Exophoric ellipsis meets extraction: the case of modal ellipsis

Javier Fernández-Sánchez
University of Gdańsk

The phenomenon: Modal Ellipsis (ME) refers to cases where a modal V is followed by a 'gap', signalled throughout by an underscore (1). Here I focus on ME in Spanish:

(1) a. Juan quiere beber   tequila, pero sabe   que no debería __.
Juan wants to drink tequila but   knows that not should
'Juan wants to drink tequila, but he knows he shouldn't.'

 b. Por desgracia Juan no puede beber   tequila, pero tú   sí   puedes __.
by disgrace Juan not can   to drink tequila but you yes can
'Unfortunately Juan cannot drink tequila, but you can, indeed.'

The nature of the gap: Most of the literature on Spanish ME (Brucart 1987; Depiante 2000; Saab 2008) has analyzed it as a case of deep anaphora (Hankamer and Sag 1976), where the modal selects for a null pronominal element (2a). López (1994) and Fernández-Sánchez (2020) instead argue for a surface anaphora account, where the modal selects for full-fledged syntactic structure which is deleted at PF (2b); *cf.* (1a):

(2) a. …pero sabe que no debería PRON.

 b. …pero sabe que no debería ~~beber tequila~~.

Deep and Surface anaphora can be distinguished on the basis of a number of tests. I focus here on two: (i) extraction and (ii) the possibility to have pragmatic antecedents. Surprisingly, ME displays hybrid properties:

	Deep anaphora	**Surface anaphora**	**ME**
Extraction	No	Yes	Yes (3)
Pragmatic antecedents	Yes	No	Yes (4)

(3) a. Sabemos qué   libros tenemos que leer   y   **cuáles**$_i$ no deberíamos __ t_i.
know   what books have   that to read and which not should
'We know what books we have to read, and which ones we shouldn't.'

 b. Queremos ir   a muchos sitios, pero [**a la   peluquería**]$_i$ no podemos
want   to go to many   places but to the hairdresser's not can
__ t_i porque no tenemos tiempo.
    because not have   time
'We want to go to many places, but we can't go to the hairdresser's because we have no time.'

(4) a. (Context: X jumps into the icy cold sea. Y says:)
¡Yo también puedo! (I can, too!)

 b. (Context: X leaves the house to go play. Y says:)
¡Yo también quiero! (I want to, as well!)

ME is not unique in displaying these apparently contradicting properties: English VP ellipsis (cf. Merchant 2004), as well as Spanish NP ellipsis (Saab 2019). I will further show that the claims in this paper carry over to Spanish NP ellipsis.

Dilemma: Based on the data above, and on the assumption that extraction is a reliable test for full-fledge syntactic structure of the gap, we are faced with a dilemma:

(5) a. Pragmatic control isn't a good test to distinguish deep from surface anaphora.

 b. ME can have two sources; namely a deep and a surface anaphoric one.

Proposal and evidence: I argue for (5b), based on a previously unnoticed fact regarding ME: while extraction is indeed allowed in the presence of a linguistic antecedent (3), it is blocked when the antecedent is extralinguistic.

(6) (Context: I'm bored, and I want to talk to someone. I check my phone contacts, and I look at Zaira's phone number. I say to myself:)
  * A Zaira no debería.
    to Zaira not should
    Intended: 'I shouldn't call Zaira'

(7) (Context: two kids in the living room, one opens the door to the garden and goes there; the other one says:)
  * Al jardín yo también quiero!
    to the garden I also want
    Intended: 'I also want to go to the garden!'

Importantly, the ungrammaticality of these examples is not a recoverability issue: without the extracted phrases, the sequences would be grammatical, which strongly suggests that it is really extraction that renders these examples ungrammatical.

NCA ≠ ME: ME has been traditionally considered an example of Null Complement Anaphora (NCA), a case of Deep Anaphora (Hankamer and Sag 1979; Brucart 1987; Depiante 2000). Consequently, although NCA allows for pragmatic control (8), extraction is banned even in the presence of a linguistic antecedent (9):

(8) a. (Context: Juan sees that Javier is beginning to write his final project. Relieved, he says:)
     Por suerte yo ya he empezado!
     by luck I already have started
     'Fortunately I've already started.'

(9) a. *Me gustaría saber a quién te acordaste de felicitar y a
      to me would like to know to who remembered of to congratulate and to
      quién te olvidaste
      who forgot
      '*I'd like to know whom you remembered to congratulated, and whom you forgot.'

   b. *El coche lo tuviste que asegurar, pero la casa te negaste.
      the car it had to that to insure but the house refused
      '*You had to insure the car, but the house you refused.'

It follows from the data in this paper that the traditional view of ME as an case of NCA is empirically inadequate, and that ME constitutes an independent phenomenon.

Conclusions: (i) ME displays two patterns wrt extraction: in the presence of a linguistic antecedent, extraction is possible; in the presence of a situational antecedent, extraction is banned. This suggests that ME can have two sources, cf. (2). (ii) ME isn't NCA.

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