

Cross-linguistic differences in filler-gap dependencies: the role of definiteness in English and Korean

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Introduction

- English does not allow gaps inside complex NP with filler-gap dependencies:
(1) *What_i did you hear [_{DP} **the rumor** [_{CP} that John bought _____i]]?
 - Korean is said to allow this with long-distance scrambling [1].
- Goals of this paper:**
- Is it true that Korean allows gaps inside complex NPs?
 - If so, why can Korean do this (and English can't)?

Scrambling and Definiteness in Korean

- Korean allows optional scrambling of case-marked NPs.
(2) **cip**_i-ul [_{IP/TP} nakksikkwun-i [_{VP} **t**_i phalassta]]
house-ACC fisherman-NOM sold
'As for a house, the fisherman sold (it).'
- Bare NPs are common in Korean, but an **anaphoric definite** *ku* may mark the discourse status of NPs (or **familiarity**) [5].
(3) **cip**-ul palkyenhayssta. **ku** **cip**-ey amwukesto epessta.
house-ACC found the house-in anything was.not
'(I) found a house. As for the house, there was nothing in (it).'
- Heavier NPs are preferred to appear before shorter NPs [6].

Experiment 1

- 3 sub-experiments** manipulating *Extraction* and *Structure* [2-4].

Structure	Extraction	English-translated sample sentences
Quotative CP	<i>In-situ</i>	The fisherman heard (as a rumor) that the village chief sold a secluded cottage.
	<i>Scrambling</i>	As for a secluded cottage, the fisherman heard that the village chief sold ____.
Complex NP	<i>In-situ</i>	The fisherman heard a rumor that the village chief sold the secluded cottage.
	<i>Scrambling</i>	As for a secluded cottage, the fisherman heard a rumor that the village chief sold ____.
Relative clauses	<i>In-situ</i>	The firefighter remembered a street sweeper who cleaned the backstreet around the arcade.
	<i>Scrambling</i>	As for a backstreet around the arcade, the firefighter remembered a street sweeper who cleaned ____.
Coordinate NP	<i>In-situ</i>	The farmer thought that a boar ruined a melon seedling and a root of grape tree .
	<i>Scrambling</i>	As for a root of grape tree, the farmer thought that a boar ruined a melon seedling and ____.

Experiment 2

- Reexamined complex NPs** manipulating *Extraction* and *Structure*.

Structure	Extraction	English-translated sample sentences
Quotative CP	<i>Scrambling (or In-situ)</i>	As for millions in slush funds, the prosecutor said as a claim that the congress senator took ____.
Bare Complex NP		As for millions in slush funds, the prosecutor proved a claim that the congress senator took ____.
Definite Complex NP		As for millions in slush funds, the prosecutor proved the claim that the congress senator took ____.

In **both** experiments:

- 48 self-reported Korean speakers via Prolific.
- Participants read 4 tokens of each condition.
- 7-point scale acceptability judgment.
- Latin square design; pseudo-randomized.
- 1:1 filler-to-target ratio.

Korean Sentence Stimuli

(4) *Scrambling out of quotative CP*

hayan.ka oytan cip_i-ul nakksikkwun-un [_{CP} maul.icing-i **t**_i phalassta-ko] (somwun-ulo) tulessta
coastline.near secluded cottage-ACC fisherman-TOP village.chief-NOM sold-COMP rumor-as heard
'As for the secluded cottage, the fisherman heard (as a rumor) that the village chief sold (it).'

(5) *Scrambling out of complex NPs with the anaphoric definite*

swuekwon.uy pwulpep cakum_i-ul swusakwan-un [_{NP} [_{CP} kwukhoy.uywen-i **t**_i patassta-nun] **ku** cwucang-ul] ipcunghayssta
millions.GEN slush funds-ACC prosecutor-TOP congress.senator-NOM took-ADN the claim-ACC proved
'As for millions in slush funds, the prosecutor proved the claim that the congress senator took (it).'

