Korean/Japanese vs. Chinese on Quantificational/Sloppy Readings of Null Subjects*

Myung-Kwan Park and Euiyon Cho (Dongguk University)

Myung-Kwan Park and Euiyon Cho. 2015. Korean/Japanese vs. Chinese on Quantificational/Sloppy Readings of Null Subjects. Studies in Modern Grammar 85, 1–28. The paper also offers a supplementary analysis of the two subtypes of the vague action verb, using the hybrid model of lexical conceptual structure and syntactic argument structure. This paper investigates the etiology of the contrast between Korean/Japanese (K/J) and Chinese in the availability of a quantificational/sloppy reading to the null subject. We attribute this contrast to the asymmetry between K/J and Chinese in the Case/topic marking system. K/J employs both overt subject/object Case marker and topic marker, but Chinese does not have either of them. The latter language rather uses structural positions to code grammatical and topic relations. Though an object element in Chinese uses different positions (i.e., post-verbal and clause-initial positions) to indicate its grammatical relation and topichood, a subject element uses the same clause-initial position to do so. Thus, the element in clause-initial position apparently regarded as a subject element is grammaticalized into taking up the marked role of a topic in this language. Mutatis mutandis, its null counterpart or null subject is only construed as a definite topic, which bars it from being interpreted with a quantificational/sloppy reading.

[Key words: null (subject/object) argument, quantificational/sloppy vs. non-quantificational or referential/strict reading, grammatical relation, Case marker, topic marker]

* We are grateful to the two anonymous reviewers of this journal for the helpful comments and suggestions. All the remaining errors are, of course, ours. This work was supported, in part, by the National Research Foundation Grant (NRF-2013S1A5A2A03044783).
1. Introduction

Takahashi (2008a) reports that the null subject in (1) of Chinese does not allow for a sloppy reading, though it allows for a strict reading.

(1) a. Zhangsan shuo ziji de haizi mei na qian.
    Zhangsan say self Gen child take not money
    'Zhangsan said that his child did not take money.'

b. Lisi ye shuo [e mei na qian].
   Lisi too say take not money
   '(Lit.) Lisi also said that [e] did not take money.' (OK strict, X sloppy)

Cheng (2013) also notes that the null subject in the following example similar to that in (1) only allows for a strict reading, but not for a sloppy reading:

(2) a. Zhangsan renwei [CP [NP ziji-de xiaohai]1 yihou yinggai
    Zhangsan think self-gen child later should
    dang yisheng
    be doctor
    'Zhangsan thinks that his child should be a doctor in the future.'

b. Lisi zeshi renwei [CP [NP e] yinggai dang lushi]
   Lisi whereas think should be lawyer
   '(Lit.) Lisi, on the other hand, thinks that [e] should be a lawyer.'
      (OK strict, X sloppy)

Cheng (2013) goes on further to note that the null subject in (3b) of Chinese only allows for a non-quantificational reading, but not for a quantificational one: that is, the 3 teachers think that Lisi is very smart, and the same 3 teachers also think that Zhangsan is very stupid.

(3) a. You san-ge laoshi renwei Lisi hen congming

---

1 In the next section, we will argue that the nominals and their null realizations are analyzed not as DP but NP.