# The Unity of Noun-Modifying Clauses in Asian Languages

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## 1. Basic Concepts and Areal Distribution

The starting point for my paper is the discussion of Japanese "relative clauses" by Matsumoto (1988). In this work, and with some further elaboration in my own work (Comrie, forthcoming b), a typological distinction is drawn between the expression of "relative clause meaning" in English and Japanese. In English, there is a distinct construction, or perhaps more accurately set of constructions, for the expression of relative clause meaning. More specifically, the relative clause may be introduced by a relative pronoun (*who, which*), by the element *that* (whose status I will not argue about further here), or by zero. If there is a clause-initial relative pronoun, it may be case-marked, either by accusative case (though only in more literary varieties of the language) or by a preposition; such case-marking is more usual in most of the other major European literary languages. Since English does not allow zero anaphora, the relative clause can be analyzed as containing a gap, i.e. there is an argument position that would normally be filled, such as direct object, but which is not filled in its usual linear order in the relative clause construction. These possibilities are illustrated in (1)–(5).

(1)    the student [whom I praised]
(2)    the student [to whom I gave the book]
(3)    the student [that I praised]
(4)    the student [I praised]
(5)    a. I praised the student.
       b. *I praised.

There are syntactic constraints on which constituents can be relativized. For instance, while both subject and direct object of an embedded clause can be relativized if there is no overt complementizer, as in (6) and (7), only the direct object, and not the subject, can be relativized if there is an overt complementizer, as in (8)–(9):

(6)    the man [whom I believe [you saw]]
(7)    the man [who I believe [saw you]]
(8)    the man [whom I believe [that you saw]]
(9)    *the man [who I believe [that saw you]]

Moreover, this construction is distinct from the so-called *fact*-S construction, where a head noun takes a sentential complement. Here, only the complementizer *that* (or, conceivably, zero) can be used to introduce the subordinate clause, and there is no gap, as in (10).

(10)    a.     the fact [that/*which I praised the student]
          b.     *the fact [that I praised][1]

In Japanese, the basic structure that receives a relative clause interpretation consists of a head noun preceded by a subordinate clause, as in (7).

(11)    [gakusei ga    katta]  hon
         student  NOM  bought  book
         'the book [that the student bought]'

There is no possibility of a case-marked relative pronoun, nor is there usually any other overt reference to the head noun *hon* 'book' within the relative clause. Since the verb *katta* 'bought' is transitive, one might conclude that the subordinate clause of (11) contains a gap, but given that Japanese has zero anaphora, this argument is actually difficult to maintain, and I prefer to abandon it. Under appropriate conditions, namely if the referent of the covert direct object is retrievable from context, (12) is a perfectly well-formed sentence in Japanese, indeed it is the normal translation of 'the student bought it'.

(12)    Gakusei ga    katta.
         student  NOM  bought
         'The student bought [it].'

There is no reason to analyze the subordinate clause of (11) any differently, i.e. (11) consists of a head noun preceded by a clause which would be well-formed in isolation.[2]

Furthermore, Japanese seems to lack syntactic constraints on the relation between the head noun and the covert coreferential noun in the subordinate clause. The acceptability of different relations between coreferential head and covert subordinate-clause noun (phrase)s in Japanese is determined rather by pragmatic factors: If a native speaker of Japanese can readily establish a plausible relation, then the sentence is judged acceptable; if not, it is judged unacceptable. Nice examples of this are provided by Haig (in press), using syntactically parallel constructions where differing pragmatics can lead to differing acceptability judgments, as in (13)–(14).

(13    ?[[katte  ita]  kodomo ga    sindesimatta]  inu
       keeping  was child     NOM  died          dog
       '*the $dog_i$ [that the $child_j$ [that $—_j$ was keeping $—_i$] died]'

(14)    [[Kawaigatte ita]  hito  ga    nakunatta]  inu ga     maiban
        keeping      was person NOM  died       dog NOM every.evening
                eki      made kainusi o    mukae ni kita.
                station to     master ACC greet    to came

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[1]Sentence (6b) is, of course, grammatical in the somewhat unlikely event that I am talking about a fact which I praised.

