

Complementizer deletion

Hypothesis II (production difficulties)

Being optional, *at* may be inserted as a "filler" in order to gain time and hold the floor in case of production difficulties (cf. e.g. Kaltenböck 2009 on the English complementizer *that*, and Jaeger 2005 on the English relativizer *that*).

Hypothesis II

There is a higher proportion of *at* in constructions that are relatively hard to produce.

Hypothesis II.a

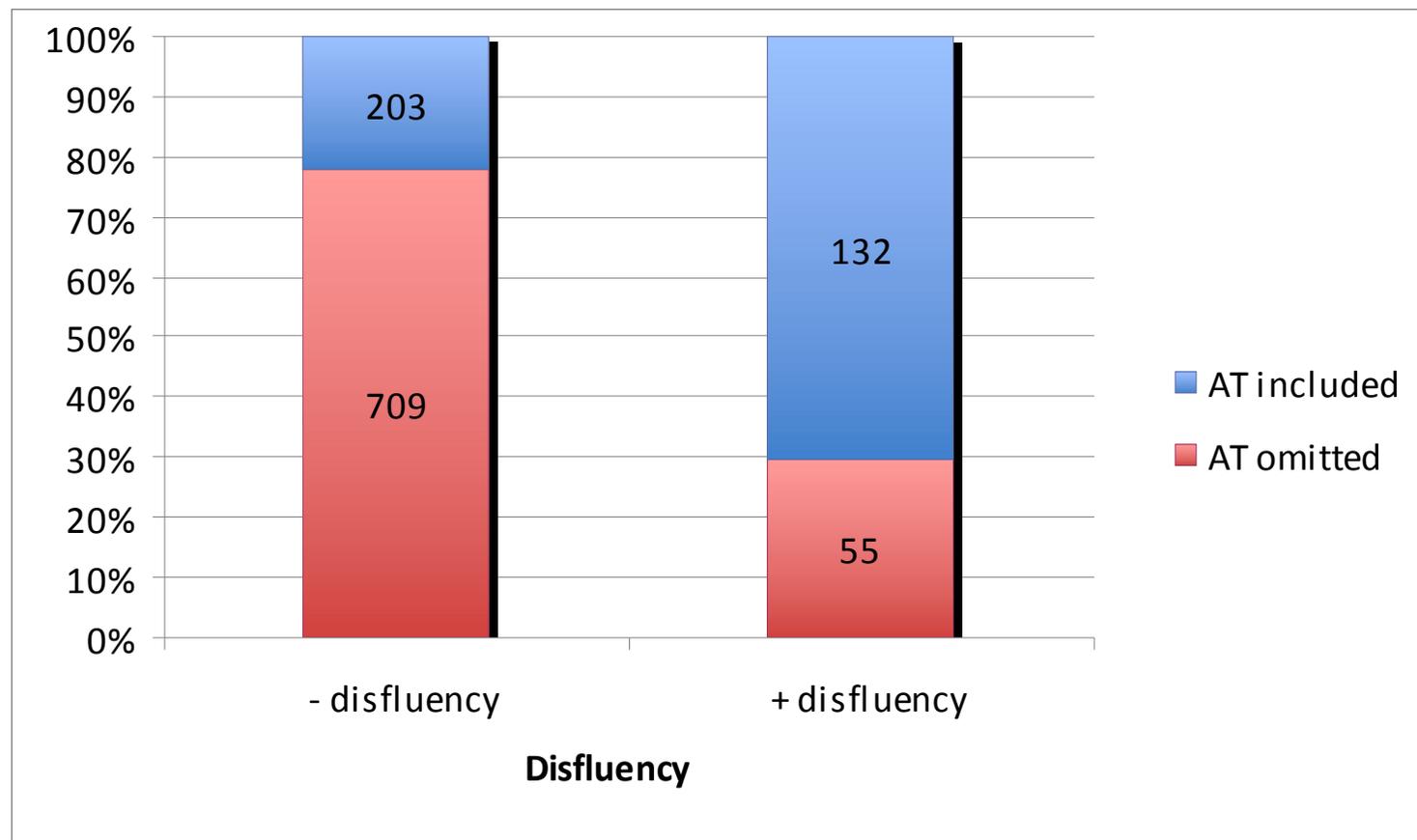
There is a higher proportion of *at* in constructions with disfluency symptoms on the clause boundary.



