

## Against evacuation movement in NP-ellipsis

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**1 Summary.** Ellipsis is generally assumed to target constituents, typically maximal projections (Lobeck 1995, Merchant 2001, Thoms 2010, a.o.). If a sub-constituent of a deleted constituent survives ellipsis, it is generally assumed to undergo evacuation movement to a position outside the ellipsis site (Jayaseelan 1990, Lasnik 1995, Saab 2022, a.o.). We will provide new evidence against this analytical strategy in NP-ellipsis based on two facts: (i) putative evacuation movement fails to trigger freezing effects; (ii) putative evacuation movement can apply to constituents that are otherwise completely immobile. We propose instead that focus marked constituents properly included in a nominal domain marked for ellipsis can survive ellipsis (in line with Hirai 2018, Stigliano 2022), thereby giving the impression of elision of individual constituents. Under such an approach it is unnecessary to resort to spurious movement operations.

**2 The logic of evacuation movement within the nominal domain.** Since Lobeck's (1995) influential work, ellipsis licensing is often taken to obtain between a functional head, the licensor, and an XP c-commanded by it, the ellipsis site (Merchant 2001, Aelbrecht 2010 a.o.). In the nominal domain, D can license ellipsis of NP as in (1a). Frequently, sub-constituents of NPs that can be independently elided can survive ellipsis, as the PP in (1b) (e.g. Yoshida et al. 2012, Saab 2022):

- (1) a. I like these books about Chomsky and you like those [<sub>NP</sub> books about Chomsky].  
b. I like these books about Chomsky and you like those ~~books~~ **about Churchill**.

This effect is often accounted for by assuming that examples like (1b) are derived by NP ellipsis, just like (1a), with the PP evacuating the NP prior deletion. Different landing sites have been postulated for evacuation movement of PPs: Saab (2018) argues it is leftward movement to a position below the determiner (e.g. ... and you those [<sub>XP</sub> [<sub>PP</sub> about Churchill] [<sub>NP</sub> ~~books~~ <sub>t<sub>PP</sub>]]], while in Yoshida et al. (2012), the PP is instead right-adjoined to some projection of N, NP or NumP (e.g. ... and you those [<sub>NP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> ~~books~~ <sub>t<sub>PP</sub>]] [<sub>PP</sub> about Churchill])). Such an analysis, among other things, has the advantage of avoiding non-constituent deletion, if the relevant operation in (1b) is taken to be NP-deletion (e.g. '... [<sub>NP</sub> ~~books~~ about Chomsky }'), and thus does not require positing another ellipsis operation of N-ellipsis, alongside NP-ellipsis. However, in what follows, we provide two new empirical arguments against evacuation movement and reanalyze NP-ellipsis remnants as the result of focus blocking ellipsis as in Stigliano (2022).</sub></sub>

**3 Evidence against evacuation movement.** *A. Absence of Freezing effects.* Saab (2018) discusses subextraction from remnants of NP-ellipsis as in (2):

- (2) I know who you bought two pictures of, but I don't know who you bought three ~~pictures~~ of.  
This derived position would be a position within NP given that the PP would be fronted together with NPs containing an elided noun, cf. the alternative continuation of (1):  
(3) ... but those ~~books~~ **about Churchill**, I really dislike.

Putative evacuation movement from NP is unlikely to be leftward given that the PP still follows prenominal adjectives and thus would have to target a position not otherwise available in the language. Evacuation movement of PPs would therefore more likely to be rightward. However, PP-extraposition would lead to a freezing effect given that subextraction would take place from a PP in a derived position.

*B. Movement of immobile constituents.* In German, DP-internal genitives are completely immobile. They can neither be fronted to the prefield nor extraposed to the postfield. Importantly, they can also not be reordered within NP by right-adjoining them:

- (4) a. Die Angst der Erstklässler vor Monstern  
 the fear the.GEN first graders of monsters  
 ‘the first graders’ fear of monsters’  
 b. \*Die Angst  $t_1$  vor Monstern [der Erstklässler]<sub>1</sub>  
 the fear of monsters the.GEN first graders

Crucially, however, genitives can survive NP-ellipsis where both N and the PP-complement are deleted (and recovered), (5):

- (5) Die Angst der Erstklässler vor Monstern ist größer als die ~~Angst der~~  
 the fear the.GEN first graders of monsters is bigger than that fear the.GEN  
 Zweitklässler ~~vor Monstern~~.  
 second graders of monsters  
 ‘The first graders’ fear of the monsters is bigger than that of the second graders.’

This would require the kind of evacuation movement to the right which is shown to be ungrammatical in (4b) (cf. ... als die [~~NP Angst  $t_1$  vor Monstern~~] [der Zweitklässler]<sub>1</sub>). Leftward evacuation movement is not an option either: while genitives can (somewhat marginally) occur in prenominal position, this is only possible if D is silent, (6):

- (6) (\*Die) der Erstklässler (\*die) Angst  
 the.NOM the.GEN first graders the.NOM fear

This is crucially different from (5), where the determiner needs to be overt for ellipsis to be possible. The genitive data are important for this debate because they avoid a confound of data based on PP-remnants: It is often assumed that PPs are not proper arguments but in fact adjuncts of N (e.g., Donati & Cecchetto 2010, Bruening & Al Khalaf 2019), in which case they could be adjoined to NP from the start and ellipsis could target a lower NP-segment, thereby rendering evacuation movement unnecessary. Given that on all standard accounts, genitives are taken to be proper arguments and thus are generated NP-internally, genitive remnants would have to be the result of evacuation movement under the assumption that only maximal projections can be elided.

**4 Analysis.** Since an analysis in terms of evacuation movement appears problematic in the light of these data, one might resort to independent deletion of constituents within the noun phrase. We propose instead, adopting insights from Stigliano (2022), that ellipsis still targets a full NP, blocking vocabulary insertion of heads included in it, and that this instruction to forgo vocabulary insertion will fail to apply to focus-marked element within the NP. Crucially, the PPs that are transparent for extraction in English and the German genitives that cannot move occupy their base position under this analysis and their behavior is therefore unsurprising.

There is a challenge for the present account in that in both languages, the preposition of PP-remnants must be pronounced (e.g. (1b)). Given that the Ps would be recoverable from the antecedent (and there is no movement in the antecedent) and they aren’t contrastive themselves, this does not follow given the assumptions in Stigliano (2022). We will argue that the obligatory pronunciation of PPs in PP-remnants of NP-ellipsis can be related to independent properties of focus projection. Note for instance, that focus particles NP-internally can only attach to PPs but not to NPs within PP-modifiers (*I read a book (only) about (\*only) John*).