RELATIVE CLAUSES IN BRIBRI

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In an important article published in Linguistic Inquiry (1977, Vol. 8, No. 1), Noun Phrase Accessibility and Universal Grammar, Edward L. Keenan and Bernard Comrie propose a hierarchy, which they suppose to be universally valid, to account for the relativization of noun phrases (NPs) in different functions in a sentence.

Keenan and Comrie state that all languages will permit relativization of the subject of a sentence, although this may be the only function in which an NP can be relativized. If the language accepts the relativization of a second function, this must be the direct object (DO), and if it relativizes a third NP, this must be functioning as an indirect object (IO). Continuing down the hierarchy, we have major oblique NPs (OBL), genitive (GEN), and object of comparison (OCOMP):

\[ \text{SU} > \text{DO} > \text{IO} > \text{OBL} > \text{GEN} > \text{OCOMP} \]

The line of accessibility may not be interrupted, although it may cease to function at any point. No language, for example, will relativize an oblique NP while skipping over the indirect object, if the language has one. At every point in the hierarchy, it must be the case that the next higher function can also be relativized. Different languages may, however, have different strategies for moving an NP up on the scale so that, for example, a direct object may function as a subject, an indirect object as a direct object, etc. But a strategy, once adopted, must be continuous on the scale if functions farther down can be relativized.

The authors recognize that ergative languages present difficulties, to the point that the distinction between subject and direct object may be blurred. They quote Johnson (1974) as proposing the following hier-

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archy for this type:
ABS > ERG > IO > OBL, etc.
where an absolutive marking is higher on the scale than is an ergative marking\(^1\).

The terms used by Keenan and Comrie all refer to syntactic functions, although there seems to be no real motivation for supposing that any syntactic function should be a 'linguistic universal', except that it can be translated into a corresponding function in a language such as English. In the same way that Keenan and Comrie admit that there may not be a clear-cut distinction between subject and direct object, they recognize that the indirect object may be confused with an oblique case, as happens in English.

Although in a larger theoretical framework their claims as to the universality of these syntactic functions can be debated, the question is of little practical interest in the present paper as the language being studied will permit relativization of any NP except the object of comparison. For purposes of this paper, however, the terminology proposed by Johnson does seem more appropriate, although even this sometimes poses a problem.

Bribri is an ergative language of the Chibcha family, and is spoken by perhaps 4500 people in the southern part of Costa Rica. There are at least three dialect areas: Amubre and Coroma near the Atlantic coast, and Salitre-Cabagra near the Pacific coast. This latter is the object of this study.\(^2\)

Except for equational sentences, Bribri overtly marks every NP in a simplex sentence except one.\(^3\) This unmarked NP, or NP with zero marking, manifests the absolutive case. The normal order of NPs in a simplex sentence is the following:

\[(\text{ERG}) - (\text{OBL}) - \text{ABS} - \text{V}\]

In one-place predications, the NP is always in the absolutive case. In two-place predications, the second NP may be marked in a variety of ways. The data for the present paper have been so chosen that this NP
is usually in the ergative case. As there seems to be no reason, in a purely syntactic study, to separate from oblique cases what in English translation will sometimes come out as the indirect object these have been grouped together. A possessive (Keenan's and Comrie's GEN) may be preposed to the possessed noun and is integrated into the NP.

Bribri has a favorite strategy for relative clause formation which permits a variety of options. In all cases the NP which contains the head in the main clause is fronted, and the coreferential NP in the relative clause may optionally also be fronted.

**Option 1**

The coreferential NP in both clauses is fronted. The NP of the main clause is deleted, but the case marking is kept. If the relativized NP is in the ergative case, the resulting ordering in the main clause is usually ERG - (OBL) - ABS - V, but may be ERG - ABS - V - OBL. If the NP in the subordinate clause is in an oblique case, the ordering in the main clause is more commonly OBL - ERG - ABS - V, but may be OBL - ABS - V - ERG. If ABS is to be relativized, the ordering is more commonly ABS - V - OBL - ERG, but may be ABS - V - ERG - OBL. If an NP in the main clause has a referent in the relative clause which is not the relativized NP, this NP (in the main clause) is pronounalized unless by so doing the referent is not clear.

\[ \text{Absolutive}^{5} = \overline{HN} = \overline{Red} \]

1. \[ \left[ s \left[ \text{NP} \left[ s \left[ \text{caballo} \text{ tue be' - } \text{a wbla-to} \right] \text{sue} \text{ je'-to} \right] \right] \right] \]

- horse bought you-dat man-erg saw 1-erg
- 'I saw the horse which the man bought from you.'

