

Genitive Subjects and Case Marker Drop in Japanese

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This paper focuses on the Kumamoto dialect of Japanese, which is one of the Hitiku dialects of the Kyûsyû region. It differs from Standard Japanese in that it allows the subject to be marked with the genitive case marker as well as the nominative case marker in independent sentences. In order to accommodate this fact, and based on Nishioka's (2022) analysis, the research argues that the genitive subject is licensed by nominal elements, including certain sentence final particles and Force located in the right periphery of independent sentences. We also hypothesize that the Case/Topic Marker Drop phenomenon is a natural consequence of the premise that a focus serves as an instruction for the phonological realization of emphasis. Thus, as long as the subject is non-focal, neither the case marker nor the topic marker is necessarily realized in the morpho-phonological component. In the Kumamoto dialect, sentence final particles play a critical role in both inducing the "de-emphasis" effects and allowing the presence of the genitive subject. As a corollary, our proposals make it possible to explicate the facts regarding the Case/Topic Marker Drop phenomenon in double subject constructions.

Key Words: Case Marker Drop, double subject construction, focus, genitive case marker, genitive subject, nominative subject, nominative case marker, right periphery, Topic Marker Drop

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1 Introduction¹

In Standard Japanese (SJ), the subject is marked with the nominative case marker *ga* rather than the genitive case marker *no* in independent sentences such as (1).²

- (1) Kumamoto-ni-wa suika-batake-*ga*/**no* ôi.
 Kumamoto-in-TOP watermelon-fields-NOM/*GEN many
 ‘In Kumamoto, there are many watermelon fields.’

The subject can be marked with the genitive case marker *no* only in the clauses within nominal phrases, as shown in (2) and (3). This phenomenon has been widely acknowledged as “*Ga/No* Conversion.”^{3,4}

- (2) *Complex NP Construction*
 Kumamoto-ni-wa suika-batake-*ga/no* ôi
 Kumamoto-in-TOP watermelon-fields-NOM/GEN many
 toiu zizitu-o sira-nakat-ta.
 that fact-ACC know-not-did
 ‘I did not know the fact that there are many watermelon fields in Kumamoto.’

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² TOP = topic marker, NOM = nominative case marker, GEN = genitive case marker, ACC = accusative case marker, SFP = sentence-final particle.

³ Ochi (2016) summarizes the major analyses of this phenomenon.

⁴ It can be argued that the nominal elements outside the embedded TP (i.e., *zizitu* and *hon*) value the embedded subject as genitive in (2) and (3). In this paper, we present a similar analysis to account for the data observed in the Hitiku dialects of Japanese.

(3) *Relative Clause*

Tarô-*ga/no* kureta hon-o nakusita.
 T.-NOM/GEN gave (to me) book-ACC lost
 ‘I lost the book Tarô gave to me.’

However, the subject can be marked with the genitive case marker *no*, even in independent sentences in the Hitiku dialects of the Kyûsyû region,⁵ among which the Kumamoto dialect (KJ) is one. For example, (4) is acceptable in KJ. If the subject is marked with the nominative case marker *ga*, the sentence does not sound like an authentic KJ example.

(4) Kumamoto-ni-wa suika-batake-*no* ôka bai/gena.
 Kumamoto-in-TOP watermelon-fields-GEN many SFP
 ‘In Kumamoto, I think/hear that there are many watermelon fields.’

(4) ends with SFPs such as *bai* or *gena*. *Bai* indicates “I think that” or “I insist that,” and *gena* indicates “It seems that” or “I hear that.”⁶ They are similar to the SFPs such as *yo* and *zo* of SJ in that they are emphasized or they emphasize the preceding predicate (i.e., *ôka* ‘many’ in (4)) of the sentence.⁷

Four interesting facts must be noted regarding the *no*-marked subject (hereinafter referred to as the GEN subject) in KJ examples. First, the predicate types do not affect the possibility of the GEN subject, as exemplified in (4)–(7).^{8,9}

⁵ More specifically, the Hitiku dialects are used in Fukuoka, Kumamoto, Nagasaki, and Saga prefectures in Kyûsyû. The two authors are from Kumamoto (Minoru Fukuda) and Fukuoka (Takeshi Furukawa).

⁶ Though there are other types of SFPs in KJ, here, we are concerned with *bai* and *gena*, which are frequently used in the KJ examples of theoretical linguistic papers.

