

Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

Title

Noun Predicate Sentences in Modern Japanese
: The Semantics and Functions of “Adjective + Noun” Predicate Sentences

Name

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This thesis describes the characteristics of modern Japanese noun predicates, focusing principally on predicates of the form “Adjective + Noun” (sentences with the form “Adjective + Noun da” such as “Yamada-sensei wa yasashii hito da”).

A substantial body of research on Japanese sentences has accumulated, with work on verb predicates developing at a particularly early stage. On the other hand, while there is a large amount of research on noun predicates, little attention has been paid to the overlap with adjective predicate sentences and there still seems much to be elucidated. Furthermore, going forward, it will be important to focus not only on the overlap between the two types of predicates, but also the differences between them. Previous research seems to have placed little emphasis on the similarities and differences between the two types. This thesis thus attempts a comprehensive study of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences, adjective predicate sentences and “Adjective + mono da/koto da” sentences. The aim is to elucidate the characteristics of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences based on the linguistic facts, through quantitative analysis consisting of manual collection of examples and extraction of examples from “The Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese” (BCCWJ) in addition to qualitative constructional analysis.

This thesis consists of four sections, Introduction (Part I), Main Discussion I (Part II), Main Discussion II (Part III) and Conclusion (Part IV). Part I is an introduction, and covers Chapters 1 and 2. In Chapter 1, I state the objectives and the scope of the research, and present the language materials used. In Chapter 2, I give a general overview of past research related to the current study.

The main body of this thesis is contained in Part II and Part III. Part II consists of Chapters 3 to 6, and Part III corresponds to Chapter 7. In Part II I consider the characteristics of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences. In Part III I take up “Adjective + mono da” and “Adjective + koto da” sentences, in which the so-called formal nouns “mono” and “koto” are noun predicates, and focus on their continuity with modal forms.

Finally, in Part IV, I state what this thesis has revealed and its significance, and mention issues

for future research.

Below, I provide a summary of the contents of each chapter of this thesis.

[Main Discussion I : The Characteristics of “Adjective + Noun” Predicate Sentences]

In the course of Main Discussion I (Part II), I examine the characteristics of real examples of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences, focusing on their similarities and differences to adjective predicate sentences, as well as on the characteristics of their predicate structure.

In Chapter 3, I observe the “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences that form the focus of this thesis. I clarify the scope of the study, observing the types of subject nouns (individual/concrete or general/generic), the relation between subject noun and predicate noun, and the relation between the meaning of the adjective and the predicate structure of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences.

In Chapter 4, I compare “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences and Adjective Predicate Sentences, focusing on the way subjects are marked. Both “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences and Adjective Predicate Sentences are frequently marked by “wa”. 62.4% of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences are marked by “wa”, 8.1% by “toiunowa” and 0.5% by “towa”, making a total of 71% of sentences marked by expressions including “wa”. In the case of Adjective Predicate Sentences, however, this total only reaches 47.2%. Instead, around one quarter (25.4%) of Adjective Predicate Sentences are marked by no particle, and 14.2% by “tte”. Adjective Predicate Sentences can thus be said to show greater variation in subject marking than “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences.

Differences can be found between cases in which the subject noun is individual/concrete and those in which it is general/generic. Three quarters of individual/concrete subject nouns appearing in “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences are marked with “wa”, whereas only 45.6% of general/generic subject nouns in Adjective Predicate Sentences are marked by “wa”; the proportion marked by no particle is also high, at 32.3%. For “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences where the subject noun is general/generic, 41.7% of subject nouns are marked by “wa”. A high proportion (31.3%) of subject nouns are also marked by “toiunowa” or “towa”. In contrast, 44.2% of general/generic subject nouns in Adjective Predicate Sentences are marked by “wa”, and the proportion marked by “tte” is also high (34.8%).

In Chapter 5, I focus on the characteristics of constituents collocating with “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences and Adjective Predicate Sentences, comparing individual and stage level objects expressed by subject nouns. “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences and Adjective Predicate Sentences show similarities in their modification by degree adverbs and type I comparative expressions (comparison with other entities). This reflects the fact that both are structures containing adjectives. However, they differ in regards to their collocation with stage level and type II comparative expressions (comparison of the same entity at different points in time). This difference stems from the predicate structure of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences and Adjective Predicate Sentences, i.e. whether or not they include a noun as a predicate, and shows the differences in the semantic functions of the two

constructions. In other words, Adjective Predicate Sentences can describe not only individual level (“Yamada sensei wa yasashii”) but also stage level (“Saikin, nandaka mukuchi ne”), whereas “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences are able to describe individual level (“Yamada sensei wa yasashii hito da”), but not stage level (? “Saikin, mukuchina hito ne”).

Chapter 6 continues the examination of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences, considering sentences of the type “Verb Phrase + Adjective Phrase + Noun da”, such as “Shigoto ga dekiru subarashii hito da”, in which verb phrases and adjective phrases form adnominal phrases. I focus on the internal structure “Adjective Phrase + Verb Phrase” (compound adnominal phrase) making comparisons with sentences of the type “Adjective Phrase + Verb Phrase + Noun da”, such as “Wakai yaseta josei da”, and describe the nature of the semantic connection between verb phrase and adjective phrase.

First, from a numerical perspective, the frequency of “Verb Phrase + Adjective Phrase + Noun da” type sentences (95.5%) is overwhelmingly higher than that of “Adjective Phrase + Verb Phrase + Noun da” type sentences (4.5%). Observing the semantic relation between the Verb Phrase and Adjective Phrase forming the adnominal phrase, those describing aspects with similar attributes are more common than those describing aspects with different attributes. In “Verb Phrase + Adjective Phrase + Noun da” type sentences describing aspects with similar attributes, the Verb Phrase expresses an individual and concrete attribute, which is generalized and evaluated by the Adjective Phrase. In “Adjective Phrase + Verb Phrase + Noun da” type sentences, this kind of connection is hardly observed at all. This means of expression is considered the semantics of the form “Verb Phrase + Adjective Phrase”.

[Main Discussion II :

“Adjective + mono da” and “Adjective + koto da” Sentences – from predicate nouns to modal forms]

In Part III/Main Discussion II, I consider “Adjective + mono da” and “Adjective + koto da” sentences. Focusing on how the possessor of a characteristic is expressed, I show the shift of “mono” and “koto” from typical predicate nouns to forms expressing modal meanings as a construction form.

From the perspective of sentence constructions, one type of “mono” “koto” sentences behave as typical predicate nouns (“N wa Adj mono da/koto da”) and another type can be said to typically express modal meaning (“Adj mono da/koto da” “clause + mono da/koto da”), with a variety of other intermediate sentence types. The closer intermediate types come to typical modal forms, the more frequently they express the possessor of a characteristic with a phrase or clause rather than a noun. Modal meaning essentially shows the attitude of the speaker towards an event, and this can be said to be reflected in the sentence form.

This thesis attempts to elucidate the characteristics of “Adjective + Noun” predicate sentences and comprehensively examine “Adjective + mono da/koto da” sentences focusing on the transition from predicate nouns to modal forms. It can contribute to future research on noun predicate sentences.