**Ellipsis in ‘DP be CP’ constructions and the syntax of embedded fragments**

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**Introduction.** This paper investigates sentences of the form in (1) and (2). Some NPs with ‘propositional content’, e.g. *idea, rumor, story* etc., can participate in ‘DP be CP’ structures like (1), see e.g. Potts 2002. In such cases, the CP can be replaced by a fragment corresponding only to the focused material in the CP (2), a fact which to my knowledge has not previously been noted in the literature.

(1) The {idea/rumor/story/suggestion} was that he would write to MARY.
(2) Who should he write to? – The original idea was (to) MARY, but she’s on holiday, so he should write to John. (= The original idea was that he should write to Mary)

Even though cases like (2) appear to contain only a subsentential XP after the copula, I argue that they should be analyzed as covertly clausal, as in the parenthesis in (2). An initial motivation for this is semantic; while a semantics has been given for ‘DP be CP’ structures (Potts 2002, Kratzer 2006), it’s less clear what semantics could be given for generalized ‘DP be XP’ structures. Positing ellipsis allows us to maintain a uniform semantics. There is also positive evidence for clausal structure in examples like (2). For example, pied-piping of the preposition is optional in (2); the binding connectivity effects in (3) also suggest that clausal structure is present (cf. also den Dikken et al. 2000 on pseudoclefts)

(3) Who is John going to promote? – The rumor is himself/*him.

(4) The original idea was [cp to Mary [that he should write to]]

An interesting contrast arises in cases like (5), where such fragments are strikingly ungrammatical.

(5) The [sp idea [cp that John should write to MARY]] seems like a bad one.

a. I prefer the idea that John should write to SUE.

b. *I prefer the idea (that) SUE. (i.e. the idea that John should write to Sue)

On the face of it, the CPs in (5) look the same as those in (1); in particular the syntax does not immediately seem to differ. It’s not clear that extant accounts of where clausal ellipsis is licit (e.g. Merchant 2001, van Craenenbroeck and Lipták 2006, a.o.) capture the contrast between (2) and (5b). I propose an analysis for these cases, which I argue will also help us understand other cases of embedded fragments such as (6), discussed by Temmerman 2013 (for Dutch) and Weir 2014 (for English).

(6) What did John eat? – I [think/hope/suspect] salad. (i.e. I think that John ate salad)

**What can CPs denote, and how?** We start by understanding what CPs denote in ‘DP be CP’ and ‘NP CP’ structures. Must be able to denote propositions of the familiar type, <st>. But Kratzer 2006, 2013, Moulton 2015, note that CPs must also be able to restrict the denotations of nouns like *idea*, as in (5). (These CPs are not arguments; as Moulton points out, nouns like *idea* and *story* do not take arguments. They also semantically restrict their head nouns rather than standing in apposition to them, as Stowell 1981 suggests; and despite semantic appearance, they do not have the syntax of relative clauses, *pace* e.g. Kayne 2009.) Kratzer and Moulton propose that (one particular flavor of) complementizer, call it CI, (for ‘logophoric’, after Kratzer 2006), can transform propositions into properties of (abstract) individuals with propositional/intentional content, <e,st>.

(7) \[CI] = \lambda p. \lambda x. [\text{CONT}(x)(w) = p] \quad \text{(where } x \text{ is a variable over individuals with propositional content, and CONT is a function from such individuals to their content)}

(8) \[\text{[cop CI that John is corrupt]}] = \lambda x. [\text{CONT}(x)(w) = \lambda w' \text{. John is corrupt in } w']

Denotations like (8) allow the composition of ‘NP CP’ examples like (5) to proceed unproblematically via Predicate Modification (Kratzer 2006, Moulton 2015).

