

On Licensing Conditions of Minimizers*

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1 Introduction

This paper, with reference to English and Japanese, studies the nature of what Bolinger (1972) calls a minimizer.¹ The items in (1a) function as English minimizers and the ones in (1b) as Japanese minimizers:

- (1) a. an inch, a red cent, a nickel, a thin dime, a finger, a drop, a wink, a bit, a thing, etc. (see Bolinger (1972:121), Horn (1989:399))
- b. itien 'a yen', itigo 'a word', itizi 'a character', itido 'once', itidoku 'a reading', itiniti 'a day', itibu 'a bit', itibetu 'a glance', ikkoku 'a moment', issen 'a sen (=1/100 yen)', issui 'a sleep', itteki 'a drop', ippo 'a step', hitokoto 'a word', hitori 'a person', sukosi 'a few/a little', etc.

In Japanese, the numeral *iti* 'one' is typically prefixed to a word to form a minimizer.

As will become clear, those items listed in (1) occur both in positive and negative contexts; however, only when the items are the focus of negation, they emphasize the negative senses of sentences in which they occur. The term "minimizer" is used here to refer to this functional aspect of the items and not the items themselves; *an inch*, for example, functions as a minimizer only when it is the focus of negation. Presumably, Bolinger (1972) used this term to refer to those items listed in (1a). The usage of this term in the present paper departs from that in Bolinger.

As we have just stated, minimizers put emphasis on senses of negation under negative contexts. Consider the following:

- (2) a. John didn't budge.
b. John didn't budge (even) an inch.
- (3) a. John wa ugok -anakat -ta.
John Top move -Neg -Past
'John didn't budge.'
b. John wa ippo mo ugok -anakat -ta.
John Top a step MO move -Neg -Past
'John didn't budge (even) an inch.'

Compared with the (a) sentences, the (b) sentences with *an inch* and *ippo mo* stress the senses of negation; we understand that John did not move at all in the (b) sentences. In the English

example, the optional intensifier *even* clearly indicates that *an inch* in negative contexts emphasize negative senses.

Now, consider the following sentences:²

- (4) a. He had a cut an inch long above his left eye.
 b. John wa syakaizin tosite no ippo o humidasi -ta.
 John Top member-of-society as Gen a step Acc start -Past
 'John has gone out into the world.'

In (4), *an inch*, and *ippo o* do not lay emphasis on negative senses at all: the items do not function as minimizers. In (4a), *an inch* is literally interpreted: the length he cut was an inch long. In (4b), the literal sense of *ippo o humidasi-u* is metaphorically extended, so that the sentence is understood to mean that John has gone out into the world. Comparing the sentences in (4) with those in (2) and (3), we find that the occurrence of *an inch* or *ippo* is not restricted to either positive or negative contexts. In what follows, we will refer to the item in (1b) with a particle as the "complex." Note that in Japanese, depending on the kind of particle attached to *ippo*, the contexts where complexes occur are different: *ippo* with the particle *mo* occurs in the negative context, while *ippo* with the accusative case-marker *o* occurs in the positive one.

Further examples are cited below:³

- (5) a. It's not worth a {nickel/thin dime/red cent}.
 b. Every time you raise the price of gasoline by one cent it costs the American consumer roughly a billion dollars.

In (5a), *a nickel*, *a thin dime*, and *a red cent* put emphasis on negative senses. By contrast, Horn (1989:399) notes that the positive versions of (5a) sound jocular or literal; in other words, *a nickel*, *a thin dime*, and *a red cent* do not function as minimizers in positive contexts. In (5b), *one cent* is literally interpreted and a negative sense is not observed here; that is, *one cent* does not function as a minimizer. For the additional Japanese examples, consider the following:

- (6) a. John wa sake o itteki mo nom -anakat -ta.
 John Top sake Acc a drop MO drink -Neg -Past
 'John didn't drink a drop.'
 b. itteki no namida ga kanozyo no hoho o nagare -ta.
 a drop Gen tear Nom her Gen cheek Acc flow -Past
 'A drop of tear fell down her cheek.'
- (7) a. John wa kaigi tyuu hitokoto mo syaber -anakat -ta
 John Top meeting during a word MO speak -Neg -Past

'John didn't speak a word during the meeting.'

- b. John no hitokoto ga Mary o kizutuke -ta.
 John Gen a word Nom Mary Acc hurt -Past
 'John's word hurts Mary.'

