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Some Notes on Genitive Objects in Japanese

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1. Introduction

Stative predicates in Japanese are known to allow nominative objects (Kuno 1973). When they occur in the adnominal clause, they also allow genitive objects (Miyagawa 1993).

(1) Taroo ga   eigo   ga/no   wakaru   koto
     Taro NOM English NOM/GEN   understand   thing
     'the fact that Taro understands English'

This paper investigates focus and scope properties of such genitive objects. Throughout, Miyagawa's (2012) Genitive of Dependent Tense (GDT) hypothesis, according to which a combination of weak v and (a subset of) dependent Tense licenses genitive, plays an important role.[1]

2. Genitive Objects and Focus

As discussed by Akaso and Haraguchi (2011) and Miyagawa (2013), genitive (as opposed to nominative) is incompatible with focus, as shown in (2). And yet these authors point out an interesting exception. Genitive objects are not incompatible with focus; see (3b).

(2) Taro-dake-{ga/*no}   yonda ronbun
     Taro-only-NOM/GEN   read   article
     'the article that only Taro read'
(3) a. Taroo dake ga/*no   hanas-eru   gengo
         Taro   only NOM/GEN   speak-can   language
         'the language that only Taro can speak
     b. Furansugo   dake ga/no   hanas-eru   hito
         French   only NOM/GEN   speak-can   person
         'the person that can speak only French'

Miyagawa (2013), which is an extension of his earlier analyses (Miyagawa 1993, 2011, 2012),

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[1] GDT was first introduced by Miyagawa (2012) for genitives in temporal adverbial clauses. Miyagawa (2013) argues that GDT applies more generally in adnominal domains. Due to space limitation, I cannot explicate the nature of GDT in this paper.

argues that this fact follows from his (2010) theory. Adopting Chomsky's (2008) feature inheritance mechanism and allowing some degrees of variation in the features to be transferred across languages, Miyagawa argues that discourse configurational languages such as Japanese select topic/focus features as the target of the feature transfer operation. To be specific, such formal features originate on the C head (a phase head) and get inherited by T. As a result, focus feature checking requires a CP layer. But the D-licensed genitive cannot occur in a CP because the Phase Impenetrability Condition prevents the D head from probing inside a CP. For Miyagawa, an example such as (3b) is fine because the genitive in this case is licensed via genitive of dependent tense (GDT), a different type of genitive. No probing by the D head is required in this case.

I take it that focus under discussion is identificational focus (as opposed to information focus) in the sense of É. Kiss (1998, 2002). According to É. Kiss, identificational focus is syntactically manifested in the form of movement. For example, an argument modified by *czak* 'only' must undergo focus movement in Hungarian.

(4) a. *János   be   mutatott   csak   Pétert   Marinak
      John   VM   introduced   only   Peter   Mary-to
      'John introduced only Peter to Mary.'
    b. János   CSAK PÉTERT   mutatott   be   Marinak
      John   only   Peter   introduced VM   Mary-to
      'John introduced only Peter to Mary.'   (É. Kiss 2002: 95)

Note that Miyagawa's analysis is consistent with the well-known fact that the *wh*-subject can be genitive (although he does not address this point).

(5)   Kimi   wa   [dare   ga/no   kaita]   hon   o   yonda   no?
      You   TOP   who   NOM/GEN   wrote   book   ACC   read   Q
      'Who is the person x such that you read the book that x wrote'?

Wh-elements are standardly taken to be focus-related, and get licensed via some focus-related head in the periphery of a clause. Indeed, *wh*-phrases in Hungarian must undergo focus movement.

(6) a. * János   be   mutatott   kit   Marinak?
       John   VM   introduced   whom   Mary-to
       'Whom did John introduce to Mary?'
    b. János   KIT   mutatott   be   Marinak?
      John   whom   introduced   VM   Mary-to   (see É. Kiss 2002: 90)

In (5), the focus head that licenses the *wh*-subject (i.e., the interrogative C head) is located in the matrix clause. Thus, under Miyagawa's analysis, the adnominal clause in this case can be a bare TP and the *wh*-subject can be D-licensed.

Nevertheless, Miyagawa's analysis faces a challenge in light of the fact that the *no*-subject and a focus particle are not mutually exclusive, as the genitive subject construction may have a focus particle on other elements, such as an adverb (7), a nominative object (8b), and a PP argument (9).

