



Pragmatic demotion and clause dependency

On two atypical subordinating strategies in Lo-Toga and Hiw (Torres, Vanuatu)

Alexandre François

Langues et Civilisations à Tradition Orale,
Fédération Typologie et Universaux Linguistiques, CNRS

Despite the wealth of subordinators in Hiw and Lo-Toga (Oceanic, north Vanuatu), two of their Tense-Aspect-Mood categories – the *Subjunctive* and the *Background Perfect* – can do without them, and encode clause dependency by themselves. A pragmatic hypothesis is proposed to account for this clause-linking faculty. The Subjunctive differs from other irrealis categories insofar as it lacks any specific illocutionary force; the Background Perfect labels its predicate as informationally backgrounded. In both cases, the clause lacks certain key properties (illocutionary force; informational weight) which are normally required in pragmatically well-formed utterances. This *pragmatic demotion* makes the clause dependent on external predications, which naturally results in syntactic subordination. This case study illustrates how syntax can be reshaped by the pragmatic parameters of discourse.

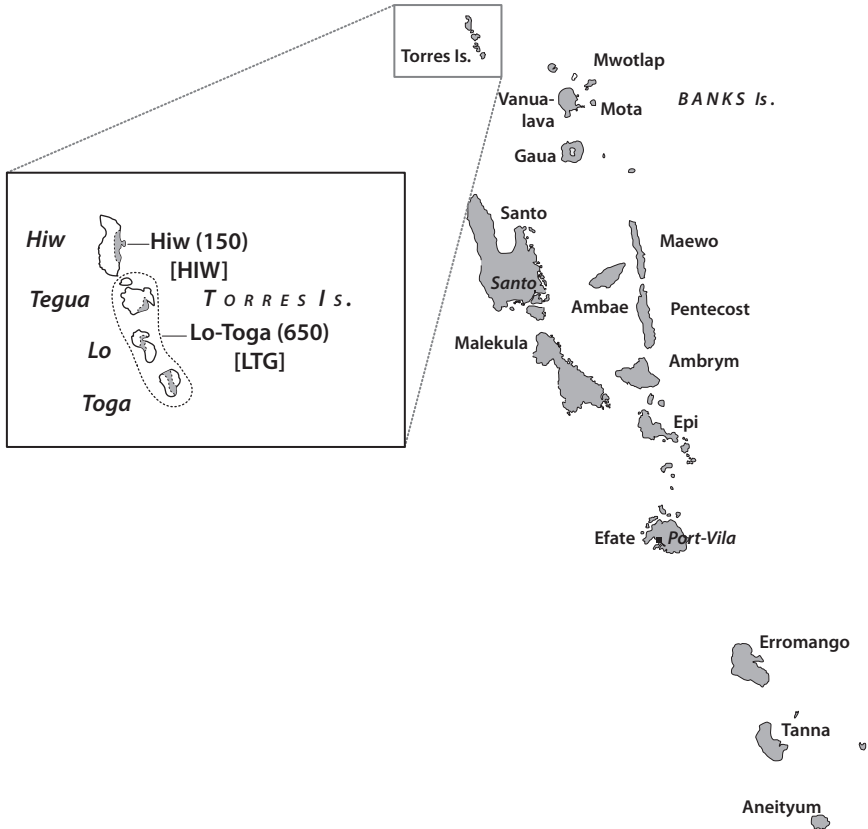
1. Two cases of subordination with no subordinator

1.1 The Torres languages

The Torres islands form a small island group located at the northwestern tip of the Republic of Vanuatu (formerly New Hebrides), in the south Pacific (Map 1).¹ Two

1. The present work originates in a talk I gave in 2006 for the research group *Typology of interclausal dependencies* (Fédération Typologie et Universaux Linguistiques), led by Isabelle Brill. I am grateful to her, as well as to Alexis Michaud, Claudia Wegener and Johan van der Auwera, for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper. The data presented in this chapter were collected by the author during several field trips to the Torres islands, in 2004, 2006 and 2007. The financial support of the LACITO – CNRS, as well as of the French *Ministère de la Recherche* (ACI “Jeunes Chercheurs”), is also gratefully acknowledged.

Oceanic languages are spoken there: Hiw by 150 speakers, and Lo-Toga – itself consisting of two very close varieties Lo and Toga – by 650 speakers. They have never been the subject of any published grammatical description.



Map 1. The two Torres languages, at the northwestern tip of Vanuatu

Hiw and Lo-Toga differ from each other in many regards, whether in their phonology, their lexicons, or details of their grammars – enough to make them clearly distinct, mutually unintelligible languages. Nevertheless, they also share parallel structures in most domains of their morphosyntax, their phraseology, and more generally the way they categorize meaning into forms. This linguistic isomorphism between the two Torres languages is due both to their common ancestry, and to a history of sustained social and cultural contact which their communities have long had with each other. The linguistic phenomena to be discussed in the present chapter belong to those many structures which are shared by the two languages: this is why I will treat

them together here, and illustrate each phenomenon with evidence taken alternatively from Hiw and from Lo-Toga.²

While these two Torres languages also have a lot in common with the languages of the Banks group – and those of Vanuatu in general – spoken further south (Map 1), they present many specific developments, which tend to give them a grammatical profile of their own. This is especially true of the topic I will discuss here, namely the morpho-syntactic strategies for encoding clause dependency and subordination. Generally speaking, as we shall see in Section 2, the various types of dependency between clauses or predicates (subordination, coordination...) are expressed – quite classically – by a variety of conjunctions and other overt morphemes that are more or less dedicated to this clause-linking function. Yet, despite the wealth of these formal devices, these two languages have also developed certain patterns of clause dependency that lack any formal subordinator.

1.2 BSraxis or subordination?

Considered superficially, each of the following sentences consists simply of a string of two clauses, with no formal indication whatsoever of their syntactic relationship:³

- (1) Hiw Ne temēt on tō yaqe me
 ART devil SBJV go:SG appear hither
 n̄wē ne, tek̄n̄wa voyi.
 like this people AOR:run.away
 [lit. The devil *would appear like this*, people ran away.]
 ‘(Whenever) the devil appeared, people would run away.’
- (2) LTG Ne gehuh ve kerkur tēle si mat mēt.
 ART coconut.crab BKPF₁ ITER~crunch person BKPF₂ CPLT die
 [lit. The coconut crab *has devoured people* has died.]
 ‘The coconut crab (*which*) *had devoured people* was dead.’

One might propose to see in these two sentences examples of simple clause parataxis (cf. Noonan 1985: 55), or perhaps of verb serialization. In fact I will show that (1) and (2) rather illustrate genuine patterns of syntactic subordination, in the full sense of the term.

While such instances of apparent clause parataxis are frequent in the spontaneous speech of the two Torres languages, they are much more constrained than they at first appear, and depend on the Tense-Aspect-Mood marking (TAM) on the verbs. Among

2. When a given fact is unique to one of the two languages, this will be stated explicitly: see for example the resultative construction, which exists only in Lo-Toga.

3. The spelling conventions adopted for the two Torres languages include the following: $g = [y]$; $\bar{n} = [ŋ]$; $\bar{n}w = [ŋ^w]$; $q = [k^w]$; $d = [t]$; $\bar{r} = [ʁ]$; $o = [ɔ]$; $\bar{o} = [o]$; $\bar{o} = [θ]$; $e = [ə]$; $\bar{e} = \text{LTG } [ɛ]$, Hiw $[e]$; $\bar{e} = \text{LTG } [e]$, Hiw $[i]$.

the many TAM categories – about sixteen – present in each of these two languages, *only two* appear to trigger seemingly paratactic structures of this sort. One belongs to the domain of irrealis modality, and is called the *Subjunctive* ('СБЈУ'); this appears as *on* in the Hiw sentence (1). The other belongs to the set of realis TAM markers, and more precisely to the perfect aspect; due to its particular properties, I propose to label it the *Background Perfect* ('БКРФ') – expressed as *ve... si* in (2).

Ultimately, these two TAM categories – each one for distinct reasons and through different mechanisms – can be said to convey the status of their clause as being syntactically subordinate to another main clause. In other words, apparently paratactic sentences such as (1)–(2), even though they may lack any formal conjunction, can still be said to be *formally marked as subordinate*: this information is conveyed by the TAM marking on the verb, instead of being coded by clause linkers. Thus, the first clause in (1) is marked as a dependent clause by the presence of the Subjunctive; likewise, the first predicate phrase of (2) is formally identifiable as a subordinate (relative) clause through the use of the Background Perfect.

1.3 Formal properties, functional mechanisms

In this study, I intend not only to establish the empirical facts for these two undescribed languages, but also to propose a functional interpretation and discussion. I will adopt a functionalist perspective on this set of linguistic facts, and suggest that the syntactic effect of these two TAM categories, rather than just a purely formal property, can be shown to result from their semantic and pragmatic values.

In a nutshell, the core function of the Subjunctive in the Torres languages⁴ is to represent a virtual state of affairs, with no further information on modality or illocutionary force. This pragmatic indeterminacy is fundamentally the reason why a subjunctive clause will need to attach itself to another clause, which provides it with the modality value it lacks. Likewise, the Background Perfect can be defined as a perfect aspect which demotes its predicate from the scope of the informational focus. Due to this backgrounded status, the predicate then needs to attach itself to another element under focus, in order to form a valid utterance.

The two cases thus appear to follow similar logic. Intrinsically, each of these two TAM markers combines its purely semantic value (in terms of aspect or modality)

4. Obviously, the “Subjunctive” category of the two Torres languages owes its name to very similar mood categories found in other languages (Noonan 1985: 91), notably Indo-European ones. This being said, as a principle, the observations made in this article must be understood as applying primarily to the TAM category specific to the Torres languages – hence the uppercase in its label, following the usage in Comrie (1976:10). My intention is not to make any general claim about the properties of a universal category *subjunctive* – supposing such a cross-linguistic category indeed exists (see Haspelmath 2007).

with some pragmatic property. In both cases, this property corresponds to a form of *pragmatic demotion* – lack of a specific illocutionary force for the Subjunctive, lack of focal status in the case of the Background Perfect – and in both cases, this demotion results in a form of clause dependency. While they are ultimately grounded in the pragmatic dimension of discourse, these two TAM-based strategies ultimately also affect the formal syntax of the sentence, as they constitute a routinized device for encoding clause subordination.

The following sections are organized as follows. Section 2 will provide a brief syntactic overview of the two Torres languages, and will pay special attention to overtly marked clause-linking strategies – whether subordination, coordination or verb serialization. Section 3 will then examine in detail the functional and formal behaviour of the Subjunctive, and Section 4 will be dedicated to the subordinating power of the Background Perfect.

2. Clause linking in the Torres languages: An overview

I will begin this study with an overview of the syntactic structures of the two Torres languages, with special focus on clause linking strategies.

2.1 Syntax of the simple clause

Like their Oceanic neighbours of Vanuatu, Hiw and Lo-Toga possess an accusative alignment system, and follow a strict SVO constituent order.

2.1.1 *Argument coding*

Subjects take the form of noun phrases or free pronouns preceding the verb, and are not cross-referenced on the predicate itself. Likewise, direct objects usually leave the verb form unchanged (3a), except when they have human reference. In the latter case, the verb form becomes marked for transitivity (3b), and sometimes bears a suffix cross-referencing the object (3c):

- (3) a. LTG *Nēke na itē n' eñwe mē-he si.*
 1SG PRF₁ see ART house POSS-3PL PRF₂
 'I've seen their house(s).'
- b. LTG *Nēke na ise kemi si.*
 1SG PRF₁ see:TR 2PL PRF₂
 'I've seen you_{[+human]'}
- c. LTG *Nēke na isi-he si.*
 1SG PRF₁ see:TR-3PL PRF₂
 'I've seen them_{[+human]'}

2.1.2 Tense-Aspect-Mood categories

Alongside its arguments, a well-formed verb phrase entails the presence of a marker coding for aspect, mood and polarity. These three parameters are subsumed under a single paradigm of portmanteau morphemes. For example, the marker labelled Complete (a postclitic *piti* in Hiw, a proclitic *mat* in Lo-Toga) simultaneously encodes aspectual meaning (completed event), modal meaning (indicative), and polarity value⁵ (affirmative):

- (4) a. Hiw *Sise mot̄rig piti.*
 3PL sleep:PL CPLT
- b. LTG *Nihe mat metur.*
 3PL CPLT sleep
 ‘They’ve already slept.’

The category of tense properly speaking is not marked in these languages. Although the paradigm of verb modifiers should thus be designated, strictly speaking, as A-M-P markers (for “Aspect-Mood-Polarity”), throughout this chapter, I shall nevertheless continue to use the widespread abbreviation TAM (for “Tense Aspect Mood”), for the reader’s convenience.

The two Torres languages possess sixteen formally distinct⁶ TAM categories. The realis markers (see §4.1) include the Stative, the Imperfective, the standard Perfect, the Background Perfect, as well as the Complete, the Recent Perfect, and the Realis Negative. The irrealis categories (see §3.3) include the Future, the Prospective, the Potential, the Apprehensive, the Subjunctive, the Counterfactual, and the Irrealis Negative. Finally, two categories – labelled Aorist (see §2.2.1) and Time Focus – span the realis and the irrealis domains.⁷

The Aorist is a particularly polysemous category, found in the Torres⁸ as well as several of the Banks islands to the south (François, in press). It covers several meanings, both realis and irrealis, including narrative, sequential, generic, prospective, imperative and conditional. A possible description of the Aorist would be to consider

5. The morphosyntax of the negation will be mentioned in §0.

6. Many of these TAM morphemes are morphologically complex, and sometimes discontinuous – as in the case of the Perfect *na...si* in (3). See also the discussion in §0.

7. See François (2003) for a detailed semantic analysis of a highly similar (and partly cognate) TAM system, that of the neighbouring language Mwotlap.

8. The morphology of the Aorist in the Torres languages is complex (François, in press). First, it is coded by a set of preverbal markers that vary for person and number (LTG 1sg *ke*, 2sg *we*, 3sg *ni...*); second, these preverbal markers are generally deleted in the presence of a free personal pronoun, in which case the surface form of the Aorist is simply Ø [see ex. (28b)]. In the present article, I will only mention the Aorist in the gloss when it is relevant to the discussion, otherwise the verb will simply be given as unmarked for TAM.

it as a “zero” verbal category that is underspecified with regard to tense, aspect and mood; this would account for both its great flexibility, and its compatibility with modally bound dependent clauses (12). Interestingly, the Subjunctive [Hiw *on*, LTG *vě(n)*] can be analysed along similar lines – in terms of semantic underspecification – except that it is restricted to irrealis clauses (see §3). As we will see later, the two markers can be synonymous in certain contexts – compare (12) and (38) for modality-bound complement clauses; or (32f) and (35b) for the hortative. Yet even though the Aorist and the Subjunctive show a certain degree of functional overlap, the Subjunctive will be preferred when the semantic status of the subordinate clause is explicitly irrealis or generic.

