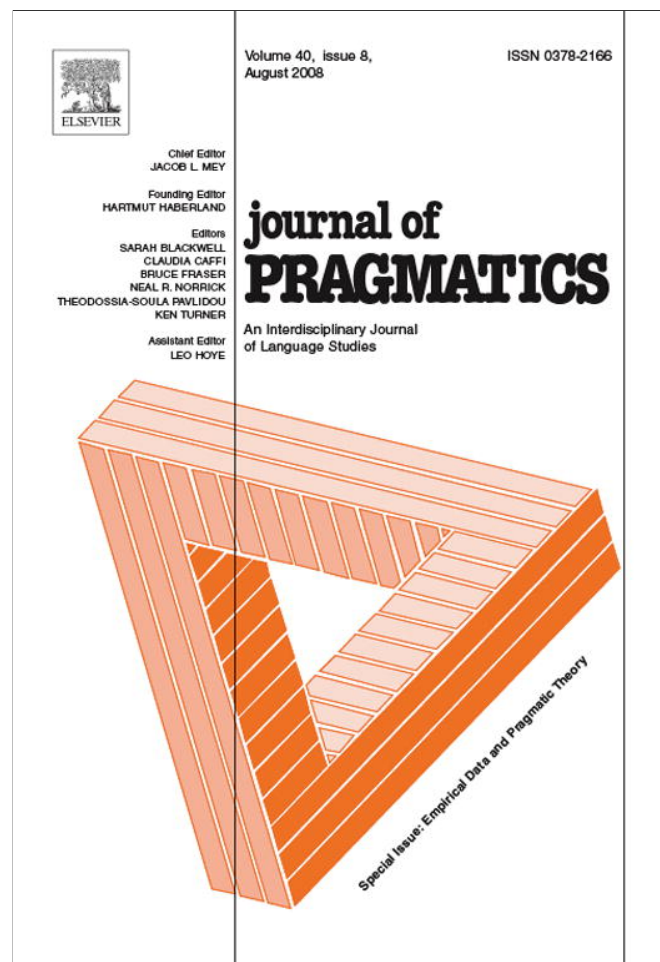


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Constructions of the type *la cause/la raison/la preuve* + utterance: Grammaticalization, pragmaticalization, or something else?

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Abstract

French makes use of a series of nominal constructions that provide a challenging object of linguistic research. They are built on a predicative NP that introduces a clause without resorting to any complementation marker such as [*que*] to connect the two (e.g. *la cause/la raison/la preuve* + utterance). At first glance, these structures could either be treated as the result of a grammaticalization process originating in a specific use whereby the noun governs the clause via a copula (*la preuve est que, la raison est que, la cause est que*), or as the outcomes of a pragmaticalization process occurring at the discourse level. However, a close examination of diachronic data strongly suggests that they should rather be seen as instances of a routinization of complex discourse structures. These constructions may be analysed as coupled segments (of the question–answer, deictic marker–referent type) whose traits have become more and more fixed through routinization.

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1. Introduction

Contemporary French makes use of a series of constructions in which a predicative NP introduces a clause without resorting to any complementation marker:

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- (1) Non, les tatouages ne sont pas dangereux, **la preuve**, je suis toujours vivant. (www.fr.freeever.com/freeever/tatouage.jsp)
‘No, tattoos are not dangerous; the proof, I’m still alive’.¹
- (2) Malgré son âge respectable, il lui est arrivé de saluer ses fans en se promenant en papemobile. . . découverte de son recouvrement pare-balles! **La raison**: il veut être près du peuple. (http://blogue.branchez-vous.com/archives/2006/04/le_pape_est_coo.html)
‘Despite his respectable age, he has sometimes greeted his fans while riding in his pope-mobile with its bulletproof covering taken off! The reason: he wants to be close to people’.
- (3) Cyril, relais de La Meute à Clermont-Ferrand, était convoqué le 27 décembre 2002 au Tribunal de grande Instance de Clermont-Ferrand en vue d’une mesure de « rappel à la loi ». **La cause**: il avait exprimé une réaction par écrit sur une affiche sexiste. (www.lameute.fr/reseau_archives/41a50.php3)
‘Cyril, the Clermont-Ferrand representative of La Meute, was summoned to the Court of Grand Instance of Clermont-Ferrand on the 27th of December 2002 in order to be ‘called to order’. The cause: he had reacted in writing to a sexist advertisement’.

At first glance, these constructions could be treated within grammaticalization theory as being derived from a specific use whereby the noun governs the clause via a copula (*la preuve est que, la raison est que, la cause est que*). However, we shall see that this analysis is inadequate and that, in fact, they should instead be seen as instances of routinization of complex discourse structures. We shall trace the constructions back to a use in which the NP stands for an autonomous speech act. We shall also dissociate *la raison* and *la cause* from *la preuve*, showing that the occurrence of *la preuve* in examples such as (1) may be accounted for by its capacity to function as an independent speech act and refer deictically, whereas the occurrences of *la raison* and *la cause*, as in (2) and (3), respectively, may be considered as cases of routinization of a question–answer pair.

2. Possible cases of apocope?

The three constructions mentioned above could be seen as the product of a grammaticalization process originating in a sequence of the type [noun + copula + complement clause]. Such an analysis would fit into the evolutionary model according to which verbs that loosely govern their complements, such as *guess, mean, think* (see Brinton, 1996, 2007) may turn into parentheticals, as in “As it was he sold the goddamned things at my racket club. I mean he was only a member because of my husband”, and then become discourse markers, as in “I just want to look at the stuff, I mean, examine it physically, not experience it emotionally” (Brinton, 2007:46). The initial constructions would thus be the ones we find in the following examples:

- (4) Depuis son ouverture, géoportail connaît un vif succès grâce à une très forte communication à son sujet. **La preuve est que** le serveur hébergeant ce site était inaccessible 10 min après sa mise en ligne en raison d’une trop forte fréquentation. (www.outil-referencement.com/blog/index.php/237-geoportail)

¹ The English rendering of the French constructions is very close to a literal translation (even in the case of *la preuve*, its English homologue, *the proof*, does not function in a similar manner); this enables us to point out their underlying morphological structure.

‘Since its launch, géoportail has enjoyed great success, being the centre of much discussion. The proof is that the server hosting this site was no longer accessible 10 min after it went on line because it had too many visitors’.

