Three Types of Ditransitive Verbs in Japanese

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I report that ditransitive verbs in Japanese are divided into three classes on the basis of their behavioral and coding properties. I show that ditransitive verbs have two major classes, which I refer to as 'change-of-location' and 'change-of-possession' verbs, and that there is one more class which shows mixed behavior.

2. Class Membership

In Japanese ditransitive verbs, arguments are marked with 'nominative *ga*, dative *ni*, accusative *o*', as illustrated in (1).

(1) a. John-ga   Mary-ni   hon-o   age-ta.
        John-NOM Mary-DAT   book-ACC give-PAST
        'John gave Mary a book.'
    b. John-ga   Mary-ni   tegami-o   okut-ta.
        John-NOM   Mary-DAT   letter-ACC   send-PAST
        'John sent a letter to Mary.'

Ditransitive verbs take three arguments, but there is no cross-referencing system such as agreement. Some examples of change-of-possession verbs ('give' type verbs) are given in (2) and change-of-location verbs ('send' type verbs) are given in (3):

(2) a.   verbs of giving: *ataeru* 'give' *teikyoo-suru* 'offer', *yakusoku-suru*
            'promise', *wariateru* 'assign', *ageru* 'give', *sasi-dasu* 'offer'
            yzuru 'offer', *kuwaeru* 'join', *watasu* 'hand'
    b.   verbs of future giving: *motomeru* 'ask', *yoosei-suru* 'request'
            yurusu 'allow', *hosyoo-suru* 'gurantee', *tanomu* 'ask'
    c.   verbs of communication: *yuu* 'tell', *syookai-suru* 'introduce',
            osieru 'teach', *hookoku-suru* 'report', *tugeru* 'tell', *tazuneru* 'ask',
            siteki-suru 'point out', *miseru* 'show', *simesu* 'show'

(3) a.   verbs of communication: *hookoku-suru* 'report', *renraku-suru* 'contact',
            siraseru 'notify', *meeru-suru* 'email', *tutaeru* 'convey',
    b.   verbs of sending: *okuru* 'send' *yuusoo-suru* 'mail', *yusoo-suru* 'transport',
            nageru 'throw', *dasu* 'let out', *ireru* 'let in'
    c.   verbs of carrying: *motte-yuku/motte-kuru* 'take/bring'

The *ni*-marked phrase *Mary-ni* (Mary-DAT) of the 'give' verb in (1a) behaves like a true NP, which is akin to the indirect object in (4a).   On the other hand, the *ni*-marked phrase *Mary-ni* of 'send' verb in (1b) behaves like a PP, which is comparable to the *to*-dative in (4b).

(4) a. John gave <u>Mary</u> a book.
    b. John sent a letter <u>to Mary</u>.

Japanese differs from English, in that verbs that appear in double object constructions are confined to change-of-possession verbs, and the other ditransitive verbs appear in the postpositional object construction.   This is illustrated in (5).

(5) a.   English
                         (2a)   (2b)   (2c)   (3a)   (3b)   (3c)
       Double object   <--->
       P-Object   <--->

   b.   Japanese
                         (2a)   (2b)   (2c)   (3a)   (3b)   (3c)
       Double Object   <------------------->
       P-Object   <------------------->

3. Coding Properties
3.1. Basic Order
    The arguments of ditransitive verbs may be placed in various positions as long as they are placed to the left of the verb.

(6) a.   John-ga   hon-o   Mary-ni   age-ta.
        John-NOM   book-ACC Mary-DAT   give-PAST
   b.   Mary-ni   hon-o   John-ga   age-ta.
       Mary-DAT   book-ACC   John-NOM   give-PAST
   c.   hon-o   Mary-ni   John-ga   age-ta.
       book-ACC   Mary-DAT   John-NOM   give-PAST

We can assume that the basic word order is nominative-dative-accusative, and the base order of dative-accusative sequence can be checked by way of fixed idioms.

(7) a.   teki-ni   senaka-o   mise-ru
       enemy-DAT back-ACC   show-PRES
       'show one's back to the enemy (=retreat)'
   b.   ?*senaka-o   teki-ni   miseru-ru
        back-ACC   enemy-DAT show-PRES

(8) a.   usiro-ni te-o   mawas-u
       back-DAT hand-ACC turn-PRES
       'turn hands to the back (=make a secrete arrangement)'

    b. *te-o   usiro-ni   mawas-u
       hand-ACC back-DAT   turn-PRES

Since idiomatic meanings are obtained when we have dative-accusative order, this order must be the basic.[1]   Nominalization lends further support to this claim.

