LFG and the typology of complementizer constructions
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1. INTRODUCTION: The category complementizer may justly be claimed to be one of the discoveries of modern linguistics. Where many categories and relations (noun, subject, etc) have passed, often seamlessly, from traditional grammar into modern theory, complementizer made its debut in Rosenbaum (1967), was established as a significant player in Bresnan (1970), acquired a leading role in Lectures on Government & Binding (Chomsky 1981) and achieved true syntactic stardom as the clausal head in the Barriers (Chomsky 1986) system before exploding into, at the latest count, six different functional heads in the work of Rizzi (1997, 2001), Benincà (2001) and others engaged in the so-called ‘cartographic’ approach to mapping out the structure of the clause. Our goal here is to review a number of typologically diverse complementizer effects, and to argue that the crucial role of a c-structure C system has been exaggerated, and derives from an over-insistence on certain parochial properties of modern English syntax at the expense of wider typological considerations. We suggest there has been a systematic confusion between complementizer as position and as function, and that a model like LFG where position and function are represented on separate planes is better equipped to model the typological diversity displayed by natural languages in this domain.

2. MISMATCH I: C BY POSITION BUT NOT BY FUNCTION: In Pennsylvania German (PG) the element which originates as the complementizer in purposive constructions, *fer*, has spread throughout the complementation system. A simultaneous change has led to the almost total loss of *zu*, so that *fer* has entirely replaced *zu* for many speakers (Börjars & Burridge 2003). Contrast (1a) vs (1b) and (2a) vs (2b):

(1) a) No hot sie so hatt browiert *fer* alles sauwer halde. PG
then has she so hard tried FER everything clean keep
‘Then she tried so hard to keep everything clean.’

b) Sie hat probiert alles sauber *zu* halten. StG
she has tried everything clean zu keep
‘She has tried to keep everything clean.’

(2) a) Ich hoff *fer* glei fatt gee. PG
I hope FER soon away go
‘I hope to go away soon.’

b) Ich hoffe gleich fort *zu* gehen. StG
I hope soon away zu go
‘I hope to go away soon.’

There is strong evidence to suggest that *fer* in PG has taken the same path of grammaticalisation as *zu* has done in earlier forms of German, yet the functional and structural aspects of grammaticalisation have not progressed in parallel. Functionally, *fer* has passed through all the stages in Hasplemath’s (1989) cline from purposive to infinitival. Nonetheless it has maintained the clause-initial position associated with it in its earlier complementizing role, occurring outside the marker of negation. Within a derivational model of syntax this would require an illicit ‘downward’ movement, whereas in LFG it is a simple matter to relate a non-canonical position in c-structure with the f-structural content associated with an IP.

3. MISMATCH II: C BY FUNCTION BUT NOT BY POSITION: Simpson (1988) pointed to the existence in a number of Australian languages of case suffixes which served a complementizing function. In principle it would not be impossible to insert the case suffix under C and move the verb to join it in C. However, if, as Simpson argues (1988: 217), it is better to treat nominal case and complementizer case as the same
morpheme, then a model where the case function can be mapped to noun or clause as appropriate without an intervening CP layer is preferable. A similar argument can be made for the Indo-European accusative and infinitive construction, where the accusative case appears on the nominal subject but expresses the object function of the clause as a whole. Once again a model with a fixed positional architecture obscures the most economical statement of the facts.

4. DOUBLE COMPLEMENTIZERS (TOO MANY C’S): Mediaeval Romance languages show a double complementizer effect in examples like the Old Florentine (3), where che ‘that’ occurs both before a conditional protasis (and other topical material) and again before the main clause (Wanner 1995).

(3) però vi priego in lealtade e fede che, se ttue vuoli del mio avere, che ttu ne tolghi
‘therefore I beg you in loyalty and faith that if you want some of my wealth that you should take it’

On a model such as Rizzi’s (1997) and Benincà’s (2001), data of this kind are taken to support a series of stacked topic/focus projections in the so-called ‘C-field’ (itself an ill defined entity); cf Paoli (2003). This model also requires movement through the various layers of C (Ledgeway 2003), but does not account for the fact that the double C is not realized except when overt material intervenes. We propose an analysis with a separate i-structure projection and an alignment constraint placing the C at the left edge of its clause. The ALIGN LEFT constraint is independently required for complementizer placement in other languages (including of course English), but is here exceptionally allowed to apply both to the smaller and larger clauses. We argue that this permits a more economical and compact analysis than does a system which permits unconstrained iteration of many layers of (usually empty) functional structure. The recent discovery of a double de construction in Old Sardinian (Vincent, Bentley & Samu 2004) confirms our analysis since for Rizzi che/que but not di/de can be separated from the verb (cf also Kayne 1999).

5. NULL COMPLEMENTIZERS (TOO FEW C’S): In contexts where no overt complementizer surfaces, a null category is required in turn demanding licensing by uninterpretable features such as EPP and Case (Boskovic & Lasnik 2003). Economy of expression within LFG by contrast eliminates both the null categories and the features while still permitting the statement of the relevant generalizations.

6. ENGLISH THAT: English that is often taken to be the archetypal instance of clause initial, C head. Yet Pesetsky & Torrego (2001), in order to achieve a common analysis of the complementizer in declarative and interrogative clauses are forced to postulate that that originates in T and is subsequently moved to C (though under conditions which on their own admission (p.372) are far from clear). The problem, we suggest, is one of their own making and disappears if we do not require a single universal c-structure which holds across all languages and all constructions within a single language.

7. THE ROLE OF C IN WH-CONSTRUCTIONS: The evidence of wh-constructions is frequently adduced to support the need for a C-projection. However, cross-linguistically we find at least two types of language where requiring a CP in an interrogative clause is more a hindrance than a benefit. The first type are so-called wh-in situ languages like Chinese and Japanese, where there is no overt movement and thus no call for a C head. Second, some multiple wh-fronting languages such as Serbo-Croat give wrong results in terms of Superiority effects if an analysis involving movement to CP is assumed (Boskovic 2003). We show that the consistent property in all wh-constructions is a FOCUS relation plus functional uncertainty but that there is no common universal c-structure nor parametric variation in feature strength.

8. CONCLUSION: In conclusion we argue that LFG, by exploiting the independently motivated distinctions between c-, i- and f-structure, together with an alignment constraints to state the correct surface positioning, can achieve a full empirical coverage of the typologically attested complementizer effects without recourse to ad hoc theoretical mechanisms such as:
• uninterpretable features such as Case and EPP
• a distinction between ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ versions of each feature
• movement rules which displace items into C
• null C heads
• the fragmentation of C into a proliferating series of functional heads.
REFERENCES


