
REVIEW OF HENDERY (2012), *RELATIVE CLAUSES IN TIME
AND SPACE: A CASE STUDY IN THE METHODS OF
DIACHRONIC TYPOLOGY*

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1 OVERVIEW

Hendery (2012), a revised version of Hendery (2007), is one of the first attempts at diachronic typology in syntax. The book includes a lengthy but readable and user-friendly introduction discussing the goals and merits of the method used. The book in a sense is an attempt to demonstrate the validity and usefulness of diachronic typology. The relative was chosen as a test case, since it is well studied, both in individual languages and in syntactic theory (p. 7). Indeed, in recent years, there has been a steady stream of studies examining subordination, the rise of which, and in particular various aspects of the relative clause. Many of these studies have been typological, some, particularly those by Givón, with a distinct diachronic angle (Givón 2009, Givón & Shibatani 2009, Heine & Kuteva 2007). One of the reasons for this surge in interest is, I suspect, the idea of recursion, which has been floating around for awhile, initially following Hauser, Chomsky & Fitch (2002); certainly much of Givón's work is presented as a response to Chomsky. Hendery is only peripherally interested in the origins of the relative and much more interested in identifying set paths of change cross-linguistically and what may motivate them (triggers). Her work is in many respects a data-driven elaboration on Heine & Kuteva (2007) and some of their earlier work on Grammaticalization, in which they have identified sources of relative markers, for example.

The book examines a number of specific features in order to identify universal paths of change. Chapter 2 looks into relative markers, where they come from,

where they are going and what may motivate their change. Heine & Kuteva (2002) identified three sources: demonstratives, interrogatives and the word ‘here’ (based on a single doubtful example from Tok Pisin). Hendery, on the other hand, lists a dazzling number of elements which have been co-opted as markers of relative clauses. She additionally examines what may happen to relative clauses in history, i.e., what changes they may go through. The chapter nicely shows that the generalizations in Heine & Kuteva (2002) leave much of the evidence unaccounted for, and that in fact there are many other sources of relative markers beyond the three mentioned above. Similarly, Hendery finds more extension possibilities which relative markers take than those noted in Lehmann (1984). One of the most interesting discussions in the chapter deals with the relationship between possessives and relatives, which is attested in a variety of languages: Basque *-en*, Chinese *de* etc. Hendery claims that the evidence clearly points to the relative as the source while the possessive marker is a mere extension (p. 73). Specifically for Semitic, she notes that possession with the relative marker is not attested in the earliest sources, only much later. I beg to differ; every Semitic language has both relative and possession marked in identical ways. In Biblical Hebrew, not only is possession attested with a relic relative pronoun (which Hendery herself notes on p. 89), as in example 1a, it is also attested with the innovative Canaanite relative pronoun, which replaced the original relative pronoun, but retained all its syntactic traits, as in example 1b (Pat-El 2010, Pat-El 2012b):

- (1) a. *YHWH ze Sinay*
 PN rel PN
 ‘YHWH of Sinai’ (Exodus 15:13)
- b. *ham-mizrāqôt ‘ăšer zāhāb*
 def-basins rel gold
 ‘The golden basins’ (1 Kings 25:15)

The Semitic languages provide ample evidence for both possessive and relative marked with the same pronoun, which is unfortunately known by the name “relative” although it clearly has other functions as well. Additionally, many Afroasiatic languages mark relatives and possessives with the same marker. Most importantly, Egyptian uses the same type of inflection as Semitic does on its possessive/relative marker. In other words, the evidence does not support an extension from relative to possessive; if anything, we simply cannot tell which of these functions is original. One should perhaps entertain the possibility that possessives and relatives are not so different from each other, as both are nominal attributes. The Semitic languages, I think, favor a unified marking for all their nominal attributes (Goldenberg 1995) and the evidence traces it at least to proto Semitic. One interesting question which remains unexplored in this chapter is which relative markers can cluster; for example, Akkadian, an East Semitic language, uses both a relative pronoun and a special verbal suffix, which may be related to case endings, to mark relatives.

