

On the Directions of Selection

Ken Safir – Rutgers University

Some sorts of clause types (different ones in different languages) are manifestly rigid in their meanings, which is to say that the sorts of meanings that they introduce, e.g., deontic modality or conditionality, do not vary across the predicates they appear with. Insofar as the set of predicates that take them as complements can be predicted from the meaning of the clause, it might be said that these clausal types select the predicates that they can appear with. I will demonstrate this effect for certain clause types in three languages and then argue that clausal selection is a compatibility relation, which in some cases must take into account more than the predicate-complement sister relation. For example, I will show that Lubukusu actual clauses, which have a distinct morphology, semantically select for a limited range of matrix predicates, but also require that the matrix event/situation cannot be unrealized in the utterer's now. English Inherent Subjunctive (EIS) clauses, also distinct morphologically, require or can sometimes coerce the matrix predicate to support a particular kind of overt or implicit argument. In many languages, the meaning of the matrix predicate shifts predictably based on the kind of complement clause it can take. A case of particular interest is Medumba, which appears to have relatively few propositional attitude and verbs of saying, but a richer set of semantically rigid complement clauses (also each morphologically distinct). As a result, the same verb root is translated by a variety of different English verbs in a fairly predictable fashion. I will use these three cases as illustrations of why we should reject the widespread assumption (an assumption increasingly challenged in recent years, see below) that the clausal complement a predicate takes is uniquely a function of the predicate that takes it (most typically appealed to account for the variety of infinitives in English). Rather I will support a version of the view that clausal complementation is better thought of as a symmetric compatibility relation.

The English Inherent Subjunctive (EIS) is a complement clause type with a distinct morphology that is semantically rigid in that it requires a particular kind of deontic interpretation, e.g. *They insist that John be there* has a jussive meaning that *They insist that John is there* does not, while the use of *demand*, *request*, *require*, etc. do not even allow deontic indicative clauses, e.g., *I require that John should be there* which are judged as odd or unacceptable. Predicates like *expect*, *hope*, and *say* cannot take EIS at all. I will show in order for a predicate to take EIS, it must express (a) desire for a state of affairs (SOF) that serves a purpose of an explicit or implicit matrix clause agent/beneficiary and (for verbs and most adjectives) (b) a situation where the beneficiary cannot bring about the desired SOF without explicit or implied appeal to a facilitator. The distinction between *important*, which implies a need or purpose, and *significant*, which does not illustrate (a): *It is important/*significant that John be there*. To illustrate (b), consider the contrast between *request* and *decree*. For *request*, the addressee is usually implicit *She requests/requires (of you) that you report in uniform* but realization of the SOF cannot be entirely up to the matrix subject, e.g., *??I decree that you report in uniform*. The worlds of evaluation for the EIS prejacent are (a) worlds where the truth of the prejacent serves a purpose p and (b) in every $w \in W$, where W is the set of worlds accessible to the agent of p , the agent of p in w must be incapable of insuring without assistance that the prejacent is true in w . Thus the predicates that are or are not compatible with EIS complements is predictable from what EIS requires of a complement-taker.

Predicate selection by complements in languages is illustrated where the meaning of verbs shift according to the clausal complement they co-occur with (as is the case for *insist* or *advise* for EIS). A rather novel sort of subordinate clause type found in Lubukusu introduces an actuality entailment (Safir, Baker and Sikuku, 2019, Safir, to appear), which can shift the meaning of a potentiality predicate to render it, in effect, an implicative. The analysis proposed for these 'actual clauses' (ACs) is that they are embedded assertions indexical to the reporter of speech, so that "John wants that Bill ACT-be guilty" means that the proposition that John wants to be true, namely, that Bill is guilty, is in fact true according to the utterer. This entailment of the AC is invariable and leads to predictable meaning shifts for English translations of Lubukusu verbs. For example, the Lubukusu verb that means "is able" when it takes a subjunctive or an infinitive means "succeed" when it takes an AC. Because the actuality entailment of ACs does not vary, it predicts what sorts of verbs can take it as a complement (as will be demonstrated).

