

Is N-drop NP Ellipsis?

Aaron Braver*
Brandeis University
aaron@aaronbraver.com

29 April 2007
Harvard Undergraduate Linguistics Colloquium

1 Introduction

- N-drop is a productive process in Spanish allowing a DP to lack an overt noun
- Three major types - D-AP, D-RC, and D-PP
 - (1) Quiero la falda negra y la [] amarilla
want.1SG the skirt black and the yellow
'I want the black skirt and the yellow (one)'
 - (2) El ordenador que funciona y el [] que no funciona
the computer that works and the that NEG works
'The computer that works and the (one) that does not work'
 - (3) El reloj de Martín y el [] de Marisol
the watch of Martín and the of Marisol
'Martín's watch and Marisol's'
- One account - "rich" number and gender morphology license null noun (Contreras 1989)
- Many cases where N-drop looks an awful lot like NP Ellipsis
- A standard NP Ellipsis example (only marginal similarity to N-drop - we'll explore the previous point shortly)
 - (4) Compramos muchos libros y tú compraste algunos []
bought.1PL many books and you bought some
'We bought many books, and you bought some (books)'
- What I'll be talking about

*My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Lotus Goldberg for her support and direction in this project. I also wish to thank my Spanish-speaking consultants, Luis Alonso-Ovalle, Roser Saurí, and Claudia Borgonovo, for both their judgments and for sharing their linguistic knowledge. This talk is modified from my senior honors thesis at Brandeis University.

- The distribution of N-drop
- Brief discussion of a previous analysis
- Some further empirical facts about N-drop
- What allows for the confusion between N-drop and NP Ellipsis, and why we still want to keep them as separate processes
- A (fortunate) consequence of keeping N-drop and NP Ellipsis separate

2 Notes on Distribution

- Only PPs headed by *de* ‘of’ can follow the gap - other P heads are ungrammatical:

(5) *El coche para Marta y el [] para Lourdes
 the car for Marta and the for Lourdes

(6) *La llamada a Ignacio y la [] a Paco
 the call to Ignacio and the to Paco

- Only the element *immediately* following the gap matters - note the non-*de* Ps:

(7) El coche caro para Marta y el [] barato para Lourdes
 the car expensive for Marta and the cheap for Lourdes
 ‘The expensive car for Marta and the cheap (one) for Lourdes’

(8) La llamada de su madre a Ignacio y la [] de su padre a Paco
 the call of his mother to Ignacio and the of his father to Paco
 ‘The call from his mother to Ignacio and the (one) from his father to Paco’

- When following a demonstrative, almost anything (or nothing at all) is permitted after the gap:

(9) Ese coche para Marta y este [] para Lourdes
 that car for Marta and this for Lourdes
 ‘That car for Marta and this (one) for Lourdes’

(10) Esa llamada a Ignacio y esta [] a Paco
 that call to Ignacio and this to Paco
 ‘That call to Ignacio and this (one) to Paco’

- This is different from all other cases of N-drop. I will argue that even though it looks like N-drop, this is actually NP Ellipsis

3 Against a Nominalization Approach

- Traditional descriptive grammars say this is a simple case of nominalization via zero-derivation

(11) A nominalization by zero-derivation account

La camisa negra y la blanca.∅
the shirt black and the white.NMLZ

‘The black shirt and the white one’

- Problem: N-drop works with PPs and relative clauses - we don’t want to say that those can nominalize, too
- Problem: The supposedly nominalized adjectives don’t behave like nouns - they can be modified by adverbs, but not by adjectives
- The non-N-drop adverb/adjective paradigm:

(12) a. El libro verdadero
the book true
‘The true book’
b. El libro verdaderamente rojo
the book truly red
‘The truly red book’

- Adjectives and adverbs with N-drop:

(13) a. El [] verdaderamente rojo
the truly red
‘The truly red (one)’
b. *El [] verdadero rojo
the true red

- Problem: No N-drop with prenominal adjectives

(14) a. El famoso escritor bajo y el famoso escritor alto
the famous writer short and the famous writer tall
‘The famous short writer and the famous tall writer’
b. *El famoso escritor bajo y el famoso [] alto
the famous writer short and the famous tall

