

PROBLEMS WITH HONORIFICATION-AS-AGREEMENT IN JAPANESE:
A REPLY TO BOECKX & NIINUMA*

Jonathan David Bobaljik & Kazuko Yatsushiro
University of Connecticut & ZAS, Berlin
December 2004

Abstract. Boeckx & Niinuma (2004) argue that a particular object honorification construction in Japanese should be seen as a special case of more familiar object agreement configurations and that Chomsky's (2000) government-like Agree relation, along with the notion of defective intervention, suffices to predict the syntactic properties of this construction. We question here certain (largely tacit) key assumptions of their analysis, including the appropriateness of their morphological gloss, the c-command relations that drive the analysis, and the degree to which honorification is similar to the agreement configurations in the other languages they consider. We suggest that various omissions in their article have led them to posit a greater degree of similarity than the data actually show, and we conclude that an assimilation of honorification to object agreement along the lines Boeckx & Niinuma propose is a much more ambitious task than their article suggests; in part, this is precisely because object honorification does not look like (object) agreement by any of the criteria that they consider.

Keywords: Japanese object honorification; ((indirect) object) agreement; (defective) intervention.

1. INTRODUCTION

Boeckx & Niinuma (2003), henceforth B&N, discuss data from an Object Honorification [OH] construction in Japanese. The relevant construction is shown in (1). Example (1a) is a transitive sentence, with no marking of honorification; the corresponding OH construction is given in (1b), with certain details of the segmentation and gloss left purposefully vague here, as this is a point of contention to which we return in detail in section 2.¹

- (1) a. Taroo-ga Tanaka sensee-o tasuke-ta
Taroo-NOM Tanaka Professor-ACC help-PAST
Taro helped Prof. Tanaka. [non-honorific]
- b. Taroo-ga Tanaka sensee-o o-tasuke(-)si-ta
Taroo-NOM Tanaka Professor-ACC HP-help(-) "su"-PAST
Taro helped Prof. Tanaka. [OH]

The primary conclusion that B&N draw is that OH is syntactic (object) agreement. They summarize their article as follows:

* For discussion of portions of the material presented here, we are grateful to Susana Béjar, Cedric Boeckx, Fumi Niinuma, Masashi Nomura, Uli Sauerland, Susi Wurmbrand, Florian Zellmayer, and two anonymous reviewers. For additional judgments on Japanese data, we thank: Shigeto Kawahara, Makoto Kadowaki, Masako Hirotsu, Takuro Tanaka, Takako Iseda, Toshiko Oda and Tsuyoshi Sawada. Jonathan Bobaljik's research is in part funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant # 410-2002-0581.

¹ Abbreviations: HP = honorific prefix.

Honorification-Agreement Problems

“Chomsky’s 2000 Agree relation captures the whole array of facts once it is assumed to be subject to defective intervention effects, which are attested independently. Our analysis enables us to bring the Japanese agreement facts fully in line with agreement constraints cross-linguistically, and thus provides another piece of evidence that, abstractly, languages are near-invariant.” (B&N p.470)

The major relevant empirical observation, due to Harada (1976), is that there is a hierarchy INDIRECT OBJECT > DIRECT OBJECT dictating which internal argument will control the alternation between honorific and non-honorific constructions. In constructions with an indirect object (primarily, but not only, dative phrases), that indirect object (or an NP contained therein—a point to which we return) will determine whether the predicate is honorific or not. When there is no indirect object, the direct object (or an NP contained in it) will determine honorification. A relevant pair is given in (2); specifically, (2a) shows that the indirect object may trigger OH. Importantly, (2b) shows that OH cannot be used to indicate deference towards the direct object in the presence of an indirect object. The example in (2b) can only be used to indicate honorification of my younger brother. (Niinuma 2003 shows that this description is not entirely accurate and proposes an interesting refinement based on data not considered in B&N.)²

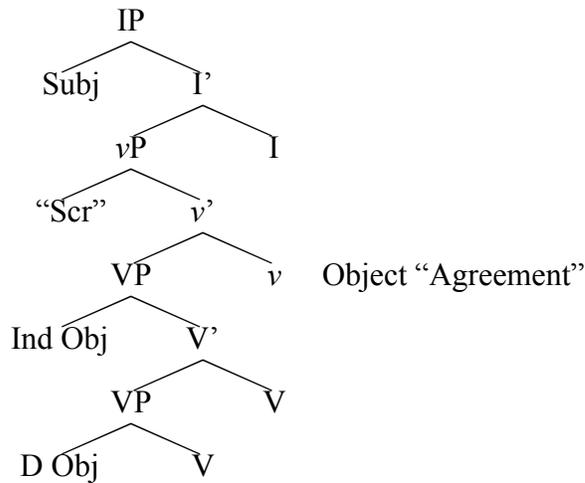
- (2) a. (pro) Yamada sensee-ni otooto-o go-syookai(-)si-ta
 Yamada Professor-DAT brother-ACC HP-introduce(-) “su”-PAST
 I introduced my younger brother to Prof. Yamada.
- b. #(pro) ootoo -ni Yamada sensei -o go-syookai(-)si-ta
 brother-DAT Yamada Professor -ACC HP-introduce(-) “su”-PAST
 I introduced Prof. Tanaka to my younger brother. (Harada 1976, p.530)

B&N propose to derive this priority relation as arising from the structure in (3).³ The crucial assumptions are: (i) the head v is the locus of object honorification, (ii) this head c -commands both indirect and direct objects, and (iii) the indirect object asymmetrically c -commands the direct object. It is also important to the details of their analysis (though not to the points raised here) that the landing site of scrambled objects (indicated as “Scr”) is higher than v (movement does not alter the honorification pattern).

² We mark sentences such as (2b) as anomalous (#) rather than ungrammatical (*)—the sentence is acceptable, but on the anomalous interpretation that the speaker’s younger brother is honorified (socially superior) with respect to the speaker. Our use of # in such contexts corresponds to Harada’s and B&N’s *.

³ This tree is inferred from the partial labeled bracketings given in B&N, especially their (31). We have made minor modifications including regularizing their structures to head-final trees for Japanese (their (31) has V-object order in the Japanese) and making certain choices where B&N are not explicit (such as VP-recursion rather than multiple specifiers for the indirect object). These choices are for expository convenience and do not affect the analysis except in details of implementation. Likewise, in line with B&N, we have not included a subject trace in (3)—it is presumably in Spec, ν P, but the relative order of the subject trace and the landing site of scrambling is not relevant for the analysis.

(3)



Given these assumptions, their analysis is straightforward: the head v agrees with the highest clausemate DP in its c-command domain. If that DP is considered [+SSS] (socially superior to the speaker), it triggers the appropriate “agreement” on v ; else v surfaces in the non-honorific form. They argue that this “closest” property reflects the canonical manifestation of the Agree/agreement relation, and that the inability of a direct object to agree across a non-honorific indirect object constitutes a case of defective intervention.

The interest in B&N’s proposal lies not within analysis itself (indeed, the locality/minimality account is already suggested for the OH paradigm in Toribio (1990), where it is cast in terms of movement to a specifier position) but rather in the underlying assumptions. Not least among these is the suggestion that c-command is the pertinent factor, and hence the conclusion that OH lies squarely within the syntax. It is thus unfortunate that the correctness of the key empirical assumptions is presupposed, largely without defense or comment. We examine some of those assumptions here and demonstrate that (i) the only honorific morphology in the construction is the prefix *(g)o-*, which neither occupies a position c-commanding the two DPs, nor is unique to the OH construction, hence is not plausibly associated with v , (ii) the correlation between honorification and c-command is not generally supported by standard c-command diagnostics, and (iii) to the extent that B&N do present intervention/locality effects in OH, these are unlike the agreement constraints in other languages to which the authors point. In addition, we suggest that the intervention effects are not “defective” under any obvious understanding of this notion, and in particular not in a way that will also extend to the Icelandic and Romance facts they discuss. We address these points in turn in the sections that follow. In conclusion, on closer inspection (and considering the more interesting facts presented in Harada 1976 and Niinuma 2003) the analysis presented in B&N threatens to trivialize what should constitute an interesting set of puzzles, and to obscure genuine cross-linguistic differences, worthy of further investigation.

