Insubordination and the grammaticalisation of interactive presuppositions

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1. Insubordination: what it is

(1)   *If you could just sit here for a while please.*
              [Free-standing conditional, functioning as request]
              [, you would be doing me a favour / I would be happy [etc.]]

(2)   *Ob   wir   richtig sind?*
        whether   we   right   are
        '[It's possible/I doubt/you were wondering (etc.)] whether we're right?'
        [Free-standing 'whether' clause, representing imputed question/position]

(3)   *Alza-r-si,   porc-i, av-ete cap-ito?   Rifa-re*
        get_up-INF-REFL   pig-PL   have-2PL understand-PstPTCP   make-INF

        i   lett-i,   ma   presto!   Puli-r-si   le   scarp-e.
        the.M.PL   bed-PL   but quickly   clean-INF-REFL   the:F.PL shoe-PL

        '(To) get up, pigs, understand? (To) make your beds, and hurry! (To) clean your
        shoes!'   [Source: P. Levi: La tregua]

(4)   あれを見て!
        Are wo   mi-te !
        that ACC   look-CNJ
        'Look at that!' [Free-standing chained-form verb functioning as informal imperative;
        `< are-wo mite kudasai  'looking at that, give down [=please]!]`

(5)   *Kajakaja-ntha dali-jurrk?*
        daddy-COBL come-IMM:COBL
        '(Have you seen / do you know) whether/that daddy has arrived?'

Definition of insubordination:
the conventionalised main-clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses (Evans 2007:367)

English (1): free-standing conditional clause, introduced by *if*

German (2): free-standing whether clause, introduced by *ob* 'whether' and with verb-final subordinate verb order

Italian (3): use of infinitive as command

Japanese (4): chained *-te* clause as command/request, normally non-finite, non-final predicate chained to final predicate bearing tense/mood, politeness markers etc.

Kayardild (5): finite subordinate clause, each word of which bears a 'complementizing oblique' case suffix marking the clause as the complement of some main predicate

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Note that, in principle, any structural feature associated with
subordinate clauses may turn up in insubordination, e.g.
subordinating conjunctions (if, ob); subordinating verbal
morphology (infinitive in Italian, -te construction in
Japanese), case use characteristic of subordinate clauses
(Kayardild), subordinate-specific word order (German).
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Diachronic process: insubordination
Synchronic product: insubordinated constructions

2. Why insubordination is a problem for standard claims about grammaticalisation

The literature on morphosyntactic change concentrates on diachronic developments by which subordinate clauses develop from material in main clauses. Insubordination proceeds in the opposite direction (i.e. subordinate clauses recruited to provide material for new main-clause types)

Insubordination is a counterexample to the 'normal', 'unidirectional' direction of grammaticalisation:

> [G]rammaticalisation is unidirectional [...]. [I]t leads from a 'less grammatical' to a 'more grammatical' unit, but not vice versa. A few counterexamples have been cited (e.g. ... Campbell, in press.)[i] They concern either degrammaticalisation or regrammaticalisation... The former is present when the direction of grammaticalisation is reversed, that is, when a more

grammatical unit develops into a less grammatical one, while the latter applies when forms without any function acquire a grammatical function. Although both degrammaticalisation and regrammaticalisation have been observed to occur, they are statistically insignificant and will be ignored in the remainder of this work. Note that many cases of alleged degrammaticalisation found in the literature on this subject can be shown to be the result of an inadequate analysis (see Lehmann 1982:16-20). [Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer (1991:4-5)]

From the diachronic point of view, (grammaticalisation - N.E.) is a process which turns lexemes into grammatical formatives *and renders grammatical formatives still more grammatical*. [Lehmann (1982:v), italics mine]

[grammaticalisation is a process] whereby linguistic units lose in semantic complexity, *pragmatic significance*, syntactic freedom, and phonetic substance, respectively. [Heine & Reh (1984:15)]

A possible counter-move: insubordination isn't grammaticalisation, but reanalysis:

> The discussion so far has focused on unidirectionality, and what kinds of unidirectionality are characteristic of grammaticalisation. Virtually nothing is exceptionless, and there are of course instances of change in languages that are counterexamples of tendencies that can be characterised as "less>more grammatical", "main clause>subordinate clause", etc. In these volumes the papers by Campbell and Greenberg explicitly raise counterexamples to unidirectionality...... It is likely that all these examples are strictly speaking actually not cases of grammaticalisation (although once they have occurred they may be subject to the generalisation, reduction, loss, and other changes typical of grammaticalisation). Rather, the examples Campbell and Greenberg cite can be regarded as instances of reanalysis. (Traugott & Heine 1991:6-7)

However, the usual definitions of reanalysis don't fit insubordination very well:

> .. a mechanism which changes the underlying structure of a syntactic pattern and which does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation (Harris & Campbell 1995:61)

> 'change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestations' (Langacker 1977:59).

