NP Languages do not have NP-ellipsis: Examination of Korean and Japanese

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1. Introduction

In English, a noun phrase following a genitive case marker – 's may be elided, if the elided material has an antecedent.1

(1) This book is John’s book.

This phenomenon has been traditionally referred to as N’-ellipsis. If John’s book is an NP, as in (2)a, John’s is in Spec, NP, and book, the N’, is elided. However, under the DP hypothesis (Abney 1987; Fukui and Speas 1986), the genitive -’s heads the functional phrase DP, as in (2)b, taking John as Spec, DP, and the NP book as its complement.

(2) a. b.

Since the elided constituent book has been re-analyzed as an NP, I will refer to this phenomenon at NP ellipsis, henceforth.

In the following two sections, I present data from Korean and Japanese to show that there is no NP-ellipsis in these languages. In section 4, I consider data from Japanese Kochi and Kagoshima dialects to further support the haplology analysis of the standard Japanese dialect. Section 5
presents a typological generalization that only DP languages may have NP-ellipsis, and section 6 concludes.

2. (No) NP-ellipsis in Korean

In Korean, the genitive case marker –uy must be followed by a nominal. In other words, there is no NP-ellipsis:

(3) a. [Ku-uy chayk]-un ceryemha-na, [na-uy chayk]-un bissada.
   he-GEN book-TOP cheap-but, I-GEN book-TOP expensive
   ‘His book is cheap, but mine is expensive.’

b. [Ku-uy chayk]-un ceryemha-na, [na-uy kes]-un bissada.
   he-GEN book-TOP cheap-but, I-GEN thing-TOP expensive

c. *[Ku-uy chayk]-un ceryemha-na, [na-uy e.c.]-un bissada.
   he-GEN book-TOP cheap-but, I-GEN -TOP expensive

The three sentences in (3) show the contrast between his book and my book. To refer to my book after his book has been uttered, one may repeat the book and say na-uy chayk ‘I-GEN book’ as in (3)a, or use a pro-form to refer to the book and say na-uy kes ‘I-GEN thing’ as in (3)b; the form na-uy e.c. ‘I-GEN e.c.’ in (3)c is never allowed. Use of the pro-form kes ‘thing/one’ is dispreferred in reference to a human being or an abstract entity, perhaps since its original meaning has the denotation of a concrete object. Therefore, while referring to a concrete object as in (3) is perfectly natural, referring to a human being as in (4), a deverbal element as in (5), or an abstract object as in (6) renders semantic awkwardness.

(4) ?[Chelswu-uy haksayng]-an [Yenghi-uy kes]-pota
   Cheolsoo-GEN student-TOP Younghee-GEN thing-than
ttoktok-ha-ta.
   smart-be-DECL
   ‘Cheolsoo’s student is smarter than Younghee’s.’

(5) ?[Roma-uy phakoy]-nun [Kyoto-uy kes]-pota
   Roma-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-GEN thing-than
shimbak-hay-ss-ta.
   severe-BE-PAST-DECL
   ‘Rome’s destruction was more severe than Kyoto’s.’
Though Taroo’s attitude is good, Hanako’s isn’t.

The Japanese pro-form no has a parallel distribution to that of kes: both elements tend not to be used to refer to human beings or abstract entities (including deverbal nominals) (see Okutsu 1974, among others).

However, it is worth noting that this semantic restriction is not set in stone. Although the pro-form kes ‘thing’ formally refers to concrete objects, a coda-less colloquial form of the morpheme, kke, is used to refer to human beings and abstract entities:

   ‘You are mine. (colloquial)’

   ‘My love is bigger than yours. (colloquial)’

Also, (5) can be greatly improved by replacing kes ‘thing’ with ku-kes ‘that.thing / the.thing’ as in the following:

9. [Roma-uy phakoy]-nun [Kyoto-uy kukes]-pota  
   Roma-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-GEN that.thing-than  
   severe-BE-PAST-DECL.  
   ‘Rome’s destruction was more severe than Kyoto’s.’
3. **Standard Japanese**

Standard Japanese appears to have NP-ellipsis parallel to that of English. Consider the following sentence, which is the direct Japanese counterpart of English sentence (1), above:

(10) *Kono hon-wa John-no da.*
    
    this book-TOP John-no DECL
    
    ‘This book is John’s.’

