What $i$-$f$*

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This paper argues that the English interrogative complementizer *if*, traditionally taken to be atomic, is actually bimorphemic, with -$f$ a wh-morpheme and $i$- the default finite stem-allomorph of BE, also present in *‘is’. Similar to the German complementizer *dass*, composed of two separate syntactic heads, *d*- and *-ass* (Leu, 2015), where *d*- competes with the finite verb movement to the V2 position, English *if* is composed of $i$- (marked [+finite]), and -$f$ ([+wh]), which I argue are heads in the CP domain (akin to Rizzi’s (1997) Fin and Force). Thus, the bimorphemic structure of *if* partly explains its two special properties: its restriction to finite clauses and its ability to seemingly introduce embedded interrogatives without a wh-morpheme. According to my analysis, such a restriction to finite contexts is correlated with the form of the complementizer and its exclusion of the wh-generalization simply does not apply, as *if* also features a wh-morpheme. Data from the bimorphic complementizers structure in Slavic languages (Czech and Russian) supports this analysis.

1 Introduction

The English complementizer *if*, which appears in embedded interrogatives, is traditionally considered to be monomorphemic. In this paper, I’ll motivate the idea that *if* is bimorphemic:

(1) $if = i + f$ ,
where each phonological segment corresponds to one morpheme:
- $i$- a finite stem-allomorph of BE;
- -$f$ a wh-morpheme

Analyzing *if* as a structurally complex element composed of two syntactic heads allows us to account for two special properties of *if*. First, in English, embedded interrogatives obligatorily feature a left-peripheral wh-morpheme, (2).

(2) a. I don’t know whether Mary is going to come
   b. I wonder which one is yours
   c. I wonder where Mary stays
   d. Mary doesn’t know when John’s leaving

In the case of embedded interrogatives containing *if*, this wh-generalization does not seem to apply. Hence *if*, according to its traditional analysis, does not feature a wh-morpheme and thus is exceptional, (3).

(3) I don’t know if you’ll come

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Second, the complementizer *if*, unlike *whether*, is restricted to finite clauses, (4a), thus appearing to not be allowed with infinitives, (4b).

(4)  

a. He doesn’t know if you’ll stay  
    (finite)  

b. I don’t know whether /*if to go to the movies  
    (non-finite)  

(Kayne, 2000b:40)

This restriction does not apply to *whether*, (5a), nor to other wh-words, allowed in non-finite contexts, (5b-d).

(5)  

a. I don’t know whether to stay.  

b. I don’t know which one to choose.  

c. I don’t know where to go.  

d. I don’t know when to leave.

In this paper, I’ll argue that *if* is not exceptional. On my analysis of *if* as structurally complex, featuring a wh-morpheme, the wh-generalization extends to *if*. I argue that its restriction to finite contexts is correlated with the form of *if* being bimorphemic, with *i*-marked [+finite].

The paper is organized as follows. The background information on the previous research realized in the domain of internal structure of function words is proposed in Section 2. Section 3 discusses the structural complexity of the German complementizer *dass* and its syntactic properties to be restricted to finite contexts, proposed by Leu (2015). The data from Slavic languages supporting the analysis of English *if* is discussed in Section 4. Based on the arguments presented in previous sections, the analysis of *if* being bimorphemic is proposed in Section 5. The conclusions are summarized in Section 6.

2 Background

Function words are typically treated as monomorphemic in syntax. However, there is a tradition that recognizes their structural complexity. In recent years, discussion of internal structural complexity of function words has become more prominent (see Cardinaletti&Starke, 1999; Kayne, 2000; Déchaine&Wilschko, 2002; Kayne, 2010; Szabolcsi, 2010).

My analysis of *if* as bimorphemic, with each morpheme a separate syntactic head, implies and therefore, if correct, supports the view that morphology is syntactic “all the way down” (Marantz, 1997). That is, morphemes are structure building components of grammar responsible of both morphophonological and syntactical structure. I argue that the structural complexity of *if* can account for its syntactic property of being restricted to finite contexts and its non-exemption of the wh-generalization.

