Gapping in Jordanian Arabic

In this paper, we analyze elliptical constructions in Jordanian Arabic (JA), such as the example in (1).

1) ḥāsān b-ʃakul ṭiṣṣa, ḍo / *laʔi̇nno ʿumār [_____] Ƅuɾγer
   Ḥāsān Asp-eat.3sm-IMP pizza and */because Ṿmār burger
   ‘Ḥasān eats pizza, and */because Omar [eats] a burger.’

A central question for us is whether the JA construction in (1) has the properties of gapping or those of pseudogapping, the English elliptical constructions shown in (2a) and (2b), respectively.

2) a. Some have served mussels to Sue and others swordfish. (Johnson, 2009: 289)
   b. Some have served mussels to Sue and others have swordfish.

In both (1) and (2), the main verb is elided in the second conjunct. Also, T is missing in the second conjunct in (1) and (2a). Yet T still exists in (2)b and the verb is elided in pseudogapping through VP-ellipsis (Stump 1977). To our knowledge, the syntax of the JA construction in (1) is uncertain, as there are few studies that have been done in the Arabic descriptive literature. In order to diagnose this JA elliptical construction as gapping or pseudogapping, we have checked it against the properties of gapping identified by Johnson (2009). The properties of the JA elliptical construction can be summarized as follows. Property (1): like English gapping but unlike pseudogapping, the JA elliptical construction occurs only in coordination cases, as in (1), which is grammatical with the coordinator o ‘and’ but ungrammatical with the subordinator laʔinno ‘because’. Property (2): in JA, the antecedent of the gap cannot occur within an embedded clause unless the second conjunct is also embedded; this is likewise a property of gapping but not of pseudogapping. In other words, (3) is grammatical only if the second conjunct (and thus the whole coordination) is interpreted as embedded under the matrix verb ‘said’.

3) ḥaʔat ennu ʿahmad ṭaʔa ʃi̇bne, o ʿumār [_____] ḫumus.
   Ṣay-3fs-PER COMP Ahmad eat-dinner.3ms-PER cheese, and Ṣumār ḫumus
   ‘She said that Ahmad ate cheese, and Omar [ate] Hummus’

Property (3): English gapping, but not pseudogapping, exhibits an asymmetric scope relation whereby the subject of the first conjunct binds a pronoun in the subject of the second conjunct, which Arabic also exhibits. Accordingly, JA examples behave like English gapping in this case, as in (4):

4) kul bent ṭaʔer ʿa-Māsər o ʿum-ha ʿa-tunensis.
   every girl will 3fs-travel to-place, and mother-her to-Tunisia
   ‘Every girl will fly to Egypt, and her mother to Tunisia.’

Thus, the question that arises here is, “what is the syntax of JA structures in the examples above?” Johnson (2009) has proposed that gapping involves a low coordination structure and ATB verb movement to a position he refers to as the Predicate Projection. However, for several reasons, I adopt Toosarvandani’s (2013) analysis, which includes low coordination of the two VPs, with the gap derived via VP-ellipsis. First, T is missing in the second conjunct as multiple VPs are embedded under one T; this is achieved through a coordinator that combines the two VPs (Toosarvandani, 2013). The second reason is that VP-ellipsis is able to derive the correct linear order with object control verbs, where the gap is a discontinuous constituent on the surface, as in (5a); ATB movement involves fronting all of the missing material and thus derives the wrong word order, as shown in (5b).

5) a. I_{i} have [[t_{i} [v_{i} persuaded T_{0} to write a novel]]], and [[v_{i} Bill_{j} [v_{i} persuaded t_{j} to write t_{j} a short story]]].
   b.*I_{i} [PredP [persuaded t_{i}] [TP to write t_{j} t_{j} ] [v_{i} t_{j} [v_{i} persuaded T_{0} to write t_{j} a short story]]] (Toosarvandani, 2013)

In this mechanism, the first subject can move to Spec, TP to get its case checked, while the second subject gets its case checked where it is generated (Toosarvandani, 2013; Johnson, 2009) so it remains in-situ. Then, the two conjuncts must be identical in order to apply VP-ellipsis, which can be achieved by a covert movement of burger ‘burger’ and pittera ‘pizza’, NP shift to the right. Finally, the only way to delete additional material is through VP-ellipsis (Toosarvandani, 2013). Accordingly, the correlates ḥasān and pittera and the remnants Ṿumār and burger in (1) are located outside the VP, and so they do not go missing when VP elides in the second conjunct.