



The passive ellipsis clause penalty is not information-structural

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Preliminary conclusion (still an ongoing work!)

The Passive Ellipsis Clause Penalty (PECP) in VP ellipsis is due to the cost of constructing materials unprovided by the antecedent

The phenomenon

Sentences with a passive ellipsis clause is worse than those with an active ellipsis

(1) The judge [_{VP} read the report] first, and then the lawyer did too.

(2) [The report]₁ was first [_{VP} read t₁] by the judge, and then the confession was too.



Acceptability: (1) > (2) (Arregui et al., 2006; Poppels & Kehler, 2019; Clifton et al., 2019)

This asymmetry holds even if antecedent voice != ellipsis voice

(3) Passive antecedent - Active ellipsis

[The report]₁ was first [_{VP} read t₁] by the judge, and then the lawyer did too.



(4) Active antecedent - Passive ellipsis

The judge [_{VP} read the report] first, and then the confession was too.

Acceptability: (3) > (4) (Poppels & Kehler, 2019; Clifton et al., 2019)

Taken together: passive ellipsis ↓ acceptability -> **Passive Ellipsis Clause Penalty**

The accounts

P&K's informational-structural account:

- VP ellipsis requires the VP meaning to be topical
- but passive always makes the subject topical → conflict of topicality

Our syntax/semantic account:

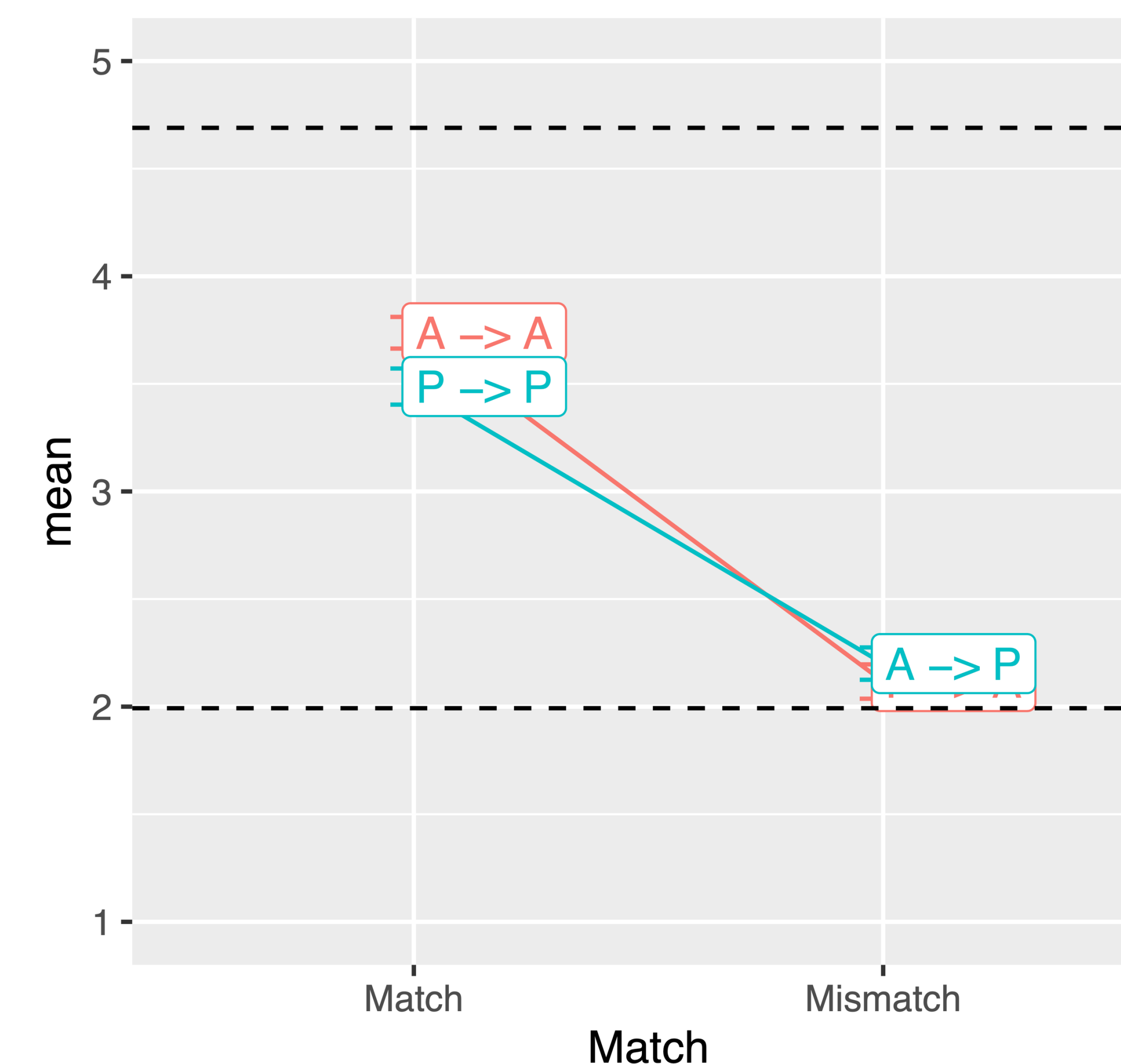
- VP Ellipsis is licensed iff the elided VP and its antecedent have equal semantic denotations.
- Displaced elements must be syntactically reconstructed back into VP for evaluating the licensing condition.
- Readers need to construct the patient from scratch for passive ellipsis → PECP

Test: What if we remove the by-phrase?

