

On the Relationship between Nominative Objects and Major Subjects in Japanese

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Fumikazu Niinuma and Shigeki Taguchi(2009), "On the Relationship between Nominative Objects and Major Subjects in Japanese," *Language & Information Society* 10. One of the controversial issues in the Japanese syntax is how the nominative Case on NPs is licensed. The related question would be whether there is a relationship between the interpretation (the exhaustive-listing and the neutral description interpretation) and the licensing conditions on the nominative Case. We first show that there are two types of nominative objects in Japanese and that this difference should be attributed to the distinction between the exhaustive-listing interpretation and the neutral description interpretation. Extending Yoon's (2007) analysis of major subjects and Woolford's (2006) Case system, we argue that the nominative Case on the object NP that has the exhaustive-listing interpretation is licensed by the sentential predicate, and thus it is an inherent Case. On the other hand, we argue, following Takezawa(1987) and Ura(1996, 2000), that the nominative Case on the NPs that receive neutral description interpretation is licensed by T. As a result, the nominative Case on subjects and objects (or adjuncts) is subject to the same grammatical operations.

Key words : Nominative Objects, Major subjects, Inherent Case, Case filter

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1. Introduction

Japanese has a Case alternation phenomenon where the accusative case marker on the (direct) object changes to the nominative case marker under a certain environment. One of the main concerns is how the nominative Case on the object is licensed, more specifically, whether the licensing conditions for the nominative Case on the object is different from those on the subject. Tada(1992), Yatsushiro(1999) and Takano(2003) argue that the nominative Case on the object is licensed differently from the nominative Case on the subject. On the other hand, Saito(1982), Koizumi(1994, 1998), Niinuma(2000), and Nomura(2003, 2005) argue that the same mechanism licenses the nominative Case on the object as well as the subject.

It seems that we need to consider this issue from the semantic point of view as well. It has been argued since Kuroda(1965) and Kuno(1973) that there are two types of the nominative NPs in Japanese: NPs with the exhaustive-listing interpretation (major subjects) and those with the neutral-description interpretation (grammatical subjects). Furthermore, the recent syntactic treatment of subjects in Japanese (and Korean) has shown that the structural positions of major subjects and grammatical subjects as well as the licensing conditions for them are different (see Koizumi(1994, 1998) and Yoon(2007)). Notice that the linguists mentioned above have all argued that a single head or a single operation licenses the nominative Case on the object, even though the exact mechanisms proposed are different. Thus, the question that arises is what kinds of interpretations nominative objects bear. If nominative objects may bear the exhaustive-listing interpretation, it constitutes a strong evidence for the claim that nominative objects are licensed in the same way as nominative subjects.

In this paper, we show that there are cases where the nominative object

may bear the exhaustive-listing interpretation, which is one of the principal properties of major subjects. Then, we claim that there are two types of nominative objects in Japanese: One is that they are licensed by T under long-distance Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001), and the other is that they are licensed by sentential predicates (cf. Yoon 2007). More specifically, our claim is that objects may be marked as structural nominative Case (licensed by T under Agree), or as inherent nominative Case (licensed by sentential predicates via a particular theta roles). If our claim is on the right track, the properties of nominative objects in Japanese follow automatically. The immediate consequence of this claim is that the nominative Case on subjects and objects (or adjuncts) is subject to the same grammatical operations.

The organization of this paper will be as follows. In section 2, we will observe several properties of nominative objects in Japanese, pointing out the similarities between nominative objects and major subjects in Japanese. In section 3, we will claim that there are two types of nominative objects in Japanese. First, we will review the syntactic treatment of major subjects proposed by Koizumi(1994, 1998), and Yoon(2007). Then, based on Yoon's (2007) analysis, we will argue that the nominative object that has the exhaustive-listing interpretation is assigned a particular theta role by the sentential predicate and thus it has an inherent Case, extending the ideas proposed by Woolford(2006). On the other hand, the nominative object that has the neutral-description interpretation is licensed by T under long-distance Agree, and thus it is a structural Case. We finally show that the proposed analysis can account for the properties in the section 2. In section 4, we will discuss two implications for the proposed analysis. Section 5 is a summary of this paper.

