On the function COMP in Cantonese

Adams Bodomo and Sophia Lee
Department of Linguistics
University of Hong Kong

Proceedings of the LFG01 Conference

University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Mirriam Butt and Tracy Holloway King (Editors)

2001

CSLI Publication

http://csli-publications.stanford.edu/

Abstract

This paper discusses the function COMP with data from Cantonese. We first point out some possible problems for previous proposals for the elimination of COMP. We next take up the concept of ‘ mixed language’ using Cantonese data. Initial results show that Cantonese is indeed a mixed language. We do, however, propose that the concept of mixed languages should be extended to include degrees or extents to which a language can be regarded as a mixed language. Our analysis in this paper supports a finer-grained categorization of grammatical functions in linguistic theory.

1. Introduction*

Grammatical function categorization and specification constitute an important issue for most formal theories of syntax. However, not all theoretical frameworks have the same taxonomy of functions. While familiar ones such as SUBJ and OBJ are recognized and differentiated in almost all theories of grammar, some others such as the OBL_q, COMP and XCOMP are not that familiar across frameworks. Some frameworks, such as LFG, are thus more finer-grained than others in terms of grammatical function categorization. In this paper we look more closely at the existence and relevance of one function, COMP, in the structure of Cantonese, a Yue dialect of Chinese as spoken in Hong Kong. COMP (or closed complement) was first introduced as a grammatical function in Lexical-Functional Grammar in Bresnan (1982a & b). However, its existence is not without controversy. Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan (1996a) propose that clausal complements, which are commonly considered as bearing COMP function, can be taken as bearing the OBJ function since they possess the same kinds of syntactic properties as OBJ do. Other works consider that there is evidence for COMP as a distinct grammatical function (Lødrup 1996; Curly 1996; Dalrymple and Lødrup 2000). In this paper, we propose to contribute to this discussion with analysis of data on Cantonese COMPs. In section 2, we introduce and illustrate the existence of COMP and other functions such as OBJ in the structure of Cantonese. In section 3, we question whether it is possible to successfully argue against the existence of COMP as a grammatical function (Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan 1996). In section 4, we take up the concept of *mixed language*, as introduced by Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000), as a motivation for retaining COMP as a grammatical function in Cantonese. We show that Cantonese is an OBJ/COMP mixed language based on the simple fact that there is

* We are grateful for comments on this paper from the following people: Helge Lødrup, Mary Dalrymple, and participants at LFG 2001.

alternation between COMPs and OBJs. Following this position, we propose that the concept of mixed language should be extended to include degrees or extents to which a language can be regarded as a mixed language. This will be briefly demonstrated in section 5. Finally, we show that a finer-grained categorization of grammatical functions in a linguistic theory like LFG is desirable.

2. Complement Functions and the Structure of Cantonese

Cantonese like other dialects of Chinese, has some very unique characteristics including pro-drop without a rich inflectional morphology (Luke, Bodomo and Nancarrow 2001), long distance anaphora (Pan and Hu 2001) and a quite complex verbal complementation. It is this latter aspect of Chinese that is addressed in this paper. We show below in examples (1) – (5) the full range of grammatical functions, such as OBJ, OBJ_θ, OBL_θ, COMP and XCOMP that captures verbal complementation in Cantonese, respectively.

(1) *Nei5* *gaau3* [*ngo5*]
2.SG teach me
'You teach me.'

(2) *Nei5* *bei2-zo2* *bun2* *syu1* [*ngo5*]
2.SG give-PERF CL book 1.SG
'You have given me a book.'

