

BRIDGING CONSTRUCTIONS IN HAMAR DISCOURSE

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This paper deals with bridging constructions in Hamar, a South Omotic language spoken in Southwest Ethiopia. Hamar bridging constructions are discourse linkage strategies consisting of sequences of two clauses which mark the end and the beginning of a discourse unit. Commonly known under the label ‘tail-head linkage’, bridging constructions are usually reported for polysynthetic languages of Papua New Guinea and Amazonian languages, but they are widespread also on the African continent; in the African linguistics tradition they are discussed in relation to phenomena such as clause chaining, converbs and switch reference. The three types of linkage strategies attested cross-linguistically (Guérin and Aiton 2019) are very common in Hamar discourse: the recapitulative linkage type (or tail-head), in which the lexical predicate of the first clause is repeated in the form of a converb or subordinate verb form in the second clause; the summary linkage type, which involves the light verbs *hayá* ‘to do’ and *hamá* ‘to express’, depending on the (in)transitivity of the summarized event; and the mixed linkage type, which combines features of the two main types. The three constructions play an important role in structuring Hamar discourse, and they are associated with various functions including backgrounding events, marking a transitional point between episodes in a story or marking conversational turns, keeping track of the main event line and recapitulating quotation events.

Keywords: tail-head linkage, bridging constructions, converb, grammaticalization, (in)transitivity, light verbs

1. Introduction

Bridging constructions consist of sequences of two clauses which mark the end and the beginning of a new discourse unit. The beginning of the new discourse unit is characterised by a bridging clause which repeats, paraphrases or summarizes the content of the previous clause. Commonly known under the label ‘tail-head linkage’, bridging constructions are usually reported for polysynthetic languages of Papua New Guinea and Amazonian languages, but they are widespread also on the African continent. Example (1) below shows a typical Hamar bridging construction consisting of a ‘tail’ or reference clause (1a) and the ‘head’ or bridging clause (1b)¹.

- (1) a. noqó-no kadã=ko= kad-é.
water-F.S pour:PASS=3F=pour:PASS-PRES
‘The water will be poured.’
- b. **noqó-n** **kaá-ise**
water-F.OBL pour-CNV1
‘**after pouring the water**’
- c. búno-n ko=kad-é
coffee-F.OBL 3F=pour:PASS-PRES
‘the coffee is added.’

¹ In this article the convention of indicating the bridging clause in bold and underlying the reference clause is adopted after Guérin (2019).

The bridging clause (1b), *noqón kaáise*, repeats the content of the previous reference clause (1a) and it functions as the initial, non-main clause of a new discourse unit. Cross-linguistically the bridging clause is usually syntactically, semantically and/or prosodically dependent: languages vary in how dependency relations to the main clause are marked.

Depending on the morphosyntactic characteristics of the predicator in the bridging clause, three types of bridging constructions have been individuated cross-linguistically (Guérin and Aiton 2019): in the recapitulative linkage type the event of the first clause is repeated verbatim or closely paraphrased; the summary linkage type summarises the content of the first clause by means of an anaphoric predicate; the mixed linkage type combines features of the two main types. All three types of bridging constructions are attested in Hamar discourse. Example (1b) is a typical instance of recapitulative linkage, whereby the bridging clause repeats the content of the previous reference clause. The summary linkage in Hamar employs the two light verbs *hamá* ‘to express’ and *hayá* ‘to do’ which anaphorically refer to the propositional content of the preceding reference clause. An example of summary linkage with *hayá* can be seen in (2d) below. The mixed linkage type combines the light verbs of summary linkage with the summarizing strategy of recapitulative linkage.

Recapitulative linkage, also known as tail-head linkage, is a sub-type of bridging constructions which until recently was considered a characteristic of polysynthetic languages of Papua New Guinea and Amazonian languages (see Guillaume 2011 and Guérin and Aiton 2019 for an overview). In the African linguistic tradition tail-head linkage types have been documented under different names, and plenty of examples can be found in the rich literature on clause-chaining, converbs, middle verbs and switch reference in African languages (see for example Azeb Amha and Dimmendaal 2006; Longacre 1990; Meyer et al. 2014; Völlmin et al. 2010).

Tail-head linkage in African languages has been described for the Bantu languages Makonde, Jita, Digo (Nicolle 2015:11–12), Logoori (Sarvasy 2019) and Eton (Van de Velde 2008); for the isolate language Bangime spoken in Northern Mali (Heath and Hangtan 2018:401-407)²; for the Bainouk and Joola languages of the Atlantic branch and for the Mande language Mandinka (Cobbinah 2024); for the for the Cushitic language Bedja (Vanhove 2005); for the Chadic languages Barayin (Lovestrand 2018:26-28), Buwal (Viljoen 2015:19-23; 48-49), Gude (Levinsohn 1994: 7), Mofu-Gudur (Hollingsworth and Peck 1992), and for the Nilotic language Lango (Noonan 1992), suggesting that this phenomenon is widespread across language families in the African continent. In Ethiopia, tail-head linkage is reported for the Omotic languages Wolaitta (Azeb Amha p.c. in Guérin and Aiton 2019: 2) and Baskeet (Getachew Yohannes Madebo 2016). Tail-head linkage can be seen in the example texts provided for the Omotic languages Koreete (Longacre 1990: 13), Baskeet and Gimira (Longacre 1990: 25); and for the Cushitic languages Konso (Mous and Ongaye Oda 2009) and Afar (Longacre 1990: 17). I expect to find the summary linkage type with the light verbs ‘to do’ and ‘to say’ in other languages of Ethiopia, given the extensive use of clause chaining and the pervasive use of verbal compounds with the light verbs ‘to say’ and ‘to do’ in the area (Appleyard 2001; Cohen et al. 2002), however I do not have proof at this stage.

The aim of this paper is to provide a detailed description of bridging constructions in Hamar, given that previous descriptions did not deal with this phenomenon (Petrollino 2016; Lydall 1976). The paper is organised as follows: the next sub-section 1.1 provides information about the main syntactic features of Hamar which are relevant for bridging constructions. Next, the structural characteristics of Hamar bridging constructions are described: recapitulative linkage is described in section 2, followed by summary linkage with the light verbs *hamá* and *hayá* in 3. Section 4 discusses mixed linkage and section 5 discusses the structural organization of Hamar discourse units, showing

² Heath and Hangtan use the expression “Echo clauses” to describe tail-head linkage.

that paragraph demarcation (Longacre 1983, Givón 1983) is signalled by recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses, whereas summary bridging clauses occur only within discourse units. The section describes in details also the various functions of bridging constructions, showing how they contribute to temporal and thematic cohesion. Section 6 summarizes the conclusions.

1.1 Syntactic preliminary Hamar is a South Omotic language³ spoken in South West Ethiopia (Petrollino 2016). Like other Omotic languages (Azeb Amha 2017), the predominant word order is SOV in both dependent and independent clauses. Dependent clauses always precede main clauses, they are semantically and prosodically dependent, and they are characterised by subordinative verbal suffixes and converb markers, some of which are summarized in Table 1 below. Dependent clauses can occur in long sequences of clause chaining, the end of which is always an independent clause. Independent clauses are stand-alone clauses headed by a main, final verb.

Most Hamar verbal paradigms cross-reference the subject by means of pronominal subject clitics: an example of this can be seen in (1a) above, where the main clause contains a verb form which cross-references the feminine subject *noqóno* ‘water’ by means of the 3rd person feminine subject clitic *ko*. Some Hamar verbal paradigms, both dependent and independent, are characterized by the absence of pronominal subject marking. This means that in Hamar discourse it is common to come across stretches of consecutive independent and dependent clauses with no indication of subject marking. This can be seen in the bridging constructions in example (2) below. The main clauses in (2a) and (2c) consist of independent verbs in the narrative form ending in *-b*, and the bridging clauses in (2b) and (2d) contain the general converb marker *-ise*: none of the four verbs cross-references the subject by means of person and number marking.

