[ADNOMINAL COMPLETIVE CLAUSES]

[Propositional value, modality, grammaticalization]

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[The completive clause]

Nominal subordinate clause (‘that-clause’)
Different functions of That / Que
Relativity (Antecedent)
Adnominal use
Structure of the nominal group
No nucleus
Determinate, substantive group, consisting of nucleus and adnominals
The idea that this New York team might be the best ever
The fact that President Bush conquered Iraq
The belief that Jeb will someday be President of the United States
Few studies of the subject

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[The issues]

› When can a nominal group have an adnominal completeive clause?
  › *The baker that President Bush conquered Iraq
  › *The meeting that Jeb will someday be President of the United States
  › ??The joke that the Bush family will return to the White House

› What is the value of it when it is there?
  › The idea that Peter is elegant vs. The idea of Peter's elegance

› Compound conjunction and adnominal completeive clause
  › The fact that the Yankees won made me very happy
  › That the Yankees won made me very happy

[Theoretical framework]

› Modular approach (Nølke 1994)
  › Description of theoretical aspects in mutually independent modules (separate 'miniature theories')
  › Link the linguistic form to the linguistic meaning
  › Assures value of explanation/prediction of results
  › Links between modules (meta-rules): None assumed beforehand
  › A series of methodological principles governing the application of the approach
    › Most notably the mutual independence of the modules, and principle of global accessibility
    › Modules evolve, target the solution of a specific problem
[Syntagmatic structure]

Grammaticality, order of elements, constituent structure
- Possible and impossible structures
- Starting module in every analysis
  - Does not assume privileged status, nor that syntax is primordial!
  - Observable data, study of linguistic form
- Overall syntagmatic structure of the nominal group
  - (DET) Adjectives – Nucleus – Prepositional group – Subordinate clauses
    - The quick brown fox from the forest that I saw yesterday
    - The incredible fact that Angelina Jolie has been signed to star in a movie about her
    - Not really this level of the syntagmatic structure that is interesting here

[Syntagmatic structure]
Possible structures

- Avoid support verb constructions
- Nouns that can be combined with a completive clause
  - Possibility/probability, fact, idea, thought, belief, conclusion, argument, opinion, impression
  - Adapted from a list of nouns of this property in French (Chevalier & Léard 1996, Jønsson forthc.)
  - Frequency (Fact, Idea by far the most frequent)
- Alternative constructions
  - Support verbs (with marginal members of the class of nouns with completives)
    - I have the impression that P / came to the conclusion that P / “have the fact that P
    - I put out the word that you were lookin’ / ??The word that you’re looking seems wrong
  - Adnominal prepositional group
    - The idea that Peter is elegant / The idea of Peter’s elegance
[Predicational structure]

Overall description of adnominals’ relation to the noun
- Noun as predicate
- Arguments vs. modifiers
  - The conquest of Iraq by President Bush (in 2003)
  - Correspondance to members of the phrase (Valency in derived nouns)
  - The roof of the house was on fire
  - Peter’s sister is pregnant again
  - Inherent valency in primary nominal predicates
  - The two big black dogs on the table
  - Classes of modifiers: Quantity, quality, location (Rijkhoff 2002)

Adnominal completive

Valency?
- I conclude that Iraq has been conquered
- I’ve come to the conclusion that Iraq has been conquered
- The fact that P / The idea that P
- No direct derivation, inheritance of arguments
- Criteria: Possibility of a possessive pronoun as determiner (His idea that P?)

Co-reference
- The fact that P > P is a fact
  - Apposition (Muller 1996, 2002) – completive clause with a nominal antecedent
  - Modus/dictum (Ballier 2008): The completive clause is the dictum and the noun is the modus (commentary to content of completive)
  - How many nouns? P is an idea?
[Grammaticalization]

› Gradual change (through use) from lexical item to grammatical item
  › Less exact meaning, Fact as a semantically bleached noun
  › Grammaticalized conjunction
      › [The fact that] Peter won surprised me / [That] Peter won surprised me
      › Fact instead of conjunction
      › I hate the fact women like Luke Walton
      › I hate the fact D.J. Mbenga has a publicist

[Grammaticalization]

› Co-existence (Hopper & Traugott 2003)
  › Lexical form continues to exist alongside grammatical form
  › E.g. Go in English is both auxiliary verb and lexical verb.

› Only fact?
  › Semantically very weak (more so than e.g. Idea, Thought)
  › Requires context that does not refer to the denotation of the noun
  › Shows where there has not been grammaticalization
  › The mere fact that something is true doesn’t mean you should say it
  › People’s response to the fact that I am a computer
[Reference and determination]

- Special connection between the determiner and the adnominal completive?
- Almost exclusively a definite article as determiner (in French examples, at least)
- Adnominal on another level: Nominal group/determiner
  - The idea of Peter’s elegance / The idea that Peter is elegant
  - Coherent with theory that the noun is subordinated
- Indefinite determiners possible?
  - French: Une affirmation que P
  - Support verb constructions

[Entity order]

- Lyons (1977), Dik (1997)
  - First order: Things; Second order: Events; Third order: Propositions
- A nominal group with adnominal completive clause denotes an entity of the third order
  - Same value as proposition, from the completive clause
  - Inspired by Hengeveld (2008), who classifies Fact as a noun of the third order
- Prominent hypothesis in Jønsson (forthc. [written in 2008])
  - Too many counterexamples to maintain as a general hypothesis
    - J’ai passé tout l’après-midi dans l’attente que P (French, 2nd order)
    - Might be relevant for Fact
      - Determined by noun, not group structure nor presence of completive clause
[Expansion of the analysis?]

› Other, and more, modules could be dictated by the data
  › Modality?
    › Mood is a big question in dealing with completive clauses in French
  › Textual structure
    › How nominal groups with adnominal completives are used
      › Genre: Primarily in journalism (French)
  › Cross-linguistic perspective
    › Compare results from French, English, etc.

[Final remarks]

› Work in progress
  › Builds on general study of the nominal group’s structure in a modular approach
  › Not really cross-linguistic (as yet)
  › No conclusions, exact rules

› Formulate meta-rules
  › Starts with Syntagmatic structure (observations, grammatical rules)
  › Extremely difficult to formulate (depend on precise local rules)
  › Will constitute the actual result of this analysis (sometime in 2011)
Selected references


Selected references (2)

Selected references (3)

› Stage, L. (1997): “La transposition des actants dans le syntagme nominal”. In Revue Romane, no. 32, 1, pp. 51-86.