

## ⇒ 論 說 ‹‹

The influence of subject NPs in the structuring of discourse:  
A case study of *as*-clauses expressing reasons

Yoko Yamada

**Abstract:** This study investigates the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses expressing reasons (henceforth *as*-clauses), especially focusing on the discourse properties of subject NPs in clauses. To date, detailed investigations of *as*-clauses have been limited; consequently, not much is known about the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses. Examining empirical data by applying the consciousness-based approach to information flow proposed by Chafe (1994), this study demonstrates how the usage of *as*-clauses is pragmatically motivated.

**Key words:** subject NPs in clauses, structure of discourse, *as*-clauses, activation, information

### 1. Introduction

This study investigates the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses expressing reasons (henceforth *as*-clauses), especially focusing on the discourse properties of subject NPs in clauses. Studies covering the ordering of main clauses and *as*-clauses suggest the tendency of *as*-clauses to precede the main clause (e.g. Altenberg 1984; Diessel 2005).<sup>1</sup> However, Yamada (2014) described a different approach to *as*-clauses than that offered thus far. Yamada (2014) analysed a total of 92 instances of *as*-clauses, manually collected from parts of eight expository/academic books written in British English from 1999 to 2011. Yamada presented that most of the *as*-clauses in the data followed the main clause (87 out of 92 instances (94.6%)). Yamada (2014) thus revealed that the strong tendency of *as*-clauses to follow the main clause is most often attributed to relative familiarity with the preceding sentence.

Yamada (2014) indicates two major cases in which main clauses, not *as*-clauses, are more closely related to the preceding sentence. One case is when subject NPs in main clauses refer to the whole part of the preceding sentence, as in (1). The other case is when subject NPs in main clauses refer to expressions in the preceding sentence, as in (2).

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<sup>1</sup> The tendency of *as*-clauses to precede the main clause is also claimed by some dictionaries (e.g. *Genius English-Japanese Dictionary* (fourth and fifth edition) and *The Wisdom English-Japanese Dictionary* (second edition)) and by some reference books (e.g. Swan 2005<sup>3</sup>: 73).

- (1) Most people have a horror story relating to round buying. I can remember arriving at a bar to meet a friend, who was already there with five of his work colleagues. Custom compelled me to offer them all a drink when I went up to the bar, even though he and I would have to leave after that one. It was quite upsetting for me as I was out of work at the time. It wasn't a cheap bar either.  
(Example (4) in Yamada 2014, originally from Colin Joyce, *Let's England*)<sup>2</sup>
- (2) When the person's occupation is finally revealed, it is customary, however boring or predictable this occupation might be, to express surprise. The standard response to 'Yes, I am a doctor [or teacher, accountant, IT manager, secretary, etc.]' is 'Oh, *really?!*' as though the occupation were both unexpected and fascinating. This is almost invariably followed by an embarrassed pause, as you search desperately for an appropriate comment or question about the person's profession — and he or she tries to think of something modest, amusing, but somehow also impressive, to say in response.  
(Example (6) in Yamada 2014, originally from Kate Fox, *Watching the English*)

In example (1), the subject NP *it* in the main clause refers to the whole part of the preceding sentence. In example (2), the subject NP *this* in the main clause refers to the expression (*Oh, really?!*) in the preceding sentence. Although Yamada (2014) did not conduct a close examination of examples, such as in (1) and (2), these examples suggest that subject NPs in clauses play an important role in the choice of the order of main and *as*-clauses.

Further elaborating on this point, this study examines the discourse properties of subject NPs in main and *as*-clauses by applying Chafe's (1994) consciousness-based approach to information flow. Furthermore, this study explores characteristics of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses.

Numerous studies have examined adverbial clauses (i.e. clauses that are marked by linguistic forms such as *when*, *if* and *because*) from various perspectives. Among them, several studies on adverbial clauses have referred to *as*-clauses in their analyses (e.g. Altenberg 1984; Diessel 2005; Zufferey and Cartoni 2012). However, detailed investigations of *as*-clauses have rarely been conducted. Consequently, not much is known about the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses. In contrast, there have been extensive studies on *because*-clauses, a typical English adverbial clause expressing reasons (e.g. Schiffrin 1987; Ford 1993). This study aims to reveal the nature of the lesser-known English adverbial clauses.

