

An Overview of Clause Linkage Patterns in Sidaama (Sidamo), a Cushitic Language of Ethiopia

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This study examines clause linkage patterns in Sidaama using the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (Foley & Van Valin 1984, Van Valin 1984, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997, Van Valin 2005, etc.), and shows that not only different constructions but also different uses of a single construction can show varying degrees of the tightness of syntactic linkage, depending on the semantic relationship that they express. The present study also points out that there are some phenomena that do not seem to be consistent with predictions that might be made by the theory.

RRG, which provides a systematic framework for the investigation of clause linkage and semantic relations between clausal as well as subclausal constituents, uses the Interclausal Relations Hierarchy to demonstrate how semantic relations between clausal or subclausal constituents are reflected in the tightness of syntactic linkage – the closer the semantic relation is, the tighter the syntactic linkage in the construction expressing it is (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 481, Van Valin 2005: 209; cf. Silverstein 1976, Givón 1980). Although RRG has been used to describe languages of various language families, it has not been used to investigate clause linkage in Cushitic languages such as Sidaama.

The present study examines clause linkage patterns in Sidaama (based on Kawachi 2007). In this language, a finite verb form requires at least the subject person/number suffix (also the subject gender suffix in the case of the first person) to be attached to the verb root. Sidaama seems to have at least seven nexus-juncture combinations: nuclear subordination, nuclear coordination, core cosubordination, core subordination, core coordination, clausal cosubordination, and clausal subordination.

The Interclausal Relations Hierarchy applies to various linkage patterns and the semantic relations that they express in Sidaama. There are also cases where the Interclausal Relations Hierarchy applies to different uses of a single construction. First, the *-nni* construction, where the verb root is accompanied by the manner/instrumental suffix *-nni* and the subject person suffix, and is followed by a finite verb as the main verb, shows differences in syntactic linkage depending on the meaning that it expresses. This construction can be used, in the order of increasingly closer semantic relations, for (i-a) simultaneous actions (e.g. ‘While singing, she lit a light.’), for (i-b) the manner of motion (e.g. ‘He ran out of the house.’) or concomitance for action verbs, for (i-c) means (e.g. ‘She dried the clothes by squeezing them.’), and in (i-d) the present progressive aspect marker (where the main verb is the existential/locational verb). The syntactic linkage of verbs in the *-nni* construction as used for (i-a) is a clausal subordination (periphery). That as used for (i-b) and (i-c) is a clausal cosubordination, which is tighter in syntactic linkage than a clausal subordination. The syntactic linkage in the *-nni* construction as used for (i-d) is a nuclear subordination, which exhibits a tighter linkage than the other uses of it mentioned above. Second, the *-e* construction, where a verb root accompanied by the converb (connective) suffix *-e* and the subject person suffix, and is followed by a finite verb as the main verb, can also differ in syntactic linkage depending on the semantic relation that it expresses. This construction can be used, in the order of increasingly closer semantic relations, for (ii-a) sequential actions (e.g. ‘He closed the door, and sat down.’), for (ii-b) manner of motion (e.g. ‘She ran out of the house.’) or concomitance for state-change verbs, and in (ii-c) the present continuous aspect marker (where the main verb is the existential/locational verb). The syntactic linkage of verbs in the *-e* construction as used for (ii-a) is a clausal cosubordination (loose linkage: illocutionary force is shared by conjoined verbs, but external negation may or may not be shared by them). When it is used for (ii-b), it is also a clausal cosubordination, but shows a tighter linkage because both illocutionary force and external negation are shared by conjoined verbs. The syntactic linkage in the *-e* construction as used for (ii-c) is a nuclear subordination, which is tighter than the previous two uses. Third, the syntactic linkage in the *-e* construction with the verb of saying *y-* as its *-e*-marked verb is different, depending on the type of the verb used as the main verb. When *y-* in this construction is used for

its literal meaning (in other words, the construction expresses sequential actions), it is clausal cosubordination (loose linkage: illocutionary force is shared by conjoined verbs, but external negation is not shared by them). On the other hand, the syntactic linkage in this construction with *y-* is tighter (clausal cosubordination with tight linkage: both illocutionary force and external negation are shared by conjoined verbs) when *y-* is used as a quote marker (in other words, the construction expresses direct discourse) or is used like a complementizer (in other words, the construction expresses indirect discourse) for *hed-* ‘think’ or *amman-* ‘believe’ as the main verb.

However, there are a few cases that do not seem to be compatible with some of the details of the Interclausal Relations Hierarchy. First, if the *-nni* construction as used for simultaneous actions and the *-e* construction as used for sequential actions are compared, the former does not seem to be syntactically not as tightly linked as the former, contrary to the opposite prediction that might be made from their semantic difference. The *-nni* construction as used for simultaneous actions is a clausal subordination (periphery), whereas the *-e* construction as used for sequential actions is a clausal cosubordination, where the clauses share the same illocutionary force (though not external negation). The semantic relation between temporally overlapping events should be tighter than that between sequentially occurring events, and thus the former should be expressed in a syntactically tight way than the latter. However, this is not the case. Second, out of the three cases where the clitic *=nna* (‘and’, ‘because’, ‘while’) is used for clausal junctures, the *=nna* construction that expresses sequential actions (clausal cosubordination) is not as tight in syntactic linkage as the *=nna* construction that expresses a reason and the one that expresses simultaneous actions (both clausal subordinations (periphery)), even though the former, which expresses a closer semantic relation, should be tighter in syntactic linkage than either of the latter. Third, out of the four constructions where the verb suffix *-gede* ‘so that, like’ attaches to a verb to form a subordinate clause, the one that shows the most distant semantic relation is tighter in syntactic linkage than two others that show closer semantic relations. Specifically, the *-gede* construction used for propositional attitude, cognition, or indirect discourse, where *-gede* serves as a complementizer of verbs, expresses a more distant semantic relation with a syntactically tighter linkage (clausal subordination (daughter)) than the purpose construction with *-gede* (purposive) and the periphrastic causative with *-gede*, which are both clausal subordinations (periphery). On the other hand, a psych-action, purposive or jussive construction with *-gede*, which uses verbs involving the realization or prevention of an event as its main verbs is also a clausal subordination (periphery).

In conclusion, the Interclausal Relations Hierarchy can explain the iconic semantics-syntax relations in many clause linkage patterns and subpatterns in Sidaama. Nevertheless, there are a few phenomena in this language for which the hierarchy does not seem to provide a sufficient explanation.

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