



English looks at Japanese and vice versa : a contrastive approach to internsifiers in English and Japanese

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English Looks at Japanese and *Vice Versa*: A Contrastive Approach to Intensifiers in English and Japanese*

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This study will deal with intensifiers (technically termed as “amplifiers”) in English and Japanese, especially focusing on “*zenzen*” in Japanese, whose subcategories are assumed to be “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” in Japanese in comparison with the English equivalents. Given the assumption that those English expressions concerned can be realized on the semantic scale of gradient from degree to intensity, it can be demonstrated that “*zenzen*,” “*mattaku*,” and “*hijyo-ni*” are also located on a similar semantic continuum. With special attention to the combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmative expressions in Japanese, their meanings and functions will be thoroughly explored within the framework of regeneration, *i.e.*, replacement of the old meaning with the new.

0. Introduction

There have been so far many proposals for the classification, occurrence positions and order, and hierarchical nature of English adverbs in various theoretical frameworks. We have not seen, however, a satisfactorily comprehensive treatment of them. The same situation can be true of the treatment of Japanese adverbs. They also have their own syntactic and semantic peculiarities, which are assumed to deny comprehensive linguistic description. English and Japanese adverbs are thus worth tackling as a real target of investigation. The present study maintains that insights gained through the analyses of English adverbs can be applicable to the treatment of Japanese adverbs and *vice versa*.

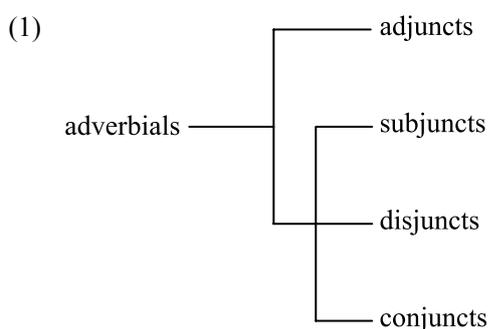
The expression form of “intensity” treated in the present study has been long assumed to be peripheral, not central, to linguistic description and hence an adverb as a “trash box” in the parts of speech. Given a more comprehensive framework of English and

Japanese adverbs to be treated as a whole from a contrastive analysis, idiosyncratic natures of adverbs in both languages can be more thoroughly explored. This study will be a descriptive analysis of intensifiers (technically termed as “amplifiers” in English) in English and Japanese, especially focusing on “*zenzen*” in Japanese whose subcategories are “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” in comparison with the English equivalents. Assuming that those English expressions concerned can be realized on the scale of gradient from degree to intensity, we will maintain that “*zenzen*,” “*mattaku*,” and “*hijyo-ni*” are also located on a similar semantic continuum.

1. Scope of the Study

We should, first of all, touch on Greenbaum (1969) as the first and most comprehensive study of English adverbs in the width of scope and the depth of investigation. Greenbaum (1969) classifies English adverbs (or “adverbials” in terms of Greenbaum (1969)) into adjuncts, disjuncts and conjuncts, the first being

regarded as integrated into the clause, and the second and the third remaining peripheral outside the clause, according to the degree of integration into the clause structure, and dwells on their syntactic and semantic characteristics. This trichotomy of classification is followed in Quirk *et al.* (1972), and it is further elaborated into a four-way classification of adverbials with an additional new category of “subjuncts” in Quirk *et al.* (1985) and Declerck (1991), for instance:¹



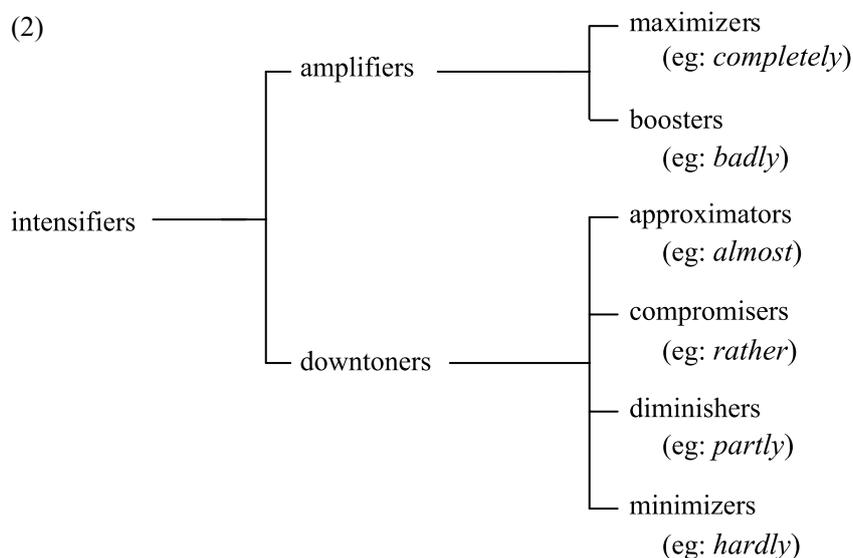
According to Declerck (1991: 21-5), adjuncts are incorporated into the clause structure as a central element of the clause, whereas subjuncts, disjuncts and conjuncts do not serve to modify the verb and its complement, recognized as peripheral and outside of the central element of the clause with each of them varying in their functions. For example, subjuncts function in a subordinate role to one of the constituents of the clause or to the clause as a whole; dis-

