

Fragment answers in Dutch and English: A TP-ellipsis account

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A. Outline The chief aim of this paper is to investigate Fragment Answers (FAs) in Dutch in comparison to their English counterparts. While the former can in general be embedded and are insensitive to islands, the latter only occur in main clause contexts and are island-sensitive. I argue that the difference follows naturally if Dutch FAs are given an account parallel to that of Sluicing, i.e. fronting to [Spec, CP] and TP-ellipsis. I also show that there is variation among the Dutch embedded FAs: one type of embedded FA, which *is* – unlike other Dutch FAs – island-sensitive, moves from [Spec, CP] to matrix [spec, *v*P] (prior to the TP-ellipsis).

B. Fragment answers in Dutch & English: basic properties

B.1. Definition Fragment answers, both in English and Dutch, are answers consisting of a non-sentential XP with the same propositional content as a fully sentential answer (cf. Merchant 2004).

- (1) Q: *Wie gaat de wedstrijd winnen?* ‘Who is going to win the contest?’
A: *Diana.* (= *Diana gaat de wedstrijd winnen.*) ‘Diana.’ (= ‘Diana is going to win the contest.’)

B.2. Ellipsis Merchant (2004) shows that English FAs are derived from full sentential structures by ellipsis (PF-deletion). This is suggested by the fact that the FA shows connectivity effects identical to those exhibited by the FA’s correlate in a non-elliptical sentence. This is also true for Dutch FAs (embedded and non-embedded), as illustrated in (2) with Variable Binding.

- (2) Q: *Wat vindt elke politicus_i uiterst belangrijk?* ‘What does every politician_i hold in high regard?’
A: *Zijn_i imago.* / *Elke politicus_i vindt zijn_i imago uiterst belangrijk.*
‘His_i image.’ / ‘Every politician_i holds his_i image in high regard.’

B.3. Movement Merchant (2004) also provides several diagnostics to show that the fragments have been moved prior to the ellipsis (i.e. the elided clausal structure hosts the trace/copy of the movement operation). One of these diagnostics is Preposition Stranding: P-stranding languages like English allow both ‘bare’ DP and PP answers, while in non-P-stranding languages like Dutch only PP answers are possible, cf. (3).

- (3) Q: *<Naar> wie was Peter <*naar> aan het kijken?* ‘Who was Peter looking at?’
A: a. *Naar Marie.* b. **Marie.* ‘(At) Mary.’

Some Dutch speakers do not entirely exclude P-stranding in WH-movement or topicalization. For them, the non-pied-piped variant of the question in (3), with stranding of [_P *naar*], is not unacceptable. These speakers also allow for the DP answer in (3b). This correlation corroborates Merchant’s diagnostic as well.

C. Fragment answers in Dutch & English: main differences

C.1. Dutch, but not English, FAs are island-insensitive While English FAs obey island constraints – as expected if they involve A’-movement – Dutch FAs do not. Testing for FA-island sensitivity is not unproblematic, as the questions which the FAs would have to answer are themselves locality-violating. Therefore, Merchant (2004) uses *implicit salient questions* (yes-no questions with an intonation rise on an XP *in situ*) as a diagnostic. Example (4) shows that Dutch, but not English, FAs can violate a Relative Clause island.

- (4) Q: *Willen ze iemand aannemen die GRIEKSpreekt?* ‘Do they want to hire someone who speaks GREEK?’
A: *Nee, ALBANEES.* *‘No, ALBANIAN.’

Sluicing, i.e. clausal ellipsis leaving only a WH-phrase, is also insensitive to islands (Ross 1969; Merchant 2001).

- (5) *Ze willen iemand inhuren die een Balkantaal spreekt. – Welke?*
‘They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language. – Which one?’

C.2. Dutch, but not English, FAs are embeddable The question in (6) allows for a number of different embedded FAs in Dutch (cf. also Barbiers 2002). However, their English counterparts are ungrammatical.

- (6) Q: *Wie dacht je dat zou winnen?* ‘Who did you think would win?’
A₁: *Ik dacht Eva.* A₂: *Ik had gedacht Eva.* A₃: *Ik had Eva gedacht.* *‘I thought Eva.’
I thought Eva I had thought Eva I had Eva thought *‘I had thought Eva.’

Like non-embedded FAs in Dutch, the embedded fragments in (A₁) and (A₂) are not sensitive to islands, as illustrated in (7a) with an Adjunct island. However, FAs like (A₃) *do* obey locality constraints, cf. (7b). This crucial difference indicates that this type of FA should be given a different analysis.

- (7) *Is Jan gekomen omdat hij MARIE wil versieren?* ‘Has John come because he wants to seduce Mary?’
a. *Nee, ik dacht / had gedacht / zou denken EVA.* *‘No, I thought / had thought / would think Eva.’
b. * *Nee, ik had EVA gedacht / ik zou EVA denken.* *‘No I had Eva thought / would Eva think.’

