

snippets

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Editorial Statement

1. Purpose

The aim of *Snippets* is to publish specific remarks that motivate research or that make theoretical points germane to current work. The ideal contribution is brief, self-contained and explicit. One encounters short comments of this kind in earlier literature in linguistics. We feel that there no longer is a forum for them. We want *Snippets* to help fill that gap.

2. Content

We will publish notes that contribute to the study of syntax and semantics in generative grammar. The notes are to be brief, self-contained and explicit. They may do any of the following things:

- point out an empirical phenomenon that challenges accepted generalizations or influential theoretical proposals;
- point out unnoticed minimal pairs that fall outside the scope of any existing theory;
- point out an empirical phenomenon that confirms the predictions of a theory in an area where the theory has not been tested;
- explicitly describe technical inconsistencies in a theory or in a set of frequently adopted assumptions;
- explicitly describe unnoticed assumptions that underlie a theory or assumptions that a theory needs to be supplemented with in order to make desired predictions;
- call attention to little-known or forgotten literature in which issues of immediate relevance are discussed.

We also encourage submissions that connect psycholinguistic data to theoretical issues. A proposal for a pilot experiment in language acquisition or language processing could make for an excellent snippet.

The earliest *Linguistic Inquiry* squibs exemplify the kind of remark we would like to publish. Some of them posed unobserved puzzles. For instance, a squib by Postal and Ross in *Linguistic Inquiry* 1:1 (“A Problem of Adverb Preposing”) noted that whether or not we can construe a sentence-initial temporal adverb with an embedded verb depends on the tense of the matrix verb. A squib by Perlmutter and Ross in *LI* 1:3 (“Relative Clauses with Split Antecedents”), challenging the prevailing analyses of coordination and extraposition, noted that conjoined clauses, neither of which contains a plural noun phrase, can appear next to an “extraposed” relative that can only describe groups. Other squibs drew attention to particular theoretical assumptions. For instance, a squib by Bresnan in *LI* 1:2 (“A Grammatical Fiction”) outlined an alternative account of the derivation of sentences containing *believe* and *force*, and asked whether there were principled reasons for dismissing any of the underlying assumptions (among them that semantic interpretation is sensitive to details of a syntactic derivation). A squib by Zwicky in *LI* 1:2 (“Class Complements in Phonology”) asked to what extent phonological rules refer to complements of classes. None of these squibs was more than a couple of paragraphs; all of them limited themselves to a precise question or observation.

3. Submission details

Snippets is an electronic journal. We will solicit submissions twice a year. The submissions that we accept will be posted on the journal website approximately 3 months after each deadline, and all accepted submissions will remain permanently on the website. *Snippets* is intended as a service to the linguistics community. Consequently, authors are advised that, when they submit to *Snippets*, we understand them as allowing their submission to be reproduced if published. At the same time, the rights for the published snippets themselves will remain with the authors. As a result, citation of *Snippets* material will have to indicate the author's name and the specific source of the material.

We will accept electronic submissions at the address snippetsjournal@gmail.com. Electronic submissions may take the form of (a) the text of an e-mail message, or (b) an attached file. The attached file should be a simple text file, a Word file (Mac or Windows), a Rich Text Format (RTF) file, or a PDF. The files must be anonymous, but must be accompanied with information about the authors: name, affiliation, and (postal or electronic) address. Submissions can be of any length below 500 words (including examples), with an additional half page allowed for diagrams, tables, and references. The submissions may not contain footnotes or general acknowledgments, except acknowledgements of funding sources, which must be credited in a line following the references. Authors who wish to acknowledge language consultants are allowed but not required to do so. We will not consider abstracts.

4. Editorial policy

Submissions will be reviewed by our editorial board and review board, and review will be name-blind both ways. While we guarantee a response within 3 months of the submission deadline, we will not necessarily provide more than a yes/no response to the submitter. We allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

This statement reproduces with minor modifications the editorial statement in Issue 1 of Snippets (January 2000), edited by Carlo Cecchetto, Caterina Donati and Orin Percus.

