

Hypothetical manner clauses in French and Spanish: Prosody co-signals degrees of (in)dependence

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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!'



From subordination to insubordination

RQ1: How can we tell subordinate and insubordinate clauses apart?
i.e., which **constructional features** characterize insubordinate (HM) clauses

- > **syntax**: clause-combining patterns they are involved in
- > **functional behaviour**: meanings they express and functions they serve



From subordination to insubordination: degrees of syntactic (in)dependence

→ syntactic dependency unfolds in a **continuum** (Smessaert et al. 2005)

from highly **dependent**...

> complement clauses (**obligatoriness** + **no-preposability**)

(3) French

*Et puis elle fai-t **comme si** de rien n' étai-t.*
and then she do-3SG as if of nothing not be-PST.3SG
'And then she acts AS IF nothing happened.'

> bound subordinate clauses, cf. Verstraete 2007 (**no-obligatoriness** + **no-preposability**)

(4) Spanish

*Trabaj-a **como si** no hub-iese un mañana.*
work-3SG as if not be-PST.SBJV.3SG a.M tomorrow
'S/he works like(AS IF) there is no tomorrow.'

> free subordinate clauses, cf. Verstraete 2007 (**no-obligatoriness** + **preposability**)

(5) French

***Comme si** le froid ne suffis-ait pas, la météo annonc-e un nouveau cyclone.*
as if the cold NEG be.enough-PST.3SG NEG the weather announce-3SG a new storm
'AS IF the cold wasn't enough, the forecast announces a new storm.'

...to fully **independent**

- > dependency shift (D'Hertefelt 2018)
- > insubordination (Evans 2007)



From subordination to insubordination: beyond prototypical meanings

In **prior research** (Royo-Viñuales et al. 2022), we identified **six functional behaviours** of hypothetical manner clauses:

- i. hypothetical **manner**: manner of *doing*, counterfactual epistemics
- ii. hypothetical **qualification**: manner of *being*, counterfactual epistemics
- iii. hypothetical **cause**: manner of *doing/being*, potential epistemics
- iv. **denial** of an assumption: underlying manner of *saying*, speaker attitude → denial
- v. **nuanced agreement**: underlying manner of *being*, speaker epistemic attitude
- vi. **scalar evaluation**: underlying manner of *being*, evaluation → indifference



Research question

RQ2: What about **prosody**?

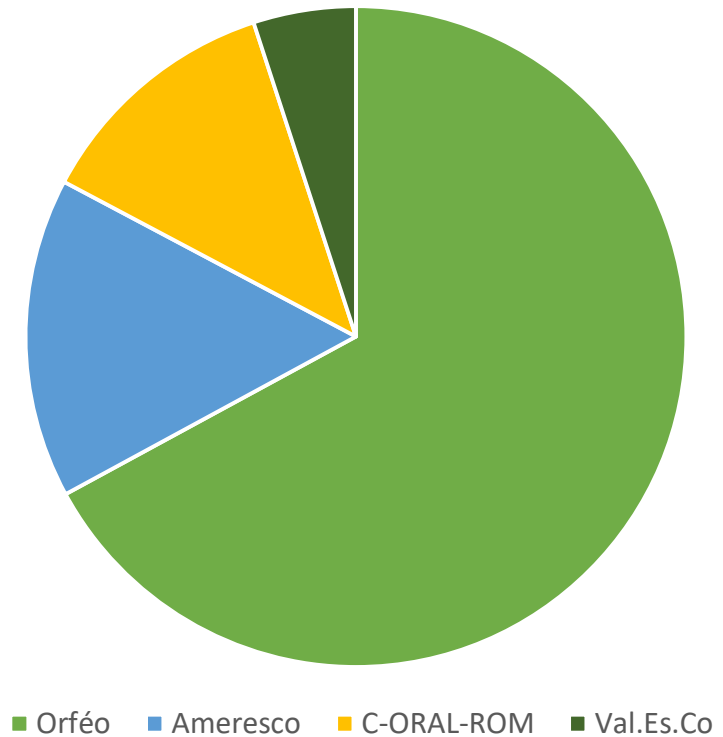
i.e., do prosodic features correlate with syntactic and functional behaviour