3 German complementizer *d-ass* (Leu, 2015)

German *dass* has been argued recently to be composed of two separated syntactic heads *d*- and *-ass* (Leu, 2015). In this section, I present the traditional analysis of German *dass* and Leu’s re-analysis.

3.1 Traditional analysis

The traditional analysis of the German verb occupying the second position in the clause and its complementarity with a complementizer (den Besten, 1983) shows that in matrix clauses, the verb moves to the empty complementizer position. This is structured in (6). This is followed by movement (or merger) of a constituent onto Spec,CP, deriving V2.
Thus, in (7), the verb *liest* ‘reads’ moves to the second position of the clause because of the lack of a complementizer in matrix clauses.

(7) heute abend *liest* Niko ein neues Globi-Buch
today evening reads Nico a new Globi-book
‘This evening, Nico reads a new Globi-book.’ (Leu, 2015:4)

In contrast, in embedded clauses, the verb appears in final position. In (8) the verb *liest* ‘reads’ is final in the clause, which itself is introduced by *dass*. The verb movement to the complementizer position is not allowed, because of the presence of the complementizer in C, as shown in (9).

(8) *dass* Niko heute abend ein neues Globi-Buch *liest*
that Nico today evening a new Globi-book reads
‘… that Nico reads a new Globi-book this evening.’ (Leu, 2015:4)

While in German, embedded V2 is in complementary distribution with a complementizer in the clause, (10a). In Scandinavian Germanic, the verb can appear in second position even in the presence of the complementizer. In (10b), the complementizer *at* is obligatory and the verb *har* ‘has’ is in the second position of the embedded clause.

(10) a. wir wissen (*dass*) dieses Buch *hat* Bo nicht gelesen
we know that this book has Bo not read
b. vi ved *(at) denne bog *har* Bo ikke lest
we know that this book has Bo not read
‘We know that Bo hasn’t read this book.’ (Leu, 2015:21 c.f. in Vikner, 1995:66)

This property of Scandinavian languages has been proposed to be a case of CP-recursion (Vikner, 1995). According to this analysis, Danish has two complementizer positions (C heads). While the complementizer *at* occupies the upper C head, verb movement is still possible to the lower complementizer position, (11).
3.2 Leu’s reanalysis of German \textit{d-ass}

Although the CP-recursion analysis accounts for the co-occurrence of V2 and a complementizer in Scandinavian languages, such an analysis assumes two different structures for German and Danish; namely, German has one C head while Danish has two.

Leu (2015) observes that in Germanic languages that allow the verb in second position in embedded clauses containing a complementizer (eCV2), the form of the complementizer is simple and phonologically similar to \textit{-at}; in Germanic languages that don’t allow eCV2, the complementizer’s form is complex and phonologically similar to \textit{dass}. This correlation between the form and eCV2 is presented in Table 1.

\textit{Table 1: eCV2 and complementizer form in Germanic languages}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>language</th>
<th>eCV2</th>
<th>complementizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afrikaans</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>d-at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>d-at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frisian</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>d-at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>d-ass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss German</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>d-as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yiddish</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>az</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faroese</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Icelandic</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwegian</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swedish</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>att</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leu proposes that German \textit{dass} is structurally complex, consisting of two syntactic heads occupied by \textit{d-} and \textit{-ass} (corresponding to Danish \textit{at}). Thus all Germanic languages have CP-recursion. However, in German, both C-heads are realized by complementizer morphemes, \textit{-ass} and \textit{d-}, the latter competing with a verb movement to the C position. This is structured in (12). In contrast, in Danish, the complementizer \textit{at} occupies the higher C head position making verb movement to the lower empty C position possible, (c.f. (11)). Thus CP-recursion applies not only to Scandinavian languages, but also to German-type complementizer languages.
Note also that in German, the complementizer *dass* is restricted to finite contexts, just like the English complementizer *if*, (c.f. (4)). On the other hand, in Danish, the complementizer *at* occurs in both finite and non-finite contexts (Iatridou & Kroch, 1992; Vikner, 1995). Hence, *d*- competes for C with finite verb fronting and *d*- is restricted to finite contexts. For these reasons, Leu proposes to analyze *-ass/ at* as Force₀ and German *d*- as Fin₀.