In the (a) sentences, *itteki mo* and *hitokoto mo* stress negative senses of the sentences; while in the (b) sentences, *itteki no* and *hitokoto ga* are literally interpreted and they never emphasize negative senses at all. In other words, the occurrence of *itteki* and *hitokoto* in themselves is not restricted to negative nor positive contexts. Note again that *itteki* or *hitokoto* with *mo* function as the minimizers in Japanese. If the case-marking particles such as *no* or *ga* are attached, *itteki* and *hitokoto* never function as minimizers. We must pay attention to the difference of the particles attached.

It is reasonable to claim, from these observations, that both in English and in Japanese, the occurrence of the items in (1) in themselves is restricted to neither positive nor negative contexts. They can occur in both contexts. Then, a question arises here: under what conditions do the items function as minimizers? The observations so far suggest that negation is essential for the minimizers. In the course of discussion, however, this is not the only factor for the occurrence of the minimizers. No previous studies discuss the licensing conditions of the minimizers; in fact, there are no previous studies exclusively dealing with the minimizers. Previous studies on negative polarity items (henceforth, NPIs) have dealt with NPIs as a whole, of which minimizers constitute a part (Ladusaw (1980), Linebarger (1980; 1987; 1991), Yoshimura (1993), among others). It has been just noted in the literature that the minimizers are restrictive NPIs in the sense that their occurrence is rather limited. However, Horn (1978:148-151), from a comparative perspective, cites various minimizers from languages of the world and mentions their universality. Following his observation and one of the conclusions I reached in Yoshida (1995) that minimizers should be distinguished from the rest of the NPIs, I examine the behavior of the minimizers, and will propose two licensing conditions for them: the Negative Focus Condition, and the Minimal Action Condition. They constitute the essential part of the licensing conditions. Furthermore, I will suggest an additional language-particular condition for Japanese minimizers.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 proposes two licensing conditions by examining sentences with overt negatives. In the course of discussion, it will also be shown how minimizers emphasize negative senses. In section 3, we will examine sentences without overt negatives and show that the minimizers in the sentences are focuses of negation through

implied negation. In relation to the implied negation, we will introduce the notion of indirect licensing, and suggest the necessity for an additional licensing condition for Japanese minimizers.

2 Minimizers with Overt Negatives

This section deals with sentences with overt negatives. By examining the sentences, we will propose two licensing conditions for minimizers: the Negative Focus Condition and the Minimal Action Condition. For the first condition, I have already argued in Yoshida (1995) that English minimizers should be the focus of negation.

2.1 Negative Focus Condition

Let us begin by considering the following examples:

- (8) a. John wouldn't budge an inch, even if he is threatened.
 b.* John budged an inch, even if he is threatened.
- (9) a. His paper doesn't hold a candle to mine.
 b.* His paper held a candle to mine.
- (10) a. John hasn't read a verse of the Bible.
 b.* John has read a verse of the Bible.

In the (a) sentences, *an inch*, *a candle*, and *a verse* emphasize negative senses. The unacceptability of the (b) sentences indicates that the verb phrases with *an inch*, *a candle*, and *a verse* must be in the scope of an overt negative. To elaborate this approximation, consider the following pair:

- (11) a.* John didn't [budge an inch because he was pushed], but because he fell.
 b. John didn't [move because he was pushed], but because he fell.

In (11a), *budge an inch* is obviously in the scope of the overt negative, which is marked with square brackets; however, the sentence is unacceptable, contrary to our prediction. As for (11b), which also describes John's movement, the sentence is acceptable.

We must now explain why (11a) is unacceptable in spite of the fact that *budge an inch* occurs in the scope of the overt negative. Considering the fact that (11b) is acceptable, the unacceptability of (11a) should not be attributed to the intended meaning of the sentence. Note that in both sentences, the overt negative *not* and the following conjunction *but* are correlative. In fact, *not* actually negates the occurrence of the first *because* clause, and the following *because* clause introduced by *but* restates the reason why John moved. The existence of the following restatement clause ensures that the first *because* clause is the focus of the overt negative. Then,

budge an inch in (11a) and *move* in (11b) are not the focus of negation, although they are present in the scope of the overt negative. That is, being in the scope of the overt negative is not sufficient for *budge an inch* to be licensed. Rather, it must be the focus of the overt negative. Thus, it is more appropriate to state here that the whole of *budge an inch* must be the focus of negation.

This line of argument is further elaborated by considering the following examples:

- (12) a. John didn't [budge because he was pushed], but because he fell.
 b.* John didn't [move an inch because he was pushed], but because he fell.
 b'. John didn't move an inch.

This pair contrasts with that of (11) with respect to the occurrence of *an inch*. It is also noted that the acceptability is reversed in these pairs. The fact that the *because* clause in (12a), as in (11a), is the focus of the overt negative indicates that the verb *budge* does not have to be the focus of negation. Based on this observation, we claim that what must be the focus of negation in (11a) is not the whole of VP *budge an inch* but only *an inch*. This is also shown by the contrast between (11b) and (12b). Although we refer only to *an inch* in the discussion, the same argument is also true of other items in (1a), which leads to the claim that English minimizers have to be the focus of overt negatives.

