

# Indirect Passives and Relational Nouns (II)

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## Abstract

As was argued in the preceding paper ([Iida 2012]), typically a new argument is introduced as "indirect theme" in Japanese indirect passive. In order to explicate the nature of a relation between the newly introduced argument and the old arguments, we undertake a systematic study of relational nouns in Japanese. In the present part, we concentrate on relational nouns that express kinship and other social relations. A relational noun is a noun which takes an argument, and is an "unsaturated" expression in Fregean sense. Relational nouns, however, may give rise to some "saturated" expressions which are not relational. They are (i) nouns which express relationships themselves, (ii) relational nouns used "absolutely", and (iii) relational nouns used as classificatory labels.

## 5 The varieties of relations between new and old arguments

There still remains the problem of explicating the nature of "a certain relation" which the newly introduced argument should bear to one of the old arguments. As we remarked before, this relation is determined by the context of the utterance. In many cases, however, a hearer can guess what it is because there is a "default" interpretation according to the type of a noun which denotes the direct theme or agent of the events introduced by the verb.

If we concentrate on the case of indirect passives coming from transitive verbs, there are three types of nouns which have such default interpretations. These types are represented by the following sentences<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of indirect passive coming from intransitive verbs, there are no corresponding cases to the second and third types, as the following examples show.

- (i) ? Hanako wa ashi ni itam- are- ta.  
                   TOP foot DAT hurt PASSIVE PAST  
 (intended meaning: Hanako's foot hurt. )

- (11) Hanako wa kodomo o home- rare- ta.  
TOP child(ren) ACC praise PASSIVE PAST  
(Hanako had her child(ren) praised.)
- (32) Hanako wa kata o tatak- are- ta.  
TOP shoulder ACC tap PASSIVE PAST  
(Hanako was tapped on the shoulder.)
- (33) Hanako wa saifu o nusum- are- ta.  
TOP purse ACC steal PASSIVE PAST  
(Hanako had her pocketbook stolen.)

In the first type represented by (11), the indirect theme of an event is related to its direct theme by kinship or some other social relation. In the second type which is exemplified here in (32), the direct theme is a part of the indirect theme just as a shoulder is a part of a person. In the third type, the direct theme is a possession of the indirect theme as the pocketbook is supposed to be owned by Hanako in (33). This type also includes the cases in which the direct theme is something produced by the indirect theme; (26) may be an example if we suppose the picture in question (“e”) is painted by Taro.

In the cases of the first and third types, it must be emphasized that the relations suggested by the nouns are “default” ones; in other words, there are cases in which the relations between the indirect themes and the direct themes (or sometimes, the agents) are not such default relations. For example, Hanako need not be the child’s (or children’s) mother in some utterances of (11); Hanako might be a teacher of them, or just somebody who is taking care of them. Similarly, although it is very natural to assume that the pocketbook in question is owned by Hanako in (33), this is not its only interpretation; Hanako might have kept her friend’s pocketbook.

In contrast, if an indirect passive has the second type of relations, it is very difficult to imagine an interpretation which is different from the default interpretation. Thus, it seems impossible to interpret “kata” (shoulder) in (33) is not Hanako’s. We are going to consider why this is so in the context of indirect passive construction.

Thus, except the cases of the second type, the relation between the indirect theme and the direct theme (or agent) is ultimately determined by contextual considerations. Sometimes it is determined wholly by the particular conversational context because no “default” relation is suggested. In the following example, what kind of relation obtains between Hanako and Taro is supposed

- 
- (ii) ? Hanako wa saifu ni nakun- are- ta.  
TOP purse DAT get lost PASSIVE PAST  
(intended meaning: Hanako lost her purse.)

This raises some very interesting questions, which will be discussed in Appendix I.

to be already known to a speaker and a hearer in the context, or should be figured out by the hearer from the context.

- (34) Hanako wa Taro o home- rare- ta.  
TOP ACC praise PASSIVE PAST  
(Hanako had Taro praised.)

