

SYNTAX OF THE TIV RELATIVE CLAUSE

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Abstract

The study interrogates the syntax of relative clauses and explores issues dominant in its analysis. Issues interrogated include restrictive and non-restrictive analysis; mediated and unmediated analysis under the canopy of principles and parameters approach (Chomsky, 2001), seeking to know how the relative clause in the Tiv language is accounted for, under the frame of those dominant forms of analyses. The methodology employed for the study involved interrogating the various strategies which the Tiv language adopts in the selection and structuring of those specific features that become characteristic of the language and form its parameters. The data obtained for the study sought to answer questions that discern the relation between the relative head and the relativized site. The analysis tried to see whether or not the head of the relative clause plays a dual role such as being part of the matrix clause, serving syntactic and semantic function in RC internal position, and whether the RC is a complement, or an adjunct of the DP. The findings of the study show that Tiv exhibits overt relative markers. Also, the RPr is the central component that serves the link between the other elements in the construction, inferring that the relation is an indirect one, mediated by the RPr, thus agreeing with the concept of mediated analysis. The findings also agree with the assumption of the RC being the complement of the determiner derived by movement of the head noun into the SPEC position of the relative CP, and also that there is long distance binding. Data treatment shows that Tiv favours both mediated and unmediated analysis in its treatment of relative clauses.

Key Words: Syntax, Relative clause, Tiv, Mediated, Unmediated, Restrictive, Non-restrictive, Analysis.

1.0 Introduction

This work seeks to investigate the nature and characteristics of the relative clause in Tiv. The major subject of debate in the syntax of relative clause is the distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clause (Comrie, 1989) and even though there is no absolute consensus on the methodological procedures for accounting for the phenomenon in language, the standard view in the syntax of relative clauses is that which seeks to highlight the key components of the relative clause (henceforth, (RC)) construction to be: Head, the relative pronoun (RPrn) and the clause (Bresnan, 2001, Dalrymple, 2001, Falk, 2001). The relationship between the RC and the element it modifies, also known as the relative head (RH) as well as the relation of the RH to the relativization site is the subject of debate by the various linguistic scholars, since the human language accounts for different patterns in the surface

ordering of the relation.

Thus, in investigating the nature and characteristics of the relative clause in Tiv, attention will be on the distinction between the restrictive and non-restrictive RCs; to determine difference between the mediated and unmediated analyse with a view to showing the one that better accounts Tiv RCs. This exposes the basic morphological and syntactic properties of the restrictive headed RC in Tiv (Kayne, 1994, Bianchi, 2000, and Vries, 2002). The analysis interrogates the relation between the RC and the element it modifies. Emphasis is focused on discerning the relation of the RH to the relativized site. Here, both grammatical and semantic considerations are held in sight as the analysis tries to map a surface ordering for Tiv, using as base, the following questions:

Does the head of the RC play a dual role, i.e. as part of the matrix clause

and serving syntactic and semantic function in RC internal position?

Specifically, the above question seeks to confirm, whether true, the RC clause as a complement; whether not true, it is an adjunct of the DP that contains it. Also, it seeks to determine whether the element originates inside the clause (i.e., base generated external position to the clause).

The work contributes to advance postulations regarding the theory of language, especially as it pertains to UG (Chomsky, 1986a), Principles and Parameters framework (Chomsky, 2000a) and the Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 2015). The concern with all these phases is the question of knowledge of language and the use of this knowledge (Chomsky, 2000a). Thus, as a theoretical perspective, UG in all its modifications and variations has underpinnings about the nature of human language which border on principles (Chomsky, 1981a), simplicity, economy conditions, endocentricity, etc (Cook and Newman, 2007; Chomsky, 2015) that enable a native speaker to make competent choices in the lexicon and compute 'perfect' sentence. The methodology involves the various strategies which specific human languages adopt in the selection processes and those specific features that characterize parameters. Consequently, this work provides an ideal avenue where data and theory interact to advance formal frontiers of knowledge at the cross-linguistic level.

