

Harry – gefangen in der Zeit

Begleitmaterialien

Episode 034 – Grammar

1. Connecting main clauses with "denn"

A main clause usually contains a subject and a conjugated verb. Coordinating conjunctions can be used to connect two main clauses. Both clauses are independent and equal. The word order in each one doesn't change.

The conjunction "denn" is a coordinating conjunction that joins two main clauses. The second part provides more information about the first part.

Unlike the conjunctions "und" and "oder", there is always a comma before "denn"!

Without conjunction:

Wir brauchen einen Staubsauger.

With conjunction:

Wir brauchen einen Staubsauger,

denn

Der Teppich hat Flecken.

der Teppich hat Flecken.

Without conjunction:

Du bist ein Säufer.

With conjunction:

Du bist ein Säufer,

denn

Du hast alles getrunken.

du hast alles getrunken.

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A subtle difference

"denn" has the same meaning as "weil". Both words introduce a reason. Grammatically, however, they differ.

"denn" is a coordinating conjunction, connecting one main clause to another. That's why the word order of the second clause doesn't change.

"weil" is a subordinating conjunction that introduces a subordinate clause to a main clause. The conjugated verb moves to the end of the subordinate clause.

Examples:

*Wir brauchen einen Staubsauger, **denn** der Teppich **hat** Flecken.*

*Wir brauchen einen Staubsauger, **weil** der Teppich Flecken **hat**.*

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2. Connecting main clauses with "nicht ... sondern"

After a negation, you can use "sondern" to provide an alternative or contrast.

Examples:

*Harry ist **nicht** mutig, **sondern** feige.*

Dr. Anderson ist *kein* Arzt, sondern ein Mörder.

"sondern" is a conjunction that connects two main clauses. If the verb and/or subject is the same in both sentences, then they can be dropped from the second part.

That makes the compound sentence shorter.

Without conjunction: *Harry ist nicht mutig.* *Er ist feige.*

With conjunction: ***Harry ist nicht mutig, sondern er ist feige.***

Shortened: *Harry ist nicht mutig, sondern feige.*

Sometimes the negation doesn't apply to the whole sentence, but to only part of it or a group of words or a single word. "sondern" can still be used to provide a contrast.

Example:

Ich habe den Stein nicht geworfen, sondern eine Frau.

In this case, the pronoun "ich" is negated and so only "eine Frau" is added.

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Example:

*Ich habe den Stein nicht **geworfen**, sondern **mitgebracht**.*

In the above sentence, only the past participle is negated.

The part of the sentence to be negated is often pronounced more heavily either through stronger emphasis or through word order.

Example:

Question: *Wieso haben Sie das Fenster kaputt gemacht?*

Reply: *Das war ich nicht, sondern der Stein.* (= regular word order)

Reply: *Das war nicht ich, sondern der Stein.* (= emphasized word order)

"sondern" always requires a comma

No matter whether "sondern" introduces a whole clause or just a single word, it is always preceded by a comma!