

Finite complementation and the conceptual space of intersubjectivity

A Radical Construction Grammar view

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Issues

- **Universal** ↔ **Language specific**
Intersubjectivity, quoting ↔ Constructions
- **Goal: conceptual**
 - Kind of addition to Van Linden et al. 2023, Wiemer 2026, this workshop, ...
- **Quotation ↔ Complementation ↔ Parentheticals**

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Diagnostic problems(?) – 1

Quotation

Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852-53); cf. Womack (2011)

Sir Leicester [...] regards the Court of Chancery, even if it should involve an occasional delay of justice and a trifling amount of confusion, as

“... effectively a fragment of direct speech. The elevated viewpoint from which the Court's monstrous inefficiency looks like a minor imperfection is clearly Sir Leicester's.”



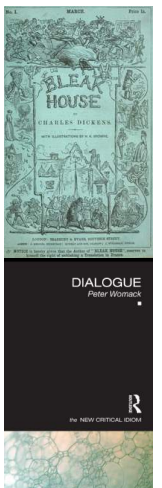
Diagnostic problems(?) – 1

Quotation – mixed with description ('unquotation')

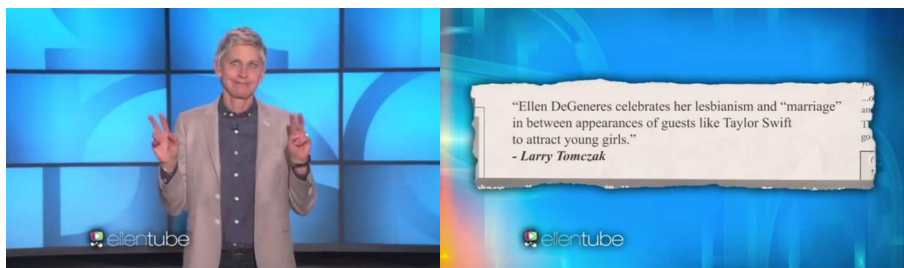
Dickens' *Bleak House* (1852-53); cf. Womack (2011)

Sir Leicester [...] regards the Court of Chancery, even if it should involve an occasional delay of justice and a trifling amount of confusion, as a something, devised in conjunction with a variety of other somethings, by the perfection of human wisdom, for the eternal settlement (humanly speaking) of everything.

“In the sudden drop into total vagueness [...], the reader detects, not Sir Leicester's consciousness, but a mocking authorial consciousness [...] what Bakhtin calls 'doublevoiced discourse'. Two distinct speakers are heard in the same words, one signalled by the syntax, the other by the vocabulary.”



Diagnostic problems(?) – 1



Quotation=simulation of language use

Cf. also: “fictive interaction” (Pascual 2014)

*I prefer an **I do** ring over an **I will** ring* (“I do” metonymy for wedding)

*The trouble with cocaine is that the **but I didn’t inhale** excuse does not work*

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Diagnostic problems(?) – 1

Simulation-Description not always unambiguously distinct

Journalist’s report of a conversation

*The doctor estimates the baby to have been only a few days old. Carla thinks that **Etta is the mother**.*

Carla: “OMG, Etta must be the mother”

*The doctor estimates the baby to have been only a few days old. Carla **thinks that Etta is the mother**.*

Carla: “I think that Etta is the mother”

Recall Dickens’ *Bleak House* (1852-53):

*Sir Leicester [...] regards **the Court of Chancery**, even if it should involve an occasional delay of justice and a trifling amount of confusion, ...*

- Further: Verhagen (2023)

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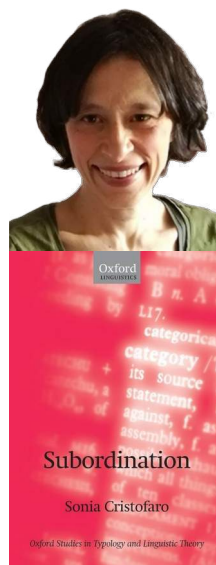
Diagnostic problems(?) – 2

On defining SUBORDINATION

“Functional [...] situations are presumably universal across languages. Hence one can define subordination in functional terms, and then see how this functional situation is expressed cross-linguistically. In this way, the notion of subordination is not tied to the specific way in which clause linkage is realized in any given language” (Cristofaro 2003: 25)

COMPLEMENTATION: Combined reference to SoAs?

“Complement relations link two SoAs such that one of them (the main one) entails that another one (the dependent one) is referred to.” (Cristofaro 2003: 95)



Combined reference to SoAs?

On defining COMPLEMENTATION

“Complement relations link two SoAs such that one of them (the main one) entails that another one (the dependent one) is referred to. [...] This feature of complement relations is captured by most definitions of complement constructions, which usually describe complement clauses as clauses functioning as an argument of a main predicate (cf., e.g. Noonan 1985: 46). Arguments are a necessary specification of predicates, so these definitions are fully compatible with the definition provided here. (Cristofaro 2003: 95)



Combined reference to SoAs?

