Unifying phrasal and subword Right-Node Raising: A multidominance account*

Eva Neu & Lulu Guo

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Queen Mary University of London

1. Introduction

Right-Node Raising (RNR) is a configuration in which a string, the so-called pivot, is interpreted as being shared across conjuncts (1). Typically, the pivot – here, *romantasy novels* – surfaces at the right edge of the coordination.

(1) Ahmad likes, but Elly hates, romantasy novels.

Following previous literature, we refer to the first and second conjunct at the exlusion of the pivot as the *remnant* (*Ahmad likes*) and the *correlate* (*Elly hates*), respectively.

The central puzzle of RNR concerns the apparent mismatch between interpretation and surface realization of the pivot: it is interpreted as part of both conjuncts despite being pronounced only once. A rich literature has evolved around this puzzle. The two main analytical contenders are the *ellipsis* approach, according to which the pivot is syntactically present in the first conjunct but is not spelled out at PF (Ha 2008, Bošković 2004, Hartmann 2001, Wilder 1997, a.o.), and the *multidominance* approach, according to which the pivot is multidominated across conjuncts but linearized only once at the right edge (Wilder 1999, 2008, Bachrach and Katzir 2007, 2009, a.o.).[1] These two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Barros and Vicente (2011) and Belk et al. (2023) have both argued for a dual account of RNR, with some cases requiring an ellipsis and others a multidominance analysis.

Here, we contribute to this literature by looking at a particular species of RNR that we refer to as subword RNR, which is often overlooked or regarded as a distinct phenomenon. Some examples are given in (2):

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[1] A third analysis, which relies on overt ATB movement of the pivot, has been quite thoroughly refuted by Abels (2004) (see also Wexler and Culicover 1980, McCloskey 1986, De Vos and Vicente 2005, a.o.). We also set aside here analyses developed in frameworks such as categorial grammar that rely on non-constituent coordination (e.g., Kubota and Levine 2015).

(2) a. over- and underestimate
b. pre- and post-war
c. socio- and psycholinguists

Like in phrasal RNR, a pivot at the right edge of the coordination is shared across conjuncts, but unlike in phrasal RNR, this pivot is smaller than a word. Note that we use the terms 'word' and 'subword' purely descriptively; we do not claim that words are theoretical primitives.

We take as our starting point the assumption that phrasal and subword RNR should, to the extent possible, receive a unified analysis (see also Wilder 2008, Chaves 2008). There is a growing recognition in the field that syntax and morphology – operations above and operations below the word level – do not constitute two separate modules of the grammar; rather, the same rules and principles are operative in both (see, e.g., Bruening 2018, a.o.). This view has been put forward particularly prominently in the tradition of Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993, 1994). Against this background, the fact that phrasal and subword RNR present the same empirical profile strongly suggests that they have the same underlying structure.

In this paper, we explore this idea by looking at how phrasal and subword RNR compare with each other in two particular respects. First, phrasal and subword RNR both allow for a distributive plural reading. In the previous literature, this fact has been noted for each type of RNR separately, but a connection between distributive plurality in phrasal and subword RNR, respectively, has to our knowledge not so far been drawn. Specifically, we review the recent proposal by Belk et al. (2023) that distributive readings in phrasal RNR can be derived from a multidominance structure together with Quantifier Raising (QR), and we discuss whether this analysis extends to subword RNR. We argue that distributive plurals in subword RNR equally need to be captured by multidominance. A multidominance analysis of subword RNR has previously been proposed by Wilder (2008); here, we contribute to Wilder's work by showing that such an analysis is in fact necessitated by the data from distributive readings. However, we also demonstrate that QR – the other ingredient in Belk et al.'s analysis – is not a viable option for subword RNR.

