

## Complementizer Agreement and the relation between C° and T°<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. The issue

A substantial set of West-Germanic dialects displays Complementizer Agreement, henceforth CA (cf. among others Bayer 1984; Haegeman 1992; Zwart 1993, 1997; Law 1991; Carstens 2003). Consider an example of this phenomenon in (1) (from Barbiers et al. 2005).

- (1) a. ... **dat ik** zuinig leef.  
          that I frugal live<sub>SG</sub>  
          ‘...that I live frugally.’
- b. ... **datt-e we / jullie / hullie** gewoon lev-e  
          that-<sub>PL</sub> we / you<sub>PL</sub> / they normal live-<sub>PL</sub>  
          ‘...that we / you / they live normally.’ (Katwijk Dutch)

The Katwijk Dutch complementizer *dat* ‘that’ agrees in number with the subject of the embedded clause: when the subject is plural there is inflectional morphology on the complementizer. Note that in these examples not only the complementizer agrees with the subject, but also the finite verb.

There are a number of analyses of CA. In the majority of these, CA has been presented as (the core piece of) evidence in support of the hypothesis that there is a close connection between C° and T° (cf. among others den Besten 1977, 1989, Zwart 1993, 1997; Chomsky 2005). The first implementation of this connection is found in analyses in which CA is taken to reflect the movement of a functional head position in the IP-domain (or the features of such a head), either I°, T° or AgrS°, to C° (cf. den Besten 1977, 1989, Zwart 1993, 1997; Hoekstra & Maracz 1989; Watanabe 2000). The second implementation of this connection between T° and C° was put forward in Chomsky (2005), who argues that the  $\phi$ -features of T° (realized as TA) are inherited from C°. T° enters the derivation without  $\phi$ -features, and it gets them from C° upon merger of the latter. The fact that in some languages agreement is actually spelled out

on a  $C^\circ$ -related element like the complementizer seems to support the idea that  $C^\circ$  starts out with  $\phi$ -features. More precisely, Chomsky (2005) states that “sometimes the  $\phi$ -features of  $C$  are morphologically expressed, as in the famous West Flemish examples”. Most likely, reference is being made here to the CA examples discussed in, for instance, Haegeman (1992).

In both these implementations CA is seen as an additional reflex of the feature checking relation between  $T^\circ$  and the subject, which leads to verbal agreement (henceforth TA).<sup>3</sup> If the  $\phi$ -features features on  $C^\circ$  and on  $T^\circ$  are in fact one and the same set of features, the clear prediction must be that the  $\phi$ -features spelled out on the complementizer have to be the identical to those spelled out on the finite verb.

The goal of this paper is twofold. (i) We will first provide empirical evidence to challenge the claims according to which there is a featural dependency between  $T^\circ$  and  $C^\circ$ . We will also briefly discuss some alternative proposals which also are shown to be empirically inadequate. (ii) We will elaborate on West Flemish External Possessor Agreement (EPA), the pattern which is a cornerstone of our argumentation and which has hitherto not been observed or discussed in the literature.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we show that CA and TA do not result from the same feature checking relation. In section 3 we argue against some alternative (non-syntactic) analyses of CA, including feature checking at the PF-interface via linear adjacency and prosodic domains (Fuß 2007,2008, Ackema & Neeleman 2004, Miyagawa 2009), as well as analyses in terms of analogy (Kathol 2001, Zwart 2006). The data presented lead to the conclusion that CA is the result of a different syntactic feature checking relation than TA, along the lines of Carstens (2003, 2009). In section 4, we discuss the (novel) EPA data in some more detail.

## **2. Empirical evidence against a $\phi$ -feature dependency between $T^\circ$ and $C^\circ$**

Two sets of data from Dutch dialects serve to show that the  $\phi$ -features of  $C^\circ$  are not simply an additional reflex of the agreement relation between  $T^\circ$  and the subject. The first set of data concerns agreement with coordinated subjects in Limburgian and the second set agreement with a special type of possessor construction in West Flemish.

### 2.1. Agreement with coordinated subjects in Limburgian

The Limburgian CA-paradigm is quite poor (as most CA-paradigms are, see Hoekstra & Smits 1998): the complementizer agrees only with the second person singular subject *doow* ‘you’, see (2), and not with any other subject.

