

# **CONCEPTUAL AND GRAMMATICAL LINKING OF CLAUSES IN ASSAMESE AND MISING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

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# Conclusion

In this thesis, we investigated the grammar and meaning of clause-linking from a Cognitive Linguistics perspective. We focused on clauses as linguistic representations of real-world situations. These situations are not isolated but exist in relation to one another conceptually. Consequently, clauses, as their linguistic counterparts, are grammatically connected based on their underlying conceptual relationships. These relationships encompass various types, including sequential, causal, contrastive, evidential, modification, conditional, and complementary relations. To convey these conceptual meanings, clauses are linked grammatically through juxtaposition, coordination, subordination, and complementation. Each clause-linking type represents a specific construal chosen by the speaker, reflecting their unique conceptualization or perception of the situations involved.

**In Chapter 1**, we discussed fundamental principles of clause-linking in cognitive linguistics, including proximity-distance, sequentiality, figure-ground alignment, profiling, and perspectiveness (encompassing vantage point and viewing arrangement). Applying these cognitive principles, we then analyzed the conceptual import of the four major clause-linking types, supplementing our discussion with simplified adapted diagrams from Langacker's works. Furthermore, our discussion highlighted the non-absolute nature of these clause-linking types, which often exhibit transitional characteristics, blending features from multiple categories.

**In Chapter 2**, we presented the meaning and grammar of juxtaposition and coordination in Assamese and Mising. We often conceptualize real-life situations as interconnected, leading us to juxtapose sentences to express these connections or coordinate them using overt coordinators to explicitly mark the relationship between the situations involved. Coordination is typically employed when simple juxtaposition is insufficient to convey

the intended meaning, requiring the use of an additional element, the coordinator, to establish the connection between the two situations.

Our discussion focused on the conceptual relationships between situations in Assamese and Mising, as expressed through juxtaposition. We then explored the coordinators employed by these languages to convey such relationships, delving into their semantic properties and highlighting their ability to forge connections that simple juxtaposition might not be able to facilitate. Some of these coordinators are independent lexical words, while others are bound suffixes. Building on these coordinators, we examined various finer-grained coordination types, along with their corresponding semantic properties.

Our research demonstrates that Assamese employs the neutral coordinator *aru* to coordinate phrases and clauses, whereas Mising employs *oddokkɜ*, which carries a temporal sense and is therefore restricted to coordinating clauses. Both languages exhibit bi-syndetic coordination through emphatic markers. Additionally, Assamese employs the classifier *-tu* for emphasis and clause coordination.

In the context of simple disjunction, Assamese employs the coordinator *ba*, which assigns equal importance to both choices. In contrast, *naiba* and *ot<sup>h</sup>oba* do not exhibit complete coequality. Mising, on the other hand, employs the coordinators *manjom* and *ma:milo* for simple disjunction. Furthermore, Assamese employs the bi-syndetic coordinator *hoi..nohoi*.

Assamese possesses a neutral adversative coordinator *kintu*, which can coordinate opposite adversatives. However, its other adversative coordinators are non-neutral and purely counter-expectative. Mising has two adversative coordinators, *ɜdɜmpidaggom* and *ɜdɜmpige:la*, which are also purely counter-expectative and cannot coordinate opposite adversatives.

Assamese often seems to prefer juxtaposition to coordination, and Mising even more so, as is evident with natural combinations.<sup>1</sup> As is pointed out in Mithun (1988, p. 332), such

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<sup>1</sup> The tendency to relatively mark less is also evident in what Walchli (2005) termed as *natural combination*, i.e., combinations that form a conceptual unit (See Mithun, 1988, p. 332).

juxtaposed natural combinations may often yield idiomatic meanings as is evidenced by the juxtaposed natural combination *lora-burha* ‘young and old’ in Assamese, which is used by Lakshminath Bezbaruah, one of the forerunners of modern Assamese literature, in his much acclaimed historical play *Joymoti Kunwari* (2014, pp. 366-428) to describe Dalimi’s innocent character: *lora-burha kak koi Dalimi nubuze tak* (‘lora burha kak ko-i Dalimi na-buz-e tak’ ‘boy old man whom tell-3 Dalimi NEG-understand-3 that’ = ‘For Dalimi all people are alike, whether old or young’).

