

[Article]

# A Note on the Japanese Focus Particle *Bakari*\*

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## 1. Introduction

The Japanese particle *bakari* in (1a) has been classified into a group of focus particles expressing *limit* by traditional grammarians, on the widely held assumption that it is a marker for *limit* or *exclusion* (Kikuchi (1983), Morita (1971), Noda (1995), Numata (1986, 2000), Sadanobu (2001, 2003), to name a few).<sup>1</sup> The example in (1a) indicates that people who came to the party were almost limited to boys. This function is similar to that of another Japanese particle *dake* in (1b), which roughly corresponds to *only* in English.

- (1) a. Otokonoko-*bakari*-ga sono paatii-ni ki-ta.  
boy-bakari-Nom the party-to come-Past  
'People who came to that party were mostly boys.'
- b. Otokonoko-*dake*-ga sono paatii-ni ki-ta.  
boy-only-Nom the party-to come-Past  
'Only boys came to that party.'

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Previous studies focused on describing similarities and differences between *bakari* and other particles indicating *limit* such as *dake*.

Against this background, the present paper addresses theoretical issues posed by syntactic distributions of the focus particle *bakari*. More specifically, implications of the contrast in (2) and (3) are the main theme of this paper.

- (2) a. John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-*bakari*-(o) sasi-ta.  
John-Nom conversation-Dat water-*bakari*-(Acc) pour-Past  
'lit. What John did was mostly putting damper on the conversation.'
- b. \*John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-*dake*-(o) sasi-ta.  
John-Nom conversation-Dat water-only-(Acc) pour-Past  
'John put only a damper on the conversation.'
- (3) a. John-ga hi-ni abura-*bakari*-(o) sosoi-da.  
John-Nom fire-Dat oil-*bakari*-(Acc) pour-Past  
'lit. What John did was mostly adding oil to fire.'
- b. \*John-ga hi-ni abura-*dake*-(o) sosoi-da.  
John-Nom fire-Dat oil-only-(Acc) pour-Past  
'John always added oil to fire.'

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 identifies an empirical problem with VP scope of the focus particle *bakari* under the current minimalist program. Section 3 discusses relevant properties of *bakari*, and argues that it can be best analyzed as involving generic quantification over events but not individuals. Consequently, the contrast is no longer regarded as evidence for covert raising of *bakari*. Section 4 argues that the contrast should be attributed to idiosyncratic properties of *bakari*, claiming that *bakari* is associated with an event argument of the verb in (2a) and (3a).

## 2. Problems with VP-scope of Focus Particles

This section briefly discusses a theory-internal problem with the contrast in (2) and (3) under the current minimalist program.

## 2.1. Elimination of the LF Component

The minimalist program has seriously asked a question of how well human language is designed. Given a general consensus that “being well-designed” is somehow related to computational efficiency, a corollary is that the computational system of human language is strictly local and derivational.

Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2004) introduces the notion of *phase*, which ensures cyclic syntactic derivation. CP and *v*P are supposed to be a phase. Technical details aside, a phase constitutes a closed computational unit and computation proceeds phase by phase. Once a phase is completed, its head becomes inert and triggers no further operations. Notice that under this phase-based approach, there is no room for an operation which applies in an independent covert component, such as LF or the covert syntax. In the phase-based computational model, which can be regarded as an instance of a single cycle model, the covert Cycle no longer exists.

Eliminating the covert Cycle raises a new issue. How can we treat so-called LF phenomena, such as covert Quantifier Raising, without recourse to covert operations? In this respect, association with focus in Japanese seems an interesting phenomenon to look at, because Aoyagi (1994, 1998, 1999) argues that covert operations are involved in association with focus in Japanese.

