

Compound Adjectives at the Morphology-Syntax Interface

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1. Introduction

Japanese has a number of different types of adjectival expressions where an adjective is morphologically combined within a noun.

- (1) a. tawai(-ga)-na-i b. darasi(-ga)-na-i c. toritome(-ga)-na-i
solidity-NOM-null-PRES punctuality-NOM-null-PRES stop-NOM-null-PRES
'childish' 'untidy' 'rambling'

The relation between the adjectives with and without case marking looks like English expressions like (2).

- (2) a. behavior [like a child]
b. [childish/childlike] behavior

The morphological composition of the compound adjectives in (1) suggests that they are formed by incorporating the noun into the adjective.

- (3) [TP ~~Noun-ga~~ [Adj Noun-ga-na] -i] → [TP [Adj Noun-na] -i]

These adjectives allow case marking to appear (optionally) on the noun part, and they take an experiencer subject. They can be divided into three classes. The Class II adjectives possess the interesting property that they can access both pre- and post-incorporation structures.

- (4) Class I: *yurugi(-ga)-nai* 'unshakable', *sokke(-ga)-nai* 'curt, blunt', *atogusare(-ga)-nai* 'without later trouble', *abunage(-ga)-nai* 'safe'

Class II: *sikata(-ga)-nai* 'unavoidable', *moosiwake(-ga)-nai* 'inexcusable', *darasi(-ga)-nai* 'untidy', *tawai(-ga)-nai* 'childish', *toritome(-ga)-nai* 'rambling', *hugai(-ga)-nai* 'cowardly'

Class III: *syoo-ga-nai* 'cannot help', *syoo-mo-nai* 'trivial', *doo-siyoo-mo-nai* 'no way of doing'

- (5) Roadmap: 1. Distinguishing adjectives from negative clauses
2. The discussion of the properties of compound adjectives:
a. Properties that can be attributed to unincorporated structures

- b. Properties that can be attributed to pre-incorporated structures
c. Adjectives with no pre-incorporation structure available

2. The Properties of Compound Adjectives

2.1. Complex Adjectives versus Negated Possessive/Existential Clauses

The complex adjectives and negated possessive/existential clauses have the same morphological sequences, and need to be distinguished.

- (6) a. John-ga yuuki-ga na-i.
John-NOM courage-NOM NEG-PRES
'John does not have courage' (Possessive/existential)
b. Mary-ga tawai-ga na-i.
Mary-NOM solidity-NOM null-PRES
'Mary is childish' (Adjective)

They can be distinguished by looking at whether they have positive counterparts. Positive counterparts are available only for negated possessive/existential clauses.

- (7) a. John-ga yuuki-ga ar-u.
John-NOM courage-NOM have-PRES
'John has courage'
b. *Mary-ga tawai-ga ar-u.
Mary-NOM solidity-NOM have-PRES
'Mary is adult-like (?)'

2.2. The Differences Between the Class I and Class II Adjectives

Both Class I and Class II adjectives do not have affirmative counterparts regardless of whether they occur with nominative case marking.

- (8) Class I
a. abunage-ga na-i → *abunage-ga ar-u
danger-NOM null-PRES danger-NOM have-PRES
'safe, less dangerous'
b. abunage-na-i → *abunage-ar-u
danger-null-PRES danger-have-PRES
'safe'
(9) Class II
a. tawai-ga na-i → *tawai-ga ar-u
solidity-NOM null-PRES solidity-NOM have-PRES
'childish'
b. tawai-na-i → *tawai-ar-u
solidity-null-PRES solidity-have-PRES
'childish'

Proposal: The Class I adjectives do not instantiate incorporation to the adjectival base when noun part is marked with nominative case, but the Class II adjectives do even if the noun occur with nominative marking.

- (10) Class I
 a. *abunage-ga nai* → [TP *abunage-ga* [ADJ *na*]-i]
 b. *abunage-nai* → [TP [ADJ *abunage-na*]-i]
 (11) Class II
 a. *tawai-ga nai* → [TP ~~*tawai-ga*~~ [ADJ *tawai-ga-na*]-i]
 b. *tawai-nai* → [TP [ADJ *tawai-na*]-i]

A: Adverb insertion: The Class I adjectives allow an adverb to appear after the noun part when the noun is marked with nominative, but the Class II adjectives do not.

- (12) Class I
 a. (mattaku) *abunage-ga* (mattaku) *na-i*
 entirely danger-NOM entirely null-PRES
 ‘entirely without danger’
 b. (mattaku) *abunage* (*mattaku) *na-i*
 entirely danger entirely null-PRES
 ‘entirely without danger’
 (13) Class II
 a. (mattaku) *tawai-ga* (?*mattaku) *na-i*
 entirely solidity-NOM entirely null-PRES
 ‘entirely childish’
 b. (mattaku) *tawai* (*mattaku) *na-i*
 entirely solidity entirely null-PRES
 ‘entirely childish’

B: Nominative-dative alternation (on the subjects): The Class I adjectives can undergo the so-called nominative-dative alternation. This alternation is not possible with the Class II adjectives.

