

## Elliptical appendices of relative clauses (EARs)

My talk addresses the structure illustrated in (1).

- (1) Am 11. März begann er mit seinen grausamen, rätselhaften Taten,  
on 11 March began he with his cruel mysterious crimes
- die er mit einer kleinen Kamera filmte  
which.ACC he with a small camera filmed
- und (\*er) sich dabei wie in einem Actionfilm inszenierte.**  
and (\*he) himself.ACC at.it like in a action.movie staged

(Der Spiegel, Nr. 13/2012, S. 96)

‘On 11 March, he began his cruel, mysterious deeds, which he filmed with a small camera, staging himself as if in an action movie.’

The elliptical appendix of a relative clause (EAR) is found in line 3: *und sich ... inszenierte*. This structure shows two remarkable properties: (a) it involves a subject gap that seems to be obligatory (*\*er*) and (b) it shows verb last order (*...inszenierte*) but lacks the usual triggers for this order in German, i.e., a (visible) complementizer or a relative pronoun. Note that it does not fit beneath the relative pronoun from the first conjunct since then it would have to accommodate a second direct object.

The question is whether EARs are a pure usage phenomenon or robust in mental grammar in a generative sense. In order to approach this question, I conducted an online survey, using (modified versions of) real examples as well as examples of related structures, in particular of Asymmetric Coordination (Reich 2009). The latter’s acceptability and grammaticality seems to be beyond dispute in the literature, so it served as a baseline structure. For every item, the participants were asked whether they had been reading an actual or mock German sentence. Crucially, the survey was framed as a response time experiment and the participants were told to react as quickly as possible. The rationale behind this design was to elicit grammaticality judgments that are really spontaneous. In sum, the design might be called a **pseudo response time experiment**.

The results show that, depending on the individual item, between 77 and 95 of 103 participants accepted the EARs. This is only slightly below the rates for the AC (95/103). What is crucial for the acceptance of EARs, however, is the presence of an overt conjunction and, indeed, the absence of the subject. These results are also reflected in the individual data. In sum, EARs (with overt conjunctions, without subjects) appear to be quite robust in mental grammars.

Moreover, EARs do not qualify as grammatical illusions (Haider 2011) according to the criteria suggested by Meinunger (2023). That is to say that there is no reason to trace back their acceptability to effects of processing alone. In more detail, they can be generated in syntax quite easily, drawing on Harries-Delisle’s (1978) analysis of coordination reduction, and they are *not* confined to a very limited set of contexts<sup>1</sup>.

### References

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- Harries-Delisle, Helga. 1978. Coordination reduction. In Joseph H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of human language/4: Syntax*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Meinunger, André. Unexpected finite verb forms in German: Cases of grammatical illusion? *Linguistische Berichte* (Sonderheft 34). 205–230.
- Reich, Ingo (2009), „*Asymmetrische Koordination*“ im Deutschen (Studien zur Deutschen Grammatik 75). Tübingen: Stauffenburg.

<sup>1</sup> Note that the two restrictions mentioned above are not exclusive to EARs. An overt conjunction is also required by, e.g., English VP-ellipsis if there is no polarity contrast between the conjuncts. An obligatory subject gap is found with AC.