

## Coordination and Subordination in the Ejagham Language

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### ABSTRACT

*In linguistics, coordination is a complex syntactic structure that links together two or more elements, these elements are called conjuncts. The unique properties of coordinate structures have motivated theoretical syntax to draw a broad distinction between coordination and subordination. Coordination and subordination are a common but important syntactic phenomena exhibited by natural languages. Coordination means combining two sentences while subordination is a principle of hierarchical organization of linguistic units. In investigating this phenomenon, scholars have paid attention to its associated syntactic features such as the connecting devices, structural types, compression rules and constraining principles. Like many other languages, Ejagham employs two major categories to conjoin phrases and clauses. These are the overt and the covert categories. In linguistics, a feature of a word or phrase is said to be covert if there is no surface evident of its existence within that phrase, while overt is an adjective which means open to view or knowledge; not concealed. B. L. Whorf distinguished between overt and covert categories, referring to them as pheno- and cryptotypes, respectively. Phenotypes are classical morphological categories with explicit grammatical meaning and formal indication that is a morpheme, while cryptotypes are covert categories, being based upon the semantic and syntactic features of words with no explicit morphological expression, but essentially instrumental for the construction and understanding of utterances; they influence the collocation of a given word with other words in a sentence. This paper describes the structure of this phenomenon in Ejagham (a Bantu Language spoken in the South West region of the republic of Cameroon). The structural approach is adopted in the data presentation to highlight on some cross- Linguistic universals on coordination and subordination in order to properly characterize the Linguistic features in Ejagham.*

**Keywords:** Coordination, Subordination, subordinators, Coordinate structures Linguistic Coding

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The term coordination refers to syntactic constructions in which two or more units of the same type are combined into a larger unit and still have the same semantic relations with other surrounding elements. The units may be words, verbs, phrases, subordinate clauses or full sentences. Coordination and Subordination are well-established grammatical terms but like many other Linguistic terms with a long history. They are somehow fuzzy, both being used in a variety of mutually related-senses depending on the theoretical context. As a syntactic relation, Coordination is traditionally said to hold if the unit in question are syntactically "equivalent", "have the same status" "play the same role", in a given syntactic context. (see Lang 1984 Lehmann 1988, Huddleston & Pullum 2002:128 Iff, Carston and Blakemore 2005:3539, Crystlman 2006) . Haspelmath 2004 proposes the two definitions below. : A construction [A B] is considered Coordinate if the two parts A and B have the same status. Whereas it is not coordinate if it is asymmetrical and one of the parts is clearly more salient or important, while the other is in some sense Subordinate. He also said that the term Coordination refers to syntactic constructions in which two or more units of the same types are combined into larger units and still have the same semantic relation with other surrounding elements. (Haspelmath 2004:34) Lehmann 1988: 182 says "the coordinated entities may be clauses in a broad sense, that is finite or non- finite verbs, phrases, or full clauses, or they may be lower level categories". Coordination as traditionally understood is signaled by a coordinating connective conjunction. Coordination gives equal attention to two items. Certain features of central coordination can be identified at clausal level.

- First, they have to come at the beginning of the second clause for example : my husband supported and adored football
- Second, the clauses they connect are in sequences or in time consequence or cause-effect and so cannot be switched without changing meaning for example : John came late so, he was sent out of class
- Third, no other conjunction can be combined or added in front of them for example: John ate and drank. If we say John ate, but drank the sentence will be ungrammatical
- Next, they can be used to link units that are smaller than clauses for example: John sang and Mary cried
- Also, they can be used to link subordinate clause for example : I went to church and sang

-Finally, they can link more than two clauses for example :Because I had to catch the train, and as we were short on time, I forgot to pack my toothbrush for our vacation.

Subordination is an asymmetric relation, both in linguistics and in everyday life and by that token intimately correlated with the notion of hierarchical structure. If A is subordinate to B then B cannot be subordinate to A but B may be subordinate to a third entity which may be C. Lehmann (1988). Clausal Subordination, is often said to contain less prominent or salient information to less communication weight than the super ordinate clause Aarts 2006 gives the following sentence as an example: I thought [clause that [NP the endless storm] was frightening]]. From the example, he explained that in the noun phrase "endless storm", "storm" is the head, preceded by the determinative "the" which renders the phrase definite, while "endless" finishes the additional descriptive information about the head. "The endless storm is frightening" is subordinate because it functions as the direct object of the verb phrase "think" which is part of the main clause. Generally, subordination gives less attention to one idea so that the other has emphasis. The objectives of this paper is to identify the coordinators that exist in the Language, and to further examine how these linguistic phenomenon can be apply to the language by connecting sentences of more than two clauses. Also important is the fact that we are also out to reveal the fact that subordination in the Ejagham language is marked by special subordinating morphemes which denote time, purpose, condition and concession.

