

Individual Paper Session 11
Syntax
Wednesday, July 5
10:45-11:15am

On Scrambling and Left Branch Effect in the Grammar of Japanese EFL Learners

Yoichi Miyamoto
Osaka University
miyamoto@lang.osaka-u.ac.jp

Bošković (2005) proposes that languages whose nominals do not require the DP-layer allow scrambling and can be insensitive to left branch effect (LBE). Japanese is such a language (e.g., Fukui 1986). This paper provides the experimental results showing that the effect of nominals lacking DP is observed in English comparative deletions (CDs) in the grammar of Japanese intermediate EFL learners, but it is less obvious at the advanced level.

Notice that the Op-movement illustrated in (1) exhibits LBE:

(1) *John bought [_{DPa} more expensive car][Op₁ than [Mary bought [_{DPa} [_{QP}t₁ house]]]].

Corver (1992) argues that LBE is due to the existence of DP. Now, under Bošković's proposal, Miyamoto and Okada's (2004) finding that Japanese intermediate EFL learners allow scrambling indicates that English nominals lack DP in their grammar. Then, the structure given in (2) should be available to these learners (We assume that the indefinite article is adjoined to QP):

(2) John bought [_{QPa} more expensive car][Op₁ than [Mary bought [_{QPa} t₁ house]]]].

Accordingly, the Op-movement within the *than*-clause should be legitimate in their grammar since no minimality effect with D is expected.

A grammaticality judgment test was administered to three proficiency (advanced-intermediate-elementary) groups of learners and native speakers. The test included various CDs including the type given in (1)/(2) and WH-questions exemplified in (3), which were to test the availability of (A-)scrambling (Miyamoto and Okada 2004):

(3) *Which boys did each other's mothers praise?

Results supported our hypothesis: (a) scrambling is available at the intermediate level, but not at the advanced level (cf. Umeda 2005) and (b) intermediate learners, unlike advanced learners, do not consistently rule out sentences of the type in (1)/(2). Considering these results, we suggest that the DP-layer starts constantly emerging at the advanced level (cf. Wakabayashi 1997, Kuribara 2000, among others).