
Who passed it to whom? Exploring the areality of temporal adverbial clauses

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Traditionally, it has been proposed that rare syntactic patterns have high genetic stability and strong resistance to being borrowed in language contact situations (Nichols 1992: 181). However, it is becoming ever clearer that speakers can transfer rare syntactic patterns from one language to another without actual substance. Unfortunately, our current understanding of this theoretical domain with respect to clause-linkage is still in its infancy.

Many temporal clause-linking patterns (e.g. ‘when’, ‘while’, ‘until’) that are cross-linguistically rare occur in areal clusters, suggesting that language contact has played an important role in their cross-linguistic distribution. The clusters composed of rare features seem to be the result of event-based triggers, that is, historical events that led patterns to spread due to intensive language contact (Bickel 2017). The areality of temporal clause-linking devices is the result of pattern replication. In this scenario, no phonetic substance is involved but rather the transfer of patterns or structural templates (Matras & Sakel 2007).

In this talk, I develop a series of methodological steps for investigating the directionality of spread of various rare temporal clause-linkage patterns: identifying the source and the details of chains of contacts where possible. The steps are based on intra-genealogy variance analyses, systematically informed by what is known from social/cultural history. By intra-genetic variance analyses is meant the analysis of the internal diversity of the families composing the areal clusters. By social-cultural history is meant prehistoric or recent migration patterns and types of bilingualism. This is essential if one wants to estimate historical stability, transition probabilities, and direction of spread of a pattern (Bickel 2008). Special attention is paid to verb-doubling constructions used for indicating ‘while’ in South Asian languages, ‘until’ constructions in Mesoamerican languages spoken in the Huasteca area, and adverb(ials) meaning ‘only’ used for indicating ‘as soon as’ in languages spoken in Mali.

References: Bickel, Balthasar. 2008. A refined sampling procedure for genealogical control. *Language Typology and Universals* 61: 221-233. Bickel, Balthasar. 2017. Areas and universals. In Raymond Hickey (ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of areal linguistics*, 40-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Matras, Yaron & Jeanette Sakel. 2007. Introduction. In Yaron Matras & Jeanette Sakel (eds.), *Grammatical borrowing in cross-linguistic perspective*, 1-14. Berlin/New York: Mouton De Gruyter. Nichols, Johanna. 1992. *Linguistic diversity in space and time*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.