Relativization in Lobi *Shweta Akolkar, Rececca Jarvis, & Sansan Claude Hien (UC Berkeley)*
In this talk, we document relativization in Lobi (Mabia/Gur; ISO:lob; Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana), which involves the addition of a suffix -n(ɪ) to the verb. This morphology is specific to relativization and does not occur in other A'-processes in the language. We suggest an analysis on which -n(ɪ) is an exponent of movement through a specifier of a functional head in the verbal spine (perhaps v). This proposal supports the findings of recent work indicating that A'-dependencies in Mabia languages often involve interactions with the area around the vP edge (Hiraiwa & Bodomo [henceforth H&B] (2008), Hartmann (2022), a.o.).

The -n(ɪ) **suffix.** Lobi relativization has two obligatory morphosyntactic reflexes: first, the head noun must appear in the leftmost position of the clause; and second, the suffix -n(ɪ) must follow the verb. This pattern is consistent across relativization of all structural positions, including subjects (1a), objects (1b), possessors (1c), and objects of prepositions (1d). Lobi relative clauses involve an articulated clausal spine and can host TAM marking (e.g., PST in (8b)) and negation (3). It is perhaps noteworthy from examples like (1) that the head is usually followed by a demonstrative. However, the crucial ingredient in Lobi relativization is not the demonstrative but, rather, -n(ɪ). The demonstrative, when present, indexes the definiteness of the head; the definite suffix -ra may follow the head noun instead (2a), and other markers like numerals can occur with indefinite heads (2b).

The particle -n(ɪ) is in complementary distribution with another suffix -rɛ that occurs in typical root clauses: in discourse-neutral clauses, -rɛ suffixes the verb (4a), while in clauses with a focus-fronted constituent, -rɛ suffixes the focused phrase (4b). (See H&B for an analysis of a particle in Dagaare, lá, that is distributionally similar to Lobi -rɛ.)

Towards an analysis. We propose a working analysis on which -n(ɪ) is a reflex of the relativized argument moving through Spec,vP en route to its landing site in Spec,CP. Preliminary evidence from idiom connectivity effects (6) favors a movement analysis of Lobi relativization. To capture the generalization that -n(ɪ) only occurs in relativization and not other A'-processes, we suggest that -n(ɪ) might index agreement of v with the [REL] feature on the moving relativized item, as a kind of *wh*-agreement. External arguments which bear [REL] are able to trigger agreement with v from their base position in Spec,vP, accounting for the presence of -n(ɪ) in both subject and non-subject relativization. (Note that other A'-processes in Lobi, like focus, *do* exhibit subject/non-subject asymmetries; for this reason, we are inclined to favor an analysis on which v that expones -n(ɪ) is the one in which subjects are introduced, not a higher projection.)

Current explorations. This project on the syntax of relativization in Lobi is actively ongoing. Here, we discuss two phenomena that are currently under investigation, which we hope will shed further light on Lobi -n(ɪ) and its distribution.

-n(ɪ) *outside relativization.* While, as noted in the introduction, -n(ɪ) does not occur in any other canonical A'-construction in Lobi (e.g., topicalization, focus), -n(ɪ) does occur as a verbal suffix elsewhere in the language. Specifically, -n(ɪ) can occur in some fact- and event-like clauses, as illustrated in the complement of 'surprise' in (5a) and in the temporal clause in (5b). Currently, we are exploring the possibility of unifying the analysis of relative clauses and factive/temporal clauses in Lobi.

Variable positioning of -n(ɪ). Like other verbal affixes in Mabia languages, including Lobi -rɛ and Dagaare lá, -n(ɪ) does not always surface directly adjacent to the verb. As noted by H&B for Dagaare lá, in sentences with object pronouns, -n(ɪ) attaches to the object pronoun (5b,7). This pattern may be analyzed as resulting from a similar object-shift process to the one proposed by H&B (involving cliticization of the object pronoun to -n(ɪ)).