My analysis of English *if* proposed in the present paper is similar to Leu’s analysis of German *dass*:

(13) \( dass = \textit{d}_i + \textit{ass} \quad t_i \)

That is, I claim that *i*- of English *if* initially occupies the FinP head position, consequently merging with *-f*, which is in the head of ForceP, (14; 15).

(14) \( if = \textit{i}_i + \textit{f} \quad t_i \)

(15)

These observations are summarized in Table 2.

| Table 2: Complementizers in German, Danish and English |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| complementer                                | German       | Danish   | English |
| structural complexity                       | bimorphemic  | monomorphemic | bimorphemic |
| markedness                                  | [+finite]    | -        | [+finite] |

5
4 Slavic languages

In this section, I present an analysis of interrogative complementizers in Czech and Russian. In these languages, the morphological structure of embedded interrogative and conditional complementizers reveals a transparent complexity.

4.1 Czech

In Czech, bimorpemic jestli appears in conditional clauses, as shown in (16), and in embedded yes-no interrogatives, as in (17a). I argue that jestli is morphologically complex, composed of jest- and -li.

(16) jestli Marie zůstane, odjedu
jestli Mary stay.3SG go.3SG
‘If Mary stays, I’ll go.’ (conditional)

First, in the context of embedded yes-no interrogatives, jestli, (17a), alternates with the particle -li attached to the verb in clause-initial position, as in (17b, c).

(17) a. nevím, jestli Marie zůstane
nevím NEG.know.1SG jestli Mary stay.3SG
‘I don’t know if Mary will stay.’ (embedded interrogative)

b. nevím, zůstane-li Marie
nevím NEG.know.1SG zůstane-li Mary
‘I don’t know if Mary will stay.’ (embedded interrogative)

c. nevíme, mají-li dnes medovinu
nevíme NEG.know.1PL mají-li dnes medovinu
‘We don’t know whether they have honey today.’ (embedded interrogative)

According to Schwabe (2004), the particle -li can appear on fronted verbs in conditional clauses, as illustrated in (18).

(18) a. máte-li pochyby, zatelefonujte na informace
have.2PL-li doubts call.IMP at information
‘If you have doubts, call information.’ (conditional)

b. ztratí-li volbu, musí odstoupit
ztratí-li election must step.down.IMP
‘If one loses an election, one must step down.’ (conditional)

Hence, we observe an alternation between verb movement to the left of -li, as shown in (17b, c) and (18a, b), and the presence of jest- to the left of -li, as in (16) and (17a), both in conditional and interrogative context.

Second, according to Fried (2009), Czech jestli is derived from the interrogative phrase jest li ‘is [it]?’ This phrase is composed of jest, 3SG form of the verb být ‘BE’, and the interrogative particle -li, common to many Slavic languages, including Czech, where it appears only in embedded interrogatives and are no longer used in direct yes-no interrogatives (Fried, 2009).

Not all native speakers of Czech find this type of construction (i.e., containing -li on the verb) grammatical, though. (Ivona Kucherova, p.c.).
Based on these observations, suggesting a morphological and syntactic boundary between *jest-* and -*li*, I propose that Czech complementizer *jestli* is morphologically complex, composed of two morphemes, *jest-* and -*li*:

(19) \[ \text{*jestli} = \text{*jest-} + \text{-li} \]

4.2 Russian

In Russian, conditional clauses are introduced by bimorphemic complementizer *jesli*. Similarly to Czech, I propose that this complementizer is composed of two morphemes, *jes-* and -*li*.

4.2.1 Russian *jest’i* - BE

In Russian, *jest’i* ‘is’ is a finite inflected form (3SG) of the verb *bit’* (BE)\(^2\), as shown in (20), composed of the finite stem *jes-* and the inflection -*t’*.

(20) a. na stal’ye jest’i knig-y on table.LOC BE.3SG book-NOM ‘There is a book on the table.’

b. ete ni-jest’i xerušo it NEG-BE.3SG good.ADV ‘It is not good.’

