P-stranding in ellipsis in Spanish does not arise from copular sources: evidence from non-exhaustive readings.

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1. P-stranding effects in a non-P-stranding language

This paper focuses on clausal ellipsis in Spanish, which exhibits an interesting pattern. As the sentence in (1) shows, prepositions can be optionally omitted in sluicing, but P-stranding is not allowed in regular wh-questions, as (2b) shows:

(1) Ana habló con alguien, pero no sé (con) quién.
Ana talked with someone but not I.know with who
‘Ana talked with someone but I don’t know with who’.

(2) a. ... pero no sé [con quién], habló Ana t_i.
   ... but not I.know with who talked Ana
   (literal) ‘... but I don’t know with who Ana talked.’

b. *... pero no sé quién, habló Ana con t_i.
   ... but not I.know who talked Ana with
   (intended) ‘... but I don’t know who Ana talked with’.

(examples adapted from Merchant 2001, ex. 41)

This pattern seems to be a counterexample to the Form-identity generalization II in (3), also known as the Preposition Stranding Generalization:

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Merchant (2001) reports the variant in (1) without the preposition to be dispreferred, but mostly acceptable. Rodrigues et al. (2009) claim that it is only slightly marginal for some speakers, and totally acceptable for most of them. My own native judgments are similar to Rodrigues et al.’s in that the variant without the preposition is totally acceptable.

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(3) **Form-identity generalization II: Preposition-stranding**

A language $L$ will allow preposition stranding under sluicing iff $L$ allows preposition stranding under regular wh-movement. *(Merchant 2001, p. 92)*

To account for cases like (1), some authors such as Vicente (2008), Rodrigues et al. (2009) and Barros (2014, 2016) have claimed that P-stranding effects (i.e. the availability of P-less remnants) in sluicing in Spanish (and in other non-P-stranding languages such as Brazilian Portuguese) are in fact derived from a non-isomorphic cleft/copular source, and not from an isomorphic wh-question source. In this paper I argue against this claim by showing that it makes the wrong predictions with regard to the availability of (non)exhaustive readings in P-less remnants.

The structure of this paper is as follows: In Section 2 I provide some background on the debate regarding P-stranding effects in ellipsis in Spanish (a non-P-stranding language). In Section 3 I show that P-less remnants of clausal ellipsis allow non-exhaustive readings, contrary to what is predicted when positing non-isomorphic copular sources. Finally, Section 4 concludes and states some open questions.

2. **P-stranding effects and non-isomorphic copular sources**

In recent years, compliance with the Preposition Stranding Generalization has been explored for different languages: see, for example, Fortin (2007) and Sato (2011) for Indonesian; Stjepanović (2008) for Serbo-Croatian, Algryani (2010) for Arabic, Abels (2017) for Bulgarian, among others; for Romance languages, Almeida and Yoshida (2007) for Brazilian Portuguese, Rodrigues et al. (2009) for Brazilian Portuguese and Spanish, and Vicente (2008) for Spanish.

Almeida and Yoshida (2007) first noted that Brazilian Portuguese offers a counterexample to the Preposition Stranding Generalization since it is possible to ‘strand’ (i.e. omit) the preposition in sluicing (4) but not in wh-questions (5b).

(4) A Maria dançou com alguém, mas eu não lembro (com quem).

the Maria danced with someone but I not remember with who

‘Maria danced with someone, but I don’t remember who.’

(5) a. ...mas eu não lembro [com quem], a Maria dançou $t_f$.

...but I not remember with who the Maria danced

(literal) ‘...but I don’t remember with who Maria danced.’

b. *...mas eu não lembro quem, a Maria dançou com $t_f$.

...but I not remember who the Maria danced with

(intended) ‘...but I don’t remember who Maria danced with.’

(examples adapted from Almeida and Yoshida 2007, ex. 6)
According to these authors, the variants with and without the preposition in (4) are ‘entirely acceptable and mutually interchangeable’ for most of the speakers consulted. They report finding similar judgments for different prepositions (i.e. com ‘with’, para ‘to’, de ‘of, from’, entre ‘between’, en cima de ‘on top of, above’, debaixo de ‘under’). Although they did not offer an explicit account of why it is possible to omit the preposition in sluicing in Brazilian Portuguese, they showed that sluicing in this language possesses the same characteristics as in English, and that Brazilian Portuguese is a true counterexample to (3). They ruled out a copular source analysis by applying some of the tests proposed by Merchant (2001), like the aggressively non-D-linked wh-phrases test, the mention-some and else modification tests, and the fact that sluicing in Brazilian Portuguese ameliorates island effects (for further details, see Almeida and Yoshida 2007).

