Ellipsis[1]

Notes and reminders:

- Language reports: Submit PDF on IVLE by the end of the day Saturday
- Final: December 1st 9am, MPSH5. I will put a review guide on IVLE later this week.
- Review session (optional): Same time next week, **AS7 01-06**.
- No office hours tomorrow. Email me for questions or meetings.
- Course evaluations are online; please submit.

1   The problem of ellipsis (and anaphora)

(1)   **VP-ellipsis:**

John wrote a great language report. I'm sure Mary can [VP] too.

(2)   **VP-anaphora (*do it*):**

John wrote a great language report. I'm sure Mary can [VP do it] too.

(3)   **Fragment answer:**

Q: What did John eat?

A: Wan tan mee.

(4)   **Sluicing:** (a term by Ross)

John ate something but I don't know what.
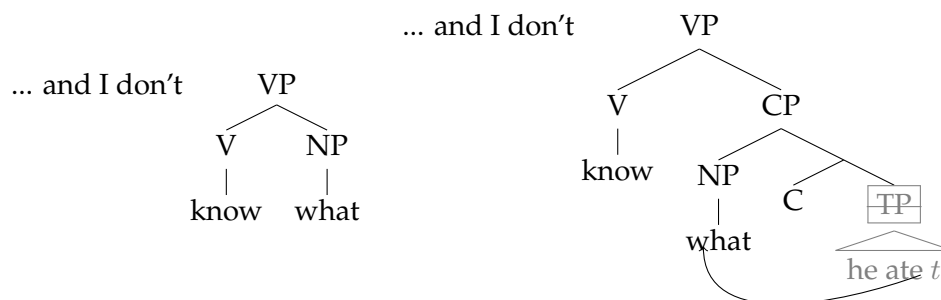
(5)   **Two approaches to these types of constructions:**

a.   What you see is what you get (WYSIWYG):

There is no unpronounced linguistic structure here. We (somehow) interpret these constructions by considering the discocurse context and world knowledge.

b.   Covert syntactic structure

There is linguistic structure here that is (somehow) silent.

For example, two options for (4):

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[1]Handout based on notes by Hadas Kotek.

2 Linguistic and non-linguistic antecedents (Hankamer and Sag, 1976)

One important observation is that some constructions require a *linguistic antecedent* but some can be a non-linguistic antecedent:

Verb phrase ellipsis requires a linguistic antecedent:

(6) [Sag produces a cleaver and prepares to hack off his left hand]
Hankamer: # Don't be alarmed, ladies and gentlemen, we've rehearsed this act several times, and he never actually does.

(7) [Hankamer attempts to stuff a 9-inch ball through a 6-inch hoop]
Sag: # It's not clear that you'll be able to.

Do it allows non-linguistic antecedents:

(8) [Sag produces a cleaver and prepares to hack off his left hand]
Hankamer: Don't be alarmed, ladies and gentlemen, we've rehearsed this act several times, and he never actually does it.

(9) [Hankamer attempts to stuff a 9-inch ball through a 6-inch hoop]
Sag: It's not clear that you'll be able to do it.

Sluicing requires a linguistic antecedent:

(10) [Hankamer produces a gun, points it offstage and fires, whereupon a scream is heard]
Sag: #Jesus, I wonder who.

Null complement anaphora—a limited option of null complements in English—allows a non-linguistic antecedent:

(11) [Indulgent father feeds baby chocolate bar for dinner]
Mother: I don't approve.

(12) [Two people are disturbed by loud noises of popcorn-eating in adjacent row]
One to the other: Don't you think we should complain?

The conclusion is that null complement anaphora is not the same as VPE. Whether something is pronounced or not does not predict whether a linguistic antecedent is required or not.

3 6 arguments for covert syntactic structure in ellipsis

3.1 VP ellipsis

1. <u>Agreement with material in the ellipsis site:</u>

   (13) a. We can't prove that there are such rules, but there { are, *is }.

   b. I can't prove that there's a cat in the box, but there { is, *are }.

2. <u>VPE can introduce antecedents for *it*:</u>

   (14) a. My uncle didn't buy anything for Christmas, but my aunt did, and it was bright red.

   b. * My uncle didn't buy anything for Christmas, so my aunt did it for him, and it was bright red.

   Notice that *do it* cannot introduce new antecedents.