Second, -n(ɪ) can follow at least some prepositions. Here, we illustrate with ná 'with.' When instruments (introduced by ná, see (8a)) are relativized, an additional morpheme rá appears between the verbal root and -n(ɪ) (8b). We propose that this additional morpheme rá might be the preposition ná, incorporated into the verbal root. Current investigation into other prepositions and their behavior in relativization is ongoing; if this generalization of preposition incorporation stands, it provides further, novel evidence that -n(ɪ) is a separable morpheme that affixes to the verb root later in the syntactic derivation.

Examples.

(1)   a. *Subject relativization*
    oló ɟí-ré   [kʰέr kέ nà-ń irí]
    Olo know-RE   woman DEM like-NI Iri
    'Olo knows the woman who likes Iri.'

    b. *Object relativization*
    oló ɟí-ré   [kʰέr kέ irí nà-ń]
    Olo know-RE   woman DEM Iri like-NI
    'Olo knows the woman who Iri likes.'

    Possessor relativization
    c. [bɪsáàn kέὲ ní   mɪ ɟì-ń   ]
      child   DEM mother 1SG know-NI
    dunu-né
    be.small-RE
    'The child whose mother I know is small.'

    d. *Object-of-preposition relativization*
    [j'áà   ké-ra   mɪ ɟì-ń oló] bɔ́ɔ́-ré
      market DEM-LOC 1SG see-NI Olo   be.good-RE
    'The market where I saw Olo is nice.'

(2)   *No demonstrative following the head*
    a. oló ɟí-ré   [kʰέr-ra   nà-ń irí]
    Olo know-RE   woman-DEF like-NI Iri
    'Olo knows the woman who likes Iri.'

    b. oló ɟí-ré   [kʰέr bɪɛl nà-ń irí]
    Olo know-RE   woman one like-NI Iri
    'Olo knows a woman who likes Iri.'

(3)   *RCs can host negation*
    [bĩ́ĩ́ kέ a   sar-ní   tõmbri á   ] gbó-r
      dog DEM NEG straight-NI body   NEG bark
    'The dog that is sick (lit., that doesn't have a straight body) barked.'

(4)   a. *Discourse-neutral clause*
    ol ɟí-ré   sánsàn
    Olo know-RE Sansan
    'Olo knows Sansan.'

    b. *Clause with focus-fronting*
    ɔ-ré   oló ɟí
    3SG-RE Olo know
    'It's him that Olo knows.'

(5)   *Clausal nominalizations with* -n(ɪ)
    a. dɪ kɔ pʰúró-ré   irí [mɪ ɟì-ń oló]
    EXPL PST surprise-RE Iri   1SG see-NI Olo
    'My seeing Olo surprised Iri.'

    b. [wɔ kõ   mì-ń] tʰangbá a   kɔ í́   a
      3PL bear 1SG-NI   God   NEG PST come NEG
    'When I was born, it wasn't raining.'

(6)   *Idiom connectivity*
    [tʰangbá kέ kɔ í́-n   ] bɔ́ɔ́-ré
      god   DEM PST come-NI good-RE
    'The rain that happened was good.' (lit. 'the God that came'; tʰangbá on its own cannot refer to rain.)

(7)   *Object pronouns and* -n(ɪ)
    [kʰέr bri   kɛ ɟí mì-ń] bɔ́ɔ́-ré
      woman young DEM see 1SG-REL   nice-RE
    'The girl who saw me is nice.'

(8)   *Instrument relativization*
    a. irí kɔ l'wɔ́-ré bii ná úré
    Iri PST cook-RE soup with spoon
    'Iri cooked soup with a spoon.'

    b. úré   kɛ irí kɔ l'wɔ́-rá-ní bii curo-ré
    spoon DEM Iri PST cook-RA-NI soup big-RE
    'The spoon Iri cooked with is big.'

References.

Hiraiwa & Bodomo (2008). Object-sharing as symmetric sharing: Predicate clefting and serial verbs in Dàgáárè, NLLT.

Hartmann (2022). *v*P as a phase – evidence from Dagbani.