Clause combining: Syntax of subordination and complementation

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This chapter examines the phenomenon of *subordination* and how it is realized in the indigenous languages of North America. We will start by defining terms and looking at examples of different types of subordinate clauses, then consider ways in which various North American languages indicate that a clause is subordinate. One way in which languages can differ is whether the subordinate material is expressed in a full clause or one that is reduced in some way. Moreover, languages may exhibit different patterns of case marking, word order, or negation in subordinate clauses compared to the patterns found in main clauses. The final section considers some tricky cases in which it may be hard to tell whether a specific clause is a main clause or a subordinate clause.

1. Some definitions

Let us start by defining some terms. A *clause* consists of a *predicate* (usually a verb), the *arguments* required by the predicate (for example, a subject and an object), plus optional *modifiers* providing information about the time of the event (for example "yesterday") or the reason for the action, etc. *Subordinate clauses* are clauses in which the whole clause functions either as an argument or as a modifier in another clause, the *main clause*. In the Cherokee example in (1), the underlined portion is a subordinate clause expressing the time of the main clause:[1]

(1)	*sanaale*	*yijayééja*	*jalagi*	*hadahntesgéesdi*
	sanaale	yi-ja-yéej-a	jalagi	hi-adanvhtesg-éesdi
	morning	IRR-2B-wake(I):CMP-CVB	Cherokee	2A-think:INC-PFT

'In the morning when you wake up, think Cherokee!'
(Cherokee; Montgomery-Anderson 2015: 338)

The main clause is 'think Cherokee!' and could be used on its own. The underlined part is a clause (it has a verb 'wake up', a subject 'you', and a modifier 'in the morning') and that whole clause functions as a modifer in the main clause, identifying the time when you should 'think Cherokee!'. Notice that the underlined part (the subordinate clause) could not be said in isolation, except as a fragment answering a question like "When should I think Cherokee?" In the next section we will see a number of ways in which languages can mark clauses to indicate that they are subordinate: in (1) the subordinate clause is marked by a "converb" suffix *-a* on the subordinate clause verb, as well as by a change in tone on the verb.

The opposite of subordination is *coordination*, where two (or more) simple clauses are combined into a single sentence and each half of the sentence is of equal importance. (2) is a Cherokee example of coordination:

(2)	*aniisgay*	*aàníina*	*aniichúújahno*	*aàniidóòna*
	anii-sgaya	anii-na	anii-chúúja=**hno**	anii-dóòna
	3A.NS-man	3A.NS-sit(NS):PRC	3A.NS-boy=**CN**	3A.NS-stand(NS):PRC

'The men are sitting and the boys are standing.'
(Cherokee; Montgomery-Anderson 2015: 316)

(2) contains two main clauses: that is, each clause in (2) could be used on its own as a simple clause; moreover, the activity described by each clause in (2) is given equal weight. The part of (2) that means 'and' is the enclitic conjunction *=hno*, which attaches to the first word of the second clause. (Enclitics and proclitics are discussed in section 2.3 below.)

1.1. Types of subordinate clause: complement vs. adjunct

Subordinate clauses like the one in (1) are called *adjunct* or adverbial clauses: they perform functions similar to simple adverbs identifying the time or reason or other circumstance related to the main clause. Another type of subordinate clause is known as a COMPLEMENT CLAUSE, a clause which expresses the subject or object of the verb of the main clause. For example, consider (3), also from Cherokee:

(3)	*uùnaduulis*	*jalagi*	*uuniiwooniíhisdi*
	uunii-aduuli=s	jalagi	uunii-wooniíhisdi
	3B.NS-want:PRC=Q	Cherokee	3B.NS-speak:INF

'Do they want to speak Cherokee?'
(Cherokee; Montgomery-Anderson 2015: 319)

The underlined part of (3) is a complement clause, here functioning as the object of 'want'. Like the adjunct clause in (1), the complement clause in (3) cannot be used on its own as an independent clause. Complement clauses are different from adjunct clauses, however, in that adjunct clauses are optional: in (1) the speaker has chosen to give extra information about the time when the main clause takes place. Complement clauses are not optional – if the underlined portion of (3) were omitted the remaining portion would not be a complete sentence.