Thus, in order to examine these two grammatical terms, in Ejagham, this paper has been divided into four sections. Section one is focused on the method of data collection and the structure of the language. Section two handles the types of coordination here we have two sub-sections. The first sub-section is dealing with covert coordination while the second sub-section deals overt coordination. It is important to note that we have also discussed the conjunction reduction role under this sub-section. Section three focuses on subordination and its markers; we have equally highlighted the structure of subordinate structures and other special syntactic properties of the subordinate clause. Section four which is the last, presents the conclusion

## 1. Data collection and structure of the language

The data for this research was collected from adult native speakers who understand and speak the language. The criteria used in selecting the informants were age, education, and the number of time spent in the area where the language is spoken. Some of the sentences were also selected by the author from Ejagham literary texts. Each sentence was rendered in its original Ejagham form after which a word for word translation was given, and it was finally translated to English. In translating, attempt was made to present the local texture as much as possible without at the same time compromising the general linguistic acceptability of sentence. The International Linguistic Alphabet was used as the bases for our transcription. According to Walters 1981, the present and past tense is not morphologically marked in the language under study. The present tense is marked by a low tone on the subject pronoun, while the past tense is marked by a high tone on the verb root. The future tense on its part is marked by the morpheme /tik/. Ejaghamas the structure SVO.

## 2 Types of Coordination in Ejagham

Coordinate structures in the language under study may be classified in terms of two criteria: Linguistic coding and syntactic structures. A Linguistic code is a system of rules or medium of communication. A language code consists of systems and units of language. It is possible to make combinations to be able to elaborate and to transmit messages in a successful way; these combinations are subject to certain rules, depending on the language or language in question. A syntactic structures on the other hand is the study of how words or other elements of sentence **structure** are combined to form grammatical sentences. Talking on the linguistic coding, two types of coordination may be distinguished: overt and covert coordination. Concerning syntactic structures, two types of coordination may be identified: phrasal and clausal coordination.

### 2.1 Covert coordination

“Covert clauses are juxtaposed without any explicit connecting word or morphemes; but the sentence is interpreted by the native speaker as possessing a conjunction in the underlying structure” Dzamestrie (1998:76). Covert coordination is used mostly to conjoin clauses/sentences characterized by the absence of an overt tense marker in the second and subsequent conjuncts. It is worth noting that the present perfect tense is not morphologically marked, but is only done phonologically, through a high tone on the subject pronoun. This is done on both the main and the subordinate clauses. Let us look at the examples below.

1. Ayuká nyámmfúní, Besongányámegome  
Ayuks.mcookeruBesongs.mcook Plantains

- “Ayuk cooked eruand Besongcooked plantains”
2. eyongányamoránAkoá nyámoyú  
Eyouns.mcookfufuAkos.m cook yams  
“Eyongcookedfufu and Ako cooked yams”
  3. mendifúniwə` ə gwə` áyíp  
I eat eruyous.mdrink water  
“ I ate áru and you drank water”

At first sight, it appears the events of both clausal conjuncts are related; but a closer look reveals that there is no requirement for the events of the different conjuncts to be related in the sentences above. For instance, the cooking of the eru has no relationship with the cooking of plantains, except that both states deal with the aspect of cooking. The fact that the second and subsequent clauses depend on the first tense marking (which is a high tone on the subject pronoun) however, establish a temporal relationship between the events. If the second or subsequent clausal conjunct has an overt tense marker; the interpretation may be unrelated and not a coordinate reading event, if the tenses are identical. It is important to note that the past tense in the language under study is marked by a high tone on the verb root. Let us look at example (4) below.

4. nsɔká tsákɪkám , oyúmàβen ε βen  
Elephants.mplaydrum animals.s.mdance  
“Elephant played a drum the animals danced”

In the example above, although the events in the two clauses are quite obviously related and can be interpreted as occurring in a temporal sequence, the presence of the tense marker (which is marked by a high tone on the verb root) in the second conjunct separates them entirely. The fact that the animals danced is not in any way related to the elephant playing a drum. There is no indication of a temporal or current special relationship between the two events. In other words, the elephant could have played the drum in scene “A” at time (1), while the animals danced in scene “B” at the same time (2). Let us look at phrasal covert-coordination.

