

## **Subsentential utterances, ellipsis, and pragmatic enrichment\***

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**Abstract:** It is argued that genuinely subsentential phrases, such as a discourse-initial utterance of “From France” to indicate the provenance of an item, provide evidence for the reality of the pragmatic process of free enrichment. I consider recent attempts to treat such discourse-initial fragments as linguistic ellipsis of some kind while accommodating the difference between these cases and accepted types of ellipsis such as sluicing and gapping (for example Merchant 2007a,b). I claim that the mechanisms they posit to save an ellipsis story have no role in an account of performance (an account of the processes of utterance interpretation). An argument against the enrichment approach from the indeterminacy of the content of subsentential utterances is discussed, and refuted, and it is shown how this indeterminacy is accommodated in a contextualist pragmatic theory.

### **1. Introduction: ‘Subsentential’ utterances and the free enrichment debate**

We can utter what appear to be isolated noun phrases, prepositional phrases, etc., such as the expressions in (1a)-(6a) below, and thereby communicate propositional contents<sup>1</sup>; some possibilities are given in (1b)-(6b):

1.     a. [Glancing at a woman across the room] The editor.  
        b. THAT WOMAN IS THE EDITOR OF MODE MAGAZINE<sup>2</sup>.
2.     a. [Holding up a bottle of wine] From France.  
        b. THIS WINE IS FROM FRANCE.
3.     a. [Uttered by someone trying to pick a robber out of a police line-up] The  
           second man from the right.  
        b. THE SECOND MAN FROM THE RIGHT ROBBED ME.
4.     a. [Uttered by a used-car salesman] Only 10,000 miles. Like new.  
        b. THIS CAR HAS BEEN DRIVEN ONLY 10,000 MILES. IT'S LIKE A NEW CAR.
5.     a. Typical.  
        b. THAT BEHAVIOUR IS TYPICAL OF HIM.
6.     a. Nice shirt.  
        b. THAT IS A NICE SHIRT / YOU ARE WEARING A NICE SHIRT.

Such apparently subsentential utterances are central to the ongoing debate in semantics and pragmatics about whether or not all constituents of an utterance's truth-conditional content, or proposition expressed, can be traced to the standing encoded expression-type meaning (logical form). Contextualists, including Recanati (1989, 2004), Carston (1988, 2002, 2004), Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995), maintain that pragmatics can have a far more pervasive effect on truth conditions than merely supplying values where an indexical in the encoded meaning indicates that such a value is required. According to the contextualist view, many pragmatic effects on truth conditions, including quantifier domain restriction, provision of a location with weather verbs, and the interpretation of the above sentence fragments, are not linguistically mandated; instead, a pragmatically

motivated and controlled process of ‘free enrichment’ provides ‘unarticulated constituents’ of content<sup>3</sup>.

Stainton (1994; 2006b) sketches an account of how what are genuinely only subsentential phrases could be used to explicitly express propositions. This account is located within a view of mental architecture as comprising domain-specific faculties (including the language system), and central systems that can integrate information from the various faculties and from inference and memory<sup>4</sup>; his account goes roughly as follows. The linguistic input is decoded into a conceptual representation that is delivered to the central system, which is where pragmatic inference occurs; the same happens with inputs to the other perceptual modules, e.g. vision. Information stored in encyclopaedic memory or inferred from stored assumptions is also available in the central system, and is in the same conceptual format, so representations derived from the various perceptual and language modules can be integrated by the central system with information from inference and memory. Integration, suggests Stainton, is performed by function-argument application: the speaker utters either (i) a word or phrase whose content is an argument to some propositional function, and context provides the function, or (ii) a word/phrase whose content is the propositional function, and context provides the argument. Applying the propositional function to the argument results in the proposition expressed. For example, in the case of (2) above (“From France”), the central system will receive from the visual module a concept of the bottle of wine being pointed at (i.e. the argument); the input from the language faculty is a property concept (the propositional function), and applying the function to the

arguments results in the two inputs being concatenated in the language of thought (Stainton 2006b: 156-7).

The opposing, far more semantically oriented view, defended by Stanley (2000, 2002, 2005a), King and Stanley (2005), Martí (2006), Stanley and Szabó (2000), and Taylor (2001), is that all determinants of truth conditions are indeed traceable to logical form. To account for contextual effects including those mentioned above, they are forced to posit extensive hidden structure in sentences' logical forms – covert domain variables, location variables, and so on, attached to the relevant overt lexical item.

The main challenge to a free enrichment account is the charge that it overgenerates: that to appeal to 'free' pragmatic processes is to abandon hope of explaining how we grasp truth-conditional content, as such processes appear to be unconstrained and unsystematic. I won't discuss this overgeneration worry here; it is addressed in Hall (2008a) and more fully in (2008b), where it is shown that free enrichment, properly understood, is tightly constrained given quite general, widely accepted assumptions about pragmatic processing. However, the semanticist such as Stanley, while having, at first sight, a more elegant and predictive account of where truth-conditional effects of context do and do not occur, must account for all genuine such effects by positing hidden structure. If he allows *any* free pragmatic effects on truth conditions, then he faces the same challenge as the pragmatist: he needs a theory of what pragmatic factors allow some enrichments but exclude others.

Here, I focus on how advocates of the semantic approach account for data like (1)-(6). To maintain that the linguistic form of an utterance is structurally isomorphic with the proposition expressed requires denying the existence of genuine cases of subsentences used to express truth conditions, or propositions. As it is agreed that utterances of (1)-(6) and many similar examples do have truth conditions, the semanticist must show that they are structurally complete sentences, with some form of linguistic ellipsis having applied.

Many authors have already argued that data such as (1)-(6) cannot be treated as syntactic ellipsis, relatively uncontroversial examples of which are gapping and sluicing (Barton 1990, 2006; Stainton 2006a,b, etc.). I discuss this literature only briefly (section 2) in order to clarify what motivates a different type of ellipsis approach, namely, the recent analyses of Ludlow (2005) and Merchant (2007a,b). These authors treat discourse-initial fragments as involving sentential linguistic representations, but also aim to explain the differences with established varieties of ellipsis. In section 3, I propose a response to approaches of this sort, claiming that they are empirically implausible as an account of how the truth-conditional content is recovered, and that the manoeuvres to adjust the linguistic form of the uttered fragment to structurally match the content have no role in an account of comprehension.

One of the arguments used by Barton (1990) and Stainton (2006b) against the idea of treating discourse-initial fragments as ellipsis is the fact that in the discourse-initial cases, often no unique content is identifiable – that is, they are indeterminate. But Stanley (2000), in turn, uses indeterminacy as an argument against treating certain cases

of subsententials as expressing truth conditions (from which it would follow that they would not involve free enrichment). In section 4, I argue that the requirement for determinacy for an utterance to count as expressing truth conditions is unrealistically strict, and discuss how this indeterminacy can be accommodated in a principled way by a pragmatic theory that sees linguistic meaning as radically underdetermining of truth conditions. Section 5 concludes and briefly discusses implications for the wider debate about the existence of free enrichment in both sentential and subsentential utterances.

## **2. The ellipsis presupposition**

This section presents some background on the ‘subsententials’ debate so far. It reinforces the case against treating discourse-initial fragments as syntactic ellipsis, but the main aim is to highlight how these fragments differ from uncontroversial cases of ellipsis, and thus establish what has to be accounted for in the debate about whether or not they involve ellipsis or enrichment.

