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A Note on Varieties of Raising-to-Object Constructions in Japanese: Evidence from *Koto-ga* RTOs[†]

Yuya Noguchi

1. Introduction

In Japanese, the nominative Case on the embedded subject in (1a) can be replaced with the accusative Case, as shown in (1b).^{1,2}

- (1) a. Ken-wa [Mai-ga kasiko-i to] omotta.
Ken-Top Mai-Nom smart-Pres C thought
'Ken thought that Mai is smart.'
- b. Ken-wa Mai-o kasiko-i to omotta.
Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought
'Ken thought Mai to be smart.'

Constructions like (1b) are referred to as raising-to-object constructions (RTOs, henceforth) in some previous researches, given their similarity to their English counterpart (e.g., the translation in (1b)) (even though the two crucially differ in whether the complement clause is finite or not).³ Since Kuno (1976), it has been controversial what analysis can capture the properties of RTOs. In particular, there have been two conflicting views on where the accusative phrase in RTOs originates. According to one view, it originates in the embedded clause and undergoes movement to the matrix clause (see Kuno 1976, Sakai 1999, Bruening 2001, Hiraiwa 2001, 2005, Tanaka 2002, among many others). Following Bruening (2001) and Hiraiwa (2001, 2005), I assume that the movement applied to the accusative phrase in this analysis is optional movement. With this view, (1b) would have either one of the two structures in (2), which differ in whether the accusative phrase undergoes optional movement to the matrix clause.

[†] This paper partly draws on my presentation at ConSOLE29 hosted by Leiden University in January 2021 (Noguchi 2021). I thank the audience for their comments. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.

¹ The following abbreviations are used: Acc = accusative, C = complementizer, Cl = classifier, Cop = copula, Dat = dative, Gen = genitive, Nom = nominative, Pres = present tense, Top = topic particle

² Note that the embedded tensed predicate in (1), *kasiko-i* 'is smart', itself cannot take a phrase marked with the accusative Case as its subject, as shown in (i).

(i) Mai {-ga/*-o} kasiko-i.
Mai-Nom/-Acc smart-Pres

This suggests that the accusative marking of the logical subject of the embedded clause in (1b) is associated with the matrix clause.

³ The term RTO does not imply that "raising to the object position" always takes place in this construction.

- (2) a. Ken-wa [CP Mai-o kasiko-i to] omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought
 b. Ken-wa Mai-o_i [CP t_i kasiko-i to] omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought

According to the other view, on the other hand, the accusative phrase in RTOs is base-generated in the matrix clause, with the embedded subject position occupied by a *pro* (see, e.g., Saito 1983, Hoji 1991, Mihara 1994, Takano 2003). Under this approach, the structure of (1b) could be represented as in (3).

- (3) Ken-wa Mai_i-o [CP *pro*_i kasiko-i to] omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought

Regarding this issue, Goto (2016) attempts to “put a period to a long debate on analyses of [RTOs] in Japanese” (Goto 2016: 3). More specifically, she argues that both the two analyses illustrated above are possible and that which analysis applies to an RTO depends on the type of the matrix predicate.

Against this backdrop, this short paper aims to provide a new piece of evidence for Goto’s proposal. More specifically, I show that her proposal is corroborated by taking into consideration the construction which I termed as *koto-ga* RTOs in Noguchi (2021), whose example is shown in (4).⁴

- (4) Ken-wa Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C thought
 ‘Ken thought Mai to be smart.’

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 gives an overview of Goto’s (2016) proposal that RTOs in Japanese are analyzed in different manners depending on the type of the matrix predicate. Section 3 introduces a new puzzle regarding *koto-ga* RTOs and argues that it is captured by Goto’s proposed hypothesis. Section 4 concludes the paper.

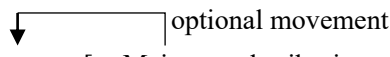
2. Goto (2016)

Goto (2016) argues that RTOs like (1b), where the matrix predicate is *omotta* ‘thought’, are analyzed differently from ones like (5b), where *danteisita* ‘concluded’ is used as the matrix predicate.

⁴ *Koto-ga* RTOs like (4) have been judged ill-formed in literature (e.g., Kuno 1976, Hoji 1991, Kishimoto 2018). However, they sound fine to my ear. Also, (at least some of) Japanese speakers that I consulted judged them acceptable.

