A Constructional Approach to the Dative- Nominative Alternation in Japanese and Korean

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1. Introduction

A large number of stative predicates in Japanese alternate between the two case patterns in (1).

(1) a. *NP1-nom NP2-nom* [1]
b. *NP1-dat NP2-nom*

The alternation is not without exception. Predicates such as *suki, kirai, nikui, itai*, V-*tai*, are associated only with the pattern (1a). It seems that the domain of distribution for pattern (1b) is a subset of the domain of pattern (1b). See Caluianu (2002) for a comprehensive list of the alternating and the non-alternating predicates in Japanese. Previous studies do not attribute any clear semantic effect to the alternation in (1). A similar alternation can be observed in Korean with only minor differences distinguishing the two languages.

Assuming that language is governed by something like the Principle of No Synonymy advocated by Goldberg, which states that *'if two constructions are syntactically distinct, they must be semantically or pragmatically distinct'* (Goldberg 1995: 67), the claim that the alternation in (1) does not affect interpretation becomes problematic. Moreover, if the two patterns in Japanese are semantically equivalent, why do their domains of distribution fail to overlap? Japanese and Korean appear to be very similar. How are the differences between the two languages to be explained? Syntactic accounts of the alternation in (1) (Morikawa 1993; Ura 1999) claim that dative case assignment is a lexical property of verbs, and as such idiosyncratic. The aim of this paper is to show that the distribution of the two case patterns and the differences between Japanese and Korean can be accounted for in a principled way.

The framework used will be Construction Grammar (CG)(Goldberg 1995). The choice of framework was determined by a number of features of this theory. Construction grammar does not posit a strict separation between syntax and lexicon. In CG, argument structure constructions (C) are regarded as form- meaning (F- S) pairs, such that some aspect of F or of S is not predictable from the component parts of C. Constructions, such as (1a) and (1b), are associated with a semantic description, much in the same way as lexical items. CG can capture the semantic relations among formally related constructions through inheritance links, without having to posit an abstract common semantic representation.

2. Analysis

2.1. Japanese

The alternating predicates in Japanese can be divided into two types:

A1: The alternation is associated with a semantic distinction: *atsui, amai, mieru, kikoeru.*

A2: The alternation is not associated with a semantic distinction: *ureshii, dekiru, wakaru*, V-*(r)eru.*

[1] Stative predicates in Japanese normally trigger topicalisation when the clauses containing them occur as independent sentences. To avoid awkwardness the double nominative constructions in Japanese will appear in the topicalized form (*-wa/-ga*) throughout the paper.

The analysis of A1 predicates can reveal the constructional meaning of the two case patterns. A1 predicates require the (1a) pattern when there is a whole- part relation between NP1 and NP2, but prefer pattern (1b) when the two NPs are not semantically relate, see examples (2a) and (2b).

(2) a. *watashi-wa/*ni-wa* *kao-ga* *atsui* 'My face feels hot'
I-top/*-dat-top face-nom hot
b. *watashi-ni-wa/?-wa* *kono suupu-ga* *atsui* 'This soup is (too) hot for me'
I-dat-top/?-top this soup-nom hot

The choice of sentence pattern is associated with a difference in interpretation. Sentences like (2a) express sensations located in the body part referred to by NP2, whereas sentences like (3b) express evaluations of the property associated with NP2.[2] See Caluianu (2002) for details.

The sensation adjectives in A1 are one-argument property adjectives. The readings in (2a) and (2b) are contributed by the two constructions. The constructional meaning of (1a) and (1b) could be parphrased as in (3) below. The representation of sentences (2a) and (2b) is given in Figures 1 and 2.[3]

(3) a. Sensation Construction: Experiencer (X) feels sensation related to Stimulus/ Body Part (Y)
b. The Evaluation Construction: Experiencer (X) evaluates property of Theme (Y)

The Sensation construction has two profiled arguments. This determines the choice of direct case for both arguments. In the Evaluation Construction, the Experiencer argument is not profiled, hence its oblique case. Our treatment differs slightly from Goldberg (1995), in that we have constructions specify only the surface form of the arguments, not their grammatical function. The grammatical fucntion of the arguments is calculated on the basis of the profiling status of the participants of the predicate. Only profiled participants will be associated with grammatical functions. Non-profiled participants will correspond to adjuncts.

Figure 1. *The Sensation Construction*

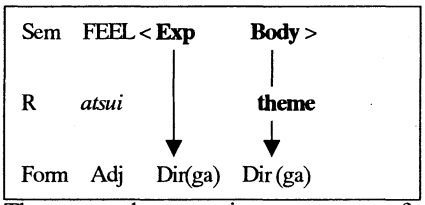
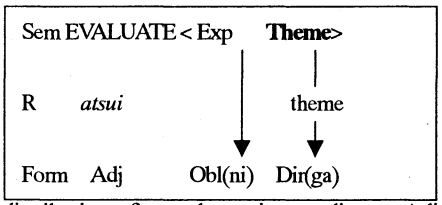


Figure 2. *The Evaluation Construction*



The proposed constructions can account for the distribution of non-alternating predicates. Adjectives such as *itai, kayui, suki da*, V- *tai*, refer to psychological processes that do not involve evaluations. As such, these predicates are compatible only with the sensation pattern. The contrary is true for *tough*-constructions, which involve mainly evaluations. This makes these constructions optimally compatible with the (1b) pattern.