2.1.3 Syntactic categories and their predicativeness

Another important characteristic of the Torres languages – and more generally of many of the area’s languages (François 2005a) – is the diversity of parts of speech compatible with the predicate function. A predicate head⁹ need not be a verb: it can be an adjective, a noun, a numeral, etc. For example, a nominal predicate takes the form of a simple noun phrase in a direct (zero) construction, with no copula – whether it be equational (type ‘*X is the N*’) or ascriptive (‘*X is an N*’).

- (5) Hiw *Nine* { *řekño-k* }.
 3SG mother-1SG
 ‘She (*is*) my mother.’

When the subject is omitted, the result is a clause that consists of just a single noun phrase:

- (6) Hiw (\emptyset) { *ne wake* }.
 ART canoe
 ‘(It’s) a canoe.’ [DIRECT NOUN PREDICATE]

Several other word classes may also be directly predicative. This includes locative phrases – whether in the form of adverbs [e.g. the interrogative ‘where’ in (7)] or prepositional phrases [see *yö kōñ* in (54)] – as well as certain invariant words [e.g. the existential predicate ‘not exist, lack’ in (7)].

- (7) LTG *Ne heñwëvot mino* { *evë* }? – *Nie* { *tategë* }.
 ART knife my where 3SG NEG:EXIST
 ‘Where (*is*) my knife? – It is not here.’

Direct predicativeness (Lemaréchal 1989; Launey 1994) constitutes an important property of parts of speech in the Torres languages, which will later prove crucial in the syntactic analysis of the Background Perfect (§4.2.2.2).

9. In Examples (5)–(7), the limits of the predicate phrase are indicated by curly brackets.

2.2 Subordination

Hiw and Lo-Toga possess a wide array of morphological devices for encoding the syntactic relations between a subordinate and a main clause. I will successively examine the coding of complement clauses (§2.2.1); conditional clauses (§2.2.2); relative clauses (§2.2.3); and adverbial time clauses (§2.2.4).

2.2.1 Complement clauses

The Torres languages have a quotative particle (Hiw *tom*, LTG *të*) for introducing direct reported speech. It can be used as the unique predicate of the clause, or in combination with a speech verb:

- (8) Hiw *Tema-ne yuř-mi-e tom “Ye nëne?” Tom “Noke!”*
 father-3SG ask-TR-3SG QUOT who that QUOT 1SG
 ‘Her father asked her [*saying*]: “Who was that?” [*She said*] “That was me!”’

The same quotative particle is used to introduce indirect speech. Therefore, despite its obvious origin as a quotative, it is better analyzed, synchronically, as a complementizer. Indeed it can combine not only with verbs of speech, but also with all sorts of verbs governing a clause complement:¹⁰

- (9) Hiw *Noke tati mënëg, noke ttöm tom ne gë kye.*
 1SG NEG steal 1SG think COMP ART thing my
 ‘I didn’t steal it, I thought (*that*) it was mine.’
- (10) LTG *Ne ñwië ni holōq me, ni*
 ART devil AOR:3SG return hither AOR:3SG
itë tē nihe ve toge.
 see COMP 3PL IPFV stay
 ‘The devil came back, and saw (*that*) they were there.’

If the complement clause is realis, its predicate is normally compatible with any realis TAM marker (Perfect, Stative, Imperfective...), with no particular restrictions. The same applies if the clause is semantically irrealis but is modally independent from the main clause. For example, a main verb meaning ‘believe’ would allow the complement clause to take essentially the same TAM markers as in an independent clause. As we shall see in §3.3.1, there are quite a few irrealis markers which correspond to this definition, for example the Potential (Hiw *ta*, LTG *si*):

10. This process, whereby the quotative particle has generalised its use to cover the whole functional array of a complementizer, is widespread in the area. The process may be compared to the typologically common process whereby complementisers originate in a verb of speech (see Heine & Kuteva 2002; Chappell 2008).

- (11) LTG *N' ige wë ne, nêke dôem tĕ nêke sɪ gën.*
 ART fish like this 1SG think COMP 1SG POT:AFF eat
 'This sort of fish, I think I *can* eat.'

Conversely, certain types of predicates – typically, verbs of volition and manipulation-entail that the irrealis complement clause be bound to the main clause with respect to modality. In that case, the choice of TAM marking in the complement clause becomes essentially restricted to two possible categories: the Subjunctive [see (37)–(38) below] or the Aorist (12).

- (12) LTG *Ne lie-k na ñih tĕ ke tun dë sa ñwil.*
 ART mind-1SG STAT want COMP AOR:1SG buy from M chief
 'I'd like to buy it from the chief.'

Purpose clauses are also constructed along the same patterns (COMP + Aorist or COMP + Subjunctive): see (39)–(40) and (62)–(63) below. Once again, in this irrealis context, the Subjunctive and the Aorist are essentially equivalent (cf. §2.1.2).

The combination of the complementizer and Aorist markers has also grammaticalized, in Lo-Toga (but not in Hiw), into a TAM category in its own right, called the Prospective. Its meanings encompass the desiderative ('want to do'), the deontic ('should do', 'must do'), the prospective proper ('be about to do')...¹¹ Although it originally incorporates the complementizer *tĕ*, this Prospective marker can appear on the main predicate of an independent clause – as in (32c) below – which shows that it has lost any connection with clause dependency. This is also proven by the possibility of combining the Prospective (here *tĕ we* 'Prosp:2sg') with the complementizer *tĕ* in the same sentence:

- (13) LTG *Tate pero tĕ nike tĕ we hadit.*
 NEG:REAL long COMP 2SG PROSP 2SG be.initiated
 [*lit.* It's not long before you're going to be initiated]
 'You are soon going to follow the initiation rituals.'

The category of the Future is in turn a composite morpheme, which combines the Prospective (*tĕ* + Aorist) with the particle *ake* – see (15), (26), (32a).

2.2.2 Conditional clauses

Conditional clauses may again involve the same complementizer (Hiw *tom*, LTG *tĕ*), which is here translated 'if':

- (14) Hiw *Tom ike gengon ñwō, ne ga tat qisi tiřtiř ike.*
 COMP 2SG AOR:eat first ART kava NEG:IRR hit:TR strong 2SG
 'If you eat first, the kava won't have any strong effect upon you.'

11. Both the morphology and the semantics of the Lo-Toga Prospective are narrowly similar to those of the Prospective in Mwotlap (François 2003: 218–257).

The conditional subordinator also displays longer forms which are derived from the complementizer. One thus finds the (semantically non-compositional) combination HIW *tom* + *ñwë* ‘like’ → *tom-ñwë* or *tom-ñwë-tom* meaning ‘if’ – see (49). Lo-Toga has exactly parallel forms, either morphologically transparent (*të* + *wë* ‘like’ → *tëwë* [təwɛ] ‘if’) or with a slight vowel change *tëwë* → *tewë* [təwɛ] ~ *tewë-të* [təwɛtɛ] – see (15), (48).

Several TAM categories can be found in the protasis of a conditional sentence: Aorist; Subjunctive; Counterfactual (15):

- (15) LTG **Tewëtë** TE not ne *metë-ne* SI, nie *të* n'
 if CTFC₁ hit ART eye-3SG CTFC₂ 3SG FUT₁ 3SG
ake mēteqa ē!
 FUT₂ blind OBL
 ‘If they had hit his eyes, he would have become blind!’

We will see below (§3.5.2) that, while conditional constructions can make use of a conjunction, they are also regularly coded by the Subjunctive alone. This TAM marker is the only one capable of replacing a conditional conjunction.

2.2.3 Relative clauses

Relative clauses are marked by a variety of morphological devices. The role of relativizer can be played, in both languages, by the (polyfunctional) form *pe*:

- (16) LTG *Noke të ke vë k' itë ne gehuh*
 1SG PROSP 1SG go 1SG see ART coconut.crab
pe ve kerkur tële nök.
 REL IPFV IPFV~crunch person there
 ‘I’ll go and have a look at that coconut crab *WHICH devours people*.’

The relativizer function can also be played by phonologically heavier forms; these combine several morphemes in ways that are not always semantically compositional. Thus one finds a relativizer HIW *petom* ~ LTG *petë*, etymologically the combination {relativizer + complementizer} [also see (41) below]:

- (17) HIW *Sise mi nö-sa tir ñwute petom sise*
 3PL with POSS-3PL true place REL 3PL
 toge ie yö ñwřëwön.
 stay:PL OBL:ADV LOC forest
 ‘They have special places of theirs, *WHERE they dwell in the forest*.’

Lo-Toga also combines the relativizer *pe* with the comparative *wë* ‘like’ (→ LTG *pewë*), generally with virtual or generic referents (*whoever...*):

- (18) LTG *Ni ole ne wuhe hi*
 AOR:3SG give ART potion DAT
heñwere pewë na mōo.
 people REL STAT sick
 ‘He provides medicine to WHO(EVER) is sick.’

In fact the form *wë* alone (without *pe*) can also serve as a relativizer in Lo-Toga – see (42). To sum up, the forms of the relativizer in Hiw are *pe* or *petom*; those in Lo-Toga are *pe*, *petë*, *pewë* or *wë*.

Finally, despite the wealth of these relativizers, it is also common for relative clauses to lack any formal subordinator, provided the status of the whole phrase as a dependent clause is visible on the verb’s TAM marking. This ability to constitute a relative clause with no relativizer is attested only with two TAM categories, precisely those which form the topic of the following sections: the Subjunctive (§3.5.2), and the Background Perfect (§4.2.2.1).

2.2.4 Adverbial time clauses

Adverbial time clauses are often formed with a noun meaning ‘time, moment’: Hiw *tamerëñ* ~ (take)timeëñ, LTG *mowe*. The time clause can then be construed as a relative clause (see Thompson & Longacre 1985: 179) – i.e. *when* = literally *the time in which...*

- (19) Hiw *Ike yo-ie ti timeëñ pe kimiře në*
 2SG see-3SG PRF time REL 2DU STAT
yumegov që, tamerëñ pe tekñwa te
 young still time REL people from
yö vönyö ve tetaywö.
 LOC village IPFV celebrate
 ‘You met her (at a time) WHEN you both were still young,
 as the villagers were celebrating.’

But it also commonly happens that the same word appears on its own, with no overt relativizer:

- (20) LTG *Mowe ne tarepi ëke mat tēh pah,*
 time/when ART body canoe CPLT carve finish
pahvën ge rak ne hēm’ in.
 then AOR:PL make ART outrigger its
 ‘Once the body of the canoe is carved, [then] one makes the outrigger.’

It could be proposed to see *mowe* here still as a noun ‘time’ followed by a relative clause with no relativizer; however, such relative clauses, as mentioned in §2.2.3, are normally

restricted to two TAM markers. The presence in (20) of another TAM category (*mat* ‘Complete aspect’) calls for another syntactic analysis: namely, that the noun *mowe* has been grammaticalized into a subordinator ‘when’.¹²

In addition, Lo-Toga also has a genuine time subordinator *nonegë* ‘when, as’:

- (21) LTG **Nonegë** *nie ve vin-gë ne megole, ni*
 as 3SG IPFV climb-APPL ART child AOR:3SG
hur ne vete sise.
 sing ART song one
 ‘As she was climbing with her baby, she began to sing a song.’

We shall see other cases where time clauses lack an overt subordinator, the relation of dependency being reflected only by the TAM marking on the verb: the Subjunctive (§3.5.2).

2.3 Coordination

The Torres languages make relatively little use of coordination, and generally prefer resorting to subordinating or serialising strategies.

Following a typologically common trend (Stassen 2000), the Torres languages usually form the equivalent of coordination between two noun phrases by using the comitative preposition *mi* ‘with’:

- (22) Hrw *tema-ne mi řekña-ne*
 father-3SG with/and mother-3SG
 ‘his father WITH/AND his mother’

Quite originally, Lo-Toga has extended the use of this comitative preposition to coordination between any two phrases, including two prepositional phrases (23) or two clauses (24):

- (23) LTG *Noke na melekelake pi megole mēke, mi pi lēgie mēke.*
 1SG STAT happy about child your and about wedding your
 ‘I’m delighted about your baby, *with/AND about your wedding.’
- (24) LTG *Ne ñwië si dahia ē ne tēle, mi*
 ART devil POT harm OBL ART person and
nihe si kur verië ne tēle.
 3PL POT crunch also ART person
 ‘Devils can harm people, *with/AND they can even devour people.’

12. This pattern, whereby a noun meaning ‘time, moment’ grammaticalizes into a subordinator, is commonplace in the area. Mwotlap does the same with (*vēt*)*mahē* (François 2003: 26), as well as Bislama with *taem* < Eng. *time* (Crowley 2004: 188).

This functional extension of *mi* is unique to Lo-Toga, and is quite marginal in the language. It would be impossible in Hiw, where *mi* is still used strictly as a comitative preposition with a noun phrase. In order to coordinate two clauses, Hiw instead uses an adverb *pavën* ‘then’:

- (25) Hiw *Timeřen ěne, nine ně n̄wotoy kĕ,*
 time that 3SG STAT short little
pavën n' uy ena ně teytoy.
 then ART hair her STAT plaited
 ‘At that time, she was a little short, AND her hair was plaited.’

Other coordinate constructions include words for ‘but’ (Hiw/LTG *pa*), ‘or’ (Hiw *titom*, LTG *hitĕ*), or ‘because’ (Hiw [*uř*] *nĕpe [tom]*, LTG *nawĕ*).

2.4 Verb serialization

Finally, this rapid overview of clause linkage in Hiw and Lo-Toga should mention, albeit briefly, verb serialization. Serial verbs in these two languages have two distinct forms.

The structure which is known in typology as *nuclear-layer* serialization (Foley & Olson 1985; Crowley 1987, 2002) consists in joining two verb radicals together with no intervening element, as if through a process of lexical compounding. The resulting “macro-verb” behaves in many regards as a single verbal unit, taking no more than one subject and one object:

- (26) LTG *Tĕ w' ake vese vahĕ noke ě ne iĕ ige.*
 FUT₁ 2SG FUT₂ say show 1SG OBL ART name fish
 [*lit.* You will *say show* me of fish names]
 ‘You will teach me the names of fish.’