- (5) a. Ken-wa [Mai-ga kasiko-i to] danteisita.
 Ken-Top Mai-Nom smart-Pres C concluded
 ‘Ken concluded that Mai is smart.’
 b. Ken-wa Mai-o kasiko-i to danteisita.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C concluded
 ‘Ken concluded Mai to be smart.’

More specifically, she proposes the following hypotheses: (i) when the matrix predicate of an RTO is a *think*-type predicate (e.g., *omou* ‘think’, *kanziru* ‘feel’), the accusative phrase originates in the embedded clause and undergoes optional movement, (ii) when the matrix predicate of an RTO is a *conclude*-type predicate (e.g., *danteisuru* ‘conclude’, *kimetukeru* ‘decide prematurely’), the accusative phrase originates in the matrix clause and the embedded subject position is occupied by a *pro*. These are summarized in (6).

- (6) a. *think*-type predicate: *omou* ‘think’, *kanziru* ‘feel’, etc.
 optional movement
 Ken-wa ___ [CP Mai-o kasiko-i to] omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought (= (1b))
 b. *conclude*-type predicate: *danteisuru* ‘conclude’, *kimetukeru* ‘decide prematurely’, etc.
 Ken-wa Mai-o [CP *pro*_i kasiko-i to] danteisita.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C concluded (= (5b))
 (cf. Goto 2016: 2-3)

Henceforth, I refer to RTOs with a *think*-type predicate (e.g., (1b)) and ones with a *conclude*-type predicate (e.g., (5b)) as *think-RTOs* and *conclude-RTOs*, respectively.

In the rest of this section, I show two arguments that Goto shows for her proposal.⁵ The first argument has to do with the position of an embedded adverb. She considers the contrast between the two RTOs in (7), where the embedded adverb *mada* ‘still’ precedes the accusative phrase.

- (7) a. John-ga mada Mary-o kodomo da to omotta.
 John-Nom still Mary-Acc child Cop C thought
 ‘John thought Mary to be still a child.’ (Hiraiwa 2001: 72)
 b. *John-ga mada Mary-o kodomo da to danteisita.
 John-Nom still Mary-Acc child Cop C concluded
 ‘John concluded Mary to be still a child.’ (Tanaka 2002: 647)

⁵ See Goto (2016) for the third argument for her proposal that concerns scrambling of the embedded clause of RTOs.

Notice that the only difference between the two sentences is the type of their matrix predicate; (7a) is a *think*-RTO and judged grammatical, while (7b) is a *conclude*-RTO and judged ungrammatical. Note also that, given that embedded adverbs cannot undergo long-distance scrambling (Saito 1985), the embedded adverb *mada* ‘still’ in (7) can be regarded as an explicit boundary of the embedded clause. Given these points, the contrast in (7) indicates that the accusative phrase in *think*-RTOs like (7a) can stay within the embedded clause, while the one in *conclude*-RTOs like (7b) must appear in the matrix clause. Notice that this follows from Goto’s proposal in (6); according to (6a), the accusative phrase in *think*-RTOs originates in the embedded clause and can stay there, whereas according to (6b), the accusative phrase in *conclude*-RTOs is base-generated in the matrix clause.

The second argument concerns interpretations of the accusative phrase in RTOs. Takano (2003) investigates whether the phrase in question can be interpreted with respect to the embedded clause (i.e., *de dicto* readings), as well as to the matrix clause (i.e., *de re* readings). However, Goto points out that his observation is based only on *conclude*-RTOs. This fact leads her to examine the availability of *de re/de dicto* readings of the accusative phrase in *think*-RTOs. As a result, she finds that the two types of RTOs differ in whether the accusative phrase can be interpreted *de dicto*. See the relevant examples in (8).

- (8) a. John-wa san-too-no uma-o mesu da to omotta.
 John-Top 3-Cl-Gen horse-Acc female Cop C thought
 ‘John thought three horses to be female.’ (✓*de re* / ?*de dicto*)
- b. John-wa san-too-no uma-o mesu da to danteisita.
 John-Top 3-Cl-Gen horse-Acc female Cop C concluded
 ‘John concluded three horses to be female.’ (✓*de re* / **de dicto*) (Goto 2016: 6)

(8) shows that the accusative phrase in *think*-RTOs like (8a) can be interpreted both *de re* and *de dicto*, while the one in *conclude*-RTOs like (8b) is understood only *de re*.⁶ This contrast becomes clearer when these sentences are considered under the scenario in (9), which forces the accusative phrase in (8), *santoo-no uma* ‘three horses’, to be interpreted *de dicto*, since this phrase should not be construed as referring to three horses in the actual world.

