

# *Me too* fragments in English and French: a direct interpretation approach

---

Anne Abeillé and Jong-Bok Kim

LLF, Université de Paris Cité & Kyung Hee U.,  
anne.abeille@u-paris.fr & jongbok@khu.ac.kr

Experimental and Corpus-Based Approaches to Ellipsis

SLE2022 (Societas Linguistica Europaea 55th Annual Meeting) University of Bucharest, Romania  
24–27 August 2022

# Introduction

---

## Additive adverbs with a fragment remnant

- Fragments with a nominal remnant like *me* followed by an additive adverb (*too/either/neither*) in English and French (*aussi/non plus*), which could fall under ‘bare argument ellipsis’ or ‘stripping’:
  - (1) a. A: I’m ready for my dessert right now. B: Me \*(too). (COCA 2019 MOV)  
b. A: Have a safe trip back home. B: You \*(too). (COCA 2018 TV)
  - (2) a. Elle était ravie et moi \*(aussi).  
‘She was happy and me too.’ (Frantext, Dorin, 1984)  
b. Je ne vois rien... Toi \*(non plus)?  
I NEG see nothing ... You neither  
‘I don’t see anything...You either?’ (Frantext, Pécherot, 2003)

## Some peculiarities of *Me too* Fragments

- The first peculiarity of *too* and *aussi* in such a fragment is that its presence is obligatory (Kaplan 1984)
- The adverb functions as a presupposition trigger (Rullmann 2003, Winterstein & Zeevat 2012, Ahn 2015). For instance, in (1a) *me too* presupposes that there is someone else who is ready for the dessert.
- And more to be discussed

## Two competing theories of fragments

- derivational theories (Merchant 2001, Merchant 2005, Weir 2014): introduce a sentential source and apply a move-and-delete operation.
  - (3) a. Kim comes from Seoul, and Lee, too.
  - b. and [<sub>FOCP</sub> Lee [<sub>IP</sub> — comes from Seoul]] too.
- direct interpretation theories (Ginzburg & Sag 2000): only postulate a sentence projection from the non-verbal remnant with no clausal source and with a context-driven semantic clause interpretation but without syntactic reconstruction of a clausal source.
  - (4) [S [Lee, too]].

## Our goal

- Having only one argument left in the fragments, additive fragments appear to be a type of stripping except for the presence of an additive adverb.
- Since Hankamer & Sag (1976), stripping has been considered a surface anaphor, therefore more constrained than deep anaphors such as VP ellipsis. As Kehler (2019) has it: “[unlike VP ellipsis], other forms of ellipsis, such as bare remnant ellipsis (e.g., gapping and stripping), are far less sympathetic to nonlocal antecedents, cataphora, situationally-evoked antecedents, and so forth.”

## In this paper

- provide a corpus study of additive fragments in English and French, based on COCA and Frantext ([www.frantext.fr](http://www.frantext.fr))
- on the basis of new corpus data, show that such fragments do not always have a verbal clause as their antecedent, and that when they do, different kinds of mismatch are possible between a verbal equivalent and the actual fragment
- propose a direct interpretation analysis that resorts to no syntactic reconstruction of a verbal clause

## Corpus data

---



- For English data, we used the corpus, COCA, that continues to be updated (Davies 2008). Our search limits the remnant to pronouns. We focus on Pronoun + *too/either/neither* fragments only.

	.	?	!	total
<i>too</i>	294	113	57	464
<i>either</i>	221	9	2	232
<i>neither</i>	192	35	1	228
total	707	157	60	984

**Table 1:** Samples of pronoun+additive adverb+punct from COCA

- used Frantext, which is a database of French literature, that is regularly expanded ([www.frantext.fr](http://www.frantext.fr)) and Searched for pronominal fragments with an additive adverb (*aussi* 'too' *non plus* 'neither')

	.	?	!	total
<i>aussi</i> 'too'	262	25	26	313
<i>non plus</i> 'either'	125	5	18	148
total	387	30	44	461

**Table 2:** Sample tokens of pronoun+additive adverb fragments from Frantext (after 1980)

- Most of the time the pronominal remnant has a pronominal correlate in the antecedent clause. But the correlate can also be nominal and the correlate can be implicit:
  - (5) a. Sa grande sœur grimpait aux arbres, lui aussi.  
His big sister climbed to-the trees, him too.  
'His older sister was climbing trees, him too.' (Frantext, Audin, 2012)
  - b. A: Allez, à tantôt, sois sage! B: Toi aussi rétorquai-je, ironique.  
Go, to soon, be.IMP quiet -you too answered I ironic  
'See you soon, be quiet! -You too, answered I, ironically' (Frantext, Aventin, 1988)

## mismatch between the remnant and the correlate

- Like English, French allows agreement mismatch between antecedent and fragment, as observed in gapping (Abeillé et al. 2014). In a vast majority of French fragments (70% with *aussi* 'too', 63% with *non plus* 'neither'), we found person, number or gender mismatch.

