Pragmatic Analysis of Japanese *Koto* and *No*: With and without a Complement Clause*

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1 Introduction[1]

The abstract noun *koto* 'situation, intangible thing' and the indefinite pronoun *no* occur in the head position of noun phrases with sentential complements, as shown in (1).

(1) [Taroo-ga amerika-e itta] *koto/no*-o sitta.
Taroo-NOM USA-to went thing/one-ACC came to know
'I came to know that Taroo went to the USA.'

This paper argues that, with or without a complement clause, the uses of *no* and *koto* are governed by the same pragmatic principle. *No* is used when the speaker believes and/or wishes to convey the impression that what is described by the noun phrase headed by *no* is already salient in the addressee's mind. In contrast, *koto* is used when the speaker does not wish to convey this impression. Furthermore, this paper shows that speakers routinely exploit this distinction between *koto* and *no* in order to achieve their goals for the linguistic interaction. The speaker's beliefs and intentions are subjected to various interpretations arising from the inferences made through the uses of *koto* and *no* as well as Japanese social conventions.

2 Motivation of the Study

As a clear case of a noun, *koto* refers to an intangible thing, such as an event or state. As a clear case of an indefinite pronoun, *no* is claimed to refer to a concrete entity (Imanishi 1989, McGloin 1985), but *no* can also refer to an event or state. When *no* refers to an event or state, a question arises as to

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[1]This paper focuses on cases in which either *koto* or *no* is possible in different speech contexts, and excludes the uses of *no* that do not alternate with *koto* in any situation.

how distributions of *koto* and *no* are differentiated and what they contribute to the utterances. Concerning the characteristics common to both *koto* and *no* with a complement clause, it has typically been claimed that the complement clause of *koto* or *no* represents a state of affairs that the speaker presupposes or is convinced to be true (Kuno 1973, Suzuki 1996). These analyses in terms of the speaker's belief in the truth of the denoted proposition are not adequate. First, this is because both *koto* and *no* can occur with a nonfactive predicate, like *sinziru* 'believe', as pointed out by Suzuki (1996). This is shown in (2) below.

(2) [Mary-ga kekkon-suru] ***koto/no***-o sinzite-ita no ka?!
Mary-NOM get married thing/one-ACC have been believing one Q
'You've been believing that Mary is getting married?!'

Furthermore, example (2) can be uttered by the speaker who is convinced that the state of affairs denoted by the complement clause does not obtain. For example, the speaker who does not believe that Mary is getting married can ask the question to the addressee who does believe it. This fact shows that whether or not the speaker presupposes or is convinced that what is described by the complement clause is true does not predict whether or not *koto* or *no* is used.

Second, regarding the difference between *koto* and *no*, it has been claimed that *no* denotes a concrete state of affairs or a spatio-temporal entity perceived immediately through sensory organs (Kuno 1973, Terakura 1980, Horie 1993), as in (3). In contrast, it has been claimed that *koto* denotes an abstract concept or state of affairs which is a non-spatio-temporal entity (Kuno 1973, Terakura 1980, Horie 1993), as in (4).

(3) [Taroo-ga oyoideiru] ***no***-o mita.
Taroo-NOM is swimming one-ACC saw
'I saw Taroo swimming.'

(4) [Kuzira-ga honyuu-doobutu dearu] ***koto***-o siranakatta.
whale-NOM mammal is thing-ACC did not know
'I did not know the fact that a whale is a mammal.' (Kuno's 29b)

There are, however, cases in which *no* is used for non-spatio-temporal entities. For example, a predicate that requires a concept-type argument can take a *no*-clause complement, such as *gomen da* 'not want'. One such situation is when the speaker repeats what the addressee has said. The content of the complement clause is not a situation the speaker is observing in the

speech context or has observed in the past. For example, the speaker uses *no* to express the idea proposed by the addressee (i.e. hiring a maid for their elderly father), as in (5).

