



# snippets

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

### 1. Purpose.

The aim of *Snippets* is to publish specific remarks that motivate research or that make theoretical points germane to current work. The ideal contribution is the ideal footnote: a side remark that taken on its own is not worth lengthy development but that needs to be said. One encounters many short comments of this kind in the literature of the seventies. We feel that there no longer is a forum for them. We want *Snippets* to help fill that gap.

### 2. Content.

We will publish notes that contribute to the study of syntax and semantics in generative grammar. The notes are to be brief, self-contained and explicit. They may do any of the following things:

- point out an empirical phenomenon that goes against accepted generalizations or that shows that some aspect of a theory is problematic;
- point out unnoticed minimal pairs that fall outside the scope of any existing theory;
- point out an empirical phenomenon that confirms the predictions of a theory in an area where the theory has not been tested;
- explicitly describe technical inconsistencies in a theory or in a set of frequently adopted assumptions;
- explicitly describe unnoticed assumptions that underlie a theory or assumptions that a theory needs to be supplemented with in order to make desired predictions;
- call attention to little-known or forgotten literature in which issues of immediate relevance are discussed.

We also encourage submissions that connect psycholinguistic data to theoretical issues. A proposal for a pilot experiment in language acquisition or language processing could make for an excellent snippet.

The earliest Linguistic Inquiry squibs exemplify the kind of note we would like to publish. Some of them posed unobserved puzzles. For instance, a squib by Postal and Ross in LI 1:1 ("A Problem of Adverb Preposing") noted that whether or not we can construe a sentence-initial temporal adverb with an embedded verb depends on the tense of the matrix verb. A squib by Perlmutter and Ross in LI 1:3 ("Relative Clauses with Split Antecedents"), challenging the prevailing analyses of coordination and extraposition, noted that conjoined clauses neither of which contain a plural noun phrase can appear next to an "extraposed" relative that can only describe groups. Other squibs drew attention to particular theoretical assumptions. For instance, a squib by Bresnan in LI 1:2 ("A Grammatical Fiction") outlined an alternative account of the derivation of sentences containing believe and force, and asked whether there were principled reasons for dismissing any of the underlying assumptions (among them that semantic interpretation is sensitive to details of a syntactic derivation). A squib by Zwicky in LI 1:2 ("Class Complements in Phonology") asked to what extent phonological rules refer to complements of classes. None of these squibs was more than a couple of paragraphs; all of them limited themselves to a precise question or observation.

### **3. Submission details.**

*Snippets* is an electronic journal. We will solicit submissions twice a year: the submission deadlines are April 1 and October 1. The submissions that we accept will be posted on the journal website approximately 3 months after each deadline, and all accepted submissions will remain permanently on the website.

*Snippets* is intended as a service to the linguistics community. Consequently, authors are advised that, when they submit to *Snippets*, we understand them as allowing their submission to be reproduced if published. At the same time, the rights for the notes themselves will remain with the authors. As a result, citation of *Snippets* material will have to indicate the author's name and the specific source of the material.

We will accept electronic submissions at the address [snippets@unimi.it](mailto:snippets@unimi.it). Electronic submissions may take the form of (a) the text of an e-mail message, or (b) an attached file. The attached file should be a simple text file, a Word file (Mac or Windows), or a Rich Text Format (RTF) file. All submissions must state the name and affiliation of the author(s), and a (postal or electronic) return address.

Submissions are to be a maximum of 500 words (including examples), with an additional half page allowed for diagrams, tables and references. Given that we envision the submissions themselves as footnotes, the submissions may not contain footnotes of their own. The ideal submission is one paragraph; a submission of five lines is perfectly acceptable. We will not consider abstracts.

### **4. Editorial policy.**

Submissions will be reviewed by our editorial board, and review will be name-blind both ways. While we guarantee a response within 3 months of the submission deadline, we will only provide a yes/no response to the submitter. We will not request revisions (barring exceptional cases). We allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

## 1.

### Naomi Harada – *ATR International* *Case marker drop beyond structure*

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Although the phenomenon itself is phonological, Case-marker drop in Japanese has been considered as constrained by syntactic factors. For example, the accusative Case-marker is only dropped in the so-called standard dialect when the nominal is adjacent to the Case-licensing verbal head (Saito 1985), as in (1), read with unmarked contours. The sensitivity to the unergative/unaccusative distinction is also observed (Kageyama 1993), as in (2).

