VP Ellipsis without Parallel Binding: Towards a QUD Approach

Patrick D. Elliott¹, Andreea Nicolae² & Yasutada Sudo¹

University College London¹ and Harvard University²

May 30, 2014

SUMMARY: We observe a new reading (the sticky reading) of pronouns in VP ellipsis, which is distinct from the strict and sloppy readings. This reading is problematic for standard theories of VPE, which are tailored to force parallel binding. We sketch an alternative theory based on a question-based model of information structure.

Strict, Sloppy, and Sticky Readings

Pronouns under VPE famously give rise to entailment for focus values as (non-contextual) question entailment. [108x1592](1) The sticky reading, the two sentences are about the same set of objects. The focus con-

The Discourse Condition

VPE is known to be sensitive to discourse relations between A-Cl and E-Cl (Hardt & Romero 2004, Kehler 2002, Kehler & Büring 2008). We observe that the sticky reading is more limited in distribution than the strict and sloppy readings (see (9) and (10)).

The Identity Condition

We formulate our identity condition in terms of the Question under Discussion (Roberts 2012), which in turn is based on alternative semantics for focus (Rooth 1992). We only discuss simple cases where both the clause containing the elliptical VP (E-Cl) and the clause containing the antecedent VP (A-Cl) are matrix clauses.

The Focus Condition

One crucial difference between the sticky reading and other mixed readings is that under the sticky reading, the two sentences are about the same set of objects. The focus condition captures this notion. Identifying focus values of sentences as questions, we define entailment for focus values as (non-contextual) question entailment.

Since (3) does not entail (6), the focus condition is not met. Generally, under strict and sloppy readings, [E-Cl][f]' = [A-Cl][f]' thus the focus condition holds. Under (unavailable) mixed readings, the entailment does not hold.

The DISCOURSE CONDITION

VPE is known to be sensitive to discourse relations between A-Cl and E-Cl (Hardt & Romero 2004, Kehler 2002, Kehler & Büring 2008). We observe that the sticky reading is more limited in distribution than the strict and sloppy readings (see (9) and (10)).

In the QUD model (Roberts 2012), each discourse move (assertion or question) needs to be discourse dependent on some prior question move.

Follow-Up Questions

A question FUQ is a follow-up question to another question Q (in discourse D) if any of the following is the case:

• Subquestion: Q has not been completely answered in D and Q entails FUQ.

• Reason: A partial answer p to Q has been given in D before FUQ such that a partial answer to FUQ explains p.

• Consequence: A partial answer p to Q has been given in D before FUQ such that p explains a partial answer to FUQ.

This list is tentative. More relations could be added (cf. Coherence Theory; Kehler 2002).

We represent discourse dependencies with indentation.

(8) Q: Who is going to NY?

A1: Each of the boys is going to NY.

A2: Because the editor did [proofread his paper].

(11) Q: Which of the authors' proofs did he read?

A: #None of the authors' proofs did he read. Because he is a politician.

A2: But one syntactician did [proofread his paper].

A2': #But one syntactician did [proofread their paper].

Alternative Account: Telescoping?

The telescoping analysis fails to generalize to other cases of sticky readings.

1. Incorrect truth conditions with negative quantifiers:

(14) [None of the authors'] proofread his paper. So the editor did [proofread his paper].

2. Collectivity: The telescoping analysis only generates the distributive reading.

3. Discourse configurations on telescoping: Keshet (2008) observes that telescoping is unavailable in certain discourse configurations, e.g. the explanation relation.

References:


Contact: p.elliott@ucl.ac.uk