

The double-*o* constraint and argument alternation in Japanese

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Two semantic classes of ditransitive verbs are recognized in Japanese: verbs that denote an action in which something is added to a location, such as *nuru* ('spray') and verbs that express an action in which something is removed from a location such as *katazukeru* ('clear'). It has been described in the literature how these verbs allow two alternate sentence patterns (Kageyama 1980, Fukui, Miyagawa and Tenny 1985, Kishimoto 2001, Iwata 2008, a.o.). This is referred to as argument alternation, since the verbs allow two alternate ways of organizing the nouns associated with them. For example (i) *Taro-ga kabe-ni penki-o nutta* ('Taro sprayed the paint onto the wall') and (ii) *Taro-ga kabe-o penki-de nutta* ('Taro sprayed the wall with paint'). Between (i) and (ii), we can notice that the same argument of the verb can receive different case-markers. For instance, the location argument *kabe* ('wall') is marked by a marker *-ni* in (i), whereas it is marked by *-o* in (ii). On the other hand, the locatum argument *penki* ('paint') is marked by *-o* in (i), while it is marked by *-de* in (ii).

This type of argument alternation, both in English (e.g. *John loads the hay onto the wagon* and *John loads the wagon with hay*), and in Japanese, has gained a lot of attention in the literature of argument alternation and many interesting cross-linguistic studies about the syntax and semantics of the alternation have been produced (e.g. a holistic reading of the variant (ii)) (Kageyama 1980, Fukui, Miyagawa and Tenny 1985, Pinker 1989, Levin 1993, Iwata 2008, a.o.). However, even though there has been much discussion of the alternation in the previous literature, there are some properties of the alternation still left unexplained, and the relation of the alternation to other constructions has not yet been fully explored.

In this talk, I would like to revisit this well-studied linguistic phenomenon, and to try to reinterpret the properties of the alternation in terms of the Double-*o* Constraint under the Cyclic Multiple Spell-Out (Hiraiwa 2006). My argument will provide a new perspective on the analysis of this argument alternation. The specific proposal that I make is as follows: 1) the alternating verbs such as *nuru* ('spray') and *katazukeru* ('clear') can be analyzed on a par with the possessor raising verbs such as *tataku* ('hit') in Japanese, given that the latter construction allows a violation of the double-*o* constraint (Hiraiwa 2006), and 2) it is possible to claim that the argument alternation variant shown in (ii) derives from an identical or a near synonymous syntactic structure to that of the possessor raising construction.

References

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