

# The nature of clause combining in Nuuchahnulth

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In this presentation I will survey various types of clause combining constructions in Nuuchahnulth and examine the nature of clause combining in this language.

Nuuchahnulth (a.k.a. Nootka) is a polysynthetic language spoken in British Columbia, Canada. Clause combining is widely used in complex structure building in Nuuchahnulth. Expansion of structure beyond the most basic form of a clause, i.e. a single predicate plus its direct arguments, is achieved through some form of combination of multiple predicate-argument sets.

Traditionally, clauses in such constructions have been considered to be organized hierarchically to form a structurally tight unit. This view was based on the observation that the combined clauses are grammatically dependent, i.e. either in non-finite form or marked by a subordinate marker.

However, in natural discourse, especially in narratives, strongly finite forms are rather infrequent in use. In addition, clauses with a subordinate marker are sometimes observed to be used without the 'main clause'. Thus, clause combining constructions in Nuuchahnulth seems to have a relatively loose flat structure, rather than a tight hierarchically organized structure.