2. \[ \left[ s \left[ \text{NP} \left[ s \left[ \text{caballo} \text{ tue je'-a wbla-to} \right] \text{to chichi uhtewa} \right] \right] \right] \]

- horse bought 1-dat man-erg erg dog killed
- 'The horse which the man bought from me killed the dog.'
3. \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{alakol} \ [ s \ \text{süë wtabla-to} \ [ -ä je'-to chichi bë} \ [ \text{woman saw man-erg dat l-erg dog gave} \]

'I gave the dog to the woman whom the man saw.'

\textbf{Ergative}: \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{wtabla-to} \ [ je'-ä caballo tūë} \ [ -to je' süë} \ [ \text{man-erg l-dat horse bought erg l saw} \]

'The man who bought the horse from me saw me.'

5. \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{wtabla-to} \ [ be'-ä caballo tūë} \ [ süë je'-to} \ [ \text{man-erg you-dat horse bought saw l-erg} \]

'I saw the man who bought the horse from you.'

6. \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{wtabla-to} \ [ je'-ä caballo tūë} \ [ -ä je'-t chichi bë} \ [ \text{man-erg l-dat horse bought dat l-erg dog gave} \]

'I gave the dog to the man who bought the horse from me.'

\textbf{Oblique (corresponding to 10)}

7. \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{alakol-ä wtabla-to caballo tūë} \ [ -to je' süë} \ [ \text{woman-dat man-erg horse bought erg l saw} \]

'The woman from whom the man bought the horse saw me.'

8. \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{alakol-ä wtabla-to caballo tūë} \ [ süë je'-to} \ [ \text{woman-dat man-erg horse bought saw l-erg} \]

'I saw the woman from whom the man bought the horse.'

9. \[ s \ [ s \ [ NP \ [ s \ \text{alakol-ä wtabla-to caballo tūë} \ [ -ä je'-to chichi bë} \ [ \text{woman-dat man-erg horse bought dat l-erg dog gave} \]

'I gave the dog to the woman from whom the man bought the horse.'
Oblique (Instrumental)

10. [s [NP [s [o'-wa [kaluko tía'dá]]] -wa bo' hí'dá]]
   [INST ax-inst treetrunk was-cut inst firewood was-split]
   'The ax which cut (up) the tree-trunk split the firewood.' (More
   literally, 'The ax with which the tree-trunk was cut (up) the firewood
   was split with.'

11. [s [NP [s [o'-wa [wíbla-tó kaluko teé]]] súé je'-tó]]
   [INST ax-inst man-erg treetrunk cut saw l-erg]
   'I saw the ax with the man cut (up) the tree-trunk.'

12. [s [NP [s [o'-wa [wíbla-tó kaluko teé]]] -wa bo' kite i-did]]
   [INST ax-inst man-erg treetrunk cut inst firewood split he-erg]
   'The man cut (up) the firewood with the ax with which he cut (down)
   the tree-trunk.'

Genitive

The Bribri sentence wíbla ula kí tã corresponds in English to:
   a. A/the man in missing an arm
   b. A/the man doesn't have any arms.
   Literally, the sentence means 'A/the man's arms don't exist.'

13. [s [NP [s [wíbla ula kí tã]]] súé je'-tó]
   [ABS man arm neg exist saw l-erg]
   'I saw a/the man who doesn't have an arm.' ('I saw a man whose arm
doesn't exist.'