2.1. Theoretical and Empirical Explorations in Language and the Syntax of RCs

2.1a. Nature of Language

Linguistic theory has as its guiding principle, attempts at explicating the phenomenon known as language, in the most formal, simple and economical ways devoid of any clumsiness. This has set the task to provide for both descriptive and explanatory adequacy of the grammar of a language. In Chomsky (1957) conception, a leading concern had been from the onset to classify the concept 'simplest grammar' and to determine how to choose the simplest grammar for each language. This view is captured in Radford (1988:23): 'grammar of a language is descriptively adequate if it specifies which structures are (and not) syntactically, semantically, morphologically and phonologically well formed in the language

and also properly describe the syntax, semantic, morphological and phonological structures of the sentences in the language in such a way as to provide a principled account of the native speaker's intuition about the structure'. Chomsky (2015) attests to the nature of a linguistic theory in terms of the basic principle of language (BP) in which each language yields an infinite array of hierarchically structured expressions, each interpreted at two inter-faces, conceptual-intentional (C-I) and sensori-motor (SM). This characteristic relation between 'sound' and 'meaning' (Cook and Newman, 2007) forms the basis upon which meaning is achieved by careful analysis of the structural order of the constituents in a sentence.

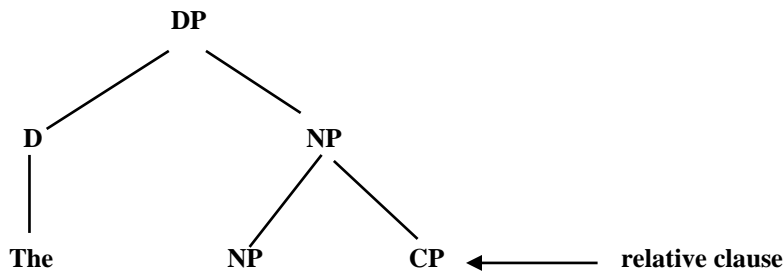
If the above is correct, it then means that structure is a key component in achieving both descriptive and explanatory adequacy in a language. Validating the importance of structure, Chomsky (1977:ch.1) says Jespersen recognized that the structures of language 'come into existence in the mind of the speaker' by abstraction from experience with utterances yielding a 'notion of their structure' that is definite enough to guide him in framing sentences of his own. Chomsky (2015) agrees that the properties of language spell the primary goals of linguistic theory: to spell out clearly this 'notion of structure' and the procedure by which it yields 'free expressions'

The commonality of language and structure is best captured under the P&P (Culicover, 1997) approach. The P&P approach holds that languages have no rules in anything like the familiar and no theoretically significant grammatical constructions except as taxonomic artifacts; but there are universal principles and a finite array of options as to how they apply (parameters). This last statement forms the theoretical construct upon which this work is built: i.e. cast RCs in the framework of a universal category of language, then see how Tiv selects from this 'finite array of options' in its syntax of RCs.

2.1b. Syntax of Relative Clauses – an Exploration

The quest for descriptive and explanatory adequacy can be judged to be the reason for the

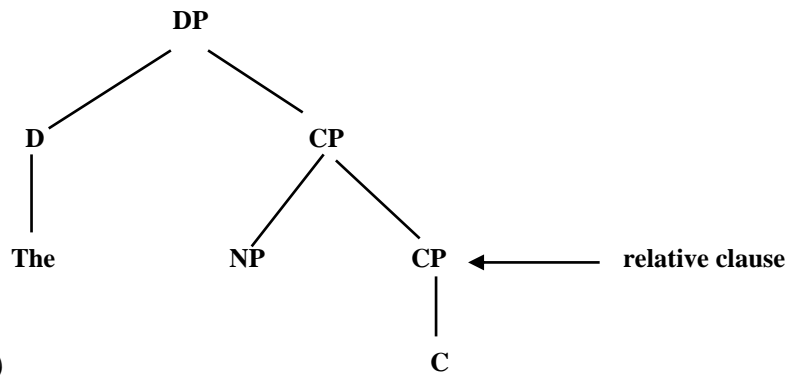
3.



Source: Bentea (2010:1)

However, an alternative analysis exists, notable among the proposals is Kayne (1994). It is antisymmetry and the hypothesis is a revised account of the raising analysis to relative clauses. The alternative proposal assumes the relative clause to be a complement of the determiner in which the surface order is derived by movement of the head noun into the specifier position of the relative CP. This is represented in the configuration (4) below:

4.



