Japanese Middles and Nonmovement[*]

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1 Introduction

There are two goals in this paper. One is to claim that the apparent subject (henceforth, "internal argument" for convenience) of Japanese middles stays as the object throughout the derivation. The data of honorification lend support for this claim; namely, I show that the internal argument of Japanese middles triggers object honorification, while the internal argument (i.e. the derived subject) of passives and unaccusatives triggers subject honorification. The other goal is to show that Japanese is a syntactic middle language which introduces the [+human] feature in overt syntax rather than at LF. Specifically, on the basis of Niinuma's (2003) claim that honorification is an Agree operation in overt syntax with respect to the [+human] feature, I argue that the applicability of honorification in Japanese middles indicates that the [+human] feature must be introduced in overt syntax. This challenges Marelj's (2004) claim that the [+human] feature of syntactic middle languages is introduced only at LF.

Before discussing Japanese middles in detail, let us briefly look at the preceding analyses of middles. Basically, the researchers of middles are divided into two groups.[1] One group of researchers assumes that middles are formed in the syntax. They are further divided into those who assume that middles involve a syntactic agent as well as syntactic movement (e.g. Stroik 1992, 1995, 1999, Hoekstra and Roberts 1993, and Matsumoto and Fujita 1995), and those who assume syntactic movement alone (e.g. Keyser and Roeper 1984, Hale and Keyser 1993, and Pesetsky 1995). More concretely, these researchers claim that (1) involves movement of the internal argument, as shown in (2):

(1) This book reads poorly.
(2) This book$_i$ (PRO/pro) reads t_i poorly.
            $\uparrow$ *Movement*
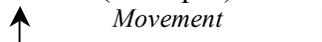
The other group of researchers assumes that middles are formed in the lexicon. Again, they are further divided into those who argue that the syntactic agent in

[1] See, however, Roberts (1986) who attempts to analyze middles from both syntactic and lexical perspectives.

middles is present lexically and semantically (e.g. Fagan 1988, 1992, Ackema and Schoorlemmer 1994, 1995, Zribi-Hertz 1993, and Rapoport 1999), and those who assume that middles are entirely agentless (e.g. Hale and Keyser 1987). For example, Fagan (1988, 1992) claims that the lexical rules in (3) form (1):

(3) a. Assign *arb* to the external θ-role.
      b. Externalize the direct θ-role.

What (2) and (3) have in common is that the internal argument becomes the subject at some point of the derivation in English middles; in other words, under the syntactic approaches, the internal argument is promoted to the subject position at the level of the syntax, whereas under the lexical approaches, this operation takes place at the level of the lexicon. I show below that this is not the case for Japanese middles like (4).[2]

(4) Kono   kinoko-ga/wa   taber-are-ru.
      this   mushroom-nom/top   eat-MS-prs
      'This mushroom can be eaten (by anyone).'

2 Syntactic vs. lexical middle languages

In contrast to the two groups of researchers mentioned in Section 1, Marelj (2004) has recently made an interesting proposal regarding middles across languages. She argues that languages are parameterized such that some of them form middles syntactically and others lexically (i.e. pre-syntactically). She calls the former "syntactic middle languages" and the latter "lexical middle languages". According to her, languages such as French, German, Italian, Polish, and Serbo-Croatian belong to syntactic middle languages, while languages such as Dutch, English, and Hebrew belong to lexical middle languages. In this section, I consider three of Marelj's diagnostic tests for determining whether a language is a syntactic or a lexical middle language, and see what they tell us about the nature of Japanese middles.[3] For the sake of exposition, let us discuss the relevant

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[2] The list of abbreviations used in this paper is following:
nom = nominative, top = topic marker, acc = accusative, dat = dative, gen = genitive, MS = middle suffix, pss = passive, pot = potential, OH = object honorific, SH = subject honorific, PM = polite marker, prs = present, pst = past

