Head-final and Head-initial Relative Clauses in Jambi Teochew

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1. Introduction

Teochew (Chaozhou, Tiociu) is a Southern Min Chinese language spoken in the southern areas of China as well as throughout Southeast Asia. Jambi Teochew is the Teochew variety spoken in Jambi City on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. There are roughly 50,000 ethnic Chinese in Jambi City, of which perhaps about 10,000 are Jambi Teochew speakers; Jambi Teochew speakers comprise less than 3% of the 370,000 population of Jambi City. Most Jambi Teochew speakers are 2nd to 4th generation Chinese Indonesians who are also native speakers of the local Malay variety, Jambi Malay, and are also speakers of Standard Indonesian.

While Jambi Teochew is historically Chinese, its contact with Malay languages has resulted in some word orders which are uncharacteristic of Chinese languages. Namely, Jambi Teochew exhibits both head-final and head-initial relative clauses even though head-initial relative clauses are generally ungrammatical in Chinese languages.

(1) [(yang) Aling phaʔ kai nongkiã] khau.¹
   REL Aling hit REL child cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

(2) [nongkiã yang Aling phaʔ (kai)] khau.
   child REL Aling hit REL cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

In (1), the head noun nongkiã ‘child’ follows the modifying clause (yang) Aling phaʔ kai ‘that Aling hit’, resulting in a head-final word order; in (2), the order of the head noun and the

¹ REL = relativizer, CL = classifier, DEM = demonstrative, POSS = possessive, PROG = progressive

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modifying clause are switched, resulting in a head-initial word order. In addition to the head-
initial word order, Jambi Teochew has also borrowed the Malay relativizer yang.

Upon observing these non-Chinese characteristics of Jambi Teochew, several questions
come to mind: (a) what are the general properties of relative clauses in Jambi Teochew and
how do these properties compare to Chinese and Malay languages? (b) Are relative clauses
an isolated instance of Malay elements or do other related constructions allow non-Chinese
forms as well? (c) Where does Jambi Teochew fit in the larger picture of contact languages?

To answer these questions, I briefly turn to some literature on contact languages and
introduce the terms contact-induced language change and bilingual mixed languages. Thomason (2001) defines contact-induced language change as “a change [that] is caused at
least in part by language contact [and] is less likely to have occurred outside a particular
contact situation.” Thomason (2001) also points out that it is unlikely that a typologically
significant change is isolated in the linguistic system of a language. Instead, she asserts that “a
language is much more likely to have undergone either a whole range of contact-induced
typological changes in its various subsystems or none.”

As one might guess, bilingual mixed languages are mixed languages which emerge in the
context of bilingual speakers. It is “distinct from both of its sources and usually not mutually
intelligible with either” (Winford 2003). The general characteristics of bilingual mixed
languages are shown below.

(3) Characteristics of bilingual mixed languages (Thomason 1997):
a. they evolve from two-language contact situations
b. there is widespread bilingualism in at least one of the speaker groups
c. the language material in the resulting mixture is easily distinguished according to
   its language of origin
d. there is little or no simplification in either component of the mixed language

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2 Jambi Teochew exhibits another type of relative clause which has been referred to as a classifier
relative (Xu 2007). In a classifier relative, a classifier which agrees with the head noun in type is used
in place of the relativizer kai. Unlike relative clauses with kai, head-initial word order is not possible.

(i) [Aling sia tie sing] zing tung.
   Aling write CL letter very long
   ‘The letter that Aling wrote is very long.’

(ii) *[sing yang Aling sia tie] zing tung.
    letter REL Aling write CL very long
   ‘The letter that Aling wrote is very long.’

This discussion on relative clauses is restricted to relative clauses which use kai.

