

ABSTRACT

The extension of structure to discourse: Chitimacha participles in discourse and diachrony

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Markers of grammatical dependency frequently undergo changes in domain or scope, whether these changes occur at the level of local morphology, clausal syntax, interclausal syntax, or discourse. In Chitimacha, a Louisiana isolate documented by Morris Swadesh in the 1930s, the diachronic continuum of scopal changes from morphology to discourse can be reconstructed for the participle *-k* using synchronic reflexes. Examples (1) - (4) illustrate its progression from locative enclitic to participle to clausal subordinator to discourse marker.

- (1) *we kap mahc ney=k tišt'uw-i*
the comet ground=LOC fall.down-3SG
'the comet fell to the ground'
- (2) *we siksink kap k'apt-k we še:ni waʔa=nk hi peš-iʔi*
the eagle up take-PTCP the pond other=LOC to fly-3SG
'the eagle, taking him up, flew him to the other (side) of the pond'
- (3) *natmakičuyink' ʔam po: k'apt-k him načpi:d-naka*
he.must.tell.us what medicine take-PTCP you cure-FUT-1PL
'He must tell us what medicine to take to cure you.'
- (4) *we-t-k-š we siksink hiš hesik'en ʔapš heyšt-iʔi. we-t-k-š*
DEM-ANA-PTCP-TOP the eagle ERG again gather-3SG DEM-ANA-PTCP-TOP
qap nenčup-i.
move.back.across-3SG

'Then the eagle picked him up again. Then he got him across.'

This grammaticalization chain illustrates an important point: Morphological structure, when it 'escapes into discourse', continues to perform a vital role in signaling relationships between stretches of discourse, just as it previously signaled relationships between clauses, and before that between constituents or individual words. In short, when morphology changes its scope, it takes some of its structural relations with it, providing new means of structuring whatever level of grammar it now exists at.

This paper shows how interclausal morphology in Chitimacha imported its structure into discourse. If morphology is capable of extending its structure into discourse, an important implication of this fact is that discourse can have every bit as much structure as morphology, and therefore that discourse conventions are part of the linguistic competence of speakers and grammar proper. Discourse structure must therefore be adequately accounted for in grammatical descriptions and models of speakers' competence.