Resumptive Pronouns in English Gapping Constructions across Relative Clauses

Abstract: This squib introduces and describes a new type of gapping construction ('resumptive gapping') which appears to involve gapping across relative clauses with a resumptive pronominal remnant of the gapping operation in the second conjunct. I highlight issues of theoretical relevance and propose one possible direction for future research on this topic and on gapping generally.

1. Introduction

Gapping is a type of clausal ellipsis which has been familiar since the earliest days of modern syntax (since at least Ross 1970). A typical example of gapping is given in (1).

(1)   John eats apples, and Mary, pears.

Most analyses of gapping in current literature are tailored to constructions like (1) which consist of two transitive predicates and a conjunction (often 'and,' occasionally 'but' or 'or'). Such gapping constructions will be termed *standard gapping*. Current theories characterize gapping as either VP ellipsis (Coppock 2001; Toosarvandani 2013) or ATB movement (Johnson 2004, 2009, 2014) restricted to low vP-coordinations.

This squib introduces an undescribed type of gapping which is is theoretically interesting because one remnant of the gapping operation is a resumptive pronoun. This type of gapping will be termed *resumptive gapping* contra *standard gapping*. Several examples of resumptive gapping are given below (links to sources given in parentheses):

(2)   Imagine meeting incredible people who love supporting you and you,

          them.   (http://bit.ly/1AK6doz)

(3)   But I have so many caring people with excellent advice. And who can

          relate to me and me, to them.   (http://bit.ly/11pZbFa)

(4)   we DO know how much you hate talking to someone who can't

          understand you, nor you them. (https://bit.ly/12pvjtZ)

(5)   Again, as in the situation with the imam, what good is a stranger who

          doesn't have any connection to you nor you to them.

          (https://bit.ly/2MARpVv)

Resumptive gapping constructions like (2)-(5) raise the following questions:

(6)   a.   Do standard gapping and resumptive gapping share defining characteristics?

            b.   How are resumptive pronouns generated as a result of the gapping operation?

This squib will describe several characteristics of resumptive gapping and provide a cursory examination of the facts. Throughout, the resumptive pronominal remnant of the gapping operation will be termed the *resumptive remnant*. Future research on resumptive gapping could enrich current theories of gapping, and ellipsis more generally, as well as shed light on a new, grammatical use of resumptive pronouns in English.

2. Methods

To find resumptive gapping constructions, I used Google's 'advanced search pattern' feature with queries as below (quotes included):

(7)   "conjunction pronoun pronoun"

      e.g. *"and you him"*, *"nor them you"*, *"or me them"*

The search results were then filtered for data more explicitly relevant to the issue at hand. This method of data collection has a notable drawback, which is that the resumptive gapping data presented here is all of a single, predictable appearance. There are potentially other resumptive gapping constructions with A'-movement or non-pronominal remnants waiting to be described.

3. Properties of the Resumptive Gapping Data

The data mined from the internet has two superficial similarities. First, the conjuncts are preceded by a relative pronoun or complementizer. Second, an argument from the first conjunct usually antecedes the resumptive remnant in the second conjunct. For example, in (2), repeated below in (8), 'people,' the subject of the first conjunct (and head of the relative clause), antecedes the resumptive in the second conjunct.

> (8)   Imagine meeting incredible people who$_i$ love supporting you and you, them$_i$.   (http://bit.ly/1AK6doz)

In all instances of resumptive gapping encountered so far, the resumptive remnant is bound by the subject of the first conjunct (i.e. the relative clause).

There are also notable structural similarities among the resumptive gapping data: specifically that the resumptive remnants are obligatory (but ungrammatical when included in the unelided paraphrase), and that resumptive gapping, like standard gapping, may also yield scope ambiguity. I will illustrate these facts in the following sections.

3.1 Resumptive Remnants are Obligatory

The most notable quality of resumptive gapping constructions is that they seem to license resumptive pronouns, which are typically unattested or marginal in English. Yet in resumptive gapping, the resumptive element does not seem ungrammatical. In fact, the only way to complete the gapping operation in these contexts is with a resumptive remnant. For instance, here are two possible paraphrases (9b,c) of a resumptive gapping construction (9a); the resumptive remnant is underlined:

(9)   a.   Imagine meeting incredible people who love supporting you and

you, <u>them</u>.   (http://bit.ly/1AK6doz)

            b.   Imagine meeting incredible people who love supporting you and

(who) you love supporting __. (NO RESUMPTIVE)

            c.   *Imagine meeting incredible people who love supporting you and

(who) you love supporting <u>them</u>. (RESUMPTIVE)

The paraphrase in (9c), with an overt resumptive pronoun, is sharply ungrammatical. It follows that there must be a structural difference between the gapped and ungapped versions of (9)—a difference which permits the generation of a resumptive element as a result of the gapping operation.

3.2 Resumptive Gaps can be Ambiguous

Most current gapping literature (see Section 1) assumes that the gapping operation is restricted to vP coordinations, also called 'low vP-coordination.' This is due, in part, to compelling modal scope facts about standard gapping, first presented by Siegel (1984), who pointed out that gapping constructions can be interpreted with both narrow and wide scope. Example (10) below gives a standard gapping construction, followed by two disambiguations for wide scope (11a) and narrow scope (11b).

