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15 Sentence-level syntax

There is morphological marking in subordinate and interrogative clauses, and a discussion of sentence-level syntax is needed to understand these morphemes. In this chapter, we discuss types of clauses in sentences (15.1), coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (15.2), interrogative structures (15.3), as well as focus (15.4).

15.1 Clause combinations

Clauses may be nuclear (main, independent), pre-nuclear (dependent clause preceding a nuclear clause), or post-nuclear (dependent clause following a nuclear clause).

As in (1a), foregrounded nuclear clauses of narrative texts most commonly use infinitive verbs. However, in non-fiction narratives, a completive verb is also common, as shown in (b).

(1a) āld̪=á   ɛ̄   **dɔ̄ɔ̀s-s**   ɛ̄   **bā̪d-d̪**   bāɛ̀=n   ɛ́   sālā̪d=à
      fox=   3sN   start-INF   3sN   break-INF   jug=DEF   GP   hyena.
      DEF   GEN=DEF
      'Fox punctured a hole in Hyena's jug.' (Nyee21)

(b)   ɟā̪dɛ̀ɛ̀r=ā   **wár-sá**   kāŋ   înī=n   ɛ̄   mā̪dā
      Jader=DEF   carried-COMP   group   3sPs=DEF   with   big.size
      'Jadar led his very big group.' (Fand23-24)

Pre-nuclear clauses are introduced with subordinate conjunctions, the most common of which is the conjunction *é gārá* 'when' which often introduces tail-head linkage. In the second line of (2), the subordinate clause refers to 'an arrival at the well' implied by the previous nuclear clause, before continuing with the next nuclear clause in the third line. In this way, the subordinate clause links new information with old information contained in the subordinate clause. The verbs of tail-head linkage are most commonly completive verbs, but can also be incomplete or past-continuous.

(2)   ɛ̄   dɔ̄ɔ̀s-s   ɛ̄   wāɟ-ɟ   d̪ūmùùn   wāā=lg   ā
      3sN   start-INF   3sN   go-INF   towards   water.source=in   SBJV
      'He set out for the well in order to

mā-ḍ = έ   fɛ̃gg.   έ gārá   líɟ-ɟ = ì̀   wāā = lg = έ,
drink-   water   GP when   /léɟ/went-   water =
SBJV = IPF   COMP = SBO1   in = SBO
get a drink. When he arrived at the well,

ɛ̄   gɔ̄ms-ɔ́ggɔ̄   fɛ̃gg = á   ɛ̄   nāā   έ   fɔ̄l   ṭɔ́ḍ-ì.
3sN   found-   water =   3sN   lay.   GP   hole. down-
         D.COMP   DEF   INCP   GEN   3sO
he discovered that the water was very far down in the well.' (Goat2-4)

Post-nuclear clauses are introduced by a subordinate conjunction as in (3a) or by a subjunctive verb as in (b). In (b), three subjunctive verbs in three separate post-nuclear clauses are introduced by the subjunctive particle *ā* and give the purpose of the nuclear clause. A further subjunctive clause (*ā māḍé fɛ̃gg* 'to drink water') is found in the first two lines of (2). Clauses may also be embedded such as the clause *fɛ̃gg-á ɛ̄ nāā έ fɔ̄l ṭɔ́ḍ-ì* 'water lay down in the hole' of the final line of (2) which is a complement of the verb *gɔ̄ms-ɔ́ggɔ̄* 'found'.

(3a)   á   wīr-ɔ̄n   áfáḍ   mān   ṭáḍ   ṭὲ,
       1sN   /wīr/slaughter-CONT.P   blood   certain   down   here
       'I am making a sacrifice here because

       έ kɔ̄rá   έ   mɔ́sí   néé   nɔ́r-r-ɔ̄n   ṭὲ.
       GP because   GP   insect this   /nár/drool-CAUS-CONT.N   here
       because this insect drools here.' (Jooj9-10)

(b)   ānɛ̄nḍá   ɛ̄   dɔ̄ɔ̀s-   ɛ̄   bàg-g   áɲέ = n
       then   3pN   start-INF 3pN   grab-INF   elephant = DEF
       'Then they elicited the help of an elephant

       ā   gɔ̀l-ḍ = îggɔ̀n   έ   ūfú = n   ṭáḍ
       SBJV   /gàl/ram-SBJV.3sN = 3pD   GP   Tabaldi.tree = DEF down
       in order to break down the Tabaldi tree for them

       ā   gâr-rā   ā   nám-ḍá   ɲālg   έ   ɲɛ̄ɛ̄rɛ̄mὰ = n.
       SBJV   be.able-   SBJV   eat-SBJV.3sN   children   GP   devil.GEN =
                SBJV.3sN   DEF
       so as to eat the nyeerma offspring.' (Nyee8-10)

15.2 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are a further lexical category, introducing either nuclear or non-nuclear (subordinate) clauses. The coordinate conjunctions of (4) are found to introduce nuclear clauses. Some references in texts from chapter 17 are listed for the

conjunctions. In addition, it is also possible to juxtapose nuclear clauses without any conjunction.