Most verbs that introduce a clausal complement proposition that could possibly be true can also take an AC complement. Factive predicates are incompatible with ACs, for example, because assertions have different presuppositions about the addressee’s knowledge. However, even though complement-taking verb properties largely predict AC distribution, the context for the event denoted for an AC-compatible predicate also matters. No verb anchored to a future or negated event can take an AC complement if it means the proposition denoted by AC is not true in the utterer’s now, e.g., “Ann will succeed in fixing the car” does involve no actuality entailment, so that meaning cannot be conveyed in Lubukusu with an AC.

These cases suggest that complementation relations can be decomposed into factors of meaning that are crucial to compatibility. Medumba, a Grassfields Bantu language, this decomposition is more evident. There are relatively few propositional attitude verbs (Gatchalian et. al, 2018 – though there are more than they report), so the variety of propositional attitudes that are lexicalized in English are often composed in Medumba. This is possible because root meanings shift depending on which of the following clause types (named after their complementizers) are complements to the verb root. Gatchalian et. al. report that, *mbúú* (C.HL) introduces polar options, much like English *whether* or *if*, that *mbúú* (C.LH) has deontic force and that *mbù* (C.L) seems to be the default when there is not deontic or optative reading, though it might be characterized positively as introducing reports of belief or speech (tentative). Now consider the “say” verb *fúp*. (Thanks to Herman Keupdijo for discussion and further data).

1a) Numi	fúp	mbù	Màrjàá	lùú		
Numi	say	C.L	Mary.H	leave.H		“Numi says that Mary left.”
b) Numi	fúp	mbúú	Màrjà	lúú		
Numi	say	C.LH	Mary	H.leave		“Numi ordered Mary to leave.”
c) Numi	fúp	mbúú	Màrjà	à?	lù	lá
Numi	say	C.HL	Mary	FUT	leave	C
						“Numi decides if Mary leaves.”

Yet while some roots are flexible in this way and can be coerced to different meanings, other predicates are recalcitrant, such as *kwèdà*, which means “believe” with C.L, but simply can’t take C.LH. However, *kwèdà* can take the polar optative with a peculiar interpretation I will discuss. The limits of coercion reflect the predicate’s contribution to compatibility resolution and the distribution of semantically rigid complement clauses is a boundary condition on research into this open topic.

Thus semantically rigid complementation plays a role in constructing complementation on the basis of compatibility. This result also has consequences for the syntactic head-complement relation (discussed as time permits). In particular, views that clausal complements are adjuncts (e.g., de Cuba, 2017, Kratzer, 2016) or that clausal complements are nominals (e.g., Moulton 2009, 2015, Kastner, 2015, Moltmann, to appear) are rejected on syntactic and semantic grounds, even though some of these accounts are in the spirit of the compatibility approach. For example, there is no indexical actuality-entailing noun in Lubukusu corresponding to an actual clause (compare *fact* for factives) and extraction from an actual clause is possible. EIS complements also allow extraction, unlike adjuncts, and appear where nominals (whatever their meaning) are not permitted (e.g., after adjectives and nouns).

References

- De Cuba, Carlos. 2017. Noun complement clauses as referential modifiers. *Glossa* 2: 1-46.
- Gatchalian, Terrance, Lee and Tyrchan. 2018. Propositional attitude verbs and Complementizers in Medumba. ACAL49 talk..
- Kratzer, Angelika. 2016. Evidential Moods in Attitude and Speech Reports. https://works.bepress.com/angelika_kratzer/10/
- Moltmann, Friederike, to appear. Truthmaker semantics for natural language: Attitude verbs, modals and intensional transitive verbs. *Theoretical Linguistics*.
- Moulton, Keir. 2009. Natural selection and the syntax of clausal complementation. Ph.D.
- Moulton, Keir. 2015. CPs: Copies and compositionality. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 46:305-342.
- Safir, Ken. 2020. Clausal Complementation as a compatibility relation. To appear in the proceedings of TripleA 6. Verena Hehl and Neil Bannerjee, eds. MIT Working Papers in Linguistics. Cambridge.
- Safir, Ken, Mark Baker and Justine Sikuku. 2020. Actual clauses in Lubukusu. In *Festschrift for Akin Akinlabi*, Oluseye Adesola, ed. Ibadan, Nigeria: Scholarship Publishing and Educational Consult.