

Kyoko Oga
Hokkaido University of Education
oga.kyoko@s.hokkyodai.ac.jp

Abstract

This study investigates a type of syntactic nominalization within non-subject honorification (NSH) in Japanese. NSH is a type of honorific construction for speakers to show their respect to the referent of a non-subject of the sentence who is considered as “socially superior to the speaker”. We argue that in NSH, the prefix *o* heads the nominalizing functional category, *n*, and takes a VP as its complement to form *nP* as a mixed projection; this functions as a predicative nominal and form a complex verb with the light verb *su(-ru)* ‘do’. An agreement relationship is established between the prefix *o* as the head *n* and an overt or implied VP-internal SSS item.

1. Introduction

This study investigates a type of syntactic nominalization within non-subject honorification (NSH) in Japanese. NSH is a type of honorific construction for speakers to show their respect to the referent of a non-subject of the sentence who is considered as “socially superior to the speaker” (henceforth, SSS) (Harada 1976, Hasegawa 2006, Ivana and Sakai 2007). In (1), the connecting form of the verb *okur(-u)* ‘send’ is sandwiched between two parts of an NSH form: an honorific prefix *o* and a verb *su(-ru)* ‘do’:

- (1) Taro-ga Tanaka-sensei-ni purezento-o o-okuri-su-ru
 Taro-NOM Tanaka-Prof.-DAT present-ACC o-send-do-PRES
 ‘Taro sends Prof. Tanaka a present.’

In (1), the speaker of the sentence demotes the subject *Taro*, which gives rise to elevation of the referent of the indirect object *Tanaka-sensei* ‘Prof. Tanaka’ as SSS.

In this paper, we argue that in NSH, the prefix *o* heads the nominalizing functional category, *n*, and takes a VP as its complement to form *nP* as a mixed projection; this functions as a predicative nominal and form a complex verb with the light verb *su(-ru)* ‘do’. A semantic agreement relationship is established between the prefix *o* as the head *n* and an overt or implied VP-internal SSS item.

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we present basic properties of NSH. In section 3, we will propose an analysis of the structure of NSH that includes nominalization of the VP by the prefix *o*. In section 4, we will discuss theoretical implications of the present analysis of the structure of NSH as a mixed projection. We will claim that the proposed structure that contains the prefix as the head-initial *n* of the *nP* and the head-final VP is a disharmonic but eligible mixed projection under the Final-over-Final Constraint (Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts 2014).

2. Characteristics of Non-subject Honorification in Japanese

The occurrence of NSH is conditioned by predicate types. It is possible with a predicate that denotes a voluntary action and has an agentive subject (Harada 1976, Hasegawa 2006). In (1), the verb takes an agentive subject *Taro*, and his voluntary action is considered as beneficial for the SSS indirect object *Tanaka-sensei* ‘Prof. Tanaka’.

What triggers NSH is not limited to an SSS indirect object. As noted by Boeckx and Niinuma (2004), there are some examples in which a direct object, rather than an indirect object, can be SSS in ditransitive sentences, where the indirect object is considered as a locative as shown below:

- (2) Watasi-wa kaizyou-ni Tanaka-sensei-o o-ture-si-ta. (Boeckx and Niinuma 2004: 456)
 I-TOP place-DAT Tanaka-Prof.-ACC o-take-do-PAST
 ‘I took Prof. Tanaka to the place.’

NSH can also occur in transitive sentences as in (3), where a transitive verb takes *Tanaka-sensei* ‘Prof. Tanaka’ as its SSS object and the subject’s action is considered as beneficial for the object.

- (3) Hanako-ga sensei-o o-yobi si-ta (Hasegawa 2006: 519)
 Hanako-NOM teacher-ACC o-call do-PAST
 ‘Hanako called the teacher.’

The possessor of the object can also give rise to NSH as shown below:

- (4) Taro-ga sensei-no(o)-kata-o o-momi-si-ta (Hasegawa 2006: 520)
 Taro-NOM Prof.-GEN-o-shoulder-ACC o-massage-do-PAST
 ‘Taro massaged the professor’s shoulders (for her/him).’

