

Reconstructing ellipsis: the case of Gapping in Romanian

1. Introduction

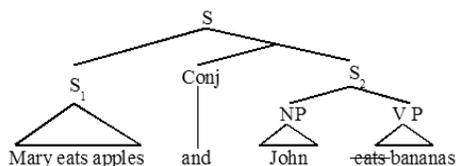
Non-constituent Coordination phenomena (e.g. Right Node Raising, Argument Cluster Coordination and Gapping) remain a challenge for both derivational and non derivational framework relying on phrase structure, the most widespread view being that apparent ‘non-constituents’ involve some ‘elliptical’ process (conceived either as a full (syntactic) reconstruction, i.e. coordination taking place between two full sentences – cf. Hartmann 2000, Merchant 2004, Chaves 2005 –, or as a ‘semantic’ reconstruction with syntactic parallelism, i.e. coordination of a full sentence with a fragment – cf. Ginzburg & Sag 2000, Culicover and Jackendoff 2005).

The basic issue raised by gapping constructions such as (1) (where a complete sentence is coordinated with some elliptical one missing its head verb and possibly some other dependents) is the one raised by ellipsis in general, namely to determine at which level the missing material is to be reconstructed.

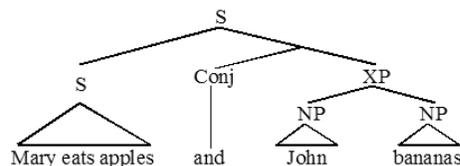
- (1) a. [John ate an apple] and [[Mary] [a banana]].
 b. [Jim flew to London on Sunday] and [[Mary] [to Paris] [on Thursday]].
 c. [John tried to begin to write a poem] and [[Bill] [a song]].
 d. [John will bring some flowers to Mary] and [either [[Bill] [some wine]] or [[Jane] [some whiskey]].

Here we provide new data from Romanian against approaches that rely on syntactic reconstruction, with deletion (or some null proform) in the ellipsis site, as schematized in (2a). We then show some problems with accepting parallelism as a strong constraint. Finally we show how a fragment-based analysis such as (2b), with semantic reconstruction can be handled formally within a construction-based HPSG framework.

(2) a. **Syntactic Reconstruction**



b. **Semantic Reconstruction**



2. Problems with the syntactic account

First, the syntactic account encounters problems when the missing verb in the fragment cannot be reconstructed: a range of connectives such as *ca și*, *la fel ca*, *precum și* (‘as well as’, ‘in the same way’), as in (3) examples, may combine with a gapped fragment while excluded with finite verbal categories.

- (3) Ion se comportă cu Maria {**ca** (**și**), **la fel ca**} Marcel (*se comportă) cu nevasta lui.
 Ion behaves towards Maria in the same way as Marcel towards his wife

Romanian requires that subordinate clauses be marked in the structure of the subordinate clause itself. However, in gapping cases, there must be a lack of subordinate marker – (*pe*) *care* in relative clauses (4a), or complementizer *că* (‘that’) in completive clauses (4b).

- (4) a. Poezia **pe care** eu o am de învățat și (***pe care**) Maria de comentat, e dificilă.
 the poem I have to learn, and Maria to comment is difficult
 b. Vreau **ca** Ion să vină azi, iar (***ca**) Petre mâine.
 I want that Ion comes today, and Petre tomorrow

Furthermore, in some negative contexts, we cannot recover a finite verb (fragments in *ba*¹ (5a), constituent negation *dar nu* ‘but not’ (5b)):

- (5) a. Lupul își schimbă părul, dar năravul **ba** (*își schimbă)!
 the wolf changes its fur, but not its bad habits
 b. Lupul își schimbă părul, **dar nu** Ioana (*își schimbă) năravul.
 the wolf changes its fur, but not Ioana her bad habits

Another piece of evidence is based on semantic problems related to adverbial scope or to referential (non)identity of nominals: in (6), the adverbs *probabil* or *tocmai* only have scope

¹ *Ba* is an adverbial item expressing propositional negation, used in popular / oral speech.

