

Coordination and Subordination in the Kenyang Language

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Abstract

Coordination and Subordination are common but important syntactic phenomena exhibited by natural languages. In investigating these phenomena, scholars have paid attention to its associated syntactic features such as the connecting devices, structural types, compression rules and constraining principles. Like many other languages, Kenyang employs two major strategies to conjoin phrases and clauses. These are the overt and the covert strategies. Talking about the overt strategy, the conjuncts of the coordinate structure are united by an overt morphological or phonological coordinating conjunction, while in the covert strategy the conjuncts are not united by any of such overt coordinating conjunction. Subordinate clauses in Kenyang on their part are marked by special subordinating morphemes which denote time, purpose, condition and concession. This paper describes the structure of both coordinating and subordinating phenomena in Kenyang (a Bantu Language spoken in the South West region of the republic of Cameroon). The structural approach is adopted in the data presentation to highlight on some cross-linguistic universals on coordination and subordination in order to properly characterize these linguistic features in Kenyang.

Keywords: coordination, subordination, linguistic universals, linguistic coding

1.0 Introduction

Coordination and subordination are well-established grammatical terms used cross-linguistically. They are somehow fuzzy, both being used in a variety of mutually related-senses depending on the theoretical context. As a syntactic relation, coordination is traditionally said to hold if the units in question are syntactically "equivalent", "have the same status," "play the same role", in a given syntactic context. (see Lang 1984; Lehmann 1988; Huddleston & Pullum 2002; Iff, Carston and Blakemore 2005; Crystlman 2006). Haspelmath (2004) proposes the two definitions below: a construction [A B] is considered Coordinate if the two parts A and B have the same status. Whereas it is not Coordinate if it is asymmetrical and one of the parts is clearly more salient or important, while the other is in some sense Subordinate. He also said that the term coordination refers to syntactic constructions in which two or more units of the same types are combined into larger units and still have the same semantic relation with other surrounding elements (Haspelmath 2004:34). Lehmann (1988: 182) says the coordinated entities may be clauses in a broad sense, that is finite or non-finite verbs, phrases, or full clauses, or they may be lower level categories. Coordination as traditionally understood is signaled by a coordinating connective conjunction. Coordination gives equal attention to two items. Certain features of central coordination can be identified at clausal level.

- First, they have to come at the beginning of the second clause (in compound sentences) ;
- Second, the clauses they connect are in sequences or in time consequence or cause-effect and so cannot be switched without changing meaning;
- Third, no other conjunction can be combined or added in front of them;
- Next, they can be used to link units that are smaller than clauses;

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-Also, they can be used to link subordinate clauses

-Finally, they can link more than two clauses;

The term Subordination like Coordination is defined according to Lehmann (1998), asagrammatical relation "R" connecting syntagms X and Y is a relation of dependency if X occupies a grammatical slot of Y or and vice versa. In a dependency relationship, Y depends on X if X determines the grammatical category of the complex and thus its external relations. Subordination is an asymmetric relation, both in linguistics and in everyday life and by that token intimately correlated with the notion of hierarchical structure. If A is subordinate to B then B cannot be subordinate to A but B may be subordinate to a third entity which may be C Lehmann (1988). Clausal Subordination, is often said to contain less prominent or salient information to less communication weight than the super ordinate clause (Arts 2006; Hetland and Molnár 2001; Peyer 1997 and Reis 1993). Generally, subordination gives less attention to one idea so that the other has emphasis. The objectives of this paper is to identify the coordinators that exist in the language, and to further examine how these coordinators can be linked through connecting devices, to sentences of more than two clauses. Also important in this paper is the discussion of subordination in the language. Kenyans have special subordinating morphemes which denote time, purpose, condition and concession. Thus, in order to examine these two grammatical terms, in Kenyang, this paper has been divided into three sections. Section 1 is focused on the types of coordination. Here we have two sub-sections. The first sub-section deals with covert coordination, while the second sub-section deals with overt coordination. The conjunction reduction role is also discussed in this sub-section. Section 2 focuses on subordination and its markers. Emphasis is on the structure of subordinate particles and other special syntactic properties of the subordinate clause. Section 3 presents the conclusion.

1.1 Types of coordination in Kenyang

Kenyang has the structure SVO. Coordinate structures in Kenyang may be classified into two criteria:

- (1) Linguistic coding and
- (2) Syntactic structures

Based on (1) above, which is linguistic coding, two types of coordination may be distinguished: overt and covert coordination. Ozameshied (1998:72) refers to these types as syntactic: where as conjuncts of a coordinating conjunction like "and","or","but" and paratactic where the conjuncts are not united by any overt coordinating conjunction. With reference to syntactic structures, two types of coordination may be identified: phrasal and clausal coordination.

