Focus Constraints on Ellipsis — An Unalternatives Account

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Focus and Ellipsis

- The Focus-Ellipsis Generalization (FEG): Focal elements cannot be elided.
 - (1) (Who was Kim going to kiss?)
 - ALEX. Kim was going to kiss ALEX.
- (2) (What was Kim going to do?)
 - Kim was going to kiss ALEX.
 - Kiss ALEX. c. #ALEX.
- FEG can be stated without recourse to [F]-markers using UNALTERNATIVE SEMANTICS (UAS, see [1, 2, 3]
- UAS uses two universal, relational focus constraints to derive Roothean focus alternatives; given two constituents U(nfunky) and F(unky)...

Weak Restriction U may introduce alternatives only if F does

('either F is focal, or U+F are, or none of them is') Strong Restriction U does not introduce alternatives, F must

('F must be focal, U must not be')

• What counts as U and F, and which of the two constraints applies, is language specific. In English: WHERE? any two sister nodes

> WHICH? default metrical weights reversed metrical weights Weak Restriction Strong Restriction strong sister = F(unky), weak sister = U(nfunky)

• additional:

WHERE? WHICH?

ellipsis

Strong Restriction non-elided = F(unky), elided = U(nfunky)

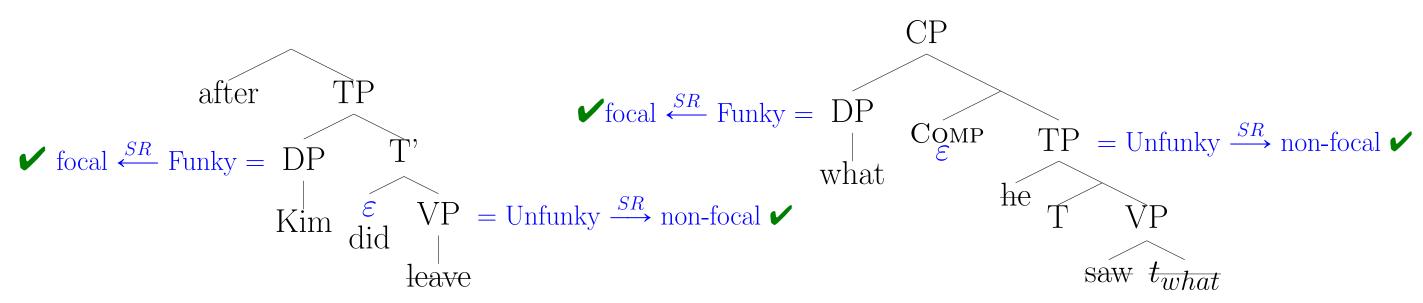
- This means that whenever ellipsis applies, the ellided part is automatically prevented from introducing alternatives, and the remnant must be focal.
- The first half of this prohibits 'elision of focal elements'.
- The second half derives Maxellide effects, without transderivationality
- So rather than ellipsis being sensitive to focus, possible focus alternatives are restricted by ellipsis.

Illustrations

Basic

(3) Al left after Kim did.

(4) John saw something, but we don't know what.



MaxElide

- (5) MAXELIDE: Let XP be an elided constituent containing an A'-trace. Let YP be a possible target for ellipsis. YP must not properly contain XP. ([5], p.141)
- (6)*John saw something, but we don't know what he
 - what Comp x focal $\stackrel{SR}{\longleftarrow}$ Funky = DP
- By ε , DP needs to be focal if VPE takes place
- so did should be focused, and there should be a contrastive target of the form 'he didn't', 'he will'...etc. which there isn't; what, on the other hand, fails to be marked as focal
- But that is not the full story... $VP = Unfunky \xrightarrow{SR} non-focal(\checkmark)$

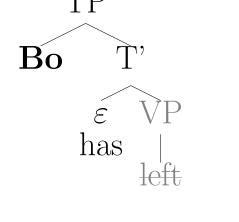
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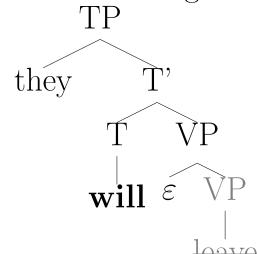
VPE in English can occur with a contrasting subject, auxiliary, or negation [cf. the Auxiliary vs. Subject] Choice distinction in [6].

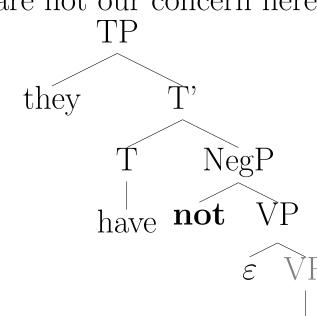
(7) They have left.

BO has, too. / No, but they WILL. / No, they have NOT.

We assume that in all cases, the Strong Restriction is triggered by an element ε , regarding its minimally c-commanding constituent (**funky**) and its complement (unfunky); the various (im)possible locations of ε (i.e. what categories can and cannot be elided in English in general) are not our concern here.







