

RELATIVE CLAUSES IN BRIBRI

Jack L. Wilson

Universidad de Costa Rica

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):

SU > DO > IO > OBL > GEN > 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-

