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# Conditions on the remnants of Spanish noun ellipsis

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## Goals of the talk

**First** – to show that focus and contrastivity play a crucial role in the licensing of DP-internal ellipsis (*contra* previous analyses, which have pretty much ignored these notions).

**Second** – to discuss various quirks of Spanish noun ellipsis that require further research into the properties of determiners and prepositions.

## 1. Introduction

In Spanish, it is possible to elide all DP-internal material to the exclusion of the D element. Let's call this *full NP ellipsis*.

- 1) Juan ha leído este libro rojo, y María ha leído aquel [NP ~~libro rojo~~]  
J has read this book red and M has read that

It is also possible for NP modifiers/complements to survive ellipsis of the noun. Let's call this *partial NP ellipsis*.

- 2) Juan ha leído este libro rojo, y María ha leído aquel [NP ~~libro~~] azul  
J has read this book red and M has read that blue

## 2. Initial description

### 2.1. Restrictions on full NP ellipsis

#### 2.1.1 Determiners

All D elements can be the remnants of full NP ellipsis, except for the definite article *el* 'the'.<sup>1</sup>

- 3) a. Juan ha leído un libro, y María ha leído otro [ e ]  
 J has read a book and M has read another  
 b. Juan ha leído este libro, y María ha leído aquel [ e ]  
 J has read a book and M has read that  
 c. Juan ha leído pocos libros, y María ha leído muchos [ e ]  
 J has read few books and M has read many  
 d. Juan ha leído dos libros, y María ha leído tres [ e ]  
 J has read two books and M has read three  
 e. \* Juan ha leído el libro, y María ha leído el [ e ]  
 J has read the book and M has read the

#### 2.1.2 Inflection

The indefinite article *un* 'a' (which can also function as the numeral *one*) must agree in number and gender with the elided noun. This is exceptional, because no such inflection is possible in non-elliptical contexts. This will remain an open question (though see Bernstein 1993 for some ideas).

- 5) a. Juan ha leído dos libros, y María un\*(o) [ e ]  
 J has read two books and M one.MASC.SG  
 b. María ha leído un\*(o) libro.  
 M has read one.MASC.SG book

Similarly, possessive pronouns must appear inflected and embedded under another D element, even though nothing like this is possible in non-elliptical contexts.

- 6) a. Juan ha leído mi libro, y María ha leído \*(el) tu\*(yo) [ e ]  
 J has read my book and M has read the your.MASC.SG  
 b. María ha leído (\*el) tu\*(yo) libro.  
 M has read the your.MASC.SG book

In the later case, it seems that the remnant is actually the postverbal version of the possessive pronoun, thus making it a case of partial NP ellipsis.

- 7) María ha leído el libro tu\*(yo)  
 M has read the book your.MASC.SG

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<sup>1</sup> The full paradigm is: *el* masc. sg.      *la* fem. sg.  
*los* masc. pl.      *las* fem. pl.

## 2.2. Restrictions on partial NP ellipsis

### 2.2.1 Determiners

Unlike what happens under full NP ellipsis, all determiners allow partial NP ellipsis.

- 8) a. Juan ha leído un libro rojo, y María ha leído otro [ *e* ] azul  
 J has read a book red and M has read another blue
- b. Juan ha leído este libro rojo, y María ha leído aquel [ *e* ] azul  
 J has read a book red and M has read that blue
- c. Juan ha leído pocos libros rojos, y María ha leído muchos [ *e* ]  
 J has read few books red and M has read many  
 azules  
 blue
- d. Juan ha leído dos libros rojos, y María ha leído tres [ *e* ] azules  
 J has read two books red and M has read three blue
- e. Juan ha leído el libro rojo, y María ha leído el [ *e* ] azul  
 J has read the book red and M has read the blue

### 2.2.2. Adjectival remnants.

Ticio (2003) observes that prenominal adjectives cannot be remnants of ellipsis, whereas postnominal ones can.

