

A discourse-based approach to concessive *although*-stripping in English

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Abstract. This study investigates concessive stripping in English, a phenomenon where the so-called Stripping or Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE) occurs in *although*-clauses. This elliptical construction has at least two sub-patterns: *although*-stripping and negative *although*-stripping. Merchant (2003) and Wurmbrand (2017) argue that *although*-stripping undergoes clausal ellipsis to contribute to the propositional meaning of a remnant, supported by syntactic connectivity effects. However, the corpus data we have identified indicate that connectivity effects can often be overridden. Based on this observation, we suggest a discourse-based approach in which the ellipsis construction is directly generated with no derivational processes and interpreted with reference to the contextual information in question.

Keywords. Stripping; Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE); subordinate stripping, concessive meaning; contextual information

1. Introduction. This study investigates *although*-stripping in English, a phenomenon where the so-called Stripping or Bare Argument Ellipsis (BAE) occurs in *although*-clauses with a concessive meaning. Much of the literature has focused on the cases where stripping occurs in a coordinate structure. However, a subordinating conjunction *although* can also have a fragmental remnant as in the coordinate structure with at least these two sub-patterns: *although*-stripping and negative *although*-stripping, as illustrated by the following attested examples from the COCA corpus:¹

- (1) a. Caffeine is a stimulant drug, **although legal**. (COCA 2010 MAG)
- b. They looked lost, **although not afraid**. (COCA 1995 FIC)

In *although*-stripping, a remnant can receive a sentential interpretation, while other elements in the putative source seem to be unexpressed. For example, the (boldfaced) remnant ‘legal’ in (1a) has a propositional meaning such that ‘caffeine is a legal drug’, and the one in (1b) can be understood as ‘they did not look afraid’. The remnant in *although*-stripping is contrastively focused with its (wavy underlined) correlate of the antecedent clause.

2. Previous approaches. In the previous analysis, Merchant (2003) and Wurmbrand (2017) argue that *although*-stripping undergoes clausal ellipsis to contribute to the propositional meaning of a remnant, in which the remnant XP combines with *although* in FocP and its complement TP is elided under the domain. Their arguments are supported by syntactic connectivity effects such as case-matching, c-selectional lexical requirements, and preposition stranding or semantic connectivity like voice matching. The following corpus data seem to support such a sentential analysis:

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¹ Corpus of Contemporary American English (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>).

- (2) a. Voice matching: The weight of managing all the needs of all the kids in the orphanage has been relieved, **although not forgotten**. (COCA 1991 NEWS)
- b. C-selection: **Although not a Quaker**, he is listed **as an attendant** at the Green Street Meeting House in Philadelphia. (COCA 2005 MAG)

In (2a), the voice of the remnant ‘forgotten’ is identical as the assumed clausal source. Also in (2b), the remnant NP ‘a Quaker’ can be construed with a preposition ‘as’ from the putative source based on its antecedent ‘he is listed as an attendant’.

Furthermore, Merchant (2003) argues that stripping structure with *(al)though* is only allowed with a negator ‘not’ as follows:

- (3) a. *Abby speaks passable Dutch, (al)though Ben too.
 b. *Abby speaks passable Dutch, (al)though Ben.
 c. Abby speaks passable Dutch, **(al)though not Ben**. (Merchant 2003:(38))

Wurmbrand (2017) has also suggested that *although* is a coordinator like *but* with a concessive meaning rather than a subordinator, which requires a contrast between the two conjuncts and shows polarity differences. Consider the following examples:

- (4) a. $[_{FocP} \text{ Abby } [_{TP}_{[-neg]} t_{Abby} \text{ speaks passable Dutch}]] \text{ **although** } *[_{FocP} \text{ **Ben** } [_{TP}_{[-neg]} t_{Ben} \text{ speaks passable Dutch}]]$ *polarity
 $*[_{FocP} \text{ **Ben** } [_{TP}_{[-neg]} t_{Ben} \text{ doesn't speak passable Dutch}]]$ *parallelism
 b. $[_{FocP} \text{ Abby } [_{TP}_{[-neg]} t_{Abby} \text{ speaks passable Dutch}]] \text{ **although** } [_{FocP} \text{ **not Ben** } [_{TP}_{[-neg]} t_{Ben} \text{ speaks passable Dutch}]]$ ✓ polarity, parallelism
 (Wurmbrand 2017:(38))

As in the examples, the stripping with *although* is possible only in the context in which both polarity reversal and parallelism are allowed.