- > prosodic contours do correlate with distinct degrees of syntactic (in)dependence (Elvira-García et al. 2017)
- > prosodic-functional correlation sheds light on how insubordination arises in discourse



Spoken corpus data: **319 instances** of hypothetical manner clauses

- > French: **214 examples** of *comme si*-clauses → *Orféo* database
- > Spanish: **105 examples** of *como si*-clauses:
 - *Ameresco* corpus (n=50)
 - *C-ORAL-ROM* corpus (n=39)
 - *Val.Es.Co* corpus (n=16)



Parameters of the analysis:

> **syntax**

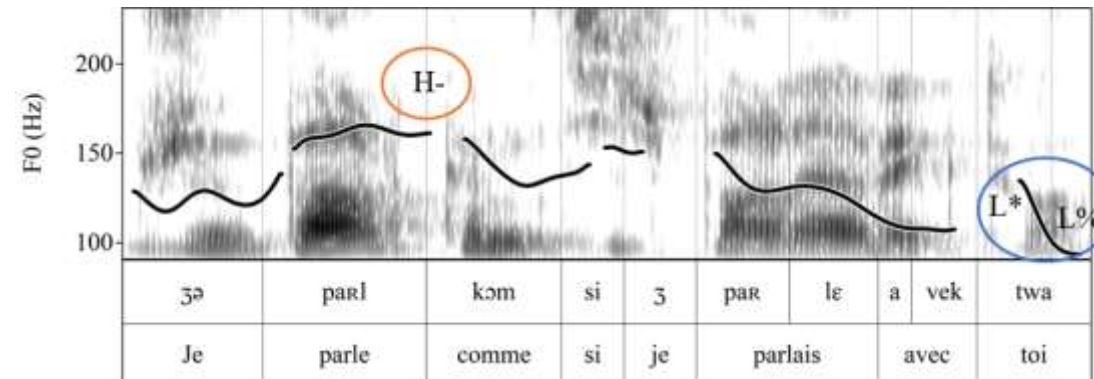
degrees of **(in)dependence**, based on obligatoriness, clefting and preposability (Smessaert et al. 2005)

> **semantics-pragmatics**

the six functional types of hypothetical manner clauses identified

> **prosody**

- phrasing: accentual units (AUs) and intonation units (IUs)
looking into minor and major **boundary tones**



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

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

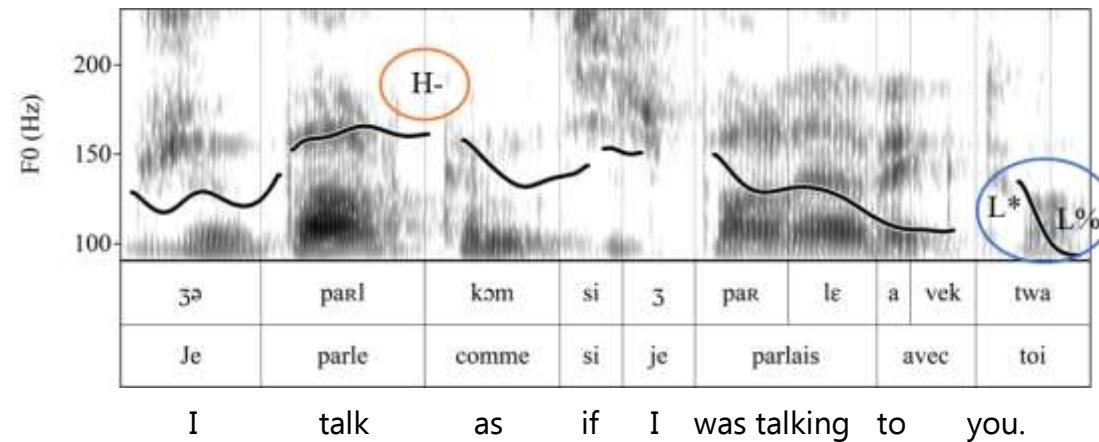
> syntax and prosodic phrasing

“previous studies support the idea that prosody marks syntactic boundaries” (Elvira-García et al. 2017:29)

