

**The ‘link’ between conditionals and topic marking:
the case of Kazakh *bolsa* and Hindi *to***

While Kazakh and Hindi are not related, with the former belonging to the Turkic language family, and the latter to the Indo-Aryan family, the two languages show examples of a clear link between the morphosyntax of conditionals and the historical development of (some) topic markers. Namely, the repurposing of some aspect of the morphosyntax of conditionals for topic marking.

We take Kazakh *bolsa* and Hindi *to* as case studies and show that their realisation is obligatory in identifying an antecedent-consequent relation between two clauses. Kazakh *bolsa* is the conditional form of the verb *bol-* ‘be’, as shown in (1). The optionality of *eger* ‘if’ and the obligatory presence of *bolsa* in (1) indicate that it is the conditional form of the verb that is essential for the interpretation of the initial clause as the protasis. The Hindi particle *to* surfaces between the protasis and the apodosis of a conditional sentence, illustrated in (2). As in Kazakh, the realisation of *agar* ‘if’ is optional; the particle *to*, however, cannot be omitted.

(1) (Eger) ol žañadan keš *(bol-sa), men olsız ket-e-min.
if 3SG again late be-COND 1SG alone leave-FUT-1SG
‘If he is late again, I’ll leave without him.’

(2) (Agar) vo aa-eg-aa *(to) maiñ use kitaab
if 3SG come-FUT.SG-3SG.M TO 1SG 3SG.DAT book
d-uuñg-ii.
give- FUT.1SG-F
‘If he comes, I’ll give him the book.’

Both the use of *bolsa* in Kazakh, and *to* in Hindi, have extended to include the topic-marking functions, as in (3) and (4)(b) respectively. In other words, these items indicate a (contrastive) topic-comment relationship between the sentence-initial topical element and the rest of the clause.

(3) Žilqī su-dī köp iš-e-di. Tüje bolsa šölge šīdamdī
horse water-ACC a.lot drink-PRS-3 camel TM thirst tolerant
žanuar.
animal
‘Horses drink a lot of water. As for camels, they are tolerant to thirst.’

(4) (a) miiraa aur raam=ne kyaa piyaa
Mira.F and Ram.M=ERG what drink.PFV.M
‘What did Mira and Ram drink?’

(b) miiraa=ne to chaay pii aur raam=ne kōfii
Mira.F=ERG TO tea.F drink.PFV.F and Ram.M=ERG coffee.F
‘Mira drank tea and Ram - coffee.’

With the help of the Dynamic Syntax (DS; Cann et al. 2005) formal apparatus we demonstrate that this extension of their uses has a natural and straightforward explanation. Building on Gregoromichelaki's (2006) work on conditionals, we show that Kazakh *bolsa* and Hindi *to* signal the transition from one structure to a parallel one and the copying of a term from the former to the latter. We propose that it is this LINK-initiating quality that has facilitated the repurposing of *bolsa* and *to* from protasis indicators to topic markers.

References

- Cann, R., Kempson, R., & Marten, L. (2005). *The Dynamics of Language*. Amsterdam: Elsevier Academic Press.
- Gregoromichelaki, E. (2006). *Conditionals in Dynamic Syntax*. (Phd Thesis), King's College London.