

Instructor: Lyn Frazier

Course: Processing at the Syntax-Discourse Interface

Times: Tuesday-Thursday-Saturday (Aug 15-29) plus two evening sessions to be arranged. (At the evening sessions, students will present their own psycholinguistic research –either prior research or the content of their written assignment, see below).

Requirements: A short written assignment is due the first week of the course. Students should use their intuitions to explore the processing of some structure in their native language. A 10-20 page essay is due the last week of the course. Ideally, the essay will report the beginning of a psycholinguistic research project developed from the written assignment, e.g., proposing an experiment to test the hypothesis proposed in the written assignment. Alternatively, the final essay could summarize the course from a critical or creative perspective.

Course description: The processing of ellipsis will be used to explore the syntax-discourse interface. Topics will include the nature of parallelism effects, the role of focus in processing ellipsis, types of ellipsis, the distinct salience relations in syntactic versus discourse representations, the role of discourse coherence relations in regulating ellipsis, processing of strict versus sloppy identity, and the appropriate division of labor between the grammar and the processor in accounting for ‘scope-economy’ and accounting for examples of elided constituents lacking an appropriate antecedent.

Recommended Background Reading on Ellipsis (available from Merchant’s University of Chicago website)

Merchant, Jason (2004) Fragments and ellipsis. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 27.6:661-738.

Syllabus

Class 1. Parallelism and the processing of co-ordinate structures.

- Goals of the course and background assumptions
- Processing co-ordinate structures
 - Syntactic preferences
 - Discourse preferences (Hoeks, et al., 2002, Engelhardt and Ferreira, submitted)
 - Parallelism effects
 - where they occur
 - their source
 - relation to deep vs. ‘surface’ anaphora (Tanenhaus and Carlson, 1990)

Class 2. Types of ellipsis and the role of focus

- Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE), Comparatives, Replacives (Gapping)
 - Carlson (2002)–effects of parallelism and focus
- Verb Phrase Ellipsis (VPE), Sluicing, Fragment Answers
 - Missing complexity effects
 - Asymmetric focus effects
- Guest lecture on processing German replacives by Britta Stolterfoht (Bader and Meng, 1999)

Class 3. The syntax-discourse divide (Frazier and Clifton, 2005)

- Syntactic vocabulary vs. discourse vocabulary
- Syntactic salience vs. discourse salience
- Main Assertion hypothesis
- Island effects (Merchant, 2004)

Class 4. Discourse coherence relations

- Kehler’s theory of discourse coherence relations (Kehler, 2000)
- Application of Kehler to ellipsis plus experimental tests (Kehler, 2002, Frazier and Clifton, to appear)
- Strict versus sloppy identity (Shapiro and Hestvik, 1995, Shapiro et al., 2003)
- Relation of strict/sloppy preferences to parallelism and to DP-type

Class 5. LF-Recycling (Arregui et al., to appear)

- syntactic vs. semantic antecedents
- the Recycling hypothesis
- role of accommodation in choosing antecedents

Class 6. Scope economy and ellipsis

- Anderson (2004)
- Fox (1995)

Class 7. Dynamic interpretation and ellipsis

- Conjoined VPs, conjoined clauses, a sequence of sentences: Des it matter?
- Types of meaning (Potts, 2005): Are they distinct? How long does the distinction persist?
- Conditionals with or without lead-in asserting the truth of the antecedent: VPE vs. BAE

References

Anderson, C. (2004) The structure and real time comprehension of quantifier scope ambiguity.

Northwestern University doctoral dissertation.

Arregui, A., Clifton Jr., C., Frazier, L. and Moulton, K. (To appear) Processing elided VPs with flawed antecedents: The Recycling hypothesis. Journal of Memory and Language.

Bader, M. and Meng, M. (1999) Subject-object ambiguities in German embedded clauses: An across the board comparison. Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 28, 121-144.

Carlson, K. (2002) Parallelism and Prosody in the Processing of Ellipsis Sentences. In Routledge Series on Outstanding Dissertations in Linguistics. New York: Routledge.

Fox, D. (1995) Economy and scope. Natural Language Semantics 3(3), 283-341.

Frazier, L. and Clifton Jr., C. (2005) The syntax-discourse divide: Processing ellipsis. Syntax, 8 (2), 121-174.

Frazier, L. and Clifton Jr., C. (To appear). Ellipsis and discourse coherence. Linguistics and Philosophy

Hoeks, J.C., Vonk, W., and Schriefers, H. (2002) Processing coordinated structures in context: The effect of topic-structure on ambiguity resolution. Journal of Memory & Language, 46, 99-119.

Kehler, A. (2000) Coherence and the Resolution of Ellipsis, Linguistics and Philosophy, 23(6), 533-575.

Kehler, A. (2002) Coherence, Reference and the Theory of Grammar. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Potts, C. (2005) The Logic of Conventional Implicatures. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shapiro, L. P and A. Hestvik (1995) On-line comprehension of VP-ellipsis: Syntactic reconstruction and the semantic influence, Journal of Psycholinguistic Research 24, 517-532.

Shapiro, L.P., A. Hestvik, L. Lesan and A. R. Garcia (2003) Charting the time-course of VP-ellipsis sentence comprehension: Evidence for initial and independent structural analysis. J. of Memory and Language, 1-19.

Tanenhaus, M. and Carlson, G. (1990) Comprehension of deep and surface verb phrase anaphors. Language and Cognitive Processes, 5, 257-280.