

A few notes on German argument *wenn*-clauses

The paper is about constructions where the propositional argument of a matrix predicate is realized by a conditional as in (1) *Frank bedauert es, wenn Maria krank ist* 'Frank regrets it if Maria is ill'. It will discuss the syntactic and semantic status of argument *wenn*-clauses and propositional correlates associated with them as well as the semantic properties of the verb classes licensing these argument adverbials.

I. An argument *wenn*-clause is neither an object- nor a subject-clause introduced by a non-canonical complementizer as suggested by Böttcher & Sitta (1972), but an adverbial which restricts the matrix clause and simultaneously provides the propositional argument of the matrix predicate – cf. Williams (1974), Pullum (1987), and Hinterwimmer (2012) for English, Fabricius-Hansen 1980 for German, and Quer (2002) for Spanish and Catalan. The reasons for its adverbial status are for instance: *i.* An obligatory propositional argument has to be realized by a correlate if the *wenn*-clause is preposed – cf. (2) *Wenn Maria krank ist, bedauert *(es) Frank* 'If Maria is ill, Frank regrets it'. Preposed complement clauses like *dass*-, *wh*-, and *ob*-clauses leave a trace in the complement position thus prohibiting a correlate there. *ii.* Unlike *dass*-argument clauses, argument *wenn*-clauses cannot be adjoined to DPs or PPs, respectively – cf. (3) *Das, dass/ *wenn Maria krank ist, ...* 'The fact that/*if Maria is ill' or (4) *Darüber, dass/*wenn Maria kommt,* 'the perspective that/* if Maria will come. *iii.* A paraphrase of constructions with argument *wenn*-clauses can contain a *dass*-clause in the complement position of the matrix predicate – cf. (5) *Wenn Maria krank ist, bedauert Frank, dass Maria krank ist.* 'If Maria is ill, Frank regrets that she is ill.' *iv.* Preference predicates admit *wh*-extraction, but they do not so if there is a *wenn*-clause – cf. (6) *Wohin zieht Frank vor, dass/*wenn Maria fährt?* 'Where does Frank prefer that Maria will go?'

Similarly to Pesetsky (1991), I consider extraposed argument *wenn*-clauses as base-generated VP- or vP-adjuncts which are indirectly licensed by a correlate or, if there isn't any, by a propositional *pro* – cf. (7) *Frank bedauert, wenn Maria krank ist.* 'Frank regrets if Maria is ill'. *Wenn*-clauses in the left periphery like (2) originate in the Spec-position of the functional category TP where they are licensed by T^0 . Since they are out of VP, they are ordinary adverbials. Argument *wenn*-clauses inside VP, however, are rather complement-like ones.

II. Correlates like *es, das* as well as prepositional correlates like *darüber* 'pro-about' are the canonical propositional arguments of predicates licensing argument *wenn*-clauses. They are theta-marked by these predicates and refer to a contextually given proposition. The latter is either anaphorically given as in (2) or denoted by an extraposed *wenn*-clause as in (1). A correlate in a complement position licenses an extraposed *wenn*-clause by m_e -command in terms of Pesetsky (1991). Semantically, it is represented as an indexed variable that absorbs the index of the *wenn*-clause it m_e -commands or is preceded by. If there is no overt correlate as in (7), the propositional argument is represented as a phonologically empty propositional *pro*. This *pro* is licensed if it is theta-marked by V^0 and if it m_e -commands the *wenn*-clause, which provides its index. Unlike an overt correlate, *pro* does not indicate that there is a context-given proposition.

III. The *wenn*-clause σ in a construction with such a predicate is regarded as the protasis of an implication as in (8) $\sigma \Rightarrow \tau(\sigma)$ (cf. Williams 1974, Fabricius-Hansen 1980, and Hinterwimmer 2011) or as the restrictor of an operator in the matrix clause as in (9) $[\forall e: e \text{ involves } \sigma]\{e \text{ involves } \tau(\sigma)\}$ (cf. Kratzer 1986 for ordinary conditionals and Quer 2002 and Thomson 2012 for argument *if*-clause constructions), respectively. And, it is assumed that a predicate licensing argument *wenn*-clauses is (potentially) factive – cf. *bedauern* 'regret' in (1). I will show that approaches like (8) and (9) do not account for constructions where the matrix verb is a preference predicate – cf. (10) *Mia zieht es vor, wenn Paula Klavier spielt.* 'Mia prefers it if Paula plays the piano' (cf. Fabricius-Hansen 1980). As far as potentially factive predicates are concerned, I will modify the approach (8) as follows: the *wenn*-clause σ 'Paula plays the piano' restricts the matrix clause τ 'Mia prefers that σ ' in that it expresses that σ is contingent. Thus, potential factivity is not a necessary condition for a predicate to license an argument *wenn*-clause. It will also be shown that it isn't a sufficient condition either since there are potentially factive predicates like *darüber nachdenken* 'cogitate about' that are factive, but do not allow argument *wenn*-clauses.

References

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