



Refusing to subordinate?

The syntax of Danish causal clauses

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INTRODUCTION

According to the standard description of Danish, causal clauses with *fordi* 'because' denote *causes* or *reasons* (Lyons 1977: 445), usually occur after presupposed matrix clauses, and usually have 'subordinate clause word order' (*Adv*>*V* or *V3*) (cf. Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 1541ff):

(1) ... fordi jeg ikke har nogen penge.
... because I not have any money.

However, in spoken and informal written language, *fordi* clauses can introduce 'explanation' clauses with an epistemic or illocutionary function (Sweetser 1900; Hengeveld 1996):

(2) Og Justin er ikke faren fordi han har selv sagt at han ikke ville have børn før [han] er blevet gift! – And Justin is not the father, because he said himself that he doesn't want kids until after he's married (viunge.dk, 07/11/11)

They occur with non-presupposed matrix clauses:

(3) Gik ned og oddsede bagefter, og jeg tabte desværre fordi City er lort – I went down and placed a bet afterwards, and unfortunately I lost, because City is crap (fmfreaks.dk, 13/11/10)

And they can have 'main clause word order' (*V*>*Adv* or *V2*), as in (2). However, this word order pattern is common in complement clauses and is thus not a signal of main clause status (Hansen & Heltoft 2011; Jensen & Christensen 2013).

QUESTIONS

- Which factors determine the distribution of the *V2* and *V3* word order patterns in *fordi* clauses?
- Are *fordi* clauses with *V2* coordinate clauses, as suggested by Therkelsen (2003)?

DATA

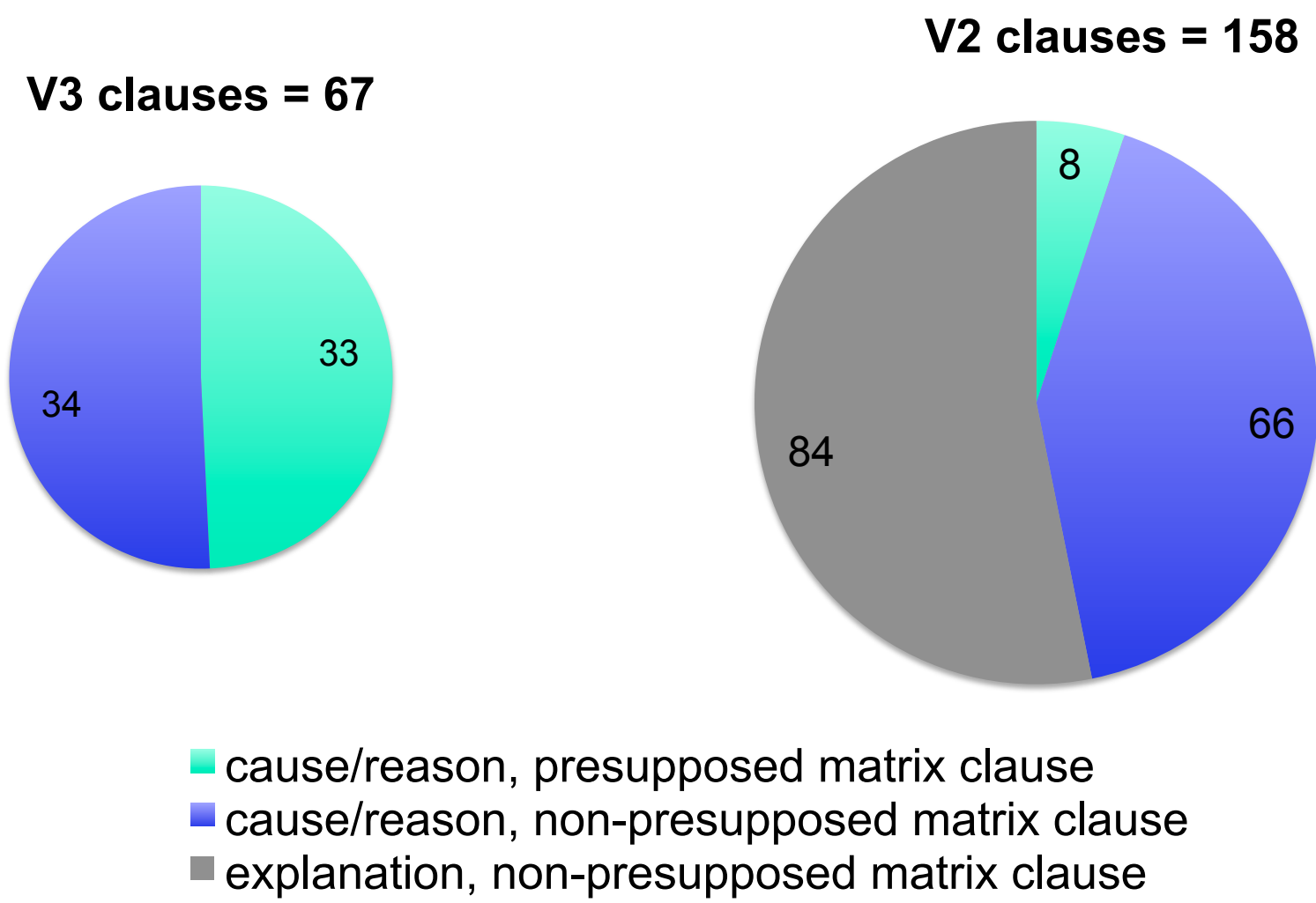
- **What?**
Recordings of five sittings in the Danish parliament as well as (edited) transcripts of these sittings – about 22 hours of video.
- **Why?**
The data are freely available on the internet and represent a spoken register which is not often investigated linguistically.
- **How?**
Found all *fordi* clauses in the transcripts and checked the actual word order in the recordings. Of the 421 *fordi* clauses in the material, 225 manifest the difference between *V2* and *V3*.

