

Focus particles in verb-echo answers: An argument for Argument Ellipsis*

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1. Introduction

Polar questions in Hebrew, as in many other languages (see Holmberg 2016 for a typology), can be answered affirmatively by echoing the verb in the question. Using a ‘verb-echo’ answer has the same effect as using the affirmation particle ‘ken’ (yes), as shown in (1). Verb-echo answers, and Hebrew object gaps more generally, have been traditionally analyzed as involving verb-stranding VP-ellipsis (VSVPE); an operation involving movement of the verb to a position outside *v*P, followed by *v*P-ellipsis (Doron 1999; Goldberg 2005). This is illustrated in (2a), where strike-through indicates elision and the subject is assumed to be rendered null via subject *pro*-drop. Recently, however, the VSVPE approach has been challenged by Landau (2018, 2020a, 2020b), who argues that Hebrew object gaps involve Argument Ellipsis (AE), an operation by which a verb’s object is elided on identity with an antecedent verbal argument (2b). A definition, inspired by Oku 1998, is suggested in (3).

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|-----|----|---|----|---|
| (1) | Q: | Dina hevia jain?
Dina brought wine
‘Did Dina bring wine?’ | A: | {hevia / ken}.
brought / yes
‘Yes.’ |
|-----|----|---|----|---|

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|-----|----|---|
| (2) | a. | VSVPE: [TP <i>Subject</i> _{<i>i</i>} [T′ T+v+V [$\overline{[vP \ t_i \ [\overline{[v′ \ t_v \ [\overline{[VP \ t_V \ [Object]]}]]}]}$]]]]] |
| | b. | AE: [TP <i>Subject</i> _{<i>i</i>} [T′ T [<i>v</i> P <i>t</i> _{<i>i</i>} [<i>v</i> ′ <i>v</i> [<i>v</i> P V [Object]]]]]]] |

- (3) Argument Ellipsis (AE): a constituent XP_{*e*} can be elided if,
- a. XP_{*e*} is dominated by a verb phrase VP_{*e*} whose head V_{*e*} assigns a theta role to XP_{*e*} (i.e., XP_{*e*} is selected for by V_{*e*}).
 - b. The linguistic context supplies an antecedent XP_{*a*}, which is itself dominated by a phrase VP_{*a*} whose head V_{*a*} selects for XP_{*a*}, s.t. XP_{*a*} is identical to XP_{*e*}.

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One of Landau’s central arguments against the VSVPE analysis relies on the observation that adjuncts in Hebrew are excluded from object gaps following an overt verb. This is illustrated in (4), where the presence or absence of a VP-adjunct in an ellipsis site is diagnosed by examining whether negation dominating the ellipsis site can target the adjunct. The infelicity of (4b) indicates that the adjunct is not contained in the ellipsis site of a verb-echo answer, while it is contained in an ellipsis site that also contains the verb (4c). If verb-echo answers are derived by eliding a VP whose verb has vacated it, we would expect the ellipsis site in (4b) to contain the VP-adjunct (at least optionally), as is the case when the verb is silenced (4c) — contrary to fact.

- (4) a. ata makiv ota me-ha-tixon?
 You know her from-the-high.school
 ‘Do you know her from high school?’
- b. #lo makiv. ani makiv ota me-ha-universita.
 NEG know I know her from-the-university
 ‘I don’t know her. I know her from university.’
- c. lo. ani makiv ota me-ha-universita.
 NEG I know her from-the-university
 ‘No. I know her from university.’ (Landau 2018)

This paper expands on Landau’s work and provides new evidence against the VSVPE approach, the crux of which is the novel observation that an ellipsis site following an overt verb in Hebrew seems unable to contain not only adverbial material, but also the focus particle *only*. When a polar question contains *only*, a verb-echo answer is infelicitous, while simple affirmation is appropriate, as illustrated in (5).

- (5) Q: Dina (vak) hevia (vak) jain? A: {#hevia / ✓ken}.
 Dina (only) brought (only) wine brought / yes
 ‘Did Dina only bring **wine**?’ Intended: ‘Yes.’

The paper aims to illustrate that (5) constitutes a problem for VSVPE analyses of Hebrew object gaps (cf. (2a)), which can be solved in an AE framework (cf. (2b)). We propose an AE analysis of the data, testing its predictions regarding other focus particles.