juncts express the speaker’s comment on the content or the form of the utterance; and conjuncts show a logical linkage between two utterances, functioning as connectives.

Let us turn to the present topic in question, “intensifiers,” one of the subcategories of “subjuncts.” The target expression forms of “intensity” concerned belong to “amplifiers” under the label of “intensifiers,” which is demonstrated as follows:

Quirk *et al.* (1985) subcategorizes “intensifiers” into “amplifiers” and “downtoners.”² With definitions of both categories in mind, “amplifiers” function as scaling upwards, which can be divided into the following: “maximizers,” denoting the upper extreme of the scale, and “boosters,” denoting a high degree or a high point on the scale (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 590), while “downtoners” have a generally lowering power on the effect of the verb or complement (cf. Quirk *et al.* 1985: 579).

It is significant to mention two points here in relation to what follows in the discussion. First, as is pointed out in Quirk *et al.* (1985: 590), both “maximizers” and “boosters,” especially the latter, perform unique functions of forming open classes in linguistic description, in which we can observe “new expressions are frequently created to replace older ones whose impact follows the trend of hyperbole in rap-



idly growing ineffectual.” This means that new expressions can be freely added to this category one after another and that the function of intensity can be ubiquitously applicable in other new forms. Second, as is indicated in Okada (1985: 35), “maximizers” and “boosters” can be distinctively separated in meaning according to corresponding Japanese expressions: the former corresponding to “*mattaku*” and the latter to “*hijyo-ni*.”

The present study aims to clarify the inherent nature of intensity from the viewpoint of contrastive linguistics of English and Japanese. I hope that the detailed contrastive analyses of English and Japanese intensifiers will reveal some aspects of expressions roughly captured under the label of intensity.

2. Analyses of English Intensifiers: “amplifiers” including “maximizers” and “boosters”

This section will be devoted to the semantic analyses of some representative examples of “amplifiers” as English intensifiers and to the consideration of their inherent natures according to Yamauchi (1985), which has attempted to reexamine some defects observed in Greenbaum (1970). The first and most important point to be investigated in Yamauchi (1985) is whether or not English intensifiers can be assigned equivalent semantic values to the corresponding Japanese expressions such as “*zenzen*,” whose subcategories are “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*”.

The target English intensifiers in this section are one-word adverbs with *-ly* suffixes as follows:

- (3) *absolutely, badly, bitterly, completely, deeply, entirely, extremely, fully, greatly, perfectly, thoroughly, totally, utterly* (alphabetical order)

Given the rearrangement of the above adverbs according to the classification of “maximizers” and “boosters” in Quirk *et al.* (1985), we can reconfirm the fact that what Okada (1985) points out in terms of the seemingly interesting correspondences of English and Japanese intensifiers holds true in the semantic description based on each definition given in

Kenkyusha’s New English-Japanese Dictionary, Sixth Edition (2002), one of the most comprehensive and reliable publications in Japan.

