

El silencio de la sintaxis:

Una introducción al fenómeno de la elipsis

Clase 3. 25 de julio de 2024

1. Review of last class

- In ellipsis certain linguistic material is omitted but it's still understood
 - We usually categorize the different ellipsis based on what's missing
 - *Not all that's missing is ellipsis* (strictly speaking): deep vs. surface anaphora
 - * We need to run tests and diagnostics: pragmatic control, missing antecedents, extraction, syntactic parallelism, inverse scope
 - We found evidence that there is a missing syntactic structure (*structural* approach)
 - How we understand what's missing is highly restricted
 - we need an **identity** condition:
 - * semantic: meaning is all that matters, mismatches in form should be allowed
 - * syntactic: meaning is not enough, mismatches in form shouldn't be allowed
- Some methodological points:
 - If elliptical sentences are the result of 'silencing' part of a syntactic structure, then:
 - if a non-elliptical sentence is grammatical, its elliptical counterpart is also grammatical; if a non-elliptical sentence is ungrammatical, it's elliptical counterpart is also ungrammatical.
 - any deviations should be explained.
 - Always compare elliptical sentences with their non-elliptical counterparts.
- We looked at *sluicing* with more detail:
 - We compare isomorphic with non-isomorphic sources
 - what predictions do each make?
 - * Case marking
 - * Preposition omission
 - * Exhaustivity
 - If we want to truly understand the phenomenon, we cannot just based our whole theory on one example, we need to look at the language and its properties, and the particular construction and its properties.
 - If we want to understand TP-Ellipsis, we need to look at other sub-types (unless we have reasons to assume that sluicing is somewhat special).

2. Different flavors of syntactic identity

- Even if we think that a syntactic identity condition for ellipsis accounts for the data more accurately than a semantic identity condition, we still need to define identity

i. Identity in all semantic and syntactic features:

- (1) Gender mismatches are impossible:
 - *Gabriela ya es **tía** y Mario también ya es ~~tío~~.
- (2) Identity only in (phonological) form doesn't matter:
 - *El **orden** natural de las cosas no puede alterarse por una ~~orden~~ arbitraria de Dios.
- (3) Tense mismatches are impossible:
 - a. *Ayer, **cocinó** Ana, pero en general, no sé quién ~~cocina~~.
 - b. *Mañana no **iré** al parque, pero ayer sí ~~fui~~ al ~~parque~~.

→ This seems too strong, given that there are some cases where some features can mismatch:

- (4) Some gender mismatches are possible:
 - Gabriela es **abogada** y Pedro también es ~~abogado~~.
- (5) Some polarity mismatches are possible:
 - I don't think that she **will** comply, but I don't know why she ~~won't~~ comply.
- (6) Some tense mismatches are possible:
 - a. Sally **cooks** every night. She learned how ~~to cook~~ from her father.
 - b. *Maria es actriz y Juan también.

ii. Identity as feature non-distinctiveness:

Ranero (2021): The antecedent and material properly contained within the ellipsis site must be featurally non-distinct.

- (7) a. Either he turned in his final paper by midnight or he explained why he ~~didn't~~ ~~turn it in by midnight~~. $\emptyset - \Sigma_{[+NEG]}$
- b. ??Either he **DID** turn in his final paper by midnight or he explained why he ~~didn't~~ ~~turn it in by midnight~~. $\Sigma_{[+NEG]} - \Sigma_{[+NEG]}$

→ there is no featural clash between Σ heads bearing polarity features in (7a), but there is a featural clash in (7b).

→ The same for (im)possible Tense mismatches: $T_{[PAST]} - T_{[PRES]}$ vs. $T_{[PRES]} - T_{\emptyset}$

→ What about gender mismatches?

3. Nominal ellipsis

- **Nominal Ellipsis:** a label applied to different types of anaphoric phenomena involving a gap within the internal structure of the nominal phrase. (Saab 2018)

- (8) a. La destrucción de Roma fue más miserable que la de Kyoto.
 b. *En una panadería.* Dame tres de grasa y tres de manteca.
 c. ¡Que la crisis la paguen los ricos!
 d. Trabajan.
 e. Sonia compró café y Bruno también compró.