(7) kinoo/sukosi   dake Taroo ga/no   nonda kusuri
     yesterday/little   only   Taro NOM/GEN   took   medicine
     'the medicine that Taro took only yesterday/only a little'

(8) a. ?*Hanako   dake no   huransugo   no   hanas-e-ru   koto
       Hanako   only GEN French   GEN speak-can-PRES fact
      'the fact that only Hanako can speak French'

    b. Hanako   no   huransugo dake ga   hanas-e-ru   koto
       Hanako   GEN French   only NOM   speak-can-PRES fact
      'the fact that Hanako can speak only French'

(9) Taro dake ni hanako   no   okutta   ronbun [2]
     Taro only to Hanako   GEN sent   article
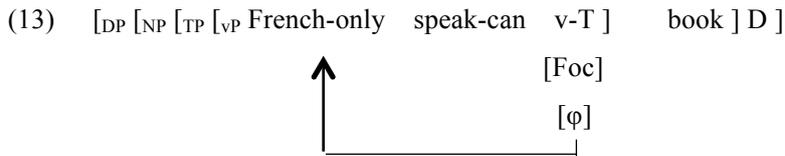   'the article that Hanako sent only to Taro'

In the remainder of this section, I would like to offer a modification of Miyagawa's analysis that maintains the empirical coverage of his analysis while accommodating data such as (7) to (9).

Here are some crucial ingredients of the proposal. First, I assume with Akaso and Haraguchi (2011) and Miyagawa (2013) that a focused element is syntactically licensed at the clausal periphery. Second, departing from those authors, I assume that adnominal clauses in Japanese are uniformly TPs (Murasugi 1991).[3] Thus, focus is licensed in the C-region when the clause is a CP, and in the T-region when the clause is a TP.[4] Third, when a nominal argument is focused, it needs to undergo both Case feature checking and focus feature checking. Now let me spell out my proposal:
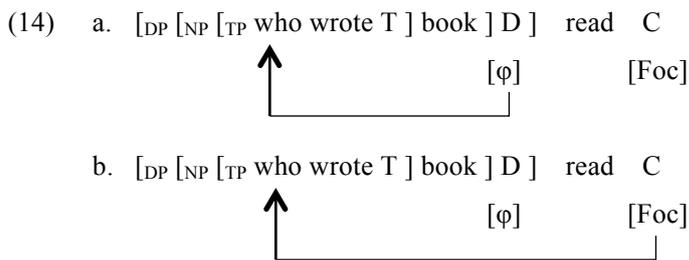
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[2] See Miyagawa (2003) and Ochi (2009) for the discussion that –*ni* that occurs in the genitive subject construction is unambiguously a postposition. Note also that the genitive phrase here is not a possessor base-generated in the spec of DP (i.e., outside the relative clause), as it follows a PP argument that clearly belongs to the relative clause.

[3] Unless adnominal clauses contain an overt complementizer such as *toiuu* (see Nakau 1973), in which case they are CPs.
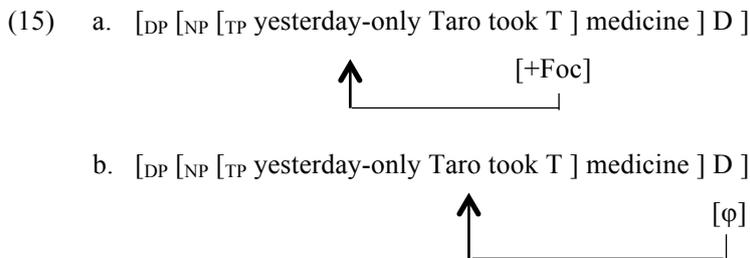
[4] See Miyagawa (2010) for the proposal that discourse properties such as focus and topic are licensed at the T-region in Japanese. Miyagawa argues that such features originate on C and get inherited by T. Our suggestion in the main text is therefore different from Miyagawa's view in this respect.

(10)   Focus checking of an argument α cannot take place prior to Case checking of α.

The proposal is based an old idea about improper movement: an argument cannot undergo A'-movement prior to A-movement. An example like (11a), taken from Boeckx (2008), is barred as it involves movement of *who* into the spec of the embedded CP, an A-bar position, prior to its movement into the spec of the matrix TP (an A-position).

(11)   a. *Who seems that it was told that it would be raining outside?

       b. $[_{CP}$ Who$_i$ $[_{TP}$ t_i seems $[_{CP}$ t_i that $[_{TP}$ it was told t_i that ....]]]]

