CHAPTER 3

“Small structures”
A sententialist perspective*

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Fragment answers and some apparently nonsentential utterances are argued to be syntactically elliptical for fully sentential structures; an ellipsis analysis accounts for a wide range of connectivity and anti-connectivity effects. Fragments furthermore undergo movement to a clause-external position prior to ellipsis, capturing a number of otherwise puzzling asymmetries, but not all “small structures” are amenable to an elliptical analysis.

1. Introduction

The nature of short or “fragment” answers as in (1) and that of “out-of-the-blue” utterances as in (2) have long been of interest to linguists and philosophers.

(1) [Abby and Ben are at a party. Abby asks Ben about who their mutual friend Sarah is bringing as a date by uttering: “Who is Sarah bringing?” Ben answers:]
Alex.

(2) [Abby and Ben are at a party. She sees an unfamiliar man with Sarah, a mutual friend of theirs, and turns to Ben with a puzzled look on her face. Ben says:]
Some guy she met at the park.

The final utterances in (1) and (2) are generally known as “nonsentential speech” or “fragments” in the linguistic and philosophical literature (see the Introduction of this volume for a fuller discussion of the varieties of nomenclature in use). The primary observation to be made about these fragments is that they can have the same conversational function as (3) and (4) respectively:

(3) Sarah is bringing Alex.

(4) He’s some guy she met at the park.

The question that this observation gives rise to is the following: How can such syntactically nonsentential objects give rise to well-formed assertions with fully sentential propositional content? More specifically, does the propositional content of (1) and
(2) come from (a) a novel method of generating and interpreting such fragments or (b) the usual mechanisms? The consequences for the architecture of the grammar are clear, depending on which option is correct. If option (a) is right, we need to allow nonpropositional semantic objects to be used to make assertions, whereas if option (b) is right, we need to implement what appears to be a kind of ellipsis.

Option (a), which I will call the “direct interpretation” approach, has enjoyed considerable success, being pursued in various forms by van Riemsdijk (1978), Yanofsky (1978), Barton (1990), Stainton (1995, 1997, 1998), Ginzburg and Sag (2000), Jackendoff (2002), Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), and several contributions to this volume, among others. Option (b), which I will call the “ellipsis” approach, has had fewer adherents, the primary ones being Hankamer (1979), Morgan (1973, 1989), and Stanley (2000). In this chapter, I present data that support the ellipsis approach for some such “telegraphic” utterances, and argue that this ellipsis is preceded by movement of the fragment to a clause-peripheral position. This analysis is shown to correctly capture the full range of facts in English, Greek, and other languages from case matching, preposition stranding, binding theory connectivity, pronominal restrictions, scope, bound variable anaphora, polarity items, complementizer deletion, island sensitivity, and immobility effects. I wish to stress at the outset that it is clear, especially from the other contributions to this volume, that an ellipsis analysis is not appropriate for all such fragments: There are clearly, to my mind, a large number of phenomena for which a direct interpretation approach is preferable. Finding the boundaries between these sets of phenomena (if indeed they are nonoverlapping, which I doubt) is an important task to be taken up. Here I concentrate solely on those facts that seem to me to be the best candidates for an elliptical analysis, and for which I feel no well-worked-out, convincing nonelliptical alternative has been proposed.

2. Fragment answers

Fragment answers can be of a variety of categories, such as DPs, PPs, and VPs, as seen in the following examples:

(5) A: Who did she see?
  B: John.

(6) A: When did he leave?
  B: After the movie ended.

(7) A: What does Bush want to do to Iraq?
  B: Take it over.

In all these cases, I propose that the fragment has undergone movement to a clause-peripheral position, call it specFP, and that the head of this projection, F, hosts a feature E, which licenses the ellipsis of the host clause TP, out of which the fragment has moved. This is illustrated for (5) in (8) (see Merchant 2001 for details of the E feature).
2.1 Evidence for ellipsis in fragments

The first kind of evidence for ellipsis in fragments comes from case connectivity effects.

