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A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon

Voll, R.M.; Voll R.M.

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Author: Voll, Rebecca

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CHAPTER 12

Relative clauses

The current chapter is meant to give an overview of the most important characteristics of Mundabli relative clauses. The bulk of its content is nearly identical with the section on Mundabli relative clauses in Lovegren and Voll (2017). However, the current account contains some new information, especially regarding tone, the dummy subject and negation in relative clauses. In the remainder of this chapter, I treat the following typologically relevant parameters of relative clauses in turn: the linear order of the relative clause with respect to the head noun and with respect to other nominal modifiers (§12.1), marking of the relative clause, i.e. the elements that mark a relative clause as such (§12.2), representatives of the head nominal within the relative clause, i.e. the status of what are typically referred to as resumptive pronouns or “representative nominals” (§12.3) and the accessibility of different types of formally distinct grammatical relations to relativization (§12.4).¹ Finally, §12.5 describes how various inflectional categories, including tense and aspect, focus marking, illocutionary force and negation, are marked in relative clauses, and how this compares to main clauses. For a comparison of relative clauses in the two Yemne-Kimbi languages Mundabli and Mungbam and a more elaborate analysis, see Lovegren and Voll (2017).

¹Here I refer to the concept developed in the works of Keenan and Comrie (1977; 1979a;b).

12.1 Position of the relative clause

In order to frame the following discussion on Mundabli relative clauses, it is important to take a look at the structure of the noun phrase and the position of the relative clause relative to the head nominal and to other noun modifiers.

As shown in §7.3, in the unmarked case, all modifiers within an NP occur to the right of the head noun. The head noun may be modified by possessive pronouns, demonstratives, adjectives, numerals and/or the definite determiner, all of which show concord with the noun class of the head noun, and by relative clauses. The relativizer also shows concord with the noun class of the head noun. See Chapter 4 for an overview of the Mundabli noun class system. Like all noun modifiers, the relative clause follows the head nominal. In nearly all examples of relative clauses found in spontaneous texts, the relative clause is the only noun modifier and is thus placed directly after the noun. If other modifiers are present the relative clause occurs at the end of the noun phrase, following all other noun modifiers, including the determiner.

The schema in Figure (12.1) shows the unmarked order of noun modifiers. Given that no other modifier follows the relative clause, it is difficult to determine whether the relative clause is to be treated as embedded in, or adjoined to, the matrix NP. However, it does not seem to be possible for anything to intervene between the relative clause and the rest of the NP.

N – POSS – ADJ – DEM – NUM – DET – REL

Figure 12.1: Position of the relative clause relative to the head nominal and to other noun modifiers

- (502) ŋwàtì bí bī-fyíŋ b-én bí-tɔ b-ɔ
 CL7/8.book CL8;3SG.POSS CL8-new CL8-DEM.PROX CL8-three CL8-DET
 nō [wù fɔ tɔŋ b-ɔ Báméndà]
 SUBORD CL1 P1 buy(b) CL8-REL Bamenda

◊‘these three new books of hers which she bought in Bamenda’

In all examples in this chapter, the head nominal and the representative of the head nominal within the relative clause (i.e., the resumptive pronoun) are underlined. In (502), the resumptive pronoun is omitted (see §12.3 for details). It is worth noting that the semantically bleached nouns níŋ ‘thing, matter’ and dè ‘place’ are frequently used as head nominals in cases where other languages might use a headless relative clause. Although head-less relative clauses are possible, they are rather uncommon.

12.2 Relative clause-marking

Having shown how the relative clause relates to its environment, this section discusses relative clause marking, i.e., the strategies used to identify a relative clause as such. Every relative clause is marked by a relativizer, which agrees in noun class with the head nominal and which I refer to as the “postverbal relativizer”. It immediately follows the verbal complex. In addition, relative clauses are optionally introduced by the subordinating conjunction *nō*, which does not show agreement. It also introduces certain kinds of adverbial clauses.

12.2.1 Postverbal relativizer

The postverbal relativizer, exemplified in (503), is identical in shape with the definite determiner and the distal demonstrative (cf. §5.2). It agrees with the head nominal in noun class and must immediately follow the verb complex of the relative clause, irrespective of the definiteness of the matrix NP or of the syntactic-semantic role of the head noun within the relative clause.