3 Non-bilingual mixed languages include pidgins and creoles which will not be discussed here.
Some famous examples of bilingual mixed languages include: (a) Media Lengua, which has a Spanish lexicon with Quechua grammar; (b) Michif, which combines French NP structures with Cree VP structures; and (c) Ma’a, which has a Cushitic-Bantu lexicon with a mostly Bantu grammar. Thomason (1997) differentiates mixed languages which emerged abruptly as the language of new ethnic groups (e.g. Media Lengua and Michif) from mixed languages which have developed gradually over a longer period of time (e.g. Ma’a). In abrupt mixtures, the most common type, “one or more particular subsystems come from one language and the rest of the language from the other” (Thomason 1997). Since abrupt mixtures are the result of bilingual speakers combing their languages into a single form, they are not appropriately characterized as instances of contact-induced language change. Gradual mixtures like Ma’a do not exhibit the same kind of division where one particular subsystem is from one language while the rest is from the other. Instead, gradual mixtures result from slow change via incremental borrowing; in this sense, each step in its development is a contact-induced language change (Thomason 1997, 2001).

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I discuss the formation of relative clauses in Chinese and Malay languages. This will serve as a guide for evaluating the properties of relative clauses in Jambi Teochew which are discussed in Section 3. Section 4 describes the properties of nominal complement clauses and nominal modification in Jambi Teochew and how these properties are similar to or different from the properties exhibited in relative clauses. The paper is concluded in Section 5 where I discuss the answers to the aforementioned questions. I eventually arrive at the conclusion that, although head-initial relative clauses are derived from Malay, there are very few other Malay elements in the Jambi Teochew nominal modification system. While Jambi Teochew appears to be best categorized as an abrupt bilingual mixed language, it does not exhibit the degree of mixing that other known mixed languages have.

2. Relative Clauses in Chinese and Malay Languages

This section provides a brief overview of relative clauses in Chinese and Malay languages. Generally, relative clauses in Chinese languages are head-final and head-initial relative clauses are ungrammatical. The following examples are from Mandarin.

(4) a. [laoshi da de xiaohai] zai ku.
   teacher hit REL child PROG cry
   ‘The child that the teacher hit is crying.’
A Chinese variety that is more closely related to Jambi Teochew is the Jieyang dialect of Teochew, which is spoken in the Chaoshan region of China. In her discussion on Jieyang relative clauses, Xu (2007) states that the modifying clause always precedes the head noun. In addition to the modifying clause is the Chinese relativizer kai which is also used in the Jambi Teochew relatives in (1) and (2).

(5) haũ tã sungtshio kai nang
   like say joke REL people
   ‘people who like to make jokes’ (Xu 2007:25)

Dryer (2005) shows that in a sample of 756 languages only five languages show a combination of basic verb-object order with head-final relative clauses;\(^4\) three of these five languages are Chinese languages (Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka). From this perspective, head-final relative clauses in Chinese languages are typologically rare.

Malay languages exhibit a more typologically pervasive pattern; they have a basic verb-object order and their relative clauses are head-initial. In Jambi Malay, the local Malay variety also spoken by Jambi Teochew speakers, only head-initial relative clauses are permitted while head-final relative clauses are ungrammatical.

(6) a. dioʔ numbur [jarng yang kito bontang tadi].
   3sg hit net REL 1pl spread.over earlier
   ‘It hit the net that we set earlier.’

b. * dioʔ numbur [yang kito bontang tadi jarng].
   3sg hit REL 1pl spread.over earlier net
   ‘It hit the net that we set earlier.’

The Jambi Malay examples above also illustrate the use of the Malay relativizer *yang*. As shown in (1) and (2), this relativizer has been borrowed into Jambi Teochew.

3. Relative Clauses in Jambi Teochew

As mentioned, relative clauses in Jambi Teochew can appear head-finally or head-initially. In head-final relative clauses, the head noun comes after the modifying clause. The appearance of the Malay relativizer *yang* is optional. The Chinese relativizer *kai*, however, is obligatory. When *kai* is not present, the resulting sentence is ungrammatical.