- (6) a. Les acolytes se sont mis à poil. Moi aussi.  
the accomplices REF are put at hair. Me too  
'The accomplices got naked. Me too.' (Frantext, Sartre, 1983)
- b. Cette fois, je suis vraiment amoureuse, lui aussi.  
this time, I.CL am really lover.FSG him too  
'This time, I am really in love, him too.' (Frantext, Prin, 2005)

- There can also be verb form mismatch. In (7), the antecedent is a declarative but the fragment is an order/advice speech act: 'You too (should) do your best to be safe', with a change in verb mood.

(7) We will do our best to be safe, you too. (COCA 2012 BLOG)

- (8) a. A: Ne t' en prive pas! Écris! B: Alors, elle aussi!  
NEG you.CL of-it.CL deprive.IMP not Write.IMP B:-Then, her too!  
'Do not deprive yourself! Write! -Her too, then!' (Frantext, Chaix, 2005)
- b. Ses parents étaient musiciens... [...] Vous aussi, peut-être ?  
'His parents were musicians... You too maybe?'(Frantext, Garat, 2006)

## fragments in embedded clauses

- Wurmbrand (2017: 6) introduces the so-called Embedded Stripping Generalization: "stripping of embedded clauses is only possible when the embedded clause lacks a CP".
  - (9) a. A: What does Nixon want for breakfast? B: Kissinger says eggs. (Morgan 1989)
  - b. When I get asked who's the biggest diva on the set, I say you. (Wurmbrand 2017)
  - c. Smith left and everyone thought (\*that) Jones too. (Johnson 2018: 518)
- corpus data yield examples where additive fragments occur in embedding environments:
  - (10) a. Everybody's got to renegotiate, and that means you too. (COCA, MOV, 1999)
  - b. A: I'm probably just gonna get a beer. B: Yeah, so many choices. I think me too. (MOV 2015)

## Embed fragments in French

- French allows fragments in embedding environments in a more flexible way. French additive fragments can be embedded with or without *que* ('that'). (11a) contradicts Wurmbrand's generalization, and is different from *that*-less parenthetical uses in (11c):
  - (11) a. C'est un homme qui adore ses enfants. Remarquez que moi aussi.  
'It's a man who adores his children. Notice that me too'. (Frantext, Aymé, 2002)
  - b. A: Tu veux me croquer mon Prince? B: J'te préviens moi aussi.  
'You want to bite me my Prince? - I warn you me too' (Frantext, Hanska, 1981)
  - c. C'est un homme qui adore ses enfants. Moi aussi, remarquez.  
'It's a man who adores his children. Me too, notice'

## Propositional meaning

- the possibility of a sentential adverb like *actually* and *now* in English (Hankamer & Sag 1976, Merchant 2003):
  - (12) a. Abby speaks passable Dutch, and probably/possibly/fortunately Ben, too. (Merchant 2003)
  - b. It looks like almost everyone dislikes this idea and me too actually. (COCA 2020 BLOG)
  - c. it's got you completely stuck, and me too now. (COCA 1990 FIC)
- modified by an evaluative (*malheureusement* 'unfortunately') or a modal adverb (*peut-être* 'maybe')
  - (13) a. Les deux jeunes personnes faillirent mourir de peur. Malheureusement vous aussi.  
'the two young persons almost died of fear. You too unfortunately' (Frantext, Buron 1998)
  - b. J' ai un peu de temps devant moi. Et vous aussi, peut-être?  
I.CL have a little of time ahead me And you too, maybe?  
'I have some time before me. And you too maybe?' (Frantext, Ormesson 1987)



## Complex in building the propositional meaning

- The propositional content of the fragment usually comes from the preceding clause, but it can also involve more than one preceding clause.

(14) Où allait-il? A Carcassonne. Parfait. Vous aussi.