- (503) wù dzé āyī, n=dǐ yá tǐn sé, n=gān
 CL1 say(b) no 1_{SG=F1} go_up(c) there CL3/7a.attic 1_{SG=go(a)}
 dā bān nín [kī lē jīm
 see(a) clearly CL7.thing CL7 make(a).IPFV stop_burning(c).IPFV
 tō k-ó gū w-ó]
 move_away(b).IPFV CL7-REL CL3/7a.fire CL3-DET

‘She said: No! I will go up to the attic and find out what is putting out the fire.’

The postverbal relativizer is not to be confused with a resumptive pronoun. Firstly, as Table 12.1 shows, the two clearly differ in shape. The resumptive pronoun is represented by the second column in Table 12.1, headed preverbal pronoun,² and the postverbal relativizer is represented by the third column, headed determiner/relativizer, as determiners and relativizers are identical in shape. Secondly, although the resumptive pronoun is often absent, there are numerous cases (e.g., (504)) of relative clauses containing both a postverbal relativizer *and* a representative nominal in the form of a pronoun.

- (504) first nín nō [n=kā ló k-ó kǐ] dǐ yē
 first CL7.thing SUBORD 1_{SG=F2} do(a) CL7-REL CL7 be(b) COMP

‘The first thing I will do is: [...]’

²Non-preverbal pronouns of noun classes other than Class 1, 2 and 9 differ from preverbal pronouns in their tonal pattern (see §6.1). Non-preverbal pronouns of these other noun classes carry a superhigh tone. Apart from this tonal difference, preverbal and non-preverbal pronouns are identical.

noun class	preverbal pronoun	determiner/relativizer
1	wù	wō
2	bǔ	bó
3	wū	wó
4	yī	yó
5	wū	wó
7	kī	kó
8	bī	bó
9	yì	yó
10	yī	yó
19	fī	fó
18b	mū	mó
6a	mū	mó
14	bī	bó

Table 12.1: Preverbal pronouns and determiners/relativizers

Although the postverbal relativizer is cognate with the definite determiner and the distal demonstrative, the postverbal relativizer does not modify the head nominal. This is supported by its position in the middle rather than at the end of the relative clause (see (503) and (504)) and by the fact that the postverbal relativizer is always present, irrespective of the definiteness of the matrix NP or of the ability of the head nominal itself to be modified by a determiner. This latter point is illustrated by examples such as (505), which contains a postverbal relativizer even though the head nominal is a 2_{SG} pronoun, which cannot be modified by a demonstrative or a determiner.³

- (505) wān w-ēn, dĩ wà nō [à lō w-ō ná
 CL1.child CL1-DEM.PROX be(b) 2_{SG} SUBORD 2_{SG} make(a) CL1-REL as
 mī wān w-ō lē f-án gbō kún]
 1_{SG} CL1.child CL1-DET get_lost(a).IPFV PROX-here CL3.house behind

‘Child, you are the one who made my [other] child get lost here behind the house.’⁴

³Relative clauses modifying pronouns as in (505) are possible, though not common. When the head nominal is a first or second person pronoun, the relative marker always shows Class 1 agreement.

⁴The phrase *mī wān* ‘my child’ is a fixed lexicalized expression. While possessive phrases are usually head-initial, consisting of a head noun followed by a possessive pronoun which agrees with the noun class of the head nominal, in this fixed expression, the noun ‘child’ is simply juxtaposed to the focus form of the 1_{SG} pronoun.

12.2.2 Clause-initial subordinating conjunction

Relative clauses can be additionally introduced by the subordinating conjunction **nō̃**⁵ (glossed ‘SUBORD’), as in (506). However, when introducing a relative clause, this subordinator always co-occurs with a postverbal relative marker; it never functions marks a relative clause on its own.

- (506) **d̥zũ** **nō̃** [**bā** **kə** **lǎ** **kpī** **y-̃** (**yì**) **tō**
 CL9.goat SUBORD IMPERS P3 make(a) die(b) CL9-REL CL9 CL7/8.day
b-̃ **ŋgɔ̃]** **kə** **bān** **áná** **būbūbūbū**
 CL8-DIST.DEM upon P3 be_white(b) like_that IDEO.white

◊‘The goat which was killed on that day was completely white.’

Every relative clause can be introduced by this subordinator, but it is frequently absent and its presence is never obligatory. The same subordinator also introduces certain adverbial clauses, such as reason clauses and specific kinds of time and manner clauses.

