1. Introduction

Kishimoto (2000, 2005) argues from a syntactic point of view that the definiteness effect in there-constructions and that observed in possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese are parallel to each other. His syntactic proposal basically depends on Belletti’s (1988) “partitive case.” In this paper, we will point out a number of problems with his analysis, and argue that the definiteness effect in there-constructions has nothing to do with that observed in possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition.

The present paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we will review a number of previous studies concerning the definiteness effect in there-constructions. In section 3, we will argue that the definiteness effect in there-constructions is different from that in possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition both in English and Japanese, especially by way of pointing out some problems with Kishimoto’s syntactic proposal. Section 4 makes concluding remarks.

2. Previous Studies on the Definiteness Effect in There-Constructions

what follows, we will provide a general review of the studies.

2.1 Rando and Napoli (1978)

Rando and Napoli (1978) argue that the post-verbal noun phrases in _there_-constructions must be non-anaphoric. They assert that the restriction on the noun phrases depends on the notion of anaphoricity, not on the traditional distinction between definite and indefinite.

The notion of anaphoricity is assumed to be determined depending on both the speaker and the hearer. A noun phrase is considered anaphoric if it occurs in the preceding discourse, or if it refers to some entity familiar to the speaker and the hearer. Thus, the post verbal noun phrase in _there_-constructions must represent an unfamiliar entity.

Rando and Napoli's main concern is the distribution of _there_-constructions with a list interpretation, since the constructions with a list reading contain definite noun phrases. For example, the following case is an apparent counterexample to their proposal, which is discussed by Rando and Napoli themselves.

(1) Q: What's worth visiting here?
   A. There's the park, a very nice restaurant, and the library.
   That's all as far as I'm concerned.

   (Rando and Napoli (1978:300))

The first sentence in (1A) is a so-called _there_-construction with a list reading, which allows definite noun phrases in the post verbal position. Definite noun phrases can be anaphoric to a referent already introduced into the discourse.

In order to account for the well-formedness of the definite phrases in (1A), they argue that the requirement of non-anaphoricity must apply to the list itself rather than individual definite entities. This explanation is similar to Milsark's (1974, 1977) treatment of _there_-sentences with a list reading, where the definiteness effect applies to the list itself, but not the individual items in the list. Although the post verbal noun phrases in (1A) are formally
definite, Rando and Napoli argue that the definite phrases are semantically indefinite and therefore are non-anaphoric. Thus, the construction with a list interpretation also satisfies their condition.

While Rando and Napoli explain the definiteness effect in there-constructions semantically by using the notion of anaphoricity, they hint at the need to argue this issue in terms of a pragmatic mechanism. According to them, a noun phrase is considered anaphoric only if it has been introduced in the (fairly immediately) preceding discourse (Rando and Napoli (1978:309))

2.2 Holmback (1984)

Holmback accounts for the definiteness effect in there-constructions by using the “inclusiveness” condition based on Hawkins’s (1978) theory. Hawkins argues that definite expressions require an inclusiveness reference. Under this view, entities do not have to be familiar or known for a successful definite reference. They have only to be uniquely identified. Holmback’s inclusiveness condition is defined as follows:

(2) [T]he description must be such that it can be seen to refer to inclusively independent of the immediate context in order for an existential [there-construction] to have a definite description as [a post-verbal noun phrase].

(Holmback (1984:209))

Holmback regards there-constructions as having the function of introducing a new entity into the discourse. According to her, the definiteness effect in the constructions is the consequence of the incompatibility between the presentational function and the inclusiveness condition on definite expressions. That is, if a new entity is introduced in the form of a definite noun phrase, the inclusiveness must have nothing to do with the preceding discourse. In order for the definite noun phrase to be treated as new to the discourse and to be felicitously used in there-constructions, the referent of the noun phrase must be inherently unique or meets the inclusiveness condition. Consider the following cases:
(3) a. There were both major political parties represented at the conference.
   b. There is the village idiot at the front door.

(Holmback (1984:209))

In each acceptable example the definite noun phrase contains enough
information for the hearer to identify the relevant referent. Even in an
out-of-the-blue context, the definite expression can be uniquely identified by
the hearer. That is, it satisfies the inclusiveness condition. Therefore, the
definite noun phrases can be used in there-constructions.