1.1.1 Covert Coordination

"Covert clauses are juxtaposed without any explicit connecting word; but the sentence is interpreted by the native speaker as possessing a conjunction in the underlying structure" Dzamestrie (1998:76). Covert coordination is used mostly to conjoin clauses/sentences characterized by the absence of an overt tense marker in the second and subsequent conjuncts. Let us look at the examples below.

1. Ayuk a naà mbuà áru; Besong a na ák^{wa}à
Ayuk s.m cook áru Besong s.m cook Plantains
"Ayuk cooked áru and Besong cooked plantains"
2. Má è nyàè mbu àáru wòè ó nyuà manyàèp
I eat P₂ áru you sm drink water
" I ate áru and you drank water"

At first sight, it appears the events of both clausal conjuncts are related; but a closer look reveals that there is no requirement for the events of the different conjuncts to be related in the sentence above. For instance, the cooking of the eru has no relationship with the cooking of plantains, except that both states deal with the aspect of cooking. The fact that the second and subsequent clauses depend on the first tense marking, however, establish as a temporal relationship between the events. If the second or subsequent clausal conjunct has an overt tense marker; the interpretation may be unrelated and not a coordinate reading event, if the tenses are identical. Let us look at example (3) below.

3. ns'ùk a àdàèp mbuà nkaè, nyaè á Beèn
 Monkey s .m play P₂ drum animals s.m dance
 "Monkey played a drum the animals danced"

In the example above, although the events in the two clauses are quite obviously related and can be interpreted as occurring in a temporal sequence, the presence of the tense marker in the second conjunct separates them entirely. The fact that the animals danced is not in any way related to the monkey playing a drum. There is no indication of a temporal or current special relationship between the two events. In other words, the monkey could have played the drum in scene "A" at time (1), while the animals danced in scene "B" at time (2). Let us look at phrasal covert-coordination.

1.1.2 Phrasal covert coordination in Noun phrases

As earlier mentioned, unlike overt coordination, covert does not require coordinators. Verb phrase structures in Kenyang can merely be juxtaposed as can be seen below. They are not coordinated morphologically, but they are phonologically through the pause (.) .Let us consider the examples below.

4. Agbor, áyong, neò Ayuk ba róèñ ásiüj
 Agbor, áyong and Ayuk s.m go market
 "Agbor, áyong and Ayuk have gone to the market"
5. Mát tSáá mbuè nenyá è ntaè ánow, Ako, neò Ayuk
 I give P₂ food to ánow Ako and Ayuk
 "I gave food to ánow, Ako, and Ayuk"

These examples show, the covertly coordinated nouns can stand either in subject or in object position.

1.1.3 Phrasal Covert Coordination in Verb Phrase

Phrasal covert coordination also implies the coordination of verb phrases, as illustrated below.

6. Mèò t'wó è mbuà ñ-nyáè náyaè, ñ-kpòèt kájweàj ɲ-soò bó è tSaàn
 I come P₂ eat food cut wood wash s.m dishes
 "I came, ate, cut the wood, and washed the dishes"
7. Besong àè tsóèñ naà náenyáè, àè-so òbòè tsan; a gòèt kájweèj
 Besong s.m fut, cook food, s.m wash s.m dishes s.m cut wood

"Besong will cook the food, wash the dishes, and cut the wood".

As can be seen from the examples above, the tense and subject are expressed in the first verb phrase and have scope over the entire structure as it is the case in overt coordination. Since the verb phrases are underlyingly coordinated, it is needless repeating the subject and the tense marker in the subsequent verb phrases. Also important is the fact that in example (6) above, the subject marker is the nasal [ñ] because of the first person personal pronoun; which is not the case with example (7). The covert strategy is never used to coordinate two nouns phrases. However, it can be used in a situation where two or more nouns occur in a series. Even in this case, the covert strategy cannot be used to coordinate all the nouns in the series. The last two nouns must be coordinated with an overt conjunction [ne] meaning "and" in English. Let us look at the following examples.

8. Ayuk, áyong neò Etah ba k'waàj mbuà neòk'waàj amem eket nen'ikmwet
 Auyk, áyong, and Etah, S.m sing P₂ sing in house pray
 "Ayuk, áyong and átah sang in the church"

1.1.4 Clausal Covert Coordination

Sentential covert coordination involves the juxtaposition of two or more clauses, as illustrated below.

