

Complementiser-like *how* clauses – distribution, extraction, factivity

Rachel Nye – GIST, Ghent University

The topic of this talk is a little-discussed type of declarative complement clause, which I refer to as the complementiser-like *how* clause (CLHC) (cf. 1a). On the surface, there seems to be little to distinguish CLHCs from declarative *that*-complement clauses, besides the presence of *how* rather than *that*. Nevertheless, as observed by Legate (2010), CLHCs differ considerably from *that*-clauses in terms of their syntactic and semantic behaviour, with regard to (i) distribution: they show a more nominal-like distribution e.g. in their ability to occur as the complement to a preposition (cf. 1b) (ii) extraction: they are strong islands (cf. 1c) and (iii) presupposition: the content of a CLHC is always presupposed (cf. 1d). On the basis of these facts, Legate (2010) analyses CLHCs as DPs.

- (1) a. John told me **how** he'd been on holiday to Spain.
b. John told me **about how** he'd been on holiday to Spain.
c. * What did John tell you **how** he'd seen ~~what~~ on holiday?
d. # John told me **how** the world is flat.

In the first part of this talk, I reassess the distributional arguments Legate puts forward in support of a DP analysis for CLHCs in English, and conclude that these are not compelling, particularly when the behaviour of other *wh*-clauses is taken into consideration: broadly speaking, CLHCs pattern like other *wh*-CPs. Furthermore, I provide data on the distribution of Dutch CLHCs which shows that in significant respects they pattern like declarative *dat* 'that'-clauses rather than DPs. I suggest that analysing CLHCs as CPs not only gives a better account of their distribution, but has the benefit of allowing their other distinctive properties – strong island status and presupposed content – to be attributed to the lexical properties of *how* itself, rather than to a null D head. I sketch an analysis along the lines of Baunaz (2011) for how this might be achieved.

One aspect of Legate's analysis which is retained under such an approach is the idea that the presuppositional interpretation of a CLHC is not dependent on the matrix predicate under which it is embedded. In the second part of this talk, I consider the consequences of such a view in the light of recent accounts which argue against the direct encoding of factivity/presuppositionality in the syntax of a complement clause (de Cuba 2007, de Cuba & Ürögdi 2009, Haegeman & Ürögdi 2010). I tentatively outline a system in which the referential CP vs. non-referential CP distinction of such approaches is maintained, and accounts for the behaviour of factive and non-factive *that*-clauses. This is supplemented, however, by a third inherently presuppositional type of complement clause, realised in English as a CLHC. I suggest that there seems to be cross-linguistic support both for the idea of a three-way distinction of declarative complement-clauses in terms of presuppositionality (e.g. Baunaz 2011 on French; Roussou 1992, 2010 on Modern Greek), and for a correlation between (lack of) presuppositionality and island strength.

References

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