A Minimalist approach to Reprise Fragments

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Although reprise fragments (RFs) such as (1B) have received much attention in monostratal generative frameworks (e.g. Ginzburg & Cooper 2004), RFs remain unexamined from a Minimalist perspective.

(1) A: Pass me the monkey-wrench.
   B: Pass you {the monkey-wrench / the what}?
   B’ : {the monkey-wrench / the what}?

Adopting the orthodox Minimalist assumption that all fragments are derived from full-fledged utterances via PF-deletion/ellipsis (cf. Merchant 2001 et seq.), which entails that the RF in (1B) is derived from the reprise question in (1B), this paper will:

(i) describe the major characteristics of RFs in English (a wh-movement language) and Hungarian (a focus-movement language) and demonstrate that they pose problems for Merchant’s (2004) ‘Move & Delete’ (M&D) analysis of fragmentary responses.

(ii) offer a preliminary Minimalist analysis that treats both standard and reprise fragments as in-situ phrases in these languages.

Through investigating RFs in English and Hungarian, it will be shown that, although the M&D approach to clausal ellipsis is too restrictive for modelling English RFs, a naïve ‘in-situ’ approach (e.g. Abe 2016) is too lenient for modelling Hungarian RFs. We demonstrate that the correct balance is struck when the in-situ approach to deletion is coupled with a QUD-based licensing condition on clausal ellipsis which views all ellipsis-licensing QUDs as syntactically-derived, regardless of whether they are explicitly uttered or merely inferred (following a suggestion in Reich 2000).