The assertion of (34) is intelligible only if the speaker assumes that there is some close relation between Hanako and Taro; she might be Taro's mother, or his teacher. If there were no connection between Hanako and Taro, then asserting (34) would make little sense. Hence, if someone hears (34) asserted but knows nothing about the relation between Hanako and Taro, she will assume a connection between them. This is a case of accommodation, which is found quite generally in our linguistic exchanges.

We are going to consider the three types of nouns which are associated with a certain kinds of "default" relations in the following sections. In doing so, we are also going to consider how relational facts are expressed in a natural language, in particular, in Japanese.

## 6 What is a relational noun?

The relations between the new and old arguments that figure in the first type are kinship relations and other social relations; examples are that between a parent and a child, that of a husband and a wife, and that between a teacher and a pupil. A typical way of expressing that a relation of this kind holds between X and Y is to use a noun phrase consisting of a relational noun, a genitive case particle "no", and either a noun phrase NP<sub>1</sub> denoting X or a noun phrase NP<sub>2</sub> denoting Y. The following are the examples.

NP<sub>1</sub> wa NP<sub>2</sub> no oya da. (X is/are a parent/parents of Y.)  
NP<sub>2</sub> wa NP<sub>1</sub> no ko da. (Y is/are a child/children of X.)

NP<sub>1</sub> wa NP<sub>2</sub> no sensei da. (X is/are a teacher/teachers of Y.)  
NP<sub>2</sub> wa NP<sub>1</sub> no seito da. (Y is/are a pupil/pupils of X.)

The form common to these is this.

NP<sub>1</sub> wa NP<sub>2</sub> no RN da,  
TOP GEN is

where RN is a noun which we are going to call "a relational noun". As "NP<sub>2</sub> no RN" is itself a noun phrase, those sentences which express the relations between X and Y consist of two noun phrases and a copula.

If you are accustomed to the standard notation for relations in modern logic, you expect that even in plural logic a relational fact will be expressed in a form as

$$XRY,$$

or, more generally,

$$RX_1X_2\dots X_n.$$

But, this is not the usual way to express a relational fact in a natural language; at least, it is not so in Japanese. What you see much more frequently is the construction using a relational noun.

In *Principia Mathematica*, Whitehead and Russell introduced a notation “ $R'y$ ” as meaning “the term  $x$  which has the relation  $R$  to  $y$ ”<sup>2</sup>. Although they write “relation  $R$ ”, they intended to define the value of a function for a given argument. Thus, they write:

If there are several terms or none having the relation  $R$  to  $y$ , all propositions about  $R'y$ , *i.e.* all propositions of the form “ $\phi(R'y)$ ,” will be false.<sup>3</sup>

We might adopt this notation with a necessary modification for our plural logical framework. Namely, we allow both the argument and the value of  $R$  be plural; hence,  $R$  is a relation that may hold between several things and other several things. Then, our way of expressing a relational fact by using a relational noun might be expressed in the following formula.

$$X \eta R'Y,$$

where “ $\eta$ ” is a logical predicate in plural logic meaning “among”<sup>4</sup>. The above formula may be read in English as “ $X$ s are among the  $R$  of  $Y$ s”, or simply “ $X$ s are the  $R$  of  $Y$ s”; an example is “John and Mary are the students of Alfred and Bertrand”. And it may be read in Japanese as “ $X$  wa  $Y$  no  $R$  da”; an example is “Taro to Hanako wa Ichiro to Jiro no gakusei da”(Taro and Hanako are the students of Ichiro and Jiro). If we wish to preserve the Japanese word order in the formalization, we might change the above formula to the following.

$$X Y'R \eta,$$

It must be noted that these formulas are logically equivalent to

$$XRY.$$

It is characteristic of Japanese (or, presumably, natural languages in general) to prefer the construction using a relational noun to a predicate for the expression of a relational fact.

<sup>2</sup> A.N.Whitehead and B.Russell, *Principia Mathematica*, \*30.01.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See [McKay 2006], Chapter 6. McKay, however, uses another symbol for “among”.

