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# Towards a Unified Theory of Fragments: Diagnosing Discourse-Initial Fragments as Small-Clause Syntactic Imperatives

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## 1 Introduction

Consider the following scenarios:

- (1) Alice and Bob are in a car. Bob is about to run over a squirrel. Alice yells:  
*Squirrel!*
- (2) Alice and Bob walk into their living room to find everything in shambles and tatters and their friend Carol sitting in the middle of the floor with a pair of scissors. Carol looks up in horror, and says:  
*I swear I didn't!*

and the following interactions:

- (3) Q: What do you want to eat for dinner?  
A: Pizza.
- (4) Q: Who was Alice talking to?  
A: Bob.

The speech in examples (1) and (2) and the answers in (3) and (4) all represent different kinds of *nonsentential utterances*, more commonly known as sentence fragments. (1) and (2) are *discourse initial (DI)* because they appear without any linguistic antecedent; (3) and (4) are *fragment answers*. Because the syntactic structure of fragments is a contentious point, the terminology used to refer to them is also contentious. In this paper, I will use the term *fragment* to refer to all things which have gone by any of the names *Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE)*, *nonsentential* or *subsentsential utterance*, or *sentence fragment*.

Questions about the underlying syntactic form of sentence fragments - and especially discourse-initial fragments - have gone unresolved for the last fifty years. While some argue that all sentence fragments are the product of syntactic operations like fronting and ellipsis on complete sentences, others claim that fragments are base-generated as non-sentential utterances and interpreted directly at LF. Either approach requires

alterations to our current theory of syntax or semantics. An ellipsis approach to sentence fragments requires the addition of a new ellipsis procedure. A direct interpretation approach requires a new understanding of the semantics and propositional content of non-sentential constituents like DPs and PPs.

One popular approach in the ellipsis program was formalized by Jason Merchant (2004), in which he demonstrates how ellipsis can be used to derive both fragment answers and DI fragments from fully sentential sources. In contrast to an ellipsis approach, direct interpretation approaches to sentence fragments argue for base-generated sub-sentential utterances. They place more burden on the semantics to regulate and interpret grammatical sentence fragments. Most recently, Merchant (2010) conceded to his primary academic opponent Robert Stainton the claim that DI fragments are probably not the result of an ellipsis operation. There are simply too many examples of DI fragments for which derivation from a fully sentential source is either unaccounted for by Merchant's theory or unable to be restrained under the obvious modifications to it.

The present study aims to bring us closer to achieving a unified ellipsis approach by accounting for a large swath of these problematic DI fragments. I will propose a new kind of imperative - the small-clause imperative - and I will argue that a subset of these DI fragments can be analyzed as this new imperative type, thus making them unproblematic for Merchant's specific ellipsis approach. However, there still remains a subset of DI fragments - those that have no directive force and are not imperatives - that proves problematic for both ellipsis and non-ellipsis approaches. These will be discussed in Section 5.

This paper is organized as follows: In Sections 2 and 3, I will outline the ellipsis and direct interpretation approaches in detail, examining how they deal with both fragment answers and DI fragments. In Section 4, I will outline the arguments for treating a subset of the remaining DI fragments as imperatives and introduce some diagnostics for their identification. Finally, in Section 5, I will discuss the remaining problems for a unified ellipsis approach to all fragments. In Section 6, I will conclude and outline possible future paths for fragment research.

## **2 Arguments for an Ellipsis Approach**

Elliptical structures such as sluicing, gapping, and pseudogapping have been discussed in the syntactic literature since the dawn of generative linguistics. Because generative syntax assumes the sentence (or CP)

to be the basic unit of syntax, it is important for analysis within this framework to somehow maintain that all fragments are derived from full sentences. Most recently, the major proponent of this elliptical approach to fragments is the linguist Jason Merchant, who created a mechanism for modeling both fragment responses to questions and discourse-initial (DI) fragments. In this section, I will outline this mechanism, then present some of the empirical data from English upon which it is based.

## 2.1 Parallel with Sluicing

In his 2004 paper “Fragments and Ellipsis,” Merchant argues for an ellipsis approach to sentence fragments by drawing a parallel with sluicing. Sluicing is the phenomenon present in the sentences in (5), in which everything but the *wh*-expression in an embedded clause is elided.

- (5) a. Jack bought something, but I don’t know what.  
b. Beth was there, but you’ll never guess who else.  
c. Jack called, but I don’t know when/how/why/where from  
d. Sally’s out hunting - guess what!  
e. A car is parked on the lawn - find out whose.<sup>1</sup>

We say that sluicing is an ellipsis phenomenon because the sluiced clause exhibits connectivity effects with its unsluiced counterpart. Merchant explores two of these connectivity effects in depth. First, the sluiced *wh*-phrase must match the case of its counterpart in a non-elided version of the sentence. For example, (5b) is grammatical because the nominative *who* is the subject of its clause: it would be ungrammatical to say, “Beth was there, but you’ll never guess whom else.” In contrast, it *would* be grammatical to say, “Beth wants to buy a present for someone, but you’ll never guess whom,” because the sluiced expression is a direct object in accusative case. Second, there is a correlation between languages that allow preposition-stranding *wh*-movement and languages that allow sluicing of the preposition. In other words, a language will allow preposition stranding as a result of sluicing if and only if it allows preposition stranding as a result of *wh*-movement. This contrast can be seen in the preposition-stranding language English in (6) and the non-preposition-stranding language Greek in (7):

- (6) a. Peter was talking with someone, but I don’t know (with) who.  
b. Who was he talking with?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Merchant (2004), 664.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 667.

- (7) a. I Anna milise me kapjon, all dhe ksero \*(me) pjon.  
 the Anna spoke with someone but not I.know with who  
 Anna spoke with someone but I don't know with whom.
- b. \*Pjon milise me?  
 Who did she speak with?<sup>3</sup>

In (6b), we see preposition-stranding wh-movement, with *who* moved from the object position of *with* to the front of the sentence to form a wh-question. In (7b), this kind of wh-movement is not allowed, and thus there is another way to form questions in Greek that leaves the preposition and its object adjacent. Correspondingly, (6a) - in which the preposition *with* is optional before its object - is grammatical, while (7a) is ungrammatical without the preposition *me* before its object. The reasoning, then, is that this correspondence can be accounted for by saying that both the question and the sluiced clause are formed by the same movement operation.

## 2.2 Ellipsis in Minimalism: The [E] Feature

Merchant, working within a Minimalist framework, proposes an [E] feature, which “instructs the post-PF phonological interpretative component not to parse its complement<sup>4</sup>.” In other words, any content that appears to the right of this [E] feature at PF will be deleted, *at PF*. There is no syntactic deletion involved in this process. Merchant also proposes different kinds of [E]’s for different kinds of ellipsis.  $E_S$  appears in sluiced constructions;  $E_V$  appears in constructions with VP ellipsis. The presence or absence of any of the given [E]’s in a language’s grammar determines whether or not that language allows for its particular associated ellipsis procedure. (For example, German has an  $E_S$  feature but no  $E_V$  feature, because it allows sluicing but not VP ellipsis.) This can be seen in the sluiced sentence *Jose lives in Canada, and we know why*. The second clause would have the underlying form

- (8) [<sub>CP</sub> We know why<sub>i</sub> [E] [<sub>TP</sub> Jose lives in Canada t<sub>i</sub>]

