

ABSTRACT

Tense and Aspect of Negative Sentences in Japanese

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The purpose of this study is to investigate the temporal reference of the four negative forms of Japanese verbs; sinai, sinakatta, siteinai and siteinakatta giving special attention to the fact that each form deals with an event which does not realize. Since the positive sentence refers to a situation as something which has already realized by the speech time or as something to be realized later, temporal reference of the negative sentence may not be the same as that of the positive sentence.

In order to treat the temporal reference, a Hans Reichenbachian theoretical framework is used in this work. In this model tense is treated as the grammatical category which relates the reference time to the speech time, and aspect as the grammatical category which relates the reference time to the event time.

Morphologically, Japanese verbs make the temporal division of the past and the non-past. Whether a non-past verb form sinai refers to present time or future time, depends on the Aristotelian category of the verb. In the intrinsic temporal reference sinai forms of activity verbs and accomplishment verbs refer to future time, whereas other verb categories like achievements or states, refer to present time. This intrinsic temporal reference could however be altered by using temporal adverbial phrases such as mo, mada or nakanaka. Context is another factor used to convert one temporal reading to another. Extrinsic temporal reference, expressed by the context or temporal adverbial phrases, could also be used to explicitly state a certain temporal reference. Intrinsic temporal reference of a Siteinai form is a present ($RT=ST$) reading. This reading however could be converted to a future ($ST<RT$) or a past ($RT<ST$) one in the extrinsic reference. The unique temporal reading of morphologically past forms sinakatta and siteinakatta is a past reading ($RT<ST$).

Aspectually, unmarked forms sinai and sinakatta express only simple aspect. Simple aspect is the aspect category in which reference time is not separated from the event time ($ET=RT$). Marked forms siteinai and siteinakatta could express anterior aspect, in which event time precedes reference time, or stative aspect, in which reference time is included in event time ($RT\subseteq ET$). Which of these two aspect categories is referred to by the complex verb form is decided by extrinsic temporal reference, i. e. by the context or by the temporal adverbial phrases. For example, when co-occurring with ima (now) siteinai form refers to the stative aspect, but when co-occurring with frame adverbials or with adverbials expressing the initiating or the terminating point of the negative event, the aspect reading of the complex form is an anterior one.

In so far as intrinsic temporal reference is concerned, a considerable disparity cannot be found between negative and positive sentences. This shows that the natural language is flexible enough to handle both the affirmative and the negative mood in a similar fashion. Extrinsic temporal reference is where a noteworthy distinction could be found.

This study goes into a detailed account of how extrinsic temporal adverbials are used to localize and anchor the event time. Deictic frame adverbials localize the event time by setting up a frame for it. Moreover they function as anchors, pinning down the event time to the speech time point of the time axle. Since positive sentences deal with realization, i. e. of an event reaching its end point, in simple aspect, event time is included in the frame set by the adverbial as a point. This is not the case with the negative event time of simple aspect. Unlike positive events, negative ones do not have end points, as they treat events which fail to realize. Therefore negative events normally occupy at least a sub-span of the event frame set by the frame adverbials. This is the same reason why negative events could co-occur with frame adverbials such as sibaraku (for a while) which serve mainly as quantifiers of the event time. Achievement verbs in the positive simple aspect form cannot co-occur with this kind of frame adverbials used to express the length of the event time. No need to say, since they deal with events reaching their end points in the positive, they could not co-occur with expressions of periods of time. Another interesting feature with adverbials such

as sibaraku is that when co-occurring with sinai forms, they designate the length of the event as preceding or following the anchor.

Since the negative event does not have an end point, it is not easy to pinpoint the exact time when the event is negated. Therefore negative events show many restrictions when co-occurring with time adverbials referring to a point of time. One example is the adverbial sakki (just now referring to the past), which takes the form sakkikara indicating the initiating point of the negative event time or the form sakkimade indicating the terminative point of the negative event, when co-occurring with the sinakkata form.

These observations concerning the co-occurrence of extrinsic temporal reference phrases lead us to the conclusion that the negative events show similar properties as that of Aristotelian states. Non-dynamicity, having no end points, persistency, and exhibiting the sub-interval property could be given as supporting evidence to this conclusion. We however do not mean to treat negative events exactly as states.

Aspectual adverbials moo (already) and mada (not yet) show a general tendency to anchor the event time to the speech time when co-occurring with non-past forms, but to the reference time when co-occurring with the past forms. When co-occurring with aspectually complex forms, deictic time adverbials could be used to give the reference time a certain value on the time axle in comparison with the speech time. In this usage time adverbials function as anchors of the event time pinning it down to the reference time.

To study what kind of anchoring patterns could be found in a discourse unit is a future prospect. If such patterns could in any way be related to the reference time movement in a discourse unit suggested by Partee(1984), should also be an interesting research topic.