2.1.1 Case-matching connectivity effects

In languages with overt case morphology on DPs, the case of a fragment must match the case of the wh-phrase that is its correlate (e.g., pjos in (9), pjon in (11)) in the antecedent question. This is illustrated for Greek in (9) through (12), but also holds for Russian, German, Urdu, Hebrew, Korean, and English.

(9) Q: Pjos idhe tin Maria?
who-NOM saw the Maria
‘Who saw Maria?’

the Giannis-NOM
the Giannis-ACC

(10) a. A: O Giannis idhe tin Maria.
the Giannis-NOM saw the Maria-ACC
‘Giannis saw Maria.’

the Giannis-ACC saw the Maria-ACC
‘Giannis saw Maria.’

(11) Q: Pjon idhe i Maria?
who-ACC saw the Maria
‘Who did Maria see?’

the Giannis-NOM
b. A: Ton Gianni.
the Giannis-ACC

}\text{(8)}
the Maria-NOM saw the Giannis-NOM  
'Maria saw Giannis.'
b. A: I Maria idhe ton Gianni.  
the Maria-NOM saw the Giannis-ACC  
'Maria saw Giannis.'

On the ellipsis analysis, the case in the fragment answers comes from the usual mechanisms (verbal or T-related) for assigning cases internal to clauses.

2.1.1 Other connectivity effects
In general, a fragment shows the same kinds of grammatical dependency effects that we find in fully sentential structures. This is illustrated for the binding principles A, B, and C in English in (13) through (15), and for the more complex anaphoric dependency found with the Greek item o idhios in (16) and (17).

(13) Q: Where is he₂ staying?
a. *In John₂’s apartment.
b. *He₂ is staying in John₂’s apartment.
(14) Who did John₁ try to shave?
a. *Him₁.
b. *John₁ tried to shave him₁.
(15) Who does John like?
a. Himself.  
b. John likes himself.
(16) a. Pjos nomizi o Giannis oti tha pari tin dhoulia?  
who thinks the Giannis that FUT gets the job  
'Who does Giannis think will get the job?'  
b. O idhios.  
the same  
'Him.' (= Giannis₁ thinks that he₁ will get the job.)  
c. O Giannis₁ nomizi oti tha pari tin dhoulia o idhios₁.  
the Giannis thinks that FUT gets the job the same  
'Giannis₁ thinks that he₁ will get the job.'
(17) a. Pjos nomizi oti tha pari tin dhoulia o Giannis?  
who thinks that FUT gets the job the Giannis  
'Who thinks Giannis will get the job?'  
b. *O idhios.  
the same  
c. *O idhios₁ nomizi oti tha pari tin dhoulia o Giannis₁.  
the same thinks that FUT gets the job the Giannis
If binding theory effects are due to syntactic constraints on co-occurrence stated over phrase markers using c-command, then the behavior of indexed DPs in fragments can be taken to indicate that such phrase markers are present, if unpronounced.

2.2 Evidence for movement in fragments

There is also substantial evidence that the fragment has moved prior to the ellipsis.

2.2.1 Preposition stranding

The first such evidence comes from the cross-linguistic distribution of prepositionless fragment answers to \textit{wh}-phrases governed by a preposition. While such answers are grammatical in preposition-stranding languages, such as English and the Scandinavian languages, these kinds of answers are impossible in non-preposition-stranding languages like Greek, German, Yiddish, Czech, Russian, Bulgarian, Hebrew, and others (a reviewer points out that French patterns as expected with non-P-stranding languages); the Hebrew example is from Ginzburg and Sag (2000:299).

(18) English: a. Who was he talking with?
   b. Mary.

(19) Swedish: a. \textit{Vem har Peter talat med?} who has Peter talked with
   b. Mary.

(20) Norwegian: a. \textit{Hvem har Per snakket med?} who has Per talked with
   b. Mary.

(21) Danish: a. \textit{Hvem har Peter snakket med?} who has Peter talked with
   b. Mary.

(22) Icelandic: a. \textit{Hvern hefur Pétur talad við?} whom has Petur talked with
   b. Mary.

