Exceptional inflection in German right node raising constructions*

Johannes Hein

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

1. Introduction

In this paper, I discuss the observation that an obligatory morphological reflex of NP-ellipsis (NPE) in German (Lobeck 1995, Murphy 2018) becomes optional in sentences with a right node raised NP. At first glance, this seems to fit neatly with the claim that right node raising (RNR) can have two distinct derivations, one involving ellipsis and another involving multidominance (Barros and Vicente 2011, Belk et al. 2023). Under this view, the reflex would appear in the derivation with ellipsis and would be absent in the one with a multidominance structure. However, as I show, the presence vs. absence of the reflex does not in fact align with other diagnostics that have been argued to distinguish between the two underlying structures of RNR. Instead, both the reflex and its absence can cooccur with characteristics of ellipsis as well as with those of multidominance. I suggest that this can be accounted for in a straightforward way under Belk et al.'s (2023) 'unity of process', i.e. the proposal that the non-pronunciation of the RNR pivot in the non-final position is the result of one and the same operation (which they term *Pruning*) in both ellipsis and multidominance derivations and that this operation is not available in regular 'forward' NPE. This, in turn, supports the view that RNR is not merely backwards oriented ellipsis but requires its own dedicated process of non-pronunciation.

2. Exceptional inflection as a reflex of NP-ellipsis

Generally, in a German DP that contains a determiner and an adjective the determiner carries the so-called strong inflection (marked in bold throughout the paper) while the adjective inflects according to the weak declension pattern (1).

*I'd like to thank Astrid van Alem, Imke Driemel, Paula Fenger, Thom van Hugte, Marie-Luise Schwarzer, Timea Szarvas, Philipp Weisser, and the audiences at HU Berlin, the University of Potsdam, and NELS 55 for discussion and confirmation of judgements.
This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (LeibnizDream, grant agreement No 856421).

(1) *Strong inflection on determiner, weak inflection on adjective*

	MASK 'this old wine'			FEM 'this old broth'			NEUT 'this old oil'		
NOM	dies-**er**	alt-e	Wein	dies-**e**	alt-e	Brühe	dies-**es**	alt-e	Öl
ACC	dies-**en**	alt-en	Wein	dies-**e**	alt-e	Brühe	dies-**es**	alt-e	Öl
DAT	dies-**em**	alt-en	Wein	dies-**er**	alt-en	Brühe	dies-**em**	alt-en	Öl
GEN	dies-**es**	alt-en	Weins	dies-**er**	alt-en	Brühe	dies-**es**	alt-en	Öls

With a determiner from the class of so-called *ein*-words, i.e. the indefinite determiner *ein* 'a', the negative determiner *kein* 'no', or any of the possessive determiners like *mein* 'my', *dein* 'your', etc., the determiner remains uninflected in masculine nominative and neuter nominative and accusative (2). In these three case-gender contexts, the adjective takes the strong inflection in a pattern called the *mixed adjectival declension*.

(2) *Declension of* ein-*words and mixed adjectival declension*

	MASK 'this old wine'			FEM 'this old broth'			NEUT 'this old oil'		
NOM	*mein*	alt-**er**	Wein	mein-**e**	alt-e	Brühe	*mein*	alt-**es**	Öl
ACC	mein-**en**	alt-en	Wein	mein-**e**	alt-e	Brühe	*mein*	alt-**es**	Öl
DAT	mein-**em**	alt-en	Wein	mein-**er**	alt-en	Brühe	mein-**em**	alt-en	Öl
GEN	mein-**es**	alt-en	Weins	mein-**er**	alt-en	Brühe	mein-**es**	alt-en	Öls

In the absence of an adjective, in these three case-number combinations the determiner still does not show any inflection, as exemplified by the first conjuncts in (3). When these determiners are, however, used as pronouns, i.e. without a subsequent NP, they obligatorily carry the strong inflectional affix as evidenced by the second conjuncts in (3).

(3) a. Dein Wein schmeckt lecker, aber mein*(**-er**) schmeckt scheußlich.
your wine(M) tastes delicious but my-M.SG.NOM tastes hideous
'Your wine tastes delicious but mine tastes horrible.'

b. Sein Öl war teuer und dein*(**-(e)s**) war billig.
his oil(N) was expensive and your-N.SG.NOM was cheap
'His oil was expensive and yours was cheap.'

c. Ich benutze mein Öl und er benutzt sein*(**-(e)s**).
I use my oil(N) and he uses his-N.SG.ACC
'I'm using my oil and he's using his.'

