A Syntactic Account of the Properties of Bare Nominals in Discourse[*]

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Abstract. Case markers in Korean are omissible in colloquial speech. Previous discourse studies of Caseless bare NPs in Korean show that the information structure of zero Nominative not only differs from that of overt Nominative but it also differs from that of zero Accusative in many respects. This paper aims to provide a basis for these semantic/pragmatic properties of Caseless NPs through the syntactic difference between bare subjects and bare objects: namely, the former are left-dislocated NPs, whereas the latter form complex predicates with the subcategorizing verbs. Our analysis will account for the facts that (i) the distribution of bare subject NPs are more restricted than that of bare object NPs; (ii) bare subject NPs must be specific or topical; (iii) Acc-marked NPs in canonical position tend to be focalized.

Keywords: Case markers, bare nominals, left-dislocated NPs, focalization

1. Introduction

Case markers in Korean are omissible in colloquial speech. Many previous studies of Caseless bare NPs in Korean show that subject-object asymmetries are observed in various respects. For example, as observed in the wide range of conversational data (H. Lee 2006b-c), occurrence rate of bare NPs in complement position is higher than that of bare NPs in subject positions. The grammatical contrast in (1) further shows that the distribution of bare NP subject in (1b) is not only less common but also severely restricted in canonical subject position, namely, Spec-T, in contrast to the bare NP object in (1a) in canonical object position.

(1) a. Mary-ka   **Chelswu-(lul)**   manna-ss-e.
       Mary-Nom Chelswu-Acc   meet-Past-Dec 'Mary met Chelswu.'
   b. Chelswu-lul   **Mary-*(ka)** manna-ss-e.
       Chelswu-Acc Mary-Nom meet-Past-Dec   'Chelswu, Mary met.'

It is plausible to assume that the subject *Mary-ka* in (1b) is "frozen" in the subject position, Spec-T, due to the scrambled object *John-ul*. Thus, (1b) sharply contrasts with (1a) in that Nominative Case must be marked unlike Accusative.

Another subject-object asymmetry is D-linking restriction some non-Case-marked *wh*-phrases show. As initially noted by Ahn & Cho (2006), non-Case-marked subject *wh*-phrase *nwukwu* 'who' has only D(iscourse)-linked interpretation in the sense of Pesetsky (1987), as shown in (2).

(2) a. Nwukwu-∅ Yenghi-lul   manna-ss-ni?
        who   Yenghi-Acc meet-Past-Q
      'Who is such that he/she met Yenghi?'   (only D-linked reading is possible)
    b. Nwu(kwu)-ka Yenghi-lul   manna-ss-ni?
       who-Nom   Yenghi-Acc meet-Past-Q
      'Who met Yenghi?'   (non-D-linked reading is also possible)

 However, such restriction isn't observed in the case of bare object *wh*-phrases in (3).

(3) a. Yenghi-ka   nwukwu-∅   manna-ss-ni?
       Yenghi-Nom who   meet-Past-Q   (non-D-linked reading is also possible)
    b. Yenghi-ka   nwukwu-lul manna-ss-ni?
       Yenghi-Nom who-Acc   meet-Past-Q
      'Who did Yenghi meet?'   (non-D-linked reading is also possible)

Interestingly, if the Case marker is absent in the scrambled object *wh*-phrase, only D-linked interpretation is possible, as shown in (4).

(4) Nwukwu-∅   Yenghi-ka   manna-ss-ni?
    Who   Yenghi-Nom meet-Past-Q
    'Who is such that Yenghi meet (him/her)?'   (only D-linked reading is possible)

    The third interesting asymmetry is found with specific/non-specific contexts. In (5a), the bare subject NP is not permitted with the non-specific modifier *han/etten*. Note, however, that this restriction does not apply to bare NP objects. Thus, in (5b), Acc Case on the object can be freely absent with non-specific modifier.

(5) a. (Yeysnal-ey) **han/etten namca-*(ka)** sal-ass-ta.
         long.time-at a/a.certain man-(Nom)   live-Past-Dec
        '(Long time ago) there was a man lived.'
    b. (Yeysnal-ey) Mary-ka **han/etten namca-(lul)** manna-ss-ta.
       long.time-at M.-Nom a/a.certain man-(Acc)   meet-Past-Dec
       '(Long time ago) Mary met a man.'