(23) Greek: a. \textit{Me pjon milise i Anna?} with whom spoke the Anna
   b. \textit{Me ton Kosta.} with the Kosta
   c. *\textit{Ton Kosta.}

(24) German: a. \textit{Mit wen hat Anna gesprochen?} with whom has Anna spoken
   b. *\textit{Dem Hans.}
   c. \textit{Mit dem Hans.} with the Hans
(25) Yiddish:  
a. *Mit vemen hot zi geredt?
   ‘With whom has she spoken?’
b. *Mit Moshe.
   ‘With Moshe.’

(26) Czech:  
a. *S kým mluvila Anna?
   with whom spoke Anna
b. *S Jindřichem.
   ‘With Jindřichem.’
c. *Jindřichem.

(27) Russian:  
a. *S kem ona govorila?
   with whom she spoke
b. *S Ivanom.
   ‘With Ivan.’
c. *Ivanom.

(28) Bulgarian:  
a. *S koj e govorila Anna?
   with who aux spoken Anna
b. *S Ivan.
   ‘With Ivan.’
c. *Ivan.

(29) Hebrew:  
a. *Le-mi hixmeta?
   to-who you.flattered
   ‘To Moti.’
c. *Moti.

This distribution is expected if the fragment undergoes movement, subject to language-particular constraints. It is a major puzzle for nonsententialist analyses, and to my knowledge, the nonsententialist approaches ignore this set of data completely (Culicover & Jackendoff 2005, e.g., fail to appreciate how difficult these data are for their analysis, and do not mention it at all. Casielles (Chap. 5, this volume) also overlooks these important data).

2.2.2 Islands
Perhaps the most striking confirmation that fragments move comes from the fact that they are sensitive to islands. This can be seen in three contexts. The first is in answers to implicit salient questions, discussed by Morgan (1973) and Hankamer (1979). When no island is present, such fragment answers are as licit as their sentential counterparts.

(30)  
a. Does Abby speak Greek fluently?
c. No, she speaks *Albanian fluently.
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(31)  
   a. Did Abby claim she speaks Greek fluently?
   b. No, Albanian.
   c. No, she claimed she speaks Albanian fluently.

But when the correlate to the fragment is embedded in an island, only the sentential answer is possible: The fragment answer, since it requires movement out of the island, is barred:

(32)  
   a. Does Abby speak the same Balkan language that Ben speaks?
   b. *No, Charlie.
   c. No, she speaks the same Balkan language that Charlie speaks.

(33)  
   a. Did Ben leave the party because Abby wouldn’t dance with him?
   b. *No, Beth.
   c. No, he left the party because Beth wouldn’t dance with him.

(34)  
   a. Did Abby vote for a Green Party candidate?
   b. *No, Reform Party.
   c. No, she voted for a Reform Party candidate.

The second context where island sensitivity can be observed is in answers to multiple questions:

(35)  
   Who’s more likely to be influencing who? The CIA John Foreman, or John Foreman the CIA?

(36)  
   a. Which committee member wants to hire someone who speaks which language?
   b. Abby wants to hire someone who speaks Greek and Ben wants to hire someone who speaks Albanian.
   c. *Abby Greek, and Ben Albanian.

It should be noted that while the island facts reported here have been judged unacceptable by more than a dozen speakers, island sensitivities for fragment answers are in general somewhat variable, due to factors that at present are unclear: Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), Stainton (Chap. 4, this volume), and Casielles (Chap. 5, this volume) all adduce examples that appear to involve island violations but that are nevertheless acceptable.

2.2.3 Complementizer deletion

Morgan (1973) presents a puzzle from complementizer deletion; he notes that while in situ complementizers can be deleted after verbs like believe, in fragment answers the complementizer must be present:

(37)  
   What does no one believe?
   *(That) I’m taller than I really am.

(38)  
   No one believes (that) I’m taller than I really am.
This is exactly the pattern found with movement of CPs, as expected on the present analysis:

(39) *(That) I’m taller than I really am, no one believes.