1.2. Types of complements

1.2.1. Embedded statements

Let us look at additional examples of complement clauses. Complement clauses often express statements, as in the Kutenai example in (4):

(4)	*Qa*	*ʔupxni*	*miȼ'qaqas*
	qa‿	ʔupx‿ni	miȼ'qaqas
	NEG‿	see/know‿IND	chickadee

niʔs	*ksakiɬ*	*hakiɬwiȼkiɬiɬ*
niʔ-s	k‿sak-iʔɬ‿	hakiɬ-wiȼki-ɬ-iɬ
the-S3	SM‿still-ADV‿	keep-watch-DI-PASV

'The chickadees don't know (that) they are being watched.' (Kutenai; Morgan 1991: 445)

The statement 'they are being watched' in (4) is what the chickadees don't know.

1.2.2. Embedded questions

It is also possible to use a complement clause to report a question that a subject asked or wondered about as in the Washo example in (5):

(5) *béverli* *gó:beʔ* *hálaŋa* *hé:š* *yákˈaš-i* *ʔ-í:d-i-š*
Beverly coffee still Q warm-IPFV 3.SBJ-say-IPFV-SR

gó:beʔ *métuʔ-mámaʔ-i*
coffee cold-finish-IPFV
'Beverly asked if the coffee was still warm,
but the coffee was cold.' (Washo; The Washo Project Online Dictionary)

The question 'is the coffee still warm?' is what Beverly asked. (The second line of (5) is a coordinate clause, conjoined with 'Beverly asked…'.)

1.2.3. Future or hypothetical events

Complements of verbs like 'want to' or 'try to' express future events or hypothetical events. We already saw a Cherokee example of this type in (3); another, from Northern Pomo, is in (6):

(6) *wayʔe* *duhu* *man* *natka*
early leave 3SF.A try
'She tried to leave early.' (Northern Pomo; O'Connor 1992: 36)

In (6), 'leave early' is what the subject of (6) tried to do.

1.3. Types of adjuncts

(3-6) illustrated types of complement clauses; now let us look at different types of adjunct clauses that a language might employ.[2]

1.3.1. Temporal adjuncts

As we saw earlier in the Cherokee example in (1), adjunct clauses often provide information about the time of the event reported in the main clause relative to the time of another event. A similar example is seen in the Tonkawa sentence in (7):

(7) *ʔawas-wa·-ka* *ya·c-ayco-na-l-ʔok*
meat-OBV-NOM.PL look-up-ABL-3-when

he-ylap-an-cʔel-ʔa·-yʔk *yele·la-k-laknoʔo.*
REFL-stand-GER-TOP-DEF-ALL sit-PART-EVID
'When the buffalo looked up, he was sitting on top of the tree.'
(Tonkawa; Hoijer & Wier 2018: 50)

Other temporal adjuncts may express temporal relations such as 'while…', 'before…', and 'after…'.

1.3.2. Reason clauses

Another semantic type of adjunct clause is one that identifies the reason for the event in the main clause occurring, as in the Northern Pomo example in (8):

(8) *ti?* *xama* *dit̲hal-kan* *mo:w* *khemane-nha*
NCBR.OBL foot hurt-ACOMP 3SM.A dance-NEG
'He's not dancing because his foot hurts.' (O'Connor 1992: 257)

According to O'Connor (1992: 39), the suffix *-kan*, glossed ACOMP for adverbial complementizer, indicates that "[a]ction in suffixed clause precedes action in main clause, and main clause event is seen as resulting from event in suffixed clause." (The abbreviation NCBR, non-clause-bounded reflexive, indicates that the possessor of the foot is the same as the person who is not dancing.)

1.3.3. Purpose clauses

Other adjunct clauses make the goal or purpose of the action of the main clause explicit, as in the Haida example in (9):

(9) *dang-ga* *tla.ad-ee-ran* *hl* *qats'a-ang*
you-PP help-INFIN-for I come.in-PR
'I've come in to help you.' (Haida; Enrico 2003: 1045)

In (9), the speaker asserts that he or she has come in in order to help the addressee.

1.3.4. Concessive clauses

Another type of adjunct clause is often translated in English with 'although' or 'even though', expressing a state of affairs that contrasts with what is expressed in the main clause.

(10) *c'ə* *n'í[t]=ɬ* *qásq'an-ə-n=ɬ* *ɬáq'askʷ*
although that's=NC dislike.food-CTL-2S=NC seaweed
ʔɪ: *məq'ap* *ḳíp-t*
and 2E must.eat.S.-3
'Even though you dislike seaweed, you have to eat it.' (Nishga; Tarpent 1987: 418)

In the Nishga example in (10) the speaker knows that the addressee does not like seaweed, but asserts that the addressee must eat it nevertheless.

