Weak Heads in Labeling: Case Studies with Complex Predicates and Modification Structures

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*Seminar will be conducted via ZOOM

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12:00nn of 1 November 2020 (Sunday) – Hong Kong Time
The Zoom Meeting details will be provided on 2 November 2020

Abstract

One of the main goals of Minimalist Syntax is to eliminate stipulated syntactic principles. The labeling theory of Chomsky 2013 was a big step forward toward this goal as it explains the distribution of noun phrases as well as the nature of movement in place of several syntactic principles, including the Case Filter and the Last Resort Principle. It also opened up a new way to approach syntactic variation among languages.

I proposed in Saito 2017 that Case markers and predicate inflection serve as anti-labeling devices in Japanese and showed that the labeling theory then successfully explains several well-known typological properties of the language, including free word-order, multiple subjects, and argument ellipsis. In this presentation, I first make an attempt to explain why Case markers and predicate inflection serve as anti-labeling devices. The proposal is that they are weak heads in the sense of Chomsky 2015 and hence are unable to provide labels. Then, I extend the analysis to two more typologically significant properties of Japanese. One is the employment of compound verbs with unique properties and the other is productive sentential modification of nouns.

Speaker


All are Welcome