(7)-(10) are accepted by most authors as cases of syntactic ellipsis:

- |     |                                       |                            |
|-----|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 7.  | A: Where are you from?                |                            |
|     | B: Italy.                             | [Immediate, direct answer] |
| 8.  | Sally left and we don't know why.     | [Sluicing]                 |
| 9.  | Linda speaks French and Jane German.  | [Gapping]                  |
| 10. | Linda speaks French but Jane doesn't. | [VP-ellipsis]              |

In syntactically elliptical utterances, the fragment is syntactically a full sentence, and it is generally assumed that the elided content is recovered by processes internal to the language faculty, without appeal to pragmatic inference: The covert syntax is identical to material present in the antecedent, and the content from the antecedent is copied into the ellipsis site.

The immediately obvious difference between (7)-(10) and the kind of fragments that are the focus of this paper is that the former cannot occur discourse-initially, or in isolation: without an explicit linguistic antecedent as licenser, they sound at least awkward<sup>5</sup>. Gapping, for instance, is ungrammatical in isolation or without the right type of linguistic antecedent:

11.    A: Does anyone speak French or German?  
        B: \*Yes, Jane German.

(1)-(6), in contrast, are perfectly natural when uttered discourse-initially. The utterance of (1) (“The editor”) to identify someone doesn’t require an explicit prior question; all that is needed is that an individual be salient of whom can be predicated the property of being the editor.

Stanley (2000: 401-9) attempts to downplay this difference, suggesting that many of the apparently discourse-initial cases are in fact syntactically elliptical. He claims that the felicitous use of these utterances depends on something in the non-linguistic context making salient a linguistic expression to serve as the antecedent for ellipsis: For

example, they would often be infelicitous without a preceding ostensive stimulus (such as a demonstration) to draw attention to some object or person. They therefore aren't discourse-initial in any relevant sense, he says, because the prior context necessary for such utterances to be acceptable makes linguistic antecedents salient to serve as licensers for ellipsis. For (1), the idea is that the implicit question "Who is that woman?" is salient, so this and the overt utterance function similarly to the overt question-answer pair in (7) above: The implicit question makes the linguistic expression "That woman is..." available as the restoration of the unpronounced material in the 'reply'.

However, while it is true that prior context is generally necessary for these fragments to be interpreted, it does not follow that such context does the work necessary to support the idea that these utterances are elliptical, even if one accepts the idea that non-linguistic context activates natural-language sentences to license ellipsis<sup>6</sup>. Although I don't find that idea plausible, I will avoid debates about natural language and the medium of thought here, and suggest instead that the slight variation I present below on the example that Stanley himself discusses clearly demonstrates that non-linguistic context does not play the role that Stanley requires it to play.

Take the above-mentioned case of an utterance of "The editor". If the implicit question "Who is that woman?" is salient in the context, that question can serve as the antecedent for ellipsis, on Stanley's account, so implicit question and uttered fragment function analogously to an overt question-answer pair, which most people would accept is a case of ellipsis. But consider the following equally realistic context for an utterance of (1): A

and B are at a party at which the editor of *Mode* magazine will be arriving, and A has told B that she wants to know who the editor is. A bit later, a woman enters and B utters “The editor”. B’s utterance is perfectly felicitous and interpretable; however, the implicit question that was salient in the context was “Who is the editor?”. This, if we accept Stanley’s story about how ‘prior context’ can function, makes salient the linguistic antecedent “The editor is \_\_\_\_”. But that is not the right kind of antecedent to license an elliptical utterance of “The editor”. Thus the non-linguistically-realized part of the proposition expressed by this utterance does not come from any salient linguistic antecedent, even on Stanley’s liberal conception of what can constitute a linguistic antecedent, and what is going on here is not syntactic ellipsis. This undermines Stanley’s claim that the infelicity of his example in the absence of prior context is due to an elliptical expression occurring without a licenser<sup>7</sup>.

This, then, is one of the features of these fragments that poses difficulties for the semanticist account, and which has led most authors to abandon the project of trying to find a way of treating what is going on in the interpretation of most discourse-initial fragments as anything like traditional syntactic ellipsis: they do not pick up the rest of their propositional content from a linguistic antecedent.

A second important difference between discourse-initial fragments and familiar kinds of ellipsis is in whether or not the allegedly elided syntactic/semantic content is recoverable. Identification of the unique deleted material is possible with sluicing, VP-ellipsis, and so on, as is to be expected if these constructions are full natural-language sentences, some elements of which go unpronounced, and this explains the fact that

ellipsis does not occur discourse-initially: it is the explicit antecedent that provides the material to complete the fragment. As has been emphasized by Barton (2006) and Stainton (2006b), however, in the discourse-initial fragments in (1)-(6) we can't (uniquely) identify the allegedly deleted linguistic material. For instance, candidates for the unpronounced elements in (1) might include "She is", "That is", "That woman is", "has just come in", "is the person near the door", "is over there", and so on. So this difference would not be accommodated by the assimilation of (1)-(6) to syntactic ellipsis<sup>8</sup>.

Merchant (2007a,b) shows that only in two kinds of case is there evidence for syntactic ellipsis. The first is the constructions illustrated in (7)-(10), plus some others such as pseudogapping, where there is an overt linguistic antecedent licensing the ellipsis: That the fragments found there are syntactically complete sentences is strongly suggested by connectivity effects<sup>9</sup>. The second is a subset of discourse-initial fragments which displays similar effects. For example, in German, to order a coffee, you can utter the apparent subsentence "Einen Kaffee" (a-ACC coffee). Accusative case on the object is obligatory, as it would be if the fragment were embedded in a full overt sentence: "Ein Kaffee" (a-NOM coffee) is ungrammatical. I take this as evidence that what is linguistically encoded is not just the bare DP, but that there is at least an argument slot mandating saturation, or perhaps, as Merchant suggests, they are abbreviations of memorized 'scripts' (in a traditional, rather than cognitive-science, sense: we memorize dialogues for certain conventional situations such as ordering things). Although this example has parallels cross-linguistically, as Merchant says, these cases have a "formulaic, conventional character, in which particular *linguistic* elements are made

manifest and hence license ellipsis. ...they are limited in number and kind, learned explicitly, and seem to reflect syntactic properties of particular lexical items in the languages” (2007a: 42). The majority of discourse-initial fragments, then, including the kind I focus on here, *cannot* be analysed in this way: there is no evidence that they are syntactically elliptical.

The recognition that the discourse-initial cases like (1)-(6) cannot plausibly be treated in the same way as traditional syntactic ellipsis, where the elided material is recovered linguistically, has led to recent attempts to develop a different kind of ellipsis account of these fragments, which accommodates the differences with sluicing, gapping, etc. But this raises the question, why posit a novel kind of ellipsis simply to account for these discourse-initial fragments? If they are evidently different to well-established cases of syntactic ellipsis, why think that they are linguistic ellipsis of any variety? The answer is that the default assumption among many authors seems to be that something overtly less than sentential must be elliptical: this presupposition is evident in Stanley’s discussion of subsententials, where his strategy is simply to neutralize an objection to an ellipsis account, and then conclude that the utterance in question is in fact elliptical. Yet to draw such a conclusion is to rule out free enrichment without any argument, and, in the context of the debate about the reality of the enrichment process, this conclusion is premature. As Stanley himself says, the semanticist position – that there are no strong (i.e. non-linguistically mandated) pragmatic effects on truth conditions – is an empirical hypothesis, in advance of detailed inquiry (Stanley 2005b). Given that he does not exclude the possibility of the existence of free enrichment (contingent on a satisfactory future account of it), he is not entitled to assume, when confronted with an apparently

subsentential utterance, that ellipsis is the default explanation. As will emerge in the next section, the fallacy of this presupposition is demonstrated by attempts to spell out just what sort of ellipsis must be involved here.

