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On the nominal nature of propositional arguments

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Contents

Introduction

Katrin Axel-Tober, Lutz Gunkel,
Jutta M. Hartmann & Anke Holler

The linguistic properties of so-called propositional arguments – broadly understood as arguments expressing events, propositions, or situations, usually realized as finite, non-finite, or gerundival structures – have been the subject of extensive research from different perspectives. The syntactic structure and grammatical category of such propositional arguments, especially of finite complement clauses, have been a major topic of debate in the syntactic literature in the last 50 years.

One central aspect of the discussion concerns the question of whether some or potentially all complement clauses should be treated as noun phrases. The details of such a noun-phrase analysis range from assigning complement clauses a silent nominal head or a functional D-layer to considering the complementizer (*that* in English) to be part of the nominal category. The nominal status of embedded clauses has also been proposed to be part of the structure of these clauses, suggesting that these are underlyingly relative clauses. From a semantic perspective, clauses have been considered to be propositional contents or properties of individuals (see, among others, Kratzer 2006, 2013; Moulton 2015), which partially corresponds to a relative-clause analysis. A result of some of these discussions is that 'propositional argument' can be kept as a merely descriptive term with both the status of these clauses as arguments and their content as propositions no longer being a part of the understanding of such clauses.

The papers collected in this volume take up these issues on the basis of recent developments in the theoretical literature, explore their consequences for the analysis of complement clauses, and integrate insights on the basis of cross-linguistic data including German (with dialectal variants such as Bavarian and Alemannic), English, Dutch (also Brabant Dutch), Old and Modern Greek, Jula (Niger-Congo), Swedish, and Basque, as well as a number of other genetically and typologically diverse languages.

The topic of this volume was discussed at the workshop 'On the nouniness of propositional arguments' organized by the editors of this volume as part of the 43th annual DGfS conference held online via the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg in March 2021. Most of the contributions were presented at the workshop.

The chapters of this book cluster around four recurring topics in the discussion, namely: Why should complement clauses be considered relative clauses and what are the advantages and challenges of the relative-clause analysis? (Section 1); What are the syntactic underpinnings of analyzing complement clauses as nominal phrases? (Section 2); What are the semantic consequences and challenges when treating complement clauses as nouny?

Part I:
Complementation as relativization

Relatively nouny?

Carlos de Cuba

Abstract

This paper focuses on the claim that all complement clauses are relative clauses as proposed by Kayne (2008, 2010). The current interest in the nouniness of propositional complements has led many researchers to adopt the relative clause analysis in their work. While the idea of unifying all complement clauses under one analysis is an attractive one, I argue in this paper that in its present form the RC analysis is not tenable. Though I do not rule out the possibility that some complement clauses can be analyzed as relative clauses, I present evidence that shows it cannot be the case that all of them are. I present a number of examples where the RC analysis makes incorrect predictions, is unable to account for data, or causes us to lose existing analyses of data.

Keywords

Noun complement clause, relative clause, operator movement complementizers, complementizer drop

1 Introduction*

In an effort to reconcile Kayne's (1994) Linear Correspondence Axiom with Chomsky's (1995) Bare Phrase Structure, Kayne (2008), following Guimarães (2000), proposed that a head *x* can merge with itself, yielding the singleton set {x}. This solved a projection problem that occurs when merging two heads that would otherwise be in a symmetrical c-command relationship, causing a linearization problem (with mutual c-command it would be unclear which head should project). An upshot of the proposed analysis in the paper is the claim that nouns do not project.

Given that nouns have traditionally been analyzed as taking a number of different types of complements, the onus was then on Kayne to show that what we have been calling complements of nouns are not in fact complements. Kayne's solution was to propose that instead of clausal complements, we were dealing

* This paper is a revised and updated version of de Cuba (2017), originally published in Glossa. This version provides a number of additional arguments that did not appear in the original version.

Sind Komplementsätze nominal? Positionen der Grammatikschreibung

Gisela Zifonun

Abstract

Wissenschaftliche Grammatiken integrieren Erkenntnisse aus verschiedenen Forschungsfeldern. Dabei können zuvor übersehene Zusammenhänge oder auch Widersprüche aufgedeckt werden. Ob dies auch auf die Frage der Nominalität von Komplementsätzen zutrifft, ist Thema dieses Beitrags. Dazu werden neuere Referenzgrammatiken des Deutschen befragt. Befunde zur Morphologie von Substantiv und Verb, zum Vergleich zwischen Nominalphrasen und (Komplement-)Sätzen sowie zur Semantik der Konstruktionen zeichnen ein uneinheitliches, zum Teil widersprüchliches Bild, was den nominalen Charakter von Komplementsätzen angeht. Eine Nominalitätshierarchie für die verschiedenen Komplementsatztypen wird vorgeschlagen.