Second, a way in which subword RNR is seemingly different from phrasal RNR is that it is heavily restricted, and often quite idiosyncratically. Following Chaves (2008), we argue that this can be accounted for by positing a sense identity constraint on RNR which requires the pivot to receive the same interpretation in each conjunct. If the word parts involved in RNR combine with each other semantically in a transparent fashion, sense identity can be obeyed, but if the complex words receive an idiomatic interpretation, RNR is blocked. While Chaves motivated this constraint in the context of an ellipsis analysis, we propose that it holds too under a multidominance approach. Crucially, phrasal RNR is equally constrained by sense identity. Thus, the upshot of this discussion is that the seemingly idiosyncratic nature of subword RNR does not constitute evidence for it being a distinct phenomenon.

We wish to highlight that this short paper will not attempt to propose a full analysis of subword RNR, let alone of RNR in general. Our goal is merely to examine a range of data points from both phrasal and subword RNR that have a bearing on the question to what extent they can be given a unified analysis. In particular, while we believe that like phrasal

RNR, subword RNR can have both a multidominance and an ellipsis structure, we focus here on the former, which we argue can be detected using distributive plural readings. We leave an exploration of the properties of subword RNR that are unambiguously indicative of ellipsis to future work.

We proceed as follows. Section 2 reviews previous work on subword RNR, with a focus on Artstein (2005). Section 3 is concerned with distributive plural readings in RNR, and Section 4 discusses how the acceptability of both phrasal and subword RNR is affected by semantic decomposition. Section 5 is a brief summary.

2. Previous work

Subword RNR, seen in (2), is often regarded as a morphological phenomenon distinct from phrasal RNR since the word parts that participate in it are generally considered inaccessible to syntactic operations (Höhle 1982, Müller 1990, a.o.). Accordingly, Subword RNR has most commonly been analyzed as deriving from a morphological or phonological deletion process (e.g., Smith 2000, Booij 1985, Wilder 1997, Chaves 2014, 2008, Erschler 2018, but see Wilder 2008 for a multidominance account akin to ours).

However, a major challenge for a deletion analysis of subword RNR has been pointed out by Artstein (2005). RNR constructions may yield interpretations distinct from those of their full-fledged coordination counterparts in that only the RNR variant can give rise to a distributive plural reading. Example (3a) can receive the interpretation that Bill is an orthodontist and Martha a periodontist, but this reading is unavailable in the full coordination, (3b). This interpretive asymmetry makes it problematic to derive RNR structures through phonological deletion from full coordination structures.

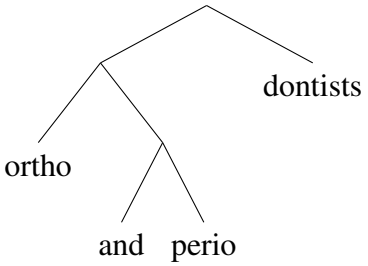
(3) a. Bill and Martha are ortho- and periodontists. (Artstein 2005:359)
✓ Bill and Martha are both orthodontists and periodontists. *(collective)*
✓ Bill is an orthodontist and Martha is a periodontist. *(distributive)*
b. Bill and Martha are orthodontists and periodontists. (✓ *collective*, ✗ *distributive)*

At the same time, Artstein also argues that the word parts that participate in the RNR construction in (3) – *ortho-*, *perio-* and *-dontists* – should not be considered morphemes that could be regularly conjoined in the syntax because they do not have a clear meaning outside of the complex words in which they occur here: many speakers know what a periodontist is, but few know the meaning of the string *perio*. Arstein's analysis of subword RNR is designed to account for both of these observations.

Before we outline his analysis, a note on inter-speaker variation. First, the distributive plural reading in (3a) is not easy to arrive at (see also Chaves 2008:269). The same holds for distributive readings under phrasal RNR, discussed in Section 3. Nonetheless, this reading is strictly inaccessible in full coordinations such as (3b), and we believe that this contrast still needs to be accounted for. Second, speakers vary in their intuitions about (3) regardless of the distributive reading. We address this variation and gradience in judgments in detail in Section 4.

Artstein proposes a surface coordination analysis for (3), shown in (4), relying on a mechanism he labels *phonological decomposition*. This mechanism allows remnant (*ortho-*) and correlate (*perio-*) to denote strings of sound, which are treated as arguments (5). The pivot is interpreted as a function which takes a string and returns the meaning of the word consisting of the input string concatenated with *-dontist* (6) (Artstein 2005:363).

