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Case Drop from Fragment Answers in Korean
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Junghyoe Yoon and Yoshihisa Kitagawa*

1 Introduction

Korean exhibits case marking and case drop as exemplified in (1)-(3).

(1) Wh-questions:
   a. Nwukwu-\{ka / ∅\} wuyu-lul sass-ni?
      who.NOM milk.ACC bought-Q
      'Who bought milk?'
   b. YungHee-ka mwues-\{ul / ∅\} sass-ni?
      YungHee.NOM what.ACC bought-Q
      'What did YungHee buy?'

(2) Case Drop in Clausal Answers:
   a. YungHee-\{ka / ∅\} wuyu-lul sass-e.
      YungHee.NOM milk.ACC bought-DCL
      'YungHee bought milk.'
   b. YungHee-ka wuyu-\{ul / ∅\} sass-e.
      YungHee.NOM milk.ACC bought-DCL
      'YungHee bought milk.'

(3) Case Drop in Fragment Answers:
   a. YungHee-\{ka / ∅\}
      YungHee.NOM
      'YungHee (bought milk).'
   b. Wuyu-\{∅ / *lul\}
      milk.ACC
      '(YungHee bought milk).'

As can be seen in (2) and (3), clausal and fragment answers exhibit puzzling asymmetry in both case marking and case drop. In this paper, we concentrate on the case drop involved in fragment answers as in (3) (henceforth FAs), and attempt to explicate why the overt case marker is sometimes realized, need not be realized, or cannot be realized in this construction.¹

One obvious question that needs to be answered in our analysis of (3) is why and how subject-object asymmetry arises in case-marked FAs (i.e., o⁷ka vs. *lul) while no such asymmetry is observed in bare FAs (indicated as NP-∅). To provide an answer, we will argue for the following analyses. First, despite their appearance, FAs as in (3) are syntactically analyzable as sentences that involve ellipsis. Second, case-marked FAs and bare FAs involve distinct types of sentential construction.²

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²For the analysis of the case phenomena in a clausal construction as in (2), the readers are referred to Yoon (2011) and Kitagawa and Yoon (2011). The term 'case drop' in this paper is meant to refer to the absence of phonetic content of a case particle from a nominal argument, nothing more or less. Throughout, we will indicate case drop in linguistics examples with '∅' as in (1)-(3) without any implication of the existence of a phonetically empty case particle intended. The term 'drop' does not imply the involvement of any operation of deleting phonetic contents, either.

²This is not to claim that all instances of fragments in Korean (or any other language) are analyzable as sentential.

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2 Case-marked Fragment Answers

We propose first that case-marked FAs in Korean as in (3) below are to be analyzed as sentences involving VP-ellipsis.

(4) a. YungHee-ka
   YungHee.NOM
   'YungHee (bought milk).'
   b. Wuyu-stäul.
      milk-ACC
      '(YungHee bought) milk.'

A nominative-marked FA, for instance, is derived as illustrated in (5A).\(^3\)

(5) Q: [TP nwukwu-ka\(_1\)] [VP t\(_1\) wuyu-lul sa-ss-ni ]]
Who-NOM milk-ACC buy-PST-Q
A: [TP YungHee-ka\(_1\)] [VP wuyu-lul sa-ss-ni ]]
YungHee-NOM milk-ACC buy-PST-DCL

For ease of description, we illustrate VP-ellipsis here in terms of the deletion of the element crossed out. Under the LF-copy approach, the deleted VP in (5A) would be base-generated as an empty VP whose content is copied from the antecedent VP in (5Q) at LF.