Section 2 of this study provides an overview of Chafe's (1994) approach to information flow. In Section 3, the data in this study is reviewed. Section 4 examines

<sup>2</sup> The underlines in examples (1) and (2) were added by Yamada (2014).

discourse properties of subject NPs in main and *as*-clauses in terms of Chafe's (1994) approach to information flow and explores the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses. Section 5 examines the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses under a specific circumstance. Section 6 summarises the conclusions of this study.

## 2. Chafe's (1994) consciousness-based approach to information flow

Chafe (1994) analyses the relationship between language and consciousness. Chafe (1994) defines 'the word *consciousness*' (p. 28) as 'an active focusing on a small part of the conscious being's self-centered model of the surrounding world' (p. 28). The focus of consciousness moves constantly from one item of information to the next. Chafe (1994) introduces 'the metaphor of *flow*' (p. 30) 'to capture the dynamic quality of the movement of information into and out of both focal (active) and peripheral (semiactive) consciousness' (p. 30).

The amount of information contained in a focus of consciousness is very limited. This characteristic of consciousness is linguistically reflected. Chafe (1994) regards each intonation unit (i.e. segmentation of speech) as the expression of a single focus of consciousness. Intonation units are identified by various features such as pauses and 'changes in overall pitch level' (Chafe 1994: 69). Chafe (1994: 69) hypothesises intonation units as 'the linguistic expression of information that is, at first, active in the consciousness of the speaker and then, by the utterance of the intonation unit, in the consciousness of the listener, or at least that is the speaker's intent'.

Based on his sample data, Chafe (1994: 69) suggests that 'the majority of substantive intonation units have the form of single clauses'. Clauses verbalise the idea of events or states,<sup>3</sup> and events and states tend to be active in consciousness for only a short period. Each idea is 'replaced by another idea at roughly one- to two-second intervals' (Chafe 1994: 66). Most events and states include one or more participant referents. According to Chafe, the clause as a whole usually expresses new information (information that is newly activated at a given point in a discourse), whereas its parts (linguistic forms that express referents participating in events and states) express either given (information that is already activated at a particular point in a discourse), accessible (information that was previously semi-active), or new information.

What is crucial in Chafe's distinction of information type is that this distinction 'is determined primarily by the speaker's assessment of changing activation states in the mind of the listener' (Chafe 1994: 81).

Concerning referents included in events and states, one of the referents has a status of

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<sup>3</sup> Chafe (1994) defines an event as something that happens, and a state as something that simply exists for a period of time.

grammatical subject. Chafe (1994) suggests that a grammatical subject expresses a starting point.<sup>4</sup> Chafe (1994: 83) states as follows:

Clauses do not express a random collection of independent events or states, floating in the air like so many disconnected bubbles. Rather, each has a point of departure, a referent from which it moves on to provide its own new contribution.

Chafe argues that, in general, subjects expressing starting points express given information. In Chafe's data, 81 % of subjects expressing starting points express given information (Chafe 1994: 85).<sup>5</sup>

In his analysis of the flow of information entering and exiting people's consciousness, Chafe focuses on ordinary conversational speech on the grounds that conversational speech is the most natural use of language. However, Chafe regards his analysis as a baseline for the discussion of linguistic phenomena found in other styles of language use (such as academic prose, fiction and prepared speeches).<sup>6</sup> In this study, written English data are examined in terms of Chafe's (1994) consciousness-based approach to information flow.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Data

For the purpose of this study, data were collected considering three points. First, a limited context is not appropriate for linguistic research at the pragmatic level. Second, *as*-clauses do not distribute evenly among dialects/registers (e.g. Biber et al. 1999). These points were also considered by Yamada (2014). As a third point, the outcomes of the data may vary depending on the types of dialects and/or registers examined (e.g. Hunston 2002).

Based on these three points, I focused on British English as the dialect type and mystery fiction as the register type to be examined. From the first 300 pages of seven mystery stories from 2000 to 2015, *as*-clauses were collected.<sup>8</sup> The following is a list of the books

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<sup>4</sup> Chafe (1994) divides subjects into two types: functional and non-functional. Functional subjects express starting points, whereas non-functional subjects do not. Chafe (1994) indicates that *it* used as weather expressions is an example of a non-functional subject.

