Framing fragments: a cognitive approach to situational ellipsis

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This paper suggests a usage-based Construction Grammar (CxG) analysis of situational ellipsis, such as (1)-(2), which needs to explicitly revert to the notion of frames or script-knowledge (e.g., Fillmore 1977).

(1)   "Mit Karte" (with credit card)

(2)   "To the airport"

Simply put, constructions (cxns) are form-function pairings learned through expierences of situated langauge use (cf., e.g., Bybee 2006). Frequent uses of (1) in a COMMERCE-PAY-script, or (2) in a TRAVEL-script lead to stronger entrenchment and ultimately to an addition to the stack of conventionalized utterances which are "on hold" in the respective script. Thus, certain situations (as real life instantiations of frames) trigger potential fragments which are readily produced or expected. Fragment-cxns are acquired throughout life (cf. Tomasello 2003). They are learned in a specific situation and esp. children may never hear a full sentential version of them (later, prescriptivist rules call for appropriate constituents as a post hoc addition). The degree of conventionalization varies, some fragments may never achieve cxn status. This is compatible with the suggested approach as cnxs often start out as 'online' form-meaning pairs, i.e. constructs. Yet, the interpretation still depends on the respective context and script. Scripts form a network of conceptually related situations which may be activated in order to produce or understand novel, fragmented constructs.

References: • Bybee, J. (2006): From usage to grammar: the mind's response to repetition. In: *Language* 82(4), 711-733. • Fillmore, C. (1977): Scenes-and-frames semantics. In: *Linguistic Structure and Processing*, 55-81. • Tomasello, M. (2003): *Constructing a language. A usage-based theory of language acquisition.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.