

## A Principled Polysemy analysis of a Japanese goal marker in motion event constructions: The case of *-ni*

Mariko Uno  
Georgetown University

In this study, I analyze the distributional pattern of a goal marker *-ni* in Japanese motion event constructions. Researchers have observed that although *-ni* indicates the goal in motion event constructions, it can only occur with a particular class of motion verbs. Specifically, *-ni* only appears with path motion verbs (e.g., *noboru* [*ascend*]) example [1]); it cannot occur with manner motion verbs (e.g., *aruku* [*walk*]) example [2]) (Beavers, 2008). Previous studies investigating the distributional restrictions of *-ni* in motion event constructions represent *-ni* as simply a case marker whose distribution is governed by the verb, not considering the complex semantics of *-ni* and how they affect its distributional pattern in motion event constructions (cf. Beavers, 2008). However, analysis of *-ni* demonstrates that *-ni* has a wide range of meanings, such as temporal sense, causal sense, and supporting sense, suggesting that it is better understood as part of a complex polysemy network.

This study proposes that the full semantic structure of *-ni* is an important factor contributing to the specific distributional pattern the marker exhibits in motion event constructions. A Principled Polysemy analysis (Tyler & Evans, 2003) of *-ni* in and outside of motion event constructions provides evidence that *-ni* designates a spatial configuration in which an oriented TR is in contact with or proximal to a LM. When the spatial configuration is integrated with context of motion events, a constrained goal sense is derived. In particular, *-ni* designates motion events where a TR comes to be in contact with a LM. Part of the conceptualization of the TR having come into contact with the LM involves specification of the TR's path. Accordingly, *-ni* occurs with path motion verbs which highlight the path of motion. As in many languages, Japanese manner of motion verbs do not highlight path, thus *-ni* cannot occur with manner of motion verbs. Presumably this is because manner of motion verbs highlight manner leaving the path of motion to simply be implied. Note the anomaly of example (2). I argue that recognizing that *-ni* is a polysemous spatial particle, rather than simply a case marker provides a more systematic, motivated account of the distributional patterns of *-ni* in Japanese motion event constructions.

### Examples

- (1) Sentence with *-ni* and a path motion verb, *ascend*.

Taro-ga ni-kai *-ni* nobo-ta.  
Taro-TOP 2nd-CL.floor-to ascend.  
'Taro went up to the second floor.'

- (2) Sentence with *-ni* and a manner motion verb, *walk*.

?Taro-ga eki \**-ni* arui-ta.  
Taro-TOP station-to walked.  
'Taro walked to the station.'

### References

- Beavers, J. (2008). On the nature of goal marking and delimitation: Evidence from Japanese. *Journal of Linguistics*, 44, 283-316.
- Tyler, A., & Evans, V. (2003). *The semantics of English prepositions: Spatial scenes, embodied meaning and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.