9. áyong àè soà mbuè bó ètsan, má na ànányáè
 Áyong s.m wash P₂ s.m dishes I cook food
 "Áyong washed the dishes, I cooked the food"
10. Bakia àè naè mbuè nányáè, má BÍ'kÍ' so òbó ètsan
 Bakia S.m cook P₂ food I Neg wash S.m dishes
 "Bakia cooked the food but I did not wash the dishes"

As these examples illustrate, the underlying coordinator may express addition as suggested in example(9) above, or contradiction as can be seen in example(10) above, in which two different subjects are performing two actions. This means that these clauses can be used as independent sentences somewhere else.

1.2 Overt Coordination

Kenyang has many overt markers which permit various types of coordination to occur at the phrasal as well as the sentential level, to form complex phrases of various grammatical categories.

1.2.1 The Coordinator Kὲò

The morpheme [kὲò] is a marker of disjunction. It is the unmarked form of disjunction which functions to stress that conjuncts are to be considered as separate units, despite their syntactic linking. /Kὲò/ generally translates into English as “or” as in the example below.

11. áyong àè tSòèŋ toàk chiù manyep kὲ è a è naè chí` nὲòyὲò
 Áyong s.m fut carry cop water or S.m cook cop food
 “Eyong will either fetches water or cook food”

[kὲò] is used for alternative coordination and exclusively in interrogative sentences. It implies a question and is equivalent to English “or” as already mentioned. In the preceding section, we presented the elements showing that [kὲ] is a conjoint and highlighted peculiar characteristic in each case

1.2.3 The Coordinator Mpoàkoà

The morpheme [mpoàkoà] is the only coordinator in Kenyang that unites different clauses. It expresses the meaning “while” and is used almost exclusively in the future tense as illustrated in the examples below.

12. Agbor a àtsòèñ nyàè nὲònyá èmpoàko àáyong a èBuèrà èkánóè
 Agbor s.m fut eat food while áyong s.m sleep sleep
 “Agbor will be eating food while áyong will be sleeping”

As in the preceding cases of verb phrase and clausal coordination, only the first conjunct is marked for tense on the subject pronoun.

1.2.4 The Coordinator Né̀ò

The coordinator [ná] means “and” in English. It can conjoin phrases in Kenyang. The coordinator of proper nouns is possible with [nὲ], as can be observed from the examples below.

Áyong àà naè ákʷàà naè bárǹù
 Áyong s.m cook plantains asp vegetable
 “Eyong cooked plantains and vegetables”

[ná] cannot conjoin more than two nouns in one structure. When there are more than two conjuncts, it is advisable to use commas. The coordinating conjunction must however be overt between the last conjuncts as earlier discussed. It is also important to know that the coordinator [ná] also means “with”. The difference is only seen at the level of the content. The use of [ná] as a conjoint is more general and less restrictive, than when it is used to mean “and” as in English. Let us look at the examples below.

14. wó ènyáè áBaòjù ná yīi
 you eat fufu with what
 “With what did you eat fufu”

[ná] cannot be used to conjoin a sequence of actions or events, hence the ungrammaticality of the following sentences.

*15. Ayuk àà kʷaj neè kʷaáj ne aBen náBeèn
 Ayuk s.m Sing song and dance dance
 “Ayuk sing sing and dance dance”

1.2.5 Sentential Coordination

Sentential coordination involves the juxtaposition of two or more clauses characterized by second and subsequent conjuncts.

16. Ayuk aè na à áruà, Besong a´ na è áBaàj
 Ayuk s.m cook áruô Besong s.m cook fufu
 "Ayuk cooked áru and Besong cooked fufu"

1.2.6 Conjunction Reduction Rule

Like many other languages, Kenyang has certain syntactic devices by which syntactic or verbal compactness is archived. The conjunction reduction rule is one of these. This rule becomes operational on a coordinate construction that exhibits parallel structures. When this rule applies, it deletes identical elements in the parallel structures, sentence (17) illustrates this point the examples below.

17. Mbi aè nyèò, áyong aè nyèò
 Mbi s.m eat, eyong S. m eat
 "Mbi has eaten and áyong has eaten"

In example (17) above, the clauses [mbi aè nyèè] "mbi has eaten" and [áyong aè nyáè] "áyong has eaten" are parallel structures. The second occurrence of the identical elements is delited [a ènyá ènányáè] as can be seen from (18) below.

18. Mbi a nyá ná nyá èáyong ñkwóè
 Mbi s.m eat food áyong even
 "Mbi has eaten so does áyong"

2. Subordination

As earlier mentioned, subordinate clauses in Kenyang are marked by special subordinating morphemes which denote time, purpose, conditions and concession. Apart from these special subordinating morphemes, the structure of subordinate clauses is very similar to that of (independent) clauses, although the case interaction of tense and aspects may differ in the sense that the main and subordinate clause follows the main clause. It is worth noting that its position can also be influenced by the role it plays in linking the main clause to the preceding discourse. In the section that follows, we will examine the various types of subordinate clauses in Kenyang, highlighting the subordinating morpheme and other special syntactic properties of the subordinate clause.