(7) a.  [(yang) Aling phaʔ kai nongkiä] khau.  
   REL     Aling hit     REL child        cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

   REL     Aling hit     child        cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

In head-initial relative clauses, the head noun appears before the modifying clause. The Chinese relativizer *kai* is generally optional although its presence is usually preferred; when *kai* is not present, some speakers judged the sentence as marginal or degraded. The Malay relativizer *yang* is obligatory.

(8) a.  [nongkiä yang Aling phaʔ (kai)] khau.  
   child        REL     Aling hit     REL cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

b. * [nongkiä Aling phaʔ (kai)] khau.  
   child        Aling hit     REL cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

For both types of relative clauses, it is ungrammatical when no relativizer is present at all.

   Aling     hit     child        cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’
b. * [nongkiã Aling pha?] khau.
   child Aling hit cry
   ‘The child that Aling hit cried.’

Additionally, it is ungrammatical to switch the relativizers or replace one with the other.

      REL Aling hit REL child cry

   Aling hit REL child cry

      child REL Aling hit REL cry

   child Aling hit REL cry

(12)  ok/* [yang to Päšiã thaktsu kai] lausu [yang suka nongkiã kai] zing kui.
   REL at Jakarta study REL teacher REL like child REL very tall
   ‘The teacher who studied in Jakarta and likes children is very tall.’

With regards to multiple relative clauses, one question is whether or not a head-final relative clause and a head-initial relative clause can appear simultaneously on the same head. This would result in a form which is found in neither Chinese nor Malay languages. In the realm of contact languages, such a construction is an attested possibility. Thomason (2001) discusses Ethiopic Semitic languages which have been influenced by indigenous Cushitic languages. This has resulted in the existence of a construction where a preposition and a postposition appear on either side of an NP. This pattern is not found in either the prepositional Semitic languages or the postpositional Cushitic languages; instead, it is a combination of the two. For Jambi Teochew relative clauses, the judgements are varied. Some speakers judged the combined form as grammatical while some judged it as ungrammatical.

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Like the combined form in (12), a sentence where two relative clauses appear after the head (i.e. head-initially) also received varied judgements.

(13) ok/* lausu [yang suka nongkiā kai] [yang to Pāsiā thaktsu kai] zing kui.  
    teacher REL like child REL REL at Jakarta study REL very tall  
    ‘The teacher who likes children and studied in Jakarta is very tall.’

All speakers judged the form where two relative clauses appear before the head (i.e. head-finally) as ungrammatical.

(14) * [yang to Pāsiā thaktsu kai] [yang suka nongkiā kai] lausu zing kui.  
    REL at Jakarta study REL REL like child REL teacher very tall  
    ‘The teacher who studied in Jakarta and likes children is very tall.’

One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that speakers can vary in how many Malay elements are exhibited in their grammar. Some speakers are willing to accept multiple relative clauses that appear head-initially or on either side of the head while other speakers reject these sentences altogether.

To summarize this section, a general pattern in Jambi Teochew relative clauses is that the Malay relativizer yang must always precede the modifying clause while the Chinese relativizer kai must always follow it. The word order of the individual elements inside a relative clause remains largely the same as in their respective languages. Head-final relative clauses are like relative clauses found in Chinese languages; the only immediately noticeable difference is the occurrence of the optional Malay relativizer yang. Head-initial relative clauses are like relative clauses in Malay languages; similarly, the only immediately noticeable difference is the appearance of a generally optional kai. When two relative clauses are present, Jambi Teochew speakers exhibit some variation. Some speakers allow forms that appear more Malayic while others do not allow these at all.

4. Related Grammatical Constructions

This section addresses some constructions that are similar to relative clauses, namely nominal complement clauses and other forms of nominal modification. It will be shown that almost all of these constructions only allow head-final word ordering despite the fact that relative clauses can be either head-final or head-initial.
4.1. Nominal Complement Clauses

Like English, the word order of nominal complement clauses in Mandarin is nearly identical to the word order exhibited in relative clauses. That is, nominal complement clauses appear head-finally and head-initial ordering of the complement clause is ungrammatical.