2. OBJECT HONORIFICATION

The first point we would like to focus on is B&N’s implication of v and thus of an Agree relation in the analysis. Their gloss and morphological segmentation of the OH construction is a departure (unacknowledged) from previous treatments. We suggest here that the departure is

neither motivated nor innocuous, and that the standard understanding of the morphology of these constructions alone challenges the B&N analysis. Specifically, in the next few subsections, we construct an argument for the following observation:

- (4) The only overt morpheme reflecting honorification in Japanese is contained in the lowest VP projection, and specifically, does not c-command the indirect object.

It should be clear that this is a serious *prima facie* problem for the enterprise laid out in B&N. Their appeal to Chomsky’s Agree relation relies crucially on the target of agreement (the Probe) being in the highest position. By treating the morpheme *su-*, which occurs between the verbal stem and Tense, as the OH suffix, their analysis appears to have initial plausibility. But this segmentation is at best a misleading departure from previous usage. The evidence in the literature cited by B&N points in fact to the implausibility of their analysis; this is reinforced by new evidence from VP-fronting, a construction they mention but do not consider with respect to the OH data.

2.1 OH and Light verb *su-ru*

In (5) we repeat the basic OH example from (1b), with B&N’s segmentation and gloss. Example (6) is the subject honorification [SH] construction, again with B&N’s segmentation and gloss.

- (5) Taroo-ga Tanaka sensee-o o-tasuke-si-ta
Taro-NOM Professor Tanaka-ACC help-OH-PAST
 Taro helped Prof. Tanaka. [OH]
- (6) Tanaka sensee-ga hon-o o-yomi-ni-nat-ta
Professor Tanaka-NOM book-ACC read-SH-PAST
 Prof. Tanaka read the book. [SH]

B&N omit the honorific prefix (which occurs in both SH and OH constructions) from their glosses.⁴ Their brief discussion of the morphology focuses on the elements that do distinguish the SH from the OH constructions. Specifically, they treat *si ~ su* as an OH suffix and the sequence *ni nar* as “the [SH] suffix” (p.4, singular in the original; JDB/KY).⁵ The choice to characterize these latter elements as suffixes constitutes a surprising departure from the literature they cite, a departure which B&N neither note nor defend. The previous literature, including Harada (1976), on which B&N primarily rely, provides a morphological analysis as in (7)-(8).

- (7) Taroo-ga Tanaka sensee-o o-tasuke si-ta [= (5)]
Taro-NOM Tanaka Professor-ACC HP-help do-PAST

⁴ There are two forms of the prefix, *go-/o-*. The choice is determined by the root to which they attach (Sino-Japanese roots take *go-*) and the allomorphy is orthogonal to present concerns. Importantly, the subject/object distinction is unrelated to the choice of prefix.

⁵ There are other morphological realizations of the OH construction, including partially suppletive verb roots (see B&N fn. 2); the facts are reported in the accessible English literature (see especially Harada 1976) and do not bear on the points made here, so far as we can see.

- (8) Tanaka sensee-ga hon-o o-yomi-ni nat-ta [= (6)]
Tanaka Professor -NOM book-ACC HP-read-DAT become-PAST

While previous proposals diverge in certain details, a key point that they share is in providing a “light verb” segmentation for both constructions. For Harada (1976), for example, the honorific prefix *o-* occurs on the (bare) infinitive form of the lexical verb, and the finite predicates are the independent, auxiliary-like verbs *su-* ‘do’ (with suppletive past tense allomorph *si-*) and *nar-* ‘become’ (the past tense *nat-* is the result of predictable coda assimilation). The particle *-ni* in the SH construction is the automatic reflex of the fact that *naru* takes a dative complement; *-ni* is the dative case particle. (Harada 1976, pp. 525-6, explicitly discusses, and rejects, treating the sequence *ni nar* as a single, morphologically complex constituent, since contrastive particles occur in between the two elements, as expected on the standard segmentation.) For Suzuki (1989) and Toribio (1990), the verb stem is not an infinitive but rather a gerund or nominalization.⁶

The light verb construction is extensively discussed in the literature (see Grimshaw & Mester 1988, Saito & Hoshi 2000, and references therein). Non-honorific examples of light verb *su-ru* are given in (9). It is particularly common with Sino-Japanese roots, such as *zyooto* ‘hand over’ as in (9a).⁷ *Syookai* ‘introduce/introduction’ is such a root, and obligatorily occurs in the light verb construction independently of honorification; thus the non-honorific (9b) provides a minimal contrast with Harada’s honorific example in (2a)—the two predicates differ only in the presence or absence of the honorific prefix, providing a strong *prima facie* case against treating *si* as OH morphology.

⁶ Toribio provides morphological justification for this latter claim (p. 536), arguing that when the gerund is distinct from the bare root, it is the gerundive (nominalized) and not the bare form which surfaces.

⁷ The complement of light verb *su-* may take the accusative case particle *-o* under certain conditions, but as the examples in (9) illustrate, it need not. We do not yet know all the conditions affecting the distribution of the case particle in light verb constructions. One relevant condition is the so-called “double *-o* constraint” (Harada 1973) which prohibits two accusative NPs in the same clause; this excludes accusative *-o* on the verbal noun in all OH constructions with an accusative object.

Fumi Niinuma (personal communication, November 2004) suggests a possible point of difference between honorific and non-honorific light verb constructions, related to the point just mentioned. In his judgment, when the light verb bears the accusative case particle, then the object of the verb may be expressed as genitive, as in (i) (compare (9b)), but he finds the genitive object degraded when the light verb bears an honorific prefix.

- (i) John-ga Tanaka sensee-ni imooto-no (??go-)syookai-o si-ta
John-NOM Tanaka professor-DAT sister-GEN (HP-)introduce-ACC do-PAST
 John introduced his sister to Prof. Tanaka.

The contrast is not sharp, though (the second author and another speaker consulted reject the genitive in (i) even without honorification), and moreover, some OH examples do tolerate an accusative/genitive alternation (ii).

- (ii) Tugi-no apointmento-de Saitoo sensee-ni kono hon-no go-syookai-o suru yoteida.
next-GEN appointment-at Saito Prof.-DAT this book-ACC HP-introduce-ACC do plan
 I plan to introduce (=show) this book to Prof. Saito at the next appointment.

We do not understand the factors involved and therefore leave case marking in light verb constructions as a topic for further research.

Honorification-Agreement Problems

- (9) a. Mary-ga Tanaka sensee-ni toti-o zyooto si-ta.
Mary-NOM Tanaka Professor -DAT land-ACC hand.over do-PAST
 Mary handed over land to Prof. Tanaka.
- b. (pro) Lina-ni ootoo-o syookai si-ta
Lina-DAT brother-ACC introduce do-PAST
 I introduced my younger brother to Lina.

The examples in (10) illustrate another light verb context. Emphatic particles such as *-sae* ‘even’, *-mo* ‘also’, and the topic marker *-wa*, can be attached to a verb stem, as shown in (10a). When this occurs, the light verb *su-* is required, presumably to support the tense affix, in a manner reminiscent of *do*-support in English. Contrast the non-emphatic counterpart without the light verb (10b). This is equally possible with the OH construction (in appropriate contexts), as (10c) shows.

- (10) a. Kai-ga hon-o yomi-sae/mo/wa si-ta
K-NOM book-ACC read-even/also/TOP do-PAST
 Kai even read a book.
- b. Kai-ga hon-o yon-da (< /yom/ – /ta/)
K-NOM book-ACC read-PAST (by place and voicing assimilation)
 Kai read a book.
- c. Taroo-ga Tanaka-sensee-o o-tasuke-sae si-ta. (cf. (7))
Taro-NOM Tanaka Professor-ACC HP-help-even do-PAST
 Taro even helped Prof. Tanaka.

