

Adverbial Clauses: New Horizons

Adverbial clauses and
subordinate dependency relationships

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March 2026

Roadmap

- [1] Organizational matters
- [2] DFG-Network: *Adverbial clauses and subordinate dependency relationships*
- [3] Conference *Adverbial Clauses: New Horizons*
- [4] Concluding remarks and future plans

Roadmap

- [1] Organizational matters
- [2] DFG-Network: *Adverbial clauses and subordinate dependency relationships*
- [3] Conference *Adverbial Clauses: New Horizons*
- [4] **Concluding remarks and future plans**

DFG-Network: overview

➤ meeting #3: *Variation of adverbial clauses* (Göttingen)

Fatima Hamlaoui (University of Toronto) – invited speaker

The syntax-phonology mapping of adverbial clauses. A flexible approach

Werner Frey (formerly Leibniz-ZAS, Berlin) – invited speaker

Adverbial clauses and the dazzling term ‘pre-prefield’

General conclusion: The interaction of multiple interfaces gives rise to increasing variation:

[a]: level of embedding:	central vs. peripheral vs. non-integrated
[b]: linear order:	in front of the matrix clause vs. after the matrix clause
[c]: level of interpretation:	content vs. epistemic vs. speech act
[d]: lexical restrictions:	at-issue vs. non-at-issue content
[e]: prosody:	prosodic break vs. no prosodic break

DFG-Network: overview

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[d]: lexical restrictions:	at-issue vs. non-at-issue content
[e]: prosody:	prosodic integration vs. prosodic disintegration

1. The higher the adjunction position of a causal clause, the greater its interpretive freedom (Frey 2016).
2. If an adverbial clause occurs in the prefield of the matrix clause, it cannot be non-integrated (applicable to verb-second languages).
3. If an adverbial clause conveys non-at-issue content, it is unlikely to be a central adverbial clause (cf. *because* vs. *since*).
4. If an adverbial clause operates on the speech act level, it must be non-integrated.
5. If an adverbial clause must be prosodically separated from the matrix clause, it is unlikely to be a central adverbial clause.

Brief summary

➤ meeting #6: *Tell me something new about adverbial clauses* (Berlin)

- [1] **Joachim Jacobs**: The assertoric potential of adverbial clauses in **German** does not depend on grammatical factors like syntactic integration. Rather, what seems to be crucial is whether adding an assertoric intention to the meaning of the utterance of an adverbial clause is compatible with certain norms of rational assertion (and with some aspects of information structure).
- [2] **Łukasz Jędrzejowski & Wojciech Guz**: **Polish** *tyle że* introduces adverbial clauses whose core function is contrastive refinement of the preceding discourse. A corpus study of 100 examples demonstrates that although *tyle że* may appear in concessive or adversative contexts, its defining property is to refine and contrast some element of the previous clause or discourse. Syntactically, *tyle-że*-clauses behave as non-integrated adjuncts that must follow the matrix clause.

Brief summary

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- [3] **Wellington Souza de Paula**: Central adverbial clauses are merged in the specifier of circumstantial projections (Spec,CircP) in the clause structure. Using data from **Brazilian Portuguese**, he argues that these clauses follow a fixed hierarchical order reflecting different circumstantial meanings such as time, reason, and purpose.
- [4] **Maria Lobo**: Unlike in Standard **European Portuguese**, **dialectal** gerund clauses may occur with connectives, overt subjects, and different word orders, and can express several adverbial meanings (e.g., temporal, conditional, causal). The analysis suggests that gerund clauses in Portuguese dialects have a richer syntactic structure than those in the standard variety.

Brief summary

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- [5] **Xindan Xu**: The talk investigates the internal syntax of **Icelandic** *svo-að*-clauses, focusing on the distinction between purpose and result clauses. The results show that result clauses allow several root phenomena, while purpose clauses are more restricted, suggesting that the results clauses behave like peripheral adverbial clauses and purpose clauses like central adverbial clauses.
- [6] **Werner Frey**: In **German**, integrated adverbial clauses do not encode their own illocutionary force, whereas certain adverbial clauses occurring in the external field can function as subsidiary speech acts. The analysis also distinguishes between world-related and discourse-related external adverbial clauses, which differ in their discourse functions and syntactic behavior.