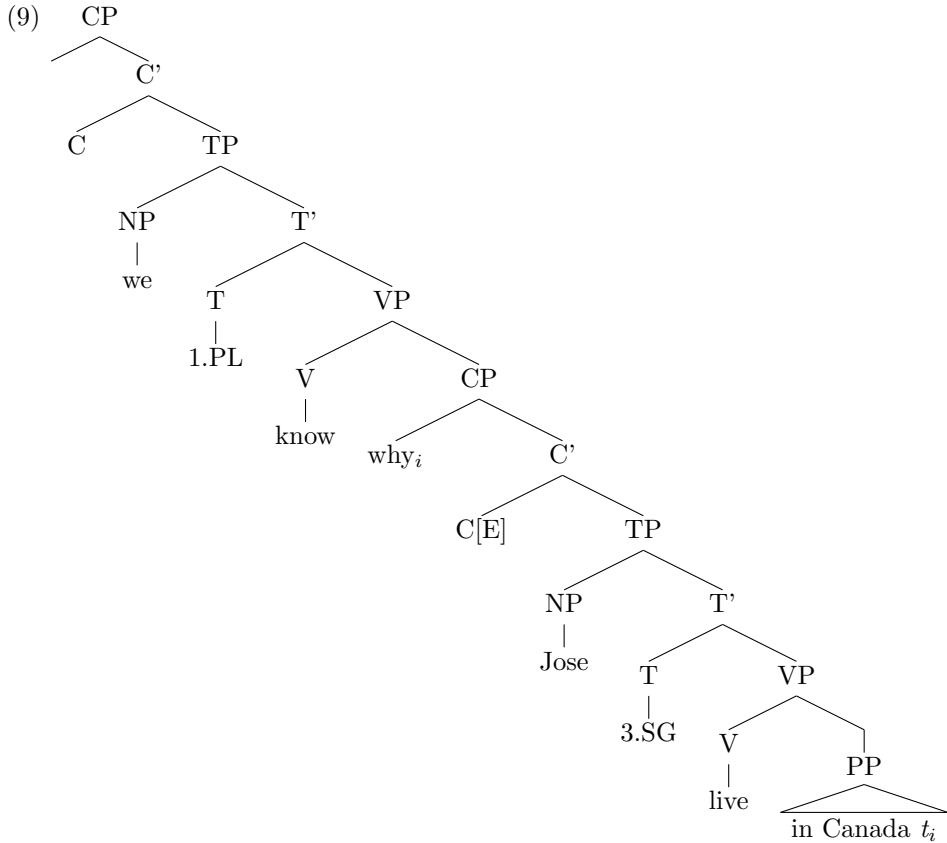
where the whole phrase *Jose lives in Canada* is unpronounced (elided) because it appears as complement to the head bearing the [E] feature. This is shown in the tree in (4).<sup>5</sup>

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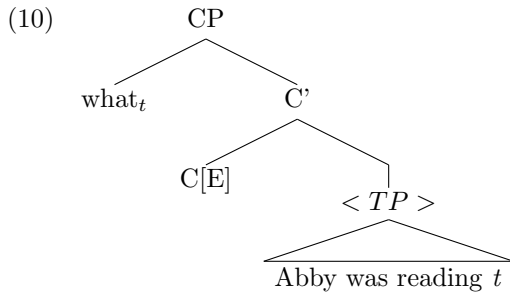
<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 671.

<sup>5</sup>Example from Stainton (2006), 96.



The example in (9) can be generalized to a basic movement plus deletion operation, first proposed in Merchant (2001) and illustrated in (10), for the second clause of the sentence *I know Abby was reading, but I don't know what*.



First, the un-elided part of the sentence is moved up, out of the TP, to the spec,CP position. Second, all the content complement to the C head with an [E] feature is deleted. This movement plus deletion operation allows for more complicated elliptical sentences, and - most importantly - can be generalized further to account for all kinds of sentence fragments.

Merchant (2004) goes on to show that a version of this [E] feature - he calls it arbitrarily [E<sub>f</sub>] can be used in fragments. This will work because the semantics of [E] is designed to capture the identity requirement of

both ellipsis. Thus, [E] requires that there be mutual entailment between the elided expression E and some antecedent A. In other words, [E] fails unless A entails E and E entails A. This can be demonstrated more clearly with an example.

- (11) Q: What did you have for lunch?  
a. A: \*Pizza<sub>t</sub> < I hate ~~t~~ >.  
b. A: Pizza<sub>t</sub> < I had ~~t~~ for lunch >.<sup>6</sup>

Response (11a) is ungrammatical because the elided expression is not mutually entailed by the antecedent question: having lunch does not entail hating something and vice versa. Response (11b) *is* grammatical because having lunch *does* entail having something for lunch, and vice versa, obviously.

### 2.3 Applying the [E] Feature to Sentence Fragments

Merchant argues for an ellipsis approach to sentence fragments by showing that they exhibit the same kinds of connectivity effects as sluiced phrases, and thus are subject to the same theoretical analysis. Merchant (2004) explores many of these connectivity effects, and I will summarize some of those that he explores here. Merchant also examines two different kinds of fragments: (1) fragment answers to questions, and (2) discourse-initial (DI) fragments. The connectivity effects are most clearly seen in the fragment answer type of fragments, so I will begin my discussion there before summarizing his DI fragment analysis.

Some examples of fragment answers can be seen in (12)-(16):

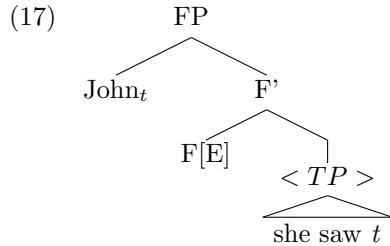
- (12) a. Who did she see?  
b. John.  
c. She saw John.  
(13) a. When did he leave?  
b. After the movie finished.  
c. He left after the movie finished.  
(14) a. What does Bush want to do to Iraq?  
b. Attack it.  
c. Bush wants to attack it.  
(15) a. What's that?  
b. A dish.  
c. It's a dish.  
(16) a. What's left for me to eat?  
b. Some turkey.

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<sup>6</sup>Thanks to Cati Fortin for this example!

c. There's some turkey.<sup>7</sup>

In the above examples, the (b) response represents the fragment answer, and the (c) response represents a fully sentential version of the information conveyed in (b). Merchant derives his model of fragment answers from the mechanism illustrated in (10). This derivation can be seen in (17), illustrating the fragment response in (12).



Instead of raising to spec,CP, the fragment answer raises to the spec position of an FP. Merchant (2004) does not give this phrase a specific name (the FP stands for "functional projection"), but it could be analogous to Rizzi (1997)'s FocusP, another left-peripheral phrase that's part of an expanded CP structure.<sup>8</sup> Merchant's F head has the [E] feature, so its complement TP is elided.

Merchant's argument for this approach relies on a set of connectivity effects exhibited between fragment answers and their antecedent questions. His examples include case-matching, three Binding Theory effects, preposition stranding, wh-island constraints, complementizer deletion, and negative polarity item (NPI) fronting. I will cover a few of these in the remainder of this section that I found most convincing, but see Merchant (2004) for much more thorough and cross-linguistic coverage of each of these.

### 2.3.1 Case-Matching in Fragments

As in the sluicing examples above, the morphological case of a fragment answer is always the same as its counterpart in a fully sentential answer. This can be seen in English in (18).

- (18) Q: Whose car did you take?  
 a. A: John's.  
 b. A: \*John.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Examples from Merchant (2004), 673.

<sup>8</sup>Merchant (2004), 675.

<sup>9</sup>Example from Merchant (2004), 678. Note that this isn't a perfect example, because the possessive *John's* is not a constituent under standard analyses of English possessives. This example was the best one from English, but see Merchant (2004) for cross-linguistic examples that are more convincing.



Similar patterns can be seen in Greek, German, Korean, Hebrew, Russian, and Urdu, all languages with much richer case-marking systems. However, the English example effectively communicates the point. The genitive response *John's* is grammatical, as it would be in the full sentence *I took John's car*. The nominative form *John* is ungrammatical, as it would be in the full sentence *I took John car*.

### 2.3.2 Binding Theory Effects in Fragments

Merchant observes several types of Binding Theory connectivity effects in fragment answers. First, DPs in fragments are subject to the same Binding Principles as their correlates in full sentences. Consider the examples below.

- (19) Where is  $he_1$  staying?  
a. \* In  $John_1$ 's apartment.  
b. \*  $He_1$  is staying in  $John_1$ 's apartment.
- (20) What does  $John_2$  think?  
a. \* That the  $bastard_2$  is being spied on.  
b. \*  $John_2$  thinks that the  $bastard_2$  is being spied on.<sup>10</sup>

The examples above demonstrate adherence to Binding Principle C, which states that a name (like *John* or *the bastard*) must not be co-indexed with a c-commanding name or pronoun. Principle B, which states that a pronoun may only have a non-local, non-c-commanding antecedent, is also observed in fragments, as in (21).

- (21) Who did  $John_1$  try to shave?  
a. \*  $Him_1$ .  
b. \*  $John_1$  tried to shave  $him_1$ <sup>11</sup>

And finally, Principle A, which states that every anaphor must have a local antecedent, is observed in grammatical fragments like (22) and not in ungrammatical fragments like (23).

- (22) Who does  $John_1$  like?  
a.  $Himself_1$   
b.  $John_1$  likes  $himself_1$ .

- (23) Who does  $John_1$  think Sue will invite?

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<sup>10</sup>Examples from Merchant (2004), 679

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 680

- a. \*Himself<sub>1</sub>.
- b. \*John<sub>1</sub> thinks Sue will invite himself<sub>1</sub>.<sup>12</sup>

My favorite example is the fragment below, which is grammatical even though it appears to be a Principle C violation.

- (24) Who did you tell *t* about Bill<sub>1</sub>'s raise?
- a. Him<sub>1</sub>.
  - b. \*I told him<sub>1</sub> about Bill<sub>1</sub>'s raise.<sup>13</sup>

The fully sentential form in (24b) violates Principle C, because *Bill* is co-indexed with the c-commanding pronoun *him*. This appears to be an example of non-connectivity between fragment and antecedent question, but Merchant offers the analogous sluicing example below.

- (25) The police arrested Alex<sub>2</sub>, but he<sub>2</sub> didn't know why <the police arrested **him**<sub>2</sub>>. <sup>14</sup>

In the example above, having *Alex* underlyingly in the place where *him* is would violate Binding Principle C, because lower-clause *Alex* would be co-indexed with the c-commanding *he*. To make it grammatical, lower-clause *Alex* is replaced with *him*. This phenomenon is known as *vehicle change*. Were this sentence to be turned into a fragment answer by Merchant's front-then-delete mechanism, the pronoun *him* would be fronted and be a grammatical response.

### 2.3.3 Polarity Items in Fragments

The final connectivity effect discussed by Merchant which I will examine is the patterning of negative polarity items in fragments. Polarity items are words which can only appear in either affirmative contexts (a positive polarity item, or PPI) or negative contexts (a negative polarity item, or NPI). In English, no NPI's are allowed to front, so Merchant's analysis (correctly) predicts that they also are not allowable as sentence fragments. This is demonstrated in the examples below.

- (26) Q: What didn't Max read?  
A: \*Anything.
- (27) a. Max didn't read anything.  
b. \*Anything, Max didn't read.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 683.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 691.

Along those lines, we should expect languages that allow fronting of polarity items to also allow those polarity items as fragment answers. Merchant cites the following example from McCloskey (1996) in Irish, which allows fronting of NPIs in certain contexts.

(28) Rud ar-bith ní-or cheannaigh mé.  
 thing any NEG[PAST] bought I  
 I didn't buy anything.

(29) a. Caidé (a) cheannaigh tú?  
 what C bought you  
 I didn't buy anything.  
 b. Rud ar bith.  
 thing any  
 Nothing.<sup>16</sup>

This concludes our discussion of connectivity effects between fragment answers and questions. In the remainder of this section, I will outline Merchant's argument for extending the ellipsis approach to discourse-initial fragments without linguistic antecedent.

## 2.4 Ellipsis in Discourse-Initial Fragments

The following example from Jorge Hankamer and Ivan Sag's 1976 paper "Deep and Surface Anaphora" illustrates an important observation upon which Merchant builds his analysis of DI fragments.

(30) a. Hankamer [observing Sag successfully ripping a phone book in half]:  
 I don't believe it.  
 b. Sag [same circumstance]:  
 It's not easy.<sup>17</sup>

The statements in (30a) and (30b) both contain the word *it*, which acts as both a pronoun and an anaphor because it stands in for some more concrete object or entity and also refers to that replaced entity. By virtue of being an anaphor, *it* must co-refer with some antecedent expression. Obviously in the examples above, it does not. On the basis of this and other examples, Hankamer and Sag conclude that there is a distinction between "deep anaphora" and "surface anaphora." Deep anaphora allow for pragmatic control (i.e. non-linguistic antecedents) and are not derived transformationally, but exist in d-structure. Surface anaphora require a syntactic antecedent in s-structure and are derived transformationally by deletion/ellipsis

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 692.

<sup>17</sup>Example from Hankamer and Sag (1976), 407.

processes. The sentential *it* anaphora, including the *it* in (30) and also the VP *do it*, are deep anaphora, base-generated in d-structure. Thus, they allow for nonsyntactic control.<sup>18</sup>

Merchant posits that some form of this sentential *it* anaphora is underlying every DI fragment. Because these expressions can be pragmatically - rather than syntactically - controlled (and because they can be base-generated and don't need to be transformationally derived from a more contentful expression), if the non-linguistic content to which they refer is sufficiently salient, there is no problem satisfying the mutual entailment requirement of the [E] feature. Thus, DI fragments can undergo the same kind of ellipsis procedure as fragment answers to questions when the elided segment is one of the deep sentential *it* anaphora posited by Hankamer and Sag (1976). Specifically, Merchant argues that every grammatical DI fragment has either an underlying [*VP do it*] or an expletive subject and copula, which are elided to derive the fragment.<sup>19</sup>

Consider the examples below.

- (31) a. [*Miss Clairol* advertisement]  
Does she or doesn't she? Only her hairdresser knows.
- b. [John attempts to kiss his wife while driving]  
John, you mustn't.
- c. [As a response to an offer of a second piece of chocolate cake]  
I really shouldn't.
- d. [Mary gets John as expensive present]  
Oh Mary, you shouldn't have!
- e. [Gesturing toward an empty chair]  
May I? [Responding]  
Please do.
- f. [Looking at someone about to jump off a bridge]  
She won't.
- g. [Seeing someone who has dyed his hair green]  
You didn't!<sup>20</sup>

In the examples above, Merchant claims that an underlying [*VP do it*] is deleted from the end of the sentence. Because *do it* can be pragmatically controlled, there is no interpretation problem. Contrast with the example below.

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<sup>18</sup>Deep anaphora contrast with surface anaphora, which require a syntactic antecedent and are thus argued to be derived transformationally. Sluicing is a procedure that leaves behind surface anaphora, exemplified below, with surface anaphor italicized:

(1) Bob drove somewhere, but I don't know where *Bob drove t*.

<sup>19</sup>Note that there is a potential hole in this argument: if the reason to allow underlying *do it* or (expletive) subject+copula to be elided is that they are deep anaphora that may be pragmatically controlled, then we must still account for the fact that other deep anaphora (like most anaphoric pronouns) cannot be similarly elided. For example, a sentence like *John<sub>i</sub> went to ~~his<sub>i</sub>~~ apartment* should be allowed to elide *his*, because it is a deep anaphor that refers to a clearly salient entity *John*. However, this is not the case.

<sup>20</sup>Merchant (2004), 718.

- (32) [As an invitation to dance]  
 a. Would you like/care to dance?  
 b. \*Would you?  
 c. Would you do it?  $\neq$  Would you like/care to dance?
- (33) a. Shall we dance?  
 b. Shall we?  
 c. Shall we do it? = Shall we dance?

In other words, because *Would you like/care to dance?* does not contain [<sub>VP</sub> do it], it cannot undergo VP-ellipsis and remain grammatical. In *Shall we do it?*, on the other hand, *do it* clearly refers to dancing in a certain context, and thus the fragment without *do it* is the grammatical question *Shall we?* Merchant also offers examples of expletive subject plus copula ellipsis.

- (34) a. [Responding to a puzzled glance at an unfamiliar person]  
 He's some guy she met at the park.  
 Some guy she met at the park.
- b. [Holding up a cup]  
 i. This is from Germany.  
 ii. It's from Germany.  
 From Germany.
- c. [Hearing a knock on the door]  
 i. It/That must be someone from the neighborhood.  
 ii. It/That must be the paperboy.  
 Someone from the neighborhood.  
 The paperboy.
- d. [Seeing a student running towards us across the quad and waving at me frantically]  
 She's from my syntax class.  
 From my syntax class.<sup>21</sup>

These examples all undergo the same movement-then-deletion process as fragment answers. The fragment version of *He's some guy she met at the park* would have the structure below.

- (35) [<sub>FP</sub> some guy she met at the park]<sub>1</sub> [<sub>TP</sub> he is *t*<sub>1</sub> ]

Merchant argues for this same process when the DI fragment is a PP, as in the examples below, with the fragment versions in (a) and the underlying structure in (b).

- (36) a. [Seeing someone trying to pound in a nail with a screwdriver]  
 No, no - with a hammer!
- b. [Seeing someone with a cut searching for a band-aid]  
 In the top drawer.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 723-724.

- c. [Seeing a small child jumping and reaching for a set of paints]  
After dinner, okay?
- d. [Entering a room and seeing an exasperated mother who’s just put her baby down to nap and who’s gesturing angrily at the ceiling, where the upstairs neighbor’s dog is barking; she whispers:]  
For twenty minutes already!<sup>22</sup>

Merchant calls this approach to DI fragments “limited ellipsis,” because ellipsis is allowed in a limited set of cases. In the next section, I will go over some of the counter-arguments to the limited ellipsis approach to DI fragments, all of which have been raised by proponents of a direct interpretation approach sentence fragments.