Common idea: combining Pred-arg structures

“A complement clause is a type of clause which fills an argument slot in the structure of another clause. [...]”

- (I) It has the internal structure of a clause, at least as far as core arguments are concerned.
- (II) It functions as core argument of another clause. The range of functions available to a complement clause always includes O (object in a transitive clause).”

(Dixon 2010, vol. 2, 370)

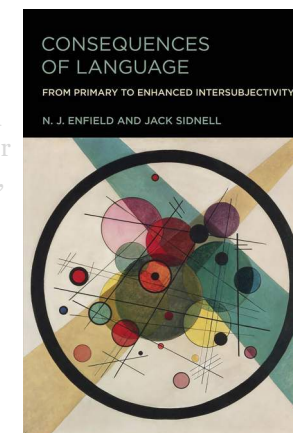


Consider reasons for alternative

Complementation = embedding?

“Languages provide means for *embedding* one clause in another.[...] This function is especially important for intersubjectivity because it is our tool for thematizing and characterizing people’s beliefs and desires, and thereby for publicly coordinating around the things that people think, want, and feel. These are the grammatical resources for *complementation* (Dixon 2010, vol. 2, 370ff).” (Enfield & Sidnell 2022: 167)

- Complementation ≠ Subordination
 - There are languages that use embedding only for adverbial and/or relative relations (Cristofaro 2003)
- Complementation function not necessarily related to (other) subordination function(s)



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Distributional issues

Complementation(!)

Not that Sentences (Verhagen 2005, Delahunty 2006)

“Mr. Harriman?”

“Major,” he replied lightly. “Not that it matters, old boy.” (LeCarré 1962)

She hoped that perhaps Miss Robertson would give her a piece of ribbon. Not that she would wear it, but she’d like to show it to Norrie O’Dowd. (O’Brien 1942)

It-less impersonal root clauses (Verhagen 2005)

Fact is that more and more photo’s [...] show up [...]

Biggest problem is that there is no obvious organization that represents the domain name side of things.

→ Certain grammatical features of main clause (here: lack of determiner) only possible in presence of complement clause

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Distributional issues

Complementation(!)

No clear argument roles

1) *The danger is that things will get out of hand*.

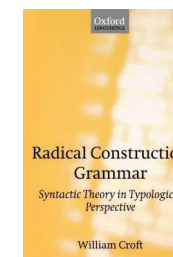
Subject? Predicate? (in copular construction?)

(Cf. *It is a danger that things will get out of hand* vs. *The dangers are that things will get out of hand and that...*)

2) *He { feared / was afraid } that things might get out of hand.* } Object?

3) *He warned that things might become difficult*.
(cf. **He warned something*)

→ Choice is basically arbitrary: “methodological opportunism” (Croft 2001)



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Distributional issues

	<i>it/something</i>	<i>the book</i>	<i>that it will be raining</i>
read	✓	✓	✓
think	✓	–	✓
realize	✓	–	✓
devour	✓	✓	–
see	✓	✓	✓
paint	✓	✓	–
say	✓	–	✓
warn	–	–	✓

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Complements not as arguments

Evidence?

Combinatorial properties/distribution

- overlap with PA-structures very limited
- methodological opportunism looming large

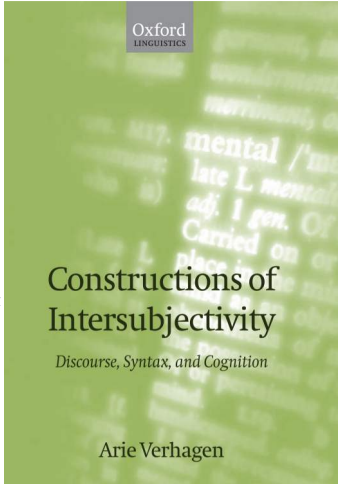
In conversation: vast majority does not function as component of the representation of an SoA

but as target of epistemic/evidential/evaluative qualification, expressed by matrix (Thompson 2002)

In ontogeny: first CTPs do not denote SoAs

but are 'performatives' and e/e/e operators on propositions (Diessel & Tomasello 2001)

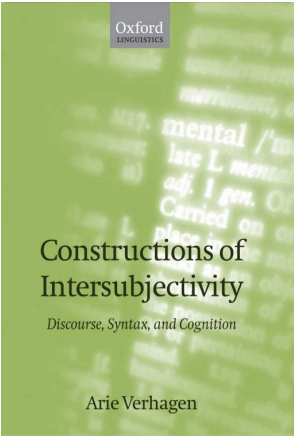
→ complement clauses 'take' ('constrain') a specific type of matrix expressions (→ "construction") rather than the other way around



