

Conditions on ellipsis beyond Semantic Parallelism: the case of elliptical copulas

(talk formerly advertised as “Choose your correlates carefully”)

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1 Introduction and roadmap

Everyone agrees that a successful ellipsis requires that the ellipsis site be semantically parallel to its antecedent, for some definition of “semantically parallel”. Given this much, we can construct the following research question.

Observation: Semantic parallelism is a *necessary* condition on ellipsis.
Question: Is it also a *sufficient* condition?
Answer: No, there are necessary conditions on ellipsis beyond Semantic Parallelism.

Line of attack The empirical domain is going to be an extension of [Rodrigues et al.’s \(2009\)](#) study of elliptical copulas in Spanish. I am going to present a related class of sentences where Semantic Parallelism is satisfied, but ellipsis fails nonetheless. Consequently, it must be the case that Semantic Parallelism on its own is not enough. The additional two conditions that I am going to defend today are the following (both of which have been already proposed in previous work).

- (1) *Parasitic licensing* ([van Craenenbroeck 2008](#), [Barros 2008](#))
A head or a phrase α extracted out of an ellipsis site by the head licensing that ellipsis must be morphologically anchored, where α is morphologically anchored iff it is morphologically non-distinct from its correlate in the ellipsis antecedent, if there is one.
- (2) *Correlate Focus*
The correlate of the remnant of ellipsis must be in focus (assuming that it already satisfies the rest of conditions in [Chung et al. 1995](#)).

2 A walk through data

2.1 Summary of [Rodrigues et al. \(2009\)](#)

- (3) *Preposition Stranding Generalization* ([Merchant 2001](#))
For any language L, L allows P-stranding under sluicing only if it also allows P-stranding under non-elliptical A-bar movement.

- (4) *Illustration of (3) for Spanish (Merchant 2001:99)*
- a. * ¿Quién ha hablado Andrés con?
who has talked Andrés with
 - b. Andrés ha hablado con alguien, pero no sé ??(con) quién.
Andrés has talked with someone but not know with who

However, [Rodrigues et al. \(2009\)](#) argue that examples like (4b) are generally much more acceptable than [Merchant](#) claims. Their conjecture is that (4b) stems from an underlying specificational copular clause (5): since the pivot of the copular clause is not headed by a preposition, ellipsis creates the *illusion* of P-stranding without invoking any *actual* P-stranding.

- (5) Andrés ha hablado con alguien, pero no sé quién es esa persona
Andrés has talked with someone but not know who is that person

[Rodrigues et al. \(2009\)](#) provide four independent arguments (interaction with multiple sluicing, *else*-modification, aggressively D-linked wh- phrases, split questions) that the source of sluicing in this environment is indeed a copular clause. The version without a P-stranding effect involves regular sluicing of a non-copular clause.

- (6) Andrés ha hablado con alguien, pero no sé con quién ha hablado Andrés
Andrés has talked with someone but not know with who has talked Andrés

More generally, their claim is that (3) needs to be formulated at the level of individual constructions, rather than languages (7). This generalization supports the biconditional in (9), which I am going to assume is correct.

- (7) *Revised Preposition Stranding Generalization (Rodrigues et al. 2009)*
For any language L and construction C, L allows P-stranding in C under sluicing only if L also allows P-stranding in C under non-elliptical A-bar movement.
- (8) *P-stranding effects under sluicing (Rodrigues et al. 2009)*
P-stranding ellipses Spanish (and some other languages) require a specificational copular clause as the source for ellipsis.
- (9) *Correlation*
P-stranding effect \Leftrightarrow Copular sluicing.

2.2 Some difficult cases

[Rodrigues et al. \(2009\)](#) did not discuss the fact that copular sluicing (as diagnosed by a P-stranding effect) is unexpectedly ungrammatical in certain environments.

- (10) Alicia ha hablado sobre un ensayo de Baroja pero no sé *(sobre) qué novela de
Alicia has talked about an essay by Baroja but not know about what novel by
Cela.
Cela.

I propose that a P-stranding effect in (10) is ungrammatical because the corresponding non-elliptical copular is also ungrammatical. This allows the formulation of (12).

