

A new class of verbs taking *that*-clause complements

Workshop on Current Change in the English Verb Phrase
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Structure of talk

1. Casual observation of 'errors'
2. Attempt to see pattern
3. Initial data survey (*OED*, *BNC*, *COCA*) of sample verbs
4. Stance
5. Source of innovation
6. Questions raised

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Sporadic data

- From a piece of student coursework:

(1) Quirk et al. (1985) advance that the *try* in *try and V* is ...

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Sporadic data

- More generally, usage of form

(2) *X Vs* that *Y* is the case.

- Ungrammatical when *V* = *advance*, *articulate*, *express*, etc.?
- Error for *X Vs* the claim that *Y* ?
or
- Change in progress?

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Status of forms

- Experience so far is that students who write such things are insecure about usage:
 - neither convinced that they had been right
 - nor clear that they were wrong.
- After looking at evidence, I am much less secure about what strings count as standard English.

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V + *that*-clause

- The verbs fall into various overlapping semantic groups. Various sets of semantic labels, e.g.:
 - communication verbs; mental verbs.
 - factual verbs (covering speech act verbs introducing indirect statements and intellectual states and acts); suasive verbs; emotive verbs.
- Most such verbs occur quite normally with a *that*-clause complement.
- However, some (to my ears) do not.

Biber et al. (1999: 362-3, 660-70)
Quirk et al. (1985: 1180-83)

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[*the N + that*-clause]_{NP}

- Many abstract Ns head a complex NP of form *the + N + that*-clause complement:
 - *admission, argument, claim, fact, hypothesis, opinion, proposal, etc.*

He proposed the theory that ...
He advanced the theory that ...

Biber et al. (1999: 648-50)
Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 964-7)

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First classification of verbs

- Classify them by their complementation possibilities when used in context of a human subject stating a fact, expressing an opinion, etc.
- Verbs occur ± *that*-clause, ± NP (where "NP" means abstract NP headed by *fact, claim, suggestion, etc.*, especially a complex NP like *the claim that the Earth is flat*).

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V + *that*-clause ✓, *V + NP

- (*admit*), *agree, argue, comment, complain, conclude, contend, decide, declare, deem, feel, hint, hope, insist, object, point up, promise, realise, reason, reckon, remark, reply, retort, say, teach, think, warn, write*

Huddleston & Pullum (2002: 958-9, 1017-22)
Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985: §16.30, B3)

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V + *that*-clause ✓, V + NP ✓

- *accept, acknowledge, add, affirm, allege, allow, announce, assert, assume, believe, (claim), concede, confirm, consider, convey, (deduce), (determine), demonstrate, deny, disclose, discover, doubt, emphasise, establish, explain, (find), forget, guarantee, hold, imagine, (indicate), infer, (judge), maintain, mention, observe, (point out), (predict), (presume), ?pronounce, propose, prove, recognise, regret, repeat, report, see, (show), state, (stipulate), stress, submit,*

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***V + that-clause, V + NP ✓**

- *advance, articulate, back up, challenge, communicate, contradict, convey, define, discuss, dispute[#], encourage, endorse, enlarge upon, espouse, express, oppose, promote, put across, put forward, question[#], rule, support, sustain, underline, underscore, utter*
- [#OK with *whether*-clause]

Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik (1985: §§16.26-7, B1-B2)

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***V + that-clause – but occurs**

	OED entry	OED quotes	BNC	COCA	
advance	x	x	x	✓	
advocate	x	✓	✓	✓	
contest	x	x	✓	✓	
endorse	x	x	✓	✓	
espouse	x	x	x	✓	
express	x	x	✓	✓	
highlight	x	✓	?✓	✓	

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advance that

- In *OED* only possible in passive with abstract NP subject, *the claim was advanced that ...*, or even *It was advanced that ...*:

1718 J. CHAMBERLAYNE *Relig. Philos.* (1730) II. xix. §45 It may be safely advanced that there falls about 20 inches of Rain yearly.

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***advance that* [from COCA]**

I advance that until we take the bigger frame, the issue of homophobic bullying and violence [...]

Even though the DSM definition has changed, I would advance that the earlier definition prevails in popular and academic discussions of trauma.

In doing so, I advanced that maintaining the masculine hegemony is in conflict with sustained and healthy attachment behaviors,

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***advocate that* [from COCA]**

I advocate that the text be read as a codification of Barnes's aesthetic philosophy. (2003)

Why would a woman appear to advocate that members of her gender practice the very traits she despises most in the opposite (2005, MAG, MS - non-academic)

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contest that [from BNC]

A0B 440 We contest that there are no laws written in stone, and that there is room for hybrids.