The conceptual space of intersubjectivity

Finite complementation

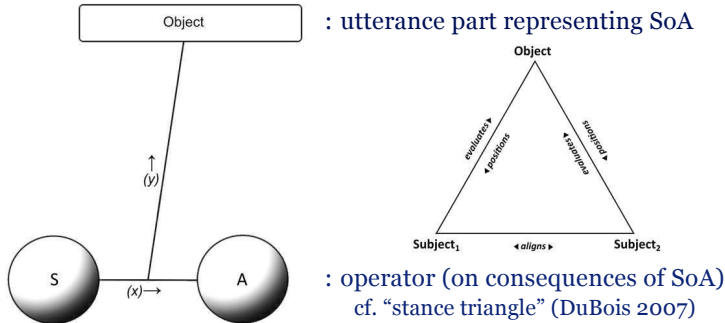
"Languages provide means for *embedding* one clause in another.[...] This function is especially important for intersubjectivity because it is our tool for thematizing and characterizing people's beliefs and desires, and thereby for publicly coordinating around the things that people think, want, and feel. *These are the grammatical resources for complementation* (Dixon 2010, vol. 2, 370ff)." (Enfield & Sidnell 2022: 167)



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The conceptual space of intersubjectivity

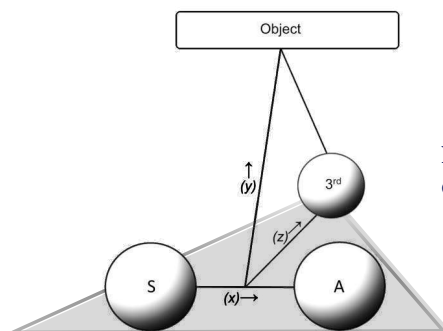
Cognitive coordination of subjects of communication/ conceptualization



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The conceptual space of intersubjectivity

Cognitive coordination of subjects of communication/ conceptualization



- Speaker and Addressee: always relevant
- “Others” (third parties): sometimes
- more or less identifiable, more or less generic
- He got mad because his bike was gone*
⇒ “He thought that his bike was gone”
He got mad because he thought that his bike was gone
→ reduces commitment of S to A re “his bike was gone”

Negation, modality, evidentiality, ... and complementation

- coordination of epistemic/evaluative stance (WS 17!)
- “o[p]”, rather than “[_{p1} Pred(a, p₂)]”
- operator status: reduces potential for ‘addressability’, discourse prominence (Boye & Harder 2007, 2021)
- Natural: quotative clause – CTP – adverb

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Quotation in complementation

Recall journalist’s report of a conversation

*The doctor estimates the baby to have been only a few days old. Carla **thinks that Etta is the mother**.*

(Carla: “I think that Etta is the mother”)

- “Although indirect speech is supposed to be untainted by characters’ expressivity, there are in fact numerous cases of such mimicry” (Fludernik 2005: 562)
- Max thought that no false hopes should be raised now.*
Then he told Quinten that he had hit the bull’s eye for the umpteenth time.

→ Third person, past tense deixis, and syntax (*that*) mark complement clause content (“reported speech/thought”) as partially non-quoted
⇒ When deixis (e.g. 1st person present tense narrative) and syntax (absence of *that*) do not make a difference, “direct” and “indirect” speech/thought may become indistinguishable

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Quotation in complementation

- Deixis (tense, third person) and syntax (*that*) mark complement clause content (“reported speech/thought”) as partially non-quoted
- ⇒ When deixis (e.g. 1st person present tense narrative) and syntax (absence of *that*) do not make a difference, “direct” and “indirect” speech/thought may become indistinguishable

→ Language specificity

- Not all languages have (obligatory) tense marking, deictic systems differ (e.g. logophoricity, in-/exclusive first person plural, pro-drop), availability of (productive) subjunctive mood, other markers of modality/epistemicity, ...
- English: no difference in word order main/subordinate (unlike Dutch, German); allows ‘*that*-drop’ (under certain conditions) – Dutch: never – German: under certain conditions, with change in subordinate clause word order (and sometimes mood), ...

