Nominative-Genitive Conversion Revisited*

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1. Introduction

A long-standing analysis of Nominative-Genitive Conversion (NGC) in Japanese generative grammar and in Japanese linguistics has been to reduce the source of genitive Case to the presence of an external D head of relative clauses and nominal complements, which can check genitive Case (cf. Mikami 1953, Harada 1971, 1976, Bedell 1972, Saito 1982, Fukui and Nishigauchi 1992, Miyagawa 1993, Sakai 1994, and Ochi 1999 among many others; but cf. Watanabe 1996, Hiraiwa 2000a).

This article demonstrates that the generalization that NGC is dependent on the presence of an external D head is rejected on much empirical grounds. This immediately leads to a refutation of the ECM/Raising analysis of NGC (Miyagawa 1993, Ochi 1999), which is based on the generalization. Two further arguments against the ECM/Raising analysis are also presented. The main aim of this short article is to achieve a higher descriptive adequacy of NGC, restricting theoretical arguments to a minimum.[1]

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[1] Unfortunately, full discussions of theoretical issues are far beyond this short paper. Interested readers are referred to Hiraiwa (2000a).

2. Nominative-Genitive Conversion Revisited

2.1. A New Generalization of NGC in Japanese

NGC has the following six notable properties that call for explanation. This article focuses on (1a), (1d), (1e) and (1f) and provides principled accounts.[2]

(1) a. A descriptive generalization. (Section 2.)
b. Optionality.
c. Lack of Accusative-Genitive conversion.
d. Complementizer blocking effect. (Section 3.1.)
e. Lack of defective intervention effects. (Section 3.2.)
f. Transitivity restriction. (Section 3.3.)

(2) has been the descriptive generalization to NGC, which has almost never been called into question in the literature with only a few exceptions (cf. Saito 1982, Miyagawa 1993, Sakai 1994, Ochi 1999; cf. Watanabe 1996, Hiraiwa 2000a).

(2) NGC is restricted to only relative clauses and nominal complements (i.e. structure with an external D-head).

As (3) and (4) show, NGC is possible only in relative clauses and nominal complements but not in main clauses.

(3) Kinoo John **ga/no** katta hon
yesterday John-NOM/GEN buy-PST-ADN book
'the book which John bought yesterday'

(4) John wa [$_{CP}$ kinoo Mary-**ga/no** kita koto/no]
John-TOP yesterday Mary-NOM/GEN come-PST-ADN FN/C
-wo siranakatta
-ACC know-NEG-PST
'John didn't know that Mary came yesterday.'

Miyagawa (1993), building on the generalization (2), argues that in NGC genitive Case on the subject DP is checked by an external D head at LF (hereafter *the ECM/Raising analysis*).

However, very significantly, a close scrutiny reveals that the long-standing generalization in (2) is empirically quite inadequate. As shown in (5)-(11), NGC is allowed in the structures without any external D head.

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[2] Hiraiwa (2000a) shows that the properties (1a), (1c) and (1d) are cross-linguistically true in NGC. Explaining the properties (1b) and (1c) requires full development of theoretical discussions, which goes beyond the scope of this paper. See Hiraiwa (2000a) for a cross-linguistic study on NGC based on about twenty languages

(5) John wa [ame **ga/no** yamu made] office ni ita.
John-TOP rain-NOM/GEN stop-PRES-ADN until office-at be-PST
'John was at his office until the rain stopped.'

(6) [Boku **ga/no** omou ni] John wa Mary ga
I-NOM/GEN think-PRES-ADN -DAT John-TOP Mary-NOM
suki-ni-tigainai
like-must-PRES
'I think that John likes Mary.'

(7) [Sengetsu ikkai denwa **ga/no** atta kiri] John kara
last month once call-NOM/GEN be-PST-ADN since John-from
nanimo renraku ga nai.
any call-NOM be-not-PST
'There has been no call from John since he called me up once last month.'