1.3.5. Conditional clauses

The final type of adjunct clause exemplified here is the conditional clause, or 'if clause'. A conditional adjunct clause identifies a hypothetical state of affairs; the main clause expresses the consequence of that hypothetical condition:

(11) *Ńch'ii=yúgo,* *doo* *dadányu* *nahikai* *da*
it.is.windy=if NEG outside we.(PL.).are.(around) NEG
'If it is windy we don't go outside.'
(San Carlos Apache; de Reuse 2006: 337, glosses added from de Reuse's word list)

In the Apache example in (11), the hypothetical condition is 'if it is windy' and the consequence of that condition is expressed in the main clause: 'we don't go outside'.

2. How are clauses identified as subordinate?

Now that we have a sense of the range of functions subordinate clauses play in a sentence, let us investigate how languages distinguish subordinate clauses from main clauses and how different types of subordinate clauses might be identified.

2.1. Complementizer or particle

Some languages indicate that a clause is subordinate by using a separate small word, often called a *particle* or a *complementizer*. (English uses this strategy with complementizers like *that* or *whether* introducing complement clauses and words like *when* or *if* introducing various types of adjunct clauses.) An example of this strategy was seen above in the Nishga concessive clause in (10), which is introduced by a separate particle glossed 'although'. More examples of particles can be seen in the Nez Perce examples in (12):

(12) a. ***ke*** ***kaa*** *Angel-nim* *hi-nees-cewcew-téetu*
C then Angel-ERG 3SUBJ-O.PL-call-HAB.PRES
'when Angel calls them' (Nez Perce; Deal 2015: 412)

b. ***ke****-x* ***kaa*** *Angel-nim* *hi-cewcew-téetu*
C-1 then Angel-ERG 3SUBJ-call-HAB.PRES
'when Angel calls me' (Nez Perce; Deal 2015: 410)

In (12) the combination of *ke* and *kaa* indicate that the clause is a temporal adjunct clause, glossed 'when'. See Aoki (1970: 126–127) for the wide range of particles found in Nez Perce subordinate clauses. As Aoki points out, some of the particles can be the host for subject and/or object inflection. In (12b), for example, the particle *ke* is followed by *-x*, which indicates the first person singular object of the verb 'call'.

2.2. Affix

Many of the languages of North America exhibit complex morphology on the verb, with agreement for both subject and object, incorporated objects, incorporated adverbial material, etc. (See chapters on WHAT IS A WORD? and SYNTAX WITHIN THE CLAUSE.) It is therefore not surprising that some of the languages of North America indicate that a clause is subordinate by adding an affix to the verb of the subordinate clause. We have already seen several instances of this strategy in the examples above: for example, the Cherokee example in (1) has a "converb" suffix *-a* attached to the adjunct clause, and the Tonkawa example in (7) includes a suffix *-ʔok* glossed 'when'.

Languages with switch reference (see chapter on SWITCH REFERENCE AND EVENT COHESION), where the switch reference system extends to subordinate clauses, often have paired suffixes marking specific types of subordinate clauses. In such systems, one member of the pair of suffixes indicates that the subject of the subordinate clause is the same as the subject of the main clause and the other member of the pair indicates that the subject of the subordinate clause is different from the subject of the main clause. Consider the pair of Choctaw sentences below:

(13) a. *Kaah* *sa-nna-**haatokoosh**,* *iskali'* *ittahobli-li-tok*
car 1SI-want-because:SS money save-1SI-PT
'Because I wanted a car, I saved money.'

b. *Kaah* *banna-**haatoko**,* *iskali'* *ittahobli-li-tok*
car want-because:DS money save-1SI-PT
'Because he wanted a car, I saved money.' (Choctaw; Broadwell 2006: 263)

Both sentences of (13) exhibit adjunct clauses of the reason type, and both adjunct clauses are identified by a suffix on the verb of the subordinate clause. In (13a) the suffix expressing 'because' is *-haatokoosh* while in (13b) the suffix glossed 'because' is *-haatako*. The suffix in (13a) also indicates 'same subject' – that is, the subject of 'want' and the subject of 'save' are the same person. In (13b) the suffix indicates 'different subject', because the subject of 'want' is not the same as the subject of 'save'.

