

Chapter 1

Subjunctions as discourse markers? Stancetaking on the topic 'in subordinate subordination'

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The present paper is about types of seeming subordination (i.e. subordination by form), which in fact bears all distributional assets of inordination. Yet, such inordinate subordination is characterized by sentential autonomy in terms of illocutive force (i.e., it is not only presupposed as subordinates usually are). It will be shown that a reliable diagnostic is provided by the selection of modal particles in the narrow sense, which German and Dutch excel in. It will be illustrated that even the property of matrix V2 as opposed to subordinate Vlast, otherwise a reliable diagnostic in German and Dutch, are not sufficient conditions for subordination vs. matrix status, sentential presupposition vs. assertive status, and independent (autonomous) illocutive force vs. dependent (inherited) illocutive force. Modal particles play a major diagnostic role in this categorial dichotomy. It will be argued that since formal subordination is an insufficient condition for the separation of formal and notional independence of sentential autonomy the theory of sentence types will have fundamentally to be modified with the main asset of a thorough notional rather than formal definition of sentential autonomy.¹

1 What might tempt one to analyze *wenn/if* as a discourse marker

The goal of the present discussion is the clarification of the status of sentences with the looks of subordination, but which nevertheless appear autonomously like (1)-(4) below.² The recent debate on this phenomenon has been traced back to Evans (2007), but it has, in fact, a far longer tradition, at least in the literature on German data. The gist of the ensuing discussion is as follows:

¹ I have profited from critical remarks extended by Nick Evans on a draft version of this.

² Clausal autonomy is more than clausal root. In other words, they select illocutive force AND can be uttered without matrix support.

1. The subordinate *wenn/if* (and its equivalents in other languages, notably German), as an ‘in subordinate subordinator’/IS, may neither be a true subordinator in a number of cases, nor can it be a discourse marker for various reasons, among which that *wenn/if* retains its original conditional meaning and that other subjunctions fail to undergo the same grammaticalizing result. The latter issue fails to substantiate with generalizing force the classification of *wenn/if* as a discourse marker.
2. Once *wenn/if* is taken to be possible and meaningful also in what is an embedded form (which, counter to English, is beyond doubt in German), we shall add it to the list of matrix clauses marking special speech acts counteracting, undoubtedly, all syntactic canons.
3. Since, furthermore, the phenomena under discussion show also prosodic traits of autonomous declaratives, we conclude that the pf-module hosting the prosodic rules overwrite syntactic and semantic-truth logical rules with the effect to autonomize phenomena of in subordinate subordination. Such steps, however, do not invalidate the canonic syntactic and semantic rules (such as word order, MP-insertibility, subjunctive cliticization, etc.).

The problem to be solved in the present discussion is briefly this: in the pertinent literature we find solutions to the extent that such original subordinators as *if* are reclassified as discourse operators licensing sentences in their own matrix like right. This position is here refuted. The phenomenon, more generally, is this: there appear to be exclamative sentences introduced by subjunctives, which nevertheless stand by themselves yielding the speech act effect of independent clauses. See the following illustration (1)-(4), where the respective subjunction words appear underlined. [Italics for valid English sentences, flat Roman for glosses of the German sentences. ‘Syntactic form’ refers to ‘embedded’ vs. ‘non-embedded’; parentheses signal elided protasis or apodosis.]

	Syntactic form	speech act autonomy
(1) <u>Wenn</u> er heute nur hier wäre! <i>if he only were here today!</i>	C(\cap ?)	autonomous
(2) <u>Was</u> DAS nun wieder ist! <i>what that again might be!</i>	(CP \cap)CP	autonomous
(3) <u>Ob</u> das heute wohl noch geht? <i>if that today still works</i>	(CP \cap)C	autonomous
(4) <u>Dass</u> DAS denn noch geht heute!? <i>that this still works today</i>	C(\cap CP)	autonomous

