Towards the Non-predicate Modification Analysis of the Expressive Small Clause in Japanese

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Abstract

This paper concerns an understudied aspect of the grammar of Japanese termed "expressive small clause." In particular, it shows that the analysis of the expressive small clause in Japanese using the composition rule of Predication Modification is not empirically tenable, and the construction should instead be analyzed as an instance of applying a nominal argument to an expressive predicate.

1 Introduction

This paper concerns the structure of what is termed as *expressive small clause* in Japanese (Izumi and Hayashi, 2018) illustrated in (1).

(1) Kenji-no   kusottare!
     Kenji-GEN shit.dripper
     'Kenji, asshole!'

In particular, this paper shows that the analysis based on the semantic operation of Predicate Modification that Izumi and Hayashi (2018) (I&H hereafter) propose fails to capture the descriptive generalizations of the construction, and it instead argues for an analysis based on more "traditional" predication.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 provides some introductory descriptive accounts of the expressive small clause. Section 3 reviews what I call the Predicate Modification analysis that I&H propose, which I argue is not empirically tenable in section 4. Section 5 provides an alternative account that is quite similar to what Potts and Roeper (2006) argue for English. Section 6 concludes.

2 Expressive Small Clause in Japanese

Let us first discuss some fundamental properties of the expressive small clause construction in Japanese. Potts and Roeper (2006) use the term *expressive small clause* (ESC) for expressions like (2).[1]

(2) You idiot!   (Potts and Roeper, 2006)

Example (2) is *expressive* in that it is used to express the speaker's attitude/emotion towards the addressee or towards a situation. It is a *small clause* in the sense that it is verbless. I&H identify that expressions like (1) are the Japanese equivalent of (2). Thus, (1) is *expressive* in that it is used to express the speaker's emotion or attitude towards the referent (*Kenji*) or his act, rather than to describe or assert the referent's idiocy, and it lacks a verb or a copula. In Japanese, unlike in English, the ESC is mainly used to express the speaker's *negative* attitude towards the addressee or his act. Thus, positive descriptions such as *tensai* 'genius' and *hansamu* 'handsome' are far less acceptable, unless, perhaps, they are used clearly as a sarcasm.[2]

(3) # Kenji-no   tensai/hansamu!
     Kenji-GEN genius/handsome!
     'Kenji, genius!'

Japanese differs from English in two other regards. First, the particle *-no* links the two constituents, and it is obligatory. I call this particle

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[1] Gutzmann (2019) uses the term *expressive vocative* to refer to expressions like (2).

[2] Some Japanese speakers may find (3) rather acceptable, as a reviewer pointed out, while the native speakers that I consulted share the judgment given in this paper.

genitive marker for the sake of convenience, merely reflecting the fact that it typically marks the genitive case. A typical ESC in Japanese has the form of NP-*no* XP. The NP appears to be the argumental referential expression, whereas the XP is seemingly the predicate which typically carries some derogatory sense.[3] Second, the Japanese ESC allows non-second person argument, and in fact, use of a second person pronominal form is disallowed:
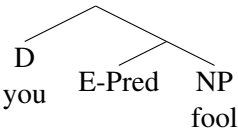
(4) ?? omae-no kusottare!
       you-GEN shit.dripper
       'You asshole!'

If a speaker wishes to use an ESC to a hearer, s/he can use the hearer's name. Thus, example (1) can be used to express the speaker attitude to the hearer whose name is *Kenji*. Finally, the Japanese expressive small clause can be used as an argument as in (5) below.

(5)   Kenji-no   kusottare-ga   kita.
      Kenji-GEN shit.dripper-NOM came
      'The asshole Kenji came.'

