

THE IMPACT OF HONORIFIC STRATIFICATION ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE ELIDED SUBJECT IN KOREAN

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Elision of the subject is a self-regulating linguistic process that aims at reducing the sentence depth in regressively shaped languages, like Korean. The loss is partly compensated by the honorific and speech-level stratification. Its impact upon the identification of the omitted subject is limited by several factors some of which will shortly be examined in what follows.

1. One of the conspicuous characteristics of a language is the way of organizing its constitutive elements, particularly on the sentence level. In progressively oriented languages, like English, Russian or, say, Arabic, there are no clearly identifiable limits to the length of a sentence, a fact that can easily be demonstrated on any randomly selected sentence in these languages. Here, there is no such sentence, whatever its length might be, that could not be further expanded. The point may be illustrated on an example quoted by V.H. Yngve (1960): *He cried because she hit him because he called her names because she wouldn't give him any candy*. It is evident that the sentence would tolerate a practically unlimited number of further expanding elements.

The situation is somewhat different in regressively organized languages, like Korean, Japanese or, say, the Finno-Ugric Hungarian, distantly related to the former two on the structural basis of the Ural-Altaiic agglutination. An English sentence, structurally close to that previously quoted: *We were visited by a neighbor who just returned from America where he called on his daughter (who was) married to a deputy for the Democratic Party that gained no access to the Parliament*, is virtually untranslatable into Korean while maintaining its regressive structures of subordination. The following three native speaker's attempts to translate it, all the same, convincingly illustrate the structural limits of the regressively shaped languages as to their capability for expansion. The translator, with a reliable linguistic training as well as with an excellent knowledge of English, proceeded from a relatively complex, though extremely obscure transfer of the English sentence, through a moderately dissected one into two co-ordinated clauses, up to its splitting, finally, into three formally independent sentences. Apart from this, each variant has at least one co-ordinated non-final predicate and, in some of them, even anaphoric elements may be found.

Note: All Korean examples will invariably be presented in McCune-Reischauer system, in order to prevent undue collisions between various widely differing systems of Romanization, most frequently transliteration (Keedong Lee, 1993, e.g. *issta*, *anhda*), sometimes alternating with transcription (Hansol H. B. Lee, 1989, e.g. *anhda* (127), *anta* (139, 140), etc.)

For the sake of simplicity, for three McCune-Reischauer digraphs and two trigraphs new symbols have been introduced: *ä* (for *ae*), *ü* (for *wi* and Lewin-Kim's *ui*) and *ö* (for *oe*), as well as *yä* (for *yae*) and *wä* (for *wae*). Further, for typographical reasons, the Yale *u* and *e* will be rendered by *ú* and *ó* respectively.

Symbols used:

RM – regressively structured modifier complex coextensive with a subordinate clause;

NFP – non-final predicate signalling boundaries between co-ordinated clauses;

FP – final predicate marking the end of a sentence;

A – anaphoric term: apart from cases of true word repetition, the symbol A (with the indexed serial number) will also denote correlated noun-pronoun (*i-sarami* / *kúnún*) and noun-adverb (*migugesó* / *kú-gosesó*) sequences.

i. *úihöe túró-gaji mot-han minjudang täüiwón-gwa kyórhon-han ttarúl pangmun-hago migugesó mak tora-on ius-sarami uri-jibe watta.*

Literally:

<i>úihöe</i>	<i>túró-gaji mot-han</i> (RM ₁)	<i>minjudang</i>	
to the Parliament	(that) gained no access	(for) the D.P.	
<i>täüiwón-gwa</i>	<i>kyórhon-han</i> (RM ₂)	<i>ttarúl</i>	<i>pangmun-hago</i> (NFP)
to a deputy	(who was) married	daughter	he called on (his)
<i>migugesó</i>	<i>mak tora-on</i> (RM ₃)	<i>ius-sarami</i>	<i>uri-jibe watta</i> (FP)
from America	just returned	a neighbor	to our house came

That is:

FP – 1, NFP – 1, RM – 3, A – 0

ii. *ttarúl pangmun-hago migugesó mak tora-on ius-sarami uri-jibe wannünde kú-ttarún úihöe túró-gaji mot-han minjudang täüiwón-gwa kyórhon-hässótta.*

Literally:

<i>ttarúl</i> (A ₁)	<i>pangmun-hago</i> (NFP ₁)	<i>migugesó</i>	<i>mak tora-on</i> (RM ₁)
daughter	he called on (his)	from America	just returned
<i>ius-sarami</i>	<i>uri-jibe</i>	<i>wannünde</i> (NFP ₂)	<i>kú-ttarún</i> (A ₁)
a neighbor	to our house	came and	that daughter
<i>úihöe</i>	<i>túró-gaji mot-han</i> (RM ₂)	<i>minjudang</i>	
to the Parliament	(that) gained no access (for)	the D.P.	
<i>täüiwón-gwa</i>	<i>kyórhon-hässótta</i> (FP)		
to a deputy	(was) married		

That is:

FP – 1, NFP – 2, RM – 2, A – 1

iii. *ius-sarami uri-jibe wannunde kúnún mak migugesó tora-watta. kú-gosesó ttarúl pangmun-hännunde ttarún minjudang täüiwón-gwa kyórhon-hässótta. kúróna minjudangún úihöe túró-gaji mot-hätta.*

Literally:

<i>ius-sarami</i> (A ₁)	<i>uri-jibe</i>	<i>wannunde</i> (NFP ₁)	<i>kúnún</i> (A ₁)	<i>mak</i>
a neighbor	to our house	came and	he	just
<i>migugesó</i> (A ₂)	<i>tora-watta</i> (FP ₁)	<i>kú-gosesó</i> (A ₂)	<i>ttarúl</i> (A ₃)	
from America	returned	at that place	(his) daughter	
<i>pangmun-hännunde</i> (NFP ₂)	<i>ttarún</i> (A ₃)	<i>minjudang</i> (A ₄)	<i>täüiwón-gwa</i>	
he called on and	(his) daughter	(for) the D.P	to a deputy	
<i>kyórhonúl-hässótta</i> (FP ₂)	<i>kúróna</i>	<i>minjudangún</i> (A ₄)	<i>úihöe</i>	
(was) married	but	the D.P.	to the P.	
<i>túró-gaji mot-hätta</i> (FP ₃)				
gained no access				

That is:

FP – 2, NFP – 2, RM – 0, A – 4

(The three Korean versions of the English sentence will also be given in Hangúl-script at the end of this paper).

2. The set of devices, used to reduce the sentence depth, also seem to include the elision of subject in the communicative space between the author of the message (Ai) and its addressee (Aii). The Ai – Aii axis has to be completed by the spoken-of member of the communication process, irrespective of whether of a human or an extra-human reference (Aiii).

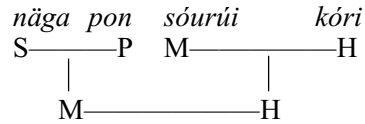
But exactly the latter type of sentence depth reduction obscures the orientation at the crucial communicative axis between the author of the message and its addressee. The loss is partly compensated by honorific and speech-level stratification. Despite the fact that both these devices are closely inter-linked with each other, the following remarks will deliberately be restricted to the honorific/neutral *-si(-úsi-)/zero*¹ opposition. All other means of conveying the honorific/neutral contrast will be disregarded. As for the speech-level stratification, it will be assumed, in the context of this discussion, to be automatically adapted to the honorific/neutral contrast.

2.1. The assumption that the elision of subject is motivated by a self-regulating process, aiming at reducing the sentence depth, is not quite free of problems, for in true regressive head-modifier (H-M) structures the subject is usually maintained, as in: *uriga-baranún kót* “the thing which we want” (175);²

¹ The honorific marker (Hm) occurs in two allomorphs: *-si-*, appended to verb stems ending in a vowel, and *-úsi-*, appended to those ending in a consonant, as in *ka-* “to go”: *ka-si-mnida* or *ilk-* “to read”: *ilg-úsi-nda*. Other honorific markers will appear only exceptionally (cf., *-sosó*, a honorific imperative ending: “please, do!” in 4.3.1.2).

² Unless otherwise indicated, the examples quoted are those of Hansol H. B. Lee. The transcription is modified in accordance with the McCune-Reischauer system.

näga-bon sóurüi-góri “the streets of Seoul that I saw” (121), i.e.



as against e.g.:

* (*näga/nanún*) *sóurüi-górirül poatta* “(I) saw the streets of Seoul”.³

The elision of subject typically occurs in subject-predicate (S-P) rather than H-M sequences, i.e. in structures involving two basic constituents of a clause or sentence: an expressed or unexpressed subject (S) and a predicate (P), final (FP) and/or non-final (NFP).

