Exclamatives and Nominalization in Japanese

In many of the languages grouped together as Altaic, when predicates are inflected for their attributive form, they can be used as nominals as well as noun modifiers, suggesting that the attributive form has a nominalizing function. In earlier stages of the language, Japanese made use of attributed forms for nominalization, as (1) illustrates.

(1) *[Kano siroku sakeru] wo   namu yufugafo   to   mawosi   faberu.*
     that white   bloom   ACC FOC bottle.gourd COMP   say   be.HUMBL.PRES
     'What blooms in a white color is called 'bottle gourd'.'   (Yūgao, Tale of Genji)

In modern Japanese, the nominalization pattern (except in archaic usage) is no longer available. This is generally considered to result from the attributive form having merged with the conclusive form. Shida (2006) claims that the attrition of the nominalizing pattern has began around the end of Middle Japanese or the beginning of Early Modern Japanese (c.a.1600). It is claimed by many (Aoki 2005, inter alia) that the loss of the inflectional distinction correlates with the emergence of the nominalizing particle *no*.

In modern Japanese, verbs and adjectives have lost a distinct 'attributive-conclusive' inflection, so the loss of the nominalizing function is naturally expected, as described by many previous studies. On the other hand, nominal adjectives still retain a distinct attributive morphological form, as shown in (2).

(2) a. *{yake-ta/aka-i/kirei-na}*   *kami*
         burn-PAST/red-PRES/pretty-ATTR.PRES   paper
         '{burnt/red/pretty} paper'
    b. *Kami-ga   yake-ta/aka-i/kirei-da.*
         paper-NOM burn-PRES/red-PRES/pretty-CONCL.PRES
         'The paper is {burnt/red/pretty}.

The non-past inflectional form of a nominal adjective differs depending on whether it modifies a noun or is used as a main predicate. This inflectional difference leads to the expectation that nominal adjectives would retain a nominalizing function.

The main objective of the present paper is to show that this expectation is borne out. In this paper, this is shown by data from fragmentary exclamatives like (3).

(3) *Nan-toyuu   {orokamono/*utukusi-i/*hasir-u}!*
     what   stupid.man/beautiful-PRES/run-PRES
     'What {a stupid man/beautiful/run}!'

The type of exclamative illustrated in (3) has a syntactic restriction that what occurs after the exclamatizer *nan-toyuu* 'what' is limited to a noun or a noun phrase. Thus, categories such as verbs and adjectives are not allowed to occur after the exclamativizer *nan-toyuu*. Nevertheless, nominal adjectives are licensed in the post-exclamativizer position when they appear in the attributive form.

(4) *Nan-toyuu   {oroka-na/*oroka-da}!*
     what   stupid-ATTR.PRES/stupid-CONCL.PRES
     'How stupid!'

Nominal adjectives occur in this environment only when they take the attributive form (and the conclusive form is unacceptable). Since the post-exclamatizer position is restricted to nominal expressions, it can be concluded that the attributive form of a nominal adjective is nominalized.

Importantly, nominalized nominal adjectives behave differently from regular noun phrases; nominal adjectives following the exclamatizer *nan-toyuu* do not serve as

nominal predicates nor can they be placed in argument position.

(5) *Kare-wa {nan-toyuu orokamono/*nan-toyuu   oroka-na   (no)}   da!*
       he-TOP   what   stupid.man/what   stupid-ATTR.PRES NOMLZ COP
       'What {a stupid man/stupid} he is!'

I propose that the nominalization of nominal adjectives in the attributive form is accomplished by merging the nominalizing little *n* with the nominal-adjective head NomA to create the structure [*n* [NomA NomA]] (instead of merging the adjectival little *a* with NomAP). I suggest that the little *n* does not project to a maximal projection, as a result of diachronic attrition—a plausible historical change, given the general loss of distinct attributive inflection. If nominalized adjectives are not turned into phrases, it follows that they can appear only in stand-alone fragmentary exclamatives, which accommodate non-maximal nominal expressions. This analysis also accounts for the fact that genitive phrases do not occur with the attributive form of nominal adjectives.

(6) **Nan-toyuu kare-no   oroka-na!*
       what   he-GEN   stupid-ATTR.PRES
       (lit.) 'What his stupid!'

Note that (6) is acceptable if *oroka-na*, which is in the attributive form, is replaced by the noun *orokasa* 'stupidity'. If the little *n*, which nominalizes nominal adjectives, has a nominal feature, *oroka-na* should have the potential to license genitive case. But genitive phrases cannot be merged with the nominalized *oroka-na*, since *n*P, to which a phrasal element (i.e. a maximal projection) is added, is not projected from the little *n*.

In the literature on Japanese, there is an issue over how nominative-genitive conversion is licensed. Under the most prominent view (e.g. Miyagawa 1993), genitive case is licensed by N (or D), which appears outside a relative or a noun-complement clause, but Hiraiwa (2001) argues that the genitive case is licensed by C (which Agrees with T and v to derive the attributive form). If the little *n* remains non-phrasal, and if only a phrasal element can occur in the specifier or the complement position of a category, a nominalized predicate in the attributive form will not appear in a clause, and hence cannot be associated with TP/CP. This fact leads to the conclusion that C (i.e. the attributive form of the predicate) should not license nominative-genitive conversion.

Overall, the new exclamative data reveal that the nominalization patterns attained by attributive inflection are quite restricted. Verbs and adjectives are not nominalized by their inflection. Nominal adjectives, which retain a distinct attributive inflection, can be nominalized by merging the nominalizing little *n*, but this element no longer projects to *n*P. The data show that in modern Japanese, noun-modifying verbal/adjectival clauses—the type of clauses where the predicates appeared in the attributive form in earlier pre-modern stages—are no longer nominalized; nominal adjectives can still be nominalized, but clauses are not built from nominalized nominal adjectives.

References

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