Keywords

Wortart, Wortbildung, Relativsatz, Hierarchie, Nominalisierung, Semantik, Verbalität

1 Einleitung

Wissenschaftliche Grammatiken versuchen, den Stand der Forschung in den verschiedenen grammatischen Themenbereichen zu einem Gesamtbild der Grammatik einer Einzelsprache zusammenzufassen. Keine leichte Aufgabe, wenn dabei nicht nur den Ergebnissen aus heterogenen Forschungsfeldern verschiedener theoretischer Strömungen Rechnung getragen werden soll, sondern auch sprachtheoretischen, sprachvergleichenden oder sprachtypologischen Gesichtspunkten sowie neuen empirischen Befunden, die gegebenenfalls mit innovativen Methoden ermittelt wurden. Notwendigerweise wird dabei verdichtet und zusammengefasst. Wissenschaftliche Grammatiken können nicht mit der Forschung konkurrieren, was die argumentativ abgesicherte Analyse im Einzelnen angeht. Stattdessen können sie im besten Fall aus einer übergreifenden Perspektive Zusammenhänge, Korrelationen oder auch Widersprüche zwischen Aussagen offenlegen, die bei der nur auf jeweils wenige Aspekte fokussierten Erforschung von Phänomenen auftreten können.

Dies könnte auch bei der Frage der Nominalität von Komplementsätzen der Fall sein. Im Folgenden werden daher neuere deutsche wissenschaftliche Grammatiken in den Blick genommen und zum Thema befragt. Zunächst wird in Abschnitt 2 untersucht, welche Relevanz das Thema insgesamt für die aktuelle Grammatikschreibung jeweils hat. In den Abschnitten 3 und 4 wird dann behandelt, wie aus grammatischer Sicht auf morphosyntaktischer und semantischer Ebene die Nominalität von Komplementsätzen einzuschätzen ist. Dabei wird in Abschnitt 3 sowohl die Wortarten- und Wortbildungsebene als auch die

Part II:
Complement clauses and nominal structure

(H)óti-clauses from DP to NPhood. The life of a Greek nouny clause*

Richard Faure

Abstract

This article analyzes the nominalizations of (*h*)*óti* 'that'-clauses through the history of Greek. It ties together and accounts for 1) the emergence of overt nominalization with *to* 'the', and 2) the change in distribution (extension to non-factive, non-declarative verbs like *nomízo* 'think'). Crosslinguistically, two factors trigger nominalization: 1) Case marking (subject and after prepositions), and 2) definite interpretation. Focusing on the latter, definiteness comes in two types: weak (factivity) and strong (anaphoricity). The article shows that, in Classical Greek, *hóti*-clauses were DPs. They decomposed into *h*+*óti*, in which *h*- played the role of a weak definite marker. The non-definite (non-nominal) and strong definite roles were covered by other clause-types (infinitival and participial clauses). When *h*- was lost, *óti*-clauses became similar to NPs and were thus available for nominalization. In Modern Greek, nominalization takes on two forms: a silent D to fulfill the weak definite role (replacing *h*-) and the article *to* to fulfill the strong definite role (replacing participial clauses). *Óti*-clauses remained bare with *nomízo* 'think' (replacing infinitival clauses). Thus, the history of Greek displays three possibilities for nominalization: by the definite article, a silent D, or a morpheme within the complementizer. Their distribution is accounted for in terms of weak and strong definiteness.

Keywords

Complement clauses, Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, nominalization, diachrony, definiteness

* I would like to warmly thank the organizers and the audience of the conference 'On the nouniness of propositional arguments' as well as the editors of the present special issue and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions. I am very grateful to Nikos Angelopoulos for his help with the data and a long discussion of the analyses. All remaining errors are of course mine.

On noun-related complementizer clauses

Kalle Müller

Abstract

In recent research, it has been proposed that prima facie complement clauses are more akin to relativization structures. That is, verbs only take nominal complements and what is usually called a verb or a noun complement clause is actually a relative clause to an overt or silent noun. This paper argues that so-called noun complement clauses fall into two categories, neither of which involves complementation or relativization. In the first category, clauses that stand in an identity relation to their head noun are analysed as close appositions. In the second category, where the relation between head noun and clause resembles a head-argument relation, this relation is not established by complementation but mediated through a silent preposition. Both clauses are themselves nouny: they are enshelled within an empty nominal head.

