ON HOW TO BE ROOTED IN A CONTEXT (Abstract, GLOW 35, University of Potsdam)
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1. *Introduction*. The impact of information-structural categories on the formal properties of the sentence has led some authors to assume dedicated discourse/contextual projections in the C-domain (Rizzi 1997 and related work). However, this conflicts with a strongly modular view according to which only features that are truth-conditionally relevant, but not purely contextual features, belong in the syntactic computation (Horvath 2010, Fanselow–Lenertova 2010). The arguments are often focussed on a single phenomenon; we contend instead that an approach comparing different phenomena allows a more comprehensive view of the interplay between syntax and context. This will be shown by considering a set of 'root phenomena' which can apply in distinct types of embedded clauses, requiring a fine-grained distinction in their distributional properties. Our discussion will focus exclusively on declarative clauses.

2. *Data*. We show that it is necessary to distinguish at least two types of 'root phenomena':
– **Type I phenomena** occur in clauses embedded under bridge verb (e.g. the **question tag** in (1)), and their interpretation does not interact with elements in the matrix clause: (a) In Italian, a **fronted focus** cannot associate with a matrix clause negation (2); (b) In English, a **Left Dislocated** QP in the embedded clause does not scopally interact with a matrix QP (3):

(1)   I {think/?*am glad} you like it, don't you?
(2)   ?* Leo non ha detto che [DI SARA] è innamorato.
       Leo NEG has said that WITH SARA (he) is in-love
(3)   ?   Every student tells me that one exam, I can prepare it in two weeks (*∀>∃)

– **Type II phenomena** (German **V2**, English **Topicalization**) also occur in clauses embedded under non-bridge verbs (4), and they do not require an independent interpretation of the embedded clause w.r.t. the matrix clause: cp. (5) to (2) and (6) to (3):

(4) I am glad that this unrewarding job, she has finally decided to give up.
(5) (?) Hans glaubt   NICHT, Peter hat GEWONNEN...   (Truckenbrodt 2006, (67))
       Hans believes not,   Peter has won...
(6) **a.** Jeder meiner Kollegen meinte auf ein Examen kann ich mich innerhalb von 2 Wochen vorbereiten. **b.** Every student tells me that one exam, I can prepare in two weeks ($^\checkmark$∀>∃)

Drawing a first distinction, type I phenomena occur in **discourse active** embedded clauses (in the sense of Dayal–Grimshaw 2009): the proposition expressed bears a non-vacuous update potential w.r.t. the **discourse context**, because the modal base introduced by the matrix verb is not realistic. Type II phenomena also occur in embedded clauses whose update potential gets 'absorbed' into the **derived context** introduced by the matrix attitude verb (Gärtner 2002, Truckenbrodt 2006; cf. also Krifka 2011, §3.6), with no impact on the discourse context. Our **conclusion** is that root phenomena are not a unitary class; the debate about whether or not 'assertive potential' is a necessary condition for root phenomena (Bentzen *et al.* 2007) is due to the failure to distinguish the two subclasses.

3. *Analysis*. **Step 1:** How to characterize the two types of root-like embedded clause?
In Stalnaker/Heim update semantics, the Context Change Potential (CCP) of an assertion updates the set of **shared** beliefs of the conversational community (common ground), while in Gunlogson (2003) it updates the set of public commitments of a **single** participant. Farkas–Bruce (2010) propose a componential view of the context which subsumes both these aspects: an assertion has the effect of updating the speaker's commitment set and also of projecting an updated common ground. Suppose, however, that these two updates can be separated; we then have the following parameters w.r.t. CCP: **(i)** individual commitment / (proposed) shared commitment; **(ii)** discourse context / derived context introduced by a matrix attitude verb. We

assume that derived contexts do not comprise a shared common ground, but only individual commitment sets (cf. Truckenbrodt 2006, 281). We obtain the following combinations:

	1. Simple assertion		2. Non-discourse-active subordinate		3. Discourse-active subordinate	
	discourse context	derived context	discourse context	derived context	discourse context	derived context
Individual commitment	+	(nil)	-	+	-	+
Shared commitment	+	(nil)	-	(nil)	+	(nil)

This view of discourse-active subordinates agrees with Dayal–Grimshaw's claim that the speaker does *not* commit herself to the truth of the proposition expressed by the subordinate (*pace* Hooper–Thompson 1973), yet the latter has a proper CCP w.r.t. the discourse context. In other terms, the speaker places the embedded proposition 'on the table' as a potential relevant update of the shared common ground, without taking responsibility for its truth.

Step 2: The permissible contexts for root phenomena depend on their interpretive impact.

– Type I phenomena are linked to the **conversational dynamics**. Specifically, we show that:

a) Question tags implement a request for the addressee to confirm the relevant proposition;

b) Italian focus fronting implements a correction (partial reversal of a previous assertion);

c) English LD implements a topic shift, steering the conversation toward a new topic.

These conversational moves update the shared commitments of the conversational community: this is why type I phenomena are only allowed in the **first** and **third** clause type.

– Type II phenomena, instead, have no impact on the conversational dynamics, but they at most implement the structuring of information within a single assertion: hence, they only require the presence of an individual commitment set, either in the discourse context or in a derived context. This is why they are licensed in **all three** clause types.

– Type I phenomena are only licensed if the proposition expressed by the embedded clause has **autonomous** CCP w.r.t. the matrix clause: this is why there cannot be any scopal interaction (or association with focus) between a matrix element and an element included in the embedded clause (cf. (2)-(3)), contrary to type II phenomena (cf. (5)-(7)).

4. **Consequences.** The data in (2)-(3) show that the discourse active status of the subordinate clause rules out a syntactically and semantically permissible relation between a matrix and an embedded element. The two competing views of the syntax–context interface then reduce to the opposition between failure–proof grammar vs. «free generation + filtering» (Boeckx 2010, a.o.). If syntax and semantics are blind to the discourse active status of the embedded clause, (2)-(3) must be filtered out at the interface with the context. (CP-extraposition (Meinunger 2004) may account for (2)-(3), but, if it is interface-driven, it still requires reference set computation and filtering of the non-interface-complying outputs.) If instead the syntax encodes the CCP status of a clause in its C head, the relevant scope interactions will be blocked in the course of the derivation. We believe that, by considerations of computational efficiency, failure-proof computation should be regarded as the null hypothesis.

[1] Bentzen *et al* 2007. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 79, 93–118. **[2]** Boeckx 2010. In Putnam (ed.), *Exploring Crash-Proof Grammars*, 105–124. Benjamins. **[3]** Dayal–Grimshaw 2009. Subordination at the interface. Ms., Rutgers Univ. **[4]** Fanselow–Lenertova 2011. *NLLT* 29, 169-209. **[5]** Farkas–Bruce 2010. *J. Semantics* 27, 81–118. **[6]** Gärtner 2002. *Theoretical Linguistics* 28, 33–42. **[7]** Gunlogson 2003. *True to Form*. Routledge. **[7]** Horvath 2010. *Lingua* 120, 1346–1369. **[8]** Hooper–Thompson 1973. *LI* 4, 465–497. **[9]** Krifka 2011. Embedding speech acts. Ms., Humboldt Univ. zu Berlin. **[10]** Meinunger 2004. In Lohnstein–Trissler (eds.), *The Syntax and Semantics of the Left Periphery,* 313–341. Mouton de Gruyter. **[11]** Rizzi 1997. In Haegeman (ed.), *Elements of Grammar,* 281–337. Kluwer. **[12]** Truckenbrodt 2006. *Theoretical Linguistics* 32, 257–306.