

Contrastive topic marking with German *dagegen* ('in contrast') and *wiederum* ('in turn')

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In my talk, I will discuss the German connectives *dagegen* ('in contrast') and *wiederum* ('in turn') and their function to signal contrast via contrastive topics. Corpus data reveal that, unlike other contrastive connectives, *dagegen/wiederum* are, in fact, restricted to conjuncts involving contrastive topics. I therefore argue that *dagegen/wiederum*'s contribution to discourse coherence is to signal or 'highlight' a contrastive relation already available structurally via contrastive topic marking. Data from an acceptability rating study corroborate my claims showing that (i) *dagegen/wiederum* are rated as unacceptable in conjuncts lacking contrastive topics and (ii) their absence does not reduce acceptability of the connection.

1 Introduction

Past research has shown that there are different kinds of contrastive relations that pattern with different (specified) contrastive connectives. In my talk, I will discuss the German connectives *dagegen* ('in contrast') and *wiederum* ('in turn') and their function to signal a contrastive relation defined by (information) structural alternatives.

This relation has been labelled inter alia 'semantic opposition contrast' (e.g. Lakoff 1971), 'formal contrast' (e.g. Jasinskaja 2012), or 'contrastive comparison' (e.g. Breindl et al. 2014) and information structural properties of the contrasted conjuncts in terms of parallel topic-comment- or topic-focus-structure have been widely discussed as pivotal (e.g. Sæbø 2003, Umbach 2005, Breindl et al. 2014). I will go one step further and argue that the alternatives involved in this contrastive relation stem from contrastive topic marking, as showcased by the conditions of use for *dagegen* and *wiederum*.

Example (1) shall serve as an illustration: Due to the focus alternatives 'not liking coffee' and 'drinking tea', (1a) can be interpreted as contrastive (hence the perfectly acceptable marking by *aber* ('but') in (1b)). The use of *dagegen* or *wiederum* in (1c), in turn, is heavily marked.

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|-----|--|--|
| (1) | Peter mag keinen Kaffee. | 'Peter doesn't like coffee.' |
| | a. Er trinkt Tee. | 'He drinks tea.' |
| | b. Aber er trinkt Tee. | ' But he drinks tea.' |
| | c. Er trinkt ? dagegen / ? wiederum Tee. | 'He drinks, ? in contrast / ? in turn, tea.' |

If the connectives' use in this context is acceptable at all, the verb and its complement would have to be prosodically marked by a hat contour, cf. (1d). In a version with the object fronted as in (1e), *dagegen* and *wiederum* become equally acceptable:

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|----|---|
| d. | Er /TRINKT dagegen / wiederum \TEE. |
| e. | /TEE dagegen / wiederum \TRINKT er. |
| f. | /TEE \TRINKT er. |

Both versions, (1d) and (1e), share the property of contrastive topic marking in Büring's (2016) sense: the (prosodical and/or syntactic) splitting of the verb 'to drink' and its complement 'tea' marks them as non-exhaustive alternatives to 'to not like' and 'coffee', respectively (cf. also

Krifka 2008). As the asyndetic (1f) shows, this effect is independent of the connectives' presence.

The goals of my talk are twofold: first, I argue that a connection with German *dagegen* and *wiederum* requires a specific information structural pattern that can be analyzed in terms of information structural alternatives, viz. contrastive topics¹ in the two conjuncts. The 'semantic opposition' or 'comparison' effects ascribed to such connections, then, can be traced back to the conventional implicature triggered by contrastive topic marking. Second, since the effect of contrastive topics stands on its own, I argue that the contribution of *dagegen* and *wiederum* to discourse coherence is to simply signal or 'highlight' a contrast which is already available structurally. The two connectives can thus be regarded as markers of (Information) Structural Contrast elicited by contrastive topic marking.

2 Empirical evidence

There are two sources of empirical evidence that we will discuss. First, corpus data reveal that *dagegen* and *wiederum* – in contrast to other contrastive connectives such as German *dennoch* ('yet/nevertheless') – occur in conjuncts with a limited set of information structural properties in the conjuncts. Second, experimental data from an acceptability judgment study support the eligibility of *dagegen* and *wiederum* for contrastive topic marking, while also showing that they are, in fact, perfectly omissible.

2.1 Corpus data

In data by Zieleke (to appear), 100 sets of data for each contrastive connective² have been extracted from DeReKo sub-corpus *die Zeit* and annotated for topic development. Adopting a broad notion of topic as a 'point of departure' in Jacobs' (2001) or Chafe's (1976:50: "the topic sets a *spatial, temporal, or individual framework* within which the main predication holds"), the two contrasted conjuncts have been annotated for the topics as well as the relation between the two topics. The possible categories of topic development were (i) contrastive topics (non-exhaustive alternatives), (ii) topic promotion (Daneš's 1970 linear progression, cf. footnote 1), (iii) continuous topics, and (iv) unrelated topic shift (newly introduced, non-alternative, non-promoted topics).

The results show that, while contrastive topics only play a marginal role for contrast with other connectives such as *dennoch* (5%), they make up the entirety of connections with *dagegen* (100%) and the majority of connections with *wiederum* (53% the rest belonging to category (ii) topic promotion, cf. footnote 1).

2.2 Acceptability judgment

36 native speakers of German were presented with 36 items showing a small discourse consisting of a context sentence and two contrastive conjuncts as shown in (2). They were asked to rate the acceptability of the second conjunct among a Likert scale from 1 (very

¹ *Wiederum* is also eligible for connections involving what Daneš (1970) called linear progression:

- (i) Peter such seinen Kaffee. Der_{Kaffee} **wiederum** steht draußen.
'Peter is searching for his coffee. The coffee, in turn, is outside.'