[2]In most of the other languages I will be discussing that share the basic properties of the Japanese "relative clause", there is overt marking of the subordinate status of the subordinate clause, either through the presence (at least optionally) of a conjunction, or through the use of special subordinate morphology. This was, incidentally, also the case in Old Japanese. The statement about the well-formedness of the subordinate clause of (12) in isolation should be interpreted to mean "*pace* changes due solely to general properties of subordinate, or more narrowly noun-modifying, clauses".

'*The dog$_i$ [that the person$_j$ [who —$_j$ was keeping —$_i$] died] came to the station every evening to greet his master.'

Since the literal English translations of (13) and (14) are ungrammatical, let me give a paraphrase. Example (13) refers to a dog such that the child that was keeping that dog died. Example (14) refers to a dog such that the person that was keeping that dog died. The syntactic structure of the subordinate clauses in both examples is thus identical. But while all Japanese speakers find (14) acceptable, many find (13) to varying degrees unacceptable. The reason is that in (13) the hearer has no cues as to which child or which dog is being talked about. In (14), however, the reference to a dog going to the station each evening to greet its master—even though the master fails to show up—immediately calls to mind the story of the famous dog Hachiko. In other words, (14) can readily be given a cultural context, and is therefore readily interpreted. Note that, from a syntactic viewpoint, (13)–(14) would both violate subjacency if Japanese had English-style relative clauses; indeed, this is precisely why the English translations are ungrammatical.

Finally, Japanese has other constructions with the same structure as (11), but which do not receive a relative clause interpretation. One of these is the translation equivalent of the English *fact-S* construction, as in (15). Another example, which requires a more round-about translation into English, is shown in (16).

(15)  [gakusei ga   hon  o   katta]  zizitu
      student  NOM  book ACC bought  fact
      'the fact [that the student bought the book]'

(16)  [dareka  ga   doa  o   tataku]  oto
      someone  NOM  door ACC knock    sound
      'the noise of someone knocking at the door'

A more literal translation of (16) would be something like '*the noise that someone hits the door', which is ungrammatical in English.

In Comrie (forthcoming b) I argue that the study of relative clauses in Japanese, and perhaps a number of other languages, has suffered from trying to assimilate them to the English (or more generally, European) type. The Japanese data can be given a much more coherent interpretation by positing that Japanese has a single construction type which combines a head noun and a preceding subordinate clause. Depending on pragmatic factors—which interpretation makes more sense—this construction will be assigned either a relative clause interpretation, as in (11), or a *fact-S* interpretation, as in (15), or some other interpretation, as in (16).

In Comrie (forthcoming a), I make a first attempt at defining the areal distribution, at least within Eurasia, of languages that are more similar to English in this respect versus those that are more like Japanese. The English type is dominant in Europe, comprising not only the major Indo-European languages of Europe but also such non-Indo-European languages as Finnish and Hungarian. I will therefore henceforth call this the "European type". The Japanese type is widespread in Asia, and I will therefore henceforth call it the "Asian type", though I should emphasize that there are substantial parts of Asia that are not characterized by this type; for instance, most Indo-Aryan languages belong to a distinct type, with so-called correlative relative clause constructions, as in example (17) from Hindi, whose literal translation is something like 'which man I was talking to, he will go to India tomorrow'.

(17)  Maiṁ jis          ādmī se bāt kar rahā         thā,
      I.DIR which.SG.OBL man to talk do PROG.SG.M be.IPF.SG.M
          vah         kal       bhārat jāegā.
          that.DIR.SG tomorrow India  go.FUT.M.SG
      'The man [to whom I was talking —] will go to India tomorrow.'

As far as I can tell, the Asian type encompasses at least Ainu, Japanese, and Korean; Chinese, and probably some (but not all) other Sino-Tibetan languages; the Dravidian languages; some Turkic languages (but definitely not all—Turkish itself is excluded, see below); Thai and Khmer[3] (though not, apparently, Vietnamese).

