The Japanese inferential *-no koto-da-*(*kara*): Explicit and implicit causal marking

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Introduction: It has been observed in the Japanese literature that the Japanese NP-*no-koto-da-kara* 'lit. because NP-GEN fact' can indicate that the property of the attached NP serves as evidence for inferring the result conveyed by the main clause (Masuoka 2013), as shown in (1). If there is no *daroo* 'will' in (1), (1) becomes ill-formed. An interesting point is that the same causal and inferential meaning arises even without *kara* 'because', as shown in (1).

(1) (Q: Do you think Taro will come to the party?)

Taro-no   {koto-da(-*yo)-kara   / koto-da(-yo).}   isogashii*(-daroo).
Taro-GEN {KOTO-PRED(-Prt)-because / KOTO-PRED(-Prt)} busy-will

'lit. Because it's Taro, he will be busy.'/ 'It's Taro. He will be busy.'

Note that *Taro-no koto-da* (without *kara* 'because') in (1) is an independent sentence. This is supported by the fact that, unlike *Taro-no koto-da-kara*, the sentence-final particle *yo* can attach to *no koto-da*. Note also that similar to the case of *no-koto da-kara*, *no koto-da* (without *kara* 'because') in (1) becomes odd if there is no modal in the subsequent sentence.

Why is it that *no koto-da* (without *kara*) can have a cause inferential relationship with the subsequent sentence despite the absence of *kara*? What is the difference between *no-koto-da-kara* and *no-koto-da* (without *kara*)? In this paper, we argue that unlike NP-*no koto-da-kara*, NP-*no koto-da* (without *kara*) has been conventionalized as an independent evidence-indicating marker (which is a conventional implicature (CI)-triggering expression) and that the dependent relationship between NP-*no koto-da* (without *kara*) and a modal statement is captured in the use-conditional level.

NP-*no koto-da*(*-kara*) triggers a CI: In terms of meaning, we claim that *no-koto-da-kara* and *no koto-da* (without *kara*) conventionally implicate that the contextually salient property of an NP attached to *no koto-da* serves as evidence for inferring the subsequent *p*. This can be classified as a CI because when we deny (1), for example, the denial *sore-wa uso-da* 'that's false' can only target the main assertion of (1). (Note: We do not consider the evidence concerning the property of an NP to be a presupposition because the property of NP is a speaker's knowledge (Yumoto 2015).)

The meaning of *no koto-da*(*-kara*): Although both *no koto-da-kara* and *no koto-da* have the same CI meaning, the way their CI meanings are computed is different. In the case of *no koto-da-kara*, the causal CI meaning is triggered by *kara*. Let's consider this based on (1). Regarding the meaning of the proper name Taro, we assume that it denotes a set of properties related to Taro:

(2) $[[\text{Taro}]] = \lambda P. P(\text{Taro})$

No koto-da then picks out a contextually salient property Q from a set of properties P (here, Taro) and denotes that $P(Q)$ is true:
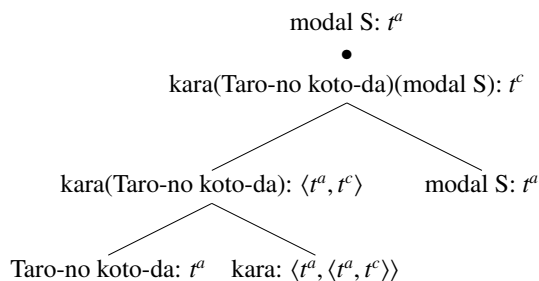
(3) $[[\text{no koto-da}_{at-issue}]] = \lambda P_{\langle\langle e,t\rangle,t\rangle}\exists Q.\ Q$ is a contextually salient property, $P(Q) = 1$
(where $P(Q)$ is in the speaker's knowledge)

Kara then combines with an NP-*no koto-da* sentence and a modal sentence and triggers a CI:

(4) $[[\text{kara}_{EPI}]]: \langle t^a, \langle t^a, t^c\rangle\rangle = \lambda p\lambda q : p.\ p$ is evidence for inferring q