12.3 The representative of the head nominal

According to (Keenan 1985: 147), the encoding of the role of the head noun in the embedded sentence is one of the most significant parameters from the viewpoint of typological variation. In Mundabli, the head nominal can nearly always be represented within the relative clause. The only exception is a certain type of locative relative clause (see below). The head nominal is generally represented by a pronoun which occupies the same position in the relative clause as in a main clause.

The presence of a representative nominal is obligatory when the representative nominal functions as the subject of the relative clause, as in (507), and when it functions as the possessor in a genitive phrase, as in (508).

- (507) **m̥** [**wù** **kə** **dzé** **w-̃** **d̥zũ** **gbām**
 CL1.man CL1 P3 say(b).IPFV CL1-REL CL3a.word CL7/8.god
tō **k-̃** **ŋgɔ̃]** **kə** **dī** **pǎ** **pítà** **kyǎ**
 CL7/8.day CL7-DET upon P3 be(b) Pa P. K.

‘The person who was preaching on that day was Pa Peter Kia.’

- (508) **m̥** **nō̃** [**ń** **kə** **mũ** **w-̃** **wān**
 CL1.man SUBORD 1SG.PRO = P3 marry(a) CL1-REL CL1.child
wū] **kə** **fēl** **fī**
 CL1-CL1POSS P3 be_blind(a) pass(b)

◊‘The man whose daughter I married was blind.’

⁵The subordinator has a phonetic variant **nā** which often occurs in fast speech. The two variants occur in free alternation.

In all other types of relative clause, the use of a representative head nominal is optional. However, the conditions under which the resumptive pronoun may be omitted differ, according to the grammatical function of the representative nominal within the relative clause. While e.g., a resumptive pronoun in object function may simply be left out, this is not possible when the resumptive pronoun is the object of a comitative prefix. In this case, only the whole adpositional phrase can be dropped. In the remainder of this section, I describe the conditions under which a representative head nominal may be omitted, treating object relative clauses, dative relative clauses, different types of locative relative clauses and comitative relative clauses in turn.

An object relative clause, like in (506) may or may not contain a representative head nominal, i.e. the representative head nominal may simply be omitted.

A dative phrase is optionally introduced by the locative preposition *ĩ*, as in (509a), and requires the dative postposition *lā*. When the representative head nominal in a relative clause is the argument of a dative phrase, it can be omitted so that the dative phrase is stranded (509b). In this case, the locative marker *ĩ* is usually omitted as well, so that the dative postposition *lā* is left alone (509b). It is not possible to omit the whole dative phrase.

- (509) a. *mbē* *nō* [wù kà dzyě b-ś (ĩ) *bó*
 CL2.people SUBORD CL1 P3 cook(a).IPFV CL2-REL (LOC) CL2.LOC
 lā], *bś* kà *fān*
 DAT CL2 P3 be_rich(a)
 ◊‘The people for whom she used to cook were rich.’
- b. *mbē* *nō* [wù kà dzyě b-ś *lā*], *bś* kà
 CL2.people SUBORD CL1 P3 cook(a).IPFV CL2-REL DAT CL2 P3
 fān
 be_rich(a)
 ◊‘The people for whom she used to cook were rich.’

There are two different kinds of locative relative clauses: those which contain a locative postposition and which describes location in relation to a certain object or location and those which do not contain a locative postposition and which describe location at a certain place rather than in relation to an object or location.

In a locative relative clause of the former type, the object of the locative phrase may be omitted, as indicated by the parentheses in (510). In this case, the locative phrase is stranded. The use of the locative preposition *ĩ* (omitted in (510)) in this type of locative phrase is, as always, optional, so that the respective locative postposition may get stranded either together with the locative preposition or on its own, as in (510). The resumptive pronoun can also be replaced by the locative pro-form *tʃín* ‘there’.

- (510) kpē w-ɔ̌ nō [bɔ̌ ʃɔ̌ dʒī kwō ʃī w-ɔ̌
 CL3.pot CL3-DET SUBORD CL2 P1 put(a) enter(c) go_down(a) CL3-REL
 dɔ̌ w-ɔ̌ (wũ) mī], wū ʃɔ̌ ɡǎ ǎ mòmò
 CL3a.beans CL3a-DET CL3 in CL3 P1 be_big(b) ADVLZ very

◊‘The pot into which they put the beans was very big.’