AN3 1141 He contests that petty commodity production is a separate mode of production from the capitalist one, but that it articulates with it to facilitate the expanded reproduction of the capitalist mode (Quijano 1974).

□ Different meaning in:

K5M 9894 They did not contest that they participated in the crime ring, but said they had no choice because of pressure from Chinese secret societies.

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endorse that

ARW 93 Neither would I infer that Spare Rib's readers would endorse that I'm straight, white, no longer middle class, anti-IRA, have mixed feelings about Israel's policies, can't knit, bake, have unbiddable hair and a 34-inch chest. [BNC]

Only two examples in COCA, very recent:

This is one of the main reasons that investigators endorse that physical education is the most adequate environment for sociomoral education (COCA, 2007)

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espouse that [from COCA]

Gardner 1985, p. 197) communicates this same demand, espousing that further research is needed " to generalize the findings reported to brands (1992, ACAD CurrentPsych; COCA) Like Carl Rogers, the feminist relational approach espouses that the more the worker presents as a genuine human being, the more effective (2003, ACAD SocialPsych)

Others have espoused that relationships in American society are primarily codependent (Shaef, 1987). (2002, ACAD OrthoNursing)

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express that [from COCA]

From all accounts today, certainly, people have expressed that they feel it's a tragedy,

I was talking to a close friend and expressing that how can no one pick this up?

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highlight that [from OED quot'ns]

2006 Mother & Baby Aug. 138/1
Immunologist and allergist Dr Amolak S. Bansal highlights that two thirds of a baby's immune system is in the tummy.

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Error vs. change

- Status of occasional forms on web or elsewhere.
- Need to avoid non-native speaker data(?).
- Absence of meta-linguistic comments may be significant, presence certainly is.
- What is frequency threshold which suggests incipient change rather than random error?

Hundt (forthcoming)

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Acquisition, salience

- How would the learner discover which verbs take which complementation?
- Appears to be non-salient usage.
- Change from below (in sense that not conscious).
- But perhaps aspiring to a more high-status register.

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Stance

... the expression of stance is backgrounded in noun complement clauses. With verb complement clauses, the subject of the verb is often a human agent or experiencer, so that the stance reported by the verb can be attributed directly to that person. In contrast, the stance conveyed by a controlling head noun is not normally attributed to anyone, so that readers must infer that the noun reports the stance of the writer.

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Stance

The opposite distribution of verb complement clauses (preferred in conversation) and noun complement clauses (preferred in academic writing) can thus be attributed to two factors. First, conversation has an overall preference for verbal rather than nominal structures, while academic prose shows the opposite pattern, preferring to integrate information in noun phrases.

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Stance

Second, the differing primary purposes of conversation and academic prose are at least as important here: conversational participants are interested in each others' personal feelings and attitudes [...] In contrast, academic writers are generally much more interested in the information being conveyed than personal attitudes; [...]

Biber et al. (1999: 650)

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Register

- If new uses are violating traditional academic conventions by a switch from complex NP to *that*-clause, this is at least consonant with Biber et al.'s work on stance if we assume that the writers concerned are (inadvertently or otherwise) practising a more conversational style.

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Analogy 1

- Forms like *advance that X* occur on analogy of verbs that can be complemented by a *that*-clause instead of an NP, such as *reason*.

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Analogy 2

- Forms like *advance that X* occur on analogy of large number of verbs that can be complemented either by a *that*-clause or by an NP, such as *demonstrate*.

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Analogy 3

- Forms like *advance that X* occur on analogy of large number of verbs that can be used either transitively or intransitively.
- Development of intransitive (elliptical) use, as in
Jim hadn't eaten his dinner.
Jim hadn't eaten.
perhaps leads to use of new intransitive pattern,
Jim advanced
to which *that*-clause can be added to specify proposal.

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Analogy 4

- Some at least of these verbs can be used earlier where subject is *words*, *article*, *book*, etc., rather than human agent. Thus *express* in *OED*, and likewise perhaps *endorse* in *COCA*:

Because grounded theory endorses that data analyses occur simultaneously with data collection, interviews continued until saturation occurred ... (*COCA*, 2008)

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More detailed work needed

- ❑ Need to check Advanced Learner's Dictionary and other more specialist works for recognised complementation patterns.
- ❑ Separation of V and *that* may make pattern less salient; so far only contiguous examples checked.
- ❑ Genre variation in Brown family and COCA may well be significant.
- ❑ Numbers and dates also.

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Conclusion

- ❑ Change is particularly easy to motivate, as there are multiple sources.
- ❑ Manning (2003) argues that in a large corpus, most complementation patterns get shared by semantically similar verbs.
- ❑ Serial relationship might be useful way to map or even model the development.
Quirk (1965)
- ❑ Multiple inheritance in Construction Grammar more recent, related approach.

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