- (2) a. gámuri niʔá-b
 jackal come-NARR
 ‘the jackal came.’
- b. **gámuri** **niʔá-ise**
 jackal come-CNV1
 ‘**the jackal came**’
- c. báasha-dán yedá-b
 chicken-ACC catch-NARR
 ‘and caught the chicken’
- d. **hayá-ise**
 do-CNV1
 ‘**doing that...**’

As it will be discussed later on, some inflected converbs and subordinate verb forms play an important role in discourse because they enable referent tracking, especially in long stretches of clause chaining involving a series of uninflected verb forms which do not cross-reference the subject.

Hamar bridging clauses are always dependent clauses characterised by converbs and subordinate verbs, whereas the reference clause is a main, stand-alone clause. Table 1 below provides a list of the most common subordinative verb suffixes attested in bridging clauses.

³ The classification of Hamar and South Omotic is still debated, see Azeb Amha (2017) for a discussion and overview. Theil (2023) has recently re-labelled “South Omotic” as “Peripheral Omotic” because of the uncertain status of South Omotic languages in relation to each other and to the main “Central Omotic” languages.

Table 1: Subordinative suffixes commonly attested in bridging clauses

| Suffix | Gloss | Definition |
|----------|-----------|-----------------------------|
| -te | SE | same-event converb |
| -ise | CNV1 | general converb |
| -énka | CNV2 | (different) subject converb |
| -xa | PAST.CONT | past continuous |
| -isaxa | PAST.PF | past perfect |
| -ika | PF.CONT | past perfect continuous |
| -hattáxa | REAS | reason marker |

The three converb markers *-te*, *-ise* and *-énka* do not encode TAM values, and their interpretation derives from the main verb. For this reason converb markers are different from the other subordinative suffixes included in Table 1, which encode specific tense-aspect values as indicated in the glosses. The next sections will describe the formal characteristics and functions of the linkage types attested in Hamar bridging constructions.

2. Recapitulative linkage

A recapitulative linkage type consists of a bridging clause which repeats the content of the previous reference clause. In Hamar the propositional content of the reference clause is recapitulated by a verbatim repetition of the predicate. Example (2) above shows a bridging construction of the recapitulative linkage type: the bridging clause *gámuri ni?áise* ‘the jackal came...’ in (2b) is almost identical to the reference clause *gámuri niá?b*, the difference is in the morphological dependency marking of the final predicate; the converb *ni?áise* in the bridging clause is a subordinate, dependent verb form. Similarly example (3) below shows the verbatim repetition in the bridging clause of the whole reference clause, the only morphological difference being in the subordinative suffix on the final verb:

- (3) a. *wəxâ goin-te záani daxá-tte dees-idi*
 ox:M way.F.OBL-LOC rope tie-SE kill-PF
 ‘(he) tied the ox with a rope and killed it along the way’
- b. *wəxâ goin-te záani daxá-tte deesá-isaxa*
 ox:M way.F.OBL-LOC rope tie-SE kill-PAST.PF
 ‘after he tied and killed the ox along the way’
- c. he called the people who were in the village, cut all that meat and gave it to the people.⁴

Typically, in recapitulative linkage the propositional content of the bridging clause is the same as the reference clause, however there can be small differences between the two clauses, involving for example the argument structure. This can be observed in example (1) where *noqóno* ‘water’ functions as the patient of the main verb *kadā=ko=kadē* ‘it will be poured’; in the bridging clause *noqón* functions as the object of the subordinate, transitive verb *kaáise*.

In some recapitulative linkage types the bridging clause omits some constituents as in (4), (5) and (6) below:

⁴ Some Hamar examples are simplified for ease of reference. Only the translation of a sentence may be given if its grammatical content is not deemed important to understand a particular example.

- (4) a. róoro kála shóqo-be kóofini-be kínka gob-ánna qaabá-da
 day one tick-COM squirrel-COM together run-OPT think-IPFV
 ‘One day, Tick and Squirrel were planning to race each other.’
- b. **shóqo-be kóofini-be kínka ki=gob-ánna qaabá-isaxa**
 tick-COM squirrel-COM together 3=run-OPT think-PAST.PF
 ‘**after Tick and Squirrel planned to race each other [...]**’
- (5) a. εε koon ǰě-tte deesá-ǰ
 man:M 3F:ACC hit-SE kill-NARR
 ‘The man hit and killed it (the python)’
- b. **εε ǰě-tte deesá-isaxa**
 man:M hit-SE kill-PAST.PF
 ‘**after the man had hit and killed,**’
- c. he said to the baboon: “tomorrow at two I will come, and I will bring a sheep for you”.

In (4b) the constituent *róoro kála* ‘one day’ is omitted, and in (5b) the 3rd person object pronoun *koon* is not included in the bridging clause. Similarly, example (6) below shows the omission of some lexical content (*kánkinsa wágano*) from the bridging clause:

- (6) a. kánki-n-sa wága-no birr dong da-kashadǎ
 car-F.OBL-GEN price-F.S birr five IPFV-pay:PASS
 ‘the price to be paid for the car ride was five birr’
- b. **birr dong kashadǎ-xa**
 birr five pay:PASS-PAST.CONT
 ‘**five birr had to be paid**’
- c. ukulí-xal birr dong dáa
 donkey-AFF birr five exist
 ‘Donkey had five birr.’

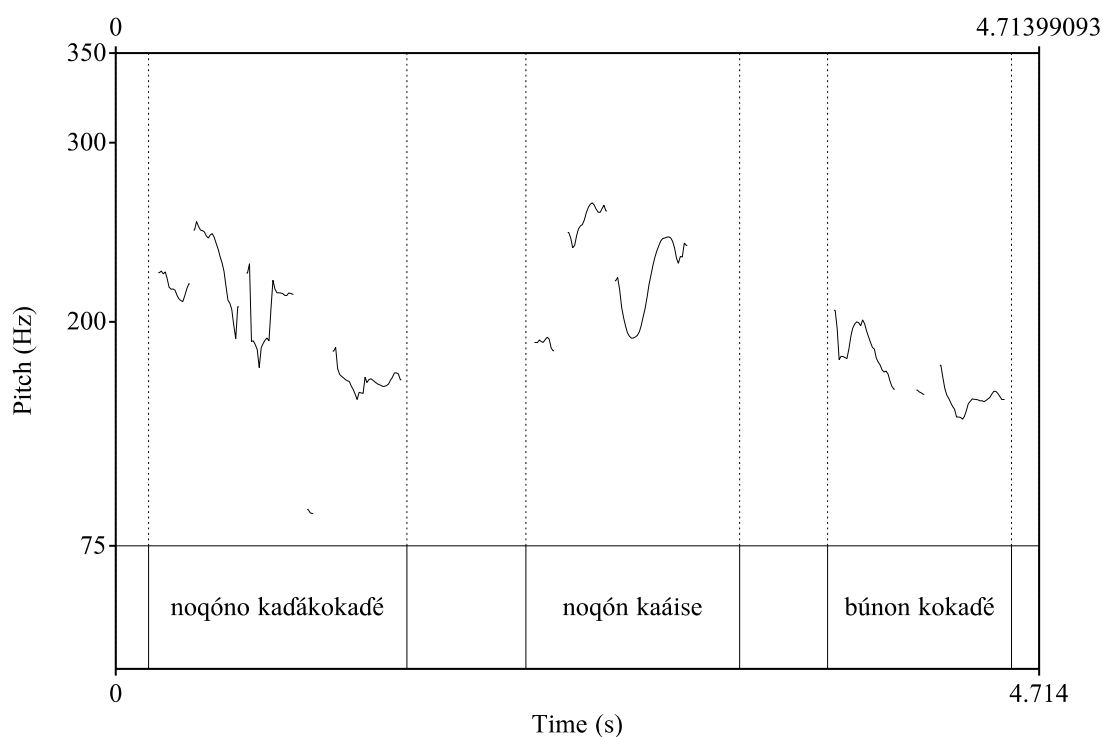
Some bridging clauses deviate from the verbatim repetition of the reference clause by adding the manner deictic *yin* “thus, so” as illustrated in (7) and (8) below:

- (7) a. Bargám̄ba-sa qullá-dán ko=bombín-ka maccá-de
 Bargám̄ba-GEN goat:P-ACC 3F=bomb:F.OBL-INS finish-PFV
 ‘They killed the goats of Bargám̄ba with bombs’
- b. **agá-rra qullá yin maccá-ise**
 DEM2.M-ABL goat:P so finish-CNV1
 ‘**then, after they killed the goats like this,**’
- c. they came here through Wóǰa.
- (8) a. “Ok, you can bray just one time”
- b. qáski gi-idí
 dog say-PF
 ‘Dog said’

- c. **qáski** **yin** **giá-isaxa**
 dog so say-PAST.PF
 ‘after Dog said so’
- d. kédá pər kisi kála ɔɔlá-ɓ
 then again 3 one bray-NARR
 ‘he (the donkey) brayed one more time.’