Where went he.CL? To Carcassonne. Perfect. You too

'Where was he going? To Carcassonne. Perfect. You too.' (Frantext, Buron, 1998)

- a change of clause type/illocutionary force:

(15) a. T' aimes ça, l' argent? Moi aussi.

You.CL like this, the money? Me too

'You like money? Me too.' (Frantext, Beauchemin, 1981)

b. Savez-vous pourquoi[...] ils me surnomment Doc? Non. Vous aussi, je

Know you.CL why they.CL me.CL nickname Doc? No You too, I  
suppose?

suppose?

'Do you know why they nickname me Doc? No. You too, I suppose?' (Frantext, Navarre, 1988)

## Two different types: contrastive and coreferent use

- contrastive use: the remnant in the fragment introduces another individual who stands in contrast with the individual(s) denoted by the correlate.
- coreferent use: Usually with turn changing, the remnant and the correlate are coindexed:
  - (16) a. A: Frankie's guys are back! B: Them too! (COCA 1991 MOV)
  - b. A: John's been drinking. B: JOHN too!

## **Some issues for syntactic reconstruction**

---

## Case mismatches between the remnant and the correlate

- case assignment to the fragment: Although a nominative pronoun is required for the subject of a verbal clause, it is not possible in the fragment:
  - (17) a. A: I'm ready for my dessert right now. B: Me/ \*I too. (COCA, 2019, MOV)
  - b. A: Who's getting hungry? B: Me. (COCA 2019 MOV)
  - c. Some teams get paid a little bit, but not us. (COCA 2018 FIC)
- In French, the divide is between the weak clitic forms (*je, me 'I, tu, te 'you, il, le 'he'*) and the strong forms (*moi, toi, lui*). The strong form cannot be in bare subject position, but is required in case of modification (Miller & Sag 1997):
  - (18) a. Elle était ravie et moi/ \*je aussi.  
'She was happy.FSG and me too.'
  - b. J'/ \*Moi étais ravi aussi.  
I.CL/\*STRX was happy.MSG
  - c. \*Je/ ?Moi aussi étais ravi.  
I.\*CL/STRX was happy.MSG

- When the remnant corresponds to a complement, a (preverbal) weak form is also required in a verbal clause, and a strong form is not acceptable in postverbal position:
  - (19) a. Cela l'inquiétait, et moi/ \*me aussi par sympathie.  
This her.CL.worried, and me.STRX/\*CL too by sympathy  
'This was worrying her, and me too by sympathy.' (Frantext, Chandernagor, 1981)
  - b. Cela m'inquiétait aussi/ \*Cela inquiétait moi aussi.  
This me.CL.worried too/ \*This worried me.STRX too  
'This worried me too.'

## Preposition omission

- Depiante (2000) and Merchant (2001), preposition omission in ellipsis comes from preposition stranding, and non preposition stranding languages like French, should not allow for it. In our fragments, the preposition can be omitted:  
(20) a. A: Ça ne me fait rien, mais alors rien du tout. B: Moi non plus!  
this NEG me.CL does nothing, but then nothing at all - Me neither!  
'This does nothing to me, really nothing at all. -Me neither!' (Frantext, Manoeuvre, 1985)  
b. ça ne fait rien \*(à) moi non plus.  
'It does not do anything to me either.'  
c. \*Moi non plus, ça ne fait rien à \_\_ .  
'me too, it does not do anything to \_\_

## Deletion under identity and island constraint

- A deletion under identity analysis usually assumes focus fronting (Depiante 2000, Merchant 2003), especially when the remnant is not the subject:

- (21) a. I think Superman brought me home. You too? (COCA 1994 TV)  
b. \*~~Superman brought home~~ you too? / Superman brought you home too?  
c. [<sub>FocP</sub> You [<sub>IP</sub> ~~Superman brought~~ — home]] too?

- But when the correlate is an embedded subject, its movement is not possible:

- (22) a. Je voudrais surtout qu' elle soit heureuse. Et toi aussi,  
I.CL like.COND above.all that she.CL be.SBJV happy.FSG And you too,  
tant qu' à faire.  
as that to do  
'I would like above all that she be happy. And you too, for that matter'  
(Frantext, Ormesson, 1987)  
b. \*Et toi aussi, je voudrais que — sois heureuse. (You, I want that — be happy) (putative source for (33a))

## Putative source inside an island

- The following example has the correlate inside a relative clause, which is an island for focus fronting:

(23) a. [...]c' est ce qui la maintient et moi aussi.

this is this that her.CL maintains and me too

'This is what keeps her, and me too.' (Frantext, Akerman, 2013)

b. \*et moi aussi, c'est ce qui maintient \_\_ . putative source for 34a)

Me too, this is this that keeps

c. et c'est ce qui me maintient aussi.