The derivation of an accusative-marked FA, on the other hand, would not be fulfilled by ellipsis of any single constituent that is permitted in Korean:

(6) Q: [TP YungHee-ka\(_1\)] [VP t\(_1\) mwues-ul sa-ss-ni ]]
YungHee-NOM what-ACC buy-PST-Q
A1: *[TP YungHee-ka\(_1\)] [VP t\(_1\) wuyu-lul sa-ss-ni ]]
YungHee-NOM milk-ACC buy-PST-DCL
A2: *[TP pro\(_1\)] [VP t\(_1\) wuyu-lul sa-ss-ni ]]

First, on the standard assumption that ellipsis targets a single constituent, the derivation of accusative-marked FAs in terms of discontinuous ellipsis as in (6A1) would be prohibited. Second, we cannot assume that the FA here is derived as in (6A2), either, in which a null subject appears and V-ellipsis applies in a way similar to that in a gapping construction. As can be seen in (7a-b) below, V-ellipsis in gapping always takes place regressively rather than progressively in Korean.

(7) a. YungHee-nun sakwa-lul [V ø], (kuliko) YungHee-nun photo-lul mek-ess-e.
   YungHee-TOP apple-ACC and YungHee-TOP grapes-ACC eat-PST-DCL
   'YungHee (ate) apples and YungHee ate grapes.'
   b. *(YungHee-nun sakwa-lul mek-ess-e), (kuliko) YungHee-nun photo-lul [V ø].
   YungHee-TOP apple-ACC eat-PST-DCL and YungHee-TOP grapes-ACC
   'YungHee ate apples and YungHee grapes.'

We can also confirm that V-ellipsis is not a viable option in Korean when we try to answer (6Q) with the subject represented overtly as a topic phrase as in (8A4).

(8) A4: [TP YungHee-nun\(_1\)] [VP t\(_1\) wuyu-lul sa-ss-s-se / *[V ø]] ]]
YungHee-TOP milk-ACC buy-PST-DCL

It is difficult, therefore, to consider that V-ellipsis is involved in (6A2).

\(^3\)We suppress the vP analysis here for simplicity.
These observations would lead us to conclude that the accusative-marked FAs are prohibited in Korean because there is no way to derive them in a legitimate way with ellipsis in this language. We believe that this is a quite desirable result since we can now capture the subject-object asymmetry observed in the case-marked FAs in (4) (i.e., okka vs. *lul) without postulating anything special. It simply follows from the asymmetry in the applicability of VP-ellipsis between the two answer clauses in (5) and (6).

3 Bare Fragment Answers

We now turn to the derivation of bare FAs indicated as NP-∅ in (9).

(9) a. YungHee-{ka / ∅}
   YungHee.NOM
   'YungHee (bought milk).'

b. Wuyu-{∅ / *lul }
   milk-ACC
   '(YungHee bought) milk.'

We claim that bare FAs are also derived when ellipsis takes place in a full-fledged clause. Unlike in the case of case-marked FAs, however, bare FAs are realized not in a canonical sentential construction but in a pseudocleft construction.

Let us motivate this analysis step by step. First, when a wh-question is asked in Korean, it can be answered not only with a parallel 'canonical' sentence but also with a pseudocleft sentence, as in (10A2) (for a subject wh) and (11A2) (for an object wh).

(10)Q:  
   Nwu(kwu)-ka  
   wuyu-lul  
   sa-ss-ni?
   who-∅  
   buy-PST-Q
   'Who bought the milk at the market?'

A1: YungHee-ka
   wuyu-lul  
   sa-ss-e.
   YungHee-∅  
   buy-PST-DCL
   'YungHee bought the milk at the market.'

A2: [ Sicang-eyse  
   wuyu-lul  
   sa-n  
   kes-un ] YungHee-{∅ / *ka}-ya.
   market-∅
   buy-ADN  
   thing-TOP
   YungHee-NOM-COP.INFORMAL
   'The person who brought milk at the market is YungHee.'

(11)Q:  
   ChelSwu-ka  
   mwues-ul  
   sa-ass-ni?
   ChelSwu-∅  
   buy-PST-Q
   'What did ChelSwu buy at the market?'

A1: ChelSwu-ka
   mwues-ul  
   sa-ass-ni?
   ChelSwu-∅  
   buy-PST-Q
   'ChelSwu bought milk at the market'

A2: [ ChelSwu-ka  
   mwues-ul  
   sa-n  
   kes-un ] wuyu-{∅ / *lul}-ya.
   market-∅
   buy-ADN  
   thing-TOP
   milk-COP.INFORMAL
   'The thing which YungHee brought at the market is milk.'

