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慶應義塾大学言語文化研究所
The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies

Pronouns, determiners, and the typology of movement

講師：高橋 将一 氏（青山学院大学准教授）

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Null pronominals have often been postulated in launching sites of certain kinds of movements in English, while, except for PRO, they are, in general, not permitted in non-extraction sites (see, e.g., Cinque 1990 and Postal 1998, 2004). I argue that the identity of null pronominals of this sort is a covert definite determiner that does not involve its restrictor NP and discuss a theory that is developed to explain *when* we can posit such a determiner and *why* we must do so under certain circumstances (Takahashi to appear).

We begin with discussing remnant-inducing raising to subject in (1), whose launching site designated as t_I has sometimes been recognized as a null pronominal (see Collins and Sabel 2015, Lasnik and Saito 1992, and Postal 2004).

(1) [How likely t_I to win] is [an Austrian]_I? (Sauerland and Elbourne 2002:297)

Capitalizing on Takahashi and Hulsey's (2009) Wholesale Late Merger (WLM), I argue that t_I is first occupied by the determiner of the subject DP, namely, *an*, but it is eventually replaced by a covert definite determiner via Fox's (2002) Trace Conversion or some procedure equivalent to it (see Elbourne 2005 and Sauerland 1998, 2004). I seek a key to the "why" question in this case in the mechanism for linearizing syntactic structures. I propose that if a full-fledged copy of the subject DP were left behind in the launching site in (1), we would not be able to yield appropriate linear ordering. I argue that this problem can be circumvented in the above-mentioned analysis of (1). We will also see that it captures two characteristic properties of remnant-inducing raising to subject that have been taken to corroborate the postulation of a null pronominal in this environment. First, remnant-inducing raising to subject shows an antireconstruction effect (Barss 1986, Ruys 2015, and Sauerland and Elbourne 2002). In other words, the subject cannot take scope within the infinitival clause in (1). It follows because there is no copy of the subject DP in that clause in our analysis. Secondly, it exhibits what I call a pronominality effect: if an extraction site of remnant-inducing raising to subject is a position where an overt pronoun cannot appear, ungrammaticality results (Postal 2004). If we assume that pronouns should be identified as determiners (Abney 1987 and Postal 1966), we can understand why we find the effect in this particular context (see Stanton 2016 for the relevance of WLM to a pronominality effect; see also O'Brien 2017).

Building on this theory, I will also explore extraction from a selective island and *tough* movement, both of which share certain traits with remnant-inducing raising to subject (see, e.g., Cinque 1990, Postal 1998, and Stanton 2016). These cases suggest that Case plays an important role in understanding the "when" question mentioned above.