Feature Inheritance and Case Marker Drop
in Non-standard Japanese

FUKUDA Minoru

This study assumes that the focus interpretation is involved in the major subject of multiple subject constructions of Japanese and argues that the focused elements with phonetic effects cannot be dropped and must be phonetically externalized. In doing so, it draws on three studies, namely Kuno (1973a, b), which focused on the interpretation of the nominative case marker *ga* in standard Japanese, Miyagawa (2010), which focused on the Feature Inheritance analysis for the focus interpretation, and Nishioka (2013, 2018), which focused on case markers such as *ga* and *no* in the dialect used in Kumamoto Prefecture of Japan. If the subjects fail to receive a focus interpretation, the omission of *ga* and *no* is allowed because they circumvent the externalization condition on focused elements. The same analysis can be extended to the focused accusative case marker. It is inferred from our proposal that the fact that case markers aside from the nominative and accusative ones cannot be dropped is arguably connected with the availability of the focus interpretation induced by feature inheritance.

Key Words： case marker drop, exhaustive listing, focus, Japanese, Kumamoto dialect, major subject, multiple subject construction, neutral description

Table of Contents

Ⅰ　Introduction[*]

One of the characteristics of the Japanese language is the availability of multiple subject constructions (MSCs) such as (1), which are impermissible in English (Saito (2021)).[1]

(1)　a.　Kumamoto-ga suikabatake-ga   ooi.
　　　　K.-nom　　　　watermelon field-nom　　many.
　　　　'Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'　　(Kato (2005: 31))

　　　b.　Bunmeikoku-ga　　　　　dansei-ga　　heikinzyumyoo-ga
　　　　Civilized countries-nom　　male-nom　　average-life-span-nom
　　　　mizikai
　　　　short-is
　　　　'Civilized countries (have the characteristic that) males (have the characteristic that) their average life-span is short'

(Kuno (1973a: 34))

As Mihara (1994: 114) pointed out, the omission of the nominative case marker *ga* is not acceptable in MSCs. Taking (1a) as an example, there are three patterns of dropping *ga*, as exhibited in (2), all of which are far from perfect acceptability.[2]

(2)　a.　*Kumamoto-φ　　　suikabatake-φ　　　　ooi.
　　　　K.- φ　　　　　　　watermelon fields-φ　　many
　　　b.　*Kumamoto-φ　　　suikabatake-ga　　　　ooi.
　　　　K.- φ　　　　　　　watermelon field-nom　　many
　　　c.　*/?Kumamoto-ga　　suikabatake-φ　　　　oo-i.
　　　　K.- nom　　　　　　watermelon field-φ　　　many

In the Hitiku dialect (especially Kumamoto, which is the author's native tongue), the subject of sentences is marked not only with nominative *ga* but also with genitivec *no* (Nishioka (2013: 176)).

(3)　a.　Tenki-*ga*　　yoka　　ne.
　　　　weather-nom　good　　SFP (sentence final particle)

'Above all, the weather is good/It is the weather that is good'

Cf. Tenki-*ga* ii-ne. (Standard Japanese)

    b.   Tenki-*no*   yoka   ne.

        weather-gen   good   SFP

        'The weather is good'

        Cf. *Tenki-*no* ii-ne. (Standard Japanese)

The tolerability of the *no* subject for independent clauses like (3b) distinguishes standard Japanese from the Kumamoto dialect. Whereas the genitive case marker *no* can be used for the subject of independent clauses in the Kumamoto dialect, it cannot in standard Japanese.[3]

As a descriptive generalization of the syntactic and semantic differences between *ga* and *no* in the Kumamoto dialect, Nishioka (2018: 105) provided (4) and (5), in which KJ refers to the Kumamoto dialect.[4]

(4)   In KJ, the nominative case is indicated by *no* when it is located within a verb phrase (*v*P), and by *ga* when it is located in the TP Spec position.[5]

(5)   The *ga* subject in KJ denotes the focus or topic interpretation, whereas the *no* subject denotes neither.

Let us next examine the MSCs of the Kumamoto dialect corresponding to (1a). There are four combinations of *ga* and *no*, as shown in (6). Two of them, (6a) and (6b), are acceptable, whereas the rest, (6c) and (6d), are not (Kato (2005: 31-32)).[6]

(6) a.   Kumamoto-ga   suikabatake-ga   ooka bai.

           K.-nom   watermelon field-nom   many SFP

           'Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'

      b.   Kumamoto-ga   suikabatake-no   ooka bai.

      c.   *Kumamoto-no   suikabatake-ga   ooka bai.

      d.   *Kumamoto-no   suikabatake-no   ooka bai.