  Note further that overt realization of Acc Case in (5b) tends to induce a "focalized/emphatic" reading, as observed in the previous discourse studies (Jun 2005, E. Ko 2000, H. Lee 2006b, Matsuda 1995). By contrast, overt realization of Nom Case in (5a) does not necessarily give rise to a focalized interpretation, which is another instance of subject-object asymmetry of Case realization.
  In sum, the subject-object asymmetries, D-linking asymmetries, non-specific adjective modification with regard to non-Case-marking mentioned so far are listed in Table 1, 2 & 3.

Table 1: Subject-object asymmetries on non-Case-marking

Canonical	Subjects	Objects
Non-Case-Marking	Impossible	Possible

Table 2: Asymmetries on non-Case-marking and D-linking restriction

Non-Case-Marked WH	Subjects	Fronted Objects	In-Situ Objects
D-linked Reading	Possible	Possible	Possible
Non-D-linked Reading	Impossible	Impossible	Possible

Table 3: Asymmetries on non-specific adjective modification

Non-Case-Marked	Subjects	Objects
Non-Specific Adjective Modification	Impossible	Possible

This paper aims to correctly predict various kinds of subject-object asymmetries of morphological Case realization under the formal syntactic treatment.

2. Bare NP Object vs. Bare Subject /Dislocated NPs

We suggest that bare NPs can occur in the complement position of V since it can be part of a syntactic complex predicate. In other words, the bare NP object has dual function: namely, it fulfills as an argument of the subcategorizing verb, and it also forms a predicate with the selecting verb in syntax. We claim that this option is only available with bare NPs in Korean (but not Case-marked DPs, for example). Note that this option is excluded if a bare NP occurs outside of V domain. Thus, we can account for the grammatical contrast between (6a) and (6b).

(6) a. Mary-ka   **Chelswu-**∅ manna-ss-e.
       Mary-Nom Chelswu   meet-Past-Dec
       'Mary met Chelswu.'
    b. *Chelswu-lul **Mary-**∅ manna-ss-e.
        Chelswu-Acc Mary   meet-Past-Dec
        'Chelswu, Mary met.'

The nominal *Chelswu* in a VP-internal position in (6a) can be part of a syntactic complex predicate, so a bare NP object is allowed there. This option, by contrast, is not possible in the case of the nominal *Mary* in Spec-T, a VP–external position in (6b).

   Regarding the appearance of bare subject NPs in noncanonical subject positions, we adopt a proposal in Ahn (1999) that these bare subjects can be analyzed as Left-Dislocated (LDed) NPs:

(7) Mary$_i$-∅   *pro*$_i$ ku chayk ilk-ess-ni?
    Mary   the book   read-Past-Q
    'Did Mary read that book?'

In (7), although *Mary* is not in a complement position of V, a nominative Case marker can be absent. *Mary* in (7) is analyzed as an LDed NP in a left peripheral position with a null resumptive *pro* in its base-generated position.

   Note that LD option is not available for the analysis of the bare subject NP in (6b) since LDed phrases cannot be embedded by other scrambled/moved elements cross-linguistically (see Grohmann 2003).

   The next task is how to derive D-linked property of LDed nominals. Boeckx (2003; 2004) and Boeckx & Grohmann (2004) put forward that the peculiar property of LD hinges on the special type of movement.

(8) NP$_i$….[$_{TP}$…[$_{DP}$ RP [<NP$_i$>]]…]

In (8), a resumptive pronoun, RP and its antecedent, NP form a constituent and the resumptive chain is a result of sub-extraction of the NP. We assume with Boeckx (2003) that the resumptive chain results in the D-linked interpretation. The particular derivational step is called SubMove (Boeckx & Grohmann 2004:11). In line with this reasoning, we assume (10) for (9).

(9) Nwukwu Yenghi-lul   manna-ss-ni?
      Who   Yenghi-Acc meet-Past-Q
      'Who is such that he/she met Yenghi?'