- (5) Cela ne surprend donc personne que les versements mensuels d’une location soient toujours moins élevés que ceux d’un emprunt, à condition que les prix et les taux d’intérêt soient identiques. **La raison est que** le consommateur ne rembourse qu’une partie du capital dans le cas de la location et la totalité du capital dans celui de l’emprunt. (<http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inoca-bc.nsf/fr/ca01852f.html>)
‘It is no surprise to anyone, then, that the monthly instalments on a rental are always lower than those on a loan, provided that prices and interest rates are the same. The reason is that the customer only returns part of the capital in the case of a rental and the entire capital in the case of a loan’.
- (6) De nombreuses personnes critiquent cette politique de tolérance zéro car elle entraîne plusieurs effets pervers: le premier et le plus visible est l’augmentation des plaintes contre les policiers, qui est de 41% pour New York. **La cause est que** les policiers sont pressés par leur hiérarchie de « faire du chiffre ». (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tolérance_zéro)
‘Many persons criticize this zero tolerance policy because it has several perverse effects: the first and most visible one is the increase in the number of complaints against policemen, which is 41% for New York. The cause is that policemen are urged by their superiors to ‘rack up the numbers’.

The shift from [definite articleNoun *est que* Sentence] to [definite articleNoun, Sentence] could be treated as a case of grammaticalization, similar to the process that affected the interrogative construction *qu’est-ce que (qu’est-ce que tu fais?)* ‘what is that that (what is that that you are doing?)’, which has evolved into an apocopated construction in oral French: *qu’est-ce (qu’est-ce tu fais?)* ‘what is that (what is that you are doing?)’. The hypothesis of a grammaticalization process underlying the evolution of *qu’est-ce que* is put forward by Druetta (2002):

[. . .] the very existence and usage of this apocopated form are an important indicator of the degree of grammaticalization of *est-ce que*, since we move from the coalescence stage, where the various morphemes agglutinated in the new unit are actually unanalysable, to a stage implying the dropping off of a fundamental element of the cleft device, namely the particle *que*, whose function would be to introduce the extracted element into the kernel sentence. (Druetta, 2002:3, our translation)

Based on his examination of corpus-based examples, Druetta points out that the apocopated form observes the same distribution in discourse as the original form. He also underlines that *que* ‘that’ is dropped off only in certain contexts, namely, those where an interrogative form (such as *que*, *quand* ‘when’, etc.) is present.

Treating the constructions examined in the present paper as the result of a grammaticalization process that has operated on a nominal item governing a sentence raises several problems. First, the apocope of *que* cannot be considered to be a usual process (Druetta clearly shows that this process is limited to certain contexts). The reduction of the original construction via apocope cannot thus be seen here as a standard indicator of grammaticalization. Secondly, the hypothesis that these constructions are derived from the apocope of the complementation marker would

imply that the NP (*la preuve, la cause, la raison*), when directly prefacing a sentence, is in fact the result of a double apocope, having affected both the copula (*est*) and *que*. Lastly, the distribution of non-governing constructions such as those in (1)–(3) differs greatly from that of the construction [Noun *est que*], unlike the case of the interrogative constructions described by Druetta. Non-governing constructions combine freely with any syntactic material (e.g. sentences, nominal and pronominal forms), whereas governing constructions require a proper sentence in their own right, as illustrated by the following examples, where *la preuve est que* cannot be used with *moi* ('me'), *la raison est que* cannot be used with *la pollution* ('pollution'), and *la cause est que* cannot be used with *la pollution de l'air* ('air pollution'):

- (7) C'est rémunéré et facile (**la preuve: moi!**)
(<http://kravmaga.forumactif.com/ftopic140.Qu-est-ce-que-la-fede-LASD.htm>)
'You get paid for it and it's easy (the proof: me!)
- (8) C'est rémunéré et facile, ***la preuve est que moi!**
'You get paid for it and it's easy (the proof is that me!)
- (9) 17H45, Wuhan, 31 degrés au sol, nuageux. En fait le temps est toujours le même dans les grandes villes: nuageux. **La raison:** la pollution.
(<http://marine-en-chine.over-blog.org/archive-09-04-2006.html>)
'17.45 pm, Wuhan, temperature at ground level 31 °C, cloudy weather. Actually the weather is the same in all large cities: cloudy. The reason: pollution'.
- (10) 17H45, Wuhan, 31 degrés au sol, nuageux. En fait le temps est toujours le même dans les grandes villes: nuageux. ***La raison est que** la pollution.
'17.45 pm, Wuhan, temperature at ground level 31 °C, cloudy weather. Actually the weather is the same in all large cities: cloudy. The reason is that pollution'.
- (11) Il est vrai que cette crainte n'était pas infondée: dans ce qui était alors la Tchécoslovaquie, des forêts entières avaient dépéri en peu de temps. **La cause:** la pollution de l'air.
(www.wsl.ch/lm/publications/series/jbericht/jb98/kap2-fr.html)
'It is true that this fear was not unjustified: in what was then Czechoslovakia, entire forests had withered in no time. The cause: air pollution'.
- (12) Il est vrai que cette crainte n'était pas infondée: dans ce qui était alors la Tchécoslovaquie, des forêts entières avaient dépéri en peu de temps.
***La cause est que** la pollution de l'air.
'It is true that this fear was not unjustified: in what was then Czechoslovakia, entire forests had withered in no time. The cause is that air pollution'.

For all these reasons, the nominal forms analysed here should not be considered avatars of subordinate clauses from which *que* has been dropped. Furthermore, both *la cause* and *la raison* could constitute an autonomous turn in a conversational dialogue²:

² We shall provide a different analysis for [*la preuve* + NP].

- (13) - 17H45, Wuhan, 31 degrés au sol, nuageux. En fait le temps est toujours le même dans les grandes villes: nuageux.
 - **La raison?**
 - La pollution.
 - '17.45 pm, Wuhan, temperature at ground level: 31C, cloudy weather. Actually the weather is the same in all large cities: cloudy.
 - The reason?
 - Pollution'.
- (14) - Il est vrai que cette crainte n'était pas infondée: dans ce qui était alors la Tchécoslovaquie, des forêts entières avaient dépéri en peu de temps.
 - **La cause?**
 - La pollution de l'air.
 - 'It is true that this fear was not unjustified: in what was then Czechoslovakia, entire forests had withered in no time.
 - The cause?
 - Air pollution'.