No serious attention has been paid so far to the case marker drop phenomenon in MSCs in the Kumamoto dialect. Let us therefore show whether *ga* and *no* can be dropped in (6a) and (6b). Here, there are four patterns of combination as exemplified in (7).[7] (7d)

sounds far more natural than its standard Japanese version as indicated in (2c).

(7) a. *Kumamoto-φ suikabatake-φ ooka bai.

  b. *Kumamoto-φ suikabatake-ga ooka bai.

  c. *Kumamoto-φ suikabatake-no ooka bai.

  d. ?Kumamoto-ga suikabatake-φ ooka bai.

One of the axes of the present paper is to argue for the hypothesis that the first subject of MSCs receives the focus interpretation, which obviates the availability of the deletion of focused elements as shown in (7a-c).

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section II examines Nishioka's (2013, 2018) analysis of nominative case marking in the Kumamoto dialect. In Sections III and IV, on the assumption that the major subject, which comes first in MSCs, receives focus interpretation, we propose that focused elements like *ga* cannot be taken out but must be phonetically externalized. Section V accounts for the possibility of case marker drop in MSCs in the Kumamoto dialect. Section VI points out interesting cases in which *no* is used as the nominative case marker in standard Japanese. In Section VII, it is argued that the feature inheritance analysis is applicable to accusative case marking. Finally, Section VIII summarizes the argument of the present paper and touches upon the consequences and issues for future research

II Feature Inheritance and Focus Interpretation

According to Kuno (1973a: 60), the nominative case marker *ga* can indicate either a neutral description or an exhaustive listing, based on the types of predicates. If the predicate represents an action, existence or temporary state, the subject with *ga* is ambiguous between the neutral description and exhaustive listing.

(8) John-ga kita.

  J.-nom came

  a. 'John came' (Neutral description)

  b. 'It was John who came' (Exhaustive listing)

In contrast, if the predicate represents a stable state, there is no ambiguity. Thus, the subject with *ga* can receive only the exhaustive-listing interpretation.[8]

(9)   John-ga gakusei desu.

       J.-nom student is

       a.   *'John is a student' (Neutral description is unavailable.)

       b.   'It is John is a student' (Exhaustive listing)

In light of the abovementioned analysis, let us reconsider (3), which is reproduced as (10). The subject of the sentence *Tenki-ga ii-ne* in standard Japanese is ambiguous between neutral descriptions and exhaustive listings because the predicate *ii* ('good') implies a temporary state.

(10) a.   Tenki-*ga*   yoka   ne.

             weather-nom   good   SFP (sentence final particle)

             'Above all, the weather is good/It is the weather that is good'

             Cf. Tenki-*ga* ii-ne. (Standard Japanese)

       b.   Tenki-*no*   yoka   ne.

             weather-gen   good   SFP

             'The weather is good'

             Cf. *Tenki-*no* ii-ne. (Standard Japanese)

A careful comparison of (10a) and (10b) shows that, the use of *ga* for the subject brings on an exhaustive-listing interpretation in the former, whereas that of *no* for the subject brings a neutral-description interpretation in the latter. Thus, in the Kumamoto dialect, no ambiguity emanates even if the predicate indicates an action, existence, or temporary state.

To provide a minimalist account for the difference between the *ga* and *no* subjects in the Kumamoto dialect, Nishioka (2013: 182, 2018: 105) employed Miyagawa's (2010) proposal concerning feature inheritance. According to Miyagawa (2010), the [topic/focus] feature is inherited from C to T, resulting in the occurrence of the topic or focus element in TP Spec, in languages like Japanese.[9] Identifying an exhaustive-listing interpretation as a focus interpretation, Nishioka (2013, 2018) argued that the focus interpretation of the *ga* subject is because of its occupation of TP Spec either in the

Kumamoto dialect or in standard Japanese. On the other hand, the *no* subject stays in *v*P, thus inducing a neutral-description or non-focus interpretation. As a corollary, the case marker *no* can be diagnosed as incompatible with focus of any kind.

In the meantime, we must be more specific about the interpretation of focus. This is so because, according to Nakamura (2011), there are two types of focus: identificational and information focus. The former corresponds to Kuno's (1973b: 32) exhaustive listing, which distinguishes the referent of the subject from those of the rest. In contrast, the latter serves as offering new information. In this paper, we assume that the *ga* subject can be either identificational focus or information focus, but the *no* subject is neither of them in the Kumamoto dialect. Turning back to the examination of the subjects in MSCs, the first *ga* subject, which is frequently referred to as the major one, invariably indicates an exhaustive listing in standard Japanese, as Kuno (1973b: 41) and Mihara (1994: 101-112) found. We assume that this holds true for the Kumamoto dialect. Thus, the major subject receives an exhaustive-listing interpretation.