- (1) a. Taro-ga hon-(o) yon-da.  
Taro-Nom book-Acc read-Past.  
'Taro read a book/books.'  
b. Hon<sub>i</sub>\*(-o) Taro-ga hon t<sub>i</sub> yon-da.
- (2) a. Taro-??(ga) warat-ta.  
Taro-Nom laugh-Past.  
'Taro laughed.'  
b. Taro-(ga) ki-ta.  
Taro-Nom come-Past.  
'Taro came.'

Previous studies point to the same generalization: A Case-marker is dropped only in a "governed" position.

In this squib, I report a case in which semantic factors, rather than structural ones, regulate Case-marker drop. In particular, I claim that the dative-marker drop is constrained by the feature [+/- animate] on the DP to be Case-marked.

In the Kansai dialects (the "Western" dialects), Case-marker drop occurs more frequently than in other dialects (Kanazawa 1986). In particular, it allows dative-marker (*ni*) drop under certain conditions. To determine the condition regulating *ni*-drop in the dialect, a survey of the written text of recorded dialogues from Bono 2005 was carried out. The task for the participants (college students who are native speakers of the dialect) is as follows: After watching a cartoon segment (*Dora-emon*) for 10 minutes, A explains the gist of the piece to B, who has not watched it.

- (3) An excerpt from the dialogue  
(Int = Interjective, SFP = Sentence final particle, ∅ = dropped Case-marker)

A: De, (breath) ie∅ kaet-te,  
Then, home return-ing,  
'Then, (he) went home and ...'

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B: Un.  
Int  
'OK'

A: Maa, Dora-emon-**ni**, eh, iikoto-na, minna-no hanasi-te  
Int, Dora-emon-Dat, Int good.thing-SFP everyone-Gen speak-ing  
'And then, (he) told Dora-emon all the good things happened to the others, and...'

The existence of *ni* on the goal argument of a ditransitive verb was examined in the written text of three dialogue sessions. The result shows a strong correlation between the semantic features of the DP and the possibility of *ni*-drop: of all the instance of *ni*-drop, the DP was [-animate] (cf. Table 1). In contrast, *ni* on the animate DP is always retained: no instance of *ni*-drop with [+animate] DP was found (cf. Table 2). The percentage of *ni*-preservation varies among individuals, but as far as the cases examined are concerned, the tendency is to drop (and not to keep) *ni* on the inanimate DPs (cf. Table 3).

Summarizing, *ni*-drop is not ad-hoc even in spoken data, where the word order is more flexible than written data: it is constrained by a principle sensitive to a semantic feature [+/-animate] of the DP to be Case-marked, suggesting that structural properties are not directly tied to dative-marker drop in a certain dialect of the language.

**Table 1:** *Ni*-drop with [-animate] DP

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
# [-animate] dative DPs without <i>ni</i> / # dative DPs without <i>ni</i>	7/7 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	2/2 (100%)

**Table 2:** (Lack of) *Ni*-drop with [+animate] DP

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
# [+animate] dative DPs without <i>ni</i> / # [+animate] dative DPs with <i>ni</i>	0/6 (0%)	0/15 (0%)	0/8 (0%)

**Table 3:** Percentage of *ni*-preservation

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
# [-animate] dative DPs with <i>ni</i> / # dative DPs with <i>ni</i>	4/10 (40%)	3/18 (16.7%)	6/14 (42.3%)

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In his recent papers, Chomsky (1999, 2000, 2004, 2005a, 2005b) stresses that the minimalist program is part of a biolinguistic perspective on the language faculty. The biolinguistic framework is justified with reference to studies of neurolinguistics, and uses some psycholinguistically oriented terminology like “derivation”, “computation”, “phase-level memory”, but is curiously staying away from psycholinguistic research, and from basic observations regarding the functioning of the computational system for language processing. One question that has been bothering me for a while is related to the notion of “derivation by phase”: *How can the notion of derivation by phase be reconciled with psychological reality?*

