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Some Preliminary Notes on *Soo* ECM Constructions in Japanese

Gen Kasai

1. Introduction

In generative grammar, the study of Case has played a central role in linguistic research and has revealed innate properties of the language faculty. One of the most widely discussed Case-related phenomena is exceptional case marking (ECM). ECM constructions allow the embedded subject to be case-marked as accusative, as in (1). In (1), the embedded subject *her* is assigned accusative Case.

(1) Mike wants her to play tennis with you.

Japanese also has ECM constructions, as shown in (2). The embedded subject *Mike* can bear the accusative marker *o* as well as the nominative marker *ga*. Interestingly, Japanese ECM constructions in (2) allow the embedded subject to be accusatively marked in the finite CP headed by the complementizer *to*, while the embedded clause is non-finite TP in the English counterpart. A piece of evidence comes from tense alternation. A diagnostic of finiteness of clauses in Japanese is the availability of tense alternation of the predicate (Fujii 2006). (2) shows that the embedded copula can alternate with respect to present (non-past) and past tense. This fact suggests that the embedded clause in Japanese ECM constructions are finite CP, as discussed in the previous literature [1].

(2) Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-ga/o tensai da/dat-ta to] omotteiru.
T.-TOP M.-NOM/ACC genius COP/COP-PAST C think
'Taro thinks that Mike is a genius.'

Although canonical ECM constructions such as (2) have been investigated by many researchers (e.g., Saito 1985; Kaneko 1988; Oka 1988; Hoji 1991; Sakai 1998; Hiraiwa 2001; Kobayashi and Maki 2002; Tanaka 2002; Takano 2003; Hiwairwa 2005; Hoji 2005; Kuno 2007; Ura 2007; Goto 2014; Kishimoto 2021; Takahashi 2021), the syntactic properties of non-canonical ones, in which the verbs selecting the embedded CP is modified by a pro-form *soo* 'so', remain mysterious (cf. Sakamoto 2016; Fujiwara 2022). (3) shows that *soo* modifies the matrix predicate, which refers to the embedded CP, whose subject can be marked accusative.

(3) Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-ga/o tensai da/dat-ta to] soo omotteiru.
T.-TOP Mike-NOM/ACC genius COP/COP-PST C so think
'Taro thinks that Mike is a genius.'

This paper focuses on the non-canonical ECM constructions, which I call *Soo* ECM henceforth, and proposes

[1] As an annonymous reviewer points out, clause types may vary, depending on verbs. The discussion, however, does not matter so much in this paper and is beyond my scope. I leave this important issue for future research.

that *Soo* ECM is derived by optional movement of the embedded accusative subject out of the embedded CP as well as prolepsis [2]. The evidence emerges when the silent *pro* is unavailable. In other words, *Soo* ECM is legitimate even when *pro*-resistant wh-phrases and idioms are accusatively marked in *Soo* ECM.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly summarizes previous studies on ECM constructions in Japanese, and Section 3 introduces previous observations on *Soo* ECM. Section 4 observes that *pro*-resistant constituents, namely wh-phrases and idioms, can occur as ECMed subjects in *Soo* ECM and argues, on the basis of the Proper Binding Condition and cleft constructions, that *Soo* ECM can be derived by a raising approach as well as by prolepsis. Section 5 explores the nature of raising in *Soo* ECM and shows, on the basis of cleft constructions, PP placement, and island effects, that the raising involved in *Soo* ECM is optional. Section 6 concludes this paper.

2. A Quick Summary of Previous Literature on ECM Constructions

Analyses of ECM constructions can be divided into three main types, as illustrated in (4). The obligatory-raising analysis in (4-a) argues that ECM constructions involve obligatory movement out of CP, whereas the optional-raising analysis assumes that movement to the matrix clause is optional in (4-b). By contrast, the prolepsis (major object + *pro*) analysis in (4-c) does not involve movement. Rather, the major object occupies the V-complement position, and the embedded subject is the phonologically null pronoun (*pro*).