2. The Non-Uniform Properties of Nominative Objects in Japanese

2.1. Scope Interactions

One of the main diagnostics of the structural position of nominative objects in Japanese comes from the scope facts. Tada (1992) observes that the nominative object in (1) takes wide scope over the potential *-(rar)e*, while the object with the accusative marker in (2) is within the scope of the potential.

(1) John-wa	migime-dake-ga	tsumur-e-ru
John-Top	right. eye-only-Nom	close-can-pres
(i) [*] can > only		
(ii) only > can		
(2) John-wa	migime-dake-o	tsumur-e-ru
John-Top	right. eye-only-Acc	close-can-pres
(i) can > only		
(ii) [?] only > can		(Tada 1992)

Based on the contrast above, it has been assumed that nominative objects stay in a higher position than the object with the accusative case marker (cf. Tada(1992), Koizumi(1994, 1998), Yatsushiro(1999), Niinuma(2000), among others). However, recently Nomura(2003, 2005) observes that it is also possible for the object with the nominative case marker to be within the scope of the potential, arguing that nominative objects may be located within VP in overt syntax. Consider the following example below:

- (3) Taro-ga koyubi-dake-ga mage-rare-ru no wa shitteita-ga,
 Taro-Nom pinkie-only-Nom crook-can-pres NM Top knew-but
 (kare-ga) kusuriyubi-dake-mo mage-rare-ru no-ni-wa odoroitā
 he-Nom ring-finger-only-also crook-can-pres NM-Dative-Top surprised
 'I have known that Taro can crook only his pinkie but I am
 surprised that he can also crook only his ring finger.' ("can > only"
 reading is possible) (Nomura 2005)

In fact, Nomura(2003, 2005) argues that two positions may be available for nominative objects: Spec of TP, and the base-generated position. In section 3, we will point out the problems with Nomura(2003, 2005).

2.2. Predicate types

It is a well-known fact that nominative objects are licensed by a certain type of predicates. Kuno(1973), Tada(1992), Yatsushiro(1999), among others, argue that the predicates that have a [+stative] feature are able to license nominative objects, which are well-attested in other languages. However, Saito(1982) observes that they can sometimes occur with the predicates which do not have [+stative], as shown below:

- (4) ²Kono shu-no eiga-ga₁ kodomo-ga e₁ yorokobu
 This kind-Gen movie-Nom child-Nom enjoy
 'It is this kind of movie that children enjoy'(Saito 1982)

The verb *yorokobu* 'enjoy' is not a stative predicate, since it can cooccur with the progressive form *te-iru*, which is not possible for the stative predicates in Japanese.¹⁾

1) The sentence becomes acceptable when *te-iru* has a perfective meaning, not a progressive meaning.

(5) Kodomo-ga kono eiga-o yorokon-deir-u
 Child-Nom this movie-Acc enjoy-progressive-pres
 'The children is enjoying this movie'

(6) a. John-wa migime-dake-ga tsumur-e-ru
 John-Top right,eye-only-Nom close-can-pres
 'John can close only his right eye'

b. ^{??}John-wa migime-dake-ga tsumur-e-teir-u
 John-Top right,eye-only-Nom close-can-progressive-pres
 'John can be closing only his right eye'

It is interesting to note that the example (4) cannot cooccur with the progressive form, either.

(7) [?]Kono shu-no eiga-ga₁ kodomo-ga e₁ yorokon-deir-u
 This kind-Gen movie-Nom child-Nom enjoy-progressive-pres
 'It is this kind of movie that children is enjoy'

From this observation, two ways of explanations seem to be available. First, the verb *yorokobu* has two meanings, one with [+stative] and the other without [+stative]. Second, the stativity comes from other factors, such as generic interpretation or habitual interpretation. We will show later that the second approach is on the right track.