Unlike the type of locative relative clause exemplified by (510), locative relative clauses which do not contain a locative postposition and which describe location at a certain place rather than in relation to an object or location, henceforth referred to as absolute locative relative clauses, never contain a representative nominal. They are unique in this regard. Absolute locative relative clauses always take the semantically bleached noun *dē* ‘place’ as their head nominal and their postverbal relativizer *ʃɔ̌* shows locative agreement (511).⁶

- (511) ká à wōŋ mē, ká m̄ = mū, mī n = tsò
 COND 2SG squish(a) finish(a) COND 1SG = drink(b) 1SG 1SG = show(a)
dē nō [wān w-ā kə ʃī f-ɔ̌]
 CL9/10.place SUBORD CL1.child CL1-2SG.POSS P3 pass(b) LOC-REL

‘After you have finished squishing [the small berries], after I have drunk [the juice], I will show [you] where your child has gone.’

Finally, in a comitative relative clause, the representative nominal can be omitted only if the comitative marker *ā*,⁷ is also absent, as shown by the parentheses in (512) (see (516) for an example of a comitative relative clause in which the comitative phrase is not omitted).

- (512) sìŋ nō [wù ʃɔ̌ tǎn y-ɔ̌ sò y-ɔ̌ (ā yì)]
 CL9.knife SUBORD CL1 P1 cut(b) CL9-REL CL9.meat CL9-DET COM CL9
 kɔ̌
 be_sharp(b)

◊‘The knife that she cut the meat [with] was sharp.’

The way in which representative nominals may be omitted in relative clauses has strong parallels in the possibility to omit pronouns in main clauses. Thus, for example, the subject, which cannot be omitted in a relative clause, is also the only obligatory argument in a main clause. Also stranding of locative phrases is possible in main clauses as well as in relative clauses. Alternatively, in both, the locative phrase can be omitted entirely. Concerning absolute locatives, the non-existence of locative pronouns may account for the absence

⁶It is likely that *ʃɔ̌* is a remnant of Proto-Bantu locative class 16, which encodes location

⁷Although the marker has instrumental semantics in (512), I refer to this marker as comitative because this is its main semantic function.

of representative head nominals in absolute locative relative clauses. Finally, in a main clause, just like in a relative clause, a comitative phrase cannot be stranded. The comitative argument may only be omitted if the comitative marker is also omitted.

12.4 Accessibility to relativization

Another typologically relevant factor in relative clause structure concerns the permissible grammatical functions of the head nominal within the relative clause (Andrews 2007: 207). In Mundabli, there is no restriction on the grammatical relation of the representative nominal within the relative clause. The representative nominal within a relative clause may be the subject, the object, the dative argument or the comitative argument of the relative clause, it may be the argument of a locative phrase or the possessor in a genitive phrase (see (513), (514) which repeats (506), (515), (516), (517) and (518), respectively).

- (513) m̀̀ [ẁ̀ k̀̀ dzé w-̄ d̄́ú gbà̀m
CL1.man CL1 P3 say(b).IPFV CL1-REL CL3a.word CL7/8.god
tō k-́ nḡ] k̀̀ dī p̄́ p̄́t̄ kȳ
CL7/8.day CL7-DEM.DIST upon P3 be(b) Pa P. K.

‘The person who was preaching on that day was Pa Peter Kia.’

- (514) d̄́ú n̄ [b̄ k̀ l̄ kp̄ y-̄ (yì) tō
CL9.goat SUBORD IMPERS P3 make(a) die(b) CL9-REL CL9 CL7/8.day
b-́ nḡ] k̀̀ b̄n áná b̄b̄b̄b̄b̄
CL8-DET upon P3 be_white(b) like_that IDEO.white

◊‘The goat which was killed on that day was completely white.’ (repeated from example (506))

- (515) w̄̀ w-̄ n̄ [m=f̄ f̄ w-̄ kp̄
CL1.child CL1-DET SUBORD 1SG=P1 give(b) CL1-REL CL3/7a.money
í w̄ l̄] k̀̀ t̄f̄ á k̀̀-̀k̀̀
LOC CL1.LOC DAT return(c) come(b) ADVLZ CL9.hand~RED

◊‘The child who I gave the money to came back with empty hands.’

