

**Causal Relations between Discourse and Grammar: *Because* in Spoken
French and Dutch**

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Abstract

The chapter presents a cross-linguistic study of the subordinating conjunctions *parce que* in French and *omdat* in Dutch (both corresponding to English *because*) at the interface between discourse and grammar. It is argued that causal subordinate conjunctions do not always mark a causal relation at the discourse level, because they do not always link two independent utterances or speech-acts. Such subordinating conjunctions, however, can gain discourse status, when they are used paratactically; as may be witnessed from accompanying discourse behavior such as co-occurring discourse markers, filled pauses, declination reset, etc. Thus, the aim of this study is to gain deeper insight into the discursive consequences of the grammatical options of coordination and subordination.

Key words: subordination, Dutch, French, causality, discourse markers, grammar, discourse, corpus analysis

1. Introduction

Causal connectives have long since been described as markers of discourse structure and discourse coherence, in particular as signals of causal coherence relations (Gernsbacher 1997; Sanders and Spooren 2007, 2009; Canestrelli; Mak, and Sanders 2013). In the words of Canestrelli, et al. (2013:1395): “It is generally assumed that causal connectives provide crucial information about the discourse representation; they signal that a causal relation is to be established between two text segments. These markers are therefore assumed to provide processing instructions which specify the enfolding discourse structure”. This direct link between “connectivehood” and “discoursehood” is hardly ever questioned. Causal connectives do however come in different syntactic kinds, mainly as coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, or conjunctive adverbials. Debaisieux (2004, 2016) convincingly questioned the status of subordinating conjunctions as elements of discourse. This line of reasoning will be further pursued here. More specifically, I will try to show that the distinction between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions is an important one carrying consequences at the discourse level. This is in line with Blühdorn’s (2008:80) claim that “[t]he interaction between hierarchical and non-hierarchical connections in syntax, semantics and discourse can only

be described in appropriate detail on the basis of independent and explicit theories of each of the three domains of language structure”. This view requires us to revise the way in which we define the discourse level. Namely, not only as “language above the sentence or above the clause” (Stubbs 1983:1), but also as language in use (Brown and Yule 1983; Fasold 1990). In the former approach, discourse is contrasted with “syntax” or “sentence grammar”, in the latter it is contrasted with language as a codified system¹. Here, I will try to show that these two approaches can be reconciled. As language in use, discourse reflects how speakers put the language system to use in utterances, chunks, and stretches of speech, making use of lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic information. Thus, discourse comes with the affordances the grammar gives us. As speakers, we may stretch these grammatical “rules” and bend them to new uses in discourse, which eventually may enter the grammar again as renewed grammatical constraints in a continuous cycle (cf. Ariel 2009). This requires linguists “to study grammar and discourse together in order to understand how language comes to be what it is” (Du Bois 2003:47).

Focusing on French *parce que* and Dutch *omdat* (both corresponding broadly speaking to English *because*) in (spontaneous) spoken language, I will claim here that taking into account the syntactic status of discourse connectives in addition to their semantic profile allows a more satisfying

¹ I would like to thank one of the reviewers for helping me make explicit these contrasts.

account of their use in discourse. More precisely, I will argue that causal subordinate conjunctions do not always mark a causal relation at the discourse level, because they do not always link two independent utterances or speech-acts. Such subordinating conjunctions, however, can gain discourse relational status, when they are used paratactically; as may be witnessed from accompanying discourse behavior such as co-occurring discourse markers, filled pauses, declination reset, etc. In sum, the aim of this study is to gain deeper insight into the discursive consequences of the grammatical options of coordination and subordination (see also, Diessel and Hetterle 2011; Scheffler 2005).

2. Causal connectives, subjectivity and discourse

Dutch and French causal connectives have been studied amply in the literature, more specifically in the discourse coherence literature. Much of this work concentrates on the causal pairs *car* – *parce que* in French (Groupe Lambda-L 1975; Degand and Pander Maat 2003; Degand and Fagard 2012; Zufferey 2012) and *want-omdat* in Dutch (Degand 1998; Pit 2007; Sanders and Spooren 2013, 2014; Spooren et al. 2010), observing a division of work between the two connectives building up the pair. More precisely, there is a tendency for French *car* and Dutch *want* to express so-called subjective

causal relations or claim-argument relations, i.e. causal relations that are construed by or presented from the perspective of the speaker, while *parce que/omdat* show a tendency to present causal relations in a factual, objective way as consequence-cause relations (Canestrelli et al. 2013). In their cross-linguistic study, Stukker and Sanders (2012) add German *denn-weil* to the picture and find indications for the pervasiveness of the distinction between subjective and objective causal relations. In addition, the studies suggest that French, German and Dutch causal connectives are sensitive to this conceptual distinction in parallel ways (p. 176).