However, we have not explained yet what a relational noun is. A relational noun is a noun which takes an argument or arguments<sup>5</sup>. It is an “unsaturated” expression if we may use a Fregean terminology. It becomes a saturated expression once all of its arguments are specified. For example, a relational noun “oya” (parent/parents) takes one argument; if you specify whose parent or parents are in question, you will get an expression which denotes a certain person or persons. In other words, when you are given only an expression

oya,

you don’t know who this expression denotes. But, once this is modified to

Taro no oya  
GEN

you will have a more definite idea of who are talked about, namely, Taro’s parents or one of them.

Hence, let us represent a relational noun “oya” as “**oya**( $X^{no}$ )” and adopt the following as a semantic axiom for it.

**Axiom**

$$V(Y, \text{“oya}(X^{no})\text{”}) \Leftrightarrow Y \text{ is/are a parent/parents of } X.$$

More generally, we have the following axiom for a relational noun RN.

**Axiom** (relational noun)

If RN is a Japanese relational noun which can be translated into an English relational noun  $\rho$ , then

$$V(Y, \text{“RN}(X^{no})\text{”}) \Leftrightarrow Y \text{ is/are a } \rho/\rho\text{s of } X.$$

## 7 The nouns that should not be confused with relational nouns

### 7.1 Non-relational nouns derived from relational nouns

It is true that there are Japanese sentences which seem to express relations much more straightforwardly. Examples are:

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<sup>5</sup> See [Iida 2011, pp.34f.]. As Chris Barker remarks in [Barker 2008] §1.4, it seems that there are no relational nouns which take two arguments; all relational nouns have only one argument.

(35) Taro to Hanako wa oyako da.  
and TOP parent-child is/are

(Taro and Hanako are parent and child.)

(36) Taro to Hanako wa tomodachi da.  
and TOP friend(s) is/are

(Taro and Hanako are friends.)

They have a form

$X$  to  $Y$  wa  $R$  da.

Considering the fact that the word order of a Japanese sentence can be represented relatively well in reverse Polish notation, we might be tempted to suppose that the form found in (35) and (36) should be the form of a relational fact. However, “ $R$ ” here is not a relational noun in our sense, because it does not take any arguments. “Oyako” in (35) and “tomodachi” in (36) are both saturated expressions. Moreover, as you can see that “oyako” is a concatenation of “oya” (parent(s)) and “ko” (child(ren)), these expressions are all derived from certain relational nouns that are closely connected with them.

(35) by itself does not tell us whether Taro is a parent of Hanako or the other way round; we know only that either of the following should be true.

(37) Taro wa Hanako no oya da,  
TOP GEN parent(s) is/are

(Taro is Hanako’s parent.)

(38) Hanako wa Taro no oya da,  
TOP GEN parent(s) is/are

(Hanako is Taro’s parent.)

As “ko” expresses the converse of the “oya”-relation, (37) and (38) are respectively logically equivalent to

(37') Hanako wa Taro no ko da,  
TOP GEN child(ren) is/are

(Hanako is Taro’s child.)

(38') Taro wa Hanako no ko da,  
TOP GEN child(ren) is/are

(Taro is Hanako’s child.)

Hence, (35) might be considered as an abbreviated form of the logical compound of these sentences, namely,

$$((37) \wedge (37')) \vee ((38) \wedge (38')).$$

The case of (36) is similar, but it is much simpler. As the relation of “tomodachi” (friends) is symmetric, the sentence (39) with a relational noun “tomodachi”

- (39) Taro wa Hanako no tomodachi da,  
TOP GEN friend(s) is/are  
(Taro is Hanako’s friend.)

logically implies

- (40) Hanako wa Taro no tomodachi da.  
TOP GEN friend(s) is/are  
(Hanako is Taro’s friend.)

“Tomodachi” in (36) should be regarded as non-relational and it might be considered as the conjunction of (39) and (40), both of which contain a relational “tomodachi”.

In general, if a relational noun RN expresses a relation  $R$ , then we might form a non-relational expression E from RN. There are two cases.