2.3. The positions of Nominative Objects

It has been argued that the underlying position of nominative objects is the same as that of accusative objects, probably due to the theta role assignment. In fact, Niinuma(2000) has argued that nominative objects 'tucks-in' to Spec TP after the subject undergoes movement to Spec TP. However, Saito(1982) observes that there are some cases where the

nominative object must be realized in the sentence-initial position, as shown in (9-10):²⁾

(8) a. John-ga kono biru-dake-ga oishiku nom-e-ru
John-Nom this beer-only-Nom deliciously drink-can-pres
'John can drink only this beer deliciously'

b. Kono biru-dake-ga John-ga oishiku nom-e-ru
this beer-only-Nom John-Nom deliciously drink-can-pres

(9) ²Kono shu-no eiga-ga₁ kodomo-ga e₁ yorokobu
This kind-Gen movie-Nom child-Nom enjoy
'It is this kind of movie that children enjoy'

(10) ¹Kodomo-ga kono shu-no eiga-ga yorokobu
child-Nom this kind-Gen movie-Nom enjoy
'It is this kind of movie that children enjoy'

(cf. Saito 1982)

Thus, the questions that we need to consider are as follows: The first is why the nominative object does not have to appear in the sentence-initial position, as in (8). The second is why the nominative object in (9) must be realized in the sentence-initial position.

2.4. Adjunct Nominative Object?

Saito(1982), and Takano(2003) observe that indirect objects or adjuncts

2) Susumu Kuno (personal communication) points out that the predicate *yorokobu* can be both a transitive and an intransitive verb. Given this, the unacceptability of (10) may be accounted for if the direct object must have the accusative case marker when the predicate is used as a transitive verb. If this analysis is on the right track, the sentence in (9) indicates that *kono shu-no eiga-ga* does not function as a direct object, but the major subject, which implies that that the licensing condition of the nominative case marker in (10) does not involve movement.

may have the nominative case marker under a certain condition. Witness the following examples:

- (11) a. *Watashi-wa kono kaisha-ni/-Nom Mary-o suisenshi-ta.*
 I-Top this company-Dat/-Nom Mary-Acc recommend-past
 'I recommended Mary to this company.'
- b. *Watashi-wa kono kaisha-ga Mary-o suisenshi-ta-i.*
 I-Top this company-Nom Mary-Acc
 recommend-want-Pres
 'I want to recommend Mary to this company.'
- (12) a. *Bokura-wa daigaku-no toshokan-de/-Nom benkyo-shi-ta*
 We-Top university-Gen library-Loc study-do-past
 'We studied in the university library'
- b. *Bokura-ni-wa yahari daigaku-no toshokan-ga*
 we-for-topic after all university-Gen library-Nom
itiban ochitsuite benkyoo-deki-ru
 best calmly study-can, do-pres
 'After all, for us, the university library is the place where we
 can study quietly'

(cf. Saito(1982), Takano(2003))

Notice that the dative marker or the locative postposition in (11a) and (12a) cannot be replaced with the nominative case marker because of the absence of the [+stative] predicates. If the predicate becomes [+stative] by the addition of the relevant morpheme *-tai* or *-dekiru*, the nominative case marker on the indirect object or the adjunct may be licensed.

2.5. Nominative Objects that bears exhaustive-listing interpretation

It has recently argued that there are cases where nominative objects have the exhaustive-listing interpretation, as well as the neutral-description

interpretation (see Kuno(1973) for the definition of the exhaustive listing and the neutral description interpretation). The relevant examples are shown below:

(13) Watashi-wa hotonodo-no biru-ga nom-e-ru
 I-Top most of-Gen beer-Nom drink-potential-pres
 'I can drink most of the beer' (neutral description)

(14) Hontoowa, (musume-dewa naku) musuko-o/-ga isha-ni
 actually Daughter-be not son-Acc/-Nom doctor-Dat
 shi-tai no desu,
 become-want NM be
 'Actually, I want my son to become a doctor, not my daughter'
 (exhaustive listing)

(cf. Matsui 2008)

Kuno(1973), for instance, has discussed the relationship between the position of NPs with the nominative case marker and their interpretation. He argues that the NP with the nominative case marker in the sentence-initial position tends to get exhaustive listing interpretation when the predicate is [+stative]. The fact that the nominative NP in (14) is able to have exhaustive listing reading even though it is not located in the sentence-initial position requires further explanation.