(8) Kono atari-wa [hi **ga/no** kureru ni tsure(te)]
around-here-TOP sun-NOM/GEN go-down-PRES-ADN as
hiekondekuru.
colder-get-PRES
'It gets chillier as the sun goes down around here.'

(9) John wa [toki **ga/no** tatsu to tomoni]
John-TOP time-NOM/GEN pass-PRES-ADN with as
Mary no koto wo wasurete-itta.
Mary-GEN FN-ACC forget-go-PST
'Mary slipped out of John's memory as times went by.'

(10) [John **ga/no** kuru to konai to]
John-NOM/GEN come-PRES-ADN and come-not-PRES-ADN and
de wa oochigai da.
-TOP great-difference CPL-PRES
'It makes a great difference whether John comes or not.'

(11) John wa [Mary **ga/no** yonda yori] takusan-no
John-TOP Mary-NOM/GEN read-PST-ADN than many-GEN
hon wo yonda
books-ACC read-PST
'John read more books than Mary did.'
(Watanabe 1996:396)

Very strikingly, in the examples above, NGC is allowed despite the fact that no external D is involved. Furthermore, (12) confirms the lack of D in the relevant embedded clauses in (5)-(11).

(12) a. ***sono** *yori* / ***sono** *made* / ***sono** *ni* / ***sono** *to* / ***sono** kiri
it(GEN)-than /it (GEN)-until / it(GEN)-DAT / it(GEN)-with / it(GEN)-since

b. **sore** *yori* / **sore** *made* / **sore** *ni* / **sore** *to* / **sore** kiri
it-than / it-until / it-DAT / it-with / it-since

(12) demonstrates that none of the italicized P(reposition)-like elements that head CPs in (5)-(11) can select the genitive form of the pronoun '*sono'* but rather they take the full DP form '*sore'*. This explicitly excludes the possibility that these elements check inherent genitive Case or they function as an external D-head to check structural genitive Case. Thus the data (5)-(11) are crucial empirical counterevidence against the long-standing generalization of NGC (2).

A further close examination, however, uncovers a very interesting new generalization that lies behind the distribution of NGC in Japanese. It should be noted that all the structures that allow NGC are headed by verbs with a special verbal inflection, predicate adnominal form (*P-A form*) (which has been termed *Rentai-kei* in the Traditional Japanese linguistics). This leads us to the following descriptive generalization.

(13) *A New Descriptive Generalization of NGC*
NGC in Japanese is only licensed by the special verbal inflection (the predicate adnominal form; *the P-A form*).

It is sometimes difficult to demonstrate the validity of (13) in modern Japanese due to the well-known morphophonological merger of the verbal End form into the P-A form, which took place around the 13th century (see Kinsui 1995 among others). But fortunately, the so-called verbal adjective and copula, which still retain the relevant morphophonological distinction, confirm our claim. Note that the end form *da* is morphologically realized as *na* in relative clauses and nominal complements as illustrated in (14), whereas the end form *da* appears in the matrix clause.

(14) a. John ga suki-**na** ongaku wa blues da
John-NOM like-PRES-ADN music-TOP blues be-PRES
'The music that John likes is the Blues.' cf. (3)

b. John ga Mary ga suki-**na** koto/no wa
John-NOM Mary-NOM like-PRES-AND FN/C -TOP
yuumei da.
well-known CPL-PRES
'It is well-known that John likes Mary.' cf. (4)

c. John ga Mary ga suki-**da**
John-NOM Mary-NOM like-PRES-END
'John likes Mary.'

This diagnostic test reveals that the verbal inflection in (5)-(11) is the P-A form.

