Syntactic Constraints on Argument Ellipsis in Korean

Overview This paper aims to investigate the issue of how argument ellipsis (henceforth *AE*) in Korean is syntactically constrained. There has been much discussion on what the nature of elided elements is in terms of LF- or PF-recoverability (Oku 1998; Kim-S.W. 1999; Saito 2007), yet the target position of AE still remains unclear. Based on new data in Korean, I propose that the target of AE in Korean is confined to the highest specifier position of a predication (i.e., its subject). The main dataset include inalienable possession, resultatives, and passives.

Puzzle Regarding inalienable possession, Kim-S.W. (1999) pointed out that *Mina-lul* 'M-ACC' in (1B) can be elided. But consider (1C): *phal-ul* 'arm-ACC' cannot be elided despite its being parallel to (1B).

(1) A: Siwu-ka Mina-lul phal-ul cap-ass-ta.
S-NOM M-ACC arm-ACC catch-PST-DEC
'Siwu caught Mina's arm.'
B: Hani-nun Δ tali-lul cap-ass-ta.
H-TOP leg-ACC catch-PST-DEC
(intended) 'Hani caught Mina's leg.'
#**C**: Hani-nun Suho-lul Δ cap-ass-ta.
H-TOP S-ACC catch-PST-DEC
(intended) 'Hani caught Suho's arm.'

(2) A: Mapepsa-ka mwul-ul wain-ulo mantul-ess-ta.
magician-NOM water-ACC wine-RES make-PST-DEC
'A magician turned water into wine.'
B: Manye-nun Δ maykcwu-lo mantul-ess-ta.
witch-top beer-RES make-PST-DEC
(intended) 'A witch turned water into beer.'
*__C__: Manye-nun hulk-ul Δ mantul-ess-ta.
witch-TOP dust-ACC make-PST-DEC
(intended) 'A witch turned dust into wine.'

The same pattern holds for resultatives: only *mwul-ul* 'water-ACC' in (2B) can be elided; but *wain-ulo* 'wine-RES' in (2C) cannot. (1-2) share a common property that only the first nominal can be elided.

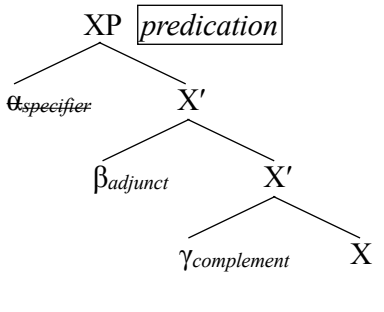
Proposal I argue that the asymmetry in (1) and (2) can be captured if we introduce the generalization of constraint on AE using the notion of predication. It reads as follows:

(3) ***The Constraint on Argument Ellipsis (CAE)***
Nominal argument α whose θ-role has been given can be elided, only if α is the subject of a predication XP, thus being located in the highest specifier position of the XP predication domain.

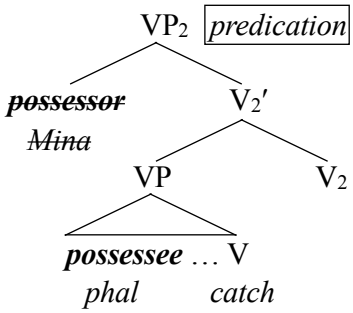
Predication here refers to Spell-Out domains after which phonetic elements are syntactically linearized (Fox & Pesetsky 2005; Ko 2007), rather similar to argument-introducing domains (McGinnis 2001; Pylkkänen 2008). I will first analyze (1-2) under the CAE, and then show further evidence to support it.

Analysis Applying the CAE configuration (4), we get (5a-b) for (1-2) respectively.