Prosodically, bridging clauses are demarcated by pauses and they are characterised by a distinctive rise-fall intonation which contrasts with the falling intonation of the main, stand-alone clauses. This can be seen in Figure 1 below which illustrates the PRAAT grid for example (1). The falling intonation can be seen on the reference clause preceding the bridging clause, and on the independent clause following the bridging clause. The bridging clause of recapitulative type *noqón kaáise* shows a rise-fall intonation:

Figure 1: PRAAT grid of recapitulative linkage (example 1)



3 Summary linkage

In some constructions the propositional content of the reference clause is substituted in the bridging clause by a generic light verb which summarizes or anaphorically refers to the previous discourse unit. The generic verb functioning as a summary linkage does not paraphrase the lexical content of the preceding reference clause. The most common types of verbs used in summary linkage cross-linguistically are generic verbs that can be roughly translated as ‘to do’, and demonstrative verbs usually expressing manner, as in ‘do like that’ or ‘be like that’ (Guérin and Aiton 2019).

Hamar employs the two light verbs *hayá* ‘to do’ and *hamá* ‘to express’: the choice of one light verb over the other in the bridging clause is determined by the (in)transitivity and type of event expressed in the reference clause.

The light verb *hamá* summarizes intransitive events and the content of direct speech; *hamá* in its converb form *hamáise* has also grammaticalized into a complementizer for quotative events (see 3.3). The verb *hayá* summarizes transitive events. Example (9) and (10) below show a typical instance of clause chaining displaying two consecutive bridging constructions: the first summary linkage with *hamá* summarizes the content of the previous direct speech in (9b) and (10b); the second summary linkage with *hayá in* (9d) and (10d) summarizes the transitive event of the preceding reference clause:

- (9) a. “He will think of all that meat, but he won’t think about the heart. Hyena does not think like that!”
- b. **hamá-ise**
express-CNV1
‘saying that’
- c. weilamâ bishê bulá-tte gaʔá-ḅ
heart:M only:M take.out-SE bite-NARR
‘(he) took out and ate only the heart’
- d. **hayá-xa**
do-PAST.CONT
‘while doing that [...]’
- (10) a. “Ok, slaughter it”
- b. **hamá-ise**
express-CNV1
‘saying that’
- c. kí-na qánte álfa wul imá-ḅ
3-DAT DAT knife all give-NARR
‘he gave him all the knives’
- d. **hayá-xa**
do-PAST.CONT
‘while doing this [...]’

Table 2 below illustrates the variety of subordinative suffixes that the two light verbs can take in bridging constructions. As the table shows, these light verbs can be productively inflected by all sort of subordinative suffixes and converb markers to convey temporal and aspectual depth to the narration flow. The light verbs occur also with the passive derivation, which as explained below has backgrounding effects on the recapitulated event, and with or without the clitic pronouns depending on reference-tracking functions.

Table 2: Example of occurrences of *hamá* and *hayá* in Hamar bridging constructions

| hamá 'to express' | | hayá 'to do' | |
|-------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| hamá-ise | express-CNV1 | hayá-ise | do-CNV1 |
| hamá-xa | express-PAST.CONT | hayá-xa | do-PAST.CONT |
| hamá-isaxa | express-PAST.PF | hayá-isaxa | do-PAST.PF |
| hambá-xa | express:PASS-PAST.CONT | haidá-xa | do:PASS-PAST.CONT |
| hamb-énka | express:PASS-CNV2 | haid-énka | do:PASS-CNV2 |
| keemá-xa | 3:express-PAST.CONT | keeyá-xa | 3:do-PAST.CONT |
| koomá-xa | 3F:express-PAST.CONT | kooyá-xa | 3F:do-PAST.CONT |
| keemá-isaxa | 3:express-PAST.PF | keeyá-isaxa | 3:do-PAST.PF |
| kin=am-énka | 3=express-CNV2 | kin=ay-énka | 3=do-CNV2 |
| kon=am-énka | 3F=express-CNV2 | kon=ay-énka | 3F=do-CNV2 |

Despite the productive co-occurrence of the light verbs *hamá* and *hayá* with subordinative suffixes and pronominal subject markers, some forms are in the process of becoming grammaticalized complementizers and verbal markers. The two light verbs do not occur only in summary linkage type, and in line with the areal tendency observed for other Ethiopian languages, they encode (in)transitivity also in other periphrastic constructions: these will be briefly discussed in section 3.3 and 4 below. There are prosodic differences between bridging clauses consisting of the light verbs *hamá* and *hayá* vis-à-vis their grammaticalized forms, these are discussed in the next sections.

3.1 Linkage with *hayá* 'to do' The light verb *hayá* in the bridging clauses below summarizes the transitive events of the reference clause. Example (2) above showed the bridging clause with *hayáise* (2d) summarising the preceding transitive verb 'to catch' of the reference clause (2c). Similarly, in the example below the light verb *hayáise* anaphorically refers to the preceding transitive verb 'to give':

- (11) a. Donkey had five birr;
- b. ukulí birré-na dong yinná-dan yin=ut-énka im-idí
 donkey birr-P five REFL:P-ACC REFL=get.in-CNV2 give-PF
 'Donkey gave his own five birr when he got in (the car).'
- c. **hayá-ise**
 do-CNV1
 'doing that'
- d. qáski-xal bóndi kála dáa-da.
 dog-AFF ten one exist-IPFV
 'Dog had ten birr.'

The next two examples show a summary linkage type with the verb *hayá* accompanied by pronominal clitics: the subordinate forms *keyáxa* in (12b) and *kinhayénka* in (13b) include the pronominal clitics *ki* and *kin* for third person referring to the subjects of the events described in the reference clauses:

- (12) a. óo gúrguro-dan tigá-6
 DST crocodile-ACC step.on-NARR
 '(he) stepped there on the crocodile.'

- b. **keyá-xa**
3:do-PAST.CONT
'while he was doing that'
- c. gúrguro ki=dangaʔá-tteeesá-6
crocodile 3=ACC bite-SE kill-NARR
'the crocodile bit him and killed him.'

In both examples, pronominal clitics are necessary for reference tracking, given that in the wider discourse context, the story consists of a long sequence of clause chaining displaying only uninflected verb forms which do not cross-reference the subject.

- (13) a. dabí kála, mirjá, dattón ogó-n wúshki-ka kat'á-6
animal one Kudu animal:F.OBL DEM2.F-F.OBL bullet-INS shoot-NARR
'(he) shot a bullet to a wild animal, a female Kudu'
- b. **kin=hay-énka**
3=do-CNV2
'when he did (so)'
- c. dattóno maqasá-te gob-idí.
animal:F.S bleed-SE run-PF
'the wild animal ran away, bleeding.'

