

**Context and Binding in Japanese.** By MASAYO IIDA. Stanford: CSLI Publications. 1996. Pp. xiii, 374.

Reviewed by TAKAO GUNJI, *Osaka University*

This book is a slightly revised version of Masayo Iida's doctoral dissertation submitted to Stanford University in 1992. Even though the title of the book is very general, she focuses on essentially one phenomenon in Japanese: the binding of the reflexive anaphora *zibun* 'self'.

The study of this word has a long history in Japanese linguistics, and by the mid 1970's, it was a general consensus among most Japanese linguists that the antecedent is the subject at some level of the syntactic representation.

However, a numerous counterexamples to the above generalization have also been noticed; a nonsubject can sometimes behave as the antecedent of *zibun*. Thus, one of the challenges in the treatment of *zibun* has been to give an adequate explanation of nonsubject binding. One possible avenue pursued so far has involved introduction of some form of pragmatic binding at least for nonsubject binding; the subject condition is essentially restricted to syntactic binding.

Iida begins the book, after a brief introductory chapter, by first giving a thorough review of previous studies in Ch. 2, where she reviews both syntactic and pragmatic approaches. In evaluating previous studies, she makes a distinction as to whether the syntactic and the pragmatic conditions are to be applied disjunctively or conjunctively, which is orthogonal to the traditional syntactic/pragmatic distinction. In Ch. 3, she argues that Japanese *zibun* shows conjunctive characteristics, and argues against some of the previous studies on Japanese reflexives that she finds disjunctive theories, pointing out problems associated with these approaches.

She then goes on to propose her own CONJUNCTIVE theory of *zibun*-binding in Ch. 4. In her approach, what syntax does in *zibun*-binding is weaker and allows nonsubjects to be an antecedent. On the other hand, the pragmatic part is more elaborate and she proposes a very general but powerful concept PERSPECTIVE, which is discussed in detail in Ch. 5.

Based on the foregoing general discussion and supporting data, Ch. 6 gives the formalization of the proposal in the framework of Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG) (Pollard and Sag 1994), but the book itself can be read without the knowledge of HPSG. The last chapter deals with zero pronouns in Japanese. The devices proposed for the treatment of *zibun* are shown to have wider application in this chapter.

What is innovative about her treatment of reflexive is the distinction between the disjunctive and the conjunctive approaches concerning the relationship between syntax and pragmatics. In the former approach, which is traditionally prevalent, the antecedent of *zibun* only has to satisfy either the syntactic or the pragmatic constraint. Thus, when syntax cannot find the antecedent, pragmatics will be called in to determine the possible antecedent.

One of the defects of the disjunctive approach, according to Iida, is that if syntax and pragmatics are allowed to independently determine the antecedent, it is in general possible to have two separate antecedents for the multiple occurrences of *zibun* in a sentence, resulting in unwanted interpretation. Another problem for the disjunctive approach is that there are both cases where the syntactic subject condition is too weak (a subject failing to be an antecedent) and cases where the same condition is too strong (a nonsubject being an antecedent). These cases suggest that the subject condition is not the right way to specify the syntactic condition for the antecedent of *zibun*.

As an alternative, what Iida proposes is a conjunctive approach, where the antecedent is required to satisfy both the syntactic and the pragmatic conditions. In this approach, the syntactic condition must be somewhat weaker than that proposed in previous works in order to allow for nonsubject binding. Accordingly, what she requires is minimal: *zibun* must not *o*-command the antecedent.

*O*-command, taken from HPSG, is not a constituency-based notion, but based on the relative obliqueness among the coarguments of a verb. In a nutshell, the antecedent may not be a more oblique coargument, or a constituent dominated by a more oblique coargument, than the reflexive. This is a weaker condition than the subject condition, as the subject is the least oblique argument, and allows an object to antecede the reflexive if the former is less oblique than the latter. Note that this is also much weaker than HPSG Binding Principle A, where an anaphor must be *o*-commanded by the antecedent.

If this syntactic condition is the only constraint on the antecedent of the reflexive, it obviously overgenerates possible antecedents. Thus, she imposes the pragmatic condition conjunctively; only when both the syntactic and pragmatic conditions are satisfied can a constituent antecede *zibun*. Her pragmatic condition is more general than previously proposed pragmatic notions such as logophoricity and empathy, and works not only for reflexives but for zero pronouns as well.

What Iida proposes is the notion of PERSPECTIVE. Intuitively, the perspective is “the reference point which the speaker chooses in describing the situation in question” (163). The perspective taken by the speaker coincides, in most cases, either with the speaker, since the existence of the speaker in a given utterance situation “is guaranteed and the speaker is always able to express her ego in describing a given situation”, or with the subject, as the subject position “has a general focusing effect” and “the subject is the only argument which is required in any sentence” (180).

