FOCUSED GENITIVE SUBJECT
IN JAPANESE AND MONGOLIAN

HIDEKI MAKI, MEGUMI HASEBE and LINA BAO
Gifu University, Yokohama National University and Osaka University*

Keywords: focus, genitive, Japanese, Mongolian, subject

1. Introduction

Harada (1971) originally discussed a nominative/genitive case marker alternation phenomenon in Japanese, called the ga/no conversion, as illustrated in (1).

(1) [Doyoobi-ni tamago-ga/-no yasui] mise-wa kono mise desu.
Saturday-on egg-Nom/-Gen cheap store-Top this store be
‘The store where eggs are cheap on Saturdays is this store.’

Since his seminal work, the phenomenon has been discussed by many linguists, such as Miyagawa (1993), Watanabe (1996), Hiraiwa (2001), and Maki and Uchibori (2008), among others. Among those linguists, Horie and Saito (1996) observe (i) that nominative subject, when it has the meaning of exhaustive listing in the sense of Kuno (1973), cannot alternate with genitive subject, and (ii) that nominative subject, when followed by the focus particle dake ‘only,’ cannot alternate with genitive subject, and provide generalization (2).

(2) Ga/No Conversion fails to apply if the ga-marked subject is a focus of the embedded sentence. (Horie and Saito (1996))

See Akaso and Haraguchi (2011), among others, for related observations.

In this paper, we examine examples with a focused genitive subject in Japanese, and point out that they will be incorrectly predicted to be gram-
matical by two major approaches to genitive subject licensing, namely, Miyagawa’s (1993) / Maki and Uchibori’s (2008) D-Licensing Approach and Watanabe’s (1996) / Hiraiwa’s (2001) Adnominal Form-Licensing Approach. We also examine the corresponding examples in Mongolian, an Altaic language that exhibits the nominative/genitive alternation, and show that they are perfectly grammatical in the language. Therefore, in this paper, we address two questions: (i) what factor lies behind the prohibition against focused genitive subject in Japanese, and (ii) what factor distinguishes Japanese and Mongolian in terms of focused genitive subject.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 presents an overview of the two major approaches to genitive subject licensing in Japanese and one major approach to genitive subject licensing in Mongolian as the background to the subsequent sections. Section 3 presents the data with a focused genitive subject in Japanese and Mongolian. Section 4 addresses the two questions arising from the data in Section 3, and considers what the proposed analysis may suggest for the theory of (Japanese/Mongolian) syntax. Section 5 addresses a remaining question in Japanese, providing a statistical analysis on the collected data. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. Background: Genitive Subject Licensing in Japanese and Mongolian

This section reviews the mechanisms of genitive subject licensing involved in Japanese and Mongolian as the background to the subsequent sections. First, let us review the mechanism of genitive subject licensing in Japanese. Two major approaches have been proposed in terms of what licenses genitive subject in Japanese: (i) the D-Licensing Approach by Miyagawa (1993) and Maki and Uchibori (2008), among others, and (ii) the Adnominal Form-Licensing Approach by Watanabe (1996) and Hiraiwa (2001), among others. In this paper, for expository purposes only, we take Maki and Uchibori (2008) as a representative case of the D-Licensing Approach, and Hiraiwa (2001) as a representative case of the Adnominal Form-Licensing Approach.

Maki and Uchibori (2008), following the essential claim by Miyagawa (1993), propose that D licenses genitive subject in relative clauses such as (1). In (1), the genitive subject is preceded by an adverb, which guarantees that it is within the relative clause in overt syntax. Maki and Uchibori (2008) claim that D that subcategorizes NP (mise ‘store’ in this case) licenses the genitive subject via Agree (Chomsky (2000)), so that it does not
undergo LF movement to DP SPEC at LF, unlike Miyagawa (1993).

Hiraiwa (2001) proposes the Adnominal Form-Licensing Approach to genitive subject licensing, essentially following another important previous study by Watanabe (1996). Hiraiwa argues that genitive subject licensing in Japanese depends on the adnominal form of the predicate, not D, by showing that there is a set of clauses allowing genitive subjects that do not involve a noun, such as (3). Note that made ‘until’ in (3) is not a noun.