- (2) Ich denk de-s **doow** Marie ontmoet-s.  
I think that-2sg you<sub>sg</sub> Marie meet-2sg  
‘I think that you will meet Marie.’ (Limburgian)

The finite verb also agrees with the second person subject in this example. The ending on the complementizer and the verb is the same, namely an s-suffix. This seems to confirm the idea that the agreement on the complementizer is in some way dependent upon the agreement on the finite verb.

The example in (3), however, shows that this idea cannot be maintained.

- (3) Ich dink de-s [ toow en Marie] kump.  
I think that-2sg you<sub>sg</sub> and Marie come<sub>pl</sub>  
‘I think that you and Marie will come.’

The subject in this example is a coordination of a second person singular first conjunct and a third person singular proper name as a second conjunct.<sup>5</sup> The finite verb appears in the plural, agreeing with the complete coordination. The complementizer, on the other hand, agrees with the second person singular first conjunct. This clearly shows that the agreement on the complementizer and the agreement on the finite verb are not the result of the same  $\phi$ -feature checking relation. Hence, CA cannot be used as an argument in favor of the idea that C and T share the same set of  $\phi$ -features.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2. Agreement with external possessors in West Flemish

A similar argument can be found in a slightly different setting in West-Flemish (WF). WF has a generalized CA-paradigm (see Haegeman 1992 for details), in which not





at PF against the interpretable features of the subject within this prosodic domain, resulting in CA.<sup>89</sup>

Another implementation of this idea is put forward by Miyagawa (2009). He argues that CA is the result of string adjacency at PF. In particular he says: ‘[...] I will speculate that the complementizer portion of the agreement receives its valuation not in narrow syntax but in PF’ (Miyagawa 2009:68) and ‘[...] it appears that in complementizer agreement, the probe-goal relation is established strictly through string adjacency, of the type familiar in phrasal phonology’ (Miyagawa 2009:124). Similar linear adjacency approaches are found in Kathol (2001) and Zwart (2006), who appeal to analogy to account for CA.

Sections 3.1. and 3.2. provide arguments against these adjacency approaches. The first argument comes from cases where there is no adjacency or prosodic phrasing between C° and the subject, yet there is CA. The second argument shows that CA is sensitive to the internal structure of the subject. We show that this is unexpected from the point of view that CA is the result of simple adjacency or prosodic phrasing.

### 3.1 Linear adjacency/prosodic phrasing and CA (WF)

A linear adjacency or prosodic phrasing approach to CA predicts (i) that CA will be triggered if there are  $\phi$ -features adjacent to C° and (ii) that CA will not be triggered by the subject if C° is separated from the subject by another XP. We show that both predictions are falsified by West-Flemish data.

Consider the examples in (8). The complementizer *dat* ‘that’ in (8a) is the form that arises with a singular third person subject, as expected with the subject *zelfs Valère* ‘even Valère’. West Flemish has the very marginal option to front a focused direct object across the subject. Fronting a third person plural direct object leads to a configuration in which the complementizer will be adjacent to a set of third person plural interpretable features, see (8b-c). However, this configuration does not lead to (the expected) CA with fronted object DP.<sup>10</sup>

- (8) a. kpeinzen dat **zelfs Valère** zukken boeken niet leest.  
       I.think that even Valère such books not reads
- b. ?? kpeinzen {dat zukken boeken} **zelfs Valère** niet leest.

- I.think that such books even Valère not reads  
 c. \* kpeinzen {da-n zukken boeken} **zelfs Valère** niet leest.  
 I.think that-<sub>PL</sub> such books even Valère not reads  
 ‘I think that even Valère would not read such books.’ (West Flemish)

These examples are problematic for PF-analyses of CA in yet another way. Consider the examples in (9) (see also Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2002, Haeberli 1999 for similar examples) with a plural subject *zelfs men broers* ‘even my brothers’ co occurs with a singular direct object *zuknen boek* ‘such a book’. In (9b) the singular object is focussed past the plural subject.

- (9) a. kpeinzen **da-n**/\*dat **zelfs men broers** zuknen boek niet lezen.  
 I.think that-<sub>PL</sub>/\*that even my brothers such.a book not read  
 b ?? kpeinzen **da-n** zuknen boek **zelfs men broers** niet lezen.  
 I.think that-<sub>PL</sub> such.a book even my brothers not read  
 c \* kpeinzen **dat** zuknen boek **zelfs men broers** niet lezen.  
 I.think that such.a book even my brothers not read  
 ‘I think that even my brother do not read such a book.’

