

# Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The purpose of this letter is to point out errors in Walker, Iida, and Cote (1994) concerning precedent in work on centering in Japanese, and thereby to set the scholarly historical record straight. Walker, Iida, and Cote misrepresent the following facts:

1. Kameyama (1985, 1986, 1988) applied the centering theory of Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein (1983) to Japanese. The central intuition there was that zero pronominals in Japanese were like unstressed pronouns in English. This was the first attempt to apply the theory to a language other than English.
2. Among pragmatic treatments of anaphoric elements, centering represents an intermediate approach between purely semantic and purely syntactic. This intermediate position first originated in Sidner (1979, 1983), and was also taken in Kameyama's treatment of Japanese zero pronominals.
3. Unlike Sidner, who used thematic roles to order the Cf (or potential foci), Kameyama determined that surface grammatical functions mattered to centering. This directly influenced the view expressed in Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein (unpublished manuscript 1986) about the importance of grammatical subjects (Grosz, personal communication), on which the centering algorithm used in Walker, Iida, and Cote (1994) is based.

The most controversial remark in Walker, Iida, and Cote (1994) appears on p. 224: "Although Kameyama uses the centering terminology, her account is not based on the constraints and rules of centering theory as developed here and presented in (Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein 1983, unpublished; Brennan, Friedman, and Pollard 1987)."

Kameyama's work began in 1983 with Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein (1983) as the basis; it was heavily influenced by the simultaneous development of Grosz, Joshi, and Weinstein (1986), but did not result in exactly the same specific proposal. Furthermore, the Walker, Iida, and Cote (1994) remark misrepresents the centering theory by narrowly identifying it with a particular algorithm.

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