

Group work results (ellipsis)

Chris Potts, Ling 390a: Controlling the Discourse, Fall 2007

Nov 7

Group work task (from Monday)

Instructions As a group, select one of the forms of ellipsis exemplified in section 4 of the handout ‘Introduction to VP ellipsis’ and try to answer the following questions about it (with supporting data). Make sure the data and some of the explanation make it onto this sheet. Turn in one copy of this sheet at the end of class, with all your names at the top. (This not for grading; I just want to process the data and discuss it next time.)

Questions

- i. Does this form of ellipsis permit free intersentential anaphora?
- ii. Is this form of ellipsis surface anaphoric, or can its antecedent be nonlinguistic?

1 Null complement anaphora

In NCA, a full sentence goes missing. No auxiliary, negation, or infinitival-*to* marks the ellipsis site.

- (1) A: The movie was awful. I didn’t like the music, the acting was poor, and there wasn’t even any nudity.

B: I agree.

Verdict: “It’s unclear what B is agreeing with and the message is even more strange when we ask whether B agreed that A didn’t like the music. So this example doesn’t permit long-distance anaphora.”

- (2) [Context: Someone looking at the stars] I’m amazed

Verdict: “The antecedent can be nonlinguistic.”

2 Proform ellipsis

- (3) Verdict: Intersentential anaphora is possible.

a. Ed ran the race. It was for charity. It was really long and uphill. Ali is tough: she did it too.

b. Ed ran the race, climbed the watch tower, ate a burger, and failed his driving test, all in one afternoon. Ali did it/that too.

- (4) Verdict: Surface anaphoric — it doesn’t work without a linguistically expressed antecedent.¹

¹Note from CP: I am confident that we can find cases in which the antecedent is merely inferred from the context, rather than being said aloud. Such cases will/would challenge the verdict that proform ellipsis is surface anaphoric.