The passive derivation on the light verb signals consequential relationships between events in the same paragraph, and it can be interpreted has a reason clause. In (14) the light verb in the passive form *haidáxa* marks the consequential event triggered by the facts and actions stated in the preceding reference clause:

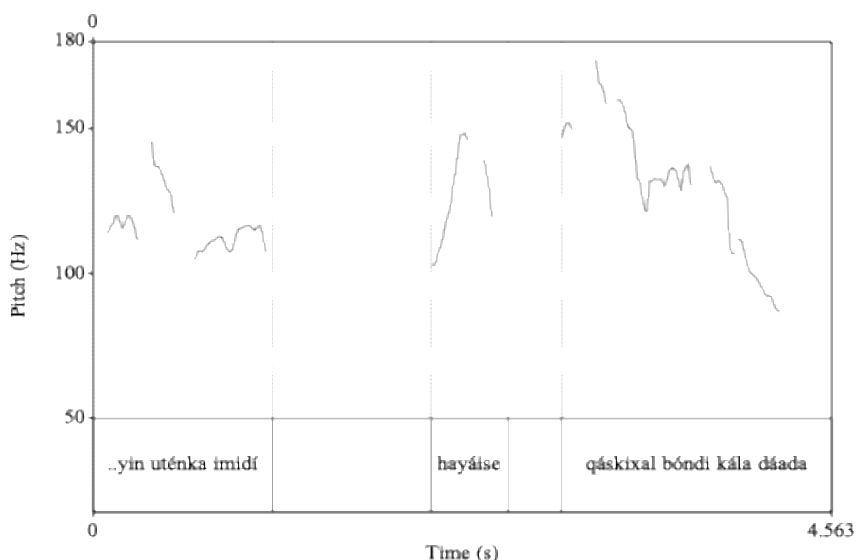
- (14) a. kin=niʔ-énka kidí per qáski-n baʔá-ise darán gará-6
3=come-CNV2 3 again dog-F.OBL bring-CNV1 3.ALL let-NARR
'When he came, he brought the dog and released the dog on him.'
- b. **haidá-xa**
do:PASS-PAST.CONT
'because of this (because it was done)'
- c. qáski-no óo oitá-da
dog-F.S DST chase-IPFV
'the dog chased him far away.'

In addition to contributing to the temporal cohesion of the story line, summary linkage can have an anticipatory function and signal a change of subject or situation in the following clause (see Givón 1983). In example (11) above the light verb signals the introduction of a new situation concerning a new character of the story: the paragraph from which example (11) is extracted introduces the various characters of the story and explains how they deal with the payment of a ticket for a car ride. In the reference clause in (11b), the topic is the donkey and the fact that he paid five birr; next, the bridging clause in (11c) introduces the new character (the dog) and the fact that he had ten birr. More details about thematic cohesion and discourse structure will be discussed in section 5.

Summary linkage shows the same prosodic features described for bridging clauses of the recapitulative type. This can be seen in Figure 2 below which illustrates the pitch contour of example

(11). The bridging clause *hayáise*, which summarises the preceding reference clause headed by the transitive verb *imidí*, has a rise-fall intonation and it is demarcated by pauses:

Figure 2: PRAAT grid of summary linkage with *hayá* (example 11).



3.2 Linkage with *hamá* ‘to express’ The light verb *hamá*, as anticipated above, summarizes intransitive events expressed by the final, main verb of the preceding reference clause. In (15b) below, the light verb *hamá* anaphorically refers to the intransitive verb *shidídi*:

- (15) a. hattá-sa demí-n-te ardá-ise, hattá-sa c’aac’í-n-te
 tree:M-GEN side-F-OBL-LOC enter-CNV1 tree:M-GEN root-F.OBL-LOC
ga?á-te, ogó-te shid-ídí
 chew-SE DEM2.F-LOC stay-PF
 ‘(he) sit at the side of the tree, and chewing on the root, he stayed behind’
- b. **kεεmá-isaxa**
 3:express-PAST.PF
 ‘after he did that (literally: after he expressed)’
- c. kédá yi?-ána tobbá.
 then go-REL.PAST.P seven
 ‘those who were going became seven.’

The bridging clause in (15b) consists of the light verb *hamá* ‘to express’ marked by the subordinative suffix *-isaxa* and the pronominal clitic *ki* for third person⁵.

A similar example can be seen in (16) where *kinaménka* summarizes the preceding intransitive event headed by the existential predicator:

⁵ The form *kεεmáisaxa* is the result of the deletion of /h/ and the consequent vowel assimilation: ki=<h>amá-isaxa. Both processes are common morphophonological rules of Hamar.

- (16) a. kidí ooní-n yinnó-n-te dáa-da
 3 house-F.OBL REFL:F-F.OBL-LOC exist-PFV
he was in his own house
- b. **kin=am-énka**
 3=express-CNV2
when he expressed
- c. later in the afternoon, the jackal came to visit him

The light verb *hamá* in its converb form *hamáise* is typically found after direct speech as illustrated in (9a, 9b) and (10a, 10b) above, and in (17a, 17b, 17e, 17f) below.

- (17) a. “we will live together”
- b. **hamá-ise**
 express-CNV1
saying (that)
- c. piimbá-ise giá-ḅ
 be.afraid:PASS-CNV1 say-NARR
‘he said (so) in fear (being afraid)’
- d. **haidá-xa**
 do:PASS-PAST.CONT
‘because of this (because it was done)’
- e. “Ok, that is fine, go ahead and herd the cows!”
- f. **hamá-ise**
 express-CNV1
‘saying (that)’
- g. they herded, slaughtered, and ate the cattle together and started living together.

The clause chain in (17) shows that *hamáise* summarizes the direct speech in (17a) and (17e). The bridging clause with *hayá* in (17d) summarizes the preceding event expressed by the transitive verb *giá* ‘to say’.

The passive form of *hamá* followed by the subordinative suffix *-xa* is commonly found in long stretches of direct speech, where it separates different conversational turns as in (18) below:

- (18) a. “yáa, qáski, macc-idú?”
 2SG dog finish-PF.INT
 “you, Dog, are you done?”
- b. **hambá-xa**
 express:PASS-PAST.CONT
‘when this was expressed’
- c. “intamacc-idí-ne”
 1SG finish-PF-COP
 “I am done”

In (19) below *hambáxa* separates the conversational turns between the tick and the squirrel (19b), and it summarizes the event expressed by the intransitive verb *dálqá* ‘to talk’ in (19f); *hamáise* in (19d) summarizes the preceding chunk of direct speech.

- (19) a. “You, Tick, you won’t defeat me, you never raced with anybody before! nobody ever wins against me!”
- b. **hambá-xa**
express:PASS-PAST.CONT
‘when this was expressed’
- c. “I will win! Later, one of us (the winner) will get the money”
- d. **hamá-ise**
express-CNV1
‘saying (that)’
- e. kínka dálqá-6
together talk-NARR
‘they talked’
- f. **hambá-xa**
express:PASS-PAST.CONT
‘when this was expressed’
- g. Squirrel said: [...]

3.3 The light verbs *hamá* and *hayá* The association of *hamá* and *hayá* with (in)transitive events in bridging constructions parallels the use of these light verbs in ideophone periphrastic constructions.

Hamar ideophones can be embedded via periphrastic constructions with *hamá* and *hayá* as illustrated in (20): the ideophone *tip* in (20a, b) and the ideophone *desh* in (20c, d) can occur as complements of *hamá* or *hayá*, and have intransitive or transitive semantic reference, respectively.

- (20) a. shárqa tip ham-idí-ne
calabash IDEO.straight express-PF-COP
‘the calabash has straightened up (by itself)’
- b. shárqa tip hay-á!
calabash IDEO.straight do-IMP.2SG
‘make the calabash straight!’
- c. shárqa desh ham-idí-ne
calabash IDEO.tilt express-PF-COP
‘the calabash tilted (by itself)’
- d. shárqa desh hay-á!
calabash IDEO.tilt do-IMP.2SG
‘tilt the calabash!’