A note on non-distributive belief ascriptions

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Pasternak (2018) observes that it is possible to truthfully attribute to a plurality a belief that cannot be truthfully attributed to any of its atomic parts. The example in (1) (Pasternak's (4)) illustrates this observation. Crucially, the interpretation that makes (1) true in the suggested context cannot be a distributive one, nor can it be accounted for via a *de re* construal of 'six houses'.

- (1) *Context: Sam owns a construction company and has six clients, none of whom know of the others' existence. She has convinced each client that she would build a house for him. In reality, she is a con artist and built no houses at all.*
(In total,) Sam's clients believe that [she built six houses]

Based on these and related observations, Pasternak proposes that the possibility of non-distributive belief ascriptions follows from the fact that the beliefs of a plurality can generally be inferred from the beliefs of its atomic parts: when the beliefs of the atomic parts composing a plurality are mutually compatible, the beliefs of that plurality correspond to the conjunction of the beliefs of its atomic parts. This proposal nicely accounts for the case in (1): since each client believes that Sam built a house for him, their conjoined belief is that she built six houses.

As a follow up to Pasternak's observations, consider now the following variants of (1) and assume that Bill and John are Sam's only two clients:

- (2) a. Bill believes that [Sam is from Texas]_p
b. John believes that [Sam is a hard worker]_q
c. Sam's clients believe that [she is from Texas and she is a hard worker]_{p and q}
- (3) a. Bill believes that [Sam is from Texas and she is a hard worker]_{p and q}
b. John isn't sure that [Sam is from Texas]_p and he isn't sure that [she is a hard worker]_q
c. Sam's clients believe that [she is from Texas and she is a hard worker]_{p and q}
- (4) a. Bill believes that [Sam is from Texas]_p
b. John believes that [if Sam is from Texas, then she is a hard worker]_{if p, then q}
c. Sam's clients believe that [she is from Texas and she is a hard worker]_{p and q}

In these three examples, Sam's clients' individual beliefs are mutually compatible and their conjoined beliefs entail *p and q*. Yet people can truthfully attribute to Sam's clients the belief that *p and q* is true only in (2c). Intuitively, (3c) and (4c) are not acceptable because, in contrast to (2c), one of the individual experiencers, namely John, does not believe any of the non-trivial entailments of *p and q*: in both (3) and (4), John is agnostic about *p*, about *q*, and thus about *p and q*.

These contrasts suggest that, for a belief to be truthfully attributed to a plurality, it is necessary but not sufficient that the believed proposition be entailed by the conjoined beliefs of the corresponding individuals. Rather non-distributive belief ascription seems to require not only that every non-trivial entailment of the relevant proposition be believed by some part of the relevant plurality, but also that every part of that plurality believes some non-trivial entailment of that proposition. Both these requirements are met in (1) and (2), but only the former is met in (3) and (4).

Overall, these observations are reminiscent of the dual requirement at work in cumulative readings and may invite us to envision non-distributive belief ascriptions as particular instances of phrasal cumulativity interacting with attitudinal semantics. Arguably, one could try to account for this phenomenon using similar mechanisms as those previously proposed for deriving the cumulative readings of sentences involving more than one plural DPs, e.g., by appealing to and adapting the cumulativity ****-operator proposed in Beck and Sauerland 2000 (see Schmitt 2017 for a recent proposal). As far as I can tell, an analysis along these lines would capture the contrasts unveiled in this note and naturally extend to cases involving other attitude verbs like ‘want’, which has been shown in Pasternak 2018 to allow non-distributive desire ascriptions.

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First conjunct agreement in Polish: Evidence for a mono-clausal analysis

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In languages such as Polish a verb agreeing with a post-verbal subject &P can reflect either the features of the first conjunct (first conjunct agreement (FCA)) or the resolved features of the &P (full agreement); see (1) from Citko (2004:91).

- (1) Do pokoju weszła/ weszli młoda kobieta i chłopiec.
to room entered-F.SG entered-M.PL young woman and boy
'Into the room walked a young woman and boy.'