Since I have mentioned Thai, and since most conference participants will be in a far better position to evaluate the Thai material than I am, let me illustrate what I mean. My knowledge of Thai relative clauses and related constructions derives almost entirely from Hoonchamlong (1991), although the responsibility for interpreting the data is, of course, mine.[4] The basic structure is illustrated in (18)

(18)  phûuchaaj [thîi thɔɔ hěn]
      man        that you see
      'the man that you saw'

Since Thai has zero anaphora, there is no a priori reason to assume that there is, in any strict syntactic sense, a gap in (18). And indeed we find examples that seem to violate subjacency, such as (19), parallel to Japanese example (14), suggesting that there are no syntactic constraints on the relationship between the head noun and the covert coreferential noun phrase in the subordinate clause.

(19)  wan níi chán hěn nágkhǐan [thîi nít bɔɔg nɔ̀j   wâa deeŋ
      day this I   see writer       that Nit tell  Noy that Dang
          kamlaŋ ʔàan nǎŋsy̌y [thîi wícaan]]
          PROG   read book   that criticize
      '*Today I saw the writer that Nit told Noy that Dang was reading the book that criticized.'

The sense of (19) is '…the writer such that Nit told Noy that Dang was reading the book that criticized him', where *him* refers back to *the writer*.

Thai has the same construction in examples translating English *fact*-S constructions, as in (20) (Noss 1964:179).[5]

(20)  kaan [thîi kháw sɔ̀ɔb tòg]
      fact that  he   fail  examination
      'the fact that he failed the examination'

However, in one sense the range of the Thai construction goes beyond that of the Japanese construction discussed above. In Thai, this construction can also be used for sentential complements that are arguments of a verb, as in (21).

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[3]For Khmer, see Comrie and Horie (1995).

[4]It is, however, interesting to note that many aspects of Hoonchamlong's analysis are very close to Matsumoto's for Japanese and to my own ideas, even though Hoonchamlong's account is formulated in a very different framework, namely the formal framework of Government and Binding theory.

[5]I suspect that the examples discussed by Hoonchamlong (1991:181–184) may belong here, although Hoonchamlong gives a different interpretation.

(21) chán mâj chɔ́ɔb [thîi thəə ninthaa khruu]
I    not  like     that you gossip teacher
'I don't like it that you gossip about the teacher.'

As noted by Hoonchamlong (1991:177), this use of *thîi* differs from the competing complementizer *wâa* in that the former presupposes the truth of the complement clause, while the latter does not. Since the truth of relative clauses, and also of *fact-S* constructions, is also presupposed, one can perhaps establish a generalization that *thîi* can introduce any kind of presupposed non-adverbial clause. But I leave the implications of this to be worked out by those who are more familiar with Thai.

## 2. Other Typological Features and Alternative Constructions

As I hope to have made clear in the brief presentation of the English and Japanese data in section 1, to establish whether a language belongs to the European or to the Asian type requires a fair amount of argumentation. In particular, it proves to be impossible to judge from simple inspection of relative clauses whether a language belongs to the one type or the other. For instance, in the typological literature, including Comrie (1989), both the English construction as in (4) and the Japanese construction as in (11) have been classified as instances of the "gap" type of relative clause, defined as one where the subordinate clause contains no overt reference to the head noun. Yet this construction in English nonetheless belongs to the European type, subject for instance to syntactic constraints on extraction (as in (22), cf. (9)), while the Japanese construction belongs to the Asian type. Indeed, English belongs to the European type whether the relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun, by *that* (whose status as a relative pronoun or as a complementizer is controversial), or by zero.

(22)    *the man [I believe [that saw you]]

An even more striking contrast is provided in Comrie (forthcoming a), where it is shown that while some Turkic languages, such as Karachay-Balkar (northern Caucasus) belong to the Asian type, Turkish itself belongs to the European type. This manifests itself down to fine details such as the acceptability of (23) in Karachay-Balkar versus the unacceptability of a literal translation into Turkish; the example parallels Japanese example (16).

