Indivisible portmanteaux and the timing of ellipsis

Overview: Portmanteaux crossing a possible ellipsis boundary in Hungarian (and Cypriot Greek and Bengali) can block ellipsis that is otherwise licensed. This project presents a post-syntactic analysis of ellipsis silencing that captures elliptical indivisibility in a Late Insertion model by means of a timing account: portmanteaux formation precedes ellipsis silencing, and so can bleed it.

Data: The paradigm for the singular negated Hungarian copula is provided in table 1. The 3.PRS form in bold is the portmanteau form, which appears instead of the expected **nem van*.

Table 1: Hungarian NEG copulas

	PRS	PST
1	nem vagyok	nem voltam
2	nem vagy	nem voltál
3	**nincs**	nem volt

While present tense copulas can be elided as in (1a) and third person copulas can be elided as in (1b), the 3.PRS copula cannot be elided under negation as in (1c). In other words, it is precisely the portmanteaux *nincs* which blocks ellipsis, and cannot be split into *nem ~~van~~*. All data come from original fieldwork with two native speakers from Dunaujvaros and Cluj-Napoca. The same pattern of elliptically indivisible portmanteaux exists with plural copulas, as well as negative copulas in Bengali and the future subordinator in Cypriot Greek (omitted for brevity).

(1) a. Pisti otthon van, de én nem ~~vagyok~~ ~~otthon~~.
Pisti at.home be.3SG.PRS, but I NEG ~~be.1SG.PRS~~ ~~at.home~~
'Pisti is at home, but not me.'

b. Pisti otthon volt, de Ildi nem ~~volt~~ ~~otthon~~.
Pisti at.home be.3SG.PST, but Ildi NEG ~~be.3SG.PST~~ ~~at.home~~
'Pisti was at home, but not Ildi.'

c. * Pisti otthon van, de Ildi nem ~~van~~ ~~otthon~~.
Pisti at.home be.3SG.PRS, but Ildi NEG ~~be.3SG.PRS~~ ~~at.home~~
Int: 'Pisti is at home, but not Ildi.'

Analysis: The above examples contain sentential negation, which licenses ellipsis, and not constituent negation of the remnant. Consituent/focus negation in Hungarian precedes the negated constituent (Kiss, 2015). The relevant ellipsis in Hungarian involves non-pronunciation of articulated structure as opposed to non-structural or silent pronoun approaches, as diagnosed by connectivity effects such as island sensitivity and case matching (Merchant, 2018). Only the latter is shown.

(2) Bélának tetszik ez a póló, de Kati*(nak) nem.
Béla.DAT like.3SG.PRS DEM DEF t-shirt, but Kati.*(DAT) NEG
'Béla likes this t-shirt, but Kati does not.'

The existence of structure inside ellipsis sites means that some silencing operation must render it silent. To block ellipsis, portmanteaux must already exist at the level of representation where ellipsis applies. In a Late Insertion model (Halle & Marantz, 1993), information about the exponents of feature bundles, including which ones have portmanteau forms, is only available post-syntactically. This means that ellipsis silencing must also be post-syntactic to be bled by portmanteaux formation.

Proposal: Following Merchant (2001), I assume the presence of an [E] feature in the structure on the head of the sister of the intended ellipsis site. In the post-syntax, the Insertion algorithm associates exponents to terminals bottom up, by structural spans as in Svenonius (2016). For a given span, a portmanteau exponent will be inserted only if it is equally good or better at exponing the features of the span as the available non-portmanteau exponents (Haugen & Siddiqi, 2016). The Insertion algorithm proceeds iteratively following these steps:

1. Target the lowest node that is not associated with an exponent
2. If it hosts an [E] feature, delete all the terminals in its c-command domain
3. Associate an exponent with the largest possible span anchored by the targeted node, as per the matching algorithm above

Applying this proposal to Hungarian proceeds as follows. [E] is on the terminal with NEG, and will (attempt to) trigger ellipsis of its complement. Consider Insertion when it targets the copula in (1c). The matching algorithm will associate the span <NEG+E, 3SG, PRS, √BE> with the portmanteau form *nincs*, and then move on to the next unassociated node, which is the subject. Since NEG+E was associated when Insertion was targeting √BE and not NEG+E itself, the [E] feature on NEG was never read by Insertion as per the algorithm. Conversely, for (1a), when targeting the copula, Insertion will associate only <1SG, PRS, √BE> with *vagyok* since no portmanteau exponent is available for a larger span with these features. The next target of Insertion in (1a) will be NEG+E, which will trigger deletion of the terminals below it, resulting in ellipsis silencing succeeding.

The prediction is that if [E] is hosted on a terminal that is not the lowest member of a span with a portmanteau exponent (i.e. the portmanteau crosses an ellipsis boundary), Insertion algorithm will never notice the [E] feature due to the nature of the algorithm, and silencing will not be triggered. This derives elliptical indivisibility. A Fusion account of portmanteau formation, timed before ellipsis as Impoverishment inspired by Murphy, 2016 is shown to be equally successful for Hungarian and Bengali, but not Cypriot Greek.

Discussion: Sailor (2020, forthcoming) observes that contextual allomorphy is bled if the trigger is inside an ellipsis site. To account for this, he proposes that ellipsis occurs by Segregated Transfer, where the material inside the ellipsis site is never evaluated in the same PF cycle as material outside the ellipsis site. But if this is so, the post-syntax could never evaluate both the copula inside the ellipsis site and negation outside the ellipsis site in Hungarian to know whether they could form a portmanteau or not. Modelling elliptical indivisibility in a Late Insertion model requires the post-syntax to have simultaneous access to terminals on both sides of the ellipsis site.

The proposal put forth here still predicts that contextual allomorphy will be blocked across ellipsis boundaries, because material within the ellipsis site is deleted when Insertion targets the node hosting [E]. Subsequent applications of Insertion would not have any of the material inside the ellipsis site in their context of Insertion. This means any nodes outside the ellipsis site will not undergo contextual allomorphy for features that were inside the ellipsis site prior to its deletion.

Sailor presents Segregated Transfer as in interpretation of the proposal of Aelbrecht (2010), who observes that certain syntactic dependencies are blocked by ellipsis, while others are not. She proposes that ellipsis, once licensed in the syntax, immediately transfers the ellipsis site to PF, severing it from the rest of the structure in the syntax, thereby account for the impenetrability effects. This view is compatible with a model of the post-syntax where the transferred portions of the derivation are not operated on in isolation as Sailor proposes, but rather are re-assembled prior to post-syntactic operations applying. This is a refinement of the distributed view of ellipsis proposed by Merchant (2001): [E] has distinct syntactic and post-syntactic effects. Its syntactic effect is freezing, perhaps by means of Transfer as Aelbrecht proposes, and its post-syntactic effect is deletion. Crucially, ellipsis deletion occurs after portmanteau formation, and so must be post-syntactic.

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