# Focus Types and Gradients in Korean Case Ellipsis

Hanjung Lee*†

Sungkyunkwan University

**Hanjung Lee. 2008. Focus Types and Gradients in Korean Case Ellipsis.** *Language and Information 12.2*, 1–20. This paper examines the effects of focus types on case ellipsis in Korean. A number of previous studies have suggested that accusative case markers in Korean and Japanese cannot be dropped when the object they mark is contrastively focused (Masunaga, 1988; Yatabe, 1999; Ko, 2000; Lee, 2002). Using experimental evidence, we argue against the view that case ellipsis in Korean is sensitive to the distinction between contrastive vs. non-contrastive focus. An alternative analysis is proposed which accounts for the phenomenon of variable case marking in terms of the interaction between the contrastive strength and the discourse accessibility of focused object NPs. By viewing patterns of case ellipsis as the result of balancing between these two forces, such an analysis can correctly predict the gradient pattern of case ellipsis shown by the three types of focused objects tested in the experiment (contrastive replacing focus, contrastive selecting focus and non-contrastive, informational focus), while at the same time offering an explanation for why subtypes of focus exert distinct influences on case ellipsis. (**Sungkyunkwan University**)

**Key words:** case marking, case ellipsis, focus types, contrastiveness, accessibility

## 1. Introduction

Korean has been described as a language in which all subjects and objects are case-marked, though case marking is optional in colloquial speech. An example of ellipsis of case markers is given in (1):

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* Department of English, Sungkyunkwan University, 53 Myoungryun-dong, 3 ga, Jongro-ku, Seoul 110-745, Korea. E-mail: hanjung@skku.edu

(1) a. Ecey       Minswu-ka    chinkwu-lul manna-ss-ta.
       yesterday Minsoo-Nom friend-Acc   meet-Pst-Indic
       'Minsoo met his friend yesterday.'

    b. Ecey       Minswu-ka    chinkwu      manna-ss-ta.
       yesterday Minsoo-Nom friend(-Acc) meet-Pst-Indic
       'Minsoo met his friend yesterday.'

In (1b), the object *chinkwu* 'friend' appears without the following accusative case marker *-lul*, which would normally indicate the object of the verb. While (1a) and (1b) are semantically equivalent, i.e., in both cases the actor is *Minswu* and the theme is *chinkwu* 'friend', they may differ in contextually determined meanings, pragmatic functions, attitudes of interlocuters.

This paper examines the effects of the focus type of object NPs on the choice between case-marked and case-ellipsed objects in colloquial Korean. In a number of previous studies, the notion of contrastive focus has been claimed to be an important factor affecting case ellipsis in Japanese and Korean (Tsutsui, 1984; Masunaga, 1988; Ko, 2000; Lee, 2002, among others). For instance, Ko (2000) has suggested that the accusative case marker *-(l)ul* in Korean cannot be dropped when the object it marks is contrastively focused, i.e., when it is interpreted as contrasting with some other object(s) of the same type. More recently, Lee (2002) has analyzed the function of particle ellipsis in Japanese as 'absolute specification', i.e., referring to an entity without implying the existence of some alternative.

Using evidence from an elicitation experiment, we argue against the view that the naturalness of object case ellipsis in Korean can be explained in terms of the distinction between contrastive and non-contrastive focus. Instead, we show that patterns of object case ellipsis are sensitive to a more fine-grained distinction between focus types. Section 2 examines the two major information structure concepts that are of interest in this paper: focus and contrastiveness. Section 3 presents a brief summary of the generalizations that have emerged from previous studies on the focus effect on case ellipsis and then addresses the question why focus and contrastiveness are relevant to case ellipsis and case marking. After discussing the hypotheses to be tested in the experiment in section 4, in section 5 we provide experimental evidence in support of the view that patterns of object case ellipsis are sensitive to a more fine-grained distinction between focus types. It is argued that the distinct influence of the three subtypes of focus tested in the experiment can be accounted for in terms of the interaction between the contrastive strength and the degree of the discourse accessibility of a focused object. Section 6 offers a summary and some conclusions.

## 2. Focus and Contrastiveness

Focus is usually defined as the portion of the sentence that the speaker assumes is not known to the hearer. Focus is distinguished into two types: contrastive focus and non-contrastive focus. Contrastive focus involves an explicit choice among the limited set of contextually given alternatives, whereas non-contrastive focus does not require the contrast set (Chafe, 1976; Rooth, 1992; Kiss, 1998; Vallduví and

Vilkuna, 1998). Non-contrastive, informational focus simply marks new information in the sentence without explicitly contrasting it with something in the discourse. A very common example of informational focus is an answer to a WH-question:

(2) A: Who wants to marry Jane?

B: John wants to marry her.

B's utterance is non-contrastive if it is an answer to A's question: the focus indicates the referent is novel, or newly activated. Note that formally identical sentences may receive either a contrastive or non-contrastive interpretation, depending on context:

(3) A: Who wants to marry Jane, John or Tom?

B: John wants to marry her.

B's answer in (3) is contrastive because it selects *John* from the contrast set provided in the context. If, however, no such context set were provided by A, *John* in B's answer would be non-contrastive focus, as in (2).

Contrastive focus is further distinguished from non-contrastive, informational focus in terms of exhaustiveness (Chafe, 1976; Kiss, 1998). The exhaustive nature of contrastiveness means that once a subset is selected and marked as contrastive, all other members and subsets of members of the set are excluded.[1] For example, the sentence in (4B) containing a contrastive focus conveys that it was *only a hat and nothing else* Mary picked out for herself, whereas the informational focus in (5B) merely presents *a hat* as new information, without suggesting that the hat was the only one of a set of relevant things for Mary.

(4) A: Did Mary buy a shirt?

B: No, it was <u>a hat</u> that she picked for herself.

(5) A: What did Mary buy?

B: She picked <u>a hat</u> for herself.

