

A constructional-contrastive approach to (in)subordination: The case of hypothetical manner clauses in French and Spanish

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From subordination to insubordination

> **subordinate** clauses are **dependent** on a main clause (element)



syntactically: anchored to a main clause
pragmatically: illocutionary force borrowed from main clause
discursively: surrounding discourse is needed for semantic-pragmatic interpretation

(1) French

*Il reprend-s la parole **comme si** de rien n' ét-ait.*
he take.back-PRS.3SG the word as if of nothing NEG be-PST.3SG
'He starts speaking again as if nothing had happened.'

> **insubordinate** clauses are formally subordinate (Evans 2007), but **independent**



syntactically: no main clause
pragmatically: illocutionary force of their own (e.g. exclamative)
discursively: meaningful in isolation (D'Hertefelt 2018)

(2) Spanish

A: *Me gust-a mi soltería.*
REFL like.PRS.3SG my single.life
'I like being single.'

B: ***Como si** tuv-ieras otra opción jajaja*
as if have-SBJV.PST.2SG other option [laugh]
'AS IF you had the choice hahaha!'

Research questions

- How can we tell subordinate and in subordinate clauses apart?
i.e. which **constructional features** characterize in subordinate (HM) clauses
- Does the resulting typology account for **how in subordination arises in discourse**?
i.e. how do speakers come to use formally subordinate clauses in an independent way
- Can we draw **cross-linguistic conclusions** about (in)subordination?
i.e. do French and Spanish HM clauses show a similar constructional behaviour

Corpus data: **1219 instances** of HM clauses

French: **714 examples** of *comme si*-clauses

- > **spoken** in conversation: *Orféo* (n=214)
- > **written** online: *frTenTen17* (n=250)
- > **written** literature: *Corpus Romans* (n=250)

Spanish: **505 examples** of *como si*-clauses

- > **spoken** in conversation: *Val.Es.Co* (n=16)
- > **written** online: *esTenTen18* (n=200)
- > **written** social media: *Twitter* (n=200)

Each extracted clause was analysed in terms of...

> **syntax**

degrees of **(in)dependence**, based on obligatoriness, clefting and preposability (Smessaert et al. 2015)

> **semantics-pragmatics**

the different **semantic values** they can express and the **discourse functions** they can serve

> **prosody**

nuclear configurations (Delais-Roussarie et al. 2015, Elvira-García et al. 2017): pitch accent + boundary tone

→ nuclear configuration of the hypothetical manner clause

Constructional typology of hypothetical manner clauses

Subordinate...

Insubordinate...

i. hypothetical manner

semantics: manner of *doing*, counterfactual epistemics
syntax: strong, weak and independent
prosody: falling pattern (declarative)

iv. denial of an assumption

semantics: underlying manner of *saying*, speaker attitude → denial
syntax: independent (both syntax and discourse)
prosody: rising-falling pattern (exclamative)

ii. hypothetical qualification

semantics: manner of *being*, counterfactual epistemics
syntax: strong and independent
prosody: falling pattern (declarative)

v. nuanced agreement

semantics: underlying manner of *being*, speaker epistemic attitude
syntax: independent (both syntax and discourse)
prosody: falling pattern (declarative)

iii. hypothetical cause

semantics: manner of *doing* and *being*, potential epistemics
syntax: strong, weak and independent
prosody: falling pattern (declarative)

vi. scalar evaluation

semantics: underlying manner of *being*, evaluation → indifference
syntax: independent (both syntax and discourse)
prosody: falling pattern (declarative)

→ Three types fall into the strict definition of insubordination

→ Two insubordinate constructional types are only attested in Spanish

→ Most frequent types in both languages



Constructional typology of hypothetical manner clauses

i. hypothetical manner

semantic expression of manner at a **representational** level (i.e. ideational discourse domain; cf. Crible & Degand 2019)

↪ manner of *doing* – ‘to do X AS IF Y was true’ (Olguín-Martínez 2021)
counterfactual epistemic status of the clause content

