

Mermaid Construction as Raising with a Nominal Predicate



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8 March 2022

Before beginning...

Do you speak or have some knowledge of any of these languages (or related languages) shown below?

- Japonic: Japanese, Ryukyuan
- Korean: Korean
- Sino-Tibetan: Mandarin Chinese, Amdo Tibetan, Burmese, nDrapa
- Austronesian: Tagalog (Filipino)
- Indo-European: Bengali
- Dravidian: Kurux
- Turkic: Tatar
- Afroasiatic: Sidaama

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**These are languages that have
the Mermaid Construction!**

Structure of this presentation

Claim: **Mermaid Construction is a kind of raising with a nominal predicate**

Flow:

- Introduction
 - What is Mermaid Construction? Brief review of raising
 - Very brief introduction to Japanese (to be used as data in this presentation)
- Evidence
 - Diagnostics, Grammaticalization
- Discussion
 - Applying to other languages
- Conclusion

What is Mermaid Construction?

Tsunoda (2020): A monoclausal construction with a sequence of a verb and a noun predicate that form a compound predicate

Mermaid Construction (MC) is typically observed in languages in East Asia

- Japonic: Japanese, Ryukyuan
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What is Mermaid Construction?

Example (Japanese):

- (1) *asita Hanako=ga Nagoya=ni ik-u yotee=da.*
tomorrow Hanako=NOM Nagoya=DAT go-NPST plan=COP
'Hanako plans to go to Nagoya tomorrow.'

VP?



In (1), *ik-u* 'go' modifies the succeeding noun (lit. 'going plan').

(1) superficially looks like having *Hanako=ga* as the subject of the predicate *yotee=da*.

However, *Hanako* is not a *plan*... there is a mismatch (hence mermaid)

What is Mermaid Construction?

Tsunoda (2020): A monoclausal construction with a sequence of a verb and a noun predicate that forms a compound predicate

compound predicate

(1) *asita Hanako=ga Nagoya=ni ik-u yotee=da.*
tomorrow Hanako=NOM Nagoya=DAT go-NPST plan=COP
'Hanako plans to go to Nagoya tomorrow.'

V + N (+ Copula) is a compound predicate

- N syntactically functions more like an auxiliary
- N morphologically remains to be a noun

Current Issue in Mermaid Construction

Tsunoda (2020):

- MC involves a **compound predicate** V + N (+ copula)

Issue:

- Do we really need this new concept to account for Mermaid Construction?

Proposal in this study:

- MC can be handled in parallel with **raising**
- To propose a new type of raising with a **noun**

What is Raising?

Syntactic movement of an argument from an embedded clause to a main clause

- e.g., 'John **seems** [___ to leave].


Characteristics:

- The semantic role of the raised subject is assigned by the embedded predicate.
- Raising predicates are often functional: aspect, modality, evidentiality, etc.
 - Related to grammaticalized auxiliaries (e.g., will, be going to, etc.)
- Raising predicates are typically verbs and adjectives.
 - raising with a nominal predicate has not been reported

Very short introduction to Japanese

Japanese < Japonic

Syntax:

- SOV
- head-final (adjective → noun, modifier → modified)

Morphology:

- agglutinative, case-marking by suffixation
- bipartite tense system: past and non-past

Mermaid Construction as Raising

Proposal: MC is a kind of **raising** with a **noun predicate**

(1) *asita* *Hanako=ga* [____] *Nagoya=ni* *ik-u* *yotee=da.*
tomorrow Hanako=NOM Nagoya=DAT go-NPST plan=COP

‘Hanako plans to go to Nagoya tomorrow.’

Nominal raising predicate

This analysis is compatible with the characteristics of raising.

- no thematic role assignment
- functional usage
- (slight) grammaticalization

Mermaid Construction as Raising

Classic diagnostics for identifying raising

1. **Passivization**: no semantic change

(2) Hanako=ga [___ Taro=o tatak-u] yotee=da.

Hanako=NOM Taro=ACC hit-NPST plan=COP

‘Hanako plans to hit Taro’

(3) Taro=ga [___ Hanako=ni tatak-arer-u] yotee=da.

Taro=NOM Hanako=DAT hit-PASS-NPST plan=COP

‘Taro will be hit by Hanako.’

cf. # ‘Taro plans to be hit by Hanako.’ (English ‘to plan’ is a control verb)

Mermaid Construction as Raising

Classic diagnostics for identifying raising

2. **Idiom chunks:** *asi=ga boo=ni nar-u* 'exhausted as if one's legs were sticks'

(4) Asi=ga [boo=ni nar-u] yotee=da.

leg=NOM stick=DAT become-NPST plan=COP

'(I) will be tired as if (my) legs had become sticks.'

cf. English

(5) The cat is out of the bag. (i.e., the secret is out)

(5') The cat **seems** to be out of the bag. (raising)

(5'') # The cat **tries** to be out of the bag. (control)

Mermaid Construction and Grammaticalization

MC and raising also agree in terms of the degree of grammaticalization.