To summarize briefly, contrastiveness is the state in which there is a set of entities that is mutually known (a contrast set) and one member is chosen from that set to the exclusion of the other members. Contrastive focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the

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[1] An anonymous reviewer points out that both (2B) and (3B) imply that John is one and the only person who wants to marry Jane. While an answer to a WH-question which functions as informational focus can be interpreted as exhaustive, in the case of informational focus, by picking out one alternative the rest is only implicitly excluded and the excluded alternatives may not be mutually known to interlocutors. This effect is due to the Gricean maxim of quantity licensing the hearer to assume that the speaker's statement is the strongest, or most informative, that can be made in the situation. By contrast, contrastive focus involves a closed set of contextually specified alternatives and hence the excluded alternatives must be explicitly given in the context.

predicate phrase can potentially hold, whereas non-contrastive, informational focus only conveys new, non-presupposed information. These properties of contrastive focus—the availability of a limited set of contextually given alternatives and exhaustiveness—contextualize the interpretation of contrastively focused elements and hence make them highly prominent as compared to non-contrastive focus (Choi, 1999; Cowles, 2003).

## 3. Focus Types and Case Ellipsis

In a number of previous studies, the notion of contrastive focus has been claimed to be one of the strongest factors affecting case ellipsis in Japanese and Korean (Tsutsui, 1984; Masunaga, 1988; Ko, 2000; Lee, 2002, among others).[2] This claim has been formulated in various ways by different scholars:

> My assumption is that whenever the pertinent NP is deemphasized or defocused, the case marker can be deleted (Masunaga, 1988, 147).

> The ellipsis of the case particle (CP) of an NP-CP is unnatural if the NP-CP conveys the idea of exclusivity (Tsutsui, 1984, cited from Yatabe (1999)).

> The nominative case particle *ga* in Japanese cannot be dropped when the expression it marks is focused, i.e., when the expression it marks is interpreted as contrasting with some other object(s) of the same type (Yatabe, 1999, 79).

> I suggest that *-lul* is a focus marker in the sense of the alternative semantics of Rooth (1985) which is elaborated in Vallduví and Vilkuna (1998): a set of alternatives for the 'focused' constituent is generated as an additional denotation (Ko, 2000).

In certain cases, however, case ellipsis of the accusative case marker is favored even though the object it marks is contrastively focused. Consider the following example in (6), taken from Lee (2006a, 333):

> (6) A: Jinmi-ka    computer(-lul)  sa-ss-e, hywudayphon(-ul) sa-ss-e?
>       Jinmi-Nom computer(-Acc) bought, cell phone(-Acc)    bought
>       'Did Jinmi buy a computer or a cell phone?'
>
>     B: computer(-lul) sa-ss-e.
>       '(She) bought a computer.'

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[2] Additional factors affecting the naturalness of case ellipsis in Japanese and Korean which will not be discussed here include the following: the formality of the extralinguistic context, familiarity among interlocuters (Lee and Thompson, 1985; Ko, 2000), the kind of semantic role that a nominal argument bears (Lee, 2002), specificity of the object (Kim, 1993), syntactic position of the argument (Ahn and Cho, 2006; Ahn and Cho, 2007), length of the argument NP, utterance length, proximity of the NP to the predicate (Fry, 2001) and the animacy, definiteness and person of argument NPs (Lee, 2005; Lee, 2006b). For extensive reviews of previous studies, see Fry (2001), Lee (2005), Lee (2006b), Lee (2006).

In B's reply, 'computer' is an example of what Dik and others (1981) refers to as 'selecting contrastive focus'. This type of contrastive focus does not involve any explicit contradiction of some other previously stated alternative. As in B's reply in (6), the speaker simply picks out one of the two candidates presented in a disjunctive question uttered by A. What's interesting about the formal expression of selecting focus objects is that as Lee (2006) notes, they seem to favor case ellipsis over explicit accusative marking. All Korean speakers we have consulted agree that the version with case-ellipsed selecting focus is more natural than that with the case-marked counterpart, while both versions are grammatically well-formed.

Selecting focus is in sharp contrast to 'replacing focus', which does not show strong preference for case ellipsis:

(7) A: Jinmi-ka     computer(-lul)   sa-ss-e.
       Jinmi-Nom computer(-Acc) bought
       'Jinmi bought a computer.'

    B: Aniya, hywudayphon(-ul) sa-ss-e.
       No,     cell phone(-Acc)    bought.
       'No, (she) bought a cell phone.'

Unlike selecting focus, replacing focus explicitly contradicts a stated alternative and is considered the clearest instance of contrastiveness in some pragmatic approaches to contrastiveness (Lambrecht, 1994; Lee, 2007). The contrast between the two subtypes of contrastive focus illustrated above suggests that not all kinds of contrastive focus may behave in the same way with respect to their formal realization. One of the goals of the experiment, which will be presented in section 5, will be to examine whether and how the two subtypes of contrastive focus (replacing vs. selecting focus) exert distinct influences on variable case marking in Korean.

Why is it that contrastiveness is relevant to case ellipsis and case marking? In Lee (2006a), we have argued that the effect of focus type is a reflection of the 'identifying' function of case marking. de Hoop and Narasimhan (2008) argue that in its identifying function case-marking identifies arguments that are strong or prominent subjects or objects in order to distinguish between more prominent subjects and objects and less prominent ones. Thus for Korean the identifying function predicts more prominent or stronger focus type, i.e., contrastive focus to be more frequently case-marked than weaker focus type, i.e., non-contrastive focus. Hence the identifying function explains the tendency observed in our experiment that objects left unmarked more frequently when they are low-prominent in the dimension of focus (i.e., non-contrastive focus) than when they are more prominent (i.e., contrastive focus).[3]

de Hoop and Narasimhan (2008) suggest two criteria of argument strength that apply to subjects and objects. One such criterion is 'discourse prominence'.

