ABSTRACTS
12th Biennial Rice University Symposium on Language

The Genesis of Syntactic Complexity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium
Poster Session

March 28, 2008

Poster session: Development of complex linguistic structures

Here's a structure that's not so simple: Revisiting the acquisition of relative clause constructions

Cecily Jill Duffield (University of Colorado at Boulder)

The constructional approach to language acquisition taken by Diessel and Tomasello (Diessel, 2007; Diessel and Tomasello, 2000; Diessel and Tomasello, 2005; Tomasello, 2003) states that children acquire syntax starting with simple item-based structures. Children then build up more complex constructions incrementally by relating them to structures previously learned, relying heavily on semantic and pragmatic mappings. Regarding relative clauses, they argue that children first produce syntactic blends or "amalgams" and then acquire regular "presentational" relative constructions (PRCs) consisting of a copular clause and a relative clause that is usually intransitive (see examples). Other relative clause types are acquired later (Figure 1). I examined copular relative constructions culled from the same data set used in Diessel & Tomasello's longitudinal study (Diessel and Tomasello, 2000; Suppes, 1974) and find no evidence for incremental development from syntactic blends to regular PRCs. First, it may not be plausible to relate children's syntactic blends analyzed as amalgams (Lambrecht, 1988) and "presentational" object-gap relatives on a single structural complexity continuum, because object-gap relatives feature NNV rather than NV(N) syntax (Figure 2). Second, within the subset of regular PRCs, both intransitive and transitive relative clauses and subject-gap and object-gap relative clauses appear at around the same time in development, with no evidence of incremental development. Finally, the "presentational" relative constructions in question do not map to a single presentational function: many tokens feature postverbal NPs that are not new (Prince, 1981). The data support Diessel & Tomasello's claim that children's earliest relative clause structures are copular relative constructions with a deictic subject and post-verbal NP followed by a relative clause, but provide no evidence that this is a single construction derived from presentational amalgams. Further research will explore whether early copular relative clauses are a network of related constructions derived from a variety of children's earlier forms.

Examples:
Figures omitted; please see poster.
Syntactic Blends ("amalgams"):

- That's doggy turn around . (Nina, 1;11)

- This is my doggy cries . (Nina, 2;0)

- That's him been in my house . (Nina, 2;1)

- That's a [/] # that's a turtle swim . (Nina, 2;2)

- Here's a mouse go sleep . (Nina, 2;3)

Regular copular relative constructions ("regular PRCs")

- That's Cambridge where Nonna lives. (Nina, 2;10)

- Here's his box that he's gonna go in. (Nina, 3;0)

- This is the one that's walking on his head. (Nina, 3;0)

- This is Mel that's gonna take that little boys to that little boys (Nina, 3;1)

- And there's the penguins that we saw. (Nina, 3;2)

Relative clauses in Isthmus Zapotec
Maritza Elena Enríquez Licón (El Colegio de México)

Relativization in Isthmus Zapotec has been described by Pickett et al. (1998), at least its most clear mechanism: the use of a relativizer *ni*. However, not all clauses used to relativize show this element. The language shows at least two other mechanisms for this purpose: juxtaposition and the use of a demonstrative pronoun. Beside this, some of the relativized clauses show a determinant used for nouns, which make me think they are being nominalized.

In recent work about syntactic complexity (Givon, Mithun, Estrada, etc) it is noted that most languages will have available the juxtaposition mechanism for relativizing, no matter if the language already has a relativizer; it also has been noted that some languages change the use of a demonstrative pronoun to relativizer; showing different in-between stages, and one of the defining factors to find out the stage of the construction, Givon claimes, are intonation contours.

The questions I will try to answer in this work are:

1. Regarding the determinant marker used in some relative clauses, could it be a sign that relative clauses are starting to nominalize, or they used to nominalize? Why don't all relative clauses show this determinant?

2. What is the difference between a relative clause showing a relativizer and a relative clause that does not show this element? In which environments does each one of them appear?

3. What is the true meaning of sentences showing a demonstrative pronoun? We know that in Isthmus Zapotec, even though there is a copula, this element is often not used; this opens the question of whether clauses that show a demonstrative prononoun are really relative clauses or other type of clauses, like coordinate sentences of the type: 'Juan is my friend (and) he is a poet'?

Examples

Juxtaposition and use of a noun determinant:

(1)   *ombre [[b-ia7   xwan] ka]   z-eeda-be   zito*
       man   COMPL-see Juan   DET COMPL-come-3SGH far.away
      'The man that John saw came from far away.'

Ni relativizer:

(2)   *tigre ga   [ni [bi-ti-me   lobo ka]]   z-ee-me   ndani gishi ga*
       tiger DET REL COMPL-kill-3SGAN wolf 3SGAN COMPL-go-3SGH inside woods DET
      'The tiger that killed the wolf went into the woods.'

