

Deletion in synthetic adjectival compounds

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In this talk, I describe a novel ellipsis phenomenon that deletes the second part of synthetic adjectival compounds (indicated by ____), stranding an emphatic, mostly numeric, left part in the process and eliding an adjectivized noun.

(1) Deze lift is zeven-persoon-s, en die acht _____. (Dutch)
this lift is seven-person-ADJ and that eight
'This lift can carry seven people, and that one can carry eight.'

(2) Ez a bogár hat-láb-ú, az a pók nyolc _____. (Hungarian)
this the insect six-leg-ADJ that the spider eight
lit. 'This insect is six-legged and that spider eight.'
'This insect has six legs and that spider eight.'

This type of ellipsis is attested in informal speech in Dutch and Hungarian, two unrelated languages, and is constrained in almost identical ways in the two. These ellipsis facts seem to violate Lexical Integrity and cannot be classified as any known exception to this condition (such as coordination reduction, eliminating either the first part of a compound in a second coordinand, or the second part of a compound in a first coordinand, see Booij 1985). They are also curious in that this kind of deletion only occurs in compound adjectives that function as clausal predicates and crucially never occurs in adjectives that function as attributive modifiers of nouns. Going through the morphosyntactic properties of this construction, I will argue that the data should be treated as ordinary ellipsis, with repercussions for the analysis of synthetic adjectival compounds in these languages and ellipsis licensing in general.