

# Relative clauses in Mēbengokre\*

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## Abstract

This paper describes and proposes an analysis of relative clauses in Mēbengokre, a Jê language from the eastern Amazon region of Brazil. Relative clauses in this language are normally internally-headed, and the verbal predicate within them assumes a nominal form, triggering ergative alignment. The description of relative clauses addresses first (§2) their internal characteristics, i.e., ergative case marking, absence of morphological marking of the head of the relative clause, absence of some of the TAM categories present in main clauses, and the fact that internal heads can be omitted, yielding “free relative” constructions; §3 describes their external characteristics, i.e., their peculiar distribution within the clause, which often requires displacement to a left-peripheral focus position, the determiners and classifiers that may occur outside of the relative clause, and the possibility of some heads being external to the relative clause, among other topics.

The main thrust of our analysis of relative clauses is to show (§4) that they are not adjuncts of any sort, but rather self-contained noun phrases. In light of this idea, we analyze all “adjectival” modification within a noun phrase as having a predicative structure identical to that of relative clauses. The paper concludes by arguing that the proposed analysis of relative clauses illustrates a striking property of Mēbengokre, namely the systematic ambiguity between modifiers and heads found in all nominal expressions in the language.

Mēbengokre is a Jê language spoken in north-central Brazil by two indigenous nations, the Xikrin and the Kayapó, numbering over ten thousand individuals in total. It is closely related to Apinayé (described by de Oliveira 2005), Suyá (described by Santos 1997), Timbira (described by Popjes and Popjes 1986, and Alves 2004), and Panará (described by Dourado 2001).

This article is a description of the construction in Mēbengokre which is the functional equivalent of relative clauses, of which (1) is a simple example (the relative clause is within brackets):

- (1) amrẽ i-mã [ a-je tep bôr ] kwỳ ngã  
hither 1-DAT 2-ERG fish roast.PL.N some give.V  
‘Give me some of the fish you roasted.’
- (2) [ a-je tep bôr ] mỳrỳri dja ba ngôj ku’õ  
2-ERG fish roast.PL.N while FUT 1NOM pot wash.V  
‘I’ll wash the pots while you roast the fish.’

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The most natural way to analyze this construction, which is identical in structure to complement and adjunct clauses (cf. (2)), is as a nominalization. For this reason, the paper begins with a general characterization of noun phrases in Mēbengokre. The description of relative clauses themselves is divided into “internal” and “external” aspects (roughly what happens within and outside the brackets in the example). The paper closes by taking up noun phrases in general again, after the insights offered by the examination of relative clauses.

## 1 Introduction to Mēbengokre noun phrases

Simple noun phrases in Mēbengokre generally consist of single bare nouns, as illustrated in (3). The interpretation of these bare nouns can range from definite to generic depending on various factors (such as their topicality, aspect marking on the verb, and context), and in the case of count nouns that denote non-humans, can be both singular or plural. Nouns can be followed by demonstratives or quantifiers; some of these are shown in (4). There does not seem to be a clear distinction between count and mass nouns.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

- (3) tep  
fish  
‘the fish, one fish, fish, some fish’

- (4) a. tep jā  
fish this  
‘this/these fish’  
  
b. tep wā  
fish that

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<sup>1</sup>In this paper, contrary to our previous practice, we follow the most common orthographic conventions used to write Mēbengokre, rather than a broad phonetic transcription. The symbols stand for their usual IPA equivalents, except for  $r = /r/$ ,  $' = /ʔ/$ ,  $nh = /ɲ/$ ,  $ng = /ŋ/$ ,  $x = /tʃ/$ , and  $dj = /dʒ/$ ;  $\hat{e} = /e/$ ,  $e = /ɛ/$ ,  $\hat{o} = /o/$ ,  $o = /ɔ/$ ,  $y = /ɥ/$ ,  $\hat{a} = /a/$ ,  $\hat{y} = /ɤ/$ ,  $\tilde{y} = /ũ/$ , and  $\tilde{a} = /ã/$ .

<sup>2</sup>Abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: N, V — nominal and verbal forms of the verb (some verbs make no morphological distinction between the nominal and verbal forms; in these cases, N and V are not indicated in the glosses; whether the use is nominal or verbal should be clear from the surrounding examples); POSS — possessive postposition; INSTR — instrumental postposition; FOC — focalized constituent; 1, 2, 3 — first, second and third person; 2>3 — accusative pronominal agreement for second person subject acting on third person object; NOM, ACC — nominative and accusative case, only manifested (and glossed) in pronouns; absolutive, also the case of inalienable possessors, is not indicated in the glosses (i.e., absolutive pronouns are glossed simply as 1, 2, 3); ERG, DAT — ergative and dative postpositions (these have various prosodically and morphologically conditioned allomorphs, not distinguished in the glosses); third person inflection is sometimes zero or expressed by truncation of an initial consonant; in the former case it is not glossed, as the form in question is identical to the uninflected stem; in the latter case it is glossed as inseparable from the stem; NFUT — nonfuture; NEG — (existential) negation; INT — interrogative; ANTICAUS — anticausative; ANTIPASS — antipassive. Most locative postpositions are glossed using plain English words for convenience.

<sup>3</sup>A note regarding research methodology. The general properties of the construction described in this paper are known to us from analysis of texts and from our own direct exposure to the language during the period from 1996 to 2009, totalling approximately ten months in the field. For the purposes of this paper, targeted elicitation was carried out both monolingually and bilingually, and the majority of examples comes from elicitation.

<sup>4</sup>We cannot say much regarding the count/mass distinction in Mēbengokre in this paper. Note however that most quantifying words (e.g. *kwj* ‘some’) don’t make a distinction between describing masses or pluralities, as should be clear from the glosses to the examples. Furthermore, words such as *tep* ‘fish’ and *mry* ‘land animal’ may refer to individuals (i.e., a count interpretation) or to their meat (i.e., a mass interpretation).

- ‘that/those fish’
- c. tep kuni  
fish all  
‘all the fish’, ‘all of the fish (sg. or pl.)’
- d. tep ’õ  
fish one  
‘one fish’
- e. tep kwỳ  
fish some  
‘a few fish’, ‘some of the fish (sg. or pl.)’

Stressless versions of the demonstratives *jã* and *wã* exist, making them enclitics to the head noun. One is tempted to call these determiners, as de Oliveira (2005) did for Apinayé. In Mēbengokre, they do not seem to have a usage or meaning that sets them apart from demonstratives, however, so we will consider them to be contextually conditioned variants of the stressed demonstratives. The conditions for this alternation are not known. In elicitation, consultants report that the stressed demonstrative is interchangeable with the stressless one in most situations.

Keeping to the strictly head-final nature of Mēbengokre, adjuncts to the noun phrase appear to the left of the head noun; these are normally possessors, locations, or other expressions consisting of a postpositional phrase:

- (5) a. i-nhõ kà  
1-POSS canoe  
‘my canoe’
- b. krī raj kam kubē  
village large in barbarian  
‘city dwellers’
- c. mē no kam ixē  
people eye in mirror  
‘eyeglasses’
- d. bô o kikre  
thatch with house  
‘house with a thatched roof’
- e. ngy ’ã mē karō  
clay on people image  
‘clay doll’
- f. pidjỳ nhõ myt  
medicine POSS time  
‘time for medicine’

- (6) a. i-krã  
1-head  
'my head'
- b. kubẽ kra  
barbarian son  
'the white man's son'
- c. karõ  
image  
'his/her/its shadow'
- (7) a. i-djudjê  
1-weapon  
'my weapon'
- b. (i-nhõ) djudjê  
1-POSS weapon  
'(my) bow'

The nouns *eye* and *image* in examples (5c, 5e) are *relational* or inalienably possessed, meaning that they require a complement, in the form of either another noun or person inflection, as illustrated in (6). If no overt noun or person inflection is present, a third person reference, anaphoric to a topical entity, is always implied (ex. (6c)), except in a vanishingly small class of noun stems that can alternate between a relational (i.e., inalienably possessed) and a non-relational (i.e., alienably possessed or unpossessed) use (cf. (7)). The required complement position can however be saturated by a generic noun such as *mẽ* 'people' to get an approximately non-relational meaning, as in (5e). The interpretation of the dependent noun in this construction is usually that of inalienable possessor, kindred, or part of a whole; other semantic relations, such as material, kind, function, or purpose, normally need to be expressed through postpositional adjuncts. In particular, the postposition *nhõ*, used for alienable possession, is the one with the greatest semantic versatility, perhaps as a result of recent influence from Portuguese, cf. the distinctly non-Mëbengokre-like (5f).

