NON-SELECTED ARGUMENTS AND THE ETHICAL STRATEGY
Tomokazu Takehisa, NUPALS

INTRODUCTION: This paper investigates non-selected arguments in Japanese, as in (1)–(3) below, and makes the following claims: [1] non-selected arguments such as non-volitional agents/causers and possessors are syntactically indistinguishable, introduced by Appl (Pylkkänen 2008), while (volitional) agents are introduced by Voice (Kratzer 1996); [2] due to the defective licensing property of Appl in Japanese, non-selected arguments can only appear as nominative subjects of lexical causative verbs or those of possessor passives; moreover, [3] interpretational differences between these arguments are derived post-syntactically, by means of a modified version of the Ethical Strategy (Rivero 2004), which draws inferences from the thematic information read off the syntax and the set of proto-role properties (Dowty 1991).

[1]: I argue for the distinction between (volitional) agents, on the one hand, and non-volitional agents/causers and other non-agentive VP-external arguments, on the other. Support for this view comes from data involving (direct) passivization, soo suru (“do so”) replacement, and formation of potential constructions (Inoue 1976).

[2]: While non-selected arguments can appear freely in languages like German where Appl assigns inherent dative case, the defective licensing property of Appl in Japanese severely restricts their distribution to the contexts where an agent argument is suppressed (in passive) or not required (in lexical causatives) so that they can be marked nominative by T.

[3]: Despite the difference in the licensing property of Appl, non-selected arguments receive similar treatments with respect to thematic interpretation across languages: given that Appl merely relates an argument to the event denoted by its complement (cf. Cuervo 2003, Schäfer 2012), the argument introduced is underspecified with respect to the way it participates in the event. I propose that the post-syntactic inferential procedure derives the interpretation of such thematically underspecified arguments in consideration of the syntactic input and the set of proto-role properties, which serve to circumscribe the bounds of interpretation. Specifically, an argument introduced by Appl can participate in the event, roughly in one of the two ways: causing the event or being causally affected by it. More specifically, if Voice, which introduces an agent argument, is not present in the input, as in (1) and (2), then the argument introduced can be construed in either way: as a non-volitional agent/causer, as in (1), or as being causally affected, presumably by having a (possessive) relation to another entity affected by the event, as in (2). Moreover, if the presence of an agent is formally represented in the input, as in (3), then the thematically underspecified argument can only be construed as being causally affected.

SUMMARY: The present analysis offers a unified syntactic treatment of non-selected arguments such as non-volitional agents/causers and possessors, while at the same time deriving their variable interpretations by the post-syntactic Ethical Strategy. To the extent that this analysis is successful, the interpretations of non-selected arguments are syntactically uninformative.

(1) Taro-ga ukkari koppu-o war-Ø-ta (>wat-ta)  
   T.-NOM inadvertently cup-ACC √break-CAUS-PST  
   ‘Taro inadvertently broke the cup.’

   Non-volitional agent/causer

(2) Taro-ga ziko-de ude-o or-Ø-ta (>ot-ta)  
   T.-NOM accident-in arm-ACC √break-CAUS-PST  
   ‘Taro broke his arm in the accident.’

   Possessor (Causative)

(3) Taro-ga Hanako-ni/niyotte okasi-o tabe-rare-ta  
   T.-NOM H.-DAT/by sweets-ACC √eat-PASS-PST  
   ‘Taro had his sweets eaten by Hanako.’

   Possessor (Passive)
REFERENCES