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[3] Another widely attested function of case marking is to disambiguate arguments in terms of their function in the clause, especially where these are most likely to be confused (Dixon, 1972; Dixon, 1979; Comrie, 1978; Aissen, 2003). This function of case marking is known as the 'distinguishing' function of case. Lee (2006a) argues that the effects of animacy, definiteness and person on Korean case ellipsis/marking are distinguishing rather than identificational.

Another way of measuring the 'strength' of an argument is by looking at its semantic prototypicality, i.e., the degree to which it possesses certain features that characterize the argument's role in the expressed event. Following de Hoop and Narasimhan (2008), we will use 'strength' measured in different ways as a comprehensive term for different factors such as discourse prominence, referentiality, proto-role properties, etc.

## 4. Contrastive Strength, Accessibility and Case Ellipsis

Recall that in its identifying function, case marking identifies strong arguments to distinguish more prominent subjects and objects from less prominent ones. Thus an account of case marking based on argument strength would predict that contrastively focused arguments to be more frequently case-marked than arguments that are not contrastively focused. This account further predicts stronger subtypes of contrastive focus to be more frequently case-marked than weaker ones. Of the two subtypes of contrastive focus tested in this experiment, which one is stronger than the other in terms of contrastiveness? Let us consider main sources of contrastiveness to clarify this question. The most important criteria that have been discussed in the literature in connection with the definition of contrastiveness are listed below:

(8)  a.  Membership in a set

 b.  Limited set of alternatives

 c.  Exhaustiveness

 d.  Explicit contradiction of alternatives

The basic requirement for contrastiveness is membership in a set, namely that we can generate a set of alternatives for the focused constituent (Jackendoff, 1972; Rooth, 1985; Krifka, 1993; Vallduví and Vilkuna, 1998). Rooth (1985) and Krifka (1993) claim that a focus always evokes a set of alternatives. According to this view there is no contrastive focus to be separated from the ordinary, informational focus. Instead, focus is viewed as uniformly conveying a contrast between the actual element in focus and the potential alternatives. In fact, informational focus may involve membership in a contextually or lexically evoked set, though it does not require the existence of a contrast set. This is illustrated in (9):

(9)  A:  Did you finish packing what you need?

 B:  Yes, I packed <u>toothpaste and a hair-drier</u>. But I forgot my toothbrush.

*Toothpaste* and *a hair-drier* can trigger a set of travel items in the context of (9) (due to the previous mention of *packing*), and these items can provide the contrast needed for the focused *toothpaste* and *a hair-drier*.

In many approaches to focus, however, membership in a set is narrowed down to the requirement of a *closed* set. The decisive criterion for contrastiveness is

thus, according to Halliday (1967), Chafe (1976) and Rooth (1992), the availability of a limited number of candidates. When the set of possibilities is unlimited (or not contextually restricted), the sentence supplies only new information and fails to be contrastive. Contrastiveness adds the requirement of exhaustiveness (Chafe, 1976; Kiss, 1998). Thus based on the two decisive criteria for contrastiveness (the limited number of candidates and exhaustiveness), we can define contrastive focus as follows: a contrastively focused constituent refers to alternatives in a contextually limited set where the alternatives are known to the participants of the discourse and identifies one element exclusively out of that set.

A further criterion of contrastiveness is explicit contradiction of some previously stated alternative(s). Halliday (1967) defined contrast to mean something that is contrary to a previously stated or predicted alternative. However, while it is the case that contrastiveness often has this corrective reading as in the case of replacing focus (example (7)), it does not require it, as shown in (6) above.

The criteria of contrastiveness mentioned above lead to the following distinction between foci:

(10) Distinction between foci according to contrastive properties

|  | Informational focus | Selecting focus | Replacing focus |
|---|---|---|---|
| Membership in a set | √ | √ | √ |
| Limited set of alternatives | X | √ | √ |
| Exhaustiveness | X | √ | √ |
| Explicit contradiction of alternatives | X | X | √ |

On the basis of this distinction, we can also derive the following scale of contrastiveness where higher positions correspond to greater contrastive strength:

(11) Scale of contrastive strength:
     Replacing focus > Selecting focus > Informational focus

Informational focus is the least clear or weaker instance of contrastiveness because it meets only the most basic requirement for contrastiveness, namely that of membership in a set. In addition to this, selecting focus meets two other criteria for contrastiveness, i.e., the limited number of candidates and exhaustiveness, and replacing focus meets the additional requirement of explicit contradiction of stated alternatives. Thus informational focus can be considered the least clear or weakest instance of contrastiveness, while replacing focus is the strongest instance of contrastiveness having the greatest number of crucial factors of contrastiveness.

The account of case marking based on contrastive strength would predict that of the three subtypes of focused objects, overt case applies most frequently to replacing focus objects and least frequently to informational focus objects, in line with the degree of contrastive strength:

(12) Prediction of contrastive strength:
     Overt case-marking ←————————————————— Case ellipsis
     Replacing focus > Selecting focus > Informational focus

An alternative account of the phenomenon of variable case marking that is conceivable is to focus on the function of *case ellipsis* rather than on the (identifying) function of *case marking*. Why do speakers sometimes omit elements of syntactic structure that are normally obligatory? The short answer to this question is that speakers exploit ellipsis "for reasons of economy or style" (Crystal, 1997, 134). The first function, economy of expression is, as the philosopher H.P. Grice observed, one of the fundamental principles underlying how speakers communicate with one another. Speakers strive to be only "as informative as required" and to "avoid unnecessary prolixity" (Grice, 1975). From this perspective, ellipsis can be viewed as a mechanism by which speakers achieve more efficient communication (Nariyama, 2000). However, ellipsis is not merely a tool for compressing utterances. Speakers often exploit ellipsis in order to convey aspects of the 'packaging' of their message. Hawkins (2004) argues that economy of expression is tied to the accessibility or cognitive status of a referent, i.e., the degree of activation of a referent in a mental representation: the more accessible entities are referred to by shorter and more reduced forms.

