief goes ...
- (19) Thipa eo morena a sena-ng nama ka yona
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj Pr 'cut'-Relr Obj Prep 'it'
 The knife with which the chief cuts meat

(16), (17), (18) and (19) are instances of head noun as oblique objects of the relative sentence. (18) is clearly directional whereas (19) is instrumental. In other words, the head noun in (19) is semantically playing the role 'instrumental.'

Head Noun as Possessor of Subject and Object of the Embedded Sentence

A head noun can also be a possessor of the subject of the relative verb in Sesotho. This is achieved by using a Possessive Marker characterized by nominal prefix (with phonological changes) plus possessive marker -a. The pronoun referring to the head noun would then follow to complete the possessive construction.

Examples:

- (20) Mikgomo tseo lesaka la tsona le heleh-ile-ng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj PossM 'them' Subj 'collapse'-Perf-Relr
 The cattle whose kraal has collapsed
- Bana bao bo-mmaa bona ba tsama-ile-ng
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Ø-PossM 'them' SubjP 'go'-Perf-Relr
 The children whose mothers have gone

(21) Motho ea morena a shap-ile-ng ngwana wa hae ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP 'beat'-Perf-Relr Obj PossM 'his'
 The person whose child the chief beat up ...

Lesole leo morena a tebela-ng mosadi wa lona ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj Pr 'expel'-Relr Obj PossM 'him'
 The soldier whose wife the chief expels ...

(22)
 Motho eo bana ba hae morena a buang ka bona
 Head N Rel Pr 'children'-Obl PossM 'his' Subj SubjP 'speak'-Relr Prep 'them'
 The person whose children the chief speaks about

In (20) the head noun is the possessor of the subject of the embedded sentence. In (21) the head noun is the possessor of the DO of the embedded sentence. (22) shows a case where the head noun is the possessor of the oblique object (Obl). It is quite clear that the strategy employed in relativizing on the possessor of the oblique object is different from (20) and (21). The arrows indicate clearly how the co-reference chaining works. In (22) the possessed 'bana' has been shifted to a position higher than the subject in the relative sentence, because the possessed 'bana' is topicalized. A non-topicalized sentence would appear as follows:

(23)
 Motho eo morena a buang ka bana ba hae
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj Pr 'speak'-Relr Prep 'children' PossM 'his'
 The person whose children the chief speaks about

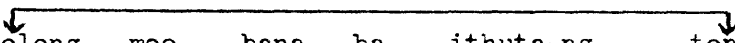
(24)
 *Motho eo morena bana ba hae a buang ka bona
 Head N Rel Pr Subj 'children' PossM Poss Subj 'speak'-Relr Prep Obl
 Possessed

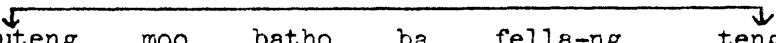
(24) is ungrammatical because the subject of the relative sentence is separated from the relative verb by the possessive constructions. Such a topicalization in Sesotho is disallowed. The point that I want to make here is that (20) and (21) do not have a different strategy from the one in (22) once topicalization is ruled out as in (23). In other words, co-referential chaining would remain the same in (20), (21) and (23). It suffices to say that possessives can easily be relativized in Sesotho.

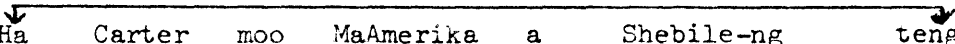
Head Noun as Locative

Although this does not form part of the argument on NP Accessibility Hierarchy, a discussion of the head noun as locative in the relative verb has interesting syntactic traits in Sesotho.

Examples:

(25)  Sekolong moo bana ba ithuta-ng teng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjP 'learn'-Relr LocM
 At school where children learn ...

 Gauteng moo batho ba fella-ng teng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj Subj P 'end'-Relr LocM
 In Johannesburg where people end/disappear ...

 Ha Carter moo MaAmerika a Shebile-ng teng ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjM 'look'-Perf-Relr LocM
 At Carter's (place) where Americans are looking at ...

