

## Are deeply embedded clauses important for the description of clausal subordination?

We often observe clauses subordinated to clauses that themselves are subordinate. For example, in the Estonian sentence  $[[_{C1}=Kui\ emad\ näitavad\ sind\ oma\ lastele,\ [_{C2}=et\ nood\ teaksid,\ [_{C3}=missuguseks\ nad\ kunagi\ saada\ ei\ tohi,]_{C=siis\ tea},\ [_{C1}=et\ sinust\ on\ maailmale\ kasu]]]$  (ENC 2019), in addition to the main clause (C), there are two first-order embedded clauses (C1), one second-order embedded clause (C2) and one third-order embedded clause (C3). Any clause below C1 is deeply embedded (DEC).

The properties of DECs and their structural relations to other parts of the sentence are poorly studied which is related to the idea of recursion as a fundamental property of language (e.g. van der Hulst 2010). The recursion postulate implies that the properties of complex sentences can be reduced to a sum of bi-clausal relations, i.e.,  $[C\ [C1\ [C2\ [C3]]]] = [C\ [C1]] + [C1\ [C2]] + [C2\ [C3]]$  (Letuchiy 2021: 525–529). If rerunning the same procedure leads to reproduction of the same structure, we cannot expect to find anything new in DECs compared to the first-order embedded clauses. Accordingly, Estonian and Finnish grammars silently assume that the description of clausal subordination can be exhausted with the description of C1s (cf. ISK, EKG II, EKS).

We investigate sentences with DECs in relation to the variables ‘embedding depth’, ‘position of the clause relative to the higher clause’, ‘type of the embedded clause’, its ‘finiteness (incl. the specific morphological form of the verb)’, and ‘language’. The languages are Estonian, Moksha Mordvin, and possibly Komi (if our research advances so far until May 2024). The material comes from electronic corpora containing published texts.

We will show that DECs are not entirely identical with first-order embeddings, i.e., that embedding depth is a factor influencing the grammar of subordinate clauses. This challenges the idea that a description of the relationship between the main and first-order embedded clauses suffices to elucidate clausal subordination in a language, and that properties of complex sentences can be reduced to a sum of bi-clausal relations.

## References

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