

The Interplay of Case and Aspect

— A Contrastive Sketch —

Teruhiro Ishiguro

I

Most languages in the world, in their deep or underlying structure, have Noun Phrases that function as grammatical or relational elements¹ such as Agent, Object, Patient,... existing potentially as K (*Kasus*)² + N . However, in the surface structure, they appear to change their order obligatorily or optionally. For instance, English and Japanese have the following different configurations as shown in (1), (2), (3) and (4):

(1) John gave Tom a book.

(2) John gave a book to Tom.

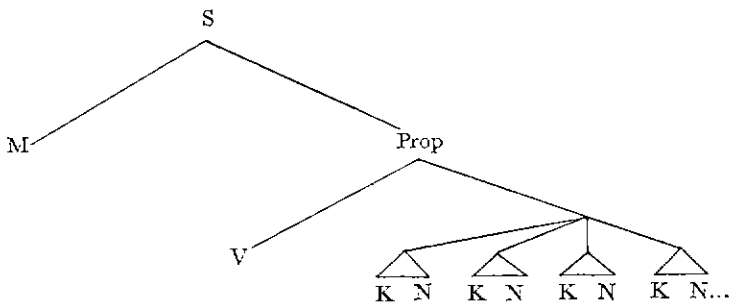
The two sentences given above are semantically identical. But in (1), each NP (John, Tom, book) does not accompany a preposition that indicates its Case category because the word order of English determines the function of each NP. While in (2) the NP "Tom" is accompanied by the preceding preposition "to" which indicates the direction³ to which the action of the predicate verb "give" was forwarded. In Japanese, on the other hand, the semantically identical sentences with (1), and (2) have the following variegated structures:

- (3) Taroo ga Ziroo ni hon o ageta. "Taroo gave Ziroo a book."
 (4) Taroo ga hon o Ziroo ni ageta.
 (5) Ziroo ni Taroo ga hon o ageta.
 (6) Ziroo ni hon o taroo ga ageta.
 (7) Hon o Taroo ga Ziroo ni ageta.
 (8) Hon o Ziroo ni Taroo ga ageta.

All these Japanese examples show that all the NPs are followed by postpositions called *kaku-zyosi* (case particles). And this combination of *NP+postposition* allows the same sentence to have various manners of configuration. This fact suggests in such a language as English, where the rigid word order is required, deep case particles that lie concealed in the deep structure of a sentence only show up partially in the surface structure.

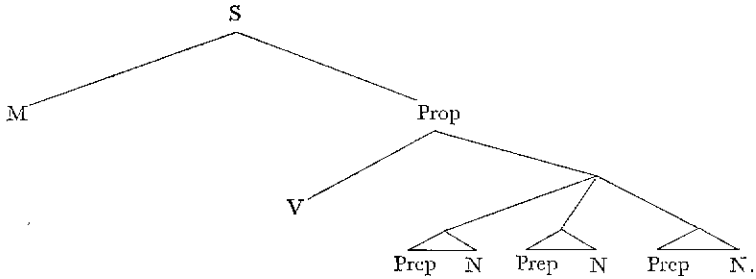
As was outlined in my last paper⁴, the abstract Case category that resides in deep structure affects the function of the relational NP according to the meaning signaled by *K* (*Kasus*). Thence the basic phrase structure of a sentence would be diagrammed as in the next Diagram 1.

- (9) Diagram 1



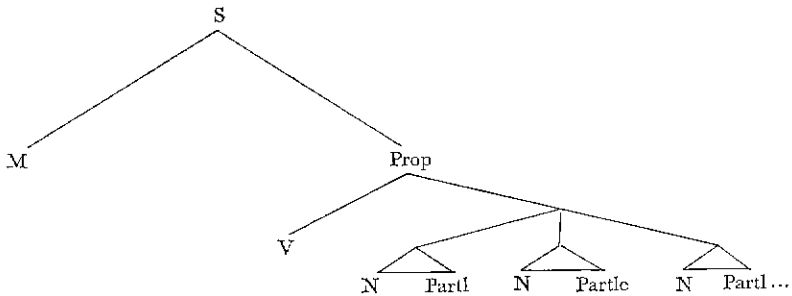
The $K+N$ nucleus appears in English as *Preposition+N* as diagrammed in the following:

(10) Diagram 2



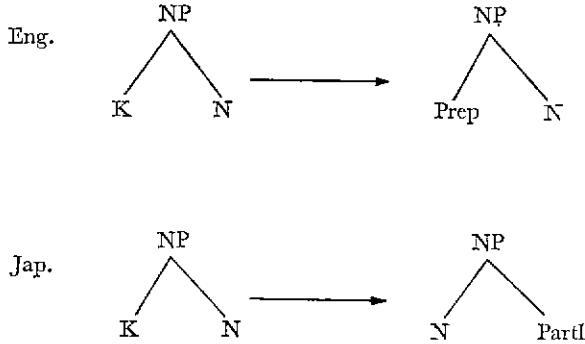
While in Japanese the Case marker or the Case particle follows the noun as shown in the next diagram:

(11) Diagram 3



Probably the following diagramming would better explain the deep Case structure of the two languages:

(12) Diagram 4



In the following sections, I would like to compare the Case functions of English and Japanese by examining the so-called Case particles in both languages. In Japanese all the relational NPs appear in a combination of $N+K$ in the surface structure, whereas in English $K+N$ combination exists only in abstraction. Namely as clearly shown in the examples on Page 1, English Subject and Object NPs appear without K , i.e. prepositions, in the surface structures. By applying some techniques of contrastive study,⁵ I will examine some English and Japanese equivalent verbs⁶ to clarify some syntactic differences they display in comparison.

II

Contrastive analysis is a means to help to set up a universal theory in linguistic theory. For the purpose of making a contrastive study of two languages, it is necessary to prepare a common ground to use as its basis of comparison. In the next section I would like to make a brief analysis of Case structure in English and Japanese according to

Fillmore's Case Grammar model.⁷

I am going to discuss some interesting phenomena concerning the present issue. First of all, in the underlying structures of such depth as proposed by Fillmore, verbs having the similar meaning both in English and Japanese tend to attract the NPs in the similar Case frame. For instance, when we compare the English verb "open" with the Japanese verb "akeru," we notice the fact that both of these two verbs can commonly select three different Cases, namely (O), (I) and (A). However the situations where these Cases appear, in other words, which Case appears independently or which Case appears with other Case(s) in their surface structures are in many cases different. I will show their surface contrasts next.

(13) { Eng. John opened the door with the key.
 { Jap. John ga tobira o kagi de aketa.

(14) { Eng. John opened the door.
 { Jap. John ga tobira o aketa.

(15) { Eng. The door opened.
 { Jap. Tobira ga aita.

(16) { Eng. *The door opened with the key.
 { Jap. Tobira ga kagi de aita.

(17) { Eng. The key opened the door.
 { Jap. *Kagi ga tobira o aketa.

An interesting fact is that in (16) and (17) the acceptability of the two sentences in each pair is reverse. As I proposed in my last paper,⁸

I do not consider the transitivity and intransitivity of the verbs "open" and "akeru/aku" relevant in this analysis, since in my description, the idiosyncrasy of these two verbs resides in the fact that they share the common domain as an absolutive verb "OPEN" and "AK-".

Secondly, in the following pairs all the Japanese sentences are acceptable, while their English counterparts are not.

- (18) { Jap. John ga aketa.
Eng. *John opened.
- (19) { Jap. Kagi de aketa. (Subject not identified.)
Eng. *Opened with the key.
- (20) { Jap. Tobira o aketa. (Subject not identified.)
Eng. *Opened the door.

Here are revealed other interesting facts that in Japanese a sentence without Subject or Object can be acceptable, while in English, a sentence with an animate (Human) Subject requires an Object in a transitive construction, and that a transitive construction without a Subject is unacceptable. Can this phenomenon be observed in other instances as well? Let me examine another example.

