From converb to complementizer: On the syntactic flexibility of *dep* in Kazakh

Ariela Ye & Aidan Sharma*

Abstract. It is well-attested that in many unrelated languages the linker that connects matrix and subordinate clauses is grammaticalized from the verb 'say' (Lord 1976). There is a long-standing debate as to whether these elements are complementizers (Hyman & Comrie 1981; Clements 1975) or verbs (Major 2024; Driemel & Kouneli 2025; Kinyalolo 1993). This paper argues, in line with recent work (Ye 2025; Yue 2023; Bossi 2023), that a binary analysis is necessary in some languages and the syntactic category of that 'say' element is generally dependent on the matrix predicate. We present novel fieldwork data of Kazakh (Turkic) to show, based on evidence from passives, fragment answers, negation, subject restrictions, interpretation of temporal modifiers, complement types and stranding, that the element *dep* sometimes behaves as a complementizer and sometimes as a verb.

Keywords. say-complementation; Kazakh; Turkic; converbs; (non-)communicatives

1. Introduction. *Say*-complementation involves an element related to the verb 'say' that introduces embedded clauses. Examples from Kazakh[1], Sakha (2), Uyghur (3), Mandarin (4), and Kipsigis (5) are shown below. Note that Kazakh, Sakha, and Uyghur are head-final with 'say' appearing at the right edge of the clause, while Mandarin and Kipsigis are head-initial with 'say' appearing at the left edge. The focus of this paper is the Kazakh word *dep*, which is a converb form of the verb 'say' used to introduce embedded clauses. We gloss it as DEP throughout the paper until we propose an analysis of its syntactic status.

(1) Kazakh
Murat [Aıdyn-dy qula-p qal-dy **dep**] bil-e-di.
Murat Aidyn-ACC fall-CVB AUX-PST **DEP** know-NPST-3
'Murat knows that Aidyn fell.'

(2) Sakha (Baker & Vinokurova 2010:595)
Min [ehigi-(ni) bügün kyaj-yax-xyt **di-en**] erem-mit-im.
1SG 2PL-ACC today win-FUT-2PL **say-CVB** hope-PST.PTCP-1SG
'I hoped that you would win today.'

* We'd like to thank our Kazakh speakers for their time and patience in providing the Kazakh judgements in this paper. We'd also like to thank Adam McCollum for funding and Aziza Kuanysh for assisting our fieldwork in Almaty. Finally, we'd like to thank Mark Baker, Maria Kouneli, Troy Messick, three anonymous LSA reviewers, and the audience at the LSA 2026 annual meeting for their feedback on this project. All errors are our own. Authors: Ariela Ye, Rutgers University (arielalu.ye@rutgers.edu) & Aidan Sharma, Rutgers University (aidan.sharma@rutgers.edu).

[1] Kazakh (kaz) is a Turkic language primarily spoken in Kazakhstan, with significant speaker populations in China, Mongolia, and Uzbekistan. Worldwide, there are about 20,154,620 speakers (Eberhard et al. 2026). All uncited Kazakh data in this paper comes from fieldwork done by the authors in Almaty, Kazakhstan in the summer of 2025 with occasional subsequent follow ups. We consulted 11 native speakers of Kazakh, all college-aged and from various regions of Kazakhstan.

(3) Uyghur (Major 2024:1126)
Mahinur [Tursun-(ni) göshnan-ni et-t-i **de-p**] oyla-y-du.
Mahinur Tursun-ACC meatbread-ACC make-PST-3 **say-CVB** think-NPST-3
'Mahinur thinks that Tursun made meatbread.'

(4) Mandarin (Ye 2025:304)
Yuēhàn juéde [**shuō** míngtiān huì xiàyǔ].
John think **say** tomorrow will rain
'John thought that it would rain tomorrow.

(5) Kipsigis (Driemel & Kouneli 2025:223)
ǎː-ŋgén [àː-**lé** ∅-rú-è kíbêːt].
1SG-know 1SG-**say** 3-sleep-IPFV Kibeet.NOM
'I know that Kibeet is sleeping.'

