Proceedings of the LSA

Relative clause constructions in Gyegu Tibetan

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Abstract. This paper represents the first analysis of relative clauses in Gyegu Tibetan. Gyegu Tibetan is a Tibetic language spoken in and around Yushu City, Qinghai Province, People's Republic of China. The language forms relative clauses using a nominalized clause to modify a head noun, with five nominalizers used to form such constructions: /kʰi/, /mə/, /sʰa/, /tɕə/, and /zi/. Their use is determined primarily by the thematic role of the relativized noun (with regards to the RC-internal gap). The nominalizer /sʰa/ is used to relativize *location* arguments. The nominalizers /kʰi/ and /mə/ have overlapping distribution and are both used with *agent* arguments, while /tɕə/ and /zi/ also show overlapping distribution with *patient* and *theme* arguments, although only /zi/ is used with *instrument* arguments. In addition to morphosyntactic and semantic factors restricting the choice of nominalizer, the size of the relative clause and the choice of nominalizer also interact, with certain nominalizers being unable to co-occur with temporal and/or aspectual morphology. Each nominalizer also receives either an inherent perfective or imperfective aspectual interpretation, which may be neutralized using the aspectual morpheme /də/. Our analysis of Gyegu Tibetan is broadly in line with earlier accounts of relative clause constructions across other Tibetic languages.

Keywords. Tibetan; relative clause constructions; nominalization; Sino-Tibetan languages

1. Introduction. Although relative clauses have been described in a variety of modern Tibetic languages including Central Tibetan (DeLancey 1999), Kyirong Tibetan (Huber 2003), and Dongwang Tibetan (Bartee 2007), these constructions remain understudied. Relative clauses in Tibetic languages are formed quite differently from those in better studied Indo-European languages. Previous research shows that modern Tibetic languages form relative clauses using a nominalized clause to modify a head noun (DeLancey 1999: 231; Tournadre & Suzuki 2023: 209). Although Tibetic languages all use nominalizers to form relative clauses, the particular nominalizers used, and the specific requirements for how they are used, differ from language to language. In many varieties, including Central Tibetan and Gyegu Tibetan, a number of different nominalizers are used, the choice of which is determined primarily by the thematic role of the relativized noun.

In Central Tibetan, the nominalizer is chosen not only based on the thematic role of the head noun being relativized, but also on the aspectual interpretation (or "aspectual reference") of the relative clause (DeLancey 1999: 231). There are four nominalizers used to form relative clauses

* We would like to thank our language consultants Mary and Tsiren Lhayong, without whom this paper would not have been possible. We would also like to thank Arienne Dwyer and the Endangered Language Fund's Sharing Language Diversity Fellowship for funding the fieldwork that resulted in this data collection. Authors: Trent Ukasick, Inner Mongolia University (ukasicktrent@gmail.com) & Raymond Gagné, University of Washington (gagner2@uw.edu).

in the language: *-pa, -yag, -mkhan,* and *-sa*[1]. In addition to these nominalizers, the genitive morpheme *'i* is frequently found in relative clause constructions, as shown in example (1).

(1) kho-s bsad-pa-'i stag
3SG-ERG killed-NMLZ-GEN tiger
'the tiger which he killed'

The use of a genitive morpheme in relative clause constructions is common in other Tibetic languages (Tournadre & Suzuki 2023: 312). However, such constructions are not observed in Gyegu Tibetan[2].

Central Tibetan verbs also have different stems for perfective and imperfective aspect. Each nominalizer in Central Tibetan requires either a perfective or imperfective verb stem in the relative clause, but cannot occur with both. For example, the nominalizer *-yag* requires an imperfective verb stem. Gyegu Tibetan verbs also have different stems for past, present, and imperative (Ukasick 2025: 221), but it is unclear at this time whether nominalizers require specific verb stems in relative clause constructions.