If  $R$  is a symmetric relation like *being friends with*, then we can use RN itself as a non-relational expression just as we saw in (36). Other examples are “shiriai” (acquaintances), “dōryō” (colleagues) and “dōkyūsei” (classmates). These nouns form monadic plural predicates. They are plural predicates, because we can say of an indefinite number of people that they are RN as the following example shows.

- (41) Taro to Hanako to Jiro wa tomodachi da,  
and and TOP friends is/are  
(Taro, Hanako and Jiro are friends )

If RN is a relational noun which expresses a symmetric relation, then we can infer from

$X$  wa  $Y$  no RN da. ( $X$ s are  $Y$ s’ RNs.)

to

$X$  to  $Y$  wa RN da. ( $X$ s and  $Y$ s are RNs.)

RN is a relational noun in the first sentence, but RN in the second sentence is no longer a relational noun. In order to distinguish it from the relational RN, let us write the non-relational RN as “RN<sub>nonR</sub>”.

Moreover, as “ $X$  to  $Y$ ” can be regarded as a complex noun phrase which denotes plural things or persons, the latter sentence can be regarded as having the form such as

( $X$  to  $Y$ ) wa  $RN_{nonR}$  da.

This means that  $RN_{nonR}$  is a monadic predicate.

A relational  $RN$  and its non-relational counterpart  $RN_{nonR}$  are logically related in such a way that the following equivalence holds.

$Xs$  are  $RN_{nonR}$   $\Leftrightarrow$  for any  $x$  and  $y$ , if  $x$  and  $y$  are among  $Xs$  and  $x \neq y$  then  $x$  is  $y$ 's  $RN$ .

An example is this:

$Xs$  are friends  $\Leftrightarrow$  for any two different  $x$  and  $y$  who are among  $Xs$ ,  $x$  is  $y$ 's friend.

It should be remarked that we cannot generally infer from “ $X$  wa  $Y$  no  $RN$  da” ( $Xs$  are  $Ys$ '  $RN$ ) and “ $Y$  wa  $Z$  no  $RN$  da” ( $Ys$  are  $Zs$ '  $RN$ ) to “ $X$  to  $Y$  to  $Z$  are  $RN_{nonR}$ ” ( $Xs$ ,  $Ys$  and  $Zs$  are  $RN_{nonR}$ ). It is not necessarily true that, for any person  $A$ , a friend of  $A$ 's friend is also  $A$ 's friend.

It must be obvious, however, that such inference is valid for a relational noun like “ $dōkyūsei$ ” (classmates) or “ $dōryō$ ” (colleagues) which denotes a relation that is transitive as well as symmetric.

If  $RN$  does not express a symmetric relation, we should then use an expression like “ $RN$  to  $RN'$ ” (or “ $RN$   $RN'$ ” as in “ $oyako$ ”) provided that  $RN'$  is a relational noun that expresses the converse of  $R$  or a certain relation closely connected with the coverse of  $R$ .

“ $Seito$ ” (pupil) expresses the converse of the relation expressed by “ $sensei$ ” (teacher). Thus, we can form a complex noun “ $sensei$  to  $seito$ ” (teacher and pupil) which expresses the relation between teachers and pupils. Here is an example.

(42) Taro to Hanako wa sensei to seito da.  
and TOP teacher and pupil is/are  
(Taro and Hanako are a teacher and his pupil.)

On the other hand, “ $sofu$ ” (grandfather) does not express the converse of the relation expressed by “ $mago$ ” (grandchild). But we can say the following, because Hanako is a grandchild of Taro if Taro is a grandfather of Hanako, on the assumption that Taro is male as the name suggests.

(43) Taro to Hanako wa sofu to  
and TOP grandfather  
mago da.  
grandchild is/are  
(Taro and Hanako are a grandfather and his grandchild.)



Another example is “chichioya” (father) and “musuko” (son). Although it is not necessarily true that if X is the father of Y then Y is the son(s) of X, and neither its converse, the following sentence makes a perfect sense.

- (45) Taro to Jiro wa chichioya to musuko da.  
           and          TOP father and son is/are  
 (Taro and Jiro are a father and his son.)