(4)



(5) a. $[\![\text{ortho}]\!] \in D_e$: the string *ortho* b. $[\![\text{perio}]\!] \in D_e$: the string *perio*

(6) $[\![\text{dontist}]\!] \in D_{eet}$: the function $h : D_e \rightarrow D_{et}$ such that for all $\alpha \in D_e$, $h(\alpha) = [\![\alpha\text{dontist}]\!]$ if αdontist is a word and $[\![\alpha\text{dontist}]\!] \in D_e$, undefined otherwise.

Phonological decomposition can thus coordinate meaningless strings and applies when regular semantic decomposition fails. It is solely restricted by constraints on phonological well-formedness.

Artstein argues that the distributive plural reading of *-dontists* can then be established through the relation between $[\![\text{ortho}]\!] \oplus [\![\text{period}]\!]$ and $[\![\text{Bill}]\!] \oplus [\![\text{Martha}]\!]$, as illustrated in (7).[2] Here, $[\![\text{dontists}]\!]$ is a relation between two arguments α and β – where the inner argument β is $[\![\text{ortho}]\!] \bigoplus [\![\text{perio}]\!]$, and the outer argument α is *Bill and Martha* – such that α is a plurality and both α and β can be broken down into individual parts. Every part of α is related by $[\![\text{dontists}]\!]$ to at least one part of β, and every part of β is related by $[\![\text{dontists}]\!]$ to at least one part of α.

(7) $[\![\text{dontists}]\!] = \lambda\beta\lambda\alpha.\alpha \in \text{PL} \wedge \exists \text{n, m} \in \text{N}, \alpha_1,...,\alpha_n, \beta_1,...,\beta_m[\alpha = \alpha_1 \oplus\cdots\oplus\alpha_n \wedge \beta = \beta_1 \oplus\cdots\oplus\beta_m \wedge \forall_i \leq n\ \exists_j \leq m\ [[\![\text{dontist}]\!](\alpha_i, \beta_j)] \wedge \forall_j \leq m\ \exists_i \leq n\ [[\![\text{dontist}]\!](\alpha_i, \beta_j)]]$

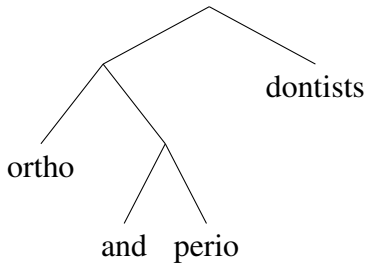
We identify two major problems with Artstein's analysis. First, subword RNR is known to be unacceptable if the complex words involved are not transparently decomposed, as in (8a) – a blackbird is not simply a black bird – or are not morphologically complex at all, as in (8b). There is no reason to assume that these examples should be ruled out by constraints on phonological well-formedness. Thus, Artstein's analysis wrongly predicts RNR based on phonological decomposition in (8) to be possible.

[2]See also the **-operator analysis of distributive plurality by Beck and Sauerland (2000), Winter (2000), a.o., which relies on a similar semantics.

(8) a. *black- and hummingbirds (David Adger, p.c.)
b. *Man- or Winchester (Wilder 2008:282)

Second, Artstein's base-generation analysis predicts that (9)–(11) are all syntactically possible structures since they can be analyzed as coordinations of meaningless strings. It is true that phonological well-formedness constraints could block (10) and (11) from surfacing, but the fact remains that under Arstein's view, they could be generated in the syntax. Thus, syntax would not operate on a finite set of discrete morphemes. We do not believe that this is an attractive view.