Chapter 3 deals with the relationship between different relative markers within a single system, and what type of changes a relative marker may undergo. Distributional differences may include differentiation between human and non-human (English *who*, *which*), between restrictive and non-restrictive (English *that*, *which*) or between the case assignment of the head noun (French *qui*, *que*). Hendery correctly notes that the same starting point may lead to a variety of resolutions, as is the case in the distribution of *qui/que* in the Romance languages. Furthermore, she observes that there is no stable situation, and systems may move from free variation to complementary distribution and vice versa. One of the examples of loss of a relative strategy given in this chapter is the Egyptian “relative verb” (pp. 146-147). Despite the name, this is a nominal form with gender-number agreement markers. It is translated to English as a relative clause, but it is likely a deverbal nominal form. The subject of these forms is an oblique suffix and they can be modified by attributive adjectives (Allen 2000: ch. 24). In other words, these forms are not specific to relative position. As such, they are quite different from the relative introduced with the inflected pronoun *ntj* and are far more similar to participial adjectives. Hendery got her information from unglossed textbooks and made a valiant effort to gloss them herself, but unfortunately got it wrong. The following is the correct glossing; note that the “verbal” form carries nominal agreement markers:

- (2) *ḥ3s-t* *nb-t* *rwj-t-n=j* *r=s*
country-fs every-fs advance-fs-pf=1cs.obl against=3ms
‘Every foreign country against which I advance’

Furthermore, Hendery notes that in Middle Egyptian the feminine singular form of the relative pronoun *ntt* shifted to only mark complement clauses while the masculine singular *ntj* only marked relative clauses. Two issues need to be borne in mind. First, in earlier texts, complements were introduced by a different form, *wnt*, which is not a relative pronoun, and could plausibly be the base for the later *ntt*; in other words, the complementizer *ntt* may be a homograph with the feminine singular relative *ntt*. Second, *ntt* as a complementizer is actually rather rare and never reached full grammaticalization. A later complementizer developed from the infinitive of the verb ‘to say’, *r.dd* (Kammerzell & Peust 2002, Kramer 2012). Thus, Egyptian may not be a good example for relatives becoming complementizers due to a shift to analytic typology.

Chapter 4 discusses how relative clauses may have developed. The central question is whether parataxis gives rise to hypotaxis as a near universal. This has been claimed to be a general tendency by some (Heine & Kuteva 2007, Givón 2009), but rejected by others (Harris & Campbell 1995). Hendery competently reviews the data supporting the claim and finds it woefully overstated. There is no evidence that this is a universal or even a common path of change. This point has been made clear already by Harris & Campbell (1995), but it keeps holding sway of a number of linguists so in need of reiteration. Hendery further discusses deranked

relative verbs and their possible origin at length. She concludes that deranked verbs usually develop into balanced constructions but not vice versa. This issue could have benefited from some comparison to other expressions of attribution in the relevant languages. At least for Biblical Hebrew, what is claimed to be a deranked verb (Givón 1991) is in fact an attributive participle whose syntax and morphology are identical to that of an attributive adjective. Hendery further looks at changes in the position of the relative in reference to its head, which is, of course, of great interest to synchronic typologists. Here, too, the issue of attribution in general is relevant. One of the typical examples of position change is the relative in the Ethio-Semitic languages, which used to have a post-nominal relative, but now have a pre-nominal relative. Hendery ties this change to sentential word order changes (VSO-to-SOV) and to contact with Cushitic. While it is true that word order changes in Ethio-Semitic were motivated by contact with Cushitic, it is interesting to note the gradual and unequal change in the earliest sources (Little 1974). Gəʿəz, the earliest attested North Ethio-Semitic language, is V-first, but its demonstrative has already shifted to pre-NP; some adjectives and relatives have started to move to pre-head but have completely shifted to that position much later. In other words, sentential word order had nothing to do with the change in the nominal phrase, since the change there took place after word order change in the nominal phrase. Furthermore, both adjectives and relatives should be considered together, as their ordering change seems to mutually dependent. This fits well with Cristofaro (2003)'s notion of economy, which Hendery adopts: languages encode the relationship between relatives and main clause in a way used for other constructions with similar relationship.

Chapter 5 deals holistically with possible motivations for change. Hendery first examines word order types as a motivation for changes in the relative clause. Here, too, the case of Ethio-Semitic is used as evidence that the basic sentential word order must change from VO to OV before the change of post- to pre-nominal in relatives. But as I mentioned above, the change of order in relatives and adjectives in Ethio-Semitic happened before VO changed to OV. The order of nominal modifiers in Gəʿəz is variable: adjectives, genitive and relative clauses may be positioned before, or after their head noun (Little 1974: 79). Some elements are more likely to gain a fixed position than others; in Gəʿəz, quantifying adjectives, such as *bəzuh* 'much', and ordinal numbers are regularly pre-posed (see example 3a), even before the change in sentential word order. Relatives are still fluctuating (see example 3b), but are normally post-posed and in any position maintain the inflection of the relative pronoun:

- (3) Gəʿəz
 a. *sābā ʿ-āwit hagar*
 seven-fs city.fs
 'The seventh city'

- b. *wəsta ʔnta boʼ-ka mu hagar*
into rel.fs enter.pf-2mp city.fs
'In the city you have entered'

The failure to acknowledge that there is a very slow and gradual process which started with nominal modifiers, not with basic word order, affects a number of Hendery's conclusions, since Ethio-Semitic is a central piece of evidence in this chapter. The main conclusion, that multiple characteristics of relatives are borrowed at once (p. 225), cannot be based on Ethio-Semitic. Evidence from Ethio-Semitic suggests that various features changed at different times and the correlation between them is not similar to the one suggested in the chapter.