Source: Bentea (2010:1)

Kayne’s (1994) raising/promotion analysis of RCs draws on Smith (1964) and Vergnaud (1974). He argues that the raising/promotion analysis of RCs is the only structural analysis that conforms to the linear correspondence axiom (LCA). The tenets of LCA are such that right adjunction is banned and strict binary branching is postulated, the consequence being that each maximal projection is restricted to only one adjunct and specifier position and to one complement. The diagram (4) above, in the light of Kayne (1994) captures the architecture of LCA for relative clause that: a relative clause is a CP that follows the rest of the DP it is supposed to adjoin to. Kayne finally assumes that RCs must be complement of a functional head; this, he observes is possible since relative CPs are not theta-marked. This functional head is the determiner head (Abney, 1987). After all these, Kayne concludes that the D-CP complementation analysis is in tandem with the LCA.

3.1. The Relative Clause in Tiv

This refers to any clause that modifies a noun head, and is functionally equivalent to any adjective and as a mark of their grammatical function; relative clauses modify the noun or restrict the reference. Consider the example (5):

5a.

or [u wua kwase na]
 Man that-REL-M kill-V.pst wife him-3SG-POSSS-pro
 ‘the man that killed his wife’

5b

. kon- u [u mende sha vande]
Tree PRO-RESUM that-REL-M germinate-V.PST on rock
'tree that sprout up on the rock'

5c.

mсен [ka or gen u na- n jighjigh]
N- it-FOC person-SG another to give-PROG faith
'msen is someone that you can trust'

All the examples in (5a-c) have the relative clause structure. In Tiv, the relative marker is introduced, which links the relativized N head to the relative clause. Tiv characterizes various morphemes for relative marking, which may be pronouns, etc. This is seen in the example (b & c), which display variant relative markers. In (a), the N head is *or* 'man', in (b), it is *kon* 'tree', and in (c), it is *mсен*. They are the relativized NPs and the relative clause serves the function of modification of the N head. The relative clause serves as the modifier of the N head, is evident in (a), where possession is marked, on the relative clause. In (b), the relative clause contains the prepositional complement of location that modifies the N head in terms of location. (c) has a pronominal verbal complement which serves as the relativized NP clause, a relative clause that modifies the N head by functioning as the complement of the relativized NP.

The analysis agrees with the populist view of syntax of relative clauses, which is that the relative pronoun is the central component that serves the link between the other two elements in the construction. This infers that the relation between the head and the positions in the clause is an indirect one, mediated by the Rprn. And it is this relationship that has given rise to the concept of a mediated analysis in the syntax of RCs (Falk, 2010). The example (c) is best explained based on Kayne's (1994) analysis, which assumes the relative clause to be the complement of the determiner and the surface ordering derived by movement of the head noun into the specifier position of the relative CP. We will consider further examples below:

6a.

Tersoo pine hanma takerada un a va mi
N. ask-V.PST which book he-RESUMP will come it
'Tersoo asked which book he will bring'

6b.

ve pine or u ve a na
They ask-V.PST person-SG that they will give-PRST
'they asked whom they will give'

The example in (6a) is an instance of relative clause modification, that restricts the N head, and it is modification of the head by a finite restrictive relative clause. The restriction is achieved through the use of the pronominal relative marker *hanma* 'which' and restricts the choice of the referent. The example in (6b) presents an instance of resumptive pronoun in Tiv (a pronoun which is related to the relativized NP). In the example, in (6a), the resumptive pronoun is headed by the relative head *hanma* 'which', while in (6b), the relative head is the complementizer 'that' which is an overt relative operator. Examples (6a & b), in their internal structure, are strikingly similar to the structure of indirect questions; and their semantic functions are equivalent to adjectives and serve as complement of the noun head that they modify.

3.2. Headless Relative Clauses

In the syntax of relative clauses, instances abound where there exists noun phrases in relative clauses without nouns. They go by the term headless relative clauses. The concern in the literature is whether these headless relative clauses have the same structure as relative clauses and the opinion is that languages are parameterized on this (Payne, 1997).

In Tiv however, the form of the headless relative clause is the same as the form of the relative clause. Consider the data below:

7

. u a lu ir la
 s/he/it that be black that

[_{NP}that one] [_{RC}that is black]

Headless relative clauses of this sort obligatorily require demonstrative. There is no structural difference between headless relative clauses and those with a head. In the example (7), there is no referent noun with which modification is achieved by realization. Instead, modification is achieved by the attributive nature of the adjective. In Tiv, a headless relative clause can contain additional words that otherwise occur as modifiers of the noun, as in (8):

8a.

