Provisional and Conditional clauses in Old Japanese

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The discourse-status and reference-coding properties of subordinated and coordinated clauses in Old Japanese (OJ, c. 8th century) and Early Middle Japanese (EMJ, 800-1200) have received some attention in previous literature (Akiba 1977, Ohori 1994, McAuley 2002), but not a lot, and none of these studies considered these discourse-related properties along with the syntactic structures of the language. The research reported in this paper is based on the Oxford Corpus of Old Japanese (OCOJ), an extensive annotated corpus of Japanese texts from the 8th century, investigating these properties further, in the context of more clearly articulated syntactic structures.

We discuss four different clause types, indicated by the form of their predicate: Gerund clauses (ending in *-te*), forming a coordinate or consecutive construction; Concessive clauses "even though" (ending in *-(e)do* marking a Concessive ("even though"); Provisional (ending in *-(e)ba*), sometimes called "realis conditional"; and Conditional (ending in *-(a)ba*), sometimes called "irrealis conditional". Except for the Provisional, these clause types are familiar from other languages. The Provisional of OJ presents one event as being connected to another, sometimes with the meaning of 'when S_1, S_2' or 'because S_1, S_2'', or with a less distinct connection, which might be paraphrased 'given that S_1, S_2'' or 'now that S_1, S_2''.

The functions of the Provisional in subordinating one clause to another are now performed in NJ by the suffix *-to* (Kuno 1973, Yamaguchi-Fujii 1993). What is remarkable is how closely the syntactic structures of 8th century Provisional *ba*-clauses and 21st century *to*-clauses match. Kuno (1973: 209) summarizes his study of NJ subordinating and coordinating suffixes relating an S_1 to a following S_2 by classifying NJ *-to* as a marker of loose subordination and *-te* as a marker of coordination. His tests for the subordinating status of *-to* are: the semantic scope of an overt subject of S_1 can be limited to S_1, and the overt subject of S_2 may appear to the left of S_1 (therefore S_1 is embedded inside S_2). However, no negative, aspect or illocutionary markers in S_2 may scope over S_1.

Using electronic tools to search the OCOJ, we investigated these same properties for Provisional clauses, and found exactly the same results, based on around 900 examples. A Provisional S_1 is embedded within an S_2, though it is quite 'high' within S_2. This syntactic structure also explains the observations in Ohori (1994) that epistemic and deontic modality in S_2 cannot scope over a Provisional S_1. The OCOJ is marked up for phrase and clause boundaries, and therefore can be used to probe syntactic subordination and coordination. We have found examples like (1) where a null object in S_1 corefers with an overt NP in S_2, which indicates the syntactic structure as shown, with subordination. Such a pattern of null anaphora is not possible in truly coordinated (*-te*) clauses in Japanese (Yamaguchi-Fujii 1993).

(1)   [S_2 [S_1 *masurawo-no* e_i *ywobi-tate-sikaba*]   *sa-wosika-no_i*
       fine.man-GEN   call-stand-PAST.PROV   PFX-buck-GEN$_i$
       muna-wake-yuka-mu]
       breast-divide-go-CONJECTURAL
       "The buck must be pressing through (the brush) because the fine men flushed
       it out." (MYS 20.4320)

We have also found examples where an overt object in S_1 antecedes a null argument in S_2. To be compatible with Binding Theory, the null argument in S_2 must be lower than S_1, so that it cannot c-command into S_1. The possible and impossible positions for this null argument are shown in (2).

(2)   [S_2 (*e_i) [S_1 *oposaka-ni apu ya wotomye-wo$_i$*   *miti-twopeba*]
        big.hill-DAT   meet FP young.woman-ACC road-ask.PROV
        tadani pa e_i *nora-zu*]
        straight TOP   tell-NEG
        "When I asked the way from the young woman I met on the big hill, she didn't tell me the direct way." (NSK 64)

Akiba (1977) claimed that *-ba* in OJ is a marker of switch-reference – a marker of "different subject" in contrast to *-te*, which marks "same subject". This claim is challenged and shown to be incorrect for EMJ by Ohori (1994), who reports that the same subject is retained in *ba*-clauses around 20% in MJ and 30% in late MJ, and by McAuley (2002), who reports 30% retention of same subject in EMJ. It should be noted, though, that these proposed analyses actually conflate two different verb forms and clause types, the Provisional and the Conditional, apparently because both verb forms end in the syllable /ba/; they are however morphologically entirely distinct: *kakeba* 'write.Provisional' versus *kakaba* 'write.Conditional'. There are important differences in the properties of these two clause types; the corpus shows that Conditionals have a higher proportion of null arguments than Provisionals.

To investigate the switch-reference idea, we go back earlier in time, to the 8th century. The OCOJ shows that around 75% of the Provisional clauses have a null subject, and that this subject is retained into S_2 at least 20% of the time. Null objects are retained around 50% of the time. Hence while Provisional clauses might disfavour the identification of the subjects of S_1 and S_2, this is not and never has been a formal grammatical property, but is due to the discourse relations between S_1 and S_2 (also suggested in Ohori 1994, McAuley 2002). Further investigation through the corpus will clarify these relations, and we believe that we will find different relations for Provisional and Conditional clauses, to explain the difference in rates of null arguments within them.

References
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