4 Further Empirical Data

- Lobeck (1995) lays out a general schema for several types of ellipsis
- Test 1: Is flanking material required? Yes. (We'll come back to Dem-XP in a bit)
 - (15) a. *Quiero la falda negra y la []
want.1SG the skirt black and the
 - b. *El ordenador que funciona y el []
the computer that works and the
 - c. *El reloj de Martín y el []
the watch of Martín and the
- Test 2: Can the antecedent be outside a coordinate or subordinate structure the gap is in? Yes.
 - (16) A María no le gustan los paraguas, pero estaba lloviendo y María llevó
to María NEG 3SG like the umbrellas but was raining and María brought
el [] negro
the black
'María doesn't like umbrellas, but it was raining and she brought the black (one)'
 - (17) Jaime leyó la carta que escribió Marta, pero cree que la [] de Lourdes es
Jaime read the letter that wrote Marta but thinks that the [] of Lourdes is
mejor
better
'Jaime read the letter that Marta wrote, but he thinks that Lourdes' (one) is better
- Test 3: Can the gap precede the antecedent? Yes, in some cases
- Not here:
 - (18) *La []_i roja y la camisa_i negra
the red and the shirt black
- Gap can precede antecedent if BAC is obeyed.
 - (19) Porque no le gustan los [] rojos, Marta compró los flores azules
because NEG 3SG like the red, Marta bought the flowers blue
'Because she does not like the red (ones), Marta bought the blue flowers'
- Gap can also precede antecedent in a few other cases, in violation of BAC.
 - (20) A Marta le gustan los [] rojos, y por eso compró los flores azules
to Marta 3SG like the red, and for this bought the flowers blue
'Marta does not like the red (ones), so she bought the blue flowers'
- Test 4: Must the empty category be exactly a phrase? No

Is N-drop NP-Ellipsis?

(21) La [NP [N caja] de lapices] y la [] de crayones
the box of pencils and the of crayons
'The box and pencils and the (one) of crayons'

(22) La [NP [caja de lapices] redonda] y la [] cuadrada
the.FSG box of pencils.MPL round.FSG and the.FSG square.FSG
'The round box of pencils and the square (box of pencils)'/ *'The box of round pencils and the box of square (ones)'

- N-drop can get its antecedent from context - 'pragmatic control' (Hankamer and Sag 1976)

(23) [There is a table with two shirts on it - one red and the other blue]
Prefiero la [] roja
prefer.1SG the red
'I prefer the red (shirt)'

- The antecedent and the gap can be on opposite sides of an island (e.g. complement clause island)

(24) *¿A cual/que mujer no crees el rumor de que José gritó?
to which/what woman NEG believe the rumor of that José yelled
'*Which woman did you not believe the rumor that José yelled at (her)?'

(25) La aduanera alta no cree el rumor de que la [] baja gritó a un pasajero
The customs.agent tall NEG believes the rumor of that the short yelled at a passenger
'The tall customs agent doesn't believe the rumor that the short (one) yelled at a passenger'

- N-drop can violate the Coordinate Structure Constraint

(26) *¿Que compró Lourdes y Marta vió el pingüino?
what bought Lourdes and Marta saw the penguin
'*What did Lourdes buy and Marta saw the penguin?'

(27) El tigre blanco no duerme, pero el pingüino y el [] amarillo duermen
the tiger white NEG sleep but the penguin and the yellow sleep
'The white tiger isn't sleeping, but the penguin and the yellow (one) are sleeping'

5 Confusion with NP Ellipsis

- By tweaking the context, you can force the gap to mean more (or less). This additional meaning is cancellable (e.g. (29b))

- (28) a. La [conferencia corta] en el aula y la [] de la otra sala
 the lecture short in the lecture-hall and the in the other room
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the *short* (one) in the other room’
- b. [A sign in front of the speaker indicates that there will be two talks today, one in the lecture hall, and one in some other room]
 La [conferencia] corta en el aula y la [] larga
 the lecture short in the lecture-hall and the long
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the *long* (one) [in some other room]’
- (29) a. [A sign in front of the speaker indicates that there will be two lectures in the same room later today - one long, and one short]
 La [conferencia] corta [en el aula] y la [] larga
 the lecture short in the lecture-hall and the long
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the long (one) [*in the lecture hall*]’
- b. [La conferencia corta] en el aula y la [] larga en la otra sala
 the lecture short in the lecture-hall and the long in the other room
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the long (one) in the other room/#in the lecture hall’
- (30) a. [Neutral context]
 La caja negra de Martín y la [] de Julio
 the box black of Martín and the of Julio
 ‘Martín’s black box and Julio’s (non-black) box’
- b. [Martín and Julio are both holding black boxes]
 La caja negra de Martín y la [] de Julio
 the box black of Martín and the of Julio
 ‘Martín’s black box and Julio’s (black) box’

- Similar judgments are made with English *one*

- (31) [Neutral context]
 The short lecture in the lecture hall, and the long one
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the long one [not necessarily in the lecture hall]’
- (32) [A sign indicates that there are two talks, one in the lecture hall, one long and one short]
 The short lecture in the lecture hall, and the long one
 ‘The short lecture in the lecture hall and the long one [in the lecture hall]’

