

Selectional Restrictions of Aspectual Verbs and Aktionsarten in Japanese

日本語のアスペクト動詞における選択制限とアクションサート

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〈Abstract〉

The present paper examines selectional restrictions of aspectual verbs on their verbal complements in Japanese and their implications to Aktionsarten of Japanese lexical verbs. Special emphasis is on Japanese Stative verbs, showcasing a set of data reflecting Aktionsart properties involved in the selectional restrictions imposed by the aspectual verbs. The recent developments in the Minimalism have assigned a number of linguistic facts a secondary status, claiming that those are “semantic” or “pragmatic”, and not purely syntactic in nature. The profound issues once casted by selectinal restrictions have faded away from the central issues of syntactic inquiries in the generative grammar in this way as well. Close examination of the selectional restrictions by the aspectual verbs in Japanese, however, points to a more systematic, syntactic approach to the selectional restriction of aspectual verbs in lieu of structural analysis on Japanese lexical verbs in the Minimalist syntax, also supporting mainstream classical proposals on Japanese Aktionsarten.

〈キーワード〉

Linguistics, Syntax, Aspectual verb, Selectional restriction, Aktionsart

1 Introduction

The selectional restrictions are properties of lexical verbs which designate subcategorizations of grammatical dependents they require. For example, for the event denoted by the lexical verb in the example 1 to be felicitous, the grammatical object of the lexical verb *built* needs to be something of ‘built-able’ as in 1a, for instance, a house, model plane, or even reputation. Thus the event in 1b does not make sense in the normal sense of *sky*:

- 1a.Hiroshi built a house.
1b.#Hiroshi built sky.

In the same vein, aspectual verbs such as *start*, *finish*, and *halt*, which describe a certain phase in the event structure of their complement verbs –beginning, ending, or continuity of the event, for example-, also put restrictions on the class of verbs they take as their ‘grammatical

objects’ or verbal complements:

- 2a.Mary stopped noticing the spot.
2b.#Mary stopped knowing the truth.

The aspectual verb *stop* is felicitous only in 2a, where the grammatical object headed by the lexical verb *notice* is capable of depicting an event with a certain degree of complexity in its event structure, or Aktionsart.

This paper seeks a systematic explanation to the selectional restrictions of the aspectual verbs in Japanese, bringing them back to the center stage of syntax, or the structural analysis. First, I summarize an analysis proposed for the selectional restrictions of English aspectual verbs in Mori (2015) (Section 2). Then I lay out data on their Japanese counterparts, thereby extending the generalization observed there (Section 3) to Japanese aspectual verbs. Finally, I examine a traditional proposal

on Japanese Aktionsarten going as far back as 1950, and support its validity, especially with respect to Stative verbs in Japanese. (Section 4). A brief conclusion follows.

2 The Selectional Restrictions of Aspectual Verbs in English

2-1 A Generalization on the Selectional Properties of the Aspectual Verbs in English

English has a great number of aspectual verbs. Upon close examination, the selectional restrictions they impose on their grammatical objects are strikingly systematic. Possible combinations of the aspectual and lexical verbs are shown in Table 1 (Mori 2015: 55, summarized):

Table 1: Combinations of English AVb and LVb¹⁾

AVb \ LVb		Structural Complexity ¹⁾				
		+	←	→	-	
		<i>finish</i>	<i>initiate</i>	<i>halt</i>	<i>launch</i>	<i>start</i>
+ S C 1) -	<i>build</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<i>push</i>	×	✓	✓	✓	✓
	<i>notice</i>	×	×	✓	✓	✓
	<i>love</i>	×	×	×	✓	✓
	<i>exit</i>	×	×	×	×	✓

As in Table 1, structural complexities of aspectual and lexical verbs are matched with the least complex aspectual verbs imposing the least restrictions, and the most complex ones, the most, on the Aktionsart characteristics of the lexical verbs they select:

3. Mutant microbes started to build a nest/push the container/notice the vacant spots/love the nutrient portion/exist (in the beaker).

