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Citation

Hernáiz, Rodrigo (2019). Causal clauses as source for sentential complementation: Methodological issues. In: 24th International Conference on Historical Linguistics (ICHL), 1-5 Jul 2019, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

URL

https://oro.open.ac.uk/72668/

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Causal clauses as source for sentential complementation: Methodological issues

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In many modern and ancient languages, subordinate markers for dependent clauses expressing causality can also function as — or are formally identical to — elements marking complement clauses. Hebrew *kī*, Hittite *kuit*, Spanish *como,* Twi *se* or Latin *quod* can occur both as causal subordinators and as complementizers:

Spanish

(1) [***Como*** *allí no había nadie*] *cerraron las ventanas* (Causal)
Since nobody was there, they closed the windows

(2) *Escríbele* [***como*** *que ya hemos llegado*] [1] (Compl.)
Write to him (to say) that we have arrived

The same markers usually serve a greater range of functions, including the flagging of other types of adverbial subordination (temporal, final etc.). In some cases, their source can be traced back to demonstratives/relativizers (e.g., Latin *quod*; Hittite *kuit*) or to interrogative pro-forms (Spanish *como*).

Furthermore, it has been argued that a reanalysis of causal clauses can be the source for complement constructions in Akkadian (Deutscher 2002), and the same idea lies behind assumptions about the origin of complementation strategies in other languages, like Hebrew (Zuckermann 2006). The development of complementation from causal clauses is assumed to have occurred in factive complement-taking predicates in which an ambiguous interpretation for causality and sentential complementation can logically arise:

Hebrew

(3) *Ha-neeshám zuka* [***ki*** *hu khaf mi pésha*] (Causal)
The accused was acquitted because he was innocent

(4) *Ha-neeshám taán* [***ki*** *hu khaf mi pésha*] (Compl.)
The accused claimed that he was innocent (Zuckermann 2006)

Nevertheless, the development of complementation from oblique clauses appears problematic for some theories about the rise of subordination strategies (Cristofaro 1998, Heine & Kuteva 2007). Indeed, the nature of the reanalysis outlined above is not yet fully understood, as illustrations for the process are fundamentally taken from periods in which both causal and complement functions of multivalent markers already co-exist in the language under analysis. The diachronic process by which complement clauses might have derived from causal sources is, therefore, largely based on synchronic evidence, and present methodological issues that will be addressed in this paper. This will be illustrated by a diachronic and synchronic analysis of causal subordination in Akkadian, covering different dialects and periods of the language. Accounting for common diachronic sources, alternative paths for the process leading to analogy between causal and complement markers will be discussed.

[1] Non-standard Castilian Spanish

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