It is very tempting to analyze (10) as an instance of NP-ellipsis, as in (11); this is the account pursued by Saito, Lin, and Murasugi (2008) (=SLM) and Saito and Murasugi (1990).

(11) *Kono hon-wa John-no han da.* [N’-ellipsis analysis]
    
    this book-TOP John-no book DECL
    
    ‘This book is John’s.’

However, it is not easy to determine whether this phenomenon in Japanese is an instance of NP-ellipsis or haplology of two homonyms, since the morpheme *no* is ambiguous between the genitive case marker *no* and the pro-form *no*. In fact, Kuno (1973) and Okutsu (1974) analyze (10) as a reduction of two successive *no’s* into one; i.e., (10) is derived from (12) by the rule of haplology:

(12) *Kono hon-wa John-no no da.* [Haplology analysis]
    
    this book-TOP John-GEN one DECL
    
    ‘This book is John’s.’

Many languages employ the natural rule of haplology, the elimination of a syllable when two consecutive identical or similar syllables occur (Yip 1998).

Both the NP-ellipsis analysis and the haplology analysis seem to capture the phenomenon, on the surface. In the next section, I employ data from several Japanese dialects to show that the NP-ellipsis analysis does not insightfully capture the phenomenon.
3.1. Haplology analysis

The Japanese data can be analyzed exactly the same way as in Korean. (13)a may be analyzed as derived from (13)b, and (14)a may be analyzed as derived from (14)b (the sentences are from SLM, with the replacement of ga ‘though’ with keredo ‘though’):

(13) a. [Rooma-no hakai]-wa [Kyooto-no]-yorimo
Rome-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-no -than
hisan datta.
was
‘Rome’s destruction was more miserable than Kyoto’s’

b. [Rooma-no hakai]-wa [Kyooto-no no]-yorimo
Rome-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-GEN one-than
hisan datta.
was

(14) a. [Taro-no taido]-wa yoi keredo, [Hanako-no]-wa
Taroo-GEN attitude-TOP good though Hanako-NO -TOP
yokunai.
not-good
‘Though Taroo’s attitude is good, Hanako’s isn’t.’

b. [Taro-no taido]-wa yoi keredo, [Hanako-no no]-wa
Taroo-GEN attitude-TOP good though Hanako-GEN one-TOP
yokunai.

The reason that (13)b and (14)b do not surface is that the genitive case marker –no and the pro-form no undergoes a rule of haplology, banning two successive no’s and reducing them into one (Okutsu 1974).

SLM refers to Kamio’s (1983) study on the distribution of the pro-form no to undermine Okutsu’s haplology analysis. According to Kamio, the pro-form no may refer to concrete objects only. If this observation is strictly true, we are left to wonder why (13)b and (14)b would be (marginally) acceptable.

Just like its Korean counterpart, the pro-form no tends not to refer to human beings or abstract entities due to semantic mismatch with the original meaning of the word, which denotes a concrete object.
3.2. Argument NP-ellipsis analysis

According to SLM, the deletion of the complement is allowed only when Spec, DP is filled, and only arguments can move to Spec, DP in Japanese.

(15)  
\[ \text{Rome-GEN} \quad \text{hakai}-\text{wa} \quad \text{Kyoto-no} \quad \text{yorimo} \]
\[ \text{hisan} \quad \text{datta.} \]

‘Rome’s destruction was more miserable than Kyoto’s’

In (15) (= (13)a), being an argument of hakai ‘destruction’ in Kyoto-no hakai ‘Kyoto’s destruction’ licenses Kyoto ‘Kyoto’ to move to Spec, DP. Since Spec, DP is filled, elision of hakai ‘destruction’ in Kyoto-no hakai ‘Kyoto’s destruction’ is licensed. This process is schematized in (17)a below.

