



NP-Ellipsis

Week 1 – Introduction to NPE

By Anh Duy La - UCL



Overview

- Aims:
 - Introduce NPE as a type of ellipsis along with its properties
 - Discuss main issues in the NPE research area
 - Briefly look at part of the existing literature on NPE in classifier languages

Schedule

- W1: Introduction to NPE with characteristic properties
- W2: Nature of the NPE gap
- W3: How is the gap derived?
- W4: How is the gap licensed?
- W5: NPE in classifier languages



What is Ellipsis?

- Ellipsis is a phenomenon where missing material is recovered from and interpreted with regard to the linguistic context.
- Some types of ellipsis are VP-ellipsis (VPE), Sluicing, and NP-ellipsis (NPE), among others (Gapping, Stripping, Fragment Answer, etc.)
- We will look briefly at the first two for broad comparisons but focus mainly on the last one.



VPE

- (1) I bought a car last month, and my best friend did ____ too.
- (2) My mom hurt her knees, but I didn't ____.
- (3) I want to tell you about my marking experience, but I can't ____.



Sluicing

- (1) I met a lecturer from the UCL Linguistics Department, but I don't know exactly who(m) ____.
- (2) My friend managed to write a 3000-page dissertation, but I don't know how ____.
- (3) He stopped talking to me, but I don't know why ____.



NPE

- (1) My friends have one boba each day, but I normally have four ____.
- (2) You can have these books, but I will take those ____ so don't touch them.
- (3) Every linguistics student thinks they love syntax at the beginning but only some ____ actually become syntacticians.

Gapping

- A type of elliptical phenomenon where, canonically, only the verb is elided from the sentence, leaving behind everything else.

(1) Andrew loves black tea and Daniel ~~loves~~ green tea.

- Gapping seems to form a class different from that containing Sluicing and VPE.

Syntactic constraints on Gapping and Ellipsis

- Jackendoff (1971) gives a list of constraints on Gapping and those on Ellipsis (umbrella term for Sluicing, VPE, and NPE from now on).

(1) Constraints on Gapping:

- a. A gap **must be** flanked by lexical material.
- b. A gap **must occur** in a coordinate, but **never** a subordinate clause not containing its antecedent.
- c. A gap **cannot precede** its antecedent
- d. A gap **need not** be a phrase.

(2) Constraints on Ellipsis:

- a. An ellipsis-site (E-site) **doesn't have to be** flanked by lexical material and can be sentence-final.
- b. An E-site **can occur** in a coordinate or a subordinate clause not containing its antecedent.
- c. An E-site **can precede** its antecedent **under certain conditions**.
- d. An E-site **must** correspond to a phrase.

(1a) vs (2a)

- Gapping:

(3) Amaram likes oat porridge and I ____ *(rice porridge).

- VPE and Sluicing:

(4) Amaram eats oat porridge in the morning, {but I don't ____./while I do ____in the evening}.

(5) Amaram went on a date with someone, but I haven't found out who ____ (yet).

(1b) vs (2b)

- Gapping:

(6) a. Tyrion saw a dragon and Daenerys ____ a basilisk.

b. *Tyrion saw a dragon before Daenerys ____ a basilisk.

- VPE and Sluicing:

(7) a. Tyrion saw a dragon and Daenerys did ____, too.

b. Tyrion saw a dragon before Daenerys did ____.

(8) a. Tyrion saw one of the dragons, and Daenerys knows exactly which one ____.

b. Tyrion saw one of the dragons, even though he didn't know which one ____.

(1c) vs (2c)

- Gapping:

(9) a. *Rand ___ a cake and Moiraine bought a muffin.

b. *Because Rand ___ a cake, Moiraine bought a muffin.

- VPE and Sluicing:

(10) a. *Rand didn't ___, but Moiraine bought a gem.

b. Because Rand didn't ___, Moiraine bought a gem.

c. *Lan haven't found out who ___, but Moiraine knew who stole the sword.

d. Even though Lan haven't found out who ___, he knew that someone took his sword.

(1d) vs (2d)

- Gapping:

(11) a. Mary met Bill at Berkeley and Sue ____ at Harvard. (Sue met Bill at Harvard)

b. Mary met Bill and Sue ____ John.

- VPE and Sluicing:

(12) a. Mary met Bill at Berkeley and Sue also did ____ (*Bill) at Harvard.

b. Mary met someone at Berkeley, but I don't know who ____ Mary met at Berkeley.



NPE

- NPE-sites don't need to, but can, be flanked by lexical material.

(13) John Hammond wanted to clone seventy species of dinosaurs, but if I were him I would just clone two ____.

- NPE-sites can occur in both coordinates and subordinate clauses and can precede their antecedent.

(14) Since my father can only afford to buy ten ____, I'd only ask him to buy me nine mansions.

- NPE must apply to at least a phrasal constituent.

(15) a. *I was going to print twenty pictures of my family, but then thought better and printed twenty ____ of myself.

b. I was going to print twenty pictures of my family, but then thought better and printed only ten ____.



NPE

- We have seen that NPE patterns with VPE and Sluicing and is distinct from Gapping.
- There are three main areas of research when it comes to NPE, or any similar elliptical phenomenon:
 1. What is the nature of the gap?
 2. How is the gap derived?
 3. How is the gap licensed?



Nature of the gap

- Is the gap an empty pronominal (Similar to *pro* in pro-drop languages.) or a non-pronominal null category?
- Is the gap sensitive to island constraints?
- Deleted material
- How big can the gap be across languages?



Derivation of the gap

- Base-generated empty category
- Full syntactic structure before deletion



Licensing of the gap

- Head government (Lobeck 1995)
- Specifier + functional head (Kester 1994, 1996a, 1996b)
- Functional head (particularly in Romance languages) (Bernstein 1991, 1993a, 1993b)

References

- Bernstein, Judy (1991). DPs in French and Walloon: Evidence for Parametric Variation in Nominal Head Movement. *Probus* 3/2: 101–126.
- Bernstein, Judy (1993a). The Syntactic Role of Word Markers in Null Nominal Constructions. *Probus* 5: 5–38.
- Bernstein, Judy (1993b). Topics in the Syntax of Nominal Structure across Romance. PhD dissertation, CUNY.
- Jackendoff, Ray (1971). Gapping and Related Rules. *Linguistic Inquiry* 2: 21–35.
- Kester, Ellen-Petra (1994). Adjectival Inflection and the Licensing of Pro. University of Maryland Working Papers in Linguistics 2: 91–109.
- Kester, Ellen-Petra (1996a). Adjectival Inflection and the Licensing of Empty Categories in DP. *Journal of Linguistics* 32: 57–78.
- Kester, Ellen-Petra (1996b). The Nature of Adjectival Inflection. PhD dissertation, Utrecht University.
- Lobeck, Anne (1995). *Ellipsis: Functional Heads, Licensing, and Identification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.