How to deduce the ban on such improper movement is an important issue, although this paper cannot address it in any depth.

      Let us now reconsider (2) in light of (10). Since the adnominal clause is a TP by assumption (see above), it is the adnominal T that bears a focus feature in this case. When the nominative subject of an adnominal clause is focused, both Case and focus are licensed by the adnominal T, as shown in (12a). This derivation does not run afoul of (10): A single probe (T in this case) probes and agrees with the subject, valuing both features simultaneously. When the genitive subject is focused, however, we get a different picture. As shown in (12b), Case checking cannot take place prior to (or concomitant with) focus feature checking. This would account for the contrast seen in (2).

(12)   a. $[_{DP}$ $[_{NP}$ $[_{TP}$ Taro-only   read   T]   book] D]

                                      [+Foc]

                                      [φ]

       b. $[_{DP}$ $[_{NP}$ $[_{TP}$ Taro-only   read   T]   book] D]

                                 [+Foc]   [φ]

Let us now examine (3). In (3a), genitive Case cannot appear on the subject for the reason that we have already seen: focus is checked at the level of the adnominal TP but the genitive Case checking must wait until the introduction of D, and the condition stated in (10) is violated. As for (3b), I assume that genitive is GDT-licensed (as in Miyagawa 2012, 2013). Accordingly, genitive Case is licensed at the level of TP. Focus feature is also licensed at this point in the derivation.

(13)   [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ French-only   speak-can   v-T]   book] D]

                                                     [Foc]

                                                     [φ]

This line of analysis correctly accommodates (5), with the focus feature on *dare* 'who' being licensed at the matrix CP, much later in the derivation than the licensing of genitive, which takes place at the level of DP.
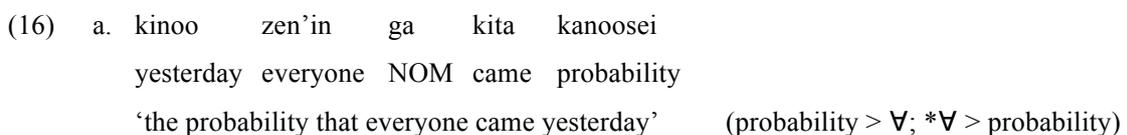
(14)   a.   [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ [$_{TP}$ who wrote T] book] D]   read   C

                                         [φ]   [Foc]

      b.   [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ [$_{TP}$ who wrote T] book] D]   read   C

                                           [φ]   [Foc]

Now, the data shown in (7) through (9), which pose potential problems for Miyagawa, are accommodated straightforwardly under the analysis explored here. In (7), for example, an adverb like *kinoo* 'yesterday' has its focus feature checked by the adnominal T while the subject *taroo* 'Taro' is assigned genitive by D. The condition in (10) is trivially satisfied.

(15)   a.   [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ [$_{TP}$ yesterday-only Taro took T] medicine] D]

                                    [+Foc]

      b.   [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ [$_{TP}$ yesterday-only Taro took T] medicine] D]

                                                [φ]

3.   Genitive objects and Scope

Let us now turn to some scope properties of genitive objects. I adopt the following two assumptions about the determination of scope. First, I assume that Japanese has no covert operation that affects scope (e.g., Quantifier Raising (QR)). In particular, as discussed by Ochi (2001), genitive subjects take wide scope only when they have undergone overt movement into the spec of DP.

(16)   a.   kinoo   zen'in   ga   kita   kanoosei
               yesterday   everyone   NOM   came   probability
               'the probability that everyone came yesterday'   (probability > $\forall$; *$\forall$ > probability)

   b. zen'in   ga   kinoo   kita   kanoosei

      everyone NOM yesterday came probability

      'the probability that everyone came yesterday'   (probability > ∀; *∀ > probability)

(17) a. kinoo   zen'in   no   kita   kanoosei

      yesterday everyone NOM came probability

      'the probability that everyone came yesterday'   (probability > ∀; *∀ > probability)

   b. zen'in   no   kinoo   kita   kanoosei

      everyone GEN yesterday came probability

      'the probability that everyone came yesterday'   (probability > ∀; ∀ > probability)

Second, Case properties/values and scope are intimately related in that the scope of an argument α cannot extend beyond the projection of the Case licensor of α. Accordingly, a D-licensed genitive argument may move to the spec of DP and take wide scope over the head noun.[5] On the other hand, a T-licensed nominative argument cannot not move beyond TP (since it has no reason to do so), which is why the examples in (16) are unambiguous. This line of reasoning has an implication for genitive objects, which, as we discussed in the previous section, may be GDT-licensed. As noted by Miyagawa (1993) (see also Ochi (2001)), nominative objects and genitive objects exhibit distinct scope properties: genitive objects may take scope over the head noun, which is not possible for nominative objects.