Thus, I argue that, in Russian, a finite non-inflected stem-allomorph of BE, *jes-*, is one of the morphemes of the bimorphemic complementizer *jesli*, along with -*li*, a kind of polarity particle, discussed in the next subsection.

4.2.2 Russian -*li*

In Russian, the particle -*li*, apart from bimorphemic complementizer *jesli*, appears in a variety of contexts. First, in matrix clauses, -*li* appears attached to the main verb and is used to form yes-no questions (Schwabe, 2004).

(21) Tentseval-y-li Maša? dance.PST-3SG.F-li Maša ‘Did Mary dance?’

It is interesting to note that the distribution of the Russian particle -*li* is similar to that of the Japanese *ka* (22), which also appears in the clause to mark interrogatives.

(22) Akira-ga odorimasu ka Akira-NOM dance Q ‘Does Akira dance?’ (Szabolcsi, Whang & Zu, 2014:125)

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\(^2\) 3SG (*jest’*) is the only form of the copular verb *bit’* that is still in use in modern Russian (Wade, 2010). Other forms, namely, *jesm’* (1SG), *jest’* (2SG), *jesm* (1PL), *jeste* (2PL) and *sut’* (3PL) (Жолобов, 2013), are not used any more.

\(^3\) *jest’* is marked with the phonologically soft form of the third person inflection, -*t’*, that, according to Жолобов (2013), could be found in some thematic verbs in Old Slavic, but not present any more in modern Russian, thus *jest’* being exceptional. A hard form of third person inflection, -*t*, is used now with all verbs in modern Russian (*xoce-t’* ‘wants’, *smotri-t’* ‘looks’, *igraje-t’* ‘plays’) (Jakobson, 1948; Wade, 2010).

\(^4\) In (20b), *jest’* is used to emphasize the negative judgement of the speaker about the event of the clause.
Second, in Russian embedded clauses, the particle -li attaches to the verb to form indirect questions (23).

(23) ja ni-znaju tentseval-u-li Maša
I NEG-know dance.PST-SG.F-li Maša
‘I don’t know if Masha danced.’ (Russian)

The Japanese question particle ka similarly appears in embedded interrogatives, as shown in (24).

(24) Taro-wa [Yuka-ga denwasi-ta ka] siritagatteiru
Taro-TOP Yuka-NOM call-PST Q want.to.know
‘Taro wonders whether Yuka called.’ (Shimoyama, 2001:10)

The similarity between Russian li and Japanese ka becomes even more prominent when we consider that both are used in disjunction contexts. In Russian, -li appears in the disjunction morpheme ili ‘or’, -ka appears as an affix meaning ‘or’ on the first disjunct in Japanese.

(25) Ivan ili Petr
Ivan OR Petr
‘Ivan or Petr.’ (Russian)

(26) [John-ka Mary]-ga hashitta
John-OR Mary-NOM ran
‘John or Mary ran.’ (Szabolcsi, 2014:5)

Finally, the Russian particle -li and the Japanese particle ka both appear as part of existential quantifiers (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>something</td>
<td>Što-libo</td>
<td>nani-ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone</td>
<td>Kto-libo</td>
<td>dare-ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>somewhere</td>
<td>Gde-libo</td>
<td>Doko-ka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 summarizes the parallel contexts in which Russian -li and Japanese ka appear.

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5 The relatedness of Japanese quantifiers’ semantics to that of polarity interrogatives and disjunctions, in context of which the particle ka can appear, is discussed in Szabolcsi (2014). In this paper, I extend Szabolcsi’s discussion to Russian quantifiers that, analogically to Japanese ka-quantifiers, can be composed of the particle -li, found, otherwise, in polarity interrogatives contexts.
Table 4: Russian and Japanese polarity particles ka and -li