However, in order to corroborate that the derivation is not [*la cause/la raison/la preuve + que + sentence*] > [*la cause/la raison/la preuve + sentence*], we have to show that another grammaticalization trajectory is also highly improbable. One might think that the constructions under analysis are derived from the apocope of the structure *c'est que* '[this] is that'. From this point of view, a construction of the type [NP (*raison/cause/preuve*) + sentence] might be derived from [NP, *c'est + que + sentence*]. The first difficulty raised by this hypothesis is that it involves a double apocope (*c'est + que*):

- (15) 17H45, Wuhan, 31 degrés au sol, nuageux. En fait le temps est toujours le même dans les grandes villes: nuageux. **La raison c'est** la pollution.
 '17.45 pm, Wuhan, temperature at ground level 31 °C, cloudy weather. Actually the weather is the same in all large cities: cloudy. The reason is the pollution'.
- (16) Malgré son âge respectable, il lui est arrivé de saluer ses fans en se promenant en papemobile... découverte de son recouvrement pare-balles! **La raison, c'est qu'**il veut être près du peuple.
 'Despite his respectable age, he has sometimes greeted his fans while riding in his pope-mobile with its bulletproof covering taken off! The reason is that he wants to be close to people'.

The apocope of *que* in (16) is as hard to defend as an apocope of *la raison/la cause est que*. Occurrences of the type [NP, *c'est + sentence*], where the presentative construction is maintained in the absence of *que* before a sentence, as in (17), are hard to find:

- (17) Malgré son âge respectable, il lui est arrivé de saluer ses fans en se promenant en papemobile... découverte de son recouvrement pare-balles! *[**La raison/La cause c'est**] il veut être près du peuple.
 'Despite his respectable age, he has sometimes greeted his fans while riding in his pope-mobile with its bulletproof covering taken off! The reason/the cause is he wants to be close to people'.

The occurrences fitting this pattern are extremely rare (only 38 on www.google.com); all of them belong to the noun *problème*, and they pertain to a rather informal written language register (characterized by spelling mistakes, flawed syntax, etc.). So, a structure such as [*la raison/la cause/la preuve* + sentence] cannot be accounted for by invoking the dropping off of *c'est que*, since such an apocope has left no traces whatsoever. In other words, there are no intermediate constructions where *que* has already been abandoned but *c'est* is still present.

We are thus left with no data supporting an analysis based on the reduction of a subordinating construction to an asyndetic one, i.e. one in which the conjunctions have been omitted. Therefore, these nominal forms followed by an utterance are not the result of a reduction process; instead, they are similar to two independent discourse sequences that have their own illocutionary force and are connected through a discourse relation in the resultant construction.

3. The differences between [*la preuve* + utterance] and [*la raison/la cause* + utterance]

As we have just seen, none of the constructions built on *la preuve*, *la cause*, or *la raison* can be traced back to a form governing a sentential complement. A certain number of traits dissociate the construction with *la preuve* from the other two; the most obvious of these is the fact that the constituent *la preuve* has undergone a process of fixation. Its determiner and number have become invariable:

- (18) Parle à un psy, je l'ai fait et ça a bien marché; **la preuve**, je suis fiancé et j'aime de nouveau la vie. 'Talk to a shrink, I've done it and it's worked; the proof, I've got engaged and I've come to love life again'. (<http://funkymag.com/probleme623> > Rossari, 2006:172)
- (19) Parle à un psy, je l'ai fait et ça a bien marché; ***les preuves**, je suis fiancé et j'aime de nouveau la vie. 'Talk to a shrink, I've done it and it's worked; the proofs, I've got engaged and I've come to love life again'.
- (20) Parle à un psy, je l'ai fait et ça a bien marché; ***une preuve**, je suis fiancé et j'aime de nouveau la vie. 'Talk to a shrink, I've done it and it's worked; a proof, I've got engaged and I've come to love life again'.

Unlike *la preuve*, *la raison* and *la cause* have preserved the original properties of the noun category:

- (21) Il me cache de son ex. Ce qui nous bloque nous, lui et moi, dans notre relation. **Les raisons**: il a peur de sa réaction car ils ont un enfant ensemble. Il craint son incompréhension, le chantage. (http://72.14.221.104/search?q=cache:MjbXRB5t_HsJ:forum.doctissimo.fr/famille/rerelations-parents-enfants/cache-sujet)
'He's hiding me from his ex. And that creates a block in our relationship with each other. The reasons: he's afraid of her reaction because they have a child together. He's afraid of her incomprehension, of blackmail'.
- (22) L'histoire est récente puisque j'ai quitté mon compagnon samedi soir. **Les causes**: la violence. (http://72.14.221.104/search?q=cache:vSV8IBidIRAJ:www.sosfemmes.com/faq/100_suivantes/123_natly.htm+%22les+causes+la+violence%22&hl=fr&gl=ch&ct=clnk&cd=6&lr=lang_fr)
'This story is pretty recent because I broke up with my boyfriend on Saturday evening. The causes: violence'.

Another characteristic property of *la preuve* is the fact that it may be used absolutely, i.e. either in isolation or between pauses in discourse, with the NP thus functioning as an autonomous utterance that conveys an assertive illocutionary force:

- (23) - Comment se fait-il qu'on ne vous voie jamais ici? - On me voit, ici. **La preuve**. Elle se rejeta un peu en arrière pour me regarder. (Vian > Frantext)
 'How come nobody sees you round here? - I am seen round here. The proof. She jumped back a bit to look at me'.

The illocutionary autonomy of *la preuve* in its absolute use is confirmed by the fact that it may function as a reply in a dialogic context:

- (24) J'en croyais à peine mes yeux. (Je l'ai peut-être déjà dit? Alors c'est le décalage horaire). Ici au Canada, ils ont eu aussi des moulins.
 - Vous n'y croyez pas non plus, n'est-ce pas? **La preuve**. Oui, oui c'est moi là à côté. (http://lezart.free.fr/Images/Canada/moulin_perrot.htm)
 'I could hardly believe my eyes. (Have I already said that? Then it must be the jet lag). Here in Canada they also had windmills.
 - You don't believe it either, do you? The proof. Yes, yes, it's me over there'.

