

Particle-Stranding Ellipsis in Japanese, Phase Theory and the Privilege of the Root

1. Introduction

In this squib, I describe and analyze a new type of nominal ellipsis in Japanese. This elliptic pattern was first mentioned in the traditional Japanese linguistics by Hattori (1960) and touched on by subsequent work (Arita 2009; Hayashi 2001; Sato 2008; Sato and Ginsburg 2006, 2007; Vance 1993; Yoshida 2004) but has not received due attention in the generative literature. In this squib, I call the ellipsis pattern Particle-Stranding Ellipsis/PSE. PSE has emerged as a robust reply pattern quite recently in colloquial dialogues of Japanese, as shown in (1).¹

(1) Speaker A: Tanaka-kun wa?

Tanaka-TIT TOP

‘How about Tanaka?’

Speaker B: Wa ne, kaisha-o yameta yo.

TOP TAG company-ACC quit EXCL

‘Oh, (he) quit (his) company!’

(Hattori (1960, p. 452), as cited in Vance (1993, p. 20))

In this dialogue, as a response to Speaker A’s question which introduces *Tanaka-kun* ‘Tanaka’ as a topic of discourse, Speaker B starts his reply with the topic-marker *-wa* without the

accompanying topic NP. A fuller examination of the PSE cases below shows that this pattern is a root phenomenon targeting the sentence-initial topic position which can occur only once.

Rizzi (2005a) proposes within Phase Theory (Chomsky 2000, 2001, 2004) that the edge of the root clause may remain unpronounced while being accessible to discourse identification and applies this approach (“the Privilege of the Root”) to Topic Drop in colloquial German, Dutch and other Germanic languages (Ross 1982; Huang 1984). Importantly, Topic Drop patterns with PSE in all structural respects. Based on these parallels between PSE and Topic Drop, I propose to analyze PSE in Japanese as another instance of the Privilege of the Root Phenomenon. I argue that a non-contrastive topic NP undergoes overt phrasal movement into the specifier of TopP, leaving the overt topic-marker *-wa* behind. PSE obtains when the phase head Top triggers the Spell-Out of its complement domain.

2. Particle-Stranding Ellipsis in Japanese

PSE has three structural properties. Firstly, as the comparison between (2a) and (2b, c) shows, PSE can only apply to a sentence-initial topic element.

- (2) a. Ø-wa Mary-ni kyoo-koso nanasi-o si-nakerebanaranaine.
 TOP Mary-DAT today-precisely talk-ACC do-must TAG
 ‘Intended: Ø must talk to Mary today.’

b. * Mary-ni Ø-wa kyoo-koso nanasi-o si-nakerebanaranaine.
 Mary-DAT TOP today-precisely talk-ACC do-must TAG
 ‘Intended: Ø must talk to Mary today.’

c. * Mary-ni kyoo-koso Ø-wa nanasi-o si-nakerebanaranaine.
 Mary-DAT today-precisely TOP talk-ACC do-must TAG
 ‘Intended: Ø must talk to Mary today.’

(Yoshida (2004, p. 296))

Secondly, PSE is a root phenomenon. PSE is impossible in an embedded clause, as shown by the ungrammaticality of the examples in (3a, b).

- (3) a. * John-wa sono-toki [_{CP} Ø-wa tensai-da-to] omotta.
 John-TOP that-time TOP genius-COP-COMP thought
 ‘Intended: John thought at that time that Ø is a genius.’
- b. * John-wa sono-toki [_{CP} Ø-wa Mary-ga korosita-to] omotta.
 John-TOP that-time TOP Mary-NOM killed-COMP thought
 ‘Intended: John thought at that time that Mary killed Ø.’

(Yoshida (2004, p. 297))

Finally, SPE can occur only once in a clause, as shown by the ungrammaticality of the utterance made by Speaker B in (4).

(4) Speaker A: Kono-hito-wa John-o dare-ni syookai-suru-tumori-na-no?