3.2 Fragment answers

The covert structure hypothesis for fragments is that there's some kind of movement of the fragment to the edge, followed by deletion of the rest of the clause:

(15) [Wan tan mee] [John ate ___]

3. <u>Binding behaves just like in non-ellipsis cases:</u>

   (16) Who does Patrick$_i$ like?

   a. Himself$_i$ / *Him$_i$

   b. Patrick$_i$ likes himself$_i$ / *him$_i$

   (17) Where is he$_i$ now?

   a. In his$_i$ / *Patrick$_i$'s flat.

   b. He is in his$_i$ / *Patrick$_i$'s flat.

4. Parallels between *it*-cleft movement and fragment answers:

There is a restriction on the distribution of infinitival clauses: only control infinitivals can be clefted and only control infinitivals can be fragment answers.

(18) a. Control:

  i. It's [to get a job in Europe] that she really wants.   *cleft*

  ii. Q: What does she really want?

   A: To get a job in Europe.   *fragment answer*

  b. Raising:

  i. * It's [to procrastinate] that people tend.   *cleft*

  ii. Q: What do people tend to do?

   A: *To procrastinate.   *fragment answer*

3.3 Sluicing

The covert structure hypothesis for sluicing is similar to that for fragment answers. See page 1.

5. Case matching:

NPs in sluicing show up with Case that we would understand if there is an unpronounced Case-assigner in the ellipsis site, but not otherwise. The example comes from German, where *schmeicheln* 'flatter' assigns dative, while *loben* 'praise' assigns accusative (Ross, 1969):

a. Er will jemande**m** schmeicheln, aber sie wissen nicht, {*wer   /
  he wants someone.DAT flatter   but they know not   who.NOM
  *wen   / **wem**   }
  who.ACC   who.DAT
  'He wants to flatter someone, but they don't know who.'

b. Er will jemande**n**   loben, aber sie wissen nicht, {*wer   / **wen**
  he wants someone.ACC flatter but they know   not   who.NOM who.ACC
  / *wem}
   who.DAT
  'He wants to praise someone, but they don't know who.'

6. The preposition-stranding generalization:

The distribution of preposition-stranding under *wh*-movement out of putative ellipsis sites correlates with whether a language allows P-stranding in non-elliptical contexts. We would want to capture that under one generalization; this is afforded by a movement analysis. (This, and more, data is from Merchant 2001).

(19) **English (P-stranding)**

    a.   Peter was talking with someone, but I don't know (with) who(m)   *ellipsis*

    b. ✓ Who was Peter talking with?   *question*

(20) **Swedish (P-stranding)**

    a.   Peter har talat   med någon;   jag vet   inte (med) vem.
           Peter has talked with someone I   know not with   who

    b. ✓ Vem har Peter talat   med?
         who has Peter talked with

(21) **Greek (non P-stranding)**

    a.   I   Anna milise me   kapjon,   alla dhe ksero   *(me) pjon
           the Anna talked with someone but not I.know *with who

    b. * Pjon milise   me?
         who talked.3s with

(22) **Russian (non P-stranding)**

    a.   Anja govorila s   kem-to,   no ne znaju *(s) kem.
           Anja spoke   with someone, but not I.know with who

    b. * Kem ona govorila s?
         who she talked   with

(23) **German (non P-stranding)**

    a.   Er wollte   mit jemandem tanzen,   aber ich weiss nicht, *(mit) wem.
           he wanted with someone   to.dance but I   know not   with who

    b. * Wem wollte er mit tanzen?
         who wanted he with to.dance

4   Island repair

There is good evidence that there is covert syntactic structure in sluicing. But now, a puzzle: it appears that sluicing can to "repair" island violations: (data from Ross 1969; Chung et al. 1995; Merchant 2008)

(24)   I believe that he bit someone, but they don't know who ~~I believe that he bit~~.

(25)   Complex NP Constraint (noun complement):

    a.   * I believe the claim that he bit someone, but they don't know who I believe [the claim that he bit ___].

    b.   (?) I believe the claim that he bit someone, but they don't know who.

(26)   Complex NP Constraint (relative clause):

    a.   * She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize which one of my friends she kissed [a man who bit ___].

    b.   (?) She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize which one (of my friends).

(27)   Coordinate Structure Constraint:

    a.   * Bob ate dinner and saw a movie that night, but he didn't say which movie he [ate dinner and saw ___] that night.

    b.   (?) Bob ate dinner and saw a movie that night, but he didn't say which.