What we ultimately end up saying about (5), however, will depend on our approach to the syntax of *only*. As can be seen in (5), Hebrew *only* can appear both adjacent and non-adjacent to its focus associate. This poses the question of whether *only* forms a syntactic constituent with its focus associate when the two are linearly adjacent (6). The two possible answers to this question, i.e., *yes* and *no*, have both been defended in the literature. A version of each approach is summarized in (6a-b). For ease of exposition, we adopt the approach in (6a) when first presenting our argument against VSVPE and providing an alternative AE analysis. However, we then devote a section of the paper to an illustration that VSVPE must resort to unwarranted stipulations to account for (5) regardless of our answer to (6). Only the specifics of the AE account will depend on our answer to (6).

- (6) Does *only* ever form a syntactic constituent with its focus associate when the two appear linearly adjacent?
- a. **No**, every *only* is adverbial *only*: *only* is a sentential operator scoping (at least) at *vP*. When adjacent to its associate, *only* is just an agreement reflex, marking the presence of an abstract covert *only* in the scope position (Hirsch 2017, also compatible with certain implementations of von Stechow and Iatridou 2007).
 - b. **Yes**, some *only* is constituent *only*: *only* is a type-flexible operator that, when adjacent to its associate, forms with it a constituent with the semantic type of a generalized quantifier. The two move at LF to the scope position of *only* which outscopes (at least) *vP* (e.g., Rooth 1985, Erlewine and Kotek 2018).

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 illustrates how the fact reported in (5) posits a problem for VSVPE. Section 3 elaborates on how this problem differs from the adjunct exclusion problem raised by Landau, and rejects a potential VSVPE counter-argument that appeals to independently observed constraints on focus association across ellipsis boundaries. Section 4 develops an AE analysis of the data and shows that it correctly predicts the behavior of another focus particle, *even*, in verb-echo answers. Sections 2–4 assume a theory of *only* as in (6a). In section 5 we illustrate that our argument against VSVPE holds even if a theory as in (6b) turns out to be true, and discuss the modifications we must make to our AE account in that case. Section 6 concludes.

2. A problem for VSVPE

To derive a verb-echo answer with VSVPE (2a), two ingredients are required. First, the verb must raise to a position above *vP*, and second, *vP* must undergo ellipsis. Hebrew has been argued to exhibit both ingredients independently. First, Hebrew exhibits optional Subj-V-Adv-Obj word order (Borer 1995). Since Pollock 1989, such word order has been assumed to indicate that the verb raised above the adverb to T. Thus, Hebrew can be argued to exhibit V-to-T movement (7). Hebrew can also be shown to exhibit phrasal ellipsis, including stripping (8) and ‘canonical’ VPE, in which *vP* is deleted under an overt auxiliary (9) (Landau 2018). Below and throughout the paper, Δ designates an ellipsis site.

- (7) Dina [_V šateta] [_{Adv} besimxa] t_v et ha-jain.
 Dina drank happily ACC the-wine
 ‘Dina drank the wine happily.’
- (8) Dina hevia jain ve-Ben {gam / lo} Δ .
 Dina brought wine and-Ben also / NEG
 ‘Dina brought wine and Ben also did/didn’t bring wine.’
- (9) Q: Gil haya mazmin kan jajin? A: batuax hu haya Δ .
 Gil was order here wine sure he was
 ‘Would Gil have ordered wine here?’ ‘Surely he would have.’

Crucially, the presence or absence of a focus particle in the sentence does not affect the availability of V-to-T movement or of phrasal ellipsis. To see that V-to-T movement is available in the presence of *only*, consider the sentence in (10), which contains *only* and also exhibits Subj-V-Adv-Obj word order. Had the presence of *only* blocked V-to-T movement, we would have expected (10) to be ungrammatical, as verb movement to a position above the adverb has been ruled out.

- (10) Dina (ʁak) [V šateta] [Adv besimxa] (ʁak) t_V et ha-jain.
 Dina (only) drank happily (only) ACC the-wine
 ‘Dina only drank the **wine** happily.’

The examples in (11–12) illustrate that phrasal ellipsis is possible in the presence of *only*, and that semantically, *only* can contribute its exhaustive meaning inside the ellipsis site. In other words, nothing prevents the ellipsis of phrases containing the focus particle.

- (11) Q: Gil haya mazmin kan ʁak jain? A: batuax hu haya Δ.
 Gil was order here only wine sure he was
 ‘Would Gil have ordered only **wine** here?’ ‘Surely he would have.’
- (12) a. Dina ʁak hevia jain ve-Ben gam Δ (= <ʁak hevi jain>).
 Dina only brought wine and-Ben too only brought wine
 ‘Dina only brought **wine** and Ben only brought **wine** too.’
- b. Dina ʁak hevia jain ve-Ben lo Δ (= <ʁak hevi jain>).
 Dina only brought wine and-Ben NEG only brought wine
 ‘Dina only brought **wine** and Ben didn’t bring only **wine**.’

