Víctor Royo Viñuales / Wout Van Praet / Liesbeth Degand / An Van linden

A contrastive-constructional approach to (in)subordination

The case of hypothetical manner clauses in French and Spanish

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This study investigates hypothetical manner (HM) clauses, i.e. clauses introduced by the conjunction *comme si* in French and *como si* in Spanish (both meaning 'as if'), as illustrated in (1) to (4).

(1) Spanish – complement *como si*-clause expressing 'hypothetical qualification'
*El seguro es de la antigua dueña. Es **como si no estuviera asegurada**.*
'The insurance belong to the former owner. It is as if she didn't have any.'

(2) French – bound subordinate *comme si*-clause expressing 'hypothetical manner'
*Vous me parlez **comme si je connaissais le Wallon**.*
'You talk to me as if I knew [something about] the Wallonian language.'

(3) French – free subordinate *comme si*-clause expressing 'hypothetical cause'
***Comme si quelqu'un l'avait tirée de l'intérieur**, la porte s'ouvrit avant qu'il ne l'ait touchée.*
'As if someone had pulled it from the inside, the door opened before he touched it.'

(4) Spanish – insubordinate *como si*-clause expressing 'denial of an assumption'
*¡**Como si yo tuviese una cámara**!*
'As if I had a camera!'

As previous studies have suggested, clauses introduced by conjunctions can display different degrees of syntactic-discursive (in)dependence (D'Hertefelt 2018, Sansiñena 2019), they can express a range of non-prototypical meanings (Lastres-López 2021), and these features may correlate with their prosodic behaviour (Elvira-García/Roseano/Fernández-Planas 2017). Thus, our study integrates these three dimensions and provides a fine-grained constructional account of *subordination* and *insubordination* (i.e. "the conventionalized main clause use of what […] appear to be formally subordinate clauses" (Evans 2007:367)), ultimately aiming to investigate how the latter arises in discourse.

Our study draws on corpus data, including both written (n=900) and spoken (n=319) discourse. In total, 1219 instances of HM clauses were analysed in a three-fold way: i) by assessing the degree of **syntactic (in)dependence** *w.r.t.* their surrounding discourse, based on proportionality (Smessaert/Cornillie/Divjak/van den Eyde 2005) and preposability (Verstraete 2007); ii) by identifying their **functional features**, i.e. the semantic values they express and discourse functions they can serve; and iii) spoken data were also investigated in terms of their **prosodic features**, including pitch accent and intonation boundaries.

In line with earlier pilot studies (Royo-Viñuales/Van linden 2022), the results show that, small language-specific uses aside (i.e. two unique functional types only attested in Spanish),

the two languages under study share a four-way functional typology of HM clauses, proto-typically illustrated in (1) to (4). But, more interestingly, the results shed clear light on how insubordinate constructions arise in discourse when correlating functional behaviour with prosody. Crucial in this respect are bridging contexts (Evans/Wilkins 2000, p. 550) which con-textually support both a 'manner' and a 'denial' reading, illustrated in (2). The analysis shows that, in the two languages, around 30% of subordinate clauses like (2) display a rising-falling prosodic configuration, which is also widely attested in insubordinate clauses conveying 'de-nial of an assumption'. This finding supports Van linden & Van de Velde's (2014) hypothesis of insubordination arising through a process of hypoanalysis (Croft 2000) and shows that speakers do reanalyse this contextual meaning as an inherent functional property of the subordinating conjunction, allowing insubordinate clauses to appear in discourse.

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Contact information

Víctor Royo Viñuales

Université de Liège / Université catholique de Louvain

vroyo@uliege.be

Wout Van Praet

Université catholique de Louvain

wout.vanpraet@uclouvain.be

Liesbeth Degand

Université catholique de Louvain

liesbeth.degand@uclouvain.be

An Van linden

Université de Liège / KU Leuven

an.vanlinden@uliege.be