Some Notes on Two Types of Fragments in English*

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Ahn, Hee-Don and Cho, Sungeun. 2012. Some Notes on Two Types of Fragments in English. Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics, 903-921. Fragments convey the same propositional content that their full sentential counterparts do. The form-function mismatch of fragments has been one of the non-trivial issues in syntax, semantic and pragmatics. We suggest that there are two types of fragments in English, and they have different derivational processes and interpretative mechanism. Case-marked fragments have full sentential structures prior to ellipsis and the interpretation follows from the sentential structures that are the sources of propositional interpretations. Caseless fragments, on the other hand, are base-generated nonsentential XPs whose interpretations come directly from pragmatics-discourse.

Key Words: Fragments, Case-marked fragments, Caseless fragments, Ellipsis

1. Introduction

One notable characteristics of everyday speech is ellipsis of linguistic elements. This phenomenon raises a crucial question to representations involved in the resolution of unpronounced linguistic information. In this line of research, fragments like (1B, 2B, and 3B) seem to raise non-trivial implications for representations of elided materials (Merchant 2006: 2):

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(1) A: Who did John kill?  
   B: The janitor.  
(2) A: When did he leave?  
   B: After the movie ended.  
(3) A: What does Bush want to do to Iraq?  
   B: Take it over.  

As shown in (1-3), fragmentary utterances are smaller than grammatically complete sentences and can be of a variety of categories, such as DPs, PPs, and VPs.  
Interestingly, the fragments that consist of nonsentential XPs in (1B), (2B) and (3B) convey the same propositional contents as fully sentential answers like (4a), (4b) and (4c), respectively, and they have identical assertoric forces as their full sentential counterparts.

(4) a. John killed the janitor.  
   b. After the movie ended, he left.  
   c. Bush wanted to take it over.

Merchant's (2001, 2004, 2006) ellipsis analysis assumes that a fragmentary utterance such as (1B) is derived through movement of remnant fragments prior to ellipsis of the full-fledged sentential structures, as shown in (5).

(5) [sp the janitor] [John killed t]

In (5), the janitor undergoes movement to a sentence-initial position prior to ellipsis of the full-fledged sentence structure. Hence, under this approach it is expected that fragments convey the same propositional content as fully sentential answers, preserving the usual mapping of syntax and semantics.  
Scope symmetry shown in both fragments and their non-elliptical correlates also supports the ellipsis analysis. Under the analysis, quantifier scope is predicted to be similar in both fragments and their non-elliptical correlates. The following data confirm the prediction, which may further
Some Notes on Two Types of Fragments in English

support Merchant’s silent clausal analysis of fragments (Merchant 2004:681).\(^1\)

(6) A: How many diplomats did every translator greet?
   B: a. Three.
      b. Every translator greeted three (diplomats).

In both the fragment and full clause answers in (6B), *three* can take scope over or under *every*: Thus, the PF-deletion analysis of fragment answers gains another support from scoping phenomena in English.

Case connectivity also supports the ellipsis analysis. More specifically, the morphological case form of fragment DP is exactly the same as the one we find in the corresponding DP in a fully sentential structure.

(7) Whose car did you take?
    a. John’s. (cf. I took John’s.)
    b. *John. (cf. *I took John.)

However, as pointed out by Elugardo & Stainton (2005), although there are many things to which ‘ellipsis’ can be readily applied to, it’s quite unclear whether all of them can be analyzed in the same way. First, as pointed out by Culicover & Jackendoff (2005), in some case, a fragment answer doesn’t seem to refer to its question counterpart as its sentential source.

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\(^1\)Merchant (2004:680) argues that reflexives in fragments show a distribution regulated by the Binding Theory parallel to their correlates in fragmentary sentential complement (see Ahn & Cho 2009 for detailed discussion of this issue):

(i) Who does John like?
   a. Himself.
   b. John likes himself.

