

Local licensers and recovering in VP ellipsis

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Abstract

The core properties of VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese may be captured assuming that the elliptical constituent is licensed under local c-command by a verbal element in a sentence functional head. However, the lack of VP ellipsis in most Romance languages and in German, despite the existence of verb movement to sentence functional projections in these languages, suggests that a parameter is involved. Empirical evidence indicates that this parametric variation should not be attributed to a specific functional head because the functional head occupied by the verbal licenser may vary across languages and language varieties. So we will claim that the existence vs. absence of VP ellipsis in the languages considered in this study is due to the features of the functional head that intervenes between the verbal licenser and the elliptical vP phase.

1. Introduction

European and Brazilian Portuguese (EP and BP) pattern after English in presenting VP ellipsis (cf. (1a-b)), in contrast with other Romance languages (cf. (2a-c)):¹

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¹ In the current paper, the term VP ellipsis applies to the standard cases, presenting an auxiliary or the copulative verb, *be*, followed by an elided constituent. However,

- (1) a. Perguntámos se eles já tinham chegado e,
 asked if they already had arrived and,
 efectivamente, já tinham __.
 indeed, already had
 ‘We asked if they had arrived already and, indeed, they already had.’
 b. John has bought a new house, but Mary hasn’t.
- (2) a. *Susana había leído *Guerra y Paz* pero María no había __.
 Susana had read *War and Peace* but Maria not had
 ‘Susana had read *War and Peace* but Maria had not.’
 (Silva 1999:265)
 b. *On a demandé si ils ont déjà mangé et ils ont __.
 one has asked if they have already eaten and they have
 ‘One has asked if they have already eaten and they have’
 (Lobeck 1999:99)
 c. *Claudine est une bonne étudiante, et Marie est aussi.
 Claudine is a good student and Marie is too
 ‘Claudine is a good student and Marie is too.’
 (Lobeck 1999:99)

Reanalysing proposals for English and Portuguese², we will claim that the existence of VP ellipsis is linked to the availability of a verbal licenser in a sentence functional projection that locally c-commands the ellipsis site. However, based on empirical evidence from EP and BP (Matos & Cyrino 2001, Cyrino & Matos 2002), we will assume, in contrast to previous analyses, that the functional heads involved may vary across languages and language varieties. In fact, EP and BP exhibit differences concerning the licensing of the elliptical constituent whenever verbal sequences formed by an auxiliary and a main verb occur. While (3a) is interpreted as VP ellipsis both in EP and BP, (3b) in BP admits the recovering of all the complements of the verb, but (3c) in EP favours a Null Object reading and does not allow for the recovery of the indirect object.

in accordance with Raposo 1986, we will extend this designation in Portuguese to cases where a main verb selecting some complement(s) has raised out of the *vP*, leaving behind its copy and its elliptical complement(s). To some extent, these cases are parallel to the instances of VP ellipsis involving *be* in English, considering that in Portuguese all types of verbs may move out the *vP*.

² *Portuguese* hereafter means both varieties, unless otherwise specified.

- (3) a. Ela está *a ler/lendo* livros às crianças, mas ele não está __.³
 she is to read/reading books to_the children, but he not is
 ‘She is reading books to the children, but he is not.’
 (__ = [_{VP} [está] ~~lendo~~ ~~os~~ ~~livros~~]) (EP/BP)
 is reading the books
- b. Ela está lendo livros às crianças, mas ele não está lendo __.
 she is reading books to_the children, but he not is reading
 (__ = [_{VP} [~~lendo~~] ~~livros~~ ~~às~~ ~~crianças~~]) (BP)
 reading books to the children
- c. Ela está a ler livros às crianças, mas ele não está a ler __.
 she is to read books to-the children, but he not is to read
 ‘She is reading books to the children, but he is not reading.’
 (__ = [_{DP} _]) (EP)

The examples in (3a) and (3c) suggest that the licenser of the elliptical vP in EP is the verb heading finite T: in (3c) a verbal complex headed by finite T has not been formed and the VP ellipsis reading is lost. In contrast, this reading is available in BP (cf. (3b)) because the main verb in Asp(ect) is able to license the elliptical constituent.

Accepting that the licensing condition in VP ellipsis consists in the identification of the ellipsis site by a verbal element in a functional category that locally c-commands it, a question remains: how does one explain the lack of VP ellipsis in languages where T or C have uninterpretable V-features forcing the verb to move to these positions before Spell-Out? Extending our hypothesis to other Romance languages and to German, we will argue that the absence of VP ellipsis in these languages is due to the features of the functional head that intervenes between the verbal licenser and the elliptical vP phase.

Although consistent with our previous work (Matos & Cyrino 2001, Cyrino & Matos 2002), the current paper differs from it in several respects. In particular, it extends the analysis of the VP ellipsis licensing condition, not restricting our attention to the occurrence of this construction in Portuguese. Additionally, it focuses on the relevance of parallelism upon the availability of VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese, a topic we had no chance to previously examine. Finally, it proposes an alternative formulation of the VP ellipsis parameter that we assume to be more adequate than the one we have presented in Matos & Cyrino (2001).

This paper is organised as follows: in section 2, we present a comparative analysis of VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese: in 2.1, we discuss the nature of the elliptical constituent in this construction; in 2.2, we analyse the local

³ The auxiliary *estar* ‘be’ selects a prepositional infinitival complement or a gerundive in EP; in BP only the latter option is possible. In the remainder of the paper, we analyse the EP dialectal variant where *estar* selects a prepositional infinitival complement.

identifier of the elliptical *vP* and the parallelism condition over their occurrence; in 2.3, we review the existing Minimalist proposals for the licensing condition on VP ellipsis and sketch an alternative account. Section 3 deals with micro-parametric variation in VP ellipsis in EP and BP. In section 4, we analyse the parametric properties that explain the absence of VP ellipsis in French, Italian, Spanish, and German.

2. A comparative analysis of VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese

2.1. VP ellipsis and the nature of the elliptical constituent

As exemplified in (4), English and Portuguese exhibit VP ellipsis, a construction excluded from closely related languages like German or Spanish – cf. (5) and (6).

- (4) a. John will drive home and Mary will __ too.
 b. O João tinha lido um livro mas a Ana não tinha __.
 the João had read a book but the Ana not had
 ‘João had read a book but Ana had not.’
- (5). *Hans wird heimfahren und Maria wird __ auch.
 ‘Hans will drive home and Maria will too.’
 (Lobeck 1995)
- (6). *Susana había leído *Guerra y Paz* pero María no había __.
 Susana had read *War and Peace* but María not had
 ‘Susana had read *War and Peace* but María had not.’
 (López 1999)

In these languages an alternative strategy of predicate ellipsis – sometimes identified with VP ellipsis (cf. Brucart 1999, López 1999) – is used, which is referred to as *Stripping* in Chao (1987), or *Pseudo-Stripping* in Depiante (2000)⁴.

- (7) Hans wird heimfahren und Maria __ auch.
 ‘Hans will drive home and Maria, too.’
- (8) Susana había leído *Guerra y Paz* pero María no __.
 Susana had read *War and Peace* but María not
 ‘Susana had read *War and Peace* but not María.’

⁴ *Stripping* is the term proposed in Hankamer and Sag (1976). In view of the different behaviour of English and Spanish, Depiante (2000) dubs its correlate in Spanish *Pseudo-Stripping*. In Portuguese these differences also occur (Matos 1992, 2003).

