Breaking free: a new analysis of free relatives

Old Avestan feature a cross-linguistically novel type of free relatives: those based on demonstrative-based pronouns, in contrast to the standard definition of free relatives as being introduced by interrogative-based pronouns (Caponigro 2003). In this talk, I will discuss the significance of this novel type of free relatives a novel synchronic formal analysis of free relatives. I propose a new analysis of free relatives at the syntax-semantics interface. I show that this novel analysis minimizes the need for stipulating silent operators as a result of the unique properties of the Old Avestan free relatives, explains diachronic patterns, and has cross-linguistic support.