The authors furthermore stress that these observations are not black and white distinctions, but reflect prototypical uses. An additional point of attention regarding these studies should be that most of them rely on mainly written data. This latter aspect is of importance, since the mode may affect the type of causal relations expressed by the connectives. This is the case both for French and for German. In spontaneous spoken French, *car* is extremely rare (in terms of frequency); leaving *parce que* to take over the more subjective uses (Simon and Degand 2007; see also Debaisieux 2002)².

² Degand and Fagard (2012) present this subjective use of *parce que* as a case of subjectification over time, Debaisieux (2016), however, shows that this subjective or pragmatic use of *parce que* was available to speakers from the beginning of the French language.

An aspect that is hardly discussed in these studies is the syntactic difference between the two members of the causal pairs under investigation. Namely, *want/car/denn* are coordinating conjunctions and *omdat/parce que/weil* are subordinating conjunctions. Linking this syntactic difference to the semantic/pragmatic profile sketched so far, we could draw the very preliminary conclusion that coordinating conjunctions establish subjective relations between two independent speech events, while subordinating conjunctions express objective causal relations as a single speech event. This isomorphic mapping does not hold. Instead, there is need to work out how causal relations work at the syntactic, semantic and discourse-relational level (Blühndorn 2008).

3. *Parce que* in grammar and discourse

In her analysis of *parce que* in spoken French, Debaisieux (2016) refers to numerous studies, in several languages, pointing out that subordinating conjunctions, like *parce que*, are polyfunctional in that they can introduce both dependent and independent sentences. In example (1) *parce que* relates two propositions into one single causal speech event: because of her car being parked very far away, her friends made fun of the speaker; while in (2) *parce que* establishes an argumentative relation between two independent speech

events: the speaker expresses her opinion about writing style, which she motivates in the framework of poetry writing. As argued in the previous section, the latter relation is often described in terms of subjectivity, epistemicity or speaker perspective, while the causal relation in (1) is said to be of propositional, ideational or objective nature.

- (1) *ouais ils ont s se sont foutus de ma gueule tout le trajet // **parce** qu'elle était garée super loin /// (LOCAS-F, conv-i_1_loc1)*³
'yeah they made fun of me during the whole walk *parce que* it [the car] was parked really far away.'

- (2) *mais sachez que // au dix septième /// euh le classicisme c'est vingt ans // et pourtant vingt ans // qui ont donné en fait // leur nom à tout le siècle **parce que** ce courant /// était le courant /// entre guillemets // préféré /// euh de louis quatorze /// (LOCAS-F, conv-f2)*
'but [you should] know that in the seventeenth century uh classicism is twenty years and yet twenty years that have in fact given its name to the whole century *parce que* that movement was the in brackets preferred movement of uh Louis XIV '

³ The data used for this study come from the Louvain Corpus of Annotated Speech – French (LoCAS-F, Degand, Martin and Simon 2014). Short // and longer /// pauses have been left in the transcription, the syntactic and prosodic annotations have been removed here.

Debaisieux (2016:80) observes that so far the literature on morpheme polyfunctionality has had a strong bias towards pragmatic solutions. Most authors rely on the opposition between a marker functioning in subordinate clauses and a connective functioning in discourse patterns, without any syntactic analysis of the different structures the morphemes are involved in. She then convincingly argues that both the syntactic and the pragmatic properties of the two *parce que* uses should be taken into account, thus motivating two distinct “levels of syntactic combinations”, which she labels micro-syntactic “constructions⁴” and macro-syntactic “configurations”. In a construction, “*parce que* is a conjunction which introduces a subclause that is both embedded and dependent to the main clause predicator”. In a configuration, “*parce que* is a conjunction which links two syntactically independent utterances which are pragmatically grouped” (Debaisieux 2016:80). The syntactic behavior of *parce que* at the microsyntactic and macrosyntactic levels are different. This will be laid out briefly in the following sections, and I will then turn to the consequences of these distinctions in discourse.

3.1. *Microsyntactic and Macrosyntactic parce que*

⁴ Note that the term ‘construction’ does not refer to the ‘construction grammar framework’ in the sense of Goldberg (2006), Hoffmann and Trousdale (2013), Croft (2001), or others.

On the basis of the rich literature on French spoken grammar, Debaisieux describes three external syntactic properties that distinguish *parce que* in a Construction from its use in a Configuration: (i) the pronominal proportion criterion, (ii) the syntagmatic criterion, and (iii) the contrasting option. When all three criteria are applicable, *parce que* is used in a Construction, if not, the use is configurational. The pronominal proportion criterion reveals that the *parce que*-clause is a dependent clause. In practice, this criterion is operationalized by replacing the *parce que*-clause by the interrogative pronoun *pourquoi* ('why/whatfore'). The second criterion is operationalized by the possibility of clefting the *parce que*-clause (*c'est parce que X, que ...*, 'it's because X, that ...'), thus indicating "the proximity relation between a given constituent and its verbal predicator" (Smessaert et al. 2005:484). The third criterion consists in the possibility of contrasting the *parce que*-clause with a *mais*-clause (*pas parce que...*, *mais parce que*, 'not because ..., but because ...').