<sup>5</sup> In total, 16% of subjects expressing starting points express accessible information, and 3% of them express new information (see Chafe 1994: 86).

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed comparison of Chafe's (1994) approach to information flow with other approaches to information flow proposed by other studies, see Chafe (1994, Chapter 13).

<sup>7</sup> As studies applying Chafe's (1994) notion of consciousness, see Sunakawa (2005). In her analysis of written texts, Sunakawa (2005) regards a clause in written language as a form corresponding to an intonation unit in spoken language.

<sup>8</sup> The size of sources of data was determined based on Biber et al. (1999) and Yamada (2014). The corpus data of Biber et al. (1999) show that academic prose contains *as*-clauses twice as often as fiction. Yamada (2014) collected a total of 92 instances of *as*-clauses from the first about 100 pages of eight expository/academic books written in British English.

used as the sources of data:

1. Ann Cleeves's *The Glass Room*
2. Reginald Hill's *Midnight Fugue*
3. Peter Lovesey's *The Stone Wife*
4. Ian Rankin's *Fleshmarket Close*
5. Ruth Rendell's *No Man's Nightingale*
6. Peter Robinson's *Children of the Revolution*
7. R. D. Wingfield's *Winter Frost*

Some of the books listed above have the versions printed and published in the USA. However, *as*-clauses were collected from the versions printed and published in Britain so as not to confuse results with the differences between American and British English.<sup>9</sup> The settings of the stories in the books depict present-day British society.

Similar to Yamada (2014), instances of *as*-clauses that were unclear in meaning were excluded. In total, 93 instances of *as*-clauses were obtained. The data show the similar tendency to Yamada (2014) in the ordering patterns of main clauses and *as*-clauses: the *as*-clauses in the data tend to follow the main clause (75 out of 93 instances (80.6%)).

Considering the subject NPs in the data, the instances can be classified into three categories in terms of the activation state of referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and *as*-clauses:

- (i) Referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading a complex sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause
- (ii) Referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state at the time when he/she is reading a complex sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause
- (iii) Referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading a complex sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause

Table 1 presents the distribution of instances. The figures in parentheses indicate the percentages of distribution.

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<sup>9</sup> *Genius English-Japanese Dictionary* (fourth and fifth edition) states that there is a tendency to prefer *since* to *as* in American English and that this is derived from the fact that *as* has several meanings.

Table 1. *Activation state of referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and as-clauses*

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active than those expressed by subject NPs in <i>as</i> -clauses | Referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in <i>as</i> -clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state | Referents expressed by subject NPs in <i>as</i> -clauses are more active than those expressed by subject NPs in main clauses | Relationship between activation state of referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and that of referents expressed by subject NPs in <i>as</i> -clauses is unclear |
| 50 (54%)   | 21 (23%)   | 17 (18%)   | 5 (5 %)   |

In the following section, the discourse properties of subject NPs in main clauses and *as*-clauses are explored in terms of Chafe's (1994) approach to information flow, and the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses is explored. To begin with, cases in which referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active are surveyed. Then the survey will proceed to cases in which referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar, and will proceed to cases in which referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active.

#### 4. Discourse properties of subject NPs in main clauses and *as*-clauses and the structure of discourse organised by these clauses

##### 4.1. When referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active

Here, the data have 50 instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active in the consciousness of the reader than those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses at the time when he/she is reading a complex sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause. Some examples of this occurrence are as follows:

- (3) Wexford was the first to speak. 'Ms Hussain was a good friend of yours, Ms Bray?'

Wexford didn't really know if they were Miss or Mrs or one of each but he seemed to have got it right as Georgina didn't correct him.

(Ruth Rendell, *No Man's Nightingale*: 19) (Underline added)

(4) Again Liz radioed the station.

‘What is it now?’ barked Wells, his voice raised against a background of shouts and crashes.

‘All units to look out for a dark blue car with a damaged nearside wing, wanted in connection with an armed robbery,’ she told him. ‘Approach with caution ... driver believed to be armed with a shotgun.’ She had to repeat herself as Wells couldn’t hear over the background.