⁷ See Endo (2022) and Endo and Maeda (2020) for the analysis of SFPs in SJ. They argue for the Truncation analysis to account for the Case Marker Drop phenomenon. However, Fukuda and Furukawa (2023) point out that the analysis faces difficulties. Our approach is different, as discussed in Sections 5 and 6.

⁸ (5)–(7) are quoted from Nishioka (2022). The SFP *bai* can also be used instead of *gena* in (5)–(7).

⁹ If the object DP *son-uta-ba* is not scrambled, the sentence sounds strange, which indicates that the GEN subject is not allowed, as shown in (i).

(i) ??Bunka-sai-de Tarô-no son-uta-ba utôta (gena)

See Nishioka (2022) for the analysis of this case.

- (5) *Unergative verbs such as hasiru 'run'*
 Undôkai-de Tarô-no hasitta (gena)
 Field day-at Tarô -GEN ran (SFP)
 'Tarô ran at the field day.'
- (6) *Unaccusative verbs such as tuku 'arrive'*
 Mô eki-ni Hanako-no tuita (gena)
 already station-at Hanako GEN arrived (SFP)
 'Hanako has already arrived at the station.'
- (7) *Transitive verbs such as utau 'sing'*
 Son-uta-ba bunka-sai-de Tarô-no utôta (gena)
 the song-ACC cultural-festival-at Tarô-GEN sang (SFP)
 'Tarô sang the song at the cultural festival.'

Second, in KJ, the *ga*-subject (hereinafter referred to as the NOM subject) induces a focus interpretation, whereas the GEN subject does not. For example, if the NOM subject were used in (4), it would be emphasized or focused. However, the GEN subject does not indicate this type of focus interpretation.¹⁰

In fact, several KJ speakers prefer the voiceless genitive case marker *n* in (4)–(7). This type of vowel reduction is not observable in the case of the nominative marker *ga*, which highlights the difference between focused NOM subjects and non-focal GEN subjects in KJ.

Third, existing research has not paid serious attention to whether SFPs such as *bai* and *gena* are optional or not, when discussing the GEN subject examples of KJ.¹¹ However, these SFPs play specific roles in licensing GEN subjects in (4)–(7), because KJ speakers are likely to use them at the end of the sentences when using a GEN subject. In a nutshell, the GEN subject sentence sounds far more natural when it ends with *bai* or *gena*.

Finally, though *bai* and *gena* can be omitted in (4)–(7), in such cases, KJ speakers tend to extend the final vowel of the predicate verb with the rising intonation, rendering the sentence exclamatory. To use (4) as an example, by omitting *bai* or *gena*, KJ speakers

¹⁰ We discuss this in Section 2. The same distinction can also be observed when *ga* and *no* are used as genitive case markers in KJ. See Fukuda (2009).

¹¹ For example, the SFP *gena* is implicitly regarded as optional in Nishioka's (2022) examples shown in (5)–(7). However, it seems that Kato (2005) regards the SFP *bai* as a required element in her examples reproduced as (35)–(38).

tend to stress or lengthen the final vowel of *ôka*. In (8), the final vowel is prolonged.¹²

- (8) Kumamoto-ni-wa suika-batake-no ôkâ!
 K.-in-TOP wmf.-GEN many
 ‘In Kumamoto, there are so many watermelon fields!’

This paper highlights the syntactic, functional, and phonological aspects of certain right peripheral elements in Japanese. Specifically, we argue for two major claims.

First, elements exist in the right periphery, licensing the GEN subjects in (4)–(7). We argue that (overt) SFPs such as *bai* and *gena* are nominal in KJ. Therefore, they play a critical role in genitive case valuation. Based on Nishioka’s (2022) analysis, we also argue that Force is nominal in KJ, valuing the subject DP as genitive (see also Rizzi (1997)). Although silent, it induces certain phonological effects. Thus, it can be identified as a covert SFP in KJ. SJ also has SFPs and Force; however, they are not nominal. Therefore, it has no GEN subject in independent sentences.