(25a)

Ke bona sekolo seo bana ba ithutang ho sona
 Subj 'see'-Pres Obj-Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjM 'learn'-Relr Prep 'it'

Ke bona morena eo motseng wa hae mahlanya a dulang teng

Subj 'see!Pres Obj-Head N Rel Pr Loc PossM Pron Subj SubjP 'stay!Relr LocM

I see the chief at whose place the mental patients stay.

(LocM=Locative Marker)

One might want to regard (25) as a separate strategy from many others in the sense that the relative clauses are characterized by two invariable words, moo and teng, which both form extreme boundaries of a relative sentence of this nature. This, however, would be unnecessary, because it can be easily shown that moo as the relative pronoun derives from the demonstrative much in the same way as other relative pronouns in Sesotho. The teng merely functions to complete the 'locativeness' of the expression. In other words, in the place of a preposition and a pronoun referring to the head noun, we have teng when the head noun is locative. In fact, technically there has been no proof that a head noun can play the rôle of locative in the relative clause.

Head Noun as Object of Comparative Particles

Comparison in Sesotho is achieved by an expression, which in English can be rendered as 'X surpasses Y in/with Z'. In other words, in Sesotho an object of a comparison is like a DO of an ordinary three-placed verb.

Examples:

(26) Moshe o feta Tafita ka matla
 Subj SubjM 'surpass' DO Prep 'strength'
 Moshe surpasses David with strength

or

Moshe is stronger than David

- (27) Thabo o mosa ho feta Tsietsi
 Subj SubjM 'kind' Infin.Pr 'surpass' DO
 Thabo is kinder than Tsietsi

In (26) 'strength' is not predicated like in (27) where 'kindness' is predicated. In both (26) and (27), however, the object of comparison remains a DO of the verb feta, which is invariable in Sesotho. Relativizing on such an object, therefore, is no different from the type of constructions in (12), (13), (14) and (15). The oblique object would behave like other oblique objects as in (16), (17), (18) and (19).

Examples:

- (28) Borui boo a feta-ng setjhaba ka bona ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj 'surpass'-Relr DO Prep 'it'
 The riches with which he surpasses the nation ...
- (29) Bolotsana boo Thabo a feta-ng Tsietsi ka bona ...
 Head N Rel Pr Subj SubjM 'surpass'-Relr DO Prep 'it'
 The cunning with which Thabo surpasses Tsietsi ...

In (28) and (29), i.e. 'he is richer than the nation' and 'Thabo is more cunning than Tsietsi', the oblique objects are relativized. This occurs regardless of the fact that such an oblique object can be predicate as in (27). The fact that the Sesotho object of a comparative 'particle' behaves like a DO of an ordinary verb feta is supportive of the observation made by Keenan and Comrie where they say that 'some languages (e.g. Finnish and Shona) have apparently systematic ways of presenting objects of comparison as direct objects of verbs' (Keenan and Comrie, 1977).

4.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Besides the schemas presented up to this point, there are other constructions which one might examine with regard to relative clauses. One might argue, for instance, that it is necessary to consider permutations based on the Accessibility Hierarchy, which will show the role of the head noun in the embedded sentence in the context of different other syntactic positions in the main sentence. In Sesotho the exercise appears futile, because the role the head noun plays in the unembedded sentence does not affect its role in the embedded sentence. For instance, one could have the head noun as object (DO) of the main sentence, and note the reaction, if any, in the role it plays in the embedded sentence:

(30)	<u>Main Sentence</u>	<u>Embedded</u>
	DO	Subj
	DO	DO
	DO	Obl, etc.

The constructions remain the same in Sesotho. Hence, there is no need to pursue this line.