(10)   Ward can't eat caviar, or Sue, beans.[1]

(11)   a. *Wide Scope*

Ward can't eat caviar, or Sue, beans. (…*I forget which*.)

$\neg\Diamond$eat(Ward, caviar) $\vee$ $\neg\Diamond$eat(Sue, beans)

---

[1] I have modified Siegel's (1984) original sentence, replacing 'and' with 'or' because the latter seems clearer in eliciting the two ambiguous readings.

b. *Narrow Scope*

Ward can't eat caviar, or Sue, beans. (*…they have strict diets.*)

$\neg\Diamond$(eat(Ward, caviar) $\vee$ eat(Sue, beans))

The *wide scope* (11a) reading of (10) can be paraphased as, 'Either ward can't eat caviar or Sue can't eat beans, I forget which.' On the other hand, the *narrow scope* (11b) reading of (10) can be paraphrased as, 'Ward can't eat caviar and Sue can't eat beans, they both have strict diets.'

Upon further scrutiny, resumptive gaps seem to share this ambiguity with standard gapping constructions, but narrow scope seems to be the more natural parse. For instance in (12), the most natural reading to me is almost exclusively the narrow scope one, given below in (13b) and paraphrased in (13c):

(12)   It's so frustrating especially when you have a technical question trying to relay it to someone who doesn't understand you or you them.

                                                            (http://bit.ly/1yGyngc)

(13)   a.   …someone who doesn't understand you, or you, them.

         b. $\lambda x \neg$ (understand(x, you) $\vee$ understand(you, x))

         c.   Paraphrase: …someone who doesn't understand you and who you don't understand.

Given the proper context, I argue that the wide scope interpretation of resumptive gaps can be accessed as well. A more felicitous example to illustrate a wide scope interpretation is given below:

(14)   John told me he fought with someone at the party last night, but *I don't*
         know if it was with someone who didn't get along with him, or him with
         them.

The intended wide scope interpretation of (14) is represented and paraphrased in
(15b,c).

(15)   a.   …someone who didn't get along with him, or him with them.

         b.   λx [¬ (get.along.with(x, John)) ∨ ¬ (get.along.with(John, x))]

         b.   Paraphrase: 'I don't know if it was with someone who didn't get
                along with John, or who John didn't get along with.'

Thus it seems that both wide and narrow scope readings are consistent with
resumptive gaps, even if they require very explicit contexts. A universal theory of
gapping must account for the accessibility of both narrow and wide scope readings in
standard and resumptive gapping.

4. Resumptive Pronouns

Resumptive pronouns are typically postulated as a last-resort operation for fixing an
otherwise ungrammatical utterance. Shlonsky's (1992) analysis of Hebrew and
Palestinian Arabic makes just such a claim. This is reinforced and reformulated in later
research like Aoun, et al.'s (2001) work on Lebanese Arabic (McCloskey, 2006).

Aoun et al. (2001) define two types of resumption: (i) *Apparent Resumption*
(2001:393), which involves movement, that cannot cross an island boundary, from a
position within the maximal projection containing the pronoun (or 'epithet phrase'); and,
(ii) *True Resumption* (2001:394) in which no movement takes place from the position of

the pronoun. In the case of True Resumption, an A'-antecedent binds the resumptive element, and the antecedent-resumptive relation must cross an island boundary. Future research on resumptive gapping should test whether the resumptive remnant is the result of movement (Apparent Resumption) or the result of base generating a resumptive pronoun bound by an A'-antecedent across an island boundary (True Resumption) and, if so, what island violation is responsible for generating the resumptive element.

5. Another Possible Resolution

On the other hand, a novel position could be taken that the resumptive remnant is generated as the result of a more general condition that characterizes gapping.[2] It is generally accepted that gapping is related to focus structure, and that the remnants of the gapping operation must be focus-marked (see Johnson 2017:22 for an overview and relevant citations).

(16)   *The Focus Condition*

         Remnants of the gapping operation must receive focus.

Thus one could argue that in order for the Focus Condition to be satisfied, a remnant must not be null (i.e. a trace), and the only resolution to this issue is to generate a resumptive which will receive focus. This could be motivated by independent conditions on parallelism and ellipsis (Fox 1999). For example, between these two potential structures, the latter is preferred to prevent a violation of the Focus Condition (*t* is the trace of *who*):

---

(17)   a.   *Imagine meeting incredible people who$_j$ t_j love supporting you,

and you, t_j.

b.   Imagine meeting incredible people who$_j$ t_j love supporting you, and

you, them$_j$.

In (17a), the trace of a movement cannot be focused; instead, a resumptive pronoun is externally merged as in (17b) and bound by *who*. This theory's appeal comes from its independence of Aoun et al.'s (2001) types of resumption which depend on island violations. It is also independent of any claims about the size of coordination structures in standard and resumptive gapping. Moreover, a prohibition on focused traces would be in line with the fact that gapping is a focus phenomenon which requires its remnants to be prosodically focus-marked. A problem, however, is that the Focus Condition does not explain why the correlate to (17b) given in (18) is ungrammatical.