The English verb "erect" and the Japanese verb "tateru" are equivalent⁹ as they have similar semantic content as well as in their functions of Case category selection. Namely they both take (O), (I), (B) and (A). Notice the following pairs where transitive verbs "erect" and "tateru" function exactly in the same way.

- (21) { Eng. John erected the house for the son with a loan.
Jap. John wa musuko ni ie o syakkin de tateta.

- (22) { Eng. The house was reected for the son by John with a loan.
 { Jap. Ie ga musuko ni John ni syakkin de taterareta.

In this passive construction where two $N+n_i$ phrases occur next to each other, the first phrase is always in Benefactive Case and the second phrase is in Agentive Case.

- (23) { Eng. The house was erected by John.
 { Jap. Ie wa John ni taterareta.

This Japanese construction is ambiguous. The reason is that the phrase $John+n_i$ can have both Agentive and Benefactive implications. As the translation of the English sentence, $John+n_i$ must be an Agentive phrase.

- (24) { Eng. The house was erected with a loan.
 { Jap. Ie wa syakkin de taterareta.

The two sentences in this pair are fine, because Instrumental phrases “with a loan” and “syakkin de” work in an identical way.

- (25) { Eng. *The son was erected the house by John with a loan.
 { Jap. Musuko wa ie o John ni syakkin de tatetemoratta.
 (*rareta.)

This English sentence is bad, but the Japanese counterpart with “tatetemoratta” is good. This is maybe because some modal aspect that functions together with the Benefactive Case (i.e. John ni) affects the meaning of the structure. Yet it is noticeable that the sentence which resulted from the simple passivization of the sentences in (21) turned

out to be unacceptable.

Next, I would like to examine why the Japanese verb "tat-" can be used as intransitive, whereas the English verb "erect" or "build" cannot be used as intransitive. Let me examine the following pairs:

- (26) { Jap. Ie ga tatta.
Eng. *The house erected.
- (27) { Jap. Ie ga syakkin de tatta.
Eng. *The house erected with a loan.
- (28) { Jap. Ie ga Taroo ni tatta.
Eng. *The house erected for Taroo
- (29) { Jap. ?Ie ga Ziroom ni tatta.
Eng. *The house erected by Ziroom.

From the examples given above, it is clearly manifested that the actual manner of the appearance of Case frame in the two languages differ so much in the surface structures. It is also evident that from these two examples of the verb from English and Japanese, the Japanese verbs function in a different way from their counterparts in English in many ways. In order to put the two in a universal frame I should change the way of description of these verbs in the following way:

- (30) { Transitive: open } OPEN
 { Intransitive: open }

- (31) { Transitive: akeru } AK-
 { Intransitive: aku }

Hence their formulation would something like

$$(32) \quad \text{OPEN} [-\text{O}, (\text{I}) (\text{A})]$$

$$(33) \quad \text{AK-} [-\text{O}, ((\text{I}), \text{A})]$$

In the case of “erect” and “tateru”, the formulation would be something like

$$(34) \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Transitive: erect—ERECT} \\ \text{Intransitive: } \emptyset \end{array} \right.$$

$$(35) \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Trnasitive: tateru} \\ \text{Intransitive: tatu} \end{array} \right\} \text{TAT-}$$

Their formulation would be:

