

A derivational approach to Japanese pronouns

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Synopsis: This paper pursues a derivational analysis of Japanese pronouns, and provides support for the view that the notion “pronoun” is not a primitive (Wiltschko 1998, Déchaine and Wiltschko’s 2002).

Issue: A partial list of Japanese person pronouns is given in (1).

(1)

	Singular	Plural/Group
1st	<i>ware, watakusi, watasi, wasi, etc.</i>	<i>ware-ra, watasi-tati, wata-tati, wasi-ra, etc.</i>
2nd	<i>anata, an'ta</i>	<i>anata-tati, an'ta-ra, an'ta-tati</i>
3rd	<i>kare, kanozyo</i>	<i>kare-ra, kanozyo-ra, kanozyo-tati</i>

As shown in (2), Japanese pronouns can be modified by an attributive modifier (Kuroda 1965).

(2) *Mary-wa* [*sinsetu-na* {*watasi* | *anata* | *kare*}]-*o aisi-teiru.*
 Mary-TOP kind-COP.ADNOM I you he -ACC love-ASP
 Lit. ‘Mary loves kind {me | you | him}.’

(3) shows that the 3rd person pronoun cannot receive a bound variable reading (Hoji 1991).

(3) *dono gakusei₁-mo* [*kare₁-ga kasikoi to*] *omot-teiru.*
 every student-MO he-NOM smart C think-ASP
 ‘Every student₁ thinks that he_{*1 | 2} is smart.’

Given these properties, Noguchi (1997) argues that Japanese pronouns are NPs. Under the N-pronoun analysis, Japanese pronouns can be modified by an attributive modifier because they are NPs. Moreover, NPs are constant, and hence cannot be interpreted as a bound variable. However, Yashima (2015) argues that the 3rd person pronoun can be interpreted as a bound variable if Binding Condition B and the antilogophoricity constraint are simultaneously satisfied. In (4), the matrix subject is not a person whose perspective of the attributive content of the pronoun (i.e. *kare* ‘he’) is evaluated. Furthermore, the pronoun is embedded inside the relative clause, and there is no Condition B violation. In this case, a bound variable reading is possible.

(4) *dono gakusei₁-mo sensyuu* [[*RC kare₁-o suisen-sita*] *sensei*]-*ni orei-o okutta.*
 every student-MO last.week he-ACC recommend-did teacher -to present-ACC sent
 ‘Every student₁ sent a present to the teacher who recommended him₁ last week.’ (Hoji et al. 2000)

The availability of the bound variable reading in (4) is problematic for the N-pronoun analysis because there should be no contrast between (3) and (4), with regard to the availability of the bound variable reading. More recently, Yashima (2015) proposed that the Japanese 3rd person pronoun is an epithet and is born as a DP. However, if the 3rd person pronoun is a DP, it is not clear how to capture the fact that Japanese pronouns can be modified by an attributive modifier, as in (1). We thus have a tension between these two previous analyses; the N-pronoun analysis vs. the D-pronoun analysis.

Proposal: We propose that Japanese pronouns are born as NPs. Based on the pronouns given in (1), we identify two head nouns; *re* and *ta*. The pronouns in (1) are now decomposed as in (5).

(5) a.

	π-feature	N
1st	<i>wa</i>	<i>re</i>
2nd	<i>na</i>	<i>re</i>
3rd	<i>ka</i>	<i>re</i>

b.

		π-feature	N	
1st		<i>wa</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>si</i>
2nd	<i>a</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>ta</i>	
3rd		<i>ka</i>	<i>ta</i>	

The denotations of *re* and *ta* are given in (6).

(6) a. $\llbracket ta \rrbracket^{w, c, g} = \{x_c \mid \text{person}'(x)(c)\}$ b. $\llbracket re \rrbracket^{w, c, g} = \{x_c \mid \text{individual}'(x)(c)\}$

Pronouns headed by *ta* always refer to a person, and we assume that *ta* denotes a set of persons in a context *c*, as in (6a). On the other hand, *re* can be used as a head of impersonal pronoun such as *sore* ‘it’. Given this, we assume that *re* denotes a set of individuals, as in (6b). As for π-features, we analyze *wa* as a realization of the 1st person feature, adopting privative feature system. Similarly, *na* is a realization of the 2nd person feature, and *ka* is a realization of the 3rd person feature, as in (7). (7a) denotes a singleton set whose sole member is the speaker in a given context. Similarly, (7b) denotes a singleton set whose sole member is the