The existence of constructions comprising an uninflected element or an ideophonic word followed by a general verb ‘to say’ is one of the diagnostic feature of the Ethiopian Language Area (Ferguson 1970). A verb meaning ‘to say’ is usually involved in the derivation of intransitive verbs in the Cushitic language Afar and in various Semitic languages such as Tigre and Gurage (Cohen et al:

2002). In the Semitic language Amharic, onomatopoeic stems can only occur as complements of verbs meaning ‘to say’ and ‘to do’ (ibid.: 2002). Cohen et al. (2002) observed that in many Afroasiatic languages the light verbs ‘to say’ and ‘to do’ have grammaticalized into verbal inflectional markers: this is a common pattern analysed as an areal, East African phenomenon (ibid.:2002).

Similar to other Afroasiatic languages, in Hamar the verb *hamá* in its converb form *hamáise* has grammaticalized into a complementizer that embeds quotative events in the main clause headed by a speech verb. This can be observed in (21) below.

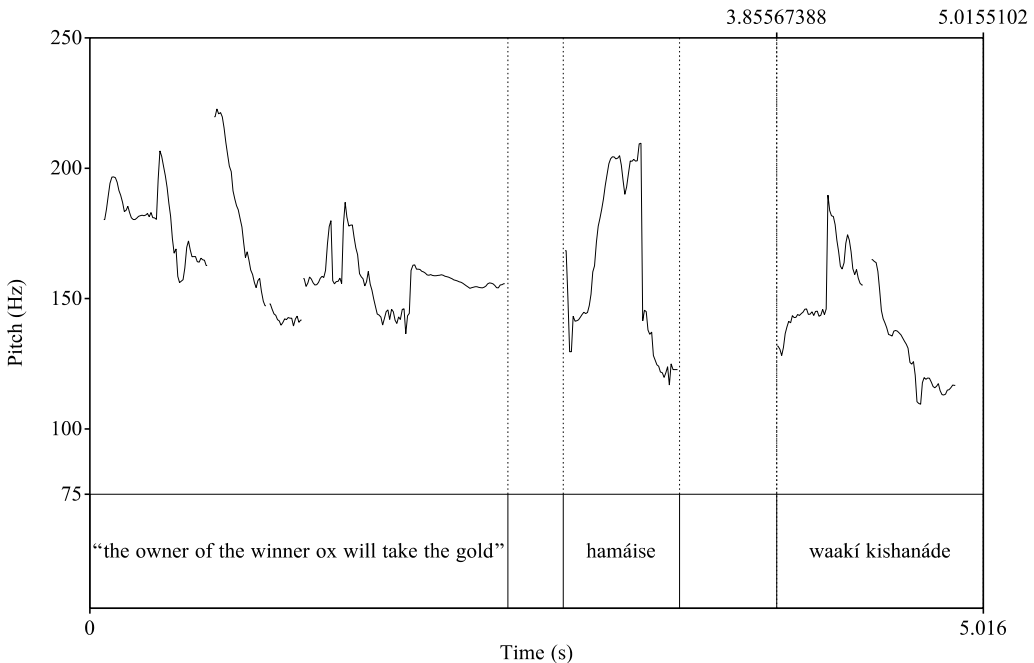
- (21) “wórq-in-dán wo=kashim-é!” hamáise ki=éé-na giá-de
 gold-F.OBL-ACC 1PL=share-PRES COMPL 3=man-P say-PFV
 ‘(saying) “let’s share the gold” he told the people (i.e.: he told the people to share the gold).’

The complementizer *hamáise* in (21) forms a prosodic unit with the preceding quotative clause and the following clause headed by the speech verb: this is different from the converb *hamáise* described in the previous section, which instead occurs in bridging clauses demarcated by pauses (22). When *hamáise* is summarizing direct speech in a bridging clause, it does not form a prosodic unit with it, cf. (21) with (22) and Figure 3 with Figure 4 below.

- (22) a. “The owner of the winner ox will take the gold!”
 b. **hamá-ise**
 express-CNV1
 ‘saying (that)’
 e. waakí ki=shaná-de
 cattle 3= buy-PFV
 ‘they bought cattle’

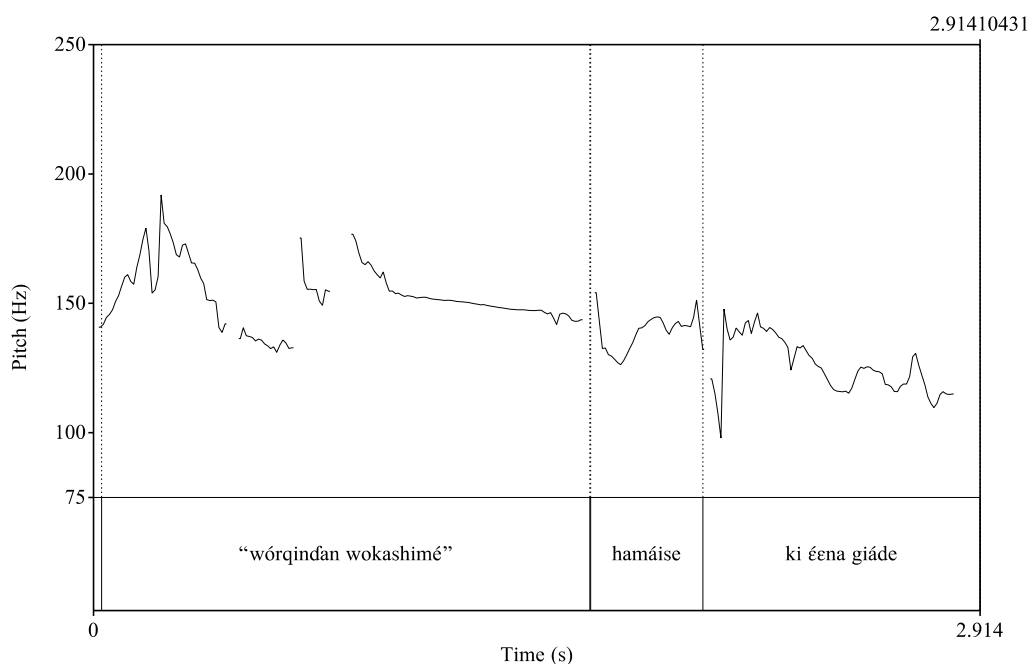
Figure 3 illustrates the pitch contour of the summary linkage with the light verb *hamá* ‘to express’ presented in example (22). As the PRAAT grid show, bridging clauses with *hamáise* have the same rise-fall intonation of summary linkage with *hayá* and recapitulative linkage:

Figure 3: PRAAT grid of summary linkage with *hamá* (example 22).



Demarcating pauses before and after *hamáise* are diagnostic to differentiate summary linkage (Figure 3) from the grammaticalized form *hamáise* functioning as complementizer (Figure 4):

Figure 4: PRAAT grid of example (21) with the complementizer *hamáise*



The mixed bridging constructions discussed in the next section are also contexts in which the grammaticalization of the light verbs can be observed.

4 Mixed linkage

The mixed linkage occurs when the bridging clause includes the lexical predicate of the reference clause, as in the recapitulative type, and the light verb typically found in summary linkage.

Hamar has two types of mixed linkage: both types employ a periphrastic construction consisting of the grammaticalized form of the light verbs used in summary linkage. In the first type, a verbal compound consisting of the narrative form of the lexical verb followed by the converb *hayáise* (in short: verb-*b* + *hayáise*) occurs as predicate of the bridging clause (4.1); in the second type the predicate consists of an uninflected verb contributing the lexical meaning followed by the reason marker *-hattáxa*, which is a grammaticalized form derived from the light verb *hayá* (4.2).

4.1 Verbal compound with *hayáise* In the first type of mixed linkage, the lexical predicate occurs in the narrative form in *-b*, followed immediately by the converb *hayáise* in case of recapitulation of transitive events. The verbal compound verb-*b* + *hayáise* is attested only in bridging constructions: normally the narrative form in *-b* occurs only in syntactically and semantically stand-alone, main clauses. This means that the verb forms marked by the narrative *-b* in this type of bridging clauses become non-finite complements of the light verbs, suggesting that the mixed bridging clauses with verb-*b* + *hayáise* are a context for the incipient grammaticalization of the light verb *hayá* into a verbal marker.

