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Libro de resúmenes

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A preliminary overview of ellipsis in English predicative prepositional phrases

Antonio Vicente Casas Pedrosa
Universidad de Jaén

Problema y objetivos

This paper focuses on the analysis of ellipsis in predicative prepositional phrases (PPPs) in English. Although their syntax can be complex, scholars have not paid enough attention to some of their features yet. Different examples illustrating the main types of ellipsis and their characteristics will be obtained from various corpora, grammars, and dictionaries.

First, they can be described as those phrases which are headed by a preposition whose Complement (C) is a Noun Phrase (NP) and which act as Subject Complement (Cs) at clause level. Such is the case of "of value" in [1]:

[1] It can be concluded that Adomnan"s life of Columba is of value for the structure of society which seems not to have changed greatly between Columba"s time and Adomnan (ICE-GB:W1A-002 #115:1).

Therefore, an intensive relationship is established between the Subject (S) and this unit since the latter predicates something of the S, thus conveying a condition, feature, quality, or state which is attached to the S.

Marco Teórico

Secondly, a distinction should be drawn between textual and structural ellipsis (Quirk et al., 1985: 900). In the former, the omitted word(s) can be retrieved from the immediate context, whereas that is not the case in the latter. Examples [2] and [3] illustrate these phenomena, respectively. Thus, the words omitted after the copulative verb "is" in [2] are "a conflict", but "speaking" or "talking" is missing after "was" in [3]:

[2] And uh o one particular aspect <,> o of the delays uh i is uh uh of considerable relevance uh on this occasion <,> (ICE-GB:S2A-063 #7:1:A).

[3] I was on the phone for over 2 hrs (ICE-GB:W1B-005 #43:3).

A concept closely related to that of "structural ellipsis" is the so-called "structural recoverability", which can be defined as the cases in which "the full form is recoverable not through knowledge of context, but simply through knowledge of grammatical structure" (op. cit.: 861).

Resultados esperables

Finally, a third group of PPPs consists of those which are the result of a more complex process since they are subsequently retrieved from a longer PPP. Therefore, they are obtained after a double ellipsis. Thus, the words "left" and "a state of" have been omitted after "and are" and "in" in [4] and [5]:

[4] If it is not, then they are asked to leave for a year and are in a state of limbo, unable to play on the Tour and unable to play in amateur events (BNC:G2C 747).

[5] I felt as if I was in limbo (BNC:CDS 833).

The study of further examples lets us draw different conclusions. It can be highlighted, among others, that in some cases the omission of "a state of" may involve a change in the preposition heading the PPP (e.g. "in" is replaced by "under"), as can be seen in [6] and [7]:

[6] Chicago was in a state of siege in the aftermath of the Haymarket trial (BNC:A0U 2482).

[7] Is it to be wondered that the parrots which depend upon such places are under siege? (ICE-GB:W2B-028 #68:1).

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