The notion of phase is a development of ideas having a long history in linguistics, those of bounding nodes and barriers. From a linguistic point of view it is unquestionable that these notions are productive. However, the minimalist program explores the idea that the computational system for the human language derives sentences phase by phase, starting from the most embedded one. As soon as a phase is completed, it is sent to the interfaces for interpretation, and a next phase is computed. This is justified with reference to memory load, clearly a psychological notion. However, whether from the point of view of the speaker or of the hearer, the computational system doesn't treat sentences starting from the most embedded phase in a language like English. Instead of saying : *Who said that Mary gave a book to Paul?* speakers don't spell-out something like the following (brackets added to make clear the approximative derivation): [ $v^*P_{phase1}$  gave a book to Paul][ $CP_{phase2}$  that Mary] [ $v^*P_{phase3}$  said][ $CP_{phase4}$  who]? It will not do to assume that speakers can keep in memory all the phases already planned, waiting for the most external phase to be completed, before spelling them out in the reverse order. The capacity of short term memory is simply too small for that (without even taking into account the computation necessary at the interfaces). There is here a fundamental disparity between the left-to-right processing observed in psycholinguistic studies and the right-to-left computation assumed in derivation by phase.

The notion of phase hasn't been unchallenged, most recently by Boeckx and Grohmann (to appear), but as far as I can see, the problems discussed are internal to the system and do not touch the basic point made here. In as much as the generative enterprise aims to describe the computational system for the human language, the notion of derivation by phase is in need of deep rethinking. This brings me back to my original question: How can the model be modified to bring it closer to psychological reality, without losing on linguistic coverage? As long as the model can't face this

basic question, all references to the computational system, memory load, and other psychological notions will remain pure rhetoric, overtly misleading in pretending that what we are doing is describing the computational system for the human language, and ultimately addressing the biology of language, while what we are really doing is constructing a linguistic system independent of psychological and biological concerns.

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### 3.

Go Mizumoto – Kyushu University

#### *Can Japanese children postulate clause boundary by prosody?*

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In this snippet, I discuss the role of prosodic information in young children's comprehension of language, and examine experimentally whether children can detect clause boundaries by using prosody.

The experiment was the following: first, three stimulus sentences which are ambiguous as to the position of the clause boundary were auditorily presented to the subjects (48 children, 47-82 months; 10 adults as a control group). After presenting each stimulus, the experimenter asked a question to the child. This question examined where the subjects postulate a clause boundary. (1) is an example of the stimulus sentences:

- (1) usagisan-ga henna kao-o site tatteiru pandasan-o waraw-ase-masita  
rabbit-NOM make a face standing panda-ACC laugh-CAUS-PAST  
a. [<sub>S</sub> usagisan-ga henna kao-o site], tatteiru pandasan-o waraw-ase-masita  
'The rabbit's making a face made the standing panda laugh.'  
b. usagisan-ga [<sub>S</sub> henna kao-o site tatteiru] pandasan-o] waraw-ase-masita  
'The rabbit made the standing panda that is making a face laugh.'

(1) is ambiguous as to the position of clause boundary. In (1a), the first four words constitute a clause and modify the matrix predicate *waraw-ase-masita*. In this type of sentence, a clause-initial boundary is postulated sentence-initially, but no sentence internal left boundary exists. In (1b), the words from *henna* to *tatteiru* constitute a clause, and as a relative clause, this modifies *pandas-an-o*. In this example, a left clause boundary is set sentence-initially and a clause-internal left boundary is postulated between *usagisan-ga* and *henna*. In each reading, auditory stimuli were prepared with the following properties in clause boundary position: final segments were lengthened, pitch resetting occurred, and a pause was set. After presenting the stimuli, the experimenter asked the question "who made a face?" If the subjects identify the clause boundary correctly, they should answer *usagisan* in the case corresponding to (1a) and *pandas-an* in the case corresponding to (1b).

The result of the experiment was that the subjects answered correctly to (1a) type stimuli (a percentage of correct answers 84.7%, cf. 100% in adults) but most subjects answered incorrectly in (1b) type stimuli (29.2%, cf. 100% in adults).

This result leads us to some conclusions:

- (i) (1a) type postulation of clause boundaries is preferred;
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- (ii) prosodic information for the non-preferred reading is not working. (In other words, prosodic cues are unavailable in children's sentence comprehension.);
- (iii) The unavailability of prosodic cues suggests that young children's comprehension of sentences could be performed on the basis of some strategy which is formed earlier in the course of language acquisition (such as word order (Bever (1970), Hayashibe (1975)) or some innate knowledge of language.