'This is what keeps me'



## Mismatch in polarity

- Additive adverbs are typically sensitive to the polarity of the context clause. A clausal reconstruction analysis is challenged by polarity mismatch. Sometimes the negation is implicit as in (24a), and *either* would not be possible in a verbal clause:

- (24) a. A: We reserve the right to delete any comment for any reason at any time. B: Me either. (COCA 2012 WEB)
- b. I too/\*either reserve the right to delete any comment for any reason at any time.
- (25) a. A: Genetschka, il est hors de question que tu allumes le poêle, Genetschka it is out of question that you.CL light.SBJV the stove les bûches sont trop lourdes![...] B: Volenka, toi non plus! the logs are too heavy.FPL -V you neither!  
'Genetschka, it's out of the question that you light the stove, the logs are too heavy. -Volenka, you neither!' (Frantext, Schreiber, 1996)
- b. #Il est hors de question que tu allumes le poêle non plus.  
'It is out of the question that you light the stove neither'.

## More on polarity mismatch

- Although *too* is usually used with a positive antecedent, a negative one is also possible. For instance, in (26a), *too* has scope over the negation, which shows that the adverb adjoins to the pronoun. The putative source is thus not a clausal one like (26b), but would be something like (26c).

- (26) a. A: I can't deal with you right now. B: Me too. (COCA 2001 MOV)  
b. ( $\neq$ ) I can't deal with you right now, too.  
c. ( $=$ ) I too can't deal with you right now.

A further complication arises from examples like (27a):

- (27) a. A: Noise?  $\sim$  I don't hear anything. B: Me neither. (COCA 2013 MOV) (I don't hear anything either/\*neither.)  
b. Neither do I hear anything./\*I neither don't hear anything.

- Exophoric uses are supposed to be impossible according to Hankamer & Sag (1976), as illustrated by the following:
  - (28) [Mary is reading El Quijote] John says: #But not Hamlet?
  - (29) a. At the Riverside Caf, Kyle orders something that sounds like chicken-fry-stick and I nod and say, “*Me too.*” (COCA 2019 FIC)
  - b. il entre dans le dispensaire... dont je sors, porteur d’une radiographie... Ah! Vous aussi?  
x-ray Ah You too  
‘he enters the dispensary [...] which I’m leaving carrying an x-ray :Ah! you too?’ (Lucot 2001)

## **A direct interpretation approach**

---

- Given the challenges facing a syntactic reconstruction approach, we propose a direct interpretation (DI) approach couched upon a construction-based HPSG (Sag 1997; Ginzburg & Sag 2000).

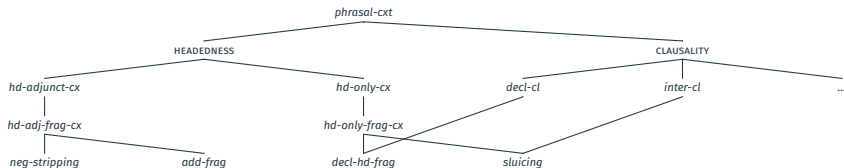
# Direction interpretation approach

- Ginzburg & Sag (2000) develop a comprehensive DI approach for fragments. Their analysis takes fragments as a special type of head-phrase and introduce the so-called headed-fragment phrase.

- (30) a. A: What do you like? B: Bagels.  
b. A: Who is leaving? B: Kim./Me.

- additive fragments as another independent type of fragments

(31) An inheritance hierarchy of fragment constructions:



- Two types: coreferent additive fragments and non-coreferent contrastive use.  
(32) a. A: John left. B: JOHN too! (coreferent use)  
b. A: John left. B: Kim too. (contrastive use)
- in non-elliptical environments, the additive usages of *too* and *either* typically appear in the preverbal or in the sentence final position:  
(33) a. Kim too wants to explore Europe.  
b. Kim wants to explore Europe, too.  
c. In Europe too, they have oil.

## Lexical information

- *too* is either modifying an NP or a sentence, with the presupposition that there is another individual or a situation other than the one denoted by the modified NP or sentence.