“there is a common intonational strategy to encode intermediate phrase boundaries [...]: the **continuation rise**”

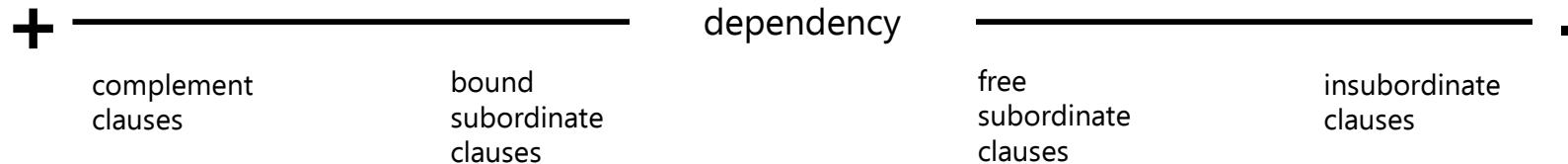
(Elvira-García et al.

2017:31)



“From a phonetic point of view, a continuation rise is an **F0 rise** [H-] at the right edge of a constituent”

(Elvira-García et al. 2017:31)

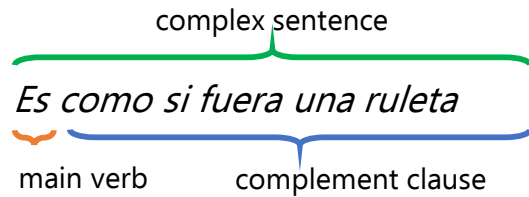


Results: prosodic behaviour of *comme si* and *como si*-clauses

> syntax and prosodic phrasing

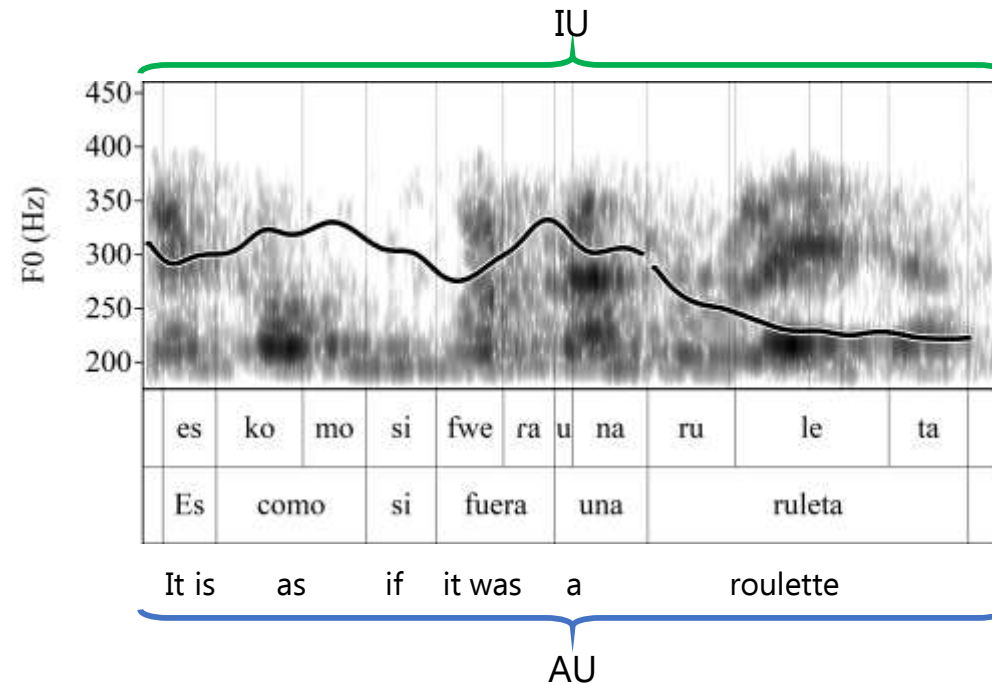
“previous studies support the idea that prosody marks syntactic boundaries” (Elvira-García et al. 2017:29)