2.3 Abbott (1992, 1993)

Abbott (1992, 1993) suggests that there-constructions including those
with a list reading can be accounted for in a unified way. Her proposal is
against Rando and Napoli's analysis, in which there-constructions with a
list interpretation are treated as counterexamples to the definiteness effect.
Consider the following case:

(4) a. Don't forget that Kim will be bringing a salad.
   b. Oh right – there is that.

(Abbott (1992:106))

In the acceptable there-construction in (4b), the post-verbal noun phrase that
is not listed. Moreover, the post-verbal phrase is clearly anaphoric to the
preceding discourse. Therefore, this case cannot be accounted for by the
notion of anaphoricity by Rando and Napoli.

Instead, Abbott defines the function of there-constructions as follows:

(5) The function of there-constructions including those with a list reading
    is to draw the addressee's attention to the existence and/or location of
    the entity or entities denoted by the focus [post-verbal] noun phrase.

(cf. Abbott (1993:41))
Abbott argues for a unified account of both “normal” there-constructions and there-constructions with a list interpretation. The relevant examples are given below.

(6) A. Is there anything to eat?
   B. There is the leftover chicken from last night. (Abbott (1993:42))

(7) A. I guess we’ve called everybody.
    B. No, there’s still Mary and John. (Abbott (1993:42))

In (6), speaker B does not seem to be asserting the existence of the leftover chicken. Rather, the speaker simply draws the addressee’s attention to the existence of the chicken. Similarly, the there-sentence in (7B) cannot be treated as asserting the existence of a list with Mary and John. In this context, the addressee may have forgotten about the existence of Mary and John as filling the predicational slot “people for us to call.” Speaker B in (7) uses the there-sentence to draw his attention (Abbott (1993:43)).

2.4 Ward and Birner (1995) and Birner and Ward (1998)

Ward and Birner (1995), and Birner and Ward (1998) argue that the post-verbal noun phrases in there-constructions represent hearer-new information. Put another way, they consider that there-constructions do not require indefinite noun phrases but hearer-new noun phrases.

The notion of hearer-newness was first proposed by Prince (1992). According to Prince, there are two information statuses depending on whether information is evoked within the current discourse (it is assumed to be old with respect to the discourse, or it is “discourse-old”) or it is believed by the speaker to be previously known to the hearer (it is assumed to be old with respect to the hearer’s belief, or it is “hearer-old”). While discourse-old information is also hearer-old information, hearer-old information might be discourse-new. That is to say, the hearer might know something although it
was previously not mentioned. Thus, hearer-old/hearer-new information and discourse-old/discourse-new information are independently determined.

Whether or not the noun phrases are assumed to represent hearer-new entities depends on the speaker’s beliefs about the hearer’s beliefs. That is, when the speaker does not assume that the entity is already known to the hearer, the noun phrases are assumed to be hearer-new. By contrast, when the speaker assumes that the entity is already known to the hearer, the noun phrases are not hearer-new (i.e., hearer-old). Hearer-old entities are typically compatible with definite noun phrases, while hearer-new entities are assumed to be indefinite. However, Prince claims that not all definite noun phrases are hearer-old and some of them can represent hearer-new entities. This is suggested by the following acceptable examples, where the post-copular noun phrases are definite.

(8) a. There were the same people at both conferences.
    b. There was the usual crowd at the beach.
    c. There was the stupidest article on the reading list.

(Prince (1992:299))

Prince asserts that the definite noun phrases in (8) behave like indefinite phrases. It follows, then, that they can occur felicitously in there-constructions.

Ward and Birner argue that all there-constructions with definite noun phrases can be accounted for by a single principle from a pragmatic perspective. That is, the post-verbal noun phrases represent an entity which is not presumed by the speaker to exist within the hearer’s knowledge store.

Based on their examination of a corpus, which contains 100 there-constructions with definite post-verbal noun phrases, they categorize five different classes of definite noun phrases. These classes are listed in (9) below.

(9) a. Hearer-old entities treated as hearer-new
    b. Hearer-new tokens of hearer-old types
There-Constructions Versus Possessive Constructions and Constructions with Verbs of Acquisition

There are constructions with Verbs of Acquisition and Constructions with Verbs of Acquisition and

The definite noun phrases corresponding to these represent a hearer-new entity and hence satisfy the constraint on the post-verbal noun phrases in there-constructions.

