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## Relativisation in Telugu and English

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### **Abstract:**

Relative clauses can be pre-nominal or post-nominal which is a parametric variation. The languages taken for the analysis in this paper are English and Telugu which allow post nominal and pre-nominal relative clauses respectively. This paper mainly focuses on the relativisation of noun phrase position in English and Telugu with regard to ease of accessibility of noun phrase positions to the formation of relative clauses and also the constraints in the formation. This study will tell us whether Comrie's (1981) Accessibility Hierarchy holds true for Telugu too.

**Key words:** Relativisation, post-nominal and pre-nominal, Accessibility Heirarchy, Telugu

### **1. Introduction**

Telugu, which is one of the classical languages of India, is a major Dravidian language spoken in the southern part of India. The basic word order of Telugu, just like any other Dravidian language, is SOV. It is a pro-drop or null subject language and is also strictly head final, in that all lexical and inflectional heads follow their complements. The verb in a Telugu sentence is very rich in inflectional morphology. Relative clauses are used to give additional information about something or somebody without starting another sentence. While Telugu, Kannada, Turkish and other languages allow only pre-nominal relative clauses, Arabic, Persian, English and others have only post nominal relative ones. And there are also languages like Hindi and Sanskrit, which allow both.

In many languages there are many constraints on relativisation on the positions of noun phrases. This paper attempts to discuss the four positions, namely subject, direct object, indirect object and possessor since these positions seem to form a hierarchy across languages with regard to relativisation. According to Bernard Comrie (1981), it is, in general, easier to relativise subject than any of the other constituents, easier to relativise direct objects than indirect object and so on. This hierarchy can be shown as: subject>direct object>non direct object> possessor. Here, ">" means 'is more accessible than'. Through this model of accessibility hierarchy Comrie generalizes that if a language has a possessive that is relativised then it can have all the other constituents relativised. Though it appears to be a language universal, Austronesian and West Indonesian languages are, however, counter examples for this. In this paper we will examine whether we can relativise all noun phrase positions in Telugu and the requirements to avoid ambiguity in the relativisation of certain constituents.

### **2. Accessibility to Relativisation in English and Telugu**

English allows all constituents to be relativised without any constraint. In other words, in English, it is possible to relativise subject, direct object, indirect object and possessor which we can see in the following examples.

- The man[who bought the pen for the girl] (relativised subject)
- The pen [which the man bought for the girl] (relativised object)
- The girl [for whom the man bought the pen] (relativised indirect object)
- The boy [whose pen the man bought for the girl] (relativised possessor)

Coming to Telugu, the major Dravidian languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam have only pre-nominal relative clauses in which the head NP is always preceded by a subordinate clause. There are no relative pronouns in these languages. Languages not only differ from one another, but also within a language there can be more than one distinct type of relative clause. There are mainly two types of relative clauses in Telugu which are participial and correlative. Here are the examples for the two types.

- [pustakamu caduvutunnavaḍu] mā tammuḍu (Participial type)  
book.acc read.prog.pres.3sm my brother.nom  
The one who is reading a book is my brother.

- [evaḍu pustakamu caduvutunnāḍō] vāḍu mā tammuḍu (Correlative type)  
who.nom book.acc read.prog.pres.3sm he our younger brother.nom  
The one who is reading a book is my brother.

While participial is a native type of the Dravidian family, the other type, correlative relative clause, is a borrowed one from Indo Aryan languages because of the long sustained contact of these two distinct families of languages. In this present study, we will discuss what constituents in Telugu can be relativised in both the types of clauses.

The subject, just like in any other language, is the most accessible to be relativised in Telugu without any restrictions in both the types of relative clauses which we can see in the following examples.

- [uttaramu vrāsinavāḍu] mā tammuḍu (Participial type)  
Letter write.perf.one.3sm our brother  
The one who wrote the letter is my brother.
- [ē abbāyi uttaramu vrāsāḍō] vāḍu mā tammuḍu (Correlative Type)  
Which boy.nom letter write.pt.3sm he.emph. Our brother  
The one who wrote the letter is my brother.

