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A contrastive analysis of verb ellipsis in German and Japanese

This talk deals with a class of elliptical constructions in a contrastive perspective between German and Japanese. I would like to concentrate on cases in which typically a verb is missing, like the following:

- (1) Peter trinkt Bier und Maria ____ Wein.
- (2) Taro-ga biiru-o ____ sosite Hanako-ga wain-o nonda.
Taro-Nom beer-Acc ____ and Hanako-Nom wine-Acc drank
'Taro drank beer and Hanako (drank) wine.'

It has been already reported in the literature that the possibility of deletion is correlated with the word order pattern of the language. If the position of the gap is changed, each of the above sentences becomes unacceptable:

- (3) *Peter ____ Bier und Maria trinkt Wein.
- (4) *Taro-ga biiru-o nomi, sosite Hanako-ga wain-o ____.
*Taro-Nom beer-Acc drink, and Hanako-Nom wine-Acc ____.

What is remarkable is the well-formedness of the German sentence corresponding to the Japanese (4) exhibiting OV-order, i.e. (5), beside the expected pattern like (2), i.e. (6):

- (5) weil Peter Bier trinkt und Maria Wein ____
- (6) weil Peter Bier ____ und Maria Wein trinkt

In this talk I strive for an explanation for this contrast between German and Japanese ((4) vs. (5)). Starting from the premise that the basic word order lies at the heart of the phenomenon, I provide further data from Japanese that have not found much attention and propose that the morphosyntactic properties of conjunction and complementizer can play a crucial role.