Pseudo-Stripping, which is also available in Portuguese,⁵ differs from VP ellipsis in that there is no verbal element adjacent to the elided elements and the spelled out constituent is not restricted to the subject (see (9)). This suggests that the ellipsis affects the whole sentence, with the exception of an argument (cf. *para ti* ‘to you’ in (9)) and an adverbial that express the similarity or dissimilarity of the content of the elliptical sentence with respect to its antecedent (in (9), *também* ‘too’).

- (9) O João é simpático para mim e penso que para ti também ____.
 the João is nice to me and think that to you too
 ‘João is nice to me and I think that he is also nice to you.’

Pseudo-Stripping and VP ellipsis also differ in their distribution. The former is excluded from island domains (cf. (10)) and does not occur as a backward ellipsis (cf. (11)).

- (10) *Ela tinha lido todos os livros que tu também ____.
 she had read all the books that you too
- (11) *Penso que para ti também ____, ele é simpático para mim.
 (I) think that to you too, he is nice to me

In contrast, in VP ellipsis, the elliptical constituent may be separated from its antecedent by an island (cf. (12) and (13)) and occur as a backward ellipsis (cf. (13)).⁶

- (12) Ela tinha lido todos os livros que tu também tinhas ____.
 she had read all the books that you too had
 ‘She had read all the books that you had, too.’
- (13) Se tu estivesses ____, ele também estaria {a descansar/descansando}.
 if you were, he also would be to rest/resting
 ‘If you were, he would also be resting.’

⁵ For a characterisation of this construction in Portuguese, see Matos (1992, 2003).

⁶ As it is well known, VP ellipsis obeys the *Backward Anaphora Constraint* (Langacker 1969), which states that an anaphora (or an elliptical constituent) may not both *precede* and *command* the expression that establishes its content. *Command* is defined as in (i). The examples in (ii) and (iii), from Jackendoff (1972: 268), illustrate the Backward Anaphora Constraint for VP ellipsis.

(i) Command: a node A commands a node B if neither A or B dominates each other, and the sentence node that most immediately dominates A, also dominates B.

(ii) If he hasn’t __ yet, John should try to climb the Eiffel Tower.

(iii) *Charlie will __, if his mother-in-law doesn’t leave town.

These data have been interpreted as evidence for the relative autonomy of the elliptical constituent in VP ellipsis with respect to its antecedent. Its distribution has been correlated to the one of the null pronominals⁷, and the elliptical VP has been characterised as a verbal proform with no internal structure.⁸

However, empirical evidence, both from English and Portuguese, shows that the latter claim cannot be maintained, if we adopt the core assumption that the sentences in (14) and (15) are representative of VP ellipsis.

- (14) a. John is a friend of mine, but Tom is not ____.
 b. This book was read by every student in this class, and that one was ____, too.
- (15) Os livros ainda não tinham chegado, mas os jornais já
 the books yet not had arrived, but the newspapers already
 tinham ____
 had
 ‘The books had not yet arrived, but the newspapers already had.’

In (14a) the copulative verb has moved out of the VP, in (14b) the internal argument of the passive past participle has raised from the VP into the sentence subject position and the same happens to the internal argument of the unaccusative verb *chegar* (‘arrive’) in (15). In all these cases the elliptical constituent exhibits the copies of the moved constituents.

Thus, we conclude that in VP ellipsis the elliptical constituent, despite its autonomy, is not a proform and exhibits internal structure.

2.2. *The local identifier of VP ellipsis and the parallelism requirement*

One of the most significant differences between English and Portuguese is what may count as the local identifier of the ellipsis. In English, auxiliary verbs, the copula *be*, and the infinitival marker *to* are the only elements admitted, as shown by the contrast between the examples in (16) and (17), from Sag (1980) and Bresnan (1973), respectively:

- (16) a. John loves Mary, and Peter does ____, too. (____ = ~~love~~)
 b. Harry seems upset, but Bill doesn’t seem to be ____. (____ = [~~be~~] ~~upset~~)
 c. Betsy wanted to go home, but Peter didn’t want to ____. (____ = ~~go home~~)

⁷ See the ECP accounts of VP ellipsis in English, e.g. Zagana (1988), Chao (1987).

⁸ See, for instance, Chao (1987), Lobeck (1995, 1999), Doron (1999), López (1999).

- (25) O Luís foi à biblioteca às nove horas e o
 the Luís went to the library at nine o'clock and the
 Pedro também foi __.
 Pedro too went
 'Luís went to the library at nine o'clock and Peter did, too'.
 (__ = ~~{foi} à biblioteca às nove horas~~) (EP/BP)
 went to the library at nine o'clock
- (26) *O Luís chegou à biblioteca às nove horas e o
 the Luís arrived at the library at the nine o'clock and the
 Pedro também foi __.
 Pedro too went
 (__ = ~~{foi} à biblioteca às nove horas~~) (EP/BP)
 went to the library at the nine o'clock

This parallelism is one of the properties that distinguishes VP ellipsis with main verbs in Portuguese from *Null Object* (cf. (27))⁹ and *Null Complement Anaphora* (cf. (28))¹⁰, since the latter constructions do not require, though they admit, the presence of the same verb in the antecedent and in the null complement sentence.

- (27) Ela tirou o anel do dedo e guardou __
 she took off the ring from the finger and put
 no cofre.
 in the safe
 'She took off the ring from her finger and put it in the safe.'
- (28) Ela já escreveu a sua dissertação, mas ele ainda não
 She already wrote the her dissertation, but he yet not
 começou __.
 began
 'She already wrote her dissertation, but he has not yet begun.'
 (__ = ~~writing his dissertation~~) (EP/BP)

VP ellipsis in English also presents a parallelism condition when *be* or *have*, in their auxiliary or main verb forms, are the local identifier of the

⁹ *Null Object* in Portuguese has been analysed, a.o., by Raposo (1986), Kato (1993), Cyrino (1997), Kato & Raposo (2001), Costa & Duarte (2003). For the distinction between *Null Objects* and *VP Ellipsis*, see Cyrino & Matos (2002).

¹⁰ *Null Complement Anaphora* is lexically restricted to some verbs of complementation, and some aspectual or modal verbs (Hankamer and Sag 1976, Brucart 1999, Depiante 2000, Cyrino 2004, Matos 2003, Cyrino & Matos (in press)).

ellipsis, although some authors assume that with *have* this condition is only a tendency¹¹ (Quirk et al. 1972, Warner 1985, Lasnik 1999 and Roberts 1998).

- (29) a. *John is happy, and Mary soon will __. (~~__=be happy~~)
 b. John is happy, and Mary soon will be __. (~~__=[be] happy~~)
- (30) *John has loved but hasn't himself been __. (~~__=[been] loved~~)

Within the Minimalist framework, Lasnik (1994, 1999) and Roberts (1998) agree that the requirement for parallelism is an instance of the condition on identity for the recovery of the ellipsis. Lasnik claims that languages may differ with respect to the component of the grammar where verbal morphology is generated, Lexicon or Syntax. English is a hybrid language: while *be* and *have* are already inflected in the Lexicon, the remaining verbs are bare, being associated with the inflectional affixes heading the sentence functional projections during the syntactic derivation. In contrast with Chomsky (1995), Lasnik considers that Finite Inflection in English has strong features which trigger the overt raising of the verb in Syntax. He argues that in VP ellipsis, the differences in the verbal morphology of the verbs selected by the modals or *do* and their antecedents may be overlooked, because the verb to be elided and its antecedent are both bare forms (31). In contrast, these inflectional differences are not allowed with *have* and *be* (32) since they are merged fully inflected and, for ellipsis to occur, the verbal forms inside the VP should be identical.