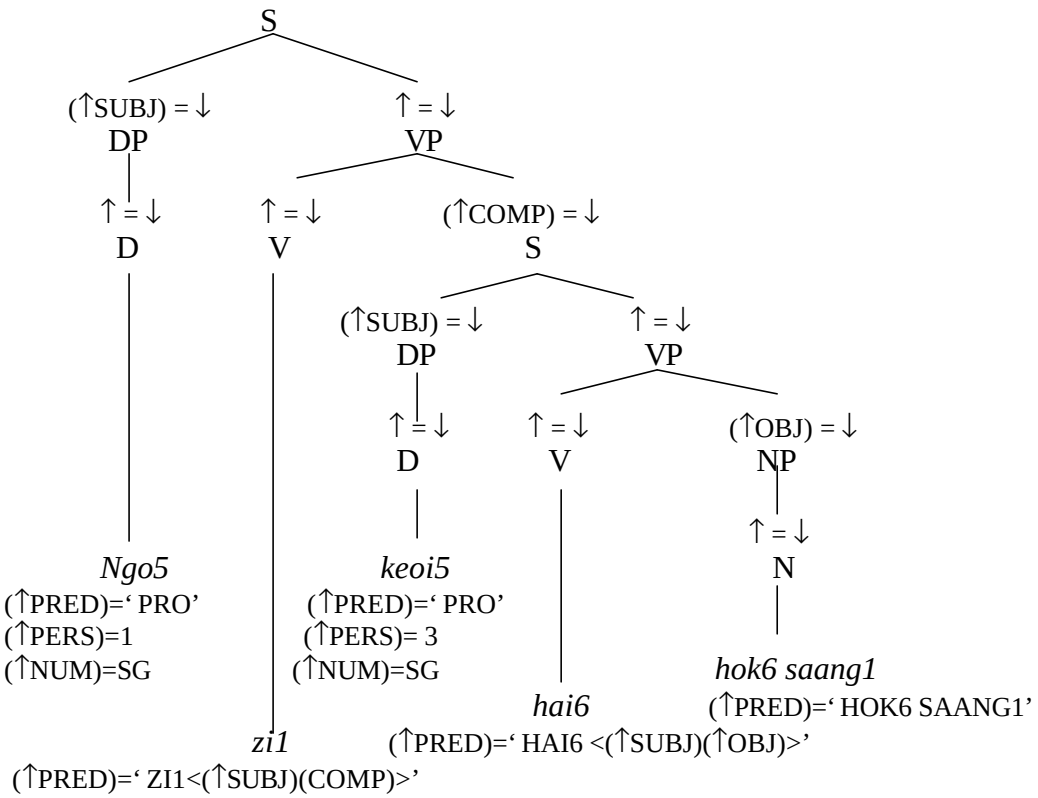
(3) *Ngo5* *zyu6* [*hai2* *zung1waan4*]
1.SG live at Central
'I live in Central.'

(4) ***Ngo5*** ***zi1*** **[*keoi5*** ***hai6*** ***hok6 saang1*]**
1.SG knows 3.SG be student
'I knows that s/he is a student.'

(5) *Keoi5* *jiu3* *ngo5* [*zau2*]
3.SG want 1.SG leave
'He/she asked me to leave'

COMP is the embedded sentence which contains its own subcategorized arguments as illustrated in (4). In most languages it usually appears together with a complementizer which serves as a sentence introducer. In Cantonese, however, there is no obvious complementizer as *that* in English. The annotated c- and f-structure diagrams in (6) illustrate the occurrence of COMP in the structure of Cantonese.

(6) c- and f-structures of example (4): *Ngo5 zi1 keoi5 hai6 hok6 saang1*



$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{‘ PRO’} \\ \text{PERS} & 1 \\ \text{NUM} & \text{SG} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{PRED} & \text{‘ ZI1<(↑SUBJ)(↑COMP)>’} \\ \text{COMP} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{SUBJ} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{‘ PRO’} \\ \text{PERS} & 3 \\ \text{NUM} & \text{SG} \end{bmatrix} \\ \text{PRED} & \text{‘ HAI6 <(↑SUBJ)(↑OBJ)>’} \\ \text{OBJ} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{‘ HOK6 SAANG1’} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

COMP is realized as S in terms of phrase structure category as shown in the c-structure. The f-structure shows us that it consists of a PRED *hai6* which subcategorizes for two arguments, i.e. *keoi5* as the SUBJ and *hok6 saang1* as the OBJ. Neither of them needs to be controlled by the matrix functions. Having illustrated the occurrence of COMP as a grammatical function in Cantonese, we will try to examine a debate in the literature about the existence of COMP.

3. Should COMP be eliminated as a Grammatical Function?

As mentioned earlier, not all works in LFG agree that COMP should exist in the taxonomy of grammatical functions. In this section we question the relevance of the arguments against COMP with respect to Cantonese.

Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan (1996) takes the position that all the sentential complements, in fact, bear the grammatical function OBJ or OBJ_q and hence COMP is unnecessary as a grammatical function and should thus be eliminated from the LFG taxonomy of grammatical functions. There are various reasons for this position. First, it is argued that the distinction between OBJ and COMP at f-structure is duplicated as NP and S respectively at c-structure. This duplication of information at the two levels of representation results in a redundancy and therefore the distinction of the two functions should be made in terms of phrase structure category at c-structure, but not of grammatical functions at f-structure.

However, this would depend on the kind of language one is dealing with. It is known that phrase structure category alone is not able to differentiate all the various types of syntactic behaviour. This is especially true for those non-configurational languages like Warlpiri and Malayalam in which their grammatical functions are not uniformly represented in terms of continuous phrases at c-structure. Even Cantonese, though not one such non-configurational language, provides an interesting piece of

evidence here as shown in the case of a ‘ pro-drop’ sentence in (7):

(7) $_{S}$[*Keoi5* $_{VP}$[*waa6* $_{VP}$[*m4* *leng3*]]]
3.SG say NEG pretty
‘ S/he said that (it is) not pretty.’

Though COMP is usually realized in Cantonese as S in terms of phrase structure category, it is sometimes realized as VP as shown in (7) due to the absence of an overt subject in the embedded sentence. This piece of evidence in Cantonese indicates that phrase structure might not provide as clear an evidence for distinguishing OBJ and COMP in terms of NP and S as is suggested by Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan (1996).

Another argument in favor of eliminating COMP is the claim that verbs which take a sentential complement can be passivized just as OBJ can be. Again, this might work for some languages but not for all. We believe that it is not a general trend for many languages. In Cantonese, COMP cannot normally be passivized as in (9):

(8) *Ngo5* *zi1 dou3-zo2* [*keoi5* *saat3-gwo3* *jan4*]
1.SG know-PERF 3.SG kill-PERF people
‘ I know that s/he has killed a person.’

(9) ?*[*Keoi5* *saat3-gwo3* *jan4*] *bei2*[1] *ngo5* *zi1 dou3-zo2*
3.SG kill-PERF people BEI 1.SG know-PERF
‘ That s/he has killed a person is known by me.’

The only way to get a structure that looks like a passivization of COMP would be to nominalize it by adding “li1+CL+N” or “ge3 + N” right after it. Consider the example below in (10):

(10) [*Keoi5* *saat3-gwo3* *jan4*] *li1* *gin6* *si6* *bei2* *ngo5* *zi1 dou3-zo2*
3.SG kill-PERF people this CL matter BEI 1.SG know-PERF
‘ That s/he has killed a person is known by me.’

In (10), the S *Keoi5 saat3-gwo3 jan4* is moved to the initial position of the sentence,

[1] ‘ *bei2*’ serves as the passive marker in Cantonese.

however, it becomes the modifier of the SUBJ *li1 gin6 si6*.

Lastly, a major argument for the elimination of COMP as a grammatical function advanced by Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan (1996) comes from the structure of the Lexical Mapping Theory (LMT)'s four-way classification of grammatical functions (Bresnan and Kanerva 1989, Bresnan 2001). The current LMT model decomposes grammatical functions into two binary features, $\pm r$ and $\pm o$. It is obvious that COMP has not been taken into consideration during the development of the theory. We don't believe, however, that it is a good enough reason to not include COMP in the taxonomy of LFG functions just because it has not been accounted for by the LMT. In any case, it is not only COMP that is not accounted for by the LMT. Other functions like XCOMP are not included. A better approach would probably be to consider expanding the generative power of LMT to account for more functions and not to eliminate COMP and others because of the apparent inability of LMT to handle them.

Indeed various alternative proposals have been made to augment the current LMT model. For instance, Zaenen and Engdahl (1994) propose that COMP and XCOMP bear the thematic role PROPOSITION.

Given the above, among other reasons, we take the position in this paper that COMP exists as a grammatical function in Cantonese.

4. Cantonese as an OBJ/COMP mixed language

Following from our arguments that COMP exists as a grammatical function in Cantonese, we would like to show in this section that some clausal complements function as COMPs and some as OBJs. The syntactic behaviour of clausal complements is language-specific. It has been shown that in some languages like Icelandic and Spanish, all clausal complements bear a uniform grammatical function, OBJ. Some clausal complements bear either OBJ or COMP function in other languages.