The one clear exception to head-finality in the noun phrase has the following form:

- (8) kubẽ rop  
barbarian dog  
'dog-people', 'dog-person'

A series of expressions like the one in (8), all of them containing *kubẽ*, are used to name mythological beings. Neither *kubẽ* nor *rop* are relational nouns, so the only analysis possible for these noun phrases is one where the two nouns are in apposition. This is in stark contrast with the remainder of the language,

where it is usually straightforward to identify the element on the right as the head of a construction.<sup>5</sup> These symmetric compounds can be paraphrased by headed constructions where one of the elements is marked by a postposition:<sup>6</sup>

- (9)    *kubē*      *bê rop*  
        barbarian in dog  
        ‘dog-people’, ‘dog-person’

Modification by adjectives requires a great deal of further discussion. We postpone the presentation of our analysis until later, but in order to give the reader a flavor for the construction, we offer the following examples:

- (10) a. *idji*      *mex*  
        3.name beautiful  
        ‘beautiful names’
- b. *ngy bor*  
        clay bake.N  
        ‘baked clay’
- c. *mē*      *kra-re*  
        people son-DIM  
        ‘people with children’ (also ‘people’s children’)

In all of these cases, the modifier appears to be on the right. Morphosyntactically, however, what here seem to be modifiers are actually relational heads acting as predicates, taking their modifiees as complements. Later we show how, in light of our analysis of internally-headed relative clauses, the idea of modifiers as predicates, i.e., as heads of a relative clause which modifies a noun which is internal to it, can in fact be upheld about all modified noun phrases. Example (10c) shows that words with nominal reference can also be modifiers, i.e., they are ambiguous between being the semantic heads of the construction, or being modifiers to the word on the right. We will argue in §4.1 that the ambiguity exists also in (10a) and (10b), which would have the additional readings “the beauty of the names” and “the baking of the clay”, respectively. Having

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<sup>5</sup>Other than in these seemingly symmetric compounds, the element on the right in N-N compounds in Mēbengokre is always relational, and the element on the left can be straightforwardly identified as its complement in morphosyntactic terms, if not always semantically. Thus, Mēbengokre compounds differ from the apparently similar head-final compounds of English and other Germanic languages in the relationality of the noun on the right, which places important restrictions on what the semantic relation between the two parts can be. Incidentally, we call these constructions *compounds* here for lack of a better term. It should later become clear that we consider the headed construction to be simply the syntactic object that results from putting together a relational word with a complement, in a fully productive way.

<sup>6</sup>It will probably strike the reader as counterintuitive that the modifier in this construction should be *kubē* rather than *rop*, an objection that we share, given that *kubē* is the hyperonym for all foreign groups, real or mythological. The exact way in which (9) gets its interpretation will become clearer when we address adjectival modification (cf. the discussion surrounding ex. (10)). In brief, *bê* is a locative postposition which gets a copular interpretation by virtue of the existential interpretation that noun phrases get when they become clauses. The literal meaning of the example would therefore be ‘there is dog in the barbarian’ as a clause, and ‘the barbarian on which there is dog’ as a noun phrase. Note that this sort of construction can take on an equative meaning even in English, in cases such as ‘in me you have a friend’, which means ‘I am your friend’.

implicitly defined *head* above, we could define *modifiers* in the language to be heads in a non-referential function.

## 2 Internal characteristics of relative clauses

Most relative clauses in Mēbengokre are head-internal. This means that the relativized noun appears within the relative clause, as an argument of the embedded predicate. No special marking appears on the noun that serves as head. Compare the main clause in (11a) with the relative clause (11b):

- (11) a. ba kubēkà jadjà  
 1NOM clothes put.on.V  
 ‘I put on clothes.’
- b. i-je kubēkà jadjàr jã  
 1-ERG clothes put.on.N this  
 ‘these clothes that I put on’

To contrast the internally-headed relative clause of Mēbengokre with externally-headed constructions also found in the language, which parallel the relative clauses found in more familiar languages, take the following example:

- (12) kàx jã, [ i-je o mry kà kadjàr ] jã  
 knife this 1-ERG with animal skin remove.N this  
 ‘this knife that I use to skin animals’

A construction such as this one differs from the relative clause in (11b) in that there is a pause between the purported head and the relative clause. In addition, two demonstratives are present. This type of construction, involving apposition of a simple noun to a gapped relative, is amply discussed by Meira (2006) as the most characteristic form of the relative clause in Carib languages. Like in Mēbengokre, the Carib construction is characterized by a clear pause between the simple noun and the gapped relative, but, unlike the former, the construction as a whole takes at most a single demonstrative. Because of the presence of multiple demonstratives, we contend that, whatever the correct analysis of Carib is, Mēbengokre structures such as (12) are not grammaticalized as relative clauses in the language, and have to be analyzed as two complete noun phrases that are juxtaposed, each of which is fully referential (i.e., the relative clause is not interpreted restrictively). The obligatory presence of a pause reinforces the fact that there is no nominal template to support such juxtaposition as an actual adjunction, but rather only as an afterthought or clarification. This is possible with pairs of underived noun phrases, such as the following:

- (13) Kajtire, a-kamy ja  
 Kajtire 2-brother this  
 ‘Kajtire, this brother of yours’

In §2.5 we will argue that the relative clause in (12) is actually a free relative juxtaposed to a noun phrase.

As can be observed in (11b), word order in the relative clause is identical to order in the equivalent main clause. The main verb of a relative clause takes a special form, which, as we have argued elsewhere (Salanova 2007b, 2008), is nominal in character. One can also observe that the form of the pronoun for the transitive subject is ergative in (11b). Relative clauses, like all other embedded clauses, display an ergative pattern, evident in pronominal agreement on the verb and in the marking of transitive subjects:

(14) Ergative split

a. Nominative pattern in main clauses:

i. ba	a-pumũ	ii. ba	nõ
1NOM	2-see.V	1NOM	lie.V
	‘I see you.’		‘I lie down.’

b. Ergative pattern in relative and other embedded clauses

i. i-je	a-pumũnh	ii. i-nõr
1-ERG	2-see.N	1-lie.N
	‘me seeing you’	‘me lying down’

Outside and to the right of the relative clause a classifying element may appear, as well as a demonstrative or quantifier. Very little else can appear in a noun phrase containing a relative clause.

In this section, we develop the following additional descriptive points about the internal workings of relative clauses: (a) relative clauses lack some of the morphological categories and structural positions that are possible in main clauses; (b) there is no marking on the head, leading to ambiguity; (c) all positions in the clause can be relativized, (d) there is no definiteness restriction on the head of the relative clause, and (e) heads may be replaced by third person pronouns. In §3, we discuss the elements that appear outside of relative clauses.

## 2.1 Relative clauses lack tense and other categories

The left periphery of matrix clauses is constituted by a focus position, which can contain at most one dislocated phrase, a delimiting particle that indicates future versus nonfuture tense (or possibly irrealis versus realis mood), and a position reserved for nominative subjects, which is further to the left than that of the ergative subject or of any verb phrase constituent.

None of these left peripheral positions are available in relative clauses. The ergative subject, considered to be an oblique, can appear only after the particle *arỳm* ‘already’, which appears just after the nominative subject in the matrix clause. This puts whatever position *arỳm* is in as the left bound of structure in internally-headed relative clauses, effectively excluding tensed relative clauses.