Ⅲ　Focus Interpretation of Multiple Subjects

Based on the analysis outlined in the previous section, we scrutinize the subjects in the MSCs in this section. To begin with, let us have a close look at standard Japanese (1a), which is replicated as (11). In what follows, the major subject is underlined.

(11)　Standard Japanese:
　　　<u>Kumamoto-ga</u>　　　suikabatake-ga　　　　　ooi.
　　　K.-nom　　　　　　　watermelon field-nom　many.
　　　'Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'

As discussed in Section 2, the major subject *Kumamoto-ga* necessarily points to identificational focus, that is, exhaustive listing. Thus, (11) is more likely to mean that among the places discussed, Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields. Syntactically, the major subject is located at or above TP Spec (Mihara (1994), Mihara and Hiraiwa (2006)), which enables it to be constantly accessible to the [focus] feature inherited from C to T.

Then, what about the second subject *suikabatake-ga* in (11)?[10] There are two possibilities. First, the second *ga* subject represents a neutral-description interpretation if

the predicate *ooi* ('many') is taken to suggest a temporary state. The interpretation is elucidated by means of the adverb *saikin* ('nowadays') in (12).

(12) Kumamoto-ga   saikin   suikabatake-ga   ooi.
      K.-nom   nowadays   watermelon-fields-nom   many
      'Nowadays Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'

The other possibility for the second subject is the interpretation of information focus, which is typified by the conversation example in (13).

(13) a.   Kyusyu rokken-de   Kumamoto-ga   nani-ga   ooi   no?
            K. six prefectures-in   K.-nom   what-nom   many   Q
            'In the six prefectures of Kyusyu, what does Kumamoto have the most of?'
      b.   Kumamoto-ga   suikabatake-ga   ooi   yo.
            K.-nom   watermelon field-nom   many   SFP

In question (13a), the major subject *Kumamoto-ga* specifies the area, that is, the topic of the conversation, and the second subject asks for a new piece of information. Thus, the second subject provides new information in (13b) in the form of (11). From these observations, we deduce a conclusion that the second *ga* subject can serve as information focus in (11), which is not assigned structurally.

Let us focus on the multiple subjects in the Kumamoto dialect, whose example (6) is repeated as (14).

(14) Kumamoto dialect:
      a.   Kumamoto-ga   suikabatake-ga   ooka   bai.
            K.-nom   watermelon field-nom   many   SFP
            'Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'
      b.   Kumamoto-ga   suikabatake-no   ooka   bai.
      c.   *Kumamoto-no   suikabatake-ga   ooka   bai.
      d.   *Kumamoto-no   suikabatake-no   ooka   bai.

With regard to the major subject in (14a) and (14b), the same analysis of standard

Japanese (11) is applicable because the subject in question indicates an identificational focus in the Kumamoto dialect as well. However, (14c) and (14d) are disparate from them with respect to the presence of *no* in the major subject. As seen in the survey of (3b), *no* can be used for the subject in the Kumamoto dialect, but intrinsically resists a focus interpretation. Thus, both constructions under discussion end up with full unacceptability.

One may naturally wonder what the role of the second subject is in (14a) and (14b). Here, as the analysis of (11) shows, there are two possible interpretations: neutral description and information focus. Given the difference between *ga* and *no*, established in (5) with respect to the Kumamoto dialect, we argue that the second subject in (14a), that is, *suikabatake-ga*, is under the information focus interpretation, whereas that in (14b), that is, *suikabatake-no*, is under the neutral-description interpretation. This is supported by the following two arguments.

First, it is true that (14a) sounds more natural than (14b) as an answer to question (15), but (14b) sounds more natural than (14a) as an out-of-the-blue statement.

(15) Kyusyu rokken-de   <u>Kumamoto-ga</u>   nan-ga   ooka   ne?

K. six prefectures-in   K.-nom   what-nom   many   Q

'In the six prefectures of Kyusyu, what does Kumamoto have the most of?'

Second, the replacement of *ga* with *no* in (15) lowers acceptability, as indicated in (16), because wh-question words generally receive focus in interrogative sentences, which is incompatible with the focus-resistant property of *no*.

(16) ??Kyusyu rokken-de <u>Kumamoto-ga</u> nan-no ooka ne?

Our discussion of MSCs provided in this section can be abridged as in (17) and (18).

(17) Standard Japanese:
  a.   Major subject, that is, the first *ga* subject → identificational focus
  b.   The second *ga* subject → either neutral description or information focus

(18) Kumamoto dialect:
  a.   Major subject, that is, the first *ga* subject → identificational focus

   b. The second *ga* subject → information focus

   c. The second *no* subject → neutral description

  Bearing these in mind, we are now ready to explicate the possibility of case marker drop in MSCs. However, before that we must spell out an interface condition on the phenomenon. This is the main focus of the next section.