- (31) a. John slept and Mary will __ too.
 b. John Past-sleep [_{VP} sleep] and Mary will [_{VP} sleep] too.
- (32) a. *John *was* here and Mary will __ too. (~~__ = be here~~)
 b. ?* John *hasn't* a driver's license, but Mary should __.
 (~~__ = have a driver's licence~~)

Roberts (1998) also assumes that the identity condition precludes VP ellipsis whenever the elliptical verb and its antecedent do not have the same formal features — this is what happens when only one of them has raised to check its formal features.

Considering that the contrast in (33) and (34) obtains in Brazilian Portuguese, a similar analysis has been proposed by Zocca (2003) for this variety of Portuguese (notice that in EP the examples in (33) and (34) are equally unacceptable).

¹¹ In British English the main verb *have* may also raise out of the VP. In this case, it requires parallelism with the verb occurring in the antecedent of VP ellipsis.

- (33) A Maria estudou muito, mas o João não vai __.
 the Maria studied very hard, but the João not goes
 ‘Maria studied very hard, but João will not.’
 (__ = ~~estudar~~) (BP)
 study
- (34) a. *O João era famoso e o filho dele também vai __.
 the João was famous and the son of him also goes
 ‘João was famous and his son will, too.’
 (__ = ~~ser famoso~~)
 be famous
- b. *O João estudou e a Maria também estava __.
 the João studied and the Maria also was
 ‘João studied and Mary was, too.’
 (__ = ~~estudando~~)
 studying

According to Zocca these contrasts are a consequence of the morphological structure of the verbal forms involved. She assumes that all verbs in Brazilian Portuguese, with the exception of *ser* (‘be’) and *estar* (‘be’), are formed by a stem plus affixes of tense and person, as in (35a). In contrast, *ser* and *estar* are stored in the Lexicon as atomic items with no internal structure, cf. (35b).

- (35) a. *estudou* => (*estud* + affixes)
 studied stud
- b. *era* => (*era*)
 was was

She claims that verb affixes present uninterpretable- ϕ and T-features that must be eliminated before Spell-Out for convergence at LF. Hence, she concludes that the availability of VP ellipsis without parallelism is only apparent, because the verb forms at LF are identical:

- (36) A Maria estudou (*estud*+*af_t* + *af_{\phi}*) muito, mas o João não
 the Maria studied (*stud*+ *af_t* + *af_{\phi}*) very hard, but the João not
 vai (~~*estud* + *af_t* + *af_{\phi}*~~)
 goes (*stud* + ~~*af_t* + *af_{\phi}*~~)
 ‘Mary has studied very hard, but John will not.’

She, thus, admits that the contrast in grammaticality between (34) and (37) follows from the identity condition on ellipsis: being unanalysed, the different occurrences of *ser/estar* in (34) count as different items and ellipsis may not apply.

- (37) O João era famoso e o filho dele também vai ser __.
 The João was famous and the son of him also goes to be
 ‘João was famous and his son will be, too.’
 (__ = ~~ser famoso~~)
 be famous

However, these analyses, which base the observance of verbal parallelism in VP ellipsis on the elimination of formal features, do not seem to adequately deal with this construction in Portuguese.

First of all, in Portuguese, the parallelism requirement for the licensing verb and the verb in the antecedent predicate is not restricted to *ser* and *estar*; instead it is the general pattern, as illustrated in (38) – see also (23)-(26).

- (38) a. *O João trabalha e a Ana também há-de __.
 the João works and the Ana also has to
 (__ = [há-de] ~~trabalhar~~)
 has to work
- b. *Ele não estudou muito mas tinha __.
 he not studied very hard but had
 (__ = [tinha] ~~de estudar muito~~)
 had to study very-hard
- c. *Ele não lera ainda esse livro mas ela já tinha __.
 he not read-Pluperfect yet that book but she already had
 (__ = [tinha] ~~lido esse livro~~)
 had read that book
- d. *Ele trabalhava até tarde e nós também ficávamos __.
 he worked until late and we also stayed
 (__ = [ficávamos] ~~a trabalhar até tarde~~)
 stayed working until late)

Besides, these analyses predict VP ellipsis to be impossible whenever two different forms of *estar* or *ser*, occur as single finite verbs in the elliptical and antecedent sentences, as in (39), since they would raise out of the VP, leaving copies that would be interpreted as two different atoms at LF.

- (39) a. Ele é famoso mas seu pai nunca foi __.
 ‘He is famous, but his father never was.’
 (__ [foi] ~~famoso~~)
 was famous
- b. Antigamente, as crianças eram punidas, mas agora não são __.
 in old days, the children were punished, but now they are not.
 ‘In the old days, children were punished, but now they are not.’
 (__ = [são] ~~punidas...~~)
 are punished

Moreover, examples without parallelism involving the (semi-)auxiliary verb ‘ir’ are unacceptable in European Portuguese:

- (40) *A Maria estudou muito, mas o João não vai __. (EP)
 the Maria studied very hard, but the João not goes
 ‘Maria studied very hard, but João will not.’

To account for the exclusion of this sentence in EP (cf. (40)) and its acceptability in BP (cf. (33)), a different approach can be taken: to admit that in BP it instantiates a different construction, *Null Complement Anaphora*. This would explain the absence of the parallelism requirement as well as the variability of acceptability across language varieties and among speakers of the same variety.¹²

Finally, considering Portuguese, it is doubtful that only formal features are responsible for the parallelism constraint on ellipsis. In this language, VP ellipsis with main verbs is possible, but it is not well formed when the verb stems in the elliptical and the antecedent sentence differ, even when these verbs exhibit the same argument and categorial structures and present the same inflectional morphology (cf. (41)):

- (41) *O governo contribuiu com um montante para as obras
 the government contributed with an amount to the repairs
 da igreja e os fiéis também avançaram __.
 of the church and the faithful also advanced
 (__=[avançaram] com um montante para as obras da igreja) (EP/BP)
 advanced with an amount to the repairs of the church

This suggests that the parallelism requirement crucially focus on the lexical identity of the verbs which raise out of the VP. Accepting that ellipsis operates under identity, this parallelism is expected, since the copy of the verbs belongs to the predicate to be elided. Thus, we may hypothesise that, in English, the auxiliary verbs that do not require parallelism are not originally generated inside the predicate verbal phrase. In fact, classical analyses assume that *do* and some modal auxiliaries are directly merged in T.

In sum, the parallelism condition on the raised verb should be understood as a requirement for the identity of ellipsis: the verbs raised out of the predicate leave their copies which are interpreted as an element of the predicate.

¹² Cyrino & Matos (in press) develop a comparative study of *Null Complement Anaphora (NCA)* in Portuguese, English and Spanish. They show that NCA in Portuguese, although sharing with English and Spanish most of the defining properties of this construction, presents a Surface Anaphora behaviour.

2.3. *Licensing and Identification of the elliptical vP*

Chomsky (1995) and Lasnik (1999), a.o., consider that the ellipsis must be analysed as a Deletion process operating at PF. A parallelism requirement applying at LF would ensure that the phrase to be deleted receives an interpretation similar to its antecedent. At the level of PF, the constituents to be deleted present a low-flat intonation (Chomsky 1995: 125-126) and are deaccented (Tancredi 1992).