> 'another well-known source of grammaticalisation is reanalysis ... in which old boundaries are reinterpreted.' (Traugott 1980:49)

Insubordination doesn't fit any of these definitions very well – so remains a stubborn set of empirical problems that need to be integrated into generalising theories of morphosyntactic change

3. Steps and argumentation

The historical trajectory for insubordination:

Subordination	Ellipsis	Conventionalised ellipsis	Reanalysis as main clause structure
A	B	C	D
Subordinate construction	Ellipsis of main clause	Restriction of interpretation of ellipsed material	Conventionalised main clause use of formally subordinate clause

A note on what 'ellipsis' means:

Quirk et al (1972:536 'words are ellipted only if they are uniquely recoverable, i.e. there is no doubt about what words are to be supplied ... What is uniquely recoverable depends on the context.'

A better alternative: define ellipsis as involving 'some recoverable elements that are grammatically acceptable', and then allow a range of situations from uniquely-recoverable to non-uniquely recoverable (with perhaps an infinite range of possibilities).

An example of these 4 steps, with respect to German subordinate clauses:

3a. FULL CONSTRUCTION WITH OVERT MAIN CLAUSE. ['normal' state – not insubordination yet]

(6)   *Ich   erinner-e   mich nicht,*
          I   remember-1SG   me   not

        ob   sie   eine   Karte gekauft hatte.
        whether she a.F.NOM   ticket bought had.3SG

        'I don't remember whether she bought a ticket.' (Durrell 1997:387)

3b.   ELLIPSIS OF MAIN CLAUSE. Main clause is ellipsed. The same insubordinated construction (here *ob* + subordinate clause) is consistent with a range of 'restored' material.

(7)   *[Was   mein-st   du dazu,] Ob ich mal wegen meiner Galle   frag-e?* [ii]
          what think-2SG you to.it   if I   just because my   gall.bladder ask-1SG
          '(What would you think), if I just ask about my gall bladder?' (Buscha 1976)

(8)   *[Ich zweifl-e,]   Ob wir richtig sind?* (Buscha 1976)
          I   doubt-1SG   if we   right   are
          '(I doubt), whether we are right?'

(9)   *Ob diese Wortstellung zulässig   ist?*   [, *erschein-t mir   fraglich.*]
         if this   word.order permissible is   appear-3SG 1SGDAT doubtful
         'Whether this word order is permissible, (seems doubtful to me).'
         (Weuster 1983:33)

3c. CONVENTIONALISATION OF ELLIPSIS. Certain syntactically permitted reconstructions
become excluded by convention. E.g. insubordinated *wenn* (if-)-clauses in German (as in
English) are compatible with a range of restored elliptical material, but they should involve
positive rather than negative evaluation – wishful thinking in (10), and permissions/suggestions
in (11):

(10)   a. [*Es wäre   schön,*] / *Wenn ich deine Statur hätte.*
            it   be.3.SG.SBJV   lovely   if   I   your build had

         b. [*Ich wäre   froh,*] /
            I   be.1.SG.SBJV   glad

         c. *[*Es wäre   schlimm,*] /
            it   be.1.SG.SBJV   bad

           'a. [It would be lovely]   /   if I had your build'.
           'b. [I would be glad]'
          *'c. [It would be bad]'

(11)   *Wenn Sie sich vielleicht die Hände wasch-en   möchten?*
         if   you self perhaps   the hands wash-INF might

         a. [, *können Sie   das hier tun.*]
             could   you that here do

         b. [, *wäre   das sehr   nett von Ihnen.*]
             were   that very   nice of you

         c.* [, *können Sie   das nicht tun*]
             could   you that not do

         d.* [, *wäre das   nicht sehr nett von Ihnen*]
             were that not   very nice of   you

         'If you would maybe like to wash your hands.
          [, that would be very nice of you.]
          [, you can do it here.]
         *[, you can not do it]
         *[, that would not be very nice of you.]'