Given that nothing in the presence of *only* blocks neither V-to-T movement nor phrasal ellipsis, i.e., the two ingredients required for VSVPE, a VSVPE account of Hebrew object gaps seems to predict verb-echo answers to questions with *only* to be well-formed and felicitous, contrary to the fact reported in (5).

3. On the interaction of *only* and ellipsis

Recall that we are assuming a theory according to which *only* is always in an adverbial position (6a), regardless of its linear position relative to its focus associate. On this theory, when linearly adjacent to its associate, the string ‘only’ is an exponent of an agreement reflex, marking the presence of a covert operator in an adverbial position (Hirsch 2017). Therefore, a Hebrew sentence in which *only* is linearly adjacent to its associate consists of the ingredients in (13).

- (13) Dina ∅_{ONLY} hevia ʁak jain.
 Dina ONLY brought FOC wine

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In (13), a silent operator represented as \emptyset_{ONLY} occupies an adverbial position, and the overt element preceding the focus associate is an agreement morpheme marking focus (glossed as FOC). Given that in this theoretical framework *only* is always an adverb, the argument against VSVPE in section 2 illustrates that – like Landau’s adjuncts – adverbial *only* too seems to be excluded from the ellipsis site in object-gap sentences.

A crucial difference between adverbial *only* and other adjuncts, however, is that adverbial *only* on the theory in (6a) can be exponentiated as an empty string (this is what happens when the string ‘*ʔak*’ is linearly adjacent to the focus associate as in (13)). Thus, in a VSVPE framework, the syntactic position of *only* in a verb-echo answer relative to the landing position of a stranded verb is under-determined. Given that there is no overt element marking the position of adverbial *only*, in principle it could reside either above or below the derived position of the verb. This fact, together with an independent observation regarding the interaction between *only* and ellipsis, provides proponents of VSVPE with potential recourse. This is illustrated next.

Beaver and Clark (2008) observe that *only* cannot associate into an ellipsis site. This is illustrated in (14a), where ellipsis excludes *only* but includes its associate (examples from Stockwell 2020:235). If *only* is always adverbial, Beaver and Clark’s generalization entails that we cannot elide a constituent below the adverbial position of the covert *only* operator if that constituent contains the focus associate of *only*. As long as covert *only* can be shown to reside outside the ellipsis site, such an ellipsis operation will require covert *only* to associate across an ellipsis boundary as in (15), contra the generalization in (14).

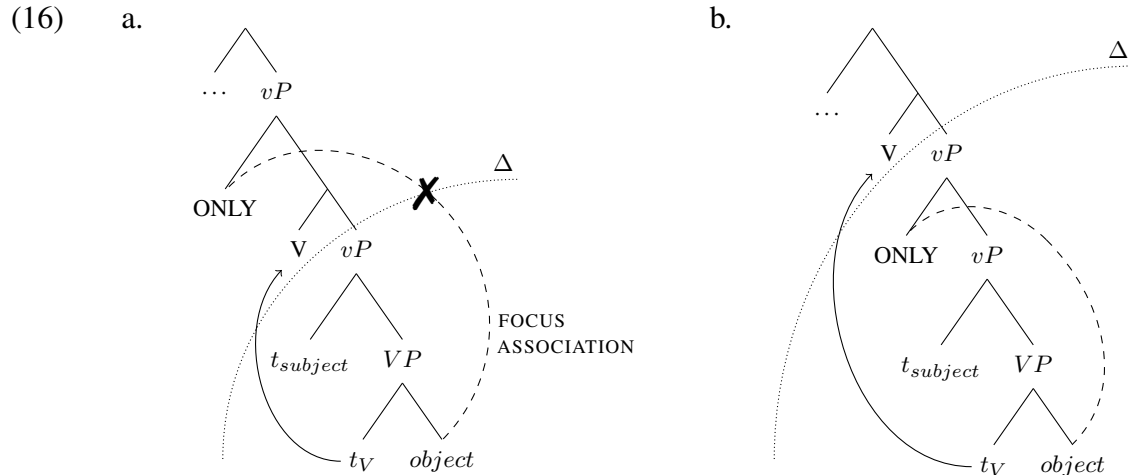
- (14) Beaver and Clark (2008) – *only* cannot associate into an ellipsis site:
- a. *John only eats CHEESE. BILL only does Δ (= <eat cheese>) too.
 - b. John only eats CHEESE. BILL does Δ (= <only eat cheese>) too.

