In many instances, identification of a particular construction as involving subordination, coordination, or as being monoclausal poses no problem – at least language-internally, given that the criteria are often language-specific, with at best a tendency towards some cross-linguistic comparability. In a number of instances, however, constructions occur, even in languages that in general have well-defined clause boundaries and a well-defined distinction between subordination and coordination, that prove to be problematic. The paper will examine a range of examples of this kind, pointing out the problems, the reasons why they are problematic, and possible approaches to integrating them into an overall approach to language that pays due attention to the combination of form, semantics, and pragmatics.

The first set of data to be considered concerns intermediate cases between subordination and monoclausal structure, involving a range of criteria that, in the languages concerned, normally provide tests for clause boundaries, such as accessibility to various syntactic processes that is sensitive to the presence of a clause boundary. These data require the recognition of a scale ranging from monoclausal to having an internal subordinate clause boundary. Some other examples that might seem to illustrate this feature, but which on closer inspection are probably to be analyzed differently, will also be considered.

The second set of data to be discussed includes intermediate cases that are at least problematic with regard to their assignment to coordination or subordination, typically having the form of the one but some properties of the other, or having an indeterminate form and behaving now like the one and now like the other. It will shown that constructions having the form of one type often have semantic or pragmatic properties that are closer to the other type, and that the interaction between formal and semantic-pragmatic properties lies at the heart of many of the problematic cases.