3d. C**ONVENTIONALISATION OF THE WHOLE CONSTRUCTION (CONSTRUCTIONALISATION).** The construction now has a specific meaning of its own and it may not be possible to restore any ellipsed material.

(12a)   *Wo   Zehntausende verreck-en müss-en*.
          where ten.thousands die-INF   must-3PL
          'Where tens of thousands must die.' [LIT.]

Buscha (1976), in discussing examples like (11a), is unable to supply a paraphrase from which this can be derived by simple deletion, and replaces *wo* by the subordinating concessive conjunction *obwohl* in her expansion (11b):[iiii]

(12b)   *Obwohl Zehntausende verrecken   müss-en,*
          although ten.thousands die-INF   must-3PL

          mach-en   sie   sich keine Gedanken   darüber.
          make-3PL   they self no   thoughts   about.that

          'Even though tens of thousands must die, they don't think twice about it.'

3e. Arguments and data regarding conventionalisation and ellipsis.

It is only once stage (c) is reached that we have insubordination, rather than a specific case of ellipsis that happens to involve main clause elision. This makes information about the range of possible semantic interpretations crucial: only once we have conventionalisation (i.e. some structurally possible interpretations are eliminated) do we have Stage (c); and only when we can't readily derive the interpretation synchronically from ellipsis at all do we have Stage (d).

To understand what is going on in a particular language, the most important data we can have therefore concerns the range of possible interpretations for prima facie insubordinated clauses and their relation to possible restored clauses. E.g. to determine whether elliptical Japanese -node or -*kara* 'because' sentences as in (13a, b) count as insubordination,we need to know whether there is any restriction on what material could be 'restored':

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(13a) ぼくは行くから…
　　　Boku wa ik-u   kara.
　　　I   TOP go-PRES because
　　　'Since I am going, [please don't bother / don't worry /etc.]'
　　　'Since I am going, [nobody else has to do it / the problem there will be
　　　solved etc.]'
　　　[Others???]

(13b) ぼくは行きますので...
　　　Boku wa ikimasu   node
　　　I   TOP   goADR.HON   because
　　　'Since I am going, so .. [= (46)]'

A second line of research is typological: even though there are clearly convergent cross-linguistic tendencies, there are also many cases where comparable input conditions lead to distinctly conventionalised final conditions.

3f. Conventionalisation and distinct pathways in the insubordination of conditional clauses

Insubordinated *if*-clauses are extremely common cross-linguistically, being associated time and again with requests and suggestions:

English

(14)   A milkman's sheet about Xmas deliveries, including[iv]:
　　　If you would kindly indicate in the boxes below your requirements and then hand the completed form back to your Roundsman by no later than the 16th December 1995.

German: see above

Dutch:
(15)   *Hans, of   je   even naar Edith zou lopen*.
　　　Hans   whether you   just to   Edith will go
　　　'Hans, would you just go to Edith.'

French:
(16)   *Si on allait se   promen-er?*
　　　if one went REFL   walk-INF
　　　'What if we went for a walk?'

Japanese:

(17)　お医者さんに行ったらいいと思う
　　　oishasan　ni　it-tara　ii　to　omo-u.
　　　doctor　LOC　go-if　good　COMP　think-PRES
　　　'I think that it would be good to go to a doctor.'

(18)　お医者さんに行ったら
　　　oishasan　ni　it-tara?
　　　doctor　LOC　go-COND
　　　'Why don't you go to a doctor?'

Spoken Mon:

(19a)　*(yɔ ra?)　ʔa wòiŋ kwan　mòn məkɛh, (ʔoa) cɒt　mìp*
　　　if　PART　go visit village Mon if　I　mind happy
　　　'(I) would be happy if (you) would visit a Mon village.'
　　　[data from W. Bauer p.c.]

(19b)　*ʔa wòiŋ kwan　mòn məkɛh.*
　　　go visit village Mon if
　　　'(You) should visit a Mon village.'
　　　[data from W. Bauer p.c.]