- Side note: interpretation of the gap may be influenced by whatever is marked as “kontrast” (e.g. Rooth 1992, Vallduví and Engdahl 1996, Vallduví and Vilkuna 1998)
- Traditional differences between NP Ellipsis (NP-E, alternatively known as N’-Deletion) and N-drop:

Is N-drop NP-Ellipsis?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>(33) N-drop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP with gap may be headed by definite article • Modifiers must follow the gap | <p>NP-Ellipsis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DP with gap may not be headed by definite article • Modifiers may follow the gap |
|--|---|

- Some more examples of NP-E (from Ticio 2005)

(34) Compramos muchos libros de física y tú compraste uno []
 bought.1PL many books of physics and you bought one
 ‘We bought many physics books, and you bought one (physics book)’

(35) Compramos muchos libros de física y tú compraste uno [] de química
 bought.1PL many books of physics and you bought one of chemistry
 ‘We bought many physics books, and you bought one chemistry book’

- Sometimes N-drop and NP-E look quite similar:

(36) El estudiante [*Complement* de syntaxis] [*Adjunct* de México]
 the student of syntax of Mexico
 ‘The syntax student from Mexico’

(37) Hay tres estudiantes de syntaxis de México, y dos [] de Japón
 there-are three students of syntax of Mexico and two of Japan
 ‘There are three syntax students from Mexico, and two from Japan’

- NP-E in the ellipsis evaluation criteria:

	NP-E	N-drop
Must be flanked?	No	Yes
Subordinate clauses?	Yes	Yes
Precede antecedent?	Yes, in certain conditions	Yes, more lenient
Must be a phrase?	Yes	No

- Proposal: there are indeed two separate processes going on
- Diagnostic: drop all post-gap modifiers. If the result is grammatical, the example is NP-E

(38) a. Hay tres estudiantes de syntaxis de México, y Marta conoció a dos
 there-are three students of syntax of Mexico and Marta met to two
 [] de Japón
 of Japan
 ‘There are three students of syntax from Mexico, and Marta met two from Japan’

b. Hay tres estudiantes de syntaxis de México, y Marta conoció a dos
 there-are three students of syntax of Mexico and Marta met to two
 [] ~~de Japón~~
~~of Japan~~
 ‘There are three students of syntax from Mexico, and Marta met two’

- Since the example above remains grammatical after removing the modifier, it is necessarily an instance of NP-E

6 Consequences

- Ideally, there would be independent evidence corroborating the story of two different processes
- Recall: when a demonstrative heads the DP, no modifier is needed
- Originally, this posed a problem for a unified analysis of N-drop - how would a demonstrative allow violation of the flanking material requirement?
- Proposal: “N-drop” of type Dem-XP is actually NP-E

- (39) a. *El coche para Marta y el para Lourdes
 that car for Marta and this [] for Lourdes
 b. *El coche para Marta y el ~~para~~ Lourdes
 that car for Marta and this [] for Lourdes
- (40) a. Ese coche para Marta y éste para Lourdes
 that car for Marta and this [] for Lourdes
 ‘That car for Marta and this (one) for Lourdes’
 b. Ese coche para Marta y éste ~~para~~ Lourdes
 that car for Marta and this [] for Lourdes
 ‘That car for Marta and this (one) for Lourdes’

Selected References

- CONTRERAS, HELES (1989). *On Spanish Empty N' and N*. In Carl Kirschner and Janet Decesaris (Eds.) *Studies in Romance Linguistics*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam.
- HANKAMER, JORGE AND IVAN SAG (1976). *Deep and Surface Anaphora*. *Linguistic Inquiry* 7(3):391–426.
- KESTER, ELLEN-PETRA AND PETRA SLEEMAN (2002). *N-ellipsis in Spanish*. *Linguistics in the Netherlands* 19:57–78.
- LOBECK, ANNE (1995). *Ellipsis: Functional Heads, Licensing, and Identification*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- ROOTH, MATS (1992). *A Theory of Focus Interpretation*. *Natural Language Semantics* 17:501–557.
- TICIO, M. EMMA (2005). *NP-Ellipsis in Spanish*. *Proceedings of the 7th Hispanic Linguistics Symposium* 7:128–141.
- VALLDUVÍ, ENRIC AND ELISABET ENGDAHL (1996). *The Linguistic Realization of Information Packaging*. *Linguistics* 34:459–519.
- VALLDUVÍ, ENRIC AND MARIA VILKUNA (1998). *On Rheme and Kontrast*. *Syntax and Semantics* 29:79–108.
- ZAGONA, KAREN (2002). *The Syntax of Spanish*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.