- (15) [\emptyset_{ONLY} [... [~~... associate ...~~]]
- |-----~~x~~-----|

Thus, for VSVPE to derive the badness of echo answers to questions with *only* (5), all that is required given the generalization in (14) is an auxiliary assumption that the highest position in which a Hebrew verb can strand is below the lowest position in which covert *only* (i.e., \emptyset_{ONLY}) can be merged. If this assumption holds, then the echo answer in (5) can only have the structure in (16a), in which the verb moves to a position below covert *only*, VP is elided, and focus association crosses an ellipsis boundary. As Beaver and Clark illustrate, the kind of focus association exemplified in (16a) is illicit. Therefore, had (16a) been the only structure available for the verb-echo answer in (5), VSVPE would have derived the unacceptability of this answer as a violation of Beaver and Clark’s generalization.

This line of explanation is only valid, of course, if a structure as in (16b), in which the verb raises above *only* and focus association takes place within the ellipsis site, is assumed to be ruled out independently. But herein lies the problem. Despite the fact that we have no definitive evidence for the position of covert *only* relative to the stranded verb, the assumption seems unwarranted. If we accept the evidence that Hebrew has V-to-T movement, then

if the merging position of *only* is below T, we do not have any reason to restrict a verb from raising over *only*. And even if we reject the claim that the landing site for Hebrew verbs is indeed T, then to the extent that Hebrew verbs move at all, there is nothing in principle that should block their movement to a position above *only*.



We therefore reject a VSVPE account of the challenging data that appeals to Beaver and Clark’s generalization.

4. An AE account

An analysis of our data in terms of AE is appealing because, unlike sentences with phrasal ellipsis (11–12), sentences with ellipsis that leaves the verb overt cannot express an exhaustive meaning even if the ellipsis antecedent contains *only*. Consider (17–18), where deletion excludes the verb.

- (17) Dina hevia ʁak jain ve-Ben gam hevi Δ (= <jain>).
 Dina brought only wine and-Ben too brought wine
 ‘Dina only brought **wine** and Ben brought wine too.’
 (Felicitous if Ben brought both wine and beer.)

- (18) Dina hevia ʁak jain ve-Ben lo hevi Δ (= <jain>).
 Dina brought only wine and-Ben NEG brought wine
 ‘Dina only brought **wine** and Ben didn’t bring wine.’
 (Infelicitous if Ben brought both wine and beer.)

The fact that the sentence in (17) is felicitous if Ben brought both wine and beer suggests that the elided argument does not need to contain the focus particle. Example (18) illustrates something stronger; namely, that the elided argument cannot contain the focus particle. The second conjunct in (18) can only convey the proposition that Ben did not bring wine at all, not that he did not bring *only* wine. If *only* could have been part of the ellipsis site, then the negation morpheme in the second conjunct should have been able to negate the exhaustive

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meaning contributed by *only*, and (18) as a whole should have been felicitous in a context in which Ben brought beer in addition to wine. In this section, we therefore assume that object gaps are derived via AE, and illustrate that this assumption accounts for the data we have seen so far and in particular, for the infelicity of verb-echo answers in response to polar questions with *only* (5).

AE as defined in (3) targets verbal arguments. On the theory of *only* we are taking for granted (6a), however, *only* never forms a constituent with such an argument, as it is merged at the very least in an adverbial position outscoping the verb. Therefore, AE by definition will exclude covert adverbial *only* when it elides the verbal object with which adverbial *only* associates. In other words, the verb-echo answer in (19) cannot have the parse in (20), in which the covert adverbial \emptyset_{ONLY} is inside the elided argument, *by assumption*.

- (19) Q: Dina hevia \textbackslash ak jain? A: {#hevia / \checkmark ken}.
 Dina brought only wine brought / yes
 ‘Did Dina bring only wine?’ Intended: ‘Yes.’

- (20) * pro_{Dina} hevia Δ (= $\langle \emptyset_{\text{ONLY}} \text{\textbackslash}$ ak jain \rangle)
 Dina brought ONLY FOC wine

However, the fact that AE only targets verbal arguments does not by itself exclude the possibility that *only* contributes its exhaustive meaning to object-gap sentences without actually being inside the ellipsis site. This is because even if adverbial *only* is never part of a verbal argument, given our assumption that it is phonologically null, it can reside out of the ellipsis site in a verb-echo answer. After all, if adverbial *only* is a covert operator, a verb-echo answer would consist of the same overt material whether that operator is a part of it or not. *Prima facie*, then, there are two conceivable AE parses of the verb-echo answer in (19), listed in (21a-b). We show next, however, that both parses are ruled out for reasons independent of our posited definition of AE, thus correctly capturing the infelicity of the verb-echo answer in (19).

