A Study of Ellipsis in Informal English

by

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0. Linguistics has undergone rapid change. The goal of linguistics, however, is to write an adequate grammar of languages, revealing their underlying rules. At least we have observed the following conspicuous change of things that influenced the state of affairs in linguistics (Cf. Shuy 1977: 73):

1) the general broadening of interest which began to develop in the 1960's, leading to new kinds of interdisciplinary studies;
2) development of interest in problems of minority peoples, especially in the schools; and
3) general discomfort with separating the study of formal grammar from the semantic aspects of language.

Linguistics began to take an interest in language in social contexts, in which both REGISTER, 'varieties according to use', and DIALECTS, 'varieties according to user', have been points of discussion (Halliday, McIntosh & Strevens 1964; Crystal & Davy 1969; Gregory & Carroll 1978). A tentative picture of the varieties will be shown like:

![Varieties Diagram]

At the risk of slight oversimplification, we may say that one's dialect shows who (or what) you are, whilst one's register shows what you are doing (Hudson 1980: 49). It may be helpful to observe an example of the non-linguistic and linguistic marking devices in

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order to provide a better understanding of the register conception.

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<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>tuxedo</td>
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<td>Casual</td>
<td>suit</td>
<td>hello</td>
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<td>Informal</td>
<td>slacks</td>
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<td>Intimate</td>
<td>nothing</td>
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Table 1 Register

Neverthe Arkansas, language is by far the primary structure-marking device used by humans, partly because of its flexibility and partly because of its inflexibility. The use of dress to mark the formality of an occasion is probably a cultural universal. Yet the use of dress has some serious limitations. It lacks flexibility. While it may be possible to shed a jacket, loosen a tie, reduce the number of buttons on a blouse to show increased informality, we are generally not required to take several sets of clothing with us wherever we go. The necessity of changing the formality of an occasion frequently arises in human culture, frequently during a conversation. The limitations of dress are such that it is wholly inadequate for this kind of job. Language, however, has the capacity for changing the level of formality practically instantaneously.

Language ... can be used not only to mark levels of formality, but to mark levels of social rank which are, for the most part, fixed. (Dwyer 1976: 91–92)

Joos (1962) has postulated five degrees of formality in English; however, it is open to doubt whether the scale of formality can be categorized as neatly as Joos (Crystal & Davy 1969: 74). Rather, we may sometimes find it more reasonable to categorize rather roughly into two subcategories: formal and informal styles. Formal speech occurs typically in formal social contexts, where the speaker must watch his or her language. The language often insists on greater preciseness. Informal speech, in contrast, occurs in casual, relaxed social settings, in which speech is spontaneous, often emotive and rapid.

1. May I offer you some coffee? / Would you care for some coffee?  [formal]
2. D’yuuh want some coffee?
3. Want some coffee? / Coffee?

Typical studies are Labov’s study of /r/ in New York (Labov 1966, 1972), Trudgill’s study of alternative pronunciations of the -ing suffix (/ə/ and /ɒ/), and James and Lesley Milroy’s study in Belfast, Northern Island (Milroy, J. 1978; Milroy, L. 1976; etc.).

In the following sections, I will concentrate on the rules of the informal style, especially focusing on the elliptical phenomena.⁴

There are a number of good reasons for choosing relatively informal conversation between educated people as the opening variety for linguistic analysis. Conversation ... is without doubt the most commonly used kind of English, and consequently a variety which will be more familiar to the vast majority of English-speaking people than any other.

(Crystal & Davy 1969: 95)

1. Ellipsis: Its Nature

One of the typical differences between formal and informal language styles in English is that the latter has a greater amount of abbreviation, shortening, contraction, and deletion (Quirk et al. 1972: 536 ff)⁵

Ellipsis is purely a surface phenomenon, which reduces redundancy, especially in
informal speech style. The speaker and the hearer are distinctively dyad in a given context. Words are ellipted easily since they are recoverable either from their linguistic or non-linguistic contexts.

(4) "Coffee, Starsky?" "Uh-huh?" She looked at Hutch. "Carrot juice," he said. "Or whatever he’s got, if he’s out of that." "Why would he be out of that?" Starsky inquired, "Who the hell else would order it?" Dianne went to get their beverages. (S & H, 67)

Here the ellipted words may be easily recovered from the context. They are part of the shared information between the speaker and the hearer (Cf. Yamada 1980). Thus,

(5) "(Do you want) Coffee, Starsky?" "(I want) Carrot juice," he said.