However, insubordinated if-constructions in Spanish (20a) and Swedish (20b) have a quite different interpretation.. As an explanation for the Spanish development Schwenter (1999:8), who furnishes this example, suggests that the link from conditionality to disagreement is via an ellipted main clause along the lines of (in this example) *if it's horrible, how can you say it's great?*

(20a)　[Sisters Q and R are looking at clothes in a shop window:]
　　　Q:　Ah,　¡mira　qué chaqueta　más　chula!
　　　ah　look.IMP what jacket　INT　great

　　　R:　Si　es　horrible.
　　　if　it.is　horrible

　　　Q:'Hey, look what a great jacket!'
　　　R:'But it's horrible!'

(20b)　*om　ni　har　nån　stug-katalog　eller　nåt*
　　　if　you　have　some　cottage-catalogue or　something
　　　'Do you have a caottage catalogue of something?'　(Lombardi Villauri 2004:210)

The fact that the meaning of insubordinated Spanish and Swedish *si*-clauses is quite different to English / French / German / Dutch / Mon / Japanese illustrates that the development is conventionalised, even though some pathways (> request) are much commoner and perhaps more readily explained from pragmatic principles, perhaps using accounts based on Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson 1987)

4. Typology of functions coded by insubordinated clauses

The descriptive task: charting the functions served by insubordinated clauses cross-linguistically

A very wide range of functions is attested. They can't all be exemplified here – see Evans (2007) for relevant cross-linguistic data. In summary:

4.1 Indirection and interpersonal control: requests and commands, hints, warnings and admonitions.

Hints (Kayardild):

(21)   *dathin-a   yarbud-a   thaari-juru-y*
        that-NOM   bird-NOM   bring.back-POT-CLOC
        '(Eat it in such a way that) you can bring that bird back. (i.e. don't eat it all.)'
        Pragmatically: 'hey, don't eat it all!'
        Literally: 'that (you/we) can bring that bird back…'

(22)   *Dathin-inja   kunawun-inja   rabi-jarra-nth*
        that-COBL   child-COBL   get.up-PST-COBL

        rik-urrk,   rila-thirrin-inj.
        crying-LOC.COBL   wake-RES-COBL
        '(Someone/you should comfort that child), because it's got up, because it's
            crying, because it's been woken up.'
            Context: addressing the child's mother in middle of night.'
        Lit.: 'that that child has got up, that it's crying now, that it has been woken…'

4.2 Modal functions of various types: epistemic and evidential meanings; deontic meanings (especially hortatives and obligation); exclamation and evaluation

Ex: Kayardild: wide range of possible epistemic framings (see that / know that / hear that), with present tenses focusing on direct perception/knowledge of event, past tenses focusing on perception/knowledge of result, and future tenses on supposition/inference from general knowledge:

(23)   *[Dan-kurrka   ri-in-kurrka*
        here-LOC.COBL   east-from-LOC.COBL

dali-jurrka   budubudu-nth]
come-IMM.COBL   boat-COBL

'(I can hear/see) the boat coming from the east.'
Context: a group of people waiting on a beach, watching and listening for a boat.
Interpretation of visual vs. auditory evidence would depend on how close the boat was,
whether it is night-time or daytime, etc.

(24)   *[Dan-kurrka   marrkathu-nth]*
here-LOC.COBL   aunt-COBL
'Here's aunty. (I can see/hear her coming).'

(25)   *[Kajakaja-ntha   dali-n-marri-nja=d]*
daddy-COBL   come-NMZ-PRIV-COBL=yet
'(I see that / it seems that) daddy hasn't arrived yet.'
Context: speaker is returning disappointed from the airstrip,
where he had hoped to meet the hearer's father.

(26)   *[Thabuju-ntha   warra-jarra-nth]*
big brother-COBL   go-PST-COBL
'(There's no-one here,) because big brother has gone.'
Context implies: there's no-one here, so big brother must have gone.

(27)   *[Banga-ntha   bijarrba-ntha   balung-kuu-ntha*
turtle-COBL   dugong-COBL   westward-MPROP-COBL

thula-thuu-nth]
descend-POT-COBL
'(I know that) the turtle and dugong will go down to the west.'
Context: speaker has seen the 'spouts' where they have broken the surface en
      route.

4.3 Signalling presupposed material: negation (i.e. negative clauses have subordinate form), contrastive focus, reiteration, disagreement with assertions by previous speaker

Givón (1979:107) 'negative assertions are used in language in contexts where the corresponding affirmative has been mentioned, deemed likely, or where the speaker assumes that the hearer - erroneously - holds to a belief in the truth of that affirmative.'