The difference between utterances with an expressed and those with an omitted subject may clearly be seen on the respective English translations:

The subject is expressed:

näga hagesso “I will do it” (91);

nanún onül móriga ap’úda “I have a headache today” (148);

uriga näil sagessúmnida “we shall buy (it) tomorrow” (91); etc.

The subject is elided:

sinmunül ponda “(I) am reading the newspaper” (152);

hakkyoe núkkessúmnida “you/he may be late for school” (91);

nülgó-boinda “(he) looks old” (125);

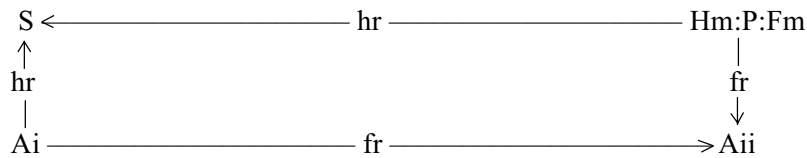
chibe itta “(she) is at home” (146), etc.

2.2. Adopting the theory of an elided subject as the result of a sentence-depth reduction would present no descriptive problems if identifying the S-P relationship with that of H-M, as done by Hansol H. B. Lee (1989, 148): “The clause may be defined as an endocentric construction which consists of a predicate as its head and one or more elements preceding the head as its expansion.” The subject is subsequently listed among the expanding elements of the predicate (ibid., 149).

Even when rejecting the interpretation of the crucial topic-comment S-P relationship as a subordinate one, the elision of subject still seems to be in harmony with the general trend towards sentence-depth reduction as a parallel echo-process, co-occurring with other, more specific mechanisms which aim at reducing the number of constitutive elements in regressively structured messages. The priority accorded to co-ordination over subordination, at the most general scale, is the most efficient method that may be applied to this purpose (cf. also three tentative translations of an artificial English sentence in §1).

3. The part played by the honorific (deference) and formality stratification in compensating the loss of information, inherent in the subject, may be illustrated on the following diagram:

³ The examples marked by an asterisk are due to the author of this paper. Most are free structural variants of the source-quoted examples.



Symbols used:

- S – expressed or unexpressed subject;
- P – predicate, occurring as final (FP) or nonfinal predicate (NFP); while the Hm may occur with both the FP and NFP, the Fm only with the FP; apart from verbal predicates, the Hm may also occur with verbo-nominal predicates (see the examples quoted in § 3.2. below: *hasinún* (participle); *osigirúl* (verbal noun), etc.).
- Hm – honorific marker *-si-(-úsi)/zero* appended to the verb stem in FP and/or NFP, expressing speaker's (Ai) deference to the entity conveyed by the subject of the sentence (or clause) in which it occurs (see also note 1);
- Fm – formality marker, coinciding with the inflectional ending of FP in any of the 1-5 speech-level classes,⁴ expresses the speaker's (Ai) attitude towards the addressee of the message (Aii);
- hr – honorific relationship (for the hr-part of the diagram see Hansol H.B. Lee, 87);
- fr – formality relationship (the fr-part of the diagram was inspired by the formulation of Seok Choong Song 1988, XVI);
- Ai, Aii – participants in the communication process: author of the message (speaker); addressee of the message (spoken-to), respectively (see also §2 above).

3.1. As previously stated, the information lost with the elided subject can, in a way, be compensated by the honorific/neutral distinction that, together with the speech-level hierarchy, reflects the Korean social custom. Although far from being able to restore the subject-related information to the full, it is still able to mark the distinction between the Ai and Aii, indirectly even Aiii, participants of the communication process. Nevertheless, this distinction is not quite specific, since the *-si-(-úsi)* pole of the honorific/neutral opposition merely signals that the omitted subject is different from Ai. Typically, however, the elided subject has to be identified with Aii. The *zero* pole of the opposition is even less specific: it merely suggests that the message does not involve any person (rarely object, see further on) worthy of special deference. Typically, however, the elided subject coincides, in this case, with Ai, although Aiii, or even Aii participants cannot strictly be excluded as potential partners.