- 9) a. \* Juan ha visto al antiguo decano, y María ha visto al futuro [ *e* ]  
 J has seen the former dean and M has seen the future
- b. Juan ha visto al (✓ futuro) decano (?\*futuro)  
 J has seen the future dean future

Nonetheless, this generalization appears to be falsified by ordinals, which are necessarily prenominal,<sup>2</sup> yet still make acceptable ellipsis remnants.<sup>3</sup>

- 10) a. Juan ha leído el cuarto libro, y María ha leído el quinto [ *e* ]  
 J has read the fourth book and María has read the fifth
- b. María ha leído el (✓quinto) libro (\*quinto).  
 M has read the fifth book fifth

Ticio tries to establish a correlation between the pre-/postnominal position of the adjective and its interpretation, given that prenominal adjectives tend to be appositive, whereas postnominal ones are restrictive.

<sup>2</sup> Carmen Martínez (p.c.) points out that *capítulo* 'chapter' allows both pre- and postnominal ordinals. This seems to be a one-off exception, though.

<sup>3</sup> Are ordinals adjectives? On the one hand, they inflect for gender and number in the same way as regular adjectives. On the other hand, unlike adjectives, they seem to resist adverbial modification. Here is, nonetheless, one possible case of an adverbial modifying an ordinal.

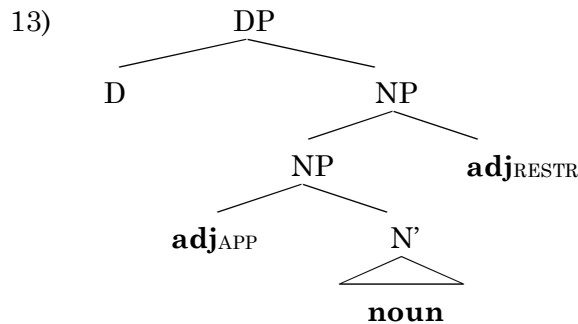
i) La falta de empleo es la sorprendentemente tercera mayor preocupación de los jóvenes  
 the lack of jobs is the surprisingly third main worry of the youth  
 [i.e., young people are supposed to be worried, above everything, about the lack of jobs,  
 but in a poll this particular worry unexpectedly came up in third place].

- 11) a. Un famoso actor  
 a famous actor [appositive]  
 b. Un actor famoso  
 a actor famous [restrictive]
- 12) Juan ha visto a un actor poco conocido, y María ha visto  
 J has seen to an actor little-known and M has seen  
 a uno [e] famoso  
 to one famous  
 [\*appositive / ✓ restrictive]

### 3. Ticio (2003)

#### 3.1. Analysis

Ticio (2003) proposes to distinguish adjectives structurally in the following way.



The adjoined position is justified by the fact that these adjectives necessarily modify the complements of the noun (Sánchez 1996).<sup>4</sup>

- 14) a. Un ladrón de bancos torpe  
 a thief of banks clumsy  
 b. ?? Un ladrón torpe de bancos  
 a thief clumsy of banks

By postulating that ellipsis targets the lower NP node, it is possible to derive the data in (9) through (12).

#### 3.2. Problems

##### 3.2.1. Empirical coverage

Although it covers the data to a large extent, Ticio's analysis has some significant gaps. For one, numerals (*qua* prenominal adjectives) escape the generalization –see (10).

Moreover, (9) features non-intersective adjectives, which nonetheless seem to be restrictive. One test for restrictivity vs appositivity is whether the adjective can support a distributive reading of a quantifier.

<sup>4</sup> Ticio also mentions that the adjunct status of postnominal adjectives by citing the impossibility of extracting adjuncts out of PP. However, all her cases of adjunct extraction concern PPs, not adjectives.