Ve cica Mba Yan ve tema

they all They ASP them sit-PST
 [_{NP}all of them] [_{RC}that sat]

b.

Se gbin Mba yan se nenge
 Us plenty those ASP we see-PST
 [_{NP}many of us] [_{RC}that saw]

c.

mбан cuku Mba ve va la
 these few them they come that
 [_{NP}these few] [_{RC}that have come]

In example (8a), there is an additional word that acts as modifier of the headless relative clause: *ve cica* ‘all of them’ (a), *se gbin* ‘plenty of us’ in (b), and *mбан cuku* ‘these few’, in (c). This indicates that it is possible in Tiv for the headless relative clause to contain additional words that act as modifiers of noun. Yet, some headless relative constructions involve a participial phrase which functions as a noun phrase, and it inflects for case number in a similar manner to nouns. Consider the example that follows;

9a. m nenge[u a lu yila-n] mbayev la
 I see INDF-pro-one that be-V call-PROG children that
 ‘I see [the one that is calling] the children’

b. ve kor [ve mba wua-n] i- or la
 they catch-V.PST them those kill-PROG PL-person that
 ‘they caught [those of them that kill] people’

c

. se lam [a mbakura- n] hunda-gar
 we spoke to those guard-PROG door settlement
 ‘we spoke [to them that guard] the city’s gate’

Such constructions as in (9) above are possible, only where in the syntax of RCs, the verbs are in a way more nominal than finite verbs in main clauses, such that in the absence of a noun head, the verb functions as the nominal head of the noun phrase (9a-c). This nominal nature of the participle is accounted for in terms of the morphological resemblance of participles and adjectives. Participles, thus exhibit a mixture of verbal, adjectival and nominal features.

Further, example (10) illustrates relative constructions in which the verb exhibits nominal properties; where the headless relative clause in (a) is analogous to the headed relative clause in (b) as shown:

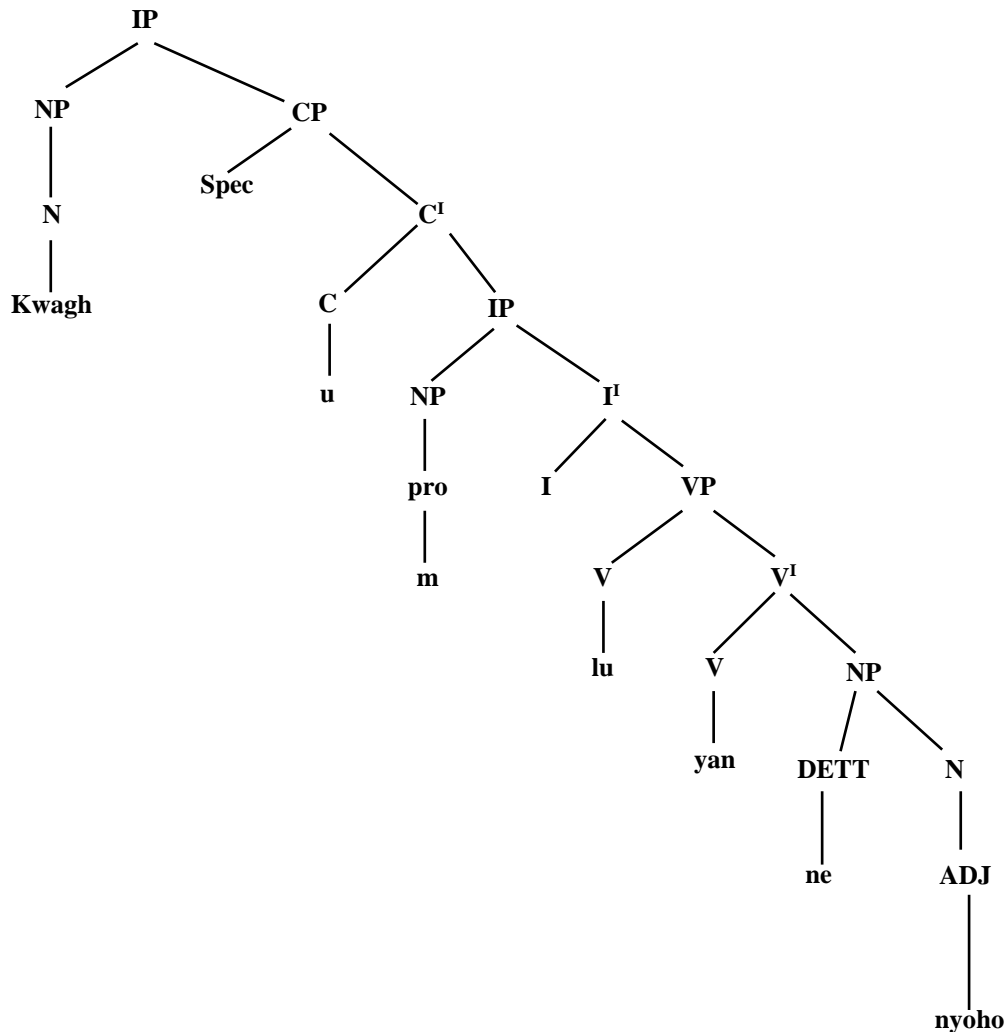
10a.

