TP Ellipsis = VP Ellipsis + Reduction of TP Domain

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Park, Myung-Kwan. "TP Ellipsis = VP Ellipsis + Reduction of TP Domain." Studies in English Language & Literature 50.1 (2024): 97-113. In the traditional analysis of ellipsis, TP and VP ellipsis are considered to be distinct operations. However, departing from this conventional wisdom, this article posits that TP ellipsis emerges from an additional phonological reduction occurring within a TP domain subsequent to VP ellipsis. This study is motivated by the observations made in Rudin (2019) and Kroll (2019), which highlight instances in specific structural contexts, where elements such as tense/modals and sentential polarity can occur within the TP domain undergoing phonological reduction, despite differing from their counterparts in the antecedent clause. The study acknowledges that the reduction of a TP domain is variably permissible, sometimes optional or prohibited, and in other cases, mandatory. By also examining Merchant's (2008) MaxElide as a subset of reduction operations, this article investigates the factors that influence the conditioning of these operations. (Dongguk University)

Key Words: TP ellipsis, VP ellipsis, reduction, MaxElide, identity in reduction/ellipsis

I. Introduction

Rudin (2019) brings to our attention the intriguing paradigm of examples in (1):

(1) a. The baseball player went public with his desire [to be traded]_A. He does not care where [TP he will be traded]_E.

- b. [Your favorite plant is alive]_A, but you can never be sure for how long [TP it will be alive]_E.
- c. Although Sally sees that [she must defeat her competitors]_A, she relies on Susie to tell her how [TP PRO to defeat her competitors]_E.
- d. Either [turn in your final paper by midnight]_A or explain why [TP you do not turn it in by midnight]_E.
- e. [Always save a little from each paycheck]_A. Once you are older, you will understand why [TP you should always save a little from each paycheck]_E. (Rudin 2019: 266-267)

All these examples involve TP ellipsis (that Ross (1969) dubbs as Sluicing), but they apparently violate an identity in ellipsis. The TP in the (E)llipsis clause is elided, though it is different in tense/modality and/or polarity from its antecedent in the (A)ntecedent clause. The peculiar pattern of ellipsis in these examples poses a challenge to the existing formulations of identity in ellipsis, such as Merchant's (2001) semantics-based mutual entailment definition of it and the standard syntactic identity condition that requires identity of (morpho-)syntactic structure (Sag (1976) among many others). Though the ellipsis in (1a-e) appears to violate either the semantics- or the syntax-based definition of identity in ellipsis, the grammaticality of these examples leads us to reexamine the nature of TP ellipsis and the characterization of identity in ellipsis in general, which are the topics of investigation in this paper.

To investigate these issues, this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reconsiders the nature of TP ellipsis, proposing an alternative interpretation that views TP ellipsis not as an isolated operation but as a composite of two interdependent sub-operations—VP ellipsis followed by subsequent phonological reduction of TP domain. In Section 3, we delve into how the reduction of a TP domain aligns with the identity requirement, illustrating its adherence to Kroll's (2019) concept of being 'locally given.' This section illuminates the conditional

aspects governing the reduced TP, delineating specific criteria for its fulfillment. Moving on to Section 4, we scrutinize the relationship between TP domain reduction and Merchant's (2008) MaxElide, demonstrating their distinct yet related manifestations stemming from a shared typology. Finally, Section 5 consolidates our findings and draws conclusions, providing a comprehensive wrap-up that culminates our exploration into the intricacies of syntax.

II. The Nature of TP Ellipsis

It is generally acknowledged that there are three types of ellipsis in English, as in (2).

- (2) a. NP ellipsis (NP as a complement of D)
 - b. VP ellipsis
 - c. TP ellipsis

Putting aside NP ellipsis, we concentrate on VP and TP ellipsis. One logical possibility for them is that VP and TP ellipsis are independent operations. When a structural condition is met (i.e., a TP or VP antecedent is followed/preceded by another), the repeated TP or VP undergoes ellipsis. Either TP or VP ellipsis applies without being contingent on the application of the other.

Another logical possibility is that there is only VP ellipsis, but apparent TP ellipsis arises when the TP domain or projection immediately above undergoes additional (phonological) reduction after the initial application of VP ellipsis, as schematized in (3).

$$(3) [_{CP} \qquad [_{TP} = [_{VP} =]]$$

In (3), the initial VP ellipsis is indicated by a single strike-through, while the additional reduction of the TP domain on top of VP ellipsis is indicated by a double strike-through.

