

Motivations and Restrictions on the *Longer* Dependency Formation in Japanese

One of the widely attested generalizations in online long-distance dependency formation studies is that the parser tries to minimize the dependency length wherever (grammatically) possible. For example, in the study of the processing of *wh*-questions, it has been demonstrated that, upon encountering the *wh*-phrase the parser attempts to find and link the *wh*-phrase to the closest grammatically licit licensor (Phillips 2006, Stowe 1986 a.o.). Aoshima, Phillips and Weinberg 2004) have presented an exception to this generalization. Aoshima et al., found that Japanese speakers initially analyzed a fronted *wh*-NP as the object of the most deeply embedded verb. In other words, Japanese speakers seem to prefer a *longer* dependency to a shorter dependency (see Yoshida 2006 for the related discussion).

Aoshima et al. contended that the longer dependency bias is motivated by the general mechanism of sentence processing. They argue that, in Japanese complex sentences, the first verb that the parser encounters is almost always the most deeply embedded verb due to the strong head-final property. Therefore, during online sentence processing, the earliest point where the dependency between the *wh*-NP and the verb can be formed is the most deeply embedded clause.

Aoshima et al.'s study, however, leaves open exactly what motivates the longer dependency formation and what restrictions apply to the longer dependency formation process. Through various online reading studies in Japanese, this study tries to figure out what the motivation for the longer distance dependency formation is, and what constrains the online longer distance dependency formation processes. Specifically, this study argues for the following: The longer dependency formation is motivated by grammatical requirements associated with the fronted NPs, i.e., the parser tries to satisfy the grammatical requirements of the fronted NP as soon as possible; yet the longer dependency formation process is restricted by the general constraint on online parsing such as Reanalysis As Last Resort principle (Frazier and Clifton Jr. 1998, Schneider and Phillips 2001, Sturt et al. 2001).

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