P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity

Troy Messick Rutgers University

Introduction

Background
Else-modification as a diagnostic
French Sluicing and PPs
Orphan Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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Thanks to my co-authors

Viviane Déprez (Rutgers) and Meg Gotowski (Pomona)

The ellipsis site and its antecedent

When we encounter an ellipsis site, intuitively we take the meaning of the missing phrase to be related in some way to its antecedent. In many (simple) instances, it appears we can "copy and paste" the antecedent phrase into the ellipsis site.

(1)   Randall walked along the rode and Rita did Δ too.

Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

What has puzzled linguists for decades now (and the reason for the workshop) are instances where this simple "copy and paste" procedure does not work.

Mismatches are possible

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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- Tolerated Mismatches

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- Tolerated Mismatches
    - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis (Merchant, 2013)

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P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity

Troy Messick Rutgers University

Introduction

Background
Else-modification as a diagnostic
French Sluicing and PPs
Orphan Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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    - Vehicle Change of R-expressions (Abels, 2022; Fiengo and May, 1994)
    - Short and Cleft Sources in sluicing (Barros, 2014; van Craenenbroeck, 2010; Rodrigues et al., 2009; Vicente et al., 2021)

It has been shown that gender of elided DPs can mismatch from their antecedent (in restricted ways).

(2)   O   Paulo é ator e   a   Fernanda também é Δ
      The Paulo is actor and the Fernanda also   is Δ
      'Paulo is an actor and Fernanda is too.'   Bobaljik &
      Zocca (2011: ex. 2)

Mismatches are possible

Elided R-expressions can seemingly undergo 'vehicle change'
such that an R-expression of one type in the antecedent can be
replaced with another type in the ellipsis site (again in
restricted ways).

(3)   John believes himself to be heroic and he said that
        Mary does Δ too.
        Δ = believe him to be heroic Fiengo & May (1994: 206
        ex. 24)

Mismatches are possible

Cleft and other types of copula continuations have been argued
to exist for sluicing for a number of reasons. For instance,
p-or-q sluices have no isomorphic continuations and may only
occur in languages where clefts are possible continuations.

(4)   Either something's burning, or Sally's baking a cake
        again, but I don't know which Δ
        Δ = it is   Barros (2014: 50 ex. 55a)

Sources of mismatches

Mismatches force us to either weaken the identity condition on ellipsis or give enrich the morphosyntax in some way (or a combination of both)

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis
  - ϕ-feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis
  - Vehicle Change of R-expressions
  - Short and Cleft Sources in sluicing

Sources of mismatches

Today, I want to focus on looking at an argument from French that P-stranding under sluicing in a non-p-stranding language derives partially from the possibility of cleft sources (following RNV, Barros and others for different Romance languages).

- Tolerated Mismatches
  - Voice mismatches in VP-ellipsis
  - ϕ-feature mismatches in Predicate and NP ellipsis
  - Vehicle Change of R-expressions
  - Short and Cleft Sources in sluicing

Clefts in French Sluicing

- Roadmap
  - Background: Sluicing, p-stranding generalization, and cleft analyses of apparent counter-examples
  - Background: French sluicing, Orphan vs. grammatical prepositions in French
  - Acceptability judgment experiment: Design, results and discussion
  - Comparison of the cleft approach to recent analysis of p-stranding in Spanish in Stigliano 2022
  - General discussion about what this means for ellipsis identity

Some terminology

A sluicing construction like (5) is represented schematically in (6).

(5)   [John met *someone*], but I don't know [[*who*] Δ].

(6)   [A-Clause . . . *correlate* . . .] [[*remnant*] E-Clause]

I will sometimes use the term **presluice** to refer to the elided clause before ellipsis takes place. (e.g., this ellipsis site derives from a cleft presluice)

P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity

Troy Messick Rutgers University

Introduction

Background
Else-modification as a diagnostic
French Sluicing and PPs
Orphan Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

P-stranding Generalization

(7) **Preposition stranding generalization** (Merchant, 2001)
A language L will allow preposition stranding under sluicing only if L allows preposition stranding under regular *wh*-movement.

(8) a. Who did John talk about?
     b. John talked about someone, but I don't know who John talked about

(9) **Preposition stranding generalization** (Merchant, 2001)
A language L will allow preposition stranding under sluicing only if L allows preposition stranding under regular *wh*-movement.

(10) a. *Pjon milise   me?
        who she.spoke with
        'Who did she speak with?'

   b. I   Anna milise me   kapjon   alla dhe ksero
      The Anna spoke with someone but not I.know
      *(me) pjon
      with who
      'Anna spoke with someone but I don't know with who.'