Further, Boeckx and Niinuma (2004: 459–460) point out that *Tanaka-sensei* ‘Prof. Tanaka’ marked with *kara* ‘from’ or *to* ‘with’ particles can also trigger NSH as below:

- (5) Taro-ga Tanaka-sensei-kara hon-o o-kari-si-ta
 Taro-NOM Tanaka-Prof.-from book-ACC o-borrow-do-PAST
 ‘Taro borrowed the book from Prof. Tanaka.’
- (6) Taro-ga Tanaka-sensei-to Yamada-sensei-no o-taku-o o-sagasi-si-ta
 Taro-NOM Tanaka-Prof.-with Yamada-Prof.-GEN o-house-ACC o-look.for-do-PAST
 ‘Taro looked for Prof. Yamada’s house with Prof. Tanaka.’

As Harada (1976) and Matsumoto (1997) point out, NSH is possible if the subject’s action results in the implied SSS person’s benefit as below:

- (7) ?Watakusi-ga o-bentou-o o-tabe-si-masyou (Harada 1976: 527)
 I-NOM o-lunch-ACC o-eat-do-will
 ‘I will eat (someone’s) lunch (for someone).’

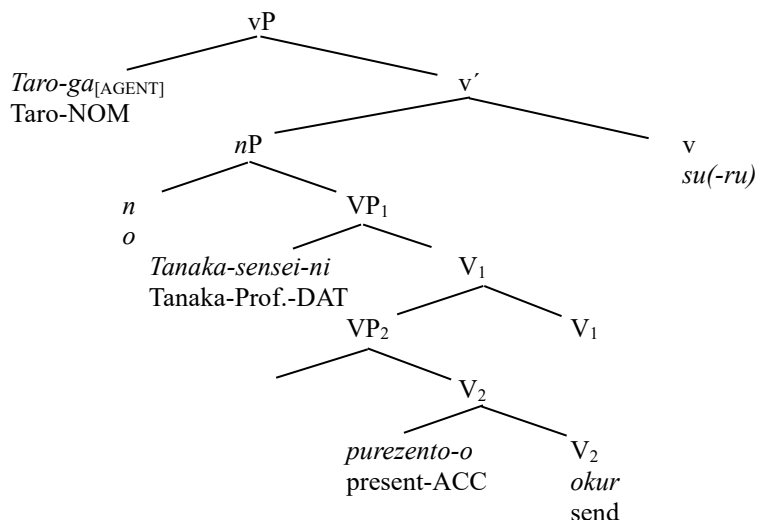
Summarizing the above examples, NSH is possible with a ditransitive/transitive predicate with an agentive subject, and a trigger of NSH is an SSS item that appears as (i) an indirect object, (ii) a direct object, (iii) a possessor of an object, (iv) a *kara-* or *to-*marked item, or (v) an implicit beneficiary. It is important to note that the agentive subject of NSH is never considered as an SSS item in NSH.

3. Analysis

On the basis of the facts that NSH is triggered by the (implicit) presence of several types of non-subject SSS item, whereas the subject never triggers the occurrence of NSH, we propose to formulate NSH as semantic agreement between the honorific prefix *o* and an SSS item located within VP under the split vP analysis (Kishimoto 2012). Given that *su(-ru)* ‘do’ is a light verb that can co-occur with verbal nouns in Japanese (Grimshaw and Mester 1988, Ivana and Sakai 2007), *o-okuri* ‘o-send’ in (1) is accounted for as having some type of nominal property. On the other hand, the indirect and direct objects of the verb *okur(-u)* ‘send’ remain associated with the Dative and Accusative Case markers,

respectively, the same as in the regular, non-honorific sentence. Having observed the dual properties of *o*-V in NSH, we claim that its nominal property stems from the prefix *o*, and its verbal property stems from the embedded VP. We propose that the prefix *o*, as the head *n*, realizes a head-initial structure, attaching to the VP to nominalize it and forms an *n*P. Based on Borsley and Kornfilt's (2000) analysis for mixed projections, we propose a structure in which VP, lacking a higher vP layer, appears as a complement of *n* as a nominalizing head forming an *n*P, and it functions as a predicative nominal and forms a complex verb with the light verb *su(-ru)* 'do'. Following Chomsky (1995, 2001) and Ivana and Sakai (2007), we assume that the light verb *su(-ru)* 'do' takes the *n*P as its complement, and the subject *Taro-ga* appears in the Spec of v, where it receives the [AGENT] role from the light verb. (1) has the following structure:

(8)

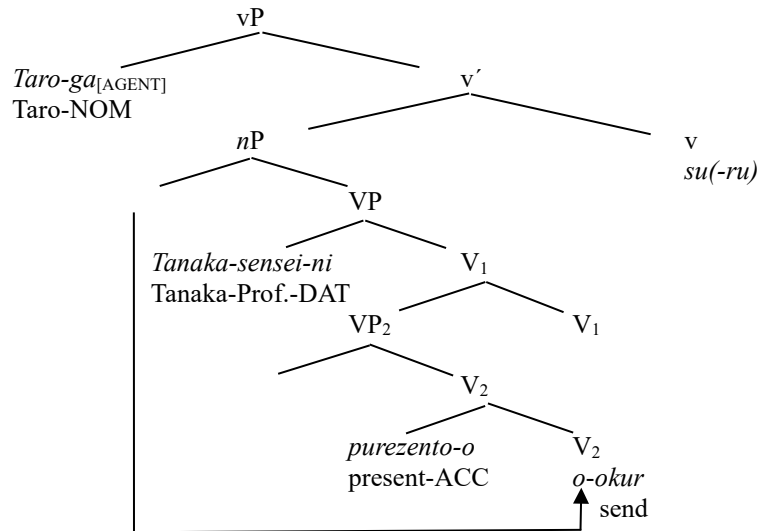


Building on Miyagawa and Tsujioka's (2004) proposal that the possessor of the theme is in the Spec of V₁ in ditransitive constructions, we propose that the indirect object, *Tanaka-sensei* 'Prof. Tanaka', who is considered as not only an SSS item but also the possessor of the theme, is base-generated in the Spec of V₁, where the honorific feature on the head *n* enters into an agreement relationship with the SSS indirect object. The subject *Taro-ga* 'Taro-NOM', on the other hand, is located outside the VP₁ and thus excluded from entering into an agreement relationship with the head *n*.

As pointed out earlier, not only an indirect object in ditransitive constructions but also a direct object, a possessor of an object, a *kara-* or *to-*marked item, and an implicit beneficiary can give rise to NSH. We claim that overt SSS items are base-generated within the VP where they can enter into an agreement relationship with the prefix *o* as the head *n*. As for the implicit beneficiary, we assume that it appears as *pro* within the VP where it receives an interpretation as beneficiary (Boeckx and Niinuma 2004).

In the proposed structure (8), the surface word order of NSH is not obtained yet. Based on Embick and Noyer (2001) and Hein and Murphy (2022), we suggest that the honorific affix *o* undergoes postsyntactic lowering to the verb, as illustrated in (9).

(9)



Here, we have to note a difference between our approach to NSH and Hasegawa's (2006). Referring to Suzuki (1989), Hasegawa (2006) assumes that the prefix *o* resides at D of the head-final DP, which is the complement to the light verb *su(-ru)* in NSH. This is based on the observation that the event described by a predicate in Subject Honorification refers not to any indefinite event but to a definite/specific one, and she suggests that the presence of the prefix guarantees the definite/specific reading of the event.

In the present analysis, we do not take the prefix *o* as the head D, because the event described in NSH does not always refer to a definite/specific one. In (7), the predicate *o-tabe-si-masyou* 'will eat' can refer to a future event of eating for an indefinite/non-specific SSS person's benefit, and thus the presence of the prefix *o* in NSH does not guarantee the definite/specific reading of the event described by the predicate in NSH.

We also have to note a difference between our approach to NSH and Ivana and Sakai's (2007). Ivana and Sakai claim that the honorific prefix is a functional category of honorification, H, that realizes a head-final HP structure, selecting an NP headed by the *renyoukei* form of its preceding V. They assume that the *renyoukei* form of the main verb is actually a noun, based on the fact that it takes the particle *no* in a genitive construction in the modifier position in Subject Honorification as shown below:

- (10) Sensei-ga o-kaki-no hon (Ivana and Sakai 2007: 181)
Prof.-NOM o-write-GEN book
'the book written by the professor'

They suggest that the overt morpheme order, *o-V*, in Honorification is obtained by merging the prefix *o* with the adjacent nominalized verb at PF, which is parallel with English past tense morphology, whereby affixal inflections merge with Vs at PF under adjacency (Lasnik 1999).

