
Tracing a new pattern of avoidance – the case of subordinate focal ellipsis in German

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In this talk, I investigate a type of ellipsis in German which is typically not listed among the canonical types of reduction and focus on its formal properties, its distribution and its context requirements (Konietzko 2016). The study is based on corpus data from the deWaC 2010 Corpus (Baroni et al. 2009). The structure under investigation, which I dub Subordinate Focal Ellipsis (SFE), is given in (1):

- (1) Das Wasser wurde gestoppt. Ob mit Erfolg, wird sich zeigen
the water was stopped if with success will itself show
'The water was stopped. If this will be successful remains to be seen.'

SFE exhibits the following formal properties: In a subordinate clause everything is omitted except for the complementizer and one remnant constituent, which may be associated with a focus particle (e.g. *auch*). SFE typically occurs with *ob*-clauses; other argument clauses and adverbial clauses do not host SFE. In most cases, the SFE host clause occupies a left-peripheral position, i.e. the prefield or is left-dislocated with a resumptive *d*-proform. 55 instances of SFE were extracted from the corpus in total. Within this sample, 49 were left-peripheral; only one case was clearly right-peripheral. I attribute this distribution to the discourse requirements of SFE and its information structure. The remnant in SFE serves as the focus within the *ob*-fragment. Discourse-given material is omitted and is anaphoric to an antecedent in the preceding clause. I propose that the prevalence of left-peripheral cases is rooted in their left-dislocated position. Such subordinate clauses are unintegrated within the host sentence and share characteristics with paratactic structures (Haegeman 1991, Frey 2011, Reich & Reis 2013). This makes the SFE more prominent at the discourse level and facilitates coreference resolution given the fact that the antecedent of the SFE is not in its superordinate (matrix) clause but in the preceding clause in the discourse. In the end, this configuration makes SFE more closely related to instances of coordinate than subordinate ellipsis.

References: • Baroni Frey, W. (2011). Peripheral Adverbial Clauses, their Licensing, and the Prefield in German. In E. Breindl et al. (eds.), *Satzverknüpfung – Zur Interaktion von Form, Bedeutung und Diskursfunktion*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 41–77. • Haegeman, L. (1991). Parenthetical Adverbials: The Radical Orphanage Approach. In B. Shaer et al. (eds.), *Dislocated Elements in Discourse*. London: Routledge, 580–611. • Konietzko, A. (2016). *Bare Argument Ellipsis and Focus*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins. • Baroni, M. et al. (2009). The WaCky wide Web: A collection of very large linguistically processed Web-crawled corpora. *Language Resources and Evaluation* 43(3), 209–226. • Reich, I. & M. Reis (2013). Koordination und Subordination. In J. Meibauer et al. (eds.), *Satztypen des Deutschen*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 536–569.