

Do elided constituents really exist in unembedded quantifiers?

Yukio Furukawa

An unembedded quantifier, which is isolated in a conversation initial position (see the utterance in (1)), raises a philosophically intriguing question: is it meaningful in isolation?

- (1) *situation: There are some empty seats around a table, and then, pointing at one, I say,*
An editor of Natural Language Semantics (Stainton 1998)

Stainton (1998) argues that it is meaningful. He claims that (1) can, by itself, express a propositional meaning such as ‘the unoccupied seat is reserved for an editor of Natural Language Semantic’: although (1) is not uttered as a sentence, it can be falsified e.g. if the seat is reserved for Emmon Bach. On the other hand, Stanley (2000) argues that the propositional meaning of (1) is not due to the meaningfulness of the unembedded quantifier, but due to syntactic ellipsis. He claims that a quantifier phrase has no meaning in isolation: although, apparently, it is not uttered as a sentence, its missing piece (either an open proposition or a predicate) covertly exists. It seems that (1) does not provide any decisive evidence for the debate between the direct interpretation analysis (the former) and the syntactic ellipsis analysis (the latter).

I suggest that unembedded ‘negative’ quantifiers provide decisive evidence for the debate. Especially, I focus my attention on two quantificational expressions that exhibit so-called ‘negative concord’, i.e. *KANENAS* in Greek and *ni-kogo* in Russian. Previous research about negative concord observes (i) that they require clause-mate sentential negations (see (2)), but nevertheless, (ii) that they can be isolated as fragmental answers.

- (2) a. *KANENAS* *(dhen) ipe *TIPOTA*. Greek
nobody NEG said.3SG nothing
‘Nobody said anything.’ (Giannakidou 2000)
b. Ja *(ne) videl *ni-kogo*. Russian
I NEG saw no.one
‘I saw nobody.’ (Watanabe 2004)

In fact, however, their isolations are not restricted to fragmental answers; they can be isolated in conversation initial positions as shown in (3) and (4), and convey propositional meanings that may be equivalent to the propositional meanings of their fully sentential counterparts. (NB. Just for the purpose of comparison, I add the cases of English *nobody* and the cases of Japanese *dare-mo* to the following examples.)

- (3) *situation: Mary is a TA. Today, since she had to teach, she went to her classroom. Since it was her first tutorial, she expected every student’s participation. When she opened the door, however, she found that no one/student was there. Then, she said,*
- | | | | | |
|----------|----|-------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| Greek | a. | <i>KANENAS!</i> | a’. | Dhen iparxei <i>KANENAS!</i> |
| Russian | b. | # <i>Ni-kogo!</i> | b’. | Ni-kogo net! |
| English | c. | <i>Nobody!</i> | c’. | There is nobody/Nobody is here! |
| Japanese | d. | # <i>Dare-mo!</i> | d’. | (Dare-mo) i-nai! |

(4) *situation: Basically the same as (3), but, this time, her expectation was weak, since it was almost the end of the semester. She expected that not all students were present, in other words, she expected absence of some students.*

Greek	a.	KANENAS!	a'.	Dhen iparxei KANENAS!
Russian	b.	Ni-kogo!	b'.	Ni-kogo net!
English	c.	Nobody!	c'.	There is nobody/Nobody is here!
Japanese	d.	#Dare-mo!	d'.	(Dare-mo) i-nai!

KANENAS can be isolated in the conversation initial position under the context of (3). Felicity in (3a) suggests that the syntactic ellipsis analysis loses in this case. Suppose, for a moment, that (3a) involved syntactic ellipsis. If isolations in (3) involve syntactic ellipses and have antecedents to recover their missing pieces, due to absence of previously uttered texts, their antecedents cannot be parts of the previous texts but rather 'contextual' (or at least unarticulated) antecedents. Since its previous context (in the expectation world of the speaker) is roughly 'for every student, s/he is present' and every proposition entailed by it is nonnegative, no negative proposition/predicate that could be an antecedent for its missing piece would be available. However, if such a nonnegative proposition/predicate were recovered as its missing piece, the clause-mate condition (2a) would be violated. Therefore, it is impossible to recover its missing piece, and it is concluded that its propositional meaning is not due to syntactic ellipsis, but due to its own meaningfulness of (3a).