This manifestation of variability in the structure of languages in this respect has led Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000) to propose the term *mixed language* to describe a language in which clausal complements exists both as OBJs and COMPs. The existence of OBJ/COMP mixed languages implies the need for the distinction between COMP and OBJ function because even a hierarchically-defined distinction among grammatical functions cannot predict the different behavior of clausal complements in mixed languages (Dalrymple and Lødrup 2000). Following the introduction of the idea of mixed language, we will now try to examine if Cantonese is an OBJ/COMP mixed language.

The first and most important step in deciding if a language is an OBJ/COMP mixed language, which we define as one in which some clausal complements can function as OBJs while others function as COMPs is to see if there is an alternation of NP OBJs and COMPs in the complementation properties of some predicates in the language.

4.1. Alternation with NP object

In Cantonese, verbal predicates like *zi1* (*dou3*) ‘know’ and *seon3* ‘believe’ that take OBJ clausal complements also allow NP objects, i.e. they take either NP/DP/CLP [2] or S OBJs:

(11) a. *Ngo5* *zi1 dou3* $_{S}$[*keoi5* *hai6 hou2* *jan4*]
1.SG know 3.SG be good people
‘I know that s/he is a good person.’

b. *Ngo5* *zi1 dou3* $_{DP}$[*li1* *gin6 si6*]
1.SG know this CL matter
‘I know (about) this.’

[2] CLP = Classifier phrase

(12) a. *Ngo5 seon3* $_{S}$[*keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*]
1.SG believe 3.SG be good people
‘ I believe that s/he is a good person.’

b. *Ngo5 seon3* $_{DP}$[*keoi5*]
1.SG believe 3.SG
‘ I believe (in) him/her.’

On the other hand, verbal predicates like *gok3 dak1* ‘ think, feel’ and *hei1 mong6* ‘ hope’ that take COMP clausal complements do not allow nominal OBJs:

(13) a. *Ngo5 gok3 dak1* $_{S}$[*keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*]
1.SG think 3.SG be good people
‘ I think that s/he is a good person.’

*b. *Ngo5 gok3 dak1* $_{DP}$[*keoi5*]
1.SG think 3.SG

(14) a. *Ngo5 hei1 mong6* $_{S}$[*keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*]
1.SG hope 3.SG be good people
‘ I hope that s/he is a good person.’

*b. *Ngo5 hei1 mong6* $_{DP}$[*keoi5*]
1.SG hope 3.SG

These verbs allow only COMP clausal complements. This shows that clausal complements do function differently depending on the matrix predicate in which not all of them can be taken as bearing an OBJ function as proposed by Alsina et al. (1996).

The above analysis of Cantonese as a mixed language is based on the criteria that were used in Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000). However if the distinction between OBJ and COMP languages is attributable to the pronominalization by an NP proform, this may not be a good criterion for Cantonese since Cantonese pronouns refer primarily to animate entities, and are rarely used to replace phrases or sentences that encode facts, propositions and ideas. On this score, one might argue that Cantonese is solely a COMP language. We should note, however, that we cannot pronominalize even clear cases of inanimate OBJ NPs in Cantonese as shown in (15).

(15) a. *Ngo5* *zi1* *ni1 gin6 si6*
1.SG know this matter
‘ I know this matter.’

??b. *Ngo5* *zi1* *keoi5*
1.SG know 3.SG
‘ I know it.’

The above two types of predicates show that some clausal complements function as OBJs and others function as COMPs in Cantonese. On this score alone, Cantonese is clearly an OBJ/COMP mixed language.

4.2. Other criteria

In addition to the COMP alternation with NP OBJs that is given as a first parse in establishing a language as an OBJ/COMP mixed language, Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000) have also mentioned others including coordination, passivization, unbounded dependency, and complementation facts. We show in this subsection that even though we have established Cantonese as an OBJ/COMP mixed language on account of the facts of NP OBJ alternation with COMP, these other extra facts do not seem to apply well in Cantonese grammar. This thus raises the issue as to what kind of OBJ/COMP mixed language Cantonese is, if it is at all.[3]

4.2.1 Coordination

Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000) bring up the issue of NP object coordination with a clause, as shown in (16), as a feature of all the three languages, English, German and Swedish that they consider as mixed languages.

