

Comparing Numeral Classifier Constructions in Japanese and Korean: The Role of Case Projection in Constituency Differences

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Cho, Youngyoon & Yoo, Yongsuk. Comparing numeral classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean: The role of case projection in constituency differences. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 31(2), 45-61. This paper provides a comparative analysis of numeral classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean, focusing on the differences in constituency and the underlying syntactic structures. Through the examination of the base structures of NPs combined with conjunction and their total and separate interpretations, as proposed by Sudo (2015), we apply various constituency tests to investigate these phenomena. Our findings reveal key differences between the two languages, particularly in the role of Case Projection in determining constituency properties. This study contributes to the understanding of Japanese and Korean numeral classifier constructions and the broader field of comparative linguistics.

Key Words: numeral classifier, case projection, comparative syntax, Korean and Japanese

1. Introduction

This article contends that the parallel structure of classifier constructions in Korean and Japanese exhibits significant differences in constituenthood due to the presence or absence of Case projection (KP), as explored in the observations presented by Sakamoto and Yoo in

2016. Many people, including both Korean and Japanese speakers, recognize the similarities between the two languages, as their sentence structures often appear quite similar on the surface, with both sharing some words and employing a subject-object-verb (SOV) structure. However, when delving deeper into the intricate details of these languages, several notable differences become apparent (Ishizuka, 2009; Saito & An, 2014; Migawa, 2005), making it important to carefully compare and contrast their linguistic features.

This paper aims to investigate the differences and similarities between numeral classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean, with a particular focus on the interpretation of these constructions when host nouns are a set of NPs connected by a conjunction. The discussion will be organized as follows: first, we will provide a general overview of numeral classifier constructions in both languages, followed by an examination of the base structures of total and separate interpretations proposed by Sudo (2015). We will then delve into the constituency properties of numeral classifier constructions by applying various constituency tests. Finally, we will explore the broader implications of our findings for the study of numeral classifier constructions and linguistic theory.

By investigating the mechanisms of numeral classifier construction Japanese and Korean numeral classifier constructions, this paper seeks to enhance our understanding of these languages and contribute to the field of linguistics.

2. Numeral Classifier Constructions in Japanese and Korean

Numeral classifier constructions are utilized in both Japanese [JP] and Korean [KR] to express quantity and count objects. It can precede or follow their host nouns. When the host noun is a set of NPs connected by a conjunction such as 'and', the position of the classifier plays a role in determining the interpretation. Following (1) and (2) are the example sentences:

- | | | | | | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| (1) a. | Taroo-ga | go-nin-no | otoko-to | onna-o | aisiteiru |
| | Taroo-NOM | five-CL-GEN | men-and | woman-ACC | love |
| | Lit: 'Taro loves five men and woman.' | | | [JP] (√total; √separate) | |
| b. | Taroo-ga | otoko-to | onna-o | go-nin-no | aisiteiru |
| | Taroo-NOM | men-and | woman-ACC | five-CL-GEN | love |
| | Lit: 'Taro loves man and woman five.' | | | [JP] (√total; √separate) | |

- (2) a. Taroo-ka Tases-myeng-uy **namca-wa** **yeca-lul** cohahanda.
Taro-NOM five-CL-GEN men-and woman-ACC love
Lit: 'Taro loves five man and woman.'
[KR] (√ total; √ separate)
- b. Taroo-ka **namca-wa yeca-lul** Tases-myeng cohahanda.
Taro-NOM men-and woman-ACC five-CL love
Lit: 'Taro loves man and woman five.'
[KR] (√ total; × separate)¹⁾
(Sakamoto & Yoo 2016)

In (1), Japanese allows both total and separate interpretations, regardless of the classifier's position relative to the host noun which is in bold letters. Both (1a) and (1b) can convey either that a group of five men and women arrived (total interpretation), or that five men and an indefinite number of women arrived (separate interpretation). Like Japanese, Korean numeral classifiers can precede or follow their host nouns. However, the classifier's position plays a more critical role in determining meaning in Korean. In (2a), both total and separate interpretations are acceptable as the numeral classifier *Tases-myeng-uy* precedes the host noun. In (2b), conversely, only the total interpretation is permitted when the numeral classifier *Tases-myeng* follows the host noun, distinguishing Korean from Japanese in (1b).

