

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 publish issues roughly twice a year, and all issues will remain 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 snippetsjournal@gmail.com. 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, nor may they contain acknowledgments – though we will allow informants and funding sources to be credited in a line following the references. 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. We will provide a response within 3 months of the moment when we acknowledge receipt of a submission. At the same time, we do not guarantee more than a simple yes/no response to the submitter. We will not require revisions (barring exceptional cases). We allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

1.

Heidi Harley, Jeffrey Punske – *University of Arizona, Southern Illinois University (Carbondale)*

Some PP modifiers of NP block relative readings in superlatives

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Superlatives are ambiguous between an absolute and one or more relative readings (see: Heim 1985, 1999, Szabolcsi 1986, Gawron 1995, Farkas and Kiss 2000, Sharvit and Stateva 2002, Pancheva and Tomaszewicz 2012).

- (1) a. Art bought the largest sculpture for Andrew.

absolute: *Art bought a sculpture for Andrew that was larger than any other sculpture.*

- b. ART bought the largest sculpture for Andrew.

relative 1: *The largest of the sculptures for Andrew that was bought by someone was bought by Art. Larger sculptures may exist.*

- c. Art bought the largest sculpture for ANDrew.

relative 2: *The largest of the sculptures that was bought for someone by Art was bought for Andrew. Larger sculptures may exist.*

The two relative readings of (1) reflect the interaction of contrastive focus with the superlative: When a subject like *Art* (1b) or a VP-adjunct like *for Andrew* (1c) is focused, the superlative is relativized to the focus context.

The availability of relative readings depends on the locus of the focused item. Pancheva and Tomaszewicz (2012) notice that focusing an element internal to the superlative phrase does *not* make a relative reading available. So it is impossible to read *John met the youngest students from LONdon* as meaning *#The youngest of the students from somewhere that were met by John were from London*. The relative reading associated with subject focus ("relative 1"), however, is unaffected.

Surprisingly, certain PP modifiers of the superlative DP block *all* relative interpretations, even those associated with subject focus (2):

- (2) MARY bought the largest cake in the store.

relative 1 (unavailable): *#The largest cake in the store that was bought by anyone was bought by Mary. Larger cakes in the store may exist.*

It is not obvious why this should be. Most PP modifiers seem to allow the subject-focus relative reading, as in the examples in (3):

- (3) a. MARY bought the largest cake with sprinkles.

relative 1: *The largest cake with sprinkles that was brought by anyone was brought by Mary. Larger cakes with sprinkles may exist.*

- b. BONNIE had the clearest shot at the target.

- c. HANK travelled the longest road through the desert.
-

However, parallel to (2), the subject-focus relative reading is lost in the examples in (4):

- (4) a. PAULA married the richest man around.
b. CLAUDIA bought the biggest house under \$150,000.

We hypothesize that the PP-modifiers in (2) and (4) themselves specify the domain under consideration for the evaluation of the superlative. PP modifiers which simply restrict the denotation of the N, on the other hand, leave the domain underspecified, and the speaker relies on context to determine the relevant domain for evaluation of the superlative (i.e. in (1) and (3)). In line with Pancheva and Tomaszewicz (2012), we believe the differences in domain specificity are likely due to a different attachment site for domain-restricting PPs within the superlative DP. Such speculation is supported by phrasal compounds, which have unambiguous attachment to N and allow the relative reading:

- (5) CLAUDIA bought the biggest under-\$150,000 house.

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Editors' note. *Snippets*-internal problems severely delayed the publication of this piece, which was originally processed in 2013. We apologize for this.

2.

Natalia Ivlieva, Yasutada Sudo – *Institut Jean-Nicod (CNRS), University College London*

Another problem for alternative-based theories of plurality inferences: the case of mass plurals

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Bare plurals like *books* trigger plurality inferences in U(pward)E(ntailing) contexts, (1a), but not in D(ownward)E(ntailing) contexts, (1b). Furthermore in non-monotonic contexts, they are observed in UE part of the meaning, but not in the DE part of the meaning, (1c) (Spector 2007).

- (1) a. John read books.
b. John didn't read books.
c. Only John read books.

Sauerland (2003), Spector (2007), Zweig (2009) and Ivlieva (2014) develop 'alternative-based theories' of the phantasmagoric behaviour of plurality inferences. Putting the details aside, all of them crucially exploit singular counterparts of plural bare nouns, e.g. *a book*.

Magri (2011) identifies an interesting problem for these theories posed by so-called 'count mass nouns' (aka 'collective mass nouns', 'fake mass nouns', etc.). His observation is that these mass terms trigger plurality inferences in the same way that bare plurals do. For example, in UE contexts, (3a), *change* implies that there is more than one coin, which disappears in DE context, (3b). And in non-monotonic contexts, (3c), the plurality inference is only observed in the UE part of the meaning.