Despite the relevance of parallelism to establish which linguistic expression may be elided, this requirement is not a sufficient condition as shown, for English, in (42):

- (42) a. John is *reading that book* and Mary is __, too.
 b. * John starts *reading that book* and Mary starts __, too

Since in these examples the italicised expressions act as antecedents of the elliptical constituents, ellipsis should be unrestrictedly permitted. However, only (42a) is well formed. (42b) is unacceptable because the verb, being a main verb, has not raised to a sentence functional projection. These contrasts show that VP ellipsis obeys a licensing condition (see also Merchant 2001), whatever analysis we adopt for ellipsis, Deletion at PF or Reconstruction at LF. We can view this condition as a structural clue for the identification of the constituent to be deleted or recovered. Within the Minimalist Program, some proposals on VP ellipsis licensing have been put forward both for English and Portuguese (Lobeck 1999, López 1999, Martins 1994, Matos & Cyrino 2001, Cyrino & Matos 2002).

2.3.1. *Licensing by Sigma*

According to Martins (1994) and López (1999), the elliptical constituent in VP ellipsis, characterised as a base-generated null category, is licensed by feature checking against Σ , the functional category proposed in Laka (1990) to account for sentence polarity.¹³

Martins (1994: 191) considers that this licensing is obtained in a configuration akin to Spec-Head Agreement, by moving the Null VP and adjoining it either to [Spec, Σ P] or to Σ P (see (43)). The motivation for this movement is the truth-value of VP, which requires checking in the domain of strong Sigma. Martins (1994) claims that the parametrical variation across languages relies on the strength of the V-features of Σ : in Portuguese, Σ has strong V-features, but in languages like Spanish it does not.

¹³ Martins (1994) and López (1999) differ in the configuration adopted. Martins considers that this projection dominates IP while López assumes the reverse.

(43) [Σ P [VP -] .. Σ ... [Σ P ...[VP -]]]

In contrast, López (1999) assumes that VP ellipsis exhibits a null category with no internal structure, a *pro-V* head, which overtly raises to Σ to check its strong Σ -features. In English, this process is mediated by Aux (cf. (44)):

(44) [Σ P not [Σ [Σ [Σ Aux VP]]]]. (López 1999)

He argues that the parametrical differences among languages are due to the presence or absence of Σ -features in the verbal elements: while auxiliary verbs in English and main and auxiliary verbs in Portuguese present Σ -features, in Spanish they do not.

Both analyses above present a major problem: there is no evidence against the correlation between Σ P and the licensing of the elliptical constituent in VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese.¹⁴

In fact, the relevance of Σ P in the licensing of VP ellipsis in Portuguese is not consistently assumed in Martins (1994). She admits that only in affirmative root sentences does the verb raise to Σ before Spell-Out. In negative and in embedded (affirmative or negative) sentences, the verb remains in a lower functional projection.

Moreover, considering English, López (1999) remarks that the polarity items cannot license the elliptical verb phrase in the absence of a verbal licensing head, as shown by the contrasts in (45). The same happens in Portuguese, as illustrated by the ban on Pseudo-Stripping in island domains (see (46a)), in opposition to VP ellipsis (see (46b)):

(45) a. *Peter likes cauliflower, but John not.
b. Peter likes cauliflower, but John does not __ (López 1999)

(46) a. *Ela só vai visitar os amigos se tu {não/sim}__.
she only goes visit the friends if you {not/yes}
b. Ela só vai visitar os amigos se tu
she only go-Indicative visit the friends if you
fores __.
go-Subjonctif
'She will only visit her friends, if you will.'

López claims that the ungrammaticality of (45a) is due to the fact that in English the polarity item is a specifier of Σ P; hence, Σ is lexically unfilled and cannot host the elliptical category, since the latter, as a clitic, requires a

¹⁴ This does not imply the exclusion of Σ as a licenser of VP ellipsis in other languages. As it will be apparent in sections 3 and 4, we admit that the VP ellipsis licensing functional head may vary across languages.

phonetically realised host. However, this explanation cannot be extended to EP, since in this language the sentence negative marker is a head, which merges with the tensed verb, as shown by the examples in (47a) and (47b), the latter a T-to-C case.

- (47) a. Essas crianças não bebem usualmente leite (EP)
 these children not drink usually milk
 ‘These children do not usually drink milk.’
- b. [_{CP} Que [_C não têm] [_{TP} essas crianças [_T ~~têm~~] bebido]]? (EP)
 what not have these children [~~have~~] drunk
 ‘What have these children not drunk?’

Additionally, there is evidence that the elliptical vP may present internal structure; consequently, that it should not move like a head in overt syntax.

In sum, the approaches to the licensing of Elliptical vP based on the checking of Σ -features do not seem empirically adequate for English nor Portuguese.

2.3.2. Licensing by Strong Tense

Focussing on English and assuming that the elliptical constituent in VP Ellipsis is a nonarbitrary non-DP *pro*, Lobeck (1999) subsumes the licensing of this element under the General Condition on the licensing and identification of *pro* (Lobeck 1999: 117):

- (48) Empty pronominals must check strong Spec-Head agreement features.

Since VP ellipsis is introduced by finite auxiliaries and by the infinitival tense marker ‘to’, Lobeck assumes that T is the licensing functional head of the elliptical constituent, which she argues to be “a strong agreement feature” in English” (Lobeck 1999). Assuming the *Bare Phrase Structure* hypothesis, she claims that the *Null VP* is a category with no internal structure, which ambiguously acts as a minimal and maximal projection. So, according to the Linear Correspondence Axiom, it is not asymmetrically c-commanded by T^o. For the derivation to converge, it must overtly raise to [Spec, TP], to be identified by Tense lexically filled through Spec-Head-Agreement (cf. (49)).

- (49) [_{TP} [_{VP} pro]_j [_T T [_{VP} t]_j]

In this view, the parameter differentiating languages with and without VP ellipsis relies on the point of the derivation where the auxiliary verbs are merged: in languages with VP ellipsis, the auxiliaries are directly merged with Tense; in languages lacking VP ellipsis, the auxiliaries are originally generated within VP. Hence, only in the former case is VP-*pro* devoid of internal structure, and qualifies for the licensing strategy: being a head

selected by T, the null VP must move to [Spec, TP] in order to prevent a violation of the Linear Correspondence Axiom.

Lobeck's (1999) analysis is falsified by Portuguese, since in this language VP ellipsis is possible both with auxiliary and main verbs. Moreover, in Portuguese, as in other Romance languages (cf. Kayne 1975, Emonds 1978), auxiliaries and main verbs behave alike with respect to sentence Negation or Verb Raising. This fact allows us to admit that all these verbal elements are originally merged inside the VP, although they may raise to the required sentence functional projections. The parallelism requirement for the local identifier of the elliptical *v*P constitutes an argument in favour of this claim (see section 2.2).

Besides, the characterisation of the ellided *v*P as a constituent with no internal structure is empirically inadequate, both in English and Portuguese, as we have seen in section 2.2. However, if we consider that in VP ellipsis the gap has internal structure, Lobeck's (1999) licensing analysis cannot be maintained: being maximal, the VP does not violate the LCA, and needs not to move to [Spec, TP] in overt syntax.

2.3.3. Licensing by a local verbal functional head

Following proposals by Matos (1992), Cyrino (1997), Matos & Cyrino (2001) and Cyrino & Matos (2002), we will assume that the licensing of VP ellipsis is achieved in the configuration presented in (50):

- (50) In VP ellipsis the elliptical verbal predicate is licensed under local c-command by the lexically filled functional head with V-features that merges with it.

In Matos & Cyrino (2001), this functional head has been identified with Tense. However, as we will see in the next sections, some parametrical variation concerning the choice of the licensing head is allowed.

The condition in (50) assumes that the crucial licensing factor is the relation of local c-command. Therefore, we admit that, in VP ellipsis, the verb moves, though for reasons that are independent from the licensing of the elliptical category.

