A Gap in an Ellipsis Paradigm: Some Theoretical Implications

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I. A Gap in a Paradigm

(1) a John slept, and Mary will too
   b John slept, and Mary will sleep too

(3) *John was sleeping, and Mary will too
   a John was sleeping, and Mary will sleep too

(5) a John has slept, and Mary will too
   b John has slept, and Mary will sleep too

Hypothesis 1: Any form of a verb V can be 'deleted under identity' with any form of V.

Hypothesis 2 (merely a descriptive generalization): A form of a verb V other than be or 'auxiliary' have can be 'deleted under identity' with any form of V. A form of be or auxiliary have can only be deleted under identity with the very same form.

Hypothesis 3: A form of a verb V can only be deleted under identity with the very same form. Forms of be and auxiliary have (finite ones, at least) are introduced into syntactic structures already fully inflected. Forms of 'main' verbs are created out of lexically introduced bare forms and independent affixes.

John [Af] sleep, and Mary will sleep too

II. Motivation for the Hybrid Morphological Account

Lasnik (1995b) proposes this morphological difference between main and auxiliary verbs in English to account for the fact that finite auxiliaries show the full range of raising effects (like all verbs in French), while main verbs in English show none of them. The proposal is that the English finite auxiliaries (and all finite verbs in French) are lexically introduced with inflectional features which must be checked against a functional head (or heads). English main verbs are lexically uninfl ected, so they don't raise.

*John left not
b *John left not

Just as in Chomsky (1955) and Chomsky (1957), the process associating the finite affix with the bare verb ('Affix Hopping') requires adjacency.

The strictly lexicalist theory of Chomsky (1993) in which all verbs (in fact all lexical items) are introduced fully inflected does not account for (14).

(17a) Strong lexicalism: verbs are pulled from the lexicon fully inflected.
   b There is no affix hopping.
   c The inflected V raises to Agr (and T) to 'check' the features it already has. This checking can, in principle, take place anywhere in a derivation on the path to LF.
   d Once a feature of Agr has done its checking work, it disappears.

(18a) In French, the V-features of Agr (i.e., those that check features of a V) are strong.
   b In English, the V-features of Agr are weak.

(19a) If V raises to Agr overtly, the V-features of Agr check the features of V and disappear. If V delays raising until LF, the V-features of Agr survive into PF.
   b V-features are not legitimate PF objects.
   c Strong features are visible at PF, weak features are not. Surviving strong features cause the derivation to 'crash' at PF.
   d This forces overt V-raising in French.

(20) In English, delaying the raising until LF does not result in an ill-formed PF object, so such a derivation is possible. What makes it necessary is:

(21) 'Procrastinate': Whenever possible, delay an operation until LF.

(22) Why do have and be raise overtly?

(23) Have and be are semantically vacuous, hence not visible to LF operations. (Chomsky does not discuss modals.) Thus, if they have not raised overtly, they will not be able to raise at all. Their unchecked features will cause the LF to crash.

(24) *John not left
(25) *John left not

One or the other of these should be allowed. If something rules out (24), then (25) should, as a consequence, be permitted, since Procrastinate only chooses among convergent derivations.

III. An Alternative Treatment of the Gap?

(27) Given that finite forms of be raise, while finite forms of main verbs do not, could it be that, for some reason, a trace can't serve as (part of) an antecedent for ellipsis? This possibility was considered, and rejected, in Lasnik (1995b).

(28a) Linguistics, I like it, and you should like linguistics too
   b ?Someone will be in the office. Yes there will be someone in the office.
   c That this approach will fail is likely. No it isn't likely that this approach will fail.

(29) "[w, [e] X] cannot antecede VP-ellipsis." Roberts (n.d.)
(30) "...a trace of verb movement cannot serve as part of a VPE antecedent." Potsdam (1996)

A number of languages with overt V raising to l nonetheless allow VP ellipsis, with the effect that everything in the VP except the V is deleted. Doron (1990) shows this for Hebrew:

Q: Salaxt et ha-yeladim le- beit-ha-sefer
   A: Salaxt
   "Did you send the kids to school?"
   "I sent"
   "I did"

(33) Martins (1994) shows the same thing for Portuguese and McCloskey (1990) does for Irish:

A Martas deu um livro ao Joao? Sim, deu.
   "Did Martha give a book to John? Yes, she did."
The DA proved Jones guilty and the Assistant DA will hire
Susan (1995), that 'object shift' is overt in English .

