

ON APPARENT NOMINAL COORDINATION IN GITKSAN*

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1. Introduction

This paper investigates coordination in Gitksan, an endangered Tsimshianic language natively spoken in the northern interior region of British Columbia. Specifically, I investigate the behavior of *gan*, a morpheme which has in the past been described as a nominal coordinator (Rigsby 1986; Livingston 1989), despite displaying some non-canonical behaviors. This paper considers *gan*'s non-canonical syntax and investigates whether a syntactic analysis of it as a “coordinator” is indeed appropriate.

There are two apparent coordinating morphemes in Gitksan: the clausal coordinator *ii*, and the phrasal coordinator *gan*, which conjoins nominals and PP elements (Forbes 2013). Here, I focus on describing the properties of *gan* when it coordinates nominals. An example is provided below in (1), where three nominals are conjoined as the argument of the intransitive locative verb *dox*. Note that word order in Gitksan is strictly predicate-initial, specifically VS and VAO.¹

- (1) Luu dox_{hl} smax gan_{hl} anaax gan_{hl} maa'y ts'im dihlxws Lisa.
luu dox=[hl smax] gan=[hl anaax] gan=[hl maa'y] ts'im dihlxw=s Lisa
in be.PL=[DET meat] **and**=[DET bread] **and**=[DET berries] in bag=DET Lisa
'There's meat, bread, and berries in Lisa's bag.'²

This paper addresses the fact that *gan* displays a number of behaviors distinct from those expected from traditional coordinators (e.g. English *and*). I present three behaviors which distinguish *gan* from the standard notion of coordinator. First, *gan* and subsequent

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¹ The notation S = intransitive subject, A = transitive subject, and O = transitive object will be used throughout the paper as Gitksan is a morphologically ergative language. There is one exception to the VAO generalization: series I (clitic) pronouns attach to aspect markers and other functional elements preceding the verb/predicate, when such an element appears. This is the case in, for instance, examples (11) and (12).

² Abbreviations: 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, ASSOC = associative, AX = agent extraction, CTRL = control, DET = determiner, EMPH = emphasis, FOC = focus, III = series III independent person marking, II = series II suffixal person marking, I = series I clitic person marking, NEG = negative, OBL = oblique, PL = plural, PREP = preposition, SG = singular.

conjuncts may appear discontinuous from the initial conjunct. Second, there is a restriction on the coordination of ergative arguments: some speakers may not coordinate ergative pronouns continuously, and others may not coordinate ergative pronouns at all. Finally, the initial conjunct of a coordinate phrase may be extracted, violating the Coordinate Structure Constraint (Ross 1967). I discuss these properties further in section 3.

These behaviors all point to a fundamental syntactic difference between the initial conjunct of a *gan*-construction and subsequent conjuncts, uncharacteristic of coordination in many other languages (although reminiscent of quasi-coordinators in, for example, Slavic languages). It is thus unclear whether ‘coordinator’ is an inaccurate descriptor for *gan*, or whether coordination is crosslinguistically more diverse than previously recognized.

In this paper, I pursue an adjunction analysis of coordination following Munn (1993), and propose that the distinct properties of *gan* follow from a single parametric difference between it and more familiar coordinators: it lacks the semantic requirement which triggers Coordinate Structure Constraint effects (argued for by Zhang 2010, among others). This analysis allows for a universal syntax in coordinate constructions, and suggests that non-canonical or ‘quasi’-coordinate behavior arises from parametric variation in the application of the Coordinate Structure Constraint.

I will make use of terminology from coordination (e.g. conjunct) in this paper for the sake of description, though whether these terms are indeed accurately representative of the underlying structure is yet to be verified. The structure of the paper is as follows: I review existing crosslinguistic analyses of coordinate structures in section 2, and consider the data from Gitksan in section 3. I provide my analysis and that of Livingston (1989) in section 4, and conclude in section 5.