In chapter 5 Hendery supplies a more thorough comparison of relatives with other relevant structures and finds that there is no obvious correlation between change in relative and in other types of attributes in most of her sample. She, however, finds correlation between the use and position of a relative marker and the position of the relative clause in respect to its head. Hendery further examines the role of contact in motivating change and concludes that it is a major factor (p. 218). The problem with this statement is that contact may be a factor in the *spread* of a feature, but Hendery does not supply evidence to prove that it motivates the development of a syntactic feature. The three cases she discusses, Ethio-Semitic, Quechua and Armenian, were in contact with languages which have pre-nominal relatives, so there is no development here but rather copying. Of course, contact is a factor in linguistic change (Thomason 2006), but if one seeks to study the underpinnings of the process of change, then total borrowing of the sort that Hendery argues for does not provide many helpful clues.

Chapter 6 concludes with a review of the major findings of the book, which are helpfully organized in a number of tables, from most attested to least attested including features which are unattested. Tables 11-12 cover features, while tables 13-14 cover changes. These tables map the data, but do not, of course, provide a motivation or a trigger, which is what distinguishes synchronic from diachronic typology. Hendery is justifiably reluctant to take a strong stand on this issue. An important part of this chapter is her examination of the implications of her findings on previous theoretical claims. Finally, she summarizes the approach and argues that historical linguists should take cues from diachronic typology (p. 245).

2 EVALUATION

Overall, the book is very well written and its review of the literature thorough and clear. The presentation of data is normally careful and accurate, although there are a few glitches here and there (for example, p. 77, ex. 21b; p. 106, ex. 38 b). The book is very ambitious in its scope, examining not only relative markers, but also types of relatives, and the relationship between different relatives in the same language. What it discovers is that paths of change are far more complex and

sources for relative markers are far more abundant than is typically claimed by Grammaticalization theory. This by itself is a worthy contribution. To her great credit, Hendery is adequately cautious both in accepting claims made by linguists and in formulating generalizations. The book is replete with fascinating case studies and theoretical discussions. Hendery's command of the theoretical literature about this topic is commendable. Her choice of topics to cover is intriguing, which makes the book a compelling read.

Since this study presents itself as a proto-type for diachronic typology and seeks to establish its usefulness, some comments about these goals are also in order. I find the methodology used in this book highly problematic. Hendery claims that she collects example and then examines the strength of the evidence (p. 160-161). But the examples she collects were already processed by linguists and she herself has no direct access to evidence. Data in this monograph come not from languages, but rather from linguistic analysis of language change. Since Hendery, like most typologists, is not a specialist in most of the languages in her sample, she is basing her study on "changes that linguists working in that language family say occurred" (p. 13). Essentially this is a study of studies. Diachronic typology is interested in mechanisms, processes and developmental paths. These are hypotheses, not observable patterns. In other words, what Hendery is collecting is not only scholar-dependent, but also theory-dependent. Since Hendery herself does not have the tools to assess the merit and even the factual accuracy of these studies, and since she cannot conduct her own historical investigation on most of these languages, the problems with this study are far more serious than with any synchronic typological study.

An example of the problems can be illustrated with the following case study in Hebrew, which was quoted in this monograph. Hebrew did not have a developed adverbial subordination system. Instead of finite adverbial clauses, it uses infinitives preceded by prepositions, whose subject is represented by a possessive suffix. Givón calls it "genitival strategy", but it is very similar to absolute construction in Indo-European, and like them the exact semantics of these constructions is context dependent, unless the preposition introducing them has a clear semantics. In the following example, which both Hendery and Givón supply (albeit with no context), the reason to assume a temporal reading is the context: this sentence is followed by the story of the creation of the world and all living things in it:

- (4) *'elle tōl d-ôt haš-šāmayim wə-hā-'āreš*
 dem.mp history-p.cnst def-heaven.mp and-def-land.fs
ḇ-hibār'-ām
 in-create.pass.inf-them
 'This is the story of the heaven and earth after they were created' (Genesis 2:4)

However, in later phases of Hebrew, finite adverbial clauses can be introduced via the common relative particle *'ăšer*:

- (5) *mē- 'āmālēqî hēbî'û-m 'ăšer ḥāmāl hā-'ām 'al*
 from-Amalekite bring.pf.3mpl-them rel pity.pf.3ms def-people on
mēṭab ḥaš-šō'n
 best.ms.cnst def-flock

'They have brought them from the Amalekites, because the people spared the best of the sheep' (1 Samuel 15:15)

Since *'ăšer* was originally a noun meaning 'place', Hendery, following Givón (1974), suggests that the *'ăšer* strategy took over the "genitival strategy". This is further allegedly substantiated because in Modern Hebrew, the reduced form of *'ăšer*, *še*, "is the only way to express adverbials" (Hendery 2012: 105). In other words, the new relative arose from a (non-finite) adverbial clause. The problems and factual errors in this scenario are many, but I will only concentrate on those which tripped Hendery. Hebrew originally had two relative constructions. One is headed by a relative pronoun, *z-*, marked as head (i.e., in "construct state"), as in example 6a; this pronoun was originally inflected for gender-number and agreed with its head noun in every feature but its state. This agreement marked the relative as an attribute of its head. The other type is headed by a noun, which is marked as head (i.e., in "construct state"), as in example 6b:

- (6) a. *nādhîṭā bə-ḥasd-əkā 'am zû gā'altā*
 lead.pf.2ms in-mercy-your.ms people rel redeem.pf.2ms
 'In your grace, you have lead the people you have redeemed' (Exodus 15:13)
- b. *'am lō' yāda'tî ya'abdū-nî*
 people.cnst neg know.pf.1cs worhsip.impf.3p-me
 'A people I do not know worship me' (2Samuel 22:44)

In the attested Biblical Hebrew texts, these two types are already relics and they have been supplanted by the noun-turned-relative marker *'ăšer* (Huehnergard 2006). The new relative marker was not developed from an adverbial marker, but rather from the type of relative presented in 6b: a noun in construct which governed a dependent relative clause in early Hebrew. It is true that there are examples where *'ăšer* seems to introduce an adverbial clause, such as example 5. This development, however, is later than the introduction of *'ăšer* as a relative marker, not earlier, so it cannot explain this particular change. The reasons for the later use of *'ăšer* as a marker of adverbial clauses are complex, but one of them seems to be the fact that *'ăšer* does not inflect in agreement with its head noun and so lacks a very important feature of nominal attributes in this language. A similar phenomenon is

also attested in Aramaic and Arabic, both of which still use their inherited proto-Semitic relative pronouns. When the pronoun in these languages lost its inflection, it was extended to become a general subordinator, introducing adverbial clauses as well as complement clauses (Pat-El *forthcoming*). What we find in Mishnaic and Modern Hebrew does not help Hendery's argument, because the pattern of adverbial clauses in these later Hebrew dialects is a clone of an Aramaic pattern, not an internal development in Hebrew (Pat-El 2012a). Hence, what we have here is a reduction of the original system with two types to only one type. Since in the remaining type, the head is a noun, not a pronoun, it could not carry attributive agreement and could therefore be used to introduce adverbial clauses. This analysis is additionally supported by comparative evidence. The pattern in later (as well as complement clauses) dialects is not a continuation of this development, but a result of extensive contact with Aramaic.

Hendery cannot know all of this and cannot evaluate the accuracy or the strength of the evidence in the studies she is using to describe this case. This is not a judgment of her linguistic skills, which are clearly impressive, but rather of the inability of a single person to accomplish what she set out to do. Of course, Hendery is not expected to know the complex history of every language she is using and data in an unknown language family is not always easy to analyze; certainly clearly glossed Semitic and Egyptian examples are hard to come by. Given the problems I noted here, it is likely that Hendery has made similar misjudgments with other language families through no fault of her own. This is why diachronic typology of the type espoused in this monograph is so problematic.

Furthermore, Hendery seeks to ask how and why languages change in the particular paths that she identified. As she herself aptly notes, changes have to be inferred (p. 160). Such inference is not done on the basis of common pathways, as Hendery suggests (pp. 197-198) but first and foremost on the basis of available data both internally, in the language studied, and comparatively, in its immediate relatives, if such evidence is available. Hendery's treatment seems to favor the analysis of the typologist, who has access to quantitative material over the historical linguist, who has access to actual attestations of the language and intimate knowledge of its structure and history. The problems I noted above with the treatment of Semitic languages in this monograph are indicative which of them is more competent to offer reconstruction. Since diachronic typologists must rely on the work of historical linguists, I fail to see why one should favor typological conclusions over historical linguistic ones. Nevertheless, this is a serious and interesting study, which would have been far more accurate and useful if it had been conducted by a group of linguists rather than one individual, as skilled as she may be.

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