The new variety of ‘semanticist’ account that I turn to now appears to accommodate the differences between sluicing and gapping, on the one hand, and discourse-initial fragments on the other. These accounts acknowledge that the missing elements of truth-conditional content are not uniquely identifiable and not recovered linguistically, and they leave the bulk of the work to pragmatics. The idea is that what goes unpronounced, and is recovered grammatically, is not the *content*, but consists only of indexical or deictic elements. The truth conditions recovered (proposition expressed) are predicted to vary between hearers, but still, a full (indexical) sentence was the syntactic structure encoded by the phonologically subsentential utterance. The accounts also explain the discourse-initial occurrence of these fragments (as indexicals do not rely on linguistic antecedents for their content). Despite these merits, I argue in section 3 that this approach provides no alternative to a free enrichment account, as far as the explanation of interpretation is concerned, and ends up undermining the presupposition from which it derives its appeal: namely, that anything overtly subsentential is elliptical.

### **3. The new ellipsis: linguistic or pragmatic?**

I take for granted from now on that most discourse-initial fragments cannot be assimilated to traditional syntactic ellipsis. The recognition of this has led recently to a different tactic by some semantically-oriented theorists, who still aim to treat the

discourse-initial cases as ellipsis of some kind, while giving due weight to the differences between these cases on the one hand, and constructions like sluicing and gapping on the other. The accounts in question, Ludlow (2005) and Merchant (2007a,b), offer rather different versions of the idea, but are susceptible to the same general response, and in this section, I develop an argument against this type of approach in general.

Ludlow (2005) proposes that cases of apparently subsentential speech have a fully sentential syntactic structure, with the covert syntax being formed from some combination of the following deictic elements: PRO in subject position; an unpronounced light verb such as “have”, “do”, “be”; OBJ in object position and DET in determiner position. It is not yet clear, as Stainton (2006b: 126-7) points out, where these silent deictics can and cannot occur; however, no account that gives substantial weight to pragmatics, whether involving silent indexical elements, or pragmatic enrichment, has yet proposed in any detail how the mechanisms they posit are constrained and avoid massively overgenerating elliptical/subsentential discourse-initial expressions, so I will assume that the two approaches in question are equal in this regard<sup>10</sup>. Focusing first on Ludlow, I’ll argue that the empty element account, even if more fully described, would have no prospect of offering a viable account of how the truth-conditional content is recovered from these discourse-initial fragments<sup>11</sup>.

As an illustration, Ludlow considers an utterance of “Slab” by a construction worker to ask for a slab. This utterance, he claims, has the (fully sentential) structure in (12),

consisting of an unpronounced subject, light verb, indirect object, and determiner, which are assigned values in context, plus the overt noun:

12. [PRO (give) OBJ [DET slab]]

Carston (2002: 155) briefly considers a similar account (with empty syntactic nodes specifying merely what grammatical category appears in each slot), and suggests that such a structure with indexicals needing saturation is largely redundant, since the conceptual material necessary to saturate it would have to be highly activated anyway, given the very minimal constraints imposed by the indexicals, which indicate only what kind of grammatical expression should be supplied. There is no independent evidence that the structure is present in these cases, and this sort of structure would still fall far short of determining truth-conditional content. This contrasts with the sluicing, VP-ellipsis, etc, where, as discussed before, there is strong evidence that the sentential structure is present, and pragmatics has no role in determining the content. *Ceteris paribus*, then, the free enrichment account of the discourse-initial cases is more parsimonious than the ‘unpronounced deictic’ account, by virtue of not positing interpretively redundant linguistic structure, and should be preferred.

However, the objection to such an account goes further than merely that the silent deictics would generally play no essential role in the interpretation process and are dispensable: it’s that an account that posits them at all would have to assume a sequence of interpretive steps that is clearly illogical. This problem stems from the fact that

pragmatic inference would be involved not only in assigning content to the recovered deictics, but also in choosing the correct logical form, prior to saturation.

Given the pronounced fragment, there will be numerous grammatically possible combinations of the various silent deictics to complete the sentence, so the hearer has to work out which combination was intended as the logical form. Ludlow himself mentions PRO, OBJ, DET and light verbs, and Stainton (2006b: 126-7) points out that there will also need to be other empty deictics including at least prepositions and complementizers ('PREP' and 'COMP')<sup>12</sup>. Consider now an utterance of "Michael's fiancée". Just a few possible combinations offered by the grammar (before saturation of the deictics) include<sup>13</sup>:

13.   a. [PRO (be) [DET Michael's fiancée]]
- b. [[DET Michael's fiancée] (do) [OBJ]]
- c. [PRO (be) COMP [DET Michael's fiancée]]
- d. [PRO (give) OBJ PREP [DET Michael's fiancée]]
- e. [PRO (be) PREP [DET Michael's fiancée]]

To maintain that the deictics were encoded in what was uttered, this account would therefore have to assume massive ambiguity, with the surface form "Michael's fiancée" being lexically associated with many different sentences. Assuming that an ambiguity account is unappealing, what was linguistically decoded by the hearer must have been just the subsentential phrase, and the deictics are subsequently selected, but Ludlow says nothing about how this process works. If the fully sentential expression containing

the deictic is to play a role in getting to the truth-conditional content, the hearer would *first* decide which of the possible deictics is the correct completion of the logical form, and only *then* go about assigning the intended content to those deictics. But, given the huge number of possible logical forms that could correspond to a given discourse-initial fragment, on what basis does he decide? It seems that the disambiguation or syntactic reconstruction required to identify which logical form is being used must be dependent on the hearer working out the content that forms the proposition expressed. Decoding does not provide the hearer with the putative silent deictics mandating saturation, and the selection of the correct combination of deictics cannot be made by the language faculty, given the wide range of possible combinations. What would have to happen, then, is that pragmatic processes work out the proposition expressed, taking as their starting-point the only part of that content for which the hearer has evidence – the decoded subsentential phrase. So getting from encoded meaning to proposition expressed would have to be a process of free enrichment, and only once the proposition expressed has been identified could the linguistic logical form be reconstructed. The silent deictics, then, play no role in comprehension, and it is difficult to see why this kind of element would be represented at any stage of interpretation, since, if the natural-language sentence were reconstructed, it would simply add an extra, superfluous stage of processing subsequent to the derivation of the truth-conditional content.

A very recent proposal by Merchant (2007a,b), which he labels ‘semantic ellipsis’, also makes use of covert indexical-like elements but is aimed specifically at accounting for the discourse-initial cases rather than ellipsis in general. The idea is that what is lexically encoded by a subsentential expression, the word “red”, say, is just the property

RED, which is a type  $\langle e, t \rangle$  entity. Type-shifting rules and  $\lambda$ -reduction, which are only a fairly minimal extension of independently-motivated rules, have to apply to enable semantic composition, and this results in the introduction of free variables, giving, e.g., RED( $x_2$ ), which is semantically sentential, type  $\langle t \rangle$  (fuller details are given in Merchant 2007a: 36-9). The propositional content is arrived at by linguistic decoding and type-shifting, plus saturation of the variable, so no free enrichment is involved<sup>14</sup>.