(4) a. NP-ACC$_1$ [$_{CP}$ t_1...] (Obligatory Raising, Kuno 1976; Sakai 1998; Tanaka 2002; Kuno 2007)

b. [$_{CP}$ NP-ACC...] or NP-ACC$_1$ [$_{CP}$ t_1...]
(Optional Raising, Hiraiwa 2001; Hiwairwa 2005; Kishimoto 2021)

c. NP-ACC$_1$ [$_{CP}$ *pro*$_1$...]
(Prolepsis, Major Object + pro, Saito 1985; Oka 1988; Hoji 1991; Takano 2003; Hoji 2005)

Due to space limitations, I will take up one argument in favor of the movement analyses in (4-a) and (4-b). ECM constructions show Proper Binding Condition (PBC) effects (Kuno 1976), as shown in (5). The unacceptability of (5) is explained by the PBC. The embedded subject *Mike* in (5) is extracted out of CP, and the embedded CP then undergoes scrambling to sentence-initial position. The embedded CP contains the unbound trace, t_1. By contrast, this unacceptability is difficult to capture under the prolepsis analysis due to the lack of the unbound trace (the embedded subject is just *pro*).

(5) *[$_{CP}$ t_1 tensai da to] Taro-wa Mike-o$_1$ omotteiru.
genius COP C T.-TOP Mike-ACC think
'Taro thinks that Mike is a genius.'

[2]The movement might be scrambling or case-driven A movement. Seeking this issue is beyond my scope. I leave this important issue for future research. I thank an annonymous reviewer for bringing this issue to my attention.

3. Basic Properties of *Soo* ECM and Some Previous Notes on *Soo* ECM

Having briefly reviewed previous studies on ECM constructions, I now turn to *Soo* ECM. *Soo* ECM shares some similarities with canonical ECM constructions. First, their embedded clauses are selected by verbs representing the indirect speech and the internal feelings of the matrix subject such as *sinziru* 'believe', *kantigaisuru* 'mistake', *kateisuru* 'hypothesize', and *omoikomu* 'erroneously believe' (cf. Kuno 1976). Second, the embedded clause, which contains the accusative subject, is finite CP headed by the complementizer *to*. (3) indicates that the embedded clause in *Soo* ECM allows tense alternation, which suggests the finiteness of the CP.

However, these two constructions behave differently with respect to PBC effects. *Soo* ECM does not show PBC effects (Fujiwara 2022:86), as in (6) (*soo* 'so' in (6) refers to the embedded CP), whereas canonical ECM constructions do. This fact supports the prolepsis analysis of *Soo* ECM because the analysis does not produce an unbound trace but instead places *pro* in the embedded subject position, as in (7-a). In contrast, (7-b) indicates that the movement analysis necessarily generates an unbound trace. In short, canonical ECM constructions are derived by raising strategies such as (4-a) and (4-b), whereas *Soo* ECM allows prolepsis strategy in (4-c) at least.

(6) [$_{CP}$ tensai da to] Taro-wa Mike-o$_1$ soo omotteiru.
genius COP C T.-TOP Mike-ACC so think
'That pro$_1$ is a genius, Taro thinks of Mike$_1$.'

(7) a. [$_{CP}$ *pro*$_1$ tensai da to] Taro-wa Mike-o$_1$ soo omotteiru.

b. [$_{CP}$ t_1 tensai da to] Taro-wa Mike-o$_1$ soo omotteiru.

However, the discussion does not show that *Soo* ECM completely lacks movement, even though the prolepsis option is available. The next section discusses *pro*-resistant constituents, namely wh-phrases and idioms, and argues that *Soo* ECM can involve raising.

4. Raising Analysis of *Soo* ECM

This section focuses on wh-phrases and idioms, which cannot be referred to by pronouns, and proposes that *Soo* ECM has raising as one of its sources, in addition to prolepsis. I propose that *Soo* ECM has two derivations, as in (8-a) and (8-b). In (8), *soo* 'so' adjoins to the matrix VP. In (8-a), the NP with the accusative marker is base-generated in V-complement position as a Major Object and is referred to by *pro*. In contrast, (8-b) illustrates that the accusative subject moves out of CP or stays in-situ. Having introduced evidence suggesting prolepsis strategy of *Soo* ECM in Section 3, subsections 4.1 and 4.2 are devoted to showing that *Soo* ECM are derived by a non-proleptic strategy when *pro* is inaccessible. Section 5 seeking the nature of a non-proleptic strategy involved in *Soo* ECM and argues that the strategy is not obligatory but optional movement of the embedded NP with an accusative case out of the embedded CP.

(8) a. [$_{VP}$ [$_{VP}$ NP-ACC$_1$ [$_{CP}$ *pro*$_1$...]] soo]

b. [$_{VP}$ [$_{CP}$ NP-ACC...] soo] or [$_{VP}$ [$_{VP}$ NP-ACC$_1$ [$_{CP}$ t_1...]] soo]

4.1. Wh-phrases

As Saito (2017:723) points out, wh-phrases cannot be represented by *pro*, as exemplified in (9). The following sentence has a *pro* subject in the embedded clause, but that subject cannot refer to the preceding wh-phrase *dare* 'who'.

