

CAUSALS, CONCESSIONS, AND THE SCOPE OF NEGATION

Thorstein Fretheim

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

NO-7491 Trondheim

E-mail: Thorstein.Fretheim@hf.ntnu.no

While wide-scope negation of a causal relation between two propositions P and Q – as in the English sentence I didn't move because the rent was raised – is truth-conditionally underdetermined as to whether the speaker did or did not move and the rent was or was not raised, use of a concessive construction – I didn't move although the rent was raised – eliminates the inherent vagueness of the negative causal construction, as it encodes the information that the rent was raised but that the speaker did not move because of in spite of that. The intuitively felt resemblance between the causal truth-conditionally underdetermined construction and the concessive construction is claimed to have caused an Old Norse causal connective to be re-analysed as a non-truth-conditional concessive, for det ('for that'), in modern Norwegian. For det is referred to as a 'weak' concessive with a procedural meaning in the sense of relevance theory, a meaning which will be pragmatically strengthened to a regular 'strong' concessive expressing the expectation that Q is false if P is true, in case considerations of relevance support the inferred 'strong' interpretation of the token in context.

1. Causals and concessives

In a recent paper, König and Siemund make the observation 'that concessive clauses and complex sentences with such clauses are rarely, if ever, used for the speech act or speech activity of conceding and that they should rather be analysed as standing in opposition to causal constructions' (König and Siemund 2000, 343). They set out to explore the linguistic and cognitive bases of what they refer to as a wide-spread intuitive feeling that a concessive construction is the opposite of a causal construction. I am not going to recapitulate their arguments. What is important for my purpose is the fact that use of a concessive construction frequently means a rejection of the interlocutor's (or occasionally some third person's) explicit claim or more indirect suggestion that there exists a causal relation between a proposition P (the averred cause) and a proposition Q (the averred consequence). And in that context it seems to me that it even makes a lot of sense to say that the speaker concedes the truth of P but rejects a belief that Q follows from P.

Producing a concessive construction is not the only grammatical strategy available to a speaker intending to perform an act of rejecting a communicated thought that Q is a consequence of P. The speaker could place the metarepresented relation 'Q because P' within the scope of external negation – '¬(Q because P)' – but that would yield a truth-conditionally underdetermined semantic representation, one which does include the information that there is no causal relation between P and Q but fails to tell us whether the speaker's objection to 'Q because P' might be due to a commitment to the falsity of Q ('Even if P is true, the truth of Q does not follow') or a commitment to the belief that a true Q is caused by something other than P. In other words, the negation operator can target

either Q or P. What may be needed to determine the truth conditions of a given token of a sentence encoding the external negation '¬(Q because P)', for example the proposition expressed by an utterance of the English sentence *I didn't move because the rent was raised*, is an inference-based narrowing down of the scope of negation (see chapter 4 of Carston 2002, a semantic-pragmatic account of negation whose ingredients are a weak univocal semantics with external negation and pragmatic enrichment in the form of scope narrowing).