(15) a. John wa ijou-**na** *made* ni sinkeisitsu da
John-TOP extraordinary-ADN extent to nervous-PRES
'John was extraordinarily nervous.' cf. (5)

b. John no koto ga simpai-**na** *yori* mo
John-GEN thing-NOM worried-PRES-ADN than
Mary ga simpai da.
Mary-NOM worried-PRES.
'I am worried about Mary rather than about John.' cf. (11)

This generalization is correctly borne out by the ungrammaticality of NGC in the clauses with other verbal inflectional forms. Consider the examples below.

(16) a. [Dare **ga**/***no** yon**de**-mo] kamaimasen.
whoever-NOM/*GEN read-COND-even care-NEG-PRES.
'I don't care whoever will come.'

b. [John **ga**/***no** ku**reba**] minna yorokobuyo
John-NOM/*GEN come-COND everyone pleased-PRES
'Everyone will be delighted if John comes.'

c. Omae **ga**/***no** **koi**!
you-NOM/*GEN come-IMP
'(You) Come here!'

d. John ga Mary **ga/*no** **kita** to/ka
John-NOM Mary-NOM/*GEN come-PST-END C/Q
itta/tazuneta
say/ask-PST
'John said/asked that/whether Mary came.'

Summarizing the discussions in this section, we have shown that the long-standing generalization of NGC (2) is empirically inadequate and demonstrated that NGC is crucially dependent on the presence of the P-A form, presenting the new generalization (13).

2.2. The Mechanism of NGC

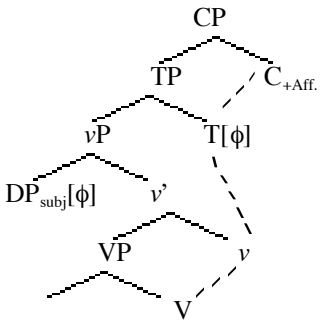
Building on the new generalization in the previous section, I propose the following theory as a mechanism of NGC.

(17) A syntactic C-T-*v*-V head amalgamate, which is formed via AGREE, corresponds to the special verbal inflection (*the P-A form*).

This head amalgamate has a ϕ-feature that can check genitive Case as well as nominative Case.

(18) is the representation of the mechanism of NGC.

(18)



Adopting the insight of Kinsui (1995), I crucially propose that the P-A form in Japanese involves a zero C (cf. also Kaplan and Whitman 1995). It is further argued that this zero C is 'affixal' ([+Aff.]) and requires C-T-*v*-V head amalgamation ('head-movement') via AGREE (cf. Lasnik 1999).

In (18) each head AGREEs cyclicly; *v* AGREEs with V, which T AGREEs with. Now at the step of the derivation where $C_{+Aff.}$ is merged with the TP, $C_{+Aff.}$ requires AGREE with T-*v*-V, spelling out the special verbal inflection *the P-A form*. If there is no C-T-*v*-V head amalgamation due to the absence of $C_{+Aff.}$, the verb is realized as *the end form* as a result of T-*v*-V AGREE). The claim here is that this C-T-*v*-V head amalgamate has a ϕ-feature that can check structural genitive Case as well as nominative Case.[3] Crucially, note that under the proposed theory, there is no structural difference in nominative Case-checking and genitive Case-checking in NGC; the same single ϕ-feature is responsible for both nominative and genitive Case-checking in (18).[4]

Thus now the proposed mechanism of NGC (17) provides a natural explanation for our generalization (13).

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[3] See Hiraiwa (2000a) for a precise theoretical implementation of the idea under the framework of Chomsky (2000) as well as much empirical justification, which space limitation disallows us to illustrate here.

[4] Interestingly, the proposed theory gives theoretical basis for claims in Traditional Japanese linguistics that in classical Japanese *no* and *ga* were both nominative and genitive (cf. Konoshima 1966, Nomura 1993 among many others).

3. Nominative-Genitive Conversion Elucidated

3.1. Defective Intervention Constraints: Against ECM/Raising

In this section I will demonstrate that data from locality/minimality in NGC presents crucial evidence against Miyagawa's (1993) and Ochi's (1999) ECM/Raising analysis.