- (3) a. John has change.
b. John does not have change.
c. Only John has change.

Magri argues that this observation is problematic for the alternative-based accounts, because there is no grammatical singular counterpart (**a change*). Although he suggests that one way to save the theories might be to have *a piece of change* as an alternative to *change*, he also points out that such a move is theoretically costly, as what counts as an alternative should be structurally constrained (Fox & Katzir 2011, Katzir 2007).

Against this backdrop, we raise another problem for the alternative-based accounts that comes from *pluralia tantum* of the kind known as 'mass plurals', e.g. *clothes*, *belongings*, *possessions*, *goods*, *movables*, *valuables*, *eatables* (McCawley 1975, Ojeda 2005). We observe that these nouns also give rise to plurality inferences. Concretely, (4a) has a plurality inference that more than one article of clothing is involved, while (4b) does not. Moreover, (4c) has a plurality inference only in the UE part of the meaning.

- (4) a. This bag has clothes in it.
b. This bag does not have clothes in it.
c. Only this bag has clothes in it.

The problem is analogous to Magri's, and potentially graver: it is not obvious what counts as a singular alternative. For nouns like *belongings* and *clothes*, the singular counterpart is simply ungrammatical (*belonging* and *clothe* do not function as singular nouns in the relevant way). As Magri suggests, one way to save the alternative-based accounts might be to postulate *ad hoc* singular alternatives. However, for mass plurals, the noun part needs to be different as well. For instance, for *clothes*, a suitable singular alternative might be *an article of clothing* or *a garment*. One might think that a *garment* should indeed be a legitimate alternative to *clothes*, as it seems to be structurally as complex as *clothes*. Yet, it is not always easy to find such suitable, structurally simple singular nouns for other mass plurals, e.g. *belongings*, *valuables*, *eatables*, etc.

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3.

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Ergativity of adjectives in Japanese

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Intransitive verbs are divided into ‘unergatives’, which take external arguments generated in subject position, and ‘ergatives’ (or ‘unaccusatives’), which take internal arguments appearing in object position underlyingly (Perlmutter 1978, Burzio 1982, Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, and others). Remarkably, a similar division can be found among adjectives: Japanese has ergative adjectives, alongside unergative adjectives (see Cinque 1990 for discussion of Italian facts).

In Japanese, the existence of the ergative class of adjectives is verified by considering an unaccusative diagnostic based on the adverb *takusan* ‘many’ (Kageyama 1993, Kishimoto 2005). *Takusan* has the property that it can specify the quantity of internal arguments (even if they are not contiguous), but not external arguments. Thus, *takusan* can specify the quantity of the subject, but not the object, of a transitive verb, as in (1).

- (1) Kodomo-ga hon-o soko-de takusan yon-da.
child-NOM book-ACC there-in many read-PAST
‘Children read many books there/*Many children read books there.’
(* on the intended interpretation)

This heuristic allows us to assess the ergative split of intransitive verbs. The adverb *takusan* can quantify over the subject (internal argument) of an ergative verb, but not the subject (external argument) of an unergative verb, as indicated in (2a-b).

- (2) a. Kodomo-ga soko-de takusan koron-da.
child-NOM there-in many fall.down-PAST
‘Many children fell down there.’
b. Kodomo-ga soko-de takusan hasit-ta.
child-NOM there-in many run-PAST
‘*Many children ran there.’

(In (2b), *takusan* can still specify the amount of an action described by the unergative verb, since it can be a predicate modifier).

Interestingly, even with intransitive adjectives (which can be either adjectives with *-i* ending and adjectives with *-da* ending (=nominal adjectives)), a difference in acceptability arises with regard to *takusan*-modification.

- (3) a. Kami-ga naka-de takusan siwakytua-ni nat-ta
paper-NOM inside many rumped become-PAST
‘Many sheets of paper became rumped inside.’
b. *Kodomo-ga soko-de takusan hukigen-ni nat-ta.
child-NOM there-in many ill-tempered become-PAST
‘*Many children became ill-tempered there.’

As seen in (3), *takusan* can quantify over the subject of *siwakutyada* ‘rumpled’, but not *hukigenda* ‘ill-tempered’. (In (3), the adjectival clauses are embedded under the verb *naruru* ‘become’ to provide an adjunction site for *takusan*, which is primarily used for verbal modification.)

