

THE PROSODY OF INSUBORDINATION IN FRENCH AND SPANISH

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A PILOT CORPUS STUDY ON HYPOTHETICAL MANNER CLAUSES

What are in subordinate clauses...

French:

(1) A: *Je vais arrêter de fumer.* B: **Comme si t'allais réussir!**
 A: 'I am quitting smoking.' B: 'AS IF you would succeed!'

Spanish:

(2) *¿Un concierto? Como si tuviera dinero para ir...*
 'A concert? AS IF I had [enough] money to come...'

Formally-subordinate (i.e. subordinating conjunction) BUT...

- **isolated** in discourse (no main clause) so syntactically **independent**
- diverging functional behaviour (here **denial of an assumption**)

... and how do they arise in discourse?

Prior research (Royo-Viñuales et al. 2022, Royo-Viñuales & Van linden 2022) identified:

Different syntactic patterns...

- complements
- non-obligatory adverbials
- independent clauses

... positions of the clause...

- postposed to main clause
- preposed to main clause
- isolated in discourse

... and functional types

- hypothetical manner
- hypothetical cause
- discursive elaboration/reformulation
- denial of an assumption
- nuanced agreement
- scalar evaluation

What about prosody?

Data Spoken corpus data: **280 examples**

French: 214

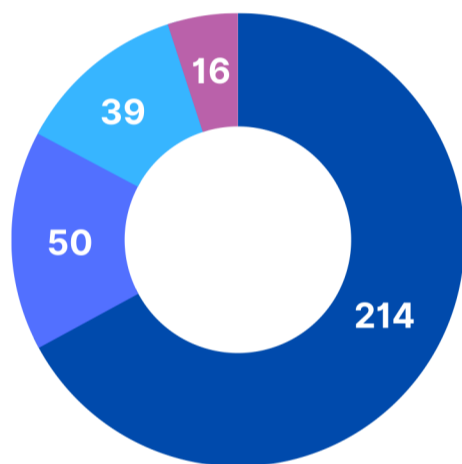
■ **Orféo** (exha.)

Spanish: 105

■ **Ameresco** (exha.)

■ **C-ORAL-ROM** (exha.)

■ **Val.Es.Co** (exha.)



Parameters

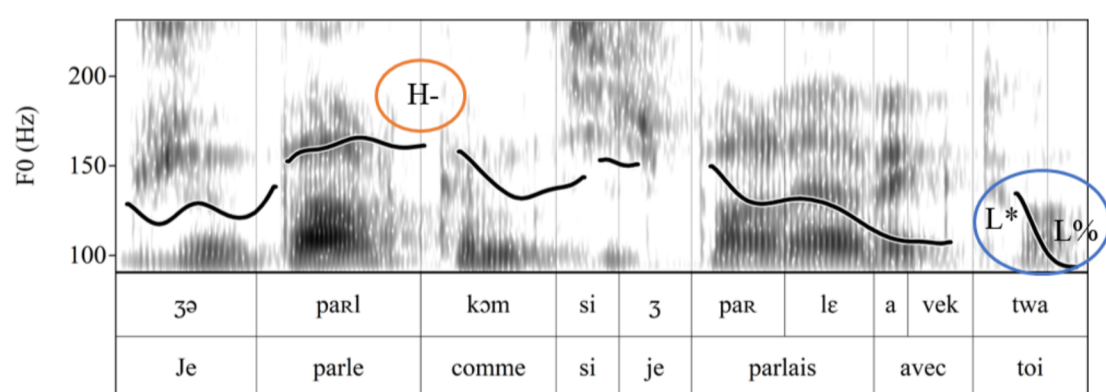
Syntax: syntactic patterns and possible positions

Semantics-pragmatics: functional types

Prosody:

> Phrasing: accentual units (AU) and intonation units (IU)

[(*Je parle*)^{AU} (*comme si je parlais avec toi*)^{AU}]^{IU}



Non-obligatory adverbial *comme si* clause in postposed position expressing hypothetical manner

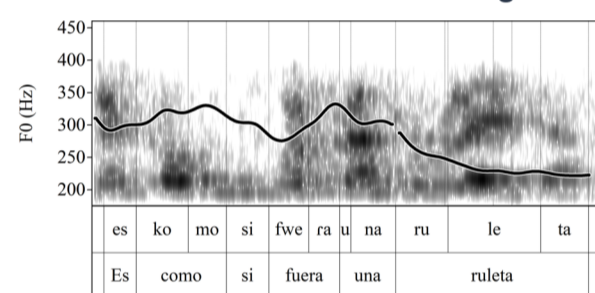
> **minor boundary tones** (between AUs)

> **nuclear configurations** (pitch accent + major boundary tone)