(3) John-wa [ame-ga/-no yam-u] made ofisu-ni ita.

John-Top rain-Nom/-Gen stop-PRES until office-at was
‘John was at his office until it stopped raining.’

Based on Chomsky’s (2000) theory of Agree, Hiraiwa (2001) proposes that while the inflection with the conclusive form of the verb corresponds to the V-(v-)T amalgamate created via Agree in syntax, the inflection with the adnominal form of the verb results from an Agree relation of V, (v), T, and a special type of C (C_{affix} in Hiraiwa’s terms). He then proposes that genitive subjects are licensed by the V-(v-)T-C amalgamate, not D, while nominative subjects are licensed by the V-(v-)T amalgamate.

Note here that Hasebe et al. (2012) claim, based on a statistical analysis, that only when the predicate is an adjective is there no significant difference between the nominative subject and the genitive subject in Japanese, which will be of some relevance in Section 5.

Let us then turn to the mechanism of genitive subject licensing in Mongolian. In this paper, we follow Maki et al. (2010), who propose (4).

(4) Conditions on Genitive Subject Licensing in Mongolian
a. A genitive subject must be c-commanded by a nominal feature, and
b. A genitive subject must be in a local relationship with the adnominal form of the predicate.

(Maki et al. (2010: 236) slightly edited)

(4a) and (4b) are in a sense a mixture of the D-Licensing Approach and the Adnominal Form Licensing Approach. Maki et al. (2010) reached (4) based on the examples in (5) and (6).

(5) öčügedür Uļayan-u qudal-dun- abduction/*čai nom yesterday Ulagan-Gen buy-take-PAST.ADN/-PAST.CON book ‘the book which Ulagan bought yesterday’

(6) öčügedür bi-ø Uļayan-u qudal-dun- abduction/*čai yesterday I-Nom Ulagan-Gen buy-take-PAST.ADN/-PAST.CON gejü bodu-ysan nom that think-PAST.ADN book
‘the book which I thought [that Ulagan bought t] yesterday’

In (5), the genitive subject is allowed only when the predicate is in the adnominal form. Note that the genitive subject is disallowed without a nominal head. In (6), the genitive subject is allowed in the embedded clause headed by the [−Q] COMP. The important point about (6) is the fact that the genitive subject is permitted only when the predicate in the embedded clause is in the adnominal form. These facts led Maki et al. (2010) to claim the two conditions in (4).

3. Data

Let us now consider the examples with a genitive subject in the two languages that will pose interesting questions under the approaches to genitive subject licensing reviewed above.

3.1. Japanese

This subsection provides a set of Japanese data with a major subject and another set of data with the focus particle dake ‘only.’ First, let us consider the examples with a major subject. The examples in (7)–(12) indicate that the major subject does not pattern together with the argumental subject, when followed by the genitive case marker, which is not predicted under the approaches to genitive subject licensing reviewed in section 2. Observe example (7).

(7) Natsu-ga biiru-ga umai.
summer-Nom beer-Nom tasty
‘It is in summer that beer is tasty.’

In (7), the major subject natsu-ga ‘summer-Nom’ has the connotation of exhaustive listing, but the argumental subject biiru-ga ‘beer-Nom’ does not. The major subject cannot be marked genitive, as shown in (8b), while the argumental subject can be marked genitive, as shown in (8a).

(8) a. Wain yorimo biiru-ga/-no umai kisetu
wine than beer-Nom/-Gen tasty season
‘the season when beer tastes better than wine’

b. Huyu yorimo natsu-ga/*-no umai sake
winter than summer-Nom/-Gen tasty liquor
‘the liquor that tastes better in summer than in winter’

Also, some PPs are marked nominative when they have the connotation of exhaustive listing. Consider example (9).
(9) Tookyoo-kara-ga sono basho-ga tooi.  
Tokyo-from-Nom the place-Nom far  
‘It is from Tokyo that the place is far.’

