

LINGTYP survey: Complementizers for reported speech

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1 The Question

A colleague of mine has alerted me to the existence of a complementizer in Polish, *jakoby*, which is restricted exclusively to verbs of saying. Two examples are given below. We would like to know if you are aware of any other languages that have a complementizer with similar restrictions.

- (1) *Autor twierdzi, [jakoby pisarz dobrowolnie wstąpił do Waffen-SS]*
author.NOM claims jakoby writer.NOM voluntarily join.3SG.M.I-PTCP to Waffen-SS
'The author claims that the writer (supposedly) joined the Waffen-SS voluntarily.'
- (2) *Firma zaprzeczyła, [jakoby były zgłoszenia o wadliwych kartach]*
company.NOM deny.3SG.F.I-PTCP.PERF jakoby be.PL.N-VIR.I-PTCP reports.NOM about faulty
cards.LOC
'The company denied that there (supposedly) were any reports about faulty prepaid cards.'

2 Summary

Clarification added by Björn Wiemer:

As for quotatives mentioned below, one should have in mind that they Polish and Russian units from which the query started, do not have quotative functions at all. Importantly, quotatives and reportives are quite different things, although both may be connected to each other historically (as, e.g., in some African languages). The difference is that reportive markers scope over propositional content, whereas quotatives refer to illocutionary acts (cf. Boye, 2012). Thus, it is telling that Güldemann (2008) highlights "mimesis" as the prominent function of quotatives (but not reportives), and he connects mimesis directly to "quotation as demonstration", as discussed in Clark & Gerrig (1990).

Complementizers that are restricted to verbs of saying appear to be widespread at least in several language families. The languages mentioned in the answers to the surveys include:

- Slavic: Polish, Russian
- Altaic
- Mongolic: Buryat, Kalmyk, Khalkha
- Languages of the Caucasus: Adyghe, Kabardian
- Information on quotatives in African languages can be found in: Güldemann, Tom. 2008. *Quotative indexes in African languages: a synchronic and diachronic survey*. Empirical Approaches to Language Typology 34. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

3 Detailed answers

3.1 Slavic

Björn Wiemer writes:

I would like to correct the claim that Pol. *jakoby* as a complementizer is restricted to verbs of saying. It still occurs after SEEM-verbs as well; compare e.g. an example from Łojasiewicz (1992: 105):

- (3) *Zdaje mi się, jakoby-m słyszał jakieś wołanie.*
seem.prs.2sg me.dat refl -1.sg hear.pst.m some shouting
'It seems to me that / as if there is some shouting = that sb. is shouting.'

This usage has been on its retreat (probably for a couple of centuries already). But *jakoby* is well attested still as an adnominal modifier (close in function to a complementizer) after nouns denoting mental acts; compare [note that the finite verb of the complement introduced by *jakoby* is always in the form of the past, although it may refer to the present or future, as well]:

- (4) *Był-o-by błędem sądzić, jakoby młodzież (...) nie kochała swego miasta.*
cop-pst-3sg-subj mistake.ins think.inf jakoby young.people.nom.f neg love.pst.3sg.subj.f poss.refl.gen
town.gen
'It would be a mistake to think that/as if the young people don't like their town.'
- (5) *Nie znajduje potwierdzenia domysł, jakoby aktywiści rekrutowa-l-i się w większości spośród ludzi pokrzywdzonych przez los (...).*
neg find.prs.3sg confirmation.gen opinion.nom jakoby activists.nom recrute.pst.3pl refl in majority
from.among people.gen handicapped.gen.pl through fate
'One cannot find confirmed the opinion according to which [= as if/that] activists [from a given political group] in their majority come from people who have experienced bad things from fate.'

Peter Arkadiev writes:

The same element is used in Russian, and both the Russian and the Polish elements must have common Slavic origins. Note that "jakoby" is not a neutral complementizer but implies that the speaker does not assume responsibility for the content of speech (s)he is reporting.

As far as I know complementizers restricted to verbs of speech or rather verbs of speech and cognition (e.g. "think") as opposed to verbs of volition ("want") or manipulation ("cause") are quite widespread in the world's languages. I know of Altaic languages and some languages of the Caucasus, e.g. Adyghe and Kabardian. On the latter, there has been a very good work by my former student Ksenia Ershova, which is going to be published in English quite soon.

