

Things we embed

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From nearly the beginning of research on clausal complementation there have been many proposals for nominal or determiner structures above the CP (Rosenbaum 1967, Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1970, Han 2005, Davies and Dubinsky 2010, Takahashi 2010, Hartman 2012, and others) or for nominal features on C itself (Manzini and Savoia 2003). There have also been suggestions that clauses can trade in the semantics associated with DPs as “referential propositions” (De Cuba 2007, Haegeman and Ürögdi 2010, Sheehan and Hinzen 2011, Kastner 2015, De Cuba 2017). Just exactly what a referential proposition is, however, remains elusive.

In this talk, we examine nominalized CPs in Korean and Japanese. We show that they have anaphoric requirements (suggesting that they do ‘refer’), but that the range of propositional antecedents they can refer to is limited. We take as a point of comparison response particles, which access a larger range of propositional discourse referents (Krifka 2013). We also examine propositional anaphora proper in Japanese, Korean, and English and suggest that these too are anaphoric to the same, smaller range of propositional discourse referents than previously recognized (Asher 1993, Snider 2017).

We hypothesize that (anaphoric) reference to propositions—once elliptical structures are factored out—is in fact reference to ‘things’ with propositional content, individual types perhaps corresponding to the attitudinal objects of Moltmann (2013, 2020). Only certain ‘chunks’ of language can evoke these objects, hence the more limited reference afforded to nominalized CPs and propositional anaphora. The implications for the syntax-semantics of CPs and their nominal and nominalized counterparts are explored.

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