

Typology of Complement Clause Construction in Verb-Final Languages

Category: either oral or poster

This paper examines complement clause constructions in verb-final languages focusing on the presence and absence of complementizers, the position of complementizers in a clause, and the position of a complement clause with respect to the main verb. It introduces three patterns of complement clause constructions in verb-final languages and argues that the position of a complement clause with respect to the main verb and its arguments is a structural criterion for the verb-final languages as to whether one makes or does not make use of complementizers in a sentence which contains a complement clause. The data for this study include 30 different verb-final languages from various language families and various geographical areas.

While many verb-final languages use complementizers to mark clause boundary, some do not use complementizers. The main goal for this study is to investigate whether there is a structural criterion for verb-final languages whether determining the use of complementizers to mark embedded complement clauses.

Close examination of verb-final languages reveals that there are three patterns in complement clause constructions. One is complement clause embedded between main verb and its arguments, the second is complement clause embedded after main verb and its arguments, and the third, complement clause embedded before the main verb and its arguments. In one pattern, complement clause embedded between main verb and its arguments, verb-final languages always require complementizers unless the embedded verb is marked by other markers (e.g. dependent clause marker). In the other two patterns, on the other hand, complementizers may be absent from the sentence.

Giving the phenomenon above, the current study argues that in verb-final languages, the verb itself (either the main or embedded verb) may function as a clause boundary without complementizers, and this may result in the absence of complementizers in some verb-final languages.