To examine which factor induces the (1a) preference is germane to the problem of language learnability. By verifying that this preference did not come into existence by experience, e.g., using the frequency of word order as a clue (Matthews *et al.* (2005)), it could be revealed what the innate knowledge of language is.

For more information about our experiment, see Mizumoto (2006) (written in Japanese) or please access the following URL (a short manuscript written in English): [http://www.lit.kyushu-u.ac.jp/linguist/doc/miz/Snippets\\_exp.pdf](http://www.lit.kyushu-u.ac.jp/linguist/doc/miz/Snippets_exp.pdf).

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#### 4.

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#### ***Particle verbs trigger cluster formation***

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In the Germanic OV-languages, infinitival complementation may give rise to cluster formation, in which the verbs form an adjacent sequence in the right periphery. In Evers' (1975) seminal work, this is derived by Verb Raising (VR), which adjoins an embedded infinitive to the dominating verb:

- (1)        dat    hij [    Nederlands t<sub>i</sub>]    begint    te    leren<sub>i</sub>  
          that    he     Dutch           begins    to    learn  
          '...that he begins to learn Dutch.'  
          DUTCH (Van Riemsdijk 1998; 642)

According to Evers (1975), Dutch particle verbs do not trigger VR of the embedded infinitive:

- (2)        \* dat    hij [    Nederlands t<sub>i</sub>] **aan-**    vangt    te    leren<sub>i</sub>  
          that    he     Dutch     on-    catches    to    learn  
          '...that he begins to learn Dutch.'  
          (Van Riemsdijk 1998; 642)

This contrast between simple verbs and particle verbs in triggering cluster formation has been observed many times since, and it is occasionally offered as support for the operation VR (Van Riemsdijk 1998; Wurmbrand 2001; Neeleman 1994, among others).

I show that this is not justified, as there is a counterexample to the generalization, and moreover, the scarcity of VR-triggering particle verbs (VR a descriptive term from here) could be explained differently.

The counterexample to the generalization that particle verbs cannot trigger cluster formation is *mee-helpen* 'help' (literally: with help). The *infinitivus pro participio* effect, by which the expected past participle surfaces as an infinitive, proves that (3) involves a verb cluster:

- (3)        De    brandweer        heft    **mee-**    helpen    zoeken  
          The    fire.department    has    with-    help    search  
          'The fire department has helped search.'  
          (from: [www.politie.nl/zuid-holland-zuid/nieuws/060605\\_hoeksche\\_waard.asp](http://www.politie.nl/zuid-holland-zuid/nieuws/060605_hoeksche_waard.asp))

I believe there are two reasons for the near-absence of VR triggering particle

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verbs, both of which argue against excluding them as VR triggers in principle.

First, the VR triggers roughly correspond to the restructuring verbs cross linguistically. Perhaps most particle verbs fail to trigger VR not because of the particle, but because meaningwise, they are unlikely restructuring predicates.

Once this factor is controlled for, only a handful of predicates remain. Besides *mee-helpen* ‘help’, only *aan-vangen* ‘begin’ (literally: on-catch), *op-houden* ‘stop’ (literally: up-hold) and *door-gaan* ‘continue’ (literally: through-go) might be expected to be restructuring verbs.

I suggest that the fact that the latter three do not create clusters, is accidental. The VR triggers form a natural class, but to some extent, it is arbitrary which verbs are actually in it, just like cross linguistically, the exact set of restructuring verbs is to some degree arbitrary. Thus, it seems just a coincidence that *beginnen* ‘begin’ is a VR-trigger, but its (near) synonym *starten* ‘begin’ is not. The fact that the particle verb *aan-vangen* ‘begin’ is not a VR-trigger could be a coincidence as well.

Similarly for *op-houden* and *door-gaan*: it is unclear whether it is the particle that explains that they are not VR triggers, because the (near) synonyms *stoppen* ‘stop’ and *continuëren* ‘continue’ are not VR triggers either.