When used in such a way, the NP refers deictically to an element in the discourse context. *La raison* and *la cause* do not have this capacity.

What we may also note is that the fixation undergone by *la preuve* has been accompanied by a modification in the meaning of the noun. This has not happened with the other constructions where *preuve* may occur. As an expression, *la preuve* has the capacity to introduce states of affairs into discourse that would not normally be labelled as 'proofs':

- (25) C'est bientôt Noël: **La preuve** il neige. (<http://lemulot.iffance.com> > Rossari, 2005:71)
 'Christmas is getting close: the proof it's snowing'.

The use of the other constructions built on *preuve* would not be felicitous in this same context:

- (26) C'est bientôt Noël: *[**Pour preuve/A preuve/Preuve en est**] il neige.
 'Christmas is getting close: [As proof/as proof of it/a proof of it is] it's snowing'.

All of these traits show that the expression *la preuve* functions differently from other similar constructions. Unlike the other expressions examined, *la preuve* may be related to the deictic function it can assume in certain contexts. The diachronic data concerning the appearance of the constructions built on *cause*, *raison*, and *preuve* will be used to point out the difference between the constructions of the type [*la raison/la cause* + utterance], on the one hand, and [*la preuve* + utterance], on the other.

4. Predicative nominal constructions: diachronic data

For the current study, we searched the Frantext database and identified the first written occurrences of the following forms:

- the NP used dialogically as a speech act (*La cause?*; *La raison?*; *La preuve?*);
- the NP used to introduce a deictic syntagm, namely, *la voici* (*la cause, la voici; la raison, la voici; la preuve, la voici*);
- the NP used absolutely with deictic reference;
- non-governing NP (*La preuve/la cause/la raison* + utterance);
- governing NP (*La cause/la raison/la preuve (en) est que*).

La cause?

- (27) DU BOIS.
Je vous dis qu'il faut quitter ce lieu.
ALCESTE.
La cause?
DU BOIS.
Il faut partir, Monsieur, sans dire adieu. (Molière, *Le Misanthrope*, 1667)
- DU BOIS.
'I'm telling you we have to leave this place'.
ALCESTE.
'The cause?'
DU BOIS.
'We have to leave, Sir, without saying farewell'.

La cause en est que

- (28) Nous ne savons absolument rien avec certitude. **La cause en est que** jusqu'à présent tous nos instituteurs et nos maîtres, sans exception, sont toujours partis de principes généraux que nous avons tous pris pour vrais sans examen [...] (Destutt de Tracy, *Éléments d'idéologie*, dans *Logique*, 1805)
'We don't know anything with certainty. The cause of it is that until now all our high school and elementary school teachers, without exception, have always relied on general principles that we have taken for granted and not questioned'.

La raison?

- (29) Et celles ses estroictes barrieries et forteresse ne retarderont vos forts et puissans assaulx. **La raison?** Vous avez Amour de vostre cousté et ayde: contre lequel aulcune Rocque ne peult longuement durer. (Jeanne Flore, *Contes amoureux*, 1537)
'And these narrow barriers and fortress will not delay your strong and powerful assaults. The reason? Love is on your side and helps you: no rock can last long against it'.
- (30) ALCANTOR.
Qui, vous?
SGANARELLE.
Oui, moi.
ALCANTOR.
Et la raison?

SGANARELLE.

La raison? C'est que je ne me sens point propre pour le mariage [. . .] (Molière, *Le Mariage forcé*, 1668)

ALCANTOR.

'Who, you?'

SGANARELLE.

'Yes, me'.

ALCANTOR.

'And the reason?'

SGANARELLE.

'The reason? The reason is that I don't feel at all ready for marriage [. . .]'

- (31) N'en murmurez, Madame, ici non plus que l'autre;
 Sa part la satisfait, recevez mieux la vôtre;
 J'en étois idolâtre, et veux vous épouser.
La raison? C'est ainsi qu'il me plaît d'en user. (Pierre Corneille, *Attila, roi des Huns*, 1682)

'Madame, do not murmur of it here more than the other;
 She is pleased with her share, be better pleased with yours;
 I who used to worship her now want to marry you.
 The reason? That is what I feel like now'.

- (32) Cette femme hautaine, Mme de Rênal, était l'auteur de cette abomination. **La raison?**
 Les beaux yeux et les joues si fraîches du petit abbé Sorel la disaient de reste.
 (Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir*, 1830)
 'This haughty woman, Mme de Rênal, was the author of this abomination. The
 reason? The beautiful eyes and the so fresh cheeks of the little clergyman Sorel
 were speaking it loud and clear'.

La raison, la voici

- (33) OSMAN.
 Et sur quels fondements l'explique t'on ainsi?
 Sçachons en la raison.
 La SULTANE.
La raison, la voici.
 Lors que de tous pechez une Ame s'est purgée,
 De dons surnaturels elle est avatagée [. . .]
 (Tristan l'Hermite, *Osman*, 1655)

OSMAN.

'And on what grounds do they explain it in this way?

Let's find out the reason'.

The SULTANA.

'The reason, here it is.

When a soul has cleansed itself of all its sins,

It becomes endowed with supernatural gifts [. . .]'

La raison est que

- (34) Car quand on dit: Vita Corradini, mors Caroli, et qu'il y avoit plus de peril à conserver Conradin prisonnier, qu'à le faire mourir, cela dit clairement en matiere d'Etat (où tout est bon, pourvu qu'il proufite, qu'il se devoit ainsi faire; **la raison est que** les loix ne sont saintes, sinon en tant qu'elles sont salutaires au peuple). (Pierre de L'Estoile, *Registre-journal du règne de Henri III: t. 5 (1585-1587)*, 1587)
 'Because when they say: Vita Corradini, mors Caroli, and it was more dangerous to keep Conradin prisoner than to kill him, this tells us a lot about the State (where everything is good, as long as it is profitable, so this had to be done this way; the reason is that laws are sacred only insofar as they are beneficial to the people'.

La raison en est que

- (35) [...] elle en fait une sagesse véritablement céleste, où s'accordent ces opposés qui étoient incompatibles dans ces doctrines humaines. Et **la raison en est que** ces sages du monde placent les contraires dans un même sujet. (Blaise Pascal, *Entretien avec M. de Sacy*, 1655)
 '[...] she turns it into a really heavenly wisdom where the opposites that were incompatible within those social sciences harmonize. And the reason of it is that these sages of the world place opposites within one and the same subject'.