These 'say' elements raise the question as to whether they are synchronically functioning as complementizers or verbs when they introduce embedded clauses. Though the syntactic category of the 'say' element was not the main focus of these papers, work on Kinande (Baker 2008), Lubukusu (Diercks 2013), and Ibibio (Duncan & Torrence 2017) has presented an analysis of such elements as complementizers. Meanwhile, work on Uyghur (Major 2021, 2024) and Kipsigis (Driemel & Kouneli 2025) has presented an analysis of these elements as verbs. Recently, work on Kipsigis (Bossi 2023),[2] Sakha (Yue 2023), and Mandarin (Ye 2025) has argued that even within a single language both possibilities can exist and that it depends on the matrix predicate whether the 'say' element behaves like a complementizer or verb. We argue for such an analysis of Kazakh *dep*, where its syntactic behavior depends on whether the matrix verb is communicative or non-communicative (Anand et al. 2019), similar to the proposal in Ye (2025) for Mandarin. We argue *dep* behaves as a complementizer with non-communicative verbs (e.g., *bilý* 'to know', *oılaý* 'to think', *sený* 'to believe') and a verb with communicative verbs (e.g., *shaǵymdaný* 'to complain', *aıqaılaý* 'to scream', *aıtý* 'to say').

2. Kazakh *Say*-Complementation.

2.1. 'SAY' IN KAZAKH. Kazakh has two verbs that roughly translate to 'to say' in English: *deý* (say-INF) and *aıt-ý* (say-INF). The focus of this paper is on *deý*, since it is a form of *deý* that is used to introduce embedded clauses such as in (1). Besides introducing embedded clauses, *deý* is commonly used as a matrix verb (6).

(6) Murat birnárse de-di.
Murat something say-PST
'Murat said something.'

[2] But see Driemel & Kouneli (2025) for criticism of the analysis in Bossi (2023).

2.2. KAZAKH *-(I)p* CONVERBS. The form of 'say' that introduces embedded clauses consists of the root *de* 'say' and the converbial suffix *-(I)p*. This converbial suffix is productive in Kazkah. An adjunct formed from the converb form of the verb *tyńdaý* 'to listen' is given in (7).

(7) Búgin men [mýzyka **tyńda-p**] úı jumys-y-n zhasa-dy-m.
today 1SG music **listen-CVB** home work-3POSS-ACC do-PST-1SG.
'Today I did my homework while listening to music.'

The converb suffix *-(I)p* is also used in multiverb constructions, demonstrated with the combination of *oınaý* 'to play' with an auxiliary verb in (8).

(8) Áli **oına-p** jatyr-syń ba?
still **play-CVB** AUX-2SG Q
'Are you still playing?' (Mukhamedova 2015:130)

Adjunct *-(I)p* clauses such as in (7) indicate simultaneous action. When adverbial *-(I)p* clauses lack an overt subject, they are interpreted as having the same subject as the matrix clause. An example from the Turkic web - Kazakh corpus[3] of an adjunct *-(I)p* clause with the verb *deý* 'to say' is given in (9).

(9) Halq-ymyz-dyń ejelgi dástúr-i boıynsha, toı jasa-ǵan
people-1PL.POSS-GEN ancient tradition-3.POSS according.to wedding DO-PST.PTCP
úı-ge o-nyń jaqyn-dar-y [**"toıǵa shashý" de-p**], tátti taǵamdar
home-DAT 3SG-GEN relative-PL-3.POSS **"toıǵa shashý" say-CVB** sweet food
ákel-e-di.
bring-PRES-3
'According to the ancient tradition of our people, his relatives bring sweets to the house where the wedding took place, saying "toıǵa shashý" (literally: spread/shower the wedding).' (Kilgarriff et al. 2004, 2014)

The element *dep* that introduces embedded clauses is (superficially) the same as the converb formed from the root *de* 'say' and *-(I)p* in (9), but we will argue that synchronically *dep* often functions as a monomorphemic complementizer. However, we will also show interesting cases where *dep* should be decomposed as *de-p*.

3. Against a Pure Verbal Analysis. Major (2021, 2024) has proposed for closely related Uyghur that despite *dep* usually being translated into English as the complementizer, its morphological form should be taken at face value and *dep* should be treated as a verb. In a verbal analysis of *dep* (cf. Major 2024), a sentence like (10) is better translated as "Murat knows something, saying Aidyn fell.', comparable to the usual converb use of *dep* in (9).

