What’s LF got to do with it?

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1 Introduction

(1) A Standard View of Ellipsis (as summarized by Elbourne 2005):
   a. The strict-sloppy ambiguity is to be dealt with in terms of referential versus
   b. Ellipsis requires a linguistic antecedent,
   c. The relationship between antecedent and dided phrase is one of identity of LF.

On Stooppiness [See, especially, Elbourne 2005]

(2) a. Kim visited his mother, but Bo didn’t __.
   b. [visit(boy, mother)](Kim) vs. [λx.visit(x’s mother)(x)](Kim)
      Keenan 1971, Sag 1976, Williams 1977

(3) a. The policeman who arrested John read him his rights, but the policeman who
   b. John’s coach thinks he has a chance, and Bill’s coach does __ too. (Wescoat 1989)
   c. If John has trouble at school, I’ll help him, but if Bill does __, I won’t. (Hardt 1999)
   d. (John and Bill both have cats.) When I met John, I talked to his cat, but when
   I met Bill, I didn’t __.

(4) When John had to cook, he didn’t want to. When he had to clean, he didn’t either __. (Hardt 1999)

Pragmatic Control

(5) a. [Pat attempts to kiss Chris while driving:] Pat, you mustn’t __.
   b. [A piece of chocolate cake is offered:] I really shouldn’t __,
   c. [As an invitation to dance:] Shall we? __
   d. [Bo gets Lee an expensive present:] Bo, you shouldn’t have __!


Active-Passive Mismatches:

(7) a. It should be noted, as Dummett does __, that… (Last, ms.)
   b. Botanist: That can all be explained.
      Mr. Spock: Please do __ (Star Trek rerun)
      [Sag 1976: 75, footnote 2]

(8) a. This information could have been released by Gorbachov, but he chose not to,
   b. A lot of this material can be presented in a fairly informal and accessible fashion, and ofen I do,
      [Hardt (1993); (131), (134): 37]

(9) ??John fired Max, although it was Bill who should have been. [Fieno & May (1994), p. 203 note 10]

(10) [Prison guards deserve their good salaries] Proposing to reduce their numbers to save money would be endangering them even more than they are __. [Letter to editor, SJMN, June 24, 2004]

Rebinding

(11) a. Kim was easy to talk to __; Sandy wasn’t __.
   b. ??Kim was easy to talk to __; Sandy was hard to __. [__ = talk to ]

(12) a. A: I know what everyone was talking about __.
   b. B: *What was Pat __? [__ = talking about]

(13) a. *What Sandy carried was the baseball bat, and what Betsy did __ was the
        catcher’s mitt,
b. What Sandy wanted to buy ___ but couldn't ___ was the catcher's mitt,

(14) My brother Al, who John liked, but who Harry didn't ___ , was a nice guy. [Sag 1976: 84, footnote 26, attributed to Larry Horn]

(15) a. *We wanted to invite someone, but we couldn't decide who to ___.
    b. *Mary was told to bring something to the party, so she asked Sue what to ___.
    [Loebeck 1995 (26): 175]

(16) What VP-Ellipsis can do and What it can’t ___ . [Johnson 2003]

(17) We know that Abby DOES speak [Greek, Albanian, and Serbian] we need to find out which languages she DOESN’T ___! [Merchant 2001:115 fn 5 (ii)]

(18) If it contains some stuff you like and other stuff you don’t ___ , delete the parts you don’t like and forward only the parts you really want to share. [http://www.breakthechain.org/libopentr.html 8/31/05]

Resolution of Indexicals

(19) A: Do you think they’ll like me?
    B: Of course they will ___, [___ = like you/*me]
    [Sag and Hankamer 1984]

(20) Are you telling me I simply have to gut it out for the rest of my life? God doesn’t want me to be miserable, does He?
    I stammered, “No, He doesn’t ___. But surely you two can work things out, I know you must love each other,” [http://www.married comm/ a00177199c9m as retrieved on Sep 10, 2005 07:07:32 GMT]
    [___ = want you/*me to be miserable]

(21) Sag and Hankamer (1984: 332)

    Delete VP in Sa only if:
    1. qa is the Kaplan-context of Sa,
    2. qa is the Kaplan-context of some sentence Sa not subsequent to Sa in discourse, and
    3. there is some VP in Sa such that for all t, w, and assignment functions f, 
       [[VPa]]w[f] = [[VPa]]w[f].

(22) A: Do you think they’ll like me?
    B: Of course they will ___, [___ = like you/*me]
    for all t, w, f, [[like you]]w[f] = [[like me]]w[f].

(23) I lost my wallet before he did ___ [___ = lost his/my wallet]

(24) Forwarding a message leaves the headers in place, revealing the e-mail addresses of everyone who has received and/or sent the message in the past, I don’t really want to know who got it before I did ___ and I don’t want my e-mail address distributed in this manner, I’m sure you don’t ___ , either, [http://www.breakthechain.org/libopentr.html 8/31/05]
    [___ = want your/my e-mail address distributed in this manner]

Conclusions:

(1) VPE is based on meaning,
(2) VPE is not based on a ‘syntactic level of LF’,
(3) Nor is VPE based on a ‘serious’ LF (i.e. one that receives a model-theoretic interpretation).

2 Inference-Based VPE

(26) a. Irv and Mary wanted to dance together, but Mary couldn’t ___, because her husband was there. (Webber 1978)
    b. Irv and Mary wanted to dance together—Mary wanted to dance with Irv.