Table 60: Coordinate conjunctions

ɔ̀	'and'	Nyee4, 27, Fand13, Assa1, 3, 9, 12
ḍè	'then, since'	Fand20, 22, Womn11
ṭāén	'then'	Fand28, Minj13
ānēnḍá	'then, therefore'	Minj12, Womn11, 17, 24
énná	'therefore, thus'	Fand5
mìnṭààðéɛ́	'thereafter'	Thng4
gɔ̂l	'in that way'	Nyee28
lɔ̂ŋ	'then, until'	Goat6, 12, 16, Nyee15, Thng10

The conjunctions *ḍè* 'then, since' and *lɔ̂ŋ* 'then, until' are analyzed as coordinate conjunctions, since subordinate marking in the clause never occurs with them. The conjunctions *ānēnḍá* 'therefore' and *ḍè* 'then, since' are shown in (4c); the conjunction *lɔ̂ŋ* 'then, until' is shown in (5e).

(4) **Coordinate conjunctions**

(a)
ɟìnná	wɔ̄-īn = îìggə̀	tú = í	ɛ́	kɔ̄rá
that	go-INCP = IPF	out = SBO	GP	because

'They remarry because

(b)
ɔ̀ðɔ̄ɔ̄gg = ɔ́	nà	ɔ́ŋ	tè	ɟīs-ə̀n = îìggə̀	bɛ̀ɛ̀nāḍ = ɛ́ɛ́ = n.
women =	REL	bad	here	/ɟìs/make-	wrongdoing =
DEF				CONT.N = 3pA	SBO = DEF

bad women (their first wives) make them do wrong.

(c)
ānēnḍá,	bìì	bìì-ḍə̀	bɛ̀ɛ̀nāḍ = á	àwḍàmàlɔ̄	**ḍè**
therefore	/bìɟ/let.	/bɛ̀ɛ̀/say-	wrongdoing =	please	since
	IMP	IMP.PL	DEF		

So let us please stop the wrongdoing since

(d)
bɛ̀ɛ̀nāḍ = á	ṭél	ná	ṭál-ḍ áāgg = ɛ́	ɲə́m = ì	wá.
wrongdoing =	God	REL	/ṭál/create-COMP	/ɲám/want.	not
DEF			1pA = RDM	INCP = 3sAM	

God who created us doesn't want us to do wrong.' (Womn9-12)

The subordinate conjunction *wàr* 'but' of table 61 has only been attested to introduce post-nuclear clauses, but the other conjunctions of table 61 introduce pre-nuclear and post-nuclear clauses.

Table 61: Subordinate conjunctions

é gārá	'when, while'	Goat3, 7, 17, Fand 1, 7, 8, 15
é kɔ̄rá	'because'	Jooj9, Assa5, Tifa6, Womn9
(ār)	'if'	Goat14, 15, Fand20, Thng21, Womn21
wàr	'but'	Nyee13

The subordinate marking in the clause occurs along with these conjunctions as a clitic on the verb, or clause finally, or both. It is more common for the conjunction *ār* 'if' to be absent from the clause than to be present, although there is subordinate marking regardless. As shown in 10.7, the verb-final subordinate clitic attached in 'if' clauses differs in tone from the clitic attached to verbs of other subordinate clauses.

In (5c), the conjunction *wàr* 'but' occurs along with the verb-final subordinate clitic *=ɩ̄* (SBO3). In (d), the conjunction *é gārá* 'when' occurs along with the verb-final subordinate clitic *=ɩ̌* (SBO1) and the clause-final subordinate clitic *=É* (SBO). In (4a), the conjunction *é kɔ̄rá* 'because' occurs along with the clause-final subordinate clitic *=É* on *bèènād̠=éé=n* 'wrongdoing=SBO=DEF' where the definite clitic *=n* for vowel-final stems is also attached.