Many Counterexamples

P-stranding, evasion, and what they (might) mean for ellipsis identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers University

Introduction

Background
Else-modification as a diagnostic
French Sluicing and PPs
Orphan Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

Merchant himself noted that there are apparent counterexamples to the PSG, and in the years since many authors have noted issues with the PSG in numerous different languages (Almeida and Yoshida, 2007; Fortin, 2007; Rodrigues et al., 2009; Sato, 2011).

(11)   a. *Quem que a   Maria dancou com?
            Who that the Maria danced with
            'Who did Maria dance with'?

        b. A   Maria dancou com alguém, mas eu não
            the maria danced with someone, but I   not
            lembro   (com) quem
            remember (with) who
            'Maria danced with someone but I don't
            remember who.'   Almeida & Yoshida (2007:350
            ex. 5-6)

While there have been many ways researchers have attempted
to account for the problematic cases, one fruitful avenue of
research has been to suggest that apparent p-stranding under
sluicing in fact does not involve p-stranding at all but instead
involves a cleft presluice (Rodrigues et al 2009, Barros 2014,
van Craenenbroeck 2010). Though see (Sag and Nykiel, 2011;
Stigliano, 2022)

(12) O   Joã falou com una menina mas eu não sei
      The João talked with a girl   but I not know
      qual é a menina coma qual João falou
      which is the girl with the which João talked
      'João talked with a girl but I don't know which.' (RNV
      2009: ex 7)

Else sluices

In arguing against cleft sources for English sluices, Merchant gives a number of diagnostics that he uses to control for the possibility of a cleft presluice (Merchant, 2001).

(13)   a.   Harry was there, but I don't know who else was there
       b.   #Harry was there, but I don't know who else it was

Else sluices

Else is incompatible with clefts due to the fact that it leads to a semantic anomaly when composed with the meaning of the cleft pronoun (Barros, 2012).

(14) a. Jack left, but I don't know who else left.
      b. $\lambda p. \exists x[\text{human}(x) \ \& \ x \neq y_j \ \& \ p = \hat{} \text{left}(x)]$

(15) a. #Jack left, but I don't know who else it was
      b. $\lambda p. \exists x[\text{human}(x) \ \& \ x \neq y_j \ \& \ p = \hat{} \iota z[\text{left}(z)] = x]$

Else-modification meets P-stranding

At least in the languages where *else* modification is
incompatible with clefts, Rodrigues predicts that p-stranding
should not be possible with *else* modification since it would rule
out the possibility of a cleft presluice. This is the case for
Spanish.

(16)   Juan ha hablado con una chica rubia,   pero no
         Juan has talked   with a   girl blonde, but not
         sé   *(con) qué   chica más
         know (with) what girl   else
         'Juan has talked with a blonde girl, but I don't know
         with what other girl'   RNV (2009: ex. 27a)

In an appendix, RNV 2009 discuss French. Like the other
Romance languages we have discussed so far, French does not
allow for p-stranding under *wh*-movement, but it is possible in
sluicing.

(17)   a.   *Qui tu as dansé avec?
       Who you have danced with
       'Who have you danced with?'

      b.   Jean a dansé avec quelqu'un, et je ne
        Jean has danced with someone, and I NEG
        sais pas qui
        I   NEG who
        'Jean has danced with someone but I don't know
        who.'   RNV (2009: ex. 70 & 72)

Looking at French

Unlike Spanish, at least with the preposition *avec*, p-stranding under sluicing is still possible with *else* modification.

(18) Jean a   dansé avec Marie, mais je ne   sais
      Jean has danced with Marie, but I NEG know
      pas (avec) qui d'autre
      NEG (with) who else.
      'Jean danced with Marie, but I don't know who else.'
      RNV (2009: ex. 77)

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

Looking at French: A twist

While this appears to be the case for *avec*, other prepositions seem to behave differently.

(19)   Les policiers ont parlé à quelqu'un mais on se
        The police   have spoken to someone but we SE
        demande (à) qui
        ask   (to) who
        'The police have spoken to someone, but we wonder
        who.'

(20)   Les policiers ont parlé à ce garcon et on se
        The police   have spoken to this boy   and we SE
        demande *(à) qui d'autre
        ask   (to) who else
        'The police have spoken to this boy and we wonder
        who else.'

The puzzle in a nutshell

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background

Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment

Design
Results

General
Discussion

An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

Some prepositions, like *avec*, can be dropped in sluicing even
when there is *else* modification. Other prepositions, like *à*, can
only be dropped in instances where *else* modification has not
taken place. How and Why does this difference exist?

French sluicing

Compared with other Romance languages, sluicing in French (dialects) is relatively understudied (Dagnac, 2019; Gotowski, 2022; Ott and Therrien, 2020). We assume that French sluicing is the result of movement + deletion. One piece of evidence for this is that remnants can show reconstruction effects.