[3] In this paper, I do not discuss the availability of ECM-middles and the syntactic unaccusativity of middles, both of which are adopted by Marelj (2004) as tests for a syntactic middle language. Specifically, Marelj argues that the ill-formedness of (i), an instance of ECM-middles, is evidence that English is a lexical middle language (see Marelj 2004 for details). However, it is not clear whether the ill-formedness of (i) is due to the properties of English as a lexical middle language. More precisely, Jonathan Bobaljik (p.c.) and Željko Bošković (p.c.) suggested to me that it might be simply due to a selectional restriction that verbs like *consider* are incompatible with middles in English, as shown by the ill-formedness of (ii) (see also the discussion below for the selectional restriction on verbs and middle formation):

properties of Japanese middles with reference to those of middles in English, which is purported to be one of lexical middle languages.[4]

The first test is related to restrictions on the type of verbs that can be input to middles. For instance, it has been observed in the literature that inherently stative verbs (e.g. *know*), perception verbs (e.g. *see*), and psych-verbs (e.g. *forget*) are usually illegitimate inputs for English middles (cf. Keyser and Roeper 1984, Fellbaum 1986, Roberts 1986, Fagan 1992, Hoekstra and Roberts 1993, and Ackema and Schoorlemmer 1994. etc.), as shown in (5):

(5) a. *The answer knows easily.
    b. *The mountains see best after rain.
    c. *Anniversaries forget easily.

Marelj maintains that if a language is sensitive to selectional restriction of verbs, it is categorized as a lexical middle language, and if not, it is categorized as a syntactic middle language. The total acceptability of the following sentences lends support to the assumption that they are formed syntactically:[5]

(i)   *John considers a fool easily.
(ii) *This story considers easily.
Furthermore, it is unclear whether ECM-middles are available in Japanese. It might be possible to argue that (iii)b is an instance of ECM middles that is formed based on the ECM counterpart of (iii)a. However, as shown by the non-ECM counterpart of (iii)a, ECM across clause boundary is known to be optional in Japanese (cf. Kuno 1976, etc.). Thus, it is hard to tell whether the nominative marking in *zibun-no syutyoo-ga* in (iii)b is a result of middle formation, or it is just an instance of normal Case-marking with a non-overt subject.
(iii) a. Watasi-wa   zibun-no   syutyoo-ga/o   tadasi-i   to   sinzir-u.
         I-top   self-gen   argument-nom/acc   right-prs   that   think-prs
         'I believe my own argument to be right.'
      b. Zibun-no syutyoo-ga/wa   tadasi-i   to   sinzir-are-ru.
         Self-gen argument-nom/top   right-prs   that   believe-MS-prs
         'One's own argument can be believed to be right.'
For the syntactic unaccusativity of middles, I provide evidence and arguments below that Japanese middles are different from passives and unaccusatives, in that they do not involve obligatory syntactic movement of the internal argument to the subject position. Thus, I assume that the apparent unaccusativity of Japanese middles, if any, is due to an optional movement operation like scrambling.
[4] One important qualification is in order here. Even though I continue to take the constructions in question as Japanese middles, we cannot completely exclude the possibility that they are simply impersonal potential constructions, as pointed out by Jonathan Bobaljik (p.c.) (see also Hashimoto 1969 for a similar view). Thus, the reader should bear in mind that the following diagnostic tests and the arguments against Marelj's analysis coming later hold only if the constructions in question are indeed middles.
[5] The verb *wakaru* in (6)a is an inherently stative verb with the potential and spontaneous meanings. Hence, it is incompatible with the middle suffix, which also has these meanings.

(6) a. Sono kotae-ga/wa   kantanni   waka-ru.
     the   answer-nom/top easily   know-prs
     'The answer can be known easily.'
    b. Yugamine-ga/wa   santyoo-kara   yoku   mi-e-ru.
     Mt. Yugamine-nom/top top.of.mountain-from   well   see-MS-prs
     'Mt. Yugamine can be seen from the top of the mountain.'
    c. Iyana-koto-ga/wa   kantanni   wasurer-are-ru.
     bad-thing-nom/top easily   forget-MS-prs
     'Bad things can be forgotten easily.'