2.2.4 Polarity items

The distribution of polarity items in fragment answers cross-linguistically also patterns after their moveability in the relevant language, as Giannakidou (2000) shows. In English, a polarity item like *anything can neither serve as a fragment answer nor be fronted.

(40) a. What didn’t Max read?
   b. *Anything.

(41) a. Max didn’t read anything.
   b. *Anything, Max didn’t read.

In a language like Greek, however, as discussed in Giannakidou, certain polarity items can be fronted; it is exactly these items that can also appear as fragment answers.

(42) TIPOTA  
    dhen idha.
    nothing-EMPHATIC not I.saw
    ‘I didn’t see anything.’

(43) Q: Ti idhes?
    what you.saw
A: TIPOTA.
    nothing-EMPHATIC
    ‘Nothing.’

2.2.5 Turkish bare objects versus subjects

Hankamer (1979:395) discusses the distribution of “bare” DPs in Turkish (those occurring without the indefinite article/numeral bir ‘a/one’). While bare objects cannot be fronted, bare subjects can be. Expectedly, it is only bare subjects that can form licit fragment answers:

(44) Q: Hasan ne yazıyor?
    ‘What is Hasan writing?’
A: *(Bir) mektup.
    ‘(A) letter.’

(45) Q: Hayvanların en aptalı ne?
    ‘Of the animals, the most stupid is what?’
A: Ayı.
    ‘Bear.’
2.2.6 Raising versus control infinitivals
As Chomsky (1981:62) points out, raising and control infinitivals differ in their move-
ability: Control infinitivals can be fronted, as in clefts, while raising infinitivals cannot.
Expectedly, control, but not raising, infinitivals can appear as fragment answers.

(46) a. *It’s [to procrastinate] that people tend.
   b. Q: How do people tend to behave?
      A: *To procrastinate.
         (cf. the well-formedness of the sentential answer People tend to pro-
         crastinate.)

(47) a. It’s [to get a job in Europe] that she wants.
   b. Q: What does she really want?
      A: To get a job in Europe.
         (cf. She really wants to get a job in Europe.)

2.2.7 Predicate answers
Answers that are predicates must include an entire VP, regardless of whether the se-
mantics of the question would be satisfied with merely a V, as pointed out in Hankamer
(1979:239–243), and illustrated here:

(48) A: What did he do to the car?
   B: Totaled *(it).

(49) A: What did she do with the spinach?
   B: Washed *(it).

(50) A: What did he do for his sister?
   B: Funded *(her).

This follows on the present account as a consequence of structure preservation: Move-
ment to specFP is phrasal, not head, movement, so the minimal informative con-
stituent that can be used as a fragment answer is the VP, not the V.

2.2.8 Pronominal answer restrictions
In languages with strong/weak pronoun distinctions, we find again a perfect correla-
tion between those pronouns that can be fronted or occur at the left edge of the clause
and those that can be used as fragment answers. Weak (or clitic) pronouns can do nei-
ther, while strong (or tonic) pronouns can do both. This is shown for Greek, French,
German, and Dutch:

(51) Greek:  
            \textit{Pjon idhes?}  \quad \text{whom did you see}  
            a. Afton.  \quad \text{him-STRONG}
b. *Ton.
   him-weak

(52) French: Il voulait qui?
   ‘He wanted who?’
   a. Moi.
      me-strong
   b. *Me.
      me-weak

(53) German: Was wolltest du?
   what wanted-2sg you
   a. Das.
      ‘That.’
   b. *Es.
      ‘It.’

(54) Dutch: Wie heeft ze gezien?
   ‘Who has she seen?’
   a. Jou.
      you-strong
   b. *Je.
      you-weak

(55) Greek: {Afton / *Ton},
   [him-strong/him-weak], him I saw
   [me-weak]

(56) French: {Moi / *Me},
   [me-strong/me-weak] he me wanted
   [il me voulait]

(57) German: {Das / *Es} wollte ich.
   [that/it] wanted I
   [wollte ich]

(58) Dutch: {Jou / *Je} heeft ze gezien.
   [you-strong/you-weak] has she seen
   [heeft ze gezien]

A similar distribution is found in English, as discussed by Yanofsky (1978), Napoli (1982), and Barton (1990). Only the “strong,” accusative form of pronouns can ordinarily occur in fragment answers. It is this form of the pronoun that similarly can bear focus on the left periphery of the clause as well.