(9)



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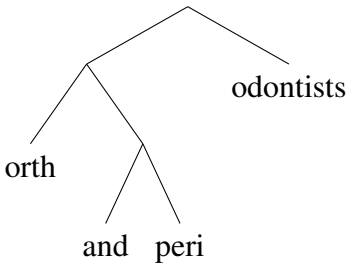

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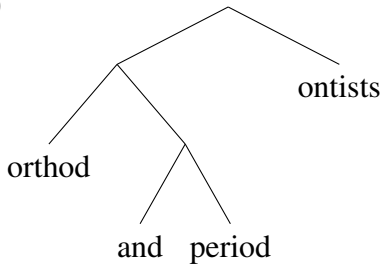


In sum, phonological decomposition, even if correctly deriving (3), vastly overgenerates. The surface coordination analysis, which depends on phonological decomposition, thus loses its advantage. In the next section, we take a closer look at distributive plurality and draw a parallel to phrasal RNR.

3. Distributive plurality

Distributive plural readings, seen just now for subword RNR, have also been observed for phrasal RNR, as in (12) (Belk et al. 2023:700, a.o.). The RNR construction in (12a) can receive the interpretation that Ava and Habib studied one language each. Just like in the subword cases, this distributive reading is unavailable in the full coordination, (12b).

(12) a. Ava will soon, and Habib is going to, study Oceanic languages.
✓ Ava and Habib are each going to study more than one Oceanic language. *(collective)*
✓ Ava and Habib are going to study one Oceanic language each. *(distributive)*
b. Ava will soon study Oceanic languages, and Habib is going to study Oceanic languages. *(✓ collective, ✗ distributive)*

The literature has not yet provided a unified account of distributive plurality in both subword and phrasal RNR under a single analytical framework. In this section, we propose that subword RNR exhibiting distributive plurality, like their phrasal counterparts, can be analyzed as involving multidominance.

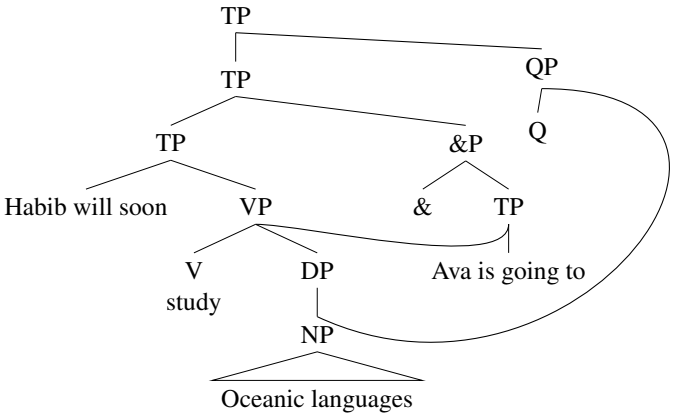
Belk et al.'s analysis of distributive plurality in RNR builds on the availability of an internal reading of *same* in examples like (13). Carlson (1987) as argueed that the internal reading in (13) requires *same* to take wide scope over multiple events (see also Barker (2007), a.o.). Belk et al., following the same logic, assume that in order to derive the internal reading, *same* has to QR to take wide scope over the coordination in an RNR construction (14).

(13) John and Ryo read the same book. (Belk et al. 2023:696)
John and Ryo each read a book, and the books they read were the same. *(internal)*

(14) Ann read, and Ryo reviewed, the same book. (✓*internal*; Belk et al. 2023:697)

Belk et al. propose that the same configuration also accounts for distributive plural readings. To obtain the distributive interpretation, *Oceanic languages* in (12a) must undergo QR over the entire coordinate structure. Furthermore, recall that just like in subword RNR, a distributive reading is unavailable in the full coordination. This suggests that covert ATB-QR over a coordination is blocked; otherwise, the distributive interpretation should be available. Belk et al., following Moltmann (1992), Citko (2005), De Vries (2009), a.o., argue that a prohibition against forking chains rules out both covert ATB-QR in full-sized coordination and overt ATB-movement in RNR. However, a multidominated constituent can still undergo QR because it does not violate the ban on forking chains. Thus, letting the plural *Oceanic languages* be multidominated across conjuncts allows it to take wide scope via QR, deriving the distributive reading. The full structure is shown in (15).