2.3. Clitic

As discussed in the chapter WHAT IS A WORD?, *clitics* resemble affixes in being phonologically dependent on a host word to be pronounced, but in other respects have properties of separate words. Some languages of North America identify subordinate clauses by using a clitic, rather than an affix or a separate particle. A clitic which precedes the host it attaches to is called a *proclitic*; one which follows the host is called an *enclitic*. An example of an enclitic was seen in (2), with the Cherokee conjunction *=hno* 'and'. For an example of a proclitic consider the following Caddo example, in which a proclitic *nat* appears in a temporal adjunct clause:

(14) *nappáwdihšiyah …* *nahašʔháwwá·yáh* *dikaʔháy*
nat#wa-wid(i)-ih-šiyah nak#hašnáw-wa-yáh dikaʔháy
TEMP.SUB#PL-arrive-AND-TRANSLOC.PERF TRANSLOC.IND#meal-PL-eat something
'When they arrived there, … they would eat something there.'
(Caddo; Melnar 2004: 94–95)

The symbol # after *nat* indicates that the usual word-internal phonological processes of Caddo do not apply at that boundary, reflecting a difference between clitics and ordinary affixes.

2.4. Special paradigms of subject/object agreement

In other languages, the difference between main and subordinate clauses may be indicated by the use of a separate *paradigm*, that is, the set of affixes agreeing with the subject (and object, in some languages). For example, in the Algonquian language Meskwaki third person singular is expressed by the suffixes *-w-a* in the independent indicative paradigm, which is only used for verbs in main clauses. See (15a):

(15) a. *mahkate·wi·wa*
mahkate·wi·-**w**-**a**
fast-3-SG
'he/she fasts; he/she fasted' [main clauses only]

b. *mahkate·wi·tehe*
mahkate·wi·-**t**-ehe
fast-3-MODE.SUFFIX
'if he/she had fasted, …'

c. *e·hmahkate·wi·či*
e·h-mahkate·wi·-**t**-i
AORIST-fast-3-MODE.SUFFIX
'… that he/she fasts; that he/she fasted.'

d. *me·hkate·wi·či*
IC-mahkate·wi·-**t**-i
IC-fast-3-MODE.SUFFIX
'when he/she fasted, …' (Meskwaki; Dahlstrom 2000: 76–78)

Other paradigms, the conjunct forms, are used mostly in subordinate clauses.[3] A sampling of conjunct paradigms is shown in (15b-d): in all three forms third person is expressed by the suffix *-t*, which is palatalized to [*-č*] if it is followed by [*-i*], as in (15c-d).

Other parts of the conjunct verbs indicate what role the subordinate clause plays. For example, (15b) is a contrary-to-fact 'if' clause, (15c) is a complement clause which could be used with a main clause such as 'I know…', and (15d) is an adjunct clause expressing 'when' in the past. These functions are identified with a combination of the final suffix (glossed MODE SUFFIX in (15b-d) above) and what appears on the left edge of the verb. On the left edge of the verb there are three possibilities: nothing at all (15b), a prefix *e·h-*, glossed AORIST (15c), or a process known as *initial change* (IC) in the Algonquianist literature which changes the length and quality of the vowel of the first syllable of the verb. In (15d) initial change has changed the short [*a*] of the stem to a long [*e·*]. Note that for the purpose of glossing examples, initial change is represented as if it were a prefix on the left edge of the verb stem, both in the morphological breakdown in line 2 and in the glosses in line 3.

In each form in (15b-d), neither the mode suffix at the right edge of the verb nor what appears on the left edge of the verb (if anything) can be identified as marking the verb's function on its own: each of the mode suffixes appears in other conjunct paradigms, as does the aorist prefix and initial change. It is the combination of the material on the left and right edges of the verb that indicates the function of the verb's clause. See Dahlstrom (2000: 76–78) for more discussion.

2.5. Nominalization

In some languages of North America, forming a subordinate clause involves turning the clause into a noun.[4] Many Salish languages employ this strategy (Kroeber 1999: 100):

(16) *ʔi‿cən* *ʔa··t* *kʷθə‿dáktə* *kʷə‿**s**-ƛ̓'èm-ə-θ-ám'š-**s***
AUX‿1s.SU.CL call.TR ART‿doctor ART‿**NZ**-look-LV-TR-1s.OB-**3.PO**
'I called a doctor to look me over' (Lushootseed; Kroeber 1999: 102)

In (16) the final word of the sentence expresses a purpose clause '[for him] to look me over'. The purpose clause is formed by turning the whole clause into a noun, indicated by the prefix *s-* (in boldface) on the verb 'look'; *s-* is glossed NZ for nominalizer. As a result of the nominalization, the subject of 'look' is expressed as a possessor (the boldfaced suffix *-s* at the right edge of the nominalized clause). The purpose clause can thus be translated literally as "his looking me over". Another consequence of turning the purpose clause into a noun is that the

subordinated material is introduced with an article *kʷə,* appearing on the left of the nominalized clause.