(16) Pat remembered the appointment and that it was important to be on time. (Dalrymple and Lødrup 2000)

In this construction, an NP object can be coordinated with a clause which also bears the

[3] We do not rule out the case that the facts of Cantonese might lead one to argue that it is, indeed, a non-mixed language. Lødrup (email communication, June 2001) has hinted at this alternative analysis.

OBJ function. We note here that this kind of construction is very unnatural in Cantonese; in fact this is not a usual way to coordinate two clauses in this language, as shown by the marginally or hedgingly acceptable sentences in (17) and (18).

(17) ? *Ngo5* *ming4 baak6* *nei5 ge3* *gam2 sau6* *tung4 maai4* [*nei5*
1.SG understand 2.SG POSS feeling and 2.SG

ji2 ging1 *zeon6-zo2* *lik6*]
already try-PERF strength
'I understand your feeling and that you have tried your best.'

(18) ? *Ngo5* *do1 ze6* *ngo5* *baa4 baa1* *maa4 maa1* *zung6 jau2* [*di1*
1.SG thank 1.SG father mother and some

bang4 jau2 *jat1 zik6* *gam2* *zi1 ci4* *ngo5*]
friend all the way so support 1.SG
'I thank my parents and that my friends have supported me all the way.'

This is also the case in Mandarin Chinese. Chao (1968: 271) indicates that 'since the expressions must be comparable in structure, it is not good to have a nominal phrase and a clause in coordination'.

In any case, this kind of coordination is not always available even in English, German and Swedish, as observed by Dalrymple and Lødrup's (2000) quotation of the following sentence:

(19) *He proposed [a 20 % reduction for the elderly] and [that the office be moved to the suburbs]. (Emonds 1970:85)

NP object coordination with an OBJ clausal complement is thus not a strong enough evidence in determining the status of a language as an OBJ/COMP mixed language.

4.2.2 Passivization

Another piece of evidence that could distinguish between OBJ and COMP and thus help in deciding the status of a language comes from the facts of LMT, as observed

by Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000). Following LMT, SUBJ and OBJ functions are classified as –r, while COMP is classified as +r (proposed by Zaenen and Engdahl 1994). It is then predicted that the –r argument can be realized as SUBJ as in the passive, while the +r argument cannot be realized as SUBJ.

Cantonese, however, does not seem to be in line with this prediction in which both OBJ clausal complements as in (20) and COMP clausal complements in (21) can by no means become the SUBJ of the passivized verbs:

(20) *[*Keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*] *bei2 ngo5 seon3*
3.SG be good people BEI 1.SG believe

(21) *[*Keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*] *bei2 ngo5 gok3 dak1*
3.SG be good people BEI 1.SG think

In fact, not all -r arguments can become the subject of the passivized verbs. This depends very much on the verb type. Verbs like *gwaa3 zyu6* ‘miss’, *zung1 ji3* ‘like’, *zang1* ‘hate’, and etc. do not have their passive counterparts regardless of the types of complements they take (neither nominal NP OBJ (22) nor OBJ clausal complement (23)):

(22) a. *Ngo5 zung1 ji3 li1 fu3 ngaan5 geng2*
1.SG like this CL glasses
‘I like this pair of glasses.’

*b. *Li1 fu3 ngaan5 geng2 bei2 ngo5 zung1 ji3*
this CL glasses BEI 1.SG like

(23) a. *Ngo5 zung1 ji3* [*nei5 daai3 li1 fu3 ngaan5 geng2*]
1.SG like 2.SG wear this CL glasses
‘I like that you wear this pair of glasses.’

*b. [*Nei5 daai3 li1 fu3 ngaan5 geng2*] *bei2 ngo5 zung1 ji3*
2.SG wear this CL glasses BEI 1.SG like

As we can see then, Cantonese does not seem to distinguish OBJ clausal complement from COMP clausal complement in this respect.

4.2.3 Unbounded dependency

The facts of unbounded dependency provide yet another parameter for comparing OBJ and COMPs. Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000) observe that most languages (e.g. English, German, and Swedish) allow OBJ arguments to enter into an unbounded dependency, but not COMP. However, it is not uncommon that Cantonese allows topicalized COMP, i.e. a COMP can be identified with a TOPIC. In this case, both OBJ and COMP clausal complements are allowed to enter into an unbounded dependency as in (24) and (25) respectively:

(24) [*Keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*], *ngo5 zi1 dou3*
3.SG be good people 1.SG know
‘ S/he is a good person, I know.’

