Coordination, Subordination, and Their Ilk in Sliammon Salish

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Aside from being simply juxtaposed (i.e. in parataxis), a clause can be either coordinated with or subordinated to another clause in Sliammon Salish. In closer inspection, however, the boundary between coordination and subordination is not so rigid. This presentation gives, first, an overview of clausal coordination and subordination. Then, two complex constructions are discussed in detail: the "emphatic negation" construction and the construction involving main clauses with the predicate 'want'. The full forms of these constructions are bi-clausal; however, considerable reduction in form occurs on one of the clauses — the whole construction resulting in what appears to be a mono-clausal sentence.

The emphatic negation construction is formally bi-clausal:

(1)   xʷaʔ   čam'-as   ʔiy   q'aq'a-m = št

       NEG   how-3CNJ.SBJ and   hungry-MDL=1pl.INDC.SBJ
       'We never got (went) hungry.' (lit. 'It was never and we got hungry.')

The construction involving main clauses with the predicate 'want' is also bi-clausal:

(2)   ʔətθ = x̣aƛ'   kʷə = tθ = tiwš-am-stu-mi

       1sg.POSS=want/desire   DET=1sg.POSS=learn-MDL-CAU-2sg.OBJ
       'I want to teach you.' (lit. 'My desire is my teach(ing) you.')

In actual usage, however, the first clauses of both of these two constructions undergo reduction in their forms: the clause indicating negation in (1) reduces phonetically to *xʷčəm* and the possessive marker attaching to the predicate 'want' in (2) gets omitted. The resulting constructions of these reductions appear to be mono-clausal.

Two factors appear to be the cause of these reductions. First, in both of these constructions, the two clauses are not semantically equivalent; the first clauses express "secondary concepts", in this case negative and desiderative, whereas the second clauses have lexical content. Second, these two constructions are high in their frequency of occurrence in actual usage. Speakers are aware of the reductions, and are able to recall the full bi-clausal constructions.