In this pattern of nuclear-layer serialization, the second verb modifies the first verb, both semantically and syntactically (Bril 2004; François 2004).

The Torres languages have also developed a pattern of *core-layer* serialization, whereby two verbs follow each other in a single clause, yet each one bears its own TAM marker (or at least the proclitic part, in the case of discontinuous markers). This TAM marker is normally the same for the two verbs:

- (27) LTG *Noke NA vĕn NA vivdĕ si l' ěnwe rōor.*
 1SG PRF₁ go PRF₁ pray PRF₂ LOC house holy
 ‘I went to pray in the church.’

This is an example of “concordant marking of tense-aspect-mood”, to use the terms in Aikhenvald (2006: 42).

The latter pattern is especially used when V_1 is a verb of motion (*go, run...*) or of posture (*sit, stand...*). One of the derived uses of this serial structure, involving a posture verb in the V_1 -slot, codes progressive aspect:

- (28) a. LTG *Noke ve gel ve hiar ne heñwëvot mino.*
 1SG IPFV stay IPFV seek ART knife my
 [*lit. I stay I search I knife*]
 ‘I am looking for my knife.’

This progressive construction involves either the Imperfective *ve* (cf. §4.1.1) as in (28b), or the semantically “neutral” aspect called Aorist (§2.1.2). In this case, the very special morphology of the Aorist (fn.8 p.1) makes the serial pattern less easy to detect:

- (28) b. LTG *Noke (Ø) gel ke hiar ne heñwëvot mino.*
 1SG AOR stay AOR:1SG seek ART knife my
 ‘I am looking for my knife.’

In all these cases, the sharing of arguments and of TAM marking – whether it occurs once or is repeated – clearly shows that we are dealing with serial verb constructions,¹³ and hence with single clauses (Durie 1997; Bril 2004). As such, these structures do not illustrate patterns of clause linking strictly speaking, but rather linkage strategies between predicates.

3. The Subjunctive: In search of an illocutionary force

The preceding section showed the wide array of formal devices used by the two Torres languages to encode dependency relations between clauses and predicates, whether in the form of verb serialization, coordination, or subordination. Despite the wealth of these clause-linking devices, two TAM categories, the Subjunctive and the Background Perfect, present atypical behaviour: these two markers, and only these two, show a strong tendency not only to combine with subordinate clauses, but also to directly encode clause dependency, even in the absence of any subordinating device (see §1.2).

I shall detail these two cases successively: the Subjunctive in the present section, and the Background Perfect in Section 4.

13. The Resultative constructions of Lo-Toga share certain properties with these serial verb constructions, yet they must be analyzed as a different structure: see §0.

3.1 Presentation

The Subjunctive was first exemplified in sentence (1), reproduced below:

- (1) Hiw Ne temēt **on** tō yaqe me ñwë
 ART devil SBJV go:SG appear hither like
 ne, tekñwa voyi.
 this people AOR:run.away
 [lit. The devil *would appear like this*, people ran away]
 ‘(Whenever) the devil appeared, people would run away.’

The behaviour of the Subjunctive is parallel in Hiw (form *on*) and in Lo-Toga (forms *vë ~ vën*).¹⁴ One question arises: what exactly is the mechanism that makes this Subjunctive marker so intimately connected with subordination? Why is it that all other TAM categories – including the various irrealis markers – require the presence of overt subordinators, whereas the Subjunctive can easily do without them? Could one go as far as to consider this morpheme intrinsically endowed with the power of subordination?

The position I will adopt here is the following: the syntactic properties of the Torres Subjunctive, in terms of its ability to encode subordination, can be understood as an indirect consequence of fundamentally semantic properties: this marker codes an event as merely irrealis, *with no further specification of any illocutionary force*. This *modal and pragmatic indeterminacy* accounts for the inability of the Subjunctive alone to constitute well-formed utterances, and ultimately helps explain its strong tendency to trigger syntactic dependency between clauses.

3.2 A note on irrealis sentences

An irrealis sentence involves the representation of a virtual situation which has no reality other than that of a mental construct in the speaker’s discourse. Unlike realis events, whose existence is a fact and which may therefore be recounted as such, an irrealis situation cannot simply stand on its own: in order to form a pragmatically well-formed utterance, it needs to be embedded in some form of secondary predication, be it a deontic predicate, an epistemic judgment, or a speech act of some sort.

14. Despite the formal difference between LTG *vë* [βɛ] ~ *vën* [βɛn] and Hiw *on* [ɔn], it is in fact likely that the two forms are cognate. According to regular vowel correspondences (François 2005b), they could reflect a proto-form *¹βani, of uncertain origin. A link with Proto Oceanic *pani ‘give’ is not implausible, although it raises semantic problems. The connection between *give* and subjunctives does not seem to be widely supported in other languages (see Bybee et al. 1994), and the etymology of English *if* (< OE *ġif*), sometimes mentioned as connected to *giefan* ‘give’, is disputed.

For example, let us consider the state of affairs {BABY GET SICK}. When one refers to a realis event like (29), that state of affairs can easily be stated and provided with various semantic properties, such as time coordinates and truth value:

(29) ENG Baby got sick again last week.

Conversely, the same state of affairs in an irrealis context (i.e. *the possibility that Baby gets sick at some point in the future*) will not be able to constitute, by itself, a complete utterance. Even the English sentence (30), which is syntactically complete and grammatical, appears to be an ill-formed utterance from the pragmatic point of view:

(30) ENG Suppose Baby got sick.

A sentence like (30) is felt to be incomplete, as if waiting for the rest of the sentence in order to be interpretable.¹⁵

To use the terminology of Simon Dik's Functional Grammar, a sentence like (30) does little more than merely represent a possible State of Affairs – i.e. “the conception of something that can be the case in some world” (Dik 1989: 46). In order to constitute a well-formed utterance, such a virtual situation needs to be encapsulated within some type of higher-level linguistic operation – such as aspect and time operators that would provide it with the status of a “Possible fact”; or illocutionary force and modal values that would make it a pragmatically complete “Speech act”.

For example, the virtual state of affairs mentioned above could be incorporated within various forms of speaker-centered speech acts – e.g. apprehension, wish, prediction, etc.:

- (31) a. ENG *I fear* Baby might get sick.
 b. ENG *I wish* Baby got sick!
 c. ENG [*Given what I know, I hereby predict that*] Baby will get sick.

It may also take the form of a question, anchoring the modal center in the addressee (31d):

- (31) d. ENG [*According to you*] will Baby get sick?

It may also be encapsulated within a conditional structure, either as the protasis (31e–f) or as the apodosis (31g):

15. The pragmatic incompleteness of an English sentence like (30) is confirmed by historical evidence: in English-based Melanesian Pidgins such as Bislama or Tok Pisin, the imperative form *suppose* has grammaticalised into a subordinator *sipos/sapos* meaning ‘if’ (François 1997: 22; Mühlhäusler et al. 2003: 24; Crowley 2004: 189).

- (31) e. ENG *In case* Baby gets sick, *he will need to take this medicine.*
 f. ENG *Every time* Baby gets sick, *he tends to recover within two or three days.*
 g. ENG *If he goes out in that cold weather,*
[I hereby predict that] Baby will get sick.

In all of these sentences, the virtual situation – which by itself has no pragmatic value – comes explicitly incorporated within a higher-level predication involving a specific speech act or modal attitude (prediction, wish, apprehension...). This is what makes them capable of forming a valid utterance, unlike (30) above.

3.3 Two types of irrealis markers in the Torres languages

These preliminary remarks about the nature of irrealis utterances should help understand the facts in Hiw and Lo-Toga. In each of these two languages, a semantically irrealis verb can be associated with two types of TAM markers: (a) modally specified markers, (b) a modally underspecified marker, the Subjunctive.

3.3.1 Modally specified irrealis TAM markers

One set of irrealis TAM markers consists not only in representing a state of affairs as virtual; they also inherently convey a specific modal value and/or speech act (such as prediction, order, warning, etc.) within which this state of affairs is logically embedded. In a way, these modally specified morphemes could be described as semantically composite, as they combine the [+irrealis] feature with some other modal specification. It is therefore not surprising – following the reasoning in §3.2 – that they should be capable of forming pragmatically well-formed, complete utterances.

In Lo-Toga,¹⁶ this first set of irrealis markers includes the affirmative Future *të n'ake* in (32a) and its negative counterpart *tat* in (32b); the Prospective *të ni* in (32c); the affirmative Potential *si* in (32d) and its negative counterpart *tat ho* in (32e); the Aorist used for orders in (32f); the Apprehensional *mik* in (32g).

- (32) a. LTG *Nie tē n' ake metur l-eñwe mino.*
 3SG:INDEP FUT₁ 3SG:S FUT₂ sleep LOC-house my
(I predict/promise...) 'He will sleep at my house.'
- b. LTG *Nie tat metur l-eñwe mino.*
 3SG:INDEP NEG:IRR sleep LOC-house my
(I predict/forbid...) 'He won't sleep at my house.'

16. The forms given in this paragraph are for Lo-Toga. Hiw has corresponding markers for all of them, except that it does not formally distinguish between the Future (32a) and the Prospective (32c).

- c. LTG *Nie* **të** **ni** *metur l-eñwe* *mino.*
 3SG:INDEP PROSP 3SG:s sleep LOC-house my
 (I recount somebody else's desire...)
 'He'd like to sleep/He's supposed to sleep... at my house.'
- d. LTG *Nie* **si** *metur l-eñwe* *mino.*
 3SG:INDEP POT:AFF sleep LOC-house my
 (I allow or state a factual possibility...)
 'He can sleep at my house.'
- e. LTG *Nie* **tat** **ho** *metur l-eñwe* *mino.*
 3SG:INDEP NEG:IRR POT:NEG sleep LOC-house my
 (I state a factual impossibility...)
 'He cannot sleep at my house.'
- f. LTG *Nie* **ni** *metur l-eñwe* *mino!*
 3SG:INDEP AOR:3SG sleep LOC-house my
 (I order/suggest...) 'Let him sleep at my house!'
- g. LTG *Nie* **mik** *metur l-eñwe* *mino!*
 3SG:INDEP APPR sleep LOC-house my
 (I present a situation as undesirable...)
 '(I fear) he might sleep at my house!'

3.3.2 *The Subjunctive, a modally underspecified TAM marker*

In addition to these “modally specified” markers, the two Torres languages possess another irrealis marker with slightly different properties. This proclitic, which I label the Subjunctive, belongs to the same morphosyntactic paradigm as the TAM markers cited in (32a–g).

The reason for treating this morpheme separately is not morphological, but semantic. In itself, the Subjunctive provides the clause with no specific modality nor illocutionary force of any kind, and appears to convey the sole meaning [+irrealis]. To use Dik's terms, it does nothing more than to represent a purely virtual *State of affairs*. It is therefore hardly surprising (following §3.2) that the Subjunctive alone is unable to form a pragmatically valid declarative sentence:

- (33) a. Hiw *N' **on** *mitiř* *yö-ñwe* *kye.*
 3SG SBJV sleep:SG LOC-house my
- b. LTG *N*e* **vën** *metur l-eñwe* *mino.*
 3SG SBJV sleep LOC-house my
 ('for him to sleep at my house'...)

A declarative sentence like (33a–b) would be felt to be truncated or unfinished, in a way very similar to (30) in English. This can be explained if one remembers that a virtual state of affairs can only form a complete sentence if it is embedded in a higher-level linguistic operation. While the various irrealis morphemes cited in (32a–g) incorporate

that linguistic operation intrinsically, this is not the case for the Subjunctive (33a–b), which remains *modally under-specified*.

This semantic property of the Torres Subjunctive entails an important corollary: its *high potential for syntactic dependency*. Due to its pragmatic incompleteness, a Subjunctive clause will need to hook on to some other clause or predication operator, in order to form a valid sentence. This essentially implies that the Subjunctive has a strong affinity with syntactic subordination – hence my choice for its name. In certain cases, this affinity means that the Subjunctive will combine with/be required by formal subordinators, in a way reminiscent of the subjunctives found in European languages. But quite often – and crucially for the topic of the present volume – the syntactic consequence will be that the Torres Subjunctive is capable of *creating* a relation of dependency between two clauses, *even in the absence of any specific subordinator*.

These issues will form the essentials of the discussion in §3.5. But before we turn to them, it is necessary to address the paradox of the hortative.

3.4 The special case of the hortative

The preceding paragraphs may have given the impression that the Torres languages make it impossible for an utterance to consist of a single clause marked as Subjunctive. Even though this may be indeed very close to the truth, there is in fact one exception to this generalization: the case of third-person hortatives.

When the speaker orders that an action be performed by the addressee, he will use an *imperative*. In the Torres languages this may be marked by the Aorist, or more often by the verb alone:

- (34) a. Hiw *Tō me!* ~ Wöt *tō me!*
 go:SG hither AOR:2SG go:SG hither
- b. LTG *Vēn me!* ~ We *vēn me!*
 go hither AOR:2SG go hither
 ‘Come here!’

When the person in control of the desired state of affairs is distinct from the addressee, the corresponding speech act, described typologically as a *hortative* (van der Auwera, Dobrushina & Goussev 2008), may also be coded by the Aorist, as in (32f) above. In addition, for *third-person hortatives*, the two Torres languages can also use their Subjunctive:

- (35) a. Hiw *N’ on mitiř yō-ñwe kye!*
 3SG SBJV sleep LOC-house my
- b. LTG *Nie vēn metur l-eñwe mino!*
 3SG SBJV sleep LOC-house my
 (*I order/suggest...*) ‘Let him sleep at my house!’

This functional equivalence between the Aorist and the Subjunctive is also found with *third-person optatives*:

- (36) LTG *Ne teñwēte vën toge mē-ke !*
 ART peace SBJV stay with-you
 (*I wish*) ‘May peace be with you!’

This use of the subjunctive for hortatives or optatives is typologically common,¹⁷ as witnessed by Latin *Veniat!* ‘Let him come!’ or *Pax sit semper vobiscum* ‘May peace be always with you’ (cf. Ernout & Thomas 1953: 239). However it seems to be at odds with the definition I gave of the Torres Subjunctive in §3.3.2, where it was stated that this marker does not convey any speech act value. If this is so, then where does the illocutionary force of these hortative or optative utterances find its source? And how is it possible that sentences such as (35a–b) and (36) are perfectly well-formed, while (33a–b) was ungrammatical?

