

Nominal-Internal Subjects in Japanese

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1. Introduction

The major goal of this paper is to argue for the existence of A-movement at the LF level. I will show this by looking at in what I refer to the ‘nominal-internal subject’ construction.

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 worry/Mary is worried about that child.’

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.

- (2) [TP Subj-GEN [~~Subj-GEN~~ [NP ~~Subj-GEN~~ N_{pred}]-COP]]

I claim that in Japanese, a covert movement of a subject is available.

2. Nominal-Predicate Constructions

The nominal-internal subject construction under investigation is one type of possessor raising construction. A well-known case is found in (3).

- (3) a. [Zoo-no hana]-ga naga-i.
elephant-GEN trunk-NOM long-PRES
‘The elephant’s trunk is long.’
b. Zoo-ga hana-ga naga-i.
elephant-NOM trunk-NOM long-PRES
‘As for the elephant, its trunk is long.’

In (3b), the possessor ‘elephant’ is extracted from the thematic subject ‘trunk’.

- (4) *Zoo-ga naga-i.
elephant-NOM long-PRES
‘The elephants are long’.

- (5) a. [POSS [Arg POSS N] [Predicate]]
 b. [EXP [Pred EXP N]]

No semantic deviance is caused by omitting the non-raised argument, as shown in (6).

- (6) Mary-ni-wa [nayami]-da.
 Mary-DAT-TOP worry-COP
 'That child is a worry.'

Example (6) is felt to be an elliptical sentence, since the possessor is not extracted from the missing argument (and since it can be counted as pro).

3. Subjecthood and Objecthood

One important structural difference between (1a) and (1b), repeated here as (7), is that the genitive experiencer, unlike the dative experiencer, is located within the nominal predicate.

- (7) 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 worry.'

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.

- (8) 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.'

While we would expect that the dative argument in (7a) serves as the subject, it is also true that the genitive argument in (7b) also counts as the subject.

The facts of subject-oriented reflexivization illustrate that the experiencer argument serves as the subject of the clause regardless of whether it is marked with dative or genitive case.

- (9) a. [Zibun_i-no musuko]-ga [John_i-no nayami]-dat-ta.
 self-GEN son-NOM John-GEN worry-COP-PAST
 'John was worried about his son.'
 b. John_i-ni-wa [zibun_i-no musuko]-ga nayami-dat-ta.
 John-DAT-TOP self-GEN son-NOM worry-COP-PAST
 'John was worried about his son.'
- (10) a. *John_i-ga [zibun_i-no musuko-no nayami]-dat-ta.
 John-NOM self-GEN son-GEN worry-COP-PAST
 'His son was worried about John.'

- b. *[Zibun_i-no musuko]-ni-wa John_i-ga nayami-dat-ta.
 self-GEN son-DAT-TOP John-NOM worry-COP-PAST
 ‘His son was worried about John.’

A genitive argument in general does not serve as the antecedent of the reflexive.

- (11) *[Mary_i-no syasin]-ga [[zibun_i-no atama]-no ue]-ni oti-ta.
 Mary-GEN picture-NOM self-GEN head-GEN top-DAT drop-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘Mary’s picture dropped on self’s head.’

In Japanese, the objecthood of argument can be measured by looking at whether the formal noun *koto* ‘fact’ devoid of its semantic content can be inserted.

- (12) a. John-ga Ken(-no koto)-o sikat-te i-ru.
 John-NOM Ken-GEN fact-ACC scold be-PRES
 ‘John is scolding Ken.’
 b. John(*-no koto)-ga Ken-o sikat-te i-ru.
 John-GEN fact-NOM Ken-ACC scold be-PRES
 ‘John is scolding Ken.’

This formal noun cannot occur with the nominative subject of a passive clause, which has been promoted from an erstwhile direct object.

- (13) Ken(*-no koto)-ga John-ni sika-rare-te i-ru.
 Ken-GEN fact-NOM John-by scold-PASS be-PRES
 ‘Ken is being scolded by John.’

Koto-insertion in the two clauses in (14) constructed from the nominal predicate.

- (14) a. Kodomo(-no koto)-ga [Mary-no nayami]-da.
 child-GEN fact-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP
 (Lit.) ‘The child is Mary’s worry.’
 b. Mary-ni kodomo(-no koto)-ga nayami-da.
 Mary-DAT child-GEN fact-GEN worry-COP
 (Lit.) ‘The child is an worry for Mary.’

The theme serves as an object irrespective of whether the experiencer appears in the dative or the genitive case.

- (15) a. Mary(*-no koto)-ni kodomo-ga nayami-da.
 Mary-GEN fact-DAT child-NOM worry-COP
 (Lit.) ‘The children is Mary’s worry.’
 b. Kodomo-ga [Mary(*-no koto)-no nayami]-da.
 child-NOM Mary-GEN fact-GEN worry-COP
 (Lit.) ‘The child is a worry for Mary.’

