

Syntactic Gradience between Finite Clauses and Small Clauses:
Evidence from a Diachronic Change in Genitive Subject Clauses in Japanese

Yoshiki Ogawa, Keiyu Niikuni and Yuichi Wada
Tohoku University

In generative syntax it is generally assumed that while there are several different sizes of non-finite (including small) clauses (such as CP, TP, AspP, vP, VP/AP) as in (1), finite clauses uniformly have a full-fledged CP structure, whether it is the root, a complement, or a modifier, as in (2a).

- (1) a. John found [_{AP} Mary/her out]. (cf. Stowell 1983)
 b. John saw [_{AspP} Bill/him running] (cf. Felser 1999)
 c. John had [_{vP} Bill/him cut his hair] (cf. Ritter and Rosen 1993)
 d. John made [_{TP} Bill/him cut his hair] (cf. Ritter and Rosen 1993)
 e. John believes [_{CP} Mary/her to be smart] (cf. Saito 2017)
- (2) a. [_{CP} [_{TP} NP_i-NOM [_{H-AspP} [_{VoiceP} [_{vP} [_{L-AspP} [_{VP/AP} *t_i* V/A] V/A] L-Asp] v] Voice] H-Asp] T] C] (cf. Pesetsky 1995; Collins 2005; Travis 2010)
 b. [_{DP} [_{TP} [_{H-AspP} [_{VoiceP} [_{vP} [_{L-AspP} [_{VP/AP} NP-GEN V/A] V/A] L-Asp] v] Voice] H-Asp] T] NP D]
 c. Universal functional hierarchy: CP > TP > H-AspP > VoiceP > vP > L-AspP > VP/AP

One of the few exceptions to the null hypothesis is Miyagawa (2011), who claims that a finite relative clause with a Genitive subject in Japanese, as in (3a), is TP with a “defective” tense, selected by D, as in (2b) (hence, he argues that an eventive sentence such as (3b) is ruled out).

- (3) a. Shimi-**ga/no** tui-ta syatu
 stain-NOM/GEN attach_{intr}-PAST shirt
 ‘a shirt on which there is a stain’
 b. Totuzen shimi-**ga/*no** tui-ta syatu
 suddenly stain- NOM/GEN attach_{intr}-PAST shirt
 ‘a shirt that was suddenly stained’ (Miyagawa (2011: 1279))

Extending his hypothesis one step further, in this paper we propose (4a) as a language universal and (4b) as a hypothesis about a diachronic change ongoing for a Genitive Subject Clause in Japanese (GSC), of which (4c) is a consequence:

- (4) a. A non-selected clause, whether finite or non-finite, should be syntactically as small as possible, unless positive evidence showing that the clause in question needs a larger structure is sufficiently available for a language learner.
 b. The syntactic size of a GSC has been shrinking in view of the principle in (3a) and along the cline in (2c) in the last 100 years, and the younger age groups tend to have a smaller unmarked structure for a GSC.
 c. The predicates available in the GSC have been more and more limited to stative verbs and adjectives, excluding an eventive transitive verb, an eventive unaccusative verb and a transitive verb in the passive voice. (cf. Harada 1971)

We claim that (4a) is a kind of economy principle to the effect that functional categories that lack positive evidence for it do not project above the lexical predicate in a non-selected clause, such as (reduced) relative clauses (cf. Williams 1975; Bošković 1997; Ogawa et al. to appear).

We will defend (4b) and (4c) on the basis of the results of an acceptability judgment experiment which targets 600 native speakers of Tokyo Japanese who belong to three age-groups (25-34, 45-54, 65-74). In this experiment, the participants were presented 12 pairs of Nominative and Genitive subject sentences of each of the eventive unaccusative type (=5a), the passivized transitive type (=5b) and 6 such pairs of the stative verb type (=6a) and the adjective type (=6b) and were asked to rate the acceptability of each sentence on a five-point Likert scale. It is assumed in a way compatible with (3a,b) that the GSCs in (5a), (5b), (6a) and (6b) only project up to H-AspP, L-AspP, VP, and AP, respectively, all lacking TP and CP (cf. (2c)).

