Dummy *su*- and Lexical *su*:: A Reply to Miyara

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In a recent issue of this journal, Miyara (1991) presents a new analysis of the verb *su*- as it appears in the contexts of (1) and (2).

(1) a) Zyon-wa hon-o kai-wa _si-ta_ ga, yomi-wa
John-TOP book-ACC buy-TOP do-PAST but read-TOP
_do-not-PAST

‘John bought a book, but he didn’t read it.’

b) Biru-wa Rinda-o tazune-wa _site-mi-ta_ ga,
Bill-TOP Linda-ACC visit-TOP do-try-PAST but,
uti-ni-wa _i-nakat-ta._
home-at-TOP be-not-PAST

‘Bill tried visiting Linda, but she wasn’t at home.’

(2) a) Zyon-wa onseegaku-o _kenkyuu-si-ta_.
John-TOP phonetics-ACC study-do-PAST
‘John studied phonetics.’

b) Zyon-wa onseegaku-o _kenkyuu-si-wa si-ta_.
John-TOP phonetics-ACC study-do-TOP do-PAST
‘John studied phonetics (but soon gave it up).’

(1 a, b) exemplify what Miyara calls ‘contrastive verb forms’, where *su*- shows up after such emphatic particles as *wa* (topic), *mo* ‘also’, and *sae* ‘even’. On the other hand, (2 a, b) involve a compound
verb of the form V[erbal] N[oun] + su-. Miyara contends that the instances of su- in both cases are phonologically inserted by a “last-cyclic syntactic rule” (whatever it means), and that the proposed su-insertion supersedes the incorporation analysis of VN-su compounds developed in Kageyama (1976–77, 1980, 1982).

In this note, I should like to show that Miyara’s analysis suffers from both technical and empirical flaws and in no way undermines my incorporation analysis. Specifically, it is demonstrated that, contrary to Miyara’s claim, the two types of su- exemplified in (1) and (2) are not identical: whereas the su- that occurs with contrastive verb forms indeed appears to be a “dummy” verb as Miyara assumes, the su- in VN compounds has its own lexical properties and hence cannot be derived by an insertion rule.

1. Technical Problems

Although I do not want to be picky on every detail, it will nevertheless be appropriate to point out a couple of technical problems that I detect in Miyara’s analysis, before we go into empirical differences between the two types of su-.

Miyara (p. 22) presents an elaborate formalization of su- insertion rule, reproduced below:

(3) i) \( \alpha = [+V, -N, -A] \) and \( \gamma', \gamma'' = X \). \( \beta = \) emphatic particles \([+V]\)
   - a) \([\ldots, [\alpha \beta], \ldots, \gamma']\)
   - b) \([\ldots, [\alpha \beta /s/], \ldots, \gamma']\)

ii) \( \alpha = [+V, +N] \) and \( \gamma', \gamma'' = X \). \( \beta = \) emphatic particles \([+V]\)
   - a) \([\ldots, [\alpha (\beta)], \ldots, \gamma']\)
   - b) \([\ldots, [\alpha (\beta) /s/], \ldots, \gamma']\)
   - c) \([/s/], \gamma' \) (when \( \alpha, \beta = 0 \) and \( \ldots, \gamma' = \theta \))
   - d) \([\alpha /s/ \beta /s/] \) when \( \ldots, \gamma' = \theta \)

where \( \ldots, \gamma' \) either contains one or two \( X \)'s or is null. \([+V]\)
(3i) represents the su-insertion for contrastive verb forms (i.e. $\alpha$ is a verb [+V, −N]) and (3 ii) that for VN compounds (i.e. $\alpha$ is a VN [+V, +N]). For the present purposes, it suffices to note that the environments of the two subrules contain different specifications which do not seem to be readily unifiable into a single natural format. In particular, contrastive verb forms obligatorily require $\beta$ (emphatic particle) whereas VN compounds have it only optionally. It is thus evident that Miyara’s proposal actually involves two distinct rules. (3 i) and (3 ii) work disjunctively, and as is commonly assumed in linguistic argumentation, a rule that is formulated disjunctively is spurious and does not capture a true generalization.

