

Japanese multiple nominative constructions: The view of Antisymmetry

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This paper examines multiple nominative constructions (MNCs) in Japanese, pursuing the question of how nominative *ga*-marked phrases are syntactically licensed. MNCs in Japanese, in which more than one *ga*-marked phrase can occur within a clause, have widely been studied by a number of linguists (e.g. Kuno, 1973; Fukui, 1986; Takezawa, 1987; Tateshi, 1991; Heycock, 1993; Vermeulen, 2005).

It has been claimed that the outermost *ga*-marked phrase in MNCs, as in (1b), shares the properties with the *subject* of the individual-level predicate that denote permanent properties of individuals, as in (1a), in that the (outermost) *ga*-phrase receives an exhaustive (or focused) reading. Building on the idea that the subject-predicate relationship can license not only positions, but also arguments independently of θ -assignment, Heycock (1993) claims that all the *ga*-phrases occurring in ‘adjoined’ positions are subjects of predication and that they are licensed by virtue of an aboutness relation. The main claim Heycock makes is that successive layers of predication (i.e., thematically closed sentences) can function as predicates, licensing a further subject in an A-position.

As shown in (1b), the only innermost *ga*-phrase has a very close connection to the predicate denoting the property. In contrast, outer *ga*-phrases show a significantly looser connection with the predicate. Clearly, not all *ga*-phrases have the same status. This can be confirmed by testing VP-fronting and the replacement by the proform *soo* (‘so’) (Akiyama, 2004). The proform *soo* can replace a lexical predicate which contains the innermost *ga*-phrase in (2a) and VP-fronting can (marginally) pied-pipe the innermost *ga*-phrase in (3b). This indicates that the lowest *ga*-phrase does not occupy SpecTP; rather, it probably stays in a lower position such as SpecvP. As can be seen in (4), VP-fronting with pied-piping of the innermost *ga*-phrase is impossible in a transitive structure – I take it that VP-fronting *per se* is not ungrammatical when the verb is transitive: what *is* ungrammatical is VP-fronting that pied-pipes the innermost *ga*-phrase. Suppose that some feature on *v* triggers object movement to one of the specifiers of vP. Now, if we assume that phrase structure obeys Antisymmetry (Kayne, 1994) and that the LCA is a PF constraint, there is no asymmetric c-command relation between the outer Spec and the inner Spec in (5a,b). Hence, no linear order can be established between these two elements, which, in turn, can explain the ungrammaticality of (4a). That is, first, Object Shift is grammatical when the subject leaves vP since a trace of a subject does not have to be linearly ordered, as in (5c,d). Second, vP-fronting with pied-piping of the subject is grammatical when there is no Object Shift since no symmetry is created on the edge of vP. This phenomenon is, in fact, reminiscent of VP-fronting in German. It is claimed that an indefinite DP can stay *in situ* while a definite DP is moved out of its base-position in German (e.g. Wurmbrand, 2004). On the basis of this, it can be postulated that the definite accusative DP *Mamas Auto* (‘mom’s car’) is shifted from VP to SpecvP in (6) and that the indefinite nominative subject *ein Idiot* (‘an idiot’) within a fronted phrase, as in (6a), stays in SpecvP. The ungrammaticality of (6a) precisely shows that an indefinite nominative subject (in a base-position: SpecvP) and a definite accusative object (in a moved position: SpecvP) cannot co-occur in specifiers of vP – due to a violation of antisymmetry – which is comparable to the Japanese data in (4a). This crucially suggests that the *ga*-marked subject originated in SpecvP can stay *in situ* when (i) there is some other *ga*-marked constituent outside of SpecvP in an MNC and (ii) there is no nominal object (an accusative-marked DP) in the structure because of antisymmetry.

This leads to the conclusion that Japanese MNCs are not instances of multiple adjunction, nor are they multiple specifiers. Rather, each *ga*-phrase and its predicate in an MNC are always mediated by a functional head.