The three criteria apply well to example (1), thus indicating that this is a *parce que* Construction. The criteria do not apply well to example (2), because the *parce que* constituent is not embedded and not dependent. In addition to these external syntactic properties, Debaisieux lists a number of internal syntactic properties, which further distinguish constructions from

configurations. For sake of space and focus these will not be developed any further here.

According to Debaisieux, it is important to give a syntactic account of the distinction between Construction as a network of grammatical dependency relations and Configuration that belongs to the discourse level of analysis. However, because of the formal link between the constructional and configurational uses of *parce que* and the obligatory initial position of all *parce que* uses, Debaisieux warns against considering configurational *parce que* as a discourse marker. According to her, “even in their discursive use, conjunctions behave differently from discourse markers or particles.” (Debaisieux 2016:92). I disagree with the argument given. First, because discourse markers and particles do not form a homogeneous class, therefore there is not something like a ‘common behavior’. Second, because Debaisieux herself has convincingly shown that there are systematic syntactic differences between constructional and configurational *parce que*. Rather than calling for a macrosyntactic level, distinct from the discourse level, I would like to claim that macrosyntactic structures pave the way for independent discourse structure uses. Thus, there are reasons to merge Debaisieux’ configurational *parce que* uses with the category of DMs, and to distinguish them from the conjunctive uses (constructional in Debaisieux’ terms). My main argument will be that DM *parce que*, like any other DM, is “either outside the syntactic structure or loosely attached to it” (Brinton 1996:34), in a relation of “weak

clause association” (Schourup 1999:232). It follows that in discourse, DM *parce que* serves to introduce a separate speech event or “rhetorically categorized unit” (utterance or speech act) (Blühndorn 2008).

3.2. *Conjunctive and DM parce que in discourse*

In this section I mean to show that *parce que* comes in two ‘flavors’, as conjunction and as DM. The hypothesis is as follows: As a conjunction, *parce que* integrates “a clause as an adjunct in a Construction by means of a government relation” (Debaisieux 2016:90); semantically, it establishes a causal relation between cause and effect, represented in discourse as a single discourse event. Thus, it does NOT introduce a causal discourse/coherence relation. As a DM, *parce que* links independent clauses or syntactic constructs; semantically, it establishes a relation of causal type (cause-effect, justification, ...), represented in discourse as a paratactic causal relation between two independent discourse events. In the following, I will focus on the distinction between conjunction *parce que* and DM *parce que*, pointing to the syntactic and semantic differences when needed.

The data used for this study come from the Louvain Corpus of Annotated Speech – French (LoCAS-F, Degand, Martin and Simon 2014). This data set comprises authentic spoken French in 14 different communicative situations, such as spontaneous face-to-face conversations, radio interviews, political

addresses, varying in terms of degree of preparation, degree of interaction, number of speakers, etc. While fairly small (3h38, 41.322 tokens), the corpus is enriched with segmentation information (syntactic clauses, intonation units, basic discourse units, cf. Degand and Simon 2009) and various annotations (syntactic sequences, discourse markers, disfluencies, prosodic boundaries, intonation contours...). Of interest here is the way we annotated *parce que* in the corpus. Discourse markers were identified as linguistic expressions relating their host utterance to the discourse situation, where they can fulfill a threefold role contributing to the discourse organization (textual coherence), to the speaker/hearer interaction (interpersonal meanings), and/or to speaker attitudes (Degand 2014). In addition to this functional description, we took a strong syntactic bias limiting discourse marker status to those expressions that were syntactically detachable from a sentence (Schiffrin 1987), i.e. the weak clause association criterion mentioned above. Thus, in LOCAS-F, DMs are always outside the dependency clause. Concretely, this criterion was operationalized using the clefting operation (cf. supra). Retrieving all *parce que* occurrences from LOCAS-F, I found 124 tokens of which 56 are conjunctions (integrated in the dependency clause) and 68 are discourse markers. I systematically applied all of Debaisieux' (2016) external and internal syntactic criteria to the sample. This resulted in the recategorization of a number of *parce que* occurrences. The final sample contains 41 conjunctions and 83 DMs. In other words, in our data, 33% of

parce que occurrences are not identified as DMs, i.e. as potential markers of a discourse relation, because they occur within a dependency clause. Is this justified? To answer this question I will systematically analyze the *parce que* sample with respect to its discourse behavior, i.e. prosodic pattern, speaker-hearer management, referential chains, disfluencies and production phenomena.