→ distinguish empty nouns (i.e., deep anaphora) from nominal ellipses (i.e., surface anaphora).

4. Diagnostics

- Some contexts are ambiguous:

- (9) Los perros inteligentes y los tontos son indistinguibles.
 Nominal Ellipsis reading: ‘Smart dogs and foolish dogs are indistinguishable.’
 Empty Noun reading: ‘Smart dogs and foolish people are indistinguishable.’

→ this ambiguity is straightforwardly derived under the hypothesis that we are dealing with **different types of nominal gaps** in each of the DPs:

- (10) a. Empty Noun*:
 [DP D [NumP Num [_{nP} n_[human]]]]
 *an empty noun is a functional nominal category which might encode some features such as [+/- human], [+/- female], [+/- count], and so on.
- b. Nominal Ellipsis:
 [DP D [NumP Num [_{nP} n [RP ROOT]]]]

Structures:

- (11) a. Los perros inteligentes y los ~~perros~~ tontos son indistinguibles.
 b. Los perros inteligentes y los *n*_[human] tontos son indistinguibles.

A. Extraction

- Ellipsis sites can be extracted out of, empty nouns cannot:
- (12) Yo sé de quién compraste dos fotos, pero no sé [de quién]; compraste tres ~~fotos~~ →

B. Matching/Selection

- NPE gaps select for the same categories as their non-elliptical counterparts:
- (13) a. El amor de Ana **por** los autos es más grande que el mío **por** los libros.
 b. La insistencia de Ana **en** sus problemas y la de Sonia **en** los suyos.

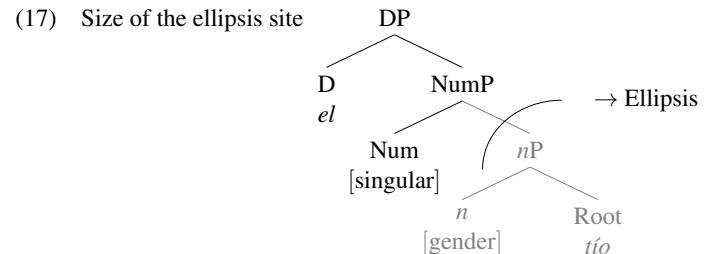
C. Antecedents/Pragmatic Control

- Ellipsis sites require a linguistic antecedent; empty nouns don't:
- (14) a. *Los artificiales no piden permiso.
 b. Los ricos no piden permiso.

Possible and Impossible mismatches

- Gender mismatches are usually impossible
- (15) *el tío de Ana y la de Mario
- Number mismatches are usually possible:
- (16) el tío de Ana y los de Mario

Proposal: the difference boils down to the lexical vs. syntactic nature of gender and number:



Possible and impossible mismatches—Revisited: (from Ranero 2021)

- (18) [GENDER] mismatches under ellipsis—three classes of nouns:
- Class I: [GENDER] mismatch symmetrically ill-formed
 - *Gabriela ya es tía y Mario también.
 - *Mario ya es tío y Gabriela también.
 - Class II: [GENDER] mismatch symmetrically well-formed
 - Ana es una abogada exitosa, y Mario también.
 - Mario es un abogado exitoso y Ana también.
 - Class III: [GENDER] mismatch asymmetrically well-formed
 - Mario es un actor exitoso y Ana también.
 - *Ana es una actriz exitosa, y Mario también.

masculine antecedent
 feminine antecedent

(19) [GENDER] in Spanish (partially from Kramer 2015)