However, there are also cases that numeral classifiers can either precede or follow their host nouns without altering the meaning in both Japanese and Korean. When the host noun is a single noun, the meaning remains unchanged regardless of the classifier's position. Following (3), (4), and (5) are the examples:

- (3) a. Tases-myeng-uy **namca-ka** wassta
Ffive-CL-GEN man-NOM came
lit: 'Five man came' [KR]

1) Below is the survey I made to figure out the probable meaning of the sentence.

Question: What is the meaning of the sentence "Taroo-ka namca-wa yeca-lul Tases-myeng cohahanda"? (Total 62 people whose mother tongue is Korean participated.)

- (1) Total 5 of man and woman that Taro likes. [53.23%]
- (2) A man and 5 women that Taro likes. [8.06%]
- (3) Taro and the man like the same 5 women. [4.84%]
- (4) Both the first option and the second option are possible. [12.90%]
- (5) Both the first option and the third option are fine. [1.61%]
- (6) The sentence in the question is ungrammatical. [19.35%]

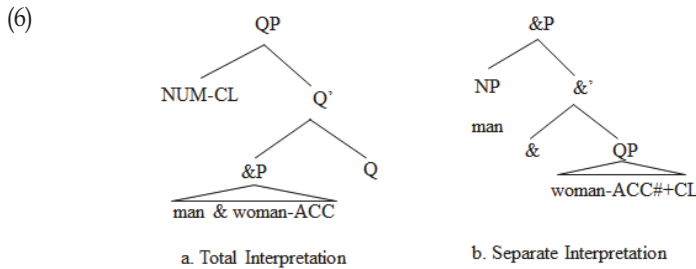
	b. Go-nin-no	otoko-ga	kita
	five-CL-GEN	man-NOM	came
	lit: 'Five man came'	[JP]	
(4)	a. Namca-ka	Tases-myeng	wassta
	man-NOM	five-CL	came
	lit: 'Five man came'	[KR]	
	b. Otoko-ga	go-nin	kita
	man-NOM	five-CL	came
	lit: 'Five man came'	[JP]	
(5)	a. Namca	Tases-myeng-i	wassta
	man	five-CL-NOM	came
	lit: 'Five man came'	[KR]	
	b. Otoko	go-nin-ga	kita
	man	five-CL-NOM	came
	lit: 'Five man came'	[JP]	

(Sakamoto & Yoo 2016)

In (3) and (4), we can see the position of the numeral classifier (*go-nin* and *tases-myeng*) doesn't make any difference in contrast to (1) and (2). They can also combine with case markers as (5) as Kim(2005) noted, this aspect will not be covered in this paper. To further understand these differences, we need to examine the base structure of total and separate interpretations in both languages.

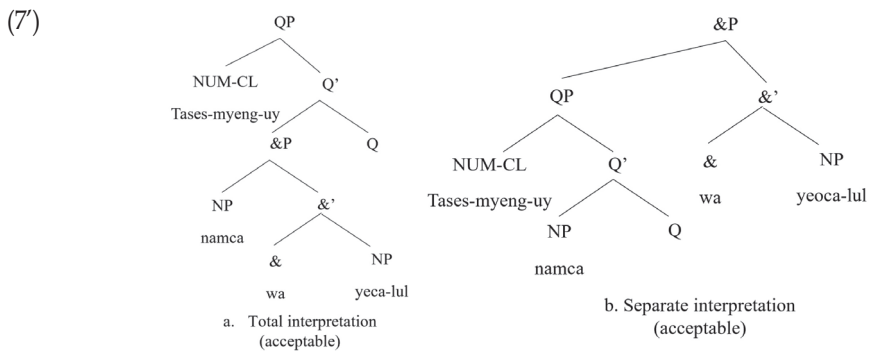
3. Base Structures of NPs with Total and Separate Interpretations