This-person-TOP John-ACC who-DAT introduce-do-intend-COP-Q

‘To whom does this person intend to introduce John?’

Speaker B: * Ø-wa Ø-wa Mary-ni syookai-suru-tumori-nan-desu yo.

TOP TOP Mary-dat introduce-do-intend-COP-POL EXCL

‘Ø (=this person) intends to introduce Ø (=John) to Mary.’

(Yoshida (2004, pp. 297-298))

3. German Topic Drop, Phase Theory and the Privilege of the Root

In this section, I propose to analyze SPE in Japanese as an instance of the Privilege of the Root Phenomena in the sense of Rizzi (2005a). Rizzi (2005a) proposes that Phase Theory allows for an interesting account of the optional non-pronunciation of linguistic material at the edge of the root category and applies this proposal to the ellipsis of matrix complementizers and German topic drop. It is generally assumed in Phase Theory (Chomsky 2000, 2001, 2004; see also Nissenbaum 2000) that Spell-Out applies to the complement of a strong phase head. The Privilege of the Root phenomenon obtains when material in the specifier of the topmost phase head escapes Spell-Out to the phonetic system. Let us see how this theory applies to German topic drop, as illustrated in (5a-c).

(5) a. Ich hab’ ihn schon gesehen.

I have him already seen

‘I saw him already.’

b. Hab' ihn schon gesehen.

have him already seen

'Ø (=I) saw him already.'

c. Hab' ich schon gesehen.

have I already seen

'I saw Ø(=him) already.'

(Huang 1982, p. 546)

In these examples, a topic undergoes overt movement into the specifier of TopP in a rich array of discourse-related functional projections such as FinP, FocP, among others (Rizzi 1997). The “topic drop” in German, then, arises when the phase head Top Spells-Out its complement, leaving the moved topic inaccessible for pronunciation.

Importantly, as Yoshida (2004) pointed out, German topic drop exhibits the same structural properties which we have seen to characterize Japanese PSE. Firstly, topic drop can only occur in the sentence-initial topic position. The examples in (6a, b) are ungrammatical because the topic is not in the topic-position.

(6) a. * Ihn hab' Ø schon gesehen.

him have already seen

'Ø (=I) saw him already.'

- b. * Ich hab' Ø schon gesehen
 I have already seen
 'I saw Ø (=him) already.'

(Huang 1982, p. 547)

Secondly, as observed by Cardinalletti (1990) and Rizzi (1994, 2005b), German topic drop is a root phenomenon. It cannot occur in an embedded clause even though a topic occupies the clause-initial topic position in the embedded clause. This point is illustrated in (7a, b).

- (7) a. * Hans glaubt [Ø habe es gestern gekauft].
 Hans believe have it yesterday bought
 'Hans believes that Ø (=I) bought it yesterday.'
- b. * Hans glaubt [Ø habe ich gestern gekauft].
 Hans believe have I yesterday bought
 'Hans believes that I bought Ø (=it) yesterday.'

((7a) from Rizzi (2005b, p. 14), (7b) from Yoshida (2004, p. 296))

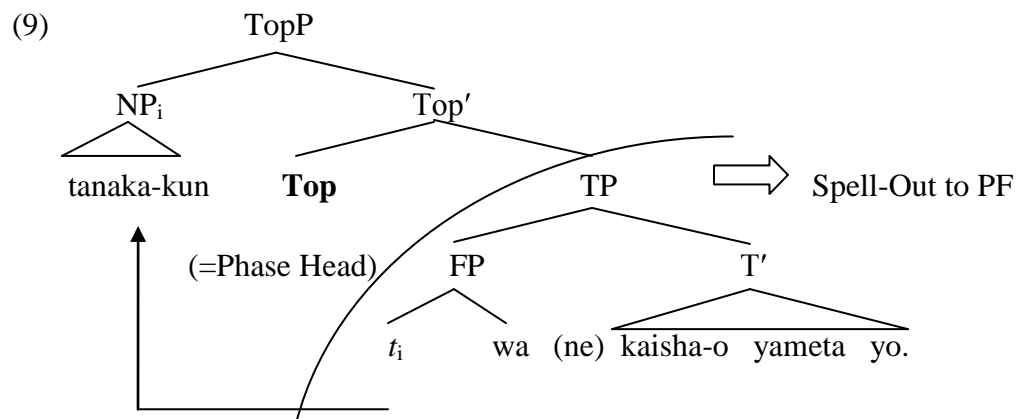
Finally, topic drop can occur only once in the root clause, as shown in the paradigm in (8a-e); the example in (8e) is ill-formed because topic drop targets both subject and object.

