

Causal/concessive V1 and Wo-VE clauses

Canonical assertions usually have the finite verb in second position in German (cf. (1) and (2)).

- (1) [Die Freisinnigen] **führten** einen super Wahlkampf.
- (2) [Er] **ist** angeblich kaum scheu.

There are, however, (peripheral) types of assertive utterances which deviate from this pattern. Two of these structures are illustrated in (3) and (4).

- (3) Ich bin klar enttäuscht über das Resultat der FDP. Das schlechte Abschneiden ist sehr überraschend. **Führten die Freisinnigen doch einen super Wahlkampf** – ganz im Gegensatz zu den anderen Parteien. (St. Galler Tagblatt, 29.9.2008)
- (4) Es ist schon komisch. Über Wochen kann der Bär nicht mit einem Betäubungsgewehr überrascht werden. **Wo er doch angeblich kaum scheu ist und der geneigte Wanderer von ihm als Appetithappen angesehen wird.** (Braunschweiger Zeitung, 3.7.2006)

While (3) is an example of a verb-initial (V1) clause, (4) is a *Wo*-verb-final (*Wo*-VE) clause.

This article is about the grammatical properties and specific interpretations/uses of such clauses.

In the literature, both of these structures are associated with special characteristics and specific meanings/uses (cf., e.g., Önnersfors 1997b; Pasch 1999; Günthner 2002; Pittner 2011). If such characteristics apply, it must be possible to capture them by an analysis.

These characteristics include the assumption that the clauses have a causal and, where applicable, a concessive reading, whereby these two interpretations occur on different levels: the causal reading appears to be always epistemic or illocutionary while the concessive interpretation (if present) is propositional. In this light, it has been posited that the two structures take on two different ‘roles’: V1 clauses are said to be interpreted causally and *Wo*-VE clauses concessively (cf. Zifonun/Hoffmann/Strecker 1997, p. 2312f.; Pasch 1999; Günthner 2002; Önnersfors 1997b, p. 161).

A second feature is that the modal particle *doch* is obligatory in these clause types, or at least appears to be very typical (cf., e.g., Winkler 1992, p. 36; Altmann 1993, p. 1020; Önnersfors 1997b, pp. 155/157; Zifonun/Hoffmann/Strecker 1997, p. 2299; Pittner 2011, p. 157; Oppenrieder 2013, pp. 40/42; Thurmair 2013, p. 640). This claim has been related to the assumption that both clauses presuppose their contents and that the particle codes this meaning (cf., e.g., Winkler 1992, p. 43; Pasch 1999, p. 145; Günthner 2002, p. 325; Günthner 2007, pp. 134, 135; Altmann 1993, p. 1020; Önnersfors 1997b, p. 166). At the same time, however, it has been observed that one component of the meaning normally ascribed to *doch*, namely that of contradiction or adversativity, cannot be identified in

these clauses (cf., e.g., Önnarfors 1997b, p. 167). For this reason, it is still not clear why *doch* favours this environment so strongly.

By referring to corpus data from the *Deutsches Referenzkorpus* (which (mainly) consists of conceptually and medially written language) and the German web corpus, *DECOW*, (which consists of conceptually spoken language and medially written language), I will investigate the validity of the characteristics mentioned above.

In particular, I will argue against the presupposed status of the utterances' contents and content that the occurrence of the particle *doch* can be inferred from this. It transpires that the established/uncontroversial/factual nature of the proposition included in both clause types could not be verified. The (in)acceptability of some *Wo-VE* data which was explained with reference to this aspect can be attributed to other factors, when dealt with separately. What is more, a detailed investigation of V1 clauses reveals that they are primarily fully focussed, comment-only or purely rhematic with a strong degree of assertion. I believe that this is difficult to reconcile with their purportedly presupposed status.

The corpus data also show that the strict association of V1 clauses with a causal interpretation and *Wo-VE* clauses with a concessive reading is not tenable. Both clause types are always interpreted causally at a modal level and both types can additionally be interpreted concessively. Whether the concessive interpretation applies depends on the attitude the clauses provide a motivation for.

In line with the findings of Önnarfors (1997b, p. 170) and Pittner (2011, p. 170), I would argue that *doch* is indirectly responsible for the causal relationship between the V1 or *Wo-VE* clause and the preceding clause. A crucial part of this interpretation is due to the causal default interpretation which speakers – if possible – also establish in paratactic clause structures, even when absolutely no cohesive devices are used. In contrast with their analyses, my modelling provides an explanation as to why *doch* (and not a different particle, for example) facilitates this interpretation (even though the particle certainly does not code the causal reference directly). It is the concrete modelling of the contribution of the modal particle *doch* which is relevant in this respect: contrary to the established notion that *doch* introduces a contradiction, according to my analysis *doch* indicates that a topic up for discussion in the discourse is still open. As this modelling allows for adversative contexts, whereby they are not a prerequisite for the appropriate use of the particle, the missing adversative reference in the V1 and *Wo-VE* clauses is no longer problematic. Based on the meaning contribution which I have ascribed to the particle, it can be assumed that its meaning is transparent, both when used causally with a concessive moment of signification and when used in purely causal cases. Furthermore, the meaning contribution which I ascribe to *doch* does not involve the particle presupposing the proposition which it refers to. As mentioned above, this is not an interpretation which categorically applies to the V1 and *Wo-VE* clauses. If this reading is present, however, it is not incompatible with the meaning of *doch*; in other words my modelling does not preclude that the situation included in a *doch* utterance is already known. This is merely not a requirement for the adequate use of this particle.

To move away from the characteristics of the two clause types given above and discussed in the literature, my modelling of *doch* also applies to certain stylistic effects which have generally been neglected to date. Other authors (cf. Oppenrieder 1989, p. 204; Reis 2000, p. 218; Oppenrieder 2013, p. 42) have alluded to the fact that these clause types appear to

be *expressive*, thus implying that the speaker is more emotionally involved. I spell out this impression in concrete terms by showing that the V1- and *Wo*-VE clauses in narrative texts are used predominantly in specific narrative situations and styles, namely in the *personal narrative style* in which one character serves as a *reflector figure*. My modelling of *doch* can capture this use, making it possible to explain why a different particle is not used in the clauses although it may be more appropriate for coding the causal relationship.

The study presented in this article offers an analysis of two (peripheral) clause types in German. Nevertheless it touches on many aspects which are relevant when investigating particles, clause types, information structure and speech act theory, both in general and when comparing languages.

Literature

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Corpora

Corpora from the Web ((DE)COW): <http://hpsg.fu-berlin.de/cow/>
[Schäfer/Bildhauer 2012]

Deutsches Referenzkorpus (DEREKO): <https://cosmas2.ids-mannheim.de/cosmas2-web/>
[e.g. Kupietz et al. 2010]