Roberts (n.d.)...

Applied to the feature F, the move Operation thus creates at least one and perhaps two "derivative chains" alongside the chain CH=EF,F1 constructed by the operation itself. One is CH(F,F1,F2) consisting of the set of formal features PF[F] and its trace; the other is CH=F,F1,F2,a category carried along by generalized pied-piping and including at least the lexical item containing F. CH,F1 is always constructed, CH,F2 only when required for convergence...As noted, CH,F1 should be completely dispensable, were it not for the need to accommodate to the sensorimotor apparatus." [p.265]

"Just how broadly considerations of PF convergence might extend is unclear, pending better understanding of morphology and the internal structure of phrases. Note that such considerations could permit raising without pied-piping even overtly, depending on morphological structure..." [p.264]

In (58), if only the attracted features raise, but the V does not raise, a PF crash will ensue, but only if the offending item exists at that level. Deletion provides another way to salvage the derivation. When the lower VP is deleted without the V having raised, a PF crash is avoided and the result is acceptable Pseudogapping.

For the most part, perhaps completely: it is properties of the phonological component that require pied-piping. Isolated features and other scattered parts of words may not be subject to its rules, in which case the derivation is canceled; or the derivation might proceed to PF with elements that are 'unpronounceable,' violating FL. Chomsky (1995a, p.262)

Q: Ar chair tu isteach air
put [PAST] you in on it
"Did you apply for it?"
A: Chair
put [PAST]
"Yes."


"...a raised V has fewer features than a non-raised V, assuming that the features that cause raising are not copied (this has to be assumed in a minimalist framework or the raising operation would not eliminate features and so would have no motivation, and so would be impossible given the general last-resort nature of movement). Roberts (n.d.)

Speaker B: Tell me why
IP HQffY will never
Mary
will
Susan
[Agr0]
[VP!!]
Agr
TP
V
[SVC
[strong F]]
NP
Agr
N
Agr
V
hire

Given that a raised \( X \) has a feature (or set of features) checked and deleted, why can it antecede the deletion of an XP with its head in situ (as in Pseudogapping and Sluicing)?

An ultimately related question: Given that NP raises but V doesn't raise in the Pseudogapping construction, why must V raise in corresponding non-elliptical version?

*Mary will Susan hire

A parallel question: Given that Inf doesn't raise to Comp in the Sluicing construction, why must Inf raise in the corresponding matrix non-elliptical version?

Which linguists Susan will never understand

Overt movement is driven by a 'strong feature' of a head, which attracts a matching feature within the complement of that head. All movement, whether covert or overt, is fundamentally feature movement. [Chomsky (1995b)]

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I.

A candidate for a VP headed by verb trace anteceding deletion of a VP headed by a lexical verb: Pseudogapping as overt NP raising to Spec of Agr, followed by VP ellipsis. (Lasnik (1995a), based on the proposal of Koizumi (1993), following Johnson (1991), that 'object shift' is overt in English.)

If (36) is correct, it should presumably generalize to all heads, not be limited to V and trace of V:

If (VP [v e] X) cannot antecede YP-ellipsis of [VP [Y] X].

Sluicing (Ross (1969), now standardly analyzed as IP ellipsis (Lobeck (1990) and Saito and Murasugi (1990)), provides another potential counter-example.

95a John hired Bill and Mary will
b John [a hire [\l Bill [v 1]]] and Mary will [\l \l Susan [v hire t]]

Crucially, Pseudogapping is not just deletion of the verb:

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An account completely parallel to that provided for (58) is available for (63).

Note that now, the major prima facie counter-examples to Roberts' proposal ((36), as generalized to (44)), are completely compatible with it.

So why not accept the Roberts-Potsdam account of the gap in the original ellipsis paradigm?

*John was here, and Mary will too

BUT what are those features? It is hard to see how they could be anything other than inflectional features. But checking and deleting the inflectional features of was makes it more like be, not less like be.

Bibliography


