

Some Notes on Nominalization in Japanese: A Typological Perspective

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Introduction

This article is a first attempt to examine the characteristics of nominalization in the Japanese language from a typological perspective with special reference to the following four comprehensive books on language typology and language history titled (i) *Nominalization in Asian Languages: Diachronic and Typological Perspectives* (Yap et al., eds., 2011), (ii) *Handbook of Japanese Contrastive Linguistics* (Pardeshi and Kageyama, eds., 2018), (iii) *Sekai-gengo-eno Siza: Rekisi-gengogaku to Gengo-ruikeiron [A Worldwide Perspective on Languages: Historical Linguistics and Linguistic Typology]* (Matsumoto, 2006), and (iv) *Sekai-no Gengo to Nihongo. [World Languages and Japanese.]* (Tsunoda, 1991).

Nominalization in Japanese that we will examine includes the following examples in which each of the underlined portions is a verbal-based nominalized expression in some way or other:

- (1) *sekai-no ugoki-o yomi nasai*
[‘Read the trends in the world.’]
- (2) *gakubutyoo tosite-no sekinin-no omosa-o keiken sita* [‘I experienced the importance of Dean’s overall responsibility.’]
- (3) *nero-ga rooma-o hakai sita koto-wa zizitu-da*
[‘Nero’s destruction of Rome is a fact.’]
- (4) *yama-ni iku yori umi-ni iku hoo-ga ii*
[‘It is better (I like it better) to go to the sea than to go to the mountains.’] (Horie 2011: 488)
- (5) *Ken wa [[Ai ga motte kita]_{NMLZ} no]_{NP} o tabeta.*
[‘Ken ate what Ai brought.’] (Shibatani 2018: 360)

Yap et al., eds. (2011: 3) define nominalization in its core sense as referring to the process by which we derive nominal expressions (e.g., Comrie & Thompson 1985/2007) –for example, from verbs (e.g., *watch* >

watcher) or adjectives (e.g., *narrow* > *narrowness*, *narrowing*). Clauses may also be nominalized (e.g., *awaken the public conscience* > *awakening (of) the public conscience*). Yap et al. add that nominalization constructions are often distinguished in terms of the following types: participant vs. event; lexical vs. clausal; embedded vs. non-embedded. Comrie & Thompson (1985: 349 / 2007: 334) also state that the term ‘nominalization’ means in essence ‘turning something into a noun’. Here I would like to adopt such broad definition that we can cope with a variety of nominalized expressions and constructions observed in the Japanese language.

This article aims to primarily review these four comprehensive books and make a first attempt to examine the characteristics of nominalization in Japanese, so that we can characterize the properties of nominalization in Japanese from a typological and slightly historical perspective.

The article consists of this introduction and the following four body sections plus concluding remarks. Section I reviews Yap et al., eds. (2011), which deal with nominalization in Asian languages from diachronic and typological perspectives. Section II reviews Pardeshi and Kageyama, eds. (2018), which contrast Japanese with other languages cross-linguistically and typologically in terms of verbal constructions, nominal constructions, and aspect/modality/predication. Section III carefully examines Matsumoto (2006), where Indo-European languages, word order in a typological perspective, issues in subject, and typological maps of world languages are taken up. Section IV reviews Tsunoda (1991), where the characteristics of Japanese are clarified among world languages from the perspectives of language typology and language

universals.

Finally, in Section V, we briefly summarize the characteristics of nominalization in Japanese by reflecting on the preceding four body sections and make concluding remarks of our own.

I Yap et al., eds. (2011) *Nominalization in Asian Languages: Diachronic and Typological Perspectives*

The Introduction in this book (pp. 1-57) deals with nominalization strategies in Asian languages. At the beginning of this introduction (p. 1), it is stated that this paper examines a wide range of nominalization strategies found in Asian languages and identifies robust grammaticalization pathways that trace the life of versatile nominalizers, particularly those that develop from light nouns and noun phrase markers such as classifiers, plural markers, demonstratives, and case markers. It also focuses on the extended uses of nominalization constructions—from referential to non-referential functions, among them adnominal (e.g., relative clause and genitive) marking, tense-aspect-mood (TAM) marking, speaker stance marking, and subordinate adverbial marking. Examples come from Sino-Tibetan, Iranian, Korean, Japanese, Austronesian, and Papuan languages.

