Verbal Concord in Transformational Grammar (II)

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Here the question may be raised why we do not substitute《aux》for《T》. In this regard, consider the following sentences.

(33) The man will be here.
(34) The men will be here.

Even though (33) has a singular subject《man》and (34) has a plural subject《men》, the copulas in both are identical, i. e.《be》. There is obviously no agreement of the copula with the subject when a modal (such as《will》) is involved. Therefore, it is unnecessary to have the copying rule for verbal concord apply when there is no verbal concord involved. For this reason, we will not make rule (32) more general by substituting《aux》for T.

The two morphophonemic rules (14) and (17) can be conflated by the use of square brackets into (35).

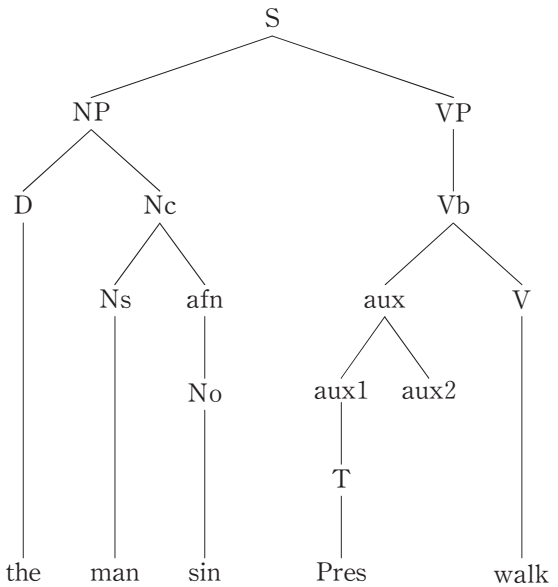
(35) $X + man \begin{bmatrix} sin \\ pl \end{bmatrix} Y \longrightarrow X \begin{bmatrix} man \\ men \end{bmatrix} Y$

When a verb other than the copula《be》is involved, there is agreement with the subject NP only in the present tense, as shown by the following sentences:

(36) The man walks.
(37) The men walk.
(38) The man walked.
(39) The men walked.

Note that in (36) and (37), in which present tense is involved, the verb varies in form depending on whether the subject NP is singular or plural, while in (38) and (39), in which past tense is involved, there is no alternation of the verb form.

Thus, if sentences such as (36)—(39) have a deep structure that can be represented by a P-marker such as (40),



then, an agreement rule identical to rule (12), but specifying verb, 《V》, rather than 《be》, as in (41), can be formulated.

(41) X+Ns+No+Pres+aux2+V+Y ⟶ X+Ns+No+Pres+No+aux2+V+Y

Since verbs agree with the subject NP only in the present tense, unlike 《be》 which agrees in both the present and past tenses, there is no rule for verbal agreement that corresponds to the rule for 《be》 agreement in the past tense, i. e. (24). Furthermore, since there is no rule corresponding to (24), we cannot produce a more general rule corresponding to (32). The reason is that such a rule would be a conflation of rule (41) and the non-existent rule for verb agreement in the past tense.

When modal rather than tense is involved, as in (42)—(43), the verb phrases are identical ; both are 《will walk》

(42) The man will walk.
(43) The men will walk.

Identical verb phrases show, of course, that verb agreement is not involved, so no agreement rule is needed for sentences such as (42)—(43) in which modal is involved.

For the sentences considered up to this point, rule (32) is the correct rule for copula agreement making 《be》 agree with the subject NP in both the past and the present tense, and (41) is correct rule for verb agreement, making 《V》 agree with the subject NP only in the present tense. The two rules (32) and (41) can be conflated by the use of square brackets, yielding (44).

(44) $X+Ns+No\begin{bmatrix} T+be \\ \\ Pres+V \end{bmatrix}Y \longrightarrow X+Ns+No\begin{bmatrix} T \\ \\ Pres \end{bmatrix}No\begin{bmatrix} be \\ \\ V \end{bmatrix}Y$

4. Agreement When a Compound Subject is Involved

Consider the following sentences in which a compound subject consisting of two or more NP's joined by《and》, is involved.