(23)    [et   biš-gän]   iyis
meat cook-PRT smell
'the smell of meat cooking'

Indeed, we find that the Asian type can cooccur with opposing values for a number of other typological parameters. For instance, we have already illustrated, in passing, that this type is compatible with both OV (head-final) and VO (head-initial) word order typology. OV languages with the Asian type include Japanese, Korean, Ainu, the Dravidian languages, and Turkic languages like Karachay-Balkar. VO languages with the Asian type include Chinese, Thai, and Khmer. Similarly, the Asian type occurs with prenominal noun-modifying clauses (as in Japanese, Korean, Ainu, the Dravidian languages, the relevant Turkic languages, and Chinese—Chinese shifts groups here) and with postnominal noun-modifying clauses (Thai and Khmer). But perhaps even more strikingly, the Asian type is not restricted to relative clauses that would be considered as belonging to the gap type

as defined in such works as Comrie (1989). As argued in Hoonchamlong (1991), Thai has, in addition to "gap" relative clauses illustrated in section 1, pronoun-retention relative clauses as in (24) (cf. (18)), in which an overt pronoun is coreferential with the head noun.

(24)    phûuchaaj  [thîi  thɔɔ  hĕn  kháw]
       man            that  you  see  he
       'the man that you saw'

Likewise in Japanese it is possible, though rare, to have an overt pronoun in the relative clause coreferential with the head noun.

     It is worth examining in some detail how examples like (24), in comparison with (11) or (18), are to be analyzed in the framework I am advocating here. Recall that the basic point is the following: All that the syntax specifies is that a head noun is accompanied by a modifying clause. The precise semantic relation is established pragmatically. In sentences like (11) or (18), it is necessary to establish a plausible relation between *book* and *the student bought*, the most likely such relation being that the student bought the book. In sentences like (24), it is necessary to establish a plausible relation between *book* and *the student bought it*, and the most likely such relation is that the pronoun is coreferential with the head noun. The pragmatic principle is thus the same in both constructions, as indeed it is in constructions with *fact*-S interpretations like (15). Work has already started on deciding whether languages with gap-type relative clauses belong to the European or to the Asian type. These last considerations suggest that languages with the pronoun-retention type also need to be reinvestigated from this viewpoint.[6]

     In fact, it may even be necessary to reconsider English in light of the preceding remarks. As noted above, the kinds of relative clauses found in standard English all belong to the European type. In non-standard English, instances of pronoun-retention are also attested, as in (25).

(25)     the road [that I don't know [where it leads]]

Note that (25) without the resumptive pronoun *it* is ungrammatical, a violation of the rule that one cannot relativize, using any of the constructions other than pronoun-retention, the subject of a subordinate clause introduced by a complementizer (here, *where*). The traditional assumption has been that sentences like (25) should be analyzed essentially in the same way as the construction of the standard language, except that a pronoun is retained, this allowing for a greater range of relations between head noun and relativized element. But an alternative now available to us is to assume that (25) is, in syntactic terms, simply a subordinate clause (*that I don't know where it leads*) attached to a head noun. Of course, if this were so, we would predict that translation equivalents of examples like Japanese (15) or (16) should occur. Interestingly, Matsumoto (1988) notes that such examples have been attested in non-standard English, such as (26).

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[6]The other major relative clause types identified in Comrie (1989), namely the relative-pronoun type and the head-internal type, seem more restricted in such typological compatibilities. The relative-pronoun type can only be of the European type, since it necessarily involves movement of the relative pronoun relative to the position of an equivalent argument in a declarative main clause, i.e. a syntactic link is necessarily established between the relative pronoun and a gap in the relative clause. Head-internal relative clauses have, by definition, the basic structure of an independent sentence, and may thus be incompatible with the European type.

(26)    You come to a group [that you have to eat certain foods].

An example from my own recent light reading (Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*, 1992, chapter 37) is given in (27), in which the relative marker *who* bears no syntactic relation to what follows.

(27)    Marietta has attended cocktail parties that were also attended by some people [who, well, your eyes would bug out].