Notice that (1), due to the insertion of the modal particle *nur* ‘only’, cannot be thought of as a conditional subordinate. There is no embedding matrix clause imaginable. (2) is possible as an apodosis sentence to a performance verb question (*Er fragte sich,...* ‘he asked himself...’). The same holds for a performance predicate protasis for (3) and, as an apodosis, for (4). However, any superordinate clause other than by the form of a performance predicate (*say, believe, ask*) appears impossible. Again, the insertions of the modal particles/MPs *wohl* ‘well’ and *denn* ‘then’ render (3) and

(4) as insubordinable to any matrix clause. Given that *wenn-dass/if-that* (henceforth IS) count as subjunctions subordinating complement sentences as well as the fact that such sentences fully comply with our communicative understanding as emotive utterances with wishful import may lead to the conclusion that all there remains to classify *if* in an autonomous utterance is a discourse marker.

All of this lets us conclude that the autonomy of sentences as speech acts in their own right cannot be made contingent alone on the presence of an embedding matrix clause. (1)-(4) are not embeddable while doubtlessly autonomous. We emphasize that one of the factors for clause typing is the insertion of MPs – grammatical (not lexical!) adverbials affecting the speech act quality in C(omp) (Abraham 2013; 2014; Struckmeier 2010). We will return to this type determinant.

Our refutation of the claim that *if, what* (*wenn, was*, and a few more in German; Dutch *als, wat* and more) are autonomous discourse operators will be based on the following empirical problems:

- all ‘insubordinate subordinations’ have the looks of subordinated sentences (V-final in German and Dutch);
- subordinated sentences generally disallow the insertion of modal particles for reasons of their presuppositional (rather than assertive) status;
- the clash between categorial status of the pertinent subjunctions and sentential autonomy is to be solved along two different lines:
- either the lexical subjunction is recategorized with a fundamentally different licensing force (as indicated in the literature referred to in the incipient paragraph) – this position will have to say what is behind the syntactic and semantic-pragmatic properties reserved to subordination;
- or the list of autonomous sentences is extended equally fundamentally. This step requires that the criteria for motivating sentence types/STs are extended such that not only the new STs, but also the old ones are covered under one common denominator. This line of argumentation need not change the syntactic-semantic status of subordinators. They remain subordinators both semantically and syntactically.

We will pursue the line of argumentation using MPs as diagnostics for sentential autonomy (second in the list above). Notice that much depends of the categories and sentential characteristics of subordinated sentences. The fact that subordination is clearly signaled by word order and MP insertion in German (and Dutch), but not in English and French³ (since there are no such differences in the first place) indicates very strongly that our solution may not be valid cross-linguistically. The ensuing discussion follows basic insights on the distinction of declarative meaning and ‘locution’ meaning in regard to the assumption in update semantics that the meaning of

³ Proclisis characteristic of matrix clauses is replicated in embeddings: *Moi je crois que... – Il a dit que moi je crois...* . Proclisis is retained. French subordination is motivated semantically, not syntactically as in German. The same holds for English.

a sentence is its context change potential/CCP (cf. Gunlogson (2003: 50–51) before the background prepared by Heim (1992) and others). The modification made here is that the CCP of a sentence is defined in terms of an update to a substructure of the context, i.e. the commitment set (cs) of an individual participant. Consistent with the accompanying working hypotheses to be unfolded, intonational rise and fall will serve to identify the individual cs to be updated, given an utterance context, i.e., a context in which individual participants can be identified in the roles of Speaker/Sp and Addressee/Addr.

2 Why *wenn/if* can never be a discourse marker: the necessary requirement⁴

It may seem difficult to tell whether English *if* still has the status of a subjunction in sentences like (1). After all, (1) has a fully saturated communicative meaning even as long as devoid of an appropriate matrix clause. Furthermore, it appears tough, or maybe even impossible, to find a corresponding matrix clause that, even if elided elliptically, may posit the kind of dependency required for (1).