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Results

Hypothesis II.a: supported



Complementizer deletion

Hypothesis III (grammaticalization)

As a marker of embedded clauses the complementizer *at* becomes superfluous in cases where the complement loses its status as embedded as a result of grammaticalization of complement-taking elements (CTEs).

Example of grammaticalization of CTEs:

Afrikaans

(Boye and Harder 2007: 591-592; cf. Thompson and Mulac 1991: 318)

ek glo ('I think') (matrix clause)

>

glo ek (parenthetical)

>

glo'k

>

glo (epistemic particle)



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Hypothesis III

There is a higher proportion of *at* in constructions with nongrammaticalized or relatively weakly grammaticalized CTEs (cf. e.g. Thompson & Mulac 1991, and Cuyckens & Shank on English).

Problem

In the absence of a coherent theory of grammatical status and grammaticalization, it is impossible to diagnose grammaticalized expressions.



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Solution to the problem:

a theory of grammatical status and grammaticalization
(Boye & Harder 2012)

Central ideas

1. Grammatical expressions (morphemes, words, constructions) cannot themselves convey the main point of a linguistic message, but are conventionalized as serving an ancillary purpose by providing secondary (backgrounded) information.
2. Grammaticalization consists in the development of such expressions.

Diagnostic criteria of grammatical status

1. Grammatical expressions cannot normally be focalized.
2. Grammatical expressions cannot normally be addressed in subsequent discourse.



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Diagnostics of grammaticalized Danish CTEs (cf. Boye & Harder 2007)

Diagnostic 1: Grammaticalized CTEs have parenthetical uses.

(1) *Hun er der, **tror jeg**.*

she is there think I

'She is there, I think'.

Parenthetical uses as a diagnostic of ancillary, secondary status:

Parentheses are specialized for – and thus diagnostic of – ancillary, secondary status.



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Diagnostic 2: Grammaticalized CTEs allow of adverbial raising.

(1) *Jeg tror **ikke/sagtens** [hun kan klare det].*

I think NEG/easily she can make it

'I think she can't/can easily make it'.

Adverbial raising as a diagnostic of ancillary, secondary status:

Being ancillary and secondary, grammaticalized CTEs are immune to adverbs which have a focalizing effect.

Being relatively weakly grammaticalized, however, they still have a constructional slot for such adverbs.



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Additional feature associated with grammaticalized Danish CTEs
(cf. Thompson & Mulac 1991 on English):

Grammaticalized CTEs tend to have 1SG or 2SG subjects
(cf. Afrikaans *ek glo*).

CTE subject as a grammaticalization feature:

CTEs typically grammaticalize into subjective or intersubjective markers (e.g. Thompson & Mulac 1991).



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Hypotheses tested

Hypothesis III.a

There is a higher proportion of *at* with CTEs that do not have parenthetical uses.

Hypothesis III.b

There is a higher proportion of *at* with CTEs that do not allow for adverbial raising.