We then consider the following sentences with Japanese minimizers:

- (13) a. John wa ippo mo ugok -anakat -ta.
 John Top a step MO move -Neg -Past
 'John didn't budge an inch.'
 b. John wa ugok-anakat-ta.
 c.* John wa ippo mo ugoi-ta.
- (14) a. John wa sake o itteki mo nom -anakat -ta.
 John Top sake Acc a drop MO drink -Neg -Past
 'John didn't drink a drop.'
 b. John wa sake o nom-anakat-ta.
 c.* John wa sake o itteki mo non-da.
- (15) a. John wa itido mo yakusoku o yabur -anakat -ta.
 John Top once MO promise Acc break -Neg -Past
 'John has never broken a promise.'
 b. John wa yakusoku o yabur-anakat-ta.
 c.* John wa itido mo yakusoku o yabut-ta.

A comparison between the (a) and (b) sentences demonstrates that *ippo mo*, *itteki mo*, and *itido mo* lay emphasis on negative senses: we understand the (a) sentences above to mean that John's action did not occur at all. We also find that *ippo mo*, *itteki mo*, and *itido mo* in the (a) and (c) examples have a focusing particle *mo*. If we remove the focusing particle *mo* from the (a) examples, we do not obtain the emphatic senses; in other words, *ippo*, *itteki*, and *itido* by themselves do not function as minimizers. Therefore, with an overt focusing particle, Japanese minimizers have to be focused. In fact, the difference in acceptability between the (a) and (c) sentences indicates that Japanese minimizers must be focused by an overt negative.⁴ From the discussions so far, we propose the following licensing condition:

- (16) Negative Focus Condition: Minimizers must be the focus of negation.

In order to satisfy (16), an overt negative is used as a licenser in all the acceptable sentences examined above. In section 3, we will examine sentences without an overt negative, where the minimizers are the focus of negation through implied negation. Although negation is essential in licensing minimizers, the Negative Focus Condition alone does not properly license the minimizers, which we will see later. Thus, we will propose another condition in the next subsection.

2.2 Minimal Action Condition

In this subsection, we consider again the sentences discussed above, with special attention to the action described by the verb phrases with minimizers, and then propose the second licensing condition for the minimizers. We also reveal how minimizers stress emphatic senses of negation. Let us begin by considering the following sentences:

- (17) a. John didn't budge (even) an inch. (=2b)
 b. John hasn't read a verse of the Bible. (=10a)
- (18) a. John wa ippo mo ugok -anakat -ta. (=3b)
 John Top a step MO move -Neg -Past
 'John didn't budge (even) an inch.'
 b. John wa sake o itteki mo nom -anakat -ta. (=14a)
 John Top sake Acc a drop MO drink -Neg -Past
 'John didn't drink a drop.'

In (17a) and its Japanese counterpart (18a), the verb phrases *budge an inch* and *ippo ugok-u* show that the distance of movement is extremely short.⁵ Moving extremely short distance is felt to be slight movement. One might say that John could physically move half an inch or *ham-po* 'half of *ippo*' or even shorter in a normal situation. This is certainly true. However, it is also

true that the distance of movement described by the verb phrases is undoubtedly short. Although an inch is not the shortest length in a strict sense, it is absolutely short. In any case, the verb phrases describe the slight, if not the slightest, movement. We then examine (17b). In the society where Christianity penetrates, any person may read the verse of the Bible in any way, even if he may not read through the whole of the Bible. Then, reading a verse of the Bible expresses a little mental activity. It seems reasonable to state that *read a verse of the Bible* is the slight, if not the slightest, mental action. Consider now *itteki nom-u* 'drink a drop' in (18b). Under normal circumstances, it is not possible that we drink only a drop of beverages. *Itteki nom-u* is felt to be a little activity. This is also the small action as we have just seen.

In (17) and (18), the verb phrases express the small action, though not the smallest in a strict sense. Suppose now we measure the action in terms of quantity. Then the small action described in (17) and (18) is quantitatively small; in other words, the action is close to the lower endpoint on a scale. This small quantity seems to be essential in licensing minimizers. We push the argument further along this line.

Let us consider the following sentence:

(19) John doesn't have a child.

If John does not have a child, then it is necessarily the case that he never has any number of children. Note that the number of children negated in (19) is the smallest number of existence; that is, one. The point is that if the smallest number of children does not exist, then the non-existence of any number of children is necessarily the case. With this idea in mind, we return to (17) and (18).