No Extraction — no MaxElide Effect?

Takahashi & Fox, [7]: The Parallelism Domain for VPE must include the antecedents to any VP internal traces; MaxElide only applies within the PD. This results in the impression that ME is only active with trace-containing EVPs:

John said Mary likes Peter.

BILL also said she does

BILL also did.

John said Mary [likes Peter]_{PD}. BILL also said she does [like Peter]_{PD}.

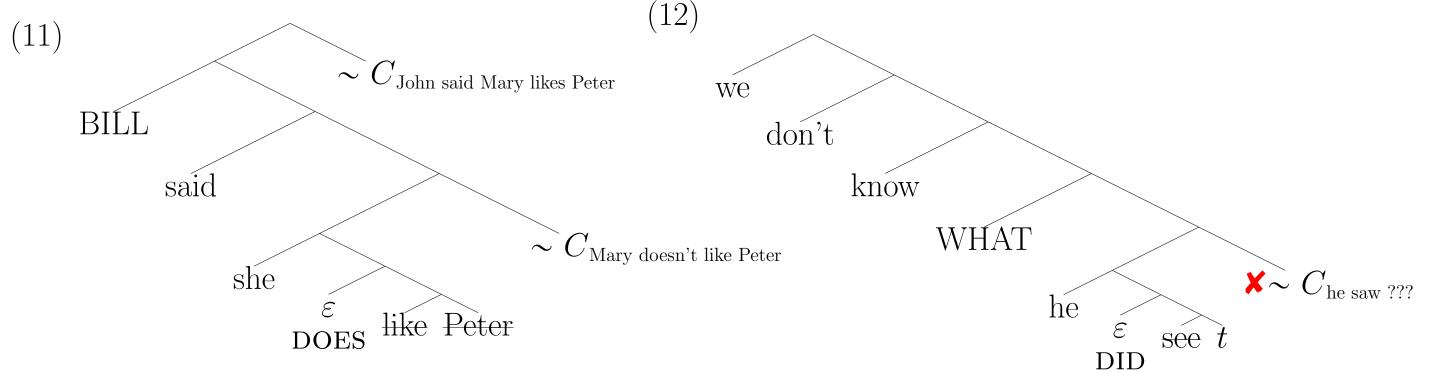
John [said Mary likes Peter] PD. BILL also did [say Mary like Peter] PD.

(10) John saw something, but we don't know

*what he did [see $t_{\overline{w}hat}$]_{PD}. *[what he did see t_{what}]_{PD}. what he did see t_{what}]_{PD}.

PD contains trace, but not antecedent PD ok, ellipsis not maximal in PD PD contains antecedent, ellipsis maximal

Proposal: Apparent ME obviations involve Second Occurrence Focus (SOF) on lower element cf. (11).



It is crucial for SOF that the lower focus must find a target before any higher focus is encountered. But, as in [7]'s proposal, this is impossible if the Focus Domain (the c-command domain of $\sim C$) contains an unbound trace, cf. (12).

Further Predictions

Embedded ME is Maximal

In case there is a focal element between the EVP and the extractee, ellipsis should be maximal underneath that element (pace general restrictions on VPE, see Disclaimer):

(13) I don't know which puppy you should agree to adopt, but I know [PD] which one you should NOT [(*agree to) adopt t]]

(14) Sally might have agreed to eat rutabagas, but Holly should NOT have (*agreed to).

This claim is endorsed by [7], pace Griffiths [4]. According to our account, sentences such as (15) from [4] should be ungrammatical:

I know who MARY thinks he'll kiss and also who SUE thinks he will (15) a.

I know who BILL hopes to kiss and also who BOB hopes to.

Intermediate Status ME Effects

If the extractee is not itself focused (nor anything below it), ME effects are judged weaker:

(16) ?? Abby knew when he had quit, but Beth didn't know when he had.

Examples are predicted to be good, since the PD can include when without including a higher focus (than had):

(17) know when he [had]_F quit t when

C_{knew when he had quit}

The degradation of (17) arguably has to do with finding a target, which would have to be 'when he hadn'tquit'. Accordingly, examples improve where such a contrast is more plausible:

(18) Abby knew which girl he had kissed, but Beth

didn't.

b. ?*didn't know which girl.

didn't know which girl he had.

ME Effects in Non-Extraction Contexts

ME effects should occur whenever there is no target for a secondary focus, regardless of extraction.

(19) Ben SHOULD like Jo's boyfriend, but he DOESN't (*like Jo's) ([4], example 15)

Summary

- UAS provides a natural explanation for ME effects, without reference to syntactic F-markers.
- Whenever a Strong Restriction applies, the unfunky sister (the elided phrase, in this case) is prevented from deriving focus alternatives.
- Apparent ME obviations involve SOF on lower element
- If the extractee is not itself focused, ME effects are judged weaker, infelicity of such sentences is simply pragmatic.
- Remaining mystery: Griffiths [4] sentences where SOF cannot find its target before getting to the higher focus, but the sentence is still grammatical (cf. (15)).

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leave

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