2.6. Interaction with Nominative/Genitive Conversion

Nominative-Genitive Conversion (NGC) in Japanese is an operation where the nominative case marker *-ga* is replaced by the genitive case marker *-no* in embedded contexts such as the relative clauses (see Harada(1971), Miyagawa(1993), Ochi(1999), Hiraiwa(2000, 2005)). Nominative objects are not exceptional in that they also undergo GNC, as shown in (15). However,

Niinuma and Taguchi(2006, 2008) and Harada(2007) independently point out that there are some instances where NGC may not be applied. Furthermore, Niinuma and Taguchi(2006, 2008) observe that when nominative objects have exhaustive-listing interpretation, NGC cannot be applied. Consider (16):

- (15) a. Watashi-ga biru-**ga** nomi-ta-i.
 I-Nom beer-Nom drink-want-pres
 'I want to drink beer'
- b. Watashi-ga biru-**no** nomi-ta-i wake
 I-Nom beer-Gen drink-want-pres reason
 'the reason that I want to drink beer'
- (16) a. Bokura-ni-wa yahari daigaku-no toshokan-**ga** ichiban
 we-for-topic after all university-Gen library-Nom best
 ochitsuite benkyoo-deki-ru
 calmly study-can.do-pres
 'After all, for us, the university library is the place where we
 can study quietly'
- b. Bokura-ni-wa yahari daigaku-no toshokan-**no** ichiban
 we-for-topic after all university-Gen library-Nom best
 ochitsuite benkyoo-deki-ru riyuu
 calmly study-can.do-pres reason
 'the reason that after all, for us, the university library is the place
 where we can study quietly'
- (Niinuma and Taguchi(2006, 2008), cf. Harada(2007))

2.7. Interim Summary

To sum up, we have observed that nominative objects in Japanese have non-uniform properties. For instance, they sometimes take a wide scope over the potential, but sometimes they are within the scope of the potential, or they sometimes undergo GNC, but sometimes they do not. The question

is how we can explain the properties of nominative objects in Japanese in a principled way.

3. An Analysis

In the previous section, we have shown that nominative objects may have the exhaustive listing interpretation, which is one of the main properties of major subjects in Japanese. In this section, we will argue that there are two types of nominative objects in Japanese, and propose our analysis based on the syntactic account of major subjects proposed by Koizumi(1994, 1998) and Yoon(2007) and the analysis of inherent Case proposed by Woolford (2006).

3.1. A Syntactic Treatment of Major Subjects

Koizumi(1994, 1998) argues that the interpretation of NPs with the nominative case marker *-ga* depends on the structural position that they appear in, as shown in (17):

(17) a. An NP receives the exhaustive-listing interpretation only if it is Case-licensed in the Broad Checking Domain of Tense.

b. An NP receives the neutral-description interpretation only if it is Case-licensed in the Narrow Checking Domain of Tense.

(18) a. $[_{AGRS-P} NP]_{[AGRS]}$ \Leftarrow neutral-description

b. $[_{AGRS-P} NP]_{[AGRS-P]}$ \Leftarrow exhaustive-listing

Putting the technical details aside, the statements in (17) say that when the NP is located in Spec of AGRs, it gets the neutral-description interpretation.

On the other hand, when the NP is in an adjoined position of AGRsP, the exhaustive-listing interpretation obtains.

Yoon(2007) also follow the same line of analysis but he differs Koizumi (1994, 1998), in that the major subject in Yoon's (2007) analysis is located in a specifier position, not in an adjoined position. Let us consider the Yoon's analysis of major subjects:

(19) Yoon(2007)

[_{XP} DP [_{ZP} ...]