Relevance-based pragmatic considerations help us decide what assumption(s) the speaker intends to present as false, (i) that the speaker's rent was raised, (ii) that the speaker had changed residence, or (i) as well as (ii) – as opposed to a negation of the assumption that the speaker's moving was caused by the raised rent. A comma inserted between the clauses indicates that the causal clause is intonationally non-integrated: *I didn't move, because the rent was raised*, and then the scope of negation will be understood to be restricted to the negative matrix clause even in the encoded logical form (and *the rent* is more likely to be enriched as 'the rent at the place to which I could have moved', by bridging inference). However, my concern in this paper is with negation whose scope embraces the cause (P) as well as the consequence (Q), because that is the kind of causal construction whose function overlaps the function of concessive constructions (König and Siemund 2000). As will be demonstrated in section 2, this overlap can lead to grammatical changes. What was a formal indicator of a causal relation between P and Q (in the scope of negation) in Old Norse has been reinterpreted as an indicator of a concessive relation between P and ¬Q in modern Norwegian. As a change from causal to concessive implies getting rid of the inherent truth-conditional underdeterminacy of '¬(Q because P)', my claim is that this historical change was spurred by Sperber and Wilson's principle of relevance and the accompanying presumption of optimal relevance, whose second part is defined as follows: 'The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences' (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 270). If a speaker intends to say both that Q does not follow from P and that Q is false, she can choose to convey her message either by means of a linguistic form encoding external negation of the causal construction 'Q because P' or by means of a concessive construction of the type '¬Q (even though P)'. At the recipient's end, decoding of the former type of grammatical structure has to be followed up by a pragmatic process of narrowing the scope of negation down to ¬Q. In contrast, the alternative use of a concessive modifier expressing P means encoding ¬Q directly, with no need for a truth-conditional strengthening of the encoded semantic representation. A diachronic re-analysis of the original causal construction as concessive would then arguably make the linguistic stimulus more relevant because it means less processing effort for the addressee. This is a plausible impetus for a diachronic change.

In German it is possible to let a causal adjunct representing P co-occur with a concessive adjunct representing the same proposition P, as illustrated in (1) and (2) taken from König and Siemund (2000), where causal *deshalb* and *deswegen* ('therefore', 'because of that') co-occur with concessive *trotzdem* ('in spite of that').

- (1) Johann hat viel Geld verloren. Deshalb ist er trotzdem kein armer Mann geworden.
 therefore is he nevertheless no poor man become
 'John has lost a lot of money. He has not become a poor man *because of/in spite of* that.'
- (2) Ich habe zwei Wochen lang fast nichts gegessen.
 Deswegen habe ich trotzdem nicht abgenommen.
 because.of.that have I nevertheless not off.taken
 'I have hardly eaten anything for two weeks. I have not lost any weight for all that.'

Observe that *deshalb* and *deswegen* are within the scope of negation in (1)-(2), in defiance of their sentence-initial position. The second sentence in (1) can be glossed either as causal 'because of' or

as concessive 'in spite of'. *Deswegen ... trotzdem* in (2) was glossed as 'for all that' by the authors. *For all that* is invariably a concessive phrase in present-day English, notwithstanding the (originally) causal meaning of the preposition *for* (cf. the discussion in König and Siemund 2000, 346). We are going to revisit the causal use of *for* in our exploration of Norwegian concessives in section 2.

What happens to the linguistic semantics of a German sentence like the last one in (2), if we eliminate the adverbial adjunct *trotzdem* as shown in (3)? And how would the omission affect the addressee's pragmatic interpretation of a token of (3)?

- (3) *Deswegen habe ich nicht abgenommen.*
'Therefore/because of that I haven't lost any weight.'

My two German informants tell me that the only truth-conditional interpretation of (3) that they are able to access is one that gives the negator narrow scope; whatever propositional value is assigned to anaphoric *deswegen*, the cause represented by *deswegen* is outside the scope of negation in (3). A wide-scope negation interpretation, as in (2), is out of reach when *trotzdem* is dropped, making an utterance of (3) irrelevant in the contextual frame of the initial utterance of (2). The different truth-conditional interpretations that a native speaker of German is likely to give to the sentence with *trotzdem* in (2) and to the *trotzdem*-free but otherwise identical sentence in (3) suggest that this concessive affects the propositional content of an utterance. That would appear to give us an argument in support of the claim that *trotzdem* is a truth-conditional linguistic item. However, as I am going to show directly, the fact that a concessive modifier may have an impact on the addressee's inference-based construal of the proposition expressed by an utterance can be explained without our succumbing to the seemingly inevitable but sadly inadequate conclusion that concessives have a truth-conditional meaning.

The function of *trotzdem* is to communicate the meaning that there is some sort of contrast, or even an assumed incompatibility, between the matrix clause proposition and the proposition identified as the 'antecedent' of pronominal *-dem* of *trotzdem*. This is a non-truth-conditional meaning as surely as the adversative meaning conveyed by means of the co-ordinating connective *aber* ('but') in (4) or an adverbial *aber* substituted for *trotzdem* in (2).

