On the Absence of Minimality Effect with Japanese Cleft*

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1 Introduction

The aim of this work is to shed a new light on the discussion regarding how cleft in Japanese – one of the typical focus-related A'-movement forming an operator-variable relation (see Hoji 1987, 1990, Kuwabara 2000, Hiraiwa and Ishihara 2002, 2012, Takano 2002, Kizu 2005, Takeda 2018; a.o.) – is derived based on the novel evidence that it exhibits the absence of minimality effect. I show that this effect can be captured by the overt focus movement analysis

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(Hiraiwa and Ishihara 2002, 2012) but not by the null Op(erator)-movement analysis (Hoji 1987, 1990, Kuwabara 2000, Kizu 2005, a.o.). The organization of this paper is as follows. First, in Section 2, I will introduce basic facts of Japanese clefts. Then, in Section 3, I will introduce the novel example that shows Japanese cleft is minimality-free. In Section 4, I will provide an analysis of minimality-free nature of Japanese cleft. Section 5 is a conclusion.

2 Basic Facts

As can be seen in the following, cleft in Japanese is in principle unbounded; e.g., the argument *kono biru-kara* 'from this building' can not only be clefted in the clause it is base-generated in as in (1), but also in higher clauses as in (2)–(3).[1, 2]

(1) Local cleft:
[$_{CP2}$ [[Ken-ga Yui-ni [$_{CP1}$ [[Mari-ga t_i detekita]-no]-wa]
K.-NOM Y.-DAT M.-NOM came.out-C-TOP
[kono biru-kara]$_i$ da]-to] tsutaeta].
this building-from COP-C told
'[$_{CP2}$ Ken told Yui [$_{CP1}$ that it was [from this building]$_i$
[that Mari came out t_i]]].'

(2) Long-distance cleft:
[$_{CP2}$ [[[Ken-ga Yui-ni [$_{CP1}$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to]
K.-NOM Y.-DAT M.-NOM came.out-C
tsutaeta]-no]-wa] [kono biru-kara]$_i$ da].
told-C-TOP this building-from COP
'[$_{CP2}$ It was [from this building]$_i$ [that Ken told Yui
[that Mari came out t_i]]].'

(3) Super long-distance cleft:
[$_{CP3}$ [[[Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ [Ken-ga Yui-ni [$_{CP1}$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]
G.-NOM K.-NOM Y.-DAT M.-NOM came.out
-to] tsutaeta]-to] omotta]-no]-wa] [kono biru-kara]$_i$ da].
-C told-C thought-C-TOP this building-from COP
'[$_{CP3}$ It was [from this building]$_i$ [that Gen thought
[$_{CP2}$ that Ken told Yui [$_{CP1}$ that Mari came out t_i]]]].'

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[1] All the Japanese examples are transcribed in the *Hepburn (Hebon)* system Romanization. The translations in single quotes are not always meant to be the correct English translations and are sometimes intended to give the (rough) structure and/or meaning of the examples.

[2] Here, I put aside the potential processing difficulty associated with super long-distance cleft which involves a sentence with three clauses that may affect the acceptability to begin with.

In addition, more than two clauses can host cleft; e.g., *kono biru-kara* base-generated in the embedded clause and *Yui-ni* 'Yui-DAT' base-generated in the matrix clause can undergo local cleft, respectively.

(4) Two local clefts in different clauses:
[$_{CP2}$ [[[Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ [[[[Mari-ga t_i detekita]-no]-wa]
K.-NOM M.-NOM came.out-C-TOP
[kono biru-kara]$_i$ da]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa] [Yui-ni]$_j$ da].
this building-from COP-C told-C-TOP Y.-DAT COP
'[$_{CP2}$ It was [Yui]$_j$ [that Ken told t_j [$_{CP1}$ that it was
[from this building]$_i$ [that Mari came out t_i]]]].'

3 New Fact: Japanese Cleft is Minimality-free

What is of interest is that super long-distance cleft of *kono biru-kara* moving from CP1 to CP3 ((3)) can take place, even if there is a local cleft of *Yui-ni* taking place in CP2 ((4)), as shown in (5).

(5) Super long-distance cleft crossing over the local cleft:
[$_{CP3}$ [Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ [[[[Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to]
G.-NOM K.-NOM M.-NOM came.out-C
tsutaeta]-no]-wa] [Yui-ni]$_j$ da]-to] omotta]-no]-wa]
told-C-TOP Y.-DAT COP-C thought-C-TOP
[kono biru-kara]$_i$ da].
this building-from COP
'[$_{CP3}$ It was [from this building]$_i$ [$_{CP}$ that Gen thought [$_{CP2}$ that it
was [Yui]$_j$ [$_{CP1}$ that Ken told t_j [$_{CP}$ that Mari came out t_i]]]].'

