

Chapter 4

Relative Clauses in Assamese and Mising

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4.0 Introduction

This chapter is a detailed study of the semantics and grammar of relative subordination in Assamese and Mising. The chapter has the following structure. In Section 4.1, we have discussed the relative-correlative construction, highlighting its use in restrictive modification. In Section 4.2, we have analyzed the properties of nominalized relative clauses, highlighting their role in providing descriptive function. In the following two sections, we have illustrated with examples, how the relative-correlative structure is mainly used for restriction, and how the nominalized form is mainly used in informal contexts. In Section 4.4, we have discussed juxtaposition as a means of relative subordination, highlighting its non-restrictive modification function.

As discussed in Chapter 3, conceptual links between situations often require a shared ground. One such connection occurs through modification, where one situation qualifies

the subject of another. This conceptual relationship is grammatically expressed through relative subordination.

Relative subordination is, thus, a grammatical mechanism that reflects real-world connections where one situation modifies another situation as expressed by the main clause. Relative clauses, which are subordinate clauses that modify the head noun in the main clause, are the grammatical realization of this conceptual relationship. They provide additional information about the head noun, functioning adjectivally while maintaining their clausal form.

Although bi-clausal, relative clauses focus on a single situation, modifying the head noun in the main clause. In the example ‘The man who I met yesterday is Chinese’, the relative clause ‘who I met yesterday’ is subordinate to the main clause. However, the profile of the entire nominal clause ‘the man who I met yesterday’ dominates, influencing the subordinate clause. At the sentence level, the primary focus is on the man’s nationality, not the timing of the meeting. This demonstrates that the profile of the main clause has a significant impact on the overall clausal structure.

Cognitive Linguistics emphasizes the role of cognition and experience in shaping language. From this perspective, a relative clause is a dependent clause because it relies on the main clause for its full meaning. It cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. The use of a relativizing subordinator or relativizer further reinforces this dependency, signaling that the relative clause is a subordinate element within the larger sentence structure. This reflects the cognitive process of linking related information and organizing it hierarchically.

Restrictive relative clauses are essential to the meaning of the main clause. They help identify or restrict one thing from a group of similar things. In the example, ‘The girl who sits on the first bench is my best friend’, the clause ‘who sits on the first bench’ restricts the girl to a specific individual. However, the primary focus of the sentence is on the girl’s relationship with the speaker, not her seating arrangement. This demonstrates that while the restrictive relative clause is important for identification, the information it conveys may not be the main focus of the sentence.

Non-restrictive relative clauses, by contrast, provide additional information about the noun but are not essential to the meaning of the main clause. They can be removed without affecting the sentence's core meaning. In the example, 'My phone is lost, which was a gift to me from my sister', the clause 'which was a gift to me from my sister' provides extra information about the phone but is not crucial to understanding that it is lost. They are often separated by commas or intonation breaks. Non-restrictive relative clauses provide additional information that is independent of the main clause. This information has its stance and is considered equally important to the content of the main clause. Thus, both the main clause and the non-restrictive relative clause are essential for understanding the full meaning of the sentence.

Thus, depending on their conceptual and grammatical relationship to the main clause, relative clauses can be classified into three main types: restrictive, non-restrictive, and middle cases. Middle cases fall somewhere between restrictive and non-restrictive. They are not strictly additional information, nor do they entirely restrict the head noun. Instead, they provide identifying details or characteristics.

It is important to note that the boundaries between these types can be fluid. A relative clause might exhibit characteristics of more than one type, making it difficult to definitively categorize. This flexibility highlights the nuances and complexities of relative clause usage in language. Let's consider the following examples: (adapted from Langacker, 2009, p. 335)

- (1) *The man who I met yesterday is Chinese.*
- (2) *Any man who is from China is welcome here.*
- (3) *I just met a man who is Chinese.*
- (4) *I met a man yesterday who is Chinese.*
- (5) *I just met a man, who is Chinese.*

Example (1) is a typical restrictive relative clause construction. The relative clause 'who I met yesterday' helps to identify the specific man the speaker met out of many the day before. Its placement directly after the noun and its role in restricting one individual is crucial to the overall meaning.

Example (2) is slightly removed from a typical restrictive relative clause. The relative clause does not restrict one from many but provides specific information to identify the nominal referent. Only a man ‘who is from China’ is welcome. In this case, the nominal referent itself is ‘any man’ so there is no question of restricting one from many.

In (3), the relative clause is more independent and is no longer used to restrict or identify. Instead, it further characterizes the nominal referent the man.’ It is moving toward what we call an *extra piece of information* about the nominal referent.

In (4), the relative clause is even further removed from the nominal referent it modifies. In the words of Langacker (2009, p. 335), it is “removed from the shadow of the nominal referent.” This is evident from the adverbial ‘yesterday’ separating them. The adverbial is a more important piece of information than the relative clause, indicating that they are no longer a classical grammatical constituent.

In (5), the relative clause is non-restrictive. It is no longer a vital piece of information about the noun but an additional one. The comma separates it from the main clause. This non-essential information can be dropped without significantly affecting the meaning. Non-restrictive relative clauses are often compared to coordinate constructions, having co-equal structures and profiles.

Thus, the conceptual and grammatical linking between the relative clause and the nominal referent it modifies is tightest in (1), the canonical restrictive relative clause, and becomes progressively looser and is the loosest in (5), the non-restrictive clause. (See Langacker, 2009, p. 335)

4.1 Relative Clauses in Assamese and Mising

In Assamese, relative clauses can be finite or non-finite. The relative subordinator or more simply, relativizer can be an independent lexical entity like *zi* ‘who’, *zar* ‘whose’, or *zak* ‘whom’, or the relative clause can be non-finite with no relativizer marking it.

In Mising, finite relative clauses are marked by the relativizers: *okko* ‘what,’ *s3:kom* ‘whom’, or *s3kk3* ‘whose’. Alternatively, they can be non-finite in form with no relativizer marking them.

In both languages, relativization can also be achieved through juxtaposition. This is primarily used when the relative clause is non-essential information about the modified head noun. Unlike English, where the relative clause typically follows the modified noun, in Assamese and Mising, the relative clause usually precedes the noun.

Relative subordination is a grammatical mechanism that modifies the head noun of a main clause. This modification often involves specificity, as in restrictive relative clauses, which single out a particular entity from a larger set. For instance, in English, the question words ‘who’, ‘which’, and ‘what’, are used to specify a particular person or thing (e.g., ‘Who is that man?’, ‘Which way should we go?’, ‘What is your name?’). Similarly, relative pronouns like ‘who’, ‘which’, and ‘where’, are used to specify entities in relative clauses (e.g., ‘The girl who I met yesterday is here’, ‘The conference which was scheduled next week has been postponed’, ‘The café where I ate yesterday is closed today’).