- (5) a. Boohan kamera-**ga/??no** take-rare-tei-ru ie
 surveillance camera-NOM/GEN attach_{tr}-PASS-PERF-NONPAST house
 ‘a house to which a surveillance camera has been attached’

- b. Boohan kamera-**ga/?no** tui-tei-ru ie
 surveillance camera-NOM/GEN attach_{intr}-PERF-NONPAST house
 ‘a house to which a surveillance camera has attached’
- (6) a. Totte-**ga/no** tui-ta koppu
 grip-NOM/GEN attach_{intr}-Past cup
 ‘a cup with a grip on it’
- b. Kao-**ga/no** akai otoko
 face-NOM/GEN red man
 ‘a man whose face is red/flushed’

The results showed (i) that a Genitive subject was always significantly less acceptable than a Nominative one in (5a,b) ($p < .001$), (ii) that a GSC was significantly less acceptable when it was paired with a passivized transitive verb as in (5a), than when it was paired with an unaccusative eventive verb as in (5b) ($p < .001$), (iii) that the younger age group(s) judged the GSCs as significantly less acceptable than the older age group(s) ($ps < .05$), and (iv) that a GSC headed by stative verbs or adjectives in (6a,b) was as acceptable as a Nominative counterpart for all the three age groups.

Our previous work with acceptability judgment task showed (v) that for the younger two age groups, a TP-adverb (e.g. subject-oriented adverb) preceding a Genitive subject as in (7) was significantly less acceptable than a vP-adverb (e.g. manner adverb) counterpart as in (8) ($ps < .05$).

- (7) ??Tanosisooni kodomotati-**no** ason-dei-ru kooen
 Cheerfully-looking children-GEN play-PROG-NONPAST park
 ‘the park in which children are playing cheerfully’
- (8) ??Geragerato kodomotati-**no** waraw-te-iru hanasi
 guffaw(Adv) children-GEN laugh-PROG-NONPAST story
 ‘the story against which the children are guffawing’

All these results can be explained under (4a,b). Let us assume, more specifically, that the unmarked structures for a GSC are VP/AP for the youngest age group, vP/VoiceP for the intermediate one, and TP for the oldest one, and that the larger deviance from their unmarked structure for a GSC leads to lower acceptability. Given these assumptions, we can explain why the acceptability rating is (6a,b) > (5b) > (5a)/(8) > (9) and the better acceptability ratings by the older age group(s). We conclude that “finite” relative clauses for passives, unaccusatives and statives may differ in their syntactic size, even if they commonly lack an external argument.

References

- Bošković, Željko. 1997. *Nonfinite complementation: An economy approach*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Collins, Chris. 2005. A smuggling approach to the passive in English. *Syntax* 8 (2). 81–120.
- Felser, Claudia. 1999. *Verbal complement clauses: A minimalist study of direct perception constructions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Harada, Sin’ichi. 1971. *Ga-No* conversion and idiolectal variation in Japanese. *Gengo Kenkyu* 60. 25–38.
- Miyagawa, Sigeru. 2011. Genitive subjects in Altaic and specification of phase. *Lingua* 121 (7). 1265–82.
- Ogawa, Yoshiki, Keiyu Niikuni, and Yuichi Wada. To appear. Nominative/genitive conversion in Japanese and syntactic clause shrinking now in progress. *LACUS Forum* 44.
- Pesetsky, David. 1995. *Zero syntax: Experiencers and cascades*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ritter, Elizabeth and Sara Thomas Rosen. 1993. Deriving causation. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 11 (3). 519–55.
- Saito, Mamoru. 2017. Notes on the locality of anaphor binding and A-movement. *English Linguistics* 34. 1-33.
- Stowell, Tim. 1983. Subjects across categories. *The Linguistic Review* 2 (3). 285–312.
- Travis, Lisa. 2010. *Inner aspect: The articulation of VP*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Williams, Edwin. 1975. Small clauses in English. *Syntax and Semantics* 4, ed. by John P. Kimball, 249–273. New York: Academic Press.