As the second test, let us consider whether a morphological marking is observed. According to Marelj (2004), syntactic middle languages involve special case absorbing morphology that triggers the movement of the internal argument to the canonical subject position; however, middles in lexical middle languages do not have any Case to absorb to start with, and hence they do not show any morphological marking. As can be seen in the contrast between (1) and (4), English middles do not have a morphological marking, while Japanese middles involves the middle suffix *(ar)e*. Moreover, Ura (1999, 2000) argues that this morpheme optionally absorbs the accusative Case of the verb in potential constructions. This is demonstrated by the semantically vacuous alternation between (7)a and (7)b below.[6] The difference between middles in (6) and potential constructions in (7) is that the absorption of the accusative Case is obligatory in the former, while it is optional in the latter.[7]

(7) a. Taroo-ga   eego-o   hanas-e-ru.
     Taroo-nom   English-acc speak-pot-prs
    b. Taroo-ga   eego-ga   hanas-e-ru.
     Taroo-nom   English-nom speak-pot-prs
     'Taro can speak English.'

The final test to consider is whether the Goal-Recipient restriction is observed (cf. Roberts 1986, Fagan 1992, and Ackema and Schoorlemmer 1994). This restriction states that ditransitive verbs such as *give*, *sell*, and *send* cannot co-occur with the recipient-goal in English middles, as exemplified in (8):

(8) *Small packages ship most customers easily.

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[6] For the preceding analyses of the alternation, see Saito (1982), Takezawa (1987), Tada (1992, 1993), Koizumi (1994, 1995, 1998), Saito and Hoshi (1998), Ura (1999, 2000), Yatsushiro (1999), Wurmbrand (2001), Takano (2003), and Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2005), among others, and references cited therein.

[7] However, I argue in Section 3 that the internal argument of Japanese middles do not undergo movement to the subject position. If this argument is correct, it might be the case that Case-absorption has nothing to do with the movement of the internal argument.

Marelj claims that the inability of these verbs to partake in middles is a result of a lexical operation (see Marelj 2004 for details). Thus, if a language is sensitive to the restriction in question, it should be regarded as a lexical middle language. However, the following Japanese example is totally fine with a recipient-goal phrase. This observation provides additional evidence that Japanese is a syntactic middle language.

(9) Meeru-ga/wa   nihon-no   kazoku-ni kantanni okur-e-ru.
     email-nom/top Japan-gen   family-to easily   send-MS-prs
     'Email can be sent easily to families in Japan.'

3 No movement in Japanese middles

So far, I have provided evidence showing that Japanese is a syntactic middle language, rather than a lexical middle language like English, on the basis of Marelj's (2004) proposal that languages are parameterized such that some of them form middles syntactically and others lexically. Crucially, she also claims that syntactic middle languages form middles through syntactic movement of the internal argument to the canonical subject position, just like unaccusatives. If this is correct, it is predicted that the internal argument of Japanese middles could behave like a subject rather than an object. I demonstrate that this prediction is not borne out, and argue that the internal argument of Japanese middles stays as the object throughout middle formation.

Honorification is crucially relevant to the current discussion. Honorification in Japanese is classified into subject and object honorification, which are defined by Harada (1976) as (10) and (11), respectively:

(10) *Subject Honorific Marking*:
     Mark the predicate as [Subject Honorific] if its subject is an SSS.
(11) *Object Honorific Marking*:
     Mark the predicate as [Object Honorification] when an SSS (a person who is socially superior to the speaker) is included in
     (a) the indirect object, if the predicate is ditransitive, or
     (b) the direct object, if the predicate is transitive.