As earlier mentioned, unlike overt coordination, covert does not require coordinators. Noun phrase structures in Ejagham can merely be juxtaposed as can be seen in the examples (5) and (6) below. They are not coordinated morphologically, but they are phonologically through the pause. It is also important to know that the present perfect tense in this language is marked by a high tone on the root of the verb root. (.) Let us consider the examples below.

5. Agbor, eyong, yáAkoájúghem

Agbor, eyong and Akos.mgo market  
Agbor, Eyong and Ako have gone to the market”

6. Ojag, Oben. yáBesongádiorβe  
Ojag, Oben and besongs.meat beans  
“Ojag Oben and Besong have eaten beans”

These examples show that, the covertly coordinated nouns can stand either in subject or in object position. Let us consider phrasal covert coordination in verb phrases in the section that follows.

### 2.1.2 Phrasal covert coordination in verb phrase

Phrasal covert coordination also implies the coordination of verb phrases as illustrated below.

7. Yéájākásúmfə́á diátúríeyí  
3<sup>rd</sup>s.mwent, washed dress,s,m ates.marrange place  
“She went, ate, washed the dresses, and arranged the place”
8. Besongtík á ayámədí, á súmfə́, á gbútnkún  
Besongfuts.mcook foodsmwash dish, smcut wood  
“Besong will cook the food, clean the dishes and cut the wood.
9. Ayukátík á yámədí a túríenjú á túkáyíp  
Ayuks.mfutscook food, s.mwash house, smcarry water.

“Ayuk will clean the house and carry water.”

As can be seen from the examples above; the tense and subject are expressed in the first verb phrase and have scope over the entire structure as it is the case in overt coordination; meaning that since the verb phrases are underlyingly coordinated, it is needless repeating the subject and the tense marker in the subsequent verb phrases.

The covert strategy can be used in a situation where two or more nouns occur in a series. Even in this case, the covert strategy cannot be used to coordinate all the nouns in the series the last two nouns must be coordinated with an overt conjunction [yá] meaning “and” in English. Let us look at the following examples.

9. Ako, Ojong yá Atah a kò'nekò'nkánjú Oβási  
Ako, Ojong and Atah. msing s. msing in house God  
“Ako, Ojong and Atah sang in the church”

The sentence above will be ungrammatical if conjunction are used marker instead of the pause. Consider the example below.

- \* Ako, yá Ojong, yá Atah a kò'nekò'nkánjú Oβási  
Ako, Ojong and Atah sm sing sm sing in house God  
“Ako, Ojong and Atah sang in the church”

### 2.1.3 Clausal covert coordination

Sentential covert coordination; involves the juxtaposition of two or more clauses as illustrated below.

12. Eyongású ágbáñ- ágbáñ menyámèdi  
eyongs.m washs.m dishes I cook food  
“eyong washed the dishes, I cooked the food”
13. Agboratúrínjú, menyámèdi  
Agborsm arrange house eat food  
“Agbor arranged the house and I ate food”
14. Bakiaá nyámèdik ménmeníkásúá gbáñ- ágbáñ  
Bakias.m cook food but I Neg washs.m dishes  
“Bakia cooked the food but I did not wash the dishes.”

As can be seen in (13) above, that there are two deferent events which are linked together by the pause. In (14) shows adversative conjunction.

Ejaghám has many overt markers which permit various types of coordination to occur at the phrasal as well as the sentential level, thereby forming complex phrases of various grammatical categories.

## 2.2 OVERT COORDINATION

This is a type of coordination that involves the use of coordinators or coordinate markers. In this language we have four morphemes that are used to coordinate sentences.

### 2.2.1 Coordinators

The coordinator /kɛn/

The morpheme [kɛn] is a marker of disjunction whose functions is to stress on the fact that conjuncts are to be considered as separate units, despite their syntactic linking. [kɛn] is generally translates into English as “or” let us look at the examples below.

14. Eyongtíkòtúkáyípkentíkò nyámèdi  
Eyong Futs.m carries.m water or Futs.m cook food  
“Eyong will you fetch water or cook food?”
15. Ayuktík ò èdikentík ò gwóáyí  
Ayuk Futs.meat or Futs.m drink water  
“Ayuk, will you eat food or drink water”

[kɛn] is used for alternative coordination and exclusively in interrogative sentences. It implies a question and is equivalent to English “or” as already mentioned. We presented the elements showing that [kɛn] is a conjoint and highlighted peculiar characteristic in each case

### 2.2.2 The coordinator /átokɛsɛ/ “while, when”

The morpheme [átokɛsɛ] is the only coordinator in the language under study that unites different clauses. It expresses the meaning “while” and is used almost exclusively in the future tense. It is also important to note that this morpheme can only come at the beginning of a sentence. Let us look at the examples below.