Sudo (2015) investigated the structure of NPs in languages that allow for both total and separate interpretations, specifically focusing on the interaction between quantifier phrases (QP) and conjunction phrases (&P). The study aimed to determine the base structures responsible for each interpretation and shed light on the syntactic properties of NPs in these languages. According to Sudo (2015), two base structures account for total and separate interpretations in languages that allow for both interpretations. Syntax trees on (6) are the two different structures of 'man and woman-ACC #+CL'.



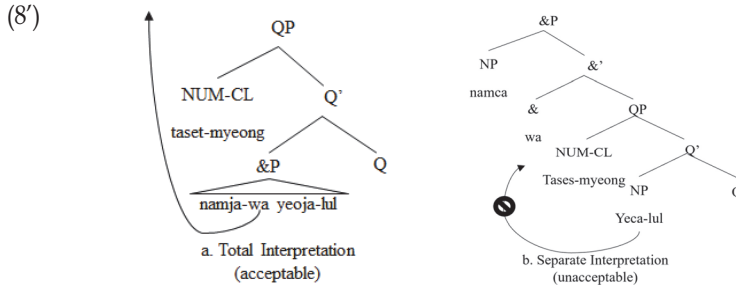
In (6a), the QP is positioned above the &P, with the &P functioning as the complement of the Q. This hierarchical arrangement results in a total interpretation, where the quantifier encompasses the entire set of NPs connected by the conjunction. Conversely, in (6b), the &P is situated above the QP, with the QP serving as the complement of the &. This configuration leads to a separate interpretation, in which the quantifier applies individually to the second NP, which is 'woman' in (6b). Following (7) and (7') are one example sentence and its syntactic structures in Korean language:

- (7) Taroo-ka **tases-myeng-uy** **namca-wa yeca-lul** **cohahanda.**
 Taro-NOM five-CL-GEN men-and woman-ACC love
 Lit: 'Taro loves five man and woman.' [KR] (∨ total; ∨ separate)



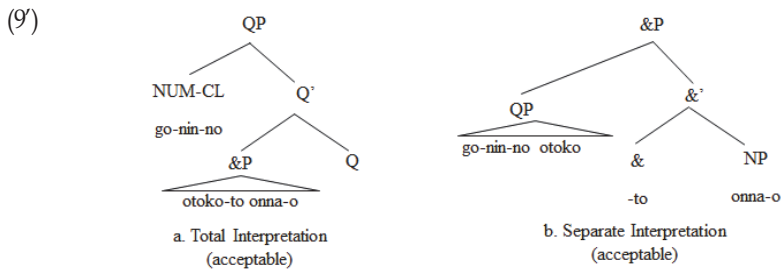
Sentence (7) is acceptable with both total interpretation and separate interpretation, which is shown in (7'a) and (7'b) respectively if the numeral classifier *tases-myeng* precede the host noun *namca wa yeca-lul*. Following (8) and (8') are another example sentence and its syntactic structure in Korean.

- (8) Taroo-ka **namca-wa yeca-lul** **Tases-myeng** cohahanda.
 Taro-NOM men-and woman-ACC five-CL love
 Lit: 'Taro loves man and woman five.' [KR] (√ total; x separate)



