

Clausal subordination: finite and non-finite

BMA-ANGD17-CNy7a.09, BBN-ANG17-342.09

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When & where:

Wednesday 10:15–11:45, R327, DELG

1 Aim

This specialisation seminar discusses the syntax of clausal subordination (aka ‘embedding’ or ‘recursion’), looking at both finite and non-finite constructions and the contexts in which they are found. The seminar is aimed at distilling the essential syntactic properties of and restrictions on clausal subordination. The participants will closely examine the distribution of clausal subordination and learn about the major empirical and theoretical questions that this phenomenon raises.

2 Content

Clauses can be embedded in larger clauses — the textbook case of recursion in syntax. Thus, a verb such as ‘to think’ can select a clause as its complement and at the same time project a clause of its own (as in ‘John thinks that Mary is smart’); there are also verbs which appear to allow a clause to serve as the subject of their own clause (as in ‘That John did this surprises me’); and clauses can be embedded inside clauses under relativisation as well (‘This is the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built’). There are restrictions on each of these instances of clausal subordination. For example, although clauses can be direct objects, they cannot serve as indirect objects of ditransitive verbs; although clauses seem to be able to be subjects, they resist subject-auxiliary inversion; and although recursion of relative clauses is legitimate, it is very difficult in cases of multiple subject relatives, giving rise to ‘centre embedding’. Clausal subordination is subject to and imposes various other constraints as well. These restrictions do not manifest themselves in the same ways in cases of finite and non-finite clauses, prompting an investigation of the role of finiteness in the syntax.

Among the topics to be studied in this seminar are the root/non-root distinction, the factive/non-factive distinction, the indicative/subjunctive distinction, control and raising, the cross-categorial distribution of clausal subordination, the syntax of cross-clausal dependencies, the size of clausal constituents, and the morphosyntax of complementisers. This seminar finds its way through the maze of clausal subordination constructions and towards an exit that provides satisfactory answers to the major questions that surround them.

3 Assessment

Active participation in the discussion in class, and writing a conference-style two-page abstract at the end of the semester.

4 Literature

The seminar will not use a textbook. A selection of references to important titles from the primary literature will be provided for each section of the course.

The handouts/slides will be uploaded to the website:

<http://seas.elte.hu/dokuwiki/studies/courses> > "course material page"

5 Schedule

This is a preliminary schedule of the course. Changes to it will be announced in class in advance.

Date	Topic
September 13	Introduction
September 20	Reading break (no class)
September 27	Bridge verbs. Sequence of tenses The factive/non-factive distinction and opacity; CP and cP
October 4	Clausal prolepsis and the argument status of subordinate clauses
October 11	Indicative vs subjunctive/imperative Root/non-root contrasts and 'embedded root phenomena' (V2)
October 18	Control vs raising, finite control. 'Restructuring'; 'size matters'
October 25	Morphology: IPP and PPI ('parasitic participles') 'Root infinitives' Nominal infinitives
November 1	Autumn break (no class)
November 8	Clausal subordination elsewhere, and the principled limitations of clausal recursion I: clauses as complements of prepositions
November 15	Clausal subordination elsewhere, and the principled limitations of clausal recursion II: clauses as complements of adjectives, clauses as complements of nouns, relative clauses
November 22	Complementisers and their ancestors (demonstratives, wh-items, Ps)
November 29	A-bar dependencies across finite and non-finite clause boundaries: extraction and (alleged) reflexes of successive cyclicity
December 6	A-dependencies across finite and non-finite clause boundaries
December 13	Anaphoric dependencies across finite and non-finite clause boundaries

6 Other

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If you have any questions, we will be happy to meet with you. Please send an email to either/both of us in advance to schedule an appointment; we can meet either at ELTE or via Zoom.