And,

(6) "I live in the General Dorm. Know where it is?" He nodded. "Room number?"

(S & H, 5)

Thus,

(7) "(Do you) Know where it is?" "(What is the) Room number?"

Some types of ellipsis are not dependent on the adjacent context for their interpretation, as we have seen so far. We have other types of ellipsis which are dependent on linguistic context. In adverbial finite clauses the whole of the predication or part of it can be omitted, except that we cannot ellipt merely object (Quirk et al. 1972: 538 -39):

(8) Because Alice won’t (dust the furniture), Mary is dusting the furniture.

(9) *He took the money because she wouldn’t take (the money).

2. Ellipsis : Tag-Controlled

The rules for forming the most common type of tag question are (Quirk et al. 1972: 390 -1):

1) The tag question consists of operator+subject: is he? isn’t he? can’t I? would you not? etc.
2) The operator is the same as the operator of the preceding statement: I haven’t met you, have I?
3) The subject of the tag is a pronoun which either repeats, or appropriately substitutes for, the subject of the statement.
4) If the statement is positive, the tag is negative, and vice versa.
5) The nuclear tone of the tag occurs on the auxiliary, and is either rising or falling.

If the tag normally mirrors the subject and operator of the preceding statement, they are still recoverable information even when ellipted; thus, the subject and operator in the main sentence are often dropped out.

(10) *Pretty, isn’t it? (S & H, 82)

(11) I assume you will report this conference to your immediate superior. Captain Dobey, isn’t it? (S & H, 84)

(12) *Little late, isn’t it? (S & H, 91)

(13) *Picturesque old place, isn’t it? (S & H, 138)

(14) *Sort of black Shriners’ outfit, isn’t it? (S & H, 66)

(15) What was that stuff about being entertainers? Huggy Bear and Company, wasn’t it? (S & H, 73)

The examples are unique in that the subjects are all it, but theoretically the types of subjects do not seem to alter the rule (Akmajian et al. 1979: 185):

(16) a. Been hitting the bottle again, haven’t you?

b. Wants me to pay the bill, does he?

c. Likes her new house, does she?
A Study of Ellipsis in Informal English

d. Failing his courses, isn't he?
e. Steal my money, will they?
f. Getting pretty excited, aren't you?
g. Not ready to swim fifty laps, are you?

It is noteworthy that these sentences show another regularity: both the subject and the operator must be deleted together.

(17) a. *Have been hitting the bottle again, haven't you?
b. *Is failing his courses, isn't he?
c. *Will steal my money, will you?

We will reasonably ask why the sentences (17) are impossible. We may conclude that the original subject + operator structure is composed of its contracted form like: you've, he's and you'll instead of you have, he is and you will respectively (Cf. Labov 1969). However, if the operator itself has already a contracted negative particle n't, then we do not have any form like *you'ven't; instead we have you haven't.

(18) Haven't been hitting the bottle again, have you?

Akmajian et al. (1979: 187) postulate the rule:

Given a sentence with a tag question, the subject of the main sentence may be deleted, under the following conditions:

i) the subject must be identical with the pronoun in the tag, and
ii) if the main sentence contain an auxiliary, it must be contracted onto the subject if it can be contracted onto the subject.

3. Ellipsis: Questions

Let us discuss abbreviated questions. One of the former examples was:

(3) Coffee, starsky?

The process of ellipsis may be traced as:

(19) a. Do you want coffee, Starkey?
b. You want coffee, Starkey?
c. Want coffee, Starkey?

However, we have to examine if the type (19 b) is really an abbreviated question. It might be a declarative sentence with a rising question intonation placed on it. Akmajian et al. (1979: 189 ff) discuss the following example.

(20) Last night's party go well?

The declarative sentence should be

(21) Last night's party went well.

and the question in statement form should be

(22) Last night's party went well?

Therefore, we may safely trace the ellipsis process:

(23) Did last night's party go well? → Last night's party go well?

However, we will find it rather difficult to determine that (19 b) will be an abbreviated question or a simple declarative question since we cannot detect any such morphological feature as we have seen in (23).