Hypothesis III.c

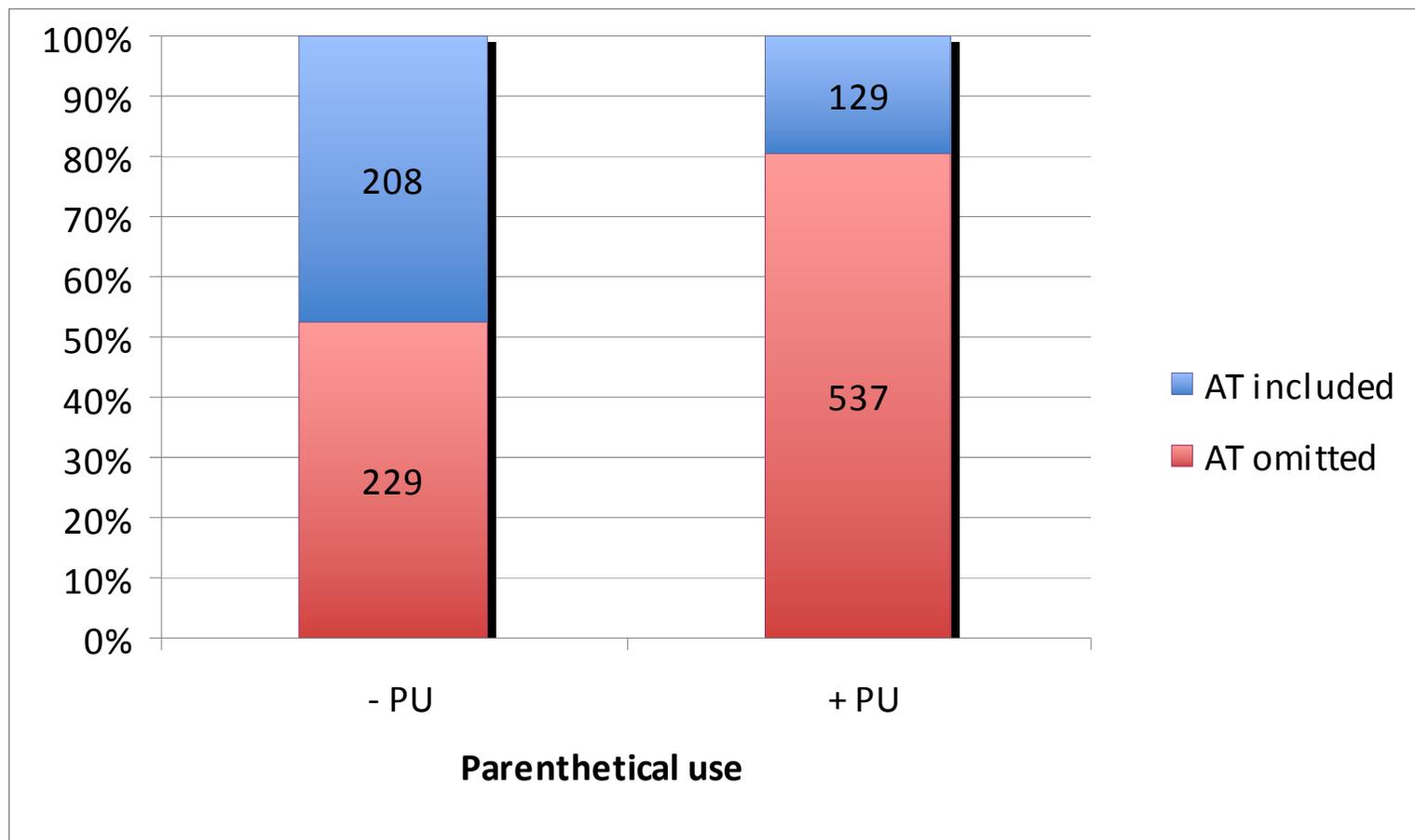
There is a higher proportion of *at* in constructions without 1SG or 2SG CTE subjects.