(ii) Who does John think Sue will invite?
   a. ??Himself.
   b. ??John thinks Sue will invite himself.
(8) A: Why don’t you fix me a drink?  
    B: In a minute, ok?  
(9) A: How about fixing me a drink?  
    B: In a minute, ok?  

(8B) and (9B) are interpreted as ‘I’ll fix you a drink in a minute’. Suppose the fragment (8B) refers to the question as its non-elliptical correlate. Then, the fragment is expected to be interpreted as ‘Why don’t I fix you a drink in a minute?’, contrary to fact. Furthermore, there is a case where the sentential source of a fragment is rather vague. Consider (10B).  

(10) A. What’s wrong with you today?  
    B. Headache.  

(≠ Headache is wrong with me today.)  

With respect to (10B), there are various interpretative possibilities, as shown in (11).  

(11) a. I have a headache.  
    b. I’ve got a terrible headache.  
    c. My headache kills me.  
    d. My headache comes again.  
    e. You bring me a headache.  

In other words, it is far less clear what would be exact sentential sources of (10B) if it is analyzed as an instance of clausal ellipsis. To capture these problematic cases of fragments, we suggest in this paper that there are two distinct ways of deriving fragment constructions in English. More specifically, we propose that Case-marked fragments are derived from TP ellipsis while Caseless fragments are base-generated as nonsentential XPs. We adopt the proposal in Ahn & Cho (2006, 2009) that Case-marked fragments have full sentential structure prior to ellipsis and
Some Notes on Two Types of Fragments in English

the interpretation follows from the sentential structure that supports a propositional interpretation. In contrast, we propose that Caseless fragments, which are directly generated as nonsentential X(P)s, are interpreted through a pragmatic discourse relation to the antecedent. We will label this kind of approach as "hybrid analyses" of fragments. There are some antecedents of hybrid analyses such as Morgan (1989), Fortin (2007), Choi & Yoon (2009), and Ahn & Cho (2011), which propose that some fragments are derived/interpreted directly, but the others by syntactic ellipsis.\footnote{The direct interpretation analyses are proposed by Barton (1990, 1991, 1998), Lappin (1996), Ginzburg & Sag (2000), Jackendoff (2002), Culicover & Jackendoff (2005), Barton & Progovac (2005), Stainton (1995, 1997, 1998, 2005, 2006). Under the analyses, fragments are nonsentential XPs. The interpretation of the nonsentential XPs involves not a literal copy of the antecedent, but rather a pragmatic discourse relation to the antecedent.}

We suggest that apparent counterexamples to Merchant's (2004) move-and-delete analysis should be reanalyzed as Caseless fragments that undergo neither movement nor ellipsis; that is, they are base-generated nonsentential XPs.

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2, the first subsection provides some pieces of evidence to support the existence of two types of fragments in English; namely, Case-marked fragments derived via clausal ellipsis vs. base-generated Caseless fragments. The second subsection of section 2 explores the nature of apparent counterexamples against the move-and-delete approach to fragments, and shows that they are indeed directly-generated Caseless fragments in English. Concluding remarks are presented in Section 3.
2. Toward a Solution: Two Types of Fragments

2.1 Case-marked Fragments vs. Caseless Fragments

The crucial difference between (1b) and (10B), repeated here as (12B) and (13B), respectively is presence or absence of a determiner.

(12) A: Who did John kill?
   B: The janitor.
(13) A: What's wrong with you today?
   B. Headache.  

Given that a determiner occupies the head position of D, the janitor is analyzed as DP while headache can be analyzed as bare NP. Under the assumption that D is a locus of Case feature, we label (12B) and (13B) as Case-marked fragment and Caseless fragment, respectively.

3 Two anonymous reviewers indicate the possibility that the following fragments are employed as a reply to (13A).

(i) a. That horrible headache!
   b. A very bad headache!

They both seem to be possible with exclamation forces only although (ia) is somewhat more acceptable than (ib). Perhaps exclamation force may give rise to an independent sentential unit, hence (iab) differ from the instances of non-exclamatory fragments. We leave detailed analysis of exclamatory fragments here (see Portner & Zanuttini (2005) for related discussion).