(59) Q: Who watered the plants?
   a. Me.
   b. *I.

(60) a. *Me watered the plants.
   b. I watered the plants.

(61) a. Me; I watered the plants.
   b. *I, I watered the plants.
But the fact remains that in particular the English facts are somewhat puzzling: as Casielles (Chap. 5, this volume), Progovac (Chap. 2, this volume), and Barton (Chap. 1, this volume) point out, something more needs to be said to account for the properties of the English pronouns. Casielles points out correctly that usually (in nonanswer contexts) the pronoun *me* in (61a) is topical, not focused as required by the answering context. I acknowledge this difficulty, and am inclined to believe that the accusative case that surfaces in English is in fact due to the left periphery – the pronoun receives nominative case in situ, but on moving to the left, it receives a new case assignment (whether by a default case mechanism as Progovac moots or by a functional head in the left periphery itself is immaterial), which in English overwrites the earlier case; this situation is parallel, I believe, to what is found in Greek (and other) apparently phrasal comparatives (see Giannakidou & Merchant 2006; Lechner 2004), and to the case of subject-to-object raising in Japanese and Nieuw, and to other Suffixaufnahme (‘case-stacking’) cases, for example as found in some Caucasian and Australian languages and in Korean. Case assignment in English is indeed a difficult matter (especially in copular clauses and other noncanonical argument positions), and it is perhaps not surprising that it is difficult in the case of fragment answers as well. What is perhaps more indicative is the situation found in languages where such complications are absent, such as Greek and German. In such languages, pronouns behave exactly like nonpronominal DPs, appearing in fragment answers in the case appropriate to their syntactic function within the elided clause (by hypothesis), including the nominative. If these languages have any default case at all, it is presumably nominative, as this is the case found in citation forms, titles, street signs, and so on. But in answer to a direct object question such as *Who did you see?* (Greek *Pjon idhes?* (who-acq you saw), the only answers possible are in the accusative, including for pronouns (*Esena* (you-acc), *Esi* (you-nom)). This fact appears to me to be unaccounted for on the nonsententialist approaches just cited.

In summary, there is considerable reason to believe that fragment answers are syntactically fully sentential, but that ellipsis has rendered part of the clause unpronounced. This ellipsis is consistent with current views of ellipsis, which countenance only constituent deletion, only if the pronounced fragment undergoes movement to a clause-external position prior to the ellipsis. This theoretical requirement was seen to have substantial empirical support from a wide range of phenomena.

3. Discourse-initial (?) fragments

3.1 Discourse-initial fragments

Having seen that ellipsis is implicated in the derivation of fragment answers, we are now in a position to examine the second kind of fragment that opened this chapter, fragments with no linguistic antecedents at all, such as (62) (repeated from (2)), said in response to an inquiring glance.
Some guy she met at the park.

Such fragments form the basis for the radical revisions proposed most recently by Stainton in a series of papers (1995, 1997, 1998), following the important initial work of Barton (1990). The core of Stainton's argument can be stated as follows. Premise 1: Ellipsis requires linguistic antecedents. Premise 2: Such fragments do not have linguistic antecedents. Conclusion: These fragments do not involve ellipsis (by modus tollens).

Stainton's (1995, 1997, 1998) argument fails to go through because Premise 1 is false, however. While ellipses cannot occur in true discourse-initial contexts ("DI_null"), they can occur without previous utterances in the discourse ("DI_lang"). Such fragments, then, may indeed involve ellipsis, but of a limited kind, licensed by the discourse context in the absence of linguistic material that could serve as a more explicit antecedent. There are a considerable number of examples of DI_lang ellipses that have been discussed in the literature; I reproduce some of the most important ones here. (See Hankamer & Sag 1976; Schachter 1977, 1978; Hankamer 1978; Stanley 2000; Pullum 2001 for differing views on what to make of these data.)