(10)
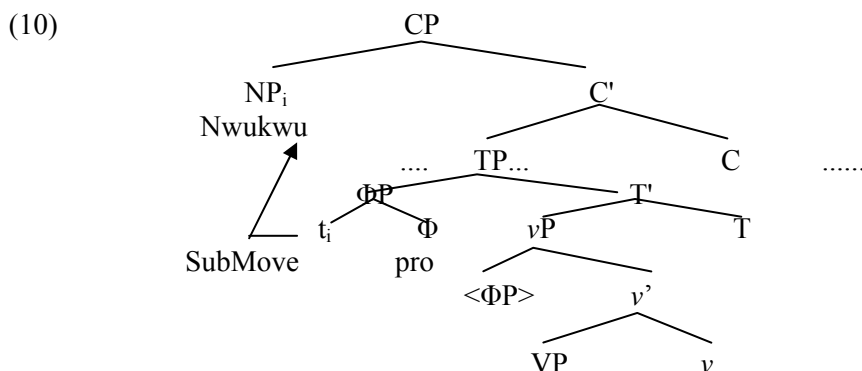
Movement of the bare NP to Spec-C is triggered by the theta-theoretic requirement because the NP cannot obtain a theta role in ΦP since the head of ΦP, namely *pro*, absorbs the theta-role assigned by *v*. Note that *pro* and its antecedent are distinct syntactic entities and they form a constituent upon First Merge. The movement of ΦP to Spec-T is triggered by Φ-features on T (Agree). Note further that the NP undergoes SubMove to Spec-C where it gets a theta-role "aboutness," so it fulfills the Full Interpretation. Consequently, the chain *<nwukwu, pro>* induces only D-linked reading like many other *wh*-resumption or *wh*-clitic doubling constructions (Boeckx 2003, Boeckx & Grohmann 2004, Jaeger 2003 and others).
   A similar explanation is possible for (11). In (11), a non-Case-marked object *wh*-phrase occurs in a left periphery position, and only D-linked interpretation is induced.

(11) Nwukwu Yenghi-ka   manna-ss-ni?
      Who   Yenghi-Nom meet-Past-Q
      'Who is such that Yenghi meet (him/her)?'

Under our analysis, the object *wh*-phrase *nwukwu* in (11) is LDed. Then *nwukwu* undergoes SubMove, leaving *pro* in its base-generated position shown in (12), and the D-linked property of dislocated *wh*-object results.

(12) [$_{CP}$ [$_{NP}$ Nwukwu]$_i$ [$_{TP}$ Yenghi-ka$_j$ [$_{vP}$ t$_j$ [t$_i$ pro]..]T]C]

SubMove

Note further that the parallel behavior between scrambled bare objects and bare subjects cannot be captured under the functional analyses. Put another way, the functional analyses focus basically on functional roles (i.e. subject/object), so the semantic properties of dislocated bare NPs cannot be captured under this proposal. Our formal analysis, on the other hand, is concerned with structural positions of bare NPs (i.e. VP-internal vs. VP-external), and can provide a uniform account for the previously observed semantic restriction of the subject WH and scrambled WH based on syntactic principles since they are all LDed.

3. Semantic/Pragmatic Implications

The structural difference between bare NP subjects and bare NP objects correctly predicts the high occurrence rate of bare NPs in complement positions. Given that the bare NP in a complement position can freely occur as part of a syntactic predicate, restrictions on the bare NP are predicted to be relatively weak. Put differently, the presence of bare objects in canonical positions is grammatically unmarked, and is not regulated by any semantic/pragmatic constraints. By contrast, the dislocated bare NPs in non-complement positions are grammatically designed as such to exhibit extra discourse semantics. Therefore, unlike bare NPs in complement position, those in VP-external positions are expected to be distributionally more marked and semantically more restricted (see D. Lee 2002, Ohara 2001, Shimojo 2006 for similar facts in Japanese).

Given that 1st and 2nd person subjects are given information in the discourse, they are more likely to function as LDed nominals that trigger D-linked reading or topical reading, compared with 3rd person subjects. The relevant examples that may support this argument are given in (13). ('!' indicates a marked use in discourse.)

(13) a. Ne-(!ka) etiey ka-ss-ni?
      You-Nom where go-Past-Q   'Where did you go?'
  b. Ne-(!ka) kwail-ul elmana sa-ss-ni?
     you-Nom fruit-Acc how many buy-Past-Q 'How many fruits did you buy?'
  c. Wuli-(!ka) etilo ka-l-kka?
     We-Nom where go-Fut-Q   'Where will we go?'
  d. Wuli-(!ka) mwusun yenghwa bo-l-kka?
     We-Nom what   movie   watch-Fut-Q 'What movie will we watch?'