Building on ideas in Lobeck (1995), Wiltschko (1998), and Roehrs (2006), and on evidence from the selection of relative pronouns (Brandt and Fuß 2014), Murphy (2018) argues that these pronouns contain an elided noun and therefore constitute cases of NP ellipsis.

Akin to Saab and Lipták's (2016) account of exceptionally inflected adjectives with NPE in Hungarian, Murphy (2018) models the absence of inflection on an *ein*-determiner

when followed by a noun and its exceptional occurrence under NPE as a consequence of postsyntactic morphological processes and their interaction with NPE and the *Stray Affix Filter* (Lasnik 1981). Adopting an articulated structure of the DP, he posits a ϕ-projection that hosts person, number and gender features and is realized by the inflectional affix.[1] *Ein*-words are base-generated in SpecDP (e.g. Gallmann 1996, Müller 2002). When no ellipsis occurs, the ϕ-head undergoes *Lowering* (Embick and Noyer 2001) to the head of its complement, i.e. the adjective *alt* 'old' in (4a) or *n* in (4b). In the former case, it will be spelled out as a strong inflectional affix, here *-er*. In the latter case, the complex *n*+ϕ head will receive a zero spell-out, e.g. via contextual allomorphy of ϕ in the presence of *n*. This accounts for the 'displacement' of strong inflection to the adjective in the mixed adjectival declension (2) and for its absence on the *ein*-determiners in the first conjuncts of (3).

(4) a. [$_{\text{DP}}$ mein [$_{\text{D}'}$ D [$_{\phi\text{P}}$ __ [$_{\text{AP}}$ alt+$\underbrace{\phi}_{\textbf{-er}}$ [$_{n\text{P}}$ *n* Wein]]]]]

b. [$_{\text{DP}}$ dein [$_{\text{D}'}$ D [$_{\phi\text{P}}$ __ [$_{n\text{P}}$ $\underbrace{n+\phi}_{\varnothing}$ Wein]]]]

Now, consider a situation in which the complement of ϕ has undergone ellipsis (5), understood here as a syntactic operation that renders its domain inaccessible for any further computation including post-syntactic processes like Lowering and Vocabulary Insertion. In this case, Lowering of ϕ is bled by ellipsis leading to a violation of the Stray Affix Filter (5a). This violation is then repaired by Local Dislocation (Embick and Noyer 2001) of the affix to the determiner *mein* (5b). This accounts for the exceptional reappearance of strong inflection on the determiners observed in the second conjuncts in (3).

(5) a. [$_{\text{DP}}$ mein [$_{\text{D}'}$ D [$_{\phi\text{P}}$ ϕ ⟨[$_{n\text{P}}$ *n* Wein]⟩]]]

b. [mein-**er** $\varnothing$ __ ⟨nP⟩]

Under this approach, the exceptional strong inflection on *ein*-words when they occur without a noun is a direct morphological reflex of, and in turn an indicator for NP-ellipsis.

3. Exceptional inflection in Right Node Raising

3.1 The pattern

In the sentences in (3) and (6b) it is the noun in the second conjunct that is left unpronounced under identity with a noun in the first one. German also allows for the non-pronunciation of the noun in the first conjunct thus creating a right node raising construction. Given the right contrastive situation, it is possible to strand a possessive determiner. In contrast to cases of 'forward' NPE, however, this determiner may remain uninflected or appear with exceptional inflection (6a). There is thus an asymmetry between deletion of an NP in the final conjunct, which results in obligatory exceptional inflection (EI), and

[1] The ϕ-head is realized by strong inflection only in the three exceptional case-gender combinations. In all other combinations, it is realized by weak inflection while strong inflection is hosted on the D-head.

deletion of an NP in the non-final conjunct, which only optionally gives rise to exceptional inflection on a stranded determiner.

(6) a. Ich löse mein(**-s**) und du löst dein Problem.
I solve my-N.SG.ACC and you solve your problem(N)
'I solve my and you solve your problem.'
b. Du löst dein Problem und ich löse mein*(**-s**).
you solve your problem(N) and I solve my-N.SG.ACC
'You solve your problem and I solve mine.'

There are two ways to account for this asymmetry: (i) One could maintain the idea that exceptional inflection is the result of an operation of NP-ellipsis no matter in which conjunct it appears. In that case, the optional lack of exceptional inflection in RNR must be the result of another process or a different structure. The second option (ii) is to treat the deletion in the non-final conjunct as a process that is different from regular NPE in the final conjunct and that this process can optionally lead to exceptional inflection.

