The relation **Accompanying Circumstance** across languages.
Conflict between linguistic expression and discourse subordination?\(^1\)

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1. Introduction

Existing theories of discourse structure and approaches to discourse analysis come in two main variants: Some have developed a rich taxonomy of rhetorical relations (cf. Segmented Discourse Theory as presented e.g. in Asher and Lascarides 2003 and, in particular, Rhetorical Structure Theory as outlined by Mann and Thomson’s RST 1988, Mann and Taboada 2005); others (starting with Grosz and Sidner 1986) are more ‘minimalistic’, segmenting discourse according to a bipartite division of discourse subordination and coordination (e.g. Webber et al 2003, Polanyi et al 2004).

Recent attempts at determining the linguistic basis for discourse structure suggest that discourse coordination may be tested on the basis of syntactic coordination (Asher and Vieu 2005). One argument in favor of such a test is that there is strong evidence (at least in English) that a prototypical subordinating relation like Elaboration is impossible in syntactic coordination – and interesting explanations for this have been forwarded in the semantics-pragmatics literature (Carston 2002, Blakemore and Carston 2005). Furthermore, typical cases of discourse coordination appear in syntactic conjunction, such as Continuation and Narration (Asher and Vieu 2005).

In the present paper, we approach the topic of discourse relations from a cross-linguistic perspective, motivated in part by the question of how syntactic choice constrains discourse structure and what role rhetorical relations play for translation choice. Existing theories and analyses in the literature, when applied to authentic cross-linguistic data, have unveiled interesting differences across languages with respect to the discourse potential of different syntactic structures, particularly syntactic coordination.(see Fabricius-Hansen et al. 2005) It seems to us that these cross-linguistic observations are important and must be taken into account in a linguistic analysis of discourse structure.

The linguistic structure we have extracted for our observations is the *ing*-participle used as an adjunct in English and relating to its matrix clause by what is sometimes called Accompanying Circumstance. We discuss such data from a trilingual perspective, including English, German and Norwegian, with a view to the discourse properties of the syntactic

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manifestations in the three languages, and with our theoretical questions regarding discourse relations in mind.

Our discussion leads to the more general question of whether rhetorical relations discussed in the literature capture the properties that are central for truly equivalent translation.

Our paper is organized as follows: In section 2 we present examples of English source text excerpts and their different translations into German and Norwegian. The data are collected from a parallel corpus of English, German and Norwegian source texts with their authorized translations into the other respective languages – a sub-corpus of the Oslo Multilingual Corpus (OMC). In section 3 we present discourse relational concepts which are of central concern to our analysis. In section 4 we discuss the position of Accompanying Circumstance in relation to Elaboration, Continuation and Background on the one hand and the subordinating/coordinating distinction on the other. Section 5 concludes the paper by questioning the adequacy of these relations for translation among the three languages.

2. The data.
Accompanying circumstance (AC), as a clause-linking relation, is informally defined as relating two events or states to each other, which, "from the point of view of the speaker/writer, form a unit mentally" (Kortmann 1991: 122). A typical example is (1):

(1) We walked slowly along the rows of trestle tables, admiring the merciless French housewife at work. (P. Mayle: A Year in Provence)

The two eventualities described in (1) take place at the same time, in the same place, and involve the same controlling referent. They form a unit in the sense that they describe a single, although complex situation on the part of that referent (we). AC is in this sense very similar to prototypical Elaboration, as will be demonstrated in section 4.

Another example is (2a), in which we observe that VP-conjunction has been chosen to translate this example in German (2b) as well as Norwegian (2c).