Given that Japanese cleft is one of the typical A'-movement of focused phrase to FocP in the clause peripheral CP cartography position which forms an operator-variable relation, the super long-distance cleft moving from CP1 to CP3 in (5) can be taken as minimality-free, assuming that there is FocP in CP2 that license cleft which is filled by local cleft.

4 Analysis

I argue that the absence of minimality effect can be accounted for along the line of the overt focus movement analysis (Hiraiwa and Ishihara 2002, 2012), while the null Op-movement analysis (Hoji 1987, 1990, Kuwabara 2000, Kizu 2005, a.o.) erroneously predicts to exhibit the minimality effect. I first show how the latter analysis fails to account for the minimality effect (Section 4.1), and then I show the former analysis accounts for it (Section 4.2).

4.1 The Null Op-Movement Analysis

First, let us look at the derivation of Japanese cleft in (1)–(4) under the null Op-movement analysis. For the sake of exposition, I assume the landing site of null Op-movement to be FocP headed by *-da* in the cartographic CP system.[3] Under this analysis, cleft is (i) derived by null Op-movement to FocP (headed by *-da*) in the presuppositional clause and (ii) the moved null Op is co-indexed with the clefted element which is base-generated in the cleft-pivot before *-da*. Thus, local cleft in (1) proceeds as follows (ignoring the derivation at CP2); null Op undergoes clause-internal movement into FocP in CP1 (FocP1).

(6) Derivation of local cleft under the null Op-movement:
$[_{CP2}\ [_{CP1}\ [_{FocP1}\ Op_i\ [\ldots\ t_i\ \ldots]$-no-wa $[\underline{\text{kono biru-kara}}]_i$-da]-to] …]

Long-distance cleft in (2) proceeds as follows; null Op undergoes successive-cyclic movement going through the edge of CP1 that does not have FocP (headed by *-da*) and hence a non-criterial position for null Op involving cleft, and then to FocP in CP2 (FocP2).

(7) Derivation of long-distance cleft under the null Op-movement:
$[_{CP2}\ [_{FocP2}\ Op_i\ [\ldots\ [_{CP1}\ t_i\ [\ldots\ t_i\ \ldots]$-to] …]]-no-wa
$[\underline{\text{kono biru-kara}}]_i$-da]

Super long-distance cleft in (3) proceeds as follows, essentially in the same way as long-distance one; null Op undergoes successive-cyclic movement going through the edge of CP1 and CP2 that do not have FocP (headed by *-da*) and hence a non-criterial position for null Op involving cleft, and then to FocP in CP3 (FocP3).

(8) Derivation of super long-distance cleft under the null Op-movement:
$[_{CP3}\ [_{FocP3}\ Op_i\ [\ldots\ [_{CP2}\ t_i\ [\ldots\ [_{CP1}\ t_i\ [\ldots\ t_i\ \ldots]$-to] …]-to] …]]-no-wa
$[\underline{\text{kono biru-kara}}]_i$-da]

Two local clefts in different clauses in (4) proceed as follows, essentially in the same way as local cleft; null Op corresponding to *kono biru-kara* and *Yui-ni* undergoes clause-internal movement into FocP1 and FocP2, respectively.

[3] Here, I put aside the specific differences among the null Op-movement analyses. As far as I can see, the analyses utilizing null Op-movement face with the problem posed by (5).

(9) Derivation of two local clefts in different clauses under the null Op-movement:
   a. Local cleft via null Op-movement in CP1:
      [$_{CP1}$ [$_{FocP1}$ Op_i [… t_i …]-no-wa [<u>kono biru-kara</u>]$_i$-da]-to]
   b. Local cleft via null Op-movement in CP2:
      [$_{CP2}$ [$_{FocP2}$ Op_j [… t_j [$_{CP1}$ [$_{FocP1}$ Op_i [… t_i …]-no-wa [<u>kono biru-kara</u>]$_i$ -da]-to] …]]-no-wa [<u>Yui-ni</u>]$_j$-da]

Now, consider how the minimality-free cleft in (5) is derived under the null Op-movement analysis. The gist is that, under this analysis, super long-distance cleft of *kono biru-kara* from CP1 to FocP in CP3 must go through FocP in CP2, which inevitably causes a problem. Consider the derivation of (5) up to the point FocP in CP2 is filled by Op_j (which is (to be) co-indexed with *Yui-ni*).