Rodrigues et al. (2009) discussed P-stranding effects in ellipsis in Brazilian Portuguese and Spanish. They claim that apparent counterexamples to the Preposition Stranding Generalization in these two languages are in fact derived from what they call pseudosluicing, which is the name they give to a sluice with a cleft or copular source, as in (6b) (a similar source is proposed for Brazilian Portuguese):

\[(6) \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{Ana habló con una chica pero no sé cuál.} \\
             & \text{Ana talked with a girl but not I know which} \\
             & \text{‘Ana talked with a girl, but I don’t know which.’} \\
\text{b. } & \text{...no sé cuál es la chica con la que habló Ana.} \\
             & \text{...not I know which is the girl with the that talked Ana} \\
             & \text{‘...I don’t know which is the girl that Ana talked with.’}
\end{align*}
\]

(\text{examples adapted from Rodrigues et al. 2009, ex. 6})

In this paper I argue that P-stranding effects cannot be derived from pseudosluicing. Evidence against Rodrigues et al.’s claim comes from the availability of non-exhaustive readings in clausal ellipsis with P-less remnants. That is, in clefts/copular sources as the ones proposed by Rodrigues et al., the pivot entails exhaustivity, hence, these should only allow a mention-all interpretation and are predicted to be incompatible with modifiers which require a mention-some interpretation like for example and else. As I will show, this prediction is not borne out. In the next Section, I apply two of the tests that Merchant (2001) proposes against the reduction of sluicing to pseudosluicing and I show that even when P-less remnants are possible, a cleft/copular source is ruled out.

\footnote{With regard to other tests like the aggressively non-D-linked wh-phrases test, I follow van Craenenbroeck (2010) in claiming that it does not provide any evidence regarding the syntactic structure inside the ellipsis site. The following examples show that aggressively non-D-linked wh-phrases cannot be remnants for ellipsis (iib) but they can occur in regular wh-questions (ic) and as pivots of pseudo-clefts (id).}

\[(i) \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \text{Alguien rayó mi auto anoche...} \\
             & \text{someone scratched my car last night...} \\
             & \text{‘Someone scratched my car last night...’}
\end{align*}
\]
It is really important to emphasize that even though previous works (e.g. Merchant 2001, Almeida and Yoshida 2007, Rodrigues et al. 2009, Barros 2016, among others) focused on sluicing, there is no principled reason to assume that the analyses they propose hold only for this type of clausal ellipsis and not for all the other types (e.g. stripping, bare argument ellipsis, fragment answers/questions, etc.). As Griffiths and Lipták (2014) pointed out, the different ‘flavors’ of clausal ellipsis are defined according to the type of constituent that survives deletion. Therefore, if clausal ellipsis is defined as the deletion of a TP (with the exception of usually one constituent), then all its sub-types should be derived in an identical manner, unless there are independent reasons to propose a construction-specific treatment of ellipsis. In the remaining of this paper I assume that there is no evidence to assume that sluicing behaves differently than other types of clausal ellipsis, or that the restrictions imposed to sluicing are different from the conditions that govern other types of clausal ellipsis. In this regard, I assume that if a mechanism/source is possible in one type of clausal ellipsis, it should be possible in all the other types.

3. Exhaustive readings

In this section I apply two of Merchant (2001)’s tests (mention-some and else modification) to show that sluicing cannot arise from pseudosluicing, as defined by Rodrigues et al. (2009). In particular, while clausal ellipsis with P-less remnants allows non-exhaustive readings, non-isomorphic copular sources only allow exhaustive readings. I will also show that isomorphic sources are indeed compatible with non-exhaustive readings.

3.1 Mention-some modification

P-omission in ellipsis in Spanish is compatible with mention-some modifiers like por ejemplo ‘for example’, as the fragment question in (7b) shows:

    b. ...quisiera saber quién (*carajo)! ...I wish to know who the hell (intended) ‘...I wish I knew who the hell!’
    c. ...quisiera saber quién rayó mi auto! ...I wish to know who the hell scratched my car ‘...I wish I knew who the hell scratched my car!’
    d. ...quisiera saber quién es la persona que rayó mi auto! ...I wish to know who the hell is the person that scratched my car ‘...I wish I knew who the hell is the person that scratched my car!’

