

P_{CON} and Dative and Possession Construction in English and Japanese

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The goal of my PhD is to develop a uniform account for some syntactic constructions, including the argument alternations (such as the dative alternation and the locative alternation) in English and Japanese, under what I call the “contiguity hypothesis.” In this talk I will be focussing on the dative alternation, although I will also suggest an extension to possessive constructions in both languages.

Dative alternation verbs such as *give* and *send* in English occur in two different syntactic variants, the double-object construction (henceforth, DOC) and the dative complement construction (henceforth, DCC). It is well-known that the two object arguments are different in terms of syntax and semantics. For example, the two objects in the DOC behave differently with respect to licensing anaphors (Barss and Lasnik 1986, Larson 1988, a.o.), heavy NP shift (Hudson 1992, a.o.) and adjective secondary predication (Baker 1997, a.o.). Also, it has been claimed that the IO of the DOC is interpreted as a possessor, whereas no such interpretation arises in the DCC (Pinker 1989, Goldberg 1995, Pesetsky 1995, Harley 2002, Krifka 2004, a.o.).

Harley (2002) analyses the dative alternation by postulating that (i) each variant of the dative alternation is associated with a distinct underlying structure and (ii) English verbs in the DOC decompose into two heads, a light verb v_{CAUSE} and a preposition head P_{HAVE} . P_{HAVE} is hypothesized to be identical to the prepositional component of verbal *have* in the possession construction (Freeze 1992, a.o.). The existence of P_{HAVE} in the underlying structure of double-object verbs licenses the possessive entailment of the DOC. P_{HAVE} is missing in the base structure of the DCC, where there is instead a head encoding location, so the DOC does not entail the possessive reading. Harley further argues that the same analysis can be given for the two possible word orders for ditransitive verbs in Japanese.

However, the possession interpretation of the DOC is not an entailment but rather a suggestion or implicature in both languages, according to the results of a pilot questionnaire implemented recently for both native speakers of English (similar discussions have been found in and Rappaport and Levin 2005) and Japanese.

Being based on the results of the pilot, I will mainly argue the following two points in this presentation: (i) a Harley-style possession analysis is rejected and instead, the abstract predicate locative P_{CON} will be introduced as head of the $P_{CON}P$ under the small *vp* structure. This P_{CON} is base-generated in for both underlying structures of the DOC and the DCC. Assuming Oba (2002), I will claim that dative verbs in both Japanese and English decompose into three heads, v_{CAUSE} , V and $P_{CON-DYNAMIC}$. P_{CON} entails that there is a perceived spatially contiguous relation between the theme and the goal in a given event. P_{CON} can be further divided into two types, $P_{CON-STATIC}$ and $P_{CON-DYNAMIC}$. $P_{CON-DYNAMIC}$ specifies a type of contiguity such that there is a movement sub-event between the theme and the goal. The theme DP is base-generated in Spec of $P_{CON}P$ and the goal DP, in the complement position of $P_{CON}P$ in English. On the other hand, the *ni*-marked DP (goal) is base-generated in Spec of $P_{CON}P$ and the theme DP, in the complement position of $P_{CON}P$ in Japanese; (ii) under this contiguity hypothesis, a transformational analysis will be proposed for the dative alternation verbs both in English and Japanese. Thus, the DOC will be derived from the DCC by moving the theme DP to Spec of VP. In Japanese, Dative(-*ni*)-Accusative(-*o*) word order is claimed as basic and the other order will be derived by scrambling the *o*-marked DP to Spec of VP.

The possession verbs such as *have*, *get*, *motsu* (‘have’) decompose into three heads, v_{BE} , V and $P_{CON-DYNAMIC}$, whereas the verb *aru* (‘be-with’) or be decomposes into v_{BE} , V and $P_{CON-STATIC}$.