La preuve?

- (36) Le Dauphin.
 Il est mort.
 Louis. **La preuve?**
 Le Dauphin, lui remettant des dépêches.
 Lisez, sire: la voici. (Casimir Delavigne, *Louis XI*, 1832)

The Dauphin.
 'He's dead'.
 Louis.
 'The proof?'
 The Dauphin, giving him the dispatches.
 'Read this, Sire; here's the proof'.

La preuve la voici

- (37) Au point de vue de l'hygiène, réussit-elle? Oui. **La preuve la voici**: depuis six ans que ce Dîner des enfants pauvres est fondé à Hauteville-House, sur quarante enfants qui y prennent part, deux seulement sont morts. (Victor Hugo, *Actes et Paroles 2: Pendant l'exil: 1852-1870*, 1875)
 'As far as hygiene is concerned, is she successful? Yes, she is. The proof, here it is: during the six years since this Dinner for poor children was founded at Hauteville-House, out of the forty children taking part in it, only two have died'.

Deictic use of *la preuve*

- (38) CÆLINA. Vous êtes bien tous les mêmes.
LE SOUS-LIEUTENANT. Vous croyez?
CÆLINA. **La preuve.**
LE SOUS-LIEUTENANT. Je suis sûr, quant à moi, qu'il en tient toujours.
(H. Monnier, *Les Bourgeois de Paris*, 1854)
- CÆLINA. 'You're all the same'.
THE SECOND LIEUTENANT. 'Do you really think so?'
CÆLINA. 'The proof'.
THE SECOND LIEUTENANT. 'I, for one, am sure that he is still suffering'.
- (39) Alors? Quant aux Juine, vous savez aussi bien que moi. Alors? - Je ne dis pas ça, répondit la Germaine. Mais faut bien tout de même que quelqu'un ait mouchardé.
La preuve. Elle désigna la feuille au bout des doigts de Pluret. (Jean-Louis Bory, *Mon village à l'heure allemande*, 1945)
- 'And then? As far as the Juines are concerned, you know it as well as me. And then? – That's not what I'm saying, answered Germaine. But someone must have ratted. The proof. She pointed at the piece of paper in Pluret's hands'.
- (40) - Comment se fait-il qu'on ne vous voie jamais ici? - On me voit, ici. **La preuve.** Elle se rejeta un peu en arrière pour me regarder. J'étais plus grand qu'elle d'une bonne tête. - Je veux dire, en ville... (Boris Vian, *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*, 1946)
- 'How come nobody sees you round here? – I am seen round here. The proof. She jumped back a bit to look at me. I was taller than her by one head. – I mean downtown...'
- (41) - Du moment que j'en ai les moyens... - N'empêche que tout à l'heure vous étiez pas prête à raquer un rond pour un taxi.- Puisque c'était inutile. **La preuve.** - Ça roule, dit Trouzcaillon en se retournant vers les passagères pour quêter une approbation. (Raymond Queneau, *Zazie dans le métro*, 1959)
- 'Since I can afford it... – All the same, a few minutes ago you weren't prepared to cough up a buck for a taxi ride. – Since it was useless. The proof. – It's working, said Trouzcaillon looking back for the female passengers' approval'.

La preuve as a non-governing NP

- (42) Et le dr. Béritens conclut que Greco, loin d'être un exalté ou un fou, était un astigmatte atteint de strabisme. S'il avait vécu de nos jours, il serait passé chez l'oculiste et, son infirmité corrigée, aurait ensuite peint ses tableaux normalement. **La preuve:** prenez chez un opticien les verres de lunette que prescrivent les oculistes pour corriger l'astigmatisme et regardez une toile du Greco. (Maurice Barrès, *Greco ou le Secret de Tolède*, 1911)
- 'And Dr. Béritens concluded that El Greco, far from being a hothead or a madman, was astigmatic, suffering from strabismus. If he had lived nowadays, he would have seen an oculist, and once his infirmity had been corrected he would have painted normally. The proof: go to an optician, get the glasses that oculists prescribe to correct astigmatism and take a look at a painting by El Greco'.

- (43) J'ai entendu souvent le professeur James répéter « qu'il fait bon vivre dans un pays comme le nôtre, où il n'y a pas de gens vraiment malheureux. Les Français d'autrefois non plus, dit Martial, ne se savaient pas malheureux. **La preuve**, ils chantaient [...] (Paul Bourget, *Nos actes nous suivent*, 1926)
 'I've often heard professor James repeat that "it is good to live in a country like ours, where there are no people who are really unhappy. The French of olden times, Martial said, didn't consider themselves unhappy either. The proof, they used to sing [...]'
- (44) Elle trancha:
 - On ne donne pas à manger à une montre. Pourquoi prolonger cette histoire de montre? Il précisa:
 - Mais si voyons. **La preuve**, elle a cuit trois oeufs. Je les ai mangés.
 (André Baillon, *Délires*, 1927)
 'She cut it short:
 - Watches are not supposed to be fed. Why go on with this watch thing? He clarified:
 - Come on, you know I'm right. The proof, it's cooked three eggs. I've eaten them'.

La preuve est que

- (45) Je veux bien tomber d'accord de tous ces faits, qui prouvent seulement que les tableaux peuvent bien quelquefois nous faire tomber en illusion, mais non pas que l'illusion soit la source du plaisir que nous font les imitations poétiques ou pittoresques. **La preuve est que** le plaisir continuë, quand il n'y a plus de lieu à la surprise. (Abbé Jean-Baptiste Dubos, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, 1733)
 'I readily agree with all these facts, which show only that paintings may sometimes lead us into illusion, but not that illusion is the origin of the pleasure we take in poetic or picturesque imitations. The proof is that pleasure does not fade out when the surprise effect is lost'.