The first category in (9a) includes the reminder there-constructions noted by Bolinger (1977), Hannay (1985), Lakoff (1987), and Abbott (1993). When the speaker believes that the entity has been forgotten, he will treat the entity, which is mentioned earlier, as a hearer-new entity. Consider the following example:

(10) Almanzo liked haying-time. From dawn till long after dark every day he was busy, always doing different things. It was like play, and morning and afternoon there was the cold egg-nog.

(Birner and Ward (1998:123) [the underline is mine])

In (10), the underlined there-sentence contains the definite noun phrase the cold egg-nog. According to Birner and Ward (1998:124), while the cold egg-nog is mentioned earlier, there are sufficient grounds for the writer to believe that the entity has been temporarily forgotten by the reader. This enables the speaker to reintroduce the noun phrase as a hearer-new entity.

The second category (9b) can be found in example (11).

(11) The Woody Allen-Mia Farrow breakup, and Woody’s declaration of love for one of Mia’s adopted daughters, seems to have everyone’s attention. There are the usual sleazy reasons for that, of course – the visceral thrill of seeing the extremely private couple’s dirt in the street, etc.

(Ward and Birner (1995:732))
The post-verbal noun phrase in *there*-construction in (11) represents a new instance of a known type. This kind of examples include post-verbal noun phrases with adjectives such as *same, usual, regular, traditional, ideal, correct, perfect*.

The third type listed in (9c) is exemplified in (12).

(12) A. What could I give my sister for her birthday?
   B. There's John's book on birdwatching.

   (Birner and Ward (1998:131))

The *there*-sentence in (12B) is assumed to be a *there*-construction with a list interpretation. The post-verbal noun phrase *John's book* represents a book that the hearer is presumably familiar with and thus, the entity is uniquely identifiable. Nevertheless, the noun phrase is counted as a hearer-new entity in that the noun phrase instantiates the variable of an inferable open proposition. The *there*-construction in (12B), *(There's John's book on birdwatching)*, evokes the following open proposition:

(13) X is a birthday present for my sister.

The post-verbal noun phrase *John's book* represents a hearer-old entity newly instantiating the variable *x* in the relevant open proposition. Consequently, the noun phrase is hearer-new in the restricted context of the open proposition, which makes the *there*-construction felicitous.

The definite phrases listed in the fourth class (9d) are not relevant to the prior context for their acceptability. This is unlike the first three categories. This type of definite noun phrase is equally felicitous outside of *there*-constructions (in first-mention contexts). Thus, it is unsurprising that it can be used felicitously as the post-verbal noun phrase in a *there*-construction as shown in (14):

(14) In addition, as the review continues, *there is always the chance that we'll uncover something additional that is significant.*
In (14), the hearer probably assumes that the post-verbal noun phrase *the chance* conveys new information. But the description provided by the embedded clause within the noun phrase is sufficient to fully and uniquely identify the particular chance in question. Therefore, the noun phrase can appear felicitously in the *there*-sentence.

The final type ‘false definite’ in (9e) refers to a formal definite noun phrase used to represent an entity not assumed to be uniquely identifiable to the hearer.

This type includes the noun phrases with demonstrative *this* which are formally definite noun phrases behaving functionally like indefinite ones. Most uses of demonstrative *this* require that the speaker assume the hearer is in a position to identify the referent. However, in the following example, the speaker does not assume that the hearer can uniquely identify the entity represented by the noun phrase with demonstrative *this*:

(15) One day last year on a cold, clear, crisp afternoon, I saw this huge sheet of ice in the street.  
(Ward and Birner (1995:738) [the underline is mine])

The demonstrative in (15) is used to instruct the hearer to add a new entity to his knowledge store. Such a demonstrative can be felicitously used as the post-verbal noun phrase in *there*-constructions, as shown in (16).

(16) One day last year on a cold, clear, crisp afternoon, there was this huge sheet of ice in the street.  
(Ward and Birner (1995:738) [the underline is mine])

Ward and Birner (1995) and Birner and Ward (1998) capture the characterization of the definiteness effect pragmatically in a unified way. They argue that the ill-formedness of *there*-constructions is not due to the appearance of formally definite noun phrases.
Rather, the post-verbal noun phrases in there-constructions are felicitably used as long as they are construable as hearer-new entities in the context. That is, there are five types of definite post-verbal noun phrases in there-constructions. These five types can be considered to refer to hearer-new entities.