The exact structure of the light verb construction(s) is a matter of some debate, but the consensus is that the lexical verb occurs in some non-finite, possibly nominal(ized), form, as the complement of an independent, auxiliary-like “light” verb.⁸

Importantly, none of the light verb constructions in (9)-(10) without the honorific prefix have any honorific meaning.

2.2 The morphology of honorification

In addition to the surface similarity, there are at least two additional morphological arguments that *si-* in the OH construction is indeed the light verb and not an honorification suffix; that is, that the construction should be segmented and glossed as in (7), rather than as in (5).

The first argument comes from the past/non-past alternation. The present tense form of (7) would have the string *su-ru* ‘do-PRES’ in place of *si-ta* ‘do-PAST’. The alternation *si-* (Past) ~ *su-* (non-past) is a suppletive alternation displayed by the light verb *su-ru* in all its uses, including the OH construction. Positing that *-si* is an agreement suffix in (5) fails to capture this

⁸ The major debate is whether the complement of the light verb is the erstwhile verb alone (in which case some process of argument structure inheritance must be invoked) or is a VP with the verb and its complements.

allomorphy. This consideration suggests that the morpheme in the OH construction is what it looks like, namely, the light verb.⁹

The second morphological argument in favour of a light verb analysis of the OH (and SH) construction starts from the observation that the honorific prefix *go-/o-* attaches to nouns and adjectives. The examples in (11a-b) illustrate this; (11c-d) illustrate that honorification on nouns does not (always) require a c-commanding honorific expression.¹⁰

- (11) a Yamada sensee-no o-boosi
Yamada Prof.-GEN HP-hat
 Prof. Yamada's hat (Harada 1976, p.539)
- b. Sensei-ga o-zyoubu da
Teacher-NOM HP-tough be
 The teacher is tough. (Namai 2000, p. 174).
- c. Asita o-denwa-de go-henzi itasi-mas-u
 Tomorrow HP-phone-ON HP-reply do-POLITE-PRES
 'I'll give you my reply tomorrow on the phone.' (Harada 1976, p.534).
- d. O-syooyu-o totte kudasai.
HP-soy.sauce-ACC take please
 Please pass the soy sauce.

As Toribio (1990, p. 546) discusses, analyzing the SH and OH constructions as light verb constructions with a nominalized (or gerundive) complement allows a stronger claim to be made, namely, that the honorific prefixes may only attach to [+N] categories, that is, nouns and adjectives. The light verb construction falls into place if the verbal complement is nominalized (or gerundive). On B&N's analysis, the prefix is attaching directly to the main verbal predicate of the clause. This leaves as a mystery why the prefix can never attach to an unambiguously verbal predicate outside of these constructions, as partly illustrated in (12):

- (12) Yamada sensee-ga (*o-)it-ta
*Yamada Professor-NOM (*HP-)go- PAST*
 Prof. Yamada went. (SH)

Note that this argument also extends to truly verbal honorific forms. For example, (13) illustrates the use of the (unambiguously verbal) passive suffix *-(r)are* as an honorific marker (note the absence of a passive-like alternation in argument structure and case-marking). When the *-rare* honorification strategy is used without light verb morphology, then the honorific prefix is

⁹ Likewise, B&N's inclusion of a hyphen in the *ni-nat* sequence in (6) strongly suggests that they tacitly recognize that this is bi-morphemic, despite their claim to the contrary, cited above.

¹⁰ Harada (p. 534) observes that there are hierarchy effects regarding which of multiple NPs within a complex NP may trigger honorification on the head noun.

disallowed. The honorific prefix is only possible in the light verb honorification construction, that is, when the verb stem is arguably [+N].¹¹

- (13) a. Yamada sensee-ga (*o-)ik-are-ta
*Yamada Professor-NOM (*HP-)go-PASS-PAST*
 Prof. Yamada went. (SH)
- b. Yamada sensee-ga kono ronbun-o (*o-)kak-are-ta
*Yamada Professor-NOM this article-ACC (*HP-)write-PASS-PAST*
 Prof. Yamada wrote this article. (SH) (after Toribio 1990, p. 547)

Previous authors have chosen to treat the honorification constructions, and OH in particular, as light verb constructions, in which the only honorific morphology is the prefix. B&N provide no reason to think otherwise, and the available morphological evidence is not in their favour. We turn now to (new) syntactic evidence in favour of the (standard) light verb analysis.

2.3 VP-preposing I: A syntactic argument for a light verb analysis

Another argument in favour of a light verb analysis of the OH construction comes from the fact that the verbal noun and the light verb may be separated in the VP-preposing construction, a construction which B&N refer to in a slightly different context (p. 476). VP-preposing with a non-honorific verb is illustrated in (14a); as (14b) shows, this construction may not strand verbal affixes. Note that this test confirms that the passive morpheme (in its honorific use in (13), as in its non-honorific usage) is indeed a suffix—this suffix may not be stranded in VP-preposing ((14c)).

- (14) a. [Lina-o tasuke]-sae Kai-ga t_{VP} si-ta.
Lina-ACC help-even Kai-NOM do-PAST
 Kai even helped Lina.
- b. *[Lina-o tasuke]-sae Kai-ga t_{VP} -ta.
Lina-ACC help-even Kai-NOM -PAST

¹¹ Note that double-honorification (*nizyuukeigo*) is in principle possible (although prescriptively frowned upon). Note, though, that to the extent an example like (i) is accepted, it is only possible when the light-verb construction is embedded inside the verbal honorification (compare (ii)). In other words, while it may be possible for the honorific prefix and verbal honorification strategies to co-occur, the verbal honorification marker *-rare* must be attached to the light verb, and not to the stem which bears the honorific prefix, consistent with the view that the stem in the light verb construction is [+N].

- (i) Yamada sensee-ga kono ronbun-o o-yomi-ni na-rare-ta
Yamada Professor-NOM this article-ACC HP-read-DAT become-PASS-PAST
 Prof. Yamada read this article. (SH)
- (ii) * o-yom-are-ni nat-ta
HP-read-PASS-DAT become-PAST

- c **[kono ronbun-o kaki]-sae Yamada sensee-ga t_{VP} (r)are-ta*
this article-ACC write-even Yamada Professor-NOM PASS-PAST
 Prof. Yamada wrote this article.

VP-fronting is also possible in the OH construction as (15a) demonstrates. Importantly, the morpheme *si-* is left behind here as well (contrast (15b)).¹²

- (15) a. *[Tanaka-sensee-o o-tasuke]-sae Taro-ga si-ta.*
Tanaka-Prof.-ACC HP-help-even Taro-NOM do-PAST
 Taro even helped Prof. Tanaka.
- b. **[Tanaka-sensee-o o-tasuke-si/su]-sae Taro-ga -ta.*
Tanaka-Prof.-ACC HP-help-even Taro-NOM PAST

If the morpheme *si* were, as B&N propose, a verbal suffix, then it should be impossible to strand that suffix under VP-preposing in (15a), just as the true suffixes in (14) cannot be stranded. Instead, even in the honorification construction, the morpheme behaves as the light verb and not as an (agreement) suffix.

2.4 VP-preposing II: Implications of the light verb analysis

In the preceding subsections, we have reviewed arguments in favour of the standard segmentation of the OH construction as a special case of a light verb construction. Specifically, *su-* is the light verb *su-* and not an OH suffix accidentally homophonous with that verb. This leaves the prefix *o-* (*~go-*) as the only overt morphological manifestation of honorification in the construction. What are the consequences of this conclusion for B&N's analysis?

