Particle Stranding Interruption: 
A Korean Counterpart of Particle Stranding Ellipsis in Japanese

Duk-Ho An
(Konkuk University)


      ‘Has Taro come?’          ‘He hasn’t come yet.’ (Shibata 2014)

Turning to Korean, the consensus seems to be that PSE is not available. For instance, Sato and Maeda (2019) remark, “Korean, which otherwise has a very similar particle system as Japanese, does not allow PSE.” Indeed, a direct counterpart of (1) is totally ungrammatical, as (2) shows.

(2) A: Hana-nun wa-ss-ni? B: *-Nun acik an wa-ss-e.
      ‘Has Hana come?’         ‘She hasn’t come yet.’

It is also worth noting the sheer absence of any discussion on PSE in the literature on Korean.

The goal of this work is to examine a hitherto undiscussed phenomenon in Korean that I call “Particle Stranding Interruption (PSI)” and show that PSI and PSE manifest a systematic parallelism, indicating that the languages in question do not differ with respect to their ability to strand certain particles. I also consider why PSE per se is not possible in Korean.

First, utterances can be interrupted in various ways. For instance, a speaker may stop in the middle of her utterance because she changed her mind or because she needs some time to think about what to say next; a speaker may anticipate what another speaker is about to say and cut in in the middle of it; a speaker may stop to allow others to pick up and continue the utterance in a language game; and so on. What is of interest to us is that in so doing, an interruption can take place at the boundary between a particle and its host, stranding the former, i.e., PSI, as in (3), where the topic marker -nun and the postposition -eytayhayse ‘about’ are stranded.

(3) (Context: For some reason, people do not want to talk about Hana.)
   A: Hana … | …
   A/B: | -Nun nacwungye iyakiha-ca.
        -TOP later talk-PROPOS
   A’/B’: | -Eytayhayse-nun nacwungye iyakiha-ca.
          -about-TOP later talk-PROPOS
      ‘Intended: Let’s talk about (Hana) later.’

(4) shows that the nominative case marker -ka can also be stranded under PSI.

(4) (Context: Speaker A hesitates to praise Hana. Speaker B picks it up and continues the utterance.)
   A: Hana … | …
   B: | -Ka ttokttokhaki-nun ha-ci.
      -NOM smart-FOC is-CONFIRM
      ‘Intended: (Hana) is indeed smart.’

Other particles can also be stranded under PSI, though I will not go into them here. The point is that similarly to PSE, PSI allows various particles that normally require a host to be stranded.

Now, let’s turn to the parallelism between PSI and PSE. Recall that the consensus in the literature is that PSE is not available in Korean. The parallelism below provides evidence that we are dealing with essentially the same phenomena and hence, Korean and Japanese are not different. In other words, Korean does have a counterpart of PSE in Japanese.

First, as is well-known, PSE requires a linguistic antecedent. That is, the host of the stranded particle has to be overtly realized in the preceding utterance. The same is true of PSI.
Second, stranded particles in PSE have to be focused, i.e., they should receive phonetic stress. The same is true of PSI.

Third, in both PSE and PSI, stranded particles are strictly limited to utterance-initial position.

(5) A: John-wa sono-toki Taroo-o dare-ga korosita-to omotta-no?  
John-TOP that-time Taro-ACC who-NOM killed-COMP thought-Q  
‘Who did John think at that time that killed Taro?’

PSE  
John-TOP that-time -TOP Mary-NOM killed-COMP thought-TAG  
‘Intended: John thought at that time that (Taro, Mary killed.’  
(Sato 2012:496)

(6) A: ‘Will John quit his job?’

B: -Ga sigoto-o yameru ka dooka-wa sira-nai kedo,  
PSE  
-NOM job-ACC quit Q whether-TOP know-NEG though  
(Cf. (5))

soou uwasa-wa aru. such rumor-TOP exist

‘Though I don’t know whether [e](=he) will quit his job, there is such a rumor.’  
(Shibata 2014)

(7) (Context: Hana is not supposed to meet Jini. Speaker A heard from Sumi that they did and begins to talk about it. Speaker B disagrees with what Sumi said.)

A: Sumi-nun Hana ... | ...  
Sumi-TOP Hana

B: * Sumi-nun | -ka Jini-lul manna-ss-tako  
PSI  
Sumi-TOP -NOM Jini-ACC meet-PAST-COMP

malha-ess-ciman, na-nun an mit-e. say-PAST-thought I-TOP not believe-DEC  
‘Intended: Though Sumi said that Hana met Jini, I don’t believe it.’

B’: | -Ka Jini-lul manna-ss-tako  
-NOM Jini-ACC meet-PAST-COMP

malha-ess-ciman, na-nun an mit-e. say-PAST-thought I-TOP not believe-DEC

The next question is why PSE per se is not allowed. Recall that stranded particles in PSE and PSI have to be focused. Shibata (2014) argues that an intermediate phrase boundary is inserted to the left of the focused particle and that the left boundary of the utterance has to be aligned with this boundary, which effectively forces the stranded particle to be utterance-initial.

(8) [u ... ... ]

{\[\rightarrow [ Particle \_ \_ \_ \_ ]

Note further that unstranded particles are normally not focused, e.g., in A’s utterance in (1), the topic marker is not focused, while that in B’s utterance is focused due to the prosodic condition above. This means that the prosodic structures around the stranded particle and its antecedent are different in PSE. Assuming this, note that there is an important difference between PSE and PSI. That is, in PSE, the stranded particle can be repeated from the previous utterance, while in PSI, it is not. In fact, PSI disallows an overtly realized particle to be repeated.

(9) A: Hana-nun | ...  
Hana-TOP

A/B: * | -Nun nacwungey iyakiha-ca.  
(Cf. (3))

-TOP later talk-PROPOS

Given this, I suggest that differences in prosodic phrasing between a stranded particle and its antecedent is permitted in PSE, while it is not in PSI. In other words, Japanese allows a focused stranded particle to be anteceded by a non-focused particle, while Korean does not.

Selected references:
Sato and Maeda. 2019. Particle stranding ellipsis involves PF-deletion. NLLT 37, 357-388.