In defense of the truncation hypothesis for main clause phenomena
Carlos de Cuba
University of Calgary

Introduction: In order to account for the fact that main clause phenomena (MCP) like topocalization are available in peripheral adverbial clauses (PACs) but not central adverbial clauses (CACs), Haegeman (2006a,b) proposes that the CP layer of CACs is structurally deficient, while PACs are fully articulated. Haegeman (2006b) extends the truncation analysis to finite that clauses, claiming that the CP layer of factive complements is also truncated, providing an explanation for why factive complements resist MCP. However, in subsequent work Haegeman (2012:189-193) argues against the truncation hypothesis, providing a series of what she sees as problems with this type of analysis. In this paper I make two main claims: (a) Haegeman’s (2006a,b) truncation account is problematic; (b) Haegeman’s (2012) arguments against truncation are specific to her (2006a,b) view of the left periphery, and they do not create serious problems for other truncation analyses (such as de Cuba 2007, de Cuba & Ürögdi 2009).

Problems with Haegeman’s (2006a,b) account: Although she takes a cartographic view, Haegeman’s truncation account assumes a left periphery, shown for English in (1a-c), that deviates substantially from a more standard Rizzian (1997 et seq.) implementation (1d).

(1)

a. Root clauses: Mod Top Foc Top Force Mod Fin
b. Embedded MCP clauses/PACs: Sub Mod Top Foc Top Force Mod Fin
c. Embedded factive clauses/CACs: Sub Mod Fin
d. Rizzi (2004): Force Top Int Top Foc Mod Top Fin

Note the innovations that Force is below a number of projections and that Sub is the highest projection in both adverbial clauses and that clauses. For the latter innovation Haegeman appeals to Bhatt & Yoon (1992), who differentiate a pure subordinator position from a position encoding illocutionary force. For adverbial clauses this position hosts the subordinating conjunction, which can then select a PAC with Force or a CAC without Force. Haegeman then extends the analysis to embedded that clauses, treating that as a subordinating conjunction. However, this is a curious move given that Bhatt & Yoon (see also Szabolcsi 1994) specifically analyze English as a language that conflates subordinators and force in one position, as opposed to say Yiddish, Korean or Hungarian. If this is correct, then an analysis like (1b-c), which crucially depends on the independence of Sub and Force, is untenable for English that clauses. Also problematic is the fact that that does not seem to pattern syntactically with subordinating conjunctions (before, when, because, etc.) externally (2), or in extraction (3).

(2) a. I closed the door before/when/because/*that John was yelling at Mary.
   b. I said *before/*when/*because/that John was yelling at Mary.

(3) a. *Who did you close the door before/when/because John was yelling at?
   b. Who did you say that John was yelling at?

An existing alternative: Haegeman (2012:261) claims that her arguments against truncation in adverbial clauses hold for truncation accounts of that clauses. However, the majority of the arguments are against the innovations in (1a-c). I argue specifically that the truncation account of de Cuba & Ürögdi 2009 (truncated referential [CP], fully articulated non-referential [cP [CP]]) stands up to the challenges posed by Haegeman (additionally, de Cuba & Ürögdi do not appeal to the problematic concept “assertion”). Thus, the truncation hypothesis remains as a challenger to the event operator intervention account of MCP (Haegeman & Ürögdi 2010, Haegeman 2012).
References: