

Nominal-Internal Subjects in Japanese

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The major goal of this paper is to show that in what I refer to the ‘nominal-internal subject’ construction in Japanese, the nominal-internal experiencer of a nominal predicate superficially stays in where it is base-generated, but it nevertheless functions as a syntactic subject. I argue that the experiencer acquires the status as the subject of the clause by undergoing covert movement to the subject position of the clause (Spec-TP). The data from Japanese illustrate that in a language like Japanese, a covert movement of a subject is available, which is probably motivated by the specifier (EPP) requirement of T, suggesting that if subject movement is not induced at the overt syntactic level, it can be instantiated at the LF level, contrary to the commonly-held assumption that movement of a subject can be induced only at the overt syntactic level.

The nominal-internal subject construction under investigation is one type of possessor raising construction, but differs from other types of possessor raising constructions attested in Japanese, where possessor raising gives rise to an additional or a major subject in addition to the thematic subject (Kuno 1973, Vermeulen 2005, and many others). The hallmark of this construction is that the experiencer argument acts as the thematic subject of the clause even if it remains within the nominal predicate on the surface. One representative example of this construction is given in (1b).

(1) a. **Mary-ni** ano-kodomo-ga [nayami]-da.

Mary-DAT that-child-NOM worry-COP

(lit.) ‘For Mary, that child is a worry.’

b. Ano-kodomo-ga [**Mary-no** nayami]-da.

that-child-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP

‘That child is Mary’s (only) pride/Mary is (only) proud of that child.’

As shown in (1), with a nominal predicate like *nayami* ‘worry’, which is combined with the copula, the experiencer argument can be marked with either dative case or genitive case. Note that this alternation takes place in the matrix clause, and differs from oft-discussed ‘genitive-nominative’ conversion in Japanese, which is made possible only when embedded under a larger nominal.

One important structural difference between (1a) and (1b) is that the genitive experiencer, unlike the dative experiencer, is located within the nominal predicate. The fact that an adjective modifier modifying the nominal predicate can precede the genitive experiencer shows that it must be embedded in the predicate nominal.

(2) Ano-kodomo-ga [(ookina) **Mary-no** (ookina) nayami]-da.

that-child-NOM big Mary-GEN big worry-COP

‘That child is Mary’s big worry.’

(1a) falls into the class of dative-subject construction, because the dative argument possesses subject properties, and one standard subject test of reflexivization in Japanese picks out the dative argument as its antecedent (Shibatani 1978).

(3) **Mary-i-ni** zibun-i-no kodomo-ga [nayami]-da.

Mary-DAT self-GEN child-NOM worry-COP

(lit.) ‘For Mary, that child is worry.’

Notably, the genitive-marked experiencer in (1a), despite the fact that it appears inside the nominal predicate, behaves in the same way as the dative experiencer in (1a), in that it can be the antecedent of reflexive *zibun* ‘self’.

- (4) Zibun_i-no kodomo-ga [Mary_i-no nayami]-da.
 self-GEN that-child-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP
 (lit.) ‘Self’s child is Mary’s worry.’

In Japanese, a genitive argument appearing in a nominal does not count as an antecedent for the subject-oriented *zibun*, but in the nominal-internal subject construction, the genitive experiencer serves as the antecedent of the reflexive *zibun*.

Moreover, in ordinary possessor-raising constructions in Japanese, a thematic subject is present alongside an extra (or a major) subject created by possessor raising. In the nominal-subject construction, by contrast, no subject is present in the clause; the only argument in the clause—i.e. theme argument—is an object. It is shown that formal noun insertion provides a test for the objecthood of this argument, because the formal noun can be added to an argument appearing in direct object position, but not in subject position (Sasaguri 1999, Takubo 2007).

- (5) Kodomo(-no koto)-ga Mary-no nayami-da.
 child-GEN fact-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP
 ‘The child is Mary’s worry.’

The facts illustrate that (1b) is a ‘disguised’ transitive construction, in which only the direct object appears in the clause, whereas the syntactic subject is deeply embedded within the nominal predicate.

The data suggest that in the nominal-internal subject construction, the genitive argument serves as a subject syntactically. Nevertheless, this argument does not appear in the clause subject positions, Spec-TP or Spec-vP, but rather appears within a nominal predicate. The fact that the predicate-internal experiencer has subject properties follows naturally if the genitive experiencer, which resides in the nominal predicate on the surface, is moved to the subject position of the clause by way of covert movement.

- (6) [_{TP} Subj [_{Subj} [_{NP} Subj N_{pred}]-COP]]

In this analysis, the genitive-marked experiencer comes to occupy the subject position at the LF level—the position where the dative subject in (1a) appears on the surface. I will further show that the covert movement of the genitive experiencer, which counts as the subject of the clause, does not induce a Weak Crossover effect, on the basis of which I will argue that the relevant movement should be an instance of A-movement, rather than A'-movement. Movement of a subject is usually assumed to be instantiated only in overt syntactic structure, but the Japanese fact illustrates that this type of movement may be instantiated at the LF level.

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