

Moving Vehicle Violations: Binding via Movement and Vehicle Change effects*

Malhaar Shah

1 Introduction

Vehicle change has been an important puzzle in ellipsis since its discovery in Fiengo and May (1994). In this snippety squib, I float an idea for why vehicle change exists: the binding phenomena are conditions on the PF-realization of chains. The core proposal here relies on an approach to binding phenomena, ‘Chain Based Binding’ (CBC), first suggested by Lidz and Idsardi (1998), followed up by Hornstein (2001; 2009), Drummond, Kush, and Hornstein (2012), and developed extensively in Drummond (2011). CBC relies on the idea that any sort of bound interpretation (‘accidental coreference’ aside) relies on the movement of an R-expression. The trace or lower copy of the R-expression is then Spelled Out as a pronoun or an anaphor (or left unpronounced), depending on the distance between the chain links.

Here is a rough illustration of the proposal.

- (1) a. **PF:** John₁ said [_{CP} that he₁ likes to party].
b. **LF:** John said [_{CP} ~~John~~ that [_{TP} ~~John~~ likes to party]]

The aim of this squib is not to defend this conception of Binding over other conceptions (say, Agree Based Construal). Instead, it is to illustrate a virtue of CBC. CBC allows one to maintain a form of argument familiar in ellipsis scholarship.

1. A syntactic dependency *SD* in a certain structure is ruled out by a constraint *C*.
2. Under ellipsis, *SD* is licit, even when the structure has not changed.
→ *C* is a **PF-condition**.

Such an argument is made for, among other things, *wh*-islands, the Coordinate Structure Constraint, and Beck effects. We see Condition *C* obviation under ellipsis. Following the natural argument above, I will outline a view in which Condition *C* can be thought of as a PF-phenomenon (namely, a condition on the realization of lower copies, as in CBC).

2 Pronominalization and Reflexivization

I assume that A-chains can be sent to Spell-Out (where A-chains are tuples of copies whose first member and last member are in A-positions). I also assume each copy in the chain has a diacritic

*This squib is intended to be extremely sketchy and short. I spend little time on details, and provide no comparison to other theories of the same phenomena. Comments are extremely welcome.

indicating whether it is in an A-position or an A'-position.¹ (1a) will involve the following during Spell-Out:

(2) $\langle \text{John}^A_{\text{NOM}}, \text{John}^{A'}, \text{John}^A_{\text{NOM}} \rangle \rightarrow \langle /j\text{ohn}/, / \emptyset /, /h\text{e}/ \rangle$

An alternative is only A-positions are input to Spell-Out:

(3) $\langle \text{John}^A_{\text{NOM}}, \text{John}^A_{\text{ACC}} \rangle \rightarrow \langle /j\text{ohn}/, /h\text{imself}/ \rangle$

The Spell-Out rules involved (in English) are pronominalization and reflexivization. Pronominalization takes place when an A' position is crossed in the chain (effectively, as an improper movement obviator). Reflexivization takes place when there are only A-positions in the chain input to Spell-Out. I assume these rules do not take more than a 3-membered chain as their input, and that cases like (4) are the product of deletion after *several* rounds of reflexivization.

(4) John₁ is [likely [to seem [to appear [to want [to wash himself₁]]]]]

I also leave open the possibility that, in English, pronouns in subject position (as in (1a)) are in fact products of reflexivization rather than pronominalization, but as a Last Resort maneuver made to avoid reflexives in agreeing positions (the Anaphor Agreement Effect (see Woolford, 1999)).

With this conception of binding in mind, we see that a Condition C violation is simply a failure of pronominalization or reflexivization to apply when it was meant to apply. In that sense, the grammar simply does not generate Condition C violating structures, which are to be filtered out later by constraints on indexations. Rather, a Condition C violating structure (where an R-expression forms a chain with another R-expression which c-commands it) is the input to Spell-Out rules, which will in turn output well-formed PF-structures, with pronouns and anaphors where we expect to see them. What if these Spell-Out rules are bled by a PF-deletion process like VP-ellipsis?

3 Bleeding Pronominalization: ellipsis

Vehicle Change effects (VCE) are the absence of Condition C effects under ellipsis. The examples below are quoted in Murphy and Müller (2022).

- (5) a. John₁ was arrested, but he₁ doesn't know [why [TP $\langle \text{he}_1/*\text{John was arrested} \rangle$]]
(adapted from Merchant 2001)
- b. Mary is prouder of John₁ than he₁ believes that I am [VP $\langle \text{proud of him}_1/*\text{John} \rangle$]
(Lechner 2004)
- c. Mary introduced John₁ to everyone he₁ wanted her to [VP $\langle \text{introduce him}_1/*\text{John to} \rangle$]
(Fiengo and May 1994)

One can think of the *he*₁s in the above examples as either being generated by pronominalization applying to the residue of the partially-elided chain, or as the result of another movement (to the

¹I am following Drummond (2011) in these assumptions. They are made here for concreteness, but I doubt that they are the only technical implementations possible. The details here are quite immaterial.

position in which *John* is pronounced). But there is no Condition C violation *per se* - no illicit PF-chain is produced, as the offending material is deleted.

More telling are Drummond and Shimoyama's (2014) examples, involving VCE across a CP boundary but not across a TP boundary.² Crucially, in these examples, pronouns are also illicit, meaning that this cannot be analyzed as covert conversion of an R-expression to a pronoun.

- (6) a. I want [_{CP} for John₁ to win] just as much as he₁ does [_{VP} ⟨want [_{CP} for *him₁/*John to win]⟩]
- b. I believe [_{TP} John₁ to be intelligent] just as much as he₁ does [_{VP} ⟨believe [_{TP} *him₁/John₁ to be intelligent]⟩]

These are cases of not only Condition C obviation, but Condition B obviation. A Condition B violation would be applying pronominalization where reflexivization should have applied. Yet, here, deleting the above structures will bleed both relevant Spell-Out rules, so no offending A-chains will be maintained at PF, even though pronominalization and reflexivization did not apply.

Treating all of the Binding Phenomena as resulting from the realization of A-chains at PF allows this to fall out quite naturally. Kennedy and Lidz (2001) discuss examples of comparative stripping and provide a similar argument for the existence of a Long Distance Anaphor (LDA) in English. Lacking a Long Distance Reflexivization rule, English LDAs can surface only when they are rendered silent by ellipsis. Similarly, Condition C (and sometimes B) can be obviated by simply deleting a PF-structure. This means no offending chain is present at PF, and pronominalization and reflexivization will simply fail to apply.

The viability of CBC may also offer support for many island phenomena as conditions on PF representations rather than as conditions on narrow-syntactic derivations. As there is pronominal binding into islands, the application of a PF rule like pronominalization can rescue islands (much like ellipsis, Ross 1969, Merchant 2001, Lasnik 2009).

4 Conclusion

Summarizing: Condition C violations occur when you **can** pronominalize/reflexivize but you don't. If you elide the offending structure, you **can't** pronominalize/reflexivize. There is no consequent violation.

As Drummond (2011) notes, 'If Lidz and Idsardi's proposal [CBC] is workable, the resulting simplification of the theory of grammatical dependencies is striking. Two subtheories have been removed (the theory of binding dependencies and the theory of control dependencies) and the constraint [that an A-chain cannot span more than one theta position] has been dropped.' Though the proposal was made 26 years ago, its empirical benefits have not been fully reaped. If this squib is on the right track, CBC offers explanations for well-documented, but poorly understood phenomena.

²Drummond and Shimoyama do not draw the connection to CBC I pursue here.

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