- (4) absolutely: “*kanzen-ni*,” “*mattaku*” / “*danzen (toshite)*,” “*honto-ni*” / “*zenzen (mattaku) [...nai]*” (with emphasis on negation) / “*mattaku honto-ni*,” “*mattaku sono-tori-ni*”
 completely: “*moushibun-naku*,” “*kyubun-ni*,” “*kanzen-ni*” / “*mattaku*,” “*zenzen*” (entirely)
 entirely: “*zenzen*,” “*mattaku*,” “*kanzen-ni*,” “*sukkari*” (completely, wholly)
 fully: “*kyubun-ni*,” “*kanzen-ni*,” “*mattaku*” (completely)
 perfectly: “*kanzen-ni*,” “*moushibun-naku*,” “*hijyo-ni-yoku*” / “*mattaku*,” “*sukkari*” (altogether)
 thoroughly: “*kyubun-ni*,” “*tettei-teki-ni*,” “*sukkari*,” “*zenzen*,” “*tettoutetsubi*” / “*akumade*,” “*mattaku*”
 totally: “*mattaku*,” “*zenzen*,” “*sukkari*” (wholly, completely)
 utterly: “*mattaku*,” “*zenzen*,” “*kanzen-ni*,” “*sukkari*” (completely, totally)
 badly: “*hidoku*,” “*ooi-ni*”
 bitterly: “*hageshiku*,” “*hidoku*”
 deeply: “*tettei-teki-ni*,” “*shinkoku-ni*,” “*hijyo-ni*,” “*fukaku*”
 greatly: “*ooi-ni*,” “*hijyo-ni*,” “*haruka-ni*”
 extremely[†]: “*hijyo-ni*,” “*jitsu-ni*,” “*totemo*”

(Note that all the above examples except “extremely” are contained in the description of Quirk *et al.* (1985).)

In spite of the fact pointed out in Okada (1985), however, a closer observation will reveal some defects in the generalization of linguistic description of maximizers and boosters. One example is that listing “completely” as a synonym of “entirely,” “totally,” or “utterly” can be inconsistent with the assumption that there should be very few perfect synonyms, if any, in the domain of semantics. Another is that the

same problem can be true of the Japanese translations of “badly,” “bitterly,” “deeply,” “greatly,” and “extremely.”

For a more elegant treatment of semantically interrelating maximizers and boosters, each sentence with the target adverb, where it is as simplified or unified as possible in the sentence structure or the subject to avoid any unnecessary confusion, is tested on acceptability based on the intuitions of five American native speakers of English to be recaptured on the semantic scale of “degree” and “intensity.” The basic assumption lies in that the nature of “degree” will allow the target sentence to occur in the construction with comparison or modification, while the nature of “intensity” will not accept any circumstances observed in “degree” manifestations.

- (5) (a) They *thoroughly* disapprove of his method.
 (b) They *deeply* sympathize with you.
 (c) They *bitterly* regretted his mistake.
 (d) They *fully* accept responsibility.
 (e) They *badly* need a drink.
 (f) They *totally* rejected the suggestion.
 (g) They *greatly* admire his music.
 (h) They *completely* failed in the exam.
 (i) They *perfectly* fell into a trap.
 (j) They *entirely* agree with you.
 (k) They *utterly* deplore his tactics.
 (l) They *extremely* enjoyed the play.
 (m) They *absolutely* refuse to listen to your grumbling.

The informants are required to check the acceptability of the above sentences according to the following six criteria. If they judge the target sentence acceptable, they are expected to mark “+,” while if unacceptable, they are expected to mark “-.” When they are suspended in judgment, they are required to mark “?” The asterisk mark before (b) sentence in each pair shows that it is unacceptable according to the informant check.

It is important to note here again that if an adverb functions as denoting “degree,” then some forms of comparison or modification can be obtained. It is

clear that the following criteria serve to differentiate between “degree” and “intensity”:

- (6) (A) It can be the focus of clause comparison with the correlatives *as . . . as*:
 a. They need a drink *as badly* as I do.
 b.*They refuse to listen to your grumbling *as absolutely* as I do.
- (B) It can be premodified by *However* to form the opening of a dependent clause:
 a. *However fully* they accept responsibility, they
 b.**However extremely* they enjoyed the play, they
- (C) It can be premodified by *How* to form the opening of an interrogative transformation of the clause:
 a. *How bitterly* did they regret his mistake?
 b.**How utterly* do they deplore his tactics?
- (D) It can be premodified by *How* to form the opening of an exclamatory transformation of the clause:
 a. *How greatly* they admire his music!
 b.**How absolutely* they refuse to listen to your grumbling!
- (E) It can be the focus of clause comparison with the correlatives *more . . . than*:
 a. They sympathize with you *more deeply* than I do.
 b.*They agree with you *more entirely* than I do.
- (F) It can be premodified by *very*:
 a. They *very badly* need a drink.
 b.*They *very completely* failed in the exam.