(2) a. The others followed her, waving their weapons (RD1)
   b. Die anderen folgten ihr und schwangen ihre Waffen.
   The others followed her and waved their weapons
   c. De andre kom etter og viflet med våpnene sine.
   The others came after and waved with their weapons

Consider also (3):

(3) a. He and Aunt drifted on together, in the dim rooms, listening to the wireless, talking only very occasionally, retiring early. (AB1)
   b. Er und die Tante ließen sich gemeinsam treiben, saßen in den düsteren Räumen, hörten Radio, redeten nur selten miteinander, gingen früh schlafen.
   he and the aunt let themselves drift together, sat in ..., listened ..., talked only very occasionally to each other, went early to bed

2 For details about the OMC see http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/OMC/English/.
3 The translation data are taken from the OMC. The source sentence is marked with an abbreviated reference (in brackets) to the source text in question.
c. Han og tante levte videre sammen på måfå i de mørke rommene, *de hørte på radio, snakket sjelden sammen, og gikk tidlig til ro*.

*he and Aunt lived on together aimlessly …. they listened to the wireless, talked only very occasionally to each other, went early to bed*

Semantically (1), (2a) and (3a) have very much in common. The matrix clause verbs are of the same aspectual class and so are the adjuncts. The subjects relate to their verbs by the same – more or less prototypical – agentive role. In all these cases an activity is stated in the matrix clause, and additional co-temporal and co-spatial activities involving the same agent fill in the picture, so to speak. While the German and the Norwegian translations of (2a) make use of the same structure, VP-coordination, there is a difference in the two translations of (3a): The German translation uses VPs (without the coordination marker) to render the adjunct whereas the Norwegian translator has chosen a sentence sequence (notably also without the coordination marker) separating the two by a comma, not a full stop.

While co-temporal activities are common for the expression of the AC-relation, there are also examples like (4):

(4) a. He saw Sandra off the premises, closed the shop, tidied up his office and left, *taking the four primary stones with him* (FF1)

b. Er wartete, bis Sandra gegangen war, verschloß die Ladentür, räumte sein Büro auf, *steckte die vier großen Steine ein und verließ das Gebäude.*

…. *stuck the four big stones in and left the building*

c. Han fulgte Sandra til døren, stengte butikken, ryddet opp på kontoret og gikk; *de fire kostelige steinene hadde han med seg.*

…. *and left; the four precious stones had he with him*

The aspectual classes of the verbs in (4a) differ from the previous examples. The matrix clause event (‘left’) is an accomplishment. The adjunct adds an AC to his leaving: another accomplishment (‘took with him’). The translations into German and Norwegian differ in an interesting way: While the Norwegian translation renders the adjunct in the form of a full sentence denoting a state, the German translator has interpreted the adjunct as an accomplishment event and placed the information from the adjunct in the first part of a VP-conjunction. The result is a temporal succession reading, and the action of taking the stones is integrated into the narrative, episodic structure.

It is an interesting question whether the same relation of Accompanying Circumstance is understood to hold in the two translations. We will take this up in section 5.

(5a) and (6a) differ aspectually from the previous examples in that the matrix predicate is inchoative, and the next event introduced accompanies or enriches the activity extending beyond the initiative:

(5) a. Sikitia was so happy that she began to dance across the meadow, *singing a song* she had composed inside the dank prison.

b. Sikita war so froh, daß sie anfing, über die Wiesen zu tanzen, *während sie ein Lied sang*, das sie im kalten Kerker gedichtet hatte.

…. *while she sang a song …*

c. Da ble Sikita så glad at hun begynte å danse over engene *mens hun sang en sang* hun hadde diktet i det kalde fengslet. (JG1)

…. *while she sang a song …*

(6) a. He started to make a series of phone calls, *setting up getting-to-know-you meetings* with the security chiefs in each of the main ministries. (FF1)
Er griff zum Telefon und traf eine Reihe von Verabredungen mit den Sicherheitschefs aller wichtigen Ministerien, damit man sich kennenlernte.
He reached for the phone and made a series of appointments with …

Han satte i gang med en rekke telefonsamtaler og avtalte møter "for å bli kjent med hverandre" med sjefene for sikkerhetsgruppene i de tre viktigste bygningene.
He started a series of phone calls and set up getting-to-know-you meetings …

The verb in the ing-adjunct is an accomplishment. The non-finite adjunct form allows coercion to activity or state, the consequence of which is that the singing temporally parallels the dancing in (5a) and the activity of setting up meetings in (6a) coincides with the phone calls. The temporal conjunction in both translations of (5a) is needed to coerce the accomplishment in the adjunct to an activity/state. In (6a) the accompanying circumstance is already an unbounded event, and the conjunction is not needed. The choice between syntactic VP-conjunction and while-subjunction in the translations seems to depend on the correlation/non-correlation of aspect/boundedness of the two events related.