- (516) ṅk̀̀m n̄ [ntí f̄ l̄ w-̄ ā w̄] kw̄
CL1/2.hoe SUBORD N. P1 go_to_bush(a) CL1-REL COM CL1 break(a)
f̄
pass(b)

◊‘The hoe which Ntie went to the farm with broke.’

- (517) kpē w-ɔ̌ nō [bɔ̌ ʃɔ̌ dʒī kwō ʃī w-ɔ̌
 CL3.pot CL3-DET SUBORD CL2 P1 put(a) enter(c) go_down(a) CL3-REL
 dɔ̌ w-ɔ̌ mɪ], wū ʃɔ̌ ǎ ǎ mòmò
 CL3a.beans CL3a-DET in CL3 P1 be_big(b) ADVLZ very

◊‘The pot which they put the beans into was very big.’

- (518) wān nō [mán mǔ ɔ̌ w-ɔ̌ ngàʃǎ]
 CL1.child SUBORD CL19/18.name CL18;3SG.POSS be(b) CL1-REL N.
 ʃɔ̌ lə nū
 P1 go_to_bush(a) CL3/7a.farm

◊‘The child whose name is Ngasha went to the farm.’

In Mundabli, it is impossible to form a relative clause with a head noun that plays no obvious grammatical role within the relative clause.⁸

12.5 Asymmetries between main and relative clause properties

Relative clauses and main clauses in African languages commonly differ regarding their inflectional or focus marking possibilities. Typically, fewer possibilities are available in relative clauses as compared to main clauses (Hyman and Watters 1984).

In Mundabli, inflectional possibilities are nearly the same in both main and relative clauses. All temporal and aspectual distinctions exist in main and relative clauses. However, while segmental tense markers are identical in main and relative clauses, tonal inflections in relative clauses differ from tonal inflections in main clauses. Focus marking is expressed in the same way in main and relative clauses, and interrogative relative clauses are also possible; these have basically the same structure as interrogative main clauses. Only the way in which negation is marked differs considerably between main and relative clauses. The remainder of this section treats all these aspects in turn.

Mundabli has no restrictions on the occurrence of temporal or aspectual distinctions in relative clauses. Tense is marked by preverbal particles and specific tone patterns on the verb, both in main and relative clauses. All tenses can occur in main clauses and in relative clauses, and the aspectual perfective/imperfective distinction marked by ablaut and specific verb tone patterns, also exists in both. However, while segmental tense markers are identical in main and relative clauses, tonal inflection in relative clauses differs partly from tonal inflection in main clauses. Table 12.2 compares tonal inflection in perfective verbs across tenses in main and relative clauses. While the overall

⁸This is worth mentioning because it is possible in the related language Mungbam; for details see Lovegren and Voll (2017).

structure of tonal inflections is the same in main and relative clauses, the actual tone patterns may differ. Imperfective verbs show the same tone patterns, namely mid for Class A verbs and high for Class B and Class C verbs.

tense	tense marker	main clause			relative clause		
		A	B	C	A	B	C
P0		L	S	H	M	S	HM
P1	fǔ	L	S	H	M	S	HM
P2	à~nà	L	LH	H	LH	M	H
P3	kə	LH	M	H	LH	M	H
F1	dí	H	H	H	H	H	H(/HM) ⁹
F2	ká	H	H	H	H	H	H

Table 12.2: Segmental tense markers and tone patterns of non-final perfective verbs of verb tone classes A, B and C in all tenses (P0-P3 and F1-F2) in main and relative clauses

The word order of the relative clause is the same as that of a main clause, and even focus-induced word order changes are possible. Focus marking is basically the same in main and relative clauses. In order to be focused, the subject of a main clause can occur in IAV position (cf. §14.2.3). The same happens in relative clauses, as can be seen in (519) and (520) which are opposed to a relative clause with an unmarked word order in (521). In (519), the representative nominal is in focus; in (520), a nominal other than the representative nominal is in focus. Note that the post-verbal relativizer precedes the focused subject.

- (519) bī tsè mə nō [fǔ gyā w-ə wù dʒǔ
 1_{PL} search(a) CL1.man SUBORD P1 steal(a) CL1-REL CL1 CL9.goat
 y-ə]
 CL9-DET

◊‘We look for the man that [he] stole the goat.’

