

What can if-stripping tell us about ellipsis?

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1. Introduction

(1) **If-Stripping** = *if* + fragmental non-wh-phrase (remnant)

a. John likes to drink whiskey. If *scotch*, I'll pour him an Islay.

b.

Antecedent/*correlate* Remnant Ellipsis

John [likes to drink *whiskey*], **if** *Scotch*, ~~John likes to drink Scotch~~...

(2) Looks like other types of stripping, *e.g.* negative Stripping, stripping under focus adverbials

a. John likes to drink whiskey, not *wine*. (See Hankamer and Sag 1976:409)

b. John likes to drink whiskey, but only scotch.

(3) However, Stripping is not possible under complementizer *that*:

a. Jane loves to sip whiskey, and John says *wine* too. (See Wurmbrand 2017:344)

b. *Jane loves to sip whiskey, and John says **that** *wine* too. (See Lobeck 1995:27)

(4) *Embedded Stripping Generalization (ESG)* (Wurmbrand 2017:344-5)

Stripping of embedded clauses is only possible when the embedded clause lacks a CP.

(5) Goals of this study: Reveal the basic properties of if-Stripping

- If-Stripping is therefore a counterexample to the ESG
 - *If* is a complementizer
 - If-Stripping is genuine clausal ellipsis
- Dynamic Phase accounts of clausal ellipsis cannot derive if-Stripping
- Answer the question: what distinguishes *if* from *that* in Stripping contexts?
 - The remnant of if-Stripping undergoes focus movement
 - *If* and the remnant occupy higher CP positions than *that*
 - Clausal ellipsis targets a lower CP projection

2. Basic properties of if-conditionals

2.1 *If* shares many properties of other complementizers (like *that*)

(6) *Prefer*-verbs do not allow null arguments. (*caveat* - see Appendix A)

a. *John preferred.

b. John preferred scotch/if Mary goes/that Mary left

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(7) Verbs select for complements of particular categories or semantic properties

- a. John prefers *if/that/*whether/*why* Mary left.

(8) Do-so replacement suggests that the subordinate clause is a complement to V

- a. John prefers [_{DP}scotch]/[_{CP}*if/that* Mary left and Susan *does so*] (**scotch/*if* Jack left).

(9) Adverbs may not intervene between a head and its complement

- a. John prefers (**seriously*) [_{DP} the first option] / [_{CP}*if/that* Mary goes].
 b. John prefers [_{DP} the first option] / [_{CP}*if/that* Mary goes] (*seriously*).

(10) *If* blocks Subj-Aux inversion (Bruening 2017)

- a. If Mary had left, John would be happy.
 b. (**If*) Had Mary left, John would be happy.
 c. That Mary had left made John happy.
 d. (**That*) Mary had left made John happy.

(11) **Table 1: Shared properties of complementizers**

Properties of Comp	<i>if</i> -clause	<i>that</i> -clause
Categorial selection	✓	✓
Adjacency of complement	✓	✓
Do-so constituency test	✓	✓
Subj-Aux Inversion	✓	✓

2.2 If-Stripping shares many properties with other types of clausal ellipsis (e.g. Stripping and Sluicing)

(12) Stripping remnant with implicit correlate (Merchant 2001:120-121)

- a. A: They will serve the guests. B: If (**it is*) *whiskey*, his teetotaler mother will be upset.
 b. A: They will serve the guests. B: Not (**it is*) *whiskey*.
 c. A: I know they will serve the guests, but I don't know *what* (**it is*).

(13) Idiomatic meanings are preserved in if-Stripping (Rottman & Yoshida 2013)

- a. A: John made headway in his project. B: If (**it is*) *a lot of headway*, we should congratulate him.
 b. A: John made made some headway with his project *but not a lot of headway*.
 c. A: I heard John made headway on his project, but not *how much headway*.

(14) If-Stripping shows Binding Condition A effects (Chomsky 1980;Iatridou 1991)

- a. A: John₁ is criticizing someone. B: If *himself*₁, it is unfair.
 b. A: John₁'s friends are criticizing someone. B: **If himself*₁, it is unfair.