Local c-command by a lexically filled V-functional head is required for the licensing of the elliptical category as a complete verbal projection, i.e., a *v*P phase. This licensing occurs when the verbal element instancing the functional head arises from Merge or Internal Merge. In the first case, attested by the modal verbs and the *do* support in English, the elliptical projection is licensed as a *v*P phase because it is the complement of the merging functional head. In the latter case, illustrated by V-Movement, the elliptical *v*P is additionally licensed by local c-command of the raised verb, which is understood as the head of this *v*P, and, consequently – according to the Bare Phrase hypothesis, which does not radically distinguish between a maximal

projection and its head – as the element which ultimately represents the whole *v*P. Nothing prevents this licensing, since, although the raised verb belongs to the *v*P phase, the Phase Impenetrability Condition posits that the head and the periphery of the phase are accessible to outside operations (Chomsky 2000, 2001, 2004).

Taking into account the lack of VP ellipses in languages where the licensing condition seems to obtain, as is for instance the case of French, Spanish and Italian, we must admit that parametrical properties concur to allow or prevent its fulfilment across languages.

Matos & Cyrino (2001) claim that the parametric variation between these languages relies on the strength of Tense: T with strong V-features licenses VP ellipses, while T with weak-V features does not. The authors assume that in languages without VP ellipses, but presenting Verb Movement out of the VP, the verb is attracted by AgrS or CP. This formulation of the VP ellipsis parameter is not completely satisfactory, mainly because it resorts to the strong/weak feature distinction, whose motivation is theoretically internal, and is viewed as a stipulation to trigger constituent movement.

However, before we proceed to a new proposal, we will present our analysis of the microvariation in VP ellipsis in EP and BP, since it may be enlightening in establishing crucial properties of the licensing of elliptical *v*P.

3. Microvariation in EP and BP: parametrisation of licensing heads

Cyrino & Matos (2002) show that, whenever sequences of verbs occur, VP ellipsis in EP and BP presents differences concerning the licensing and identification of the elliptical constituent. VP ellipsis both in EP and BP is possible in sequences of verbs formed by auxiliary and main verb, whenever the remnant of the ellipsis is just the auxiliary, as in (51).

- (51) Ela está {a ler/lendo} livros às crianças,mas ele não está ____.
 she is to read/reading books to the children,but he not is
 ‘She is reading books to the children but he is not.’
 VP ellipsis: ____ = [_{VP} está [_{VP} lendo — livros às crianças]] (EP/BP)
 is reading books to the children

However, when the auxiliary and the main verb are both spelled out, contrasts in the interpretation of the ellipsis arise. Considering the sequences of verbs [*Progressive Aspect Auxiliary + main verb*], the following interpretations obtain: while in BP, (52) is mainly perceived as VP ellipsis, (53) in EP is preferably understood as a sentence with a null object (*he is not reading anything*) and no indirect object.¹⁵

¹⁵ Notice that if the antecedent sentence presents a definite instead of an indefinite object, the same judgements obtain in EP:

- (52) Ela está lendo livros às crianças, mas ele não está lendo ____.
 she is reading books to the children, but he not is reading
 ‘She is reading books to the children but he is not.’
 \checkmark *VP ellipsis*: ____=[_{VP} [~~lendo~~] ~~livros às crianças~~] (BP)
 reading books to-the children
- (53) Ela está a ler livros às crianças mas ele não está a ler ____.
 she is to read books to the children but he not is to read
 read
 ‘She is reading books to the children but he is not reading.’
 \checkmark *VP ellipsis*: ____=[_{VP} [~~lendo~~] ~~livros às crianças~~] (EP)
 \checkmark *Null Object*: ____=[_{DP}-]

The same contrasts occur in sequences of [*Passive Auxiliary + main verb*], as shown in Cyrino & Matos (2002). Yet, there is an exception: the sequence of the [*Perfect Tense Auxiliary + main verb*] is able to identify the whole elliptical vP both in EP and BP (see (54)). In EP, in this case, the Auxiliary and the main verb form a verbal complex (*tem lido* ‘has read’), which heads C in T-to-C configurations, producing a Subject-Verb Inversion, as illustrated in (55).¹⁶

- (54) Ela tem lido livros às crianças, mas ele também tem lido ____.
 she has read books to the children, but he too has read
 ‘She has read some books to the children but he also has.’
 \checkmark *VP ellipsis*: ____ = [_{VP} [~~lido~~] ~~livros às crianças~~] (EP/BP)
 read books to the children
- (55) Que [_C tem lido] [_{TP} ela ultimamente às crianças]? (EP)
 what has read she lately to the children
 ‘What has she read to the children lately?’

(i) Ela está a ler *Harry Potter 5* às crianças, mas ele não está a ler ____.
 she is to read *Harry Potter 5* to the children, but he not is to read
 ‘She is reading *Harry Potter 5* to the children but he is not reading.’
 \checkmark *VP ellipsis*: ____=[_{VP} [~~is~~] ~~to read Harry Potter 5 às crianças~~] (EP)
 \checkmark *Null Object*: ____=[_{DP}-]

¹⁶ In sentences where the verbal complex has not been formed, the auxiliary raises alone to C, (i):

(i) Que [_C tem] [_{TP} ela lido ultimamente às crianças]? (EP)
 what has she read lately to the children
 ‘What has she read to the children lately?’

(54) indicates that what really allows or precludes the interpretation of VP ellipsis is the functional projection where the verbal element shows up at Spell-Out, not the presence or absence of the main verb.

The contrasts in (52) and (53), involving the Progressive auxiliary, show that the functional heads licensing VP ellipsis in EP and BP may differ, in accordance with the selectional properties of the auxiliaries in each of these varieties.

Taking the presence of sentence negation as evidence for the projection of (active) Tense in EP and BP,¹⁷ we conclude that, in verbal sequences formed by the *Perfect tense auxiliary*, the *Progressive auxiliary* or the *Passive auxiliary*, active Tense is occupied by the auxiliary heading the sequence, since only the negation of the whole sequence produces fully well-formed sentences, as shown in the following examples:

- (56) Ele (não) tem (*não) visto esses filmes (EP/BP)
 he (not) has (not) seen those films
 ‘He has not seen those films.’
- (57) a. Ele (não) está a (?não) ver esses filmes (EP)
 he (not) is to (not) see those films
 ‘He is not seeing those films.’
 b. Ele (não) está (*não) vendo esses filmes (BP)
 he (not) is (not) seeing those films
 ‘He is not seeing those films.’
- (58) Esses filmes (não) foram (*não) vistos por Maria. (EP/BP)
 those movies (not) were (*not) seen by Maria

In BP, the ungrammaticality of the sentences obtained by negating the complements of those auxiliaries suggests that these complements are not TPs; they are better characterised as Aspectual (Perfect (56), Progressive (57b)) or Passive voice (58) projections. The same happens in EP, except for the case of the *Prepositional Infinitival* complement of progressive *estar* ‘be’, which marginally accepts negation (57a)¹⁸.

Considering now VP ellipsis, empirical evidence shows that while in EP the ellipsis is canonically licensed by T, in BP it may also be licensed by functional heads below TP: Asp or Passive. One additional piece of evidence

¹⁷ In languages like Portuguese, sentence negation only occurs when a preverbal negative element overtly c-commands T (Laka 1990, Zanuttini 1996, Matos 2001).