### 3 Support for a Direct Interpretation Approach

The arguments outlined in this section come primarily from two sources: Robert Stainton’s 2006 paper, “Neither Fragments nor Ellipsis,” and Peter Culicover and Ray Jackendoff’s 2005 book, *Simpler Syntax*. All of these authors are proponents of a “direct interpretation” approach to sentence fragments (a.k.a. “non-sentential utterances”). While the details of the approaches vary between authors, this kind of approach generally puts the burden on semantics to interpret fragments. In this section, I will go through some of the empirical evidence that these authors use to make their case against Merchant’s ellipsis approach and some of Merchant’s responses, including his own concession in Merchant (2010) that an ellipsis approach to DI fragments may not be the optimal one.

#### 3.1 Empirical Problems with Merchant’s Proposals

##### 3.1.1 An Empirical Problem with the [E] Feature

Stainton’s primary objection to Merchant’s ellipsis approach is with his attempt to extend it to DI fragments. If these utterances are, in fact, complete sentences, then they should be embeddable. He gives as an example the phrase *Several men from Segovia*, which can be the NP [<sub>NP</sub> Several men from Segovia], or - under Merchant’s limited ellipsis analysis - the elliptical sentence with the same pronunciation [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> Several men from Segovia] [E] [<sub>C'</sub> did it]]. Following that, the examples below should all be acceptable sentences.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 726-727.

- (37) \*If there is graffiti on the wall, then several men from Segovia.  
 (38) \*If several men from Segovia, then the job will be poorly done.  
 (39) If there is graffiti on the wall, then several men from Segovia did it.  
 (40) If several men from Segovia did it, then the job will be poorly done.

Obviously, (37) and (38) are bad if the phrase *several men from Segovia* is a bare DP. However, the CP (sentential) version should embed perfectly well if it's actually a CP (because sentences, even in there forms post-ellipsis, ought to be embeddable).

Merchant (2010) responds to this problem by observing that it *could* be absolved by positing a distinction between matrix and embedded clauses that would regulate the appearance of the [E] feature. In Minimalism, this distinction could be regulated with a feature something like Adger's (2002) [Clause-type:Matrix] feature, which would be a requisite trigger for the [E<sub>f</sub>] feature.<sup>23</sup> Merchant claims that there is independent, cross-linguistic evidence for such a feature: both German and Dutch exhibit different verb ordering in matrix and embedded clauses; imperatives (in many languages) do not embed; and subject-auxiliary inversion in English occurs only in the matrix clause. Merchant notes that it is "at best unclear"<sup>24</sup> whether there exist any commonalities between these phenomena, so there is no argument for or against an [E] feature restriction to the matrix clause being one of them.

### 3.1.2 An Empirical Problem with Movement

Both Culicover and Jackendoff and Stainton observe that there are many examples of fragment answers in scenarios where extraction from lower in the clause would cause an island constraint violation. Consider the exchanges below, with islands bolded for emphasis:

- (41) *Relative Clause Island*  
 a. Harriet drinks scotch that comes from **a very special part of Scotland**.  
 b. Where? or Where in Scotland? [\*Where does Harriet drink scotch that is from *t*?]
- (42) *Relative Clause Island*  
 a. John met a guy who speaks **a very unusual language**.  
 b. i. Which language? [\*Which language did John meet a guy who speaks *t*?]  
 ii. Yes, Albanian. [\*Albanian, John met a guy who speaks *t*.]

<sup>23</sup>Note this would have to be specific to the [E<sub>f</sub>] feature used for fragment derivations, as both sluicing and verb phrase ellipsis can appear in embedded clauses. For example,

(1) I know that Abby's reading something, but I don't know what<sub>*i*</sub> ~~Abby's reading *t<sub>i</sub>*~~.

<sup>24</sup>Merchant (2010), 30.

- (43) *Subject Island*
- a. For John to flirt at the party would be scandalous.
  - b. Even with his wife? [\*Even with his wife, would for John to flirt *t* at the party be scandalous?]<sup>25</sup>

Merchant (2001) accounts for these alleged island violations by saying that island constraints don't apply in deletion operations. This is an accepted understanding of the PF interface, that it is unable to regulate island constraints.<sup>26</sup> Thus, this set of data remains unconvincing on its own as an argument against an ellipsis approach.

### 3.1.3 Empirical Problems with Limited Ellipsis (i.e. DI Fragments)

The most convincing evidence introduced by Stainton (2006) are his counter-examples to Merchant's (2004) limited ellipsis approach to DI fragments. There are a myriad of examples of DI statements which cannot be derived by eliding either [VP do it] or [IP [NP this/that] [I' is t]]. Some of these can be seen below.

- (44) Both hands.
- (45) Two black coffees.
- (46) To Segovia!<sup>27</sup>

Stainton notes that you could account for these by increasing "the inventory of exceptions"<sup>28</sup> of constituents which may be elided without the presence of a linguistic antecedent. For the examples above, this would mean adding [*IP* pro [*VP* use]]<sup>29</sup> for "Both hands," and two *more* unique exceptions for each of the others. This direction is problematic for three reasons. First, it is a slippery slope, and one can fairly easily come up with new DI fragments which aren't derived from sentences within this inventory. Second, these new additions to the inventory of exceptions are not deep anaphoric forms, making them less empirically satisfactory (i.e. we are trying to avoid starting with an unconstrained base-generated d-structure sentence). Finally, their fronted, fully-sentential forms are awkward at best, sounding more like "Yoda-speak" than actual English.<sup>30</sup>

Merchant (2010) is not bothered by the "Yoda-speak" quality of these fully sentential structures. He notes that judgements about clefted and fronted structures often receive varying acceptability judgements, so

<sup>25</sup>Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), 245.

<sup>26</sup>This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as "salvation by deletion."

<sup>27</sup>Stainton (2006), 108.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Or, really, any imperative verb that makes sense in a given context, e.g. *wash*.

<sup>30</sup>Stainton (2006), 109.



the awkwardness of these particular fronted structures should not be automatic grounds for their dismissal. However, he admits that there is no good syntactic ellipsis model that could account for the above examples. Of these, he writes, "In sum, there are simply some examples that the syntactic ellipsis analysis cannot accommodate."<sup>31</sup>

Culicover and Jackendoff (2005) also offer some counter-examples to Merchant's limited ellipsis approach that follow a similar form to Stainton's.

- (47) a. *PP with NP!*  
On the porch with that trunk (, Mr. Stevenson, will you?)  
Off with his head!
- b. *NP Pred!*  
Seatbelts fastened!  
Everyone in the car!  
Books open to page fifteen!<sup>32</sup>

The above two examples are only a subset of ten "free-standing utterance types that cannot be derived in any useful sense from sentences" identified by Culicover and Jackendoff.<sup>33</sup> I will address the remaining eight at the end of this paper, but first, I will propose a new analysis of the above examples that dismisses them as fragments and thus removes them as a barrier to unified theory.

## 4 Treating Fragments as Imperatives

Recall the following examples of DI fragments brought up as challenges to Merchant's limited ellipsis approach by Stainton (2006).

- (48) Both hands.  
(49) Two black coffees.  
(50) To Segovia!<sup>34</sup>

Also recall the subset of "free-standing utterance types" below, introduced by Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), plus the additional example (53), which I will discuss at the end of this section.

- (51) *PP with NP!*  
On the porch with that trunk (, Mr. Stevenson, will you?)  
Off with his head!

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<sup>31</sup>Merchant (2010), 34-26.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 236-237.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 236.

<sup>34</sup>Stainton (2006), 108.

- (52) *NP Pred!*  
 Seatbelts fastened!  
 Everyone in the car!  
 Books open to page fifteen!
- (53) *NP and S*  
 One more beer and I'm leaving.  
 One more step and I'll shoot.<sup>35</sup>

The first observation here is that all of these examples could be tagged with the phrase "Do it!"

- (54) On the porch with that trunk - do it!  
 (55) Seatbelts fastened - do it!  
 (56) One more step and I'll shoot - do it (, I dare you!)

These contrast with some of the DI fragments mentioned earlier:

- (57) \*From Germany - do it!  
 (58) \*Some guy she met at the park - do it!

This is, of course, different from saying that there is a *do it* underlyingly, but it does suggest a common directive force in all of these exclamations. Before going any further, it will be helpful to have some background on the syntax of imperatives.

#### 4.1 Background on Imperatives

Imperatives have *directive force*. We can define directive force as something used by a speaker to instruct a hearer to change their *plan set*, or set of propositions which represents the series of events that the hearer intends to enact.<sup>36</sup> This definition is sufficiently intuitive for the purposes of this paper without getting into the semantic details of plan sets. Most languages, excluding English, have some kind of morphosyntactic marker for phrases that contain directive force: either the subjunctive (e.g. Modern Greek, Spanish, Italian, Hindi) or infinitivals (e.g. German, Italian, Spanish). This suggests that there must be some universal grammatical category "Imperative."<sup>37</sup>

When I talk about imperatives in this paper, I am referring to *syntactic* imperatives. This is an important distinction to make, because the broader category of "imperatives" just includes all utterances which express directives. Directives can also be expressed by questions (*Would you hand me those scissors?*) or by

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 236-237.