Interestingly, this connection between question words and relative pronouns is not unique to English. In languages like Assamese and Mising, question words like *zi* ‘who’, *zar* ‘whose’, *zak* ‘whom’, *okko* ‘what’, *s3:kom* ‘whom’, and *s3kk3* ‘whose’ are also used to specify entities. This shared characteristic highlights the cognitive link between questioning and specifying, which underlies the use of relative clauses in language.

While a language like English has a clear distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, languages like Assamese and Mising exhibit a more nuanced approach. In these languages, relative clauses often take a nominalized form with no relativizers marking them, creating a middle ground between restrictive and non-restrictive constructions. These nominalized relative clauses function as attributes, modifying the head noun.

4.1.1 The Relative-Correlative Structure in Assamese and Mising

In this section, we discuss the relativizers *zi*, *zar*, *zak* in Assamese and *okko*, *s3:kom* and *s3kk3* in Mising.

In the relative-correlative structure, relative clauses are finite in Assamese and Mising. In Assamese, it begins with the relativizer *zi* ‘who’ or *zar* ‘whose’ or *zak* ‘whom’, followed by the head noun it modifies. The correlative *xei* ‘that’ is often, but not always,

used in the main clause. The relativizer *zi* can refer to both the subject and the object of the relative clause. *zar* refers to the non-canonical subject, while *zak* refers to the object of the relative clause.

In Mising, the relative clause begins with the relativizer *-okko* ‘what’ or *s3k* ‘whose’ or *s3:kom* ‘whom’ followed by the nominal referent it modifies. The correlative *-3d3* ‘that’ is optional in the main clause. Additionally, the relative clause is marked by the suffix *zi*, which Taid (2016:326) designates as ‘relativizing suffix.’ The relativizer *okko* can refer to both the subject and the object of the relative clause. *s3kk3* ‘whose’ refers to the non-canonical subject, while *s3:kom* ‘whom’ refers to the object of the relative clause.

The relative-correlative structure is primarily restrictive in function. It restricts one thing from a group of similar things, bringing it to the forefront in a real-world situation. This structure provides vital information about the nominal referent, helping to identify it within the group.

4.1.1.1 The relativizer *zi* in Assamese and *okko* in Mising

Under this subsection, we will discuss the relativizers *zi* and *okko*, which belong respectively to Assamese and Mising. Consider these examples:

- (6) *teur zizoni suali shillongot t^hake tai kali ahibo* (Assamese)
 teu-r zi-zoni suali Shillong-ot t^hak-e tai kali
 he-GEN SUB-CLF girl Shillong-LOC stay-3 she tomorrow
 ah-ib-o
 come-FUT-3
 ‘His daughter who lives in Shillong will come tomorrow.’

Example (6) has been diagrammed as Fig. 30 on the next page.

Relative subordination: *Relative subordination schema*

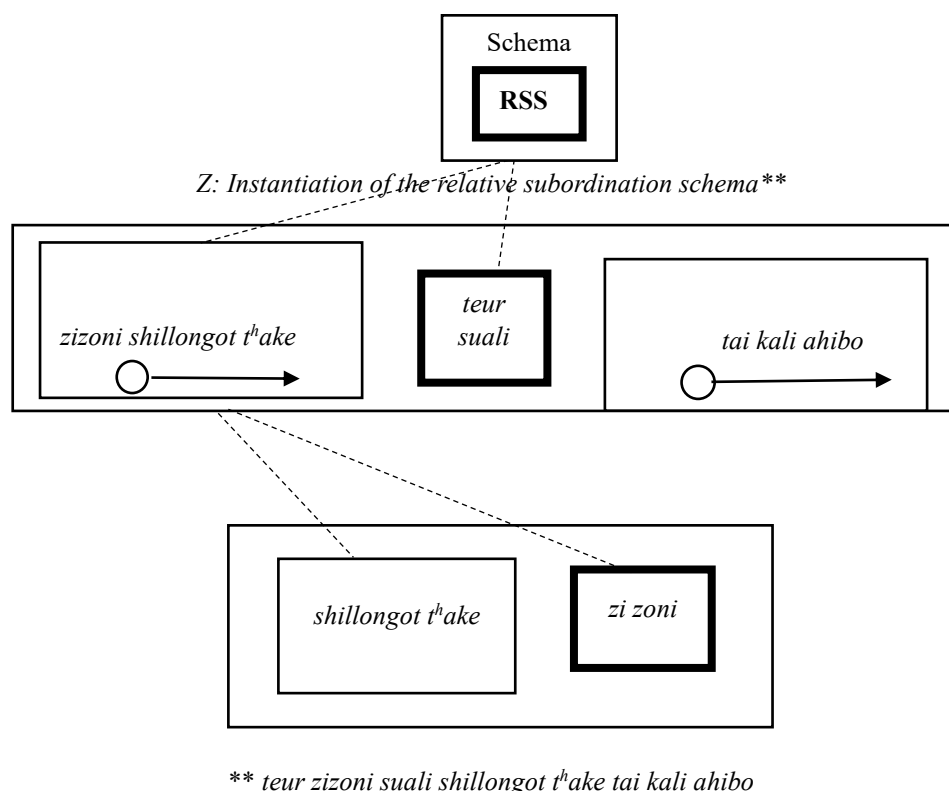


Fig. 30: Relative subordination by *zi*

In Fig. 30, the topmost box represents the entire sentence *Z*. Within *Z*, the leftmost box symbolizes the relative clause, while the rightmost box represents the main clause. The arrow inside both the boxes indicate that they are processual in nature.

The middle box, highlighted in bold, represents the head noun. This head noun serves as the figure (F) for both the main clause and the subordinate clause, as indicated by the dashed arrows between them. These dashed arrows signify a mental experience.

The lower box further elaborates the relative clause, where the relative subordinator *zi* is the figure (F), hence smaller in size and is in bold, while the rest of the relative clause is the ground (G). This interpretation applies to Figures 31, 32, and 33 as well.

- (7) *bik okko om3d3 Shillongbo dudagzi 3d3 jampo gi3ku* (Mising)
 bi-k okko om3-d3 Shillong-bo du-dag-zi 3d3
 he-GEN SUB daughter-DEF Shillong-LOC live-HAB-REL that
 jampo gi-j3-ku
 tomorrow come-FUT-back
 ‘His daughter who lives in Shillong will come tomorrow.’

In both (6) and (7), the relativizers *zi* and *okko* refer to the subject of the relative clauses. They identify and restrict the specific daughter who lives in Shillong, distinguishing her from the concerned person’s other daughters living in other places. This particular daughter is brought to the forefront and profiled, and something is said about her in the main clause.

In (6), the pronoun *tai* ‘she’ refers back to the nominal referent modified by the relative clause and says something else about that daughter, namely that she will come. To maintain economy, the correlative can be omitted, as in (6), or included, as in (7). Pronouns are inherently coreferential, so even without the correlative, it is clear that *tai* ‘she’ refers back to the nominal referent modified by the relative clause ‘the girl who lives in Shillong.’

