

Linguistic Inquiry

517

Volume 13, Number 3

Summer, 1982

13(3) 7182 (343-570) ISSN 0024-3892

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WE NEED (SOME KIND OF A) RULE OF CONJUNCTION REDUCTION

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Gazdar (1981, 155-158) proposes to eliminate from grammar the rule of Conjunction Reduction (CR), and to generate coordinate constituents by means of context-free phrase structure rules. To be sure, the formulation of a transformational rule of CR runs into a number of problems (cf. Grosu (1981) and references cited there) and some writers (e.g. Williams (1978, 38)) have tried to put restrictions on the application of the rule. Grosu (1981) shows Williams's restrictions to be inadequate. I will not try to make a formal statement of CR here; my purpose

I would like to thank Höskuldur Thráinsson for commenting on an earlier version of this squib.

is only to show that some such type of rule is in fact needed, if not in English, then in general linguistic theory.

My evidence comes from Icelandic, which exhibits a number of so-called *impersonal verbs*; that is, verbs whose only finite form is the 3rd pers. sg., irrespective of the person and number of the subject. In normal word order (Icelandic being an SVO language), these verbs are preceded by an NP in an oblique case: accusative (A), dative (D), or genitive (G). Historically, at least some of these oblique NPs are topicalized objects, but Thráinsson (1979, 462–476) argues quite convincingly that, whatever their origin, they should be analyzed as subjects synchronically. A few examples are given in (1)–(3):

- (1) Mig vantar bókina.
me (A) needs (3sg) the book
'I need the book.'
- (2) Mér líkar þetta.
me (D) likes (3sg) this
'I like this.'
- (3) Vindsins gætir lítið.
the wind (G) notices (3sg) little
'The wind is hardly noticeable.'

These verbs must presumably be specially marked in the lexicon to ensure that their subject appears in an oblique case (cf. Andrews (1982)). One could propose that they should also be marked [3sg] to indicate that this is their only finite form and that they never agree with their subject (unless, of course, the oblique subject is also 3sg). However, the facts disconfirm this proposal. As Thráinsson (1979, 466) has shown (see also Andrews (1982)), Subject–Verb Agreement depends on the case of the subject; only a nominative subject triggers agreement. The 3rd sg. form of the impersonal verbs is therefore an automatic consequence of an oblique case subject, but cannot be marked in the lexicon. This can be seen from the fact that a few verbs which usually take nominative (N) subjects sometimes change their subject to an oblique case; when this happens, the verb ceases to agree with the subject and takes on the 3rd sg. form, as can be seen in examples (4)–(5):

- (4) a. Við $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{hlökkum (1pl)} \\ *\text{hlakkar (3sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ til jólanna.
'We (N) look forward (1pl) to Christmas.'
- b. Okkur $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} * \text{hlökkum (1pl)} \\ \text{hlakkar (3sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ til jólanna.
us (A/D) looks forward (3sg) to Christmas
'We look forward to Christmas.'
- (5) a. Ég $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{finn (1sg)} \\ * \text{finnur (3sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ til.
'I (N) feel (1sg) (pain).' (particle)

- b. Mér $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *finn \text{ (1sg)} \\ finnur \text{ (3sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ til.
 me (D) feels (3sg) (pain) (particle)
 'I feel pain.'

The converse also holds: when a verb which is usually impersonal takes a subject in the nominative, it agrees with this subject in person and number.

- (6) a. Mig $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} dreymir \text{ (3sg)} \\ *dreymi \text{ (1sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ allar nætur.
 me (A) dreams (3sg) every nights
 'I dream every night.'
- b. Ég $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *dreymir \text{ (3sg)} \\ dreymi \text{ (1sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ allar nætur.
 'I (N) dream (1sg) every night.'
- (7) a. Bátana $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} rekur \text{ (3sg)} \\ *reka \text{ (3pl)} \end{array} \right\}$ á land.
 the boats (A) drifts (3sg) on land
 'The boats drift ashore.'
- b. Bátarnir $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *rekur \text{ (3sg)} \\ reka \text{ (3pl)} \end{array} \right\}$ á land.
 'The boats (N) drift (3pl) ashore.'

Of the "exceptional" b-forms, those in (4b) and (7b) are quite common, while (5b) and (6b) are rare. What causes these changes is immaterial here (see Thráinsson (1979, chapter 7) for some discussion). We want to show simply that Subject-Verb Agreement is apparently impossible with nonnominative subjects, and conversely, that it is obligatory with nominative subjects. This correlation seems to be quite well established.

As Kossuth (1978, 453) has pointed out, it is possible to conjoin two VPs even though one of the verbs is impersonal, the other a regular personal verb. What Kossuth has not observed, and what cannot be seen from her examples since all the verbs there (not only the impersonal ones) have the 3rd sg. form, are the interesting agreement facts we find in such co-ordination. Let us look at (8), containing two conjoined VPs. The first verb, *sjá* 'see', takes a nominative subject, whereas the second, *finnst* 'find (somebody to be something)', is impersonal and takes a dative subject.

- (8) Peir sjá stúlkuna og
 they (N) see (3pl) the girl and
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} *finnst \text{ (3pl)} \\ finnst \text{ (3sg)} \end{array} \right\}$ hún álitleg.
 finds (3sg) she attractive
 'They see the girl and find her attractive.'

In (9), on the other hand, the first verb, *líka* 'like', is impersonal

and takes a subject in the dative case, while the second, *borða* 'eat', is a normal verb taking a nominative subject.

- (9) Þeim líkar maturinn og
 them (D) likes (3sg) the food and
 $\left. \begin{array}{l} *borðar (3sg) \\ borða (3pl) \end{array} \right\} \text{ mikið.}$
 eat (3pl) much
 'They like the food and eat much.'

If *þeir* 'they (N)' is the subject of both the VPs in (8), we would expect it to trigger agreement on both verbs. Conversely, we would *not* expect *þeim* 'they (D)' in (9) to trigger agreement on the second verb *borða* 'eat'. However, the facts do not seem to bear out either of these expectations. In (8), the 3rd sg. is the only possible form of the second verb, *finnst*, while in (9), only the plural form of the verb *borða* is possible. Note that Gazdar could not explain this (as he (1981, 158) tries to do with an example from Williams (1978, 39)) by referring to a rule of Gapping (whatever kind of rule that is), because here the verb is not lacking and the conjoined sentence parts are constituents, i.e. VPs. But it was exactly constituent coordination that Gazdar's (1981) rules (9) and (10) were intended to handle.

So, where are we now? It seems obvious that assuming the second VPs in (8) and (9) to have their own subjects in deep structure accounts straightforwardly for the facts. The verb *finnst* in (8) then has a dative subject which does not trigger agreement, so that it takes on the 3rd sg. form, while the verb *borða* in (9) has a nominative pl. subject that triggers agreement. These subjects are then deleted by CR (however formulated) and the VPs conjoined; the result is the surface forms (8) and (9).

As a last resort, proponents of the base-generated account could try to argue that the subject only triggers verb agreement in the first of coordinated VPs; hence, the second verb in (8) is in fact subjectless and therefore takes on the 3rd sg. form (just like the "weather verbs", which also have no deep structure subject). However, such an account breaks down immediately when we consider (9), where the 3rd sg. form is impossible in the second VP; and when two (or more) VPs having only personal verbs are coordinated, both (or all) verbs agree with the subject of the sentence in person and number.

It appears, then, that no explanation is available for the agreement facts in (8) and (9) unless we assume that CR is a rule of Icelandic syntax, and accordingly of syntactic theory.

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LINGUISTIC INQUIRY

Volume 13, Number 3
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