2. Analyses of coordination

2.1 Structures

The two main syntactic configurations this paper will consider for coordinate structures are presented below in (2) and (3). In the first, the coordinator serves as the head of a functional projection &P which takes two conjuncts as, respectively, complement and specifier (e.g. Kayne 1994; Johannessen 1998). In the other, the coordinator serves as the head of &P which takes one conjunct as its complement, and adjoins to the other (e.g. Munn 1993).³



³ I remain agnostic on the particular categorial identity of &P. It is possible that the structure in (2) projects a true category &P, thus raising the question of why, crosslinguistically, no elements seem to c-select specifically for coordinate phrases. Zhang (2010) among others argues against this, claiming that &P essentially absorbs the categorial features of one of its conjuncts. For the adjoining structure (3), the category might be &P, or similar to something oblique, like P. This would require further, language-specific tests.

Both of the asymmetrical structures above predict a tighter degree of constituency between the coordinating head and the second conjunct, to the exclusion of the initial conjunct. In these structures, the more deeply embedded conjunct DP₂ (the *internal* conjunct in Zhang's (2010) terminology) is rightmost; this is in line with my assumption that Gitksan is head-initial, but the directionality of each constituent is in fact expected to vary parametrically across languages.

Crucially, the structures above make distinct predictions. In (2), the external conjunct has a Spec-Head relationship with the coordinator itself, while in (3) this is not the case. Further, the constituent comprised of the coordinator and the internal conjunct DP₂ is an intermediate bar-level projection &' in (2), but a full-fledged phrase in (3). This makes distinct predictions about whether the coordinator-and-DP₂ constituent may strand DP₁: only with the structure in (3) should stranding be possible.⁴ In section 3 I present data which demonstrates precisely this in Gitksan.

2.2 The Coordinate Structure Constraint

As originally discussed by Ross (1967), there is an apparent crosslinguistic restriction against the extraction of whole conjuncts from within coordinate constructions as exemplified in (4).⁵ This restriction has been termed the Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC). While the CSC was traditionally considered to be an active constraint in the grammar, I use the term here simply as notation for the descriptive generalization about restrictions on conjunct extraction.

- (4) * Who did you see __ and John?

In recent generative approaches, following the aims of the Minimalist program, there has been an emphasis on reducing the number of construction-specific restrictions on syntactic operations. Zhang (2010) reanalyzes the CSC as epiphenomenal, derived from existing restrictions on extraction from adjuncts or intermediate-level projections, and a Relativized Parallelism Requirement which holds between the two conjuncts at a semantic or processing level (see also Munn 1993; Fernández-Salgueiro 2008). Note that any crosslinguistic notion of parallelism which holds between conjuncts must crucially be semantic in nature, rather than syntactic, as it is possible to coordinate elements of distinct categories:

- (5) Pat is a Republican and proud of it. (Sag et al. 1985: 117)

As will be shown, CSC effects do not hold as strictly in Gitksan as for languages like English. I analyze this in section 4 as parametric variation in the applicability of this Parallelism Requirement.

⁴ The conjuncts additionally differ in their expected c-command relationship. While in (2) DP₁ straightforwardly c-commands the lower DP₂, the c-command relationship of DP₁ with DP₂, embedded within an adjoining element, is less clear. As no tests have yet been discovered which straightforwardly distinguish c-command from precedence in Gitksan (Davis and Brown 2010; Davis, p.c.), I leave this for future work.

⁵ Extraction from within a conjunct is more free, as noted by Zhang (2010). This is demonstrated in, for example, *Which herbs can you eat __ and not feel sick?*

This analysis is not tenable for Gitksan, which conjoins nominals and clauses with distinct morphemes. While nominals are conjoined with *gan*, clauses must be conjoined with the morpheme *ii*, as demonstrated by the interpretations of the following sentences.

- (9) a. Hanak' 'nit ii smext.
 hanak' 'nit ii smex-t
 woman 3SG.III **and** bear-3SG.II
 'She's a woman and (she is) a bear.' (Context: The woman can transform.)
- b. */# Hanak' 'nit ganhl smext.
 hanak' 'nit gan=hl smex-t
 woman 3SG.III **and**=DET bear-3SG.II
VG: "People... would have pictures of a woman standing beside a bear."
BS: "She's a woman, and her bear."

As the discontinuous examples in (6) use the coordinator *gan*, rather than *ii*, we cannot attribute the pattern to Bare Argument Ellipsis. An alternate explanation would be extraposition. However, under an analysis where both conjuncts are part of an &P as in (2), the constituent excluding the initial conjunct is an intermediate bar-level projection: &'. Movement or extraposition of this constituent would thus not be possible. The alternate structure in (3) better allows for this discontinuity: the adjunct consisting of *gan* and the second, internal conjunct DP₂ could have attached to a different site, or been extraposed.

