Epistemic 'determiner' outside nominal projections in Japanese

1. Introduction

In Japanese, indefinite pronouns, semantically related to another NP, can appear in a preverbal position: for example, in (1), *dare-ka* 'someone' is related to a distant case-marked NP, *otokonoko* 'boy':

(1)   otokonoko-ga sokoni **dare-ka** imase-n-ka ? (Kamio 1973: 83)

        boy-   NOM there   **someone** be-NEG-Q   'Is there some boy or other there?'

This study aims to shed new light on the syntax and semantics of nominal quantification in Japanese, by showing (i) that such floating indefinites are syntactically base generated as adjunct to a verbal projection, just like an adverb, and (ii) that they may be analyzed semantically as parallel to an epistemic determiner, *quelque* in French, conveying the speaker's ignorance about the identity of the referent (Alonso-Ovalle & Menéndez-Benito 2003).

2. Syntaxe

Kamio (1973) observes that floating indefinites manifest similar distributions to floating numerals, as *futa-ri* 'two-Classifier' in (2a,b). Two competing views have been proposed for the syntax of floating numerals: (i) the adverb view which assumes that they are base generated as VP adjunct, like in (2a); (ii) the stranding view according to which, in the underlying structure, they are mutually c-commanded by the related case-marked NP, and are left behind after its movement, as in (2b):

(2)a.   otokonoko-ga   sokoni [$_{VP}$ **futa-ri** [$_{VP}$ imase]]-n-ka ?

         boy-   NOM   there   **two CL**   be-   NEG-Q   'Are there two boys there?'

   b.   otokonoko-ga$_k$ sokoni [t$_k$] [**futa-ri**] [$_{VP}$ imase]-n-ka ?

         boy-   NOM   there   **two CL** be- NEG-Q

In favor of the stranding view, the following restrictions on floating numerals have been argued: (i) VP adverbs cannot intervene between them and the related subject NP; (ii) they cannot be related to a NP within another NP; (iii) an object NP cannot intervene between them and the related subject NP. Nakanishi (2008) however points out systematic counterexamples to these generalizations, as in (3a,b,c), and further observes that floating numerals require a distributive reading, which consists in counting the number of events, and thus supports the adverb view:

(3)a.   kodomo-ga [$_{VP}$ butai-de [$_{VP}$ **zyuu-nin** odotta]]. (Nakanishi 2008 : 294)   [√VP adverb]

         Child-NOM [stage-at [**ten- CL** danced]] 'Ten children danced at the stage separately.'

   b.   Ano isya-   wa   [$_{NP}$ zidoo-no me]-o   **sanzyuu-nin** sirabeta. (ibid.)   [√complex NP]

         That-doctor-TOP [pupil-Gen-eye]-ACC **thirty-   CL** examined

         'That doctor examined thirty pupils' eyes'

   c.   kesa-   gakusee-ga   sore-o   **go-nin** katteittta. (adapted from Nakanishi: 295) [√accusative NP]

         this morning student- NOM it- ACC **five-CL** bought   'Five students separately bought it this morning'

As shown in (4a,b,c), floating indefinites behave in the same way as floating numerals in (3a,b,c):

(4)a.   kodomo-ga [$_{VP}$ butai-de [$_{VP}$ **dare-ka** odotta]]- rassii   [√VP adverb]

         Child-NOM [stage-at [**someone** danced]]-I hear 'I heard that some child or other had danced at the stage'

   b.   Ano   kookooyakyuu-   no kantoku-wa [$_{NP}$ sensyu-no kao]-o **dare-ka** nagutta-rasii. [√complex NP]

         That high school baseball-GEN trainer-TOP [player-GEN-face]-ACC **someone** beat- I hear

         'I heard that that trainer of a high school baseball team had beaten some player or other on the head'

   c.   gakusee-ga   sore-o   **dare-ka** katteitta-rasii.   [√accusative NP]

         student- NOM it- ACC **someone** bought-I hear   'I heard that some student or other had bought it'