- a. XP : Sentential constituent containing a Major subject and Sentential Predicate
- b. DP : Bare position of the Major subject
- c. ZP : Sentential Predicate

According to Yoon(2007), DP in the Spec of XP must be licensed by the sentential predicate ZP to satisfy certain semantic conditions (such as 'aboutness condition' (Kuno(1973) or 'characteristic property' condition (Yoon (2007))). More specifically, Yoon(2007) argues that when the semantic conditions are appropriately met, the sentential predicate ZP assigns a theta role to DP in Spec of XP, which is similar to the theta role assignment of Agent to the subject NP in Spec of vP. Notice this analysis implies that there are two positions available for the nominative Case licensing in Japanese and Korean, and that the licensing conditions of major subjects are completely different from the grammatical subjects, which are licensed by a theta role assigned by the predicate, not by sentential predicate.

Given the syntactic treatment of major subjects proposed by Yoon(2007), let us consider the interaction between the interpretation of the nominative NPs and the applicability of NGC discussed in section 2.6. The nominative NPs that have the neutral-description interpretation may undergo NGC, while

the nominative NPs that receive the exhaustive-listing interpretation resist NGC.

Let us assume, following Takezawa(1987) and Ura(1996, 2000), among others, that the nominative Case in Japanese is licensed by T. Let us also suppose that the nominative Case that is licensed by T may undergo NGC. In fact, Hiraiwa(2000, 2005) argues that T plays an important role for the licensing of the nominative Case as well as that of the genitive Case under NGC in Japanese. In other words, the NPs that are licensed by T are able to undergo NGC. Also notice that Koizumi(1994, 1998), Niinuma(2000), and Nomura(2003, 2005) have already argued that nominative objects are also licensed by T. On the other hand, the inapplicability of NGC in the case of major subjects indicates that their nominative Case is licensed by a head other than T. Thus, we propose (20):

(20) Nominative Case on major subjects in Japanese (and Korean) is licensed by a functional head which is structurally higher than T under Spec-head configuration.

(21) [_{NP} NP X [_{TP} ...]] (order irrelevant)

The question that immediately arises is why the nominative case on major subjects cannot undergo NGC. In the following subsection, we will show that the analysis of inherent Case proposed by Woolford(2006) shed a new light on the treatment of major subjects.

3.2. Inherent Nominative Case

The main concern of Woolford(2006) is how Case on NPs is licensed. Since Chomsky(1981) it has been proposed that there are two kinds of Case licensing: Structural Case which is licensed by a syntactic configuration, and

inherent Case which is licensed by the idiosyncratic properties of the verbs. Woolford(2006) argues instead that non-structural Case is further divided into two patterns: Inherent Case and lexical Case. Inherent Case, according to Woolford(2006), is more regular, associated with particular theta positions, (ex. inherent dative Case with DP goals, and ergative Case with external arguments). On the other hand, lexical Case is idiosyncratic Case, lexically selected and licensed by certain lexical heads (ex. genitive objects in Icelandic and Russian). Furthermore, Woolford(2006) argues that inherent Case is licensed by a functional head (little/light v heads), which is the same configuration as the assignment of Agent to the subject NP.

Woolford(2006) argues that one of the diagnostics of Inherent Case is that the Case is preserved under A-movement. For instance, the inherent dative NP in German does not bear the nominative Case under passivization, as illustrated in (22), and the dative Case on the subject NP in Icelandic is preserved even though it undergoes raising to the matrix subject position, as shown in (23).³⁾

- | | | | | |
|---------|--------|-------|----------|---------------|
| (22) a. | Sie | hilft | ihm | |
| | She | helps | him-Dat | |
| b. | Ihm | wird | geholfen | |
| | He-Dat | is | helped | (Haider 1985) |
-
- | | | | | |
|---------|--|----------------|-------------|--|
| (23) a. | Barninu | batnaði | veikin | |
| | Child-Dat | recovered-from | disease-Nom | |
| | 'The child recovered from the disease' | | | |

3) As pointed out by Yong-Ha Kim (personal communication), it is not clear what motivates the distinction between inherent Case and lexical Case under the framework of Woolford (2006). For instance, it seems that the object in (22a) is located in the complement position of V (lexical Case), but it does not allow Case alternation. This means that it is possible to analyze the dative Case in German as a lexical Case. However, we will use Woolford's (2006) dichotomy for convenience.