In (9), the nominative PP *Tookyoo-kara-ga* ‘Tokyo-from-Nom’ has the connotation of exhaustive listing, but the argumental subject *sono basho-ga* ‘the place-Nom’ does not. For the sake of simplicity, let us categorize the nominative PP as a major subject. Then, the major subject cannot be marked genitive, as shown in (10).

(10) hontooni Tookyoo-kara-ga/*-no tooi basho  
really Tokyo-from-Nom/-Gen far place  
‘the place which is really far from Tokyo’

Furthermore, as Saito (1982) points out, some objects are marked nominative in the sentence-initial position. Consider example (11).

(11) ?Kono shu-no eega-ga kodomo-ga yorokobu.  
this kind-Gen movie-Nom child-Nom enjoy  
‘It is this kind of movie that children enjoy.’ (Saito (1982: 13))

Saito (1985: 217) claims that in (11), *kono shu-no eega-ga* ‘this kind-Gen movie-Nom’ is a base-generated major subject. It cannot be marked genitive, as shown in (12).

(12) hontooni kono shu-no eega-ga/*-no kodomo-ga  
really this kind-Gen movie-Nom/-Gen child-Nom  
yorokobu koto  
enjoy fact  
‘the fact that it is this kind of movie that children enjoy’

Second, let us consider the examples with the focus particle *dake* ‘only.’ Horie and Saito (1996) and Akaso and Haraguchi (2011), among others, provide data with *da ke* ‘only,’ and show that the particle cannot co-occur with a genitive subject. Consider the examples in (13) and (14).

(13) [Kinoo Yamada san-dake-ga/*?-no tanonda] ryoori-wa  
yesterday Yamada-only-Nom/-Gen ordered dish-Top  
esukarugo-ryoori deshita.  
escargot-dish was  
‘The dish that only Yamada ordered yesterday was an escargot dish.’  
(Horie and Saito (1996) slightly edited)

(14) kinoo Taroo-dake-ga/*-no nonda kusuri  
yesterday Taro-only-Nom/-Gen took medicine  
‘the medicine which only Taro took yesterday’  
(Akaso and Haraguchi (2011: 96) slightly edited)

In (13) and (14), the genitive subject cannot co-occur with the focus particle
dake ‘only,’ while the nominative subject can.

3.2. Mongolian

This subsection provides Mongolian data with the focus particle jübken ‘only’ alone, as the language does not possess major subjects. Let us consider example (15), taken from our own fieldwork, in which the focus particle jübken ‘only’ modifies the subject.

(15) öčügedür jübken Ulaγan-ø/-u qudaldun-abu-γsan nom yesterday only Ulagan-Nom/-Gen buy-take-past.ADN book

‘the book which only Ulagan bought yesterday’

Example (15) is perfectly grammatical with the genitive subject, in contrast to the Japanese counterparts in (13) and (14).

The data in this section thus pose two questions: (i) what factor lies behind the prohibition against focused genitive subjects in Japanese, and (ii) what factor distinguishes Japanese and Mongolian in terms of focused genitive subjects.

4. Discussion

Let us first address the question of what factor lies behind the prohibition against focused genitive subjects in Japanese. Following Akaso and Haraguchi (2011), among others, we postulate the focus projection FP above TP, and assume that a major subject is base-generated in FP SPEC, and a focused subject moves to FP SPEC at LF. Then, the schematic structure without a focused genitive subject will look like (16a), and one with a focused genitive subject will look like (16b), in which the genitive subject moves to FP SPEC at LF. Note that in the following discussion, the V-T complex stands for the adnominal form of the predicate, and the nominal head (N/D) is not represented for the sake of simplicity.

(16) a. [TP . . .NP-Gen . . .V-T] . . .
   b. *[FP [NP-only-Gen], [TP . . .t1 . . .V-T] F] . . .