Although Central Tibetan nominalizers require either a perfective or imperfective verb stem, it is important to note that the resulting relative clause may receive a different interpretation in terms of aspectual reference. For example, the nominalizer *-mkhan* requires an imperfective verb stem, but relative clauses formed using *-mkhan* are "inherently neutral with respect to time reference" (DeLancey 1999: 235).

Table (X) below shows the complete set of nominalizers used to form relative clauses in Central Tibetan, including the thematic role of the nouns they relativize, their required verb stem form, and the aspectual interpretation of the resulting relative clauses.

Nominalizer[3]	Thematic Role	Stem	Interpretation
-pa	Non-*agent*	Perfective	Perfective
-yag	*Patient/theme; instrument*	Imperfective	Imperfective
-mkhan	*Agent*	Imperfective	Neutral
-sa	*Source; goal; location; benefactives*	Imperfective	Neutral

Table 1. Nominalizers in Central Tibetan Relative Clauses

Kyirong Tibetan exhibits a similar system of four nominalizers, transcribed by Huber (2003) as *-kɛ̃̀ː*, *-pa*, *-sā*, and *-tɕɛ̀ː*. These nominalizers form relative clauses in broadly the same way as in

[1] DeLancey (1999) uses the standardized Wylie transliteration system, which represents written Tibetan using the Latin script, but does not necessarily reflect modern pronunciation. For this paper, we have chosen to represent Gyegu Tibetan using phonemic transcriptions.

[2] There is some variation in the pronunciation of these nominalizers, which could be attributed to a specific "genitive form" of the nominalizer, similar to what is described in Kyirong Tibetan by Huber (2003: 6). However, further investigation is required to determine the true nature of this variation.

[3] Throughout this paper, we use both the term nominalizer and relativizer to refer to these morphemes.

Central Tibetan. However, the thematic roles that each nominalizer can relativize differs between Central Tibetan and Kyirong Tibetan, with *-kɛ̃ː* able to relativize *agent*, *patient*, *instrument*, and *recipient* arguments, *-pa* able to relativize *agent*, *patient*, and *instrument* arguments, *-sa* is able to relativize *recipient*, *location*, *goal*, and *source* arguments, with *-tɕɛ̀ː* only used to relativize *patient* arguments. Similar to Central Tibetan, the nominalizers *-pa* and *-sa* sometimes appear in the genitive form (Huber 2003: 6).

Just as in Central Tibetan and Kyirong Tibetan, relative clauses in Dongwang Tibetan are formed using a set of nominalizers which differ in the thematic roles they relativize and their aspectual interpretation (Bartee 2007). Unlike Central Tibetan and Kyirong Tibetan, there are only three nominalizers in Dongwang Tibetan, one of which is used to relativize *location* and *instrument*, one of which is used to relativize *location* in perfective clauses, and a third used for all other thematic roles.

This background literature paints a consistent picture of relative clause formation in Tibetic languages. In all previously described languages, a small set of nominalizers is used to relativize a head noun, with the choice of relativizer governed by the thematic role of the head noun and the desired aspectual interpretation of the resulting relative clause. This is also the case in Gyegu Tibetan, where five nominalizers, /sʰa/, /kʰi/, /mə/, /tɕə/, and /zi/ are used to form relative clauses, with similar considerations of thematic role and aspectual interpretation. In Section 2, we present a descriptive account of nominalizers in Gyegu Tibetan. In Section 3, we propose a theoretical analysis to account for the observed empirical patterns. Section 4 addresses remaining questions that cannot be fully resolved due to the limited data currently available.

2. Gyegu Tibetan Nominalizers. In this section, we examine how nominalizers in Gyegu Tibetan relative clauses interact with thematic roles, tense/aspect morphology, and the inherent aspectual interpretations associated with each nominalizer. The nominalizer used to relativize a head noun in Gyegu Tibetan is determined by the thematic role of the relativized noun. Additionally, the size of the relative clause correlates with the choice of nominalizer, as different nominalizers co-occur with distinct tense and aspect morphology, suggesting that they contain projections of different sizes.