- (11) * Alicia ha hablado sobre un ensayo de Baroja, pero no sé qué novela de Cela
Alicia has talked about an essay by Baroja but not know what novel by Cela
es ese ensayo.
is that essay.
- (12) *Generalization #2: No ellipsis repair*
An elliptical specificational copular clause is acceptable in exactly the same environments where the corresponding non-elliptical copular clause is also acceptable.

2.3 Extension to stripping

2.3.1 Stripping has the same derivation as sluicing

After Merchant (2004), I assume that stripping has the same derivation as sluicing, i.e., movement of the remnant to the left periphery plus TP deletion. The usual arguments apply: first of all, stripping is sensitive to island boundaries within the ellipsis site.

- (13) A: El jefe quiere contratar al candidato que estudió historia.
 the boss wants hire the applicant that studied history
 B: * No, economía.
 no economics
- (14) A: El currículum del mejor candidato dice que *pro* estudió historia.
 the resumé of.the best applicant states that he studied history
 B: No, economía.
 no economics

Additionally, binding-theoretic effects obtain between the remnant and the elided material.

- (15) Q: ¿Sobre quién ha estado hablando Andrés_i todo el tiempo?
 about who has been talking Andrés all the time
 A: Sobre sí_i mismo.
 about him self
- (16) Q: ¿Sobre qué libro ha querido hablar todo_i autor?
 about what book has wanted talk every author
 A: Sobre su_i autobiografía.
 about his autobiography

2.3.2 The conditions on sluicing also hold for stripping

Depiante (2000) claimed, on the basis of the following examples, that stripping doesn't support P-stranding effects. Vicente (2010) makes a similar claim for corrective adversative coordination, which he claims also involves stripping. Note that, in all these cases, the corresponding reduced specificational copula is ungrammatical.

- (17) a. Pedro sabe sobre historia más que nadie, y *(sobre) geografía también.
 Pedro knows about history more than anybody and about geography also
 b. Andrés escribe para *La Nación*, y *(para) *Clarín* también.
 Andrés writes for *La Nación* and for *Clarín* also
 c. Andrés no escribe para *La Nación*, sino *(para) *Clarín*.
 Andrés not writes for *La Nación* but for *Clarín*
- (18) a. * Pedro sabe sobre historia más que nadie, y eso es también
 Pedro knows about history more than anybody and that is also
 geografía.
 geography
 b. * Andrés escribe para *La Nación*, y ese periódico es también *Clarín*.
 Andrés writes for *La Nación* and that newspaper is also *Clarín*
 c. * Andrés no escribe para *La Nación*, sino que ese periódico es *Clarín*.
 Andrés not writes for *La Nación* but that that newspaper is *Clarín*

However, P-stranding is acceptable in some cases. In all of this, the corresponding reduced specificational copula is somewhat stilted but clearly more acceptable.

- (19) A: He oído que Andrés ha hablado sobre un tema interesante.
 have heard that Andrés has talked about a topic interesting
 B: En efecto, (sobre) astronomía.
 that's right about astronomy
 B': En efecto, ese tema ha sido astronomía.
 that's right that topic has been astronomy
- (20) A: ¿Para qué periódico escribe Andrés?
 for which newspaper writes Andrés
 B: *(Para) Clarín.
 for Clarín
 B': Ese periódico es Clarín.
 that newspaper is Clarín

3 The insufficiency of Semantic Parallelism

We have established the pattern in (21), which establishes that Semantic Parallelism holds between a copular clause and a non-copular clause. If it didn't, this pattern would be *ungrammatical* regardless of whether the corresponding non-elliptical copula was grammatical or not.

- (21) *Non-isomorphic sluicing/stripping*
 $[A \text{ Non-copular clause}] + [E \text{ copular clause}] = \text{grammatical,}$
 if the corresponding non-elliptical specificational copula is grammatical.

Now, here is the formulation of Semantic Parallelism in Merchant (2001). Importantly, note that it is formulated in terms of *e-GIVENNESS*, which is in turn defined as a *symmetric* relation: mutual entailment *modulo* F-closure.

- (22) *Semantic Parallelism*
 An expression E can be elided if it is *e-GIVEN*.
- (23) *e-GIVENNESS*
 An expression E is *e-GIVEN* iff E has a salient antecedent A and, *modulo* \exists -type shifting:
 a. A entails the F-closure of E, and
 b. E entails the F-closure of A.
- (24) *F-closure*
 The F-closure of α , written $F\text{-clo}(\alpha)$, is the result of replacing F-marked parts of α with \exists -bound variables of the appropriate type (*modulo* \exists -type raising).
- (25) *\exists -type shifting*
 \exists -type shifting is a type-shifting operation that raises expressions to type $\langle t \rangle$ and existentially binds unfilled arguments.