At first glance, option (i) aligns very well with recent arguments that RNR can have two distinct derivations, one that involves ellipsis and another that involves multidominance (Barros and Vicente 2011, Belk et al. 2023). Under this view, it would seem straightforward that exceptional inflection occurs when RNR is derived by ellipsis while it is absent when it is derived by multidominance. However, as I will show in what follows, this analysis is untenable. Instead, the optionality of exceptional inflection in RNR follows naturally from an approach where RNR involves a dedicated leftward deletion process (Belk et al. 2023).

3.2 The duality of RNR

RNR constructions, such as (7), display a number of syntactic characteristics that, taken together, cannot be accounted for by any single syntactic operation.

(7) John likes, and Mary dislikes opera.

Despite its heterogeneous profile of properties, RNR has received a number of treatments that attempt to give it a unified analysis, either in terms of rightward ATB-movement (Ross 1967, Postal 1998, Sabbagh 2007, Clapp 2008), or multidominance (McCawley 1982, Bachrach and Katzir 2009, Gračanin-Yuksek 2013), or ellipsis (Wexler and Culicover 1980, Hartmann 2000, Abels 2004, Ha 2008). Barros and Vicente (2011) and Belk et al. (2023) argue that none of these unitary analyses of RNR can capture the full data. After dismissing movement accounts based on the island-insensitivity of RNR (though see Kimura 2022) and its failure to lead to rebracketing, they show that RNR shares properties with regular forward ellipsis that are difficult to explain under a multidominance approach. They also notice that it has characteristics that are compatible with multidominance and do not feature in forward ellipsis. Barros and Vicente (2011) further observe that in most cases these different traits are in complementary distribution (see Belk et al. 2023 for principled exceptions). Among the properties that are common to ellipsis and RNR is the fact that

both tolerate certain morphological mismatches. Thus, in both the forward ellipsis (8a) and the respective RNR construction (8b) the form of the verb *wake* may differ between the antecedent and the ellipsis site.

(8) *Morphological mismatches in ellipsis and RNR* (Belk et al. 2023:689)

a. Ava always suceeds in waking up early, but I usually fail to ⟨wake up early⟩.
b. I usually fail to ⟨wake up early⟩, but Ava always succeeds in waking up early.

Similarly, like forward ellipsis (9a), RNR allows vehicle change (9b), where the R-expression *Ava* inside the ellipsis site unexpectedly does not induce a violation of Principle C despite being bound by the pronoun *she*.

(9) *Vehicle change in ellipsis and RNR* (Belk et al. 2023:690)

a. I fear that the boss will fire Ava_1, although she_1 hopes that he won't ⟨fire $*\text{Ava}_1/\text{her}_1$⟩.
b. She_1 hopes that he won't ⟨fire $*\text{Ava}_1/\text{her}_1$⟩, but I fear that the boss will fire Ava_1.

A property that is not present in forward ellipsis (10a) but nonetheless features in RNR constructions is cumulative agreement, where the verb appears with plural inflection despite the fact that the subjects in each conjunct are both singular (10b).

(10) *Cumulative agreement absent in ellipsis but possible in RNR* (Belk et al. 2023:690)

a. *John have traveled to Cameroon , and Ryo ⟨has traveled to Cameroon⟩, too.
b. Mary is proud that John, and Alma is glad that Ryo, have traveled to Cameroon.

Likewise, regular forward ellipsis does not license so-called internal readings of relational adjectives such as *same* or *different*, where the comparison is between the objects in both conjuncts (Carlson 1987). The only possible reading in (11a) is the external one, where the songs performed by Ava and those performed by Beatrix are different from some contextually salient set of songs. In an RNR construction (11b), however, the internal reading is easily obtained (Jackendoff 1977), meaning that the songs that Ava composed are necessarily different from the songs that Beatrix performed.

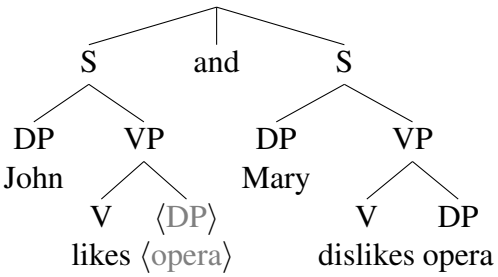
(11) *Internal readings licensed in RNR but not in ellipsis* (Belk et al. 2023:690)

a. *Ava performed $\text{different}_{\text{int}}$ songs, and Beatrix did ⟨perform different songs⟩, too.
b. Ava composed, and Beatrix performed, $\text{different}_{\text{int}}$ songs.