(5)   **Subordinating conjunctions**

(a)   ɛ̄   dɔ̄ɔ̀s-s   ɛ̄   bàgg   kár = á   d̠í
      3pN   /d̠ɔ̀ɔ̀s/start- 3pN   /bàg/grab.   wild.cow =   also
               INF   SBJV   DEF
      'They also elicited the help of the buffalo

(b)   ɛ̄   gɔ̀l-d̠ = ɩ̂n   d̠-ɛ́ɛ̄n   ná   t̠ád̠   d̠í,
      3sN   /gàl/ram-   PP-3sO   REL   down   also
               SBJV.3sN = 3sD
      in order to break it down for them,

(c)   **wàr**   ā   gâr-rā   ɛ̄   gɔ̀l-d̠ = ɩ̌   d̠-ɛ́ɛ̄n   ná   t̠ád̠   wá.
      but   SBJV   /gâr/able- 3sN   /gàl/ram-   PP-3sO   REL   down   not
                        SBJV.3sN   SBJV.3pN =
                                             SBO3
      but she was not able to break it down.

(d)   **é gārá**   kǎhs-s = ɩ̌   ūfú = n = í,   ɛ̄   dɔ̄ɔ̀s-s
      GP when   /kɔ́n/strike-   hijliij.tree =   3sN   /d̠ɔ̀ɔ̀s/start-INF
                   COMP = SBO1   DEF = SBO
      When she struck the tree,

(e) lôŋ   ɛ̄   wāɟ-ɟ   sím   ūfú   ɔ̄ɔ̄ŋ.
    until   3sN   /wāɟ/go-INF   down   tree   body
    (her horns) went deep into the tree.' (Nyee11-15)

15.3 Interrogatives

Questions are constructed using the question marker *à* or an interrogative pronoun. Only the interrogative pronouns of (6b-e) agree in number with the noun phrase which they replace. Some interrogative pronouns have a marked form when they replace words which occur in an uncommon position in the clause, but are otherwise unmarked. Other interrogative pronouns only have one form regardless of its position in the clause. When any of the interrogative pronouns are pre-verbal, the clause-final subordinate clitic $=\acute{E}$ (SBO) of 7.7 and 8.3.8 attaches sentence-finally. When an interrogative pronoun replacing an adverb is pre-verbal, the verb-final subordinate clitic $=\breve{\imath}$ (SBO1) of 10.7 is attached to the verb.

(6) **Interrogatives**

	Unmarked		Marked		
	SG	PL	SG	PL	
(a)	à	à			QM
(b)	ŋān	ŋɔ̄nɔ́ə̀ḍə̀			'who'
(c)	ŋānán	ŋānáāḍán			'for whom'
(d)	ɛ́ ŋān	ɛ́ ŋānáāḍ		ɛ́ ŋɔ̄nə̀	'whose'
(e)	ɲíí	ɲíígg	ɲíīnā	ɲííggə̀	'what'
(f)	ná īsíīn	nà īsíīn			'which'
(g)	tā īsí	ṭā īsí			'which'
(h)	ḍə̀ì		ḍə̀yīn		'when'
(i)	(fān) ḍá	fān ḍáēn			'where'
(j)	(fān) īsí				'how'
(k)	ɔ̄rɔ́ŋ				'why'

In the example questions to follow, typical answers to the questions are in parentheses. The examples are all with singular interrogatives; plural interrogatives take similar constructions.

As discussed in 14.6.6, questions with yes/no responses have the question marker *à* sentence-finally.

(7) ɟāā=n   bánḍāl   ṭír-sɔ́   ṭɔ́ɔ́   ná   sèggār=ɛ́ɛ́n   **à**
    person=DEF   weak   kill-COMP cow   REL   strong=RDM   QM
    'Did the weak person kill the strong cow?' (Yes./No.)

The interrogative pronoun *ŋān* 'who' takes the place of animate nouns in subject case.[39] It can be pre-verbal as in (8a) with the clause-final subordinate clitic =*É*, or post-verbal as in (b) with the agented passive clitic =*Ê* on the verb.

(8a) **ŋān**   ṱír-sɔ́   ṱɔ́ɔ́=n=**ɛ́**   (b)   ṱɔ́ɔ́=n   ṱír-s=**ɪ̂**   **ŋān**
     who   kill-COMP   cow=   cow=DEF   kill-   who
                      DEF=SBO   COMP=PAS.A
     'Who killed the cow?' (The person killed the cow.)

The interrogative pronoun *ŋānân* 'for/to whom' takes the place of animate indirect objects.

(9)   ɉāā=n   ṱír-sɔ́   ṱɔ́ɔ́=n   **ŋānân**
     person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow=DEF   for whom
     'For whom did the person kill the cow?' (The person killed the cow for his uncle.)