While it may not be the case that everyone who accepts (25) in non-standard usage would also accept (26) and (27), this may be the direction in which non-standard usage is moving.
These English data suggest yet a further important factor to bear in mind. Speakers of English who accept, in non-standard usage, examples like (25), (26), or (27), also accept, in the same registers, examples like (3) and (4), which cannot be analyzed simply as noun-modifying clauses attached to a head noun, because they involve syntactic constraints on what constituents can be relativized. In other words, such speakers have both the Asian type and the European type. From which we conclude that it is possible for a single language to have both types, i.e. two relative clause-like constructions with radically different structures. I emphasize this because it goes against a tendency in syntactic analysis that has been inherited from the early days of transformational grammar, namely the idea that constructions that can more or less substitute for one another should be given identical, or at least very similar analyses. In analyzing non-standard English, pronoun-retention and gap types are analyzed in essentially the same way, because they have very similar, indeed usually identical functions. But this is by no means a necessary line to take. It is quite conceivable that constructions serving more or less the same function might have radically different structures. This is clearly the case cross-linguistically: In general, English relative clauses translate into Japanese noun-modifying clauses and vice versa, and it is only when one considers less typical examples, like Japanese (15)–(16), that the differences appear. There is no reason why similar distinctions should not operate language-internally, and some varieties of non-standard English seem to illustrate this possibility. Whether this is widespread among the languages of the world remains to be seen, as more languages are analyzed taking into account these perspectives.
    A further point that needs to be taken into account is the following. Given that the two types, European and Asian, can cooccur in a single language, it ought to be possible for the one to be replaced diachronically by the other—indeed, this seems to have happened in Turkish, whose relative clause construction shows a number of innovations, in the direction of the European type, in comparison with more conservative relative clause constructions in other Turkic languages, even though, incidentally, all the constructions under discussion here make use of native Turkic morphology.[7] Note that this suggests not only that the two types can cooccur, but that the one can develop into the other, presumably through intervening stages. An interesting piece of evidence is provided by the Dravidian language Tamil (Lehmann 1989:284–94, 310–311). In general, the Tamil data closely parallel those from Japanese, in particular in that there is little reason to draw a language-internal syntactic distinction between modifying clauses with

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[7]Some Turkic languages, including Turkish, also have a finite, postnominal relative clause based on Persian and using a reflex of the Persian relativizer *ke* (*ki*). This construction is not under discussion here.

relative clause interpretation and those with *fact*-S interpretation, such as (28) and (29).

(28) [kumaar-ai(k) kaṭi-tt-a] naay[8]
Kumar-ACC bite-PST-PRT dog
'the dog which bit Kumar'

(29) [oru mantiri varu-kiṟ-a] anta[9] vatanti
a minister come-PRS-PRT that rumor
'the rumor that a minister would come'

In general, the two constructions run in parallel, so that indeed there seems to be no reason to distinguish them syntactically. However, Lehmann notes that there is one small respect in which they differ, and this concerns noun-modifying clauses where the verb is *uḷ* 'exist' or one of three other defective verbs. Noun-modifying clauses with these verbs are fine if they are interpreted as relative clauses, as in (30). However, they are excluded if they are given a *fact*-S interpretation, as in (31).

(30) [inta(k) kiraama-tt-il uḷḷ-a] iranṭu koovil
this temple-OBL-LOC exist-PRT two temple
'the two temples which are in this village'

(31) *[kaṭavuḷ uḷḷ-a] nampikkai
God exist-PRT belief
'the belief that God exists'

This could conceivably represent the beginning of a shift away from the Asian type in the direction of the European type, initially through differentiation of relative and *fact*-S constructions with these defective verbs.

### 3. Syntactic Versus Pragmatic Constraints

A major difference between the European and Asian types, as presented above, is that the European type shows syntactic constraints on the relation between the head noun and the position relativized—in generative terms, constraints on extraction—whereas the Asian type does not. This is an important difference, but unfortunately it is not always easy in practice to draw it. The examples given in section 1 were clear-cut. The difference in acceptability between English examples (7) and (9) is very robust, and it is hard to imagine a pragmatic account that would account for this degree of difference (and not a mild preference in favor of one or the other); this is clearly a syntactic difference. Japanese examples like (13) and (14) seem equally clear in the direction of a pragmatic account: Changing the pragmatics of an example, by making a context more easily retrievably, can render fully acceptable a construction that is otherwise questionable for some speakers. But many examples are far from clear in this way.

It is worth initially clearing up a misconception. When it is claimed that there are no syntactic constraints, it is often concluded that this means there are no constraints, or at least no serious constraints, or at the very least that a language with "only" pragmatic constraints will allow a far wider range of constructions than one with syntactic constraints. And certainly the comparison between Japanese or

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[8]Letters in parentheses indicate sounds that are inserted by sandhi (morphophonemic rule).

[9]*Anta* here is a demonstrative.

