

On the Licensing Condition of *Pro* in Nominal Adjectives

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0. Introduction

In present-day English, the use of 'the + adjective', as in examples (1), is mostly restricted to the human, generic and plural expressions.

- (1) a. There is a lack of communication between [the young]
and [the old].
- b. [The very wise] avoid such temptations.
- c. [The industrious Dutch] are admired by their neighbours.

[Quirk et al., 1985: 422-3]

The Japanese language, which lacks an article system, also has the nominal use of adjectives, with a special particle, i.e. *no*, attached to the adjectives, as in (2).

- (2) a. *wakai-no* to kekkon-shita.
young-GEN with married
'(I) married a young person.'
- b. *wakai-no* o Kudasai.
young-GEN ACC get-me
'Get me something young. (e.g., young fruit, vegetables, pork, etc.)'
- c. *wakai-no* ha iikoto da.
young-GEN NOM-TOP good AM
'Being young is very good.'

[GEN = genitive marker¹ ACC = accusative marker NOM-
TOP = nominative topic marker AM = affirmative marker]

In the examples of (2), *wakai-no* 'young + genitive' can denote a young person, vegetable, animal, or property/state/ characteristic of a person/animal/ plant/thing. Thus Japanese allows a far wider range of uses of nominal adjectives than English;

it is never limited to the human, generic and plural uses. But this is not the case only in Japanese. European languages other than English, Germanic or Romance, also have a greater variety of uses of adjectives as nouns and the definite article is not necessarily required. A set of paradigmatic Dutch examples are given in (3).

- (3) a. de blinden *pro*
 'the blind (person)'
 b. een blinde
 'a blind (person)'
 c. blinden *pro*
 'blind (people)'
 d. de rodeauto en de groene *pro*
 'the red car and thegreen (one)' [Kester 1996]

Kester (1996) refers to the human, generic and plural nominal use of adjectives as human construction, and claims that it contains small *pro* as its head which must be licensed in the sense of Rizzi (1986). Following Rizzi, she claims that the licensing condition of *pro* is universally two-fold, consisting of formal licensing and identification. Then she observes that nominal uses of adjectives are allowed if *pro*, which is attributively modified by the adjectives, satisfies the two-fold condition. In the English human construction, under her proposal, the features [+human, +generic, +plural] satisfy the licensing condition on *pro* as its DEFAULT values. She also notes that in Dutch *pro* is formally licensed by the inflectional element schwa [-e] attached to the adjectives, and the nominal use of adjectives is not limited to the human construction. It seems that, just like the Dutch schwa [-e], the Japanese Genitive marker *no* functions as the formal licenser of *pro*, but [+human, +generic, +plural] are not DEFAULT values.

Essentially based on Kester's observations, we will draw here the three conclusions given in (4).

- (4) a. Present-day English does not have an overt formal licenser of *pro* in the nominal adjective construction and its use is highly restricted.
 b. If a language, like many European languages other than English, has an overt formal licenser, it allows a wider range of use of nominal adjectives, not restricted to the [+human, +generic, +plural] use.

- c. Japanese, a geographically isolated language, is not an exception to the conclusion of (b); its genitive marker *no* attached to adjectives operates as a formal licenser and it has a wider range of use of nominal adjectives, though the DEFAULT values are [+state, +specific, +singular].

1. Basic Facts in Japanese

In order to see exactly what the Japanese ADJ+*NO* means, we pick up three major semantic categories, HUMAN, OBJECT and STATE, which might be the paramount semantic features projected into language from the extralinguistic real world.

The adjectives in (5) and the list below can denote all the three semantic categories.