The answer to this paradox does not lie with the Subjunctive itself: obviously, if hortative/optative modality were intrinsically built into this marker, then it should convey it in every sentence, and an utterance such as (33a–b) should be correct. This means we need to take seriously the only difference that distinguishes (33) from (35): the *prosody* – which is very roughly represented here by the punctuation. On the one hand, the prosodic contour of (33a–b), that of a declarative statement, results in the pragmatic incompleteness of the sentence. On the other hand, the prosody of (35a–b), which is characteristic of orders and exclamatory sentences – a high pitch plateau ending in an instant fall – makes the sentence grammatical.

In my interpretation, the particular suprasegmental profile of the sentence is the locus where the needed illocutionary force is lodged, and must be sought. The ungrammaticality of (33a–b) showed that the function of the Subjunctive, namely the mere representation of a virtual State of affairs, did not find enough support in the declarative modality to constitute a well-formed utterance. Conversely, what (35a–b) reveals is that an intonation typical of orders and exclamations, because it is markedly anchored in the speaker’s desires and emotions, is sufficient to provide that virtual State of affairs with the modal value and illocutionary force it needs to form a correct utterance.

Semantically, this formal asymmetry indeed makes sense. Such a mental construct as a virtual state of affairs can hardly be *stated* in any way; but it can still be represented in an emotional perspective – which is what exclamatory utterances tend to mimic. This contrast accounts, respectively, for the incompatibility between the Subjunctive and the declarative modality, and for its affinity with the intonation of orders and exclamations.¹⁸

17. See Noonan (1985: 54): “Main clause subjunctives tend to be used in modal, hortative, or imperative senses”.

18. A similar hypothesis was proposed in François (1997: 66) to explain why certain languages encode their imperative with some linguistic structures (noun phrases, infinitives, subjunctive clauses...) which would constitute an ill-formed declarative sentence. Despite their

In sum, (35) and (36) constitute no exception to the general principles outlined in §3.3.2, namely that an irrealis event can constitute a sentence if, and only if, it is involved in a modal predication of some kind. But while every other irrealis TAM marker in the Torres languages has an inbuilt illocutionary force that makes it well-designed for the formation of a valid utterance – cf. (32a–g) – this is not the case with the Subjunctive, which is under-specified in this regard. As a result, the only way for a Subjunctive verb to form a correct sentence, is to receive its illocutionary force “from outside”. Most of the time, this external source for the coding of modality will correspond to a different clause, that syntactically belongs outside the Subjunctive clause; this point will account for the strong ties of this marker with syntactic subordination (§3.5). As for (35a–b) and (36), they illustrate a more particular case, where the specific illocutionary force is lodged “outside” the verbal form strictly speaking, yet still has to be found within the formal limits of the clause itself: in its prosody.

All things considered, the functions of hortative and optative which are sometimes fulfilled by the Subjunctive do not contradict its earlier description as a *modally under-specified*, indeterminate irrealis marker.

3.5 From modal indeterminacy to syntactic subordination

In sum, the Subjunctive is the only irrealis TAM category of the Torres languages which does not inherently convey any modal value or illocutionary force. Unless it receives the latter from some modally charged intonation pattern, it is therefore unable to constitute a valid utterance on its own.¹⁹

The principal corollary of this description is the strong ties that exist between this irrealis TAM marker and the syntax of clause dependency. I will first review the various cases where the Subjunctive combines with a clause that is already marked formally as subordinate: complement clauses, relative clauses, conditional sentences, etc. In a subsequent section (§3.5.2), I will show that the presence of an overt subordinator is in fact not even necessary for the Subjunctive to be able to encode syntactic dependency between clauses.

3.5.1 *The subjunctive combined with overt subordinators*

Quite often, the backgrounded clause is already marked as dependent by means of a subordinator of some sort. This is the case, for example, when a clausal complement is

morphological variety, these linguistic structures all share a similar semantic function: the representation of a virtual State of affairs. More recently, Nick Evans has addressed similar issues under the cover term “Insubordination” (Evans 2007).

19. This TAM marker corresponds to what Cristofaro (1998, 2003) calls a “deranked” verb form: that is, a form – of which the Italian Subjunctive would be another illustration – “that is structurally different from those used in independent declarative clauses” (Cristofaro 2008).

introduced by means of a complementizer (Hiw *tom*, LTG *të*), after a verb of manipulation or expectation (see §2.2.1):

- (37) Hiw *Mařenage sa gatët ti tekñwa TOM*
 chief their say DAT people COMP
ne veřoye on pa.
 ART war SBJV finish
 [lit. The chief asked the people *that the war be stopped.*]
 ‘The chief asked his people to stop the war.’

- (38) LTG *Dege toge säh TË ne gengën*
 1INCL:PL stay wait COMP ART food
vë howse pah.
 SBJV cooked finish
 ‘Let’s wait till the food is completely cooked.’

The same formal structure {complementizer + Subjunctive} is used for purpose clauses, either with the same subject or with one different from the main clause.

- (39) Hiw *Sise myö ti ne töt ga ñot TOM sise*
 3PL pull PRF ART root kava one COMP 3PL
on ni yö gemoy.
 SBJV drink LOC men’s.house
 ‘They’ve pulled out a head of kava *so as to* drink it in the men’s house.’

- (40) LTG *Hör t’ ò ñwule me vete mi hōr TË*
 3DU PROSP DU:S return hither place POSS 3DU COMP
nie vë menēwe.
 3SG SBJV breathe
 ‘They are going back to their place for him to get some rest.’

Syntactic dependency may also be marked by a relativizer (§2.2.3). The Subjunctive is required when the relative clause is semantically irrealis and/or generic (cf. Eng. *whoever*):

- (41) Hiw *Tekñwa PETOM sise on tati*
 people REL 3PL SBJV NEG
voyi wřog, ne temët quř-ise.
 escape through ART Ghost crunch-3PL
 ‘All those *who were unable to escape*, the monster would devour them.’

- (42) LTG *N’ ēve wë nihe vë vese hivi-ke,*
 ART thing REL 3PL SBJV say DAT-2SG
nike rōñtë urvë.
 2SG listen properly
 ‘Whatever they may tell you, you must obey them.’

As we saw in §2.2.4, adverbial time clauses generally take the form of a relative clause hooked on the noun ‘time, moment’, with or without an overt relativizer. When the time reference of the subordinate clause is irrealis or generic, the Subjunctive is expected:

- (43) HIW TAKETIMERĒN PE *ne tayō on mēt, tite*
time REL ART person SBJV die 1INCL:PL
tivig n’ opē-ne.
bury ART body-3SG
‘When(ever) somebody dies, we bury their body.’
- (44) LTG MOWE wē si tēle vë mōo, dege leklok mē.
time REL some person SBJV sick 1INCL:PL help with.3SG
‘When(ever) somebody gets sick, we help them.’
- (45) LTG MOWE kemë vë da-togin, nike vën me
time/when 1EXCL:PL SBJV be-ready 2SG go hither
dege ñwule.
1INCL:PL return
‘When we’re ready, you can come here so we can go back together.’
- (46) LTG Noke tē ke vën ke tugtugerë remë mino
1SG PROSP 1SG go 1SG watch mother my
MOWE nie vë metur.
time/when 3SG SBJV sleep
‘I will watch my mother when she’s asleep.’

An irrealis clause can be embedded within another irrealis clause, in which case the Subjunctive percolates throughout. (47) shows three instances of *vë(n)*: the first one (*vën itë*) is due to the semantic status of the time clause as generic (‘whenever’); the next two (*vë sōw vë lewō*) constitute a second level of subordination, being a complement clause within that time clause [see also (51) below]. Incidentally, the string /*vë sōw vë lewō*/ is a serial verb construction, of the type that requires the repetition of the TAM marker (see §2.4):

- (47) LTG {MOWE kemëm vën itë [TĒ ne ho
time/when 1EXCL:PL SBJV see COMP ART leaf
in vë sōw vë lewō pe si] },
its SBJV grow SBJV big already PRF
alē kemë ge lio.
then 1EXCL:PL AOR:PL dig.up
‘When(ever) we see that [the taro’s] leaves have grown (and become) big,
we dig it up.’

Finally, the protasis of conditional sentences (§2.2.2) constitutes another structure where the Subjunctive often combines with the subordinator ‘if’:

- (48) LTG TEWĒTĒ *ne liō vĕ ñih, nīe si hue*
 if ART mind:2SG SBJV want 2SG POT paddle
o rōw vete qe ē.
 out out place deep OBL
 ‘If you want, you can also paddle (your canoe) out there into the deep sea.’
- (49) HIW {TOMÑWĒTOM *se on vĕn yō veřoye, s’*
 if 3PL SBJV go:PL LOC war 3PL
on qĕtnog ne tayō ne tayō on qĕt }, *sisē*
 SBJV kill:PL ART person ART person SBJV die:PL 3PL
viye n’ opĕ-se me se mok eřē qoř.
 take:PL ART body-3PL hither 3PL put on grave
 ‘{ If/WHEN the population went to war, and many people were killed and died }, their bodies were then collected and deposited in stone graves.’

Note that the Subjunctive never occurs in the *apodosis* of such conditional sentences, because this is a section of the sentence which needs to have its own illocutionary force – as in (31g) above.

These Examples (37) to (49) all illustrate the strong links of the Subjunctive with subordinate structures. In each case, the Subjunctive verb phrase does no more than represent a virtual state of affairs which is, in itself, deprived of any inherent modal value. What then makes the clause interpretable, is its insertion – here via overt subordination – within a higher level predication, which is in turn specified for modality and illocutionary force.

3.5.2 *The subordinating effect of the Subjunctive alone*

Crucially, while the Subjunctive marker often combines with a subordinator, it turns out that it is also capable of creating an effect of syntactic dependency on its own. A clause marked as Subjunctive will spontaneously tend to develop a relationship of syntactic dependency with a matrix clause, even in the absence of any formal subordinator.

The most frequent case of “spontaneous” subordination is when the Subjunctive alone marks the protasis of a conditional sentence. Indeed, the conditional conjunctions ‘if’ – illustrated in §2.2.2 and in (48)–(49) – become optional when the verb is marked with the Subjunctive. In the majority of cases, the TAM morpheme is sufficient to encode the subordinate status of the clause:

- (50) LTG Nĕke vĕ vese tĕ ne genegone vĕ vĕn,
 1SG SBJV say COMP ART war SBJV go
ne genegone tĕ ni vĕn.
 ART war PROSP 3SG go
 ‘(If) I say that the war (must) go on, then the war will go on.’

- (51) Hiw Ik' on fōñ tom sē gē on fāk ti,
 2SG SBJV hear COMP some thing SBJV make PRF
ike ta tōw ne wēt eye.
 2SG POT compose ART song OBL
 '(IF) you hear that some event has happened,
 you can compose your song about it.'

- (52) Hiw Ik' on sēf-ie on yoqse, n' ēptgō nēne!
 2SG SBJV spear-3SG SBJV miss ART shame that
 '(IF) you try to spear him and you miss, then shame on you!'

Rather than hypothesizing a form of conjunction ellipsis, it is probably more accurate to suggest that the semantic dependency is inherently encapsulated in the modal morpheme itself.²⁰ Quite often, this leads to the impression that the Subjunctive marker itself is in fact a sort of conjunction meaning 'if'. Consider for example the idiomatic phrase 'if not' (Hiw *on tego*; LTG *vē tategë*):

- (53) Hiw Tite gon ne pēta, on tego, gon ne qēte.
 1INCL:PL eat ART yam SBJV NEG:EXIST eat ART taro
 'We'll eat some yam; if not (=or else), some taro.'

The similarity of the Subjunctive morpheme with a conditional conjunction is not merely an effect of translation, but also appears to be a reality for the speakers themselves. This is clear, for example, in this sentence of Hiw:

- (54) Hiw On yō kōñ, sise yō ñwutuye ne vti
 SBJV/if LOC night 3PL see only ART star
ve yay rē mesaye.
 IPFV shine on sky
 'If at night, they would just watch the stars that shine in the sky.'

It is true that locative phrases – including prepositional phrases like *yō kōñ* 'at night' – may be used with the syntactic function of predicate (§2.1.3). However, this is always done in the form of a direct predicate, incompatible with any TAM marker.²¹ Therefore, the combination of the subjunctive *on* with the phrase *yō kōñ*, rather than being seen as plain TAM marking – which would be grammatically abnormal here – would probably be better explained by a form of specialization of *on* as a form of (quasi)

20. A similar pattern of grammaticalisation can be found in some West Germanic languages. Thus in English, the modal auxiliary *should* in sentence-initial position takes up the function of a conditional conjunction: e.g. *SHOULD you be in Paris, call me* (see Van der Auwera & Plungian 1998: 98).

21. In other words, the part of speech *LOCATIVE* in these languages is "directly predicative", but not "TAM-sensitive" (François 2005a: 192).

conjunction, similar to other conditional subordinators also present in this language (§2.2.2). Incidentally, this pattern is only attested in Hiw: Lo-Toga would have to use one of its genuine conjunctions here (*tewëtë li qeñ* ‘IF [it were] at night’). This last point tends to confirm that (54) illustrates an extreme case in the evolution path of the Subjunctive, which Hiw has reached but not its close neighbour.

When a sentence-initial clause is marked by the Subjunctive alone, it can be ambiguous between a strict conditional reading – equivalent to the *if*-clauses of (48)–(49) – and a future or generic time interpretation – corresponding to the *when*-clauses of (43)–(47) above.

- (55) Hiw Ne ñwute on meyigegege ttëñ, ike tëñ aṛ
 ART place SBJV dark pitch 2SG grope seek
 ñwutuye ne wōnaye.
 just ART road
 ‘(E/WHEN) it’s pitch dark, you just have to grope your way.’

- (56) LTG Ne tō vē ele gega wë nōk, tate
 ART fowl SBJV crow always like this NEG
 pero tē ne metave ni tōt.
 long COMP ART morning AOR chop
 ‘(EVERY TIME) the cock crows like that, (this means) day is almost breaking.’

- (57) LTG Deñwëk noke vē ñwule, noke tē k’ ole si vot.
 today 1SG SBJV return 1SG PROSP 1SG:S take some stone
 ‘Today (WHEN) I go back, I’ll take some money with me.’