In the well-formed structure in (16a), the genitive subject and the V-T complex are in the same domain (TP), while in the ill-formed structure in (16b), the focused genitive subject is not in the same domain as the V-T complex. We take this difference to suggest that a genitive subject needs to be close enough to the V-T complex at LF, that is, it needs to be in the same TP domain at LF. Although the exact mechanism that blocks genitive subject licensing in the configuration in (16b) is not yet clear, at least the generalization on the distribution of genitive subjects in Japanese is clear,
that is, a genitive subject and the V-T complex must be in the same TP domain at LF.

With this generalization, let us turn to the second question: what factor distinguishes Japanese and Mongolian in terms of focused genitive subjects. We will show that the difference is correctly derived from both (i) the generalization we reached, namely, the idea that a genitive subject and the V-T complex must be in the same TP domain at LF, and (ii) a syntactic difference between Japanese and Mongolian in the positions of focus particles.

As shown in example (15), the focus particle *jübken* ‘only’ in Mongolian is placed before the subject NP. Therefore, we assume that it is adjoined to it, as shown in (17b). When the subject is not preceded by *jübken* ‘only,’ the structure is identical to that of Japanese, as shown in (17a).

(17) a. \[TP \ldots NP-Gen \ldots V-T\]…
   b. \[FP [TP \ldots [only \ [NP-Gen]\] \ldots V-T] F]\…

Now, suppose that the focused genitive subject takes scope at LF. There are two possibilities here: (i) the entire focused genitive subject moves to FP SPEC, and (ii) only the focus particle moves to FP SPEC. Since both operations will provide fundamentally identical results, we may assume the second possibility, as shown in (18).

(18) \[FP [only_1 \ [TP \ldots [\_1 \ [NP-Gen]\] \ldots V-T] F]\…

Let us now consider the structure in (18) in terms of the generalization that a genitive subject and the V-T complex must be in the same TP domain at LF. In (18), the genitive subject and the V-T complex are in the same TP domain at LF, unlike the structure in (16b) in Japanese. Therefore, the example with a focused genitive subject is correctly predicted to be grammatical in Mongolian, in contrast to Japanese.

Let us now consider what the proposed analysis may suggest for the theory of (Japanese/Mongolian) syntax. First, Horie and Saito’s (1996) generalization in (2) only applies to Japanese, not Mongolian. Therefore, it is not universal.

Second, Akaso and Haraguchi’s (2011) claim needs to be revised. They claim that a focus particle cannot be allowed in a relative clause with a genitive subject. However, under our analysis, a genitive subject is possible with a focused adverb, as shown in (19).

(19) \[Doyoobi-ni-dake tamago-ga/-no yasui\] mise-wa kono mise desu.

Saturday-on-only egg-Nom/-Gen cheap store-Top this store

be

‘The store where eggs are cheap only on Saturdays is this store.’
This is because in (19), only the focused adverb *doyoobi-ni-dake* ‘Saturday-on-only’ is moved to FP SPEC at LF, leaving the genitive subject and the V-T complex (or Predicate-T complex) in the same TP domain at LF, as schematically shown in (20).

(20)  \[ \text{FP} \ [\text{PP-only}] \ 1 [\text{TP} \ t_1 \ \text{NP-Gen}...\text{V-T}] \ F]… \\

Therefore, the example in (19) with a genitive subject is correctly predicted to be grammatical, as the structure falls under the generalization that a genitive subject and the V-T complex must be in the same TP domain at LF.

5. A Remaining Question

The second reviewer questions the validity of our claim that the particle *dake* cannot co-occur with a genitive subject in view of examples such as (21) and (22), as it will predict that these examples are ungrammatical in Japanese.

(21)  \text{umi-dake-ga/-no mieru heya}  \\
  \text{ocean-only-Nom/-Gen see.can}  \\
  \text{‘the room from which only the ocean can be seen’}  \\
  \text{(Akaso and Haraguchi (2012))}

(22)  \text{[Adamusu-dake-no mita] maboroshi}  \\
  \text{Adams-only-Gen saw phantom}  \\
  \text{‘the phantom which only Adams saw’}  \\
  \text{(cited from http://www.allcinema.net/prog/show_c.php?num_c=9555)}

(21) is from Akaso and Haraguchi (2012), who point out that the genitive subject is fine with the focus marker if the verb is unaccusative. (22) was brought to our attention by the second reviewer. In (22), the genitive subject is followed by the focus marker, in spite of the fact that the verb is accusative. This indicates that grammaticality judgments for focused NPs marked genitive vary among native speakers of Japanese. We therefore conducted a questionnaire-based survey in order to examine to what degree focused genitive NPs are allowed by native speakers of Japanese using the Visual Analogue Scaling (VAS) evaluation method. The scale used in this study is shown in (23).

