

Phase-by-phase computation of prominence in ellipsis and PP stranding island alleviations

This paper proposes that an account of PP-stranding in ellipsis in non-PP-stranding languages needs to take into account how prominence via Focus/Contrast is computed. The proposal here is that prominence is computed on a phase-by-phase basis (Selkirk and Kratzer 2007). Cases of PP-stranding in Polish will be argued to be instances of non-constituent ellipsis (Bruening 2015), but with one remnant. PP-stranding is possible when there is a smaller phase than the PP where prominence can be established. This is the case when the remnant of sluicing is a D-linked wh-phrase (but not a simple wh-phrase). When prominence needs to be computed in more than one phase within the domain of ellipsis, as is the case when there are multiple remnants, then one of the remnants needs to move or be an adjunct. In either case PP-stranding becomes impossible as is shown in non-constituent ellipsis, multiple wh-movement ellipsis, and in sprouting.

Data. Szczegielniak (2008), Rodrigues, et.al. (2008) show that, in languages that lack PP-stranding, D-linked sluice remnants can appear without the PP, but are marked for appropriate case. In (1) we see a wh sluice remnant marked for locative; when the structure is pronounced with material in italics the sentence is unacceptable (curly italics = deleted)

1. Jola zagrała w jakimś teatrze, ale nie wiem którym₁ *{*Jola zagrała w t₁ teatrze*}
Jola played in some theatre, but not know which (loc) Jola played in theatre
'Jola played in some theater, but I do not know which theater she played in'

Contrasts between pronouncing string in 1, with or without expression in italics, have been argued to suggest that the underlying structure of the sluice in (1) is a cleft construction that has additional wh-movement. However, based on acceptability surveys, Nykiel (2013) has argued that such clefts are as ungrammatical as wh-movement stranding a PP. Additional evidence that a cleft cannot be the underlying structure of (1) involves cases where the whole d-linked phrase is a remnant. In (2) the full cleft structure, from Szczegielniak (2008), is ungrammatical, yet it becomes fine if the italicized string is dropped.

2. Jola zagrała w jakimś teatrze, ale nie wiem którym teatrze₁ *{*to w t₁ Jola zagrała*}
Jola played in some theatre, but not know which theater (loc) it in Jola played
'Jola played in some theater, but I do not know which theater she played in'

Proposal. I will argue that PP-stranding in sluicing is an instance of phase-by-phase ellipsis that targets non-constituents and leaves pronounced the most prominent XP within a given phase (Selkirk and Kratzer 2007). Non-constituent ellipsis has been argued for cases of coordinate ellipsis as in (4) (Wilder 1997, Hofmeister 2010, Bruening 2015)

3. Jan zadzwonił do Marii we wtorek i {*Jan zadzwonił*} do Joli w piątek
Jan called to Maria on Tuesday and *Jan called* to Jola on Friday.
'Jan called Mary on Tuesday and Jola on Friday'

We can derive non-constituent ellipsis by assuming that at each phase level the most prominent XP can be treated as focused and become a remnant, provided the structure overall fulfills required syntactic and semantic constraints on ellipsis (see: Chung 2013). This allows us to delete the CP in (3) sparing, however, the PP complement embedded in vP phase as well as the PP adjunct, provided both are evaluated as prominent via focus contrast marking within the vP phase.

In order to account for PP-stranding in (1), let me assume phase-by-phase ellipsis and that complex nominals like: *which theater*, as well as any PP, are phases (Boskovic 2014). Marking prominence within the nominal phase containing a D-linked wh-phrase gives us two options: (i) mark as most prominent just the wh (which theater), or (ii) mark as most prominent the whole nominal (which theater). This translates into the possibility of having two types of remnants: a bare wh- (*którym*) as in (2), or the wh plus NP (*którym teatrze*) as in (3). Not marking prominence within the nominal phase but within PP phase gives us PP remnants containing the wh-expression as a whole (*w którym teatrze* = 'in which theater'). The latter non-PP-stranding derivation is the only option for remnants that are simple wh-expressions, since simple wh-words lack the status of a phase. This is why a simple wh like: *кто* 'who', cannot be remnant without the P it is a complement of (Szczegielniak 2008).

4. Jola podeszła do kogoś ale nie wiem *(do) kogo
 Jola approached to someone but not know to who
 'Jola approached someone but I do not know who'

Predictions. PP-stranding in ellipsis is impossible in cases when there is more than remnant, since prominence of two remnants has to be computed at a phase where both are present. Hence, multiple wh-slucing does not allow PP-stranding (Szczegielniak 2008), even with D-linked wh's.

5. Jan napisał jakiś list do jakiegoś ucznia ale nie wiem który *(do) którego
 Jan wrote some letter to some student but not know which (to) which
 '*Jan wrote some letter to some student but I do know which to which (student)'

PP-stranding is also impossible in structures like (5), where omission of a PP is out even if we make the nominal complex:

6. Jan wbiegł do dużego banku we wtorek i {Jan wbiegł} *(do) małego banku w piątek
 Jan ran into big bank on Tuesday and Jan ran into small bank on Friday.
 'Jan ran into a big bank on Tuesday and into a small one on Friday'

Note that the same observation applies to English counterparts of (4) indicating that, as argued in Bruening (2015), movement does not play a role in non-constituent ellipsis.

Sprouting also does not allow PP-stranding, indicating that prominence has to be evaluated at the level of the whole adjunct, not within the adjunct itself.

7. Jola zasnęła w jakimś teatrze, ale nie wiem *(w) którym
 Jola slept in some theatre, but not know (in) which (loc)
 'Jola slept in some theater, but I do not know which'

Finally, vP ellipsis does not allow PP-stranding since the PP remnants need to be marked as prominent at the vP level, there is no option of marking the just complement of the PP as prominent since the PP itself needs to be marked as prominent at the vP level.

8. W domu będzie nam ciepło ale *(w) lesie nie będzie
 in house is us(dat) warm but in forest not is
 'It will be warm for us in the house but not in the forest.'

Conclusion. This paper argues that PP-stranding in ellipsis in non-PP-stranding languages is, in essence, a case of non-constituent ellipsis. However, unlike NCE in (3), PP-stranding ellipsis has just one remnant. Availability of PP stranding violations in Polish ellipsis provides insight into how prominence is computed phase by phase, and how prominence later factors in establishing the types of remnants possible in ellipsis.

References:

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