

# Syntactic Positions of Nominative Objects in Japanese

## — *Te-Aru* Constructions —

—日本語の *Te-Aru* 構文における主格目的語とその統語構造—

森 延 江  
Nobue MORI

### 〈Abstract〉

This paper seeks to explore syntactic positions of nominative objects in Japanese *te-aru* constructions. Nominative object constructions in Japanese have been paid much attention for their syntactic uniqueness and have even paved a way to a new syntactic paradigm in the history of generative grammar. The structural positions of grammatical objects bearing nominative Case are unanimously claimed to be quite high as compared to those with canonical accusative Case in nominative/accusative object constructions (Koizumi 1998, Ura 2000, inter alia). Little attention, however, is paid to the structural positions of nominative-bearing objects involved in Japanese *te-aru* constructions. This paper utilizes TP adverbial as a “landmark” for TP (Thompson 1994, Ernst 2001, inter alia) to determine the structural positions of nominative objects in *te-aru* constructions, and provides yet additional arguments that nominative objects are indeed out of VP, and further up in the structure — possibly out of TP — in Japanese *te-aru* constructions as well.

### 〈Keywords〉

Syntax, Nominative Object, Structural Position

## 1 Introduction

In nominative object constructions, grammatical objects appear in Nominative Case, as in 1b, as opposed to canonical Accusative Case, as in 1a:

1a. Hiroshi-ha Hanako-o suki-da  
-Top -Acc like-Assert.  
‘Hiroshi likes Hanako.’

1b. Hiroshi-ha Hanako-ga suki-da  
-Top -Nom like-Assert.  
‘Hiroshi likes Hanako.’

Nominative object constructions in Japanese have been much debated in literature. However, much of the research has been devoted to those involved in constructions with idiosyncratic lexical verbs or modals, such as stative, desiderative, potential predicates, and etc. This paper focuses on the structural positions of Nominative Case

objects in aspectual *te-aru* constructions in Japanese, which have attracted little attention in the literature to this day. I use adverbials to mark relative structural heights and propose a syntactic position of nominative objects and that of their counterparts, canonical accusative objects in *te-aru* constructions in Japanese.

First, I lay out relative adverbial positions of time adverbials. Having established that they sit quite high in the structure, I utilize this class of adverbs as a landmark signaling TP. I examine the structural positions of nominative and accusative objects based on the findings on the adverbials. A short conclusion follows.

## 2 Predicate Ellipsis and Position of Time Adverbial in Japanese

### 2-1 Predicate Ellipses in Japanese

At least two types of ellipses involving verbal predicates are observed in Japanese<sup>(1)</sup>:

2a. *so-suru* ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga tegami-o yabut-ta. Hanako-mo so-shi-ta.  
 -Nom letter-Acc tear-pst -aslo so-do-pst  
 ‘Hiroshi tore letters. Hanako did so, too.’

2b. *so-da* ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga tegami-o yabut-ta. Hanako-mo *so-da*.  
 -Nom letter-Acc tear-pst -aslo so-do-assert  
 ‘Hiroshi tore letters. Hanako (did) so, too.’

In 2a, the elided structure is supported by *so-suru* (‘do so’), and in 2b, *so-da* (so-Affirm.).

**2-2 Adverbial Modification and Predicate Elision**

As in 3, however, only the *so-suru* (do-so) ellipsis allows the time adverbial *before X* in its structure:

3a. *so-suru* ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae tegami-o yabut-ta.  
 -Nom moring-meal-Gen-before-at letter-Acc tear-pst  
 Hanako-mo hiru-gohan-no-mae so-shi-ta.  
 -aslo noon-meal-Gen-before-at so-do-pst  
 ‘Hiroshi tore letters before breakfast.  
 Hanako did so, too, before lunch.’

3b. *so-da* ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae tegami-o yabut-ta.  
 -Nom moring-meal-Gen-before-at letter-Acc tear-pst  
 Hanako-mo hiru-gohan-no-mae\*? so-da.  
 -aslo noon-meal-Gen-before-at so-Assert  
 ‘Hiroshi tore letters before breakfast.  
 Hanako (did) so, too, before lunch.’

The data above are easily accounted for if we assume the deletion approach to the ellipses as in the following (Lasnik 1999, Mori 2015, inter alia).

**2-3 Time Adverbials and TP Elision**

The deletion process of the elided constructions in 3a and 3b is depicted in what follows:

4a. *so-suru* VP ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae tegami-o [<sub>VP</sub> yabut]-ta.  
 -Nom moring-meal-Gen-before letter-Acc tear-pst  
 Hanako-mo hiru-gohan-no-mae [<sub>VP</sub> ~~yabut~~]-ta.  
 -aslo noon-meal-Gen-before tear-pst

‘Hiroshi tore letters before breakfast.  
 Hanako (did) so, too, before lunch.’