Among others, this article will focus on examples from Japanese by distinguishing the following nominalization types, nominalization strategies, and referential and non-referential uses of nominalization constructions:

First, in Yap et al. (2011: 3) nominalization is composed of three types: participant vs. event, lexical vs. clausal, and embedded vs. non-embedded. The term ‘participant nominalization’ refers to derived nominal constituents that function as arguments within referential status, while an event nominalization refers to the nominalization of an action. In Yap et al. (2011: 5), nominalization functions on both lexical and clausal levels, a phenomenon also observed across the language families represented in these volumes. Yap et al. (2011: 7) add that clausal nominalizations are generally embedded as arguments of a matrix clause; however, this is not always true.

Second, Yap et al. (2011: 9-26) identify some of the most common nominalization strategies observed in the languages investigated as morphological, zero, and substantivization strategies, which are each exemplified by using examples from Japanese in (6)-(8) below:

- (6) *kodomo-ga nai-te i-ru tokoro-o mita*
 ‘I saw a child crying.’ (Horie 2008: 175)
- (7) [*yama-ni iku*] *yoru umi-ni iku hoo-ga ii*
 ‘It is better (I like it better) to go to the sea than to go to the mountains.’ (Horie 2011: 488) [= (4)]
- (8) [*moro-pito no aswob-u*] *wo mi-re-ba*
 ‘when (I) see all the people play’ (Wrona 2008: 165) (*Man'yōshū* 5.843)

Notice that, as Yap et al. (2011: 14) describe, nominalization constructions may be identified by noun phrase markers, among them: classifiers, plural markers, possessive pronouns, demonstratives, definiteness markers, and case markers, and that since the case marker *wo* is indicative of the nominal expression *moro-pito no aswob-u* in (8), it is often used to identify nominalization constructions.

Third, Yap et al. (2011: 26-48) examine types of referential and non-referential uses of nominalization constructions: nominalization and relativization—Korean, Japanese, and Chinese nominalization constructions are typologically compared (with diachronic implications), nominalization and clausal subordination—e.g., *undoō sita no ni taizyū ga heranakatta* ‘Although I exercised, I did not lose weight.’ (Yap & Mathews 2008: 317), etc.

II Pardeshi and Kageyama, eds. (2018) *Handbook of Japanese Contrastive Linguistics*

The general introduction in this handbook (pp. vii-xxxiii.) titled “Introduction to the *Handbooks of Japanese Language and Linguistics*” provides a common guideline for the twelve volumes of *Handbooks of Japanese Language and Linguistics*.

This introduction begins with the social and cultural aspects around the Japanese language by presenting the geography, population, and languages of Japan in section 1, the history of the Japanese language in section 2, its geographic and social

variations in section 3, and then investigates into the language itself. Sections 4 and 5 deal with an overview of the Japanese lexicon and phonology, and syntax and semantics. Section 6 considers psycholinguistics and applied linguistics by discussing the acquisition, comprehension, and production of Japanese as a first or second language. Section 7 offers a brief overview of Japanese grammar by pointing out writing, alphabetic transcription, and population in 7.1, word order in 7.2, NP structure in 7.3, subject and topic in 7.4, complex sentences in 7.5, context dependency in 7.6, and predicative verbal complexes and extenders in 7.7

As for word order in 7.2, it is important to notice the following things on pages xviii-xix. As seen in the sentence *Taroo wa Ziroom to Tookyoo e it-te kutusita o kat-ta.* ('Taro went to Tokyo with Jiro and bought socks.'). Japanese is a verb-final, dependent-marking agglutinative language. It is basically an SOV language, which marks the normal dependent arguments by particles (*wa*, *to*, *e*, and *o* above), and whose predicative component consists of a verb-stem, a variety of suffixes, auxiliary verbs, and semi-independent predicate extenders pertaining to the speech act of predication. While a verb is rigidly fixed in sentence final position, the order of subject and object arguments may vary depending on pragmatic factors such as emphasis, background information, and cohesion.

In the introduction of Chapter 12 titled 'Nominalization in crosslinguistic perspective' in this handbook, referring to Shibatani (2017), Shibatani (2018: 345) offers a new analysis of Japanese nominalization that distinguishes between lexical and grammatical nominalizations on one hand, and between verbal-based nominalizations and nominal-based nominalizations on the other. As for this new analysis by Shibatani (2017, 2018), we would like to examine it in another opportunity.

III Matsumoto (2006) *Sekaigengo-eno Siza: Rekisigengogaku to Gengo-ruikeiron* [*A Worldwide Perspective on Languages*]

Matsumoto (2006) has four parts, which are subdivided into 18 chapters.

