

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:	<i>Wir brauchen einen Staubsauger.</i>		<i>Der Teppich hat Flecken.</i>
With conjunction:	<i>Wir brauchen einen Staubsauger,</i>	denn	<i>der Teppich hat Flecken.</i>

Without conjunction:	<i>Du bist ein Säufer.</i>		<i>Du hast alles getrunken.</i>
With conjunction:	<i>Du bist ein Säufer,</i>	denn	<i>du hast alles getrunken.</i>

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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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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!