Contrary to *KANENAS*, isolation of *ni-kogo* exhibits varieties of felicity, as shown in (3b) and (4b). These differences about (in)felicity suggest that the syntactic ellipsis analysis wins in the case of unembedded *ni-kogo*. As indicated by the fully sentential counterparts (3b') and (4b'), the propositional content intended by isolated *ni-kogo* is invariable in both (3b) and (4b). Moreover, this propositional content itself is felicitous under both contexts, as shown by felicitous (3b') and (4b'). If isolated *ni-kogo* could, by itself, convey this propositional meaning, both (3b) and (4b) should be felicitous since both (3b') and (4b') are felicitous under both contexts. Nevertheless, only (4b) is felicitous which is not predicted by the direct interpretation analysis.

(5) *situation: the same as (3):*

Russian	a.	Ni-kogo?	a'.	Ni-kogo net?
English	b.	Nobody?	b'.	Is there nobody/is nobody here?
Japanese	c.	#/?Dare-mo?	c'.	(Dare-mo) i-nai no?

(6) *situation: the same as (4):*

Russian	a.	Ni-kogo?	a'.	Ni-kogo net?
English	b.	Nobody?	b'.	Is there nobody/is nobody here?
Japanese	c.	Dare-mo?	c'.	(Dare-mo) i-nai no?

Interestingly, if its isolation is a question, it becomes felicitous even under the same context as the context of (3) (see (5a)). Felicity in (5a) suggests that necessity for sentential negation in (2b) is not due to a morph-syntactic reason such as agreement. Again, since the previous context only provides nonnegative antecedent, it is impossible to recover its missing piece with sentential negation in (3b) and (5a). Nevertheless, (5a) is felicitous. I rather claim that sentential negation is semantically necessary in (2b) to convey the intended negative meaning since *ni-kogo* does not entail negativity. Infelicitous (3b) also supports this claim: if *ni-kogo* were negative, its infelicity would be hardly predicted.

I claim that *ni-kogo* is a scalar implicature item such as 'even one person' that strengthens and widens the inference 'there is at least one student that is not present'. The only difference between the context of (3) and the context of (4) is that only in the latter is this inference available to recover the

elided material of isolated *ni-kogo*. Therefore, only (4b) is felicitous. I further claim that the reason why (5a) is felicitous is due to the semantics of a yes-no question. Suppose (i) that a yes/no question denotes a set consisting of its yes-answer and its no-answer (see (7)), and (ii) that a yes/no question is definable only if at least one of its members is definable. (NB. Following Guerzoni 2004, a question denoted by e.g. (5a)/(6a) should be described in two ways depending on the scope relations between the scalar implicature item and the question operator.)

- (7) a. $\{[[ni-kogo]]([P])=1, \neg[[ni-kogo]]([P])=1\}$ (for $Q > ni-kogo$)
 b. $\{[[ni-kogo]]([P])=1, [[ni-kogo]]([\neg P])=1\}$ (for $ni-kogo > Q$) where $P = \neg \text{present}(x)$

Clearly, the no-answer of (7b), i.e. $[[ni-kogo]]([\neg P])=1$, is recoverable from the context of (3), and hence, (7b) is definable as a question. Remarkably, (5a) is a biased question that is characteristic to a question with a scalar implicature item. Guerzoni (2004) observes that negative bias in a question arises if the scalar implicature item takes a wider scope than the question operator. This nicely fits in the felicity of (5a) and its biased reading. In any case, since *ni-kogo* does not entail negativity, I claim that its isolation necessarily involves syntactic ellipsis whose elided material provides negativity. Otherwise, its isolation fails to convey the intended negative meaning.

References

- Giannakidou, A. 2000. Negative ... concord? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 18(3): 457-523.
- Guerzoni, E. 2004. *Even-NPIs in yes/no questions*. *Natural Language Semantics* 12: 319-343.
- Stainton, R. 1998. Quantifier phrases, meaningfulness 'in isolation' and ellipsis. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 21: 311-340.
- Stanley, J. 2000. Context and logical form. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 23(4): 391-433.
- Watanabe, A. 2004. The genesis of negative concord. *Linguistic Inquiries* 35(4): 559-612.