



snippets

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Case-stranding nominal ellipsis in Japanese: a preliminary sketch

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This squib documents a new type of nominal ellipsis in certain dialects of Japanese that has not been reported in the literature. I dub it Case-Stranding Nominal Ellipsis (CSNE). The null argument in CSNE does not fit into the generative inventory of empty categories. I propose a tentative direction to take in face of this ellipsis.

CSNE is illustrated in (1d).

- (1) a. A: Hanako-wa kuukoo-ni tuki-masi-ta ka?
Hanako-Top airport-to arrive-Pol-Past Q
'Did Hanako arrive into the airport?'
- b. B: Hai, tuki-masi-ta.
yes arrive-Pol-Past
'Yes, (she) arrived.'
- c. A: Mary-mo tsuki-masi-ta ka?
Mary-also arrive-Pol-Past Q
'Did Mary also arrive (into the airport)?'
- d. B: [_{NP} e]-ga mada tuki-mase-n.
-Nom yet arrive-Pol-Neg
'(She) has not arrived yet.'

In (1d), the null NP, intended to refer back to *Mary*, is elided but with the nominative Case overly realized. This type of ellipsis has not been reported in any other language. CSNE is also found in (in)direct objects and objects of prepositions, though space limitations prevent inclusion of the relevant data. My survey shows that this ellipsis has characteristics in (2a-d).

- (2) a. obligatory pitch accent on the stranded case marker
b. focus/topic interpretation on the elided NP
c. no multiple CSNEs
d. matrix clause phenomenon

What is the identity of the null argument as in (1d)? The elided NP cannot be PRO because this formative can only be found in control structures which (1d) does not involve. It also cannot be a trace of A or A'-movement because there is no movement involved in (1d). It also cannot be *pro* because it has been commonly assumed in the literature on null subject languages like Italian (Rizzi 1982) that this null element is

internally Case-marked. CSNE is different from Italian *pro*-subjects because the Case is overtly stranded. Therefore, the elided NP does not fit into the generative inventory of empty categories.

I suggest here a possible analysis of CSNE, though detailed investigation of this ellipsis pattern is left as an important task to be undertaken. Recent work on Japanese ellipsis (Oku 1998) shows that this language allows reconstruction of the elided element by LF copying. This analysis allows the case to be stranded as the LF copying process permits reconstruction of the NP without accompanying case. As for the properties in (2a-d), I believe that they are related to one another. Specifically, the properties in (2b-d) result from that in (2a). Pitch accent feeds focus/topic interpretation ((2b)). Though multiple focus constructions are fine in Japanese, the same phonetic cue singles out the most salient focused/topic NP, blocking multiple occurrences of CSNE ((2c)). As reported in Hungarian (Kiss 1998), focus/topic interpretation is sensitive to the surface matrix position of the elided NP (2d).

I have documented CSNL here in a preliminary form because careful examination of this ellipsis pattern necessitates reconsideration of the standard inventory of empty categories and provides a new avenue of research toward identifying the possible type of null elements in natural language.

References

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