Similarly, in (7), the relativizer *okko* picks out and profiles the daughter who lives in Shillong, distinguishing her from the concerned person’s other daughters. The correlative *3d3* refers back to the nominal referent modified by the relative clause and proceeds to say something about that daughter.

Likewise, in (8) and (9) below, the relative clauses refer to the subject of the relative clauses. They profile the specific mobile that was expensive, distinguishing it from other mobiles. In (8), the correlative *xei-tu* ‘that-CLF’ is dropped because it is clear that the lost mobile is the same one profiled by the relative clause, namely the expensive one. Juxtaposing them makes their relationship quite clear.

- (8) *zitu mobile iman dam di kinisilu, azi herai t^hakil* (Assamese)
 zi-tu mobile iman dam de-i kin-isil-u
 SUB-CLF mobile so much price give-NF buy-PST-1
 azi hera-i t^hak-il
 today lost-NF stay-PRF
 ‘The mobile that I bought by with so much money is lost today.’
- (9) *okko mobiled3m dam bigel r3tagazi 3d3 silo jokkan* (Mising)
 okko mobile-d3-m dam bi-ge:-l r3-tag-zi 3d3 silo
 SUB mobile-DEF-ACC price give-open-NF buy-PRF-REL that today
 jok-kan
 lost-PST
 ‘The mobile that I bought by with so much money is lost today.’

Example (9) has been diagrammed in Fig. 31 below.

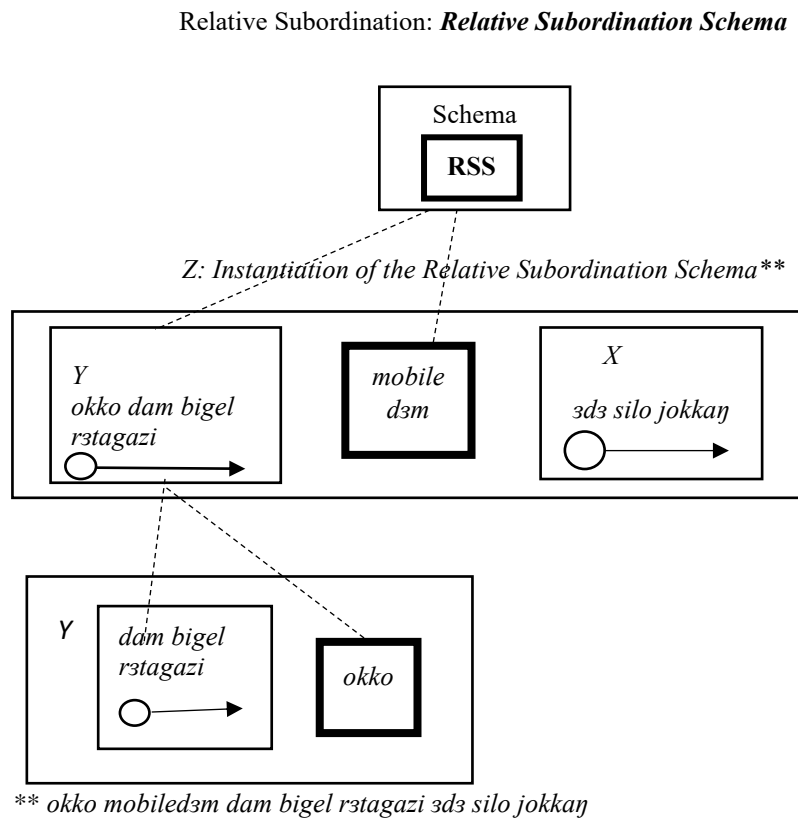


Fig. 31: Relative subordination by *okko*

In the same way, in (10) and (11) below, the relativizer also refers to the subject of the relative clause. In these examples, the relative clauses restrict and profile the specific mobile that was dear to the speaker, distinguishing it from other mobiles the speaker may have owned. However, unlike in previous examples, the correlative cannot be dropped in (10) and (11).

This is because when we want to emphasize the nominal referent again in the main clause, the mind needs to recall it. Therefore, the correlative cannot be omitted. The main clause in (10) and (11) does not focus on the action of ‘the mobile getting lost’ but rather on the fact that the specific mobile profiled by the relative clause, the one that was so dear to the speaker, is lost.

- (10) *zitu mobile moi iman b^hal paisilu xeituhe herabo pai ne!* (Assamese)
 zi-tu mobile moi iman b^hal pa-isil-u xei-tu
 SUB-CLF mobile I so much love get-PST-1 that-CLF
 hera-ibo pa-i-ne
 lost-FUT get-NF-Q

‘How could the mobile that was so dear to me have been lost?’

- (11) *okko mobiled3m ηo aip3 m3:dagazi 3ddar jokpa:don* (Mising)
 okko mobile-d3-m ηo aip3 m3:daga-zi 3dd-ar
 SUB mobile-DEF-ACC I very like-HAB-REL that-EMP
 jok-pa:-don
 lost-receive-Q

‘How could the mobile that was so dear to me have been lost?’

In (12) and (13), the relative clause refers to the object of the relative clause. This is evident from the fact that the nominal referent is suffixed by the locative case marker *-ot* in (9) and the locative case marker *-do* in (10) and the accusative marker *-m* is suffixed to *3d3* ‘that’ making it *3d3m*. A location cannot be a subject, only an object. Here as well, the relative clause restricts and profiles a specific man whom the speaker did so much for, distinguishing him from other men the speaker may have known.

- (12) *zibur kot^hat mur k^hong ut^he, teu xeiburei kore* (Assamese)
 zi-bur kot^ha-ot moi-r k^hong ut^h-e teu xei-bur-ei kor-e
 SUB-PL speech-LOC I-GEN anger rise-3 he that-PL-EMP do-3
 ‘He always does those things which make me angry.’

- (13) *okko agomdo ηo agliη sa:dagzi bi 3d3miη idag* (Mising)
 okko agom-do ηo agliη sa:-dag-zi bi 3d3-m-iη
 SUB speech-LOC I anger rise-HAB-REL he that-ACC-EMP
 i-dag
 do-HAB
 ‘He always does those things which make me angry.’

In (14) and (15) as well, the relative clause refers to the object of the relative clause. The nominal referent, together with the causal adverbials *karone* ‘because’ in (14) and *l3gap3* ‘because’ in (15), creates a causal ground upon which the main clause event ‘he is upset with me’ happens. The accusative marker *-m* is suffixed to the correlative *3d3* as it functions as the object of the main clause, making it *3d3m*. Therefore, the relativizer refers to the object of the relative clause. The relative clause restricts and profiles a specific thing that makes the speaker angry, distinguishing it from other things. In these cases, the correlatives cannot be dropped because the focus is not on what he does but on the fact that he does those very things profiled by the relative clause.

- (14) *zitu kot^har karone xi muk beja pale, xaitu beleg edin kom dija* (Assamese)
 zi-tu kot^ha-r karone xi moi-k beja pa-il-e
 SUB-CLF speech-GEN because he I-DOM bad get-PRF-3
 xei-tu beleg ek-din ko-m de-a
 that-CLF different one-day say-FUT give-2
 ‘I will tell you some other day about the thing because of which he is upset with me.’