¹⁸ See Raposo (1989) for a characterisation of this verbal sequence. According to the author *estar* selects *Prepositional Infinitival construction*, headed by the preposition *a*, which in turn selects a TP complement. However, there is a competing construction in EP in which the Progressive Aspect auxiliary behaves as a restructuring verb. As claimed in Matos (1992) and Cyrino & Matos (2002) it is this construction that is usually involved in VP ellipsis.

for this claim is provided by the distribution of *também* ‘too’/‘also’ within these verbal sequences, as shown in Matos & Cyrino (2001), Cyrino & Matos (2002). In EP, when *também* c-commands the whole sequence of verbs, the VP ellipsis reading obtains, as in (59), but when this adverbial intervenes between the verbs of the sequence, the VP ellipsis reading is almost lost (Matos 1992), as illustrated in (60).

- (59) Ela tem lido livros às crianças e ele *também* tem lido ____.
 she has read books to the children and he also has read
 ‘She has read books to the children and he has, too.’
 VP ellipsis: ____ = [_{VP} [~~lido~~] os livros às crianças] (EP)
 read the books to the children

- (60) Ela tem lido livros às crianças e ele tem *também* lido ____
 she has read books to the children and he has too read
 ?? VP ellipsis: ____ = [_{VP} [~~lido~~] os livros às crianças] (EP)
 read the books to the children
 √Null Object: ____ [_{DP} -]

In contrast, in BP, the position of *também* does not seem to crucially affect the interpretation of the sentence, and the VP ellipsis reading is the preferred one.

- (61) Ela tem lido livros às crianças e ele (*também*) tem (*também*) lido ____.
 she has read books to the children and he (also) has (also) read
 ‘She has read books to the children and he has, too.’
 VP ellipsis: ____ = [_{VP} [~~lido~~] os livros às crianças] (BP)
 read the books to the children

The assumption that *também* ‘too’ is a focussing adverb, and that focussing adverbs are heads that select different projections as complements (Cinque 1999: 30-32), enables us to explain these contrasts between EP and BP (cf. (62)). Although in EP the auxiliaries and the main verb may form a verbal complex headed by the verb in finite T, the interposition of the adverb *também* ‘too’ breaks off this complex and the VP ellipsis reading is lost. In contrast, the grammaticality of the corresponding examples in BP, with the intended VP ellipsis reading, corroborates that in this variety the licensor of elliptical *vP* may be a functional heads below TP, Asp-Perf (as in (62)), Asp-Progr or Past Participle.

- (62) ele [_T tem] [_{VPaux} tem] [_{AdvP} [_{Adv} também] [_{Asp PerfP} lido [_{VP} -]]]

The different behaviour of Passive Past Participle verbal sequences in EP and BP deserves an additional comment. The examples in (63) show that,

even in the absence of any intervening adverbial, the presence of the Passive Past Participle blocks VP ellipsis in EP (cf. (63a)), but not in BP (cf. (63b)).

- (63) O carro foi dado à Maria, mas os outros prêmios
 the car was given to the Maria, but the other prizes
 não foram dados __.
 not were given
 ‘The car was given to Maria, but the other prizes were not given.’
- a. **VP ellipsis*: __ = [_{VP} [~~dados~~] [~~os outros prêmios~~] a-Maria] (EP)
 given the other prizes to Maria
- b. √ __ = [_{DP} ~~os outros prêmios~~] the other prizes
 √ *VP ellipsis*: __ = [_{VP} [~~dados~~] [~~os outros prêmios~~] a-Maria] (BP)
 given the other prizes to Maria

In EP, the verbal sequence in (63) is only related to the internal argument *os outros prêmios* ‘the other prizes’, which ends up as the subject of the sentence. We assume that in EP the Passive Participle is unable to identify the elliptical *vP*, due to its non fully verbal nature. In fact, Passive Participles have not been classically characterised as being [+V, -N], but only [+V]. The contrast between EP and BP indicates that in BP the Passive Past Participle has strengthened its verbal content.

The differences in the licensing of Elliptical *vP* in EP and BP raise the question of what has determined the change in the licensing heads in these varieties. Our hypothesis is that in BP all sentence functional projections, including the Passive Phrase (or Voice Phrase), have been reanalysed as extended V projections with full V-features. This aspect of BP correlates with another one, the loss of unrestricted Generalised V-Movement: although Verb raising to sentence functional projections is available in BP, it is kept to a minimum. In particular, T-to-C Movement seems to have been lost, as shown in examples like the following, from Kato et al. (1996: 347):

- (64) Onde eles estão os meninos? (BP)
 where they are the children?
 ‘As for the children, where are they?’

In sum, while in EP the licenser of elliptical *vP* is always Tense, in BP it is the closest lexically filled V-functional head which merges with the elliptical predicate.

4. Parameterization across some Romance and Germanic languages

The VP ellipsis licensing condition in (50)¹⁹ predicts the existence of this construction in languages with Verb Movement. Yet, although VP ellipsis is a much more generalised phenomenon²⁰ than often admitted,²¹ there are languages that do not present VP ellipsis in spite of having V-Movement. This is the case of Spanish, French, and German, as shown in the examples (2a,b) and (5), repeated in (65):

- (65) a. *Susana había leído *Guerra y Paz*, pero María no había __.
 Susana had read *War and Peace*, but María not had.
 ‘Susana had read *War and Peace* but María had not.’
 (López 1999)
- b. *On a demandé si ils ont déjà mangé et ils ont __
 we have asked If they have already eaten and they have
 ‘We have asked if they have already eaten and they have’
 (Lobeck 1999)
- c. *Hans wird heimfahren und Maria wird __ auch
 Hans will drive home and Maria will too
 (Lobeck 1995)

We assume that some parametrical property must be involved that cancels the effect of the licensing condition. In the spirit of the proposals considered in section 2, we would be led to hypothesise that the licensing of the elliptical vP across languages would be carried out by a single functional category, for instance, Tense, and we would impute the lack of VP ellipsis to one of the two following factors: (i) either in these languages the licensing functional category is not the core final landing site of the element carrying tense morphology, (ii) or, alternatively, a certain specific feature of the relevant functional category is missing in these languages, determining its incapacity to license the elliptical vP.

None of these hypotheses is truly appealing. In fact, the analysis of VP ellipsis in EP and BP has proved that the licensing heads may vary in language varieties, suggesting that the same happens across languages. Moreover, the study of Holmberg (2001) on Finnish shows that even languages where the final landing site of V is the left periphery of the sentence may exhibit both IP and VP ellipses. Additionally, current work on the relation between C and T (cf. Pesetsky & Torrego 2001, Chomsky 2001)

¹⁹ (50) states that in VP ellipsis the elliptical verbal predicate is licensed under local c-command by the lexically filled functional head with V-features that merges with it.

²⁰ Cases of VP ellipsis have been reported for different languages, such as: Japanese (Otani and Whitman 1991), Portuguese (Raposo 1986, Matos 1992, Martins 1994, Cyrino 1997, Kato 2001), Hebrew (Doron 1999), Finnish (Holmberg 2001).

²¹ It has often been claimed that VP ellipsis is a construction only available in English. Within the Minimalist Program, see for instance, Wilder (1997: 104, fn. 9).

weakens the claim that there is a clear distinction on the temporal properties of C and T. So, we would like to find another explanation for the non-existence of VP ellipsis in the languages in (64) above.

Taking into account the Principles and Parameters Theory assumption that the parametrical differences between languages are grounded on the lexicon and on the morphosyntactic features of the functional categories, we may expect that the lack of VP ellipsis across languages may be due to different factors, arising from the interplay of the variable properties of functional categories with the idiosyncratic features of the lexicon in these languages, which concur to an apparently identical output. However, considering French, Spanish, Italian and German, we would like to provide a tentative unified explanation, exploring in a different way an intuition firstly drawn in Ambar (1988). That author correlates the existence versus absence of VP ellipsis with the well known contrast in the value of the auxiliary verbs in Present Perfect Tense in Portuguese and English vs. Spanish, Italian, and French (cf. (66)). We will also include German in the latter group of languages, since it apparently exhibits the same correlation (cf. (67)).