When following the general preposition *ɛ́* (GP), the interrogative pronoun *ɛ́ ŋān* 'whose' takes the place of possessed animate nouns. It can be post-verbal as in (10a) or pre-verbal as in (b). In pre-verbal position as in (b), the agented passive clitic =*Ê* is attached to the verb, the post-verbal agent is in genitive case, and the clause-final subordinate clitic =*É* is attached to the agent.

(10a)   ɉāā=n   ṱír-sɔ́   ṱɔ́ɔ́   **ɛ́**   **ŋān**
      person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow   GP   whom
      'Whose cow did the person kill?' (The person killed his uncle's cow.)

(b)   ṱɔ́ɔ́   **ɛ́**   **ŋān**   ṱír-s=**ɪ̂**   ɉáà=n=**ɛ̄**
    cow   GP   whom   kill-COMP=PAS.A   person.GEN=DEF=SBO
    'Whose cow did the person kill?' (The person killed his uncle's cow.)

The interrogative pronoun *ɲíí* 'what' takes the place of non-human nouns. When taking the place of a noun object, it is unmarked post-verbally as in (11a), but has a marked form in (b) where the agented passive clitic =*Ê* is attached to the verb and the clause-final subordinate clitic is attached to the agent.

(11a)   ɉāā=n   ṱír-sɔ́   **ɲíí**   (b)   **ɲíínā**   ṱír-s=**ɪ̂**   ɉáà=n=**ɛ̄**
      person=DEF   kill-COMP   what   what   kill-COMP   person.GEN
                                            =PAS.A   =DEF=SBO
      'What did the person kill?' (The person killed a cow.)

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[39] Because of limited data, the pronoun is not presented when taking the place of an animate noun object.

The relativizer *ná* along with the interrogative pronoun *īsíīn* 'which' takes the place of a relative clause. When taking the place of a relative clause modifying a subject, it can be pre-verbal as in (12a) or post-verbal as in (b). When taking the place of a relative clause modifying an object, it can be post-verbal as in (c) or pre-verbal in (d). Another way of replacing a relative clause is with the copula *ṭā* and the interrogative pronoun *īsí* 'how' as in (e).

(12a) ɟāā   **ná**   **īsíīn**   ṭír-sɔ́   ṭ5̄ɔ̀=n=**ɛ̄**
      person   REL   which   kill-COMP   cow.GEN=DEF=SBO
      'Which person killed the cow?' (The weak person killed the cow.)

(b) ṭ5̄ɔ́=n   ṭír-s=**ī̀**   ɟāà   **ná**   **īsíīn**
    cow=DEF   kill-COMP=PAS.A   person.GEN   REL   which
    'Which person killed the cow?' (The weak person killed the cow.)

(c) ɟāā=n   ṭír-sɔ́   ṭ5̄ɔ́   **ná**   **īsíīn**
    person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow   REL   which
    'Which cow did the person kill?' (The person killed the strong cow.)

(d) ṭ5̄ɔ́   **ná**   **īsíīn**   ṭír-s=**ī̀**   ɟáà=n=**ɛ̄**
    cow   REL   which   kill-COMP=PAS.A   person.GEN=DEF=SBO
    'Which cow did the person kill?' (The person killed the strong cow.)

(e) ṭ5̄ɔ́=n   **ṭā**   **īsí**   ṭír-s=**ī̀**   ɟáà=n=**ɛ̄**
    cow=DEF   COP   how   kill-COMP=PAS.A   person.GEN=DEF=SBO
    'Which cow did the person kill?' (The person killed the strong cow.)

The interrogative pronoun *ḍɔ̀ì* 'when' takes the place of adverbs of time. It is unmarked post-verbally as in (13a), but has a marked form in (b). As in (13b), when an interrogative pronoun replacing an adverb is pre-verbal, the verb-final subordinate clitic =ĭ (SBO1) used on 'when' clauses in 10.7 is attached to the verb *ṭír-sɔ̄* 'kill-COMP'.

(13a) ɟāā=n   ṭír-sɔ́   ṭ5̄ɔ́=n   **ḍɔ̀ì**
      person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow=DEF   when
      'When did the person kill the cow?'
      (The person killed the cow yesterday.)

(b) **ḍɔ̀yīn**   ɟāā=n   ṭír-s=**ĭ**   ṭ5̄ɔ̀=n=**ɛ̄**
    when   person=DEF   kill-COMP=SBO1   cow.GEN=DEF=SBO
    'When did the person kill the cow?'
    (The person killed the cow yesterday.)

Similarly, the interrogative pronoun *(fãn) ḏá* 'where' is a substitute for adverbs of place. It is unmarked post-verbally as in (14a), but has a marked form in (b), again with the verb-final subordinate clitic *=ỉ* (SBO1) attached to the verb *ṱ̃r-sā* 'kill-COMP'.

