

Dual Suppletion in Japanese

Introduction: In this paper, we observe the hitherto unnoticed phenomenon we dub “dual suppletion” in Japanese: when heavy and light verbs *su* ‘do’ can supplete in two different contexts, *deki* ‘do.POT and *nasar* ‘do.HON’, potential suppletion “wins” over honorific suppletion. Extending Choi & Harley’s (2016) analysis of “dual suppletion” in Korean, we explain Japanese suppletion with the bottom-up nature of Vocabulary Insertion (Bobaljik, 2000) in Distributed Morphology. Japanese apparent “suppletion” turns out to be true suppletion based on availability of suppletion with idiomatic interpretation (Harley, 2014) and several theoretical implications are discussed.

Potential suppletion: Potential suppletion is one of few instances of suppletion in Japanese (Tagawa, 2014). Both heavy (1a) and light (1b) verbs *su* ‘do’ supplete as *deki* ‘do.POT’:

- (1) *Potential suppletion in Japanese*
- a. John-ga tennis-o {**deki*****sa-re**}-ru.
John-Nom tennis-Acc {do.POT|do-POT}-PRES
‘John can play tennis.’
 - b. John-ga heya-o sooji-{**deki*****sa-re**}-ru.
John-Nom room-Acc clean-{do.POT|do-POT}-PRES
‘John can clean a room.’

Notice that the analytic combination of the conjugated form *sa* and the potential morpheme *-re* is impossible (cf. ^{OK}*tabe-re-ru* ‘eat-POT-PRES’).

Honorific suppletion: Honorific suppletion is another instance of suppletion in Japanese. In the same vein, both heavy (2a) and light (2b) verbs *su* ‘do’ can be suppletive as *nasar* ‘do.HON’:

- (2) *Honorific suppletion in Japanese*
- a. Obama-ga tennis-o {**nasar*****o-si-ni-nar**}-u.
Obama-Nom tennis-Acc {do.HON|HON-do-Dat-become}-PRES
‘Obama plays tennis.’
 - b. Obama-ga heya-o sooji-{**nasar*****o-si-ni-nar**}-u.
Obama-Nom room-Acc clean-{do.HON|HON-do-Dat-become}-PRES
‘Obama cleans a room.’

Here again, the analytic combination of the conjugated form *si* and the honorific morpheme *o-* (Ivana & Sakai, 2007) is out (cf. ^{OK}*o-tabe-ni-nar-u* ‘HON-eat-Dat-become-PRES’).

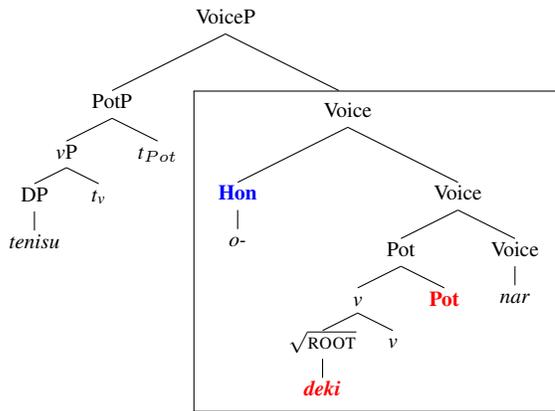
Dual suppletion: Which suppletion “wins” when suppletion of the verb *su* is doubly forced by potential and honorific? Interestingly, potential suppletion blocks honorific suppletion. In both heavy (3a) and light (3b) verb examples, the suppletive potential form *deki* appears with the analytic honorific form *o-V-ni-nar*, which would otherwise be impossible (2a-b):

- (3) *Potential suppletion blocks honorific suppletion*
- a. Obama-ga tennis-o {**o-deki-ni-nar*****nasar-are**}-_(r)u.
John-Nom tennis-Acc {HON-do.POT-Dat-become|do.HON-POT}-PRES
‘Obama can play tennis.’
 - b. Obama-ga heya-o sooji-{**o-deki-ni-nar*****nasar-are**}-_(r)u.
John-Nom room-Acc clean-{HON-do.POT-Dat-become|do.HON-POT}-PRES
‘Obama can clean a room.’

