Collective predication and ellipsis: another case of ineffability

March 29, 2018
v1.0

   Collective predicates, such as *meet* are typically assumed to only compose with expressions denoting pluralities, on the basis of contrasts like those in (1). This can be modelled as a presupposition, as in (2), assuming a Link (1983)-style ontology for pluralities.

(1)   a.   Jorge and Ivan met in the corridor.

      b.   *Jorge met in the corridor.

(2) $[\![\text{meet}_{\text{sum}}]\!] = \lambda X \in D_{\text{e}} : \text{atom}(X) = 0 \,.\, \text{meet}(X)$

   Given these assumptions, the elliptical examples in (3) and (4) are puzzling. Both (3) and (4) are considered acceptable, but isomorphism between the ellipsis site and its antecedent would involve application of a collective predicate to a singular trace.

(3)   [Jorge and Ivan]$_F$ met in the corridor,   *stripping*
      and Tanya Δ too.

      a. $\Delta \neq [t \text{ met}]$

(4)   Jorge and Ivan met in the corridor,   *contrast sluicing*
      but I don't know which OTHER person Δ.

      a. $\Delta \neq [t \text{ met}]$

   Focusing on (4), there is an implication that another person met with Jorge and Ivan. There are two ways of capturing this while maintaining a largely isomorphic ellipsis-site, indicated in (5a) and (5b).

(5) a.   …which OTHER person ⟨ [Jorge, Ivan and *t*] met ⟩

    b.   …which OTHER person ⟨ Jorge and Ivan met *t* ⟩

(5a) involves adding the remnant as an additional conjunct, and extracting it. This is parallel to what Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey (1995) describe as *sprouting*, since *which OTHER person* lacks a correlate. However, this involves violating the Coordinate Structure Constraint, and Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey show that sprouting is island-sensitive.

(5b) on the other hand, involves manipulating the argument structure of the predicate. This, however, involves violating Chung, Ladusaw & McCloskey's *Fixed Diathesis* constraint (see also Barros 2014); argument structure alternations are generally not tolerated under ellipsis.

Ellipsis-specific considerations aside, the interpretation of the putative sources in (5) is simply too weak. (4) imposes a *same event* requirement – that is to say, it implies that there is a meeting event involving Jorge, Ivan and another person, of which the meeting event involving Jorge and Ivan is a proper part. The putative sources in (5) are both have a reading according to which the meeting events are non-overlapping.

An analysis of (3) and (4) needs to meet an additional desideratum – the collective predicates which allow a singular remnant under ellipsis all fall into Winter's (2001) class of *set* predicates (*meet*, *gather*, etc). Winter's collective *atom* predicates, such as *to be a good team*, give rise to unacceptability.

(6) a.   *Jorge and Ivan are a good team, and Tanya too.

    b.   *Jorge and Ivan are a good team, but I don't know which OTHER person.

References

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