(R. D. Wingfield, *Winter Frost*: 44) (Underline added)

(5) ‘As I was saying, when she couldn’t get a reply, she decided to ring the emergency services. Couple of uniforms turned up. They couldn’t get an answer either. Then one of them thought he smelled gas, which was odd as there isn’t any gas connected here ...’

(Reginald Hill, *Midnight Fugue*: 244) (Underline added)

In example (3), compared with the referent expressed by the subject NP *Georgina* in the *as*-clause, the referent expressed by the subject NP *he* in the main clause is more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part. In this example, Wexford, the primary character in the story, keeps occupying the subject position. The writer uses the pronoun *he* to express this character after expressing him with the proper noun *Wexford* twice. It seems that the writer assumes that this character remains active in the consciousness of the reader when expressing him with the pronoun *he*. On the other hand, the writer uses the proper noun *Georgina* in the *as*-clause to express Georgina Bray, the character to whom Wexford is speaking. No event or state in which Georgina Bray participates has been mentioned for the time being. Thus, it seems that the writer does not assume that this character is already active for the reader at the time when the reader is reading the underlined part. Based on what has examined, it seems reasonable to infer that the writer employs Wexford, who is active in the consciousness of the reader, as a starting point for the development of the discourse.

In example (4), compared with the referent expressed by the subject NP *Wells* in the *as*-clause, the referent expressed by the subject NP *she* in the main clause is more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part. Example (4) depicts the scene in which Acting Detective Inspector Liz Maud, who is at a crime scene, radios Station Sergeant Bill Wells. The writer uses the pronoun *she* in the main clause to refer to Liz. This character is the speaker of the preceding two utterances, which keeps this character active in the consciousness of the reader. On the other hand, the writer uses the proper noun *Wells* in the *as*-clause and not the pronoun *he* to express Wells. This is probably because the writer does not assume this character remains active in the consciousness of the

reader after having been mentioned as *him* in *she told him*. It seems reasonable to suppose that the writer employs *Liz*, who is active in the consciousness of the reader, as a starting point for the development of the discourse.

In example (5), unlike the subject NP *there* in the *as*-clause,<sup>10</sup> the referent expressed by the subject NP *which* in the main clause is active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part. The clause *one of them thought he smelled gas* persists by being nominalised with the relative pronoun *which*. Thus, it seems that the writer assumes that the referent verbalised as *which* remains active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when the reader is reading the underlined part. On the other hand, the subject NP *there* is assumed to be the subject that Chafe (1994: 85) calls ‘nonfunctional’ and thus, does not express a starting point.

Of 50 instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs of main clauses are more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading a sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause, the majority are instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses keep occupying subject positions for the time being, as in examples (3) and (4). Moreover, most subject NPs in main clauses present given information (i.e. information that is already activated at a particular point in a discourse), as in examples (3), (4) and (5). Only some subject NPs in main clauses present accessible information (i.e. information that was previously semi-active). No instance in the data was found in which subject NPs in main clauses were presenting new information (i.e. information that is newly activated at a given point in a discourse).

However, unlike subject NPs in main clauses, subject NPs in *as*-clauses may present new information. The following example illustrates this:

- (6) When Banks got to the outer cordon, he showed his warrant card to the officer on duty, who lifted the tape for him and handed him a hooded overall and shoe covers. Awkwardly, he took off his raincoat and put on the protective gear over his clothes. This area was where the CSIs and other officers not required at the immediate scene waited until they were needed. Only essential personnel were given access through the inner cordon to inside the tent itself, and as few people as possible were allowed there at a time.

Already, the CSIs were busy fixing up extra lights as the early November morning was overcast and dull.

(Peter Robinson, *Children of the Revolution*: 2) (Underline added)

<sup>10</sup> Following Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 241-243), *there* in example (5) is treated as the subject in the *as*-clause.



In this example, the referent expressed by the subject NP in the main clause is assumed to be semi-active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part. Thus, the subject NP in the main clause presents accessible information. On the other hand, the referent expressed by the subject NP in the *as*-clause has not been introduced in the previous discourse. In addition to this, there is no specific information that makes this referent semi-active in the consciousness of the reader before he/she reads the *as*-clause. Therefore, this referent is inactive in the consciousness of the reader until he/she reads the *as*-clause. The subject NP in the *as*-clause presents new information.

