The inherent syntactic incompleteness of RNR

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Basic claim

• Right node raising (RNR) sentences like (1) are represented like that in (2)

• (1) Lana bought, and James read, the book.

• (2) [Lana bought] and [James read the book]
Basic claim

• RNR involves clauses that are incomplete in a syntactic sense:

• (3) [Lana bought]

• Only post-syntactically does the clause get its internal argument:

• (4) After syntax: Lana bought the book
Basic claim

• This requires a loosening of the transparent mapping between syntactic complementation and semantic composition/interpretation

• RNR is part of a larger group of constructions where this is required:
  • **RNR:** Lana bought, and James read, the book
  • **ATB:** What did Lana buy and James read?
  • **CWh:** What and when did James read
Basic claim

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• RNR is part of a larger group of constructions where this is required:
  - **RNR**: Lana bought, and James read, the book
  - **ATB**: What did Lana buy and James read?
  - **CWh**: What and when did James read?
Background

• In a typical RNR sentence there is a single element that is interpreted in two different locations despite arising overtly in only one:

• (4) Lana bought ___ and James read the book
Background

• This sort of *Interpretation at a distance* is not proprietary to RNR:

• (5) **What** did Joe eat ___?

• (6) **Jim** wants to ___ eat apples

• (7) **Tim ate** but I don’t know what ______
Background

- Syntacticians have concocted a number ways to capture *Interpretation at a Distance* and maintain the syntax/semantics isomorphism

- **Movement operations**
  - *What* did Joe eat *what*?

- **Null elements**
  - *Jim* wants to *PRO* eat apples

- **Phonological deletion**
  - *Tim ate* but I don’t know what *Tim ate*
Using our tools on RNR

• How well does our syntactician’s toolkit work on RNR?


• (8) [Lana bought t] and [James read t] [the book]
Using our tools on RNR

• But there are known problems with this approach

• RNR is not subject to movement islands (McCawley 1982):

• (9) Lana met a man who repaired, and Mary met a man who sold, old bicycles
Using our tools on RNR

Further, in some languages only certain elements can A’-move:

In Tagalog only arguments that agree with the verb can A’-move (Sabbagh 2008):

• (10) *Sino ang ninakaw ang kotse mo?
   who cop. stole abs car you
   (‘Who stole your car?’)

But this constraint does not hold for RNR (Larson 2011):

• (11) Si Juan ay nanghuhuli at si Maria ay nagtitinda [ng isda]
   abs Juan ay catches and abs Maria ay sells erg fish
   ‘Juan catches, and Maria sells, fish.’
Using our tools on RNR

• How well does our syntactician’s toolkit work on RNR?


• (12) Lana bought the book and James read the book.
Using our tools on RNR

- We seem to have here a proliferation of elements that can elide:

- (13) Lana conversed with Dana, and Jim conferred, with Dana.

- (14) Lana thought that Tim would be a good doctor, and Dana thought that Jim, would be a good doctor.
Using our tools on RNR

• We seem to have here a proliferation of elements that can elide:

• (15) Hans soll heimfahren und Ute muss [heimfahren]
  Hans should home.go and Ute must home.go
  ‘Hans should, and Ute must, go home.’

• (16) My theory perhaps over-generates, while your theory perhaps under-, generates the data
Using our tools on RNR

• Further, it has been noted that RNR sentences and their putatively unelided versions are not synonymous (Abels 2004):

• (17) a. Ivan wrote, and Ivy read, similar books.
   b. Ivan wrote similar books and Ivy read similar books.
Using our tools on RNR

• Our traditional tools do not seem up to the task of analyzing RNR. What are we to do?


• Or we can do away with the isomorphism
What is to be done?

• If we want to maintain the transparent mapping, we need to alter how phrase structure can be built:

• (18) Lana bought and James read [the book]
What is to be done?

- There are problems for a Multidominance account

- C-command effects:

- (19) He hopes that Susan won't, but the secretary knows that she will fire John

- (20) a. Ivan bought, but Ivy didn't read, any books
   b. *Ivan didn't buy, but Ivy read, any books
What is to be done?