We argue that the additional reduction of a TP domain as schematized in (3) is characterized as applying optionally. It can apply or it does not apply. We suggest that this analysis of TP ellipsis as deriving from the additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis gives a right handle in accounting for otherwise puzzling aspects of TP ellipsis in (1), repeated below as in (2):

- (2) a. The baseball player went public with his desire [$\underline{\text{to be traded}}$]_A. He does not care where [$\underline{\text{TP he will be traded}}$]_E.
 - b. [Your favorite plant is alive]_A, but you can never be sure for how long [TP it will be alive]_E.
 - c. Although Sally sees that [she must defeat her competitors]_A, she relies on Susie to tell her how [TP PRO to defeat her competitors]_E.
 - d. Either [turn in your final paper by midnight]_A or explain why [TP you do not turn it in by midnight]_E.
 - e. [Always save a little from each paycheck]_A. Once you are older, you will understand why [TP you should always save a little from each paycheck]_E.

Be reminded that in these examples, the elided TP is distinct in tense/modality and/or polarity from its antecedent TP.

The conspicuous feature of the examples in (2) is that an elision of a smaller constituent than TP, i.e. a VP ellipsis, can apply, with the un-elided TP domain explicitly expressing a distinct meaning of tense/modality or polarity from its antecedent counterpart, as in (3).

(3) a. The baseball player went public with his desire to $[\underline{be\ traded}]_A$. He does not care where he will $[\underline{vP}\ \underline{be\ traded}]_E$.

- b. Your favorite plant [T_{Pres}] [be alive]_A, but you can never be sure for how long it will [VP be alive]_E.
- c. Although Sally sees that she must [vP defeat her competitors]A, she relies on Susie to tell her how PRO to [vP defeat her competitors]E.
- d. Either [turn in your final paper by midnight]_A or explain why you do not [v_P turn it in by midnight]_E.
- e. Always [save a little from each paycheck]_A. Once you are older, you will understand why you always **should** [vp save a little from each paycheck]_E.

To reinforce the proposed analysis of TP ellipsis as deriving from the additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis, we adduce two more cases of similar phenomenon reported in the previous literature. First, Yoshida (2010) and Yoshida and Gallego (2013) observe that in what is called Antecedent Contained Sluicing (ACS), there is a mismatch in modality/polarity value between the ellipsis and its antecedent TPs, as in (4a-b).

- (4) a. <u>John is not inviting anyone/someone</u> without saying who [TP he is inviting t].
 - b. <u>John must select a color</u> without knowing which one [_{TP} he selects t]. (Yoshida 2010: 350)

In (5a), the elliptical TP does not contain negation, while the antecedent TP does. In (5b), the elliptical TP has the present tense in T, while the antecedent TP has 'must' in it. Yoshida (2010) proposes that what undergoes deletion/reconstruction in the ellipsis clause is not the antecedent TP per se, but the VP inside this TP (containing the trace copy of the subject DP in [Spec, VP]). Yoshida's proposal accommodates the fact that by dint of the VP-internal subject hypothesis, VP as a small clause acts as an antecedent for TP ellipsis. We note that in fact, in such a case, VP ellipsis

¹ However, Takita (2013) argues that contrary to Yoshida's proposal, in German ACS, VP as a small

can also arise, as follows:

- (5) a. John is not inviting anyone/someone without saying who he is $[v_P]$ inviting t.
 - b. John must select a color without knowing which one he does [vp select t].

In these examples involving VP ellipsis, the tense/modality or polarity is overtly realized. Since VP ellipsis is allowed as in (5a-b), we hold on to the idea that apparent TP ellipsis in (4a-b) derives from the additional reduction of a TP domain after it.

Second, along the same line as Yoshida (2010) and Rundin (2019), Kroll (2019: 2) also notes that the elided TP can be different in polarity from its antecedent TP. Her paradigmatic example is as in (6):

(6) I do not think that [California will comply]_A, but I do not know why [TP California won't comply]_E.

In this example, where the underlined antecedent TP is overtly positive in polarity

clause does not serve such a role, based on the following example:

(i) German

Hans wurde von jemandem guküßt, ohne zu wissen

Hans was by someone kissed without to know

wer *(ihn küßte).

who.NOM him kissed

'(lit.) Hans was kissed by someone without knowing who_{NOM} (kissed him).'

(Takita 2013: 667)

This example has voice mismatch; the antecedent TP has a passive form, but the ellipsis TP has an active form. It is generally acknowledged that voice mismatch is permissible under VP ellipsis, whereas it is not under TP ellipsis (Merchant 2008). Granted that, the ungrammaticality of (i) indicates that, like that in the same fashion as elliptical TP, voice mismatch inside the TP domain undergoing reduction is intolerable.

in the so-called 'Neg Raising' context, the ellipsis TP in the following clause can be interpreted as negative in polarity.