<sup>36</sup>Han (1998), 155.

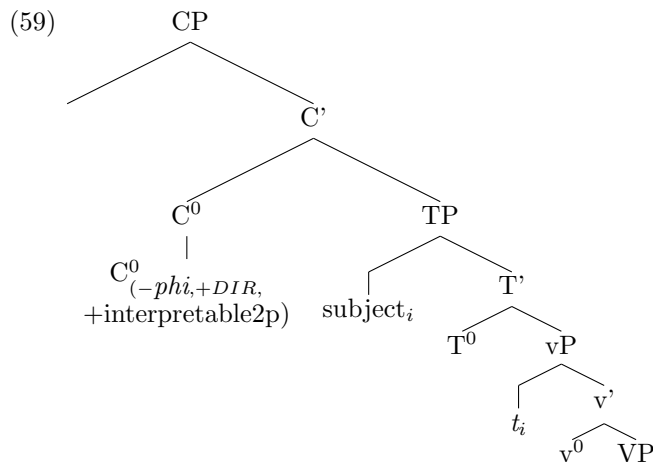
<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 2.

declaratives (*I want you to hand me those scissors.*)<sup>38</sup> Directives can also be direct (*Close the window, please*) or indirect (*It's really cold in here with the window open, don't you think?*). In this paper, I am concerned only with *direct, syntactic* imperatives.

Chung-hye Han, in her 1998 dissertation, "The Structure and Interpretation of Imperatives: Mood and Force in Universal Grammar," defines syntactic imperatives as utterances that express some directive force and also meet the following criteria:

1. They must be able to appear without an overt subject.
2. They contain a verb in its bare form.<sup>39</sup>

David Medeiros (2013) builds on Han's definition and proposal to derive an analysis that works for cross-linguistic imperatives. He classifies a language as having a *rich imperative morphology* if it has overt verbal imperative form(s) beyond the 2nd person (i.e. English is not a rich-morphology language). He claims that only in rich-morphology languages can  $C^0$  with uninterpretable *phi* features (i.e. that is, gender, number, and person features) select an imperative T, which means that only in rich-morphology languages can that  $T^0$  case- and *phi*-agree with the subject and only in rich-morphology languages can imperatives embed. To accommodate poor-morphology languages like English, Medeiros adds a left-peripheral C-head ( $C_{dir}$ ), which always selects an imperative  $T^0$  specified for interpretable 2nd person features:



For Medeiros (2013), the  $C^0_{(+DIR)}$  gives the complement its directive force and 2nd person features. And it is the  $C^0_{(+phi)}$  that selects an indicative finite T, which assigns nominative case to its subject (as usual).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 2.

<sup>40</sup>Medeiros (2013), 41.

It is this approach to imperatives which I will be modifying later in the section to accommodate the set of fragment data introduced above. However, as I will show below, my proposal should be adaptable to any earlier analyses of imperatives within a generative framework.

## 4.2 Diagnosing Fragments as Imperatives

In English, syntactic imperatives always issue a directive to an addressee or addressees.<sup>41</sup> Cross-linguistically, the addressee(s) can be 1st, 2nd, or 3rd person. Also cross-linguistically, some languages allow imperatives to appear in matrix, embedded, and relative clauses (e.g. Ancient Greek).<sup>42</sup> However, all of these features do not hold for English imperatives, which always have 2nd person features, are always addressee-oriented, and *cannot* embed.<sup>43</sup> Some examples, in basic English imperatives, can be seen below.

- (60) *To you*: Pass your homework to the front.
- (61) *To a third-person boy in the corner*: \*Pass his homework to the front.
- (62) \*I wish that pass your homework to the front.

These specific features, combined with the general features of syntactic imperatives, will help us diagnose examples (48)-(53) as syntactic imperatives.

In this section, I will show that all of the utterances identified at the top of the section can be diagnosed as imperatives, by showing that they 1) are unembeddable, 2) have 2nd person features, and 3) are always addressee oriented. Let's begin with unembeddability, which is a necessary but not sufficient feature for English imperatives. As noted in Section 3.2.1, all of the free-standing utterances identified by Culicover and Jackendoff cannot be embedded (except - of course - as direct quotes, e.g. "He said, 'On the porch with that trunk!'"). This also holds for all examples (48)-(53), as seen below.

- (63) \*I wish that both hands.
- (64) \*I wonder if two black coffees.
- (65) \*He said that on the porch with that trunk.
- (66) \*She knows that everyone in the car.
- (67) \*I know that one more beer and I'm leaving.

From here, I will address the other two defining features of English imperatives: 1) they have 2nd person

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 160

<sup>42</sup>Medeiros (2013), 17-18.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 24.

features, and 2) they are addressee-oriented. The remainder of this subsection is split - between the easier fragments to diagnose (examples (48) - (52)) and the more difficult fragment (example (53)).

#### 4.2.1 The Easy Ones

English imperatives have 2nd person features and are always addressee-oriented. Both of these criteria hold for the fragment examples (48)-(52). Let's examine some of these more closely: first, the examples from Stainton, which we can diagnose as 2nd person with the addition of tag questions. Consider the following data:

- (68) Both hands, won't you?
- (69) Use both hands, won't you?
- (70) \*Both hands, won't he?
- (71) \*Use both hands, won't he?

The ungrammaticality of the 3rd person singular examples above suggests 1) that there *is* some kind of underlying or implied subject, and 2) that said subject is 2nd person, and can only be 2nd person. This generalization holds for the data from Culicover and Jackendoff. Example (51) can be tagged as below:

- (72) On the porch with that truck, won't you?

but not as:

- (73) \*On the porch with that truck, won't we?
- (74) \*On the porch with that truck, won't they?

And finally, consider the typology of possible tags for example (52):

- (75) a. Seatbelts fastened, won't you?  
b. \*Seatbelts fastened, won't they?  
c. Everyone in the car, won't you?<sup>44</sup>  
d. \*Everyone in the car, won't we?

The grammatical options above all contain some form of a 2nd person subject. Now, we must address the addressee-oriented requirement for English syntactic imperatives. We can test for this by adding speaker-oriented adverbs to our fragments. Speaker-oriented adverbs are a broad category of adverbs that contrasts

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<sup>44</sup>Note that this example - while it does meet the criterion of 2nd person subject, *does* pronounce an overt subject. However, there is another grammatical form of this fragment: *In the car, won't you?* which has no overt subject and meets the other criteria. Thus, it satisfies the requirement for English syntactic imperatives that they *may* appear without an overt subject.

with verb- or adjective-modifying adverbs. They can be characterized syntactically, as *sentence adverbials*, or adverbs which attach to a sentence rather than a VP.<sup>45</sup> Most importantly, they are ungrammatical when applied to imperative constructions and thus, should also be ungrammatical when paired with any of the fragments. Verb-modifying adverbs, on the other hands, should sound fine.

This is clearly the case for the examples from Stainton (2006):

- (76) \*Ideally, use both hands!
- (77) \*Ideally, both hands!
- (78) Use both hands carefully.
- (79) Both hands, carefully.
- (80) Two black coffees, quickly!
- (81) \*Two black coffees, fortunately!

It also holds for the Culicover and Jackendoff examples:

- (82) On the porch with that trunk, quickly!
- (83) \*On the porch with that trunk, luckily!
- (84) Seatbelts fastened, immediately!
- (85) \*Seatbelts fastened, luckily!

As an interesting aside, these fragments constructions *are* all able to take what Morzycki (2014) refers to as "speech act adverbials."<sup>46</sup> These adverbs act opposite to speaker-oriented adverbs, and may thus be thought of as *addressee-oriented adverbs*. Consider the examples below, where the adverb is modifying the relationship of the directive to the addressee, rather than the speaker:

- (86) Honestly, use both hands.
- (87) Seriously, two black coffees.

Thus, it is fairly straightforward to classify the above fragments as some kind of syntactic imperatives. We will see one slightly more difficult fragment construction, then attempt to account for all of these within a Medeiros-style analysis.

#### 4.2.2 The Harder One

In this section, I will discuss constructions like those in (53), copied below:

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<sup>45</sup>Morzycki (2014), 5.

<sup>46</sup>Morzycki (2014), 40.

- (88) (reprinted from (53)) *NP and S (Culicover 1972)*  
One more beer and I'm leaving.  
One more step and I'll shoot.