When two accomplishments or activities are linked by Accompanying Circumstance, the German translation may need some explicit indicator that the two events are co-temporal and not temporally succeeding each other. Thus, the connective dabei (lit. ‘thereby’, on that occasion) is quite often found in the German translations of this type, while the Norwegian corresponding translation is quite successfully interpreted as co-temporal without any explicit marker, viz. (7):4

(7) a. He smiled slyly, nodding. (WB1)
   b. Er lächelte verstohlen und nickte dabei.
      he laughed slyly and nodded “dabei”
   c. Han smilte litt lurt og nikket.
      he smiled a bit slyly and nodded

Pure states also occur in the matrix of this structure, as in (8a) and (9a). In (8) VP-conjunction has been chosen in the translation in both languages while (9b) and (9c) show other – non-finite or prepositional – solutions that we cannot go into here.

(8) a. We were silent, holding hands. (JB1)
   b. Wir schwiegen und hielten uns an den Händen.
      we were silent and held us in the hands
   c. Vi satt tause og holdt hverandre i hånden.
      we sat silent and held each other in the hand

(9) a. The woman waited, facing him and wearing a perky smile, with her fingers laced together on the counter. (AT1)
   b. Die Frau wartete, ihm zugewandt, ein kesses Lächeln im Gesicht, die Finger auf der Theke verschränkt.
      the woman waited, turned towards him, a perky smile in the face, the fingers laced together on the counter
   c. Piken ventet, så på ham med et nebbete smil, med fingrene foldet på disken.
      the girl waited, looked at him with a perky smile, with the fingers folded on the counter

Examples like (8a) – (9a) would seem to fit the vague characterization of AC cited above. However, there is also reason to classify the example as a case of Continuation since there are

several states involved that may form the Background for some event in the following discourse. Thus, in addition to discussing the nature of the AC- relation in comparison with Elaboration, we need to delimit the AC-cases relative to other neighboring relations such as Background and Continuation and consider the possibility that AC may be subsumed under some of these categories. We address these issues in section 4. First, however, we shall briefly present the relevant discourse relational distinctions.

### 3. Discourse Subordination and Coordination and a taxonomy of discourse relations

A discourse consists of a sequence of clauses (propositions) that relate to each other to create particular structural patterns. In the SDRT (Segmented Discourse Representation Theory) framework of Asher and Lascarides (2003), these “rhetorical” relations are of (at least) two kinds: On the one hand there are Content-Level relations like Elaboration, Narration, Explanation, Result, Background, which pertain to the informational level, their semantics being “defined entirely in terms of the events and individuals that are introduced in the constituents” (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 459); on the other there are relations like Contrast and Parallel which constrain the structure of the units they relate (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 168ff.).

Only the former will concern us here. The identification/determination of rhetorical relations is based on a variety of information sources (world knowledge, lexical input, anaphora resolution etc), and there is no natural limit for the number of relations that may hold between the propositions. Asher and Lascarides (2003) – like Asher (1993) – present a rich taxonomy of relations combined with a complex default reasoning procedure to establish them.

Other approaches, more generally concerned with computational discourse parsing and related implementation issues, restrict themselves to a major distinction between coordinating and subordinating discourse relations: The segment to be parsed or processed may be coordinate to the previous segment, in the sense that the two segments contribute to the discourse as a whole on an equal footing, so to speak, or it may be subordinate, in the sense that the incoming discourse segment is dominated by the segment it is attached to. In case of discourse subordination only the subordinating (superordinate) segment plays a role in the main story line. By using these two structuring devices, a discourse is incrementally structured as a tree with branches. Only the right edge branches are available as attachment points for incoming propositions (Right Frontier Constraint, RFC) (Grosz and Sidner 1986, Polanyi and Schä 1984, Polanyi 1988, 2004).