3.2.1. *Parce que* prosodic patterns

LOCAS-F has been annotated with prosodic boundaries. These come in two types: Major and intermediary prosodic boundaries that segment the flow of speech into intonation units (for more details about the annotation procedure, see Simon and Christodoulides 2016), with an indication of their intonation contour. Since prosodic patterns reflect discourse behavior and semantic configurations of connectives and DMs (Ford 1993; Hansson 1999; Simon and Degand 2007; Raso 2014, see also Sanders and Evers-Vermeul, this volume), I expect conjunctive and DM *parce que* to diverge on these features, if they do indeed differ at the semantic and/or discourse level. Considering the overall occurrence of prosodic boundaries (major and intermediary) with the two types of *parce que* under investigation, results indicate that conjunctive and DM *parce que* do not diverge significantly from one another (X^2 (yates) = 1.38, df = 1, p = 0.2401; n = 124; N.S.). This is not in line with our expectations, since we expected conjunctive *parce que* to co-occur less

with prosodic boundaries than DM *parce que*. Furthermore, whenever there is a co-occurring boundary with either type of *parce que*, there is no difference in the type of intonation contour (X^2 (yates) = 0.003, df = 1, p = 0.8625; n = 105). Thus, the results of the prosodic patterning of the two types of *parce que* give no evidence for a distinct discourse behavior. Both types co-occur more frequently with prosodic boundaries than without, and there is no significant distinction between conjunction and DM for: (i) location of any prosodic boundary, (ii) presence of major intonation boundary, or (iii) type of intonation contour⁵.

3.2.2. *Parce que, disfluencies and production phenomena*

Discourse Markers are typical of spoken language, in which they may occur as traces of the production process. It follows that DM *parce que* should co-occur more with disfluencies and other production phenomena than conjunctive *parce que*. This is confirmed, at least partially, by the data analysis. Only six cases of *parce que* co-occur with a filled pause (*euuh*), but of these five are DMs. Although this result is not telling in quantitative terms, qualitatively it makes sense that DM *parce que* co-occurs more often with filled pauses than conjunctive *parce que*. Clustering of filled pauses and DMs is indeed more frequent at the boundaries of utterances (Crible, Degand and

⁵ It is worth noting that Dehé (2017) found similar counter-evidence for parentheticals in spoken English.

Gilquin 2017). The same observation is made for the clustering of *parce que* with other DMs. Of the fourteen *parce que* occurrences that are immediately adjacent to other DMs, thirteen are DMs (see 3-4). These are either cases of stalling, giving the speaker more time to plan or formulate their utterance (3), or cases of embedding in which *parce que* introduces a new independent complex clause (4).

- (3) [teachers talking about their students during a school trip to Rome]

ils vont nous embêter toute la soirée /// voire toute la nuit // hein

*/// **parce que** bon // enfin quoique ils se seront // levés // tôt ///*

(LOCAS-F, conv-i_2)

they are going to annoy us all evening even all night isn't it (hein)

parce que bon enfin quoique they will have woken up early

- (4) *dans un second temps je vais rappeler notre analyse des phrases*

*interrogatives /// **parce que** comme c' est à partir de cette analyse-*

là qu'on a /// émis des hypothèses sur les phrases interrogatives

// en fait c' est quand même // bien de savoir ce qu' on a vu ///

(LOCAS-F, cnf_3)

secondly I will recall our analysis of interrogative sentences

parce que since it's from that analysis that we formulated

*hypotheses about interrogative sentences in fact it is still good to
know what we have seen*

DM *parce que* frequently goes together with false starts, reformulations or interrupted utterances. Of the fourteen segments of that type, only one involves a conjunctive *parce que*. This again confirms that *parce que* in its DM status fulfills different discourse functions than conjunctive *parce que*, among which utterance planning takes a predominant position.

3.2.3. *Parce que and co-referential chains*

It has been shown that relational and referential coherence interact (Kehler 2001; Stede 2016). More precisely, segments that are closely related semantically tend to show tighter co-reference patterns. Concretely, I expect conjunctive *parce que* to link more frequently segments with coreferring arguments (as lexical or pronominal noun phrases). This should be less the case for DM *parce que*. Figure 1 presents the distribution of the two types of *parce que* in co-reference patterns. Results show that the two types differ significantly from one another (X^2 (yates) = 8.47, $df = 1$, $p < 0.005$; $n = 118$). More precisely, the analysis of the standardized residuals shows that conjunctive *parce que* does indeed link co-referring segments more often than DM *parce que*.