(9) a. John-ga   himawari-ni   mizu-o   yar-u
       John-NOM   sunflower-DAT   water-ACC give-PRES
       'give water to sunflowers
   b. (John-no) himawari-no   mizu-no   yari-kata
       John-GEN sunflower-GEN water-GEN give-way
       the way of giving water to sunflowers
   c. *mizu-no   himawari-no   yari-kata
       water-GEN   sunflower-GEN give-way

When all the arguments are genitively marked, scrambling becomes unavailable. Since the agent-recipient-theme is the only available order in the nominal, the basic case marking pattern of Japanese ditransitive verbs should be 'nominative-dative-accusative'. (see Kishimoto 2006).

3.2. Potential Forms

    In Japanese, potential forms can be fairly productively formed with the addition of the potential morphemes *(r)e, (r)are*.

(10) a. John-ni kodomo-ni   omotya-ga   age-rare-ru.
       John-DAT child-DAT   toy-NOM   give-can-PRES
       'John can give his child a toy.'
   b. John-ni seito-ni   tegami-ga   okur-e-ru.
       John-DAT student-DAT letter-NOM   send-can-PRES
       'John can send a letter to his students.'

The status of the two dative markings differs.

(11) a. John-ga   kodomo-ni   omotya-ga   age-rare-ru
       John-NOM   child-DAT   toy-NOM   give-can-PRES
       'John can give his child a toy.'

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[1] Japanese has a number of idioms that look like taking an apparent accusative-dative order, as in (i).
  (i) asi-o   boo-ni   suru
      leg-ACC bar-COP make
      'dead of feet'
Ni-marking on the noun *boo* is not a dative case marker, however. Rather, it should count as an adverbial form of a copula *da*. To my knowledge, all the idioms in this form occur with the causative *suru* 'make', which takes a small clause complement, rather than ditransitive predicates. Moreover, Miyagawa and Tsujioka (2004) discuss the existence of some idioms taking accusative-dative order, but in Kishimoto (2007b), I have argued that this does not reflect the base word order of the arguments of ordinary ditransitive predicates in Japanese.

b.　*John-ni　　<u>kodomo-ga</u>　　omotya-ga　age-rare-ru
　　　　John-DAT　　child-NOM　　toy-NOM　　give-can-PRES
　　　　'John can give his child a toy.'

3.3. Alternative marking

　　In some cases, *ni*-marking can be replaced with genuine postpositions.　We observe a difference between change-of-possession and change-of-location verbs.

(12) a.　John-ga　kodomo-ni/??-e/*-made　hon-o　　atae-ta.
　　　　John-NOM child-DAT/-to/-up.to　　　book-ACC give-PAST
　　　　'John gave a book (up) to John.'
　　b.　John-ga　gakkoo-ni/-e/-made　　nimotu-o　okut-ta.
　　　　John-NOM school-DAT/-to/-up.to　luggage-ACC send-PAST
　　　　'John sent his luggage (up) to his school.'

The postposition *e* carries the meaning of 'to, toward' (a destination) and *made* 'up to' (a limit of motion).　They are compatible with change-of-location verbs, but not with change-of-possession verbs.

3.4. Recipient/Goal-subject variants

　　A large number of ditransitive verbs take source subjects, but some have recipient/goal-subject counterparts.

(13) a.　*ageru* 'give' ←→ *morau* 'get'
　　b.　*todokeru* 'deliver' ←→ *uketoru* 'receive'

For the recipient/goal-subject variants of change-of-possession verbs, the source arguments may be marked with either *kara* 'from' or dative case. The source-subject variants of change-of-location verbs can only be marked with *kara*.

(14) a.　John-ga　　sensei-kara/sensei-ni　　　hon-o　　　morat-ta.
　　　　John-NOM　teacher-from/teacher-DAT　book-ACC　get-PAST
　　　　'John got the book from the teacher.'
　　b.　John-ga　　sensei-kara/*sensei-ni　　tegami-o　uketott-ta.
　　　　John-NOM　teacher-from/teacher-DAT　letter-ACC　receive-PAST
　　　　'John received the book from the teacher.'

3.5. Compound nominal describing reciprocal action

　　With some ditransitive verbs, a compound nominal can be formed by combining recipient/goal-subject and source-subject verbs.　Their marking patterns are different.