- (4) *Ich habe zwei Wochen lang fast nichts gegessen aber ich habe nicht abgenommen.*
'I have hardly eaten anything for two weeks but I haven't lost any weight.'

A causal adjunct like *deswegen* in (3) does not really place a constraint on the truth of the negative proposition expressed; in that respect it differs from a conditional or a temporal adjunct. However, the assertion made in (3) is that the negative proposition is true *because* the proposition of the preceding utterance is true, and that is a thought which contradicts most people's set of beliefs. The *trotzdem* alternative in (5) below is a relevant follow-up, though, because the proposition expressed by that utterance is the same as the proposition of the second conjunct of (4) and the concessive adjunct expresses the non-truth-conditional information that the speaker anticipates an astonishment reaction from the hearer when he is being told that Q is true.

- (5) *Ich habe zwei Wochen lang fast nichts gegessen.*
'I have hardly eaten anything for two weeks.'
#*Deswegen habe ich nicht abgenommen. / Trotzdem habe ich nicht abgenommen.*
'Therefore I haven't lost any weight.' / 'Even so I haven't lost any weight.'

How does (2) above differ semantically and pragmatically from the alternative in (5) with the concessively modified $\neg Q$? *Trotzdem habe ich nicht abgenommen* in (5) and *Deswegen habe ich trotzdem nicht abgenommen* in (2) express distinct propositions, yet paradoxically they seem to be

pragmatically interchangeable forms, as they both communicate the assumption that the speaker has failed to lose weight in spite of an excruciatingly long period of fasting. In my opinion there is a fairly straightforward reason for this perceived functional equivalence of the version with and the version without causal *deswegen*. The communicative role of concessive *trotzdem* in (2) is to avert the hearer's attention from a truth-conditional reading that places sentence-initial *deswegen* outside the scope of negation and to cause him to focus on a reading which places it within the scope of negation. Only the latter is consistent with the linguistic presence of *trotzdem*, which is allowed to co-occur with *deswegen* precisely because a concessive may not ever interact with the negation operator, or any logical operator. As a non-truth-conditional connective it fails to make a contribution to the proposition expressed, to the explicature in the sense of Sperber and Wilson (1995). *Trotzdem* forces a wide scope of negation reading of the second sentence in (2), which opens for a truth-conditional strengthening so that the negation targets Q. It should be observed, though, that this does not happen because *trotzdem* represents a concept that adds a truth condition but because the concessive is anaphorically linked to the proposition of the preceding utterance, which provides us with an assumption that blocks the interpretation '(because P) \neg Q' in the counter-expectation context set up by *trotzdem*.

Norwegian is a language which, like English, does not permit a concessive to co-occur with a coreferential causal adverbial. But Norwegian makes up for that inability by having developed a concessive historically derived from a causal modifier (in Old Norse). Its re-analysis as a non-truth-conditional concessive gives it a function analogous to that of *trotzdem* in (2), whose role is to cause the hearer to choose an external negation interpretation plus a truth-conditional strengthening from ' \neg (Q because P)' to ' \neg Q'. This concessive, *for det* ('for that'), differs from other Norwegian concessives, in that it activates a context which makes the thought 'Q because P' mutually manifest. The remainder of this paper is devoted to a semantic-pragmatic analysis of this concessive in Norwegian, with a focus on what distinguishes it from a causal within the scope of negation and what distinguishes it from other Norwegian concessives.