The main problem with this proposal is that, like Ludlow's, it does not account for how the process of the hearer's recovery of truth-conditional content goes – the only empirically plausible hypothesis is still the view that this process appears to have to take as its starting point the uttered subsentential expression, without any further influence from linguistic encodings or rules, and *pragmatically* work out the propositional content in order to reconstruct the sentential linguistic form. The grammar can generate isolated words and subsentential expressions<sup>15</sup>, and these do not always need developing into a full proposition: Merchant himself (2007a: 26-7) cites the case of 'labels', including book titles, product names, street signs, and so on. A different type of example is (14) below. The utterer of (14) probably would not be understood as explicitly expressing a proposition; instead, the utterance functions as a device to bring the said baby to the hearer's attention, and the hearer would not enrich the content of the utterance into a full-fledged proposition that he takes to be the utterance's explicit, or truth-conditional, content:

14. [Uttered by a mother on realizing she's mislaid her three-month-old]

The baby!

So we can produce and interpret what Merchant agrees are genuinely only phrases, which are grammatical and which do not have sentential structure at any linguistic level of representation, either syntactic or semantic. What is encoded by the utterance is just the semantics of a phrase, i.e. not a type  $\langle t \rangle$  entity. The semantic ellipsis device is triggered pragmatically: since type-shifting does not always need to apply when the phrase is uttered (as the communicated meaning need not be propositional), whether or not the type-shifting is triggered depends not on the linguistic environment the phrase occurs in, but on pragmatic considerations. Moreover, it is not simply the recognition that the speaker intends to literally express something propositional that triggers type-shifting: different kinds of type-shifting are possible, and the hearer needs to decide between them. To illustrate how this decision depends on the prior identification of truth-conditional content, consider utterances in two different contexts of “Michael’s fiancée”.

- Context 1: A woman enters the room and H glances at her then looks quizzically at S. S utters “Michael’s fiancée”.
- Context 2: H has told S that he wants to be informed (discreetly) when Michael’s fiancée arrives. Later, a woman walks in; S utters “Michael’s fiancée” (without any glance/other ostension).

It seems plausible that the following propositions are expressed in each context:

- Proposition expressed in C1: THAT IS MICHAEL’S FIANCÉE.

- Proposition expressed in C2: MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE HAS JUST WALKED IN.

Because, in C1, the overt phrase forms the predicate of the proposition expressed, while in C2, it forms the subject, the type-shifting operates differently in the two cases:

- Result of type-shifting in C1: MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE ( $x_2$ )
- Result of type-shifting in C2:  $x_3$  (MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE)

The question is, on what basis does the hearer decide which kind of type-shifting occurs? The C1 kind of type-shifting clearly is chosen on the basis of the propositional constituents 'THAT IS' (or 'a IS') being entertained by the hearer, thanks to her perception of the woman in question. In C2, to trigger this kind of type-shifting, the hearer has to access an appropriate predicate, such as 'HAS JUST COME IN', so that the overt phrase can function as a subject to combine with this predicate. So, as far as I can see, the hearer has to work out the propositional content that the speaker intends to express explicitly in order to determine which kind of type-shifting applies, resulting in the introduction of a free variable in the appropriate place in the semantic structure, which is then to be saturated.

It appears, then, that type-shifting and variable-introduction are applied so as to match the linguistic form of what was uttered to the proposition that the hearer takes to be communicated. Parallel to Ludlow's account, the hearer has to work out what proposition is being communicated, in order for the correct linguistic rules apply to introduce the rest of the sentential linguistic structure (the free variable, in this case). So

they have not accounted for the mechanism by which the truth-conditional content is actually recovered, prior to the application of whichever linguistic rules turn out to be necessary. It cannot be recovered by saturation, because the elements to be saturated cannot be recovered until the propositional content is identified. And the only suggestion in play for *how* this propositional content is identified is a pragmatic enrichment account.

Both Ludlow's and Merchant's accounts recognize that traditional theories of ellipsis cannot be extended to cover discourse-initial fragments, and take seriously the differences between the two sets of data: the lack of a linguistic antecedent to license ellipsis in the discourse-initial cases, plus the lack of a unique, identifiable content. Their attempts to offer a syntactic/semantic alternative to pragmatic enrichment, however, do not seem to be able to avoid the conclusion that the performance theory, that is, the account of how the hearer processes the utterance to arrive at the truth-conditional content, involves free enrichment. The manoeuvres employed by Ludlow and Merchant to retain the desired isomorphism between the logical form of the utterance and the proposition expressed are, at best, a way of modelling our linguistic *competence*, because if they are construed as part of the performance account, then they can occur only subsequently and in addition to the pragmatic enrichment, thus forming a redundant extra, post-interpretive phase. Such a device may allow the semanticist to claim that the linguistic form and propositional content recovered by the hearer of these utterances end up being isomorphic, but it does so at the cost of undermining the rationale for this isomorphism – the semanticist view (cf. Stanley 2002, 2005a) that only a theory on which all constituents of an utterance's truth-conditional content are

traceable to the encoded, invariant sentence-type meaning can give a systematic account of how we grasp this content. Allow purely pragmatic determinants of truth conditions, continues the objection, and your theory cannot predict which pragmatically recovered material will intrude on truth conditions, and which will merely be implicated. But the discussion of this section has shown that the semanticist's desired result of an account on which all constituents of truth-conditions are traceable to logical form cannot be maintained for these utterances. As I have argued in my response to Merchant's and Ludlow's proposals, which are both aimed at supporting the semanticist approach to effects of context on truth conditions, an account which allows pragmatic processes to intrude into the determination of the linguistic logical form in fact abandons the systematicity and predictiveness that are the major appeal of the semantic approach: construction of a sentential logical form is post hoc; what is uttered is a subsentential phrase, and the propositional truth-conditional content is arrived at via pragmatic enrichment, unmandated by the linguistic form.

#### **4. Subsententials and indeterminacy**

In the rest of the paper, I consider a different strategy that has been applied to some cases of subsentential expressions to deny that free enrichment is involved in their interpretation. According to Stanley, "Linguistic speech acts must determinately be made with the relevant sort of force. They must also express determinate contents" (2000: 407). The example he discusses is (15):

15. [Thirsty man staggers up to water vendor] Water!

Stanley concludes that an utterance of (15) is not a proper speech act as it lacks determinate content and illocutionary force. The truth conditions are not determinately that THE SPEAKER WANTS WATER, as opposed to a number of other options, such as that THE ADDRESSEE SHOULD GIVE THE SPEAKER WATER, and the illocutionary force is similarly indeterminate, between an assertion, an order, and a request. While such utterances can undoubtedly be used as vehicles of communication, beyond the initial decoding it is general (as opposed to linguistic) knowledge that is brought to bear in interpreting them; Stanley likens this sort of communication to a kick under the table, a tap on the shoulder, or a frown. At best, these utterances and non-linguistic gestures communicate implicatures: they don't have literal propositional content, so the question of purely pragmatically supplied constituents of truth conditions does not arise.

As I discussed in section 2, a feature of many discourse-initial fragments, including some of (1)-(6), is that no unique content is identifiable. That is to say, their content is indeterminate – perhaps not so much as in the “Water!” case, but most allow the hearer some flexibility in exactly what content he recovers: The explicature of an utterance of “Michael’s dad”, said of someone who has just entered the room, could be represented by one hearer as  $\alpha$  IS MICHAEL’S DAD, and by another as MICHAEL’S DAD HAS JUST WALKED IN. Given the failure of the ellipsis strategy, in any of its manifestations, could the semanticist simply deny that there is any truth-conditional content, here, so there is no question of free enrichment? I’ll argue that this is not an option for (1)-(6) and any other fragments that the semanticist thought susceptible to an ellipsis analysis, and, in fact, that this strategy is plausible only for a very few fragments.