syntax: complement clauses



- **strong** degree of syntactic dependence
- > obligatory (complement) clause
 - > no preposability

prosody: main and sub constitute **single** accentual unit

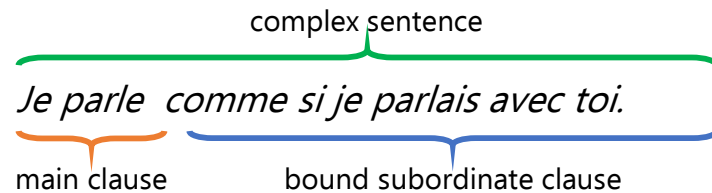


Results: prosodic behaviour of *comme si* an *como si*-clauses

> syntax and prosodic phrasing

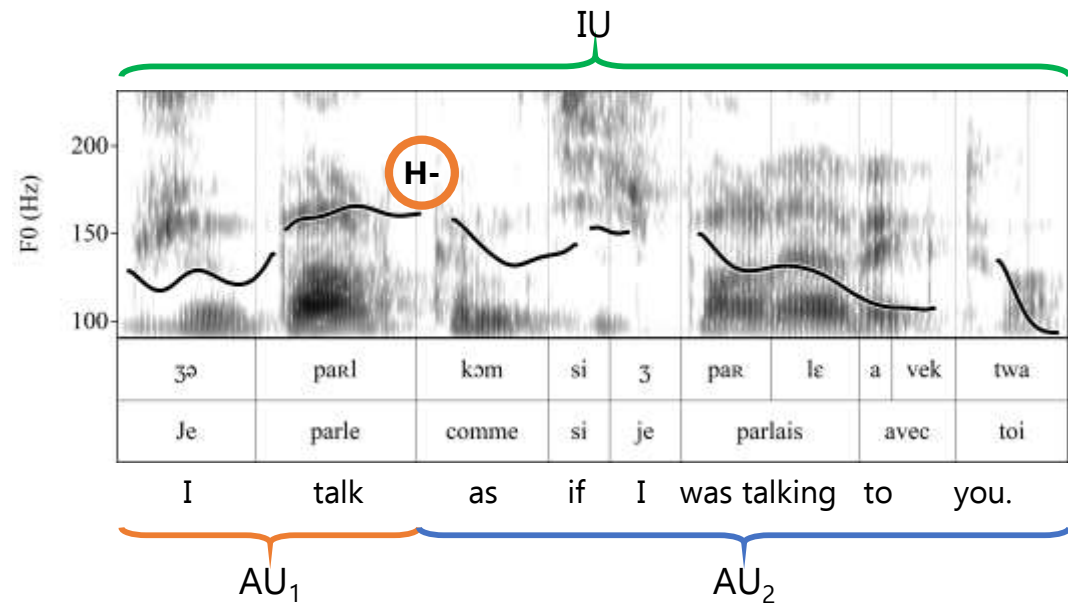
“previous studies support the idea that prosody marks syntactic boundaries” (Elvira-García et al. 2017:29)

syntax: bound subordinate clauses



- **weak** degree of syntactic dependence
- > non-obligatory (adverbial) clause
 - > no preposability