HUMAN, OBJECT and STATE

- (5) a *akarui-no* to kekkon-shita. [HUMAN]
 bright-GEN with married
 ‘(I) married a bright person.’
- b. *akarui-no* o kudasai. [OBJECT]
 bright-GEN ACC get-me
 ‘Get me something bright (e.g., a bright shirt, car or house, etc.)’
- c. *akarui-no* o hokorasiku-omou. [STATE]
 bright-GEN ACC proud-feel
 ‘(I) feel proud of being bright.’

akarui ‘bright’, *bakabakashii* ‘ridiculous’, *chuutohanpa-na* ‘halfway’, *daitan-na* ‘bold, daring, brave’, *futtota* ‘fat, obese’, *fuugawari-na* ‘offbeat’, *genki-na* ‘spry, energetic, vital’, *hanayaka-na* ‘showy, gorgeous’, *hosoi* ‘slender, stalky’, *inki-na* ‘gloomy, somber, dismal’, *iyokuteki-na* ‘eager, keen, enthusiastic’, etc.

The adjectives in (6) and the list below can denote HUMAN and STATE but not OBJECT.

HUMAN and STATE (*OBJECT)

- (6) a. *junjo-na-no* to kekkon-shita. [HUMAN]
naive-GEN with married
‘(I) married a naive person.’
- b. **junjo-na-no* o kudasai. [OBJECT]
naive-GEN ACC get-me
‘Get me something naive.’
- c. *junjo-na-no* o iijirashiku-omou. [STATE]
naive-GEN ACC pathetic-feel
‘(I) feel pathetic of (someone’s) being naive.’

Atsukamashii ‘brazen, unabashed, pushing’, seikyuu-na ‘hasty, impetuous, quick-tempered’, sekkachi-na ‘hasty, restless, impatient’, shincho-na ‘prudent, cautious, discreet’, takumashii ‘stout, sturdy, strong-minded’, yuukooteiki-na ‘friendly, fraternal’, etc.

The adjectives in (7) and the list below can denote OBJECT and STATE but not HUMAN.

OBJECT and STATE (*HUMAN)

- (7) a. **kokochiyoi-no* to kekkon-shita. [HUMAN]
comfortable-GEN with married
‘(I) married a young person.’
- b. *kokochiyoi-no* o kudasai. [OBJECT]
comfortable-GEN ACC get-me
‘Get me something comfortable.’
- c. *kokochiyoi-no* o ureshiku-omou. [STATE]
comfortable-GEN ACC pleased-feel
‘(I) feel pleased of being comfortable.’

aimai-na ‘vague, equivocal’, jidooteiki-na ‘automatic’, meikai-na ‘clear, explicit, lucid, perspicuous’, utagawashii ‘doubtful, dubious, questionable’, waisetsu-na ‘obscene’ etc.

The adjectives in (8) and the list below can denote OBJECT and STATE but

not HUMAN.

STATE (*HUMAN and ?*OBJECT)

(8) a **saishinteki-na-no* to kekkon-shita. [HUMAN]

meticulous-GEN with married

'(I) married a meticulous person.'

b. ?**saishinteki-na-no* o kudasai. [OBJECT]

meticulous-GEN ACC get-me

'Get me something meticulous'

c. *saishinteki-na-no* o ureshiku-omou. [STATE]

meticulous-GEN ACC pleased-feel

'(I) feel pleased of being meticulous.'

attooteki-na 'overwhelming, sweeping, preponderant', koogyooteki-na
'industrial, technological, manufacturing', etc.

A critically important thing to notice here is that the STATE reading is allowed in all the four classes of adjectives. Thus it can be concluded that STATE is a DEFAULT value with the Japanese ADJ+NO construction.

2. Singularity and Specificity of ADJ+NO

Many Japanese people have clear intuition that ADJ+NO primarily denotes singularity. However, if a well-constructed context is given, it can refer to more than one thing; plural reading is certainly available when it refers to humans or objects.

(9) a. *wakai-no* o sannin yokoshite-kure. [PLURAL]

young-GEN ACC three-people send-here-please

'Please send three young people here.'

b. *akai-no* o mitsu tabeta. [PLURAL]

red-GEN ACC three ate

'(I) ate three red ones.'

But in all the examples given so far, the preferred reading might be singular. This intuition is reflected in the fact that ADJ+ NO doesn't go along with particles which

denote plurality, like *tachi* and *ra*.