In (9a) the complementizer *dan* ‘that’ in C° and the subject *zelfs men broers* ‘even my brothers’ agree in  $\phi$ -features. In (9b-c) the complementizer and the plural subject are not linearly adjacent and they are not in one prosodic domain. Nevertheless, this configuration does lead to CA with the plural subject, which is unexpected from a prosodic phrasing or linear adjacency approach. (10) shows the same pattern but with an adverb rather than an arguments intervening between the complementizer and the subject. The complementizer *dan* ‘that’ in C° and the subject *men twee broers* (‘my two brothers’) are not in one prosodic domain and they are not linearly adjacent. However, this configuration leads to CA.

- (10) a. ... **da-n**/?\*dat toen juste **men twee broers** kwamen.  
 that-<sub>PL</sub>/that then just my two broers came
- b. ... **da-n**/?\*dat juste ip dienen moment **men twee broers** kwamen.  
 that-<sub>PL</sub>/that just at that time my two brothers came  
 ‘...that my two brothers came in just at that moment.’

### 3.2 Linear adjacency/prosodic phrasing and CA in a subset of the cases

Another empirical argument against a linear adjacency account comes from the comparison between (11a) and (11b). (11a) displays the external possessor pattern discussed above: in (11b) the possessor and the possessum form one constituent.

- (11) a. **omda-n**/\*omdat **André en Valère** tun juste **underen computer**  
 because-<sub>PL</sub>/because André and Valère then just their computer  
 kapot **was**.  
 broken WAS<sub>SG</sub>
- b. **omdat**/\*omda-n **André en Valère** **underen computer** kapot **was**.  
 because/because-<sub>PL</sub> André and Valère their computer broken was  
 ‘...because André and Valère’s computer was broken’. (West-Flemish)

In both (11a) and (11b), the complementizer *omdat/omdan* ‘because’ in C° and the possessor *André en Valère* (‘André and Valère’) are in one prosodic domain (and linearly adjacent). However, this configuration leads to CA with the possessor in *André and Valère* in (11a), which displays the discontinuous possessor pattern, but not in (11b) in which the possessor is part of the DP containing the *possessum*.

### 3.3. Summary

The data presented in this section show that CA does not result from a  $\phi$ -feature checking relation at PF via either string adjacency (contra Miyagawa 2009) or prosodic phrasing (contra Ackema & Neeleman 2004).



## 4. External Possessor Agreement

In this section we expand on the WF External Possessor Agreement pattern, which is one cornerstone of our analysis. Though a full analysis would take us too far, we will present the crucial properties of the construction and sketch a line of analysis.

### 4.1. The properties of the External Possessor construction in Flemish

As already discussed the crucial property of EPA is that, put informally, the subject seems to be split into a lower *possessum* subject and a higher possessor subject. The former agrees with the finite verb, the latter displays CA. In this section we list the main properties of EPA and we outline an analysis. In addition to shedding new light on the problem of CA, the WF data are also relevant for the study of the architecture of the subject positions (see Cardinaletti 1997, 2004)

#### 4.1.1. The *possessum DP* is *VP external*

As shown by (12) in the EPA pattern both the EP and the *possessum DP* are VP external: in (12a) both the EP *Valère* ‘Valère’ and the *possessum* *zen broere* ‘his brother’ precede the marker of sentential negation *niet* which is external to vP, in (12b) they appear to the left of an adjunct (*were* ‘again’) and a floating quantifier (*al* ‘all’), in (12c) they precede the temporal adjunct *atent* (‘always’).

- (12) a ... dat Valère tun juste zen broere **niet** in Gent was.  
that Valère then just his brother not in Gent was  
‘...that just then Valère’s brother wasn’t in Ghent.’
- b ... dat Valère tun juste zen koeien **were al** ziek woaren.  
that Valère then just his cows again all ill were  
‘...that just then Valère’s cows were again all ill.’
- c ... dat Valère tegenwoordig zenen GSM **atent** an stoat.  
that Valère these days his mobile always on stands  
‘...that nowadays Valère’s mobile phone is always switched on.’

We assume that the possessum has moved to the canonical subject position, which we provisionally<sup>11</sup> identify as SpecTP. We come back to the position of the EP below in section 4.1.3.

#### 4.1.2. *The External Possessor has subject properties*

In addition to triggering CA, the EP displays a second subject property: (i) for speakers who allow for a pronominal variant of the EP it cannot be realized as a dative (13) but it has to be realized as a nominative (14).