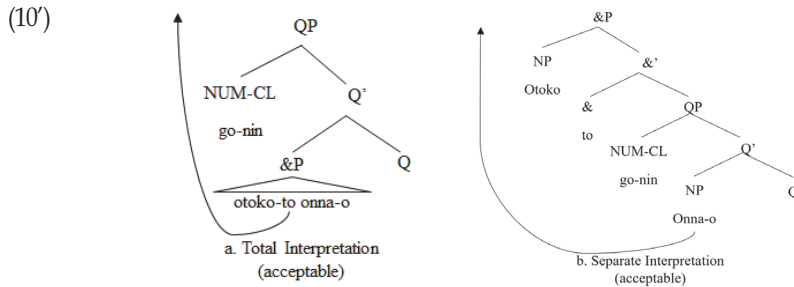
Comparing (8) with (8'a), &P *namca-wa yeca-lul* can move out of QP since the total interpretation is accepted. On the other hand, in (8'b), the movement of NP *yeca-lul* out of QP is somehow impossible as we can see the separate interpretation is not permitted when the classifier and NP forms a QP. Following (9) and (9') are one example sentence and its syntactic structure in Japanese.

- (9) Taroo-ga **go-nin-no** **otoko-to onna-o** aisiteiru
 Taro-NOM five-CL-GEN men-and woman-ACC love
 Lit: 'Taro loves five man and woman.' [JP] (√total; √separate)



In (9), same with Korean example (7), both interpretations are permitted when the numeral classifier precede the host noun as in (9'a) and (9'b) respectively. Following (10) and (10') are another example sentence and its syntactic structure in Japanese.

- (10) Taroo-ga **otoko-to** **onna-o** **go-nin** aisiteiru
 Taro-NOM men-and woman-ACC five-CL love
 Lit: 'Taro loves man and woman five.' [JP] (√total; √separate)



Given that both (10'a) and (10'b) are acceptable, not only &P in (10'a) but also the later NP *onna-o* in (10'b) can move out from QP in Japanese, which is different from (8'b). With the difference, I assume that it would be constituency that enables later NP *onna-o* in (10'b) to undergo movement since only the constituent can undergo movement. This finding has significant implications for the analysis of numeral classifier constructions in Korean and paves the way for applying constituency tests to further investigate this phenomenon.

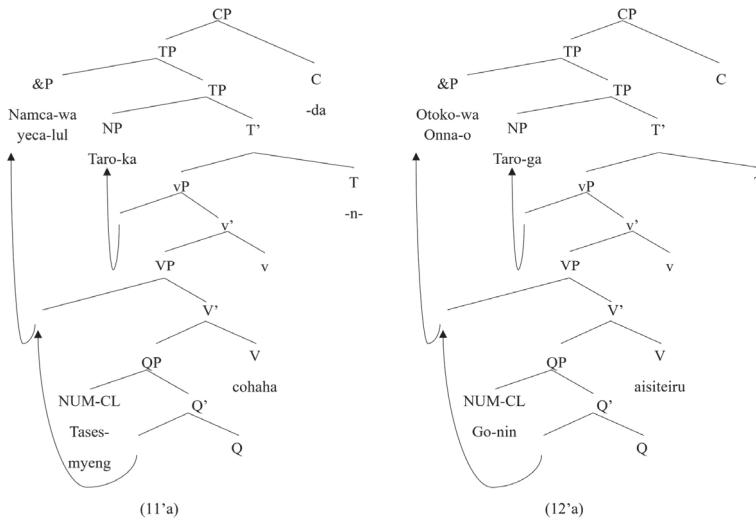
4. Constituency Tests for Numeral Classifier Constructions

In this section, we will demonstrate that the sequence under consideration (NP-Case NUM-CL) constitutes a constituent in Japanese, but not in Korean. Taking into account the semantic distinctions discussed in the preceding chapter, we will provide evidence that the sequence in question exhibits distinct behaviour in relation to constituency tests such as movement, clefting, pronominalization, and fragment answers.

Firstly, let's examine the movement tests to determine the constituency of the sequence under scrutiny. In both Korean and Japanese languages, the scrambling of elements marked with the accusative case is generally permitted, as illustrated in example sentence and syntactic structures in (11) and (12).