The more extreme instance of a reversal from positive to negative in polarity under ellipsis is also attested in the following example, cited from Kroll (2019: 21):

(7) [Corpus example 91594, Santa Cruz Ellipsis Project]

Context: [O]n the day the Japanese invaded Pearl Harbor, Hummel was rounded up and locked in an internment camp along with about 2,000 other foreigners.

. . . So he and a British friend engineered an escape with the help of Nationalist guerrillas concealed nearby. He crawled over barbed-wire and walked most of the night and the next day. He was 20 and had no military training. But he was handed a small Belgian pistol, and he had little choice but to stay and help, harassing Japanese patrols by night and trying to defend a small patch of land against a communist takeover.

Sluice: "I do not know why [TP I was not scared]E, but I really cannot remember [being scared]A." [Hummel] said. "It all seemed like great fun."

In (7), the foregoing context prior to ellipsis makes it easier to process the reversal in polarity under ellipsis in interpreting the elided TP vis-à-vis its antecedent TP that comes after it.

It is to be noted that Kroll's examples in (6) and (7) can also be supplanted by the following examples in (8) and (9), where instead of TP ellipsis, VP ellipsis applies.

- (8) I do not think that California will [comply]_A, but I do not know why it won't [v_P comply]_E.
- (9) I do not know why I was not [vP scared]E, but I really cannot remember [being scared]A.

This indicates that the examples in (6) and (7) are not derived from TP ellipsis per se but from the additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis.

In short, we have demonstrated that apparent TP ellipsis does not derive from the standard understanding of TP ellipsis (i.e., one single application of eliding TP), but from VP ellipsis followed by the subsequent application of eliding a TP domain above VP.

III. Additional Reduction of TP Domain after VP Ellipsis

When apparent TP ellipsis derives from an additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis, what kind of identity requirement does the reduction at hand meet? The more relevant question is whether the reduction at hand needs to meet the same identity requirement (i.e., the ellipsis constituent is identical to or non-distinct from its antecedent counterpart) that ellipsis in general does.

Regarding this issue, Merchant (2013: 19) uses the following examples in (10a-b) to elucidate it:

- (10) a. Lately, Mark hasn't been able to play the sonata flawlessly. I do not know why [TP e].
 - i. = why Mark hasn't been able to play the sonata flawlessly.
 - ii. \neq why Mark has been able to play the sonata flawlessly.
 - b. Abby didn't turn off the stove, but I do not know when [TP e].
 - i. = when she didn't turn off the stove.
 - ii. \neq when she turned off the stove. (Merchant 2013: 19)

(10a) and (10b) are interpreted as (10ai) and (10bi), respectively, but they cannot be read as (10aii) and (10bii), respectively. This set of examples lead Merchant (2013) to claim that the negation in an antecedent TP will always require the corresponding

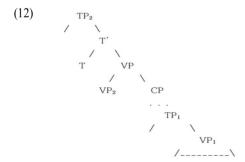
negation in the elided TP to meet an identity in ellipsis.

To obtain a polarity reversal reading as in (10aii) and (10bii), we need to apply not TP ellipsis but VP ellipsis, as follows:

- (11) a. Lately, Mark hasn't been able to play the sonata flawlessly. I do not know why he has been [vp e].
 - b. Abby didn't <u>turn off the stove</u>, but I do not know when she did [$_{VP}$ e].

This shows that an additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis does not apply freely.

Underscoring the contrast between the examples that allow for a reversal in polarity under the additional reduction as seen in the previous section (such as (1d), (4a), (6), and (7)) and the examples in (10a-b) that do not, we suggest that the reversal at issue is generally not allowed for the additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis, but it is in some structural restricted contexts. Yoshida (2010) notes that TP ellipsis inside an adjunct clause (CP) as in (12) allows for a reversal from negative to positive in polarity.



In the schematic structure of (12), if the TP₁ inside the adjunct clause (CP) was elided in identity with the matrix TP₂, it would invite an infinite regress problem.

Thus, the alternative legitimate derivation is that in avoiding the problem, not the TP₁ but the VP₁ is elided in identity with the matrix VP₂. Since VP₁ is a small clause that is positive in polarity and does not house a modal auxiliary, it is interpreted as positive in polarity and absent in a modal auxiliary. In other words, VP₁ is elided in skirting the infinite regress problem, and subsequently the additional reduction of a TP domain only suppresses the same subject in [Spec,TP] as well as the modal-less T, giving rise to the reading almost analogous to that of VP₁.