(28)   Sentential Subject Constraint:

    a.   * That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge who [that he'll hire ___] is possible.

    b.   (?) That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge who.

(29)   Adjunct island:

    a.   * Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember which one of the teachers Ben will be mad [if she talks to ___].

    b.   (?) Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember which one (of the teachers)

(30)   Wh-island:

    a.   * Sandy was trying to work out which students would be able to solve a certain problem, but she wouldn't tell us which one she was trying to work out [which students would be able to solve ___].

    b.   (?) Sandy was trying to work out which students would be able to solve a certain problem, but she wouldn't tell us which one.

4.1 A classic analysis (Chomsky, 1972)

(31) She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize which one of my friends ~~she kissed a man who bit~~ —.

(32) ... Tom doesn't realize
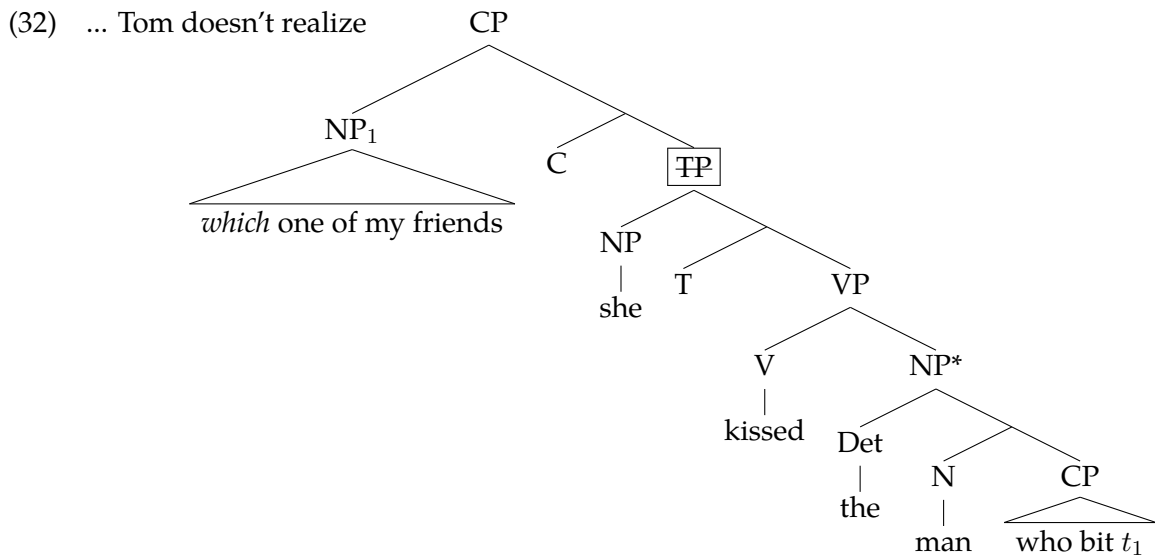
Idea: (Chomsky, 1972, and others)

- * is assigned to an island when it is crossed by a movement operation. It is ungrammatical/impossible to pronounce *.
- If a later operation (e.g. sluicing) deletes a constituency containing the *, the derivation is rescued. The result is no longer ungrammatical.

There is also a nice, modern way to think about this in relation to Fox and Pesetsky (2005) from last week.

4.2 A problem with the analysis

(33) Merchant (2001):

   a. * They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't know which they do ~~want to hire someone who speaks~~ *t*.

   b. They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language, but I don't know which (Balkan language) ~~they want to hire someone who speaks~~ *t*.

VP-ellipsis does not repair islands!

(34) Complex NP Constraint (noun complement):

* I believe the claim that he bit someone, but they don't know who I do.

(35) Complex NP Constraint (relative clause):

* She kissed a man who bit one of my friends, but Tom doesn't realize which (one of my friends) she did.

(36) Coordinate Structure Constraint:

* Bob ate dinner and saw a movie that night, but he didn't say which he did.

(37) Sentential Subject Constraint:

* That he'll hire someone is possible, but I won't divulge who is.

(38) Adjunct island:

* Ben will be mad if Abby talks to one of the teachers, but she couldn't remember which one of the teachers he will.

(39) Wh-island:

* Sandy was trying to work out which students would be able to solve a certain problem, but she wouldn't tell us which one she was.

References

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