3.1 Do-ellipsis

(24) "You plan to clean your gun when you get home?" "Of course." (S & H, 108)
(25) Huggy Bear asked, "You want another beer?" (S & H8, 5)
(26) Glancing at his watch, he said, "You know it's three o'clock?" "So?" (S & H, 91)

Do-ellipsis in wh-question:
(27) “Gee, that’s lucky for me,” the truck driver said in a tone of relief. “What you want me to do?” (S & H8, 120)

(28) He halted just short of the stairway when she asked commandingly, “Hey, mister, where you think you’re going?” (S & H8, 75)

3.2 Does-ellipsis

(29) “This box have a name?” Starsky asked. (S & H8, 69)

Does-ellipsis in wh-question:

(30) “How much it cost you?” “Twenty bucks.” (S & H8, 76)

3.3 Did-ellipsis

The interpretation of tense in abbreviated questions, where the tense carrier auxiliary has been ellipted, illustrates some kind of difficulty in recovering deleted information without an overt element of time-when adverbials, or some kind of ambiguity out of context.

(31) “What’s your handicaps?” Phil asked. “He’s mine,” Hutch said, pointing to a thumb at Starsky. That set off a gale of laughter from Jerry and Phil again. “You hear that?” Jerry said to the redhead Candy when he stopped laughing. (S & H8, 53)

3.4 Do-you-ellipsis (20 exx)

[ + want] (6 exx)

(32) “I got coffee and Danish. Want to share?” (S & H, 18)

(33) The plump man giggled as he pushed a large lapel flower toward Starsky. “Wanna smell my flower?” he asked. (S & H8, 27)

[ + think] (5 exx)

(34) “Oh, sorry. What do you think I ought to do about the pool, Officer Starsky? Think the officer can handle it all?” (S & H, 108)

(35) “See that guy?” Hutch asked over the radio. “Yeah,” Starsky said. “Think it was Dallaway?” “Too dark, but it was his build.” (S & H, 99)

[ + remember] (2 exx)

(36) You said you’d never work our district while we were here. Remember? (S & H, 24)

[ + know] (2 exx)

(37) I live in the General Dorm. Know where it is? (S & H, 5)

Other examples are: [+ see] (2 exx), [+ feel like] (1 ex), [+ mind] (1 ex), [+ have] (1 ex).

Do-you-ellipsis in wh-question:

(38) “Well now, that’s a shame, I’m sure. But why tell us?” (S & H8, 49)

3.5 Did-you-ellipsis

(39) “Ever hear of Magic Minnie?” “The witch woman? Sure, everybody has.” (S & H8, 49)

Notice the subject only ellipsis in wh-question:

(40) “And if Henderson’s capable of having a kid wiped out just on the off chance he might be a blackmail threat sometime in the dim future, how do think he’s going to react to what he probably figures is going to be an open attempt to blackmail him?” (S & H, 161)

We do not have ellipsis of the negative auxiliary. Thus,

(19 b) You want coffee, Starsky?

is never interpreted as the negative question like

(41) Don’t you want coffee, Starsky?

However,

(42) Don’t want coffee, Starsky?

is possible.
A Study of Ellipsis in Informal English

(43) Hutch said, "Didn't get much of a take today, huh, Lijan?" (S & H, 69)
So far, stylistic ellipsis for the abbreviated style can take place only if the particular sentence or context provides clues that allow us to properly infer what was ellipted (Cf. Akmajian et al. 1979 : 195).

4. Have-ellipsis

The auxiliary verb have can be ellipted as well.

(44) a. Have you seen John lately?
    b. You seen John lately?
    c. Seen John lately?
Again, it is possible to ellipt you without also ellipting have. In this respect, recall the behavior of do.

(45) *Have seen John lately?
It is quite noteworthy that have got type of expression easily yields an ellipsis, leaving got behind (5 exx).