prosody: main and sub constitute **separate** accentual units



Results: prosodic behaviour of *comme si* an *como si*-clauses

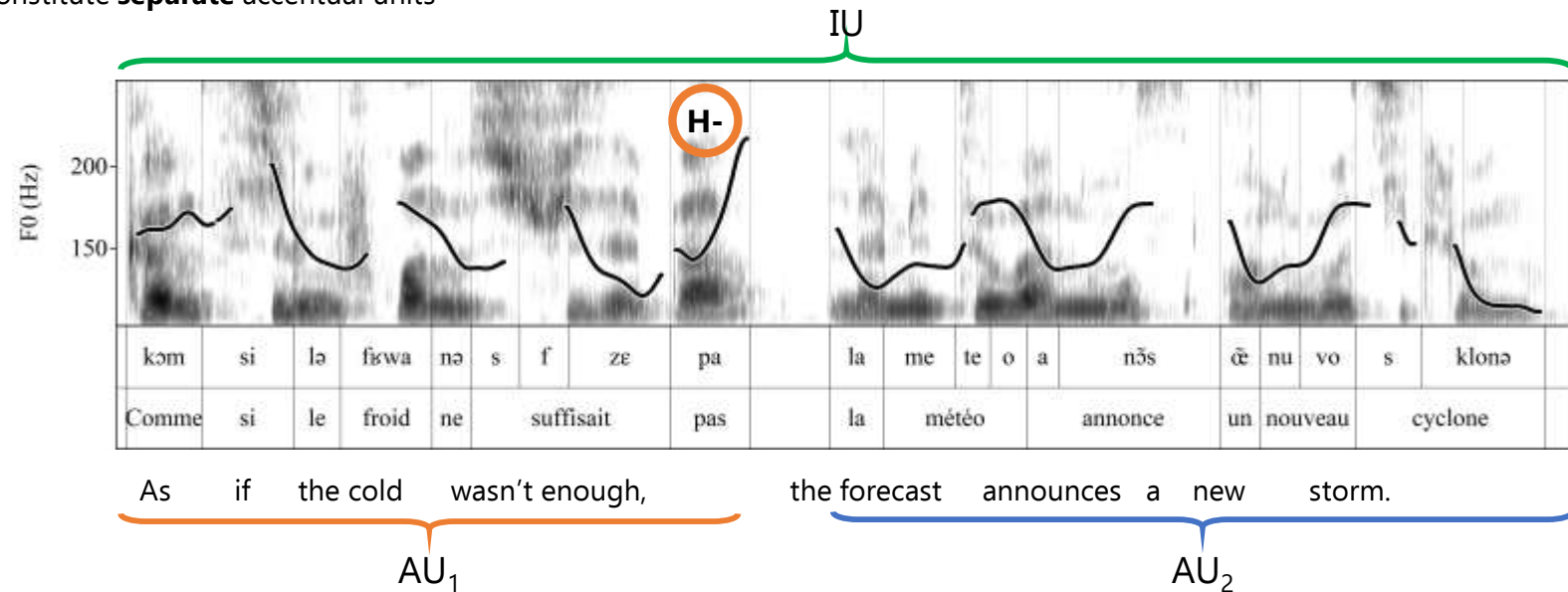
> syntax and prosodic phrasing

“previous studies support the idea that prosody marks syntactic boundaries” (Elvira-García et al. 2017:29)

syntax: free subordinate clause → **weaker** degree of syntactic dependence (non-obligatory (adverbial) clause + preposability)