- (9) *Scenario*: One day John went to a pasture. There were only cows in the pasture then. John could not distinguish cows from horses, and he thought, in the mistaken belief, that the animals in the pasture were horses. Then, he had an idea that three of the animals were female. (ibid: 6)

Under this context, (8a) is felicitous, while (8b) is not. This confirms that the *de dicto* reading is

⁶ Goto (2016) notes that *de dicto* readings of the accusative phrase in *think*-RTOs are unavailable for some speakers. She claims that this may not be a counterexample to her proposal, given that similar idiolectal differences are observed in English RTOs; see Section 3 of Goto (2016) for more details.

available only in *think*-RTOs. Note now that the contrast in question can be captured by Goto's hypothesis in (6). According to (6a), the structure of (8a) should be either one of the two in (10).

- (10) a. John-wa [CP san-too-no uma-o mesu-da to] omotta.
 John-Top 3-Cl-Gen horse-Acc female-Cop C thought
 b. John-wa [san-too-no uma-o]_i [CP t_i mesu-da to] omotta.
 John-Top 3-Cl-Gen horse-Acc female-Cop C thought

Notice that the accusative phrase originates in the embedded clause in both structures in (10) and thus serves as an element of the embedded clause, at least at a certain derivational step. This squares with the fact that a *de dicto* reading of the accusative phrase is available in (8a). According to (6b), on the other hand, (8b) should have the structure in (11).

- (11) John-wa [san-too-no uma]_i-o [CP *pro*_i mesu-da to] danteisita.
 John-Top 3-Cl-Gen horse-Acc female-Cop C concluded

In this structure, the accusative phrase originates in the matrix clause and thus does not count as an embedded element. This accounts for why no *de dicto* reading of the accusative phrase is available in (8b) (cf. Takano 2003).

3. *Koto-ga* RTOs

In this section, I aim to provide a new piece of evidence for Goto's proposal by considering *koto-ga* RTOs like (4), repeated below:

- (4) Ken-wa Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C thought
 'Ken thought Mai to be smart.'

In Section 3.1, I provide a new puzzle regarding *koto-ga* RTOs. To capture this puzzle, Section 3.2 describes part of the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs provided in Noguchi (2021). With this analysis, in Section 3.3, I show that Goto's proposal gives an account of the puzzle.

3.1 Puzzle

Recall first that Goto's proposal is based on her observation that the two types of RTOs, *think*-RTOs and *conclude*-RTOs, do not pattern together with respect to, e.g., the position of an embedded adverb and *de re/de dicto* readings. I now point out that a similar asymmetry is observed in *koto-ga* RTOs. Witness the relevant examples in (12).

- (12) a. Ken-wa Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C thought
 ‘Ken thought Mai to be smart.’ (= (4))
- b. *Ken-wa Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to danteisita.
 Ken-Top Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C concluded
 ‘Ken concluded Mai to be smart.’

(12) crucially shows that *koto-ga* RTOs can be realized when their matrix predicate is a *think*-type predicate (e.g., *omotta* ‘thought’ in (12a)), while they cannot when their matrix predicate is a *conclude*-type predicate (e.g., *danteisita* ‘concluded’ in (12b)). To capture this new puzzle, in the next subsection, I will provide part of the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs that I proposed in Noguchi (2021); I refer the reader to Noguchi (2021) for more details of this construction.

3.2 Analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs

Before illustrating the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs, let us first confirm that this construction can be considered as one variant of RTOs, as the term suggests. This view is reasonable if we take into consideration the noun *koto* ‘matter/fact’ in *koto-ga* RTOs. Note that *koto* in (4) does not make any semantic contribution, adding no nuance of “matter” or “fact”. This fact suggests that *koto* in *koto-ga* RTOs is the semantically-vacuous formal noun (e.g., Sasaguri 1996, Kinjo & Sasaguri 1999, Takano 2003, Kishimoto 2004), rather than its contentful counterpart with the meaning of “matter” or “fact”. One notable characteristic of this formal noun is that it can appear only on objects.⁷ (13) shows, for example, that it can be attached to the object (with the help of the genitive Case) but not to the subject.

