

An Incremental Approach to Closest Conjunct Agreement in Spanish

Closest conjunct agreement (CCA) has only recently been studied in Romance (Villavicencio & Sadler (2005) for Brazilian Portuguese; Demonte & Pérez-Jiménez (2012) for Spanish; Bonet (2013) for Catalan), in which it was previously believed to not occur (Heycock & Zamparelli 2005; Dobrovie-Sorin 2009). Additionally, most analyses focus on the overt syntactic and morphological properties of CCA without fully elaborating the underlying semantics. I propose an incremental semantics (e.g. Bittner 2003), in which composition is understood as a type of anaphor bridging that derives incremental updates based on topological order of words rather than syntactic hierarchy.

CCA in Spanish may occur in a conjunction of Ns: an element that agrees with N (either D or A) agrees only with the closest member of the coordination. A specific structure of type [DN&N] may also surface in conjunction, in which the second N lacks D. The conjuncts may then be jointly modified by a postnominal A. CCA is observed quite frequently in such structures as indicated by the Corpus del Español (Web-Dialects; CdE: New) (Davies 2016), both when conjuncts are singular and plural. In such cases, D must obligatorily agree in both gender and number with the closest conjunct; A may agree in gender and number with the closest conjunct, though CCA is optional. Nevertheless, when CCA occurs, both D and A semantically scope over both conjuncts. See (1) for examples of CCA with singular conjuncts.

Syntactically, the structure of coordination can be understood as in (2), adapted structure from Le Bruyn & de Swart (2014), with agreement effects explained via Agree (Chomsky 2000) and post-syntactic linearization (Arregi & Nevins 2008; Embick 2007). Though this structure accounts for superficial agreement patterns, the underlying syntax comes into conflict with the semantic interpretation found alongside CCA, whereby D and A may always scope over the entire coordinate phrase.

I propose abstracting the structure in (2) away from the syntactic hierarchy it implies, and instead adding a dynamic semantics that allows for the semantic interpretation to be built up word-by-word. As such, the semantics of the phrase is updated incrementally in accord with surface structure. Following Le Bruyn & de Swart, D semantically scopes over both conjuncts as a result of a semantic type shift; see (3). DP in combination with coordination then triggers a presupposition that another discourse referent will follow (Discourse Representation Theory (DRT), Kamp & Reyle 1993). The interpretation of the coordinate phrase thus involves an incremental process of anaphora resolution that identifies the asserted discourse referent (N1) as identical in structure to the presupposed discourse referent (N2). The incremental update associated with conjunction itself makes possible a plural semantics of and agreement on the coordinate phrase; however, this update only affects the part of the coordinate phrase following the conjunction. Mismatch agreement patterns between D and A are subsequently proposed to be a result of the material the semantic updates target: as incremental updates precede, agreement processes are triggered to occur as soon as possible within the phrase being built. Thus, while D (and pronominal A) is observed to always exhibit CCA in line with an incremental semantics of a singular conjunct (N1), postnominal A may vary its agreement in accord with N2 (CCA) or with the coordinate phrase as a whole.

- (1) a. [La radio y televisión pública catalanas] negocian hoy.
 the.F.SG radio F.SG and television.F.SG public.F.SG catalan.F.PL negotiate.3.PL today
 'The Catalan public radio and television corporations are negotiating today.'
- b. [una inoportuna llovizna y viento pertinaz] nos mantuvieron...
 an.F.SG inopportune.F.SG drizzle.F.SG and wind.M.SG persistent.SG keep.3.PL
 'an inopportune and persistent drizzle and wind'

- (2) $[_{DP} [_{CoordP} [_{DP} D [_{NP} N1]]] y [_{NP} N2]]_i [_{AP} A] t_i]$

- (3) las profesoras y alumnos ('the professors.F.PL and students.M.PL')
- a. $[_{CoordP} [_{DP} \text{las profesoras}] y [_{NP} \text{alumnos}]] \square$
- b. $[[\text{las profesoras}]]= \langle \{x\}, \{\text{profesoras}(x)\}, \emptyset \rangle_K \square$
- c. $[[\text{las profesoras y}]]= \langle \{x, X\}, \{\text{profesoras}(x), X = x \oplus y\}, \{\langle \{y\}, \{\text{R}(y, x)\}, \emptyset \rangle_L \} \rangle_K$
- d. $[[\text{las profesoras y alumnos}]]= \square \langle \{x, X\}, \{\text{profesoras}(x), X = x \oplus y, \text{alumnos}(z), z = y\}, \{\langle \{y, z\}, \{\text{R}(y, x)\}, \emptyset \rangle_L \} \rangle_K$