[3] https://www.sketchengine.eu/

(10) Murat [Aıdyn-dy qula-p qal-dy **dep**] bil-e-di.
Murat Aidyn-ACC fall-CVB AUX-PST **DEP** know-NPST-3
'Murat knows that Aidyn fell.'

However, we will present a number of diagnostics indicating that Kazakh *dep* is not used as a verb in these cases.

3.1. PASSIVIZATION. On an account where *dep* in (10) is an *-(I)p* converb, its subject is interpreted as the same as the matrix subject. However, this calls into question what this means for passives such as (11).

(11) Aıdyn qula-dy dep **aıt-yl-dy**.
Aidyn fall-PST DEP **say-PASS-PST**
'It was said that Aidyn fell.'

When the matrix verb is passivized, the verb in an *-(I)p* adjunct such as the one in (7) must also be passivized.

(12) Búgin [mýzyka **tyńda-l-yp**] úı jumys-y **zhasa-l-dy.**
today music **listen-PASS-CVB** home work-3POSS **do-PASS-PST**.
'Today the homework was done while music was listened to.'

However, the fact that *dep* is not passivized in (11) indicates that it is not behaving like a verb.

3.2. FRAGMENT ANSWERS. Fragment answers to *wh*-questions targeting *dep* clauses behave like CP arguments rather than *-(I)p* adjuncts. Questions such as (13a) can be answered with (13b).

(13) a. Murat ne(-ni) oıl-a-dy?
Murat what(-ACC) think-NPST-3
'What does Murat think?'
b. Aıdyn qula-dy dep
Aidyn fall-PST DEP
'that Aidyn fell'

If (13b) was an adjunct, it would not be expected as a possible fragment answer for a *what* question but instead would only be expected as an appropriate answer to manner questions like a *how* question.

3.3. INTERPRETATION OF MATRIX NEGATION. Here, we test the predictions of a verbal account of *dep* with respect to matrix negation. A verbal account of *dep* clauses as *-(I)p* adjuncts that can be either VP or TP adjuncts (cf. the account of Uyghur 'say' in Major 2024) predicts that *dep* clauses can be outside the scope of matrix negation. With adjunct *-(I)p* clauses in Kazakh, matrix negation does allow a reading where the speaker is still committed to the content of the *-(I)p* clause (14).

(14) Murat [Aıdyn-dy mazala-ý-ǵa tyrys-**yp**], o-ǵan qara-**ma**-dy
Murat Aidyn-ACC bother-INF-DAT try-**CVB** 3SG-DAT look-**NEG**-PST
✓'Murat didn't look at Aidyn to try to bother him.'
✓'Murat, trying to bother Aidyn, didn't look at him.'

In (14), the adjunct clause can be under the scope of negation, which gives the reading where it is not true that Murat looked at Aidyn to try to bother him. Or, the matrix predicate can be negated without the adjunct clause being denied, which gives the reading where Murat is trying to bother Aidyn, and to do this Murat did not look at him. However, this second reading is not available for *dep* clauses under matrix negation (15).

(15) Murat [Aıdyn ket-ti **dep**] oıla-**ma**-ı-dy.
Murat Aidyn leave-PST **DEP** think-**NEG**-PRES-3SG.
✓'Murat doesn't think that Aidyn left.'
✗'Murat doesn't think something, saying Aidyn left.'

This highlights a clear distinction between *dep* clauses and *-(I)p* adjuncts, indicating *dep* does not behave like a verb in these sentences.

3.4. RESTRICTIONS ON SUBJECTHOOD. The following diagnostic, used by Yue (2023) for Sakha, shows that the matrix 'say' verb has certain semantic restrictions on its subject, which do not apply to the use of 'say' in clausal embedding. Outside of magical/fairy tale contexts, Kazakh *deý* requires a human subject.

(16) **#Mysyq** [o-ny tamaqtan-dyr-ma-dy] **de-di**
cat 3SG-ACC eat-CAUS-NEG-PST **say-PST**
Intended: 'The cat said you didn't feed it.'

However, non-humans can be the subject of a matrix predicate which uses *dep* to embed another clause.