The example 3 illustrates the aspectual verb *start*, the least complex aspectual verb of all levels of complexities, selecting lexical verbs of all levels of structural complexities as its complements.

The crucial point in Table 1 is that in selecting complement verbs, the aspectual verbs make reference to the Aktionsart properties of the verbal complements they opt.

The vertical notion of ‘Structural Complexity’ in Table 1 corresponds to Aktionsart complexity. Standardly, lexical verbs are classified into four Aktionsarten, Accomplishment–Activity–Achievement–State. I split the Stative verbs into two classes in Table 1 and Table 2 below

for a theory-internal as well as empirical reasons; transitive states such as *love*, and intransitive ones such as *exist*. This builds on semantic internal event complexities they denote, and their corresponding subliminal syntactic complexities. (Mori 2005).

2-2 An Analysis

The pattern above in Table 1 indicates that selectional restrictions of aspectual verbs are extremely sensitive to Aktionsarten of lexical verbs they select. That is, no matter how the data above are to be explicated, it has to propose finer subliminal structures internal to lexical verbs in accordance to Aktionsarten. In this vein, any theoretical framework which assigns progressively more complex structures to the verb types in the Aktionsart hierarchy, namely, from the more complex to less, Accomplishment (*build*) > Activity (*push*) > Achievement (*win*) > State (*like, love*), would suffice to give an ample explanation to the pattern in Table 1. The important factor here, suggested in Table 1, is that the selectional restrictions are structural.²⁾

3 The Selectional Restrictions of Aspectual Verbs in Japanese

3-1 The Generalization Revisited in Japanese

Let us now consider the selectional patterns of Japanese aspectual verbs:³⁾

Table 2: Combinations of Japanese AVb and LVb¹⁾

AVb \ LVb		Structural Complexity ¹⁾		
		+	←	→
		<i>oe</i> (<i>finish</i>)	<i>das</i> (<i>come.to</i>)	<i>hazime</i> (<i>start</i>)
+ S C 1) -	<i>tate</i> (<i>build</i>)	✓	✓	✓
	<i>os</i> (<i>push</i>)	×	✓	✓
	<i>kizuk</i> (<i>notice</i>)	×	✓	✓
	<i>suk</i> (<i>like</i>)	×	×	✓
	<i>i/ar</i> (<i>be</i>)	×	×	✓

The relevant examples of the aspectual verb selections depicted in Table 2 are as follows:

- 4a. Ken-wa ie-o tat.e/kuruma-o osi/
-top house-acc build.caus/car-acc push/
supotto-ni kizuki/ -hazim.e-ta/-dasi-ta

spot-dat notice/ -start.caus-past/-come.to-past
(Ken started to/came.to notice the spot/push the car/
build the house.)

- 4b. Ken-wa kono-3-ka.getu-de zyo.zyo-ni
-top this-3-CL.month-in by.and.by-adv
sama.zama-na tarento-o suki.ni-nat-ta.
variety-adj star-acc like.part-become-past
Mayuyu-o suki.de-ari-?hazim.e-ta/*?-dasi-ta/-
-acc like.part-be-start.caus-past/-come.to-past
*oe-ta koro-no zibun-wa ima-demo
finish-past days-gen self-top now-even
sinzir.are-nai to-iu
believe.can-neg comp-say
(Ken has gradually come to like various stars in
these three months. He says he can't believe
how he could have started to/came to like/finished
liking Mayuyu then.)

- 4c. Takusan-no keikan-ga zuratto haarei-o
Many-gen police-nom in.a.row Herley-acc
narabe-te baabon sutoriito-no pabu-no mae-
line.up-while Bourbon Street-gen pub-gen front-
ni i-?hazim.e-ta/*?dasi-ta/*oe-ta
at be-start.caus-past/come.to-past/finish-past
node kono tiiki-no tian-wa yoku-nat-ta
because this area-gen safety-top good-become-pst
(Since many police started to/came.to be/finished being
in front of the pubs in Bourbon Street, the safety of the
area has improved.)