3.2 Mongolic

Elena Skribnik has collected data on complementation from several Mongolic languages. She sent me her abstract which was accepted for the upcoming ALT conference:

There are two major clause complementation types in the Mongolic languages: a non-finite complement (one of about ten participles/action nouns with a case marker) and a finite one with an introducing complementizer (Buryat *geže* / Kalmyk *giž*/ Khalkha *gež*, an imperfective converb of an auxiliary quotation verb *ge-/gi-*). The third type, with governed postpositions such as e.g. Khalkha *tuxai* 'about', comprises only a few constructions. With verbs of cognition, the *ge-/gi-* complement indicates that the speaker's knowledge is indirect (the result of complex logical operations, common knowledge etc.); some verbs – like Kalmyk *sana-* 'think' – only allow the *ge-/gi-* complement. With verbs of emotion it signals that the stimulus is not an actual event, but a mental construct (cf. "emotions caused and emotions projected", Bolinger 1984), such that it is mostly used with verbs like 'hope' and 'fear' e.g. Buryat *ai-* 'fear':

- (6) *Buuda-xa-ny geže ai-ba gü?*
 shoot-FUT-3sg CMPL fear-PST Q
 ‘(She) was afraid that (he) will shoot?’

Typical for verbs of perception are non-finite complements in the accusative, constructions with the *geže/giž* complementizer being quite seldom; the distinction here is between immediate perception and “mental perception” (Verhoeven 2007:293). With verbs of hearing it is auditory vs. hearsay, e.g. Kalmyk *soŋs-* ‘hear, listen’:

- (7) *Zal-d bää-sn uls Kugultinov šülg-üd-än umš-s-ig soŋs-v*
 auditorium-DAT be-PP people K. poem-PL-REFL read-PP-ACC hear-PST
 ‘The people sitting in the auditorium listened to Kugultinov reading his poems.’

- (8) *Xalx Moŋhl-yn poličičesk boln olna üüldäč-nr dund dörvd jas-ta uls oln bilä giž*
 Khalkha Mongolia-GEN political and social leader-PL among Dörbet bone-COM people many PTCL CMPL
soŋs-la-v
 hear-PST.EVID-1sg
 ‘I heard that there were many Dörbet people among Khalkha-Mongolian political and social leaders.’

With Kalmyk verbs of seeing only non-finite complements with the accusative (immediate perception) are grammatical; in Buryat also finite complement clauses with *geže* are possible, signalling interpreted information (obtained e.g. through inference); Buryat *xara-* ‘look, see’:

- (9) *Butid Tagar-ai myaxa sabša-x-iye-ny xara-na*
 B. T.-GEN meat chop-PTCP-ACC-3sg look-PRS:3sg
 ‘Butid watches how Tagar chops meat.’
- (10) *yamar xemžee ab-aa-b geže xara-ža üze-xe xeregtei-l*
 what measure take-PST-PTCL CMPL look-CVB see-PTCP necessary-PTCL
 ‘It is necessary to take a look at what measures are taken.’

Therefore, the opposition of the two complementation types with mental and psychic verbs in Mongolic can be seen as an opposition between a firsthand and a non-firsthand information source in dependent clauses (“evidentiality strategy”, Aikhenvald & Dixon, 2003: 18).

3.3 African Languages

Don Killian writes:

This topic has been addressed rather thoroughly for Africa by Tom Güldemann in his work *Quotative indexes in African languages* (Güldemann, 2008). His focus is not solely on complementizers which are restricted exclusively to verbs of saying, but this topic is definitely addressed, as well as historical origins and extensions of these types of complementizers. The book also has a large amount of typological comparisons to other languages in the world outside of Africa, so it could be a good starting point for further references.

References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y., & Dixon, R. M. W. (eds). 2003. *Studies in evidentiality*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Boye, K. 2012. *Epistemic meaning*. Mouton De Gruyter.
- Clark, Herbert H., & Gerrig, Richard J. 1990. Quotations as demonstrations. a crosslinguistic and functional-cognitive study. *Language*, 66(4), 764–805.
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