4b. *so-da* TP ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga [<sub>TP</sub> asa-gohan-no-mae tegami-o yabut]-ta.  
 -Nom moring-meal-Gen-before letter-Acc tear-pst  
 Hanako-mo [<sub>TP</sub> ~~hiru-gohan-no-mae asa-gohan-no~~  
~~mae yabut~~]-ta  
 before tear-pst  
 ‘Hiroshi tore letters before lunch, before breakfast.  
 Hanako (did) so, too, before lunch.’

I assume that adverbials are adjoined to the phrase that they modify (Ernst 2006, inter alia), and that what are deleted here are VP (or  $vP^{(2)}$ , See Thompson 2006) and  $TP^{(3)}$ , as shown in 4a and 4b, respectively.

Since only VP is elided in 4a, the time adverbial is allowed to appear in the construction: it is adjoined to a positions higher than VP, which is the target of elision in *so-suru* ellipsis constructions. In contrast, the time adverbial is adjoined to a structure within TP that is elided in *so-da* ellipsis in 4a. Thus the adverbial is not permissible there (Since the parallelism is required in the ellipsis, ‘before lunch’ and ‘before breakfast’ co-exist in the underling structure before the elision takes place in 4b).

In this section, I took up the time adverbial, and established that its adjunction site is quite high in the syntactic structure. In the next section, I use the time adverbial to mark TP, and show that nominative objects in *te-arū* constructions occupy a position higher than TP.

**3 Nominative Objects in *Te-Aru* Constructions****3-1 Japanese *Te-Aru* Constructions**

*Te-arū* constructions in Japanese display nominative objects as follows<sup>(3)</sup>:

5. Hiroshi-ga syasin-o/ga moyashi-te-arū  
 -Nom pictures-Acc/Nom burn-TE-have  
 ‘Hiroshi has burnt the pictures.’

In 5, it is licit for the grammatical object *syasin* (‘pictures’) to appear either in Accusative Case or Nominative Case.

Now observe the following:

6a. Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae-ka hiru-gohan-no-

-Nom morning-meal-Gen-before-or noon-meal-Gen-mae 9-mai-no syasin-o moyashi-te-arū  
 before 9-CL-Gen pictures-Acc burn-TE-have  
 ‘Hiroshi has burnt 9 pictures either before breakfast or lunch.’  
 (\*?object > adverbial) (object > adverbial)

6b. Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae-ka hiru-gohan-no-  
 -Nom morning-meal-Gen-before-or noon-meal-Gen-mae 9-mai-no syasin-ga moyashi-te-arū  
 before 9-CL-Gen pictures-Nom burn-TE-have  
 ‘Hiroshi has burnt 9 pictures either before breakfast or lunch.’  
 (?object > adverbial) (adverbial > object)

What’s interesting here is that the reading wherein the object takes wide scope is unavailable with the accusative object (6a), and available with the nominative object (6b). I elaborate these readings immediately below.

### 3-2 Scope Differences Between Accusative Objects and Nominative Objects in Japanese *Te-Aru* Constructions

The relevant two readings involving the scope interactions between the grammatical objects and the TP adverbials in 6 are as follows:

7a. object > adverbial:

Suppose Hiroshi needed to burn up 9 pictures in total. He burnt 3 of them before breakfast, and 6 before lunch. So in total, Hiroshi burnt 9 pictures. (viz., “it is the case that for each picture *x* Hiroshi burnt *x* either before breakfast or before lunch.”)

7b. adverbial > object:

Suppose Hiroshi needed to burn up 9 pictures in total. He burnt all 9 of them, either before breakfast, or before lunch. So Hiroshi burnt all the 9 pictures before breakfast or all the 9 pictures before lunch. (viz., “it is the case that either before breakfast, or before lunch, Hiroshi burnt all the pictures.”)

Crucially, it is possible for a picture *x* to be burnt before breakfast, and a picture *y*, before lunch, under the reading in which the object takes wider scope than the adverbial in 7a, but not under that in which the object takes narrower scope than the adverbial in 7b<sup>(4)</sup>.

Thus the data in 6 strongly suggest that the nominative object occupies a position which can take wider scope than

the TP adjunct in 6b, whereas the accusative object does not in 6a. The next question then is how high the nominative object can get to.

### 3-3 The Landing Site of the Nominative Objects

Let us turn to the data below wherein verbal predicates are elided:

8. Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae syasin-ga  
 -Nom morning-meal-Gen-before picture-Nom moyashi-te-arū  
 burn-TE-have  
 Hanako-mo hiru-gohan-no-mae?? so-da.  
 -aslo noon-meal-Gen-before so-Assert  
 ‘Hiroshi has burnt pictures before breakfast.  
 Hanako (has) so, too, before lunch.’

The time adverbial *hiru-gohan-no-mae* (‘before lunch’) is not well-formed in 8. This is suggestive that the TP is elided in 8, as we have seen before. Now I address the question as to how high the nominative objects can get to.

Suppose that the nominative objects indeed go out of TP, to a higher position. Then it should be able to appear in a construction wherein TP is elided. This is borne out:

9a. Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae syasin-ga  
 -Nom morning-meal-Gen-before picture-Nom moyashi-te-arū  
 burn-TE-have  
 Hanako-mo posta-ga so-da.  
 -aslo poster-Nom so-Assert  
 ‘Hiroshi has burnt pictures before breakfast.  
 Hanako (has) so, too, (about) posters.’

