On the importance of being silent or pronounced; English –able and Japanese –rare potentials compared
Tomoko Ishizuka (Tama Univ.) & Hilda Koopman (UCLA)

English 'modal' and Japanese 'passive' Potential Constructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English: 'weak' or 'bound'-able potential</th>
<th>Japanese: 'bound'-rare (=passive) potential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The dress is wearable.</td>
<td>a) Sono doresu-ga ki-rare-ru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The dress is wearable by Mary.</td>
<td>b) Mary-ni sono doresu-ga ki-rare-ru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Mary is wearable the dress.</td>
<td>c) Mary-ga sono doresu-o ki-rare-ru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) John is sleepable.</td>
<td>d) John-ga ne-rare-ru.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Japanese potentials show wider distribution, i.e. active potentials (c) and (d).

Questions

- Why can a passive morpheme –rare yield an ‘active’ (nom-acc) syntax?
- Where does the modality interpretation in –rare potentials come from?
- Why do –able potentials have ‘passive’ alignment?
- Why does Japanese allow active potential constructions, but not English?

Towards a leanest possible modular account!

Shared properties:
- Identical structural make up in both languages.
  - MOD and VOICEPASS

Different properties:
- Spell-out options differ (epp = bound):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>–able A</td>
<td>-rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epp y</td>
<td>epp y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relative merge order is left free:
- [Mod> Voice or Voice> Mod]

Spell out patterns yield more merge options for Japanese.

We assume
- General structural building principles, with highly decompositional & derivational syntax.
  - A complement cannot remerge with the selecting head (Abeles 2003, Kayne 2005).

Proposal
- Potential constructions (minimally) involve two heads: Modal and Voice (passive).
- Different options in spell-out:
  - being silent or pronounced, bound or not in Mod, and (perhaps) labeling (A or V).

Passive potentials

Available in both languages!
- The merge order [Mod> Voice> VP] (e.g., can be read) converges in both languages.

Active potentials

Only possible in Japanese. Why?
- VOICE > MOD only converges in Japanese, not in English, due to its spell-out option!

Potential constructions consist of VoicePASS & Modality heads, which can be silent.
- The distributional differences between Japanese & English potentials reside in difference in spell-out patterns, which determines the relative order of merge.
- General pattern with epp; if a head is pronounced, the specifier is frozen (cannot move further because it needs to be in the same spell-out domain as the head); if silent, there is no such requirement.

Selected References