2. From causal to concessive modifier

The predecessor of the Norwegian concessive adverbial *for det* (for that) is the Old Norse causal adverbial *firir þui*, also spelled *fyrir þvi*. *þvi* is the sg. dative case form of the demonstrative *þat* ('that'), which is used cataphorically with reference to a proposition P expressed in the Old Norse clausal complement of an adverbial adjunct prefaced by *firir þui at* (or *að*) ... (literally: for THAT that ...). When Old Norse causal *firir þui* with an anaphoric (backward-linking) demonstrative *þui* appears in a negative declarative, it very often takes scope over negation. There are apparently very few convincing examples in Old Norse texts of a causal *firir þui* in the scope of negation. Nevertheless it is my contention that the re-analysis of *for det* as a concessive was made possible by the fact that the pragmatic functions of concessive and causal modifiers are virtually conflated when the causal element is within the scope of the negation operator.

While Old Norse *firir þui* as a subordinating causal connective combined with the complementizer *at* ('that'), modern Norwegian *for det* as subordinator combines with *om*. This is primarily a conditional connective, and it also appears in concessive *selv om* ('even if', 'even though', 'although') clauses. This historical change of complementizer is a sign of grammatical re-analysis. Causal *firir þui at* was lexicalized as the causal connective *fordi*, where the high front vowel in the stressed final syllable directly reflects the vowel of the old dative form *þui*. *For det at* as a subordinating causal connective still exists in Norwegian alongside *fordi at*, but these forms are generally considered to be very colloquial, or even 'child language'.

One strong argument for a historical change from a causal *firir þui* to a concessive *for det* is seen in the way that Norwegians use *for det* in non-negative declaratives. We should not be surprised to find that the human mind can confuse concessive modifiers in a negative sentence and causal modifiers within the wide scope of negation, nor that this confusion can lead to semantic changes and then to changes in the linguistic code, but due to their opposite nature it is inconceivable that we would ever mix up the function of causals and the function of concessives in affirmatives. Dropping the negation in a German sentence like *Deswegen habe ich trotzdem nicht abgenommen* in (2) where *deswegen* and *trotzdem* represent the same state of affairs, we get *Deswegen habe ich trotzdem abgenommen* ('Therefore I have nevertheless lost weight'), which is a good sentence provided that *deswegen* ('therefore') and *trotzdem* ('nevertheless') represent two distinct states of affairs (represented as different propositions in both parties' working memory). *For det (om)* parts company with *av den grunn* and *fordi* in affirmative declaratives. What is communicated in (6) and (7) below is that the speaker enjoyed her visit to Norway in spite of the country's high cost of living, but (8) encodes the opposite meaning that the speaker enjoyed her visit to Norway because of the country's high cost of living. In order to understand how *for det* could acquire this function in affirmatives we must assume that the historical process of re-analysis was already completed at the time when (6) became normal usage. (6) and (8) have distinct meanings.

- (6) Jeg har hatt det fint i Norge *for det*. / *for det om det er et dyrt land*.
 'I've had a good time in Norway all the same.' / 'although it's an expensive country.'
- (7) Jeg har hatt det fint i Norge *likevel*. / *selv om det er et dyrt land*.
 'I've had a good time in Norway all the same.' / 'although it's an expensive country.'
- (8) #Jeg har hatt det fint i Norge *av den grunn*. / # *fordi det er et dyrt land*.
 #'I've had a good time in Norway for that reason.' /
 #'because it's an expensive country.'

Although the adverbial adjuncts were justifiably glossed in the same way in (6) and (7), the lexical meaning of *for det (om)* should not be equated with the meaning of other Norwegian concessives, whether clausal or non-clausal. *For det (om)* has lexicalized a constraint on context selection which is inherited from the use of causal *firir þui (at)* in the only kind of situation where the causal appears to be equivalent to a concessive, i.e. in acts of rejecting a communicated assumption that Q follows from P. While the use of other Norwegian concessives would be in order if the individual who did not expect Q to be reconciled with P was the speaker herself, correct use of *for det (om)* demands a setting in which the speaker is objecting to some person's belief (or to a popular belief in the community at large) that P leads to Q. Unlike the concessive *selv om* clause in (9), the *for det om* clause in (10) is therefore semantically anomalous.