(25) [*Keoi5 hai6 hou2 jan4*], *ngo5 gok3 dak1*
3.SG be good people 1.SG think
‘ S/he is a good person, I think.’

It would therefore seem that, on this score, Cantonese again does not come out as an OBJ/COMP mixed language, as it is hard to distinguish between OBJ and COMP in Cantonese using this piece of evidence.

4.2.4 Complementation of nouns, adjectives and prepositions

A further piece of evidence as observed by Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000) comes from the facts of differences in category complementation. In English, nouns and adjectives (intransitive categories) are expected not to take OBJ clauses but COMP clauses. In contrast, prepositions (transitive category) are predicted to take OBJ clauses. Unlike English, nouns in Cantonese do not take COMP clauses. On the other hand, adjectives are expected to take COMP clauses as in (26):

(26) *Ngo5 hou2 hoi1 sam1* [*gaan1 gung1 si1 ceng2-zo2 ngo5*]
1.SG very happy CL company employ-PREP 1.SG
‘ I am so happy that the company has employed me.’

There is a productive construction which occurs along with an obligatory adjectival modifier *dou3* ‘ to the extent that’ as in (27):

(27) *Keoi5 gui6 dou3* [*deoi3 goek3 jyun5 saai3*]
3.SG tired to the extent CL legs feeble all
‘ S/he is so tired that his/her legs are feeble.’

However, the sentential complement does not seem to function as a COMP, but as an ADJUNCT.

There is no common agreement that prepositions form a distinct class of category in Cantonese. If we take the position that coverbs are not prepositions (Bodomo 1999, 2000), this test would no longer be valid. On the other hand, if coverbs are in fact prepositions in Cantonese, then it is expected that prepositions do not take OBJ clauses.

(28) *Keoi5 can3* [*ngo5 dei6 m4 wai4 ji3*] *tau1-zo2 bun2 syu1*
3.SG during 1.PL NEG aware steal-PERF CL book
‘ S/he stole the book when we did not pay attention.’

(29) *Keoi5 soeng2 jau4* [*ngo5 zyu2 ci4 li1 go3 wui2*]
3.SG want from 1.SG chair DET CL meeting
‘ S/he wants me to chair this meeting.’

(30) *Keoi5 zi1 gwan1 jyu1* [*ngo5 dei6 hap6 zok3 ge3 si6*]
3.SG know about 1.PL cooperate POSS matter
‘ S/he knows about the matter on which we cooperated.’

The coverb *can3* in (28) seems to have taken a sentential complement clause *ngo5 dei6 m4 wai4 ji3*, however, it functions as an adjunct in this case. In (29), the coverb *jau6* takes an OBJ *ngo5* instead of the sentential complement *ngo5 zyu2 ci4 li1 go3 wui2*. In (30), the coverb *gwan1 jyu1* takes a nominalized sentence, but not a COMP clause.

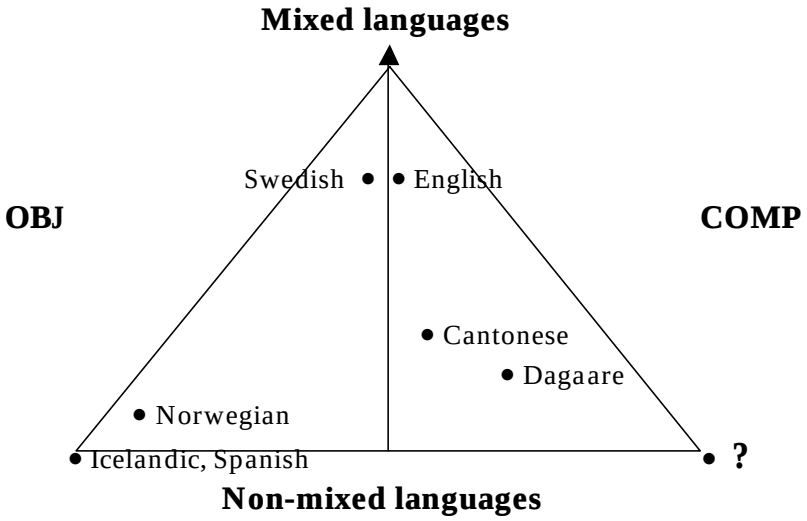
We have argued in this section that though Cantonese does not seem to have satisfied most of the criteria to be considered as a mixed language (Dalrymple and Lødrup 2000), it still is a mixed language. It is simply because a distinction between two kinds of clausal complements, i.e. OBJ clausal complement and COMP clausal