3   The Predicate Modification Analysis of Japanese Expressive Small Clause

Let us now consider how the Japanese ESC has been analyzed. Taking Potts and Roeper's (2006) analysis as a starting point, I&H propose that the English ESC is mediated by E-Pred as shown in (6) and (7).
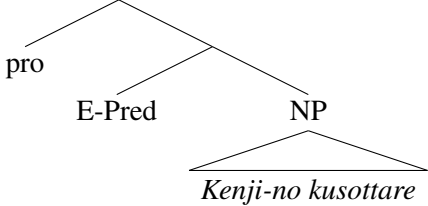
(6)
```
        D
      /   \
  you  E-Pred  NP
                fool
```

(7) $[\![\text{E-Pred}]\!]^c = \lambda P_{\langle e,t\rangle}.\lambda x.\{c' : c'_S = c_S$ and $c'_A = c_A$ and x is c'_A and c'_S considers c'_A to be unfavourably describable as being $P\}$ (where c_S is the speaker of context c and c_A is the addressee of c)

      (Izumi and Hayashi, 2018: (20a), (21))

[3]It has been argued recently that Japanese is an NP language that lacks the D layer in its syntax. I use the term NP for expository purposes only, and I remain agnostic regarding this issue. See Izumi (2016) and references there in for further details. Also, I use the term XP for the "predicate" component of the Japanese ESC to abstract away from the exact nature of this entity, although nouns often appear in this position.

In short, E-Pred is an abstract predicate which turns an ordinary predicate into an expressive one. The composition of the structure in (6) results with an expressive meaning of type E.

I&H claim that Japanese differs from English in that E-Pred appear above the two constituents in the expressive expression:

(8)
```
            pro
           /    \
     E-Pred      NP
                /    \
```
Kenji-no kusottare
(Izumi and Hayashi, 2018: (20b))

This follows from the idea that proper names are underlyingly predicates of type $\langle e,t\rangle$ (Izumi, 2016; Oda, 2018, and references therein). Given that both the proper name *Kenji* and the predicate *kusottare* 'shit dripper' are of type $\langle e,t\rangle$, they are processed by Predicate Modification:

(9)   Predicate Modification
      If α is a branching node, $\{\beta,\gamma\}$ is the set of α's daughters, and $[\![\beta]\!]$ and $[\![\gamma]\!]$ are both in $D_{\langle e,t\rangle}$, then
      $[\![\alpha]\!] = \lambda x \in D_e.[\![\beta]\!](x) = [\![\gamma]\!](x) = 1$
                  (Heim and Kratzer, 1998: 65)

Predicate Modification yields a single type $\langle e,t\rangle$ predicate out of two. Thus, assuming that the name *Kenji* roughly means a set of entities that are called "Kenji", and leaving aside the exact nature of the particle *-no*, the NP *Kenji-no kusottare* in (8) roughly means the following:

(10) $\lambda x.x$ is called *Kenji* and x is an asshole.
                  (cf. Izumi and Hayashi, 2018: (24b))

After applying (10) and the abstract null pronoun to E-Pred, we obtain the following meaning.

(11) $\{c'$: the individual referred to by pro is $c'_A (= c_A)$ and $c'_S (= c_S)$ considers c'_A to be unfavourably describable as being called Kenji and as being an asshole$\}$
                  (cf. Izumi and Hayashi, 2018: (24c))

I&H claim that this analysis captures some of the observations that we made in the previous section. First, since the ESC always target the addressee in

the context, so that the use of second person pronoun in the ESC would be redundant, which accounts for the ill-formedness of example (4). In addition, I&H account for the argumental use of the ESC illustrated in (5) by claiming that it is in fact not an ESC, but it is the NP component of the structure in (8) composed by Predicate Modification, which receives a referential meaning by a type-shifting rule.

4 Against the Predicate Modification Analysis

While there are some clear advantages to I&H's Predicate Modification-based analysis laid out above, I argue in this section that it is not tenable as it fails to account for many empirical facts.

First, let us consider the structure of the Japanese ESC and the meaning of E-Pred in (7) and (8). Since E-Pred turns an ordinary predicate to an expressive one, and it takes scope over both the argumental NP and the predicative XP in the structure in (8), E-Pred crucially takes scope over the NP and it necessarily anticipates that the speaker has an unfavourable attitude towards being called *Kenji* by uttering (1). This prediction is not borne out since the name *Kenji* in (1) carries no derogatory sense. I&H acknowledge this observation and add that the NP can have a negative referential expression such as *teisupe pasokon* 'low-spec PC' in (12).