Stanley does not justify his appeal to this requirement that, to count as performing a genuine speech act, an utterance must have determinate content and force, and several authors have already argued that it is far too strong a criterion: if it were applied consistently, then much of verbal communication – whether sentential or subsentential, and even though judged perfectly grammatical – would not count as performing linguistic speech acts, contrary to everyone’s intuitions<sup>16</sup>. Interestingly, Stanley and Szabó (2000: 237-8) themselves acknowledge that in quantifier domain restriction, the context does not provide the unique descriptive material that specifies the domain, and this is the reason they give for not treating this phenomenon as syntactic ellipsis: discussing the quantifier “every”, they note that “there are very few cases where there is a single plausible candidate for the role of the domain restricting predicate”, whereas “In cases of syntactic ellipsis, there is a unique phrase recoverable from the context”. Since in the usual (i.e. non-referential) cases of quantifier domain restriction, the descriptive material (the domain-restricting predicate) is content-constitutive (see Neale 1990), as Stanley and Szabó agree, they are recognizing that there is indeterminacy of content here (and the same will apply to non-referential uses of definite and indefinite descriptions). Yet Stanley apparently fails to notice the implications of this for his determinacy criterion: having acknowledged that sentences needing domain restriction often do not have determinate contents, yet accepting that they are used to perform speech acts, it follows that the (in)determinacy of content should not be used as a criterion to decide whether a given utterance constitutes a genuine linguistic speech act, and the decision should be made on other grounds. Moreover, it is clear from this discussion that Stanley himself is not using determinacy as a criterion for speech-act

status: his view is that an indeterminate but fully sentential utterance involving domain restriction is still a speech act, but an indeterminate subsentential utterance cannot be. It seems, then, that his reason for denying some genuine subsententials the status of speech act is precisely their subsentential nature, and the implicit justification for this is the presupposition that they cannot involve free enrichment.

Intuitions, which Stanley et al. profess to take seriously as the core data for a semantic theory to explain (cf. Stanley and Szabó 2000: 240; King and Stanley 2005: 141), are that the domain restriction cases and many (apparent) subsententials do express truth conditions. In this regard, Clapp (2005) argues that the determinacy criterion and intuitions pull in different directions. In cases where intuitions are that an utterance is used to express truth conditions, but where it is indeterminate exactly what those truth conditions are, then applying the determinacy criterion strictly would require one to accept that speaker-hearers' intuitions about truth conditions must be wrong. But if Stanley were to claim that intuitions about truth conditions are often wrong, it would undermine his entire project, which takes seriously intuitions about truth conditions, and attempts to use semantic theory to account for them. Such a move would render otiose his syntactic strategy (the appeals to syntactic ellipsis and shorthand to account for subsententials, and the positing of hidden indexicals to account for quantifier domain restriction and other effects of context in sentential utterances), since any cases of quantifier domain restriction etc. that did have determinate contents could be analysed as elliptical. If one is claiming that people are often mistaken about the truth conditions of their utterances, then rather than modifying linguistic theory with hidden indexicals and novel forms of ellipsis in order to account for their intuitions, one could instead

adopt semantic minimalism à la Cappelen and Lepore (2005) or Borg (2004). As Clapp says, **all** fragments that are not **obvious** cases of syntactic ellipsis will not qualify as expressing truth conditions, so would not need accounting for by semantic theory. His remarks apply to most of the discourse-initial fragments, including (1)-(6) – all those for which an ellipsis account cannot simply be assumed but must be argued for, precisely because the exact deleted syntactic and semantic material is not identifiable, i.e. their content is indeterminate. To allow for the indeterminacy displayed by quantifier domain restriction, and many other cases, while still respecting speaker-hearer intuitions that such utterances perform speech acts (with truth conditions), the determinacy criterion would have to be loosened to an extent that it will actually exclude very few (allegedly) subsentential utterances<sup>17</sup>. Most of the disputed discourse-initial fragments, then, are not so indeterminate that should not count as performing speech acts, but, thanks to their indeterminacy, among other reasons discussed in the last two sections, nor are they susceptible to analysis as a form of linguistic ellipsis. We can conclude that what is uttered is genuinely subsentential and gets developed by pragmatic enrichment into the truth-conditional content.

So, should (15) (The case of the thirsty man crying “Water!”), be treated as a speech act, expressing truth conditions? The utterance is probably a ‘directive’ of some sort, rather than an assertion, which complicates the question of how to judge what its truth conditions are. However, it can be assumed that the aim of the speaker is to explicitly express a proposition (rather than to, say, just draw the hearer’s attention to water, and only implicate something to the effect that he wants some water). And the interpretation that the hearer ends up with includes a proposition that is a development of the encoded

phrase. Although there is likely to be variation between hearers in what they take the proposition literally expressed to be, this variation will be restricted to a clear range – including THE SPEAKER WANTS WATER; THE HEARER SHOULD GIVE THE SPEAKER WATER; and so on. The fact that it is at least meaningful to ask the question of what proposition was expressed (in contrast to the merely attention-directing utterances such as (14) “The baby”), indicates that we have intuitions that there exists such an entity. The suggestion that I will develop in more detail shortly is that what should count as the proposition literally expressed is whichever proposition, among a possibly large number of candidates, the hearer constructs as the development of the encoded meaning, given the usual presumption that his pragmatic processing is geared to the recovery of the speaker’s communicative intention.

In what follows I sketch how the indeterminacy about the proposition expressed can be accommodated in a principled way in a contextualist pragmatic theory. I use some fairly general assumptions about pragmatic processing that have been made explicit in Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986/1995), but that appear perfectly compatible with the views of other contextualists such as Recanati (2004). Consider first those processes that do not contribute to the proposition expressed: in many cases of conversational implicature, non-verbal or paralinguistic communication, interjections, and so on, it is implausible that fulfilling the speaker’s communicative intention involves the hearer recovering exactly the thought content that the speaker had in mind (and often, it is anyway unlikely that the speaker had a very specific content in mind). Everyone would agree that such communication can be successful while typically incorporating a great deal of indeterminacy about the exact set of propositions

that the speaker intends the hearer to construct. It is also generally accepted that (virtually) every utterance requires some degree of pragmatic inference to arrive at the proposition expressed.

Sperber and Wilson argue that the domain of pragmatics is the class of ostensive stimuli, whether verbal or non-verbal, and all such stimuli are interpreted by a single pragmatics system employing the same pragmatic principles: Pragmatic processes that contribute to the proposition expressed operate according to the same principles as processes of implicature calculation, and so on. By virtue simply of not being a process of decoding, but rather one of hypothesis formation and confirmation, all pragmatic inference, including reference assignment, involves some leeway for divergence between the thought that the speaker has in mind and the thought that the hearer infers: strict duplication of thoughts is anyway an unrealistic requirement and not necessary for successful communication, but, depending on the accuracy demanded in a given discourse situation, any of a range of propositions might be near enough. Given this and the fact that linguistic meaning virtually always underdetermines the proposition expressed anyway, there is no motivation for singling out the proposition literally expressed as necessarily having to meet a higher standard of determinacy than anything else that is communicated, and no requirement that a single unique content be grasped by both speaker and hearer.

A speaker, judging what information will be manifest to the hearer, can have some more or less precise expectations about what interpretation the hearer can construct from a given utterance. So a speaker who utters a subsentential phrase, having available the

resources to be more explicit, can be assumed not to have any one particular proposition in mind that she expects the hearer to recover; instead, a number of propositions will be compatible with the speaker's communicative intention, and so this intention will be satisfied if the hearer recovers any one of these propositions. Whichever of these propositions the hearer constructs, it will inevitably have some constituents supplied by free pragmatic enrichment, since the subsentential linguistic input did not encode a fully propositional schema.