(5) [Uti-ni tanin-ga hairikomu] ***no***-wa gomen da tte.
House-in outsider-NOM enter one-TOP not want COP QT.
'He said that he does not want others to come into the house.'
(Murasaki 1992:1:43)

There is also a case in which *koto* is used to describe something concrete, such as the speaker's physical condition. According to the above-mentioned analyses, *no* is predicted to occur in this case, but that is not the case. For example, even though the complement clause denotes the speaker's physical condition, such as having a headache, *koto* occurs as in (6).

(6) Sooda yo, [atama-ga itai] ***koto***-nante wasuretyae.
That's right, SFP head-NOM hurts thing-TOP let's forget
'That's right, let's forget about my having a headache.'
(The speaker is talking to herself.) (Sakura 1988:3:115 modified)

The above-mentioned analyses also predict that *no* occurs with a complement of an event-type predicate. However, this is not always the case. For example, a *koto*-clause can occur with *hazimatta*, 'began', which is classified as an event-type predicate in Vendler (1967). This is shown in (7).

(7) Kurasu de [mainichi san mairu hasiru] ***koto***-ga hazimatta.
Class-in every day three mile run thing-NOM began
'Running three miles every day in class has started.'

If *no* is used only to refer to a spatio-temporal entity and *koto* is used for a non-spatio-temporal entity, these uses of *koto* and *no* in (5)-(7) are not explained.

3 *Koto* and *No* are Nouns when they have a Complement Clause

In past analyses, such as Terakura (1980), *koto* and *no* are called complementizers when they have a sentential complement. This section demonstrates that *koto* and *no* with a complement clause are nouns by showing that they have the following syntactic properties of nouns: 1) a noun can be fol-

lowed by a case marker; 2) Nominative/Genitive case markers alternate in the clause headed by a noun; and 3) in a clause headed by a noun, if the highest embedded predicate is the copula, it must be in its attributive form.

First, Japanese case markers follow only a projection of a noun. When a case marker follows a clear example of a noun, such as *uwasa*, the sentence is acceptable. However, when a case marker follows a non-noun such as a quotative marker, the sentence is unacceptable. This is shown in (8).

(8) [Taroo-ga amerika-e iku] **uwasa/*to-o** kiita.
Taroo-NOM USA-to go rumor/QT-ACC heard
'I heard (a rumor) that Taroo will go to the USA.'

Example (9) shows that the accusative marker *o* follows *koto* and *no*. This fact shows that *koto* and *no* are nouns.

(9) [Taroo-no okusan-ga kiree na] ***koto/no***-o kiita.
Taroo-GEN wife-NOM pretty COP thing/one-ACC heard
'I heard that Taroo's wife is pretty.'

Second, the Nominative case *ga* alternates with the Genitive case *no* only in clauses headed by a noun. For example, while *ga* and *no* alternate in the sister clause of the noun *uwasa* 'rumor', as in (10), they do not alternate in the sister clause of a quotative marker *to* (a non-noun), as in (11).

(10) [Taroo-ga/*no* amerika-e itta] **uwasa**-o kiita.
Taroo-NOM/GEN America-to went rumor-ACC heard
'I heard a rumor that Taroo went to the USA.'
(11) [Taroo-ga/**no* amerika-e itta] **to** kiita.
Taroo-NOM/GEN America-to went QT heard
'I heard that Taroo went to the USA.'

The Nominative/Genitive cases also alternate in the sister clause of *koto* and *no*, as in (12). This fact shows that *koto* and *no* are nouns.

(12) [Hanako-*ga/no* kekkon-suru] ***koto/no***-o sitta.
Hanako-NOM/GEN get married thing/one-ACC came to know
'I came to know that Hanako is getting married.'

Third, in an adnominal clause, and when its highest predicate is a copula, the copula must be in its attributive form, *na*, not in the conclusive form

da, as in (13). In contrast, in the sister clause of a non-noun, such as the quotative marker *to*, the conclusive form *da*, not the attributive form *na*, must occur as in (14).

(13) [Taroo-no okusan-ga kiree na/*da] **uwasa**-o kiita.
Taroo-GEN wife-NOM pretty COP rumor-ACC heard
'I heard a rumor that Taroo's wife is pretty.'