(15) contrasts with (16), in which hi ‘day’ in ame-no hi ‘rainy day’ cannot be elided.

(16) *
\[ \text{Hare-GEN} \quad \text{hi}-\text{wa} \quad \text{yorimo, ame-no } \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{otikomu.} \]
\[ \text{clear-no} \quad \text{day-TOP} \quad \text{good though} \quad \text{rain-no} \quad \text{TOP} \quad \text{feel-depressed} \]

‘Clear days are okay, but I feel depressed on rainy days.’

According to SLM, this elision is disallowed because ame ‘rain’ is an adjunct of hi ‘day’. Being an adjunct, it fails to move to Spec, DP, and as a consequence, it fails to satisfy the licensing condition of NP-ellipsis. This is schematized in (17)b.

(17) a.

```
   DP
  /   \                   /   \                   /   \                   /   \   
Kyoto no DY | <NP> D | t N | hakai | ame-no D'  | NP | N | hi
```

b.
4. Kochi and Kagoshima dialects

In the standard Japanese dialect, both the genitive case marker and the pro-form have the same form, no, which makes it extremely difficult to discern if both no’s survive and go through the rule of haplology to surface as one no in phonology, or if the head noun elides. In this section, I will show that all the cases in which haplology is found in the standard dialect align with the cases in which the pro-forms in the Kochi and Kagoshima dialects are allowed, to claim that the one no showing up in the standard Japanese dialect is a result of haplology.

In the Japanese Kochi dialect, the genitive case marker is -no, as in standard Japanese, but ga is used as a pro-form, instead of the standard no (Hajime Hoji, p.c. and p.c. to Audrey Li). In the Kagoshima dialect (KGSM), n(o) is the genitive marker, and to is used as a pro-form (Yosuke Matsumoto, p.c. to Hiroki Maezawa). A summary of these morphemes in the three dialects is given in (18):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Genitive</th>
<th>Pro-form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Japanese</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kochi</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>ga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kagoshima</td>
<td>n(o)</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Kochi and Kagoshima dialects, both the genitive marker and the pro-form appear after a noun phrase or a prepositional phrase. The elision of the pro-form is unavailable.

The sentences (19)a (= (13)a) and (20)a (= (14)a) in the standard dialect are compared to their counterparts in the Kochi dialect (b’s) and in the Kagoshima dialect (c’s):

(18)
a. [Rooma-no hakai]-wa [Kyooto-no] -yorimo [Standard]
Rome-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-no one-than
hisan data.
miserable was
‘Rome’s destruction was more miserable than Kyoto’s’

b. [Rooma-no hakai]-wa [Kyooto-no ga]-yorimo [Kochi]
Rome-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-no one-than
hisan yatta.
miserable was

c. [Rooma-no hakai]-wa [Kyooto-n(o)to]-yorimo [KGSM]
Rome-GEN destruction-TOP Kyoto-no one-than
hisan data.
miserable was

a. [Taroo-no taido]-wa yoi keredo, [Standard]
Taroo-GEN attitude-TOP good though
[Hanako-no] -wa yokunai.
Hanako-no -TOP good-not
‘Though Taroo’s attitude is good, Hanako’s isn’t.’

b. [Taroo-no taido]-wa ei kendo, [Kochi]
Taroo-GEN attitude-TOP good though
[Hanako-no ga]-wa yoonai.
Hanako-no one-TOP good-not

c. [Taroo-no taido]-wa yoka kedo, [KGSM]
Taroo-GEN attitude-TOP good though
[Hanako-n(o) to]-wa yokunaka.
Hanako-no one-TOP good-not

The three dialects are very similar; only a few words are realized differently (boldfaced), the variation of which can easily be explained by phonology. Notice that the instances in which the pro-forms (ga in the Kochi dialect and to in the Kagoshima dialect) are used overlap with the instances in which haplology is available in the standard dialect.

