

Finite complementizers as demonstratives in the clausal domain

CogLing Days 2022, Tilburg

Camil Staps
Leiden University & Radboud University
info@camilstaps.nl
mstdn.social/@CamilStaps

Johan Rooryck
cOAlition S & Leiden University
johan.rooryck@gmail.com
mstdn.social/@JohanRooryck

Get the full draft on LingBuzz: <https://lingbuzz.net/lingbuzz/006751>

1. Roadmap

- The **complementizer** *that* retains the **spatial meaning** of the original distal **demonstrative**
- This is because it **points** to a presupposition in the **Common Ground**
- A distal element is used because it involves the **Addressee**, who is far from the Speaker
- We should take the “Common **Ground**” seriously as a cognitively represented **space**

2. Introduction: direct & indirect speech

Direct speech is ‘proximal’; indirect speech is ‘distal’:

- (1) a. *Sue said (this/*that): “It is raining.”*
b. *Sue said (*this/that) it is raining.* (Rooryck 2019: 257)

This ‘distance’ is interpreted in two ways:

- **Actual distance:** the distance between the referent (the original utterance) and the deictic expression (the speech report) as multidimensional conceptual objects in a state space (Churchland 1986)
 - Dimensions: propositional content, lexical form, accent, accompanying gestures, ...
 - Direct speech is proximal because it requires copying of lexical form and allows copying of accent, accompanying gestures, ... (Clark & Gerrig 1990)
 - Indirect speech is distal because only propositional content needs to / can match
- **Addressee involvement:** the distance between the referent (the original utterance) and the Speaker
 - Direct speech is proximal because the Speaker has direct evidence for the utterance, which is not shared with the Addressee
 - Indirect speech is distal because both Speaker and Addressee have indirect evidence; the utterance is in the Common Ground, ‘close’ to the Addressee and ‘far’ from the Speaker
 - The Common Ground is not proximal for the Speaker, but the proximal/distal distinction is used to distinguish between the information content private to the Speaker (proximal) and that shared with the Addressee (distal)

3. Presupposition effects

Claim: overt distal complementizers \Rightarrow Addressee involvement \Rightarrow Common Ground.

3.1. Exclamatives

Many languages use finite complementizers for exclamatives (more examples in Zevakhina 2013: 167):

(2) *That bio industry is still allowed!*

Explanation: the propositional content of the exclamative is presupposed in the Common Ground (Zanuttini & Portner 2003), e.g. cannot be used to convince the Addressee:

(3) *(*That) bio industry is still allowed, I'm telling you!*

Hence: *that* explicitly involves the Addressee, who has access to the Common Ground.

3.2. So-called 'optional' that

(4) *Did you know (that) you had a flat?* (Bolinger 1972: 59)

Bolinger (1972: 59):

- “*A* passes a slow-moving car driven by *B*, and calls out to him: *Did you know you had a flat?*”
- “Alternatively, *A* passes *B*, notices the flat and says nothing, but *B* observes *A*'s curiosity and calls *What are you staring at?* *A*¹ replies, *Did you know that you had a flat?*”

In other words, without *that* the sentence can be uttered out of the blue. *That* suggests some context between Speaker and Addressee. Again, distal *that* involves the Addressee through the Common Ground.

3.3. The adverb-COMP construction in Romance

Romanian:

(5) *Sigur (că) va veni*
sure COMP will.3SG come
'Of course s/he's coming.' (Romanian; Cruschina & Remberger 2017: 89)

Interpretive difference between the presence/absence of the complementizer:

- *Că* can only be used if the Addressee could have inferred the propositional content themselves
- The overt complementizer is thus conditioned by the existence of Common Ground
- *Că* comes from Latin *quod*, a non-proximal interrogative; this is another case of a non-proximal element used to involve the Addressee via the Common Ground.
- Similar examples exist in Ibero-Romance (Kocher 2022)

3.4. Generalisation

Exclamatives, Romance adverb-COMP constructions, and English 'optional' complementizers all use an **overt distal complementizer** to refer to the **Common Ground** which involves the **Addressee**. The complementizer is therefore **still demonstrative**, as it points to a presupposition.

¹ Bolinger has *B* instead of *A* here, but we take this to be a mistake.