- (66) a. John has seen his friends lately and Peter has, too.
 b. O João tem visto os seus amigos ultimamente e o Pedro também tem.
 c. *Jean a vu ses amis et Pierre a aussi.
 d. *Juan ha visto a sus amigos y Pedro ha también.
 e. *Gianni ha visto i suoi amici e Piero ha anche.
 (Ambar 1988: 663).

- (67) *Hans hat geschlafen und Peter hat __ auch. (Lobeck 1995)
 Hans has slept and Peter has __ too
 ‘Hans has slept and Peter has too’

Yet, departing from Ambar (1988), we will take the contrasts on the aspectual values of these auxiliary verbs as a clue for the features of the sentence functional projections involved, in particular those which codify Aspect.²²

The term Aspect applies to the internal temporal structure of a situation, conceiving it either as a consequence of the predication (the predicate, the arguments, and adjuncts involved), the so-called Lexical Aspect, or *Aktionsart*, or as the result of the linguistic devices that encode the speaker’s viewpoint concerning this internal temporal structure, the Grammatical Aspect. As often remarked, it is difficult to draw a border line between the two types of Aspect, since lexical and grammatical elements frequently

²² Ambar’s analysis was developed in the Government and Binding Theory framework. She claimed that the existence of VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese was due to the lexical properties of auxiliary verbs in these languages: being lexical, they could properly govern the null VP (Ambar 1988: 664).

interact, converging to build up the global aspectual meaning of the denoted situation.²³

In the framework of the Principles and Parameters Theory, especially within the Minimalist Program, it has sometimes been suggested that Grammatical Aspect corresponds to a specific category, Asp, heading a functional Projection, AspP (e.g., Belletti 1990, Dermidache and Uribe-Etxebarria 2000, Iatridou et al. 2001, Schmitt 2001 2000, Oliveira et al. 2004). Lexical Aspect is mainly captured by the light verb projection (*v*P), a hybrid category presenting both lexical (predicative) and functional properties (cf. Hale and Kayser 1993, Chomsky 1995, 2004²⁴).

(68) [CP C [TP T [AspP Asp ... [*v*P]]]]

The correlation between Tense and Grammatical Aspect has also been emphasised, not only because there are proposals to capture both categories in terms of the same primitives,²⁵ but also because the tense inflection morphology may convey aspectual information.²⁶ Additionally, the grammaticalisation processes of Aspectual verbal complexes corroborate the correlation between tense and Grammatical Aspect. Thus, in terms of the Minimalist Program, we would say that the category Asp is related both to the predicative structure of the clause, the *v*P phase, and to the Tense domain of the sentence, the C-T phase.

Taking the Perfect and Progressive auxiliary constructions as different instances of Asp, we assume that Asp may be a recursive category within a single sentence.

(69) John has [_{AspPerf} been [_{AspProg} reading these books]]

Moreover, we consider that the Aspect-Perfect and the Aspect-Progressive constructions do not exhaust the content of the category Aspect and that the Grammatical Aspect of a sentence may be computed, even when these constructions do not occur. In other words, we assume that AspP is always projected in the derivation of a sentence, despite the existence or lack of overt specific linguistic devices to encode the grammatical aspect information into the verb. The interpretation of verbal tenses in terms of their compositional aspectual properties constitutes an additional argument in favour of this claim:

²³ As often mentioned, the use of the Perfect may contribute to characterise an event as an achievement (cf. *She wrote two novels*) and the use of the Present as an activity (cf. *She writes novels*).

²⁴ In Chomsky (2001), *v* and T are both functional and substantive categories: *v* is a hybrid category, which may be included in the core functional categories (Chomsky 2001: 6), but presents argument structure (Chomsky 2001: 43, fn.8). As for T, it “should be constructed as a substantive rather than a functional category” because T is the “locus of the tense/event structure” (Chomsky 2001: 9).

²⁵ See for instance, Giorgi and Pianesi (1997), Dermidache and Uribe-Etxebarria (2000), and, for Portuguese, Peres (1996), Ambar (1996).

²⁶ This is the case of Portuguese. See, for instance, Oliveira (2003:138).

e.g., the *Present of the Indicative* in Portuguese may express *habitual* and *iterative* values and these values are computed, on a par with the perfect value, in the Present Perfect Tense (cf. Oliveira 1996, 2003, Peres 1996, Schmitt 2001), suggesting that an additional Asp head projects coexisting with Perf_Aspect.

(70) [TP [AspP [AspPerfP [AspProgrP [vP]]]]]

Studies on Aspect (Li & Shirai 2000, Iatridou et al. 2001) accept that, in languages like French, Spanish, Italian, German and Dutch, the *Perfect Tense* periphrasis has undergone a grammaticalisation process, which has converted it into an instance of Tense. In these languages, the Present Tense Perfect competes with, and tends to replace, the Simple Perfect Past form (71).²⁷

- (71) a. María ha leído el libro.
 b. Maria a lu le livre.
 c. Maria ha letto il libro.
 d. Maria hat das Buch gelesen
 Maria has the book read
 ‘Maria read the book.’

In contrast, in English and Portuguese, the Perfect verbal complex has retained its prevailing aspectual value.²⁸ In particular, Portuguese shares with English the use of the Present Perfect designated as *Universal Perfect*,²⁹ which denotes that a situation takes place from a certain point in the past up to the present, (72), (cf. Iatridou et al. 2003, Oliveira 2003), despite the differences in meaning they may assume (cf. Schmitt 2001, Oliveira 1996, 2003, Peres 1996) in these languages.

- (72) a. Ela tem estado doente desde o Natal.
 she has been sick since the Christmas
 b. She has been sick since Christmas.

²⁷ See Chevalier et al. (1964) for French; Rojo (1990), Cartagena (1999), for Spanish.

²⁸ Nevertheless, there are cases where the Perfect verbal complex in these languages compete with simple past forms of the verb. This is what happens in Portuguese with the Past Perfect (cf. *Ela tinha lido o livro*. ‘She had read the book’), which usually substitutes the Pluperfect (cf. *Ela lera o livro*. ‘She read.Pluperfect the book.’).

²⁹ Iatridou et al (2001) mentioned four major uses of the Present Perfect in English: the *Universal Perfect*, the *Experiential Perfect*, the *Result Perfect*, and the *Recent Past Perfect*. The three last uses are sometimes included in the so-called *Existential Perfect*. According to Brugger (1997), in Portuguese only the *Universal Perfect* is available.

One of the striking properties of the examples in (71), not often emphasised, is that the weakening of the aspectual content of the Present Perfect verbal complex correlates with the loss of temporal value of the tense inflection which affects the finite auxiliary. In fact, although the auxiliary verb exhibits the inflection marks of the present, the complex expression formed by the auxiliary plus the Past Participle is interpreted as a Past expression, a substitute for the simple Past.³⁰

Accepting that there is a correspondence between the tense morphological inflection of the verbs and Tense interpretation, the examples in (71) are problematic. We can overcome the problem by taking the idea of grammaticalisation seriously: in (71), the value of the present is ignored and the verbal complex formed by the Auxiliary and the Past Participle is (re)interpreted as Past Perfect at the relevant level for interpretation, as illustrated for French in (73).

(73) a lu => < - Present, + Past >

In order to account for the unexpected compatibility between the Present tense morphology in the auxiliary verb and Past reading in T, we may hypothesise that T in the examples in (71) has unspecified features for Present, hence, non-interpretable features that must be removed for convergence at the Phonological Component (cf. (74)).