- (9) *Selv om* John og jeg gikk i samme klasse i seks år, påsto han at han ikke husket meg.
 'Although John and I were in the same class for six years, he maintained that he couldn't remember me.'
- (10) ??*For det om* John og jeg gikk i samme klasse i seks år, påsto han at han ikke husket meg.

The assumption that one would remember someone who has been one's classmate for six years is the speaker's own in (9), it is not attributed to the addressee or to anyone else. The speaker's intention in (9) is not to contradict an asserted or implied belief that Q is (likely to be) a consequence of P. *For det om* imposes an interpretation on (10) which is hard to reconcile with the meaning of the subsequent main clause with the lexical verb meaning 'maintain' or 'claim'. It introduces a concessive clause whose proposition is typically an echoic interpretation of someone's thought that P and Q are causally related propositions.

(11) and (12) are essentially different from (10), for purely pragmatic reasons. *For det om* in (11)-(12) directs the hearer to a context in which someone must have said or implied that Q (probably) follows from P and the reaction of the speaker of (11)-(12) is to deny the truth of that presumption.

- (11) For det om John og jeg gikk i samme klasse i seks år, kjente vi hverandre ikke så godt.
for that if J. and I went in same class in six years knew we each other not so well
'Although John and I were in the same class for six years, we didn't know each other well.'
- (12) For det om Åse er ung, er hun faktisk veldig erfaren.
for that if A. is young is she actually very experienced
'Although Åse is young, she is actually very experienced.'

The linguistic semantics of both (11) – where the main clause is negative – and (12) – where the main clause is positive – gives the addressee access to a context that is likely to make the utterance relevant to him. There is an interactional element which is encoded in the meaning of *for det om*, and that meaning component has to be wholly inferred if *selv om* is substituted for *for det om* in (11)-(12).

Non-clausal *for det* works in the same way as a clause prefaced with *for det om*. Consider the dialogue of (13) where *for det* in the utterance of A₂ should not be replaced by *likevel* ('all the same', 'nevertheless'), because that would too easily give us the impression that the speaker believes there to be some sort of incompatibility between being drunk and being negatively affected by hot weather. *For det* is seen to operate at a metalinguistic level in (13).

- (13) A₁: Den fyren der borte ser ut til å ha problemer med varmen.
'That guy over there seems to have a problem with the heat.'
B: Han er full!
'He is drunk!'
A₂: Han har problemer med varmen for det/#likevel.
'He has nevertheless a problem with the heat.'

For det is acceptable in (13) A₂ because this concessive instructs the hearer to activate a context in which the speaker attributes a causal belief to the hearer, which the speaker does not share. The alternative *likevel* does not encode that kind of instruction, so with *likevel* as concessive modifier in (13) there is a serious risk that the hearer will establish mentally a contrast between B's explicature and the explicature of the utterance of A₂, while *for det* is in perfect agreement with speaker A's metalinguistic objection to B's objection to A₁.

Finally, the effect of the special lexical constraint on context selection that makes *for det (om)* unique among Norwegian concessives is felt very strongly in positive interrogatives, as seen in (14)-(15), where *for det om* again contrasts with *selv om*.

- (14) Tar du på deg frakk for det om det er årets hittil kaldeste/#varmeste dag?
'Are you going to wear an overcoat just because it's so far the coldest/#warmest day of the year?'
- (15) Tar du på deg frakk selv om det er årets hittil varmeste/#kaldeste dag?
'Are you going to wear an overcoat even though it's so far the warmest/#coldest day of the year?'

An utterance of (14) implies that the weather is possibly not cold enough for an overcoat even if it is the coldest day of the year so far. (15) is acceptable just in case the adjective is the antonym *varmeste* ('warmest'), the contrast there is simply between the warm weather they are experiencing and the rather wintry kind of clothing referred to.

¹ Observe that English *nevertheless* is an unproblematic gloss in (13) A₁, although *nevertheless* and *likevel* are frequently translational correspondents. In my opinion the acceptability of *nevertheless* and the reduced acceptability of *likevel* in (13) must be due to the fact that the English lexicon lacks a concessive with the lexical properties of Norwegian *for det*.

