

Deletion of non-constituents in clausal ellipsis: remnants in the middle field

Dennis Ott (Humboldt University of Berlin) & Volker Struckmeier (University of Cologne)

Synopsis. A predominant analysis of sluicing and fragment answers rests on the assumption that any material that survives deletion has been moved to a sentence-initial position; this permits clausal ellipsis to target a single constituent. We document instances of clausal ellipsis that cast doubt on the viability of this approach. In these cases, ellipsis spares elements that have no impact on the truth value of the elliptical sentence and can demonstrably never occupy the prefield. Such facts, we argue, favor a non-syntactic implementation of clausal ellipsis.

Background. Building on Ross 1969, Merchant 2001 proposes to analyze sluicing as movement of the *wh*-phrase to Spec-C and subsequent PF-deletion of TP, triggered by a feature of C (1). Merchant 2004 proposes to extend this analysis to fragment answers (2) (also Arregi 2010).

- (1) John kissed someone – guess [*who* C⁰ [~~he kissed t~~]]. (3) [_{CP} XP C⁰ [...t...]]
(2) Who did John kiss? – [*Mary* C⁰ [~~John kissed t~~]].

This *move-and-delete analysis* (MDA, (3)) has been widely adopted for clausal ellipsis, although it faces a number of non-trivial challenges (cf. Bruening in press). Material in C, e.g., never survives deletion; multiple remnants are possible where corresponding overt movements are not ((4), Ortega-Santos et al. 2014); and ‘swiping’ seemingly inverts *wh*-PPs ((5), Merchant 2002).

- (4) Peter asked Bob about syntax. And who about phonology (~~*did he ask~~)?
(5) Peter went to the movies, but I don’t know who with (~~*he went to the movies~~).

Analyses that adopt the MDA are forced to assume exceptional movement of the secondary remnant, cf. Sailor & Thoms 2014, Ortega-Santos et al. 2014, Weir 2014, and Boone 2014, a.o.

Observations and Proposal. In this talk, we point out hitherto unnoticed cases of complex remnants in clausal ellipsis that militate against the MDA. In German, modal particles (MPs) and sentence adverbs (SAs) express speaker attitude/commitment but do not affect their host sentence’s truth conditions. Both MPs and SAs can occur as unaccented secondary remnants:

- (6) A: Peter hat Leute eingeladen. B: Und WEN wohl/vermutlich alles? (*wohl* ≈ presumably)
Peter has people invited and who PRT presumably all
(7) A: Wen hat Fritz eingeladen? B: PETER wohl/vermutlich.
who has Fritz invited Peter PRT presumably

Importantly, these remnants resist MDA analyses: they are not focused (and thus cannot be analyzed in terms of exceptional focus movement, as in Ortega-Santos et al. 2013 Weir 2014), they are no afterthoughts, and MPs are categorically immobile in any event ((8b), Struckmeier 2014):

- (8a) Gestern / In Berlin hat Peter wohl Leute eingeladen. *low adverbials can move to prefield*
yesterday in Berlin has Peter PRT people invited
(8b) *Wohl hat Peter gestern Leute eingeladen. *MPs cannot move to prefield*

Additionally, B’s responses in (6,7) are not legitimate prefield constituents:

- (9) Und WEN (*wohl alles) hat er eingeladen? (10) PETER (*wohl) hat er eingeladen.
and who PRT all has he invited Peter PRT has he invited

(7B) cannot be a single middle-field constituent either: since *Peter* is stressed, scrambling across the MP/SA is strongly dispreferred (11B) (cf. Struckmeier 2014). Instead, (7B) corresponds to (11B’), showing that *Peter* occupies the prefield while the MP/SA is in the middle field.

- (11) A: Wen hat Fritz eingeladen? B: ??Fritz hat PETER wohl / vermutlich *t* eingeladen.
who has Fritz invited Fritz has Peter PRT presumably invited
B’: PETER hat Fritz wohl/vermutlich *t* eingeladen.