(12)   teisupe   pasokon-no baka!
       low.spec PC-GEN   idiot
       'Low spec PC, idiot!'
                    (cf. Izumi and Hayashi, 2018: (9d))

It should be pointed out, however, that the way in which the E-Pred is construed necessarily makes the entire ESC expressive, and therefore the predicative content of the argumental NP component would also necessarily be interpreted derogatory.

Now let us consider some of the consequences of deriving the structure of the Japanese ESC using Predicate Modification. The composition rule of Predicate Modification is typically used to account for restrictive modification, and thus the elements that enter into the semantic composition via Predicate Modification, such as *red* in *red shirts* are taken to be adjuncts. This means that at least type-theoretically there is no reason for the Japanese ESC

to have both constituents of the frame [NP-*no* XP] to be present, if the Predicate Modification-based analysis is on the right track. Example (13a), which lacks the argumental NP, is felicitous only when the speaker is facing the addressee and expressing the addressee's idiocy. This contrasts with (1), which is possible even when the individual whose name is *Kenji* is not present in the scene where it is uttered. Similarly, (13b) may be used as a vocative expression, but it does not by itself express any negative impression towards the addressee or the name.

(13)   a.   Baka! 'Idiot!'
       b.   Kenji!

In addition, the two constituents are both of type $\langle e, t \rangle$. This means that they are semantically very similar and they should be switched around when everything else is equal. Thus we expect that the following example to be able to function as an ESC, just like (1) does.

(14)   kusottare-no   Kenji
       shit.dripper-GEN Kenji
       'Kenji, who is an asshole'

While it is possible to interpret this example as a phrase where the expressive expression *kusottare* 'shit dripper' modifies the proper name *Kenji*, it does not have the expressive function that (1) invokes.[4]

Finally, let us consider the fact that the ESC can be used as a nominal argument, illustrated in (5) which is repeated as (15) below.

(15)   Kenji-no   kusottare-ga   kita.
       Kenji-GEN shit.dripper-NOM came
       'The asshole Kenji came.'

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[4]It should be noted that Japanese allows modification of proper names.

    i.   yakyuusenshu-no   Ichiro
         baseball.player-GEN Ichiro
         'Ichiro who is a baseball player'

It should be reminded that the form NP-*no* XP in Japanese is highly ambiguous, as an reviewer points out that there are non-expressive cases like (ii) below where the second entity appears to be predicated of the first entity.

    ii. bara-no   hana
         rose-GEN flower
         'rose/rose flower'

See footnote 5 for another construction that has the form NP-*no* XP.

I&H argue that the semantics of the nominal argument *Kenji-no kusottare* 'the asshole Kenji' should be derived by Predicate Modification just like an ordinary nominal expression of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ with a modifier. This then would suggest that the derogatory expression *kusottare* 'shit dripper' can be substituted with any other type $\langle e, t \rangle$ (nominal) expression. However, it is not the case. Consider (16) below.

(16) * Kenji-no   {kyooju / sensei /
      Kenji-GEN professor / teacher /
      tensai}-ga   kita.
      genius-NOM came
      'Kenji, who is a professor/teacher/genius, came.'

In (16), all of the nominal predicates following the proper name does not necessarily convey any negative interpretation that *kusottare* 'shit dripper' in (15) does, and the sentence is ungrammatical with any of those words with the intended meaning.[5] In fact, it is possible to interpret (16) with the intended appositive-like meaning, once it is made clear that the predicate is sarcastically used.

(17) Kenji-no   sensei-**sama**-ga   mata
      Kenji-GEN teacher-HON-NOM again
      nanika   itteru.
      something say.PROG
      'Kenji, the teacher-preacher, is saying something again.'