REFERENCES

Hansen, E & L Heltoft, 2011, *Grammatik over det Danske Sprog*, Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab. – Hengeveld, K, 1996, "The internal structure of adverbial clauses", in: Devriendt, Goossens & van der Auwera (eds.): *Complex structures*, Mouton de Gruyter. – Jensen, T J & T K Christensen, 2013, "Promoting the demoted: The distribution and semantics of 'main clause word order' in spoken Danish complement clauses", in: *Lingua* 137. – Lyons, J, 1977, *Semantics*, Cambridge University Press. – Sandøy, H, 2008, "Norske syntaktiske 'avvik' i norsk", in: Carlsen, Moe, Andersen & Tenfjord (eds.): *Banebryter og brobygger i andrespråksfeltet*, Novus. – Sweetser, E, 1990, *From etymology to pragmatics*, Cambridge University Press. – Therkelsen, R, 2003, "The functions of Danish causal conjunctions", in: *Nordlyd* 31(2).

RESULTS

- 37% of the *fordi* clauses are epistemic or illocutionary 'explanation' clauses. All of these appear to have *V2*.
- Presupposed matrix clauses are rare (18%) and mainly but not exclusively occur with *V3*.
- *V2* is more common than *V3*: 70% vs. 30% of the clauses.



V3 clauses denote 'real-world' causes or reasons and can have both presupposed and non-presupposed matrix clauses.

V2 clauses can both be of the 'real-world' and the 'explanation' type; explanation clauses never have presupposed matrix clauses.

DISCUSSION

Some *fordi* clauses with *V2* belong to the same semantic types as the *V3* clauses and cannot be considered coordinate clauses.

Sandøy (2008: 181) about spoken Norwegian: *V2* is used to stress that the speaker is "vouching for" the truth of the propositional content of the subordinate clause. This would make the difference between the word order patterns one of mood rather than syntactic status (cf. Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 1677ff).

However, some *fordi* clauses have turned up that cannot reasonably be considered subordinate, like the interrogative clause in (4). This calls for further research.

(4) Jeg opfatter det selv som en naturlig videreudvikling af samtænkning, fordi hvad handler det om i skrøbelige stater? – I for one consider this a natural further development of the concerted planning and action approach, because what's it all about in vulnerable states?
(Danish Parliament, 21/01/14)