(15)



In our representation, we adopt the analysis of QR in Fox and Johnson (2016), according to which only the NP is raised. Note also that QR takes place at LF only; the correct word order is derived from the multidominated structure via a linearization algorithm (Wilder 1999, 2008, Gračanin-Yuksek 2007, a.o.).

We now turn to the question of whether Belk et al.'s analysis can be extended to distributive readings with subword RNR, as in Artstein's example (16). The plural pivot which is distributed across conjuncts is *-dontists*.

(16) Bill and Martha are ortho- and periodontists.

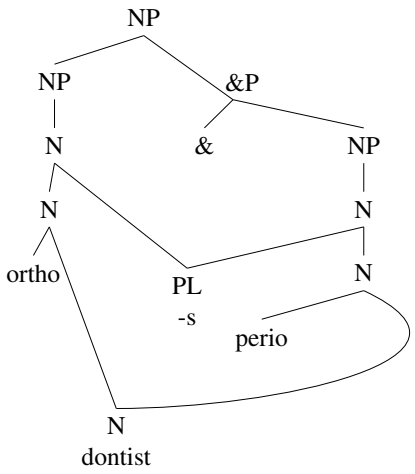
We begin by noting that words like *orthodontists* constitute a bracketing paradox. On the one hand side, the prosodic structure is as in (17a), where *ortho* and *dontists* are prosodic constituents. On the other hand, given that compounding and derivational morphology precede inflectional morphology, the morphological/syntactic structure must be as in (17b), where *orthodontist* forms a constituent at the exclusion of *-s*.

(17) a. ((ortho) (dontists)) b. [[ortho] [dontist] s]

Our syntactic analysis must reflect the structure in (17b), not in (17a).

Having clarified the constituency structure, the question remains how to analyze the relevant nodes in terms of category and in their status as heads or phrases. We will see that this does not affect the outcome of this discussion. For concreteness's sake, we adopt a conservative representation according to which a word like *orthodontists* corresponds to a complex N head (18).

(18)



This structure contains two pivots, *dontist* and *-s*.[3] This is because syntactically, *dontist* and the plural marker are not a constituent and thus cannot form a single pivot. As a result, QR is crucially impossible in the tree in (18) because there is no plural noun that could be raised. It is in principle possible to raise the plural head only, but this is not QR, and it is not clear what the interpretative effect of this movement would be. This problem holds independently of the head vs. phrasal status of *dontist*, and independently of whether QR applies to an NP or a DP. Belk et al.'s strategy for deriving a distributive reading from a QR'ed position of the plural constituent thus cannot apply to subword RNR.

[3] Alternatively, the first pivot *dontist* could also be derived via ellipsis; see Belk et al. (2023) for a discussion of examples with both ellipsis and multidominance pivots. This does not affect the overall argument here.

One might argue that this finding, rather than undermining Belk et al.'s analysis, simply demonstrates that phrasal and subword RNR are underlyingly distinct phenomena after all, with distributive readings being derived via different routes in the two cases. While we cannot rule out this possibility, we note that first, it is not clear how to derive distributive plurality from a QR'ed structure even for phrasal RNR in the first place. Belk et al. do not specify the semantic mechanism involved or comment on this question beyond what we have summarized above. Second, the fact remains that a distributive reading needs to be derivable for subword RNR in some way, and we agree with Belk et al. that a multidominance structure is a much more promising route for achieving this goal than an ellipsis structure, under which distributive plurals are wholly unexpected (see also Barros and Vicente 2011). But if distributive readings can be derived from a multidominance structure in situ for subword RNR, it is not clear why QR should be needed as an additional mechanism for phrasal RNR.

In sum, distributive readings are available in both subword and phrasal RNR constructions. We concur with Belk et al. (2023) and Barros and Vicente (2011) that multidominance provides a promising framework for capturing distributive patterns, and we follow Wilder (2008) in implementing such an analysis for subword RNR. However, QR is not a workable option for subword RNR, and it appears insufficient to account for the phrasal cases as well. Taken together, this suggests that QR might not be necessary for deriving distributive readings. What alternative mechanism may conspire with multidominance to yield such interpretations remains an open question for future research.