La preuve en est que

- (46) Et je crois pouvoir avancer qu'il ne falloit pas moins que l'aprobation générale d'un Parlement si célèbre, pour priver le Fils de Pepin de son droit d'ainesse. **La preuve en est que** ce malheureux Prince, ayant voulu revenir quelques années après contre une décision qui lui paroissoit si injuste, fut condamné et traité comme rebelle dans un autre Parlement tenu au même lieu. (Henri de Boulainvilliers, *Lettres historiques sur les Parlemens ou États-Généraux: t. 1*, 1727)
 'And I think I may safely advance that no less than the approval of such a famous Parliament was required in order to deprive Pepin's son of his right of primogeniture. The proof of it is that this unhappy Prince, having wished to lodge an appeal a few years later against a decision that seemed to him so unfair, was condemned and treated as a rebel by another Parliament held in the same place'.

La cause first appears in its dialogic use (*La cause?* in example (27)) in the seventeenth century. *La raison* appears a little bit earlier (in the sixteenth century), as a dialogic form (*La raison?*) and as a governing NP (*La raison est que*). *La preuve* appears first as a governing NP

Table 1

Diachronic data related to *la cause/la raison/la preuve* provided by the Frantext database

	Dialogic use	Occurrence in a deictic context	Deictic use	Non-governing predicative NP	Governing NP
La preuve	Since the 19th century (36)	Since the 19th century (37)	Since the 19th century (38); in the 20th century (39) (40) (41)	Since the beginning of the 20th century (42) (43) (44)	Since the 18th century (45) (46)
La raison	Since the 16th century (29) (30) (31) (32)	Since the 17th century (33)	Unattested and unenvisageable	Unattested	Since the 16th century (34) (35)
La cause	Since the 17th century (27)	Unattested	Unattested and unenvisageable	Unattested	Since the 19th century (28)

(in the eighteenth century), and then as a dialogic form (in the nineteenth century). *La raison* is used in a deictic context for the first time (i.e. *la raison la voici*) in the seventeenth century, and *la preuve* occurs in the same context (i.e. *la preuve la voici*) in the nineteenth century. Frantext does not provide any attestations of the construction *la cause la voici*. The deictic use of *la preuve* (i.e. *La preuve!*) is attested in the nineteenth century. As a non-governing predicative NP, *la preuve* appears a little bit later, at the beginning of the twentieth century. No instances of *la raison* and *la cause* as non-governing predicative NPs are found in the Frantext database (Table 1).

5. What can we infer from these data?

It seems that an autonomous constellation of uses of *la preuve* has evolved within a relatively short time. Between the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century we find dialogic occurrences, occurrences in a deictic context, and occurrences of the NP used absolutely with deictic reference; and, around the beginning of the twentieth century, we come across the NP used as a non-governing construction. The uses with a governing function appeared at a previous stage, during the eighteenth century. The way these data are distributed allows us to posit a link between the absolute use, which refers deictically, and the non-governing use.

As far as *la cause* and *la raison* are concerned, it is impossible to identify what might be called a family of uses. The use of *la raison* in a deictic context is attested well before that of *la preuve* (namely, in the seventeenth century); however, the former never acquired a deictic use. The early appearance and the frequent citing of the dialogic use do not refute the idea that the non-governing structure dissimulates in fact a dialogic use of the nouns *cause* and *raison*, fixed in a question-answer routine. This type of construction is very productive in contemporary French. We can even identify an entire class of relational nouns (such as *motif*, *conséquence*, *condition*) that occur in such constructions, although their use is confined to a rather colloquial register (see examples (47)–(49) and examples (64)–(69)):

- (47) Il ne peut plus exercer son métier en France. Le motif: il aurait mis en place un système faussant le référencement. . . (www.lemondedublog.com/juridique/)
 'He cannot practise his profession in France any longer. The reason: he is said to have set up a system that distorts referencing. . .'

- (48) Il n'est pas précisé [dans le fichier] pourquoi il a été inculpé. La conséquence, personne ne veut lui louer un appartement.
(www.forumjapon.com/forum/viewtopic.php?p)
'It is not said [in the file] why he was accused. The consequence: nobody wants to rent him an apartment'.
- (49) Tout le site est modifiable [..]. LA condition, il faut s'authentifier sur le site...
(www.diablotins.org)
'The entire site may be modified. [...] THE condition – one has to log in to the site...'

The chronological distribution of the various attestations does not allow us to hypothesize that the non-governing use derives from the governing use. Each of the three nouns under analysis may be used as a governing structure, but *la preuve* is the only one to have developed a non-governing use in written French as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. If governing constructions manifest a tendency to reduce their form, why did this tendency not affect all three of the nominal predicates during more or less the same period?

6. An evolution hypothesis

Our hypothesis is that the non-governing use of *la preuve* is a variant of its deictic use. In other words, *la preuve* maintains its deictic use in an occurrence such as (1). This amounts to saying that in the following examples, *la preuve* functions in an analogous manner:

- (50) – « les Français d'autrefois non plus, » dit Martial, « ne se savaient pas malheureux. **La preuve**, ils chantaient » [...] (Paul Bourget, *Nos actes nous suivent*, 1926)
'The French of olden times, Martial said, didn't consider themselves unhappy either. The proof, they used to sing [...]'
- (51) Tous, personnages officiels, imposants, cravatés et de noir vêtus. – Je suis journaliste à Rouge Midi. – Tiens donc! – Mais pro-américain. **La preuve**. Il désigne son ruban autour du cou, échange quelques mots avec un amiral aussi. (Boris Schreiber, *Un silence d'environ une demi-heure*, 1996)
'All of them, official-looking, imposing, wearing ties and dressed in black. – I'm a journalist with Rouge Midi. – Well, well! – But I'm pro-American. The proof. He points to the ribbon around his neck and exchanges a few words with an admiral as well'.

In our view, the use in (50) does not derive from the use in (51); instead, the construction with *la preuve* in (50) represents nothing more than a simplified version of the one in (51).

As for *la raison* and *la cause*, we postulate that their dialogic and non-governing uses are actually one and the same. This amounts to saying that in examples (52)–(55), *la raison* is used in an analogous manner but is integrated into different contexts; thus, we have a dialogic-dialogical context in (52), a dialogic-monological context in (52) (53) (54), and a monologic-monological context in (55)³:

³ See Roulet et al. (2001) for a definition of these notions in the Geneva modular approach to discourse analysis.