Ⅳ　Externalization of Focus

  Mihara (1994) pointed out that exhaustive-listing *ga* cannot be dropped. Based on this, we propose the following generalization regarding case marker drop and focus interpretation.

  (19) Case markers that receive a focus interpretation (either identificational or informational) are phonetically externalized. Therefore, they cannot be dropped.

  Generally, focus elements bear phonetic features for emphasis and must thus be pronounced, which disallows any operation that nullifies the phonetic effects. The nominative case *ga* is assigned focus by means of feature inheritance, and the peak of speech pitch in focalization is placed not on the entire DP, but on the case marker, as Tomioka (2010) pointed out. As a result, the focused case marker *ga* must be pronounced and may not be dropped. In light of the Minimalist Program, (19) can be considered an instruction for phonetic externalization or an interface condition.

  Incidentally, (19) makes interesting predictions because it does not preclude case markers from being absent if they are neither identificational nor informational focus.

  Let us re-examine two cases of standard Japanese in terms of condition (19), which disallows the omission of focused *ga*. In the ambiguous example in (8), which is reproduced as (20), *ga* can be dropped, though marginal, as in (21). In accordance with the expectation, the neutral-description interpretation survives, whereas the exhaustive-listing or identificational focus interpretation is excluded in (21).

  (20) John-ga kita.

     J.-nom came

      a.   'John came' (Neutral description)

      b.   'It was John who came' (Exhaustive listing)

(21) John-φ   kita.

      a.   'John came' (Neutral description)

      b.   *'It was John who came' (Exhaustive listing is unavailable.)

In contrast, the omission of *ga* in the unambiguous example in (9), which is repeated as (22), leads to ungrammaticality, as shown in (23). This is simply because condition (19) prohibits focused *ga* from being dropped.

(22) John-ga   gakusei   desu.

      J.-nom   student   is

      a.   *'John is a student' (Neutral description is unavailable.)

      b.   'It is John is a student' (Exhaustive listing)

(23) *John-φ   gakusei   desu.

Finally, we reconsider the examples of the Kumamoto dialect shown in (3), which is reproduced as (24). We should recall here that the interpretation depends on whether the case marker for the subject is *ga* or *no*.

(24) a.   Tenki-*ga*   yoka   ne.

            weather-nom   good   SFP (sentence final particle)

            'Above all, the weather is good/It is the weather that is good'

            Cf. Tenki-*ga* ii-ne. (Standard Japanese)

      b.   Tenki-*no*   yoka   ne.

            weather-gen   good   SFP

            'The weather is good'

            Cf. *Tenki-*no* ii-ne. (Standard Japanese)

Deriving from (24b) rather than (24a) because of condition (19), (25) unveils the new fact that the neutral-description interpretation remains intact despite the deletion of the case maker under consideration.

(25) Tenki-φ yoka ne. (Neutral description)

V　Case Marker Drop in Multiple Subject Constructions

There are two crucial cases of MSCs to consider under the analyses proclaimed in Sections III and IV. The first case is (2), namely, the possibility of the deletion of *ga* in MSCs in standard Japanese. (1a) and (2) are duplicated as (26) and (27), respectively.

(26)　<u>Kumamoto-ga</u>　suikabatake-ga　　　　ooi.

　　　K.-nom　　　　watermelon field-nom　many.

　　　'Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'

(27)　a.　　*<u>Kumamoto-φ</u>　suikabatake-φ　　　　ooi.

　　　　　　K.- φ　　　　watermelon fields-φ　　many

　　　b.　　*<u>Kumamoto-φ</u>　suikabatake-ga　　　ooi.

　　　　　　K.- φ　　　　watermelon field-nom　many

　　　c.　　*/?<u>Kumamoto-ga</u>　suikabatake-φ　　　oo-i.

　　　　　　K.- nom　　　　watermelon field-φ　　many

As noted in the analysis of (11) (= (1a) and (26)) in Section III, the first *ga* subject, being the major one with the identificational-focus interpretation, condition (19) uniformly impedes the erasure of *ga* of the major subject in (27a) and (27b).

However, the unacceptability of (27c) alludes to the following questions: (i) Why is the omission of *ga* of the second subject in (27c) not allowed? (ii) As pointed out in footnote 2, why is (27c) not as unnatural as (27a) and (27b)? The answer lies in the survey of (12) and (13) conducted in Section III. We argue that the second *ga* subject is ambiguous between neutral description and information focus. Consequently, the former meaning improves (27c), whereas the latter rejects it. The ambiguity gives rise to a contradictory result, leading to an unstable judgment of (27c).