- (15) Negative Stripping shows Binding Condition A effects (Yoshida, Nakao, & Ortega-Santos 2015))
- a. A: John₁ is criticizing someone. B: Not himself₁.
 - b. A: Someone is criticizing John₁. B: *Not himself₁.
- (16) Sluicing shows Binding Condition A effects (Merchant 2001)
- a. John₁ criticized a lot of pictures, but I don't know how many pictures of himself₁.
 - b. *Some pictures were startling for John, but I don't know how many pictures of himself₁.
- (17) If-Stripping shows Binding Condition C effects (Chomsky 1980; Iatridou 1991) (See Appendix B)
- a. A: He₁ was selling some pictures. B: *If *of John*₁, his mother will be upset.
 - b. A: His₁ sister was selling some pictures. B: If *of John*₁, his mother will be upset.
- (18) Negative Stripping shows Binding Condition C effects (Hunter & Yoshida 2016)
- c. A: He₁ was selling some pictures. B: *Not pictures of John₁.
 - d. A: His₁ sister was selling some pictures. B: Not pictures of John₁.
- (19) Sluicing shows Binding Condition C effects (Merchant 2001)
- e. A: He₁ was selling some pictures, but I don't know how many pictures of John₁.
 - f. A: His₁ sister was selling some pictures, but I don't know how many pictures of John₁.
- (20) CP may not remain in the complement position of *'be ashamed of'*, and the moved CP must have an overt complementizer (Bošković & Lasnik 2003, Merchant 2005:690)
- a. *John is ashamed of that he drank too much.
 - b. *(That) he drank too much, John is ashamed of.
 - c. A: John is ashamed of something. B: If *(*that*) *he drank too much*, then he shouldn't be.
 - d. A: John is ashamed of something. B: Not *(*that*) he drank too much, that's for sure.
- (21) PP remnant enters into selectional relation with antecedent verb in if-Stripping, Stripping, and sluicing (Yoshida, Nakao, & Ortega-Santos 2015)
- a. John relies on someone. If on/*of *Mary*, she is very trustworthy.
 - b. John was talking with someone. If with/to/*of *Mary*, she gives good advice.
 - c. John relies on Mary. Not on/*of Susan.
 - d. John relies on someone, but I don't know on/*of who.

(24) **Table 2: Summary of examples (12-21)**

Clausal Ellipsis Properties	<i>if</i> -Stripping	<i>Stripping</i>	<i>Sluicing</i>	<i>Copular Clause/ Proform</i>
‘Sprouting’ of implicit correlate	✓	✓	✓	✗
BCA effects	✓	✓	✓	✗
BCC effects	✓	✓	✓	✗
Antecedent V selects Remnant P	✓	✓	✓	✗
Movement of CP remnant	✓	✓	N/A	✗

2.3 Summary

What we’ve seen so far suggests:

- *If* is a complementizer (7-11)
- If-Stripping is genuine clausal ellipsis (12-16)
- If-Stripping is therefore a counterexample to the ESG (4)
- **What remains: what distinguishes *if* from *that*? How is if-Stripping derived?**

3. Deriving if-Stripping

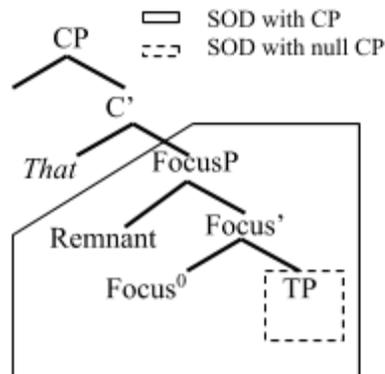
3.1 Dynamic Phase Approach (Gengel 2009; Wurmbrand 2017)

- Assumes a Split-CP model of the left periphery (LP) (Rizzi 1997)