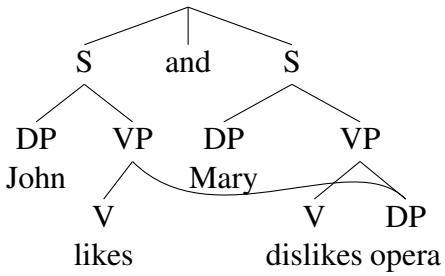
Based on these observations, Barros and Vicente (2011) and Belk et al. (2023) argue that RNR must have two distinct underlying structures (for other 'mixed' approaches to RNR see e.g. Valmala 2013, Chaves 2014, Hirsch and Wagner 2015, Kimura 2018). In one,

called RNR-ellipsis (RNR-E), there are two instances of the pivot, one in each conjunct, with the instance in the non-final conjunct undergoing ellipsis (12). In the other, called RNR-multidominance (RNR-MD), a single instance of the pivot is multidominated by both conjuncts (13).

(12) *Ellipsis (RNR-E)*



(13) *Multidominance (RNR-MD)*



3.3 Exceptional inflection is not linked to the duality of RNR

The properties of ellipsis and multidominance discussed in the previous section can be used to diagnose which of the two structures is underlyingly present in a given RNR construction. Belk et al. (2023) further observe that RNR in non-coordinate structures never exhibits properties associated with multidominance but does consistently show those linked to ellipsis. We can therefore add the possibility of occurring with non-coordinate RNR to our diagnostics and eventually end up with the list given in (14).

(14) *Diagnostics for underlying structure in RNR*

	RNR-E	RNR-MD
morphological mismatches	✓	✘
vehicle change	✓	✘
non-coordinate RNR	✓	✘
cumulative agreement	✘	✓
internal readings	✘	✓

Now, following the analytical option (i) from above, if the presence or absence of exceptional inflection in RNR were correlated with the presence of ellipsis or a multidominance structure, respectively, we would expect the following: In an RNR structure that tolerates mismatches, vehicle change, or is a non-coordinate structure, a stranded determiner should only appear with inflection. In an RNR structure that allows cumulative agreement and internal readings of relational adjectives, only the uninflected version of a stranded determiner should be possible. As the following examples attest, this is not the case. Both an exceptionally inflected as well as an uninflected determiner are grammatical in RNR with a morphological mismatch (15), with vehicle change (16) and in non-coordinate RNR (17).

(15) a. Peter verdrängt sein ⟨schlechtes Gewissen⟩ und du entledigst dich dein-es schlechten Gewissens

b. Peter verdrängt sein**-s** ⟨schlechtes Gewissen⟩ und du
Peter suppresses his-N.SG.ACC bad conscience(N) and you
entledigst dich dein-es schlechten Gewissens.
rid you your-N.SG.GEN bad conscience(N)
'Peter suppresses his but you rid yourself of your bad conscience.'

(16) a. Er$_i$ glaubt, die Galerie kauft mein ⟨Porträt von Gabriel$_i$⟩, aber ich denke, sie entscheidet sich für Idas Portrait von Gabriel$_i$.

b. Er$_i$ glaubt, die Galerie kauft mein**-s** ⟨Porträt von Gabriel$_i$⟩, aber
he believes the gallery buys my-N.SG.ACC portrait(N) of Gabriel but
ich denke, sie entscheidet sich für Idas Portrait von Gabriel$_i$.
I think she decides REFL for Ida's portrait(N) of Gabriel
'He$_i$ believe the gallery will buy mine, but I think they'll settle on Ida's portrait of Gabriel$_i$.'

(17) a. Wir müssen heute dein ⟨Namesschild⟩ durch mein Namensschild ersetzen.

b. Wir müssen heute dein**-s** ⟨Namesschild⟩ durch mein
we must today your-N.SG.ACC name.tag(N) through my
Namensschild ersetzen.
name.tag(N) replace
'We need to exchange yours with my name tag today.'