(15) a. wo ting-dao [na ge xiaohai da laose de xiaoxi].
1sg hear-arrive that CL child hit teacher REL news
‘I heard that news that a child hit a teacher.’

b. * wo ting-dao [xiaoxi de na ge xiaohai da laose].
1sg hear-arrive news REL that CL child hit teacher
‘I heard that news that a child hit a teacher.’

While nominal complement clauses in Jambi Teochew exhibit similarities to relative clauses, their properties are not exactly the same. The most important difference is that nominal complement clauses can appear head-finally but not head-initially. If the complement appears after the head noun, the sentence is ungrammatical.

(16) a. ua tiā [(yang) nongkiā phaʔ lausu kai siusek].
1sg hear REL child hit teacher REL news
‘I heard the news that a child hit a teacher.’

b. * ua tiā [siusek yang nongkiā phaʔ lausu (kai)].
1sg hear news REL child hit teacher REL
‘I heard the news that a child hit a teacher.’

Despite this, like relative clauses, yang is can appear optionally in head-final complement clauses while kai is obligatory. A head-initial complement clause where yang is not present remains ungrammatical.

(17) a. * ua tiā [(yang) nongkiā phaʔ lausu siusek].
1sg hear REL child hit teacher news

b. * ua tiā [siusek nongkiā phaʔ lausu (kai)].
1sg hear news child hit teacher REL

Nominal complement clauses without any relativizer are ungrammatical.
Head-final and Head-initial Relative Clauses in Jambi Teochew (Anne E. Peng)

(18) a. * ua tía [nongkĩ phaʔ lausu siusek].
1sg hear child hit teacher news

b. * ua tía [siusek nongkĩ phaʔ lausu].
1sg hear news child hit teacher

Also like relative clauses, *yang and *kai cannot be switched and cannot be used in place of one another. This is true regardless of whether the head is head-final or head-initial.

(19) a. * ua tía [kai nongkĩ phaʔ lausu *yang siusek].
1sg hear REL child hit teacher REL news

b. * ua tía [nongkĩ phaʔ lausu *yang siusek].
1sg hear child hit teacher REL news

c. * ua tía [kai nongkĩ phaʔ lausu siusek].
1sg hear REL child hit teacher news

(20) a. * ua tía [siusek kai nongkĩ phaʔ lausu *yang].
1sg hear news REL child hit teacher REL

b. * ua tía [siusek nongkĩ phaʔ lausu *yang].
1sg hear news child hit teacher REL

c. * ua tía [siusek kai nongkĩ phaʔ lausu].
1sg hear news REL child hit teacher

Comrie (1996) argues that relative clauses and nominal complement clauses in Japanese are the same construction, unlike in English where they are distinct. Further research is needed to determine whether relative clauses and nominal complement clauses in Jambi Teochew should be regarded as the same construction. One clear pattern, however, has emerged from this discussion. While relative clauses can appear head-finally or head-initially, nominal complement clauses must be head-final. If they are the same construction, this would suggest that the appearance of Malay elements can be isolated to specific types. If they are distinct constructions, then perhaps these results are to be expected.

4.2. Noun Phrase Modifiers

This section addresses other types of nominal modifiers in Jambi Teochew and how they compare to modifiers in Chinese and Malay languages. It will be shown that, even though relative clauses can appear head-finally or head-initially, other nominal modifiers in Jambi Teochew are generally restricted to head-final word order like nominal complement clauses.
4.2.1. Adjectives

Adjectives in Jambi Teochew appear before the head noun; when the adjective appears after the head noun, the phrase is ungrammatical.

(21) a. soi tshia
    small car
    ‘small car’

b. * tshia soi
    car small
    ‘small car’

(22) a. ang-sek kai tshia
    red-color KAI car
    ‘red car’

b. * tshia kai ang-sek
    car KAI red-color
    ‘red car’

Compared to Chinese and Malay languages, Jambi Teochew patterns more like Chinese languages where the adjective also appears before the head noun. In Jambi Malay, adjectives appear after the head noun they modify.

