

On insubordination: Form, function and development of insubordinate *if*-clauses

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Insubordination, defined by Evans (2007: 366) as “the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses”, has received increased attention in recent years (e.g. Evans 2007, Mithun 2008, Verstraete et al. 2012). The main interest has been on the communicative function and origin of insubordinate clauses, while their form is generally assumed to be invariant, with subordination in English being signalled for instance by the use of a subordinator. The present study contributes to the discussion of function and development of insubordinate clauses but in addition shows that they also differ formally from their subordinate counterparts, viz. in their prosodic realization. Based on corpus data from the spoken part of the British component of the *International Corpus of English*, the main focus will be on insubordinate *if*-clauses, as in (1).

(1) *If you'll just come next door* (ICE-GB:s1a-089-159)

More specifically, the proposed paper identifies prosodic patterns typically associated with prototypical uses of insubordinate *if*-clauses and shows how they diverge from the prosodic realisation of their syntactically dependent counterparts. Such difference in formal realisation provides evidence for separate storage of insubordinate clauses and supports the view that they belong to a different component of the grammar (Heine et al. 2013).

Formal analysis of insubordinate *if*-clauses presupposes clear delimitation of the category in question and identification of functional subtypes. Based on a detailed analysis of spoken corpus data the study distinguishes different functional types, which fall into the two main categories prospective and retrospective, as well as different degrees of fixation ranging from spontaneous to formulaic uses. All of these have in common that they are semantically non-restrictive and instead relate to the immediate situation of discourse particularly the components discourse organisation, speaker attitude and speaker-hearer interaction. This, together with their syntactic independence, makes them typical members of a larger category of extra-clausal constituents, also referred to as theticals (Heine et al. 2013).

The paper concludes with a brief outline of the presumed development of insubordinate clauses which can accommodate both Evans's (2007) ellipsis hypothesis and Mithun's (2008) extension hypothesis. Drawing on the concept of cooptation (Heine et al. 2013), it is argued that insubordinate clauses arise through a spontaneously operation which redefines (coopts) subordinate clauses for pragmatic purposes. Through repeated use such instantaneous insubordinate clauses may develop into more fixed constructional or even formulaic insubordinate clauses.

References

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