Whether inflected and uninflected determiners also both can occur in RNR-MD structures is somewhat more difficult to assess in German. First, cumulative agreement can only diagnose multidominance of V(P) or T. The right node raised noun, however, never forms a constituent with V or T to the exclusion of the determiner. Cumulative agreement is therefore not informative with regard to the structural integration of the noun.

As for internal readings, the relational adjective *ähnlich* 'similar' can be combined with a singuar indefinite noun and allows for an internal reading (18a). Though the judgement is slightly worse, this reading seems to also be possible in an RNR construction with a stranded determiner (18b) independent of whether the determiner is inflected or not.

(18) a. Gabriel und Elmar tragen ein ähnliches$_{\text{int}}$ Hemd.
Gabriel and Elmar wear a similar shirt(N)
'Gabriel and Elmar are wearing a similar shirt.'

b. ?Gabriel mag mein(**-s**) und Elmar hasst dein ähnliches$_{\text{int}}$ Hemd.
Gabriel likes my-N.SG.ACC and Elmar hates your similar shirt(N)
'Gabriel likes mine, and Elamr hates your similar shirt.'

This shows that the optionality of inflection in RNR does not reflect the underlying structural duality. Both inflected and uninflected stranded determiners appear in RNR-E and arguably also in RNR-MD structures as summarised in (19). We are therefore left with

the second option mentioned above, that there is a process of deletion in the non-final conjunct that variably results in the presence or absence of inflection on the determiner.

(19) *Pattern of EI compared to diagnostics for underlying structure in RNR*

	RNR-E	RNR-MD	with EI	without EI
morphological mismatches	✓	✘	✓	✓
vehicle change	✓	✘	✓	✓
non-coordinate RNR	✓	✘	✓	✓
cumulative agreement	✘	✓	n.a.	n.a.
internal readings[2]	✘	✓	(✓)	(✓)

4. Accounting for the optionality of exceptional inflection in RNR

4.1 One process with two results

Belk et al. (2023) suggest that despite the structural duality of RNR there is a single operation that leads to the non-pronunciation of the pivot in the non-final conjunct and that this operation is different from regular forward ellipsis. They propose that the linearization conflict and the concomitant violation of the *No-Tangling Condition* (a ban against crossing branches, Partee et al. 1993) that is posed by RNR-MD structures is resolved by a postsyntactic pruning operation (20) that cuts the offending branch(es).

(20) *Pruning*
Let S_α and S_β be parallel structures. A branch α in S_α may be pruned if
a. S_α precedes S_β,
b. α corresponds to a branch β in S_β, and
c. β's yield satisfies the ordering statements that hold of α's yield in S_α.

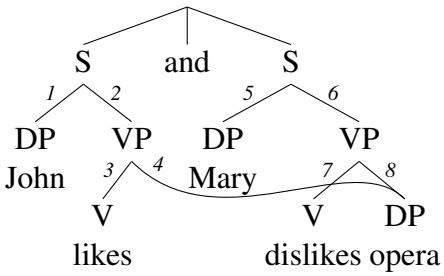
[2]Other relational adjectives are hard to test. Of the three words meaning 'different' *verschieden, unterschiedlich, anders* only *unterschiedlich* is tolerated with a singular noun and an internal reading. However, it is not clear whether this internal reading persists in RNR, and even less so when RNR strands a determiner as this requires some form of contrast between *mein* and *dein* which already establishes that the books are different from each other. Using the words for 'same' (*gleiche, selbes*) also leads to problems as these require a definite determiner. Exceptional inflection, however, only shows up on *ein*-words.

(i) a. Ida und Ava lesen ein unterschiedliches$_{int}$/*verschiedenes$_{int}$/*anderes$_{int}$ Buch.
Ida and Ava read a different/different/other book
'Ida and Ava are reading a different book (from each other).'
b. ?Ida liest, und Ava kauft ein unterschiedliches$_{int}$ Buch.
Ida reads and Ava buys a different book
'Ida reads, and Ava buys, a different book.'
c. ?*Ida liest mein(**-s**), und Ava kauft dein unterschiedliches$_{int}$ Buch.
Ida reads my-N.SG.ACC and Ava buys your different book
'Ida reads mine and Ava buys your different book.'

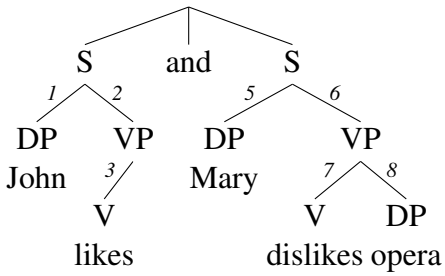
(21) *Parallelism* (Hartmann 2000:117)
A and B are parallel clauses iff $[\![A]\!]_o \in [\![B]\!]_f \wedge [\![B]\!]_o \in [\![A]\!]_f$.

