

A prominent approach to verb phrase ellipsis (VPE) posits a syntactic identity constraint between the elided constituent and some local antecedent (Sag1976, Kitagawa1991). Psycholinguistic research provides support for such an identity condition for VPE—acceptability depends on the extent of syntactic mismatch between antecedent and elided material (ArreguiEtAl2006, Kim&Runner2009). Less experimental work exists on pseudogapping, which many have analyzed as a close relative of VPE (Jayaseelan1990, Lasnik1995) involving focus movement followed by ellipsis. We present a magnitude estimation study comparing effects of syntactic mismatch on VPE and pseudogapping, which poses problems for a simplistic syntactic identity constraint that applies uniformly across ellipsis types, and suggests that sensitivity to syntactic identity depends on the type of representation that must be recovered for each construction.

ArreguiEtAl. and Kim&Runner showed that in VPE, voice mismatches between antecedent and ellipsis clauses result in degradation (1); this was not observed in unelided sentences, supporting an ellipsis-specific structural identity constraint.

- (1) ?Jill was accused by Andy, and Matt did, too.

However, Merchant2008 noted that while VPE apparently tolerates syntactic mismatches, they seem categorically unacceptable for pseudogapping (2).

- (2) *Jill was accused by Andy, and Matt did Beth.

For Merchant, a difference in ellipsis size explains this purported asymmetry: the elided constituent includes the voice feature on *v* in pseudogapping, but not VPE. Consequently, syntactic identity applies to voice only for pseudogapping. Empirically, then, pseudogapping should enforce identity more strictly than VPE. Using magnitude estimation, we compared mismatched sentences with matched and unelided controls.

Normalized acceptability scores were fit to a mixed-effects model including Ellipsis, Mismatch, Ellipsis type, and interactions as predictors (Subject, Item as random effects; $ps < 0.05$). Previous results extended to pseudogapping, with Ellipsis and Mismatch resulting independently in lower acceptability, and an Ellipsis-Mismatch interaction—mismatch decreased acceptability only with ellipsis. Interestingly, Ellipsis-Mismatch interacted with Ellipsis type: the mismatch penalty was stronger for VPE than pseudogapping.

Weaker sensitivity to structural mismatch in pseudogapping appears to conflict with Merchant's prediction. But post hoc comparisons revealed that mismatched pseudogapping and VPE sentences were equally unacceptable; instead, matching pseudogapping was significantly less acceptable than matching VPE, suggesting pseudogapping has a lower baseline acceptability than VPE. Indeed, the difference in sensitivity to mismatch remained after corpus estimates of construction frequencies were included in the model.

Alternatively, ellipsis types with different discourse functions may differ in sensitivity to structural identity. VPE requires reconstruction of VP-meanings; voice mismatch leaves no strictly-matching VP in the discourse to copy directly into the ellipsis site. In contrast, pseudogapping highlights contrasts between sets of arguments; this focus structure is what comprehenders must recover. These results suggest that identity constraints cannot apply uniformly across ellipsis types; instead, following the intuition behind the condition on recoverability of deletion, what must be recovered for interpretation depends on each construction's discourse function, which then influences sensitivity to deviations from exact syntactic identity. Additionally, if voice-mismatched pseudogapping is judged more 'acceptable' than mismatched VPE because the relevant interpretations are more easily recovered, Merchant's asymmetry may ultimately be rooted in interpretability, rather than grammaticality.

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