- b. Barninu virđist [t hafa batnað veikin]
Child-Dat seems to-have recovered-from
disease-Nom
'The child seems [t to have recovered from the disease]'

(Andrews(1982:464))

To summarize, the main points of Woolford's (2006) claim is 1) that inherent Case does not undergo any case alternation, and 2) that inherent Case, which is associated with a particular theta role, is licensed under the Spec-head configuration.

3.3. An Proposal

Recall from the discussion in section 2.1, that nominative objects in Japanese sometimes take wide scope over the potential, but they do not always do so. It seems that they may be located in two different positions. In fact, Nomura(2005) attributes the scope facts to the optionality of movement of the nominative object to Spec of TP in overt syntax (see Nomura(2005, chapter 4 for more detailed analysis). However, his analysis cannot account for the interpretation of nominative objects as well as the (in)applicability of NGC. We argue, with Nomura(2005), that there are two licensing conditions for nominative objects in Japanese, but it needs some modification.

We have also observed that there are cases where the nominative case marker does not undergo NGC, and this fact is affected by semantics, namely NGC is inapplicable when the NPs with the nominative case marker have the exhaustive-listing interpretation.

Given these observation, we claim that there are two types of nominative Case in Japanese. Furthermore, we argue that the licensing conditions of

the two types of nominative Case are different. One of the nominative Case licenser is T, and thus it is a structural Case (see Takezawa(1987), Ura(1996, 2000), among others). The other is an inherent Case. Following Yoon (2007), we argue that the NP that has the exhaustive-listing interpretation has a particular theta role, and that is licensed by Spec of XP, which is located above TP. Recall that Woolford(2006) argues that inherent Case is also licensed under the Spec-head configuration if the theta role is associated with a particular theta role. If so, it follows that the nominative Case on major subjects in Japanese is also an inherent Case, which contrasts with grammatical subjects that bear the structural nominative Case.⁴⁾ If this analysis is on the right track, we can account for the fact that the nominative Case on the major subject does not undergo NGC. This is because the nominative Case on the major subject is not structural, but inherent. The applicability of NGC in Japanese cannot be accounted for without assuming the two kinds of nominative Case (structural nominative and inherent nominative).⁵⁾

Based on the argument above, we propose that there are two types of nominative objects in Japanese. The nominative object may appear in the base-generated position and the nominative Case is licensed by T via long-distance Agree. In this case, it has the neutral-description interpretation. On the other hand, the nominative object that has the exhaustive-listing interpretation is licensed by the sentential predicate, and its Case is inherent. The proposal that there are two positions available for nominative objects

4) See also Saito(1982). However, our analysis differs from Saito(1982), who claims that the nominative Case in Japanese is inherent.

5) Anne Zribbe-Hertz (personal communication) questions the status of nominative objects in Japanese. She points out that it may be the case that they have nominative Case via middle formation. However, Taguchi and Niinuma(2008) argue that nominative objects in Japanese do not pass any subjecthood tests (zibun binding, subject honorification, PRO in adjunct clauses), and we conclude that they does not undergo movement to Spec TP.

in Japanese naturally accounts for the properties of nominative objects in Japanese. For instance, the nominative objects take a wide scope over the potential because it is licensed by a sentential predicate. It is also possible for them to be within the scope of the potential because it can be licensed by T under long distance Agree. Adjuncts must bear the inherent nominative Case since they cannot receive any semantic role from the lexical category and since they must be licensed by a sentential predicate. The nominative object that has the exhaustive-listing interpretation is licensed by the sentential predicate, while the nominative object licensed by T has the neutral-description interpretation. In the next subsection, we will reconsider the positions of nominative objects discussed in section 2.3.

