Introduction

Traditionally, reductions in coordinate constructions are a major point of departure for the study of sentence grammar and the nature of grammatical rules. In the transformational analysis of language, reduction phenomena have been used from the outset to motivate the existence of transformational rules and especially to argue for the necessity of variables for categories as well as for strings (cf. Chomsky 1957, 35). Due to the study of coordinations, further theoretical proposals appeared for the first time, such as restructuring operations, mirror image rules, transderivational constraints, across-the-board application of rules, and the notion of recoverability of deletion. Others disappeared for the same reason. The present study of reductions in coordinate constructions maintains this orientation towards the theory of grammar. It brings the characteristics of the conjunction reduction rule of Gapping to bear upon the general principles that constrain the notion of transformation.

The starting-point of the first chapter is the distinction between initial and non-initial coordination, which is used to illustrate a remarkable structural difference between English and Dutch. As regards the main issue, English and Dutch are shown to bear a striking resemblance vis-à-vis their reduction phenomena. The remainder of chapter 1 concentrates on nonphrasal conjunction, resulting in two conclusions. First, reduction of the first conjunct, so-called Backward Conjunction Reduction, turns out to be different from reduction in the other conjuncts, captured by Gapping.

The latter clearly belongs to sentence grammar, whereas the former almost certainly does not. Second, the distinction made in recent analyses between Forward Conjunction Reduction, Left Peripheral Deletion, Conjunct Movement and Gapping is abandoned. The sum of these phenomena can be shown to result from a generalized rule of Gapping.

The second chapter surveys some recent discussions of Gapping. The notion of recoverability is used to argue that there is no need for this rule to refer to specific constituents.

The third chapter shows, as carefully as current understanding allows, that the variable between the remnants of Gapping is sensitive to the Island Constraints. Although there is no a priori reason to expect that Gapping should obey constraints on movements, it turns out that there is a non-trivial parallelism between the scope of Gapping and that of WH-movement. This implies that any attempt to derive these restrictions from general principles such as Subjacency should apply both to movement rules and to Gapping. A revised notion of Subjacency is proposed to obtain this result.