9b. Hiroshi-ga asa-gohan-no-mae syasin-ga  
 -Nom morning-meal-Gen-before picture-Nom moyashi-te-arū  
 burn-TE-have  
 Hanako-mo posta-gai [<sub>TP</sub> asa-gohan-no-mae  
 -aslo poster-Nom morning-meal-Gen-before  
 (posta-gai) moyashi-te-arū]  
 poster-Nom burn-TE-have  
 ‘Hiroshi has burnt pictures before breakfast.  
 Hanako (has) so, too, (about) posters.’

The examples in 9 offer a solution to the inquiry we have

posed from the outset: The nominative objects in *te-arū* constructions undergo a derivation to reach a structurally higher position than TP.<sup>(6)</sup> The elided elements are struck through in 9b. Here, the TP is deleted, together with the copy of the nominative object *posta-ga* (poster-Nom). The nominative object, however, is copied onto and merged again to a position higher than TP. So the structure licitly yields the interpretation described above.

I would like to draw the attention of the readers to the fact that the reading in 9b must have the interpretation of the phrase *asa-gohan-no-mae* ('before breakfast'), which is not phonetically realized in 9b, fulfilling the parallelism requirement as often observed in predicate ellipses. This means that (1) TP adjuncts do not go out of TP (viz., once adjoined to TP, no 'copying and merging process' is

induced to adjuncts), (2) grammatical objects, on the other hand, do involve further copy-and-merge processes, and that (3) in case of (2), the copy interpreted in LF is the one at the landing site<sup>(7)</sup>.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I elaborated possible structural heights of the nominative objects in Japanese *te-arū* constructions, utilizing the adverbials to mark relative structural positions. The data involving adverbials, together with the ellipsis, demonstrate that the structural position of the nominative object is quite high in the tree in Japanese *te-arū* constructions. I leave for future research the exact landing site of the nominative objects in *te-arū* constructions.

## 注

- (1) I set aside here various constructions which seem to involve elision of verbal predicates, and claims confirming or negating the existence of VP ellipsis in Japanese since this stakes little of what I try to accomplish in this paper. My stance here is that at least some types of ellipses involving verbal predicates are possible. *So-suru* and *so-da* constructions are certainly among them.
- (2) Thompson (2006) proposes an AspP, a node above vP and below VP, which checks [Bounded] features of verbal predicates. For my purposes here, it does not pose any serious problem whether the elided node in *so-suru* is vP, AspP, or VP. However the following example strongly indicates that what is elided is a constituent smaller than vP:

### a) *so-suru* ellipsis:

Hiroshi-ga 2-zikan-de/2-zikan ie-o tate-ta.  
 -Nom 2-hour-in/2-hour-for house-Acc build-pst  
 Hanako-mo 7-zikan-de/7-zikan so-shi-ta.  
 -aslo 7-hour-in/7-hour-for so-do-pst  
 'Hiroshi built the house in 2 hours/for 2 hours.  
 Hanako did so, too, in 7 hours/for 7 hours.'

The example (a) is well-formed in Japanese. Assuming that the time frame adverbial 'in X-amount of time' adjoins to AspP, and the durative adverbial 'for X-amount of time' to vP (Thompson, 2006), the logical conclusion is that what is elided in (a) is a smaller constituent than vP. This is exactly what has been proposed in Mori (2015) as well on independent reasons concerning subliminal syntactic structures of lexical verbs.

- (3) I utilize the time adverbial without a particle *-ni* (at) to avoid any complication in the exposition of the possible adjunction site of the adverbial.

- (4) *Te-arū* constructions require a certain discourse. As much as *te-arū* constructions with accusative objects are legitimate, so are those with nominative objects.
- (5) It may be possible for the two scopes to yield an equivalent truth condition. For example, it could be the case that for a given picture *x*, *x* is burnt *before breakfast* for all the members of the pictures. So the reading wherein the object takes wider scope may have an identical reading in case the adverbial takes scope over the object, but, crucially, not vice versa.
- (6) Assuming that adjuncts are in general introduced to a structural position which is outer as compared to grammatical objects, this conclusion holds.
- (7) Alternatively it may be the case that LF interprets the best possible copy so as not to induce LF crush.

## 参考文献

- Ernst, Thomas. 2001. *The Syntax of Adjuncts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lasnik, Howard. 1999. 'Verbal Morphology: Syntactic Structures Meets the Minimalist Program', In *Minimalist Analysis*, Lasnik, H. 97-119, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mori, Nobue. 2015. *A Syntactic Structure of Lexical Verbs*. Tokyo: Koyo Shobo.
- Thompson, Ellen. 1994. *A Syntactic Representation of Tense and Temporal Modification*. MA Dissertation, University of Maryland.
- Thompson, Ellen. 2006. 'The Structure of Bounded Events'. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37.2:211-228.
- Ura, Hiroyuki. 2000. *Checking Theory and Grammatical Functions in Generative Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.