The results of the investigation can be shown in the following matrix:

(7)

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)
(a) <i>thoroughly</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+
(b) <i>deeply</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+/?
(c) <i>bitterly</i>	+	+	+	+	+	?
(d) <i>fully</i>	+	+	+	+	+/?	?
(e) <i>badly</i>	+	+	+	+	-	+
(f) <i>totally</i>	+	+	+	+/?	+	-
(g) <i>greatly</i>	+	+	-/?	+/?	-/?	+/?
(h) <i>completely</i>	+	?	?	+	+/?	-
(i) <i>perfectly</i>	?	+	?	+/?	?	-
(j) <i>entirely</i>	+	+	-	?	-	-
(k) <i>utterly</i>	?/-	-	-	?/-	-	?
(l) <i>extremely</i>	?/-	-	-	?/-	-	?
(m) <i>absolutely</i>	-	?/-	-	-	?/-	-

This matrix demonstrates that “maximizers” and “boosters” are ordered to show a gradient, that is, a graded variation in the similarity and dissimilarity of the items. The more “+” entries an adverb has, the more it may assume the function of “degree,” because the possibility of comparison or modification suggests that the adverb in question can be partly characterized in terms of “degree”; the more “-” entries it has, the more it may function as “intensity,” because it may denote the maximum of degree, that is, the highest degree, which refuses any comparison or modification.³

To summarize briefly from the observation, we maintain that “intensity” and “degree,” which can be respectively realized as “maximizers” and “boosters,” exist on the same semantic continuum with some gradient because they vary in their functions from the one side of expressing primarily “degree” of the item modified to the other side of strengthening the “intensity” of the item modified according to a varying effect.

I have so far overviewed the analyses of English

intensifiers based on Yamauchi (1985) to point out that they can be analyzed on the same semantic continuum with gradient. This also suggests that there should be further applicability to the analyses of Japanese intensifiers in a similar framework to what has been presented so far in the analyses of English intensifiers, in that “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*,” which are seen as Japanese counterparts of the English equivalents, should be treated together, not separately, with special focus on their relations of semantic continuity, for a more elegant description of them.

3. Analyses of Japanese Intensifiers: “*zenzen*” including “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*”

This section will deal with one of the Japanese intensifiers, “*zenzen*,”⁴ which includes “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” along in a similar semantic vein, and explore its semantic functions of “intensity” with application of insights from the analyses of English intensifiers. As has been suggested above in the previous section, in which English intensifiers should be located on the same semantic continuum with some gradient extending from “degree” to “intensity,” a similar approach would be appropriate to the analyses of Japanese intensifiers such as “*zenzen*” including “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*.” Given the fact that in some Japanese authentic dictionaries published thus far “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” are almost always given as definitions of “*zenzen*,” the next task to be set is to clarify semantic interrelations between “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” under a more comprehensive definition of “*zenzen*.”

I will pay a special attention to the controversial issue of whether “*zenzen*” should be followed by an affirmative statement or a negative one, which can be typically characterized in the semantic acceptability of the statement that “*Zenzen daijyobu*,” as is often heard in daily Japanese vernacular.

A more careful observation of definitions of “*zenzen*” in some Japanese authentic dictionaries will be helpful to clarifying its semantic nature in the following discussion. Note that bold letters are used for special emphasis in each definition below:

- (8) *Daijirin* (1995)
- a. *hitotsu-nokorazu, arayuru-ten-de, marrukiri, mattaku* (followed by negatives or negative expressions such as “*dame*”)
 - b. *hijyo-ni, totemo* (in vulgar vernacular speech)
- (9) *Sanseido's Kokugo Jiten, Fifth Edition* (2001)
- a. *mattaku, marude* (followed by negatives or “*chigau*” or “*betsu-da*”)
 - b. *totemo* (in vulgar use)

We can observe from the above examples that (i) two types of possible meanings “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” (or “*totemo*” as a very similar alternative) are assigned to the definition of “*zenzen*,” (ii) the definition of “*mattaku*” corresponds to negatives, and (iii) the definition of “*hijyo-ni*” includes usage in vulgar speech.

The following description presents an implicit usage of “*hijyo-ni*,” which indirectly implies that it is acceptable even with the affirmative statement:

- (10) *Shin Meikai Kokugo Jiten, Fifth Edition* (2005)
- a. *mattaku*
 - b. *hijyo-ni* (in vulgar use and not accompanied by negative expressions)

It is interesting to point out, furthermore, that the following dictionaries supplement more explicit explanations on the usage in the affirmative circumstances:

- (11) *Iwanami's Kokugo Jiten, Sixth Edition* (2000)
- a. *marukkiri* (followed by negatives or negative expressions)
 - b. *sukkari, zenmen-teki-ni* (Many examples can be observed in this usage denoting affirmative meanings, but the usage with the meaning of “*hijyo-ni*” and “*danzen*” is in vulgar use.)
- (12) *Kojien, Fifth Edition* (1998)
- a. *subete-no-ten-de, sukkari*

- b. *mattaku, marude* (followed by negatives or negative expressions)
- c. *mattaku, hijyo-ni* (in vulgar use and also with affirmatives)

Let us go on next to a more comprehensive semantic description of “*zenzen*,” based on the above observations in each Japanese dictionary, along with a few significant findings pointed out in Tanaka (2004).