- (15) *okko agom l3gap3 bi ηom m3njikazi 3d3m 3dilai lubikup3* (Mising)
 okko agom l3gap3 bi ηo-m m3-nji-ka-zi 3d3-m
 SUB speech because he I-ACC feel-NEG-PST-REL that-ACC
 3dilai lu-bi-ku-p3
 someday tell-give-repeat-ALL
 ‘I will tell you some other day about the thing because of which he is so upset with me.’

Likewise, in (16) and (17), the relativizer refers to the object of the relative clause. It restricts and profiles a specific thing he did, distinguishing it from other things. The accusative marker *-m* is suffixed to *okko* making it *okkom*, as it is functioning as the object of the main clause. In these cases, the correlatives can be dropped because it is clear that the things that will make her angry are the very things profiled by the subordinate clause.

- (16) *xi kali zi k^hoŋhe korile, tumar xunile k^hoŋei ut^hibo* (Assamese)

xi	kali	zi-k ^h on-he	kor-il-e	tumi-r
he	yesterday	SUB-CLF-EMP	do-PRF-3	you-GEN
xun-il-e	k ^h oŋ-ei	ut ^h -ibo		
hear-PRF-3	anger-EMP	rise-FUT		

‘You will rather be angry if you hear what he did yesterday.’

- (17) *bi m3lo okkom itozi tadmil no agliŋ sa:j3* (Mising)

bi	m3lo	okko-m	i-to-zi	tad-mil	no
he	yesterday	SUB -ACC	do-PRF-REL	hear-NF	you
agliŋ	sa:j3				
anger	rise-FUT				

‘You will rather be angry if you hear what he did yesterday.’

In (18) and (19), the relativizers also refer to the object of the relative clause. They identify and profile a specific piece of news that was unexpected, distinguishing it from other expected news. Although there is no formal correlative in the main clause, it can be understood that the news profiled by the relative clause, namely the one that scared the speaker, is the same news referred to in the subordinate clause.

- (18) *xi kali zitu he k^hobor dile, moi bor b^hoi k^halu* (Assamese)

xi	kali	zi-tu	k ^h obor de-il-e	moi	bor	b ^h oi
he	yesterday	SUB-CLF	news give-PRF-3	I	very	scare
k ^h a-il-u						
eat-PRF-1						

‘The news that he gave me yesterday made me very scared.’

- (19) *bi m3lo okko kabar bitozi tadla ŋo aip3 p3sokaŋ* (Mising)
 bi m3lo okko kabar bi-to-zi tad-la ŋo aip3
 he yesterday SUB news give-PRF-REL hear-NF I very
 p3so-kaŋ
 fear-PST
 ‘The news that he gave me yesterday made me very scared.’

Relative clauses in the *zi-xei* structure in Assamese can also follow the nominal referent they modify. This means the main clause can precede the relative clause. The main clause introduces the nominal referent using a demonstrative like *ei* ‘this’. *ei* is followed by the correlative *xei* ‘that’ in the main clause, creating a structure like ‘this is the one I am talking about.’

The *zi* clause, or the relative clause, further characterizes the nominal referent, which is the subject of the relative clause. It does not restrict one from many. This structure is mainly used to create suspense or dramatize a situation by first introducing the nominal referent and then further characterizing it with the relative clause. It is often used when the nominal referent is already known to the listener or has been discussed previously.

It is to be noted that this structure always refers to the subject of the relative clause. It is mostly used in formal speech and writing and is less common in everyday conversation. Mising, being primarily a spoken language, does not frequently use this structure to create dramatic effect in writing.

In (20) below, the person Bezbaroa is initially pointed out by the demonstrative *ei* ‘this’. The correlative *xei* ‘that’ refers back to the person pointed out by *ei*, which is Bezbaroa in this case. The *zi* clause further characterizes Bezbaroa as someone ‘who loved the Assamese people with all his heart.’

- (20) *eizonei Bezbaroa, zi axomija zatik antorere b^hal paisil* (Assamese)
 ei-zon-ei Bezbaroa zi axomija zati-k
 this-CLF-EMP Bezbaroa SUB Assamese community-DCM
 antor-ere b^hal pa-isil
 heart-INS love feel-PST
 ‘This is Bezbaroa, who loved the Assamese people with all his heart.’ (example adopted from Kalita, 2019, p. 239)

In (21) below, a specific person is initially pointed out or introduced by the demonstrative pronoun. The relative clause then further characterizes that person as the one who cheated on the speaker. It is clear that the nominal referent has been mentioned previously to the listener, as in ‘this is the very person I told you about who cheated on me.’

- (21) *eizoneitu xeizon, zi e muk iman t^hogile* (Assamese)
 ei-zon-ei-tu xei-zon zi-e moi-k iman t^hog-il-e
 this-CLF-EMP-CLF that-CLF SUB-ERG I-DOM very cheat-PRF-3
 ‘This is the very person, who cheated me so much.’

4.1.1.2 The relativizers *zar* and *zak* in Assamese and *s3kom* and *s3k* in Mising

Two other relative-correlative relativizers in Assamese are *zar* ‘whose’ and *zak* ‘whom.’ *zar* is composed of *zi* ‘who’ and the genitive case marker *-r* and *zak* is composed of *zi* ‘who’ and the differential object marker *-k*. *zar* refers to the non-canonical subject, while *zak* refers to the object of the construction.

Similarly, Mising has the relativizers: *s3:kom* ‘whom’ and *s3kk3* ‘whose’ as well for its relative-correlative structure. *s3kom* is composed of *s3:ko* ‘who’ and the accusative marker *-3m*. And *s3kk3* is composed of *s3:ko* ‘who’ and the *-k3* suffix marking the genitive case. (Taid, 2016, p. 123). *s3kk3* ‘whose’ refers to the subject, while *s3:kom* ‘whom’ refers to the object.

In (26) and (27) below, the relativizers profile a specific person ‘whom the speaker loved very much,’ distinguishing them from others. The main clause then poses a question about this particular person.

- (26) *moi zak iman b^hal paisilu xeizonei nu enekoi t^hogibo lage ne* (Assamese)
 moi zak iman b^hal pa-isil-u xei-zon-ei nu enekoi
 I SUB very love get-PST-1 that-CLF-EMP EXL like this t^hog-
 ibo lag-e ne
 cheat-FUT be attached-3 Q
 ‘How could the person I loved so much have betrayed me like this?’

- (27) *ŋo s3:kom 3ddiko aip3 m3:dagazi biin ŋom jatto* (Mising)
 ŋo s3:kom 3ddi-ko aip3 m3:dag-zi bi-in ŋo-m
 I SUB so much-IND love feel-HAB-REL he-EMP I-ACC
 jat-to
 cheat-PST
 ‘How could the person I loved so much cheat on me like this?’