A pseudocleft answer to a wh-question as in (10A2) and (11A2) are nothing special. They are used quite naturally and frequently in Korean.

Furthermore, such pseudocleft answers may appear in different sizes when different items involved there are expressed phonetically empty as in the examples below — as in (12) when the topic phrase is elided, and as in (13) when the informal copula ya in (12) is replaced by its phonetically empty version e ya.
Note now that the NPs appearing in the pre-copula position in (13a-b) are equivalent to what we have called bare FAs.

Bare FAs in (13) in fact are nothing but the reflection of the phenomena commonly observed in a pseudocleft construction. First, copulas in general may often undergo copula drop even within the full form of the pseudocleft answers as in (10A2) and (11A2). This point can be confirmed by the fact that the informal status of these sentences is maintained even when the overt ya is missing.

Second, as has been indicated in all sizes of the pseudocleft answers in (10) through (13) above, overt case markers are prohibited from appearing on the pre-copula NP in this construction. This will also be a natural consequence in the proposed analysis, since structural case particles are prohibited in all pre-copula positions in Korean. This restriction applies to all types of copular constructions (including pseudoclefts) and all structural case particles alike, as shown in (16)-(17) (Kang (2006: 254-279)).

(16) a. Ku salam-i kaswu-{i/*ul}-i-ta.
   the person-NOM singer-NOM/ACC-COP-DCL
   'The person is a singer.'

b. Mary-ka manna-n jes-un John-(*ul)-i-ta.
   Mary-NOM meet-ADN thing-TOP John-NOM-COP-DCL
   'The person who Mary met was John.'

c. John-ul manna-n jes-un Mary-(*ka)-i-ta.
   John-ACC meet-ADN thing-TOP Mary-NOM-COP-DCL
   'The person who met John was Mary.'
To sum up, we have proposed that a bare FA in Korean is to be analyzed as an 'elliptical' pseudocleft sentence as in (18).

(18)a. $\text{[\text{Wuyu-lul sa-n kes-un YungHee-(\text{*ka})-ya.}]}$

\begin{verbatim}
 milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee-NOM,COP.INFORMAL
\end{verbatim}

'The person who bought milk was YungHee.'

b. $\text{[\text{ChelSwu-ka sa-n kes-un YungHee-.}]}$

\begin{verbatim}
 ChelSwu-NOM buy-ADN thing-TOP milk-COP.INFORMAL
\end{verbatim}

'The thing which ChelSwu bought was milk.'

In this construction, the topic phrase is elided, the informal copula $\text{ya}$ appears without its phonetic content, and the focused NP appears in the pre-copula position obligatorily as a bare FA.

The immediate advantage of this analysis is that we can now provide an answer for the question we raised on the paradigm in (3) at the beginning of this paper. We noted there that subject-object asymmetry arises in case-marked FAs (i.e., $\text{ok}\text{ka}$ vs. $\text{*lul}$) but no such asymmetry is observed in bare FAs. We already reduced the asymmetry in case-marked FAs to the asymmetrical applicability of VP-ellipsis. We now know why case drop applies symmetrically between subjects and objects when bare FAs are obtained. A bare FA is a focused NP appearing in the pre-copula position in a pseudocleft sentence, but case marking is prohibited across-the-board in Korean for pre-copula NPs. In the next section, we will provide further motivation for the proposed analysis of bare FAs as described in (18).

### 4 Further Motivation

First, the postulation of the phonetically empty informal declarative copula $\text{ya}$ plays a key role in the proposed analysis of bare FAs, permitting us to capture their fragmentary appearance as well as bareness in case marking. We would like to argue now that the empty copula showing up in bare FAs indeed must be this particular informal and empty copula.