14. [s [NP [s [wíbla ula kí tã]]] -to je' súg]
   [ERG man arm neg exist erg I saw]
   'The man who doesn't have an arm saw me.'
15. $\text{EN}\{s\{NP\{s\{wbla ula ki tå\}]-a je'-to chichi bë\}}$

\begin{itemize}
  \item man arm neg exist dat l-erg dog gave
\end{itemize}

'I gave the dog to the man who doesn't have an arm.'

Option II

In this option the coreferential NP in the relative clause is

fronted and marked with the coreferential relative marker (CRM) $\text{wë}$. The

head of the RC (in the main clause) is deleted.

Absolutive

16. $\text{Abs}\{s\{NP\{s\{caballo wë-të bë'-a wbla-to\}\}}]\text{Erg}\{s\{süë je'-to\}\}$

horse CRM bought you-dat man-erg saw l-erg

'I saw the horse which the man bought from you.'

Ergative

17. $\text{Abs}\{s\{NP\{s\{wbla wë-to, je'-ä caballo tëë\}\}}]-to je' süë\}$

man CRM-erg l-dat horse bought erg l saw

'The man who bought the horse from me saw me.'

Oblique (10)

18. $\text{DAT}\{s\{NP\{s\{alakol wë-ä wbla-to caballo tëë\}\}]\text{DAT}\{s\{s\{je'-to chichi bë\}\}}$

\begin{itemize}
  \item woman CRM-dat man-erg horse bought -dat l-erg dog gave
\end{itemize}

'I gave the dog to the woman from whom the man bought the horse.'

Oblique (Inst)

19. $\text{INST}\{s\{NP\{s\{o'wë-wa wbla-to kaluko tëë\}\}]-wa bo' kite i-did\}$

ax CRM-inst man-erg treetrunk cut -inst firewood split

\begin{itemize}
  \item he-erg
\end{itemize}

'The man cut (up) the firewood with the ax with which he split the

tre-trunk.'
Genitive

20. [s [NP [s [wblawëula kttä] sue je'-to] man CRM arm neg exist saw 1-erg

'I saw the man who has no arms.' ('I saw the man whose arms don't exist.')

Option III

With this option, the appropriate NP in the relative clause is fronted, and the embedded S (functioning as an NP) is marked with a possesed e' (Dem). The head NP (in the main clause) is fronted, as it must be with all strategies both in restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses. The head NP may optionally be deleted, but the case markings are kept.

Absolutive

21. [s [NP [NP [cabal'wblatoje' (caballo)] süe je'-to] horse bought you-dat man-erg Dem (horse) saw I-erg

'I saw the horse which the man bought from you.'

Ergative

22. [s [NP [NP [wblatoje'-ä caballo tüe] (wbla)] -to je' süe] man-erg I-dat horse bought Dem (man)-erg I saw

'The man who bought the horse from me saw me.'

Oblique (10)

23. [s [NP [NP [alakol'-ä wblato caballo tüe] (alekol)] -ä je'-to woman-dat man-erg horse bought Dem (woman)-dat I-erg chichi bë] dog gave

'I gave the dog to the woman from whom the man bought the horse.'
Oblique (Inst)

24. [s [np [np [s 'wa wibla-to kaluko te]] (e') (o!)] -wa bo' kite i-did]  
ax-inst man-erg treetrunk cut Dem (ax)-inst firewood  
split.he-erg  
'The man cut (up) the firewood with the ax with which he split the  
treerunk.'

Genitive

25. [s [np [np [s wibla ula kt tā]] (e') wibla] sūē je'-to]  
man arm neg exist Dem man saw 1-erg  
'I saw the man who has no arms.'

For the possessive (GEN), the deletion rule which is otherwise  
optional may not apply. If applied, the reference would be to ula ('arm').

Option IV

The NP of the relative clause may be marked with wē (CRM) and the  
fronting rule is optional, although still favored. The subordinate  
clause must be marked with e' (Dem), and the optional N deletion rule  
of the main clause applies without exception. Because this option is so  
highly marked, all of the possibilities would rarely, if ever, be taken.

Absolutive

26. [s [np [np [s wibla-to be'-ā caballo wē tūē]] (e') (caballo)] sūē je'-to]  
Same as 16 and 21.
Ergative

27. [s NP NP [s wblæ (wə-tə je'-à caballo tūe] (wblæ) -to je']

Same as 17 and 22.