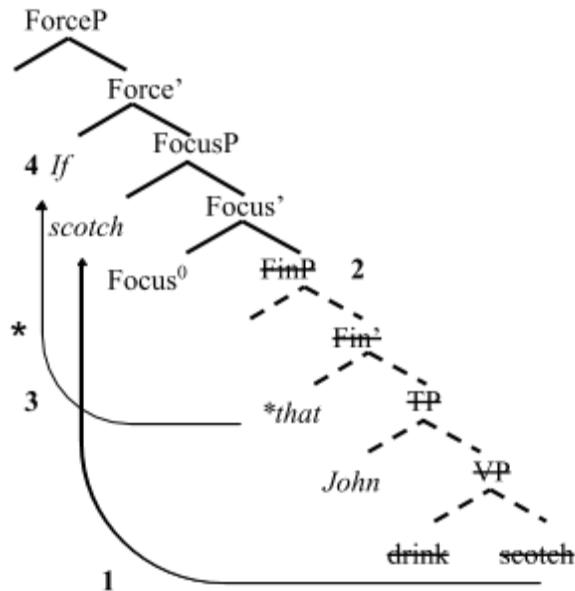
(25) [ForceP[TopicP[FocusP[TopicP[FiniteP[TP]]]]]]

- Assumes a derivation that proceeds via ‘Dynamic Phases’ (Chomsky 2000, 2001, 2008; Gengel 2006; Wurmbrand 2017)

(26)



(28) Components: Focus fronting (1), clausal ellipsis (2), low origin of *that* (3), and a high origin of *if* (4)



(29) The remnant can be focus associated (cf. Nakao 2009; Yoshida, Nakao, & Ortega Santos 2015; Wurmbrand 2017)

- a. A: John is pouring drinks. B: If *whiskey* (not wine), I'll have a scotch.
- b. A: Someone is bringing whiskey. B: If *John* (not Mary), then I assume they'll bring an Islay.

(30) Low origin of *that* also accounts for anti-adjacency effects on subject extraction (Hagstrom 2001:15)

- a. This is an amendment which they say that, *next year*, *t* will be law.
- b. *This is an amendment which they say that *t* will be law. (Hagstrom 2001:15)

(31) Raising of *that* to a higher projection accounts for some embedded topicalization data

- a. John thinks that geography, Jane loves to study. (Hankamer and Sag 1976: 353)

(32) In French, complementizer *que* can occur in conditionals, but not in reduced conditionals.

- a. A: Theresa apportera un vin ou du whisky.
Theresa will-be-bringing a wine or a whisky.
'Theresa will be bringing wine or whiskey.'
- b. B: Si (qu') elle apportera un vin, je voudrais un vin rouge.
If (that) she will-be-bringing a wine, I want a wine red.
'If she brings wine, I want red wine.'
- c. B: If wine, je voudrais un vin rouge.
Si (*que) vin, ... I want a wine red
'If wine, I want red.'

(33) It's been argued (Endo 2017, Radford 2018) that the *how come that* construction belies a low position of *that*, which fills a position as a Finite or Factive head.

- a. How come that an infinite universe will collapse under gravity (Radford 2018:254)

(34) In French and English, non-finite verbs may be remnants but finite verbs may not.

- a. John wanted to rent a boat not buy.
- b. *John rented a boat, not bought.
- c. Jean veut visiter la Suisse, mais pas passer une semaine en Italie.
Jean want visit-inf Swizerland but NEG spend-inf one week in Italy
“Jean wants to visit Switzerland, but he doesn't want to spend a week in Italy.”
- d. *Jean visite la Suisse mais pas passe une semaine en Italie.
Jean visits Swizerland but NEG spends one week in Italy
“Jean is visiting Switzerland, but he isn't spending a week in Italy.”

3.3 Summary

- Dynamic Phase account wrongly predicts remnant to be included in the ellipsis site
- Low CP Deletion approach accounts for differences between *if/that* in embedded Stripping

6. Conclusions

- We have shown that if-Stripping is a counterexample to the generalizations that clausal ellipsis cannot occur under overt complementizers by showing that:
 - 1) *if* is a complementizer and;
 - 2) if-Stripping is genuine clausal ellipsis.
- We propose a new analysis of clausal ellipsis to account for contrasts between *if* and *that* which assumes deletion of a lower CP projection (FinP), rather than TP.

