

Title: Backward NP Ellipsis in the Nominal Right Node Raising

This paper draws novel cross-linguistic data from nominal right node raising constructions (NRNR) to show that backward ellipsis is more restricted than previously observed especially in right node raising construction (RNR). The NRNR data also provides evidence that closest conjunct agreement (CCA) cannot be reduced to ellipsis.

Background: Backward ellipsis has been shown to be restricted as in (1). Langacker (1969) and Ross (1967, 1969) propose the backward anaphora constraint in (2).

- (1) a. [Surpass Donald Trump's []], Bill Gates's fortune certainly does.
b.* Bill Gates's [] surpasses Donald Trump's fortune.
- (2) Backward Anaphora Constraint (BAC): Anaphoric elements (of which ellipsis sites are a special case) may not simultaneously command and linearly precede their antecedents.

Barros and Vicente (2009) show BAC can be violated in RNR. Assuming RNR involves both multi-dominance and ellipsis, they hypothesize the interaction of backward ellipsis and multi-dominance in (3). In particular, they argue that VP RNR involves VPE, a process available in English forward ellipsis, whereas DP RNR cannot involve DP ellipsis, a process unavailable in English forward ellipsis. Instead, DP RNR involves multi-dominance.

- (3) Backward ellipsis is possible only in those cases where the corresponding forward ellipsis is also possible. Elsewhere, multi-dominance happens.

In this paper I show that backward NPE is yet more restricted in nominal right node raising constructions and cannot be captured by (3).

NRNR: Nominal right node raising involves RNR in the nominal domain like (4). On the surface *student* is shared by the demonstratives/possessor DPs. I will label the shared element (noun) as the target and the sharing elements (demonstrative/possessor) as the sources. Shen 2016 argues that the singular target (4a) involves a multi-dominance construction which is not available for (4b).

- (4) a. This and that student are a couple. b.* John's and Mary's student are a couple.

Shen argues against an ellipsis analysis for the singular target in NRNR in (4) based on the observation that cross-linguistically elements that do not license NPE do license singular target in NRNR. For example, numeral + adjective and possessor DP + adjective in English do not license NPE in (6), thus the singular target does not involve ellipsis in (5).

- (5) a. One tall ~~student~~ and one short student are a couple.
b. John's tall ~~student~~ and Mary's short student are a couple.
- (6) a.* One tall student knows me but one short ~~student~~ doesn't
b. John's tall student knows me but Mary's short ~~student~~ doesn't.

This is not restricted to English: in Spanish and Italian, the post-nominal adjectives license NPE while the pre-nominal ones like *supuesta* 'alleged' do not. Nevertheless, singular target is available under pre-nominal adjectives in (7a). In Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, NPE is licensed under agreeing adjectives but not non-agreeing adjectives like *braon* 'brown'. Yet singular target in NRNR is available under non-agreeing adjectives in (7b).

- (7) a. La supuesta y la verdadera terrorista son pareja. b. braon i bež čarap su par.
the alleged and the true terrorist are couple. brown and beige sock are pair

Ban on NPE in NRNR: Having established that singular target in NRNR does not involve ellipsis, a closer look at (4b) reveals that in fact NPE is banned in NRNR. Since NPE is licensed under possessor DPs in English, according to (3), the backward ellipsis in RNR should be possible, thus (8) is predicted to be acceptable, contrary to the fact.

(8)* John's ~~student~~ and Mary's student are a couple.

Again English is not alone in this ban on backward NPE in NRNR. German possessor DPs license NPE (9a), however, singular target in NRNR under possessor DPs is not available in (9b). Same can be seen in Polish genitive possessors.

(9) German

- a. Marys Student und Johns sind ein Paar.
 Mary's student and John's are a couple.
 'Mary's student and John's are a couple.'
- b.* Johns ~~Student~~ und Marys Student sind ein Paar.
 John's ~~student~~ and Mary's student are a couple.
 'John's student and Mary's student are a couple'

In Dutch indefinite neuter singular DPs, inflection *-e* on *groen* 'green' is banned unless the noun is elided. In NRNR, not only the grammatical sentence with singular target in (11a) does not involve the inflectional marker, the presence of the marker is banned in NRNR in (11b), indicating that NPE is ruled out in NRNR.

(11) Dutch

- a. een groen en een rood boek zijn allebei duur
 a green and a red book are both expensive.
- b.* een groene en een rood boek zijn allebei duur
 a green-e and a red book are both expensive.
 'a green book and a red book are both expensive.'

CCA in Mismatch: When the two sources in NRNR involve different number values, the target shows agreement with the closest conjunct (CCA) as in (12).

- (12) a. Ten tall and one short student formed a football team.
 b.* Ten tall and one short students formed a football team.

Having established that NRNR does not involve backward ellipsis, these CCA cases cannot be derived from ellipsis either. There must be a separate operation that licenses CCA. I follow Bhatt and Walkow (2013) in assuming that when valuation (the second step of Agree) cannot be done in syntax, it is postponed to PF where the target will be valued by the linearly closest source, i.e. the closest conjunct.

Summary: This paper has shown that 1) backward ellipsis is more restricted than the traditional BAC; 2) that forward ellipsis is not a pre-condition on backward ellipsis in right node raising; and 3) that closest conjunct agreement cannot be reduced to ellipsis.

Selected References

- Barros, Matt & Luis Vicente. 2009. Backward...ellipsis? Handout, presented at ZAS.
- Bhatt, Rajesh & Martin Walkow. 2013. Locating Agreement in Grammar: an Argument from Agreement in Conjunctions. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 31(4). 951–1013.
- Shen, Zheng. 2016. No Clash Constraint in Nominal RNR Number Agreement, in *Proceedings of 39th Penn Linguistics Conference*.