Deviant marking of causality in fictional prose and newspaper genres: stylistic effects and linguistic theory

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Creative text effects result from strategic linguistic choices – this assumption is widely accepted in various domains of discourse study, and it has been applied in numerous studies focusing on stylistic or rhetorical strategies in discourse. Surprisingly little attention, however, has been devoted to the question *how* linguistic creativity functions from a linguistic theoretical point of view (cf. Dancygier & Sanders, 2010). This paper focuses on linguistic mechanisms underlying an 'obvious' case of linguistic creativity (cf. Leech & Short, 2007: 39-41): 'deviant' patterns of language use; I investigate how deviant use results in a coherent yet remarkable (aesthetically or functionally motivated) interpretation of conventional linguistic elements. As a case study, I analyze how deviant use of causal connectives brings about stylistic *viewpoint* effects.

Evidence from corpora (Pit, 2007; Stukker, Sanders & Verhagen, 2009) and discourse processing (Canestrelli, Mak & Sanders, submitted) suggests that various languages contain connectives prototypically associated with causal relations rendered from a neutral perspective (1), in which the author reports a causal process that occurred in observable reality. These connectives must be contrasted with others (2), prototypically associated with subjective claim-argument relations, reported from subjective author or character perspective.

(1) They stepped inside *parce que/weil/omdat* it started to rain.
(2) It'll soon start raining, *car/denn/want* dark clouds are gathering.

Interestingly, any of these connectives may also occur in contexts they are *not* prototypically associated with:

(3) They stepped inside *car/denn/want* it started to rain.
(4) It'll soon start raining, *parce que/weil/omdat* dark clouds are gathering.

Lower frequency and longer reading times suggest that these usage types are somehow deviant. I report qualitative evidence from literary and newspaper discourse suggesting that deviant connectives consistently introduce an aspect of their prototypical usage schema in a context that is otherwise ambiguous for causality type, resulting in an overall interpretation that fits each individual occurrence well. Thus, (3) would occur in a context focusing on the character's internal states; (4) in a context of an author trying to objectify an inherently subjective act of reasoning.

In addition, I report quantitative evidence suggesting that deviant usage correlates with linguistic characteristics of the local context of use and with the overall rhetorical goal of the text (literary motif, communicative goal). In sum, these findings suggest that deviant connective use of connectives results in a 'creative' interpretation by mapping (Fauconnier, 1997) the causality type associated with the deviant connective, which is demonstrably congruent with interpretative elements in the local or global context, onto the type of causality that is most readily available in the causal relation itself. This interpretation is in line with basic tenets in cognitive linguistics, assuming that linguistic categorization has its basis in the author's or a character's subjective worldview including rhetorical intentions, and that the meaning and use of linguistic categories may be extended to less conventional contexts, provided that some conceptual relation to the prototypical core is maintained (Langacker, 1990; Verhagen, 2007).

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