The following examples show bridging constructions in which the bridging clause summarizes the content of the previous reference clause by means of the verb-*b* + *hayáise* compound:

- (23) a. baití-dan ki=aafá-de
 river-ACC 3=see-PFV
 ‘they saw a river’
- b. **bain** **aafá-b** **hayá-ise**
 river:F.OBL see-NARR do-CNV1
 ‘**and immediately after seeing the river**’
- c. [...] Water, tired of climbing the mountain, joined the river.
- (24) a. got’í-no ki=sa buldá~buldá
 shaved.area-F.S 3=GEN pull:PASS~pull:PASS
 ‘the shaved area of the goat hide is scratched out’
- b. **got’í-n** **bulá-b** **hayá-ise**
 shaved.area-F.OBL pull-NARR do-CNV1
 ‘**immediately after scratching the shaved area**’
- c. after one day the goat hide is soaked in water with the fermented sorghum.
- (25) a. roorô oitto-xa motta-no baxá~baxadã
 day:M fourth:M-INS fermented.dough-F.S cook~cook:PASS
 ‘on the fourth day, the fermented dough is cooked’
- b. **baxá-b** **hayá-ise**
 cook-NARR do-CNV1
 ‘**immediately after cooking it**’
- c. then the fermented dough is pounded to powder.

This type of mixed linkage is characterised by the absence of pauses between the lexical verb in the narrative form and the light verb (cf. Figure 5 and 6 below). This is what distinguishes mixed linkage from standard summary linkage occurring after a verb ending in the narrative suffix *-b*. Moreover, the converb *hayáise* in the verbal compound is often phonetically reduced to *áise*:

- (26) a. They brewed beer together
- b. **parsi-n** **kinka** **shabá-b** **<hay>á-ise**
 beer-F.OBL together brew-NARR do-CNV1
 ‘**and immediately after they brewed beer together [...]**’

Figure 5 shows the PRAAT grid of a regular bridging construction presented above in example (2). Here the main, reference clause (2c) ends in a verb marked by the narrative suffix *-b*; the following summary linkage *hayáise* (2d) is uttered after a pause:

Figure 5: PRAAT grid of summary linkage with *hayáise* (example 2c, 2d)

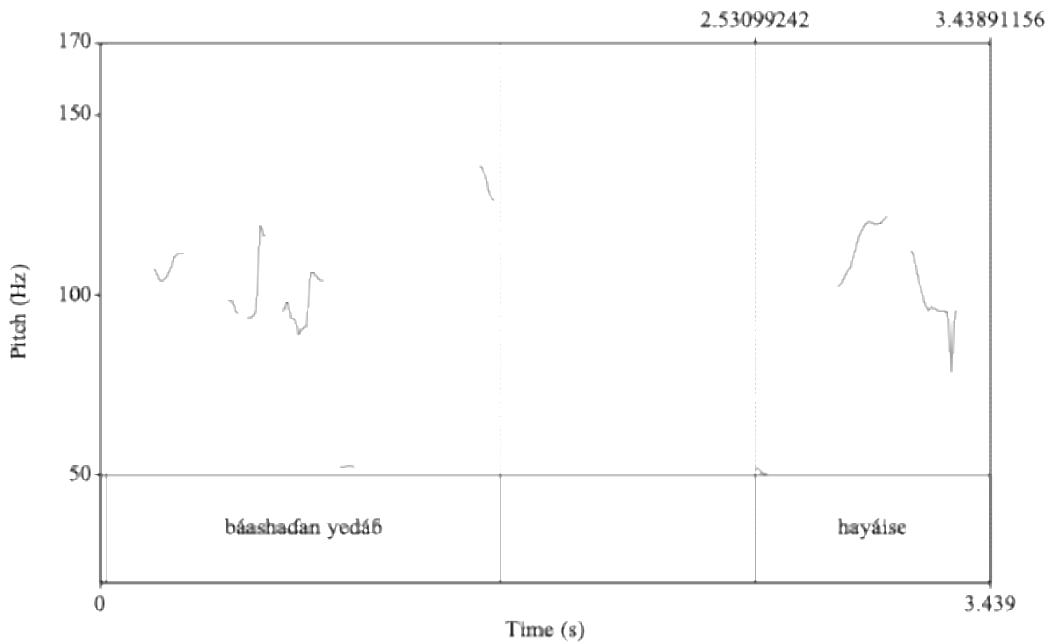
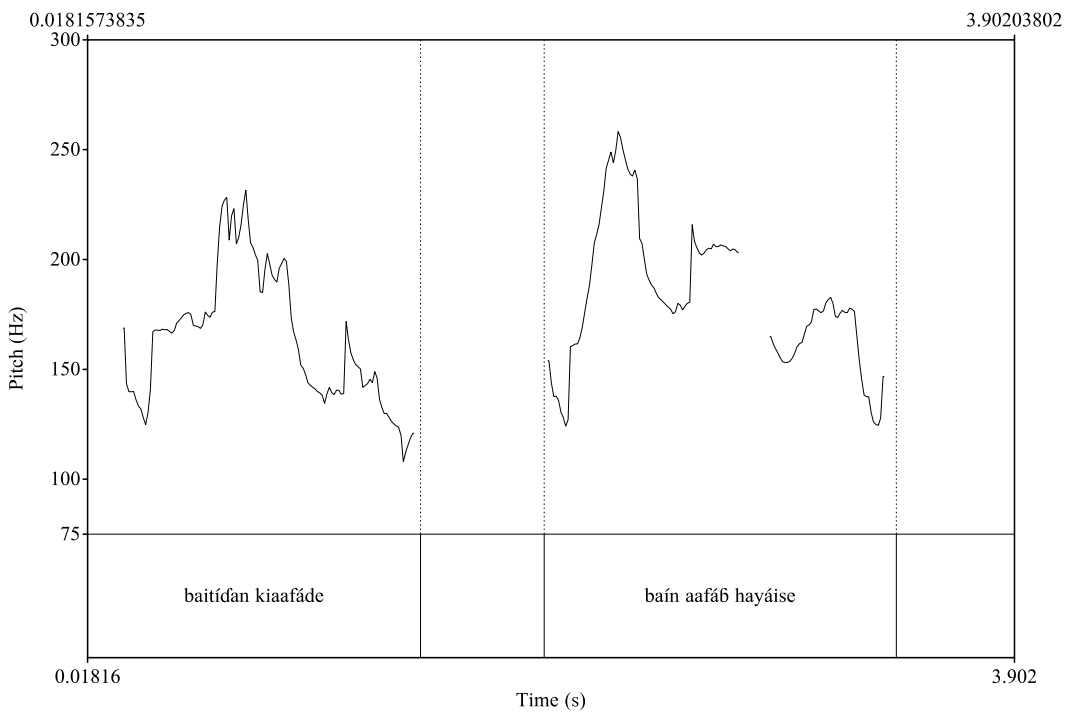


Figure 6 shows the PRAAT grid of example (23), where the verbal compound *aafáb hayáise* forms one prosodic unit and it is the predicate of the bridging clause:

Figure 6: PRAAT grid of mixed linkage with *hayáise* (example 23)



Bridging clauses employing the mixed linkage with verb-*6* + *hayáise* convey immediate temporal continuity indicating that the time span between two events is very short. Further examples of these semantic relations will be discussed in section 5, example (32).

Examples of mixed bridging clauses with *hamá* could not be found in the current corpus, however constructions with an intransitive verb in the narrative form occurring as the non-finite complement of the light verb *hamá* exist in clause chaining. The clause chain in (27) shows a regular bridging clause of the summary linkage type with *hamá* (27b) summarizing the preceding intransitive event (27a); the following clause in (27c) is not a bridging clause, but a dependent clause headed by the verbal compound *anc'áb hambénka*: here the lexical (and intransitive) verb in the narrative form is followed by the light verb *hamá* in converb form. Phonetic reduction of the light verb can also be observed in these contexts: the elision of the final syllable in *hambénka* results often in *hambén*:

- (27) a. kéda gudurí gob-ídí
 then hyena run-PF
 'then the hyena ran away'
- b. **hamb-énka**
 express:PASS-CNV2
 'when expressing (this)'
- c. kodí kéda anc'á-6 hamb-én<ka>
 3F then laugh-NARR express:PASS-CNV2
 'when she laughed'
- d. her belly exploded.