In (17) and (18), the action described by the verb phrases is quantitatively small. Suppose that the action is perceived as the smallest quantity. Then, exploiting the idea presented above, we understand that the non-existence of the smallest quantity logically entails the non-existence of any amount. Thus, non-existence of any amount virtually focuses on the lower endpoint on a scale; in other words, non-existence of any amount is emphasized. If even the smallest action is not performed, then it is necessarily the case that an activity is not practiced at all. As a result, non-occurrence of the action is stressed. This explains why sentences in (17) and (18) carry strong negative senses.⁶ We propose here the second licensing condition for minimizers:

(20) Minimal Action Condition: The action described by a verb phrase with a minimizer must be perceived as the smallest.

The point is that the action must be perceived as the smallest, even if it is not in a strict sense.

We should note here the role of a minimizer: the small action described by the verb phrase is owing to the minimizer. With the occurrence of the minimizer, which expresses small quantity, the verb phrase describe small action. Negating the verb phrase, then, yields emphatic senses of negation.

Two licensing conditions (16) and (20) work together to constrain minimizers. The two conditions are inseparable from each other. Consider the following sentences:

- (21) a. Every time you raise the price of gasoline by one cent it costs the American consumer roughly a billion dollars. (=5b)
 b. John didn't budge two inches.

In (21a), although the action described by the verb phrase with *one cent* may be perceived as the smallest, *one cent* is not the focus of negation, violating the Negative Focus Condition. Thus, *one cent* is not licensed as a minimizer. In (21b), *two inches* may be the focus of negation; however, the action described by the verb phrase cannot be perceived as the smallest; that is, violation of the Minimal Action Condition. Therefore, *two inches* is not licensed as a minimizer. The conditions not only describe the occurrence of minimizers, but they predict that an increasing number of items will function as minimizers.

Since we have just proposed the licensing conditions for minimizers, a comment may be in order for those of NPIs. The fact that the minimizers compose a part of the NPIs may lead one to the idea that the licensing conditions of NPIs replace those of minimizers. Previous studies on NPIs have proposed several licensing conditions, which, unfortunately, do not refer to the small action described by a verb phrase. To function as a minimizer, it is essential for us to feel that the verb phrase describes the smallest action, as we have seen above. Thus, the licensing conditions of NPIs are not enough for the proper licensing of minimizers.

3 Minimizers without Overt Negatives

We turn to the minimizers that occur in sentences without overt negatives. In the course of discussion, we make sure that the two conditions are operative in licensing the minimizers, with special attention to the Negative Focus Condition. In addition to direct licensing by overt negatives discussed so far, this section introduces the notion of indirect licensing: minimizers are licensed via negative implication. Noting the distinction between direct and indirect licensing, we will suggest that direct licensing selects the minimizers with *mo* and indirect licensing selects the ones with *demo* in Japanese.

3.1 English Minimizers without Overt Negatives

This subsection, most of whose argument has already been offered in Yoshida (1995), introduces the notion of indirect licensing in examining several constructions of English: interrogatives, *if* clauses, comparatives, and *be surprised if* constructions. Acceptable sentences here carry negative implications and minimizers in them are the focus of negation in an indirect way via implied negation. Although we do not mention the action described by the verb phrases one by one, it is certainly perceived as the smallest, satisfying the Minimal Action Condition.

First, consider the following *wh* interrogative:

(22) Who would lift a finger for you?

This sentence is interrogative in form; however the speaker is not asking a question as to which person helps the hearer. Rather, (22) carries the following negative implication:

(23) No one would lift a finger for you.

The speaker, by uttering (22), is not asking a question; rather, the sentence implies the negative statement in (23). That is to say, the speaker is trying to convey his/her strong negative belief. In other words, (22) is interpreted as a rhetorical question.

The original sentence does not contain an overt negative, which seems to be a sign that the minimizer is not the focus of negation. However, it is practically the focus of negation via negative implication (23). Thus, compared with cases containing overt negatives, the minimizer here is indirectly licensed by negation in the sense that it is the focus of negation via the implication, observing the Negative Focus Condition. The example here indicates that the minimizers are not necessarily the focus of overt negatives.

The same line of argument holds for the following *yes-no* interrogative.

(24) Does Charlie bat an eye when he is threatened?

The speaker, by uttering this interrogative sentence, is not asking a question. Rather, he suggests his negative belief as in (25):

(25) Charlie doesn't bat an eye when he is threatened.

Sentence (24), as well as (22), is interpreted as a rhetorical question. Despite the fact that there are no overt negatives, the minimizer *an eye* is actually the focus of negation in an indirect way via negative implication (25), observing the Negative Focus Condition.