The accessibility of a referent is affected by three main factors: recency of mention, explicit mention, and unity—whether the previous mention of the referent is in the same or previous sentence, or in the same or previous paragraph. Entities that have been recently mentioned are more accessible than those mentioned further back in time (Prince, 1981; Ariel, 1990). Entities that have been mentioned explicitly are also more accessible than those whose existence is derived by an associative or bridging inference or by a general knowledge frame (Clark and Haviland, 1977; Hawkins, 1978; Matsui, 2000). Entities are more accessible when they are mentioned in the same or previous sentence than when they are not (Arnold, 1998; Almor, 1999).

Coming back to the problem of the morphosyntactic encoding of focus accessibility, focus is not generally associated with high accessibility of its referent. But it is not the case that the referent of focus is always inaccessible. While focused referents do not consistently encode highly accessible referents, empirical work on the processing of focus shows that both topic and contrastive focus cause an increase in referent accessibility that leads to a preference for pronominal co-reference (Arnold, 1998; Almor, 1999; Cowles, 2003). Cowles (2003) argues that this similarity between topics and contrastive foci with respect to referent accessibility is attributable to their shared property of presupposition of existence. As discussed earlier, in order for a sentence containing a contrastive focus to be felicitous, elements that are within the scope of that focus are presumed to exist prior to the utterance, even when they are not previously given in the discourse. Topics also necessarily presuppose the existence of their referent (Lambrecht, 1994). These studies thus provide evidence in favor of the higher accessibility of contrastive focus compared to non-contrastive focus.

Of the two subtypes of contrastive focus tested in the current experiment, selecting focus can be considered more accessible than replacing focus in terms of givenness and unity. The referent of the selecting focus is often explicitly mentioned in a disjunctive question uttered by the previous speaker, whereas replacing focus does not have to take up a previously mentioned referent. Unlike replacing focus,

selecting focus does not involve any explicit contradiction of some other previously stated alternative and satisfies the previous speaker's expectation or presupposition that his or her question will be answered with one disjunct (Lee, 2007), thus leading to more predictable continuation of the discourse. This unity in turn may result in higher activation for the representation of the referent of the selecting focus.

   Since more accessible entities are preferentially referred to by shorter or less complex forms, selecting focus objects are expected to be case-ellipsed more frequently than objects that represent other kinds of focus that are less accessible than selecting focus:

(13) Prediction of accessibility:
     Case ellipsis ←——————————————— Overt case-marking
     Selecting focus > Replacing focus > Informational focus
     High accessibility ←——————————— Low accessibility

   The experiment to be reported in section 5 will compare this prediction with the prediction of the account based on contrastive strength by examining the relative frequency of case-marked and case-ellipsed objects according to the three factors (replacing focus, selecting focus and informational focus).

## 5. Effects of Contrastive Strength and Accessibility: Experimental Study

### 5.1 Methods

**Participants**: 98 students from Sungkyunkwan University, ages 20-26, participated in this experiment. The time to complete the experiment was approximately 15-20 minutes. All participants were native speakers of Korean, defined as having learned Korean before age five.

**Procedures**: Each participant was asked to fill in a questionnaire, which contained short conversations between two speakers, providing contexts for the choice of case-marked and case-ellipsed forms of an object. The participants had to choose as spontaneously as possible between the two object forms in the given contexts (A full list of experimental items is given in Appendix). An example of the stimuli used in the experiment is given below.

(14) Example stimuli

| Condition | Stimuli |
|---|---|
| Contrastive-<br>Replacing<br>focus | A: Jinmi-ka     computer(-lul)     sa-ss-e.<br>      Jinmi-Nom   computer(-Acc)   bought<br>      'Jinmi bought a computer.'<br>B: Aniya,   hywudayphon-ul/∅   sa-ss-e.<br>      No,     cell phone-Acc/∅     bought.<br>      'No, (she) bought a cell phone.' |
| Contrastive-<br>Selecting<br>focus | A: Jinmi-ka     computer(-lul)     sa-ss-e,    TV(-lul)<br>      Jinmi-Nom   computer(-Acc)   bought,   TV(-Acc)<br>      sa-ss-e?<br>      bought<br>      'Did Jinmi buy a computer or a TV?'<br>B: computer-lul/∅ sa-ss-e.<br>      '(She) bought a computer.' |
| Non-<br>contrastive-<br>Informational<br>focus | A: Ecey       mwuel     sa-ss-e?<br>      yesterday   what.Acc   bought<br>      'What did you buy yesterday?'<br>B: hywuka   cwung   ilk-u-lyeko   chayk-ul/∅    sa-ss-e.<br>      break     during   read-to     book-Acc/∅   bought<br>      '(I) bought books to read over the break.' |

There were 20 items per condition, 60 items altogether. The items used in the questionnaire were further controlled for other factors in the following way:

(15) a. Only the nominal objects of transitive verbs were included in the questionnaire.

b. The type of the head of object NPs has been limited to a countable common noun.

c. The factors of animacy and definiteness have been controlled by keeping them constant throughout the questionnaire. The object is always inanimate and indefinite.

Controlling items in this way, the present study attempts to investigate the choice between overtly case-marked and case-ellipsed focused objects in what can approximate real choice contexts where the influence of other factors is kept to a minimum.