4. Sense identity: idiomaticity and contextual allosemy

We now turn to the second peculiarity of the example in (19) from Artstein (2005), which is that the word parts that participate in the coordination – *ortho-*, *perio-* and *dontist-* – do not appear to be interpretable in isolation (but see Chaves 2008:268).

(19) ortho- and periodontists

Recall that Artstein dealt with this challenge by positing that coordination can operate on meaningless strings. In Section 2, we highlighted the problems that this approach faces. Here, we argue that examples like (19) do not force us to give up on the idea that syntax operates on morphemes, and we further show that they are not limited to the domain of subword RNR, but are attested with phrasal RNR as well. In the following, we set aside the distributive plural interpretation of (19), which we have dealt with above. We end by discussing the role of inter-speaker variation and gradience in judgments.

We adopt from Chaves (2008) the idea that RNR – including subword RNR – is subject to a sense identity constraint, in that the pivot must receive the same interpretation in both conjuncts (Zaenen and Karttunen 1984:316, Wilder 1997, a.o.). Chaves motivates this claim by assuming an ellipsis analysis of RNR, under which the pivot is deleted in the first conjunct. Trivially, ellipsis requires semantic identity. We argue that a sense identity constraint equally holds on RNR under a multidominance analysis. If there is only a single constituent in the tree corresponding to the pivot, then it must receive the same interpretation

in both conjuncts. We assume that it is not possible for a given node to be assigned two different interpretations simultaneously.

There are a variety of conditions that violate sense identity in RNR. Consider first (20):

(20) *There stood a one- and well-armed man. (Chaves 2008:274)

Both complex words that participate in RNR – *one-armed* and *well-armed* – have a perfectly compositional semantics. However, *armed* receives a clearly distinct interpretation in the two, referring either to the property of having a limb or of carrying a weapon. As a result, the example is best described as a pun.

Chaves shows that the same effect can be observed in phrasal RNR. For instance, in (21), the pivot receives a different interpretation in the two conjuncts, analogous to (20):

(21) a. *Sue had to erase, and Tom was asked to join, the board.
b. *I put the money, while Roger left the boat, in the bank. (Chaves 2008:274)

A slightly different case is presented by the examples in (22):

(22) a. *I caught butter- and fireflies.
b. *We bought an hour- and a looking-glass.
c. *We need more floor- and cupboards. (Chaves 2008:274)

As Chaves rightly points out, unlike (20), these compounds are highly lexicalized. Butterflies are not flies made out of butter. We argue that there are two ways of accounting for the unacceptability of (22). First, such compounds might not be decomposed syntactically in the first place: there might not be a separate node in the tree corresponding to, say, *glass* in (22b). Accordingly, RNR is impossible both under an ellipsis analysis, which would require there to be a node corresponding to the pivot that can be deleted in the first conjunct, and under a multidominance analysis, which would require there to be a node that is multidominated across conjuncts. The question of whether the pivot receives the same interpretation in both conjuncts does not even apply.

An alternative analysis of (22) would hold that the complex words in question – e.g., *hourglass* – are decomposed syntactically into two nodes, *hour* and *glass*, but that a meaning is only assigned to the entire constituent consisting of these two nodes. A word like *hourglass* would then have the same status as a phrasal idiom like *kick the bucket*: the construction is syntactically complex, but a denotation is only assigned to the constituent as a whole. Under this view, RNR in (22) is syntactically possible, but sense identity is violated because the node corresponding to the pivot contributes to two different idiomatic interpretations in the two conjuncts. These two analyses of (22) – no syntactic decomposition, syntactic decomposition but holistic interpretation – are not easily teased apart, and which of them applies might depend both on the item and on the speaker. What is more, one conjunct might be syntactically atomic, the other syntactically complex but semantically atomic.