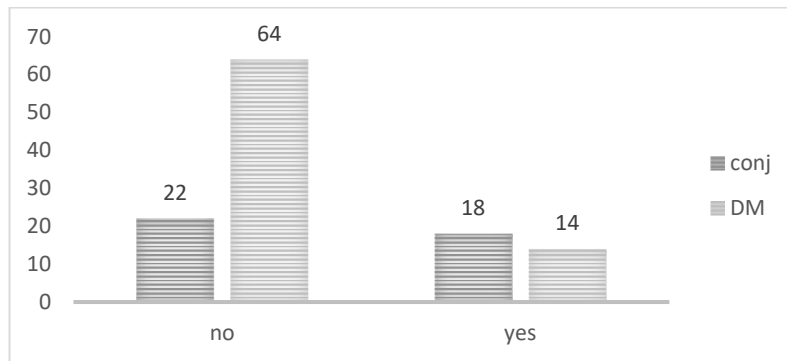


Figure 1. Co-reference patterns with conjunctive and DM *parce que*

3.2.4. *Parce que* and turn management

A final observation regarding the discourse status of the *parce que* segments concerns turn management. Discourse Markers have indeed been frequently described as turn or speaker-hearer management devices (Degand and van Bergen 2016; Fischer 2000; Taboada 2006), hence DM *parce que* should be more frequent in that locus. First, it appears *parce que* only rarely occurs at turn transitions, as only five of such uses are found in the sample. However, when *parce que* is used at a transition, it is always a DM, not a conjunction.

3.3. *Parce que*: Preliminary conclusion

Debaisieux (2016) convincingly showed that *parce que* comes in two distinct syntactic patterns, which I have here called conjunctive *parce que* (at work in Debaisieux' construction) and DM *parce que* (in Debaisieux' configuration). I hypothesized that these two syntactic forms actually reflect that the

expressions are used at different levels: syntax and discourse, respectively. More precisely, I suggested that subordinate conjunctive *parce que* marks a syntactically dependent and semantic causal relation but not a *discourse* relation, because it does not link independent discourse segments. On the other hand, DM *parce que* was hypothesized to mark a local semantic causal relation AND a causal discourse relation between independent discourse segments. The aim of the data analysis was to confirm the status of the segments linked by *parce que*. While the unfilled pause analysis was not conclusive in this respect, I have shown that DM *parce que* segments are indeed more independent than conjunctive *parce que* segments. Evidence comes from the higher frequency of disfluency and production phenomena with DM *parce que*, its higher involvement in speaker-hearer management, and its lesser degree of coreference between the linked segments.

In the following sections, I will focus on a specific syntactic use of Dutch *omdat*, the translational equivalent of *parce que* with the aim of finding out whether a similar distinction can be made between a grammatical and discourse use of this conjunction.

4. V2-omdat in (spontaneous) spoken Dutch

Syntactically, Dutch *omdat* is a subordinating conjunction. It follows that it complies with the specific V-late constituent order constraint, rather than with the main clause V2-constraint, that determines that in Dutch (as in German) the finite verb should occupy the second slot of the sentence, with only one constituent in the first slot. This is illustrated in the following constructed examples with the coordinating conjunction *want* (for/because) obeying the V2-constraint because it links two matrix clauses (5), while subordinating *omdat* follows the V-late rule, as it links a matrix clause with a dependent clause, in either order (6-7). Next to coordinating *want* and subordinating *omdat*, spoken Dutch sees the sporadic emergence of an apparent coordinating use of *omdat* (8), in which the finite verb occupies the second slot (V2-rule) (see also, Sanders and Evers-Vermeul, this volume).

- (5) *Ik ga naar de Handlebar **want** ze hebben daar goeie koffie.*

‘I go to the Handlebar *want* they have there good coffee’

- (6) *Ik ga naar de Handlebar **omdat** ze daar goeie koffie hebben.*

‘I go to the Handlebar *omdat* they there good coffee have’

- (7) ***Omdat** ze er goeie koffie hebben, ga ik naar de Handlebar.*

‘*Omdat* they there good coffee have, go I to the Handlebar.’

- (8) *ik uhm tussen de middag moesten we mijn zus en ik altijd bij mijn oma eten. **omdat** oma woonde alleen en mijn moeder vond dat zielig dus wij moesten dat oplossen* (CGN, fn000634)
- ‘at noon my sister and I had to have our lunch with Granny *omdat* Granny lived alone and my mother thought that was sad so we had to fix that.’

