

A Common Structure for Cross-linguistic Conjunction Patterns

1 Introduction

Goals:

- Investigate the structure of conjoined DP's from a cross-linguistic perspective;
- Focus on structures interpreted with all individuals together in the event;

Caveat Lector. I abstract away from some important issues:

- The linear order of elements in the conjoined expression (e.g., *X and Y*, *X Y and*, etc.);
- The morphological form of the conjunction (e.g., adposition, particle, case, etc.);

Terminological points:

- I use **conjunction** to refer to “and”.
- I use **coordination** as a cover term for both conjunction and disjunction.

2 Basic Data

English (Indo-European) has coordinate structures where two DPs are connected by a coordinating conjunction. This is the most common structure in the world's languages.

- (1) I saw **John and him**.

Tagalog (Austronesian) has a “special coordinate construction” containing a pronoun indicating the person and number of the entire construction, and a DP. (Schachter and Otnes (1972)) Such structures are found in many Austronesian languages, and elsewhere in the world. Following Lichtenberk (2000), I will refer to such plural pronouns as **inclusory pronominals**.

- (2) Nakita ko **silá ni Juan**.
saw I 3pl DET Juan

‘I saw him and Juan.’ (Schachter and Otnes, 1972, p. 116)

Between these extremes lie languages like Pima and Mapuche.

Pima (Uto-Aztecan) is like English, except that Pima coordinated (non-subject) DPs co-occur with a pronominal clitic reflecting the person and number of the entire coordinate phrase.

- (3) John at t- naam 'aañi c heg Mary.
John AUX:PF 1pl- meet 1sg and DET Mary
‘John met me and Mary.’

Mapuche (Araucanian) is like Tagalog in some ways. (Smeets (1989)) This language has inclusory pronominals, but also allows an optional pronoun corresponding to the inclusory pronominals in person (4a vs. 4b).

- (4) a. **Iñché eyimi iñchiu** iyu.
 1sg 2sg 1du eat:1du
 ‘You and I ate.’ (Smeets, 1989, p.177)
- b. **Eyimi iñchiu** iyu.
 2sg 1du eat:1du
 ‘You and I ate.’ *ibid.*

3 Structural Generalizations

To bring this range of data under a single structural representation, we minimally need structures like (5): the individual arguments are coordinated, and the person/number features of the entire coordinate structure are computed and expressed with the inclusory pronominals as some kind of “summary”.



Not all components of this structure are necessary in a given language:

- Some languages do not have (overt) inclusory pronominals.
 Do English-type languages lack inclusory pronominals altogether or are they simply covert?
- Some languages lack an overt coordinator.
 The interpretation of juxtaposed DPs is semi-arbitrary. In most languages this indicates conjunction, but occasionally it indicates disjunction. (E.g., the Limbu texts in van Driem (1987).) I notate this arbitrariness with a null conjunction.
- Some languages can have one missing conjunct.
 Typically, the missing conjunct must be the highest person on the standard person hierarchy (in 6). In Mapuche example (4b), the first person pronoun is the only possible missing conjunct. A similar structure with an overt first person pronoun and null second person pronoun would be impossible. I call the conjunct that is (or can be) missing the **primary conjunct**.

- (6) 1st > 2nd > 3rd

4 The Primary Conjunct

The primary conjunct must be syntactically distinct from the other conjuncts:

- Only the primary conjunct can be “zero pronominalized”.
- Some languages impose ordering restrictions on their conjuncts.
 Ulithian (Austronesian): If a pronoun and noun are coordinated, the first (i.e., primary) conjunct must be the pronoun.

- (7) a. **Gaag mè Coon** melee xa sa loxo.
 I and John FM PM Perf go
 ‘I and John went.’ (Sohn and Bender, 1973, p. 209)
- b. ***Coon mè gaag** melee xa sa loxo.
 John and I FM PM Perf go
 ‘John and I went.’ (*ibid.*)₂

The Standard English preference to mention the speaker last is curious. It is probably an imposed standard, like the prohibition against splitting infinitives and the preference to avoid passives.