(15) Lack of certain morphological categories:

a. Focus, tense/mood, and a higher subject position in main clauses:

kukryt nē ba arým ku-bĩ  
 tapir (FOC) NFUT 1NOM already 3ACC-kill.V  
 ‘I killed *tapir*.’

b. Not available in relative clauses (but see §3.2 below):

(\*kukryt) (\*nē) (\*ije) arým ije bĩn  
 tapir (FOC) NFUT 1ERG already 1ERG 3.kill.N

Mēbengokre has a series of postverbal markers that can be used in some of the same functions as the left peripheral particles. These are either directional postpositions or positional verbs transitivized with the instrumental postposition *o*, as in (16d), which might have temporal interpretations parasitic on their essentially aspectual or modal meaning. They include the following:

- (16) a. kute kà nhipêx **mã** jã  
 3ERG canoe make.N to this  
 ‘the canoe he’s about to make’
- b. kute kà nhipêx **’ÿr** jã  
 3ERG canoe make.N up.to this  
 ‘the canoe he almost made’
- c. kute kà nhipêx **kadjy** jã  
 3ERG canoe make.N in.order.to this  
 ‘the canoe he’s supposed to make’
- d. kute canoe nhipêx **o** **ÿr** jã  
 3ERG canoe make.N INSTR 3.sit.N this  
 ‘the canoe he’s making’

These resources are also available in main clauses. Furthermore, there seems to be no substitute in relative clauses for some of the main clause left-peripheral particles such as *dja* ‘future or irrealis’ and *we* ‘hearsay evidential’.

One characteristic of the nominal verb form used in relative clauses is that it is passive-like, in the sense that while in transitive finite main clauses the omission of the subject can only mean that it is recovered anaphorically from discourse context, the ergative subject of a relative clause, if omitted, triggers a generic interpretation for the agent, not unlike what happens in the English passive construction without a *by*-phrase.<sup>7</sup> Note the contrast between (17c) and (18b):<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>One might well ask if the ergative subject of embedded clauses is not a demoted subject, given its optional nature and its patterning with other obliques. There is however no ‘active’ counterpart to the ‘passive’ embedded verb, much as there is no passive counterpart to an active finite main verb, and thus there is no real demotion to speak of. Nominal forms of verbs are passive-like in the same way that nominalizations in many languages of the world, including several European languages, have been claimed to be (cf. Alexiadou 2001), i.e., because transitive subjects are generally introduced by *by*-phrases (the *by*-phrase is not the only choice in English, which can also rely on the Saxon genitive).

<sup>8</sup>We can establish a parallel between this and what we said about relational nouns above: the transitive subject is obligatory

- (17) a. *ba hadju kate*  
 1NOM radio break.V  
 ‘I broke the radio.’
- b. *hadju aj-kate*  
 radio ANTICAUS-break.V  
 ‘The radio broke.’
- c. *hadju kate*  
 radio break.V  
 ‘S/he broke the radio.’ (cannot mean: ‘the radio was broken’)
- (18) a. *ije hadju ka’èk*  
 1ERG radio break.N  
 ‘the radio that I broke’
- b. *hadju bi-ka’èk*  
 radio ANTICAUS-break.N  
 ‘the radio that was broken’ (not ‘by him’); ‘the radio that broke’
- c. *hadju ka’èk*  
 radio break.N  
 ‘the radio that was broken’ (not ‘by him’); ‘the radio that broke’

Note, in particular, that the ergative subject can be omitted even when the anticausative prefix is not present, (18c). We do not know the meaning difference between (18b) and (18c).

An additional passive trait of the nominal verb form is the fact that the ergative case is straightforwardly composed of an accusative pronominal mark governed by the element *je* (which has an allomorph *te* in the third person).<sup>9</sup> Other than for the ergative, *je* is also used as a reason-introducing postposition, as in the following construction:

- (19) *bri pyma=je muw*  
 frog fear=for cry.V  
 ‘He wept for fear of the frog.’

in (finite) verbal clauses, but omissible in nominal ones; like the obligatory complement of relational nouns, the subject can be made generic in verbal clauses only by means of a generic noun such as *mē* ‘people’.

<sup>9</sup>The full paradigm of pronominal forms in the singular is therefore as follows:

	Nominative	Absolutive	Accusative	Ergative
1st	<i>ba</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>i-</i>	<i>ije</i>
2nd	<i>ga</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>aje</i>
3rd	$\emptyset$	$\emptyset$	<i>ku-/a-</i>	<i>kute</i>

Absolutive and accusative pronominal forms are bound. Absolutive forms are used for the S and O functions of nominal forms of verbs, for the complements of relational nouns, and for the objects of most postpositions. Accusative is used for the O function of most finite verbs, and for the objects a handful of postpositions. Ergative is used exclusively for the A function of nominal forms of verbs, while nominative is used for the S and A functions of finite verbs, but may often “duplicate” an oblique (i.e., ergative, dative, genitive or locative) subject in a main clause (see Reis Silva and Salanova 2000). For this reason, we have raised the possibility in Salanova (2008) that nominative pronouns are inflected auxiliaries. Nominative forms are also the forms that are generally used in non-argumental positions (i.e., focus, topic, or as stand-alone utterances).

## 2.2 There is no marking of the head

The head of the relative clause is not marked in any particular way; there are no relative pronouns or any special determiner for relative clause heads. Interrogative pronouns, which in many languages double as relative pronouns, do not have this function in Mēbengokre, as the obligatoriness of the interrogative interpretation of the following sentences attests:

- (20) a. [ aje mỳj mry par ] nē kà kam ikwā?  
 2ERG what animal kill.PL.N NFUT canoe in 3.lie  
 ‘What animal that you killed is lying in the canoe?’ (not: ‘the animal which...’)
- b. [ aje nhũm kôt a-tēm ] nē kraje kà kuri dja?  
 2ERG who with 2-go.N NFUT still canoe near stand.V  
 ‘Who that you went with is still standing next to the canoe?’ (not: ‘the one who...’)

This serves to show that interrogative pronouns are necessarily interrogative, and do not double as relative or indefinite pronouns.<sup>10</sup>

Though a series of pragmatic and information-structure factors put practical limits on interpretation, Mēbengokre relative clauses are essentially ambiguous in many ways. Any governed noun phrase present in a relative clause can in principle be its head:

- (21) [ kubē ku-te mē i-mā mēkrīdjà nhōr ] nē jã  
 barbarian 3-ERG PL 1-DAT chair give.N NFUT this  
 ‘These are the chairs that a/the white man gave us’, or  
 ‘This is the white man that gave us some/the chairs.’

There is no restriction as to the grammatical function within the relative clause of the noun phrase that serves as head: noun phrases in adjunct roles are freely allowed, as attested in (22). Null third-person pronominals can also be interpreted as heads, in a construction that could be considered the equivalent of a free relative (cf. (23)). Free or headless relatives are treated in more detail in §2.5.

- (22) [ kubē kôt i-tēm ] nē jã  
 barbarian with 1-go.N NFUT this  
 ‘This is the white man with whom I went.’
- (23) [ mē tũm kute arēnh ] nē jã  
 PL old 3ERG 3.say.N NFUT this  
 ‘This is what the ancients told.’

<sup>10</sup>*mỳj* ‘what’ does seem to have an indefinite use if and only if it is followed by a destressed demonstrative *ja* or *wa*: *mỳja* ‘something’, and *mỳjwa* ‘whatever that is’, somewhat pejoratively.

Note, though, that the a relative clause cannot mean just anything associated to the event described.<sup>11</sup> Aside from the possibility of naming the event itself (‘my going’), to be discussed later, the possible interpretations of Mēbengokre internally-headed relative clauses are strictly linked to relativizable positions that are represented in the structure by a third person pronoun.<sup>12</sup>

- (24) a. kôt i-tēm jā  
with 1-go.N this  
‘this one who I went with’, ‘me, the one that goes with him/her’, ‘my going with him/her’
- b. \*i-tēm jā  
1-go.N this  
‘me, the one that goes’, ‘my going’, but not ‘the way/time I go’, ‘the one I go with’, etc.

