

CONJUNCTIVE MARKERS OF CONTRAST IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH: SYNTACTIC PATTERNS AND DISCOURSE EFFECTS

CONJUNCTIVE MARKERS: A DEFINITION

- Linguistic items that express **logical relationships** between textual units
- **Several grammatical categories:**

COORDINATORS	<i>He studied hard, but he failed.</i>
SUBORDINATORS	<i>Although he studied hard, he failed</i>
CONJUNCTIVE ADJUNCTS	- <i>He studied hard. However, he failed.</i> - <i>Helen studied hard. By contrast, Luke partied all semester.</i>

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Investigate & compare the type of syntactic segments in which French & English CMs tend to be included
→ English & French have been said to differ in their **syntactic preferences** (e.g. Chuquet & Paillard 1987)
- Focus of meaning relations of **contrast**

CONJUNCTIVE MARKERS AND SYNTAX

- Syntax = **central defining feature** of CMs
 - CMs must link clauses or larger units
 - Phrasal level > no conjunctive function (e.g. Hoek et al. 2017)

👉 *Afghanistan may yet go forward; **but** it may more easily go back.*
👈 *Justin Welby has been clear **but** tactful on both these points.*



- **Little research** has looked at the **syntactic aspects** of CM use
 - Most studies have **focused** on the **semantic features** of CMs
 - E.g. contrastive linguistics: lack of one-to-one mappings across languages → very **fine-grained semantic analyses** of CMs (e.g. Pit 2007; Cartoni & Zufferey 2012)

DATA

COMPARABLE CORPUS OF QUALITY NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

LANGUAGE	ENGLISH	FRENCH
SIZE	c. 2 million words	
# OF TEXTS	c. 4,000 articles	
SOURCES	<i>The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Observer...</i>	<i>Le Monde, Le Figaro, Libération</i>

METHODOLOGY

1.

COMPILATION OF A LIST OF CONJUNCTIVE MARKERS OF CONTRAST

- 42 English CMs
- 50 French CMs

2.

AUTOMATIC EXTRACTION FROM THE CORPUS

- Use of WordSmith Tools 6
- 26,013 hits

3.

MANUAL DISAMBIGUATION

- Semantic (contrast only) & syntactic (clause level or above)
- Disambiguated set: 15,364 CMs of contrast

4.

MANUAL CODING OF THE DATA

- Type of CM (coordinator, subordinator, conjunctive adjunct)
- Type of host clause (finite, non-finite, verbless)
- Rank status of the host clause (main, hypotactic, minor)
- Lexical item

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

- Similar dominant patterns of use in English and French (between 80 and 99% of instances)

CM TYPES	DOMINANT PATTERNS	EXAMPLES
Coordinators and conjunctive adjuncts	Finite & main clauses	Ali Zeidan est un homme courageux et compétent, mais il se <u>trompe</u> de diagnostic.
		At Nansen, there were 'no lessons in the humanities, arts or music' for an entire year group. Arabic, however , <u>was</u> compulsory learning across the entire school
Subordinators	Finite & hypotactic clauses	While there <u>is</u> no guarantee that sanctions would end Russia's expansionism, they would increase the pressure on Moscow to retreat.

- Statistically significant differences within the less frequent categories, including:

FR > EN	Coordinators and conjunctive adjuncts in minor clauses	Autre point : les contradictions d'une assistante maternelle, affirmant d'abord qu'un des enfants n'avait pu être influencé dans ses accusations par la télé, avant d'admettre, «les joues cramoisies», qu'il a pu la regarder «machinalement» (le Parisien). En revanche , sur le malaise du prêtre-ouvrier, aucune citation.
	Hypotactic clauses standing alone	Les commentateurs se focaliseront sur la beauté des mouvements diplomatiques et l'habileté des compromis. Alors que tout se jouera, aujourd'hui et demain, dans la gestion des conséquences sociales de la crise.
	Coordinators and conjunctive adjuncts in hypotactic clauses	La sortie de Valls contre la dépénalisation des délits routiers a laissé apparaître quelques tensions, <u>sans susciter</u> toutefois le moindre éclat de voix de Taubira.
EN > FR	Subordinators in verbless hypotactic clauses	Efforts at political reform in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait, while <u>welcome</u> , are but partial remedies.

SYNTACTIC FRAGMENTATION & EMPHASIS

Hypotactic clauses standing alone

*Les commentateurs se focaliseront sur la beauté des mouvements diplomatiques et l'habileté des compromis. **Alors que** tout se jouera, aujourd'hui et demain, dans la gestion des conséquences sociales de la crise.*

[Although everything will come down, today and tomorrow, to the management of the social consequences of the crisis.]

Conjunctive adjuncts and coordinators in minor clauses

*Nous nous enflammons pour ou contre Dieudonné, pour ou contre le voile islamique, demain pour ou contre les coups de canif à la loi de 1905. **Mais** sur le meurtre de Van Gogh, qui nous parle exactement de la même chose, pas d'émotion, pas d'indignation, pas d'effroi.*

[But on Van Gogh's murder (...) no emotion, no indignation, no terror].

- Fragmented style of expression (cf. Chafe 1982)
 - In line with the increasingly **informal** and **reader-friendly** character of editorials (Westin 2002)
- **Emphasis** on the contrastive link and the following segment
 - In line with the **persuasive** function of editorials (cf. Biber 1988)
- Such patterns are significantly more common in French than in English

SYNTACTIC COMPRESSION

Hypotactic uses of conjunctive adjuncts and coordinators (FR)

L'Occupation, que l'écrivain n'a pas connue, mais dont il a vécu des conséquences et tutoyé des ombres, est remontée roman après roman, génération après génération.

[The Occupation, which the writer did not experience, but whose consequences he lived through and whose shadows he touched, is outlined novel after novel, generation after generation].

Subordinators in verbless clauses (EN)

Efforts at political reform in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait, while welcome, are but partial remedies

- Different manifestations in the two languages
- The information is conveyed in a **compact, synthetic** manner
 - In line with the **space-saving** concerns and central **informational** purposes of newspaper writing
- More **implicit** ways of signalling the relationships between clauses or sentences (>< reader-friendly)

[T]wo conflicting linguistic paradigms are at work in the editorials: the aspiration for informality and the aspiration for information density and lexical specificity. (Westin 2002: 164)

CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

- Significant **cross-linguistic differences** in syntactic patterning of CMs of contrast, despite similar dominant patterns
- Value of a syntactic approach to CMs
 - Syntactic differences reflect broader (differences in) **strategies of textual development**
 - CM use at the **syntax-discourse interface**
- Important implications for both **foreign-language teaching** and **translator training**

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