Two types of anti-labeling coordinators: An evolutional view

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1. Introduction

Chomsky (2013) proposes that φ-feature agreement plays a crucial role in the labeling process and argues that the head of structured coordination does not serve as a label. In this connection, Saito (2016) proposes that suffixal Case in the languages that lack φ-feature agreement serves to make a constituent invisible for labeling and hence plays a crucial role in the labeling algorithm. This paper examines the syntactic and phonological properties of the coordinators, *and* in English and *to* in Japanese, and argues that both of them are anti-labeling but in different manners: from an evolutional viewpoint, *and* has gained the status of a syntactic head whereas *to* is a phonological linker and has not been grammaticalized as a syntactic head.

2. Previous analyses and assumptions about coordination

2.1 English Chomsky (2013: 45ff.) assumes the underlying structure of coordination in (1a), which captures the semantic symmetry of coordination, and hypothesizes that Z moves out of β to merge with α yielding (1b), whereby β is labeled W, and γ is labeled Z. For this to work, the head of coordination (Conj) should not serve as a label. The labeling is based on φ-feature agreement, and hence Z and W are of the same category.

(1) a. $[_{\alpha=?}$ Conj $[_{\beta=?}$ Z W]]] → b. $[_{\gamma=Z}$ Z $[_{\alpha}$ Conj $[_{\beta=W}$ Z W]]]

2.2 Japanese Saito (2016) explores the labeling mechanism in the languages that lack φ-feature agreement such as Japanese and Korean. His hypothesis is that suffixal Case in these languages serves to make a constituent invisible for labeling. In the structure γ = {α-Case, β} for example, only β is visible and provides the label of γ. This is based on Bošković's (2007) proposal that Case valuation takes place independently of φ-feature agreement. Dobashi (2017) extends Saito's analysis and assumes that the coordinator *te* in Japanese is not a labeler either.

2.3 Evolutional development Kubo (2018), adopting Chomsky's (2013) labeling algorithm, suggests the possibility that the evolutional development of coordinate structures depicted in (2) could capture the peculiar properties regarding the categories of conjuncts in multiple coordination (which Chomsky 2013 sets aside as unstructured coordination, p.45) in English.

(2) a. Z W → b. Z & W → c. Conj (Z W)

Kubo argues that whereas structured coordination in English has gained the hierarchical structure (2c) (= (1a)), English has "living fossil" examples of (2a) and (2b) (pp.46-48):

(3) a. Root small clauses: *Him worry*? b. V-N compounds: *pick-pocket*, *scare-crow*
c. Parallel two-word small clauses: *nothing ventured, nothing gained* … (2a)-type

(4) He leads a lonely life, though he is a linguist, a pianist, ??(and) a genius. … (2b)-type

In the examples in (3), there is no overt coordinator, and parallel elements do not have to be of the same category. In (4), *and* is not a syntactic head (Conj) but a phonological linker (&) which serves to make explicit the presence of the last conjunct (p.48). Kubo further points out that multiple coordination in Nunggubuyu exhibits both (2a) and (2b), as exemplified in (5a) and (5b) respectively (Kubo 2018: 48-49, citing Heath 1986).

(5) a. NP NP NP … (2a)-type b. mari NP mari NP mari NP … (2b)-type

3. Analysis of the anti-labeling property of coordinators

I argue that the Japanese coordinator *to* is a phonological linker (&) representing the 2nd stage in (2b), based on the following empirical evidence. First, multiple coordination in Japanese can be of the (2a) and (2b) types like Nunggubuyu:

(6) a. Minami, Tatu, Kazu-ga paati-ni kita. (M T K-NOM party-DAT came) … (2a)-type
b. Minami-to Tatu-to Kazu(-to)-ga paati-ni kita. (M-*to* T-*to* K(-*to*)-NOM party-DAT came)
'Minami, Tatu and Kazu came to the party.' … (2b)-type

As is seen in (6b), *to* can occur after every conjunct including the last one, and having only one *to* before the last conjunct like English (e.g. (4)) degrades the sentence (??*Minami, Tatu-to Kazu-ga…*). I hypothesize that this comes from the phonological nature of *to* as a linker, which prefers to appear evenly to beat the rhythm (cf. Shiobara 2019 for *and* in multiple coordination).

Secondly, when a coordinated NP is in the subject position, the nominative Case appears only after the last NP in Japanese, as shown in (7). This suggests that not only Case but also *to* are anti-labeling in Japanese: independently of φ-feature agreement, the NP in [Spec,TP] as a whole probes for the Case value provider T and has its Case valued as nominative.

(7) a. [Kare-to kanojo(-to)]-ga paati-ni kita. (he-*to* she(-*to*)-NOM party-DAT came)
b. *Kare-to-ga kanojo(-to)-ga/*Kare-ga-to kanojo-ga(-to) paati-ni kita.

This contrasts with English, where each conjunct of the coordinated NP in [Spec,TP] must be valued as nominative, not as (default) accusative (e.g. *him* in (3a)) as shown in (8a); and the Case is dependent on φ-feature agreement as shown in (8b):

(8) a.?* Him and her love parties. / ?* He and her love parties. / * Him and she love parties.
b. He and she love parties. / * He and she loves parties.

Thirdly, *to* behaves differently from postpositions in Japanese. Although Japanese is a WITH-language and the coordinator *to* has the same phonetic content as the comitative postposition *to* ('with') (Stassen 2013), they can cooccur:

(9) [You did not come home yesterday.]
[Doko]-de-wa naku [dare-to](-to) [nan-no-tame]-ka-o siritai.
(where-be-TOP not who-with-*to* what-of-for-Q-ACC want.to.know)
'I don't want to know where (you were), but I do want to know with whom (you were), and for what.'

To sum up, the Japanese coordinator *to* is anti-labeling like the English coordinator *and*, but for different reasons: the former is a phonological linker (&) in the (2b) type and the latter is an anti-labeling syntactic head (Conj) in the (2c) type. On the other hand, as is usually assumed, English and Japanese adpositions are considered syntactic heads and labelers. The present analysis implies that Stassen's (2013) hypothesis of the historical shift from (comitative) *with* to (coordinating) *and* should be wrong. In fact, unlike English, the PP cannot constitute a subject with the original subject NP, as is shown in (10b):

(10) a. Minami-ga Tatu-to paati-ni kita. (M-NOM T-with …) 'M came to the party with T.'
b.??Minami Tatu-to-ga paati-ni kita.(M T-with-NOM …)'M with T came to the party.'

Furthermore, while the PP can appear in front of the subject, the PP is considered only as scrambled before the subject NP, or as of the (2b)-type with *to* being a phonological linker:

(11) T-to, M-ga paati-ni kita. (T-with, M-NOM…) /[T-to M]-ga paarti-ni kita. (T-*to* M-NOM…)

Selected references Bošković, Ž. 2007. On the locality and motivation of move and agree. *LI* 38, 589-644. Chomsky, N. 2013. Problems of projection. *Lingua* 130, 33-49. Kubo, Y. 2018. Sinkagengogaku-kara mita takoutouikouzou. *Kyushu Eibungaku Kenkyu* 34, 41-51. Shiobara, K. 2019. Spelling out the spell-out of an XP-YP structure. *JELS* 36, 169-174. Stassen, L. 2013. Noun Phrase Conjunction. *WALS Online* (v2020.4), accessed on 2026-05-28.)