S.Ko (2002: 237) notes that the bare NP forms are strongly preferred in (13). Since the referents of 1st and 2nd person subjects are pragmatically assumed in their context, bare NP subjects, which are LDed nominals, are more coherent in these contexts. The unnaturalness of subjects with Nominative Case marker *-ka* is accounted for parallel to *ga*-marked subjects in Japanese, as discussed in Kuno (1972). According to Kuno (1972: 273), *-ga* as a subject marker in the matrix sentence always signals that the subject conveys new, unpredictable information. Note that the speaker's or hearer's existence or coming into existence is presupposed in a regular conversational discourse. Therefore, it is implausible for the speaker to talk about his or addressee's existence or appearance at the place of his speaking as if it were an entirely new event. This seems to be why all the first/second person nominals with *-ka* marker make the relevant sentences much more unnatural.

We can also account for the contrast that S.Ko (2002: 237) observes for the third person subject which can occur with or without a nominative Case marker, as shown in (14).

(14) a. Chelswu-(ka) etilo ka-ss-ni?
      Chelswu-Nom where go-Past-Q   'Where did Chelswu go?'
  b. Chelswu-(ka) mwusun yenghwa-lul po-ni?
     Chelswu-Nom what movie watch-Q   'What movie does Chelswu watch?'

Since referents of third person subjects are not pragmatically assumed in the discourse, the occurrence of *-ka* marker doesn't make the sentences unnatural unless the subject is mentioned in the previous discourse or presupposed.

Our analysis can further be confirmed by the following examples, which are Korean counterparts of Japanese examples discussed in Kuno (1972).

(15) a. Na-nun i   hoysa-uy pwuhoycang-i-ta.

I-Top   this company vice-president-Cop-Dec
'I am a vice-president in the company.'
  b. Nay-ka i   hoysa-uy pwuhoycang-i-ta.
      I-Nom this company vice-president-Cop-Dec
      'I am the only vice-president in the company.'
  c. Na-∅   i   hoysa-uy pwu-hoycang-i-ta.
      I   this company vice-president-Cop-Dec
      'I am a vice-president in the company.'

Kuno (1972: 283) observes the subject with the overt Nominative -*ga* marker implies that there are no other vice-presidents in the company. This is, according to him, due to the force of exhaustive listing of -*ga*. He observes that such a connotation does not exist with a topic maker, or with no markers. The same contrasts are found in Korean, as in (15). This contrast is correctly predicted under the LD/sentence-topic analysis of bare NP subjects. LDed NPs share some discourse properties with topics such as specificity or D-Linkedness, so the paradigm naturally follows.
  The following examples further confirm the fact that presence of -*ka* marker is enforced by exhaustive listing meaning the referent has (cf. Ono et al 2000: 70).

(16) Wuli cip-un yecha-*(ka) motwu khu-ta
      our family woman-Nom all big-Dec   'As for my family, women are all big.'
(17) A: Etten tongali-ey kaipha-yess-ni?
          which club join-Past-Q   'Which club did you join?'
      B: Yengehoyhwa-*(ka) cohtako sayngkakhapni-ta
          English conversation-Nom good think-Dec
          'I think that English conversation club may be good.'

In this case, a speaker uses *ka*-marked nominal X in order to convey the following meaning: the meaning of 'X (and only X) ...' or 'It is X that ...' Therefore, the nominal with -*ka* is generally a discourse-new information. Given the fact that Bare NPs in subject positions are either LDed nominals or sentence topics, they are predicted to be ruled out in (16-17).
   The analysis advanced here further explains the fact that definite subjects such as pronouns and names show the higher rate of Case deletion than low definite ones (see H.Lee 2006a,c, K.Lee 2002, Masunaga 1988, Ono et al. 2000, Yatabe 1999).

(18) a. Ce-∅ hyuka-lul   daum tal-lo   milwu-ess-e-yo.
        I   vacation-Acc next month-lo postpone-Past-Dec
        'I (humble) postponed my vacation to next month.'
  b. Ahn Sungbae haksayng-∅ sihem-ul an machiko   nays-e-yo.
      Ahn Sungbae student exam-Acc   not complete submit-Past-Dec.
      'Ahn Sungbae student submitted the exam without completing it.' (cf. H.Lee 2006a: 77)

Definite expressions referring to individuals already known to the hearer are more likely to function as sentence topics or as LDed nominals, and hence definite subjects are expected to occur more frequently without Nom Case than low definite ones.
  Our analysis also makes a correct prediction about bare NP subjects in specific/non-specific contexts in (5), repeated here as in (19).

(19) a. (Yeysnal-ey) **han/etten namca-*(ka)** sal-ass-ta.
          long.time-at a/a.certain man-(Nom)   live-Past-Dec
          '(Long time ago) there was a man lived.'
  b. (Yeysnal-ey) Mary-ka **han/etten namca-(lul)** manna-ss-ta.

long.time-at M.-Nom a/a.certain man-(Acc)   meet-Past-Dec
'(Long time ago) Mary met a man.'