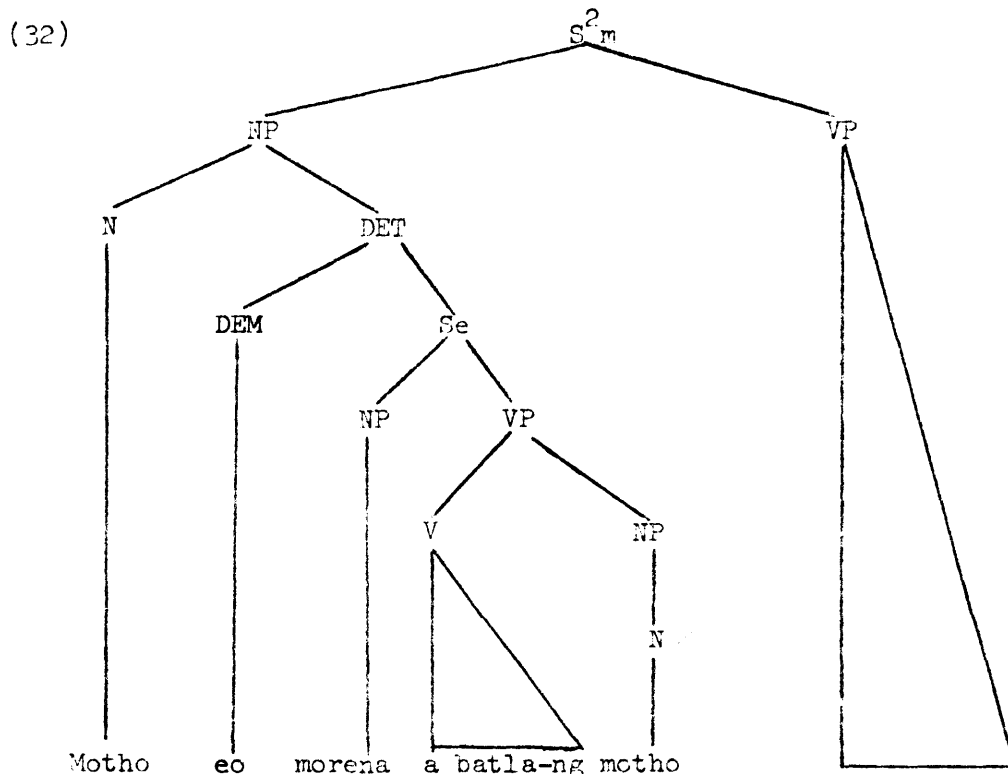
The sentences given so far have not included a negated sentence, although negated sentences are available in the language. Such a construction is achieved by preplacing the negative marker 'sa' before the relative verb.

Example:

(31)	Motho	ea	bana	ba	sa	mo	rat-e-ng ...
	Head N	Rel Pr	Subj	SubjP	NegP	ObjM	'like'-NegM-Relr
	The person whom the children do not like ...						

There is very little point in pursuing a discussion of negatives as if they would help us in establishing certain features of a Sesotho relative sentence. This is why most examples are in the affirmative construction in this paper.

The use of the demonstrative as a relative pronoun is a common feature of South African Bantu languages (Sesotho, Tswana, Pedi, Xhosa, Zulu, Swati, Ndebele). I would not be surprised to find the same thing in Uenda, Tsonga and many other Bantu languages spoken north of South Africa. This, in fact, has led linguists working on Bantu languages to claim that a relative S node should be represented as dominated by a Determiner node in the deep structure and be commanded by the Demonstrative (Wald, 1970). Following Wald's example one could show what the phrase-structure of one Sesotho sentence would be:



S_m = main sentence

Se = embedded sentence

The point that I wish to establish here, however, is not the suggestion made by Wald. I say this in spite of the strong theoretical claims Wald makes in his proposal of a revision of the rewrite rules to accommodate relative clauses in Bantu languages. I wish only to make a loose statement about the idea of definiteness, which Sesotho arguments acquire once relativized. I want to argue that it is the demonstrative that brings this quality of definiteness to the head noun, because generally arguments in Sesotho are not marked for definiteness/indefiniteness. In the context of a relative sentence, however, arguments are, intuitively, definite. In short, in Sesotho the type of relative clauses that one gets are always restrictive relative clauses. The reason for this, I want to claim, lies mainly in fact that relative clauses are introduced by the demonstratives. One could draw an analogy and claim that the English relative sentence which is introduced by the relative pronoun 'that' has to be a restrictive relative clause, because 'that' in English also functions as a demonstrative. Little wonder, therefore, that in Sesotho the question of nonrestrictive relative clauses is ruled out, since every relative clause has to be introduced by a demonstrative. Relative clauses of nonrestrictive nature can be tried on personal pronouns.