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>context</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes-no direct interrogative</td>
<td>V-li…?</td>
<td>...ka?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes-no embedded interrogative</td>
<td>[...] [...]</td>
<td>[...] [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disjunction</td>
<td>i-li</td>
<td>ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quantifiers</td>
<td>pronoun-li-bo</td>
<td>pronoun-ka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, based on the distribution of Russian -li, similarly to Japanese ka, used both in yes-no interrogatives and disjunction contexts, it is natural to consider Russian -li as a polarity particle. Polarity particles are discussed in the literature as those appearing in polarity context ('yes-no' questions) (Progovac, 2005; Lohnstein & Trissler, 2004). In English, yes and no particles are considered polarity particles (Kramer & Rawlins, 2009). In Slavic languages, the particle -li is normally referred to as a polarity item (Lohnstein & Trissler, 2004; Arsenijevčić, 2011; Progovac, 2005 etc.). According to Arsenijevčić (2011), in Serbo-Croatian, the disjunction ili, which is similar to Russian disjunction ili ‘or’, is composed of two elements, namely, i- ‘and’ – a conjunction element – and -li – a polarity item. Both Japanese ka and Russian -li appear in context of questions, indefinites and disjunctions and are at least similar (Szabolcsi, 2014). Hence, the analysis of Russian -li can be transposed to Japanese, thus considering Japanese ka as a polarity item, similarly to Russian -li.

4.2.3. Russian jesli

In this paper, I propose that jes- – a 3SG non-inflected allomorph of the verb BE – and -li – a polarity particle, are the two morphemes of Russian bimorphemic conditional complementizer jesli. Thus, in (27a, b), jesli is used to introduce conditionals. This complementizer is allowed only in conditional clauses and not accepted in yes-no embedded interrogatives (27c).

(27) a. ja dam tebę knig-u jesli ti ljub-iš teitati
'I will give you a book if you like to read.' (conditional)

b. jesli Marija gelđna, pusti pejest
jesli Marija is.hungry,F let eat.FUT.3SG
‘If Mary is hungry, let her eat.’ (conditional)

c. ja ni-znaje jesli Ivan spit
ja NEG-know.PRS.1SG jesli Ivan sleep.PRS.3SG-li
‘I don’t know if Ivan sleeps.’ (embedded interrogative)

Embedded yes-no interrogatives are introduced with an inflected verb stem followed by the particle -li (V-li), as shown in (28a, b). V-li is not allowed in conditionals context (28c).

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The semantics of polarity questions in contrast with alternative questions is discussed in Szabolcsi (2014). In this paper, I adopt the author’s view (and of a number of other authors, namely, Lohnstein & Trissler (2004); Progovac, 2005 and Arsenijevčić (2011) for Serbo-Croatian) to consider yes-no interrogatives marked with Russian -li as polarity questions.
In (28a, b), the inflected verb stem *spit* (‘sleeps’) and *znai* (‘knows’) is followed by *-li*, while in (27a, b) *-li* cliticizes to *jes*, a non-inflected finite stem of the verb *bit* (BE). Thus, in Russian and Czech, the particle *-li* appears to be encliticized to a verbal stem that moves to the left of *-li*.

While in Russian, *jesli* is used in conditionals and *V-* *li* is used in embedded interrogatives, in Czech, *jestli* and *V-* *li* appear in both contexts. Table 5 summarizes the distribution of *jes(t)li* in the two Slavic languages.

### Table 5: Czech and Russian (*jes(t)li*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>context</th>
<th>Czech</th>
<th>Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>embedded interrogatives</td>
<td><em>jestli</em></td>
<td><em>V-</em> <em>li</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conditionals</td>
<td><em>jestli</em></td>
<td><em>jesli</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>V-</em> <em>li</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence, in Czech and Russian, the complementizer *jes(t)li* alternates with a verb fronting *-li*, suggesting the morphemic status of *jes(t)*-* and *-li*. Thus, I propose that the two elements of the complementizer *jes(t)li* in both Slavic languages are *jes(t)*-* – an allomorph of BE – and *-li* – a polarity particle.

### 4.3 Summary

I have argued that both Czech and Russian have bimorphemic counterparts of English *if*: *jes(t)li*, composed of two morphemes, *jes(t)* – a 3SG allomorph of BE (*bit*) – and *-li* – a polarity morpheme, which appears in interrogative, disjunction, and quantificational contexts in Russian.