The other case to consider is the availability and unavailability of a case marker drop in the Kumamoto dialect. The basic patterns of MSCs are shown in (6a) and (6b), which are reproduced as (28a) and (28b), respectively. The application of case marker omission results in (7), which is repeated as (29).

(28)　a.　　<u>Kumamoto-ga</u>　suikabatake-ga　　　　ooka　bai.

	K.-nom	watermelon field-nom	many	SFP

'Kumamoto has a lot of watermelon fields'

	b.	<u>Kumamoto-ga</u>	suikabatake-no		ooka	bai.
(29)	a.	*Kumamoto-φ	suikabatake-φ	ooka	bai.
	b.	*Kumamoto-φ	suikabatake-ga	ooka	bai.
	c.	*Kumamoto-φ	suikabatake-no	ooka	bai.
	d.	Kumamoto-ga	suikabatake-φ	ooka	bai.

As discussed in Section II, the major subject *Kumamoto-ga* serves as representing an identificational focus. Therefore, condition (19) bars the omission of *ga* as in (29a), (29b), and (29c).

Why is (29d) acceptable? That is, why is it possible to omit the case marker of the second subject? This is because (29b) derives from (28b) rather than (28a) by means of a case marker drop. As summarized in (18), the *no* subject is a neutral description and intrinsically immune to condition (19), which makes it possible to delete *no* as in (29d). In the Kumamoto dialect, there is a one-to-one relationship between the semantic property of the second subject and the type of case marker affixing it, and thus there is no ambiguity here. In this respect, the Kumamoto dialect is distinguishable from standard Japanese, the relevant property of which is digested in (17). Therefore, the judgment on the construction in standard Japanese corresponding to (29d), that is, (27c), is variable.

VI　*No* Subject in Standard Japanese

As shown in (3b), one of the characteristics of the Kumamoto dialect is the occurrence of *no* as the nominative case marker in independent clauses. It is natural to ask whether *no* can also be used for the subject of independent clauses in standard Japanese. We argue that the answer is positive, and direct attention to two significant facts. The first linguistically interesting fact to note is Dansako's (2020) observation that young children, whose first language is Japanese, sporadically use genitive subjects, that is, *no* subjects. This fact is conceivably ascribable to the delay in the acquisition of the tense feature, which is responsible for nominative *ga* marking. Second, as shown in (4), the presence of *no* subjects in the Kumamoto dialect is restricted to tenseless syntactic domains like *v*P. This provokes us to expect that *no* subjects may occur in tenseless

structures in standard Japanese, as well. Fukuda (2021) argued that *no* can be used to indicate the subject of nominal clausal expressions like (30) in standard Japanese.[11]

(30) Onetyan-no baka!
Sister-GEN fool
'Sis, you are a fool!'

The colloquial expression in (30) implies the addresser's dissatisfaction toward the addressee. *Baka* ('fool') can be comprehended as a predicate, which suggests that *onetyan-no* is the subject in the expression, as displayed by the translation. As this expression lacks a tense element, the feeling of dissatisfaction holds temporarily, that is, at the time of utterance, rather than permanently. Thus, the *no* subject in (30) is necessarily interpreted as a neutral description rather than as an exhaustive listing. As a result, *no* is erasable, as shown in (31).

(31) Onetyan-φ   baka!

VII Accusative Case Marker Drop

Recent corpus studies of the Japanese language have shown that case marker drop is generally limited to nominative *ga* and accusative *o*, although there are minor exceptional cases.[12] The same observation has been made by generative syntacticians like Mihara (1994: 16) and Mihara and Hiraiwa (2006: 24). This section deals with accusative case marker drop phenomena in terms of condition (19).

The first thing we would like to examine is Kurosaki's (2003: 81) observation of standard Japanese. Presenting (32) as a typical example, Kurosaki argued that when the accusative case marker *o* is phonetically stressed, its deletion is hindered.[13]

(32) Context: The villagers are trying to stop the construction of a waste treatment plant through violence. The village mayor proposes to settle the matter in court, but the villagers say that it is impossible. The mayor responds by saying the following.
a.   Koko-wa   ore-o sinzite kure.

　　　　　　　　here-topic　　I-acc　　trust　　　give

　　　　　　　　'Trust me in this case.'

　　　　b.　　*Koko-wa　　ore-φ　sinzite　　kure.