3. Data discussions.

3.1. NON-CONNECTIVITY. Distinct from the previous analyses, the corpus data we have identified indicate that connectivity effects can often be overridden. Observe the mismatches in the following data:

- (5) a. Voice mismatch: I suspect_[active] Barry Bonds did also, **although never proven**_[passive]. (COCA 2012 BLOG) [= although it was not proven (that) Barry Bonds did also]
- b. Tense mismatch: I **was** a cyclist for many years, **although not any longer**. (COCA 2012 WEB) [= although I **am** not a cyclist any longer]

The remnant ‘never proven’ with a passive voice in (5a) is linked to the active voice correlate. Also in (5b), the putative source of the elided clause needs to have the present tense, differing from its antecedent clause. This indicates that those mismatches between putative and target clauses cast doubt on the postulation of a sentential source.

3.2. LOCALITY ISSUE. Another potential issue emerges from locality restrictions of the remnant in *although*-stripping. As widely suggested in the literature, stripping is sensitive to islands (Depiante 2000, Reinhart 1991, among others). However, we observed some data which are assumed to be island-insensitive as follows:

(6) Left Branch Island

- a. Inimical to Opposition Earth and [_{NP} many Elementals, **although not all**]. (COCA 2019 FIC)
- b. I eventually produced [_{NP} a decent, **although tentative**, paper]. (COCA 1993 MAG)

If the stripping results from a sentential source, then the correlate contained within an island violates the left branch constraint. This suggests that movement-and-deletion operations may not be sufficient to account for the ellipsis of *although*-stripping. Actually, this violation of the left branch island condition can be easily observed especially in the contrastive related stripping examples.

3.3. ADJACENCY ISSUE. A further complication arises from a lexical remnant when it comes to the adjacency. Different from phrasal remnants, certain remnants such as an attributive adjective or a quantifier can be cataphoric as in (7a) or quite distant from outside of the scope of the NP as in (7b), even though they can be read in the same scope of the noun phrase in the putative source.

- (7) a. The Burj, **although new**, is an easy way to frame Dubai as a travel destination. (COCA 2012 BLOG)
- b. The democrats expect to win some seats in the legislature China will impose on Hong Kong, **although not many**. (COCA 1997 NEWS)

This suggests that the movement-and-deletion operations may not be applied to account for the ellipsis site of *although*-stripping.

3.4. CONTRAST RELATION WITH NO OVERT NEGATOR. Merchant (2003) argues that the negator *not*, which is the Neg head, is required in *although*-stripping and it selects for an FP with an E feature.

- (8) Abby speaks passable Dutch,
*(al)though Ben too. / *(al)though Ben. / **(al)though not Ben**. (Merchant 2003:(38))

However, we can find from the authentic data that *although*-stripping sufficiently shows a contrast relation between the remnant and its corresponding correlate in spite of no overt negator.

- (9) a. Things are still a bit shaky, although **getting better**. (2012 WEB)
- b. Holden was considered a rebellious, ungrateful, disrespectful teenager that, although **rare**, is a worldwide epidemic. (2012 WEB)
- c. ... an accomplishment for an agency that, although **improving**, is falling short of benchmarks set by a federal court and the U.S. Department of Justice. (2009 NEWS)
- d. ... many more

3.5. EXOPHORIC ANTECEDENT. Meanwhile, consider the following example which does not have its linguistic antecedent.

(10) Maybe I'll go with you, **although the shooting**. (COCA 1997 TV)

In this case, the remnant needs to be understood with the situational or surrounding context, which rather can have interpretations like 'although the shooting happens' or 'although there would be the shooting'. Thus, since it is not applicable to be syntactically matched, it rather needs the discourse information, which can be resolved from the extralinguistic materials (Hankamer & Sag 1976; Miller & Pullum 2013).

4. Theoretical implications. Our corpus investigation shows that when a remnant in *although*-stripping functions as a (part of) predicate in the putative source, the remnant can be alternatively reconstructed as a predicational copula clause with a pronominal deictic subject. Consider the following example:

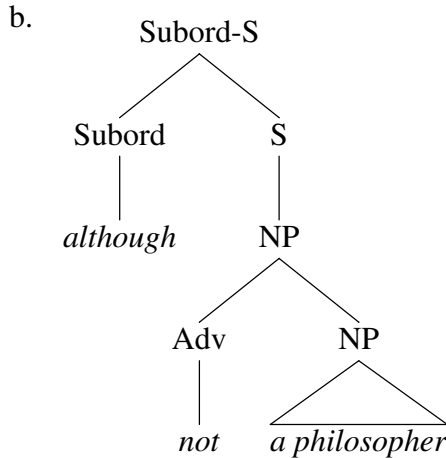
- (11) a. **Although** (he_i was) **not a philosopher**, [the manic comedian Jerry Lewis]_i, captured this willing surrender to sensation ... (COCA 2015 ACAD)
b. Although Jerry Lewis was not a philosopher, ...
c. Although he was not a philosopher, ...

Supporting this argument, Mikkelsen (2008) points out that in a copula question and answer pair, only predicational copula clause is permitted to be the answer to Question-under-Discussion (QUD), while a copula clause with the specificational predicate cannot.