- (16) a. [EXP-DAT THEME-NOM WORRY-COP]
 Subj Obj
 b. [THEME-NOM [EXP-GEN WORRY]-COP]
 Obj Subj

The genitive experiencer does not fill the subject position.

- (17) a. [TP Subj-DAT [~~Subj-DAT~~ [NP ~~Subj-DAT~~ N_{pred}]-COP]] (Overt movement)
 b. [TP Subj-GEN [~~Subj-GEN~~ [NP ~~Subj-GEN~~ N_{pred}]-COP]] (LF movement)

The genitive experiencer is moved to Spec-TP at the LF level, in much the same way that the dative experiencer is moved to Spec-TP in overt syntax.

4. Evidence for LF Possessor Raising

Evidence that the genitive experiencers are covertly A-moved to Spec,TP may be derived from variable binding.

Example (18) shows that when a quantifier is located within the nominal predicate, it cannot bind a zero pronoun outside (due to Weak Crossover).

- (18) ?*[[*e_i* mensetu-si-ta] hito]-ga [dare-mo_i-no tizin]-dat-ta.
 interview-PAST person-NOM everyone-GEN acquaintance-COP-PAST
 ‘The persons who interviewed *e* were everyone’s acquaintances.’

The zero pronoun appearing within the nominal predicate does serve as a bound variable to be bound by a quantifier on its left.

- (19) Dare-mo_i-ga [[[*e_i* mensetu-si-ta] hito]-no tizin]-dat-ta.
 everyone-NOM interview-PAST person-NOM acquaintance-COP-PAST
 ‘Everyone was the acquaintance of the person who interviewed *e*.’

The case involving the dative experiencer, which is located in Spec-TP.

- (20) Donna-hito_i(-ni)-mo [[*e_i* narat-ta] sensei]-ga hokori-dat-ta.
 every-person-DAT-Q learn-PAST teacher-NOM honor-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘The teachers who learned *e* were everyone’s honor’

- (21) ?*[[*e_i* osie-ta] sensei]-ni dare-mo_i-ga hokori-dat-ta.
 teach-PAST teacher-NOM everyone-NOM honor-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘Everyone was an honor for teachers who taught *e*.’

In the genitive-experiencer counterpart, a zero pronoun inside the nominative theme argument can serve as a bound variable.

- (22) [[*e_i* narat-ta] sensei]-ga dare-mo_i-no hokori-dat-ta.
 learn-PAST teacher-NOM everyone-GEN honor-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘The teachers from who *e* learned were everyone’s honor.’

In (22), the quantifier does not c-command the null pronoun on the surface, but variable binding is nevertheless possible.

- (23) [TP Exp-GEN [C_{OP} ~~Exp-GEN~~ Theme-NOM [~~Exp-GEN~~ N-Pred]-Cop]T]

The observed property in (22) is shared by a passive clause like (24).

- (24) Donna hon-mo_i syppansya-kara [[e_i kai-ta] hito]-ni zootei-s-are-ta.
 every book publisher-from write-PAST man-DAT give-PASS-PAST
 ‘Every book was given to the person who wrote it from the publishers.’

5. Inversion

The hallmark of a copular clause is that the two DPs can be switched, as seen in (25a-b).

- (25) a. [Kono kodomo]-ga [Mary-no nayami]-dat-ta.
 this child-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘This child was Mary’s worry.’
 b. [Mary-no nayami]-ga [kono kodomo]-dat-ta.
 Mary-GEN worry-NOM this child-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘Mary’s worry was this child.’

The subject-oriented reflexive *zibun* can be bound by the experiencer argument of a nominal predicate like *nayami* ‘worry’.

- (26) [Zibun_i-no kodomo]-ga [Mary_i-no nayami]-da.
 self-GEN child-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP
 (Lit.) ‘Her child is Mary’s worry.’
 (27) [Mary_i-no nayami]-ga [zibun_i-no kodomo]-dat-ta.
 Mary-GEN worry-NOM [self-GEN child]-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘Mary’s worry was her child.’

In (27), *Mary* precedes, but does not c-command, the reflexive *zibun*, which is contained with the nominal *nayami* ‘worry’. Nevertheless, *Mary* can bind the reflexive *zibun*.

In (28), *zibun* cannot be bound by the genitive argument, even though the latter precedes the former.

- (28) *[Mary_i-no kodomo]-ga [zibun_i-no nayami]-dat-ta.
 Mary-GEN child-NOM self-GEN worry-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘Mary’s child was her worry.’

Again, the fact remains constant in the other form of the clause, as (29) illustrates.

- (29) *[Zibun_i-no nayami]-ga [Mary_i-no kodomo]-dat-ta.
 self-GEN worry-NOM Mary-GEN child-COP-PAST
 (Lit.) ‘Mary’s child was Her worry.’

- (30) a. $\sqrt{[\text{Self}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-NOM } [\text{NP}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-COP]} (= (26))$
 b. $*[\text{Self}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-NOM } [\text{NP}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-COP]} (= (29))$
 (31) a. $\sqrt{[\text{NP}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-NOM } [\text{Self}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-COP]} (= (27))$
 b. $*[\text{NP}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-NOM } [\text{Self}_i\text{-GEN } N]\text{-COP]} (= (28))$

In both sentences *Mary-no nayami* ‘Mary’s worry’ serves as the predicate, and *kono kodomo* ‘this child’ the subject.