3.2 No ergative pronoun conjunction

This section describes a restriction on the conjunction of pronouns by *gan*, in contrast to proper names or common nouns. Names in any core argument position may be coordinated freely, demonstrated in (10) for intransitive subjects (S), objects (O), and transitive subjects (A).

- (10) a. 'Wihl gol dip Clarissa gant Michael.
 'wihl gol [dip Clarissa gan =t Michael]
 around run.PL [ASSOC Clarissa **and** =DET Michael]
 'Clarissa and Michael ran around.'
- b. 'Wehiis Colint Clarissa gans Michael.
 'we-i =s Colin [=t Clarissa gan =s Michael]
 find-CTRL =DET Colin [=DET Clarissa **and** =DET Michael]
 'Colin found Clarissa and Michael.'
- c. 'Wayis dip Michael gant Clarissat Barbara.
 'wa-i [=s dip Michael gan =t Clarissa] =t Barbara
 find-CTRL [=DET ASSOC Michael **and** =DET Clarissa] =DET Barbara
 'Clarissa and Michael found Barbara.'

In contrast, while the coordination of S and O pronouns is possible, the coordination of A-position pronouns is restricted. Some speakers require coordinated A-position pronouns to be discontinuous (as in (11)), while others who disprefer discontinuous coordinate phrases are unable to perform coordination at all (as in (12)).

- (11) a. * Neediin gans 'niin japhl miyup ky'oots.
 nee=dii=[n gan=s 'niin] jap=hl miyup ky'oots
 NEG=FOC=[1SG.I **and**=DET 2SG.III] make=DET rice yesterday
- b. Neediin japhl miyup ky'oots gans 'niin.
 nee=dii=[n] jap=hl miyup ky'oots [gan=s 'niin]
 NEG=FOC=[1SG.I] make=DET rice yesterday [**and**=DET 2SG.III]
 'You and I didn't make rice yesterday.' (VG)

- (12) a. * Neediin dee'antxws Michael gant 'niin.
 nee=dii=[n] dee'antxw=s Michael [gan=t 'niin]
 NEG=FOC=[1SG.I] guide=DET Michael [**and**=DET 2SG.III]
 Attempted: 'You and I guided Michael.'
 BS: Just not good Gitxsanimx to attach it there.
- b. Needipdii dee'antxws Michael.
 nee=**dip**=dii dee'antxw=s Michael
 NEG=1PL.I=FOC guide=DET Michael
 'We guided Michael.' (BS)

One might initially expect the restriction demonstrated above to be linked to the anomalous form and position of the ergative pronouns in (11) and (12): these examples are of dependent clauses, and the subject pronouns are pre-predicative (series I) clitics.⁷ Only a highly restricted number of functional elements may precede the predicate in Gitksan; it's possible that a full-fledged coordinate phrase simply can't appear there. However, the problem remains when attempting to coordinate predicate-suffix pronouns (series II). These pronouns can't be coordinated as agents (13a), but can as objects (13b).

- (13) a. * 'Wa'm gant 'nit 'niin.
 'wa-['m gan =t 'nit] 'niin
 find-[1PL.II **and** =DET 3SG.III] 2SG.III
 Attempted: 'Me and him found you.'

⁷ Gitksan syntax is split into independent and dependent clauses. Simply, dependent clauses are those where functional material such as negation or aspect precedes the predicate (the only exception being the future marker), and independent clauses are those without such material. The morphology of ergative and absolutive pronouns differ in each type of clause: ergative pronouns are suffixes to the predicate (series II) in independent clauses (see (6a)), and pre-predicative clitics (series I) in dependent clauses (see (11) and (12)). I refer the reader to Rigsby (1986) and Tarpent (1987) for additional details.

- b. Neemdii 'wa'm gant 'nit.
 nee=m=dii 'wa-['m gan =t 'nit]
 NEG=2.I=FOC find-[1PL.II **and** =DET 3SG.III]
 'You didn't find me and him.' (BS)

The problem with coordination in these contexts thus seems to be with the ergative argument position itself, rather than the morphological form of pronouns. This is a curious observation, as Gitksan does not display any other syntactically ergative properties (discussed in detail by Hunt 1993). Furthermore, this difficulty only appears with *pronouns* in ergative position; recall that the coordination of full nouns, continuous or discontinuous, is perfectly legal in these contexts.