3 An anonymous reviewer asks a question as to whether three in (6B-a), repeated here, is a Case-marked fragment or Caseless fragment.

(6) A: How many diplomats did every translator greet?
   B: a. Three.
   b. Every translator greeted three (diplomats).

Note that the bare numerals like two or three alone can occur in argument positions, and hence should be Case-marked, as shown in (i).

(i) Two is company. Three is a crowd.
As mentioned in Section one, (12B) and (13B) show a crucial difference with respect to the interpretation. (12B) is interpreted only as (14a) (among many potential candidates), while (13B) has various interpretive possibilities, as shown in (15a-e).

(14) a. John killed the janitor.
   b. John was killed by the janitor.
   c. The janitor had a knife.
   d. It's the janitor who killed John.

(15) a. I have a headache.
   b. I've got a terrible headache.
   c. My headache kills me.
   d. My headache comes again.
   e. You bring me a headache.

The interpretational contrast between (12B) and (13B) is well predicted under the analysis advanced here. We propose that the syntactic representations in (12B) and (13B) can be (16) and (17), respectively.

(16) \[
[CP [TP the janitor] [\check C [TP John killed t]]]
\]
(17) \[
[NP Headache]
\]

The fragments with determiner as shown in (12B) has the full sentential structure for interpretation. Given that D is the locus of Case-feature, we call this type of fragments, Case-marked fragments. The Case-marked fragments like (12B) need full sentential structure to have their Case features checked, as shown in (16). By contrast, fragments without

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5 An anonymous reviewer points out an interesting fact related to Case-marked fragments. Consider (i).
determiner like (13B) don’t have features checked and are void of full sentential structures, hence non-sentential (17). (17), then, is interpreted directly from context.6 As a result, (17) has various interpretative possibilities.

In a similar vein, the analysis advanced here also accounts for the contrast between (18) and (19).

(18) A: What does John play?
   B: The violin.
   B’: Violin.

(19) A: What does John do?
   B: The violin.
   B’: Violin.

As an answer to (18A), either (18B) or (18B’) is good. However, as an

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(i) A: What did John buy there?
   B: A book.
   The fragment is the result of movement (to Spec-C) followed by elision of TP, as depicted in (i).

(ii) [\( \gamma \) [\( \gamma \) A book] [\( \gamma \) John bought t]]

However, as the reviewer indicates, the non-elided counterpart of (ii) isn’t well-formed, as shown in (iii).

(iii) A: What did John buy there?
   B: *A book, John bought there.
   B’: John bought a book.

The ill-formedness of (iiiB) seems to be related to the nature of movement A book. The movement is analyzed not as focus movement but as topicalization. The indefinite nominal cannot undergo topicalization, which results in ill-formedness of (iiiB). The contrast between (iiiB) and (iiiB’) shows that focus movement doesn’t occur in English except for fragments (recall (iB) vs. (iiiB’)). It is not clear why this contrast holds in English.

Fortin (2007) also indicates that fragments such as vocative NPs and XPs such as bare unergative VPs, adjunct adverbial phrases, interjection phrases are generated without the derivation of a full sentential structure.
answer to (19A), (19B) seems to be awkward. Note that the contrast between (18B) and (19B) is parallel to the one between (20B) and (21B).

(20) A: What does John play?  
    B: John plays the violin.  
(21) A: What does John do?  
    B: John does the violin.

In other words, if (18B) and (19B) are derived from (20B) and (21B) respectively via clausal ellipsis, we expect the parallel acceptability contrasts.

The sentential sources of (18B') and (19B'), however, are not clear. Anything related to the violin can be possible interpretations of the fragments. In particular, it isn't necessary for (18B') and (19B') to have the sentential sources like (22a) and (22b), respectively.

(22) a. John plays violin.  
    b. John does violin.

In fact, (19B'), for example, can be interpreted in various ways, and hence can have numerous sentential counterparts, as shown in (23).

