The Structure of Relative Clauses in Maay Maay

The current study describes the structure of relative clauses in Maay Maay, a language spoken by approximately 1.8 million speakers in Somalia, that has been generally unrepresented in the linguistics literature (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2013). The data for this study was gathered over the course of three months of elicitation sessions with a single native speaker of Maay Maay. The goals of this study are twofold. First, it aims to provide a basic documentation of the structure of Maay Maay relative clauses, illustrating their properties using several typological factors which have been established in the literature. Since the entire body of literature on Maay Maay consists of only a few short published papers (Paster 2006; Paster, 2010) and an unpublished grammatical sketch (Harley, Coto & Gordon, 2012), this is the first time that relative clauses have been described in the language. This descriptive analysis contributes valuable data to the typological literature on relative clauses.

Secondly, I argue that the data from Maay Maay relative clauses has important theoretical implications regarding the structure of relative clauses and DPs in general. In particular, I demonstrate how, at first consideration, certain properties of Maay Maay seem to present a problem for aspects of the raising analysis of relative clauses as proposed by Kayne (1994). This is because, even though Maay Maay has noun-initial relative clauses, it seems to exhibit two properties which have been known to associate with noun-final relative clauses. Kayne uses an analysis which involves IP-raising to account for these properties in noun-final languages which is clearly not feasible in Maay Maay, a noun-initial language. A similar problem concerning these properties in Lebanese Arabic was discussed by Ouhalla (2004) who proposed a parametric distinction between languages that have CPs as their relative clause projections and languages that have DPs as their relative clause projections. This is a significant alteration to Kayne's account which assumes that all relative clauses are CPs, selected by a Determiner head.

Based on the data from Maay Maay, I argue that relative clauses in Maay Maay are not DPs as Ouhalla's proposal would suggest, but CPs, more in line with Kayne's original proposal. I also argue that Maay Maay has N-to-D raising in all DPs, which allows the noun to incorporate with the determiner. I show that the two previously mentioned properties that have been attributed to noun-final relative clauses occur in Maay Maay as a by-product of this N-to-D raising in relative clause constructions. Based on this analysis, I argue that the parametric distinction proposed by Ouhalla is unsupported by the data from Maay Maay. I also demonstrate how this analysis reveals an interesting property of complex sentence constructions in Maay Maay. Specifically, embedded clauses are marked both by complementizers which occupy C° as well as by demonstratives which occupy the SPEC CP position. The presence of these demonstrative markers supports several accounts which have argued that demonstratives are generated in SPEC positions (Giusti, 1993; Brugè 2002).