A unified approach to gapping and cleft ellipsis

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It has often been argued that ellipsis involves a licensing relation between a functional head and a phrase which undergoes non-pronunciation at PF (the PF-deletion analysis; e.g., Merchant 2001). This type of analysis has been justified most extensively for sluicing (*John knocked something over, but I don't know what ~~John knocked over~~*) and VP-ellipsis (*John knocked over the teapot, but Bill didn't ~~knock over the teapot~~*), but has occasionally been applied to gapping as well (*John knocked over the teapot, and Bill ~~knocked over~~ the milk jug*) (Sag 1976, Coppock 2001). However, gapping has a number of unusual properties which call a straightforward XP-ellipsis analysis into question, and this has motivated a number of authors to analyse gapping in terms of properties of coordinate structures (e.g., Williams, Ackema & Szendrői 2002, Lin 2002, Johnson 2009). In this talk, I will argue against both XP-ellipsis and coordination-based analyses of gapping, basing my argument on the properties of cleft ellipsis (*If there is anything that Bill is, it's stupid ~~that Bill is~~*). Like gapping, cleft ellipsis is highly restricted in its distribution, but unlike gapping it is not restricted to coordinate structures. Hence, a unified analysis of cleft ellipsis cannot be based on properties of coordination. Nor can an analysis of gapping in terms of VP-ellipsis be extended to cleft ellipsis, where what is deleted is a full clause rather than a VP. Instead, I argue, following Carrera Hernández's (2007) analysis of gapping, that both gapping and cleft ellipsis involve a syntactic dependency between two maximal projections. This dependency licenses the dependent as 'null-headed' – i.e. bearing categorial features but no pointer to a lexical entry, and hence unpronounced. Such a null-headed projection must enter a dependency with a fully-specified projection by LF in order to satisfy the Inclusiveness condition (Chomsky 1995): all properties of the syntactic structure are ultimately derivable from the lexicon. In the case of gapping, the dependency holds between the two conjunct TPs, as in (1a); in the case of cleft ellipsis, the dependency holds between the *if*-clause CP and the partially-deleted cleft clause CP, as in (1b). The null T can then license its complement and/or specifier (e.g., the VP in (1a)) as null-headed, a process known as 'dependent ellipsis' (see Williams 1997, Ackema & Szendrői 2002):

(1) a. $[_{\&P}$ $[_{\mathbf{TP}}$ John knocked over the teapot] $[_{\&'}$ and $[_{\mathbf{0TP}}$ Bill $[_{0T'}$ 0T … the milk jug]]]]
b. $[_{TP}$ $[_{\mathbf{CP}}$ If there's anything that Bill is] $[_{TP}$ it $[_{T'}$'s $[_{\mathbf{0CP}}$ 0C … $[_{AP}$ stupid]]]]]

Carrera Hernández shows that the relation between the two TPs in (1a) obeys standard conditions on syntactic dependencies: in particular, obligatoriness, locality and c-command (e.g., Koster 1987, Neeleman & van de Koot 2002). I show that cleft ellipsis divides into two types, one of which requires the presence of a local, preceding, c-commanding *if*-clause, as in (1b), the other of which does not. For example, while a reduced DP-cleft can occur as a self-contained sentence/utterance, a reduced VP-cleft cannot; yet a reduced VP-cleft premodified by an *if*-clause is perfect:

(2) a. A: What did John knock over? B: It was the teapot.
b. A: What did John do? B: ?*It was knock over the teapot.
c. If there's anything John did, it was knock over the teapot.

I argue that the reduced cleft in (2a) ('Type A') either involves no ellipsis or phrasal ellipsis of the cleft clause CP (as in sluicing and VP-ellipsis), while the reduced cleft in (2b) ('Type B') necessarily involves ellipsis of the type in (1b). This means that the conditions on syntactic dependencies hold in (2b) but not in (2a), accounting for the fact that the reduced VP-cleft requires an *if*-clause antecedent, and that neither this antecedent nor the reduced cleft may be embedded. Given Williams' (1997) General Pattern of Anaphoric Dependence, it also accounts for the requirement that the *if*-clause precede, rather than follow, the reduced cleft. Given some plausible modifications to Carrera Hernández's proposal (in terms of what counts as an intervener for locality), we can also account for the fact that Type B cleft ellipsis does not require a

coordination structure, unlike gapping. The present analysis thus has an advantage over coordination-based analyses of gapping, as well as those involving VP-ellipsis, which predict that gapping and cleft ellipsis should pattern with VP-ellipsis in their locality properties. Perhaps most interestingly, reduced AP-clefts can be seen as intermediate between DP-clefts and VP-clefts in their behaviour. When the AP is interpreted as a mere new information focus, the reduced cleft patterns more with VP-clefts in that the locality conditions hold; however, when the AP focus is made explicitly contrastive, the locality conditions can be violated, as in DP-clefts. Given that contrastive focus (but not new information focus) normally licenses A′-movement of the focus (e.g., É. Kiss 1998), this suggests that the contrastive interpretation licenses A′-movement of the clefted AP followed by *phrasal* ellipsis of the cleft clause. Since phrasal ellipsis (e.g., sluicing, VP-ellipsis) is not subject to the strict locality conditions on gapping, the present analysis can account for the dual behaviour of reduced AP-clefts if we recognise two types of ellipsis: XP-ellipsis (not subject to locality conditions) and head-ellipsis (subject to locality conditions).

Next, I show that the present analysis of gapping and cleft ellipsis makes some correct predictions about the behaviour of cleft ellipsis in other languages. For example, Russian has a cleft construction which is functionally similar to the English *it*-cleft, but which is non-copular and lacks any indication of a relative-clause-like CP; an example is given in (3a). The Russian cleft can be analysed as a double-TP structure in which the clefted constituent (here, *Ivana*) undergoes A′-movement to adjoin to the lower TP (Reeve 2012). This cleft can be reduced, as in (3b); this reduced cleft alternates with a true copular sentence with default nominative on the clefted DP, as in (3c).

(3) a. Éto (*byl(o)) Ivana$_i$ Maria ljubila t_i.
this was.M.SG/N.SG Ivan-ACC Maria.NOM loved
'It was Ivan that Maria loved.'

b. Esli Maria i ljubila kogo-to, to èto Ivana.
if Maria.NOM and loved someone.ACC then this Ivan-ACC
'If there's anyone that Maria loved, it was Ivan.'

c. Esli Maria i ljubila kogo-to, to èto byl Ivan.
if Maria.NOM and loved someone.ACC then this was Ivan.NOM

Because (3b) shows case connectivity, it arguably must be derived from the full cleft in (3a) via ellipsis. Because there is no CP to delete in this case (unlike in English), Type B cleft ellipsis (i.e., head-ellipsis, as with gapping) is the only possibility, and we correctly predict that reduced clefts like (3b) are subject to strict locality conditions, like English VP-clefts. On the other hand, as (3c) cannot have been derived via ellipsis, we correctly predict that it is not subject to these locality conditions.

References

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