(23) a. Mandarin
    xiao haizi
    small child
    ‘small child’

b. Jambi Malay
    buda? kci?
    child small
    ‘small child’ (Yanti 2010:565)

4.2.2. Nouns

Like adjectives, modifying nouns also appear before the head noun in Jambi Teochew. It is not possible for the modifying noun to appear after.

(24) a. nikue tsang
    papaya tree
    ‘papaya tree’

b. * tsang nikue
    tree papaya
    ‘papaya tree’

This is another instance where Jambi Teochew patterns like Chinese languages. Nominal modifiers in Mandarin also appear before the head noun while in Jambi Malay they appear after the head noun.
Head-final and Head-initial Relative Clauses in Jambi Teochew (Anne E. Peng)

    ganlan shu              bataŋ kmaŋ
    ‘olive tree’            ‘kemang tree’ (Yanti 2010:571)

4.2.3. Possessors

Possessives in Jambi Teochew also pattern like adjectival modifiers; the possessor appears before the head noun.

(26) a. Aling kai ang      b. * ang kai Aling
    Aling POSS husband    husband POSS Aling
    ‘Aling’s husband’     ‘Aling’s husband’

(27) a. i kai ang          b. * ang kai i
    3sg POSS husband      husband POSS 3sg
    ‘her husband’         ‘her husband’

Once again, Jambi Teochew is more like Chinese languages. Possessors in Chinese languages appear before the head noun while in Jambi Malay they appear after the head noun.

(28) Mandarin
    a. Xurong de laogong   b. ta de laogong
    Xurong POSS husband    3sg POSS husband
    ‘Xurong’s husband’     ‘her husband’

(29) Jambi Malay
    a. laki Rosima         b. bini dio?
    husband Rosima         wife 3sg
    ‘Rosima’s husband’     ‘his wife’ (Y2010:573)

4.2.4. Demonstratives

In Jambi Teochew, demonstratives appear before the head noun; when they appear after the head noun, the phrase is ungrammatical.

(30) a. hi kai nongkiā    b. *nongkiā hi (kai)  c. *nongkia kai hi
    DEM CL child          child DEM CL       child CL DEM
    ‘that child’          ‘that child’        ‘that child’
While Jambi Teochew does borrow the Malay demonstrative pronouns *itu* ‘that’ and *ini* ‘this’, their use as demonstrative determiners is ungrammatical regardless of where they appear relative to the noun.

(31) a. * nongkiā itu 
    child DEM
    ‘that child’
    
b. ?/* itu nongkiā
    DEM child
    ‘that child’

In Chinese languages, demonstratives precede the head noun. In Malay languages, demonstratives follow the head noun.

(32) a. * Mandarin
    na ge xiaohai
    DEM CL child
    ‘this child’

   b. * Jambi Malay
    budaʔ-ni
    child-DEM
    ‘this child’ (Y2010:577)

This is yet another instance where Jambi Teochew patterns more like Chinese languages.

4.2.5. Quantifiers

Non-numeral quantifiers appear before the head noun in Jambi Teochew, Mandarin, and Jambi Malay. Since the order is the same for all three languages, it is not immediately obvious whether there are any Malay elements.

(33) a. * Jambi Teochew
    tak kai hakseng
    every CL student
    ‘every student’

   b. * Mandarin
    mei ge xuesheng
    every CL student
    ‘every student’

   c. * Jambi Malay
    ttiap kampōŋ
    every village
    ‘every village’ (Y2010:578)

In Mandarin, numeral quantifiers appear before the head noun. Jambi Malay allows two orders: the numeral and classifier sequence can appear before or after the head noun.
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(34)  
Mandarin
liang zhi gou
two CL dog
‘two dogs’

(35)  
Jambi Malay (Y2010:579)
a.  krtas limo lmbar
paper five piece
‘five pieces of paper’
b.  duo glas ae?
two glass water
‘two glasses of water’

Numeral quantifiers in Jambi Teochew can appear before the head noun as in Chinese languages. When the numeral and classifier sequence appears after the head noun, speakers varied in their judgements. Some speakers found it grammatical while other speakers judged it ungrammatical. This is another instance where speaker variability is exhibited.

