

snippets

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4.

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Remarks on gapping in ASL

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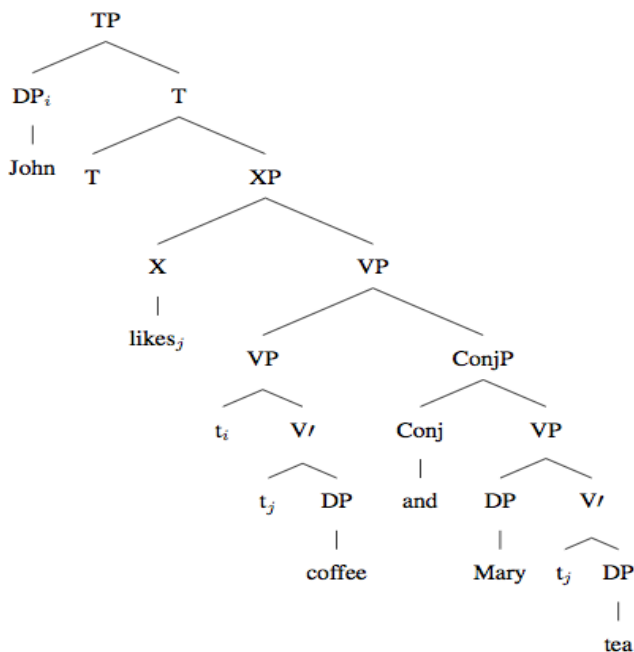
Small-conjunct analyses of Gapping analyze the category coordinated in sentences like (1) as VP or vP.

(1) John likes coffee and Mary, tea.

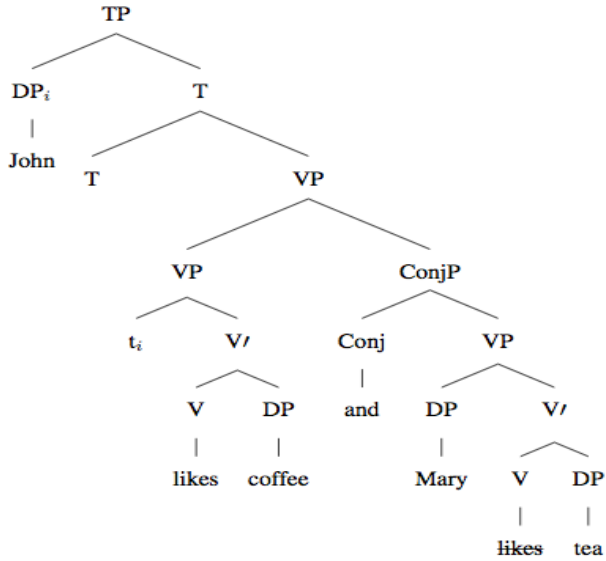
The left-conjunct subject moves into the shared Spec,TP, and the right remains in-situ. The identical verbs either undergo ATB movement to an intermediate projection (2a; Johnson 2009), or the rightmost verb is elided (2b; Coppock 2001).

On large-conjunct analyses, in contrast, Gapping structures consist of coordinated categories of the size of TP or CP. The clause in the left conjunct is normal, while the one in the right conjunct has undergone movement of the rightmost Gapping remnant followed by ellipsis of some lower category (2c; Wilder 1994).

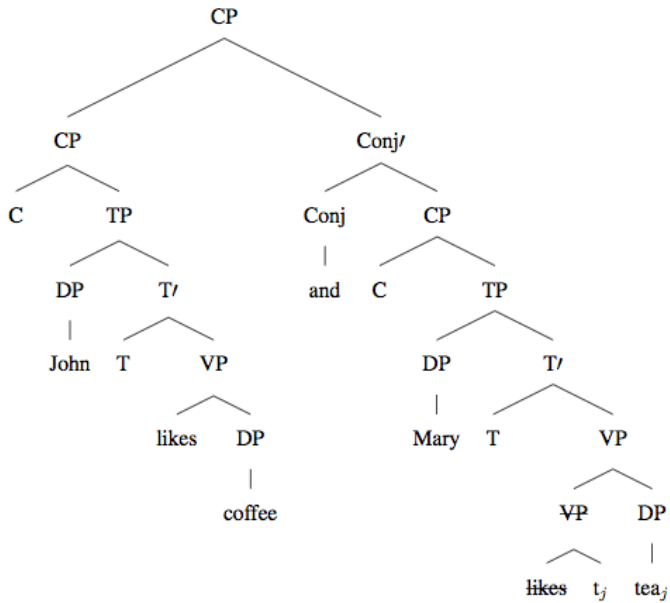
(2a)



(2b)



(2c)



American Sign Language (ASL) possesses a Gapping construction (3) similar to English's. (Glossing for ASL represents signs in uppercase English words of loosely equivalent meaning and indexical elements as IX1, IX2, etc.)

(3) IX1 LIKE COFFEE, IX2 TEA.

He likes coffee, and she, tea.

One kind of coordination in ASL is realized prosodically, as contrastive shoulder movement. The signer shifts so that her torso is facing slightly to the left during the first conjunct, and then to the right during the second conjunct. Here the scope of this contrast prosody is indicated by brackets, like so: [shoulders left], [shoulders right].

This unique feature of this ASL coordinator affords evidence for the size of the conjuncts in Gapping. The Small-Conjunct analysis of Gapping predicts that the leftmost subject will be outside the scope of the contrast prosody, since it has raised into the shared Spec,TP (Braze 2004). Under accounts where the verb raises ATB, it should be as well. In contrast, the Large-Conjunct analysis of Gapping predicts that the leftmost subject will occur inside the contrast prosody. As shown in (4a) and (4b/c) below, the latter prediction obtains.

(4) a. [IX1 LIKE COFFEE], [IX2 TEA].

b. *IX1 [LIKE COFFEE], [IX2 TEA].

c. *IX1 LIKE [COFFEE], [IX2 TEA].

If ASL's contrast prosody is "greedy," extending past the actual syntactic domains being coordinated, we would expect to see the same pattern in clear VP-coordination, like (5); but the prosodic pattern illicit in (4b) is perfectly fine here.

(5) IX1 [LIKE COFFEE], [DISLIKE TEA].

She likes coffee and dislikes tea.

The contrast between (5) and (4b) suggests that the latter is not VP-level coordination and thus provides indirect support for the Large-Conjunct analysis. Similarly, in cases of unambiguous clausal coordination, the contrast prosody is as in (4a).

(6) [IX1 LIKE COFFEE], [IX2 DISLIKE TEA].

He likes coffee and she dislikes tea.

These rather simple observations about Gapping in ASL receive a principled account on the Large-Conjunct analysis of Gapping: ASL's contrast prosody simply extends across the conjunct, whatever the category coordinated, and Gapping derives from coordination of at least TP-sized categories. Because these same facts are mysterious on a small-conjunct analysis, they suggest that such accounts are, for ASL at least, not on the right track.

References

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- Johnson, K. (2009) "Gapping isn't (VP) ellipsis." *Linguistic Inquiry* 40(2), 289-328.
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