Similarly, in (28) and (29) below, the relativizers profile that one person ‘whom he spoke to’ out of many in a group. The correlative is substituted by the pronoun *teu* ‘he’ in (28) and *bi* ‘he’ in (29), referring back to the same person profiled by the relative clause.

- (28) *zak moi tumar kot^ha koisilu teu pahori gol* (Assamese)
 zak moi tumi-r kot^ha ko-isil-u teu pahora-i
 SUB I you-GEN speech say-PST-1 he forget-NF
 za-il
 go-PRF
 ‘The person whom I told about you, he forgot.’

- (29) *s3:kom nok agom3m lukazi bi mitpantoku* (Mising)
 s3:kom no-k agom-3m lu-ka-zi bi
 SUB you-GEN speech-ACC tell-PST-REL he
 mitpan-to-ku
 forget-PRF-repeat
 ‘The person who I told about you; he forgot it.’

In (30) and (31) below, the relativizers also profile a specific person ‘about whom the speaker keeps hearing,’ distinguishing them from other people. In these cases, the correlative is substituted by a pronoun.

- (30) *zar kot^ha iman dine moi xuni asilu teuk azi log palu* (Assamese)
 zar kot^ha iman dine moi xun-i as-il-u teu-k
 SUB speech many day I hear-NF be-PRF-1 he-DOM
 azi log pa-il-u
 today meet get-PRF-1
 ‘Today I finally met the person who I kept hearing about for so long.’

- (31) *s3kk3 agom3m su:p3 tadladuŋazi biŋ silo riksuto* (Mising)
 s3kk3 agom-3m su:p3 tad-la-duŋa-zi bi-m silo
 SUB words-ACC till now hear-NF-stay-REL he-ACC today
 riksuto
 meet-PRF
 ‘Today I finally met the person who I kept hearing about for so long.’

In (32) and (33) below, the relativizers profile a specific person ‘whose fear makes everyone shiver,’ distinguishing them from other people. In these cases, the correlatives are substituted by *tek^het* (‘he’ honorific) in (32) and *bi* (‘he’) in (33). The focus of the fear is that very person, who is the patient and therefore takes the accusative marker *-m* in Mising in (33) below.

- (32) *zar b^hoiŋot ami sob kopi t^haku, te^{kh}et ek^het ei dei!* (Assamese)
 zar b^hoi-ot ami kopi t^hak-u tek^het ek^het-ei dei
 SUB fear-LOC we shiver stay-1 he (hon.) he-EMP POL
 ‘The person whose fear makes us shiver is only her!’

- (33) *s3:kom p3sola appiŋ3 zinna dudagzi bi s3gg-iŋ* (Mising)
 s3:kom p3so-la appiŋ-3 zin-na du-dag-zi
 SUB fear-LOC everyone-NOM tremble-NF stay-HAB-REL
 bi s3gg-iŋ
 he this-EMP
 ‘The person whose fear keeps everyone trembling is only this person!’

In (34) and (35) below, the relativizers profile a specific person ‘hearing whose words the speaker went somewhere,’ distinguishing them from others.

- (34) *zar kot^ha xuni moi golu teuei nahil* (Assamese)
 zar kot^ha xun-i moi za-il-u teu-ei na-ah-il
 SUB speech hear-NF I go-PRF-1 he-EMP NEG-come-PRF
 ‘The person because of whom I went there never showed up.’

- (35) *s3kk3 agomkki ŋo gito bi:iŋ gimakaŋ* (Mising)
 s3kk3 agom-kki ŋo gi-to bi:-iŋ gi-ma-kaŋ
 SUB words-INS I go-PRF he-EMP go-NEG-PRF
 ‘The person because of whom I went there never showed up.’

Both Assamese and Mising has at least 3 such restrictive relativizers in their respective languages, which are presented in Table 5 and 6 below.

Table 5: Restrictive Relativizers in Assamese

Sl. No.	Relativizers	Restrictive
1	<i>zi</i>	✓
2	<i>zar</i>	✓
3	<i>zak</i>	✓

Table 6: Restrictive Relativizers in Mising

Sl. No.	Relativizers	Restrictive
1	<i>okko</i>	✓
2	<i>s3:kom</i>	✓
3	<i>s3kk3</i>	✓

4.2 The nominalized relative clause and the middle case of describing

Another way of relativizing in Assamese and Mising is when the relative clause directly precedes the nominal referent it modifies without no relativizer marking it. In both languages, these relative clauses are non-finite in form. In Assamese, these non-finite relative clauses are always marked by the non-finite marker *-a*. In Mising, they are marked by the non-finite marker *-nam*.¹ or *n3*.²

Semantically, these relative clauses are neither fully restrictive nor fully non-restrictive but fall somewhere in between. Unlike the relative-correlative structure, which primarily restricts and profiles one thing from a group, the content of these relative clauses without a relativizer provides a description of the thing in the nominal referent without necessarily restricting it from others. They can sometimes help identify the thing in the nominal

¹ Taid (2016, p. 102) designates *-nam* as a nominal suffix used to form a verbal noun.

² It also refers to the doer of the action.

referent or simply describe the nominal referent in the main clause. The nominalized relative clause, depending on the context, may describe the thing involved without restricting it; in that case, it is *not* additional information either.

In (39) and (40), the relative clause does not profile one dress from Mary's other dresses but instead helps to identify the specific dress being discussed in the main clause.

- (39) *Mary e pind^ha kapurzur bor d^hunija* (Assamese)
 Mary-e pind^h-a kapur-zur bor d^hunija
 Mary-ERG wear-NF dress-CLF very beautiful
 'The dress that Mary is wearing is very beautiful.'

Example (39) has been diagrammed on the next page as Fig. 32. The relative clause is not elaborated any further as there is no relativizer marking non-finite relative clauses in Assamese and Mising.

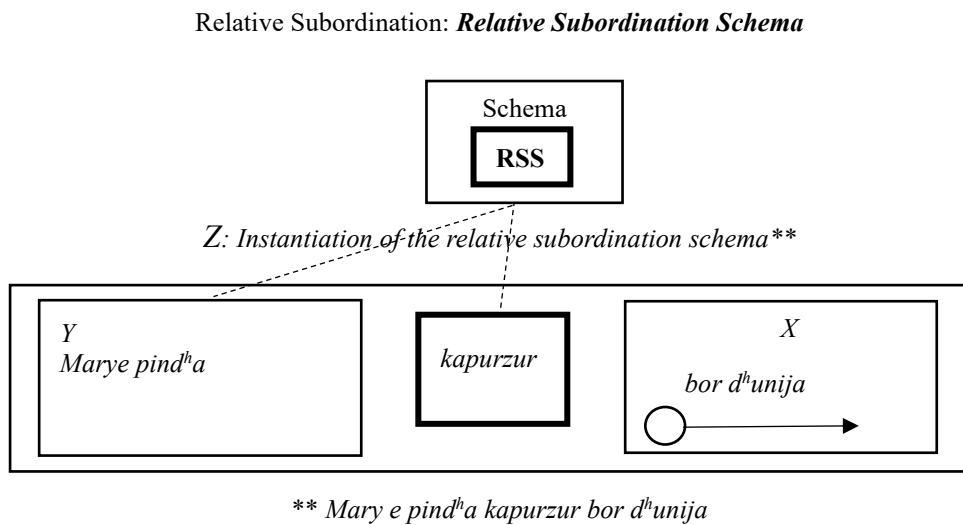


Fig. 32: Non-finite relative subordination in Assamese

- (40) *Maryk3 g3nam gasord3 aip3 kaṇkandag*
 (Mising)
 Mary-k3 g3-nam gasor-d3 aip3 kaṇkan-dag
 Mary-GEN wear-NF dress-DEF very beautiful-HAB
 'The dress that Mary is wearing is very beautiful.'

