Relative clause formation in Lule (Argentine Chaco)

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1 Introduction.

Lule was spoken by a semi-nomadic people who lived in the Gran Chaco between the Pilcomayo river and the Andean foothills of northwestern Argentina. It is an extinct language, which was also spoken by other groups of the present-day Argentine provinces of Tucumán and Santiago del Estero. Virtually all of our documentation of Lule comes from the Sardinian Jesuit missionary Antonio Maccioni (1688-1753) in his Arte y vocabulario de la lengua lule y tonocoté, published under the name Machoni in Madrid in 1732. Mentions of Lule disappear from the historical record after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1776. We may surmise that the Lule language lost its last speakers sometime in the course of the early 19th century.

2 Genealogical affiliation and philological challenges.

The Lule language is generally considered to be genealogically related to the Vilela language, forming a Lule-Vilela family, but it remains possible that the lexical similarities are due to contact rather than to shared ancestry. The language described in Machoni (1732) provides interesting challenges for the study of linguistic diversity in the Chaco area, because it is typologically rather distinct from the other known Chaco languages as well as from neighboring Andean languages, and because we have to rely almost entirely on Maccioni’s examples and linguistic abilities in trying to reconstruct its grammar in modern terms. The retranscription and morphological analysis in the following sections is based on the comprehensive grammar of Lule, which is being written by the authors of this paper. For the abbreviations used, see the note at the bottom of p. 6.

3.1 Relative clause formation in Machoni’s (1732) grammar section.

There are 18 examples that can be interpreted as relative clauses in Machoni’s (1732) grammar section, so it is actually possible to present that corpus here. Each example is presented in five lines, so no information is lost: the first line is the sentence in the original spelling, the second line is Maccioni’s translation or gloss in Spanish (with archaic spellings normalized to modern Spanish practice), the third line, which also carries the example number, is our phonemic spelling, the fourth line is the word by word and morphological analysis, and the fifth line is our fairly literal translation into English. On that line, there is also a number in parentheses, which the page number in Machoni’s (1732) grammar section. One can distinguish four types of relative clause formation strategies, sections 3.2 through 3.5.

3.2 Agent nominalizer -ton.

One type of construction involves the agent nominalizer -ton, as in examples (1) through (8):

pelè in lè otigueyuton, vecìnèp
el indio que trabajó ayer murió
(1) pele inle wotikeyu-ton wets[-i] ne-p
man yesterday work-NMLZ die[-THEM] P.REC.Vis-3sSBJ
‘the man who worked yesterday died’ (56)

pelè in lè otigueyuton, vyetip
el indio que trabajó ayer murió
(2) pele inle wotikeyu-ton uye-ti-p
man yesterday work-NMLZ NEG-do-3sSBJ
‘the man who worked yesterday died (lit. was no more)’ (56)
pelé in lè otiqueyuton, vecip
el indio que trabajó ayer murió
(3) pelé inle wotikeyu-wotin wetsi-p
man yesterday work-NMLZ die-3SBJ
‘the man who worked yesterday is dead’ (56)

ecitòn zotà Dios meticant
Dios llevará al Cielo al que fuere bueno
(4) etsi-ton tso=ta Dios metika-n-t
be.good-NMLZ heaven=LOC Dios take-FUT-3SBJ
‘God will take the one who is good to heaven’ (56)

yuísinis yetòn Petro cumuepìnèp
he oído al que dize, o dixo que Pedro se casó
(5) íwis-i ni-s ye-ton Petro kumue-p-i ne-p
hear-THEM P.REC.VIS-1SBJ say-NMLZ Peter get.married-3SBJ-?? P.REC.VIS-3SBJ
‘I heard the one who said/says that Peter got married’ (56)

yuísinis yetòn Petro cumuèp
he oído al que dize, o dixo que Pedro se casó
(6) íwis-i ni-s ye-ton Petro kumue-p
hear-THEM P.REC.VIS-1SBJ say-NMLZ Peter get.married-3SBJ
‘I heard the one who said/says that Peter is getting married’ (56)

quys yepnicsintòn
yo tengo la obligación de enseñar
(7) kis yepnís-in-ton
1SPRO teach-FUT-NMLZ
‘I am one who will teach’ (56)

pelè quis tacevinstòn tià vyè
el indio que tengo de castigar no está aquí
(8) pelé kis tak-tseu-in-s-ton tia uye
man 1SPRO INS-punish-FUT-1SBJ-NMLZ here NEG
‘the man I will punish is not here’ (64)

3.3 Agent nominalizer -ton AND the anaphoric and resumptive pronoun mima.

Another type of construction involves the agent nominalizer -ton, as well as the anaphoric and resumptive pronoun mima, as in example (9). There is only one example of this construction in the corpus. We will deal with the clause translated as ‘what God commands’ in section 4.3 in this presentation, let us ignore it for now.

