

Pseudo-Sloppy Readings in Flat Binding

Short Summary This paper concerns the sloppy interpretation of pronouns in ellipsis, and in particular two recent contributions by Takahashi and Fox (2005) (=TF) and Hardt (2006) concerning *rebinding* in *MaxElide* violations. We argue that rebinding in *MaxElide* violations is subject to the following generalization:

- (1) Rebinding is possible if the binder of the rebound pronoun is element of the domain of quantification of the binder in the first conjunct.

This generalization is argued for by contrasts like (2): The sloppy reading is possible in the sub-domain case (2a) where *the boy* denotes an element of the domain of quantification of *almost every boy* in the first conjunct. In (2b), however, *the teacher* doesn't denote an element of the set of boys, and the sloppy reading is impossible.

- (2) a. Almost every boy hopes that Sally will marry him. Even this boy hopes that she will. (cf. Hardt (2006))
 b. #Almost every boy hopes that Sally will marry him, and even the teacher hopes that she will.

We then propose an account of (1) based on the *Flat Binding* system of Sauerland (2007). In particular, the system allows two different representations for sloppy readings in the sub-domain cases, one of which is not expected to be restricted to *MaxElide* conforming structures.

MaxElide TF propose an elegant account for the contrast in (3).

- (3) a. John hopes that Sally will marry him. Bill does Δ too.
 Δ = hopes that she will marry Bill.
 b. *John hopes that Sally will marry him. Bill hopes that she will Δ too.
 Δ = marry Bill

They assume following Rooth (1992) that ellipsis must be licensed by a focus domain containing, but not necessarily identical to the ellipsis site. The focus domain must be identical in interpretation to a discourse antecedent, where crucially the indices of variables matter. If binder indices can only be used once, Rooth's account predicts that variables can be rebound in ellipsis as in (4) only if the licensing focus domain contains the binder.

- (4) John λx x hopes that Sally will marry x and Bill $\underbrace{\lambda y$ y hopes that she will ~~marry y~~ }
 focus domain

TF add to Rooth's account the new constraint *MaxElide* which requires that if a focus domain licenses ellipsis, its maximal elidable sub-constituent must be elided. This condition is violated in (3b) because the matrix VP as in (3a) can also be elided. TF's analysis predicts ellipsis of the matrix VP is acceptable. (5) shows that if ellipsis of the matrix VP is the only possible ellipsis, a sloppy interpretation because much easier again.

- (5) John hopes that Sally will marry him. Bill hopes that Sue will Δ .
 Δ = marry Bill

Hardt's Counterevidence and More Data Hardt (2006) shows the new fact in (6), which challenges TF's account. TF predict *MaxElide* to be violated by the sloppy interpretation in (6), just as in (3b). But, the sloppy interpretation is possible in (6).

- (6) Nearly every boy said Mary hit him. But Bill didn't say she did Δ
 Δ = hit Bill

Therefore, Hardt develops an account that licenses sloppy readings whenever the antecedent of the ellipsis involves binding by a quantifier (among other things). However, Hardt's account runs into problems with the new examples in (7) and (2b) above where the subject of the second clause is not a boy.

- (7) Nearly every boy said Mary hit him. But the adult witness didn't say she did.

In fact, even (7) only supports a sloppy interpretation if we understand that Bill is one of the boys. We propose the following generalization for these facts and those in (2):

- (8) A sloppy reading remains possible in violation of MaxElide if the binder in the first conjunct is a quantifier and the subject of the second conjunct satisfies the restrictor of this quantifier.

A Flat Binding Explanation We explain generalization in (8) by assuming that binding can involve bound E-type pronouns as in Sauerland's (2007) flat binding proposal rather than rebinding. Sauerland's attempts to explain all binding without indices using a representation of pronouns as definite descriptions instead. For our purposes, it is sufficient if this is one option. In particular, we propose the representation in (9) for (6).

- (9) Nearly every boy said Mary hit *the boy*. But Bill didn't say she did ~~hit *the boy*~~.

The two definite descriptions *the boy* in (9) are the LF-representations of the pronoun. Crucially they are not indexed at all, but refer to the most salient in the assignment. In both clauses, this will be the boy introduced by the subject into the assignment. Therefore the sloppy interpretation of the second clause is predicted.

Because the definite descriptions are not indexed, the two VPs *hit the boy* in (9) are identical in interpretation. Therefore they can serve as the focus domain licensing their ellipsis without violation of MaxElide.

A representation corresponding to (9) for (8) is the following:

- (10) Nearly every boy said Mary hit *the boy*. But the adult witness didn't say she did ~~hit *the boy*~~.

This fails to receive a sloppy interpretation because the adult witness introduced by the subject of (10) is not a boy. Hence, there is no unique salient boy for the definite description *the boy* in the second conjunct to refer to and (10) is predicted to be a presupposition violation.

References

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