
Ellipsis of relative clauses is Move-and-Delete

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The ellipsis of relative clauses (RCs) is an empirical domain where one can test the differing predictions of in-situ and Move-and-Delete approaches. I argue that only the predictions of the latter are borne out: (i) RCs can only be deleted in the context of another ellipsis, compare (1a) and (1b), and (ii) deletion of post-nominal modifiers is more acceptable than deletion of pre-nominal ones.

Collins (2015) observes that English allows what appears to be deletion of a relative clause. German has the parallel construction, (1a). (1a) is ambiguous: it is possible to interpret the RC on the second conjunct. However, interpretation of a deleted RC is impossible if no other ellipsis occurs, such as gapping in (1b).

- (1) a. Ich sah drei Studenten die ich kannte und
I saw three students that I knew and
zwei Professoren.
two professors
'I saw three students who I knew and two professors (who I knew).'
- b. Ich sah drei Studenten die ich kannte und
I saw three students that I knew and
ich sah zwei Professoren.
I saw two professors
**two professors that I knew'

I propose that (1a) should be analyzed as a type of stripping/bare argument ellipsis. In a coordination of CPs (following e.g. Depiante 2000), one remnant moves to the left periphery before TP is elided.

This analysis correctly predicts that pre-nominal modifiers cannot be deleted, since it is not possible to move the head noun and a determiner while stranding an adjective. If the head noun can move away from its modifiers, e.g., in split topicalization (e.g. Ott 2011), the structure becomes more acceptable.

References: • Collins, C. (2015). Relative clause deletion. In A.J. Gallego & D. Ott (eds.) *50 years later: Reflections on Chomsky's Aspects*, 50–70. • Depiante, M.A. (2000). The syntax of deep and surface anaphora. University of Connecticut dissertation. • Ott, D. (2011). Local Instability, Harvard University dissertation.