Dios amaićitòn mimà tít vsa Dios nequequësp
el que ama a Dios guarda sus mandamientos o lo que Dios manda
(9) Dios amaisi-ton mimà ti-t usa Dios ne-kekes-p
God love-NMLZ ANA.DIST do-3SBJ what God INS-command-3SBJ
‘the one who loves God, that one observes what God commands’ (64)

3.4 Anaphoric and resumptive pronoun mima only

Another type involves no nominalization, but only the anaphoric and resumptive pronoun mima, as in examples (10) through (15). The pronoun mima can be optional, as in examples (10) and (11).

pelè Dios alapip, zotà cant, o mimà zotà caànt
el hombre que Dios escogió, irá al Cielo
3.5  No relativization marking at all.

Finally, the grammar section contains three examples (16-18) of null head relativization without either the agent nominalizer -ton, nor the resumptive pronoun mima.

Dios yelem ti
fac secundum legem Dei (Latin), haz lo que Dios dice o manda
(16) Dios yelem[-p] ti[-i]
    God command[-3sSBJ] do[-THEM]
    'do what God commands!' (78)

Dios olómp ti
fac secundum legem Dei (Latin), haz lo que Dios dice o manda
(17) Dios olom-p ti[-i]
    God speak-3sSBJ do[-THEM]
    'do what God says!' (78)

Dios nequequesp ti
fac secundum legem Dei (Latin), haz lo que Dios dice o manda
(18) Dios ne-kekes-p ti[-i]
    God INS-command-3sSBJ do[-THEM]
    'do what God commands!' (78)
3.6 Discussion.

The following is a table of morphosyntactic features of the 18 examples presented so far:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example(s):</th>
<th>Overt head sentence-initially:</th>
<th>Head is subject of the main clause:</th>
<th>NP position relativized:</th>
<th>Strategy:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1-3, 7)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>NMLZ on verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4-6)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>NMLZ on verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>NMLZ on verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>NMLZ on verb AND mima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10-11)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>mima OR no marking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12-14)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>mima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>mima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16-18)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>Object</td>
<td>no marking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tentative conclusions regarding these 18 examples are the following. We suggest that the nominalizer is the preferred strategy when the NP position relativized is Subject. Example (8) is the only counterexample to this, but then example (8) is suspicious in any case, because it is an example with the nominalizer following a verb inflected for subject person, so it is hard to know what to make of this. If sentence (8) actually contained a passive, and could be translated as ‘the man who will be punished by me…’, it would no longer be a counterexample, but then of course we would have to argue that the 1st person subject inflection on ‘punish’ is actually something else.

We also suggest that mima is the preferred strategy when the NP position relativized is Object, unless, as shown in example (9), there is no overt head sentence-initially and the head is the subject of the main clause, in which case the nominalizer is also present.

It is hard to draw any conclusions from the ‘no marking’ strategy, illustrated by (16-18) because these three sentences are close variants of each other, clearly considered just one example by Maccioni. Let us note for now that sentence (18) bears a similarity to part of sentence (9), and we will return to this point in section 4.3.

4.1 Relative clause formation in Machoni’s (1732) texts section.

We counted 33 sentences that can be interpreted as containing relative clauses in Machoni’s (1732) texts section. Only a few examples will be provided here, as the texts are quite repetitive. The texts, separately paginated, are all parts of 18th century Catholic Church doctrine, including prayers, and two catechisms. Except for the second catechism, no Spanish translation is given by Maccioni, which shows that he expected the Jesuits who were to use his book to be familiar with the texts. So in the examples below, we do not provide a Spanish gloss.

4.2 Examples of relative clause formation in Machoni’s (1732) texts section.

The texts section shows, overwhelmingly, the relative clause strategy with the agent nominalizer -to(n), (examples 19-21) and also the strategy with no marking at all (examples 22-23), but significantly, we think, no example of the resumptive pronoun mima at all.