To begin with, Korean is known to have an elaborated system of clause-final particles. For instance, the outermost (= final) verbal suffix usually expresses modality like declarative or question, which may be preceded by a marker indicating the formality of the utterance, as illustrated in (19a-c).\(^6\)

(19)a. $\text{cohahay-ss-ta}$

like-PST-DCL

b. $\text{kasu-wi-ta}$

singer-COP-DCL
c. $\text{sa-ss-upni-kka}$

buy-PST-FORMAL-Q,FORMAL

To make the long story short, Korean verb stems (root + tense) in general must be accompanied by an overt modality marker, and hence cannot stand alone at surface, as shown in (20).

(20)a. $\text{YungHee-ka sakwa-lul cohahay-ss-(ta / *[e]_{\text{PST}})\.}$

\begin{verbatim}
 YungHee-NOM apple-ACC like-PST-DCL
\end{verbatim}

'YungHee liked apples.'

\(^6\) Sometimes, the modality marker itself indicates the formality as in (19c). Some modality markers may also indicate speakers' attitude toward what they are saying.
b. YungHee-ka nwukwu-lul manna-ss-{ni / *[ e ]ln}?
   'Whom did YungHee meet?'

The situation is the same with a clause-final copula. Although the copula itself can be phonetically empty as we saw above, the modality marker cannot be empty:

(21)a. Ku salam-i kaswu-{[ e ]-ta / *[ e ]ln}.
   'The person is a singer.'

b. Wuyu-ul sa-n kes-un YungHee-{[ e ]-ta / *[ e ]ln}.
   'The person who bought milk was YungHee.'

The informal declarative copula *ya is exceptional in this respect, as seen in (22).

(22)Ku salam-un kaswu-*ya.
   'That person is a singer.'

The absence of an overt modality marker is exceptionally tolerated with *ya, presumably because this copula involves 'fusion' indicating the declarative and informal status of the utterance. We can also confirm that *ya in (22) can undergo 'copula drop' when we observe that (23) below permits a copular interpretation even though it does not involve any overt copula.

(23)Ku salam-nun kaswu.
   'The person is a singer.'

This sentence, in fact, must also be interpreted as an informal declarative utterance on a par with the *ya construction in (22) above. We can capture these interpretive restrictions imposed on (23) when we hypothesize that *ya can appear phonetically empty, as in (24).

(24)Ku salam-un kaswu-[ e ]*ya.
   'That person is a singer.'

With this much background, we now are ready to examine the crucial paradigm (25)-(26) below to support our postulation of the phonetic empty *ya in bare FAs.

(25)Q: Nwu(kwu)-ka wuyu-lul sa-ss-upni-kka?
   Who bought the milk?
   A1: YungHee-{[ i-pni-ta / *[ e ]-pni-ta]}
   YungHee-COP-FORMAL-DCL
   A2: *YungHee.

(26)Q: Nwu(kwu)-ka wuyu-lul sa-ss-ni?
   Who bought the milk?
   A1: YungHee-*ya
   YungHee-COP-INFORMAL
   A2: okYungHee.

When a *wh-question is asked in the formal style as in (25Q), it can be legitimately answered with an "NP+copula" that is appropriately marked as formal as in (25A1) (with or without copula drop). The same is true with the informal question-answer pair (26Q) and (26A1). Quite interestingly, however, the formal question cannot be answered with a bare FA, while the informal question can,
as the contrast between (25A2) and (26A2) indicates. One may consider that (25A2) is unacceptable simply because case drop is incompatible with the formality of the involved conversation. Although it is true that case drop is generally attuned to and observed more often in informal utterances, it is not necessarily prohibited in the formal utterances. Case drop in fact is permitted even in the formal question in (25Q), as illustrated in (27).

(27) Q: Nwu(kw)-ka wuyu-[lul / Ø] sa-ss-upni-kka?
   who-NOM milk-ACC buy-PST-FORMAL-Q.FORMAL
   'Who bought the milk?'

The contrast between (25A2) and (26A2) follows straightforwardly if bare FAs are analyzed as involving the phonetically empty ya under the approach we proposed, as in (28).

