A Junction Analysis of Verbless Statements

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I. ADJUNCTION IN JUNCTION GRAMMAR

Junction Grammar is based on the relationships, or junctions, which hold between linguistic units. JG recognizes three general junction operations: conjunction, subjunction and adjunction. Conjunction (symbolized &) is the relationship between items of coordinate grammatical rank. It corresponds to the traditional notion of coordinating conjunction. Subjunction (symbolized with *) is the relationship which holds between elements of super- and subordinate grammatical rank. It is the relationship underlying the traditional concepts of modification, complementation and subordination. Adjunction (symbolized +) is the basic building operation which joins linguistic operands to form a complex result different from its constituents. It is the relationship between verbs or prepositions and their objects, the relationship joining predicates to their subjects.

A full adjunction configuration has three levels (see Figure 1). At the lowest is the predicator--the nucleus of the adjunction. The predicator is optionally adjoined to one or more objects. The predicator and its adjuncts together form a predicate, which is adjoined in turn to the subject to form a full predication, or a statement in junction terminology. It is this meaning of statement to which the title of this paper makes reference. The nucleus, the predicate and the statement of an adjunction are abbreviated with X, PX and SX respectively, where X is a category variable which ranges over the predicator categories.

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        SX
       /  \
     PX  +  Y
    /  \          X = V, A, P, N
   X + (N)        Y = any category
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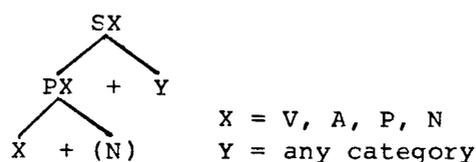
Figure 1. Adjunction Configuration

One of the distinguishing features of Junction Grammar is its extension of the role of predicator to other categories than the verb. Eldon Lytle, originator and principal exponent of JG, has put forward very fine defenses of this practice elsewhere (1974, pp. 75-79; 1971, pp. 67-80; 1977, pp. 29-36), so I will not repeat them here. The following noun phrases demonstrate the economy and semantic similarity yielded by a uniform treatment of relative modifiers. Note that V stands for verb, A for ad (either adjective or adverb), P for preposition and N for noun.

SV Modifier: The official <u>who had a lot of money</u>

SA Modifier: The <u>very rich</u> official

SP Modifier: The official <u>with a lot of money</u>

SN Modifier: The mayor, <u>a multimillionaire,</u>

Recent developments in JG suggest that nouns are subjoined to ads when they function in the nucleus of an adjunction. Prepositions, in turn, can be viewed as transitive ads. This reduces the predicator categories to two in theory: V and W, which is the cover symbol for ads and prepositions. In practice, however, it is usually clearer to use the redundant labels <u>P</u> and <u>A</u> (sometimes <u>P</u>, <u>Adj</u> and <u>Adv</u>).

One more category appears in J-trees, that of quantifier (abbreviated <u>Q</u>). Quantification is accomplished via subjunction of a quantifier to the various elements of an adjunction.

II. <u>REDUCTION, ELLIPSIS, DIRECT REPRESENTATION</u>

Junction Grammar rejects the role of reduction in the derivation of verbless (W-based) statements. Nor are they considered defective in any way--they are fully formed relative to their category. This position adheres faithfully to the simplicity principle of grammar formulation: If two sets of rules are equally capable of explaining a given phenomenon, except that one of them requires more structure (or involvement of the rules or supporting machinery, etc.) than the other, then the simpler rules are to be preferred. Selection of the more complex rules requires compensating justification. The burden of the proof of preferability lies with the more involved explanation. Junction Grammar maintains that verbless statements can be generated and analyzed using a direct underlying representation.

Ellipsis, unlike reduction, is recognized as a valid phenomenon in JG. Ellipsis is the likely explanation when the missing part <u>repeats</u> a previous word or phrase. It is marked by a construction which does not make good sense when taken at face value. The words which are lexicalized often reflect their relationship to those which have been ellipted. Consider these cases of ellipsis:

Arthur loved Jenny and Jenny Lance.