(17) **Mysyq** [o-ny tamaqtan-dyr-ma-dy **dep**] bil-e-di
cat 3SG-ACC eat-CAUS-NPST-3 **DEP** meow-PST
'The cat knows that you didn't feed it.'

As mentioned in Section 2.2, without an overt subject Kazakh *-(I)p* adjuncts are interpreted as having the same subject as the matrix clause. So, if *dep* in (17) was a verb, it would be expected to have the same semantic restrictions on its subject as seen in its matrix verb use in (16).

3.5. "REDUNDANT" TEMPORAL MODIFICATION. This diagnostic, modified from Yue (2023), uses the interpretation of converbs to diagnose whether *dep* clauses behave like other *-(I)p* adjuncts. Since *-(I)p* converbs indicate simultaneous action, inserting a modifier like *jatqanda* 'while' should have little to no semantic effect for adverbial clauses. Yet, this is not the case when it comes to the *dep* clauses under discussion here. While (17) was acceptable with a non-human subject, (18) has a different interpretation and is not acceptable with a non-human subject.

(18) **#Mysyq** [o-ny tamaqtan-dyr-ma-dy **dep jatqanda**] máýla-dy
cat 3SG-ACC eat-CAUS-NEG-PST **DEP** **while** meow-PST
Intended: 'The cat meowed while saying that you didn't feed it.'

This is unexpected if *dep* is a converb in both sentences. However, it is expected if *dep* is a complementizer in (17) and *jatqanda* forces a converb reading of *dep*, which requires a human subject, in (18). Similarly, (19) is infelicitous with *jatqanda*, but is a normal complementiation use of *dep* without it. (20) shows an example where the sequence *dep jatqanda* is felicitous.

(19) Murat [Aıdyn ket-ti **dep (# jatqanda)**] oıla-ı-dy.
Murat Aidyn leave-PST **DEP** while think-NPST-3
'Murat thinks that Aidyn left.'
Not: 'Murat thinks something, while saying that Aidyn left.'

(20) Murat [Aıdyn ket-ti **de-p jatqanda**] ne jasa-ıtyn-yń oıla-p jat-yr.
Murat Aidyn leave-PST **say-CVB while** what do-PTCP-2SG think-CVB AUX-PROG
'While saying that Aidyn left, Murat is thinking about what to do.'

3.6. EVENT MODIFICATION. This diagnostic comes from Ótott-Kovács (2023), who argues that a verbal *dep* would have to introduce an event. This event would then be able to be targeted by *qaıtadan* 'again', which is not borne out.

(21) Aısha **(qaıtadan)** [**(qaıtadan)** men **(qaıtadan)** Almaty-ǵa bar-dy-m **dep**] aıt-ty.
Aisha **again** **again** 1SG **again** Almaty-DAT go-PST-1SG **DEP** say-PST
'Aisha said (again) that $I_{SPEAKER/Aisha}$ went to Almaty (again).'
Not: 'Aisha told (the news) *saying again* that $I_{SPEAKER/Aisha}$ went to Almaty.' (Ótott-Kovács 2023:111-112)

Regardless of the placement of *qaıtadan* 'again', there is no interpretation involving an event introduced by *dep*.

3.7. AGENT-ORIENTED MODIFIERS. Ótott-Kovács (2023) also argues that agent oriented modifiers should be able to target the (covert) subject of a verbal *dep*, contrary to fact.

(22) Aısha [**(megafon/kórshi/sabyr-men)** men **(megafon/kórshi/**
Aisha **megaphone/neighbor/patience-INSTR** 1SG **megaphone/neighbor/**
sabyr-men) Almaty-ǵa bar-dy-m **dep**] aıt-ty.
patience-INSTR Almaty-DAT go-PST-1SG **DEP** say-PST
'Aisha said that $I_{SPEAKER/Aisha}$ went to Almaty with the megaphone/together with the neighbor/patiently.'
Not: 'Aisha told (the news) *saying with a megaphone/saying together with the neighbor/saying patiently* that $I_{SPEAKER/Aisha}$ went to Almaty.' (Ótott-Kovács 2023:113)

Once again, regardless of where the agent-oriented modifier is placed, there is no evidence that there is any agent introduced by *dep*.