We then examine the following *if* clauses:

(26) a. If you contribute a red cent to the Moonies, I'll hit you.

b.*If you contribute a red cent to the Moonies, I'll reward you.

(27) You shouldn't contribute a red cent to the Moonies.

(26a) is interpreted as in (27): the speaker forbids the hearer to donate any money to the

Moonies. We must now consider the difference in acceptability between (26a) and (26b).

The only difference between these sentences is the action described in the apodoses, which seems to be a source of the difference in acceptability. When the apodosis describes the act of hitting, which is obviously undesirable to the hearer under normal situation, the sentence is acceptable; when it gives a description of the act of praise, which is clearly desirable to the hearer, the sentence is unacceptable. Further pursuit of the difference in acceptability now requires the consideration of what attitudes the speakers have toward the hearers. In (26), the speakers are regarded as taking an attitude of prohibition toward the hearers. Generally speaking, an attitude of prohibition may accompany such threatening action as hitting or scolding. It is reasonable to argue that the attitude of prohibition is compatible with the threatening action of hitting. Hence, (26a) is acceptable. However, the apodosis describing the act of praise suggests that the speaker wants the hearer to donate money to the Moonies, which is obviously at odds with the attitude of prohibition. Therefore, (26b) is unacceptable. As for the minimizer in (26a), it is the focus of negation through negative implication as in (22) and (24), observing the Negative Focus Condition.

Comparative constructions, where no overt negatives are found, are also discussed here.

(28) a. Cows fly more often than John lifts a finger to help the poor.

b.*The sun rises more often than John lifts a finger to help the poor.

(cf. Linebarger 1991:178-179)

Sentence (28a) bears the following negative implication:

(29) John doesn't lift a finger to help the poor.

In (28a), the speaker mentions an unimaginable event of cow's flying and compares this event with his conviction of John's unkindness. Then the sentence is interpreted as in (29). The minimizer here is also indirectly licensed by negation through negative implication.

In (28b), an ordinary habitual event of sunrise is mentioned and compared with the speaker's conviction of John's unkindness. Suppose that the action described by *lift a finger* signals the speaker's negative belief that John never helps the poor, then an event to be compared with should also describe a negative situation. However, as noted above, the ordinary or imaginable event of sunrise is compared. Thus, (28b) is unacceptable.

Final English examples without overt negatives are *be surprised if* constructions:

(30) a. I'll be surprised if John lifts a finger to help the poor.

b.*I'll be glad if John lifts a finger to help the poor.

(31) John won't lift a finger to help the poor.

Sentence (30a) is interpreted as in (31), where the speaker's negative conviction of John's unkindness is observed. The minimizer, as in the above instances, is indirectly licensed by negation.

In (30b), *I'll be glad* suggests that the speaker expects the event represented in the subordinate clause will take place. In other words, he hopes that John will help the poor. Suppose, again, that the action described by the verb phrase signals the speaker's negative opinion that John never helps the poor, then the two views about John are obviously incompatible. Hence, (30b) is unacceptable.

3.2 Japanese Minimizers without Overt Negatives

This subsection deals with Japanese minimizers without overt negatives. As will become clear, Japanese minimizers, as with English ones, may be licensed indirectly via implied negation. Based on the distinction between direct and indirect licensing, then, we will show that direct licensing selects the minimizer with *mo* and indirect licensing selects the one with *demo*. We will also mention the properties of *mo* and *demo*.

Now let us begin by considering the following examples:

- (32) a. omae ni ippo demo yuzuru yatu ga iru daroo ka?
 you Dat a step DEMO yield fellow Nom be Q
 'I wonder whether anyone gives you an inch.'
- b. (sake o nom -e -nai omae ni) itteki demo nom -ase-ru
 sake Acc drink -Potential -Neg you Dat a drop DEMO drink -Cause
 yatu ga iru daroo ka?
 fellow Nom be Q
 'I wonder whether anyone forces you to drink a drop.'
- c. (kono isogasii toki ni) issyun demo muda ni suru yatu ga
 this busy time a moment DEMO waste do fellow Nom
 iru daroo ka?
 be Q
 'I wonder whether anyone loses a moment.'
- (33) mosi omae ga hitokoto demo syabet -tara, nagur-u zo.
 if you Nom a word DEMO speak -if hit -Present ZO
 'If you speak even a word, I'll hit you.'
- (34) mosi omae ga mazusii hito o sukosi demo tetuda-eba,
 if you Nom poor people Acc a bit DEMO help -if

odoroku daroo yo.

be-surprised YO

'If you lift a finger to help the poor, I'll be surprised.'

