snippets

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Backward gapping is not RNR:
Evidence from Determiner Sharing

Marie-Luise Schwarzer · Universität Leipzig

Backward gapping (BG), i.e. omission of a verb(al complex) in the first conjunct of a coordination (1a), has been argued to be due to the same operation that also derives Right Node Raising constructions (RNR), (1b) (Hankamer 1979, Wesche 1995 Kornfilt 2000, Hernández 2007 a.o.)

(1) a. … dass [jeder Gallier seiner Familie ~~von Obelix erzählt~~] und [jeder Legionär
   that every Gaul his.DAT family.DAT of Obelix tells and every legionary
   seinem Präfekten von Obelix erzählt]
   his.DAT prefect.DAT of Obelix tells
   'that every Gaul tells his family about Obelix and every legionary tells his prefect
    about Obelix'

   b. … dass [jeder Gallier hofft ~~auf Obelix zu treffen~~] und [jeder Feind vermeidet auf
   that every Gaul hopes at Obelix to meet and every enemy avoids at
   Obelix zu treffen]
   Obelix to meet
   'that every Gaul hopes to meet Obelix and every enemy avoids meeting Obelix'

In this snippet, I want to share an observation that is puzzling under the view that BG reduces to RNR: determiner sharing can be licensed by (backward) gapping, but not by RNR. Determiner sharing constructions (DS) are gapping structures which also allow the omission of a determiner or quantifier (2a) (McCawley 1993, Johnson 2000, Lin 2002, and others). Crucially, this omission is dependent on verbal gapping (2b). If the verb surfaces overtly in the second conjunct, as in (2b), the interpretation of a missing quantifier becomes impossible, and (2b) cannot refer to *few cats*, but only to *cats in general*.

(2) a. **Few** dogs like Whiskas and ~~few~~ cats ~~like~~ Alpo.   = *few cats*
   b. #Few dogs like Whiskas and ~~few~~ cats like Alpo.   (Johnson 2000)

German allows RNR, forward and backward gapping, and DS, and thus presents an ideal test case. (3) illustrates that DS is possible in a backward gapping coordination in German, but not in an RNR construction. The judgments are subtle but 82% of interviewed native speakers (28 out of 34) report the contrast of (3a) vs. (3b).

(3) a. … dass [jeder Gallier seiner Familie ~~von Obelix erzählt~~] und ~~jeder~~ Legionär
   that every Gaul his.DAT family.DAT of Obelix tells and every legionary
   seinem Präfekten von Obelix erzählt
   his.DAT prefect.DAT of Obelix tells
   'that every Gaul tells his family about Obelix and every legionary tells his prefect
    about Obelix'

b. ?*… dass [jeder Gallier hofft ~~auf Obelix zu treffen~~] und [~~jeder~~ Feind vermeidet auf
   that every Gaul   hopes at   Obelix to meet   and every enemy avoids   at
   Obelix zu treffen]
   Obelix to meet

   'that every Gaul hopes to meet Obelix and every enemy avoids meeting Obelix'

(3a) shows a backward gapping structure that licenses DS: the verb and one of its arguments are omitted in the first conjunct and the quantifier is omitted in the second conjunct. Still, the quantifier is interpreted as if it was there overtly. In (3b) where the clausal complement has been right-node raised, that interpretation of the quantifier is not possible. Note that bare singular nouns are disallowed in German, so if DS is not possible, the sentence should become ungrammatical. If backward gapping and RNR are underlyingly the same operation, the contrast in (3b) is in need of an explanation.

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Marie-Luise Schwarzer
marie-luise.schwarzer@uni-leipzig.de
Universität Leipzig
Institut für Linguistik
04107 Leipzig
Germany