On the nature of the connective particle "ni" in Japanese
Category: formal syntax

The main aim of this paper is to provide an analysis of the connective particle *ni* in Japanese, which occurs in examples like (1) and (2). Kuno (1973) points out that the connective *ni* differs from another connective particle *to* in the following three respects: First, *ni*, unlike *to*, cannot be repeated after the final conjunct, as shown by (3) and (4); Second, a *ni*-marked DP, unlike a *to*-marked DP, cannot be used as a comitative adverbial, as shown by (5); Third, while sentences that contain DPs coordinated by *to* (*to*-coordination) allow both group and distributive readings, those with DPs coordinated by *ni* (*ni*-coordination) yield only distributive readings, excluding group readings, as illustrated by (6). The distribution of *ni* is also constrained in the following context: According to my informants, the examples in (7) and (8), where *ni*-coordination appears in an adjunct phrase, are relatively more degraded than the examples in (1) and (2). This contrast cannot be attributed to the unavailability of distributive contexts in examples (7) and (8), considering that *to*-coordination in the same contexts allows a distributive reading (cf. (7)). To the best of my knowledge, no adequate explanation has been so far given to the properties of *ni* seen above (in this paper, I put aside the discussion of the connective particle *to*.)

The observation that *ni*-coordination is fully licensed when it is followed by nominative *ga* and accusative *o* (cf. (1)–(2)), while it yields a less acceptable result when it is followed by a postposition (cf. (7)–(8)) suggests that the distribution of the connective *ni* is related to the availability of structural case. Interestingly, Harada and Larson (2009) (henceforth H&L) argue that Japanese dative *ni* is such an element. Specifically, they propose that dative *ni* as in (9) is a "concordializing" suffix that attaches to a DP and creates a phrase that obtains case by agreement held between a structural case probe (v, T) and a goal DP bearing valued case feature, as schematically shown by (10). This analysis can be extended to the connective *ni*, on the plausible assumption that the two *ni* are lexically non-distinct. I thus propose that the connective *ni* is a concordializing suffix, and that the sentence in (1) is represented as in (11). The derivation of this example goes as follows. First, the projection of v (v' in (11)) is merged with the three DPs, forming vP, which in turn is merged with T. Next, T, the probe, initiates search and ends up agreeing with the final conjunct, the nominative DP. As a result of this agreement, the other two DPs obtain case and show up with the concordializing suffix, *ni*. Notice that in this structure, the order of precedence between the three DPs, mutually c-commanding each other, is not determined. Thus, in principle, the DP that is valued for case can be a non-final conjunct and the other two DPs may appear with *ni*, as shown in (12). However, I assume that this option is not taken, for the purpose of avoiding possible confusion as between the structure with *ni*-coordination in (12) and the one without in (13).

The presented proposal can explain the properties of *ni*-coordination observed in the examples in (3)–(8). First, let us consider (3a) and (4a), where *ni* is followed by structural case. The ungrammaticality of these examples is expected, since *ni*, being a concordializing suffix, is not supposed to occur between a DP and structural case. Second, the lack of adverbial usage of *ni* seen in example (5) also follows from the suffixal nature of this particle. Third, consider (6a), which allows only the distributive interpretation. The absence of the collective interpretation in this example is expected, under the structure of a sentence with *ni*-coordination in (11) that I propose, where the conjuncts do not alone form a constituent, which could otherwise represent a collective reading. It should be noted here that in a putative derivation like (14), where the three conjuncts *do* form a constituent, the coordinate complex DP, the probing operation targets this complex, which is the closest DP to the probe. Therefore, it is not expected that the conjuncts of the coordinate complex in (14), located outside the domain of agreement, exhibit case concord. This is why sentences with *ni*-coordination lack a collective reading. In contrast, the distributive reading of this construction is derived under the "parallel structure" approach to coordination as proposed by Goodall (1987), Moltmann (1992), and others. In this approach, it is assumed that a sentence with coordination results from a union of its parallel structures, and that the sentence is interpreted as a conjunction of the semantic representations of the parallel structures. To illustrate, (15) has the parallel structures in (16), represented as in (17), where the conjuncts in coordination appear in parallel, in an analogous way as in (11). The semantic representations of these parallel structures conjointly yield the two-event reading of this example. Now, under this approach, the sentence with *ni*-coordination in (1) has the parallel structures in (18), which give rise to the distributive reading of this example, as desired. Finally, consider (7)–(8), where *ni*-coordination is placed inside an adjunct PP. The relative markedness of these examples is accounted for, if we extend H&L's proposal and assume that concord operates also with non-structural case but in this case, concord is somewhat "weaker." This assumption seems empirically plausible, given that the *ni*-coordination within a complex PP in (19) also makes a sentence slightly marginal.

To sum up, in this paper I propose that the connective marker *ni* in Japanese is a concordializing suffix (H&L), and show that the proposal can explain a number of properties of *ni*-coordination.

(1) John-**ni** Bill-**ni** Ken -ga kita.
    -and -and -Nom came 'John, Bill, and Ken came.'

(2) John-ga Bill-**ni** Ken -**ni** Harry -o korosita.
    -Nom -and -and -Acc killed 'John killed Bill, Ken, and Harry.'