$$(36) \quad \text{ERECT} [-\text{O}, ((\text{B}) (\text{A}))]$$

$$(37) \quad \text{TAT-} [-\text{O}, (\text{I}, \text{A})]$$

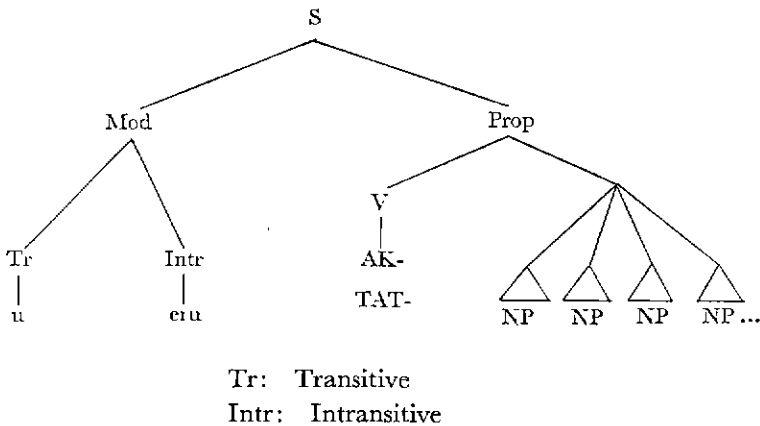
The simplification I proposed brings forth some merits in description. Among them is the fact that “AK-” and “TAT-” from “akeru/aku” and “tateru/tatu” pairs have made the notion signaled from those morphemes more general; namely the action of “opening” and “erecting” more abstract. By doing this, the description can be fitted into a more universal frame. More specifically and practically, this has made the formation of the intransitive construction with only (O) as Subject much easier.

III

A merit of describing these sets of Japanese verbs *akeru/aku* as AK-

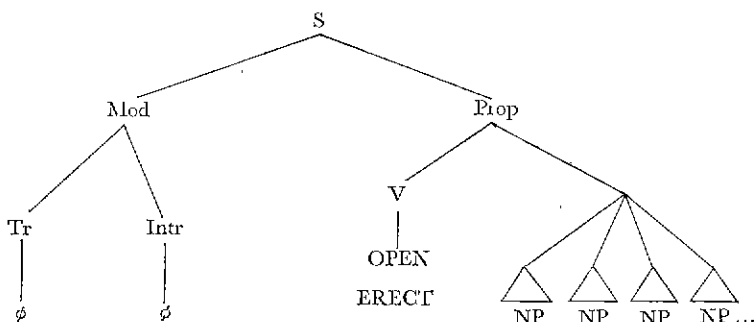
and tateru/tatu as TAT-, namely both as stems, is to attain simplification and abstraction in the function of these verbs. For deriving the transitive form “akeru” the attachment of the morpheme “-eru” is needed, and for deriving the intransitive form “aku” the attachment of the morpheme “-u” is required. And the same procedure can also be applied in the case of “TAT-”. The verbal features “transitive” and “intransitive” must be assigned in the Modal part and these morphemes “-u” and “-eru” function just as other modal features such as Tense, Number, Aspect, Voice, and so on, when they are attached to the verb stem.¹⁰ Thus this is diagrammed as follows:

(38) Diagram 5



In English also the corresponding features can be described as in the following:

(39) Diagram 6



In this diagram the verbs “OPEN” and “ERECT” are treated as general verbs¹¹ to which the modal features “Transitive” or “Intransitive” is attached before they appear in the surface structure. By this, the process is better explained to such a degree that both English and Japanese have the same description concerning their verbal features. This is to suggest a way of the inclusion of transitivity and intransitivity into syntactic description.

IV

Glancing at what is illustrated in the above examples, I may suggest that in such a typical Case language as Japanese it is requisite to observe the relationship between the Verb which belongs to the Proposition together with Case frames, and the modal features which, on the other hand, belongs to Modality from a different angle.¹² That is because in the Case language a Verb occurs always under strong influence of modal features. And these modal features which appear as suffixal morphemes in the surface structures also affect the choice

of the Case of each NP in the Proposition part. Namely, the co-occurrence of the Case frame and verbal morphemes has much to do with this fact in Japanese. Thence the Verb must be given in stems in the deep structure, and the sentential meaning in the surface structure is determined by assigning both modal morphemes under modal features and Case frame of each NP.¹⁹ When the configuration on the surface is decided, this operation is more complicated in the case of Japanese than in English. This is because in English the potential power of a Verb which is given in the full form is much stronger than in Japanese. In other words it is more independent. It dominates the whole sentence by selecting modal features and assigning Case frames to succeeding NPs. While in Japanese the potential power of the Verb is weak because it is given in an abstract form of stems as AK- and TAT- in the deep structure, the English counterpart is given in full forms such as OPEN and ERECT designating a more concrete and more meaningful faculty. This is one of the reasons that English verbs are more independent.