A more delicate problem with (3) is that su- is assumed to be attached after the sequence $\alpha$ ($\beta$), as illustrated by the tree diagram (4) (Miyara p. 8):

I find this structure implausible. In the light of the general principle of morphology that forbids syntactic elements like emphatic and case particles to participate in word formation (cf. Shibatani and Kageyama (1988: 461)), it is difficult to assume that the sequence kawi-wa-si forms a single word dominated by V. Rather, we should regard V-wa and si- as separate constituents. Since the tense morpheme cannot stand alone, it will then be more plausible to regard su- as being attached to -ta as a tense carrier.
2. Empirical Differences between the Two Types of su-

We now move on to empirical differences between the instances of su- in (1) and (2). Most trivially, as noted by Miyara himself, contrastive verb forms always call for emphatic particles, as shown by the contrast between (1) and (5):

(5) *Zyon-wa hon-o kai-si-ta ga, yomi-si-nakat-ta.

John-TOP book-ACC buy-do-PAST but, read-do-not-PAST

'John bought a book, but he didn’t read it.'

The su- in VN compounds, on the other hand, does not require such particles (cf. (3 ii), where β is in parentheses).

Contrary to Miyara’s claim that su- in VN compounds is semantically empty, there is every reason to believe that this su- has lexical status, although the su- with contrastive verb forms appears to be a dummy. For convenience’ sake, the former will be referred to as the VN su- and the latter as the contrastive su-.

First, the VN su- may assign Case while the contrastive su- may not.

(6) a) syokuzi-o su-ru
dine-ACC do-PRES
‘to dine’

b) *tabe-o (sae) su-ru
eat-ACC (even) do-PRES
‘to even eat’

Generally, only lexical verbals can assign Case. (For discussion on how the Case on VNs is assigned, see Kageyama (1991).)

Second, the VN su- may be passivized, but the contrastive su- may not.

(7) a) Hirosi-wa hihan (sae) s-are-ta.
H.-TOP criticize (even) do-PASSIVE-PAST
‘Hiroshi was even criticized.’
b) *Hirosi-wa naguri-sae s-are-ta.

H. -TOP beat-even do-PASSIVE-PAST
‘Hiroshi was even beaten.’

In general, only verbs which have accusative Case and object \( \theta \)-role can undergo passivization. The well-formedness of (7 a) indicates that the VN \( su \)-there has both accusative Case and object \( \theta \)-role. (Again, the reader is referred to Kageyama (1991) for relevant discussion on the source of the VN \( su \)-’s \( \theta \)-role.) In marked contrast to this is the ungrammaticality of (7 b), which reveals that the contrastive \( su \)-lacks lexical status.

Third, the iteration of verb infinitives as in naki-naki ‘cry and cry’ and (mizu-o) nomi-nomi ‘drink and drink (water)’ applies to the VN \( su \)- (as pointed out in Kageyama(1976-77, 1980)), but not to the contrastive \( su \):

(8) a) syokuzi-sii-sii
     dine-do-do

b) *susi-o tabe-sae sii-sii
     sushi-ACC eat-even do-do

This rule of verb iteration appears to be generally restricted to lexical verbs, as shown by the discrepancy between lexically derived V-V compounds (tobi-hane tobi-hane ‘jump and jump’) and syntactically derived V-V compounds (*tobi-tuzuke tobi-tuzuke ‘keep jumping and keep jumping’)——see Kageyama (1989) for the distinction between lexical and syntactic compounds. The iteration of direct passives (nagur-are nagur-are ‘beaten and beaten’) is perhaps an exception. Given this lexical/non-lexical distinction, it follows that the contrastive \( su \)- (8 b) has no lexical status.

Fourth, as noted by Kageyama (1976-77, 1980), the potentiality meaning of the lexical \( su \)-is expressed by the suppletive form dekiru ‘can’, as in syukudai-o suru ‘do homework’ and syukudai-ga dekiru ‘can do homework’. The same suppletion applies to the VN
su- as well, but not to the contrastive su-:

(9) a) kenkyuu (sae) dekiru
study (even) can-do
‘can even study’

b) *biiru-o nomi-sae dekiru
beer-ACC drink-even can-do
‘can even drink beer’

(The honorific suppletion nasar- works the same way.) Since morphological suppletion generally occurs with forms that are specified in the lexicon, the well-formedness of (9a) points strongly to the lexical status of the VN su-. In contrast, the ungrammaticality of (9b) shows the lack of lexical status in the contrastive su-.

Fifth, consider nominalization like hon-yomi ‘book-reading’ and uso-tuki ‘liar’. In standard Japanese, this type of nominalization is generally limited to the lexical component, with the exception of occasional coinages containing syntactic elements such as naimono-nedari ‘asking for the moon’. In particular, VN-su- compounds, which are syntactically derived from the phrase ‘VN (object) su-’ in my incorporation analysis, are generally immune from nominalization: *kenkyuu-si ‘doing research’. In Osaka dialect, however, this nominalization rule has a somewhat extended application, producing such forms as umaikoto-ii ‘(lit.) to say flattering words’ = ‘a flatterer’, ee-kakko sii ‘(lit.) to do show-off’ = ‘a dandy’, and crucially, nouns like (10a) involving VN-su- compounds.