The object is also easily accessible to be relativised in both the types of clauses. Let us look at the following examples.

- [ā abbāyi vrāsina] uttaramu ivvāḷa nāku andindi (Participial type)  
That boy write.perf. Letter today me.dat reach.pt.3sn  
The letter which the boy wrote has reached me today.
- ē uttaramu [ā abbāyi vrāsāḍō] adi ivvāḷa nāku andindi (Correlative type)  
Which letter that boy write.pt.3sm that today I.dat Reach.pt.3sn?  
The letter which the boy wrote has reached me today.

The indirect object can get relativised in Telugu in both the types of clauses. But it is not possible to drop the subject of the action in the participial relative clause when the relativised noun phrase is an indirect object. Let us look at the following examples.

- [nēnu pustakamu icchina]vāḍu vellipōyāḍu (Participial Type)  
i.nom book.acc give.perf.3sm go.go.pt.3sm  
The one to whom I gave a book went away.

In (11), in the subordinate clause or relative clause of the participial type we have to obligatorily mention the subject NP (*nēnu* 'I' in (11)) at the beginning of the relative clause to make the other argument, *vāḍu* 'he' indirect object. Otherwise, the indirect object itself becomes the subject or external argument of the clause changing the meaning of the sentence. Let's look at the same example, without the subject NP *nēnu* 'I' as it is possible in Telugu which is a pro-drop language.

- [pustakamu icchina]vāḍu vellipōyāḍu  
book.acc give.pt.3sm go.go.pt.3sm  
The one who gave a book went away.

The above sentence (12) functions just like the example (5) in which the subject is relativised. In (12) *vāḍu* 'he' has become a relativised subject because of the absence of an NP at the beginning of the clause.

In the correlative type, the problem does not arise as the verb of the relative clause carries agreement features of the subject. Through the agreement features on the verb we can assume a small *pro* in the subject position.

- [evariki pustakamu iccānō] vāḍu vellipōyāḍu (Correlative Type)  
Who.dat book.acc give.pt.1s he.nom go.go.pt.3sm  
The one to whom I gave the book went away.

Finally the possessor is also accessible to be relativised in both the types. In this participial type too, just like in the indirect object relativisation of participial type, we cannot drop the subject of the clause. Here is an example.

- [nēnu amma kōsamu polam konna]vāḍu Visākhapaṭṭanamu vellāḍu.  
I.nom for her land buy.3sm Visakhapatnam go.pt.3sm  
The one whose land I bought for my mother went to Visakhapatnam.

The agreement features of the subject are absent on the verb of the relativised clause which finally turns the possessor into subject when the actual subject is not mentioned. Let us look at the same sentence without mentioning *nēnu* 'I'.

- [amma kōsamu polamu konna]vāḍu Visākhapaṭṭanamu vellāḍu.  
For mother land buy.3sm Visakhapatnam go.pt.3sm  
The one who bought land for my mother went to Visakhapatnam

This sentence also functions like (5) with *vāḍu* 'he' as a relativised subject as there is no mention of *nēnu* 'I' at the beginning.

The correlative type does not have any constraint for the possessor to be relativised. With agreement features of the subject on the verb of the relativised clause it blocks the possessor to become the subject even if the subject is not overtly expressed.

- [evari polamu amma kōsam konnānō] āyana Visākhapaṭṭanamu vellāḍu  
Whose land.acc for mother buy.pt.1s he.hon.nom Visakhapatnam go.pt.3sm  
The one whose land I bought for my mother went to Visakhapatnam.

### 3. Conclusion

As discussed above, in Telugu, there are no restrictions on relativisation on the all four positions in correlative type where as in the other type, participial; the subject has to be mentioned obligatorily to stop the indirect object or the possessor from becoming subject. With this detailed analysis we can state that it is possible to relativise all NP positions in Telugu and thus conclude that Accessibility Hierarchy holds true for Telugu too which in turn helps to determine the universal properties of relative clauses.

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