- (13) a \* ... dat **eur ier** tun juste **eur scheerapparaat** kapot was.  
           that<sub>-SG</sub> her here then just her razor broken was
- b \* ... dat/da-n **under** tun juste **underen computer** kapot was.  
           that<sub>SG</sub>/that<sub>-PL</sub> them then just their computer broken was
- (14) a %?? ... dat **zie ier** tun juste **eur scheerapparaat** kapot was.  
           that she here then just her razor broken was
- b %?? ... da-n **zunder** tun juste **underen computer** kapot was.  
           that<sub>-PL</sub> they then just their computer broken was

#### 4.1.3. *The External Possessor occupies a position higher than the canonical subject position*

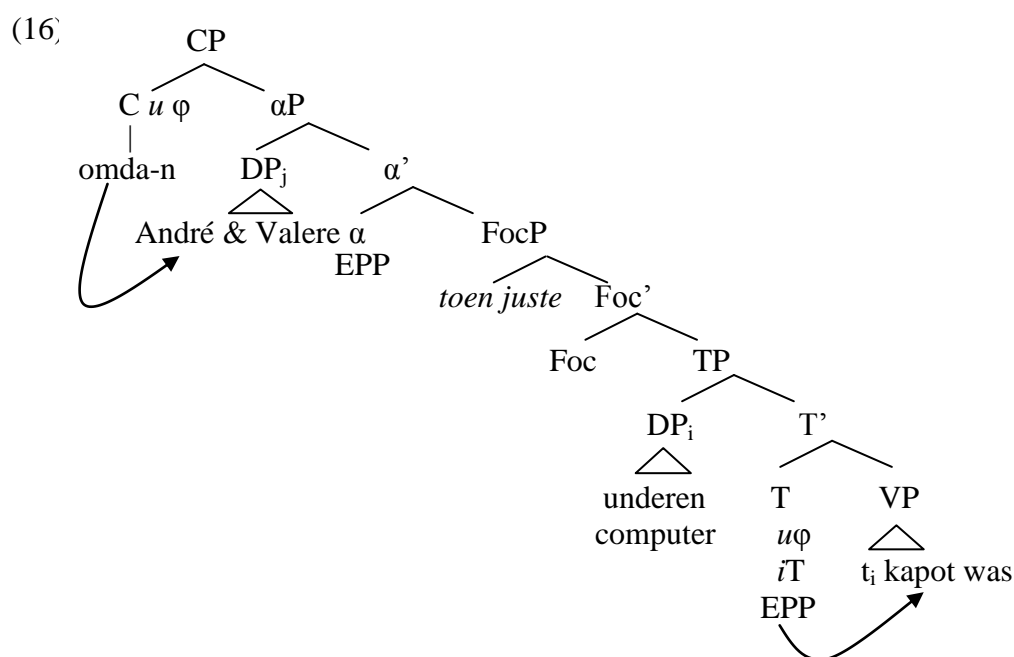
As shown in (15), in EPA patterns the possessor and the *possessum* are separated by an adjunct that modifies the clausal domain: in (15a) this is a focused temporal adjunct *tun juste* ‘just then’. This adjunct is a crucial ingredient in licensing EPA: without it EPA is not possible, as shown in (15b).

- (15) a. omdat/omda-n André en Valère **tun juste** underen  
           because/because<sub>-PL</sub> André and Valère then just their  
           computer kapot was.  
           computer broken **was**<sub>-SG</sub>
- b. **omdat**/\*omda-n André en Valère underen computer kapot was.  
           because/because<sub>-PL</sub> André and Valère their computer broken was  
           ‘...because André and Valère’s computer had broken down (just then).’

We postulate that the presence of the focused temporal adjunct defines two domains for the subject: the lower SpecTP (i.e. the canonical subject position) and a higher position. Tentatively, given the subject properties of the EP, we identify this position as an A-position which, following Miyagawa (2009: chapter 3) we label  $\alpha$ P. Our proposal is in the spirit of a number of recent proposals for the architecture of the high IP domain such as Saito's (2006) 'Theme projection', Shlonsky's (1994) AgrCP, the high SubjP proposed in Cardinaletti (1997, 2004), Rizzi (2007<sup>12</sup>), Rizzi and Shlonsky (2005, 2006), Tortora and Den Dikken (2009), and the high Topic position in the middle field proposed in Frey (2000, 2004) and Grewendorf (2005). We postulate that the projection of the position is licensed by the availability of the focused adjunct, though the precise conditions that are at stake remain to be worked out.