2.6. Tonal contour

The tonal language Cherokee uses tone to identify subordinate clauses. All subordinate verbs in Cherokee bear a "highfall" tone; for some subordinate clauses this is the only indication that they are subordinate.

(17) *duùhwahtvvhe* *taliine* *aániihlinaʔéêʔi*
dee-uu-hwahtvvh-e tali-iine anii-hlinaʔ-éeʔi
DST-3B-find:CMP-NXP two-ORD 3A.NS-sleep(NS):INC-NXP**\SUB**
'He found them asleep again.' (Cherokee; Montgomery-Anderson 2015: 342–343)

The gloss \SUB indicates highfall tone, here on the nonexperienced past suffix. According to Montgomery-Anderson (2015: 467), the highfall tone rises higher than regular high tone, and falls a little at the end.

2.7. No marking

There sometimes is no special marking identifying a clause as a subordinate clause. Watkins (1984: 235) states that some complement clauses in Kiowa are "simply juxtaposed to the main clause."

(18) *nɔ́··pʼì·* *ę́-tét*
my-sister [(2,3SG/AGT):1SG/PAT:Ø/OBJ]-tell/PF

á-kʼì··dè *Carnegie-kù* *Ø-bá·n-ê·*
her-husband-POSS Carnegie-to [3SG]-go-IPF/HSY
'My sister told me that her husband was going to Carnegie.' (Kiowa; Watkins 1984: 235)

2.8. Embedded questions

The special type of complement clause expressing a question often contains a question particle, if the embedded question is a yes-no question, or a question word, if the embedded question is of the question word type. Here are examples of an embedded yes-no question and an embedded question word question from Slave:

(19) *John* [*ʔeyi* *tʼeere* ***sú*** *húhshu*] *kodįhshǫ́le*
that girl Q 3 OPT.marry 3 know.NEG
'John doesn't know if that girl is getting married.' (Slave; Rice 1989: 1175)

(20) [***ʔamíi*** *ʔatʼį*] *keodįhsǫ́le*
who 3 is 3 knows AREA.NEG
'She doesn't know who it was.' (Slave; Rice 1989: 1181)

See also the Washo example of an embedded yes-no question in (5).

Meskwaki, on the other hand, employs its rich system of verbal paradigms (discussed earlier in 2.4) to indicate that a subordinate clause is an embedded question. In (21) there is no

independent question word corresponding to 'who'. Instead, the subordinate verb is identified as an embedded question by the combination of initial change on the first syllable of the compound verb plus the suffixes on the verb 'eat'. Furthermore, the final suffix *-a* on the verb 'eat' indicates that the element being questioned is the subject of the verb 'eat'.[5]

(21) *e·hwe·pi–nana·tohtawi·nameki . . .*
e·h-we·pi–nana·tohtaw-i·nameki . . .
AOR-begin–ask-X>1P/AOR

e·škike·hi–mi·čikwe·na
IC-ašk**i**–=ke·hi –mi·či-kwe·n-a
IC-first.time–=and –eat-3>0/INT.PART-3
'They (unspecified) began to ask us . . . and who ate it first.'
(Meskwaki; Dahlstrom 2019: 77)

3. Full clause or reduced?

Besides the differences illustrated in the preceding section regarding the strategies used to indicate that a given clause is subordinate, there are also differences seen among the languages of North America in terms of whether the subordinate clause expresses the full range of information that would be found in a main clause. Some languages, such as the Algonquian language Blackfoot and the Salish language Halkomelem, have no infinitive forms (Ritter and Wiltschko 2004). In other words, every subordinate clause in those languages expresses the full range of information found in main clauses. Other languages exhibit various restrictions on what grammatical information is expressed in a subordinate clause. For example, Rood (1996: 590) reports that Wichita marks fewer tense/aspect distinctions in subordinate clauses than are found in main clauses.

3.1. Infinitives

Some North American languages are described as having infinitive forms of the verb in some subordinate clauses. Lakota is an example:

(22) *Inúŋwaŋ* *iblúthe*.
inúŋwAŋ i-bl-(y)úthA
swim try-1SG.A-stem
'I tried to swim.' (Lakota; Ullrich 2018: 16)

In (22) the main clause verb 'try' is infixed with a first singular agent morpheme but the verb of the subordinate clause has no marking for subject. Nevertheless, the subject of 'try' is understood to also be the subject of 'swim' in the Lakota example, just as it is in the English translation which uses an infinitive form of 'swim'. Similar examples were seen above in (6) for Northern Pomo and (9) for Haida.

