

Perspectives under Ellipsis

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Synopsis: We make a new observation that there is a contrast in felicity between (1a) and (1b), under a context where Macron is in Paris but Obama is not; and crucially, neither A nor B is in Paris.

- A: (1) *Macron thinks that Obama will come to Paris.*
B: (1a) # *I doubt that he will come to Paris.*
(1b) *I doubt that he will.*

The question is why the elided version (1b) is felicitous, given that the unelided version (1a) is not. We argue that a PF-deletion analysis of ellipsis cannot readily account for this contrast, at least without making substantial new assumptions about how to interpret deictic verbs of motion. We propose that an LF-copying analysis of ellipsis can better explain this contrast.

The Semantics of *Come*: Cinque (1972), Oshima (2006a,b) and Barlew (2017) observe that *come* is anchored to an individual's perspective, and carries the presupposition that the perspective holder (or in Barlew (2017)'s term, "the anchor") is located (or at least *thinks s/he is located*) at the destination of *come*. For example, in (1), *come* is anchored to Macron's perspective; the anchor Macron is located in Paris, and the destination of *come* is also Paris, so the presupposition of *come* in (1) is satisfied. According to Barlew (2017), the possible anchors for the perspective of *come* are salient individuals in a given context, normally including the speaker, the addressee, the attitude holder, etc. With regards to (1), the speaker A, the addressee B, and the attitude holder *Macron* are all salient individuals, but only the perspective holder *Macron* satisfies the presupposition. For (1a), the possible anchors are A and B. Neither of the possible anchors, A or B, can satisfy the presupposition of *come*, so (1a) is infelicitous. It is worth pointing out that the infelicity of (1a) shows that the attitude holder *Macron* from the previous utterance cannot serve as a possible anchor of *come* in (1a).

Under PF-deletion: Under a PF-deletion analysis (Merchant 2001), the elided material in (1b) is derived by initially building the full VP *come to Paris* as in (1a), and then deleting it at PF. If this is true, (1b) should be infelicitous for the same reason as (1a): there is no available anchor for *come* in (1b) that will satisfy the location presupposition. (Note again that *Macron* from the previous utterance is not a possible anchor, as the infelicity of (1a) demonstrates; the possible anchors in (1b) only include A and B, neither of which is in Paris.)

Under LF-copying: Under an LF-copying analysis (Chung et al. 1995), the elided material in (1b) is derived by copying the LF of the VP from (1a). Crucially, this copied LF can contain information about the (possible) anchor(s) of *come*. For example, according to Oshima's (2006a,b) analysis, the VP in (1) contains the output of a function from the context to a set of possible anchors. A simplified version of this analysis for (1) at LF would be [_{VP} *come*^{speaker, addressee, Macron} to Paris]; the set of possible anchors for *come* is shown in superscript. If the elided VP in (1b) is a copy of this LF, then we account for the felicity of (1b), since the information about possible anchors is copied from the antecedent; the possible anchors in (1b) are the same as the ones in its antecedent. The infelicity of (1a) is still accounted for, since the VP in (1a) is *not* derived by the LF-copying operation, but built up as in (1). A simplified version of the analysis for (1a) would be [_{VP} *come*^{speaker, addressee} to Paris].

A different view of *come* and *go*: We also explore whether the PF-deletion view might be able to account for (1b) by adopting a non-standard analysis of *come* and *go*. Suppose the unelided source of (1b) is not (1a), but rather *I doubt that he will <go to Paris>*. PF-deletion might then

correctly predict the felicity of (1b), but only if we assume that the verbs *come* and *go* can be treated as identical under ellipsis. We explore one possible implementation of this idea, where *come* and *go* are essentially two realizations of a single abstract lexical item *MOVE*, spelled out as *come* or *go* depending on the choice of anchor. That is, (1) could underlyingly be *Macron thinks that Obama will MOVE to Paris*. In narrow syntax, *MOVE* is anchored to *Macron*. At PF, since the anchor *Macron* is located at the destination of *come*, namely *Paris*, *MOVE* is spelled out as *come*. (1b) could also be *I doubt that he will MOVE to Paris*. In narrow syntax, *MOVE* is anchored to the attitude holder (i.e., the speaker B). At PF, since B is not at the destination of *come*, *MOVE* would be realized as *go*, but be unpronounced due to deletion. However, one conceptual problem for this analysis is that the spell-out rules for *MOVE* would require PF to access information about where the anchors' locations, which is not encoded syntactically.

Problems with a bound variable treatment of *come/go*: Furthermore, under this different view of *come/go*, the anchoring of the perspective of *come* happens in narrow syntax. It is natural to ask what syntactic mechanism might be involved in anchoring the perspective. One potential mechanism is to anchor the perspective of *come* by variable binding. A possible analysis for (1) in narrow syntax is shown in (2), where *MOVE* is bound by *Macron*.

(2) *Macron_i thinks that Obama will MOVE_i to Paris.*

This is not a completely novel mechanism, considering this is how pronouns get interpreted: in both (3a) and (3b), *him* is a bound variable. (“<...>” means that “...” is syntactically present, but gets deleted at PF.)

(3a) *Macron_i thinks that Mary will visit him_i.*

(3b) *John_j also thinks that she will <visit him_{*j/i}>.*

However, we argue against this bound-variable treatment of *MOVE*. Crucially, previous work has identified constraints on the interpretation of bound-variable pronouns under ellipsis, and the interpretation of *MOVE* under this analysis fails to obey these constraints. For instance, Takahashi & Fox (2005) point out that bound-variable pronouns give rise to “MaxElide” effects in examples like (3a-b): *him* in (3b) can refer to *Macron*, but not *John*. This poses a problem for applying the variable binding mechanism to *MOVE*: if the mechanism used for interpreting pronouns is the same used for *MOVE*, we would predict that in (4b), *MOVE* in the ellipsis site could not be bound by *I*. However, the fact that (4b) is felicitous indicates that it should be possible for *MOVE* in the elided site to be bound by *I*, where *MOVE_i* in the antecedent is spelled out as *come*, and *MOVE_j* in the ellipsis site would have been realized as *go* if pronounced.

(4a) *Macron_i thinks that Obama will MOVE_i to Paris.*

(4b) *I_j also think that he will <MOVE_j to Paris>.*

In this sense, we have to either treat *MOVE* as a variable, but one which behaves differently from pronouns, or appeal to another syntactic mechanism to anchor *MOVE*. Either way, this involves invoking an *ad hoc* mechanism for *come/go* without independent motivations.

Conclusion: To account for the facts in (1a-b), we must either reject the PF-deletion analysis of ellipsis for this case, or else reject a standard view of *come/go* as two separate lexical items.

Selected References: •Barlew, J. (2017). *The semantics and pragmatics of perspectival expressions in English and Bulu: The case of deictic motion verbs*. OSU Dissertation. •Chung et al. (1995). Sluicing and logical form. *Natural Language Semantics* 3 (3): 239-282. •Cinque, G. (1972). Fillmore’s semantics of “come” revisited. *Lingua e Stile*, 7:575-599. •Merchant, J. (2001). *The syntax of silence: Sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis*. OUP: Oxford. •Oshima, D.Y. (2006a). GO and COME revisited: What serves as a reference point? In Antić, Z. et al editors, *Proceedings of BLS 32*. Berkeley, CA. Takahashi, S. and Fox, D. (2005). MaxElide and the re-binding problem. In E. Georgala and J. Howell (eds.), *Proceedings of SALT 15*. Ithaca, N.Y.