

The twofold conceptual space of coordination relations

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The aim of this paper is to depict the conceptual space within which the three basic coordination relations of *combination* ('and'), *contrast* ('but') and *alternative* ('or') are located (Croft's distinction between 'semantic map' and 'conceptual space' will be followed here, cf. Croft 2003: 144-52). The notion of coordination relation is defined in purely functional terms as a relation established between functionally parallel states of affairs (henceforth SoAs), i.e. each having an autonomous cognitive profile and the same illocutionary force (see Mauri 2007: chapter 2). Every construction used to establish one or more coordination relations is considered a coordinating construction, regardless of its morphosyntactic properties.

As pointed out, among others, by Dik (1968) and Haspelmath (2004), further subtypes may be identified within each coordination relation. Combination may be TEMPORAL (simultaneous vs. sequential) or ATEMPORAL, depending on the location of the SoAs on the temporal axis. Contrast may be OPPOSITIVE, CORRECTIVE or COUNTEREXPECTATIVE, depending on the origin of the conflict (cf. Haspelmath, to appear). Alternative may be SIMPLE or CHOICE-AIMED, depending on the necessity to make a choice between the available possibilities (cf. 'standard' vs. 'interrogative' disjunction, Haspelmath (to appear)). This research, based on a 74 language sample, examines the cross-linguistic coding of the three basic coordination relations and their subtypes with respect to two parameters: (i) the presence and morphophonological complexity of overt coordinating markers (mono-/polymorphemic, mono-/polysyllabic markers), and (ii) the semantic domain of each attested marker, that is, the set of relations it may be used for (general vs. dedicated markers).

Two main results have been achieved in this survey. First of all, the semantic domains of the attested markers have revealed a neat bipartition within the coordination conceptual space, which relates combination to contrast on the one hand and combination to alternative on the other hand. As exemplified in Fig. 1, combination and contrast markers show recurrent overlapping polysemy patterns across languages, pointing to the following combination-contrast conceptual space: [*sequential comb* - *simultaneous comb.* - *atemporal comb.* - *oppositive contrast* - *corrective contrast* - *counterexpectative contrast*] (see Malchukov 2004 for a slightly different assessment). To the contrary, combination and alternative relations tend to be coded by means of completely different markers, thus showing a reduced semantic overlap. However, in languages with no overt marker for alternative, the two relations are expressed by means of the same construction, namely alternative is systematically conveyed through the combination of possibilities. In such cases, the potential status of each combined SoA is obligatorily marked by means of some irrealis markers (like *maṇaya* in example (1), cf. Mauri, forthcoming). No polysemy pattern is attested between the coding of contrast and alternative.

Secondly, the exam of the morphophonological complexity of the attested markers highlights the hierarchical structure characterizing the twofold coordination conceptual space. As highlighted by Kortmann (1997: 78) for subordinators, a simple morphophonological structure tends to correlate with a basic and general semantics, mainly because markers expressing basic and general relations have a high frequency of use and consequently undergo a high morphophonological erosion (Croft 2003: 110-16). This form-function asymmetry is mirrored by data in the sample. Combination markers, which express the most basic and unspecified relation, are structurally simpler than both contrast and alternative markers, and general markers are structurally simpler than dedicated ones. In particular: (i) if a language has one of the markers indicated on the following hierarchy, it will be at least as morphophonologically complex as the markers to its left: [*dedicated marker for sequential combination*, *general marker expressing at least one combination relation* > *general marker only expressing contrast relations* > *dedicated marker for a contrast relation*]; (ii) in a language, markers used to express alternative relations, either general or dedicated, are at least as morphophonologically complex as the markers used to express at least one combination relation. The comparison of contrast and alternative markers, instead, does not reveal any regular cross-linguistic pattern.

To conclude, I will argue that combination, contrast and alternative do not stand on the same level, but combination is more basic and is implied by the other two relations. Based on the attested polysemy patterns and on the morphophonological complexity of the coordinating markers, I propose a twofold, hierarchical conceptual space, structured along two perpendicular axes of increasing semantic specificity having their origin in the combination relation (Fig. 2). On the one hand, a combination of SoAs may be specified in terms of some discontinuity (Givón 1990: 849) originating a contrast. On the other hand, a combination may be specified in terms of the irrealis of the SoAs it links, creating a set of alternative possibilities. Along the two axes, the more a coordination relation is semantically specified, the more complex will be the marker expressing it.

References

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Figures and examples

- (1) Mangarayi, Gunwingguan, Australian (Merlan 1982: 39)

<i>manjaya</i>	<i>ja-Ø-niŋa-n</i>	<i>manjaya</i>	<i>dayi</i>
perhaps	3-3sg-come-PRES	perhaps	NEG

‘Perhaps he’ll come, perhaps not.’, i.e. ‘it is possible that he may or may not come’

	SEQ	SIM	ATEMP	OPPOSIT	CORRECT	COUNTEREX
Mangarayî	-				gana	
Tuvaluan	-	kae				
Hdi	ld	-				am d
Maori	aa	haki	-		engari	
Hausa	kuma				amman	
Russian	i		a			no
S-Croatian	i		a		već	ali
Polish	i		a		ale	
German	und				sondern	aber
Italian	e				ma	
			mentre	bensì	però	

Figure 1: *The combination-contrast conceptual space: some attested semantic maps.*

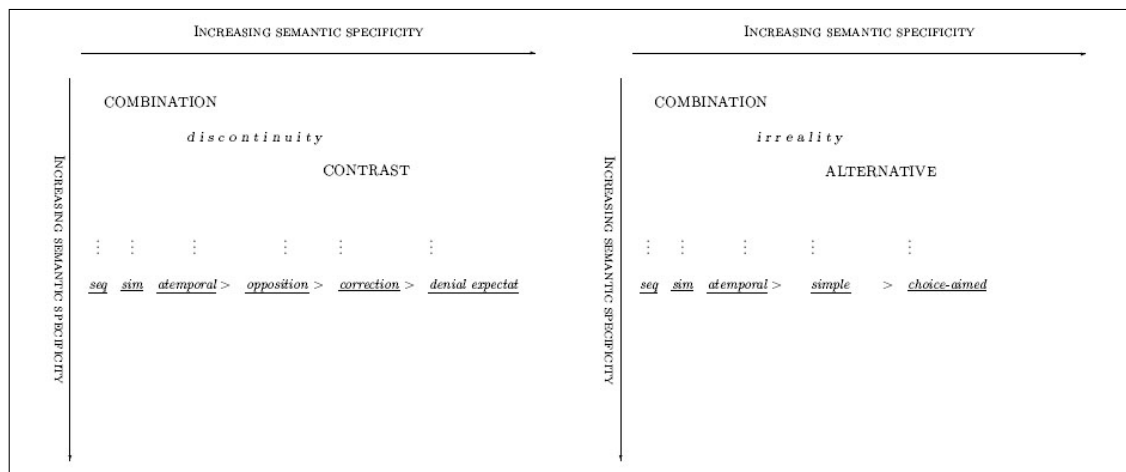


Figure 2: *The conceptual space of coordination relations: two dimensions of increasing semantic specificity.*