

## Semantically asymmetrical coordinate clauses in Iron Ossetic<sup>1</sup>

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There is a widespread notion among typologists that the difference between coordinate and subordinate clauses is that the former are semantically and pragmatically symmetrical with the associated clause, while in the latter case the relationship is asymmetrical. That is, semantic asymmetry correlates with asymmetry in syntax. This opposition is sometimes understood in terms of pragmatic assertion vs. non-assertion, in terms of e. g. Lambrecht 1994. Different versions of this approach to coordination and subordinations can be found in such works as Langacker 1991, Cristofaro 2003. On the other hand, there are attested counterexamples against the equivalence of coordination and assertion, and subordination and non-assertion. For instance, constructions that are pragmatically used in assertive contexts (e.g. in narrative) are syntactically subordinate in many NE Caucasian languages such as Bagwalal (Казенин 2001), Akhvakh (Creissels to appear), Qunqi Dargwa (Belyaev 2010). Because of these and similar facts, some scholars have proposed a weaker version of the ‘pragmatic approach’ to subordination. For instance, O. Pekelis (2009), based on Russian data, comes to the conclusion that coordinate clauses can only be assertive, while subordinate clauses can be both assertive and non-assertive.

However, there seem to be no cases attested in the literature where a syntactically *coordinate* construction expresses a semantically *asymmetrical* relationship. Ossetic, a North-East Iranian language spoken in the North Caucasus, seems to provide evidence for exactly this kind of construction.

In this language, the coordinate conjunction *ǎmǎ* ‘and’ denotes coordination between any pair of constituents of the same category. It is consistently coordinate according to all tests which are applicable in Ossetic. For instance, central embedding of one of the clauses within the other is ungrammatical. A change in the linear order of clauses denoting a sequence of events is impossible without a change in the order of events.

At the same time, there are constructions in Ossetic which are derived from coordinate constructions and are specifically devoted to expressing asymmetrical semantics. In the literary Iron dialect there are two such constructions with causal semantics: *wǎmǎn ǎmǎ* ‘that.DAT and’ and *wǎj tǎxxǎj ǎmǎ* ‘that.GEN for and’. Even though the meaning of these constructions is certainly not symmetrical, and the causal clause is most often in presupposition, they have retained the coordinate properties of the conjunction *ǎmǎ* ‘and’ from which they are derived. For example, central embedding of the «subordinate» clause is impossible (1b), as well as a change in linear order: the causal clause must follow the main clause (1c).

- (1) a. *ǰawǎr-ǎn ǰǎg wǎd-i wǎmǎn ǎmǎ=jǎm Alan*  
Zaur-DAT offence-be-PST.INTR.3SG that.DAT and=3SG.ENCL.ALL Alan  
*nǎ=fǎ-zǎrd-t-a*  
NEG=PV-speak-TR-PST.3SG

‘Zaur was offended **because** Alan didn’t invite him’

- b. \**ǰawǎrǎn, wǎmǎn ǎmǎ=jǎm Alan nǎ=fǎzǎrdta, ǰǎg wǎdi*

- c. *wǎmǎn ǎmǎ=jǎm Alan nǎ=fǎzǎrdta, ǰawǎrǎn ǰǎg wǎdi*

Similar behaviour is observed for *ǎmǎ* ‘and’ used to introduce sentential complements and relative clauses.

To the best of my knowledge, such a mismatch between syntax and semantics is not attested for any language of the world. At the same time, there are known cases when a coordination marker has been claimed to have evolved into a subordination marker, e.g. in Mingrelian (Harris and Campbell 1995: 290] and in !Xun (Heine and Kuteva 2004: 43-44). The data of Ossetic raises doubt whether there is a unidirectional and universal process of increasing clausal intergration whence markers of coordination come to mark subordination (Heine and Kuteva 2004: 44). It may well be that Ossetic is not the only counterexample. If tests on coordination and subordination are carried out in other languages for which an evolution from coordination to subordination has been claimed, the result may be that this kind of evolution is not as widespread as has previously been thought.

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At the same time, the data of Ossetic forces one to abandon the notion of non-assertion as a cross-linguistically valid way of defining subordination. Subordination-coordination and presupposition-assertion or semantic symmetry are located on different axes. At best, these parameters can be found to typologically correlate, which may probably be explained through patterns of diachronic development.

This paper shall explore the properties of the constructions outlined above, and touch upon typological and areal issues the data of Ossetic brings up.

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