Complementation is not a primary syntactic category. Reported speech is.

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McGregor (1994, 1997) analyses the syntactic relation between the elements *a* and *b* in examples (1) and (2) as a common syntactic relation he calls 'framing' (whereby element *a* 'frames' element *b*).

(1) [John said:]$_a$ ["Perhaps it might rain today"]$_b$
(2) [John said]$_a$ [that nobody would come tomorrow]$_b$

This syntactic relation is independent from more established syntactic relations, such as coordination and complementation. But they are perhaps not mutually exclusive. Indirect speech constructions as in (2) involve a structure that most linguists would characterise as a form of complementation at some level of analysis. And when we try to describe the syntax of reported speech and thought cross-linguistically (cf. Spronck & Nikitina, 2019), it becomes clear that languages vary in the extent to which the syntactic relations of complementation and reported speech and thought/framing overlap (Rumsey, 2019).

In this paper I explore the relation between complementation and framing in three unrelated languages: Dutch, the Bantu language Kikuyu and the Australian Aboriginal language Ungarinyin. The Dutch data are extracted from the Corpus of Spoken Dutch (CGN), the Kikuyu and Ungarinyin analysis is based on newly collected primary data.

I demonstrate that in each of these languages the relation between framing and complementation differs, and argue that this has consequences for the treatment of complementation in functional linguistics. I introduce the notion of a 'primary syntactic category' and n^{th}-order syntactic categories, and classify reported speech/framing as an example of the former and complementation as a second or third order syntactic category. I argue that by making this distinction, our account of complementation as a functional syntactic structure gains descriptive accuracy and that doing so allows for a more nuanced analysis of the construction type.

References

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