In 47 out of 50 instances, *as*-clauses follow the main clause.<sup>11</sup> This indicates that there is a strong tendency to position subject NPs expressing more active referents first and employ the subject NPs as starting points for the development of the discourse.

#### 4.2. When referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state

The data present 21 instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state. When referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state, referents tend to be already active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading a sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause. Thus, subject NPs in main clauses and those in *as*-clauses tend to present given information. The following examples illustrate this:

- (7) She coasted her car into the station car-park, keeping well clear of the coach into which a rabble of noisy drunks were being herded. As they spotted her they let out a torrent of wolf whistles, accompanied by crude gestures. Ignoring them she pushed her way through to her office, clutching her handbag tightly. She hoped to find Morgan in Frost's office as she wanted him to check on the cashier, but it was empty.

(R. D. Wingfield, *Winter Frost*: 45) (Underline added)

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<sup>11</sup> Of 47 instances, 43 instances are those in which main clauses and *as*-clauses are not embedded in another clause, as in examples (3), (4), (5) and (6), and four instances are those in which main clauses and *as*-clauses are embedded in another clause.

- (8) He told the estate agent he would think about it and went home where another email from Diane awaited him. She was postponing her return as she'd been invited to spend a month in the Algarve but she would be back — she had already booked a flight from Faro — on 30 November.

(Ruth Rendell, *No Man's Nightingale*: 92) (Underline added)

In example (7), the referent expressed by the subject NP *she* in the main clause and the referent expressed by the subject NP *she* in the *as*-clause are the same character. Since this character has been mentioned for the time being, the subject NP *she* presents given information.

Similarly, in example (8), the referent expressed by the subject NP *she* in the main clause and the referent expressed by the subject NP *she* in the *as*-clause are the same character. Since this character is *Diane*, who was mentioned in the preceding sentence, the subject NP *she* presents given information.

As presented in examples (7) and (8), referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are often the same when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state. Hence, logically speaking, positioning *as*-clauses before or after the main clause is possible from the perspectives of employing subject NPs expressing more active referents as starting points. However, *as*-clauses follow the main clause in 17 out of 21 instances.<sup>12</sup> This point will be further elaborated in Section 4.4.

#### 4.3. When referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active

The data present 17 instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active in the consciousness of the reader than referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses at the time when he/she is reading a sentence comprising a main clause and an *as*-clause. These instances can be classified into two groups according to the ordering of main clauses and *as*-clauses. One group contains instances in which *as*-clauses precede the main clause, and the other group contains instances in which *as*-clauses follow the main clause.

The data have nine such instances in the first group. For example:

<sup>12</sup> Of 17 instances, 11 instances are those where main clauses and *as*-clauses are not embedded in another clause, as in examples (7) and (8), and six instances are those where main clauses and *as*-clauses are embedded in another clause.

- (9) ‘I really want to photograph you at home,’ Ingeborg pressed her. ‘That’s the premise for the series and as you’re my first interviewee this will set the standard for everything that follows.’

‘I understand,’ Lee said with an effort to be helpful.

(Peter Lovesey, *The Stone Wife*: 138) (Underline added)

- (10) I doubt if it will affect you much if at all but I am coming back a few days early and I don’t want to have to go to a hotel. As I have a house in Kingsmarkham and you have been keeping an eye on it, it will be best for me to go straight there from Gatwick.

(Ruth Rendell, *No Man’s Nightingale*: 127) (Underline added)

In example (9), when compared with the referent expressed by the subject NP *this* in the main clause, the referent expressed by the subject NP *you* in the *as*-clause is more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part. Here the referent expressed by the subject NP *you* is Lee to whom Ingeborg is speaking. Since the conversation between Ingeborg and Lee is continuing for the time being, it seems that the writer assumes that Lee remains active in the consciousness of the reader when expressing her with the pronoun *you*. Regarding the type of information presented by the subject NP, it presents given information. On the other hand, the referent expressed by the subject NP *this* in the main clause is not assumed to be active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when the reader is reading the underlined part.