In general, “X to Y wa RN to RN’ da” means the same as

- (\*) (X wa Y no RN da  $\wedge$  Y wa X no RN’ da)  $\vee$   
 (Y wa X no RN da  $\wedge$  X wa Y no RN’ da)

In a case like “sensei to seito” (teacher and pupil) consisting of a pair of relational nouns RN and RN’ which expresses respectively a relation  $R$  and its converse  $\tilde{R}$ , the following equivalence holds, because  $Y\tilde{R}X$  if and only if  $XYR$ .

$$X \text{ wa } Y \text{ no RN da} \Leftrightarrow Y \text{ wa } X \text{ no RN' da}$$

Hence, (\*) above reduces to

$$(X \text{ wa } Y \text{ no RN da} \vee Y \text{ wa } X \text{ no RN da})$$

In a case like “sofu to mago” (grandfather and grandchild), the relation  $R'$  expressed by “mago” (grandchild) is not the converse of the relation  $R$  “sofu” (grandfather) expresses. But these two relations are related in such a way that  $YRX$  if  $XR'Y$ . Hence, (\*) reduces to

$$(X \text{ wa } Y \text{ no RN' da} \vee Y \text{ wa } X \text{ no RN' da})$$

As for a case like “chichioya to musuko” (father and son), there is no such implication and we cannot reduce (\*) to a simpler formula. Still, the relations  $R$  and  $R'$  expressed by these two relational nouns are related in the following way.

There exists a relation  $S$  such that (i) if  $XYR$  then  $XSX$ , and (ii) if  $YRX$  then  $YSX$ .

An illustration is this. If Taro is the father of Jiro, then Taro is a parent of Jiro; if Jiro is a son of Taro, then Jiro is a child of Taro; the relation “child” expresses is the converse of that expressed by “parent”.

When RN is like “tomodachi” (friend) and expresses a symmetrical relation, its non-relational counterpart  $RN_{\text{nonR}}$  is a monadic plural predicate as we saw above. In contrast, a complex noun “RN to RN’” like “sensei to seito” (teacher and pupil) should be construed as a dyadic plural predicate. This fact raises several problems.

First, there is a problem exemplified by the following sentence.

- (46) Taro to Hanako to Jiro wa oyako da.  
and and TOP parent-child is/are  
(Taro, Hanako and Jiro are a parent/parents and a child/children.)

We cannot know who is a parent and who is a child, if we are given only the sentence. We might know that in some cases like those in which there is an obvious difference in ages between the three persons. But we might not in other cases. We can disambiguate a sentence like (46) by using a slightly different construction; if we reformulate (46) as

- (46') Taro to Hanako wa Jiro to oyako da,  
and TOP and parent-child is/are

then there will be no ambiguity in the grouping and it means either Taro and Hanako are the parents of Jiro or Taro and Hanako are Jiro's parents.

Other problems are connected with the semantics of plurality, and are not our main concern in this paper. I explain briefly what sort of problems they are and leave the detailed treatment for another occasion.

One problem is how to give the semantics of a dyadic plural predicate without singularizing plurals. This is called the problem of the plurally plural in the literature<sup>6</sup>. If we wish to avoid singularizing plurals, then we must be able to give the semantics of the sentence like

- (47) Taro to Hanako wa Jiro to Ayumi  
and TOP and  
to oyako da.  
and parent-child is/are  
(Taro and Hanako are the parents of Jiro and Ayumi, or,  
Taro and Hanako are the children of Jiro and Ayumi.)

without supposing that there are some entities one of which consists of Taro and Hanako and another which consists of Jiro and Ayumi.

Another problem is this. In the examples we have considered so far, the non-relational nouns like “oyako” (parent and child) and “sensei to seito” (teacher and pupil) are the part of a predicate like “oyako da” (are parent and child) and “sensei to seito da” (are teacher and pupil). But these nouns also occur as the noun phrases accompanied with quantifier as the following sentences show.

- (48) San kumi no oyako ga ki- ta.  
three set GEN parent-child NOM come PAST  
(Three sets of parent-child came.)