Grammaticalization clines (Hopper & Traugott 2003):

- content word > **grammatical word** > clitic > affix
 - raising predicates (*seem, be likely, etc.*): grammatical word
 - cf. Old English *willan* > Middle English *willen* (> English *will*) > English *-'ll*
 - Mermaid-Construction nouns: grammatical word
 - cf. Early Modern Japanese (EMJ) *sama* ('appearance')
 - > EMJ *sama*(=*nari*) (MC noun 'It seems that...')
 - > Modern Standard Japanese (MSJ) =*soo* (evidential clitic for hearsay)
 - > MSJ *-soo* (suffix 'It looks like...')

Mermaid Construction and Grammaticalization

MC and raising also agree in terms of the degree of grammaticalization.

Mechanisms happening in grammaticalization (Heine & Kuteva 2002):

1. **desemanticization**: loss in meaning content
2. **extension**: use in new contexts
3. decategorialization: loss in morphosyntactic properties
 MC nouns and raising predicates retain their nominal morphology
4. erosion: loss in phonetic substance
 MC nouns and raising predicates retain the same phonetic realization

Interim Summary

		Raising	MC
Raising diagnostics	passivization	✓	✓
	idiom chunks	✓	✓
Semantic role assignment		✗	✗
Grammaticalization clines (Hopper & Traugott 2003)		grammatical word	grammatical word
Grammaticalization mechanisms (Heine & Kuteva 2002)	desemanticization	✓	✓
	extension	✓	✓
	deategorialization	✗	✗
	erosion	✗	✗

How about other languages?

Korean (language isolate) (Kim 2020)

(6) *chinkwu=nun ilpon=ey ka-l* *yeyceng=i-ta.*

friend=TOP Japan=DAT go-ADN.PROS plan=COP-DECL

‘(My) friend plans to go to Japan.’

Amdo Tibetan < Tibetic < Sino-Tibetan (Ebihara 2020)

(7) *arjə=kə nor ptsoŋ-ju* *ntɕharzə* *rɛ.*

father=ERG yak sell.IPFV-NMLZ.GEN plan COP.B

‘(My) father plans to sell yaks.’

How about other languages?

Kurux < Northern Dravidian < Dravidian (Kobayashi 2020)

- (8) *a:s-hi: tamba-s-in ilc-ka: caḍḍe: rahc-a:.*
3SG.M-GEN own.father-M-ACC fear.PS-PST.VADJ necessity COP.PS-PST.3SG.NM
'It was because he was scared of his father.'

Sidaama < Cushitic < Afro-Asiatic (Kawachi 2020)

- (9) *íse faraššó guluf-f-annó gara-a=ti.*
3SG.F.NOM horse.ACCOBL ride-3SG.F-IPFV.3 manner-LV=NPC.PRED.MOD
'It seems like she rides a horse (habitually).'

How about other languages?

Tagalog < Malayo-Polynesian < Austronesian (Katagiri 2020)

(10) *plano-ng apruba-han nang=gobyerno ang=pag-import nang=bigas.*

plan-LK

approve-PF:INF

GEN=government

DIR=NMLZ-import

GEN=rice

‘The government plans to approve the import of rice.’

Bengali < Indo-Aryan < Indo-European (Huziwara 2018)

(11) *tar tokio=te jawar kotha.*

3SG.GEN

Tokyo=LOC

go.VN.GEN

word

‘He is supposed to go to Tokyo.’

How about other languages?

Tatar < Kipchak < Turkic (collected by the presenter)

(12) *Siŋa öj-gä qajt-irya röxsät.*

2SG.DAT house-DAT return-INF permission

‘You are allowed to go home.’

Mandarin Chinese < Sinitic < Sino-Tibetan (Ono 2013)

(13) *tiānxiàng shì yào xià yǔ=de yàngzi.*

weather COP PROSP fall rain=ADN appearance

‘It appears that it will rain.’

Cross-linguistic observation

Cross-linguistic observation:

- Embedded verb is non-finite
→ Counterargument against Tsunoda (2020), which argues for finite

Summary

			Raising	MC
Syntax	Raising diagnostics	passivization	✓	✓
		idiom chunks	✓	✓
Morphology	Embedded verb form		non-finite	non-finite
Semantics	Semantic role assignment		✗	✗
Grammaticalization	Grammaticalization clines (Hopper & Traugott 2003)		grammatical word	grammatical word
	Grammaticalization mechanisms (Heine & Kuteva 2002)	desemanticization	✓	✓
		extension	✓	✓
		deategorialization	✗	✗
	erosion	✗	✗	

Conclusion

We have seen that:

- MC can be put in line with **raising constructions**
 - evidence in syntactic, morphological, semantic, diachronic aspects
- MC is a kind of raising triggered by a **nominal predicate**
- MC (typically) comes with a **non-finite** embedded verb
 - against the hypothesis of Tsunoda (2020)
 - in line with raising constructions

We further need to:

- work on comprehensive cross-linguistic study
- (more rigid) theoretical accounts for MC

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