

Negative Polarity Items in Japanese

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The main aim of this presentation is to observe the behavior of Negative Polarity Items (NPIs) in Japanese and propose that Japanese does not have to undergo subject-raising.

Kishimoto (2016) argues that the behavior of NPIs in raising constructions shows us whether or not an argument undergoes A-movement in Japanese. Consider (1), which involve raising constructions formed on the aspectual verb *iru* ‘be’, and NPIs *amari ooku-no* ‘very much’ within negative contexts. Based on the assumption that NPIs appear in scope domain of a negation, the NPI is licensed in (1b) where an object position is occupied by a NPI, not in (1a) where a subject position is occupied. From this contrast, Kishimoto observes that *nai* occupies the Fin head position as a consequence of its head raising, and the subject is moved to the matrix Spec-TP. Kishimoto’s proposal shows that (1) is derived as in (2). The object with the NPI can be properly licensed by the head-raised Neg whereas the subject with the NPI is outside of the scope domain and then cannot be licensed. The subject-object asymmetry as shown in (1) is captured only if the subject undergoes raising to the matrix TP.

However, I provide a set of data which is problematic for Kishimoto’s analysis. Observe (3) where a different type of NPI *rokuna* ‘good’ is involved in the subject position. This NPI is examined in literatures and considered to be the NPI in Japanese (cf. Kataoka 2006). Kishimoto’s analysis predicts that the NPI in (3) is not properly licensed since the NPI in the subject position is outside of the scope domain. However, contrary to prediction, I observe that (3) is allowed. This piece of evidence indicates that Kishimoto’s analysis is problematic.

To sum up, the empirical evidence provided in this paper indicates that Kishimoto’s analysis needs to be reconsidered, and argues against the claim that Japanese has subject raising.

(1)a. *Saikin amari ooku-no hito-ga hon-o yoma-nai-de i-ru
recently very many-GEN man-NOM book-ACC read-NEG-GER be-PRS
‘Recently, very many people have not been reading books.’

b. Saikin Ken-ga amari ooku-no hon-o yoma-nai-de i-ru
recently Ken-NOM very many-GEN book-ACC read-NEG-GER be-PRS
‘Recently, Ken-has not been reading many books.’ (Kishimoto 2016)

(2) [_{FinP}[_{TP} SUBJ [_{VP}[_{FinP}[_{TP}[_{NegP}[_{VP} OBJ V-v]NEG]NEG-T]NEG-T-Fin]Be]T]T-Fin] (Kishimoto 2016)

(3) Rokuna ginko-ga kokyaku-ni okane-o kasa-nai-de i-ru.
good bank-NOM customer-DAT money-ACC lend-NEG-GER be-PRS
‘No good banks lend the money to customers.’

Selected references

- Kataoka, Kiyoko. 2006. *Nihongo hiteibun no kozo: kakimazebun to hiteikoo hyogen* (The structure of negative sentences in Japanese: scrambling and Neg-sensitive elements). Kurosio, Tokyo.
- Kishimoto, Hideki. 2017. Negative polarity, A-movement, and clause architecture in Japanese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 26, 109-161.