The adverb view is further supported by the following observation. Cheng (2009) argues that *dōu* in Chinese, as in (5a), is a definite determiner providing contextual domain restriction for strong determiners, and that it occupies a DP external (VP adjoined) position. In favor of the adverb view, she points out that a single *dōu* may be related to each of the conjoined strong DPs, as in (5a). Similarly, in (5b), a single floating indefinite, *nani-ka* 'something', may be related to each of the conjoined NPs, *okasi* 'cake' and *nomimono* 'drink', as shown by the translation:

(5)a.   [Dàpùfèn de xuéshēg hé měi-ge   lǎoshī] **dōu**   zǎo dào. (Cheng 2009: 68)

         Most   of student and every-CL teacher **DOU** early arrive

         'Most of **the** students and all **the** teachers arrived early.'

b. [okasi to nomimono]-o watasi-ni **nani-ka** kudasai. (adapted from Kamio 1973: 83)

cake and drink -ACC me-DAT **something** give 'Give me some cake or other and some drink or other'

3. Semantics

Semantically, floating indefinites (i) convey, as noted above, the speaker's ignorance, as well as an epistemic determiner *quelque* in French (and probably *un qualche* in Italian and *algún* in Spanish). Thus, in a context where the speaker can naturally obtain direct information about the referent, as in (6a,b), these two expressions are deviant:

(6)a. ?? Hier, j'ai rencontré **quelque** amie. (Jayez & Tovena 2008: 1)

'Yesterday, I met some friend or other.'

b. ?? watasi-wa <u>tomodati</u>-ga kokode **dare-ka** odoru- no- o mita.

I- TOP friend NOM here **someone** dance-COMP-ACC-saw 'I saw some friend or other dance there'

Moreover, both of them (ii) manifest Free Choice reading in modal contexts, as in (7a,b), (iii) never take narrow scope under a clause mate negation, as in (8a,b), and (iv) allow an extensional narrowing of alternative domain, as in (9a,b), which suggests that they evoke extensional alternatives. These four similarities indicates that Japanese floating indefinites can be analyzes semantically in a parallel way to the French epistemic determiner *quelque*:

(7)a. Il faut avoir **quelque** protecteur à la cour. (van de Velde 2000: 256)

'We must have some protector or other at the Court (anyone is ok)'

b. Anata-wa nomimono-o **nani-ka** kat-temoii. Nan-demo ii-yo.

You-TOP drink- ACC **something** buy-may what-even good 'You may buy some drink: any choice is ok'

(8)a. *Je n'ai pas mangé **quelque** pomme. (Corblin 2004: 101)   [*Neg > *quelque*]

'I did not eat some apple'

b. Taro-wa   nomimono-o **nani-ka** kawa-nakatta   [√ *nani-ka* > Neg / *Neg > *nani-ka*]

Taro-Top   drink-   Acc what-or buy-didn't   'There is some drink or other that Taro didn't buy'

(9)a. Yoronda a probablement rencontré **quelque** amie qui n'était pas Marie.   [domain narrowing]

'Yodonda probably met some friend or other, who was not Mary'   (Jayez & Tovena 2008: 7)

b. gakusee-ga kinoo   **dare-ka** kita   ga sore-wa Taro-de-wa-nai.   [domain narrowing]

student-Nom yesterday who-or came but it-Top Taro-be-Top-Neg

'Some student or other came yesterday, but it was not Taro'

(10)   (Mary came) ∨ (John came) ∨ …(student *n* came)   [student *n* ≠ *Taro*]   (for (9b))

Aloni (2006) suggests that the ignorance reading of epistemic determiners is derived from a disjunction of relevant alternative propositions, by way of Grician Quantity Principle: the fact that the speaker asserts a disjunction conversationally implicates that she doesn't know the truth of each disjunct which is more informative than the whole disjunction. Inspired by this analysis and taking into account that Japanese indefinites (ex. *dare-ka* 'someone') include, besides a WH word (ex. *dare* 'who'), a disjunction marker –*ka* 'or', I argue that the semantics of floating indefinites consists of inducing a disjunction of alternative propositions, as in (10). Gil & Tsoulas (2009) argue that in East Asian languages, nominal quantification may be effectuated in the verbal domain. As noted above, Cheng (2009) claims that *dōu* in Chinese is a DP-external definite determiner. In the same vein, this study proposes to analyze Japanese floating indefinites as indefinite (epistemic) determiners outside nominal projections.

Reference

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