CLAUSAL COMPLEMENTATION IN ENGLISH

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Abstract

Complement clauses are subordinate clauses used to complete the meaning relationship of an associated verb or adjective in the main clause. The submitted paper discusses complementation by nominal clauses, both from the structural and functional viewpoint. Furthermore, the necessary attention is devoted to the grammatical positions of nominal finite and nominal non-finite complement clauses and their various functions.

Key words: *complementation, complement clauses, nominal finite complement clauses, nominal non-finite complement clauses, grammatical positions of complement clauses*

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of complementation is based on the fact that a valid sentence can be constituted only if the verb or adjective is complemented by a certain number of other elements, which are required to complete the meaning of a sentence. The paper discusses various opinions of linguists on complementation and valency or valence. Attention is devoted to the distinctions in terminology and symbols used in selected sources of linguistic literature dealing with the issues of complementation and valency or valence. Biber et al. (1999), Downing & Locke (2006) use the term valency and include the subject amongst the complements of the verb. On the other hand, Quirk et al. (1985), Carter and McCarthy (2006) use the term verb complementation and refer only to those "items" which are dependent on the verb and which are necessary for the sentence to be complete, both from the viewpoints of its structure and meaning. The term clausal complementation is used to denote the process of embedding a clause as a complement of another clause. The clause, which is embedded in the complement position of the other clause, is referred to as a complement clause. Moreover, the paper points out the fact that only nominal clauses, both finite and non-finite, can function as complement clauses completing the meaning of a verb or adjective in the main clause. The nominal complement clauses are discussed in the paper both from a structural and functional viewpoint. The verb complementation theory is discussed and analyzed on sample sentences taken from Online Logman Dictionary of Contemporary English.

2. COMPLEMENTATION

Each sentence consists of a certain number of clause elements whose presence is obligatory for the sentence to be grammatical. A minimal clause structure contains the subject and the finite verb phrase, which jointly function as the predicate. However, it should be pointed out that a verb in a minimal clause structure must be an intransitive verb, i.e. a verb not requiring complementation by the other obligatory clause elements. All other verb classes, except intransitive verbs, require complementation by obligatory clause elements as illustrated below.

Compare:

[1] Outside it was still raining.

[2] The stew smelled *delicious.*

[3] We know *that greenhouse gases can affect the climate.*

[4] I asked *him where he lived.*

[5] They consider *themselves to be Europeans.*

In [1] the verb in the SV pattern is an intransitive verb not requiring complementation by the other obligatory clause element. In [2] the copular verb in the SVCs pattern is complemented by the subject complement expressed by an adjective phrase. In [3] the monotransitive verb *to know* in the SVOd pattern requires complementation by a direct object realized by a nominal *that -clause.* The verb *to ask* in [4] is a ditransitive verb requiring complementation by two clause elements, an indirect object realized by a noun phrase and a direct object realized by a nominal interrogative clause in the SVOiOd pattern. Lastly, the complex transitive verb *to consider* in [5] requires complementation by two clause elements, a direct object and an object complement in the SVOdCo pattern.

Quirk et al. (1985:65) distinguish the term complementation from the term complement and define complementation as "the function of a part of a phrase or clause which follows a word, and completes the specification of a meaning relationship which that word implies." We distinguish complement clauses used to complete the meaning relationship of an associated verb (verb complementation) or adjective (adjective complementation).

Compare:

[6] I seem *to have lost my car keys.*

[7] Mills replied *that he was staying at his parents' flat.*

[8] Children who live in the country's rural areas are very likely *to be poor.*

[9] The car is liable *to overheat on long trips.*

The italicized complement clauses in [6] and [7] complete the meaning relationship of the associated verbs *to seem* and *to reply* respectively. On the other hand, the italicized complement clauses in [8] and [9] complete the meaning of the associated adjectives *likely* and *liable* respectively.

Biber et al. classify verbs into copular, intransitive and transitive. According to these linguists, the verbs occurring in the two-place SVPs pattern are copular, the verbs used in the one-place SV pattern are intransitive, and lastly, the verbs in the two- and three-place patterns with a direct object are transitive verbs.