The SDRT framework also exploits the distinction between (discourse) subordination and coordination (cf. Asher and Lascarides 2003 and, in particular, Asher and Vieu 2005). The distinction is based primarily on the RFC: If for instance an anaphor attaches or may attach to a referent in the penultimate sentence, the preceding and the penultimate proposition relate by subordination (cf. Elaboration); if no such attachment is possible, they relate by a coordinating relation (cf. Continuation, and Narration). Following Txurruka (2000), Asher and Vieu (2005) also assume that the explicit (syntactic) coordination marker and signals discourse coordination.

They take the subordinating/coordinating relations to be of a different nature than rhetorical relations, representing different ways of packaging information at discourse level, and aim at determining the rhetorical relations with respect to their coordinating and subordinating roles or potential in discourse (Asher and Vieu 2005).

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5 According to the authors, rhetorical relations are in essence speech act types, their truth-conditional effects being “a specification of the illocutionary contribution one conveys when one utters a speech act of that type” (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 434).

6 “Txurruka (2001) has convincingly argued that and is a discourse marker for a coordinating relation; it doesn’t correspond to a single rhetorical relation but signals a number of different possibilities such as narration or result.” (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 170)
While it is by now undisputed that the relation *Elaboration* is a prototypical subordinating relation, and *Narration* and *Continuation* are coordinating (see sect. 4), it is, however, not always easy to determine whether other relations are discourse subordinating or coordinating (and according to Asher and Vieu 2005, some of them – e.g. Result – may even vary in that respect, depending on the context).

The rhetorical relation *Background* is a case in point. The fact that the notion of “background” is used with reference to a diversity of phenomena in discourse partitioning (Ramm and Fabricius-Hansen 2005) makes it a particularly difficult concept. In Asher and Lascarides (2003) it is used to name a rhetorical relation which holds between two statements like the following:

(10) Last night a burglar broke into Mary’s house. Mary was asleep.

The relation is taken to hold “whenever one constituent provides information about the surrounding state of affairs in which the eventuality mentioned in the other constituent occurred“ (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 460). It is generally exemplified by sentence sequences like (10) where it is the second sentence that describes a state temporally overlapping the event introduced by the first sentence; that is, S2 conveys a background description relative to S1 – *Background*(S1, S2). Background is a coordinating relation since it demands a common topic for the two sentences (cf. Asher and Lascarides 2003: 165f., 460f.).

At one point Asher and Lascarides (2003: 207f.) distinguish between two Background relations: *Background*1, exemplified by (10), and *Background*2, which holds when it is the first segment of a sequence that provides information about the “surrounding state of affairs” relative to the subsequent segment: *Background*2(S2, S1) as in (11).

(11) It was a quiet evening. I was in bed reading. The doorbell rang.

According to the authors, it is only the order in (10) which creates a problem in defining the relation. The discourse relation *Background* is a coordinating discourse relation, but when the order of the segments follow the pattern in (10), and this is of central concern, it differs from other discourse coordinating relations by allowing a subsequent segment S3 to attach to S1, as in (10').

(10') Last night a burglar broke into Mary’s house. Mary was asleep. *He stole all her jewelry.*

As mentioned above, this is a diagnostic property of subordinating discourse relations. Asher and Lascarides (2003: 166f.) overcome the difficulty by assuming that the text consisting of S1 and S2 “has a topic whose content is constructed by repeating (rather than summarizing) the contents“ of the two segments. The topic is understood to relate to the background segment by a relation called *Foreground-Background Pair* – which is classified as a subordinating discourse relation (p. 462). In the end, then, the authors have it both ways: S2 is related to the preceding segment S1 by a coordinating discourse relation (Background), but related by a subordinating discourse relation (Foreground-Background Pair) to the topic constructed by repeating the contents of the Discourse Representation Structures assigned to S1 and S2. Thus it would seem that the notion of a Foreground-Background Pair is introduced *ad hoc* with the sole purpose of explaining why the allegedly coordinating *Background* relations in essential respects seems to behave like a subordinating relation.7 Asher and Lascarides concede that „[i]ntuitively, a discourse structure