I haabbits than hutches.

The blue pencils don't sell as well as the yellows.

I'll bathe the baby if you'd like me to.

Kwasney and Sondheimer (1979, p. 9) identify two forms of ellipsis: contextual and telegraphic. The first is exemplified in a sentence like

President Carter has.

which makes sense as an answer to the question

Who has a daughter named Amy?

This otherwise extra-grammatical sentence can be explained as either an instance of ellipsis or a structure involving an anaphoric pro-form.

Telegraphic ellipsis, the second variety, is exemplified by this compound sentence appearing on a barber shop sign:

3 CHAIRS NO WAITING

In the JG formulation this is not credited to ellipsis. It is an example of a verbless statement, being a direct product of the base rules.

One final construction needs to be distinguished from the topic of this paper. That is the grammatical fragment, whether the nonstandard error found in much student writing--

He never washed before meals. Because no one had ever told him to.

or the two-punch appended phrase found increasingly in Madison Avenue copy--

Tanner toys can really take it. 'Cause that's the way we build 'em.

The difference between these two types is chiefly that one is accidental and the other is intential. They are both best analyzed in terms of the neighboring sentence, the full stop notwithstanding. (This is a minor complication if the linguistic domain is discourse analysis rather than "sentence" analysis.)

III. VERBLESS STATEMENT ENVIRONMENTS, USES

Let's to the heart of the matter. What are the uses of verbless statements, and in what syntactic environments can they be found?

I have elsewhere (Tenney 1979, pp. 7-8) proposed eight broad environments for both statement categories: independent, comment, substantive, noun-complement, verb-complement, ad-complement, quantifier-complement and relative. They are illustrated with verb-based statements in the sentences that follow:

Independent: He was decorated for bravery in World War II.

Comment: The problem, I feel, lies in their scheduling.

Substantive: I hope nobody notices.

Noun-Complement: I resent your innuendo <u>that</u> <u>it</u> <u>might</u> <u>have</u> <u>been</u> <u>prevented</u>.

Verb-Complement: It seems <u>they've</u> <u>got</u> <u>us</u> <u>down</u> <u>for</u> <u>next</u> <u>week</u>.

Ad-Complement: <u>If</u> <u>we</u> <u>had</u> <u>some</u> <u>ham</u> we could have some ham and eggs <u>if</u> <u>we</u> <u>had</u> <u>some</u> <u>eggs</u>.

Quantifier-Complement: She had so many children <u>that</u> <u>she</u> <u>didn't</u> <u>know</u> <u>what</u> <u>to</u> <u>do</u>.

Relative: I am the man <u>to</u> <u>whose</u> <u>wife</u> <u>you</u> <u>made</u> <u>reference</u>.

Notice that with relative statements the antecedent and the relative pro-form can function quite differently in their respective clauses. In addition, they may vary over many different categories. Consider, for example, the variety shown in these sentences:

Adverb Relative: Come back tomorrow, <u>when</u> <u>I'm</u> <u>not</u> <u>in</u> <u>the</u> <u>middle</u> <u>of</u> <u>the</u> <u>wash</u>.

Quantifier Relative: <u>The</u> <u>more</u> <u>you</u> <u>scratch</u>, the more it'll itch.

PV Relative: He sells used cars, <u>like</u> <u>his</u> <u>brother</u> <u>Chris</u>.

Statements can also be assigned to syntactic classes according to whether or not they are interrogative, exclamatory or imperative or some combination of these. Here, too, there are eight possible classes--four compound, three simple and one totally unmarked, corresponding to a simple declarative statement.

The statement environments and the syntactic classes vary independently, although the latter show more variety in independent statement environments. Verbless statements generally belong to the unmarked (declarative) or simple syntactic classes, as exemplified by the sentences which follow. In these and other example sentences, implicit elements required for an adequate semantic interpretation are included in parentheses.