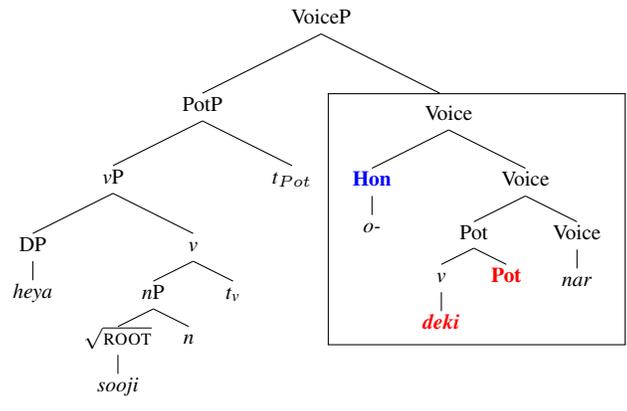
Chung (2007, 2009) observed that there exists a similar “dual suppletion” in Korean, where honorific suppletion blocks negative suppletion. Choi & Harley (2016) argued given the cyclic bottom-up locality of suppletion (Bobaljik, 2000) that Hon is closer to suppletive verbs than Neg in Korean.

Proposal: Extending Choi & Harley’s (2016) insight from Korean to Japanese, we propose that suppletion is modeled as Vocabulary Insertion (VI) in Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz, 1993) and Pot is closer to suppletive verbs than Hon in Japanese. In heavy verbs (4a), root supletes and undergoes head movement up to Voice generating the complex head (indicated as box), where root suppletion is locally triggered by Pot (the intervening little *v* is “pruned”; Embick, 2010). In light verbs (4b), little *v* supletes and undergoes head movement up to Voice with roots stranded (e.g. *sooji* ‘clean’), which is possible because roots are already categorized by little *n* (Sugimura, 2012; Tagawa, 2014). Hon is “dissociated morpheme” inserted post-syntactically before VI as left-adjoined to Voice (Bobaljik, 2008; Choi & Harley, 2016), deriving the correct word orders.

(4) a. *Heavy verb structure*



b. *Light verb structure*



Japanese “suppletion” = suppletion?: Borer (2014) may question whether apparent “suppletion” in Japanese is just an alternation of synonymous lexemes (e.g. *kill* vs. *massacre*). However, as argued by Harley (2014) and Choi & Harley (2016), this possibility can be falsified by suppletion with idiomatic interpretation because the same idiomatic interpretation is not expected for different lexemes (e.g. *kill two birds with one stone* vs. **massacre two birds with one stone*). In addition to the fact that both heavy and light verbs supplete in parallel, suppletion is available with idiomatic interpretations (e.g. *kuti-ni suru* ‘eat’):

(5) *Suppletion with idiomatic interpretation*

Saito-sensei-ga natto-o kuti-ni {deki|nasar}-ta.
 Saito-Prof-Nom natto-Acc mouth-Dat {do.POT|do.HON}-PAST
 ‘Prof.Saito could eat natto.’

Conclusion: If the proposal of this paper is correct, there are several theoretical implications. First, Japanese suppletion suggests that root suppletion does exist, supporting phonology-free syntax (Haugen & Siddiqi, 2013; Harley, 2014). Second, blocking of honorific suppletion by potential suppletion, in concert with the bottom-up nature of VI (Bobaljik, 2000), strongly indicates that Hon is higher than Pot in Japanese clausal architecture. To sum, typologically rare “dual suppletion” in Japanese and Korean should provide the novel insight to morphological theories in future.

Selected References: Choi, J. & Harley, H. (2016). Honorification in low and high places and its implications to the clausal architecture in Korean.; Chung, I. (2009). Suppletive verbal morphology in Korean and the mechanism of vocabulary insertion.; Ivana, A. & Sakai, H. (2007). Honorification and light verbs in Japanese.; Sugimura, M. (2012). Root vs. *n*.; Tagawa, T. (2014). Cycle-Sensitive Suppletion in Japanese.