Thai, with pragmatic constraints, and English, with syntactic constraints, would seem to confirm this: compare Japanese sentence (14) or Thai sentence (19) with its English translation. But there are certain features of Japanese and Thai syntax that make the processing of what would otherwise be complex constructions of this kind relatively easy. Japanese has overt case markers/postpositions to indicate the syntactic or semantic relation of overt noun phrases, which makes it much easier to recover the syntactic or semantic relation of a noun phrase that is missing, and this of course applies both in relative clauses and in independent clauses with zero anaphora. In Thai, the Subject–Verb–Object word order helps to keep subject and object apart, while the use of prepositions and/or serial verb constructions can also *help keep track of the syntactic and semantic relations of noun phrases.* What would happen if a language lacked these devices? Such a language is Haruai, a *non-Austronesian language spoken in the southwest of Madang Province, Papua New Guinea.*[10] Haruai has a number of constructions receiving relative clause interpretations, but the one of interest here has a phrase-final head noun preceded by a subordinate clause, as in (32).

(32)
| [ha | gʷökʷö | kɓ | p] | rg | py=kay | md |
|-----|--------|-----|----|----|--------|-----|
| boy | bad | steal | get.PRS.3SG | money | where | stay.PRS.3SG |

'Where is the money that the bad boy stole?'

The same construction can be used with a *fact*-S interpretation.

(33)
| [yöwr | nöbö | mgan | wölw-mön | rg | ybdw-m̃] | haywö |
|-------|------|------|----------|----|---------|-------|
| bird | man | cave | enter-DS | stone | pierce-PST.3PL | story |

'the story of how birds, when the man entered the cave, pierced the stone'[11]

One might therefore expect to find relativization operating as freely in Haruai as it does in Japanese or Thai. In fact, relativization is very constrained in Haruai. In natural discourse, it is rare to find other than the simplest examples, and speakers are loath even to consider more complex examples when such examples are presented to them. However, there are independent factors that make the processing of Haruai noun-modifying clauses with a relative clause interpretation more complex than their equivalents in Japanese or Thai. Like Japanese and unlike Thai, Haruai is strictly verb-final, so word order cannot be used to distinguish the arguments of a verb when one is covert. But unlike Japanese, Haruai does not have any case distinction between subject and object. This means that even a simple relative clause like (34) is potentially ambiguous between 'the boy that hit the man' and 'the boy that the man hit'.

(34)
| [nöbö | pal] | ha |
|-------|------|-----|
| man | hit.PRS.3SG | boy |

When one adds to this the fact that the language also makes frequent use of head-internal relative clauses, and that the rather minimal agreement morphology on the verb serves only to identify the person–number of the subject, it is clear that the basic syntactic structure of the language gives the hearer few cues on the basis of

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[10]My work on Haruai was supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Grant BNS-8504293

[11]This is a favorite Haruai story, in which a young man is trapped inside a cave by a sorcerer, but is saved by birds who peck a hole through the stone

which to retrieve the interpretation of a noun-modifying clause with relative clause interpretation. I suspect that this is the main reason for the heavy effective constraints on such constructions, though to this I would add that it is extremely hard to pin down exactly what these constraints are, which is as one would expect if they are pragmatic rather than syntactic—slight changes in the plausibility of a combination can have a major effect on its acceptability. I do not claim that this is anything like a complete solution to the problem, indeed much more work will need to be carried out to determine why different languages with pragmatic constraints seem to have such different constraints. But at least an approach to a solution is there.