- (11) [Namca-wa yeca]-lul Taroo-ka t Tases-myeng cohahanda.
 men-and woman-ACC Taro-NOM five-CL love
 Lit: 'Man and woman, Taro love five.' [KR](v total; x separate)
- (12) [Otoko-to onna]-o Taroo-ga t go-nin aisiteiru
 men-and woman-ACC Taro-NOM five-CL love
 Lit: 'Man and woman, Taro love five.' [JP] (v total; x separate)

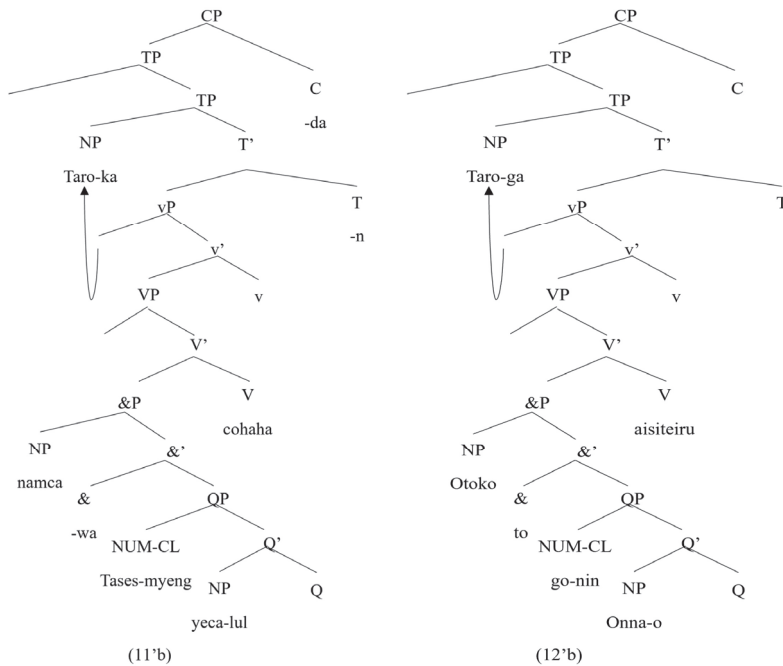
In both (11) and (12), both languages permit object scrambling of conjoined NPs, *namca-wa yeca* and *otoko-to onna*. This eliminates the possibility that the NPs are in the (8b) and (10b) structure, where the second NP (*yeca* in (11) and *onna* in (12)) forms a constituent under the base structure. As predicted by the current test, the separate interpretation is absent in (8). Following (11'a) and (12'a) are the syntactic structures of (11) and (12) in total interpretation respectively.



When we figure out the meaning of sentences in (11'a) and (12'a) in the way of total interpretation, the conjoined NPs moved from its original position to the adjunct position of TP (Miyagawa, 2005).²⁾ I assume the reason of its possibility that

2) Supposing the higher projection above QP exists as XP, [NP-CASE NUM-CL] can be a constituent as follows: [_{XP} namca-wa yeca-lul X [_{QP} Tases-myeng [_{&P} t] Q]]. In addition, *namca-wa yeca-lul* can move

[NP-CASE NUM-CL] structure is also a constituent according to Bošković (2014) and Abels (2004) that a lexical phrase's highest projection qualifies as a phase and the movement of a phasal complement into its specifier is prohibited. Following (11'b) and (12'b) are the probable synthetic structures in separate interpretation respectively.



When we adopt the (6b) structure into both (11) and (12), the constituent 'NP-Case NUM-CL' with 'NP & NP-Case' as another one is not able to be made as the complement of VP in both (11'b) and (12'b).³⁾ This phenomenon actually proved our analysis on (6b) since it satisfies that the structure cannot be made.

out of XP and make sentence (11) grammatical since it forms constituent as well.

3) If we suppose that there is a higher projection above QP, the whole &P should be as follows: [_{&P} namca wa(&) [_{XP} yeca-lul X [QP Tases-myeng [_{&P} t] Q]]].

In this case, *namca-wa yeoca-lul* cannot undergo movement out of &P since it is not a constituent.