3.8. CASE MARKING OF CAUSEES. Ótott-Kovács (2023) also uses causatives to diagnose the argumenthood of *dep* clauses, and shows that *dep* clauses pattern like direct object arguments. In Kazakh causative constructions, causees surface with accusative case when the verb takes no direct object (23), but with dative case when the verb does take a direct object (24).

(23) Men **sen-i/*saǵan** jumys.iste-t-ti-m.
1SG **2SG-ACC/*2SG.DAT** work-CAUS-PST-1SG
'I made you work.'

(24) Men ***sen-i/saǵan** suraq-ty sura-t-ty-m.
1SG ***2SG-ACC/2SG.DAT** question-ACC ask-CAUS-PST-1SG
'I had you ask the question.' (Ótott-Kovács 2023:116)

The causee also appears as dative when the verb takes a *dep* clause (25).

(25) Men ***sen-i/saǵan** [jańbyr jaý-dy ma dep] sura-t-ty-m.
1SG ***2SG-ACC/2SG.DAT** rain rain-PST Q DEP ask-CAUS-PST-1SG
'I made you ask whether it rained.' (Ótott-Kovács 2023:117)

This shows that *dep* clauses behave like arguments rather than adjuncts, hinting at the status of *dep* as a complementizer in a CP.

4. Against a Pure Complementizer Analysis. So far, we have discussed a number of *dep* clauses that behave differently from *-(I)p* converb clauses, indicating that *dep* dos not behave like a verb in an *-(I)p* converb. However, we propose that there are also some instances where *dep* clauses involve a verbal *dep*.

4.1. COMPLEMENT TYPES. While the previous section shows that there is a complementizer *dep* which takes TP complements, in this section we look at instances of DP complements to *dep* under a communicative verb like *aıqaılaý* 'to scream' as opposed to a non-communicative verb like *oılaý* 'to think'.

(26) Murat birnárse (dep) aıqaıla-dy.
Murat something DEP scream-PST
'Murat screamed something.'

(27) Murat birnárse (*dep) oıla-dy.
Murat something *DEP think-PST
'Murat thought something.'

As the contrast between (26) and (27) shows, *dep* can optionally appear with *aıqaılaý* 'to scream' when selecting a DP complement, whereas *dep* is not compatible with *oılaý* 'think' when taking a DP complement. The contrast between (26) and (27) thus indicates *dep* has different statuses in different environments. We attribute this differing behavior of *dep* to the type

of matrix predicate, specifically whether it is communicative (*aıqaılaý* 'to scream'; 26) or non-communicative (*oılaý* 'to think'; 27). In Section 5, we will show how this follows from the status of *dep* as a converb in (26) and a complementizer in (27).

4.2. FRONTING. Obviously, since *deý* and *-(I)p* are both productive in Kazakh, there are verbal adjuncts formed with the speech verb use of *dep* (e.g., 9 and 20). However, there are also *dep* clauses like the one in (28), which appear similar to the complement clauses discussed in the previous sections, that we argue can also involve a verbal *dep*.

(28) Murat Aıdyn-ǵa **[qula-p qal-dy-m dep]** shaǵymdan-dy
Murat Aidyn-DAT **fall-CVB AUX-PST-1SG DEP** complain-PST
'Murat complained to Aidyn that he fell.'

When used with a communicative verb, the fronting possibilities involving *dep* clauses are different than they are with a non-communicative verb. For example, with a non-communicative like *senýý* 'to believe', the entire embedded clause can be fronted (29b). But, the complement of *dep* cannot strand *dep* and be fronted by itself (29c).

(29) a. Murat **[Aıdyn-dy qula-p qal-dy dep]** sen-di
Murat **Aidyn-ACC fall-CVB AUX-PST DEP** believe-PST
'Murat believed that Aidyn fell.'

b. **[Aıdyn-dy qula-p qal-dy dep]**, Murat sen-di.
Aidyn-ACC fall-CVB AUX-PST DEP Murat believe-PST
'That Aidyn fell, Murat believed.'

c. ***Aıdyn-dy qula-p qal-dy]**, Murat **[dep** sen-di
Aidyn-ACC fall-CVB AUX-PST Murat **DEP** believe-PST
Intended: 'Aidyn fell, Murat believed that.'