2.5 The Summary of the Previous Studies from a Semantic and a Pragmatic Perspective

In the previous subsections, we reviewed a number of previous studies of the definiteness effect in there-constructions, where the effect in these constructions is accounted for, based on semantic or pragmatic grounds. Their accounts are summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Anaphoricity</th>
<th>The post-verbal noun phrase must be non-anaphoric.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rando and Napoli (1978)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holmback (1984)</td>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>The post-verbal noun phrase (especially the definite noun phrase) must be uniquely identifiable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbott (1992, 1993)</td>
<td>Drawing the hearer's attention</td>
<td>There-construction must be used to draw the addressee's attention to the existence or location of the entity denoted by the post-verbal noun phrase.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birner and Ward (1998)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.6 Milsark (1974, 1977)

Milsark (1974, 1977) argues that the definiteness effect in there-constructions is the result of a semantic clash between existential quantification triggered by the expletive there and noun phrases that fail to have an existential reading.

Noun phrases that fail to have an existential interpretation include
proper names and universal quantifiers as well as definite descriptions. Among the definite descriptions, Milsark includes expressions with the definite article the. This means that only the traditional distinction between definite and indefinite is not sufficient to give an appropriate explanation for the definiteness effect in there-constructions.

In order to capture the distribution of the post-copular noun phrases in there-constructions, Milsark coins the terms weak and strong for those noun phrases which can and cannot occur in there-constructions respectively. The relevant examples are given below.

(17) a. There are \{some/several/many/few\} wolves at the door.  
    (weak determiners)

     b. *There are \{most/all/those/Betty’s\} wolves at the door.  
    (strong determiners)  
    (Milsark (1977) [the underlines are mine.])

The weak and strong determiners are listed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak Determiners (allowed in there-constructions)</th>
<th>strong determiners including the definite article the, demonstratives, possessive determiners, pronouns, universal quantifiers (all, every, each), most</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2.7 Syntactic Analyses

There are at least two different studies that account for the definiteness effect in there-constructions from a syntactic perspective. Both analyses are stated in terms of case theory.

In an analysis proposed by Safir (1985, 1987), the post-verbal noun phrase and the expletive there in the subject position of the construction forms an ‘unbalanced’ chain. It is argued that the definiteness effect is a consequence of the chain in order to satisfy the case filter.
Belletti (1988), on the other hand, appeals to the nature of a “partitive case” assigned to a noun phrase in her attempt to explain the definiteness effect.

In a language such as Finnish, which shows a morphologically rich case system, there are two possible cases assigned to the object. One is an accusative case, and the other is a partitive case. While an accusative case is assigned to the object of transitive verbs, a partitive case is assigned to the object of unaccusative verbs. Which case is assigned depends on the interpretation of the object noun phrase. Specifically, when the object has a definite reading, an accusative case is assigned, whereas when the object has an indefinite reading, a partitive case is assigned.

Belletti argues that this proposal has its most direct impact on the account of the definiteness effect in there-constructions. That is, she argues that the noun phrase to which a partitive case is assigned displays the effect, because a partitive case is only compatible with an indefinite interpretation of the noun phrase.

Following Belletti, Kishimoto (2000, 2005) argues that not only the definiteness effect in there-constructions but also the effect in possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese can be accounted for in a unified way.

Keeping in mind the various studies of the definiteness effect in there-constructions, we will discuss Kishimoto’s argument in more detail and point out some problems in the following section.

3. The Definiteness Effect in There-Constructions Versus the Definiteness Effect in Possessive Constructions and Constructions with Verbs of Acquisition

Kishimoto (2000, 2005) argues from a syntactic perspective that possessive constructions in Japanese bear a similarity to there-constructions. In addition, Kishimoto (2005) argues that there-constructions and Japanese constructions with verbs of acquisition are also parallel to each other. On the basis of Belletti (1988), he argues that these three constructions have the
same syntactic structure.

