

The development of Japanese *no*: Grammaticalization, degrammatialization, or neither?

This paper discusses the development of the multi-functional particle *no* from premodern Japanese (PMJ) to modern Japanese (ModJ). After reviewing two previous proposals, which can be characterized as grammaticalization and degrammatialization, I argue that the alleged grammaticalization did not happen, and that alleged degrammatialization is better characterized as renewal.

No in ModJ has three functions:

- (1) a. Taro-no hon (Genitive) b. akai no (Pronoun)
 T.-NO book red NO
 ‘Taro’s book’ ‘red one’
- c. Taro-ga kooto-o kita no-wa samui kara da (Complementizer)
 T.-ga coat-Acc put.on NO-Top cold because Copula
 ‘It is because it is cold that Taro put on a coat.’

(1a-c) illustrate the usage of *no* as genitive, pronoun, and complementizer, respectively. Genitive *no* existed in PMJ, while complementizer *no* emerged in ModJ, and the existence of pronominal *no* in PMJ is controversial, as I show below.

So far there has been two major proposals concerning the development of *no*:

- (2) Pronoun > Complementizer (Yanagida 1993, grammaticalization)
 (3) \emptyset > *no* (Horie 1993, degrammatialization)

I argue that the (2) did not happen, and that (3) is better characterized as renewal, where a morpheme undergoes phonological reduction to zero and is then replaced by another morpheme.

Pronoun > Complementizer ? (4) is the oft-cited alleged evidence for the pronominal *no* in PMJ:

- (4) ima-no nusi-mo saki-no-mo te torikahasite
 now-Gen master-also previous.time-NO-also hand holding
 ‘the current master and the previous one are holding hands together,’ (*Tosanikki*, 10C)

Yanagida (1993) assumes that the second *no* (after *saki*) is a pronoun and is the source of complementizer *no*, basing his proposal in (2). However, it is better analyzed as involving N’ deletion (cf. Saito, Murasugi, and Lin 2008), illustrated below for ModJ:

- (5) Taro-no kuruma-wa takai-ga Jiro-no \emptyset -wa yasui
 T.-Gen car-Yop expensive-but J.-Gen \emptyset -Top cheap
 ‘Taro’s car is expensive, but Jiro’s \emptyset is cheap.’

Thus, (4) does not constitute evidence for (2). I concur with Nishi (2006) that the complementizer *no* developed independently of the genitive *no*.

In more theoretically oriented research, Pronoun > Complementizer is formalized as D > C (Simpson 2003), but this is also dubious. The categorically ambiguous status of ModJ *no* is illustrated by (1c) above and (6) below:

- (6) Taro-wa [*ringo-ga sara-no ue-ni at-ta no*]-wo tot-te
 T.-TOP apple-NOM plate-GEN surface-on be-PAST NO-ACC take-and
 ‘Taro picked up an apple which was on a plate and...’ (Kuroda 1992)

(1c) is a cleft, and *no* corresponds to the rationale clause in the focus, and therefore it cannot

be D (with a nominal feature) but C. (6) is an example of a head-internal relative clause, and since *no* is the complement of ‘take’, it is D.

Now, exactly the same categorial ambiguity of *no* (between D and C) in ModJ is observed in its PMJ equivalents. PMJ has designated inflection forms (the so-called *rentai* forms) used in particular embedded contexts:

- (7) a. musaboru-koto-no **yama-zar-u**-ha inoti-o ohu-ru daizi
 devour-thing-NOM stop-not-RU-TOP life-ACC finish-RU importance
 ima koko-ni kitare-ri to tasikani **sira-zar-eba** nari
 now here-at come-PERF C certainly know-not-because COP
 ‘It is because he certainly does not know that it is time to finish his life that he does not stop being greedy.’ (Turezuregusa 134, 14C)
- b. [awoki *kame*-no ohoki-nar-**u**]-wo suwe-te
 blue vase-GEN large-be-**RU**-ACC set.up-and (Kuroda 1992)
 ‘(They) set up a celadon vase which was large and...’ (Makura-no Sōsi, 10C)

(7a) and (7b) are a cleft and a head-internal relative clause, respectively, in PMJ, and like their ModJ equivalents in (1c) and (6), the conjugated (*rentai*) forms (headed by RU) are either D (7a) or C (7c). Thus, the categorial ambiguity of *no* simply reflects the categorial ambiguity of its ancestor *rentai* forms, and thus it in itself cannot have undergone the change of D > C.

Ø > no ? Comparing the ModJ cleft and head-internal relative clause in (1c) and (6) and their PNJ equivalents in (7a, b), one can see that *no* is missing in (7). This led Horie (1993) (among others) to assume that PMJ has a zero noun Ø, which is replaced by *no* in ModJ. This proposal itself is degrammaticalization and requires strong motivations, but the proposal stems from the failure to recognize the proper morphological structure of *rentai* forms. As in (7a, b), once RU is identified as the head of *rentai* forms, we can connect RU and *no*. But there is a time gap between the loss of RU and the emergence of *no*. So the real change is ru > Ø > no. The zero morpheme appeared only in a transitional stage. Crucially, to the extent that the ultimate source of *no* is not zero, the whole change ru > Ø > no is not a case of degrammaticalization. More specifically, it is a case of renewal (cf. Gelderen 2011), a kind of cycle, where a morpheme undergoes phonological reduction to zero and is then replaced by another morpheme.

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