(23) John plays/perform/enjoys/learns the violin.

In sum, Caseless NP fragment void of full sentential structure is interpreted directly from context and has various interpretative possibilities as opposed to Case-marked DP fragments.

Adverbial fragments like (24) can also be analyzed in the similar way to Caseless NP fragments.7

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7With respect to absolutely, two reviewers point out the possibility that it can be analyzed in the way similar to Yes. Whether it is an adverb or an interjection, it is regarded as a Caseless fragment under the analysis advanced here.
(24) A: Do you want to go to the movies today?
   B: Absolutely.

Should (24b) be analyzed as clausal ellipsis, the most plausible sentential counterpart can be (25). However, not only (25) but (26a-c) can also be possible sentential counterparts.

(25) Absolutely, I want to go to the movies today.
(26) a. Absolutely, I want to see a movie today.
    b. Absolutely, I would like to go to the cinema.
    c. Absolutely, I am glad to join you.

Thus, the Adverbial fragment too is void of full sentential structure (hence, not derived via clausal ellipsis), and should be interpreted directly from context, so it can have various interpretative possibilities unlike Case-marked fragments.

PP fragments further give rise to interesting contrasts related to their argument/adjunct status. Compare (27B) with (28B).

(27) A: Where did you put my book?
    B: On the desk.
(28) A: Have you seen my book?
    B: On the desk.

The dominant interpretation of (27B) seems to be (29). By contrast, (28B) has various interpretative options like (30a-c) plus (29).

(29) I put it on the desk.
(30) a. I have seen it on the desk.
    b. I saw someone put it on the desk.
    c. Go get it, it’s on the desk.
We assume that adjunct PPs don't have any formal features (in particular, Case features) to be checked, and hence are void of sentential structure for feature checking. Then, (28) can be analyzed as nonsentential PP, which is interpreted directly from context. Argument PP fragments like (27B) seem to pattern differently from adjunct PP fragments like (28B), and there are two possible explanations for this contrast.

Possible explanation #1: DP fragments and PP fragments are fundamentally different. Like adjunct PPs, argument PPs don't seem to bear any Case features to be checked. Then, PP fragments cannot be treated as Case-marked fragments, and hence they cannot be derived from a full sentential source. Then, the dominant interpretation of (27B) as (29) hinges on different factors, namely, pragmatics of question. We speculate that the interpretation like (29) is strongly preferred for (27B) due to general semantico-pragmatic property of wh-question and its answer pair. If some of (30) might be possible interpretations for (27B), then this line of reasoning is more plausible.

Possible explanation #2: Unlike adjunct PP fragments, arguments PP fragments pattern with DP fragments on feature checking. For some speakers we have consulted, (29) is only possible reading for (27B). Recall that other interpretative options are not available for DP fragments like (12B) since Case-marked DP fragment in (12B) is derived from full sentential structure and the interpretation follows from its sentential counterpart. If argument PPs too are Case-marked unlike adjunct PPs, then the interpretation asymmetry naturally follows since the argument PP fragments should also be derived by full sentential structure.

In order to capture the contrast between argument PP and adjunct PP, we could possibly assume that theta-roles are features (Bošković & Takahashi 1998, Hornstein 1999, and Manzini and Roussou 2000). On this view, the argument PP fragments have full sentential structures to have their theta feature checked. As a result, the argument PP fragments are interpreted from their full sentential structures.

In addition, it is generally assumed that argument PP is assigned inherent Case with theta roles. Again, in the case of argument PP fragments to have inherent Case assigned, the coherent syntactic structure is required. As a result, the
Culicover & Jackendoff (2005) note that PP fragments can be problematic for ellipsis analysis of fragments like Merchant (2004). Recall (8) and (9), repeated here as (31) and (32).

(31) A: Why don't you fix me a drink?
   B: In a minute, ok?

(32) A: How about fixing me a drink?
   B: In a minute, ok?