　　　To account for the reason the accusative case maker cannot be dropped in (32b), we assume that the inheritance of the [topic/focus] feature from C to T, proposed by Miyagawa (2010), also occurs in *v*P. We propose that the [topic/focus] feature is inherited from *v* to V along with the case feature. Thus, through the feature agreement, that is, valuation, between the features in question and the object DP, the accusative case marker *o* is assigned the focus interpretation in *v*P, which activates condition (19). Accordingly, the focused accusative *o* is always phonetically externalized, and its elimination is prevented as in (32b).

　　　There are cases in which *o* is not focused. We submit that this is so because the inheritance of [topic/focus] from *v* to V is optional, in line with Nishioka's (2018: 108) analysis of feature inheritance in subordinate clauses. When no inheritance comes about, *o* does not indicate a focus interpretation.

　　　The Kumamoto dialect offers an interesting case of nominative object constructions, as exemplified in (33).[14] Both *ga* and *no* are used as accusative case markers.

　　(33)　a.　　Taro-ga　　　eigo-*ga*　　　dekuru　to

　　　　　　　　T.-nom　　　　English-acc　able　　　SFP

　　　　　　　　'Taro can speak English.'

　　　　　　　　(SJ: Taro-ga eigo-*ga* dekiru yo)

　　　　b.　　Taro-ga　　　eigo-*no*　　　dekuru　to

　　　　c　　*Taro-no　　eigo-*ga*　　　dekuru　to

　　　　d.　　*Taro-no　　eigo-*no*　　　dekuru　to

　　　(33c) and (33d) are judged as unacceptable for the same reason that explains the unnatural examples shown in (6c, d) and (14c, d). The stable state inferred from the predicate *dekuru* ('able') imposes the exhaustive-listing, that is, identificational focus, interpretation of the subject *Taro-no*, which is incompatible with the property of *no*.

　　　The following two contrasting facts are more interesting. First, the acceptability of (34) seems to indicate that either *ga* of the object in (33a) or *no* of the object in (33b) can be dropped.

(34) Taro-ga   eigo-φ   dekuru to

Second, the *ga* object in (33a) can be scrambled, whereas the *no* object in (33b) cannot, however.

(35) a.   *Eigo-ga* Taro-ga   *t*   dekuru to.
      b.   **Eigo-no* Taro-ga   *t*   dekuru to.

The analysis outlined in the previous sections leads us to assume that the appearance of *no* is limited to the domain for non-focus interpretation, that is, the tenseless syntactic domain like *v*P, irrespective of whether *no* is attached to the subject or object. Then, *ga* cannot be erased in (33a), but *no* can in (33b). This in turn implies that what is missing in (34) is *no* rather than *ga*.

Finally, if scrambling to the sentence-initial position induces a focus effect of any kind, as Nakamura (2010, 2015) argued, the syntactic movement operation is incompatible with the nature of *no*. Consequently, (35b) is rendered unnatural.

VIII   Consequences and Further Issues

Scrutinizing the focus interpretation involved in the major subject of MSCs, we argued that focus elements with phonetic effects cannot be dropped but must phonetically be externalized. We examined the new fact that *no* can be dropped in MSCs in the Kumamoto dialect because it is not associated with any kind of focus. We also pointed out that it is likely for the *no* subject to be found in independent clauses in standard Japanese. Finally, we submitted that the feature inheritance analysis is applicable to the accusative case marker as well. We now refer to one of the consequences of our proposal. That is an explanation of the fact that, besides *ga* and *o*, case markers are not allowed to drop out.

First, the potentiality of case marker drop and the focus interpretation invoked by feature inheritance can be roughed out as in (36), from which we obtain the generalization in (37).

(36) a.　　Once the focus interpretation is obtained through feature inheritance, neither nominative nor accusative case marker drop is permitted.

　　　b.　　If no focus interpretation is obtained through feature inheritance, either nominative or accusative case marker drop is permitted.

(37) Case markers can be dropped only in the structure where a focus interpretation is available through feature inheritance.

As has been claimed, only nominative and accusative case markers are relevant to feature inheritance, and can therefore be dropped as long as they are not focused. On the other hand, other case markers like *no* (genitive case), *kara* (source), and *de* (location) are never dropped, irrespective of whether they are phonetically focused or not. This is because feature inheritance is unrelated to their focus interpretation. It has now become clear why the omission of case markers other than nominative and accusative ones is not legitimate.

Let us re-examine what has been discussed above from a different perspective. It is possible to suppose that case markers are classified into two groups: one that has a distinction between strong and weak forms, and another that does not have such a distinction. In the former, including nominative and accusative case markers, strong and weak forms are focused and non-focused case markers, respectively. Weak forms can phonetically be null. The latter, including case markers other than nominative and accusative ones, must invariably be pronounced because of the lack of the distinction between strong and weak forms.