Given that Semantic Parallelism is satisfied in the configuration $[A \text{ non-copular clause}] + [E \text{ specificational copula}]$ (otherwise ellipsis would fail), and given that Semantic Parallelism is a symmetric relation, it is also necessarily satisfied in the configuration $[A \text{ specificational copula}] + [E \text{ non-copular clause}]$. The prediction is as follows:

- (26) *Prediction about inverse non-isomorphic sluicing/stripping*
 $[A \text{ Copular clause}] + [E \text{ non-copular clause}] = \text{grammatical}$
 if the corresponding non-elliptical non-copular clause is grammatical.

However, (26) is surprisingly incorrect, and not only in Spanish! What (26) predicts is that the presence of a preposition ought to be grammatical.

(27) *Unexpected failure of ellipsis*

- a. La persona con la que ha hablado Andrés es alguien de Contabilidad, pero
the person with which has talked Andrés is someone from accounting but
no sé (*con) quién exactamente.
not know with who exactly
- b. Der Mann, mit dem Anne gesprochen hat, ist jemand aus der
the man with who.DAT Anne talked has is someone from the
Buchhaltung, aber ich weiß nicht { *(mit) wem / ✓ wer } genau.
accounting but I know now with who.DAT who.NOM exactly
- c. The person that Alice has talked to is someone from Accounting, but I don't know
who (*to) exactly.

Crucially, all the ungrammatical non-P-stranding sentences have well formed non-elliptical counterparts. So, something else is going on here.

- (28) a. La persona con la que ha hablado Andrés es alguien de Contabilidad, pero
the person with which has talked Andrés is someone from accounting but
no sé con quién *pro* ha hablado exactamente.
not know with who he has spoken exactly
- b. Der Mann, mit dem Anne gesprochen hat, ist jemand aus der
the man with who.DAT Anne talked has is someone from the
Buchhaltung, aber ich weiß nicht, mit wem genau sie gesprochen hat.
accounting but I know not with who.DAT exactly she spoken has
- c. The person that Alice has talked to is someone from Accounting, but I don't know
who exactly she has spoken to.

The same holds for stripping, as the following examples show.

- (29) A: La persona con la que ha hablado Andrés es alguien de Contabilidad.
the person with which has talked Andrés is someone from accounting
B: En efecto, (*con) Beatriz.
that's right with Beatriz
B': En efecto, *pro* ha hablado con Beatriz.
that's right he has talked with Beatriz
- (30) A: Die Frau, mit der Anne gesprochen hat, ist jemand aus der
the woman with who.DAT Anne spoken has is someone from the
Buchhaltung.
accounting
B: Genau, (*mit) Beate. B': Genau, sie hat mit Beate gesprochen.
correct with Beate correct she has with Beate talked
- (31) A: The person that Alice has talked to is someone from Accounting.
B: Yes, (*to) Bob. B': Yes, she has talked to Bob.

4 Additional conditions on ellipsis

4.1 Parasitic licensing and morphological anchoring

van Craenenbroeck (2008) notices that copular ellipsis (as diagnosed by a P-stranding effect) fails in languages with morphological case, except when the case of the copular subject is syncretic with the case assigned to the correlate by the corresponding preposition (the examples below are from Greek, but they also happen in Czech, German, Hindi, Hungarian, Russian, Slovene...).

(32) *Case dissimilarity blocks P-stranding despite grammaticality of non-elliptical source*

- a. * I Anna milise me kapjon, alla dhe ksero pjos.
the Anna spoke with someone.ACC but not know who.NOM
- b. I Anna milise me kapjon, alla dhe ksero pjos itan.
the Anna spoke with someone.ACC but not know who.NOM was

(33) *NOM/ACC syncretism with 'ti' enables P-stranding*

- O Giannis anakateftike se kati, ala dhen ksero ti.
the Giannis mixed.up in something.ACC but not know what.NOM/ACC

van Craenenbroeck proposes the following condition to capture these cases.