A different sense of the term "infinitive" is used in Montgomery-Anderson's (2015) description of Cherokee. Cherokee infinitives have prefixes identifying the subject of the verb of the subordinate clause but do not indicate the tense/aspect of the verb.[6]

(23) *aànehldi* *uudagesv* *uuyoohuúsehdíiʔi*

a-anehldi uudagesv uu-yoohuúsehdíiʔi
3A-try:PRC weight 3B-lose:INF
'He is trying to lose weight.' (Cherokee; Montgomery-Anderson 2015: 75)

Another example of a Cherokee infinitive was seen above in (3).

3.2. Both main and subordinate predicates in a single verb

The most extreme example of reducing the subordinate "clause" is found in languages which permit incorporation of complement predicates into the main clause verb. For example, in the Yupik example in (24) the main clause predicate is 'say' (in boldface) and the predicate of the complement of 'say' is 'wait for', which is expressed as part of the same verb:

(24) *atanqe-ciq-**ni**-llru-ateng* *ama-ni*
wait.for-FUTURE-**say**-PAST-CNSQ.3SGA+3R.PLO there-LOC
'Because he said that (he) will wait for them there'
(Central Alaskan Yupik; Woodbury 2017: 555)

Notice that Yupik allows separate tense markers for the two predicates in (24): 'wait for' is future tense and 'say' is past tense. Another example of this type can be seen in the Meskwaki example in (21), where 'begin' and 'ask' are compounded into a single verb.

4. Interactions with case-marking, word order, and negation

The difference in syntactic contexts between main clauses and subordinate clauses can have an effect on other parts of the grammatical system of a language. For example, the Uto-Aztecan language Southern Paiute exhibits different case-marking patterns depending on whether the clause is main or subordinate. Subjects in main clauses take nominative case, while subjects in subordinate clauses take oblique case.

(25) ***nʉʉ'*** *pʉsuchuxwai-yʉ-ak* ***Johni-ung*** *kiritsi-ang*
I.NOM know-PR-3VIS John.OBL-ART cat.OBL-ART

narungwa-ngkʉ-kai-naya-anga-n
buy-APP-PERF-OSP.OBL-3SVIS-1S
'I know (it) that John bought the cat for me.'
(Southern Paiute; adapted from Bunte 1986: 283)

In (25) the first person subject of the main clause is in nominative case, while 'John', the subject of the complement clause, takes an oblique case marker.

The basic word order pattern of a language may also differ depending on whether the clause is a main clause or a subordinate clause. For Quileute, Andrade (1933: 278) reports, "In the main clause the normal order is (1) verb, (2) subject, (3) object. In the subordinate clause the subject precedes the verb."

(26) *toqò·l* *dâ·kil* ***yik*** ***hadós·t'ot'*** *ki'* *k'ade´'ya'a´k*
replied then the elder.sister the her.younger.sister

“hé.sekɬli	***tca’à·***	***ha’***	***tcè·kʷ***	***t’łotóloo´t***	*tas*	*há.kutaχa´.”*
I.prefer	yonder	that	large	star	3rd.person.conditional	come

‘Then the elder girl said to her younger sister,
“I should prefer that big star yonder would come.”’ (Quileute; Andrade 1933: 280, 285)

In (26) the first clause is a main clause, with the subject (in boldface) following the verb. In the second line there is a complement clause in which the subject ‘that big star yonder’ (in boldface) precedes the verb of the complement clause, ‘come’.

Another example of how the difference between main and subordinate clauses can affect other parts of the language is in the expression of negation. In Potawatomi, two different strategies are used to negate a verb, depending on whether the verb is in a main clause or in a subordinate clause. The following examples are from the Forest County, Wisconsin, dialect of Potawatomi:

(27) a.

Jo wi	*nin*	*nwi-byasi*	*wabek*
jo=wi	nin	n-wi-bya-**si**	wabek
NEG	I	1-FUT-come.VAI-NEG	tomorrow

‘I’m not coming tomorrow.’

b. *ga-bwa-wje-bontawat*
IC.gi-**pwa**-wje-bonet-awat
PST-NEG-RROOT-quit.VTI-3.PL.CONJ
‘why they did not quit it’ (Potawatomi; Lockwood 2017: 115)

(27a) is a main clause; negation here is expressed with a negative particle *jo* plus a suffix *-si* on the verb (both in boldface). In (27b), however, the subordinate clause is negated with a preverb *pwa* compounded with the verb and there is no negative morpheme suffixed to the verb.