It is argued here that any subjunction requiring finite V to stay in clause-last position in German is at the bottom of the explanation why *if*-clauses may receive independent status as an exclamative speech act. This is a necessary, a *sine qua non* condition on this phenomenon. However, as is obvious from comparing *if*-independents with imperatives and *yes-no* questions independents, an extra condition must be added to come to terms with the difference between independent *if* and equally independent, but *V-to-C* motivated imperatives and sentence questions. Let us first develop the first step in our line of argumentation as illustrated in Table 1. Notice that we assume the illocutive force of the exclamative to derive from FIN ('C(omp)' in syntactic terminology). In other words, V-final-move-to-C is the necessary, albeit insufficient requirement for IS. The main body of our illustrations comes from German, which has an extended literature on sentence types (Altmann 1988; Altmann, Batliner & Oppenrieder 1989; Meibauer, Steinbach & Altmann 2013) and has variously addressed the problem of sentence type interpretation (cf. Kaiser & Struckmeier 2015). Notice that all cases of IS show an empty prefield indicative of a strong intervention effect (of feature alignment) between C(omp/FIN), the left predicate bracket, and the prefield/ SpecCP. See Table 1.

[The clausal representation in terms of the five sentence fields in Table 1 simplify structural bracketing or a corresponding tree representation. IS abbreviates the classification as 'insubordinate subordination'. German is a strict OV language due to its

⁴ To achieve discourse and textually coherent representations, we advocate a bottom-up strategy. Thus, we stand behind arguments in favor of the Uniformity Hypothesis, i.e. the hypothesis that discourse representations and the respective requirements (e.g. text coherence) can, and need to, extend clause syntax dependencies without conflicting with them. As a consequence, any top-down strategy for the representation of text and discourse coherence as the ones dominating the literature are seen to fail for the mere reason that the generative prerequisites for sentences are necessary (although not sufficient) also for discourse and text structure and consequently cannot be dismissed.

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principled left directed valence force as in *Mutter_{DAT} ein Geschenk_{ACC} bringen* ‘bring mother a present’.]

Table 1: German sentence structure based on clause type, speech act, and subordination (caps for (contrastive) stress).

Prefield	FIN/C(omp)	Left MF	Right MF	Lexical V	IS
<i>Er</i> he	<i>wäre</i> would	–	<i>heute gerne</i> today	<i>hier</i> here	–
<i>Es wäre schön</i> it would be nice	<i>wenn</i> if	<i>er</i> he	<i>bloß heute</i> only today	<i>hier wäre</i> here were	–
–	Wenn if	er *(bloß) he only	heute today	hier wäre! here were	+
<i>Er fragt sich</i> he wonders	<i>was</i> what	<i>das nun</i> this now	<i>wieder</i> again	<i>ist</i> is	–
Was	–	das nun	wieder	ist!?	+
<i>Das</i> this	<i>geht</i> goes	–	<i>heute noch</i> today still	–	–
–	Dass	das	heute noch	geht!?	+
<i>Es ist undeutlich</i> it is not evident	<i>ob</i> if	<i>das</i> this	<i>heute noch</i> today still	<i>geht?</i> goes	–
–	Ob	das	heute noch	geht?	+
<i>Er weiß nicht</i> he knows not	<i>dass</i> that	<i>das</i> this	<i>heute noch</i> today still	<i>geht</i> goes	–
<i>Das</i> this	<i>ist</i> is	<i>nun</i> now	<i>etwas zu viel</i> a little too much	–	–
Das	*ist/IST	nun	wieder etwas!	–	+
<i>Wer</i> who	<i>ist</i> is	<i>das</i> that	<i>*nur?</i> only	–	–
Wer	*ist/IST	das	nur!	–	+

English syntax will typically provide the following structures for the three (four including negation) different sentences as in Table 2.

Quite generally, discourse markers appear outside of CP in English (for example as

Table 2: English sentence structure with respect to clause type, speech act, and subordination.

