

snippets

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Quantifiers and the derivation of fragments

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Merchant (2004) argues that fragment answers are derived from full clauses by movement of the focused answer constituent plus TP-deletion. Ott and Struckmeier (2018) have argued against the movement component of his analysis and in favor of an alternative where the answer stays in situ and the clause is removed by non-constituent deletion. Weir (2014) defends a similar position, rejecting Merchant's proposal that fragments are moved in the syntax. Merchant's "move-and-delete" analysis is in (1B), and the non-constituent deletion analysis of Ott and Struckmeier is given in (1B').

- (1) A: What did you buy yesterday?
B: [DP A goat]_i [TP ~~I bought t_i yesterday~~]
B': [TP ~~I bought~~ [DP A goat] yesterday]

Some arguments in favor of the in-situ analysis come from examples where acceptable fragment answers correspond to constituents that are not normally amenable to movement. One case which Weir discusses is that of bare quantifiers like *everyone*: these cannot be clefted or topicalized, but they can be fragments, and so Weir concludes that this is problematic if the movement involved in fragments is syntactic. (See also van Craenenbroeck and den Dikken 2006 for an argument from NPI fragments.)

- (2) A: Who did they invite?
B: Everyone.
- (3) a. ??Everyone, John invited.
b. *It was everyone that John invited.

This snippet shows related data, involving negative quantifier fragments, that seem to support the move-and-delete analysis. The data consist of cases where a high position for the scope of negation is distinguishable from a low one. In (4), the fragment answer responses have readings where negation scopes over an intensional verb, while the unreduced answer sentences lack this interpretation.

- (4) A: What do you regret telling John to buy?
B: Nothing.
B': I regret telling him to buy nothing.

Thus (4B) has the reading "I don't regret telling John to buy anything," where negation scopes over *regret*, but (4B') lacks this interpretation; thus, (4B) is compatible with a situation where A has no regrets over what she told John to buy, while (4B') would not be, as she regrets telling him

to abstain from buying stuff. Similar results obtain in similar sentences with *require*, *refuse* and other such verbs.

These results follow from Merchant's analysis, since the negative quantifiers are moved to a high position where they may take wide scope over the embedding predicates, but they do not follow from the in-situ analyses, which predict that the fragments should have the same scope readings as their unreduced counterparts. Crucially, NegDPs are just as resistant to topicalization and clefting as universal quantifiers (**it was nothing that John ate*), so if proponents of in-situ deletion were to contend that at least some examples are derived by move-and-delete (such as (4)), then the instances of failed fronting in (3) would lose their value as arguments against the move-and-delete account of (2).

References

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