These sentences are interpreted as follows:

- (32')a. daremo omae ni ippo mo yuzur -anai.
 anyone you Dat a step MO yield -Neg
 'No one would give you an inch.'
- b. daremo omae ni itteki mo nom -ase -nai.
 anyone you Dat a drop MO drink -Cause-Neg
 'No one would force you to drink a drop.'
- c. daremo issyun mo muda ni si -nai.
 anyone a moment MO waste do -Neg
 'No one would lose a moment.'
- (33') hitokoto mo syaber -anai yooni siro.
 a word MO speak -Neg do(Imperative)
 'Do not speak even a word.'
- (34') omae wa mazusii hito o sukosi mo tetudaw -anai daroo.
 you Top poor people Acc a bit MO help -Neg guess
 '(I guess) you never lift a finger to help the poor.'

The original sentences contain no overt negatives, which seems to be a sign that *ippo*, *itteki*, *issyun*, *hitokoto*, and *sukosi* are not the focus of negation. The negative implications in (32')-(34'), however, indicate that the items are actually the focus of negation. Therefore, Japanese minimizers in negative contexts may be, as in the cases of English, indirectly licensed by negation in the sense that they are the focus of negation via implied negation. Thus, sentences (32)-(34) satisfy the Negative Focus Condition.

In (32)-(34), *demo* is attached to the Japanese minimizers. This observation, together with the one made earlier that *mo* is attached to the Japanese minimizers with overt negatives, suggests that *mo* and *demo*, when they are attached to Japanese minimizers, are signs of direct and indirect licensing respectively. In order to clarify this point, consider the slightly modified versions of (32)-(34), where the particles are changed to *mo*:

- (35) a.* omae ni ippo mo yuzuru yatu ga iru daroo ka?
 b.* (sake no nom-e-nai omae ni) itteki mo nom-ase-ru yatu ga iru daroo ka?
 c.* (kono isogasii toki ni) issyun mo muda ni suru yatu ga iru daroo ka?

(36) * mosi omae ga hitokoto mo syabet-tara, nagur-u zo.

(37) * mosi omae ga mazusii hito o sukosi mo tetuda-eba, odoroku daroo yo.

Compared with (32)-(34), where *demo* is attached, (35)-(37) are all unacceptable, which suggests that indirect licensing of Japanese minimizers selects *demo* rather than *mo* on the surface form.

In addition to the examples above, we examine the following pairs, where overt negatives occur:

(38) a. John wa ippo mo ugok -anakat -ta.

John Top a step MO move-Neg -Past

'John didn't budge an inch.'

b.* John wa ippo demo ugok-anakat-ta.

(39) a. John wa sake o itteki mo nom -anakat -ta.

John Top sake Acc a drop MO drink -Neg -Past

'John didn't drink a drop.'

b.* John wa sake o itteki demo nom-anakat-ta.

(40) a. John wa itido mo yakusoku o yabur-anakat -ta.

John Top once MO promise Acc break -Neg -Past

'John has never broken a promise.'

b.* John wa itido demo yakusoku o yabur-anakat-ta.

In (38)-(40), the overt negative *nai* is affixed to verbs in the inflected form *-anakat-*. With *mo* accompanied by the overt negatives, the (a) sentences are acceptable; while in the case of *demo*, the (b) sentences are unacceptable. Depending on the particles attached to the minimizers, the acceptability is different. These examples and the ones discussed above suggest that direct licensing on the one hand and indirect licensing on the other select *mo* and *demo* respectively.

In passing, consider the following examples:

(41) a. issui mo suru monoka.

a sleep MO do MONOKA

'I never sleep a wink.'

b.* issui demo suru monoka.

(42) a. itibu no suki mo miseru monoka.

a bit Gen unguardedness MO show MONOKA

'I never let down a bit of my guard.'

b.* itibu no suki demo miseru monoka.

There are no *nai* or its inflected forms here; however, based on the argument that direct licensing selects *mo*, it may not be unreasonable to claim that the sentences in (41)-(42) in fact contain some elements acting as overt negatives. The following paraphrases of the (a) sentences clear up the point:

- (43) a. *issui mo si -nai tumorida.*
 a sleep MO do -Neg intend
 'I intend I never sleep a wink.'
- b. *itibu no suki mo mise -nai tumorida.*
 a bit Gen unguardedness MO show -Neg intend
 'I intend I never let down a bit of my guard.'

