P-stranding effects in clausal ellipsis in Spanish: evidence for isomorphic sources

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In this talk I argue for a **Syntactic Identity Condition** on ellipsis, on the basis of apparent P-stranding effects in clausal ellipsis in Spanish. Unlike analyses based on non-isomorphic sources for ellipsis, the present analysis affords a unified account of all kinds of TP-ellipsis as well as an explanation for a novel generalization observable in Spanish: **P-less remnants are only allowed when the correlate in the antecedent stays in-situ, but not when it moves**.

Previous analysis. In Spanish, P-stranding seems to be possible in sluicing, as shown in (1a), but not in wh-questions, as (1b) shows. This apparent counterexample to the P-Stranding Generalization –'A language *L* will allow P-stranding under sluicing iff *L* allows P-stranding under regular wh-movement' (Merchant 2001)– has led some authors (Vicente 2008, Rodrigues et al. 2009, Barros 2014) to propose a non-isomorphic (cleft) source for ellipsis, like the one in (2):

(1)   a.   Juan habló con alguien, pero no sé   (con) quién.
           John talked with someone but   not I.know with who
           'John talked with someone but I don't know who.'
      b.   *Quién habló Juan con?
             who   talked John with (Intended 'Who did John talk with?')

(2)   Juan habló con alguien pero no sé   quién ~~es la persona con la que habló~~.
      John talked with someone but   not I.know who   is the person with that he.talked
      'John talked with someone but I don't know who is the person that he talked with.'

P-omission ≠ Cleft sources. I argue against a cleft source for P-less remnants. First, ellipsis with P-less remnants allows nonexhaustive readings and is thus compatible with modifiers such as *por ejemplo* 'for example' (3B) (Merchant 2001). Clefts only allow 'mention-all' interpretations (4), which make them unavailable as sources for 'mention-some' P-less remnants (3B):

(3)   A.   Deberías   hablar con alguien sobre tus   problemas financieros.
           you.should talk   with someone about your problems   financial
           'You should talk with someone about your financial problems.'
      B.   (Con) quién, por ejemplo?
            with who, for example ('Who, for example?')

(4)   Quién es la   persona con la que debería hablar, (*por ejemplo)?
      who   is the person with la que I.should talk   for example
      'Who is the person that I should talk with, (for example)?'

Second, the cleft-source analysis predicts that when P-omission is possible, a cleft source must be available, and when a cleft source is available, P-omission should be possible. I show that this two-way correlation doesn't hold: not all cases of P-omission have a possible cleft source (3B, 4), and P-omission is impossible in some contexts (5) in which a cleft is grammatical (6).

(5)   A: Con quién habló Juan? – B: *(Con) María.
         with who   talked John?   with   Mary ('A: Who did J. talked with? B: M.')

(6)   María es la   persona con la que habló Juan.
      Mary is the person with la que talked Juan ('M. is the person that J. talked with')

Third, this analysis cannot account for the right generalization with regard to apparent P-stranding effects in Spanish, namely, that P-less remnants are only allowed when the correlate in the antecedent stays in-situ (1a, 3), but not when it moves (5).

Proposal. My proposal is summarized in (7):

(7)   Syntactic Identity: The ellipsis site must be syntactically identical to its antecedent, modulo [F]-marked material. This condition is computed before Spell Out.

I assume an approach to ellipsis in which fragments can stay in situ and be interpreted in their base position (Weir 2014, Abe 2015). Clausal ellipsis is licensed by the feature [E] in C (Merchant 2001). [E] gives the instruction to fail to realize all the material on C and its complement (ellipsis targets C, and eliminates its [+wh] feature before Spellout, which explains why the remnant can stay in situ). At the same time, F-marked constituents are interpreted (phonologically) with stress. The instruction to stress F-marked constituents is in conflict with the instruction to fail to realize the material on C[E] and its complement. To resolve this, deletion only targets non-F-marked material. This is shown in (8b) (non-F-marked material is underlined):