(18) Taroo no   subete no   yubi ga   mage-rare-ru kanoosei   ga   takai.

      Taro GEN ∀   GEN   finger NOM bend-can-pres probability   NOM high

      '(lit.) the probability that Taro can bend each of his finger is high.'

      [*∀ > probability; probability > ∀]

(19) Taroo no   subete no   yubi no   mage-rare-ru kanoosei   ga   takai.

      Taro GEN ∀   GEN   finger GEN bend-can-pres probability   NOM high

      '(lit.) the probability that Taro can bend each of his finger is high.'

      [∀ > probability; probability > ∀]

The wide scope reading of the genitive object shown in (19) is made possible via D-licensing.

     With all these points in mind, let us now examine the scope property of GDT-licensed genitive objects. Our approach makes a very specific prediction: Unlike a D-licensed genitive phrase, a GDT-licensed genitive object cannot take scope over a head noun. At this point, I have not been able to find a good test case to verify this prediction. One obvious way to force a genitive object to be GDT-licensed (and not D-licensed) is to have it modified by *dake* 'only.' But the latter seems to be a

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5 Alternatively, it may remain in its underlying position, in which case it takes scope in that position.

genuine sentential operator, and it is unclear whether it can ever interact scopally with a head noun. For this reason, I would like to confine the discussion in this paper to the interaction of the GDT-licensed genitive object and negation in the adnominal clause. As repeatedly noted in the literature, a nominative object with *dake* 'only' yields wide scope over negation whereas its accusative counterpart tends to yield narrow scope.

(20)　a. Sono　kodomo　wa　koyubi　dake　ga　mage-rare-nai.
　　　　　the　　child　　NOM　pinkie　　only　NOM　bend-can-not
　　　　　'The child cannot bend all of his/her fingers.'
　　　　　[only > not; ??not > only]

　　　b. Sono　kodomo　wa　koyubi　dake　wo　mage-rare-nai.
　　　　　the　　child　　NOM　pinkie　　GEN　finger　ACC　bend-can-not
　　　　　'The child cannot bend all of his/her fingers.'
　　　　　[??only > not; not > only]

This type of contrast is retained in the adnominal clause. Thus, the nominative object in (21) has scope over negation, whereas the accusative object in (22) takes narrow scope.

(21)　Sono　kodomo　ga　koyubi　dake　ga　mage-rare-nai　koto
　　　　the　　child　　NOM　pinkie　　only　NOM　bend-can-not　　fact
　　　　'the fact that the child cannot bend only the pinkie'　　[only > not; ??not > only]

(22)　Sono　kodomo　ga　koyubi　dake　wo　mage-rare-nai　koto
　　　　the　　child　　NOM　pinkie　　only　ACC　bend-can-not　　fact
　　　　'the fact that the child cannot bend only the pinkie'　　[??only > not; not > only]

Now let us see how a genitive object behaves in this respect.

(23)　Sono　kodomo　ga　koyubi　dake　no　mage-rare-nai　koto
　　　　the　　child　　NOM　pinkie　　only　GEN　bend-can-not　　fact
　　　　'the fact that the child cannot bend only the pinkie'　　[only > not; not > only]

Although the judgment is somewhat unclear (see below for some discussion of this point), it seems that this example is fully ambiguous. The wide scope reading of the genitive object is somewhat surprising in light of some discussions in the past literature concerning the syntactic location of the

genitive subject.[6] For example, as Harada (1971) originally pointed out, the genitive subject sounds best when it is adjacent to the predicate of which it is predicated, which Watanabe (1996) and Miyagawa (2011) took as an indication that the genitive subject stays in its original position (i.e., within vP).

(24) kodomotati ga/*no minnade ikioiyoku kake-nobotta kaidan
       children   NOM/GEN together vigorously run-climbed.up stairway
       'the stairway which those children ran up together vigorously'

Also, Ochi (2015) argues that although the genitive subject may move into the spec of DP or stay within vP, it does not occupy the spec of TP. The proposal is based on examples such as those in (25) and (26) under the following context: Taro was unable to answer any of the questions in yesterday's exam, and his mother wanted to know the reason for it.