## 2.2. On VP-scope of the Particle *Dake*

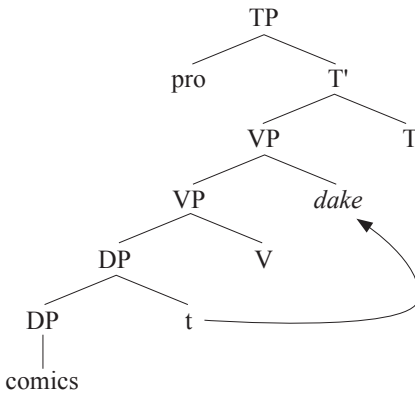
Aoyagi (1994, 1998, 1999) observes that (4b) has the same reading as (4a), arguing that *dake* moves to a position in which it can take VP scope.

- (4) a. John-wa [<sub>VP</sub> manga-o yon]-da-*dake*-de zenzen benkyoo-si-nakat-ta.  
 John-Top comics-Acc read-only at all study-do-not-Past  
 ‘John only read comics and did not study at all.’
- b. John-wa [<sub>VP</sub> manga-*dake* yon]-de zenzen benkyoo-si-nakat-ta.  
 John-Top comics-only read at all study-do-not-Past  
 ‘lit. John read only comics and did not study at all.’

(Aoyagi 1998: 160-161)

The second clause *zenzen benkyoo-si-nakatta* ‘John did not study at all’ in the two examples would be intended to indicate that the VP is focused in both examples. In order for a focus sensitive operator to be associated with a focused item, the former has to c-command the latter. In (4b), this structural requirement is not satisfied in overt syntax. Aoyagi argues that *dake* in (4b) undergoes covert movement to a position from which it can c-command the VP. The alleged covert movement of *dake* in (4b) could be illustrated as in (5):

(5) Covert movement of *dake*



It should also be noted that exactly the same observation can be obtained even in examples involving *bakari*, which are given in (6).

- (6) a. John-wa [<sub>VP</sub> manga-o yon]-de-*bakari*-de zenzen benkyoo-si-nakat-ta.  
 John-Top comics-Acc read-*bakari* at all study-do-not-Past  
 ‘lit. What he did was mostly reading comics and he did not study at all.’
- b. John-wa [<sub>VP</sub> manga-*bakari*-(o) yon]-de zenzen benkyoo-si-nakat-ta.  
 John-Top comics-*bakari*-(Acc) read at all study-do-not-Past  
 ‘lit. What he read was mostly comics, and he did not study at all.’

In short, the examples in (4) and (6) can be regarded as an empirical problem with the claim that the independent covert Cycle does not exist. A

question then is whether the alleged VP scope is real or not.

### 2.3. Counterarguments by Hoshi and Miyoshi (2008)

Hoshi (2006) and Hoshi and Miyoshi (2008) put forth a derivational analysis of the Japanese focus particle *dake*, claiming that the association with focus is established derivationally, without recourse to any operations in the covert syntax. The claim is mainly substantiated by two arguments against raising of *dake* at LF (Aoyagi (1994, 1998, 1999)).

Their first argument against raising of *dake* is related to the intended interpretation of (4b). They argue that (4b) does not imply that *dake* takes VP scope, because the test used here only checks the compatibility of the two propositions in a sentence. The two propositions in (4b) ‘*John read only comics*’ and *John did not study at all*) are compatible irrespective of whether *dake* takes VP scope or not. Even if *dake* does not take VP scope, the first proposition *John read only comics* is still compatible with the second proposition. The point is that the first proposition does not specify the possibility of whether John did anything other than reading comics. If correct, this observation implies, contra to Aoyagi (1998), that (4b) is no longer evidence for covert raising of *dake*.

Second, there are cases suggesting the absence of LF raising of *dake*. Hoshi and Miyoshi (2005, 2008) demonstrate this by using the nature of idiom chunks. A part of an idiom is not a semantic primitive in its own right. This entails that we cannot focus a part of an idiom, because a focused item, by definition, must denote something, in order to be contrasted with other entities. If the particle *dake* could undergo covert movement to an appropriate position where it can associate with the whole idiomatic VP, we predict that it ought to be able to attach to a relevant part of an idiom. But this is not the case, as shown by (7b) and (8b):

- (7) a. John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-o sasi-ta.  
 John-Nom conversation-Dat water-Acc pour-Past  
 ‘John put a damper on the conversation.’

