

Copula *Da*-Sentences and Adjectival Sentences

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Introduction

The sentences discussed in this paper are copula *da*- and adjectival sentences which are interpreted as in the present tense. Sentences (1) and (2) are such examples:¹

- (1) Taroo wa hayaoki da.
Nom early riser Copula
'Taro is an early riser.'
- (2) Taro wa totemo omosiroi.
Nom very interesting
'Taro is very interesting.'

Compare the above sentences with sentence (3) below, which is also interpreted as in the present tense:

- (3) Taroo wa maiasa hayaku oki- ru.
Nom every morning early get up Pres
'Taro gets up early every morning.'

If the morpheme *ru*, which is directly following the verb *oki*, is replaced by the morpheme *ta*, we get sentence (4):

- (4) Taroo wa maiasa hayaku oki-ta.
Past
'Taro got up early every morning.'

Sentences (3) and (4) differ only in that the former is in the present tense, while the latter is in the past tense. Thus we may safely assume *ru* in (3) and *ta* in (4) are the present tense and the past tense markers, respectively. Now note that the sentences in (1) and (2) are not marked by the present tense marker *ru*, while their past tense versions are marked by the past tense marker *ta* as shown below:

(5) Taroo wa hayaoki dat-ta.

Past

‘Taro was an early riser.’

(6) Taroo wa totemo omosirokat-ta.

Past

‘Taro was very interesting.’

The questions we ask now are whether *da*- and adjectival sentences in the present tense are structurally different from the sentences with tense markers and why the non-occurrence of the tense marker is limited to these sentences. In the following sections I will be concerned with these questions and discuss three alternative analyses for *da*- and adjectival sentences in the present tense.

I

Ru-Deletion Analysis

One analysis we might propose is to say, as Inoue (1976, 19) does for *da*-sentences, *da*- and adjectival sentences in the present tense are underlyingly marked by *ru*, which is obligatorily deleted by means of a transformation. Analyzing *da*- and adjectival sentences

in the present tense as such, we can simplify the description of the sentence types in Japanese by saying that matrix sentences are all marked by a tense marker, regardless of either the tense or the predicate type. But this analysis not only lacks supporting syntactic evidence but also makes a wrong prediction of the past tense forms of adjectives. Let us first discuss the plausibility of the analysis with respect to *da*-sentences.

Presuming *da*-sentences are underlyingly marked by *ru*, we have two alternative analyses for the underlying form of *da*. One is to say it is *da+ru* and the other is to say *daC+ru*. If we follow the former analysis, we would expect the past tense form of *da* to be **da-ta*, based on the fact that the present and the past tense markers follow the same form in verbal sentences like (3) and (4). The actual past tense form is, however, not **da-ta* but *dat-ta*. The latter analysis, on the other hand, does not make a wrong prediction. *daC+ta* would become *dat-ta*, undergoing an independently motivated phonological rule. The *ru*-deletion analysis would, then, claim that *daC+ru* becomes *da* with *C+ru* being dropped. It should be noted, however, that there is no supporting syntactic or phonological evidence for this hypothesized rule to delete *C+ru*.

Let us next discuss the *ru*-deletion analysis with regard to adjectival sentences. The analysis makes a wrong prediction, whatever analysis we propose for the adjectival stems. There are two alternative analyses for the adjectival stems, both of which are compatible with the *ru*-deletion analysis. One analysis says that the stem of *omosiroi* ('interesting') is *omosiroi* and the other says it is *omosirok*, based on the adjectival forms appearing in a certain environment.

Suppose the former analysis were correct. Following the *ru*-deletion analysis, we would expect the past tense forms of *omosiroid* to be **omosiroid-ta*, since the present and the past tense markers follow the same form in verbal sentences as we have seen above. But the past tense form which actually appears on the surface is *omosiroidat-ta* as shown in (6). If it were the case that the adjectival stem is *omosiroid*, then the *ru*-deletion analysis would claim the past tense form to be **omosiroid-ta*, which becomes **omosiroid-ta* with *k* being changed into *i* in front of *ta*. Thus, whichever analysis we choose for the adjectival stems, the *ru*-deletion analysis makes a wrong prediction. This provides an argument against the claim that adjectival sentences in the present tense are underlyingly marked by the present tense marker *ru*.

In this section the *ru*-deletion analysis has been discussed and shown not to be correct either for adjectival sentences or *da*-sentences.

II

Ru-Replacement Analysis

The *ru*-replacement analysis, which is to be discussed in this section, is only applicable to adjectival sentences in the present tense² and claims that the adjectival ending *i* is an alternant of *ru* and that *ru* is transformationally replaced by *i* in case it follows an adjective, which is the analysis whose correctness has been taken for granted in the literature (e.g. Inoue 1976, 19). This analysis, however, does not seem so plausible not only because the analysis lacks supporting syntactic or phonological evidence but also because it makes a wrong

prediction concerning the adjectival forms in the past tense.