(27) Webber: Inference is involved in the resolution of at least some instances of VPE,

(28) Martha and Irv had planned to nominate each other, but Martha couldn’t ___, because of her political obligations,

(29) Here, the reading is ‘Martha couldn’t nominate Irv’. Unlike dance, the verb nominal cannot appear without its object, Webber notes that there seem to be no hard and fast rules delimiting the class of productive inferences relative to verb phrase ellipsis. (p. 4 38) However, there is a crucial factor in example (26) which is not noted by Webber: the interpretation without inference is unacceptable, involving, as it does, an agreement violation between the singular subject Mary and the VP dance together. This fact is the key to solving the problem posed by Webber, about how to delimit the class of available inferences in ellipsis: only inferences triggered by violations are possible, [Hardt 2005]
(30) a. Bob wants to sail round the world and Alice wants to climb Kilimanjaro, but neither of them can, because money is too tight, (Webber 1978)

b. I did everything Mary did, Mary swam the English Channel and Mary climbed Kilimanjaro, and I did too, (Fiengo and May 1994)

c. Whenever Max uses the fax or Oscar uses the Xerox, I can’t, (Fiengo and May 1994)

(31) a. Bob wants to sail round the world and Alice wants to climb Kilimanjaro\l Bob and Alice want to [realize their desires],

b. Mary swam the English Channel and Mary climbed Kilimanjaro\l Mary [swam the English Channel and climbed Kilimanjaro]

c. Whenever Max uses the fax or Oscar uses the Xerox... \? Max and Oscar [use the Xerox]

(32) Atheists approach every discussion WITH prejudice: there is NO god, they say \- end of discussion for them. Agnostics, on the other hand, say maybe there is \- maybe there isn’t \- don’t really know \- no prejudice, [http://groups.google.com/group/alt.atheism/ Posting April 6, 2003]

There is no god \l There isn’t [a god]

(33) You can’t prove there is no Krishna, so how do you know there isn’t \_ \? You can’t prove there is no Allah/Muhammed, so how do you know there isn’t \_ \? You can’t prove there is no Zeus so how do you know there isn’t \_ \? You can’t prove there’s no Santa Claus so how do you know there isn’t \_ \? [http://groups.google.com/group/alt.atheism/ PostingApril6,2003]

There’s no Santa Claus \l There isn’t a Santa Claus

(34) A: I just need the impetus of someone to collaborate with.
B: I’d love to \_ \.
A’s utterance conversationally implicates that A would like B to [collaborate with A]

[SW: Dec, 2005]

(35) A: Boy, some of these things really have steep price tags on ’em...
B: \"They sure are, [FM, 10/1/05]
Xs have steep price tags on ’em \l Xs are [expensive]

(36) I'm gonna send them an email saying that Ling 1 is something they could take,
I don't think many of them will \_ , though, [DB, 9/26/05]

Ling 1 is something they could take \l They could [take Ling 1]

(37) "They can’t come here to Akron or to any other place in America and talk to you about all the jobs that they created, because they haven’t, “ [John Kerry, Sept, 4, 2004]

they can’t talk to you about all the jobs that they created \l they can’t say they’ve [created a lot of jobs]

(38) Scott: They need reassurance that I can’t give them,
Harper: Yes you can \_ , [Boston Public, Dec 2, 2002]

They need reassurance that I can’t give them \l I can’t [give them the reassurance that they need].

(39) "Though the Moldovan and Romanian organizations typically smuggle girls to Western Europe and not the United States, they are, Matei says, closely allied with Russian and Ukrainian networks that do \_ \, [NY Times, 1/25/04]

X typically smuggle girls to Western Europe and not the United States \l X does not smuggle girls to the US,

(40) The Ugly Side of Teen Parties

Your parents aren’t home, but suddenly the police are \_ .

How do you handle problem parties? [In Read This!, SJMN 8/30/05]

Your parents aren’t home \l Your parents aren’t [at f], (where f is the location of your home.)

(41) B: I just need you to sign this to affirm my student status.
I: [laughter]
B: I mean I am \_ , aren’t I? [BE, 8/30/05]
X affirm my student status \l X affirm that I am [a student]

(42) [Re flooding in New Orleans]

There will be a “total evacuation of the city. We have to \_ . The city will not be functional for two or three months,” Nagin said, [8/31/05 AP, Guardian Unlimited]
a. There will be a “total evacuation of the city” - We will [totally evacuate the city].

(43) I: But sliding glass doors are easier to leave open in the night, aren’t they?
P: Yes, but would you want to? [PE 9/2/05]
  sliding glass doors are easier to leave open in the night! It’s easier to [leave
glass doors open in the night] (i.e. it would be easier to leave our glass doors
open in the night.)

(44) a. Breakfast is usually what a place like this does best, so it was a surprise to
go back and find out that it wasn’t _ - or, at least, that it wasn’t _ on
that morning, when I ordered Sonny’s Breakfast Special ($5.50), which is two
eggs, potato, toast, coffee and your choice of ribeye steak or butterfly pork chop.
on Aug 31, 2005 21:37:38 GMT]

b. Breakfast is usually what a place like this does best! Breakfast is usually [good
(excellent?)] at a place like this.

3 Conclusions

(45) a. Inference based VPE is common in language use.

b. To provide a unified account of the available data, an interpretive theory of
VPE (like that suggested by Hardt [1993] [See also Culicover and Jackendoff
(2005).]), which incorporates inference, seems preferable to LF matching, LF
copying, or LF-jiggling alternatives.

c. Trying to explain the graded space of acceptability in terms of more general
properties of discourse processing (Hardt, Keeler) seems promising.

d. Many previous claims of ungrammaticality are better regarded as claims of re-
duced acceptability, parallel to recent results obtained regarding wh processing
(e.g. Featherston 2005), Clifton et al. (in press), Arnon et al. (2005), Sag et al.
(submitted)

e. This minimizes grammar and maximizes explanation of the relevant data.

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