

The Semantics of Nominalizations from Alternating Verbs in Japanese: Theoretical Consequences for Morphology

This paper proposes an analysis of apparent transitivity markers in Japanese within the context of recent work within DISTRIBUTED MORPHOLOGY (DM) (Harbour, 2000, Marantz, 2002 and Arad, 2003). Arad, following Marantz (2002), argues:

Roots are assigned an interpretation in the environment of the first category-assigning head with which they are merged [*i.e.*, *little v, n and a*] ...The first category head merging with the root defines a PHASE (Chomsky, 1999), that is, a stage in the derivation where the element built by the computational system is spelled out both semantically and phonologically (Arad, 2003: 747-8).

The idiosyncratic semantics of nominalizations containing transitivity markers, commonly considered morphology occurring in the head of *v* and thus phase-defining (Pylkannen, 2002, Miyagawa, 1998, and Harley, 1995), raises a paradox for this analysis (see example 1). Adopting the strategy of den Dikken (1995), who argues that apparent valence-changing morphemes with multiply ambiguous functions are AFFIXAL PARTICLES, I focus on the morpheme *-e-*, which is found as an apparent transitivity-marker with multiple functions in seven of Jacobsen (1992)'s fifteen semi-productive morphological classes. Like den Dikken (1995: 230)'s affixal particle *ver-* in Dutch, in Classes 1, 9, and 13, it seems to mark intransitivity; in Classes 2, 3, 14 and 15 it behaves as a transitivity marker and in a sub-class of Class 3 (*jūjūdōshi* 'verbs of giving and receiving') it seems to introduce an applicative argument (See example 2). Of interest is that in Classes 3, 9, 13, 14, and 15, the roots alone have no lexicalizations as verbs or nouns without the affixation of the apparent transitivity markers (See example 2). This is indeed the case in ten of Jacobsen (1992)'s fifteen alternating classes. It therefore seems that one of the primary functions of the apparent transitivity markers is to lexicalize non-lexicalizing roots. I draw the analogy with the *-ceive* and *-mit* morphemes of English (Aronoff, 1976: 11-14), which like many Japanese roots, have no lexicalizations without the attachment of affixal particles, e.g., *re-*, *con-*, and *per-*. Aronoff (1976: 26) attributes non-compositionality to non-cyclicity, i.e., non-phase-defining morphology. Indeed, semantic idiosyncrasy for Japanese nominalizations seems confined to those related to alternating verbs (See example 3). In addition, morphologically simple nominalizations avoid de-verbal nominalizations of less than 3 *morae* (Kageyama, 1999: 109). By contrast, de-verbal nominalizations of 2 *morae*, or less, are abundant (Volpe, 2005).

In order to account for the semantics of the apparent de-verbal nominalizations, I conclude that that the transitivity markers of Japanese must be below the phase-creating head of *v* and within the domain of the root as affixal particles (See example 4). The analysis proposed is in line with the recent "radical decomposition" of roots in DM by Harbour (2000) and Marantz (2002) who argue that roots such as $\sqrt{\text{destroy}}$ are, in fact, bi-morphemic cross-linguistically decomposable into a root $\sqrt{\text{stroy}}$ and a particle *de-*. The idiosyncratic semantics of the Japanese nominalizations results from their root-internal morphological complexity.