- (14) Class I
 a. [John-no unten]-**ga/-ni** *abunage-ga* *na-i*
 John-GEN driving-NOM/-DAT danger-NOM null-PRES
 ‘John’s driving is not dangerous/smooth.’
 b. [John-no unten]-**ga/*-ni** *abunage-na-i*
 John-GEN driving-NOM/-DAT danger-null-PRES
 ‘John’s driving is not dangerous/smooth.’
 (15) Class II
 a. Mary-**ga/?*-ni** *tawai-ga* *na-i*.
 Mary-NOM/-DAT solidity-NOM null-PRES
 ‘Mary is childish.’
 b. Mary-**ga/*-ni** *tawai-na-i*
 Mary-NOM/-DAT solidity-null-PRES

‘Mary is childish.’

There is a well-known case requirement in Japanese, i.e. the nominative-case constraint. Intransitive clauses cannot have dative marking on their sole arguments.

- (16) *Kesiki-ga/*-ni utukusi-i*.
 view-NOM/-DAT beautiful-PRES
 ‘The view is beautiful.’ (intransitive adjective)

Abunage-ga nai behaves as a transitive adjective. On the other hand, *tawai-ga nai* behaves like an intransitive adjective, in not allowing the dative marking on the noun. The suppression of a case marker via incorporation is different from case-marker drop, which often takes place in colloquial speech.

- (17) John-**ga/-ni** *sonna yuuki(-ga) na-i desyo!*
 John-NOM/-DAT such courage-NOM NEG-PRES EMPH
 ‘John does not have such courage!’
 (18) John-**ni/-ga** *sonna yuuki(-ga) ar-i masu ka?*
 John-DAT-TOP such courage-NOM have-PRES POLITE Q
 ‘Does John have such courage?’

C: NPI licensing: *Nai* can license NPI when it appears unincorporated.

- (19) Class I
 a. Kare-no unten-wa sukosimo *abunage-ga nakat-ta*.
 he-GEN driving-TOP at.all danger-NOM null-PAST
 ‘His driving was not dangerous at all.’
 b. *Kare-no unten-wa sukosimo *abunage-nakat-ta*.
 he-GEN driving-TOP at.all danger-null-PAST
 ‘His driving was not dangerous at all.’
 (20) Class II
 a. *Kare-wa sukosimo *tawai-ga nakat-ta*.
 he-TOP at.all solidity-NOM null-PAST
 ‘He was childish at all.’
 b. *Kare-wa sukosimo *tawai-nakat-ta*.
 he-TOP at.all solidity-null-PAST
 ‘He was childish at all.’

D: Premodifier: The addition of a premodifier is possible with the Class I adjectives, as (21), but this is not possible with the Class II adjectives, as (22).

- (21) Class I
 John-no unten-wa [**korepotti-no/nan-no** *abunage*]-mo *nakat-ta*.
 John-GEN driving-TOP slightest-GEN/any-GEN danger-also null-PAST
 ‘John’s driving was least dangerous.’

(22) Class II

*Mary-wa [korepotti-no/nan-no tawai]-mo nakat-ta.
Mary-TOP slightest-GEN/any-GEN solidity-also null-AST
'Mary was highly childish'

2.3. Some Uniform Behavior of the Two Classes of Adjectives

There are cases where the two classes of adjectives pattern together.

E: The occurrence of the particle *mo*: The adjectives in both classes allow the occurrence of the particle *mo*.

(23) Class I

Mary-no unten-wa abunage-ga/-mo nakat-ta-si...
Mary-GEN driving-TOP danger-NOM/-also null-PAST-and
'Mary's driving was without danger, and ...'

(24) Class II

Mary-no kotoba-wa tawai-ga/-mo nakat-ta.
Mary-GEN speech-TOP solidity-NOM/-also null-PAST
'Mary's talk was childish.'

F: Nominative-genitive conversion (on the noun part of the adjectives): This conversion is allowed optionally when a clause with a nominative argument is embedded under another nominal. This alternation is possible with both Class I and Class II adjectives.

(25) a. [John-ga-no hasit-ta] koto
John-NOM/-GEN run-PAST fact
'the fact that John's driving is safe'

b. [John-ga/-no yon-da] hon
John-NOM/-GEN read-PAST book
'the book which John read'

(26) Class I

a. [John-no unten-ni abunage-ga/-no na-i] koto
John-GEN driving-DAT danger-NOM/-GEN null-PRES fact
'the fact that John's driving is safe'

b. [abunage-ga/-no na-i] unten
danger-NOM/-GEN null-PRES driving
'safe driving'

(27) Class II

a. [tawai-ga/-no na-i] koto
solidity-NOM/-GEN null-PRES fact
'the fact that it is childish'

b. [tawai-no/-ga na-i] hito
solidity-NOM/-GEN null-PRES man
'a childish man'

G. Nominalization: Once a clause is nominalized, obligatory change of nominative

marking to genitive case marking takes place, and no adverbial particle is admitted inside the nominal (i.e. *mo* cannot replace or add to genitive case).

