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Generative Grammar In a Broader Perspective

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August 20 (Wed) – 22 (Fri) : Main Session
August 23 (Sat) : Workshops on Scrambling & Wh-Movement

Invited Speakers
Main Session : Anders Holmberg (University of Durham)
Workshops : Mamoru Saito (Nanzan University)
Norvin Richards (MIT)

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Two Different Types of Overgeneration of "*no*" in Japanese Noun Phrases

In the standard Japanese, the genitive Case marker, the pronoun ("*one*" in English) and the complementizer all are phonetically realized as "*no*" as shown in (1).

(1) a. John-no hon
-Gen book (John's book)
b. akai no
red one (the red one)
c. robusutaa-o tabeta no-wa Bosuton-de da
lobster -Acc ate C -top Boston -in is
(It is in Boston that (I) ate Lobster.)

Clancy (1985) and Murasugi (1991), for Japanese, and Kim (1987) and Lee (1991), for Korean, among others, find that some children insert "*no*" and "*ke*" in the respective language even after relative clauses, as shown in (2).

(2) a. usatyan-ga tabeta no ninzin (Murasugi, 1991)
rabbit -Nom ate (*no) carrot
(the carrot that the rabbit ate)
b. Acessi otopai tha-nun ke soli-ya (Kim, 1987)
uncle motorcycle ride Pres (*ke) sound is
((This) is the sound that a man is riding a motorcyle.)

The present paper reports, based on our four-year-longitudinal-observational study with a Japanese-speaking child, that there are two distinct types of overgeneration of "*no*" observed in the grammar acquisition process: the first takes place before the genitive Case marker and the complementizer are acquired and the second is observed after these are acquired.

The first part of the paper reports the order in which the different "*no*'s" were acquired between the age 1 and the age 5. The order was (i) "the independent genitive form" (e.g., *Akkun-no* (Akkun's)), (ii) the noun (e.g., *akai-no* (the red one)), and (iii) NP with the genitive Case marker inserted between the modifying NP and the head N (e.g., *Akkun-no syuppoppo* (Akkun's choo-choo)).

Then, we report the empirical finding of two distinct stages concerning the overgeneration of "*no*". The first overgeneration takes place at 2:4 just after (ii), and the second at 2:7 after (iii). The two types of overgeneration took place with the same child at the different stage of acquisition. Crucially, the first overgeneration shown in (3) was observed when neither the gentive Case marker insertion rule nor the complementizer were acquired. This overgeneration stopped at around 2:6. And then, just around the time when the tense and nominative Case assignment were acquired, the overgeneration of "*no*" as in (4) started again.

(3) a. Akkun tiityai- no konkonkonkon [2:4]
Akkun small-*no hammer (in Akkun's vocab)
((Akkun cannot find) his hammer, the small one.)

b. Ookii- no booti [2:4]
big -*no hat
((Mother wore) the big one, the big hat.)

(4) a. Katta-no keeki [2:7]
get-Past-*no cake
(The cakes that (we) got.) [2:9]
b. pengintyan tyuiteyu- no kaban
penguin have -*no bag
(The bag that has a penguin (logo) on it.)
c. ima papa -ga ieta- no ottotto doko [2:10]
now Father-Nom put-*no fish where
(Where is the fish that Father put in (the aquarium) just now?)

In acquisition studies, three hypotheses have been proposed regarding the syntactic status of the overgenerated "*no*": "*no*" as the genitive Case marker (Ito 1993), "*no*" as a noun (Nagano 1960), and "*no*" as a complementizer (Murasugi 1991, Lee 1991). This study suggests that the first overgeneraed "*no*" is the pronoun, and the second, the complementizer, thereby providing supporting evidence for both the noun hypothesis and the complementizer hypothesis.

We further conjecture that the first overgeneration takes place when children overgeneralize the usage of the pronoun "*no*" and place it after any pronominal modifier. The meaning of (3b), for example, is as indicated, i.e., 'the big one, the hat'. This possibility was rejected in Murasugi (1991) because the children she examined already had proper knowledge of the genitive marker "*no*." Thus, if the overgenerated "*no*" is a pronoun, the genitive "*no*" must appear between it and the head noun e.g. 'hat'. But note that the first overgeneration of "*no*" we observed takes place before the genitive Case marker is acquired. Hence, the absence of the genitive "*no*" in (3) is in fact expected.

As for the second overgeneration, the "*no*" in question cannot be the pronoun because it takes place after the genitive Case marker is acquired. Hence, we maintain Murasugi's (1991, 2001) analysis: the prenominal sentential modifiers in adult Japanese and Korean are of the category IP (instead of CP) but children initially hypothesize that they are CPs. Consequently, some children produce an overt complementizer in the prenominal CP (based on the knowledge that C is "*no*" for example in cleft sentences.) Those children retreat from the overgeneration on the basis of their knowledge of universal principles and the positive evidence. (See Murasugi 1991, 2001 for the details.)

Thus, our longitudinal study provides a partial resolution for the long-standing debate on the overgeneration of "*no*." The overgeneration of the genitive "*no*" never takes place. But the pronoun analysis and the complementizer analysis were both correct. The overgeneration of these elements take place at different stages of the grammar acquisition.