When language users do not seem behave according to cognitive categories

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Causal connectives in discourse

The temperature rose because the sun was shining.
The neighbors must be away, because the lights are out.

Backward order: Consequence-Cause

Both based on an Implication relation $P \rightarrow Q$

Difference:

Report of external reality (OBJECTIVE)
versus
Speaker conclusion (SUBJECTIVE)

Dutch causal connectives as 'specialists'

The temperature rose doordat *the sun was shining.*
CONSEQUENCE-CAUSE, non-volitional content

*Jan went home* omdat *he was ill.*
CONSEQUENCE-CAUSE volitional actions

The neighbors must be away want *the lights are out.*
CLAIM-ARGUMENT / EPISTEMIC

Does anybody need to go to the bathroom? want *we are leaving!* SPEECH ACT

Comparison of Dutch causal connectives in three genres

- Written newspaper texts
  - highly edited, carefully planned
- Spoken conversations
  - Spontaneous, face-to-face, low degree of planning
- Chat language
  - Spontaneous, low degree of planning, less feedback from conversational partner (no paralinguistic cues)

- Research Question: is the distribution of causal connectives in Dutch genre-dependent?

Causal connectives and genre: initial impressions
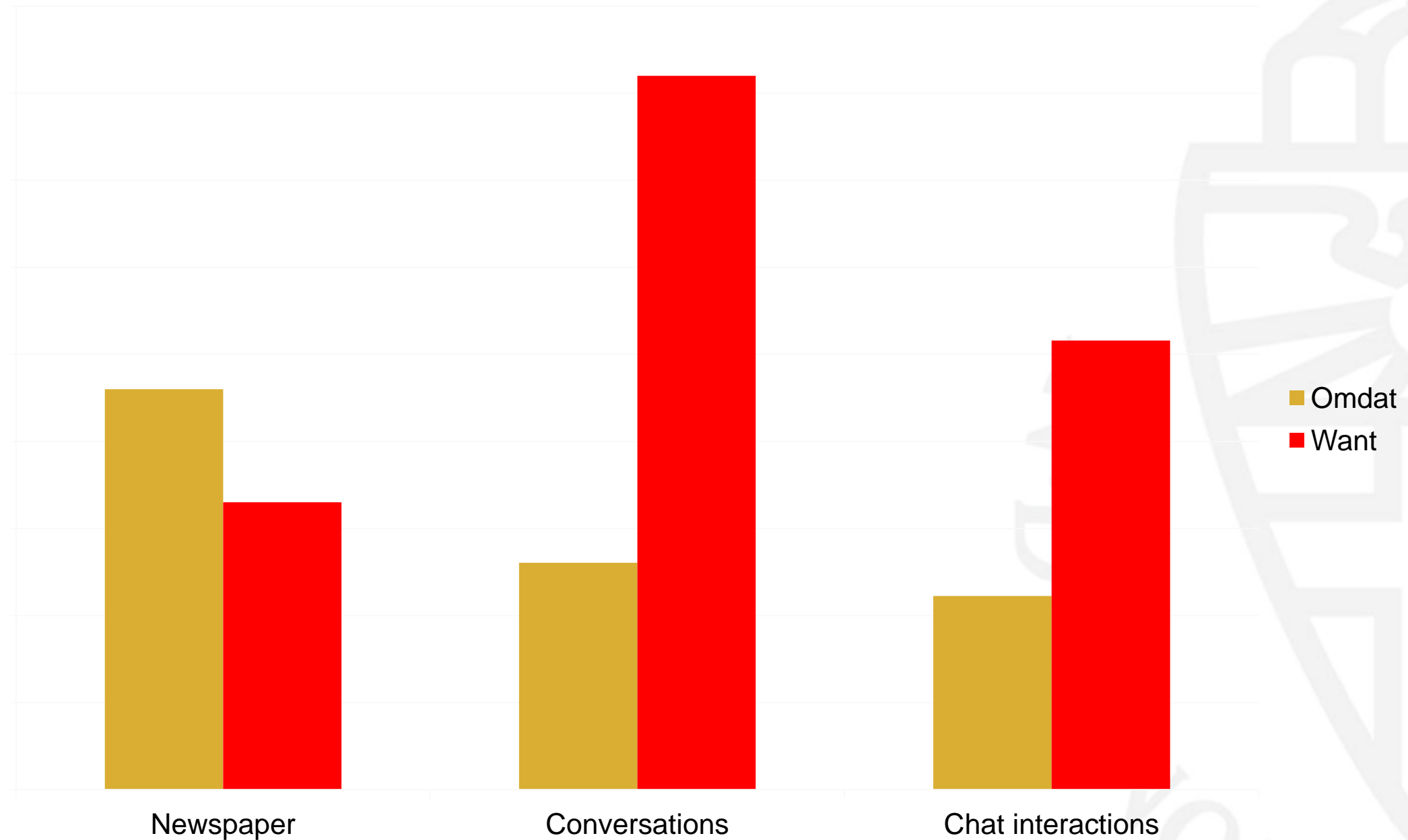
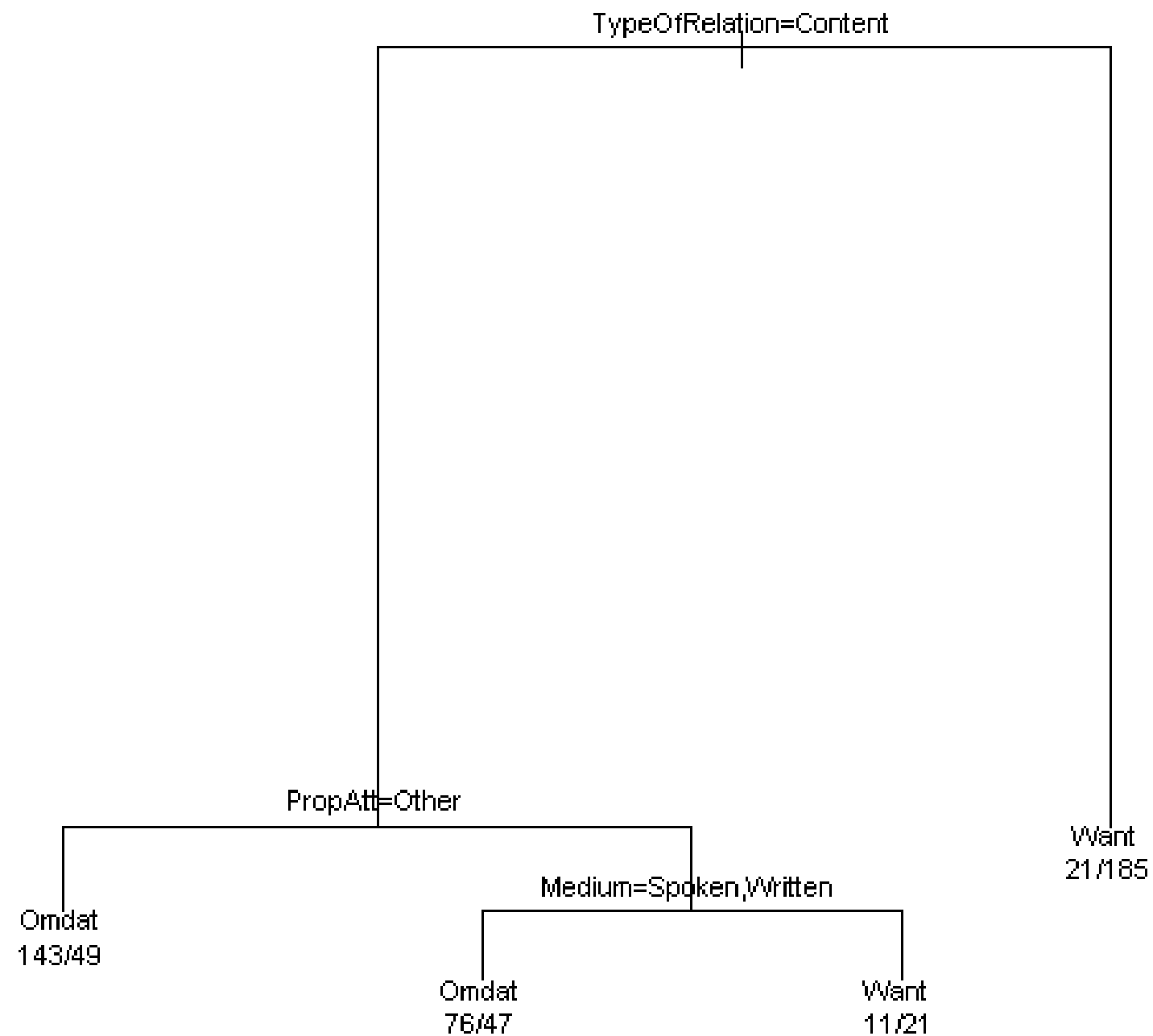Frequency of omdat and want per million words

