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Elly van Gelderen and Vida Samiian

Department of Linguistics
California State University, Fresno
Fresno, California 93740-8001

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Yuki Matsuda
University of Washington
Asian Languages and Literature
Box. 353521
Seattle, WA 98195-3521
ymatsuda@u.washington.edu

Nominative Objects and Lack of Multiple Feature-checking in Child Japanese

Kazumi Matsuoka

Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures
University of Memphis

1. Checking of Multiple Nominative Case

The Japanese Nominative Object typically appears with [+stative] predicates. Some Japanese predicates, such as *wakaru* (to understand), *iru* (to need), *dekiru* (to be able to handle), *hoshii* (desirable), *suki* (be fond of), are inherently [+stative]. Only Nominative Objects are allowed to appear with those predicates.

(1)a. Misato-ga doitsugo-ga deki-ru (koto)
Misato-NOM German-NOM able to handle-NPAST (fact)
'(The fact that) Misato can speak German.'

b. *Misato-ga doitsugo-o deki-ru (koto)
Misato-NOM German-ACC able to handle-NPAST (fact)
'(The fact that) Misato can speak German.'

The [-stative] verbs can be converted into [+stative] by the potential verbal morpheme, *-(rar)e-*. When this happens, the object can appear either with the Nominative or the Accusative Case-particle.

(2)a. Misato-ga doitsugo-ga hanas-e-ru (koto)
Misato-NOM German-NOM speak-can-NPAST (fact)
'(The fact that) Misato can speak German.'.

b. Misato-ga doitsugo-o hanas-e-ru (koto)
Misato-NOM German-ACC speak-can-NPAST (fact)
'(The fact that) Misato can speak German.'

In his extensive investigation of multiple feature-checking, Ura (1996) argued that 'the Nominative Case-feature of T in Japanese and Korean may enter into multiple feature-checking relations...' (1996: 336). He assumed that multiple feature-checking is subject to parameter-setting. Tense in Japanese and Korean, for example, has multiple sets of the Nominative Case-feature, while that is not the case in languages such as English. This implies that children need to process primary linguistic data to determine if their language allows multiple Case-checking. This process interacts with the default value of the parameter in the following fashion.

Suppose that UG contains a parameter for the availability of multiple Case-checking. The negative value of the parameter rules out (3b) and (3d) in the examples below.

(3)a. John-ga chiizupan-o yak-e-ru (koto)
John-NOM cheese bread-ACC bake-can-NPAST (fact)
'(The fact that) John can bake cheese bread.'

b. John-ga chiizupan-ga yak-e-ru (koto)
John-NOM cheese bread-NOM bake-can-NPAST (fact)
'(The fact that) John can bake cheese bread.'

c. I want him (for the project).

d. * I want he (for the project).

However, the (b) sentence is perfectly grammatical in adult Japanese, and hence Japanese children have opportunities to hear similar constructions as positive evidence. This positive evidence can guide the children as they re-set the value of the parameter. This learnability consideration leads to the prediction that the value of this parameter is set to be negative as a default.

On the other hand, if the default value of the parameter is set to be positive, the grammar would rule in all sentences in (3). In this situation, children who are acquiring English will face the dilemma of the absence of negative data. One possible source of the negative evidence is a direct correction from adult speakers. However, it is commonly observed that young children do not rely on

grammatical corrections from parents (Morgan and Travis 1989).

Assuming that the default setting of the parameter is negative, it is predicted that at an early age, Japanese young children would not produce the multiple Nominative construction, in which both the subject and the object appear with the Nominative Case-particle.

An empirical prediction from this assumption is that at some early point, children will not produce any multiple Nominative constructions, such as (4), early in the time course of language development:

(4) Yuchan-ga omizu-ga hoshi-i.
Yuchan-NOM water-NOM desirable-NPAST
'Yuchan wants water.'

2. Method

The data were taken from three sets of databases, independently transcribed in the CHILDES format (MacWhinney and Snow 1990, Oshima-Takane and MacWhinney 1995): the AKI Corpus (Miyata 1995), the Noji Corpus (computerized for Morikawa 1997), and the KAN Corpus (currently in construction at the University of Connecticut). The age ranges of the children, during the time that their utterances were collected, are as follows:

- AKI: 1;5;7-3;0;0
- Sumihare (Noji): 1:11-3;3
- KAN: 2;2;3 – 3;0;12

The CLAN program was used to identify 2699 spontaneous utterances including the particle *ga*. Those sentences were sorted according to predicate types.

3. Results

The Nominative Case-particle *ga* is observed to appear early in the transcripts. Most of those early uses of *ga* are attached to the subject of intransitive verbs or non-stative transitive verbs, though. The stative predicates, with or without Case-particles, seem to appear a few months later than the first use of *ga*. The following table summarizes the age of the first appearance of *ga* and the stative predicate.