- (52) ALCANTOR.
 Qui, vous?
 SGANARELLE.
 Oui, moi.
 ALCANTOR.
Et la raison?
 SGANARELLE.
La raison? C'est que je ne me sens point propre pour le mariage [...] (Molière, *Le Mariage forcé*, 1668)
- ALCANTOR.
 'Who, you?'
 SGANARELLE.
 'Yes, me'.
 ALCANTOR.
 'And the reason?'
 SGANARELLE.
 'The reason? The reason is that I don't feel at all ready for marriage [...]'
- (53) N'en murmurez, Madame, ici non plus que l'autre;
 Sa part la satisfait, recevez mieux la vôtre;
 J'en étois idolâtre, et veux vous épouser.
La raison? C'est ainsi qu'il me plaît d'en user. (Pierre Corneille, *Attila, roi des Huns*, 1682)
- 'Madame, do not murmur of it here more than the other;
 She is pleased with her share, be better pleased with yours;
 I who used to worship her now want to marry you.
 The reason? That is what I feel like now'.
- (54) Cette femme hautaine, Mme de Rênal, était l'auteur de cette abomination.
La raison? Les beaux yeux et les joues si fraîches du petit abbé Sorel la disaient de reste. (Stendhal, *Le Rouge et le noir*, 1830)
- 'This haughty woman, Mme de Rênal, was the author of this abomination.
 The reason? The beautiful eyes and the so fresh cheeks of the little clergyman Sorel were speaking it loud and clear'.
- (55) Malgré son âge respectable, il lui est arrivé de saluer ses fans en se promenant en papemobile. . . découverte de son recouvrement pare-balles! **La raison:** il veut être près du peuple. (Internet)
- 'Despite his respectable age, he has sometimes greeted his fans while riding in his pope-mobile with its bulletproof covering taken off! The reason: he wants to be close to people'.

An utterance introduced by *la preuve* conforms to certain properties that signal its relationship with deixis. In a configuration made up of a segment preceding *la preuve* (called X) and a segment following it (called Y), the latter segment represents an instantiation of the former. If X stands for the expression of a certain viewpoint (conveyed by a proverb, for instance), Y has to denote a state of affairs materializing it.

- (56) Pierre qui roule n’amasse pas mousse. **La preuve**, Jean est toujours fauché.
 ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss. The proof, Pierre is always broke’.

Y would not be felicitous if it expressed another abstract viewpoint that constituted a literal interpretation of X.

- (57) Pierre qui roule n’amasse pas mousse. ***La preuve**, une vie aventureuse ne permet pas d’amasser des biens.
 ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss. The proof, leading an adventurous life does not allow one to accumulate goods’.

No such constraint affects the use of *la cause* and *la raison*:

- (58) Pierre qui roule n’amasse pas mousse. **La cause/La raison**: une vie aventureuse ne permet pas d’amasser des biens.
 ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss. The cause/the reason: leading an adventurous life does not allow one to accumulate goods’.

The idea or message conveyed by the proverb only has to be instantiated by a certain individual in order to render this context adequate for *la preuve*:

- (59) Pierre qui roule n’amasse pas mousse. **La preuve**, la vie aventureuse de Jean ne lui a pas permis d’amasser des biens.
 ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss. The proof, John’s adventurous life hasn’t allowed him to accumulate any goods’.

In the absence of a subsequent discourse segment, *la preuve* may still allude to the same state of affairs if the discourse context allows it:

- (60) - Pierre qui roule n’amasse pas mousse. **La preuve!**
 - Tu parles de la vie aventureuse de Jean?
 - Oui, bien sûr.
 - ‘A rolling stone gathers no moss. The proof!
 - Are you referring to John’s adventurous life?
 - Yes, of course’.

The use of *la preuve* in itself allows us to refer to a state of affairs considered to be an instantiation of what has been said in X. The relationship between *la preuve* and Y may be compared to the relationship existing between a deictic expression and its verbalized referent:

- (61) - Où est Jean?
 - **Ici**, dans la cuisine.
 - ‘Where is John?’
 - Here, in the kitchen’.

We may say that *dans la cuisine* (‘in the kitchen’) is to *ici* (‘here’) what *la vie aventureuse de Jean* (‘John’s adventurous life’) is to *la preuve* (‘the proof’). The use of *la preuve* in contexts

where an image is displayed illustrates its capacity to refer to a specific state of affairs that represents the instantiation of a general truth. Below are some of the contexts we have found where the use of *la preuve* is combined with an image:

- (62) C'est le printemps, **la preuve**:
 Les bourgeons s'épanouissent.
 Photo (représentant un bourgeon sur un arbre)
 (<http://ptipois.canalblog.com/archives/paris/p20-0.html>)
 'Spring has come, the proof:
 The buds are opening'.
 Picture (representing a bud on a tree)
- (63) Photo (représentant une primevère)
 Houpi, c'est le printemps, **la preuve**!
 (<http://blog.doctissimo.fr/CTOUMOI/index.php///last/50>)
 Picture (representing a primrose)
 'Whoopee, spring has come, the proof!'

La preuve is used in exactly the same manner in the following contexts: *C'est le printemps, la preuve!* ('Spring has come, the proof!'); *C'est le printemps, la preuve* + picture and *C'est le printemps, la preuve les bourgeons s'épanouissent* ('Spring has come, the proof the buds are opening'). This expression designates its referent deictically, and the speaker may resort to a picture or a sentence in order to exemplify it. The prototypical use of *la preuve*, as illustrated in (50), is nothing but an avatar of its deictic use: in such a context, the deictic function of the NP is being disguised by the subsequent utterance, whose role is to verbalize a fact that is not readily accessible given that specific discourse situation.

The question–answer routine lying behind the construction [*la raison/la cause* + utterance] is evident in observed uses of this productive pattern. The nominal predicates that metalinguistically qualify the discourse segment they precede are likely to function in a similar manner. NPs such as *le motif*, *la conséquence*, and *la condition* may occur in constructions of the type [NP + utterance], both as monologic and dialogic structures:

- (64) Mme Biau, habitante du village de Najac, vient de « déclarer la guerre » à la municipalité. **Le motif**: son petit chien est tombé malade pour la seconde fois à cause des désherbants chimiques dont la mairie fait usage.
 (www.najactribune.com/?p=actu_view&s=&id_news=22)
 'Mrs Biau, an inhabitant of the village of Najac, has just 'declared war' on the municipality. The reason: her small dog has fallen ill for the second time because of the chemical weedkillers used by the local council'.
- (65) Heike Kück, directrice du zoo de Bremerhaven en Allemagne, reçoit actuellement des lettres d'insultes du monde entier. **Le motif**? Son zoo héberge six pingouins mâles qui ont constitué trois couples homosexuels.
 (www.integralpersonality.com/IPBlog/archives/2005/03.html)
 'Heike Kück, director of the Bremerhaven zoo in Germany, is receiving insulting letters from all over the world. The reason? Her zoo houses six male penguins that have formed three homosexual couples'.