As is well known, honorification in Japanese is triggered by the arguments in their surface position, rather than by those in their underlying position; roughly put, if a surface subject is an SSS, subject honorification applies, and if a surface object is an SSS, object honorification applies. To instantiate this, let us consider examples of passives and unaccusatives, both of which are considered to be derived through syntactic movement of the internal argument to the subject position (e.g. Kuno 1973 and Miyagawa 1989). The derived subject of a passive sentence like (12)a and an unaccusative sentence like (13)a triggers subject honorification, as in (12)b and (13)b, not object honorification, as in (12)c and (13)c:

(12) a. Yamada   sensee-ga   tinpira-ni   nagur-are-ta.
       Yamada   teacher-nom gangster-by hit-pss-pst
    b. Yamada   sensee-ga   tinpira-ni   o-nagur-are-ninat-ta.
       Yamada   teacher-nom gangster-by SH-hit-pss-SH-pst
    c. *Yamada   sensee-ga   tinpira-ni   o-nagur-are-si-ta.
       Yamada   teacher-nom gangster-by OH-hit-pss-OH-pst
       'Professor Yamada was hit by a gangster.'
(13) a. Tanaka   sensee-ga   eki-ni   tui-ta.
       Tanaka   teacher-nom station-at arrive-pst
    b. Tanaka   sensee-ga   eki-ni   o-tuki-ninat-ta.
       Tanaka   teacher-nom station-at SH-arrive-SH-pst
    c. *Tanaka   sensee-ga   eki-ni   o-tuki-si-ta.
       Tanaka   teacher-nom station-at OH-arrive-OH-pst
       'Professor Tanaka arrived at the station.'

Now, let us turn to middles in (14) and (15). If the internal arguments in (14) and (15) are indeed "subjects" as defined in (10), it is predicted that they could not trigger object honorification. However, (14)c and (15)c show that object honorification in fact can be triggered by an SSS included in the direct object, in accordance with (11)b.[8]

(14) a. Tanaka   sensee-no   ryoori-ga   taber-are-ru.
       Tanaka   teacher-gen dish-nom   eat-MS-prs
    b. #Tanaka   sensee-no   ryoori-ga   mesiagar-e-ru.
       Tanaka   teacher-gen dish-nom   eat.SH-MS-prs
       'Professor Tanaka's dishes can be eaten.'
    c. Tanaka   sensee-no   ryoori-ga   itadak-e-ru.
       Tanaka   teacher-gen dish-nom   eat.OH-MS-prs
(15) a. Kono   konpyuutaa-ga/wa   kantanni tuka-e-ru.
       this   computer-nom/top   easily   use-MS-prs
       'This computer can be used easily.'
    b. #O-kyaku-sama-no   konpyuutaa-ga/wa kantanni
       PM-customer-PM-gen computer-nom/top easily
       o-tukai-ninar-e-ru.
       SH-use-SH-MS-prs
       'The customer's computer can be used easily.'

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[8] In fact, (14)a and (15)a can also undergo subject honorification, as shown by # in (14)b and (15)b. However, I assume that subject honorification in these cases is triggered by the non-overt external argument, not by the internal argument (see the discussion on agentivity below). In other words, arbitrary eaters are honorified in (14)b, and arbitrary users including the customer in question are honorified in (15)b. At any rate, what matters for identifying the surface position of the internal argument is not whether subject honorification is applicable, but whether object honorification is applicable (i.e. the contrast between (12)c/(13)c and (14)c/(15)c).

    c. O-kyaku-sama-no   konpyuutaa-ga/wa kantanni
       PM-customer-PM-gen computer-nom/top easily
       o-tukai-itadak-e-ru.
       OH-use-OH-MS-prs
       'The customer's computer can be used easily.'

Hence, I conclude that Japanese is another type of syntactic middle languages, in the sense that it does not resort to syntactic movement of the internal argument throughout middle formation.

