

Sentence fragments, indicated by small capitals in (1), present an interesting problem for linguistic analysis in that they have the superficial form of phrases but are used with the force of complete sentences. This has given rise to two different approaches to them: one on which they are syntactically complete but not fully pronounced sentences, and the other on which they are syntactically just phrases. In this paper, I argue in favour of the latter approach and against the former — in particular, the version proposed in Merchant (to appear), according to which fragments represent a kind of preposing structure in which the fragment moves to the specifier of a C-domain projection and the linguistic material below this projection deletes, as illustrated in (2). What I argue is that while fragments do have a parallel among preposing structures, the clearest parallel is with non-movement ‘hanging topic left dislocation’ (HTLD); and that both fragments and the dislocates in HTLD are plausibly analysed as ‘orphans’ (Haegeman 1991) — that is, syntactically unembedded phrases (see also Ginzburg & Sag 2000) (G&S).

Focussing on data from German and English, I demonstrate that fragments in these languages, *pace* Merchant, do not pattern with ‘fully pronounced’ movement structures after all and thus are unlikely to have the same syntax as them. In particular, fragments do not behave like movement structures with respect to islands, binding, or negative polarity item (NPI) licensing, as shown in (3), (4), and (5), respectively. Moreover, English fragments do not have the discourse properties of familiar non-question A'-movement structures such as topicalization or focus movement, which require that the moved phrase represent ‘discourse-old’ information (e.g. Birner & Ward 1998). This makes it difficult to see how the sentence in (6b) could be a ‘fully pronounced’ counterpart of the fragment in (6a).

What fragments do bear a striking resemblance to (as even Merchant acknowledges) are the dislocates in HTLD structures, widely understood not to involve movement (e.g. Cinque 1983). Like fragments, these dislocates do not trigger island violations, can have case marking that does not correspond to their thematic function, and can acceptably violate binding principle C, as illustrated in (7), (8), and (9), respectively. In addition, fragments may have syntactic forms — in particular, count noun expressions without determiners and, in German, temporal expressions without prepositions — available in HTLD but not movement structures, as shown in (10)–(11). Finally, fragments may, like HTLD dislocates, felicitously express ‘discourse-new’ information, as illustrated in (12). This makes an analysis of fragments that draws a parallel to HTLD structures rather compelling. What makes it even more compelling is that the dislocate and associated sentence in HTLD structures have long been argued to be syntactically independent of each other (e.g. Cinque 1983; Zenen 1997). This would make the former an ‘orphan’, not embedded in any larger syntactic structure and in particular neither part of its associated sentence nor in a left-peripheral position c-commanding the rest of this sentence. Some evidence for the latter claim is the pattern in (13), where the licensing of the NPI *ever* by the licensor *only* in the movement structure in (13a) but not the HTLD structure in (13b) indicates that *only* occupies a position c-commanding *ever* in the former but not the latter structure. An ‘orphan’ analysis for both fragments and HTLD dislocates would, of course, assign them the same syntactic status, drawing an appealing parallel between two apparently disparate structures similar to that offered by Merchant’s account.

Such an analysis of fragments and HTLD dislocates thus offers new reasons to understand the former as syntactically unembedded phrases, consistent with the claims of Stainton (e.g. 2004) and others. It also provides a solid foundation for capturing observed differences in the distribution of fragments and HTLD dislocates, as exemplified in (14). This is that the latter but not the former structures are directly associated with additional linguistic material — a difference which prevents the two kinds of structures from making identical contributions to a discourse or from being interchangeable in every context. There is, in fact, good evidence that this difference has such consequences; one form of evidence is that fragments permit a (non-syntactic) reconstruction of absent linguistic material that violates Merchant’s (to appear) condition on the semantics of deleted material: namely, that there be an antecedent that entails this material and that is entailed by it. Acceptable sequences like (15), in which the fragment is understood in terms of a reconstruction of the negation of the previous statement, which is arguably the most salient antecedent available, clearly do not fulfil such a condition.

- (1) a. A: Who is Beth bringing? B: ALEX. b. (Holding up a lamp:) FROM GERMANY!
- (2) a. Beth is bringing [DP John]₁ b. [DP John]₁ Beth is bringing t₁.
- (3) a. A: Did the FBI interview everyone that Mary went to school with? B: No, John.
 b. A: I would find it hard to believe any rumour that militiamen had killed Blair.
 B: Bush, maybe, but Blair, never.
 c. A: I wonder what kind of madman would want try to kill the President.
 B: What kind of martyr...?
- (4) a. A: Who appeared to be the cause of John and Mary's problems?
 B: Each other (*appeared to be the cause of John and Mary's problems). (G&S:297, (4c))
 b. A: Who is to blame if the President's plan fails?
 B: Only himself (*is to blame if the President's plan fails).
 c. A: Whose kids has John talked to? B: Just John's own (*John has talked to).
- (5) Drink like a fish in public—when wouldn't John do that?
 a. Ah, well, ever in his life—you don't really know John: he's pretty conservative.
 b. *Ever in his life, John wouldn't do that. (cf. John wouldn't do that ever in his life.)
- (6) a. (Pointing to a lamp:) From Germany! b. (Pointing to a lamp:) #From Germany this is!
- (7) My father, they dug up every book he ever read.
- (8) a. A: Who watered the plants? B: Me/*I. b. Me/*I, I watered the plants.
- (9) John's₁ own children, he₁ was always yelling at them to shut up.
 (cf. *He₁ was always yelling at John's₁ own children to shut up.)
- (10) a. A: Hast du gehört? Der Leiter hat gerade Frank gefeuert.
 A': Have you heard? The boss just fired Frank.
 B: Armer Kerl! B': Poor guy!
 b. Armer Kerl, der Leiter hat ihn gerade gefeuert. b'. Poor guy, the boss just fired him.
 (cf. *Armer/Armen Kerl hat der Leiter gerade gefeuert. * Poor guy, the boss just fired.)
- (11) Um wieviel Uhr kommt Hans? 'At what time is Hans coming?'
 a: 16 Uhr. '4 o'clock. b. (*Um) 16 Uhr kommt Hans. '(*At) 4 o'clock Hans is coming.'
- (12) (Pointing to a sanctimonious politician on TV:)
 a. Dieser Blödmann! a'. That jack-ass!
 b. Dieser Blödmann, ich habe gehört, man hat ihn kürzlich mit einer Prostituierten erwischt.
 b'. That jack-ass, I heard they just caught him with a prostitute.
- (13) a. [Only a 'B']₁ John could ever get t₁.
 b. * Only a 'B', John could ever get that. (cf. A 'B', John could get just that.)
- (14) Who did you see today?
 a. My father. b. #My father, I saw him today.
- (15) A: John couldn't ever get an 'A'.
 B: Yeah/No, only a 'B' or worse. = 'John could only ever get a 'B' or worse.'
 ≠ 'John couldn't ever get only a 'B' or worse.'

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