(18)   *Imagine meeting incredible people who love supporting you and

who you love supporting them.

Given the Focus Condition, one might expect that resumptive pronoun in (18) should be grammatical to satisfy this condition, contrary to fact. Therefore, future research on this topic should address that the resumptive pronoun is obligatory and receives focus, while teasing apart what (if any) island violation generates the resumptive pronoun and why this is grammatical despite the fact that the overt minimal pair is not.

6. Conclusion

This is the first time that resumptive gapping has been described before in literature on gapping or ellipsis. Of note are the facts that resumptive gapping licenses the generation of resumptive pronouns, while preserving hallmark scope facts true also of standard gapping constructions. Additionally, current theories of gapping only address gapping in matrix clauses, but resumptive gapping seems to be an instance of gapping within embedded clauses. This also merits further exploration.

Future work on this topic should address the following questions:

(19) a. How large are the coordination structures in both standard and resumptive gapping?

    b. What condition on resumptive gapping or island violation generates the resumptive remnant?

    c. How productive and acceptable are resumptive gapping constructions to native English speakers?

    c. Do other types of resumptive gapping exist? Can they be found in existing corpora of natural speech?

A satisfactory theory of gapping should also be able to account for the similarities (or differences) between standard and resumptive gapping, ultimately feeding into a unified theory of gapping that adequately accounts for those facts.

References

Aoun, Joseph, Lina Choueiri, & Norbert Hornstein. 2001. Resumption, Movement, and Derivational Economy. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 32: 371-403.

Abeillé, Anne. 2006. In Defense of lexical Coordination. *On-line proceedings CSSP Conference*, LLF Université Paris 7.

Barss, A. & H. Lasnik. 1986. A Note on Anaphora and Double Objects. In *Essays on Anaphora. Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, Vol. 16.* Springer: Dordrecht.

Bowers, John. 1993. The Syntax of Predication. *Linguistic Inquiry* 24: 591-656.

Coppock, Elizabeth. 2001. Gapping: In defense of deletion. *Chicago Linguistic Society (CLS)* 37: 133-148.

Fox, Danny. 1999. Focus, Parallelism, and Accommodation. In *Proceedings of SALT 9*, Tanya Matthews & Devon Strolovitch (eds.), 70-90. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University.

Johnson, Kyle. 2004. In Search of the English Middle Field. Unpublished, URL: <http://bit.ly/1vfhp3z>

—— 2006. Gapping. In: *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax, Volume I.* Martin Everart and Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.), 407-435. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

—— 2009. Gapping Is Not (VP-) Ellipsis. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 40: 289-328.

—— 2014. Gapping. *Personal Webpage.* <http://bit.ly/1tJxuhB>

—— 2017. To Gap and Strip. To appear in *Handbook on Ellipsis*. T. Temmerman & J. van Craenenbroak (eds.).

Kuno, Susumu. (1976) Gapping: a functional analysis. *Linguistic Inquiry* 7: 300-318.

Larson, Richard K. (1985) On the Syntax of Disjunction Scope. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 3,* 217-264. Reidel Publishing Company.

Lin, Vivian. 2002. *Coordination and sharing at interfaces.* Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.

McCloskey, James. 2002. Resumption, Successive Cyclicicty, and the Locality of Operations. In Samuel Epstein & Daniel Seeley (eds.), *Derivation and Explanation in the Minimalist Program*, 184-226. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

McCloskey, James. 2006. Resumption. In Martin Everart & Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax, Vol. I*, 94-117. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Neijt, Anneke. 1979. *Gapping: a contribution to sentence grammar*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Foris Publications.

Oirsouw, Robert R. van. 1987. The syntax of coordination. *Language* 66: 844-850.

Progovac, Ljiljana. 1999. Events and Economy of Coordination. *Syntax* 2: 141-159.

Ross, John Robert. 1967. Constraints on variables in syntax. Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.

Ross, John Robert. 1970. Gapping and the order of constituents. In Manfred Bierwisch & Karl E. Heidolph (eds.), *Progress in linguistics,* 249-259. The Hague: Mouton.

Sag, Ivan. 1976. Deletion and logical form. Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT.

Siegel, Muffy E. A. 1984. Gapping and Interpretation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 15: 523-530.

Shlonsky, Ur. 1992. Resumptive Pronouns as a Last Resort. *Linguistic Inquiry* 23: 443-468.

Schwartz, Bernhard. 1999. On the syntax of *either…or*. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 17: 339-370.

Sportiche, Dominique, Hilda Koopman, & Edward Stabler. 2014. *An Introduction to Syntactic Analysis*. Wiley-Blackwell.

Toosarvandani, Maziar. 2013. Gapping is low coordination (plus VP-ellipsis): A reply to Johnson. MIT.

Williams, Edwin. 1978. Across-the-Board Rule Application. *Linguistic Inquiry* 9: 31-43.