Keywords

Noun complement clause, relative clause, close apposition, abstract object, preposition

1 Introduction

This paper is concerned with examples such as in (1) and draws data mainly from German and English. I will refer to the CPs in (1) by the more neutral term noun-related complementizer clauses (= NCCs).

(1) a. die Behauptung / Tatsache, dass …
b. the claim / fact that …

Cases like in (1) have traditionally been analysed as complement clauses. This, however, raises a number of theoretical issues (Stowell 1981: 197–207; Kayne 2008). In more recent approaches, they have been analysed as relative clauses via movement from inside the subclause (Kayne 2008; Arsenijević 2009).

The main questions of this paper are:

(i) What is the syntactic relationship between noun and NCC?
(ii) How does the syntactic relationship correspond to the semantic relationship?

I will argue that NCCs are neither complement clauses nor Kaynean relative clauses. Semantically, there are two basic kinds of relationship, each of which corresponds to a certain syntactic constellation. Noun and NCC can either refer together to the same object, in which case the NCC is in (close) apposition to the head noun (= Type I), or they can refer to two different objects, in which case they must be mediated by a preposition (= Type II). This latter observation is usually blurred by the fact that the preposition can remain silent and usually has to in

A syntactic account of clausal complementation in Jula*

Alassane Kiemtoré

Abstract

This paper attempts a unified syntactic derivation for clausal complementation in the West African language Jula (Manding-Niger-Congo, SOV) using two mechanisms: predication (cf. Bowers 1993; den Dikken 2006; Citko 2011) and Case assignment à la Koopman (1992). Two types of complement clauses are considered: (i) complement clauses associated with a correlate (CCs$_{+CORR}$), and (ii) complement clauses without a correlate (CCs$_{-CORR}$). Despite their surface differences, I propose deriving the two types from the same underlying structure. The relation between the correlate and complement clause is analyzed as an instance of predication. In this respect, they are both base-generated within a predication phrase in the right periphery of the complementation sentence. The position of the correlate within the matrix clause results from a SpecX-to-SpecX movement triggered by Case assignment, resulting in the surface SOV word order observed in the language. Correlates are sometimes (overtly) absent due to a principle active in Jula grammar according to which the specifier position of a covert Case assigning head must remain covert. By treating the relation between correlate and complement clause as a case of predication, the analysis, in a way, goes against approaches that advocate for the nouniness of complement clauses (cf. Aboh 2005; Arsenijević 2009; Kayne 2014, among others). However, as will be shown, complement clauses in Jula do not behave like nouny clauses.

Keywords

Complement clauses, correlate, case assignment, predication, nouniness of clauses

1 Introduction

This paper takes on a syntactic derivation of clausal complementation in Jula, using the example of finite complement clauses introduced by the say-complementizer *ko*. Nevertheless, before we present the data to be considered in Section 1.4, some preliminary information about Jula is given.

1.1 The language

Jula (aka Dioula or Dyula), spoken in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali, is a West African Mande language (Niger-Congo family), part of the Manding

* This work would have been impossible without the valuable support and contribution of Daniel Hole and Ellen Brandner, as well as the very patient Jula speakers I have worked with: Mahamadou Famanta, Faissa Sigué, Koulsoum Maiga, Daouda Dembélé, Yacouba Dembélé, Dramane Sory, Issa Bella, Lassane Tiendrebeogo, Issouf Son, Kotim Nogo, and many others. I also thank the anonymous reviewers, whose comments and questions have helped improve the paper.

Part III:
Semantic aspects

Definitely factive

Vesela Simeonova

Abstract

In this paper I propose a parallelism between the nominal and verbal domains with regards to non-factivity and factivity: non-factive verbs and nouns combine with CONTENT predicates while factive verbs and nouns combine with definite descriptions of situations that EXEMPLIFY propositions (terms in the sense of Kratzer 2006). Adopting de Cuba's (2007, 2017) proposal for a little *c*P layer selecting CP, the two semantically different types of clauses are represented here syntactically as flavours of the little *c* projection. The proposal thus makes the relationship (long entertained in the literature) between factivity and definiteness formally explicit both from a syntactic and semantic perspective without assuming that factive clauses are covertly headed by a DP projection or are ontologically nominal.