Miss Clairol advertisement:] Does she or doesn't she? Only her hairdresser knows.

As claimed by Hankamer (1978) and Pullum (2001), these have something of the flavor of utterance idioms, and seem to some extent to be conventionalized. What I claim is conventionalized, however, is simply the VP [VP do it]. The meaning of this VP is licensed by the discourse relevance of some action; it need not have a determinate propositional content. Thus I share the judgment of Stanley (2000), for example (and pace Hankamer & Sag 1976) about Hankamer and Sag's (1976) example; there is no difference in grammaticality for the two variants in (64). (A reviewer agrees that do it is a felicitous continuation for all of the examples in (63) except for (63c), which "does not sound like an appropriate way to ask someone to dance." I concur.)

[Harry Houdini, before an audience of thousands, is attempting to escape from a locked safe dangling under a blimp. One spectator says to another:] Do you think he'll be able to do it?

The fact that the missing VP is do it also accounts for the following fact: While such DI_lang VPs are possible in questions, as seen in (65), no extraction from the unpronounced VP is possible, as seen in (66).
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(65) [Seeing three contestants about to buzz in:]
Who do you think will first?

(66) [Seeing a contestant about to pick among three choices:]
Which (one)/What do you think she will?

The same holds, as a reviewer notes, for other examples modeled on (63):

(67) a. *Key lime pie, I really shouldn’t.
b. *The tango, shall we?
c. *This bridge, I won’t.

Furthermore, because the VP do it is restricted to nonstatives, such DI \text{lang} uses should equally bar stative meanings; the correctness of this prediction is borne out in the following:

(68) [Abby has a ten-year-old younger sister, who she discovers one day in front of their mother’s dresser. The younger sister has put on their mother’s clothes, done up her hair like their mother, put on their mother’s jewelry, and in general done everything possible to resemble their mother. She is in the very act of applying their mother’s lipstick when Abby enters the room and observes all this. Abby is horrified and shouts:]
Don’t!

a. = Don’t do it! (Here possibly = Don’t put on that lipstick!)
b. \neq Don’t resemble our mother!

The restriction to nonstatives also explains why, although (69a) is a highly conventional invitation to dance, and if anything would therefore be expected to be found in such contexts with a reduced VP, (69b) is actually impossible in such a meaning, since \{like/care\} to dance is stative.

(69) [As an invitation to dance:]
a. Would you \{like/care\} to dance?
b. *Would you?
b’. Would you do it? \neq Would you \{like/care\} to dance?

Resolution of DI \text{lang} deictics and/or pronouns is similar:

(70) [Responding to a puzzled glance at an unfamiliar person:]
That/He’s some guy she met at the park.

Since such deictics and pronouns are licensed in DI \text{lang} contexts, and since the copula is similarly licensed, it is possible that DI \text{lang} fragments have the following derivation:

(71) \text{[FP some guy she met at the park]:} <\text{TP he’s } t_1 \text{?}>
Initial support for the correctness of this analysis comes from case facts in case-marking languages like Greek and German. The case that occurs on such fragments is the nominative, the same case that occurs on predicate nominals with the copula.

(72) Greek: a. Kapjios pu gnorise sto parko.  
   someone-nom that she.met in.the park  
   b. *Kapjon pu gnorise sto parko.  
   someone-acc that she.met in.the park

   a-nom guy that she in.the park met has  
   b. *Einen Typ, den sie im Park kennengelernt hat.  
   a-acc guy that she in.the park met has

(74) Greek: a. Afos ine {kapjios/*kapjon} pu gnorise  
   he is [someone-nom/someone-acc] that she.met sto parko.  
   in.the park

   German: b. Das ist {ein/*einen} Typ, den sie im Park  
   that is [a-nom/a-acc] guy that she in.the park  
   kennengelernt hat.  
   met has

Other differences between sentential antecedents and fragment antecedents to ellipsis discussed in Stainton (1998:326) follow from the proposed analysis. Since the unpronounced material in the fragment in (76) is equivalent to the deictic and copula pronounced in (77), it comes as no surprise that the predicate ellipsis in Mark’s utterance is equally strange in both cases (since it is resolved as And Betty is the man from Paris, too, or at best, And Betty is from Paris, too – in any case, not as And Betty is at the door, too).