#### 4.2. CA and the External Possessor: two probes, two goals

The focused temporal adjunct is merged in a focus projection which allows for the projection of the high subject projection. Along the lines of Carstens (2003), we propose that both T and C are associated with uninterpretable features: C agrees with the most local goal, the external possessor base-generated in  $\alpha$ P<sup>13</sup>; T agrees with the most local goal, the subject in Spec,V. (16) is a representation of (15a)<sup>14,15</sup>:



Since the focus of our paper is CA we have so far only illustrated EPA in embedded domains. An important observation, however, is that EPA is actually only available in embedded domains, and that it is incompatible with T to C movement: (16) shows that, regardless of the agreement patterns, EPA is not available in subject initial and non subject initial V2 root clauses:

- (17) a \* Jehan was toen juste zen scheerapparoat kapot.  
           Johan was then just his razor broken
- b \* Jehan was/woaren toen juste zen computers kapot.  
           Johan was/were then just his computers broken
- c \* Was Jehan toen juste zen scheerapparoat kapot?  
           was Johan then just his razor broken
- d \* Was/woaren Jehan toen juste zen computers kapot?  
           was/were Johan then just his computers broken

We assume that the availability of EPA is dependent on the licensing of nominative case on the external possessor (see section 4.1.2). In embedded clauses, the uninterpretable  $\phi$ -features on C act as a probe and CA can introduce an additional instance of Nominative case, thus licensing the external possessor (cf. also Haegeman 1986, 1992). In non-embedded (V2) clauses, however, head movement from T to C checks off the uninterpretable  $\phi$ -features of C (Den Besten 1977, 1989), this means that C is no longer a probe, and that the additional nominative case required for licensing of the external possessor is unavailable.<sup>16</sup>

The analysis of EPA provided here crucially depends on the hypothesis that CA and TA do not result from one and the same feature checking relation between  $\phi$  - features of  $T^\circ$  and the subject. CA with the external possessor signals the presence of a discrete  $\phi$ -feature set in  $C^\circ$ , which appears in addition to the  $\phi$  -feature sent in  $T^\circ$  that leads to TA.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we hope to have shown that there is empirical evidence showing that CA is neither the result from the sharing of  $\phi$  -features between  $T^\circ$  and  $C^\circ$  nor from a

PF-feature checking relation. The data discussed here also lead to the conclusion that CA cannot be construed as evidence in favor of the claim that there is a  $\phi$ -feature dependency between  $T^\circ$  and  $C^\circ$ . The data discussed, and in particular the WF EPA phenomenon, are support for analyses such as that developed in Carstens (2003) according to which CA is the result of a syntactic  $\phi$ -feature checking relation between the  $\phi$ -features of  $C^\circ$  and the subject and TA is the result of a syntactic  $\phi$ -feature checking relation between  $T^\circ$  and the subject. The Extended Possessor Agreement data also contribute to a further understanding of the architecture of subject positions.

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<sup>3</sup> Fuß (2004, 2005a,b, 2008) also argues that CA is dependent on the features checked in T°. The only difference, however, is that in his analysis the agreement morpheme on the complementizer is inserted post-syntactically. Fuß’ analysis makes the exact same prediction as the analyses discussed in the main text, namely that CA and TA should express the same phi-feature checking relation. Therefore, the empirical problems that we raise for the analyses in the main text also apply to Fuß’ analysis.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Carstens (2003) for additional arguments against a T-to-C movement approach to CA.

<sup>5</sup> The coordinated subject cannot have been derived from sentence coordination and concomitant conjunction reduction as has been argued by Aoun, Benmamoun & Sportiche (1998) for Arabic since the predicate can contain a reciprocal or consist of a verb like *meet* which needs a collective subject (see Van Koppen 2005).

<sup>6</sup> For reasons of space we will not provide further discussion of CA with coordinated subjects. We refer the reader to Van Koppen 2005, 2007, to appear for a detailed analysis.