In conclusion, I challenged the claim that VR triggering particle verbs do not exist, and proposed that the near absence of such verbs could be explained partly by the low incidence of particle verbs with the relevant meaning, and partly by lexical accident. Consequently, it is questionable whether the near absence of VR triggering particle reveals anything about the derivation of verb clusters.

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5.

**Susi Wurmbrand – University of Connecticut**  
**Back to the future, Part 2**

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In Wurmbrand (2001), it is pointed out that German does not allow inherently past modifiers (e.g. *yesterday*) in future contexts, even in cases where the interpretation would not result in a tense clash (cf. the past future contexts in (1)).

- (1) *Hans beschloß vor einer Woche dass er MOD auf eine Party gehen würde.*  
 John decided a week ago that he to a party go would.  
 ‘John decided a week ago that he would go to a party.’

Possible/impossible modifiers (MOD):  
 \* *past* modifiers: *gestern* ‘yesterday’, *vor 2 Tagen* ‘two days ago’  
 √ *future* modifiers: *morgen* ‘tomorrow’, *einen Tag später* ‘a day later’

The possibility of modifiers such as *a day later* and *tomorrow* in contexts such as (1) shows that a past future interpretation is in principle possible and that the problem cannot be a problem with deictic modifiers in these contexts. Furthermore, since no such restriction exists in English, it seems unlikely that the prohibition against past modifiers in past future contexts in German is caused by some semantic tense clash or the like.

Rather, I would like to speculate that the problem in (1) is a syntactic problem. As a hypothesis, I suggest that in German, sentential temporal modifiers must be licensed by an agreeing temporal head. More specifically, I assume that the tense feature of a sentential modifier must match the tense feature of T (or the modal or aspect head hosting *woll*, assuming a composite structure of the future). This yields the following possible and impossible relations.

(2)	T/Modal/Asp	MODIFIER
a.	<past>	<past>
b.	<fut/woll>	<fut>
c.	* <fut/woll>	<past>
d.	* <past>	<fut>

Past modifiers in past future contexts are then a case of (2c), illustrated in more detail in (3). The feature <*fut/woll*> of *would* clashes with the <*past*> feature of modifiers such as *yesterday*, and hence past modifiers are not licensed.

- (3) decided a week ago [ would go \*yesterday / tomorrow ]  
 <past> <past> [ <fut/woll> \*<past> / <fut> ]

Furthermore, (4) shows that, as predicted by this syntactic licensing approach, future modifiers are not possible in past/perfect contexts (cf. 2d).

- (4) *In einer Woche wird Hans behaupten dass er MOD auf eine Party gegangen ist/sei.*  
In a week will John claim that he to a party gone is/is-Cond  
'In a week, John will claim that he went to a party.'

Possible/impossible modifiers (MOD):

- \* *future* modifiers: *morgen* 'tomorrow', *in 2 Tagen* 'in two days'  
√ *past* modifiers: *gestern* 'yesterday', *vor 2 Tagen* 'two days ago'

A further fact supporting this basic idea comes from the distribution of temporal modifiers within NPs (this fact was pointed out to me by N. Fitzgibbons who noticed this contrast between sentential and nominal modifiers in Russian). As shown in (5), both past modifiers in past future contexts and future modifiers in past/perfect contexts are perfectly fine when the modifiers are embedded within an NP.

- (5) a. *Hans beschloß vor einer Woche dass er auf die gestrige Party gehen würde.*  
John decided a week ago that he to the yesterday's party go would.  
'John decided a week ago that he would go to yesterday's party.'  
b. *Hans wird in einer Woche behaupten dass er auf die morgige Party gegangen sei.*  
John will in a week claim that he to the tomorrow's party gone is.  
'John will claim in a week that he went to tomorrow's party.'

Under the interpretation where the nominal modifiers in (5) refer to the time of the party, (5a) is essentially synonymous with (1) (with *yesterday*), and (5b) with (4) (with *tomorrow*). The difference in grammaticality hence shows again that the problem does not appear to be a semantic problem. Assuming a syntactic account such as the one sketched above, however, the difference is expected: only sentential modifiers are in the domain of sentential tense, and therefore only sentential modifiers must match the features of the local T/Modal/aspect head.

An obvious question is why this licensing relation must hold in some languages but not in others.

## References

Wurmbrand, S. (2001) "Back to the future." *Snippets* 3, 15-16.