(34) *Parasitic licensing (van Craenenbroeck 2008, Barros 2008)*

A head or a phrase α extracted out of an ellipsis site by the head licensing that ellipsis must be morphologically anchored, where α is morphologically anchored iff it is morphologically non-distinct from its correlate in the ellipsis antecedent, if there is one.

- a. morphological anchoring of DPs requires identity of morphological case (in languages that have it).
- b. morphological anchoring of verbal heads requires identity of the lexical root and derivational morphology.
- c. morphological anchoring of PPs requires identity of P.

The standard P-stranding cases with a non-copular antecedent are predicted to be grammatical. The extracted phrase is a DP, so (34a) is vacuously satisfied due to the lack of morphological case in Spanish. However, it still causes ellipsis to fail in languages with morphological case.

(35) *Vacuous morphological anchoring of DP*

- Andrés ha hablado [PP con alguien], pero no sé [DP quién].
Andrés has talked with someone but not know who

In the ungrammatical cases with a copular antecedent, the extracted PP fails (34c) because its antecedent lacks the appropriate preposition.

- (36) * La persona con la que Andrés ha hablado es [DP alguien de Contabilidad],
the person with which Andrés has spoken is someone from accounting
pero no sé [PP con quién].
but not know with who

However, in order for this account to work, we need to block the extracted PP from taking the PP inside the predicative argument of the copular clause as its antecedent.

(37) *An illicit antecedent choice*

La persona [PP con la que Andrés ha hablado] es alguien de Contabilidad,
 the person with which Andrés has spoken is someone from accounting
 pero no sé [PP con quién].
 but not know with who

4.2 Correlate Focus

Many works presuppose something like this:

(38) *Correlate Focus*

The correlate of the remnant of ellipsis must be in focus (but note that this is not sufficient —e.g., a proper name cannot be a correlate even if focused, because it fails Chung et al.'s condition that correlates introduce variables).

This is relevant because specificational copular clauses have a well-defined pattern of Information Structure: the referential argument can be focalized, but the predicative one cannot (Bolinger 1972, Mikkelsen 2004).

(39) Q: Who is the winner?

A: The winner is [F Bob]

(40) Q: What is Bob?

A: * [F The winner] is Bob.

As expected, constituents embedded inside the predicative argument cannot be licit correlates for the remnant of ellipsis (examples below suggested by Matt Barros, p.c.). Note that this is an ellipsis effect, because the non-elliptical counterpart is grammatical.

(41) a. * [PR One of the people that someone from Accounting shot at] was Sally, but I can't recall who.

b. One of the people that someone shot at was Sally, but I can't recall who (from Accounting) shot at her.

(42) One of the people that Sally shot at was [RF someone from Accounting], but I can't recall who.

This completes the analysis of the ungrammatical examples with copular antecedents. The only licit correlate for the PP remnant is the DP inside the referential argument; however, this DP fails to morphologically license the PP.

(43) * La persona con la que Andrés ha hablado es RF[DP alguien de Contabilidad],
 the person with which Andrés has talked is someone from accounting
 pero no sé [PP con quién].
 but not know with who

5 Main conclusion of the talk

Semantic Parallelism is a necessary but not sufficient condition on ellipsis. At the very least, one also needs to adopt Parasitic Licensing and Correlate Focus.

6 The end of the story?

Do copular antecedents support sprouting? The analysis I've developed suggests that they should. Parasitic Licensing is vacuously satisfied (see [van Craenenbroeck 2008](#)), and so is Correlate Focus. Initially, this seems mildly correct: although these examples are mildly degraded, the presence of a preposition is clearly necessary.

(44) A: La persona a la que Andrés ha felicitado es Beatriz.
the person to which Andrés has congratulated is Beatriz

B: ? Sí, *(por) su magnífica tesis.
yes for her wonderful thesis

(45) ? La persona a la que Andrés ha acusado es Beatriz, pero no sé *(de) qué.
the person to which Andrés has accused is Beatriz but not know of what

However, some examples are markedly worse, even though they are still better than the corresponding ones featuring a P-stranding effect.

(46) ?? La persona con la que Andrés ha hablado es Beatriz, pero no sé *(sobre) qué.
the person with which Andrés has talked is Beatriz but not know about what

More research is necessary here to figure out the exact empirical picture.

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