Downing & Locke (2006:83) declare that "the potential number of participants, including the subject – that is, the number of 'places' in the clause that the verb controls" – is sometimes referred to as its semantic valency. Different classes of verbs have different semantic valencies. There are one-place verbs, which have a subject only, and in principle belong to the SP pattern. The two-place verbs have a subject and one other element, as in the SPC and SPO patterns. Three-place verbs have a subject and two other elements as in the SPOO and SPOC patterns. Syntactic valency refers to the number of nominal elements present in any given clause that have a direct grammatical relation to the verb."

It can be concluded that there is a distinction between the term valency or valence and the term complementation. Biber et al. (1999), Downing & Locke (2006) use the term valency and include the subject amongst the complements of the verb. On the other hand, Quirk et al. (1985), Carter and McCarthy (2006) use the term verb complementation and only refer to those elements which are dependent on the verb and necessary for the sentence to be complete, both from the viewpoints of its structure and meaning.

When comparing copular complementation presented by Quirk et al. in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (1985)* and copular complementation presented by Carter and McCarthy in *Cambridge Grammar of English (2006)*, it may be concluded that Carter and McCarthy do not distinguish, in contrast with Quirk et al., the SVA pattern. Obligatory adverbials (or predication adjuncts) are treated by them as subject complements expressed by an adverb phrase or by a prepositional phrase.

In *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* by Biber et al. (1999), the last clause element in copular complementation is referred to as the subject predicative (Ps) in the SVPs pattern. On the other hand, the last clause element in copular complementation in the SVA pattern is termed an

obligatory adverbial in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk et al. (1985). It should be also pointed out that in *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* by Biber et al. (1999), the last clause element in complex transitive complementation is referred to as the object predicative (Po) in the SVOdPo pattern. However, the last clause element in complex transitive complementation is referred to as the object complement (Co) in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk et al. (1985).

Biber et al. (1999:122) state that "the core of the clause can be divided into two main parts: the subject and what is traditionally called the predicate. Structurally, these correspond broadly to a nominal part and a part with the verbal nucleus; semantically, to a topic and a comment. Together, they express a proposition.The predicate can be broken down into a verb phrase proper and a number of complements (objects, predicatives, obligatory adverbials)."

The term complement has been used in the syntax theory in the following meanings: the complement as a clause element following copular verbs in copular complementation (the subject complement, Cs), the complement as a clause element following complex transitive verbs in complex transitive complementation (the object complement, Co), and lastly, the complement as an obligatory clause element following the verb in verb complementation (objects, obligatory adverbials). For example, there are two obligatory complements following the verb in He handed *the teacher a slip of paper*, an indirect object and a direct object.

2.1 Verbs with multiple valency patterns

In their characterization of verb complementation, Biber et al. (1999:141) distinguish between "one-place verbs (combining with a subject only), two-place verbs (combining with a subject and another element), and three-place verbs (combining with a subject and two other elements). However, many verbs allow more than one pattern, so we should perhaps more correctly speak of verbs being 'used with' particular valencies." In other words, the number of complements a verb takes constitutes its valency.

In the sample sentences illustrated below it is evident that one verb can be used in several clause patterns.

Compare:

[10] For some reason, the key wouldn't turn.

[11] In October the leaves turn *orange and yellow.*

[12] She gently turned *the handle of the bedroom door.*

[13] You're wrong, and I can prove *it.*

[14] The design proved *to be a success.*

The verb *to turn* in [10] is an intransitive verb not requiring complementation by the other obligatory clause element. However, the same verb is used in [11] as a copular verb in the clause pattern Adv SVCs. The verb *to turn* in [12] takes a monotransitive pattern (SVOd). The verb *to prove* can also take several clause patterns, e.g. a monotransitive pattern in [13] and a copular pattern in [14].

It should be also emphasized that many verbs can take various clause patterns, e.g. intransitive and monotransitive patterns, but these verbs differ in their preference for one pattern over the other. For example, the verb *to stand* and the verb *to change* can take both of these valency patterns. However, the verb *to stand* usually occurs as an intransitive verb, while the verb *to change* mostly takes monotransitive patterns.

Compare:

[15] She stood in the doorway.