- b. \*John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-*dake* -(o) sasi-ta.  
 John-Nom conversation-Dat water-only-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘lit. John put only a damper on the conversation.’
- (8) a. John-ga hi-ni abura-o sosoi-da.  
 John-Nom fire-Dat oil-Acc pour-Past  
 ‘John added oil to fire.’
- b. \*John-ga hi-ni abura-*dake*-(o) sosoi-da.  
 John-Nom fire-Dat oil-only-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘John only added oil to fire.’

#### 2.4. *Bakari* Might Support the Covert Cycle?

However, Hoshi and Miyoshi’s argument against covert raising of *dake* is not entirely successful, since their second argument cannot be applied to examples with *bakari*.<sup>2</sup>

- (9) a. John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-*bakari*-(o) sasi-ta.  
 John-Nom conversation-Dat water-*bakari*-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘lit. What John did was mostly putting damper on the conversation.  
 (=2a))
- b. John-ga hi-ni abura-*bakari*-(o) sosoi-da.  
 John-Nom fire-Dat oil-*bakari*-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘lit. What John did was mostly adding oil to fire.’ (=3a))

The acceptability of (9) could mean that *bakari* but not *dake* can undergo covert raising to a position in which it can take scope over the entire idiomatic VP.

Note, however, that there is independent evidence to suggest that *bakari* never undergoes covert movement. *Bakari* cannot stay in the scope of clause-mate negation as shown in (10b).

- (10) a. John-ga ringo-*bakari*-(o) tabe-ta.  
 John-Nom apples-*bakari*-(Acc) eat-Past  
 ‘lit. What John ate were mostly apples.’

- b. ??John-ga ringo-*bakari*-(o) tabe-nakat-ta.  
 John-Nom apples-*bakari*-(Acc) eat-not-Past  
 ‘(i) What John did not ate were mostly apples.’ (neg < *bakari*\*)  
 ‘(ii) It is not the case that what John did ate were mostly apples.’  
 (neg > *bakari* ??)

If *bakari* in (10b) could undergo covert movement like Quantifier Raising in English, the reading in (10bi) would be available and the sentence should be acceptable. However, as a matter of fact, *bakari* cannot take scope over negation in (10b), which strongly suggests that *bakari* never undergoes covert movement.

So a real question is why the examples in (9) are acceptable. Given the standard view that meanings of idioms are not predictable from literal meaning of their part, a corollary, then, is that a part of an idiom cannot be modified or focused since it does not have a meaning in its own right. What is predicted is that the examples in (9) would be unacceptable.

In what follows, we argue that the acceptability of the examples in (9) should be attributed to idiosyncratic properties of the particle *bakari*, by demonstrating that it is best analyzed as involving generic quantification over events.

### 3. On Two Properties of *Bakari*

This section examines two relevant properties of the particle *bakari*: (non)-exhaustivity and plurality requirement. It reveals that generic but not universal quantification is involved in the semantics of *bakari* and it quantifies over events but not individuals.

#### 3.1. (Non)-Exhaustivity: *Bakari* as a Generic Quantifier

*Bakari* and *dake* can be used to express limit in a general sense, but only *dake* contains an exhaustive operator. It has been reported that unlike *dake*, *bakari* allows for exceptions (Kikuchi (1983), Morita (1971), Sadanobu

(2001, 2003), and among others). This is one important difference between *dake* and *bakari*. *Dake*, like *only* in English, is an exhaustive operator, whereas *bakari* is a generic operator.

Consider the scenario in (11).

(11) Mary went to the party and enjoyed seven canapés and one stuffed olive.

Under the scenario in (11), the utterance in (12a) is true but (12b) is false, which indicates *bakari* does not require exhaustive interpretations. Thus, it cannot be a universal quantifier in the strict sense.<sup>3</sup>

- (12) a. Mary-ga kanappe-*bakari*-(o) tabe-ta.  
Mary-Nom canapé-*bakari*-(Acc) eat-Past  
'What Mary ate were mostly canapés.'
- b. Mary-ga kanappe-*dake*-(o) tabeta.  
Mary-Nom canapés-only-(Acc) eat-Past  
'Mary ate only canapés.'

