

慶應言語学コロキウム

Ellipsis of arguments: Its acquisition and theoretical implications

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参加費無料 申込不要

In this three-part talk, I will address the acquisition of Argument Ellipsis (AE), which is observed in a limited number of languages such as Japanese, Korean, and Turkish (cf. Oku 1998, Kim 1998, Saito 2007, Takahashi 2008), and discuss its implications for the theory of linguistic variation.

Part I: Argument Ellipsis arising from non-fusional nominal morphology

First, I will defend the position that AE is an indispensable operation for a certain number of languages such as Japanese, by reviewing a series of studies showing that other grammatical devices such as *pro*s and VP-ellipsis cannot explain a whole range of interpretations arising from null arguments in Japanese. Then, I will point out problems with previous parametric proposals of AE, focusing in particular on Oku's (1998) Scrambling Analysis and Saito's (2007) Anti-agreement Analysis, and provide a novel analysis of the cross-linguistic distribution and acquisition of AE, centering on the relationship between AE and morphological properties of noun phrases.

Part II: Argument Ellipsis in object agreement languages

Although a previous study by Şener and Takahashi (2010) shows that subject-predicate agreement in Turkish blocks AE, in conformity with the prediction by the Anti-agreement Analysis, there are some confounding factors related to lack of AE in subject positions. To circumvent the problems, I will discuss data from three languages with object agreement (Hindi, Basque, and Kaqchikel Maya), and show that what determines the availability of AE is morphology of noun phrases, supporting the proposal made in Part II.

Part III: Argument Ellipsis in acquisition

The morphological analysis of the cross-linguistic distribution and acquisition of AE pursued in Part I and Part II predicts that AE is acquired very early, despite the fact that direct positive evidence for the availability of AE is virtually non-existent in child-directed speech. A couple of experiments I conducted with Japanese-speaking children to test the prediction of earliness will be presented in this part.

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