Meanwhile, with a communicative like *shaǵymdanýý* 'to complain', the entire clause can be fronted (30b) or *dep* can be stranded (30c).

(30) a. Murat Aıdyn-ǵa **[qula-p qal-dy-m dep]** shaǵymdan-dy
Murat Aidyn-DAT **fall-CVB AUX-PST-1SG DEP** complain-PST
'Murat complained to Aidyn that he fell.'

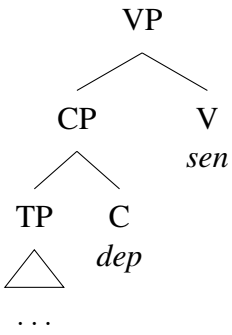
b. **[Qula-p qal-dy-m dep]**, Murat Aıdyn-ǵa shaǵymdan-dy
fall-CVB AUX-PST-1SG DEP Murat Aidyn-DAT complain-PST
'That he fell, Murat complained to Aidyn.'

c. **[Qula-p qal-dy-m]**, Murat Aıdyn-ǵa **dep** shaǵymdan-dy
fall-CVB AUX-PST-1SG Murat Aidyn-DAT **DEP** complain-PST
'He fell, Murat complained to Aidyn.'

In the next section, we argue that this difference in fronting possibilities is due to a difference in the status of *dep* as a complementizer or a verb.

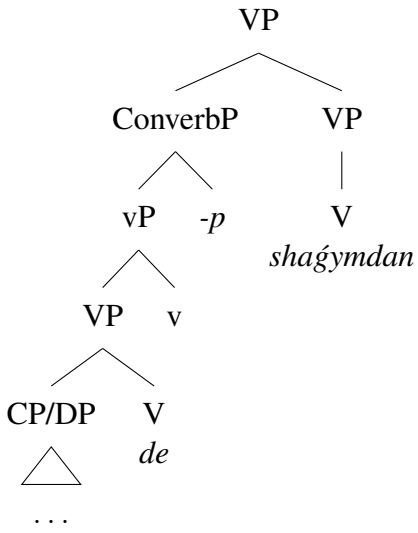
5. A Binary Analysis. The conclusion of the previous section, that *dep* behaves like a complementizer with non-communicatives and a verb with communicatives, allows for a straightforward proposal of the syntax of these two structures. With a non-communicative matrix predicate like *sený* 'to believe', we propose that *dep* is a complementizer as in (31).

(31) Structure for Non-communicatives (e.g., *oılaý* 'to think'; *sený* 'to believe')



With a communicative verb like *shaǵymdaný* 'to complain, we propose that *dep* can be broken down into the verb root *de* and the converb suffix *-(I)p*, with the structure in (32; cf. the analysis of Uyghur converbs in Major 2024).

(32) Structure for Communicatives (e.g., *aıqaılaý* 'to scream'; *shaǵymdaný* 'to complain')



These structures explain the differences between *dep* with communicative and non-communicative predicates as it relates to complement types. In line with Major's (2024) observation for Uyghur,[4] it would be unexpected to analyze *dep* as a complementizer in (26), since complementizers are not typically able to introduce a DP argument, as shown for English in (33).

[4] Kazakh differs crucially from Uyghur in the transitivity of 'scream'. In Kazakh, *aıqaılaý* 'to scream' can take a DP object, while the Uyghur equivalent cannot. So, the tests/diagnostics used by Major (2024) for Uyghur do not apply in exactly the same way.

(33) Murat screamed/said/thought (*that) something.

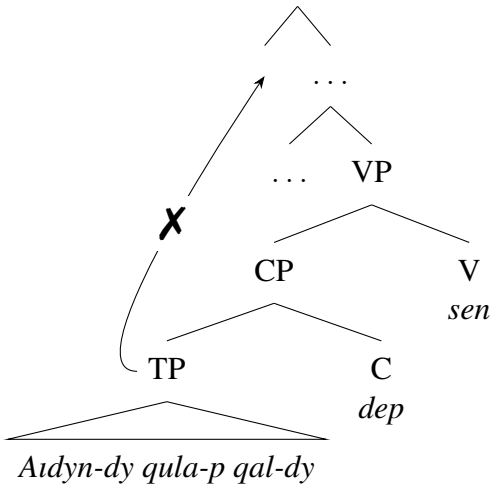
Thus, it follows that *dep* cannot be used with *oılaý* 'to think' in (27) since *oılaý* is a non-communicative verb which must take the complementizer *dep* in (31). Meanwhile, a communicative verb like *aıŋqaılaý* 'to scream' is compatible with the structure in (32) which allows for either a CP or a DP complement, explaining why *dep* can be used in (26).