In example (10), unlike the referent expressed by the subject NP *it* in the main clause, the referent expressed by the subject NP *I* in the *as*-clause is active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part. Example (10) is the first part of a letter and the referent expressed by the subject NP *I* is the sender of the letter. Since the content of the letter is about the sender of the letter, it seems that the writer assumes that the referent expressed by the subject NP *I* in the *as*-clause remains active in the consciousness of the reader when the reader is reading the underlined part. The subject NP *I*, thus, presents given information. On the other hand, the subject NP *it* in the main clause is ‘[a]n extraposed subject’ (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 1403). This subject is assumed to be non-functional and thus does not express a starting point.

In short, like the instances discussed in Section 4.1, the instances falling under the first group indicate the tendency to position subject NPs expressing more active referents first and employ the subject NPs as starting points for the development of the discourse.

Regarding the second group, this group contains instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active, but *as*-clauses follow the main clause. The data present eight such instances. These instances seem to be counterexamples from the

perspective of employing subject NPs expressing more active referents as starting points. How should these instances be explained?

An examination of this type of instance shows that a motivation to employ as starting points less active referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses is to clarify a causal relation between the main clause and its preceding sentence. The following example illustrates this:

- (11) ‘Oh, it’s you again. Come in,’ said Lisa Gray, managing a weak smile when Winsome and Annie turned up at her door. It was marginally more welcoming than the greeting Dayle Snider had given them earlier, but not much. Lisa gave Annie a suspicious glance, and Winsome introduced them.

‘Not interrupting anything, are we?’ Winsome asked. Annie had agreed that her partner should do most of the questioning, as she already seemed to have created some sort of bond with Lisa. Annie would jump in as and when she felt like it.

(Peter Robinson, *Children of the Revolution*: 227) (Underline added)

In this example, the referent expressed by the subject NP *she* in the *as*-clause is Winsome, who keeps occupying the subject position in the preceding clauses. Thus, compared with the referent expressed by the subject NP *Annie* in the main clause, the referent expressed by the subject NP in the *as*-clause is more active in the consciousness of the reader at the time when he/she is reading the underlined part.

However, the proposition evoked by the main clause is the reason why Winsome and not Annie asked a question to Lisa Gray. Then, the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause is the reason for the proposition evoked by the main clause. Thus, the main clause before the *as*-clause is an appropriate ordering. In the data, two instances fall under this case.

What examples like (11) show is that employing subject NPs expressing more active referents as starting points may sometimes be overridden by other motivations related to the structuring of discourse.

#### 4.4. Summary of this section

This section has examined discourse properties of subject NPs in main clauses and *as*-clauses and has explored the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses. What has emerged from the examination of these data is as follows:

- (a) When referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses differ with respect to the degree of activation state, there is a strong tendency to position subject NPs expressing more active referents first and employ the subject NPs as starting points for the development of the discourse.
- (b) When referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state, there is a strong tendency for *as*-clauses to follow the main clause.
- (c) Even when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are less active than those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses, subject NPs expressing less active referents in main clauses could be employed as starting points to clarify a causal relationship between the main clause and the preceding sentence.

With regard to (a) above, it is of interest that the predominant case in the data is when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active and main clauses precede *as*-clauses. The data contain 47 such instances (see Section 4.1). On the other hand, there are only nine instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses (see Section 4.3).

This disparity implies that English speakers tend to prioritise saying something about more active referents in their consciousness<sup>13</sup> and then supply an account for it, rather than say something about more active referents and then use it as an account for speaking something about less active referents. This would serve to explain why *as*-clauses tend to follow main clauses when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state.<sup>14</sup>

If this explanation is correct (at least as to the use of *as*-clauses), then one further question arises: how should the nine instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses be accounted for? To deal with this question, the following section explores the structure of discourse when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses.

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<sup>13</sup> This indicates producing a grammatical form of a clause comprising a given subject and a new predicate.

<sup>14</sup> The data do not support the view that the ordering of main clauses and *as*-clauses is determined by the length of clause when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses and those expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are similar with respect to the degree of activation state. The mean word number of the main clauses is 9.4, whereas the mean word number of the *as*-clauses is 8.6.