(75) Jason: The man from Paris is at the door.  
   Mark: And Betty is, too.

(76) Jason: The man from Paris.  
   Mark: ??And Betty is, too.

(77) Jason: That’s the man from Paris.  
   Mark: ??And Betty is too.

Other predicates, in certain extremely limited and highly conventionalized contexts, may be elided as well. Perhaps the most common such context is one of ordering something from a waiter at a restaurant. In this context, a small range of elements (bring, give, I want, I’d like) can be elided, with the consequence that we observe the relevant case: in Greek accusative, in Russian the genitive (partitive).
(78) Greek: a. (Enan) kafe (parakalo)!
   a coffee-ACC please
   ‘(A) coffee (please)’

   b. Ferte mou (enan) kafe (parakalo)!
   bring-IMP me a coffee-ACC please
   ‘Bring me (a) coffee (please)!’

(79) Russian: a. Vody (pozhaluiста)!
   water-GEN please
   ‘(Some) water (please)!’

   b. Dajte mne vody (pozhaluiста)!
   give-IMP me water-GEN please
   ‘Give me (some) water (please)!’

The English equivalent in such contexts is underdetermined by its lack of distinguishing case morphology:

(80) Water!

The moral of all these examples is merely that richer contexts help to provide nonlinguistic antecedents to ellipsis. This being the case, a “limited ellipsis” analysis of fragments in DI_{lang} contexts is feasible, and no adjustments to the usual syntax-semantics-pragmatics interfaces are needed for such phenomena.

3.2 Nonelliptical varia

There are a number of other phenomena that are sometimes discussed in connection with nonsententials or “small structures,” and that can in most cases occur with no antecedents (implicit or overt). These other nonsentential types fall roughly into the classes in (81) through (88) (see Shopen 1972; Sadock 1974; Yanofsky 1978; Klein 1985; Morgan 1989; Barton 1990, 1998; Schlangen 2003; Culicover & Jackendoff 2005; Stainton 2004, with additional classes in Klein; Schwabe 1994; and Schlangen). In such cases, there is no good evidence to my mind for any kind of ellipsis being involved.

(81) [Short directives:] Left! Higher! Scalpel!

(82) [Special registers: telegrams, headlines, weather reports, diaries, recipes, instructions:] If no paper, turn wheel.

(83) [Labels, titles: cf. Bühler’s dingfest angeheftete Namen (‘names adhering to things’), Bühler 1934:$10):]
   a. Campbell Soup.
   b. Starbucks.
   c. Thief, Thief!

out in fear and for help “thieves,” he intends that the general concept “thieves” be connected to what he is perceiving at that moment’.

d. Fire!
e. And now: the first act of the night: The Rolling Stones!
f. To Kill a Mockingbird
g. German: Der Zauberberg (‘The Magic Mountain’)
h. Next exit: Chicago.
i. E 61st St.

(84) [Expressive exclamations:] Wonderful! Nonsense! Fate! For Pete’s sake!

(85) Utterance idioms (Klein’s (1985) “elliptische Formeln” (‘elliptical formulas’):]
a. Up yours.
b. German: Gewitter im Mai – April vorbei (lit. ‘storms in May – April over’)c. German: Wenn schon, dann schon (lit. ‘If already, then already’; roughly, ‘In for a penny, in for a pound’)d. Dutch: Met Jason [‘with Jason’) as a telephone greeting]

(86) [Other nonsentential partially fixed material expressions ((b)–(h) from Culicover & Jackendoff 2005):]a. So much for the light of reason.
b. Off with his head!
c. A good talker, your friend Bill,d. Books open to page 15!
e. How about a cookie?
f. What, me worry?
g. Hey, Phil!
h. Vikings 27, Bears 3

(87) [Some kinds of fragments (e.g., Schlangen (2003)’s “explanation” subtype):]a. Mary: Try it. It’s good for you.
b. Peter: Why?
c. Mary: Lots of vitamins.