One consequence is that it becomes far less obvious that the OH construction should be analysed in isolation from the SH construction, as they involve the same honorific morpheme. Nevertheless, it is certainly conceivable that the honorific prefixes occur in different positions in the two constructions (examples of homophonous agreement affixes occupying distinct positions for subject and object agreement are by no means unknown; in Kiswahili, for example, see Keach 1995, the 1sg agreement affix *ni-* reflects subject agreement occurring before Tense, but object agreement when following Tense). An analysis along these lines is explicitly put forward in Toribio (1990). For Toribio, the honorification agreement is the prefix *o-*, which in the OH construction occupies a position roughly analogous to what B&N label *v* (i.e., c-commanding both Indirect and Direct Objects, and agreeing with the closer/higher of the two).

The VP-preposing construction provides an argument against even this position, though. The relevant facts concern VP-preposing in ditransitive structures. In these constructions, the verb may be fronted with both internal arguments (as in (16a)), or (for some speakers at least)

¹² It is possible to repeat the light verb in the fronting construction (one occurrence in the fronted constituent and another supporting the inflectional material); but this is possible with the normal light verb construction and is thus independent of honorification. A reviewer finds repeating the light verb preferable in (15a), but reports the same preference for the non-honorific light-verb construction, further supporting our contention that these are in fact the same construction.

with just the direct object (stranding the indirect object) as in (16b), but not with the indirect object alone (hence (16c) is unacceptable).¹³

- (16) a. [Uli-ni Erika-o mise]-sae Kai-ga t_{VP} si-ta
Uli-DAT Erika-ACC show-even Kai-NOM do-PAST
 Kai even showed Erika to Uli
- b. [Erika-o mise]-sae Kai-ga Uli-ni t_{VP} si-ta
Erika-ACC show-even Kai-NOM Uli-DAT do-PAST
 Kai even showed Erika to Uli
- c. *[Uli-ni mise]-sae Kai-ga Erika-o t_{VP} si-ta
Uli-DAT show-even Kai-NOM Erika-ACC do-PAST
 Kai even showed Erika to Uli.

Yatsushiro (1999, pp. 163-199) discusses this construction and these restrictions in detail, providing in addition an overview of a number of previous analyses. Specifically, Yatsushiro proposes that the unacceptability of (16c) is a special case of the broader unavailability of remnant VP-preposing in Japanese. That is, given the structure in (3), the facts are accounted for by fronting of either the higher VP (deriving (16a)) or the lower VP (deriving (16b)). But the derivation of (16c) would involve scrambling of the accusative object out of the VP and subsequent fronting of the “remnant”. Yatsushiro proposes that this is excluded by (the mechanisms that underlie the correct part of) the Proper Binding Condition, the effect of which is that the fronted constituent cannot contain an unbound trace. As discussed there, this will likewise exclude examples where a transitive verb alone is fronted, stranding its internal argument, but will allow fronting of an unergative verb alone, deriving an observation well-known in the GB literature on Japanese.¹⁴

Note importantly that the VP-fronting construction displays the IO > DO prominence effects that form the core object of inquiry in B&N; that is, a direct object determines honorification in a simple transitive clause (15a), while it is the indirect object that determines honorification in a ditransitive (17a). Example (17b) is thus odd since the honorification is directed towards Lina.

- (17) a. [Tanaka-sensee-ni Lina-o o-mise]-sae Kai-ga si-ta
Tanaka-Prof-DAT Lina-ACC HP-show-even Kai-NOM do-PAST
 Kai even showed Lina to Prof. Tanaka.

¹³ The same pattern is reported for German in Bobaljik (1995, p. 176), with the same analysis offered, following a suggestion of Winnie Lechner. There is a split in judgments here, which may be a North-South split: not all German speakers reject the analogue of (16c), see Müller (1997).

¹⁴ Yatsushiro (pp. 166, 168) cites seven previous papers for versions of this observation, reviewing two proposals in detail. B&N are thus in error when they state that Yatsushiro (1999) “missed the generalization that Japanese does not allow a remnant VP to be proposed,” that the generalization “has never been studied in any depth” and that “it is not clear what it would follow from” (n. 20, p. 475).

- b. #[Lina-ni Tanaka-sensee-o o-mise]-sae Kai-ga si-ta
Lina-DAT Tanaka-Prof-ACC HP-show-even Kai-NOM do-PAST
 Kai even showed Prof. Tanaka to Lina.

One could imagine that the similarity of the OH construction to a light verb construction is accidental, or that the two constructions exist in parallel. The fact that the OH patterns are the same with or without fronting provides a strong *prima facie* reason to believe that this is one and the same construction, namely, a light verb construction, just as the morphology suggests.

Now, we have seen above that the (lower) VP may front along with the accusative DP, but stranding the Dative. We also know (from Harada) that in a ditransitive construction, it is the Dative, and not the Accusative, which triggers honorification. The example in (18) combines the test cases for the two observations.

- (18) [Lina-o o-mise]-sae Kai-ga Tanaka-sensee-ni si-ta
Lina-ACC HP-show-even Kai-NOM Tanaka-Prof.-DAT do-PAST
 Kai even showed Lina to Prof. Tanaka. (OH)
- (19) *[Lina-o mise]-sae Kai-ga Tanaka-sensee-ni o-si-ta
Lina-ACC show-even Kai-NOM Tanaka-Prof.-DAT HP-do-PAST
 Kai even showed Lina to Prof. Tanaka. (OH)

This construction is important. If Yatsushiro’s analysis of the paradigm in (16) is generally correct, then there can be no trace of the indirect object in the fronted VP in (18). The example in (18), like that in (16b), involves preposing of the lower VP of the structure in (3). As the example shows, the honorific prefix is fronted along with the verb stem. It follows that the honorific prefix is contained in the lowest VP, and crucially cannot be in—or higher than—the projection containing the dative. It follows that the honorific prefix does not occupy the head *v*.

In sum, the considerations discussed here strongly suggest that B&N have misidentified light verb *su~si-* as an agreement suffix. More specifically, if the analysis of VP-preposing is correct, then the statement in (4), repeated here, best reflects current understanding of the morphosyntax of OH.

- (4) The only overt morpheme reflecting honorification in Japanese is contained in the lowest VP projection, and specifically, does not c-command the indirect object.

This does not mean that the B&N analysis is necessarily incorrect, but it raises the bar for demonstrating the plausibility of an Agree-based analysis.¹⁵

¹⁵ As a final exercise in this section, one might consider a potential avenue of retreat for B&N, essentially, to ignore the morphology entirely and to posit an abstract functional head in the position of *v* in (3), responsible for abstract agreement that—by as yet unknown processes—triggers the honorific prefix and the light verb stem. B&N’s criticism of potential movement based accounts applies here, as in the following passage, which we have quoted verbatim, save for the substitution of “an abstract Agree relation” for the original text “Spec-Head Agreement”:

“... in the absence of a full-fledged theory of what counts as a possible functional projection, there is no way to exclude the possibility of” an abstract Agree relation, “as it will always be possible to

3. C-COMMAND PARADOXES

The previous section has presented arguments that B&N's departure from previous morphological analyses was far from innocuous, and, in the absence of justification, threatens to undermine their approach. At this point, we leave aside the issue of whether Agree is the correct relationship and move to a broader topic, specifically, whether c-command is the correct interpretation of Harada's observations regarding the IO > DO hierarchy. Previous accounts cast in terms of Spec,Head agreement, most explicitly Toribio (1990), have relied on this interpretation as well, to support the argument that honorification is syntactic (although note that the plausibility of a structural account of the distribution of SH is challenged in Namai 2000). The shape of B&N's argument is once again straightforward: in (3) the indirect object asymmetrically c-commands the direct object, hence there is an initial plausibility to reducing the prominence hierarchy determining OH to the independently justified structural hierarchy. As above, the interest in the proposal hinges not on the analysis, but rather on the validity of the independent evidence for the c-command relations. Once again, B&N presume the correctness of the assumption without comment. And once again, consideration of standard diagnostics challenges their key tacit assumption. Minimal pairs show that there is no systematic correlation between NPs in an IO that may trigger honorification, and those that c-command the direct object by standard diagnostics such as binding.