4.2 The reason marker -hattáxa The second type of mixed linkage consists of an uninflected verb stem carrying the lexical meaning followed by the reason marker *-hattáxa* which inflects for person.

The reason marker *-hattáxa* is a fully grammaticalized form deriving from *haidáxa*, the subordinate passive form of *hayá*. Various morphophonological rules are responsible for the final shape of the reason marker *-hattáxa*, which is suffixed to pronominal clitics and not directly to the verb stem (Petrollino 2016: 237). The reason marker *-hattáxa* can co-occur with both transitive and intransitive verb stems. As illustrated in examples (14) and (17) above, the summary linkage with *haidáxa* is interpreted as a reason clause in bridging constructions; the grammaticalized form *-hattáxa* has retained the same semantics as shown in example (28) below:

- (28) keen εεlá ettáxa ki=ni?á-de
 3:ACC call 1SG:REAS 3=come-PFV
 'He came because I called him.'

Like the summary linkage with *haidáxa*, the mixed linkage with *-hattáxa* expresses a consequential relationship between clauses, however the two have different discourse structuring functions, see the discussion in section 5, example (31). An example of a mixed linkage with the grammaticalized reason marker *-hattáxa* can be seen below in (29):

- (29) a. noqó yi?á-ise núu-dan ki=deesá-de
 water go-CNV1 fire-ACC 3=kill-PFV
 'Water went and killed Fire'

- b. deesá kettáxa
kill 3:REAS
'because he had killed [...]

5. Functions and distribution of bridging constructions

This section will highlight the discourse structuring functions of Hamar bridging constructions (5.1), and it will show how the various constructions contribute to thematic and temporal cohesion in discourse (5.2). The section ends with a brief discussion about the correlation between text genres and the occurrence of specific constructions (5.3).

5.1 Discourse structure Bridging constructions are linkage strategies which add structure to discourse. Longacre's (1983; 2007) definition of "paragraphs" as building blocks of discourse is relevant in order to disambiguate these discourse-structuring functions. A paragraph is a discourse unit which elaborates a discourse topic, as for instance an episode in narrative texts (ibid.).

In Hamar discourse, recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses mark the end of a paragraph and the beginning of a new one, i.e. they demarcate different discourse units; summary linkage types occur always within paragraphs, to keep the thematic and temporal cohesion within the same discourse unit.

The end of a paragraph is always an independent clause headed by a final verb. Impressionistically it seems that the pause between the end of a paragraph and the following bridging clause which is introducing the new paragraph is longer than the pause that can be heard before and after summary bridging clauses. That is to say that paragraph demarcation is not only indicated by recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses, but it might also be marked by longer pauses. However, given the variation in speech rate and storytelling style among the speakers, this remains an observation that needs to be further investigated.

5.2 Functions The best way to illustrate the various discourse functions and highlight the role played by the three types of linkages in adding thematic and temporal cohesion is to look at longer texts from various genres. In the following excerpts, different paragraphs are indicated as P1, P2, etc., marked at the beginning and at the end of each paragraph. Paragraphs are also graphically demarcated for ease of reference. Recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses are marked with B1-2, to indicate the linking function between different paragraphs. Bridging clauses of the summary linkage type, which occur within the boundaries of the paragraph, are marked as b1, b2 and so on.

Example (30) is the excerpt of a folktale, displaying two consecutive paragraphs: the first episode in P1 is about the baboon, who is asked by the squirrel to seal the sorghum container. The baboon closes the container, and the paragraph ends with the scene of the baboon going away to the forest. The next episode corresponds to a new paragraph (P2), introduced by a recapitulative bridging clause (30f); this signals that the story has moved on to a new narrative episode, which tells about how the squirrel tricks the baboon and takes advantage of his absence to steal the sorghum from the container:

- (30) P1 a. "Oh Baboon, when you go, seal the opening on the top of the container!"
- b1 b. **hambá-xa**
express:PASS-PAST.CONT
'when this was expressed'
- c. gaitá aafó-n galt'á-b
baboon:M mouth-F.OBL seal-NARR
'the baboon sealed the opening (of the sorghum container)'

- b1 d. **hayá-ise**
do-CNV1
'doing that'
- e. yí=sa qáú róxa yi?á-6
REFL=GEN forest PER go-NARR
P1 'he went away through the forest'
- B1-2 f. **kéda qáú róxa ki=yi?á-isaxa**
then forest PER 3=go-PAST.PF
'then, after he had gone through the forest'
- P2 g. the squirrel, laying under the container, sharpened a branch, pierced the container above him, collected a bit of sorghum, boiled it, and ate it.

As example (30) shows, the summary type of bridging clauses enable thematic and temporal continuity within the same paragraph and the same episode, by signalling the end of a the direct speech (30b) and by conveying the temporal sequentiality of the actions performed by the baboon (30d). The recapitulative bridging clause in (30f) instead links the previous paragraph to a new one, signalling the beginning of a new narrative episode.

The summary linkage type enables information backgrounding and referent tracking within paragraphs. In example (11) above for instance, the summary linkage helps backgrounding the character of the story being introduced in the previous reference clause, and it shifts the focus to the new character introduced in the same paragraph. In (13), (15) and (16) the summary linkage helps tracking the participants by cross-referencing the subject through pronominal clitics, which are otherwise absent in the paragraph.

The next excerpt (31) is a long stretch of discourse which displays four consecutive paragraphs linked to each other by recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses (indicated by B1-2, B2-3, B3-4):

- (31) P1 a. “noqó yaa núu-dán dees-á!” hamáise ki=éena giá-de
water 2SG fire-ACC kill-IMP.2SG COMPL 3=people:P say-PFV
'“Water! Kill the Fire!” the people said.'
- b. noqó yi?á-ise núu-dán ki=deesá-de
water go-CNV1 fire-ACC 3=kill-PFV
P1 'Water went and killed Fire'
- B1-2 c. **deesá kettáxa**
kill 3:REAS
'because he killed'
- P2 d. kéda noqó-be budámo-be gon-be makkán bish shidá-ise,
then water-COM false-COM true-COM three only remain-CNV1
'then Water, False and True, being only the three of them left,'
- e. wórqin-dán ba?á-ise,
gold.F.OBL-ACC bring-CNV1
'carrying the gold'
- f. “goití wo=yi?-é!” hamá-ise
way 1PL=go-PRES express-CNV1
'and saying, “let’s go!”’

- g. goití ki=yi?á-de
way 3=go-PFV
P2 ‘they went along the way.’
- B2-3 h. **goín** **kin=yi?-énka**
way.F.OBL 3=go-CNV2
‘**when they went along the way**’
- P3 i. baití-dán ki=aafá-de
river-ACC 3=see-PFV
‘they saw a river’
- B3-4 j. **bain** **aafá-f** **hayá-ise**
river.F.OBL see-NARR do-CNV1
‘**and immediately after seeing the river [...]**’
- P4 k. since from the river a mountain had to be climbed,
and since the Water had never climbed a mountain before,
Water, tired of climbing the mountain, joined the river.

The four paragraphs in example (31) above correspond to four different narrative events on the story line. First, the killing of the fire by the water, upon request of the group (P1). The next event introduced by the mixed bridging clause in (31c) presents and highlights a new situation: the number of characters has now diminished to three, since the fire has been killed. The mixed bridging clause with *-hattáxa* is here necessary because it links two different discourse units. If the linkage would have taken place within the same event and paragraph, the summary linkage type with *haidáxa* would have been used instead (see 4.1).