• Instead, I posit that we eschew the transparent mapping between syntactic complementation and semantic composition/interpretation.

• Syntax: [Lana bought] and [James read the book]

• Post-syntax: ~Lana bought the book and James read the book
A Post-syntactic account

• This buys us two things simply and easily:

• The lack of pronunciation of the shared material in the first conjunct

• The lack of non-semantic effects of the shared element residing in the first conjunct
A Post-syntactic account

• Reciprocal licensing:

• (21) *Ivan\textsubscript{i} and Igor\textsubscript{j} saw, and Ivy\textsubscript{k} heard, each other\textsubscript{i+j}(+k).

• (22) Ivy\textsubscript{k} heard, and Ivan\textsubscript{i} and Igor\textsubscript{j} saw, each other\textsubscript{i+j}.
A Post-syntactic account

• Weak crossover effects

• (23) *no possible co-varying reading:*
  Sally bought, but he$_i$ selected, each boy$_i$'s fathers day present.

• (24) *possible co-varying reading:*
  He$_i$ selected, but Sally bought, each boy$_i$'s fathers day present.
A Post-syntactic account

• Complement clause selection:

• Brazilian Portuguese:

• (25) a. *Maria quer que Ana vai viajar
   Maria wants that Ana will.indic travel
   ‘Maria wants that Ana will travel’

   b. Pedro quer, mas Maria lamenta que Ana vai viajar
   Pedro wants but Maria regrets that Ana will.indic travel
   ‘Pedro wants, but Maria regrets, that Ana will travel.’
A Post-syntactic account

• How do we get the interpretation to come out right?

• Lana bought ____ and James read the book
A Post-syntactic account

• Following Herburger 1997, 2000, backgrounded, non-focussed elements restrict event variables:

• (26) ROSALIA wrote poetry
• (27) At LF: $\exists e: \text{write}(e) \& \text{Theme}(e, \text{poetry})$ 
  $\{\text{Agent}(e, \text{Rosalia})\}$

• (28) Some event of writing poetry was such that its agent was Rosalia.
A Post-syntactic account

• The shared material in RNR must be somehow presupposed, background material (adapted from Hartmann 2000):

• (29) a. What did Ivy and Iris do?
   b. *Ivy bought, and Iris read, a long book

• (30) a. What was done with a long book?
   b. Ivy bought, and Iris read, a long book
A Post-syntactic account

• So let’s look at RNR under Herburger’s scheme:

• (31) Ivan bought, and Ivy read, the long book.
• (32) [∃E: Ee & Ee' & participant(E, the long book)]
  {Agent(e,Ivan) & buy(e) & Agent(e',Ivy) & read(e')}

• (33) There are some events of which one is event-A
  and one is event-B and these events involved the long
  book such that event-A's agent is Ivan and it is a buying
  and event-B's agent is Ivy and it is a reading.
A Post-syntactic account

• Under this account, the shared material is only extant in the rightmost conjunct

• It is restricted into each conjunct post-syntactically, even post-semantically

• The relevant events are restricted to those involving the shared material.

• The shared material is interpreted in each event based on the event structure of the verb and what it is lacking
A Post-syntactic account

• This suggests that the acceptability of RNR sentences is due in part to pragmatic effects

• This might the fuzzy borders of the construction:

• (34) Dana kept her money in, and Jim likes to stroll along, the bank

• (35) I told Dana to fetch, and you told Jim to give, the ball to Joe.
Conclusions

• I have argued for a few things here:

• Our traditional syntactic toolkit is ill-suited for RNR
• This forces us to make a choice: The syntax or something else needs to do some stretching
• There are problems with allowing the syntax to stretch that are not found in making a more semantic stretch
Conclusions

• RNR should be seen as an instance where the argument structure in the syntax under-determines the interpreted argument structure

• This is captured by allowing the shared material to restrict event quantifiers in virtue of its backgrounded nature
References


Ha, S. 2006. Multiple dominance CAN'T, but PF-deletion CAN account for Right Node Raising. Paper presented at the 42nd Annual Meeting of the CLS.


References