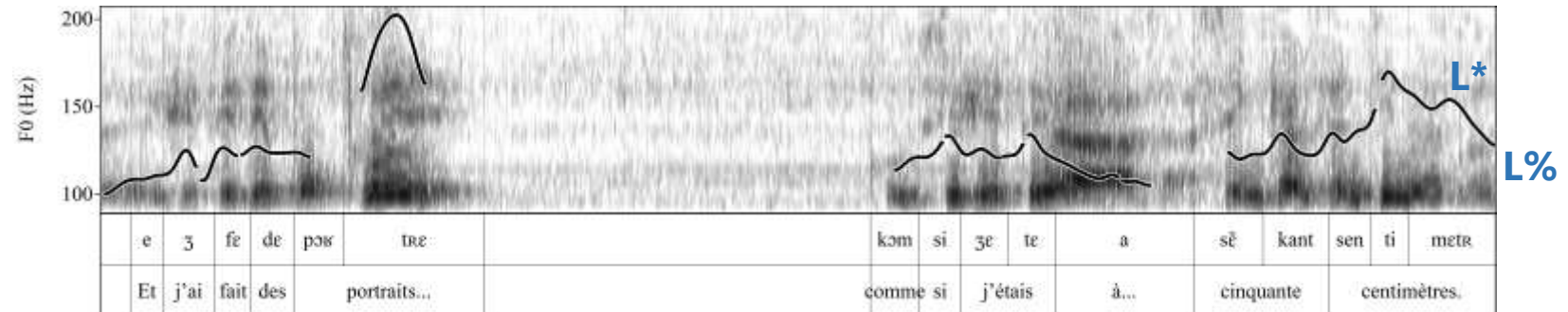
(3) *Et j' ai fait des portrait-s... comme si j' ét-ais à cinquante centimètres.*
and I have.1SG do-PTCP PARTITIVE picture-PL as if I be-PST.1SG at fifty centimetres
'And I took some pictures... AS IF I was fifty centimetres close.'

syntax (i.e. degree of (in)dependence):

- > **strong**: complement clauses
- > **weak**: non-obligatory adverbials: *bound* and *free* subordinate clauses (Verstraete 2007)
- > **independent**: dependency shift (D'Hertefelt 2018)

prosody

- > falling pattern (L* L%)
→ **declarative**



Constructional typology of hypothetical manner clauses

iv. denial of an assumption

semantic expression of the **speaker's attitude** (i.e. interpersonal discourse domain; cf. Crible & Degand 2019)

➔ manner of *saying* (i.e. speech act level) – [*you say that*] AS IF X *were true* [but it's not] '
counterfactual epistemic status of the clause content

→ polarity reversal (Brinton 2014):

allows the speaker to simultaneously **deny an assumption** and **assert its opposite**

syntax (i.e. degree of (in)dependence):

> **independent**: insubordinate clauses

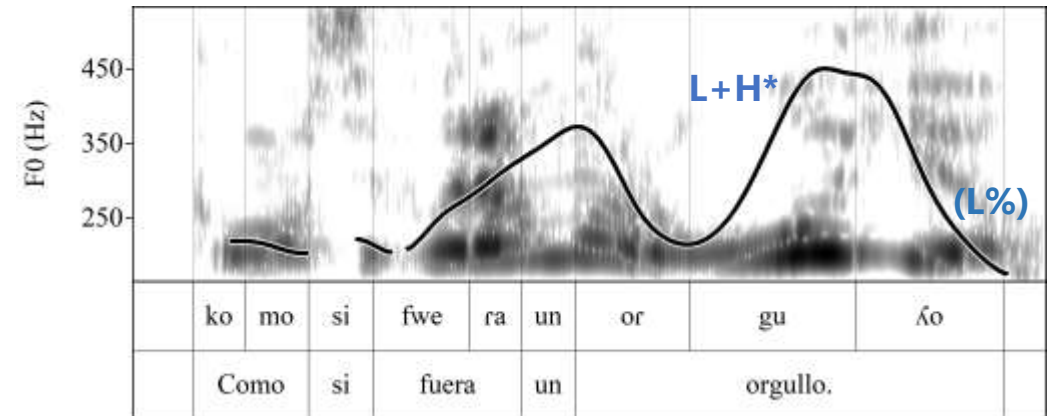
(4) Spanish

A: *Yo salg-o todos los fines.de.semana.*
I go.out-PRS.1SG all the weekends
'I go out every weekend.'