We will argue, however, that Kishimoto is not on the right track. We claim that there-constructions are different semantically or pragmatically from possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition. We emphasize that it is English possessive constructions, not there-constructions, that must be compared with Japanese possessive constructions.

3.1 Kishimoto (2000, 2005)

Kishimoto (2000, 2005) maintains that possessive constructions in Japanese bear a similarity to there-constructions, although he himself recognizes that Japanese possessive constructions and there-constructions clearly differ in semantic content.

He proposes that the distribution of the definiteness effect in these constructions can be predicted on the basis of a certain syntactic structure. Based on Belletti’s (1988) argument, he argues that the object noun phrase (or the post-verbal noun phrase) in these constructions is assigned a partitive case by the verbs. In his discussion, especially in Kishimoto (2005), not only possessive constructions but also constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese are assumed to have the same syntactic structure as that of there-constructions. Specifically, the definiteness effect in Japanese constructions with verbs of acquisition is also reduced to the objects bearing a partitive case.

In Belletti’s approach, what plays an important role is Case. She argues that the definiteness effect in there-constructions can be reduced to the nature of the object of unaccusative verbs. According to her, unaccusative verbs have the capacity of inherently assigning a partitive case to their objects, and they cannot assign a structural accusative case to them. Her proposal is based on the following Finnish sentences.

(18) a. Pöydällä on kirjoja.
   on the table is (some) books-PART PL
   ‘There are some books on the table.’
b. Helsingistä tulee kirjeitä.
from Helsinki comes (some) letters-PART PL
'There come some letters from Helsinki.'

(Belletti (1988:2))

In (18), the Finnish counterpart of *be* and *come*, which are typical unaccusative verbs, are used and their objects bear a partitive case. As is clear from the glosses, when a partitive case is assigned, these objects have an indefinite reading, which is manifested by the English expression *some*. Thus, the partitive hypothesis directly accounts for the definiteness effect in *there*-constructions.

Belletti’s claim that a partitive case appears to be compatible only with an indefinite interpretation seems to be on the right track, if other examples are given in Finnish:

(19) a. Anne tapaa vieraita
Anne meets guests-PART
‘Anne meets some guests.’

b. Anne tapaa vieraat
Anne meets guests-ACC
‘Anne meets the guests.’

(de Hoop (1996:66-67))

In (19), the transitive verb, the Finnish counterpart of the verb *meet*, is used. Both examples (19a) and (19b) show that the verb can assign either an accusative case or a partitive case to the object. When a partitive case is assigned, the object in (19a) has an indefinite reading, whereas when an accusative case is assigned, the object in (19b) has a definite interpretation.

It is obvious, however, that *there*-constructions with a list reading are counterexamples to Belletti’s analysis, since her account is not designed to handle cases where the post-verbal noun phrase is definite. In other words, under Belletti’s view, the constructions with a list reading are considered to be simply exceptions.
By contrast, Kishimoto does not treat them as exceptions. In order to account for both there-constructions with no list reading and those with a list reading in a unified way, he argues that the definiteness effect must be explained not only from a syntactic perspective but also from a pragmatic perspective. His idea can be summarized as follows:

(20) There-constructions, possessive constructions, and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese display the definiteness effect because the post-verbal noun phrase (or the object) bears a partitive case. Noun phrases bearing the case must always convey new information for the hearer.

Kishimoto agrees essentially with Belletti’s account. However, he wants to treat there-constructions with a list reading in a systematic way. Therefore, he argues that the definiteness effect must be explained not only in terms of a syntactic theory but also in terms of pragmatics.

As noted above, Kishimoto’s analysis has its roots in the observation that there-constructions appear to have a great deal in common with possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese. First, for example, they all display the definiteness effect. Secondly, they contain unaccusative verbs (Kishimoto (2005:247)). Although most previous studies have explained the definiteness effect in there-constructions from a pragmatic perspective, Kishimoto argues that the effect in these three constructions uniformly depends on both the syntactic and the pragmatic constraint.

As we will see in the following section, Kishimoto’s account, which treats there-constructions on a par with possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese, will encounter some empirical problems.

3.2 Problems with Kishimoto (2000, 2005)

In this section, we will point out problems with Kishimoto (2000, 2005). His account is problematic in the following respects.