Since the focus of our talk is on contrastive topics, we will put this use on the side. Note, however, that this connection also relies on information structural properties and is therefore compatible with our claims on the nature of contrast with *dagegen* and *wiederum*. See Zieleke, submitted, for a suggestion on a notion of Structural Contrast incorporating both information structural make ups.

² In fact, data on six German contrastive connectives (*dagegen* ('in contrast'), *wiederum* ('in turn'), *dennoch* ('yet/nevertheless'), *trotzdem* ('nevertheless'), *jedoch* ('however/yet'), *allerdings* ('however')) were analyzed in order to identify the role of information structural components of contrastive conjuncts for the type of contrast expressed.

unacceptable) to 7 (very acceptable). This conjunct was manipulated for two variables: On the one hand, the conjunct contained either *dagegen*, *wiederum* or no connective (= asyndetic version). On the other hand, the information structural makeup of the conjunct varied. In the 'parallel' condition illustrated in (2a), the second conjunct provided a parallel information structure with contrastive topics (aboutness or frame-setting) and contrastive foci (lexico-semantic alternatives or negation). In the 'independent' condition shown in (2b) the conjuncts involved a different, but coherent and contrastive continuation with diverging information structure. This diversion was induced by a shift from referential to frame topics in combination with non-contrasting verbs as in (2b), passive constructions orthetic *es gibt* ('there are') – sentences.

(2) Context:

Der Chef schickt zwei seiner Mitarbeiter zu einem Kundentermin.
 'The boss sends two of his employees to a customer meeting.'

First Conjunct:

[Herr Schmidt] fährt mit dem Auto.
 'Mr. Smith goes by car.'

Second Conjunct:

a) Parallel:

[Herr Müller] fährt **dagegen / wiederum / Ø** mit dem Fahrrad.
 'Mr. Muller goes ... by bike.'

b) Independent:

[Im Stau] bereut er **dagegen / wiederum / Ø** seine Entscheidung.
 'Stuck in traffic, he_{Mr. Smith} ... regrets his decision.'

In both conditions, the second conjunct can be connected by the underspecified contrastive connective *aber* ('but'). 36 fillers were built analogously to the experimental items and served as control items.

The mean ratings are summarized in Figure 1 below. The three trellises represent the three connective-conditions, *dagegen*, *wiederum* or asyndetic, each showing the mean ratings in the parallel condition on the left (cf. (2a)) and the independent condition on the right (cf. (2b)).

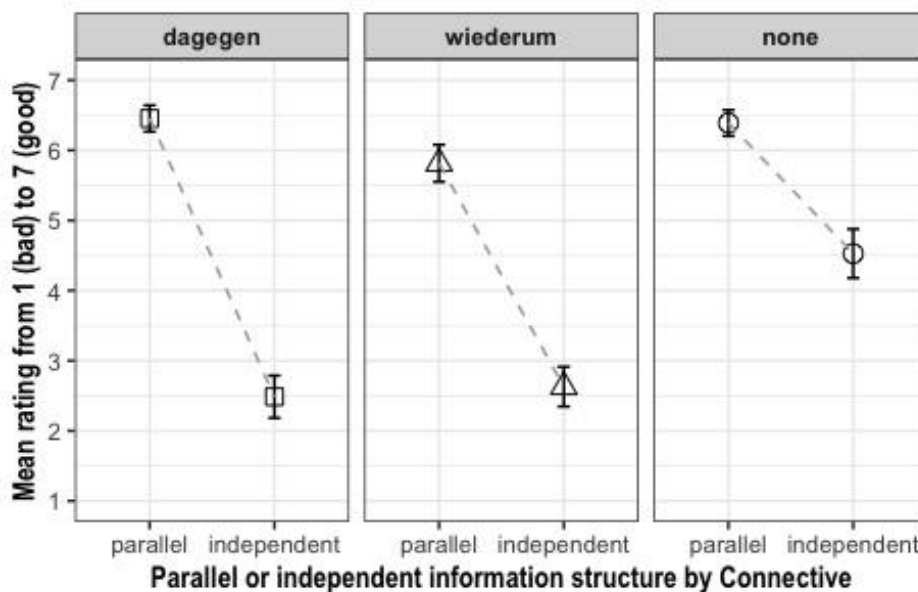


Figure 1 Mean ratings for *dagegen*, *wiederum*, and no connective

The plot allows for the following observations: first, all three connective-conditions are less acceptable in the independent condition than in the parallel one involving contrastive topics.

Second, the difference in acceptability ratings varies between the connectives *dagegen* and *wiederum* on the one hand and asyndetic connection on the other. While connections with *dagegen* or *wiederum* in the independent (yet contrastive!) condition received mean ratings of 2.5 and 2.6, respectively, the asyndetic continuation received mean ratings of 4.5. In other words, contrast without a contrastive information structure is less accessible without a contrastive marker, but still acceptable, whereas it becomes unacceptable with the markers *dagegen* or *wiederum*. Finally, the mean ratings in the parallel condition involving contrastive topics is similar across all three trellises, with 6.5 and 5.8 for *dagegen* and *wiederum*, respectively, and 6.4 for the asyndetic connection.

3 Discussion

The results of the acceptability judgment study corroborate both my claims on the nature of contrast with German *dagegen* and *wiederum*. The two connectives do require conjuncts with contrastive topics, otherwise they are rated as unacceptable. Moreover, contrastive topics are such strong markers of contrast on their own that (further) explicit marking by connectives is not required. The contribution of these connectives to discourse coherence is thus to signal a contrast already available via (information) structural means.

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