(3) a. *John-**ni** Ken-**ni** -ga kita.
    b. John-**to** Ken(-**to**) -ga kita.
        -and -and -Nom came 'John and Ken came.'

(4) a. *John-ga Bill-**ni** Ken-**ni** -o korosita.
    b. John-ga Bill-**to** Ken(-**to**) -o korosita.
        -and -and -and -Acc killed 'John killed Bill and Ken.'

(5) John-ga Mary-**to**/*-**ni** paatii-ni kita.
    -Nom -and party-to came 'John came to the party with Mary.'

(6) a. John-**ni** Mary-ga kekkonsuru. 'J. and M. are going to marry (two weddings).'
    b. John-**to** Mary-ga kekkonsuru. 'J. and M. are going to marry (one or two weddings).'
        -and -Nom marry

(7) ??John-ga Mary-**ni** Jane-**ni** Sara -kara tegami-o moratta.
    (cf. John-ga Mary-**to** Jane-**to** Sara -kara tegami-o moratta.)
        -Nom -and -and -from letter-Acc received
   'John received letters from Mary, Jane, and Sara.'

(8) ??Tegami-ga (John-kara) Mary -**ni** Jane-**ni** Sara -e todoita.
     letters-Nom -from -and -and to arrived
    'Letters arrived (from John) to Mary, Jane, and Sara.'

(9) John-ga Mary -ni piza-o ageta.
   -Nom -Dat pizza-Acc gave 'John gave a pizza to Mary.'

(10)

(11)

(L&H: 14)
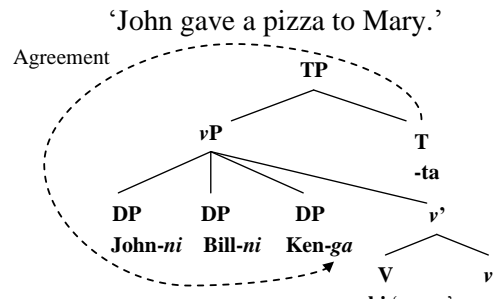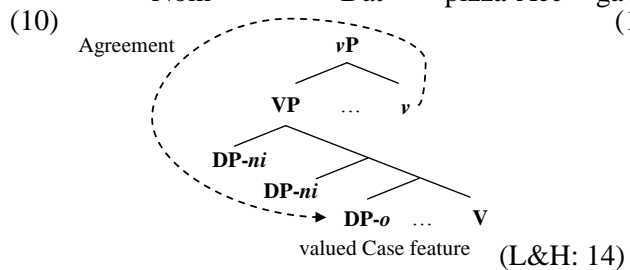
(12) [TP [vP John-**ni** Bill-ga Ken-**ni** [v' [VP hon-o kat] v] -ta]
        John-and Bill-Nom Ken-and book-Acc buy -past
    (lit.) 'John, Bill, and Ken bought books.'

(13) [TP [vP John-**ni** Bill-ga [v' [VP Ken-ni [VP hon-o kat]] v]] -ta]
        John-and Bill-Nom Ken-for book-Acc buy -past
    'John and Bill bought a book for Ken.'

(14)
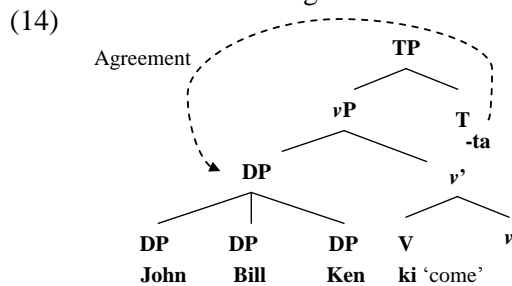
(15) Jane and Alice saw Bill. (Goodall 1987: 22)
(16) a. Jane saw Bill
     b. Alice saw Bill (ibid.)

(17)

(ibid.)
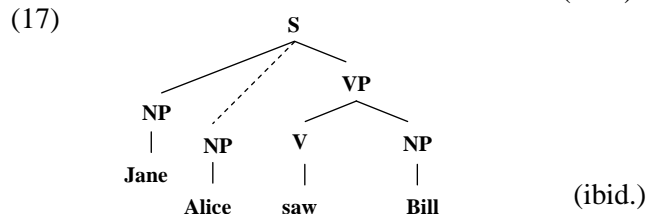
(18) a. John kita 'John came.'
     b. Bill kita 'Bill came.'
     c. Ken kita 'Ken came.'

(19) ??John-ga { Mary-**ni** Jane-**ni** Ken -niyotte / Mary-**ni** Jane-**ni** Ken -notameni } korosareta.
        -Nom -and -and -by -and -and for was killed
    'John was killed {by Mary, Jane, and Ken/for Mary, Jane, and Ken}.'

References: Goodall, G. 1987. *Parallel structures in syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.| Harada, N. and R.K. Larson. 2009. Datives in Japanese. In *Proceedings of WAFL5. MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 54: 3-17. Cambridge, MA: MITWPL.| Moltmann, F. 1992. Coordination and comparatives. Ph.D. dissertation, MIT, Cambridge, Mass.| Kuno, S. 1973. *Nihon Bunpô Kenkû*. Tokyo: Taishûkan.