



Secondary grammaticalization in clause combining: from adverbial subordination to complementation in English



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ABSTRACT

In this article we look at a case of secondary grammaticalization in English which entails the development of originally adverbial subordinators into complement-clause connectives. The study systematizes our earlier findings regarding the adverbial links *but*, *if*, *though*, *lest*, *as if*, *as though*, and *like*, which over time have come to realize a subsidiary function as equivalents (or near-equivalents) of the major declarative complementizers *that* and zero in certain specific contexts. We show that minor declarative complementizers are typically associated with the expression of subjectivity and irrealis. As such, they are usually attested in complementation structures in which subjectivity is also at hand (e.g. they are complements to specific predicate-types occurring in non-assertive environments). The development discussed here illustrates grammaticalization both at the level of clause links and at the level of clause-combining.

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1. Setting the scene

Secondary grammaticalization, understood as those cases in which an already grammatical marker acquires a new, more grammatical function (cf. Kuryłowicz, 1965, p. 52; Givón, 1991, p. 305; Brinton and Traugott, 2005, p. 77) has received less attention in the literature on grammaticalization than the shift from lexis to grammar. A possible case of secondary grammaticalization entails the development of originally adverbial subordinators into complement-clause connectives, a tendency attested across languages and language families.

In this article we look at the use of originally adverbial links as complement-clause connectives in English. In spite of their long recorded history, ‘minor declarative complementizers’ (López-Couso and Méndez-Naya, 1998) have received very little attention in reference grammars of Present-day English as well as in the literature on complementation. Over the last few years we have addressed several of these links in the history of the English language, namely *but*, *if*, *though*, *lest*, *as if*, *as though*, and *like*. Taking as a starting point the standard corpora covering the history of English (Helsinki Corpus and ARCHER) and the contemporary language (e.g. the Brown family of corpora (see Hofland et al., 1999) and the Diachronic Corpus of Present-day Spoken English (Aarts and Wallis, 2006)), we have, in a number of publications (López-Couso, 2007; López-Couso and Méndez-Naya, 1998, 2001, 2012a, 2012b, 2014), examined the use of these adverbial connectives in the complementation domain, where they have come to serve as equivalents (or near-equivalents) of the major declarative complementizers *that* and zero. In our present contribution we aim to systematize the main results of our previous work in order to deal with the

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study of these minor complementizers in a more comprehensive way, paying attention not so much to the history and use of each individual link, but rather to the category of minor declarative complementizers as a whole. We will consider the structural and semantic features shared by these connectives which make them eligible to serve a complementizer function in addition to their original use as adverbial subordinators. In our view, the analysis of this development in English may shed some light on the distinction between primary and secondary grammaticalization, on the relation between complementation and adverbial subordination, and consequently on our understanding of clause linkage.

2. Adverbial subordinators within and beyond the adverbial domain

As mentioned in Section 1, the connectives under discussion (*if, though, as if, as though, like, lest, and but*) are typically associated with the domain of adverbial subordination. For our purposes, we follow here the classification of adverbial semantic types proposed by Kortmann (1997) in his typological study of adverbial connectives in European languages. In this model the adverbial semantic space is divided into 32 interclausal relations, organized into three different networks, namely the temporal domain, the modal domain, and the CCCC domain (comprising the notions of Cause, Condition, Concession, and Contrast). *If, though, as if, as though, like, lest, and but* introduce clauses of different semantic types, all of them pertaining to the CCCC domain, with the exception of Comparison (*as if, as though, like*), which belongs to the modal domain. The relations expressed by these subordinators are described by Kortmann as follows (where *p* and *q* stand for the propositions expressed by the adverbial clause and the matrix clause respectively):

CCCC domain

Condition (<i>if</i>):	'if <i>p, q</i> '	(Kortmann, 1997, p. 85)
Concession (<i>though</i>):	'although <i>p, q</i> '	(Kortmann, 1997, p. 86)
Negative purpose (<i>lest</i>):	'lest <i>p, q</i> '	(Kortmann, 1997, p. 86)
Exception (<i>but</i>):	'except that <i>p, q</i> ', ' <i>q, only that p</i> '	(Kortmann, 1997, p. 87)

Modal domain

Comparison (<i>as if/as though/like</i>):	' <i>q, as if p</i> ', ' <i>q, as though p</i> '	(Kortmann, 1997, p. 88)
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Examples (1)–(5) provide illustrations of the adverbial clauses introduced by the subordinators under analysis.

- (1) **If** Colin is in London, he is undoubtedly staying at the Hilton. (from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1091)
- (2) No goals were scored, **though** it was an exciting game. (from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1097)
- (3) He talks **as if/as though/like** he has a potato in his mouth. (adapted from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1110)
- (4) Earthen moulds were being hastily erected **lest** an attack should be launched that night. (from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1108)
- (5) Nothing would satisfy the child **but that** I place her on my lap. (from Quirk et al., 1985, p. 1103)

In syntactic terms, the adverbial clauses introduced by these connectives typically express satellite relations and therefore belong to the periphery of sentence structure, functioning as adjuncts or modifiers. Since they are not core sentence elements, they are easily omissible.

Kortmann (1997, p. 58) characterizes adverbial subordinators as versatile and syntactically polyfunctional elements, which often take on new functions, both within adverbial subordination (consider, for instance, cases of temporal connectives like *since*, which acquired causal and concessive values over time) and also beyond the adverbial domain. The latter type of development is related to the fact that adverbial links lie at “the meeting point of several category continua” (Kortmann, 1997, p. 58) in clause linkage, in particular the subordinator–coordinator and the complementizer–adverbial subordinator–relativizer continua. The developments analysed in this article illustrate changes along the second continuum: in addition to their function in the adverbial domain, the links under study can also be used to introduce declarative complement clauses, which function as arguments of a predicate and are therefore obligatory constituents in clause structure. In such a function, these connectives have come to serve as equivalents (or near-equivalents) of the major declarative complementizers *that* and *zero* and cannot be replaced by other adverbial links for the same semantic relation. Examples (6)–(10) illustrate the use of these subordinators in the complementation domain.

- (6) It would be a good idea **if** you hired a bodyguard. (from McCawley, 1988, p. 143)
- (7) I do not marvel **though** they are full of diseases when they are old. (1557 North Guevara's Diall Pr 295; OED s.v. *though* II.4.a)
- (8) It seemed **as if/as though/like** he was trying to hide his true identity. (adapted from Huddleston and Pullum, 2002, p. 962)

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