Between coordination and subordination: typological, structural and diachronic perspectives on pseudocoordination

As exemplified by go and get or try and do in English, pseudocoordination refers to the use of coordinator ‘and’ in constructions that behave unlike typical coordination, possibly best defined diachronically as a transitional state between coordination and subordination. I present clear evidence of originally coordinative structures undergoing reanalysis and grammaticalizing as subordinate, such as English try and. The resulting constructions often still display some properties of coordination and cannot be identified as either coordination or subordination. Thus syntactic analysis of pseudocoordination is challenging and important.

The phenomenon has received relatively little attention cross-linguistically, yet careful investigation reveals a variety of examples in many language families; it is not unusual or unexpected. The most extensive work deals with the Scandinavian Germanic languages, especially Swedish and Norwegian, where pseudocoordination is a salient grammatical feature (cf. Wiklund, 2007; Lødrup, 2002). It has also been discussed some for English (Ross, 1967; Carden & Pesetsky, 1977). Beyond these languages, descriptions are sparse and rarely cross-referenced, but descriptive grammars reveal instances elsewhere. With inconsistent nomenclature (pseudocoordination, fake coordination, serialization, verb-verb agreement, etc.) and a general lack of awareness of its cross-linguistic presence, it is not surprising that the phenomenon is rarely identified; for example, Heine & Kuteva (2002) identify the pattern VP-AND > SUBORDINATOR but give only two examples and write:

“What is clear, however, is that there are some languages in which the pattern VP-AND > SUBORDINATOR is a natural one.”

One exception to the lack of broadly cross-linguistic work is Coseriu (1966), who identifies a large number of languages, primarily in the Indo-European family, with a construction of the form take and, which he originally proposed as an areal feature, shared through borrowing. But constructions with remarkable similarities (as well as variation) are found in many unrelated families, which cannot be due to contact. Pseudocoordination can be found throughout Indo-European, as well as in Semitic, Khoisan, several Atlantic Niger-Congo languages, Kartvelian, the Oceanic and Formosan languages in Austronesian, Baure (Arawakan, Bolivia), the Iwaidjan and Gunwinyguan families in Australia, Kabardian (Northwest Caucasian), Piman within Uto-Aztecan, and possibly in ancient Chinese. In fact, despite limited descriptive work, most languages with overt general coordinators like English and are likely to extend its use beyond strictly additive coordination in the verbal and clausal domains via pragmatic implicature, which in many cases results in grammaticalization.

At the same time, many other languages (including for example Japanese, Korean and Turkish) display an apparently inverse pattern of pseudosubordination where originally subordinate forms act as coordinate structures thereby displaying many of the same properties as pseudocoordination (Yuasa & Sadock, 2002), a common development for converbs (Haspelmath & König, 1995; Haspelmath, 2004). More broadly there are also syntactic similarities in other constructions such as serialization and verbal affixation. These various strategies in form appear to all serve the same function: to associate the action of a main predicate with secondary properties. For example, directional usage of all of these strategies is extremely common. Throughout the world in various language families, we find evidence of pseudocoordination similar to English go and get, similar patterns with pseudosubordination and converbs, the extremely common serialization of motion verbs, and the affixal category of Associated Motion or itive/andative and ventive (Bourdin, 2005).

Finally, para-hypotaxis (cf. Bertinett & Ciucci, 2012), found in at least Indo-European, Semitic, Bantu and Zamucoan demonstrates that a coordinator can be found linking an
explicitly marked dependent clause to an independent clause. Clearly the presence of a particular conjunction in itself is not sufficient in determining structure.

The goals of this talk are threefold: first, and most importantly, I will establish the cross-linguistic presence of pseudocoordination with examples from diverse language families. Second, I will discuss semantic and syntactic properties of coordination. From a semantic perspective, pseudocoordination can encode numerous meanings including directionality, manner specification, complementation (such as control), progressive, absentive, perfective and other aspects, and even causation. From a syntactic perspective, pseudocoordination presents many challenges for analysis such as the ‘bare form condition’ for English try and (*He tries and do(es) it) as a parallel morphology constraint (also found in Faroese, Heycock & Petersen, 2012), same-subject (non-switch-reference) requirements, and the relationship with semantic structure, which is likely similar to that of, for example, serialization. Third, I will propose a new typology that can incorporate coordination, pseudocoordination and subordination based on a number of factors including: i) whether the second clause is an argument or adjunct of the first (structure); ii) the meaning relation between the clauses (semantics); iii) the type of conjunction, if any (linker); iv) whether the clauses are independently asserted (factivity); and v) whether there are any morphosyntactic dependencies between the clauses (dependency). Analyzing pseudocoordination will force us to leave the traditional dichotomy of coordination and subordination behind, focusing instead on these (in fact independent) underlying properties that once made that analysis desirable.

**Pseudocoordination examples:**

1. Han sitter og skriver dikt. ‘He sits and writes poetry.’
   (Norwegian; Lødrup, 2002: 121)
2. Yirrangbalhmen dja kunkedjelk shut the door and it is cold
   ‘Shut the door because it is cold.’
   (Kunwinjku; Etherington & Etherington, 1998: 129)
3. ëå-så ié run-3FSG stay-and
   ‘She is running.’
   (Sandawe [Khoisan]; Eaton, 2007: 9)
4. nevere nga rosweshya ach niyonpa riwer-ye next day NEG if rain.IRR and I walk go her house LOC
   ‘If it doesn’t rain tomorrow, I will walk to her house.’
   (Bauern; Danielsen, 2011: 87)

**References**