- 15) a. Cinco chicas vieron a un actor famoso  
 five girls saw to a actor famous  
 [AMBIGUOUS: ✓ each of the girls saw a different famous actor]  
 ✓ one specific famous actor was seen by all five girls
- b. Cinco chicas vieron a un famoso actor  
 five girls saw to a famous actor  
 [UNAMBIGUOUS: \* each of the girls saw a different famous actor]  
 ✓ one specific famous actor was seen by all five girls

Applying this test to non-intersective adjectives (*former, alleged*):

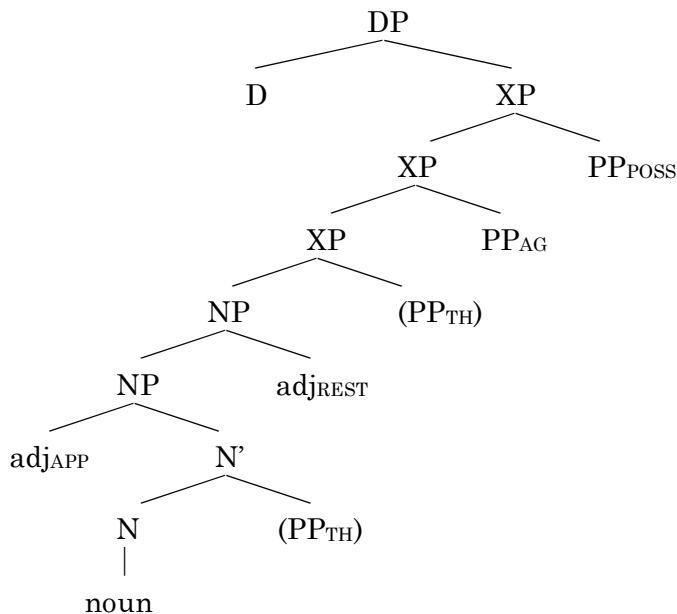
- 16) a. Cinco chicas vieron a un presunto violador  
 five girls saw to a alleged rapist  
 [✓ distributive]
- b. Cinco aficionados del Athletic vieron a un antiguo jugador  
 five supporters of A saw to a former player  
 [✓ distributive]

Thus, the opposition seems to be between appositive and restrictive adjectives, not prenominal and postnominal ones.

### 3.2.2. Scope of ellipsis, part I

Ellipsis can target material higher than the NP node. Ticio proposes the following extended structure to accommodate PPs (evidence comes from binding asymmetries and locality effects).

17)



All types of PPs can be targeted by ellipsis. Note that extending the domain of ellipsis upwards simply won't work, given that it is possible for a "low" PP to survive ellipsis while a higher one is elided.

- 18) a. Juan ha leído el libro [AG de Borges][POSS de Pedro]...  
 J has read the book of P by B  
 b. ... y María ha leído el [~~libro~~] [AG de Cela] [POSS ~~de Pedro~~]  
 and M has read the book by C of P  
 c. ... y María ha leído el [~~libro~~] [AG ~~de Borges~~] [POSS de Elena]  
 and M has read the book by B of E

### 3.2.3. Scope of ellipsis, part II

The opposite effect: it is possible for material below the lower NP node to survive ellipsis –e.g., nouns to the exclusion of their modifiers. Note that this requires focal stress on the noun.

- 19) Juan ha leído un POEMA de Borges, y María ha leído  
 J has read a poem by B and M has read  
 un CUENTO \*([~~de Borges~~])  
 a short story by B

## 4. A focus position in the Spanish DP

### 4.1. The analysis

Ticio proposes to analyse cases similar to (18b) and (19) as movement at PF (post-syntactically) of the remnant to a position outside the scope of ellipsis.

*Why at PF?* Ticio observes that, outside ellipsis, wh- extraction of a PP over a higher one is impossible. For instance, a possessor blocks extraction of an agent/theme, but not vice versa (Ormazábal 1991).