These paraphrases, where speaker's negative intention is observed, suggest that both (41a) and (42a) in fact contain some elements acting as overt negatives, which license *issui mo* and *itibu no suki mo*, and that *monoka* expressing the speaker's negative intention seems to be a possible candidate for the elements. We suggest that *monoka*, in addition to *nai*, functions as the overt negative in the sense that it directly licenses the minimizers.⁷

Kato (1985) and McGloin (1986) mention *monoka* in their detailed analyses of negation in Japanese. In Kato (1985:149-150), *monoka* is grouped together with cases involving implied negation under the title of "no overt negative." Unfortunately, he did not discuss the group at all; however, judging from his classification, he seems to have thought that the sentences with *monoka* do not accompany overt negatives but do imply negation, which contrasts with our claim. On the other hand, McGloin (1986:76), who did not develop any arguments for her claim on *monoka*, just stated that "with *monoka*, the negation is not implied but strongly asserted."

The discussion here suggests that direct licensing selects *mo*, while indirect licensing selects *demo* in Japanese, which will lead to the proposal of an additional licensing condition for Japanese minimizers. Both *mo* and *demo*, in relation to the minimizers, are attached to the items perceived as describing minimum quantity, and the resultant complexes clearly indicate the lowest endpoint on a scale; in other words, *mo* and *demo* focus on the minimum quantity, and the action described by the verb phrases with them is perceived as the smallest. Minimizers with *mo*, in concord with overt negatives, stress negative senses in negative sentences. The complexes never occur in positive sentences. The sentences with the complexes, therefore, assert negative proposition. On the other hand, minimizers with *demo* never occur with overt negatives. These complexes are used in some interrogative and conditional sentences as we

have seen above. The sentences, in describing hypothetical situation, do not assert negative proposition, but imply them. Thus, *mo* and *demo*, in relation to minimizers, induce negative assertion and negative implication respectively.^{8,9}

The discussion here for Japanese minimizers focuses on clear cases and ignores complicated ones. As for the particles, we have exclusively dealt with *mo* and *demo*, and ignored such particles as *taritomo*, or *sae*. As for the sentence types, our discussion does not include complex sentences where sentences with minimizers are embedded in ones with overt negatives. The behavior of complex sentences are so complicated that our statement about direct/indirect licensing here does not immediately apply. Consider the following examples from Kato (1985:178-179):

(44) kaze ga naoru made, [koohii o ippai mo non-de]wa ikenai
 cold Nom recover until coffee Acc a cup MO drink Top Neg(Imperative)
 'You should not drink coffee until you recover from the cold.'

(45) *kyoo wa [hon o issatu mo ka-u] to wa kagir-anai.
 Today Top book Acc one(Classifier) MO buy Top Neg
 'Lit. It is not necessarily the case that I will buy even one book today.'

(Alphabetical notations are slightly changed for consistency and glosses are added in (44) and (45).)

Some expressions such as *wa ikenai* permit minimizers with *mo* in embedded sentences, while others such as *to wa kagir-anai* does not. A fuller investigation of Japanese minimizers awaits future research.

4 Summary

We have shown in this paper that the items listed at the outset appear not only in negative contexts but also in positive ones. From this observation, we have claimed that the occurrence of them is restricted to neither positive nor negative contexts. Then we have considered under what conditions minimizers are licensed, and proposed two conditions for them: the Negative Focus Condition, and the Minimal Action Condition. For the latter condition, what is of importance is not the minimum quantity in a strict sense; rather, the action must be perceived as the smallest. In connection with this, we have also shown how emphatic senses of negation are obtained. In discussing the minimizers without overt negatives, the notion of direct and indirect licensing has been introduced. As for the Japanese minimizers, we have pointed out the correspondences between direct licensing and *mo* on the one hand, and indirect licensing and

demo on the other, which will lead to the proposal of an additional licensing condition for Japanese minimizers.

Notes

* This is a revised version of the idea reported at the Tsukuba English Linguistics Colloquium held on February 22, 1996. I am grateful to the audience there for useful comments. In writing this paper, I have benefited from the comments, suggestions, and criticisms by Ronald Craig, Satoru Kobayakawa, Koichi Nishida, Keiko Sugiyama, Yuji Tanaka, and Hideki Zamma. Needless to say, any remaining errors and inadequacies are entirely my own.

¹ This use of minimizer is slightly different from the one, in the sense of Quirk et al. (1985). In their usage, a minimizer is the word intensifying a negative sense, and they include such items as *barely*, *hardly*, *little*, and *scarcely*, which in themselves carry negative senses. In the present paper, however, a minimizer refers only to the word expressing small quantity.

² (4a) are taken from *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*.

³ (5a) are cited from Horn (1989:399), and (5b) from *Time Almanac Reference Edition*, 1994. In addition to (5a), Horn provides the following examples:

- (i) a. I didn't eat *a thing*. (??I ate a thing.)
- b. I didn't {drink *a drop*/sleep *a wink*}.
- c. I don't {give *a damn*/give *a hoot*/care *a fig*}.
- d. There wasn't *a sign* of them.