3-2 An Analysis Revisited

The Japanese aspectual verbs in Table 2 exhibit similar patterns to their English counterparts as well, further supporting the structural approach to the selectional restrictions of the aspectual verbs. That is, again, the aspectual verbs make crucial reference to the internal event complexities of the complement verbs they select. Translating the various degrees of the event complexities denoted by the lexical verbs as real syntactic complexities (see Mori 2005, and the references therein), it is a striking fact that the aspectual verbs have an access to the syntactic complexities of their verbal complements.

4 Looking into Japanese Statives

4-1 Traditional Classifications of Japanese Statives

Kindaichi (1976) in effect proposes that almost all Statives in Japanese verbal lexicon have shifted to Achievements. Thus he lists only three verbs to be true Statives⁴⁾, namely, *iru* (be), *aru* (be), and *iru* (need) in this language.

4-2 Shifts from Statives to Achievements in Japanese Verbal Lexicon

Indeed, some Japanese verbs typically Stative in other languages, for example in English, display properties often observed in Achievements:

6. Hiroshi-wa sono-koto-o kinou sit-ta
-top its-matter-acc yesterday know-past
(Hiroshi came.to.know that matter yesterday.)

The example 6 designates an event of Hiroshi's coming to know a certain matter. Here the 'change', the hallmark of Achievements, is clearly indicated by *sir* (know) in this construction. Indeed, this verb patterns with Achievements in terms of modifications by durative and time-frame adverbials as well:

- 7a. Hiroshi-wa sono himitu-o
-top the secret-acc
iti nen-de/*iti nen-kan sit-ta
one year-in/one year-for know-past
(Hiroshi came.to.know the secret in a year/for a year.)

- 7b. Hiroshi-wa odoroi-ta-koto-ni tatta
-top surprise-matter-as only
iti nen-de/iti nen-kan-dake sono himitu-o
one year-in/one year-for-only the secret-acc
mou sit-te-i-ta
already know-part-be-past
(Surprisingly, Hiroshi already knew the secret in a year/for a year.)

The same point is illustrated in selectional restrictions of the aspectual verbs, where *dasi* (come.to) and *hazime* (start) both select *sir* (know) as their verbal complements:

8. Tasuksan-no hito-ga sono hitu-o siri-
 many-gen people-nom the secret-acc know-
 dashi/hazi.me-ta node
 come.to/start.casu-past because
 kankei-sya-ga asset-ta
 related-people-nom upset-past
 (Since many people came.to/started to know the secret,
 those involved were upset.)

Analogous Stative-Achievement shifts can be attested in other Japanese lexical verbs normally classified as Statives cross-linguistically. The aspectual verb selections support this observation as well:

9. *hosii* (want):
 Kim-wa sono hono-ho hosi-gari-hazim.e/
 -top the book-acc want-expr-start.caus/
 dashi/*oe-ta
 come.to/finish-past

(Kin came.to/started to/finished wanting the
 book.)

As we have already seen, some aspectual verbs, such as *das* (come.to), sharply distinguish Achievement verbs, such as *kizuku* (notice), from Statives, such as *suk* (like) and *ir/ar* (be). This is in line with the traditional proposal that Japanese verbal lexicon has a great number of non-Statives to the extent that there are only a few verbs remaining with the properties characteristics to true Statives in this language.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I proposed the structural analysis of the selectional properties of the Japanese aspectual verbs, supporting the classical proposal that Stative verbs in Japanese are eventive in terms of their Aktionsarten characteristics.

注

- (1) ‘AVb’ stands for ‘aspectual verbs’, ‘LVb’, ‘lexical verbs’, and ‘SC’, ‘Structural Complexity’.
 (2) I leave it open as to the exact mechanism and, more importantly, possible theoretical framework which would explain this clear pattern. This stakes little to what I explore in this paper. See Mori (2005) for one such theoretical framework and the references therein.
 (3) For the ease of exposition, I only discuss transitive version of Japanese aspectual verbs in this paper.
 (4) He also lists a few other ‘verbs’ as Statives in Japanese. These verbs, however, are best classified as adjectives or modals. I

exclude those verbs from the list of Stative verbs in Japanese, and thus from my analysis here.

参考文献

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