Tanaka (2004) adopts the combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmative statements for discussion such as “*Zenzen oishii yo,*” “*Zenzen genki sou da ne,*” “*Zenzen daijyobu,*” or “*Zenzen OK*” and attempts to make a reconstruction of the usage of “*zenzen*” in terms of the interrelationships between “*zenzen*” + negatives and “*zenzen*” + affirmatives.

The first point suggested in Tanaka (2004) is that “*zenzen*” can be followed by both negatives and affirmatives, justified with examples cited in *Daijirin*, which are both from works of great men of letters (in the Meiji era and after, such as Soseki Natsume, Hakucho Masamune and so on).⁵

- (13) *Ittai seito ga zenzen warui desu* (Soseki Natsume, *Bocchan*, Meiji 39) (bold mine)
- (14) *Haha ha zenzen doui shite* (Hakucho Masamune, *Izuko he*, Meiji 41) (bold mine)

The meaning of “*zenzen*” in the above examples should be ascribed to “*mattaku*” or “*kanzen-ni*,” not “*hijyo-ni*” or “*totemo*,” through the semantic verification by word substitution. Hence, “*Haha ha mattaku doui shite*,” not “**Haha ha hijyo-ni doui shite*,” for example. I call this group “a combination of ‘*zenzen*’ with intensity + negatives or affirmatives.”

The second point is concerned with the usage of “*zenzen*” followed by affirmatives, a topic widely talked about even in the non-academic world, with the following two sets of expressions including “*zenzen*.” The adverb of “*zenzen*” in the following examples can be substituted for “*hijyo-ni*” (or “*tote-*

mo”), as is observed below:

- (15) a. **Zenzen** oishii yo. / **Zenzen** genki sou da ne.
 b. **Hijyo-ni** (or *tomemo*) oishii yo. / **Hijyo-ni** (or *totemo*) genki so da ne.

“Zenzen” in the following examples, on the other hand, can, or “seems to be more suitable to show itself to” in terms of Tanaka (2004: 33), express the meaning of “*mattaku*” or “*kanzen-ni*,” not “*hijyo-ni*” or “*totemo*”:

- (16) a. **Zenzen** daijyobu. / **Zenzen** OK.
 b. **Mattaku** (or *kanzen-ni*) daijyobu. / **Mattaku** (or *kanzen-ni*) OK.
 c. ***Hijyo-ni** (or *tomemo*) daijyobu. / ***Hijyo-ni** (or *totemo*) OK.

It is significant to infer an important assumption from this vague identification in Tanaka (2004) that “*mattaku*” seems to be more suitable than “*hijyo-ni*” to identify the status of “*zenzen*.” It is the assumption that the ambiguous identification in the explanation is attributed to the implication that “*zenzen*” in (16) does not perfectly correspond to “*mattaku*” with intensity, rather “*mattaku*” with the target adverb still remaining in the domain of degree, but, at the same time, just lying in a “pre-phase” of categorization transforming from degree to intensity. I can ascertain this from the fact that two meanings of “*mattaku*” are sometimes interestingly slotted into different definitions, and furthermore “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” are sometimes put together in the same category of definition, as is seen in *Kojien, Fifth Edition* (1998). I will call the former group of “*zenzen*” in (15) “a combination of ‘*zenzen*’ with degree + affirmatives” and the latter in (16) “a combination of ‘*zenzen*’ with degree to intensity + affirmatives” for convenience in the present discussion.

The third point is related to the semantic interpretation of a seemingly controversial expression, “*zenzen*” + affirmatives such as “*Zenzen oishii yo*.” Tanaka (2004) seeks for a pragmatic condition in the preceding context as a more persuasive method of interpretation, where the connotation or existence of

negation is expected to lie in the context as a basis of acceptability.

Compare the following pair of (17) and (18):

- (17) a. (girl): *Kyo ha chotto shippai shita mitai. Oishiku nai desho.*
 b. (boy): **Zenzen** oishii yo.
 (18) a. (girl): *Kyo ha umaku dekita mitai. Oishii desho.*
 b. (boy): ?**Zenzen** oishii yo.