5. Conclusion

Complementizers like *that* and *que* are **demonstrative** in the sense that they refer to a presupposition in the **Common Ground**.

| | Information content (CP) | Entities (DP) |
|-----------|---|--|
| Exophoric | Direct / indirect speech (§2) Actual distance in a multidimensional conceptual world, interpreted as descriptive similarity Addressee involvement: interpreted as evidentiality; proximity is private witness evidentiality | Exophoric demonstratives (§4.1) Actual distance in the concrete physical world Addressee involvement: interpreted as psychological factors (psychological distance, joint attention, empathy, ...) |
| Anaphoric | Presupposition (§3) Addressee involvement: <i>that</i> used over \emptyset to signal content in the Common Ground | Anaphoric demonstratives (§4.2) Addressee involvement: <i>that</i> used over <i>this</i> to interact and empathise with the Addressee |

- The reference to **utterances** and **propositions** can be seen as the CP parallel to the reference to **entities in the speech situation** and **linguistic elements** on the DP level
 - Speech reports are exophoric references to information content
 - Presupposition is anaphoric reference to information content
- **Addressee involvement** can explain differences between *this* and *that* in all reference types, and also the alternation between *that* and zero in clausal complements
 - *This* cannot introduce clausal complements because it would introduce not-at-issue content
- **Actual distance** is relevant for exophoric reference only, as it requires the deictic expression and the referent to be of the same type
 - For exophoric demonstratives: pointing gesture and entity both have a physical location
 - For speech reports: original utterance and report both have a linguistic representation
- The spatial core of **demonstratives** like *that* is stable: as **complementizers** they still **point**, namely to content in the **Common Ground**
- The Common **Ground** is a **cognitively represented space**
- This allows for a **polysemy** account of *that* based on actual distance and Addressee involvement (rather than a grammaticalization account)

6. Addendum: relativizers and the fluidity of the DP/CP distinction

Relativizers fit in the lower right quadrant, but require a distal element for the same reason as *that*-clauses on the left: a proximal element would imply that the head, which has already been mentioned, is private to the Speaker. The alternation between *that* and zero is thus based on whether there is something to refer to:

- (6) a. *There was nothing unusual \emptyset caught your eye when you came in?*
(Inspector Morse, season 7, episode 1)
- b. *Was there anything that/? \emptyset caught your eye while browsing through the racks?*

References

- Churchland, Paul M. 1986. 'Some reductive strategies in cognitive neurobiology'. *Mind* 95/379:279–309. Reprinted in Paul M. Churchland, 1992, *A neurocomputational perspective. The nature of mind and the structure of science*, 77–110. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Clark, Herbert H., and Richard J. Gerrig. 1990. 'Quotations as Demonstrations'. *Language* 66:764–805.
- Çokal, Derya, Patrick Sturt, and Fernanda Ferreira. 2014. 'Deixis: *This* and *that* in written narrative discourse'. *Discourse Processes* 51:201–229.
- Cruschina, Silvio, and Eva-Maria Remberger. 2017. 'Before the Complementizer: Adverb Types and Root Clause Modification'. In *Adjective Adverb Interfaces in Romance*, edited by Martin Hummel and Salvador Valera, 81–109. *Linguistics Today* 242. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Diessel, Holger. 1999. *Demonstratives. Form, function, and grammaticalization*. *Typological Studies in Language* 42. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kocher, Anna. 2022. *Complementizers on edge. On the boundaries between syntax and pragmatics in Ibero-Romance*. *Open Romance Linguistics* 1. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Lakoff, Robin. 1974. 'Remarks on *this* and *that*'. In *Proceedings of the Tenth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*, edited by Michael W. La Galy, Robert A. Fox, and Anthony Bruck, 321–344. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Maes, Alfons, Emiel Kraemer, and David Peeters. 2022. 'Explaining variance in writer's use of demonstratives: A corpus study demonstrating the importance of discourse genre'. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics* 7/1:1–36.
- Peeters, David, Emiel Kraemer, and Alfons Maes. 2021. 'A conceptual framework for the study of demonstrative reference'. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 28:409–433.
- Rooryck, Johan. 2019. "'Recycling" evidentiality: a research program'. In *Mapping linguistic data. Essays in honour of Liliane Haegeman*, edited by Metin Bağrıaçık, Anne Breitbarth and Karen De Clercq, 242–261. Ghent.
- Zanuttini, Raffaella, and Paul Portner. 2003. 'Exclamative Clauses: At the Syntax-Semantics Interface'. *Language* 79:39–81.
- Zevakhina, Natalia. 2013. 'Syntactic Strategies of Exclamatives'. *Eesti ja soome-ugri keeleteaduse ajakiri. Journal of Estonian and Finno-Ugric Linguistics* 4:157–178.