kwagh [u m lu ya- n] ne nyoho
 Thing that-REL-M 1SG be eat-PROG this nyoho
 ‘what I am eating is sweet’

b. i-you ki [m lu ya- n] ne ki nyoho
 SG-yam it 1SG be eat-PROG this it sweet
 ‘this yam that I am eating is sweet’

The example (10a) has a tree schema of the following configuration:

11.



It has been in Tiv that participial phrases behave like clauses syntactically. Transitive participles occur with accusative case-marked direct object as in the examples above.

In Tiv, the restrictive relative clause is formed by using overt relative determiners (see exs:5a, 5b, 6b, 10a). The overt marker is introduced by the complementizer and serves as the equivalent of ‘that-relatives in English’. These overt markers serve as heads. These C heads in Tiv are *u* (see exs 5a, 5b, 6b, and 10a), while *ve* is provided in the example below:

12a

. ve na [ana ve u zohon]?

They give who that you quarrel?

‘To whom did they give that you quarrel?’

b

. ve er nyi [ve u zohon]?

they do what that you quarrel]?

‘what did they do that you quarrel?’

Both *u* and *ve* are realized as overt markers in restrictive relative clauses which are analyzed as complementizers. These are used with both human and non-human referents.

The alternative analysis provided by Kayne where RCs are CPs selected by an external DP and the relativized element, here, the head is raised from inside the RC to the specifier position is here exemplified for Tiv as (13 a, & b), where (a) is the original structure and (b) is the final structure after movement has taken place

13a

. [DP [D [CP [C (u) Terfa wua or]]]]

b. [DP [D [NP or]_i [C (u) Terfa wua t_i]]]]

‘the man that Terfa killed’

(13a) represents pre-movement and pre-selection whereas (13b) is an instance of movement and the final word order. In (b), the RC is seen as CP, selected by an external D and the relativized element (the head *-Or*) raises from inside the relative clause to the specifier position of CP. From this perspective, it is seen that in the relative construction *Or (u) Terfa wua*, starts off with the configuration (13a), where the NP *Or* ‘man’ originates as the complement of the verb *wua* ‘kill’ and the external determiner selects the relative CP thereby obtaining the final word order in (13b).

Relative constructions with overt relative pronouns have the moved constituent generated in the complement position as well, and in Tiv as opposed to many other languages, the structure is the same as in (14):

14a

. [DP [D [CP [C (a) ve ungwa abaver]]]]
 which 3PL hear-V.PST news

b

. [DP [D \emptyset [NP abaver]_i [C (a)] ve ungwati_i]]]
 news which 3PL hear- V.PST
 ‘news which they heard’

In (14), it is observed that the complement is generated in the embedded verb before it is selected by the external DP and moves to the specifier position of the DP as exemplified in (14b).

Constructions involving embedded PPs in Tiv, exhibit behaviour not consistent with what obtains in English. This is seen in the example that follows:

15a.

[DP [D [CP [C (u)]_{IP} M wua [yar [PP a] gbuuka]]]]]
 which 1SG kill-V.PST deer with gun
 ‘which I kill deer with gun’

15b.