(34)

$$\left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{add-adv} \\ \text{FORM } \langle \textit{too} \rangle \\ \text{SYN } \left[ \text{CAT } \textit{Adv}[\text{MOD NP}_j] \right] \\ \text{SEM } \lambda_i[\textit{P}](j) \\ \text{CNXT } \left[ \text{PRES } \left[ \begin{array}{l} \textit{fact} \\ \textit{P} \\ \textit{contrast-rel}(i, j) \end{array} \right] \right] \end{array} \right]$$



## Distinctive properties again

- additive *too* and *aussi*: obligatory in elliptical environments (See Amsili et al. 2016 for experimental evidence):

(35) a. A: I hate mushrooms. B: Me \*(too)

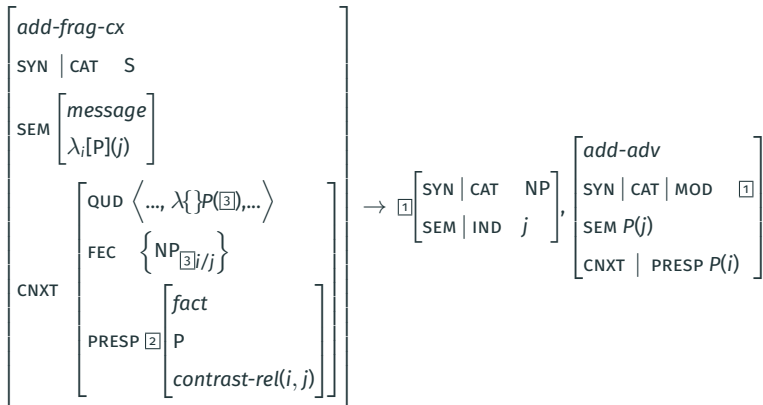
b. A: Je déteste les champignons. B: Moi \*(aussi).

(36) Additive Fragment Construction: ( $\uparrow$  *head-adj-cx*):

The additive adverb combines with a head NP, forming a head-adjunct-fragment construction with a sentential meaning that replaces the NP referent in a proposition evoked by a linguistic or discourse antecedent, and that presupposes the existence of another contrasting individual in the context.

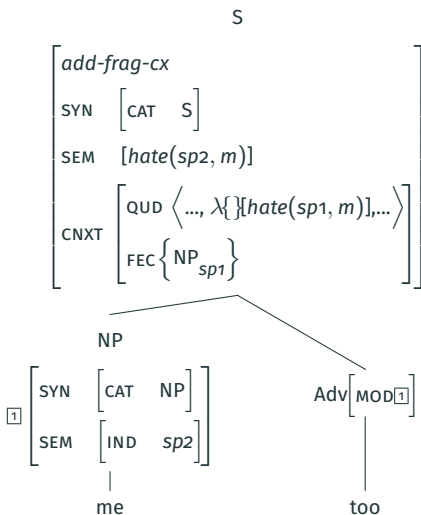
# Additive Fragment Construction

(37) Additive Fragment Construction: ( $\uparrow$ hd-adj-frag-cx):



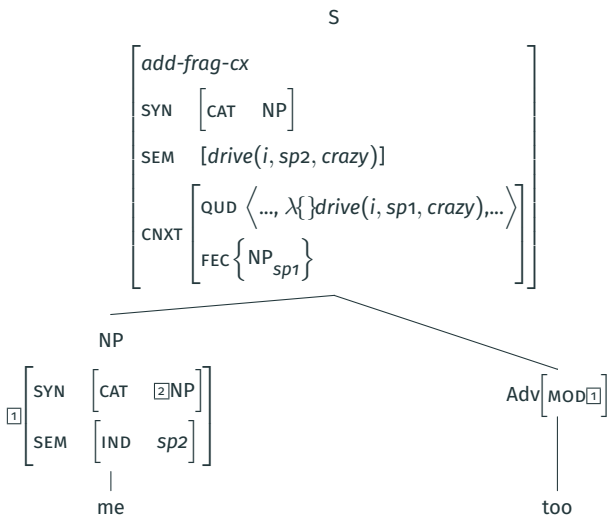
## A licensed structure

- (38) An example of a contrastive use (with subject correlate): A: *I hate mushrooms.* B: *Me, too.*



## A licensed structure

- (39) An example of a contrastive use (with object correlate): A: *It is driving me crazy.* B: *Me too.*