(9) *Dare-ga$_1$ kankoku-ni ittaka-wa sira-nai kedo, *pro*$_1$ amerike-ni itta ka nara sitteiru.
who-NOM Korea-DAT went-TOP know-NEG but America-DAT went Q if know
'I don't know who went to Korea but I know who went to America.'

If *Soo* ECM used only the prolepsis strategy, wh-phrases would be predicted not to occur with the accusative marker in *Soo* ECM. This prediction is not borne out, as indicated in (10). The wh-phrase *dare* 'who', bearing accusative Case, can occur in *Soo* ECM. This fact suggests that movement strategies such as (4-a) and (4-b) are available for *Soo* ECM.

(10) Taro-wa dare-ga/o tensai da to soo omotteiru no.
T.-TOP who-NOM/ACC genius COP C so think Q
'Who does Taro think is genius?'

In addition, PBC effects in *Soo* ECM with wh-phrases support the movement analysis of *Soo* ECM, as (11-b) shows. The embedded wh-phrase *dare* 'who' in (11-b) moves out of CP, after which the embedded CP undergoes scrambling into the matrix clause. Note that question formation itself does not affect the acceptability of (11-b) because (11-a), which is a yes/no question without the wh-phrase, is still acceptable.[3]

(11) a. [$_{CP}$ *pro*$_1$ tensai da to] Taro-wa Mike-o$_1$ soo omotteiru no.
genius COP C T.-TOP Mike-ACC so think Q
'That pro$_1$ is a genius, does Taro think of Mike$_1$?'

b. *[$_{CP}$ t_1 tensai da to] Taro-wa dare-o$_1$ soo omotteiru no.
genius COP C T.-TOP who-ACC so think Q
'That t$_1$ is a genius, who$_1$ does Taro think?'

Furthermore, cleft constructions indicate that *Soo* ECM can be derived by a movement approach. In Japanese cleft constructions, multiple constituents can be situated in the focus position. Koizumi (1995) argues that multiple foci must be clause-mates, as in (12) and in (13) (see also Tanaka (2002) and Hiraiwa (2001)). (12-b) shows that *dare* 'who' and *nani* 'what' can be focused because they are in the same clause. On

[3]PBC effects behave differently, depending on the movement type of the stranded NP and the following remnant movement (e.g., Müller 1998; Abels 2007), as an annonymous reviewer correctly notes. Müller (1998) argues that the movement types must not be the same. Then, the PBC violation in (11-b) suggests that CP fronting and extraction from the embedded CP are the same operation, that is, scrambling. However, Japanese shows PBC effects if A movement from the constituent, which is fronted later (e.g., Takita 2010). Considering this, it is difficult to argue that extraction from the embedded CP in (11-b) is scrambling or A movement.

the other hand, *dare* 'who' and *nani* 'what' in (13-b) are not clause-mates, which degrades the acceptability of (13-b).

(12) a. Mary-wa [$_{CP}$ Taro-ga dare-ni nani-o watasita to] omotteiru no.
M.-TOP T.-NOM who-DAT who-ACC passed C think Q
'To whom does Mary think that Taro passed what?'

b. Mary-ga [$_{CP}$ Taro-ga t_1 t_2 watasita to] omotteiru no-wa dare-ni$_1$ nani-o$_2$ desu-ka.
M.-NOM T.-NOM passed C think NML-TOP who-DAT who-ACC COP-Q
'To whom and what is it that Mary thinks Taro passed?'

(13) a. Dare-ga [$_{CP}$ Taro-ga Mary-ni nani-o watasita to] omotteiru no.
who-NOM T.-NOM Mary-DAT who-ACC passed C think Q
'Who thinks that Taro passed Mary what?'

b. *t_1 [$_{CP}$ Taro-ga Mary-ni t_2 watasita to] omotteiru no-wa dare-ga$_1$ nani-o$_2$ desu-ka.
T.-NOM Mary-DAT passed C think NML-TOP who-NOM who-ACC COP-Q
'Who and what is it that thinks Taro passed to Mary?'