5. Some tricky cases

Most of the time it is easy to decide whether a particular clause in a language is a main clause or a subordinate clause. There are, however, a few tricky cases to be aware of, which will be covered in this section.

5.1. “Cosubordination”

Occasionally languages have constructions which seem to exhibit features of both coordination and subordination; the term which has been coined for such constructions is *cosubordination*. An example can be seen in the Siouan language Crow. Crow has a switch reference system, but the system operates only on coordinate clauses. In the Crow construction which is described as cosubordination, chains of clauses are connected by switch reference markers, with only the final clause of the chain bearing a marker indicating the speech act type:

(28)

*alápasshi-ss-basaa-**(a)k***	*dáakbachee-sh*	*hii-**ák***	*kukaaaaxp-**ák***
direction-GOAL-run-SS	his.son-DET	reach-SS	embrace-SS
*óhchikaap-**ak***	*iispáschi-**k***	*huu-k*	
greet-SS	kiss-DECL	say.PL-DECL	

'he ran toward him, he reached his son, he hugged him, he greeted him, he kissed him' (Lk 15:28) (Crow; Graczyk 2007: 402)

The same-subject markers on the non-final clauses are in boldface, as is the declarative speech act marker *-k* on the final verb of the chain, 'kiss'. (The final word in (28) is a reportative evidential which also has the declarative speech act marker.) The effect of the declarative marker extends over the entire chain, and the non-final clauses cannot be used on their own—features which suggest subordination. However, the Crow switch reference system does not otherwise appear on subordinate clauses, only on coordinate clauses, making constructions like (28) difficult to classify as involving either subordination or coordination.

For a further example of a language analyzed as exhibiting cosubordination, see Jacobsen (1992), a lengthy discussion of various subordinate and cosubordinate constructions in the Wakashan language Nootka.

5.2. Formally subordinate constructions used in main clauses

In some languages, clauses bearing morphology which usually indicates that the clause is subordinate can used as main clauses in certain contexts. For example, the Algonquian language Plains Cree exhibits a similar distinction between independent and conjunct paradigms as the one discussed above in 2.4: in Cree, second person singular is indicated by a prefix *ki-* plus a suffix *-n* in the independent paradigm, used only in main clauses (29a), while conjunct verbs require a suffix *-yan* to express second person singular (29b). (29b) shows that a verb bearing conjunct inflection can be used in a main clause:

(29) a. *kinôhtêhkatân* *cî*
ki-nôhtêhkatê-**n** cî
2-hungry.VAI-SAP Q
'Are you hungry?' [independent inflection]

b. *ê- nôhtêhkatêyan* *cî*
ê- nôhtêhkatê-**yan** cî
C1-hungry.VAI-2 Q
'Are you hungry?' [conjunct inflection]
(Plains Cree; Cook 2014: 140)

According to Cook (2014: 140), the form in (29a), with the independent inflection normally used for main clauses, is used to ask someone "out of the blue" if they are hungry, such as when someone has come to visit. The form in (29b), using conjunct morphology otherwise found on subordinate clauses, is used when the context creates a presupposition relevant to the utterance, perhaps if the addressee is rummaging in the fridge looking for food.

5.3. Historical change/reanalysis

In the section above we saw that verbs bearing subordinate clause marking may be used in a main clause in certain contexts. For some languages, such variation between subordinate clause functions and main clause functions eventually results in certain constructions being reanalyzed as being main clauses only.[7] As a result, the verbal morphology which originally marked the clause as being subordinate still appears on the newly reanalyzed clause, even though

the clause is no longer subordinate. An example of this can be seen in the Algonquian language Menominee, where question-word questions (as opposed to yes-no questions) require conjunct inflection on the verb.

(30) *Tāq* *kēs–mēcek?*
WH PST–eat.AI.3CONJ
'What did he eat?' (Menominee; Johnson and Macaulay 2015: 344)

As in other Algonquian languages, the primary function of conjunct morphology in Menominee is to indicate that the clause is subordinate. Given that, we might expect the translation of (30) to be something like "What is the thing which he ate?", with 'eat' appearing in a subordinate clause. Johnson and Macaulay (2015), however, present evidence which indicates that the verb in questions like (30) is not part of a subordinate clause but is instead the main clause verb of the question. Menominee questions are therefore an instance where the syntax of the construction has changed over time, reanalyzing an originally subordinate clause to be a main clause, but where the morphology of the construction still reflects the syntax of the older construction.[8]

6. Conclusion

This chapter has defined various types of subordination, surveyed ways in which subordination may be indicated, shown how the syntactic context of subordination can affect other parts of a language's linguistic system, and ended by pointing out a few pitfalls that analysts of a language may need to watch out for in classifying clauses as subordinate.