V

Contrary to my intention to discuss overall universality in English and Japanese, I must admit the above statement tends to be rather a relative point of view, as I unconsciously pointed out some defects of my description in it.

It was not my true intention to point out the defects this analysis might involve. However, since there has not been achieved any perfect description even of a single structure of a single language, I hope what I have offered in this paper would be generously considered as

an attempt at progress in linguistic description.

It is a principle in linguistic description that a linguist must avoid paying too much attention toward a linguistic phenomenon peculiar to a language when he is making an attempt to describe a universal fact about the language. However, a linguist should also not miss or ignore any peculiar fact in a language even if it is contradictory from one point of view. From this standpoint, what I have done may be permitted from a broader angle.

In the next paper I would like to describe the interrelation between Case and modal features, which is left untouched in this paper. I have an ambition that my description will contribute to giving insights into the mechanism of morphemic selection of modal features and in generating some complicated honorific structures in Japanese.

Notes

- 1 This NP is identical with what is called *Actant* by Lucien Tesnière introduced in his *Éléments de Syntaxe Structurale* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1982) p. 102, pp. 105–115. Charles J. Fillmore also discusses this fully in “The Case for Case,” in Emmon Bach and Robert Harms (eds.), *Universals in Linguistic Theory* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968) pp. 1–90. My paper “The Notion of Subject Selection in Case Grammar” *Doshisha Studies in English*, Nos. 44–45, (The Literary Association, Doshisha University, March, 1988) pp. 260–277.
- 2 Teruhiro Ishiguro, *Ibid.* p. 266.
- 3 This directional NP is interpreted as a kind of locative phrase by John M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Case* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982). William Diver also introduced a similar idea in his lecture at Tezukayama Gakuin University, on May 20, 1984.
- 4 Teruhiro Ishiguro “Case in Deep Structure” *Doshisha Studies in English*, Nos. 47, 48 (The Literary Association, Doshisha University, March, 1989.)
- 5 Concerning the methodology of contrastive study, the following work offers a good guide: Tomasz P. Krzeszowski, *Contrastive generative grammar: theoretical foun-*

- dations* (Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1979).
- 6 As to the notion of equivalence, *cf.* my paper, "Niti-ei Taisyookenkyuu to Kigooronteki Moderu" (Japanese-English Contrastive Study and Semiotic Model), *Hyogen Kenkyuu*, No. 35 (Hyoogen Gakkai, March, 1979)
 - 7 Charles J. Fillmore, *op. cit.*
 - 8 Teruhiro Ishiguro, "Case in Deep Structure" *op. cit.*
 - 9 Teruhiro Ishiguro, "Niti-ei Taisyookenkyuu to Kigooron-teki Moderu" *op. cit.*
 - 10 This dynamic insight was introduced in Casilda E. Luzares in her Ph. D dissertation *The Morphology of Selected Cebuano: A Case Grammar* (Pacific Linguistics, Australian National University, 1979.) I was so much inspired by Luzares' insights that I richly drew upon her idea in the development of this paper.
 - 11 By "general verb," I mean a verb that does not indicate either transitivity nor intransitivity for the convenience of my description.
 - 12 In Fillmore's model, Modality includes only such popular features as Voice, Mood, Aspect, Tense, Number, *etc.* These features do not function equally for the predicative verb. Especially the feature Aspect involves many different sub-features. In Luzares' study the semantic function of this set of sub-features of Aspect is neatly analyzed.
 - 13 This conception is the highlight of Luzares' study. This idea can be applied to the analysis of Japanese syntax and also to the analysis of other verb-central languages such as Tagalog and Indonesian. (from a personal conversation between Professor Masakai Tatsuki and the author).