Secondly, the sequence under examination can be clefted in Japanese but is not possible in Korean. It is important to note that Korean nominative/accusative case-marked elements are not compatible with copula (Park, 2014). Despite the fact that the sequence in question lacks a case marker adjacent to the copula, we cannot entirely dismiss the possibility that the sequence used in this example might be [NP-Case CL-Case] (*sakwa-lul sae-key-lul*). Given that our system posits that a Case-marked NP preceding the classifier cannot constitute a constituent in Korean due to its internal syntactic structure, this would not undermine our analysis. Nonetheless, we will not delve further into the precise nature of clefting in this context.

- (13) *Taro-ka mekun-kes-un **sakwa-lul** sey-kay ita
 Taro-NOM ate-NML-TOP apple-ACC three-CL COP
 Lit: ‘It was three apples that Taro ate’ [KR]
- (14) Taroo-ga tabeta-no-wa **ringo-o** mi-ttu da
 Taro-NOM ate-NML-TOP apple-ACC three-CL COP
 Lit: ‘It was three apples that Taro ate’ [JP]

The existence of grammatical error in sentence (13) demonstrates that *sakwa-lul sae-key* (which translates to ‘apple-ACC three-CL’) cannot be focused on the cleft construction. Conversely, the corresponding part in (14), *ringo-o mi-ttu*, can be focused on the construction. This provides additional evidence that the QP in (6b), specifically the [NP-CASE #-CL] sequence, cannot form a constituent in Korean, while it can in Japanese.

- (15) a. Taro-ka kyengchal-kwa [**totwuk-ul tases-myeng**] cohaha-ni?
 Taro-TOP police-and thief-ACC five-CL love-Q
 Lit: ‘Does Taro love police and thief five?’
- b. *Ani, kangto-wa [**kutul-ul**] cohahanda
 no gangster-and they-ACC love
 Lit: ‘It was three apples that Taro ate’ [KR]
- (16) a. Taro-wa keisatu-to [**doroboo-o gonin**] aisiteiru no?
 Taro-TOP police-and thief-ACC five love Q
 Lit: ‘Does Taro love police and thief five?’

- b. Iya, yakuza-to [karera-o] aisiteimasu.
no gangster-and they-ACC love
Lit: 'It was three apples that Taro ate' [JP]

In (15), *kutul* 'they' cannot take *totuk-ul tases-myeng* 'thief-ACC five-CL' as its antecedent, making (15b) unacceptable. Meanwhile, in (16), *karera-o* 'they' can take *doroboo-o gonin* 'thief-ACC five-CL' as its antecedent. The contrast between (15) and (16) supports the idea that the QP in (6b) cannot form a constituent in Korean, while it can in Japanese.

- (17) a. Taro-ka kyengchal-kwa **nwuku-lul** cohaha-ni?
Taro-TOP police-and who-ACC love-Q
lit: 'Taro loves police and who?'
b. ***Kangto-lul** tases-myeng
gangster-ACC five-CL
lit: 'Gangster five'
b'. Tases-myeng-uy **Kangto**⁴⁾
five-CL-GEN gangster
lit: 'five Gangster' [KR]
- (18) a. Taro-wa keisatu-to **dare-o** aisiteiru no?
Taro-TOP police-and who-ACC love Q
lit: 'Taro loves police and who?'
b. **Yakuza-o** go-nin
gangster-ACC five-CL
lit: 'Gangster five'
b'. Go-nin-no **Yakuza**
five-CL-GEN gangster
lit: 'five Gangster' [JP]

As shown in (17), in contrast to (17b) with the [NP-CASE #-CL] format, only (17b') with the [#-CL NP] format is acceptable. However, in (18), both [NP-CASE #-CL] in (18b) and [#-CL NP] in (18b') are acceptable. This analysis further

4) 'Kangto Tases-myeng' can also be a grammatical answer on (17a) since 'Kangto Tases-myeng' is considered as a noun according to Kim (2010).

supports the notion that the [NP-CASE #-CL] structure does not form a constituent in Korean, as opposed to Japanese.