The proper interpretation will be given by the context. If the situation is expected to take place anyway – e.g. short-time visitors are expected to go back to their place sooner or later – it will translate as a *when* clause. But if the hypothesis is uncertain, then the topic clause will correspond to a conditional sentence proper. Obviously, the speakers get by perfectly well with this semantic ambiguity, and do not necessarily feel the need to disambiguate these situations, even though they do have the formal means to do so (see §2.2.2, §2.2.4).

The irrealis value of the Subjunctive does not only cover such time references as future and generic present. It is also found in past contexts – whether real or fictitious past, as in narratives – provided the event is presented as iterative:

- (58) Hiw Tekñwa on ñwuye me ton ne řekove
 people SBJV return hither from ART work
 sa, s’ on vën wate me, se vën se motřig.
 their 3PL SBJV go:PL until hither AOR:3PL go:PL AOR:3PL sleep:PL
 ‘(EVERY TIME) the group came back from their labour and reached home,
 they would go to sleep.’

- (59) LTG Ne *n̄wië vë* ere nie vete'k, ni
 ART Ogre SBJV hit:SG 3SG here AOR:3SG
wël vën wë nōk.
 leap thither like this
 '(WHENEVER) the Ogre tried to hit him, he would jump away like this.'

This is where sentence (1) – cited in §1.2 – would fit:

- (1) HIW Ne temët **on** tō yaqe me n̄wë
 ART devil SBJV go:SG appear hither like
 ne, tekñwa voyi.
 this people AOR:RUN.away
 '(WHENEVER) the devil appeared, people would run away.'

This use of the Subjunctive in the expression of past iterative events in time clauses, paradoxical though it may be, finds its parallel in the Classical Latin “subjunctive of repetition” (Ernout & Thomas 1953: 400):

- LAT Id ubi **dix-isse-t**, hasta-m in fines
 that when say-SBJV:PLUPRF-3SG spear-ACC to territory
 eorum emitte-ba-t.
 their throw-IND:IMPRF-3SG
 'WHEN(EVER) he thus spoke, he would throw a spear into their territory.'
 [Livy I, 32, 13]

Irrealis relative clauses are formed along similar lines. Compare (42) above with (60), where the subordinate status is exclusively coded by the mood marker:

- (60) LTG N' *ēve nēke vën* alegōr tē tat rak,
 ART thing 1SG SBJV forbid COMP NEG:IRR do
heñwere pah tē ge rōñtë.
 people all PROSP PL:S listen
 'Whatever I may ban people from doing, they will have to comply.'

The presence of the article (*ne*) in (61) makes it clear that *mowe* is a noun meaning 'time' (rather than a subordinator, cf. §2.2.4), and that we are dealing here with an irrealis relative clause with no relativizer:

- (61) LTG ... *vën wahe ne mowe* nēke **vën** tēmetō.
 go until ART time 1SG SBJV old.man
 '... until the time (WHEN) I get old.'

Finally, while purpose clauses can include a complementizer as in (39)–(40) above, they may also do without any conjunction:

- (62) HIW *Noke tegtegagyē* ne megoye kye {n' **on** toge varōñ}.
 1SG IPFV~mislead ART child my 3SG SBJV stay quiet
 'I'm amusing my baby (so) he keeps quiet.'

- (63) LTG *We tōw ne mon, we veñkë ne mesor*
 AOR:2SG aim.at ART bird AOR:2SG let.go ART arrow
 { *vë vën vë qihe nie* }.
 SBJV go SBJV bang 3SG
 ‘You aim at the bird, then you shoot your arrow (so) it flies and knocks it.’

3.6 From clause dependency to lexical derivation

The pattern illustrated in (63), whereby a purpose clause can be coded by the Subjunctive *vë* alone, is the source of a process of reanalysis completed by Lo-Toga, but not Hiw. This process involves several steps leading to patterns of resultative (pseudo-) serialization, resultative compounding, and even causative derivation. I will conclude my analysis of the Torres Subjunctive by detailing the successive steps of this reanalysis. This will confirm the powerful affinity of the Subjunctive morpheme not only with clause dependency, but also with predicate binding, including an ultimate tendency towards the fusion of verb roots into one word.

Lo-Toga has developed a resultative construction that is clearly derived from the purposive subordination structure (63), yet with a tighter relationship between the two verbal heads, in a manner reminiscent of verb serialization. When a first dynamic event V_1 (generally a verb of impact) results in a state V_2 , then V_2 is obligatorily marked as a Subjunctive. The structure { V_1 *vë* v_2 } is particularly frequent in Lo-Toga:

- (64) LTG *Ole ne gi, ge tōt vë wureri,*
 take ART kava AOR:PL chop SBJV small:PL
ge gët vë menō.
 AOR:PL chew SBJV soft
 (Procedural explanations about how to process kava, a woody plant
 which is ground and brewed into a narcotic drink)
 ‘Take a branch of kava, mince_[Aor] it small_[Sbjv], then chew_[Aor] it soft_[Sbjv].’

A sentence like (62) above unambiguously consisted of two distinct clauses: the main verb was immediately followed by its object (*the baby*), and the latter referent was repeated, in the form of a pronoun, as the formal subject within the subordinate purpose clause. Comparison between (62) and the two resultative constructions in (64) – respectively *tōt vë wureri* and *gët vë menō* – shows similarities and differences. On the one hand, the underlying syntactic structures are identical: the subject of V_2 coincides with the object of V_1 . But on the other hand, (64) shows tighter structure than (62). Its two verbs are not separated by any noun phrase, be it the object of V_1 or the subject of V_2 ; the only morpheme

that divides V_1 from V_2 in each construction is the Subjunctive *vë*. Phonologically speaking, the strings { V_1 *vë* V_2 } are uttered under a single contour with no internal pause, as if forming a single syntactic phrase.

The compactness of the constructions in (64) is confirmed by (65): if a noun phrase occurs, it is preferably postposed to the whole phrase { V_1 *vë* V_2 } rather than inserted in between.

(65) LTG *Dōr* *si* *gët* *vë* *menō* *ne* *gi* *ne*.
 1INCL:DU POT chew SBJV soft ART kava this
 ‘We can chew this kava soft.’

(66) LTG *Dege* *të* *ge* *lōv* *vë* *ñwedōl* *ne*
 1INCL:PL PROSP PL:S call SBJV short ART
iē *të* ‘Alex’.
 your.name QUOT (name)
 ‘We shall (*pronounce shortly* =) shorten your name to *Alex*.’

Functionally as well as formally, these strings { V_1 *vë* V_2 } have a lot in common with serial verb constructions (§2.4), the only difference being that the TAM marking differs between V_1 and V_2 . Syntactically, this sequence of verbs behaves globally like a single, transitive macro-verb. In a way, it would even make sense to consider the whole string a single lexical unit (*gët-vë-menō* ‘soften by chewing’; *lōv-vë-ñwedōl* ‘shorten’), as through a process of *lexical compounding*.

Arguably, the form *vë* in these compound forms has come to have a status of its own:²² instead of coding the Subjunctive, it could be described here as a kind of “buffer” affix linking two verb roots together, with resultative meaning. This new analysis could result in an alternative transcription and gloss for (65):

(65’) LTG *Dōr* *si* *gët-vë-menō* *ne* *gi* *ne*.
 1INCL:DU POT chew-RESULT-soft ART kava this
 ‘We can “soft-chew” this kava.’

Interestingly, Lo-Toga is the only language in north Vanuatu that has developed this pattern of resultative structure, using a buffer morpheme like *vë*. All its neighbours – including Hiw – would simply construct their resultative macro-verbs by resorting to a simple pattern of nuclear-layer serialization (François 2004, 2006). Thus, the equivalent of (65) in Mwotlap would be *kuy madamdaw na-ga/chew soft ART-kava/*, with nothing between the two verb radicals.

22. Note that the variant *vën* is never attested in these new structures, which in other words tends to confirm that the Subjunctive marker has adopted a new grammatical status here.

While sentences like (64)–(66) are still somewhat ambiguous and compatible with more than one interpretation, some other examples provide an even clearer case for a compounding analysis. This is especially true when the first verb before *vë* is the dummy auxiliary *da* ‘do’ (also ‘be’), which does not exist as an independent verb. The string *da-vë-* thus serves as a productive prefix in Lo-Toga for the formation of causative (transitive) verbs out of stative (intransitive) verbs or adjectives (Table 1).

Table 1. Resultative compounds of Lo-Toga, incorporating the Subjunctive/Resultative morpheme *vë*

SIMPLE VERB/ADJECTIVE			RESULTATIVE COMPOUND	
<i>menō</i>	‘soft’	→	<i>gët-vë-menō</i>	‘soften by chewing’
		→	<i>qihih-vë-menō</i>	‘soften by grinding’
<i>ñwedōl</i>	‘short’	→	<i>lōv-vë-ñwedōl</i>	‘shorten (a name)’
<i>mōo</i>	‘sick’	→	<i>da-vë-mōo</i>	‘make s.o. sick, sicken’
<i>mēmerie</i>	‘painful’	→	<i>da-vë-mēmerie</i>	‘hurt (body part)’
<i>luwō</i>	‘big’	→	<i>da-vë-luwō</i>	‘make bigger, enlarge’
<i>hemrë</i>	‘laugh’	→	<i>da-vë-hemrë</i>	‘talk playfully, joke’
<i>duwër</i>	‘false’	→	<i>da-vë-duwër</i>	‘pretend’
<i>rōor</i>	‘holy’	→	<i>da-vë-rōor</i>	‘consecrate, baptize’

(67) LTG *Temētrōñ tat ho da-vë-mōo ne tēle.*
 healer NEG:IRR POT:NEG do-RESULT-sick ART person
 ‘Healers cannot make people sick.’

(68) LTG *Ne ri ñwēl na deda-vë-mēmerie*
 ART top.of reef STAT ITER~do-RESULT-painful
ne teplē tēle.
 ART foot person
 ‘The surface of the coral reef hurts the feet.’

(69) LTG *Tate hehu da-vë-rōor nihe që.*
 NEG bathe do-RESULT-holy 3PL still
 [lit. (one) has not bathed consecrated them yet]
 ‘They haven’t been baptized yet.’

Once again, these examples are open to two morphological analyses. It is still possible to consider them compoundings between two lexical roots (*da* ‘do’ + *mōo* ‘sick’), hence the gloss /do-RESULT-sick/. But due to the relative productiveness of the process, and the low semantic specificity of the first auxiliary, it would be equally accurate to speak synchronically of a process of lexical derivation that actually combines a single lexical

unit (V_2) with a CAUSATIVE prefix *davë-*. In the latter case, one could transcribe (67) as *davë-mōo* and gloss it /CAUS-sick/.²³

The historical and/or logical processes outlined here can be described as a series of morphosyntactic reanalyses. Starting from a clear pattern of subordination between two clauses, each step corresponds to a tighter relationship between the verbs of each clause, and ultimately results in a specialized pattern of causative derivation (Table 2).

Table 2. From biclausal purpose subordination to causative derivation: the binding power of the Subjunctive

EX.	SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS	ROOTS	VERBS	CLAUSES
(40)	V_1 = main clause V_2 = dependent purpose clause, with subordinator	2	2	2
(62)	V_1 = main clause V_2 = dependent purpose clause, without subordinator	2	2	2
(64)	V_1 = first action in resultative (quasi) serialization V_2 = resulting state in resultative (quasi) serialization	2	2	1
(65)	V_1 = first radical in resultative compound verb V_2 = second radical in resultative compound verb	2	1	1
(67)	V_1 = (dummy verb) > <i>causative prefix</i> V_2 = stative verb, input of causative derivation	1	1	1

3.7 The Subjunctive: Summary

The various functions of the Subjunctive in the two Torres languages are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The narrow ties between the Subjunctive and clause dependency: A summary

SYNTAX	FUNCTIONAL VALUE	EXAMPLES
no subordination	hortative & optative (3sg)	(35)–(36)
combines with subordinators	modally-bound complement clauses	(37)–(38)
	purpose clauses	(39)–(40)
	irrealis & generic relative clauses	(41)–(42)
	irrealis adverbial time clauses	(43)–(47)
	irrealis conditional protases	(48)–(49)
directly encodes subordination	irrealis conditional protases	(50)–(52)
	⇒ [Hrw] reinterpreted as conjunction <i>if</i>	(53)–(54)
	irrealis & generic adverbial time clauses	(55)–(59)
	irrealis & generic relative clauses	(60)–(61)
	irrealis purpose clauses	(62)–(66)
	⇒ [LTG] resultative compounding	(65)–(69)
	> causative derivation	

23. This prefix has thus, in function, replaced the Proto Oceanic causative prefix **paka-*, which has essentially left no trace in the two Torres languages.

4. The Background Perfect: In search of a focus

The TAM category I propose to label “Background Perfect” offers a broadly similar, yet quite distinct illustration of the phenomenon just discussed with the Subjunctive. The general mechanism behind the two patterns is the same: the semantic and pragmatic identity of a TAM marker makes it particularly prone to the syntactic coding of clause dependency. Nevertheless, the case of the perfect is sufficiently different to warrant a section of its own.

The question addressed here is the following: how can the Background Perfect marker (*ve... si*) clearly form a subordinate – relative – clause in a sentence like (2), and yet do without any overt subordinator? What is there in its makeup that renders it syntactically different from other realis categories, and especially different from the regular Perfect?

- (2) LTG *Ne gehuh ve kerkur tēle si mat mēt.*
 ART coconut.crab BKPF₁ ITER~crunch person BKPF₂ CPLT die
 [*lit.* The coconut crab *has devoured people* has died.]
 ‘The coconut crab (*who*) *had devoured people* was dead.’

Once again, I shall argue that the syntactic power of this marker must ultimately be understood as an outgrowth of its main functional property, namely, its ability to mark the informational status of its predicate as *presupposed*. Due to this form of *pragmatic demotion*, the predicate phrase thus marked needs to search for an external focus of information, which will typically result in a syntactic relation of dependency between clauses.

4.1 The two perfects and sentential focus

Among the various TAM categories that can denote a realis event (§2.1.2), the two Torres languages have a Stative, an Imperfective, and two perfects. I will briefly present the first two of these TAM markers, before I turn to the difference between the last two which are derived from the former.

4.1.1 Stative vs. Imperfective

The Stative [Hiw *ně(gě)*, LTG *na*] is followed exclusively by stative predicates, that is, stative verbs and adjectives:

- (70) LTG *Ne vavetēme mi kemi na deřēñha.*
 ART language POSS 2PL STAT difficult
 ‘Your language is difficult.’