Oblique (10)

28. [s NP NP [s wblæ-to alakol wē-à caballo tūe] e'] (alekol) -à je'
   -to chichi bē

Same as 18 and 23.

Oblique (Inst)

29. [s NP NP [s wblæ-to o' wē-wa kaluko tee] e'] (o') -wa bo' kite
   i-did

Same as 19 and 24.

Genitive-

30. [s NP NP [s wblæ wula kī tā] e'] (wblæ) suē je'-to

Same as 20 and 25.

Option V

This option, as well as the following one, caused the greatest
amount of discussion and vacillation among the three informants consulted.
As far as the hearer is concerned, it seems probable that the reference
of the main clause should be taken in the larger context of the discourse. It is possible, however, to establish certain general principles
for this type of sentence independently of this larger context.

The head NP in the main clause may be substituted for by the pro-
form wak (literally 'owner'). This form can only be used to relativize
a noun which is marked as \(+\text{Human}\) . Without the larger context of the
discourse, in the relative clause the coreferential noun is \underline{usually}
fronted and marked with RCM. The relative clause must then be marked
with \underline{Dem}. That we are dealing with a single sentence, rather than two,
is demonstrated by the intonational pattern and by the fact that RCM may
not appear in a simplex sentence. Certain problems with this option will
be noted as they come up.

**Absolutive**

31. \(_{S}[\underbrace{NP}_{NP}\underbrace{alako\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{w\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{hpe\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{w\_\_to\_}_{\underline{ABS}}]\underbrace{e\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{wak\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{s\_\_e\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{\_je\_\_to\_}\overline{8}

\begin{align*}
\text{woman} & \text{ RCM hit man-erg} \\
\text{Dem} & \text{ 'owner' saw l-erg} \\
\end{align*}

'I saw the woman whom the man hit.'

In this sentence, 'woman' is both fronted and marked with RCM. Out
of context, however, there is a certain vacillation because 'man' is
marked for Erg. The sentence could, then, be interpreted as meaning 'I
saw the man who hit the woman.'

**Ergative/Absolutive**

32. \(_{S}[\underbrace{NP}_{NP}\underbrace{w\_\_to\_}_{\underline{Erg}}\underbrace{alako\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{w\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{hpe\_}_{\underline{ABS}}]\underbrace{e\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{wak\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{s\_\_e\_}_{\underline{ABS}}\underbrace{\_je\_\_to\_}.

\begin{align*}
\text{man-erg} & \text{ woman Rel hit} \\
\text{Dem} & \text{ 'owner' saw l-erg} \\
\end{align*}

'I saw the man who hit the woman.'

'I saw the woman whom the man hit.'

The informants were unanimous in accepting this as an acceptable
sentence. Nevertheless, 'man' is 1) fronted and 2) the agent of the
action. Although 'woman' is marked with RCM, these two factors taken
together are strong enough to indicate that the person I saw was the
man. In this case, RCM seems simply to function as an emphatic form.
But, as 'woman' is marked with RCM, the informants were in agreement.
that could be the reference: 'I saw the woman whom the man hit.' In a rather large number of similar type sentences, in which the word order in the relative clause was manipulated, the informants would only accept fronting of an NP marked with RCM, or that an NP be so marked in other positions only if an ergative-marked NP occupied the first position. In this latter case, there was always some vacillation as to the reference. Frequently, the informants volunteered the information that 'owner' was not to be taken in its literal sense, but that the word referred to the 'owner of the action', which would indicate that the form is agent-oriented in sentences where an ergative is present. In other sentences, where there is no ergative, 'owner' may be used to refer to postentially agent NPs, or in one-place predications where the NP is in a state or involved in a process.

Ergative/Oblique

33. \[
\begin{align*}
&\text{s} \left[ \text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \right]
\end{align*}
\]

man RCM-erg woman-dat horse bought Dem owner saw 1-erg

'I saw the man who bought the horse from the woman.'