2.1 THE /SᴴA/ NOMINALIZER. The nominalizer /sʰa/[4] is used to relativize *location* arguments, as shown in example (2).

(2) pʰənde ŋa l̥ojon tsi sʰa l̥odz̥a tʰe reʔ
DIST.DEM2 1SG.ABS study do NMLZ school DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the school I attend (study at).'

However, what constitutes a *location* argument is sometimes unexpected and language specific. For example, the object argument of the verb /kʰatɕi/ 'to kiss' is interpreted as a *location* rather than a *patient*, as seen in example (3).

(3) tʰe aji tʰe=gə mər kʰa-tɕi sʰa awo
DIST.DEM1 woman DIST.DEM1=ERG 3SG.FEM mouth-kiss NMLZ man
tʰe ka reʔ
DIST.DEM1 love COP
'The woman loves the man that she kissed.'

[4] /sʰa/ derives from the same historical source as Central Tibetan *-sa* and shares the same written form.

/s^{h}a/ does not co-occur with any tense or aspect morphology in our data. The lack of any aspectual morphology relative clause internally indicates that the relative clause contains only a *v*P, and does not contain higher projections such as AspP or TP. DeLancey (1999: 239) claims that *=sa* in Central Tibetan is "neutral as to aspectual reference", which we claim to be the case with /s^{h}a/ in Gyegu Tibetan. In the sentences in example (4), we see that /s^{h}a/ can be associated with both completed (perfective) and habitual (imperfective) events.

(4) a. ŋətano k^{h}atso s^{ɦ}ama s^{ɦ}a s^{h}a tɯna s^{ɦ}ama s^{ɦ}a je ndʐo
1PL yesterday food eat NMLZ place food eat to go
'Let's go eat at the place we ate yesterday.'

b. p^{h}ənde ʂ^{ɦ}o tsan s^{h}a ts^{h}on-k^{h}on t^{ɦ}e reʔ
DIST.DEM2 yogurt sell place business-house DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the store that sells yogurt.'

The fact that /s^{h}a/ can be associated with ongoing events and completed past events indicates that it is neutral to aspectual reference, just as it is in Central Tibetan.

2.2 THE /K^{H}I/ AND /MƏ/ NOMINALIZERS. The nominalizer /k^{h}i/ is used to relativize *agent* arguments, and is not restricted to solely human *agent*s, as seen in example (5).

(5) a. ɨz to s^{h}i=də k^{h}i ʔɲə t^{ɦ}e
now tiger kill=ASP NMLZ person DIST.DEM1
'That person who is killing the tiger.'

b. p^{h}ənde ŋa mbi k^{h}i tɛ^{h}ə t^{ɦ}e reʔ
DIST.DEM2 1SG.ABS bite NMLZ dog DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the dog that bit me.'

Unlike /s^{h}a/, /k^{h}i/ is inherently interpreted as perfective when it appears without other aspect morphemes. This perfective interpretation is shown in example (6).

(6) to s^{h}i k^{h}i ʔɲə t^{ɦ}e
tiger kill NMLZ person DIST.DEM1
'The person who killed the tiger.'

/k^{h}i/ can also co-occur with aspectual morphology, specifically the aspect marker /=də/. The morpheme /=də/ plays a large role in the aspectual interpretation of relative clauses in Gyegu Tibetan. As previously mentioned, each nominalizer in Gyegu Tibetan receives a specific inherent aspectual interpretation. However, we argue that /=də/ is used to essentially "flip" the aspectual interpretation from perfective to imperfective, or vice-versa. As argued in section 3, /=də/ may effectively be "neutralizing" aspect, rather than simply changing the interpretation between perfective and imperfective. The morpheme /=də/ is also found elsewhere in the language as a clitic with continuous aspect interpretation (Ukasick 2025: 273). It is unclear at this time whether these morphemes are homophonous, or whether there is a deeper connection between its use as a continuous aspect marker and "flipping" aspectual interpretations in relative clause constructions. A similar morpheme *de* is also found in Dongwang Tibetan and may occur relative clause internally (Bartee 2007: 452). Bartee (2007) glosses this morpheme as a continuative aspect marker.