Both adjectives in (3) take theme arguments as subjects, but there is a discernible semantic difference: *siwakutyada* ‘rumpled’ in (3a) describes an external state or an externally observable state of the subject, but *hukigenda* ‘ill-tempered’ in (3b) indicates an internal state of the subject. Adjectives patterning with *siwakutyada* include *boroboroda* ‘weary’, *makkuroda* ‘pitch-black’, *kitanai* ‘dirty’. On the other hand, adjectives patterning with *hukigenda* include *yuutuda* ‘gloomy’, *tumaranai* ‘bored’ (taking animate subjects), as well as *omosiroi* ‘interesting’ and *tanosii* ‘enjoyable’ (taking animate or inanimate subjects). It is easy to see that the two classes of adjectives share the semantic properties distinguishing between *siwakutyada* and *hukigenda*. The facts suggest then that the ergativity of intransitive adjectives, i.e. the division between unergative and ergative adjectives, is determined according to whether they describe external or internal states of the theme arguments.

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The semantic content contributed by appositive relative clauses is expected to “project”, i.e. entail commitments for the actual speaker independently of the syntactic environment the appositive occurs in (see e.g. Potts 2005, Koev 2013). In (1), the unaltered appositive content (that Edward is from Minnesota) is attributed to the speaker even though the appositive itself is presumably in the syntactic scope of a possibility modal.

- (1) It is possible that Edward, who is from Minnesota, enjoys cold winters.

This example showcases a general and fairly robust pattern of appositive projection past various propositional operators. However, Schlenker (ms) notices that under certain conditions appositive projection can be blocked. In (2), your getting into trouble depends both on me calling the Chair and the Chair calling the Dean, so the appositive is interpreted as conjoined to the antecedent clause and becomes part of the regular truth-conditional content of the sentence.

- (2) If tomorrow I call the Chair, who in turn calls the Dean, then you will be in deep trouble. (Schlenker ms, slightly modified)

The central observation of this note is that appositive relative clauses can trigger intermediate, i.e. weaker inferences. (3) below differs from (2) in that the appositive does not contribute to the at-issue content. But (3) also contrasts with (1) since the appositive content projects in a weaker, conditionalized form.

- (3) If Jack buys a car, which will probably be a Volvo, his wife will be upset.

At-issue content: If Jack buys a car, his wife will be upset.

Projective inference: If Jack buys a car, it will probably be a Volvo.

I call this the “antiproviso problem” for appositive relative clauses for the following reason. Local satisfaction theories of presupposition (see Karttunen 1974, Heim 1983, Beaver 2001) predict that (4) should trigger the conditionalized presupposition that if Fred hates sonnets, he has a wife. In reality, the stronger, unconditional inference is obtained that Fred has a wife.

- (4) If Fred hates sonnets, then his wife does so, too. (Geurts 1999)

Geurts (1999) dubs this the “proviso problem” for presupposition. In (3), we have the opposite problem: on most accounts the appositive content is expected to project in its unaltered form but what we get is a weaker, conditionalized inference.

Interestingly, projective inferences triggered by appositive relative clauses do show some similarities to presuppositions. The sentence in (5) has the logical form of $(\phi \wedge \psi_p) \rightarrow \chi$ (where the subscript marks the semantic presupposition associated with

the second part of the *if*-clause) and presupposes that $\phi \rightarrow p$, i.e. that if the applicant is 64 years old we cannot hire him.

- (5) If the applicant is 64 years old and realizes that we cannot hire him, he won't be disappointed by a rejection letter. (Schlenker 2011)

This projection pattern is similar to the one in (3). This last sentence has the logical form of $(\phi \wedge \underline{\psi}) \rightarrow \chi$ (where the underlined part is the appositive import) and triggers the projective inference that $\phi \rightarrow \psi$. (See also Schlenker ms. 2013 for similar observations.)

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We argue that ASL 'high' loci can simultaneously display a behavior which is:

- (i) iconic [= loci may stand in geometric relations that reflect the geometric arrangement of their denotations];
- (ii) quasi-gradient [= when two loci are interpreted iconically, a third one can be 'sandwiched' between them, with the expected interpretation];
- (iii) *phi*-feature-like [= height specifications can be disregarded – possibly under agreement – by ellipsis and focus-sensitive constructions];
- (iv) irreducible to the behavior of co-occurring and possibly non-featural elements, such as classifiers.

Schlenker et al. 2013 and Schlenker 2014 established points (i) and (iii), but not points (ii) and (iv). (The crucial examples involved 3 levels only [high, normal, low], as well as classifiers in various positions, which could be taken to be responsible for the iconic effects that we observed.)