In (19a), the bare NP is not allowed because the modifier *han/etten* can license only nonspecific nominals. Since the bare NP subject is inherently specific or D-linked, it cannot co-occur with nonspecific marker semantically. Note, however, that this restriction doesn't apply to bare NP objects. Thus, in (19b), under our analysis, a bare NP object is a purely optional counterpart of the Accusative Case-marked NP, which can be generated as part of a complex predicate. An Accusative Case marker on the object can be freely unpronounced with non-specific modifier.

Note further that as observed in the previous discourse studies, overt realization of Acc Case in (19b) may induce a "focal" reading (Jun 2005, E.Ko2000, S.Lee2006, Matsuda 1995). By contrast, overt realization of Nom Case in (19a) does not necessarily give rise to a focal interpretation.

This minimal difference implies that our syntactic treatment of Nom/Acc asymmetry is on the right track. In other words, the presence of Nom Case is compulsory in canonical subject position, viz., in non-dislocated position. Thus, overt Nom Case should cover wider range of discourse information in contrast to overt Acc Case considering pragmatic division of labor. Note further that Acc Case in dislocated position, namely, in scrambled position cannot be absent. Thus, it is predicted that the appearance of Acc Case on scrambled NPs does not necessarily give rise to focalization effects on a par with that of Nom Case in canonical subject position. Hence the scrambled NP in (20a) is not necessarily focalized unless it receives extra focal strategy such as special prosody and the like.

(20) a. Way ecey   **Chelswu-lul** Mary-ka   manna-ss-ni?
        why yesterday Chelswu-Acc Mary-Nom meet-Past-Q   (neutral reading is unmarked)
     b. Way ecey   Mary-ka   **Chelswu-lul** manna-ss-ni?
        why yesterday Mary-Nom Chelswu-Acc meet-Past-Q   (focal reading is unmarked)
      'Why did Mary meet Chelswu yesterday?'

Although the judgment is subtle, (20b) contrasts with (20a) in that only the Acc Case-marked object in-situ is more likely to be focalized as in (20b).

Note that the focalization in (20b) is contrastive, which crucially differs from completive focus/information, informational focus, or presentational focus. With this in mind, consider the following examples:

(21) (Over the phone)
     Nay-ka cikum ne-(!lul) pole ka-l-kkey
     I-Nom now you-Acc see go-Fut-Dec   'I'll go to see you now.'
(22) isang   iss-umyen i mwulken-(!ul) pakkwule olkkey-yo
     problem be-found-if this item-Acc exchange go-Dec
     'If a problem is found, I will return this item.'   (S. Ko 2004: 228)

In (21), *ne* 'you' cannot indicate new information and doesn't perform identification function. Thus, unless you intend to emphasize/focalize who you are going to see, the bare NP is preferred in neutral context. A similar explanation can be given in (22). In normal context, it is not necessary to focalize the item you are going to return if it has a problem. In other words, it is naturally expected that malfunctioning items will be returned to the store within a warranty period. Thus, the appearance of Acc marker on the object in (22) is predicted to be unnatural in the usual context under our conception of the functional role of overt Acc Case.

S. Lee (2006) proposes that bare NPs without Acc markers are more restricted or "marked" from the perspective of neo-Gricean pragmatics, utilizing Levinson's (2000) pragmatic

inferences. His argument is based on the contrast between Case-marked object and bare NP object in (23).

(23) a. Yengho-nun   Seoul Yek   tayhapsil-eyse   kwutwu-lul tak-ass-ta
  Yengho-Top Seoul Station waiting-room-at shoes-Acc shine-Past-Dec
  'Yengho had his shoes shined at Seoul Station waiting room.'
  b. Yengho-nun   Seoul Yek   tayhapsil-eyse kwutwu-Ø tak-ass-ta.
  Yengho-Top Seoul Station waiting room-at shoes shine-Past-Dec
  'Yengho was a shoeshine boy at Seoul Station waiting room.'

Unlike the Case-marked form *kwutwu-lul* 'shoes-Acc' in (23a), the Caseless form *kwutwu-Ø* 'shoes' in (23b) is more likely to induce idiomatic reading with its predicate *takassta* 'shined'. Hence, *kwutwu-Ø tak-ass-ta* tends to be interpreted as 'he was a shoe-shine boy'. A similar contrast is given in (24).