Aspectual morphology internal to the relative clause indicates that /k^{h}i/ relative clauses contain at least up to an AspP projection. An example of a /k^{h}i/ relative clause receiving imperfective interpretation when co-occurring with /=də/ is shown in example (7).

(7) pʰənde nıma-de-la tsʰə=də kʰi pə tʰe reʔ
DIST.DEM2 day-every-LOC late=ASP NMLZ boy DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the student who is always late.'

Although /kʰi/ co-occurs with the aspectual morpheme /də/, it cannot co-occur with the future tense marker /gu/. Instead, the future tense is expressed paraphrastically, as shown in example (8).

(8) a. **ɨz** to sʰi=də kʰi ʔɲə tʰe
now tiger kill=ASP NMLZ person DIST.DEM1
'That person who **is killing** the tiger.'
b. **tətа** to sʰi=də kʰi ʔɲə tʰe reʔ
later tiger kill=ASP NMLZ person DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the person who **will kill** the tiger.'

When presented with forms of these sentences containing future tense marker /gu/, the language consultant rejected them as ungrammatical and said that the future tense in these sentences must be expressed paraphrastically instead. This lack of future tense morphology relative clause internally indicates that although /kʰi/ clauses may contain up to an AspP projection, they do not contain a larger TP projection.

The /mə/ nominalizer shares the same distribution and aspectual interpretation as /kʰi/. The distinction between the two nominalizers lies in the perceived level of formality, with /mə/ considered more formal and closer to the written standard than /kʰi/. An example demonstrating the use of /mə/ is shown in example (9).

(9) pʰənde tɕəkə tɕa=də mə pə-non tsʰe-tsʰe ndʑo tə tɕowu
DIST.DEM1 soccer play=ASP NMLZ boy-PL every-every run when very
ndʑu to
quick COP.ATT
'All the boys playing soccer are very fast.'

As seen above, /mə/ is used to relativize an *agent*, and receives an imperfective interpretation when combined with /də/, exactly the same as /kʰi/. However, this sentence would be used in either a more formal setting, or when speaking to someone with higher social status, etc.

Based on this evidence, we conclude that /kʰi/ and /mə/ are used to relativize *agent* arguments, receive an inherently perfective aspectual interpretation when they occur without /də/, and contain an AspP projection.

2.3 THE /TɕƏ/ NOMINALIZER. The nominalizer /tɕə/ is used to relativize *patient* and *theme* arguments, as seen in (10).

(10) tʂaçʰi=gə kʰər ndan=də tɕə jeje tʰe
tʂaçʰi=ERG 3SG.MASC read=ASP NMLZ book DIST.DEM1
tʂon ka tʰi
very like PFV.OTHER
'Tashi likes the book that he read.'

Based on speaker intuitions, /tɕə/ without additional aspectual morphology receives an inherently imperfective interpretation. However, when accompanied by /=də/, the aspectual interpretation is either neutralized or flips to perfective. This is shown in example (11).

(11) a. ŋi tʂaçʰi-lə non ru-tsʰɪ tɕə tsampa tʰe
1SG.ERG Tashi-DAT make help-do NMLZ tsampa DIST.DEM1
'The tsampa that I am making for Tashi.' (the task is incomplete)
b. ŋi tʂaçʰi-lə non ru-tsʰɪ=də tɕə tsampa tʰe
1SG.ERG Tashi-dat make help-do=ASP NMLZ tsampa DIST.DEM1
'The tsampa that I made for Tashi.'

There are no instances in the corpus of /tɕə/ co-occuring with any tense morphology, indicating that /tɕə/ relative clauses contain up to an AspP, but not a TP.

2.4 THE /ZI/ NOMINALIZER. Like /tɕə/, the nominalizer /zi/ is used to relativize *patient* and *theme* arguments, as seen in (12).