With a demonstrative pronoun:

(3)   *xuan sh-amigu   nga poeta laabe*
       Juan   POS-friend DEM poet   3SGH
      'Juan, who is my friend, is a poet.'

Abbreviations: 3= Third person, an = animal, COMPL = Completive, DET= determinant, DEM=Demostrative, H = Human, POS = Possessive, Rel = Relativizer, SG= Singular, 7 = glottal stop.

Grammaticalization paths of auxiliary verb constructions: Iatmul & Yimas
Danielle Mathieu-Reeves (University of Oregon)

Auxiliary verb constructions (AVCs) can be viewed as intermediate on the scale from lexical to grammatical. Due to differing source constructions, languages develop AVC patterns of different types. This is exemplified through Yimas and Iatmul, two neighboring languages of Papua, that yield different types of AVCs due to differing source constructions. It is argued that in Iatmul AVCs develop from medial dependent verb constructions (MDVCs), and

from serial verb constructions (SVCs) in Yimas. Anderson (2006) classifies AVCs as Aux-Headed, Lex-Headed, Doubled, Split and Split-Doubled constructions. Additionally, AVC constructions differ in the order of AUX and V, and degree of AUX and V fusion.

In Iatmul (Ndu) the MDVCs result in an Aux-Headed, V-Aux structure:

(4) klə-kə   li-kə-win
     get-DEP   stay-PRES-1SG
     'I am getting it' (Foley 1986:144)

Because of Yimas' (Pondo) particular morphological complexity in SVCs, AVCs have grammaticalized in a variety of forms, unusual in the typology of AVCs. Below *tal* 'hold' used lexically in an SVC:

(5) pu-kl-cra-awl-tal-kaprapi-k
     3PL.O-3PC.A-about-get-hold-gather-IRR
     'Those few grabbed them while collecting them' (Foley 1991:323)

In (6) *tal* has grammaticalized to a causative auxiliary in this Aux-V, split pattern (S/O vs. TAM).

(6) na-ka-tal-kwalcac-t
     3SG.O-1SG.A-hold-rise-PERF
     'I woke him up' (Foley 1991:333)

In (7), *timi* 'say' has grammaticalized into a causative auxiliary, but the AVC is Aux-Headed (all morphological marking on the auxiliary).

(7) na-ka-timi-wapal
     3SG.U-1SG.A-say-climb
     "I caused him to climb up' (Foley 1986:153)

Finally, (8) is an example of a S/O v. TAM split, but the AVC is V-Aux where *tay* 'see' codes conative modality:

(8) na-mpi-kwalca-tay-ntut
     3SG.U-3DL.A-arise-see-RM.PST
     'They both tried to wake him up.' (Foley 1986:152)

This paper presents AVCs of the patterns above (and others) and a typology of the synchronic systems and diachronic developments of complex predicates in these two Lower Sepik-Ramu languages.

Northern Vietnamese motion verbs and SVCs: complexity in semantic typology
Cassandra Pace (Rice University)

Motion verbs, as described by Talmy (1985), can express motion in terms of Manner, or in terms of Path. In his prototypical example, he contrasts English and Spanish descriptions of a bottle floating into a cave.

(9) La   botella entro   a   la   cueva (flotando)
     the bottle moved-in to the cave (floating)
     English: 'The bottle *floated* into the cave.'

English is defined as satellite-framed, because the motion "into" from the above example is achieved through a satellite to the verb "floated." Spanish would be considered verb-framed, because it expresses the motion of moving into with the verb "entro."

It would be expected that eliciting this sentence in Northern Vietnamese would indicate whether NV is verb-framed or satellite-framed. However, the categorization is far from straightforward.

(10) Cái chai trôi   vào   trong động.
      CL   bottle to.float to.enter/into in   cave
      'The bottle floated into the cave.'

The complication arises from the fact that *vào* can be translated as either "to enter" or "into." Thus, this elicitation is ambiguous in whether *trôi vào* is functioning as a serial verb construction (with both Manner of Motion and Path of Motion verbs), or *vào trong* is a series of prepositions.

Vào is not unique in its ambiguity regarding verb/preposition status - Vietnamese contains many words that can either be interpreted as verbs or prepositions. This work-in-progress investigates the syntactic characteristics of these words in conjunction with Vietnamese Manner of Motion verbs. Current interpretations of Vietnamese SVCs are discussed both with and without regard to the verb/preposition word group. Finally, verb/preposition ambiguity is considered in other languages with SVC constructions.