⁴ For the traditional 1 – 5 speech-level classification, see LEWIN, B. – TCHONG DAE KIM, 1978, p. 232. The examples quoted in the present paper are mostly restricted to the 5th (*hapsyo*) and 2nd levels (*hára*). The numbering of speech levels is rather arbitrary and may differ with other authors.

Before embarking on details, the functioning of the honorific/neutral distinction will be illustrated on a number of sentences with an expressed subject:

honorific: *-úsi-* in: *ilk-(to read)-úsi-nda* (FP):

sónsängi ch'ägül ilgúsinda “a teacher is reading a book” (45);

neutral: *zero* in: *ilk-zero-núnda*:

sonyóni ch'ägül ingnúnda “a boy is reading a book” (45).

Similarly:

harabó-nimi change kasinda (-si-) “(My) grandfather is going to the market” (58);

* *aiga chibe kanda (zero)* “the child is going home”.

3.2. In sentences with an elided subject, the honorific/neutral distinction helps to identify the subject (Ai, Aii or Aiii) in relation to the remaining members of the communication act, as in:

hasinún ire sónggong ikkirúl paramnida “I wish you success in your work” (Lewin-Kim 1978, 89), i.e.

$HR=S_1$ (Aii: you) <i>hasinún ire</i> hr=gr (-si-)	lit.: that (you) are doing - in the work
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$HR=S_2$ (Ai: I, we) <i>sónggong ikkirúl paramnida</i> hr=gr (zero)	lit.: of success – the becoming – (I) wish
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New symbols used:

HR – honorific referee including both values of the honorific/neutral opposition:

high, marked by the *-si-(-úsi)* allomorphs of the honorific morpheme, and *low* (or neutral), unmarked or, alternatively, *zero*-marked;

gr – grammatical S-P relationship, coinciding here with the honorific one (hr).

Similarly:

* *osindanún iyagirúl túróssúmnida (túrótta)*

you (-si-) I, we (zero)

“I heard (the news) that you are coming”, etc.

chal tanyó-osigirúl paramnida “I hope you enjoy your trip”

you (-si-) I (zero) (GSK, 277);

3.2.1. The situation is somewhat different in some types of complex sentences, involving subordinate clauses, where several subjects (with various A-indexed values) have to be distinguished from each other. Whenever the (high-valued) honorific referee is other than *you* (Aii) and whenever the subject of the sentence does not coincide with the author of the message (Ai), the subject of the subordinate clause that occupies the Aiii position from the point of view of the FP-related subject of the sentence, has to be explicitly stated, as in:

* *näga ondanún kibyórúl padúsyóssúmnikka?*

S₁:I (zero) S₂: you (-úsi-)

“Have you received the news of my coming?” ; or

* *kúnún osindanún iyagirúl túrossúmnida (túrótta)*

S:he -si:-he zero:I

“I heard (the news) that he (honor.) is coming”, etc.

3.2.2. Neither can the subject be elided in close contrasting comparisons where the distinction between two entities, immediately opposed to each other, cannot reliably be derived from the Ai-Aii axis, as in:

kúnún na-boda naún wólgúbúl pannúnda “he gets a better salary than I do” (Essence, 374);

kúnún näga sängak-hattón-got-poda k’iga k’ótta “he was taller than I thought he would be” (ibid., 906), etc.

3.3. The -si-(-úsi)/zero markers may be incorporated into verb stems as lexically bound morphemes, in true honorific verbs of the type *chumusida* “to sleep” (in contrast to the neutral *chada*) or *kyesida* “be, stay” (in contrast to *itta*).

3.3.1. A somewhat different combination of morphemic and lexical elements occurs with a pair of highly productive, lexically contrasting verbs *chu(si)da* and *túrida* (auxiliary verbs of group I, in Hansol H.B. Lee’s classification, p. 128). They combine with what Lee classifies as *concatenating forms* of full verb stems (ending I: -a/-ó), corresponding to Lewin-Kim’s *Konverbalform* (1978, § 5.3.1. and § G2.2).

With *chu(si)da*, the marker -si- behaves as a free morpheme according to the rules briefly exposed in § 3.1., while with *túrida*, in harmony with its lexical characteristic, only zero-value seems to be possible in this application.

Both auxiliaries are used to specify the I/not-I orientation of the process conveyed by the full verb, they are combined with, in the following way:

chusida:

The S-related person, typically Aii, is doing something as a favor for (instead of) the author of the message (Ai).

túrida (honorific opposite of *chusida*):

The S-related person, the author of the message (Ai), is doing something as a favor for the addressee of the message (Aii).