In Arizona Tewa (Kroskrity 1984) the negative construction (28) involves a negative prefix (*we-)* plus a suffix -*dí* which was originally a subordinating suffix (29); insubordination has proceeded to the point where all negatives take a -dí suffix and if they need to be subordinated a second -dí suffix needs to be added (30):

(28) *Sen   kwiyó   we-mán-mun-dí*
      man   woman   NEG1-3>3.ACTIVE-see-NEG2
      'The man did not see the woman.'

(29) *He'i   se   na-mɛn-dí   'o-yohk'ó*
      that   man   3.STAT-go-SUB   1.STAT-be_asleep
      'When that man went, I was asleep.'

(30) *Kada we-mán-mun-dí-dí*   *dó-mun*
      Kada NEG-3/3ACTIVE-see-NEG-SUB   1/3ACTIVE-see
      'Kada did not see her/him/it, I did.'

I.e. insubordination proceeded from

'X not being the case, Y' to
'X not being the case' (as the normal way of marking negation)

5. What functions get expressed by insubordinated clauses, and why

An explanatory theory of insubordination will have to ask the differential question: why function(s) X, but not function(s) Y. This depends in turn on having robust data on which functions are attested, and which excluded, with insubordinated clauses. Research is still too early to permit confident statements here, but some striking initial trends are:

(a) in situations of interpersonal directivity, insubordinated clauses are used either in situations where the speaker assumes the hearer can readily identify their positive desires (insubordinated requests), or where the speaker is confident in assuming they share with the hearer a negative evaluation of the mentioned event (insubordinated apprehensive constructions)

(b) in modalizing insubordination, insubordinated clauses are used in situations where the context makes the speaker confident that the hearer can identify their epistemic stance to the proposition

(c) they are used in for the presupposed rather than the newly asserted material

More generally:

• insubordination occurs in situations where a high degree of intersubjective alignment between speaker and hearer can be presupposed

Prediction: insubordinated constructions won't be found with meanings like:

• negative imperatives[1]
• overrides of presumed hearer assumptions (though the Spanish si-construction is a problem for this)
• upgrades or redirections of the nature of evidence (e.g. from hearsay to direct perception)

6. Conclusion

• insubordination is as widespread as it is little-studied – typological studies so far have just examined the tip of the iceberg
• it is often marginal and therefore slips under the radar of grammatical descriptions – e.g. English if-requests weren't identified in a published grammatical description until Huddleston & Pullum (2002) though corpus-based discourse studies began picking it up a couple of decades earlier (Ford & Thompson 1986, Stirling 1999)
• as with other phenomena where we need close studies of synchrony in order to understand diachrony (sound change in the laboratory; variationist study; polysemy to understand semantic change) we need much more delicate studies of elliptical phenomena before we can understand what is going on
• preliminary indications suggest we will need to draw on models of language use and semantic change that are more intersubjective than subjective if we are to fully grasp the phenomenon, and in particular those that focus on how speakers achieve intersubjective alignment (Du Bois 2007)

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[1] I.e. where the insubordinated construction itself is the marker of negative imperative, as opposed to saying marking an imperative, in which there is a negative marker independently of the construction

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Abbreviations

CLOC complementizing locative (Kayardild; locative case functioning as complementizer
      for various types of subordinate clause, with first person inclusive or second person
      subjects – see Evans 1995)
CNJ   conjunct/chained form (Japanese *-te* form)
COBL complementizing oblique (Kayardild; oblique case functioning as complementizer
      for various types of subordinate clause, with first person exclusive, second or third person
      subjects – see Evans 1995)
IMM   immediate
POT   potential (can/will/must)
RES   resultative

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[i] = Campbell 1991, discussed below.

[ii] For these examples, the English translations are my own; occasionally they are slighly non-literal in the interests of idiomaticity.

[iii] Note Weuster's comment (p. 56) on this construction: '*Wo* verweist [in this example] nicht auf einen Ort; es handelt sich vielmehr um das Konzessive *wo*': *wo* [where] refers not to a place; rather it is a matter of concessive *wo* [i.e. English whereas].

[iv]   I thank Grev Corbett for this example.