3.3 Violating the Coordinate Structure Constraint

The final notable property of the coordinating morpheme *gan* lies in the way it is apparently not subject to the Coordinate Structure Constraint. The island-like effects of the CSC are one of the most common unifying properties of coordinate structures crosslinguistically. Yet in Gitksan, the initial conjunct may be straightforwardly extracted, as shown in (14). Not even a resumptive pronoun is required to license this extraction (as discussed by Munn 1993 for e.g. Hebrew, Palauan).

- (14) Gwihl gubis Henry [_ ganhl miyup]?
 gwi =hl gup-i =s Henry _ gan =hl miyup
 what =DET eat-CTRL =DET Henry *t* **and** =DET rice
 'What did Henry eat and rice?' (Davis and Brown 2011: 58)

Failure for the *gan*-construction to function like an island, as expected of a coordinate phrase, leaves little apparent motivation for this morpheme to be termed a 'coordinator' at all. It is clear that whatever property normally triggers CSC effects is absent.

In the next section I present an analysis of *gan*'s syntax that accounts for the apparent independence of the initial conjunct from the constituent comprised of *gan* and DP₂. The behaviors described in this section (discontinuity of the construction, restrictions on the coordination of ergative pronouns, and extraction capabilities of DP₁) follow from the analysis proposed.

4. Analysis of *gan*

In this section, I present a syntactic structure that accounts for the anomalous behaviors discussed above. First, in section 4.1, I propose an adjunction structure for *gan* lacking the Relativized Parallelism Requirement (Zhang 2010) between conjuncts, which ordinarily triggers CSC effects. I argue that this is able to account for such details as the restriction on ergative pronoun conjunction. In section 4.2, I compare this analysis to that proposed by Livingston (1989) for the same coordinator *gan* in mutually intelligible Nisga'a, spoken just to the west. In section 4.3, I consider some of the implications of the proposed analysis.

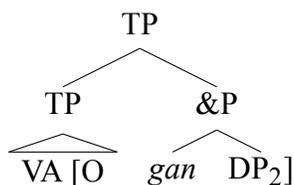
4.1 The proposal: an adjunction syntax

The evidence from discontinuity discussed in section 3.1 precludes an analysis of *gan* as a coordinator which takes the two conjuncts as its specifier and complement. The relationship between *gan* and the initial conjunct does not seem to be one of a head and a specifier, contra arguments by Zhang (2010) for coordinators in English and Chinese. I propose that the initial conjunct is a normal argument appearing in a regular argument position; this explains why it can be extracted.

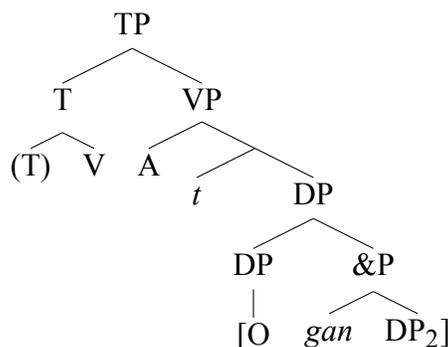
Because *gan* and the second conjunct may (or must) extrapose and appear separately from this initial conjunct, I propose that this constituent is a full phrasal projection in itself (e.g. &P), rather than an intermediate bar-level projection. I further propose that this constituent may adjoin to the clause, based on the observation that it may be freely reordered with respect to clausal adjuncts. Specifically, I suggest that it adjoins to high positions in either the nominal projection (e.g. DP) or the clausal projection (e.g. TP).⁸ The difference in whether the constituent headed by *gan* adjoins to the noun or clause can result in distinct word orders, as demonstrated below.

For an absolutive argument, adjunction to TP versus DP is ambiguous from a word-order perspective, when no other clausal adjuncts are available to disambiguate. This is demonstrated below with a transitive object.⁹ In (15), the object is continuous with the phrase headed by *gan*, even though it is adjoined to TP. In (16), the *gan*-headed phrase is adjoined directly to the object, forming a similarly continuous constituent.