We take this to mean that the heads of relative clauses in Mēbengokre can only be noun phrases, i.e., there are no relative clauses headed by adverbs such as *how* and *when*, whether overt or implicit. Implicit nominal arguments cannot head the relative clause either. This is an important point, which will be reiterated below: Mēbengokre relative clauses cannot take on whatever circumstantial meaning is associated to a clause. They are clearly nominal, and may only refer to one of the overt nominal participants of the clause, save for the eventive interpretation mentioned above, which is examined in some detail in §4.1.

### 2.3 No restriction on positions that may be relativized

All positions in the clause can be relativized with the same strategy. We have noted no instances in which the accessibility hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie 1977) might be relevant to categorically rule out a particular construction in Mēbengokre. The following examples were obtained through elicitation; their relative frequency in texts has not yet been investigated. Readers should be reminded of the potential for ambiguity in these sentences.

- (25) a. Theme (direct object)
- [ ajbir a-je a-nhō pur kurũm jàt kadjàr ] wã i-m a-ngã  
recently 2-ERG 2-POSS garden from yam uproot.N that 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
‘Give me the yam that you just took out from your garden.’

<sup>11</sup>For an example of what we are contemplating, see the description of Warlpiri adjoined (free) relative clauses by Larson (1982), which optionally take on meanings such as the time or other circumstances in which an event took place:

ngajulu-rlu-rna wawiri nyangu, kuja-npa pantu-rnu nyuntulu-rlu  
I-ERG-1sg kangaroo see-PAST, COMP/AUX-2sg spear-PAST you-ERG

- a. ‘I saw the kangaroo which you speared’  
b. ‘I saw the kangaroo when you speared it’

<sup>12</sup>The pronoun itself is often zero, as in the example given, but we know of its presence from the presence of the postposition *kôt*, which, like all postpositions, is relational, and implies a third person complement if none is present. See §2.5 for some discussion of null pronouns as heads of relative clauses.

b. Instrument

[ a-je **katōk** o mry bīn ] dja ga i-m a-ngã  
2-ERG gun INSTR animal kill.N FUT 2NOM 1-DAT 2>3-give.V

‘You should give me the gun that you use to kill game.’

c. Inessive location

[ a-je **ngōj** kam mry mrō ] wã i-m a-ngã  
2-ERG pot in meat cook that 1-DAT 2>3-give.V

‘Give me the pot in which you cook meat.’

d. Superessive location

[ **pī** ’ã akrô jet ] wã dja ga a-ta  
tree on vine hang that FUT 2NOM 2>3-cut

‘You should cut down the tree on which the vines are hanging.’

e. Proximate location

[ **kikre** kuri mē ãm ] wã nē i-nhũnkwã  
house near people 3.stand.N that NFUT 1-home

‘That house near which people are standing is my home.’

f. Direction

[ **pī** kōj Kajtire tēm ] wã dja ga a-ta  
tree towards Kajtire go.N that FUT 2NOM 2>3-cut

‘You should cut that tree that Kajtire is walking towards.’

g. Agentive subject

[ **kubē** ku-te i-mã kàj nhār ] nē jã  
barbarian 3-ERG 1-DAT knife give NFUT this

‘This is the white man that gave me the knife.’

h. Dative experiencer subject

[ **mē** ku-m bàri’y djành ] bit ku-te kur  
people 3-DAT pepper like only 3-ERG eat.PL.N

‘Only those people that enjoy pepper eat it.’

i. Dative recipient or beneficiary (indirect object)

[ i-je i-nhō **bikwa** mã idji jarēnh ] nē bōx mã  
1-ERG 1-POSS relative to 3.name say.N NFUT arrive about.to

‘The relative of mine to whom I gave a name is about to arrive.’

j. Possessor

[ **kubẽ** nhõ kà tũm ] nẽ jã  
 barbarian POSS canoe old NFUT this  
 ‘This is the white man with the old canoe.’

Relativizing out of a multiply-embedded position is also possible:

- (26) a. Location within a direct object

i-je **pĩ** kam menh nhõpõk jã  
 1ERG tree in honey bore.N this  
 ‘this tree in which I made a hole to get honey’

- b. Inalienable possessor within an instrumental

mẽ ku-te **pĩ** ’ò o menh kangrĩnh jã  
 people 3-ERG tree leaf with honey wrap.N this  
 ‘this tree whose leaves people use to wrap honey’

When multiple subjects are present, multiple embedding is avoided, perhaps because the resulting construction is inherently clumsy or difficult to process, as it would have several subjects in sequence separated from the predicates with which they belong.<sup>13</sup> Note the following examples:

- (27) a. [ a-je pĩ ’ã i-je katõk nhõr pumũnh ] wã  
 2-ERG tree on 1-ERG gun hang.N see.N that  
 ‘that tree where you saw me hang my gun’

- b. [ a-je amũjã’ã i-je krajkà jadjàr pumũnh ] wã  
 2-ERG yesterday 1-ERG pants put.on.N see.N that  
 ‘those pants that you saw me wear yesterday’

- (28) a. amrẽ [ i-je ngõj ku’õnh mã ] i-mã angã  
 here 1-ERG pot wash.N in.order.to 1-DAT 2>3.give.V  
 ‘Give me the pot that I’m supposed to wash.’

- b. amrẽ i-mã [ i-je ngõj ku’õnh mã i-prĩ ket rã’ã ] wã ngã  
 here 1-DAT 1-ERG pot wash.N in.order.to 1-careful NEG yet that give.V  
 ‘Give me that pot that I did not yet wash carefully.’

<sup>13</sup>As in the following hypothetical example (valid in principle for any head-final language with internally-headed relative clauses):

[ The dog [ I the man know ] bit ] has rabies.  
 ‘The dog that bit the man has rabies.’

A similar effect can be obtained in head-initial languages such as English:

The dog [ that the woman [ that the child knows ] loves ] has rabies.

- c. [ i-je pidjô ka'ur kêt ] jã kuni dja ga ka'u  
 1-ERG fruit pick.N NEG this all FUT 2NOM pick.V  
 'You should pick all the fruit that I did not pick.'

Examples such as those in (28) might seem completely unremarkable, were it not for the fact that, as we have argued in Salanova (2008), negation, manner modifiers, and most other post-verbal elements, are actually predicates that take as their sole arguments a nominalized clause. Such sentences therefore contain several layers of embedding.

## 2.4 Definiteness of the internal head

It has been noted in the literature on internally-headed relative clauses that internal heads are normally required to be indefinite (cf. Williamson 1987). We have noted no such restriction in Měbengokre, where demonstratives can occur on the nouns that head the relative clause, and even discourse participants can be heads (cf. 29e).

- (29) a. djãm nẽ ga [ ku-te djudjê kênh ] pumũ  
 INT NFUT 2NOM 3-ERG weapon carve.N see.V  
 'Did you see the one that carves bows?'
- b. djãm nẽ ga [ me'õ ku-te djudjê kênh ] pumũ  
 INT NFUT 2NOM someone 3-ERG weapon carve.N see.V  
 'Did you see someone who carves bows?'
- c. djãm nẽ ga [ kubẽ ku-te djudjê kênh ] pumũ  
 INT NFUT 2NOM barbarian 3-ERG weapon carve.N see.V  
 'Did you see the white man that carves bows?'
- d. djãm nẽ ga [ kubẽ jã ku-te djudjê kênh ] pumũ  
 INT NFUT 2NOM barbarian this 3-ERG weapon carve.N see.V  
 'Did you see this white man that carves bows?'
- e. djãm nẽ ga [ i-je djudjê kênh ] pumũ  
 INT NFUT 2NOM 1-ERG weapon carve.N see.V  
 'Did you see me, the bow carver?' (also: 'Did you see me carving bows?', and 'Did you see the bow I carved?')