(31b) involves inversion by clefting, the binding relation in (31b) being established via so-called ‘connectivity’ effects.

- (32) a. [Arg-NOM Pred-COP] (Canonical, non-inverted)
 b. [Pred-NOM Arg-COP] (Inverted)

Inn all sentences (26) through (29), *kodomo* is an argument and *hokori* is a predicate.

Let us look at whether the nominative phrases can be placed in cleft-focus position, because as discussed by Heggie (1988), there is a syntactic restriction that a predicate cannot be placed in the focus position, as illustrated (33).

- (33) a. *It is sick that John Smith is.
 b. It is John Smith that is the captain.
 c. *It is the captain that is John Smith.

The data in (34) suggest that *kodomo* is an argument and *nayami* is a predicate.

- (34) a. [Mary-no nayami]-dat-ta] no-wa [kono kodomo]-da.
 Mary-GEN worry-COP-PAST NOMNL-TOP this child-COP
 (Lit.) ‘It was this child that was Mary’s worry.’
 b. *[[Kono kodomo]-dat-ta] no-wa [Mary-no nayami]-da.
 this child-COP-PAST] NOMNL-TOP Mary-GEN worry-COP
 (Lit.) ‘It was Mary’s worry that was this child.’

The same relationship is confirmed by looking at relativization.

- (35) a. [[Mary-no nayami]-dat-ta] kodomo
 Mary-GEN worry-COP-PAST child
 (Lit.) ‘the child that was Mary’s worry.’
 b. *[kodomo-dat-ta] [Mary-no nayami]
 child-COP-PAST Mary-GEN worry
 (Lit.) ‘It was Mary’s worry that was this child.’

If this is the case, we have the following patterns.

- (36) a. √[[Self_i-GEN ARG]-NOM [NP_i-GEN **PRED**]-COP] (= (26))
 b. √[[NP_i-GEN **PRED**]-NOM [Self_i-GEN ARG]-COP] (= (27))
 (37) a. *[[NP_i-GEN ARG]-NOM [Self_i-GEN PRED]-COP] (= (28))
 b. *[[Self_i-GEN PRED]-NOM [NP_i-GEN ARG]-COP] (= (29))

This illustrates that the antecedent of the reflexive is restricted to the nominal-internal subject contained within the nominal predicate.

I argue that (27)(= (36b)) should be construed as an inverted copular clause, which involves

truncated pseudo-clefting

- (38) a. [TP DP_i-NOM Nominal-Pred COP]
 b. [TP [OP_i [.... t_i ... Nominal-Pred COP]-NOM] DP_i-COP]

As often discussed (see Akmajian 1970; den Dikken 2006; and others), (pseudo-)clefting is a syntactic operation that separates a focus component from a presupposition.

The primary function of (ordinary) *wh*-questioning is to ask for the identity of information unknown by the speaker. Accordingly, a presupposition component in a cleft sentence, which is assumed to be true by the speaker, cannot be *wh*-questioned (as an ordinary *wh*-question).

- (39) a. *[Dare-ni at-ta no]-ga Mary-na no?
 who-DAT meet-PAST NOMNL-NOM Mary-COP Q
 (Lit.) ‘The person that who met was Mary?’ (* as an ordinary *wh*-question)
 b. [John-ga at-ta no]-wa dare-na no?
 John-NOM meet-PAST NOMNL-TOP who-COP Q
 ‘Who was the person that John met?’

Exactly the same contrast in acceptability that is found in the inverted nominal-internal subject construction.

- (40) a. *[Dare-no nayami]-ga [kono kodomo]-na no?
 who-GEN worry-NOM this child-COP Q
 (Lit.) ‘Whose worry is this child?’ (* as an ordinary *wh*-question)
 b. [Mary-no nayami]-wa dare-na no?
 Mary-GEN worry-TOP who-COP Q
 (Lit.) ‘Who is Mary’s worry?’

No such *wh*-questioning restriction is imposed on the non-inverted clause.

- (41) a. Dare-ga [Mary-no nayami]-dat-ta no?
 who-NOM Mary-GEN worry-COP-PAST Q
 (Lit.) ‘Who was Mary’s worry?’
 b. Kono kodomo-wa dare-no nayami-dat-ta no?
 this child-TOP who-GEN worry-COP-PAST Q
 (Lit.) ‘Whose worry was this child?’

While (41) is a non-inverted copular clause, (40) is the (inverted) copular sentence, which has the syntactic operation of partitioning the clause into presupposition and focus.

6. Summary

(1) the experiencer argument of *nayami-da* ‘worry’ may be raised to the subject position either overtly or covertly via A-movement.

(2) the nominal predicate appears in a structural position that is assigned nominative case when it involves predicate inversion.

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