For examples such as (22), it is harder to find analogues in the world of phrasal RNR where idiomatic, lexicalized interpretations are rarer. However, relevant evidence comes from examples like (23):

(23) a. *His words rang, and I heard in the distance, a bell.
b. *At the dinner party, the chatty guests were spilling, and the hostess was serving, the beans.

Here, the pivot is interpreted as part of a syntactically complex, but semantically atomic idiom – *ring a bell*, *spill the beans* – in one conjunct but not the other. Again, such cases are correctly ruled out by sense identity.

To briefly recap, there is evidence that RNR both at the subword and at the phrasal level is constrained by sense identity, and we have argued that sense identity applies both under an ellipsis and under a multidominance analysis. However, we are still left with Artstein's example *ortho- and periodontists*. Since the word parts are arguably not interpretable in isolation, this might seem to predict that *orthodontist* and *periodontist* must receive an idiomatic interpretation or might not even be decomposed syntactically in the first place. Accordingly, *ortho- and periodontists* should be ruled out by sense identity, but at least some speakers find the expression grammatical.

We propose that speakers who accept *ortho- and periodontists* interpret it with contextual allosemy (see Wood 2023, Wood and Marantz 2017, a.o.). That is, the words *orthodontist* and *periodontist* are decomposed semantically into separate morphemes, but the interpretation assigned to the morphemes *ortho-* and *perio-* depends on the morpheme they combine with – here, *dontist* (24). The word parts combine via predicate modification.

(24) a. $[\![\text{dontist}]\!] = \lambda x.$ x is a dentist
b. $[\![\text{ortho}]\!]$ in the context of *dontist* $= \lambda x.$ x is a specialist in mal-positioned teeth and jaws
c. $[\![\text{perio}]\!]$ in the context of *dontist* $= \lambda x.$ x is a specialist in gums and supporting structures

The morpheme *dontist* is assigned a regular meaning in isolation, being simply an allomorph of *dentist*. On the other hand, the meaning of *ortho-* and *perio-* is dependent on the presence of *dontist*. This captures Arstein's claim that these word parts are not interpretable in isolation, but crucially, it is still in line with sense identity. Under the analysis in (24), the pivot is assigned the same interpretation in both conjuncts, thus licensing RNR. Some further cases of RNR that have been reported to be licit in the literature and which would require contextual allosemy are given in (25):

(25) a. mono- and dialogues (adapted from Booij 1985)
b. boysen- and huckle-berries (Artstein 2005)

In sum, by allowing for contextual allosemy, subword RNR can be compatible with sense identity even if the word parts involved cannot be assigned a meaning in isolation.

However, there are two major concerns we need to address at this point. First, intuitions about all but the most transparent cases of subword RNR are heavily divided, and even speakers who do accept them often do so with some hesitation. Second, if both idiomatic and allosemic interpretations are available, it is not clear what determines which analysis applies for a given example. For instance, a word like *hourglass* could be interpreted with contextual allosemy, and a word like *orthodontist* as an idiom.

We argue that these two points are related: speakers vary in their intuitions about many instances of subword RNR *because* the words involved allow for more than one possible analysis. When parsing a complex word, speakers have a choice as to whether or not to decompose it syntactically, and whether or not to analyze its meaning holistically or compositionally, with contextual allosemy also being an option in the latter case. The choice between these analyses is probabilistic rather than deterministic, a fact that has been well-established in the literature on morphological decomposition (see, e.g., Zwitserlood 2018 for an overview). Accordingly, we believe that it is indeed possible for words like *orthodontist* and *periodontist* to be parsed as idioms rather than as instances of contextual allosemy, and we predict speakers who adopt such an analysis to reject the RNR construction *ortho- and periodontists* because it would violate sense identity. Confirming this prediction in detail is still a task for future research, and it would require experimental methods that can probe into the parse that speakers assign to complex words. But it is an independently supported fact that speakers vary in whether or not they decompose complex words, and our analysis naturally links this to the variation that we see with respect to speakers' judgments for subword RNR.

