

## The syntax of complementizers: a revised version

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1. The present paper discusses clausal complementation of the type attested in Indo-European languages, with special reference to declarative complementizers, like English *that*, Italian *che*, or Greek *oti*, etc. Their characteristic property is that they also have pronominal variants, as shown in (1) for Italian *che* and English *that*:

- (1) a. So            *che*    fai    questo  
         know-1s    that   do-2s   this  
         ‘I know *that* you do this’  
      b. Il        lavoro *che*    fai    è        noto  
         the     work   that   do-2s   is        known  
         ‘The work *that* you do is well-known’  
      c. *Che*    fai?  
         what   do-1s?  
         ‘What are you doing?’  
      d. I read *that* book

The element *che* is a complementizer in (1a), a relativizer in (1b), and a wh-pronoun in (1c). The first two functions are also shared by English *that*, which, however, is not a wh-pronoun, but has a demonstrative function as in (1d). As argued in the literature, complementizer/relativizer *che* and interrogative *che* are the same element (Manzini & Savoia 2003, 2011); similarly, complementizer/relativizer *that* and demonstrative *that* are the same element (Roberts & Roussou 2003; Kayne 2010).

Assuming this pattern not to be accidental (see also Baunaz & Lander 2017, 2018), complementizers are accounted for as pronouns. This assumption raises a number of questions that need to be addressed. The first concerns the structure of complement clauses. For example, in recent approaches, complement clauses reduce to relatives modifying a null (light) noun (Arsenijević 2009, Kayne 2010, Moulton 2015). The second concerns the apparently conflicting features between pronominal and complementizer uses. For example, interrogative *che* is +*wh*, while complementizer/relativizer *che* is necessarily -*wh*.

2. Given the above, the claim in the present paper is that complementizer merge as arguments of the selecting predicate (Manzini & Savoia 2003, 2011; Roussou 2010). Under this approach, there is no null noun that is modified (cf.; Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1971 for factives). In other words, complement clauses are not concealed restrictive relatives, but closely resemble free relatives (Manzini 2014, Manzini & Roussou 2020). A basic argument for this account has to do with the fact that complementizer choice is sensitive to selectional requirements. Thus, *how* as a complementizer in English is selected by factive predicates (Nye 2013, 2018). Similarly, *pu* in Greek is selected by factive predicates (Roussou 1994):

- (2) a. Lipame            *pu*/\**oti*            apetixes  
         be.sorry-1s    that            failed-2s  
         ‘I’m sorry that you failed’  
      b. John forgot *how* Mary was never late

This kind of sensitivity is not accounted for by the null nominal modification approach, which furthermore cannot predict that not all complementizers participate in relatives. Again, while *that* is the main relativizer, *how* isn’t. The reverse holds for Greek: *pu* is the main

relativizer, while *oti* isn't (but is found in free relatives).

The next point concerns the apparent feature incompatibility between the declarative complementizer function and the interrogative one. This is the case with Italian *che*, Greek *pos* and *pu*, but also English *how*, for example, all of which have interrogative counterparts. It is argued that these pronouns are indefinites which acquire their interrogative reading once in the scope of a Q-operator, i.e., under an Agree relation with Q. In other words, the wh-reading is not inherent to them.

3. The approach outlined above has a number of implications regarding the properties of complement clauses but also the articulation of the left periphery. With respect to the latter, the claim is that the Force and Fin positions (Rizzi 1997) are V-related (see V2-phenomena) and are not realized by pronominal complementizers. The latter merge outside the left periphery of the clause they embed. It is argued that the same holds for so-called prepositional complementizers (Kayne 1984, 2000), as in Italian (x) or English (x):

- (3) a. Cerco *di* scrivere  
try-1S DI write-INF  
'I try to write'  
b. I hope *for* you to win

The elements *di/for*, and arguably *to*, are predicates that embed non-finite complements. The sentences in (3) exemplify another way of complementation, via a secondary predicate. It is argued that the pattern between pronominal and prepositional complementizers further relates to the +/-finite distinction.

Concerning the properties of the declarative complement clause, two more points need to be addressed. The first concerns what has been described as 'clausal prolepsis' in (4), where the argument position is taken by the pronoun *it*:

- (4) I do believe *it that John left*

In languages like Greek, the equivalent of (4) takes the form of clitic doubling (e.g., *to pistevo oti efije o Janis*). English though does not have clitics. One possible analysis is that (4) is an instance of a correlative.

The second point concerns phenomena of 'complementizer deletion', as in (5):

- (5) I believe (that) John left

This pattern is also attested, more restrictively though, in Greek; in Italian it appears to be sensitive to mood (subjunctive) selection (e.g., *Spero venga* 'I hope he comes'). According to Giorgi (2010), complementizer deletion in Italian relates to tense anchoring. The assumption in the present paper is that there is no deletion as such; instead embedding is direct, without the mediation of a pronominal element (a complementizer that is). At least for English, Koopman (2000) argues that these are instances of 'finite restructuring'. Assuming this to be on the right track, along with Giorgi's account, the obvious counterpart to (5) would be infinitival complementation without a preposition (e.g., Italian *voglio scrivere* 'I want to write').