

Grammatical functions and pragmatic considerations in clause combining

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Restrictions on the reference of shared arguments in two clauses is one of the most commonly explored topics in syntax. Frequently a language restricts reference of two arguments in control structures, or in relative clauses, and often conjunction reduction is similarly restricted.

It can also be the case that syntactic restrictions are relaxed; in languages with highly agreeing verbs, for instance, it is often reported that there are no firm restrictions on the reference of shared arguments in coordinate clauses, with the identifying information carried by the verbal morphology. While tempting, the fact that morphologically light languages are also attested with such indeterminate reference across clause boundaries implies that morphology alone is not an adequate explanatory. Pragmatic considerations must be taken into account, and those languages in which strict syntactic conditions are invariable should be considered to be a special case subset of the larger group of languages in which pragmatics drives the interpretation of sentences consisting of combinations of clauses.