(74) [_{CP} C [_{TP} T < α present > [_{AspP} Asp ... [_{VP}]]]],
Where α \square indicates an unspecified value

This will trigger the (Internal) Merge of the present tense inflected auxiliary with T, and, through Agree, the valuation of the tense feature of T as <-present >

In terms of the Minimalist Program, these facts suggest that in languages where there is a severe grammaticalisation of Grammatical Aspect, it is strongly related to T. In contrast, in languages like Portuguese or English, where the value of the tense verbal morphology is still computed in aspectual verbal complexes, on a par with their aspectual interpretation,³¹ there is no reason to suppose that Asp is in the same stage of grammaticalisation. So, we admit that, in the latter languages, the correlation between Grammatical

³⁰ This property also shows up in certain uses of the Present Past Participle, in the so-called existential Perfect, as illustrated in *I have lost my glasses* (Iatridou et al. 2001). However, these examples appear to be interpreted as aspectually different from the simple past. This fact indicates that the grammaticalisation of these forms is not as severe as in the Perfect complex forms of French, Italian, Spanish, and German.

³¹ Peres (1996), Schmitt (2001) and Oliveira (2003) emphasise the contribution of the Present to build the meaning of the Present Perfect in EP and BP.

Aspect and Lexical Aspect (v heading vP) may be the prevalent one, and Asp is assumed as an extension of the vP phase.

Accepting this hypothesis, we can explain why Portuguese and English present VP ellipsis, while Spanish, Italian, French, and German do not. In fact, the licensing condition states that *the elliptical vP is licensed, under local c-command, by the lexically filled functional head with V-features that merges with it*. This is possible in English and Portuguese when the verb raises to T, because AspP in these languages is interpreted as an extension of the vP phase (a property specified in (75) by the label AspP/vP). In these circumstances, AspP is part of the elliptical predicate.

- (75) a. John has seen his friends lately and Peter has __ too
 b. ... and [_{TP} Peter [_T has] [_{AspP/vP} [_{Asp} (has)] [_{vP} seen his friends lately too]]]

However, this possibility is precluded in French, Spanish, Italian, and German, where Asp is highly grammaticalised. VP ellipsis is impossible, because the verb raised to T or C does not locally c-command the elliptical predicate, i.e. vP, since Asp, which is not interpreted as an element of the elliptical predicate, intervenes between T and vP:

- (76) a. *Il est allé au cinéma et moi, je suis __ aussi
 b. ... et moi [_{TP} je [_T suis] [_{AspP} [_{Asp} (suis) allé] [_{vP} [allé] au cinéma aussi]]]

The examples in (75) and (76) involve the Present Perfect, the cases which more clearly show the contrasts in the values of Asp. However, we believe that the properties of the functional category Asp that directly merges with T remain constant within the same language, regardless of the verbal forms that are actually selected. Accordingly, VP ellipsis with main verbs is impossible in the former languages, but allowed in the latter:

- (77) a. *Tu vas au cinéma ce soir et Paul va __ aussi.
 you go to the cinema this evening and Paul goes too
 b. ... et [_{TP} Paul [_T va] [_{AspP} [_{Asp} (va)] [_{vP} [va] au cinéma ce soir aussi]]]

- (78) a. O Paulo foi ao restaurante hoje, mas julgo que
 the Paulo went to the restaurant today, but think-1sg that
 a Ana não foi __.
 the Ana not went
 'Paulo went to the restaurant today, but I think that Ana did not.'
 b. [_{TP} a Ana não [_T foi] [_{AspP/vP} [_{Asp/v} (foi)] [_{vP} [foi] ao restaurante hoje]]]

Since the only requirement for the licensing of VP ellipsis is that the functional head instantiated by the verbal element locally c-commands the elliptical predicate, VP ellipsis in BP involving functional heads below T,

such as Gerundive Progressive Aspect, (79), and Passive Past Participle (80),³² are not problematic: in these cases the licensor occupies a functional head which merges with the elided *vP*.

- (79) a. João está lendo livros às crianças e Ana também
 João is reading books to the children and Ana too
 está reading __.
 is reading
 ‘João is reading books to the children and Ana is, too.’
 b. ... a Ana também está [_{ProgrAsp} lendo [_{vP} [lendo] livros às crianças]]
- (80) a. Os relatórios foram arquivados hoje e as cartas
 the reports were filed today and the letters
 também foram arquivadas__
 too were filled __
 b. as cartas também foram [_{PassPastP} arquivadas [_{vP} ~~arquivadas~~
 [~~as cartas~~ hoje]]

From the analysis made in this section, two conclusions seem to emerge. Firstly, what we call VP ellipsis is not strictly restricted to the VP projection. Instead, this construction may range over *vP*, or extended *vP* projections. In languages like English and Portuguese, AspP-Perfect, AspP-Progressive, and Passive Past Participle projection instantiate them. Secondly, assuming the previous hypothesis to account for the existence of VP ellipsis in Portuguese and English versus its absence in Spanish, French, Italian, and German, we would say that the Parameter of VP ellipsis is a consequence of the following feature valuation of Asp:

- (81) Asp selected by T may have a \pm *Tense feature* and a \pm *Predicative feature*.

In English and Portuguese, Asp has a positive predicative feature, in languages like French, Spanish, Italian and German, where the verbal aspectual complexes are highly grammaticalised, Asp presents a positive tense feature, and a negative predicative feature. VP ellipses show up whenever Asp selected by T is $\langle + \text{predicative} \rangle$.

³² According to some proposals, the unaccusative Past Participles occurring in Passive and Absolutive participial constructions present a perfective aspectual value (cf Bosque 1990 and Santos 1999). So, we could admit that they head an Asp projection or that they originate as a specific functional projection (cf. Kayne 1989, for the active Past Participle), and then raise to check features of Asp.

5. Summary

In VP ellipsis, the elliptical constituent must be locally c-commanded by the lexically filled functional V-head that merges with the elliptical verbal predicate. This licensing condition requires the local identification of the elliptical site, this being the major factor for the wide range of distribution of this elliptical construction.

VP ellipsis may vary across languages in accordance with the properties of the lexical items and the functional projections involved. Considering English and Portuguese, VP ellipsis varies in what may count as a local licenser for the elliptical category, partially a consequence of V-Movement: just auxiliary and copulative verbs in English; every kind of verb in Portuguese. Moreover, VP ellipsis in English and Portuguese vary to the extent of the requirement for parallelism, as a consequence of the place where the licensing verbs are originally merged in the derivation: while in Portuguese all the licensing verbs leave copies on the elliptical predicate, in English some of the auxiliaries are directly merged with T, and do not interfere with the identity requirement for the elliptical predicate and its antecedent. In EP and BP, VP ellipsis may vary when the licenser of the ellipsis is a verbal sequence including the main verb, due to the lexical properties of the auxiliaries. It also varies with respect to the eligible licensing heads: while in EP, like in English, (finite) Tense seems to be the true licenser of VP ellipsis, in BP, due to a strengthening of the V-features of the sentence functional heads, Asp and Passive Past Participle³³ also allows for the occurrence of VP ellipsis.

VP ellipsis is not possible in Romance and in Germanic languages like French, Spanish, Italian, and German, which present V-Movement, because in these languages the instance of Asp selected by T is severely grammaticalised; as a consequence, a potential verbal licenser in T (or C) does not merge with the elliptical predicate: Asp intervenes preventing the local identification of elliptical vP.

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³³ In the case of Passive Past Participle being characterised as an aspectual head, the licensers of VP ellipsis in BP would be restricted to T and Asp.

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