SpecCP	FIN-AUX	VP	Postfield	IS	
<i>He</i>	<i>would</i>	<i>rather</i>	<i>be here</i>	<i>today</i>	-
<i>It would be nice</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>were here</i>	<i>today</i>	-
<i>He</i>	<i>can-</i>	<i>-not</i>	<i>be here</i>	<i>today</i>	-
<i>If *(only) he</i>	<i>would</i>	<i>be here</i>	<i>today!</i>		+

interjections or theticals). Given such status for *if* in Table 2, however, it would have to be the combination *if only* since *if* by itself would not be grammatical. The latter fact yields even more pressure to the semantic result: both *if* and *only* contribute substantively to the entire meaning of the clause with *if* retaining its conditional force and *only* adding some of the notion as a temporal adverb. Discourse markers have as their typical meaning something that is very independent of the semantics and syntax of the CP it refers to (either left dislocated or parenthetically linearized). We conclude that *if* in Table 2 cannot be a discourse marker.

The comparison with Table 1 on German makes this conclusion irrevocable. Independent and dependent clauses are structurally and linearly different. *Wenn* ‘if’ appears in Comp thereby forcing the finite predicate to get stuck in the V-final position. Thus, it cannot be assigned independent status by syntactic criteria.

3 Why *wenn/if* can never be a discourse marker: the prosodic disentangler as a sufficient criterion.

While each of the embedded sentences in Table 1 and Table 2 has rising prosody due to its question speech act or falling prosody given its declarative status, the exclamations in question have the opposite tone development, namely high. Phonetic studies have proposed high boundary tones as an intonational cue for “non-final” clauses in a wide range of languages (Gussenhoven & Chen 2000; Beckman et al. 2002). Following this finding, it is argued here that, while elliptical constructions have rising intonation patterns, syntactic independent clauses show falling patterns. Therefore, we propose prosody as an acoustic cue for the level of the syntactic (in)dependency of the construction in question (cf. Elvira-García 2015). This may appear to be the end of the story. Sentences, then, simply will have to be listed under two main parameters: linear form and speech act as necessary conditions and, possibly, intonation and corrective focus/CF as sufficient ones. We shall opt for exactly this confluence of licensing factors. Notice that it is not made clear at what stage of the derivation sentence prosodic tone comes in and whether it is of any sentence type determining effect. See Table 3 for the additional tone and focus characterization.

English syntax will typically provide the following sentence structures for the

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Table 3: German sentence structure wrt. clause type, speech act, and subordination [VF=verum focus, CF=corrective focus].

Prefield	FIN	Left MF	Right MF	Lexical V	Tone	S-type
<i>Er</i> he	<i>wäre</i> were	–	<i>heute gerne</i> today	<i>hier</i> here	high-low ↓	Declarative independent
<i>Schön</i> nice	<i>wenn</i> if	<i>er</i> he	<i>bloß heute</i> just today	<i>hier wäre</i> here were	high-low ↓	Conditional dependent
–	<i>Wenn</i> if	<i>er *(bloß)</i> he only	<i>heute</i> today	<i>hier wäre!</i> here were	high-low ↓	‘Conditional’ independent
<i>Er fragt sich</i>	<i>was</i>	<i>DAS nun</i>	<i>wieder</i>	<i>ist</i>	CF-low ↓	Indirect Q dependent
<i>Was</i>	–	<i>DAS nun</i>	<i>wieder</i>	<i>ist!?</i>	CF-low	Indirect Q independent
<i>Das</i>	<i>geht</i>	–	<i>heute noch</i>	–	high-low ↓	Declarative independent
–	<i>Dass</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>heute noch</i>	<i>geht!?</i>	low-high	Indirect Q independent
<i>S’ist unklar</i>	<i>ob</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>heute noch</i>	<i>geht</i>	high-low ↓	Indirect Q dependent
–	<i>Ob</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>heute noch</i>	<i>geht?</i>	low-high	Indirect Q independent
<i>Er weiß nicht</i>	<i>dass</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>noch heute</i>	<i>geht</i>	high-low ↑↓	S-complement dependent
<i>Das</i>	<i>geht</i>	–	<i>heute noch</i>	–	high-low ↓	Declarative independent
–	<i>Dass</i>	<i>das</i>	<i>heute noch</i>	<i>geht!!</i>	low-high ↑	S-complement independent
<i>Das</i>	<i>ist</i>	<i>nun</i>	<i>etwas zu viel</i>	–	high-low ↑↓	Declarative independent
<i>Das</i>	<i>*ist/IST</i>	<i>nun</i>	<i>wieder etwas!</i>	–	VF-low ↓	Declarative Verum focus
<i>Wer</i>	<i>ist</i>	<i>DAS</i>	<i>(*nur)?</i>	–	low-high	w-question
<i>Wer</i>	<i>*ist/IST</i>	<i>DAS</i>	<i>(nur)!</i>	–	high-low ↓	w-QUESTION VERUM FOC.