- (21) Possible parses for (19):
- a. * pro_{Dina} \emptyset_{ONLY} hevia Δ (= $\langle \text{\textbackslash}$ ak jain \rangle)
 Dina ONLY brought FOC wine
- b. # pro_{Dina} hevia Δ (= \langle jain \rangle)
 Dina brought wine

On the parse in (21a), the answer pre-elision starts out as a declarative sentence with exactly the same lexical material as the question. The subject is rendered null via *pro*-drop. The direct object, which is the focus associate of a covert *only* in an adverbial position, is rendered null via AE. But this parse requires adverbial *only* to associate with focus across an ellipsis boundary, and we can appeal to Beaver and Clark’s generalization to rule it out. Recall that, as discussed in section 3 (14–15), this kind of focus association is illicit, resulting in ungrammaticality.

On the second parse, the answer pre-elision starts out *without the focus particle* (21b). As before, both the subject and the direct object are then rendered null. In this case, no constraint on focus association renders the parse unacceptable. AE can apply to the direct object of the verb given a suitable antecedent in the question. However, the parse is nevertheless rendered infelicitous by a pragmatic constraint. Assuming *only* presupposes the truth of its prejacent (Horn 1969 and subsequent work), the answer in (19) (under the parse in (21b)) amounts to a repetition of what the question already presupposed. Asking whether Dina brought only wine presupposes that Dina brought wine, and inquires whether she did not bring anything else. Answering that she brought wine will be an odd thing to do, as the inquirer already indicated that they know this.

An echo answer to a polar question with *only* is thus infelicitous because such an answer lacks a grammatical parse that itself contains *only* while its grammatical parse lacking *only* is pragmatically deviant. Note, however, that our AE analysis does not predict that *only* is *never* argument-elidable. In fact, our definition of AE correctly predicts that *only* will be argument-elidable when it is embedded inside an argument-elidable XP; for instance, a DP argument heading a relative clause (22), or a propositional argument (23). In these cases, *only* and its entire scope can be elided via AE as they reside inside a verbal argument, so the ellipsis boundary does not separate *only* and its focus associate. Hence, *only* will contribute its exhaustive meaning in the ellipsis site.

- (22) Q: halaxta le-bar še-magiš v̄ak jain lavan? A: {halaxti / ken}.
 Go.2SG to-bar C-serves only wine white Go.2SG / yes
 ‘Did you visit a bar that serves only **white wine**?’ ‘Yes.’
- (23) Ben amaṽ še-Dina v̄ak hevia jain ve-xaim gam amaṽ Δ.
 Ben said C-Dina only brought wine and-Haim also said
 ‘Ben said that Dina only brought **wine**, and Haim said so too.’

4.1 Prediction: *even* vs. *only*

Of the two parses in (21), one parse is grammatically ruled out, while the other is bad for pragmatic reasons. This analysis assumes object gaps are generated via AE, and explains the unacceptability of verb-echo answers to polar questions with *only* by appealing to the presuppositional content of *only*. The grammatical parse in (21b) is only infelicitous due to *only*’s presupposition. The analysis therefore predicts verb-echo answers to be acceptable with other focus particles that do not presuppose the truth of their prejacent. In that case, the parse in which an AE boundary separates the focus particle from its focus associate would still involve illicit focus association. However, the parse in which there is no focus particle at all should constitute a pragmatically felicitous answer to the polar question.

Fortunately, there is a focus particle with which we can test this prediction; *only*’s cousin *even*, which unlike *only* does not presuppose the truth of its prejacent but rather – asserts it (Horn 1969, Karttunen and Peters 1979). This is illustrated in the semantics for the two operators in (24a) and (24b). On the other hand, *even* is similar to *only* in that it too is unable to associate across an ellipsis boundary, as indicated by the badness of (25).

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Therefore, assuming that *even* like *only* is always (possibly covertly) adverbial, we predict that verb-echo answers will constitute felicitous responses to polar questions with *even*.

(24) Semantics for *only* and *even*:

- a. $\llbracket \textit{only} \rrbracket^w = \lambda A. \lambda p: \underbrace{p(w) = 1}_{\textit{presupposed}} . \forall q \in \mathcal{A}[q(w) = 1 \rightarrow q \subseteq p]$
- b. $\llbracket \textit{even} \rrbracket^w = \lambda A. \lambda p: \forall q \in \mathcal{A}[q \textit{ is at least as likely as } p]. \underbrace{p(w) = 1}_{\textit{asserted}}$

(25) *Sophie even brought WINE. John even did Δ (= <bring wine>) too.