The fragments in (31B) and (32B) are in fact adjunct PPs that don’t have any Case features to be checked by a functional head. Hence, they can be directly generated as nonsentential PPs. Accordingly, they don’t require any sentential correlates for interpretation since they are interpreted directly from context. Note that only fragments of Case-marked DPs or argument PPs require sentential correlates for ellipsis.

Likewise fragments in (33B) and (34B) are analyzed as AP and PP fragment, respectively, and the interpretations of these fragments do not directly correlate with the structures of antecedent clauses (33A) and (34A).

(33) A: Would you like a cookie?
   B: What kind?
      (=What kind of cookie would I like?)
      (≠What kind of cookie do you have?)

(34) A: Are you hungry?
   B: How about a cookie?

argument PPs are interpreted from the full-fledged sentential structures.

An anonymous reviewer points out the following possibility.

(i) In a minute [I'll fix me a drink].

In such case, however, ellipsis isn’t possible because it violates (semantic or morpho-syntactic) “identity condition on ellipsis.” In order for ellipsis to be possible, the antecedent should be like ‘Will you fix me a drink?’ Otherwise, ellipsis cannot occur.
Note that these fragments are not Case-marked, and hence do not have to
be licensed in the sentential structures. Thus, no parallelism issues for
ellipsis arise here (since these are not genuine instances of ellipsis
phenomena), and they too are interpreted directly from context.

2.2 Predicate Fragments

Predicate fragments seem to be also problematic under move-and-delete
analysis. Let us look at AP fragment in the following.

(35) a. How are you?
   b. Fine.
   c. Fine, I am t.

AP resists movement to a sentence-initial position, as shown in (35c).
Nonetheless, fragment is well-formed, as shown in (35b). We doubt that
(35c) actually underlies (35b), and is amenable to ellipsis. We analyze
(35b) as nonsentential AP fragment. Then, the AP fragment isn't derived
through movement and subsequent ellipsis of TP. Accordingly, (35b) does
not necessarily pattern with (35c).

Likewise, VP fragments like (36-38) are analyzed as nonsententials.10 11

When VP fragments are generated without verb's internal arguments, the
fragments are ill-formed, as shown in the following.

(i) A: How are you going to get to Nashville?
   B: Drive.
(ii) A: Why don’t you like to tell John about your problems?
    B: *Worry.
(iii) A: What’s happening at noon?
    B: *Arrive at noon.

Fortin (2007) notes that VP fragments in (iB) is well-formed in contrast to ones in
(iiB) and (iiiB). Fortin proposes that internal arguments must be saturated in VP,
otherwise it would violate Theta Criterion. Fortin indicates that being unaccusative
verbs, internal arguments are not saturated in ill-formed VP fragments in (iiB) &
(iiiB) (NB: the drive is an unergative verb).

Similarly we can account for the obligatoriness of it or her in (iv-v) along the
(36) A: What did he do to the car?
   B: Totaled it.

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

(38) A: What did he do with his sister?
   B: Funded her.

Note that the well-formed fragments in (36-38) aren't derived from the sentential structures like (39).

(39) a. *[Tota*ld it], he __
    b. *[Washed it], she __
    c. *[Funded her], he __

As shown in (39), predicate fronting isn't allowed (perhaps due to immobility of intermediate projection T'(T-bar), as indicated by an anonymous reviewer). Hence, we claim that the VP fragments are not generated via movement and subsequent deletion of TP contra Merchant (2004).12

12 The predicate fragments are analyzed as Caseless fragments. Parallel to other Caseless fragments, they might have various interpretative possibilities. Nonetheless, one interpretation is strongly forced pragmatically. We should note that the fragments in (36-38) have more articulate structures than bare NP fragments. The interpretative options of predicate fragments are reduced compared with the ones of NP fragments.