## Other predictions: polarity mismatch

- a mismatch in the polarity value again:  
(41) A: I wasn't interested in boys. B: Me too. (COCA 2007 SPOK)
- The meaning of the fragment here is not (42a), but (42b) or (42c).  
(42) a. I too was interested in boys.  
b. I too wasn't interested in boys.  
c. I wasn't interested in boys, either.
- Semantic resolution in our analysis  
(43) a. Antecedent clause:  $\neg[\textit{interested.in}(i, b)]$   
b. Fragment interpretation:  $\neg[\textit{interested.in}(j, b)]$

- exophoric examples again:
  - (44) a. At the Riverside Caf, Kyle orders something that sounds like chicken-fry-stick and I nod and say, “*Me too.*” (COCA 2019 FIC)
  - b. I want to order the same thing too./I too want to order the same thing. /Let me have the same thing. ....
- The correlate here is provided by the context; there is no exact syntax source. In the present approach, we just replace the corresponding value of the proposition in parallelism. *Me too*: look for the correlate (Kyle) corresponding to *me* in the context, replace this value from the given proposition (and add this proposition as a fact/presupposition).

## **Conclusion**

---



## Concluding remarks

- Additive fragments exhibit a higher interpretation flexibility than usually assumed, and suggest a direct interpretation approach inspired by Ginzburg & Sag (2000).
- In particular, we show that their main use is as independent utterances, there is not always a previously mentioned correlate and exophoric uses are possible.
- distinguish between a contrastive use, where the fragment introduces a new individual, and a coreferent use, where the fragment repeats a previously mentioned individual.
- We suggest that the mandatory additive adverb in ellipsis environments is introduced as a constructional expression with its own semantic and pragmatic (e.g., presuppositional) constraints.

## References

---

- Abeillé, Anne, Gabriela Bîlbîie & François Mouret. 2014. A Romance perspective on gapping constructions. In Hans Boas & Francisco González-García (eds.), Romance perspectives on construction grammar, 227–267. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Ahn, Dorothy. 2015. The semantics of additive *either*. In Proceedings of sinn und bedeutung, vol. 19, 20–35.
- Amsili, P, E Ellsiepen & G Winterstein. 2016. Optionality in the use of too: the role of reduction and similarity. Revista da ABRALIN (Associação Brasileira de Linguística) 1(15). 229–252.
- Davies, Mark. 2008. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): 560 million words.
- Depiante, M. 2000. The syntax of deep and surface anaphora: a study of null complement anaphora and University of Connecticut. (Doctoral dissertation).
- Ginzburg, Jonathan & Ivan A. Sag. 2000. Interrogative investigations: the form, meaning and use of English interrogatives. (CSLI Lecture Notes 123). Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications.

- Hankamer, Jorge & Ivan A. Sag. 1976. Deep and surface anaphora. Linguistic Inquiry 7(3). 391–428.
- Johnson, Kyle. 2018. Gapping and stripping. In Jeroen van Craenen & Tanja Temmerman (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Ellipsis, 562–604. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kaplan, Jeff. 1984. Obligatory too in english. Language 60(3). 510–518.
- Kehler, Andrew. 2019. Ellipsis and discourse. In Jeroen van Craenenbroeck & Tanja Temmerman (eds.), Handbook of ellipsis, 314–341. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Merchant, Jason. 2001. The syntax of silence: Sluicing, islands, and the theory of ellipsis. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Merchant, Jason. 2003. Remarks on stripping, ms.
- Merchant, Jason. 2005. Fragments and ellipsis. Linguistics and Philosophy 27(6). 661–738.
- Miller, Philip H. & Ivan A. Sag. 1997. French clitic movement without clitics or movement. Natural Language & Linguistic Theory 15(3). 573–639.
- Morgan, Jerry. 1989. Sentence fragments revisited. In Bradley Music, Randolph Graczyk & Caroline Wiltshire (eds.), Cls 25: Papers from the 25th Annual Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society 228–241. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Society.

- Rullmann, H. 2003. Additive particles and polarity. Journal of semantics 20(4). 329–401.
- Sag, Ivan A. 1997. English relative clause constructions. Journal of Linguistics 33(2). 431–483.
- Weir, Andrew. 2014. Fragments and clausal ellipsis. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Ph.D. (Doctoral dissertation).
- Winterstein, Grégoire & Henk Zeevat. 2012. Empirical constraints on accounts of too. Lingua 122. 1787–1800.
- Wurmbrand, Susi. 2017. Stripping and topless complements. Linguistic Inquiry 48(2). 341–366.