In (41) and (42), the relative clause does not restrict and profile one cake from many cakes but instead helps to identify the specific cake being discussed in the main clause.

- (41) *moi k^hua caketu bor kumol asil* (Assamese)

moi k^ha-a cake-tu bor kumol as-il
 I eat-NF cake-CLF very soft be-PRF
 ‘The cake that I ate was very soft.’

- (42) *ŋok do:nam caked₃ aip₃ r₃magdag* (Mising)

ŋo-k do:-nam cake-d₃ aip₃ r₃mag-dag
 I-GEN eat-NF cake-DEF very soft-HAB
 ‘The cake that I ate was very soft.’

In (43) and (44), the relative clauses help to identify the specific girl who has come. They do not restrict one girl from other girls. There is no sense of restriction here.

- (43) *kali log pua sualizoni ahise* (Assamese)

kali log pa-a suali-zoni ah-is-e
 yesterday meet get-NF girl-CLF come-PROG-3
 ‘The girl I met yesterday has come.’

- (44) *m₃lok riksunam ko:n₃d₃ gi_{duŋ}* (Mising)

m₃lok riksu-nam ko:n₃-d₃ gi-duŋ
 yesterday meet-NF girl-DEF come-PROG
 ‘The girl that I met yesterday has come.’

Example (44) has been diagrammed in Fig. 33 on the next page.

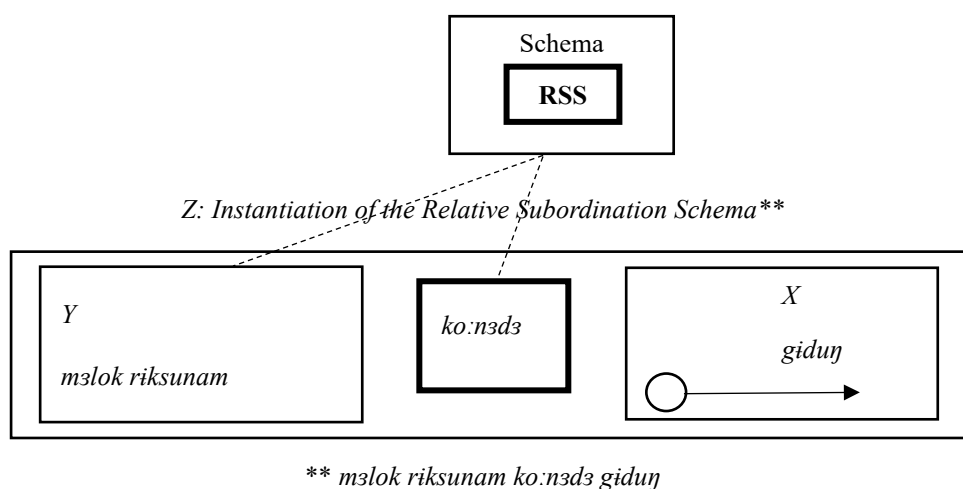


Fig. 33: Non-finite relative subordination in Mising

In (45) and (46), the relative clauses do not restrict and profile one book with ghost stories from other books but instead provide a description of the book that the speaker read, which is the book being discussed in the main clause.

- (45) *kali b^hootor kot^ha t^haka kitap ek^hon porhisilu* (Assamese)
 kali b^hoot-or kot^ha t^hak-a kitap ek-k^hon porh-isil-u
 yesterday ghost-GEN speech stay-NFbook one-CLF read-PST-1
 ‘Yesterday I read a book which had ghost stories.’

- (46) *m3lo ui do:jiŋ agom kan3 potinko poka* (Mising)
 m3lo ui do:jiŋ agom ka-n3 potin-ko po-ka
 yesterday ghost story speech stay-NF book-one read-PST
 ‘Yesterday I read a book which had ghost stories.’

4.3 The relative-correlative structure is used primarily to restrict

- (47) *Dean’s Buildingot t^haka kukurtur nam Daku* (Assamese)
 Dean’s Building-ot t^hak-a kukur-tu-r nam Daku
 Dean’s Building-LOC stay-NF dog-CLF-GEN name Daku
 ‘The name of the dog who stays in Dean’s Building is Daku.’

- (48) *zitu kukur Dean's Buildingot t^hake tar nam Daku* (Assamese)
 zi-tu kukur Dean's Building-t t^hak-e xi-r nam Daku
 SUB-CLF dog Dean's Building-LOC stay-3 he-GENname Daku
 'The dog who stays at Dean's Building is named Daku.'

In (47), the relative clause helps identify which dog is named Daku, i.e. the one that stays in Dean's Building. In (48), on the other hand, the relative clause evokes an image of multiple dogs on campus, with the one staying in Dean's building being named Daku. This suggests that there is one dog in Dean's Building named Daku, and there are other dogs on campus with different names.

In (48), the relative clause separates the dog who stays in Dean's Building from other dogs on campus. In contrast, in (47), the relative clause simply provides a description of the dog named Daku.

In (49) and (50), the relative clause helps identify who should not get down in water, specifically those who do not know how to swim.

- (49) *xaturibo nazana xokole panit nanamibo* (Assamese)
 xatur-ibo na-zan-a xokol-e pani-ot na-nam-ibo
 swim-FUT NEG-know-NF PL-3 water-LOC NEG-get down-FUT
 'People having no knowledge of swimming will not get down in the water.'

- (50) *baŋkinma:n3kidid3 asilo sizijo* (Mising)
 baŋ-kin-ma:-n3-kidi-d3 asi-lo sizi-jo
 swim-know-NOT-NF-PL-DEF water-LOC not get down-IMP
 'Those who do not know to swim, please do not get down in the water.'

In (51) and (52), on the other hand, the relative clause separates people who know how to swim from those who do not. It evokes an image of a group of people where those who don't know how to swim are restricted from the other group, profiled, and then addressed in the main clause.

(51) *zixokole xaturibo nazane panit nanamibo* (Assamese)

zi-xokol-e xatur-ibo na-zan-e pani-ot na-nam-ibo
 SUB-PL-3 swim-FUT NEG-know-3 water-LOC NEG-get down-FUT

‘The ones who do not know how to swim, will not get down in the water.’

