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## *Betsu* and *Betsubetsu*: Their Different Interpretations

Yuta Tatsumi

### 1. Introduction

In this paper, I give a concise description of the Japanese equivalents for the English *different*, i.e., *betsu* and *betsubetsu*. Various properties of the English *different* have been discussed under the rubric of ‘distributivity’ and ‘reciprocity’ (Carlson 1987, Moltmann 1992, Beghelli 1995, Beck 2000). Given the enormously complicated properties of these concepts, it is premature to contemplate a semantic analysis of *betsu* and *betsubetsu* in this short paper. However, I hope that the data provided in this paper will help us to complete the arduous work.

### 2. Similarities and Differences between *Betsu* and *Betsubetsu*

First of all, let us look at some similarities between *betsu* and *betsubetsu*. Both *betsu* and *betsubetsu* cannot directly denote a person or an object, as shown in (1a,b).<sup>1,2</sup> They are typically used as a prenominal modifier, as shown in (2).

- (1) a. \* *betsu/\*betsubetsu-ga* [ *futa-tsu-no teebaru]-o mochiage-ta.  
RECIP/RECIP-NOM two-CL-GEN table-ACC lift-PAST  
'A different person/different persons lifted two tables.'*
- b. \* [ *futa-ri-no otoko]-ga* *betsu/betsubetsu-o* mochiage-ta.  
two-CL-GEN man-NOM RECIP/RECIP-ACC lift-PAST  
'Two men lifted a different object/different objects.'
- (2) a. [ *betsu/betsubetsu-no otoko]-ga* [ *futa-tsu-no teebaru]-o mochiage-ta.  
RECIP/RECIP-GEN man-NOM two-CL-GEN table-ACC lift-PAST  
'A different man/different men lifted two tables.'*
- b. [ *futa-ri-no otoko]-ga* [ *betsu/betsubetsu-no teebaru]-o* mochiage-ta.  
two-CL-GEN man-NOM RECIP/RECIP-GEN table-ACC lift-PAST  
'Two men lifted a different table/different tables.'

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: ACC = accusative case; CL = classifier; C = complementizer; COP = copula; GEN = genitive case; INDET = indeterminate; LOC = locative; NOM = nominative case; PRES = present tense; RECIP = reciprocal; Q = question

<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I make use of the abbreviation RECIP as a gloss for both *betsu* and *betsubetsu* though it is their very nature that I attempt to ascertain in this paper.

Although *betsu* and *betsubetsu* behave alike with respect to syntactic environments in which they can be used, there is a difference between them in that only *betsubetsu* requires that the noun phrase it modifies be interpreted as plural. For example, more than one teacher must praise Taro in (3a) and more than one table must be wiped by Taro in (3b).

- (3) a. [betsubetsu-no sensei]-ga (dooji-ni) Taro-o home-ta.  
           RECIP-GEN teacher-NOM the.same.time-at Taro-ACC praise-PAST  
           'Different teachers praised Taro (at the same time).'  
       b. Taro-ga [betsubetsu-no teeburu]-o (dooji-ni) fui-ta.  
           Taro-NOM RECIP-GEN table-ACC the.same.time-at wipe-PAST  
           'Taro wiped different tables (at the same time).'

This requirement is accurately observed when we use a numeral modifier which forces a noun phrase to denote a single object. If such a numeral modifier appears with *betsubetsu*, the resulting sentence is unintelligible, as shown in (4).

- (4) a. \* [betsubetsu-no sensei hito-ri-dake]-ga Taro-o home-ta.  
           RECIP-GEN teacher one-CL-only-NOM Taro-ACC praise-PAST  
           'Only one different teacher praised Taro.'  
       b. \* Taro-ga [betsubetsu-no teeburu hito-ts-u-dake]-o fui-ta.  
           Taro-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-ACC wipe-PAST  
           'Taro wiped only one different table.'

The unacceptability of (4a,b) shows that *betsubetsu* must be related to a plural noun phrase. Note that this requirement does not hold of *betsu*, as shown in (5). In (5a), the subject phrase can denote a single teacher, and in (5b) we can conceive of the object referent as a single table.