The difference in fronting behavior also follows from these structures, as it conforms to the no C stranding constraint (Abels 2003), cf. the following English examples.

(34) a. Nobody believes that anything will happen.
b. That anything will happen, nobody believes.
c. *Anything will happen, nobody believes that.

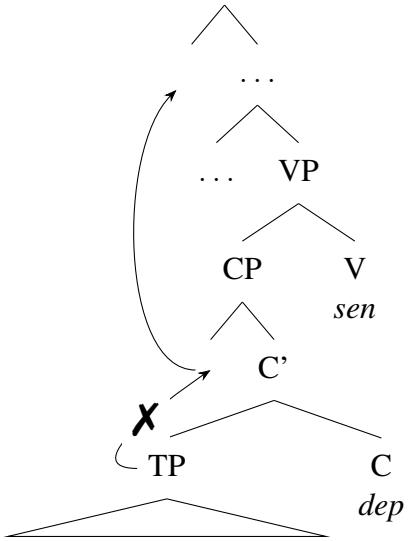
With a complementizer, you can front the entire CP (34b) but you cannot front the complement of C to the exclusion of C itself (34c). Abels (2003) derives this effect from the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC; Chomsky 2000) and anti-locality. Essentially, there are two possible ways that a TP could be fronted to the exclusion of a CP. The first possibility, shown in (35), is ruled out by the PIC. Given that CP is a phase, its domain is not accessible to further syntactic operations.

(35)



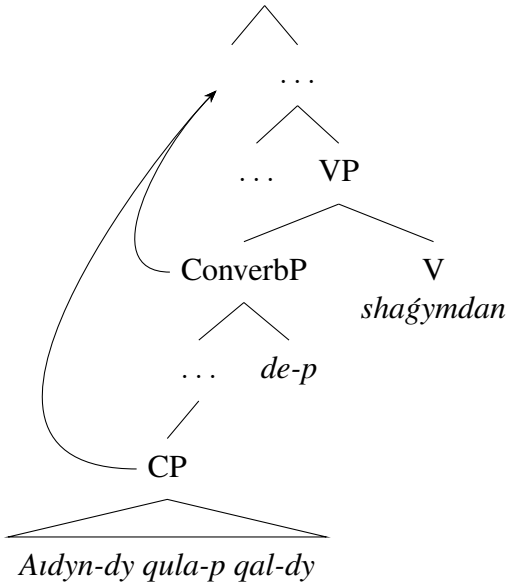
So, the only way the TP could be fronted to the exclusion of the CP is for it to first move to the phase edge and then later move to a higher position, shown in (36). However, this derivation is also impossible because complement to specifier movement is ruled out by anti-locality.

(36)



However, if you have a communicative verb, it is possible for the *dep* clause to be a ConverbP. Then, both fronting possibilities are possible as shown in (37) because you can front the entire ConverbP or you can front the CP which, in this case, does not contain *dep*.

(37)



The fact that converb *dep* can be used only with communicative predicates is likely due to the similar semantics of verbs relating to speech. However, we do not propose that *dep* is always a converb with communicatives. The use of either converb *dep* or complementizer *dep* is possible in these cases. For example the passive, which we claimed requires a complementizer *dep*, can be used with a communicative verb (11).

6. Conclusion. We have argued that *dep* can function as both a complementizer and a converb in Kazakh. Non-communicative predicates must use the complementizer *dep*, while communicative predicates can use either the converb *dep* or the complementizer *dep*. Such a binary analysis is in line with recent work on Kipsigis (Bossi 2023), Sakha (Yue 2023), and Mandarin (Ye 2025) arguing that purely complementizer or purely verbal analyses are inadequate for 'say'-complementizers in some languages.