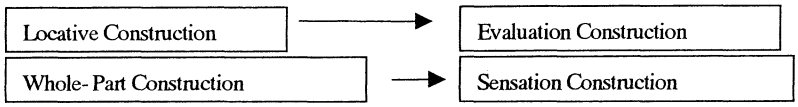
The two constructions seem best analyzed as metaphorical extensions from non-experiencer constructions. The Evaluation Construction is related to the Locative Construction (*oka-no ue-ni ie-ga aru*

[2] The evaluation is made relative to the standards of the participant referred to by NP1, as indicated by the fact that the predicate in (2b) is interpreted as meaning 'too X' (atsusugiru). This is not the case for the predicate in (2a).

[3] Constructions specify the number of arguments and their profiling status. The profiling status of an argument determines the associated form. Profiled arguments are linked to direct cases and non profiled arguments to oblique cases. The construction may contribute arguments not shared by the predicate. This option can be observed in Figures 1 and 2, where the predicate has a single argument.

'There is a house on the hill') through the metaphor 'experiencers are locations of the experience'. The Sensation Construction is linked to the Whole- Part Construction (*zoo-wa hana-ga nagai* 'the elephan's trunk is long') through the metaphor 'experiences are inalienable possessions'.

Figure 3. *Inheritance links between Experiencer Constructions and Non-Experiencer Constructions*



Caluianu (2002) presents evidence that A2 predicates are semantically complex, referring to psychological states that involve both sensations and evaluations. Consequently, these predicates are compatible with both (1a) and (1b).

(4) a. *watashi-wa/-ni-wa* *ano tegami-ga* *ureshikatta* 'I was glad (to receive) that letter'
I-top/ top-dat that letter-nom glad

The semantic contribution of the construction is neutralized because the constructional meaning is included in the lexical meaning of the predicates.

2.2. Korean

Korean differs from Japanese in two main respects. The first is the smaller number of non-alternating predicates. The second is the absence of the pattern (1b) with complex predicates, i.e. desiderative and potential forms.

Several predicates that are uniquely associated with pattern (1a) in Japanese alternate in Korean, for instance *cohta* (like), *silhta* (dislike), *mwusepta* (fear).

(5) Korean: *A-ka/-eykey* *B-ka* *coh-ta*[4] 'A likes B'
Japanese: *A-ga/*-ni* *B-ga* *suki da*
A-nom/-dat B-nom like

Predicates which seem to reject pattern (1b), accept it if the relation between the two arguments is changed from whole- part to a neutral relation. Consequently, the evidence in favor of a sensation construction similar to the one in Japanese is not convincing.

(6) a. *na-ka/*eykey* *meoli-ka* *apeu-ta* 'My head aches'
I-nom/dat head-nom hurt
b. *na-ka/-eykey* *i cwusa-ka* *apeu-ta* 'This injection hurts (me)'
I-nom/-dat this injection hurt

It seems that in Korean the dative pattern and the transitive pattern are in complementary distribution. Potential and desiderative verbs in Korean can occur with the transitive sentence pattern but reject the dative pattern. Korean differs from Japanese in this respect. Based on this observation, we can determine the constructional meaning of pattern (1b) in Korean through its relation to the transitive sentence pattern. We can assume that the constructional meaning of the transitive sentence is AFFECT < Agent, Theme> and the constructional meaning of (1b) in Korean is BE AFFECTED <Non-Agent, Theme>. The dative pattern will be compatible with predicates that have the 'be affected' component as part of their lexical meaning. We will

[4] In non-embedded contexts the first nominative marker is normally replaced by the topic marker *-nun*

assume, following Sohn (1973) and Schutze (2001) that the pattern (1a) differs from (1b) in terms of focus. Pattern (1a) in Korean is associated with the Whole- Part Construction, as in Japanese. Unlike Japanese, however, in Korean the pattern has not acquired an experiential constructional meaning.

3. Conclusions

This analysis raises a number of questions that cannot receive a full account in this paper. Why are the two case patterns associated with specific meanings in Japanese but not in Korean? A possible answer is in terms of the repertory of constructions available in the language and the relations among them.

In Japanese the dative case marker *–ni* is also used as a locative marker. This case syncretism has lead to the metaphorical extension from the Locative Construction to the Evaluation Construction. In Korean there is a distinction between animate and inanimate dative (*eykey/ey*). The inheritance link from the Locative Construction is not available. The existence of the Evaluation Construction blocks the use of the dative pattern with certain experiencer predicates in Japanese. As a result, these predicates have come to be associated only with the double nominative pattern. The association between pattern (1a) and the predicates expressing non-evaluative psychological states could be regarded as a factor behind the emergence of the Sensation Construction. In Korean, on the other hand, the constructional meaning of the dative sentence pattern is determined only by its relation to the transitive sentence pattern.

To conclude, we have claimed that the two sentence patterns in (1) can be associated with constructional meanings in both Japanese and Korean. However, owing to the pressure from other constructions in each language, the constructional meanings associated with (1a) and (1b) differ in the two languages. However, the distribution of the two patterns is not random, but determined by constructional meanings.

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