prosody: main and sub constitute **separate** accentual units

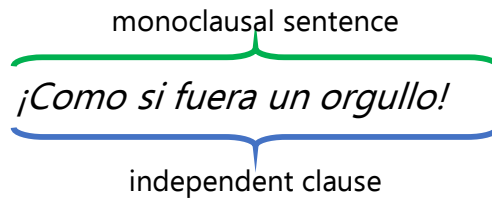


Results: prosodic behaviour of *comme si* and *como si*-clauses

> syntax and prosodic phrasing

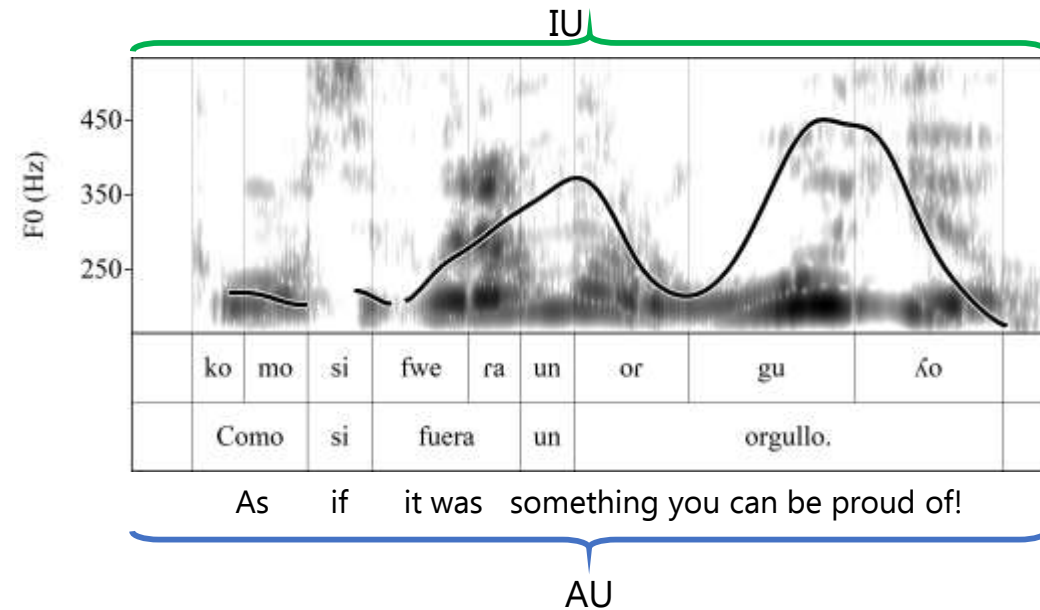
“previous studies support the idea that prosody marks syntactic boundaries” (Elvira-García et al. 2017:29)

syntax: independent clauses



→ **full** degree of syntactic **independence**

prosody: independent unit, surrounded by major boundaries



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

> functional behaviour and nuclear configurations

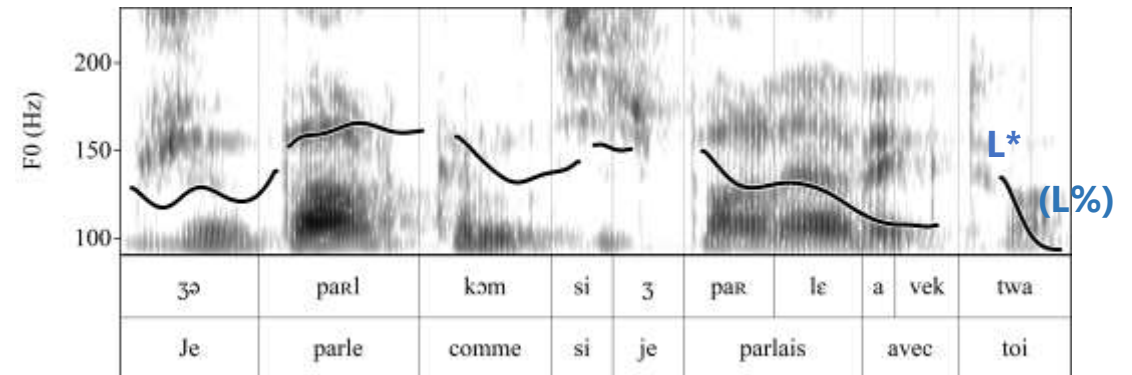
→ most frequent constructional types in both languages: *hypothetical manner* and *denial of an assumption*

> **fully subordinate** clauses expressing **hypothetical manner** and uttered with a **declarative (falling)** prosodic pattern (L* L%)

(12) French

*Avec lui, je parle avec un débit normal.
Je parle comme si je parlais avec toi.*

'I talk to him at a normal rate.
I talk as if I was talking to you.'