The honorific suffix *-sama* in (17) makes it clear that the phrase is used sarcastically and the sentence is perfectly salient with the intended meaning in a situation where the speaker is annoyed by Kenji's mansplaining behaviour. These examples show clearly that the predicate XP entity in the string

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[5]Note that (16) is grammatical with the possessive interpretation. It should also be pointed out Oda (2018) reports that sentences analogous to (16) is acceptable with the intended meaning when the predicative nominal entity is one of the kinship terms.
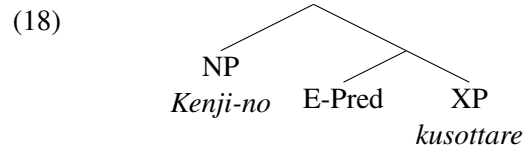
i. Tanaka-no   ojisan-ga   kita.
    Tanaka-GEN uncle-NOM came
    'Tanaka, who is a middle aged man, came.'

As Oda (2018) argues, what is observed in the example above is underlyingly different from the ESC that we are concerned with in this paper.

[NP-*no* XP] must have a clear negative expressive meaning, and thus the use of the string as an argument cannot be derived simply by applying the rule of Predicate Modification, and thus we need to treat this as one of the characteristics of the Japanese ESC.

5 Towards the "Small Clause" analysis of the Japanese Expressive Small Clause

Having seen that the Predicate Modification analysis of the Japanese ESC, which makes use of Predicate Modification and places E-Pred above the argument NP in the frame of [NP-*no* XP], encounter numerous issues, it is fair to conclude that the analysis is not tenable, at least in its current shape. In this section, I would like to argue that the Japanese ESC should be very similar to its English counterpart like *You idiot!*. More specifically, I argue that the Japanese ESC should have a structure very similar to (6) shown in (18) below, abstracting away from the exact nature of the genitive marker *-no*.