In addition to these two cases, for the case of nonsubject binding, she introduces the third source of perspective that is neither the subject nor the speaker. According to her, a nonsubject’s perspective is possible when the speaker identifies himself/herself with the nonsubject. Consider the following example she presents ((113) in Ch. 2) that involves a lexical causative *nose* ‘put’:

- (1) Taroo<sub>i</sub> wa Hanako<sub>j</sub> o zibun<sub>i/j</sub> no zityensya ni noseta.  
 Taroo TOP Hanako ACC self GEN bicycle on put  
 ‘Taroo<sub>i</sub> put Hanako<sub>j</sub> on his<sub>i</sub>/her<sub>j</sub> bicycle.’

Unlike complex causatives that involve the suffix *-sase*, lexical causatives are usually assumed to appear in simple sentences and show no ambiguity of *zibun*. Thus, the above sentence is an apparent counterexample to the syntactic approach that imposes subjecthood on the antecedent. The nonsubject binding cannot be explained by pragmatics such as logophoricity, either, since there is no predicate that can assign the logophoric feature in the matrix clause.

In her analysis, she states, concerning a similar example ((3) below), “the causee’s involvement in the described situation makes the speaker’s identification possible” (213). Even though she doesn’t directly discuss how the *zibun*-binding by *Hanako* becomes available in (1), what I infer from the above statement is that the causee (*Hanako*)’s involvement in the described situation (i.e., riding the bicycle) makes it possible to take the causee’s perspective. Note that *Hanako* has to be sitting on the saddle, not on the rear seat, and be ready to ride the bicycle on her own, in order for the *j*-interpretation to be available.

This argument can be reinforced by considering the following variation of the above sentence:<sup>1</sup>

- (2) Taroo<sub>i</sub> wa Hanako<sub>j</sub> o zibun<sub>i/\*j</sub> no kuruma ni noseta.  
 Taroo TOP Hanako ACC self GEN car LOC put  
 ‘Taroo<sub>i</sub> put Hanako<sub>j</sub> in his<sub>i</sub>/\*her<sub>j</sub> car.’

The sentence becomes unambiguous because it is expected that the causer (*Taroo*) is going to drive the car and the causee is only a passenger in the natural interpretation of this sentence. That is, the

<sup>1</sup>I owe this example to the discussion with Seiji Ueno, Mitinao Matui, and Akira Ohtani.

causee's involvement in the described situation is weaker in (2), as she is not expected to drive the car herself.

Thus, Iida's approach can provide a criterion to make a distinction between possible nonsubject binding (as in (1)) and impossible binding (as in (2)). To the best of my knowledge, the difference between sentences like (1) and those like (2) has never been discussed before.

There are, unfortunately, some problems, in both empirical and conceptual respects, in her approach. The empirical problem is about the judgment of one of her crucial examples, (1) above. According to my intuition, as well as to several other native speakers' I polled, the *j*-interpretation is not so strong, if not impossible in (1), even though they unanimously acknowledge the difference in the possibility of nonsubject binding between (1) and (2). Moreover, they report clearer ambiguity if the last verb in (1) is changed to the complex causative *nor-ase-ta* 'ride-CAUS-PAST'.

Another crucial example for her ((112) in Ch. 2) gets worse; the *j*-interpretation, which she says is possible, is in fact very hard to get for many speakers:

- (3) Taroo<sub>i</sub> wa Hanako<sub>j</sub> ni zibun<sub>i/j</sub> no matigai o satosita.  
Taroo TOP Hanako DAT self GEN mistake ACC made-realize  
'Taroo<sub>i</sub> made Hanako<sub>j</sub> realize his<sub>i</sub>/her<sub>j</sub> mistake.'

As *satos* means 'to try to persuade someone to realize something', the *i*-interpretation is semantically odd in the first place. Thus, some speakers report that the sentence lack any conceivable meaning since the *j*-interpretation is unavailable for them. They, however, get the *j*-interpretation if the last verb is changed to complex *sator-ase-ta* 'realize-CAUS-PAST'.

This may be the reflection of the fact that whose perspective the speaker takes is subject to idiolectal variation and there still remains some vagueness about the exact nature of this notion.

The conceptual problem concerns with Iida's formal definition of PERSPECTIVE CREATING expressions. Her (82) in Ch. 6 allows two cases to create a perspective. The first one allows an embedded clause to create its own perspective. This leads to the default subject or speaker perspective unless the second case holds in the embedded clause. The second case allows "perspectival expressions such as *on the right of*, *foreign* and *local* to have their own perspective in their local domain" (265). Thus, the origin of perspective is in fact defined disjunctively. Even if the syntactic condition and the pragmatic condition are applied conjunctively, the disjunctive part of the pragmatic condition makes the constraint as a whole a disjunctive one. What is more problematic, the conjunction of the syntactic condition and the first pragmatic condition simply gives the subject or the speaker as the possible antecedent and amounts to the syntactic part of the traditional disjunctive approaches criticized by Iida. Since the two cases for perspective creating expressions are merely stated disjunctively, it is not clear when the second case wins and the subject cannot be the antecedent.

These may be only minor technical problems involving formalization, as her data and arguments on them are so convincing that I have almost abandoned my own disjunctive approach (Gunji 1987). There are certainly genuine cases where nonsubjects can antecede *zibun*. Iida's approach, in this sense, seems to be on the right track and is indeed a valuable first step to delimit possible nonsubject antecedents.

## References

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