- (520) í=kəŋ sē k-ə (nō) [tǎŋ k-ə nùŋfù
 1_{SG}=love(a) CL7/8.clothes CL7-DET SUBORD buy(b) CL7-REL N.
 (kí)]
 CL7

◊‘I like the clothes that Nyungfu bought.’

⁹The tone of a Class C noun in F1 depends on the form of the tense marker. More research is needed to determine which contexts the form of the tense marker varies in.

- (521) ń=kòŋ s̄ k-ó (nō) [nùŋfù tǎŋ k-ó
 1SG=love(a) CL7/8.clothes CL7-DET SUBORD N. buy(b) CL7-REL
 (kǐ)]
 CL7

◊‘I like the clothes that Nyungfu bought.’

Main clauses with subject focus, i.e. with the subject in IAV position, contain a tonal dummy subject which consists of a low tone and occupies the canonical subject position before the verb complex (cf. §6.2 on the dummy subject and §14.2.3 on main clauses with subject focus). The dummy subject causes a subsequent superhigh tone to be realized as a low-high rising tone. In any other context, it has no perceivable effect. Unlike main clauses with subject focus, relative clauses with subject focus, i.e. with the subject in IAV position, do not contain a dummy subject. Therefore, the P1 marker **fǎ** in (519) and the verb **tǎŋ** ‘buy’ in (520) are realized with a superhigh rather than a low-high rising tone, like in the equivalent main clauses in (522) and (523). Defocalization, i.e. movement of canonically post-verbal constituents to immediate before verb (IBV) position¹⁰ (see §14.2.2.2 for details), is not attested in relative clauses.

- (522) fǎ gyà wù dǔ y-ō
 DS.P1 steal(a) CL1 CL9.goat CL9-DET

◊‘He stole the goat.’

- (523) tǎŋ nùŋfù (kǐ)
 DS.buy(b) N. CL7

◊‘Nyungfu bought it.’

Verum focus (cf. §14.4.2) can also be expressed in relative clauses, as in (524). However, this is not very common. Just like in a main clause, truth focus is marked by the particle **tǎ**, which occurs at the beginning of the verbal complex.

- (524) f-án dǐ m̄ [nō wù tǎ kè tǔ w-ō]
 PROX-here be(b) CL1.man SUBORD CL1 VER.FOC P3 come(b) CL1-REL

◊‘Here is the man who did come.’

Interrogative relative clauses are attested as well. Apart from the presence of a relativizer which follows the relative verb, the same construction is used to express content questions in main clauses, as in (525), and relative clauses, as in (526) (cf. §15.1.2 for more on interrogatives).

¹⁰For an explanation of this term, see first footnote in Chapter 14.

- (525) a. mò nō [wù yǐŋ w-ṽ gbṽ ndé] kpǐ
 CL1.man SUBORD CL1 build(c) CL1-REL CL3.house who die(b)
 ◊‘The man who built whose house died?’
 b. wù yǐŋ gbṽ ndé
 CL1 build(c) CL3.house who
 ◊‘Whose house did he build?’
- (526) a. y-én dĩ sǐŋ nō [bē fǎ tǎn y-ṽ mǎn
 CL9-this be(b) CL9.knife SUBORD IMPERS P1 cut(b) CL9-REL what
 ā yì]
 COM CL9
 ◊‘This is the knife that they cut what with?’
 b. bē fǎ tǎn mǎn ā yì
 IMPERS P1 cut(b) what COM CL9
 ◊‘What was cut with it?’

While main and relative clauses are nearly identical regarding tense, aspect and focus marking, the two differ with regard to negation. The regular negation strategy (see §8.5.3), which employs the circumfixal negative marker *ā ... wṽ*, as employed in (527), is not attested in relative clauses. However, there is one exception to this generalization, namely when the head of a relative clause belongs to Class 1. See below for details.

- (527) bī ā wǐ wṽ jṽ nǐ
 CL8 NEG hear(b).IPFV NEG CL8.talk CL1.mother.3SG.POSS

‘They are not listening to their mother’s advice.’¹¹

Rather than a negated main verb, negated relative clauses contain a positive copula verb followed by the post-verbal relativizer. Negation is instead expressed within an adverbial phrase containing a non-finite negative verb which is introduced by the adverbializer *ǎ* and followed by the post-verbal negative marker *wṽ*, as in (528a). Example (528b) shows the ungrammaticality of the regular negation strategy in a comparable but ungrammatical construction.