Second, based on Masunaga’s (1988) observation that neither focus-less subjects nor objects require the presence of case markers, we argue that the GEN subject, being non-focal, allows a missing case marker, whereas the NOM subject, being focused, does not. This analysis is applicable to the explanation of the Case Marker Drop phenomenon in double subject constructions in SJ and KJ. Here again, we show that SFPs and Force play a critical role, whether they are pronounced or unpronounced.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows how the differences between NOM and GEN subjects in KJ are syntactically explained. Section 3 describes the genitive case valuation of GEN subjects. Section 4 shows the historical background of *bai* and *gena* to indicate that they are inherently nominal. Section 5 highlights the relationship between the SFPs and the Case/Topic Marker Drop phenomenon. Section 6 addresses the so-called “double-subject constructions” to ensure that the (non-)focus interpretation of the two subjects and the (im)possibility of Case Marker Drop can be accounted for under our analysis in both SJ and KJ. Section 7 summarizes the major claims made in this study.

¹² With the NOM subject, (8) can be acceptable, as shown in (i), although it does not sound like an authentic KJ example.

(i) Kumamoto-ni-wa suika-batake-ga ôkâ!

2 Differences between NOM and GEN Subjects

There are syntactic and semantic differences between NOM and GEN subjects in KJ. Regarding syntactic differences, Yoshimura (1992) first observed that NOM and GEN subjects differ in their syntactic positions in KJ. For example, based on such grammatical facts regarding adverbial placement and the scope of negation, Nishioka (2013, 2018) argues that the NOM subject is located in the Spec of TP, whereas the GEN one remains in vP.¹³ However, the NOM subject is ambiguous in SJ because it is either in the Spec of TP or in vP.

Second, Kuno (1973a, b) argues that the NOM subject can be semantically ambiguous because it indicates either exhaustive listing (i.e., focal interpretation) or neutral description (i.e., non-focal interpretation) in SJ. In contrast, the selection is available in KJ, and thus no ambiguity arises. In KJ, the nominative case marker *ga* indicates that the NOM subject is focused, whereas the genitive case marker *no* indicates that the GEN subject is focus-free.

To provide a theoretical explanation, Nishioka (2013) employs Miyagawa's (2010, 2017) proposal of C-to-T inheritance of discourse-related features such as [topic/focus], which induces a syntactic movement to the TP Spec position in discourse-configurational languages such as Japanese. In KJ, the NOM subject moves from vP to the TP Spec, where it is valued as focused by the inherited feature [topic/focus]. It is also valued as nominative by T. However, the GEN subject is located too low to be valued as focused by the features. As it is outside the focus domain, the GEN subject remains intact as non-focal.¹⁴

It is interesting to note that the differences between the two types of NOM subjects in SJ can be captured in the same manner just indicated for KJ. The NOM subject can receive focus interpretation and nominative case in the TP Spec position, and it can receive non-focal interpretation and nominative case in vP.¹⁵

¹³ For ease of exposition, we do not distinguish the transitive or unergative v*P from the unaccusative or passive vP in what follows. Moriyama et al. (2022) argue that the GEN subject does not stay in vP but it moves to the Spec of AspP. We adopt Nishioka's analysis in this paper to avoid unnecessary complication irrelevant to our concern.

¹⁴ The genitive case valuation is discussed in the next section.

¹⁵ We assume with Nishioka (2022) that the focus-less NOM subject is also valued as nominative by T in SJ.

3 Genitive Case Valuation

In this section, based on Nishioka's (2022) analysis, we show how the GEN subject is valued as genitive in (4)–(7). In these examples, the GEN subject remains inside vP, and no possible case value assignor is available in TP. Nishioka (2022) argues that the empty root complementizer can value the GEN subject from outside TP, assuming that the complementizer in question can be nominal in KJ. His argument is based on the following facts.

First, *na*-adjectives pre-modify nouns in SJ, as shown in (9).¹⁶

- (9) Benri-*na* [N heya]
 convenient room.
 ‘a convenient room’

As the empty root complementizer is not nominal in SJ, *na*-adjectives cannot be used to modify it at the end of the sentence. The copular *da* must be used instead of *na*.

- (10) Sono heya-wa benri-**na*/✓*da* [C e]
 The room-top convenient
 ‘The room is convenient.’

However, this is different in KJ, in which *ka*-adjectives rather than *na*-adjectives are used to pre-modify nouns, as indicated in (11).

- (11) Benri-*ka* [N heya]
 convenient room
 ‘a convenient room’

In contrast to SJ, the empty root complementizer can be nominal in KJ; hence, *ka*-adjectives pre-modify the complementizer, as shown in (12).