- (49) Oyako wa mina tagaini niteiru.  
parent-child TOP all each other alike  
(Parents and children are all alike each other.)

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<sup>6</sup> [McKay 2006, pp.46ff.].

Fortunately, these two sentences can be paraphrased into those which do not commit to singularized pluralities. For example, the paraphrase of (49) runs like this:

For any  $x$  and  $y$ , if  $x$  is among the parents and  $y$  is among their children, then  $x$  and  $y$  are alike.

I do not know, however, whether every sentence with a plural noun phrase can be paraphrased in this way. I don't know how to get such a paraphrase for this sentence.

- (50) Oyako            no        daibubun   wa        tagaini        niteiru.  
       parent-child   GEN    most            TOP    each other    alike  
       (Most of the parents and children are alike each other.)

Moreover, singular quantification seems to be applicable to “oyako”, as the following example shows.

- (51) dono    oyako            mo        tagaini        niteiru.  
       which   parent-child   every    each other    alike  
       (Every parent-child is alike each other.)

This sentence is ambiguous, and it might mean either that parents and children are alike each other just as our interpretation of (49) above, or that every parent-child combination is alike each other as a combination<sup>7</sup>. It seems inevitable to treat a parent-child combination as some sort of entity if we want to have the latter interpretation. However, I am not going to discuss this problem now.

## 7.2 The absolute use of a relational noun

Japanese “kodomo” also means a person or persons who are under age, just as an English word “child” does. “Kodomo” used in this way does not take an argument, and hence is not a relational noun. The fact that there are two different uses of “kodomo” is shown by the existence of a sentence such as this:

- (52) Taro    no        kodomo   wa        mō            kodomo  
       GEN    child/ren   TOP    any longer    child/ren  
       dewa    nai.  
       is/are   not  
       (Taro's child(ren) is no longer a child (children).)

The reason why this sentence does not express a contradiction is that the two occurrences of “kodomo” do not have the same function and meaning. The first

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<sup>7</sup> For that matter, it is possible to interpret (49) in this way.

occurrence of “kodomo” is that of a relational noun, and the second is that of a non-relational noun. I suppose the same holds with the English translation.

In contrast to “kodomo”, “ko” is always a relational noun except when it is used as a part of the phrases like “otoko no ko” and “onna no ko”. They mean literally “male child” and “female child”, but usually mean “boy” and “girl”.

Many of the relational nouns which express kinsip relations can be turned into non-relational nouns that do not express the kinsip relations but the person or persons of a certain age. The following table shows this.

ani	(elder brother)	→	onī-san	(young man)
ane	(elder sister)	→	onē-san	(young woman)
oji	(uncle)	→	oji-san	(middle aged man)
oba	(aunt)	→	oba-san	(middle aged woman)
sofu	(grandfather)	→	oji-san	(old man)
sobo	(grandmother)	→	obā-san	(old woman)

Each word on the right column is also used with the same meaning as its counterpart on the left, while each word on the left is always used as a relational noun and has no such ambiguity. Hence, although the sentence

(53a) Hanako wa sobo da.  
TOP grandmother is

can mean only that Hanako is a grandmother for somebody, the sentence

(53b) Hanako wa obā-san da.  
TOP grandmother or old woman is

may be used to say either that Hanako is a grandmother, or that Hanako is an old woman. If “obā-san” in (53b) is used as a relational noun, then it makes sense to ask whose “obā-san” Hanako is. But if it is used as a non-relational noun, it does not make sense to do that. Hanako can be an “obā-san” even if she has no grandchildren. The similar remark applies to each of the words on the right column of the above table. Taro can be an “onī-san” without having any younger brother or sister. This means that such uses of “obā-san” or “onī-san” do not come from the relational uses of the same words by implicit existential quantification or “argument suppression” ([Barker 2008, pp.56f.]).

One difficult case is that of “kodomo”. Chris Barker speaks of “the monadic sense of *child*” and says the following.

(...) the monadic sense of *child* continues to explicitly entail that there must be an unspecified parent entity out there somewhere.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [Barker 2008, p.57].

