

BARE COORDINATION: THE SEMANTIC SHIFT
Henriëtte de Swart (joint work with Bert Le Bruyn)

Abstract

This paper develops an analysis of the syntax-semantics interface of two types of split coordination structures. In the first type, two bare singular count nouns appear as arguments in a coordinated structure, as in *bride and groom were happy* (N&N construction). In the second type the determiner shows number and gender agreement with the first conjunct, while the second conjunct is bare, as in the Spanish *el hornero y hornera cobran en panes* ‘the_{sg.m} baker_{sg.m} and baker_{sg.f} were_{pl} paid in bread loaves’ (DN&N construction). Both N&N and DN&N constructions are common in languages that otherwise require an article or determiner on singular count nouns in regular argument position, and give rise to split readings that cannot be accounted for by the standard semantics of conjunction in terms of set intersection. Furthermore, they are restricted to instances of ‘natural’ coordination.

We formalize the semantics of split conjunction in terms of intersection between sets of matching pairs, which correlates with the pragmatics of natural coordination. We maintain that an N&N construction gets either a definite or an indefinite interpretation, because projection of an article ranging over the coordination as a whole is blocked in languages like English and Spanish. For DN&N structures, we propose a syntactic structure in which D is in construction with the first conjunct. Coordination with a second, bare conjunct requires a covert type shift which is licensed only under the special matchmaker’s semantics of coordination. The analysis addresses a range of issues these coordinate structures raise about syntactic and semantic agreement, in particular with respect to number.