Weak forms are likely to lose their pronunciation in the course of the historical development of natural language. The case marker drop phenomena may be categorized as one of such cases.

Finally, we would like to raise three issues for further study.[15] First, more serious attention should be paid to clarify how and why the verb type affects the possibility of case marker drop in both the Kumamoto dialect and standard Japanese. Second, further research should examine cases in which MSCs are embedded as complements of verbs. For example, it will be necessary to examine Exceptional Case Marking (ECM) constructions such as (38).

(38) a.　　Taro-wa [Hanako-*ga*　baka　da] to]　　　omotta.
　　　　　　T.-topic [[H.-nom　　fool　be] COMP] thought

'Taro thought Hanako was a fool.'

    b.   Taro-wa [Hanako-*o*   baka da] to]   omotta

Accusative *o* can be used in place of nominative *ga* for the embedded subject, but it cannot be omitted, as Mihara (1994: 125) pointed out.

(39)   *Taro-**wa**   [Hanako-φ baka da] to] omotta.

In general, the accusative case marker *o* can be more easily dropped than the nominative case marker *ga*. One may wonder why this tendency cannot be confirmed in (39). Not surprisingly, one may be inclined to investigate into the counterparts of the Kumamoto dialect. We leave these matters open for future research.

Finally, let us take a brief look at Masunaga's (1988) interesting observation, though she does not deal with MSCs. For example, when a sentence final particle is added to the verb, the verb is emphasized and the case marker can be dropped as in (40b) and (41b).

(40) a.   Hanako-{o/???? φ} yonda
            H.-acc/φ   invited
            'I/Someone invited Hanako'
      b.   Hanako-{o/φ}   yonda   {zo / yo}
            H. -acc/φ   invited SFP
(41) a.   Onnanoko-{ga/*φ}   kita
            female-child-nom/φ came
            'A girl came'
      b.   Onnanoko-{ga/φ}   kita   {zo / yo}
            female-child-nom/φ came   SFP

It is obvious that SFPs play a vital role in shifting the focus position from case markers to verbs, which makes the omission of the markers possible.[16] However, the presence of sentence final particles does not improve the unacceptability of the cases in which *ga* of the major subject is erased in MSCs, as seen in (42). To put it differently, Masunaga's (1988) "focus shift" analysis fails to capture the ill-formedness of (42b).

(42)　a.　<u>Kumamoto-ga</u>　　suikabatake-ga　　　　ooi　　zo / yo.

　　　　　　　K.-nom　　　　　watermelon field-nom　many　SFP

　　　b.　*<u>Kumamoto-φ</u>　　suikabatake-ga　　　　ooi　　zo / yo.

　　　　　　　K.-nom　　　　　watermelon field-nom　many　SFP

Owing to space constraints, we do not offer further discussions, but unquestionably, Masunaga's (1988) functional syntactic analysis should be re-considered in terms of the more recent syntactic analyses like the Minimalist Program and the linguistic cartographic approach.

Notes

1.　　We focus on "double" subject constructions like (1a) rather than "triple" subject ones like (1b) for expository purposes.

2.　　The dropped case markers are indicated by φ in the examples in this paper. It seems to the author that (2c) sounds better than (2a) and (2b), based on the context or situation. The difference between (2a, b) and (2c) is discussed in Section V.

3.　　Standard Japanese exhibits the *ga-no* conversion phenomena. However, *no* cannot be used as a nominative case marker of the subject in independent clauses.

4.　　To the best of the author's knowledge, Yoshimura (1992), for the first time, pointed out a syntactic difference between the *ga* and *no* subjects in the Kumamoto dialect.

5.　　For ease of exposition, we do not differentiate between *v**, which requires an

external argument, and *v*, which does not. For the same reason, we do not deal with the topic interpretation of case markers in this paper, either.

6.   The unacceptability of (6c) and (6d) is explicated in Section III. Both constructions are perfectly natural if *Kumamoto-no* is interpreted as a premodifier of *suikabatake* ('watermelon field').

7.   We go deeply into (7) in Section V.

8.   See also Kuno (1973b: 32) for the analysis of other examples of the same kind.

9.   Owing to space constraints, this paper simplifies the analysis presented by Miyagawa (2010).

10.   Kuno (1973b) argued that only one element in a sentence can indicate an exhaustive-listing interpretation, and hence that the second *ga* subject is a neutral description. We provide a slightly different analysis in what follows. See also Mihara and Hiraiwa (2006: 44-45).

11.   There is no specific name for constructions like (30), and Fukuda (2021) referred to them as Clausal Nominal Expressions and analyzed them as nominal small clauses.

