The structure of Polish wh-words: consequences to a theory of complementizers

Wiland, Bartosz (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań)

Problem. Polish wh-words *co* 'what', *czy* 'whether' and indefinite possessive wh-pronoun *czyj* 'whose' differ morpho-phonologically from other wh-words such as *kto* 'who' or *który* 'whose'. In this respect Polish differs from a pattern where wh-expressions are based on a syncretic wh-morpheme, as e.g. English *wh-at, wh-o, wh-ich, wh-ere,* which except for the adverbial *how,* follow the morphological pattern of *wh*+X.

Claim. I argue that the wh-feature in Polish is lexicalized always as *k-* (as in *kto* 'who') while *c-* (as in *co* 'what' or *czy* 'whether') spells out both the wh-feature and what Baunaz and Lander (2017) call 'nominal core', as in (1), where the NP stands for the 'nominal core' and the *-o* suffix spells out the neuter singular nominative case. *K-* but not *c-* spelling out the wh-morpheme in complex wh-words has two consequences to the theory of complementizers, which I advance in what follows.

COMPs and the WH-layer. On the basis of cross-categorial syncretism, Baunaz and Lander (2017) argue convincingly that there exists a containment relation between WH, REL(ativizer), factive COMP(lementizer), and DEM(onstrative), of which WH is the smallest and DEM the biggest constituent in the f(unctional) seq(uence) in (2). In B&L (2017), the fseq in (2) merges with a 'nominal core' (NP in (3)) and forms a complex prefix to the left the third constituent, "φP", which is *-t* in Dutch and *-o* in Polish. For instance, the Dutch spells this fseq out as *wat* for WH and *dat* for syncretic DEM/COMP/REL in (3a) and, as B&L (2017) propose, it will spell out as the WH *co* in Polish as in (3b) since the WH and the NP core *-t-* spell out as a portmanteau morpheme *c-*. However, if the WH-feature is *k-* in Polish then this fact has a bearing for the structure of complementizers in that neither REL nor a larger COMP are based on *k-* (nor the NP *-t-*) as shown in the table below (3b) and they do not have a tri-morphemic structure, contrary to what we expect on the basis of the facts like in Dutch. In other words, we have a problem of_ "why doesn't the tri-morphemic structure grow higher than WH in the fseq in (3) in languages like Polish?" The solution: WH does not form a complex prefix with REL, COM, and DEM like in (3a) but instead, WH and the NP form a foot for the merger of REL and COMP like in (4)(since Polish lacks demonstratives based on definite morphology, this layer is absent from the fseq in Polish). Since the bottom of this fseq includes a NP, the case fseq (cf. Caha 2009) is projected on top of it.

Predictions. This architecture in (4) correctly predicts that (i) instead of the default φ-morpheme, we find different case suffixes on wh-words under upward movement as in (5) and (ii) both *k-* and *c-*wh-words show a full case paradigm beyond the default φ, e.g. *k-t-o* (NOM/ACC), *ko-go* (GEN), *k-im* (INST), *cze-go* (GEN), *cz-emu* (DAT), *cz-ym* (INST), etc.

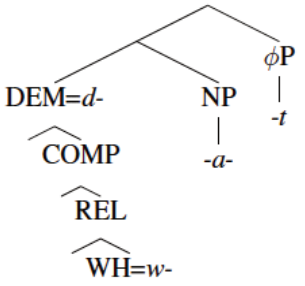
Examples:

(1) a. k - t - o
WH - NP - NOM
'who'

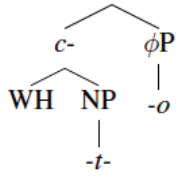
b. c - o
[WH NP]- NOM
'what'

(2) DEM > COMP > REL > WH (Baunaz & Lander 2017)

(3) a.

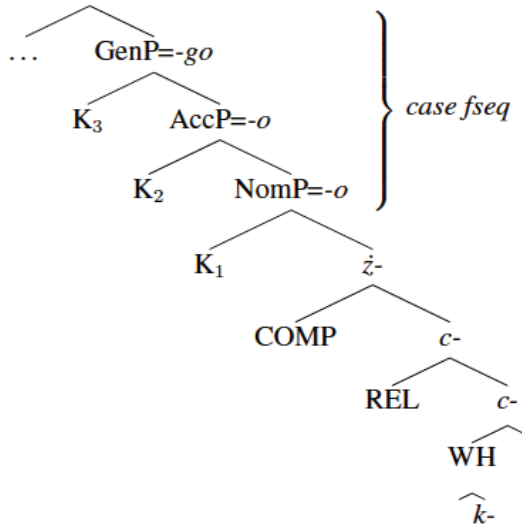


b.

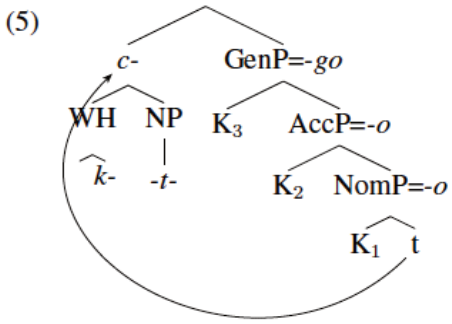


	DEM	COMP	REL	WH		DEM	COMP	REL	WH
Dutch:	*dat*	*dat*	*dat*	*wat*	Polish:	*to*	*że*	*co*	*co*

(4)



(5)



References

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