Let us start with examples that are consistent with B&N's analysis. Simple ditransitive verbs with a dative goal and an accusative theme arguably reflect the structure in (3). Evidence from reciprocal binding, for example, suggests that the indirect object c-commands the direct object.¹⁶

- (20) a. Hanako-ga atarashii gakusee-ni [otagai-no sensee]-o syookaisita
Hanako-NOM new students-DAT [ea.oth-'s teachers]-ACC introduced
 ≈Hanako introduced the new students to each other's teachers.
 (literally: 'Hanako introduced each other's teachers to the new students.')
- b. *Hanako-ga [otagai-no sensee]-ni atarashii gakusee-o syookaisita
Hanako-NOM [ea.oth-'s teachers]-DAT new students-ACC introduced
 ≈Hanako introduced the new students to each other's teachers.

claim the existence of an abstract XP to implement" an abstract Agree relation "mechanically (though, we feel, at the cost of explanatory adequacy)." (B&N, p.472)

In any event, the remaining sections of this paper challenge the assumptions underlying even the weakest abstract OH head interpretation of the B&N analysis.

¹⁶ Scrambling is known to alter the binding possibilities, as B&N recognize. This has led to one view that holds that Japanese ditransitives may be freely base generated either as in (3) or in the reverse hierarchical order (see especially Miyagawa 1997). Chain condition effects, among other considerations, provide an argument that the DAT > ACC order is basic, and the ACC > DAT order derived (see Yatsushiro 1999, 2003), or that there are two classes of verbs with distinct underlying orders (see Matsuoka 2003). As B&N point out, following Harada (1976), scrambling or word order variation do not affect the prominence relations that they are concerned with, and the IO > DO hierarchy holds regardless of word order. For the sake of argument, and following Yatsushiro (1999, 2003), we accept the evidence that (3) is basic and that other orders are derived by movement.

This accords neatly with Harada’s pair in (2) showing, with the same main verb, that the indirect object alone may condition honorification. At least two arguments show that this initial similarity does not generalize in the way that B&N claim. Evidence from non-dative honorification triggers and from possessors shows that the NP that triggers honorification in a ditransitive construction need not c-command the NP that is blocked from “agreeing”. Since B&N’s account relies exclusively on intervention by c-command, it is unfortunate that B&N did not provide any confirming diagnostics of the non-standard c-command relations that drive their account.

3.1 Non-dative “datives”

As B&N observe, not all “intervening” NPs (i.e., those that trigger OH and block OH from the direct object) bear dative case. They give examples showing the source NPs (marked by postposition *-kara* ‘from’) and comitative NPs (postposition *-to* ‘with’) also trigger intervention effects (see Niinuma 2003 for a wider range of cases). While they continue to refer to such expressions as “datives”, they note (p. 461) that this is an extension of the usual sense of the term. Example (21a) (their (15)) indicates that a *-kara* NP/PP may control OH on the verb, but as (21b) indicates, *-kara* NPs cannot serve as antecedents for reciprocals in the direct object.

- (21) a. Taro-ga Tanaka sensee-kara hon-o o-kari si-ta.
Taro-NOM Tanaka Professor-FROM book-ACC HP-borrow do-PAST
 Taro borrowed the book from Prof. Tanaka.
- b. *Taroo-ga [Yamamoto-sensee to Tanaka-sensee]-kara [otagai-no hon]-o kari-ta
Taro-NOM [Yamamoto Prof. CONJ Tanaka Prof.]-FROM ea.oth-GEN book-ACC borrow-PAST
 Intended: Taro borrowed each other’s books from Prof. Yamada and Prof. Tanaka.
 (Sentence also * with honorific predicate: *o-kari si-ta*)

Under B&N’s analysis, an indirect object may control OH, and will block such agreement from the direct object, because the indirect object asymmetrically c-commands the direct object (this makes it an intervener). Honorification possibilities should therefore track other c-command diagnostics such as reciprocal binding possibilities.¹⁷ Demonstrating that this is the case would be an interesting result, and would qualify as establishing the initial plausibility of a syntactic prominence-based account of OH. B&N do not provide relevant evidence; to the extent that we have been able to collect data, the set of “indirect object” triggers for OH is not coextensive with the set of NPs that c-command the direct object position. It appears then, that the assumption that c-command is the correct description of the OH configuration is not generally supported. It follows, of course, that an account stated crucially over c-command configurations (as B&N’s implementation of Agree, and also as in Toribio’s Spec-Head Agreement analysis) is not supported by the evidence.

¹⁷ We note that there is some variation among the speakers we consulted. One speaker accepted example (21b) and some similar examples including with possessors binding anaphors along the lines of (25a) in the next section were also judged “not so bad.” We have also encountered variation in testing B&N’s examples of honorification. What is important for our point is not the absolute judgments of course, but rather the failure of any systematic correlation between honorification possibilities and other c-command diagnostics.

3.2 Possessors

It may be possible to replicate the argument just made from possessors. In the original work on the topic of OH, Harada (1976, p.530) formulates the condition as in (22) (emphasis in the original).

- (22) Mark the predicate as [OH] when an SSS is **included** in (a) the indirect object, if the predicate is ditransitive, or (b) the direct object, if the predicate is transitive.

Harada's "inclusion" relation is intended to allow for cases in which it is the possessor of the indirect or direct object, and not that object itself, which controls OH. Niinuma (2003) gives examples such as (23), supporting and extending Harada's original possessor paradigm.¹⁸

- (23) Taroo-ga {sensee-no/#Mary-no} heya-ni nimotu-o o-moti si-ta
Taro-NOM professor-GEN / #Mary-GEN room-DAT baggage-ACC HP-bring do-PAST
 Taro brought the baggage to Professor's/Mary's room. (Niinuma 2003, pp. 86)

Although B&N faithfully report Harada's generalization with the "included in" wording (p. 455), they subsequently "revise Harada's generalization" (p.461-462) providing the following (their (25) p.462) as "an empirically correct [sic] condition on object honorification" (p.457).

- (24) Mark the predicate as [OH] when an SSS is (a) a(n) argumental dative, (b) the accusative object, if the predicate does not take a dative argument.

B&N neither acknowledge nor provide an account of the facts that motivated the "included in" aspect of Harada's original generalization. Niinuma (2003) notes this significant oversight in B&N, and as a solution (p.85, n.12) adopts the assumption from Kayne (1994) that all specifiers (though only possessors are relevant here) c-command out of the NP they are contained in. As with the cases considered in B&N, our attempts to confirm this view with standard c-command diagnostics such as reciprocal binding did not succeed, as shown in (25). Example (25a) shows that the possessor of the dative cannot bind an anaphor in the direct object, while (25b) serves as

¹⁸ The facts are more intricate than the discussion here might suggest. Niinuma argues that only [+human] NPs are relevant for honorification, in particular, he argues that a [-human] dative phrase (or one lacking a [-human] possessor), does not block a DO from controlling OH. A standing issue in the Japanese literature is whether all dative (-ni) phrases are NPs, or whether inanimate locations as in (23) are locative PPs (as mentioned briefly by B&N in their fn. 3; see Niinuma 2003), chapter III and Miyagawa & Tsujioka 2004 for different views).

Niinuma, following Harada, takes examples like (23) to show that the possessor of the -ni phrase may control OH. If this is a PP, this observation, in tandem with the failure of c-command in (25), reinforces the point in the previous section. A reviewer suggests an alternative interpretation of (23) under which the -ni phrase is a PP and it is an implicit (pro) possessor of the accusative object that controls OH. We believe that such an analysis cannot generalize to all cases of a possessor in the -ni phrase, since OH is possible in examples like (i) where the possessor of the direct object is explicit and distinct from the [+SSS] possessor (*oosama* 'king') of the location-denoting -ni phrase:

- (i) Taroo-ga [oosama-no heya-ni] [teki-no wasure-mono-o] o-moti-si-ta.
Taro-NOM king-GEN room-DAT enemy-GEN left-thing-ACC HP-bring-do-PAST
 Taro brought the thing that the enemy left behind to the king's room.

a control to show that the possessor of the dative with the same basic lexical array can govern OH.