(14) Watasi-wa [zyogingu-ga taisetu *na/da] **to** sitteiru.
I-TOP jogging-NOM important COP QT know
'I know that jogging is important.'

In the sister clause of *koto* and *no*, the attributive *na* must occur as in (15).

(15) [Zyogingu-ga taisetu na/*da] ***koto/no***-o sitteiru.
jogging-NOM important COP thing/one-ACC know
'I know that jogging is important.'

This fact shows that *koto* and *no* are nouns.

In summary, the uses of *koto* and *no* with a complement clause are concluded to be nouns based on their syntactic properties: 1) a case particle follows them; 2) Nominative *ga*/Genitive *no* alternate in the sister clause; and 3) an attributive form of the copula must occur when the copula is the highest predicate in the clause.

4 Unified Pragmatic Approach

As demonstrated in the previous section, since *koto* and *no* are nouns when they occur with a complement clause, this study proposes that the distribution and interpretation of *koto* and *no* with or without a complement clause follow from the general pragmatics of a lexical noun and pronoun in a unified fashion. *No* is used when the speaker believes that the open or closed proposition that is denoted by the complement clause is already salient and relevant in the addressee's mind at the time of the utterance. *Koto* is used when the speaker does not believe this. What is crucial in this approach is not whether that which is referred to is concrete/spatio-temporal or abstract/non-spatio-temporal, but whether or not the speaker believes that the addressee has a salient mental representation of what is described by the noun phrase.

Chafe (1994) defines the mental representation of a noun phrase as *accessible* when it has been active (i.e. in the addressee's focus) or semiactive

(i.e. not focused but not completely out of focus) in the addressee's mind. In other words, that which is described by the noun phrase is salient and relevant in the addressee's mind at the time of the speech act.

The rest of this paper presents evidence supporting the hypothesis by demonstrating situations in which *koto* is acceptable and *no* is unacceptable, and vice versa. An explanation of why the hypothesis predicts the acceptability of *koto* and *no* in each situation is also provided.

4.1 Accessibility

If *no* is used when the speaker believes that the proposition or open proposition denoted by the noun phrase headed by *no* is already salient to the addressee, it is predicted that, with or without a clausal complement, *no* is used when the speaker refers to what has just been mentioned or is salient in the speech context. This is because in such a situation, the speaker can believe that what is denoted by the noun phrase is salient to the addressee. *Koto* is used when the speaker does not believe the addressee has such a mental representation.

For example, a speaker is sympathizing with the addressee who has just stated that her mother abandoned her as a child. Since the speaker is referring to an event that has just been mentioned, she uses *no* to refer to that event, as in (16). *No* is used here without a clausal complement.

(16) Sooyuu ***no*** kanasii ne.
Like that one is sad SFP
'That is sad, isn't it?' (Murasaki 1992:2:35)

No with a complement clause is used in the same situation. For example, when the addressee proposes an idea of hiring a maid for their elderly father, the speaker refers to the idea using *no* as in (17).

(17) [Uti-ni tanin-ga hairikomu] ***no***-wa gomen da tte.
House-in outsider-NOM enter one-TOP not want COP QT.
'He said that he does not want others to come into the house.'
(Murasaki 1992:1:43)

Since the denotation of the complement clause is not a situation the speaker is observing in the speech context or has observed in the past, the past analyses predict that *koto* is used. However as shown, that does not hold. If *koto* is used in examples (16) or (17) above, the speaker sounds as if she is putting distance between her and the addressee. This is because the speaker is not

acknowledging what the addressee has just said is known to the addressee, even though they are in an intimate enough relationship to acknowledge the addressee's belief (e.g. mother/daughter, husband/wife). The distance effect will be discussed in Section 4.3. Alternatively, the speaker sounds like she is implicating that discussion on this topic is closed. Using *koto* implicates that what is referred to by the noun phrase is not accessible to the addressee. This appears to be in conflict with the maxim of Quality I (i.e. do not say what you believe to be false (Grice 1975)).[2] The addressee, who is assuming that the speaker is behaving rationally, infers that the speaker is closing the discussion by making it look as if the denotation of the noun phrase is not accessible to the addressee.