<sup>7</sup> Chomsky (2006) also seems to suggest something along these lines. He says: “it might be that what appears phonetically at C, in some cases at least, is the result of subsequent concord, not agreement” (Chomsky 2006: fn.28). However, since no further details are given about a formalization of concord, it is difficult to evaluate the implications of this paper. See Carstens 2000, Giusti 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Ackema & Neeleman (2004) provide the following argument in favor of their prosodic checking account. They show that the complementizer and the subject in East Netherlandic is sensitive to intervention of an adverb. If the adverb *op den wärmsten dag van 't joar* ‘on the hottest day of the year’ intervenes between the complementizer *dat/darre* ‘that’ and the subject *wiej* ‘we’

- (i) a. ... \*dat/dar-re        wiej    noar    't        park    loop-t.  
                                   that/that-PL        we to     the     park    walk-PL  
                                   ‘...that we are going to the park.’
- b. .. dat/\*darre        op den    wärmsten dag    van    't        joar    ook    wiej  
                                   that/ that-PI        on the    hottest    day    of     the    year    also    we  
                                   noar    't        park    loop-t.  
                                   to     the     park    walk-PL  
                                   ‘..that on the hottest day of the year, we too are going to the park.’

(East Netherlandic, from Ackema & Neeleman 2004)

Van Koppen (2005, to appear) shows that East Netherlandic CA differs significantly from other the more regular instances of CA we find in West Flemish. As we show below, West Flemish allows intervention of this type. The analysis she provides also explains the ungrammaticality of this example. We refer the reader to these papers.

<sup>9</sup> Fuß (2008), see footnote 3, notes that the Limburgian coordination data discussed in section 2.1 are problematic for his analysis. He notes that the dialects which allow this type of agreement with the first conjunct of a coordinated subject have the type of prosodic checking rule proposed by Ackema & Neeleman (2004). However, as we show in the main text, there are several substantial problems for this approach to CA. We refer the reader to Van Koppen (2005) and Van Koppen (to appear) for more detailed arguments against a prosodic checking account of agreement with the first conjunct of a coordinated subject.

<sup>10</sup> Ackema & Neeleman (2004) actually provide this counterexample themselves. They argue that the impossibility of CA with the fronted direct object in this case has to do with the fact that the object is in an A'-position. They assume that phi-features have to be checked against arguments in an A-position. Arguments in an A'-position are not felicitous arguments. With respect to this explanation, the question has to be raised why PF-mechanisms like prosodic checking would be sensitive to the A/A'-distinction.

<sup>11</sup> Adopting an articulated hierarchy of subject positions, as in Tortora and Den Dikken (2009) would have implications for the label of this position. See note 12.

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<sup>12</sup> In the spirit of Rizzi (2007), Tortora and Den Dikken (2009: note 26) assume that SubjP is a non-agreeing position. If our  $\alpha$ P is equated to their SubjP, our proposal remains compatible with their work in that, though the EP does display agreement, it actually agrees with C. Tortora and Den Dikken (2009), as well as Rizzi (2007) focus entirely on TA and have nothing to say about CA. In line with Tortora and Den Dikken (2009) the *possessum*, which does display TA, would have to be in the projection which they label AgrsP (2009: (26a)). Given that we assume that  $\alpha$ P is only projected dependent on the availability of the adjunct, we tentatively have to postulate with Tortora and Den Dikken (2009) that SubjP is not necessarily projected. However, we intend to return to the architecture of subject positions in future work.

<sup>13</sup> See Haegeman (2004) for detailed arguments that external possessors are not extracted from the DP containing the possessor.

<sup>14</sup> When we combine this analysis with the data on CA with coordinated subjects, we expect to find cases in which the complementizer agrees with the first conjunct of the coordinated EP. Unfortunately we have not been able to find a speaker yet who allows both EPA and FCA. Hence we have not been able to test this prediction yet.

<sup>15</sup> In terms of feature inheritance (FI) (16) is problematic in that after FI [ $u\phi$ ] remains on C (cf. Chomsky 2006, Richards 2006). Two solutions can be envisaged: either one allows for multiple feature inheritance whereby the features of C are inherited by T and by a higher functional head in the C-domain (but see Richards 2006 for arguments against this); or in a more radical departure from the original proposal, one postulates (ii) multiple phases, each of which with FI (Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2007).

<sup>16</sup> An alternative would be to assume that the projection of FocP creates an intervention effect for the movement of T to C, much in the spirit of Rizzi's (1997) account of the incompatibility of topicalisation and T to C in English (ib) in terms of intervention (see also Cinque and Rizzi 2010: 65):

- (i) If (tomorrow) you should see him...
- (ii) Should (\*tomorrow) you see him...