- (13) Mai(*-no koto)-ga Ken(-no koto)-o {aisiteiru / sikatta / tataita}.
 Mai-Gen matter-Nom Ken-Gen matter-Acc love/scolded/hit
 ‘Mai {loves / scolded / hit} Ken.’

Given the optionality of its attachment in (13), I refer to this formal noun as *koto_{op(tional)}*. Bearing this distributional property of *koto_{op}* in mind, notice now that *koto_{op}* being attached to the logical subject of the embedded clause in (4), namely *Mai*, indicates that the phrase *Mai* serves as an object in a certain way, despite the fact that it is marked with the nominative Case.⁸ This dual status of the

⁷ In Noguchi (2021), I assumed that this formal noun is licensed through Agree with the head of *vP*, based on the observation that it can appear non-locally with respect to a verb; see Noguchi (2021) for more details.

⁸ Note that when the embedded clause in (4) is realized as a matrix clause, it cannot be grammatical without dropping *koto_{op}*, as shown in (i). This suggests that the object status of *Mai(-no koto)* in (4) should be associated with the matrix verb (see also fn.7).

(i) Mai(*-no koto)-ga kasiko-i.
 Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres

koto-ga phrase in *koto-ga* RTOs is also observed in the accusative phrase in standard RTOs like (1b), which not only serves as the logical subject of the embedded clause but also has an object status, as evidenced by the fact that it is marked with the accusative Case. Given this consideration, *koto-ga* RTOs can arguably be regarded as a variant of RTOs.

With this much background, I will now give a rough overview of the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs provided in Noguchi (2021). One distinctive property of this construction is the Case-marking of the *koto-ga* phrase; it is marked with the nominative Case, in contrast to the logical subject of the embedded clause in standard RTOs. With the standard assumption that the nominative Case is assigned/licensed by the head of TP (i.e., T), one might wonder which of the two T's, namely the matrix T and the embedded T, is associated with the nominative Case of the *koto-ga* phrase. To answer this question, in Noguchi (2021) I introduced *(s)ase* causative constructions. An example of this construction is shown in (14b), where the causative affix *-(s)ase-* 'make' takes (the propositional content of) the sentence in (14a) as its complement.⁹

- (14) a. Mai-wa kono mondai{-ga/*-o} wakatta.
 Mai-Top this question-Nom/-Acc understood
 'Mai understood this question.'
- b. Ken-wa Mai-ni [_{VP} PRO_i kono mondai{* -ga/-o} wakar]-aseta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Dat this question-Nom/-Acc understand-made
 'Ken made Mai understand this question.'

Notice that (14a) is a nominative object construction, where an object must be marked with the nominative Case, not with the accusative Case. If *-(s)ase-* 'make' takes this sentence as its complement, however, the nominative marking of the object becomes impossible, as shown in (14b). This is arguably because *-(s)ase-* takes *vP*, rather than TP, as its complement (cf. Murasugi & Hashimoto 2004) and thus the assigner/licenser of the nominative Case, namely T, is not contained in the complement clause of (14b). Given this observation, if the nominative Case on the *koto-ga* phrase in *koto-ga* RTOs is associated with the matrix T, rather than with the embedded T, it is predicted that *-(s)ase-* cannot take a *koto-ga* RTO as its complement, since the embedded *koto-ga* RTO no longer contains T which would assign/license the nominative Case on the *koto-ga* phrase. This prediction is not borne out, however; *(s)ase* causative constructions where a *koto-ga* RTO is embedded can be realized, as shown in (15).

- (15) ?Erika-wa Ken-ni [_{VP} PRO_i Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to omow]-aseta.
 Erika-Top Ken-Dat Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C think-made
 'Erika made Ken think Mai to be smart.'

'Mai is smart.'

⁹ For expository purposes, I assume that in *(s)ase* causative constructions, the causee argument (e.g. *Mai-ni* in (14b)) appears in the matrix clause and PRO appears as the embedded subject.

This observation indicates that the nominative Case on the *koto-ga* phrase in *koto-ga* RTOs is associated with the embedded T, not with the matrix T.