The only way for a semantically dynamic verb to be compatible with this marker is to first be converted into a habitual (and therefore stative) predicate, by means of reduplication:

- (71) LTG *(*Nēke na si.*) → *Nēke na sesi.*
 *1SG STAT walk 1SG STAT ITER~walk
 *(I walk.) → ‘I usually walk, *i.e.* I am a (good) walker.’

As for the Imperfective (HIW/LTG *ve*),²⁴ it encompasses two aspectual values (cf. Comrie 1976): the progressive (72) and the habitual (73):

- (72) LTG *Remë mē ve kerë.*
 mother his IPFV weep
 ‘His mother is/was weeping.’
- (73) LTG *Nihe ve lōv nie tē “Temētrōñ”.*
 3PL IPFV call 3SG QUOT Healer
 ‘People call him “Healer”.’

The same Imperfective *ve* also takes part in several progressive structures based on verb serialization { *ve Posture verb* V₁ + *ve Action verb* V₂ }: see §2.4, ex. (28a).

Verbs that are lexically stative (including adjectives) are sometimes found to combine with the Imperfective, in which case they take on a dynamic reading:

- (74) a. LTG *Ne vete na medudut.*
 ART place STAT black
 ‘It’s dark.’ [STATIVE reading]
- b. LTG *Ne vete ve medudut.*
 ART place IPFV black
 ‘It’s getting dark.’ [DYNAMIC reading]

However, setting aside these rare cases, it is generally true that the Stative and the Imperfective tend to target two different sets of verbs, respectively stative and dynamic. Obviously this makes it difficult to carry out any extensive comparison of these two TAM markers. But as we shall now see, the situation is totally different for the two perfects that are derived from them.

4.1.2 *The two perfects*

I now turn to the two perfects of the Torres languages, which will form the heart of the following discussion: the regular Perfect (HIW *nē...ti*/LTG *na...si*) and the Background Perfect (HIW *ve...ti*/LTG *ve...si*).²⁵

24. Beside the widespread form *ve* [βə], Lo-Toga also possesses a rare variant *me* [mə]; likewise, *me...si* constitutes a (rare) variant of its Background Perfect *ve...si*. Incidentally, there is no reason to suspect any etymological connection between the element *ve* [βə] of the Imperfective and the Lo-Toga form of the Subjunctive *vë* [βɛ]: they are two unrelated morphemes.

25. Unlike Lo-Toga where the contrast is systematically coded, Hiw is problematic in that it treats the two proclitics – respectively *në* and *ve* – as optional (see Table 4). Quite often, a

Morphologically speaking, one may say that these two perfect markers show a straightforward correspondence with the Stative and the Imperfective, as they simply consist in the combination of the latter with the postclitic **ti*.²⁶ However, the clitic **ti* only occurs in combination with TAM markers, with various semantic effects, and cannot be assigned any stable meaning unto itself. It is therefore methodologically safer – and probably more realistic from the speaker’s point of view – to consider each compound TAM marker as a single meaningful morpheme, albeit a discontinuous one. As a result, while the form *na* alone was glossed STAT(IVE), I shall gloss the sequence *na...si* as PRF₁...PRF₂, with no attempt to arrive at a compositional analysis.²⁷ As for the semantic processes that may have led to the creation of these compound forms, that is a matter for history, and goes beyond the limits of the present study.

Considered from a purely semantic angle, the two TAM categories under consideration are synonymous, as they both correspond to the typological definition of the *perfect* aspect. They represent a realis event insofar as it is complete, and place the cursor in the resultant state that follows that event.

- (75) a. LTG *Kemëm na gil o si ne keka tekële.*
 IEXCL:PL PRF₁ dig out PRF₂ ART yam some
 ‘We have dug out a few yams.’
- b. LTG *Ne keka tekële kemëm ve gil o si.*
 ART yam some IEXCL:PL BKPF₁ dig out BKPF₂
 ‘(These are) a few yams we have dug out.’

Because they both point to the resultant state that follows the final boundary of a completed state of affairs, they are equally compatible with stative and with dynamic predicates. This contrasts with the Stative and the Imperfective, which tend to combine with distinct sets of verbs – stative vs. dynamic – as we saw earlier (§4.1.1). Thus, while the

perfect predicate will be tagged by the postclitic *ti* alone – as in (19) or (39) – blurring the contrast between the two perfects. This is why the present section will mainly cite examples from Lo-Toga, where the phenomenon is much more conspicuous. This being said, when the proclitics of Hiw are overtly marked – as in (76) or (79) – they do conform to the same principles as in Lo-Toga.

26. To be precise, Lo-Toga alternates between two allomorphs: an assimilated form *si* (< **ti*), and an elided form *t’* [t] when preceded or followed by a vowel – see (80), (87), (88). Here I lump the two synchronic allomorphs together under the underlying (and ancestral) form **ti*, for the sake of discussion.

27. I adopted similar methodological principles for the analysis of discontinuous TAM markers in Mwotlap (François 2003: 30 sqq, 343). Incidentally, most of the compound forms of Mwotlap involved postclitic *tō* [tu], with which the Torres form *ti/si* is cognate.

dynamic verb *gil o* ‘dig out’ is incompatible with the Stative *na* (\rightarrow **na gil o*), it can perfectly take the standard Perfect which is derived from it (\rightarrow *na gil o si*).²⁸

Yet, even though the two perfects may be said to be synonymous in terms of their aspectual semantics, they are not functionally equivalent, and in fact occur in distinct contexts. The difference between these two TAM categories is best defined in pragmatic terms, by contrasting the manner in which they organize the informational hierarchy within the sentence: to use the terms of Lambrecht (1994: 52), the standard Perfect puts its predicate under the scope of the *assertion*, whereas the Background Perfect explicitly encodes its status as a *pragmatic presupposition* (Table 4). This use of TAM markers for coding informational hierarchy is typologically original.

Table 4. Hiw and Lo-Toga have two Perfects; their difference lies in the pragmatic status of the predicate

	HIW	LO-TOGA	PRAGMATIC STATUS OF PREDICATE
(Standard) Perfect	(<i>ně</i>)... <i>ti</i>	<i>na</i> ... <i>si</i>	asserted/foregrounded
Background Perfect	(<i>ve</i>)... <i>ti</i>	<i>ve</i> ... <i>si</i>	presupposed/backgrounded

4.1.3 When TAM markers encode informational hierarchy

The regular Perfect (Hiw *ně...ti*, LTG *na...si*) represents the predicate as a realis perfect event *and* it places it under the scope of the sentence’s informational focus. This is the pragmatically unmarked situation, where the syntactic center of the sentence coincides with its pragmatic center in terms of assertion – as in (75a) or (76a):

- (76) a. Hiw *Ike ttöm tom ne tiř mon, pa*
 2SG think COMP ART true bird but
tego. Ně řak ti.
 NEG:EXIST PRF₁ make PRF₂
 ‘You could think it’s a real bird, but far from it. (Somebody) made it.’

As for the Background Perfect (Hiw *ve...ti*, LTG *ve...si*), it also construes a realis perfect predicate, but explicitly specifies its informational status as pragmatically presupposed, i.e. defocused. Crucially, a predicate phrase marked with the Background Perfect (henceforth “BkPf”), due to this backgrounded status, cannot constitute a well-formed utterance on its own:

- (76) b. Hiw **Ve řak ti.*
 BKPF₁ make BKPF₂
 *{ (somebody) made it... }_[background]

28. This freedom of actionality combinations provides further support for the view explained above, that the two perfects should not be analyzed compositionally, but as (discontinuous) TAM markers in their own right, with specific properties.

In contrast to (76a) *ně řak ti*, a sentence like (76b) would be deemed incomplete. This is because an utterance, in order to be pragmatically valid, needs to contain at least some new, assertional information.²⁹ Insofar as the BkPf tags a predicate phrase as presupposed, it makes it unable to constitute a correct utterance by itself; in order to be interpretable, the sentence needs some other constituent with which the pragmatic assertion can be identified.

Occasionally, the background status applies to the whole clause (i.e. the predicate with its arguments and complements), which is then entirely marked as presupposed. This is what happens, for example, when the speaker refers back to an event that is already known to the addressee, as a reminder. Thus compare the regular Perfect of (77a), where the whole clause is fully new, and the Background Perfect of (77b), where it only serves as a reminder of an already known fact:

- (77) a. LTG *Sesē na hag si !*
 your.sister PRF₁ sit PRF₂
 ‘Hey! { Your sister has given birth! }_[focus]’
- b. LTG *Sesē ve hag si : ne teñwën hitë ne leqëvine?*
 your.sister BKPF₁ sit BKPF₂ ART male or ART female
 ‘{ Your sister has given birth (as we know): }_[background]
 { is it a boy or a girl? }_[focus]’

(77b) could be described as a case of clause topicalization.³⁰ The event marked as Background Perfect has no informational value in itself, that would allow it to form an utterance on its own; rather, it is used as a reminder to help the addressee interpret the focal part of the sentence (in this instance, the question).

4.1.4 How many clauses?

As is typically the case for topic–focus structures, the syntactic relationship between the two clauses in (77b) is still loose. While it does illustrate a form of dependency, it does not form subordination in the strict sense of the term. Most of the time, however, the Background Perfect is involved in much more tightly bound structures than this.

29. See Givón (1984: 241), Tomlin (1985), Lambrecht (1994: 60).

30. Other strategies for clause topicalization have been observed, for example, with the “background topic clauses” found in Chuave, a language of Papua New Guinea (Thurman 1979, cited by Givón 1990: 870). Clause topicalization is a common phenomenon in North Vanuatu, but in the neighbouring Banks languages, it involves the use of deictics rather than of TAM strategies (François, in prep.).

As we shall see in §4.2, the presupposed predicate quite often involves genuine subordination, e.g. a relative clause:

- (78) LTG *Lōwie ē leqëvine meke {nie ve rak*
 thanks OBL woman your 3SG BKPF₁ make
si ne tōtōgalē}.
 BKPF₂ ART picture
 ‘Thanks to your wife {(who) drew the pictures }_[background]’

One ambiguous case, however, is when the sentence apparently consists of a single predicate: this happens especially in contrastive focus sentences like (79).

- (79) HIW *NOKE ve tot ti.*
 1SG BKPF₁ carve BKPF₂
 ‘I carved it!’ (not you...)

The predicate here (*ve tot ti*) is the presupposed segment of the sentence, whereas the focal part corresponds to its grammatical subject (*noke*). In fact the sentence’s structure is quite parallel to its English counterpart, including the contrastive focal stress that affects the subject phrase, with the same pragmatic implications. All these arguments tend to suggest that (79), just like its English translation, consists of just one syntactic clause, with no possibility to speak here of clause dependency. If this were true, then we would need to temper the claim that the pragmatic mechanism of the Background Perfect almost systematically goes along with subordination. In doing so, one would have to admit that the pragmatic properties of the BkPf sometimes trigger clause dependency as in (78), but sometimes operate on a purely pragmatic level, with little incidence on the syntactic structures, as in (79). This would also challenge the statement made earlier – on the subject of (76b) – that a main clause cannot stand alone if it is marked with the Background Perfect.

In fact, we shall see below (§4.2.2.2) that the structural similarity between Lo-Toga and English in (79) is an optical illusion. It will appear that (79), like all contrastive focus patterns in the Torres languages, is best analyzed as consisting of not just one, but two distinct clauses. In doing so, I will show that the Background Perfect does not only affect the pragmatic interpretation of the sentence in terms of informational hierarchy, but also has a syntactic impact, in creating a genuine subordination relation between predicates.

4.2 From pragmatic presupposition to syntactic subordination

The following pages will illustrate in more detail this syntactic affinity between the Background Perfect and clause dependency. I will first show cases where the two perfects combine with overt subordinators (§4.2.1). I will then show that the BkPf alone may in fact suffice to generate clause dependency and subordination, without requiring

any further formal device (§4.2.2). The special syntax of contrastive focus structures will be examined in §4.2.2.2.

4.2.1 *The two perfects and overtly marked subordination*

The semantic principles exposed in §4.1.3 for main clauses are equally true for those clauses which are formally marked as dependent by means of an overt subordinator. Thus, the regular Perfect will be used whenever the subordinate clause falls under the scope of the assertion. This is the case, in general, for complement clauses attached to speech or thought verbs:

- (80) LTG *Nëke dōem { TĚ ne n̄wië na kur*
 1SG think COMP ART Ogre PRF₁ crunch
nike pe t̄ }.
 2SG already PRF₂
 ‘I thought (that) the Ogre had already devoured you.’

Regular Perfects are also found in the protasis of certain conditional clauses:

- (81) LTG { *TewētĚ ne temēt na ōla nike si* },
 if ART ghost PRF₁ take:TR 2SG PRF₂
Temētrōn tē n’ ake vēn hēr ē nike Pene.
 Healer FUT₁ 3SG FUT₂ go find OBL 2SG Hell
 ‘If the ghosts *kidnapped* you, the Healer would come and find you in Hell.’

Conversely, if a subordinate clause refers back to an already established event, then the Background Perfect will be required. This is especially true of restrictive relative clauses, whose function is precisely to point to a background element to help the addressee track referents:

- (82) LTG *ne revrev PE nēke ve hur si /*
 ART song REL 1SG BKPF₁ sing BKPF₂
 (?? *pe nēke na hur si*)
 REL 1SG PRF₁ sing PRF₂
 ‘the song { which I sang }_[background]’
- (83) LTG *Ne lilie { PE nie ve durlue si }*
 ART cave REL 3SG BKPF₁ drill BKPF₂
ve taqe wahe me deñwē’k.
 IPFV lie until hither today
 ‘The cave { which he broke open }_[background] still exists today.’

In each of these two sentences, the relative clause is unambiguously marked as subordinate by its relativiser *pe* (§2.2.3). As for the BkPf, it arguably operates on the pragmatic level, by providing its predicate with a background status.

The regular (assertive) Perfect is thus extremely rare in relative clauses. This configuration does occur however, in exceptional cases, when the informational focus is in fact located within the relative clause. Example (84) provides an illustration of this non-standard situation:

- (84) LTG *Heñwere pah tat lölmerën ë.*
 people all NEG:IRR know OBL:ADV
Heñwere { wë na huqe wereño si }
 people REL PRF₁ initiated only PRF₂
nihe ve lölmerën ë.
 3PL IPFV know OBL:ADV
 ‘Not everybody would know (these things).
 Only { *those who’ve been initiated* }_[focus] know_[background]’

Functionally, a mere repetition of the previous sentence, with no informational weight is what, syntactically, forms the main clause (*nihe ve lölmerën*) of the whole sentence. Conversely, the sentence’s assertion is located in the relative clause, which exceptionally takes the regular Perfect rather than the Background Perfect.