(9) \[\text{[sp rumor [cop CI that John is corrupt]]} = \lambda x. \text{rumor}(x)(w) \land [\text{CONT}(x)(w) = \lambda w' \text{. John is corrupt in } w']

Constructions like (1), however, are equative (Potts 2002), i.e. DP = CP. DPs like *the rumor* appear to denote (abstract) individuals (Moulton 2015); so assuming that type-equivalence is required in equative constructions (Heycock & Kroch 1999), the CP therefore also needs to be shifted into the type of individuals <e>. I propose (departing from Potts’ implementation, and also from Kratzer and Moulton) that this is done by a choice-functional operator applied to clauses like (8) – and that this operator also inhabits a left-peripheral complementizer position which takes a CP such as (8) as complement. I label this operator as C_D – ‘D’ to imply its determiner-like semantics. (Note that the category label remains that of a C rather than a D (clausal rather than nominal); as Moulton 2015 notes, we do not want to neutralize the *syntactic* (c-selectional) DP/CP distinction, cf. e.g. discussion in Kastner 2015.)

(10) \[C_D] = \lambda P \text{.eq,.f(P)} \quad \text{where } f \text{ is a choice function that picks an individual in the domain of } P
We may also be parenthetical on this, I also speculate about the concern regarding the licensing of ellipsis: ANSW and C do not relate to the intentional content of the rumor; (i.e. the true answer in (w))

The relevance for clausal ellipsis. I propose that the difference between (2) and (5b) is because C is a licensor of ellipsis, while C is not. In Merchant 2001, 2004’s terms, only C bears the [E]-feature which attaches a fragment to its Spec and licenses ellipsis of its complement.

The idea is [to John [C [C that he should write to]]] (no C, so ellipsis not possible)

This finds a parallel with Weir 2014’s treatment of embedded fragments of the type in (6). In many languages (e.g. Dutch, Barbiers 2000; Spanish, de Cuba & Macdonald 2013; English, Weir 2014), this possibility is restricted only to bridge verbs. Non-bridge verbs, as in (15), do not allow fragment embedding of the type shown in (6).

I believe/was told/hear/think/suspect [C that John ate salad]

This is consistent with the proposal in Kratzer 2006, Moulton 2015 that verbs like believe s-select for intentional entities, not propositions. If, however, verbs like discover do not s-select for intentional entities, they will not select a clause headed by C. In support of this, note that (17b) (in contrast to (17a)) does not relate to the intentional content of the rumor; (17b) only means roughly ‘I discovered/regret that the rumor exists’ (cf. discussion in Uegaki 2015).

The failure of ellipsis in cases like (15) is therefore explained by the lack of C.

Extension to sluicing. It is perhaps surprising that those verbs in (15) which embed wh-questions do allow clausal ellipsis in sluicing, even though fragments are ruled out.

The contrast between (15) and (19) can, I argue, receive an explanation on the current account. I propose, following Weir 2014, that when these verbs embed questions, they also require the mediation of a ‘high’ left-peripheral head. If the questions denote Hamblin sets of propositions, then these need to be shifted into the single proposition which is the true answer, by means of an ANSW operator such as

\[ \text{ANSW} \] = \{w \mid 0 \neq q, \text{sent} \}

The [what Q John ate t] is roughly \( [\text{what} \ C \text{John ate t}] = \{w \mid 0 \neq q, \text{sent} \} \) (i.e. the true answer in w)

Why these left-peripheral heads? Weir 2014 argued that ‘high’ left-peripheral heads license clausal ellipsis, but gave no deeper reason for why this should be the case. However, on the present analysis, ANSW and C form a natural class that has independently been argued to be relevant for ellipsis licensing – they are both quantificational; they both take a set and return a member of that set, i.e. they are of type \( \langle \sigma, \sigma \rangle \). We may then be able to return to a variant of the picture painted by Lobeck 1995 concerning the licensing of ellipsis: that certain features, in particular quantificational force or partitivity, are the crucial determinants of whether a head can license ellipsis of its complement. Based on this, I also speculate about the licensing of clausal ellipsis in root clauses. I propose that the left-peripheral head that licenses ellipsis in root clauses may also be an element with determiner-like semantics: one which takes a proposition and returns a speech act (cf. Kriikka 2001, McCloskey 2006).