[DP [D [NP gbuuka [C (u)] M wua yar a mi
 gun which 1SG kill deer PP-with it-pro.RESUMP
 ‘Gun with which I killed a deer’

Example (15a) is an instance of a structure where the verb generates the complement verb internally, and in (15b), the NP – *gbuuka* is raised from the complement position to the SPEC position of the relative DP. It is discovered in the analysis that instead of pied-piping the preposition along with the DP, consistent with languages like English, the preposition in the case of Tiv is left in its base position and to prevent it from being stranded, a pronoun which resumes on the raised NP is generated to serve as the complement of the PP.

3.3. Wh – Constructions

The tendency has been to characterize RC under Wh-constructions with various assumptions such as Wh – movement (Chomsky, 1977), long distance dependencies (Bresnan, 2001), unbounded dependencies (Pollard and Sag 1994) as well as \bar{A} dependencies (Chomsky, 1981). The thesis of the assumptions is that a single element has more than one function, potentially in distant clauses, as seen in the example (16):

16

. ka an I kaa u er, nan wua kwase u nan ?
 FOC-it who pro-indef tell-V.pst 2SG that pro-indef kill wife of his?
 ‘who was it told to you that killed his wife’

In this data, the DP *an(a)* ‘who’ plays the function of question word in the main clause and also serves as the function of the verb *wua* ‘kill’ two clauses down the line. This instantiates long – distance binding in Tiv and exhibits structural position as parameter. In the data in (16), the question word is realized in the sentence initial position through wh-movement. The pronoun *nan* ‘he’ is housed in the second clause and it is co – referential to *an* ‘who’. Because the wh-element undergoes overt movement for realization, this typically casts Tiv in the class of higher clause for realization of the multi-functional element. More so, the structure of the language does not encourage wh-in-situ constructions, hence they have to overtly move to achieve focus; we can propose that Tiv has just the high position for the expression of the wh- function.

The data in (16) somehow settles the issue of whether mediated or unmediated analysis for Tiv. Remember that the crux of the unmediated analysis argument is that the relativized element has multifunction. This is accounted for in (16). We will consider another data and make proposal for unmediated analysis as in (17):

17.

Or u wua kwase na la va nyen
[_x[_y or [_z u wua kwase na la]] va nyen]
Man who vb.pst-kill woman POSS-his Dem-that VB. Pst-come yesterday
'the man who killed his wife came yesterday'

We take the argument here in terms of subject vs object identity. In the first instance is the fact that the adjunct *z* is part of the subject of *x* and also part of the object of *z*. Here, the object of *z* is *u wua kwase na* 'who killed his wife'. This implies that the adjunct which is a reflexive clause is both part of the subject of *x* and object of *z*. In this while, we can account for a direct appropriate relation between the nominal phrase and the in-clause element as they are both identical. The issue of identicalness eases the problem of case marking in the sense that theta role is assigned on the externally headed relative clause, making the internally headed one unnecessary for case marking.

4.1. Conclusion

The work explored the syntax of the relative clause in Tiv: with a focus on its nature and characteristics. The work is premised on the assumption which considers syntax of relative clause under the key components of head, relative pronoun and the clause. This accounts for the principles in the syntax of relative clauses. The parametric variation exposes how different languages characterize the relationship between the relative clause and the element it modifies, and the relation of the relative head to the relativization site.

The study in its analysis gave attention to the issue of whether mediated or unmediated analysis and how Tiv clause structure patterns for this occurrence, paying attention to the syntactic properties of the restrictive head. The analysis attempt answers to the issue of whether the head of the relative clause plays a dual role, and whether the relative clause is a complement, or an adjunct of the DP. Again, the issue of whether the relative head is base generated external to the clause, or it originates clause internal is attempted.

The analysis of the data suggests that the relation between the head and the positions in the clause could be an indirect one, thus favouring mediated analysis (Falk, 2010). Data also showed that the relative clause could be the complement of the determiner and the surface ordering parameterized, where derivation is by movement of the head noun into the specifier position of the relative CP (Kayne, 1994). In Tiv, this movement is overt and the Tiv language has overt markers which could be analyzed as complementizers. Wh-constructions in the data reveal the character of multi-functionality and long distance dependencies in the syntax of the Tiv relative clause. This study and its findings are important because it provides a basis to examine the structure of the relative clause in Tiv not only that, its findings constitute formal knowledge to the debate on the nature of the relative clause generally, as well as how languages react to parameter settings.

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