- (528) a. jwám nō bǐ dĩ b-ṽ ǎ gǎn wṽ
 CL2.children SUBORD CL2 be(b) CL2-REL ADVLZ go(a) NEG
 skûl, bǐ lǎe mǎn
 CL1/2.school CL2 do(a).IPFV what

◊‘The children who do not go to school, what are they doing?’

¹¹The Class 8 pronoun can be used in a pejorative manner to refer to human beings, equating them with inanimate things.

- b. *ɲwám nō bǝ ā gàn (b-ɔ) wɔ skûl,
 CL2.children SUBORD CL2 NEG go(a) (CL2-REL) NEG CL1/2.school
 bǝ lǎ mǎn
 CL2 do(a).IPFV what

intended: ◊‘The children who do not go to school, what are they doing?’

However, there is one exception to the absence of the unmarked negation construction in relative clauses, i.e. there is one case in which the unmarked negation construction with the circumfixal marker *ā ... wɔ* is attested in a relative clause. This is when the head nominal of the relative clause belongs to Class 1, as in (529). In this case, it is possible to use the regular negation strategy. As usual, the relative clause is optionally introduced by the subordinator *nō*. The main verb of the relative clause is preceded by the preverbal negative marker *ā*, and followed by *wɔ*, a word which could be interpreted either as a post-verbal Class 1 relative marker or as a post-verbal negation marker. The two are identical in shape, and in this special context, a single form seems to fulfil both functions.

- (529) wǎn nō mǎn mú ā dǝ wɔ
 CL1.child SUBORD CL18.name CL18;3SG.POSS NEG be(b) CL1-REL;NEG
 ɲùŋfù dǝ gbǝ
 N. be(b) house.LOC

◊‘The child whose name is not Nyungfu is at home.’

Another example of a negative relative clause with a Class 1 head noun which contains a regular negation construction is (530).

- (530) kpé nō wù fǎ nàm wɔ dǎ yí wɔ
 CL1.woman SUBORD CL1 P1.NEG work(a) NEG F1;NEG eat(b) NEG
 ɲām
 CL8a.fufu

◊‘The woman who did not work will not eat fufu.’

Negative relative clauses with a Class 1 head nominal can alternatively be formed by employing the unmarked relative clause negation strategy; cf. (531) and (532).

- (531) wǎn nō mǎn mú dǝ w-ɔ ǎ
 CL1.child SUBORD CL18.name CL18;3SG.POSS be(b) CL1-REL ADVLZ
 nìm wɔ ɲùŋfù dǝ gbǝ
 be_situated(a) NEG N. be(b) house.LOC

◊‘The child whose name is not Nyungfu is at home.’

- (532) kpé nō wù fǎ dĩ w-ṽ ǎ nàm wṽ dĩ
 CL1.woman SUBORD CL1 P1 be(b) CL1-REL ADVLZ work(a) NEG F1;NEG
 yí wṽ jām
 eat(b) NEG CL8b.fufu

◊‘The woman who did not work will not eat fufu.’

A construction similar to the one employed in negated relative clauses is used in main clauses to imply that an action or event has not yet taken place, as in (533) (cf. §8.5.3.4). In this case, the content verb is introduced by dĩ. This most likely represents a merger of the copula verb dĩ and the adverbializer ǎ, rendering a construction comparable to the one attested in negative relative clauses.

- (533) n = dĩ jǎm wṽ jām
 1SG = be(b).ADVLZ stir(b) NEG CL8b.fufu

◊‘I have not stirred fufu yet.’

The most probable reason for the near lack of true negative relative clauses is the fact that the post-verbal negation marker and the post-verbal relative marker compete for the same slot. The fact that the only exception to this rule, i.e. the only case of a true negative relative clause (using the regular negation strategy), are relative clauses headed by Class 1 head nominals, seems to confirm this. When the head nominal belongs to Class 1, the agreeing relative marker wṽ is identical in shape with the post-verbal negative marker wṽ. While it is still not possible for the two to co-occur, the construction employs a single post-verbal form wṽ which simply fulfils both (completely unrelated) functions. This is an interesting phenomenon and I am not aware of any other case in which a single word fulfils the function of two formally identical but semantically unrelated items simultaneously.