

An A/A'-Asymmetry in Genitive Subject Licensing in Modern Japanese

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This paper points out examples where genitive subject in Modern Japanese (Japanese, hereafter) is impossible, in spite of the fact that it should be possible under either Miyagawa's (1993)/Maki and Uchibori's (2008) D-Licensing Approach, Hiraiwa's (2001) Attributive-Licensing Approach, or Maki et al's (2010) D-Attributive-Integrated Licensing Approach, and proposes that genitive subject licensing in Japanese involves some sort of movement, which is subject to Huang's (1982) Condition on Extraction Domain (CED). Consider the examples in (1-3).

- (1) a. hontooni basashi-ga/-no umai basho
really raw horse meat-Nom/-Gen tasty place
'the place where raw horse meat is really tasty'
b. hontooni Kumamoto-ga/*-no umai basashi
really Kumamoto-Nom/-Gen tasty raw horse meat
'the raw horse meat which is really tasty in Kumamoto'
- (2) a. hontooni heekin jumyoo-ga/-no nagai shu
really average life span-Nom/-Gen long kind
'the kind whose average life span is really long'
b. hontooni josee-ga/*-no nagai heekin jumyoo
really women-Nom/-Gen long average life span
'the average life span which is really long for women'
- (3) hontooni Tookyoo-kara/-made-ga/*-no taihenna tabi
really Tokyo-from/-till-Nom/-Gen hard travel
'the travel which is really hard from/up to Tokyo'

The genitive subjects in the grammatical examples in (1-3) are arguments of the predicates, while those in the ungrammatical ones are not true arguments of the predicates. Note that the XPs marked genitive in the ungrammatical examples in (1-3) are grammatical with head nouns, as shown in (4-6).

- (4) Kumamoto-no basashi
Kumamoto-Gen raw horse meat
'Kumamoto's raw horse meat'
- (5) josee-no heekin jumyoo
women-Gen average life span
'women's average life span'
- (6) Tookyoo-kara/-made-no tabi
Tokyo-from/-till-Gen travel
'travel from/up to Tokyo'

The examples in (4-6) thus guarantee that the ungrammaticality of the ungrammatical examples in (1-3) is not due to the fact that the subject XPs cannot be marked genitive in principle.

The argument/adjunct asymmetry shown in (1-3) reminds us of Huang's (1982) CED, which states that a phrase A may be extracted out of a domain B only if B is properly governed. We therefore propose that some element in a genitive subject moves somewhere to be licensed. We assume that the relevant element moves to I(NFL), which is licensed by D, following Maki et al's (2010) Approach. The question is what moves to I. Maki (1995) claims, based on the Move-F/Attract-F Hypothesis (Chomsky (1995)), that in wh-constructions, what moves in English is a whole wh-phrase, while what moves in Japanese is only the wh-feature in the wh-phrase, and argues that an adjunct clause is transparent for wh-feature movement, but is a barrier for wh-phrase movement, based on (7-8).

(7) Kimi-wa [John-ga nani-o kau mae-ni] ie-ni kaetta no?
 you-Top -Nom what-Acc buy before-to home-to return Q
 'What did you return home before John bought *t*?'

(8) ?? What did you return home [before John bought *t*]?

Maki (2009) explains this asymmetry by proposing a semipermeable membrane theory of syntax, under which a barrier is made out of semipermeable membrane, which allows movement of the wh-feature, not a wh-phrase as a whole.

If we adopt this, what moves in the genitive subject construction should not be the genitive Case feature alone, which would be able to move through the adjunct barrier to I. Under the semipermeable membrane theory of syntax, what cannot move out of a barrier is any element that is bigger than the holes on the barrier made out of semipermeable membrane. Therefore, following the general minimalist guidelines, we propose that what moves from genitive subject to I is the minimal element bigger than the holes on the barrier, which is an X^0 category (head) that dominates the genitive case marker. As the genitive case marker is phonologically grouped with the nominal element rather than the predicate with I, we claim that the head dominating the genitive case marker moves to I at LF. Note that the genitive XPs in (4-6) are in DP SPEC, and the genitive case is licensed in situ by agreement with D.

The proposed LF head movement hypothesis is supported by the ungrammaticality of (9) originally pointed out by Horie and Saito (1996), who argue that genitive subject cannot occur with a focus particle.

(9) [Yamada san-dake-ga/*?-no tanonda] ryoori-wa esukarugo-ryoori desita.
 Yamada-only-Nom/-Gen ordered dish-Top escargot-dish was
 'The dish that only Yamada ordered was an escargot dish.'

If we assume that focus involves operator movement to an A'-position, the NP-*dake-no* 'NP-only-Gen' in (9) moves to some A'-position at LF. Then, from that A'-position, *no* 'Gen' head-moves to I, which will be impossible, since the focus NP will not be L-marked in the A'-position, and thus constitutes a barrier for LF head movement from within.

If the above argument is correct, the fact that adjunct and focused XPs marked nominative, not genitive, are allowed in Japanese, suggests that there should be two types of Case licensing in Japanese: one with head movement, and the other without it.