Now consider a different scenario. Under the situation in (13), both (12a) and (12b) are false.

(13) Mary went to the party and enjoyed three canapés and four stuffed olives.

The truth-value judgment about (12a) strongly suggests that generic quantification is involved in the semantics of *bakari*.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2. Plurality Requirement

If *bakari* can be regarded as a generic quantifier, what does it quantify over? This section develops the observation that *bakari* requires plural events (Kikuchi (1983) and Sadanobu (2001)) arguing that it quantifies over events.

Let us start with (14):



- (14) a. *Otokonoko-bakari-ga sono paatii-ni ki-ta (koto).*  
 boy-*bakari*-Nom the party-to come-Past fact  
 ‘lit. persons who came to the party were mostly boys.’
- b. *Otokonoko-dake-ga sono paatii-ni ki-ta (koto).*  
 boy-only-Nom the party-to come-Past fact  
 ‘Only boys came to the party.’

Due to the plurality requirement on *bakari* (Sadanobu (2001)), *otokonoko* in (14a) has to be interpreted as plural. On the other hand, *otokonoko* in (14b) can be interpreted as singular, because such a requirement is not imposed on *dake*. However, it is not clear enough whether *bakari* requires plural events or plural participants. We need to test sentences with *bakari* in a different context.

Consider (15), which indicates that *bakari* is incompatible with a single event reading.

- (15) <single event>
- a. \**John-bakari-ga sono paatii-ni ki-ta (koto).*  
 Jon-*bakari*-Nom the party-to come-Past fact  
 ‘lit. A person who came to that party was mostly John.’
- b. *John-dake-ga sono paatii-ni ki-ta (koto).*  
 John-only-Nom the party-to come-Past fact  
 ‘Only John came to the party.’

Suppose that *sono paatii* ‘the party’ was held only once and *John* is a unique entity in the discourse. (14a) and (15a) differ in plurality of the subject. In (14a), the subject can be interpreted as plural, whereas in (15a), this option is unavailable because *John* has to denote a single entity.

Now consider (16). The acceptability of (16) indicates that what is required is plurality of events but not plurality of particular participants:

- (16) John-*bakari-ga* sono kooen-o otozure-ta.  
 John-bakari-Nom the park-Acc visit-Past  
 ‘lit. A person who visited that park was mostly John.’

The example in (16) implies plural events. It presupposes that *John* visited that park at least several times. Thus, the acceptability of (16) indicates that plurality of participants does not affect the acceptability of sentences with *bakari*.

If *bakari* requires plural events, the predicate should be eventive.<sup>5,6</sup> Then, a further prediction is that *bakari* is incompatible with individual-level predicates, which are not equipped with an event argument. This prediction seems to be verified by (17) and (18):

- (17) a. \*Ninensei-*bakari-ga* kasikoi (koto).  
 second year student-*bakari*-Nom be intelligent (fact)  
 ‘lit. Almost all the students that are intelligent are second year students.’  
 b. \*Ninensei-*bakari-ga* se-ga-takai (koto).  
 second year student-*bakari*-Nom be tall (fact)  
 ‘lit. Almost all the students that are tall are second year students.’  
 c. \*Ninensei-*bakari-ga* ki-ga-mijikai (koto).  
 second year student-*bakari*-Nom be short-tempered (fact)  
 ‘lit. Almost all the students that are short-tempered are second year students.’
- (18) a. \*John-*bakari-ga* kasikoi (koto).  
 John-*bakari*-Nom be intelligent (fact)  
 ‘lit. John is almost always intelligent.’  
 b. \*John-*bakari-ga* se-ga-takai (koto).  
 John-*bakari*-Nom be tall (fact)  
 ‘lit. John is almost always tall.’  
 c. \*John-*bakari-ga* ki-ga-mijikai (koto).  
 John-*bakari*-Nom be short-tempered (fact)  
 ‘lit. John is almost always short-tempered.’