(28) [TP [NP Wuyu-lul] sa-n kes-un] Topic
    milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee-[e] ya

Under this analysis, the formality of the question-answer pair is consistent in (26) but not in (25). One may consider that (25A2) is ungrammatical simply because a formality marker is missing in a formal conversation. If so, the FA in (25A2) may not necessarily involve Ø_w. The paradigm in (29) below, however, suggests that this is not the case.

(29) Q: etten pwan-i wuyu-lul sa-ss-ya?
   which person[HON]-NOM milk-ACC buy-PST-Q.FORMAL
   A1: YungHee-pni-ta.
       YungHee-FORMAL-DCL
   A2: YungHee-ta.
       YungHee-DCL
   A3: *YungHee-ya.
       YungHee-INFORMAL
   A4: *YungHee-Ø_w.
       YungHee-INFORMAL

The particle ya is a neutral formality marker, but the presence of the honorific expression etten pwan 'which person (HON)' forces it to function as a formal marker in (29Q). The appropriateness of the answer (29A1) with the formal marker pni shows that it indeed is a formal situation. Crucially, however, the same question may be answered legitimately even when a formal marker does not accompany the declarative marker, as shown in (29A2). Yet, not only the presence of the informal marker ya in (29A3) but also its absence in (29A4) is also rejected in FAs. This suggests that (29A4) should be analyzed as involving a null informal marker functioning on a par with ya, i.e., Ø_w. In short, a bare FA is always interpreted as informal due to its involvement of the phonetically empty informal (and declarative) copula ya.

A virtually identical contrast can also be observed in full-fledged pseudocleft sentences. Compare the contrast between (25A2) and (26A2) with that between (30c) and (31b).

    milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee-COP-FORMAL-DCL.
    'The person who bought milk is YungHee.'

b. ok [ Wuyu-ul sa-n kes-un ] YungHee-[e]-pni-ta.
    milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee-COP-FORMAL-DCL.

    milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee

    milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee-COP-INFORMAL
    'The person who bought milk is YungHee.'
b. ok[ Wuyu-lul sa-n kes-un ] YungHee.
milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee

Once again, the contrast between (30c) and (31b) can be reduced to their asymmetry concerning the formality of the question-answer pair when they are analyzed as in (32).

    (cf. (15) above)
milk-ACC buy-ADN thing-TOP YungHee-COP.INFORMAL

This observation supports the following two major components of the proposed analysis: (i) that bare FAs are nothing but elliptical pseudocleft sentences, and (ii) they involve the phonetically empty ya.

The pseudocleft analysis of bare FAs can be further motivated by the parallel 'connectivity' effects observed in bare FAs and pseudoclefts. The bare FAs in (33A1)-(33A3) below exhibit the same patterns as those which the simple paraphrasings sentences exhibit with respect to various binding behaviors, as in (34).

(33)Q: [ John-kwa Bill ]X-un nwukwu-lul conkyengha-ni?
    John-and Bill-TOP who-ACC respect-Q
    'Whom do John and Bill respect?'
A1: ok[ cakiX-ui komwun ]-Ø.
    self-GEN advisor
    'John respects John's advisor and Bill respects Bill's advisor.'
A2: *ku-tulX-Ø.
    he-PL
    '((John and Bill) respects themX.)'
A3: ok[ ku-tulX-ui komwun ]-Ø.
    he-PL-GEN advisor
    '((John and Bill) respect [theirX advisor(s)].')

    John-and Bill-TOP self-GEN advisor-ACC respect
    'John respects John's advisor and Bill respects Bill's advisor.'

    John-and Bill-TOP he-PL-ACC respect
    '[John and Bill] respect themX.'

    John-and Bill-TOP he-PL-GEN advisor-ACC respect
    '[John and Bill] respect [theirX advisor].'

The single-denoting reflexive caki 'self' in (33A1) can take the plural antecedent John-kwa Bill 'John and Bill' in (33Q) and exhibits a distributive reading, as indicated by its translation. Such a bound variable interpretation is known to be possible only when the item to be interpreted as a variable is c-commanded by its operator as in (34a). Ku-tul 'they' appearing in (33A2), on the other hand, cannot take John-kwa Bill as its antecedent. The contrast between (33A2) and (33A3) in the availability of such an anaphoric interpretation suggests to us that what we are observing in bare FAs here is the same contrast as that induced by the Binding Condition (B) in full-fledged clauses as in (34b-c). Under the proposed analysis, this observation can be reduced to the well-known connectivity effect exhibited by pseudoclefts as in (35).

