A Principled Exception to the Coordinate Structure Constraint

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1. Introduction to the problem.

The immediate subject of this paper is a set of sentence-types which form an exception to the Coordinate Structure Constraint of Ross (1967), which, under any known formulation, prohibits extraction from a single conjunct of a coordinate structure. The Coordinate Structure Constraint correctly predicts that 1b will be ill-formed, though 1a, closely related to 1b’s source, is fine.

1. a. The Democrats will select Ferraro as their chairman and nominate a man for president.

b. *Who will the Democrats select as their chairman and nominate a man for president?

Our concern is with cases like those in 2, which seem parallel to forms as in 1, but where the content-question is quite acceptable.

2. a. We expect our graduate students to teach three courses and finish a dissertation on time.

b. How many courses can we expect our graduate students to teach and (still) finish a dissertation on time?

That is the nature of the initial problem. It will not be difficult to isolate initially the nature of the exception. As we shall see in the next section, the exceptionality of this construction has something to do with the nature of the meaning of the conjunction used in cases like 2, or the relation between the two activities linked in the conjunction. Somehow or other, and stating the point in an overly crude fashion, to be sure, the exceptionality of the construction derives from the fact that the "and" involved here is an "and" that could be paraphrased as "and nonetheless".

2. The CSC, and the phenomenon in some more detail.

I will assume that the reader is familiar with the basic literature on the Coordinate Structure Constraint. This literature, starting with Ross (1967), includes the observation that there are two major sources of
counterexamples to the Constraint. The first is the case of across-the-board (ATB) extraction, where the extracted element has a source (or corresponds to a gap) in both conjuncts, as in 3a. The second source is when the first element is a quasi-auxiliary, as in 3b.

3. a. Who do Democrats love and Republicans hate?
   b. i. What did he go and do next?
   ii. What do you suppose he went to the store and bought?

My particular interest in this paper concerns extraction from coordinate VPs. In general, VP-coordination respects the Coordinate Structure Constraint just as other coordinates do; we cannot say "Who do Democrats love and hate Ronald Reagan?", of course. However, when the sense of the relation between the two conjuncts is rather special, then, as we have already seen, the Coordinate Structure Constraint can be violated.

What is this thing called the Coordinate Structure Constraint? We don't really know. A few formal, syntactic accounts of the Coordinate Structure Constraint have been offered in recent years, no doubt the best known being Gerald Gazdar's (1981) discussion in the context of Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG), where the Constraint is seen as deriving from a more general property of syntactic parallelism; if conjuncts must all agree with respect to some set of syntactic features, and if the property of being "Slashed" — having an extraction gap — is such a property, then the Coordinate Structure Constraint has an immediate syntactic, and purely formal, explanation.

The phenomenon we are looking at casts some doubt on such an approach, at least if taken at face value. The Coordinate Structure Constraint fails here not because of some formal failing of English or the grammar, but it seems, because of the meaning of the construction. Our first task, then, must be to investigate the semantic range of this construction, and see what ways that guides and governs the syntax.

Bearing in mind the examples we have already looked at in 1 and 2, we might start by asking the question: what kind of relationship can hold between two coordinated VPs? — not just in the cases we are concerned with especially in this paper, but more generally. Typically, three kinds of coordination have been noted in the literature, to my knowledge. The simplest is the one we may call "truth-conditional", one that has a truth-condition as established by familiar truth-tables (see 4a). The second is the "temporal and", as in 4b; the third is the "causal and", as in 4c. The subject of our concern here, though, is a fourth use, the "despite" or "nonetheless" use, as in 4d.

4. a. Our first contestant likes to play the piano and (to) learn exotic languages.
   b. Harry is the only one who can hear a song once and play it perfectly on the piano.
   c. The child heard the news and broke down in tears.
   d. Jones went over the rapids and lived to tell the tale of it.

There has been much discussion in the literature concerning the relationships among the first three (and, we may suppose, by implication all four) uses of "and". My goal is simply to illustrate that with the fourth, "despite" use of "and", extraction from the first conjunct is possible, as we see, from additional examples in 5.