\textit{Dios ué ayopé Reyna Umuè auei ti-tó,}
\textit{(19) Dios we ayo-pe-p Reyna Umue áwáe ti-to}
\textit{God 2sPRO greet-FUT-3sSBJ queen mother compassion have-NMLZ}
\textit{‘may God greet you, Queen (and) Mother who has compassion’ (Salve Regina prayer)}

\textit{Yaupecelé yautpó uyáp cepssé.}
\textit{(20) ya?upe-tse=le ya?u-p-to uya-p tse-p-tse}
\textit{village-2sPOSS=LOC walk-3sSBJ-NMLZ house-3sPOSS give-FUT-2sSBJ}
\textit{‘you give his house (to) the traveller (lit. one who walks to your village)’ (Works of Mercy)}
4.3 Discussion.

Now, what one notices in the texts section, is more unusual syntax, possibly calqued on Spanish or maybe on Latin. For example, in (21), the benefactive postposition taɁyule ‘for’, follows Christiansos, although everywhere else, Lule postpositions follow their object. Since the language tends to be SOV in basic constituent order, the initial ‘I believe’ in example (23), must follow the word order of the Latin ‘credo’.

Another unusual thing, occurring often in the texts is the nominalizer following an inflected verb, as in yaʔu-p-to in example (20) and etsi-p-to in example (25). This also occurs in the grammar, as shown in example (8), but it is much less common there.

It is also suspicious that there are no examples of the resumptive pronoun mima in the texts. This is presumably because a resumptive pronoun sounds clumsy or colloquial in Spanish (and in Latin). Look again at
examples (10-15). It is possible that Maccioni did not use *mima* in the texts to improve on their style. After all, these are religious texts, and should not sound colloquial.

Finally, it is also suspicious that there is only one example of *usa* ‘what, that which’ in the grammar (example 9), although this *usa* is very common in the texts; two examples are (24) and (25). It is also instructive to compare *usa Dios nekeesp ti* ‘do what God commands’ in example (25), with *Dios nekeesp ti* ‘do what God commands’, which is example (18) from the grammar. So one wonders if this *usa* is really necessary. We suggest that this *usa* is a calque on Spanish ‘lo que’. In the grammar, *usa* is simply the interrogative pronoun ‘what?’. We suggest, then, that the portion *usa Dios nekeesp* in example (9), is taken out of the texts, although it is preceded by a portion containing *mima*, which sounds more colloquial. Example (9) is interesting then, as it shows characteristics of a more natural syntax evidenced in the grammar, as well as a characteristic of the more stilted syntax found in the texts.

Our conclusion is that in general the syntax (and maybe the morphology) of Machoni’s (1732) religious texts is more stilted and somewhat less reliable than the examples in the grammar, presumably because of a requirement that religious texts must follow the Spanish (or Latin) models closely.

5 General conclusions.

We suggest that it is possible to draw tentative conclusions from this very small corpus. Following the terminology of WALS (Comrie and Kuteva 2013a, b), the most genuine strategies for relative clause construction in Lule are likely to be the gap strategy, normally with a nominalizer at the end of the clause, and the non-reduction strategy, in the guise of the paratactic relative clause, with a resumptive pronoun. We noted that there are also relative clauses with the head *usa*, but since this only occurs in the texts, it might well be the result of a calque on Spanish, as suggested in section 4.3. More discussion of how well the types of relativization strategies of Lule fit into the typology of South America will be provided in the presentation following this one.

Let us conclude with some observations regarding the validity of philological interpretations of early missionary writings of extinct languages. Needless to say, the model of Latin grammar is always prevalent among the early missionaries, but beyond that, one can detect innovative ideas, indigenous voices, and, crucially for this presentation, places where the missionary accurately observed actual language, and places where he thought it was better to calque the language on Spanish (or Latin) models. We suggested that this happened in the Lule texts, but less so in the Lule grammar. The moral of all this is, of course, that when studying missionary grammars, we need to make careful comparisons between examples in the grammatical discussions and the texts. We may not assume, as we may safely in later documentary traditions, that the texts represent a more natural language than examples in the grammatical discussions.

**Abbreviations** used follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with the addition of: ANA ‘anaphoric’; COLL ‘collective’; P.REC:VIS ‘recent visual past’; P.REM ‘remote past’; PRO ‘independent pronoun’; •RED ‘reduplicative process, meaning uncertain’, and THEM ‘thematic’ (suffixed to imperatives and to the V1 of a serial verb construction).

**References**
