

Competing motivations in diachronic perspective: the case of doubly-marked relative clauses

Rachel Hendery, Australian National University

Antoinette Schapper, Leiden University

In this poster we show several ways in which “competing motivations” can play out diachronically, by illustrating these with case studies involving relative clauses. There is a type of relative clause in which more than one relative clause marker/relative pronoun is present, which we will refer to as “doubly-marked relative clauses”. These go beyond the double-marking described in most typologies of the relative clause, which restrict themselves to combinations of relative marker and resumptive pronoun, or relative pronoun and correlative pronoun (c.f. e.g. Keenan & Comrie 1977; Lehmann 1986; Andrews 2008, among others). We therefore first provide a typology of doubly-marked relative clauses.

Some examples of types of doubly-marked RCs include the following:

- co-occurrence of a clause-initial free morpheme (often an interrogative pronoun) with a verb affix, as in Basque (Lafitte 1962:408) and some Celtic languages (Ziegler 1993);
- the co-occurrence of an interrogative-based and a demonstrative-based relative clause marker, as in Middle English (Allen 1980), Prince Edward Island Acadian French *which que* (King 1991) or sometimes even fusing together, as in Tocharian (Pedersen 1949:113, 121);
- bracketing of the clause with a demonstrative at each end, as in some of the Oceanic languages of the Huon Gulf (Bradshaw 2009).

In many of these cases, the influence of language contact can be seen on the construction, with one of the two markers being an earlier feature of the RC, and the other a loanword, calque or otherwise influenced by another language of the region.

We then discuss how the concept of competing motivations can inform our understanding of these doubly-marked relative clause constructions. This is the case on several levels. First, drawing on the idea of processing-related constraints on relative clauses (given certain combinations of word order and clause order), as proposed by Hawkins (1990, 2004), we argue that there are at least three ways for a language to resolve such processing problems. A language can lose the problematic construction entirely (i.e. it can be out-competed by less problematic ones); it can be repaired by a change in word order or clause order; or new material can be added to simplify processing. It will be argued that in particular the “bracketing” type of relative clause is often a result of this latter solution. The development of other types of double marking may also be motivated by such processing constraints, however. Relative clause markers perform multiple functions—clause-boundary marking, referentiality, and case-marking—all of which aid processing, yet in some languages a single item that can fulfil all three functions may not be available. Another tension in such a case is therefore the conflict between the processing ease of a clause that contains all three of these elements (clause boundary marker, reference to head NP, case-marking of the “gap” in the RC) and the iconicity that is achieved by having only one unique, single-function marker. We will argue that a given language's choice between these two preferences (processing ease; iconicity) is not limited to the relative clause construction but is found in other constructions in the language too, and can therefore be analysed as a typological parameter, perhaps as a “ranking” of constraints in an Optimality Theory sense.

Moreover, in the case of those doubly-marked constructions that result from language contact, competing motivations can be seen to be at work on a sociolinguistic level. Multilingual speakers face a choice between maximising information by explicitly marking and distinguishing all categories they use in both languages and conforming to norms of the standard languages (where such norms exist). We argue that it is the sociolinguistic context that determines the outcome in these cases. Sometimes, in fact, a compromise between these competing motivations is reached: adaptation of the standard construction to maximise information without direct adoption of a loanword or calque.

References

- Allen, Cynthia. 1980. *Topics in diachronic English syntax*. New York: Garland.
- Andrews, Avery. 2008. Relative clauses. In T. Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, vol 2. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition.
- Bradshaw, 2009. Relative-clause bracketing in Oceanic languages around the Huon Gulf of New Guinea. In A. Adelaar and A. Pawley (eds.), *Austronesian Historical Linguistics and Culture History: A Festschrift for Robert Blust*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Hawkins, J. 1990. Seeking motives for change in typological variation. In W. Croft, K. Denning and S. Kemmer (eds.), *Studies in Typology and Diachrony: Papers presented to Joseph H. Greenberg on his 75th birthday*, 95-128. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Hawkins, J. 2004. *Efficiency and complexity in grammars*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keenan, E. & B. Comrie. 1977. Noun phrase accessibility and universal grammar. *Linguistic Inquiry*. 8:1.
- King, Ruth. 1991. WH-words, WH-questions and Relative Clauses in Prince Edward Island Acadian French, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics/Revue canadienne de linguistique* 36:65- 85.
- Lafitte, P. 1962. *Grammaire basque (navarro-labourdin litteraire)*. Bayonne: Editions des 'Amis du musée basque' et 'Ikas'.
- Lehmann, C. 1986. On the typology of relative clauses. *Linguistics* 24:663-681.
- Pedersen, H. 1949. *Tocharisch: Vom Gesichtspunkt der Indoeuropäischen Sprachvergleichung*. Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard.
- Ziegler, S. 1993. Zur Entwicklung der Relativsätze mit dem Relativpronomen *io- in den keltischen Sprachen. *Munchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 54:251-270.