There are two alternative analyses for an adjectival stem which are compatible with the *ru*-replacement analysis. One is to say the stem of *omosiroid* is *omosiroid* and the other is to say it is *omosiroidk*. If the former analysis were correct, the past tense form we would expect following the *ru*-replacement analysis is **omosiroid-ta*. If the latter analysis were correct, on the other hand, the past tense form we would expect is **omosiroidk-ta*, which becomes **omosiroid-ta* with *k* being changed into *i* in front of *ta*. The *ru*-replacement analysis thus makes a wrong prediction with respect to the past tense form of an adjective and therefore does not seem plausible independent of the lack of evidence either for the hypothesized rule which replaces *ru* with *i* or for the hypothesized rule which deletes the stem ending *k* and replaces *ru* with *i*.

III

Non-Tensed Sentence Analysis

The analysis to be discussed in this section is the non-tensed sentence analysis, which I propose for *da*- and adjectival sentences in the present tense. This analysis claims that *da*- and adjectival sentences in the present tense do not have a tense marker and thus that they are structurally non-tensed sentences. Let us first discuss the plausibility of the analysis with regard to adjectival sentences and secondly, with regard to *da*-sentences.

First recall the adjectival form which appears when *omosiroid* is adjacent to the past tense marker *ta*. The form is repeated below:

- (7) omosirokat- ta
 interesting Past
 'was interesting'

Compare the adjectival form in (7) with those appearing in the following examples, where the adjective is adjunct to a conjunctive particle *te* or a negative marker *nai*:

- (8) omosiroku- te yasasii
 interesting and easy
 'interesting and easy'
- omosiroku- nai
 interesting not
 'not interesting'

As shown by (7) and (8), an adjective changes its form depending on whether it is adjunct to *ta* or *te* or *nai*. A verb, on the other hand, does not change the form in the same way as an adjective does, as shown below:

- (9) oki- ta
 get up Past
 'got up'
- (10) oki- te arui- ta
 get up and walk Past
 'got up and walked'
- oki- nai
 get up not
 'not get up'

The question is why an adjective but not a verb changes its form depending on whether it occurs in front of *ta* or *te* or *nai*. The ad-

jectival ending *at*, which appears in front of *ta* in (7), is historically attested to have been an existential verb *ar*.³ Considering this, it seems to be the case that an adjective is so constrained as not to be added directly to the past tense marker *ta*. Although an adjectival stem followed by *ar* might be synchronically morphologized as an adjectival form which appears in a certain environment, the discrepancy between an adjective and a verb concerning the conjunction with *ta* shows that an adjective but not a verb is constrained in such a way as not to be added directly to the tense marker *ta*.

Now let us observe the adjectival and the verbal forms in the present tense as they appear in (2) and (4). The verb *oki* appears in the same form when it precedes the present tense marker *ru* as it does when it precedes the past tense marker *ta*. This fact leads us to assume that the tense markers *ru* and *ta* behave in the same way concerning the conjunction with the preceding morpheme. Based on this assumption, the non-occurrence of the adjectival form **omosiroku-ru* can be accounted for by saying the present tense marker *ru* as well as the past tense marker *ta* differs from *te* and *nai* with respect to the conjunction with an adjective. Then, why is it that the adjective *omosiroi* does not appear as **omosiropkar-u*?

One analysis we might propose is that *omosiroi* is underlyingly **omosiropkar-u* and eventually becomes *omosiroi* through the operation of a transformational rule. This analysis is consistent with a generalization that all matrix sentences are marked by a tense marker but does not seem to have supporting syntactic or phonological evidence. An alternative to this is to say its underlying form is *omosiropk*, which is realized as *omosiroi* on the surface. The assumption that the un-

derlying form is such seems plausible, considering the adjectival form in certain environments. And the rule which changes *k* into *i* is independently motivated. Now recall it is unlikely that the adjectival ending *i* is the alternant of the present tense marker *ru* or that *ru* is deleted by a transformational rule when it is adjunct to an adjectival stem, as we have argued above. So the analysis which says *omosirok* is the underlying form claims that sentences whose predicates are adjectives in the present tense do not have a tense marker. Analyzing the adjectival sentences in the present tense as such, we can account for the fact that they are interpreted as in the present tense by saying that sentences without tense specification are interpreted as in the present tense since it is the most unmarked tense. Considering the sentences we have discussed so far, there seem to be no arguments against the claim that the base form of an adjective appearing as *omosiroi* is the same as its morphological form and thus sentences whose predicates are adjectives in the present tense are non-tensed sentences.

Let us next observe *da*-sentences in the present tense, as in (1), which is repeated below:

- (1) Taroo wa hayaoki da.
 Nom early riser Copula
 'Taro is an early riser.'

Compare the above sentence with its past tense counterpart, (5), which is also repeated below:

- (5) Taroo wa hayaoki dat-ta.
 Past
 'Taro was an early riser.'

Based on the fact that the present tense and the past tense forms of *da* are not **da-ru* and **da-ta*, respectively, we might presume *da* as well as adjectives are so constrained as not to directly precede a tense marker.