Applied to an RNR-MD structure like (22a), this operation prunes branch 4, leading to the pronunciation of the sole instance of the pivot *opera* in the final conjunct (22b).

(22) a. *RNR-MD before Pruning*

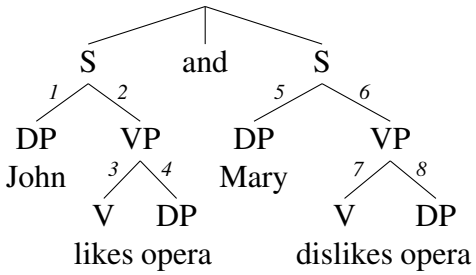


b. *RNR-MD after Pruning*

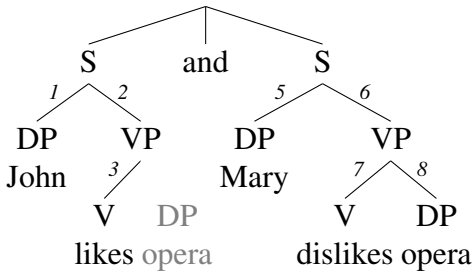


Their insight is that, once adopted, Pruning may in principle just as well apply to structures that do not involve multidominance but nonetheless exhibit the conditions stated in (20) and (21). This is exactly the case with RNR-E structures. Under the reasonable assumption that detached material will be ignored for spell-out, application of Pruning to an RNR-E structure (23a) will result in the non-pronunciation of the instance of the pivot in the non-final conjunct (23b). With this process in place, I now turn to how it can result in the variable occurrence of exceptional inflection on a stranded determiner in German RNR.

(23) a. *RNR-E before Pruning*



b. *RNR-E after Pruning*

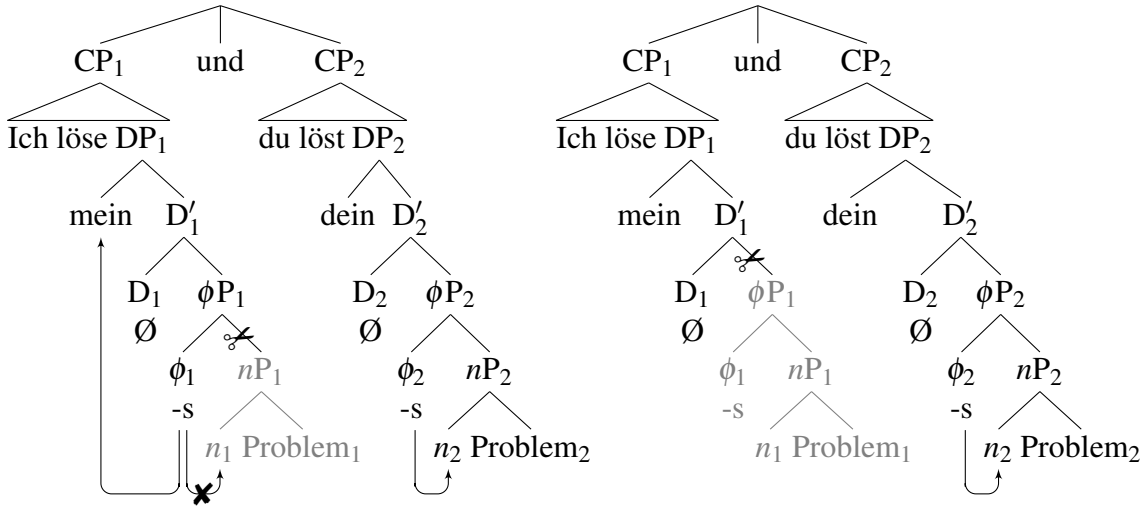


4.2 Exceptional inflection mirrors the size of the pruned structure

The overall idea is that Pruning is free as to the size of the structure that it cuts, as long as its conditions are met. Adopting the structure of the German DP proposed by Murphy (2018), the underlying RNR-E structure for (24) looks like (25). Since the conditions for Pruning hold for the $n\mathrm{P}_1$ subtree as well as for the $\phi\mathrm{P}_2$ subtree, it should be possible to prune either of them. Pruning above $n\mathrm{P}_1$ as in (25a) will bleed Lowering of ϕ_1 and lead to Local Dislocation of the affix onto the determiner as a repair to the *Stray Affix Filter* just like with cases of regular forward NPE in (5). Pruning above $\phi\mathrm{P}_1$ as in (25b), however, results in the whole $\phi\mathrm{P}_1$ subtree being ignored for further computation. As no affix is stranded in this case, the determiner remains uninflected. In both cases, Lowering of ϕ_2 onto n_2 takes place unhindered and context-sensitive spell-out will realize it as zero.