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7 In a paper that came to our attention only after we had finished the present paper, Vieu and Prevot (2004) for similar reasons argue that *Background*1 should be conceived as a subordinating relation.
containing Background(\pi_1, \pi_2), where \( K\pi_1 \) describes a (foregrounded) event and \( K\pi_2 \) describes the (background) state, should encode the fact that \( K\pi_1 \) is the ‘main story line’ or the foreground; \( K\pi_1 \) is the thing that ‘matters’ in that events from subsequent utterances will be related to it” (p. 166). But the notions of ‘main story line’ and ‘foreground’ are not an integrated part of their theory of discourse structure.

In the next section, we will try to delimit our Accompanying Circumstance relative to the discourse subordinating relation Elaboration, the coordinating Continuation, and the (coordinating and subordinating) relation of Background.

4. Accompanying Circumstance in relation to similar discourse relations

The examples we have presented in section 2 suggest that Accompanying Circumstance holds if the two eventualities rendered are co-temporal, co-spatial and involve the same agent. The same semantic criteria hold for prototypical Elaboration (see e.g. Behrens and Fabricius-Hansen 2002, Asher and Lascarides 2003: 206, 461). However, Elaboration requires that the conditions on the second eventuality merge with the conditions on the first eventuality. Thus, the elaborating adjunct in (12) fills in on the description of the underspecified causing event introduced by the causative matrix predicate (for details on this variant of elaboration, see Behrens 1998). The segment (adjunct, conjunct, independent clause) ‘filling in the details’ is discourse-subordinated to the segment introducing the underspecified referent.

(12) Like graffiti artists, they defaced the two favorite poster girls of the seventies press – spray-painting a down-turned mouth and shrivelled ovaries on the Single Girl, and adding a wrinkled brow and ulcerated stomach to the Superwoman. (SF: 101)

We also include examples under Elaboration in which there is a semantic relation of criteriality satisfaction, as in (13) and (14):

(13) Like all successful villains, he kept a low profile around the manor, driving an unobtrusive car, his sole indulgence being the elegance of his apartment. (FF1)

(14) At infant school he had been the class milk monitor, placing a bottle of milk before each pupil, then making them wait for a straw, then collecting the silver foil tops and pressing them into the large ball they were intending to give to the blind. (ST1)

Although such examples have been recognized as cases of Elaboration, they have caused a puzzle for semantic analysis. Consider (13), in which the characterization of the matrix verb has been problematic for a systematic account of event identity. Recent analyses identify predicates like “keep a low profile” as criterial event descriptions (Kearns 2003, Sæbø 2008). Criterion predicates are a type of predicates requiring some conventional criterion in order to qualify as an event of the criterion-matching kind. Consider the case in (13): For somebody to keep a low profile it is necessary that the person performs some action that is of the low profile kind: some activity which satisfies a conventional criterion for keeping a low profile in a manor setting, for example to drive an unobtrusive car. Similarly in (14): the activities this boy performs, satisfy criteria for being the class milk monitor. In a semantic model criterion predicates are 2nd order predicates, i.e. they are functions which take other predicates as their arguments (for details, see Sæbø 2008). When criterion predicates appear in the matrix, they are in this way underspecified to allow the criterion-matching enrichment supplied by the adjunct. An automatic consequence of the merge is that the temporal reference in the main clause and the adjunct is the same: event identity secures co-temporality in the strict sense.
There is no such merging of event descriptions in the case of AC: The adjunct in (15) (= (2a)), for instance, cannot be taken to describe the same physical event as the predicate of the matrix clause; nor can the speaking events in (16) and (17) be identical to the physical actions of nodding or of holding the cane out to the girl.