## 5.2 Results
Figure 1 below shows the relative frequency of case-marked and case- ellipsed objects according to the three types of focus tested. We can see that case-ellipsed forms are most frequent in the selecting focus condition (65%) and least frequent in the replacing focus condition (35%). By contrast, accusative-marked forms are most frequent in the replacing focus condition (65%) and least frequent in the selecting focus condition (35%). These results are significant at the 0.05 level ($\chi^2$=9.66, df=2)

(16)  Figure 1. Relative frequency of case-marking vs. case ellipsis for three types
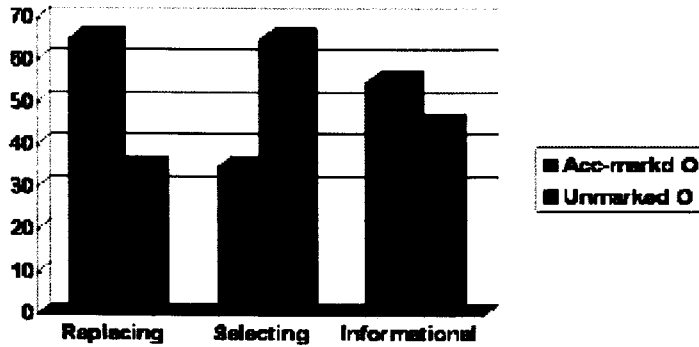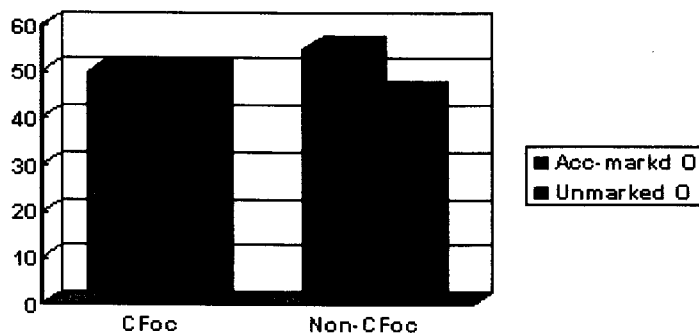       of focused objects



Figure 1 further shows that case-ellipsed forms are more frequent only in the se-
lecting focus condition, while in the other two conditions, accusative-marked forms
are more frequent.

When collapsing replacing focus and selecting focus into a single category of
contrastive focus and considering how the two object forms are distributed in
the two conditions, the following picture emerges. As shown in Figure 2, non-
contrastive, informational focus objects show higher rate of overt case marking
(55%) than contrastively focused objects (50%). The table further reveals that the
rate of case ellipsis for contrastively focused objects (50%) is higher than the rate
for informational focus objects (45%), but the difference is not significant ($\chi^2$=0.5,
df=2).

(17)  Figure 2. Relative frequency of case-marking vs. case ellipsis for contrastively
       focused objects and informational focus objects



These results show that the dichotomous distinction between contrastive vs. non-
contrastive focus is insufficient to account for the gradient pattern of case ellipsis for
focused objects. Moreover, the results are not consistent with prior claims regarding
the influence of contrastiveness on case ellipsis in Korean, calling into question the

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categorical generalization offered in previous studies that accusative case markers cannot be dropped when the object they mark is contrastively focused.

### 5.3 Discussion

In this section we consider implications that this experiment has for theoretical accounts of variable case marking. We show that neither an account based on contrastive strength nor an accessibility-based account is sufficient to explain why subtypes of focus show different preferences for case marking and case ellipsis. We propose an alternative account that combines a more fine-grained distinction between focus types with the functional, cognitive motivations for case marking and case ellipsis.

**5.3.1 Accounts Based on Contrastive Strength.** As discussed in section 4, according to the account of case marking based on argument strength (e.g., Lee (2006a)), the rate of case marking for argument NPs is sensitive to their relative strength in contrastiveness. If this is the case, replacing focus objects should show higher rate of case marking than the other two kinds of focused objects, in line with the degree of contrastive strength: replacing focus > selecting focus > informational focus. The experiment presented in section 5.2 provides support for this account as well as showing some results that it does not predict. Support for this account is found in the highest rate of case marking on replacing focus objects. However, the experiment also showed that informational focus objects are overtly case-marked by the accusative case marker more often than selecting focus objects. This finding is not consistent with the prediction of the account based on contrastive strength and cannot be accounted for in an account that takes into account contrastiveness as a sole factor triggering case marking.

**5.3.2 Accessibility-based Accounts.** The highest rate of case ellipsis on selecting focus objects confirms the prediction of an accessibility-based account that rate of case ellipsis is sensitive to the degree of the accessibility of argument NPs. The difference between selecting focus objects and replacing focus objects with respect to the rate of case ellipsis is attributable to the higher accessibility of the referent of selectively focused constituents. While offering a good account of the difference between selecting focus objects and replacing focus objects, the accessibility-based account offers no account of why informational focus objects, which are least accessible among the three subtypes of focused objects tested, show higher rate of case ellipsis than replacing focus objects. This suggests that an account which attempts to explain case variation solely in terms of the accessibility of arguments but does not take their contrastive strength into account would be inadequate.

**5.3.3 The Balance between Form Minimization and Identification of Strong Arguments: A Proposal.** Why should accessibility be such an important factor that results in form minimization? Levinson (2000) and Hawkins (2004) suggest that what underlies form minimization is processing enrichment, that is inferences of various sorts which make use of linguistic or contextual clues. Levinson (2000) discusses an important truth about the exploitation of such clues, namely

'Inference is cheap': these inferences take place anyway, and it is inefficient to undertake additional processing of forms and properties when the relevant properties are already inferable contextually or are readily accessible for other reasons. Hawkins (2004) formulates a similar idea as the principle of Minimize Forms (MiF):

> *Minimize Forms* (MiF): The human processor prefers to minimize the formal complexity of each linguistic form F and the number of forms with unique conventionalized property assignments, thereby assigning more properties to fewer forms. These minimizations apply in proportion to the ease with which a given property P can be assigned in processing to a given F.          (Hawkins, 2004, 38)

The principle of MiF predicts that the processor prefers minimizations in unique form-property pairings. Both formal units and unique property assignments can be minimized by using morphologically simple forms for frequently used elements and for properties that are inferable contextually or through inferences or real-world knowledge.

