

An Integrated Approach to Nominative/Genitive Conversion in Japanese

In this paper, we examine Case conversion phenomenon called the ga/no (Nominative/Genitive) conversion (hereafter, GNC) in Japanese, and show that the GNC is correlated with the two facts: (1) the occurrence of a head noun, overt or covert, with D, and (2) the rentai (attributive) inflection on the predicate that takes a genitive DP. We will argue that this correlation suggests that the genitive Case in the GNC contexts is licensed by D, which also licenses the rentai predicate in the same context.

The GNC takes place in embedded clauses, such as sentential modifiers to nouns, but not in independent clauses, as shown in (1). In addition, the GNC may take place in a clause which does not directly modify a noun, but is just followed by a postposition, as shown in (2). This phenomenon has led to a variety of approaches, all attempting to deal with the emergence of genitive Case no on the subject of the sentential modifier. We first review two major approaches, Miyagawa (1993) and Ochi (2001) on the one hand, and Hiraiwa (2001) and Miyagawa (2003), on the other, and clarify potential empirical and theoretical problems of the approaches. We then argue that the two major approaches to the phenomenon so far proposed are both correct in their essentials, suggesting an alternative approach which crucially relies on core observations given by the two approaches.

The two previous approaches are summarized as follows: (i) the DP approach by Miyagawa (1993) and Ochi (2001), among others, and (ii) the non-DP approach by Hiraiwa (2001) and Miyagawa (2003), among others. Both approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses. The first approach correctly captures the fact that a DP is marked genitive whenever it is in a local relation with a nominal head (or D), as shown in (1). However, this approach cannot account for the case in which there appears to be no nominal head, as shown in (2).

The second approach straightforwardly accounts for the GNC in examples such as (2). When the GNC is allowed, the predicate always takes its rentai (attributive) form. Observe the examples in (3) for the morphological distinction between the rentai form and the shuushi (conclusive) form in the case of a certain class of adjectives. Based on these examples, Hiraiwa (2001) claims that the genitive subject in a sentential modifier is licensed by C-T amalgam on C via Agree, which is morphologically realized as the rentai inflection, but not by the nominal head, thus arguing against the DP approach. However, the problem with this approach is that it is possible to insert a nominal head to be modified by the sentential modifier, such as toki ‘time,’ between yamu ‘stop’ and made ‘till’ in (2), as shown in (4). One may then argue that there is an invisible noun corresponding to toki ‘time,’ which would lead us to conclude that examples such as (2) may not provide strong support to the non-DP approach. Another crucial problem with this approach is that there is a case in which the GNC is not allowed, even though the predicate takes its rentai form, as shown in (5). Moreover, this approach does not explain the fact that a genitive DP appears both in a simple possessive structure such as [DP’s N], where no predicate in the rentai form appears, as well as in the GNC construction.

Given the crucial observations in (1-2), it is now clear that what must be accounted for in the GNC is the correlation among the followings: (i) the genitive Case marking on the embedded subject, (ii) the occurrence of a head noun, overt or covert, with D, and (iii) the rentai (attributive) inflection on the embedded predicate. We then argue that it is D that licenses both the genitive Case on the subject and the rentai form in the GNC contexts.

Our analysis will also account for the transitivity restriction (hereafter TR), which prohibits co-occurrence of an accusative DP with the genitive DP (Harada (1971), Miyagawa (1993), and Watanabe (1996), among others), as shown in (6), if we adopt Miyagawa’s (2003) proposal that there are two types of T in Japanese, i.e., T1 and T2. T1 can license morphological case marking, whereas T2 does not. His basic idea is that T1 appears in a normal sentence, and licenses ga ‘Nom,’ o ‘Acc,’ and ni ‘Dat,’ while T2 appears in GNC contexts, and does not license any of these cases. This explains the TR, because in such contexts, the tense is T2, and thus, cannot license the accusative case.

We will also examine Turkish, which also allows Genitive subject to appear in nominalized clauses such as factive (indicative) nominalized embedded clauses, as shown in (7). Following Kornfilt (2003), we argue that what licenses Genitive Case in such contexts in Turkish is not an external N/D, but an agreement element within the complement clauses (diğ-in ‘FN-2.SG’ in (7), where FN = factive nominalization). On the other hand, in non-nominalized clauses, such as regular indicative embedded clauses, the subject is marked Nominative, and the agreement element found in (7) does not appear, as shown in (8). Therefore, as Kornfilt (2003) argues, what distinguishes Japanese from Turkish in terms of Genitive subject licensing is the presence/absence of the agreement element in the given language. Furthermore, a common property of the two languages will be discussed in relation to nominalization of the relevant clauses.

Examples

- (1) a. Watasi-wa, [[John-ga/-no kita] riyuu]-o sitteiru.
I -Top -Nom/-Gen came reason-Acc know
'I know the reason why John came.'
b. John-ga/*-no kita.
-Nom/-Gen came
'John came.'
- (2) John-wa [ame-ga/-no yamu made] ofisu-ni ita.
-Top rain-Nom/-Gen stop until office-at was
'John was at his office until the rain stopped.'
- (3) a. Ano hito-wa shizuka-da.
that man-Top quiet-DA(conclusive)
'That man is quiet.'
b. [Sizuka -na/*-da] hito
quiet -NA(attributive)/*-DA(conclusive) man
'a quiet man'
- (4) John-wa [ame-ga/-no yamu toki made] ofisu-ni ita.
-Top rain-Nom/-Gen stop time until office-at was
'John was at his office until the rain stopped.'
- (5) Taroo-wa [Hanako-ga/*-no itsumo yuushuu-na-no-ka]
-Top -Nom/-Gen always excellent-NA(attributive)-Nominalizer-Q
sira-nakat-ta.
know-not-past
'Taro did not know whether Hanako was always excellent.'
- (6) [Taroo-ga/*-no hon-o kasita] hito
-Nom/-Gen book-Acc lent man
'the man Taro lent the book to'
- (7) [Sen-**in** dün sabah ev-de yemek pişir-**diğ-in**]-i san-di-m
you-GEN yesterday morning home-LOC food cook-FN-2.SG-ACC believe-PAST-1.SG
'I believed that you had been cooking food at home yesterday morning.' (Kornfilt (2003, 6a))
- (8) [Sen yarın akşam ev-de yemek pişir-ecek-sin]
you(SG) (NOM) tomorrow evening home-LOC food cook-FUT-2.SG
san-ıyor-um
believe-PRES-PROG-1.SG
'I believe you will cook food at home tomorrow evening.' (Kornfilt (2003, 2b))

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