But, as Barker himself seems to acknowledge<sup>9</sup>, it is rather difficult to establish such an entailment is a lexical one and not some other kind of entailment. For, it is always true that any person, including an underage one, has parents.

We have seen that Japanese words like “onī-san” and “obā-san” do not have any existential entailment, if they are used absolutely. This suggests that the absolute use of “kodomo” does not lexically entail the existence of any other persons and that such an entailment is derived from the general truth in biology.

Thus, in the following, we are going to distinguish a relational noun

**kodomo**(*X*)

from a non-relational noun

**kodomo**.

If we want to mark the difference more explicitly, we may use the subscripts. Thus, the relational noun “**kodomo**(*X*)” is distinguished from the non-relational noun “**kodomo**<sub>ab</sub>”, which is the absolute use of “kodomo”.

### 7.3 The classificatory use of a relational noun

In most of the conversational contexts, there is a certain frame of reference shared by the participants of the conversation. Such a frame of reference might range from small to big in its scale. If we talk about the relations between people, at the one end of the scale it can be a single family, and at another it can be the whole society.

When the members of a family is talking about some other members of the same family, a relational noun like “okā-san” (mother) and “obā-san” (grandmother) tends to work like a proper name. This is shown by the fact that it is not unusual in a Japanese family to address the children’s mother or grandmother as “okā-san” or “obā-san” even though she is not the speaker’s mother or grandmother. It is as if the point of reference for these terms were fixed on the viewpoint of the children.

If we go to the other extreme and consider the cases where the frame of reference is the whole society, we find that some relational nouns which express social relations are used to classify people in general. Each of the sentences I give below might be used as an answer to the question who Hanako is.

(54) Hanako wa gakusei desu.  
           TOP student is

(Hanako is a student.)

(55) Hanako wa sensei desu.  
           TOP teacher is

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<sup>9</sup> [Barker 2008, pp.59f.]

(Hanako is a teacher.)

(56) Hanako wa hisyo desu.  
TOP secretary is

(Hanako is a secretary.)

In some contexts, you might ask whose student Hanako is to the speaker of (54). It is more natural, however, to ask the speaker which school Hanako goes to. The same applies to other two cases; in many cases the audience wishes to know only which school Hanako teaches at or which company Hanako works as a secretary.

Between these two extremes, there are many cases in which relational nouns are used with an understanding that a particular institutional setting is presupposed. (54)–(56) might be used with such an understanding. For example, (56) might be an assertion made in a conversation which is wholly concerned with a certain company, and then what is asserted by (56) is that Hanako is one of the secretaries of the company.

Whether their frame of reference is the whole society or some particular institution, the nouns like “gakusei”, “sensei” and “hisyo” are generally used as classificatory labels and they need not be regarded as relational nouns. There may exist a “gakusei” who just belongs to some school and has no particular teacher that can be called her own. A “hisyo” might be a person who belongs to some agency and does a secretary work at various companies. In these cases, the word “gakusei” or “hisyo” functions as names for a status or a role, and is no longer a relational noun.

If some institutional setting like a particular school is assumed, then “sensei” and “seito” are just nouns for classifying the constituent members of the institution.

Thus, the classificatory use of a relational noun deprives it of its relational nature, and the noun so used is no longer a relational noun. In this respect, it is very similar to the absolute use of a relational noun. There is, however, a difference between them; in the classificatory case, it still makes sense to ask, for example, whose student a certain “gakusei” is, even though the answer might turn out to be “none”. We may characterize this feature of the classificatory use of a relational noun by the principle like the following.

In most cases, if  $X$  are the semantic values of “**gakusei**<sub>cl</sub>”, then there are some  $Y$  such that  $X$  are the semantic values of “**gakusei**( $Y$ )”.

It should be obvious that “**gakusei**<sub>cl</sub>” is the formal representation of the classificatory use of “gakusei”.

In contrast, the corresponding principle for the absolute use of a relational noun is not true. There are no entailment, even of “in most cases’ kind, between a relational noun and its absolute use.

## References

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