(15) The others followed her, waving their weapons. (RD1)

(16)a. "I see," she would say, nodding at some lengthy explanation of his; (AT1)
   b. "Aha", hatte sie oft genug gesagt und zu seinen langatmigen Erklärungen genickt;  
      "oh", had she often enough said and to his lengthy explanation nodded
   c. "Ja, jeg forstår," ville hun si og nikke til hans omstendelige forklaring. 
      "yes I see" would she say and nod at his lengthy explanation

(17)a. “Here,” he said, holding out a piece of the cane wedge to her, “try it….” (GN1)
   b. "Hier", sagte er und hielt ihr ein Stück von der Zuckerrohr Scheibe hin, "versuch... .... 
      “here” said he and held her a piece from the sugar cane wedge out, “try…”
   c. "Her," sa han, og rakte henne en bit av det skrelte røret, "prøv sånn som jeg sa." 
      "here" said he and reached her a bit from the peeled cane, “try such as I said!”

Yet, to say “I see” is to communicate understanding and to hold something out to your interlocutor is to communicate by gesture the same invitation to take it as you do by saying you invite somebody to try it. So the two events – the saying event and the non-linguistic physical action – in each example are closely related in that they in fact communicate the same speech act. Likewise, to follow someone and wave one’s weapons while doing so can be conceived as partial descriptions of one and the same complex intentional physical action. In other words: it is possible to construe a common (i.e.) superordinate topic for the two discourse segments related by AC, to be explicaded as the sum of the two individual event descriptions. That makes AC a coordinating relation, according to Asher (1993) and Asher and Lascarides (2003): The combined event descriptions elaborate on – or specify – the conditions on a complex event referent (the topic event) that is inferred from the combination itself.

There are borderline cases like (3) (see sect. 2) and (18):

(18)a. Cordelia sits with nonchalance, nudging me with her elbow now and then, staring 
       blankly at the other people with her grey-green eyes, opaque and glinting as metal 
       (MA1)
   b. Cordelia gibt sich lässig und stösst mich ab und zu mit dem Ellbogen an, während 
      ihre graugrünen Augen, undurchdringlich und glitzernd wie Metall, völlig 
      ausdrücklos die anderen Leute anstarren. 
      Cordelia gives herself nonchalant ... and nudgets me from and to, with the elbow, while her 
      grey-green eyes ... completely expressionless (at) the other people stare.
   c. Cordelia sitter makelig henslengt og kjører nå og da albuen i meg, alt mens hun 
      stirrer tomt på de andre menneskene med sine grå-grønne øyne, faste og skinnende 
      som metall. 
      Cordelia sits nonchalantly leaned ... and drives now and then the elbow into me, all while she 
      stares emptyly at the other people with her grey-green eyes...

The situation described here is understood to form a single, yet complex state-of-affair satisfying the criteria for Accompanying Circumstance. Furthermore, the predicate in the matrix describes a nonchalant sitting, which is a criterion predicate. The example should therefore be tested for

8 See Eckardt (1998: 103ff.) for details on summation of (properties of) events.
Elaboration. However, the nudging-activity and the staring do not quite match conventional criteria for a nonchalant sitting, which means that a full merge is unlikely. An example like this therefore suggests that Elaboration and Accompanying Circumstance should be kept apart as distinct relations, differing (at least) in terms of discourse sub-/coordination.

Given that AC is a coordinating relation, what, then, distinguishes it from the prototypical coordinating relations Narration and Continuation on the one hand and the more ‘dubious’ Background on the other hand?

The rhetorical relationNarration requires that “the events occur in the sequence in which they were described” (Asher and Lascarides: 462), i.e. it imposes a relation of (iconic) temporal sequence on its arguments. AC, as we have understood it and as illustrated by the examples in section 2, demands temporal overlap between the two eventualities. Consequently, AC in this strict sense, cannot be subsumed under Narration.

