Distinguishing Correlatives from Internally Headed Relative Clauses in ASL
Teresa Galloway, Cornell University

Previous work on the syntax and semantics of relative clauses in ASL has argued for analyzing relatives as either internally headed structures (Liddell 1980) or as correlatives (Coulter 1983, Fontana 1990, and Neidle 2002). Based on my own fieldwork and analysis, I argue that **both** IHRCs and correlatives are found in ASL, with clear interpretative and syntactic distinctions between them.

Many relative clauses in ASL share the superficial characteristics of SVO word order (the base word order of ASL) and a position at the left edge of the matrix clause, as seen in the examples below (PT denotes a pointing gesture and THATpt denotes a fused form of THAT combined with PT; overlines indicate co-occurring facial expressions abbreviated 'br', 'wr', and 'tns'):

(1) a. $\overline{\text{\textbf{BOY} vCL>"spray" WATER pt+}}^{\text{br}}$ KICK MY #DOG

     b. $\overline{\text{\textbf{BOY} vCL>"spray"}}^{\text{br}}$ $\overline{\text{THATpt}_{\text{boy}}}^{\text{br+wr}}$ KICK MY #DOG

     [The boy who watered (the lawn)] kicked my dog.

(2) a. $\overline{\text{THAT SENATE VOTE}_{\text{law}} \text{ \textbf{LAW}}}^{\text{br+tns}}$ ME SUPPORT$_{\text{law}}$

     b. THAT SENATE VOTE$_{\text{law}}$ **LAW** $\overline{\text{THATpt}_{\text{law}}}^{\text{br}}$ $^{\text{br+wr}}$ ME SUPPORT$_{\text{law}}$

     I support [the law the senator voted for].

Despite the superficial similarities, these examples are better classified as two distinct types of relative clauses in ASL. The first type, exemplified by the 'a' examples, are what I will argue are internally headed relative clauses (IHRCs). Syntactically, these RCs show evidence of nominalization--the final pt+ in (1a) and the 'tense' facial expression in (2a). They also obey the **indefiniteness restriction** described by Williamson (1987) which states that the head of an IHRC may not be morphologically definite. Contrast (3a) and (3b):

(3) a. $\overline{\text{GIRL BORROW \textbf{BOOK}}}^{\text{br+tns}}$ pt$_{\text{book}}$ GONE

     b. * $\overline{\text{GIRL BORROW \textbf{THAT BOOK}}}^{\text{br+tns}}$ pt$_{\text{book}}$ GONE

     [The book the girl borrowed] is missing.

The second type, seen in examples (1b) and (2b) are what I will argue are correlatives. Unlike IHRCs, correlative clauses show no evidence of nominalization. Rather, the correlative is an independent clause left adjoined to the matrix and followed by a demonstrative pronoun in the matrix co-indexed to the head of the RC. The demonstrative pronoun in ASL is either THATpt or in some dialects (as in the examples below), SELF. Unlike IHRCs, correlatives are not subject to the indefiniteness restriction, as marking the head of the correlative with prenominal THAT as in (4) is perfectly acceptable:

(4) $\overline{\text{\textbf{THAT SENATE} VOTE THAT LAW}}^{\text{br}}$ $\overline{\text{SELF}_{\text{senate}}}^{\text{br+wr}}$ ME SUPPORT$_{\text{senate}}$

   'If that senator votes for the law, then I will support him'

Furthermore, the resulting meanings are quite different from those produced by an IHRC.

                                                      $\overline{\text{br}}$ $\overline{\text{br+wr}}$

(5)   **SENATE** VOTE THAT LAW   SELF$_{senate}$ ME SUPPORT$_{senate}$

                'In general, any senator who votes for that law, I will support'

The above example could be paraphrased as 'for all pairings of a senator and that law such that the senator voted for the law, I will support that senator'. This is in line with Dayal's (1995) observation that correlatives can be thought of as 'having quantificational structures of the same kind as conditionals.' Or to be more precise, (5) can be translated as:

(5)' $\forall x$ [senator(x) $\wedge$ vote(x, law)] [support(me,x)]

In contrast, the semantic representation of an IHRC (following Shimoyama, 1999) would involve e-type anaphora. The logical form of (2a) would be represented as:

(2a)'
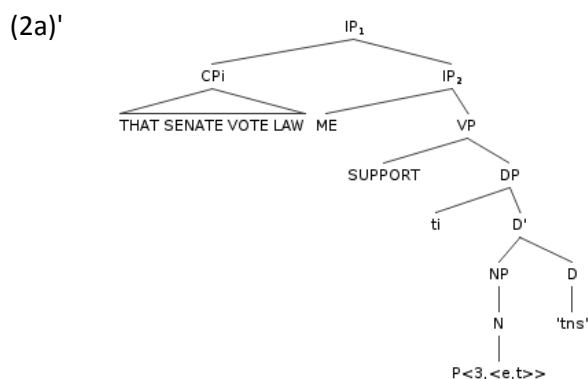
Where the proform P is a free variable of type <e,t> which gets its denotation from the context c. Here, the function g_c assigns to the index 3 associated with the proform the property of being a law that the senator voted on.

$$g_c := [3 \rightarrow \lambda x \ (law(x) \wedge vote(senator,x))]$$

In sum, I contend that superficially similar structures that had formerly been conflated in the literature are in fact two distinct types of relative clauses with properties we expect to find cross-linguistically.

References

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