Qualitative Adjectives as Reference Modifiers in Japanese

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1. Introduction

(1) Two readings of “Olga is a beautiful dancer”
   a. Intersective reading: ‘Olga is a dancer and she is beautiful.’
   b. Non-intersective reading: ‘Olga is a beautiful as a dancer.’ / ‘Olga dances beautifully.’


(2) Olga-wa utukusi-i odoriko-da.
   Olga-TOP beautiful-I dancer-Pred.Nonpast
   ‘Olga is a beautiful dancer.’ [Intersective/#Non-intersective reading]
   (Morita (2019: 92))

(3) In English, prenominal adjectives have both an intersective reading (i.e., describing a property of the noun) and a non-intersective reading (i.e., identifying the semantic range of the noun), whereas Japanese qualitative adjectives have only an intersective reading.

(4) Adjectives used in... (Bolinger (1967: 14–23))
   a. Referent modification predicates the property of the noun. [≠ Intersective]
   b. Reference modification identifies the semantic range of the noun. [≠ Non-intersective]

   a. Referent modification: huru-i hon (old-I book) ‘a book that is old’
      ki-no hasi (wood-GEN bridge) ‘wooden bridge’
   → In Japanese, referent modification and reference modification are implemented by different forms.

(6) a. huru-i hon
    old-I book
    ‘the book that is old’
   b. sono hon wa huru-i
      DET book TOP old-I
      ‘the book is old’

(7) A peculiar behaviour of qualitative adjectives: akaru-i azi (bright taste)
   [Context: Describing an impression of the taste of meatball]
   Akaru-i azi...todemo iimasuka. Korega Sitiia teki na azi nandatte omotte [...] (Let’s say...bright taste. This is the Sicilian taste, so it feels like [...])

(8) a. akaru-i azi
    bright-I taste
    lit. ‘the taste is bright’
   b. # azi ga akaru-i
      taste NOM bright-I
      lit. ‘the taste is bright’

(9) Question: Why does akaru-i in (8) not behave as a referent modifier, albeit a qualitative adjective?

(10) Aim: To argue that the metonymic interpretation allows it to behave as a reference modifier.

2. Observation

(11) a. {tuyo-i/yowa-i} goisyugi lit. ‘strong/weak lexicalism’
    b. oisi-i {ondo/osirase} lit. ‘tasty temperature/news’
    c. samu-i koe lit. ‘cold voice’
    d. ita-i yatu lit. ‘painful person’
   → These qualitative adjectives do not describe the properties of the nouns. Then, what do they express?
(12) akaru-azi
   a. [Context: Describing an impression of the taste of meatball]
      Akaru-azi...todemoderimashita. Korega Sitririteki na azinandatte omotte [...]
      (Let’s say…bright taste. This is the Sicilian taste, so it feels like [...] )
   b. ‘the taste of meal in a bright region like Sicilia’

(13) oisi-ondo
   a. [Context: Describing a thermos bottle]
      THERMOS Hin’yari oisi-ondo o kiipu! Mahoobin-koozoonotanburaa.
      (THERMOS Keeping cool and tasty temperature! The tumbler of flask bottle)
   b. ‘the cool temperature of beverage in a tasty condition when drinking’

(14) oisi-osirase
   a. [Context: Informing on a SNS]
      Rinyuuaru sita Ion-Mooru Miyazaki kara, oisi-oosirage gastodokimasita yo.
      (From the renovated Aeon-Mall Miyazaki, we have received tasty news)
   b. ‘the news that has good news about tasty food’

3. Reference Modification by Qualitative Adjectives
(15) huru-’i hon (old-I book) → sono hon wa huru-’i ‘the book is old’
(= 6)
(16) a. akaru-azi tuki ‘bright moon’
   b. tuki ga akaru-azi ‘the moon is bright’
(17) a. akaru-azi (bright taste)
   b. # aiziga akaru-azi ‘the taste is bright’

→ (16) and (17) do not show a parallel behaviour. Akaru-azi in (17b) does not serve to produce the intended
meaning, or rather they are uninterpretable, which is indicated by the hash sign (#).


[Ordering of akaru-azi with other QAs]
(18) QA1-QA2-N vs. QA2-QA1-N
   a. tiisa-na sikaku-i ieu
      small-NA square-I house
   b. sikaku-i tiisa-na ieu
   (Sproat and Shih (1991: 582), Watanabe (2012: 504))
(19) QA-[N+no]-N vs. *[N+no]-QA-N
   a. sizuka-na yuki-no hii
      quiet-NA snow-GEN day
      ‘quiet snowy day’
   b. * yuki-no siskuka-na hii
      (Watanabe (2012: 508))
(20) QA-[akaru-i]-azi vs. *[akaru-i]-QA-azi
   a. zyoohin-na akaru-i azi
      refined-NA bright-I taste
      ‘refined Sicilian taste’
   b. # akaru-i zyoohin-na azi
   → The adjective akaru-azi in (20) and (23) shows the parallel ordering behaviour with reference modifiers.