- 20) a. \* ¿[AG De quién] has leído varios libros t [POSS de Juan]?  
 of who have read some books of J  
 b. ¿[POSS De quién] has leído varios libros t [AG de Borges]?  
 of who have read some books of B

Similarly, an agent blocks extraction of a theme, but not vice versa.

- 21) a. ?? ¿[De qué libro] conoces traducciones t [de escritores importantes]?  
 of what book know translations of writers important  
 b. ¿[De qué escritores] conoces traducciones t [de *Hamlet*]?  
 of what writers know translations of H

Importantly, PPs can be freely permuted in the postnominal position, without affecting binding possibilities. Ticio attributes this to post-syntactic movement.

- 22) a. La llamada telefónica [AG de Juan<sub>i</sub>] [TH a sí mismo]  
 the call phone of J to himself  
 b. \* La llamada telefónica [AG de sí mismo] [TH a Juan<sub>i</sub>]  
 the call phone of himself to J  
 23) a. La llamada telefónica [TH a sí mismo] [AG de Juan<sub>i</sub>]  
 the call phone to himself of J

- b. \* La llamada telefónica [TH a Juan<sub>i</sub>] [AG de sí<sub>i</sub> mismo]  
 the call phone to J of himself

Thus, (18b) and (19) are the result of ellipsis applying to the output of the PF reorderings in (23).

**However**, movement at PF is problematic. By definition, PF cannot operate on narrow-syntactic features, only on phonological matrices.

- There is no obvious way in which PF can tell that a PP is a PP (or a noun a noun, or an adjective an adjective).
- There is no reason why PF movement should only move PPs to a position in the postnominal field.

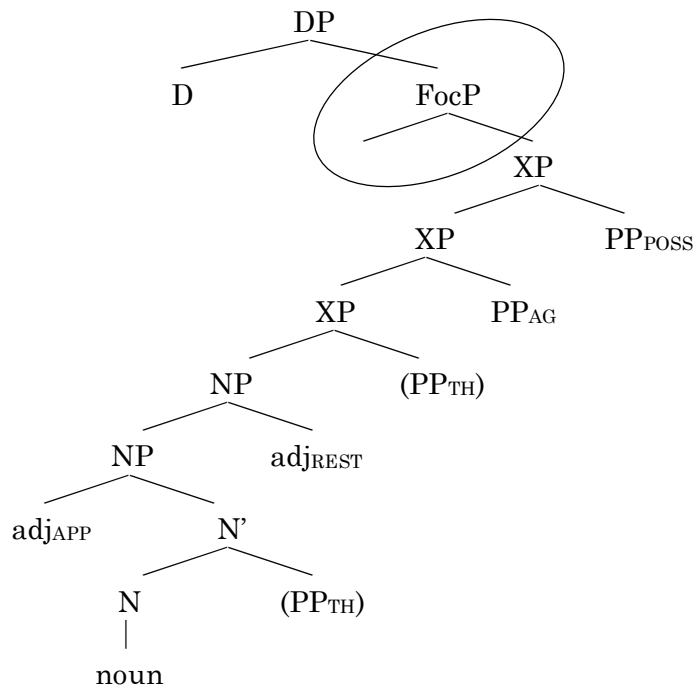
Plus, there is no explanation offered as to why things should move out of the domain of ellipsis.

**Proposal:** as we saw in (19), focus is required for a noun to survive ellipsis. Suppose that we generalise this idea to all remnants (which is, in any case, a well-established generalisation in works on ellipsis).

**Remnants of ellipsis must be contrastive**

A slight modification of Ticio's structure.

24)



Remnants of ellipsis must move to FocP. Later on, ellipsis applies to the complement of FocP (cf. van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2006 for a similar case in the clausal domain). It is true that this might be problematic given the data in (20) and (21), but I think this creates a smaller problem than post-syntactic movement.

## 4.2. Advantages

Remember from section 2.1.1 that definite determiners cannot appear in full NP ellipsis. Rather, they require an extra remnant.