An important factor that emerges from the preceding is that if a language has pragmatic constraints, then from a syntactic viewpoint it will seem to have very messy constraints. Lehmann (1989:287–293) gives a rather extensive account of constraints on relativization in Tamil, with acknowledgments to work by E. Annamalai and Sanford B. Steever. Note that if Tamil is indeed to be analyzed in the same way as Japanese, then the prediction would be that it should have pragmatic, but no syntactic constraints. While Lehmann does not explicitly consider the possibility of a pragmatic account, it is clear that the constraints he states seem very messy indeed from a syntactic viewpoint. For instance, the same morphological case is sometimes relativizable and sometimes not, depending on its semantics: A dative noun phrase can be relativized if referring to an indirect object, a goal of motion, or an experiencer, but not if referring to purpose, thus allowing 'the boy to whom I gave money', 'the temple to which Kumar went', but not 'the examination for which Kumar studies'; this seems to be connected first with more versus less likely interpretations of the dative, secondly with interpretations that are more versus less predictable from the semantics of the verb. Somewhat similarly, nouns in the instrumental case can be relativized when they express instrument or material (out of which something is made), but not when they express cause. Noun phrases with bound postpositions cannot be relativized, and this seems to reflect the fact that bound postpositions have more semantic content than case markers, making it more difficult to retrieve their specific semantics if the postpositional phrase is omitted (and bound postpositions cannot be stranded). The material presented by Lehmann certainly looks as if it could profitably be investigated from a pragmatic viewpoint by someone with thorough competence in Tamil. Even in Japanese, certain semantic relations are hard to express by means of a noun-modifying clause with relative clause interpretation for the pragmatic reason that other interpretations are more salient and simply mask the less likely interpretation. Thus (35) is taken to mean 'the building to which I will go', rather than 'the building from which I will go'.

(35)  [boku  ga   iku]  tatemono
      I      NOM  go    building

There is one final point that I would like to make concerning pragmatic accounts for the unacceptability of noun-modifying clauses. Crucial to the account I have been developing is that the noun-modifying clause, in its basic structure (i.e. making allowances for such things as finiteness versus nonfiniteness), must be capable of standing alone as an independent clause. Some noun-modifying clauses are indeed excluded for syntactic reasons, but for syntactic reasons having nothing to do with their status as noun-modifying clauses, but because of independent syntactic reasons. If the noun-modifying clause is independently ill-formed, then of course the larger structure into which it enters will also be ill-formed. For instance, in Tamil some (non-bound) postpositions do not allow their noun phrases to be

relativized, as in (36). However, this simply follows from the fact that these postpositions cannot be stranded: The impossibility of stranding equally excludes main clauses like (37) (which becomes well-formed if a noun phrase is included, as in (38)).

(36) *[kumaar parri(p) peec-i(y)-a]   uur
     Kumar  about    talk-PST-PRT  place
     'the place that Kumar talked about'

(37) *kumaar parri(p) peec-in-aan
     Kumar  about    talk-PST-3SM
     '*Kumar talked about.'

(38) kumaar oru  uur-ai(p)  parri(p)  peec-in-aan
     Kumar  a    place-ACC  about     talk-PST-3SM
     'Kumar talked about a place.'

By contrast, *iṭaiyil* 'in the middle (of)', can occur independently as an adverb in addition to occurring as a postposition with a preceding dative case (Lehmann 1989:128, 137). Since it can stand independently, a construction like (39) is possible.

(39) [iṭaiyil        oru  kuḷam  iru-kkiṛ-a]  koovil
     in.the.middle  a    tank   be.PRS.PRT   temple
     'a temple in the middle of which is a tank'

(In somewhat less than elegant English, one might translate (38) as 'a temple where there's a tank in the middle'.) Thus, the independently given possibility or impossibility of stranding a postposition will impinge on possibilities for, apparently, relativizing on the noun phrase object of that postposition.

## 4. Conclusions

In this paper, I have tried to present a new way of looking at relative clauses, or rather, more generally, noun-modifying constructions, in languages that make no syntactic distinction between such constructions with relative clause, *fact-S*, and conceivably other interpretations. As I have tried to emphasize, the validity of this approach will depend on the careful analysis of the relevant constructions in languages that seem to have this phenomenon. But perhaps even more important than the empirical results of my study are the methodological concerns that underlie it. When one approaches a new language, it is only too tempting to apply the same techniques as were applied to more familiar languages. I feel that the analysis of so-called relative clauses in many Asian languages has suffered from the transferal of descriptive techniques that have shown themselves to be insightful in the analysis of the European type of relative clause, but which lead to questionable analyses in their application to languages of what I have called the Asian type. It is conceivable that in the last analysis the best account of Asian languages will turn out to be the same, or almost the same, as for European languages, and that the analysis I have proposed here will be proven wrong. But if this is done on the basis of detailed argumentation, and not blind acceptance of tradition, I will be more than happy.

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