- (12) Q: Who/What is Mary?
A1: Mary is the graduate advisor. ⟨Predicational⟩
A2: #The graduate advisor is Mary. ⟨Specificational⟩ (Mikkelsen 2008:(13))

Furthermore, negative *although*-stripping can take the structured meaning from the negator 'not' as a either sentential or constituent operator, which requires discourse information. Especially, when the *although*-stripping context involves a deictic argument or a predicate reading, it is understood with a constituent (or contrast) negation.

- (13) a. **Although not a philosopher**, the manic comedian [Jerry Lewis] captured this willing surrender to sensation ...



Despite Merchant's (2003) analysis with obligatory negator, *although*-stripping with no negator shows a contrast relation in authentic data.

- (14) Things are still a bit shaky, **although getting better**. (COCA 2012 WEB)

In such relations, as mentioned earlier, the contextual information fulfills the ellipsis requirement between the remnant and its contrastive correlate.

- (15) Parallelism matching condition (Hardt & Romero 2004):
Ellipsis requires that there be some phrase E containing the ellipsis and some antecedent phrase A in the discourse, such that $\llbracket A \rrbracket$ is or contextually implies a member of $F(E)$.

Adopting Hardt & Romero's (2004) Parallelism matching condition, the context in (17) requires the remnant to be contrastive with the correlate, which can be in sufficient condition to fulfill the requirement.

- (16) $\llbracket [\text{Things are a bit SHAKY}]_{S1} \rrbracket \in F([\text{Thing are GETTING BETTER}]_{S2})$

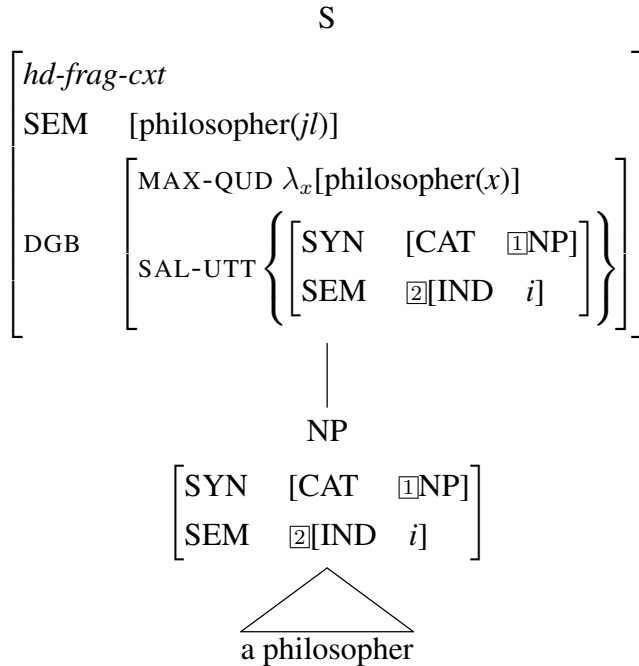
Suggesting some theoretical implication, we propose and follow a direct interpretation (DI) approach (see Hankamer & Sag 1976) since it may offer a resolution with semantic and discourse information from the fragmental remnant. Distinct from the derivational view, this approach can account for how the remnants in *although*-stripping can be mapped into non-sentential utterances, and this leads to sentential interpretations directly instantiated from the following Head-Fragment Construction.

- (17) Head-Fragment Construction (Kim 2015):
Any category can be projected into a NSU (non-sentential utterance) when it functions as a salient utterance (SAL-UTT).

Since the remnant functions as a salient utterance, it can be projected into a head-fragment construct together with the relevant discourse information such as DGB (dialogue-game-board),

MAX-QUD (maximal question-under-discussion), etc. This approach accounts for the direction that once the remnants are directly generated, neither island-sensitive operations nor filler-gap dependency are involved.

(18)



That is to say, when the semantic content is applied in *although*-stripping, its semantic meaning is negated with the polarity reversal effect, and this can be accompanied with contextual parameter DGB based on the MAX-QUD and SAL-UTT information. Especially, the contextual information sufficiently fulfills the ellipsis requirement with a constituent or contrast negation reading, despite no overt negator.

5. Conclusion. As in coordinate stripping, subordinating conjunction *although* can license stripping with a concessive meaning. Connectivity effects such as binding condition support sentential approaches from previous analyses; however, there are some evidence that contradicts the clausal ellipsis. Our authentic data findings including exophoric antecedent provide the base-generation account of *although*-stripping. *Although*-stripping context generally involves a predicational copula construction, which provides contextual information including QUD and SAT-UTT. The discourse-based contextual information sufficiently fulfills the ellipsis requirement with a constituent or contrast negation reading, in spite of no overt negator.

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