LING158: Advanced Psycholinguistics

Ellipsis in Real-time

- Meeting details
    - Tu/Th 10am - 11:45am
    - Hum 2 Room 250
- Instructor details
    - Matt Wagers, mwagers@ucsc.edu
    - 231 Stevenson, Office hours TBD
- Electronic resources
    - Web site: http://people.ucsc.edu/~mwagers/ling158/
    - PDF locker: http://www.mendeley.com/groups/3214501/_/
    - Course calendar: http://goo.gl/M36Jn

Course goals and methods

The goal of this course is somewhat the inverse of its pre-requisite course: whereas LING157 ("Psycholinguistics and Linguistic Theory") was a broad, thematic survey of the central questions in the theory of language processing, LING158 is a deep topical investigation of a particular linguistic phenomenon, *ellipsis*, and what its properties are in language perception and production. Consider a simple instance of VP Ellipsis:

(1) Percy always lost money at the track, but Major Tifto never did.

What are the appropriate syntactic and semantic representations of such a sentence as (1)? The intended interpretation seems effortless enough:

(2) Percy always lost money at the track, but Major Tifto never lost money at the track.

How is this interpretation achieved by the language processor? Ellipsis is a demonstration case *par excellence* of the constructive nature of perception: an absent/degenerate/minimal signal gives rise to a much richer representation, when it is integrated with your knowledge of language. There are a host of questions:

- Is the processing of ellipsis similar to the processing of other syntactic terms that are perceptually minimal, e.g., de-accented strings, pronounced pronouns, unpronounced pronouns, gaps/traces?
- What sort of mental representations are "left behind" in the wake of an ellipsis? Do they have syntactic properties that we can detect?
- Why does a language user produce an ellipsis when she does?
- Is there any relation between the causes of ellipsis production in speaking and the mechanisms of ellipsis recovery in understanding?
- Do we need different answers for different ellipsis constructions (N' ellipsis, VP ellipsis, sluicing, etc.)?

In this course, we will try to mount responses to these questions by learning the recent contemporary literature – in the past 10 years, ellipsis has been a very active topic of investigation from a psycholinguistic perspective – and then by carrying out projects of our own.

In the first half of the course, course participants will take turns presenting papers arguing for possible and sometimes opposite viewpoints.

In the second half, the course will run more as a workshop in which the course participants design and conduct their own studies (in groups of 3-4). The course will conclude with a research symposium.

Work and Evaluation

You will earn course credit in several ways:

- by making presentations in class of research papers;
- by being an active member of your research group in all phases of study planning, execution, analysis and write-up;
- by attending 3 obligatory office hour meetings with me throughout the course - these are a chance for us to meet one-on-one and discuss your progress individually. These meetings will begin in Week 3.

The final project will materialize in the form of an 8 page paper (written as a group) and a group presentation at the research symposium.

Grading is holistic and you are encouraged to take this course P/NP. However you will receive explicit written evaluations with suggestions for improvement after in-class presentations and one-on-one meetings

Materials

You will be subscribed to the class group at http://www.mendeley.com/ - this will allow us to maintain a common bibliography and PDF locker. In general,

all required readings will be made available here (but all electronic resources can also be accessed via the library).

Schedule: Weeks 1-5

(In an ideal world, themes and weeks will correspond in the order given below. But it's probable we may constructively linger).

Theme 1: theoretical and empirical landscape

- Tue: Phillips & Parker, real-time landscape
- Thu: Merchant handbook chapter, analytic landscape
    - Merchant (2011)

Theme 2: identity

We will begin by exploring what kind(s) of *identity* or similarity relationships hold between the elided constituent and its antecedent. We will primarily look at judgment studies that try to establish under what conditions voice mismatches can exist.

- Tue: Syntactic mismatches: voice etc.
    - Arregui et al. (2006)
    - Kim et al. (2011)
- Thu: Discourse Coherence
    - Kehler (2000)
    - Frazier & Clifton (2006)
    - Kim & Runner (2011)

Theme 3: reactivation

How can we tell what information is accessed during the resolution of an elided constituent? We will begin by looking at the logic of some classic *reactivation* studies on pronouns, and then proceed to the application of that logic to VP ellipsis. Then we will consider other ways of assessing the contents of instantaneously active representations, including the visual world paradigm in

eye-tracking and markers of lexical access (the frequency effect). In the latter case, we will read a recent paper by Sandra Chung on whether there is lexical "re-access" in sluicing.

- Tue:
    - Nicol & Swinney (1989)
    - Shapiro et al. (2003)
    - Snider & Runner (2011)
- Thu:
    - Chung (2006)
    - van Gompel & Majid (2004)
    - Lago et al. (submitted)

Theme 4: representational complexity & grammatical accuracy

If ellipses contain unpronounced structure, can we detect the parsing/construction of this structure? We will read Hankamer & Sag's classic paper on *deep* v. *surface* anaphora, which distinguishes VP ellipsis/anaphora to syntactic v. discourse-level representations. This has led to an interesting line of questions about antecedent complexity and the recovery of antecedents. First, Murphy (1985) and Tanenhaus & Carlson (1990) replied rather directly to Hankamer & Sag; more recently, Frazier & Clifton (2001) and Martin & McElree (2008, 2009) have asked how syntactic structure is instantiated in the ellipsis site - based on similar data patterns, they have alternately proposed a copying operation, and a memory pointer mechanism.

- Tue: Deep & Surface Anaphora
    - Hankamer & Sag (1976)
    - Murphy (1985)
    - Tanenhaus & Carlson (1990)
- Thu: Complexity, cont.:
    - Frazier & Clifton (2001)
    - Martin & McElree (2008, 2009)

Finally we will read some recent work by Masaya Yoshida demonstrating detailed grammatically-accurate online predictions.

- Tue: Predictive parsing of ellipsis
    - Yoshida et al. (2012a, b)

This will provide a link to the final major theme …

Theme 5: predictability

We will consider the relationship between ellipsis and deaccenting: is ellipsis an extreme form of deaccenting? What notions of redundancy/predictability license non-pronunciation?

- Tancredi (1992) ch. 2
- Rooth (1992)
- Gahl & Garnsey (2004)
- Frazier, Clifton & Carlson (2007)
- Jaeger (2010)

Bibliography

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