On the other hand, Kroll (2019) takes a different approach to such examples as (1d), (6), and (7). (1d), repeated as (13), involves the exclusive disjunction 'either or.'

(13) Either [turn in your final paper by midnight]_A or explain why [TP you do not turn it in by midnight]_E.

In (13), we see that negation is not present in the antecedent site but it is included in the interpretation of the ellipsis site. An utterance of (13) asserts that either (A) you turn in your final paper by midnight or (E) you do not turn in your final paper by midnight. The exclusive disjunction contains contrary propositions: they cannot both be true at the same time.

In contrast, (6), repeated as (14), involves Neg Raising:

(14) I do not think that [California will comply]_A, but I do not know why [TP California won't comply]_E.

Kroll (2019: 17) proposes that the assertion of the antecedent in (14) combined with the excluded-middle presupposition invoked by the negative form of verb 'do not think' entails that the speaker in (14) has the belief that California will not comply.²

² The 'excluded middle presupposition' refers to situations where an argument or statement assumes the truth of one of two opposing options without considering other potential alternatives. It's a form of logical

Kroll argues that these examples that allow for acceptable mismatches between what is omitted but interpreted as negative in polarity and its antecedent lacking negation lead to reevaluating the identity condition in ellipsis. To account for such examples, Kroll (2019: 31) proposes the following contextual entailment condition of Local Givenness as in (15):

(15) Local Givenness: A proposition can be elided if the existential closure of the proposition is entailed by the local context and is maximally salient.

Putting aside the notion of salience, we can say that the TP of an interrogative can be elided if and only if the proposition expressed by the TP, modulo existential closure, is entailed by the context in which the sentence expressing the proposition would be uttered. This formulation highlights that the requirement for identity between the ellipsis and the antecedent clauses in TP ellipsis is not solely based on semantic content but also on pragmatic aspects. This insight leads to Kroll's proposal where TP ellipsis is seen as a phenomenon influenced by pragmatics, specifically permitted by the local context's implications.

Note that unlike Kroll (2019), we have argued in favor of the analysis for TP ellipsis as deriving from an additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis. Thus, for us, the condition like (15) needs to be localized from the whole TP only to its edge, which is a TP domain just above the VP, as follows:

(16) Local Givenness: A TP domain can be phonologically reduced/suppressed if its semantic content is entailed by the local context and is maximally salient.

In other words, the additional reduction of a TP domain after VP ellipsis is subject to Local Givenness in (16). For example, in (13) that involves the exclusive

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reasoning that operates on the assumption that only two possibilities exist, often overlooking the potential for additional complexities or intermediate states.

disjunction, Local Givenness is satisfied by the reduced TP domain because the local context for the reduced TP domain entails the semantic content expressed by it. The local context for the first disjunct of this exclusive disjunction 'either or' construction in (13) is the context of the conversation. The local context for the second disjunct is intersected with the complement of the first disjunct. The exclusive disjunction dictates that the context for the second disjunct must be allowed to include worlds incompatible with the first disjunct, in order to correctly predict that the second disjunct is defined. We therefore correctly predict felicitous reduction of the TP domain.

IV. Additional Reduction of TP Domain vs. MaxElide

Merchant (2008) notes that when extraction takes place out of a VP, this VP but the higher TP immediately dominating needs to undergo ellipsis, as follows:

(17) Mary believed the claim that he hit someone, but they do not know who (* [TP Mary did]).

To accommodate this requirement, Merchant proposes the now celebrated condition of MaxElide in (18):

(18) MaxElide

Let XP be an elided constituent containing an A'-trace. Let YP be a possible target for deletion. YP must not properly contain XP.

However, when the VP at hand does not contain an A'-trace, its elision is optional, as follows:

- (19) a. Ben knows that she invited Klaus, but her father does not $[v_P]$ invite Klaus].
 - b. Ben knows that she invited Klaus, but her father does not know that she did [vp know that she invite Klaus]. (Merchant 2008: 142)

Since an adjunct wh-phrase can start from outside the VP (thus its trace is not contained by the VP), it is immune to MaxElide, as follows:

(20) John will leave, but I do not know when (he will) [$_{
m VP}$ leave]. (Hartman 2011)

A question that now arises is why MaxElide is obligatory, while an additional reduction of a TP domain proposed in this paper is optional. Park (2010) proposes that the effects of MaxElide are attributed to the fact that the construction involving an extraction of an argument wh-phrase from a VP as in (17) is a Pseudogapping construction like (21) (See (Levin 1979/1986) and Lasnik 1995 for the analysis of it). The Psedugapping construction is required to bear contrastive focus outside the VP that the remnant argument DP moves out of.

(21) Larry might read the short story, but he WON'T the play.