- (25) a. * Kazuko-ga [Lina to Kai-no kaban]-ni [otagai-no namae]-o kaita.
Kazuko-NOM Lina and Kai-GEN bag-DAT ea.oth.-GEN name-ACC wrote
 Kazuko wrote each other's names on (lit: to) Lina and Kai's bags.
- b. Kazuko-ga [Y-sensee to T-sensee-no kaban]-ni namae-o o-kaki sita.
Kazuko-NOM Y-Prof. and T-Prof.-GEN bag-DAT name-ACC HP-write did.
 Kazuko wrote names on (lit “to”) Prof. Y and Prof. T.’s bags.

In sum, the core analytical device which B&N appeal to is c-command, specifically, the intervention effect caused by the IO c-commanding the DO as in (3). Since it is not merely datives that trigger OH, but also other PP-like expressions and, as Harada observed in 1976, elements included in IOs, it is clearly incumbent upon B&N to have provided independent evidence for the c-command configuration they crucially assume. We have not conducted an extensive survey, but the examples we have presented above show that, with standard c-command diagnostics, the key c-command relations are not supported: the set of “IO” phrases that may govern OH do not all c-command the DO.¹⁹

4. ON INTERVENTION AND BEING LIKE AGREEMENT

Notwithstanding the above comments, it is still possible that B&N’s third conclusion could constitute an argument for assimilating OH to agreement (though presumably with an analysis different than the one B&N offer). The argument would be the following: OH shows distributional properties that are characteristic of other, more canonical, agreement configurations, including defective intervention effects. Despite the questions about c-command and the locus of the agreeing head raised above, this observation might suggest pursuing a unified treatment of agreement and OH. Hence, it is worth asking here too whether the data provided by B&N support the characterization they offer. This question has two parts: do the OH facts display defective intervention effects, and do the OH facts support B&N’s concluding statement, namely that “the Japanese agreement facts [are] fully in line with agreement constraints cross-linguistically, and thus provides another piece of evidence that, abstractly, languages are near-invariant” (B&N p.470)? On closer inspection, the OH facts presented by B&N do not display defective intervention effects, and, to the extent the facts are arguably “like agreement” in other languages, this is at such a level of abstraction as to be of questionable explanatory value, given the extensive variety of attested agreement configurations. We look at the claim regarding defective intervention first.

¹⁹ Niinuma (2003) also relies on non-standard assumptions about c-command to account for Harada’s “included in” cases (see below), but also fails to provide confirming evidence for these structural relations. Cedric Boeckx (personal communication Feb., 2004) expresses skepticism about our use of reciprocal binding as a c-command test, but we expect that our point will be replicable with any familiar c-command diagnostic that can be applied to the examples.

4.1 Defective intervention²⁰

Intervention—or minimality—effects are well known, typically having a form like (26), that is, prohibiting some relation (indicated by theory-neutral superscripting) between X and Z when there is an intervening expression Y with some relevant property.

(26) * [... Xⁱ ... Y ... Zⁱ ...], where X c-commands Y and Y c-commands Z

The relevant cases here involve agreement, where X is the target/probe and Y and Z are potential controllers/goals.

One example of intervention effects which B&N discuss comes from Icelandic constructions with a “quirky” dative subject. Such quirky datives are known to pass a battery of subject tests in Icelandic, see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson (1985), despite having dative case.²¹ The pair in (27) shows that the matrix verb may—and in some cases must—agree with an embedded nominative NP in quirky subject constructions (27a),²² but may not do so when the quirky dative occurs in the embedded subject position, between the agreeing verb and the embedded nominative (27b).²³

(27) a. **Jóni** virðast / ?* virðist [*t* vera taldir *t* líka hestarnir.]
Jon.DAT *seemed.PL / seemed.SG* *be* *believed.PL* *like* *horses.NOM*]
 Jon seems to be believed to like horses.

²⁰ We have included this section since we feel that the characterization of the facts bears clarification, and since B&N explicitly use (only) defective intervention to support their claim that OH is like agreement: “The picture that emerges from our account of object honorification in Japanese as subject to defective intervention effects is that (honorific) agreement in Japanese is no different from (Φ-) agreement cross-linguistically” (B&N p.468). We must admit that we do not understand the importance of defective intervention to the B&N account. Omitting the entire discussion of defectiveness would, so far as we can tell, not alter the B&N analysis in any way. Their fn. 7 suggests that they, too, recognize that the notion ‘defectiveness’ may be dispensed with, despite its prominence in their argumentation.

²¹ The reader is reminded that the Icelandic construction patterns differently from the superficially similar translations in, for example, German. The V2 property of both languages yields similar word orders, but the dative NPs in German are fronted topics that systematically fail the subject tests that the Icelandic NPs pass, where testable (see Zaenen, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Freidin & Sprouse 1991).

²² Agreement with non-subject nominatives is sometimes described as “partial agreement”, that is, agreement for for number but not for person (e.g., Boeckx 2000). This is misleading; nominative object agreement is restricted to 3rd person objects, which show the same agreement morphology as third person subjects (i.e., the morphology is not partial). First and second person nominatives in embedded clauses are possible, but partial agreement is never fully grammatical: it is never (fully) acceptable to have agreement in number without agreement for person, e.g., a third person plural verb with a 1 or 2 person plural nominative. There is a way of cashing out the theoretical notion “partial agreement” as an account of the person restriction (proposed in Taraldsen 1995), but it is incorrect to state this as an observation.

²³ The facts are more complex—movement of the experiencer as in (27a) does not always license agreement. In particular, unambiguous cases of A’ movement of the experiencer (*wh*-movement, relativization and long topicalization) pattern with (27b) in blocking agreement with the lower nominative (see Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003). There is also speaker variation reported for examples like (27b) in which the dative is a matrix experiencer rather than an embedded quirky subject; see Nomura (in prep).

- b. Mér [?]* virðast / virðist [Jóni vera taldir t líka hestarnir.]
Me.DAT seemed.PL / seemed.SG Jon.DAT be believed.PL like horses.NOM
 I perceive Jon to be believed to like horses.

(Schütze 1997: 108-109)

This establishes that the dative experiencer counts as an intervener by the schema in (26) (X is the verb, Z is the nominative, superscripts represent agreement and Y is the dative experiencer). What is of interest in the Icelandic construction is not simply the fact that the dative is an intervener (in some, but not all, configurations, see note 23), but rather that it is a “defective” intervener. The term “defective” indicates that although the dative NP is an intervener, and although it bears features relevant to agreement (person, number), it cannot trigger agreement. This is a general property of quirky datives in Icelandic; although they are subjects, they do not trigger agreement on the verb. This is illustrated in (28).

- (28) Strákunum var / *voru ekki kalt.
*the.boys.(PL).DAT was / *were.PL not cold*
 The boys weren't cold.

(Sigurðsson 1993: 38)

This, then, is defective intervention. The dative NP intervenes between the verb and the nominative NP in (27b), blocking agreement, but despite having the appropriate features, the dative NP itself cannot trigger agreement, even in the post-verbal position.²⁴ This last clause is the content of the term “defective”—a phrase is a defective intervener if, in addition to being an intervener (i.e., triggering a minimality effect), the phrase has the feature relevant to agreement (in this instance number) yet fails to agree. Intervention is defective, since the configuration for agreement takes both dative and nominative NPs into account in determining minimality relations, but in the end, only nominative NPs may actually control morphological agreement.