(21)   Chaque linguiste$_i$ a   critiqué   une partie de ses$_i$
        each   linguist has criticized a   part of his
        travail mais je ne sais pas combien de ses$_i$
        work   but I NEG know not how.much of his
        travail
        work
        'Each linguist criticized part of his own work, but I don't know how much of his own work.'

French Sluicing

A piece of evidence that the remnant must be ex situ comes
from sluices with *pourquoi*. While most questions in French
can occur with wh-in-situ, *pourquoi*. Must occur ex situ.
[Gotowski examples]

(22) a. Pourquoi tu ris?
          Why   you laugh
          'Why are you laughing?'
      b. *tu ris   pourquoi
          you laugh why
          'You are laughing why?'

French Sluicing

Sluices with *pourquoi* are perfectly acceptable.

(23)   Jean mange quelque chose, mais je sais pas
         Jean eat   some   thing, but I know not
         pourquoi
         why
         'Jean is eating something but I do not know why.'

Quoi-sluices

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

A potential issue for a move and delete approach to French
sluicing is that the form *quoi* appears in sluiced clauses, but is
typically found when left in situ.

(24) a. Que/*Quoi regardes-tu
          what   watch-you
          'What are you watching?'
      b. Tu regarde quoi/*que
          you watch   what
          'You are watching what?'
      c. Jean mange quelque chose, mais je ne   sais
          Jean eat   some   thing, but I NEG know
          pas quoi/*que
          not what
          'Jean is eating something, but I don't know what.'

Quoi-sluices

Gotowski's solution in a nutshell is to analyze *que/quoi* as
allomorphs. *Que* is inserted when the interrogative pronoun is
structural adjacent to the verb. Quoi is an elsewhere form.
Sluicing destroys the environment for the *que* VI rule to apply,
hence the elsewhere form surfaces.

(25)   a.   [+wh -human] ⇔ que / __ +V
          b.   [+wh -human] ⇔ quoi / elsewhere

Given these data, we assume that Ross/Merchant's classic
move and delete analysis of sluicing is applicable to French
(though see our discussion later).

French Sluicing

Returning to P-stranding data, as far as we are aware, all Ps can be omitted in sluicing without *else* modification. However, only a subset of Ps can be omitted with else modification. (Here we are putting aside Lafontaine French, which allows for P-stranding under regular *wh*-movement). Based on traditional judgment collection, we categorized Ps into the following two groups.

(26)   a.   **Ps that can be omitted with or without else-modification**: *avec* (with), *pour* (for), *derrière* (behind)

   b.   **Ps that can be omitted only without else-modification**: *à* (to), *de* (of), *par* (by)

French Orphans

These groupings seem to correlate with another property of French prepositions: their ability to occur as Orphans (i.e., without a complement) (Authier, 2016; Zribi-Hertz, 1984). The group that always allows for P-omission can also act as Orphans.

(27)   a.   Je voyage toujours avec cette valise
            I travel always with this suitcase
            'I always travel with this suitcase.'

       b.   Cette valise,   je voyage toujours avec
            this suitcase, I travel always   with
            'This suitcase, I always travel with (it).'
            Zribi-Hertz (1984: ex. 1-2)

French Orphans

The group that only allows P-omission without *else* modification cannot act as Orphans. Following the literature we refer to these as Grammatical prepositions.

(28)   a.   J' adore aller   à Paris
             I love   go.INF to Paris
             'I love to go to Paris.'

       b.   *Paris, J' adore aller   à
             Paris, I   love   go.INF to
             'Paris, I love to go to (it).' Zribi-Hertz (1984: ex. 33)

French Orphans

Despite first appearances, orphanhood does not seem to be
derived via movement as the dependency can occur across
islands.

(29)   Cette valise, J'ai   concu   l'hypothese   que
        this suitcase, I.have concieved the.hypothesis that
        Marie pourrait voyager avec
        Marie might   travel   with
        'This suitcase, I have conceived the hypothesis that
        Marie might travel with (it).'   Zribi-Hertz (1984: ex.
        30)

The gaps found in the Orphan prepositions are analyzed as null
pronominals similar to resumptives.

Our hunch

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
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University

- The correlation between Orphanhood and the possibility of P-omission with *else*-modification is not coincidental, but stem from the same source.

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- The correlation between Orphanhood and the possibility of P-omission with *else*-modification is not coincidental, but stem from the same source.

- P-omission with grammatical prepositions is only possible with a cleft presluice. Once you control for that possibility through the use of *else*-modification, P-omission is no longer possible.

Our hunch

- The correlation between Orphanhood and the possibility of P-omission with *else*-modification is not coincidental, but stem from the same source.

- P-omission with grammatical prepositions is only possible with a cleft presluice. Once you control for that possibility through the use of *else*-modification, P-omission is no longer possible.