Furthermore, while natural combinations such as ‘mother and father,’ ‘cats and dogs,’ and ‘read and write,’ are grammatically coordinated in English, in Assamese and Mising, they are often simply juxtaposed, as seen in examples like *ma-deuta* ‘mother-father,’ *kukur-mekuri* ‘cats and dogs,’ *lik<sup>h</sup>a-porha* ‘write-read,’ in Assamese, and *ta:to-ja:jo* ‘my grandparents,’ *iki-mikuri* ‘dogs and cats,’ *joka-kampɜ* ‘black and white,’ in Mising. Mising further exhibits a preference for juxtaposition in coordinating a-temporal combinations, where the temporal relationship between clauses is irrelevant. However, further investigation is needed to conclusively establish the validity of this claim.

We also showed in the chapter how asymmetrical coordination, where the two clauses have a figure-ground relationship, can lend itself to subordination. To facilitate a clearer understanding, we have created simplified diagrams illustrating each type of coordination in Assamese and Mising, drawing inspiration from Langacker’s work.

In **Chapter 3**, we explored the meaning and grammar of adverbial subordination in Assamese and Mising, with a focus on modification relationships between situations. Our analysis encompassed the adverbial subordinators used in these languages, including their unique meanings. Among these subordinators, a distinction can be made between free morphemes and bound morphemes. The bound morpheme subordinators are primarily composed of non-finite markers in their respective languages. Functionally, these subordinators are either “pure subordinators” or postpositions, each type exhibiting distinct semantic and structural properties. Postpositional subordinators invariably follow reified events, analogous to the positional relationships between prepositions/postpositions and nouns. In Mising, these events are often marked by the habitual marker *-dag*, as the habitual aspect implies an abstraction, rather than a specific, temporally-bound action. This abstraction effectively a-temporalizes the action. Thus,

each of these subordinators possesses distinct semantic properties, imparting unique meanings to the clauses they mark.

Mising seems to prefer simplicity, often using juxtaposition instead of more complex sentence structures, as seen in purpose clauses with advisory intent.

Coming to manner clauses in adverbial subordination, which constitute a distinct phenomenon, wherein the subordinate clause functions as an integral component of the main clause, akin to complement clauses. The primary distinction lies in the syntactic role of the subordinate clause: in complementation, it serves as an object, whereas in manner subordination, it serves as a manner adverbial. Manner subordination occupies an intermediary position between adverbial subordination and complementation, exhibiting characteristics of both categories.

To facilitate a clearer understanding of the conceptual hierarchies between situations in subordination, we created simplified diagrams illustrating adverbial subordination by free morphemes and bound morphemes in Assamese and Mising, based on Langacker's original diagrams.

In **Chapter 4**, we delved into the intricacies of relative subordination in Assamese and Mising, examining its grammatical and semantic properties. Building on the discussion of modification relationships in Chapter 3, we explored relative subordination as a specific type of modification, wherein one situation modifies the main subject of another.

Our analysis revealed diverse grammatical structures and semantic functions in Assamese and Mising, including finite and non-finite relative subordination forms. The finite form is primarily restrictive in function, with overt relativizers. Both Assamese and Mising has at least 3 such restrictive relativizers in their respective languages, viz. *zi*, *zar*, *zak* and *okko*, *s3:kom*, *s3kk3*.

On the other hand, the non-finite form is descriptive in function and is in nominalized form. We have called them “middle cases” in our thesis, i.e., existing somewhere between the restrictive and the non-restrictive form. It is not marked by any relativizer.

Non-finite relative clauses and non-finite complement clauses share a similarity in form, as both are non-finite. In both Assamese and Mising, non-finite complement clauses, particularly those introduced by the complementizers *-a* and *-nam*, respectively, are followed by a head noun.

We also noted the use of juxtaposition as a means of relative subordination in Assamese and Mising, which is primarily non-restrictive in function. In informal speech, both Assamese and Mising employ the nominalized form to relativize or modify the head noun.

In **Chapter 5**, we examined complementation as a clause-linking strategy in Assamese and Mising, based on the notion that grammatical clause-linking reflects conceptual connections between situations. Complementation enables one situation to complete the sense of another, with complement clauses providing essential information to the main clause.