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- [7] **Richard Larson**: **Warlpiri** adjoined clauses with *kuja/kaji* have a unified semantics: They denote properties that restrict a variable in the main clause's INFL domain (e.g., individuals, times, locations, or worlds), accounting for their relative, temporal, locative, and conditional interpretations. He further argues that the contrast between *kuja/kaji* and *yungu/yi* reflects a type of switch-reference marking, signaling whether the subordinate clause shares a reference variable with the main clause or not.
- [8] **Zhuo Chen & Victor Junnan Pan**: **Mandarin** unconditional constructions come in two types: headed (with *bugun/wulun* 'no matter') and bare antecedents, which differ in both internal and external syntax. Bare antecedents have a reduced structure (= TP without CP) and function as tightly integrated central adverbial clauses, while headed antecedents have a full CP structure and can behave as central, peripheral, or speech act modifying clauses. These differences explain their distinct syntactic behavior and their interaction with elements like *dou* in the main clause.

Brief summary

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- [9] **Jen Ting: Mandarin** *dang* temporal adverbial clauses involve two different syntactic structures. *Dang ... de shihou* forms a relative clause that relativizes an event, while bare *dang* is not a reduced relative but a subordinate CP headed by *dang*. This distinction explains their different syntactic behaviors and distribution.
- [10] **Ting-Shiu Lin: Mandarin** *yībiān ... yībiān ...* construction (‘while’ / ‘at the same time’) is not a coordinate structure, contrary to common assumptions. Instead, *yībiān* + VP functions as a vP/TP-level adjunct, while the construction itself is a correlative structure formed by additive adverbs indicating simultaneous events. The analysis explains its syntactic behavior, such as extraction patterns and distributional restrictions.

Brief summary

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- [11] **Marika Lekakou & Josep Quer**: V-doubling unconditionals in **Greek** (e.g. ‘whether he gives the money or not’) express alternative concessive conditionals conveying indifference to which alternative holds. It is argued that these clauses function as peripheral conditional adjuncts that denote a set of alternatives and require a modal operator in the main clause. Structurally, the bare V-doubling derives from an underlying correlative disjunction structure with a covert C element.
- [12] **Marta Massaia**: Topicalization asymmetry in **Dutch** similarity constructions arises in that *zoals* (‘as’/‘like’) clauses can be topicalized, whereas *alsof* (‘as if’) clauses generally cannot. It is argued that this contrast follows from referentiality: simulative clauses refer to a specific, identifiable manner and behave like definite expressions, while simulative clauses denote a non-specific manner and therefore resist topicalization.

Brief summary

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[13] **Jesús Olguín Martínez & Stefan Th. Gries**: A corpus-based analysis of the **English** construction *if you ask me* explores how clause position (preposed vs. postposed) interacts with discourse and usage factors. The analysis shows that preposed *if you ask me* is associated with turn-taking and attention-getting, while postposed *if you ask me* typically occurs when the same speaker continues a turn and expresses a personal evaluation.

[14] **Thomas Stolz**: The status of *para* in **Chamorro** is reassessed, as it has often been analyzed as an irrealis TMA marker rather than a subordinating conjunction. On the basis of corpus data and distributional evidence, purposive *para* is shown to function as a subordinating conjunction introducing purpose clauses, distinct from other homophonous uses of *para*. The analysis also suggests that this conjunction reflects Spanish influence on Chamorro grammar, where *para* similarly marks purposive relations.

Brief summary

- meeting #6: *Tell me something new about adverbial clauses* (Berlin)

General conclusion:

?

- meeting #6: *Tell me something new about adverbial clauses* (Berlin)

General conclusion: Adverbial clauses display considerable structural and functional diversity across languages. Their syntactic form – ranging from tightly integrated adjuncts to peripheral or discourse-related clauses – correlates with differences in interpretation, discourse function, and clause-internal structure.

Cross-linguistic evidence shows that fine-grained structural distinctions (e.g. reduced vs. full CP, central vs. peripheral attachment) play a crucial role in explaining their semantic contribution and distribution.