From the contextualist point of view, then, the indeterminacy about the truth conditions<sup>18</sup> of many subsentential utterances (and many utterances in general) is no disadvantage, and is to be expected, given reasonable assumptions about what is required for successful communication. If as much equivalence as possible between the thoughts of speaker and hearer were the aim, then the greater amount of encoding, the better, since less work is left to pragmatic inference (which, being non-demonstrative, is less reliable than decoding). But the kind of contextualist account sketched here predicts that less en-/decoding, and hence less determinacy, will often be preferable. The reason the speaker does not utter something fully propositional is not that she is not intending to literally express a proposition; it is because it is not important exactly which proposition the hearer grasps.

Consider first a case where the truth conditions of a subsentential utterance are highly determinate. It is clear that on occasions where, for example, the context makes uniquely salient an object that the speaker wants to refer to – say when speaker and hearer are both looking at a particular restaurant table, and this fact is mutually manifest

to them – the hearer will be entertaining a representation of the object, in the conceptual format in which it is available for integration with representations from other (e.g. linguistic) sources. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995), the fact that a speaker, by addressing a hearer, is demanding some processing effort from him, licenses a particular comprehension procedure for interpreting ostensive stimuli:

16. Comprehension procedure: Test interpretive hypotheses in order of accessibility; stop when you find an interpretation that meets your expectations of relevance.

The speaker, wanting to get her message across, and being able to predict to some extent what information is accessible to the hearer, will try to shape her utterance to ensure that the hearer constructs an interpretation that satisfies her communicative intention, and to minimize the risk of misunderstanding. The tacit knowledge that interlocutors have this mindreading ability means that the first interpretive hypothesis to occur to the hearer has a high degree of plausibility simply by virtue of occurring first, since its occurrence should have been predictable by the speaker. In the context described above for the utterance of “Reserved”, a concept of the table will be the first argument tested as something that could combine with the predicated property, since it is mutually manifest to speaker and hearer that the table is highly salient. The resulting interpretation, that the table is reserved, is relevant enough, so is accepted, and the comprehension procedure does not go on to consider further hypotheses about the proposition expressed. The efficiency of this comprehension strategy is even clearer in a less determinate case such as (1), the utterance of “The editor”. Carston (2002: 155) points out that, given the context in which the speaker’s demonstration makes the

referent salient, the hearer may have available to him any one of a number of different representations of the referent (THE WOMAN WHO IS STANDING NEXT TO THE DOOR IS \_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_ HAS JUST WALKED IN; etc), and, on the subsentential account, the decoded phrase can simply slot in to whichever of these conceptual representations is most salient in the hearer's mind.

The same considerations apply to Stanley's "Water!" example, despite the even higher degree of indeterminacy. Contrary to his claim, it doesn't fall in with examples of non-verbal communication: in the case of a kick under the table or a tap on the shoulder, even when they are communicative, there is no intuition that anything is decoded from these actions which serves as a constituent of whatever is communicated. Put another way, the kick (e.g.) does not provide the evidence that the hearer uses to derive the communicated content; it just provides evidence that there *is* content to be derived. The thirsty man is a rather different matter, as what is decoded from the utterance is the linguistic evidence from which the content is developed, and it will form a constituent of this content: there is a clear range of candidates for the proposition expressed, all containing the constituent WATER, which would satisfy the speaker's communicative intention. To relegate this to the status of a mere implicature would be unintuitive, and the only reason for claiming that it cannot be the proposition explicitly expressed, is its high degree of indeterminacy. So to claim that the utterance has no truth conditional content is to say that hearers' intuitions are mistaken. In which case, this theory runs into the contradiction pointed out by Clapp (2005) that, if our intuitions about the scope of truth-conditional content are regularly wrong, it makes no sense to modify grammar or semantic theory in order to render our intuitions correct. Contextualism, on the other

hand, accepts that, on occasion, there may be a great deal of indeterminacy about the proposition expressed, so does not face the problem of having to draw an arbitrary cut-off point beyond which an utterance has too indeterminate a content to count as expressing a proposition (or having truth conditions).

Finally, in this section, I'll address a potential objection suggested by a referee, which is not specific to subsentential speech – if it worked, it would apply also to the other cases of free enrichment, such as quantifier domain restrictions, where there can be indeterminacy. I've discussed above an utterance of "The editor" to identify some woman who has just walked into the room where speaker and hearer are. I've said that there is some indeterminacy about just what proposition might be recovered by the hearer as a development of the encoded meaning, and that a range of different propositions, such as either of the following, could count as fulfilling the speaker's communicative intention, and thus should count as the truth-conditional content:

17.   a. THE WOMAN WHO IS STANDING NEXT TO THE DOOR IS THE EDITOR OF *MODE*.
- b. THE EDITOR OF *MODE* HAS JUST WALKED IN.

The speaker, A, could, then, utter either of the following as a true indirect report of the utterance:

18.   B said that the woman who is standing next to the door is the editor of *Mode*.
19.   B said that the editor of *Mode* has just walked in.

A range of other indirect reports of B's utterance would also be considered true, thanks to the indeterminacy of his communicative intention. A will have understood B's utterance, as long as the proposition that she recovers as the truth-conditional content falls within that range.

The objection that a semanticist might raise goes as follows: (18) entails that B said something by his utterance of "The editor", the content of which entails that the editor of *Mode* is a woman. (19) doesn't entail this, and, in fact, would be compatible with the claim that B said something whose content could be true in a situation where no women existed. (18) could not be true in that situation. So, in uttering "The editor", B said something that could not have been true if no women existed, but, at the same time, he said something that could have been true even if no women existed. Because these different contents in (17) can both count as the truth-conditional content of the utterance, which is generally taken to be 'what is said', wouldn't I have to admit that B said these different things by means of his one subsentential utterance? But B would not take himself to be saying different things with conflicting entailments or semantic features (and we are assuming that he has reliable knowledge about what he is trying to communicate). So, wouldn't it be better to say that B actually **said nothing** by his utterance of "The editor", and that the speech reports in (18) and (19) are false?

The contextualist would not, of course, want to concede this, since he would then have to accept that whenever there is some indeterminacy (which would be the case with most examples of fragments, and many other utterances as well), nothing is said. That would be counterintuitive, given that we feel able to evaluate the truth of such

utterances, and we want to be able to claim that they do express truth conditions, and that part of the content is recovered through free enrichment. So I suggest the following response.

(17a and b) can be considered as the truth-conditional content, or what the speaker ‘said’, by his subsentential utterance, and, based on the arguments of this section, ‘what is said’ is not the exact thought content that the speaker had in mind, but is what the hearer recovers. Because the original speaker used a subsentential utterance, the hearer is forced to supply the remaining propositional content, or what is said, entirely pragmatically, and it is the hearer’s responsibility exactly what content he chooses. Entailments that follow from the hearer’s choice of content as opposed to any other content that would have fulfilled the speaker’s communicative intention are not attributed to the speaker; they are the hearer’s own responsibility. Similarly, because a subsentential utterance was used, a fully disquotational report of what she said cannot be given, and the reporter is forced to choose a linguistic expression to characterize those elements of ‘what was said’ that were not phonologically realized. The exact words that he chooses to do this are his own responsibility – as, therefore, are any entailments that arise from this choice of words as opposed to any other suitable expression. An indirect report of a subsentential utterance obviously cannot be entirely disquotational, and we do not automatically attribute the exact content (and entailments) of not-fully-disquotational reports to the original speaker. This is clear if one considers the following slight variation – suppose the report is (20):

20. B said that that idiot is the editor of *Mode*.

(20) could also be judged a true indirect report, but there is little temptation here to conclude from the reporter's choice of linguistic expression B is committed to the editor of *Mode* being an idiot. To indirectly report a subsentential utterance, the reporter is forced to choose some linguistic expression, which is not necessarily the same as that which the original speaker would have used to paraphrase what she herself meant, if called on to do so.