(45) The man and the boy are here.
(46)* The man and the boy is here.
(47) The man and the boy were here.
(48)* The man and the boy was here.

When two singular NP's are conjoined, the copula must be plural. When two plural NP's are involved, as in (49)—(52)

(49) The men and the boys are here.
(50)* The men and the boys is here.
(51) The men and the boys were here.
(52)* The men and the boys was here.

or when one NP is sngular and the other plural, as in (53)—(60)

(53) The men and the boy are here
(54) The man and the boys are here.
(55)* The men and the boy is here.
(56)* The man and the boys is here.
(57) The men and the boy were here.
(58) The man and the boys were here.
(59)* The men and the boy was here.
(60)* The man and the boys was here.

the copula must be plural,《are》or《were》.

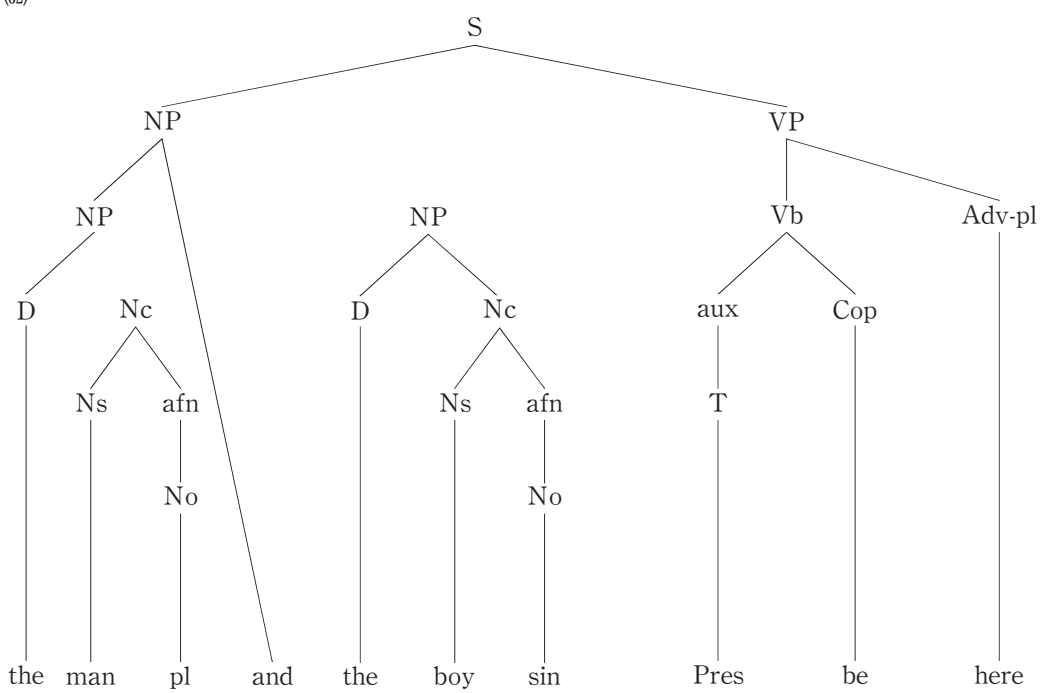
Rule (44) is not adequate to handle this since the first NP and《and》, as well as the determiner《D》of the second NP, would be subsumed under《X》, allowing the copula to agree with the number of the second NP, which would yield correct results in the case of sentences (49), (51) and

(58), but incorrect results in the case of sentences (53) and (57) since the second NP in these two sentences is singular.

Since the number of the verb will be plural regardless of the number of each of the two (or more) conjoined NP's, it appears that a rule of the form (61) could effect the necessary addition of plural, 《pl》, to the derived P-marker, assuming that the underlying P-marker has the form (62).

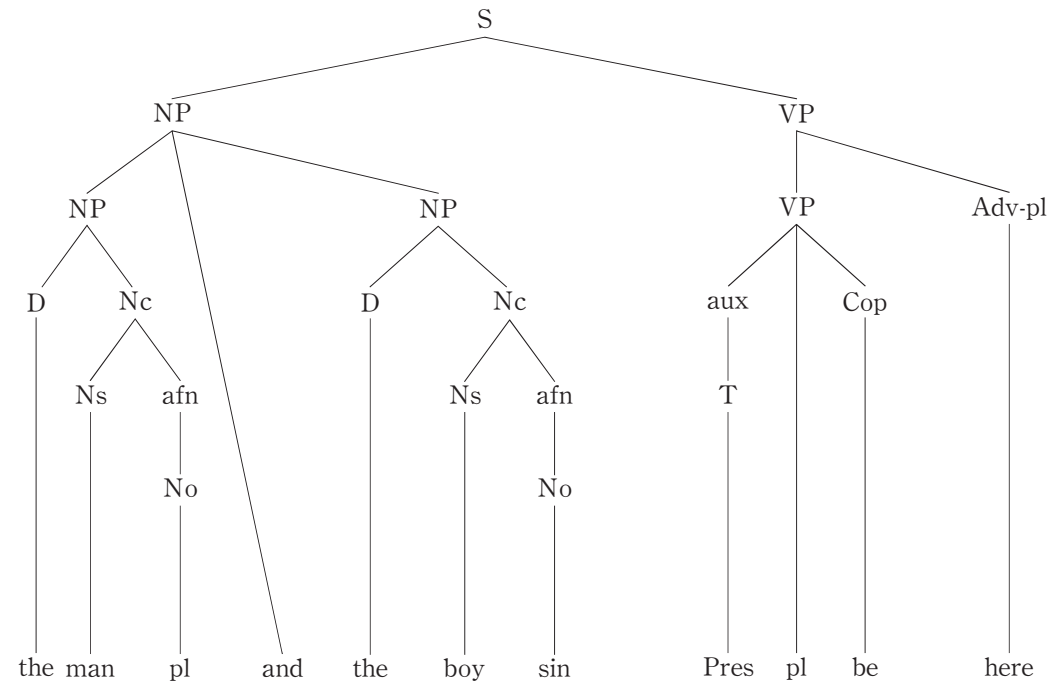
(61) X+NP+and+NP+T+be+Y ⟶ X+NP+and+NP+T+pl+be+Y

(62)