(12) ŋi tɕo=də zi tɕoma tʰe
1SG.ERG plant=asp NMLZ tree DIST.DEM1
'The tree that I planted.'

The difference between /zi/ and /tɕə/ lies in both the size of the projection and the ability of /zi/ to relativize instruments. The use of /zi/ to relativize an *instrument* argument is shown in example (13).

(13) pʰe tʂʱa tʰe sʱuʔ ça zi tʰe reʔ
DIST.DEM3 knife DIST.DEM1 yak butcher NMLZ DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the knife he killed the yak with.'

In both examples (12) and (13) above, /zi/ receives a perfective aspectual interpretation. In our data, there are instances of /zi/ co-occurring with /də/. However, in such instances, the relative clause still receives a perfective interpretation. This issue is discussed further in section 4.

In addition to co-occurring with aspectual morphology, clauses relativized using the /zi/ nominalizer may also co-occur with tense morphology. This indicates that they contain up to a TP projection, while /tɕə/ relative clauses contain only up to a AspP projection. Descriptively, this means that /zi/ can co-occur with the future tense marker /gu/, while /tɕə/ cannot. The nominalizer /zi/ co-occuring with /gu/ is shown in example (14).

(14) kʰər ça **gu** zi sʱuʔ tʰe
3SG.MASC butcher **FUT** NMLZ yak DIST.DEM1
'That yak that he **will** butcher.'

Interestingly, /zi/ is the only nominalizer found in the data which co-occurs with any tense morphology. In other instances, as with /kʰi/, tense is expressed paraphrastically.

Based on this evidence, /zi/ is used to nominalize *patient, theme,* and *instrument* arguments, receives an inherent perfective aspectual interpretation, and contains up to a TP projection.

3. Theoretical Analysis. Having laid out the descriptive patterns of the various nominalizers, let us now turn to the theoretical analysis. We argue that, as described in the previous section, each nominalizer has inherent properties relating to the thematic role of the relativized noun (relative to the relative clause-internal gap), the size of the relative clause, and the inherent aspectual interpretation of the relativizer. These properties are laid out below in Table 2.

Nominalizer	Thematic Role	Projection	Aspectual Interpretation
/kʰi/, /mə/	*Agent*	AspP	Perfective
/sʰa/	*Location*	*v*P	Neutral
/tɕə/	*Patient/theme*	AspP	Imperfective
/zi/	*Instrument/patient/theme*	TP	Perfective

Table 2. Nominalizers in Gyegu Tibetan Relative Clauses

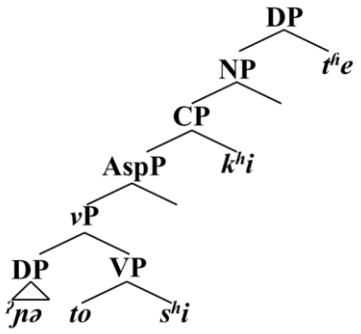
We will discuss each inherent property in turn. Beginning with the thematic role of the relativized noun, we have no analysis unique to our proposal. Any account that can aptly handle the thematic role selection in English relative clauses (e.g., the choice between *when*, *where*, *what*, etc. as the relativizer) should be able to account for the Gyegu Tibetan relativizers' behaviors as well. We will briefly sketch out a possible account, but one to which we are not committed, given that thematic relationship assignment to head nouns is a theoretical question beyond just Gyegu.

Absent language-specific diagnostics that show a movement-based account of relative clauses is incompatible, we will thus assume a movement-based account of Gyegu clauses. Thus, we will first assume that head nouns surface within the relative clause gap and undergo movement to derive the surface structure. With this assumption, thematic relations could be simply handled with UTAH – agentive heads surface in spec,vP, themes surface as complements of V, etc. For explanatory purposes, we will use (6), reproduced as (15), to demonstrate the derivation.

