

Adjunctive Coordination: The case of German *samt*

Based on evidence from closest conjunct agreement, Munn (1999, *LI*) argued for an analysis of coordination in which later conjuncts are adjuncts to the first. Nevins and Weisser (2019, *Annual Review*) raise challenges for this approach, and argue that closest conjunct agreement actually favors the account according to which the coordinator is a head that projects a conjunction phrase. This paper contributes to this discussion in an indirect way: We investigate constructions that clearly involve adjunction but lead to a meaning that is quite similar to, and sometimes contextually equivalent to, coordination. Understanding the syntax and semantics of such clearly adjunctive coordination-like cases is of interest in itself, but will also help clarify the predictions of an adjunctive account of regular coordination. A case in point is English (*along*) *with*, which can trigger both singular and plural verb agreement, and contrasts sharply with other modifiers in this regard:

- (1) a. The child along with the mother was/were taken to the hospital
- b. The child, who was accompanied by her mother, was/*were taken to the hospital

The variation in agreement in (1-a) likely reflects a different semantic construal of the subject referent. If the modifier introduces an accessory or tag-along, singular is preferred (*The hiker along with her backpack is...*), but *along*-modification can also create a group-denoting meaning centering around the modified constituent (*The mother along with the father are...*). The latter case is reminiscent of associative plurals (cf. Hucklebridge, 2023, *UMass diss*), where an individual can stand in for a larger associated group (whose additional members are made explicit by the adjunct in the case here). This paper focuses on the German preposition *samt*, which differs from *along with* in being able to attach ‘below’ the determiner, as in (2-a):

- (2) a. Der Vater samt (dem) Sohn war/waren...
 the.nominative father.nominative along.with (the.dative) son was/were ...
- b. Der Vater und (der) Sohn ??war/waren...
 the.nominative father and (the.nominative) son was/were...

True coordinations with *und* can also attach below the determiner (2-b), but only if the determiners are morphologically identical (Lamoure, 2023, *Glossa*), as in (2-b). We ran a series of online naturalness-rating experiments (6-point Likert scale; each study n=36 participants; 16 item sets varying in a subset of the relevant factors) to compare such below-determiner uses.

Fig. 1 shows average ratings with representative examples. We used noun combinations that were unlikely to be interpreted as a single individual. The poor ratings for English *and* with singular agreement suggest this manipulation was successful (interestingly, German *und*-NPs with *sg* agreement were not rated as bad as in English, but still worse than *pl*, which in turn was rated lower than in English—we do not know why). Ratings of *samt* are generally lower than *und* across experiments, probably because it is very colloquial. The results show that it is equally compatible with singular and plural agreement. The results for *und* show (small) determiner-matching effects, and also that this effect is modulated by verb agreement, such that plural agreement makes determiner-mismatch cases more acceptable (effects were tested using hierarchical mixed models).

We also explored semantic asymmetries. Fig. 2 illustrates that using *samt* is better when the modified NP is conceptually related and the combination coherent (Coherent: *the piano samt metronome*; ad hoc: *the piano samt bookshelf*), while *und*-coordination is less picky. Interestingly, there is evidence for a (small) relatedness effect with *und* as well, but only in those cases in which the determiner mismatches with the 2nd conjunct and qualifies as ‘first-conjunct-agreement’ (mismatch, coherent: *the piano.neut and stool.masc*; mismatch, incoherent: *the piano.neut and*

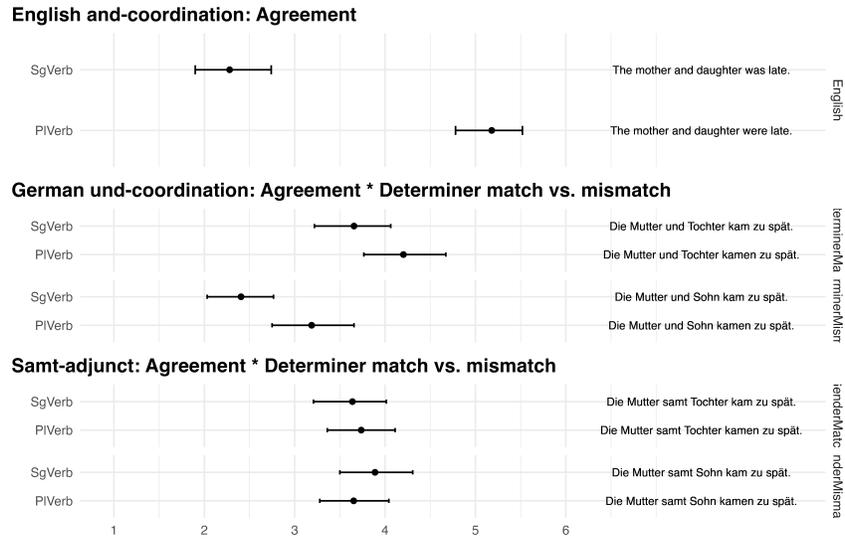


Figure 1: Agreement with NPs coordinated with *and*, *und*, and *samt*.

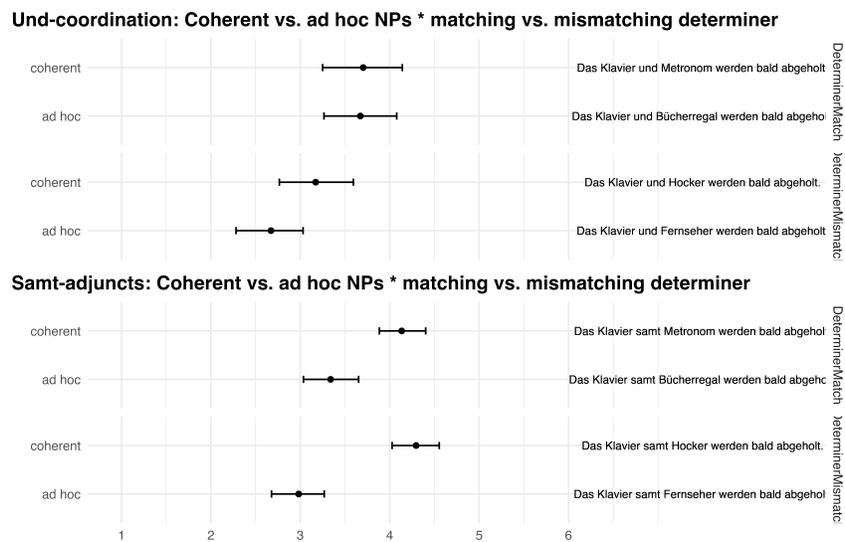


Figure 2: Relatedness- and Determiner-Mismatch effects with *und* and *samt*.

TV.masc). This could be a clue that coordination with first-conjunct agreement (but not coordination in general) is necessarily adjunctive.

To our knowledge, this is the first study of *samt* and its interaction with agreement. The results show that adjunction with *samt* contrasts with coordination in being semantically asymmetric, and that it is parallel to coordination in that it can trigger plural agreement. Additional studies not included in this abstract show that adjunctive coordination (*along with* in English and *samt* in German) is compatible with collective predication, suggesting that agreement and collective predication cannot be used as litmus tests for coordination. The results contribute to current debates about the syntax of coordination and also raise new questions for syntactic theories of agreement.

References

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