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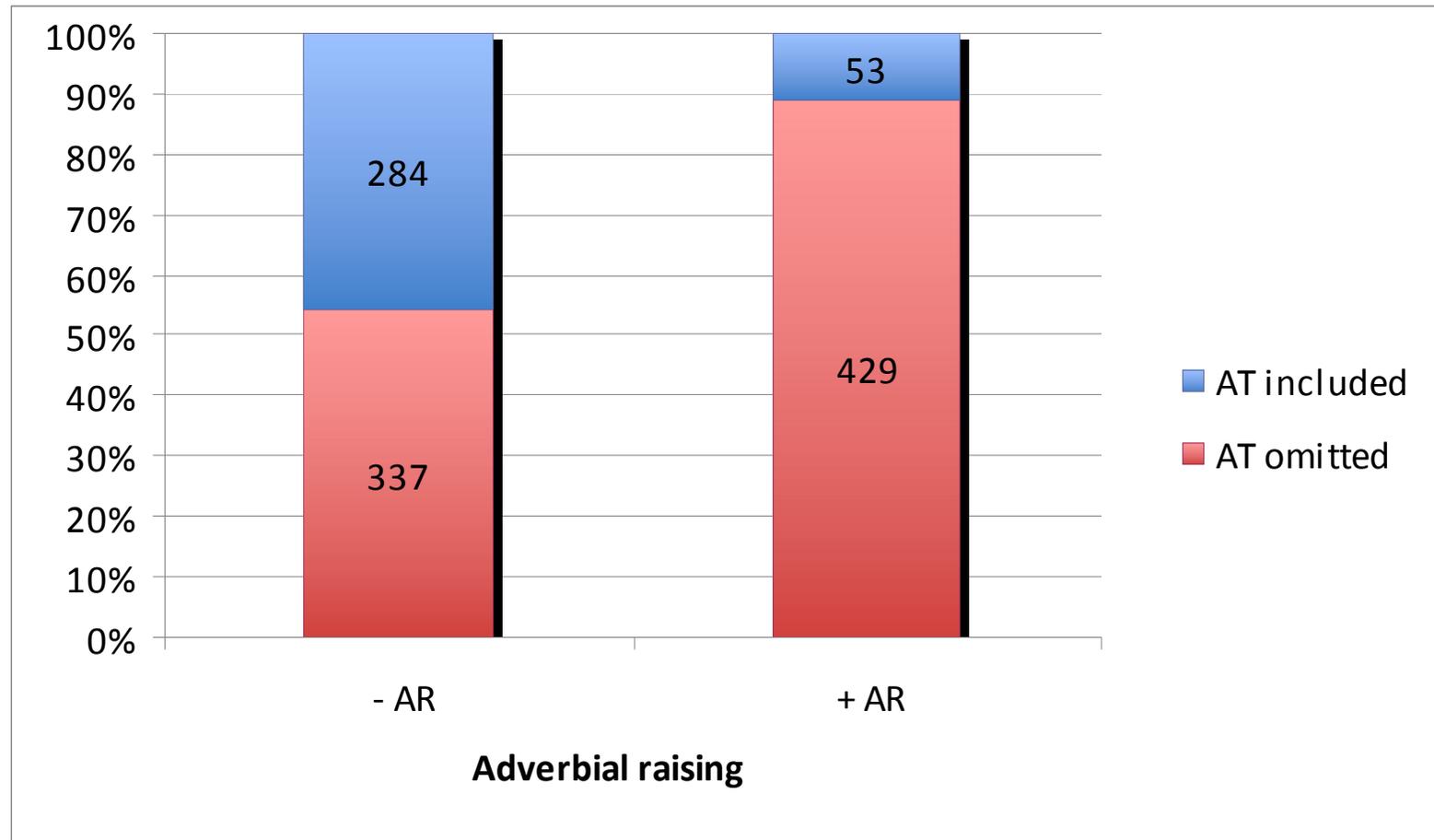
Results

Hypothesis III.a (parenthetical uses): supported.



