

The syntactic side of Conditional Conjunction

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Abstract

In [Culicover and Jackendoff \(1997\)](#), the Conditional Conjunction construction is cited as one example of a literal mismatch between syntax and semantics because it seems to exhibit syntactic properties of coordinate structures and semantic properties of subordinate structures at the same time. Hence, as they conclude, this construction cannot be derived in frameworks such as Minimalism where the semantics is derived from some syntactic level of representation such as LF. I want to argue that it is possible to derive the specific properties of this construction under Minimalist assumptions if one adheres to a strictly derivational model of Minimalism and subscribes to the assumption that a clause can be base-generated as an adjunct low in the tree and then be moved to the specifier of a coordination phrase as the regular first conjunct of a coordination.

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1. Introducing Conditional Conjunction

A certain number of constructions are regularly cited as being problematic for frameworks which do not allow for complex constructions to be stored in the lexicon. One such construction is the Conditional Conjunction construction. Based on the discussion in [Culicover and Jackendoff \(1997\)](#), it is argued that frameworks such as Minimalism cannot derive the peculiar properties of this construction. The reason for this argument is that the clausal relation in this construction seems to be neither coordinate nor subordinate, which is something not provided for in Minimalist frameworks.

And, in fact, yet, there has been no attempt to derive the Conditional Conjunction construction within a Minimalist framework. This suggests that the construction in question indeed poses a severe challenge for Minimalist theory and related frameworks. In this paper, I will illustrate the peculiar properties of this construction in detail, discuss why they might be challenging from a Minimalist perspective and put forward an analysis which captures the properties of the construction and still adheres to Minimalist assumptions.

I will proceed as follows: Section 2 illustrates the properties of the Conditional Conjunction construction. In Section 3, I will outline the analysis by [Culicover and Jackendoff \(1997\)](#) and discuss its shortcomings and why it is radically incompatible with a Minimalist framework. Section 4 discusses a recent semantic analysis of this construction by [Keshet \(2013\)](#) and shows which syntactic questions it leaves open. Then, I will sketch my proposal, which is compatible with the semantic account by

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Keshet but addresses syntax of the construction and the pressing questions he was not able to answer. Section 5 discusses some of the consequences of my approach, some of its advantages as well as potential problems. Section 6 shows how the analysis carries over to the German equivalent of this construction. Section 7 concludes.

2. Conditional Conjunction

Conditional conjunction (also known as the left-subordinating-and construction) as well as the related “One more”-construction have been the subject of linguistic studies for several decades now (cf. Ross, 1967; Culicover, 1970, 1972; Lakoff, 1970, 1986; Culicover and Jackendoff, 1997; Takahashi, 2004; te Velde, 2005; Klinedinst and Rothschild, 2012; Keshet, 2013). The major characteristic of both of these constructions is the apparent mismatch between syntax and semantics. Syntactically, examples like (1-a) and (1-b) look like cases of coordination but their semantics resembles the semantics of a conditional clause (cf. (1-c)), which is generally assumed to be subordinate.¹

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---|------|
| (1) | a. | You drink one more can of beer and I'm leaving. | CC |
| | b. | One more can of beer and I'm leaving. | OM |
| | c. | If you drink one more can of beer, I'm leaving. | Cond |
- (Culicover and Jackendoff, 1997, 197ff)

Culicover and Jackendoff (1997), who were, to my knowledge, the first to carve out the properties of these constructions in detail, observed that they may be used to paraphrase conditional clauses; however, their distribution is much more restricted. For example, the conditional reading of these constructions much harder to get when they appear in past or perfect tense:²

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|-----|--|---------------------------------------|
| (2) | #You've drunk another can of beer and I've left. | (Culicover and Jackendoff, 1997, 198) |
|-----|--|---------------------------------------|

An important property of CC constructions is that they are restricted to coordination of a certain category. The conditional reading is lost when either two CPs (as in (3-b)) or two vPs (as in (3-c)) are conjoined.³

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| (3) | a. | You know, of course, [CP that [TP you drink one more beer] and [TP you get kicked out]]. | |
| | b. | #You know, of course, [CP that you drink one more beer] and [CP that you get kicked out]. | (Culicover and Jackendoff, 1997, 198) |
| | c. | #You [vP drink one more beer] and [vP leave]. | |

Interestingly, even though cases of CC look like a coordinate clauses on the surface, they share a lot of properties with the construction they paraphrase, namely conditional clauses.

This can be illustrated with a number of different properties such as binding, extraction, quantifier raising, right node raising and gapping. All of these properties will be discussed in detail in Sections 4.4 and 5.1. Let me just give two examples which clearly illustrate that the syntactic properties of CCs significantly differ from those of ordinary coordination. In (4), it is shown that ordinary coordination (4-a) can undergo gapping but CCs (4-b) and ordinary conditional constructions (4-c) cannot.

- | | | | |
|-----|----|---|-------|
| (4) | a. | John ordered wine and his wife _ just water. | Coord |
| | b. | #John orders wine and his wife _ just water. ⁴ | CC |
| | c. | *If John orders wine, then his wife _ just water. | Cond |

The same holds for variable binding. With regular coordination, one cannot establish binding relations from one conjunct into another. This is shown in (5-a) where the variable pronoun in the first conjunct cannot be bound by a quantified

¹ In what follows, I will use the following abbreviations: CC, Conditional Conjunction; OM, “One more”-construction; Coord, (Ordinary) Coordination; Cond, Conditionals.

² Throughout this article, minimal pairs between ordinary coordination and conditional conjunction are always constructed on the basis of this observation. Ordinary coordination constructions bear past tense while CCs bear present tense. Note, however, that past tense is not categorically excluded in CCs (see Section 5.5 for discussion).

³ A detailed investigation about what kind of category is involved here is given in Section 4.2.

⁴ Under the ordinary coordination reading, (4-b) is of course grammatical. However, a CC reading (e.g. in a context where John and his wife always go out together and whenever he orders wine, she orders water because he won't be able to drive home), is impossible.

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