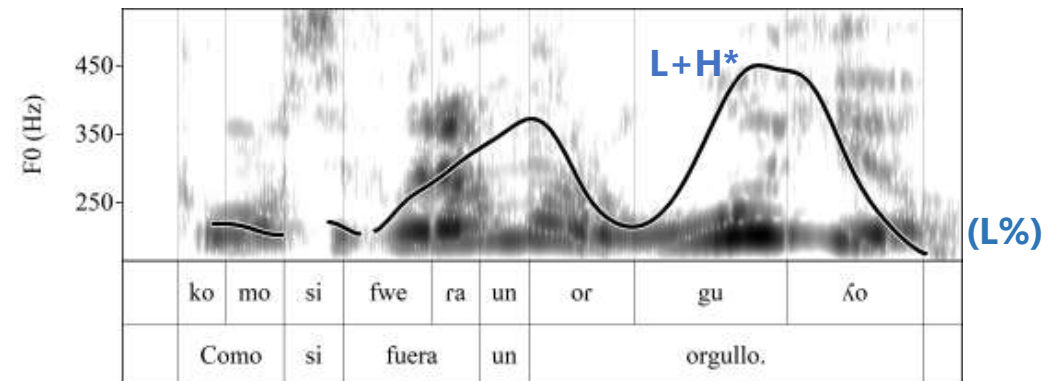


> **fully in subordinate** clauses expressing **the speaker's attitude (denial of an assumption)** and uttered with a **exclamative (rising-falling)** prosodic pattern (L+H* L%)

(13) Spanish

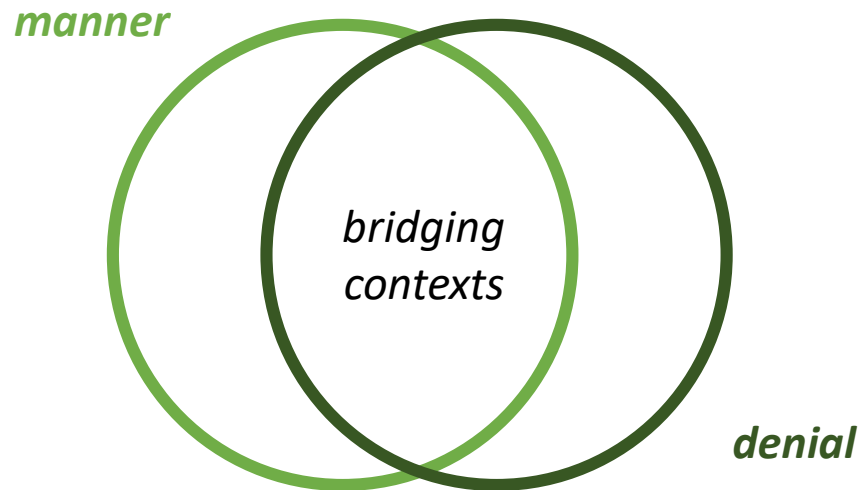
A: *Yo salgo todos los fines de semana.*
'I go out every weekend.'

B: *¡Como si fuera un orgullo!*
'AS IF you could be proud of it!'