Results: prosodic behaviour of *comme si* and *como si* clauses

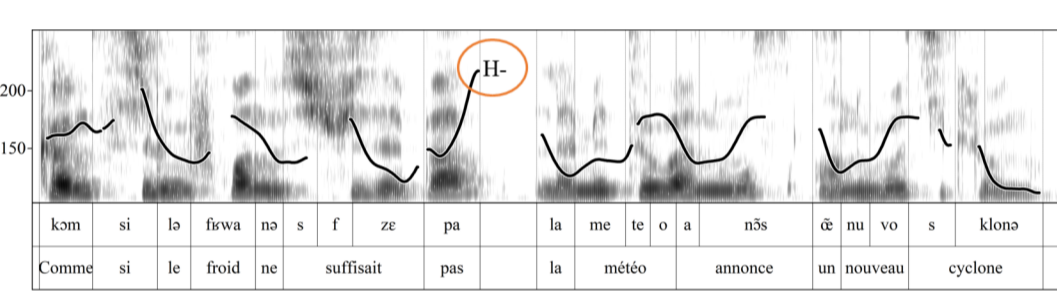
1 Syntax and prosodic phrasing

In **complement** clauses:
 main and sub constitute a **single AU**



no boundary tone between them

In **non-obligatory adverbial** clauses:
 main and sub constitute **different AUs within the same IU**



a **continuation rise** (minor boundary tone H-) signals their dependency

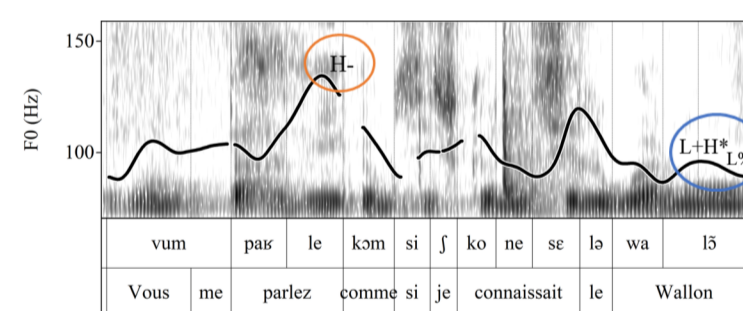
⚠ **Independent** clauses constitute **IUs on their own**, surrounded by major intonation boundaries

2 Functional behaviour and nuclear configurations

> Declarative sentences: **falling configuration** (L* L%)

> Exclamative sentences: **rising-falling configuration** (L+H* L%)

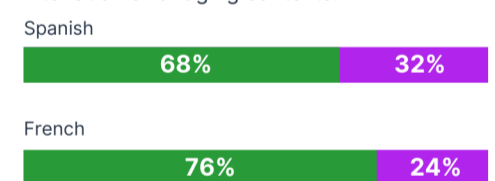
Royo-Viñuales et al. 2022
 manner → 61% of sub
 denial → 62% of insub



Analytical ambiguity: non-obligatory adverbial clauses that contextually support **manner** and **denial** readings



Intonation of bridging contexts:

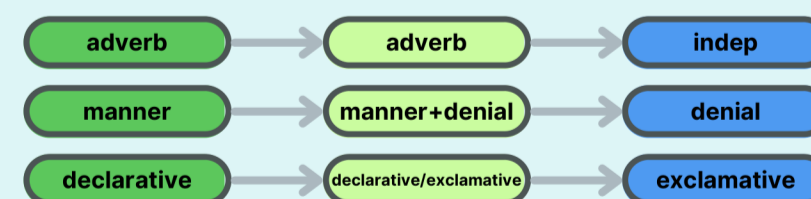


Conclusions

- **integrate prosody** in a constructional characterisation of *comme si* and *como si* clauses
- > syntactic (in)dependence is **reflected in prosody** (Elvira-García et al. 2017)
- > **prosody-function correlation:** rising-falling configuration widely associated with *denial*

→ investigate the **developmental pathway** for insubordination: **hypanalysis**

(Van linden & Van de Velde 2014)



Speakers **reanalyse contextual a meaning** as an **inherent semantic property of the subordinating conjunction**, allowing insubordinate uses to appear in discourse.

References:

- Royo-Viñuales, V., Degand, L. & Van Praet, W. (2022). *Comme si t'allais réussir!* Distribution sémantico-syntaxique des constructions introduites par *comme si* à l'interface subordination-insubordination. Paper presented at CBL-BKL Linguists' Day, Liège, Belgium.
- Royo-Viñuales, V. & Van linden, A. (2022). Insubordinate hypothetical manner constructions in French and Spanish: A pilot study. *The Papers of the LSB*, 16.
- Van linden, A. & Van de Velde, F. (2014). (Semi-)autonomous subordination in Dutch: Structures and semantic-pragmatic values. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 60, 226-250.
- Elvira-García, W., Roseano, P. & Fernández-Planas, A.-M. (2017). Prosody as a cue for syntactic dependency. Evidence from dependent and independent clauses with subordination marks in Spanish. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 109, 29-46.