Hiraiwa (2000b) shows that the ECM construction in Japanese the ECM construction gives empirical justification for Chomsky's (2000) *Defective Intervention Constraints*.

(19) *Defective Intervention Constraints* (cf. Chomsky 2000:123)
$\alpha > \beta > \gamma$
(*AGREE (α, γ), α is a probe and β is a matching goal, and β is inactive due to a prior AGREE with some other probe)

(19) is a general locality condition on a syntactic operation which prohibits an establishment of checking relation between α and γ, in the presence of an intervening closer candidate β. Now let us consider the following ECM examples.

(20) John ga Mary **ga/wo** totemo kawii to omotta.
John-NOM Mary-NOM/ACC very pretty-PRES C think-PST
'John considered Mary to be very pretty.'

(21) a. Mary ga [John **ga** me **ga** warui to] sinjiteiru
Mary-NOM John-NOM eye-NOM bad-PRES C believe-PRES
'Mary believes that John has a very bad eyesight.'

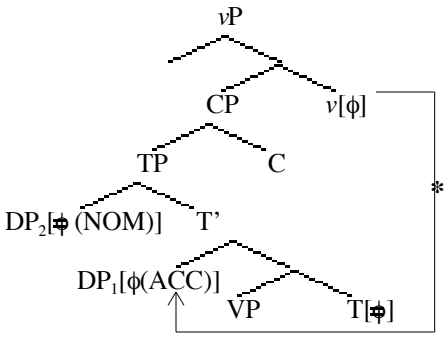
b. Mary ga [John **wo** me **ga** warui to] sinjiteiru
Mary-NOM John-ACC eye-NOM bad-PRES C believe-PRES

c.*Mary ga [John **ga** me **wo** warui to] sinjiteiru
Mary-NOM John-NOM eye-ACC bad-PRES C believe-PRES

(20) is a typical ECM construction in Japanese, which shows that ECM is possible across a CP clause boundary. In (21) a multiple nominative construction is embedded under an ECM verb. (21b) show that it is possible to ECM the higher nominative DP, assigning accusative Case. However, it should be noted that as (21c) shows, ECM/Raising of the lower nominative DP over the higher nominative DP yields ungrammaticality.

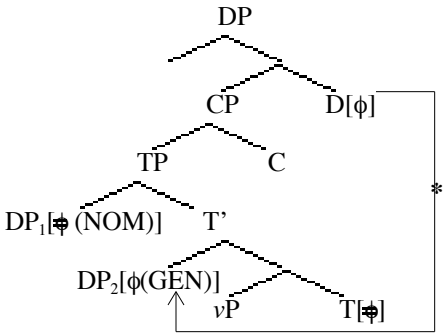
Hiraiwa (2000b) argues that the illicit derivation (21c) is excluded exactly by Defective Intervention Constraints, since the AGREE between the probe matrix v_ϕ and the goal ϕ-feature of the lower DP is blocked by the inactive goal ϕ-feature of the closer DP as a result of (19).

(22)



Now returning to NGC, if Miyagawa-Ochi's ECM/Raising analysis of NGC is correct, it should be predicted that the very same kind of locality effects emerge as represented in (23), on a par with the true ECM derivation (22).

(23)



However, very importantly, this prediction is not borne out; NGC in a multiple nominative construction allows all the four logical possibilities that are illustrated in (24) (cf. also Miyagawa 1993 and Ochi 1999).