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Appendix A: Constraints on non-initial If-stripping

Although the Low-CP Deletion account nicely handles stripping in fronted and sentence final conditionals (39ab), there seems to be an issue when directly embedded under a verb like *prefer* (39c). This account is not directly predicted by the Low-CP Deletion account considered above. This remains an open issue, though a speculative answer would suggest that it may be related to whatever licensing conditions on if-stripping exist, or that (along the lines suggested by various authors; Bresnan 1972; Haegeman 2003; Rossou 2010; Weir 2014) verbs selecting CP complements may sometimes differ in respect to the complement they take (regarding the number and kind of CP layers one assumes).

(39) Variable positions of if-stripping

- a. A: What will John bring? B: *If whiskey*, I hope John brings a smoky scotch.
- b. A: What will John bring? B: I hope John brings a smoky scotch, *If whiskey*.
- c. A: What will John bring? B: I like smokey scotches, so I prefer *if whiskey*.

Appendix B: How much structure is in the ellipsis site?

Some have argued that variants of stripping, such as why-stripping (Weir 2012; Yoshida, Nakao, & Ortega-Santos 2012/2015) maximally involves a silent vP, as opposed to a TP. We argue that this analysis is not compatible with some observations about Binding Condition C effects in raising structures involving ellipsis.

Evidence of a Tense Projection in the ellipsis site comes from restrictions on R-expressions in stripping remnants with raising structures in the antecedents. If you observe the examples in the the cases of (35-36), you will find a familiar BCC violation in the if-stripped clause when the pronoun, which is argued to raise from embedded Spec-TP to matrix Spec-TP, c-commands the R-expression in the antecedent clause. This is true for both if-stripping (35) and negative stripping (36). We argue, due to parallelism between the antecedent and the stripped clause, the presence of a pleonastic or moved pronoun is interpreted in the matrix TP in an ellipsis site, too, where it would c-command the trace of the remnant. This data is also unexpected by an account that argues against structures containing TP in the ellipsis site.

(35) If-stripping remnants in raising structures also show BCC effects with raised pronouns.

- a. A: He₁ seems to some people to be a nice person. B: *If to John₁'s classmates*, they haven't gone drinking with him...
- b. A: It seems to some people that he₁ is a nice person. B: *If to John₁'s classmates*, they haven't gone drinking with him...

(36) Negative stripping remnants in raising structures show BCC effects when a pronoun has been raised, but not when the matrix subject is a pleonastic, suggesting TP structure in the ellipsis site.

- a. A: He₁ seems to Mary's friends to be a nice person. B: **Not to John₁'s friends*.
- b. A: It seems to Mary's friends that he₁ is a nice person. B: *Not to John₁'s friends*.

Appendix C: What licenses clausal ellipsis in if-stripping?

The next point to consider is what motivates the clausal ellipsis in conditionals, or what allows the remnant to “survive”. While we do not take a position on what specifically licenses the clausal ellipsis seen in if-stripping, we would suggest, following a line of argumentation presented in Yoshida et al.’s paper on why-stripping, that it is not that the remnant moves of its own accord. Although in English focus is generally realized in-situ, a condition on recoverability like Pesetsky’s (38), forces the higher non-elided copy of a focused constituent to be realized overtly so that the semantic information it contributes can be preserved. Focused constituents generally contribute discourse-new information or relevant contrasts. We also note Liliane Haegeman’s observation in (38) that fronting in conditionals is generally dispreferred. The fact that if-stripping allows for focus fronting of a remnant suggests that the generalization against fronting reported by Haegeman (2003) is not tenable.

(37) Recoverability Condition (Pesetsky 1992)

A syntactic unit with semantic content must be pronounced unless it has a sufficiently local antecedent.

(38) Fronting in conditionals not permitted, normally (Haegeman 2003)

- a. If *whiskey* *(John is going to bring), I’ll have a nice scotch.

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