

Investigating the Effects of Voice Match and Mismatch in Recovering VP Ellipsis and Their Non-Elliptical Counterparts in a Nonnative Setting

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Kehler (2000, 2002) offered a theory predicting that a voice matched (active-active or passive-passive) structural antecedent for an elided VP in English is necessary only for resemblance relations and not for cause-effect ones. Frazier and Clifton (2006) tested this claim using an acceptability judgment task, but they were unable to find the predicted asymmetry. However, using an acceptability judgment task with a different set of sentence materials (see Table 1), Kim and Runner (2018) found some support for Kehler's predictions. Specifically, in their Experiment 1, they found that voice mismatch (active-passive or passive-active) caused a greater degradation in acceptability for VP ellipsis sentences with a resemblance relation compared to VP ellipsis sentences with a cause-effect relation. However, there was still a significant voice mismatch effect even for the cause-effect condition. The present study tests whether a similar pattern of results will obtain in an acceptability judgment task presented to advanced learners of English. This is an interesting question because previous studies have shown that L1 and L2 speakers may rely on different cues for interpreting sentences with other types of ellipsis (Boxell et al. 2017), but no previous studies have examined the effect of language background on discourse coherence and voice mismatch.

The present study reports the results from an acceptability judgment task for which 109 English Literature undergraduates at the University of Tabriz were recruited to participate. The majority of the participants had acquired English as a foreign language and were proficient at an advanced level. Students were asked to judge the acceptability of English sentences from Kim and Runner's (2018) study using a five-point scale. As in Kim and Runner (2018), three main factors were tested: Ellipsis (yes, no), Discourse Relation (resemblance, cause-effect), and Voice (match, mismatch), for a total of 8 experimental conditions. Four counterbalanced lists of these sentences were created from a total of 192 sentences (24 per condition). Every student was asked to rate 48 sentences. The responses were collected online via Google Docs, and they were analyzed using the SPSS statistical software.

According to Table 2, the analysis indicates that sentences with cause-effect relations were judged to be more acceptable than those with resemblance relations. Kim and Runner (2018) found that sentences with ellipses were judged less acceptable than sentences without ellipses in all cause-effect and resemblance relations. However, we found that sentences with ellipses and a voice match in resemblance relations were judged more acceptable by non-native speakers than sentences without ellipses.

Also, Kim and Runner (2018) found that sentences with mismatched clauses were rated lower than sentences with matching clauses. Non-native speakers, on the other hand, rated sentences

with no ellipsis and voice mismatch clauses as more acceptable than their match counterparts. In general, the results are in line with Kehler's prediction and with Kim and Runner's findings.

Conditions Resemblance Cause-effect

No Ellipsis, Match	Almost everyone accused Bill of stealing the money, but the secretary didn't accuse him.	Abby insisted that Bill get rid of the video tape, so he destroyed it.
No Ellipsis, Mismatch	Everyone accused Bill of stealing the money, but the real culprit wasn't accused by anyone.	Abby insisted that Bill's video tape be destroyed, so he got rid of it.
Ellipsis, Match	Almost everyone accused Bill of stealing the money, but the secretary didn't	Abby insisted that Bill get rid of the video tape, so he did.
Ellipsis, Mismatch	Everyone accused Bill of stealing the money, but the real culprit wasn't.	Abby insisted that Bill's video tape be destroyed, so he did.

Table 1

	Mean Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Deviation Statistic
Resemblance no ellipsis match	3.58	.048	1.220
Resemblance no ellipsis mismatch	3.70	.049	1.232
Resemblance ellipsis match	3.65	.051	1.282
Resemblance ellipsis mismatch	2.12	.050	1.317
Cause-effect no ellipsis match	3.96	.045	1.177
Cause-effect no ellipsis mismatch	3.87	.046	1.181
Cause-effect ellipsis match	3.78	.051	1.286
Cause-effect ellipsis mismatch	2.50	.054	1.382

Table 2

References:

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