

Ellipsis Revisited: In the View of Role and Reference Grammar

Hsiao-Wei Chen
National Taiwan Normal University

Ellipsis has attracted much attention from formal syntax, analyzed as either movement, PF-deletion, copying or with the concept of catenae. Yet, a much more straightforward account offered by Wilder (1997) is to deduct various subtypes of ellipsis to the notion of sharing and deletion, as in examples (1) and (2). The underlined strings are the shared elements. The square brackets represent identical materials as the underlined parts, yet, the contents are deleted to avoid repetition in the sentence. The shared and deleted unit can be an RP, a predicate or a combination of both; it does not need to be a complete syntactic phrase.

(1) Backward sharing (deleted unit)

- a. Mary bought [] / and ate the cheese. *RP*
- b. Mary will [] / and Jack must buy the textbook. *Pred. + RP*

(2) Forward sharing

- a. Alice checked out at the counter / and [] left the store. *RP*
- b. Alice bought John soda / and [] Matt coffee. *RP + predicate*
- c. Alice ordered pizza / and Jack [] fried chicken. *pred.*
- d. Alice untangled the wire / but I don't know how []. *pred. + RP*
- e. Alice likes eggplants but Jack doesn't []. *pred. + RP*
- f. I know which restaurant [Alice opens *t*] and [Jack recommends *t*]. *RP*

In this view, there is no need to specify the subtypes of ellipsis, i.e. RP ellipsis, VP ellipsis, clausal ellipsis, pseudo-gapping, right-node raising and antecedent-contained deletion. Concurring with Wilder (1997)'s work, I examine ellipsis in the framework of Role and Reference Grammar (Van Valin, 1993, 2005). First, I identify the nexus-juncture types of the shared/elided elements, as (3) shows.

(3)

nexus	elliptical constructions (with juncture)
coordination	RP ellipsis (nuclear, core, clausal), VP ellipsis (core), pseudo-gapping (clausal), clausal ellipsis (clausal)
cosubordination	RP ellipsis (nuclear, core, clausal)
subordination	antecedent-contained deletion

Subsequently, two proposals are offered to represent the sharing-deleting relationship in the semantics-syntactic linking diagram, exemplified by the coordination constructions in Figure 1 (for the sentence, 'Noelle bought John soda, and Matt, coffee.') and Figure 2 (for 'Noelle likes eggplants but Jack doesn't.'). The logical structures at the bottom of the diagrams specify the predicate and arguments that constitute the event. For shared elements that are at either end of a sentence, pre-/post-core slot is a good position to host them, as in Figure 1. The pre-/post-core slot is an outside position for elements whose status are actually in the core. The advantage of settling Noelle bought here is that the material is automatically assigned into the empty space in the cores of the conjuncts. There is no need of copying element from one conjunct to another.

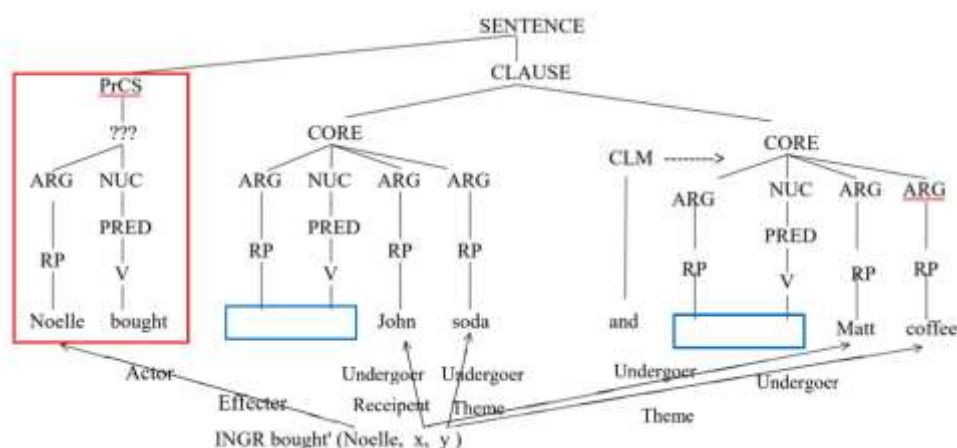


Figure 1. Pre-core slot

However, the first account cannot nicely explain shared elements that sit in the middle of a sentence. Thus, a second analysis is proposed. As Figure 2 presents, *likes eggplants* is located in the core of the first conjunct; the second conjunct accesses it through the semantic-syntax linking, as the red arrow indicates. Such analysis concurs with the constraint on the undergoer in the shared element to be identical with that in the deleted material, be it generic nouns or a specific object (i.e. *eggplants* or *the eggplant*).

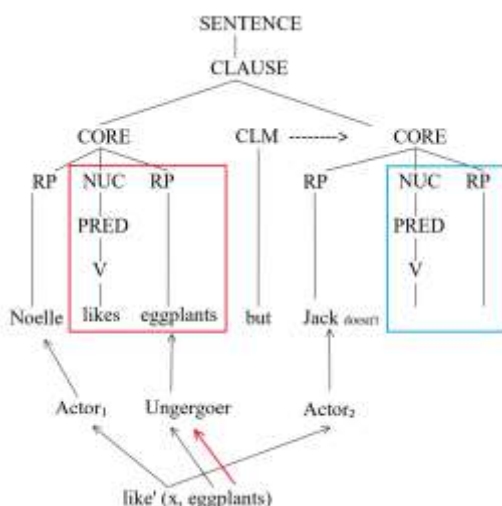


Figure 2. Base-generated

To conclude, the syntactic-semantic linking in RRG provides a different solution to the issue of ellipsis. Identical arguments are assigned to the two conjuncts with two arrows rooting from the same argument in the logical representation. The view of sharing/deletion thus generates the surface form in a straightforward manner.

References:

- Van Valin, R. D. (1993). A synopsis of Role and Reference Grammar. *Advances in role and reference grammar*, 100-151.
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- Wilder, C. (1997). Some properties of ellipsis in coordination. In A. Alexiadou & T. Hall (Eds.), *Studies on universal grammar and typological variation*, p. 59-107. John Benjamins Publishing. Amsterdam/Philadelphia.