12.   For example, the case marker *ni*, indicating "direction," is omittable, but its possibility is far more limited than that of *ga* and *o*. See Maruyama (2019) for a descriptive observation. Case markers like *no* (genitive), *kara* (source), or *de* (place), which can never be omitted, are briefly examined in Section VII.

13.   Example (32a) is quoted from Kurosaki (2003: 81). The judgment of (32b) is the author's own.

14.   (33) and (35) are quoted from Kato (2005: 31-32), and (34) is attributed to the author's own judgment.

15.   The first two issues were pointed out to the author by Mamoru Saito (personal

communication).

16.　A similar observation was also made by Kurosaki (2003).

References

Dansako, Masahiko (2020) "Shugo-no Kakuyoji-nikannsuru Togoriron-karano Jisshouteki-Kenkyu: Kumamoto-hogen-o Taisho-nisite (An Empirical Study of the Syntactic Theory of Case Marking of the Subject from the Perspective of Language Acquisition: With Special Reference to the Kumamoto Dialect," Research Report of the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research.
< https://kaken.nii.ac.jp/ja/grant/KAKENHI-PROJECT-16K16826/>

Fukuda, Minoru (2021) "A Syntactic Analysis of the Lexical, Pragmatic, and Semantic Properties of 'Clausal' Nominal Expressions in Colloquial Japanese," *Bulletin of Miyazaki Municipal University: Faculty of Humanities*, 28, 129-151.

Kato, Sachiko (2005) "Kumamoto-hogen-niokeru Ga-to O-no Tsukaiawke-nikanshite (On the Use of *Ga* and *No* in the Kumamoto Dialect)," *Gengo Kagaku Ronshu* (Journal of Language Sciences) 9, 25-36. <http://hdl.handle.net/10097/48291>

Kuno, Susumu (1973a) *The Structure of the Japanese Language*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Kuno, Susumu (1973b) *Nihon Bunpo Kenkyu* (Japanese Grammar Research), Taishukan Shoten, Tokyo.

Kurosaki, Saniko (2003) "Mujoshibun-no Bunrui-to Dankaisei (Classification and Gradation of Particleless Sentences)," *Waseda Daigaku Nihongo Kyoiku Kenkyu* (Journal of Japanese Language Education, Waseda University) 2, 77-93.

Maruyama, Naoko (2019) "Mujoshi-nitsuite (On Particleless)," A paper presented at the Symposium "Diversity of Spoken Language," National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics.

Masunaga, Kiyoko (1988) "Case Deletion and Discourse Context," *Papers from the Second International Workshop on Japanese Syntax*, ed. by William J. Poser, 145-156, CSLI, Stanford, CA.

Mihara, Ken'ichi (1994) *Nihongo-no Togo-kozo* (Syntactic Structure of Japanese), Shohakusha, Tokyo.

Mihara, Ken'ichi and Ken Hiraiwa (2006) *Shin Nihongo-no Togo-kozo* (New Syntactic Structure of Japanese), Shohakusha, Tokyo.

Miyagawa, Shigeru (2010) *Why Agree? Why Move?: Unifying Agreement-Based and Discourse-Configurational Languages*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Nakamura, Koichiro (2011) "Topikku-to Shoten——*Wa*-to Kakimaze-yoso-no Kozo-to Imi-kozo—— (Topic and Focus: The Structure and Semantic Structure of *Wa* and *Scrambled Elements*)," *70-nendai Seiseibunpo Saininshiki* (Reconsideration of Generative Grammar in the 70s), 207-230, Kaikakusha, Tokyo.

Nishioka, Nobuaki (2013) "Kumamoto-hogen-kara Miru Nihongo-no Shugo-no Togo-ichi (A Syntactic Analysis of the Subject in Japanese Based on the Kumamoto Dialect)," *Gengogaku-karano Chobo 2013* (A Views from Linguisticsi 2013), 176-188, Kyushu University Press, Fukuoka.

Nishioka, Nobuaki (2018) "Nihongo-no Hitei-no Sayoiki-to Raberingu (On the Negative Scope in Japanese and Labeling), *Kotoba-o Amu* (Weaving Language), 102-112, Kaitakusha, Tokyo.

Saito, Mamoru (2021) "Seisei Bunpo II (Generative Grammar II)," On-line lectures, held at Tokyo Gengo Kenkyusho (Tokyo Institute for Language Research), May-July 2021.

Tomioka, Satoshi (2010) "Contrastive topic operates on speech act," *Information Structure: Theoretical, Typological, and Experimental Perspective*, eds., by Zimmerman, Malte and Caroline Féry, 115-138, Oxford University Press.

Yoshimura, Noriko (1992) *Scrambling and Anaphora in Japanese*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California.