[16] Some remains of the original house still stand.

[17] Near the railway station stood *a hotel.*

[18] Can you change *the baby?*

[19] How often do you change *cars?*

[20] The rules won't change overnight.

The verb *to stand* is used in [15] and [16] as an intransitive verb. In [15] it is used with an optional adverbial, however, in [16] the verb is not accompanied by any optional adverbial. In [17] the verb *to stand* is used in its less productive clause patterning as a monotransitive verb. On the other hand, the verb *to change* is more common in monotransitive patterns, as in [18] and [19], but it is less productive in intransitive patterns, as illustrated in [20].

3. CLAUSAL COMPLEMENTATION

The term clausal complementation is used to denote the process of embedding a clause as a complement of another clause. The clause embedded in the complement position of the other clause is referred to as a complement clause. This clause is introduced by a complementizer, whose function is to identify the structure as a complement.

3.1 Clausal verb complementation

On the basis of semantic functions, the following types of clauses are distinguished in English: nominal clauses, adjective relative clauses, adverbial clauses and comparative clauses. From these types of clauses only nominal clauses are used to complete the meaning relationship of an associated verb or adjective in the main clause.

Compare:

[21] We hope *that more women will decide to join the course.*

[22] She didn't care *what her father thought.*

[23] The reason of his visit is *to get some information.*

[24] Young children enjoy *helping around the house.*

The verb *to know* in [21] reguires complementation by a nominal *that*-clause, functioning as a direct object in the SVOd pattern.The complement clause is introduced by a complementizer *that*. The verb *to care* in [22] is complemented by a nominal relative clause in the function of a direct object in the SVOd pattern. The complement clauses in both sample sentences have a finite structure. On the other hand, the complement clauses in [23] and [24] are non-finite clauses, the infinitive clause and the *-ing* clause respectively.

3.2 Clausal adjective complementation

According to Downing & Locke (2006:494), “When an adjective (e.g. *happy*) functions in a clause, as Complement of the Subject (e.g. *I am happy*) or of the Object, it is often followed by a complement relating it to a fact (e.g. *that you are here*), a process (e.g. *to see you*), or a circumstance (e.g. *about your success*). This information indicates the way in which the adjective is to be understood and is expressed mainly by finite and non-finite clauses, and by prepositional phrases (PPs).”

As it has been already mentioned, nominal clauses are used to complete the meaning relationhip of an associated verb or adjective in the main clause. In the following sample sentences nominal clauses complete the meaning of an adjective in the main clause.

Compare:

[25] I'm absolutely certain *that I left the keys in the kitchen.*

[26] The company isn't capable of *handling an order that large.*

[27] I was thankful *to make any sort of progress at all.*

The complement of the adjective *certain* in [25] is a nominal *that*-clause. The adjective *capable of* in [26] is complemented by a non-finite *-ing* clause. The complements of adjectives can be prepositional phrases, e.g. *Alex is very good at languages*, but also subordinate clauses, as in [25], [26] and [27].

Downing & Locke (2006:495) declare that adjectives taking nominal *that*-clauses as their complements "indicate the speaker's or writer's stance with respect to what is expressed in the complement". Semantically, adjectives taking nominal *that*-clauses as their complements may fall into two main types: adjectives expressing degrees of certainty and adjectives expressing affective meanings.

Compare:

[28] I felt certain *that I'd passed the test.*

[29] I was convinced *that we were doing the right thing.*

[30] He was afraid *that the other kids would laugh at him.*

[31] She should be grateful *that he was making things easier for her.*

Adjectives *certain* and *convinced* in [28] and [29] complemented by a nominal *that*-clause express certainty. Adjectives *afraid* and *grateful* in [30] and [31] take the same type of a complement clause as adjectives *certain* and *convinced* in [28] and [29]. However, they express affective meaning, not the meaning of certainty.

4. TYPES AND FUNCTIONS OF CLAUSAL COMPLEMENTATION

Nominal clauses complete the meaning relationship of an associated verb or adjective in the main clause; therefore, they are called complement clauses. These clauses are equivalent in function to noun phrases, they have the same function as a noun phrase. All types of nominal clauses functioning as complements can be substituted by noun phrases.