Kara combines with a causal clause and a resultant clause via Potts's (2005) CI application, which is a resource insensitive application, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure1

$$\text{modal S: } t^a$$
$$\bullet$$
$$\text{kara(Taro-no koto-da)(modal S): } t^c$$

$$\text{kara(Taro-no koto-da): } \langle t^a, t^c \rangle \qquad \text{modal S: } t^a$$

$$\text{Taro-no koto-da: } t^a \qquad \text{kara: } \langle t^a, \langle t^a, t^c \rangle \rangle$$
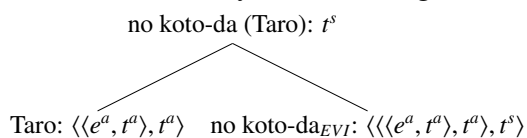
Note that there is also a presupposition that the proposition in the *kara* clause is true (e.g., McCready and Sudo 2012).

Conversely, in the case of *no koto-da* (without *kara*), the causal meaning is incorporated into the meaning of *no koto-da*. That is, *no koto-da* (without *kara*) has been conventionalized as an evidence-indicating marker, and it behaves as an independent CI-triggering expression:

(5)　[[no koto-da$_{EVI}$]] $:\langle\langle\langle e^a, t^a\rangle, t^a\rangle, t^s\rangle = \lambda P_{\langle\langle e,t\rangle,t\rangle}\exists \, Q.$ Q is a contextually salient property, $P(Q) = 1$, $P(Q)$ is evidence for inferring p (where $P(Q)$ is in the speaker's knowledge)

Notice that *no koto-da$_{EVI}$* has a CI meaning of type t^s (shunting type) rather than t^c. Superscript *s* is used for the shunting application, which is a resource sensitive application (McCready 2010). As Figure 2 shows, there is only a CI meaning at the root node.

Figure 2 　　　 no koto-da (Taro): t^s

$$\text{Taro: } \langle\langle e^a, t^a\rangle, t^a\rangle \quad \text{no koto-da}_{EVI}: \langle\langle\langle e^a, t^a\rangle, t^a\rangle, t^s\rangle$$

The dependency to a modal: The proposed analyses of the inferential NP-*no koto-da*(-*kara*) can also account for the fact that it can co-occur with "result-inferential modals", such as *daroo* 'will' and *kamoshirenai* 'may', but not with "cause-inferential modals", such as *rashii/yooda* 'seem':

(6)　Taro-no 　{koto-da. 　　/koto-da-kara} 　　 isogashii- {nichigainai /kamoshirenai
　　　Taro-GEN KOTO-PRED /KOTO-PRED-because busy- 　{must 　　 /may
　　　/daroo /*rashii /*yooda}.
　　　/will 　/seem 　/seem}
　　　'lit. Because it's Taro, he {must/may/will/*seems to} be busy.'

The cause-inferential modals like *rashii/yooda* 'seem' requires that NP-*no koto-da* is a result (rather than a cause) and that the subsequent proposition *p* is a cause. However, the property of NP in NP-*no koto-da* already exists in the speaker's knowledge and it is not caused by *p*. Thus the inferential NP-*no koto-da*(-*kara*) cannot co-occur with the cause-inferential modal.

Cross-linguistic variation: Interestingly, we can see a similar phenomenon in English 'it's NP':

(7)　It's Taro. So he {will come/must have come/came} on time.

An interesting point about (7) is that the simple past sentence in (7) is actually a modalized sentence meaning "he must have..." Here, we believe that a process of coercion is involved: "It's NP" forces the subsequent simple sentence to have a modal meaning.

Conclusion: It is theoretically crucial that NP-*no-koto-da* has a dependent relationship with a subsequent modal statement even without the clause linker *kara*. This paper shows that although a CI is logically independent of at-issue content (Potts 2005), it can have a dependent relationship with at-issue meaning (here the at-issue modal meaning) at the level of use condition.

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