Constructions similar to (53) are discussed in Han (1998). She talks about a class of *imperative-like constructions*, and argues for a distinction between them and syntactic imperatives based on a set of diagnostics, some of which I will describe below. I will show that the examples in (53) behave the same as Han's imperative-like constructions for all diagnostics.<sup>47</sup>

First, while imperatives can take *do* for added emphasis, imperative-like constructions cannot.

- (89) Do put the light on.  
(90) Do come one step closer.  
(91) \*Do put the light on, and you'll see better.  
(92) \*Do come one step closer, and I'll shoot.  
(93) "*One-more*" *fragment version*:  
Do (take) one more step, and I'll shoot.

Second, imperative-like constructions can contain NPIs, but imperatives cannot.

- (94) \*Come any closer.  
(95) \*Lift a finger to help her.  
(96) Come any closer, and I'll shoot.  
(97) Lift a finger to help her, and you'll be sorry.  
(98) "*One-more*" *fragment version*:  
Any more steps, and I'll shoot.

Third, imperative-like constructions can be interpreted with "past time reference," while imperatives cannot.

- (99) \*Take a holiday in those days.  
(100) Take a holiday in those days, and you were regarded as a spendthrift.  
(101) "*One-more*" *fragment version*:  
One more step in those days, and I'd shoot.

Finally, imperatives can have indefinite quantifiers like *someone*, *everyone*, and *nobody* as their subjects, but imperative-like constructions cannot.

- (102) Nobody help her!  
(103) Everybody come to the party!  
(104) Someone open the window.

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<sup>47</sup>All examples below (except for the *Fragment version* additions, from Han (1998), 173-175.

- (105) \*Nobody help her, and she will fail.  
 (106) \*Everybody come to the party, and she will be happy.  
 (107) \*Someone open the window, and we'll get some fresh air.<sup>48</sup>  
 (108) "One-more" fragment version:  
 Anybody one more step, and I'll shoot!

Our *One more NP...* examples in (53) differ from both syntactic imperatives and imperative-like constructions in that they don't have a pronounced verbal element. However, they do bear an obvious resemblance to Han's imperative-like constructions. They also behave like imperative-like constructions in all four of the diagnostics summarized here, as well as in the remaining diagnostics identified by Han (1998).

### 4.2.3 A Syntactic Analysis

I believe the evidence above sufficiently demonstrates that the specified subset of fragments are actually derived from syntactic imperatives (or imperative-like constructions). The next task is to account for them within our existing syntactic framework. One way to do this is to modify Medeiros (2013)'s analysis of syntactic imperatives to accommodate these verb-less syntactic imperatives.

The unifying feature of all the examples discussed in this section (besides their directive force and imperative features) is their lack of verbal or tense information. In this way, they bear resemblance to English small-clauses, some examples of these can be seen below, with the relevant XP bracketed and labelled for clarity:

- (109) The car salesman let [<sub>VP</sub> the couple negotiate a bad deal.]  
 (110) The teacher wanted [<sub>AP</sub> the students happy.]  
 (111) She saw [<sub>PP</sub> them in the dark room.]

The bracketed XP in these structures is special because it is in a subject-predicate relationship with the post-verbal NP (called the *intervening NP*). This relationship can fall into one of two categories. In the first, as in example (109), the subject of the XP is both subject of its own verb and object of the main verb. In the second, as in example (110), the subject of the XP is the subject of its own clausal adjective but not the object of the main verb.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>The three other diagnostics are, in my view, less convincing than the four above, but they can be seen in Han (1998), 173-175.

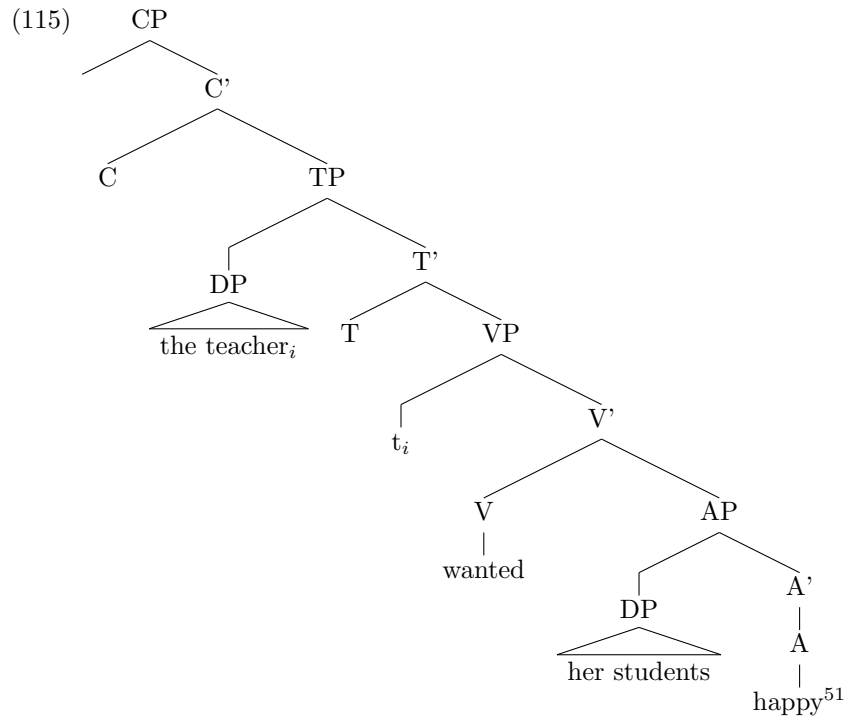
<sup>49</sup>Aarts (1992), 1.



Another feature of all small-clauses is that they contain no tense information, and thus, no TP. They also do not have a complementizer position, or CP.<sup>50</sup> As demonstrated above, small-clauses can be a variety of phrase types, but can never take any additional tense information:

- (112) \*The car salesman let the couple to negotiate a bad deal.  
 (113) \*The teacher wanted the students become happy.  
 (114) \*She saw them to be in the dark room.

The structure of one of these small-clauses can be seen in the tree below, for sentence (110):

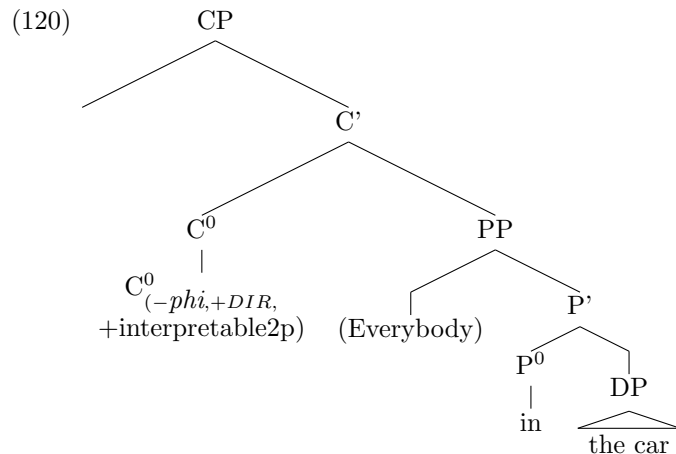


Our fragment imperatives share both of these features: appearing in a variety of phrase types, and unable to take additional tense information. They can even appear in typical small-clause constructions:

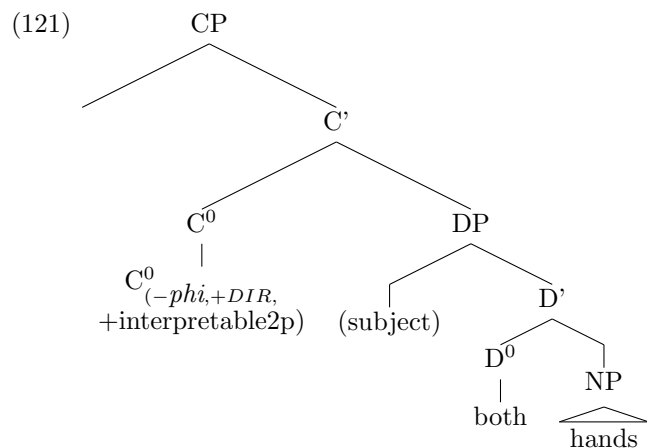
- (116) She wanted [<sub>PP</sub> everybody in the car.]  
 (117) She asked that [<sub>VP</sub> he use both hands.]  
 (118) She rode [<sub>PP</sub> the bus (all the way) to Segovia.]  
 (119) She requested that [<sub>VP</sub> the waiter bring two black coffees.]

Thus, I propose the following modification to Medeiros (2013)'s analysis of syntactic imperatives for fragment imperatives. The tree below illustrates a small-clause imperative tree for *(Everybody) in the car!*.