(15)　tomodati-to-no/*-e-no/*-kara-no　　　(omotya-no)　yari-tori/yari-morai
　　　friend-with-GEN/-to-GEN/-from-GEN　　toy-GEN　　　giving-taking/giving-getting
　　　'giving and taking (of toys) with/to/from friends'

(16) a.　gakkoo-e-no/-kara-no/*-to-no　　　　(kodomo-no)　okuri-mukae
　　　　school-to-GEN/from-GEN/with-GEN　　child-GEN　　　sending-returning

'sending and returning the child to/from/with the school'
   b.   tomodati-kara-no/-e-no/*-to-no   tutae-giki
        friend-from-GEN/-to-GEN/-with-GEN   telling-hearing
        'telling and hearing from/to/with a friend.'

4. Behavioral Properties
4.1 Relativization and Wh-question
   Both dative and accusative arguments are accessible to relativization, and there is no difference between the two classes of verbs. The same holds for *wh*-formation, because recipient and theme behave in the same way.

(17) a.   [John-ga   Mary-ni   age-ta/okut-ta]   syorui
          John-NOM   Mary-DAT   give-PAST/send-PAST document
          'the documents which John gave/sent to Mary'
   b.   [John-ga   syorui-o   age-ta/okut-ta]   Mary
        John-NOM   document-ACC   give-PAST/send-PASt Mary
        'Mary, to whom John gave/sent the documents.'
(18) a.   John-wa dare-ni   syorui-o   age-ta/okut-ta   no?
          John-TOP   who-DAT   document-ACC   give-PAST/send-PAST Q
          'Who did John give/send the documents to?'
   b.   John-wa Mary-ni   nani-o   age-ta/okut-ta   no?
        John-TOP Mary-DAT   what-ACC give-PAST/send-PAST Q
        'What did John give/send to Mary?'

4.2. Nominalization
   In nominalization, nominative and accusative arguments are changed to genitive arguments marked with *no*.   But dative case marking is changed to *e-no* 'to-GEN'.

(19) a.   John-no   Mary-e-no   hon-no   atae-kata
          John-GEN   Mary-to-GEN   book-ACC give-way
          'the way of John's giving Mary a book'
   b.   John-no   Mary-e-no   tegemi-no   okuri-kata
        John-GEN   Mary-to-GEN   letter-ACC send-way
        'the way of John's giving Mary a book'

4.3. Direct Passivization
   Change-of-possession verbs allow both dative and accusative arguments to be promoted to passive subjects under direct passivization.

(20) a.   Kodomo-ga (okaasan-niyotte) hon-o   atae-rare-ta.
          child-NOM   mother-by   book-ACC give-PASS-PAST
          'The child was given a book.'
   b.   Hon-ga (okaasan-niyotte) kodomo-ni   atae-rare-ta.
        book-NOM   mother-by   child-DAT   give-PASS-PASt
        'The book was given to the child.'
]

(21) a.　Mary-ga　　　nyuusitu-o　　　　yurus-are-ta.
　　　　Mary-NOM　　room.entering-ACC allow-PASS-PAST
　　　　'Mary was allowed to enter the room.'
　　b.　Nyuusitu-ga　　　　Mary-ni　　yurus-are-ta.
　　　　room.entering-NOM Mary-DAT　　allow-PASS-PAST
　　　　'Room entering was allowed for Mary.'

On the other hand, change-of-location verbs allow only accusative arguments to be promoted to passive subjects.

(22) a.　#Kodomo-ga　(okaasan-niyotte)　tegami-o　　okur-are-ta.
　　　　child-NOM　　　mother-by　　　　　book-ACC　　send-PASS-PAST
　　　　'The child was sent a letter.'
　　b.　Hon-ga　　(okaasan-niyotte)　kodomo-ni　okur-are-ta.
　　　　book-NOM mother-by　　　　　　child-DAT　　send-PASS-PAST
　　　　'The letter was sent to the child.'

(22a) is legitimate if interpreted as an 'adversity' or 'indirect' passive, rather than a 'direct passive', where the nominative subject is understood to be an affectee argument. The "affectee" subject is added by base-generation.

(23) a.　#John-ga　　kodomo-ni　　nak-are-ta.
　　　　John-NOM　child-DAT　　　cry-pass-PAST
　　　　'John was affected by the children's crying.'
　　b.　*Kodomo-ga　John-o　　　nai-ta.
　　　　child-NOM　　John-ACC　　cry-PAST
　　　　'The child cried John.'