In this case, there is a semantic problem. As the woman was literally the owner of the horse, the reference may be to her, although everything else indicates 'man' as the reference. Here, again, a more general context is needed.

34. \[
\begin{align*}
&\text{s} \left[ \text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \right]
\end{align*}
\]

woman RCM-dat man-erg horse bought Dem owner saw 1-erg

'I saw the woman from whom the man bought the horse.'

35. \[
\begin{align*}
&\text{s} \left[ \text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{NP} \right]
\end{align*}
\]

man-erg woman RCM-dat horse bought Dem owner saw 1-erg

This sentence, which is similar to 32, is translated the same as 33 and 34.
Oblique (Comitative)

36. [s NP [NP [ala wē-ta alakol škoke e' wak] dor stai]]
   'The child with whom the woman is walking is very poor.'

37. [s NP [NP [alakol škoke ala wē-ta e' wak] dor stai]]
   'The child with whom the woman is walking is very poor.'

Genitive

38. [s NP [NP [wbla wē ula k[tā e' wak] sūē je'-tō]]]
   'I saw the man who doesn't have an arm.' ('I saw the man whose
arm(s) doesn't (don't) exist.')

39. [s NP [NP [be'to wbla wē caballo tūe e' wak] -ā je'-tō chichi bē]]
   'I gave the dog to the man whose horse you bought.'

40. [s NP [NP [wbla wē caballo tūe be'-tō e' wak] -ā je'-tō chichi bē]]
   Same as 39.

Option VI

In this strategy, CRM (wē) is missing in the relative clause and
Dem (e') is optionally omitted. Each informant made statements to the
effect that wak in the main clause referred to 'the owner of the action'
(if there was one) in the relative clause. When they were given a sen-
tence of this type in Bribri and asked to translate it into Spanish,
their reactions followed a general pattern:
a. If the ergative-marked NP was fronted in the relative clause, the reference was always to it.

41. [s [NP [NP s wtbla-to-alakol hpe (e')] wak] sūe je'-to]
   man-erg woman hit Dem owner saw l-erg
   'I saw the man who hit the woman.'

b. If another NP, marked as [+ Human] was fronted, the reference could be either to it or to the ergative-marked NP.

42. [s [NP [NP s alakol hpe wtbla-to] (e')] wak] sūe je'-to]
   'I saw the man who hit the woman.'
   'I saw the woman whom the man hit.'

c. In sentences where there was no ergative-marked NP, the reference could only be understood in the context of the discourse.

43. [s [NP [NP s wtbla-tā alakol tso čkok] (e')] wak] dor je' ēbabī]
   man-comm woman is eat Dem owner is 1 family
   [s [NP [NP s alakol tso' čkok wtbla-tā] (e')] wak] dor je' ēbabī]
   Both sentences can be translated as:
   'The man with whom the woman is eating is a relative of mine.'
   'The woman who is eating with the man is a relative of mine.'

d. In sentences with only one human NP (nonpronoun) in the relative clause, the reference could only be to it.

44. [s [NP [NP s ye'to alakol-ā uji'kwo patkebī] (e')] wak] -to je'-ā
   l-erg woman-dat paper pushed Dem owner-erg l-dat
   caballo bē]
   horse gave
   'I sent the letter to the woman who gave me the horse.'
The man sent the letter to the woman who was waiting for it.

'I gave the dog to the man whose horse you bought.'

As was noted earlier, the informants, who are completely bilingual, frequently pointed out what they felt was a closer relationship of 'wak' with the verb than with the NPs of a sentence. In the case of sentences 41 and 42, they felt that the sense in translation was closer to 'I saw that the man hit the woman.' Sentences 43 - 47 show, however, that we are dealing with relative clauses and not sentence complements. And, although the informants frequently stated that e' wak meant 'the owner of the action', this form is used in sentences in which a process or stative verb is present in the relative clause.

The child who was born in the hospital cried hard.

'The man who is taller than the woman is a relative of mine.'
Other strategies (Sentences which require further study)

In several cases, it was difficult to get data. Such was the case with the following examples.

