Beyond modifiability:
Diagnosing pronominal category in Japanese and Mandarin
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This paper discusses a previously overlooked difference in the syntactic category of pronouns in Japanese and Mandarin. Availability of modification by such noun phrase adjuncts as adjectives and genitive noun phrases is a common diagnostic for category of a language's pronouns. Following this diagnostic, a pronoun that may be modified is pro-NP and one that may not be modified is pro-DP (see, e.g., Fukui 1988, Noguchi 1997, Bošković 2008); applying this test, it appears at first glance that Japanese and Mandarin both have pro-NP:

(1) a. **Kyou-no kare**-no hou-ga   kinou-no   kare yori atamagaii desu.
       today-GEN he-GEN way-NOM yesterday-GEN he   than smart   is
       'Today's he is smarter than yesterday's him.'   *Japanese*
    b. **Zuo tian de   ta** bi   jin tian de   ta gen   cong ming.
       yesterday POSS him COMP.PRT today   POSS he more smart
       'Yesterday's he is smarter than today's him.'   *Mandarin*

However, in contexts where modification occurs in the presence of a numeral and a classifier, a contrast emerges: Japanese pronouns may still be modified, but those in Mandarin may not:

(2) a. John-wa **ureshii wareware yo-nin**-o   mita.
       John-TOP happy   us   four-Cl-ACC saw
       'John saw the happy four of us.'   *Japanese*
    b. ***Nan-guo de ta-men san-ge** mei you tu can jia   huen-li.
       sad   DE them   three-Cl didn't   go participate wedding
       (intended) 'Sad them three didn't participate in the wedding.'   *Mandarin*

I show that the contrast in (2) results from differences in the phrase structure of nominals in Japanese and Mandarin. I present arguments from quantifier float (building on Watanabe 2006 et seq) to show that Japanese lacks the DP projection, and that pronouns in this language have the same distribution as nouns; this explains the unrestricted availability of modification. In contrast, the more rigid distribution of quantifiers in Mandarin suggests that Mandarin does in fact have DP, and distributional differences between pronouns and nouns suggest that in this language pronouns are D (rather than N), at least in certain contexts (including that in (2); Li 1999); this explains the ungrammaticality of (2b). Thus, the modification in (1b) requires explanation. I propose that this is an example of coercion of the pronoun from D to N, analogous to that in English expressions like *John knows the real me*; the difference is that such coercion is much more productive in Mandarin than in English, possibly due to the smaller amount of overt nominal functional morphology in the former than the latter.

In summary, the modifiability diagnostic for pronominal category should be used with caution: the fact that a language's pronouns can be modified in some cases does not imply that its pronouns are NPs in all contexts. Furthermore, it raises questions about the nature and availability of coercion from functional to lexical categories cross-linguistically.

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