<sup>50</sup>Aarts, 21.



The tree below for the DP small-clause imperative *Both hands!*



Rather than the  $C^0$  selecting a TP, we can have it select any kind of small-clause structure - a PP, VP, DP, NP, or AdjP. The [+DIR], [+interpretable2p], and [+phi] features on the  $C^0$  select only for small-clauses with 2nd person features. In VP small-clauses, the verb can be unpronounced because its tense is implied (by the [+DIR] feature) and no additional tense information can be added anyway (by definition of small-clause). Subjects are always optionally pronounced.

Case assignment could work in a variety of ways here. Since we can't have  $C^0_{(+phi)}$  selecting a finite nominative-assigning T, as in (59), the most straightforward way to me seems to be ECM-like Case assignment. In ECM, the subject of the embedded clause gets its Case from an optionally pronounced *for* in a special  $C^0$ . In our small-clause imperative constructions, which also have a "special"  $C^0$ , that Case assigner could similarly be  $C^0$ .

As mentioned above, this analysis is easily transferable to other generative frameworks that pre-date Minimalism. The key relationship is between a  $C^0$  with an [E] feature and its complement, both entities

which have counterparts in other models.

### 4.3 What about the others?

In the preceding section, I showed that many of the alleged counterexamples to a Merchant-style limited ellipsis approach could be dismissed as a small-clause type of syntactic imperatives. In this section, I hope to show that a few more of the remaining counterexamples can be dismissed in other ways. Finally, in Section 5, I will present the remaining problematic data. The remaining free-standing utterance types to be addressed are copied below:

- (122) *NP, NP*  
A good talker, your friend Bill.  
The best coffee in the world, that Maxwell House.<sup>52</sup>

Examples like (122) have been discussed by Ileana Paul in her 2008 paper "Great Coffee, That Maxwell House." Paul (2008) shows that these constructions, called PredNP constructions, can be derived by predicate fronting, thus maintaining the same syntax-semantics mapping seen in Merchant (2004). The details of her proposal are beyond the scope of this section, but briefly: The predicate and the subject of the PredNP construction are both generated inside of a small-clause headed by a null Relator (R). The predicate raises from this small-clause to a FocusP and the subject to spec,TP. The R head "carries certain semantic features (evaluative and stative), while T is unmarked for tense." Thus, the verb implied between the subject and predicate can be some form of the verb *to be* or *to have* but not *is being*.<sup>53</sup> This proposal can be seen the tree below, for the utterance *Smart woman, your mom*.<sup>54</sup>

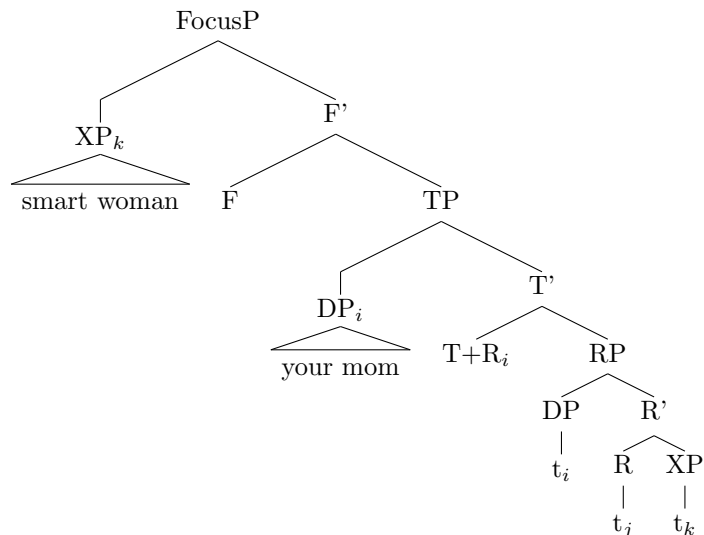
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<sup>52</sup>Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), 236-237.

<sup>53</sup>Paul (2008), 1-2.

<sup>54</sup>Tree copied from Paul (2008), 3.

(123)



Thus, we have a satisfactory explanation for PredNP constructions within the generative syntax framework. In the next section, I will introduce what I know to be all of the remaining counter-examples to Merchant’s fronting approach.

## 5 Some Final Problematic Data

The data I will present in this section is problematic in a variety of ways. In Section 5.1, I will present the remainder of the Utterance types identified by Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), which cannot be reasonably accounted for within a generative syntax framework, not to mention a Merchant-style fronting analysis. In Section (5.2), I will present some data from Benjamin Mericli (2017) on contrasts between discourse-initial NPs and DPs, which presents problems for both approaches.

### 5.1 Culicover and Jackendoff’s ”Simpler Syntax”

Several authors have attempted to formalize the notion of base-generated non-sentential utterances. In this section, I will briefly outline the framework proposed by Culicover and Jackendoff (2005) in their book *Simpler Syntax*.

Culicover and Jackendoff write, “We share with Ross and Merchant the intuition that BAE [Bare Argument Ellipsis], sluicing, clefts and pseudo-clefts, and A’ constructions such as wh-questions and fronted topics are all instances of the same grammatical mechanism at work...Rather than taking A’ constructions

to exemplify the basic phenomenon from which the others are derived, we could take BAE as the purest instantiation of the mechanism in question.”<sup>55</sup> In other words, they are suggesting that the derivation of A’ constructions does not involve movement as we know it. :) They are arguing for a simpler syntax, a what-you-see-is-what-you-get system where the burden is on the semantics to directly interpret whatever is spoken, with no underlying machinery or d-structure. For them, BAE - or what I’ve been referring to throughout this paper as *sentence fragments* - are base-generated as such.

Their evidence for such a drastic overhaul of the generative syntax model comes from the following typology of such utterance types. (I’ve addressed examples (b), (c), (d), and (h) in previous sections and shown them to be easily accounted for within a generative syntax model.)

- (124) a. *Single-word utterances*  
Hello! Ouch! Wow! Allakazam!
- b. *PP-with NP!*  
~~Off with his head!~~  
~~On the porch with that trunk (, Mr. Stevenson, will you?)~~
- c. *NP, NP*  
~~A good talker, your friend Bill.~~  
~~The best coffee in the world, that Maxwell House.~~
- d. *NP-Pred!*  
~~Seatbelts fastened!~~  
~~Everyone in the car!~~  
~~Books open to page fifteen!~~
- e. *How about NP/AP/Gerundive VP/S*  
How about a cup of coffee?  
How about a little shorter? (said by a hairstylist)  
How about going to the movies?  
How about we have a little talk?
- f. *(What,)NP+accVP/Pred?*  
What, me worry?  
John drunk? (I don’t believe it!)  
Him in an accident?
- g. *Salutation, Vocative NP*  
Hey, Phil!  
Excuse me, doctor.  
Hi there, handsome!  
Yoohoo, Mrs. Goldberg!
- h. *NP and S*  
~~One more beer and I’m leaving.~~  
~~One more step and I’ll shoot.~~  
~~Fifty years of generative grammar and what have we learned?~~
- i. *Expletive (P) NP!*  
Damn/Fuck syntactic theory!

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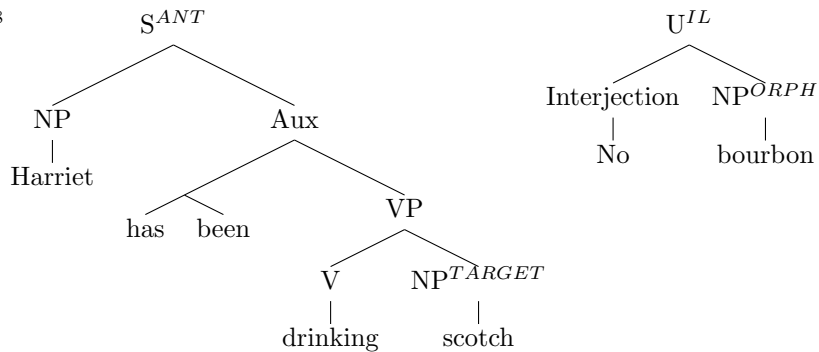
<sup>55</sup>Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), 254-255.