In other words, since the object wh-phrase as in (17) always first undergoes A-movement to [Spec.vP] before moving further to a CP domain in the same as the remnant DP in the Pseudogapping construction does, the VP it moves out of always carries contrastive focus. This generalization is correct, as shown by the examples documented by Merchant (2008: 140), as in (22) through (24) where contrastive focus is on an upper-cased word:

- (22) a. I know what I LIKE and what I DON'T [VP like].
 - b. I know which books she READ, and which she DIDN'T [vp read].
 - c. What VP Ellipsis CAN do, and what it CAN'T [VP do]. (Johnson 2001)
- (23) a. GREEK, you should take; DUTCH, you shouldn't [vP take].
 - b. I know which books ABBY read, and which ones BEN did [vp read].
- (24) a. I think YOU should ride the TALLEST camel, but I do not know which one PHIL should [vp ride]. (Schuyler 2001: (48))
 - b. I think you SHOULD adopt one of these puppies, but I can't [vp ride] predict which one you actually WILL. (Schuyler 2001: (49))
 - c. ABBY took GREEK, but I do not know what language BEN did [vp take].
 - d. We know that Abby DOES speak [Greek, Albanian, and Serbian]_F. -- we need to find out which languages she DOESN'T [VP speak]!

(Merchant 2001: 115 fn. 5 (ii))

e. (I know) ABBY wants to take GREEK, but I do not know what language BEN does [$_{VP}$ want to take].

In these examples bleeding MaxElide (i.e., disallowing an elision of TP), though wh-extraction takes place out of a VP, contrastive focus on a subject DP or an auxiliary verb in T precludes MaxElide from applying to the TP domain. Note incidentally that a simple VP is elided, which confirms that in these examples, an extraction of an argument wh-phrase out of VP is an instance of A-movement,³ which the remnant DP in the Pseudogapping construction undergoes.

To return to the examples involving an additional reduction of a TP domain, we have seen in section 2 that it applies optionally. For instance, (1e) repeated as (25) involving TP ellipsis alternates with (3e) repeated as (26) involving VP ellipsis:

³ One apparent exception to this generalization is (24e), where what undergoes VP ellipsis is [want to take t]. Since 'want' is a verb subject to reanalysis, when the wh-object of 'take' moves to [Spec,vP] at the periphery of the elided VP, its movement can count as an instance of A-movement.

- (25) [Always save a little from each paycheck]_A. Once you are older, you will understand why [TP you should always save a little from each paycheck]_E.
- (26) Always [save a little from each paycheck]_A. Once you are older, you will understand why you always should [vP save a little from each paycheck]_E.

Since what is moved in the ellipsis clause is 'why,' MaxElide is not relevant to these cases. This accounts for why either TP or VP ellipsis is permitted. Note also that though 'should' in (26) just outside the elided VP appears to bear contrastive focus, it in fact does not, because it is locally given in meeting the condition in (16).

To summarize, the additional reduction of a TP domain is apparently analogous to MaxElide, but they critically differ, in that the former is optional, whereas the latter is obligatory. But they are the same type of phonological reduction; the difference lies in whether an internal argument DP moves out of VP or not. When it does and there is no contrastive focus marked element outside an elided VP, the additional reduction of a TP domain ensues, inducing MaxElide effects. The one more thing to note is that when a tense/modal or sentence polarity expression in one clause is different from its counterpart in another clause, it bears contrastive focus. But the additional reduction applies to a TP domain where such tense/modal or sentence polarity expression counts as locally given in accordance with the condition in (16).

V. Conclusion

In reevaluating the established understanding of ellipsis operations within syntax, our investigation has proposed a novel analysis of TP ellipsis, suggesting its origin as a composite of two interdependent sub-operations—VP ellipsis followed by subsequent phonological reduction of TP domain. Our departure from the

conventional view has been motivated by the nuanced observations drawn from Rudin (2019) and Kroll (2019), shedding lights on specific structural contexts where tense/modal and/or sentential polarity elements within the reduced TP domain may differ from their counterparts in the antecedent clause.

Acknowledging the variable permissibility of TP domain reduction, ranging from optional to prohibited or obligatory in different contexts, our analysis prompts a deeper examination into the complexities surrounding these syntactic operations. Additionally, our exploration of Merchant's (2008) MaxElide as a subset of reduction operations offers insights into the factors conditioning these linguistic phenomena.

Our proposed framework not only challenges the existing understanding of ellipsis operations but also opens avenues for further inquiry into the intricate interplay between syntax and phonology. As future research progresses, a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms governing these operations is crucial in advancing our comprehension of linguistic structures and their underlying principles.

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