- (8) a. Ich hab' ihn schon gekannt.
 I have him already known
 'I already knew him.'
- b. Ihn hab' ich schon gekannt.
 him have I already known
 'I already knew him.'
- c. Ø hab' ich schon gekannt.
 have I already known
 'I already knew Ø (=him).'
- d. Ø hab' ihn schon gekannt.
 have him already known
 'Ø (=I) already knew him.'
- e. * Ø hab' Ø schon gekannt.
 have already known
 'Ø (=I) already knew Ø (=him).'

(Huang 1982, p. 548)

The parallels between German topic drop and Japanese PSE observed above, thus, indicate that the latter is to be analyzable as another instance of the Privilege of the Root phenomena in the sense of Rizzi (2005a). I propose that PSE arises as the result of the movement of a non-contrastive topic phrase into the specifier of the phase head Top. PSE arises

when this topic phase head triggers the Spell-Out of the complement and the topic NP escapes this Spell-Out via moving into the specifier of the head. The proposed analysis is shown in (9).



Whitman (1997) presents three empirical arguments that the non-contrastive topic-marker *-wa* is a clausal head, as shown in (9), an analysis originally suggested by Kayne (1994, p. 143); see also Endo (2007) for the view that *-wa* represents the head of distinct functional projections in the left periphery of a clause in Rizzi's (1997) sense. First of all, Kayne observes that *-wa* cannot co-occur with the nominative particle *-ga* or the association-with-focus particles *-mo* and *-dake*, as shown in (10).

- (10) John-wa (*ga/*mo/*sae) kita.
 John-TOP NOM/also/even came
 'John (nom/also/even) came.'

(Whitman 1997, p. 86)

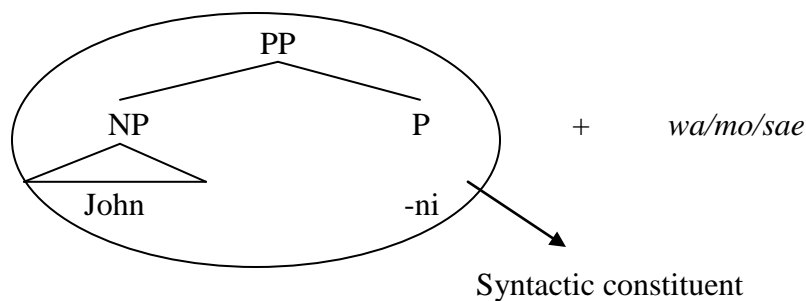
This behavior contrasts with other particles, such as dative/locative marker *-ni*, which can co-occur with the topic marker and association-with-focus particles, as shown in (11).

- (11) Mary-wa John-ni (wa/mo/sae) ko-sase-ta.
 Mary-NOM John-DAT TOP/also/even come-CAUS-PAST
 ‘Mary made John (top/also/even) come.’