5. a. How many counterexamples can the Coordinate Structure Constraint sustain and still be considered empirically correct?
   b. If the CIA could give hidden money for arms aid to Nasser and get nothing in return, why couldn't such funds be used to subsidize a Syrian refinery and avoid the ponderous formal agreements that I doubted any Syrian government would be able to sign with the United States and survive? [from Ropes of Sand, America's Failure in the Middle East, by Wilbur Crane Eueland.]
   c. How many lakes can we destroy and not arouse public antipathy?
   d. Who is the most incompetent member the Commission can nominate and still preserve face in the international community?
   e. How much can you drink and not end up with a hangover the next morning?

There are a number of characteristics of this syntactic oddity that we should be aware of.

First, the extraction works best if it involves a scalar quantity. Thus, while 5e is perfectly normal, 5a is more than a bit odd; 5d is much better than 5b. For better or worse, judgments are, as they say, extremely subtle here; but the examples in 6c, d, make this writer and his informants quite uncomfortable, though 6e seems
counterexamples to the Constraint. The first is the case of across-the-board (ATB) extraction, where the extracted element has a source (or corresponds to a gap) in both conjuncts, as in 3a. The second source is when the first element is a quasi-auxiliary, as in 3b.

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fairly natural.

6. a. What can you drink and not end up with a hangover the next morning?
   b. Who can we nominate and still preserve face in the international community?
   c. Who can this country elect and still survive?
   d. Which one can we take and not get caught?
   e. What kind of music can you listen to and still get your work done?

The reason for the preference for scalar quantities seems quite straightforward: it enhances the contextual understanding that the action of the second conjunct takes place despite that of the first conjunct.

Second, the second conjunct must be a bare VP, not a full infinitival VP, as we see in 7.

7. a. How many courses can we expect our students to teach and still write a decent dissertation?
   b. Do you expect to hold down three jobs and lead a normal life?

This is more generally a property of the "despite" sense, it seems, rather than a limitation on the extraction, as 8 suggests; compare 8b, with the "despite" sense, and the better 8c, without it.

8. a. The IMF wants to invoke austerity measures in Chile and (to) ride out the waves (that may ensue).
   b. The IMF wants to invoke austerity measures in Chile and (t) encourage private savings in the developed countries.

This certainly seems like an odd fact. From a syntactic point of view, the status of the infinitival to is rather unclear; the best study of the matter, Pullum 1982, concludes that this to is a verb of defective distribution (an analysis that was incorporated in the better known Gazdar, Pullum, and Sag 1982). Pullum doesn't quite put it this way, but his analysis in effect says that to and do, in addition to differing by only one phonological feature (voicing), differ only in one small way -- do only appears in finite contexts, and only in non-finite contexts. Other than that, they share the property that they obligatorily take bare verbal complements (and hence not modals, which only have inflected forms). That is a very surprising analysis, but it does have an interesting ring of elegance to it.

If everything Pullum says about to is correct (a point I'm willing to go along with), it is still far from clear why the appearance of to should matter for the purposes of violating the Coordinate Structure Constraint. But the fact is that the presence, or lack of it, of the to has a fairly sharp semantic effect. Consider an example in (9). Putting it in terms of syntactic categories, if, as in 9b, we coordinate bare infinitives (and thus have only one occurrence of to), the complement represents a single mental representation (the single desire for two things), whereas if the coordination is done at the [-Finite] VP level, as in 9a, where two tos appear, we find that we are reporting two mental representations. Where this intuition comes from may be hard to state, but the judgment seems firm and generally consented to.

9. a. Sullivan wants the government to declare martial law and to arrest labor activists.
   b. Sullivan wants the government to declare martial law and arrest labor activists.

Third, the VPs must describe activity-types, not specific actions that took place in a given place and time. Compare 10a and 10b; in the latter, the actions are tied down to a specific time and place, and the extraction is bad. The reason for this property seems to be that the odd counter-causal sense which is required (the sense that the second conjunct happens despite the first) is greatly enhanced in descriptions of generic activity types.

10. a. How many courses can we expect our graduate students to teach and still finish their dissertations on time?
   b. How many courses did Mrs. Sykes teach last year and still finish her dissertation on time?

To illustrate cases where a non-"despite" reading is involved, and where extraction is not permitted, consider the examples in 11, where the temporal (and perhaps some of the causal) sense is found in the conjunction.
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To illustrate cases where a non-"despite" reading is involved, and where extraction is not permitted, consider the examples in 11, where the temporal (and perhaps some of the causal) sense is found in the conjunction.
11. a. *I tried to learn Sanskrit and become a palm-reader; which language did you try to learn and become a mystic?
   b. *Which bank did she urge Sam to open a bank account at and pay his bills by check?

