

Variable clause size cross-linguistically: The extent and significance of restructuring

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Theories of variable clause size have typically considered either phenomena falling under the rubric of restructuring (such as clitic climbing, scrambling, passive across the boundary of certain infinitival constructions) or clause reduction in A-movement contexts (such as CP-omission in ECM and raising). Since the two sets of phenomena do not necessarily go hand-in-hand (for instance, although German allows extensive restructuring, it does not allow ECM in attitude contexts with verbs like believe), the two types of clause size alternations are usually kept separate and treated as distinct grammatical phenomena. In this lecture series, I address the question of clause size variation from a broad comparative perspective. I show that, cross-linguistically, there is a stable split of embedded clauses (both finite and non-finite) into three types of complements, which show systematically different behavior regarding a range of tests targeting the presence/absence of specific syntactic domains and are predicted in a semantically motivated approach to restructuring or clause-size reduction. Among the phenomena discussed are: tense and aspect restrictions, the distribution of infinitives and finiteness, the interpretation and distribution of embedded subjects, shifted indexicals, and others. Since ECM/raising is found in all three types of complements, importantly in several languages also across finite CPs, I conclude that clause reduction (CP omission) in A-movement contexts cannot be a general mechanism required for licensing A-movement. On the other hand, once certain misconceptions of restructuring are cleared, it can be shown that restructuring is in effect cross-linguistically. In addition to a catalogue of properties to be used in further cross-linguistic research on restructuring, I provide an analysis of the different degrees of restructuring and the broad distribution of ECM, which cover the cross-linguistic similarities, but also leave sufficient room for variation.