Method

- Corpus analysis
- 100 examples of *omdat* and *want* per genre
- Each example has been analyses for a large number of properties, among which subjectivity
- Logistic regression analysis and CART analysis (Cluster and Regression Tree analysis)

Subjectivity: Operationalization

- Subjectivity: an utterance is subjective because its interpretation depends on a subject of consciousness [SoC] who evaluates

    - Propositional attitude of the first segment (S1)
        - non-evaluations (facts etc.) < evaluations
    - Relation type
        - Non-volitional content, Volitional content < Epistemic / Speech act
    - Type of SoC in the first segment (S1)
        - No Conceptualizer, Third person < First person
    - Linguistic realization of the SoC (S1)
        - explicit realization < implicit realization
            - (cf. Langacker, 1990)

Results: CART analysis

TypeOfRelation=Content

PropAtt=Other

Medium=Spoken,Written

Omdat
143/49

Omdat
76/47

Want
11/21

Want
21/185

Results: Profiles for want and omdat

- **Want** instructs the reader to find the nearest SoC, and to create a causal connection "P→Q" between S2 (expressing P) and S1 (expressing Q); the SoC is responsible for this connection. The connection is a non-content relation: epistemic (Claim-Argument, Evidence) or speech act.

- Omdat instructs the reader to create a causal connection "P→Q" between S2 (expressing P) and S1 (expressing Q). The connection is a content relation (volitional or non-volitional cause).

Exceptions to the rules: omdat in subjective context

And even Th. van Boven, professor of international law at Maastricht University thinks that the decision "can only be welcomed from the point of view of human rights". But Van Boven thinks that the further development will not be that simple: "It is for a good reason that the court does not give a final judgment because a specialist in international law still needs to have a look at some crucial points.

[S1 Dat is heel verstandig], OMDAT [S2 de internationale jurisdictie erg in beweging is]"
[S1 That is very sensible], OMDAT [S2 the international jurisdiction is very much on the move]"

Subjective omdat

[S1 That is very sensible], OMDAT [S2 the international jurisdiction is very much on the move]"

prototypical 'subjective' context:
      the first segment expresses an evaluation,
      the SoC is implicit,
      the SoC is the speaker,
      the relation is epistemic (Claim-Argument)

Subjective omdat

- Our suggestion: rhetorical use of omdat
- deliberate choice
    - the conclusion does not follow from a self-constructed subjective line of reasoning
    - it follows more or less deterministically from the circumstances in the situation
    - typical for 'legalists'?
        - "it is not our choice, we are forced by the law"

Exceptions to the rules: want in objective context

Nine

Contrary to what Peter Sierksema is saying in his column (Books, August 31), the number nine ís blessed. It is for a good reason that every young boy wants to be number nine on the football field. Nine means to score.

[S1Voetbalclubs als AZ, De Graafschap en NEC dromen van nummer negen].
    WANT [S2 negen is het linkerrijtje]. Ook buiten de sport is de negen interessant.
    […]
[S1 Football teams like AZ, De Graafschap and NEC are dreaming of number nine].
    WANT [S2 nine means the left column]. Also outside of sport the number nine is
    interesting. […]'

Exceptions to the rules: want in objective context

[S1 Football teams like AZ, De Graafschap and NEC are dreaming of number nine]. WANT
[S2 nine means the left column].

'Objective' context:
the first segment expresses a fact,
the conceptualizer is explicit,
the conceptualizer is a third speaker,
the relation is Non-volitional content (Reason)

Objective **want**

- Our suggestion: strategic use of want
- deliberate choice
    - want signals that the author knows what it is that the clubs dream of and he gives their motivation.
    - want signals empathy/identification with the third person Subject of Consciousness

To what extent is the distribution of causal connectives genre-dependent?

- No systematic differences across the genres
  - across the three genres, the meaning and use of the two connectives show more similarities than differences
- Interesting connections between the concept of genre and the use of backward causal connectives
  - Frequency differences between genres (omdat more frequent in newspaper texts, want more frequent in spoken discourse and chat)
  - Strategic uses of the connectives may well be genre-dependent
    - Empathy use of want looks typical for narratives (i.e., novels, newspaper articles)