According to Tanaka (2004), a basis for preferring (17) as a more natural occurrence in the dialogue lies in the connotation or existence of negation in the preceding utterance, such as “*oishiku nai*” in (17a), for example. Tanaka (2004) explains that this negative connotation or existence smoothly introduces the occurrence of “*zenzen*” as a more natural response as in (17b). It follows that such an interpretation as it is NOT that “*zenzen oishiku nai yo*” can be obtained from the influence of the previous context to give rise to the final manifestation as a more plausible response like “*zenzen* (NOT ‘*oishiku nai*’) *oishii yo*.”

This interpretation is due to the assumption that there should be a negative inherently accompanied by “*zenzen*” based on the traditional treatment of “*zenzen*.” It should be noticed, however, that this assumption might cause a contradictory fallacy that the above analysis restricts the treatment of “*zenzen*,” though it can convey intensity and degree, exclusively to the meaning of “*hijyo-ni*,” with the result that “*zenzen*” with affirmatives must be treated as a special case in usage with the relations of intensity and degree completely separated in meaning and, at the same time, with the possibility of the occurrence with negatives as the last resort for a solution.

It is true that the analyses proposed by Tanaka (2004) can be applicable to many examples which I have gathered for investigation where there should be negative connotations latent in the preceding context to produce a surface combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives in the subsequent utterance, but I can

add interesting counterexamples below for a more linguistically significant generalization. See the following example of (19) as a counterexample of anaphoric usage of “*zenzen*”:

- (19) *Mabo tofu no moto de tsukuru yori zenzen oishii desu. Tsukuru noni nare reba 20-pun mo areba deki chai masu.* (<http://cookpad.com/mykitchen/recipe/264586/>)⁶

It would be possible to adopt such an interpretation, following Tanaka (2004), for non-direct or latent lexicalization of negatives in the preceding context as “[As for a hand-made simple cooking recipe,] *mabo tofu no moto de tsukuru yori zenzen* (NOT that *oishiku nai yo, mushiro*) *oishii desu*,” but this approach seems to be a little redundant in that it does not need to refer to the preceding context with negative connotations which denote intensity in response to negatives. Rather, it should be necessary to identify a more linguistically explicit marker of comparison, seen in a phrase of “*mabo tofu de tsukuru yori*,” which can often be observed in the examples gathered by the present author. This marker “*yori*” is thought to be used as an intensifying device of comparison in terms of the degree of good taste of the dish in this case.

The next example with a possible cataphoric interpretation will serve to make the present discussion more unequivocal:

- (20) *Saikin zenzen odayakana mainichi de, hijyo-ni hyoshi-nuke shite imasu. Tabun yoi koto nan darou kedo, watashi niha shigeki ga sukuna sugiru.... To omotte itara, chichi ga osaka kara no kaeri no densha no naka de, suri ni ai hisabisani uketa. Chinamini, haha mo ukete ita. Warui kazoku da* (http://www.j-two.co.jp/chisako/monologue/archives/2000/08/post_36.html)

Following Tanaka (2004) along with the same line above, the opening of the above statement would be “*saikin* [the stimulus is] *zenzen* (NOT that *sukunaku nai koto ha naku, mushiro*) *odayakana mainichi de*,”

but it is logically impossible without any preceding contexts in this example. Furthermore, it is more interpretatively costly to assume the opening of the statement with the weakness of stimulus, which is to be mentioned later, under the subconsciousness and to expect such relevant expressions to appear in the subsequent stream of the statement. Admitting that it is useful to keep in mind the anaphoric relationship with the preceding context, if only it is overtly present in the statement, the status of the marker of comparison with the use of “*zenzen*” in (19) and the cataphoric function of it in (20) will require further investigation.

It is most important for a tentative summary of the present discussion to refer back to the first and second points suggested by Tanaka (2004). What is to be noted here again is that (i) “*zenzen*” with the meaning of “*mattaku*” has been long used both in negatives and in affirmatives, and (ii) there are two sets of meanings, one set of meanings of “*hijyo-ni*” and “*totemo*” and the other of “*mattaku*” and “*kanzen-ni*” in “*zenzen*” in the combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives (as well as that in the combination of “*zenzen*” + negatives).

It is also most important for evidential enrichment of the present discussion to touch on Niino (1997), which maintains the semantic functional shift of “*zenzen*” with elaborate diachronic investigations of the combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives. It is very suggestive for Niino (1997: 276) to point out that “the combination of ‘*zenzen*’ + affirmatives meant “*nani kara nani made*” or “*kanzen-ni*” till the prewar period in Showa era,” but “*hijyo-ni*” or “*totemo*” after the postwar period in Showa era and that “*zenzen*” corresponding to affirmatives, as is the case with the correspondence with negatives, has retained the same meaning of “*kanzen-ni*” or “100%.”