- Shit on semantics!  
 Three cheers/Hooray for phonology!
- j. *Scores: NP Numeral, NP Numeral*  
 The Red Sox four, the Yankees three.<sup>56</sup>

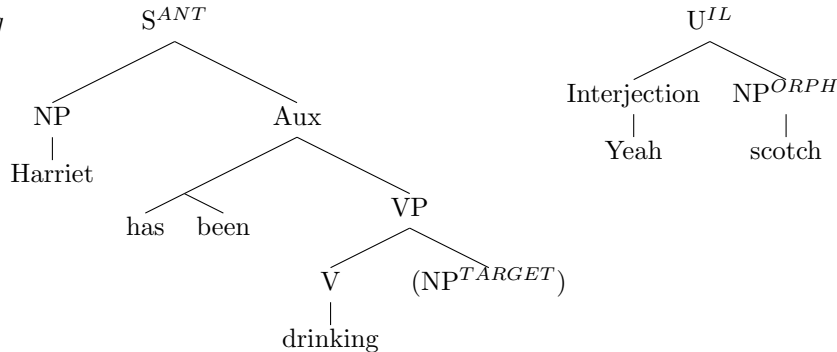
Two things are true for all of the examples remaining above. First, they cannot be reasonably derived from any complete sentence (e.g. they have no tense or verbal element). Second, they cannot be embedded. Culicover and Jackendoff’s aim, then, is to subsume both sentences (CPs) and this collection of non-sentential utterances into a broader category called Utterance or U. In their words, “We do not need to amplify UG in order to allow the syntax of fragment constructions such as BAE to be licensed: UG needs this capability anyway, in order to permit constructions such as [the ones above].”<sup>57</sup>

Culicover and Jackendoff constrain the range of possible indirectly licensed Utterances (notated as  $U^{IL}$ ) using processes they call *matching* and *sprouting*. They correlate every U with an antecedent S, which has some *Target* constituent. The corresponding U for that S then has some *Orphan* NP or PP constituent which co-refers with the Target constituent in the antecedent. If the Orphan is replacing or correcting the Target, this is an example of matching. If the Orphan is filling in a possible blank slot in the antecedent S, then this is an example of sprouting. Trees for these processes are shown below.

(125) a. *Matching*<sup>58</sup>



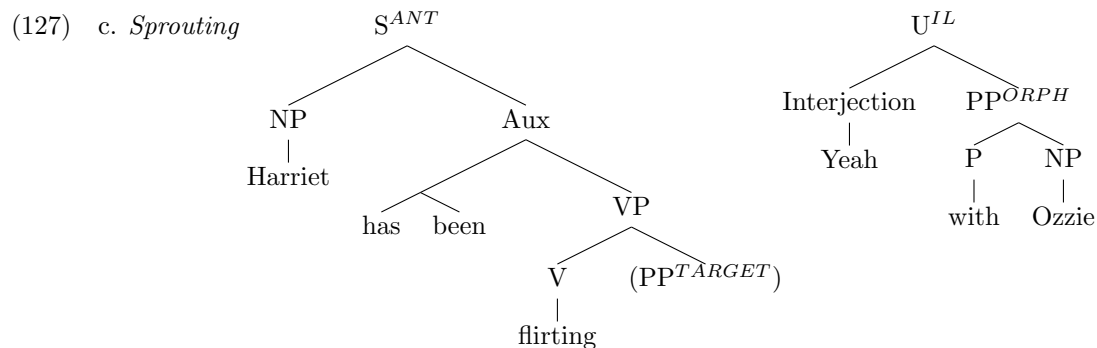
(126) b. *Sprouting*



<sup>56</sup>Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), 236-237.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 238.

<sup>58</sup>All trees adapted from Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), 264-265.



As for cases with non-linguistic context - DI fragments - the furthest Culicover and Jackendoff take their proposal is to suggest the following notation, used below for an utterance spoken in a situation where someone spots a pair of scissors and requests them.

(128) (scissors<sup>ANT</sup>) Would you hand me those<sup>IL?</sup><sup>59</sup>

Example (128) is problematic, because there are no proposed restrictions on what can qualify as a non-linguistic antecedent in the Simpler Syntax model. Like Stainton (2006), Culicover and Jackendoff (2005) articulate some convincing arguments against Merchant’s models for both fragment answers and discourse initial fragments, but ultimately fail to come up with a compelling alternative.

## 5.2 NP / DP Contrast: Data from Mericli

Benjamin Mericli introduces some new data that demonstrates the underdeveloped nature of both theories of discourse-initial fragments. In all of the above examples, I have been agnostic in labelling NPs versus DPs when they appear in fragments. However, their distinction is important to determining the grammaticality of DI fragments. Mericli (2017), makes several observations about their appearance. First, he notes that a full DP is preferred when ”marking at the existence or presence of some entity.”<sup>60</sup>

(129) \*Look, old friend from back home.

(130) Look, an old friend from back home.

Second, he notes that an NP is preferred when ”predicating a property of an entity.”<sup>61</sup>

(131) Cool haircut, Jocelyn.

<sup>59</sup>Culicover and Jackendoff (2005), 265.

<sup>60</sup>Mericli (2017), 1.

<sup>61</sup>Mericli (2017), 1.

(132) \*A cool haircut, Jocelyn.<sup>62</sup>

These data pose a problem for both an elliptical solution like Merchant's (we don't have the machinery to choose when to front a full DP vs. the bare NP) and also for a direct interpretation solution like Culicover and Jackendoff's (we have not sufficiently detailed the semantic reasons for choosing a bare NP vs. a full DP).

Merikli (2017) points out a few more quirks of this NP/DP contrast. For example, bare NP fragments are ungrammatical without an adjective, but that adjective must be an evaluative adjective.

(133) \*New / shorter / bouffant haircut, Jocelyn.

(134) Cool / terrible / slimming haircut, Jocelyn.

Full DP fragments, on the other hand, prefer to attach to a non-evaluative adjective.

(135) Look at you! A new / shorter / bouffant haircut.

(136) Look at you! A cool / terrible / slimming haircut.

Merikli also notes a contrast in the way vocatives can append to DI fragments: they are felicitous with bare NPs, but not full DPs.

(137) Nice mug, jerk. bare NP

(138) Great paper, buddy. bare NP

(139) Phenomenal dissertation, John. bare NP

(140) \*A 400-page dissertation, John. full DP

And finally, what Merikli calls "existential highlighting" can be attached to full DPs but not bare NPs.

(141) Wow! A copper mug. full DP

(142) How nice! A legible paper. full DP

(143) Look, a 400-page dissertation. full DP

(144) \*Look, phenomenal dissertation. bare NP

Based on the above data plus a few more observations (which can be seen in the notes to his 2017 presentation at the LSA Annual Meeting in January 2017), Merikli concludes that Merchant's limited ellipsis approach is insufficient. Limited ellipsis will always predict that the determiner before an NP is pronounced, because the elided material in all existential observations will always be some form of *it is*.

(145) \*(That's) a cool haircut, Jocelyn.

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<sup>62</sup>An interesting sidenote: This construction does sound okay to me when interpreted like the examples in (122).



(146) \*⟨That's⟩ a nice mug, jerk.

Merikli concludes that a hybrid semantics is necessary for interpreting DI fragments.

## 6 Conclusion and Future Paths

In this paper, I have shown that a significant chunk of the DI fragments commonly employed as counterexamples to an ellipsis approach to sentence fragments can actually be classified as a special type of small-clause syntactic imperative construction. I have done this by showing that a subset of these DI fragments have the defining traits of English syntactic imperatives: they have directive force, they can appear without an overt subject, they are unable to embed, they have 2nd person features, and they are always addressee oriented. Once this was demonstrated, it was not a stretch to assert that they can be modeled as imperatives - with [+DIR] and [+interpretable2p] features (or whatever features are used in an imperatives analysis of choice) giving appropriate directive/2nd person traits to its complement. In syntactic imperatives, this complement would be a TP; in my analysis of this subtype of DI fragments, the complement would be a tenseless small-clause.

This analysis satisfactorily dismisses all of Stainton's complaints (and some of Culicover and Jackendoff's) against Merchant's analysis. However, as described above, there are many more counterexamples. Many of these counterexamples fall into the category of "idioms,"<sup>63</sup> which are a contentious genre of construction. Culicover (2013) writes that expressions like this "reside in the lexicon as associations of meanings with non-canonical syntactic structure."<sup>64</sup> Both Culicover and Jackendoff use their existence as evidence of a Simpler Syntax model. Generative syntacticians struggle to account for them, as have I in this paper.

Future studies should continue to look into the nature of idioms, but a more immediate and achievable goal should be to account for the NP/DP contrast in DI fragments observed by Merikli (2017). Future studies should also seek to gather evidence that small-clause syntactic imperative constructions exist cross-linguistically. For the moment, I see the present study as a small victory in the move towards a unified ellipsis approach to all fragments.

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<sup>63</sup>For example: *How about XP?*, or outside the realm of fragments, the expression *take advantage of*. These constructions follow patterns that do not adhere to standard syntactic rules.

<sup>64</sup>Culicover (2013), 9.

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