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Gapping of copular be *and [Spec, CP]*

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Compared to other verbs of English, copular *be* has a rich inflectional paradigm. This creates possible morphological "mismatches" in Gapping constructions. Note that (1), with morphologically identical Gapped verbs, improves on (2):

(1) a.   Kim is a syntactician, and Dana ~~is~~ a phonologist
     b.   You$_1$ are incredibly inconsiderate, and you$_2$ ~~are~~ incredibly vain
     c.   I was unhappy, and Terry ~~was~~ distraught

(2) a.   ?The teacher is stern, and the students ~~are~~ frightened
     b.   ?I am a good syntactician, and Kim ~~is~~ a famous phonologist
     c.   ?You were unhappy, and Sandy ~~was~~ distraught

   The above contrast strengthens if the form of *be* undergoes I-to-C movement in question formation (apparently, for some speakers, the contrast is not equally strong in all the examples in (4)) :

(3) a.   Is Kim a syntactician, and Dana a phonologist?
     b.   Are you$_1$ really so inconsiderate and you$_2$ really so vain?
     c.   Was I really so unhappy, and Sandy so distraught?

(4) a.   *Is the teacher so stern, and the students so frightened?
     b.   *Am I a good syntactician, and Kim a famous phonologist?
     c.   *Were you unhappy, and Sandy distraught?

   Interestingly, though, (for many speakers) forms such as in (4) improve if a *wh*-phrase occupies the [Spec, CP] of the first clause:

(5) a.   Why is the teacher so stern, and the students so frightened?
     b.   How/In what way am I a good syntactician, and Kim a famous phonologist?
     c.   Where/why were you unhappy, and Sandy distraught?

   I-to-C movement of a "mismatched" Gapped copular *be* also proves successful in constructions involving preposed negative adverbials (which we assume occupy [Spec, CP]):

(6) a.   Never is the teacher stern, (n)or the students frightened
     b.   In no way am I a good syntactician, or Kim a famous phonologist
     c.   Very rarely were you unhappy, or Sandy distraught

In addition, presence of a phrase in [Spec, CP] in what Radford 1989 calls "resultative preposing" constructions seems to enable successful I-to-C movement of a mismatched Gapped copular *be*. So the following all sound better than the forms in (4) do:

(7) a. So stern is the teacher, and so frightened the students, that the principal had to intervene
     b. Such a good syntactician am I, and so good a phonologist Kim, that we will both be promoted
     c. So unhappy were you, and so distraught Sandy, that no clown could brighten the day

So we have the following puzzle: a Gapped form of *be* that does not match its non-Gapped counterpart morphologically proves slightly degraded (as in (2)), and matters become worse if the non-Gapped instance of be undergoes I-to-C movement (as in (4)). However, the presence of an element -- apparently any element – in [Spec, CP] ameliorates the problem of such I-to-C movement. Just why a filled [Spec, CP] position should have such an interaction with Gapping constructions merits further investigation.

References

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