A No-Source Puzzle for Clausal Ellipsis in Right Dislocation, Sluicing and Fragments
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1 Right Dislocation: the right periphery as the left periphery: In an analysis of Right dislocation (RD) that we will call the fronting & deletion (FD) analysis, the constituent that occurs at the right periphery of a clause (e.g. *Bob le chef* in (1a)) is in fact located at the left periphery of a clause that follows the first (as in (1b)). The rest of the second clause undergoes PF deletion (Merchant, 2004). This type of analysis was originally proposed for Japanese (Abe, 1999; Tanaka, 2001), and most recently extended to Dutch and German by Ott and de Vries (to appear). (See also Kuno, 1978; Takita, 2014; Park and Kim, 2009; Yoon, 2013, among others.)

(1) a. Julie invited a famous cook: *BOB LE CHEF*
   (Specificational Afterthought RD)
b. Julie invited a famous cook: *BOB LE CHEF* [she invited +]
c. [*CP₁ ... correlate ... [*CP₂ XP [ --+-- ] ] ]
   (Ott & de Vries to appear)

2 Question: Perhaps the strongest argument for the FD analysis is that mechanisms independently motivated in the grammar (leftward movement & clausal ellipsis) take care of RD, leaving no need for construction specific rules. One question that arises is whether we have evidence that the clausal ellipsis process proposed for RD is indeed identical to those that have been claimed to be involved in Sluicing and Fragment utterances. While our preliminary findings of parallel behaviour in these constructions are suggestive of some basic ellipsis mechanism underlying these three constructions, the findings also present a challenge to analyses of clausal ellipsis in general.

3 RD, Sluicing & Fragments - A Shared No-Source Puzzle Apparent island insensitivity in sluicing and fragment utterances has been attributed to (i) island repair by ellipsis (Chomsky, 1972; Lasnik, 2001) or (ii) existence of shorter non-island containing antecedents of ellipsis (Merchant, 2001; Fukaya, 2007, 2014). The view in (ii) is supported by the observation that island sensitivity resurfaces when short sources are blocked for some reason and thus island-containing antecedents are forced (Merchant, 2008; Griffiths and Lipták, to appear; Barros, to appear; Weir, 2014). We observe, however, that when a short source is blocked for certain interpretational reasons (therefore a non-short island-containing source is forced), it does not result in ungrammaticality, contrary to what is predicted (No-source puzzle). Our main data at this point are from German, Japanese and Spanish. For (2), there is no reasonable source for clausal ellipsis, as shown in (3).

(2) Es ist möglich, dass Volkswagen etwas ganz neues plant: *EINEN NEUEN KÄFER*
   it is possible that Volkswagen something entirely new plans.IND: a.ACC new.ACC Beetle
   (German; modeled after Ott & de Vries to appear)
   ‘It’s possible that VW is planning something entirely new: A NEW BEETLE.’

(3) a. *[CP₁ It is possible that VW is planning something completely new]*
   [CP₂ [a new Beetle] [it is possible that VW is planning +]] (island-containing)
b. ≠[CP₁ It is possible that VW is planning something completely new]
   [CP₂ [a new Beetle][VW is planning +]] (Short source; wrong interpretation)
c. *[CP₁ It is possible that VW is planning something completely new]*
   [CP₂ [a new Beetle.ACC ][it/that is +]] (Copular source; case mismatch)

We identify parallel no-source puzzles in Sluicing (see also Barros et al. 2014) and Fragment utterances as well. As it stands, the Case connectivity effect in these three constructions in German cannot be attributed to any obvious ellipsis antecedent. The shared no-source puzzle presents a challenge to the clausal ellipsis analysis of these phenomena currently on the market.
References