In contrast, *koto* is used when the speaker refers to what has not been previously mentioned. In such a case, the speaker does not believe the addressee already has a mental representation of what is described by the noun phrase headed by *koto*. For example, a child returns home from school and tells her mother that she did a good thing that day. She does so using *koto* without a clausal complement, as shown in (18).

(18) Okaasan, kyoo ii *koto*-o sita yo.
Mother today good thing-NOM did SFP.
'Mom, I did something good today'.

Likewise, in the case of *koto* with a complement clause, the speaker asks her friend when she meets him if he is aware of a situation, as in (19).

(19) [Mary-ga kyonen sotugyoo-sita] *koto* kiita?
Mary-NOM last year graduated thing heard
'Did you know that Mary graduated last year?'

By using *koto*, the speaker implicates that she does not expect this information to be salient to the addressee. If *no* is used, the speaker sounds like the speaker and addressee are already in the middle of a discussion.

4.2 Inner Speech

When one talks to oneself, one acts as if one is of two minds and is talking to the counterpart of oneself. The hypothesis predicts that *koto* can be used when the speaker comes up with a new idea or when the speaker has forgot-

[2]See Green's (1996) reformulation of the conversational maxims.

ten about what is referred to by the noun phrase and remembers it again. This is because, in such a case, the new idea or what has been remembered has not been salient in the addressee's mind, i.e. the second mind. If so, the speaker cannot act as if that which is referred to by the noun phrase is already salient in the other mind.

As for the case without a complement clause, for example, the speaker, a frightened boy traveling for the first time on an express train without his parents, starts wondering and asking himself whether he will be forced off of the train for any reason. He uses *koto*, as in (20).

(20) Totyuu-de orosu yoo na ***koto*** wa nai daroo na.
On the way get a person off like COP thing-TOP not exist SFP
'There would be no such situation where I am made to get off on the way, is there?'

If *no* is used, the boy sounds like he has already thought about other scary cases that could happen to him. This is because the use of *no* implicates that the issue is already salient and relevant in the addressee's mind, i.e. the speaker himself.

As for *koto* with a complement clause, the next example illustrates a child that has a headache and is not able to sleep well. In trying to get to sleep, she suddenly concocts the idea of forgetting about her physical condition. She refers to the physical condition using *koto* as in (21).

(21) Sooda yo, [atama-ga itai] ***koto***-nante wasuretyae.
That's right, SFP have a headache thing-TOP let's forget
'That's right, let's forget about having a headache.'
(Sakura 1988:3:115 modified)

This is because even though the speaker's physical condition has been in her mind, it comes back into her consciousness as part of a new realization. This use of *koto* is not explained by the previous accounts (facts/concept (Terakura 1980) or proposition as an opposite concept of an event (Horie 1993)), because the speaker's physical condition (i.e. her head hurts) is something the speaker is aware of through physical senses, not by logical reasoning. If *no* is used, the speaker does not sound as excited as when *koto* is used. This is because the use of *no* implicates that the other mind is already familiar with the physical condition.

In contrast, it is predicted that when there is nothing coming into, or re-entering the speaker's consciousness, but conversation with the counterpart of the speaker has been well underway about what is referred to by the noun

phrase, *no* can be used. This is because in such a situation, what is referred to by the noun phrase does not suddenly appear or return into the addressee's consciousness, but is already salient.

As an example of a case without a clausal complement, after the speaker states to herself the solution to a homework problem, she then disputes it, using *no* as in (22).

(22) Sonna *no* matigatteiru yo.
Such one wrong SFP
'That's wrong.'

This is because the solution has already been stated and the speaker can act as if the solution is salient and focused in her counterpart mind.

As for the case with a clausal complement, for example, when the speaker is not debating nor questioning, but is confident about an idea, *no* can be used. This is because no new idea occurs to the speaker, thus the speaker can act as if the other mind is already familiar with what she has in mind. For example, a daughter talks to herself after her mother sends her to clean her room in preparation for a visit by her homeroom teacher. The girl uses *no* to express her idea of leaving her room as it is, as in (23).

