

# On the Two Contracted Forms of the Japanese Copula: *Da* and the Zero Form

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## Phenomena

The Japanese copula has two present tense forms, *dearu* and *da*, as in (1).

- (1) Taro-wa isya dearu/da.  
Taro-Top doctor is

*Da* is the morphologically contracted form of *dearu* (Nishiyama (1999)).

I propose that the zero form of the copula is another morphologically contracted form of *dearu*. In what follows, a piece of evidence for this is provided: the distribution of *da* and the zero form. An empirically adequate descriptive generalization about the distribution of *da* has never been provided in previous literature. A complete picture can be drawn by taking into account the zero form. *Dearu* can contract iff (i) it is not used adnominally, and (ii) it is used in indicative clauses.

Nishiyama (1999) points out that *da* cannot appear if an element intervenes between *de* and *aru*. See (2).

- (2) Yoru-ga sizuka-de-mo-aru/\*da-mo (aru)  
night-Nom quiet-*de*-even-*aru/da*-even  
'The night is even quiet.' (Nishiyama (1999: 186))

However, many environments disallow *da* even if *de* and *aru* are adjacent. For example, in complements of modals such as *rasii/mitaida* 'seems' (3) and in clefts (4), *da* cannot appear.

- (3) Taro-wa gakusei dearu/\*da/∅ rasii/mitaida.  
Taro-Top student is seems (Narahara (2002: 157))
- (4) Taro-ga gakusei dearu/\*da/\*∅ no-wa kyuzitu dake da.  
Taro-Nom student is C-Top holidays only is

There are restrictions on the distribution of *da* other than adjacency.

## A New Generalization

The distribution of the contracted and the non-contracted forms are summarized in the table.

Environments	Copula				Adjectival predicate
	Non-contracted form	Contracted form			
	<i>dearu</i>	<i>da</i>	∅	<i>na</i>	
Main clauses	OK	OK	OK	*	-i
Subordinate interrogative clauses	OK	OK	OK	*	-i
Conditional clauses + <i>to</i> 'if'	OK	OK	*	*	-i
Adverbial clauses + <i>kara</i> 'because'	OK	OK	*	*	-i
Complement of <i>rasii</i> 'seem'	OK	*	OK	*	-i
Relative clauses	OK	*	OK	*	-i
Complement of <i>bekida</i> 'should'	OK	*	*	*	-kuaru
Subordinate clauses + <i>yoo(-ni)</i>	OK	*	*	*	-kuaru
Cleft constructions	OK	*	*	OK	-i
No <i>da</i> constructions	OK	*	*	OK	-i
Adverbial clauses + <i>node</i> 'because'	OK	*	*	OK	-i

We can naturally draw an interesting descriptive generalization about the distribution of the contracted forms of the copula. The environments are classified in two ways; whether *dearu* can be replaced with *na* and whether the

adjectival predicate takes the form *-i* or *-kuaru* (for example, *Taro-wa yasasi-i* ‘Taro is kind’ and *Taro-wa yasasi-kuaru bekida* ‘Taro should be kind’). The result is shown in the right hand of the table.

We observe from the table that neither *da* nor the zero form can appear in the environments where *na* can appear or where the adjectival predicate takes the form *-kuaru*. The following new descriptive generalization thus is drawn.

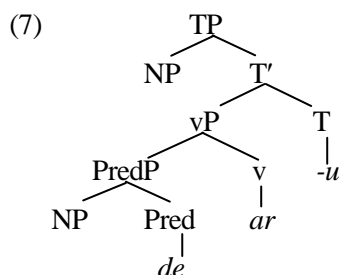
- (5) *Dearu* can contract either into *da* or into the zero form iff
- (i) *dearu* cannot be replaced with *na*, and
  - (ii) the adjectival predicate takes the form *-i*.

### Analysis

I treat the environments where the adjectival predicate takes the form *-i* as indicative clauses, following Watanabe (in press). *Na* is the adnominal form of *dearu* (although it is questionable whether the *na* form of the copula which appears in the environments in question is the adnominal form; the apparently “nominal-like” *no* in clefts, *no da* constructions, and *node* ‘because’ actually seems to be a Complementizer. If so, the fact that the copula appears in its “adnominal” form when a Complementizer follows it is puzzling. The status of the *na* form is to be investigated in future research.). The descriptive generalization is restated:

- (6) *Dearu* can contract iff
- (i) it is not used adnominally, and
  - (ii) it is used in indicative clauses.

The contracted form cannot appear in the environments where *na* can appear because *da* and the zero form are the sentence-final forms. The reason why the contracted forms can appear only in indicative clauses is explained straightforwardly if we assume the structure (7) (Nishiyama (1999) and Watanabe (in press)) for *dearu*.



I propose that *dearu* contracts with an element in the CP structure, which exists only in indicative clauses. The copula thus cannot contract in subjunctive clauses, which have a smaller structure than indicative clauses, or in clefts, for example, which have a structure only up to FinP (Hiraiwa & Ishihara (2002)).

The contraction to *da* is attributable to optional Fusion as Nishiyama (1999) proposes. The item *da* may be deleted after insertion due to a phonological operation. The copula is covert in this case.

In sum, the idea that both *da* and the zero form are the morphologically contracted forms of the copula enables us to draw an empirically adequate descriptive generalization about the distribution of the contracted forms of the copula.

**References:** [1] Hiraiwa, Ken and Shinichiro Ishihara (2002) “Missing Links: Cleft, Sluicing, and ‘No Da’ Construction in Japanese,” *MITWPL* 43, 35-54. [2] Narahara, Tomiko (2002) *The Japanese Copula: Forms and Functions*. [3] Nishiyama, Kunio (1999) “Adjectives and the Copulas in Japanese,” *JEAL* 8, 183-222. [4] Watanabe, Akira (in press) “Measure Phrase Modification in the Extended Projection of Adjectives,” *Proceedings of Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 20.