The speaker could, then, harmlessly be taken to have 'said' contradictory things, in the sense that what different hearers might recover, or indirectly report, can have contradictory entailments. The suggested objection runs together (or switches between) two notions of 'what is said': in claiming that both (17a) and (17b) are 'said' by the subsentential utterance of "The editor", 'what is said' is equated with the notion of the proposition expressed, or truth-conditional content, that I have used in this paper, on which it is not what the speaker has in mind, but what the hearer actually recovers. In implying that this is an objection because it leads to the conclusion that the speaker says contradictory things, a more intuitive notion of 'saying' is being employed, which seems to be tied more closely to the content the speaker had in mind. But on this second notion of saying, we have to distinguish what she said from what would fulfil her communicative intention, and so, on this sense of 'saying', she didn't 'say' contradictory things. The same response would apply for the words used to characterize any other pragmatically supplied element: if, for example, a domain restriction is left implicit by the original speaker, and the reporter chooses to make it explicit in her

report, any entailments that arise from the reporter's choice of linguistic expression cannot be attributed to the original speaker.

## **5. Concluding remarks**

In the last section, I've outlined how contextualism can accommodate the indeterminacy that is often a feature of the interpretation of subsentential utterances. There are several aspects of the above picture that I suspect the truth-conditional semanticist would not be enthusiastic about, so, in this concluding section, I will consider briefly whether he would be justified in rejecting it.

How determinate does a proposition have to be to count as the proposition expressed? It seems to be accepted that much of linguistic communication suffers from the 'meaning-intention' problem (Schiffer 1992, Wettstein 1981): for cases of quantifier domain restriction, propositional attitude reports, and so on, no facts about either the context or the speaker's intentions can identify a unique proposition expressed. But the construal of this as a problem assumes that there is some abstract interpersonally or metaphysically determined entity that is 'the proposition expressed'. It is agreed that hearers cannot actually recover such an entity, even assuming that it has some reality. So there is no point in considering this abstract entity the object of explanation of a theory that aims to account for how hearers interpret utterances online.

What must be explained, then, is how hearers grasp the proposition expressed/truth conditions that they actually do grasp, and this is a determinate proposition – the issue

of whether it is determinately *the* thing that the speaker had in mind is irrelevant. Moreover, Stanley agrees that truth-conditional semantics cannot account for the proposition that the hearer does recover from an utterance of a genuinely subsentential phrase: it is *pragmatically* developed into a full proposition. To avoid an obviously question-begging argument (if it's indeterminate, it's not a speech act; if it's determinate, it must be elliptical), there would have to be some evidence that the result of such pragmatic development is inevitably too indeterminate to count as a speech act. But this would not be a promising line to pursue: after all, there are undoubtedly cases where the results of optional pragmatic inference *are* determinate and there is practically no freedom for the hearer to construct a different interpretation: take the case of scalar implicatures where "some" implicates "not all", or indirect answers to "yes/no" questions, as simple examples. This is a further reason why, from the fact that a given apparently subsentential utterance has determinate content, it cannot be concluded that, because pragmatic processes are inherently too imprecise to have succeeded in arriving at this particular content, the utterance is syntactically elliptical.

Indeterminacy has to be allowed in assigning values for, at least, quantifier domains, and indexicals ("here", "now", and "there" being obvious examples where there can be considerable leeway in the exact values for locations or times that the hearers assign). What principled justification is there for allowing that a genuine linguistic speech act can have taken place despite indeterminacy of reference assignment, but excluding any indeterminacy that cannot be traced to saturation (if intuitions are that these pragmatically supplied elements contribute to truth conditions)? The only justification would be to maintain a version of the principle of compositionality for this level of

content: This would allow the truth conditions of an utterance to result from combining the values of (only) the constituents of the sentence. The arguments in sections 2 and 3 against ellipsis accounts of discourse-initial fragments showed that the level of intuitive truth-conditional content of these fragments, which is the propositional level that the sententialist accounts aim to explain, just does not meet the principle of compositionality. These accounts cannot escape involving free enrichment in an explanation of how discourse-initial fragments are processed to arrive at the truth-conditional content, and the attempt to trace the non-overt constituents to linguistic devices (covert deictics, or variable-introducing type-shifting rules) is, at best, an idealization to model linguistic competence; they have no role in a performance model (an account of utterance interpretation).

As mentioned at the start of the paper, the question of whether genuinely subsentential expressions can be used to express truth conditions has been one part of a wider debate about the reality of free pragmatic enrichment. Other types of examples that are often seen as involving free enrichment of some kind to arrive at the truth-conditional content are uses of weather predicates, and quantifier domain or nominal restriction, as illustrated in (21)-(23):

21.   a. It's raining.  
       b. IT IS RAINING IN LONDON.
22.   a. Every student passed the exam.  
       b. EVERY STUDENT IN MY CLASS PASSED THE EXAM.

23. a. Stress drove him to drink.  
 b. STRESS DROVE HIM TO ALCOHOLIC DRINK.

The semanticist approach to (21)-(23) has been to posit covert variables encoded in the logical forms of the sentences: (21) would contain a location variable attached to the verb “rain”, requiring the provision of a specific value for the location; on Stanley and Szabó’s (2000) account of nominal restriction, all nominals encode a domain variable which would underpin the domain restriction in (22) and the narrowing of the encoded meaning of “drink” in (23). However, covert variables that are attached to the relevant lexical item are tokened whenever that item is tokened, so appear in the decoded logical form, demanding saturation. This fact does not mesh very well with the optionality of the provision of a specific value – of these three examples, (23) is the clearest illustration of such optionality, as it is obvious that the concept DRINK (encoded by the word “drink”) does not always require narrowing. Recognizing this, several authors have suggested that the covert variables are optional: Martí (2006) develops this idea as an alternative to the free enrichment approach with regard to weather verbs and the apparently transitive use of “eat” when this verb occurs without an overt direct object<sup>19</sup>: “rain” and “eat” would come with, respectively, an optional location variable and an optional variable for the thing eaten. Jacobson’s (2005) account of domain restriction also makes use of optional covert variables, as does Stern’s (2000, 2006) account of metaphor and metonymy, and Stanley also seems to be moving away from the idea of fixed covert variables: his most recent view of domain variables (2007: 249; 2005a) is that they can have *different* adjunction sites. Ludlow’s and Merchant’s proposals about discourse-initial fragments are in very much the same spirit – the elided linguistic

structure that they posit both needs to be optional, and consists of deictic elements requiring saturation. So I predict that the argument I developed in section 3 against such accounts should extend to ‘optional covert structure’ accounts in general, if the structure in question is intended to play a role in the processing of the utterance.