4.1 Structural types of complement clauses

There are four structural types of complement clauses: nominal *that*-clauses and nominal *wh*-clauses are finite complement clauses and nominal *to*-infinitive clauses and nominal *ing*-clauses are non-finite clauses. The clause types can be distinguished by their complementizers, the words introducing the complement clauses. All these types of clauses can complement both verbs and adjectives.

Compare:

[32] A spokesman said *that the company had improved its safety standards.*

[33] I asked him *where he lived.*

[34] Tina's decided *to go to Rome for her holidays.*

[35] Young children enjoy *helping around the house.*

The complement clause in [32] is a nominal *that*-clause functioning as a direct object in the SVOd pattern. The complement clause in [33] is a nominal interrogative clause functioning as a direct object in the SVOiOd pattern. The nominal *to*-infinitive clause in [34] is used as a direct object in the SVOd pattern. Lastly, the complement clause in [35] is a nominal *ing*-clause functioning as a direct object in the SVOd pattern.

4.2 Functions of complement clauses

Some functions of the finite complement clauses are illustrated in the sample sentences of nominal *that*-clauses. Nominal *that*-clauses can occur in the pre-predicate and post-predicate positions in various syntactic functions.

Compare:

[36] *That anyone should want to kill her* was unthinkable.

[37] We know *that greenhouse gases can affect the climate.*

[38] The good news is *that tomorrow will be fine and sunny.*

[39] Your idea, *that he cannot go with us*, is rather strange.

[40] I'm sure *that there's a logical explanation for all this.*

The nominal *that*-clauses in [36] and [39] occur in the pre-predicate positions and function as the subject and loose appositive respectively. All the other sample sentences of the complement clauses occur in post-predicate positions and function as a direct object (sample sentence [37]) or subject complement (sample sentence [38]). Lastly, the complement clause in [40] has the function of adjective complement.

Some functions of the non-finite complement clauses are illustrated in the sample sentences of nominal *ing*-clauses.

Compare:

[41] *Thinking about her* made him very sad.

[42] His dream was *playing with them*.

[43] The students were busy *taking several exams a week*.

[44] His research, *examining the problems of handicapped people*, was time consuming.

The nominal *ing*-clauses in [41] and [44] occur in the pre-predicate positions and function as a subject and loose appositive respectively. The nominal *ing*-clauses in [42] and [43] occur in the post-predicate positions, functioning as a subject complement and adjectival complement respectively.

5. CONCLUSION

Firstly, the paper discussed the different opinions of linguists on verb complementation and valency or valence in English. We concluded that there are distinctions between the term valency or valence and the term complementation. Biber et al. (1999), Downing & Locke (2006) use the term valency and include the subject amongst the complements of the verb. On the other hand, Quirk et al. (1985), Carter and McCarthy (2006) use the term verb complementation and refer only to those elements which are dependent on the verb and are necessary for the sentence to be complete, both from the viewpoints of its structure and meaning. Furthermore, the distinctions in terminology and symbols used in the selected sources of linguistic literature were analyzed and discussed.

Secondly, verb classes, verb complementation patterns and verbs with multiple valency patterns were discussed and analyzed. We pointed out that many verbs can take more clause patterns; however, these verbs may differ in their preference for one pattern over the other, which we illustrated in the sample sentences.

Thirdly, the required attention was devoted to clausal complementation, verb clausal complementation and adjectival complementation. We concluded that the term clausal complementation is used to denote the process of embedding a clause as a complement of another clause. The clause, which is embedded in the complement position of the other clause, is referred to as a complement clause. This clause is introduced by a complementizer, whose function is to identify the structure as a complement.

Lastly, the structural types and various functions of complement clauses were analyzed and discussed in the paper. There are four structural types of complement clauses: nominal *that*-clauses and nominal *wh*-clauses are finite complement clauses and nominal *to*-infinitive clauses and nominal *ing*-clauses are non-finite clauses. The clause types can be distinguished by their complementizers, the words introducing the complement clauses. In the sample sentences we illustrated that all the above types of clauses can complement both verbs and adjectives. The sample sentences in the paper were taken from Online Logman Dictionary of Contemporary English.

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