The strong preference of selecting focus for case ellipsis follows naturally from MiF: it is because of the high accessibility of the referent of selecting focus that it has priority for a simpler form, i.e., zero-marking. Although minimizing forms and assigning properties through on-line processing enrichments reduce overall processing effort in many cases, one cannot minimize everything and assign all properties through on-line inference. There has to be a balance in human languages between conventionalized forms and their linguistic properties on the one hand, and on-line inference on the other. This balance is achieved by the interaction of processing ease and conventionalization or grammaticalization. Hawkins (2004, 41-42) suggests that processing ease regulates reductions in form, while frequency and preferred expressiveness regulate grammaticalization preferences.

Which properties get priority for unique assignment to forms in the grammar or lexicon is subject to language-specific choices. In the domain of case marking, it is often the case that the semantic proto-typicality and/or discourse prominence of arguments that have priority for overt case marking (Legendre, Raymond, and Smolensky, 1993; Næss, 2004; de Hoop and Narasimhan, 2008). The use of case morphology to mark argument prominence is said to have identificational motivation (see section 3). As discussed in section 4, replacing focus is the most strongly contrastive focus type. This explains why replacing focus objects show highest rate of overt case marking.

Thus, on this account, gradient patterns of case marking and case ellipsis in Korean are viewed as a result of balancing between processing efficiency and the need to express argument strength. We have argued that only an approach to case variation that seriously considers both the economy motivation for case ellipsis and the identifying function of case marking is capable of providing a complete view of the effects of focus types on case variation and that in so doing it may also answer the question why subtypes of focus show different preferences for case marking and case ellipsis.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper has examined the effects of focus types on case ellipsis in Korean. A number of previous studies have suggested that accusative case markers in Korean and Japanese cannot be dropped when the object they mark is contrastively focused (Masunaga, 1988; Yatabe, 1999; Ko, 2000; Lee, 2002). Using experimental evidence, we have argued against the view that case ellipsis in Korean is sensitive to the distinction between contrastive vs. non-contrastive focus. Instead, we have shown that patterns of object case ellipsis are sensitive to a more fine-grained distinction between focus types. We have proposed an alternative analysis which accounts for the phenomenon of variable case marking in terms of the interaction between the contrastive strength and the discourse accessibility of focused object NPs. By viewing patterns of case ellipsis as the result of balancing between these two forces, such an analysis can correctly predict the gradient pattern of case ellipsis shown by the three types of focused objects tested in the experiment (contrastive replacing focus, contrastive selecting focus and non-contrastive, informational focus), while at the same time offering an explanation for why subtypes of focus exert distinct influences on case ellipsis.

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## <Appendix: Materials for the Experiment>

[Contrastive—Replacing focus]

1.  A:   진영이 너, 대학교 간다고 아빠가 컴퓨터 바꿔줬다며? 좋겠네.
    B:   컴퓨터는 무슨. 이젠 공부만 하라며 책상을 / 책상 새로 사주신대. 필요도 없는데.

2.  A:   지난 바자회 때는 모자가 제일 인기 있었다면서요? 올해는 또 어떨지 궁금하네.
    B:   그렇지도 않아요. 막판 가서 보니깐 사람들이 가방을 / 가방 제일 많이 찾더라고요.

3.  A:  엄마, 여기 형광등 사왔어요.
    B:  얘, 너 정신 어디다 놓고 다니니? 내가 액자 걸게 <u>못을 / 못</u> 구해오랬잖아.

4.  A:  너 어제 몇 시에 들어왔어? 너 엄마가 밤 늦게 절대 택시 타지 말라고 했지?
    B:  어제는 진짜 <u>버스를 / 버스</u> 탔다니까. 추석 연휴라 연장 운행하는 거 엄마도 알잖아.

5.  A:  이거 한 번 읽어봐. 남자들이 대학 졸업 할 때 제일 받고 싶은 선물이 고급 양복이래.
    B:  야, 이게 벌써 언제적 조사냐? 요즘엔 다들 <u>자동차를 / 자동차</u> 바란다니까.

6.  A:  백화점 좀 갔다 올게. 참, 넌 등산화 그거 사다 주면 되는 거지?
    B:  아니. 이번에 <u>운동복을 / 운동복</u> 바꿔야 된다고 했잖아요.

7.  A:  사장님, 여기 간판 새로 한다면서요? 어디 눈에 확 띄는 걸로 디자인 정하셨어요?
    B:  아니요. 그냥 이 쪽에 큰 <u>창문을 / 창문</u> 낼까 해요. 그게 더 광고 효과가 있을 것 같아요.