In this section, we have conducted an in-depth investigation of numeral classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean, focusing on the constituency patterns within these constructions. We employed a series of constituency tests, including Object Scrambling, Clefting, Pronominalization, and Fragment Answer, to examine the status of the numeral classifier constructions in both languages.

These observed cross-linguistic differences in the constituency patterns of numeral classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean which is the pre-condition of the movement provide valuable insights into the underlying syntactic structures and their relation to semantic interpretation. Moreover, these findings contribute to our understanding of the broader principles governing the organization and interpretation of constituents in natural languages. However, even if sentences with conjoined NPs in Japanese form a constituent with numeral classifiers, I assumed that there would be another condition that actually causes the movement.

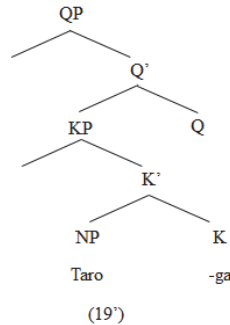
In the following section, we contend that the noted discrepancies in the constituency of the sequence under examination stem from the presence or absence of Case projection (KP) in Korean and Japanese languages.

5. The Role of Kase Projection (KP) in Constituency Differences

In this section, we explore the possible explanation for the observed differences in constituency between Japanese and Korean numeral classifier constructions. We argue that the acceptability of forming a constituent of [NP-CASE #-CL] in these languages can be attributed to the presence of Kase Projection (KP), a higher functional projection that takes NP as its complement.

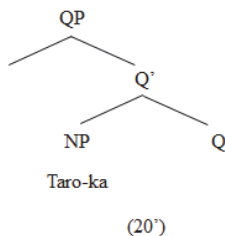
Prior to examining the syntactic variations resulting from the presence or absence of KP in Korean and Japanese, we aim to present empirical evidence that demonstrates the existence of a distinct Case projection in Japanese, which can be regarded as bar-level ellipsis (Saito & Lin & Murasugi, 1994). Following (19) and (19') are the example sentence in Japanese and syntactic structure of word with bold letters in (19A) which is ellipited in (19B).

- (19) A: [**Taroo**]-ga tukimasita ka? B:[Δ_{NP}]-ga mada tuiteimasen.
Taro -NOM arrived Q -NOM yet arrived-not
lit: 'Has Taro arrived?' lit : '-NOM has not arrived yet.' [JP]



Japanese allows for particle-stranding ellipsis, as demonstrated in the analysis of (19A) and (19B). This supports the idea that Japanese features QP-KP-NP structure, where the NP serves as the complement of KP as in (19'). The presence of this independent KP node facilitates the ellipsis of the NP complement, enabling particle-stranding ellipsis to occur in Japanese. Following (20) and (20') are the example sentence in Korean and syntactic structure of word with bold letters in (20A), which is not allowed to be ellipsed in (20B).

- (20) A: [**Taroo**]-ka tochakhayssupni-kka?
Taro-NOM arrived-Q
lit: 'Has Taro arrived?'
B:*[Δ_{NP}]-ka acik tochakhacianhassupnida.
-NOM yet arrived-not
lit : '-NOM has not arrived yet.' [KR]