Declarative: Steven French--A man as good as his word.

Interrogative: Me next?

Exclamatory: What a sight (this)!

Imperative: Hats off.

Independent verbless statements are used for a host of different purposes. They permeate our daily exposure to language, both spoken and writen. They serve a pointing function in the so-called block language of titles, labels, signs and notices. By the very nature of such statements, they require the use of deictic words like <u>this</u>, <u>here</u> and <u>such</u> (whether implicit or explicit) for their meaning. Typical of this <u>use</u> are these examples:

> (this) Toccata and Fugue in D Minor

> Completed Forms Here

They are an effective device in descriptive narrative:

> A tray for papers, a cup for pens--everything in its place.

They are used in writing to suggest a stream of consciousness:

> (this) Great date! Full moon (here), warm night (here), atmosphere electric. A kiss tonight sure thing.

They are the basis for interjections, exclamations and expletives:

> (this) Ouch!

> (such) The things some people won't do for a little attention!

> (this) Nonsense.

In like fashion they are used for conversation fillers:

> (that) Right.

Imperative verbless statements occur in salutations--

> Merry Christmas (to you).

as they do in blessings and curses--

> Good luck (to you).

> A pox on him.

and orders--

> Anchors away.

They form the basis for many aphoristic sentences:

> (if) Garbage in, (then) garbage out.

They can function as paragraph connectives in transitional phrases:

> (this) So much for the physiological arguments.

They are used heavily in telegraphic messages, typical of print and broadcast headlines.

> Interest rates up.

> Flash flood warnings around state.

Verbless statements are invariably used to depict the speech of the unlearned.

Me Tarzan, you Jane.

Many palefaces in valley.

However, adept use of the closely related predicate-theme verbless statement is a sign of the linguistic confidence which is one end of a proper education:

A fine athlete, your Evan.

Out of the question, their marriage.

A near miss is the verbless predicate embedded to a modal verb in a verb-based statement. This construction was common in Early Modern English (in Shakespeare, for example) and before; it is considered archaic in contemporary English.

The truth will out.

has verb-predicate parallel

The truth will triumph.

Their similarity is reflected in their J-trees, shown in Figure 2. A comparable construction survives in modern sentences like

Let me down, you big bully!

and

I want out of this mess.

which parallel in form and meaning their verb-predicate paraphrases

Let me go, you big bully!

and

I want to forget this mess.

Hybrid predicates like these seem to support the assertion by Bryant and Aiken (1940, pp. 33-37) that the "nonsentence" (verbless statement) was

the ancestor of the modern verb sentence.

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              SV                         SV
            /    \                     /    \
        PV  +  N                   PV  +  N
         |     the truth            |     the truth
         V                          V
        / \                        / \
      V  * PA                     V  * PV
     will  |                     will  |
           A                           V
          out                       triumph
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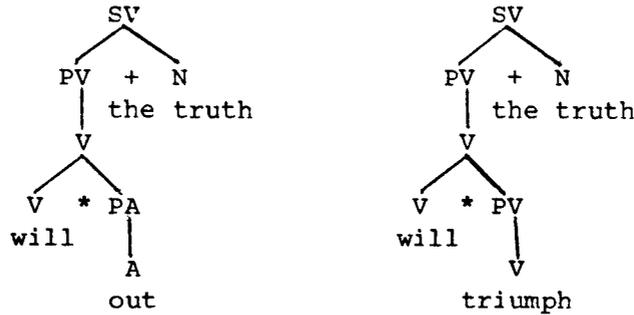
Figure 2. Modal Verb with PA, PV

Verbless statements occur in most of the seven dependent statement environments as well. The comment statement, which is referentially superordinate to the main clause but functionally subordinate, is exemplified in a sentence like the following:

What's more amazing, he had never seen the music.

Here is an example of a substantive statement:

Students high on drugs was the first item on the agenda.