The sentences (21)a (= (16)) and (22)a in the standard dialect are compared to their counterparts in the Kochi dialect (b’s) and in the Kagoshima dialect (c’s).
a. *[Hare-no hi]-wa yoi keredo, [ame-no]-wa [Standard]
clear-no day-TOP good though rain-no-TOP
otikomu.
feel.depressed
‘Clear days are okay, but I feel depressed on rainy days.’

b. *[Hare-no hi]-wa ei kendo, [ame-no ga]-wa [Kochi]
clear-no day-TOP good though rain-no one-TOP
otikomu.
feel.depressed

(21) c. *[Hare-no hi]-wa yoka keredo, [ame-n(o) to]-wa [KGSM]
clear-no day-TOP good though rain-no one-TOP
otikomu.
feel.depressed

b. *[Hare-no hi]-wa ei kendo, [ame-no ga]-wa [Kochi]
clear-no day-TOP good though rain-no one-TOP
otikomu.
feel.depressed

(22) a. *Taroo-wa iti-niï-ni [san-satu-no hon]-o yomu keredo,
Taroo-wa [iti-niï]-ni one-day-in three-CL-no book-ACC read though
Hanako-wa [go-satu-no]-o yomu. [Standard]
Hanako- TOP five-CL-no -ACC read
‘Taroo reads three books in a day, but Hanako reads five.’

b. *Taroo-wa iti-niï-ni [san-satu-no hon]-o yomu kendo,
Taroo-wa [iti-niï]-ni one-day-in three-CL-no book-ACC read though
Hanako-wa [go-satu-no ga]-o yomu. [Kochi]
Hanako-TOP five-CL-no one-ACC read

(21) c. *Taroo-wa iti-niï-ni [san-satu-n(o)hon]-o yomu kedo,
Taroo-TOP one-day-in three-CL-no book-ACC read though
Hanako-wa [go-satu-no to]-o yomu. [KGSM]
Hanako-TOP five-CL-no one-ACC read

The above examples show that the instances in which the pro-form in non-standard Japanese dialects is unavailable coincide with the instances in which haplology is unavailable in the standard dialect.

I have shown in this section that the cases in which the pro-forms in the Kochi and Kagoshima dialects are allowed align precisely with the cases in which haplology is found in the standard dialect; conversely, all the cases in which the pro-form in the non-standard dialects is disallowed align perfectly with the cases in which haplology is prohibited in the standard dialect.
5. Typological generalization

According to SLM’s (2008) analysis, NP-ellipsis is licensed by a filled Spec, DP. If an argument moves to Spec, DP, NP-ellipsis is licensed. If this claim is true, we need additional explanations for the behavior of the non-standard Japanese dialects with respect to ellipsis. The Kochi dialect and Kagoshima dialect, which have different morphemes for the genitive and the pro-form, are reported to have no NP-ellipsis. In order to explain why NP-ellipsis is allowed in the standard Japanese dialect, but disallowed in non-standard Japanese dialects with almost identical syntactic structures, SLM would need to stipulate one of the following: i) an argument of a nominal moves to Spec, DP in the standard Japanese dialect, but the same kind of movement is prohibited in other Japanese dialects; or ii) an argument of a nominal moves to Spec, DP in all dialects, but the NP may only be deleted in standard Japanese but not in other dialects.

The Kochi dialect and the Kagoshima dialect are so similar to the standard dialect that most of the differences can be explained by phonological variations; this can be illustrated by comparison of the standard Japanese ((a) sentences) on one side, and the Kochi dialect ((b) sentences) and the Kagoshima dialect ((c) sentences) on the other, from (19) to (22) above. It is less than appealing to stipulate such differences for dialects which are otherwise so similar.

On the other hand, the haplology analysis does not need such stipulations. In fact, it is consistent with other typological generalizations.