In summary, it is significant to marshal the usage and meaning of “*zenzen*” as an intensifier in Japanese, as follows:

- (i) All through history there has been semantic consistency in the usage of “*zenzen*” + nega-

tives, while there have been some variations in semantic acceptability and judgment in it, some cases of which have been occasionally seen as vulgar.

- (ii) The combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives was confined itself exclusively to the meaning of “*mattaku*” with intensity from the Meiji era to the prewar period of Showa.
- (iii) As for the meaning of “*mattaku*” with intensity, the combination of “*zenzen*” + negatives has long been regarded as correct use, while that of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives as wrong use since the postwar period of the Showa era.⁷ As a matter of linguistic fact, on the other hand, a combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives has long been observed as a meaning of “*hijyo-ni*” or “*mattaku*” in everyday vulgar vernacular speech.
- (iv) As to the future prospect for linguistic dynamics in Japanese, two possible trends can be pointed out. One is that “*zenzen*” retained in the domain of degree, though as close as possible to the function of intensity, will lose its function of degree and be incorporated into the domain of intensity. The other is that “*zenzen*,” regarded as one with the meaning of “*hijyo-ni*” to show degree, will gain general recognition and come into wider use as correct usage. This can be called the function of “semantic regeneration” in Japanese intensifiers after a similar function of English intensifiers, just as is pointed out by Quirk *et al.* (1985:590)

For a better understanding of the above summary, the following illustration will serve to capture at a glance the diachronic shift of meaning and usage of “*zenzen*” in Japanese. We can observe three phases in the transition of “*zenzen*,” focusing on degree and intensity, where ☉ denotes the already established usage for that matter, ○ is seen to be in practical use with varying degrees of acceptability and ◎ (concentric circles with shading) is assumed to be a re-

cent trend in which older uses, missing or temporary, of meaning and function are replaced or supplemented by new ones:

(21) Shift of Meaning and Usage of “*zenzen*”

- (i) the phase of the Meiji era to the prewar period of Showa

“ <i>zenzen</i> ” with intensity (=“ <i>mattaku</i> ”)	
negatives:	☉
affirmatives:	☉

- (ii) the phase of the postwar period to the present

	“ <i>zenzen</i> ” with intensity (=“ <i>mattaku</i> ”)	“ <i>zenzen</i> ” with degree to intensity (=“ <i>mattaku</i> ”)	“ <i>zenzen</i> ” with degree (=“ <i>hijyo-ni</i> ”)
negatives:	☉	☉	☉
affirmatives:		○	○

- (iii) the phase of the present to the future

	“ <i>zenzen</i> ” with intensity (=“ <i>mattaku</i> ”)	“ <i>zenzen</i> ” with degree (=“ <i>hijyo-ni</i> ”)
negatives:	☉	☉
affirmatives:	◎	◎

4. Conclusion

This study has dealt with some expressions with intensity, intensifiers (or technically termed as amplifiers) in English and Japanese, assuming that both adverbs can be realized on the same semantic continuum with some gradient from degree to intensity. It has explored the applicability of insights from the analyses of English intensifiers into the semantic investigation of “*zenzen*” in Japanese, whose subcategories are “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*.”

First, I have tried to identify the scope of the present study and have pointed out that there is some gradient in meaning and function among English inten-

sifiers, especially amplifiers, through the investigation of native-informant checks. I have also confirmed through a contrastive analysis of English and Japanese that English amplifiers do not always correspond in meaning to their supposed Japanese counterparts.

Next, as an attempt to apply insights gained from the analyses of English to the investigations of Japanese, I have taken a Japanese adverb, “*zenzen*,” which is seen as one of the Japanese intensifiers, as the target and explored its meanings and functions. The observations of the descriptions of the target adverb in Japanese authentic dictionaries have induced me to attach complicated assigned meanings to the adverb. Based on the lexical description in *Kojien, Fifth Edition* (1998), I have classified “*zenzen*” into two subgroups: one being “*mattaku*” denoting intensity and the other being “*mattaku*” and “*hijyo-ni*” denoting degree, focusing on the combination of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives, and maintained that “*zenzen*,” “*mattaku*,” and “*hijyo-ni*” are located on the same semantic continuum with gradient from degree to intensity, along with the analogy from the insights obtained from the analyses of English intensifiers.