No direct passivization can be formed with a postpositional phrase.

(24) a.　John-ga　　　kono-ginkoo-kara　okane-o　　　hikidasi-ta.
　　　　John-NOM　　this-bank-from　　money-ACC　withdraw-PAST
　　　　'John withdraw money from this bank.'
　　b.　#Kono-ginkoo-ga　John-niyotte　　okane-o　　　hikidas-are-ta.
　　　　this-bank-NOM　　John-by　　　　　money-ACC withdraw-PASS-PAST
　　　　'This bank was adversely affected by John's withdrawing money.'
　　c.　Okane-ga　　John-niyotte kono-ginkyoo-kara　hikidas-are-ta.
　　　　money-NOM　John-by　　this-bank-from　　　　withdraw-PASS-PAST
　　　　'Money was withdrawn from this bank.'

In (22a), since the affectee is added without promotion, it is easy to add a real dative argument.

(25)　#Kodomo-ga　imooto-ni　　tegami-o　　okur-are-ta.
　　　　child-NOM　　sister-DAT　book-ACC　　send-PASS-PAST
　　　　'The child was adversely affected by sending a letter to his sister.'

It is possible to a dative argument to the direct passive clause in (20a), which involves a change-of-possession verb as well, but this addition radically changes the interpretation.

(26)   #Kodomo-ga   <u>imooto-ni</u>   hon-o   atae-rare-ta.
         child-NOM   sister-DAT   book-ACC   give-PASS-PAST
       'The child was given a book.'

4.4. Animacy constraint
    The dative argument of a change-of-possession verb is confined to an animate entity. No such animacy constraint obtains with regard to a change-of-location verb.

(27)   John-ga   {Mary-ni/*uti-ni}   hon-o   atae-ta.
         John-NOM   Mary-DAT/home-DAT book-ACC give-PAST
       'John gave {Mary/his home} a book.'
(28)   John-ga   {Mary-ni/uti-ni}   tegami-o   okut-ta.
         John-NOM   Mary-to/home-to   letter-ACC   send-PAST
       'John sent a letter to {Mary/his home}.'

In English, the animacy constraint is often dependent on the syntactic frame of the construction, rather than verb class.

(29) a.   John sent {Mary/*Mary's home} a letter.
     b.   John sent a letter to {Mary/Mary's home}.

In Japanese, the animacy constraint is determined solely based on the semantics of ditransitve verbs.

4.5. Complex Verb Formation
    Compound verb formation is quite productive, and sometimes fairly regular for change-of-location verbs, so we can find a large number of (lexical) compound verbs. (Their basic meanings are more or less the same as that of the base verbs, but they differ in spatial orientation.)

(30) a.   *okuri-dasu* (send-let.out), *okuri-komu* (send-let.in), *okuri-tukeru* (send-attach), *okuri-ireru* (send-let.into) …
     b.   *nage-dasu* (throw-let.out) *nage-komu* (throw-let.in), *nage-tukeru* (throw-attach), *nage-ireru* (throw-let.into) …
     c.   *hakobi-dasu* (carry-out), *hakobi-komu* (carr-in), *hakobi-tukeru* (carry-attach), *hakobi-ireru* (carry-let.into)….

We can sometimes find (lexical) gaps, but still, (30) shows a high productivity for change-of-location verbs. By contrast, change-of-possession verbs do not readily allow for compound verb formation.

(31) a.   *atae-dasu* (give-let.out), *atae-komu* (give-let.in), *atae-tukeru* (give-attach), *atae-ireru* (send-let.into) …
     b.   *mise-dasu* (show-let.out) *mise-komu* (show-let.in), *mise-tukeru*

(show-attach), *mise-ireru* (throw-let.into) …
c. *yurusi-dasu* (carry-out), *yurusi-komu* (carr-in), *yurusi-tukeru* (carry-attach), *yurusi-ireru* (carry-let.into)….

Sporadically, we find compound verbs based on change-of-possession verbs describing transfer of knowledge, such as *mise-tukeru* in (31b), but this is far from regular.

4.6. Summary
    Change-of-possession and change-of-location verbs pattern together in a number of linguistic phenomena, but their dative phrases behave differently in certain contexts.

5. Mixed Behavior Verbs: Verbs of Commercial Transaction
    Verbs of commercial transaction like *uru* 'sell' *harau* 'pay' etc.   This class of verbs shows a somewhat complex (mixed) behavior.