In discourse studies, little attention, if any, has been given to these syntactic differences, while the focus has been on the semantic differences or differences in the types of discourse relations expressed (See Section 2). In their 2010 paper, Persoon, Sanders, Quené and Verhagen seek a semantic explanation for this use of V2-*omdat* (co-*omdat*, in their terms). The starting point of their corpus study is the above-mentioned semantic divide between *want* for the expression of more subjective relations and *omdat* for more objective relations (Section 2). In this context, Persoon et al. (2010) hypothesize that co-*omdat* takes a position in-between (subjective) *want* and (objective) *omdat*. Their investigation is threefold. First, they want to find out whether co-*omdat* is comparable to the so-called (coordinating) epistemic *weil* (Keller 1995), which in spoken German is taking over from coordinating *denn* to express subjective causality (see also Kempen and Harbusch 2016 for a recent study). Such a language change explanation is however not satisfactory for Dutch, because (coordinating, subjective) *want* is highly

frequent, both in the written and spoken modes, and is not giving way to *omdat*. Their second line of investigation follows the text-linguistic premises of Sweetser's (1990) domain analysis. The conclusion of the analysis is that co-*omdat* is used to express both objective and subjective properties. In their words, co-*omdat* "can be used to present a causal relation that does indeed carry obvious subjective features, but yet needs to be interpreted objectively" (Persoon et al. 2010:272, my translation). In other words, co-*omdat* calls for an objectifying interpretation of an otherwise subjective relation. The authors' third and final step is to investigate the prosodic characteristics of co-*omdat*. Results show a divergent profile (compared to subordinating *omdat* and coordinating *want*) in terms of declination reset and articulation rate, but these cannot be related to distinct functional profiles.

While Persoon et al.'s study gives us some insight into the functional semantic profile of co-*omdat*, it does not explicitly answer the question of why *omdat* is sometimes used with main clause order. In line with the study on *parce que*, my hypothesis is that V2-*omdat* plays a discourse specific role that is different from subordinating *omdat*. My focus will thus be on the potential discrepancy between discourse and grammar in the use of this subordinating conjunction (see Degand 2016, for a preliminary study)⁶. The data for this study have been extracted from the Corpus of Spoken Dutch

⁶ An alternative explanation is given by Kempen and Harbusch (2018), who suggest that V2-*omdat* results from a mismatch between (lexico-semantic) conjunction selection and (syntactic) V2/VF selection, which "proceed partly independently, and sometimes miscommunicate".

(CGN, van Eerten 2007), more precisely from the subcorpus ‘face-to-face conversation’, the language variety is Netherlandic Dutch, and the age group is 18-24⁷. A total of 1015 *omdat*-occurrences was retrieved, of which 33 or 3.25% appear in main clause order. When needed this sample was contrasted with a random selection of 33 subordinating *omdat* occurrences from the same subcorpus. The data sample being small, the results will be indicative rather than conclusive.

4.1. *The syntactic status of V2-omdat*

The first conclusion to rule out is that V2-*omdat* be considered as a syntactic error. After all, V-late word order is a strong normative rule in Dutch subordinating clauses (Haeseryn et al. 1997). However, in our sample, not a single instance of V2-*omdat* is (self-)corrected, neither for the conjunction, nor for verb order. Something else is happening here in native speakers’ language use, which I will try to uncover starting with the syntactic status of V2-*omdat*.

In syntactic coordination, the two linked segments have equal status with respect to the coordinator. In Dutch, these are mostly two main clauses and the coordinator is not part of the connected segments. It follows that the

⁷ The selection of this age group is motivated by the fact that V2-*omdat* seems to be a recent phenomenon that is more likely to occur in younger speakers.

segment introduced by the coordinator cannot be preposed, nor can the two segments be inverted without change of meaning. These syntactic constraints apply equally to the coordinating conjunction *want* and to V2-*omdat*, which is further confirmed by the fact that of the 33 V2-*omdat* occurrences, 28 can be substituted by *want*. However, the five occurrences that cannot be substituted point towards the particular status of V2-*omdat*. First, clustering of a coordinating and subordinating conjunction is possible (*maar omdat...* ‘but because’), but not of two coordinating conjunctions (**maar want*). Here, V2-*omdat* keeps its combinatorial possibilities. Another restriction is the construction *dat komt omdat* (‘this is because’), which does not allow the coordinating conjunction *want*, while V2-*omdat* is allowed. Thus, syntactically, V2-*omdat* is not a ‘real’ coordinating conjunction. Morphosyntactically it retains its subordinating properties, while it links two independent clauses like a coordinating conjunction. It follows that V2-*omdat* is constrained in its external syntactic properties as DM *parce que* is (see Section 3.1), because it introduces an independent rather than a dependent (causal) clause. Tentatively one could suggest that by choosing a subordinating conjunction in a paratactic construction, the speaker gives equal syntactic status to the linked segments, without losing the morphosyntactic flexibility of a subordinating conjunction. Rather than speaking of syntactic coordination for V2-*omdat*, I prefer to talk of (functional) parataxis.