(46) You got any fun stuff like conventioneers use? (S & H8, 21)
(47) You guys got any evening clothes? (S & H8, 71)
(48) You got any vodka? (S & H8, 77)

Have-ellipsis in wh-question:

(49) Where *you been? (S & H8, 77)
(50) How long *you been with the D. A.’s office, Counselor? (S & H, 32)

Subject+have-ellipsis (7 exx):

(51) "You haven't told him?" "^Told me what?" (S & H8, 152)
(52) "Where’s Huggy Bear?" Starsky asked Dianne. "^Gone upstairs." (S & H, 59)
(53) "When you expect him back?" "Not till morning. ^Gone to Catalina." (S & H, 59)
(54) ^Got a quart around here somewhere. (S & H8, 77)
(55) ^Got a message for you, is all. (S & H, 73)

Here, the sequence have you can be 'vyou/yyu/, or 'vyo /vv/.8

(56) a. 'vyou got a bowtie?
   b. Got a bowtie? (S & H8, 71)

In case of the negative contraction of have, we do not have any form like *you'ven't; instead we have you've not or you haven't. Thus, the following ellipsis type is possible:

(57) a. You haven't told me what?
   b. Haven't told me what?
   c. *Told me what?

However, the context allows the apparently impossible ellipsis possible like:

(58) Starsky said to Chief Godfrey, "You haven’t told him?" "^Told me what?"
   Hutch asked, "Well, you see —" the chief hedged, letting it trail off. (S & H8, 152)

Have-ellipsis in statement:

(59) I ^ been doing it for years. (S & H8, 18)
(60) You ^ been doing that every morning for years. (S & H8, 14)
(61) I ^ been worrying about you. (S & H8, 98)

There does not seem to be any unanimous agreement as to the ellipsis of have in statements; however, the above examples illustrate that it is quite natural when have is followed by been. The following cases seem to be unacceptable in General American English; however some dialects accept them:9

(62) a. *I gone there many times. (= I have gone there many times.)
   b. *I seen that film. (= I have seen that film.)
5. **Be-ellipsis**

The verb *be* can be ellipted.

5.1 \((\text{Are}) + \text{you} + \text{C} + \text{NP} \mid \text{[Adj]}\)

- (63) \(\wedge \text{You Mark Henderson?} \quad (S \& H, 31)\)
- (64) \(\wedge \text{You close friends with Miss Talbot?} \quad (S \& H, 130)\)
- (65) \(\wedge \text{You the manager?} \quad (S \& H, 106)\)
- (66) \(\wedge \text{You a snark?} \quad (S \& H, 5)\)
- (67) \(\wedge \text{You all right, Hutch?} \quad (S \& H, 88)\)
- (68) \(\wedge \text{You okay, buddy?} \quad (S \& H, 131)\)
- (69) \(\wedge \text{You sure?} \quad (S \& H, 139)\) (2 exx)
- (70) \(\wedge \text{You ready to go into action?} \quad (S \& H, 175)\)
- (71) \(\wedge \text{You afraid of heights?} \quad (S \& H, 65)\)

5.2 \((\text{Are}) + \text{you} + \text{V-ing}\)

- (72) \(\wedge \text{You kiddin'} \quad (S \& H, 63)\)
- (73) \(\wedge \text{You coming along?} \quad (S \& H, 91)\)
- (74) \(\wedge \text{You having the same thoughts I am about our next move?} \quad (S \& H, 134)\)
- (75) \(\wedge \text{You going to the panel discussion on metal versus plastic cans in the Rose Room tonight?} \quad (S \& H, 63)\)
- (76) \(\wedge \text{You feeling something?} \quad (S \& H, 75)\)

5.3 \(\text{Wh-} + (\text{are}) + \text{you} + \text{V-ing} \quad (4 \text{ exx})\)

- (77) \(\wedge \text{Where you guys going on your vacation?} \quad (S \& H, 3)\)
- (78) \(\wedge \text{Starsk, how you doing?} \quad (S \& H, 130)\)

5.4 \(\text{Wh-} + (\text{are}) + \text{we} + \text{V-ing} \quad (1 \text{ ex})\)

- (79) \(\wedge \text{What the hell we doing here?} \quad (S \& H, 133)\)

5.5 \((\text{Are}) \text{ you going to/gonna + V}\)

- (80) \(\wedge \text{You guys really going to go through with this?} \quad (S \& H, 49)\)
- (81) \(\wedge \text{You just going to stand there and watch?} \quad (S \& H, 80)\)
- (82) \(\wedge \text{You going to eat or drink?} \quad (S \& H, 66)\)

5.6 \(\text{Wh-} + (\text{are}) \text{ you going to/gonna + V}\)

- (83) \(\wedge \text{How you gonna get upstairs?} \quad (S \& H, 74)\)

5.7 \((\text{Are}) + \text{you} + \text{V-ed}\)

