(Non-)Ellipses in Dutch, English, and German: The case of because X

Kristin Stöcker & Martin Konvička

What is because X?
- Formally reduced causal construction containing because (or want/omdat and weil in Dutch and German, respectively)
- Interpretation depends on pragmatic inference and common ground between speaker/writer and listener/reader

What counts as an ellipsis?
Part of an utterance that is intended, but not overtly expressed.
Elided material must be contextually recoverable.
(Van Craenenbroeck & Temmerman 2018: 8)

Data & methodology
Typical for conceptually spoken contexts.
Data gathered manually using Twitter Advanced Search
(Bohmann 2016: 156; Koch & Oesterreicher 1985)

Textually recoverable
[The cattle were] sold along the way because tired or lame. (1783)
The wealthy, healthy, wise, famous and those favored by song, women and wine, all have, in individual instances committed suicide because ‘tired of life.’ (1888)
... een gevels dat berucht is bij veel automobilisten, want veel files. (1991)
Volgende week is het weer feest, want 2 december. (1900)
Die üblichste Gewohnheit ist unüblich, ist Sünde, weil gedankenlos Treiben. (1854)

Dieselben waren unnatürlich, und das Verbot der freien Bewegung an der eigenen Meeresküste war für eine Macht wie Rußland auf die Dauer unerträglich, weil demütigend. (1898)

Contextually recoverable
If due north was good enough for that chicken’s parents and grandparents and great-great-grandparents, it’s good enough for that chicken too, damn it. But Iowa still wants to sell eggs to California, because money. (2013)

X slot open to...
- Nouns
- Proper nouns
- Adjectives
- Pronouns
- Verbs
- Adverbs
- Interjections
- Direct speech
- Emojis

More data

TENTATIVE DIACHRONY

Summary
- Ellipsis is elided material that is (con)textually recoverable
- Not all instances of because X are elliptical constructions, because the assumed ellipsis is not always recoverable
- Diachronically, however, textually recoverable ellipses can be seen as a possible source construction of because X

What’s next?
- Role of hashtags in the X slot
- Quantitative analysis of the X slot
- Broader study beyond the Sandwich languages
- Comparative analysis of Dutch want and omdat
- Role of English in the spread of the construction
- Role of pauses between because and the X element