(10) Derivation of minimality-free super long-distance cleft in (5) under the null Op-movement analysis:
   a. Building CP1, with a null Op (corresponding *kono biru-kara*) moving to the edge of CP1:
      [$_{CP1}$ Op_i [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to]
   b. Building CP2, with a null Op (corresponding *Yui-ni*):
      [$_{CP2}$ [$_{FocP2}$ [Ken-ga Op_j[$_{CP1}$ Op_i [M.-ga t_i …]-to] …]]-no-wa …]
   c. Null Op (corresponding *Yui-ni*) movement to FocP2:
      [$_{CP2}$ [$_{FocP2}$ Op_j [K.-ga t_j[$_{CP1}$ Op_i [M.-ga t_i …]-to] …]]-no-wa …]

The problem begins to happen when Op_i (which is (to be) co-indexed with *kono biru-kara*) undergoes movement out of CP1 and movement into CP2. As an Op, Op_i must move into FocP2 (headed by *-da*). Suppose Op_i is moved into the higher Spec of FocP2 after Op_j moved into the lower Spec of FocP2. Then it is an instance of typical minimality violation, just like *What did who buy?* in English. Alternatively, suppose Op_i is moved into the lower Spec of FocP2. At this point, this may be allowed on a par with '*What who bought?*'-type multiple Wh-question in multiple Wh-movement languages (Bošković 2002), avoiding minimality violation. However, note that the final landing site of Op_i is FocP in CP3 (FocP3). This means that Op_i undergoes FocP2 to FocP3. Then it is an instance of typical operator freezing effect (see Rizzi 2006, Bošković 2008, a.o.). Note also that this problem carries over when Op_i is moved into the higher Spec of FocP2.

In a nutshell, the null Op-movement analysis of Japanese cleft wrongly predicts super long-distance cleft in (5) to be ungrammatical as it invovles minimality violation and/or operator freezing effect.

4.2 The Overt Focus Movement Analysis

Second, let us look at the derivation of Japanese cleft in (1)–(4) under the overt focus movement analysis. Under this analysis, cleft is (i) derived from in-situ focus construction, (ii) overt focus movement of clefted element to FocP,[4] and (iii) remnant FinP topicalization to TopP (see Hiraiwa and Ishihara 2012: 152–154). Thus, local cleft in (1) proceeds as follows (ignoring the derivation at CP2); *kono biru-kara* undergoes clause-internal movement into FocP in CP1 (FocP1).

(11) Derivation of local cleft under the overt focus movement:
   a. Building CP1, the in-situ focus construction:
   $[_{CP1}\ [_{TopP}\ [_{FocP1}\ [_{FinP}$ [Mari-ga [kono biru-kara]$_i$ detekita]-no]-da]]]
   b. Overt focus movement of clefted element to FocP1:
   $[_{CP1}\ [_{TopP}\ [_{FocP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ $[_{FinP}$ [M.-ga t_i detekita]-no]-da]]]
   c. Remnant FinP topicalization to TopP:
   $[_{CP1}\ [_{TopP}\ [_{FinP}$ [M.-ga t_i detekita]-no]-wa $[_{FocP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]]

Long-distance cleft in (2), skipping the derivation of in-situ focus construction, proceeds as follows; *kono biru-kara* undergoes successive-cyclic movement going through the edge of CP1 (via long-distance scrambling) that does not have FocP (headed by *-da*) and hence a non-criterial position for cleft, and then to FocP in CP2 (FocP2).

(12) Derivation of long-distance cleft under the overt focus movement:
   a. Long-distance overt focus movement of clefted element to FocP2:
   $[_{CP2}\ [_{TopP}\ [_{FocP2}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ $[_{FinP}$ [Ken-ga Yui-ni
   $[_{CP1}\ t_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-da]]]
   b. Remnant FinP topicalization at CP2 to TopP:
   $[_{CP2}\ [_{TopP}\ [_{FinP}$ [Ken-ga Yui-ni $[_{CP1}\ t_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa $[_{FocP2}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]]

Super long-distance cleft in (3) proceeds as follows, essentially in the same way as long-distance one; *kono biru-kara* undergoes successive-cyclic movement going through the edge of CP1 and CP2 (via successive-cyclic long-distance scrambling) that do not have FocP (headed by *-da*) and hence a non-criterial position for cleft, and then to FocP in CP3 (FocP3).

[4] To be precise, the very first step of movement should be scrambling to TP and then to FinP, given that at this point, it remains to be seen whether derivation involves cleft to FocP without looking ahead.

(13) Derivation of super long-distance cleft under the overt focus movement:
   a. Super long-distance overt focus movement of clefted element to FocP:
   [$_{CP3}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP3}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [$_{FinP}$ [Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ t_i [Ken-ga Yui-ni [$_{CP1}$ t_i [M.-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-to] omotta]-no]-da]]]
   b. Remnant FinP topicalization at CP3 to TopP:
   [$_{CP3}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ t_j [Ken-ga Yui-ni [$_{CP1}$ t_j [M.-ga t_j detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-to] omotta]-no]-wa
   [$_{FocP3}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]]

Two local clefts in different clauses in (4) proceed as follows, essentially in the same way as local cleft; *kono biru-kara* and *Yui-ni* undergoes clause-internal movement into FocP1 and FocP2, respectively.