(15) to sʰi kʰi ʔɲə tʰe
tiger kill NMLZ person DIST.DEM1
'The person who killed the tiger.'

Before any movement, the basic structure of (15) would be (16).

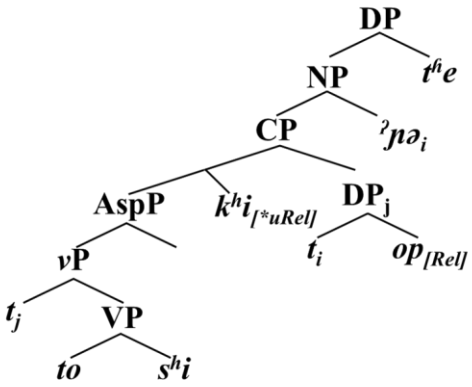
(16)



Given that the head /ʔɲə/ 'person' surfaces first in *v*P, it can be interpreted as an agent of the verb /sʰi/ 'kill.' The second part of deriving the structure requires the head to rise outside of the CP. To do so, we will simply assume for now that the DP containing the head has a null operator that has some feature required to check a strong feature on the relativizers. The head itself will then move from the specifier of CP outside of the relative clause. We are thus, absent negative evi-

dence, assuming a head raising analysis, such as that of Bhatt (2002) and others. For ease, we will call the feature involved in movement [Rel], and schematize the movement in (17).

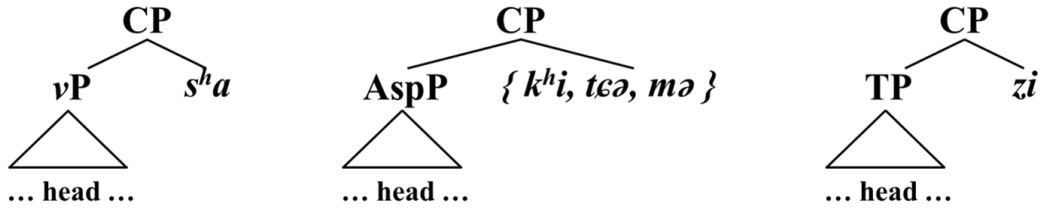
(17)



As the relativizer has a strong uninterpretable [uRel] feature, it will probe for the head noun due to forming a constituent with *op* that has a [Rel] feature. Once the whole DP has moved, as notated with the subscript *j* in (b), the head will further move outside of the CP. Regardless of the trigger for this movement, we are now able to capture whether the thematic interpretation of the head noun within the RC as well as the surface structure.

Now let us turn our attention to the size of the projection. We have already noted that the locative relativizer /s^{h}a/ does not appear with aspectual or tense morphemes. Moreover, the relativizers /k^{h}i/, /mə/, and /tɕə/ all can co-occur with the aspectual morpheme /də/, but not tense morphemes, as seen through speakers employing paraphrastic methods (e.g., adverbials) to express tense rather than the future tense morpheme /gu/. Finally, the relativizer /zi/ can co-occur with /gu/. Given these observations, we argue that the different relativizers take different maximal projections as their complements. We thus argue that /s^{h}a/-relatives are the smallest, only containing up to a *v*P while /zi/-relatives are the largest and contain up to a TP. The remaining three relativizers only project up to AspP, given the presence of aspectual morphemes but not tenses. Due to the lack of genitive case marking the relativizers, we will analyze all the relativizers as complementizers, as was already shown in (16), (17). Thus, the highest layers of each type of relativizer are laid out in (18).

(18)



To capture the size of the relative clauses, each relativizer can simply have an uninterpretable feature of its complement (e.g., /s^{h}a/ has [u*v*]). These features would be checked by the heads of the respective projections (*v*, Asp, or T), and would cause a crash if the complement to the relativizer does not have the right feature, barring cases of, for example, /s^{h}a/ with a TP. This analysis also stipulates that we must posit null T, *v*, Asp, etc. with the respective features so that even if a /zi/-relative lacks an overt tense, a null T will still satisfy the selectional requirement.

