

## **Causal categories in discourse; Converging evidence from spoken and written language use**

The discourse level is a major challenge to linguistics, since language is grounded in communicative settings (Clark, 1996), hence in discourse (Sanders & Spooren, 2007). Discourse shows coherence: the utterances in a text or conversation are connected via coherence relations, such as cause-consequence and contrast. These relations can be expressed through connectives. In this paper, we investigate the system behind the choice for particular connectives, more specifically the way in which Dutch speakers categorize causally related events by expressing them with the connectives *omdat* ('because') versus *want* ('for'). Consider (1) and (2), from a chat-corpus.

- (1) een schoolfeest van iemand die ik ken ging niet door omdat de paus toen begraven werd...  
*someone i know - their school party was cancelled OMDAT the pope was buried...*
- (2) Ik vind internet vet cool chill want allez gaat snel  
*Internet is phat cool chill WANT everthing is fast*

The difference between these two connectives can be described in terms of Subjectivity, which is understood as the degree to which to the speaker/writer is responsible for the causal relation (cf. Langacker, 1990; Pander Maat & Sanders, 2001; Sanders, Sanders & Sweetser, 2001; submitted). In these terms, (2) is more subjective than (1), because the speaker provides a judgement for which she provides an argument. Dutch *want* has a preference for subjective contexts, whereas *omdat* fits well in more objective contexts. Similar causal categories seem to be relevant across languages (Knott & Sanders, 1998; Pit, 2003; Degand & Pander Maat, 2003; Stukker, Sanders & Verhagen, to appear).

In previous work (Sanders et al. 1993), we have argued that the principles that account for coherence are of a cognitive nature. The relevance of these categories has been shown in language acquisition and discourse processing. This paper focuses on data from spoken discourse, which can provide a suitable test base for such a claim: Spoken discourse is a basic and spontaneous form of communication. Consequently, a cognitive theory of coherence should be able to account for coherence phenomena in such less-planned discourse registers.

We report new empirical data from a comparison of three types of discourse: highly edited written text is compared to spontaneous conversations (Spooren et al. (2007) and chat. Chat language resembles spontaneous conversation in the low degree of planning, but at the same time it forces participants to verbalize all information explicitly, in lack of paralinguistic and other non-verbal options of face to face conversation. We show how the subjectivity of *want* and *omdat* in chat resembles the patterns found in spoken language. Taken together, the results show how Dutch language users categorize causality on the discourse level. We conclude that these categories differ in Subjectivity and we further define the categories in prototypical and non-prototypical examples.

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