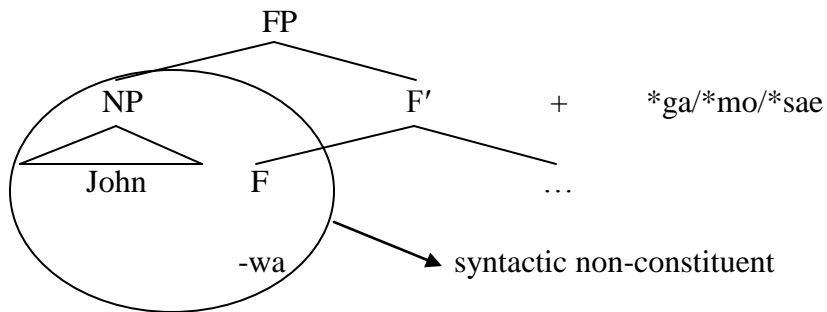
(Whitman 1997, p.86)

The contrast between (10) and (11) follows from the clausal head analysis of *-wa* under the standard assumption that the particles discussed here are phrasal particles. The example in (11) is grammatical because *wa/mo/sae* attach to the preceding PP *John-ni* ‘John-DAT’, as shown in (12). The example in (10) is ungrammatical, however, because the apparent sequence *John-wa* ‘John-TOP’ does not constitute a single phrase that *ga/mo/sae* can attach to, as shown in (13).

- (12) Dative/Locative *-ni* with *wa/mo/sae*



(13) Topic Marker *-wa* with *ga/mo/sae*



The second argument is based on the inability of *wa*-marked subjects to undergo clefting, which has been used since Hoji (1985) as a standard diagnostic for movement/constituency, as illustrated in (14). The ungrammaticality of the example in (14) naturally falls into place under the clausal head analysis of the non-contrastive topic marker because the clefted element *Mari-wa* ‘Mari-TOP’ does not form a syntactic constituent

- (14) Eri-o aisiteiru no wa Mari (*wa) da.
 Eri-ACC love COMP TOP Mari TOP is
 ‘(The one) who loves Eri is Mari.’

(Whitman 1997, p. 87)

The third argument comes from the fact that scrambling of a topic-marked phrase is impossible. Whitman observes that the non-contrastive, topic *-wa* must take a matrix interpretation. Consider (14).

- (14) [Sono hon-wa]_i [Taroo-ga [_{t_i} ii-to] omotteiru (*zizitu)
 that book-TOP Taro-NOM good-COMP think fact
 ‘(the fact that) that book, Taroo thinks is good.’

(Whitman 1997, p. 87)

This example is ungrammatical on the non-contrastive, topic reading when the whole clause is embedded under *zizitu* ‘fact’. Now, if the sentence-initial sequence *sono hon-wa* ‘that book-TOP’ were a phrase that undergoes scrambling from the embedded position, we would expect the topic-marker to be able to take scope as the topic of the embedded clause, contrary to facts. The obligatory matrix scope reading of the topic-marked NP, however, directly follows from the clausal head analysis. The topic-marker *-wa* is base-generated directly in a matrix head position; the NP *sono hon* ‘that book’ undergoes scrambling into the specifier of the head dominated by *-wa*. Under this analysis, there is no way for the fronted NP to take an embedded scope because *-wa* is base-generated in a matrix clause.

The proposed analysis correctly derives the three properties associated with PSE. First, PSE can only occur in the sentence-initial position because there is a dedicated functional projection (i.e., TopP) for the genuine non-contrastive topic element to move into. Second, it is a root phenomenon because the functional projection occurs at the top of the syntactic derivation. Finally, it applies only once because there is only one projection to host the topic element.

4. Conclusions

In this squib, I have presented evidence that the PSE observed in casual dialogues in Japanese is best analyzed as an instance of Rizzi's (2005a) Privilege of the Root Phenomenon on a par with German topic drop. I have proposed that the stranding of the topic-marker *-wa* arises when the topic NP undergoes movement into the specifier of the phase head Top, which triggers the Spell-Out of its complement domain to PF.

