

The dynamics of ellipsis identity

Building on work by Elliott & Sudo (2016), we argue (a) that ellipsis identity is (at least partly) semantic, and (b) that the semantic component of the identity condition must be stated in terms of a dynamic notion of content, such as Heim's (1982) *Context Change Potentials*. Concretely, we argue for a new ellipsis identity condition – d(ynamic)-parallelism, extending Rooth's (1993) influential proposal for VP-ellipsis, and Elliott & Sudo's refinement of Merchant (2001). Crucial evidence for our claim comes from the behaviour of quantificational expressions and modals in elliptical contexts.

E-TYPE READINGS: Quantifiers in the antecedent of a sluice often yield so-called “E-type readings”, as previously observed by Merchant (1998) (see also Romero 2003, Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey 2011). Contrary to these authors, Elliott & Sudo (2016) show that quantifiers in sluiced sentences can also give rise to Q(uantificational)-readings. This is illustrated by (1).

- (1) John applied to one graduate school.
- a. I don't know why John applied to one graduate school. (Q-reading)
 - b. I don't know why John applied to the graduate school. (E-type reading)

Notice that the overt counterparts of these continuations are *unambiguous*, implying that the two readings must be due to two different ellipsis sources. Elliott & Sudo (2016) furthermore show that quantifiers in VP-ellipses can also receive the two readings (contrary to Romero 2003, Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey 2011), as illustrated by (2).

- (2) Whenever Prof Jones is working on a paper,
- a. the postdocs cannot work on a paper. (Q-reading)
 - b. the postdocs cannot work on the paper. (E-type reading)

Again the non-elliptical counterparts of these sentences are *unambiguous*, meaning that there are two different ellipsis sources.

Along similar lines, we observe that attitude verbs may, in certain contexts, give rise to similar ambiguities, as illustrated by (3). Under what we've labelled the Q-reading, Pauli's knowledge concerns Madison's desire. Under what we've labelled the E-type reading, which we take to be a case of modal subordination, Pauli's knowledge concerns which car will bring Madison the most happiness.

- (3) Madison wants to buy a new car, and Pauli knows (just) which one.
- a. Madison wants to buy t (Q-reading)
 - b. Madison should buy t (E-type reading)

Merchant (2001) provides an account of E-type readings under sluicing, but we show in the talk that it is unsuccessful. In brief, since Merchant's account is formulated in a static setting, where entailment is insensitive to anaphoric relations, there is no way of ensuring that the definite in the ellipsis-site is bound by the quantifier in the antecedent.

Elliott & Sudo (2016) note that one of the readings can be absent for independent pragmatic reasons. In particular, when two clauses stand in a so-called *PARALLEL* relation, the E-type reading is generally absent, as illustrated by (4).

- (4) I read a paper but you didn't read a paper/*read the paper.

The fact that canonical examples of VP ellipsis are sentences of this kind presumably led authors like Romero (2003) and Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey (2011) to claim that VP ellipsis does not license E-type readings. As Elliott & Sudo stress, this constraint should be best understood as a pragmatic one, and it in fact applies to sluicing as well, as in (5).

- (5) I know which BOYS like most of the professors, but I don't know which GIRLS like most of the professors/*like them.

D-GIVENNESS While the Q-reading involves an ellipsis site that is completely isomorphic to the ellipsis antecedent, the E-type reading poses a challenge for the identity condition for ellipsis. Adopting File Change Semantics (Heim 1982), Elliott & Sudo (2016) propose d-GIVENNESS as the condition for sluicing.

- (6) A phrase TP can be elided only if TP is d-GIVEN.
- a. A phrase TP_E is d-GIVEN if there is an antecedent TP_A in the discourse such that $\llbracket TP_E \rrbracket$ and $\llbracket TP_A \rrbracket$ dynamically entail each other.
 - b. ϕ dynamically entails ψ if there is a non-empty file F' such that $F + \phi = F'$, there is a non-empty file F'' such that $F' + \psi = F''$.

Following Heim (1991), they assume that the familiarity condition on definites is a presupposition, while the novelty condition on indefinites is pragmatically derived and irrelevant for the computation of d-GIVENNESS. Consequently, (i) and the elided TP in (ib) dynamically entail each other, provided that the definite *the paper* in the latter is anaphorically dependent on the indefinite *a paper* in the former.

However, the way Elliott & Sudo (2016) formulate their account is only applicable to sluicing, as they themselves acknowledge. In what follows, we will propose to extend their idea to VP ellipsis.

PARALLELISM CONDITION IN DYNAMIC SEMANTICS Rooth (1993) proposes an influential account of VP ellipsis in the framework of alternative semantics for focus. His *Parallelism Condition* states: A VP can be elided only if it is (reflexively) dominated by a constituent PD_E (called its parallelism domain) such that there is an (accessible) antecedent constituent PD_A in the discourse and $\llbracket PD_A \rrbracket_o \in \llbracket PD_E \rrbracket_f$, where $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket_o$ is the ordinary semantic value of α and $\llbracket \alpha \rrbracket_f$ is the focus semantic value of α (we ignore assignment functions here for the sake of simplicity). The idea behind this is that PD_E and PD_A are about the same question ($\llbracket PD_E \rrbracket_f$). While this accounts for the Q-reading, it is clear that it incorrectly rules out the E-type reading.

In order to account for the E-type reading of VP ellipsis, we propose the following modification to Rooth's Parallelism Condition. In the talk, we show that this captures the modal ambiguity, once we analyze modal subordination as a kind of dynamic binding, following Roberts (1989) and others.

- (7) A VP can be elided if it is (reflexively) dominated by a constituent PD_E such that there is an accessible constituent PD_A in the discourse and $\llbracket PD_A \rrbracket_o$ and some member of $\llbracket PD_E \rrbracket_f$ dynamically entail each other.

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