Japanese Reported Speech within the Emerging Typology of Speech Reports

Several linguists have noted that Japanese reported speech doesn’t line up neatly into the division between direct and indirect speech established for Western European languages (Coulmas, 1985; Kuno, 1988; Hirose, 1995; Oshima, 2006). Related observations have been made in a number of other languages, e.g. ASL (Lillo-Martin, 1995), Amharic (Schlenker, 2003), Slave, Zazaki (Anand, 2006), Matses (Munro et al., 2012), and Uyghur (Shklovsky and Sudo, 2009). For Japanese, Maier (2010, 2014) recently proposes that partial quotation is freely allowed. We argue that Maier’s proposal makes wrong predictions for Japanese, and also show that Maier’s proposal doesn’t provide a good starting point for the typology of speech reports. We propose instead a new approach: i) speech reports are generally embedded under indexical shift operators, ii) Speech act can be embedded, iii) Western European direct speech is subject to a strict literality requirement.

Partial Quotation Account  Maier’s partial quotation account assumes that in Japanese parts of a speech report can be quoted, while other parts are not. For example, (1) could be uttered in a situation where the boss actually said yesterday “Finish this work in the next two days.”

Maier proposes that while asita and sono in (1) are indirect speech, i.e. interpreted from the speakers perspective, the imperative yare is a quotation (indicated by brackets).

But, free availability of partial quotation predicts that there should be no constraints on indexical perspective. This isn’t the case in Japanese: For example (1) isn’t acceptable in the following scenario: the boss said two days ago “Finish this work by tomorrow”. Partial quotation predicts the opposite (see (2)). Also, partial quotation predicts four-way ambiguity for (3) (or three-way, if partial quotation was restricted to clause-final segments), but (3) is only two ways ambiguous.

Indexicals obligatorily shift together in many other languages too (Anand and Nevins, 2004). All such cases are problematic for the partial quotation account. Furthermore, the partial quotation account offers no insightful way to account for obligatory indexical shift in Matses, where all indexicals shift, but extraction is freely allowed according to Munro et al. (2012). Partial quotation would have to obligatorily apply to all words in an embedded clause as indicated in (4). In sum, partial quotation is too powerful a mechanism and it is unclear how it could be constrained.

Transparent Shifters and Embedded Roots  Anand and Nevins (2004) already propose that languages are parametrized for a specific inventory of indexical shifters. For example, $S_{all}$ shifts all context components, $S_0$ shifts none, and $S_{12pt}$ shifts all but the world component. We suggest that even English direct speech should be analyzed as a shifter, with a separate account for the literality condition below. So English and Japanese select $S_{direct}$ and $S_{indirect}$, while Matses selects $S_{direct}$ and $S_{12pt}$.

In addition, we suggest that speech acts can be embedded ([krifka01]), but under different types of shifters crosslinguistically. In English, only $S_{direct}$ can embed speech acts. In Japanese, though, $S_0$ can embed speech acts. Then (1) can be analyzed as (5).

In English, direct speech is furthermore required to literally repeat an original utterance such that (6) is odd. We propose that this is a separate condition attached to $S_{all}$ in English. The literality requirement blocks extraction because an original utterance couldn’t contain a gap. Hollebrandse (2007) shows that English children at age 5–6 years allow extraction from direct quotes as do Matses and Japanese speakers. Our approach predicts the divergence between child English and adult English.
‘I was told by the boss that I should finish that work by tomorrow.’ (Kuno, 1988)

‘Taro told Hanako that Taro likes Hanako.’ / ‘Taro told Hanako that I like you.’
‘Taro told Hanako that I like Hanako.’ / *‘Taro told Hanako that Taro likes you.’

‘Which type of deer did he say he killed?’

#John said “I am going to come tomorrow.”

References