WORKSHOP ON COORDINATION AND AGREEMENT: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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Workshop on Coordination and Agreement: Introduction and overview

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Recent LFG accounts of the syntax of coordination (Kaplan & Maxwell 1988, Dalrymple & Kaplan 2000, Peterson 2004) support an analysis in which coordinate structures are not headed but rather constitute sets. At the level of f-structure, the set structure blocks the flow of information between constituents. Lexical properties of individual conjuncts have no pathway by which they can percolate up to the node dominating the whole coordination structure. Conversely, external syntactic requirements cannot percolate down to individual nodes within the coordination. This analysis clearly gives desirable results in some instances. For instance, it ensures that *John* is not SUBJ in *John and Mary are sleeping*; and it ensures that number features of individual NPs within a coordinate Subject are irrelevant to the number value of the finite verb: *are* is PLU; *John, Mary* are both SING.

However, the analysis (at least apparently) raises several general problems with respect to agreement.

1. If lexical features within a coordinate structure are insulated from the external syntax by the set structure, what determines the PLU feature on *are* in *John and Mary are sleeping*? What determines Case features on individual NPs within a coordinate NP? Two different approaches to this question are outlined in Dalrymple & Kaplan 2000 and Peterson 2004 respectively. Dalrymple & Kaplan's account, based on feature resolution, provides for an extra 'shell' of f-structure for resolved agreement features. Peterson's account, based on feature distribution, assumes that no such 'escape hatch' is provided for agreement within the syntax, and that lexical features remain 'hidden' inside a coordination set.

2. There are many examples in the literature of 'single conjunct agreement' (sometimes inaccurately referred to as 'partial agreement'), where only one of the conjuncts carries the 'expected' agreement feature value; e.g. only the first of two conjoined NPs has NOM Case, or only the second of two conjoined adjectives has the same gender value as the modified noun. Single conjunct agreement poses problems for any current treatment of coordination. If agreement can reach inside coordinate structures, it should affect all conjuncts equally; if agreement is blocked from applying inside coordinate structures, why is it not blocked from all conjuncts?

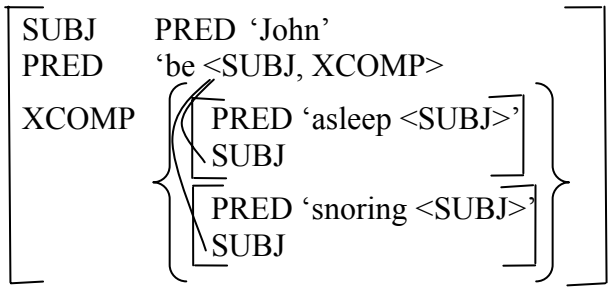
What we agree on

As outlined above, coordinate structures are not "headed". The f-structure of a coordination is a set of the f-structures of each of the individual conjuncts. Certain grammatical information can pass into the set, but only under very constrained conditions; specifically we can say that grammatical information **distributes** to all members of the set. Consider for example sentence (1):

(1) John is asleep and snoring

The f-structure for this sentence would be as shown in (2). The verb *be* has the lexically specified requirement that <↑SUBJ = ↑XCOMP SUBJ>. This links the SUBJ of *be* with the SUBJ of each of the conjuncts under a general rule that distributes grammatical functions to all members of the set.

(2)

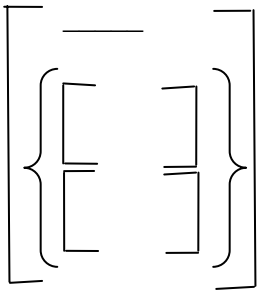


Questions

(i) What (kinds of) features "distribute" in the way described above? Dalrymple & Kaplan (2000) specify certain features as [+distributive], others as [-distributive]; Peterson (2004) claims that grammatical functions distribute, whereas lexical features do not.

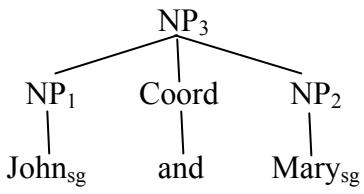
(ii) Is there an additional level of structure within the f-structure of a set for features of the set as a whole, making the f-structure of a set a "hybrid object" as shown in (3) (Dalrymple & Kaplan 2000)?

(3)



(iii) "Normal" feature percolation via the ↑ = ↓ mechanism does not apply to sets. For example, in the construction in (4):

(4)



the feature value SG does not carry up from NP_1 or NP_2 to NP_3. The question then arises whether there is a need for a mechanism of 'feature resolution' which allows features to "escape" from individual conjuncts to become features of the set, and therefore become available to participate in agreement phenomena.

Dalrymple & Kaplan (2000) answer "Yes" to both questions (ii) and (iii). I am currently agnostic about (ii) and in Peterson (2004) I take an atheistic stance with

respect to (iii). Dalrymple & Kaplan predict uniformity of agreement phenomena; I predict chaos. I therefore need special mechanisms to account for grammaticalised agreement (perhaps optimality constraints on outputs?) whereas Dalrymple & Kaplan need special mechanisms to over-ride resolved features.

(iv) Whether or not you accept "feature resolution" as a mechanism, do all lexical features participate in the same way? Do Gender, Person, Number and Case features all work alike? It seems clear, for instance, that Number cannot work in the way that Dalrymple & Kaplan propose for Gender and Person; resolution by union just doesn't make sense for Number.

(v) Following on from (iv), a more general question arises: even if you accept a mechanism such as "feature resolution", is "resolution by union" the right approach? In the Workshop Nigel Vincent presented arguments for an alternative viewpoint.

(vi) It has long been recognized that in many languages agreement phenomena target only one of the conjunct. Morgan (1972), Corbett (1991), Johannessen (1996), Quinn (1998) all have examples of single conjunct agreement. In this Workshop, Louisa Sadler and Heidi Quinn discussed some of their recent work relating to this phenomenon, and we considered what implications it has for our non-headed theory of coordination.

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