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three different sentences together with the tone assignments. See Table 4.

Table 4: English sentence structure based on clause type and speech act (no special form of subordination).

SpecCP	FIN-AUX	VP	Postfield	Tone	
<i>He</i>	<i>would</i>	<i>rather</i>	<i>be here</i>	<i>today</i>	L-↑↓
<i>It would be nice</i>	<i>if</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>were here</i>	<i>today</i>	L-↑↓
<i>If *(only) he</i>	<i>would</i>		<i>be here</i>	<i>today!</i>	L-↑

4 Clause types and alleged insubordination

In the recent past, there has been a renewed interest in sentence types/STs in German. ST classifications are based on sentence type criteria, such as word order, predicate bracket in German including V-final in subordinate sentences, the discourse based distribution of clause parts inside the predicate bracket, the choice of material in the prefield/SpecCP, the insertion of modal particles in the middle field, etc. See 4.1. below for an intensional definition of STs by Lohnstein (2000; 2007, based on Groenendijk & Stokhof 1982; 1997; Higginbotham 1996; Meibauer, Steinbach & Altmann 2013; Thurmair 2013) relating the interaction between syntactic form and ST. We will first recapitulate Lohnstein’s definitions and then apply them to the type of sentences that are autonomous, but nevertheless are dependents in German (as V-final sentences and headed by subjunctors).

4.1 Classic and non-classic sentence types

According to Lohnstein (2000, 2007; Abraham 2014; Struckmeier 2010), the following definitions interrelate syntactic form and ST. Evaluation under some world of discussion means that the clause is independent (matrix) and that a truth value can be assigned. No such evaluation yields a dependent sentence. Further structural prerequisite: Any verb occupying the left bracket/Comp has to be finite. If, and only if, a verb or its the auxiliary part occupies the left bracket/Comp does a sentence have illocutionary force (a specific speech act type) on its own. Sentences are semantically objects assigned to sets of worlds or an individual world. Let us see which semantic types of world assignable objects we can distinguish.

4.2 Types of semantic objects

A CLAUSE DEPENDENCY – TYPICAL V-FINAL: If both the lexical and the auxiliary (*haben, sein, werden*; modal verbs) part of the predicative verb, either finite or non-finite, remains in the right bracket (in ‘V-final’), the proposition denoted by the sentence will not be evaluated against a world under discussion. Such a clause

is not asserted and does not carry illocutive force in its own right, but it does that only in the context of a matrix clause (taking over the illocutive force of the matrix clause). The clause under discussion is thus presupposed and does not carry illocutive force in its own right. Dependent upon the type of matrix predicate (factive vs. non-factive), such dependent clauses do not allow the insertion of MPs (*ja, denn, eben*), since such illocution establishing grammatical material is nonsensical in presuppositions. If embedded under non-factive predicates (*say, believe, think*) and allowing bridge constructions, MP insertion is possible since there is no status of dependency in the first place. In canonic terminology: SUBORDINATE CLAUSE (PRESUPPOSED).

B CLAUSE INDEPENDENCY – TYPICAL V2: If, and only if, the finite part of the predicate (either as an auxiliary, modal verb, copula or lexical verb) occupies the left bracket (Comp/C°) and the prefield/SpecCP is not filled with a question word (*what, who(m), where, when* etc.) does a sentence have illocutionary force on its own and is assertive. The proposition denoted by the sentence will be evaluated against a world under discussion (common plus subjective grounds). In canonic terminology: MAIN or MATRIX CLAUSE (ASSERTION).

