

Arguments for a non-derivational approach to analysing gapping

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I would like to thank Joel Wallenberg, Jóhannes G. Jónsson, John Kenneth Ratcliffe and Þórhallur Eyþórsson for stimulating after-dinner conversation, and for attempting to entertain the idea of a non-Chomskyan/non-derivational approach to syntax, as I made the arguments presented here. I would particularly like to thank Joel for introducing the topic with the first sentence given here! I apologise to anyone who's already worked all this out, and whom I haven't cited – this is play, not work!

The sentence in (1) is an example of an echo-construction.

(1) John shaved himself and Mary \emptyset herself.

This structure could be viewed as containing two co-ordinated sentences, *John shaved himself* and *Mary shaved herself*, with the second verb deleted according to some reason, leaving behind a gap, with an empty category place-holder in the constituent structure.

An alternative, and to my mind preferable account, is that the second co-ordinate contains only a subject and an object, with no verb. We begin by assuming that echo constructions may contain syntactic structures that are otherwise infelicitous, such as echo *wh*-questions which show no *wh*-movement (2).

(2) A: John said he's bringing Mary to the party.
B: John said he's bringing *who* to the party?

Sentences like (2B) show that, in echo-constructions, normally unacceptable constructions are acceptable. We can treat the second co-ordinate in (1) as an echo of the first, where only the subject and object are echoed. The immediate objection to this, is that this subject and object are subject to subcategorisation restrictions imposed by a particular verb, which means that this verb also needs to be echoed in the second co-ordinate, in order to allow feature-checking to apply in this co-ordinate, and for the usual subcategorisation rules to apply here. This is supported by examples like (3), which can be said to be infelicitous, since tables cannot (usually) be said to like chairs.

(3) # John likes Mary and tables chairs.

Clearly this sentence is semantically incongruous, but when this incongruity occurs, and its immediate cause, is debatable. I will return to the point later.

I believe that the infelicity of the echo in (3) is not due to a problem created from a subcategorisation problem within this clause. That is, I do not believe that the verb is copied, and then deleted, in this case, for two reasons. Firstly, the verb *shave* may take a direct object which is disjoint from the subject, it may take a reflexive pronoun, or it may take no overt subject in its middle interpretation (4).

(4) a. John shaved Mary.
b. John shaved himself.
c. John shaved.

However, these different subcategorisation frames of *shave* cannot be co-ordinated (5).

- (5) a. * John shaved himself and Mary \emptyset .
- b. #John shaved himself and Mary Fred.

(5a) is completely unacceptable, while (5b) is a garden path sentence. Upon first reading or hearing of (5b), it sounds incomplete and bizarre. The hearer returns to the first clause, works out what the verb must be, realises that it can indeed be a transitive verb, and only then deems the sentence acceptable. It is NOT acceptable upon first reading/hearing (and I would urge any linguist who disagrees with this statement to do more judgement-gathering from native-speakers!).

If the verb were indeed copied to the second co-ordinate, then presumably its subcategorisation frame would also be copied, and any of the options in (4) would be acceptable as the second co-ordinate. The fact that this is not the case is evidence that the initial assumption, that the verb is copied in the echo, is false.

Secondly, the path a hearer must follow in order to parse (5b) is evidence that the verb is not copied, since, again, if it were, then one would not need to 'replay' the first co-ordinate in order to deduce whether the second had any meaning.

Instead of proposing that the verb is copied in the echo co-ordinate, I suggest that features of the subject and object are copied. The subcategorisation restrictions that apply to the subject and the object are realised in the first co-ordinate only. The restrictions that then apply to the subject and object in the echo co-ordinate are that the features of these echo arguments must match the features of the antecedent arguments. Notice that this means that the restrictions are not the same restrictions applied twice, and also that this allows an analysis where the verb itself does not need to be echoed.

The complete unacceptability of (5a) is due to the fact that in English, it is not possible to echo only the subject in a co-ordination construction (6a). If the subject is the only argument, then it may only be echoed without the verb, provided that some other material is also included, such as *too* (6b), *does too* (6c), or, preferably, *so does X* (6d).

- (6) a. * John eats and Mary \emptyset .
- b. ? John wrestles and Mary too.
- c. John wrestles and Mary does too.
- d. John wrestles and so does Mary.

The first reason then for the unacceptability of (5a) is that the subject cannot be echoed alone. The second reason is that, if the object is not also echoed, then its features are not present in the echoed clause, making the structure incomplete, since the antecedent frame contained both a subject and an object. And it is this second reason that accounts for why (5b) is parsable, eventually. Co-ordinating a reflexive and a non-reflexive pronoun is possible, even though it sounds very odd, since both are pronounced, or realised, in English. In other words, the object must be echoed too, and it must be interpretable as fulfilling the same role as its antecedent. The expected echo of a reflexive object is another reflexive. While in principle, any DP is possible, there is a clear cline of acceptability, as the echoed object becomes less and less like its antecedent (7).