Brief summary

1

ADVERBIAL SUBORDINATE CLAUSES IN ENGLISH

by

MICHAEL LORENZ GEIS

B.A., Rice University
(1961)

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

at the

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY

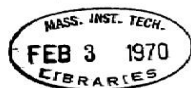
February, 1970

Signature of Author
Department of Foreign Literatures and
Linguistics, January 5, 1970

Certified by
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by
Chairman, Departmental Committee on Graduate
Students

Archives



1970

General conclusion: Adverbial subordinate clauses do not form a homogeneous syntactic class. Geis argues that clauses introduced by *where*, *when*, and *while* are underlyingly relative clauses whose antecedents have been deleted, whereas clauses introduced by *before*, *after*, *until*, and *since* originate in prepositional structures, and clauses introduced by *if* and *unless* function as nominal complements. These findings suggest that the traditional category of ‘subordinating conjunction’ obscures important structural differences and that adverbial clauses arise from distinct underlying constructions rather than a single unified clause type.

Handbook of clausal embedding

Edited by

Anton Benz

Werner Frey

Hans-Martin Gärtner

Manfred Krifka

Mathias Schenner

Marzena Żygis

Empirically Oriented Theoretical
Morphology and Syntax

Adverbial clauses

Liliane Haegeman, Eric T. Lander, Manuela Schönenberger

Chapter 3

2026

General conclusion: Adverbial clauses are not a uniform syntactic or discourse category. A fundamental distinction must be drawn between central adverbial clauses, which are structurally integrated into the host clause and modify its propositional content, and peripheral adverbial clauses, which relate the proposition of the host clause to the discourse and provide contextual assumptions for its interpretation. These two types differ systematically in their syntactic integration, scope relations, internal structure, and interaction with information structure and modality, suggesting that the analysis of adverbial clauses must take into account both sentence-level syntax and discourse-level interpretation.

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Geis (1970)

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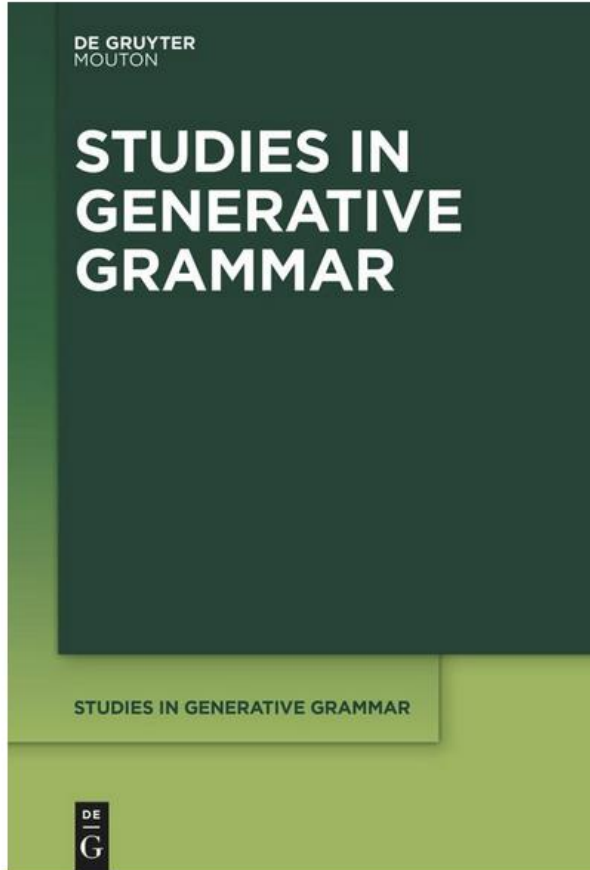
Haegeman et al. (2026)

General conclusion: Adverbial clauses display considerable structural and functional diversity across languages. Their syntactic form – ranging from tightly integrated adjuncts to peripheral or discourse-related clauses – correlates with differences in interpretation, discourse function, and clause-internal structure. Cross-linguistic evidence shows that fine-grained structural distinctions (e.g. reduced vs. full CP, central vs. peripheral attachment) play a crucial role in explaining their semantic contribution and distribution.

Berlin, March 2026

Adverbial clauses do not constitute a uniform syntactic category. Rather, they arise from different structural configurations whose degree of syntactic integration correlates with their semantic and discourse functions.

Geis (1970) + Haegeman et al. (2026) + Berlin, March 2026



Studies in Generative Grammar [SGG]

Herausgegeben von: Norbert Corver und Harry van der Hulst

Thank **YOU** for contributing to the
fourth conference on adverbial
clauses!

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Many thanks to **Andreas** for giving us the opportunity to meet in Berlin!



Thank you for
coming to
Berlin!