(24) Ich löse mein(**-s**) ⟨Problem⟩ und du löst dein Problem.
I solve my-N.SG.ACC problem(N) and you solve your problem(N)
'I solve my, and you solve your problem.'

(25) a. *RNR-E: Pruning of nP → EI* b. *RNR-E: Pruning of ϕP → no EI*

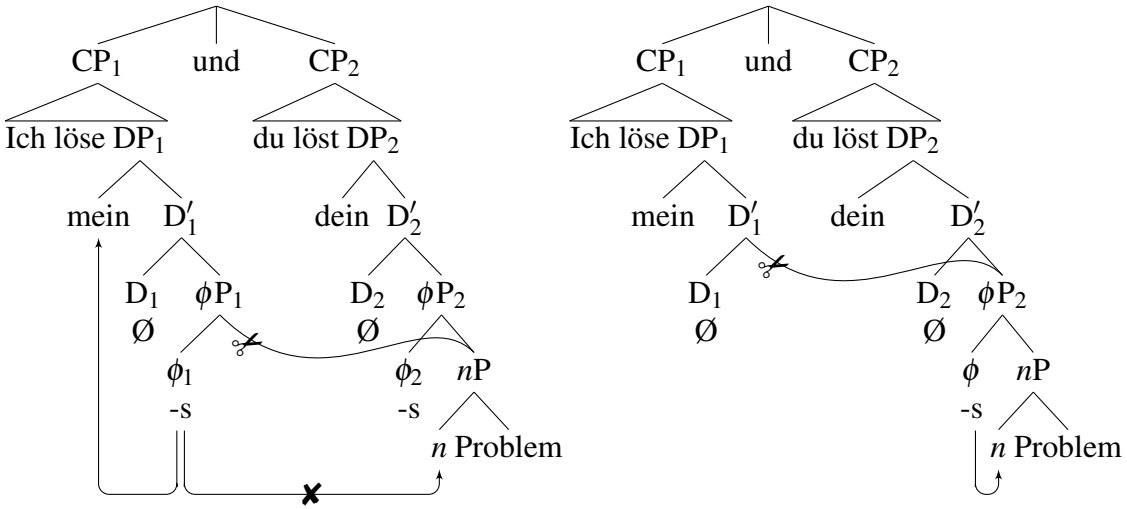


Thus, although the underlying structure is one that shows properties of ellipsis, exceptional inflection on the determiner is not obligatory because the process of non-pronunciation is not the same as in regular forward NPE. While forward NPE seems to be restricted to complements of ϕ (i.e. *n*P or AP) 'backwards' NPE effected by Pruning can variably target *n*P, eventually resulting in exceptional inflection, or ϕP, thereby detaching the affix-hosting head and consequently giving rise to an uninflected determiner.

In principle, the same logic concerning the size of the pruned subtree applies to an underlying RNR-MD structure. In contrast to RNR-E, however, the variability of where Pruning applies is determined by the size of the multidominated structure. If it excludes the ϕ-heads, as in (27a), Pruning has to apply above $n\text{P}_1$ in order to alleviate a violation of the *No-Tangling Condition*. This again blocks Lowering of ϕ_1 to the head of its complement because ϕ_1 no longer has a complement. The stranded affix is then locally dislocated onto the determiner giving rise to the latter's exceptional inflection. However, if ϕP is multidominated, as in (26b), then Pruning will necessarily apply above it. The sole instance of ϕ can undergo Lowering onto *n* and receive a zero realisation.

(26) Ich löse mein(**-s**) ⟨Problem⟩ und du löst dein Problem.
I solve my-N.SG.ACC problem(N) and you solve your problem(N)
'I solve my and you solve your problem.'