Continuation, on the other hand, is defined as Narration minus the (spatio-)temporal constraints the latter imposes (Asher and Lascarides 2003: 461). In particular, Continuation like Narration implies that the two constituents share ”a contingent common topic” (op.cit., 462), contributing on the same footing, so to speak, to the elaboration of that topic. According to the authors, Continuation is a more specific relation than the conjunction relation expressed by the coordination marker and:

“In previous work we have discussed the relation Continuation [as a rhetorical relation corresponding to and], but this relation isn’t equivalent to [the logical conjunction] Λ, either because it holds between α and β only if α and β are subordinated to some other constituent γ with some specific relations holding among Kα, Kβ and Kγ.” (Asher and Lascarides, 2003: 170 fn.)

We have argued above that (prototypical) AC can be viewed as a coordinating relation, inducing an interpretation by event (predicate) summation corresponding to the effect of ordinary conjunction by and, as explicated by Eckardt (1998). That would explain the prevailing translation-by-conjunction pattern demonstrated in section 2. But do ing-constructions in the AC-reading correspond to typical cases of Continuation as understood by Asher and Lascarides? In (19a), which illustrates the definition in Asher and Lascarides (2003: 170), the last three sentences are linked by Continuation, elaborating on the (inferred) topic that may be characterized as in (19b).

(19)a. The teacher asked the students to look for the lost cat. John looked under the table. Mary looked in the garden. Max searched all the cupboards.

b. The (three) students looked at (three) different places.

Do the matrix clause and the ing-adjunct in the AC-reading contribute in an equal way to the topic we may construe over them, as do the last three sentences in (19a)? It somehow seems that that they do not – as suggested by the term Accompanying Circumstance itself. Rather, the matrix event is indeed more salient – matters more – in the discourse as a whole; it seems that the adjunct is downgraded from a discourse-structural point of view, corresponding to its syntactic dependency on the matrix clause. Mostly, this impression is confirmed when we look closer at the context of the ing-constructions. The situation described in (8a), for example, interrupts a lively conversation, i.e. the protagonists being (or rather falling) silent is more salient than their holding hands; in (4) the matrix event of leaving concludes a series of preparatory actions (and the adjunct event is presuppositionally dependent on that event); as shown in (20), the subsequent context of
(15) evidently relates to the movement described in the matrix clause of the *ing*-construction; similarly, the sentence succeeding (16a) describes a reaction to the act of speaking (he has not seen her nodding), i.e. the matrix event alone, as seen in (21); and so forth.

(20) The others followed her, waving their weapons. Then they stopped. They stared around the room. (RD1)

(21) I see," she would say, nodding at some lengthy explanation of his; then he ’d look up and catch the gleam and the telltale tuck at one corner of her mouth.

In short: AC is comparable to the Background relation in that it behaves like a subordinating relation (in particular Elaboration) with respect to the Right Frontier Constraint but at the same time allows topic construal (event summation) like the coordinating relation Continuation.

According to Asher and Lascarides, however, Background relates a state to an event, implying a relation of temporal overlap (see sect. 3). Thus, only AC-cases fulfilling this condition fit the definition; other combinations of events and activities or states (see examples in sect. 2) do not. Besides, clear instances of clause-final *ing*-adjuncts conveying independent background information of the type illustrated by (10) are difficult to find.

In the end, then, our attempt at subsuming AC under the rhetorical relations defined in the SDRT framework seems to fail: In order to account for what we have called AC we would either have to enrich the system with yet another relation, or the definitions of the existing relations would have to be revised to include our cases. This would blur the borderlines between them considerably – which might, in fact, result in a more realistic approach.

As for the distinction between coordinating and subordinating discourse relations, AC – like Background – does not quite fit into that picture either. Asher and Vieu (2005) stress that this distinction concerns information packaging alone and that some rhetorical relations – e.g. Result – may be subordinating or coordinating, depending on the context. But, as we see it, that is not what is at play here; rather, AC and Background seem to be both coordinating and subordinating at the same time: coordinating with respect to the topic criterion, subordinating with respect to the Right Frontier Constraint. The conclusion that suggests itself is that these two criteria are not on the same footing; and maybe we need a well-defined notion of ‘main story line’9 and relative saliency or (discourse) downgrading with respect to the main story line in addition to the coordinating/subordinating pair of central discourse relations.10

5. Translation equivalence?

In this last section we return to the translations of the *ing*-adjoined structures in view of our analysis (cf. sect. 1). We have seen that Accompanying Circumstance as exemplified and discussed here is in some respects closer to a coordinating than a subordinating relation, and VP-conjunction in many of the translations seem to support this view. But the *ing*-adjunct in its AC-reading has also been shown to have a discourse-subordinating or downgrading effect, correlating with its syntactic dependency.