(24) a. Totemo John **ga** me **ga** warui riyuu
very John-NOM eye-NOM bad-PRES-ADN reason
'the reason why John has a very bad eysight' [NOM-NOM]

b. Totemo John **no** me **ga** warui riyuu
very John-GEN eye-NOM bad-PRES-ADN reason
[GEN-NOM]

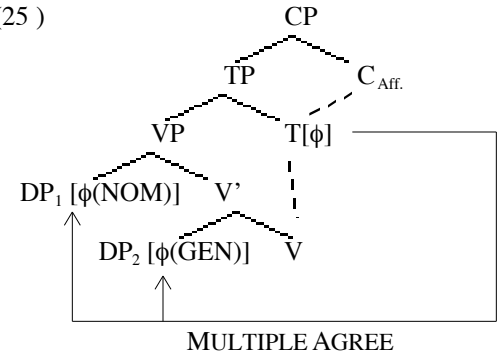
c. Totemo John **ga** me **no** warui riyuu
very John-NOM eye-GEN bad-PRES-ADN reason
[NOM-GEN]

d. Totemo John **no** me **no** warui riyuu
very John-GEN eye-GEN bad-PRES-ADN reason
[GEN-GEN]

As shown in (24c), the lower DP can be ECMed and assigned genitive Case without any defective intervention effects, despite the presence of the closer nominative goal DP. This is totally unexpected, if NGC involves ECM/Raising by an external D. This strongly shows that NGC never has an ECM/raising structure, contra Miyagawa-Ochi's claim.

On the other hand, the proposed theory of NGC (17) correctly and naturally accounts for the absence of defective intervention effects in (24c); As (25) represents, the genitive Case is checked by the same single ϕ-feature on the C-T-V amalgamate, which can also check nominative Case. Recall that there is no structural difference between the probe for the genitive Case and the probe for the nominative Case and hence no defective intervention effects are triggered.

(25)



In other words, under the proposed analysis, (24d) is grammatical just as the multiple nominative derivation (24a) and the multiple genitive derivation (24d) are licit.

3.2. Complementizer Blocking Effects

The new descriptive generalization (13) and the proposed theory of NGC (17) also provide a straightforward explanation for the observation that NGC is blocked by a presence of an overt complementizer *toiu*, *to* and *ka* (cf. Inoue 1976, Ura 1993, Watanabe 1996, Hiraiwa 2000a). Consider (26) and (27) below.[5]

(26) a. [[syoorai daijisin **ga/no** okiru]
in-the-future great-earthquake-NOM/GEN occur-PRES-ADN

[5] Hiraiwa (2000a) proposes that the so-called complementizer/nominalizer *'no'* (e.g. (4)) is not an overt C, but rather a morphophonological realization of genitive Case-checking on the head amalgamate, with far-reaching consequences for grammaticalization of Case particles as conjunction markers in Japanese (cf. Ishigaki 1955, Kinsui 1995, Kuroda 1999, Kondo 2000). Hence there is no blocking effect in the case of the complementizer *'no'*.

kanoosei]
possibility
'the possibility that a great earthquake will occur in the future'

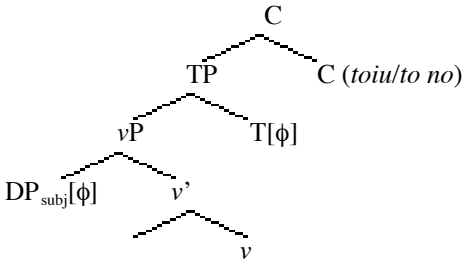
b. [[syoorai daijisin **ga/*no** okiru
in-the-future great-earthquake-NOM/*GEN occur-PRES-END
toiu kanoosei]
C possibility
'the possibility that a great earthquake will occur in the future'

(27) [[House of Blues de John **ga/*no** ensoosuru **to** no]
House of Blues-at John-NOM/*GEN play-PRES-END C-GEN
joohou]
information
'the information that John will plat at the House of Blues'

As (26) indicates that the complementizer *toiu* is optional for the head noun *'kanoosei'*. The contrast between (26a) and (26b) as well as (27) show that NGC is disallowed when an overt complementizer appears in C.

Within the present theory, this phenomenon is explained quite straightforwardly. Consider the derivation (28) for the illicit sentence (26b) and (27).

