Comitative coordination in Q’anjob’al

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I argue that the cross-linguistic morpho-syntactic diversity of expressions for ‘and’ is reflected in a diversity of semantic interpretations: while Boolean ‘and’ extends from the sentential domain to other domains pointwise, sum formation extends from type e to the sentential case metaphorically. I argue that this difference explains contrasts between two conjunctions in Q’anjob’al (Mayan, Guatemala).

Q’anjob’al employs both a comitative marker yetoq ‘with’ that functions both as a preposition and as a conjunction, and specialized conjunctions k’al and i ‘and’:

(1) ch-w-ochej naq Xhun y-etoq / i / k’al naq Yakin
    INC-A1S-like 3MAN Xhun A3-with / and / and 3MAN Yakin
    ‘I like Xhun and Yakin.’

Several kinds of arguments given by McNally (1993) for Russian, support that and- and with-conjunctions in Q’anjob’al differ in meaning. Conjunction i can combine properly quantificational (type ett) and other non-referential NPs, and thus has to have a crosscategorial Boolean semantics.

(2) miman ix jujun heb’ kuywom OKi / *y-etoq jujun heb’ ulawom
    big woman every Pl student OK and / *A3-with every Pl guest
    ‘every student and every guest is fat’ (lit. ‘is a big woman’)

Yetoq, restricted to referential NPs (type e), is interpreted simply as a sum/group forming operator.

In many languages, with-coordination can conjoin only noun phrases but not sentences. But in Q’anjob’al, yetoq ‘with’ can combine sentences and other kinds of phrases.

But in this function, comitative coordination is still different from i. Yetoq is not acceptable in most contexts where i ‘and’ can be used.¹

¹Yetoq is only acceptable between clauses which contribute to a common topic, roughly paraphrased as and in addition to that. For yetoq to be used felicitously, the clauses it conjoins always have a common topic to which they make a joint contribution, compare:

(3) a. x-kankan naq Xhun b’ay na OKi / *y-etoq x-toq y-istil naq b’ay txomb’al
    Comp-stay 3MAN Xhun to house OK and / *A3-with Comp-go A3-wife 3MAN to market
    ‘Xhun stayed home and (*in addition to that) his wife went to the market’

    b. merwal ch-kus naq Xhun y-uj tol x-k’ayil naq masanil s-tumin y-etoq
    very INC-sad 3MAN Xhun A3-by that Comp-lose 3MAN all own-money A3-with
    x-kam masanil yawb’ejal naq
    Comp-die all crops 3MAN
    ‘Xhun is sad because he lost all his money and (OK in addition to that) his crops died.’

    c. k’am tzetalyetal ch-w-aq’a y-etoq k’am maktxel b’ay ch-w-aq’a
    no what INC-A1S-give A3-with no who to INC-A1S-give
    ‘I have nothing to give and (OK in addition to that) nobody to give things to’

In (3-b), the common topic is Xhun’s lack of luck. In (3-c), the common topic is that the speaker is unable to share. In both cases, the two clauses together elaborate on their shared topic.

I propose to formalize the property of yetoq to require a common topic from the clauses it conjoins by analyzing the sentential usage of yetoq as a metaphorical extension of group/sum formation. Assume that each clause can denote a minimal illocutionary act (Searle and Vanderveken, 1985); then

a comitative coordination of clauses denotes a sum of two illocutionary acts (e.g. two assertives), and this sum relates to the rest of the discourse as a unit.

Assume that clauses/utterances in discourse are connected with rhetorical relations such as background, motivation, conclusion, etc. (Mann and Thompson, 1988). Intuitively, what I labeled above informally as “contributing to the same topic” can be represented as bearing the same (discourse) relation to the rest of the discourse structure, e.g. two (sub)utterances can be elaborations on the same preceding discourse. The role of yetoq then is to guarantee that the clauses it links stand in the same relation to the rest of the discourse. A natural implementation of this role, provided that yetoq otherwise denotes sum formation, is to assume that yetoq as a clausal linker forms a sum of two utterances. They, as a sum, are linked with a single discourse relation, schematically:

(4) elaboration

`'Xun is unhappy' [X lost money'⊕'X's crops died']`

`'Xun lost money' 'His crops died'`

I have argued that as a clausal coordinator yetoq maintains traces of the sum formation meaning, as in the NP conjunction, with its pragmatics of ‘togetherness’ (McNally, 1993). This analysis of yetoq supports the hypothesis that sentential and NP coordination can be related in different ways in different languages. While some coordinators like Q’anjob’al i and English and can be given an order-theoretic denotation (Keenan and Faltz, 1985; Rooth and Partee, 1983), where NP coordination is a pointwise extension of the clausal case, the sentential usage of yetoq is a (metaphorical) extension of its basic sum meaning from entities to discourse units.

References