    One question is what licenses nominative on the internal argument of Japanese middles. One option could be to follow Yatsushiro's (1999) and Wurmbrand's (2001) analysis of the nominative object constructions. In this case, I could argue that *v* projected in Japanese middles is obligatorily specified as [+stative], and it licenses nominative on the internal argument. Another option could be to adopt Koopman's (2005) Split TP analysis and argue that nominative on the internal argument is licensed by the lower T. The derivation is illustrated in (16). I leave this issue to future research.

(16) $[_{VP}$ ... internal argument ... V] $\{v_{[+stative]}/T_{OBJ}\}$ ... T_{SUBJ}
                             Nominative Licensing
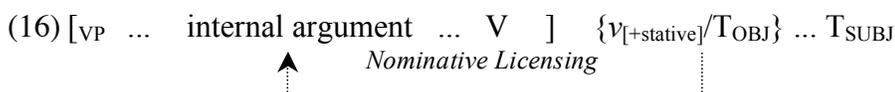
4 Consequences: the [+human] feature and agentivity

    In the previous sections, I argued that Japanese is one of syntactic middle languages, and that the internal argument of Japanese middles stays as the object throughout the derivation, on the grounds that it can trigger object honorification.

    A consequence of this observation is that Marelj's (2004) generalization about syntactic middle languages needs to be reconsidered. More specifically, she argues that in syntactic middle languages, the [+human] feature that is responsible for the agentive interpretation of middles, is introduced only at the level of LF. On the other hand, Niinuma (2003) claims that honorification is an Agree operation with respect to the [+human] feature of the direct object and *v*. Furthermore, Boeckx and Niinuma (2004) and Boeckx (2006) show that honorification must apply prior to short scrambling of the direct object that triggers object honorification.[9] Consider (17):

(17) a. #Taroo-ga   Mary-ni   Tanaka   sensee-o   go-syookai-si-ta.
       Taroo-nom Mary-dat Tanaka teacher-acc OH-introduce-OH-pst
    b. #Taroo-ga   Tanaka sensee-o$_i$ Mary-ni t_i go-syookai-si-ta.
       Taroo-nom Tanaka teacher-acc Mary-dat   OH-introduce-OH-pst
       'Taroo introduced Prof. Tanaka to Mary.'

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[9] See Bobaljik and Yatsushiro (2006) for an opposing view.

In (17)a, the dative NP blocks Agree between the direct object and *v*, and hence object honorification is inapplicable, as shown in (18)a. Crucially, however, this blocking effect does not disappear even after scrambling of the direct object applies, as shown in (18)b. This means that object honorification must have already applied at the stage where scrambling applies. Given that scrambling is a purely syntactic operation and object honorification requires the [+human] feature, it logically follows that the [+human] feature must be present in overt syntax.

(18) a. $\quad$ *[$_{VP}$ ... NP-dat ... NP-acc ... V] *v*
 $\quad$ b. *NP-acc$_i$ [$_{VP}$ ... NP-dat ... t_i ... V] *v*

If the claim that the [+human] feature is present in overt syntax in Japanese middles is on the right track, it is plausible that Japanese is different from other syntactic middle languages, in the sense that the agent of middles is also realized in overt syntax. In order to explain this, let us briefly look at Marelj's (2004) proposal regarding agentivity in syntactic middle languages.

According to Marelj, the agent θ-role is present as a formally coded feature cluster in the lexical representation of middle verbs. Crucially, however, syntactic middle languages cannot manipulate the feature cluster. This is because only lexical operations could manipulate the cluster, while all the operations related to middle formation are carried out in the syntax in this type of languages. Marelj argues that an arbitrary interpretation of the agent in syntactic middle languages comes with the [+human] feature, so that the action denoted by the sentence is taken to be fulfilled by any arbitrary person.[10] However, she claims that the [+human] feature is introduced only at LF, and hence it never has to be realized as empty pronominals in overt syntax. Hence, in syntactic middle languages, a generic reading of middle sentences is obtained by the generic operator *Gen* that takes a sentential scope at LF (cf. Matsumoto and Fujita 1995). In short, what Marelj claims is that the [+human] feature is responsible for agentivity of middles, but syntactic middle languages have no syntactic agent in middles because the [+human] feature is absent in overt syntax.