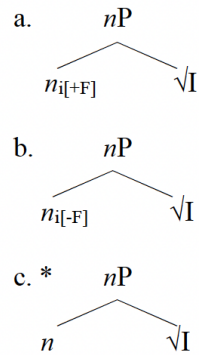
- a. The locus of [GENDER] is the categorizing head *n*
- b. Default grammatical gender is masculine.
- c. There are four flavors of *n*:
 - i. $n_{i[+F]}$ (feminine)
 - ii. $n_{i[-F]}$ (masculine)
 - iii. *n* (default; masculine concord is triggered)
 - iv. $n_{i[+F]}$ (uninterpretable feminine)

yegua
caballo
aquello, árbol
casa

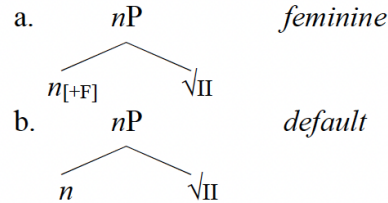
(20) Syntactic identity condition on ellipsis: The antecedent and material properly contained in the ellipsis site must be featurally non-distinct.

- Different Classes of nominals have different structures

(21) Licensing conditions for Class I



(22) Licensing conditions for Class II



(23) [GENDER] mismatch with Class I nouns violates featural non-distinctness:



*La tía de Ana y el <tío> de Clara llegaron.

(24) [GENDER] mismatch with Class II satisfies featural non-distinctness:



?La abogada de Ana es competente y el <abogado> de Eu también.

5. A possible implementation

→ What do we need for proposing an implementation?

→ Why do we care about an implementation? What's the goal of our research?

- What we want to get is a way to:

- (i) instruct the phonology to not pronounce certain part(s) of the structure (we have evidence that there is structure inside the ellipsis site).
- (ii) check the identity condition (based on what our evidence suggests, more or less strict).
- (iii) comply with any other licensing requirements that we might find (based on evidence).

- Assumption: Ellipsis is triggered by the [E]-feature

- Regarding (i):

(25) Assignment of [†]: Assign [†] to every head *h* in the complement of a head $z_{[E]}$.

(26) Phonology of [†]: A head containing [†] is not subject to Vocabulary Insertion.

- Regarding (ii):

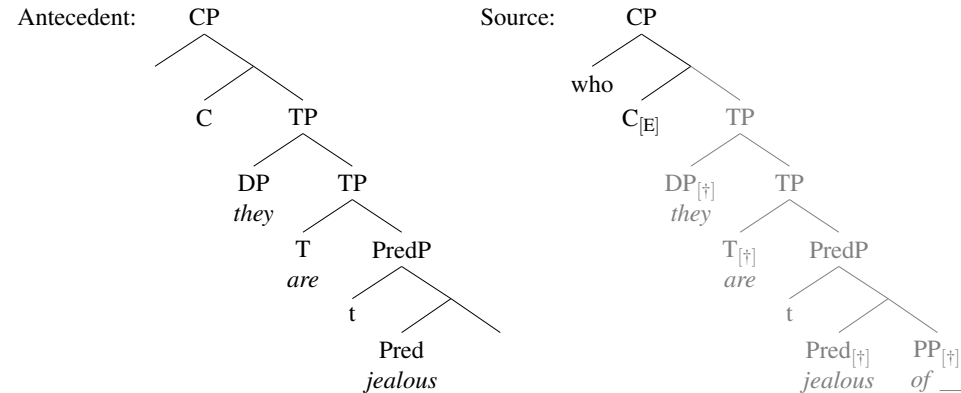
(27) Identity Condition: A head $h_{[†]}$ is licensed iff *h* has an identical correlate h' in A, where A is the antecedent.

- We need to define identity—pick your favorite poison:

(28) Identity: A morpheme α is identical to another morpheme β if and only if α and β match all their semantic and syntactic features.

- Let's see how this works:

(29) [_{Antecedent} They're jealous], but it's unclear [who [_{Ellipsis site} they're jealous of ___]].