Furthermore, I have presented a possible future picture for linguistic dynamics in Japanese that “*zenzen*” retained in the domain of degree will gradually lose its function of degree to the domain of intensity, and that “*zenzen*,” still with the meaning of “*hijyo-ni*” to show degree, will be generally recognized and universally used as correct usage. This can be characterized as a recent linguistic phenomenon in which older uses, missing or temporary, of meaning and function of the target adverb of intensity or degree, are often replaced or supplemented by new ones. I have called this the function of “semantic regeneration”⁸ in Japanese intensifiers after a similar function of English intensifiers, as is pointed out by Quirk *et al.* (1985:590).

A linguistically significant contrastive study will no doubt bear abundant fruit in capturing and clarifying a seemingly complicated interrelatedness between two very different languages. One of the great-

est advantages of the present study, as had been expected, is that insights gained through the analyses of English adverbs can be applicable to the treatment of Japanese adverbs and *vice versa*.

Notes

*This paper is a revised, but further elaborated version of my paper read at “The International Research Forum of Chinese-Japanese Theoretical Linguistics in 2007,” held on September 2, 2007, at Peking University, Beijing and my paper read at “A Joint Symposium of Doshisha University and Associated Kyoto Program in 2009,” held on September 12, 2009, at Smith College, U.S.A. My special thanks go to Prof. Deborah Foreman Takano, Doshisha University, for suggesting stylistic improvements. Any remaining errors and inadequacies are, of course, my own.

1 Quirk *et al.* (1985: 440) treats “adjuncts” and “disjuncts” equally as assigned similar status because they are both assumed to be integrated into the clause. Declerck (1991: 214-6) maintains, on the other hand, that “subjuncts” should be grouped in the same category as “disjuncts” and “conjuncts,” and separate from “adjuncts.” The present study will follow the latter classification by Declerck (1991), because it is important as a syntactic criterion of the degree of integration into the clause whether or not adverbs should function as indispensable elements in the verb phrases.

2 This classification diagram is based on Quirk *et al.* (1985: 567), with additions to each example. Quirk *et al.* (1972) incorporates a group called “emphasizers” into “intensifiers,” such as *actually*, *certainly*, *clearly*, and *really*; and *frankly*, *honestly*, and *literally*. The former three examples put an emphasis on the truth of the content uttered, while the latter three examples convey the speaker’s evaluation, assertion or comment on the content of the proposition expressed. It is noted here that “emphasizers” should be excluded from the present consideration because they denote intensity only in a narrow sense.

3 It is interesting to point out a few things from the

observation, though it may seem to be of little direct relevance to the present discussion. One is that “*thoroughly*,” “*fully*,” and “*totally*,” which were originally classified as “maximizers” in Quirk *et al.* (1985), are found to assume the function of “degree,” and can be categorized as “boosters.” Another is that “*extremely*” was for convenience regarded as one of the “boosters” on the analogy of the corresponding Japanese meanings, but the result may support the fact that it is similar to “maximizers” in function and meaning.

4 For the linguistic treatment of “*zenzen*” in Japanese linguistics, there is the viewpoint that it should be regarded as an adverb of statement in response to the negative expressions following it; there is also the viewpoint that it should be taken as an adverb of degree due to its functional shifts. For more information, see Ishigami (1983: 48-52).

5 As is mentioned in Tanaka (2004), Niino (1997: 259) points out that there appeared many examples in literary works from the Meiji era to Showa (especially prewar times of Showa) which accepted the usage of “*zenzen*” co-occurring with affirmatives as well as negatives.

6 This example was gathered from Yahoo! on August 26, 2007. The subsequent examples were all taken from the same source on the same date.

7 This phenomenon might be due to the influence of the national education of Japanese during a given period. This specification of time such as “a given period” is based on the fact that a certain age group gave a characteristically negative response to the acceptability of usage of “*zenzen*” + affirmatives. Niino (1997: 284) introduces a graph in “Shin Hyakka,” the morning column of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, dated April 10, 1994, which explains that the percentage of those who judged strange the example “*Zenzen otoku desu*.” was highest among those in their forties in those days, compared with those spending their childhood in the prewar period.

8 Harima (1993) also maintains that “*zenzen*” has

transformed from the stage where it can be used either in affirmatives or negatives, through the stage where it can be exclusively accompanied by negatives, to the stage where it emerges as quite a distinct new usage with affirmatives after the post-war period. It should be noted that the present study assumes that intensity and degree should lie on the same semantic continuum and be available to serve a new function of “regeneration” in meaning and function. Note that my approach is completely different from that of Harima (1993) in terms of orientation of the investigation.

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