3.4. Surface positions of nominative objects revisited

As discussed in section 2.3., the nominative object in (9) must be realized in the sentence-initial position, which is repeated below for convenience:

(24) a. John-ga kono biru-dake-ga oishiku nom-e-ru
 John-Nom this beer-only-Nom deliciously drink-can-pres
 'John can drink only this beer deliciously'

b. Kono biru-dake-ga John-ga oishiku nom-e-ru
 this beer-only-Nom John-Nom deliciously drink-can-pres

(25) ²Kono shu-no eiga-ga₁ kodomo-ga e₁ yorokobu
 this kind-Gen movie-Nom child-Nom enjoy
 'It is this kind of movie that children enjoy'

(26) ^{*}Kodomo-ga kono shu-no eiga-ga yorokobu
 child-Nom this kind-Gen movie-Nom enjoy
 'It is this kind of movie that children enjoy'

(cf. Saito 1982)

We argue that this difference is attributed to the syntactic properties of the potential morpheme in Japanese. Many authors including Tada(1992), Koizumi(1994, 1998), Saito and Hoshi(2000) and Takano(2003) argue that the examples like (24) assign the biclausal structure, as shown below:

- (27) John_i-ga [TP₁ kono biiru-dake-ga_j [TP₁ e_i [TP₂ PRO_i pro_j oishiku
nom]-e-ru]]

In this structure, the potential morpheme *-(rar)e* takes TP₂ as a complement, and the nominative object is posited in the adjoined position of TP₁. If our analysis is on the right track, then we predict that the nominative object can be located in the sentence-initial position which is licensed by the whole sentential predicate. We also predict that the nominative object is realized in a position between the subject NP and the predicate, and it may be licensed either by long-distance Agree or by the embedded sentential predicate, as desired.

On the other hand, the predicate in (25) does not have any morphemes that may take TP as a complement, so that in order to license the nominative object, it must be realized in the sentence-initial position to satisfy the 'aboutness' conditions that the sentential predicate imposes. Also, since there is no morpheme that may absorb the Case feature of the light verb *v*, the direct object must check off the Case feature of *v*. Since its Case feature has already checked off, the direct object is not able to check off the Case feature of T. That is why the sentence (26) is ungrammatical, as predicted.⁶⁾

In this section, we have proposed that the distinction between

6) Let us suppose, following Bošović(1997), the case checking process is an optional operation, not a configuration. If so, we are also able to explain the ungrammaticality of (26). The case feature of the object NP is checked off by T prior to its feature checking with *v*. Since the uninterpretable Case feature of *v* remains unchecked, it causes the sentence ungrammatical.

grammatical subjects and major subjects can be seen in nominative objects in Japanese. Extending the ideas of Yoon(2007) and Woolford(2006), we have claimed that the nominative Case in major subjects is inherent, while that of grammatical subjects is structural. This distinction may explain all the properties observed in the previous section. Thus, the proposed analysis argues against the claim by Tada(1992), Koizumi(1994, 1998), Niinuma(2000), and Nomura(2003, 2005) that nominative objects are not licensed by a single head or a single operation. Notice that the licensing conditions of nominative subjects and nominative objects are the same. If we admit the two types of nominative NPs in Japanese, it should be extended to nominative objects in Japanese as well. Hence, our proposal argues against Tada(1992), Yatsushiro (1999), and Takano(2003), who claim that the case assignment of nominative objects is different from the case assignment of nominative subjects in Japanese.

4. Implications

The proposed claims, if correct, have two interesting implications for the Case theory. In this section, we will discuss them.

4.1. Inherent Case

Woolford(2006) argues that inherent Case is related to a particular theta role and it is assigned by a functional head little/light verb. If our analysis is on the right track, then it constitutes evidence for the claim that inherent Case is licensed under Spec-head configuration (see also Lasnik(1995) and Stjepanovic(1997)). However, our analysis suggests that the inherent Case licensing should be extended to accommodate the inherent nominative Case

in Japanese as well. In other words, the heads that are able to license inherent Case are not only little/light verb but also other functional heads.

