Discourse Particles and Selection: Implications for the Model of Syntax

Prof. Mamoru SAITO
Notre Dame Seishin University

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Abstract

The cartographic structure of the Japanese right periphery has been investigated extensively. Endo (2010) and Miyagawa (2022), for example, consider the hierarchical organization of the sentence-final particles (such as *wa*, *yo* and *ne*), and propose to explain it by placing those particles in specific positions in the cartographic structure. I discuss the distributions and properties of those particles from a somewhat different perspective. First, I argue that the hierarchical relation among them is to be explained not on the basis of a fixed cartographic structure but by their selectional properties and the specific speech acts they convey. Second, I consider their occurrences in clause-internal positions and show that they do not interfere with the selectional relations in the core syntactic structures. For example, $particle_1$ blocks the selection of T by $particle_2$ in $\{\{TP, particle_1\}, particle_2\}$, but it does not interfere with the selection of the complement XP by V in $\{\{XP, particle_1\}, V\}$. This, I suggest, is because the particles are merged into the structure but appear in a dimension distinct from the core syntactic structure. (See, for example, Pan and Du (2024) for the three-dimensional model of syntactic structure.)

The three-dimensional structure poses a problem for linearization. For example, if a particle is merged with an XP complement of V, then two structures, {XP, particle} (discourse) and {XP, V} (core syntax), obtain and the linear order between the particle and V cannot be determined. I adopt the solution to this problem proposed by Epstein, Kitahara and Seely (2015) in a different context. That is, the problem is avoided if {XP, particle} is spelled out before the linear order between the particle and V becomes an issue and the derivation continues with {XP, V}. This analysis implies that discourse particles can be attached only to spell-out domains. As discourse particles are merged with CPs, DPs and PPs, the analysis supports Bošković's (2016) proposal that what is spelled out is a phase and not a phase complement.

Speaker

Professor Mamoru Saito received B.A. in philosophy and M.A. in linguistics from Stanford University, and Ph.D. in linguistics from MIT. He taught at USC (1984-86), University of Tsukuba (1986-88), and University of Connecticut (1988-95). He was Professor of Linguistics at Nanzan University from 1995 to 2022 and is now at Notre Dame Seishin University, Okayama City. He serves as Member of Editorial Board for many prestigious journals, including *Linguistic Inquiry, Journal of East Asian Linguistics, Studies in Chinese Linguistics, Language and Linguistics, and Linguistics*. His research interests include syntactic theory and comparative syntax.