(14) Derivation of two local clefts in different clauses under the overt focus movement:
   a. Local cleft via overt focus movement of clefted element to FocP1:
   [$_{CP1}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [$_{FinP}$ [M.-ga t_i …]-no]-da]]-to]
   b. Remnant FinP topicalization within CP1:
   [$_{CP1}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [M.-ga t_i …]-no]-wa [$_{FocP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]-to]
   c. Local cleft via overt focus movement of clefted element to FocP2:
   [$_{CP2}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ [$_{FinP}$ [K.-ga [$_{CP1}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [M.-ga t_i …]-no] -wa [$_{FocP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-da]]]
   d. Remnant FinP topicalization within CP2:
   [$_{CP2}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [K.-ga [$_{CP1}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [M.-ga t_j …]-no]-wa [$_{FocP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa
   [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ t_{FinP}-da]]]

Now, consider how the minimality-free cleft in (5) is derived under the overt focus movement analysis. The gist is that, under this analysis, super long-distance cleft of *kono biru-kara* from CP1 to FocP in CP3 does not go through FocP in CP2. Thus, the relevant cleft is in fact "minimality-free in disguise," as it does not involve minimality (nor operator freezing effect) to begin with.

(15) Derivation of minimality-free super long-distance cleft in (5) under the overt focus movement:
   a. Building CP1, with *kono biru-kara* scrambled:
   [$_{CP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to]

b. Building CP2, the in-situ focus construction:
[$_{CP2}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP2}$ [$_{FinP}$ [Ken-ga [Yui-ni]$_j$ [$_{CP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-da]]-to]

c. Overt focus movement of *Yui-ni* to FocP2 in CP2:
[$_{CP2}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ [$_{FinP}$ [Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-da]]-to]

d. Remnant FinP topicalization at CP2 to TopP in CP2:
[$_{CP2}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP2}$ [Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ t $_{FinP}$-da]]-to]

e. Building CP3, the in-situ focus construction:
[$_{CP3}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP3}$ [$_{FinP}$ [Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ t $_{FinP}$-da]]-to] omotta]-no]-da]]]

f. Overt focus movement of *kono biru-kara* to FocP3 in CP3, after long-distance scrambling of *kono biru-kara* to Spec of CP2:
[$_{CP3}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FocP3}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ [$_{FinP}$ [Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ t_i [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP2}$ [Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ t_i [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ t $_{FinP}$-da]]-to] omotta]-no]-da]]]

g. Remnant FinP topicalization at CP3 to TopP in CP3:
[$_{CP3}$ [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [Gen-ga [$_{CP2}$ t_i [$_{TopP}$ [$_{FinP}$ [Ken-ga t_j [$_{CP1}$ t_i [Mari-ga t_i detekita]-to] tsutaeta]-no]-wa [$_{FocP2}$ [Yui-ni]$_j$ t $_{FinP}$-da]]-to] omotta]-no]-wa [$_{FocP3}$ [kono biru-kara]$_i$ t_{FinP}-da]]]

For the present discussion, the crucial tenet of the overt focus movement analysis lies not in the overt focus movement, but the remnant FinP topicalization. After (15c), in (15d), remnant FinP topicalization at CP2 to TopP in CP2 takes place. Note here that this FinP contains to-be-clefted *kono biru-kara*. Furthermore, at this point, *kono biru-kara* is outside of the c-command domain of clefted *Yui-ni*. And at the time when *kono biru-kara* undergoes overt focus movement in (15f), which is preceded by long-distance scrambling to the Spec of CP2, it does not cross over *Yui-ni*. In fact, super long-distance cleft of *kono biru-kara* moves from CP1 to FocP in CP3 without moving into FocP in CP2. Thus, it does not trigger minimality effect nor operator freezing effect.

In a nutshell, the overt focus movement of clefted element under the overt focus movement analysis of Japanese cleft correctly accounts for the so-called minimality-free super long-distance cleft in (5) to be grammatical as it does not invovle minimality violation and operator freezing effect, owing to the remnant FinP topicalization.

5 Conclusion

To conclude, the so-called absence of minimality effect with Japanese cleft supports the overt focus movement analysis over the null Op-movement analysis. Crucially, unlike the null Op-movement analysis, under the overt focus movement analysis, the super long-distance cleft from CP1 to CP3 does not cross over the local cleft in CP2 due to the remnant FinP topicalization. In other words, the so-called minimality effect with Japanese cleft is absent because the derivation does not involve minimality and it is "minimality-free in disguise."

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