Keywords

Factivity, embedded clauses, content, modification, complementizers, decompositional semantics, relativization

1 Introduction

This paper is on the syntactic and semantic nature of embedded finite clauses under non-factive and factive verbs and nouns and in comparison with relative clauses. The cases of interest are listed in (1–5).

(1) Lorin **said** [that Edna is a thief]. non-factive verb

(2) Lorin **regrets** [that Edna is a thief]. factive verb

(3) the **claim** [that Edna is a thief] non-factive noun

(4) the **fact** [that Edna is a thief] factive noun

(5) the claim [that Lorin has been circulating about Ed] relative clause

(Argument) clauses and definite descriptions*

Jürgen Pafel

Abstract

It has been proposed that some types of clauses should be considered definite descriptions (especially free relatives, interrogatives, and conditionals). I will propose a generalization: All clauses are or contain a definite description (as an argument). I will argue (i) that argument clauses are definite descriptions, (ii) that at least some kinds of adverbial and attributive clauses are predicates including a definite description, and (iii) that independent clauses (as well as illocutive subclauses) include a definite description as the argument of the mood prefix. In each of these cases, the existence of a definite description seems crucial in explaining fundamental semantic facts. Assuming (i), for instance, explains many startling semantic similarities between referential noun phrases and argument clauses. Four types of definite descriptions are identified that are crucial for the semantics of noun phrases and clauses.

Keywords

Semantics, clause, argument clause, noun phrase, definite description, interrogatives

1 Introduction

I will argue that generally there is an intimate connection between clauses – no matter whether they are argument, attributive, adverbial, parenthetical, or independent clauses – on the one hand and definite descriptions of various kinds on the other. As a first step, I will try to show that there is strong evidence for argument clauses being definite descriptions. As a second step, I will take some kinds of non-argument clauses and argue that they have a close connection to definite descriptions, too, resulting in clauses either possibly being definite descriptions themselves or encompassing a definite description (as an argument).

I will use *definite description* as a purely semantic notion: An expression is a definite description iff its semantics can be represented by the description operator (i.e., the iota operator ι) and a predicate. This is a generalization of the use of the term where definite descriptions are noun phrases or determiner phrases with a definite article (see, for instance, Elbourne 2013: 1 for this quite common use). This restricted use is often extended to noun phrases beginning with a possessive or a Saxon genitive and to pronouns as well (see, for example, Heim 2019). However, even this modest extension already calls for a more general notion of a definite description. When, now and then, it is proposed that such and such a type of clause is a definite description (see references in §2 and §5), it is obvious that a semantic notion of definite description is necessary. With such a notion, expressions of various syntactic categories can be definite descriptions: There can be

* I am indebted to Friederike Moltmann and two reviewers for valuable suggestions.

The real semantic value is propositional: German particle verbs and state change

Patrick Brandt

Abstract

We argue that properties with a nominal origin get transferred regularly in certain German particle verb constructions to properties that are propositional insofar as they characterize the temporal structure of eventualities, understood to be described by propositional (= truth-assessable) representations of state changes. Accordingly, the oft-noted perfectivizing function of certain verbal particles like *ein-* in *einfahren* ('pull in', cf. Kühnhold 1972) is the effect of redressing a conflict at the syntax-semantics interface: On the one hand, constructions like *in* [*die Grube*]^{ACC} *einfahren* ('pull into the mine') exhibit transitive syntax (Gehrke 2008), requiring that the syntactic arguments be mapped onto well-distinguished or DIFFERENT referents in the semantics (Kemmer 1993). On the other hand, *in*/*ein* codes a spatio-temporal inclusion relation between its relata, contradicting the requirement imposed by the transitive syntax. Following Brandt (2019), we submit that the interface executes a manoeuvre that delays the interpretation of part of the contradiction-inducing DIFFERENCE feature. It is not locally interpreted (semantically represented) *in toto* but in part passed on to the next syntactic-semantic computational cycle. Here, the passed-on meaning is interpreted in the locally customary terms, in the case at hand, as a temporal index where the post-state of the depicted eventuality does not hold.

Keywords

Transitivity, state change, case, difference, redress, syntax-semantics interface

1 Introduction

The referents of nominal versus propositional expressions are usually treated as fundamentally different: Nouns or their projections are taken to denote (sets of) ordinary individuals (persons, tables) of type e(ntity), while sentences are taken to denote propositions that correspond to (sets of) truth values of type t(ruth).[1] Following Frege's (1892) seminal work, however, the denotations of nominal and propositional expressions are the same at an even more fundamental level: As saturated expressions, both types eventually refer to "Gegenstände" ('objects'), as opposed to unsaturated "Funktionen" ('functions'). Frege (1892 [1994: 30]) reasons as follows (my translation):

> An assertive sentence contains no empty position, which is why its meaning is to be regarded as an object. Indeed, this meaning is its truth value. Therefore, the two truth values are objects.