16. átokɛsɛ Agborá tíkádíedí, Eyongtík ánúńá

While Agbors.m Futs.meat food Eyong Futs.m sleep

“While Agbor will be eating food Eyong will be sleeping”

As in the preceding cases of verb phrase and clausal coordination only the first conjunct is marked for tense on the subject pronoun.

## 2.2 .3 The coordinator /ná/ “and”

The coordinator [ná] means “and” in English. It can conjoin phrases in the Ejagham language. The coordinator of proper nouns is possible with [ná], as can be observed from the examples below.

17. eyong á yámɔráńńánfúní

Eyongs.m cook fufu con. eru

“Eyong cook fufu and eru”

[na] cannot conjoin more than two nouns in one structure. When there are more than two conjuncts, it is advisable to use commas. The coordinating conjunction must however be overt between the last conjuncts as earlier discussed.

It is also important to know that the coordinator [na] also mean “with”. The difference is only seen at the level of the content. The use of [na] as a conjoint is more general and less restrictive, than when it is use to mean “and” as in English. Let us look at the examples below.

18. ɔdíɔráńńájen ?

You eat fufu with what

“with what did you eat fufu?”

[na] cannot be used to conjoin a sequence of actions or events, hence the ungrammaticality of the following sentences.

\*19. Ayukákɔne kɔnná βen á βennádírán

Ayuks.m Sing s.m song and s.m dance and eat fufu

\*“Ayuks sang and danced and eat fufu”

## 2.3 Conjunction reduction rule

Like many others languages, Ejagham has certain syntactic devices by which syntactic or verbal compactness is archived. The conjunction reduction rule is one of these.

This rule becomes operational on a coordinate construction that exhibits parallel structures. When this rule applies, it deletes identical elements in the parallel structures, observe the examples below.

21. Akoádíeyongádí

Akos.meat Eyongs.m eat

“Ako has eaten and Eyong has eaten”

In example (21) above, the clauses [Akoádí] “Ako has eaten” and [eyong ádí] “Eyong has eaten” are parallel structures. The second occurrence of the identical element can be seen from (22) below.

22. Akoádí, eyongerɔń á dí

Akos.m eat Eáyong evens.m eat

“Mbi has eaten so does Eyong”

## 3. Subordination

Subordination as a concept of hierarchical organization is associated closely with Coordination. One clause is subordinate to another if it depends on it. The dependent clause is called the subordinate clause and the independent clause is called the main clause (matrix clause). Subordinate clauses are usually introduced by subordinators (subordinate conjunctions) such as after, before, because, so that, when, while. eg before we play again we should do our homework. Subordinate clauses in Ejagham are marked by special subordinating morphemes which denote time purpose, conditions and concession. Apart from these special subordinating morphemes, the structure of subordinate clauses is very similar to that of (independent) clauses although the case interaction of tense and aspects may differ in

the sense that the subordinate clause follows the main clause. It is worth noting that its position can also be influenced by the role it plays in linking the main clause to the preceding discourse.

In the section that follows, we examine the various types of subordinate clauses in the language under study by highlighting the markers of subordination and other special syntactic properties of the subordinate clause.

### 3.1 Complement subordinate clauses

The complement subordinate clause serves as a complement to regular subordinating verbs such as [yɛ] “say” [táɲɛ] “refuse” / [kám] “accept” / agree/ believe” [kɛɛ] think/ remember / believe [yɔp] deceive “etc. Consider example (23) below

### 3.2 Purpose and reason subordinate clauses

These clauses provide explanations for the occurrence of a given event, actions or state. They differ in that purpose clauses express a motivating event which must be unrealized at the time of the main event while reason clause express a motivating event which may be realized at the time of the main clause, event The purpose clause is marked by the subordinating morpheme [ntɔɔɛ] in order to/so as to “let us look at the examples below.

24 Ayuk a máɲɛnwɛntɔɔɛntĩ  
 Ayuksmabandon book because money  
 “Ayuk abandoned studies/school because of money”  
 Tíkɲdí βάβά ntɔɔɛɲkíwɔm  
 Futs.m eat quick because s.m wantgo/travel  
 “Iam eating fast because I want to travel”

Tense marking in reason clause depends on the tense of the main clause. Even when not specified, it is understood that the subordinate clause event occur at the same time as the main clause event.

### 3.3 Time subordinate clauses

Time subordinate clauses express temporal sequence relationships between clauses. In Ejagham, time adverbials roundabout fashion using expressions such as “at the time that” “latter than the time that” etc. The adverbial “before” is however expressed using a subordinate clause marked by the morpheme [kɛɲ] .in such constructions the event expressed in the subordinating clause has not yet happened at the time of the event named in the main clause. Thus, there is the sense in which [kɛɲ] clauses are conceptually negative from the point of view of the event in the main clause. The following are some examples of [kɛɲ] clauses.