(18)
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                /\
               /  \
              /    \
            NP     /\
         Kenji-no  /  \
              E-Pred   XP
                    kusottare
```

What is most crucial in (18) is that what I have been calling the "argumental" NP is, in fact, referential, and thus it is an argument, while the predicate XP seems to carry the predicative characteristics. This simply means that the semantic composition of the phrase should proceed as a rather trivial instance of Functional Application, which applies the argument NP to the predicate XP.

5.1 Coordination in Japanese

In order to see that the NP in the Japanese ESC is, in fact, referential while the XP component is a predicate, we first need to review how coordination works in Japanese.

Japanese has numerous coordinators, and most notably they are sensitive to the syntactic/semantic categories of the conjuncts. Our main concern in this section is the coordination particles *-to* and *-de*. The particle *-to* typically appears when two referential nominal expressions are coordinated, while *-de* is used when two predicative nominal expressions

are coordinated (Nishiyama, 2003: 126–128).[6] The contrast is illustrated by the examples in (19) and (20). Let us consider (19) first.

(19) a. [seijika-**to** pianisuto-wa]
politician-CONJ pianist-TOP
kanemochi-da.
rich-cop
'Politicians and pianists are rich.'

b. # ano hito-wa [Fukuda
that person-TOP Fukuda
Takehiko-**to** Kada Reitarou
Takehiko-CONJ Kada Reitarou
]-da
-COP
'That person is Takehiko Fukuda and Reitarou Kada.'

c. # [furansu bungakusha-**to**
France literature.scholar-CONJ
pianisto]-no seijika
pianist-GEN politician
'a politician who is a scholar of French literature and (also) a pianist.'
(Nishiyama, 2003: 126–128)

The subject phrase with the particle *-to* in (19a) is well-formed since it is salient to interpret the conjuncts *seijika* 'politician(s)' and *pianisuto* 'pianist(s)' are distinct (sets of) referential entities. On the other hand, (19b) is infelicitous since the co-ordinator *-to* forces the interpretation where there are two separate individuals, one called *Takehiko Fukuda* and the other *Reitarou Kada* which is inconsistent with the singular subject *ano hito* 'that person'. Similarly (19c) is infelicitous since the conjuncts are the predicates of the relative clause modifying the noun *seijika* 'politician', which cannot be coordinated by the particle *-to*. Once the particle *-to* in (19) is changed to *-de*, we see the completely opposite results:

(20) a. ? [seijika-**de** pianisuto-wa]
politician-CONJ pianist-TOP
kanemochi-da.
rich-COP
'Politicians and pianists are rich.'

b. ano hito-wa [Fukuda
that person-TOP Fukuda
Takehiko-**de** Kada Reitarou
Takehiko-CONJ Kada Reitarou
]-da
-COP
'That person is Takehiko Fukuda and Reitarou Kada.'

c. [furansu bungakusha-**de**
France literature.scholar-CONJ
pianisto]-no seijika
pianist -GEN politician
'a politician who is (also) a scholar of French literature and a pianist.'

Example (20a) which contrasts with (19a) is not quite acceptable, and even if a speaker finds it acceptable, it rather means that someone who is both a politician and a pianist is rich. In contrast, examples (20b, c) are quite well-formed. It should be noted that the coordinated structure in (20b) is interpreted as having two distinct names, and thus they are acting predicatively just like the coordinated phrase in (20c).

With this information in mind, let us now return to the ESC.

5.2 Coordination and Expressive Small Clause

The structure in (18) that I argue for maintains the referent–predicate asymmetry of the Japanese ESC. Thus, we should expect that the particle *-to* that coordinates referential items may appear in the argumental NP position whereas the particle *-de* that coordinates predicates may be found in the predicate XP position. This prediction is borne out. Let us first consider the argumental NP position.

(21) a. [Kenji-**to** Toshie]-no baka!
Kenji-CONJ Toshie -GEN idiot!
'Kenji and Toshie, idiot!'

b. # [Kenji-**de** Toshie]-no baka!
Kenji-CONJ Toshie -GEN idiot!
'Kenji and Toshie, idiot!'

Sentence (21a), with the referent-coordinating *-to*, is highly acceptable with the reading where there are two individuals, Kenji and Toshie, and the speaker is frustrated with the idiocy of them or their behaviour. In contrast, (21b) that has the predicate-coordinating

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[6] A similar observation has also been made by Tsujimura (1996: 126–127).

-*de* is not acceptable at all. It certainly fails to yield the interpretation that we find with (21a). It may at best mean that the speaker is frustrated with one individual whose name is *Kenji*, who happens to be also called *Toshie*. I suggest for now that (21b) sounds strongly infelicitous because the expressive content is marred by providing rather ancillary information that s/he is also called *Kenji*. The availability of the particle *-to* within the NP position confirms that the NP constituent is referential and thus it functions as an argument. In conclusion, the data support the claim that the ESC should have the structure in (18). On the other hand, the Predicate Modification analysis fails to provide a clear explanation we observe the pattern in (21).