- (5) a. [betsu-no sensei hito-ri-dake]-ga Taro-o home-ta.  
           RECIP-GEN teacher one-CL-only-NOM Taro-ACC praise-PAST  
           'Only one different teacher praised Taro.'  
       b. Taro-ga [betsu-no teeburu hito-ts-u-dake]-o fui-ta.  
           Taro-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-ACC wipe-PAST  
           'Taro wiped only one different table.'

The data so far indicate that only *betsubetsu* must be related to a plural noun phrase. However, we can ameliorate the unacceptability of (4a,b) by introducing an extra plurality of individuals, as shown in (6).

- (6) a. [ *betsubetsu*-no sensei hito-ri-dake]-ga [ Taro-to John]-o home-ta.  
           RECIP-GEN teacher one-CL-only-NOM Taro-and John-ACC praise-PAST  
           'Only one different teacher praised Taro and John.'
- b. [ Taro-to John]-ga [ *betsubetsu*-no teebaru hito-ts-u-dake]-o fui-ta.  
           Taro-and John-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-ACC wipe-PAST  
           'Taro and John wiped only one different table.'

In (6a), the subject is interpreted as a plural noun phrase despite of the presence of the numeral modifier *hito-ri-dake* 'only one', which forces the noun phrase to denote a single person. Similarly, the object phrase in (6b) can denote more than one table. These examples indicate that the licensing requirement of *betsubetsu* can be satisfied by introducing plurality into a sentence from some place other than the noun phrase that *betsubetsu* modifies.

Note further that there are some restrictions on the amelioration in question: An extra plural element cannot be separated from *betsubetsu* by island boundaries. Thus, the unacceptability of (7a) is not improved when *betsubetsu* is embedded in a relative clause, as shown in (7b).

- (7) a. \* Hanako-ga [ *betsubetsu*-no teebaru hito-ts-u-dake]-ni hako-o oi-ta.  
           Hanako-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-LOC box-ACC put-PAST  
           'Hanako put a box on only one different table.'
- b. \* [ Taro-to John]-wa [[Hanako-ga [ *betsubetsu*-no teebaru hito-ts-u-dake]-ni  
           Taro-and John-TOP Hanako-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-LOC  
           oi-ta] hako]-o mi-ta.  
           put-PAST box-ACC see-PAST  
           'Taro and John saw the box that Hanako put on one different table.'

Note further that as shown in (8a) when *betsubetsu* is combined with a singular proper noun, the resulting sentence is unacceptable. What is special about this sentence is the fact that it cannot be remedied by the presence of an extra plural noun phrase, as shown in (8b).

- (8) a. \* [ *betsubetsu*-no Hanako]-ga Taro-o home-ta.  
           RECIP-GEN Hanako-NOM Taro-ACC praise-PAST  
           'Lit. a different Hanako praised Taro.'
- b. \* [ *betsubetsu*-no Hanako]-ga [ Taro-to John]-o home-ta.  
           RECIP-GEN Hanako-NOM Taro-and John-ACC praise-PAST  
           'different Hanako praised Taro and John.'

I suspect that the unacceptability of (8a,b) comes from the fact that a rigid designator cannot provide a set of atoms that could be a basis of the comparison introduced by *betsubetsu*, in contrast to bare common nouns in Japanese.<sup>3</sup>

To recapitulate, the upshot of this section is (i) that *betsu* and *betsubetsu* behave alike with respect to syntactic environments in which they can be used; and (ii) that *betsubetsu* cannot be separated from a plural element by island boundaries.

### 3. “Different” Interpretations

*Betsu* and *betsubetsu* show some differences with regard to their possible interpretations. Before embarking on a discussion, let me clarify the terms to be used in what follows. Beck (2000) distinguishes four interpretations of English *different*. Let us first consider the sentence (9a), which is ambiguous between a discourse anaphoric interpretation (DAI) and a reciprocal interpretation (RI). Paraphrases of the two interpretations are given in (9b) and (9c).