In (1), the pronouns index 4 different heights that reflect the height of [the heads of] their denotations, which begins to establish Points (i) and (ii). (1c) shows that these height specifications are disregarded in the course of ellipsis resolution, for otherwise the elided occurrences of *SELF* taking *IX-b* and *IX-d* as antecedents would have the 'wrong' feature specifications – which in turn should yield deviance, as in the control sentence in (1b), which contrasts with (1a); this establishes Point (iii), and the absence of classifiers establishes Point (iv). Acceptability ratings were obtained by the 'playback method' from repeated judgments by a native ASL signer [Deaf child of Deaf, signing parents] on a 7-point scale, with 7 = best.

(1) SHOW HAVE 4 GYMNAST STAND-CL BAR ORDER HEIGHT.

a. *SELF* signed at various, appropriate heights

[6.5] IX-a PRESENT SELF-a WELL, IX-b MAYBE NOT PRESENT SELF-b WELL, IX-c NOT CLEAR, IX-d DEFINITELY NOT PRESENT SELF-d WELL.

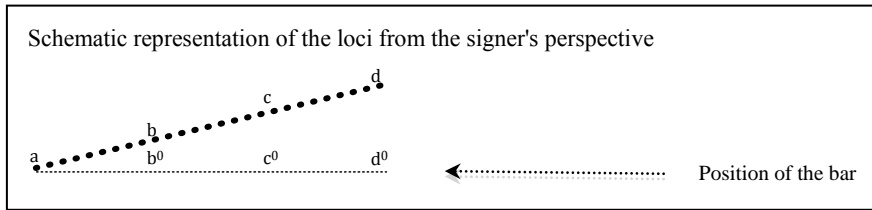
b. *SELF* signed at a constant, low height

[3.2] IX-a PRESENT SELF-a WELL, IX-b MAYBE NOT PRESENT SELF-b⁰ WELL, IX-c NOT CLEAR, IX-d DEFINITELY NOT PRESENT SELF-d⁰ WELL.

c. *SELF* signed low, only once (with ellipsis of the the second and fourth VPs)

[7] IX-a PRESENT SELF-a WELL, IX-b MAYBE NOT, IX-c NOT CLEAR, IX-d DEFINITELY NOT. => bound variable reading

'During a show, four gymnasts were standing on a bar, ranked by height. One [a short one] presented himself well; the second [taller] one possibly didn't present himself well; for the third [still taller] one, it was unclear; and the fourth [still taller] one definitely didn't present himself well.'



The first sentence of (2) is analogous to (1a). The third sentence establishes that the gymnasts operated a vertical rotation, hence *additional* heights, but now below the position of the bar – which reinforces Points (i) and (ii); Points (iii) and (iv) are preserved as in (1).

(2) SHOW HAVE 4 GYMNAST STAND-CL BAR ORDER HEIGHT.

IX-a PRESENT SELF-a BAD, IX-b MAYBE NOT, IX-c NOT CLEAR, IX-d DEFINITELY NOT.

SUDDENLY STAND-CL HANG-CL. WEIRD – NOW

a. *SELF* signed at various, appropriate heights

[6.3] IX-a' PRESENT SELF-a' WELL, IX-b' MAYBE NOT PRESENT SELF-b' WELL, IX-c' NOT CLEAR, IX-d' DEFINITELY NOT PRESENT SELF-d' WELL.

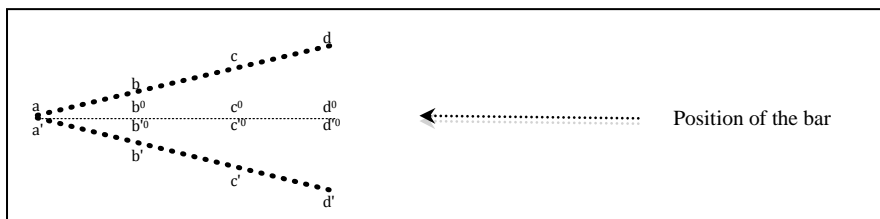
b. *SELF* signed at a constant, intermediate height

[3.7] IX-a' PRESENT SELF-a' WELL, IX-b' MAYBE NOT PRESENT SELF-b'⁰ WELL, IX-c' NOT CLEAR, IX-d' DEFINITELY NOT PRESENT SELF-d'⁰WELL.

c. *SELF* signed low, only once (with ellipsis of the the second and fourth VPs)

[6.3] IX-a' PRESENT SELF-a' WELL, IX-b' MAYBE NOT, IX-c' NOT CLEAR, IX-d' DEFINITELY NOT. => bound variable reading

'During a show, four gymnasts were standing on a bar, ranked by height. One [a short one] presented himself badly; the second [taller] one didn't present himself badly; for the third [still taller] one, it was unclear; and the fourth [still taller] one definitely didn't present badly. Suddenly, they effected a vertical rotation. Oddly, now the short one presented himself well; the second one possibly didn't present himself well; for the third one, it was unclear; and the fourth one definitely didn't present himself well.'



