**SUGAR Analysis of Coordination and Subordination**

You’ve participated in enough conversations to realize that much of our speech is not textbook grammar. When we consider the spoken language of children with language disorders, most of a corpus may be ungrammatical. As we review coordination and subordination with you, we’ll try to keep the spoken language of real children in mind. The guidelines below came from our own attempts to analyze child language and be consistent in that analysis.

When children put clauses together in a sentence, they have three basic choices. First, the clauses can be combined as equals. This process is called ***conjoining*** or ***coordination*** and is usually accomplished with a coordinating conjunction (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*). In the second type of clausal joining, one clause may be subordinate or dependent on the other. This process is called ***subordination*** or ***embedding*** because one clause is embedded in the other. Third, a sentence may contain both. We’ve tried to simplify distinguishing between the two types. In addition, we’ll explain variations you may encounter.

**Coordination**

In high school, you probably called these sentences “compound”. Conjoining or coordination means adding together two equals. This is accomplished with ***coordinating conjunctions***, such as

*For And Nor But Or Yet So*

To aid your memory, try using the easy acronym FANBOYS. Examples of use of coordinating conjunctions include the following:

She played in the sand and I swam.

I’d love to help, but I don’t have the time.

We can go to the party or we could take in a movie.

The number of coordinating conjunctions will be one less than the number of clauses. For example, two clauses have one conjunction, as in the example, *We went to the store* **but** *they were closed*. Three clauses will have two conjunctions and so on.

Occasionally, the conjunction is omitted. For example, because a child spoke quickly, we might write her utterance with a semicolon, as in “Our team lost; we went to home.” We can say that there is coordination, but no coordinating conjinction is present. Within SUGAR, although both clauses are counted for quantitative purposes, the sentence is NOT classified as having coordinating clauses in qualitative subanalysis.

**Potential issues with coordination**

When analyzing an utterance, do NOT analyze conjunctions that carry over from previous utterances by either the child or partner, as in “*But* we were tired, so we went to bed.” In this example, the “but” is not linking clauses within the utterance.

Some children begin utterances with a filler or starter word, such as *well* or *and*. Do NOT analyze these as conjunctions. The use of *and* is especially prominent in relating narratives and will often be seen in serial utterances that continue the narrative.

The girls ran from the witch.

*And* they hid in the woods.

*And* she couldn’t find them.

*And* they got away.

In addition, children may use *and, and then*, and *then* interchangeably to signify continuance, linking clauses in a coordinated fashion. For analysis purposes, consider all three to be examples of “and” because that is the function they serve.

**RULE OF THUMB**: There must be a coordinating conjunction and it must link clauses. Otherwise, we don’t analyze the utterance as an example of coordinating clauses.

**Subordination**

Coordination differs from subordination, or what in high school you called “complex sentences”. In a complex sentence, one clause is subordinate or dependent on the main clause to make sense. This is accomplished with ***subordinating conjunctions***, such as

*After Although As As if*

*As long as As much as As soon as As though*

*Because Before By the time Even if*

*Even though If In order that In case*

*In the event that Lest Now that Once*

*Only Only if Provided that Since*

*Supposing That Than Though*

*Till Unless Until When*

*Whenever Where Whereas Wherever*

*Whether or not While*

Development takes several years and some subordinating conjunctions do not appear until high school. Common subordinating conjunctions seen in children up through late elementary school are

*Because If That When Where*

The use of *that* is sometimes optional as in “I know (*that*) *you did it.”*

Embedded or subordinate clauses come in three common types, nominal, relative, and adverbial.

**Nominal subordinate clauses** occur where a noun could also occur. Early nominal subordinate clauses often follow words such as *think, know, remember* and *forget,* as in “I know what you did.” There are two clauses “I know” and “what you did.” The nominal subordinate clause is the object of the sentence and completes the thought “I know *something* (noun).”

It’s trickier when the clauses are reversed, as in “You did it, I think.” Now what is known is not dependent on what came before. The “I think” is almost an interjection or afterthought. In those cases, you do NOT have subordination…just two clauses.

Examples of nominal subordinate clauses are below.