- (10) a. **wakai-no-tachi* ha *minna* irezumi-ga suki da.
young-GEN-PL NOM-TOP every tatoo NOM-OBJ like AM
'Young people all like tatoos.'
- b. **wakai-no-ra* o *sannin* yokoshite-kure.
young-GEN-PL ACC three send-here-please
'Please, send three young people here.'
- [PL=plural word NOM-OBJ=nominative object marker]

Tachi and *ra* force a plural reading on a noun phrase they are attached to. Interestingly enough, examples like (10a,b) are ungrammatical. But if *tachi* and *ra* are elided, then (10a,b) are perfect and the plural interpretation is still possible, as indicated by the availability of floating quantifiers with plural meanings, like *minna* and *sannin*. This might indicate that ADJ+*NO* is formally singular, though it can be plural conceptually. Thus it might be concluded that, alongside STATE, singularity is also a DEFAULT value of ADJ+*NO*.

Nongeneric reading, actually specific reading, of ADJ+*NO* is always available in all the examples given thus far, though it is not incompatible with generic reading, as in (11).

- (11) a. *wakai-no* ha genki-ga ii. [GENERIC]
young-GEN NOM-TOP energy-NOM good
'Young people are full of energy.'
- b. ?*shoojikina-no* ha yayamosuruto daraku-suru. [GENERIC]
honest-GEN NOM-TOP most-likely deprave
'Honest people are most likely to deprave.'
- c. *akai-no* ha hito o koofun-saseru. [GENERIC]
red-GEN NOM-TOP people ACC excited-make
'Red ones make people excited.'

Some people find it difficult to obtain generic readings in (11), especially in (11b). By contrast, definite or specific readings are very easy to obtain by adding demonstrative adjectives like *ano* and *kono*, as in (12).

- (12) a. *ano/kono* *wakai-no* ha genki-ga ii.
that/this young-GEN NOM-TOP energy-NOM good

'That/This young man is full of energy.'

b. *ano/kono* shoojikina-no to kekkon-shita.

that/this honest-GEN with married

'married that/this young man'

c. *ano/kono* akai-no ha amai.

that/this red-GEN NOM-TOP sweet

'That/This red one is sweet.'

An interesting fact with ADJ+*NO* is that it does not cooccur with *aru* (*a* or *some*), which induces indefinite reading.

(13) a. **aru* wakai-no ha genki-ga ii.

a young-GEN NOM-TOP energy-NOM good

'A young man is full of energy.'

b. ??*aru* shoojikina-no to kekkon-shita.

a honest-GEN with married

'married a young man'

c. **aru* akai-no ha amai.

a red-GEN NOM-TOP sweet

'A red one is sweet.'

Aru is an adjective which indicates that the speaker presupposes that the hearer cannot recognize the referent which a noun phrase with it refers to. Then it might not be unreasonable to argue that ADJ+*NO* denotes a definite or specific referent.²

3. Status of *No* and Licensing of *Pro*

The Japanese language has two major nominalizers, *no* and *koto*, which are quite different, both semantically and syntactically. It seems that *no* is semantically empty or neutral, and lexical meanings of adjectives determine what ADJ+*NO* denotes. As shown above, it can at least refer to HUMAN, OBJECT, or STATE, depending on lexical meanings of adjectives. By contrast, *koto* has its own lexical meaning; it only refers to FACT or EVENT, never to HUMAN or OBJECT. Moreover, it is used as a free morpheme, as in (14).

- (14) a. *koto* o aradateru.
 matter ACC aggravate
 ‘aggravate a matter’
- b. *icchi kyooryokushite koto ni ataru.*
 unitedly cooperatig business to attend
 ‘attend our business cooperating unitedly’
- c. *koto-no okori ha sono hatsugen ni atta.*
 trouble-GEN origin NOM-TOP that speaking in was
 ‘The trouble originated in that speaking.’

By contrast, *no* is always used as a bound morpheme, never as a free morpheme; it is impossible to replace *koto* in (14) with *no*. Given this, it will follow that *no* is inflectional rather than lexical. In fact, *no* is very similar to English *'s* in that they both operate as possessive pronominals when attached to nouns, as in (15) and (16).