In the next section, I motivate the two parts of *if*, based on my analyses of Slavic *jes(t)li* and German *dass*.

### 5 English *if*

As discussed in Section 1, the English complementizer *if* is exceptional, on the traditional view. First, *if*, like German *d-ass* but unlike *whether*, only embeds finite clauses, (c.f. (4), repeated here as (29)).

(29) a. He doesn’t know if you’ll stay (finite)
    b. I don’t know whether /*if to go to the movies (non-finite)

Second, *if* embeds interrogatives without a left-peripheral *wh*-morpheme:
(30) a. I don't know what to do.
b. I wonder which one is yours.
c. I doubt where to stay.
d. I wonder whether to leave.
e. I don't know if you'll come.

On my analysis, the restriction of if to finite contexts is correlated with its form, and if is not exceptional from the wh-generalization, also featuring a wh-morpheme. In this section, I argue that if is bimorphemic, composed of two syntactic heads, i- and -f, and that such a structural complexity accounts for its seemingly exceptional proprieties.

5.1 English if: i- = BE

The analysis of Russian bimorphemic complementizer jesli, presented in Section 4, reveals that one of its elements, jes-, is a finite stem allomorph of BE, (31).

(31) jesli = jes - li
    BE - li

Analogously, note that i of if is formally identical to the finite stem of BE found in the 3sg present form is, (32), composed of i- and -s, the latter being the 3sg inflection (sleeps, stays, runs etc.).

(32) There is a book on the table.

Thus, Russian and English complementizers are similar in that they are both structurally complex and contain a default finite stem allomorph of BE, (33).

(33) jesli = jes(i)- + -li
    if   = i(s)- + -f

If so, then the restriction of if to finite clauses can be correlated with the form of the complementizer ((34) and c.f. (15), repeated here as (35)).

(34) if = i- + -f; where i- [+finite], -f [+wh]

5.2 English if: -f = [wh]

Now if i-, the first element of if, is morphemic, the morphemic status of -f, the second element of if, is naturally derived. Considering that embedded interrogatives, introduced either by wh-words (c.f. (5)), or by if, (c.f. (3)), are marked with a [+wh] feature, (Baker, 1970; Hawkins, 2005), the most plausible candidate to wh-featuring is -f of if, realized as [f], coda labial fricative. Considering, otherwise, that [f]
shares a labial feature with [w], a common realization of a wh-morpheme in English, and English does not allow [w] in coda position after a high front vowel (i.e. *[iw]), it seems to me to be natural to think of -f of if as a realization of the wh-morpheme in this context. Thus, I propose that -f of if is a realization of the wh-morpheme in this position in a word and is therefore not an exception of the wh-generalization.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, I proposed that English if is bimorphemic, consisting of the two morphemes: - i (a finite stem-allomorph of BE) and -f (an allomorph of the wh-morpheme).

On the traditional view, the complementizer if has two specific exceptional properties. First, if doesn’t contain an overt wh-morpheme, in contrast with other wh-words introducing embedded interrogatives in English (including whether). Second, if (in contrast with whether) is restricted to finite contexts and is not allowed with infinitives. My proposal that if is structurally complex, composed of two elements, with i- being marked [+finite] and -f [+wh], accounts for the fact that if appears only in finite contexts and that if is not exceptional from the wh-generalization, the property of English embedded interrogatives to feature a left-peripheral wh-morpheme.

Leu's (2005) analysis of the German complementizer dass as being composed of two syntactic heads, d- and -ass, with d- responsible for the restriction of the complementizer to finite contexts, was extended to English if. English if, I have argued, is complex and restricted to finite contexts with i- responsible for this restriction, being marked [+finite].

The comparative evidence coming from Slavic languages, Czech and Russian, that have bimorphemic complementizers jes(t)li, composed of two morphemes, jes(t) – a finite allomorph of BE – and -li – a polarity morpheme, provides additional support for analyzing English if as structurally complex.

References