(23) [Sonomama-ni-site-oku] *no*-ga syooziki tte mon yo.
As it is-leave one-NOM honesty QT thing SFP
'Leaving my room as it is is honesty.' (Sakura 1988:2:6)

If *koto* is used, the speaker sounds like she has just come up with the idea, or the speaker is not sure about the idea, since the use of *koto* implicates that the speaker acts as if the other mind is not yet aware of the idea of leaving her room messed up. Again, this use of *no* is not explained by the previous accounts (spatio-temporal entity (Terakura 1980, Horie 1993)) because the idea of leaving her room as it is is not something the speaker becomes aware of through physical senses, but by logical reasoning.

4.3 Social Factors

If the use of *koto* and *no* implicates that either the speaker holds a belief about the addressee or not, it is predicted that the use of *koto* or *no* is also determined by the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. This is because whether or not implicating that the speaker holds beliefs about the addressee is appropriate is decided by the social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. When the speaker can display his belief

about the addressee, *no* can be used if what is denoted by the noun phrase is salient in the addressee's mind. In contrast, when it is not appropriate for the speaker to display his belief about the addressee, even when the use condition of *no* is satisfied, *koto* is used.

One situation in which the speaker can display her belief about the addressee is when the speaker talks to a socially equal or lower ranking addressee in an informal conversation. For example, when the speaker and the addressee walk into a restaurant and are seated, the addressee realizes they have no money and proposes that they leave the restaurant. The speaker can use *no* as in (24). Likewise, the speaker can refer to the situation using *no* with a complement clause, as in (25).

(24) Sonna ***no*** muri da yo.
Such one impossible COP SFP
'It is impossible.'

(25) [Okane-mo harawa-nai-de deru] ***no***-wa muri da yo.
Money-even pay-NEG-GER leave one-TOP impossible COP SFP
'Leaving the store without paying money is impossible.'

If *koto* is used in (24) or (25), the speaker sounds cold because he is not acknowledging the fact that the addressee is aware of the referred situation, which the addressee believes the speaker knows. The speaker also sounds emphatic. This is because in a situation where the speaker knows that the idea is already salient to the addressee, using *koto* implicates the opposite. The addressee infers from this that he ought to be aware of the idea, even if he already is. Thus, the emphasis effect arises.

In contrast, if *koto* is used when the speaker does not believe that what is referred to by the noun phrase is already salient to the addressee, it is predicted that *koto* is used to the addressee who is socially much higher ranking when they are engaged in a non-personal conversation. This is because in such a situation, implicating that the speaker holds an assumption about the addressee's thought (i.e. the speaker knows what is referred to by the noun phrase is salient to the addressee) is not polite in Japanese social convention. In the same situation as (24) and (25), but addressing the company CEO or a higher-ranking military officer, *koto* is used as in (26) and (27).

(26) Sonna ***koto*** muri desu.
Such thing impossible COP
'It is impossible.'

(27) [Okane-mo harawa-nai-de deru] ***koto***-wa muri desu.
Money-even pay-NEG-GER leave thing-TOP impossible COP
'Leaving the store without paying money is impossible.'

If *no* is used in the above situation, the speaker sounds presumptuous because the use of *no* implicates that the speaker holds a belief about the addressee.

4.4 Discourse Organization

The speaker exploits the distinction between *koto* and *no* to organize a discourse structure. This is typical when a narrator inserts comments in her work. Since the use of *koto* reflects the speaker's belief that what it refers to is not already salient in the addressee's mind, it is predicted that when the narrator of a story makes a comment from a real life point of view, *koto* can be used. This is because a comment is not a part of the story that the addressee (i.e. the reader) knows from the story. By using *koto*, the narrator can implicate that she is not referring to what the addressee knows in the story, but about such a general situation in the real world. For example, when the speaker comments that what has just happened in the story often occurs in real life, *koto* is used without a complement clause, as in (28).

