



Elided Antecedents: Sprouting with *except*-Phrases

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The Puzzle

- The *why*-sprout in (1) is ambiguous (cf. Rudin 2017, ex. 39):

(1) Nobody liked the movie, except John, but I don't know why

(a) ...~~nobody liked the movie, except John~~. (People usually like trashy movies.)

(b) ...~~John liked the movie~~. (He's usually very highbrow.)

- The 'nobody' reading (a) is uninteresting: exact identity for ellipsis

- However, the 'John' reading (b) is puzzling: no antecedent where we can find *John* and *liked the movie* in the same place

- Taking the antecedent to be the first clause – *Nobody liked the movie* (, *except John*) – is problematic for prominent accounts of clausal ellipsis:

- Merchant (2001): no (mutual) entailment
- Chung et al. (1995): LF-copying, *nobody* ≠ *John*

- We use (1) for two things:

- to investigate the structure of *except*-phrases (suggested by Rudin 2017)
- as an argument that ellipsis sites can serve as antecedents

Proposal: *except*-phrase antecedents

Proposal: The antecedent for the 'John' reading of the *why*-sprout is the *except*-phrase. The *except*-phrase itself contains clausal ellipsis.

- Cross-linguistic precedents for clausal structure in *except*-phrases: Spanish (Perez-Jimenez and Moreno-Quiben 2012), Egyptian Arabic (Soltan 2016), Malagasy (Potsdam 2017), English vs. Russian (Potsdam and Polinsky upcoming)

- Bare argument ellipsis, aka stripping, in the *except*-phrase (2): focus-front the subject, TP-ellipsis of the evacuated clause, similar to sluicing (Merchant 2005)

(2) [_A Nobody liked the movie], except John [_E ~~John liked the movie~~].

- In (2), *John* and *liked the movie* are in the same place. Hence, (1b) has the structure in (3) (overlapping red + blue = purple):

(3) [_{A1} Nobody liked the movie], except [_{A2} John [_{E1} ~~John liked the movie~~]], but I don't know why [_{E2} John liked the movie].

- Full identity between ellipsis in the sprout (_{E2}) and the *except*-phrase antecedent (_{A2}) brings (1) into line with standard cases of clausal ellipsis

- However, in solving one problem, we have created another: need to justify there being elided structure [_{E1}] in the *except*-phrase, taking [_{A1}] as antecedent

References

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Structure in the *except*-phrase

Analysis: antecedent in (1b) is the elliptical clausal structure of the *except*-phrase

Prediction: without clausal structure in the *except*-phrase, no 'John' reading

Pronounceability as a proxy for clausal structure

- For (1b), what you can hear in the *except*-phrase is what you can interpret in the sprout (4):

(4) Nobody liked the movie, except John ((did) like(d) the movie), but I don't know why ~~John liked the movie~~.

- For (5) with a connected exeptive (a), or the addition of *for* (b), clausal structure cannot be pronounced in exception-phrases, so we infer its absence; as predicted, the 'John' reading disappears, leaving only the 'nobody' reading.

(5) a. Nobody but/except John (*liked the movie) liked the movie, BIDK why ~~nobody but/except John liked the movie~~ / *John liked the movie.
b. Nobody liked the movie, except for John (% liked the movie), BIDK why ~~nobody liked the movie, except for John~~ / % John liked the movie.

Beyond pronounceability

- Pronounceability as a proxy only – unpronounceable clausal ellipsis (6):

(6) a. Mary gave John a book, not [_{FOCP} Bill [~~she gave t a book~~]].
b. *Mary gave John a book, not Bill she gave a book.

- Unpronounceable clausal structure supports the 'John' reading in (7):

(7) [_{A1} Mary gave no one a book], except [_{A2} John [_{E1} ~~she gave t_{John} a book~~]], but I don't know why [_{E2} ~~she gave John a book~~].

- Repair effects do not undermine our analysis. The clause we are trying to pronounce in (5) – i.e. *John liked the movie* – does not need to be repaired.

- Repair effects are why we are looking at sprouting, not sluicing (8): elliptical *except*-phrase as antecedent, or the entire first clause with island repair?

(8) Nobody liked the movie, except some boy (liked the movie), BIDK which boy ~~liked the movie~~ / ~~nobody liked the movie, except t_{which boy}~~

Pronounceability beyond English

- With German *außer* 'except' (9), no clausal structure can be pronounced, and a *why*-sprout is unambiguous:

(9) Jeder mochte den Film, außer Hans (*mochte den Film) (*nicht), everyone liked the film except Hans liked the film not aber ich weiß nicht warum (Reading: everyone/*Hans) but I know not why

- With *nur* 'only' (10), clausal structure can be pronounced, and the 'Hans' reading is available for the sprout:

(10) Jeder mochte den Film, nur Hans (mochte den Film) nicht, everyone liked the film, only Hans liked the film not aber ich weiß nicht warum (Reading: everyone/Hans)

Elided antecedents

- Elided antecedents are in evidence beyond *except*-phrases with sprouting – sloppy VP ellipsis (11) (Hardt 1999, Schwarz 2000)

(11) a. John will [_{A1} cook] if you [_{A2} want him to [_{E1} ~~cook~~]]
b. And [_{A-S} he'll [_{A3} clean] even if you don't [_{E2} want him to [_{E3} ~~clean~~]] }
c. I don't know why [_{E-S} he'll clean even if you don't want him to clean]

- The elided VP [_{E2}] in (b) is composed of the VPs [_{A2}] from (a) and [_{A3}] from (b)

- We add that despite never being spoken, the elided VP [_{E2}] forms part of the antecedent [_{A-S}] for the sprout [_{E-S}] in (c)

Negation

- A variant of (1), likewise ambiguous:

(12) Everybody liked the movie, except John, but I don't know why

(a) ...~~everybody liked the movie, except John~~. (They usually hate trashy movies.)

(b) ...~~John didn't like the movie~~. (He usually loves trashy movies.)

Problem: No antecedent with *John*, **negation**, and *like the movie* all in one place

Option 1: Assume negation comes from *except* = *but not*

- Constituency problem of including half a word in the antecedent
- Presumed elided structure (13) cannot be pronounced (a)
- Instead pronounced with negation (b, c), not interpreted as double negation

(13) a. *Everybody liked the movie, except John liked the movie.
b. Everybody liked the movie, except John **didn't** like the movie.
c. Everybody liked the movie, except **not** John ~~liked the movie~~.

Option 2: Follow Rudin (2017), who argues that syntactic mismatches above vP, including negation (14) (Kroll 2016), do not matter for clausal ellipsis (15):

(14) Either turn in your final paper by midnight or explain why ~~you didn't turn it in by midnight!~~

(15) [_{A1} Everybody liked the movie], except [_{A2} John [_{E1} ~~John didn't like the movie~~]], but I don't know why [_{E2} John didn't like the movie].

Conclusion

- Elliptical structure as antecedent for another ellipsis

- Clausal structure in *except*-phrases after the *nobody* clause; otherwise phrasal – not a clear free vs. connected divide (Hoeksema 1995): *except* (*for)

- Compare standard uniform treatments of all kinds of exeptives:
 - semantic: quantifier modifiers (Reinhart 1991, von Stechow 1993)
 - syntactic: all exeptive phrases derived from underlying clauses (Harris 1982)

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