(23)  \text{The Scale Used in This Study}  \\
  \text{How would you judge the naturalness of the sentence in Japanese? Place a vertical mark [ ] on the line below to indicate how natural you feel the sentence is.}  \\
  \text{Completely unnatural}  \quad \text{Completely natural}  \\
  \text{0}  \quad \text{100}

We conducted the survey in June of 2013. A total of 71 native speakers of Japanese participated in the study (55 females and 16 males, age range 18–22, and average age 18.72). Some of the test sentences are illustrated in (24), where ( )\_a…( )\_a indicates that either one of the elements in the two pairs of the parentheses optionally appears.

(24)  a. Kyujitsu-ni(-dake)\_a gitaa(-dake)\_a-ga/-no hik-eru weekend-on(-only) guitar(-only)-Nom/-Gen play-can otokonoko-wa Jiroo desu. boy-Top Jiro be (gitaa ‘guitar’ = theme) ‘The boy who can play (only)\_a the guitar (only)\_a on weekends is Jiro.’

b. Kyujitsu-ni(-dake)\_a Jiroo(-dake)\_a-ga/-no hik-eru weekend-on(-only) Jiro(-only)-Nom/-Gen gengakki-wa gitaa desu. stringed instrument-Top guitar be (Jiroo ‘Jiro’ = agent) ‘The stringed instrument which (only)\_a Jiro can play (only)\_a on weekends is a guitar.’

We employed a counterbalanced design, and made 12 different questionnaires, each of which contained 60 test sentences. There were 720 test sentences in total. We used complex verbs with the potential morpheme (r)eru ‘can,’ as seen in (24), in order to make minimal pairs for the test sentences. The descriptive statistics for the data obtained is shown in (25). Note that the position of the subjects’ marks (their responses) on the line was measured with a ruler, and the marks in millimeters were coded as discrete numbers such as 12 and 98.

(25)  Descriptive Statistics (N = Nominative, G = Genitive, and F = Focus Particle)

|       | Adv/N | Adv/G | Adv/N-F | Adv/G-F | Adv-F/N | Adv-F/G |
|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Theme | 71.45 | 61.04 | 44.59   | 17.39   | 61.34   | 50.30   |
| Agent | 74.92 | 64.85 | 68.44   | 31.29   | 62.52   | 51.17   |

We conducted a repeated measure of 2 × 3 × 2 ANOVA (Case Type (Nom and Gen) × Focus Type (None, NP, and ADV) × Argument Type (Theme and Agent)) for the obtained data, and found statistically significant main effects for factor Case Type ($F_{(1,70)} = 93.16, p < .001$), for factor Focus Type ($F_{(2,69)} = 182.15, p < .001$), and for factor Argument Type ($F_{(1,70)} = 56.68, p < .001$). We then found, by multiple comparisons (Bonferroni), significant differences between (25a) and (25b), between (25c) and (25d),
and between (25e) and (25f), at each of the clusters of Theme and Agent ($p < .001$). This clearly shows that a genitive NP with the focus particle dake ‘only’ was not judged to be as natural as its nominative counterpart, whether it is the theme or agent of the predicate, which in turn suggests the tendency that a focused genitive NP is not preferred by native speakers of Japanese who are between 18 and 22 years old.