25 ɲkɛmáményámkɛɲkɛβín  
 Python s.mswallow+T animalbefore.s.m enter bush  
 “The python swallowed the animal before I entered the bush”

26. kɛɲkɛβíntáɲɲkɛm á ményám  
 Before enter bush ready pythons.mswallow animal  
 “Before I entered the bush, the python has already swallowed the animal”.

### 3.4 Conditional subordinate clauses

Conditional subordinate clause in Ejagham can be divided into two broad semantic categories: reality conditionals and imaginative conditionals, reality conditionals express “real” present, habitual or past events. Imaginative conditionals on the other hand, state what might have been or predict what will be in both types, the main clause contains the ordinary conditional mood marker [kɛ] and the subordinate / consequence clause is marked by the special subordinating morpheme [ájɔɛ]

Sentences containing a reality conditional clause usually state basic truth.

27. ájɔɛ á gat ádíɛdítkákú  
 Cons.mdogs.m eat food futs.mvomit  
 ” If a dog feeds too much it will vomit “

28. ájɔɛɛɛɔ kpínwɛntɔɔɛntík,ɛgbɔ ɛmɔ  
 ConNegstudybook hard Futfall exam  
 “ If we don’t study hard , we will fail our exams”

It is important to note that the conditional marker can also be placed at the middle position. In that case the sentence (28) above will look like (29) below

29. tík, ɛgbɔ ɛmɔ ájɔsɛɛɔ kɔ́n wɛtɔ́nɔ  
 Fut fail exam conNegstudy book hard  
 "We will fail the exams if we don't study hard"

### 3.5 Concession subordinate clauses

Concession clauses generally make a concession against which the proposition in the main clause is contrasted. The concession clause is marked in three different ways. In the first method, the concession is preceded by the morpheme *kgbɛ-nɔŋ* ] the concession clause itself can either precede or follow the main clause.

30. *kgbɛ-nɔŋ* Ayuk á rɛɛjãtíká βɛn ɛ βɛn  
 Although Ayuks.mbe with pregnantfuts.mdance  
 "Although Ayuk is pregnant, she will dance"

Sentences must consist of at least one main clause, whereas the number of subordinate clauses is hypothetically without limitations. Long sentences that contain many subordinate clauses are characterized in terms of hypotaxis, the Greek term meaning the grammatical arrangements of unequal constructs (hypo = beneath and taxis = arrangement). Sentences that contain few or no subordinate clauses but that may contain coordinated clauses are characterized in terms of parataxis heads and dependents clause.

### 3.6 HEADS AND DEPENDENTS

In a broader sense, subordination is a relation existing between two syntactic units, whereby, the one unit is subordinate to the other and the latter is superordinate to the former. An adjective that modifies a noun is subordinate to the noun and the noun is superordinate to the adjective, a noun phrase that is the complement of a preposition, is subordinate to the prepositions and the preposition is superordinate to the noun phrase. A prepositional phrase (pp) that modifies a verb phrase is subordinate to the verb phrase and the verb phrase is superordinate to the prepositional phrase. The subordinate unit is called the dependent unit and the superordinate unit the head. Thus, any time two syntactic units are in a head-dependent relationship, subordination is obtained. Consider the following examples in the language under study. The word in bold in each case is dependent on the other word which is its head.

33. **ntitmbi** (here adjective is subordinate to the noun)  
 Badidear  
 34. **kãtsɛ́** (here noun is subordinate to preposition)  
 "for fun"  
 35. **yimniɛ** (here the Pronoun is subordinate to verb)  
 "do it"

Subordination in this sense should be compared with Coordination. Two units or more are coordinated to each other if there is hierarchical relation between them and they have equal functional status for example "black and brown dog with love and patience clean the bathroom and the kitchen". Note that while the coordinated units are not organized hierarchically, they are organized linearly

## 3. CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, this paper focused on coordination and subordination in the Ejagham language. We described the markers of coordination, their syntactic distribution; and their context of usage. We also talked the types of coordination, specifically the overt and covert, we described the four coordinators which the language uses to conjoin phrases and clauses.

Finally, we looked at subordination and discovered that it is marked by special subordinating morphemes to denote time purpose, conditions, and concessions.

The language under study makes use of five types of subordinate clauses and their various subordinating morphemes. This morphemes are do not have specific positions within the clause. . Finally we discussed heads and dependency as far as subordination is concern

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