Firstly, it is unclear why an indefinite interpretation is always obtained
whenever a partitive case is assigned. Belletti claims that a partitive case is only compatible with an indefinite interpretation, because the case always has the meanings of 'some of' and 'part of'. In other words, however, her explanation is just a tautology (or a circular explanation); the post-verbal noun phrase in there-constructions must be indefinite because they are assigned a partitive case, which always seems to be related to an indefinite interpretation. This explanation, in effect, does not tell us much about the nature of the definiteness effect.

Besides, in some languages, a partitive case is morphologically visible, while in others it is not. More concretely, a partitive case is explicitly manifested in morphologically rich languages such as Finnish. In morphologically poor languages such as English and Japanese, however, one cannot tell what case is assigned or whether or not a partitive case is really assigned, at least in possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition.

As a matter of fact, de Hoop (1996) points out that a partitive object need not necessarily receive an indefinite interpretation even in Finnish. This is clearer from the following example.

(21) Presidentti ampui kaikkia lintuja.
    President shot all-PART birds-PART
    'The president shot at all birds.'
    (de Hoop (1996:68))

According to Belletti, the fact that universal quantifiers such as all are excluded in there-constructions is a direct consequence of the incompatibility between the quantifiers and a partitive case. In the Finnish example in (21), however, one of the universal quantifiers, all, goes with a partitive case without any contradiction.

Therefore, we do not know to what extent the partitive case hypothesis has explanatory power.

Thirdly, it goes without saying that there-constructions, possessive constructions, and constructions with verbs of acquisition are semantically
different. It is unnatural to compare *there*-constructions with possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese. As we have mentioned earlier, the reason why Kishimoto assumes that the syntactic criteria are given precedence over semantic characterizations is because he compares these three constructions (Kishimoto (2005:212)). Because they all display the definiteness effect, Kishimoto regards them as containing the same syntactic structure. That is, the object (or the post-verbal noun phrase) in these constructions is assumed to be assigned a partitive case.

Fourthly, with respect to the information structure in these constructions, his account is considered to be inadequate.

As we have observed earlier, many attempts have been made to account for the definiteness effect in *there*-constructions. The essence of these claims can be summarized below.

(22) *There*-constructions have a presentational function that requires the post-verbal noun phrase to be newly introduced in the discourse. Hence, the noun phrase represents a hearer-new entity.

Therefore, the definiteness effect in *there*-constructions can be attributed to their presentational function. That is, the post-verbal noun phrases have to be indefinite. Even in *there*-constructions with a list reading, the post-verbal noun phrase conveys new information.

In the following section, we will argue that possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition both in English and Japanese do not have such a restriction. The objects in these constructions can convey old information as well as new information. Therefore, this also leads us to conclude that Kishimoto’s argument is not adequate.

Before going into the next section, let us try to clear up a terminological issue that could cause some confusion. Following the previous studies, we use the term “the definiteness effect” for the effect observed in *there*-constructions. However, this is potentially confusing, because definite noun phrases can occur in *there*-constructions with a list reading. In order not to treat the constructions with a list reading as a special class of exceptions, the effect in
there-constructions must be referred to as the “new information effect.” As is often pointed out in the literature (cf. (22)), both there-constructions and the constructions with a list reading are felicitous if and only if the post-verbal noun phrase conveys new information.

3.3 The Information Structure of Possessive Constructions and Constructions with Verbs of Acquisition in English and Japanese

As is clear from the various studies of there-constructions, the definiteness effect in there-constructions can be reduced to the presentational function of the construction. Thus, the post-verbal noun phrase in there-constructions is typically indefinite.

We will argue that the definiteness effect in possessive constructions in English and Japanese has nothing to do with a presentational function unlike the effect found in there-constructions. In other words, the objects in these constructions do not have to convey new information. Some objects in these constructions can carry old information. This can be seen in the following English possessive constructions.

(23) Q. Is John already married?
   A. He has a beautiful wife.

In dialogue (23), the reply (23A) to the question (23Q) contains the object a beautiful wife. The object conveys new information.

The same can be observed in the following case.

(24) It is a beautiful wife that John has.

In the well-formed cleft sentence (24), the object of have is focalized. These examples show that the object in English possessive constructions can convey new information.