It should briefly be noted that, given Gyegu Tibetan is an ergative-absolutive language, the lack of TP for most relatives is unproblematic for case assignment, if we assume an inherent case assignment account such as Mahajan (1989), Woolford (1997), and Aldridge (2004). The lack of a certain projection, e.g., TP, is unproblematic for interpretation, as speakers use paraphrastic ways of conveying tense when the relative clause disallows the required morpheme. Thus, we are able to posit different sizes of clauses without problematic consequences.

Finally, let us turn to the matter of inherent aspect for each relativizer. The claim that Gyegu relativizers have an inherent aspect is typologically well-founded, given that similar patterns are observed in Central Tibetan (DeLancey 1999) and Dongwang Tibetan (Bartee 2007). Turning to the specific relativizers, we analyze /sʰa/-relatives as aspectually neutral, allowing both perfective and imperfective readings as seen in the previous section. This claim falls in line with similar claims that the cognate relativizer *-sa* in Central Tibetan is also aspectually neutral. Before continuing to other relativizers and their inherent aspect, we must discuss the aspectual morpheme /də/. It was noted in the previous section that the morpheme seems to "flip" the aspect of a relativizer, so an imperfective relativizer (e.g., /tɛə/) with /də/ becomes perfective and vice versa. However, we will now refine our claim; /də/ does not flip the inherent aspect, but rather neutralizes it. We will now present three arguments to support this interpretation.

To begin, the relativizer /sʰa/, the only aspectually neutral relativizer, is incompatible with /də/. Since the relativizer is inherently neutral, adding a morpheme to further neutralize it is unnecessary, and we thus have no elicitations of such a sentence.

Given that we observe neutral relativizers in the Tibetic languages, it thus follows that a language could include a morpheme that neutralizes aspect. As a point of a comparison, Slavic languages possess perfective and imperfective verbs which, with prefixes, may change to the other aspect (see, for example, Łazorczyk 2010 for Polish). To the best of our knowledge, no verb can be simultaneously perfective and imperfective, leading to a "neutralizing" prefix being unfounded in such languages. Thus, the language-specific (and family-specific) inventory of aspect – imperfective, perfective, and neutral aspects – lead us to posit this neutralizing behavior rather than a perfectivity "flipper."

In addition to the above, we also observed cases where the /də/ morpheme does not seem to change the aspect, having the default aspect of the relativizer. For example, we observe that /kʰi/-relatives are perfective when without /də/. Looking back at (8), reproduced as (19) below, we see that (19a) behaves exactly as expected: /də/ flips the aspect to imperfective. However, in (19b), we have a perfective reading despite the presence of /də/.

(19) a. ɨz to sʰi=də kʰi ʔɲə tʰe
now tiger kill=ASP NMLZ person DIST.DEM1
'That person who **is killing** the tiger.'

b. təta to sʰi=də kʰi ʔɲə tʰe reʔ
later tiger kill=ASP NMLZ person DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the person who **will kill** the tiger.'

If we pursue the competing analysis, where /də/ simply flips the aspect of a relative clause, then (19b) is completely unexpected. We would thus expect (19b) to mean something like "the person who will be killing the tiger," which is not a valid paraphrase. However, by pursuing a neutralization analysis, we are able to handle (19b) by saying that the aspect has been neutralized, but can still become realized as a perfective aspect when necessary. Thus, (19) becomes unproblematic under a neutralization analysis.

Given the above reasons, we thus argue that our analysis is on the right track. As for why the morpheme seems to mostly result in a simple flip of aspect, this can be attributed to competition. If a relativizer on its own expresses a perfective aspect, then the neutralizer equivalent will naturally be interpreted as imperfective, since the perfective aspect can be expressed with a simpler structure. Once again, this same argumentation explains why we do not see /də/ co-occurring with /sʰa/, given that an inherently neutral relativizer would never need to get neutralized a second time.