### 5. The structure of discourse when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses

Various studies have argued linguistic expressions which denote causal relationships (such as the English word *because*) from the perspectives of domains of use (e.g. Sweetser 1990; Zufferey 2012; Zufferey and Cartoni 2012). Sweetser (1990), for example, proposes that linguistic expressions which denote causal relationships have three domains of use: the content domain, the epistemic domain, and the speech-act domain. Consider the following examples:

- (12) a. John came back because he loved her. (Sweetser 1990: 77)  
 b. John loved her, because he came back. (Sweetser 1990: 77)  
 c. What are you doing tonight, because there's a good movie on.  
 (Sweetser 1990: 77)

In example (12a), two situations in the real world, namely the situation that John came back and the situation that John loved her, are related by *because*. This is content use. On the other hand, in example (12b), John's coming back functions as a premise for the speaker's conclusion that John loved her. This is epistemic use. Furthermore, in example (12c), the speaker's statement that there is a good movie on is the reason for his/her asking the question as to what the addressee is doing tonight. This is speech-act use.

Studies such as Sweetser (1990), Zufferey (2012) and Zufferey and Cartoni (2012) suggest that among linguistic expressions denoting causal relationships, there is a preference regarding domains of use. For example, English *since* has a strong tendency to be used in the epistemic domain or in the speech-act domain (Sweetser 1990; Zufferey and Cartoni 2012).

The data gathered for the present study suggest that even in the same linguistic expression denoting causal relationships, one specific domain of use is preferred under certain circumstances. In the data, epistemic use is preferred when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses (six out of nine instances). Consider the following examples again:

- (13) 'I really want to photograph you at home,' Ingeborg pressed her. 'That's the premise for the series and as you're my first interviewee this will set the standard for everything that follows.'  
 'I understand,' Lee said with an effort to be helpful. (= (9))

- (14) I doubt if it will affect you much if at all but I am coming back a few days early and I don't want to have to go to a hotel. As I have a house in Kingsmarkham and you have been keeping an eye on it, it will be best for me to go straight there from Gatwick. (= (10))

Both examples (13) and (14) show epistemic use. In example (13), the proposition evoked by the main clause is Ingeborg's conclusion drawn from the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause. Example (14) is the first part of a letter and the subject NP *I* is the sender of the letter. The proposition evoked by the main clause is the sender's conclusion drawn from the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause.

In contrast, another domain of use is preferred when referents expressed by subject NPs in the main clauses are more active, main clauses precede *as*-clauses, and the clauses are not embedded in another clause.<sup>15</sup> Under these circumstances, content use is predominant (30 out of 43 instances (69.8%)), followed by epistemic use (12 out of 43 instances (27.9%)). Examples (15) and (16) depict content use, whereas examples (17) and (18) show epistemic use.

- (15) 'All units to look out for a dark blue car with a damaged nearside wing, wanted in connection with an armed robbery,' she told him. 'Approach with caution ... driver believed to be armed with a shotgun.' She had to repeat herself as Wells couldn't hear over the background. (= part of (4))
- (16) Already, the CSIs were busy fixing up extra lights as the early November morning was overcast and dull. (= part of (6))
- (17) Wexford didn't really know if they were Miss or Mrs or one of each but he seemed to have got it right as Georgina didn't correct him. (= part of (3))
- (18) Then one of them thought he smelled gas, which was odd as there isn't any gas connected here ... (= part of (5))

Closely observing the instances of epistemic use, one point becomes apparent. In the data, propositions evoked by *as*-clauses tend to present accessible information when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses (five out of six instances). In example (13), for instance, the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause, namely Lee's being the first interviewee for Ingeborg, was already introduced into

<sup>15</sup> The reason why the instances in which main clauses and *as*-clauses are not embedded in another clause are explored here is that all nine instances in which referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses are not embedded in another clause.

the discourse. Since the conversation between Ingeborg and Lee is about Ingeborg's interviewing Lee, the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause is assumed to be semi-active in the consciousness of the reader and thus presents accessible information.

On the other hand, propositions evoked by *as*-clauses have a strong tendency to present new information when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active and *as*-clauses follow main clauses (10 out of 12 instances). For example, in example (17), the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause is introduced in the discourse for the first time at this point of the discourse. Hence, it presents new information. The same applies to example (18).