8.  A:  아들, 공부 안하고 그렇게 하루 종일 만화책만 볼 거야?
    B:  엄마, 전 지금 <u>역사책을 / 역사책</u> 보고 있다고요. 그림만 보고선 엄마는 참.

9.  A:  자, 이제 얼추 준비가 끝난 거 같은데. 그릇 몇 개만 더 있으면 되겠다.
    B:  아니. 그릇은 충분한 거 같고 주방 가서 <u>컵을 / 컵</u> 좀 넉넉히 가져오자.

10. A:  현주네 집들이 말야. 네가 침대보 선물 하니깐 난 다른 거 하는 수밖에 없네.
    B:  그냥 침대보 하려면 해. 난 이번엔 <u>찻잔을 / 찻잔</u> 주기로 했거든.

11. A:  저기 저거 봐. 전자제품 엄청 싸네. 나도 여기 사은권 있으니까 한 번 가보자.
    B:  아니야. 이 행사는 <u>할인권을 / 할인권</u> 가지고 와야 할 수 있대.

12. A:  과 사무실 가면 학교 마크 박힌 시계 준다던데 너도 가서 받았어?
    B:  아니야. 올해는 예산 때문에 <u>수첩을 / 수첩</u> 준대.

13. A:  너희 애도 일곱 살이지? 우리 아들처럼 맨날 그림책 사달라고 조르겠네.
    B:  영준이는 그래? 우리 민아는 <u>장난감을 / 장난감</u> 그렇게 좋아하더라고.

14. A:  여기요, 사람 더 왔으니까 숟가락 좀 몇 개 더 주세요.
    B:  여기 수저통 있으니까 수저는 됐어. <u>접시를 / 접시</u> 좀 더 달라고 그래.

15. A:  너 요즘 운전 재미에 푹 빠졌다며? 그래, 새 차 끌고 다니니깐 그렇게 좋아?
    B:  어디서 무슨 얘길 들은 거야? 운동 하려고 이달부터 <u>자전거를 / 자전거</u> 타고 다니는데.

16. A:  이제 정리는 다 됐고. 근데 저 장식장 위가 좀 휑한데 인형이라도 하나 없을까?
    B:  그러지 말고 내가 내일 폼 나는 <u>액자를 / 액자</u> 구해 올 테니까 기다려.

17. A:  방이 좀 바뀐 것 같네. 이쪽 벽에 그림이 하나 걸려 있지 않았어?
    B:  아니. 여기 계속 <u>달력을 / 달력</u> 걸어놨었는데 이제 떼버렸어.

18. A:  교육청 자원봉사 신청하는 데 도장 갖고 가면 되는 거 맞지?
    B:  아니야. 공지 안 봤어? <u>학생증을 / 학생증</u> 갖고 오랬잖아.

19. A:  이 시간에 가게는 왜? 종이컵 떨어졌어?
    B:  아니. 가서 이거 담을 <u>상자를 / 상자</u> 하나 얻어 오려고.

20. A:  자네 아직도 도자기 수집 하나? 한동안 거기 푹 빠져 살았잖아.
    B:  아니. 요새는 여기 저기 다니며 <u>기념품을 / 기념품</u> 모으는 게 재미있더라고.

**[Contrastive—Selecting focus]**

1. A: 내가 이번에 첫 월급이잖아. 남자친구 시계 사줄까 아니면 반지 해줄까?
   B: 전번에 얘기해 보니깐 은근히 <u>반지를 / 반지</u> 바라는 눈치던데.

2. A: 당신 오늘 영아한테 이불 보냈다고 했나, 서랍장 보냈다고 했나?
   B: 애가 집이 춥다고 하길래 두꺼운 <u>이불을 / 이불</u> 좀 싸서 보냈어요.

3. A: 전번에 너 자취방에 주전자가 밥솥인가 필요하다 그러지 않았어?
   B: 응. 가끔 라면이라도 만들어 먹으려면 <u>주전자를 / 주전자</u> 갖다 놓는 게 좋을 것 같아.

4. A: 영민아, 너 어제 컴퓨터를 고친거야, 아니면 세탁기를 고친거야?
   B: 하루 종일 <u>컴퓨터를 / 컴퓨터</u> 고치느라고 목하고 어깨가 뻣뻣해 죽겠어.

5. A: 우리 동아리도 내일 축제 참여하는 거야? 근데 풍선 갖고 오라고, 폭죽 갖고 오라고?
   B: 다들 색깔 적당히 섞어서 <u>풍선을 / 풍선</u> 사오는 걸로 하자.

6. A: 정주야, 삼촌 선물 받았니? 머리핀이야? 보석함이야?
   B: 응. <u>보석함을 / 보석함</u> 받았는데 너무 예뻐. 근데 채울 물건이 없다.

7. A: 그 독일 룸메이트 다시 독일 간다며? 편지든 엽서든 하나 써주는 게 예의 아니냐?
   B: 사실 별로 안 친해서 할말도 없어. 그냥 짧게 <u>엽서를 / 엽서</u> 써서 주지, 뭐.

8. A: 짐 다 풀었으면 이제 저녁 해먹자. 너 냄비 갖고 오기로 했지? 아니 젓가락인가?
   B: 난 <u>냄비를 / 냄비</u> 맡았었잖아. 자, 여기.

9. A: 자기 뭐 달라고? 병따개? 행주?
   B: 형님이 <u>병따개를 / 병따개</u> 좀 달래.

10. A: 이쪽 도로에 표지판을 설치하는 거야, 아니면 신호등을 설치한다는 거야.
    B: 아, <u>신호등을 / 신호등</u> 세운대. 여기 아무 것도 없어서 운전하기 좀 불안했는데 잘됐어.

11. A: 자네 방금 지하철에서 뭘 잃어버렸다고? 전자수첩? 휴대폰이랬나?
    B: 응, <u>휴대폰을 / 휴대폰</u> 놓고 내린 것 같아. 큰 일 났네. 분실물 센터에 있으려나.

12. A: 이번엔 회사에서 보육원에 뭘 기부한다니? 의자야 아니면 책장이야?
    B: 보육원에 책이 많다고 <u>책장을 / 책장</u> 기부하기로 했데. 불경기라 보낼 게 많지는 않다.

13. A: 여보, 애 기저귀 간다고? 아님 젖병 갖고 오랬어?
    B: 얼른 깨끗한 걸로 <u>젖병 / 젖병을</u> 하나 갖다 달라니깐.