- (84) \(\wedge \text{You guys heeded?} \quad (S \& H, 76)\)
- (85) \(\wedge \text{Testing. You set, Hutch?} \quad (S \& H, 97)\)
- (86) \(\wedge \text{You supposed to tell the girl?} \quad (S \& H, 75)\)

5.8 \((\text{Are}) + \text{you} + \text{Prepositional Phrase}\)

- (87) \(\wedge \text{You in a hurry to get back to the restaurant?} \quad (S \& H, 23)\)

5.9 **Is-ellipsis**

- (88) a. \(\wedge \text{Booth going to be available any time soon?} \quad (S \& H, 184)\)
  b. \(\wedge \text{That going to stop you?} \quad (S \& H, 121)\)
- (89) a. \(\wedge \text{This a business or a social call?} \quad (S \& H, 2)\)
  b. \(\wedge \text{Anything going on?} \quad (S \& H, 96)\)
  c. \(\wedge \text{Your watch waterproof?} \quad (S \& H, 107)\)
- (90) a. \(\wedge \text{Rear window missing, too.} \quad (S \& H, 48)\)
  b. \(\wedge \text{And blood all over the front seat.} \quad (S \& H, 48)\)
  c. \(\wedge \text{Fat Rolly over there.} \quad (S \& H, 34)\)

Once again the subject *you* cannot be ellipted unless the auxiliary verb is ellipted too:
(91) a. *Are coming along ? [=73]
b. *Are the manager ? [=65]

Again, the verbs should be contractible like:

- am I = 'my [may]  is it = 's it [zɪt]
- are you = 'ryou [əryʊw]  is John = 's John [zən]
- is he = 's he [ziɣ]  are we = 'r we [ərwɪɣ]
- is she = 's she [zəɣ]  are they = 'r they [ərdɛɣ]

(Akmajian et al. 1979 : 199)

(92) “Steak sandwich ?” Starsky said, looking at his partner's plate in surprise.
(S & H, 67)

(93) a. “Mad ?” “Yes.” (S & H, 17)
b. “Happy now ?” (S & H, 11)
c. “You know it’s after twelve ?” “Uh-huh. Hungry ?” (S & H, 65)
d. “Sure you’ve got a house guest ?” (S & H, 11)

Also in statements:

(94) a. Slowly, Starsky said wryly, “Sorry about that.” (S & H, 151)
b. Handing the fat man a napkin, he said, “Sorry, Rolly. Out of pencils.”
(S & H, 41)
c. “Surprised to see you, Dianne,” Hutch said. (S & H, 66)
d. Hutch said dourly, “Glad you found a parking place close by.” (S & H, 105)

(95) “Steak sandwich ?” Starsky said, looking at his partner's plate in surprise. “Made out of soybeans,” Dianne explained. (S & H, 67) [It's]

(96) Gonna be dark in another couple hours. (S & H, 64) [It's]

(97) You gonna back to Vinnie’s and get the Torino. Nice to have met you, Mr. Henderson. (S & H, 57) [It's]

(98) No wonder he never comes along with his partner when Dallaway makes a bug.
(S & H, 101) [It's]

(99) “He ain’t gonna like that,” Angie said doubtfully. “Gonna need his beauty sleep.” (S & H, 60) [He’s]

6. Akmajian et al. (1979 : 201) argue that:

One can delete the contractible forms of the verbs do, have, and be, and these are the only verbs that can delete. Other auxiliary verbs may not.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Will} \quad & \text{Must} \\
\text{Would} \quad & \text{Can} \\
\text{Could} \quad & \text{Should} \\
\text{etc.} \quad & \\
\end{align*}
\]

We generally cannot delete any of these verbs. For example, if we are asked You leave tomorrow ? we interpret this strictly as Do you leave tomorrow ? and never as Will you leave tomorrow ? Conversely, if we were able to delete a verb such as will, we would expect to delete it in a question such as Will you be leaving tomorrow ? But deleting will would produce the unacceptable question *You be leaving tomorrow ?

However, we can easily find some instances in which modals are most suitable to supply, either in questions or in statements. Thus, the ellipsis is highly context-oriented.