2.1 Complement Subordinate Clauses

The complement subordinate clause serves as a complement to regular subordinating verbs such as [ráèm] "say" [niüsü] "refuse" [diü] "cry" / [kaá] "accept" / agree/ believe" [k'ünsiü] think/ remember / believe" [ñóèòóètiü] deceive " etc. The subordinating morpheme is the regular complementizer [Bèòè] which is usually positioned immediately after the tense marker of the subordinate clause. There are generally no restrictions on tense marking in the main and subordinate clauses, as the following examples show.

19. ánow a èràèm mbu àBèè yiü a ètsóèñ t'wóè
 Ánow s.m say P2 com he s.m fut come
 "Ánow said that he (ie Ánow) will come"

2.2 Purpose and Reason Subordinate Clauses

These clauses provide explanations for the occurrence of a given event, actions or state. They differ in that purpose clauses express a motivating event which must be unrealized at the time of the main event, while reason clauses express a motivating event which may be realized at the time of the main clause event. The purpose clause is marked by the subordinating morpheme [mbónyu´nè] in order to/so as to "let us look at the examples below.

20. máè tsóèñ fatíúj B'íuti ù mbónyu´nè à má tSóóñ róèñ káètèòmáè
 I fut wake early because I want go hunting
 "I will wake up early because I want to go hunting"

Tense marking in reason clauses depends on the tense of the main clause. Even when not specified.

2.3 Time Subordinate Clauses

Time subordinate clauses express temporal sequence relationships between clauses. In Kenyang, time adverbials roundabout fashion using expressions such as “at the time that” “latter than the time that” etc. The adverbial “before” is however expressed using a subordinate clause marked by the morpheme [kɛ]. In such constructions, the event expressed in the subordinating clause has not yet happened at the time of the event named in the main clause. Thus, there is the sense in which [kâè] clauses are conceptually negative from the point of view of the event in the main clause. The following are some examples of [kâè] clauses.

21 .ŋgɛ̀òm a màèn mbuà akoàk ká èmá èntSwĩ̀ù áBĩ̀ù
Python s.m swallow P2 pig before I enter bush

“The python swallowed the pig before I entered the bush”

2.4 Conditional Subordinate Clauses

Conditional subordinate clauses in Kenyang can be divided into two broad semantic categories: reality conditionals and imaginative conditionals. Reality conditionals express “real” present, habitual or past events. Imaginative conditionals, on the other hand, state what might have been or predict what will be in both types. The main clause contains the ordinary conditional mood marker [káè] and the subordinate / consequence clause is marked by the special subordinating morpheme [mbaàkaà]. Sentences containing a reality conditional clause usually state basic truth.

79) mbaàkaà m-mu à aè Bám bákoàòo aũ tsòèñ gkeaj nyo`k
If con dog s.m hunt too much s.m fut meet porcupine

“ If a dog hunts a lot, it ends up encountering a porcupine “

2.5 Concession Subordinate Clauses

Concession clauses generally make a concession against which the proposition in the main clause is contrasted. The concession clause is marked in three different ways. In the first method, the concession is preceded by the morpheme [yeèchiũ] and the regular complementiser [nduà]. The concession clause itself can either precede or follow the main clause.

82) yeè chí ùnduà Ayuk aè chiũ nèè mɛ̀ènyàè; yĩ̀ũ àà tsòèñ dí
Although Ayuk s.m be with pregnant she s.m fut cry

“Although Ayuk is pregnant, she will cry”

3. Conclusion

We have focused our discussion on coordination and subordination in the Kenyang language. We described the markers of coordination, their syntactic distribution; and their context of usage. Talking still on coordination specifically overt and covert coordination, we described the various coordinators which Kenyang uses to conjoin phrases and clauses. Thus while some coordinators can combine nouns and nouns, others cannot. Beside this, Kenyang exhibits certain characteristics such as the coordination of more than two clauses, a characteristic which is restricted to the coordinator [ñkʷóè] with the condition that the subject of these clauses performs the same action. Finally, we looked at subordination and discovered that it is marked by special subordinating morphemes to denote time purpose, conditions, and concessions. Talking about the types of subordination clauses that exist in Kenyang, we found five of them. The subordinating morpheme is the regular complementiser [βɛ̀ò]. This morpheme is usually positioned after the tense marker of the subordinate clause. We equally discussed purpose and reason clauses and found out that they are marked by the morpheme [mbónyu nɛ̀] which means “in order/so to”.

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