- (66) En France, l'âge a longtemps servi de variable d'ajustement du marché du travail. **La conséquence:** le taux d'emploi actuel des personnes âgées de 55 à 64 ans est de 37,9%, parmi les plus bas de l'Union européenne. (www.travail.gouv.fr/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=601)
'In France, age has long represented an adjustment variable for the labour market. The consequence: the present employment rate of people aged 55–64 years is 37.9%, one of the lowest in the EU'.
- (67) **La conséquence?** Le rejet de l'organe transplanté. (http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interaction_medicamenteuse)
'The consequence? The rejection of the transplanted organ'.
- (68) **La condition:** Être mobile géographiquement. (www.figaroetudiant.com/premier_emploi/20060213.FIG1220.html)
'The condition: To be geographically mobile'.
- (69) **La condition?** Être venue 2 fois par semaine pendant toute la durée de la cure. (www.ciao.fr/Lignature_centre_d_amincissement__Avis_367710)
'The condition? To have come twice a week throughout the treatment period'.

The high frequency of both the monologic and the dialogic versions of these structures (the former being signalled by a colon ':', and the latter by the question mark '?') reveals the similarity between these linguistic realizations. However, one may be preferred to the other for stylistic reasons (such as the desire to emphasize the hearer's presence in the discourse).

7. A case of pragmaticalization or something else?

Clearly, these constructions cannot be adequately explained in terms of grammaticalization; instead, we raise the question of whether they can be accounted for in terms of pragmaticalization. Here below we shall briefly address the main reasons that have led to this alternative notion. According to Günthner and Mutz (2004), the concept of pragmaticalization owes its legitimacy to the 'border-line phenomena' that conform to the predictions made by Traugott (1995a,b) and by Tabor and Traugott (1998) about grammaticalization clines, but nevertheless contradict the parameters postulated by Lehmann (1995). According to the latter, the grammaticalization process involves a progressive loss of semantic and phonological substance, curtailment of choice (*obligatorification*), loss of autonomy and syntactic variability, and reduction in scope. Grammaticalized items do not carry stress, move less freely, combine less readily with other linguistic items, and are characterized by decreased scope. What we observe, however, is that some of these parameters prove problematic when used to account for the development of discourse markers. For instance, discourse markers of adverbial origin always have a wider scope than that of the initial form (see, for instance, Mosegaard Hansen (1998), on the occurrences of French *bien* ('well') as a discourse marker in topic-change contexts). The term *pragmaticalization* has been used to refer to such cases. Nonetheless, as Günthner and Mutz (2004:99) point out, these cases of 'pragmaticalization' "can only be addressed within an extended model of grammaticalization theory". The variations characterizing them are actually of the same type as those affecting sentence-level constructions. Behind these evolutions, we find the same path leading from referential to non-referential

meaning. In the specific case of the emergence of discourse markers, this path goes from referential to textual, meta-textual, and interpersonal meaning, so it may very well amount to a grammaticalization process occurring at the discourse level. Once again, however, we should stress that the constructions examined in the present paper do not conform to this evolution pattern. They do not illustrate a shift from a referential use to a more discourse-centred use. Underlying these constructions we find coupled segments (of the type question–answer, deictic marker–referent) that have undergone a routinization process. Their evolution, if we may speak of one, is that of a complete discourse structure whose traits have become more and more fixed through usage and have moved away from their original function. *La cause* and *la raison* no longer serve as a means of asking a question in order to anticipate an answer, and *la preuve* no longer represents a way of introducing the verbalization of its referent. Through routinization, the noun in such discourse structures has come to function as a mere appendix of the construction.⁴

The notion of ‘conversational routine’ is used by Arnovick (1999) to describe the process by which locutions such as *Bless you* lose their performative character. By undergoing de-institutionalization, *Bless you* has come to occur in conversational routines as a formula meant to “further discourse and reinforce socio-cultural cohesion through a demonstration of politeness” (Arnovick, 1999:5). Our use of the terms ‘routine’/‘routinization’ shares with this notion the idea of a loss of illocutionary force. However, in the case of the locution analysed by Arnovick, the conversational routine results in enhanced intersubjectivity, whereas in the case of our constructions, routinization causes the very annihilation of intersubjectivity, expressed, for example, by deictic references to the addressee. Also, when used in configurations such as (2) and (3), *la raison* and *la cause* lose their interrogative force. As far as *la preuve* is concerned, the allusion to the discourse context is less obvious in a structure such as (50), where the NP in question prefaces an utterance.

8. Conclusion

Constructions of the [*la preuve/la raison/la cause* + utterance] type do not derive from an apocope that led to their decategorization from the subordinating constructions class and their recruitment as independent structures. They are the result of the noun being used as an autonomous utterance, with its own illocutionary force. This ‘utterance-noun’ functions as an interrogative speech act in the case of *la cause* and *la raison* and as an assertive speech act referring to the discourse context in the case of *la preuve*. The deictic functioning of the latter expression has led to a sort of fixation, in the sense that the mere uttering of *la preuve* has come to represent a speech act capable of designating an extralinguistic object. This accounts for the loss of its original inflectional properties. The possibility of making the extralinguistic object referred to explicit has disguised the noun’s deictic potential, thus resulting in the construction [*la preuve* + utterance], which is analogous to the structures [*la raison/la cause/la condition* + utterance]. As for the specific case of the constructions comprising the nouns *raison* and *cause*, their origin is to be found in a question–answer pair. The modification of the punctuation parameters (replacement of the question mark by the colon) has obliterated their intrinsically dialogic nature.

⁴ Such an evolution is somewhat similar to that which has affected items that have undergone a delocutive process in the sense of Anscombre (1980). Note, however, that our constructions do not show a drastic change of illocutionary value. The interrogative force and the deictic function that originally characterize them have not turned into something else; they have simply weakened because of the presence of the utterance that directly follows the nominal form.

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