(27) a. *RNR-MD: Pruning of nP → EI* b. *RNR-MD: Pruning of ϕP → no EI*



Crucially, Pruning is restricted to apply in non-final conjuncts as per (20a). Non-pronunciation of the noun in the final conjunct of a structure such as (25) therefore must be the effected by a different operation, which does not show the same variability as to the size of the muted material. Following Merchant (2001) and Murphy (2018), forward NPE could be due to an [E]-feature on ϕ_2 rendering $n\text{P}_2$ inaccessible for further syntactic and postsyntactic processes. One question, that is part of the more general question about the distribution of (different types of) [E]-features, is why [E] cannot be hosted on D_2, where it would elide the entire ϕP_2 thereby giving rise to an uninflected determiner as in the ungrammatical version of the second conjunct of (6b), given here as (28).

(28) *... und ich löse [$_{\text{DP}}$ mein [$_{\text{D}'}$ $\text{D}_{[\text{E}]}$ ⟨[$_{\phi\text{P}}$ **-s** [$_{n\text{P}}$ *n* Problem]]⟩]].
and I solve my N.SG.ACC problem
'... and I solve mine.'

One potential explanation for this that aligns well with the view of ellipsis sites as domains of phasal spell-out alluded to in Murphy (2018:fn. 7) is that ellipsis is in fact restricted to only such phasal domains (e.g. Holmberg 2001, Gengel 2007, Aelbrecht 2016). Given that *n* is a phase head (Marantz 2001, Marvin 2002) but ϕ arguably is not, ellipsis of *n*P by an [E]-feature on ϕ is licit but ϕP-ellipsis by [E] on D is not.

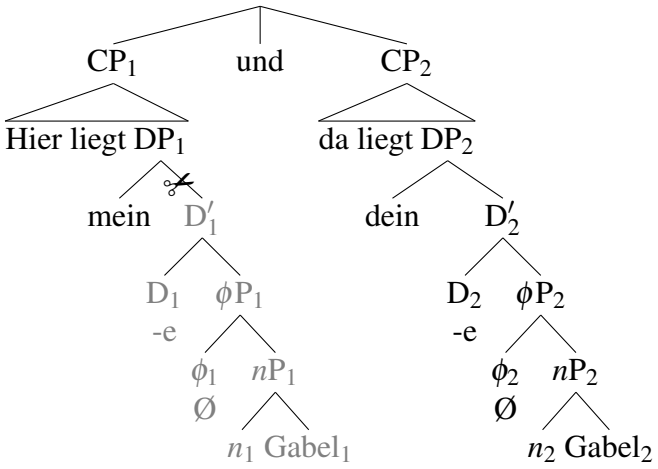
A last issue that needs to be accounted for is why it is not possible to strand an uninflected determiner in case-gender combinations where, unlike in the three mentioned in section 2 (M.SG.NOM, N.SG.NOM/ACC), the determiner bears strong inflection when followed by an adjective/noun. For instance, right node raising a feminine nominative noun (29a) or a masculine dative noun (29b) is grammatical only with an inflected determiner.

(29) a. Hier liegt mein*(**-e**), und da liegt dein**-e** Gabel.
here lies my-F.SG.NOM and there lies your-F.SG.NOM fork(F)
'Here is my and there's your fork.'

b. Du hilfst dein*(**-em**), und ich helfe mein**-em** Freund.
you help your-M.SG.DAT and I help my-M.SG.DAT friend(M)
'You're helping your and I'm helping my friend.'

As mentioned in footnote 1, in these case-gender combinations strong inflection is hosted on D rather than on ϕ (Murphy 2018:344). All else being equal, in an RNR-E structure we could expect Pruning to optionally apply above D'_1 as it is sufficiently parallel to D'_2 in (30). This would result in an uninflected determiner *mein*, contrary to fact (29a).

(30) *RNR-E: Pruning of D′ → uninflected determiner (ungrammatical)*



I thus suggest that *Pruning* only targets full phrases, not intermediate projections, in line with the widely held intuition that the latter are never affected by (post)syntactic operations.

5. Conclusion

I have shown that, despite initial appearance, the optionality of occurrence of exceptional inflection in German RNR constructions does not mirror the claimed duality between ellipsis and multidominance in their underlying structures. Nonetheless, it was shown that a process of non-pronunciation that has been suggested to be at play in both structures by Belk et al. (2023) straightforwardly accounts for the optional exceptional inflection in non-final conjuncts. This contrasts with obligatory exceptional inflection in cases of non-pronunciation of the noun in the final conjunct, which must therefore be the result of a different deletion process.

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Johannes Hein
johannes.hein@hu-berlin.de