In the conversation illustrated in (25), by contrast, what carries new information in (25A) is the subject, not the object.
(25) Q. Who has a {wife/lover}?
   A. John has a {wife/lover}.

In (25A), which is a response to the preceding question (25Q), the subject John conveys new information, while the objects a wife and a lover express old (or given) information.

In the same manner, the following cleft sentence indicates that new information can be represented by the subject of have.

(26) It is John who has a wife.

It follows that the information structure of the object in English possessive constructions is underspecified. That is, the object can convey both new and old information. Therefore, there is no restriction that the object must always convey new information.

Moreover, the same holds true for Japanese possessive constructions.

(27) John-ni-wa ootoo-ga i-ru.
    John-DAT-TOP brother-NOM be
    ‘John has a brother.’

The object or the nominative phrase in (27) can represent both new and old information. In a pseudo cleft sentence like (28a), what appears in the focus position is ootoo (‘brother’), which is the object of iru (‘be’) in (27). In (28b), on the other hand, in the focus position, the subject John appears. Thus, the object in Japanese possessive constructions does not have to express new information.

(28) a. John-ni i-ru no wa ootoo dake da.
    John-DAT be that-TOP brother only COP
    ‘It is only a brother that John has.’
   b. Ootoo-ga i-ru no wa John da.
brother-NOM be that-TOP John COP

'It is John who has a brother.'

(Kishimoto (2005:228-229))

It is worth pointing out that the following examples make the same point.

(29) a. It is a beautiful wife that John got.
   b. It is John who got a beautiful wife.

The acceptable cleft sentences in (29) include the verb of acquisition get. In (29a), the object a beautiful wife is represented as a focus element. In (29b), by contrast, the object is expressed as a topic (presupposed) element. Thus, the object does not have to convey new information also in constructions with verbs of acquisition.

Moreover, this holds true for Japanese constructions with verbs of acquisition.

(30) John-ni { umareta / tanjoosita / dekita } no wa
     John-DAT was born that-TOP
     ookina akachan da.
     big baby COP

'It was a big baby that John got.'

The object ookina akachan ('big baby') in (30) appears in a focus position.

In (31), by contrast, the object can also be used in the presupposed part:

(31) Akachan-ga { umareta / tanjoosita / dekita } no wa
     Baby-NOM was born that-TOP
     John da.
     John COP

'It was John who got a big baby.'
These examples indicate that the objects of verbs of acquisition can convey old as well as new information both in English and Japanese.

To sum up, possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition both in English and Japanese do not have a limitation on the information structure of the objects. The objects in these constructions can convey old information for the addressee.

Clearly, this does not correspond to there-constructions, where the post-verbal noun phrase must always convey new information for the hearer.

In view of the difference among these constructions, Kishimoto's (2000, 2005) position on the alleged syntactic correlation among these constructions cannot possibly be valid.

4 Concluding Remarks

We pointed out a number of problems with Kishimoto's analysis. That is, contrary to what is normally assumed in Kishimoto's (2000, 2005) proposal, we argued that there-constructions are not related to possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in English and Japanese. The reasons why this is so are as follows:

Firstly, Belletti's partitive case hypothesis does not seem to be valid in that the actual connection between the partitive meaning and an indefinite interpretation is rather controversial itself.

Secondly, it is not reasonable to compare there-constructions with possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition in Japanese, since these constructions have clearly different semantic contents. Although Kishimoto himself recognizes this point, he regards the idea of partitive case as the most relevant factor explaining the definiteness effect in these three types of constructions.

Thirdly, one cannot identify what case is assigned or whether or not a partitive case is really assigned in possessive constructions or constructions with verbs of acquisition, because English and Japanese are morphologically poor languages, compared to morphologically rich languages such as
Fourthly, with respect to information structure as well, his claim is not adequate. As was pointed out in the previous section, the definiteness effect in there-constructions can be attributed to their presentational function. Hence, the post-verbal noun phrases have to express new information, resulting in the definiteness effect in there-constructions. However, possessive constructions and constructions with verbs of acquisition both in English and Japanese do not have such a restriction. The objects in these constructions can convey old as well as new information.

Notes
*This paper is an extended English version of part of my paper, Kobukata (2009). I am indebted to Yukio Hirose for his helpful and invaluable comments on an earlier version of this article.

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