- (12) Sono heya-wa benri-*ka* [C[+N] e]
 The room-top convenient
 ‘The room is convenient.’

¹⁶ *Na*-adjectives are also referred to as *Rentai-kei* (attributive forms) in traditional Japanese grammar.

The empty root nominal complementizer in KJ allows the presence of *ka*-adjectives to modify it in (12) and values the GEN subject of independent sentences from outside TP in (4)–(7).¹⁷

We delve deeper into Nishioka’s (2022) example in (12), showing that this example presents three new facts. First, the subject DP *sono heya* ‘the room’ can be marked with the genitive case marker *no* in this case.

- (13) Sono heya-*no* benri-ka
 The room-GEN convenient
 ‘The room is convenient.’

Second, (13) sounds much more natural when it is followed by the SFPs such as *bai* or *gena*, or when it ends with a lengthened vowel with the rising intonation, as shown in (14) and (15).

- (14) Sono heya-*no* benri-ka bai/gena
 The room-GEN convenient SFP
 ‘I think/hear that the room is convenient.’
- (15) Sono heya-*no* benri-kâ!
 The room-GEN convenient
 ‘The room is convenient!’

Finally, vowel lengthening does not occur when *ka*-adjectives are used as pre-modifiers of nouns, as shown in (16).

- (16) Benri-✓*ka*/**kâ* [N heya]
 convenient room
 ‘a convenient room’

¹⁷ Nishioka (2022) provides KJ exclamative examples such as (i) to argue that the nominalizing suffix *-sa* occupies the C position, valuing the subject as genitive.

(i) Wa! Tuki-no kirei-sa!
 Oh! moon-Gen beautiful-ness!
 ‘Oh! The moon’s beauty!’ (Literal meaning)

However, similar examples are also observable in SJ, and examples such as (i) can be analyzed as nominal expressions rather than sentential ones. Therefore, we do not adopt his assumption that the suffix *-sa* is a root complementizer in KJ, but we agree that an empty root nominal complementizer can induce an exclamatory interpretation.

Vowel lengthening can occur only when *ka*-adjectives are used as sentential predicates. These observations suggest the presence of the unspoken (nominal) element that triggers vowel-lengthening effects within the sentential structure, as opposed to the nominal structure. The element is arguably (nominal) Force, which induces an exclamatory interpretation and values the subject as genitive in (15).

4 Historical Facts

As observed in Section 1, the occurrence of SFPs such as *bai* and *gena* improves the naturalness of the GEN subjects in (4)–(7). In this section, we argue that this is because historically, *bai* and *gena* are nominals.

First, the SFP *bai* is currently regarded as a typical SFP in the Hitiku dialects. According to Yanagida (2022),¹⁸ the SFP *bai* is a historical relic of the first-person pronoun *wai* ‘I’ in Old Japanese. His analysis elucidates why the SFP *bai* indicates a speaker-oriented interpretation (“I think” or “I insist”) in Present-day KJ. Similarly, this implies that the SFP *bai* retains its nominal properties in Present-day KJ.

Second, according to Higashi (1982),¹⁹ *gena* originated from the old expression *kehai-nari* ‘sign-exist,’ meaning “(I feel that) there is a sign or indication of an event.” He argues that *gena* is derived from *kehai-nari* through morphological and phonological changes, as indicated in (17).

(17) *kehai-nari* → *ke-na* → *gena*

Higashi’s (1982) theory explains why *gena* means “It seems that” or “I hear that” in Present-day KJ. Regarding the noun *ge* as the head of *gena*, the SFP *gena* can be identified as a nominal.

In summary, both *gena* and *bai* can be considered to be nominal and value the subject as genitive in (4)–(7).

¹⁸ Kunio Yanagida (1875–1962) was one of the most famous Japanese folklorists.

¹⁹ Hideyoshi Higashi (1913–year of death unknown) was a traditional Japanese grammarian who studied KJ.

5 Case/Topic Marker Drop

Kuno (1973b: 223) claims that the nominative case marker *ga* cannot be dropped. He argues that if the subject is not marked with any particle, the missing particle should be the topic marker *wa* rather than the nominative case marker *ga*. Kuno (1973b:223) also suggests that the missing topic marker *wa* is non-focal.