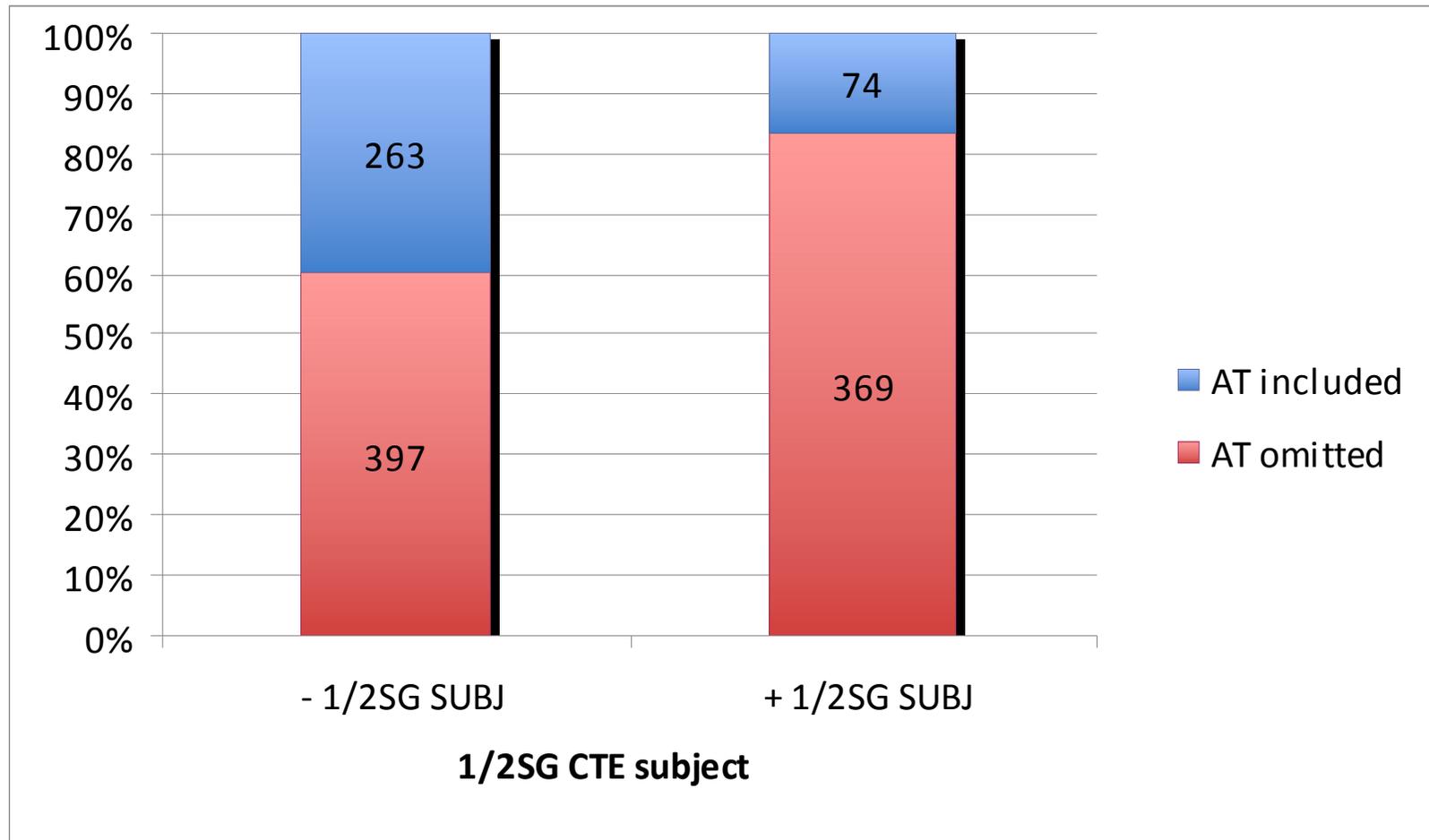
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Hypothesis III.b (adverbial raising): supported.



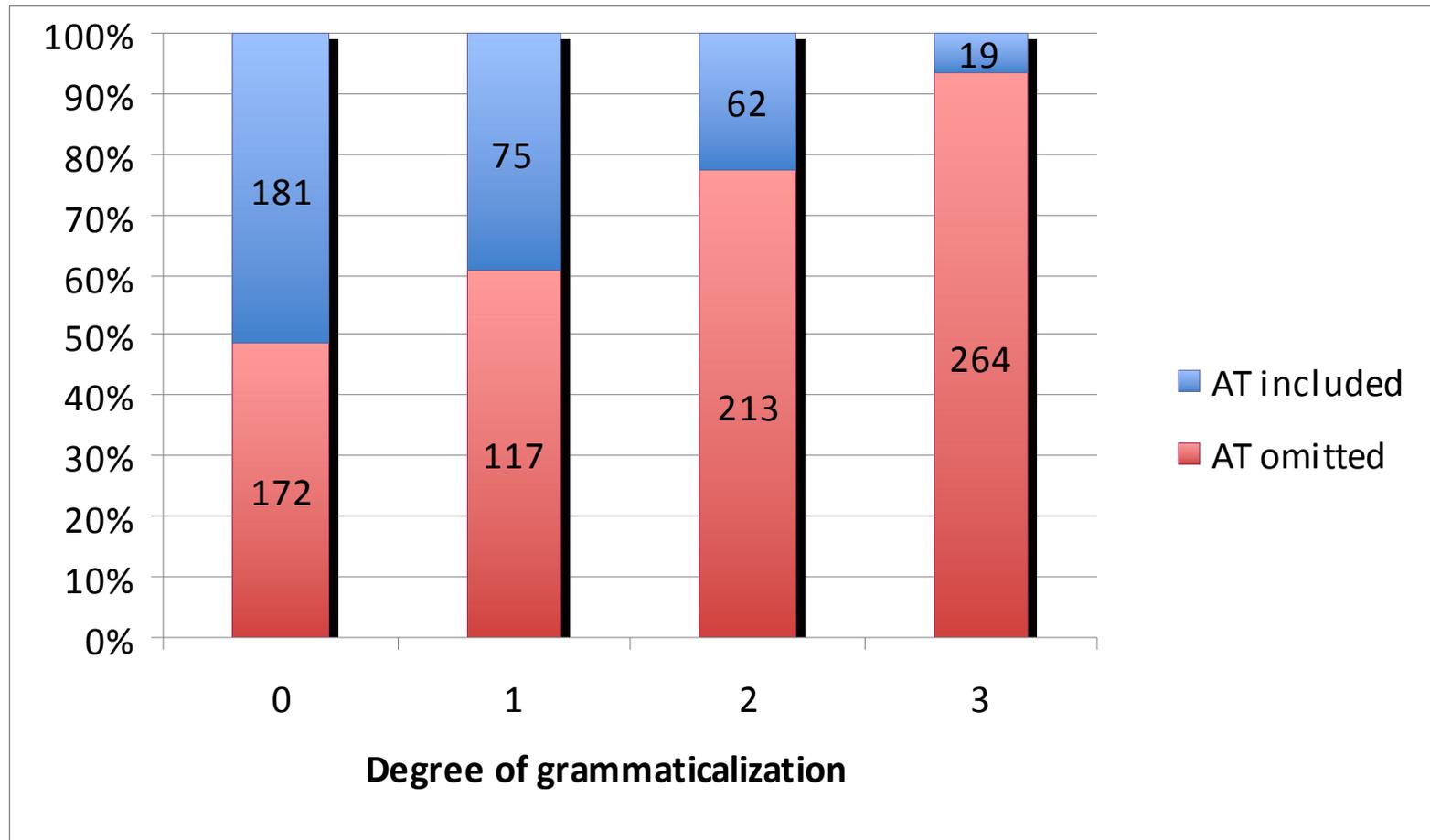
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Hypothesis III.c (1SG and 2SG CTE subjects): supported.