(15) TP-adjunction (O)



(16) DP-adjunction (O)



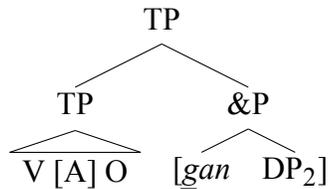
In contrast, for the ergative argument, adjunction of the *gan*-headed constituent to TP or to DP will result in different linear orders. In adjunction to TP as in (17), the object intervenes between the subject and the *gan*-phrase meant to coordinate with it. Only in a structure like (18), where the *gan*-phrase adjoins directly to the subject, will an ergative

⁸ The position of clausal adjuncts in the sentence is unknown and requires further investigation. For the sake of discussion, I call this position TP.

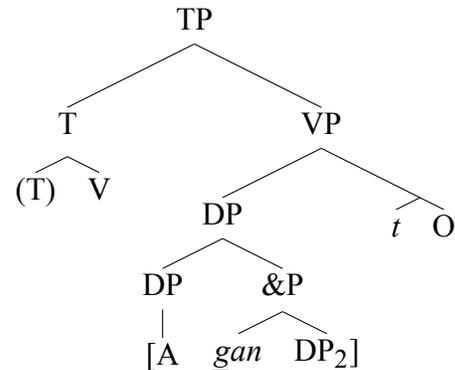
⁹ I assume verb raising to T in the structures below in order to derive verb-initial order, but this is not confirmed for Gitksan. See Carnie and Guilfoyle (2000); Carnie et al. (2005) for alternate analyses of verb-initial languages.

argument be coordinated in a continuous manner.

(17) TP-adjunction (A)



(18) DP-adjunction (A)



The restriction on the coordination of ergative pronouns results from the fact that only the adjunction of *gan* to the DP level may create a continuous constituent. This is possible with full nouns and proper names. However, pronouns are known crosslinguistically for their potential to be structurally deficient in comparison to full nouns, or even of a different category (e.g. Cardinaletti and Starke 1999 or Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002). The observed difference in coordination behavior for ergative pronouns, which in Gitksan may only be clitics or suffixes, could be due to a difference of this type, which prevents *gan* from adjoining to them directly. This analysis therefore makes a prediction which may be tested empirically in the future: that pronouns have distinct, possibly deficient structural properties, as compared to full nouns.

If adjunction to DP is not possible, as would be the case with ergative pronouns, then the only remaining option is adjunction to the clause. This results in apparently discontinuous coordination. Speakers who disprefer such discontinuous structures may entirely lack TP-adjunction; for these speakers, a workaround is required. Pronouns are made plural instead of coordinated, as shown above in (12), or the entire coordinate construction is focused, as shown below. When focused, independent pronouns (series III) are used.

- (19) 'Niin gant 'nii'y ant dee'antxws Michael.
 ['niin gan =t 'nii'y] an=t dee'antxw =s Michael
 [2SG.III **and** =DET 1SG.III] AX=3.I guide =DET Michael
 'You and I (are the ones who) guided Michael.'

More traditional coordinate constructions are also able to be analyzed with an adjunction analysis (Munn 1993); in these analyses extraction and discontinuity of the kind described above is not possible. I propose that the major difference between such constructions and coordination with *gan* is the lack of a Parallelism Requirement between *gan*'s two conjuncts (its complement and adjunction site, respectively). Normally, this filter requires a degree of semantic similarity between conjuncts, and is not a strictly syntactic constraint.

According to Livingston's (1989) data from Nisga'a, the former pattern occurs where the first conjunct is a full nominal, while the latter occurs where the first conjunct is a dependent pronoun (that is, a suffix or clitic pronoun). Independent pronouns show variable behavior. In Gitksan this is not the case, as is clear from 21 above where the initial conjunct is a pronoun in both cases. Plurality of the first conjunct largely correlates with the continuity of the construction, though this is not always so. In addition, pronoun plurality largely varies by dialect; in the East, pronouns are obligatorily plural in this construction, despite a reading which lacks additional participants (seen in (21b)). In the West, plural pronouns in this construction are largely interpreted as being indicative of additional participants. Number and group marking on full nouns, which are pluralized with the associative determiner *dip*, is less consistent, and even seems entirely optional.¹⁰

More seriously, however, this analysis fails to account for the restriction on ergative pronoun coordination, discussed in section 3.2. If a coordinate phrase may be adjoined to the clause and its first conjunct *pro* coindexed with an element inside, presumably this should not be impacted by pronominal vs. full nominal status. If this were the case, however, the same restrictions might be expected for discontinuous coordination of any argument.

