Is *porque* more like *because* or like *omdat*?

An exploration of causality and subjectivity in Spanish backward causal connectives

Connectedness is an inherent property of discourse: We generate a mental representation of discourse by relating information units of text. These units can be two or more discursive segments that are connected through coherence relations (e.g., consequence-cause). This connection leads us to create a cognitive representation of what is communicated. Causality and subjectivity are two crucial notions that allow us to distinguish coherence relations. Causality refers to the implicational meaning (P, antecedent → Q, consequent) that is inferred between adjacent discourse segments and subjectivity is the degree of speaker involvement in the construal of the relation. Consequently, objective causal relations are those in which there is no speaker involvement, and which refer to physical events/states in the world, and subjective causal relations are those in which a speaker is involved, and which refer to speech acts or reasoning of a thinking entity. Additionally, it has become apparent that some causal connectives specialize in expressing subjective causal relations while others specialize in expressing objective causal relations. Various corpus-based studies have revealed this systematic variation in terms of subjectivity in different languages. However, there are not detailed data in Spanish from this cognitive perspective.

This dissertation aims to explore the relevance of causality and subjectivity for the use of backward causal connectives in Spanish. Principally, it investigates whether Spanish backward causal connectives show a systematic variation in terms of subjectivity. To reach this goal, three specific studies are carried out, which involve the use of different research methods: Automatic analyses of corpora, manual text analyses of corpora and experimental research. The combination of different methodological approaches allows us to obtain new information about the semantic-pragmatic profile of three common backward causal connectives in Spanish.