4.2. *The semantic status of V2-omdat*

Semantic relations can be symmetrical or asymmetrical. In the former case, the “relata have equal semantic functions and equal semantic weight” (Blühdorn 2008:70). It follows that the segments can be reversed without any change of meaning. This is not the case for asymmetrical connections that “cannot be inverted without significant semantic consequences. They have different relational (thematic) roles. One of them is being connected (...), the other is what it is being connected to (...)”. (Blühdorn 2008:70). Causal semantic connections are always asymmetrical, be they linked by syntactic coordination (*want*), syntactic subordination (*omdat*), or parataxis (V2-*omdat*). In terms of semantic (a)symmetry, there is apparently no reason to prefer one form of syntactic clause linking over the other. This does not mean that the meaning encoded by *want* vs. *omdat* is the same, however (see Section 2), and it does not tell us whether V2-*omdat* encodes or is used in a specific semantic context (cf. Persoon et al. 2010). In Degand (2016), I performed a subjectivity analysis on the 33 V2-*omdat* occurrences. The results show an objective use in a majority of cases (60%), i.e. in line with the prototypical use of subordinating *omdat*. With 40% (13/33) used in a subjective context, one could tentatively conclude that V2-*omdat* might be

used to objectify a subjective context, but this is not very convincing, and most of all it does not explain why *omdat* is used with main word order.

4.3. *The discourse status of V2-omdat*

In line with the study on *parce que*, I aim to uncover here whether subordinating *omdat* and V2-*omdat* behave differently in discourse. In particular, I want to find out whether the diverging syntactic status (dependent vs. independent clause) is reflected at the discourse level and whether this could have an impact on the discourse relational status of the conjunction. Keeping the semantic divide between *want* and *omdat* in mind, my line of reasoning will be as follows: In formulating their first segment, speakers plan a (semantic) causal relation, which they signal in the most neutral way (objective causality) because their second argument is not fully worked out. When they get to the second segment, they start a new discourse segment. In contrast, with subordinating *omdat*, the planning phase includes both the semantic causal relation and the second argument, without any in-between replanning. Whether this is a plausible hypothesis will be examined on distributional data only, leaving any psycholinguistic experimental work for the future.

The prosodic analysis shows that, in terms of unfilled pauses, V2-*omdat* is prosodically integrated with the first segment: 27 out of 33 come without a

pause before the conjunction, thus confirming that the causal relation is planned in one go with the first segment. This is exactly similar to subordinating *omdat* (27/33). As for the independent status of the second segment, this is only partially confirmed: only 11 are immediately followed by an unfilled pause, but for subordinating *omdat*, this is still less (3/33). On the other hand, V2-*omdat* is followed by a declination reset in approximately half of the cases (17/33). To some extent, this might indicate that the discursive independence of the segment following *omdat* is prosodically marked. This discursive independence appears more strongly from disfluencies and production phenomena co-occurring with V2-*omdat*. In more than 57% of the cases (19/33) V2-*omdat* is followed by a reformulation of the segment (9), this is only the case for 4/33 of the subordinating *omdat* cases.

- (9) *ja nou ja en nee maar ook **omd omdat** z kijk ze willen wel een grote parkeergarage in Groningen hebben maar vanwege dat verkeerscirculatieplan d'r komt al bijna geen verkeer in in in 't centrum (CGN, fn000695)*
- ‘yes now yes and no but also *omd omdat* th look they do want a big parking garage in Groningen but because of the traffic circulation plan there is almost no traffic anymore in the center.’

Furthermore, 10 V2-*omdat* occurrences are followed by a filled pause (*uh*), while none of the subordinating *omdat* cases does. Unlike DM *parce que*, V2-*omdat* does not cluster with other DMs (only two cases of clustering), but it is more involved in speaker-hearer management pattern, i.e. at the beginning of a new turn (8/33). The coreference pattern of V2-*omdat* also seems to confirm the independent discourse status of the following segment. A coreferent pattern corresponds to a pattern in which there is explicit mention of (at least) one same referent in the two related segments (through anaphoric or lexical repetition). This is the case for 57% (19/33) of the subordinating *omdat* cases, and only for 43% (14/33) of the V2-*omdat* cases. In other words, the co-reference pattern too seems to confirm that the V2-*omdat* segment has a more autonomous discourse status than the subordinating *omdat* segments. A final observation points into the same direction, namely that V2-*omdat* segments can be complex clauses themselves (cf. (10), in which *omdat* is followed by a when-clause) or show variation in their information structure (cf. (11), in which the temporal adjunct is topicalized). These are instances of what Debaisieux (2016) called configurations. They are incompatible with subordinating *omdat*.