- 3) e. \* Juan ha leído el libro, y María ha leído el [ e ]  
 J has read the book and M has read the
- 8) e. Juan ha leído el libro rojo, y María ha leído el [ e ] azul  
 J has read the book red and M has read the blue

This restriction follows from the hypothesis above: definite determiners cannot be contrasted, therefore they cannot be the sole remnants of ellipsis. However, as soon as something else is there to be contrasted, they are allowed.

Similarly for the difference between appositive and restrictive adjectives. Only the latter can provide a contrast, hence, they are the only ones allowed as remnants of ellipsis.

- 11) a. Un famoso actor  
 a famous actor [appositive]  
 b. Un actor famoso  
 a actor famous [restrictive]
- 12) Juan ha visto a un actor poco conocido, y María ha visto  
 J has seen to an actor little-known and M has seen  
 a uno [ e ] famoso  
 to one famous  
 [\*appositive / ✓ restrictive]

What about non-intersective adjectives? Under this hypothesis, it must be the case that they cannot provide the contrast necessary to license ellipsis. I don't know why this is the case, though.

## 5. Outlook

Focus and contrastivity are necessary conditions for the licensing of Spanish NP ellipsis (and, in an ideal world, for the licensing of all types of ellipsis, cf. Merchant 2001 *et seq*). This approach seems to have better chances than previous ones, which didn't make reference to focus and contrastivity.

## Appendix - Additional problems with definite determiners

In addition to not being able to appear under full NP ellipsis, the definite determiner has some other restrictions that do not follow from a focus-based analysis –or, for that matter, from *any* existing analysis.

### A1. Sensitivity to individual prepositions

If a PP is the only remnant of partial NP ellipsis with a definite determiner, then it is licit only if headed by the preposition *de* 'of'. All other prepositions are ungrammatical.

- 25) a. Juan leyó el libro de Cela, y María el [e] de Aldecoa.  
 J read the book by C and M the of A
- b. \* Juan asistió a la charla sobre Cela, y María a la [e]  
 J attended to the talk about C and M to the  
 sobre Borges  
 about B
- c. \* Juan sugirió el regalo para Elena, y María el [e] para Enrique.  
 J suggested the gift for E and M the for E

This restriction does not hold for other determiners.

- 26) a. Juan asistió a una charla sobre Cela, y María a una [e]  
 J attended to a talk about C and M to a  
 sobre Borges  
 about B
- b. Juan asistió a esta charla sobre Cela, y María a aquella [e]  
 J attended to this talk about C and M to that  
 sobre Borges  
 about B
- c. Juan asistió a dos charlas sobre Cela, y María a tres [e]  
 J attended to two talks about C and M to three  
 sobre Borges  
 about B
- 27) a. Juan sugirió un regalo para Elena, y María uno [e] para Enrique  
 J suggested a gift for E and M a for E
- c. Juan sugirió este regalo para Elena, y María aquel [e]  
 J suggested this gift for E and M that  
 para Enrique  
 for E
- c. Juan sugirió dos regalos para Elena, y María tres [e]  
 J suggested two gifts for E and M three  
 para Enrique  
 for E

There are some apparent exceptions (Carmen Martínez, p.c.).

- 28) a. Juan tomó la cerveza negra, y María tomó la [e] sin alcohol  
 J had the beer black and M had the without alcohol
- b. Juan comió la hamburguesa vegetariana, y María la [e] con queso  
 J ate the burger vegetarian and M the with cheese

The best solution is to treat these as very conventionalized cases that do not qualify as PPs anymore. One indication is that such cases don't appear outside the very specific realms of coffee, beer, or hamburgers.

- 29) \* Juan compró la camisa con mangas largas, y Pedro la [e]  
 J bought the shirt with sleeves long and P the  
 con mangas cortas  
 with sleeves short

Furthermore, these ellipses can be used without a linguistic antecedent at all.