A question broadly discussed in the literature is whether FCA arises as a result of agreement with the first conjunct of an NP & NP coordination (mono-clausal analysis) or whether this pattern results from clausal coordination coupled with ellipsis (bi-clausal analysis), as in (2), which can be taken to involve, for example, VP ellipsis with the verb and the adjunct inside the ellipsis site and the subject outside it (see, a.o., Aoun, Benmamoun, and Sportiche 1994, 1999; Bošković 2009, 2010; Citko 2004; Doron 2000; Johannessen 1996; Marušič, Nevins, and Badecker 2010; Munn 1993, 1999 for various types of analyses).

- (2) [&P [IP Do pokoju weszła młoda kobieta] i [IP ~~<VP do pokoju wszedł>~~ chłopiec]].
to room entered-F.SG young woman and to room entered-M.SG boy

Here we would like to suggest two environments which can be employed to distinguish between phrasal and clausal coordination in the relevant set of languages: (i) verb-echo answers to polar (yes/no) questions (see Holmberg 2016) and (ii) polarity reversal responses.

(3) *Verb-echo answer*

- a. [A:] Czy tam na plaży leżała Maria *(i) Jan?
if there on beach lay-F.SG Maria and Jan
'Did Maria and Jan lay there on the beach?'
- b. [B:] leżała/ leżeli/ *leżał.
lay-F.SG lay-M.PL lay-M.SG
'Yes, they did.'

(4) *Polarity reversal*

- a. [A:] Tam na plaży nie leżała Maria *(i) Jan.
there on beach not lay-F.SG Maria and Jan
'Maria and Jan did not lie there on the beach.'

- b. [B:] leżała/ leżeli/ *leżał.
 lay-F.SG lay-M.PL lay-M.SG
 ‘Yes, they did.’

As the plural response pattern (resolved agreement) has a potential alternative derivation based on *pro_{they}* in the subject position rather than a coordinate phrase, for present purposes what is important are the echo responses that show FCA, where coordination is definitely implicated.

If the FCA responses in (3b) and (4b) were derived from a bi-clausal structure, it would be difficult to explain the absence of the coordinator, obligatorily overt in FCA environments in Polish (3a) and (4a), without further stipulation. Including the coordinator in the ellipsis site under the bi-clausal analysis would either require non-constituent deletion, if the verb doesn’t move out of the first clausal conjunct (see (5) for a possible derivation along this line), or would imply a Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC) violation, if it does (see (6)).

- (5) (\otimes non-constituent deletion)
 [IP leżała < tam na plaży t_{leżała} Maria > $\boxed{+}$ [IP tam na plaży leżał Jan]].
 lay-F.SG there on beach Maria and there on beach lay-M.SG Jan
- (6) (\otimes CSC violation)
 leżała < [IP tam na plaży t_{leżała} Maria > $\boxed{+}$ [IP tam na plaży leżał Jan]].
 lay-F.SG there on beach Maria and there on beach lay-M.SG Jan

Notice that appealing to rescue by ellipsis (Lasnik 2001, though see Barros et al. 2014) to salvage the derivation from the CSC violation in (6) creates another problem. Namely, it is unclear what would prevent the verb in the second clausal conjunct from being the one moving out of the ellipsis site, which yields an unacceptable result:

- (7) *leżał < [IP tam na plaży leżała Maria > $\boxed{+}$ [IP tam na plaży t_{leżał} Jan]].
 lay-M.SG there on beach lay-F.SG Maria and there on beach Jan

On the other hand, the mono-clausal approach can straightforwardly deliver the proper verb-echo and polarity reversal responses:

- (8) leżała < [IP tam na plaży t_{leżała} [NP Maria $\boxed{+}$ Jan]] >.
 lay-F.SG there on beach Maria and Jan

In (8) coordination does not affect the placement of the verb, and the coordinator stays inside the ellipsis site, thereby avoiding the pitfalls of the bi-clausal analysis.

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