Following metacognitive verb, such as *think, know, remember* and *forget* as in

I know *what you did in school*.

I forgot *that you were there.*

I thought *you went*

Also following *say, tell* and *see*, as in

Mom said *that we could go*.

I saw *what you did*.

Tell me *where she went*.

A somewhat strange example would be a quote, as in

“Mommy said, *‘You can go.’*”

These might be indirect also as in “Mommy said I can go.” We’ll count both as subordination too, although experts are not all in agreement.

Nominal subordinate clauses can be anywhere that we might find a noun.

Subjective: “**What they’re trying to do** is catch the ball.” Subjective nominal clauses are difficult to identify.

In prepositional phrase: “We need to stand up for **what is right**” and “I have a timer for **when lunch is**”

Objective: “You want to make sure [that**] the branches are loose and not really pointy**” and “We would follow **what she would do**”

**Relative subordinate clauses** act as adjectives following a noun and indicating which noun the speaker is referring to. Examples are below.

I liked the car *that we saw yesterday*.

She’s the one *who told me*.

Again *that* may be omitted, as in “I liked the car we saw yesterday.

**Adverbial subordinate clauses** tell us why, when, and where and generally follow S

**s**ubordinating conjunctions, such as *before, after, because if*, and *when*. Examples are below.

We stayed home *because it rained.*

*Because it rained,* we stayed home.

We’ll go *when the weather improves.*

She left the play *after she had seen the first act*.

I’ll go *if you do*.

As noted above adverbial subordinate clauses can often occupy different locations in the sentence, as in “*When the rain stops*, we’ll play outside.

**Potential issues with subordination**

As in coordination, a subordinating conjunction may occur at the beginning of the utterance or carry over from previous utterances by either the child or partner. For example, in “*Because* we were tired, we went to bed,” “because” is linking the two clauses and should be analyzed as subordination.

This is not always the case. In the utterance “*When* we went because we were tired,” the initial word “when” does NOT connect the clauses and is NOT an example of subordination. It does not link clauses within the utterance. In this instance, the clauses are linked by “because”.

In a final example, a coordinating conjunction may be present but not link clauses as in “We went *because*.” This is NOT subordination.

Here are some types of subordination where it may be difficult to locate a connector.

*That*

“That” is a subordinating conjunction or pronoun, depending on its use. For example, we could say “I know that you cheated.” The challenge with “that” is its frequent omission, as in “I know you cheated.” We still have subordination because “you cheated” fills the function of what is known.

*Say* and *ask*

In most cases, if “say” or “ask” is followed by a quote, the quote is subordinate and you can insert “that” to check. For example, in “Mom said ‘You can go tomorrow’.” or “Mom said [that] you can go tomorrow.”

But what about “He says please don’t tell no one.” Sometimes another word, such as “please” is inserted, making it more complicated. In another example, “The people say bad kitty you need to behave.” Take out “bad kitty”, which is not a clause, and you have “The people say [that] you need to behave.” Think of this as “The people say X.” “X” is a clause in this case, “you need to behave.”

In other cases, adding “that” does not help and is just plain awkward, as in “He asks can he eat his food in peace.” The grammar is scrambled, but it’s from a real child. We have two clauses: *He asks X* and *can he eat*. In most cases following say and ask, if there are two clauses, assume subordination.

*Like* is tricky.

The word “like” is in the process of weaving itself into English as a replacement for words such as “say”. For example, “Mom was like be careful out there.” It’s not a quote but more of an overall sense of what she said.

“It’s kind of like we have an outdoor cat.”

“Coralline’s like you didn’t lock it and she’s like we made a deal zip it.”

“I’m like come on.” The *you* in “Come on” is understood.

“She looks like she’s twelve.”

In most cases, “like” will be followed by a nominal subordinate clause.

*Make*

“It makes it look more real.” Two clauses, *It makes* and *it look*, but it’s difficult to try to decide what the subordinating conjunction is. As with “say” and “ask”, assume subordination.

*Is*

The word “is” can be easy to miss, especially when introducing another clause. For example, “What I really like is he jumps high.” We have “I like is X” and “He jumps high”.