

Layers of subordinate clauses: A view from causal *af-því-að*-clauses in Icelandic

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Introduction In this talk, we examine adverbial causal clauses in modern Icelandic introduced by *af því að*. Semantically, we argue that *af-því-að*-clauses can be interpreted as eventuality-related, evidence-based or speech-act-related clauses. Syntactically, we show that *af-því-að*-clauses can be analyzed as central, peripheral or disintegrated adverbial clauses in the sense claimed by Haegeman (2010, 2012) and Frey (2011, 2012, 2016). Based on Krifka (to appear), we assume *af-því-að*-clauses to be assertive clauses attaching – depending on their interpretation – as Tense Phrase, Judge Phrase or Act Phrase modifiers.

Phenomenon Adverbial *af-því-að*-clauses can introduce three reason relations (cf. van Dijk 1977, Schiffrin 1987, Sweetser 1990, and Frey 2016 for cross-linguistic data). In (1), the proposition embedded in the causal clause is interpreted as a fact causing another fact. Concretely, the fact that John loved a female person is a reason for why he came back. We refer to it as an *eventuality-related interpretation*. In (2), the speaker specifies the reason for why (s)he thinks the matrix clause is true. Accordingly, the speaker takes the event of John's coming back to be a reasonable argument to assume that he must (have) be(en) in love with a female person. Following Morreall (1979), we talk about an evidential use of *af því að* and refer to it as an *evidenced-based interpretation*. Finally, the speech act causal clause in (3) reveals the motivation for why the speaker is performing a speech act. It gives the cause of the speech act associated with the matrix clause. In this case, we talk about a *speech-act-related interpretation*. Remarkably, although the examples given in (1)–(3) receive the different semantic interpretations, they are all introduced by a single complementizer. This variation calls for an adequate analysis.

Analysis To capture the variation of *af-því-að*-clauses, we adopt a novel approach to adverbial modifiers developed by Krifka (to appear), who takes assertions to be linguistic objects requiring a formal representation in the syntax. He makes a distinction between propositions, judgements, and commitments. A proposition ϕ is represented by a Tense Phrase, TP. Private judgements are assumed to be encoded in a Judge Phrase, JP, equipped with a syntactic head that turns a proposition ϕ into the propositional function that a judge x judges the proposition ϕ to be true. It is represented as $x J- \phi$, whereby $J-$ stands for the head of the JP. Public assertions are expressed in a Commitment Phrase, ComP, possessing the head \vdash turning a proposition ϕ into the propositional function that speaker x is publicly committed in world i to ϕ : $x \vdash_i \phi$. On top of that, it is necessary to distinguish assertions from questions. According to Krifka (to appear: 6), “[i]n an assertion, a speaker makes a public commitment to a proposition, whereas in a question, the speaker restricts the possible continuations of a conversation so that the addressee makes a public commitment to a proposition.” This means that both assertions and questions are based on commitments and, correspondingly, equipped with ComP. Based on Woods (2016), Krifka takes ActP to be able to occur not only in main clauses but also in selected types of subordinate clauses. Evidence for the availability of the functional projections ActP, ComP, and JP comes from adverbial modifiers associated with the particular projection. A sample of selected Icelandic adverbial modifiers is given (4). We claim that eventuality-related causal clauses, (1), can be TP, JP or ActP modifiers, evidence-based causal clauses, (2), can be JP or ActP modifiers, and speech-act-related causal clauses, (3), are ActP modifiers throughout. In addition, we show that if causal *af-því-að*-clauses are TP adjuncts, they should be analyzed as central adverbial clauses, if they attach at the JP level, they are to be analyzed as peripheral adverbial clauses, and if they adjoin at the ActP level, they should be considered disintegrated adverbial clauses. Main arguments for our analysis come from: i) licensing conditions of the adverbial modifiers listed in (4) within *af-því-að*-clauses, ii) binding data, iii) negation scope, iv) movement restrictions, and v) clausal anaphora.

Conclusion As it turns out, a single adverbial complementizer can give rise to different interpretations. Based on causal *af-því-að*-clauses in Icelandic, we show that these interpretations are encoded in the grammar and do not arise via a pragmatic reasoning (contra Sweetser 1990). It follows that less integrated structures have more interpretative freedom than more strongly integrated ones.

Examples

- (1) Jón kom aftur af því að hann elskaði hana.
Jón come.3SG.PST back because he love.3SG.PST her
'Jón came back because he loved her.'
- (2) Jón elskaði hana, af því að hann kom aftur.
Jón love.3SG.PST her because he come.3SG.PST back
'Jón loved her, since he came back.'
- (3) Hvað ertu að gera í kvöld, af því að það er
what be.2SG doing tonight because there be.3SG
góð mynd í bíó.
a good movie in the cinema
'What are you doing tonight, since there is a good movie in the cinema.'
- (4) a. JP modifiers: JP modifiers: *sannarlega* 'certainly', *líklega* 'probably', *sennilega* 'probably',
greinilega 'obviously', *að því er virðist* 'apparently', *að því er sagt er* 'allegedly'
b. ComP modifiers: *ég get svarið það* 'by God; I can swear it', *ég sver* 'I swear', *í alvöru talað*
'seriously; in seriousness/reality', *í fullri alvöru* 'in full seriousness', *án gríns* 'without fun'
c. ActP modifiers: *í hreinskilni sagt* 'honestly', *ef svo má segja* 'if one can say so', *meðal
annarra orða* 'by the way', *sem betur fer* 'fortunately', *í fyrsta/öðru lagi* 'firstly/secondly'
skiljanlega 'understandably', *samt* 'however'.

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