The prediction is indeed borne out. A verb-echo answer can be felicitously used to affirm a polar question with *even* as in (26). Crucially, we maintain that the acceptability of the verb-echo answer in (26) is not due to an inherent difference between *only* and *even*, which allows the latter but not the former to associate with focus across an ellipsis boundary. Rather, the semantic difference between the two renders the answer without the focus particle felicitous in response to a polar question with *even*, but not with *only*.

(26) Context: We are planning a dinner. I ask what I should bring. You tell me that Dina brought everything we need. I know that Dina does not drink wine, so I ask —

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>Q: Dina afilu hevia jain?
Dina even brought wine
'Did Dina even bring wine?'</p> | <p>A: {hevia / ken}.
brought / yes
'Yes.'</p> |
|--|---|

To further show that echo answers to questions with *even* do not themselves contain an elided *even* we provide the example in (27), evaluated in the context in (26).

(27) Q: Dina afilu hevia jain?
Dina even brought wine
'Did Dina even bring **wine**?'

A₁: hevia, aval ze lo maftia, hi tamid mevia jain.
brought, but it NEG surprising, she always brings wine
'Yes, but it's not surprising as she always brings wine.'

A₂: #hi afilu hevia jain, aval ze lo maftia, hi tamid mevia jain.
She even brought wine, but it NEG surprising, she always brings wine
'She even brought **wine**, but it's not surprising as she always brings wine.'

The question in (27) inquires whether Dina brought wine, and presupposes that Dina bringing wine constitutes an unlikely turn of events. The speaker in A₁ answers the question by echoing the verb, while continuing on to contradict the presupposition of *even* in the question. This answer is fully felicitous. In A₂, on the other hand, the speaker opts for a full

answer with an overt *even*, then continues on to deny *even*'s presupposition. The result is an infelicitous utterance that sounds self-contradictory. Had the verb-echo answer in A₁ contained an elided *even*, it would have been equivalent to the full answer in A₂. But then it should have also sounded contradictory, contrary to fact. Therefore, as in the case of verb-echo answers to questions with *only*, verb-echo answers to questions with *even* are not equivalent to answers in which all the lexical material in the question, including the focus particle, has been voiced.

5. What if constituent *only* exists?

So far, we have been operating under the assumption that *only* never forms a syntactic constituent with its focus associate (cf. (6a)). This assumption, together with Beaver and Clark's generalization, made it rather straightforward to explain why verb-echo answers are unacceptable as responses to questions with *only* (19), if it is indeed the case that such answers are derived via AE. If AE only applies to sub-categorized constituents, and *only* never forms a constituent with its associate, then there is no constituent containing both *only* and its associate to which AE can apply. Furthermore, if AE is used to elide a verbal argument that is the focus associate of a covert adverbial *only* higher up in the structure, illicit focus association across an ellipsis boundary will cause the derivation to crash.

But suppose *only* is a type flexible operator that, when linearly adjacent to its associate, does in fact form a syntactic constituent with it (cf. (6b)). In that case, a further assumption is required to rule out the parse of the verb-echo answer in (28), which involves AE of *only* together with its associate. Note that, given that we are now assuming *only* adjoins its associate at LF, we no longer need to posit a silent adverbial *only* operator. The parse should be acceptable, given that there is a DP in the antecedent question containing both *only* and its associate, and furthermore, this DP is a sub-categorized argument of the verb. We suggest that the restriction in (29) is responsible for ruling out the parse in (28).

(28) **pro*_{Dina} hevia Δ (= <vak jain>
Dina brought only wine

(29) Restriction on elided *only*: elided DPs consisting of *only* and its associate (henceforth, *only*-DPs) cannot take scope above the (overt) sister of the elided constituent that dominates them (where dominance is assumed to be reflexive).¹

In (28) *only* and its associate are elided, to the exclusion of the rest of *only*'s scope, on the assumption that *only*'s scope contains (at least) the verb. Thus, given that the elided *only*-DP outscopes an overt verb, the parse violates (29). More generally, (29) restricts AE of *only* to cases in which the entire scope of *only* is contained in an elided argument (22–23).

