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A Corpus-based Approach to Japanese Adjectives in Adnominal and Conjunctive Form

The main issue of this research is the semantic deviation between adnominal and conjunctive forms of Japanese adjectives. The result of this research strongly suggests that these two forms are, with high probability, forming different constructional schemata, and each constructional schema requests different adjectives. Semantic differences between these two forms do not stem from the derivational meaning of adjectives, but from the constructional meaning, which is constituted independently.

Mikami (1955, Gendai Goho Shinsetsu [The New Theory on Modern Japanese]) has pointed out the crucial semantic and usage difference between adnominal and conjunctive forms of adjectives. For example, adnominal form osoroshi-i and ita-i in (1a) and (2a) still retain its literal meaning of ‘fearfulness’ and ‘painfulness’, while conjunctive form osoroshi-ku and ita-ku in (1b) and (2b) do not.

(1) a. osoroshi-i
   fearful-ADN taiken fearful experience
   painful-ADN chusha painful injection

b. osoroshi-ku
   fearful-CON mazui very distasteful
   painful-CON be impressed

Though this semantic variation indicates that adnominal and conjunctive forms of adjectives are different at the morphosyntactic level, it has been excluded from investigation.

In order to show the difference of each adjective’s requisition of word, we first checked the frequencies and distribution of adnominal and conjunctive forms of Japanese adjectives in three different Japanese corpora (Shincho-bunko 100, Shincho-shinsho 100, Yomiuri News (11years)). Accordingly, 11,566 phrases of adnominal form, and 17,134 of conjunctive form were found, and then we coded morphological information. Pearson’s correlation coefficient has shown more than 0.80 of high relation among the corpora, and illustrated the distributional regularity of adnominal and conjunctive forms, regardless of the difference between the corpora. Second, we examined the coefficient of variance (CV) of inflected forms from the basic form with chi-square test with 0.7 point of CV and more than 1 percent of significance. From this result, we then found high resemblance of adjective inflection and usage pattern among the corpora.

This research indicated the presence of numerous adjectives which are used only as either adnominal or conjunctive form. Each adjectival expression specifies a set of slots, and forms item-based construction (Tomasello, 2000, The Item-based Nature of Children’s Early Syntactic Development), without mutual influence. Adnominal form and conjunctive form shape different constructional schemata as to lexical level distribution.