

## Syntactic isomorphism and non-isomorphism under ellipsis

**Introduction** — Rooth (1992) and Fiengo & May (1994) argue that, on top of a *semantic* parallelism requirement (Chomsky 1965, Sag 1973), an elliptical clause must also be *syntactically* isomorphic to its antecedent (obviating inflectional morphology and the indices of some variables). However, syntactic isomorphism is violated under pseudosluicing (Merchant 1998 *et seq*), where a copular elliptical clause takes a non-copular antecedent. This talk shows that (i) non-isomorphism is a marked case arising in specific contexts, whereas isomorphism is the elsewhere case; and (ii) the exact distribution of non-isomorphic ellipses follows from the properties of the copular clauses that they stem from.

**Data distribution**— The empirical domain is the distribution of P-drop effects in Spanish under sluicing/stripping. I follow Rodrigues et al's (to app) conclusion that there is a bidirectional correlation between P-drop effects and a copular source for ellipsis. However, I show that the distribution of copular sources themselves (and consequent P-drop effects) is *not* free. (1a) shows that the first influencing factor is the syntax of the antecedent: if the antecedent itself is a copula, then P-drop effects become *obligatory* (2). This restriction follows if syntactic isomorphism is required here, forcing a copula in the ellipsis site, and a P-drop effect by Rodrigues et al's correlation.

In contrast, if the antecedent is non-copular, the possibility of P-drop depends on the semantic relation between the remnant of ellipsis and its correlate in the antecedent: P-drop is *optional* if the remnant denotes a subset of the set denoted by its correlate (1b-I), and *impossible* otherwise (1b-II). (3a) illustrates the former case, on the assumption that the *wh*-word *cuál* 'which' contains an  $\exists$  quantifier (Cheng 1991, Hagstrom 1998) whose potential referents are restricted by general pragmatic principles to the set of Stephenson's novels. (3b) illustrates the latter case, as Mamet's plays and Stephenson's novels are disjoint sets. These data suggest that syntactic isomorphism is required in (3b) –so as to enforce a non-copular elliptical clause and block the P-drop effect- but not in (3a).

Examples (4) through (6) show that the same data can be replicated under stripping. Additional data not shown here (involving unique-reference antecedents, *also* modification, and corrective environments) reinforce the conclusion that (1b-I) is the only context where syntactic isomorphism is not required. Furthermore, these data can be replicated in other Romance languages (French, Italian... , data not shown here), showing that the distribution in (1) is not a quirk of Spanish.

**Analysis** — I propose that the distribution in (1) is a consequence of the fact that pseudo-sluicing (and its stripping counterpart) stems from a specificational copula (cf. Rodrigues et al to app). These copulas are like English *it*-clefts in that they are focal structures with an exhaustivity requirement (Mikkelsen 2004), and thus result in stronger (more informative) statements than regular, non-copula-based, focus structures, as the latter have no exhaustivity requirement. Therefore, syntactic isomorphism can be obviated only if doing so results in a stronger statement *vis-à-vis* the antecedent clause –otherwise, isomorphism is required (note that semantic parallelism still must be observed in all cases). This is the case in (3a/5), but not in (3b/6), as the elliptical copula refers to a different set from that of the antecedent. Isomorphism is also required in (2/4): as the copular antecedent already introduces an exhaustive reading, a non-copular (non-isomorphic) ellipse would not be more informative, so a copular (isomorphic) ellipse is required instead.

**Outlook** — the analysis above has various implications for the theory of ellipsis: (i) it contributes to the growing body of work that takes clefts and copulas to be a privileged source for clausal ellipsis; (ii) it shows that, while both semantic and syntactic parallelism are necessary (Rooth 1992, Fiengo & May 1994), the latter is a less rigid condition than the former; (iii) finally, it raises the question of which structure building mechanisms are at play in the elliptical clause –i.e., whether a dedicated LF Copy process (Chung et al 1995), regular syntax constrained by semantic requirements (Merchant 2001), or a combination of both (in order to account for the co-existence of isomorphism and non-isomorphism).

## EXAMPLES

- (1) *(Non)isomorphism in ellipsis: descriptive generalization*
- a. Given a copular antecedent, syntactic isomorphism is obligatory in all cases (2/4).
  - b. Given a non-copular antecedent, syntactic isomorphism is
    - i. optional if the remnant of ellipsis denotes a subset of its correlate (3a/5).
    - ii. obligatory otherwise (3b/6).
- (2) La novela sobre la que ha hablado Mauricio es una de estas, pero no sé (\*sobre) cuál  
 the novel about which has talked Mauricio is one of these but not know about which
- (3) a. Mauricio ha hablado sobre una novela de Stephenson, pero no sé (sobre) cuál  
 Mauricio has talked about a novel by Stephenson but not know about which
- b. Mauricio ha hablado sobre la primera novela de Stephenson, pero no sé \*(sobre)  
 Mauricio has talked about the first novel by Asimov but not know about  
 qué obra de Mamet  
 which play by Mamet
- (4) A: La chica con la que ha hablado Mauricio es una de estas  
 the girl with which has talked Mauricio is one of these
- B: En efecto, (\*con) Clara  
 that's right, with Clara
- (5) A: Mauricio ha hablado sobre una novela de Stephenson  
 Mauricio has talked about a novel by Stephenson
- B: Cierto, pero no (sobre) *Azogue*  
 correct but not about *Quicksilver*
- (6) A: Mauricio ha hablado sobre una novela de Stephenson  
 Mauricio has talked about a novel by Stephenson
- B: Cierto, pero no \*(sobre) una obra de Mamet  
 correct but not about a play by Mamet

REFERENCES: **Cheng 1991** *On the typology of wh- questions* PhD MIT    **Chomsky 65** *Aspects of the theory of syntax* MIT Press    **Chung Ladusaw McCloskey** Sluicing and Logical Form *NLS 3* **Fiengo & May 94** *Indices and identity* MIT Press    **Hagstrom 98** *Decomposing questions* PhD MIT    **Merchant 98** Pseudosluicing *ZAS WPL 10*    **Merchant 01** *The syntax of silence* OUP    **Mikkelsen 04** *Specifying Who* PhD UCSC    **Rodrigues Nevins Vicente to app** Cleaving the interactions between sluicing and P-stranding *Proceedings of Going Romance 20*, Benjamins    **Rooth 92** Ellipsis redundancy and reduction redundancy *Stuttgart Ellipsis Workshop*    **Sag 73** *Deletion and Logical Form* PhD MIT.