



# **NP-Ellipsis Week 2 – The gap itself**

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# Structure of today

- Recap
- Islands
- Backwards Anaphora Constraint
- What Ross says
- Strengths and weaknesses

# Recap

- Last week, we saw properties of Ellipsis, and how NPE behaves in accordance with those constraints.
- This week, we will look at Ross's theory on the nature of the gap and discuss its merits and weaknesses.

# Islands

- Ross (1967, 1986) proposes structural configurations that constrain movement: islands.
- Complex NP Constraint (CNPC):
  - (1) \*Who did you see a [**NP** person [**CP** who was talking to \_\_\_]] ?
- Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC):
  - (2) \*What did you read [\_\_\_ and the latest Stormlight book] ?
- Left Branch Condition (LBC):
  - (3) \*Whose did you borrow [**NP** \_\_\_ book] ?

Whose book did you borrow \_\_\_ ?
- Sentential Subject Constraint (SSC):
  - (4) \*Which man did [**CP** that \_\_\_ won the lottery] shock Kaladin?

# Islands

- How is this relevant to non-movement phenomena?
- Some elliptical phenomena are actually sensitive to island configurations.
- Gapping:
  - CNPC:

(5) \*I bought a shiny car and the professor who \_\_\_ a second-hand one hated me for it.
- CSC:

(6) I had a small coffee and my supervisor \_\_\_ a large one.
- LBC:
  - N/A
- SSC:

(7) \*Andrew loves black tea and [**CP** that Daniel \_\_\_ green tea] scares him to death.

# Islands

- Gapping does obey some island constraints.

- What about Ellipsis?

- CNPC:

(8) I haven't read a Game of Thrones so people who have \_\_\_ find me uneducated.

- CSC:

(9) My partner hates cooking and I do \_\_\_, too.

- LBC:

- N/A

- SSC:

(10) ?He said he would clean the stove and that he didn't \_\_\_ pissed me off so much.

# NPE

- Now we turn to NPE and islands.
- CNPC:
  - (11) I only brought two friends, but I know someone who brought twenty \_\_\_!
- CSC:
  - (12) Harry invited all of his friends, but Ron only invited some \_\_\_.
- LBC:
  - N/A
- SSC:
  - (13) ?I told him to get me six books for my birthday. So that he only got me two \_\_\_ made me feel betrayed.

# Pronouns

- And guess what also blatantly disobeys island constraints?

- Pronouns!!!

- CNPC:

(14) I really like Klaus, but I know someone who doesn't like **him**!

- CSC:

(15) Harry likes Ron, and **he** wants to invite **him** to a party.

- LBC:

(16) Andrew looks really distressed because he dropped **his** boba on the floor.

- SSC:

(17) Rand tried to open the Gateway, and that **it** didn't open sent him into panic.

# Backwards Anaphora Constraint (BAC)

- An ellipsis site cannot precede its antecedent when the ellipsis gap occurs in the matrix clause (Langacker 1969).
- NPE and Ellipsis in general obey BAC.

(18) 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.

e. \*My father can only afford to buy ten \_\_\_\_, but I asked him to buy me eleven mansions.

f. Since my father can only afford to buy ten \_\_\_\_, I'd only ask him to buy me nine mansions.

# Backwards Anaphora Constraint (BAC)

- Pronouns also obey BAC.

(19) a. \*I love *him*, but *Jon Snow* doesn't love me.

b. Because I love *him*, *Jon Snow* looks very awkward whenever he sees me.

# Ross's proposal

- Ross proposes that for NPE, the gap starts its life as lexical material identical to its antecedent. Then it gets pronominalized into *one*. Next comes *one* deletion.

(20) a. I made four sandwiches, but my partner only took two **sandwiches**.

b. I made four sandwiches, but my partner only took two **ones**.

c. I made four sandwiches, but my partner only took two \_\_\_\_.

# Strengths

- It explains the parallels between pronouns and E-sites (gaps), namely BAC effects and island-insensitivity.
- It predicts that what corresponds to the E-site cannot be a head, since **one** in English can only replace a phrasal category. And this prediction turns out correct.

# Weaknesses

- The intermediary step does not always result in grammatical sentences.  
(21) a. I made four sandwiches, but my partner only took \*two **ones**.  
b. I made two sandwiches, but my partner took both **ones**.  
c. I made two sandwiches, but my partner took \*every **one**.  
d. I made two sandwiches, but my partner took \*one **one**.  
e. I made a large sandwich and a small sandwich, but my partner took the large **one**.
- Worse, the pronominalisation approach **overgenerates** when it comes to mass nouns.  
(22) I had some wine, which wasn't as good as Daniel's \***one**.





# Weaknesses

- How to rescue the theory?
- Proposal 1: Make **one** deletion obligatory
  - This would only work for the count nouns.
  - Overgeneration:  
(24) I love the smell of new books, but my brother prefers that of old \*(ones).
- Proposal 2: Discard of *one* pronominalization
  - Jackendoff (1977) tries to get around this problem by proposing that the E-site is a null pronominal element base-generated in its position without any pronominalisation or deletion
  - Prediction: there is no internal structure or material in the gap.
  - Or is there?

# Weaknesses

- The Camel test (Grinder & Postal 1971):

(25) a. I have never ridden a camel, but Ivan has \_\_\_\_, and he says *it* stank horribly.

b. #I have never ridden **a camel**, and *it* stank horribly.

(26) a. I have seen no painting with all of the brightest colours, but my partner has seen one \_\_\_\_, and he said *they* actually mix very well together.

b. #I have seen no painting with **all of the brightest colours**, and *they* actually mix very well together.

# References

- Grinder, John and Paul Postal (1971). Missing Antecedents. *Linguistic Inquiry* 2: 269-
- Jackendoff, Ray (1977). X-Bar Syntax: A Study of Phrase Structure. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Langacker, Ronald (1966). On Pronominalization and the Chain of Command. In: Modern Studies in English. David Reibel and Sanford Schane (eds.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Lobeck, Anne (1995). Ellipsis: Functional Heads, Licensing, and Identification. Oxford: Oxford University Press. **(see this for further similarities between ellipsis and pronouns)**
- Ross, John Robert (1967) Constraints on Variables in Syntax. Doctoral dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Ross, John Robert (1986). Infinite Syntax! Norwood, NJ: Ablex.