

Verb Phrase Ellipsis is discourse reference: novel evidence from dialogue

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Abstract

The majority view of Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE) maintains that it is licensed and interpreted by a syntactic-identity relation between an unpronounced VP at the ellipsis site and its "antecedent" VP. This generalization is challenged by examples of acceptable and interpretable VPE with non-identical antecedents, such as voice-mismatched VPs (Kertz, 2008; 2010; 2013), nominals (Miller & Hemforth, 2013), and lexically mismatched VPs (Merchant, 2011). An analogous problem arises with exophoric VPE, i.e. ellipsis with *no* linguistic antecedent whatsoever. Here I consider a novel challenge to identity accounts, based on small dialogues, in which a perfectly suitable, non-mismatched antecedent VP *is* available, but the interpretation of the ellipsis clause does not depend on it. I report experimental data on the acceptability and "interpretational range" of those examples, and sketch an event-anaphoric theory of VPE to account for them.