[Ordering of akaru-azi with Determiners]
(21) Det-QA-N vs. QA-Det-N
   a. sono ooki-i kuruma
      that big-I car
   b. ooki-i sono kuruma
      (cf. Sproat and Shih (1991: 582))
(22) Det-[N+no]-N vs. *[N+no]-Det-N
   a. sono ki-no hasi
      that wooden-GEN bridge
      ‘that wooden bridge’
   b. # ki-no sono hasi

(23) Det-[akaru-i]-azi vs. *[akaru-i]-Det-azi
   a. ano akaru-i azi
      that bright-I taste
      ‘that Sicilian taste’
   b. # akaru-i ano azi
3.3. *Interim Summary*

The observation shows that the adjective *akaru-i* in *akaru-i azi* is more like reference modifiers, rather than referent modifiers. This fact is the same with the other adjectives in (11) as well.

4. *Analysis*

(24) Prenominal adjectives have two types of reading (i.e., intersective/non-intersective) and each reading corresponds to different functions (i.e., predicating/identifying) (see (1) and (4)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Two types of reading and their functions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>beautiful dancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criminal lawyer</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(25) *Akaru-i* in *akaru-i azi*

a. ?? Predicating: *Akaru-i* does not predicate or describe the properties of *taste*.

b. Identifying: *Akaru-i* identifies the semantic range of *taste*.

→ Although the Japanese qualitative adjectives are generally used as referent modifiers, they can be reference modifiers in some cases (cf. Morita (2019)).

(26) Interpretation process of *akaru-i azi*

a. Semantic incongruity: The meaning of *akaru-i* gets suspended because the noun *taste* has no sense that the adjective can appropriately modify.

b. Context-dependency: *Akaru-i* must change its modifying target, looking into the context.

c. Metonymic expansion: ‘bright regions’ > ‘meal of bright regions’ > ‘bright qua taste’

→ This process is considered to solve the semantic difficulty of the expressions in (11).

(27) a. *oisi-i ondo: ‘tasty food’ > ‘temperature for tasty food’ > ‘good temperature of food for eating’*

b. *oisi-i osirase: ‘tasty food’ > ‘news about tasty food’ > ‘good news about tasty food’*

c. *samu-i koe: ‘poor regions’ > ‘voice from poor regions’ > ‘refugees’ voice’*

(28) Context-dependency

Marked expressions, which have not yet been conventionalised, are highly context-dependent and require the felicitous context to be appropriately interpreted.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Comparison of <em>akaru-i</em> in <em>akaru-i azi</em> with ordinary modifiers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Akaru-i tuki ‘bright moon’</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Akaru-i azi ‘bright taste’</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ki-no hasi ‘wooden bridge’</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(29) The adjectives in question show the peculiar behaviour (see section 3), because the intended interpretation forces them to behave as reference modifiers, but not as referent modifiers.

5. *Implication*

(30) Reference modification in compounds (cf. Nishimaki (2018: §3.3.1))


→ When a Japanese adjective is used as a reference modifier, it should take a compound form.
(31) a.  akaru-azo, {tuyo-/yowa-i} goisyugi, oisi-i ondo, oisi-i osirase, samu-i koe
   b.  ??{myoo/mei} -mi (明味), ??{kyoo/zyaku}-goisyugi ({強/弱}語義主義), {bimi-ondo} (美味温度), ??{bimi-hoo} (美味報), ??{kan-sei} (#寒声)

→ These qualitative adjectives resist taking compound forms, though they are reference modifiers. Why?

(32) Different functions between words and phrases
   a.  Words: naming function as a generic term (cf. huru-hon) (Shimamura (2014))
   b.  Phrases: describing function (cf. huru-i hon)

→ Words are used as names context-freely, whereas the relevant phrases are used context-dependently.

(33) The phrase akaru-azo is interpretationally similar to a potential compound form but its context-dependency forces it to take a phrasal form, which labels “azo (taste)” in a non-generic manner.

6. Concluding Remarks

(34) The qualitative adjectives in Japanese can even be reference modifiers due to metonymic interpretation and these adjectives context-dependently identify the semantic range of the nouns.

(35) Applicability to other cases
   a.  Synaesthetic expressions: blind mouth, ragged noise, loud colours, yellow voice
   b.  Transferred epithets: sad cigarette, weary way, early riser, sick room


Notes
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[1] The abbreviations used in this paper are listed alphabetically as follows: DET(Det) = determiner, GEN = genitive, N = noun, NOM = nominative, Nonpast = non-past tense, Pred = predicate, QA = qualitative adjective, TOP = topic.
[2] http://sakakishinichiro.com/wp/blog/%E3%82%AA%E3%82%B9%E3%83%86%E3%83%AA%E3%82%A2%E3 %83%8A%E3%82%AB%E3%83%A0%E3%83%A9/ [accessed in March 2018].

REFERENCES