(100) a. (Won’t you) Have a smoke ?
b. (Will you) Have 'nother? (Murata 1972: 548)

(101) Over his shoulder Starsky said. "Tell you something, Hutch. When I was in high school, I played defensive back on the football team." (S & H, 122) [I'll]

(102) But I wouldn't count on him being up and about. Little bomb he took with him, looked like he ain't gonna get much sleep. Probably hit the sack as soon as he gets home. (S & H, 59) [He'll]

(103) "Buy you a refill?" he asked, nodding toward her glass. "If you'd like." (S & H, 3) [Shall I]

(104) The door closed behind Starsky and Hutch, and the two detectives walked over to the bar... "See you in private?" Hutch asked. "Sure," the black man said agreeably. (S & H, 115) [Can I/C'n I]

(105) "You're almost as bad as Phil. You tell Ed?" "I will." "Okay, I'll tell Phil." He moved over to whisper to his partner. (S & H, 54) [Will]

(106) Starsky turned onto Hope Avenue. "How about Huggy Bear's bar? Kill two birds with one stone?" "Only one bird today. He took the boat over to Catalina." (S & H, 65) [Shall we]

7. Ellipsis of personal pronouns

The elements ellipted can be:

7.1 1st person pronoun, normally I (31 exx)

Most of the verbs in such an ellipted construction can take a clause complement (Quirk et al. 1972: 545).

(107) Oddly enough, your names and room number were found among the belongings in his hotel room. "How do you account for that?" "Can't say," Hutch said, trying to look amazed." (S & H, 49)

(108) "Hope they get here pretty soon," he said. "I want to be in the place by one o'clock." (S & H, 10)

(109) "You want anything?" "Yeah," Hutch said. "What you're talking about?" "Beg pardon?" (S & H, 18)

(110) Eventually he said, "Got it," and hung up. (S & H, 63)

7.2 2nd person pronoun

The second person pronoun is only ellipted in statements if a tag question is added (Quirk et al. 1972: 545). Also see 3.4 and 3.5.

(111) a. Had a good time, did you?
    b. Want a drink, do you?
    c. Had a good time?
    d. Want a drink? (Quirk et al.)

7.3 3rd person pronoun

The 3rd person pronoun is recoverable easily by looking at either a contextual cue or a linguistic cue.

7.3.1 He/She (5 exx)

(112) "Put Huggy Bear on." "Ain't here, Hutch." (S & H, 59)

(113) What about the guy with the bad breath? Walks with a limp. (S & H, 56)

(114) He's been in his apartment. Hasn't budged. (S & H, 96)

(115) "Who?" "Somebody named Molly. Said she'd be in on the midnight flight." (S & H, 184)

(116) "What happened to Carlson?" Dobey asked. "Went into private practice, Captain." (S & H, 29)

7.3.2 It
It is particularly easy to recover since the instances mostly found in idiomatically fixed type of expressions like It sounds (like) (5 exx), It looks (like) (7 exx), It seems (7 exx), It doesn’t matter (1 ex). The meaningless ‘prop’ word it (2 exx), anticipatory subject it (4 exx), and pro-forms (10 exx) are also ellipted since they are recoverable.

(117) That way’s west. \(\wedge\)Seems to me we ought to go east. (S & H, 91)

(118) \(\wedge\)Seemed to me you were surprised to see us when we cruised by outside, Rolly. (S & H, 37)

(119) \(\wedge\)Looks interesting. (S & H8, 108)

(120) \(\wedge\)Looks like he’s waiting for somebody. (S & H, 98)

(121) \(\wedge\)Sounds like a million cops. (S & H, 177)

(122) “That stakeout may last till three A. M.” “\(\wedge\)Doesn’t matter. She isn’t coming in until midnight.” (S & H, 87)

(123) \(\wedge\)Sure was nice seeing you. (S & H8, 32)

(124) You know, \(\wedge\)still bugs me how surprised to see us Coley was. (S & H, 34)

(125) Hutch said dourly, “Glad you found a parking place close by. \(\wedge\)Makes it handy to get to the radio.” (S & H, 105)

7.4 There
This is the existential subject there. The elliptical construction is likely to contain a modal other than will, but won’t is common (Cf. Quirk et al. 1972 : 546).

(126) a. Ought to be some coffee in the pot.
   b. Must be somebody waiting for you.
   c. May be some children outside.
   d. Appears to be a big crowd in the hall.
   e. Won’t be any food left for supper. (Quirk et al.)

