COSUBORDINATION

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The goal of this talk will be to argue that a third type of complex sentence needs to be recognized, namely cosubordination (Olson 1981 [1], Foley & Van Valin 1984 [2], Van Valin 2005 [3]). Consider the following Chechen examples from Good (2003) ([4]).

(1) a. Ahwmad ch’aara uecush vu, t’q’a Marjam cicig uecush ju.
   Ahmed fish buy:CVSIM V:be:PRS and Mary cat buy:CVSIM J:be:PRS
   ‘Ahmed is buying a fish, and Mary is buying a cat.’

   b. Maliikina Ahwmad gaalie, iza dwa-vuedu.
   Malika:DAT Ahmed see:CVPOST 3SGABS DX-V:come:PRS
   ‘Before Malika sees Ahmed, he leaves.’

   c. Kinchka ‘a iecna, tyka ‘a jitna mashian t’e ‘a xi’na,
      ca ja’ara Maliika.
      not J:come:WP Malika
   ‘Having bought a book, left the store and sat down in the car, Malika didn’t go home.’

The example in (1a) is a classic example of coordination, two fully inflected clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction, while (1b) contains an adverbial subordinate clause marked by the posterior converb. If (1a) is coordination and (1b) is subordination, then what is (1c)? In this example there are multiple clauses linked together, with only the final one being inflected for tense; the verbs in each of the non-final clauses is in a non-finite form. One the one hand, the construction in (1c) is similar to a coordinate structure, in that it signifies a sequence of events, while it is also similar to a subordinate structure, on the other, due to the non-finite, dependent form of the verb in the non-final clauses. Good (2003) presents evidence that (1c) is a different linkage type from coordinate linkage in (1a) and the subordinate linkage in (1b) and argues that it is an instantiation of what is termed ‘cosubordination’ in the references cited above. Cosubordination, despite not being a traditionally recognized linkage type, is found in the grammars of languages of Europe and north and central Asia, as well as in languages in New Guinea, Africa and North and Central America (e.g. Bickel 1993 [5], Guerrero-Valenzuela 2004 [6], Kockelman 2003 [7], Roberts 1988 [8], Van Valin 1984 [9]).

In the theoretical framework assumed in the paper (Role and Reference Grammar [e.g. Van Valin 2005 [3]]) coordination, subordination and cosubordination are abstract linkage relations, not construction types, and both within languages and across languages there is a complex mapping between linkage relations and complex sentence construction types. This can be seen in the Chechen examples above; in both (1b) and (1c) converb forms are found, indicating that converbs are a general type of dependent verb form which can be used in different linkage types. In English, for example, participial verb forms can be used in both cosubordinate linkages, as in the translation of (1c), and in subordination, e.g. After finishing his paper, John went to a bar for a
drink, and similarly finite clauses joined by a conjunction can be used to realize both coordination, as in the translation of (1a) and cosubordination, e.g. John went to the store and bought some beer.

Finally, some of the semantic and information structure correlates of the syntactic differences among the three types will be discussed.

Abbreviations: 3 = 3rd person, CVANT = anterior converb, CVPOST = posterior converb, CVSIM = simultaneous converb, DAT = dative, DX = deixic, J = gender prefix, PRS = present, SGABS = singular, absolutive, V = verb; gender prefix, WP = witnessed past.

REFERENCES