

The category of consecutive clauses

In the linguistic description of German subordinate clauses, the term adverbial clause is used to refer to a number of clauses such as temporal, conditional, and concessive clauses. The present paper demonstrates that the term adverbial clause might be inappropriate in the case of consecutive clauses in view of some of their syntactic properties.

Research in the field of spoken German has cast new light on some syntactic structures. It could be observed that the spoken language is characterized by the use of structures that are considered grammatically false or are not used at all in the written language. Among other structures, this refers to the use of *weil* [because], *obwohl* [although], and *während* [while] as coordinating conjunctions as opposed to their use as subordinating conjunctions in written German. This view, along with some other observations, opens up the question of coordination and subordination, suggesting that the two are to be conceived of as two points on a continuum rather than two categories opposed to each other.

The first section of this paper discusses the issue of coordination and subordination, focusing on structures that, due to their properties, cannot be easily attributed to either of the categories. Clauses referred to as sentential relative clauses (*weiterführende Nebensätze*) exhibit formal properties of subordinate clauses but possess, at the same time, their own illocutionary force. Trying to provide an adequate description of such structures, some linguists make a distinction between syntactic, semantic, and discourse levels and point to the fact in that particular case subordination on a syntactic level does not have to match subordination on semantic and discourse levels. In connection with adverbial clauses, this has been acknowledged by researchers, who make a distinction between central and peripheral adverbial clauses, the latter expressing propositions referring to the discourse background associated with the clause that seems to be their matrix clause. Research into the linear organization of sentences has come up with eight different positions for adverbial clauses. Depending on the positions that particular adverbial clauses can occupy, they are considered prototypical (i. e. central) adverbial clauses or peripheral adverbial clauses. For some authors who adopt the narrow sense of the term consecutive clause, it covers only instances containing the subordinating conjunction *sodass* [so that]. Some authors, however, use the term consecutive clause in a broader sense to cover instances in which a clause containing *dass* [that] functions as an attribute to a matrix clause element such as *dermaßen* [to such an extent that].

The following section examines pertinent literature. Traditionally, many grammars of German describe consecutive clauses in the same chapter as adverbial clauses, starting by stating their position in the sentence and naming subordinating conjunctions introducing those clauses. The relationship between consecutive clauses containing a finite verb and the corresponding infinitive constructions is also elaborated. Clauses realizing consecutive meaning that function syntactically as an attribute are considered attribute clauses by some authors so that only clauses containing the subordinating conjunction *sodass* are categorized as consecutive clauses. It is only in some highly specialized publications that the status of consecutive clauses as constituents of linguistic units at a higher level is challenged. Grammars of German do not seem to have paid proper attention to this issue.

After the literature review, sentences are analysed which contain consecutive clauses. For this purpose, instances of consecutive clauses are divided into two separate groups. The first group includes instances in which subordinate clauses are introduced by *dass* exhibiting the function of an attribute to an element such as *dermaßen* and *derart* [in such a way]. The second group comprises instances of consecutive clauses beginning with *sodass*. Using instances of real language use, question, movement and elimination tests are performed in order to determine the properties of the consecutive clauses. Further tests are performed to explore the scopal properties of consecutive clauses. The analysis makes use of tree diagrams as well. The procedure involving different tests enables us to check and demonstrate the degree to which consecutive clauses are integrated into the clause assumed to be their matrix clause. The results show that neither group of consecutive clauses can function as direct answers to a question word. As for the possibility of their elimination, only clauses with *sodass* can be omitted without affecting the grammaticality of the rest of the sentence. Regarding the position they take, clauses containing *sodass* have been shown to occupy the position following the final field (Nachfeld). Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that consecutive clauses containing *sodass* are outside the scope of different operators, which is demonstrated by looking into the scope of the negation *nicht* [not] placed within a clause assumed to be the matrix clause.

The analysis clearly points to the fact that consecutive clauses containing *sodass* are not integrated within the associated clause and therefore cannot be considered its constituent. They should not be treated in the same way that central adverbial clauses are treated because there is a range of properties that they do not share with adverbial clauses. However, this does not apply to attributive consecutive clauses, which behave in a way comparable with other attributive clauses.

The problem with the term adverbial clause is that it carries the burden of implying the constituent status of a clause. The term consecutive clause is also used for clauses with *sodass* although this is exactly the type that should not be denoted by the term adverbial clause since it does not act as a constituent. Despite that, there are widely used reference grammar books of German which still treat those clauses in the same way as conditional, temporal, and other adverbial clauses.