(36)  
a.  no tsia? kau
two CL dog
‘two dogs’
b.  ok/* kau no tsia?
dog two CL
‘two dogs’

Generally, nominal modifiers can only appear head-finally in Jambi Teochew. Adjectives, nouns, possessors, demonstratives, and quantifiers exhibit the same head-final ordering typically seen in Chinese languages. The only pattern which appeared to derive from Malay was the possibility of a numeral and classifier sequence after the noun; this, however, was only grammatical for some speakers. For the most part, nominal modification appears to be exclusively Chinese. The greatest exception to this, of course, is the head-initial word order of relative clauses.

5. Conclusion

In this final section, I discuss the answers to the questions raised in the introduction. The first question asks what the general properties of relative clauses in Jambi Teochew are and how these properties compare to Chinese and Malay languages. It was shown that head-final relative clauses have the same word order as relative clauses in Chinese with the addition of the Malay-borrowed relativizer yang. In a similar vein, head-initial relative clauses have the same word order as relative clauses in Malay languages with a generally optional kai. Word orders which appear to combine properties from both Chinese and Malay, such as the simultaneous occurrence of a head-final relative clause and a head-initial relative clause for
The second question raises the issue of whether other Malay elements are exhibited in constructions which are similar to relative clauses. The answer to this question is no. Nominal complement clauses and other forms of nominal modification are generally restricted to head-final word ordering as in Chinese languages.

The third and final question asks where Jambi Teochew fits in the larger picture of contact languages. This question is tricky and depends on the definitions of the terms used. I discuss the terms and issues in turn.

According to the characteristics of bilingual mixed languages proposed by Thomason (1997) and shown in (3), Jambi Teochew fits the criteria of a mixed language; it evolved from a situation where two languages came into contact, Jambi Teochew speakers are also native speakers of Jambi Malay, the Malay elements in Jambi Teochew are easily identifiable, and there does not appear to be any simplification in either the Chinese nor the Malay elements. Jambi Teochew seems most appropriately categorized as an abrupt type of mixture since the Malay elements are exhibited in a small portion of the subsystem; head-initial relative clauses are the most apparent Malay form even though the system of nominal modification is largely Chinese. If these conclusions are correct, then according to Thomason (1997), Jambi Teochew does not exhibit contact-induced language change; this is based on the idea that Jambi Teochew speakers are simply bilinguals who are combining elements of two languages into one. This may partially explain why Jambi Teochew does not seem to have a “range of contact-induced typological changes” (Thomason 2001); instead, these “changes”, or Malay elements, seem largely isolated to relative clauses. In this sense, Jambi Teochew is more like Media Lengua and Micif.

There are, however, some important points to note. The definition of bilingual mixed languages given by Winford (2003) is that the mixed language is distinct from both of its sources; in Jambi Teochew, this does not appear to be the case. In other words, Jambi Teochew does not exhibit the degree of mixing that is seen in Media Lengua and Micif. Its lexicon is predominantly Chinese in origin with a few Malay borrowings. Additionally, the Malay-like head-initial relative clauses only appear as a variant form; they have not replaced the Chinese-like head-final relative clauses. Furthermore, there is speaker variability on some Malay elements; some speakers reject the Malay word order while others accept it. Thus, if Jambi Teochew does truly constitute a bilingual mixed language, then it is clear that it falls on the ‘less mixed’ end of the spectrum. Utilizing a different definition of mixed languages, one may even argue that Jambi Teochew is not a mixed language at all. More data is needed to
determine whether other aspects of Jambi Teochew exhibit the same kind of isolated Malay forms as relative clauses. On the one hand, it is possible that other subsystems exhibit a similar pattern where the word order is predominantly Chinese; on the other hand, it is also just as likely that other subsystems have more Malay elements. In the realm of contact languages, it is difficult to predict which is more likely without further research.

References