(24) a. Nehi apeci-nun   tayhakkyo tanil-cekey Shin Sung-Il ppyam-ul   chi-ess-ta
  Your father-Top college go-when Shin Sung-Il cheek-Acc hit-Past-Dec
  'When your father was a college student, he hit Shin Seung-Il's cheek.'
  b. Nehi apeci-nun   tayhakkyo tanil-cekey Shin Sung-Il ppyam-Ø chi-ess-ta
  Your father-Top college go-when Shin Sung-Il cheek hit-Past-Dec
  'When your father was a college student, he was more handsome than the handsome actor Shin Sung-Il'

Unlike (24b), the Caseless form *ppyam* 'cheek' in (24b) only induces idiomatic reading 'outdo' with its predicate *chi-* 'hit'. (24a), in contrast, induces only literal reading. Thus, it seems that "*ppyam + chi-*" in (24b) is conventionalized as an idiom unlike "*kwutwu ttakk-*" in (24b).
 The complex predicate formation approach to the bare object NPs advanced here correlates directly with this consequence, dispensing with additional (meta)-pragmatic functions since idioms in general can be analyzed as extended complex predicate formations (Marantz 1984; Larson 1988).

(25)   VP ⇒ V 'outdo'
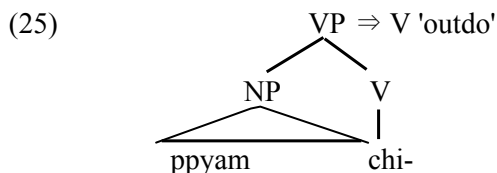
If the preferred or obligatory idiomatic readings with bare objects can be explained by complex predicate formation as in (25), our general claim is still sustained: namely, bare NPs in complement positions are unmarked forms and Acc-marked forms are marked ones containing special information since idioms are usually derived from unmarked formation across languages.
 Crosslinguistly, contrasts similar to (20) are detected in Accusative Case variation in Kannada. Lidz (2006) observes that Acc Case-marked objects receive a specific interpretation only when this morphological marking is optional (this is the case within animate direct objects). When the Accusative Case morpheme is obligatory, specificity effects are positional and are not due to the presence of the morpheme (this is the case with animate direct objects, for instance). In this case, additional morphology is required in order to achieve the specific interpretation. In Korean, the morphological marker -*nun* (often called Topic marker) is widely employed in subject positions to make semantic/pragmatic distinction from Nom Case, instead of overt/covert Nom distinction. The marker -*nun*, however, occurs only in certain very limited contexts in object positions since we can exploit overt/covert Acc distinction here quite freely for "soft" pragmatic distinctions including focalzation/emphasis or implicature (S. Lee 2006). The presence or absence of Nom

Case, on the other hand, gives rise to "hard" semantic/pragmatic effects such as specificity, definiteness, D-Linking, and the like. Thus, extra uses of the marker -*nun* with subjects (and perhaps with the dislocated NPs in general) are relatively more frequent and significant than the one with the objects in situ on pragmatic considerations.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored subject-object asymmetries of morphological Case realization and semantic/pragmatic implications under the formal analysis proposed by Ahn & Cho (2006; 2007b). According to Ahn & Cho (2006; 2007b), bare NP objects and subjects have different structural sources: bare NP objects form a "syntactic" complex predicate with subcategorizing verb, whereas bare NP subjects are LDed nominals. Hence, the distribution of bare NP subjects is closely related to discourse properties. Specifically, we have shown that such structural difference between bare NP subjects and bare NP objects results in various kind of asymmetries: high occurrence rate of bare NP objects, person/definiteness effects in bare NP subjects, and presence or absence of D-linked interpretation for bare WHs. We also discussed the contexts where overt morphological Case marking is strongly preferred. When the speaker wants to convey the meaning of 'X (and only X) ...' or 'It is X that ...', the subject nominal generally occurs with -*ka* marker. The object nominal, by contrast, occurs with -*lul* marker mostly when contrastive focalization/emphasis is given to it. Our formal account of subject-object asymmetries concerning non-pronunciation of Case markers in Korean sharply contrasts with the functional approaches such as H. Lee (2006a-c) which might basically exploit the idea that subjects and objects prototypically differ with respect to the hierarchies of person, animacy and definiteness. Our analysis can present a firm basis for these hierarchies that underlie the functional flavor of Case marking variations.

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