The three characters continue their trip carrying the gold (P2). The recapitulative bridging clause in (31h) introduces a new important turning point on the main event line: the sight of a river (P3); the mixed bridging clause in (31i) highlights this turning point and it moves the scene to a new event which is understood to take place immediately after the sight of the river. The mixed bridging clauses like the one in (31i), with the narrative form of the lexical verb followed by *hayáise* express immediate temporal continuity (more about this in the next example). The stretch of discourse ends with the last scene, in which the water stays behind and instead of continuing the journey with the others, joins the river becoming part of it (P4).

In procedural texts, bridging clauses signals the end and the beginning of a new step. Example (32) below consists of five fundamental steps in the preparation of the traditional goat skin worn by Hamar women: the five steps are linked together by recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses. The mixed linkages in (32f, h) indicate that the time span between two events is short, and it is rendered in the translation by the English adverb “immediately”:

- (32) P1 a. qultâ mashá-te ha=bul-ína, t’abé-n qarsá-ise,
goat:M slaughter-SE 2SG=pull-COND stake-F.OBL sharpen-CNV1
t’abé-n-ka haí-n-dar t’abá-t’abadá
stake-F.OBL-INS sun-F.OBL-ALL1 stretch~stretch:PASS
P1 ‘if you slaughter the goat and sharpen the stakes, the skin is then stretched in the sun
with the stakes’
- B1-2 b. **t’abá-ise,**
stretch-CNV1
‘**after stretching it**’

- P2 c. aizê agá haí-n-dar kí=wocc-ína
goat.hide:M DEM2.M sun-F.OBL-ALL1 3=be.hard-COND
ibán-in-ka buldã~buldã
afternoon-F.OBL-INS pull:PASS~pull:PASS
P2 'if that goat hide has become hard in the sun, it is taken out of the sun in the afternoon'
- B2-3 d. **bulá-ise agá-rra**
stretch-CNV1 DEM2.M-ABL
'**after taking it away**'
- P3 e. aizé-dàn, got'í-no kí=sa buldã~buldã
goat.hide-ACC shaved.area-F.S 3=GEN pull:PASS~pull:PASS
'the shaved area of the goat hide is scratched out'
- B3-4 f. **got'í-n** **bulá-ḅ** **hayá-ise**
shaved.area-F.OBL pull-NARR do-CNV1
'**immediately after scratching the shaved area**'
- P4 g. kéda ibán-in ogó kí=wocf-ína burí-n-ka
then afternoon-F.OBL DEM2.F 3=pass-COND morning-F.OBL-INS
attí-n-ka tittá=ko tittad-é,
fermented.sorghum-F.OBL-INS soak=3F soak:PASS-PRES
parsí-n attí-n-ka
beer-F.OBL fermented.sorghum-F.OBL-INS
'after that same afternoon, the following morning
the goat hide is soaked in water with the fermented sorghum,
the fermented sorghum from the *parsí* beer'
- B4-5 h. **tittá-ḅ hayá-ise kéda,**
soak-NARR do-CNV1 then
'**then, immediately after soaking it**'
- P5 i. when it becomes soft, the excess flesh of the goat hide is scraped off with the help of the knife

5.3 Bridging constructions and text genres As noticed by Longacre (1983: 9) and de Vries (2005: 365), bridging constructions typically occur in narrative and procedural texts. However, as also acknowledged by Guérin and Aiton (2019: 24), this observation might be skewed towards the types of texts preferred by descriptive grammars and by the stylistic preference of individual speakers.

The Hamar bridging constructions described in this paper have been extracted from a corpus of fictional narrative texts, such as folktales, historical narratives and procedural texts. Some of these texts are available online (Petrollino 2023).

The distribution of the three types of bridging constructions does not clearly correlate to text genre, however the mixed linkage type with the compound verb-*ḅ*+ *hayáise* tends to appear predominantly (but not exclusively) in procedural texts.

The recapitulative linkage is attested also outside of narrative and procedural texts, and it can be heard in natural occurring conversations, when speakers talk about the course of the events of a particular situation. In natural speech, recapitulative linkage is used by the speakers as an afterthought which gives the opportunity and time to process and plan the next episode in the narration of the events (de Vries 2005: 378).

6 Conclusions

This paper has dealt with bridging constructions in Hamar, providing a first overview of their grammatical features and discourse functions. Three types of linkage can be individuated in Hamar discourse: recapitulative bridging clauses, also known as tail-head linkage, summary linkage, and mixed linkage.

Reference and bridging clauses differ in morphological dependency marking on the final verb and in prosodic pattern. The reference clause is a main, stand-alone clause characterised by falling intonation and it is always followed by a pause. The following bridging clause is demarcated by pauses and uttered with a rise-fall intonation. Summary linkage with the light verb *hamáise* should not be confused with cases in which the light verb *hamáise* functions as complementizer: in the latter case no separating pauses will occur between the quotative clause and the complementizer. Demarcating pauses also distinguish summary linkage with the light verb *hayáise* from mixed linkage where the converb *hayáise* shows signs of ongoing grammaticalization.

Bridging constructions are important discourse structuring devices, and add temporal and thematic cohesion to the narration flow. The semantic relations that bridging constructions highlight within and between discourse units are: temporal simultaneity, temporal sequentiality and consequentiality. Bridging clauses can also have backgrounding effects, and help shift the attention of the listener to new scenes or characters, and to important turning points in the narration flow. Participant reference tracking is also one of the functions of bridging clauses, when the predicator therein is inflected and cross-references the subject.

The analysis supports the important division of labour among types of constructions: whereby recapitulative bridging clauses link different paragraphs and discourse units, summary linkages are found within paragraphs' boundaries. The mixed linkage types show various degrees of grammaticalization, and structurally they fall between recapitulative and mixed bridging clauses in that they combine the predicators used in the latter, and the recapitulative strategies used in the former. On the discourse level, however, mixed linkage types show the same distribution as recapitulative clauses, and they are found only between paragraphs, where they demarcate the end of a discourse unit and the beginning of a new one. This confirms the intuition of De Vries (2005) for Papuan languages and the findings of Guérin and Aiton (2019) in their cross-linguistic investigation: if different types of bridging constructions are attested in a language, they are specialized for various discourse functions.

As far as summary linkage is concerned, Hamar employs the light verb *hayá* for transitive events and *hamá* for intransitive and quotative events, aligning with three languages in Guérin's sample (ibid.2019): Cavineña, spoken in Bolivia, Aguaruna, spoken in Peru, and Eibela, spoken in Papua New Guinea. From an Ethiopian and East African areal perspective (Appleyard 2001; Cohen et al. 2002; Ferguson 1970), the existence of two light verbs encoding (in)transitivity, direct speech and other quotative events in verbal compounds is rather common, and it is possible that bridging constructions with two generic verbs 'to do' and 'to say' exist also in other Ethiopian languages.

Abbreviations

| | |
|------|------------------------|
| 1 | first person |
| 2 | second person |
| 3 | third person |
| ABL | ablative case |
| ACC | accusative case |
| AFF | affective case |
| ALL1 | specific allative case |

| | |
|------|---------------------------------------|
| CNV1 | general converb |
| CNV2 | different subject converb |
| COM | comitative case and coordinative case |
| COND | veridical conditional |
| CONT | continuous aspect |
| COP | copula |
| DAT | dative case |
| DEM2 | demonstrative with distal deixis |
| DST | distal deixis |
| F | feminine |
| GEN | genitive case |
| IDEO | ideophone |
| IMP | imperative |
| INS | instrumental case |
| INT | interrogative |
| IPFV | imperfective marker |
| LOC | locative case |
| M | masculine |
| NARR | narrative |
| OBL | oblique case (F) |
| OPT | optative marker |
| PASS | passive |
| PAST | past |
| PER | perlative case |
| PF | perfect |
| PFV | perfective |
| P | paucal/ multiple reference marker |
| PRES | present |
| REAS | reason clause marker |
| REFL | reflexive |
| REL | relative |
| S | subject |
| SE | same event converb |
| SG | singular |

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