If, as I hope to have shown in this paper, genuinely subsentential utterances can be used to express truth conditions, then we appear to have – as Stanley (2007: 22) puts it – an ‘existence proof’ of free enrichment. The type of free pragmatic process that is specific to the interpretation of subsententials is somewhat different from those involved in the interpretation of sentential speech: free enrichment in *sentential* utterances such as those in (21)-(23) above involves adjustments and development of parts of the encoded logical form, and does not include the addition of extra semantic arguments or predicates (such as NP- or VP-conjuncts), while in the interpretation of subsentential utterances, what must be supplied pragmatically to arrive at a complete proposition *does* include an argument or predicate. So accepting the existence of free enrichment in sentential utterances while denying the reality of subsentential speech acts (or vice versa) is potentially a coherent position, and the two kinds of enrichment to some extent need arguing for separately. Evidence for one kind, though, can be seen as support for the existence of the other, given the background of the general contextualist picture of the radical underdetermination of truth conditions by linguistic meaning, and the centrality of pragmatic mechanisms even in explicit communication.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The examples are drawn from Barton (1990), Botterell (2005), Stainton (2006b) and Stanley (2000).

<sup>2</sup> These are, of course, only very rough indications of the propositional contents.

<sup>3</sup> 'Unarticulated' here means not articulated at any level of linguistic representation – i.e. not just unpronounced, but not traceable to any linguistic element, overt or covert.

<sup>4</sup> This is, roughly, the view of mental architecture defended by Fodor (1983), except that Stainton is not committed to the domain-specific faculties having all of the other features of Fodorian modules, such as informational encapsulation.

<sup>5</sup> This also goes for the cases that Hankamer and Sag (1976: 408) presented of syntactic ellipsis occurring without a syntactic controller, for example, an utterance of "I wonder why" on seeing someone storm out of a room. As Stainton (2006b: 122-3) discusses, the infelicity indicates that an overt licenser is required.

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<sup>6</sup> Many authors would take issue with that idea, and Stainton (2006b: 72) argues that Stanley's view is implausible on these (among other) grounds. This is because it is widely held that thought is not conducted in natural language, but in a distinct, modality-neutral, conceptual medium – a Mentalese or Language of Thought (LoT), as defended in Fodor (1975).

<sup>7</sup> On Stainton's pragmatic account, sketched briefly in section 1, in Stanley's original example the uttered subsentential phrase "The editor" would be decoded into a subpropositional conceptual representation, in a non-natural-language medium; to grasp a full proposition, the hearer combines this with another representation – a concept of the indicated woman, provided by the visual system. The infelicity of this example without any prior context can straightforwardly be explained without assuming that it is elliptical and missing a licenser: It's simply due to the hearer not being able to access an appropriate mental concept (a representation of the individual the speaker is talking about) to function as an argument to combine with the predicate.

<sup>8</sup> The indeterminacy of the content of certain discourse-initial fragments has been used by Stanley (2000) as an argument against utterances of them expressing truth conditions at all, from which it would follow that there would be no free enrichment involved in their interpretation, but, as I discuss in section 4, only a small fraction of the disputed data could be analyzed as too indeterminate to count as expressing truth conditions.

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<sup>9</sup> This is illustrated extensively in Merchant (2004). Connectivity effects arise where the fragment has some feature that would be explained on the assumption that it is in fact a full syntactic sentence. This is easily seen with case-marking in the following example in German:

- i.      A: *Wem sieht er ähnlich?*  
           Who-DAT look-3-SING he similar  
           ‘Who does he resemble?’  
        B: *Seinem Vater* / \**Sein Vater*.  
           His-DAT father / His-NOM father  
           ‘His father’  
        B’: *Er sieht seinem* / \**sein Vater ähnlich*.  
           He resembles his-DAT / \*his-NOM father

If B’s reply were not a case of syntactic ellipsis, it would be a mystery why dative case is obligatory while nominative case, which would be expected if the fragment were subsentential, is judged ungrammatical.

<sup>10</sup> Merchant (2007a) acknowledges that his ellipsis account has the same empirical coverage as Stainton’s pragmatic enrichment. Merchant (ibid) and Stainton (2007) see the only difference between the two approaches as being in the kinds of processes they see as involved in the interpretation of fragments: pragmatic enrichment, or saturation.

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<sup>11</sup> Ludlow's account seems aimed at also providing an account of the familiar types of ellipsis such as VP-ellipsis and sluicing, but I consider here only how it fares with discourse-initial cases.

<sup>12</sup> This is because they would also have to account for many other examples, including the following, originally from Barton (1990):

- i.      A: The White House staff doesn't visit Tip O'Neill in his congressional office.
- B: An old grudge.

B expresses the proposition THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF DOESN'T VISIT TIP O'NEILL IN HIS CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE BECAUSE OF AN OLD GRUDGE. Even assuming the main clause here could be captured in Ludlow's system by a silent PRO, he'd need to add at least a complementizer to his inventory of silent deictics.

<sup>13</sup> These could correspond respectively to the following rough propositional contents (and contexts of utterance): a) THAT IS MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE. b) MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE HAS JUST COME INTO THE ROOM. c) THAT WAS BECAUSE OF MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE. d) [Handing someone a package] GIVE THIS TO MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE. e) [Holding up an object] THIS IS FROM MICHAEL'S FIANCÉE.

<sup>14</sup> There are further complications, depending on what function the uttered phrase is to serve: if the hearer works out that it is being used as an individual-denoting expression,

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it has to lift into a generalized quantifier type before variable introduction and  $\lambda$ -reduction apply. (See Merchant 2007a: 38-9.)

<sup>15</sup> This has been argued for in detail by Shopen (1972), Barton (1990), Barton and Progovac (2005), and Fortin (2007), and is something that most authors, including Stanley (2000) and Merchant, accept. Ludlow (2005) thinks otherwise, and presents data that purports to show that the grammar does not generate bare phrases: he takes constructions that look subsentential and argues that they could only have been derived through sentence-level operations. Ludlow's analyses are couched "within a 1970s model of the grammar" (Ludlow 2005: 4), and it is doubtful that they would license the same conclusions if embedded in more up-to-date syntactic theories. Moreover, it is not clear that Ludlow's claims are about performance and processing at all, given that the generative grammar enterprise within which he is working is intended as a theory of linguistic *competence* (following Chomsky 1965: 3-9). The idea that these operations are reflected in performance was long ago debunked by experimental work (Fodor, Bever and Garrett 1974). Additionally, even if it were true that the pronounced phrase must have been produced from a sentence by the application of rules such as deletion and passivization, it hardly follows that the interpretation process is a mirror-image series of transformations, particularly since the argument I gave above against Ludlow's 'silent deictic' account of fragments carries over directly to his claims about such operations being involved in comprehension: to know what transformations and reconstruction should be performed, the hearer must antecedently identify the proposition meant by the speaker.

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<sup>16</sup> Elugardo and Stainton (2004) provide the following examples to make this point:

- i. [Looking out at Grand Canyon] “That’s beautiful”.
- ii. You must turn in your report before you leave today.

Of (i), they ask whether there must be a determinate referent for “That” – a particular object or collection of objects – for the utterance to count as an assertion. Intuitively, this is not required, in which case we have a speech act where there is no determinate content. Similarly, an utterance of (ii) is undoubtedly a speech act, though we might not be certain what force it has – whether it is an order, or an assertion of policy, or a request.

<sup>17</sup> Those subsentential utterances that are not used to express propositions are perhaps cases like (14), mentioned in section 3, where a mother realizes her child is missing and cries “The baby!”, and also other attention-getting utterances, such as shouting someone’s name.

<sup>18</sup> Note that the propositions resulting from pragmatic processing and forming the utterances’ truth-conditional contents will themselves be determinate. What is indeterminate is exactly which proposition falls under the speaker’s communicative intention (if any particular proposition does).

<sup>19</sup> As in the following example:

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- i. [Mother places a plate of vegetables in front of a fussy child] Eat!

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