From Clause Combining to Discourse Structuring:

Coherence in Ob-Ugric narratives

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Clause combining and in particular the connection between two clauses is well documented for the Uralic languages: both functional and according to their relationship (co-ranking, i.e. coordination and clause-chaining, i.e. subordination). Clause combining is not only about combining clauses into sentences but as well into paragraphs and ultimately into the structuring of a discourse[1]. This aspect is also recently gaining attention for Uralic languages (Bakró-Nagy, Laakso & Skribnik 2022).

Coherence[2] can be created at three different levels: grammatic, thematic and pragmatic (Brinker 2000). Narratives are particularly suitable for the analysis of coherence-creating clause combining.

The coherence-creating function of adverbial clauses is well known: subordinate and matrix clause thus can be regarded as *margin* and *event line*, comparable to margin and nucleus of sentences according to Longacre (Shopen 2007: 269f, 372). Bridging Linkage Constructions are particularly noteworthy in this context:

Northern Mansi (Ob-Ugric)

(1) *sʲopər axt toul*   *ojka*   *ta*   **mowint-i**
capercaillie crop_of_a_bird old man   DEM   **laugh-PRS[3SG]**
'Old Man Wood Grouse Crop laughs.'
mowint-ime-t   *xowt*   *taːl-n*   *peːl-we-s*
laugh-CVB-3SG   fir   needle-DLAT prick-PASS-PST[3SG]
'While he was laughing, he got pricked by a fir needle.'[3]

In the so-called repeating type of Bridging Linkage, as example (1) illustrates, the Bridging Clause represents the margin as a subordinate clause and recapitulates the content of the preceding main clause (Reference Clause). The event line continues with new information in its following matrix clause (Guérin 2019). Some additive co-ranking strategies can also be viewed as providing coherence with regard to these aspects:

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[1] *monologue discourse* after Longacre (Shopen 2007)

[2] I understand coherence as „underlying organizing structure" according to Tannen 1984 and cohesion as „one factor contributing to coherence" (Tannen 1984: xiv)

[3] OUDB Northern Mansi Corpus. Text ID 1232: 12-13 http://www.oudb.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/?cit=1232

Kazym Khanty (Ob-Ugric)

(2a) *ɬaːjəm*   *aːɬɛmə-s*   *naːŋk*   **iɬi seːβər-ti**   *pit-s-əɬe*
      axe   lift-PST[3SG]   larch   **cut_down-INF**   start-PST-SG<3SG
      'She quickly lifted an axe and started to chop down the larch.'

(2b) **seːβər-s-əɬe**   **seːβər-s-əɬe**   *βeːβɬi*   *pit-əs*
      cut-PST-SG<3SG   **cut-PST-SG<3SG**   frail   become-PST[3SG]
      'She chopped and chopped and got tired.'[4]

The first two clauses in example (2b) recapitulate the action of (2a) in a similar way to a Bridging Linkage Construction. The following clause contains new information and thus continues the event line.

Another current topic in research is the so-called pre-mirative context (Skribnik 2023): this refers to specific coordinating sequences of clauses that consist of a verb of motion and a subsequent verb of perception. It is followed by new information, often with a mirative reading, which also corresponds to the structuring in margin and event line:

Eastern Mansi (Ob-Ugric)

(3) *kom*   *øœr-ətæ-n*   **mən-iː**   **joxt-əs**
     man   fishing_weir-SG<3SG-DLAT   **go-PRS[3SG]**   **come-PST[3SG]**
     'The man goes to his fishing weir. He arrived there.'
     sonsil-iː-tə   *øœr*   *nəsə næːr-nə*   *pʊrtəjirøœt-wə-s*
     look-PRS-SG<3SG   fishing_weir   what-DLAT   smash_into_pieces-PASS-PST[3SG]
     'He looks: "What smashed the fishing weir into pieces?"'[5]

A corpus-based systematic analysis of coherence in discourse is still missing for the Ob-Ugric languages. The aim of my talk therefore is to present various clause combining strategies of Ob-Ugric narratives based on their coherence-creating function.

References:

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[4] OUDB Kazym Khanty Corpus. Text ID 883: 81-82 http://www.oudb.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/?cit=883

[5] OUDB Eastern Mansi Corpus. Text ID 1549: 45-47) http://www.oudb.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/?cit=1549