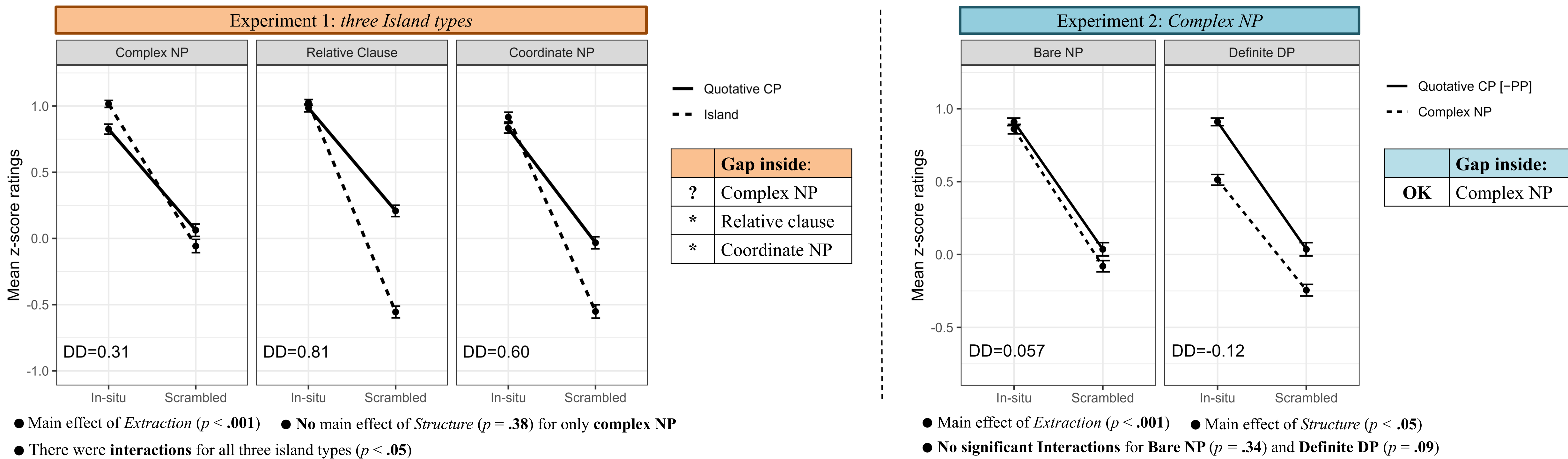
(6) *Scrambling out of relative clauses*

sangcemka cwupyen kolmok_i-ul sopangkwan-un [_{NP} [_{RC} **t**_j **t**_i chiwu-n] hwankyengmihwawen_j-ul] kiekhayssta
arcade around street-ACC firefighter-TOP clean-ADN street.sweeper-ACC remembered
'As for the backstreet around the arcade, the firefighter remembered a street sweeper who cleaned (it).'

(7) *Scrambling out of coordinate NPs*

photo namwu ppwuli_i-wa nongpwu-nun [_{CP} meystwayci-ka [_{CoordNP} **t**_i chamoy mocong-lul] mangkattulyessta-ko] sayngkakhayssta.
grape tree root-and farmer-TOP boar-NOM melon seedling-ACC ruined-COMP thought
'As for the root of grape tree, the farmer thought that a boar ruined a melon seedling and (it).'

Results



Discussion

Our findings:

- Gaps are not allowed inside relative clauses and coordinate NPs, just as in English and many other languages.
 - Gaps **ARE** allowed inside complex NPs (without additional degradation), unlike in English.
- Why does the anaphoric definite *ku* not lead to an acceptability degradation like English *the*?**
- Definiteness meaning in Korean *ku* is different from English *the*.
 - Korean *ku* requires **anti-uniqueness** [7], while English *the* introduces uniqueness presupposition.

(8) *Larger situation definites*

(***ku**) tal-i palkta
the moon-NOM is.bright
'The moon is bright.'

(9) *Part-whole bridging*

cha-lul casass-nun-tey (***ku**) **penhopan**-i tteolecey issessta
car-ACC found-ADN-but the license.plate-NOM fallen.off was
'(I) found a car, but the license plate had fallen off.'

- Uniqueness presupposition blocks filler-gap dependencies such as with English *the* [8].

Korean *ku* lacks uniqueness, permitting filler-gap dependencies with the gap inside a definite complex NP.

References

[1] Lee (1993). *Scrambling as case-driven obligatory movement*, UPenn. [2] Cowart (1997). *Experimental Syntax*. [3] Sprouse (2007). *A program for experimental syntax: Finding the relationship between acceptability and grammatical knowledge*, U. of Maryland. [4] Fukuda et al. (2022), An experimental reassessment of complex NP islands with NP-scrambling in Japanese. *Glossa*. [5] Ahn (2017). Definite and demonstrative descriptions: micro-typology. *Proceedings of GLOW*. [6] Yamashita & Chang (2001). Long-before short preferences in the production of a head-final language. *Cognition*. [7] Dayal & Jiang (2022). The puzzle of anaphoric bare nouns in Mandarin: A counterpoint to index! *L1*. [8] Tollan et al. (2025). Effects of uniqueness on extraction from definite NP objects. *NLLT*.