- (9) a. Frank likes different books.  
b. ***Discourse anaphoric interpretation (DAI)***  
Frank likes books different from some salient books.  
c. ***Reciprocal interpretation (RI)***  
Frank likes books that are different from each other. (Beck 2000: 103)

On the discourse anaphoric interpretation, the books that John likes are compared with some previously mentioned or contextually salient books. On the reciprocal interpretation, the sentence is true without presupposing such discourse salient books. What is noteworthy about this interpretation is that we must conceive that John likes more than one book.

In addition to DAI and RI, the sentence (10a) receives another interpretation that I refer to as an NP dependent interpretation (NPDI). Each interpretation that (10a) can receive is represented in (10b-d).

- (10) a. Frank and Bärbel bought different books.  
b. ***DAI***  
Frank and Bärbel bought books different from some salient books.  
c. ***RI***  
Frank and Bärbel bought books that are different from each other.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that these sentences can mean that different persons who have the name ‘Hanako’ praised Taro/Taro and John. See Chierchia (1998) for the assumption that kinds are lexically pluralized.

d. ***NP dependent interpretation (NPDI)***

The books that Frank bought are different from the books that Bärbel bought.

(Beck 2000: 104)

The NPDI is different from the RI in that on the former reading the comparison introduced by *different* is established based on the subject definite plural NP *Frank and Bärbel*. In this paper, I refer to such an expression as an antecedent of *different*-NPs. If the antecedent of a *different*-NP is a quantifier phrase as in (11a), the resulting sentence receives a Q-bound interpretation (QBI). On the QBI, *different*-NPs distribute over the members of a set introduced by a quantifier phrase.

- (11) a. Every boy bought a different book.

b. ***DAI***

Every boy bought a book different from some salient book.

c. ***Q-bound interpretation (QBI)***

Every boy bought a book different from the book that every other boy bought.

(Beck 2000: 104)

Now, let us consider the interpretation of *betsu*. As shown in (12), *betsu* is ambiguous between the DAI and the RI when there are no extra plural NPs or QPs in the sentence.

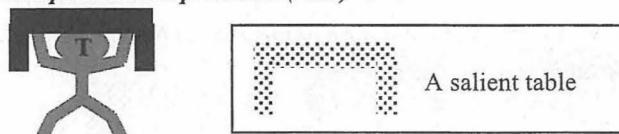
- (12) a. Taro-ga [betsu-no teebaru]-o mochiage-ta.

Taro-NOM BETSU-GEN table-ACC lift-PAST

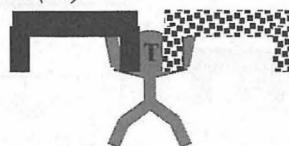
'Taro lifted a different table/different tables.'

(✓DAI, ✓RI, \*NPDI, \*QBI)

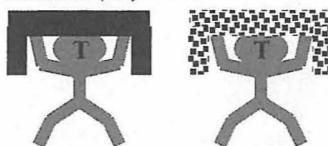
b. ***Discourse Anaphoric Interpretation (DAI)***



c. ***Reciprocal Interpretation (RI)***



d. ***Reciprocal Interpretation (RI)***



On the DAI, Taro lifted a table different from a contextually salient one, as illustrated in (12b). On the RI, Taro lifted some tables that are different from each other. The RI is compatible with the situation in which Taro lifted two different tables at the same time as in (12c) or the situation in which Taro lifted two different tables one by one as in (12d).

It is important to keep in mind that like English *different* the RI of *betsu* requires that the modified noun phrase should be conceived of as plural. The RI is ruled out when we use a numeral modifier which forces a common noun to denote a single object, as shown in (13).

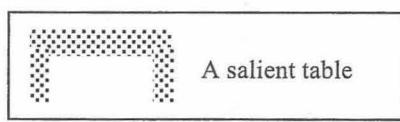


It is well-known that Japanese bare common nouns receive various interpretations such as definite, indefinite, singular and plural. I attribute the ambiguity in (12a) to the various interpretations of Japanese bare common nouns. To be more precise, *betsu* could be ambiguous depending on the singular/plural distinction of a noun phrase which it modifies. In what follows, I make use of the numeral modifier *hito-tsu-dake* ‘only one’ when we have to remove the potential ambiguity between the DAI and the RI.