¹The restriction in (29) could have been worded more straightforwardly – *elided only*-DPs cannot raise out of their ellipsis site. However, given that in (28) the ellipsis site consists only of an *only*-DP, this wording would have required us to assume that when the ellipsis site as a whole raises, this constitutes raising out of an ellipsis site. The assumption is perhaps innocuous, but with (29) we can avoid discussing it altogether.

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If constituent *only* exists, then positing the restriction in (29) is a stipulation we must make for our AE account to avoid generating verb-echo answers to questions with *only*. The stipulation, however, is required for reasons unrelated to the distribution of verb-echo answers in Hebrew. In (30), we observe that ellipsis in Hebrew disambiguates the scope of *only*. The sentence in (30a) is ambiguous between a reading according to which Dina is not permitted to bring anything other than wine (*only*>*can*), and a reading according to which Dina is permitted to not bring anything other than wine (*can*>*only*). When *can*'s complement is elided (30b), only the latter reading is available, while when both *can* and its complement are elided (30c), both readings are again available.

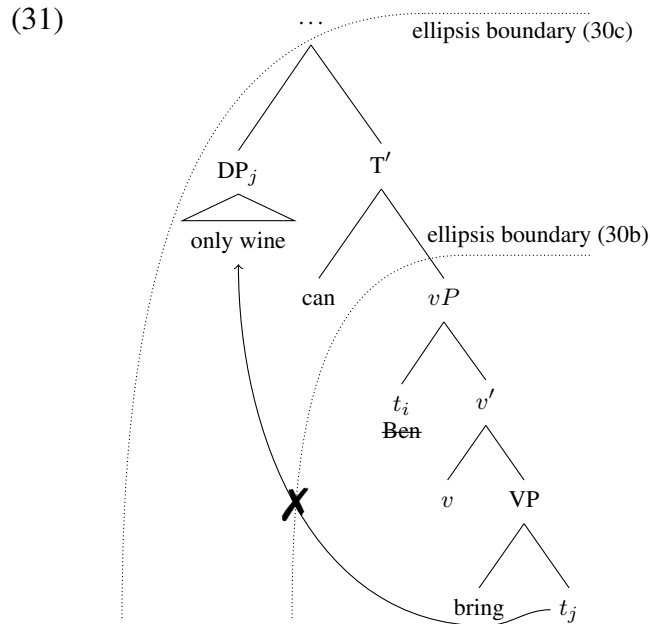
- (30) Observation – ellipsis disambiguates the scope of *only*:
- a. Dina yexola lehavi ∇ k jain.
 Dina can bring only wine
 ‘Dina can bring only wine.’ *only*>*can*, *can*>*only*
 - b. ... ve-Ben gam yaxol Δ .
 ... and-Ben also can
 ‘...and Ben also can.’ **only*>*can*, *can*>*only*
 - c. ... ve-Ben gam Δ .
 ... and-Ben also
 ‘...and Ben too.’ *only*>*can*, *can*>*only*

This observation is easily explained if *only* is always in an adverbial position. Beaver and Clark (2008) illustrate that *only* cannot associate across an ellipsis boundary (14). As discussed in section 3, if *only* is always in an adverbial position, their generalization entails that we cannot elide a constituent below the adverbial position of abstract *only* if that constituent contains the focus associate of *only*. This illicit operation is exactly what would have been required to derive a reading of (30b) in which *only* outscopes *can*. For *only* to outscope the modal, abstract *only* would have to be merged in a position above the modal. But given that the associate of *only* is part of the ellipsis site, this would require focus association across an ellipsis boundary, contra Beaver and Clark’s generalization.