(28) Kooyuu ***koto***-wa yoku aru.
Like this thing-TOP often exist.
'This often happens.' (Sakura 1987:1:54)

Similarly, with a complement clause, the speaker uses *koto* to refer to a real life situation. For example, in a cartoon frame, children are carrying lots of items on the last day of the school term and see some excitement ahead of them. Forgetting about their burden and the heat, they run towards the excitement. The writer makes a comment to the side of the frame that this is usually the case in real life, using *koto*, as in (29).

(29) Nanika omosirosoo na ***koto***-ga mitukaru to,
something interesting COP thing-NOM is found when,

[omoi] ***koto*** mo [atui] ***koto*** mo wasurete-simau.
Heavy thing also hot thing also forget-completely

'When running into something fascinating, we completely forget that things we carry are heavy or that it is hot.' (Sakura 1987:1:7)

If *no* is used, in either (28) or (29), the speaker sounds like she is describing the very scene by pulling the reader into the scene. This is because the use of *no* limits the narrator's comment to the situation in the story that the speaker believes is salient to the addressee. Under the spatio-temporal analysis, *no* is predicted to be used in example (29). Being heavy or being hot is something one perceives physically and not by logical reasoning. However, as shown in (29), *koto* is used. This is not explained by the spatio-temporal analysis.

In contrast, when the speaker refers to a specific situation in the story as a part of the story, it is predicted that *no* can be used. This is because the speaker believes that such a situation is salient to the addressee. In the following example from an essay about the speaker's life as a cartoonist, the speaker refers to a situation in the essay that she cannot draw something if she does not have a model. *No* is used as in (30).

(30) Mangaka nante, sonna *n*[3] demo nareru no desu yo.
Cartoonist TOP like that one even can become COP SFP
'You can be a cartoonist even being like that.' (Sakura 1987:1:95)

In the cases where *no* has a complement clause, for example in the background of a comic frame when the narrator takes the view of the protagonist and refers to a part of the story limited to the scene, *no* is used. For example, in the background of a frame in which a rough boy is demanding that he be allowed to hold a puppy, the cartoonist comments that letting a rough person like him do that is unsettling, as in (31).

(31) [Konna arakezuri-na taipu-no hito-ni koinu-o dakaseru]
like this rough-COP type-GEN person-IND puppy-ACC let hold

no-wa huan dearu.
one-TOP uneasy COP

'Letting a person like him hold the puppy worries me.'
(Sakura 1989:5:66)

[3] *N* is a morphological variation of *no*.

If *koto* is used, the speaker sounds like she is commenting about something outside of the story, and not about the situation that she was talking about specifically in the essay.

5 Conclusion

This paper has provided a unified pragmatic account for the distribution and interpretation of *koto* and *no* with or without a sentential complement. The uses of *koto* and *no* follow from the speaker's belief about the cognitive status of what is referred to by the noun phrase headed by *koto* or *no*. *No* is used when the speaker believes that what is denoted by the noun phrase is already salient in the addressee's mind. *Koto* is used when the speaker does not believe this. It has also shown that the distribution of *koto* and *no* follows from the speaker's goal and intention of how she wants to represent herself in the context of the utterance and from how one should behave in Japanese society. Further, this paper demonstrates how the analysis can explain nuances conveyed through their uses.

This study explains how the lexical noun *koto* and the indefinite pronoun *no* are selected. A number of studies have been conducted concerning the distribution of English lexical noun phrases and pronouns, such as Chafe (1994). In their study of five different languages, Gundel et al. (1993), claim that different kinds of referring expressions represent different degrees of givenness status. A pronoun occurs when the referent is in the addressee's focus. Unlike Chafe, the givenness status in Gundel et al. (1993)'s study is determined by three factors: accessibility, retrievability, and identifiability. Van Hoek (1995) claims that a co-reference between a full noun phrase and a pronoun tend to be acceptable when a nominal is conceptually connected to the most prominent nominal. Like the studies mentioned above, this study of *koto* and *no* is a cross-linguistic case study of lexical nouns and pronouns.

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