It seems like a logical necessity that a relative clause headed by a discourse participant (i.e., a first or second person pronoun) should be non-restrictive. For the other examples, the question of whether the interpretation of a particular relative clause is restrictive or non-restrictive is not always clear cut. Elements that normally have a deictic function not always designate definite entities, allowing a relative clause to still function restrictively, as in the following use of *this*:

- (30) Somebody at work got their clothes caught in this machine that punches holes on cardboard.

We suggest that this not fully definite use of demonstratives might be at play in some of the Mēbengokre examples given above.<sup>14</sup>

We do not have much to say in this paper about non-restrictive relative clauses beyond noting their superficial similarity to the restrictive internally-headed relative clauses that we have described so far.

## 2.5 Heads can be dropped

As was exemplified in (23) above, overt nominal heads may be replaced by third person pronouns, often null. The extent to which this is possible may be appreciated by contemplating the following examples, which parallel those in (25), with overt heads. Translation is tricky, as most of these free relative clauses contain demonstratives, and so are more specific than a translation which uses an indefinite pronoun might suggest. Like with the sentences in (25), the sentences below are potentially ambiguous.<sup>15</sup>

(31) a. Theme

[ ajbir a-je a-nhō pur kurūm — kadjàr ] wã i-m a-ngã  
 recently 2-ERG 2-POSS garden from uproot.N that 1-DAT 2>3-give.V

‘Give me what you just took out from your garden.’

b. Instrument

[ a-je — o mry bīn ] dja ga i-m a-ngã  
 2-ERG INSTR animal kill.N FUT 2NOM 1-DAT 2>3-give.V

‘Give me what you use to kill game.’

c. Inessive location

[ a-je — kam mry mrō ] wã i-m a-ngã  
 2-ERG in meat cook that 1DAT 2>3.give.V

‘Give me what you cook meat in.’

d. Superessive location

[ — ’ã akrô jet ] wã dja ga a-ta  
 on vine hang that FUT 2NOM 2>3-cut

‘You should cut down what has the vines on it.’

e. Proximate location

[ — kuri mē ãm ] wã pumū  
 near people 3.stand.N that look.V

‘Look at the one near which people are standing.’

f. Other locative

<sup>14</sup>We also remit the reader the examples in (20), in which the interpretation of the head is interrogative rather than indefinite.

<sup>15</sup>For clarity, when the gap is null, we indicate it with a dash.

[ krĩ    nhipôkri — ãm            ] wã    `ÿr    tẽ  
 village middle        3.stand.N    that up.to go.V

‘Go up to the one that is standing in the middle of the people.’

g. Dative experiencer subject

[ **ku**-m bàri’y djành ] bit    ku-te kur  
 3-DAT pepper like        only 3-ERG eat.PL.N

‘Only those that like pepper eat it.’

h. Dative recipient or beneficiary

[ i-je    **ku**-m idji    jarēnh ] nẽ    bôx    mǎ  
 1-ERG 3-DAT 3.name say.N    NFUT arrive about.to

‘The one to whom I gave a name is about to arrive.’

i. Possessor

[ — ò        kà        tũm ] nẽ    jǎ  
 3.POSS canoe old    NFUT this

‘This is the one with the old canoe.’

Rather than appearing to represent a different strategy (gapping, as opposed to an internal head), these sentences, matching all of the head-internal constructions in (25), seem to imply that the internal head can be done away with, and that, when it is present, it has simply a restrictive role.

What is striking about all of this is that free relatives are constructed with gaps, rather than with indefinite pronouns. These gaps are, in fact, identical to non-deictic third person inflection in Měbengokre. So it appears to be the case in this language that third person pronouns can be systematically interpreted as either variables bound by a relative operator, or as regular non-deictic (i.e., discourse- or topic-anaphoric) pronoun. This is essentially the same ambiguity that one finds in bare nouns, which can be bound by a relative operator, and thus serve as heads of the relative clause, or have reference on their own (i.e., be interpreted as definite or specific) without the need for any differentiating morphology. These ideas fall outside of the scope of this paper, and will have to be developed elsewhere.

### 3 External characteristics of relative clauses

In this section we address three descriptive points: (a) the nature of the elements that appear outside relative clauses, (b) external heads, and (c) the position and distribution of relative clauses within finite sentences.

#### 3.1 The nature of RC-external elements

All of the external elements about which we will talk appear to the right of the relative clause. In addition to the nominal mark on the verb itself, we need to mention the classifying elements *djà*, *djwỳnh*, and the

demonstratives *jã*, *wã* (and their stressless versions *ja*, *wa*). All of these elements may be clearly seen in the following example:<sup>16</sup>

- (32) kadjur djà jã  
 pick.N *djà* this  
 ‘this instrument to pick’

We have been considering the relative clause to end at the nominal form of the verb. The reasons for this are that, as we will see below, both the classifying elements and the demonstratives may appear in any type of noun phrase.

The morphemes *djà* and *djwỳnh* are used to create a large repertoire of what could be intuitively called “lexical” nominalizations, such as the following:

- (33) a. i-djà-kur-djà  
 1-ANTIPASS-eat.N-*djà*  
 ‘My eating utensils’, but also: ‘my eating place’, ‘my food’, etc.
- b. pi’ôk-jarênh-djwỳnh  
 writing-say.N-*djwỳnh*  
 ‘teacher’

<sup>16</sup>The nominal mark (N) is not segmentable in our analysis. In Salanova (2004, 2007b), we have argued that nominal forms of verbs are basic, both semantically and morphologically, and finite verbs are derived from them. Note that the shape of the finite form can normally be predicted from the nominal form, but not vice-versa, as the following examples attest:

<i>Nominal form</i>	<i>Verbal form</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
apêx	apê	to finish
djam	dja	to stand up
kurwỳk	kurwỳ	to light up
bâr	bã	to smell
rênh	rê	to take
rêr	rê	to pluck out (tr.)

In other cases, there is partial suppletion and other irregularities; these are treated in Salanova (2004):

<i>Non-finite form</i>	<i>Finite form</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
djupjêr	djupij	to carry on the shoulders
ngjênh	ngij	to plant
kanhwỳr	kanhuw	to pierce
rwỳk	ruw	to descend
mỳr	muw	to cry
ka’êk	kate	to break
ka’uk	katuw	to smash

We contend that the consonant that ends the nominal form is truncated in the finite verbal form. This suggestion was made by Santos (1997) regarding the related language Kísêdjê. The reason for choosing truncation over suffixation is that if the final consonant were to be added in the nominal form, one would have to set up arbitrary morphological classes that are unnecessary in the truncation approach.

We do not go here into the semantic reasons for supposing that nominal forms are basic. The interested reader should consult Salanova (2007b, 2007a).

In the literature on other Jê languages (cf., e.g., de Oliveira 2005), these morphemes have been considered to be an instrument and an agent nominalizer, respectively. Our contention is that what the “nominalizers” attach to is already nominal (i.e., it is by itself a nominalized verb that heads a relative clause),<sup>17</sup> and they themselves are no more than the relational nouns *djà* ‘container’ and *djwỳnh* ‘master’, which might have acquired a semi-grammaticalized function as classifiers, or simply have a broader meaning than what might appear from their normal nominal use, exemplified here with a third person inalienable possessor:

- (34) a. wỳj        nē    jã  
           3.master NFUT this  
           ‘This is the one who knows about it/is responsible for it/is its owner.’
- b. hà            nē    jã  
           3.container NFUT this  
           ‘This is its container.’