(52) *s3:kobulu baŋkinma:zi asilo sizijo* (Mising)

s3:ko-bulu baŋ-kin-ma:-zi asi-lo sizi-jo
 SUB-PL swim-know-NEG-REL water-LOC not get down-IMP

‘The ones who do not know swimming, please do not get down in the water.’

In (53) and (54), the relative clause helps identify the specific people being discussed in the main clause, namely those who have faith in God.

(53) *isworot bissak^h rak^ha xokolor bipod nohoi* (Assamese)

iswor-ot bissak^h rak^h-a xokol-or bipod
 god-loc belief keep-NF PL-GEN calamity
 na-hoi
 NEG-be

‘People having faith in God do not face calamities.’

(54) *isorm3 kumg3sun3 kididokk3 3dilosin ŋasod a:ma* (Mising)

isor-m3 kumg3su-n3³ kidi-dokk3 3dilo-sin ŋasod
 god-ACC belief-NF PL-from then when-also problem
 a:-ma
 be-NEG

‘People having faith in God do not face calamities.’

In (55) and (56), on the other hand, the relative clause separates one group of people who have faith in God and are believed to be protected from calamities from another group of people who have no faith in God and may be more susceptible to calamities.

(55) *zixokole iswarot bissak^h kore teulukor bipod nohoi* (Assamese)

³ -n3 is also added to the verbal root to derive adjectives.

zi-xokol-e	iswar-ot	bissak ^h	kor-e	teu-luk-or	bipod
who-PL-3	god-LOC	belief	do-3	he-PL-GEN	calamity
na-hoi					
NEG-be					

‘Those who have faith in God will not face calamities.’

- (56) *s3:kobulu isorm3 kumg3sudagzi bulukk3 3dilosin nsod a:ma* (Mising)
 s3:ko-bulu isor-m3 kumg3su-dag-zi bulukk-3 3dilo-sin
 who-PL god-ACC belief-HAB-REL them-NOM when-EMP
 nsod a:-ma
 problem be-NEG

‘Those who have faith in God will not face calamities.’

In (57), the relative clause describes the girl who is asked out for a cup of tea by the speaker in the main clause. This is a flirtatious request. Note that (57) cannot be rewritten using the relative-correlative structure because there is no one to restrict from others. This structure is typically used to identify or restrict one thing from a group of similar things. In this case, there is no need for such restriction. Thus, (58) below is rather odd.

- (57) *roṇa sula pindh^a d^hunija sualizoni- mur logot sah ekap k^haba ne?* (Assamese)
 roṇa sula pindh-a d^hunija suali-zoni moi-r log-ot
 red dress wear-NF beautiful girl-CLF I-GEN together-LOC
 sah ek-kap k^ha-ib-a ne
 tea one-cup eat-FUT-2 Q

‘The beautiful girl wearing a red dress- will you have a cup of tea with me?’

- (58) ***zi zoni suali e roṇa sula pindhⁱ ahise- mur logot sah ekap k^haba ne?* (Assamese)
 zi-zoni suali-e roṇa sula pindh-i ah-is-e moi-r
 who-CLF girl-ERG red dress wear-NF come-PROG-3 I-GEN
 log-ot sah ek-kap k^ha-ib-a ne
 meet-LOC tea one-cup eat-FUT-2 Q

Similarly, in (45) above, reproduced as (59) below, the relative clause provides a description of the book that the speaker read the day before.

- (59) *kali b^hutor kot^ha t^haka kitap ek^hon pohisilu* (Assamese)
 kali b^hut-or kot^ha t^hak-a kitap ek-k^hon
 yesterday ghost-GEN speech stay-NF book one-CLF poh-
 isil-u
 read-PST-1
 ‘Yesterday I read a book of ghost stories.’

In (60), however, the relative clause evokes an image of multiple books, with the speaker choosing the one with ghost stories from among all the others. This suggests that there were other books available but the speaker specifically selected the one with ghost stories. Thus, in (60), the relative clause separates the book with ghost stories from all the other books. In contrast, in (59), the relative clause simply describes the book that the speaker read.

- (60) *zik^hon kitapot b^hutor kot^ha ase, xeik^hon porhisilu* (Assamese)
 zi-k^hon kitap-ot b^hut-or kot^ha as-e xei-k^hon
 SUB-CLF book-LOC ghost-GEN speech be-3 that-CLF
 porh-isil-u
 read-PST-1
 ‘Yesterday, I chose to read the book with ghost stories from among all the other options available.’

The fact that the relative-correlative structure is primarily restrictive is evident in (61), where the relative clause modifies the nominal referent *kisuman manuh* ‘some people’. This means it is not referring to all people but only to a specific group of people, restricting them from the larger group.

- (61) *kintu kisuman manuh ase - zixokol g^haikoi gond^hobilaxi. g^haikoi nakor xohaijere*
teuluke zibontuk onub^hob kore (Assamese)
 kintu kisuman manuh as-e zi-xokol g^haikoi
 but some people be-3 who-PL mainly
 gond^ho-bilaxi g^haikoi nak-or xohai-ere teu-luk-e
 smell-conscious mainly nose-GEN help-INST he-PL-ERG
 zibon-tu-k onub^hob kor-e

life-CLF-DOM feel do-3

‘But there are some people who prefer to experience their life through their noses.’

(lines adopted from Borgohain, 2021, p.10)

Example (62) cannot be rephrased using the alternative form without resulting in an awkward sentence.

- (62) *ketija edin teu ratipua xui ut^hi podulimuk^holoi goijei bator kaxor k^hal burot dek^hiboloi pabo bejunia roṇor xoru xoru kolmou p^hulbur - ziburat lik^ha t^hakibo xorotor agomonor aagzanoni?* (Assamese)

ketija	ek-din	teu	ratipua	xu-i	ut ^h -i
when	one-day	he	morning	sleep-SVC	wake-NF
podulimuk ^h -oloi	go-i-jei	bat-or	kax-or	k ^h al-bur-ot	
front yard-ALL	za-NF-EMP	road-GEN	side-GEN	drain-PL-LOC	
dek ^h -ibo-loi	pa-ibo bejunia	roṇ-or	xoru-xoru		
see-FUT-ALL	get-FUT violet	color-GEN	small-small		
kolmou	p ^h ul-bur –	zi-bur-ot	lik ^h -a t ^h ak-ibo	xorot-or	
kolmou	flower-PL–	which-PL-LOC	write-NF stay-FUT	Autumn-GEN	
	agomon-or	aagzanoni			
	arrival-GEN	sign			

‘When will he finally see the day when he wakes up to find his front yard covered in small pretty violet flowers, which are a sure sign of Autumn?’ (lines adopted from Borgohain, 1975, p.14)

4.4 The nominalized relative clause is mainly used in informal domains

The nominalized relative clause in both languages is mainly used in informal speech as in (63) – (66); the relative-corerelative clause is rather used in formal speech.