- (10) ... *ik wil niet nu van spullen van tweedehandsbeurzen afhankelijk worden. [nee nee.] maar i voor mijn computer **omdat** als ik nu*

*iets onder Word opsla dan kan ik gewoon echt koffie gaan zetten
tussendoor. (CGN, fn000363)*

‘I don’t want to depend on second hand markets [no no] but for
my computer *omdat* when I now save something under Word I
can go make myself some coffee in the meantime’

(11) *en daarvoor uh dus die maandag **omdat** dinsdag dan kon niet
iedereen geloof ik. (CGN, fn000682)*

‘and before that uh so that Monday *omdat* Tuesday then not
everybody could make it I believe’

4.4. Preliminary conclusion on *omdat*

In this section, I have questioned the syntactic, semantic and discourse status of the conjunction *omdat*. It appears that when *omdat* appears in V2-position, it does express a similar semantic relation as subordinating *omdat*, namely one of causal asymmetry. Syntactically, however, the two *omdat* uses differ. As a (traditional) subordinating conjunction, *omdat* links a main clause with a causal adjunct in the form a dependent and embedded clause. Formally, this comes together with subordinate V-late constituent order. When used with matrix V2 constituent order, *omdat* links two independent main clauses in a paratactic relation, close to syntactic coordination, but keeping some of the

morphosyntactic properties of subordination. This syntactic difference has consequences on the discursive use of *omdat*, where V2-*omdat* demonstrates features of discourse independence for the segment it introduces: less prosodic integration, more disfluency, less coreference, more turn transitions. Thus, the V2-*omdat* segment gains discourse status that allows it to enter into a causal discourse relation, not only in a semantic or syntactic connection.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to question the postulate in coherence relation studies that (causal) conjunctions like *parce que* and *omdat* should be considered automatically as discourse connectives, i.e. as markers of a discourse relation. While I have myself happily contributed to this line of research, I believe that discourse researchers should pay more attention to the grammatical component of language, where I see grammar as the conventionalized system of lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic rules. Among these are rules of clause combining with two main options for the two languages under investigation: coordination and subordination. In line with Blühdorn (2008), I propose that discourse relations hold between independent units of discourse (see, e.g., Degand and Simon 2009, for a proposal of spoken

discourse segmentation or Steen's (2005) notion of basic discourse act), not between grammatical clauses.

Yet, in discourse, speakers stretch the grammatical affordances to new uses, which might over time grammaticalize and conventionalize (see also, Ariel 2009, Du Bois 2003, Waltereit 2011),

Applying this to the conjunctions *parce que* and *omdat*, I would like to suggest that the grammatical constraints of syntactic subordination are stretched in partially similar ways leading to discourse relational uses.

For *parce que*, the external and internal syntactic properties of subordination are not applicable to DM *parce que* (configurational, macrosyntactic *parce que* in Debaisieux' (2016) terms), while the positional constraints (initial position of the 'host segment') still hold. In discourse, the syntactic constraints of subordination affect the autonomy potential, as embedded adjunct clauses are not used as independent speech events, which, I speculated, might affect their potential to express a discourse relation. When these syntactic constraints are removed, the *parce que* clause can become a "rhetorically categorized unit" (Blühdorn 2008) as was demonstrated through the (qualitative) prosodic, referential and disfluency analysis. In French, this "discourse relational use" is a frequent phenomenon.

For Dutch *omdat*, I suggested that the V2 constituent order is the expression of a similar discourse use. The syntactic constraints of

subordination, most strikingly expressed by the V-late rule, are put aside in order to give discursive autonomy to the *omdat* segment. Again, this discursive autonomy appears from prosodic, referential and disfluency properties that are different from subordinating *omdat*. In contrast to French, this phenomenon is very infrequent in Dutch, probably because the causal coordinating conjunction *want* is highly frequent in spoken language, even more frequent than *omdat* (Spooren et al. 2010). Therefore, the question remains: why use *omdat* in a paratactic relation, when there is the way more frequent *want*? For German, with the same constituent order constraints as Dutch, Kempen and Harbusch (2016: 1) propose that *weil*-V2 (the German equivalent of V2-*omdat*) “arises when pragmatic and processing factors drive the encoder to discontinue the current sentence, and to plan the clause following *weil* in the form of the main clause of an independent, new sentence.” In other words, there is “miscoordination between the mechanisms for lexical retrieval and grammatical encoding”, which is again due to the very high frequency of *weil*. While, the frequency explanation does not hold for Dutch, the same authors suggest in their 2018 paper that a similar mismatch between conjunction selection and matrix vs. dependent clause selection holds for Dutch too, be it less frequently, because coordinating *want* is indeed very frequent and is planned as an autonomous utterance taking V2 by default.

A potential explanation may come from Diessel and Hetterle's (2011) cross-linguistic study of causal adverbial clauses. They found that "causal clauses tend to be more independent of the associated main clause than other semantic types of adverbial clauses" (p. 21). Speculating, I would like to suggest that this higher (syntactic) independence may pave the way for innovative discourse patterns.

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