

Insubordination in Aleut

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The Eskimo-Aleut languages have a series of moods that are formally identified in most grammars as either independent or dependent, depending on their primary function(s) as well as on their morphological characteristics. These moods play a vital role in clause linkage, and most particularly in clause chaining. In Eskimo languages, some so-called dependent moods can be used in independent contexts: for example, the mood variously called the contemporative (Greenlandic), appositional (Canadian Inuit, Iñupiaq, and Central Siberian Yupik), or subordinative (Central Alaskan Yup'ik) is frequently used instead of the indicative in narratives, and likewise in place of the imperative to soften a command. The independent use of formally subordinate clauses in the Eskimo languages is well attested (cf. Fortescue 1984, Dorais 1988, de Reuse 1994, Jacobson 1995, and Mithun 2008). The distantly related language Aleut has to date not been examined for insubordination.

In this paper, I address this need. I will briefly review the distinctive Eskimo-Aleut mood system and clause linking strategies, as well as the more common instances of insubordination in the Eskimo languages; I will then focus on insubordination in Aleut. While Aleut shows many similarities in the system of dependent and independent moods, insubordination is far less frequent and appears to work rather differently than in the Eskimo languages. Differences in clause chain structure, complex verb construction, and mood function, and more, all play a role in the degree to which insubordination is found. For example, the Aleut conjunctive is morphologically and functionally related to the Eskimo contemporative; however it is much more rarely insubordinated, partly because of its broader range of functions, its use in periphrastic constructions with auxiliaries in independent moods, and the dependent use of the indicative in clause chains, which itself may become insubordinated. These and other factors in the presence or absence of insubordination of Aleut will be discussed.