This way of introducing the nominal referent first and then further characterizing it with the relative clause is used primarily in informal, personal domains. In informal communication, the nominal referent is introduced by a demonstrative pronoun, and the nominal referent is further characterized in the relative clause without a relativizer. In (63) below, the classifier *-tu* refers back to the person introduced in the main clause.

- (63) *o ijei kali tumak zukuatu* (Assamese)
 o i-jei kali tumi-k zuka-a-tu
 yes he-EMP yesterday you-DOM tease-NF-CLF
 ‘Oh yes, yes, he is the one who even teased you yesterday.’

This informal way of speaking by first introducing the nominal referent using a demonstrative pronoun and then further characterizing it in the relative clause without any relativizer connecting them is also a way of relativizing in Mising. Here, as well the definitive marker *-d3* refers back to the person introduced in the main clause. Consider the following two examples:

- (64) *3 s3iŋ nom m3lok ɲennjosun3d3* (Mising)
 3 s3-iŋ no-m m3lok ɲennjosu-n3-d3
 yes this-EMP you-ACC yesterday tease-NF-DEF
 ‘Oh yes, this is the one who teased you yesterday.’

- (65) *s3iŋ Johnbi nok ager agerbin3d3* (Mising)
 s3-iŋ John-bi no-k ager ger-bi-n3-d3
 this-EMP John-he you-GEN work do-give-NF-DEF
 ‘This is only John, the one who did your work.’

- (66) *s3iŋ bi ɲom 3ddiko jatn3d3* (Mising)
 s3-iŋ bi ɲo-m 3ddi-ko jat-n3-d3
 this-EMP he I-ACC so much-IND cheat-NF-DEF
 ‘This is only he, the one who cheated on me so much.’

4.5 Relativizing through Juxtaposition in Assamese and Mising

Relative clauses in Assamese and Mising that are purely non-restrictive in nature are often juxtaposed next to each other. This means the main clause and the relative clause are not grammatically linked but are semantically relativized through juxtaposition.

In (67) and (68), the phrases *gutei-k^hon* ‘all-CLF’ and *appi-d3* ‘all-DEF’ in the second clause refer back to the nominal referent, the book in the first clause. The second clause qualifies the nominal referent ‘the book’ in the first clause as being ‘full of ghost stories.’

Even though the two clauses are separated by a full stop, the second clause semantically modifies the nominal referent in the first clause.

- (67) *kali rati ek^hon kitap pohilu. guteik^hon b^hutor kot^ha* (Assamese)
- | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|------------|-------------------------|
| kali | rati | ek-k ^h on | kitab | porh-il-u | gutei-k ^h on |
| yesterday | night | one-CLF | book | read-PRF-1 | all-CLF |
| b ^h ut-or | kot ^h a | | | | |
| ghost-GEN | speech | | | | |
- ‘Last night I read a book. It was all ghost stories.’

Relative Subordination: *Relative Subordination Schema*

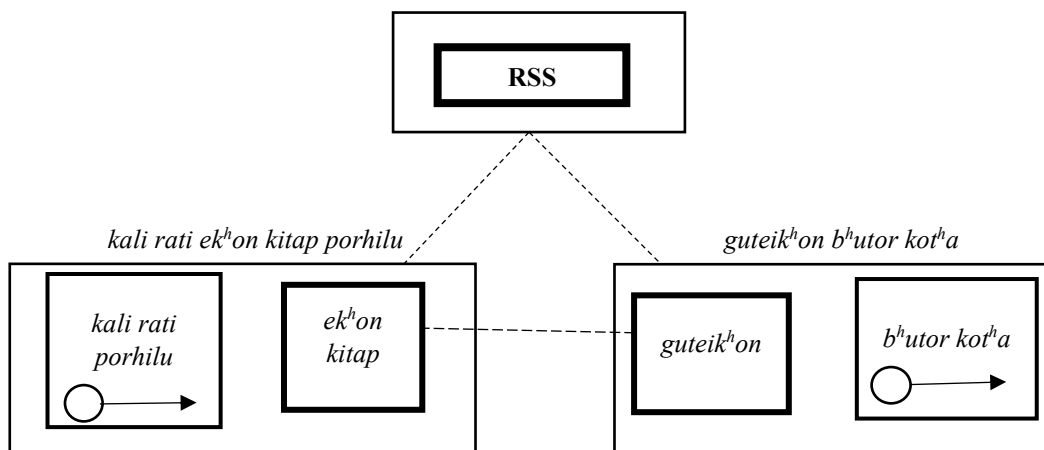


Fig. 34: A non-restrictive relative clause

Fig. 37 illustrates the non-restrictive relative construction in (67). In the diagram, both clauses maintain their independent status. The NP *ek^hon kitap* in the first clause is further specified as ‘*guteik^hon b^hutor kot^ha*’ in the second relative clause. This relationship is indicated by the dotted lines connecting the two clauses.

- (68) *mɜjum potin aborko poka. appidɜ ui do:jiŋe* (Mising)
 mɜjum potin a-bor-ko po-ka. appi-dɜ ui
 yesterday book CLF-sheet-IND read-PST all-DEF ghost
 do:-jiŋ-e
 story-NOM
 ‘Last night I read a book. It was all ghost stories.’

In (69) and (70), the second clause ‘he is Chinese’ semantically modifies the nominal referent ‘the man’ in the first clause. Thus, the two clauses can be considered to have a modifying relationship, signifying relativization.

- (69) *eimatro manuh ezon log palu. teu Chinese* (Assamese)
 ei-matro manuh ek-zon log pa-il-u teu Chinese
 this-moment man one-CLF meet get-PRF-1 he Chinese
 ‘I just met a man, who was a Chinese.’

- (70) *su:pag tani:dɜm riksuto, bi Chinese* (Mising)
 su:pag tani:-dɜ-m riksuto, bi Chinese
 now man-DEF-ACC meet-PRF he Chinese
 ‘I just met a man, who was a Chinese.’

In (71) and (72), the second clause ‘everything is incorrect’ and ‘she is a nice person’ modifies the nominal referent ‘her answer-script’ and ‘your mother’ respectively in the first clause. Even though grammatically unspecified, their modifying relationship is evident as they are juxtaposed next to each other.

- (71) *tair bohik^hon salu. guteik^hon b^hul* (Assamese)
 tai-r bohi-k^hon sa-il-u gutei-k^hon b^hul
 she-GEN answer-script-CLF see-PRF-1 all-CLF wrong
 ‘I just read her paper, which is full of mistakes.’

- (72) *m3lo nok ouma riksuto aip3 aidag tani:d3m* (Mising)
- | | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|--------|----------|------|----------|
| m3lo | no-k | ouma | riksu-to | aip3 | ai-dag |
| yesterday | you-GEN | mother | meet-PRF | very | good-HAB |
| tani:-d3-m | | | | | |
| man-DEF-ACC | | | | | |
- ‘I met your mother yesterday. She is a nice person.’

In the next chapter, we will investigate the grammar and the underlying semantics of complementation in both languages.