Fragment Answers in Korean and English: A Direct Interpretation Approach  
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Fragment answers consist of nonsentential XPs that have the propositional content of full sentences, inducing form-meaning mismatch, as illustrated in the B-sentences in (1) (Korean) and in (2) (English):

(1) A: Mimi-ka nwukwu-lul manna-ss-e?
   Mimi-NOM who-ACC meet-PST-QUE
   ‘Who did Mimi meet?’


B: Haha-lul ‘Haha-ACC’

Such fragments raise the question of how to account for the semantically propositional character of apparently nonsentential structures (Ginzburg & Sag 2000, Merchant 2004, Culicover & Jackendoff 2005). There are two main approaches addressing this question: the deletion-based approach and the direct interpretation approach. The former posits sentential sources for fragments whose parts go unpronounced (Hankamer 1979, Morgan 1989, Merchant 2004). The direct interpretation (DI) approach assumes that the complete syntax of a fragment is just the categorial phrase projection of the fragment itself, requiring a special form-meaning mapping (Barton 1998, Ginzburg & Sag 2000, Stainton 2006, Culicover & Jackendoff 2005).

In this paper, we argue for a direct interpretation analysis of fragment answers. We begin with evidence from Korean, which closely tracks patterns found in English, and then propose a unified account of fragment answers in both Korean and English. Our Korean evidence includes fragments with non-linguistic antecedents (3), fragments violating island constraints (4), and fragments showing absence of case-matching effects (5). Example (5) shows a fragment that can optionally be caseless rather than matching the semantic case marked on the correlate. This optionality affects both semantic and grammatical case, which is problematic for the deletion-based approach, given that case ellipsis of this kind is available in nonelliptical clauses only for grammatical case.

(3) (Haha and Momo are at a party. Haha sees Mimi walk in with someone he doesn’t know, and turns to Momo with a puzzled look on his face. Momo says:)

M: dosekwan-yeese manna-n namca.
   library-at meet-MOD man
   ‘The man who (she) met at the library’

(4) A: Mimi-nun [nwu-ka peli-n ton-ul] cwu-ess-ni?
   Mimi-TOP who-NOM throw.away-PNE money-ACC pick.up-PST-QUE
   ‘(lit.) Who did Mimi pick up the money that she threw away?’

B: Haha-ka ‘Haha-NOM’.

(5) A: Mimi-ka nwukwu-lopwuthe senmwul-ul pat-ass-e?
   Mimi-NOM someone-SRC(from) gift-ACC receive-PST-QUE
   ‘From whom did Mimi receive a gift?’

B: Haha-lopwuthe / Haha. ‘Haha-from/Haha’

Fragments with nonlinguistic antecedents and violation of island constraints follow straightforwardly from the DI approach. We argue that cases of absence of case-matching effects (cf. (5)) also speak in favor of this approach. A caseless fragment in Korean can’t be derived via syntactic operations of fronting and deletion required by the deletion-based approach (cf. Kim 2015). We connect absence of case-matching effects in Korean fragments to the possibility of omitting prepositions from English fragments (A: Who did Mimi get a gift from? B: From Haha/Haha) by assuming that fragments can undergo form reduction independently motivated by processing principles articulated in Hawkins (2004) (cf. Nykiel 2016). The relevant principle is Minimize Forms (MiF): it captures the generalization that linguistic forms can undergo reduction in contexts that facilitate recognition of their semantic and syntactic features. This idea is supported by the distribution of Korean caseless fragments and English fragments without prepositions: both can be used if they have overt correlates, but not if they have covert correlates (cf. Chung 2006 for English). Examples (6)-(7) lack overt correlates for the fragments, and hence the Korean caseless fragment and the English prepositionless fragment are ungrammatical. We explain these patterns by appeal to MiF, drawing in addition on Lee’s (2016) work, which shows
that grammatical case can be dropped from Korean NPs in nonelliptical clauses if their semantic and syntactic features are predictable from context.

(6) A: phyenci-ka wa-ss-e?
    letter-NOM come-PST-QUE
    ‘Did the letter come?’

B: Ung, Mimi-lopwuthe/*Mimi ‘Yes, Mimi-
    from’/Mimi.

We adopt the view that a fragment is the sole daughter of an S-node licensed by the surrounding context (Ginzburg & Sag 2000, Culicover & Jackendoff 2005, Sag & Nykiel 2011, Kim 2015). It follows that any XP can function as a fragment, projecting into a sentential structure, as licensed by the Head-Fragment Construction (cf. Ginzburg & Sag 2000, Kim & Sells 2013, Kim 2015). The construction allows the head daughter to be any syntactic category, but it must correspond to the category specified by the contextually provided SAL-UTT (salient utterance). The mother is an S, allowing such a phrase to serve as a stand-alone clause. We further leave room for MiF to operate on fragments in the following way: we allow fragments to optionally undergo form reduction by mismatching the case (in Korean) or syntactic category (in English) of their correlates just in case the correlates are overt phrases, as determined by MiF. This means for Korean that a fragment can match the correlate’s case or be caseless, and for English that it can be realized as a PP (matching the PP correlate) or as an NP. By incorporating processing constraints into our DI approach, we predict cases of case/syntactic category mismatch in Korean and English in a uniform way. We also predict that fragments with covert correlates behave differently than fragments with overt correlates due to lower accessibility of covert phrases compared to overt phrases (cf. Ariel 1990). A covert correlate is evoked by the SAL-UTT at the discourse level, receives the feature ini (indefinite null instantiation), and, as the result, the Head-Fragment construction requires a case or category match with the fragment (cf. Kim 2015). This is because MiF doesn’t license form reduction here: the processor needs access to the full grammatical specification of the evoked correlate to be able to assign the required semantic and syntactic features to it.

Our DI approach has three advantages. First, it simplifies the grammar of fragments by introducing no additional syntax: fragments are mapped onto nonsentential utterances and induce sentential interpretations from the enriched discourse. Second, it introduces no additional principles into the grammar of fragments other than independently motivated processing principles. Third, it can account for parallels among typologically diverse languages of the Korean type and those of the English type. Thus our approach is an improvement on the existing approaches to ellipsis.