As the quote at the beginning of the paper indicates, one of B&N's primary conclusions is that the Japanese cases pattern with Icelandic—the dative is a defective intervener. But inspection of the relevant cases suggests that this is not obviously correct. Treating [\pm SSS] as the feature that undergoes agreement, the dative in Japanese is a non-defective intervener—the dative intervenes in all cases, and does control honorification on the verb. The verb is honorific when the dative is [+SSS] and non-honorific when the dative is not.

So Japanese honorification is in fact unlike agreement in Icelandic (where the dative can never agree): OH does not display defective intervention effects, and (what B&N take to be) agreement is not tied to case—the dative (or more accurately indirect object) agrees whenever it intervenes.²⁵

²⁴ This is the standard characterization in the relevant literature. It is not clear that it is entirely accurate. Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir (2003, pp. 1000 ff) claim that plural agreement on the matrix verb improves in examples like (27b) when the dative experiencer is also plural. They treat this as agreement with the plural feature on the nominative, made possible when the dative and nominative DPs match in features. Note also that such intervention effects appear to be limited to cross-clausal agreement, i.e., with a nominative DP in an embedded clause. In single clauses, the verb agrees with a nominative across a dative subject in the configuration in (26) (see Bobaljik 2004)—yet another way in which the Japanese cases differ from the relevant Icelandic examples.

²⁵ Alternatively, as noted by a reviewer, B&N might consider [SSS] to be a privative feature—on this view, a dative

4.2 Person Case Constraint Effects

Following Boeckx (2000), B&N consider cooccurrence restrictions on Romance clitic pairs to constitute another instance of defective intervention which they claim Japanese resembles. The general constraints are called Person-Case Constraint (PCC) effects, of which the French **me-lui* constraint is illustrative. This constraint blocks the presence of a first or second person accusative clitic in a cluster where there is also a dative clitic (of any person). After presenting one illustrative pair of French examples, they conclude “[w]e can now liken the Japanese facts to those found in Romance and Icelandic.”²⁶

At the level of description, the conclusion escapes us. The similarity between Icelandic dative-nominative constructions and Romance **me-lui* configurations is that the presence of a dative restricts the possible choices for a lower element; in Icelandic, a dative subject restricts a clausemate object to third person, regardless of agreement, and in Romance, a dative clitic restricts a clausemate accusative clitic to third person. For Japanese, B&N present no evidence that the direct object is in any way restricted in the presence of a dative (liberally construed). In fact, they present evidence to the contrary. Examples like (2a) are fine without the honorific morphology, showing that the direct object may freely be [+SSS] in the context of a + or - SSS indirect object, the only restriction is that the DO cannot govern OH morphology.²⁷ For Japanese to have been like the PCC cases, it would have to abide by a restriction against [+SSS] (or [+human]) direct objects in the presence of an indirect object. It does not. Narrowly, then, the conditions on Japanese OH that B&N present are unlike the conditions on agreement in other languages that they present.

In fact, though not universal, PCC-like effects (that is, restrictions on the DO in the presence of an IO) are well attested in a variety of languages showing morphological agreement with the indirect object. A list of languages disallowing 1st or 2nd person themes in the context of a goal phrase is given in Haspelmath (2002) and includes languages from Indo-European, Semitic, Kartvelian, Tibeto-Burman, Malayo-Polynesian, Pama-Nyungan and various Amerindian families/groups. Other languages place other restrictions on the DO in ditransitive constructions, generally requiring that it be less-marked in some sense than the IO; in Mohawk, Baker (1996, p.196) proposes that the DO is restricted to inanimate (neuter) NPs since it is exactly this class of nouns that cannot trigger (overt) agreement. If such effects are the hallmark manifestation of defective intervention, or even if they are different manifestations of a general constraint on IO-agreement configurations (but see below) then it is striking that Japanese shows no demonstrable analog of such restrictions. In other words, not only does Japanese OH not look

lacking this feature may be characterized as a defective intervener as it lacks the relevant property for triggering honorification, yet blocks an ostensibly lower NP from doing so. Even on such a view, however, the Japanese pattern is unlike the defective intervention patterns which B&N refer to, as discussed in the next section.

²⁶ Boeckx (2003) rejects both the defective intervention account of the Icelandic facts and the earlier suggestion that the Icelandic and Romance facts should be part of a single generalization. It is unclear what the claim just quoted would mean under Boeckx’s more recent viewpoint.

²⁷ This holds equally under the refinement suggested in Niinuma (2003), under which only [+human] datives intervene (whether [+SSS] or not). There is no indication that the direct object is barred from being [+human] when there is a [+human] indirect object. In fact, many of B&N and Niinuma’s canonical examples use the predicate *syookai suru* ‘introduce’ which takes two [+human] arguments .

like agreement (or cliticization) in the languages B&N have chosen to compare it to, it also fails to show any of the common restrictions on IO-DO combinations that surface in agreement (and clitic) systems cross-linguistically.

4.3 On “being like agreement”

There is one way in which the Japanese pattern that B&N describe is reminiscent of some IO-DO agreement configurations in other languages, and this is in the priority given to the IO in the competition for a single agreement “slot”. Thus, the pattern in (29) does occur in a number of languages.

(29) Morphological non-subject agreement is controlled by:

- a. The indirect object if there is one
- b. The direct object otherwise.

This observation underlies B&N’s assertion that the IO>DO prominence in determining object honorification is “no different from (Φ -) agreement cross-linguistically.” Their presentation suggests a uniformity in agreement patterns, to which they will assimilate Japanese OH. While the pattern (29) is attested, this pattern is by no means universal, as noted by Moravcsik (1978).

28

“Languages with both dative and [direct] object agreement, in fact, may belong to almost any of the logically conceivable types from the point of view of the cooccurrence of dative and object agreement within sentences in that there are some, such as Swahili, where if the sentence does include a dative, the verb must agree with it rather than with the direct object; there are also others, such as Lebanese, where the verb in such sentences may agree, depending on some conditions, with either the object or with the dative but not with both at the same time; and also again others such as Modern Greek where the verb in such sentences may agree with both. The only type not represented is that of a language where dative agreement is restricted to those sentences that do not include a direct object...” (Moravcsik 1978, p. 366)

Note also that when the pattern in (29) does arise, it is often with concomitant restrictions on the person, number or other properties of the DO, restrictions which are not attested in Japanese (see section 4.2, above).²⁹ Finally, it should be noted that even among languages where IO and DO

²⁸ It has been occasionally claimed that object agreement is “rare”. In Gilligan's (1987) sample of 100 languages, there is a fairly even distribution of languages among the four types permitted by the implicational universal stated in Moravcsik (1978): Intransitive Subject > Transitive Subject, Direct Object > Indirect Object (if a language has agreement with one argument type on the list, it has agreement with all types to the left). Of Gilligan’s languages, 25 permit agreement with S, IO, and DO; 31 with S and DO only; 20 (the smallest single group) have only subject-agreement; and 23 have no agreement whatsoever.

²⁹ Palauan is one clear case in which the pattern in (29) arises without restrictions on the object (see Georgopoulos 1991, and Woolford 1995:220 for explicit comment on the lack of a restriction). Some caution is in order with Palauan and more generally regarding the criteria for establishing IO versus DO status. In Palauan, there is no formal marking (such as case) distinguishing IO from DO. Thus it is possible, in principle, to analyze Palauan as having obligatory dative shift or 3 → 2 advancement. The thematic goal/recipient, which obligatorily agrees, might in fact be a surface “2”. Such an analysis has been presented in detail for the Algonquian language Nisshnaabemwin/Ojibwa (see Valentine 2001 and especially Rhodes 1990), where a variety of tests pick out the agreeing (but unmarked) recipients as primary objects forming a natural class in more than just agreement with the direct objects (for example, only primary objects may passivize). Japanese formally distinguishes DO from IO via

compete to control a single agreement morpheme, the pattern in (29) is but one of a number attested patterns. In some languages, the choice is resolved by topicality (not syntactic structure), as in Itelmen (see Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2002), or by a person or other hierarchy, (see Comrie 2003 for a survey). In sum, the force of the argument from similarity to attested agreement systems—an important piece of the general argument for B&N’s conclusion of “near invarian[ce]”—is in our view tempered by the relatively wide range of variation attested in (morphological) agreement systems. The presentation that B&N offer suggests that the IO>DO priority is a property of agreement systems cross-linguistically; at best, the state of affairs is that this priority would liken Japanese OH to one among a number of attested patterns in agreement, a somewhat weaker conclusion. Until further research uncovers properties which co-vary systematically with different agreement patterns, asserting that the Japanese OH facts provide support for the “near-invariance” of agreement systems cross-linguistically is true only at such a vague level as to be of questionable import.

5. CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages we have offered a detailed critique of B&N’s analysis of OH in Japanese and of their conclusion that OH is fundamentally an agreement relation, characterized via Chomsky’s Agree relationship. We have argued that this conclusion is based on questionable empirical and theoretical premises, in part exacerbated by undefended (and misleading) departures from the existing literature. In reviewing their arguments, we found that existing evidence and logical extensions of known paradigms lead, if anything, to a disconfirmation of the predictions of the Agree approach. While the intuitive appeal of reductionism may raise the question of whether OH can be assimilated to other phenomena such as agreement, intuitive appeal should not and cannot substitute for empirical and/or theoretical argument.

REFERENCES

- Baker, Mark. 1996. *The Polysynthesis Parameter*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David. 1995. *Morphosyntax: the syntax of verbal inflection*, Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Mass.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David. 2004. Towards a phi-free syntax. Paper presented at *Phi Workshop*, McGill University, Montreal, June.
- Bobaljik, Jonathan David & Susi Wurmbrand. 2002. Notes on Agreement in Itelmen. *Linguistic Discovery* 1.1, <http://linguistic-discovery.dartmouth.edu/WebObjects/Linguistics>.
- Boeckx, Cedric. 2000. Quirky agreement, *Studia Linguistica* 54.3, 354-380.
- Boeckx, Cedric. 2003. Intricacies of Icelandic agreement. Unpublished manuscript, Harvard and University of Maryland.
- Boeckx, Cedric & Fumikazu Niinuma. 2004. Conditions on agreement in Japanese, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 22.3, 453-480.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist Inquiries: The Framework, in Roger Martin, David Michaels & Juan Uriagereka (eds.), *Step by step. Essays on Minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 89-155.

case-marking, rendering a 3→2 advancement analysis less plausible.

- Comrie, Bernard. 2003. When agreement gets trigger-happy, *Transactions of the Philological Society* **101.2**, 313-337.
- Freidin, Robert & Rex A. Sprouse. 1991. Lexical case phenomena, in Robert Freidin (ed.), *Principles and parameters in comparative grammar*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 392-416.
- Georgopoulos, Carol. 1991. On A- and A'-agreement, *Lingua* **85**, 135-169.
- Gilligan, Gary. 1987. *A cross-linguistic approach to the pro-drop parameter*, Ph. D. Dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.
- Grimshaw, Jane & Arnim Mester. 1988. Light verbs and theta-marking, *Linguistic Inquiry* **19.2**, 205-232.
- Harada, S.I. 1973. Counter Equi NP deletion, *Annual Bulletin, Research Institute of Logopedics and Phoniatics, University of Tokyo* **7**, 113-147.
- Harada, S.I. 1976. Honorifics, in Masayoshi Shibatani (ed.), *Japanese Generative Grammar*, Academic Press, New York, pp. 499-561.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2002. *Explaining the ditransitive person-role constraint: a usage-based approach*.
- Holmberg, Anders & Thorbjörg Hróarsdóttir. 2003. Agreement and movement in Icelandic raising constructions, *Lingua* **113**, 997-1019.
- Kayne, Richard. 1994. *The Antisymmetry of Syntax*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Keach, Camilla N. 1995. Subject and object markers as agreement and pronoun incorporation in Swahili, in Akinbuyi Akinlabi (ed.), *Theoretical approaches to African linguistics*, Africa World Press, Trenton, N.J., pp. 109-116.
- Matsuoka, Mikinari. 2003. Two types of ditransitive constructions in Japanese, *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* **12.2**, 171-203.
- Miyagawa, Shigeru. 1997. Against Optional Scrambling, *Linguistic Inquiry* **28.1**, 1-25.
- Miyagawa, Shigeru & Takae Tsujioka. 2004. Argument structure and ditransitive verbs in Japanese, *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* **13**, 1-38.
- Moravcsik, Edith A. 1978. Agreement, in Joseph H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of Human Language: IV: Syntax*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, pp. 331-374.
- Müller, Gereon. 1997. *Incomplete Category Fronting: a derivational approach to remnant movement in German*, Kluwer, Dordrecht.
- Namai, Kenichi. 2000. Subject honorification in Japanese, *Linguistic Inquiry* **31.1**, 170-176.
- Niinuma, Fumikazu. 2003. *The syntax of honorification*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Connecticut, Storrs.
- Nomura, Masashi. in prep. *Nominative case and agree(ment)*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Connecticut, Storrs.
- Rhodes, Richard A. 1990. Ojibwa secondary objects, in Katarzyna Dziwirek, Patrick Farrell & Errapel Mejías-Bikandi (eds.), *Grammatical Relations: a cross-theoretical perspective*, CSLI, Stanford, CA, pp. 401-414.
- Saito, Mamoru & Hiroto Hoshi. 2000. The Japanese light verb construction and the minimalist program, in Roger Martin, Juan Uriagereka & David Michaels (eds.), *Step by step: essays on minimalist syntax in honor of Howard Lasnik*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 261-295.
- Schütze, Carson. 1997. *Infl in child and adult language: agreement, case and licensing*, Ph.D. Dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, MA.

Honorification-Agreement Problems

- Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1993. Agreement as head visible feature government, *Studia Linguistica* **47**, 32-56.
- Suzuki, Tatsuya. 1989. A syntactic analysis of an honorific construction *o-ni naru* under the DP hypothesis: Towards a unified theory of honorification, in Jane Fee & Kahryn Hunt (eds.), *Proceedings of the West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*, CLSI, Stanford, pp. 373-383.
- Taraldsen, Knut Tarald. 1995. On agreement and nominative objects in Icelandic, in Hubert Haider, Susan Olson & Sten Vikner (eds.), *Studies in comparative Germanic syntax*, Kluwer, Dordrecht, pp. 307-327.
- Toribio, Almeida Jacqueline. 1990. Specifier-head agreement in Japanese, in Aaron L. Halpern (ed.), *Proceedings of the 9th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL 9)*, Stanford Linguistics Association, Stanford, CA, pp. 535-548.
- Valentine, Randy. 2001. *Nishnaabemwin reference grammar*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Woolford, Ellen. 1995. Object agreement in Palauan: specificity, humanness, economy, and optimality, in Jill Beckman, Laura Walsh Dickey & Suzanne Urbanczyk (eds.), *Optimality Theory, U Mass Occasional Papers in Linguistics*, Amherst, **18**, pp. 655-700.
- Yatsushiro, Kazuko. 1999. *Case licensing and VP structure*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Connecticut, Storrs.
- Yatsushiro, Kazuko. 2003. VP internal scrambling, *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* **12.2**, 141-170.
- Zaenen, Annie, Joan Maling & Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1985. Case and grammatical functions: The Icelandic passive, *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* **3**, 441-483.

Received 11 February 2004

Revised 23 December 2004

Jonathan Bobaljik
Department of Linguistics
University of Connecticut
337 Mansfield Road, U-1145
Storrs CT, 06269-1145
USA
<jonathan.bobaljik@uconn.edu>

Kazuko Yatsushiro
Zentrum für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft
Jägerstr. 10-11
10117 Berlin
Germany
<kazuko@mac.com>