Given that, it is expected that the *koto-ga* phrase is base-generated within the embedded clause, which makes it possible for its nominative Case to be assigned/licensed by the embedded T. In Noguchi (2021) I showed that this expectation is borne out, by observing where a matrix adverb can appear in *koto-ga* RTOs. Kuno (1976) observes that the accusative phrase in standard RTOs can precede, as well as follow, a matrix adverb, as shown in (16).

- (16) a. Ken-wa orokanimo Mai-o kasiko-i to {omotta / danteisita}.
 Ken-Top stupidly Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought/concluded
 ‘Ken stupidly {thought/concluded} Mai to be smart.’
 b. Ken-wa Mai-o orokanimo kasiko-i to {omotta / danteisita}.
 Ken-Top Mai-Acc stupidly smart-Pres C thought/concluded

This fact indicates that the accusative phrase in standard RTOs can surface in the matrix clause. In contrast, however, the *koto-ga* phrase in *koto-ga* RTOs cannot precede a matrix adverb, as shown in (17b).

- (17) a. Ken-wa orokanimo Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to omotta.
 Ken-Top stupidly Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C thought
 ‘Ken stupidly thought Mai to be smart.’
 b. *Ken-wa Mai-no koto-ga orokanimo kasiko-i to omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Gen matter-Nom stupidly smart-Pres C thought

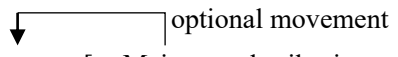
This observation thus shows that the *koto-ga* phrase in *koto-ga* RTOs originates in the embedded clause, as well as that it must stay within that clause.¹⁰ Given that, the structure of the *koto-ga* RTO in (4) can be roughly represented as in (18) (see Noguchi 2021 for its more detailed structure).

- (18) Ken-wa [_{CP} Mai-no koto-ga kasiko-i to] omotta.
 Ken-Top Mai-Gen matter-Nom smart-Pres C thought

3.3 Solving the Puzzle

Bearing in mind the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs illustrated above, let us now turn back to the puzzle in (12). I will now argue that this puzzle can be captured by Goto’s proposed hypothesis, which is summarized in (6), repeated below:

¹⁰ This paper, as well as Noguchi (2021), leaves open why the *koto-ga* phrase in *koto-ga* RTOs cannot move into the matrix clause, unlike the accusative phrase in (a subset of) standard RTOs.

- (6) a. *think*-type predicate: *omou* ‘think’, *kanziru* ‘feel’, etc.
- 

 Ken-wa ____ [CP Mai-o kasiko-i to] omotta.

 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C thought (= (1b))
- b. *conclude*-type predicate: *danteisuru* ‘conclude’, *kimetukeru* ‘decide prematurely’, etc.
- Ken-wa Mai-i-o [CP *pro*_i kasiko-i to] danteisita.

 Ken-Top Mai-Acc smart-Pres C concluded (= (5b))

(cf. *ibid*: 2-3)

According to the proposed analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs, the *koto-ga* phrase must originate in the embedded clause, so that its nominative Case can be assigned/licensed by the embedded T. Notice that this analysis is compatible with the analysis of *think*-RTOs in (6a), in that in both analyses the logical subject of the embedded clause is base-generated in the embedded clause. This compatibility captures the grammaticality of (12a), where the matrix predicate is the *think*-type predicate *omotta* ‘thought’. However, the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs does not square with that of *conclude*-RTOs in (6b); the logical subject of the embedded clause in *koto-ga* RTOs originates within the embedded clause, while the one in *conclude*-RTOs is base-generated in the matrix clause. This incompatibility captures the ungrammaticality of the *koto-ga* RTO in (12b), whose matrix predicate is *danteisita* ‘conclude’. Note here that the present account of the puzzle in (12) crucially hinges on Goto’s proposal. Given that, the asymmetry in (12) lends support for her proposal.

4. Conclusion

This paper has provided a new piece of evidence for the proposal by Goto (2016) that RTOs in Japanese are analyzed in different manners depending on whether their matrix predicate is a *think*-type predicate or a *conclude*-type predicate. More specifically, I pointed out that *koto-ga* RTOs show an asymmetry that depends on the type of the matrix predicate and demonstrated that this asymmetry can be captured by Goto’s proposal, with the analysis of *koto-ga* RTOs proposed in Noguchi (2021).

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