(14a)   ɟāā=n   ṱ̃r-só   ṱ́ɔ́=n   **(fãn)**   ḏá
        person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow=DEF   towards   where
        'Where did the person kill the cow?'
        (The person killed the cow near the house.)

(b)   **fãn**   **ḏáēn**   ɟāā=n   ṱ̃r-s=ỉ   ṱɔ̄ɔ̀=n=ɛ̄
      towards   where   person=DEF   kill-COMP=SBO1   cow.GEN=DEF=SBO
      'Where did the person kill the cow?'
      (The person killed the cow near the house.)

The interrogative pronoun *(fãn) īsí* 'how' is a substitute for adverbs of manner. The interrogative pronoun *ɔ̄rɔ́ŋ* 'why' is a substitute for other verbal adjuncts.

(15a)   ɟāā=n   ṱ̃r-só   ṱ́ɔ́=n   **(fãn)**   īsí
        person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow=DEF   towards   how
        'How did the person kill the cow?'
        (The person killed the cow with force.)

(b)   ɟāā=n   ṱ̃r-só   ṱ́ɔ́=n   **ɔ̄rɔ́ŋ**
      person=DEF   kill-COMP   cow=DEF   why
      'Why did the person kill the cow?'
      (The person killed the cow because it was ill.)

15.4 Focus

Focus is constructed by fronting the constituent which the speaker deems as the most important bit of information for the clause. Both subjects and objects can be fronted in focus.

Normally, prepositional phrases used as adjunct conjunctions such as *ɛ̄ mūn náán* 'at that time' occur sentence-initially or following a conjunction.

(16a)   ɔ̀   **ɛ̄**   **mūn**   **náá=n,**
        and   with   time   that=DEF
        'At that time,

(b)   bāárg=á   ŋáɔ́-ǎ̀ n   ɲā-lg   nà   ɔ̄n-g=ì
      Baggara=DEF   /ŋáw/search.for-CONT.P   girl-PL   REL   young-PL=RDM
      the Baggara (people group) were kidnapping young girls.' (Minj1-2)

However, subjects are brought into focus when placed before such phrases, as in (17). In this concluding sentence of a narrative where a fox and hyena try throughout to capture and eat him, the devil creature is fronted in order to emphasize him as being the victor.

(17) **ɲéérèmà = n**   έ   gāránḏá   ɛ̄   áḏ-ḏá   gāɲà
       devil = DEF   GP   that.time   3sN   became-SBJV.3sN   laughing
       'The nyeerma, at that time, went on laughing.' (Nyee34)

In the first line of the *Fandi* text, the main participant is marked as being salient, or most important, by fronting it. The noun subject *Fɔ́nḍì-n* which normally follows the subordinate conjunction *é gārá* 'when' is sentence-initial.

(18) **fɔ́nḍì = n**   έ gārá   ḏàɔ̀-s = ɔ̃   mɔ̀rāā-gg = ɛ̂ = nέ
       Fandi = DEF   GP when   fight- COMP = IPF   government-PL = ACM = SBO
       'When Fandi fought with the government, . . ' (Fand1)

Objects are brought into focus by moving them to a pre-verbal position. The object *mii-n* 'chicken' in (19) is out of its normal post-verbal position to emphasize that it is the 'chicken' being thrown away and not the 'goat'.

(19) **mǐí = n**   á   gàn   ṭú
       chicken = DEF   1sN   throw.INCP   out
       'The chicken I am throwing away.' (Jafr11)

In (20), the relative clause, describing a certain group of women, and functioning as the recipient of the transitive verb /gàf/ 'give', is brought to the beginning of the sentence. The meaning is 'It is those kinds of women and not others whom God blesses.'

(20) **nà   ân   tɔ̄-yɔ̀gg = ì**   ṭél   gɔ̀f = ɲ̃ggɔ̀n   ɟègg
       REL   stay.INCP   doors-theirs = RDM   God   gives.INCP = 3pD   things
       'To those who stay in their homes, God gives them things.' (Womn13)

Pre-verbal objects are emphasized when there is a post-verbal subject and agented passive clitic attached to the verb. The sentence of (21) is the concluding remark of a personal story where a creature repeatedly tries to attack the narrator and other participants. The construction emphasizes the outcome of the object *ɟāām* 'someone' ('no one' with negation).

(21) ɟāām   kɔ́ɔ̀m-s = ī   ḍ-έɛ̄n   wá.
       someone   /káàm/bothered.CAUS-COMP = PAS.A   PP-3sO   not
       'No one was bothered by it.' (Thng25)