

Non-veridical uses of Japanese expressions of temporal precedence

This paper discusses two Japanese expressions for asserting that an eventuality a precedes another eventuality b : B *mae ni* A and B -*nai uchi ni* A (where A and B are clauses referring to a and b). Cf. (1). Both expressions are *non-veridical* in that they do not entail B . This property is shared with English A *before* B , where it has been studied extensively (Anscombe 1964; Heinämäki 1972, 1974; Valencia *et al.* 1992; Ogihara 1995; Beaver and Condoravdi 2003). We compare the two Japanese expressions with each other and with *before*, with special emphasis on the counterfactual and modal implicatures carried by their non-veridical uses.

Following Beaver and Condoravdi (2003, henceforth B&C), we give the veridical and non-veridical uses a unified interpretation in terms of possible worlds and branching time. According to B&C, A *before* B is true at a world w iff there is a time t such that (i) A is true at $\langle w, t \rangle$ and (ii) t precedes the earliest time t' such that for some world w' in a set $alt(w, t)$ of relevant alternative worlds, B is true at $\langle w', t' \rangle$. (This holds regardless of whether t precedes or follows the time of evaluation.) The selection of $alt(w, t)$ is crucial for the semantic predictions of the account. B&C state that if B is true in w , then $alt(w, t) = \{w\}$; otherwise, $alt(w, t)$ is the set of “reasonably probable” future courses of events, given the history up to $\langle w, t \rangle$. Thus A *before* B implies that B is likely or expected at t , the reference time of A . This analysis alikens *before* to the Progressive (Dowty 1977; Landman 1992).

It is also often observed that A *before* B on its non-veridical use supports the counterfactual implicature *if not-A, would (have been) B*. The two are not equivalent, however: The counterfactual does not require for its truth that B was likely at the time of A . Consider (2), and suppose an accident occurred but was highly unlikely and not foreseeable at the time the speaker got off. Then (2a) is false, but the posterior counterfactual (2b) is true. In fact, (2a) is intuitively more similar to the prior predictive conditional (2c). Thus a counterfactual analysis would make different predictions from B&C’s likelihood analysis, and the latter is more suitable for *before*.

In Japanese, on the other hand, in the situation described, both (3a) and the counterfactual (4a) are true, whereas (3b), like (2a) and the prior predictive conditional (4b), implies that the danger was imminent when the speaker got off the bus.

Our analysis accounts for these facts as follows. *Mae-ni* is interpreted similarly to *before*, but relative to a different set of B -alternatives: not those that are likely from the perspective of A ’s reference time, but those that are most similar to w at the time of evaluation. This accounts for the difference between *before* and *mae-ni* and aligns the latter with the corresponding counterfactual. As for B -*nai uti ni* A , B -*nai* denotes a state, and *uti ni* locates A within this state and presupposes that the state is bounded. (The latter is a lexical property which distinguishes *uti* from *mama* and *aida* ‘during/while’.) This presupposition in turn implies that B is expected to occur, for that is the only way for a state of B ’s not-occurring to end. This inference, while defeasible, strengthens the meaning from *while not-B* to *before B*. It is also the reason why B -*nai uti ni* A implies that B is/was imminent at the time of A , unlike B *mae ni* A (also unlike B -*nai mama*).

This analysis explains a number of other differences between *nai uti* and *mae* as well. For instance, since the occurrence of B is only inferred via the presupposition that the state of B ’s non-occurrence is bounded, B -*nai uti ni* does not involve reference to any particular occurrence of B . In contrast, B *mae ni* A is most felicitous when B has a specific reference time (Kuno 1973).

Examples

- (1) a. [Boku-wa] ziko-ga {okoru mae-ni / okora-nai uti-ni } basu-o orita
I-TOP accident-SUBJ occur before-LOC occur-NEG within-LOC bus-ACC exit-PAST
I got off the bus before there was an accident.
- (2) a. I got off the bus before I got injured.
b. If I hadn't gotten off the bus, I would have been injured.
c. If I don't get off the bus, I will get injured.
- (3) [Ziko-de] $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a. kega suru mae-ni} \\ \text{get injured before-LOC} \\ \text{b. kega si-nai uti-ni} \\ \text{get injured-NEG within-LOC} \end{array} \right\}$ basu-o orita
accident-CAUS bus-ACC exit-PAST
I got off the bus before I got injured.
- (4) a. Basu-o ori-tei-nakat-tara kega si-tei-ta
bus-ACC get off-PERF-NEG-COND get injured-PERF-PAST
If I hadn't gotten off the bus, I would have been injured.
b. Basu-o ori-nakere-ba kega suru
bus-ACC get off-NEG-COND get injured
If I don't get off the bus, I will get injured.

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