Let me go back to *Soo* ECM. The accusative-marked logical subject in the embedded clause and the indirect object in the embedded clause cannot be multiply focused under the prolepsis analysis because the subject and the indirect object are not clause-mates. This prediction is refuted by (14-b). The ECMed subject *dare* 'who' and the indirect object in the embedded clause *nani* 'what' can occupy the focus position in cleft constructions. These data are easily captured by a raising approach, that is, the optional raising approach. In the optional raising approach, the embedded subject with the accusative marker in (14-b) can stay in the embedded CP, which satisfies the clause-mate condition. Note that the optional raising approach to *Soo* ECM is further confirmed by the fact that the matrix subject and the ECMed embedded subject are multiply focused, as exemplified in (14-c). (14-c) suggests that the ECMed subject *dare* 'who' can be optionally moved out of the embedded CP and become clause-mates with the matrix subject *dare* 'who'.

(14) a. Taro-wa dare-o nani-ni muitei-nai to soo omotteiru no.
T.-TOP who-ACC what-DAT suitable-NEG C so think Q
'Who does Taro consider to be not suitable for what?'

b. Taro-ga [$_{CP}$ t_1 t_2 muitei-nai to] soo omotteiru no-wa dare-o$_1$ nani-ni$_2$ desu-ka.
T.-NOM suitable-NEG C so think NML-TOP who-ACC what-DAT COP-Q
'Who and for what is it that Taro considers to be not suitable?'

c. t_1 t'_2 [$_{CP}$ t_2 sono sigoto-ni muitei-nai to] soo omotteiru no-wa dare-ga$_1$ dare-o$_2$
that job-DAT suitable-NEG C so think NML-TOP who-NOM who-ACC
desu-ka.
COP-Q
'Who and whom is it that Taro considers to be not suitable for the job?'

This subsection has shown, on the basis of the availability of wh-phrases, PBC effects, and cleft constructions, that *Soo* ECM can be derived by optional raising as well as by the prolepsis strategy. The next subsection turns to another class of *pro*-resistant constituents, that is, idioms.

4.2. Idioms

This subsection argues that idioms, which are resistant to *pro*, can occur as the logical subject of the embedded CP, just as wh-phrases can. I will take up the idiom, *X no me ga husiana da* 'X does not see the nature of things'. This idiom can appear in the embedded CP position in ECM constructions, as exemplified in (15).

(15) Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-no me-ga/o fusiana da to] omotteiru.
T.-TOP Mike-GEN eye-NOM/ACC knothole COP C think
'Taro thinks that Mike does not see the nature of things.'

Since idioms are *pro*-resistant, the prolepsis analysis of *Soo* ECM predicts that the idiom cannot appear in the constructions. However, (16) shows that this prediction is not borne out. The availability of (16) supports the raising analysis of ECM [4].

(16) Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-no me-ga/o husiana da to] soo omotteiru.
T.-TOP Mike-GEN eye-NOM/ACC knothole COP C so think
'Taro thinks that Mike does not see the nature of things.'

Moreover, *Soo* ECMed idioms violate PBC if the logical subject is moved out of CP, after which the CP is fronted above the NP, as (17) indicates. The degraded status of (17) further suggests that *pro*-resistant constituents in *Soo* ECM can be derived by the raising strategy.

(17) *[$_{CP}$ t_1 husiana da to] Taro-wa Mike-no me-o$_1$ soo omotteiru.
knothole COP C T.-TOP Mike-GEN eye-ACC so think
'That t_1 does not see the nature of things, Taro thinks Mike$_1$.'

In summary, this section makes novel observations that *pro* resisting constituents, including wh-phrases and idioms, can appear as the accusative-marked logical subject of the embedded clause in *Soo* ECM in terms of PBC effects and cleft constructions. The next section addresses whether the raising involved in *Soo* ECM is optional and argues that it is optional based on cleft constructions, PP placement, and island effects.

[4] As Hiraiwa (2001) notes, ECM construction in Japanese can allow a nominative and accusative case to be realized in possessor raising constructions. This is true for *Soo* ECM, as in (i). Importantly, *o-ga* sequence is legitimate in (i-b), while *ga-o* sequence is not, as (i-c) exemplifies. The unacceptability of (i-c) might be attributed to defective intervention effect of the nominative marked NP *Mike* (Hiraiwa 2001). However, this intervention effect has been argued to be imposed on Agree (e.g., Takahashi 2010). If this line of reasoning is correct, (i-c) involves case-driven movement of the accusative NP across the nominative NP at lease once in the derivation. I leave this important issue for future studies.

(i) a. Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-ga me-ga fusiana da to] omotteiru.
T.-TOP Mike-NOM eye-NOM knothole COP C think
'Taro thinks that Mike does not see the nature of things.'
b. Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-o me-ga fusiana da to] omotteiru.
T.-TOP Mike-ACC eye-NOM knothole COP C think
'Taro thinks that Mike does not see the nature of things.'
c. *Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ Mike-ga me-o fusiana da to] omotteiru.
T.-TOP Mike-NOM eye-ACC knothole COP C think
'Taro thinks that Mike does not see the nature of things.'

