

REDUNDANCY IN CONJUNCTIONS: AKTIONSART (SURPRISINGLY) MATTERS

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Consider these two contrasts:

- (1) a. * John is majoring in English, and he is a college student. (Mandelkern et al. 2020)
b. John is a college student, and he is majoring in English.
- (2) a. * Mary is expecting a daughter, and she is pregnant. (Fox 2008)
b. Mary is pregnant, and she is expecting a daughter.

Contrast such as these have been given in support of incremental theories of redundancy (Stalnaker 1974, 1978; Schlenker 2008, 2009; Fox 2008; Mayr and Romoli 2016; a.o.). These theories account for (1)/(2) (essentially) as follows: (1a)/(2a) are odd/redundant because the second conjunct in each sentence is entailed by the preceding information and hence it adds nothing new; (1b)/(2b), by contrast, aren't odd/redundant because the second conjunct isn't entailed by the preceding information and hence it adds something new.

(3)/(4) below are problematic for incremental theories: these theories fail to distinguish (3a)/(4a), which are perfectly felicitous, from (3b)/(4b), which feel redundant—perhaps not as redundant as (1a)/(2a), but redundant nonetheless.

- (3) a. John is a college student, and he's majoring in English.
b. ?? John is a college student, and he's an English major.
- (4) a. Mary is pregnant, and she's expecting a daughter.
b. ?? Mary is pregnant, and she's pregnant with a girl.¹

Global (non-incremental) theories (e.g. Meyer 2013; Katzir and Singh 2014) cannot distinguish (3a)/(4a) from (3b)/(4b) either. According to these theories, a sentence ϕ is odd/redundant when there is a simpler version of ϕ that is contextually equivalent to ϕ ; thus, on such theories, the prediction is that both (3a)/(4a) and (3b)/(4b) should be perceived as redundant (this is because in all these cases the second conjunct is contextually equivalent to the whole conjunction). This prediction is incorrect.

¹ (4b) has an oddness-free reading in which the second conjunct is perceived as an elaboration of the first; to access it, one has to make a pause after the 'and'. This reading, I believe, doesn't involve standard conjunction (hence it's not directly relevant for our purposes). Evidence for this comes from German: 'Maria ist schwanger, und sie ist mit einem Mädchen schwanger' is an odd sentence (even with a pause before the 'und'); to 'fix' the sentence, the particle 'zwar' is required, i.e. 'Maria ist schwanger, und zwar ist sie mit einem Mädchen schwanger'. (Thanks to Manuel Kríž for help with the German data.)

I take (3)/(4) to suggest that aktionsart facts interact with judgments of redundancy (a puzzling fact no matter what theory of redundancy one adheres to). Indeed, the crucial difference between (3b)/(4b) and (3a)/(4a) seems to be this: in (3b)/(4b), the bad cases, the predicates are both stative; in (3a)/(4a), the good cases, the predicates are aktionsart-divergent (stative vs. activity; cf. Vendler 1957).

Note: I talk about aktionsart, and not about grammatical aspect, because grammatical aspect isn't the relevant difference here; the contrast in (4), for example, also arises in French, and, in the good case, there's no difference in grammatical aspect but there's a difference in aktionsart:

- (5) a. Marie est enceinte, et elle attend une fille.
b. ?? Marie est enceinte, et elle est enceinte d'une fille.

Or consider (6):²

- (6) a. John is a thief, and he steals cars.
b. ?? John is a thief, and he is a car thief.



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