→ the preposition *of* in the ellipsis site doesn't find an identical correlate in the Antecedent:

(30) Identity reference set: {⟨DP_E, DP_A⟩, ⟨T_E, T_A⟩, ⟨jealous_E, jealous_A⟩, ⟨of_E, ∅_A⟩}

6. Ellipsis & Islands

- We expect that the grammaticality of an elliptical sentence will match the grammaticality of its non-elliptical counterpart, but...
 - ...we discussed examples where the elliptical sentence was ungrammatical and its non-elliptical counterpart was grammatical
 - there was something wrong in the elliptical 'operation' (e.g., it was illicit).
 - ...there are also cases where an ungrammatical non-elliptical sentence becomes grammatical in the context of ellipsis.
- Islands: movement dependencies are subject to certain restrictions:
 - *[Which Romance language]_i did they hire someone who speaks ____i?
 - *¿[Cuál lengua romance]_i contrataron a alguien que habla ____i?
- However, it seems that some of those restrictions disappear in contexts of ellipsis:
 - They hired someone who speaks a Romance language, but I don't know which.
 - Contrataron a alguien que habla una lengua romance, pero no recuerdo cuál.

→ Think of an island and see if it can be 'repaired' by ellipsis.
 → How do we explain 'island repair by ellipsis'? Any thoughts?

- Option 1: back to copular sources :(
 - They hired someone who speaks a Romance language, ...
...but I don't know which Romance language ~~it is~~.
 - Contrataron a alguien que habla una lengua romance, ...
...pero no recuerdo qué lengua romance ~~es~~.
- Option 2: short sources
 - They hired someone who speaks a Romance language, ...
...but I don't know which Romance language {they_{sg}/he/she} speak.
 - Contrataron a alguien que habla una lengua romance, ...
...pero no recuerdo qué lengua romance ~~habla~~.
 - Pros—We seem to need short sources elsewhere:
 - I remember meeting him, but I don't remember when.
 - but I don't remember when I met him.
 - ≠but I don't remember when I remember meeting him.
 - Cons—Some cases of 'repaired islands' don't have a possible short source:
 - She bought a big car, but I don't know how big.
 - ≠pero no sé cuál lengua romance habla.
 - *pero no sé cuál lengua romance hable.

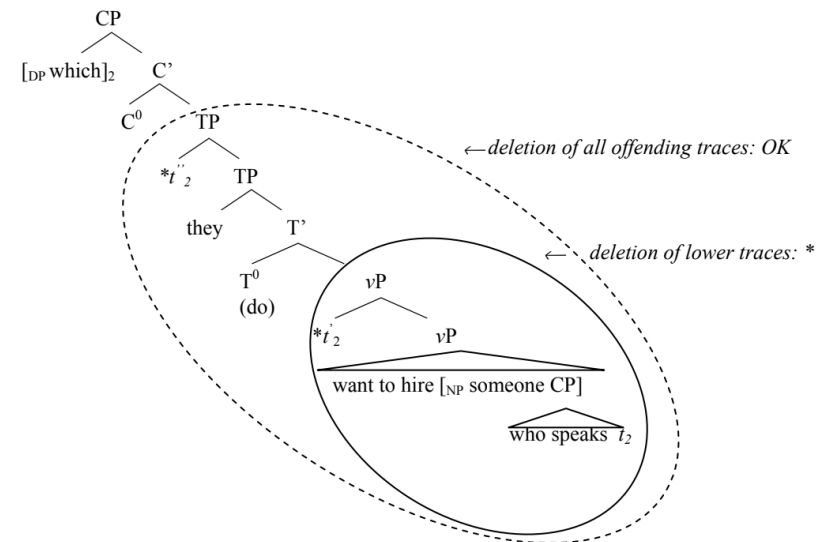
- Option 3: repair an illicit structure

Merchant (2004, 2008): assumes that the traces/copies left by movement are *-marked whenever they cross an island. The feature * is illegitimate at PF, but the problem it induces can be circumvented if an independent mechanism, ellipsis, deletes the offending traces.

- This explains Sluicing vs. VP-ellipsis wrt island repair

- Sluicing:
They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember which Balkan language.
- VP-ellipsis:
*They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember which Balkan language they do.

- They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language but I don't remember...



- Option 4: there is no illicit structure to begin with (→ the *in-situ* approach)
 - We've been assuming that the remnant moves out of the ellipsis site, based on, e.g., sluicing examples, but something that involves exceptional movement:
 - A: What did Sara eat? B: Pizza.
 - A: A: What did Sara eat? B: *Pizza, Sara ate.
 - What if the remnant doesn't need to move out of the ellipsis site?
 - Source: They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't remember ~~they want to hire someone who speaks~~ which Balkan language.