However, Masunaga (1988: 147–148) argues that non-focal subjects and objects do not require the presence of case markers. Thus, the following examples are acceptable without the nominative case marker *ga* or the accusative case marker *o* in SJ.²⁰

- (18) a. Burondo-no otokonoko-*ga*/* \varnothing Tarô-o nagutta
 blond-GEN boy-NOM/ \varnothing T.-ACC hit
 ‘A blond boy hit Tarô.’
 b. Burondo-no otokonoko- \varnothing Tarô-o nagutta zo/yo
 blond-GEN boy- \varnothing T.-ACC hit SFP
 ‘A blond boy hit Tarô.’
- (19) a. (kinô Boston-de) “Ran”-*o*/? \varnothing mita
 (yesterday B.-in) “Ran”-ACC/- \varnothing saw
 ‘I saw “Ran” (in Boston yesterday).’
 b. (kinô Boston-de) “Ran”- \varnothing mita zo/yo
 (yesterday B.-in) “Ran” - \varnothing saw SFP
 ‘I saw “Ran” (in Boston yesterday).’

In (18b) and (19b), the speaker draws the listener’s attention to the predicate verbs using SFPs such as *zo* or *yo*. This implies that the subject or the object is necessarily de-emphasized.²¹ Thus, neither the nominative case marker *ga* nor the accusative case marker *o* is required.

We encapsulate the aforementioned observations of the missing topic and case markers in the following generalization.

- (20) The subject of a sentence is not necessarily marked with *ga*, *no*, or *wa* if it fails to have focus.

²⁰ In the examples, \varnothing indicates a missing case/topic marker.

²¹ According to Masunaga (1988), several alternatives are available to de-emphasize the subject/object. Adding SFPs such as *zo* and *yo* is one.

It is imperative to draw attention to the following two assumptions. First, (20) applies to the subjects in both SJ and KJ. Second, we assume that focus serves as an instruction for the phonological realization of emphasis. Thus, if the subject has no chance to maintain focus, the case or topic marker no longer requires realization in the morpho-phonological component.²² We argue that this is the mechanism underlying the Case/Topic Marker Drop phenomenon.

As discussed in Section 2, the GEN subject is inevitably focus-free in KJ. Thus, the case marker *no* should be omissible in (4)–(7), which can be confirmed, as shown in (21)–(24).

- (21) Kumamoto-ni-wa suika-batake- ϕ ôka bai/gena.
 Kumamoto-in-TOP watermelon-field- ϕ many SFP
 ‘In Kumamoto, I think/hear that there are many watermelon fields.’
- (22) Undôkai-de Tarô- ϕ hasitta bai/gena
 Field day-at Tarô- ϕ ran SFP
 ‘Tarô ran at the field day.’
- (23) Mô eki-ni Hanako- ϕ tuita bai/gena
 already station-at Hanako- ϕ arrived SFP
 ‘Hanako has already arrived at the station.’
- (24) Son-uta-ba bunka-sai-de Tarô- ϕ utôta bai/gena
 the song-ACC cultural-festival-at Tarô- ϕ sang SFP
 ‘Tarô sang the song at the cultural festival.’

In fact, (21)–(24) sound more natural when the speaker responds to what another speaker has just said in conversation, as shown in (25)–(28). In each Speaker B’s response, the predicate (verb) is emphasized, which ensures that the subject is not focused.

- (25) Speaker A: Saga-wa suika-batake-*no* ôka gena.
 Saga-TOP watermelon-field-GEN many SFP
 ‘I hear there are many watermelon fields in Saga.’
- Speaker B: Iya-*iya*, Kumamoto-ni suika-batake- ϕ ôka
 No-*no*, Kumamoto-in watermelon-fields- ϕ many
 (to) bai.
 (COMP) SFP

²² Fukuda (1993) argues that Case Marker Drop is an LF-related phenomenon, but we look at the same facts from a different angle.