50. \( (s_{NP} (s_{NP} (s_{NP} \text{ alakol wē-ā wībla-to uįθhwə patkeb' }) (e') ) (uįθhwə) ) \)
woman RCM-dat man-erg paper pushed Dem paper
\( kʉ d' i-kī \)

neg arrived pro.over

'The woman to whom the man sent the letter didn't receive it.' Or, more literally, 'The letter didn't arrive to the woman to whom the man sent it.'

51. \( (s_{NP} (s_{NP} \text{ wībla ula kī tā } ) ) sūkule \)

1-stative man arm neg. exist seen

'I know (have seen) a man who has no arm(s).'

This particular sentence, which strongly suggests Spanish influence, was accepted by all three informants although the overall patterning of Bribri would require:

52. \( (s_{NP} (s_{NP} \text{ wībla ula kī tā } ) ) sūkule ūe'-wā \)

53. \( (s_{NP} (s_{NP} \text{ wībla kādēblo tāt } ) (e'ē) ) (wak ) kiadā u wak-kī \)
man work much of that kind (owner) is needed house

owner-over

'The owner of the house wants (needs) a man (of the kind) who works hard.'

The only case where Dem may be realized as anything but e' ('ese' in the above example) is in sentences where a generic reference is indicated.

54. \( (s_{NP} (s_{NP} \text{ wībla wōbatsē kapi } ) ) ēle'-to e'-wa \)
man face-stuck-to coffe drank he-erg Dem-instr

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'The man liked the coffee which he drank.'

This sentence seems strange as it would seem to mean 'The man drank the coffee which he liked', but all the informants rejected this translation. This is the only sentence of this type which it was possible to elicit.

Corresponding to 'The man likes coffee' is:

55. (s wbla wobatsé kapi-wa)
   man face-stuck-to coffee-instr

If we were dealing with two sentences in 54, the result would be:

56. (s wbla wobatsé kapi-wa) // (s e' je ie'-to)
   \__________________________\    \__________________________\
   1                         5
   Dem drank he-erg.

It would seem that in the case of 54 certain transformations have obligatorily taken place. Operating on a base string.

57. (s (NP (NP (s wbla wobatsé kapi-wa) e') kapi) je ie'-to)
   ___________  
   1         3     5

we would have the transformation

1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ______ 1, 3, 4, 2, 5

with the resulting string (with indices supplied for the next transformation)

58. (s (NP (NP (s wbla wobatsé kapi) e') kapi-wa) je ie'-to)
   ___________  
   1         3

To this another transformation is applied

1, 2, 3, 4 ______ 1, Ø, 3, 4

which gives
The final transformation

1, 2, 3 ___ 1, 3, 2

gives the result seen in 54, here repeated as 60 (pruned of one NP node)

60. \( \left[ s \{ NP \{ s \ w\text{bla wobats\text{-}kapi} \} \ e' \} \ -\text{wa} \right] \ j\text{e} \ i\text{e}'\text{-to} \)

In sentence 61 there is no direct reference in the relative clause to any NP in the main clause.

61. \( \left[ s \{ NP \{ s \ a\text{lakol bud\text{a}} \} \ e' \} \ w\text{bla s\text{\text{-}u}} \ j\text{e}'\text{-to} \)

woman was beaten Dem man saw l-erg

The presence of 'man' in the main clause shows a relationship with 'woman' in the relative clause. This sentence is probably derived from

Sentences of the type 'that which' are the only ones which can be relativized.

62. \( \left[ s \{ NP \{ s \ a\text{lakol bud\text{a}} \} \ e' \} \ a\text{lakol} \ w\text{bla s\text{\text{-}u}} \ j\text{e}'\text{-to} \)

\( \emptyset \)
In relative clause formation of all kinds, two fronting rules are involved. The NP to be relativized in the main clause must obligatorily be fronted to the beginning of that clause. If the fronted NP is in the absolutive case, the verb must be fronted along with it (Abs + V). If the absolutive or an oblique NP is fronted, an NP marked as ergative in the main clause may optionally be posposed to the end of the clause.