3. An attempt at orientation.

What kind of hypothesis might we be led to in the light of the data considered thus far? The most insecure pure syntactician might well decide that this data is only grist for the anomalist's mill, he who always looks for the uncomfortable morsel of data that acts like sand in the cogs of the well-oiled machine -- the Charles Forts of linguistics. At the other extreme (as I see it, at least) we might find the linguist who would be ready to conclude that this shows that the Coordinate Structure Constraint "is semantic in nature", not syntactic. That doesn't seem quite right, either; it serves no purpose to lose sight of the fact that the construction we're looking at today is, indeed, somewhat marginal, and the oddity of the syntax seems to derive from the oddity of the semantics. The semantic relation between the two activities described by the coordinated VPs is quite the opposite from the core relation that holds between coordinate VPs; rather than the two VPs having a symmetrical relation, we find that the two activities in effect are competing -- that is, the more we have of the first activity, the less likely is the second activity - that's the meaning, or the semantic relation, of the "despite" coordination.

Thus the Coordinate Structure Constraint, it appears, is one that requires syntactic parallelism just in case the semantics also presents its own semantic parallelism, at least within reasonable limits. When those reasonable limits are transgressed, and syntactic coordination is used in a context when the semantics is highly asymmetrical, then no Coordinate Structure effect is to be found.

My suggestion is this: our curiosity piece is but one example of a larger class of phenomena which have in common that they rest on the divergence between syntactic and semantic representations not being too great. This class includes some of the phenomena that generative syntacticians have looked at in recent years under the rubric of "restructuring" -- in particular, the possibility of pseudo-passives in languages like English, where a complement NP may be passivized like a direct object NP just in case the semantic relation of the object to the verb mirrors that of a possible object-to-verb relation.

The Coordinate Structure Constraint is surely not an arbitrary fact about syntax in search of formalization and nothing more. It seems most like that it is a symmetry condition on conjuncts that is induced as a reflection of the symmetric semantics that we normally and typically find when elements are conjoined.

As a syntactic restriction in English, the Coordinate Structure Constraint holds even when the relations between the elements is the temporal or causal relationship that we looked at earlier. However, a relation of succession or cause-and-effect is a natural implicature when two actions are mentioned, one at the other; in fact, even if two events are described by two separate sentences, with a full stop between them it is natural to infer sequentiality or even a causal relationship (as in 12). But the "despite" sense has such a natural basis; it is unnatural to infer a "despite" sense in the sequence in 13.

12. The light turned green. The cars began to move.

13. Elizabeth worked forty hours a week last year.

She finished her dissertation.

We should say, then, that the range of semantic descriptions that "and" can represent has three cutpoints. First, there is the core meaning of "and", one that we called the "truth-conditional" sense, one that hard-nosed semanticists have insisted was only real meaning of "and". Second, there is a natural range of extended senses, which include primarily the causal and the sequential sense. Finally, there are the semantic outer reaches where "and" can still be used in English, but where semantic symmetry whose expectation is induced by the core sense is entirely missing. The semantics diverge dramatically from the syntax, the Coordinate Structure Constraint no longer holds, and in the following section we will see some reason to believe that the syntactic restructures to follow the semantics.

4. On to stranger things.

In this final section, I would like to turn to a rather different construction that is no doubt related to the construction we have been looking at. In a paper presented at this conference eleven years ago, p
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alm-reader; which language did you try to learn and
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Lawler (1974) discussed a very disturbing construction in English in which a pleonastic negative is found, as in 14b.

14. a. I'm going to blow up this balloon.
   b. Not in here, you don't.

Lawler suggests that the initial not in these sentences is there because of a constraint that says, in essence, that an element in the scope of a negation in Logical Form must also be the scope of a negation in surface structure. (In certain respects, this 1974 paper has as much in common with current GB research as it does with classical generative semantics.)

Lawler's account doesn't help, though, when he comes face to face with examples like 15.

15. a. Can linguists study negation?
   b. Not and stay sane (, they can't).

Lawler seems to suggest that the analysis is as in 16 -- in particular, that we have another case of coordinate bare VPs, and that the negation has only the first VP in its scope.

16.