Table 1
The First appearance of the Nominative particle and stative predicates

	ga	Stative predicate	Nominative object
AKI	2;2;22	2:4:29	2;6;15
KAN	2;2;3+	2:3:14	2;4;25
Sumihare	1;11+	1;11+	2;3

(+ = the first file in the database)

The following is a summary of the number of stative predicates, with or without particles, and the number of multiple Nominative constructions.

Table 2
Multiple Nominative construction in child speech

	Stative predicates	Nominative Objects	Multiple Nominative (with the stative pred)
AKI	199	19	0
KAN	42	3	0
Sumihare	48	18	0

In any corpus, there were no multiple Nominative constructions with stative predicates. [1]

When two arguments appear with a stative predicate in children's speech, only one Nominative Case-particle was used, mostly on the object. [2]

(5) Aki-chan are-ga hoshi-i yo. (AKI48, 2;10;7)
AKI that-NOM want-NPAST
'I (AKI) want that thing.'

(6) Kore-ga deki-na-i. (KAN10-1, 2;4;25)
this-NOM can-NEG-NPAST
'(I) can't do this.'

(7) hiru-wa omanju-ga tabe-ta-i. (Sumi27, 2;7)
noon-TOP sweet bun-NOM eat-want-NPAST
'I want to eat a sweet bun for lunch/afternoon snack.'

This observation indicates that the Nominative Case, on the subject and the object, is licensed by the Tense head, which carries only one set of formal features to check the Nominative Case. [3]

4. Conclusion

Young children seem to assume the negative value of the multiple Case-checking parameter at early stages of language acquisition. Children begin with the most conservative option, namely assuming that one head can check a certain formal feature only once. This is consistent with the following assumptions.

- Multiple feature-checking is subject to parametric variation. (Ura 1996)
- The default value of the parameter is negative.

Double Nominative constructions in adult speech, such as (8) below, can serve as positive evidence for re-setting the parameter:

[1] A few double Nominative constructions were observed with non-stative predicates. One utterance was observed in the AKI Corpus (age 2;9;14, *ana ga aiterunde ne, sennnaka ga*. 'There is a hole, on the back.), and another from the Noji Corpus (Age 3:2, *niichan-ga shita-ga akaku nattara toru n yo*. 'When the big brother gets a red tongue, you take it out.) This type of multiple Nominative construction occurs only when a certain semantic restriction is satisfied. (Kuno 1973: Chapter 3) We do not consider this type of multiple Nominative construction in this study.

[2] It is possible that children have a tendency to assign the Nominative Case-particle to an internal argument, whenever possible. More than 60% of early use of the Nominative particle *ga* was assigned to the internal argument of ergative verbs. Further research is needed to confirm this informal observation.

[3] Note that a simple strategy, in which *ga* is mapped to logical subject is inconsistent with the children's willingness to use *ga* on objects of stative predicates. (W. Snyder, p.c.)

(8) kotori-ga omizu-ga nomi-ta-i tte (iw-te-ir-u).
little bird-NOM water-NOM drink-want-NPAST COMP (say-teir-NPAST)
'The little bird is saying that she wants to drink some water.'

Sentences such as (8) abound in adult speech.

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Kazumi Matsuoka
Foreign Languages and Literatures
University of Memphis
Campus Box 526430
Memphis TN 38152-6430
Email: kmatsuok@memphis.edu

On the Extent of Trace Deletion in ACD

Jason Merchant
University of California, Santa Cruz

This paper investigates the nature and syntactic placement of the restriction of quantificational determiners under the copy theory of movement and presents a brief argument from the interaction of antecedent-contained deletion (ACD) and Principle C that while relative clauses in ACD must be deleted from their base positions, complements and adjuncts in NP need not be, and hence must not be.*

1 Background

The paradigm in (1) has been discussed by Fiengo and May 1994 and Fox 1995. These authors note, following Chomsky 1981 among many others, that R-expressions in relative clauses on quantificational DPs trigger Principle C effects with respect to c-commanding pronouns, as in (1).[1]

(1) a. ??I introduced him1 to every guy Peter1 found attractive.
b. ??I sent her1 every sweater Sheila1 saw in the brochure.

This has traditionally been taken as an argument that LF-movement does not bleed Principle C of the binding theory (BT(C)), that is, that BT(C) must apply at S-structure. Chomsky 1995 however, who argues that the binding theory applies only at LF, reinterprets this fact to indicate that the restriction of the

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[1] The status of examples like (1) has been the source of some debate. The traditional discussion of bleeding of BT(C) by QR has been largely limited to cases where the c-commanding pronoun was in subject position, as in (i):
(i) * He$_1$ liked every guy I introduced Peter$_1$ to.
No-one disputes the ungrammaticality of examples like (i). The evidence is less clear with double object cases as in (1), however. Many speakers find the indicated coreference in examples similar to (1) perfectly grammatical; see Kennedy 1997:fn22 and Fox (to appear):fn 50 for discussion. The force of the argument in this squib goes through regardless of the status of such examples: everyone agrees that (at least) in ACD constructions, an apparent BT(C) violation is not found.