MARIA POLINSKY
Harvard University, USA

Clause combining in Tsez: At the meaning/structure interface

Most theories of clause linking treat coordination and subordination as mutually exclusive (but see Foley and Van Valin 1984, Haspelmath 2004 for an alternative view). It is often assumed that the categorial status of a clause as coordinate or subordinate is determined by the category of the complementizer head (including null heads). In languages where the class of conjunctions is not well delineated and where the standard diagnostics known from English and other familiar languages do not apply quite readily, the identification of a clause linkage as coordinate or subordinate may be quite difficult. Nakh-Dagestanian languages have been known to present such a difficulty, largely due to the phenomenon of clause chaining (Good 2003).

In this talk, I will present and analyze clause chaining in Tsez, a Nakh-Dagestanian language of the Avar-Andi-Tsez group. Tsez clause chains present an additional difficulty in that medial verb forms in this language can be homophonous with some finite verb forms (for example, the perfective gerund is homophonous with the nonwitnessed form of the past—see Comrie and Polinsky 1997).

I argue that a clause chain can be structurally ambiguous—it can either have all the properties of a coordinate structure or all the properties of a subordinate structure, cf.:

(i)   aɣibi   č'iwλa-n   ɣwaybi   ħapλi-s
        birds   chirp-GERUND   dogs   bark-PAST.WITNESSED
        'The birds chirped, the dogs barked.' or: 'Because/As the birds chirped, the dogs barked.'

The choice between coordination and subordination depends on the relation between propositions encoded by the linked clauses. If the two events are construed as causally related, the corresponding structure is that of subordination; for instance, in (i), the interpretation is that of dogs barking in response to the birds. If no causal relationship between the events is construed (or if such a relationship is left underspecified), the clause linkage is coordinate. The empirical evidence for this proposal comes from a number of structural diagnostics, summarized in table 1.

These results indicate that there is a promising isomorphism between the semantic relationship of the linked events and their expression through coordination *vs.* subordination. The results also suggest that the categorial status of clausal heads is insufficient in determining the choice between coordination and subordination; instead, these syntactic categories are sensitive to the degree of event connectedness and possibly to the semantics of the predicates in a clause chain (Culicover and Jackendoff 1997). Other languages that show same effects as Tsez include Tsaxur (Kibrik 1999: Ch. 4), Bagwali (Kibrik 2001), Korean (Kwon and Polinsky in press), and Japanese (Iida 1996). All of these languages are head-final; it remains to be seen whether or not this characteristic is accidental or is principally related to the proposed generalization.

Data

Table 1. Coordination vs. subordination: Main structural diagnostics (CC—clause chain)

	Coordinate structure	Subordinate structure
One of the clauses can be centerembedded in the other	**No**	**Yes**
Does not allow extractions—island status (Ross 1967/1981)	Yes	No
Asymmetric binding between the clauses (Reinhart 1983 and many others)	No	Yes
Gapping (Oirsouw 1987) and contrastive interpretation of constituents across CC	Yes	No
When a given clause chain is further embedded, the embedding is marked on:	All the predicates within the CC/Either predicate within the CC	Only the matrix predicate of the CC
Independent tense/aspect/mood/ illocutionary force for each clause	Yes	No/restricted

(1)   aɣibi   č'iwλa-n   ɣwaybi   ħapλi-s   TSEZ
        birds   chirp-GERUND   dogs   bark-PAST.WITNESSED
        'The birds chirped, the dogs barked.' or: 'As the birds chirped, the dogs barked.'

(2)   a.   ɣwaybi[aɣibi   č'iwλa-n]   ħapλi-s
                dogs   birds   chirp-GERUND   bark-PAST.WITNESSED
                "The dogs, because/as the birds chirped, barked."
                (entailment: the chirping causes the barking)

        b.   #ɣwaybi   [aɣibi   č'iwλa-n]   ħapλi-s
                dogs   birds   chirp-GERUND   bark-PAST.WITNESSED
                'The birds chirped, the dogs barked.'
                (no causal relationship between the chirping and the barking)

References
1. Comrie, Bernard and Maria Polinsky. 2007. 'Evidentials in Tsez'. In Zlatka Guentschéva and Jon Landaburu (eds.): *L'énonciation médiatisée II: le traitement épistémologique de l'information: illustrations amérindiennes et caucasiennes*, 335–350. Louvain: Peeters.
2. Culicover, Peter and Ray Jackendoff. 1997. 'Semantic subordination despite syntactic coordination'. *Linguistic Inquiry* 28: 195-217.
3. Foley, William and Robert Van Valin. 1984. *Functional syntax and universal grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Good, Jeff. 2003. Clause combining in Chechen. *Studies in Language* 27: 113-170.
5. Goodall, Grant. 1987. *Parallel structures in syntax: Coordination, causatives, and restructuring*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Hankamer, Jorge. 1979. *Deletion in coordinate structure*. New York: Garland.
7. Haspelmath, Martin (ed.). 2004. *Coordinating constructions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
8. Iida, Masayo. 1996. *Context and binding in Japanese*. Stanford, CA: CSLI.
9. Johannessen, Janne. 1998. *Coordination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
10. Kibrik, Alexander E. (ed.) 1999. *Elementy caxurskogo jazyka v tipologičeskom osveščenii*. Moscow: Nasledie.
11. Kibrik, Alexander E. (ed.) 2001. *Bagvalinskij jazyk: Grammatika, teksty, slovari*. Moscow: Nasledie.
12. Kwon, Nayoung and Maria Polinsky. In press. What does coordination look like in a head-final language? In Barbara Lewandowska (ed.). *Asymmetric events*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

13. Oirsouw, Robert R. van. 1987. *The syntax of coordination*. London—New York: Croom Helm.