A fundamental aspect of human communication is narrating or communicating the utterances of others. Finite complementation, in particular, facilitates the narration of quoted speech, often occurring with verbs of cognition and communication, such as knowing, saying, believing, and thinking. This is attributable to the fact that finite complement clauses report on the content of speech, thought or belief of somebody. Their primary functional is quotational. Assamese has at least two and Mising at least one such finite quotational complementizer in their respective languages.

In Assamese, the complementizer *ze* exhibits metonymic quotative properties, as it references a specific quote that has been previously heard, known, stated, or mentioned. On the other hand, *buli* in Assamese and *ʒmna* in Mising are purely quotational, composed of the verb roots *bul* ‘say’ and *ʒm* ‘say’ with the non-finite markers *-i* in Assamese and *-nam* in Mising, respectively. Evidence that *buli* and *ʒmna* are in fact quotational is that they can serve as quotatives in their own right, independent of their complementizer function.

In contrast, non-finite complementation is more closely integrated with the main clause, assuming a characteristic object-like function. Non-finite complement clauses are non-

tensed, lacking a typical subject, and primarily expresses the main clause subject's direct experiences or perceptions or emotions. Another fundamental experience of human life is the expression of personal preferences, dislikes and firsthand experiences. Non-finite complementation provides a grammatical way of conveying such subjective experiences, allowing speakers to articulate their individual perspectives and emotions. Consequently, non-finite complementation co-occurs with main clauses featuring verbs of perception (e.g., 'I saw her coming this way'), emotion ('I love to swim'), and volition ('I want her to come'), which serve to express subjective experiences, emotions and sensory experiences.

The non-finite complementizers in Assamese and Mising are, in fact non-finite markers in their respective languages. We provided an in-depth examination of each of these complementizers, highlighting their distinct semantic properties. We also found that in rapid informal speech in Mising, the root verb itself, assumes a non-finite function, appearing in its bare, un-inflected form without any complementizer affixed to it.

The chapter also revealed the syntactic parallelism that exists between non-finite complementation structures introduced by the complementizers *-a* in Assamese and *-nam* in Mising, which embed non-finite relative clauses inside them.

Relative clauses, by virtue of modifying the head noun, inherently possess an adjective-like quality, as they attribute specific qualities to the noun. Similarly, complement clauses followed by a head noun must also exhibit adjective-like properties. Given that adjectives and nouns share categorical membership, it logically follows that complement clauses followed by a head noun must assume a more noun-like, or reified, character. This is particularly evident in complement clauses marked by the complementizers *-a* in Assamese and *-nam* in Mising, exhibiting a higher degree of reification, and in turn showcasing structural similarity to non-finite relative clauses.

Mising, being a spoken language with limited formal usage, lacks a specific complementizer like *ze* in Assamese for formal quotation. Instead, it uses simple juxtaposition to convey quotations, particularly involving the sayings of esteemed individuals. This preference towards juxtaposition is also observed in purpose clauses with advisory intent, suggesting a broader tendency towards simplicity in Mising

discourse. This linguistic simplicity of the Mising language may be attributed to the social dynamics of the speech community, which is characterized by a close knit and simple societal structure. This cultural context may have influenced the development of a linguistic system that favours straightforward and uncomplicated communication.

Our analysis has demonstrated that these clause-linking types are not absolute, but rather exhibit a degree of fluidity, often lending themselves to one another to form a continuum. This further reinforces the cognitive notion that linguistic categories are inherently fuzzy and transactional, rather than being rigidly defined.

Therefore, clause-linking constitutes a fundamental aspect of human communication, enabling us to articulate our experiences and perceptions of the world. This phenomenon is rooted in the cognitive linguistics premise that linguistic form is, to a significant extent, determined by its meaning. Consequently, grammatical structure is inextricably linked to conceptual meaning.

Future research endeavours will entail an in-depth comparative analysis of the discourse functions associated with the four types of clause-linking in Assamese and Mising, which would provide a deeper understanding of how Assamese and Mising speakers construct meaning through clausal-linking. However, the successful execution of such a study necessitates the development of comprehensive, annotated digital corpora for both languages, which are currently lacking.