References

- Arita, Setsuko. 2009. 'Hadaka no wa' nituite no oboegaki (Notes on 'bare wa'). *Reports of the Osaka Shoin Women's University Japanese Language Research Center* 16, 95-106.
- Cardinalletti, Anna. 1990. Subject/object asymmetries in German null topic constructions and the status of SpecCP. In *Grammar in progress*, ed. by Joan Mascaró and Marina Nespor, 75-84. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist inquiries: The framework. In *Step by step: Essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, ed. by Roger Martin, David Michaels and Juan Uriagereka, 89-155. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In *Ken Hale: A life in language*, ed. by Michael Kenstowicz, 1-52. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Chomsky, Noam. 2004. Beyond explanatory adequacy. *Structures and beyond: The cartography of syntactic structures, vol. 3*, ed. by Adriana Belletti, 104-131. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Endo, Yoshio. 2007. *Locality and information structure: A cartographic approach to Japanese*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Hattori, Shiro. 1960. *Gengogaku to hoofoo* (Linguistics and methodology). Tokyo: Iwanami.
- Hayashi, Makoto. 2001. Postposition-initiated utterances in Japanese conversation. In *Studies in interactional linguistics*, ed. by Margaret Selting and Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, 317-343. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Hoji, Hajime. 1985. *Logical form constraints and configurational structures in Japanese*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Washington.
- Huang, C.-T. James. 1984. On the distribution and reference of empty pronouns. *Linguistic Inquiry* 15: 531-574.
- Kayne, Richard. 1994. *The antisymmetry of syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nissenbaum, Jon. 2000. *Investigations of covert phrasal movement*. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1994. Early null subjects and root null subjects. In *Syntactic theory and first language acquisition: Cross-linguistic perspectives*, ed. by Barbara Lust, Gabriella Hermon and Jaklin Kornfilt, 249-272. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 1997. The fine structure of the left periphery. In *Elements of grammar*, ed. by Liliane Haegeman, 289-330. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

- Rizzi, Luigi. 2005a. Phase theory and the privilege of the root. In *Organizing grammar: Linguistic studies in honor of Henk van Riemsdijk* ed. by Hans Broekhuis, Norbert Cover, Riny Huybregts, Ursula Kleinhenz and Jan Koster, 529-537. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 2005b. On the grammatical basis of language development: A case study. In *Oxford handbook of comparative syntax*, ed. by Guglielmo Cinque and Richard Kayne, 70-109. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, John R. 1982. Pronoun deleting processes in German. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America. San Diego, California.
- Sato, Yosuke. 2008. Case-stranding nominal ellipsis in Japanese: A preliminary sketch. *Snippets* 17: 9-10.
- Sato, Yosuke and Jason Ginsburg. 2006. A new type of nominal ellipsis in Japanese: Further evidence for the LF copy analysis. In *Proceedings of the 8th Seoul international conference on generative grammar: Minimalist views on language design*, ed. by Changguk Yim, 293-300. Seoul: The Korean Generative Grammar Circle.
- Sato, Yosuke and Jason Ginsburg. 2007. A new type of nominal ellipsis in Japanese. In *Formal approaches to Japanese linguistics: Proceedings of FAJL 4*, ed. by Yoichi Miyamoto and Masao Ochi, 197-204. Department of Linguistics and Philosophy: MITWPL
- Vance, Timothy. 1993. Are Japanese particles clitics? *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 27: 3-33.
- Whitman, John. 1997. Kayne: p. 143, fn. 3. In *The minimalist parameter*, ed. by Galina Alexandrova and Olga Artunova, 77-100. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Yoshida, Tomoyuki. 2004. Syudai no syooryaku gensho: Hikaku toogoron teki koosatu (The phenomenon of topic ellipsis: a comparative syntactic consideration). *Nihongo kyooikugaku no siten* (Perspectives on Japanese language pedagogy), ed. by The Editorial Committee of Annals, 291-305. Tokyo: Tokyodo Publishers.

¹ The following abbreviations are used in data in this paper: ACC, accusative; CAUS, causative; COMP, complementizer; COP, copula; DAT, dative; EXCL, exclamation; NOM, nominative; PAST, past tense; POL, politeness marker; Q, question; TAG, tag; TIT, title; TOP, topic.