Review: Analyse linguistiques sur corpus. Subordination et insubordination en français

Sous la direction de Jeanne-Marie Debaisieux.

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We are glad to present a report of this publication which is important not only for research on French, as the title announces, but more generally for studies of syntax based on corpora, too. Indeed the book presents a new methodology for syntactic research, since the studies following a corpus based approach are relatively new and, until now, few in number. Conversely, the book is a milestone both for the theoretical point of view it represents and for the number of specific syntactic constructions finding a detailed description therein. One further added value is constituted by the source of data, given that the majority of the chapters are grounded in spoken corpora. This aspect justifies the term "insubordination", appearing in the title, which is used in typological research for the description of typical spoken constructions of "exotic" languages, constructions which indeed are present in the spontaneous variety of every spoken language. As it is properly observed by Debaisieux in her introduction, the investigation of oral corpora allows the discovery of very complex constructions, not imagined in writing, and, contrary to what is claimed in the generative tradition, the emergence of phenomena that was not recorded in grammars and are unpredictable from the viewpoint of deductive competence.

The collection is rooted in the fundamental research and work of Claire Blanche-Benveniste (*Les français: usage de la langue parlée*, 2010). It is not by accident that the volume is composed of 11 chapters, most of the authors of which were her collaborators, and it represents in some sense the best festschrift of her mastery of her field.

First and foremost, we should emphasize the contribution of Debaisieux, who is the author not only of the introduction to the book but also of Chapter 1 (*Quelques problèmes posés par la notion de subordination*) which leads to the core topic of the volume. The author summarizes a relevant debate about syntactic subordination and challenges the three major approaches found in the literature: the first, and the most shared, foresees a binary opposition between coordination and subordination, which depends on the quality of the introducing conjunction; the second discovers a sort of gradualism in the possible types of relations; the third proposes a discrete hierarchy of relations, depending on the nature of the function used, and is the solution preferred by the author. On the basis of spoken data, the binary opposition between subordination and coordination is contradicted by well-known multi-function morphemes that can develop subordinate, coordinate, and adverbial roles, in this way undercutting the criterion of distinction. This collapse introduces the author's conclusion. According to Debaisieux two types of syntactic sequences must be envisaged: the *énoncé* (utterance) composed of more possible sub-sequences united under a single illocution, and the *discours* (discourse) composed of sub-sequences with different illocutions. The subordination relation occurs preferentially in utterances, while coordinate relations are preferred within the discourse. As a consequence, this fundamental syntactic distinction must be traced back to the illocution, which is not usually considered in syntactic explanation. Moreover, if within the utterance the syntactic relations basically depend on regency and traditional conjunctions generally work well to this end, this is not necessary in the case of "modal subordination". In fact, despite the literature assuming rigid hierarchical levels of structure and specific functional morphemes for each one, the GARS perspective takes the viewpoint of different active orders of structure (grammar, prosody, modality, discourse), each one realizing its own dependency relations. The utterance is the outcome of their free interactions: conjunctions may mark these different types of dependencies in accordance with a discrete hierarchy.

Allow me to add one comment from my own theoretical perspective. I agree that different orders of structures effect the utterance beyond the solitary syntactic stratification, but, in my view, these different "ingredients" function concurrently and their interaction is ruled by a necessary and unitary sensory-motor system. For instance, prosody is necessary in order to identify the "sub-sequences" required by subordinate relations and to evaluate their reciprocal relations. Thus, in my opinion, some structures may dominate the others and their interactions follow general principles.

Chapter 2 (*Le cadre descriptif*), a collective work by Debaisieux, Deloufeu, Sabio and Bilger is directly dependent on the *approache pronominal* and the

connected *macro-syntax* framework of Blanche-Benveniste, which, starting in the 1980s, has been developed by the *Group axoise pour la recherche en syntaxe* (GARS) and has mostly been published in *Recherches sur le français parlé*. The chapter reports a useful summary of GARS' research and in some respects also represents a clear advancement (accompanied by explicative tables) in the overall treatment of internal (syntactic) and external (macro-syntactic) relations, including satellite constructions. All descriptions apply to corpus data and to spoken data, specifically. We do not know of any approach comparable in its depth and subtlety of investigation.

Again I'll provide some observations from my own point of view. First of all, although the GARS' tradition separates the linguistic analysis into different steps and levels, if the prosodic counterparts of the syntactic entities were also taken into account the general frame of the syntax would be simplified at some strategic junctions. Secondly, given that the "epexegesis" applies to repetitions across different dialogic turns, the independent programming which grounds these linguistic productions should be considered, since it is also manifested by prosodic aspects. Finally, a distinction should be made in the use of the term "modality", which is extended in an ambiguous manner to the illocutionary field, with its respective action values, to logic values, in accordance with natural language logics, and to the syntactic types of sentences.

It is impossible to address in detail the richness of the various contributions concerning the most relevant themes of syntactic subordination - both completive and adverbial - as they are evidenced and supported by corpora data. However chapter 9 by Deuloufeu (*Le role de l'element que dans le phénomènes de subordination*) shows the rich functional use developed by the complementizer *par excellence*, going beyond the boundaries of the traditional completive subordination. The set of adverbial subordinations is dealt with in the central chapters: Chapter 5 by Debaisieux (*Autour de parce que et puisque*) faces the delicate description of the domain of causal and explanatory subordination; Chapter 6 by Cristophe Benzitou (*Description de séquences introduites par quand en français parlé*) is devoted to the most frequent temporal subordination; Chapter 7 by Mireille Bilger (*Etude de alors que et tandis que à partir de corpus écrits et oraux*) presents the properties of a specific temporal subordination. Moreover, in Chapter 8 Frédéric Sabio carries out an accurate description of constructions introduced by the conjunction if (*Les séquences en Si dans les corpus oraux*), in which he denounces the failure of traditional analysis which reduces this type of subordination to two classic cases in which the subordinate clause is considered either a regency object or a circumstantial adjunct. Relying on evidence from corpora he very nicely shows that at least three levels of syntactic relationships

are required to deal with it correctly. Finally, the last chapter by Deloufeu (*L'approache macrosyntactique: sources et controverses*) carries out a discussion on the foundation and possible extension of the macro-syntactic framework.

The book is enriched by two chapters that are not strictly related to the body of research as the others chapters are, making it a unified work (in some sense). They are Chapter 3 by Bernard Combette (*Quelques aspects de la "subordination" en ancien et moyen français*) and Chapter 4 by Emmanuel Canut (*De l'apprentissage et de l'usage de la "subordination" chez l'enfant de moins de six ans*), and they constitute an appropriate extension of the survey performed.

Moreover, Chapter 10 by Philippe Martin (*Coordination and subordination prosodique*) must be mentioned, which attests to the long collaboration carried out with Blanche-Benveniste. It is in the wake of this scientific exchange that the author has ventured into the investigation of spontaneous speech prosody, leading to the conception of his "dynamic cognitive model" based on prosodic events. See the recent books *Intonation du français* (2009) and *The structure of spoken language. Intonation in Romance* (2015) by Martin. These results could not have been achieved without the careful analysis of actual speech data, despite the fact that the traditional available linguistic models were, and still are, highly conditioned by the analysis of written texts and, in the domain of prosodic investigation, by the analysis of reading performance.

As a whole the collection may be considered a step forward in envisaging a corpus-based grammar of French, which is still lacking, and indeed already constitutes a fundamental milestone to this end.