(8) a. Juan vio algo   pero no sé   qué.
         John saw something but   not know what
     b. [$_A$ Juan vio [$_F$ algo]] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~Juan vio~~ [$_F$ qué]]

Evidence & Predictions. This proposal accounts for the generalization above: P-less remnants are only allowed when the correlate in the antecedent stays in situ, but not when it moves. I assume that F-marking can either target the PP or the DP in Spanish. In sluicing the correlate typically stays in situ and P-omission is optional: if the entire PP is F-marked, deletion doesn't target the preposition, as in (9a); if the DP is F-marked, the preposition will be deleted, and P-less remnants obtain, as (9b) shows. The Condition in (7) is satisfied, given that the ellipsis site is syntactically identical to the non-F-marked part of its antecedent:

(9) Juan habló con alguien pero no sé (con) quién.   (= 1a)
     a. [$_A$ Juan habló [$_F$ con alguien]] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~Juan habló~~ [$_F$ con quién]]
     b. [$_A$ Juan habló con [$_F$ alguien]] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~Juan habló con~~ [$_F$ quién]]

In fragment answers P-omission is impossible, as (10) shows. The reason is that the antecedent is a question in which the correlate PP moves: if the PP is F-marked (10a), ellipsis won't target the preposition; if the DP is F-marked (10b), deleting the preposition violates the identity condition. This correctly rules out P-less remnants in fragment answers:

(10) A: Con quién habló Juan? – B: *(Con) María.   (= 5)
      a. [$_A$ [$_F$ Con quién]$_i$ habló Juan t$_i$] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~habló Juan~~ [$_F$ con María]]
      b. *[$_A$ [Con [$_F$ quién]]$_i$ habló Juan t$_i$] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~habló Juan con~~ [$_F$ María]]

Case (10b) shows that it's not enough to have matching material between the antecedent and the ellipsis site; they have to have the same structure (modulo F-marked material). This analysis thus predicts that (i) when the correlate stays in situ, P-omission is possible (e.g. sluicing); and (ii) when the correlate moves, P-omission is ungrammatical (e.g. fragment answers). Importantly, the generalization holds regardless of the specific construction. Strong evidence for this is found in contrast sluicing. When the correlate is in situ, P-less remnants are possible (11), but when it moves, P-less remnants are ungrammatical (12):

(11) Juan habló con cinco chicas pero no sé   (con) cuántos   chicos
      John talked with five   girls   but   not I.know with how.many boys
      'John talked with five girls but I don't know how many boys.'
      a. [$_A$ Juan habló [$_F$ con cinco chicas]] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~Juan habló~~ [$_F$ con cuántos chicos]]
      b. [$_A$ Juan habló con [$_F$ cinco chicas]] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~Juan habló con~~ [$_F$ cuántos chicos]]

(12) Sé   con cuántas   chicas habló Juan, pero no sé   *(con) cuántos   chicos.
      I.know with how.many girls   spoke John but   not I.know   with how.many boys
      'I know with how many girls John talked, but I don't know how many boys.'
      a. [$_A$ [$_F$ con cuántas chicas]$_i$ habló Juan t$_i$] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~habló Juan~~ [$_F$ con cuántos chicos]]
      b. *[$_A$ [con [$_F$ cuántas chicas]]$_i$ habló J t$_i$] ... [$_{C[E]}$ ~~habló Juan con~~ [$_F$ cuántos chicos]]

In this paper I also provide evidence from sprouting and split questions (which never allow P-omission), and stripping and bare-argument ellipsis (which allow P-omission in some contexts).

Conclusions. This talk argues for an analysis of clausal ellipsis based on syntactic identity and against cleft-based accounts, whose predicted correlations between P-omission and possible cleft sources don't hold. Syntactic identity explains a novel generalization, namely that P-omission is only possible when the correlate in the antecedent stays in-situ, but not when it moves. The analysis correctly predicts that the generalization holds uniformly across all types of clausal ellipsis.