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Naomi Harada – *ATR International* *Case marker drop beyond structure*

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Although the phenomenon itself is phonological, Case-marker drop in Japanese has been considered as constrained by syntactic factors. For example, the accusative Case-marker is only dropped in the so-called standard dialect when the nominal is adjacent to the Case-licensing verbal head (Saito 1985), as in (1), read with unmarked contours. The sensitivity to the unergative/unaccusative distinction is also observed (Kageyama 1993), as in (2).

- (1) a. Taro-ga hon-(o) yon-da.
 Taro-Nom book-Acc read-Past.
 'Taro read a book/books.'
- b. Hon_i*(-o) Taro-ga hon t_i yon-da.
- (2) a. Taro-??(ga) warat-ta.
 Taro-Nom laugh-Past.
 'Taro laughed.'
- b. Taro-(ga) ki-ta.
 Taro-Nom come-Past.
 'Taro came.'

Previous studies point to the same generalization: A Case-marker is dropped only in a "governed" position.

In this squib, I report a case in which semantic factors, rather than structural ones, regulate Case-marker drop. In particular, I claim that the dative-marker drop is constrained by the feature [+/- animate] on the DP to be Case-marked.

In the Kansai dialects (the "Western" dialects), Case-marker drop occurs more frequently than in other dialects (Kanazawa 1986). In particular, it allows dative-marker (*ni*) drop under certain conditions. To determine the condition regulating *ni*-drop in the dialect, a survey of the written text of recorded dialogues from Bono 2005 was carried out. The task for the participants (college students who are native speakers of the dialect) is as follows: After watching a cartoon segment (*Dora-emon*) for 10 minutes, A explains the gist of the piece to B, who has not watched it.

- (3) An excerpt from the dialogue
 (Int = Interjective, SFP = Sentence final particle, ∅ = dropped Case-marker)

A: De, (breath) ie∅ kaet-te,
 Then, home return-ing,
 'Then, (he) went home and ...'

B: Un.
Int
'OK'

A: Maa, Dora-emon-**ni**, eh, iikoto-na, minna-no hanasi-te
Int, Dora-emon-Dat, Int good.thing-SFP everyone-Gen speak-ing
'And then, (he) told Dora-emon all the good things happened to the others, and...'

The existence of *ni* on the goal argument of a ditransitive verb was examined in the written text of three dialogue sessions. The result shows a strong correlation between the semantic features of the DP and the possibility of *ni*-drop: of all the instance of *ni*-drop, the DP was [-animate] (cf. Table 1). In contrast, *ni* on the animate DP is always retained: no instance of *ni*-drop with [+animate] DP was found (cf. Table 2). The percentage of *ni*-preservation varies among individuals, but as far as the cases examined are concerned, the tendency is to drop (and not to keep) *ni* on the inanimate DPs (cf. Table 3).

Summarizing, *ni*-drop is not ad-hoc even in spoken data, where the word order is more flexible than written data: it is constrained by a principle sensitive to a semantic feature [+/-animate] of the DP to be Case-marked, suggesting that structural properties are not directly tied to dative-marker drop in a certain dialect of the language.

Table 1: *Ni*-drop with [-animate] DP

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
# [-animate] dative DPs without <i>ni</i> / # dative DPs without <i>ni</i>	7/7 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	2/2 (100%)

Table 2: (Lack of) *Ni*-drop with [+animate] DP

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
# [+animate] dative DPs without <i>ni</i> / # [+animate] dative DPs with <i>ni</i>	0/6 (0%)	0/15 (0%)	0/8 (0%)

Table 3: Percentage of *ni*-preservation

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
# [-animate] dative DPs with <i>ni</i> / # dative DPs with <i>ni</i>	4/10 (40%)	3/18 (16.7%)	6/14 (42.3%)

References

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