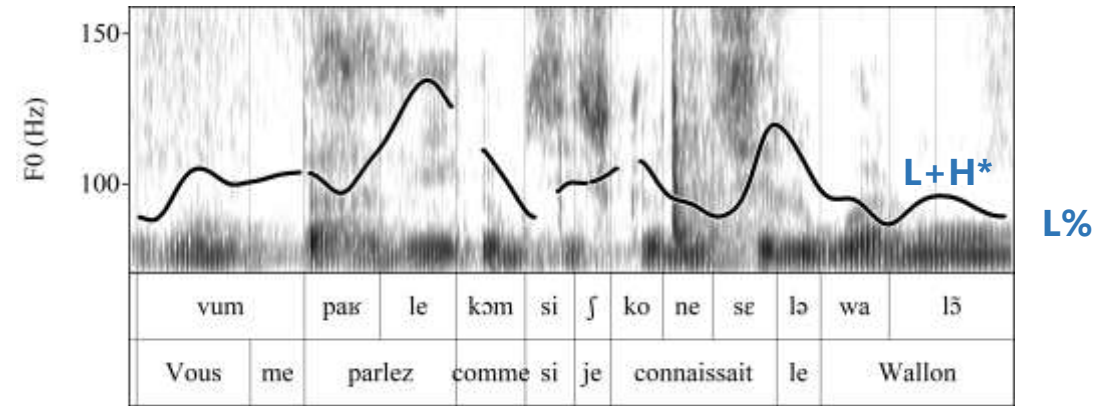


Results: the case of bridging contexts

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

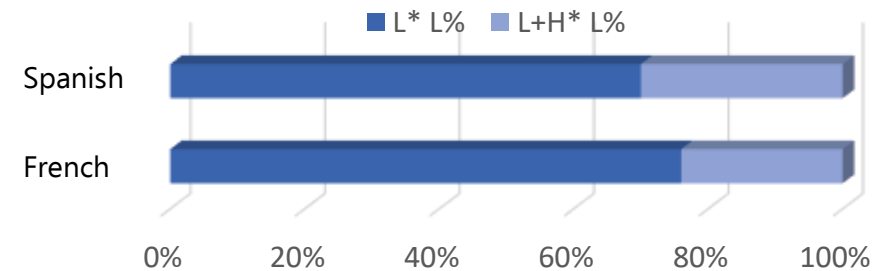


→ such examples **contextually support** both *manner* and *denial* readings



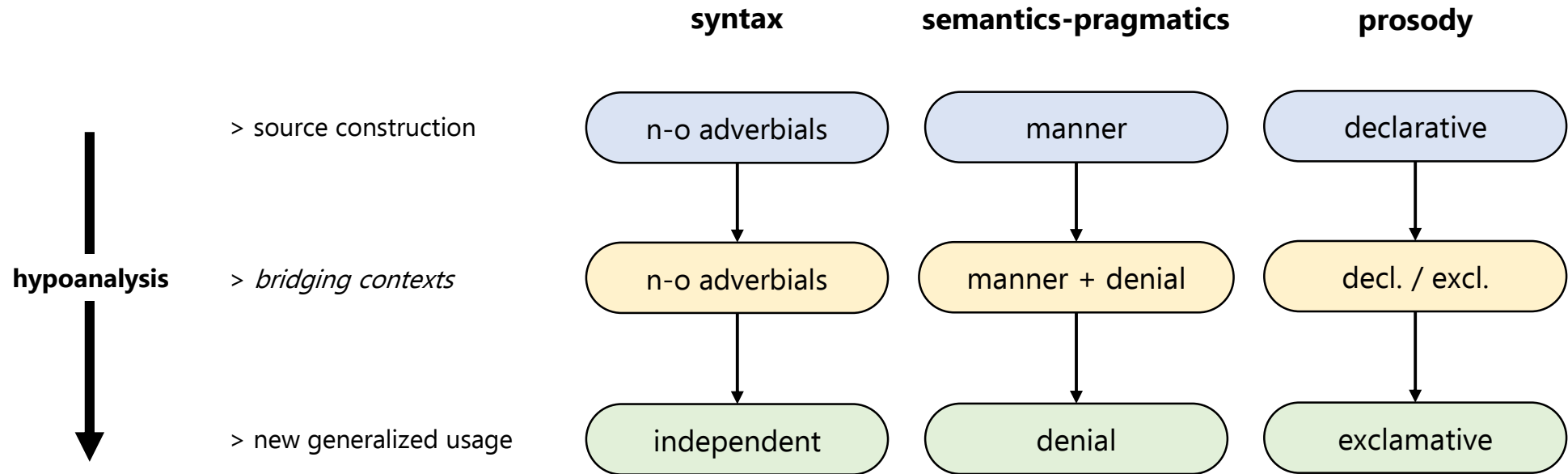
- (14) *Vous me parlez **comme si** je connaissais le Wallon.*
'You talk to me AS IF I knew the Wallonian language.'

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

- > prosody **co-signals** different **degrees of syntactic (in)dependence**: continuation rise (H-)
 - intonation proved to be a relevant feature when investigating clause-combining categories

- > prosodic configurations **correlate with functional behaviour**: declarative (falling) VS exclamative (rising-falling)
 - prosody of bridging contexts is crucial to investigate how insubordinate clauses arise in discourse



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Thank you for your attention!

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