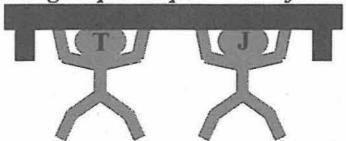
*Betsu* behaves just like English *different* in that it can receive the NPDI when there is a definite plural antecedent, as shown in (14).



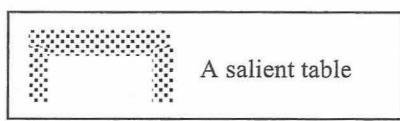
### A salient table



c. *DAI with a group interpretation of the subject NP*



### A salient table



d. *NPDI*



Note that the source of the NPDI is different from the RI even though the situation (14d), in which the NPDI is true, is apparently similar to the situation (12d). In (14a), the RI is ruled out because the numeral modifier *hito-tsu-dake* is used. Thus, the NPDI of *betsu* in (14a) is ascribed to the presence of the subject definite plural NP.

So far, *betsu* behaves just like English *different* with respect to its interpretations, and it is natural to expect that we can obtain the QBI of *betsu* when an antecedent of *betsu* is a quantifier phrase. Before taking a closer look at the data on the QBI, we have to clear up the question as to the Japanese equivalent for English *every/each*. This is because only distributive quantifiers such as *every* and *each* can function as an antecedent of a *different*-NP, as shown in (15).

- (15) a. Every student read a different book. ( $\checkmark$ QBL)  
 b. All the students read a different book. (??QBI) (Beghelli 1995: 149)

Based on the compatibility with collective predicates, I assume that Japanese indeterminate noun phrases are proper equivalents for English *every/each* NPs. Beghelli (1995) points out that distributive universal quantifiers are incompatible with a collective predicate such as *surround* and *compare*, as shown in (16b) and (17b).

- (16) a. Ten soldiers surrounded the house.  
 b. \* Every/Each soldier surrounded the house. (Beghelli 1995: 83)  
 (17) a. Jane compared the men/ten men.  
 b. \* Jane compared every/each man. (Beghelli 1995: 83)

When we apply these tests to some Japanese noun phrases which apparently have quantificational force, only the indeterminate noun phrases behave like English *every/each* NPs, as shown in (18c) and (19c).

- (18) a. [zen'in]-ga [sono ie]-o torikakon-da.  
 everyone-NOM the house-ACC surround-PAST  
 'Everyone surrounded the house.'  
 b. [subete-no otoko]-ga [sono ie]-o torikakon-da.  
 all-GEN man-NOM the house-ACC surround-PAST  
 'All the men surrounded the house.'  
 c. \* [dono otoko]-mo [sono ie]-o torikakon-da.  
 INDET man-Q the house-ACC surround-PAST  
 'Any man surrounded the house.'

- (19) a. Taro-ga [zen'in]-o hikaku-shi-ta  
           Taro-NOM everyone-ACC comparison-do-PAST  
           ‘Taro compared everyone.’

b. Taro-ga [subete-no otoko]-o hikaku-shi-ta  
           Taro-NOM all-GEN man-ACC comparison-do-PAST  
           ‘Taro compared all the men.’

c. \* Taro-ga [dono otoko]-mo hikaku-shi-ta.  
           Taro-NOM INDET man-Q comparison-do-PAST  
           ‘Taro compared any house.’

Based on these examples, I consider Japanese indeterminate noun phrases to be equivalents for English *every/each* in the sense that they can function as antecedents of *betsu*-NPs.

Now let us turn to the QBI of *betsu*. (20a) is ambiguous between DAI and QBI. Suppose that the group of men introduced by the indeterminate noun phrase consists of *x*, *y* and *z*. On the DAI, the sentence expresses the situation (20b). On the other hand, when the sentence expresses the situation (20c), we can say that it has the QBI. The comparison introduced by *betsu* is determined with respects to the members of the group.