- ‘No, I think that there are many watermelon fields in Kumamoto.’
- (26) Speaker A: Undôkai-ni Tarô-no konkatta gena
 Field day-to Tarô-GEN come-not-did SFP
 ‘I hear Tarô didn’t come to the field day.’
- Speaker B: Iya-iya, undôkai-de Tarô-φ hasitta bai.
 No-no, Field day-at Tarô-φ ran SFP
 ‘No, Tarô ran at the field day.’
- (27) Speaker A: Hanako-wa mada ne?
 Hanako-TOP yet SFP
 ‘Hanako hasn’t arrived yet?’
- Speaker B: Mô eki-ni Hanako-φ tuita bai.
 already station-at Hanako-φ arrived SFP
 ‘Hanako has already arrived at the station.’
- (28) Speaker A: Bunka-sai-de Tarô-wa nân-mo
 cultural-festival-at Tarô-TOP anything
 utawan-katta gena.
 sing-not-not SFP
 ‘I hear Tarô didn’t sing any song at the cultural festival.’
- Speaker B: Son-uta-ba bunka-sai-de Tarô-φ utôta
 the song-ACC cultural-festival-at Tarô-φ sang
 bai
 SFP
 ‘Tarô sang the song at the cultural festival.’

6 Double Subject Constructions

In (29), multiple subjects appear simultaneously in an independent sentence.²³ The SJ double-subject construction indicated in (29) has often been assumed to have the structures represented in (30).

- (29) Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake-*ga* ôi.
 Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields-NOM many

²³ Kuno (1973a, b) discusses “triple” subject constructions. However, we deal with “double” subject constructions such as (25) for expository purposes.

‘It is in Kumamoto that there are many watermelon fields.’

- (30) a. [TP Kumamoto-*ga* [TP suika-batake-*ga* [vP $\hat{o}i$]].
 b. [TP Kumamoto-*ga* [T' suika-batake-*ga* [vP $\hat{o}i$]].

In Sections 2 and 3, we hypothesize that there are two possible subject positions: the subject occupies the TP Spec (i.e., the focus position) or remains in vP (i.e., the focus-less position).²⁴ This leads us to assume the following structure for double subject constructions.²⁵

- (31) [TP Kumamoto-*ga* [vP suika-batake-*ga* [vP $\hat{o}i$]].

Let us turn our attention to Case/Topic Marker Drop phenomenon in double subject constructions in SJ. Based on the generalization stated in (20), we predict that the first nominative case marker *ga* should not be erasable; however, the second marker should be erasable. This prediction can be borne out, as shown in (32).²⁶

- (32) a. ??Kumamoto- ϕ suika-batake-*ga* $\hat{o}i$.
 Kumamoto- ϕ watermelon-fields-NOM many
 ‘It is in Kumamoto that there are many watermelon fields.’
 b. ?Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake- ϕ $\hat{o}i$.
 Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields- ϕ many

There are two facts regarding the acceptability of the two examples in (32). First, though both sentences are not perfectly acceptable, (32b) is better than (32a). Second, example (32a) does not sound fully unacceptable to some speakers. This may be because they are likely to consider the first missing element the topic marker *wa* rather than the nominative case marker *ga*. In either case, the DP *Kumamoto- ϕ* fails to indicate the focus interpretation.

The addition of SFPs such as *yo* or *zo* at the end of each sentence improves the

²⁴ In multiple subject constructions, the first NOM subject is occasionally referred to as “the Major Subject.”

²⁵ This structural analysis traces back to Yoshimura (1992). See also Nishioka (2013, 2018, 2022) for a current version of the structural analysis of the constructions under consideration.

²⁶ Though the judgment of (32) and (33) can be different among the speakers, the relative acceptability grades between them (i.e., (32a) < (32b), (32a) < (33a), (32b) < (33b), (33a) < (33b)) are significant to our discussion.

sentences.

- (33) a. ?Kumamoto- ϕ suika-batake-*ga* $\hat{o}i$ *yo/zo*.
 Kumamoto- ϕ watermelon-fields-NOM many SFP
 ‘It is in Kumamoto that there are many watermelon fields.’
- b. Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake- ϕ $\hat{o}i$ *yo/zo*.
 Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields- ϕ many SFP

The predicate $\hat{o}i$ ‘many’ is focused by means of *yo* or *zo*; hence, both subjects are de-emphasized. Therefore, neither the first nor the second subject requires the occurrence of the nominative case marker *ga*. In fact, both subjects tolerate missing case markers, although the first missing element may well be the topic marker *wa*. For example, (34) is not perfectly unacceptable, though the judgment is subtle.