complement, is crucial in this issue, which we have been able to do for Cantonese with the facts NP OBJ alternation with COMP. Although they are both realized as S, they behave in different ways. One behaves more like an OBJ, while the other is more of a COMP. Therefore, it is not plausible to differentiate the two in terms of phrase structure category in c-structure only as suggested by Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan (1996), but also in terms of grammatical functions at the level of f-structure. This therefore leaves us with the issue that OBJ/COMP mixed languages may indeed differ in the frequency, productivity and extent to which OBJ and COMP co-occur in a language.

5. Degree of mixedness of a language

In this section, based on the discussion in sections 3 and 4, we speculate on the nature of OBJ/COMP mixed languages. We propose that the extent to which OBJ and COMPs co-occur and alternate may differ from language to language. As we can see from section 3, there is no distinct boundary to differentiate mixed languages from non-mixed languages. We propose, as illustrated below in (31) that a degree of mixedness should be introduced.

(31) Finer gradation of the concept of mixed languages



→ The degree of mixedness from non-mixed languages to elaborately mixed languages

The figure in (31) is a triangle, with an arrow from the base indicating increase is the degree of mixedness, such that the further away from the base a language is the more mixed it gets in terms of OBJ/COMP occurrences. English and Swedish are thus the most mixed. Cantonese seems to be more mixed than Dagaare, a Gur language of West Africa, and Norwegian, with Icelandic and Spanish on the baseline, showing that they are non-mixed languages. These positions are not meant to be precise ones on the diagram but only indicative of language types based on trends in the behaviour of sentential complements in the language.

The triangle has two halves, indicating a division into language types, based on whether the sentential clauses behave more like OBJ or COMPs in the language. English and Swedish are each on a separate half, indicating that though both are OBJ/COMP mixed languages, English is more of a COMP language while Swedish is more of an OBJ language.

To further illustrate degrees of mixedness, let us look at some Dagaare data. It seems to be a mixed language mainly on the score of OBJ NP alternation with clausal complement COMP.

(32) a. *ǹ bɔ̀ngé lá à dɔ́ɔ́*
1SG know TOP DEF man
‘ I know the man.’

b. *ǹ bɔ̀ngɛ̀ɛ̀ lá ká à dɔ́ɔ́ é lá néng-vèlàá*
1.SG know.PERF TOP COMP DEF man be TOP person-good
‘ I know that the man is a good person.’

(33) a. *ǹ téɛ́ré ká ò yɛ́lɛ́ vèɛ̀lɛ́ lá*
1.SG think COMP 3.SG matter good TOP
‘ I think he is good.’

?*b. *ǹ téɛ́ré lá à dɔ́ɔ́*
1.SG think TOP DEF man
*‘ I think the man.’

Most of the criteria like the facts of coordination, passivization, topicalization of OBJ/COMP etc do not apply well for Dagaare, though we shall not go into the details in this paper. Yet on the strength of NP object alternation with COMP, it may still be regarded as an OBJ/COMP mixed language.

Since we do not expect all languages to meet most or all of these tests, it would be useful to extend the notion of OBJ/COMP mixed language and accept the fact that some languages have a richer manifestation of OBJ/COMP occurrence than others. On the one hand, languages like Cantonese and Dagaare are *marginal OBJ/COMP mixed languages* while others like English and Swedish are *elaborate OBJ/COMP mixed languages*. The claim we make here is that the empirical evidence for NP OBJ alternation with clausal COMP is so strong that even in the case of marginally mixed languages like Cantonese and Dagaare which can be regarded as the weaker case for distinguishing COMP from OBJ, one still has to do it because one cannot ignore the facts of NP OBJ and COMP alternation.

6. Conclusion

This paper has discussed the nature of the grammatical function COMP in the structure of Cantonese. This grammatical function has often been ignored and not given much focus in many works on Cantonese, but we show in this paper that it is one of the salient issues in a discussion of the relatively complex complementation properties of Chinese predicates.