Before closing this subsection, it would be better to briefly discuss data that involves *dake* in terms of the plurality requirement on events. Unlike *bakari*, such a requirement is not imposed on a sentence with *dake*. Observe (19) and (20):

- (19) a. *Ninensei-dake-ga*                      *kasikoi*              (koto).  
           second year student-*only*-Nom be intelligent (fact)  
           ‘Only second year students are intelligent.’
- b. *Ninensei-dake-ga*                      *se-ga-takai* (koto).  
           second year student-*only*-Nom be tall              (fact)  
           ‘Only second year students are tall.’
- c. *Ninensei-dake-ga*                      *ki-ga-mijikai*              (koto).  
           second year student-*only*-Nom be short-tempered (fact)  
           ‘Only second year students are short-tempered.’
- (20) a. *John-dake-ga*    *kasikoi*              (koto).  
           John-*only*-Nom be intelligent (fact)  
           ‘Only John is intelligent.’
- b. *John-dake-ga*    *se-ga-takai* (koto).  
           John-*only*-Nom be tall              (fact)  
           ‘Only John is tall.’
- c. *John-dake-ga*    *ki-ga-mijikai*              (koto).  
           John-*only*-Nom be short-tempered (fact)  
           ‘Only John is short-tempered.’

#### 4. Association with Focus in Japanese

So far we have argued that, unlike *dake*, *bakari* always quantifies over events. Let us now return to the contrast in (2) and (3), which are repeated below as (21) and (22), respectively.

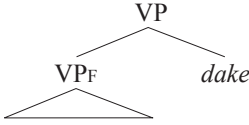
- (21) a. John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-*bakari*-(o) sisi-ta.  
 John-Nom conversation-Dat water-*bakari*-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘lit. What John did was mostly putting damper on the conversation.’
- b. \*John-ga hanasi-ni mizu-*dake*-(o) sisi-ta.  
 John-Nom conversation-Dat water-*only*-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘John put only a damper on the conversation.’ (=2)
- (22) a. John-ga hi-ni abura-*bakari*-(o) sosoi-da.  
 John-Nom fire-Dat oil-*bakari*-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘lit. What John did was mostly adding oil to fire.’
- b. \*John-ga hi-ni abura-*dake*-(o) sosoi-da.  
 John-Nom fire-Dat oil-*only*-(Acc) pour-Past  
 ‘John always added oil to fire.’ (=3)

One important implication of our argument is that *bakari* in (21a), for instance, does not associate with a part of an idiom it attaches to. Rather, in (21a), the focus particle *bakari* is associated with events denoted by the whole idiom, *putting a damper on the conversation*. Similarly, in (22a), the focus particle *bakari* is associated with events denoted by the whole idiom. The acceptability of (21a) and (22a) does not undermine the widely held assumption that a part of an idiom cannot be modified or focused, since it does not have a meaning in its own right. *Bakari* in both examples is associated with a meaningful element, an event denoted by the whole idiom.

Given the present discussion, the contrast in (21) and (22) never supports covert raising of *bakari*. More importantly, the contrast is no longer a potential problem with the phase-based single Cycle model, because it cannot provide any evidence for the independent covert Cycle.

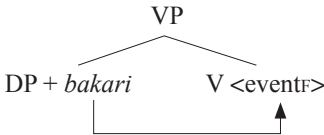
What can be conjectured from the present discussion is that Japanese has at least two syntactic options to establish the association with focus. One option is to establish the relation by Merge as in the case of *dake*, which is schematically illustrated in (23), where subscript F indicates focus:

(23) Association with Focus by *Merge*



The other option is to establish the relation by binding, or presumably, Agree, as in the case of *bakari*.<sup>7</sup>

(24) Association with Focus by *Agree* or Binding



We claim that *bakari* is associated with the event argument of the verb. If a necessity condition on association with focus is that a focus sensitive operator has to c-command a focused item, a further implication of our claim is that event arguments have to be visible to syntactic operations.