Furthermore, the results of this survey show the tendency that a genitive NP is not preferred to a nominative NP by native speakers of Japanese, when the predicate is a complex verb with the potential morpheme (r)eru ‘can,’ as (25b) was not judged to be as natural as (25a). This at least is compatible with the claim by Hasebe et al. (2012), who argue that only when the predicate is an adjective there is no difference between the nominative subject and the genitive subject in Japanese. Further scrutiny is definitely necessary on this issue.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we examined examples with a focused genitive subject in Japanese and Mongolian, and suggested the generalization on the distribution of genitive subjects in Japanese and Mongolian, that is, a genitive subject and the V-T complex must be in the same TP domain at LF. We then argued that the proposed analysis may suggest: (i) that Horie and Saito’s (1996) generalization in (2) is not universal, and (ii) that a genitive subject can co-occur with a focused adverb in relative clauses in Japanese. We also showed, on the basis of the VAS-based analysis, the tendency that a focused genitive NP is not preferred by native speakers of Japanese who are between 18 and 22 years old.

REFERENCES

Akaso, Naoyuki and Tomoko Haraguchi (2011) “On the Categorial Status of Japanese Relative Clauses,” English Linguistics 28, 91–106.

Akaso, Naoyuki and Tomoko Haraguchi (2012) “On the Agent/Theme Asymmetry in Japanese Nominative/Genitive Conversion,” paper presented at the 8th Workshop on Altaic Formal Linguistics.

Chomsky, Noam (2000) “Minimalist Inquiries: The Framework,” Step by Step: Essays on Minimalist Syntax in Honor of Howard Lasnik, ed. by Roger Martin, David Michaels and Juan Uriagereka, 89–155, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Harada, S. I. (1971) “Ga-No Conversion and Ideolectal Variations in Japanese,”
Gengo Kenkyu 60, 25–38.
Hasebe, Megumi, Hideki Maki and Toshiro Umezawa (2012) “Where the Nominative/Genitive Alternation Genuinely Takes Place in Modern Japanese,” poster presented at the 22nd Japanese/Korean Linguistics.
Hiraiwa, Ken (2001) “On Nominative-Genitive Conversion,” MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 39: A Few from Building E39, ed. by Elena Guerzoni and Ora Matushansky, 66–125.
Horie, Kaoru and Noriko Saito (1996) “A Pragmatic Constraint on Particle Conversion in Japanese,” paper presented at the 70th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America.
Kuno, Susumu (1973) The Structure of the Japanese Language, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
Maki, Hideki, Lina Bao, Qing-Yu Wu, Wurigumula Bao, Asako Uchibori, Fumikazu Niinuma and Kenichi Goto (2010) “The Nominative/Genitive Alternation in Modern Mongolian,” MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 61: Proceedings of the 6th Workshop on Altaic Formal Linguistics (WAFL6), ed. by Hiroki Maezawa and Azusa Yokogoshi, 229–245.
Maki, Hideki and Asako Uchibori (2008) "Ga/No Conversion," Handbook of Japanese Linguistics, ed. by Shigeru Miyagawa and Mamoru Saito, 192–216, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Miyagawa, Shigeru (1993) “Case-Checking and Minimal Link Condition,” MIT Working Papers in Linguistics 19: Papers on Case and Agreement II, ed. by Colin Phillips, 213–254.
Saito, Mamoru (1982) “Case Marking in Japanese: A Preliminary Study,” ms., MIT.
Saito, Mamoru (1985) Some Asymmetries in Japanese and Their Theoretical Implications, Doctoral dissertation, MIT.
Watanabe, Akira (1996) “Nominative-Genitive Conversion and Agreement in Japanese: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective,” Journal of East Asian Linguistics 5, 373–410.

[received January 24, 2013, revised and accepted July 22, 2013]

(Hideki Maki)
Faculty of Regional Studies
Gifu University
1–1 Yanagido, Gifu 501–1193
e-mail: makijp@gifu-u.ac.jp
(Megumi Hasebe)
Graduate School of Environment and Information Sciences
Yokohama National University
1-13-19-303 Wada Hodogaya, Yokohama 240-0065
e-mail: haru_sakura_0713@yahoo.co.jp

(Lina Bao)
Graduate School of Language and Culture
Osaka University
8-1-1 Aomatanihigashi, Minoh, Osaka 562-8558
e-mail: baolinam_jp@yahoo.co.jp