A sentence such as (84) tends to show that the use conditions of the two perfects in relative clauses do not obey a strict formal rule, whereby all relative clauses would mechanically take the Background Perfect. Rather, the choice of TAM marker remains a functionally productive device, based on the informational hierarchy chosen by the speaker in organizing his utterance.

4.2.2 *The subordinating effect of the Background Perfect on its own*

In sum, it would be exaggerated to say that all relative clauses – let alone all subordinate clauses – require the Background Perfect: this is only the case for those clauses which are pragmatically presupposed. Now, if we narrow down our observations to the latter configuration, an important point remains to be made. Unlike all other realis markers, the Background Perfect allows a subordinate clause to dispense with any formal subordinator, as though it were sufficient *per se* to code for clause dependency. This, as we shall see now, is especially the case with relative clauses, and the focus cleft constructions which are derived from them.

4.2.2.1 *Relative clauses*

While the BkPf is occasionally found to combine with an overt relativizer – see (82)–(83) – the most frequent pattern is for perfect relative clauses to dispense with a formal subordinator, and be simply marked by the BkPf alone (see also (78) above).

- (85) LTG *li megage { ve pah si }*
 LOC month BKPF₁ finish BKPF₂
 ‘last month’ [*lit.* in the month {(*which*) has finished}_[background]]

- (86) Hiw *Ike peon sawe-vog ne temët { tekññwa ain ve*
 2SG FUT dance-APPL ART headdress people other BKPF₁
rak ti}.
 make BKPF₂
 ‘You shall dance with a headdress { other people will have made }_[bkg]’

A superficial look at (86) could suggest a comparison with the syntax of zero-marked relative clauses in English, which happens to be parallel here. Two differences must however be noted.

- Contrary to English, zero-marked relative clauses in Torres languages are allowed whatever the function of the antecedent within the subordinate clause. Thus while English allows a zero-marked clause in (86) where the relativized NP is an object, it does not in (85), where it is a subject. The Torres languages are less constrained than English in this regard.
- Contrary to English, zero-marked relativization in the Torres languages is only allowed in combination with certain specific TAM markers, the Background Perfect and the Subjunctive. The Torres languages are more constrained than English in this regard.

We can now account for Example (2), which was quoted in §1.2:

- (2) LTG *Ne gehuh { ve kerkur tēle si }*.
 ART coconut.crab BKPF₁ ITER~CRUNCH person BKPF₂
mat mēt
 CPLT die
 [*lit.* The coconut crab { has devoured people }_[background]]
 { has died }_[focus]
 ‘The coconut crab (*who*) was devouring people had died.’

On the face of it, (2) is a sequence of two clauses taking the same subject, with no formal dependency marker between the two clauses. Only the nature of the Background Perfect, and its ability to defocus its own predicate, makes it clear here which clause is subordinate, and which is the main clause of the sentence. It must also be noted that – setting aside the case of the Subjunctive (§3.5.2) – only the BkPf is capable of encoding a relative clause in this way. Even the Imperfective, which is otherwise morphologically similar to the BkPf, makes the presence of an overt relativizer obligatory: compare sentence (2) with its counterpart (16).

This analysis in turn helps us understand the structure of (75b), here repeated:

- (75) b. LTG *Ne keka tekēle kemëm ve gil o si*.
 ART yam some 1EXCL:PL BKPF₁ dig out BKPF₂
 ‘(These are) a few yams *we have dug out*.’

An initial approach could have proposed analysing (75b) as consisting of a single clause, with a single predicate (*ve gil o si*). In this case, the unusual sentence-initial position of the object noun phrase (*ne keka tekēle*) would probably be explained as a form of left-dislocation. However, this analysis does not hold, for two reasons: formally, the whole sentence is uttered under a single phrase contour with no pause, which makes it incompatible with a topic-focus pattern; and semantically, the function of the initial NP is not that of a topic (**These yams...*), but of a predicate (*These are some yams...*). This sentence can only be properly analyzed if one remembers that the Torres languages do not make use of copula for noun predicates, i.e. nouns and noun phrases are directly predicative [see §2.1.3, ex.(6)]. Consequently, an appropriate syntactic analysis for (75b) would posit not one clause, but two: first, the whole sentence consists of a zero subject followed by its NP predicate: [*These are*] {*a few yams we have dug out*}; second, the clause *we have dug out* constitutes a relative clause (marked by the BkPf) that is embedded within that main predicate phrase.

Relative clauses marked by the BkPf alone have all the syntactic properties of relative clauses in these languages. They can be embedded within a noun phrase, a prepositional phrase, etc. As mentioned above, the antecedent of the relative can play any syntactic role both in the main clause and in the relative clause itself; and it may also be referred to by a resumptive, anaphoric morpheme within the relative clause (e.g. *ē* ‘there, from it’):

- (87) LTG *Ne gerite ni n̄wule wulē vete*
 ART octopus AOR:3SG return again place
 { *hōr v’ ōla t’ ē* }.
 3DU BKPF₁ take:TR BKPF₂ OBL:ADV
 ‘The octopus went back to the place { they had caught it from }.’

The use of the BkPf in relative clauses is so widespread, that one often hears quite complex sentences such as (88), which superficially consist in a string of juxtaposed clauses, with no obvious indication of their syntactic structure.

- (88) LTG *MOWE nie ve velag wahe vin, ni v̄n wahe*
 time 3SG IPFV run until up AOR:3SG go until
v̄n li lilie { nihe ve toge si viēne },
 thither LOC cave 3PL BKPF₁ stay BKPF₂ underneath
 { *remē mē v’ in si viēne* }, { *ne n̄wiē*
 mother his BKPF₁ lie BKPF₂ underneath ART devil
ve liē nie t’ ē }, *nie ni gerage.*
 BKPF₁ replace 3SG BKPF₂ OBL:ADV 3SG AOR:3SG climb
 ‘And as he ran all the way up, he managed to reach the cave
 { (WHERE) they had been staying }, { (WHERE) his mother had been lying },
 { (AND WHERE) the devil had taken her place }, and he climbed it.’

Apart from the first clause, introduced here by the noun-conjunction *mowe* ‘time, moment’ (§2.2.4), the five remaining clauses lack any subordinator properly speaking. However, the status of the three medial clauses (in braces) as restrictive relative clauses is unambiguous: this is indicated by the Background Perfect, as well as by the presence of locative adverbials (*viēne* ‘underneath’, *ē* ‘there’) whose function is to indicate the syntactic role of their antecedent (the noun *lilie* ‘cave’) within each embedded clause. Ultimately, among the six clauses in (88), only two have the status of informatively new, syntactically main clauses: these are the two Aorist clauses *ni vēn wahe* ‘he reached’ and *ni gerage* ‘he climbed’.

4.2.2.2 *Focusing structures*

The coding of contrastive focus, in the Torres languages as well as in other languages of north Vanuatu, resorts to a cleft-sentence strategy which is derived from its relativization patterns.

4.2.2.2.1 *Contrastive subject focus*

The focal constituent, generally a noun phrase, occurs preferably to the left of the sentence – whether via left-dislocation or not – and is immediately followed by a relative clause pointing to the presupposed segment of the utterance.

- (89) HIW *TEKŊWA* *TAMESŌ* { *pe ve* *vegevage vati*
 people old REL BKPF₁ talk show
kema ti ie }.
 IEXCL:PL BKPF₂ OBL:ADV
 ‘(It is) the older generation { WHO taught all these stories to us }’

Clearly, the best way to analyse (89) would be to identify two distinct predicates here, similarly to the analysis of (75b) above. The predicate phrase *vegevage vati* – itself a verb serialization, see (26) – is marked as syntactically dependent as much by the Background Perfect, as by the relativizer *pe*. It is subordinate to the sentence’s main predicate – that is, the nominal predicate *tekn̄wa tamesō* ‘(it is) the elders’.

The syntactic organization of such structures is also reflected in their prosody. A sentence like (89) is uttered with a contrastive accent on the last stressed syllable of the group *tekn̄wa tamesō*. It is followed by a distinctive fall in pitch and intensity on the remainder of the sentence, which is typical of presupposed elements in cleft-constructions:

[təkŋ^wa_a | tamə^lso ↓_{pə βə βəγəβəγə βati kəma ti 'iə}]

The analysis of (89) may also apply to a slightly different form of focusing pattern, one that lacks any formal relativizer. Consider (90):

- (90) HIW *TEKŊWA TE TOGE ve* řak ne gengon ti.
 people from Toga BKPF₁ make ART meal BKPF₂
 [*lit.* THE TOGA PEOPLE_[focus] { made the feast }_[background]]
 ‘(It was) the Toga people (who) organized the feast.’

A first glance at a sentence like (90), which consists of the sequence NP+VP, might have suggested that we are simply dealing with the syntax of a single sentence, with a subject followed by its predicate. However, following the reasoning above for (89), this sentence (90) can rather be shown to consist of two syntactically hierarchized clauses.

The predicate phrase *ve... ti*, which is pragmatically presupposed in the context, would thus be a relative clause with no relativizer, as in (75b) above. The phrase *tekŋwa te Toge*, to which this relative clause attaches, is pragmatically the focus of the sentence, and syntactically its matrix (NP) predicate. In other words, the syntactic structure of a focusing sentence like (90) is once again parallel to the NP predicate (75b) above:

- (91) NOUN PHRASE + VERB PHRASE with BKPF
 = { nominal equational clause₁ + relative clause₂ (without relativizer) }

The difference between the simple relative clause of (75b) and the focusing structure (90) lies essentially in the prosody. Thus, (90) contrasts a stressed segment with an unstressed one, exactly like (89) above:

[tək,ŋ^wa tə 'tɔgə ↓_{βə ʔLak nə ɣ'ən'ɣən ti}]

4.2.2.2.2 *Biclausality and the negation test*

The biclausal analysis under (91) is confirmed by certain syntactic tests, such as negation. In principle, the negator is a member of the TAM paradigm (§2.1.2), which means that it normally occurs in the same slot as the corresponding affirmative TAM marker, on the initial boundary of the negated predicate phrase. For example, a standard Perfect like (92a) would be negated as in (92b):

- (92) a. HIW *Tekŋwa te Toge nĕ* řak ne gengon ti.
 people from Toga PRF₁ make ART meal PRF₂
 ‘The Toga people organized a feast.’
 b. HIW *Tekŋwa te Toge tati* řak ne gengon.
 people from Toga NEG:REAL make ART meal
 [*ordinary negation, no contrastive focus*]
 ‘The Toga people didn’t organize a feast.’ → 1 CLAUSE

But the sentence’s overall structure turns out to be different when the negation affects a Background Perfect sentence such as (90). Instead of combining with the verb *řak* as in

(92b), the negator then affects the initial noun phrase of the sentence, thereby proving it has the syntactic status of a predicate:

- (93) Hiw *Tati tekñwa te Toge ve řak ne gengon ti.*
 NEG:REAL people from Toga BKPF₁ make ART meal BKPF₂
 [negation of contrastive focus pattern]
 ‘{ It’s NOT the Toga people }_[focus] (who) organized the feast_[bkg].’
 → 2 CLAUSES

In sum, (90) consists not just of a subject phrase with its predicate, but of two predicates: it must be analyzed as a genuine cleft construction.

Finally, exactly the same analysis could be conducted to account for Example (79), mentioned in §4.1.4 and repeated below:

- (79) Hiw *NOKE ve tot ti.*
 1SG BKPF₁ carve BKPF₂
 [lit. ‘{ (it’s) I }_[focus] (who) { carved it }_[background]’]
 ‘I made it!’

While the shortness and simplicity of (79) would spontaneously suggest we are dealing with a monoclausal SV(O) sentence just like its English translation, it turns out that a more accurate analysis would have to parse it into two distinct clauses: a direct noun predicate (*noke*)³¹ followed by a relative clause with no relativizer (*ve tot ti*).³² Thus the negation of (79) would be parallel to (93) above:

- (79’) Hiw *Tati noke ve tot ti. Temo-k.*
 NEG:REAL 1SG BKPF₁ carve BKPF₂ father-1SG
 ‘{ (It’s) not I }_[focus] { (who) carved it }_[bkg]. (It’s) my father.’

4.2.2.2.3 Contrastive focus of non-subjects

The analysis proposed above for the contrastive focus of subject noun phrases can be extended to other syntactic functions and other parts of speech. Indeed, we know (from §2.1.3) that the ability to constitute a direct predicate – with no copula – is not

31. Ex. (8) above illustrates the same pronoun *noke* ‘[it’s] me’ in a direct NP predicate structure.

32. Evans (2007), in his article on “insubordination”, cites similar instances of ‘hidden’ cleft constructions in certain Australian languages. For example, the language Ngandi (Evans 2007: 414, after Heath 1985) expresses subject focus by combining an ordinary subject NP with a verb form that is formally marked as subordinate (with *ga-*): e.g. *ñi-deremu ñi-GA-řuđu-ñi*, literally ‘[it’s] the man [who] went_{subord.}’. The structural similarity with our proposed analysis (91) is worthy of notice here: in both cases, the surface form of the sentence seems to consist of a single clause, where underlyingly there are two.

only characteristic of nouns and noun phrases, but in fact of most other parts of speech and syntactic constituents.

It is thus possible to interpret all focus constructions as *biclausal* sentences, along the lines of (91). The focus phrase forming a direct predicate may be e.g. an adverb (94) or a predicative demonstrative (95):

- (94) Hrw Ve ĩrak ti ĩwĕNA?
 BKPF₁ make BKPF₂ how
 [*lit.* { made it }_[background] HOW_[focus]?]
 ‘How was it made?’
- (95) LTG Noke ve vĕn ve tun si Vave PE NĔK!
 1SG BKPF₁ go BKPF₁ buy BKPF₂ Vava FOC this
 [*lit.* { I went to buy on Vava }_[background] { (it’s) THIS }_[focus]]
 ‘THIS is what I bought on Vava island.’

In those cases too, the BkPf clause can be analyzed as a relative clause followed by its matrix predicate.