3. The procedural meaning of *for det*

Drawing on the fundamental distinction within theories of mind between representation and computation (e.g. Fodor 1983), the relevance-theoretic distinction between conceptual and procedural encoding was propelled by Blakemore's proposal (Blakemore 1987) that certain discourse connectives be treated as encoders of information about an inferential path that is meant to facilitate the hearer's derivation of a cognitive output which agrees with the speaker's informative intention and satisfies the hearer's expectation of stimulus relevance (Wilson and Sperber 1993). There seems to be a good case for treating very many types of non-truth-conditional meaning in procedural terms, including all sorts of connectives that give the hearer information about the speech act performed or the speaker's attitude to the proposition expressed.

I am now going to offer a definition of the lexical meaning of concessive *for det (om)* which is stated as a constraint on the addressee's choice of inferential path in the utterance comprehension process.

- (16) *There is no warrant for the mutually manifest assumption – attributed to someone other than the speaker – that P causes Q (or ¬Q, as the case may be)*

This guideline directs the hearer to what I would call a 'weak' concession: P is insufficient evidence to conclude that Q, yet there is no *encoded* contradiction of Q, either. (16) invites a context-dependent propositional strengthening that would make a *for det (om)* concession pragmatically indistinguishable from a 'strong' concession characterized by the speaker's positive commitment to the contradictory conclusion that ¬Q. This pragmatic strengthening is the result of a low-cost inference whenever the data is such that *for det* and *likevel* (or *for det om* and *selv om*) are felt (by the investigator) to be interchangeable, and the strengthening process is withheld whenever a *causal* adjunct would seem to convey something equivalent to the weak concessive *for det*. (16) accounts for the way that we normally interpret a *for det*-modified positive declarative at one extreme, with pragmatic strengthening to a concessive ('anti-causal') relation between P and Q, and at the other extreme it accounts for how we are liable to interpret *for det*-modified positive interrogatives, i.e. weak concession without strengthening, possibly with a minimum of epistemic commitment beyond what is encoded by (16). It also accounts for the unacceptability of (10), as opposed to the regular concessive construction in (9), because the assumption 'John remembered me because we had been classmates for six years' cannot be one that the speaker attributes to John, it must be the speaker's own assumption which was later contradicted by John's verbal behavior. Finally, the existence of a Norwegian lexical item with the encoded procedural meaning of (16) gives us an explanation for why *likevel* is less natural than *for det* in an utterance like (13) A₂.

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PRIEŽASTIES BEI NUOLAIDOS KONSTRUKCIJOS IR NEIGIMO APIMTIS

Thorstein Fretheim

Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama neigimo apimtis tokiose priežasties ir nuolaidos konstrukcijose, kaip anglų kalbos sakiniuose: *I didn't move because the rent was raised* ('Aš neišsikėliau, kadangi nuoma pakelta') ir *I didn't move although the rent was raised* ('Aš neišsikėliau, nors nuoma pakelta'). Pirmajame pavyzdyje priežasties santykis tarp propozicijų P ir Q teisingumo sąlygų požiūriu yra neapibrėžtas, nes nėra aišku, ar kalbėtojas išsikėlė, ar ne ir ar nuoma pakelta. Tuo tarpu antrajame pavyzdyje vartojama nuolaidos konstrukcija informuoja, kad nuoma pakelta, bet kalbėtojas neišsikėlė. Teigiama, kad intuityviai jaučiamas panašumas tarp priežasties ir nuolaidos konstrukcijų sąlygojo naują senosios skandinavų kalbos priežasties jungtuko *for det* ('dėl to') interpretaciją šiuolaikinėje norvegų kalboje: jį siūloma laikyti neturiniu teisingumo sąlygų nuolaidos jungtuku ('a non-truth-conditional concessive'), kai Q yra klaidinga, jeigu P yra teisinga.