D. Fragment answers in Dutch & English: analysis

D.1. The analysis of non-embedded FAs (and Sluicing) in Dutch & English In recent work, ellipsis processes are often assumed to involve a syntactic feature [E], cf. Merchant (2001, 2004, 2008) and van Craenenbroeck (2004). In Sluicing, [E] is merged with the C°-head whose complement is to be elided. Although it is not entirely clear *why* or *how*, it seems that the presence of this [E]-feature in the C°-head to the right of a sluiced WH-phrase requires that this head always remains empty, even in languages which allow doubly-filled-COMP-filter violations in non-elliptical embedded WH-questions, such as various Dutch dialects (cf. for instance Lobeck 1995; Merchant 2001). This is illustrated in (8).

- (8) *Ze willen iemand inhuren die een Balkantaal spreekt. – Welke (*dat) ?*
'They want to hire someone who speaks a Balkan language. – Which one (* that)?'

(9a) is a simplified representation of the analysis of Sluicing: [E] is merged with C°, the WH-phrase is moved to [Spec, CP], and the TP is elided. To deal with the differences in island-sensitivity between English sluices and FAs, Merchant posits an additional CP-layer for FAs, cf. (9b). Under Merchant's account, island-violating traces/copies (marked with *) are PF-uninterpretable and must therefore be eliminated. In (9a), all *-copies have been elided, yielding a PF-interpretable object. In (9b), one *-copy is not eliminated, causing a PF-crash.

- (9) a. [CP [DP WH]₁ [C [E]] {TP...*t₁...t₁...}] b. [CP XP₁ C [CP *t₁ [C [E]] {TP...*t₁...t₁...}]]

As we have seen, Dutch FAs resemble Sluicing in not being island-sensitive. Therefore, we can assume that the non-elliptical counterpart of Dutch FAs is a simple movement structure, involving only one CP-layer, resulting in the non-WH-counterpart of Sluicing, cf. (10):

- (10) [CP XP₁ [C [E]] {TP...*t₁...t₁...}]

D.2. The analysis of Dutch embedded FAs Embedded FAs never surface with *dat* 'that', although this complementizer is obligatorily present in non-elliptical subclauses, cf. (11). If the structure of the CP-complement of *ik denk* 'I think' in (11a) resembles the structure in (10), with C° hosting an [E]-feature, the absence of *dat* is expected, on a par with the absence of an overt complementizer in Sluicing. I assume that the structure of island-insensitive embedded FAs like (A₁) / (A₂) in (6) indeed resembles that of matrix FAs.

- (11) a. *Wie heeft het gedaan? – Ik denk <*dat> Jan <*dat>.* 'Who has done it? – *I think (that) John (that).'
b. *Ik denk <dat> Jan <*dat> het gedaan heeft.* 'I think <that> John <*that> has done it.'

Unlike FAs such as (A₁) and (A₂) in (6), fragments like (A₃) precede the matrix past participle. Therefore (among other things), Barbiers (2002) analyzes this FA as involving (A'-)Focus-movement of [DP *Eva*] to the matrix [Spec, *v*P]. This fronting is followed by PF-deletion of the embedded CP. Merchant's account provides a diagnostic for deciding whether (A₃) indeed involves CP-ellipsis, or TP-ellipsis. Compared to (A₁) and (A₂), (A₃) involves an extra movement step (targeting the matrix [Spec, *v*P]), leaving a trace/copy in the embedded CP. This trace would be deleted by CP-ellipsis, but not by TP-ellipsis. If the moved XP has crossed an island-node, a non-eliminated *-trace would cause a PF-crash. Thus, CP-ellipsis predicts island-insensitivity, while TP-ellipsis predicts (A₃) to be island-sensitive. As shown in section (C.2.), (A₃) differs from other Dutch FAs exactly in obeying locality restrictions, showing that the latter prediction is correct.

E. Elliptical 'repair' effects Island insensitivity and lack of an overt complementizer in Dutch FAs are only two examples of 'elliptical repair effects', i.e. the non-elliptical structures that underlie (grammatical) ellipses are sometimes ungrammatical (cf. Merchant 2008 for an overview). As shown in section (D), these two particular cases follow from a Merchant-type analysis of Ellipsis. Another 'repair' effect seems to be the fact that embedded topicalization is generally absent in Dutch. Nevertheless, it is precisely this type of movement that leads to embedded FAs. This is shown in (11): while [DP *John*] can occur in the FA, it cannot precede *dat* in the non-elliptical subclause. As embedded FAs are not allowed in English, this 'repair' strategy seems to be absent in this language. However, I claim that this effect as well can be derived from independent properties of the grammar. Unlike in English, embedded topicalization is *marginally* possible in Dutch (with adverbials and PPs) and some Dutch dialects also allow for embedded left dislocation, cf. (12).

- (12) *Ik denk volgende vrijdag dat Jan (dan) terugkeert.* 'I think next Friday that John will return (then).'

It is this marginal availability of fronting strategies in subordinate clauses that licenses the existence of embedded FAs in Dutch.

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