

A decompositional approach to potential (*r*)*are* in Japanese

Hideya Takahashi

Iwate Prefectural University

Background: The syntax of Japanese sentences with the potential (*r*)*are*/*(r)**e* has been the topic of numerous previous studies, most of which are concentrated on selectional restrictions on the subject and their peculiar Case patterns (Inoue 1976, Ura 1996, among many others). On the other hand, there have never been attempts in the literature which try to distinguish between morphosyntactic properties of the two distinct forms, (*r*)*are* and (*r*)*e*. In addition, it has long been assumed in traditional Japanese linguistics as well as generative approaches that (*r*)*are* is a single morpheme that is taken either as a suffix or a verb.

This situation is rather surprising given that the recent derivational approach to the agglutinative aspect of the verbal morphology in Japanese under the conceptions of Distributed Morphology (DM) (Marantz 1997, 2001), whose central claim is that the syntax is root-based: each suffix in Japanese is an instance of little *v* attached to Root and thus each verb stem has its own unique syntactic construction.

Goals: This study puts forward a novel approach to potential constructions with (*r*)*are*/*(r)**e*, which argues (i) that (*r*)*are* is not a single morpheme and must be decomposed into (*r*)*ar* and (*r*)*e*, (ii) thus that (*r*)*are* and (*r*)*e* are to be treated separately in morphosyntactic terms, and (iii) that the degree of grammaticalization varies among dialects in Japanese, which leads to the (un)acceptability of the so-called "*ra*-dropped" or "*re*-added" patterns in potentials.

Data: It is well known that the potential construction in Japanese exhibits different patterns in its morphological form as dialectal variations, as shown below (potential morpheme underlined).

(1) Dialect A (including Tokyo area):

- a. five-grade conjugation class: *ik-e-ru* / *ik-are-ru* ('being able to go')
- b. lower one-tier conjugation class: **tabe-re-ru* / *tabe-rare-ru* ('being able to eat')

(2) Dialect B (including Nagoya area):

- a. five-grade conjugation class: *ik-e-ru* / **ik-are-ru* ('being able to go')
- b. lower one-tier conjugation class: *tabe-re-ru* / *tabe-rare-ru* ('being able to eat')

The contrast between the two dialects concerning the correlation of the conjugation type, on the one hand, and the choice of the potential morpheme, on the other, is even mysterious under previous approaches, where (*r*)*are* and (*r*)*e* are not distinguished syntactically. Predicates such as *tabe-re-ru*, called "*ra*-dropped" expressions, have been widely assumed to be phonetically reduced from forms such as *tabe-rare-ru* with the *ra* part omitted in PF.

In fact, facts from the so-called "*re*-added" expressions cast doubt on this prevailing view. While most speakers in dialect B allow such "*re*-added" expressions as (3) mainly in colloquial styles, (4) are totally unacceptable: (*r*)*e* can be doubled, while (*r*)*are* can never be followed by the additional (*r*)*e*.

(3) a. *tabe-re-re-ru* ('being able to eat') / *ne-re-re-ru* ('being able to sleep')

- b. **tabe-rare-re-ru* ('being able to eat') / **ne-rare-re-ru* ('being able to sleep')

Note that inserting of the duplicated (*r*)*e* brings about no semantic or pragmatic effects, according to previous surveys; there is a strong piece of evidence for its syntactic nature. Let us look at the followings, which have never been mentioned in the literature as far as we know:

(4) a. *ag-e-re-ru*/**ag-e-re-re-ru* ('being able to raise') b. *maw-as-e-ru*/**maw-as-e-re-ru* ('being able to turn': v.t.)

(5) a. *ag-ar-e-ru*/**ag-ar-re-re-ru* ('being able to rise') b. *maw-ar-e-ru*/**maw-ar-e-re-ru* ('being able to turn': v.i.)

The unacceptable status of those "*re*-added" expressions in (4) and (5) comes from the presence of (in)transitive morphemes *e*, *as*, or *ar*. This is indeed clearly in contrast with the cases in (3), in which neither *tabe-ru* 'eat' nor

ne-ru 'sleep' has an intransitive or transitive counterpart, respectively. As expected, verbs from five-grade conjugation class such as *ik-u* 'go' or *yom-u* 'read' do not resist the double *(r)e* in their potential forms, as in (6).

