

Japanese expression of temporal identity: aspectual and counterfactual interpretation of
tokoro-da

Takubo, Yukinori
Kyoto University

In this talk, I will examine the aspectual and counterfactual interpretation of *VP tokoro-da* in Japanese. *Tokoro* is a formal noun meaning location and *da* is the present form of a copula. When attached to the aspectual forms of verbs, *tokoro-da* restricts their interpretation to immediacy. The non-past form *VP-ru* can be interpreted either as immediate or remote future and the past form *VP-ta* as remote or immediate past. Their interpretation becomes immediate future and immediate past, respectively, when *tokoro-da* is attached to them. When *tokoro-da* is attached to the aspectual form *te i*, which has progressive and perfect interpretation, progressive interpretation is forced on activity verbs, excluding perfect interpretation. If *tokoro-da* is attached to stative verbs or achievement verbs, only counterfactual interpretation becomes possible. Perfect use of the aspectual form *VP-te i* is compatible with *tokoro-da* only as the consequent of counterfactual conditionals.

Conditionals with *tokoro-da* in the consequent differ from conditionals involving other modal auxiliaries such as *hazu-da* (must) or *daroo* (could, would) etc. which are generally used in the consequent of conditionals. Firstly, they must be interpreted only as counterfactuals, which is not the case with *hazu-da* and *daroo*. Secondly, unlike *hazu-da* and *daroo*, *tokoro-da* can never be used in the consequent of concessive conditionals. Thirdly, *tokoro-da* cannot be used in backtrack conditionals, i.e. conditionals such as contraposition or reverse.

Our account for the facts above is as follows. We claim that *tokoro-da* identifies the reference time, or the time of evaluation, with the event time expressed by the predicate. Thus for non-stative verbs, *VP-aspect-tokoro-da* serves to place the time of evaluation *just before*, *just after*, or *within* the runtime of the event expressed VP, depending on the forms of the aspect markers. Interestingly, the activity of the event expressed by VP in *VP-tokoro-da* must exist at the time of the evaluation, leading to the implication of vividness or the flavor of an eyewitness report. Sentences like (1) and (2) with progressive interpretation, therefore, become less acceptable when *tokoro-da* is added.

(1) Boku-wa asu-no 3-zi-made, LGB-o yondeiru (*tokoro-da).

I-TOP tomorrow-GEN- 3-o'clock-until LGB-ACC be_reading tokoro-da

(2) Boku-wa kinoo-no 3-zi-kara LGB-o yondeiru (??tokoro-da).

I-TOP yesterday-GEN 3-o'clock-from LGB-ACC be_reading tokoro-da

To account for this fact, we claim that the complement of *tokoro-da* must express a d-proposition in the sense of Takubo (2006): A proposition is a d-proposition if the truth value of it is directly (i.e. not by inference, or hearsay) accessible to the speaker, i.e. the speaker must

know either that the proposition is true or false. This characterization of *tokoro-da* accounts for the implication of vividness or eyewitness flavor associated with the veridical *tokoro-da*.

For stative verbs, including derived statives with *te i*, the event time is not definable, so the temporal identity interpretation of *tokoro-da* is impossible, accounting for the unavailability of veridical interpretation. Modal interpretation, therefore, is forced for *tokoro-da* attached to statives.

The characterization of *tokoro-da* as taking a d-proposition in the modal interpretation accounts for all the properties of modal *tokoro-da* above. If *tokoro-da* takes a d-proposition, the epistemic reading of *VP-tokoro-da* becomes impossible, because the truth value of a VP must be known to the speaker at the evaluation time. *VP-tokoro-da* cannot, therefore, be used in the consequent of a conditional with a premise lead by *P-no-nara*, which must be epistemic, as has been discussed by Arita (2007). The fact that *VP-tokoro-da* is impossible in backtrack conditionals and concessive conditionals can be explained on the natural assumption that these conditionals must necessarily be epistemic.

The obligatory counterfactual interpretation of conditionals with *VP-tokoro-da* as the consequent can be explained by Gricean maxim of quantity, given that *q* must be a d-proposition for *tokoro-da* to be attached. If *q* is a d-proposition, and the speaker knows *q* to be true, saying just *q* is more informative than saying *if p then q*, unless the premise is the only proposition that makes the consequent true, i.e. *p* is the necessary condition for *q*. If *p* is the necessary condition for *q* to hold, then if the speaker knows that *q* is true, s/he must also know that *p* is true as well. I will show that if the speaker knows both *p* and *q* to be true, *If p, q* can be an informative update of a context iff both the premise and the consequent are known to be false.

I will also discuss how our account of *tokoro-da* can be related to the analysis of nonveridical interpretation of *before* discussed in Bever and Condoravdi (2003) and *maeni* (before) and *nai uti ni* (while still not) discussed in Kaufmann and Takubo (2007).

References

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