E.g.:

chusida:

ch’odä-hä-jusyósó kamsa-hamnida “thanks for inviting me”, i.e.:

S₁: you -si- NFP S₂: I zero FP (GSK, 278);

Similarly:

i-p’yónji chom t’aja ch’yó-jusigessúmnikka “would you type this letter for me, please?” (GSK, 298);

osip tallórúl wónhwaro pakkuó-jusipsio “change 50 dollars for won currency for me, please!” (LK, 70);

túrida:

ne, pakkuó-dúrigessúmnida “O.K., I’ll change them for you”(ibid.);

ómóni irúl towa-dúryóra “help your mother with her work!” (Essence, 584);

kú-bun-kke kirúl karik'yó-dúryóttá “I have shown the gentleman the way” (ibid.);

muósúl túril-kkayo “what can I show you, sir (ma'am)?” (ibid.);

3.3.1.1. Whenever the I/not-I contrast does not correspond to the Ai – Aii relationship, the subject cannot be omitted, as the loss of the subject-related information cannot be compensated by any of these non-specific substitutes. E.g.:

chuda (zero):

kúga naege sop'orúl ponä(ó)-juóssúmnida (LK, 314) “he sent a packet for me”;

chusida (-si-):

kú-buni naege p'yónjirúl ponä(ó)-jusyóssúmnida (ibid.) “he (honor.: high) sent a letter for me” (ibid.);

túrida (zero):

nága kúege sop'orúl ponä(ó)-dúryóssúmnida (ibid.) “I sent a packet for him” (ibid.);

4. The discriminative power of the *-si-(-úsi-)/zero* opposition is even more restricted by a frequent lack of correspondence observable between grammatical and honorific relationships. From this point of view, honorific relationships may be subdivided into two distinct classes:

(1) honorific relationships coincident with grammatical ones (all cases so far examined), as in:

hasinún ire sónggong ikkirúl paramnida (see § 3.2.), i.e.: hr = gr, i.e. HR = S;

(2) honorific relationships different from grammatical ones:

hr ≠ gr, i.e. HR ≠ S.

4.1. Honorific relationship of the hr ≠ gr type, by rejecting the formal subject of a clause or a sentence as its referee, creates a dichotomic distinction between a *formal subject* (expressed), different from HR, and an *actual subject* (typically elided), identical with HR. The point will be illustrated on the following example:

	FS——gr——FP	
AS	<i>*pyóngi nasimnida</i>	“(you) are (became, fell) sick”
HR——hr——-si-		lit.: a disease comes into being;

the same holds for:

	FS——gr——FP	
AS	<i>*pyóngi namnida (nanda)</i>	“(I) fell ill”
HR——hr——zero		

Symbols used:

AS – actual subject;

FS – formal subject;

HR – honorific referee: typically *you*, or any entity of human, rarely non-human (see later on) reference worthy of respect; whenever the HR is different from *you* (Aii), in the *-si-*marked, and from *I* or *we* (Ai), in the *zero*-marked honorific relationship, the AS has to be explicitly stated;

FP – final predicate;
gr – grammatical relationship;
hr – honorific relationship;

Similarly:

móriga tchogä-jil-túsi ap'úda “I have a splitting headache” (Essence, 1315);

4.2. In view of the instability of the subject (S), Korean bilingual dictionaries steadily oscillate between S-related and S-unrelated renderings of the items quoted. In the structural domain examined, this somewhat disturbing alternation affects what we call *actual subject* (AS), too. The difference between the two may clearly be seen in the English equivalents of the examples quoted. Some examples:

4.2.1. S-related interpretations:

móriga tchogä-jil-ttúsi ap'úda “I have a splitting headache” (see above);

on momi-ttóllinda “I feel chilly all over” (Essence, 739); lit.: (the) whole: *on*;
body: *momi*; quivers: *ttóllinda*;

chinan-bam miyóri issóssúmnida “I had a slight fever last night” (GSK, 160);
lit.: last night: *chinan-bam*; a slight fever: *mi-yóri*; came into being, emerged:
issóssúmnida;

núlgú-myón nuni óduwó-jinda “our sight grows dim with age” (Essence, 1379); lit.: when (one) grows old: *núlgú-myón*; (the) sight: *nuni*; grows dim:
óduwó-jinda; etc.

momi tu-gä-rado mojaranda “if I cut myself into four quarters, they would not be sufficient” (ibid., 739); lit.: body: *momi*; two pieces: *tu-gä*; (even) if: -
rado; (they will) be not sufficient: *mojaranda*; etc.