What is the relation between these nouns and the nominalized clause? We propose (cf. Salanova 2006) that it is exactly what the morphosyntax indicates: the bleached noun *djà* or *djwỳnh* heads the construction, and takes as its sole argument a nominalized clause. In such a configuration, the nominalized clause takes on an eventive meaning, i.e., naming the action, usually in a generic way (see §4.1). The bleached nouns refer to an instrument or an agent related to the named event, but the relation with a specific argument position is accidental, that is, it is a consequence of the semantics of *djà* or *djwỳnh*, and is not due to any morphosyntactic operation binding specific positions within the nominalization. Thus, (33b) is quite literally “the master of saying writing”, (33a) “the instrument of my eating”, and so on.

The nouns *djà* and *djwỳnh* cannot be external heads: as we saw in (24) above, what is interpreted as the head of an internally-headed relative clause has to be a null pronoun or a noun phrase in a governed position. This is not the case in either of the examples in (33). In addition, *djà* and *djwỳnh* are compatible with an overt internal head, as in (35)–(37).

- (35) amrē i-mã [ pry karêr ]            djà ngã  
           here 1-DAT path clear.N container give.V  
           ‘Give me the path clearer.’
- (36) amrē i-mã [ a-je kàjpoti o    pry karêr ] djà        ngã  
           here 1-DAT 2-ERG hoe    INSTR path clear.N instrument give  
           ‘Give me the hoe that you use to clear the path.’
- (37) [ kubē        ku-te pi’òk jarēnh ]            djwỳnh nē jã  
           barbarian 3-ERG paper say.N master NFUT this  
           ‘This is the white man that teaches.’

<sup>17</sup>In fact, the contained nominalization may also be an eventive complement clause, a possibility which we set aside until §4.1 to avoid confusion.

Furthermore, *djà* and *djwỳnh* occur in many other expressions that are not derived from clauses:

- (38) a. mậtkà djwỳnh  
airplane master  
‘pilot’  
b. katōk ’y djà  
gun nut container  
‘bag for ammunition’

*Djwỳnh* also has a use where it is translated by the non-intersective adjective ‘true’, as in the following examples:

- (39) a. bēnjadjwỳr djwỳnh  
chief true  
‘leader that can perform the *bēn* chant’ (*bēnjadjwỳr* is used contemporarily for any leader)  
b. i-nhō bikwa djwỳnh  
1-POSS relative true  
‘my relatives’ (*bikwa* is used contemporarily with the meaning ‘friend’)

In this it is in opposition to *ka’āk* ‘ersatz’, used, e.g., to designate classificatory kin as opposed to consanguines.

Though it is not simple to relate the various uses of *djwỳnh* to a common core, there seems to be little morphological basis to distinguish among them. We note that there might be a correlation between their more grammatical use in (33b) and destressing, but this hasn’t been verified systematically.

To conclude, *djà* and *djwỳnh* are just special relational nouns, that attach to a structure that is already a nominalization with eventive meaning. Their sense as instruments or agents comes from their semantics, rather than being a specific morphosyntactic function.

The demonstratives *jã* ‘this’ and *wã* ‘that’ can appear after a relative clause just as they may appear after any nominal expression (cf. §1). In fact, any of the determiners described in that section may occur with relative clauses. We make special mention of *jã* and *wã* here because they seem to be much more common with relative clauses than they are with other nominal expressions, particularly in their stressless forms *ja* and *wa*. The reasons for this are unclear, though we venture to say that the demonstratives may serve to highlight that the preceding nominal clause is to be interpreted as an individual or a set of individuals, rather than as an eventive clause (cf. §4.1).

It was said in §1 that we have insufficient evidence to consider the stressless demonstratives to be determiners. There is nevertheless a correlation between stress and deixis, with stressed determiners being clearly deictic, and the stressless ones less frequently so. The deictic use is not excluded for *ja* and *wa*, however. In

particular, in the following third person pronouns, it seems to be the case that it is *ja* and *wa* that contribute the deictic meaning:<sup>18,19</sup>

- (40) a. *tām ja*  
 s/he this  
 ‘her/him here (deictic)’
- b. *tā wa*  
 s/he that  
 ‘her/him there (deictic)’
- c. *tām*  
 s/he  
 ‘her/him (anaphoric)’

Stressless demonstratives after relative clauses are often also interpreted deictically:

- (41) *tēm ja*  
 go.N this  
 ‘this one here that is going’

### 3.2 External versus internal heads

We have described Mēbengokre relative clauses as essentially head-internal. A variant where the head is external was briefly introduced above (cf. (12)), but was deemed not to be grammaticalized as a relative clause. However, it is fairly frequent to see relative clauses with the head on the left, rather than at its expected argument position, without a pause or a second determiner between the head and the remainder of the relative clause:

- (42) a. [ *kukryt a-je pī kuri omūnh* ] *nē wā*  
 tapir 2-ERG tree near 3.see.N NFUT that  
 ‘That is the tapir which you saw near the tree.’
- b. [ *kubē i-je ku-m katōk nhār* ] *nē jā*  
 barbarian 1-ERG 3-DAT gun give.N NFUT this  
 ‘This is the white man to whom I gave the gun.’

As can be seen, in place of the dislocated constituent one has a resumptive third person pronoun: *ku-* in example (42b), a morphophonological alternation at the beginning of the verbal stem in example (42a), and zero in other cases. This is the strategy used in all left-dislocation in Mēbengokre, i.e., focus (cf. (43a)) and substantive interrogatives (cf. (43b)), and is also what is used in the gap of free relatives (cf. (43c)):

<sup>18</sup>The /m/ of *tām* is lost in *tām wa* because of a phonological rule barring sequences of labial consonants.

<sup>19</sup>The difference between *tām* and the equally anaphoric zero third person is simply one of emphasis.

- (43) a. kukryt nē ba ku-bĩ  
 tapir NFUT 1NOM 3-kill.V  
 ‘I killed *tapir*.’
- b. mỳj nē ga a-bĩ  
 what NFUT 2NOM 2>3-kill.V  
 ‘What did you kill?’
- c. i-je ku-m Kajtire jarēnh jā  
 1-ERG 3-DAT Kajtire say.N this  
 ‘this one to whom I gave the name Kajtire’

If the displaced constituent is within a postpositional phrase, variants where the preposition is stranded coexist with those where it is carried along to the initial position:

- (44) a. amrē i-mā [ a-je kàjpoti o pry karêr ] ngā  
 hither 1-DAT 2-ERG hoe with path clear.N give.V  
 ‘Give me the hoe that you use to clear the path.’
- b. amrē i-mā [ kàjpoti a-je o pry karêr ] ngā  
 hither 1-DAT hoe 2-ERG with path clear.N give.V  
 ‘Give me the hoe that you use to clear the path.’
- c. amrē i-mā [ kàjpoti o a-je pry karêr ] ngā  
 hither 1-DAT hoe with 2-ERG path clear.N give.V  
 ‘Give me the hoe that you use to clear the path.’

As much as these might seem like a different, externally-headed, type of relative construction, and one which would not be subject to the ambiguity that regular internally-headed relatives exhibit, there is evidence that serves to characterize them as mere variants of the internally-headed construction. First, like in the case of free relatives, these constructions have exactly the same range of relativization possibilities found in internally-headed relative clauses, casting doubts on any analysis that sets them apart. Much more conclusively, the fronted constituent does not have to be interpreted as the head of the relative, as is attested by the fact that example (45b) is not restricted to being headed by *kàjpoti* ‘hoe’, and in fact has the same range of meanings as (45a):

- (45) a. nām i-mā [ kubē ku-te kàjpoti o pry karêr ] jakre  
 so 1-DAT barbarian 3-ERG hoe with path clear.N show.V
- i. ‘So he showed me the white man that’s clearing the path with a hoe.’
- ii. ‘So he showed me the hoe that the white man is clearing the path with.’
- iii. ‘So he showed me the path that the white man is clearing with a hoe.’

- b. nām i-mā [ kàjpoti o kubē ku-te pry karêr ] jakre  
 so 1-DAT hoe with barbarian 3-ERG path clear.N show.V  
 (same range of interpretations)

What to do, then, about the displaced constituent? We need to revise a claim made earlier surrounding (15), and admit that internally-headed relative clauses do permit some sort of focus dislocation within them. This focus dislocation seems to work just like in main clauses in that it requires resumption by pronominal agreement in the argument position. However, contrary to what holds in matrix clauses, focus is not associated with specific left-peripheral particles. The upshot is that even in constructions like (42) heads are still internal to the relative clause.