That the subject of the sentence is the condition of students being high, not some particular group of students, is reflected in the singular form of the verb, was. Similar to this statement environment is the noun-complement environment.

Their eye-for-an-eye mentality is a real impediment to peace.

The ad-complement environment is the setting for a construction traditionally known as the nominative absolute:

He walked down the street whistling, a loaf under each arm.

Relative verbless statements are the most common of all. They correspond to the simple adjectival, adverbial and prepositional modifiers. They can modify practically any category, for example:

Noun Head: Who are wearing the white hats on this issue?

Noun Head: The cars on the showroom floor are all sold.

Verb Head: The ball rolled into the street.

PV Head: She dances very gracefully.

SV Head: Fortunately, no one was hurt.

The other two statement environments--verb-complement and quantifier-complement--are theoretically possible, although they have not been substantiated to date.

IV. FINITE, NONFINITE, VERBLESS CLAUSES

It may be useful to relate the junction formalism to a more widely known approach to grammar. Such a reference is provided in Quirk and Greenbaum's Concise Grammar of Contemporary English (1973). Quirk and Greenbaum describe three kinds of clauses: finite verb clauses, nonfinite verb clauses and verbless clauses (pp. 310-13).

There is a direct correlation between their finite verb clauses and JG verb statements. Their verbless clauses have two counterparts in Junction Grammar. One is to JG verbless statements (SW's), as, for example, in

> Dozens of people, many of them former students, sent notes of condolence.

The other counterpart is to JG verbless predicates (PW's). This is the case with objective complements--

> They voted her an honorary member.

and other verbless (or non-verbal in common JG terminology) participles (Lytle 1978, pp. 7-21)--

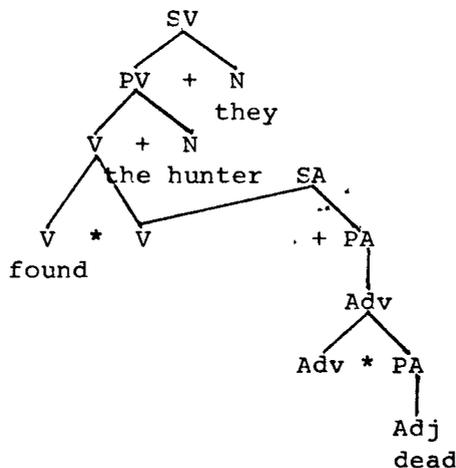> They found the hunter dead.

(See the J-tree in Figure 3.)

Figure 3. V-Level Verbless Participle

In Junction Grammar, nonfinite verb phrases are embedded to a noun or adjective head. As a result nonfinite verb constructions are merely special cases of corresponding verbless constructions. Quirk and Greenbaum's nonfinite verb clauses, then, have the same JG reflections as the verbless clauses. Some correspond to JG verbless statements. They occur in the same statement environments that were listed before:

> Independent: Alledged Sniper Arrested

Comment: He doesn't have a snowball's chance in hell, to put it bluntly.

Substantive: Women performing manual labor was unthinkable in those days.

Noun-Complement: You won't need your sign "Boy Wanted" anymore, sir.

Ad-Complement: They watched the play numbly, their victory hopes dashed.

Relative (Participial Modifier): The plane landing on runway 3 has the president on board.

Some nonfinite verb clauses correspond to JG verbless predicates, again with objective complements--

What mother wouldn't want her children spared from the heartaches of life?

and verbal participles--

He stopped talking, overcome with emotion.

Often, casting a new light on old problems reveals new solutions. Junction Grammar appears to have some powerful tools for dealing with verbless statements. Similar phenomena, the similarities inherent in all statements and all predicates, to name one example, are given similar representations. Disparate phenomena, the difference between verb-based and non-verb-based statements, to name another, are given distinctive representations which reflect their differences. In Junction Grammar, the affinities and polarities of verbless statements are manifest in a straightforward, descriptive analysis.

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