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[1] Abbreviations in the examples: 0 inanimate, 1P 1person exclusive, 3R third person reflexive, A Set A pronominal prefixes (Cherokee), A actor (Lakota), A A case (Northern Pomo), A transitive subject (Yupik), ABL ablative, ABS absolutive, ACOMP adverbial complementizer, ADV adverb, AGT agent, AI Animate Intransitive verb, ALL allative, AND andative, AOR aorist, APP applicative, AREA areal pronoun, ART article, AUX auxiliary, B Set B pronominal prefixes, C complementizer, C1 changed conjunct 1, CL clitic, CMP completive, CN conjunction, CNSQ consequential, CONJ conjunct, CTL control, CVB converb, DECL declarative, DEF definite, DET determiner, DI ditransitive suffix, DST distributive, DS different subject, E ergative, ERG ergative, EVID evidential, F feminine, FUT future, GER gerund, HAB.PRES habitual present, HSY hearsay, I intransitive (Cherokee), I agreement class I (Choctaw), IC initial change, IMPV imperfective, INC incompletive, IND indicative, INF infinitive, INFIN infinitive, INT.PART interrogative participle, IPF imperfective, IPFV imperfective, IRR irrealis, LOC locative, LV linking vowel, M masculine, NC non-determinative connective, NCBR non-clause-bounded reflexive, NEG negative, NOM nominative, NS nonsingular, NXP nonexperienced past, NZ nominalizer, O direct object, OB object, OBJ object, OBL oblique, OBV obviative, OPT optative, ORD ordinal, OSP oblique-subject participle, PART participle, PASV passive, PAT patient, PERF perfective, PF perfective, PFT perfective, PL plural, PO possessive, PP postposition, PR present, PRC present continuous, PST, PT past, Q yes/no question marker, REFL reflexive voice, REL relative, RROOT relative root, S singular (Choctaw, Northern Pomo, Southern Paiute) S subject (Nishga), S. someone/something, S3 subsidiary 3rd person, SAP speech act participant, SBJ subject, SG singular, SM subordinator marker, SR switch reference, SS same subject, SU subject, SUB subordinator, \SUB subordinate tone, TEMP temporal, TOP topic, TR transitive, TRANSLOC translocative, U undergoer, VAI verb, Animate Intransitive, VIS visible, VTI verb, Transitive Inanimate, X unspecified subject, WH question word.

[2] Not discussed in this chapter are *relative clauses*, which are subordinate adjunct clauses which modify a head noun, as opposed to the subordinate adjunct clauses discussed here, which modify the main clause. For example, in the following Sahaptin sentence the underlined portion meaning 'who rode across' is a relative clause modifying 'that man', providing more information about which man is referred to.

(i) ín=aš á=q'inu-šan-a kʷaaná ɨwínš-na
I=1SG 3ABS-see-IMPV-PST that.OBJ man-OBJ.SG

ana-pɬ́n i-qásu-yayč-a
REL-3SG 3NOM-on.horse-cross-PST
'I saw that man who rode across.' (Sahaptin; Rigsby and Rude 1996: 688)

Relative clauses are discussed in a separate chapter in this handbook.

[3] See section 5 for discussion of conjunct forms used in main clauses.

[4] Nominalization as a strategy in relative clause formation is also discussed in some detail in the RELATIVE CLAUSE chapter.

[5] See Dahlstrom 2019 for a detailed discussion of these Meskwaki forms, known as *interrogative participles* in the Algonquianist literature.

[6] Examples like the Cherokee forms in (3) and (23) suggest that finiteness is perhaps best thought of as a matter of degree, rather than a clear-cut opposition between finite and non-finite.

[7] See the chapter on NEGATION for this type of historical change involving negative particles.

[8] Another example of subordinate clauses being reanalyzed as main clauses can be seen in auxiliary verb constructions in Yuman languages, where the main verb and the auxiliary are separated by the suffix which otherwise marks 'same-subject' in a switch reference system. In such constructions the verb which is now the main verb must have originated as the verb of a subordinate clause, subordinated to the verb which now functions merely as an auxiliary (McKenzie 2015: 436).