

Marking Syntactic Complexity: Some internal and external processes of development

Marianne Mithun
University of California, Santa Barbara

In a surprising number of languages, interrogative and relative pronouns match: *Who did you see? The man who came with us enjoyed it.* The match raises intriguing questions about possible reasons behind it, such as some deeper shared semantic feature. But the pattern is concentrated in Europe, not just among Indo-European languages, but in unrelated neighboring languages as well, such as Basque, Hungarian, Balkan Turkish, and Georgian. It is rare elsewhere in the world, but does occur in certain languages of the Americas. Comparisons of 19th century Tuscarora with modern speech show that the match is quite recent: within a century, question words have been introduced into complements and headless relatives. This expansion follows a pathway proposed by Heine and Kuteva (2006): interrogative pronouns are extended to indefinite complements, then definite complements, then headless relatives, and finally headed relatives. The Tuscarora developments, which coincide with expanding Tuscarora/English bilingualism, represent grammatical replication: bilinguals, perceiving a pattern in one language, extend markers in the other on that model.