Nothing so far explains why speakers' intuitions about cases of subword RNR tend to be gradient. Such data are often perceived as somewhat odd but not wholly ungrammatical. Here, we sketch out a solution to this puzzle, but we emphasize that it would also need to be confirmed by more robust empirical data. We propose that when parsing an RNR construction, speakers try to entertain a decompositional analysis of the complex words involved, in line with the sense identity constraint, and the closer the meaning derived from this analysis matches the interpretation that these words would receive outside of an RNR context, the more felicitous this instance of RNR is perceived. For instance, we have found that some speakers prefer (26a) over (26b): while a blackberry is at least approximately speaking a black berry, a strawberry is strictly not a berry made out of straw.

(26) a. black- and huckleberries b. straw- and huckleberries

Relatedly, the subword RNR example (27) from German features the complex words *Teelöffel* 'teaspoons' and *Suppenlöffel* 'tablespoons' (literally 'soup spoons'). The example is not unacceptable, but it is odd in that it brings to mind the fact that teaspoons are for tea, 'soup spoons' for soup, when in fact, teaspoons and 'soup spoons' are simply spoons of different sizes that can be used for all manner of things other than tea and soup.

(27) Tee- und Suppen-löffel
tea and soup-spoons
'teaspoons and tablespoons'

In other words, since RNR forces speakers to adopt a decompositional interpretation, a word like 'teaspoon' which normally receives the idiomatic reading 'small spoon' is parsed as 'a spoon used for tea,' and *mutatis mutandis* for 'soup spoon.'

To summarize our key points, subword RNR is – like phrasal RNR – constrained by sense identity, whether or not this constraint is met depends on how speakers parse the complex words involved, and this in turn is subject to gradience and inter-speaker variation. None of this is in contradiction with our claim that subword RNR is underlyingly the same phenomenon as phrasal RNR; rather, the apparent difference between them simply stems from the fact that the subword level is more prone to holistic parsing and idiomatic interpretation. Furthermore, none of these data serve to adjudicate between an ellipsis analysis and a multidominance analysis. Future work in this domain is needed – specifically experimental work that links subword RNR to the literature on morphological decomposition –, but these data do not constitute evidence for a distinct syntax for subword RNR.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have taken a close look at two sets of data that have a bearing on the question whether and how phrasal and subword RNR can be given a unified analysis. First, both phrasal and subword RNR license distributive plural readings, a connection that has not been noted yet in the previous literature. We have taken this observation as evidence that a multidominance analysis of subword RNR, previously proposed by Wilder (2008), is indeed necessary since such data cannot be captured under an ellipsis analysis. However, we have also shown that Belk et al.'s (2023) strategy of deriving distributive readings from a scopally high, QR'ed position of a multidominated plural constituent cannot apply to the subword cases, and furthermore, that it is not clearly successful for phrasal RNR either.

Second, we have discussed a range of examples showing that the acceptability of subword RNR is sensitive to whether the complex words participating in it receive a transparently decompositional or idiomatic interpretation. Following Chaves (2008), we have linked this fact to a sense identity constraint holding on RNR, which we argue holds both under an ellipsis and a multidominance analysis. Moreover, we have proposed that the picture is more nuanced than suggested by Chaves in that complex words can also be interpreted with contextual allosemy. Crucially, phrasal RNR is equally constrained by sense identity, further supporting our claim that phrasal and subword RNR are underlyingly the same phenomenon.

Among the many directions for future research, we highlight three. First, it remains an open question how to derive distributive plural interpretations from a multidominance structure in both phrasal and subword RNR. Second, connecting subword RNR to the experimental literature on morphological decomposition would significantly advance our understanding of the way in which the acceptability of RNR is shaped by how speakers parse complex constituents in processing. Lastly, we have focused here on the perspective from multidominance – as being evidenced by distributive plurals –, but we believe that like phrasal RNR, subword RNR requires a dual account as either multidominance or ellipsis. Showing in detail which properties are unambiguously indicative of an ellipsis structure is a task we plan to tackle in future work.

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Eva Neu & Lulu Guo
eneu@umass.edu, lulu.guo@qmul.ac.uk