- P-omission with Orphan prepositions can come for cleft or Orphan presluices. Hence, even if you control for the cleft presluice, P-omission can still obtain through the prepositions Orphan use. Cf. Saudi Arabic where resumption is argued to be a source of P-omission (Alshaalan and Abels, 2020)

Acceptability Judgment experiment

To put us on surer empirical footing, we ran an acceptability
judgment experiment.

- The design was 2x2x2
  - The variables we controlled were: P-omission (omitted vs.
    not omitted), P-type (grammatical vs. Orphan),
    Else-modification (Else vs. No else)
- The target sentences were randomized with an equal
  number of fillers.
- 50 French speakers were recruited over Prolific, and were
  asked to rate the acceptability of a sentence on a scale of
  1-5 using Qualtrics.

Results

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background

Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment

Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

Results discussion

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction
Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions
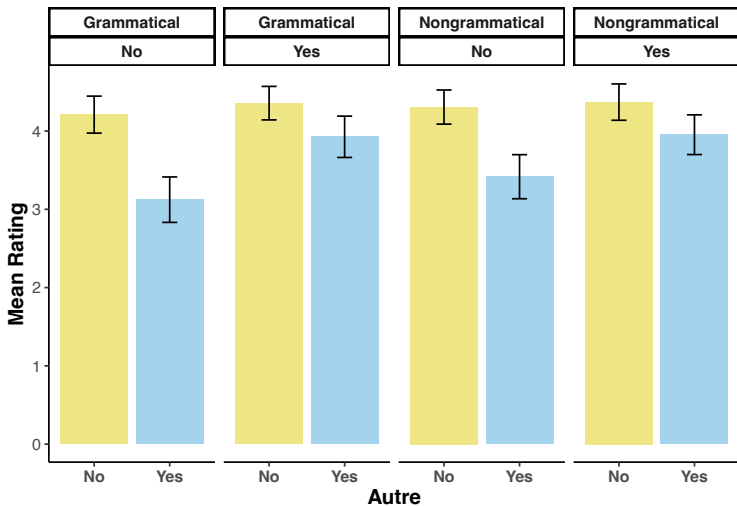Experiment
Design
Results
General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up
References

- While sentences were judged highly, we see a statistically significant drop when *else*-modification is used.

- We also see a small but significant difference between Orphan vs Grammatical prepositions with P-stranding with Orphan with *else*-modification being rated higher than Grammatical omission with *else*-modification.

- The relative means in what we found is in line with what our analysis predicts (with the caveat the absolute means are somewhat higher than we might have expected). We take this as modest support for our proposal.

Stigliano 2022 gives an alternative analysis for P-omission in (her dialect of) Spanish. Based on P-omission in a number of different elliptical environments, she comes up with the descriptive generalization in (30), on which she bases her analysis.

(30) P-omission in ellipsis in Spanish is only allowed when the following two conditions are met (a) the remnants correlate in the antecedent does not move, and (b) the remnant does not move.

An Alternative: Stigliano 2022

Recall that French allows for both wh-ex-situ and wh-in-situ productively. We might expect the possibility of P-omission to differ when a fragment is a response to a ex-situ or in-situ question. This does not appear to be the case. The fragment in (32) can be used as an answer to either of the questions in (31).

(31)   a.   Avec qui tu   dansait
            with who you dance
            'With whom are you dancing'
       b.   tu   dansait avec qui
            you dance   with who
            'you are dancing with who?'

(32)   (Avec) Maria
       (with) Maria
       '(with) Maria'

What does this mean for identity?

Implications for Identity

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
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What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.

Implications for Identity

What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.

- Difficult to see how cases fit with a strict syntactic isomorphic condition.

Implications for Identity

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- Difficult to see how cases fit with a strict syntactic isomorphic condition.

- Also potentially at odds with conditions like "no new words" (Chung, 2005)

Implications for Identity

What does this mean for identity?

- If it is the case that clefts are possible as a way to allow for P-omission, this appears to evidence for a mismatch between the antecedent and ellipsis site.

- Difficult to see how cases fit with a strict syntactic isomorphic condition.

- Also potentially at odds with conditions like "no new words" (Chung, 2005)

- Cleft mismatches do seem compatible with certain semantic approaches to identity (Focus/QUD-based) or potentially structural approaches that allow for less structure than the antecedent.

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background

Else-
modification as
a diagnostic

French Sluicing
and PPs

Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment

Design
Results

General
Discussion

An alternative

Wrapping Up

References

Thank You!

P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
Rutgers
University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

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P-stranding,
evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

Troy Messick
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University

Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment
Design
Results

General
Discussion
An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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evasion, and
what they
(might) mean
for ellipsis
identity

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Introduction

Background
Else-
modification as
a diagnostic
French Sluicing
and PPs
Orphan
Prepositions

Experiment

Design
Results

General
Discussion

An alternative
Wrapping Up

References

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