Cases like (6B) raise an additional complication for the MDA, since the *wh*-remnant is the associate of the floated quantifier. If all remnants were leftward-moved, deriving this order in the prefield would require countercyclic tucking-in of particle and quantifier below the *wh*-phrase.

The MDA thus faces a dilemma. On the one hand, certain elements that can be fronted fail to occur as secondary remnants. The adverbials in (8a) are a case in point:

- (12) Peter hat Leute eingeladen, aber ich weiß nicht, wen (*gestern / *in Berlin).
Peter has people invited but I know not who yesterday in Berlin

On the other hand, MPs are immobile yet occur as secondary remnants (6,7). Unless amended by stipulation, the MDA thus fails to correctly predict the range of licit remnants in clausal ellipsis.

We propose to abandon the MDA. Instead, ellipsis exclusively and exhaustively deletes deaccented material that is (e-)given (Merchant 2001); crucially, non-truth-functional material is not given (not entailed by context) and thus does not affect antecedent—ellipsis parallelism. This non-syntactic view of deletion permits and predicts ‘skipping’ of *in situ* MPs/SAs:

- (7') A: Wen hat Fritz eingeladen? B: PETER ~~hat er wohl/vermutlich eingeladen~~.

MPs/SAs are thus permissible remnants; unlike the deaccented lower adverbs in (12), they fail to induce a difference in truth value between the elliptical sentence and its antecedent. This is supported by the fact that MPs/SAs that are present in an antecedent sentence can be absent from an otherwise parallel elliptical sentence. For instance, the MP *ja*, which is incompatible with interrogative force, is present in (13A) but necessarily absent in B's sluice, see (13B'):

- (13) A: Peter hat ja einen Freund eingeladen. B: Wen?
Peter has PRT a.ACC friend invited who.ACC
 B': Wen hat er (*ja) eingeladen?
who has he PRT invited

The contrast between MPs/SAs (6,7) and the truth-functionally relevant adverbs in (12) is further supported by the fact that the latter *can* surface when exempted from deletion by contrast:

- (14) A: Peter hat Leute eingeladen. B: Aha. Wen denn GESTern/HIERhin?
Peter has people invited aha who PRT yesterday/to this place

We thus correctly predict the range of possible secondary remnants in the middle field. This result cannot be obtained under the MDA, even with special provisos for exceptional movement.

Once non-constituent deletion is permitted in this way, various constructions involving multiple remnants, such as the abovementioned *wh*+XP sluices and swiping, cease to be problematic:

- (4') Peter asked Bob about syntax. And [WHO ~~did he ask~~ [about PhoNOlogy]]?
 (5') Peter went to the movies, but I don't know [WHO ~~he went to the movies~~ [WITH *t*]]

We discuss a number of further implications of the non-syntactic implementation of clausal ellipsis, e.g. for licensing, locality, and Merchant's 2001 P-stranding Generalization.

Conclusion. The MDA defines clausal ellipsis syntactically, as deletion of TP. This assumption is incompatible with the occurrence of MP/SA remnants under clausal ellipsis. By contrast, it is straightforward to account for such facts on an alternative view of ellipsis as exhaustive phonological silencing of (e-)given material, exempting elements such as MPs/SAs that do not enter into the computation of truth conditions.

References: Arregi, K. 2010. *NLLT* 28. Boone, E. 2014. Diss, U Leiden. Bruening, B. in press. *UPenn WPL* 21. Merchant, J. 2001. *The syntax of silence*. OUP. 2002. In *Studies in comparative Germanic syntax*. Benjamins. 2004. *Ling & Phil* 27. Ortega-Santos et al. 2014. *Lingua* 138. Ross, J.R. 1969. *Proc CLS* 5. Sailor, C. & G. Thoms. 2014. *Proc WCCFL* 31. Struckmeier, V. 2014. *Scrambling ohne Informationsstruktur?* De Gruyter. Weir, A. 2014. Diss, UMass Amherst.