



What ellipsis is not: A discussion driven by Turkish data

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Citation for published version (APA):

Yangin, M. T. (2024). *What ellipsis is not: A discussion driven by Turkish data*. Abstract from LELPGC24, Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

Citing this paper

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What ellipsis is not: A discussion driven by Turkish data

Ellipsis is a phenomenon that can be defined as a lack of linguistic units in a construction. This definition often obscures the distinction between ellipsis and other processes such as gapping, stripping and phase, which also cause a construction to lack linguistic units. There are two main approaches to define the ellipsis process, namely the non-structural approach (Schlangen, 2003; Culicover and Jackendoff, 2005) and the structural approaches by means of either LF-copy or PF-deletion (Fiengo and May, 1994; Wilder, 1997; Fox and Lasnik, 2003). This study examines the (in)adequacy of these approaches in accounting for ellipsis by drawing on Turkish data.

The non-structural approach claims that there is no unpronounced syntactic structure in the ellipsis site. In this way, the interpretation of constructions with an ellipsis site can be explained by means of a structure called *orphan phrase* with matching and tracing processes. This structure can explain only grammatical constructions with ellipsis such as (1a); however it is inadequate to explain the ungrammaticality in (1b).

- (1) a. Ali üç yeşil top al-dı, Taha iki sarı \emptyset al-dı.
Ali three green ball get-PST.3SG Taha two yellow get-PST.3SG

‘Ali got three green balls, Taha got two yellow ones.’

- b. *Ali üç yeşil top al-dı, Taha sarı iki \emptyset al-dı.
Ali three green ball get-PST.3SG Taha yellow two get-PST.3SG

The LF-copy account, which assumes that the antecedent is copied on the ellipsis site in LF, identifies the ellipsis process with overt pronouns. While (2a) and (2b) are grammatical, this approach is incapable of explaining why a construction with an ellipsis site in a subordinate clause such as in (2c) is ungrammatical in Turkish.

- (2) a. Ali köfte sev-iyor_i, ama ben balık [e]_i.
Ali meatball like-PRS but I fish

‘Ali likes meatballs, but I like fish.’

- b. *Ali_i* köfte sev-iyor-muş_i, ama sen *o_i* balık seviyor san-dı-n.
Ali meatball like-PRS-EVID.3SG but you he fish like.PRE think-PST-2SG

‘(I heard that) Ali likes meatballs, but you thought he likes fish’

- c. *Ali köfte *seviyormuş_i*, ama sen *o balık* [e]_i san-dı-n.
Ali meatball like.PRS.EVI but you he fish think-PST-2SG

The PF-deletion account derives ellipsis by means of phasal or functional heads. Examples with remnant numeral and adjectival units such as (1a) show that the ellipsis process cannot be represented within phases. However, the case coded on the remnant adjective in (3b), but not coded on the NP elided in (3a) supports the account of the ellipsis process by means of functional heads.

- (3) a. *Ali yeşil üç top aldı, Taha sarı-lar [e] al-dı.
 Ali green three ball get-PST.3SG Taha yellow-PUL get-PST.3SG
- b. Ali yeşil üç top al-dı, Taha sarı-lar-ı [e] al-dı.
 Ali green three ball get-PST.3SG Taha yellow-PL-ACC get-PST.3SG
- ‘Ali got three green balls, Taha got the yellow ones’

Based on this Turkish data, I will argue that ellipsis is derived by PF-deletion through functional heads (i.e., not only phase heads). In addition, I will discuss that deletion caused by phase heads cannot be ellipsis in certain circumstances.

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