It is now possible and indeed critical to ask ourselves what separates these classes from the ones discussed earlier, especially question-answer pairs, for which some kind of elliptical analysis still seems to me to be unavoidable. We have arrived at a state of affairs where we must admit of two possible analyses generated by the grammar for, for example, seemingly bare DPs: one when they are used as answers to questions (a sentential source, subject to ellipsis), and another one when they are used as, for example, titles of books. As theorists, we in general try to avoid such redundancy if possible: In the present case, however, it is not possible. The question then becomes under what circumstances one or the other analysis is actually employed: What factors play a role in determining which strategy will be used to generate a “fragment”? At this
stage in our understanding, no firm answer seems possible, though the most obvious distinction is the one Hankamer and Sag (1976) made between “deep” and “surface” anaphora: The elliptical forms are “surface anaphora,” in their terms, and generally require a linguistic antecedent (modulo the “limited ellipsis” strategy outlined in the previous subsection), while the nonelliptical ones are “deep anaphora.” The latter do not require a linguistic antecedent. Applying this distinction to the phenomena here, we can claim that when a linguistic antecedent is available, the grammar (user) must make recourse to it, forcing an elliptical analysis when one is possible. (This accounts for the fact that in case-marking languages such as German and Greek, a default case such as the nominative found in titles and signs, is not possible on an NP short answer to a question over an oblique case position. The elliptical form must be used, although the other form is generable.) Whether this is a matter internal to the grammar itself (required comparison of derivations with differing numerations relative to a context) or a grammar-external pragmatic matter is not a question I can resolve here, though I suspect it is the latter (i.e., using the nonmatching, nonelliptical form leads to a stark discourse infelicity registered as unacceptability, not ungrammaticality in a narrow sense). It is exactly the fact that a nonelliptical analysis is available in the grammar, and employed in these other contexts, that makes a uniform treatment such as that envisioned in Culicover and Jackendoff (2005) inadvisable.

4. Conclusion

In brief, I have attempted to show that certain fragments can be analyzed within a conservative theory of the syntax-semantics interface, by positing ellipsis, or in some cases, a “limited ellipsis” analysis. Ellipsis alone does not account for all the attested properties of even these fragments, however; we have seen that the full range of properties – the various connectivity effects in particular – falls out from the movement component of the proposed derivation. This movement furthermore makes the ellipsis implicated in fragments consistent with our current understanding of ellipsis, one that permits only ellipsis of constituents. Finally, it is clear that we must also countenance mechanisms in the grammar for generating nonelliptical “small structures,” and find a satisfying way to delimit their application, prohibiting them from use in contexts where a sentential, elliptical analysis is possible.

Note

* I wish to thank the editors of this volume for giving me the opportunity to present this research at their workshop at Wayne State and for many fruitful discussions that this workshop afforded, as well as for their patience and encouragement in making sure this chapter was included. The main conclusions and data presented here in brief form can be found in much fuller form in Merchant (2004), to which the reader is referred for details and further exposi-
tion; this chapter is essentially a slightly amended summary of Sections 3 and 5 of that paper, and is included in this volume in part to give a better sense of the contributions at the workshop. The other contributions to this volume, in particular those of Barton, Stainton, Progovac, and Casielle, have convinced me that a more moderate, intermediate stance is required to account for the full range of data on fragments. Nevertheless, it remains clear to me that completely eschewing structural ellipsis, as for example proposed by Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), cannot at present account for many of the facts discussed here (especially the F-stranding generalization, the distribution of complementizers, predicate answers, and most of the case-matching effects in languages other than English), nor for others relevant to the larger debate (such as the difference in voice mismatch licensing under VP ellipsis vs. sluicing).

References