Ultimately, it must be asked what benefit there is to positing a null *pro* in a traditional coordination structure in the first place, when *gan* does not exhibit the major property associated with these structures: islandhood. I argue that an adjunction structure lacking *pro*, but with two different potential adjunction sites, accounts for the attested data more economically, and additionally predicts the coordination restrictions on ergative pronouns.

4.3 Implications for coordinate structures

What does this analysis of *gan* predict for a broader analysis of coordinate constructions? I will begin with the strong assumption of a unified crosslinguistic structure for coordinate constructions, and discuss the implications of this assumption.

If we assume that *gan*, despite its unusual syntactic behavior, does fit in the class of 'coordinators', this pushes us to a number of conclusions. First, more traditional coordinators such as English *and* should also be analyzed with adjunction structures, as argued for by e.g. Munn (1993). The difference between these coordinators and *gan* can be reduced to a simple parametric difference: the applicability of the Coordinate Structure Constraint (identified by e.g. Zhang 2010 as a processing filter requiring semantic parallelism between conjuncts, preventing the outermost conjunct from being extracted). Lacking this requirement, not only is DP₁ able to be extracted, but the constituent containing the coordinator and the internal conjunct is able to adjoin to a wider variety of things. English *and*, when taking a DP conjunct, must adjoin to some element with semantic properties similar to that DP; the adjunction site of Gitksan's *gan*, in contrast, is not restricted by a DP complement.

Essentially, this predicts that the legal extraction of a conjunct out of a coordinate con-

¹⁰ Number marking on the verb in Gitksan does not provide insight into the nature of the coordinated phrase because it is not the result of agreement. It instead marks true verbal number, though it may be moving toward an agreement system (Rigsby 1986; Corbett 2001: 256).

struction should go hand in hand with the capacity for that construction to be discontinuous. This prediction is something that can be tested on quasi-coordinators in unrelated languages and language groups (for example, Slavic).

If this prediction is not borne out, then the crosslinguistic picture of coordinate syntax is perhaps less unified, or else *gan* cannot be considered to be of the same class as *and*-like coordinators. Coordinate configurations have been posited to be universal by Johannessen (1998), even though in many instances the phonological form of a coordinator is null. Gitksan, however, would be a case where coordinate constructions are simply lacking in the nominal domain.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a description of some unorthodox properties of the nominal quasi-coordinator *gan* in Gitksan, and subsequently presented a structural analysis.

The non-canonical properties described were: frequent discontinuity between the initial conjunct (in situ) and the rest of the coordinate construction (extraposed); obligatory discontinuity between conjoined ergative pronouns and the rest of the construction, or else a general restriction on ergative pronoun conjunction; and finally an ability to extract the initial conjunct. In contrast to Livingston's (1989) approach where a *pro* appears within &P, coindexed with the overt initial conjunct, I suggested a simpler structure where only *gan* and the second conjunct form a constituent. This constituent is able to adjoin to either the noun or the clause, due to the fact that it lacks the Parallelism Requirement which under normal circumstances derives CSC effects. Assuming that phonologically dependent pronouns are also syntactically deficient in some way, this easily accounts for the discontinuous linear order required when ergative pronouns are conjoined.

More generally, this paper has made some predictions to be empirically tested, both about the nature of pronominal structure in Gitksan, and about (quasi-)coordinate constructions crosslinguistically. Prior claims about the underlyingly epiphenomenal nature of the Coordinate Structure Constraint (Zhang 2010; Fernández-Salgueiro 2008) allow for a greater degree of potential parametric variation in how the CSC applies across languages. The structural choice between a coordinator which projects to the phrasal level over all conjuncts (e.g. (2)) and a coordinator which adjoins to a conjunct (e.g. (3)) may be another place for potentially parametric variation.

In sum, this paper has presented some novel data from Gitksan and examined its implications for a crosslinguistic view of coordinate structures, presenting some avenues for future exploration.

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