More generally, though we do not intend to do any diachronic linguistics, if there are languages that have full-fledged complementizers which diachronically evolved from a 'say' verb (e.g., Vietnamese rằng; Duffield 2025), it should not be unexpected to find languages like Kazakh where in the synchronic grammar the 'say'-complementizer is at an "in-between" stage. The verbal structure in these "in-between" stages varies in interesting ways dependent on certain language-specific properties related to how verbs combine. Kazakh, Sakha (Yue 2023), and Kipsigis (Bossi 2023) have productive converbs, and 'say' in these languages is ambiguous between a complementizer and a converb, giving rise to interesting "in-between" behavior related to converbs. Mandarin (Ye 2025) has productive V-V compounds, and 'say' in Mandarin is ambiguous between a complementizer and a verb in a V-V compound. It is a question for future research what other strategies for combining verbs can give rise to 'say'-complementizers, and whether verbal behavior is preserved with communicative predicates in languages with those other strategies as well.

References

Abels, Klaus. 2003. *Successive cyclicity, anti-locality, and adposition stranding*: University of Connecticut dissertation.

Anand, Pranav, Jane Grimshaw & Valentine Hacquard. 2019. Sentence embedding predicates, factivity and subjects. *Tokens of meaning: Papers in honor of Lauri Karttunen* 279–308.

Baker, Mark. 2008. *The syntax of agreement and concord*. Cambridge University Press.

Baker, Mark C & Nadya Vinokurova. 2010. Two modalities of case assignment: Case in Sakha. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 28(3). 593–642.

Bossi, Madeline. 2023. Two types of 'say'-complementation in Kipsigis. In *Proceedings of WCCFL 41*, 87–96.

Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist inquiries: The framework. In Martin Roger, David Michaels & Juan Uriagereka (eds.), *Step by step: Essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, 89–155. MIT Press.

Clements, George N. 1975. The logophoric pronoun in Ewe: Its role in discourse. *Journal of West African Languages* 10. 144–177.

Diercks, Michael. 2013. Indirect agree in Lubukusu complementizer agreement. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 31. 357–407.

Driemel, Imke & Maria Kouneli. 2025. C-Agree is local subject-verb agreement in Kipsigis. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 43. 223–272.

Duffield, Nigel. 2025. Whys and wherefores: The aetiology of the left periphery (with reference to Vietnamese). *Languages* 10(5).

Duncan, Philip T & Harold Torrence. 2017. Verbal complementizers and the indirect Agree relation in Ibibio. Handout from talk given at the 91st Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America.

Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons & Alison J. Robinson. 2026. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International 29th edn. https://www.ethnologue.com/.
Hyman, Larry M & Bernard Comrie. 1981. Logophoric reference in Gokana. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 3. 19–37.
Kilgarriff, Adam, Vít Baisa, Jan Bušta, Miloš Jakubíček, Vojtěch Kovář, Jan Michelfeit, Pavel Rychlý & Vít Suchomel. 2014. The sketch engine: ten years on. *Lexicography* 1. 7–36.
Kilgarriff, Adam, Pavel Rychlý, Pavel Smrž & David Tugwell. 2004. The sketch engine. In *Proceedings of the 11th EURALEX International Congress*, 105–116.
Kinyalolo, Kasangati Kikuni W. 1993. On some syntactic properties of ḍò in Fɔ̀n. *Lingua* 91(2-3). 201–233.
Lord, Carol. 1976. Evidence for syntactic reanalysis: from verb to complementizer in Kwa. *Papers from the parasession on diachronic syntax* 179–191.
Major, Travis. 2021. *On the nature of "say" complementation*: University of California, Los Angeles dissertation.
Major, Travis. 2024. Re-analyzing 'say' complementation: Implications for case theory and beyond. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 42(3). 1125–1190.
Mukhamedova, Raikhangul. 2015. *Kazakh: A comprehensive grammar*. Routledge.
Ótott-Kovács, Eszter. 2023. *Differential subject marking in Kazakh*: Cornell University dissertation.
Ye, Ariela. 2025. A say verb or complementizer: Analyzing *shuo* following communicatives and non-communicatives. In *Proceedings of NELS 55*, 303–316.
Yue, Christine. 2023. Case on embedded subjects in Sakha. Ms., University of Pennsylvania.