(6) a. *ik-e-re-ru* (cf. *ik-e-ru*) b. *yom-e-re-ru* (cf. *yom-e-ru*)

To sum up, there are no simple processes of deleting *ra* and adding *(r)e* in PF, as assumed in previous analyses: an array of facts shown above strongly suggests that they are governed by the morphosyntactic environment where they occur. Now we are in a position to abandon previous approaches to potential morphemes *(r)are/(r)e* and to explore the morphosyntax of the potential construction in Japanese, which provides a natural account of "ra-dropped" and "re-added" expressions as well as their dialectal variations.

Theoretical Assumptions: Following Marantz (1997, 2001), a.o., we will assume DM's basic tenets: Roots are acategorical before they are merged with the first category-determining functional head (e.g. *n*, *v*, *a*). We will also assume that the structure of "VP" in the traditional sense is layered as shown in (7), where (i) external and internal arguments of the predicate are licensed by Voice and *v*, respectively (Kratzer 1996, Borer 2005), (ii) (in)transitivising suffixes appear as Cause (Pylkkänen 2002, 2008), and (iii) the top of the VP-layer is optionally occupied by GET which licenses Experiencer or Benefactive in its Spec (Nakajima 2010).

(7) [GETP ... [VoiceP ... [CauseP ... [vP ... √Root v] Cause] Voice] Get]

Proposals: The partial structures proposed for potential forms, *tabe-rare-ru* and *tabe-re-ru*, are illustrated in (8).

(8) a. [GETP ... [VoiceP ... [CauseP ... [vP ... √*tabe* v] Cause] (*r*)*ar*] *e*] (*tabe-rar-e-ru*)

b. [GETP ... [VoiceP ... [CauseP ... [vP ... √*tabe* v] Cause] Voice] (*r*)*e*] (*tabe-φ-re-ru*)

Our crucial idea is that *(r)are* is decomposed into *(r)ar* and *(r)e*: the former is the realization of Voice when the external argument is suppressed or deleted (cf. Kageyama 1996), and the latter the grammaticalized verb *e-ru* 'get' which appears as the head of GET. We assume that the semantic contribution of GET is stated in notions such as *completion*, *achievement*, or *benefit*. As seen in (8b), "ra-dropped" expression is not just regarded as a reduced form but will be analyzed in parallel with the case with *(r)are* in (8a) except that *(r)ar* does not occur at Voice. This suggests that the difference between Dialect A and Dialect B concerning the (im)possibility of "ra-dropped" phenomenon is reduced to the nature of Voice: the suppression of external argument with the aid of *(r)ar* is required in Dialect A in contrast with Dialect B. This analysis can also give a natural account of the fact that in Dialect A, a five-grade conjugation verb *ik-u* 'go' is followed by *(r)are* to derive its potential form *ik-ar-e-ru*, as in (1a). Finally, concerning "re-added" expressions, our specific proposal is that in Dialect B, the potential *(r)e* is optionally reanalyzed as Cause rather than Get, as the consequence of losing its lexical meaning related to GET in the course of grammaticalization. With this in mind, let us look at the following structures.

(9) [GETP ... [VoiceP ... [CauseP ... [vP ... √*tabe* v] (*r*)*e*₁] Voice] *e*₂] (*tabe-re-ru/tabere-re-ru*)

(10) a. [GETP ... [VoiceP ... [CauseP ... [vP ... √*ag* v] *e*] Voice] (*r*)*e*₁] (*ag-e-re-ru/*ag-e-re-re-ru*)

b. [GETP ... [VoiceP ... [CauseP ... [vP ... √*ag* v] Cause] *ar*] (*r*)*e*₁] (*ag-ar-re-ru/*ag-ar-re-re-ru*)

A "re-added" expression *tabe-re-re-ru* is successfully derived from (8b) by reanalyzing *e* at GET as Cause and the insertion of *e*₂ into GET, as in (9). This story, however, does not save the derivations of **ag-e-re-re-ru* and **ag-ar-e-re-ru*: given that the application of reanalysis obeys some locality condition, "doubly-filled" Cause should be impossible as in (10a) or *(r)e*₁ at GET cannot skip over *(r)ar* at Voice in (10b). In either case, the insertion of *e*₂ is structurally unavailable. To sum up, the dialectal difference between Dialect A and Dialect B is reduced to the nature of Voice and the degree of grammaticalization of the verb *e-ru* 'get'. Furthermore, our proposal concerning reanalysis of *(r)e* is compatible with observations in the fields of historical linguistics and language acquisition: the potential *(r)e* was originally used as intransitivising morpheme in Edo era (Aoki 2010), and the acquisition process of the potential *(r)e* proceeds in parallel with that of (in)transitivising morpheme *(r)e*.