Now note the form of *da* in front of the past tense marker *ta* in (5). A plausible analysis for the morphological form *dat* is to say it is another morphological form which the copula verb *dear* takes in front of *ta*. Compare the morphological form of sentence (5) with that of (11):

- (11) Taroo wa hayaoki deat- ta.
 Nom early riser Copula Past
 'Taro was an early riser.'

Considering the similarity between *dat* and *deat*, it does not seem unlikely to say that *dat* corresponds to *deat*.

An analysis alternative to this is to say that *dat* in front of *ta* consists of *da* and an existential verb *ar*, presuming *da+ar* becomes *dar*, which eventually changes into *dat* in front of *ta*. Since the phonological rules which are claimed to be responsible for the derivation of *dat* are independently motivated, the analysis might seem to be likely. But, if we consider the fact that *da*, in contrast with adjectives, may not occur directly preceding a verb, and it alternates either with *ni* or with *de* in such an environment, the analysis which claims *dat* derives from *da+ar* does not seem so plausible. Observe the following sentences:

- (12) a. Taroo wa Hanako o omosiroku omot- ta.
 Nom Acc interesting consider Past
 'Taro considered Hanako to be interesting.'

- b. Taroo wa Hanako o omosiroi yoo
 Nom Acc interesting appearance
 $\begin{Bmatrix} *da \\ ni \end{Bmatrix}$ omot- ta.
 Copula consider Past
 'Taro thought Hanako to seem interesting.'

- (13) a. Yamada wa mainiti tanosiku sugosi- ta.
 Nom everyday cheerful pass Past
 'Yamada had a good time everyday.'

- b. Yamada wa issyoo dokusin $\begin{Bmatrix} *da \\ de \end{Bmatrix}$
 Nom all his life a single person Copula
 sugosi-ta.
 pass Past
 'Yamada stayed single all his life.'

Compare the morphological forms of the copula in (12b) and (13b) and those in (14) and (15), respectively:

- (14) Hanako wa omosiroi yoo $\begin{Bmatrix} da \\ *ni \end{Bmatrix}$.
 Nom interesting appearance Copula
 'Hanako seems interesting.'

- (15) Yamada wa issyoo dokusin $\begin{Bmatrix} da \\ *de \end{Bmatrix}$.
 Nom all his life a single person Copula
 'Yamada has been single all his life.'

The morphological behavior of the copula *da*, which is exhibited in the above examples, suggests that the analysis which claims *da* occurs directly preceding the verb *ar* at the stage of the derivation where phonological rules operate is not so plausible. Further, considering the historical fact that *da* originates in *de+ar*, which consists of a particle *de* and a verb *ar*,⁴ it seems natural that *da* should

be constrained in such a way as not to directly precede a verb. Thus I conclude that *dat* in (5) corresponds to *dear* rather than *da*.

Whatever analysis turned out to be correct for *dat* in (5), it seems to be the case that there is a restriction on the occurrence of *da* in front of the past tense marker *ta*. The question is, then, why the present tense form of *da* is not **dar-u* but *da*. Based on the fact that *da* is interpreted as in the present tense, we might claim *da* is transformationally obtained from the underlying form **dar-u*. But this analysis does not seem to have any supporting syntactic arguments. An alternative analysis is to say *da* is not followed by a tense marker either on the surface or in the base structure. Presuming *da* is non-tensed, we can account for the present tense interpretation of *da*-sentences by saying sentences without tense specification are interpreted as in the present tense. The analysis which claims *da*-sentences in the present tense are non-tensed sentences seems preferable to the analysis which posits an underlying form distinct from a surface form without any supporting evidence.

Conclusion

In the above discussion we have discussed three alternative analyses for copula *da*-sentences and adjectival sentences which are interpreted as in the present tense and shown that the non-tensed sentence analysis seems preferable to the other two analyses, that is, the *ru*-deletion analysis and the *ru*-replacement analysis. It would be desirable for us to show that there are some kind of syntactic phenomena which distinguish *da*- and adjectival sentences in the present tense from those which we claim to be tensed sentences. If we

could find such phenomena, they would be strong arguments for our analysis. Now this possibility is left open to further study.

Notes

- 1 Japanese examples are transcribed in the National Romanization system.
Hyphenation indicates the boundary between morphemes which appear combined together on the surface.
The following labels are used for a surface case and other grammatical terms: Nom—nominative, Pres—present, Past—past.
- 2 The analysis discussed here does not apply to *da*-sentences in the present tense. Considering the phonological structure of Japanese, the hypothesis that *a* is an alternant of *ru* and *d* forms a morpheme by itself is quite unlikely.
- 3 See Hashimoto (1948).
- 4 For the historical change from *de+ar* to *da*, see Yamada (1936).

References

- Hashimoto, S. *Kokugohoo Kekiyo* (A Study of Japanese Grammar), Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1948.
- Inoue, K. *Henkei Bunpoo to Nihon-go* (Transformational Grammar and the Japanese Language), Tokyo: Taishukan, 1976.
- Yamada, Y. *Nihon Bunpoogaku Gairon* (An Introduction to Japanese Grammar), Tokyo: Hobunkan, 1936.