(127) \(\wedge\)Must be something to that. (S & H8, 75)

(128) “\(\wedge\)Anywhere we can squeeze a little of the water out of our clothes?” “There’s dryers in the laundry room,” the manager said. (S & H, 106) [Is there]

8. Miscellaneous

8.1 (as) soon as/(as) long as (9 exx)

(129) \(\wedge\)Soon as they get here, I’ll let you know, and you can come down to my office to explain all this to them. (S & H, 33)

(130) They said you should have waited for them, but \(\wedge\)long as you didn’t, to meet them on the golf course \(\wedge\)soon as you get settled. (S & H8, 46)

(131) \(\wedge\)Long as you wear a white shirt and a necktie with it. (S & H8, 71)

8.2 a couple (of)

(132) Gonna be dark in another couple \(\wedge\)hours. (S & H8, 64)

8.3 (good) evening

(133) “\(\wedge\)Evening, fuzzy friends,” the black man said. (S & H8, 2)

8.4 (you had) better

(134) But when you get home, \(\wedge\)better take off the back and douse the works with mineral oil. (S & H, 108)

8.5 Determinative

(135) We met over at the Student Union \(\wedge\)couple of weeks ago. (S & H, 3)

(136) “Those two kids who were shotgun–blasted on the beach \(\wedge\)night before last,” Hutch said. (S & H, 142)

(137) “\(\wedge\)Booth going to be available any time soon?” “Forty-five minutes,” the black man said. (S & H, 184)
A grammar of informal style English is to be part of my series of discussions of new English grammar for the teachers and students of English in Japan. …from the pedagogical viewpoint, the sort of English used in conversational situations would seem to be the most useful and least artificial kind to teach foreign students of English as a means of everyday communication. Such practical reasons are quite important. (Crystal & Davy 1969 : 95)

In addition, the rules I have discussed here not only give us some insight into the nature of language variation, but also they provide us with a concrete example of how different subfields of linguistics are integrated and unified at a broader level (Cf. Akmajian et al. 1979 : 205).

1. As to the discussion of ‘adequacy’, see Chomsky (1965).
3. Part of the usage discussion of gotcha is found in Yamada (1979 : 66). Originally, the expression is a contracted form of “I have got you.”
   “Have Dippy pick up a panel truck somewhere. The two of you be on the airport parking lot from about two-thirty on. If Starsky and Hutch manage to get the Mello girl past Max and Jeremy, you two take her there.” Nodding his bald head, Curly Dobbs said, “Gotcha.”—Max Franklin, Starsky & Hutch # 3 (Ballantine), p. 116
4. The examples in this discussion are from:
   2) Max Franklin, Starsky & Hutch # 8, Ballantine, 1978 (S & H8)
5. As to the discussion of the contraction of the auxiliary verbs, see Yamada (1975).
7. Notice the word has in the answer.
   ‘Did you ever see a bed fastened like that before? I cannot say that I have.’—Here have is necessary in the answer, because I did would imply a definite point of time (Jespersen 1909–49, IV : 65).
8. However, the lexical verb have lacks a contracted form with you: *‘vyou any wool? (Akmajian et al., 1979 : 197).
9. In some community dialects, the past forms of do and see are done and seen respectively. See Gefvert et al. (1975 : 59–60), Murata (1972 : 461). Atwood (1962 : 75, 120).
   ‘Then anyone could have come down here this morning, is that right?’ he asked. ‘To use the machine?’ ‘That’s right,’ Iverson said. ‘Did you see anyone come down?’ ‘Sure, I seen lots of tenants down here.’—Ibid., p. 63.
10. If we continue discussing the behavior of be contraction, we will discover the following fact:
   1. a. John is coming here tomorrow.
      b. John’s coming here tomorrow.
   2. a. His hobby is going to parks.
      b. *His hobby’s going to parks.
   In (2), is belongs to ‘Equative be’, which requires the pause in speech. Thus, the contraction seems to be impossible. See Kuno (1977 : 97–98), Yasui (1978 : 116).
11. “Prop word it”. See Quirk et al. (1972 : 546).
12. Also, soon’s.
   He went to bed lookin’ kinda white soon’s we got home. —N. Algren, The Man with the Golden Arm [Murata]
   “You wanted to see me?” she asked in a dull voice. He nodded. “Sit down, I’ll be with yuh soon’s I finish this.”—Harold Robbins, 79 Park Avenue (New English Library), p. 100.
Bibliography


