

## Non-canonical causal constructions across languages

Martin Konvička (Freie Universität Berlin)

In order to express causal relations, speakers of English have several constructions at their disposal: subordinate clauses such as (1a), prepositional constructions such as (1b), but also non-canonical causal constructions, at times labelled as *because* X constructions (1c) (see, e.g., Bergs 2018a; Kanetani 2019: 147–172; Konvička 2024). These non-canonical causal constructions will be the focus of the talk - specifically their form, functions, and cross-linguistic comparison.

- (1) a. *I won't be in Berlin because I'll be giving a talk in Amsterdam.*
- b. *I won't be in Berlin because of Amsterdam.*
- c. *I won't be in Berlin because Amsterdam.*

What formally distinguishes *because* X constructions (1c) from canonical causal subordinate clauses with *because* (1a) is primarily the absence of a finite verb form in the complement slot. While prepositional constructions (1b) only allow nominal complements, the non-finite causal constructions such as (1c) are characterised by a wider range of potential complements such as adjectives, adverbs, nouns, emojis or interjections (Bohmann 2016: 160). This distinct complementation pattern also raises the question of the category membership of the connector in these constructions and whether it is best analysed as a conjunction, as a preposition or as something completely different (Konvička 2018; 2023).

Although constructions of the type (1c) can be found both in spoken and written contexts, social media seem to offer particularly fertile ground for their use. Conceptually spoken language is more tolerant of deviations from standard norms (Bohmann 2016: 170) and more open to creative language use (Bergs 2018b: 286). For this reason, research on non-canonical causal constructions, such as *because* X, has so far mainly focused on social media such as Twitter and, more generally, on computer-mediated communication.

Moreover, constructions formally and functionally equivalent to (1c) are found not only in English but also in other languages such as German (Wolfer, Müller-Spitzer & Ribeiro Silveira 2020; Konvička & Stöcker 2022), Dutch (Konvička 2018; Konvička & Stöcker 2022), Czech (Konvička 2020) or Finnish (Wessman 2017).

### List of References

- Bergs, Alexander. 2018a. Because science! Notes on a variable conjunction. In Elena Seoane, Carlos Acuña-Fariña & Ignacio Palacios-Martínez (eds.), *Subordination in English*, 43–60. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Bergs, Alexander. 2018b. Learn the Rules like a Pro, so you can Break them like an Artist (Picasso): Linguistic Aberrancy from a Constructional Perspective. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 66(3). 277–293.
- Bohmann, Axel. 2016. Language change because Twitter? Factors motivating innovative uses of because across the English-speaking Twittersphere. In Lauren Squires (ed.), *English in computer-mediated communication. Variation, representation, and change*, 149–178. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Kanetani, Masaru. 2019. *Causation and Reasoning Constructions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Konvička, Martin. 2019. De verborgen complexiteit van want/omdat X. *Internationale Neerlandistiek* 57(2). 161–183.
- Konvička, Martin. 2020. Protože změna: K české kauzální konstrukci protože X. *Naše řeč* 103(3). 243–263.
- Konvička, Martin. 2023. Category membership and category potential: The case of vague because. *Lexis. Journal in English lexicology* (22). <https://doi.org/10.4000/lexis.7418>.
- Konvička, Martin. 2024. *Because reasons. Non-finite causal constructions in English, German, Dutch, and Czech*. PhD thesis. Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin.
- Konvička, Martin & Kristin Stöcker. 2022. (Non-)Ellipses in Dutch, English, and German: The case of because X. *Nederlandse Taalkunde* 27(3). 333–367.
- Wessman, Kukka-Maaria. 2017. Rating the acceptability of non-standard language. How Finnish language users rate variants of the verbless koska X 'because X' internet meme construction? Poster presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, Tartu, Estonia.
- Wolfer, Sascha, Carolin Müller-Spitzer & Maria Ribeiro Silveira. 2020. Mit der Fähre nach Island, weil Flugangst. Textsortenspezifische Angemessenheit von weil mit Verbletzstellung, weil mit Verbzweitstellung und in elliptischen Konstruktionen empirisch untersucht. *Deutsche Sprache* (2). 174–192.