- (20) a. [dono otoko]-mo [betsu-no teebaru hito-ts]-o mochiage-ta.  
 INDET man-Q BETSU-GEN table one-CL-ACC lift-PAST  
 'Every man lifted one different table.' ( $\checkmark$ DAI, \*RI, \*NPDI,  $\checkmark$ QBI)

b. *DAI*  
 A salient table

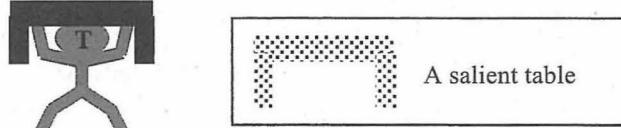
c. *QBI*  


To recapitulate, the data in this section show that *betsu* has the four interpretations that are available to English *different*. In this respect, *betsu* is a precise equivalent for English *different*.

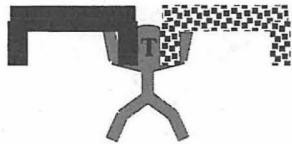
In contrast to *betsu*, *betsubetsu* does not receive a DAI. Thus, the sentence (21a) only receives the RI such as (21c,d) and cannot be used to express the situation (21b).

- (21) a. Taro-ga [betsubetsu-no teebaru]-o mochiage-ta.  
           Taro-NOM RECIP-GEN table-ACC lift-PAST  
           ‘Taro lifted different tables.’ (\*DAI, ✓RI, \*NPDI, \*QBI)

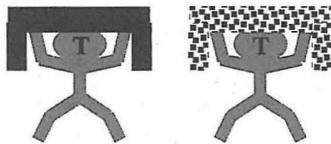
b. **DAI**



c. **RI**



d. **RI**



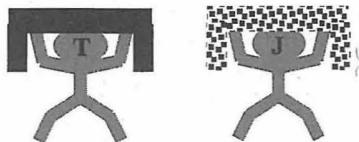
The absence of the DAI in (21) is accurately observed when we exclude the RI by attaching a numeral modifier such as *hito-tsude* ‘only one’ to a noun phrase, as shown in (22). Since *betsubetsu* cannot resort to the DAI, the resulting sentence has no available interpretations.

- (22) \* Taro-ga [betsubetsu-no teebaru hito-tsude]-o mochiage-ta.  
           Taro-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-ACC lift-PAST  
           ‘Taro lifted only one different table.’ (\*DAI, \*RI, \*NPDI, \*QBI)

The unacceptability of the sentence (22) is improved by substituting the subject phrase with a definite plural NP. This is because a definite plural NP makes it possible for the sentence to receive the NPDI, as shown in (23).

- (23) a. [Taro-to John]-ga [betsubetsu-no teebaru hito-tsude]-o mochiage-ta.  
           Taro-and John-NOM RECIP-GEN table one-CL-ACC lift-PAST  
           ‘Taro and John lifted only one different table.’ (\*DAI, \*RI, ✓NPDI, \*QBI)

b. **NPDI**



In a similar vein, a Japanese indeterminate noun phrase ameliorates the unacceptability of (22) by licensing the QBI, as shown in (24). Suppose that the group of men introduced by the indeterminate noun phrase consists of  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$ .

- (24) a. [dono otoko]-mo [betsubetsu-no teeburu hito-ts-u-dake]-o mochiage-ta.  
 INDET man-Q RECIP-GEN table one-CL-only-ACC lift-PAST  
 'Any man lifted only one different table.' (\*DAI, \*RI, \*NPDI, ✓QBI)
- b. **QBI**



In short, what is special about *betsubetsu* is that it does not have the DAI, unlike *betsu*.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have observed (i) that *betsubetsu* cannot be separated from a plural element by island boundaries; (ii) that *betsu* allows a sentence to have the DAI, the RI, the NPDI and the QBI; and (iii) that *betsubetsu* is compatible with the RI, the NPDI and the QBI, but not with the DAI. One obvious future direction of research is to make a detailed formal analysis of these properties. I conceive that they could be analyzed in terms of the semantics of distributivity and reciprocity.

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<sup>4</sup> Note that Takano (2004) independently observes that *betsubetsu* does not receive the sentence-external reading in the sense discussed in Carlson (1987).