14. A: 큰 봉지나 보자기 얻을 수 있어? 이거 그냥 들고 가긴 좀 그래서.
    B: 응. 그쪽 서랍에 <u>봉지를 / 봉지</u> 모아 놨으니깐 거기서 갖고 가.

15. A: 혹시 의자나 뭐 사다리 빌려올 수 있어? 높아서 그냥은 힘들겠는걸.
    B: 잠깐만 기다려. 앞 집에 가면 <u>사다리를 / 사다리</u> 빌릴 수 있을 거야.

16. A: 여기 이 경계 말이야. 칸막이를 하는 게 나을까? 아님 벽돌을 쌓는 게 나을까?
    B: 내 생각엔 <u>칸막이를 / 칸막이</u> 하나 주문하는 게 좋을 것 같은데.

17. A: 그럼 그 남자 명함을 줘? 아님 사진을 달라는 거야?
    B: <u>명함을 / 명함</u> 하나 줘. 주말에 내가 직접 연락해서 만나볼 테니.

18. A: 우리 아직 연결 안 된 게 뭐라고? 공유기야, 전화기야?
    B: 빨리 <u>전화기를 / 전화기</u> 사서 달아야 돼. 내일부터는 전화 주문도 받기로 했잖아.

19. A:  다음 학기부터 복도에 정수기를 없앴다니, 아니면 자판기를 없앴다니?
    B:  아, 그거? 위생문제 때문에 몇몇 층 자판기를 / 자판기 없애기로 했대.

20. A:  이번 현장학습 준비물이 뭐라고? 카메라였어, 망원경이었어?
    B:  먼 데 잘 관찰 하려면 망원경을 / 망원경 준비해 오랬어.

**[Non-Contrastive—Informational focus]**

1.  A:  내일 여행 준비는 다 된 거야? 잊은 건 없지?
    B:  맞다. 칫솔을 / 칫솔 챙기는 걸 잊었네. 치약만 챙겼어.

2.  A:  야! 너 얼굴이 왜 그래? 뭐 잃어버렸어?
    B:  급하게 오다가 택시에 지갑을 / 지갑 놓고 내렸지 뭐야. 어떻게 찾지?

3.  A:  아빠 슈퍼마켓에 뭘 사러 가신 거니?
    B:  건전지를 / 건전지 사러 가신대요. 갑자기 시계가 멈추어서요.

4.  A:  집 공기가 왜 이렇게 탁해? 뭐 좀 갖다 놓을까?
    B:  그러지 말고 거실에 화분을 / 화분 몇 개 들여놔 봐. 효과가 있을 거야.

5.  A:  선생님, 내일부터 우리 성은이 잘 부탁 드려요. 수업 때 뭐 따로 준비할 거 있어요?
    B:  특별한 건 없고 필기할 수 있게 따로 공책을 / 공책 하나 준비하면 좋겠네요.

6.  A:  김대리님, 저 오늘 결혼 기념일인데 뭘 사가야 집사람한테 점수 좀 확 딸 수 있죠?
    B:  좀 비싼 걸로 목걸이를 / 목걸이 하나 골라 가봐. 내 경험상 그게 최고야.

7.  A:  넌 피크닉 갈 때 뭐 준비해 올래?
    B:  뭐가 좋을까? 점심도시락을 / 점심도시락 싸올게. 가는 길에 식사할만한 데가 없을 거야.

8.  A:  새 아파트인데 허전해서 뭔가 더 갖다 놓아야 되지 않겠냐?
    B:  저 벽 쪽에 등을 / 등 갖다 놔 봐. 그럼 분위기도 살고 훨씬 밝을 것 같은데.

9.  A:  여보, 이번 달 카드 값 장난 아니게 많이 나왔는데. 가게에 뭐 들여놨어?
    B:  날씨도 덥고 손님도 많아지고 해서 선풍기를 / 선풍기 몇 대 주문했어.

10. A:  뭘 만드느라 사람이 들어온 줄도 몰라?
    B:  새로 자전거를 / 자전거 설계하고 있어. 이번엔 꼭 히트 상품으로 만들거야.

11. A:  (편의점에서 나오면서) 왜? 뭐 빠뜨린 거 있어?
    B:  응. 면도기를 / 면도기 안 샀잖아. 다시 갔다 올게.

12. A:  이번 주말에 새 제품 광고 내놓을 계획 그대로지?
    B:  그럼. 이번에는 모니터를 / 모니터 멋지게 광고하는 거 잊지 마. 전번처럼 하지 말고.

13. A:  요즘 왜 이렇게 머리가 복잡하냐? 뭐 머리 답답한데 효과 있는 거 없나?
    B:  좀 쉬고, 새로 나온 두통약을 / 두통약 좀 먹어 봐. 효과가 있을 걸.

14. A:  넌 어떻게 된 애가 맨날 백화점이냐? 이번엔 뭐가 갖고 싶은데?
    B:  곧 입사하니까 구두를 / 구두 보려고.. 벌써 6개월째 같은 거만 신고 다니잖아.

15. A:  (다음 날 신입사원 면접 준비 후 퇴근하면서) 그럼 내일 10시에 여기서 모이면 되지 거지? 내가 뭐 가져올 거 있어?
    B:  내일 신청자가 생각보다 많을 수도 있으니깐 봉투를 / 봉투 좀 넉넉히 챙겨올래?

16. A:  자 이제 아사 준비 다 끝났지? 또 빌릴 건 없지?

B:      짐이 생각보다 많아서 화물차를 / 화물차 더 구해야 할 것 같아.

17. A:  총무부에서 비품 예산 나왔는데 다들 뭘 구매하는 게 좋을지 생각 좀 해봐.
    B:  예산 되면 우리 최신형 복사기를 / 복사기 새로 들이죠. 지금 있는 걸로는 영 부
        족해요.

18. A:  내가 좀 도와줄까? 꽤 무거워 보이는데 안에 든 게 뭐야?
    B:  맥주병을 / 맥주병 몇 개 가져왔어. 이번 연극에 소품으로 써야 하거든.

19. A:  이게 다 뭐야? 뭘 주문했길래 이렇게 많이 왔어?
    B:  응, 게임기를 / 게임기 주문한 것 뿐인데, 공짜 DVD 들도 같이 보냈네.

20. A:  갑자기 뭘 그렇게 오래 치우고 있어? 와서 밥 먹고 해.
    B:  내일이 개업이잖아. 쌓인 신문지를 / 신문지 다 치워 놔야 뭘 들여 놓을 공간이
        생기지.