Ellipsis

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Four issues

• Representation
• Identification (Interpretation)
• Data
• Homogeneity
Representation: Complex

- Articulated syntactic representation, subject to full set of constraints.
- Compositional interpretation.
- Subject to all syntactic constraints, but constraints regulating mapping from syntax to phonology vacuously satisfied.
Representation: Atomic

- Null proform at ellipsis site or lexical type-shifting rule.
- Interpreted like other anaphors.
- Should be no syntactic evidence for internal complexity.
Representation: Nil

• Syntax generates fragments of arbitrary categories.
• Construed using general inference/matching mechanisms.
• No evidence for internal complexity.
• Evidence for fragment status?
Identification: Identity of Form

- **Reuse**: Multiple occurrences of one object
  - Entails full syntactic and semantic identity with ‘antecedent’

- **Matching**: Relation between two objects
  - In principle allows for some variability, depending on how the relation is stated
Identification: Identity of Meaning

• Various options, in decreasing strength:
  – Logical equivalence
  – Parallelism, E-Givenness, etc.
  – Inferenceability

• Each option is consistent with different answers to the representation question!
Identification: Identity of Meaning

- Syntactic structure
  - Encode identification relation as presupposition introduced by ‘E-morpheme’
Identification: Identity of Meaning

• Proform/lexical rule
  – Encode relation as presupposition (domain restriction) on variable introduced by proform or as part of a lexical rule
Identification: Identity of Meaning

• If the identification relation has systematic or language-specific properties, this would seem to indicate lexical encoding, which would in turn argue for some representational status to ellipsis (null structure+E or proform)
Data: Relevance

• Different kinds of data are going to bear on the two questions.
  – Sag: identification
  – CLM: representation

• These issues are connected, but we need to be sensitive to the distinction.
Data: Kind

• We need more data of more types, especially processing data.
  – E.g., Frazier and Clifton’s work on sluicing vs. VP-ellipsis

• Unacceptability/infelicity (presupposition failures) vs. ungrammaticality (matching effects).
Homogeneity

• It is possible that not all occurrences of non-pronunciation are alike.
• Conclusions based on one type may not generalize to other types.
• If ellipsis is heterogeneous, we need to ask why, and how we can capture differences and similarities.
Heterogeneity

• Multiple E-morphemes and/or null proforms, differing in selectional restrictions and presuppositions.

• Processing preferences regulating the choice between them?
Heterogeneity

• Surely it is possible to understand the use of a linguistic symbol without propositional content as an intention to convey a proposition related to that symbol.
• But is this the norm or the exception in ellipsis?