B: *¡Como si fuera un orgullo!*
as if be-SBJV.PST.3SG a pride
'AS IF you could be proud of it!'

prosody

> rising-falling pattern (L+H* L%) → **exclamative**



Constructional typology of hypothetical manner clauses

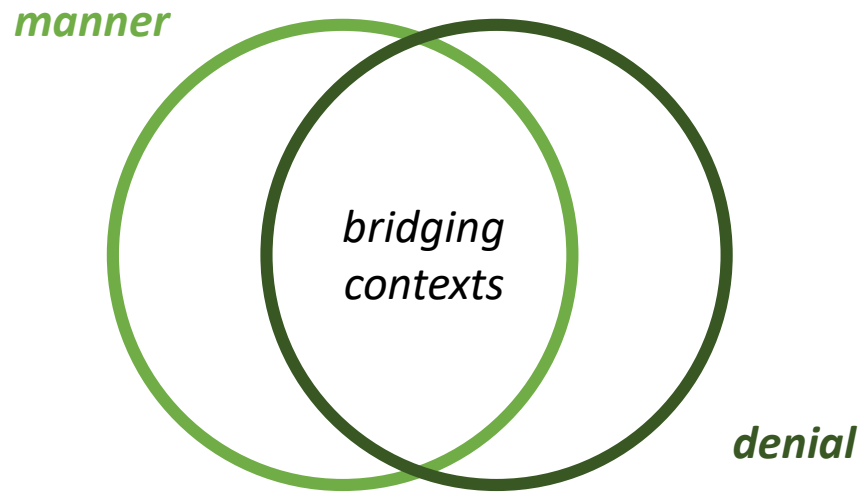
- > **fully subordinate** clauses expressing **hypothetical manner** at the representational level and uttered with a **declarative** (falling) prosodic pattern
- > **fully in subordinate** clauses expressing **the speaker's attitude** (*denial of an assumption*) and uttered with a **exclamative** (falling) prosodic pattern

→ How do speakers come to use formally subordinate clauses in an independent way?

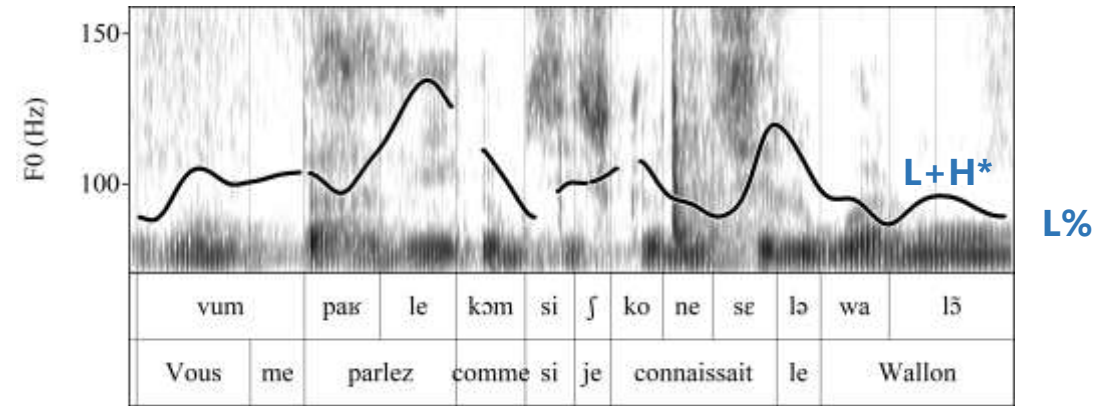


The case of bridging contexts

> **bridging contexts** (Brinton 2014:104; cf. Heine 2002)
non-obligatory adverbials with both *manner* and *denial*