4.2. Case Theory

One of the intriguing aspects of Japanese syntax is that Japanese sentences must contain at least one nominative NP (Shibatani(1977)). Thus, many linguists have tried to capture this generalization under the Principles and Parameters approach. For instance, Ura(1996, 2000) argues that this generalization can be captured by saying that the nominative feature of T must be checked, so that at least one nominative NP is realized in a sentence. Ura's explanation of Shibatani's generalization can be restated as the Inverse Case filter which states that the Case feature of the (functional) head needs to be checked off (see Bošković(1997, 2002)). The question that arises is whether it is possible to bring Shibatani's generalization under the Inverse Case filter.

The following example suggests that Ura's explanation is incorrect, given that the nominative Case of major subjects is inherent and thus is licensed by a functional head other than T. Let us consider the following example:

- (28) Bokura-ni-wa yahari daigaku-no toshokan-ga ichiban
we-for-topic after all university-Gen library-Nom best
ochitsuite benkyoo-deki-ru
calmly study-can.do-pres
'After all, for us, the university library is the place where we can
study quietly' (Saito(1982), cf. Takano(2003))

In this sentence, the subject NP is marked as a dative Case marker, and only the inherent nominative NP may be realized in a sentence.⁷⁾ Notice that under the proposed analysis, the major subject NPs may be able to have

the nominative case marker which is inherent, not structural. The fact that the sentence in (28) is acceptable suggests that it is possible for the functional head T not to check off its Case feature in Japanese. What is important for our concern is that the nominative NP bears an inherent Case, which is subject to the Case filter. This implies that Inverse Case filter cannot capture Shibatani's generalization and that the Case filter, not the Inverse Case filter, must be needed in the theory of grammar (see Bošković(2007)).

5. Summary

In this paper, we showed that the six properties of nominative objects in Japanese are explained once we accept the 'classic' idea that nominative NPs are two types (the exhaustive-listing and the neutral-description interpretation (Kuno(1973))). Based on the idea, we claimed (1) that the nominative object that has the exhaustive-listing interpretation is base-generated in Spec of XP and its Case is inherent and (2) that the nominative object that is base-generated within VP is licensed by T and it has the neutral-description interpretation. Then, we argued that the proposed claim implies (1) that inherent Case licensing is mediated through Spec-head configuration, and (2) that Shibatani's (1978) generalization cannot be captured by Inverse Case

7) It has been assumed that the dative NPs may check the Case feature of T (see Chomsky (2000)). If true, the example (28) does not constitute a piece of evidence against Ura's analysis. However, the following example cannot be accounted for under the view:

- (i) Boku-ga/[̂]-ni tukareta.
 I-Nom/-Dat tired
 'I was tired'

Note that the corresponding example in Icelandic is possible. Thus, the example above strongly suggests the dative NP in Japanese cannot check the nominative Case feature of T.

filter, but NPs is subject to Case filter.

The remaining question is why the case alternation on major subjects occurs in the ECM contexts. It is argued that the nominative case marker on the major subject is able to undergo alternation with the accusative case marker \ominus (see Hiraiwa(2005), also see Yoon(2007) in Korean). Under the current analysis, this is not expected, since the nominative Case that the major subject bears is inherent, which cannot convert to other Cases. We will leave this issue for future research.

Acknowledgments

A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the 136th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of Japan, which was held at Gakushuin University on June 21st, 2008, and at the international conference in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Sogang University, on October 9th, 2008. We would like to thank the audiences there, especially Tomohiro Fujii, Anne Zribi-Hertz, Yong-Ha Kim, Hideki Kishimoto, Susumu Kuno, Hideki Maki, Myung-Kwan Park, and Asako Uchibori for comments and suggestions. All remaining errors are our own.

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Received : January 30, 2009

Revised : April 27, 2009

Accepted : April 28, 2009