On the table lay a book, and on the sofa did too.

Ellipsis, locative inversion and why they are bad together

The Problem

Given straightforward analyses of ellipsis and locative inversion, (1) should be grammatical, but it is bad with ellipsis.

b. *Out of the barracks will march fifty soldiers, and out of the hangar will also march fifty soldiers.

Locative Inversion

Locative inversion involves focusing logical subjects Bresnan (1994).

(2) a. Fifty soldiers will march out of the barracks (in lock-step).
   Logical Subject: Subject
   Logical PP: Locative PP

Where are these elements?

Locative PPs Are in SpecTP

PPs undergo raising raising (Postal 1977:48):

(3) Out of the barracks appeared [wh.t. to march fifty soldiers].
   Inversion bleeds tag-questions (Bresnan 1994:97):
   1) *Out of the barracks marched the sergeant, didn’t he?

This behavior is consistent with the locative PP being in SpecTP (Bresnan 1994).

Logical Subjects Are in vP

A string containing a verb and a postposed logical subject can be coordinated with another such string. Thus the strings appear to be constituents.

(4) Out of the hangar will march fifty soldiers and run sixty nurses.

As mentioned above, logical subjects occur to the left of manner adverbials and the right of the main verb.

(5) a. *Out of the house ran quickly Mary.
b. Out of the house ran Mary quickly.

What’s Wrong?

The above diagnostics suggest that the basic structures in (2) are correct.

(6) Out of the barracks appeared [wh.t. to march fifty soldiers].
   Inversion bleeds tag-questions (Bresnan 1994:97):
   1) *Out of the barracks marched the sergeant, didn’t he?

The problem is not likely to be due to the locative PP.

(7) No clear reason why ellipsis would care about the category of the element in SpecTP
   Elements extracted from ellipsis sites need not match (Merchant 2001, Schuyler 2001).

So why does ellipsis fail in (7)?

(8) The [E] feature on T* should license ellipsis if the identity requirement is met.
   If we aren’t running afoul of the identity requirement, something else must be wrong.
   Ellipsis and locative inversion must be incompatible in some other way.

Hypothesis: Focus, Accent, and Deletion

Ellipsis and locative inversion do somewhat opposite things.

- Locative inversion focuses new information.
- Ellipsis deletes redundant material.
- I’d like to suggest that their discourse properties make them mutually incompatible.

Intuition: If you focus something, it isn’t redundant.

Elding the vP containing the logical subject deletes a focused element.

It has been claimed elsewhere that elision of focused does not occur.

- Merchant (2001:6, fn. 9) notes that a deleted constituent will not contain any focused material.
- Takahashi and Fox (2001) suggest that there is a constraint against deleting focused material.

This restriction on ellipsis explains the badness of (1).

Remaining Issues

Deletion containing more than just the inverted vP is good.

(10) a. Sluicing:
   On one of the sofas lay a book, but I don’t remember on which sofa.
b. Embedded Clauses:
   Mary said that on one of the sofas lay a book about syntax, and Bill did too.

One explanation: The deleted constituent doesn’t contain locative inversion at all.

- Although pragmatically different, sentences with inversion are truth-conditionally equivalent to those without (all other things equal) (see Bresnan 1994).
- If we assume a semantic identity requirement for ellipsis (Merchant 2001), then inverted and non-inverted sentences would be equivalent for the sake of ellipsis licensing.
- Thus, the elided elements in (10) do not have to have inversion, and therefore, they do not run against the restriction against deleting focused material.

Notes

1. Heavy subjects can appear to the right of manner adverbials (Culicover and Levine 2001).
3. This assumes that structural identity implies semantic identity.
4. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out these examples.

References