However, given the observation above that Japanese middles have the [+human] feature in overt syntax, there seems to be no reason to assume that the agent of middles is absent in overt syntax. In fact, Taguchi and Niinuma (2007) demonstrate that Japanese middles and *tough* constructions have the non-overt agent in overt syntax, taking advantage of three diagnostic tests for subjecthood. First, as is widely discussed (e.g. Kuno 1973 and Katada 1991), *zibun* 'self' in Japanese must be licensed by a [+human] subject antecedent. The grammaticality of (19) shows that Japanese middles and *tough* constructions have such a subject:

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[10] Marelj (2004) expresses the [+human] feature as "[+human] flavor". However, I find no difference between the two, because she adopts Rizzi's (1986) system, in which the [+human] feature is always involved as a component of arbitrary interpretation.

(19) a. Zibun-no hon-ga/wa kantanni yom-e-ru.
     self-gen book-nom/top easily read-MS-prs
     (lit.) 'Self's book can be read easily.'
   b. Zibun-no hon-ga/wa yomi-yasu-i.
     self-gen book-nom/top read-easy.to-prs
     (lit.) 'Self's book is easy to read.'

Second, Ura (1999, 2000) claims that the missing subject of an adjunct clause headed by *nagara* 'while' must be controlled by the matrix subject. The grammaticality of (20) shows that Japanese middles and *tough* constructions have a subject that controls the missing subject.

(20) a. [tanosimi-nagara], kono hon-ga/wa kantanni yom-e-ru.
       enjoying-while this book-nom/top easily read-MS-prs
     (lit.) 'While enjoying, this book can be read easily.'
   b. [tanosimi-nagara], kono hon-ga/wa yomi-yasu-i.
       enjoying-while this book-nom/top read-easy.to-prs
     (lit.) 'While enjoying, this book is easy to read.'

Finally, subject honorification is applicable, even though the agent external argument appears to be missing, as shown in (21). It is widely accepted in the literature that subject honorification is a reliable test to identify the syntactic subject of a sentence (cf. Shibatani 1977, 1978, and Ura 1999, 2000, among others). Thus, the applicability of subject honorification exemplified in (21) is strong evidence that syntactic subject is present in Japanese middles and *tough* constructions:

(21) a. Kono hon-ga/wa kantanni o-yomi-ninar-e-ru.
     this book-nom/top easily SH-read-SH-MS-prs
     'This book can be read easily.'
   b. Kono hon-ga/wa o-yomi-ninari-yasu-i.
     this book-nom/top SH-read-SH-easy.to-prs
     'This book is easy to read.'

In sum, the analysis of Japanese middles proposed in this paper suggests that there may be syntactic middle languages whose middle formation introduces not only the [+human] feature but also the agent in overt syntax.

5 Summary
In this paper, I claimed that the internal argument in Japanese middles never moves to the subject position but stays as the object throughout the derivation. This was shown by the observation that the internal argument of Japanese middles triggers object honorification, while that of passives and unaccusatives triggers subject honorification. I also argued that Japanese is a syntactic middle language

which has the [+human] feature in overt syntax, contrary to Marelj's (2004) claim that the [+human] feature of syntactic middle languages is introduced only at LF. I argued that the applicability of object honorification in Japanese middles indicates that the [+human] feature is present in overt syntax, adopting Niinuma's (2003) claim that honorification is an Agree operation in overt syntax with respect to the [+human] feature. Finally, based on the claim that Japanese middles introduce the [+human] feature in overt syntax, I suggested that there may be syntactic middle languages whose middle formation introduces not only the [+human] feature but also the agent in overt syntax.

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