Based on what has emerged from the analysis of the data here, it is suggested that when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses, *as*-clauses signal the addressee that the speaker's conclusion, namely '[t]he speaker's internal act' (Sweetser 1990: 84), is introduced into the subsequent discourse. This discourse function of *as*-clauses is consistent with the tendency of propositions evoked by *as*-clauses to present accessible information rather than new information. Accessible information requires less mental effort in changing the activation state from semi-active to active, compared with new information that requires more mental effort in changing the activation state from inactive to active. Information requiring less mental effort is more suitable for focusing the addressee's attention on the speaker's signalling of the introduction of his/her conclusion in the subsequent discourse.

This suggestion basically coincides with those in previous studies such as Chafe (1984) and Diessel (2005), though there are some discrepancies. For example, Chafe (1984: 444), in his analysis of the usage of adverbial clauses, suggests that adverbial clauses separated from main clauses by a pause in spoken language and a comma in written language provide 'a temporal, conditional, causal, or other such orientation for the information in the upcoming main clause'.<sup>16</sup> Chafe's suggestion is basically compatible with the present study. However, in Chafe's suggestion, it is unclear which type of causal orientation (i.e. causal orientation in the content, epistemic or speech-act domain) is assumed by causal 'orientation

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<sup>16</sup> In Chafe (1984), it is important whether adverbial clauses are separated by main clauses. Chafe (1984) argues that adverbial clauses almost always follow main clauses if they are not separated by a pause in spoken language and a comma in written language, and that this is because such 'adverbial clauses typically express unfamiliar information' (p. 448). Here, unfamiliar information means information that has not been introduced into a discourse or is not inferable from what has been mentioned.

In the data of this study, four out of six instances under discussion are the instances in which the *as*-clauses are separated from the main clauses by a comma, as in example (14). One instance is where the *as*-clause is not separated from the main clause by a comma (i.e. example (13)), and one instance is where it is not certain whether the *as*-clause is separated from the main clause by a comma because of a parenthesis between the *as*-clause and the main clause. Although the *as*-clause in example (13) is not separated by a comma, the proposition evoked by the *as*-clause in example (13) has been already introduced into the discourse and thus is not the information that Chafe (1984) calls unfamiliar information. As long as my data is concerned, my suggestion applies to all six instances.



for the information in the upcoming main clause' (Chafe 1984: 444).

In his analysis of the factors affecting the ordering of the main and adverbial clauses, Diessel (2005: 465) suggests that 'causal clauses providing a common ground for a conclusion tend to occur sentence-initially'. Diessel's suggestion is basically compatible with the present study, though again there are discrepancies. One important discrepancy is that Diessel (2005) found a substantial number of causal clauses preceding main clauses in the data from scientific articles. Here, however, the suggestion is derived from instances of *as*-clauses used in dialogues/letters in novels.<sup>17</sup> This discrepancy may be caused by the dialects examined. Diessel (2005) does not mention dialect types in his data from scientific articles, whereas the linguistic data used here is British English. Further researches should examine this discrepancy.

## 6. Conclusion

Inspired by the instances that were presented in Yamada (2014), this study has investigated the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses, especially focusing on the discourse properties of subject NPs in clauses. This study analysed empirical data by applying the consciousness-based approach to information flow proposed by Chafe (1994) and has demonstrated several characteristics of the structure of discourse organised by main and *as*-clauses.

First, there is a strong tendency to position subject NPs expressing more active referents first and employ the subject NPs as starting points for the development of the discourse. This is particularly so when referents expressed by subject NPs in main clauses are more active. Second, the tendency mentioned above could be overridden by other motivations related to the structuring of discourse. Subject NPs expressing less active referents in main clauses could be employed as starting points to clarify a causal relationship between the main clause and its preceding sentence. Furthermore, when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses, *as*-clauses have a discourse function: signalling the addressee that the speaker's conclusion is introduced in the subsequent discourse. The results obtained in this study illustrate how the usage of *as*-clauses is pragmatically motivated.

To what extent are the characteristics of *as*-clauses emerging from the analysis of this study shared with other causal adverbial clauses? To what extent are the characteristics of *as*-clauses emerging from the analysis of this study shared with *as*-clauses expressing other meanings (e.g. temporal meanings)? These are interesting questions which should be addressed in further research.

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<sup>17</sup> In the data, all six instances of epistemic use are found in dialogues/letters in the novels when referents expressed by subject NPs in *as*-clauses are more active and *as*-clauses precede main clauses.

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