

Null Arguments in Mandarin Chinese

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In this paper, I examine the null argument construction in Mandarin Chinese. Specifically, I examine how the strict and sloppy readings of null arguments in elliptic constructions are derived. Contra Huang (1988, 1991) and Otani and Whitman (1991), who claimed that the sloppy reading may be derived by VP-ellipsis, I propose that null arguments in Chinese may best be analyzed as argument ellipsis, similar to what Oku (1998) and Kim (1999) proposed for null argument constructions in Japanese and Korean. It is shown that the argument ellipsis analyses can cover more empirical data than VP-ellipsis analysis without resorting to many superfluous assumptions. I further try to deduce the unavailability of the sloppy reading for null subjects in Chinese to some special requirement on subjects. Moreover, I abandon Oku's (1998) correlation between argument ellipsis and scrambling, and propose that a new correlation should be established between argument ellipsis and the DP/NP parameter.

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