Inverting As-Parentheticals

Keywords: syntax, parentheticals, anaphora, ellipsis, stylistic inversion

The Problem In a discussion of predicate as-parentheticals (PAPs) as in (1), Potts \[4\] notes what he sees as a variant of PAPs in which the subject appears final to the parenthetical, as in (2). While Potts takes these ‘inverting’ as-parentheticals (IAPs) to be variants of PAPs involving an optional T-to-C movement, closer inspection shows that an optional inversion is not a possible analysis of (1) and (2), noting the ungrammaticality of the inverted analogue of (1), in (3), and an entirely different semantics for the uninvverted analogue of (2), in (4). The current talk is an investigation into the syntax of IAPs, looking at the nature of the ‘inversion’, the properties of the VP sized gap, and the location of the subject in IAPs. The conclusions that one is drawn to find many similarities between IAPs and French stylistic inversion, and has broader implications for other parenthetical constructions, the nature of the EPP on T, and VP ellipsis (VPE).

Analysis Concerning the nature of the inversion, crucial evidence comes from speakers for whom multiple auxiliaries are possible. If the subject of an IAP was in Spec, TP, and T-to-C accounted for the ‘inversion’ in (2), one would expect (5) to be grammatical with the subject sandwiched between the T in C and the lower auxiliary. Examples as in (5) are consistently ungrammatical, speakers rather accepting examples as in (6) with the subject final to the string of auxiliaries. Given the possibilities of multiple auxiliaries preceding the subject, a generalization emerges that the subject is final in IAPs, not that there is T-to-C movement.

Following the analysis of PAPs in \[4\], I argue that the VP sized gap in IAPs is not straightforwardly an instance of VPE, patterning differently than VPE and showing evidence of A’ movement. First, while VPE can take local or non-local antecedents, as shown in (7), the gap in IAPs can only take a local antecedent, shown in (8). The gap in IAPs also licenses VP-sized parasitic gaps, as shown in (9), giving evidence that the gap in IAPs is the result of A’ movement. Note that the second gap in (9), being in an adjunct island, cannot be the site of A’ movement, nor can it be an instance of VPE, only interpretable as the local antecedent just like the parenthetical gap. These facts lead one to two conclusions: a) the gap in IAPs does not behave like normal VPE and b), the gap is involved with A’ movement.

Contra \[4\], I argue that the A’ moved element is not a simplex operator head, but rather the non-pronunciation of a fully articulated VP structure, a surface anaphor in the terms of [2]. Following the diagnostics of [2], IAPs require syntactic antecedents, evidenced by the impossibility of pragmatic control as in (10). Arguments with the gap can syntactically control pronouns, as in (11), suggesting internal structure to the gap. Finally, the gap requires syntactic identity, evidenced by the impossibility of voice mismatches as in (12) and (13). The gap in an IAP then is the trace of a surface anaphor, the result of A’ movement.

Given the evidence from multiple auxiliaries and the evidence of A’ movement of the VP, it can neither be the case that the subject is in Spec, TP, nor that it is sitting low in A position. Noting the impossibility of expletives in IAPs, as in (14) and (15), I argue that the subject of an IAP is never in Spec, TP, T lacking EPP features, and that it rather is right adjoined to the clause.

Discussion The resulting picture, no expletives, A’ movement and a clause final subject, finds deep commonalities between IAPs and French stylistic inversion [3], where with A’ movement, the subject is final, as in (16) and expletives are omissible, as in (17). That in both, the lack of EPP on T appears where A’ movement is involved may lend evidence to claim that the presence of EPP on T is conditioned by C [1]. Finally, the evidence that the gap is the trace of a fully articulated VP opens questions for future research into the nature of VPE. The gap in an IAP is VPE in the sense that it is VP sized null surface anaphor, although it behaves differently that other cases of VPE on a number of dimensions. Either the notion of VPE must be restricted to exclude the surface anaphors in IAPs, or refined to recognize the distinctions between the two.
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(1) Matilda loves Alf, as Alice said she would.
(2) Matilda loves Alf, as does Alice.
(3) a) *Matilda loves Alf, as Alice said would she.
    b) *Matilda loves Alf, as did Alice say she would.
(4) Matilda loves Alf, as Alice does.
(5) Frank might have been drunk, as might Tom have.
(6) Frank might have been drunk, as might have Tom.
(7) That Frank covered his trail meant that he evaded suspicion from the police. We aren’t sure whether Tom did [VP].
    a. [VP] = evaded suspicion from the police
    b. [VP] = covered his trail
(8) That Frank covered his trail meant that he evaded suspicion from the police, as did Tom [VP].
    a. [VP] = evaded suspicion from the police
    b. [VP] ≠ covered his trail
(9) The guy that insulted Matilda made me really angry, as did Tom [VP] without meaning to.
    a. [VP] = made me really angry
    b. [VP] ≠ insulted Matilda
(10) [Situation: Alice is eating an apple.]
    Matilda: #As will I.
(11) Tom has a toy gun, as does Frank [have a toy gun], and it’s shiny.
    [it = Frank’s toy gun.]
(12) *Romeo stabbed the sheriff with his knife, as was the sheriff deputy.
(13) *The sheriff was stabbed by Romeo, as did Elvis.
(14) *There might be a problem with the analysis, as might there with the presentation.
(15) *It is likely that Alice hates Tom after he forgot their anniversary last week, as is it given his behavior last night.
(16) Quand partira ton ami?
    When will leave your friend?
    ‘When will your friend leave?’
(17) Je vux que (il) suit procede au reexamen de cette question.
    I want that (it) be proceeded to the reexamination of this problem
    ‘I want this problem to be reexamined.’

References