- (7) a. John likes himself and Mary herself.
- b. #John likes himself and Mary Fred.
- c. #* John likes himself and Mary apples.

d. ?? John likes himself and Mary skiing. [with echo interpretation]

In each case, if the verb is included, the resultant sentence is very clearly acceptable (8).

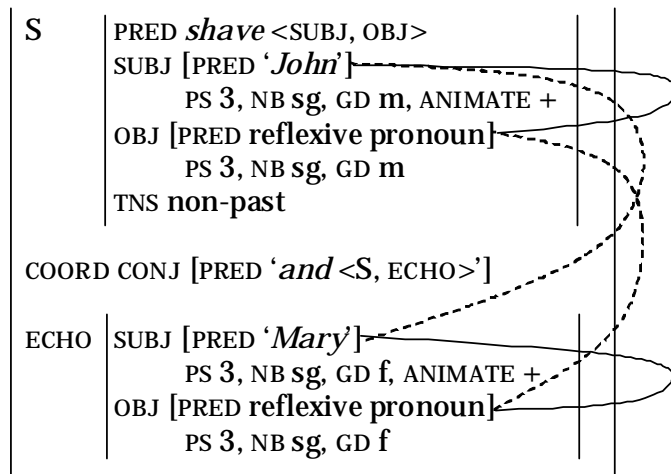
- (8) a. John likes himself and Mary likes herself.
 b. John likes himself and Mary likes Fred.
 c. John likes himself and Mary likes apples.
 d. John likes himself and Mary likes skiing.

Accounts that involve copying the verb and then deleting it need to account for the difference in acceptability between the sentences in (7) and (8) using some other mechanism, while under the non-derivational account presented here, the difference in acceptability is trivial.

In order to be more specific about how this analysis could be represented in a non-derivational theory of syntax, I use Lexical-Functional Grammar as illustration.

In (9) I give a (simplified) f-structure of (1). The solid joining lines show the reflexive coreference relation, while the dotted joining lines show the echo relations.

(9)
 f-structure for *John shaves himself and Mary herself*

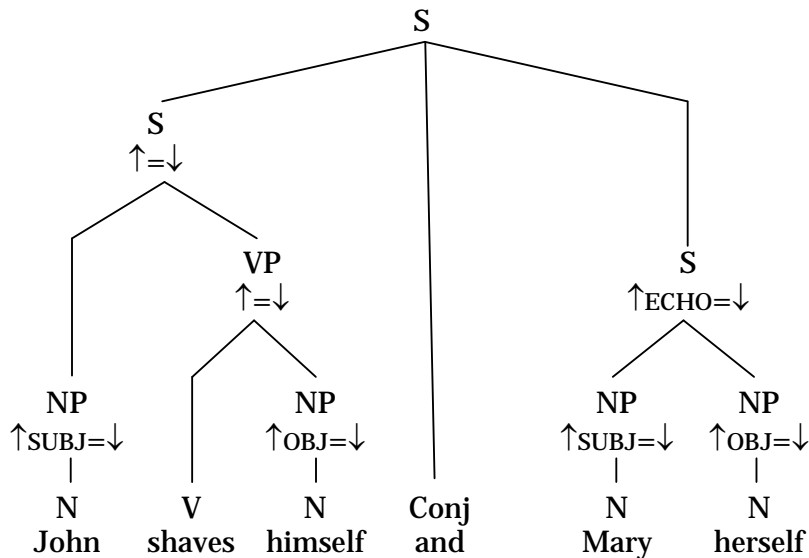


Notice that the echoed object inherits, not the features of gender and so forth, but the need to be coreferential with its antecedent. The echo construction has (obligatory) sloppy reference, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (10).

(10) * John shaves himself and Mary him.

In (11) is given the c-structure of the sentence in (1). The second clause functions as an echo structure and is labelled as such.

- (11) John shaves himself and Mary herself
c-structure



Finally, there is evidence that it is not just the verb which is not copied, but Tense/Infl is also not copied syntactically in the echoed co-ordinate, given that (12b,c) are so much more difficult to parse than (12a). If this were a copy/delete construction then presumably (12b,c) would be as good as, if not better than (12a), which is clearly not the case.

- (12) a. ? John has loved Mary for ages and Fred Agnes.
b. # John has loved Mary for ages and Fred has Agnes.
c. #* John has been admiring Mary for ages, and Martin loathing Agnes.

To the extent that (12c) is possible at all, it is a garden path construction that requires reference to the initial co-ordinate in order to parse, as before. Again, as before, this is due to the echoing of the verb or the auxiliary, along with the properties from the initial co-ordinate. Again, there is no need for an empty category in the echoed co-ordinate.

I have shown here that a non-derivational account of gapping is possible, and even preferable to an account which requires an empty category, and copying and deletion of the verb.