[1] Beyond these basic cases, quantified NPs such as *every linguist* or *no philosopher* are best regarded as relations between sets (generalized quantifiers); cf. Montague (1973).

Part IV:
Aspects based on dependent verb-second

Reconsidering the syntax of correlates and propositional arguments*

Andreas Blümel & Nobu Goto

Abstract

This paper proposes a novel approach to the syntax of pronominal correlates and propositional arguments as well as nominals which take clausal complements. It does so based on recent - computationally efficient labeling algorithm instead (cf. Chomsky 2013, 2015). This framework has inspired the idea that root clauses may or even must remain unlabeled, i.e., exocentric (cf. Goto 2013a; Blümel 2017). Adopting these ideas, we show how certain illicit cases can be reinterpreted in terms of association between pronominal correlates, propositional arguments, and impossible root clauses as complements to nouns in German.

Keywords

Propositional arguments of nouns, correlates, root clauses, labeling theory

1 Introduction

In this paper, we reconsider well-known instances of nominal correlates and their associated propositional arguments primarily in German and suggest a novel generalization with respect to their syntax. The generalization is given in (1):

(1) *Label-requirement of correlate-clause associations (LRCCA)*
The association of a correlate with a sentential argument requires a category label on that sentential argument.

* For valuable suggestions and questions we are indebted to two anonymous reviewers and to participants of the workshop 'On the nouniness of propositional arguments' at the 43rd Annual Conference of the German Linguistic Society (DGfS). We thank the editors of this special issue for their efforts and patience, as well as Kirsten Brock for her meticulous corrections.

The first-mentioned author acknowledges that the current work is funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) – project number 499585967, entitled *Revisiting Phrasal Units in the Nominal Domain/Neue Wege zur Nominalgruppe*.

On the conditional nature of V2-clauses in desire reports of German

Frank Sode

Abstract

This paper presents new morpho-syntactic and semantic evidence in support of the hypothesis that embedded V2-clauses in desire reports are a type of IF-clause. The use of this type of IF-clause is restricted to conditional evaluative constructions in which the conditional modal operator only contributes to the thematic argument of the evaluative predicate. This assessment is supported by cross-linguistic evidence and theoretical considerations. The conclusion is that embedded V2-clauses in desire reports and embedded declarative V2-clauses are two different clause types.

Keywords

Verb second, preference predicates, non-logical *if*-clauses, conditionals, subjunctive mood

1 Introduction

There are predicates that allow an embedded verb second clause (=V2-clause) to semantically relate to their content-denoting argument position. I will call the V2-clauses in these constructions '**content related V2-clauses**' (=ContV2s) and the corresponding predicates '**ContV2-licensors**'. The topic of this paper is a subclass of ContV2s that semantically relate to the content-denoting argument position of certain priority-oriented modal evaluative predicates such as preference predicates, as for example *vorziehen* ('prefer') in (1a), evaluative adjectives, as for example *gut* ('good') in (1b) and (2a) or *lieb* ('dear') in (2b), and desire predicates, as for example *wollen* ('want') and *wünschen* ('wish') in (2c).[1, 2, 3]

[1] I use the term 'evaluative' as it is used in the literature on gradable adjectives, i.e., to indicate that the corresponding predicates are gradable and involve measure functions. I call the predicates 'modal' since what is evaluated in the relevant examples are possibilities (=possible worlds or sets of possible worlds). The term 'priority-oriented modality' is introduced in Portner (2009).

[2] In the German literature on embedded V2-clauses the predicates in (1) and (2) are often grouped together under the label 'Präferenzprädikate' ('preference predicates'). I avoid this label since with the exception of the predicate *vorziehen* in (1a) none of the predicates in (1) and (2) lexically encode a preference relation in the narrow sense of preferring one possibility over another. 'Preference' understood in a wider sense falls together with 'priority-oriented modality'.

[3] Other modal evaluative predicates that belong in this class are: *schön* ('nice'), *einfach* ('easy'), *sicher* ('safe'), *bequem* ('convenient'), *schlau* ('clever') and *vernünftig* ('reasonable'). This list is based on examples given in Frank (1998). Another predicate is *wohl* ('well') as in *Mir wäre wohler, du kämst alleine* ('I would prefer (it) if you came alone').