We may note that the pleonastic not cannot normally appear before a bare VP, though it can in front of an NP or PP (cf. 17); it certainly cannot appear in front of the second VP. Lawler also notes that the connection between the two VPs must be one of structurally or logically, but not personally, defined relationship; thus while 18 is possible, 19 is not.

17. a. Can I borrow the car tonight?
   b. *Not borrow the car, you can't.
   (But cf. OK Not tonight, you can't.)

18. a. Can I go outside without any clothes on?
   b. Not and stay healthy, you can't.

19. a. Can I give you a hand?
   b. *Not and make everything worse, you can't.

In general, the relation between the two VPs is the "despite" relationship that we have been looking at this paper. That is, 15b or 16 is possible just in we have the recoverable presupposition that if studies negation, then one will go crazy -- is, not stay sane. More generally, "not [ ] and as in 16, is a possible sentence just in case VP-normally causes not-VP-2-ing, and this, of course, just the "despite" sense of "and" that we have looking at.

At this point, a rather different analysis of this suggests itself, rather than 16, and this alternative what I shall, tentatively, offer as the solution for problem at hand. In general, one of these "strip notes, as in "not in my house!", takes the scope of entire matrix sentence, with the overt material the merely the focus of the sentence. Thus 20 may be correct structure, parallel to 21, as in 22.

20.

21.

22. a. Can I get Mary to forgive me?
   b. Not without giving her back the book.

If this analogy is correct, it suggests that under certain conditions -- the semantic conditions we discussed -- and can act as a syntactic subordinate governing its bare complement VP. This in turn makes the syntactic structure no longer symmetrical, suggests that the syntax may be modified to reflect asymmetrical semantics, giving us a final structure in 23 for our problem extractions [the in 23 structure of the matrix clause is simplified a bit 231. Once and is reanalyzed as a subordinator, both extraction problems and Lawler's problems...
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   b. Not and stay sane (they can't).

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16.

\[ \text{S?} \]

\[ \text{VP} \]

\[ \text{not VP-1} \]

\[ \text{VP} \]

\[ \text{and VP-2} \]

\[ \text{3-tag} \]

\[ \text{they can't} \]

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20.

\[ X \]

\[ \text{not} \]

\[ Y \]

\[ \text{VP} \]

\[ \text{-inflected} \]

21.

\[ X \]

\[ \text{not} \]

\[ Y \]

\[ P \]

\[ NP \]

\[ VP \]

\[ \text{without} \]

\[ \text{giving her back the book} \]

22. a. Can I get Mary to forgive me?
   b. Not without giving her back the book.

If this analogy is correct, it suggests that under certain conditions — the semantic conditions we have discussed — and can act as a syntactic subordinator, governing its bare complement VP. This in turn makes the syntactic structure no longer symmetrical, and suggests that the syntax may be modified to reflect the asymmetrical semantics, giving us a final structure as in 23 for our problem extractions (the internal structure of the matrix clause is simplified a bit in 231). Once and is reanalyzed as a subordinator, both the extraction problems and Lawler's problems are
23.

how many courses can we expect our students to teach [e] and finish their theses on time

5. Conclusions

The proposal made here argues for a semantically-driven syntactic reanalysis. It probably does not matter just what kind of syntactic model is chosen to express it in, but it won't do to try to defuse the main point by interpreting the material discussed here as just a relexicalization of "and", or a mere historical fact. If semantics ever motivated such a reanalysis, then the facts that motivated the change then -- in that Golden Age -- were the same facts as we have today, and so (by some principle of uniformitarianism) the reanalysis is motivated synchronically today as well.

It is worth remembering that the syntactic facts that we have studied here could hardly have been the causes, and in fact rather have been the effects, of the change under scrutiny. Before such effects could be in fact observed if there ever were such a day, which is not obvious, and which can in principle never be determined) the reanalysis served no formal syntactic purpose hatsoever; and yet -- it occurred. It must have.

Footnotes

1. I would like to thank Jim McCawley for directing my attention to Lawler (1974) at a crucial moment in the drafting of this paper. The reader is offered the author's apologies for not being able to pursue the very interesting question regarding the possible boundary between semantics, in some strict sense, and pragmatics, with special regard to the effects involving the meaning and uses of the conjunction and. The interested reader will already have read the various references below, especially Gazdar, Grice, Ruth Kempson, Schmerling, and so on. I am grateful to Sue Schmerling for several right on-target comments after the talk.

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