11 If fragments in (36-38) have underlying structures parallel to their question counterparts, the following sentences in (i) would be the corresponding underlying
Fragments in (40-44) can be further analyzed as nonsententials, non-moved XP fragments under our proposal (the examples are taken from Culicover & Jackendoff 2005).13

(40) A: What kind of scotch does Harriet drink?
   B: Expensive.
   (cf. *Expensive, Harriet drinks [__ scotch].)
(41) A: Let’s get a pizza?
   B: Pepperoni?
   (cf. *Pepperoni, let’s get a [__ pizza]?)
(42) A: Did Susan say that she saw PAT Smith?
   B: No, KIM.
   (cf. *Kim, Susan said that she saw [__ Smith].)
(43) A: How many pounds does that pumpkin weigh?

An anonymous reviewer points out the possibility that (40B) and (41B) might be analyzed as cases of “repair by ellipsis” for island violations. That is, the island violations of full sentential counterparts might be ameliorated in fragments that undergo ellipsis. However, as indicated by Merchant (2004:688), repair by ellipsis for island violations in English isn’t observed with fragments unlike sluicing constructions, as shown in (i).

(i) a. Does Abby speak the same Balkan languages that Ben speaks?
   b.*No, Charlie.
   c. No, she speaks the same Balkan languages that Charlie speaks.
(ii) a. Did Abby vote for a Green Party candidate?
   b.*No, Reform Party.
   c. No, she voted for a Reform Party candidate.

Because of island violation, (ib) and (iib) aren’t ill-formed, and the violation cannot be saved by ellipsis in fragments.
B: Over a thousand.

(cf. *Over a thousand, that pumpkin weighs [__ pounds].)

(44) A: Is Sviatoslav pro-communist or anti-communist these days?
B: Pro.

(cf. *Pro, Sviatoslav is [__-communist] these days.)

Were these fragments derived via move-and-delete, movement of fragment remnants should be possible in their sentential counterparts, contrary to facts. Thus, fragments in (40-44) aren’t derived through ellipsis with movement: They are base-generated non-sententials like AP, N, PP, and so forth (exact labelling is not our direct concern here).

In sum, Culicover & Jackendoff’s (2005) counterexamples to Merchant’s (2004) move-and-delete analysis of fragments are only apparent. They are in fact all instances of Caseless fragments under our analysis, which are base-generated as non-sentential XPs.14

"An anonymous reviewer raises a question as to the impossibility of John in (7b), repeated here.

(7) Whose car did you take?
   a. John’s.
   b. *John.

the reviewer indicates that if there are two types of fragments in English, (7a) and (7b) can be analyzed as Case-marked and Caseless fragments respectively. Then, (7b) should be ruled out, contrary to fact.

As noted in Ahn & Cho (2011), there are two ways of licensing fragmental utterances; namely, syntactic licensing and pragmatic licensing. Further, it is noted that Case-marked fragments are syntactically licensed while Caseless fragments are pragmatically licensed. These two options seem to be fully available in Korean whereas it is not the case in English; that is, Caseless fragments such as (7b) seem to be suppressed if Case-marked fragments are available in English. In other words, Case-marked fragments seem to bleed Caseless ones in English (hence, English chooses only Case-marked fragment option whenever it is possible), while the two types of fragments are equally available in Korean (hence, both the Case-marked fragments and Caseless fragments are free variants in Korean).

We speculate that in discourse-prominent languages like Korean, the "syntax-over-pragmatics" principle is neutralized, and hence the competing fragmental constructions are equally available (see O’Grady (2012) for some related discussion.)
3. Concluding Remarks

We have proposed that two types of fragments in English have different structures and their interpretative mechanisms are systematically distinct. Case-marked fragments like DP fragments (and presumably argument PP fragments) have full sentential structures prior to ellipsis and the interpretation follows from the sentential structures that are the sources of propositional reading. Caseless fragments such as NP, AP, PP, and VP fragments, on the other hand, are base-generated nonsentential XPs whose interpretations come directly from pragmatics-discourse. We suggest that some of major counterexamples to Merchant's (2004) move-and-delete analysis put forward by Culicover & Jackendoff (2005) and others are analyzed essentially as Caseless fragments that in fact don't undergo movement and ellipsis.

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Some Notes on Two Types of Fragments in English


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