Arguably, then, height specifications of loci display grammatical properties of *phi*-features *and* a highly iconic/gradient behavior.

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References of the videos in which sentences were signed and assessed.

(1) = 19, 253; 19, 254; 19, 265; 19, 282; 19, 293 (4 ratings). (2) = 19, 272; 19, 273; 19, 284; 19, 294 (3 ratings)

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6.

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Morphological case mismatches under sluicing

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Nykiel and Sag (2011), van Craenenbroeck (2012), and Barros (2014) have argued that remnants of sluicing and their correlates may not bear different case morphology, even if a different case is possible in principle ((1)). Languages with case morphology may satisfy (1) under case syncretism (van Craenenbroeck 2012), and languages without case morphology satisfy it trivially.

(1) Case matching under sluicing.

The remnant of sluicing and its correlate must have non-distinct case morphology.

To illustrate, (2a) only allows a case-matched accusative remnant; a mismatched nominative remnant is ungrammatical, even though an unelided cleft with a nominative *wh*-pivot is licit in this context ((2b)), and cleft-based sluices are otherwise licit in German (van Craenenbroeck 2012).

(2) German

- a. Sie hat jemand-en getroffen, aber ich weiß nicht { we-n / * we-r }.
she has someone-ACC met but I know not who-ACC / who-NOM
- b. Sie hat jemand-en getroffen, aber ich weiß nicht we-r es ist.
she has someone-ACC met but I know not who-NOM it is

However, the examples in (3)–(9) show that case mismatches are in fact possible in a number of languages, contrary to what (1) predicts. It is likely that further research on lesser-studied languages will expand this list.

(3) Japanese: (Merchant 1998:94)

Dareka-ga sono hon-o yon-da ga, watashi-wa dare-(*ga) ka wakaranai.
someone-NOM this book-ACC read-PST but I-TOP who-NOM Q know.not
'Someone read this book, but I don't know who'

(4) Turkish (Merchant 2001:111fn, Ince 2012:262)

Ahmet biri-nin Ankara-ya git-tig-i-ni söyle,
Ahmet one-GEN Ankara-DAT go-COMP-POSS.3SG-ACC tell-PST.3SG
ama { kim / *kim-in } bil-my-yor-um.
but who-NOM / who-GEN know-NEG-PRS-1SG
'Ahmet said that someone went to Ankara, but I don't know who'

(5) Korean (Jo 2004:176)

John-i Mary-eykey mwuenka-lul cwu-ess-ta-nuntey, mwues-(ul)-i-nci
John-NOM Mary-DAT something-ACC give-PST-DEC-CIRC what-ACC-COP-Q
molukeyssta.
not.know
'John gave Mary something, but I don't know what'

- (6) Chamorro (Chung 2013:25)
 Ilek-n̄iha na man-ma'ā'ñao siha ni un tāotao, lao ti ma s̄angan (*ni) h̄ayi.
 say-AGR COMP AGR-afraid they OBL a person but not AGR say OBL who
 'They said they were afraid of a certain person, but they didn't say who'
- (7) Uzbek (Gribanova 2013:830)
 Siz kim-ga-dir pul ber-di-ngiz, lekin kim-(ga)
 You some-DAT-one money give-PST-2SG but who-DAT
 lig-i-ni bil-ma-y-man
 COMP-3SG.POSS-ACC know-NEG-PRS-1SG
 'You gave money to someone, but I don't know who'
- (8) German (Barros et al 2014:16).
 Elke hat ein-en groß-en Mann geheiratet, aber ich weiß nicht wie groß-(*en).
 Elke has a-ACC big-ACC man married but I know not how big-ACC
- (9) Mongolian (Sakamoto 2014:3)
 Bat hennegen-d ene nom-ig ug-sun, gevch bi
 Bat.NOM someone-DAT this book-ACC give-PERF but I
 { hen-ig / *hen-d } 'n med-eh-gui.
 who-ACC / who-DAT POSS know-INF-NEG

Although I haven't been able to figure out which factor(s) license case mismatches in some configurations (and require strict case matching in others), the small sample in (2)-(9) suffices to eliminate some possibilities, viz., at least (i) whether the language is wh- fronting or wh- in situ; (ii) whether mismatched remnants carry an overt case morpheme or are zero-marked; and (iii) a [±case matching] parameter/filter ranging over languages.

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