In this respect, this test does not seem to give any clues about the pre-elided structure. There are some other tests, such as the mention-all modification test and the swiping test, that cannot be applied to Spanish for independent reasons (basically, Spanish lacks mention-all modifiers to wh-questions and the swiping phenomenon). I will not discuss them here.

It is worth mentioning that not all types of clausal ellipsis allow P-less remnants in Spanish; while sluicing, bare-argument ellipsis and stripping allow them, fragment answers, split questions and pseudostripping do not. Why this is the case is out of the scope of this paper.
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(7) a. A: Deberías hablar con alguien sobre tus problemas financieros.
   'You should talk with someone about your financial problems.'

   b. B: (Con) quién, por ejemplo?
   'Who, for example?'

Crucially, wh-questions allow this type of modification (8a), but clefted/copular questions do not allow it (8b). This is because this type of questions entails exhaustivity and this is at odds with a *mention-some* modifier such as ‘for example’:

(8) a. Con quién debería hablar, por ejemplo?
   'Who I should talk with, for example'

   b. Quién es la persona con el que debería hablar, (*por ejemplo)?
   'Who is the person that I should talk with, for example'

The same pattern is found in bare argument ellipsis, another type of clausal ellipsis that allow P-less remnants. The following example shows that P-omission is possible even when the sentence has a non-exhaustive interpretation, given by *por ejemplo*:

(9) Ana recomienda servir la carne con un buen tinto, por ejemplo, (con) un Rioja.
   'Ana suggests to serve the meat with a good red wine, for instance, a Rioja.'

   (example adapted from Vicente 2008, ex. 18)

Nevertheless, Vicente incorrectly proposes (10a) as a source for (9). I claim that this cannot be the case because (9) is incompatible with a *mention-some* interpretation given by *por ejemplo* ‘for example’, as (10b) shows:

(10) a. El tinto con el que Ana recomienda servir la carne es un Rioja.
    'The red wine with which Ana suggests to serve the meat is a Rioja.'

    b. *El tinto con el que Ana recomienda servir la carne es un Rioja, por ejemplo.
    example
    'The wine with which Ana suggests to serve the meat is a Rioja, for example.'
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The data presented so far shows that the P-less variant in (7b) and (9) cannot arise from a cleft/copular source because these sources are incompatible with non-exhaustive readings, but P-less remnants are indeed compatible with these modifiers.

3.2 Else Modification

Rodrigues et al. (2009) claim that P-less remnants are incompatible with else modification, providing the examples in (11). According to them, this is in line with the fact that their proposed non-isomorphic sources for the ellipsis site entail exhaustivity, hence they do not allow non-exhaustive modification, as in (11b):

(11) a. Ana habló con una chica rubia, pero no sé * (con) qué chica más. Ana talked with a girl blonde but not I know with what girl else ‘Ana talked with a blond girl, but I don’t know which other girl.’

b. *...no sé qué chica más es la chica con la que habló Ana. ...not I know which else is the girl with that talked Ana (intended) ‘...I don’t know which other girl is the girl that Ana talked with.’

(examples adapted from Rodrigues et al. 2009, ex. 27)

According to them, the fact that P-less remnants are impossible when a non-isomorphic cleft/copular source is unavailable shows that P-omission actually arise from non-isomorphic sources. Nevertheless, I claim that the previous example is ruled out for independent reasons and that else modification is in fact available with P-less remnants in sluicing in particular, and clausal ellipsis in general. Martín González (2010) provides the example in (12a) which shows that non-exhaustive readings are indeed possible when the preposition is omitted. It is worth mentioning that in this case a copular source like (12b) is ungrammatical. Crucially, this example is presented in a way that it is conveyed that Ana talked with several students; this reading is lacking in (11a) above:

(12) a. Ana habló con varias estudiantes. Habló con Paula y con María Ana talked with several students she talked with Paula and with María pero no sé (con) {quién(es)/cuál} más. but not I know with who/which else ‘Ana talked with several students. She talked with Paula and with María, but I don’t know who/which else.’

b. *...no sé quién más es (la estudiante) con la que habló. ...not I know who else is the student with who she talked (intended) ‘...I don’t know who else is the student she talked with.’

(examples adapted from Martín González 2010, ex. 23)
In addition, when (11a) is slightly modified to convey that Ana talked with more than one person, *else* modification is now allowed, as (13) shows. While a clefted/copular source is still impossible, as in (14a) a wh-questions is perfectly acceptable, as in (14b):

(13) Ana habló con una chica rubia y con alguien más, pero no sé (con) quién más.