(28)



Recall that under the proposed theory, the C-T-*v*-V AGREE is a crucial pre-requisite for NGC. This is because the special verbal inflection P-A form is a realization of head amalgamation of C-T-*v*-V via AGREE. However, as (28) explicitly shows, the head amalgamate formation is syntactically blocked by the presence of the overt C, since an overt C, being non-affixal [-Aff.], bars the morphosyntactic head amalgamation and leaves the verb in the end form. This blocks genitive Case-checking, deriving surface complementizer blocking effects.

Note that under the ECM/Raising analysis, there is no good reason for NGC to be blocked by an overt C. Rather, as we have already seen in Section 3.1. above, Japanese does allow ECM/Raising despite the presence of an overt C in genuine ECM sentences. Thus complementizer blocking effect is another evidence against the ECM/Raising analysis of NGC.

3.3. Transitivity Restriction

Finally, I will briefly discuss Transitivity Restriction (TR) in NGC and propose a totally new perspective to the problem.

As it has been noted in the literature (Harada 1971, 1976, Watanabe 1996 among others), accusative objects are prohibited in NGC.

(29) Kinoo John **ga/*no** hon **wo** katta mise
yesterday John-NOM/*GEN book-ACC buy-PST-ADN store
'the store where John bought books yesterday'

As Watanabe (1996) correctly points out, the restriction is lifted if the accusative object is wh-extracted.

(30) Kinoo John **ga/no** t_i katta hon_i
yesterday John-NOM/-GEN buy-PST-ADN book
'the book which John bought yesterday'

Furthermore, interestingly, the suspension of TR is also observed in the case of *pro-drop* of the accusative object, which demonstrates that what is wrong is morphological accusative case.

(31) Kinoo John **no** (*hon-**wo)** katta mise
yesteday John-GEN book-ACC buy-AND-PST store
'the store where John bought a book yesterday.'

Looking at the issue in a broader perspective, however, shows that this TR in NGC is an instance of a more general principle underlying the Japanese language. It should be noted that it is independently well-known that in Japanese, Dative Subject Construction (DSC) resists accusative Case-marking, allowing only the DAT-NOM Case pattern (Shibatani 1978, Ura 2000).

(32) John **ni** nihongo **ga/*wo** hanas-eru (koto)
John-DAT Japanese-NOM speak-can-PRES (that)
'John can speak Japanese'

These facts suggest that in Japanese morphological accusative Case-marking is prohibited when the subject DP is in non-nominative Case. Thus I propose the following principle in Japanese (cf. Hiraiwa 2000a).

(33) Spell-out of morphological accusative case by *v* triggers nominative Case-checking on T in the next strong phase.

Putting aside the precise theoretical implementation for now, (33) captures an interdependence between morphological accusative case and abstract nominative Case-checking; more descriptively speaking,

As it is already obvious, the ungrammaticality of the NGC sentence (29) and the DSC sentence (32) is naturally expected under the single principle (33); in these examples, the spell-out of the accusative Case fails

to trigger nominative Case checking on T. Instead, the subject is assigned structural genitive Case in (29) or inherent dative Case in (32) (cf. Ura 2000). Thus our principle (33) brings to light the significant nature underlying the Case system in Japanese, and gives a unified explanation for the ostensibly unrelated phenomena (TR in NGC and the ungrammaticality of the DAT-ACC case pattern in DSC).

The following data combining DSC and NGC shows the point more clearly.

(34) a. John **ga** nihongo **ga/wo/no** hanas-eru koto
John-NOM Japanese-NOM/ACC/GEN speak-can-PRES-ADN FN
'the fact that John can speak Japanese.'

b. John **no** nihongo **ga/*wo/no** hanas-eru koto
John-GEN Japanese-NOM/*ACC/GEN speak-can-PRES-ADNFN

c. John **ni** nihongo **ga/*wo/no** hanas-eru koto
John-DAT Japanese-NOM/*ACC/GEN speak-can-PRES-ADNFN

(34) shows that among 9 possible Case patterns in Japanese, the two ungrammatical patterns are both with accusative case without nominative Case, conforming to the principle (33).

4. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, in this paper, it has been shown that the new set of data presented above is a crucial empirical counterevidence against the long-standing generalization of NGC and hence the ECM/Raising analysis. A new descriptive generalization has been proposed that NGC is crucially licensed by the special verbal inflection (the P-A form) in Japanese and argued that genitive Case in NGC is checked via AGREE with the probe ϕ-feature on the C-T-*v*-V head amalgamate, which is realized as the P-A form. Two further arguments against the ECM/Raising analysis from defective intervention effects and complementizer blocking effects have been presented.[6] The end result is an achievement of higher descriptive adequacy with a principled explanatory mechanism.

Appendix: Apparent Counterexamples to the Generalization?

There are a small set of apparent counterexamples to our generalization (13); As Mikami (1953) already notes, NGC is prohibited in '*noda'* focus construction in *'node' (since)* and *'noni' (although)* conjunction construc-

[6] Miyagawa (1993) presents scope evidence for his ECM/Raising analysis. But see Hiraiwa (2000a) for arguments against it.

tions despite the apparent presence of the P-A verbal inflectional form preceding these elements

(35) John **ga/*no** genki-**na** *noda/node/noni ...*
John-NOM/*GEN healthy-PRES-ADN C-CPL/C-OBL/C-DAT

At first sight, (35) nullifies our proposed generalization (13) that NGC is licensed by the P-A inflection.

However, as it is obvious, these counterexamples forms a natural class: all of them are highly grammaticalized forms with a complementizer *no* combined with particles *de/ni/wo* or a copula *da* (cf. Ishigaki 1955, Kuroda 1999, Kondo 2000 and references therein).[7]
a mere morphological fossil. (see. Ishigaki 1955, Kuroda 1999, Kondo 2000).

In this respect, it is very interesting to note an interaction of NGC with the 'adverbial-type' head-internal relative clause (HIRC) (cf. Mihara 1994, Kuroda 1999). Consider (36)

(36) John wa gozentyuu wa hi **no** tetteita **no ga/?wo/**
John-TOP morning-TOP sun-GEN shine-PST-ADN C NOM/ACC/
***ni** gogo ni natte ame ga huridasite kara deteitta.
DAT afternoon-DAT rain-NOM fall-begin-after go-out-PST
'It was sunny in the morning and/but John went out after it began to rain in the afternoon.' (cf. Kuroda 1999)

Notice that NGC is grammatical with *'noga'* type HIRC and marginally acceptable in *'nowo'* type HIRC, whereas in *'noni'* type HIRC, which is now fully grammaticalized into a concessive conjunction marker, NGC results in sever ungrammalicality. Thus generally, more grammaticalized, more difficult to apply NGC.

I just note here that the apparent counterexamples in (35) are not real problems for our generalization itself, but rather their ungrammaticality is closely related to a process of grammaticalization, leaving further theoretical investigation of this issue for future research.[8][9]

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[7] This lexical contiguity of these expressions can be illustrated by the fact that focus particles such as *'dake (only)* cannot intervene.
(i) John ga genki-na *no* ***dake** *da/de/ni ...*
John-NOM healthy-PRES-ADN C only CPL/OBL/DAT

[8] In other words, NGC is allowed when a relevant CP clause headed by a verb in the P-A form is an argument/proposition; a 'phase' in Chomsky (2000). See also Hiraiwa (2000a).

[9] It is interesting to note that in an earlier stage where *noda* construction was not yet fully grammaticalized, it is possible to find an example with NGC in *noda* construction. The following is an example in the Edo era that Konoshima (1966) notes.
(i) Hito no mune **no** warui no da to omotte ...
person-GEN mind-GEN bad-PRES-ADN C CPL C think-CONT
(Konoshima 1966: 53)

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