In our structure, we have proposed that the prefix *o* realizes the head-initial nP, based on the assumption that there is a strong tendency across languages that prefixes realize head-initial structures (Hein and Murphy 2022). Further, in the present analysis, we have claimed that the nominal property of *o-V* stems from the prefix *o*, rather than the *renyoukei* form of the verb, based on the fact that without the prefix *o*, it is not possible for regular, non-honorific Vs in the *renyoukei* form to appear with the genitive case particle *no* as shown below:

- (11) *Taro-ga kaki-no hon
 Taro-NOM write-GEN book
 ‘the book written by Taro’

This illustrates that regular verbs in the *renyoukei* form are not nominal enough to be associated with the genitive case particle.

4. Theoretical Implications and Conclusion

Within the principles-and-parameters framework, the standard word order is explained by the head parameter. In Japanese, which is a typical head-final language, the head follows the complement across categories. In the present analysis of NSH, on the other hand, the nominalizer *o* is a prefix, which does not appear to be consistent with the other types of nominalization (e.g., *kata*-nominalization in Kishimoto 2006).

Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts (2014) argue that the following restriction on the linearization of phrase structure is a syntactic universal:

- (12) *The Final-over-Final Constraint* (henceforth, FOFC)
 A head-final phrase α P cannot dominate a head-initial phrase β P, where α and β are heads in the same extended projection.

(Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts 2014: 171)

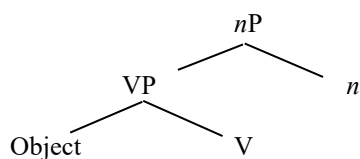
Let us consider the following logically possible complementation combinations (Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts 2014: 171):

- (13) a. *Consistent head-final* (harmonic) b. *Consistent head-initial* (harmonic)
-
- c. *Initial-over-final* (disharmonic) d. *Final-over-initial* (disharmonic)

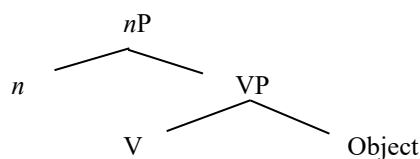
Biberauer, Holmberg and Roberts claim that FOFC determines that (13d) is nonexistent. According to them, (13a) and (13b), as harmonic configurations, are common, whereas (13c), as a disharmonic configuration, is less common but still occurs. They show that FOFC explains a range of crosslinguistic generalizations such as that OV order is more common crosslinguistically than clause-final Cs, because initial Cs can co-occur with both VO and OV orders, but final Cs can co-occur with only OV order.

Hein and Murphy (2022) argue that FOFC holds in VP-nominalization. They point out the fact that one word order, a head-initial VP with a suffixal nominalizer, is not attested and claim that the typological gap can be accounted for by FOFC. (14a), (14b), and (14c) show attested patterns of VP-nominalization, whereas (14d) is not attested (Hein and Murphy 2022: 345)

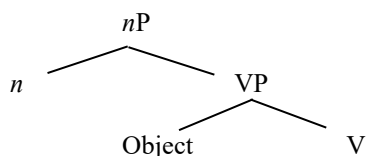
(14) a. *Consistent head-final* (harmonic)
(e.g., Dagaare, Gengbe)



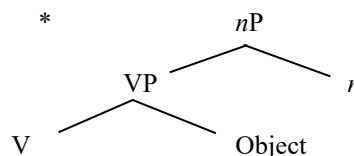
b. *Consistent head-initial* (harmonic)
(e.g., Yoruba, Mani)



c. *Initial-over-final* (disharmonic)
(e.g., Krachi, Amharic)

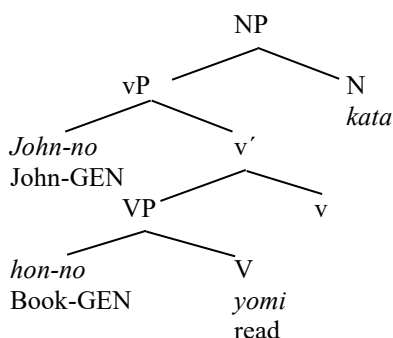


d. *Final-over-initial* (disharmonic)
(unattested?)



