snippets

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5.

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Two types of subordinate subject contact relatives

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A variety of English dialects and contact languages, such as Gullah (Mufwene 1986), Tok Pisin (Woolford 1978), Belfast English (Henry 1995), and African American English (Sistrunk 2012) allow subject relatives that lack an overt relativization marker:

(1) There's one woman on our street [Ø went to Spain last year].

These constructions are typically called subject contact relatives (SCRs). Researchers have hinted that SCRs from different varieties may have different properties, and therefore different analyses (den Dikken 2005:700, Haegeman et al. 2015:62). However, these possible differences and their ramifications have not been explored.

Based on judgments in the literature regarding the acceptability of a resumptive pronoun (RP) inside the clause, I suggest that there are (at least) two types of SCR.

One type allows a RP in the SCR:

(2) There's one woman on our street [Ø{__/she} went to Spain last year].

This type of SCR is found in Belfast English (Henry 1995:126) and Tok Pisin (Woolford 1978:222).

A second type does not allow a RP in SCR:

(3) I want you to meet somebody [Ø{__/*he} bin on my mind all my life].
    'I want you to meet somebody [that's] on my mind all my life.'

This type of SCR is found in Gullah (Mufwene 1986:10, 15, modified) and likely found in African American English (AAE), since RPs typically do not occur in ex-slave corpora (e.g., Tottie & Rey 1997, Tottie & Harvie 2000).

The above observation helps fill in a gap in our understanding of the status of SCRs. Haegeman et al. (2015) convincingly illustrate that Belfast English SCRs behave like subordinate clauses, rather than independent clauses with optional subjects as suggested by Henry (1995) and den Dikken (2005). However, Haegeman et al. do not specifically analyze AAE SCR, which have different properties than Belfast English SCRs. I suggest that the fact that RPs are not allowed in AAE SCRs indicates that these constructions are also subordinate clauses. If they were independent clauses with an optional overt subject, the personal pronoun should typically be licit; however, this is not the case.

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