5. The Optionality of Movement in *Soo* ECM

Having discussed empirical evidence favoring the movement approach to *Soo* ECM, I now turn to the optionality of movement in *Soo* ECM. I argue that the movement involved in this construction is optional with respect to cleft constructions, PP placement, and the absence of island effects. First, reconsider cleft constructions. The obligatory raising approach fails to rule in (14-b) because the accusative subject and the indirect object cannot be clause mates due to the obligatory raising of the accusative subject.

Next, PP placement provides a key diagnostic for where the accusative subject can be base-generated. Some PPs, such as *gakkyuu-iin kurai* 'like a class representative', which modifies the matrix predicate *omou* 'think' (Kobayashi and Maki 2002), cannot move across a clause Takahashi (2021:240). Given that the PP *gakkyuu-iin kurai* 'class-representative like' marks the edge of the embedded clause, let me consider (18), which indicates that the accusative wh-subject in *Soo* ECM can remain within the embedded clause. In (18), the ECMed wh-subject *dare* 'who' stays within the embedded CP because the PP *gakkyuu-iin kurai* 'class-representative like' modifying the embedded predicate precedes the subject. This fact supports the view that the ECMed subject in *Soo* ECM undergoes optional movement out of the embedded CP.

(18) Mary-wa [$_{CP}$ gakkyuu-iin kurai itumo dare-o seizitu da to] soo omotteiru no.
M.-TOP class-representative like always who-ACC sincere COP C so think Q
'who does Mary think is always as sincere as a class representative?'

Island effects also provide a useful testing ground for determining whether the movement in *Soo* ECM is obligatory. (19) shows that island effects are absent in *Soo* ECM with the accusative-marked wh-phrase. (19) would be degraded because of island effects if the ECMed subject *nani go* 'what language' within the relative clause underwent obligatory movement out of the embedded CP selected by *soo* 'so'. These data further suggest that the raising accompanying *Soo* ECM is optional.

(19) Taro-wa [$_{CP}$ [$_{NP}$ [$_{CP}$ nani go-o dekiru] nihonzin-ga] tensai da to] soo omotta no.
T.-TOP what language-ACC can.do Japanese-NOM genius COP C so thought Q.
'What language$_1$ does Taro think Japanese people who can use t_1 are geniuse?'

Two notes are in order here. First, accusative Case does not come from the verb *dekiru* 'can do', selecting the ECMed subject *nani go* 'what language', but is assigned by the matrix verb *omotta* 'thought' because the verb *dekiru* 'can do' cannot assign the accusative case, as in (20).

(20) Taro-wa suugaku-ga/*o dekiru.
T.-TOP math-NOM ACC can.do
'Taro is good at math.'

Next, the absence of island effects cannot be attributed to possessor raising (cf. Kobayashi and Maki 2002). Kobayashi and Maki (2002) claims that the lack of island effects in ECM constructions can be explained by possessor raising. In other words, the ECMed subject can be regarded as a possessor of the NP modified by

a relative clause, which contains *pro* referring to the ECMed subject, as schematized in (21).

(21) [NP-ACC/GEN$_1$ [[*pro*$_1$ V] NP]]

This derivation is not suitable for (19) because the ECMed subject *nani go* 'what language' is resistant to the *pro* strategy. In addition, the genitive counterpart of the ECMed subject *nani go* 'what language' is degraded, as shown in (22).

(22) *Nani go-no nihonzin
what language-GEN Japanese
'Japanese people of what language'

In summary, this section argues that *Soo* ECM adopts the optional raising strategy as well as the prolepsis one with respect to cleft constructions, PP placement, and island effects.

6. Conclusion

This study argues, on the basis of two *pro*-resistant constituents, namely wh-phrases and idioms, as well as PBC effects and cleft constructions, that *Soo* ECM has optional raising as one of its sources in addition to prolepsis. The obligatory raising approach is inconsistent with the data of cleft constructions, PP placement, and island effects.

These findings show that *Soo* ECM is not a uniform prolepsis construction, but a structurally ambiguous configuration in which prolepsis and optional raising coexist. Crucially, the optionality of raising suggests that accusative Case in *Soo* ECM need not be tied to overt raising. This supports long-distance Case assignment without forcing displacement (e.g., Agree, Chomsky 2000; Chomsky 2001), contrary to views that rule out long-distance Case assignment in Japanese (e.g., Saito 2016; Zushi 2016).

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