We conclude that all the relative clauses discussed previously are variants of a single structure. The axes of variation consist in the possibility of completely dropping nominal arguments (section 2.5), and in the possibility of fronting a single argument (cf. §3.2), without necessarily making it the head of the construction. As for (12), the apposition of a regular noun phrase and a free relative, creating the impression of an externally-headed relative clause, is a construction not grammaticalized specifically for relative clauses.

### 3.3 Dislocation of relative clauses

We have noted no restrictions as to which argument or adjunct positions may be occupied by relative clauses. The following examples attest relative clauses in subject, object, and indirect object position:

- (46) a. [ mē abatàj ku-te djudjê kênh mar ] bit nē ipêx  
 PL adult 3-ERG bow carve.N hear.N only NFUT 3.make  
 ‘Only the adults that know how to carve bows make them.’
- b. djām nē ga [ mē’ō bengêt ku-te djudjê kênh mar ] pumũ?  
 INT NFUT 2-ERG someone elder 3-ERG bow carve.N hear.N see.V  
 ‘Do you know any elder who knows how to carve bows?’
- c. [ a-kamy ku-te i-kanikwỳnh ’yr mōr jã ] m a-ngã  
 2-brother 3-ERG 1-sister up.to go.N this DAT 2>3-give.V  
 ‘Give it to this brother of yours that is married to my sister.’

Yet if the reader goes back to the examples given so far (cf., e.g., (25)), s/he will note that, rather than appearing in its proper argument position, the relative clause is often dislocated to the left of the containing clause.<sup>20</sup> The dislocated relative clause is obligatorily doubled by a pronoun in the argumental position where the relative clause is interpreted, just like any other left-dislocated noun phrase (cf. (43)). The left-dislocated relative clause in (47a) is interpreted in object position, and for this reason it is doubled there

<sup>20</sup>This left-dislocated position is the position referred to in §2.1 above as the *focus position*, and it precedes the tense markers *nē* (NFUT) and *dja* (FUT).

by the pronominal prefix *a-* (2>3).<sup>21</sup> The relative clause may also appear directly in object position, as in (47b), in this case without the object prefix. This pattern of left-dislocation with resumption is not exclusive to relative clauses, however; the examples (48) show the same thing happening with a simple noun phrase.

- (47) a. [ a-je ngôj ku'õnh ] dja ga i-m a-ngã  
 2-ERG pot clean.N FUT 2NOM 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
 'You should give me the pot you cleaned.'
- b. dja ga i-mã [ a-je ngôj ku'õnh ] ngã  
 FUT 2NOM 1-DAT 2-ERG pot clean.N give  
 'You should give me the pot you cleaned.'
- (48) a. ngôj dja ga i-m a-ngã  
 pot FUT 2NOM 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
 'You should give me the/a pot.'
- b. dja ga i-mã ngôj ngã  
 FUT 2NOM 1-DAT pot give.V  
 'You should give me the/a pot.'

There is one variant of the left-dislocation construction with no intervening tense mark which seems to be exclusive to dislocated relative clauses, however:

- (49) a. [ a-je ngôj ku'õnh ] i-m a-ngã  
 2-ERG pot clean.N 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
 'Give me the pot you cleaned.'
- b. \*ngôj i-m a-ngã  
 pot 1-DAT 2>3-give.V

On closer inspection, it appears that all noun phrases greater in complexity than a bare noun, and not only those containing a relative clause, allow this type of dislocation. This might be suggestive of either a prosodic constraint or some sort of definiteness or specificity restriction which we are in no position to investigate at this point:

- (50) a. ngôj ny i-m a-ngã  
 pot new 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
 'Give me the new pot.'
- b. ngôj jã/wã i-m a-ngã  
 pot this/that 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
 'Give me this/that pot.'

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<sup>21</sup>If the subject of a transitive finite verb is in the second person, third person object agreement on the verb will be replaced by this portmanteau form (second person subject acting on third person object) which is homophonous to second person agreement.

- c. ngôj 'õ i-m a-ngã  
 pot one 1-DAT 2>3-give.V  
 ‘Give me some pot or other.’

Left-dislocation is an important element in the characterization of certain types of relative-like constructions, such as correlatives (Srivastav 1991) and the fronted relative clauses of Lummi (Jelinek 1993). Despite its frequency, we do not give fronting a central place in the description of relative clauses in Mēbengokre, as it is optional and it is not in any way exclusive to relative clauses.<sup>22</sup>

## 4 General characterization of relative clauses

Though the use of resumptive pronouns is sub-standard and somewhat unnatural-sounding in the most familiar languages, one might attempt to understand Mēbengokre relative clauses by comparing them to the relative clauses with resumption in Brazilian Portuguese, such as the following:

- (51) o cara que o João disse que *ele* tinha visto *ele* ...  
 the guy that John said that he had seen him  
 ‘The guy that John said *he* had seen *him*.’

In such a clause, both gaps are filled by resumptive pronouns, like in Mēbengokre, and the relation between the external head and the gap is unselective, i.e., any of the RC-internal pronouns could be bound by “the guy”, even if stress and pragmatics make us lean towards one or other interpretation.

Structurally, however, there are several important differences between a finite externally-headed relative clause such as (51), and the nominal internally-headed relative clauses of Mēbengokre. Some of these differences should be clear from the discussion above: in addition to being head-internal, Mēbengokre relative clauses are nominal, thus non-finite, and they are reduced with respect to main clauses. In this section, we will be primarily concerned with showing another difference, namely that relative clauses are not adjoined to anything, i.e., they are self-contained noun phrases.

Relative clauses are commonly analyzed as being necessarily adjoined to an external head. This has often been defended even for internally-headed relative clauses, e.g., by Cole (1987), who holds that Quechua internally-headed relative clauses have a structure headed by a null external head, to which the visible part of the relative clause is adjoined.

On the contrary, we contend that internally-headed relative clauses in Mēbengokre never have an external head. This is a corollary of a more general property of Mēbengokre: there is no adjunction inside noun phrases (or elsewhere, in fact) other than of postpositional phrases:

<sup>22</sup>The reasons for the preponderance of dislocated relative clauses might have to do with the problem described in fn. 13.

- (52) a. \* tũm kikre  
old house
- b. kikre tũm  
house old  
'house that is old'
- c. \* bô kikre  
hay house
- d. bô=o kikre  
hay=INSTR house  
'house made of hay'

As we anticipated in §1, “adjectives” inside a noun phrase are always the syntactic head of the construction; i.e., they seem to constitute a special case of internally-headed relative clause, rather than standing as a class of their own. In morphosyntactic terms, they are relational predicates that take their modifiees as complements.

Take a noun phrase containing an adjective, such as (53), repeated from (10). This construction, in addition to being a noun phrase, is on its own a complete clause which means ‘his/her/its name(s) is/are beautiful’.

- (53) idji mex  
3.name beautiful  
'beautiful name(s)'

The same can be said about similar constructions with nominal or deverbal predicates, also repeated from example (10):

- (54) ngy bor  
clay bake.N  
'baked clay', or 'the clay is baked'
- (55) mē kra-re  
people son-DIM  
'the people with children', or 'the people have children'

In all of these constructions, going from a main clause to a noun phrase requires no additional morphology, and could be characterized semantically as shifting the reference from the predicate on the right to the entity on the left, while keeping the hierarchical relations the same.<sup>23</sup> Without going too much into this issue, as it

<sup>23</sup>Note that this is no different from a shift that normally obtains in complex noun phrases:

- (56) pī kre  
wood hole  
'hole in the wood', 'the wood is hollow', or 'hollow wood'

would take us too far afield, we assume that the basic sense is the predicational one, and that the adjectival sense is not a specific construction for modification, but essentially a sentence that has been shifted into a relative clause, no different from the internally-headed relative clauses that are the focus of this paper.

