

An Overt Marker for Individual Sublimation in Japanese

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In this presentation we will discuss an expression N(oun)-*no koto* in Japanese. *Koto* is a noun meaning ‘event’ or ‘fact’ and *-no* is a genitive marker. *No koto* serves make concrete nouns into abstract nouns, adding the meaning of ‘aboutness’ to them. Thus it must be obligatorily added to concrete nouns for predicates such as *hanasu* (talk), *gironsuru* (discuss), etc that select abstract nouns to meet the selectional requirement: *John-*(no koto)-o hanasu*.

There are some cases of *-no koto*, however, that are attached to predicates taking concrete nouns without any apparent change in meaning. N-*no koto* in this usage typically appears in the internal argument position of psychological predicates, e.g. *suki-da* (like), *aisuru* (love), *kirai-da* (hate) etc., and intensional predicates such as *sagasu* (try to find, look for). In this usage, N-*no koto* freely alternates with N without *-no koto*: the addition of *-no koto* to nouns appears to make no semantic contribution. This latter use of *-no koto* has distribution distinct from the former: the N it attaches to must be specific, N-*no koto* in this use can only take accusative and nominative case, and cannot be promoted to a subject position by passivization.

Although the use of *-no koto* in the first use is fairly transparent, the semantic, syntactic, and discourse properties of *-no koto* in the second use have not been discussed much in the literature except for sporadic descriptive remarks and have so far remained a mystery.

In this presentation, we will examine the properties of obligatory and the optional *-no koto* in detail and propose that N-*no koto* is a generalized quantifier, of the type $\langle\langle e,t \rangle, t \rangle$, i.e. the set of properties of an individual, composed compositionally from the meaning of N, *no* (genitive) and *koto* (event). We will show that our analysis to treat N-*no koto* as a generalized quantifier can account for all the properties of optional and obligatory *-no koto*, reducing the differences between them to the selectional properties of the predicates taking them as complement. Taking N-*no koto* as a generalized quantifier is quite natural because the denotation of N, when it is referential, is the same as the denotation of the set of properties of the referent of N, the latter being the sublimation properties of the referent of N. *No-koto* can thus be taken as an overt marker for individual sublimation in Japanese.