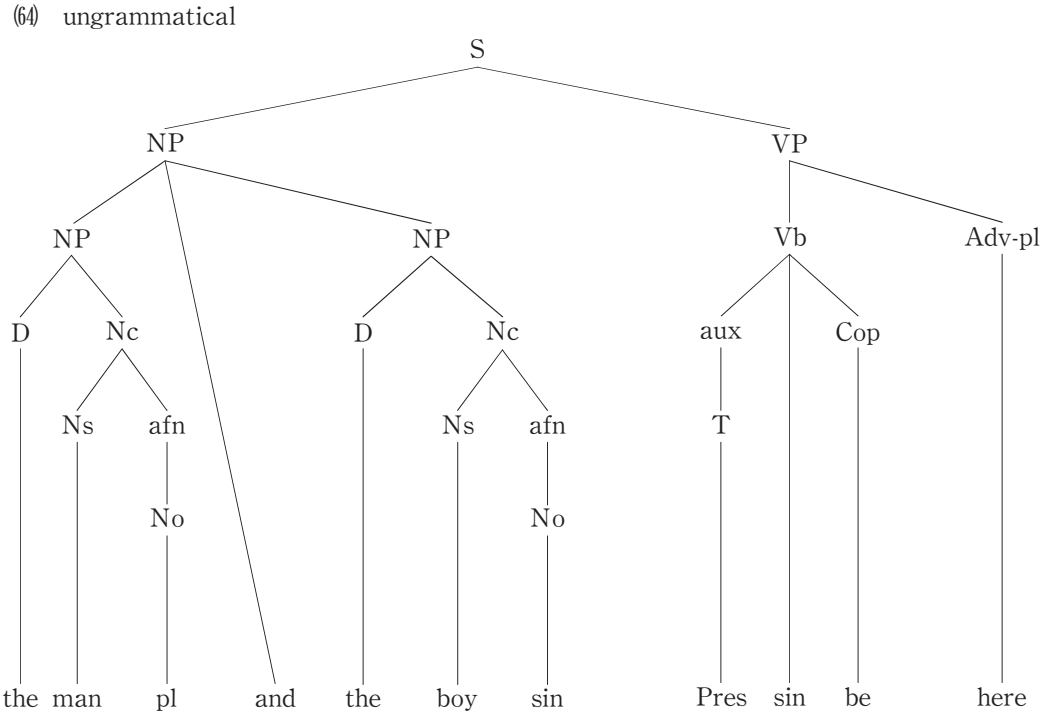


Applying rule (61) to the P-marker (62) will yield the derived P-marker (63). However, if we allowed rule (44) to apply before rule (61), it would have the effect of deriving the ungrammatical structure (64) since the copula 《be》 would be made to agree with the second NP, which in the case of (62) is singular.

(63)



(64) ungrammatical



We can block the generation of sentences such as (64) by placing rule (61) before rule (44), for once rule (61) has applied to a P-marker such as (62) to yield the derived P-marker (63), the derived P-marker, i. e. (63) will not match the structural description of rule (44); hence rule (44) cannot apply to yield incorrect results when conjoined NP's are involved.

When a verb《V》rather than《be》is involved, as in sentences (65)—(72), the number of the verb is plural regardless of whether the two (or more) conjoined NP's are both singular, as in (65), both plural, as in (67), singular and plural as in (69), orplural and singular as in (71), where《sings》is the singular form of the verb,《sing》is the plural form in the present tense.

(65) The man and the boy sing
(66)* The man and the boy sings.
(67) The men and the boy sing
(68)* The men and the boy sings.
(69) The man and the boy sing.
(70)* The man and the boys sings.
(71) The men and the boy sing.
(72)* The men and the boy sings.

It appears tempting to try to write a rule similar to (61), but it must be remembered that verbs agree only in the present tense, and this is just as true whether a single NP or conjoined NP's are involved as the subject. Therefore, a rule for verbs similar to (61) would not do since it would apply in both the past and present tenses rather than only in the present tense. If, however, we specify present (pres) rather than《T》, then the rule will apply appropriately in the case of the verbs with compound subjects

(73) X+NP+and+NP+Pres+V+Y ⟶ X+NP+and+NP+Pres+pl+V+Y

The rules for copula agreement (61) and for the verb agreement (73) when two (or more) NP's are conjoined as the subject can be coated to form rule (74).

(74) $X+NP+and+NP\begin{bmatrix} T+be \\ Pres+V \end{bmatrix}Y \longrightarrow X+NP+and+NP\begin{bmatrix} T \\ Pres \end{bmatrix}pl\begin{bmatrix} be \\ V \end{bmatrix}Y$

If more than two NP's are involved, they will be subsumed under the variable《X》.

However, consider those cases in which the two conjoined NP's both refer to the same thing, as in (75) and (77).

(75) My lord and master is coming.
(76) My lord and master are coming.
(77) My lord and master sings.
(78) My lord and master sing.

While all four sentences (75)—(78) are grammatical, (75) and (77) have the meaning that one individual, who is both my lord and my master (two roles for one individual), is referred to, while (76) and (78) have the meaning of two individuals, one who is (has the role of) my lord and the other who is (has the role of) my master, referred to. When both NP's have identical reference and both are singular, as in (75) and (77), then the copula or verb will also be made singular.

At present, there is no way to express this as an agreement rule since there is no convention for referring to nouns that are identical in reference by different in form. We do have a convention for referring to NP's that are identical in both form and refernce (called strong identity), e. g. where NP1=NP2 means that NP1 and NP2 are identical in form and reference. We have a term,《weak》identity, to refer to NP's that are identical in form but not in reference but no convention to express this type of relationship in a rule.

For the case that we have been considering, i. e., where the two NP's differ in form —one has the form《my lord》and the other the form《my master》— but they have identical reference (both refer to the same thing), we do not have either a conventional term or a convention to represent such a situation in tranformational rules. Hence, we cannot formulate an agreement rule that will express the situation that exists in sentences (75) and (77) due to the present lack of a conventional term and lack of a convention to express that term in a rule.

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