South Siberian Turkic constructions with nominalizers and their further grammaticalization
Elena Skribnik (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)

Nominalizers (NR) are auxiliary nouns used in clausal nominalizations, the most frequent being 'man/person', 'thing', 'place', and 'event/business' (i.e. both action and participant NRs). They are grammaticalized on the base of participial relative clauses from head nouns of an abstract semantic nature or indefinite pronouns as heads. There are four nominalizing techniques registered in languages of Western and Central Siberia (non-finite verbal forms; nominalizers; nominalizing suffixes with other verbal forms; combinations of question and demonstrative pronouns). The NR technique is predominant in the Ob-Ugric languages Khanty and Mansi and in the South Samoyed Selkup, is rather peripheral in the North Samoyed languages Nenets, Enets and Nganasan, and is the second of the two leading techniques in Siberian Turkic languages and in Mongolic Buryat, the other one being non-finite verbal forms (action nouns or participles). The further grammaticalization of NRs can lead to to modal words, discourse particles or derivational suffixes, depending heavily on areal contacts. I will concentrate on NRs in South Siberian Turkic languages (Tuvan, Altai-kiži, Khakas, Tofa, Shor) with some Uralic and Mongolic parallels.

South Siberian Turkic languages use NRs *kiži* 'man', *čer* 'place', and 'things' of pronominal origin (Altai-kiži *neme* 'thing' < *neme* 'what', Tuvan *čüve* 'thing' < *čüü* 'what', Khakas *nime* 'thing' < *nime* 'what'), see (11–13); *kerek* 'thing-to-do, business' can be used as a reference element to events (14) and also as a NR (15); but usually participles are used for action nominalizations. NRs are a characteristic feature of this area: Turkic languages spoken elsewhere do not use them. NR function of the word kerek is also a local feature, influenced by Mongolic languages: all Turkic languages, including Siberian, know *kerek* (in different phonetic variations) as a necessitive modal word (16).

The further grammaticalization paths of NRs differ in Siberian languages according to the secondary pragmatic uses of nominalizer constructions (NC): In Ob-Ugrian and Southern Samoyed languages, they are used almost exclusively for naming purposes (descriptions, taboo, semantic loans); "constructional names" become nouns, NRs themselves develop into derivational affixes; Mansi: *tēnut* 'food' < *tē=ne ut* 'thing to eat'; Selkup: *ap-sodimi* 'food' < *ap=sodi mi* 'thing to eat'. Similar phenomenon exists in South Siberian Turkic languages with the Uralic substrate (e.g. Tofa: *tïn=ar čüme* 'air' < 'thing to breathe'), but not in Turkic languages in general. The nouns with the common Turkic derivational affix *=čI* (nomen agentis) are, in addition, often accompanied by a NR *kiži* (Shor: *aŋ=čï kiži* 'hunter', Tuvan: *dayïn=čï kiži* 'warrior').

In Mongolic and Turkic languages, event NRs are used in constructions with modal semantics after the scheme 'It is (not) a business for you to do' > 'You must (not) do it', so they demonstrate development into modal words (16). In Mongolic languages, NCs are used as predicate nominals for purposes of information structuring (after the scheme 'I did it' > 'I am the person who did it'), which leads to grammaticalization of their NRs as predicative (assertive or evidential) particles. Similar development is demonstrated in the South Siberian Turkic languages contacting with Mongolic (Tuvan (17), and, to a lesser extent, Altai-kiži and Khakas).

Examples:
Altai-kiži:

(11) *ol   aɣaš=tiŋ   d'anïnda tur=ɣan   kiži   bis=ke   boluž=ar*
      this   tree=Gen   by   stand=Prt NR:person   we=Dat   help=Fut:3sg

      'This person who stands by the tree will help us'

(12) *Bil=er   neme=ni   qïsqan=baj   ajd=atan=ï=Ø   d'aqšï*
      know=Prt   NR:thing=Acc hide=Conv.Neg tell=Prt=Poss3sg=Nom good

      'It is good that he tells what he knows, concealing nothing'

Tuvan:

(13) *Kiži=ler*   *qïl=ïp*   *tur=ar*   *čüve=ni*   *kiži*   *čop*   *qïl=ïp*   *šïda=vas*   *dep*
man=Pl   do=Conv   Aux:PrtFut   Nr:thing=Acc   man   why   do=Conv   can=PrtFutNeg   Quot

'Why can't I (lit.: person) do what (other) people are doing?'

Altai-kiži:

(14) *Seniŋ*   *kereg=iŋ*   *d'ok!*
you:Gen   business=Poss2sg   Neg

'(This is) not your business!'

(15) *Gazet=ke*   *biči=gedij*   *kerek=ter*   *bol=bo=gon*   *edi*
newspaper=Dat   write=PrtPoss   business=Pl   be=Neg=Past   Ptl

'There was nothing to write in a newspaper about' (lit. writable events were not)

(16) *Sler=γe*   *albadan=ar*   *kerek*
you:pl=Dat   try:hard=PrtFut   business

'You must try hard'

Tuvan:

(17) *Čoq,*   *kiži-daa*   *al=baan*   *kiži*   *čüve*
no   man-Ptl   take=Neg:PrtPast   man   thing

'No, he did not even marry' (kiži al= lit. 'take a person' = 'marry')

In this example *čüve* 'thing' accompanies another NR *kiži* 'man', serving actually as an assertive particle (compare Mong. assertive particle *yüm* < *yüüme* 'thing' < *yüümen* 'what').