Examples:

- (33) Nna ke leng morena ...
 1st pers SubjM Cop-Relr 'chief'
 Pron/Sg.
- I, who am chief, ...

Rona re tlileng le bana ...
 1st pers SubjM 'come'-Perf-Relr Prep Obj
 Pron/Plur
 We who came with children ...
 (Cop=Copulative)

Such relative clauses are rare and restricted to the speech of people who have some familiarity with English. Such relativization is avoided in Sesotho by using two separate sentences instead of a complex sentence.

In terms of the restrictive relative clauses (RRC) strategies developed in Keenan (1972), Sesotho seems to employ an isolating strategy. The restrictive relative sentence is separated from the head noun, and in addition, it retains its sentential status. In short, the relative verb is still marked for tense, aspect, and so forth. In English the role of the head NP is explicitly coded in the relative pronoun whereas in Sesotho it is done by the retained pronoun; for subject versus direct object, the head NP is coded by the form of the demonstrative and the word order.

Since Sesotho can relativize on almost every position in the hierarchy, one wonders how the existence of multiple verb forms in the language can be explained in terms of their function in making inaccessible NP accessible. In other words, Keenan and Comrie's explanation for the existence of verb forms in languages does not tell us why such forms exist in those languages where every NP is accessible (Keenan & Comrie, 1977). Verb forms in Sesotho seem to serve to add specific semantic features to the stock of semantic properties inherent in the uninflected verb. In doing this, the possibilities are high that arguments in the sentence will be moved about either to give way to an additional argument or an argument demoted in the presence of a

new argument. This 'shuffling' of elements inevitably leads to making inaccessible NP's accessible, although this is not the function of verb forms. In other words, the function of multiple verb forms is to bring about different shades of meaning to the verb, and this function usually coincides with making inaccessible NP's accessible in some languages. This, however, should not be construed to mean that the accessibility hierarchy makes no significant predictions about how the elements of relative constructions can be arranged across languages. Pronoun retention in Sesotho, for instance, has been true of most languages where the head noun plays a non-subject role in the embedded sentence. This ties up with the claim made by the accessibility hierarchy proponents. In short, even if one were to follow Kuno's hierarchy for accessibility to thematic interpretation (Kuno, 1976), this would not be as strong an empirical statement about the organization of language as the type of statement based purely on surface structures. Hence, my paper has been more or less based on the framework developed by Keenan and Comrie in 1977. I believe the framework here has exposed both the morphology and syntax of relative clauses in Sesotho reasonably better than any previous work done on Sesotho relative clauses.

APPENDIX:

NOUN PHRASE ACCESSIBILITY HIERARCHY

(From Keenan and Comrie, 1977)

Languages vary with respect to which NP positions can be relativized. The Accessibility Hierarchy below expresses the relative accessibility to relativization of NP positions in simplex main clauses:

Accessibility Hierarchy

Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique Case NP >
Genitive ('possessor') NP > Object of Comparison

Here, '>' means 'is more accessible than'. An example of 'oblique case NP' is chest in John put the money in the chest; an example of 'object of comparison' is the man in John is taller than the man.

The following constraints hold for the hierarchy:

1. A language must be able to relativize subjects.
2. Any relative clause-forming strategy must apply to a continuous segment of the hierarchy. (It cannot 'skip' positions.)
3. Strategies that apply at one point of the hierarchy may in principle cease to apply at any lower point.

FOOTNOTES

1. I wish to acknowledge comments made by Prof. B. Comrie which, although are not all included, have changed certain fundamental mistakes in my original paper.
2. The phrase-structure is straight from Wald, 1970, although I have tried to use Sesotho examples.

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