(25) a. Kinoo   taroo ga   subete no   mondai   ga   toke-nakat-ta   riyuu
         yesterday Taro   NOM   ∀   GEN question NOM   solve-neg-PAST   reason

         wo   hahaoya-wa   siri-takat-ta.
         ACC mother-TOP   know-want-PAST
         'Taro's mother wanted to know the reason that Taro was not able to solve all the questions'

      b. taroo ga   kinoo   subete no   mondai   ga   toke-nakat-ta   riyuu
         Taro   NOM   yesterday ∀   GEN question NOM   solve-neg-PAST   reason

         wo   hahaoya-wa   siri-takat-ta.
         ACC mother-TOP   know-want-PAST
         'Taro's mother wanted to know the reason that Taro was not able to solve all the questions'

(26) a. ??Kinoo   taroo no   subete no   mondai   ga   toke-nakat-ta   riyuu
         yesterday Taro   GEN   ∀   GEN question NOM   solve-neg-PAST   reason

         wo   hahaoya-wa   siri-takat-ta.
         ACC mother-TOP   know-want-PAST

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[6] One could argue that the wide scope reading of the genitive object is due to focus (e.g., a focused element undergoes focus movement). As shown in (22), however, a focused accusative object does not readily yield the wide scope reading.

'Taro's mother wanted to know the reason that Taro was not able to solve all the questions'

b. taroo no   kinoo   subete no   mondai   ga   toke-nakat-ta   riyuu
   Taro   GEN   yesterday ∀   GEN   question NOM   solve-neg-PAST   reason

   wo   hahaoya-wa   siri-takat-ta.
   ACC   mother-TOP   know-want-PAST
'Taro's mother wanted to know the reason that Taro was not able to solve all the questions'

The examples in (25) contain a nominative subject and those in (26) have a genitive subject. And the (a)-example and the (b)-example in each pair are minimally different in terms of word order, with a temporal adverb (*kinoo* 'yesterday') preceding the subject in the former and following it in the latter. This word order permutation has no effects on the grammatical status in (25). But the situation is different in (26). In particular, most of the speakers that I consulted found (26a), in which *kinoo* 'yesterday' precedes the genitive subject *taroo no* 'Taro GEN,' to be degraded (to various degrees). Ochi's (2015) analysis runs as follows. Recall our assumption that adnominal clauses in Japanese are TPs. Recall also that we are considering these examples under the context in which the nominative object has scope over negation. As we are assuming that scope of an element is determined on the basis of its surface position (i.e., no QR), the nominative object in these examples must be located in a position above negation. A good candidate is the spec of TP. Also, since the adverb *kinoo* 'yesterday' is located within this adnominal domain (and not within the DP domain as it lacks *-no*), an element following it must also be located within the adnominal clause. It thus follows that an element sandwiched between *kinoo* 'yesterday' and the nominative object, both located in TP, must also belong to the domain of T. And the deviance of (26a) indicates that the genitive subject cannot occupy such a position. (26b) is fine because the genitive subject in this case is located in the spec of DP.

Let us now return to the ambiguity of (23). The first thing to note is that the genitive object is not in the spec of DP in this case: it is preceded by a nominative subject, which is located within the adnominal TP. I suggest that the genitive object is in the domain of T when it takes scope over negation.[7] This seemingly unexpected behavior of the genitive object may in fact fall out from Miyagawa's (2012) GDT. Since GDT involves dependent T (as well as weak v), and since negation is located below T (and above v), we in fact expect a GDT-licensed genitive phrase to be able to (perhaps optionally) move into the domain of T, thus above negation. Further, this line of reasoning may give us a clue about the unclear status of the scopal property of the genitive object in (23).

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[7] I assume that the genitive object remains within vP when it takes narrow scope.

According to Miyagawa (2012), GDT involves both dependent T and weak v. Because negation is presumably located somewhere between these two heads, the Case licensor for GDT is, in effect, both higher and lower than negation.

3. Conclusion

To summarize, this paper has discussed two aspects of genitive objects in Japanese. First, I offered a modification of Miyagawa's (2013) analysis by resorting to an idea behind the ban on improper movement. Then I briefly considered some scope properties of genitive objects. The overall picture that is emerging is that Case values play an important role for the calculation of scope in Japanese, and that there is no covert operation like QR in this language. Many issues inevitably arise from the observations and the suggestions made here, but I need to leave them for another occasion.

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