(10) a) sigoto-sii
work do
‘one who works hard’

b) *hataraki (sae) sii
work (even) do

Even in this dialect, however, the contrastive su- (10b) totally rejects nominalization. Here we observe another disparity in lexical status between the two types of su-.
In this section, we have pointed out several differences between VN su- and contrastive su-. These differences cast strong doubt on the feasibility of Miyara’s unitary analysis. On the contrary, the behavior of the VN su- observed above unequivocally indicates that the su- in VN compounds qualifies as an independent lexical item and hence cannot be simply inserted as a dummy.

Before closing this note, we will answer two questions which Miyara specifically addresses to my incorporation analysis of VN compounds.

3. On the Incorporation Analysis of VN Compounds

Miyara gives two counterarguments to my analysis. First, he observes that su- has “no function of strict subcategorization when it cooccurs with verbal nouns,” and that “the argument structure [of a VN-su compound] can be entirely determined by the verbal noun contained” (p. 15). The observation itself is correct, but it does not say anything about the validity of the incorporation analysis. In fact, on the assumption that VN and su- are separate constituents at D-structure, Grimshaw and Mester (1988) and Kageyama (1991) develop (different) mechanisms to account for the compositional character of θ-role assignment in this ‘light verb’ construction.

Miyara’s second counterargument to the incorporation analysis is that a transformational analysis fails to account for discrepancies like (11 a) and (11 b) (p. 17):

(11) a) Biru-wa zyuuyoo-na hatugen-o si-ta.
  Bill-TOP important statement do-PAST
  ‘Bill made an important statement.’

b) *Biru-wa zyuuyoo-na/ni [hatugen-si-ta].
  Bill-TOP important(ly) [statement-do-PAST]

(11 a) involves an adjectival modifier on hatugen ‘statement’. If only the VN were incorporated to su-, the ungrammatical sentence
in (11 b) would result. Although such a discrepancy looks problematic at first glance, I would hold that it does not immediately nullify the syntactic derivation; rather, it will be more profitable to come to grips with the real factors that render (11 b) ungrammatical, while keeping the incorporation rule. A possible reason for the ungrammaticality of (11 b) has to do with the semantic content of the VN. Unlike ordinary VNs that designate actions or events, the VN hatugen in (11 a) has the character of what Grimshaw (1990) calls a ‘result’ nominal; it denotes a concrete result or product of the action of statement-making, and this meaning seems to be engendered by the adjectival modifier zyuuyoona ‘important’ which characterizes the content of a statement rather than the manner of the action of statement-making. Because of this semantic peculiarity, we may assume that the hatugen in (11 a) is not a VN but a simple (result) noun. And naturally, VN incorporation does not apply to a simple noun.

Another conceivable source of the ill-formedness of (11 b) will be found in the licensing of ‘stranded’ adjectives by empty categories. It appears that Japanese generally does not allow adjectival modifiers to predicate an empty category. In (12), for example, it is impossible to delete a conjoined noun, leaving its modifying adjective intact.

(12) a) akai wain to siroi wain → *akai wain to siroi e red wine and white wine red wine and white
cf. akai wain to siroi no (no=‘pronoun’)
b) Boku-wa akai wain yori siroi wain ga sukida.
I-TOP red wine than white wine NOM like
‘I prefer white wine to red.’
→ *Boku-wa akai e yori siroi wain ga sukida.
I-TOP red than white wine NOM like
Similarly in (11 b), the adjective zyuuyoona ‘important’ cannot be licensed by the trace of the incorporated VN.
Now the impossibility of (11 b) should be contrasted with the grammaticality of (13).

(13) a) [hooritu-no kaisee]-o suru
    law-GEN amendation-ACC do
    'to make an amendation to a law'

b) hooritu-o [kaisee-suru]
    law-ACC amendation-do
    'to amend a law'

Unlike (11) containing a mere modifier, (13) involves an argument (hooritu ‘law’) that serves as the object of kaisee ‘amendation’, and the VN carries the ‘event’ meaning rather than a result meaning. With this provision, VN incorporation yields a good result (13 b). Put differently, the trace of an incorporated VN can license its argument, but not a modifier—a disparity that would presumably be reduced to the different modes of θ-marking and modifier identification (cf. Grimshaw (1990)).
References

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