In the relative clause, fronting of coreferential NP is favored in all options, but is optional if the relativized NP is marked with RCM (wē) or if the head NP in the main clause is the proform 'owner' (wak).

After the fronting rules have applied and RCM has been (optionally) inserted, the following general rules accounts for all the major options:

1. SD:\[ \begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c} \hline s & NP & NP & s & X & NP \hline \hline \end{array} \]
   \[ \begin{array}{c|c} \hline Y & Dem \hline \end{array} \]
   \[ NP \]
   \[ Z \]

   SC: optionally 1 + RCM 2

2. SD:\[ \begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c} \hline s & NP & NP & s & X & NP & RCM & Y \hline \hline \end{array} \]
   \[ \begin{array}{c|c|c|c|c|c|c|c} \hline \hline 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7 \end{array} \]
   SC: a. optionally 6 == wak / \[ \begin{array}{c} + \text{Human} \end{array} \]
   b. optionally 6 == Ø unless 6 == wak or genitive
   c. optionally 5 == Ø
   d. except for the proform 'wak', if the fronted NP in the main clause has [a], marked for any tone, this changes optionally, but preferably, for [è] after Dem.
i) alàkòl → alèkòl (woman)
ii) váca → véca (cow) [báka beka]
iii) cabéllo → cabéllo (horse) [kabáyo kabèyo]
iv) awà → awè (medicine-man)

**Notes**

1. In writing about ergative languages, it is usual to equate an NP marked for ergativity with a subject, and absolutive marking with a direct object.

2. The principle informant for this paper was José Feliciano Elizondo, of Salitre. The other two were 1) Arsenio Elizondo (a brother) and 2) Laudencio Ortiz, of Cabagra.

3. An NP representing a possessive (GEN) is also unmarked.

4. The bracketing used throughout this paper assumes the following basic tree structure (after fronting has taken place in the main clause).

```
  S
 /\  
|  |  
NP NP NP  V
  |  |  |
  NP N  
  |  |
  S  e1
```

Where N is not present, one NP is pruned.

5. Tones have been omitted in this paper. Words from Spanish have been left in the original spelling.
6. Bribri usually makes no formal difference between the dative ("sell to") and the ablative ("buy from").

7. In the main clause, if the noun immediately following e' (Dem) has an a which is marked for tone, optionally (but preferably) it may change for [e].

8. 'Wak' is an invariable form.

9. In certain derived sentences, the NP instigator of an action (marked as ergative) may be marked as being in a state.

10. Vis à vis Bribri, Spanish is a language of great prestige and the Bribri language is frequently belittled by the speakers themselves, who, in Spanish, refer to it as the 'dialecto'. It is rare to find a monolingual Bribri speaker and the literacy rate in Spanish is high. Because of the tremendous pressure of Spanish on the language, and because of the state of widespread bilingualism, in a study of the type attempted here it is sometimes very difficult to separate out this Spanish influence on the syntax. Frequently, the informant himself would volunteer the information that a sentence he had earlier given seemed too much like Spanish, and in other cases one of the other informants would state that certain sentences seemed too like Spanish. This was especially the case of different instances in the data where the relative clause was centered rather than to the left of the main clause. For example, types such as the following appeared in the data:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{s je'-to} \\
\text{l-erg}
\end{array} \begin{array}{c}
\text{s wbl} \text{a} \\
\text{man neg exist}
\end{array} \begin{array}{c}
\text{t} \text{a} \text{ula} \\
\text{arm}
\end{array} \begin{array}{c}
\text{sue} \\
\text{saw}
\end{array}
\]

'I saw a the man without any arms.'

That this patterning may be becoming an accepted one for Bribri is seen by the general acceptance of sentence 51 above. In this particular case, however (of the example given above), the informants agreed that the sentence was not 'good' Bribri.

The difficulty, then, in a syntactic study of a Costa Rican Indian language, of which Bribri is simply an example, is, first, to determine what might have been the original pattern. Second, one should try to determine the extent of Spanish penetration and, finally, if the results of this penetration have been accepted as normal for the language. This latter is, perhaps, the most difficult part due to the constant codeswitching of the speakers.
Bibliography