(32)   *uru* 'sell', *siharau* 'pay', *harau* 'pay', *kasu* 'lend', *tyuumon-suru* 'order', etc.

Verbs of commercial transaction fall into the class of change-of-location verbs, since they can sometimes be replaced with simple motion verbs.   In (33), *deru* 'go out' is used synonymously with *ureru* 'be sold'.

(33)   Kono-hon-wa   moo   ure-te/de-te   simat-ta.
       this-book-TOP   already   sell-TE/go.out-TE   finish-PAST
       'this book was already sold out.'

The recipient arguments of verbs of commercial transaction cannot be promoted to passive subjects under direct passivization, but accusative objects can.

(34) a.   John-ga huruhonya-ni   hon-o   ut-ta.
          John-NOM used.book.store-to book-ACC sell-PAST
          'John sold the books to the used book store.'
    b.   #Huruhonya-ga   hon-o   ur-are-ta.
          used.bookstore-NOM book-ACC sell-PASS-PAST
          'The used book store was sold the books.'
(35) a.   John-ga Mary-ni   okane-o   harat-ta.
          John-NOM Mary-DAT   money-ACC pay-PAST
          'John paid money to Mary.'
    b.   #Mary-ga okane-o   haraw-are-ta.
          Mary-NOM money-ACC pay-PASS-PAST
           'Mary was paid money.'

(36) a.   Hon-ga   huruhonya-ni   ur-are-ta.
          book-NOM   used.book.store-to   sell-PASS-PAST
          'The books were sold to the used book store.'
    b.   Okane-ga   Mary-ni haraw-are-ta.
          money-NOM Mary-to   pay-PASS-PAST

'Money was paid to Mary.'

Next, recipient/goal-subject counterparts of verbs of commercial transaction can mark their source with *kara* 'from' only.

(37)   John-wa   Mary-kara/*-ni   hon-o   kat-ta.
       John-TOP   Mary-from/-DAT book-ACC buy-PAST
       'John bought a book from Mary.'

Compound verb formation is quite productive.

(38) a.   *uri-dasu* (sell-let.out), *uri-komu* (sell-let.in), *uri-tukeru* (sell-attach),
          **uri-ireru* (sell-let.into) …
     b.   *kasi-dasu* (lend-let.out), *hasi-komu* (lend-let.in), *kasi-tukeru* (lend-attach),
          **kasi-ireru* (throw-let.into)   (cf. *kari-ireru* (borrow-let.into)) ….

This class of verbs is subject to the animacy constraint.
In nominal compounds, the dative phrase cannot be replaced with *made* 'up to', (and marginally with *e* 'to').

(39)   John-wa   Mary-ni/(?)?-e/*-made   hon-o   ut-ta.
       John-TOP   Mary-DAT/-to/-up.to   book-ACC sell-PAST
       'John sold a book to Mary.'
(40)   John-ga   {Mary-ni/*uti-ni}   hon-o   ut-ta.
       John-NOM   Mary-DAT/home-DAT book-ACC sold-PAST
       'John gave {Mary/his home} a book.'

In reciprocal nominals, the original dative phrase is marked with *to* 'with', but not *e* 'to' or *kara*.

(41) a.   Mary-to-no/*-kara-no/*-e-no   (hon-no)   uri-kai
          Mary-with-GEN/-from-GEN/-to-GEN book-GEN sell-buy
          'selling and buying of books with Mary'
     b.   Mary-to-no/*-kara-no/?*-e-no   (hon-no)   kasi-kari
          Mary-with-GEN/from-GEN/to-GEN book-GEN lending-renting
          'lending and renting of books with Mary'

The properties (39) through (41) show that the dative argument of a verb of commercial transaction is subject to the animacy constraint.

(42)   C-of-P verbs   C-T verbs   C-of-L verbs
       Double object   < -------------- >
       Postpositional obj   < ----------------------------- >
       Animacy   < ----------------------------- >

Conclusion

Japanese ditransitive verbs are partitioned into the two major classes of change-of-possession and change-of-location verbs. The former has the syntactic frame of the double object construction, but the latter, the postpositional object construction. The dative arguments of change-of-possession verbs, but not of change-of-location verbs, are constrained by the animacy constraint. But this constraint extends to the goal arguments of verbs of commercial transaction, which is syntactically classed as postpositonal object construction.

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