Experimental and Corpus-Based Approaches to Ellipsis
6th edition

Gabriela Bîlbîie & Max Bonke
(University of Bucharest & University of Cologne)

Keywords: ellipsis, corpus studies, experimental studies, linguistic theories, psycholinguistics

Elliptical utterances, such as the B-responses in the dialogue in (1), have received considerable attention in linguistic theorizing because they provide a rich source of information about the function and interaction of different linguistic levels. Central issues in ellipsis research concern questions of syntax (e.g. whether one needs to assume unpronounced syntactic structure at the ellipsis site or not), semantics (e.g. whether the missing material must be identical in interpretation to a linguistic antecedent or not) and discourse structure (e.g. in what conversational and textual contexts is ellipsis possible). The multi-faceted nature of ellipsis as an interface phenomenon has generated a multitude of insights, which is why ellipsis forms the main empirical pillar for entire grammatical frameworks (Ginzburg 2012, Kempson et al. 2016) and is often employed in attempts to arbitrate between competing frameworks (cf. Kobele & Merchant 2016).

(1)   A: Who will win the competition?
         B: Mary.
         B′: Mary will.

However, most of the evidence in the theoretical literature on ellipsis has traditionally come from introspection on constructed examples (from, e.g., Ross 1967, Hankamer & Sag 1976 to current work by Johnson 2001, Merchant 2001, van Craenenbroek 2010, van Craenenbroeck & Temmerman 2018, etc.), giving rise to disagreement among researchers or misunderstandings about the exact source of (un)grammaticality or (un)acceptability. Recent psycholinguistic and corpus work has shown that many theoretical assumptions in the literature on ellipsis do not hold when the data are collected in a controlled experimental setting or from corpora (see, e.g., special issues on ellipsis, such as Abeillé et al. 2019, Bîlbîie 2022, Bîlbîie & Nykiel 2023, a.o.). For instance, a long-standing assumption in the theoretical literature (Morgan 1973, Stowell 1981, Merchant 2005, a.o.) has been that clauses serving as fragment answers obligatorily host a complementizer, see (2). Lemke (2021) however provides acceptability judgment data that clauses without complementizers can indeed serve as fragment answers as long as confounding factors are controlled for.

(2)   What was believed (at the time)?
         *(That) he would resign.   (Merchant 2005: 690 f.)

Therefore, contemporary research on elliptic utterances increasingly eschews the traditional informal method of collecting linguistic data by means of introspection. Instead, judgment data are now often collected in controlled, large-scale experiments (using Likert scale, forced-choice, and magnitude estimation responses). Additionally, other forms of quantitative data shed light on ellipsis, such as naturally occurring speech reported in corpora and response times from self-paced reading studies. Obtaining data via these corpus-based or experimentally oriented methodologies is especially important for research in the ellipsis domain, where acceptability judgments are often subtle (provoking neither floor nor ceiling

responses; cf. Molimpakis 2019, Lemke 2021, a.o.), and where applying the informal methodology has consistently under-generated elliptic utterances (as corpus studies of naturally occurring speech often point out; cf. Barton 1990, Ginzburg & Sag 2000, a.o.).

The purpose of this workshop is to bring together researchers who work on elliptical phenomena with special emphasis on quantitative methodologies. It aims to improve the empirical foundations of the discussion, specifically by providing evidence from psycholinguistic experimentation (acceptability and eye-tracking experiments, in particular) and corpus investigations. We welcome case studies and contributions on methodological issues. Specifically, we ask (i) how experimental methods can be applied and improved to give more reliable and interpretable results; (ii) in what way corpus data can be brought to bear on theoretical questions; and (iii) how corpus data can be used to improve the results of psycholinguistic experiments, specifically by forming the basis of constructing more natural materials and by providing new hypotheses to be investigated experimentally. This workshop represents the sixth iteration of *Experimental and Corpus-Based Approaches to Ellipsis* (ECBAE) conference series that held successfully during the LSA 2017, 2019, 2023 Linguistic Institutes, online in 2020, and during the SLE 2022 conference.

ECBAE 6 is designed to offer a wide variety of perspectives on these methodological research questions. The proposed workshop covers a broad spectrum of ellipsis types (fragments, sluicing, gapping, pseudogapping, verb phrase ellipsis, etc.) and a range of methodologies (corpus-driven, acceptability judgment, production experiments, self-paced reading, eye-tracking, etc.). In addition, the contributions are expected to cover various languages and distinct theoretical frameworks, thus presenting an occasion for reflection on high-level conceptual issues.

Through its commitment to representing a broad range of empirical and conceptual approaches to ellipsis, this workshop will appeal to linguists from various backgrounds.

References
Abeillé, Anne, Philip Miller & Jeff Runner (2019), *Experimental Approaches to Ellipsis*. Special issue in *Glossa*.
Barton, Ellen (1990), *Nonsentential Constituents*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
Bîlbîie, Gabriela (ed.) (2022), *Empirical Approaches to Elliptical Constructions*. Special issue in *The Linguistic Review*, vol. 39(3).
Bîlbîie, Gabriela & Joanna Nykiel (eds.) (2023), *Experimental and corpus-based approaches to ellipsis*. Special issue in *Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 59(2)*.
Ginzburg, Jonathan (2012), *The Interactive Stance*, Oxford University Press.
Ginzburg, Jonathan & Ivan Sag (2000), *Interrogative investigations: The form, meaning and use of English interrogatives*, Stanford: CSLI Publications.
Hankamer, Jorge & Ivan Sag (1976), Deep and surface anaphora, *Linguistic Inquiry* 7(3), 391-428.
Johnson, Kyle (2001), What VP ellipsis can do, and what it can't, but not why, in M. Baltin & C. Collins (eds.), *The handbook of contemporary syntactic theory,* 439-479, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
Kempson, Ruth, Ronnie Cann, Gregoromichelaki Eleni & Stergios Chatzikiriakidis (2016), Language as mechanisms for interaction, *Theoretical Linguistics* 42(3-4), 203–275.
Kobele, Gregory & Jason Merchant (2016), The Dynamics of Ellipsis, *Theoretical Linguistics* 42, 291-296.
Lemke, Robin (2021), *Experimental Investigations on the syntax and usage of fragments*, Berlin: Language Science Press.
Merchant, Jason (2001), *The syntax of silence: Sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis*, Oxford: OUP.
Merchant, Jason (2005), Fragments and ellipsis, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 27, 661-738.
Molimpakis, Emilia (2019), *Accepting Preposition-Stranding under Sluicing Cross-linguistically: A Noisy-Channel Approach*, PhD thesis, University College London.
Morgan, Jerry (1973), Sentence Fragments and the Notion "sentence", in B. Kachru et al. (eds.), *Issues in Linguistics*, 719-751, Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
Ross, John Robert (1967), *Constraints on variables in syntax*, Cambridge, MA: MIT dissertation.
Stowell, Tim (1981), *Origins of Phrase Structure*, Cambridge, MA: MIT dissertation.
van Craenenbroeck, Jeroen (2010), *The syntax of ellipsis: Evidence from Dutch dialects*, Oxford: OUP.
van Craenenbroeck, Jeroen, and Tanja Temmerman (eds.) (2018), *The Oxford Handbook of Ellipsis*, Oxford: OUP.