→ Distinguishability of **direct** and ‘indirect’ STR differs from one language to the next

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Language + construction specificity

Apparent alternations mask differences (cf. Goldberg 2002)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Jones says that this is important</i> | 1. <i>Jansen zegt dat dit belangrijk is</i> |
| 2. <i>Jones says this is important</i> | * <i>Jansen zegt dit belangrijk is</i> |
| 3. <i>Jones says: “This is important”</i> | 3. <i>Jansen zegt: “Dit is belangrijk”</i> |
| 4. <i>This, Jones says, is important</i> | * <i>Dit is, Jansen zegt, belangrijk</i> |
| 5. <i>This is important, says Jones</i> | 4. <i>Dit, zegt Jansen, is belangrijk</i> |
| 6. <i>“This is important”, Jones says</i> | 6. <i>“Dit is belangrijk”, zegt Jansen</i> |

Jones said, and several other expressions, are possible in all of these positions, but this does not imply that all of these positions allow the same *set* of expressions: paradigms overlap, but are not identical: → constructional differences

- Quotatives (*be like, go, ...*): only 3
- ‘Subj-V-inversion’ (*said Jones*): only 4-6 (‘parentheticals’)
- (transitive and intransitive) action+manner of execution (*she expressed herself carefully*): only 4-6 (‘parentheticals’) – cf. literature overview in Gents 2022, a.o.
- *‘Mary, I want to take you out to dinner,’ he had lied, to break the frost.* (Rowling 2012)

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Constructions in Dutch

Distinguishability within a language: dependent on construction

Complementation:

- *dat* is obligatory
- complement: V-final (main clauses: V-second)
 - “subordinate clause syntax”: esp. person deixis not shifted (maintain speaker’s perspective)
- matrix specifies perspectival operation, present speaker *co*-responsible

Quotative:

- independent clause syntax in ‘complement’
- all deictic elements shifted (“100% quotation”)
- matrix announces simulation, + source

Parenthetical:

- independent clause syntax in ‘complement’
- other deictic elements need not be shifted
 - allows “free indirect discourse” (other forms of ‘mixing’)
- matrix qualifies proposition ‘after the fact’

Parenthetical

‘Mary, I want to take you out to dinner,’ he had lied, to break the frost.

De economie nam een korte adempauze, heette het.

**Het heette: De economie nam een korte adempauze*
The economy was taking a short breather, it was reported/rumored

Olga’s moeder_i zou de rijke fruitoogst uit Bosnië missen, zei ze_i.

**Ze_i zei: Olga’s moeder_i zou de rijke fruitoogst uit Bosnië missen*

Olga’s mother_i would miss the rich fruit harvest from Bosnia, she_i said.

[cf. Olga’s mother said: “I will miss the rich fruit harvest from here/Bosnia”]

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SONAR corpus, ±300 clauses of each type

Quotation-parenthetical: different preference profiles

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
1 Citeer-constructie															
2 predikaat	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc
3 zeggen	38	40	28	9	115	40%									
4 schrijven	2	7	6	5	20	7%									
5 luiden				9	10	19	7%								
6 denken	12	3				15	5%								
7 toegeven	4	6	1	2	13	5%									
8 waarschuwen	1		5	5	11	4%									
9 toevoegen (eraan)	3	3	1	3	10	4%									
10 stellen	1	1	3	2	7	2%									
11 verklaren			2	3	5	2%									
12 antwoorden	3			1	4	1%									
13 roepen	3				3	1%									
14 verduidelijken			2	1	3	1%									
15 vertellen	1		1	1	3	1%									
16 aanvullen			1	2	3	1%									
17 redeneren	1		1	2											
18 uitleggen	1		1	2											
19 verzekeren	2			2											
20 besluiten	1	1			2										
21 vervolgen		2			2										
22 beveren	1			1	2										
23 weten	1	1			2										

1 Inquit-constructie															
2 predikaat	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc	1=pro,2=prc
3 zeggen	59	49	40	46	194	53%									
4 vertellen	3	5	3	4	15	4%									
5 denken	5		7	12	3%										
6 stellen		3	5	3	11	3%									
7 weten	1	1	5	2	9	2%									
8 verklaren	1	4		3	8	2%									
9 vinden	2	1	2	3	8	2%									
10 schrijven	3	2	2		7	2%									
11 uitleggen		4	2	1	7	2%									
12 beveren		1	1	4	6	2%									
13 luiden	1		1	4	6	2%									
14 bevestigen		2		2	4	1%									
15 waarschuwen	1		3		4	1%									
16 besluiten	1	1		1	3	1%									
17 aanvullen			1	1	2										
18 opmerken		2			2										
19 reageren		1	1		2										
20 redeneren	2				2										
21 toegeven		1	1		2										
22 vervolgen			1	1	2										
23 verzekeren		1	1		2										

(Verhagen 2019)

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Take home messages

Conceptually

- Grammatical theory is still in the middle of the process of liberating itself from the idea that all clauses represent states of affairs

Analytically

- The proper conceptual space for complementation is intersubjectivity
- Partial quotation is a wide-spread phenomenon
 - possibly constrained by specific constructions, in specific languages
- Constructions determine paradigms, paradigms are diagnostic for constructional differences
 - language specific, including “Complement clause”, “CTP”, ...
- Comparative use of the label “complementation construction”? OK when:
 - demonstrable syntactic distinction from main clause,
 - operating on intersubjectivity, indicating co-responsibility of the present speaker

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CONCLUSION

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