

A Case for an Ongoing Left Periphery Truncation of Finite Clauses:
Evidence from Adverbs' Compatibility with Genitive Subjects in Japanese

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In generative syntax, it was generally accepted that finite clauses always have a full-fledged structure of CP (Pesetsky 1995). Under the cartography project advanced by Rizzi (1997) and Cinque (1999), however, it has recently been proposed that some of the functional categories in the CP domain (such as FinP, TopicP) can sometimes be “truncated,” so that there can occur null subjects in topic-prominent languages, definiteness restrictions on subjects, and even permutations of word order between VOS and SVO for some registers of some languages (Stowell and Massam 2017, Paul 2017, Haegeman 2017). Independently, Miyagawa (2011) claims that a Genitive subject (relative) clause in Japanese is a defective TP selected by D, lacking CP. In fact, in English, relative clauses of different syntactic sizes are known synchronically, as in *a man *(that) came, a man (that) she met, a man (that is) alive, a man (*that is) knowing the rumor* (cf. Williams 1975, Kayne 1994). One may wonder, then, whether and how such variations in the syntactic size of finite clauses could occur diachronically.

We will argue that an adnominal clause has been getting smaller and smaller diachronically in Japanese. More specifically, we claim that a Genitive Subject Clause (GSC) in Japanese has been getting more and more stative for younger native speakers, as a result of their GSC being shrinking from CP to TP to vP to VP/AP via truncation, as if they were “small clauses”. This claim will be justified by investigating the possibility of two different types of adverbs (i.e. TP-adverbs and vP-adverbs) preceding a Genitive subject against three different age groups of native speakers of Japanese.

The minimal pair of contrast in a GSC is given in (1a,b) (importantly, Nominative subject clauses where *no* in (1a,b) is replaced by *ga* are equally fully acceptable):

- (1) a. (??zawazawato) seitotachi-**no** (*zawazawato) sawaide-ita kyoositu
noisily students-Gen noisily running.around-was classroom
'the classroom in which students were running around noisily'
b. (?*tanosisooni) kodomotati-**no** (*tanosisooni) asonde-ita hiroba
looking-cheerful children-Gen looking-cheerful playing-was park
'the park in which children were playing, looking cheerful'

In (1a) and (1b), a manner adverb (a kind of vP-adverb) and a subject-oriented adverb (a kind of TP-adverb) are inserted before or after a Genitive subject, respectively. The intervention of an adverb between a Genitive subject and a predicate is known to be ruled out (the so-called “intervention effect”; cf. Harada 1971). Miyagawa (2011, 2013) explains the effect in the phase theory: he argues that when a subject precedes an adverb, it must be moved to [Spec, T] and such a movement is possible only if the clause has CP and an EPP feature is inherited from C to T. He also claims that while a Nominative subject clause is always CP, a GSC (not headed by an unaccusative verb) is TP selected by D, so that such a movement to [Spec, T] should be unavailable. This argument would entail that a GSC in which a Genitive subject follows a TP-adverb should be ruled in. Contrary to this prediction, however, we show the following: a GSC is unacceptable or severely degraded even if a subject follows a TP adverb: in fact, the precedence of a TP-adverb is more severely degraded than the precedence of a vP-adverb, and that the younger age groups tend to judge these sentences as worse than the older ones.

To show this, we made two large-scale Web-based surveys. The first one targeted 300 participants belonging to three different age groups (20-29, 40-49, 65-74) born, raised and now living in the metropolitan area of Japan. They were presented 12 pairs of Nominative and Genitive subject sentences with a manner adverb or a subject-oriented adverb either preceding or following the subject and asked to rate the

acceptability of each sentence on a five-point Likert scale. The result of the survey showed (i) that both a vP-adverb of the type in (1a) and a TP-adverb of the type in (1b) were significantly less degraded when they precede a Genitive subject than when they precede a Nominative subject ($p < .01$), even though the sentences were significantly more acceptable when such an adverb precedes a Genitive subject than when it follows it, (ii) that a TP-adverb preceding a Genitive subject was significantly less acceptable than a vP-adverb preceding a Genitive subject ($p < .001$), and (iii) that the younger two age groups judged a TP-adverb co-occurring with a Genitive subject worse than a vP-adverb co-occurring with a Genitive subject ($ps < .05$).

The second survey was made in the same way, for confirming whether the degradation of the (1a) type is actually due to the co-occurrence of a vP-adverb and a Genitive subject. This survey targeted 360 participants belonging to three different age groups (25-34, 45-54, 65-74) born, raised and now living in the metropolitan area:

(2). (??Sofaa-de) ane-**no** yonde-iru hon
 sofa-at sister-Gen reading-is book
 'the book (my) sister is reading on the sofa'

Here, we used a locative PP headed by *de* 'at', which is also assumed to adjoin to vP when it modifies an eventive transitive verb (Ogawa and Niinuma 2013). The results indicated (iv) that just placing a vP-adverb before a Genitive subject makes a sentence significantly less acceptable than a GSC without a locative adverb for all the age groups ($ps < .001$), and (v) that the younger age groups tend to judge a GSC with a vP-adverb before a Genitive subject as significantly less acceptable than the older one(s) ($ps < .05$).

Harada (1971) claimed that the distribution of a Genitive subject was being narrowed, that there were at least two different idiolects, one that tolerates the adverb intervention (roughly those who were in their forties some forty five years ago) and the other that does not (roughly those in their twenties then), and that this idiolectal variation was a reflect of language change that was ongoing (cf. also Nambu 2014). Our proposal is an updated version of Harada (1971), in that it makes a syntactic claim that the types of GSCs available are still narrowing because the syntactic size of a GSC has been shrinking from CP to TP to vP to VP/AP in the last 100 years or so. More specifically, we assume that Harada's (1971) Dialect A speakers, whose average age would be higher than 80 now, have a CP structure for the GSC, Harada's Dialect B speakers, who correspond to the oldest age group of our survey, have a TP structure for the GSC, and two younger age groups of our survey have a vP structure or a bare VP/AP structure for the GSC, and that the younger ones tend to have a smaller structure for the GSC. Given this claim, a TP-adverb preceding a Genitive subject is more degraded than a vP-adverb counterpart, for the following reasons: for the younger two age groups, but not for the oldest one, the GSC lacks TP which could host a TP-adverb to its left periphery, and among the younger two age groups, the younger ones are more likely to lack a vP which could host a vP-adverb to its left periphery. This claim implies that there is a "finite" (relative) clause in which TP and vP are possibly "truncated" in this order. If CP, TP and vP are all truncated, such a "finite" clause will only host a stative predicate, and it follows that tokens of the GSC are getting more and more stative.

Selected references:

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