#### 4.1 Comparison with complement and adjunct clauses

Complement and adjunct clauses that are formally identical to internally-headed relative clauses can get eventive, as opposed to participant, interpretations. This can be seen in direct perception constructions:

- (57) ba àk kàr ma  
 1NOM fowl coo.N hear  
 ‘I heard the bird calling.’

Arguably this is also the interpretation they get when they are complements of manner predicates:

- (58) a-dju-jarēnh mex  
 2-ANTIPASS-say.N good  
 ‘You spoke well.’ (lit.: ‘Your saying was good.’)

Note, however, that even apparently derivative interpretations, such as “the fact that”, are lacking in these constructions. To reiterate a point made above: though Mēbengokre nominalizations might give the impression that they can mean virtually anything related to the event described in the clause, they are limited to meaning either the event itself, or one of the participants in the event which is explicitly represented in the clausal syntax.

It is natural to expect the eventive interpretation as a possible reading of the relative clause if we take the nominal forms of verbs to be in essence like any other noun. To explain this, we begin by repeating example (10c):

- (59) mē kra-re  
 people son-DIM  
 ‘people with children’ (also ‘people’s children’)

In our view, both interpretations have the same structure, and are ambiguous simply in that in one interpretation the element on the right is referential, and the one on the left is taken as an inalienable possessor, whereas in the other interpretation the one on the right becomes some sort of predicate (‘to have children’), without nominal reference.

It is natural to suppose that this ambiguity occurs with other types of predicates that one might consider to be “adjectival” or “verbal”, given that there is no morphological distinction between these and the nominal

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That is, in such a noun phrase, the noun on the right, normally the head, can also act as a modifier without requiring any change in the morphosyntax of the phrase. Technically, to show that the hierarchical relations stay the same despite the shift in headedness, we would need to give an example with more than one level of embedding, something which we omit for lack of space.

example in (59). This is what is shown by the other two examples in (10), repeated here, with the putative second interpretation added:

- (60) a. *idji mex*  
 3.name beautiful  
 ‘beautiful names’ (does it also mean ‘the beauty of the names’?)
- b. *ngy bor*  
 clay bake.N  
 ‘baked clay’ (does it also mean ‘the baking of the clay’?)

We contend that this second interpretation is indeed present, and this can be seen in the way that manner modification works. Take the following examples:

- (61) a. *mē mex*  
 people beautiful  
 ‘The people are beautiful.’ (Also ‘beautiful people’.)
- b. *i-mex*  
 1-beautiful  
 ‘I’m beautiful.’ (Also ‘beautiful me’.)
- (62) *mē tor mex*  
 people dance.N beautiful  
 ‘The people dance beautifully.’ (lit., ‘The people’s dancing is beautiful.’)

As can be seen in these examples, *mex* ‘beautiful’ is simply a predicate that normally takes nominal arguments. Like with all predicates, it also has a modifying function. There is no reason to suppose that the structure is any different in the case in which *mex* takes a clausal expression in nominal form as an argument. The literal translation of (62) that would be consistent with this would be ‘The people’s dancing was beautiful.’<sup>24</sup> For this, the only additional assumption that is needed is that the embedded nominal clause can indeed designate ‘the dancing’.

Note that the meaning of the embedded nominalization is crucially *not* that of a proposition, but rather is a description of an event,<sup>25</sup> so (62) cannot mean ‘It was good that the people danced (otherwise it would have been a boring night).’

<sup>24</sup>A similar point is made by Arregui and Matthewson (2001) in discussing manner modification in Salish, which seems to function in a similar way:

- (63) *St’át’imcets*
- skenín ti n-s-xát’-em-a ta sqwém-a*  
 slow DET ISG.POSS-NOM-hard-INTR-DET DET mountain-DET
- ‘I walked up the hill slowly (lit., my walking up the hill was slow)’

<sup>25</sup>A formalization of this distinction, which is recognized since Vendler (1967), is advanced by Zucchi (1993).

A similar point can be made with negation. The Mēbengokre negative word *kêt* is essentially existential negation:

- (64) a. *tep kêt*  
 fish NEG  
 ‘There is no fish.’  
 b. *i-kêt=ri*  
 1-NEG=when  
 ‘When I didn’t exist.’

- (65) *mē tor kêt*  
 people dance NEG  
 ‘The people don’t dance.’ (Lit., ‘There isn’t any dancing of the people.’)

Is there any reason to suppose that (65) is a radically different construction? The answer is no, and again the only prerequisite to equate the structure of (64) and (65) is that the reading where *mē tor* is headed by *tor* ‘dancing’ is available for the latter.<sup>26</sup>

Why does manner modification work like this in Mēbengokre? We suspect that it’s because the language drastically restricts adjunction: there are no open classes of adjectives or adverbs, and, as we saw above, relative clauses aren’t adjoined either. This, coupled with the fact that finite clauses can’t be embedded, is the reason why nominal forms are so pervasive in the language.<sup>27</sup>

Note that all along we have been talking about the nominal forms of verbs. When verbs are finite there is never any ambiguity as to the fact that there is a clause where the existence in time of a particular event is claimed:

- (66) *mē bà kam mō*  
 people forest in go.PL.V  
 ‘The people are going to the woods (hunting).’ (never ‘the people that are going to the woods’, or ‘the going of the people to the woods’ )

In Salanova (2007b) we discuss the nominal-verbal opposition in event words further, and in more precise terms.

## 5 Conclusions

Our conclusion is that relative clauses in Mēbengokre are self-contained noun phrases, no different from any noun phrase in the language where there is relationality, whether because the noun itself is relational or because relationality has been introduced by means of a postposition.

<sup>26</sup>For parallels with Salish also in the functioning of negation, see Davis (2005).

<sup>27</sup>For a more detailed presentation of this analysis, the reader is referred to Salanova (2007b).

Mēbengokre noun phrases are syntactically very rigid objects: relatively few word order permutations are permitted, and there is little leeway for different semantic interpretations of relations between heads and their complements (i.e., in contrast to the freedom found in English compounds such as *man breasts*, *deprivation cuisine*, *math anxiety*, etc.), at the same time that hierarchical relations between elements are always clearly indicated. This is true for any nominal construction that has relationality, whether it's a simple inalienably possessed noun or a more complex clause-like construction.

On the other hand, there seems to be absolute freedom as to what element within the construction is to be taken as the head, with the whole complement string of words becoming a modifier. This is a rather striking, and even puzzling, property. We believe that this property comes about from the lack of morphological elements within the noun phrase which fix reference (i.e., determiners and quantifiers), leaving the intended meaning to be disambiguated by context. Much research in the domain of nominal semantics in Mēbengokre is required before we can venture any hypothesis about how this works, and in particular why the morphological elements that do exist (i.e., especially the demonstratives) do not do the job.

In closing, we should say that even though we believe that the construction described in this paper is the only one that can properly be called a relative clause, relative clause equivalents may often be expressed by means of sequences of coordinated finite main clauses, where an element introduced in the first clause is recovered anaphorically with the emphatic pronoun *tām* or *ta*:

- (67) ikua, tām ku, itu, tām oikō  
 excrete.v it eat.v urinate.v it drink.v  
 ‘He ate what he excreted, he drank what he urinated (lit., he excreted, he ate it, he urinated, he drank it)’
- (68) me’ō nē amūjā’ā mē kōt amijaprā, ta nē jākam ajte amrē tē  
 someone NFUT before people with feast.v he NFUT now again hither go.v  
 ‘The one that feasted with us earlier is coming again.’

We do not consider these constructions to be grammaticalized as relative clauses. It simply is the case that the language has two anaphoric pronouns, *tām* and *ta*, that preferentially recover a referent introduced in the immediately preceding discourse, but which, as is clear from example (67), does not need to have been introduced grammatically.

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