Strong inflection doesn't always license NP ellipsis[*]

Lobeck (1995:4) famously proposed that ellipsis is only licensed by a head that is 'specified for strong agreement'. Strong agreement is determined by whether a head 'realizes agreement in a productive number of cases' (Lobeck 1995:51). One result of this is that the inflectional properties of a given head are assumed to be directly linked to its ability to license ellipsis of its complement. For example, this can be seen for NP ellipsis in German. Neuter indefinite determiners do not normally inflect with the 'strong' inflectional ending *-es*, but instead with the weak ending *-Ø* (1a). However, if the noun is elided, strong inflection becomes obligatory (1b). Consequently, it has been argued that strong inflection plays a role in ellipsis licensing in this case.

(1) A: Peter hat [DP ein{**-Ø/*-es**} [NP Auto]] gekauft
         Peter has   a{**-WK/*-STR**}   car   bought
         'Peter bought a car.'

     B: Hat Maria auch [DP ein{***-Ø/-es**} [NP A̶u̶t̶o̶]] gekauft?
         has Maria also   a{***-WK/-STR**}   bought
         'Has Maria also bought one?'   (Lobeck 1995:114)

While this appears to be (at least descriptively) correct for languages with rich nominal inflection, Lobeck's account faces problems with poorly inflected languages. In English, a puzzling fact is that *each* can license ellipsis of its complement noun, whereas *every* cannot:

(2) a. The women came in and [DP each [NP w̶o̶m̶a̶n̶]] sat down.

     b. *The women came in and [DP every [NP w̶o̶m̶a̶n̶]] sat down.   (Lobeck 1995:93)

Lobeck was forced to stipulate that *each* is a licenser of ellipsis by virtue of a 'strong' [+partitive] feature that *every* lacks. Since this featural difference is not expressed morphologically, Lobeck's explanation of these facts remains undesirably arbitrary (see Merchant to appear).

Norwegian provides an interesting testing ground for Lobeck's approach. In Norwegian, the equivalents of *each* and *every* correspond to a difference in the type of inflection on the adjective following the determiner *hver(t)* (Vangsnes 1999). For neuter nouns, there is a distinction between strong adjectival inflection *-t* and weak inflection *-e* (see Julien 2005:45; Lohrmann 2010; Roehrs & Julien 2012:255). If the adjective bears the strong ending *-t* (3a), then it does not presuppose the existence of unripe apples, just like *every* in English. However, weak inflection *-e* contributes an existential presupposition (3b), similar to English *each*.

(3) a. Legg [DP hvert umoden-**t** [NP eple]] i denne kassen
         put   HVER unripe-**STR**   apple   in this   box.DEF
         'Put every unripe apple in this box.'

     b. Legg [DP hvert umodn-**e** [NP eple]] i denne kassen
         put   HVER unripe-**WK**   apple   in this   box.DEF
         'Put each unripe apple in this box.'   (Vangsnes 1999:83)

This is curious when compared to English. While Lobeck proposed that *each* must be a 'strong agreer' in English, Norwegian appears to be its mirror image when inflection is taken into account. It is the context akin to *every* in (3a) that exhibits strong inflection on the adjective. Thus, the prediction regarding ellipsis is clear; if inflection plays a role in licensing ellipsis, as Lobeck argues, we would expect that only strong inflection (*-t*) on the adjective can license NP ellipsis, as with German *ein-es* in (1). In fact, what we find is the opposite. In (4), NP ellipsis is possible only with the weak ending *-e*.

(4)   Siri kjøpte noen eple-r   og   la   [$_{DP}$ hvert {*umoden-**t** / umodn-**e**} [$_{NP}$ __]]
         Siri bought some apple-PL and put.PST   HVER   unripe-**STR** unripe-**WK**
         i   denne kassen.
         in this   box
         'Siri bought some apples and put each unripe one in this box.'

Thus, strong inflection does not seem to play a role in licensing ellipsis in (3) and (4). If this were the case, we would expect NPE with the equivalent of *every* with the strong ending *-t*. Rather than the type of inflection, it is the presuppositional meaning of *each* that unifies the contexts for NPE in English and Norwegian. These data provide further evidence against the idea that strong inflection is a licenser of ellipsis (see Saab & Lipták 2016).

References

Julien, Marit (2005). *Nominal Phrases from a Scandinavian Perspective*. John Benjamins: Amsterdam.

Lobeck, Anne (1995). *Ellipsis: Functional Heads, Licensing, and Identification*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Lohrmann, Susanne (2010). *The Structure of the DP and its Reflex in Scandinavian*. PhD thesis, Universität Stuttgart.

Merchant, Jason (to appear). Ellipsis: A survey of analytical approaches. In J. van Craenenbroeck & T. Temmerman (eds). *The Oxford Handbook of Ellipsis*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Roehrs, Dorian & Marit Julien (2012). Adjectives in German and Norwegian: Differences in Weak and Strong Inflections. In P. Sleeman, F. van de Velde & H. Perridon (eds). *Adjectives in Germanic and Romance*. John Benjamins: Amsterdam. 245–262.

Saab, Andrés & Anikó Lipták (2016). Movement and Deletion after Syntax: Licensing by Inflection Reconsidered. *Studia Linguistica* 70(1). 66–108.

Vangsnes, Øystein A. (1999). *The Identification of Functional Architecture*. PhD thesis, University of Bergen.