    John-and Bill-NOM respect-ADN thing-TOP self-GEN advisor-COP.INFORMAL
    'The person who John respects is John's advisor and the person who Bill respects is Bill's advisor.'
The proposed pseudocleft analysis of bare FAs can be further motivated even when we observe the absence of expected connectivity effects. First, since Higgins (1973), it has been repeatedly pointed out that pseudoclefts in English show connectivity in the licensing of negative polarity items (NPIs), as illustrated in (36a) in comparison to (36b-c).

(36)a. He bought lots of textbooks; [what he didn’t buy] was any good novels.
b. He didn’t buy any good novels.

Interestingly and quite mysteriously, pseudoclefts in Korean fail to show this connectivity effect on NPIs:

(37)*[ Sohee-ka pwulci mosha-n kes-un ] amwu mwunccey-to-ya.
   Sohee-NOM solve cannot-ADN thing-TOP any question-also-COP
   'What Sohee couldn’t solve was any question.'

Since Korean pseudocleft sentences do exhibit some connectivity effects similar to those observed in many other languages (e.g., on binding, as we just saw in (35)), this absence of connectivity (henceforth 'anti-connectivity') is quite surprising. What is not surprising to us, however, is that this anti-connectivity effect on NPIs is also observed in bare FAs in Korean. When the question in (38) is asked in an appropriate context that makes its negativity natural, the NPI expression amwu ... -to 'any' can appear in a simple sentential answer as in (38A1) while the corresponding fragment answer in (38A2) cannot.

(38)[Context: Sohee failed to pass an examination, in which she had to answer all 10 questions correctly to make the passing mark.]
   Q: Sohee-ka mwues-ul pwulci moshay-ss-ni?
      Sohee-NOM what-ACC solve cannot-PST-Q
   'What could Sohee not solve?'
   A1: Sohee-nun amwu mwunccey-to pwulci moshay-ss-e.
      Sohee-TOP any question-also solve cannot-PST-DCL
   'Sohee could not solve any question.'
   A2: *amwu mwunccey-to.
      any question-also
   '(Sohee could not solve) any question.'

Once again, what we observe here is parallel behaviors between bare FAs and pseudoclefts but not in canonical sentence, this time with respect to the anti-connectivity effect on NPIs. It supports the proposed pseudocleft analysis of bare FAs in Korean, perhaps even more strongly. Similar anti-connectivity phenomena can be parallelly observed between bare FAs and pseudoclefts in regard to 'postposition drop' and case drop in 'pair-list' answers to multiple wh-questions, which we regrettably cannot present in this paper due to the space limitation. For those arguments, the readers are referred to Yoon (2011), which also attempts to capture how the elided topic phrase and the pre-copula focus come to be interpretively associated, and how the connectivity effects come to be achieved in bare FAs, adopting the 'LF-internal derivation' of pseudocleft sentences proposed by Heycock and Kroch (1999). Based upon the results of an experiment, Yoon (2011) also points out that contrastive focus makes an accusative-marked FA as in (3b) grammatical. She argues that covert movement applied to a contrastively focused item causes this unexpected phenomenon.
5 Summary

In this paper, we presented a portion of our analyses of both 'case-marked' and 'bare' fragment answers in Korean. It was proposed and argued, first, that a case-marked FA arises when a canonical sentence involves VP-ellipsis. This analysis allowed us to capture the fact that a nominative case particle can but an accusative case particle cannot be dropped from FAs. Second, it was argued that a bare FA arises when a pseudocleft sentence as an answer involves the ellipsis of a topic phrase and a phonetically empty version of the informal copula ya. The pre-copula NP in this construction necessarily appears without a case particle and comes to be interpreted as a focused bare FA.

References


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