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Hypotheses III.a + III.b + III.c



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Summary

Test of three hypotheses about what governs absence vs. presence of *at* in Danish complements:

I. Disambiguation

Only limited support for the hypothesis so far.

II. Production difficulties

Strong support for the hypothesis.

III. Grammaticalization

Strong support for the hypothesis.



Overview

1. The standard view
2. Complementizer semantics
3. Germanic complementizer semantics
4. Complementizer deletion
- 5. Problems and questions**



Problems and questions

What are complementizers?

Basic problem:

The standard definition refers not only to function, but also to expression ("word, particle, clitic or affix").

Practical problem:

Complementing functions are arguably found also with expressions that are not words, particles, clitics or affixes – e.g. constructions or prosodical contours...



Problems and questions

Estonian

(1) *Ei isa silmad seda jõudnud näha (,)*
 NEG father.GEN eyes this:PART manage:PST.PTCP **see.INF**

[kuni pojad suureks sirgusid].
until sons big:TRANSL arouse:PST.3PL

'Father's eyes did not manage to see until his sons grew up'.

Intuitively:

without a comma – **adverbial clause**,
 with a comma – **complement clause**.



Problems and questions

Moreover:

Semantic contrasts cannot always be straightforwardly associated with contrasts between words, particles, clitics or affixes.

For instance,

it may be impossible to find

identical environments for contrasting complementizer words...



Problems and questions

Estonian

- (1) *Ta rääkis,*
 s/he speak:PST.3SG
 [*et sa oled ta üksinda jätnud*].
that you be:IND.2SG her/him alone leave:PST.PTCP
 'S/he said that you have left her/him alone.'
- (2) *Ta rääkis*
 s/he speak:PST.3SG
 [*justkui ole-ksid sa ta üksinda jätnud*].
as_if be-SUBJ:2SG you her/him alone leave:PST.PTCP
 'S/he pretended that you have left her/him alone'.
 (Lit. 'S/he was saying as if you have left her/him alone'.)



Problems and questions

Several contrasts between the complements in (1) and (2):

- general subordinator *et* 'that' vs. adverbializer *justkui* 'as if', which carries a negative propositional attitude.
- unmarked (indicative) mood vs. subjunctive ("conditional").
- "inverted word order" in (2), but not in (1).



Problems and questions

In such cases, the semantic contrast is perhaps better ascribed to the whole constructional contrast.

Discrepancy between what has complementizing function (an entire construction) and what is intuitively a complementizer.

Do we want to extend the standard definition to cover all expressions with complementizing functions?

Or:

Do we prefer to use another term – e.g. "complementation marker"?

