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**Abstract:**

## **When discourse elements become relativisation markers**

Most of the literature that deals with sources of relative clause constructions tends to centre on the grammaticalization of interrogatives and demonstratives as relative clause markers. Other sources of these markers sometimes mentioned in the literature include possessive markers (Yap *et al* 2004), classifiers (Shi & Li 2002) and nominal elements (DeLancey 1986, Givón 1991). But, although the development of relative clause markers *into* focus markers is a relatively well known phenomenon (see e.g. Harris & Campbell 1995), to my knowledge there has been little or no discussion in the literature of discourse elements such as topic markers, focus markers and similar elements as *sources* of relative clause markers.

In this presentation I will explore the similarities in the roles played by discourse elements in the grammaticalization of certain relative clause markers in four unrelated languages (Basque, Tocharian, Quechua and Georgian). For example, the relative marker in Tocharian A is *kusne* or *kucne*, which obligatorily contains the suffixed particle *-ne*, usually translated as “indeed” when used in other contexts (Adams 1988). The cognate relative marker in Tocharian B is simply *kuse/kuce*, so it appears that Tocharian A has grammaticalized as part of its relative clause marker an item otherwise used as a marker of emphasis or focus.

The view that cases such as this and the similar grammaticalizations found in Basque, Quechua and Georgian are examples of a more general phenomenon involving discourse elements finds additional support from the existence of further connections between relativisation and topic/focus that have been noted before in the literature.

I will argue that this grammaticalization “pathway” is a pattern that we might expect to find in other languages too.

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