4.2.2. S-unrelated interpretations:

móriga (päga) ap'úda “feel a pain in one’s head (stomach)” (Essence, 1315);

momi ap'úda “be sick” (ibid., 739);

momi cho(h)a-jida “get well” (ibid.);

nuni ódupta “have bad eyes” (ibid.); etc.

4.3. With entities of non-human reference, the choice between a honorific high (*-si/-úsi-*) and honorific low, or neutral, classification (*zero*) is highly subjective, since it has no immediate support in Korean social custom. It merely reflects personal value hierarchies and individual attitudes towards phenomena of the outer and inner world, as viewed from the angle of any single act of actual communication. The exclusively subjective nature of the high-low choices may be illustrated on a number of randomly selected examples:

-si-:

piga osinda “rain is falling (coming)” (58);

zero:

piga omnida “it is raining” (189);

häga ónje-ttúmnikka “when does the sun rise?” (187);

t'ayangún uridúrege pit-kwa yóru chunda “the sun gives us light and heat” (Essence 1836); etc.

4.3.1. Entities of non-human reference, closely related to an expressed or an unexpressed honorific referee, may adopt the deference class value of the latter

or may not. The difference between the two cases may be inferred from the following examples:

4.3.1.1. The HR-related honorific expansion is limited to one single phrase within a single clause or a simple sentence, as in the following two phrases (-si-/zero) drawn from a verse of the popular Arirang song:

kasinún nimún “(the) departing beloved”

-si- S₁:HR

pal-ppyóng nanda “a foot ache developed”

S₂ zero

The whole verse consists of three clauses:

(1) *narúl pórigo kasinún nimún* (2) *sim-ni-do mot-kasó* (3) *pal-ppyóng nanda* “the departing beloved is deserting me, no sooner he passed ten miles than (his) feet hurt him”.

4.3.1.2. The HR-related honorific impact is not prevented by clause boundaries, as might be observed with honorific referees of high and highest deference class membership. The HR-related honorific expansion, in this case, may progress either directly, with reference to the HR that has initiated the honorific process (cf., lines 1, 6, 7/8, 9, 10 below), or indirectly, through an HR-related entity (cf., lines 2, 3, 4/5 below):

1. *hanúre kyesin uri abóji* (k(y)esin)

2. *abójiúi irúmi kóruk'i pin-nasimyó* (-si-)

3. *kú-naraga im-hasimyó* (-si-)

4. *abójiúi-ttúsi hanúresó-wa-gach'i*

5. *ttangesó-do iruó-jisosó* (-sosó-)

6. *onúl uriege iryong-hal yangsigúl-jusigo* (-si-)

7. *uriga chal-mot-han irúl uriga yongsó-ha-dúsi*

8. *uri-jörül yongsó-hasigo* (-si-)

9. *urirúl yuhoge-ppajiji malge hasigo* (-si-)

10. *agesó ku-hasosó* (-sosó-)

1. Our Father who art in heaven, 2. Hallowed be thy name. 3. Thy kingdom come. 4/5. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 6. Give us this day our daily bread. 7/8. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. 9. And lead us not into temptation, 10. but deliver us from evil. (The Lord's Prayer).

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Symbols Used

- A – anaphoric element (§ 1);
- Ai, Aii, Aiii – participants in the communication process (§ 2);
- AS – actual subject (§ 4.1);
- Fm – formality marker (§ 3);
- FP – final predicate (§ 3);
- fr – formality relationship (§ 3);
- FS – formal subject (§ 4.1);
- gr – grammatical relationship (§ 3.2);
- H – head, in a head-modifier relationship (§ 2.1);
- Hm – honorific marker (§ 3);
- hr – honorific relationship (§ 3);
- HR – honorific referee (§ 3.2);
- M – modifier, in a head-modifier relationship (§ 2.1);
- NFP – non-final predicate (§ 3);
- P – predicate (§ 3);
- RM – regressively structured modifier complex coextensive with a subordinate clause (§ 1);
- S – subject (§ 3).