Ana talked with a girl blonde and with someone else but not I.know with who else.

‘Ana talked with a blond girl and with someone else, but I don’t know who else.’

(14) a. *...no sé quién más es (la persona) con la que habló Ana.

...not I.know who else is the person with that talked Ana

(intended) ‘...I don’t know who else is the person that Ana talked with.’

b. ...no sé con quién más habló Ana.

...not I.know with who else talked Ana

‘...I don’t know who else Ana talked with.’

The same pattern is found in other types of clausal ellipsis. For instance, (15b) combines bare-argument ellipsis and sluicing:

(15) a. A: Escuché que Ana habló sobre varios temas interesantes.

I.heard that Ana talked about several topics interesting

‘I heard Ana talked about several interesting topics.’

b. B: Sí, sobre ellipsis seguro, pero no sé sobre cuál más.

yes about ellipsis for.sure but not I.know about what else

‘Yes, (she talked) about ellipsis for sure, but I don’t know which else.’

Here both remnants can appear without the preposition, as shown in (16)

(16) B’: Sí, ellipsis seguro, pero no sé cuál más.

yes ellipsis for.sure but not I.know what else

‘Yes, (she talked about) ellipsis for sure, but I don’t know which else.’

I already showed that the source of sluicing –when combined with modifiers that entail non-exhaustive readings– cannot be a cleft/copular question because this type of questions entails exhaustivity. For the sake of completeness, the same is true for the example above:

(17) *...no sé cuál (tema) más es el tema sobre el que habló.

...not I.know which topic else is the topic about that she.talked

(intended) ‘...I don’t know which other topic is the topic she talked about.’
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With respect to the source of P-omission in the first remnant –(sobre) ellipsis ‘(about) ellipsis’– in (16), the non-isomorphic copular source is also ruled out, given the availability of mention-some modification:

(18) a.  A: *I heard Ana talked about several interesting topics.

b.  B: Sí, (sobre) ellipsis, por ejemplo.  
    ‘Yes, (she talked) about ellipsis, for example.’

c.  B’: *Sí, ellipsis es el tema sobre el que habló, por ejemplo.  
    ‘Yes, ellipsis is the topic she talked about, for example.’

A possible counterargument that has been suggested to me by Matt Barros (p.c.) is that cases such as (18c) could in fact arise from the source in (19), in which the definite (el tema ‘the topic’) is replaced by an indefinite (uno de los temas ‘one of the topics’). This is indeed compatible with mention-some modification:

(19) B”: Sí, ellipsis es uno de los temas sobre los que habló, por ejemplo.  
    ‘Yes, ellipsis is one of the topics she talked about, for example.’

Nevertheless, once these sources are allowed for some cases, it is expected that they could be found in some other cases of ellipsis with P-less remnants, such as (1), repeated below:

(20) a.  Ana habló con alguien pero no sé quién. = (1)  
    Ana talked with someone but I don’t know who  
    ‘Ana talked with someone but I don’t know who.’

b.  #...no sé quién es una de las personas con las que habló Ana.  
    ‘...I don’t know who is one of the persons that Ana talked with.’

The problem with (20b) is that the proposed source conveys that Ana talked with more than one person, and this meaning is absent in (20a) explaining the incompatibility.

The data presented in this sub-section shows that the P-less variant in (12a), (13) and (15a) cannot arise from a non-isomorphic cleft/copular source given the inherent exhaustive readings of these sources.

4. Conclusions and open questions

In this short paper I have presented compelling evidence to rule out non-isomorphic copular/cleft sources as the possible sources for P-less remnants in various types of clausal ellipsis in Spanish. This evidence comes from the availability of non-exhaustive readings (given by mention-some and else modification) in clausal ellipsis with P-less remnants.
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These facts cannot be explained by a hypothesis that claims that P-less remnants are derived from clefted/copular sources.

The obvious question that remains open is related to the source of P-less remnants in Spanish. This question can only be answered by looking at clausal ellipsis in general, not only at sluicing. By doing so, it becomes evident the fact that not all sub-types of clausal ellipsis allow P-less remnants: sluicing (Rodrigues et al. 2009, Barros 2016, Martín González 2010), contrast sluicing, stripping and bare-argument ellipsis (Vicente 2008) allow them, but fragment answers, split questions (Arregi 2010, Rodrigues et al. 2009) and pseudostripping do not allow them (I omit the examples because of space restrictions). Nevertheless, addressing this issue is out of the scope of this paper.

References

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