We have argued that despite suggestions from works such as Alsina, Mohanan and Mohanan (1996) for the elimination of COMP as a grammatical function from the LFG taxonomy of functions as it creates duplication and thus redundancy across levels of representation, this grammatical function does actually exist in the structure of Cantonese.

This is because some verbal predicates have NP objects which alternate with clausal complements that are objects, while other verbal predicates that cannot take objects NPs do have clausal complements which are COMPs. These COMPs behave differently from clausal complements that are objects, alternating with Object NPs in many ways. Following Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000) which introduces the concept of mixed languages to describe such languages, we show that Cantonese is a mixed language on this score.

But we have also drawn attention to the fact that though Cantonese is a mixed language, it does not meet many of the tests for mixed languages as suggested by Dalrymple and Lødrup (2000). We have suggested the introduction of a degree of mixedness, such that languages that behave like Cantonese should be treated as marginal OBJ/COMP mixed languages while languages like English that fulfil many of the criteria outlined should be treated as elaborate OBJ/COMP mixed languages.

One issue that has attracted grammarians is the extent to which we should abstract grammatical functions. Like the debate about a taxonomy of argument roles, there is also the debate about whether we should have fewer grammatical functions (coarse-grained approach) or a much wider category of grammatical functions (finer-grained approach). We believe that the recognition of another function, COMP, in the structure of Cantonese allows one to have a better understanding of the nature of sentential complementation in Chinese. Moreover a new member in the taxonomy of LFG functions allows us to model and express typological differences across languages.

On the strengths of these two points, we believe that a finer-grained distinction of grammatical functions is desirable in theories of grammar.

References:

Alsina, A., T. Mohanan, and K. P. Mohanan. 1996a. Responses to the discussion on COMP in LFG. Submission to the LFG list, 6 September 1996.

Alsina, A., T. Mohanan, and K. P. Mohanan. 1996b. Untitled submission to the LFG list. 3 September 1996.

Alsina, A., T. Mohanan, and K. P. Mohanan. 1996c. On COMP. Submission to the LFG list. 1 October 1996.

Bodomo, A. B. 1999. Double Objects and Serial Verbs in Competition: Expressing the Benefactive in Cantonese. Paper read at the Annual Research Forum, Linguistic Society of Hong Kong, December 1999, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong.

Bodomo, A. B. 2000. Expressing the Benefactive in Dagaare and Cantonese. Paper read at the West African Language Society Conference, August 2000, Accra, Ghana.

Bresnan, J. 1982a. The passive in Lexical Theory. In Bresnan (ed.), 1982. *Mental representation of Grammatical Relations*. London: The MIT Press. pp.3-86.

Bresnan, J. 1982b. Control and Complementation. In Bresnan (ed.), 1982. *Mental representation of Grammatical Relations*. London: The MIT Press. pp. 282-390.

Bresnan, J. and J. Kanerva. 1989. Locative Inversion in Chichewa: A Case Study of Factorization in Grammar. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20.1:1-50.

Bresnan, J. 2001. *Lexical-Functional Syntax*. UK: Blackwells.

Chao, Y. R. 1968. *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese*. California: University of California Press.

Curly, C. 1996. Even More on COMP. Submission to the LFG list. 6 September 1996.

Dalrymple, M. and H. Lødrup. 2000. The Grammatical Functions of Complement Clauses. In Butt and King (ed.), Proceedings of the LFG00 Conference, University of California, Berkeley: CSLI Publications.
http://www-csli.stanford.edu/publications/

Li, C. and S. Thompson. 1981. *Mandarin Chinese: A Functional Reference Grammar*. California: University of California Press.

Luke K. K., A. B. Bodomo and O. Nancarrow. 2001. The Subject Condition in Cantonese. Workshop on LFG approaches to Chinese, LFG2001.

Lødrup, H. 1996. COMP. Submission to the LFG list. 3 September 1996.

Pan, H and J. Hu. 2001. An Optimality-Theoretic Account of Mandarin Complex Reflexive ‘ta-ziji’ (s/he-self). Workshop on LFG approaches to Chinese, LFG2001.

Zaenan, A. and E. Engdahl. 1994. Descriptive and theoretical syntax in the lexicon. In Atkins B. T. S. and A. Zampolli (eds.), *Computational Approaches to the Lexicon*, pp. 181-212. Oxford: Oxford University Press.