- (34) ?Kumamoto- ϕ suika-batake- ϕ $\hat{o}i$ *yo/zo*.
 Kumamoto- ϕ watermelon-fields- ϕ many SFP

Let us focus on the fact that, though KJ has double subject constructions as well, it employs different case markers for the subjects. The KJ examples indicated in (35)–(38) share the same (logical) meaning.²⁷

- (35) ?Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake-*ga* $\hat{o}ka$ *bai*.
 Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields-NOM many SFP
 ‘It is in Kumamoto that I think there are many watermelon
 Fields.’ (Literal meaning)
- (36) Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake-*no* $\hat{o}ka$ *bai*.
 Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields-GEN many SFP
- (37) *Kumamoto-*no* suika-batake-*ga* $\hat{o}ka$ *bai*.
 Kumamoto- GEN watermelon-fields-NOM many SFP
- (38) *Kumamoto-*no* suika-batake-*no* $\hat{o}ka$ *bai*.
 Kumamoto- GEN watermelon-fields-GEN many SFP

Two significant facts exist regarding the four combinations of case markers

²⁷ Two notes are in order here. First, as indicated in footnote 11, (35)–(38) are examples exhibited by Kato (2005: 31), who put the SFP *bai* at the end of the sentences. Second, here again, some KJ speakers favor the voiceless genitive case marker *n* for the second subject in (36).

exemplified in (35)–(38). First, for KJ speakers, (36) sounds much more natural than (35), which sounds like an SJ sentence because of the second NOM subject. In other words, they prefer the GEN subject for the second one. The GEN subject is always considered non-focal in (36). Second, (37) and (38) suggest that the GEN subject cannot appear in the first subject position.²⁸ These two facts imply that (35) and (36) have the same structure as (31).

If no significant difference exists between SJ and KJ regarding the sentential structure of double subject constructions, almost the same judgment patterns of case marker deletion should be obtainable in (36), which is the most authentic KJ example among the four. As can be observed in (39) and (40), this expectation appears to have been confirmed, although (39) and (40) require a careful inspection.

- (39) ?Kumamoto- ϕ suika-batake-*no* *ôka* bai.
 Kumamoto- ϕ watermelon-fields- GEN many SFP
 ‘In Kumamoto, I think that there are many watermelon fields.’
- (40) Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake- ϕ *ôka* bai.
 Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields- ϕ many SFP
 ‘In Kumamoto, I think that there are many watermelon fields.’

First, the missing element can be the (de-emphasized) topic marker *wa* in (39). Second, (40) sounds more natural when it is a response to what another speaker has just mentioned. As shown in (41), the predicate *ôka* is emphasized in Speaker B’s utterance.

- (41) Speaker A: Saga-*wa* suika-batake-*no* *ôka* gena.
 Saga-TOP watermelon-field-GEN many SFP
 ‘I hear there are many watermelon fields in Saga.’
- Speaker B: Iya-*iya*, Kumamoto-*ga* suika-batake- ϕ *ôka*
 No-*no*, Kumamoto-NOM watermelon-fields- ϕ many
 (to) bai.
 (COMP) SFP
 ‘No, I think that it is in Kumamoto that there are many watermelon fields.’

²⁸ Though it is possible to regard the first GEN subject as modifying the second subject in (37) and (38), we exclude this possibility to maintain the analysis of double subject constructions.

7 Summary and Conclusion

In summary, we made three major claims. First, the GEN subject of independent sentences in KJ is licensed by nominal elements in the right periphery. Force can be assumed to be a covert nominal SFP in KJ. However, SJ lacks the GEN subject of independent sentences because it does not have such nominal elements. We have provided further support for Nishioka's (2022) analysis.

Second, based on descriptive generalization (20), we hypothesized that the Case/Topic Marker Drop phenomenon is a natural consequence of the premise that a focus is a feature that acts as an instruction for the phonological realization of emphasis. In other words, as long as the subject is focus-free, neither the case marker nor the topic marker is necessarily realized in the morpho-phonological component. SFPs play a critical role in inducing the “de-emphasis” effects, irrespective of whether they are overt or covert.

Finally, we extended the aforementioned analysis to show that the facts regarding double subject constructions in SJ and KJ fall under our analysis in compliance with generalization (20).

In conclusion, our analysis sheds new light on the following aspects of the right peripheral elements in Japanese. Syntactically, they can regulate the case valuation. Functionally, they can invoke de-emphasizing effects. Phonologically, these can be pronounced or unpronounced.

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