(28) a. Mary-ga/-mo kawai-i.
Mary-NOM/-also cute-PRES
'Mary is (also) cute.'
b. Mary-no/*-ga kawai-sa
Mary-GEN/-NOM cute-NOML
'Mary's cuteness'

(29) Class I

a. abunage-no/*-ga na-sa
danger-GEN/-NOM null-NOML
'no danger'

b. *abunage-mo na-sa
danger-also null-NOML
'no danger'

(30) Class II

a. tawai-no/*-ga na-sa
solidity-GEN/-NOM null-NOML
'childishness'

b. ?*tawai-mo na-sa
solidity-also null-NOML
'childishness'

(31)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Class I: <i>abunage-ga nai</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Class II: <i>tawai-ga nai</i>	*	*	*	*	√	√	√

Question: Why do the Class II adjectives behave in the way they do?

(32) Proposal:

Syntactic operations affect pre-incorporation structures; they are possible, as long as they do not affect the well-formedness of the post-incorporation structures (where the compound adjectives comprise only head elements).

Consequence: Syntactic operations are not accessible to word-internal elements when their pre-incorporation structures are visible.

2.4. Class III Adjectives

In the Class III adjectives, pre-incorporation structure is no longer available.

(33) a. syoo-ga-na-i doing.way-NOM-null-PRES
'cannot help'
b. syoo-mo-na-i doing.way-also-null-PRES
'trivial'

(34) The noun part '*syoo*' comes from *si-yoo* 'way of doing'

- (35) a. syoo-ga-na-i → [TP [Adj syoo-ga-na]-i]
 b. syoo-mo-na-i → [TP [Adj syoo-mo-na]-i]

A: Adverb insertion:

- (36) a. (mattaku) syoo-ga (*mattaku) na-i
 entirely doing.way-NOM entirely null-PRES
 ‘cannot be helped entirely’
 b. (mattaku) syoo-mo (*mattaku) na-i
 entirely doing.way-also entirely null-PRES
 ‘entirely boring’

B: Nominative-dative alternation (on the subjects): No alternation is possible

- (37) a. Hanasi-**ga**/*-**ni** syoo-mo-na-i
 story-NOM/-DAT doing.way-also-null-PRES
 ‘The story is boring.’
 b. Sore-**ga**/*-**ni** syoo-ga-na-i (koto)
 that-NOM/-DAT doing.way-NOM-null-PRES fact
 ‘That cannot be helped.’

C: NPI licensing: Not possible

- (38) *Sore-ga sukosimo syoo-ga-na-i
 that-NOM at.all doing.way-NOM-null-PRES
 ‘That cannot be helped.’

D: Premodifier: Not possible

- (40) *[**korepotti-no/nan-no** syoo]-mo-na-i
 slightest-GEN/any-GEN doing.way-also-null-PRES
 ‘the least trivial’

E: The occurrence of the particle *mo*: One adjective has *mo* inside, but this cannot alternate with other forms, i.e. *mo* is frozen inside the adjective.

- (39) syoo-ga-na-i ≠ syoo-mo-na-i
 (cf. syoo-ga-na-i → sya'a-na-i (reduction in colloquial speech))

F: Nominative-genitive conversion (on the noun part of the adjectives):

- (41) a. [Sono-ziko-ga syoo-**ga**/*-**no**-na-i] koto
 that-accident-NOM doing.way-NOM/-GEN-null-PRES thing
 ‘The fact that that accident is unavoidable’
 b. [syoo-**ga**/*-**no**-na-i] ziko
 doing.way-NOM/-GEN-null-PRES accident
 ‘The unavoidable accident’

G. Nominalization:

- (42) a. syoo-**ga**/*-**no**-na-sa
 doing.way-NOM/-GEN-null-NOML
 ‘unavoidable’
 b. syoo-**mo**-na-sa/*syoo-na-sa
 doing.way-also-null-NOML/doing.way-null-NOML
 ‘trivial’

(43)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Class I <i>abunage-ga nai</i>	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Class II <i>tawai-ga nai</i>	*	*	*	*	√	√	√
Class III <i>syoo-ga-nai</i>	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

- (44) The Class III adjectives: Pre-incorporation structure is not visible.

3. Conclusion

In this presentation, I have shown that one class of compound adjectives, classified as Class II adjectives, display paradoxical properties, since their component nouns are transparent to the syntax in one respect, but they are not in another respect.

I propose that the pre-incorporation as well as the post-incorporation structure is viable in the case of the Class II adjectives, so that syntactic operations can apply to the unincorporated noun only when they do not violate morphological constraints imposed on the incorporated structure.

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