- 30) a. [*Scenario: patron walking into a café*]  
 ¡Camarero! Pongame uno [e] con leche  
 waiter serve.me one with milk [=one cup of coffee with milk]  
 b. [*Scenario: waiter arriving with a tray full of drinks*]  
 ¿Quién ha pedido la [e] sin alcohol?  
 who has ordered the without alcohol [=the beer without alcohol]

There are two ways in which a non-*de* PP can be turned a licit remnant of partial NP ellipsis. The first one is for a second, independently licit remnant, to intervene between the non-*de* PP and the ellipsis site.

- 31) a. Juan asistió a la charla matutina sobre Cela, y María a la [e]  
 J attended to the talk morning about C and M to the  
 vespertina sobre Borges.  
 afternoon about B  
 b. Juan sugirió el regalo de cumpleaños para Elena, y María el [e]  
 J suggested the gift of birthday for E and M the  
 de graduación para Enrique.  
 of graduation for E

The second strategy is to insert a dummy *de* between the ellipsis site and the non-*de* PP.

- 32) a. Juan asistió a la charla sobre Cela, y María a la [e]  
 J attended to the talk about C and M to the  
 \*(de) sobre Borges  
 of about B  
 b. Juan sugirió el regalo para Elena, y María el [e]  
 J suggested the gift for E and M the  
 \*(de) para Enrique  
 of for E

*De* insertion in non-elliptical contexts is more or less acceptable depending on both specific prepositions and speakers. The *de*-less examples are acceptable for everybody.

- 33) a. María asistió a la charla (%de) sobre Borges  
 M attended to the talk of about B  
 b. María aprobó el exámen (%de) para conducir camiones.  
 M passed the exam of for drive trucks

Similarly, *de* insertion is only optional (again, with variation between prepositions and speakers) if the non-*de* PP is not the leftmost remnant.

- 34) a. Juan asistió a la charla matutina sobre Cela, y María a la [ e ]  
 J attended to the talk morning about C and M to the  
 vespertina (%de) sobre Borges.  
 afternoon of about B
- b. Juan sugirió el regalo de cumpleaños para Elena, y María el [ e ]  
 J suggested the gift of birthday for E and M the  
 de graduación (%de) para Enrique.  
 of graduation of for E

Similar judgements to (33) and (34) obtain when determiners other than *el* are used.

- 35) a. Juan asistió a una charla sobre Cela, y María a una [ e ]  
 J attended to a talk about C and M to a  
 (%de) sobre Borges  
 of about B
- b. Juan asistió a esta charla sobre Cela, y María a aquella [ e ]  
 J attended to this talk about C and M to that  
 (%de) sobre Borges  
 of about B
- c. Juan asistió a dos charlas sobre Cela, y María a tres [ e ]  
 J attended to two talks about C and M to three  
 (%de) sobre Borges  
 of about B

## A2. Appositive relatives

As opposed to what happens with appositive adjectives, appositive relatives can be remnants of partial NP ellipsis. The only exception lies again with the definite determiner, which requires an extra remnant on top of the appositive relative.

- 36) a. \* La mujer, que sabía la verdad, lo ayudó, y la [],  
 the woman who knew the truth him helped and the  
 que no la sabía, también  
 that not CL knew too
- 37) a. ✓ Esta mujer, que sabía la verdad, lo ayudó, y aquella [],  
 this woman who knew the truth him helped and that  
 que no la sabía, también  
 that not CL knew too
- b. ✓ Veinte estudiantes se matricularon en este curso. Sólo uno [ e ],  
 twenty students REFL registered in this course only one  
 quien resultó ser un genio, logró aprobarlo.  
 who turned.out be a genius was.able pass.CL

Note that, if we remove the relative clauses, we get the exact same paradigm as in (3). This suggests that appositive relatives (as opposed to adjectives) do not enter the computation of NP ellipsis –that is, (36) and (37) are, contrary to appearances, cases of *full* NP ellipsis.

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