The italicized items in (i) emphasize negative senses; however, Horn (1989:399) notes that the items in positive versions sound jocular or literal. From these observations, we understand that the occurrence of the italicized items is not restricted to either positive or negative contexts.

⁴ For another type of overt negative, consider the following examples, where no *nai* forms are found:

- (i) a. issui mo suru na.
 a sleep MO do NA
 'Do not sleep a wink.'
- b. itibu no suki mo miseru na.
 a bit Gen unguardedness MO show NA
 'Do not let down a bit of your guard.'

There are no *nai* or its inflected forms here; however, we find *na* meaning prohibition in

sentence final position. This sentence final *na* functions as overt negatives like *nai* considered so far, which is confirmed by the following paraphrase of (i):

- (ii) a. *issui mo si -nai yooni subeki da.*
 a sleep MO do -Neg should
 'You should not sleep a wink.'
- b. *itibu no suki mo mise -nai yooni subeki da.*
 a bit Gen unguardedness MO show -Neg should
 'You should not let down a bit of your guard.'

These paraphrases indicate that *na* expressing a prohibitive (or more generally a negative) sense is another instance of an overt negative. Note that the particle *mo* is attached to the minimizers in (i). See also the discussion in section 3.2 for the overtness of negation.

⁵ In considering the action described by verb phrases in Japanese, we remove the particle, which does not affect the slightness of the action at issue.

⁶ The idea presented here is owing to Fauconnier (1975).

⁷ For the status of *monoka*, consider the following sentence, where one of the NPIs *sika* appears:

- (i) *biiru sika nom -u monoka.*
 beer SIKA drink -Present MONOKA
 'We drink only beer.'

Although I myself accept the sentence, some people do not. If we follow my own intuition, then (i) indicates that *monoka* functions as an overt negative, since *sika* requires the presence of an overt negative like *nai*. However, if we follow the intuition of the latter, then (i) suggests two possibilities: either *monoka* in fact does not function as an overt negative like *nai*, or *sika* does not behave in the same way as *issui mo* and *itibu no suki mo*. For the latter possibility, consider the following sentences from Kato (1985:154-156):

- (ii) a. **daremo "Aspects" sika yom -anakat -ta.*
 anyone "Aspects" SIKA read -Neg -Past
- b. *daremo hon o issatu mo kaw -anakat -ta.*
 anyone book Acc one(Classifier) MO buy -Neg -Past
 'No one bought even a book.'
- (iii) a. *Taro sika ringo o tabe -nakat -ta.*
 Taro SIKA apple Acc eat -Neg -Past
 'Only Taro ate an apple.'

- b.*Taro sika ringo wa tabe -nakat -ta.
Taro SIKa apple Top eat -Neg -Past
- c.*Taro sika ringo mo/sae/dake tabe -nakat -ta.
Taro SIKa apple MO/SAE/DAKE eat -Neg -Past
- (iv) a. hitori mo kare ni tegami o das -anakat -ta.
a person MO he Dat letter Acc send-Neg -Past
'No one sent a letter to him.'
- b. hitori mo kare ni wa tegami o das -anakat -ta.
a person MO he Dat Top letter Acc send-Neg -Past
'No one sent a letter to HIM.'
- c. hitori mo kare ni mo/sae/dake tegami o das -anakat -ta.
a person MO he Dat MO/SAE/DAKE letter Acc send-Neg -Past
'Lit. No one sent a letter also/even/only to him.'
- (Alphabetical notations are slightly changed for consistency and glosses are added. The judgments are his own.)

The minimizer *issatu* co-occurs with another NPI *daremo* in (iib), while *sika* in (iia) does not. These examples indicate that the occurrence of *sika* is severely constrained compared to that of minimizers and that *sika* and a minimizer do not pattern alike, which suggests that the second possibility seems plausible. For the first possibility, I do not know useful means to determine the overtness of negation. A further survey concerning the status of *monoka* is needed.

⁸ For the division of labor between *mo* and *demo* concerning interrogative words, see Teramura (1991:136-137).

⁹ In relation to the distinction between *mo* and *demo*, observe the following difference in accent patterns:

- | | | | |
|--------|----------|---------------|-------------|
| (i) a. | ippo | ippo demo | ippo mo |
| | HL | HL LL | LH H |
| b. | sukosi | sukosi demo | sukosi mo |
| | LHL | LHLLL | LHH H |
| c. | hitokoto | hitokoto demo | hitokoto mo |
| | LHLL | LHLL LL | LHHHH |

While the attachment of *demo* observes the original accent patterns of minimizers, that of *mo* alters them into unaccented phrases.

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