The case for this biclausal analysis is even stronger when the asserted phrase is fronted, as commonly happens in cleft focus constructions. As mentioned in §2.1.1, the constituent order is normally SVO. When the asserted element coincided with the subject of the backgrounded verb, as in (90) or (79) above, the focus construction involved no displacing of the phrase under focus; its pragmatic status was only indicated by the prosody (and of course, indirectly, by the BkPf in the rest of the sentence). But when fronting affects an object or another complement whose normal position is after the predicate, then the disrupted syntax of the sentence makes it clear that we are dealing with a biclausal structure.

For example, compare the non-contrastive sentence (96a) – with standard word order and the regular Perfect – and its contrastive counterpart (96b):

- (96) a. LTG Gide na vĕn si me ĕ ne mesale pek.
 1INCL:PL PRF₁ go PRF₂ hither OBL:PREP ART road this
 ‘We came through this road.’ → 1 CLAUSE
- b. LTG NE MESALE PEK gide ve vĕn si me ĕ.
 ART road this 1INCL:PL BKPF₁ go BKPF₂ hither OBL:ADV
 [*lit.* ‘(it is) THIS ROAD (that) we came through (it).’]
 ‘THIS is the road we came through.’ → 2 CLAUSES

(96b) shows fronting of the focal element, in the form of a predicate noun phrase (*ne mesale pek* ‘[it is] this road’). The remainder of the sentence, which is marked as BkPf, has the syntactic status of a relative clause. Specifically, the antecedent *mesale* ‘road’ is anaphorically indexed by the locative preposition-adverb *ĕ* (‘there, through it’) – in accordance with the typical syntax of relative clauses, as in (87) above. The resulting

double-zero relative clause – i.e. zero relativizer, zero anaphora on the preposition – happens to be structurally close to its English equivalent: (*it is*) *THIS ROAD* { \emptyset *we came through* \emptyset }.

We saw earlier that the surface form of subject-focusing sentences like (79) shows some structural ambiguity, to the point that certain tests were required to determine their underlying syntax (§4.2.2.2.2). This is not necessary with other contrastive focus cleft constructions such as (96b), because they are transparent in this regard.

In sum, a predicate marked as Background Perfect must always be understood as forming a subordinate clause – even when superficially it may seem to form the sole verb of the utterance. The pragmatic center of assertion, as well as the syntactic center of the sentence, are to be sought outside of its boundaries.

4.2.2.3 *Wh-questions and the Background Perfect*

Finally, a contrast similar to (96a–b) can be found in the structure of questions. At first sight, the different choice of aspect between (97a) and (97b) is difficult to explain:

- (97) a. LTG *Nike na vegevage si mi paie?* → (??ve vegevage si...)
 2SG PRF₁ talk PRF₂ with who
 [lit. You were talking to *whom*?]
 ‘Who were you talking to?’ [STANDARD PERFECT]
- b. LTG *Paie ve vegevage si mē-ke?* → (*na vegevage si...)
 who BKPF₁ talk BKPF₂ with-you
 ‘Who was talking to you?’ [BACKGROUND PERFECT]

The rule that is empirically observed, and illustrated by (97a–b), is given in (98):

- (98) In content questions referring to a completed event (perfect), the verb will normally take the REGULAR PERFECT if the question word comes after the verb; but it must be marked as BACKGROUND PERFECT if the question word precedes the verb (whether by *wh*-movement or not).

The explanation for this unexpected asymmetry has to do with the placement of sentential focus, which in content questions systematically falls upon – or includes – the question word. In (97a), which is unmarked for word order, the sentence-final position of the question word *paie* is compatible with the interpretation of the whole predicate (including its complement) as falling under the pragmatic focus of the utterance. In (97b) however, the sentence-initial position of *paie* attracts stress and sentential focus, yielding a sentence shape that is strongly reminiscent of focalising structures such as (79) or (96b). A consequence of this sentence-initial focus is that the rest of the sentence has to be coded as informationally defocused, which explains the use of the Background Perfect here. Once again, the most appropriate analysis of (97b) is to consider it as biclausal, similarly to (91) above. In other words, what we have here is literally:

- (97) b. ‘{ (it is) *WHO* }_[focus] (the one that) { *was talking to you* }_[background]?’

Such a formal TAM contrast between (97a–b), depending on the placement of the question word, is unique to the Torres languages, and unknown elsewhere in the region. Furthermore, it is even quite particular within these two languages, as it is restricted to questions whose verbal aspect is a perfect. Uncommon though it may be, this contrast can however be explained by the internal logics of these languages, in terms of the handling of informational hierarchy and predicate dependencies.

4.3 The Background Perfect: Summary

The various patterns characteristic of the Background Perfect are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. The close links between the Background Perfect and clause dependency: A summary

SYNTAX	FUNCTIONAL VALUE	EXAMPLES
no subordination	clause topicalization & backgrounding	(77b)
combines	realis background (restrictive) relative clauses	(82)–(83)
with subordinators	realis background clause in cleft focus patterns	(89)
directly encodes	realis background (restrictive) relative clauses	(85)–(88)
subordination	realis background clause in cleft focus patterns	(90)–(96b)
	⇒ question sentences if <i>wh</i> -word is fronted	(97b)

5. Conclusion

Hiw and Lo-Toga, the two languages of the Torres islands, possess a wealth of formal devices for encoding clause dependency, and make regular use of them with most of their TAM markers. However, this paper has shown that two TAM categories – the Subjunctive and the Background Perfect – present different behaviour when it comes to handling interclausal relations. While they are both compatible with regular subordinators, they also show a marked tendency to do without them, and to be used alone as a subordinating strategy in its own right.

Obviously, the two cases under study differ in many respects, if only because they do not come under the same discourse constraints:

- the Subjunctive contrasts with other irrealis markers, in lacking the necessary information on the clause's MODALITY STATUS and ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE.
- the Background Perfect contrasts with other realis categories (especially with the regular Perfect), in marking its target predicate as PRAGMATICALLY PRESUPPOSED.

One characteristic that is nevertheless shared by these two components is that they both affect the pragmatic well-formedness of an utterance. A sentence, if irrealis, needs to have some form of illocutionary force; and likewise, an utterance must include at least some new, asserted segment. In my interpretation, the absence of either of these two elements in a clause is precisely what makes it unable to form a sentence on its own, and makes it dependent, both functionally and syntactically, upon external predicates and clauses.

In sum, different as they may be, these two patterns essentially obey the same underlying mechanism, which justifies their comparison. In both cases, the key to the syntactic structures attested is a form of pragmatic indeterminacy, or *pragmatic demotion*, that is inherently conveyed by the TAM marker.

The two patterns illustrated in this paper are specific to Hiw and Lo-Toga, and make these two languages original, even in comparison with the nearby languages of north Vanuatu. Yet they also show a form of universal relevance. They remind us that the existence of formal, dedicated subordinators is not the sole key to the syntax of interclausal relations; and that patterns of clause dependency can also result, albeit indirectly, from a clause's pragmatic properties and semantic profile. This is another illustration of how the formal structures of languages are regularly shaped and renewed through the functional constraints that weigh upon communication.

Abbreviations

Examples are glossed according to the Leipzig rules. More specific abbreviations are listed below.

AFF	affirmative	LTG	Lo-Toga
AOR	Aorist	M	masculine
APPL	applicative	NEG:EXIST	Negative existential
ART	article	OBL	oblique
BKPF	Background Perfect	POC	Proto Oceanic
CAUS	causative	POSS	possessive marker
COMP	complementizer	POT	Potential
CPLT	Complete aspect	PRF	Perfect
CTFC	Counterfactual	PROSP	Prospective
DU	dual	QUOT	quotative
FOC	focus marker	REL	relativizer
FUT	Future	RESULT	resultative
IPFV	Imperfective	S	subject clitic
IRR	irrealis	SBJV	Subjunctive
ITER	iterative	STAT	Stative
HIW	Hiw	TR	transitive verb
LOC	locative marker		

References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2005. Serial verb constructions in a typological perspective. In *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology* [Explorations in Linguistic Typology], Robert M.W. Dixon & Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds), 1–68. Oxford: OUP.
- Bril, Isabelle. 2004. Complex nuclei in Oceanic languages: Contribution to an areal typology. In *Complex Predicates in Oceanic Languages: Studies in the Dynamics of Binding and Boundedness*, Isabelle Bril & Françoise Ozanne-Rivierre (eds), 1–48. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bril, Isabelle & Ozanne-Rivierre, Françoise (eds). 2004. *Complex Predicates in Oceanic Languages: Studies in the Dynamics of Binding and Boundedness*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bybee, Joan, Perkins, Revere & Pagliuca, William. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Chappell, Hilary. 2008. Variation in the grammaticalization of complementizers from *verba dicendi* in Sinitic languages. *Linguistic Typology* 12(1): 45–98.
- Comrie, Bernard. 1976. *Aspect. An Introduction to the Study of Verbal Aspects and Related Problems*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Cristofaro, Sonia. 1998. Deranking and balancing in different subordination relations: A typological study. *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* 51: 3–42.
- Cristofaro, Sonia. 2003. *Subordination* [Studies in Typology and Linguistic Theory]. Oxford: OUP.
- Cristofaro, Sonia. 2008. Purpose clauses. In *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*, Martin Haspelmath, Matthew S. Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds), Ch. 125. Oxford: OUP.
- Crowley, Terry. 1987. Serial verbs in Paamese. *Studies in Language* 11: 35–84.
- Crowley, Terry. 2002. *Serial Verbs in Oceanic: A Descriptive Typology*. Oxford: OUP.
- Crowley, Terry. 2004. *Bislama Reference Grammar*. Honolulu HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Dik, Simon. 1989. *The Theory of Functional Grammar, Part 1: The Structure of the Clause* [Functional Grammar Series 9]. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Durie, Mark. 1997. Grammatical structures in verb serialization. In *Complex Predicates*. Alex Alsina, Joan Bresnan & Peter Sells (eds), 289–354. Stanford: CSLI.
- Ernout, Alfred & Thomas, François. 1953[1993]. *Syntaxe latine*. Paris: Klincksieck.
- Evans, Nicholas. 2007. Insubordination and its uses. In *Finiteness. Theoretical and Empirical Foundations*, Irina Nikolaeva (ed.) 366–431. Oxford: OUP.
- Foley, William A. & Olson, Mike. 1985. Clausehood and verb serialization. In *Grammar inside and outside the clause. Some approaches to theory from the field*. Johanna Nichols & Anthony C. Woodbury (eds), 17–60. Cambridge: CUP.
- François, Alexandre. 1997. La subordination sans marques segmentales: Formes de dépendance interpropositionnelle dans le discours. Mémoire de DEA. MA thesis, Université Paris-III Sorbonne Nouvelle.
- François, Alexandre. 2003. *La sémantique du prédicat en mwotlap (Vanuatu)*. Collection Linguistique de la Société de Linguistique de Paris, 84. Louvain: Peeters.
- François, Alexandre. 2004. Chains of freedom: Constraints and creativity in the macro-verb strategies of Mwotlap. In Bril & Ozanne-Rivierre (eds), 107–143.
- François, Alexandre. 2005a. Diversité des prédicats non verbaux dans quelques langues océaniques. In *Les constituants prédicatifs et la diversité des langues: Actes de la Journée de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* [Mémoires de la Société de Linguistique de Paris], Jacques François & Irtraud Behr (eds), 179–197. Louvain: Peeters.

- François, Alexandre. 2005b. Unraveling the history of the vowels of seventeen northern Vanuatu languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 44(2): 443–504.
- François, Alexandre. 2006. Serial verb constructions in Mwothlap. In *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology* [Explorations in Linguistic Typology], Robert M.W. Dixon & Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds), 223–238. Oxford: OUP.
- François, Alexandre. In press. Verbal aspect and personal pronouns: The history of aorist markers in north Vanuatu. In *A Festschrift for Robert Blust*, Alexander Adelaar & Andrew Pawley (eds). Canberra: Australian National University.
- François, Alexandre. In prep. From deictics to clause linkers. Discourse deixis, topicalization and clause backgrounding strategies in the languages of the Banks islands (Vanuatu).
- Givón, Talmy. 1984/1990. *Syntax. A Functional-typological Introduction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2007. Pre-established categories don't exist – consequences for language description and typology. *Linguistic Typology* 11(1): 119–132.
- Haspelmath, Martin, Dryer, Matthew, Gil, David & Comrie, Bernard. (eds). 2008. *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Munich: Max Planck Digital Library. <<http://wals.info/>>.
- Heath, Jeffrey. 1985. Discourse in the field: clause structure in Ngandi. In *Grammar inside and outside the Clause: Some Approaches to Theory from the Field*, Johanna Nichols & Anthony C. Woodbury (eds), 89–110. Cambridge: CUP.
- Heine, Bernd & Kuteva, Tania. 2002. *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form: Topic, Focus, and the Mental Representation of Discourse Referents* [Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 71]. Cambridge: CUP.
- Launey, Michel. 1994. *Une grammaire omniprédicative: Essai sur la morphosyntaxe du nahuatl classique*. Sciences du Langage. Paris: CNRS.
- Lemaréchal, Alain. 1989. *Les parties du discours. Syntaxe et sémantique* [Linguistique Nouvelle]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Lemaréchal, Alain. 1992. Extension possible de la notion d'orientation aux subordonnées complétives et leurs équivalents. *Bulletin de la Société de Linguistique de Paris* 87 (1): 1–35.
- Mühlhäusler, Peter, Dutton, Thomas E. & Romaine, Suzanne. 2003. *Tok Pisin Texts: From the Beginning to the Present* [Varieties of English around the World T9]. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Noonan, Michael. 1985. Complementation. In *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, Timothy Shopen (ed.), 42–140. Cambridge: CUP.
- Shopen, Timothy. (ed.) 1985. *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, Vol.2. Cambridge: CUP.
- Stassen, Leon. 2000. AND-Languages and WITH-Languages. *Linguistic Typology* 4: 1–54.
- Thompson, Sandra A. & Longacre, Robert E. 1985. Adverbial clauses. In *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*. Timothy Shopen (ed.), 169–234. Cambridge: CUP.
- Tomlin, Russell. 1985. Foreground-background information and the syntax of subordination. *Text* 5: 85–122.
- van der Auwera, Johan & Plungian, Vladimir. 1998. Modality's semantic map. *Linguistic Typology* 2: 79–124.
- van der Auwera, Johan, Dobrushina, Nina & Goussev, Valentin. 2008. Imperative-hortative systems. In Martin Haspelmath, Matthew Dryer, David Gil & Bernard Comrie (eds), Ch. 72. <<http://wals.info/feature/description/72>> 15 November, 2008.