Let us now turn to the predicate XP position. The elements in this position are typically coordinated with *-de*.

(22) a. # Kenji-no   [baka-**to**
          Kenji-GEN idiot-CONJ
          wakarazuya]!
          bigot
          'Kenji, idiot and bigot!'

      b. Kenji-no   [baka-**de**
          Kenji-GEN idiot-CONJ
          wakarazuya]!
          bigot
          'Kenji, idiot and bigot!'

While (22b) is completely salient for expressing the speaker's wish to inveigh against Kenji by calling out two negative properties, (22a) is not acceptable at all. I take this as a clear confirmation that the XP component of the Japanese ESC is in fact a predicate.

Putting together, it is safe to conclude that the Japanese ESC has the "small clause" structure in 18 that is analogous to its English counterpart.

5.3 Apparent Counterexamples

Some of the empirical findings that we discussed earlier in this paper are not apparently consistent with the structure in (18). First, the "small clause" analysis fails to account for the unavailability of the second person argument exemplified in (4) (repeated as (23) below).

(23)   ?? omae-no kusottare!
          you-GEN shit.dripper
          'You asshole!'

I agree with I&H's intuition that this particular sentence is not acceptable, but it is dubious whether it has to do with having the second person argument. Japanese is known for having an array of pronominal expressions with slightly different expressive meanings. For example, *anata*, *anata-sama*, *anta*, *omae*, *kisama*, *temee*, *omae-san*, *kiden*, etc. all mean 'you', but each of these expresses a slightly different attitude towards the hearer. Crucially, it seems that some of these pronominal expressions fare better with the ESC than others. For example, the example below appears to be well-formed, although it does certainly sound rather archaic.

(24)   **omaesan**-no {baka/ kusottare/   hentai/
          you-GEN   idiot shit.dripper pervert
          ecchi}!
          dirty
          'You idiot/asshole/pervert/dirty!'

While the exact nature of this restriction is very unclear and it is beyond the scope of this paper, this data suggests clearly that the restriction is not simply about being the second person.

Another apparent counterexample to the small clause analysis of the Japanese ESC is that it can function as an argument of the larger structure as in (25) repeated from (15).

(25)   Kenji-no   kusottare-ga   kita.
       Kenji-GEN shit.dripper-NOM came
       'The asshole Kenji came.'

This contrasts to the English ESC which cannot behave as a nominal argument.

(26)   * You fool should read more carefully.
   (Potts and Roeper, 2006: (44b))

Based on this observation, Potts and Roeper (2006) claim that the English ESC is composed via Functional Application, and rejects the two-dimensional application of Functional Application proposed by Potts (2005) shown in (27).

(27) Expressive Composition

B:a,
A(B):E

B:a A:$\langle a, E\rangle$
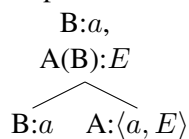
(Potts and Roeper, 2006: (42))

Given the fact that the ESC in Japanese can be used nominally, we may simply propose that availability of this expressive composition rule is rather language specific, and thus the ESC in (25) should look like the following:

(28)

Kenji:e,
kusottare(Kenji):E

Kenji:e kusottare:$\langle a, E\rangle$
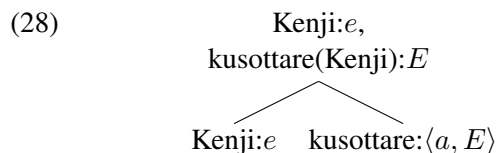
Thus, in one dimension, the expression expresses the speaker's attitude towards Kenji, while it functions as a part of larger structure in another dimension.[7]

6 Conclusion

This paper investigated the expressive small clause construction, a rather understudied domain in the

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[7]A reviewer points out that (28) is similar to English *damn* and its Japanese counterpart *kuso* and provides the following examples.

   i.   The damn dog ate my homework!

   ii.   kuso inu-ga   shukudai-o   tabeta!
       shit dog-NOM homework-ACC ate

On the other hand, the reviewer adds that the following examples are not acceptable.

   iii. ??inu-no   baka!
        dog-GEN idiot

   iv. ??inu-no   baka-ga   kyoo-mo sosoo-o
        dog-GEN idiot-GEN today-too toilet.accident-ACC
        sita
        did
        '(The) idiot dog had a toilet accident again today.

I suggest that this interesting contrast is observed due to the fact that the noun *inu* 'dog' is either treated indefinite or non-referential in (ii)–(iv). Thus, adding a demonstrative before the noun in (iii) and (iv) improves the acceptability:

   v.   ano inu-no   baka-ga   kyoo-mo
        that dog-GEN idiot-GEN today-too
        sosoo-o   sita.
        toilet.accident-ACC did
        '(The) idiot dog had a toilet accident again today.

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syntax/semantics of Japanese. While it has been previously argued by Izumi and Hayashi (2018) that the construction is derived by the composition rule of Predicate Modification, this paper has shown that such an analysis is not empirically tenable and that it should be analyzed as an instance of simple application of an argument to an expressive predicate, just like its English counterpart.

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