7. The licensing question

→ What syntactic configurations allow for ellipsis?

- Only VPs in specific syntactic environments can be elided:

- (46) a. *Moby Dick was being discussed and War and Peace was being too.
 b. Moby Dick was being discussed and War and Peace was being **discussed** too.
- (47) a. Moby Dick was discussed and War and Peace was too.
 b. Moby Dick was discussed and War and Peace was **discussed** too.

- PredP Ellipsis in Spanish is only allowed in certain contexts:

- (48) a. A: ¿No estás contento? B: ¡Sí, estoy!
 b. A: ¿No estás contento? B: ¡Sí, estoy contento!
- (49) a. *Ana está contenta, pero yo no estoy.
 b. Ana está contenta, pero yo no estoy **contento**.

→ in these examples:

- the same VP/PredP is targeted by deletion
- these VPs/PredPs are recoverable, as there is a salient antecedent in the first clause that is entirely (syntactically and semantically) identical to the ellipsis site
- BUT VP-ellipsis is only allowed in the complement of *was*, not in that of *was being*, and PredP-ellipsis is only allowed when there is some contrastiveness

- There are also some crosslinguistic differences

- (50) a. los libros rojos y los ~~libros~~ verdes
 b. *the red books and the green ~~books~~
- (51) a. Sam has bought beer, and Ben also has ~~bought~~.
 b. *Sam ha comprado cerveza, y Pedro también ha ~~comprado~~.

Licensing

Missing material has to be licensed.

Ellipsis is licensed via an Agree relation between [E] and the ellipsis licensing head.
 (adapted from Aelbrecht 2010)

• The featural make-up of [E]:

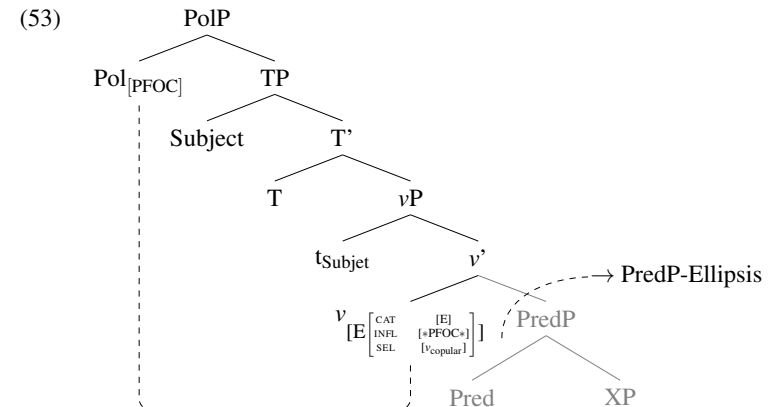
- There is an ellipsis feature (bundle) in the lexicon for each type of ellipsis.
- Each [E]-feature will consist of different feature bundles:
 - (i) Different [E] feature(s) are only compatible with certain heads, a property that is encoded by its *selectional* (*sel*) features.
 - (ii) Different [E]-features have an *inflectional* (*infl*) feature that corresponds to the *category* (*cat*) feature of a certain head, the ellipsis licenser → the [E]-features will only be licensed if they establish a checking relation with their licenser.

- Let's see how this accounts for the contrast in (48) and (49):

(52) Formal composition of the [E] that triggerst PredP-Ellipsis:

$$E \begin{bmatrix} \text{CAT} & [\text{E}] \\ \text{INFL} & [*\text{PFOC*}] \\ \text{SEL} & [\text{v}_{\text{copular}}] \end{bmatrix}$$

→ An [E]-feature with such a specification requires licensing through Agree with a proper valued polarity feature present in the Pol head:



8. Taking stock

→ What do we know?

→ What don't we know?

- How can we research what we don't know? What kind of data we need? What kind of tests? What do we do if we get contradictory results? What's the goal of our research? What's the big picture? What's the big question we want to answer?