From a discourse structural point of view, then, we may ask ourselves whether the translations by VP-conjunction in fact yield truly equivalent translations. Although it is generally considered syntactically symmetric (but see Johannessen 1998, Lødrup 2002), VP-conjunction is often semantically or pragmatically asymmetric in the sense that the event in the first conjunct prepares the ground for the (main) event in the second conjunct (Sandstrøm 1993).

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10 This article was prepared for publication in 2006. See Asher, N. et al. (2007) for a renewed analysis of Background which takes our present criticism into account.
Coordination as a discourse structure mapped on to syntactic coordination allows this pragmatic inference, since discourse coordination blocks the first event from being continued after the second event has been attached to it. However, the reverse is not the case. According to this discourse interpretation of syntactic coordination, it follows that if translation by VP-conjunction occurs without further manipulation, the event downgraded in the final adjunct of the source, is upgraded in the translation.

We have noted that German translators in particular tend towards manipulating the information when VP-conjunction is used: One strategy is to add a discourse connective *dabei*, as in (7) in section 2, and this seems to compensate for the downgrading effect of the English structure (Fabricius-Hansen 2005). Another German strategy is to reverse the order of the clauses, as in (4) in section 2, repeated as (22) below.

(22)a. He saw Sandra off the premises, closed the shop, tidied up his office and left, *taking the four primary stones with him* (FF1)

b. Er wartete, bis Sandra gegangen war, verschloß die Ladentür, räumte sein Büro auf, *steckte die vier großen Steine ein* und verließ das Gebäude.

As mentioned in section 2 above, the result of the translation is that the added circumstance in the source is changed into a narrative. On the other hand, the translator has taken care of the downgrading effect of the adjunct form in the source by placing the event in the first conjunct. This strategy has not been chosen in the Norwegian translation, in which a semicolon separates two full sentences, and a state verb has been chosen in the translation of the adjunct, indicating – perhaps – a Background relation in Asher and Lascarides’ sense:

c. Han fulgte Sandra til døren, stengte butikken, ryddet opp på kontoret og gikk; de fire kostelige steinene hadde han med seg.

In fact, a syntactic restructuring of the information is a recurring strategy in German, and is deemed necessary or at least much preferred in cases where no such restructuring is needed in Norwegian. Another example is (23), below. Tony, the carpenter, has been talking to Beverly, but they are interrupted by another man who is ready to take Beverly out for a drink. Beverly leaves, and Tony, the loser, goes home:

(23)a. Tony went home, *taking his toolbox with him*. It had been a crap day all round.

b. Tony griff nach seinem Werkzeugkasten und ging nach Hause. …

Recent research is beginning to investigate how the VO/OV-parameter and the internal information structure of sentences, including complex sentence structures, interact with discourse structure (Doherty 2002, Kruijff-Korbayová and Steedman 2003), and this seems to us to point in the right direction for our problem of establishing the underlying linguistic motivation for translation choice. While German is a very strict end-focus language, Norwegian as a VO-language is much more apt to allow a relatively rich structure in post-focal position. The differences between the Norwegian and the German translations with respect to VP conjunction that we have observed, may be related to this (information) structural difference. The interaction of basic word order and sentential information structure on the one hand and discourse structure on the other may very well turn out to explain differences in translation choice. More research in this direction is needed, particularly with respect to VP-conjunction and *ing-
participial adjuncts, as here, but also with respect to other translation alternatives, which, for clarity of exposition at this limited space, have been left out of the discussion.

References