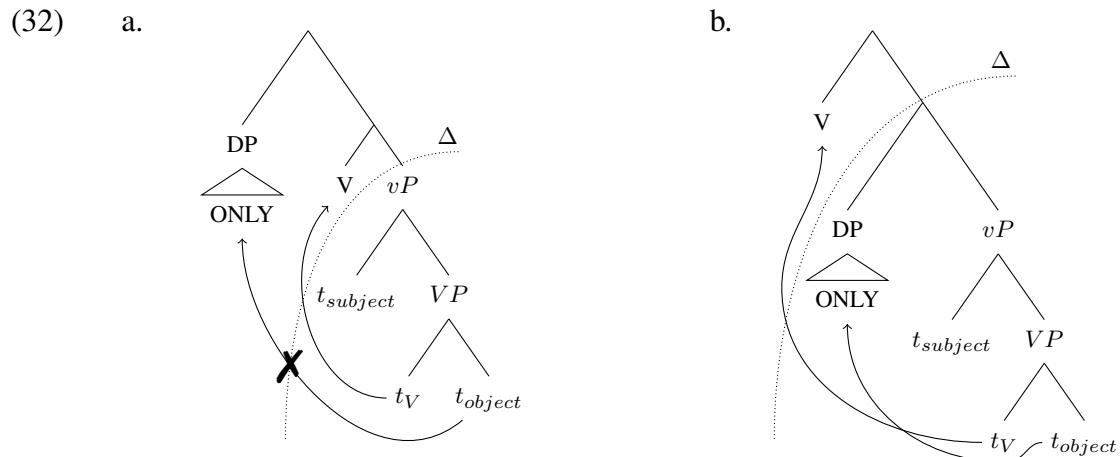
If constituent *only* exists, however, things are no longer so simple. In that case, to account for the disambiguating effect of ellipsis, we have to explicitly restrict an elided constituent *only* from scoping above the sister of the ellipsis site. As illustrated in (31) on the following page, to scope above *can* in (30b), the *only*-DP must raise from within the ellipsis site to a position above *can*. This movement of constituent *only* crosses the overt sister of the elided phrase, and is thus blocked by the principle we had to stipulate in (29). This accounts for the observation in (30). Ellipsis in (30c) does not block the wide-scope reading of *only* because there the modal is elided as well and so the *only*-DP need not move outside of the ellipsis site to outscope it.

A theory according to which constituent *only* exists must therefore posit a restriction on the scope of elided constituent *only*, which is not required in a theory according to which only adverbial *only* exists. What is crucial for us is that this restriction, which is indepen-

dently required to account for (30), will render ungrammatical any attempt to apply AE to a verbal argument containing only *only* and its associate. Therefore, regardless of one's approach to the syntax of *only*, an AE account of Hebrew object gaps correctly captures the unacceptability of verb-echo answers to polar questions with *only*.



Finally, note that even if constituent *only* exists and the restriction in (29) governs the scope of elided constituent *only*, VSVPE will still not be able to account for our data without unwarranted assumptions. There are two conceivable VSVPE derivations of verb-echo answers that contain constituent *only*, illustrated in (32a-b).



In (32a), the verb raises out of vP, which is then elided. A constituent *only*-DP then moves to take scope above the raised verb, crossing the overt sister of the elided vP along the way. In this derivation, movement of constituent *only* violates the restriction we had to

stipulate in (29), and is correctly predicted to be ungrammatical. In the second derivation in (32b), however, the verb raises, *vP* elides, and the *only*-DP takes scope at the edge of *vP*, below the stranded verb. In this derivation, then, movement of *only* is in full compliance with the restriction in (29), as it takes place within the elided constituent. If verb-echo answers are derived via VSVPE, this derivation needs to be ruled out. Otherwise, we would expect such answers to constitute a felicitous response to questions with *only*. But the scope of *only* is satisfied and type-mismatches are avoided if constituent *only* takes scope within the ellipsis site, at the edge of *vP*. It is therefore unclear on what grounds the derivation in (32b) could be ruled out.

6. Conclusion

This paper presents a challenge to VSVPE accounts of Hebrew object gaps, and shows that an AE account of such gaps captures the restrictions on what they can and cannot mean with fewer stipulations. The argument is as follows: object gaps seem unable to contain focus particles, like *only* and *even*. The presence of focus particles does not block the ingredients required for VSVPE. Therefore, VSVPE must stipulate new restrictions to account for the data. While the nature of the stipulated restrictions varies with one’s approach to the syntax of focus particles, they are all seemingly implausible. AE, on the other hand, can rely on independently motivated assumptions to explain the data.

For convenience, the assumptions that each theory of object gaps must make to account for our data, under each approach to the syntax of *only*, are summarized in the table in (33).

(33)

Theory of object gaps	Syntax of <i>only</i>	<i>only</i> is always adverbial	constituent <i>only</i> exists
AE		\emptyset	Elided <i>only</i> cannot take scope above the overt sister of the elided phrase
VSVPE		V-stranding in verb-echo answers cannot cross <i>only</i>	Elided <i>only</i> cannot take scope above the overt sister of the elided phrase and constituent <i>only</i> must scope above the landing position of a stranded verb

Crucially, AE requires no extra assumptions or an independently motivated one – depending on our approach to the syntax of *only*. VSVPE, however, must either restrict the landing position of the raising verb to a position below adverbial *only*, or restrict the scope that constituent *only* can take. This paper therefore supports the conclusion advanced in Landau’s work that VSVPE is unavailable in Hebrew. Had it existed, VSVPE would have generated felicitous echo answers to questions with *only*, contrary to fact.

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