## 5. Summary

This paper has discussed the contrast in (2) and (3). We have shown that the contrast comes from the idiosyncratic property of the particle *bakari*. Semantically, it is a generic quantifier over events though not attached to verbal projections. Our claim is that *bakari* has to be associated with a “focused” event argument but this option is not available for *dake*. The unusual behavior of *bakari* manifests a version of *form-meaning* mismatch, in that it is syntactically attached to a noun phrase but it is interpreted as being associated with an event argument in a verb.

## Notes

1. Although the particle *bakari* has several meanings, this paper concentrates on its meaning that can be replaced with another focus particle *dake* ‘only.’
2. The observation is credited to Minoru Kurahashi (p.c.).
3. This might be a hasty decision because even *always* in English, which is assumed to be a universal quantifier over events, does allow for non-exhaustive interpretations:
  - (i) A: Does Sandy feed Nutrapup to her dogs?  
B: Yes, Sandy always feeds Nutrapup to [Fido]<sub>F</sub>, and she also always feeds Nutrapup to [Butch]<sub>F</sub>.
  - (ii) A: Does Sandy feed Nutrapup to her dogs?  
B: \*Yes, Sandy only feeds Nutrapup to [Fido]<sub>F</sub>, and she also only feeds Nutrapup to [Butch]<sub>F</sub>.

(Beaver and Clark 2003: 327)

4. Throughout the paper, we use the term generic quantification as refereeing to that involved in the interpretation of kind-referring NPs and habitual sentences. Notice though that it is not a different issue of whether *bakari* forces so-called generic interpretation.
5. Kratzer (1989, 1996) and Diesing (1992) claim that a predicate has an event argument if it allows stage-level readings. They try to deduce the distinction between stage-level predicates and individual-level predicates from the difference in argument structures of the two types of predicate: Only the former has an event argument. On the other hand, Parsons (1990) claims that the distinction is not structural and an individual predicates may have an eventuality argument. We will leave open the issue concerning the nature of the distinction between stage-level predicates and individual-level predicates, but simply assume that the distinction exists.
6. An anonymous reviewer pointed out that it is not clear how *bakari* quantifies over events in example (i), because it can be uttered even if the speaker just comes across the situation where a lot of luxury cars are parked in the parking lot in question.
  - (i) Tyuusya joo-ni-wa, koukyuusya *bakari*-ga tomer-are-teiru  
parking lot-Dat-Top luxury car-bakari-Nom park-Pass-State  
‘lit. Cars parked in the parking lot are mostly luxury ones.’

Our conjecture is that what takes place in the example is distribution of events because interpretation of *bakari* requires “enumerating” (almost) all the cars in the given parking lot. It should be noted that Kikuchi (1983) and Sadanobu

(2003) discuss similar examples and argue that such examples can be regarded as involving plural events in that the speaker is looking at each car and judges whether it is a luxury car or not.

7. An anonymous reviewer raised three questions concerning the assumption that association with focus is established by Merge or Agree/Binding. First, why can only *bakari* be associated with a focused item by Agree/Binding? Second, are there any focus sensitive operators with both options? Third, there should be three logically possible types of focus sensitive operators since association with focus can be established by Merge, Agree/Binding, or both. Which is most common in Japanese?

As for the first question, the difference between *bakari* and *dake* is attributable to their idiosyncratic properties in the lexicon. A curious fact is that *bakari* cannot be semantically associated with the NP it is attached to or merged with. Rather it is associated with events the VP denotes.

As for the second question, the focus sensitive adverb *nur* ‘only’ in German might be the best candidate. See Jacobs (1983), Büiring and Hartmann (2001), Jaeger and Wagner (2003), Kleemann (2005, 2007) for the distribution of *nur*.

As for the third question, to the best of our knowledge, syntactic behavior *bakari* is unique in Japanese, presumably because it requires a sort of syntax-semantics mismatch when it is attached to a nominal projection. If we assume that association of focus is under the realm of modification in general, then the distribution of *bakari* is unusual since it does not attach to an element or its projection that it modifies.

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