Having now discussed the behavior of /də/, we can turn back to the inherent aspect of relativizers. We observe that /tɕə/ on its own yields imperfective readings, which is demonstrated by speaker judgments that (X) above sounds incomplete without the addition of /də/, showing a change from the imperfective default to a derived perfective (through neutralization) interpretation. All the remaining relativizers, /kʰi/, /mə/, and /zi/, show the opposite pattern, having a default of the perfective aspect. In all cases, we see additions of /də/ yielding mostly imperfective readings, such as habituals.

We have now provided a theoretical account for the core three properties of the different relativizers: the thematic role of the relativized head, the size of the relative clauses, and the inherent aspect of each relativizer. The first property can be handled through a movement account of relative clauses and UTAH, although such an account may later require revision should movement diagnostics show a lack of movement in Gyegu IHRCs. For the size of the relatives, we motivate the distinction based on co-occurrence restrictions on both tense and aspect morphemes, and encode this as a feature on each relativizer. Finally, we argue that the various relativizers have an inherent aspect, based on their interpretation in isolation, and that this often can be neutralized by a morpheme /də/, explaining apparent "flips" in the inherent aspect.

4. Residual Questions. There are still some lingering questions surrounding the data that we have not resolved at this time. Two major questions remain: what governs the choice between /tɕə/ and /zi/ in non-instrumental, non-future clauses, and why does /də/ occur in certain clauses when the intended aspectual interpretation can be expressed with a simpler structure?

Turning to the first question, what governs the choice between /tɕə/ and /zi/ in non-instrumental, non-future clauses? This is difficult to answer, given that both are used with very similar head nouns, as shown in example (20) and (21).

(20)	kʰər	ŋa	jɪn	zi	kuzi	mabo	tʰ̃e	kan	tɕowu	tɕʰe	reʔ	
	3SG.MASC	1SG.ABS	give	NMLZ	clothes	red	DIST.DEM1	price	very	big	COP	
	'The red clothes that he gave me are expensive.'											

(21)	mər	kan=də	tɕə	kuzi	tʰ̃e	ŋə=te	reʔ
	3SG.FEM	wear=ASP	NMLZ	clothes	DIST.DEM1	my=POSS	COP
	'The clothes that she is wearing are mine.'						

It is possible that their use is determined by factors unrelated to the head noun being relativized, or there could be more fine-grained factors related to thematic role, aspectual interpretation, etc.

Finally, we turn to a question of major theoretical importance: why does /də/ occur in certain clauses when the intended aspectual interpretation can be expressed with a simpler structure? For example, in some instances the speaker wants to express a perfective aspectual interpretation, and they use a nominalizer which already receives an inherent perfective interpretation. However, instead of simply using the nominalizer without additional aspectual morphology, /də/ appears relative clause internally. In such cases, there is no need to neutralize or flip the aspectual interpretation, yet /də/ is still present. One such instance is shown in example (22).

(22) tʰe ŋi ti=də zi ɲentɕʰon tʰe reʔ
DIST.DEM1 1SG.ERG watch=ASP NMLZ movie DIST.DEM1 COP
'That is the movie I saw.'

In the example above, the speaker desires to express the perfective aspect, and /zi/ without additional morphology already receives a perfective interpretation. Why then does the speaker choose to add /də/, which would normally serve to neutralize the aspectual interpretation? Although this phenomenon occurs with all nominalizers found in our data set, it is particularly prevalent with /zi/. Given the limited amount of data available to us, it is not possible to answer such questions at this time.

5. Conclusion. In summary, Gyegu Tibetan RCs are formed by a nominalized clause modifying a head noun. There are five nominalizers used to form RCs, and the choice of nominalizer is primarily influenced by the thematic role of the head noun. These nominalizers also select different sized clauses. The finding that different nominalizers take clauses of varying sizes fits well within the larger observations of Tibetan RCs. Our observations contribute to the understanding of the typology of RCs in Tibetic languages, and provide a basis for further research into the nature of these constructions in Gyegu Tibetan and related languages.

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