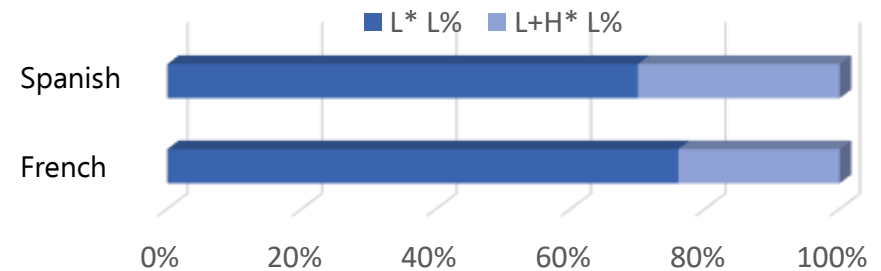


→ such examples **contextually support** both *manner* and *denial* readings



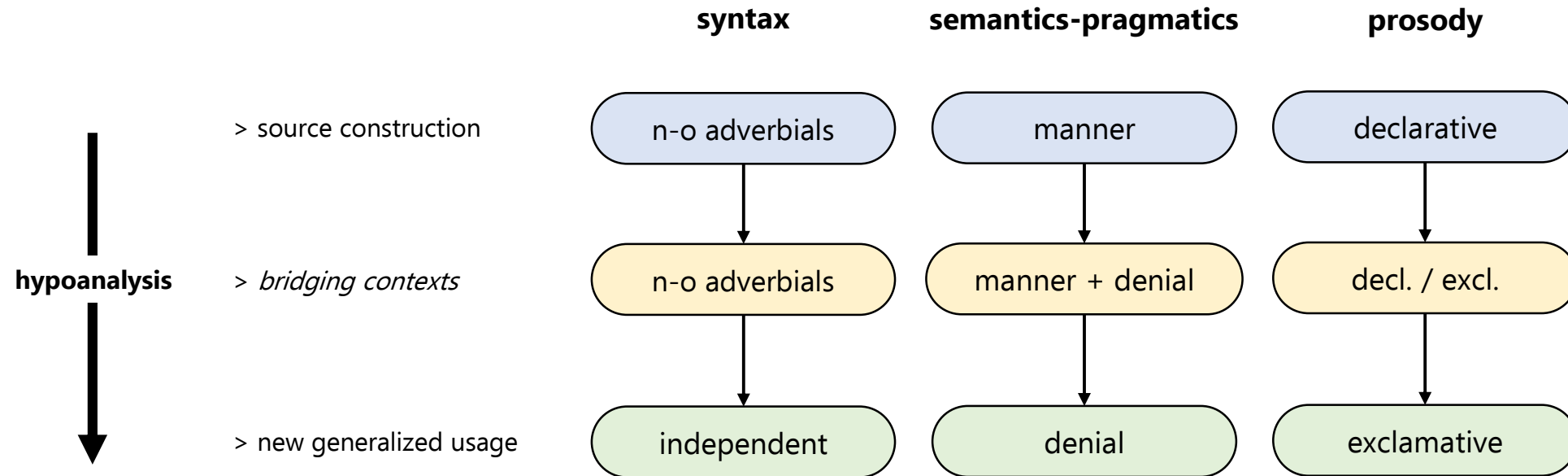
(5) *Vous me parlez **comme si** je connaissais le Wallon.*
'You talk to me AS IF I knew the Wallonian language.'

prosodic realization of bridging contexts:



Discursive development of in subordinate (*denial of an assumption*) clauses

Van linden & Van de Velde's (2014) hypothesis: **hypoanalysis** (Croft 2000)



→ Speakers do reanalyze this contextual meaning as an **inherent constructional property** of the subordinating conjunction, allowing in subordinate clauses to appear in discourse

Conclusions

- We can tell in subordinate clauses apart based on their **constructional features**
 - > in both French and Spanish, subordinate clauses are characterized by the **expression of the speaker's attitude** (viz., denial and evaluation), even with variation in their **prosody**

- Bridging contexts are crucial in **exploring the arising of subordinate clauses** in both languages:
 - > speakers reanalyse a contextual form-function pairing as an **inherent constructional property** of the conjunction itself

- Small language-specific uses aside (i.e., two unique constructional types only attested in Spanish), both languages **share a four-way typology** of hypothetical manner clauses



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Thank you for your attention.

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