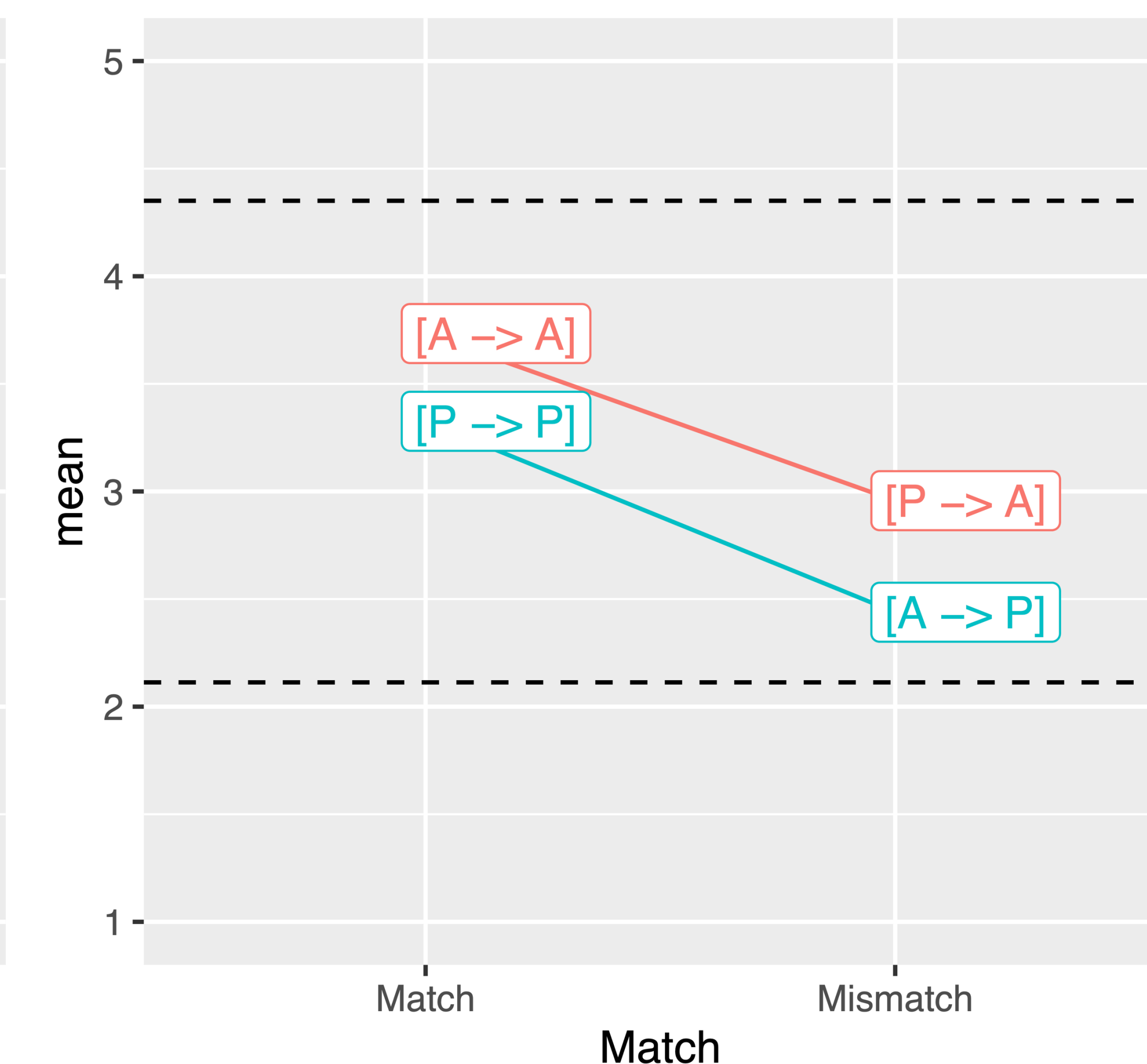
- Such a passive VP will have an existential subject.
- But an active VP doesn't contain any subject information.
- Readers need to construct the agent material for active ellipsis:

Passive antecedent - Active ellipsis ↓

The current study: without by-phrase



Poppels & Kehler (2019): with by-phrase



Experiment: testing our account

- A 5-point acceptability judgement task (N = 48 vs. N = 29 in P&K 2019)
- Design: The voice of ellipsis (active vs. passive), and whether the voice of the antecedent matches it

Stimuli: directly taken from Poppels & Kehler (2019) with by-phrase deleted + modification

- The judge first read the report, and then the lawyer did too. [A -> A]
- The report was first read, and then the confession was too. [P -> P]
- The report was first read, and then the lawyer did too. [P -> A]
- The judge first read the report, and then the confession was too. [A -> P]

Predictions

- ☐ Voice mismatch effect: Match > mismatch
- ☐ If sentences degrade when readers need to construct materials unprovided by the antecedent:
 - Passive ellipsis: bad because of the displaced patient
 - Active ellipsis: bad in [P -> A] for constructing agent

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References: [1] Arregui et al. (2006). Processing elided verb phrases with flawed antecedents: The recycling hypothesis. *JML*. [2] Clifton et al. (2019). A note on the voice mismatch asymmetry in ellipsis. *J. Psycholing. Res.* [3] Poppels, T., & Kehler, A. (2019). Reconsidering asymmetries in voice-mismatched VP-ellipsis. *Glossa*.