Pro-forms and ellipsis

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- syntactic means for abbreviating constructions to avoid redundancy

- *He may come tonight, but I don't think he will come tonight.*

- *He may come tonight, but I don't think he will <u>do so</u>.* (**substitution**)

- *He may come tonight, but I don't think he will <u>O</u>.* (**ellipsis**)

Recoverability

- can be defined as the ability to interpret and recover the full form (FF) from constructions with pro-forms or ellipsis

Recoverability

Three types:

- **textual recoverability**: the FF is recoverable from a neighbouring part of the text/context (*John is late today. He usually comes late*.)

- **situational recoverability**: the FF is recoverable from the extralinguistic situation (*Who is she?* - pointing at someone, e.g. a young woman close to the speaker)

- **structural recoverability**: the FF is recoverable from the knowledge of grammatical structure (e.g. optional conjunction *that* in *I know (that) he is clever*.)

Coreference

- a link between two or more expressions, i.e. pro-forms and their antecedents, that refer to the same thing or things (**coreference:** e.g. *Jack got <u>a first prize</u> this year, and he put <u>it</u> on the wall.*).

- otherwise the term **reference** is used (reference: e.g. *Jack got <u>a first prize</u> this year, and I got <u>one</u> last year.*).

Pro-forms for NPs and their constituents

- 3rd person pronouns and determiners (*My parents and <u>their</u> dog are in the park*.)

- indefinite pronouns like *any, all, both, each, either, some*, and *none* (*When the children arrived, <u>each</u>* (*of the children/child*) *was given a present*.)

- *the same*, implying similarity, not identity (*I want my meat well done and David wants his <u>the same</u>*.)

- *one* has two plural forms: (1) *some* for indefinite NPs
 (sg. *I need a nail/one*. pl. *I need some nails/<u>some</u>*.)
 (2) *ones* for nominal expressions, NP heads, not the whole NPs (*Have you any knives? I need a sharp one. - Take any of the <u>ones</u> on the table*.)

Pro-forms for clauses and clause constituents

- the dummy operator *do* is a pro-form for a predicate (*Martin can drive a car, and his sister does, too*.)

- *do so* functions as a pro-form for a predicate or predication, used especially in formal style both for finite and non-finite forms (*As no one else has succeeded in solving the problem, I'll try to do so myself.* or *As no one else has succeeded in doing so, I'll try to solve the problem myself*.)

- *do it, do that, do so* substitute for transitive verbs and their objects (*Are you still trying to solve the problem? - You should have done it by now*.) The pro-form *do that* gives more prominence to the object *that* than *it*, it is therefore connected especially with new or contrastive information.

Pro-forms for adverbials

- For example, the adverbs *here* and *there* can be used for place adverbials, whereas *then* for time adverbials

- Example:
    If you look in the drawer, you'll find it <u>there</u>.
    You'll understand me one day and I'll tell you my secret <u>then</u>.

Some pro-forms for some other sentence elements

- *So* and its negative equivalent *not* can be pro-forms for a *that*-clause functioning as a direct object.

- Example:

    Will they help us? - I hope <u>so</u>. or I hope <u>not</u>.

- This use of *not* is restricted mainly to verbs of belief or assumption such as: *believe, expect, guess, hope, imagine, presume, reckon, suppose, suspect*, and *think*.

Ellipsis

- is **grammatical omission** and requires **verbatim recoverability**, i.e. the actual word or words that are implied must be precisely recoverable

- Two requirements for **strict ellipsis**:

    1. when inserting the missing words, the meaning of the original sentence is not changed, *The poor need more help.* {generic reference} is not identical with *The poor people need more help.* {specific reference};

    2. when inserting the missing words, the sentence should remain grammatical, *He always wakes up earlier than I (wake up).* x *He always wakes up earlier than me (wake up).* The latter sentence illustrates substitution, not ellipsis.

Three categories of ellipsis
(according to where the ellipsis occurs within a construction)

- 1. **initial** - in initial position, e.g. *(I) hope you like it.*

- 2. **medial** - in medial position, e.g. *Jill owns a family house and Peter (owns) a cottage.*

- 3. **final** - in final position within a given construction, e.g. *I know I haven't yet finished all my work, but I will (finish all my work).*

Recoverability types of ellipsis

- situational
- structural
- textual

Situational ellipsis

- the interpretation may depend on knowledge of extralinguistic context

- Examples:
  Get it?
  Want something?
  See you later.
  Television not working?

Structural ellipsis

- the interpretation depends on knowledge of grammatical structure

- Example:

  We are staying there (for) another three weeks.
  (informal)

- often confined to written language, e.g. omission of determiners, pronouns, operators, and other closed-class words in block language (headlines, book titles, notices, notes, diaries, telegrams)

Textual ellipsis

- the interpretation depends on what is said or written in the linguistic context

- there are two kinds of ellipsis according to the relative position of the ellipsis and its antecedent:

  (1) **anaphoric ellipsis** - the interpretation depends on what comes before:

  I'm happy if you are [happy].

  (2) **cataphoric ellipsis** - the interpretation depends on what comes after:

  Those who prefer [to work now], can work now.

Two types of ellipsis

Depending on the character of the construction in which the antecedent construction and elliptical construction participate, there are two types of ellipsis:

1. **general ellipsis** - where the functional relation between the elliptical and antecedent construction is irrelevant;

2. **special ellipsis** - where the possibilities of omissions are determined by that relation

(e.g. coordination, non-finite and verbless clauses, comparative clauses)

General ellipsis

- 1. **elliptical noun phrases -** result from final ellipsis, which means that heads and any postmodifiers tend to be ellipted;
- Example: *Although Helen is the oldest <u>girl in the class</u>, Mary is the tallest <u>O</u>.*

- 2. **elliptical clauses** - typically, the subject and operator (and perhaps other auxiliaries) remain, and the predication is ellipted;
- Example: *If I could have <u>bought a ticket</u>, I would have <u>O</u>.*

Appended clause

- a type of special ellipsis;
- it is an elliptical clause (usually parenthetical or an afterthought) for which the whole or part of the preceding or interrupted clause constitutes the antecedent;

- Example:

  I caught the train - just.
  It may be viewed as elliptical for:
  I caught the train - I just caught the train.