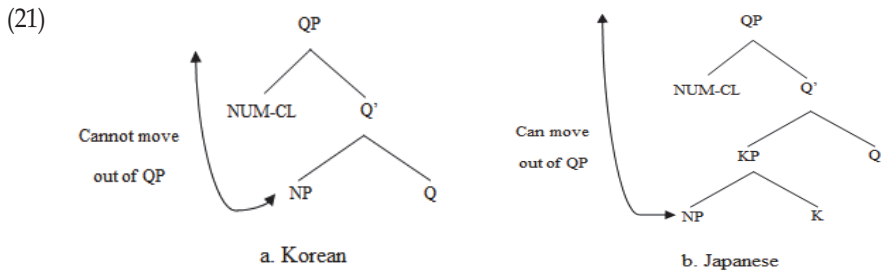


Korean does not permit particle-stranding ellipsis as in (20B), which Shibata (2014) and Bošković(2014) already noted. This absence of ellipsis suggests that Korean does not possess an independent KP node within its nominal domain with numeral classifiers. Instead, Korean seems to exhibit a simpler, the structure composed of QP and NP as in (20'). The case marker *ka* is dependent on its argument *Taro*, which blocks actual noun *Taro* to form a constituent and be ellipped.

Given the evidence from particle-stranding ellipsis, it can be concluded that Japanese nominal domains with numeral classifiers indeed involve a QP-KP-NP structure (Takahashi, 2011; Bošković, 2014). The presence of KP in Japanese syntax allows for the ellipsis of the NP complement, enabling particle-stranding ellipsis to occur.

Conversely, the lack of particle-stranding ellipsis in Korean suggests that its nominal domains with numeral classifiers involve a simpler, QP-NP structure. The absence of an independent KP node in Korean syntax accounts for the unavailability of particle-stranding ellipsis in this language.

The presence or absence of KP in the syntax of Japanese and Korean has a significant impact on the syntactic organization and interpretation of numeral classifier constructions. The QP-KP-NP structure in Japanese, which includes KP, allows for a greater range of interpretations and syntactic flexibility. In contrast, the QP-NP structure in Korean restricts the possible interpretations and syntactic configurations in numeral classifier constructions. We inferred that the difference in structure would affect the movability of later NP in conjoined NPs in (10'b). Since particle stranding ellipsis itself doesn't involve movement (Yamashita, 2019), I would delve it further with (21), Japanese and Korean nominal structure.



As demonstrated in (21), the [NP-Case #-CL] sequence necessitates the shifting of NP into the specifier of QP, under the assumption that a lexical phrase's highest projection qualifies as a phase, according to Bošković (2014). Since the movement of a phasal complement into its specifier is prohibited (i.e., anti-locality) as per Abels (2004), the [NP-Case #-CL] sequence is unable to form a constituent in Korean.

Several technical aspects warrant further clarification. One might argue that in Japanese, NP scrambling should involve the movement of KP rather than NP, leading to a similar anti-locality violation as observed in Korean. We maintain that in this situation, NP undergoes scrambling while leaving the headless KP behind with its Case marking. Although this assertion may appear somewhat arbitrary, it has been argued that there are instances where the pertinent element is attached to the moving component while stranding the remaining projections. We could also find the previous study that there is KP in Korean in Seo (2017). We argue that the presence of KP in Korean would not predict the ungrammaticality of Case stranding ellipsis discussed in (20b). We will further investigate differences of Korean and Japanese nominal structures in terms of their presence/absence of projections.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has delved into the complexities of classifier constructions in both Korean and Japanese languages, highlighting the significant differences in constituenthood that arise from the presence or absence of Case projection, as discussed by Sakamoto and Yoo (2016). Although speakers of both languages may notice apparent similarities in sentence structures, such as shared words and the use of the subject-object-verb (SOV) structure, a more profound analysis reveals a multitude of distinct linguistic features (Ishizuka, 2009; Saito & An, 2014; Miyagawa, 2005).

This paper has focused on examining the distinctions and parallels between numeral classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean, particularly when interpreting constructions involving sets of NPs connected by a conjunction. Our investigation has encompassed a general overview of numeral classifier constructions in both languages, an analysis of the base structures for total and separate interpretations as proposed by Sudo (2015), and an exploration of constituency properties through various tests.

By scrutinizing the underlying structures and mechanisms governing numeral

classifier constructions in Japanese and Korean, this paper has not only broadened our comprehension of these languages but also contributed valuable insights to the ongoing dialogue in the field of linguistics.

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