

French and German word part ellipsis in coordination structures under identity

Background: The precise nature of elliptical constituents continues to be controversial: Is there any unpronounced structure in the ellipsis site (e.g., Ross 1969; Li 2014), and if so, how much? Here, we ask whether indirect effects of a hypothetical prosodic structure of the elided element can be observed in corpus data and/or acceptability ratings. The focus is on word part ellipsis, studied less in detail (Booij 1985; Smith 2000; Kabak 2007; Erschler 2019; Despić 2017) than ellipsis of phrasal categories. **Research question:** In elements which are potentially subject to elision, does the prosodic structure of the target of ellipsis have any influence on whether ellipsis applies or not in production data and on how ellipsis or repetition is rated in an acceptability task? **Research topic:** We consider word part ellipsis in coordination structures under identity of the rightmost element in morphologically complex words with different types of prefixes, in **French (F)** and **German (G)**; (1-2). As to F, we consider bound prefixes like *pré-* 'pre' and *post-* 'post'), (1a), and prefixes that are homonymous to free forms – prepositions – like *sous* 'under' et *sur* 'over', whose status is considered ambiguous between compounds and affixed words (Amiot & Dal 2007), (1b). As to G, we consider so-called particles like *ein/aus* 'in/out', (2a), differing from the F prefixal elements in being stressed and separable from their bases, (2c), as well as forms like *über/unter* 'over/under', which – besides occurring as particles – are unstressed and bound at least in some formatives, (2b). **Corpus study:** For F, prefix sequences of the form *sous* Conj *sur* (in both orders) and *pré* Conj *post* followed by V, N, or A were drawn from the frTenTen17 web corpus, with or without ellipsis of the recurring element. For G, particle sequences of the form *ein* Conj *aus* 'in Conj out' and *unter* Conj *über* 'under Conj over' (both orders, followed by V, N, or A) were drawn from the deTenTen20 web corpus. Data were manually annotated for (among other factors) number of syllables and parity (even vs. odd) of the base. **Results:** Overall deletion rates are lower in F than in G, (3-4). Bound prefixes have lower elision rates than separable/free prefixes, (3-4). Elision rates interact with number of syllables of the (elided) base (=target of ellipsis), with more elision for longer bases. Crucially, in F elision rates interact with parity of the base, with higher elision rates in even-numbered bases as compared to odd-numbered bases, (3), indicating that the metrification of the base into binary feet – i.e., prosodic structure of the elided element – might be relevant for ellipsis. With odd bases, the prefix could arguably be contained in the metrical constituent of the base, thus blocking ellipsis. **Acceptability study:** Two online acceptability judgment tasks were carried out using the Labvanced platform. 40 participants for F and 60 for G were recruited on Prolific. The stimulus-filler ratio was 1:2, presenting 10 stimuli per F participant and 15 per G participant. Stimuli contained the same two prefix-pairs as considered in the corpus study, presented once with ellipsis and once with repetition. An additional independent variable was number of syllables of the base (G: 2-3, F: 1-5) (Schäfer et al. 2021). For each condition, 4 lexicalizations were created. **Results:** For both languages, no significant effects on ratings could be shown, but an – unsurprising – increase of reaction times with number of syllables of the base. **Discussion:** Word-part ellipsis in F and G is subject to prosodic and morphological effects that can be observed in (written) production data. An acceptability judgment task as carried out here appears inappropriate for showing this effect.

Data

- (1) a. Bound prefix: *garderies pré-(scolaire) et post-scolaire*
'pre-(school) and after-school care'
- b. Prepositional prefix: *fossé entre sous-(consommateurs) et sur-consommateurs*
'gap between under-(consumers) and over-consumers'
- (2) a. Stressed: *Mia soll die Akten ein-(sortieren) oder aussortieren.*
'Mia should sort in or out the files.'
- b. Unstressed: *Mia könnte die Kinder über-(fordern) oder unterfordern.*
'Mia could over- or underchallenge the children.'
- c. Separable: *Mia sortiert die Akten ein oder aus.*
'Mia sorts the files in or out.'

(3) French corpus data

	total		<i>pré/post</i>	<i>sous/sur</i>
N	3399		2420	979
Elision rate	58%		70%	30%
	odd bases	47%	62%	25%
	even bases	65%	74%	36%

(4) German corpus data

			stressed	unstressed
	total		<i>aus/ein</i>	<i>über/unter</i>
N	986		661	160
Elision rate	84%		86%	76%
	odd bases	85%	87%	73%
	even bases	83%	85%	77%

References: Amiot, D. & G Dal (2007): Integrating neoclassical combining forms into a lexeme-based morphology. In G. Booij, L. Ducceschi, B. Fradin, E. Guevara, A. Ralli & S. Scalise (Hrsg.), *On-line Proceedings of the Fifth Mediterranean Morphology Meeting (MMM5) Fréjus 15-18 September 2005*, 323–336. Bologna: Università degli Studi di Bologna. • Booij, G. E. (1985): Coordination Reduction in Complex words: a Case for Prosodic Phonology. In H. van der Hulst & N. Smith (Hrsg.), *Advances in nonlinear phonology*, 143–160. Dordrecht: Foris. • Despić, M. (2017): Suspended morphology in Serbian: Clitics vs. affixes. *Glossa* 2(1). 1–43. • Erschler, D. (2019): Suspended Affixation as Morpheme Ellipsis: Evidence from Ossetic Alternative Questions. *Glossa* 4(1). 1–41. • Kabak, B. (2007): Turkish suspended affixation. *Linguistics* 45(2). 311–347. • Li, Yen-Hui A. (2014): Born empty. *Lingua* 151. 43–68. • Ross, J.R. (1969): Guess who? *Proceedings from the Annual meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, Vol. 5, 252–286. • Schäfer, L., R. Lemke, H. Drenhaus & I. Reich (2021): The Role of UID for the Usage of Verb Phrase Ellipsis: Psycholinguistic Evidence From Length and Context Effects. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12. 661087. • Smith, G. (2000): Word Remnants and Coordination. In R. Thieroff, M. Tamrat, N. Fuhrhop & O. Teuber (Hrsg.), *Deutsche Grammatik in Theorie und Praxis*, 57–68. Tübingen: Niemeyer.