Lobeck (1995) argues that it is the D head plus its subcategorization requirements (i.e. a complement NP is called for) that licenses NP ellipsis. For example, in a DP language like English, the D’s licenses the deletion of the subcategorized NP book, as in (23).

\[ \text{(23)} \]
However, in Japanese and in Korean, the contextual case marker *no* does not occupy the D position. In other words, there is no D to license NP-ellipsis in the first place, as shown in (24) and in (25), respectively.

(24) a. *Rooma-no hakaï*  
Rome-GEN destruction  
‘destruction of Rome’

b.  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NP} \\
\text{Rooma-no N} \\
| \\
\text{hakaï}
\end{array}
\]

(25) a. *Roma-uy phakoy*  
Rome-GEN destruction  
‘destruction of Rome’

b.  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{NP} \\
\text{Roma-uy N} \\
| \\
\text{phakoy}
\end{array}
\]

This idea is also consistent with the observation that while Japanese and Korean allow double genitive constructions ((26) and (27), respectively), English disallow them (28) (Miyagawa 2009).

(26) a. *Rooma-no hakaï*  
Rome-GEN destruction  
‘destruction of Rome’

b. *yabanzin-no hakaï*  
barbarian-GEN destruction  
‘the barbarians’ destruction’

c. *yabanzin-no Rooma-no hakaï*  
barbarian-GEN Rome-GEN destruction  
‘the barbarians’ destruction of Rome’
The contrast between non-recursiveness of genitive case markers in English and recursiveness of genitive case markers in Japanese and in Korean suggest that the former is a D head of a “closed” functional phrase (a la Fukui 1988), whereas the latter is a contextual case marker inserted between two NPs (Kitagawa & Ross 1982). With no DPs (or DPs with null Ds) in the genitive constructions of Japanese and of Korean, and therefore no subcategorizing D to license N-ellipsis, NP-ellipsis is not allowed in Japanese and Korean.

This conclusion is consistent with Chierchia’s (1998) work on the nature of bare nominal arguments in Japanese and Korean. He categorizes Japanese and Korean as NP languages, as opposed to English, which is categorized as a DP language.

It follows, then, that DP languages may or may not have NP-ellipsis, depending on the featural specification of the D with regard to the tolerance of covert subcategorized arguments. On the other hand, NP languages cannot have NP-ellipsis, since the licensing condition is not met without an overt) DP category.
6. Conclusion

I have shown that the apparent cases of Japanese NP-ellipsis should be analyzed as haplology of the genitive case marker –no and its homonym no ‘one/thing (pro-form)’ in standard Japanese. Comparison with Korean, a neighboring language, reveals that in both languages the relevant pro-form resists reference to human beings and abstract entities, but this resistance does not render a sentence completely ungrammatical. For all cases of apparent NP-ellipsis in standard Japanese, the genitive case marker and pro-form sequence in the Kochi dialect and in the Kagoshima dialect is allowed, and for all cases of apparent prohibition of NP-ellipsis in standard Japanese, the genitive case marker and pro-form sequence in the Kochi dialect and in the Kagoshima dialect is disallowed. The haplology analysis is compatible with Lobeck’s (1995) claim that the D-head licenses its subcategorized phrase to be null, thus allowing for NP-ellipsis. From this licensing condition it follows that only DP languages like English can allow NP-ellipsis, while NP languages like Japanese and Korean do not have the option of allowing NP-ellipsis.

Notes

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1. For a detailed discussion of NP-ellipsis in English, see Jackendoff (1971).

2. Hiroki Narita (p.c.) and Masao Ochi (p.c.) point out that they can force a different reading (ii) in which there are two types of sets of books, one set consisting of three volumes of books and the other five.

3. The same observation is made about the Toyama dialect (Murasugi 1990), in which the genitive case marker is realized as -no and the pro-form is realized as ga, as in the Kochi dialect. In the Nagasaki dialect, the genitive marker is –n, and the pro-form is –to. Emi Mukai (p.c. to Audrey Li) points out that in the Nagasaki dialect, NP-ellipsis is not available. Interestingly, in all of these dialects, NP-ellipsis is not licensed.
References


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