- (15) a. *ano ko ha Keiko-no yo.*
 That child NOM-TOP Keiko-GEN AM
 ‘That child is Keiko’s.’
- b. *sonohon ha Takashi-no da.*
 The-book NOM-TOP Takashi-GEN AM
 ‘The book is Takashi’s.’
- c. *sono yarikata ha wagaya-no to onaji da.*
 the way-of-doing NOM-TOP my-family-GEN with same AM
 ‘The way of doing is the same as my family’s.’
- (16) a. Although John’s friends were late to the rally, *Mary’s* arrived on time.
- b. The fact *John’s* was poorly presented made the committee adopt *Mary’s* analysis instead.

Let us now assume that *no* in ADJ+*NO* is another realization of the possessive *no* in (15). Although there is no evidence for this assumption, since the phonetic forms of both *no*’s are exactly the same, it will not be groundless to claim that they are essentially identical, i.e., genitive marker.

Lobeck (1993) claims that the possessive pronominals in (16) include small *pro* which is licensed by *'s*. The essentials of her claims are summarized in (17)-

(19).

(17) *Licensing and Identification of Empty Pronominals*

An empty nonarbitrary pronominal must be governed by X-0 specified for strong agreement.

(18) *Agreement*

A head Y is specified for agreement iff Y shares features with another head or phrase that it governs.

(19) *Strong agreement*

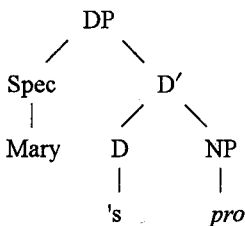
An X-0 is specified for strong agreement iff

- (i) the X-0, or a phrase or head coindexed with it, is specified for agreement and
- (ii) agreement is morphologically realized on X-0 or on the phrase or head coindexed with it.
([+Plural], [+Poss], [+Tense, +AGR] and [+WH] are all agreement features.)

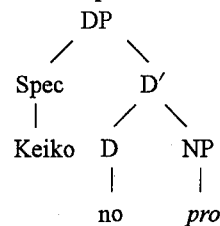
[(17)-(19): Lobeck 1993]

Let us now follow Lobeck's claims and adopt the DP-analysis proposed by Abney (1986). Then it would be that in (20) small *pro* is licensed by 's as a determiner, since it is governed by 's specified for strong agreement. Essentially the same might apply to the Japanese possessive expression of (21).

(20) Mary's *pro*



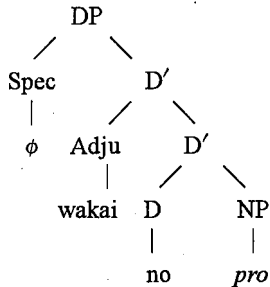
(21) Keiko-no *pro*
'Keiko's pro'



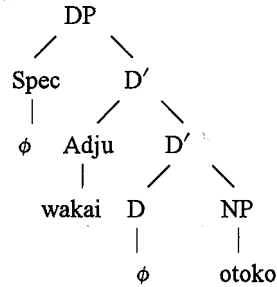
If *no* in ADJ+*NO* is the same as the possessive *no*, the phrase structure of ADJ+*NO* should also be basically the same as that of (21). It is given in (22), where [Spec, DP] is empty, adjective *wakai* is treated as an adjunct, and *pro* is licensed by *no*,

just as in (21).

(22) wakai-no *pro*
'young-GEN *pro*'



(23) wakai otoko
'young man'



Let me here suggest that ADJ+NO should have the same structure as an ordinary adjective+noun expression, a simple example of which is given in (23), where D is zero, *otoko* appears instead of *pro* under NP.³

4. Conclusion

Although many problems remain unsolved, we might have tried to demonstrate that the three conclusions given in (4) are correct at least to some extent.

Notes

1. It will be shown below that there is convincing evidence to regard that the particle *no* can be identified as Genitive marker.
2. Although it is rather difficult to distinguish between definite and specific referents, many Japanese informants around me feel that specific reading is favored.
3. It has been just presupposed that the Japanese ADJ+NO contains small *pro*. On arguments for the existence of *pro* in counterparts of European languages,

see Lobeck (1993).

References

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