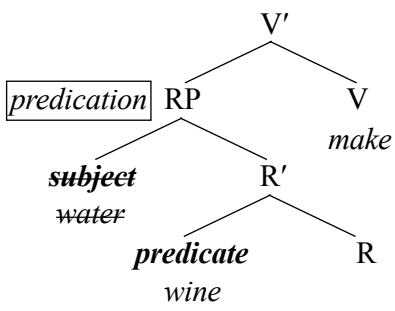
(4) ***Configuration for the CAE***



(5) a. ***Inalienable Possession***



b. ***Resultative Small Clause***

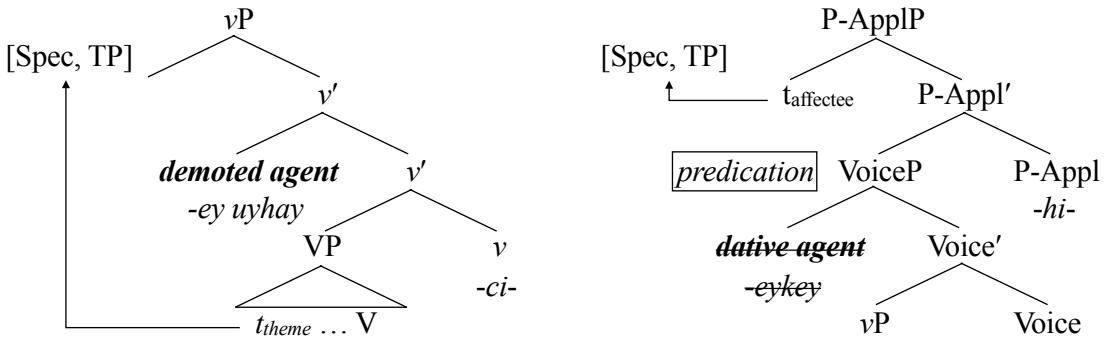


In (5a), ***possessor*** is located in [Spec, VP_2]. Here VP_2 stands for an extension of VP only providing the semantic basis for possessor (*à la* Tomioka & Sim 2007; slightly modified from Yoon 2015), thus VP_2 is still considered a single VP predication (c.f., Landau 1999; Deal 2013 on dative possessor). This makes ***possessor*** eligible for the CAE. On the other hand, ***possessee***, in a lower position of the VP, is

ineligible. In (5b), the resultative small clause forms a predication (*RP* in den Dikken 2006; Ko 2015). Thus only ***subject***, not ***predicate***, is elidable. To recapitulate, only subjects can be elided in both cases.

Prediction The CAE predicts different elliptical patterns for arguments of identical θ-role depending on their structural position. Korean passive construction is a case in point. It was argued that Korean has two types of passive constructions: i) 'analytic' passive derived via movement, using *-ci-*; ii) 'affected' passive derived via introduction of additional argument, using *-hi-*. Crucially, the structures of the two passives are distinct in the status of *by*-phrases (Park & Whitman 2003). In the analytic passive (6a), ***agent*** is demoted and realized as an adjunct, marked with ***-ey uyhay***, while theme raises to grammatical subject position (Yeon 2015). In the affected passive (6b), however, ***agent***, marked with ***-eykey***, is introduced by Voice head in its specifier position. The grammatical subject starts from the affectee position in the Peripheral-Applicative (P-Appl) projection (Kim-K.M. 2012).

(6) a. ***Analytic Passive*** b. ***Affected Passive***



The CAE predicts that only the agent in (6b) is eligible for AE by virtue of being located in the subject of VoiceP predication; the agent in (6a) is ineligible for AE, being demoted to *v*P adjunct. This is borne out: (7B) only yields an unaccusative reading without implying the *-ey uyhay* phrase, while (8B) yields the intended reading with an *-eykey* phrase.

(7) A: Taym-i inpwu-tul-**ey.uyhay** cie-**ci**-ess-ta.
dam-NOM worker-PL-**by** build-**PAS**-PST-DEC
'A dam was built by workers.'
#**B**: Twuk-to Δ cie-**ci**-ess-ta.
bank-too build-**PAS**-PST-DEC
(intended) 'A bank was built by workers, too.'

(8) A: Kangaci-ka koyangi-**eykey** pwutcap-**hi**-ess-ta.
puppy-NOM cat-**DAT** catch-**PAS**-PST-DEC
'A puppy was caught by a cat.'
B: Kosumtochi-to Δ pwutcap-**hi**-ess-ta.
hedgehog-too catch-**PAS**-PST-DEC
(intended) 'A hedgehog was caught by a cat.'

Implication Lobeck (1995) and Merchant (2001) suggested predicate ellipsis where the complement of functional heads is elided. Interestingly, the proposed CAE seems to reverse the direction of ellipsis previously suggested. It is the **specifier**, not the complement, that is elided by the CAE. Even though this needs more elaboration and further research, the argued legitimacy of structural constraint in (3) signals that AE and predicate ellipsis might originate from the same source: the way of parameterizing different directionality in linguistic 'ellipsis' operations. Therefore, if the present study is on the right track, this sheds light on revealing the puzzling nature of ellipsis in general.

[selected reference] Kim, K., 2012. Affectees in subject position and applicative theory. *CJL/RCL*; **Kim, S., 1999.** Sloppy/strict identity, empty objects, and NP ellipsis. *JEAL*; **Ko, H., 2015.** On the Typology of Small Clauses. *KGGC*; **Oku, S., 1998.** LF copy analysis of Japanese null arguments. Chicago Linguistic Society; **Saito, M., 2007.** Notes on East Asian argument ellipsis; **Tomioka, S. and Sim, C.Y., 2007.** The event semantic root of inalienable possession. *Ms, University of Delaware*.