Force Mismatch in Clausal Ellipsis

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Identity in ellipsis. Classical work on VP-ellipsis makes clear that certain deviations from strict identity between features of the antecedent phrase and features of the elided phrase are tolerated (Chomsky 1965, Sag 1976, Fiengo and May 1994). Recent work on sluicing indicates that even semantically contentful mismatches are tolerated, e.g., in modality, tense and polarity (Rudin 2019, Kroll 2019, Anand, Hardt and McCloskey 2021). Current literature, however, provides no robust evidence for mismatches in illocutionary force, for an obvious reason: Force is encoded above TP, outside the domain of identity for VP ellipsis and sluicing. The question of whether force mismatches are tolerated can only be sensibly studied in languages employing *CP*-ellipsis. Hebrew allows it as an instance of the general process of Argument Ellipsis (Landau 2018, 2022a, 2022b), so it may well provide the necessary testing ground.

Clausal ellipsis in Hebrew. English famously allows complement clauses to go missing only sporadically (Null Complement Anaphora, NCA), but Hebrew does so productively, displaying the hallmarks of surface anaphora (similarly to Japanese and Korean, Saito 2007, Park and Yoo 2013, Lee 2014, Sakamoto 2020). First, some predicates disallow a null complement unless a linguistic antecedent is present, no matter how salient its content is.

(1) a. *Context*: Dan and his wife are fixing up their new apartment, when Dan realizes he needs to buy some stuff at the local hardware store. It is Sunday, and Ana is pretty sure the store is closed. But Dan is hopeful, so he goes to the store with their son. When they arrive, they see that the store is indeed closed. Dan (sighing):
'tov, ima hayta betuxa *(še-ha-xanut sgura).'
well mom was.3SG.F sure that-the-store closed
'Well, mom was sure *(that the store is closed).'

  b. *Context*: Ana is planning to take her first 6-meter dive today at the pool. She approaches the edge of the diving board, then stops, unsure whether she can make it. Her brother Tom is watching from below. At that moment their mom calls Tom's phone. He speaks to her, holds up the phone and yells up to Ana:
'ima šo'elet *(im at holexet likfoc).'
mom asks.SG.F if you going to.dive
'Mom is asking *(whether you're going to dive.)'

Second, on widely held assumptions, the possibility of extraction from the null complement, especially when the extracted material displays morphosyntactic connectivity with its base position, is decisive evidence for the syntactic presence of the null complement.

(2) A: Mixal batxa ba-na'hag / *et ha-nahag?
Mixal trusted.3SG.F in.the-driver/ ACC the-driver
'Did Mixal trust the driver?'
B: ba-nahag$_i$ / *et ha-nahag, ani lo xošev ~~še Mixal batxa t$_i$~~.
in.the-driver/ ACC the-driver I not think.SG.M that-Mixal trusted.3SG.F
'The driver, I don't think she did.'

Below we will see parallel evidence for extraction out of elided *interrogative* complements (as in (1b)), taking advantage of the fact that *wh*-island violations in Hebrew are barely detectable (Reinhart 1981, Preminger 2010, Keshev and Meltzer-Asscher 2019).

Force mismatch in CP-ellipsis. The predicate *batuax* 'sure' selects [-Q] complement and the predicate *liš'ol* 'to ask' selects a [+Q] complement; each of them is incompatible with the opposite force value on its complement (data omitted for space reasons). In (3a), ellipsis of the [-Q]-complement of the former is licensed under identity with a [+Q]-antecedent. In (3b), ellipsis of the [+Q]-complement of the latter is licensed under identity with a [-Q]-antecedent. Recall from (1) that these two predicates reject NCA. Furthermore, PP-extraction verifies that genuine ellipsis of the complements is involved (note that the

translations revert to VP-ellipsis, as CP-ellipsis is unavailable in English).

(3) a. ani   lo   zoxer   **im**   hem nas'u   le-yavan,
       I   not   remember if   they travelled to-Greece
       aval le-italya$_i$,   ani   dey batuax   [~~še hem   nas'u t$_i$~~].
       but   to-Italy   I   quite sure   that-they   travelled
           'I don't remember if they travelled to Greece, but to Italy, I'm quite sure they did.'
  b. le-mavo le-phonologia, amru   li   le'herašem me-roš,   aval
       to-intro to-phonology said.3PL to.me to.register from-head but
       le-mavo le-morphologia$_i$,   hayiti   carix liš'ol   [~~im le'herašem t$_i$ me-roš~~].
       to-intro to-morphology   was.1SG must to.inquire if to.register   from-head
       Lit. 'To Intro to Phonology, they told me to pre-register, but to Intro to
       Morphlogy, I had to inquire whether to.'

In appropriate pragmatic contexts, such bi-directional elliptical relations are acceptable to Hebrew speakers. In the talk I provide further data of this type and discuss various controls to guard against potential interference of the *wh*-island effect and NCA derivations. The emerging conclusion is that **force can be mismatched under ellipsis**. Drawing parallels from sluicing (Anand, Hardt and McCloskey 2021), I further show that finiteness, tense, modality and polarity can also be mismatched under CP-ellipsis in Hebrew.

Theoretical implications. Theories of identity in ellipsis differ on which grammatical module they take the identity condition to hold in: syntax, semantics, pragmatics, or some combination thereof. Possibly the most straightforward way of capturing the data is to follow Rudin 2019 and Anand, Hardt and McCloskey 2022 and assume that identity is syntactic but only applies to a subclausal domain (vP or "the argument domain"). Thus, features of C^0 or Force^0 would remain unexamined by the condition and consequently tolerate a mismatch. Subset theories of syntactic identity (Murphy 2016), on the other hand, cannot explain the bidirectionality of licensing, since a subset relation between features of the antecedent and the ellipsis site cannot hold in both directions. If the condition merely requires nondistinctness (Ranero 2021), force mismatch is allowed on the assumption that [+Q] is a privative feature nondistinct from its absence (the declarative). This, however, raises the question of how these features are nonetheless distinct when selected on complementizers (both for PF and for LF).

Turning to semantic conditions, e-GIVENNESS (Merchant 2001) requires bidirectional entailment between the (F-closure of the) antecedent and ellipsis site, while Local Givenness (Kroll 2019) requires the local context to entail the ellipsis site. To evaluate these theories, we need to consider complement denotations. While a declarative complement uncontroversially denotes a proposition (a set of worlds), a polar question may be taken to denote a polar pair of propositions {p,¬p}, as in the classical view, or, once again, a single proposition, coupled with uncertainty presuppositions (van Rooij and Šafářová 2003, Biezma 2009, Biezma and Rawlins 2012, Roelofsen and Farkas 2015, Bhatt and Dayal 2020). Note that the latter is more congenial to our data: Bidirectional entailment is guaranteed if declarative and polar questions are denotationally equivalent, but not if they denote different objects. Thus, we see an interesting interaction between the issue of semantic identity (if needed over and above syntactic identity) and the proper semantic treatment of polar questions, as well as implications for syntactic nondistinctness theories of ellipsis, both being theoretically informed by the study of force mismatch under CP-ellipsis.

Selected references
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