Part I (Chapters 1-5) is an invitation to the world of Indo-European languages by considering their phonological and morphological change, issues of ergativity, and areal socio-linguistic properties from diachronic and typological perspectives.

Part II (Chapters 6-9) discusses a word order typology with focus on syntactic change in Indo-European languages, typological position of Japanese, and types of basic word order and information structure in world languages.

Among others, Chapter 7 deals with the typological position of Japanese by pointing out that Japanese belongs to the highest ratio of word order (SOV) and thus seems to be one of the languages nearest to the prototype in the Eurasian Continent—with the system of five vowels and the structure of open syllables often seen in the Oceanic. (pp. 165-167).

Part III (Chapters 10-13) takes up issues of grammatical subject, from which it can be stated that the notion of grammatical subject plays an extremely important role in SVO languages (such as Chinese, English) with no nominal or verbal inflections. Instead, then, it can be concluded that verbs and nouns play a universal role in all languages including Japanese. Part IV (Chapters 14-18) presents typological maps of numerals, types of adjectives, types of liquids, types of vowel harmony, and the diversity and universality of the naming of brothers and sisters.

IV Tsunoda (1991) *Sekai-no Gengo to Nihongo*. [*World Languages and Japanese*.]

Tsunoda (1991) examines Japanese from a typological and universal point of view and has two goals. One is to compare and contrast Japanese and other languages in the world. The other is to reconsider what a grammatical view is, particularly the way of capturing Japanese grammar.

This book consists of eleven chapters based on the above-mentioned language typology and language universals. Chapter 1 is an introduction. The following six chapters deal with word order (Chapter 2), case (Chapter 3), Silverstein's noun phrase hierarchy (Chapter 4), transitivity (Chapter 5), Tsunoda's two-

place predicate hierarchy (Chapter 6), and possessors' cline (Chapter 7) respectively. Chapter 8 suggests that we should confirm four levels of grammatical analysis: semantic roles, cases, information structure, and grammatical functions/syntactic functions/grammatical relations. Chapter 9 asserts that Japanese is not peculiar to the typological view, but rather normal mainly because it has the system of five vowels and normally shows SOV word order, both of which are most common from a typological perspective.

Chapter 10 makes a proposal for Japanese education. Finally, Chapter 11 makes concluding remarks.

V Concluding Remarks

This article has been examining a variety of nominalizations in the Japanese language by introducing the four comprehensive books on language typology and language history: Yap et al., eds. (2011), Pardeshi and Kageyama, eds. (2018), Matsumoto (2006), and Tsunoda (1991). Some typical examples of nominalizations in Japanese are:

- (9) *sekai-no ugoki-o yomi nasai*
 ['Read the trends in the world.']
- (10) *gakubutyoo tosite-no sekinin-no omosa-o keiken sita* ['I experienced the importance of Dean's overall responsibility.']
- (11) *nero-ga rooma-o hakai sita koto-wa zizituda*
 ['Nero's destruction of Rome is a fact.']
- (12) *yama-ni iku yori umi-ni iku hoo-ga ii*
 ['It is better (I like it better) to go to the sea than to go to the mountains.'] (Horie 2011: 488)
- (13) *Ken wa [[Ai ga motte kita]_{NMLZ} no]_{NP} o tabeta.*
 ['Ken ate what Ai brought.'] (Shibatani 2018: 360)

Now it is useful for our further investigation to reflect on the general characteristics of Japanese stated in Pardeshi and Kageyama, eds. (2018, pp. xviii- xix). As seen in the sentence *Taroo wa Ziroomo to Tookyoo e it-te kutusita o kat-ta.* ('Taro went to Tokyo with Jiro and bought socks.'), Japanese is a verb-final, dependent-marking agglutinative language. It is basically an SOV language, which marks the normal dependent arguments by particles (*wa*, *to*, *e*, and *o* above), and whose predicative component consists of

a verb-stem, a variety of suffixes, auxiliary verbs, and semi-independent predicate extenders pertaining to the speech act of predication. While a verb is rigidly fixed in sentence final position, the order of subject and object arguments may vary depending on pragmatic factors such as emphasis, background information, and cohesion.

Finally, we conclude by confirming that with the above-mentioned general characteristics of Japanese in mind, it is important to proceed to further investigate into nominalization in Japanese from a typological and slightly diachronic perspective.

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