- In some languages, agreement between verb and coordinate structures holds (optionally) with only the primary conjunct. (See also Corbett (1991), Munn (1993), Johannessen (1998), Corbett (2000).)¹
Mapuche: Verbal agreement can target either just the (missing) primary conjunct (8a) or the full conjoined expression (8b).

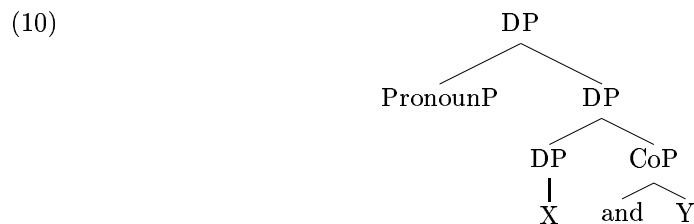
- (8) a. fey iñchiu nütram -ka -n
he 1:du conversation -FAC -IND:1:sg
'I talked with him.' ((Smeets, 1989, p. 178))
b. fey iñchiu nütram -ka -y -u
he 1:du conversation -FAC -1:ns -du
'We talked together.' (*ibid.*)

- In some languages, only the primary conjunct receives the case expected based on the grammatical role of the coordinate phrase. (See also, Kiparsky (1968), Johannessen (1998).)

Old Irish: The first (i.e., primary) conjunct is appropriately case marked, all other conjuncts can be the default nominative (9a). Notice the primary conjunct can be null (9b).

- (9) a. rí do-rigni aéar n-úar ocus tene réil rorúad ocus talam
king has.made air cold(ACC) and fire clear very.red(NOM) and earth
bladmar brass
glorious great(NOM)
'The King has made the cold air, and the clear red fire, and the glorious great earth.' (Kiparsky, 1968, p. 54)
b. comrac dúib ocus Chú-Chulainn
encounter between(2PL) and Ch'u-Chulainn(NOM)
'an encounter between you (sg) and Chú-Chulainn' (Thurneysen, 1998, p. 156)

To structurally identify the primary conjunct, I modify the coordinate structure from (5) to (10). The primary conjunct (X) is the head of the structure, and the Coordinate Phrase (CoP) is adjoined to it. (Cf. Munn (1993), Mel'cuk (To appear))



Beyond identifying the primary conjunct, this structure has other benefits:

- Since the primary conjunct is the head of the structure, the exact same selectional requirements can hold for both simple DP's and coordinated DP's.

¹For a case of non-overlap of a null conjunct and a conjunct triggering agreement on the verb, see Lichtenberk (2000).

- Cross-linguistically, arguments are zero pronominalized easier than adjuncts. By placing the primary conjunct as the head and all other conjuncts as adjuncts, we can understand why primary conjuncts can zero pronominalize and the others cannot.
- If the primary conjunct is the head and all others are adjuncts, we can understand why agreement processes occasionally only target the primary conjunct.
- The previous point holds for case assignment as well.

5 Conclusion

The construction of Conjunctions follows the general pattern:

- Select an individual as the kernel of the structure;
- Build the conjoined expression by adjoining additional conjuncts;
- Calculate person and number of entire conjoined expression from the individual conjuncts;
- Express the results in a pronominal morpheme (optional).

References

- Corbett, Greville G., 1991. *Gender*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- , 2000. *Number*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Johannessen, Janne Bondi, 1998. *Coordination*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kiparsky, Paul, 1968. “Tense and mood in Indo-European syntax”. *Foundations of Language*, 4(1):30–57.
- Lichtenberk, Frantisek, 2000. “Inclusory Pronominals”. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 39(1):1–32.
- Mel’cuk, Igor, To appear. “Dependency in Linguistic Description”.
- Munn, Alan Boag, 1993. *Topics in the Syntax and Semantics of Coordinate Structures*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Maryland.
- Schachter, Paul and Fe T. Otanes, 1972. *Tagalog Reference Grammar*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Smeets, Ineke, 1989. *A Mapuche Grammar*. Ph.D. thesis, Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden.
- Sohn, Ho-Min and B. W. Bender, 1973. *A Ulithian Grammar*. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Thurneysen, Rudolf, 1998. *A Grammar of Old Irish*. Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. Translated by D. A. Binchy and Osborn Bergin.
- van Driem, George, 1987. *A Grammar of Limbu*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.