The structure for the *kata*-nominalization in Japanese proposed by Kishimoto (2006) is accounted for as an example of (14a) as the consistent and harmonic head-final configuration, as shown below:

(15) John-no hon-no yomi-kata (Kishimoto 2006: 780)
John-GEN book-GEN read-way
'the way of John's reading a book'



In (15), *kata* 'way', as a formal noun, N, takes a vP as a projection of the head-final V *yomi* 'read'. Both N and V realize head-final structures, resulting in a harmonic, consistent head-final configuration.

In the present analysis of NSH, on the other hand, the nominalizer *o* is a prefix, which shows a clear contrast to the nominalizer *kata* in *kata*-nominalization. The prefix *o*, as the head *n*, realizes a head-first structure, whereas its complement VP is headed by the head-final V as illustrated in (8).

Extending Hein and Murphy's (2022) argument, we assume that FOFC also holds in VP-nominalization in NSH. Under FOFC, the proposed structure for NSH in (8), as a mixed projection, is accounted for as another example of disharmonic, but eligible initial-over-final configuration in nominalization in (14c).

Kornfilt and Whitman (2011) argue for four possible levels of nominalization, CP, TP, vP and VP. In addition to Kishimoto's (2006) analysis of *kata*-nominalization as vP-level nominalization, this study supports their argument by claiming that there is at least another type of syntactically derived nominalization in Japanese: NSH derived by VP-level nominalization.

References

- Biberauer, Theresa, Anders Holmberg and Ian Roberts (2014) A syntactic universal and its consequences. *Linguistic Inquiry* 45: 169–225.
- Boeckx, Cedric and Fumikazu Niinuma (2004) Conditions on agreement in Japanese. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 22: 453–480.
- Borsley, Robert D. and Jaklin Kornfilt (2000) Mixed extended projections. In: Robert D. Borsley (ed.) *The nature and function of syntactic categories*, 101–131. New York: Academic Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (1995) *The minimalist program*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam (2001) Derivation by phase. In: Michael Kenstowicz (ed.) *Ken Hale: A life in language*, 1–52. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Embick, David and Rolf Noyer (2001) Movement operations after syntax. *Linguistic Inquiry* 32: 555–595.
- Grimshaw, Jane and Armin Mester (1988) Light verbs and θ -marking. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19: 205–232.
- Harada, S. I. (1976) Honorifics. In: Masayoshi Shibatani (ed.) *Japanese Generative Grammar*, 499–561. New York: Academic Press.
- Hasegawa, Nobuko (2006) Honorifics. In: Martin Everaert and Henk van Riemsdijk (eds.) *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, volume II, 493–543. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hein, Johannes and Andrew Murphy (2022) VP-nominalization and the Final-over-Final Condition. *Linguistic Inquiry* 53: 337–370.
- Ivana, Adrian and Hiromu Sakai (2007) Honorification and light verbs in Japanese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 16: 171–191.
- Kishimoto, Hideki (2006) Japanese syntactic nominalization and VP-internal syntax. *Lingua* 116: 771–810.
- Kishimoto, Hideki (2012) Subject honorification and the position of subjects in Japanese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 21: 1–41.
- Kornfilt, Jaklin and John Whitman (2011) Afterword: Nominalizations in syntactic theory. *Lingua* 121: 1297–1313.
- Lasnik, Howard (1999) *Minimalist analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Matsumoto, Yoshiko (1997) The rise and fall of Japanese nonsubject honorifics: the case of ‘*o*-Verb-*suru*’. *Journal of Pragmatics* 28: 719–740.
- Miyagawa, Shigeru and Takae Tsujioka (2004) Argument structure and ditransitive verbs in Japanese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 13: 1–38.
- Suzuki, Tatsuya (1989) A syntactic analysis of an honorific construction *o...ni naru* under the DP Hypothesis: Toward a unified theory of honorification. In: E. Jane Fee and Katherine Hunt (eds.) *Proceedings of the eighth West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, 373–383. Stanford: CSLI Publications.