C WORD INTERROGATIVE CLAUSE – V2: If a [+wh] phrase (*who(m), where, when, what*) occupies the prefield and the finite (part of the) predicate stays in the right bracket (V-final), the derived semantic object consists of the partition of all possible worlds into a set of sets. In canonic terminology: WORD INTERROGATIVE/W-QUESTION CLAUSE.

D Yes-no INTERROGATIVE CLAUSE – V1: The sentence begins with the finite predicate (auxiliary or lexical) and leaves the prefield unoccupied. Thus, it fills the left clause bracket, Comp. Placing the predicate (verb) in the left bracket/Comp and leaving the prefield empty entails a semantic object that conforms to a bipartition of possible worlds. The meaning of such a clause is undecided between two sets of worlds: one where the denoted proposition is true and another one where the denoted proposition is false. In canonic terminology: INTERROGATIVE/YES-NO-QUESTION CLAUSE.

E IMPERATIVE CLAUSE – V1: The predicate (verb) is placed in the left bracket/Comp and leaves the prefield unoccupied. The predicative bracket is preserved (in the case that Comp takes the finite auxiliary or modal verb), while the non-finite part is in the right bracket/V-final. This derives a semantic object that conforms to change of the propositional to the discourse force of one individual world and only that, determined in the mind of the speaker and leaving no other choice on the side of the addressee. In canonic terminology: IMPERATIVE.

F Illocutive force is a prerequisite for syntax-semantic autonomy (i.e. that a sentence can be interpreted with reference to a set of accessible worlds and thus becomes a semantic object. Among all types of syntactic subordination, non-factive complements as well as logical adverbial sentences are exceptions to the extent that they project illocutive force independent of that for the matrix clause. MPs (of the German and Dutch type) are unmistakable signals for illocutive force. To the extent that they generate illocution as well as due to the fact that they occur independently from syntactic signals of (in)dependence, they serve as classifiers of STs better than

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any other overt parameter. This dissociates the ST question from the traditional parameters of word order, the occurrence of subordinations, and, last but not least, finiteness of the predicate).⁵

G Given that verbal factivity and temporality/locality on adverbial dependent clauses play the same role in disallowing MPs (Abraham 2013; 2014) and thus waive separate illocutivity, the question arises what is the common feature of the two disperse phenomena. We will come back to that.

5 Conclusion

We have argued that ‘in subordinate subordination’ is nothing else but illocutionary autonomy of dependent forms. No new category of discourse marker has to be introduced. The clue is that the emerging sentential form, the exclamative (importing the speech act of unexpectedness) receives sentential autonomy (main clause status) despite its dependent indexation (the Comp slot occupied by a subordinator and Vfinal in German and Dutch). As such, Evans’ (2007) grammaticalizing derivation through matrix ellipsis is not based on the exhaustion of empirical material in the main pertaining language (German). The gist of our mainly descriptive essay is that the sentence type of exclamative has full illocutionary force despite its clearly dependent form. We have argued elsewhere that this seeming syntactic deviation can be accounted for in terms of featural import in syntactic positions (notably in Comp).

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⁵ Apparently, this is in line with the fact that imperative functions can go along with infinitives (*Arbeiten!* ‘to work’) or (erstwhile) past participles appear to match with the function of predicative attributes (*Gescheit!* ‘smart!’) or hearsay evidentials (*schon gehört?* ‘already heard of’) (cf. Evans 2007: 430). However, the question of finiteness is only of subordinate relevance for determining ST status and so is assertivity and, as a consequence, presuppositionality. Whether this is the result of diachronic processes of elliptical reduction of syntactic matrix portions or idiomatization appears to be irrelevant for at least two reasons: If the present position is correct, intonation and accent parameters have the force of unmistakable disambiguation (e.g. exclamative and question coded under the identical form, but singled out through different prosody markers). This, in turn, is hard to come by in ancient written documents. Given the alternative which position of this alternative outweighs the other, we give preference to what we witness on today’s phenomena. It is relevant to see what follows from this: for example, on the question whether the phenomena under discussion are a sort of backwash of the conservative view on the direction of grammaticalization.

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