

The Inferential Evidentials in Japanese and Chinese

Evidentials are forms of epistemic modality that connote the speaker's assessment of the evidence for his or her statement. Although Japanese evidentials *yooda*, *rasii*, and *(-i)sooda* have been studied extensively, systematic analyses of Chinese evidentials are very few and contrastive studies between the two languages are therefore much fewer. The purpose of this study is to make it clear that usage of Japanese evidentials is based on inferential types and "territory of information," while Chinese ones are best accounted for by mental-space construction (Fauconnier 1997).

Japanese *yooda*, *rasii*, and *(-i)sooda* are most often translated as adverbial *kàn* (看) "look" + X in Chinese, but they are far from equivalent.

- (1) (Looking at a simple addition formula)
 - a. Kono keesan-wa {kantan-sooda/#kanntanna-yooda/#kantan-rasii}
 this calculation-TOP {easy-look/easy-appear/easy-seem}
 - b. Zhè-dào tí {kànshàngqu/#kànlái} hěn jiǎndān
 this calculation {look/appear} very easy
 "This calculation looks easy."
- (2) (The friend who is weak in arithmetic gave the answer immediately.)
 - a. Kono keesan-wa {kantanna-yooda/kantan-rasii/#kantan-sooda}
 this calculation-TOP {easy-appear/easy-seem/easy-look}
 - b. {Kànlái/#kànshàngqu} zhè-dào tí hěn jiǎndān
 {appear/look} this calculation very easy
 "It appears that this calculation is very easy."
- (3) (As the fine weather has lasted for a week)
 - a. Sorosoro kyoo-wa ame-ga {huri-sooda/#huru-yooda/#huru-rasii}
 soon today-TOP rain-NOM {fall-look/fall-appear/fall-seem}
 - b. {Kànlái/#kànshàngqu} jīntiān gāi xià yǔ le
 {seem/look} today will fall rain PERF
 "It seems that it is going to rain today."
- (4) (Seeing a friend after a long time)
 - a. Kare-wa zuibun {huketa-yooda/#huketa-rasii/#huketei-sooda}
 he-TOP very {old-appear/old-seem/old-look}
 - b. Tā {kànshàngqu/#kànlái} lǎo le hěn duō
 he {look/seem} old PERF very much
 "He looks very old."

In the examples (1) and (2), *(-i)sooda* corresponds to *kànshàngqu*, and *yooda/rasii* to *kànlái*, while the equivalent of *(-i)sooda* is *kànlái* and that of *yooda* is *kànshàngqu* in (3) and (4). This is because the criteria for the usage of Japanese and Chinese evidentials are different.

The difference between *yooda*, *rasii*, and *(-i)sooda* exists in the inferential types. That is, *(-i)sooda* expresses a deductive conclusion, inferring a result from a general rule and a case as in (1) and (3), while *yooda* and *rasii* express an abductive conclusion, inferring some reason from a result as in (2) and (4) (Lee 2006). And *yooda* differs from *rasii* in the “territory of information”: the former indicates that the information falls into the speaker’s territory, while the latter indicates that the information falls outside the speaker’s territory as shown in the example (4) (Kamio 1990; Lee 2006).

Chinese evidentials *kànshàngqu* and *kànlái*, on the other hand, differ in their mental-space construction. Fauconnier (1997) states that the unfolding of discourse brings into play complex cognitive constructions. And any mental space configuration will include a Base, a Viewpoint, and a Focus. Base is a starting point for the construction to which it is always possible to return. Viewpoint is the space from which others are accessed and structured or set up. Focus is the space currently being structured internally, and upon which attention is currently focused. Base, Viewpoint and Focus need not be distinct. Since inferential evidentials express the inference based on some grounds, the Focus space shows the conclusion set up from the Viewpoint, which plays the role of the grounds (although it is not always explicit). In the case of *kànshàngqu*, the Base is also the Viewpoint, and the Focus is accessed from it. However in the case of *kànlái*, the Base and the Viewpoint are distinct. In (1), the Viewpoint is “the formula consists only of addition,” and in (4), the Viewpoint is the friend’s appearance. The Viewpoint is also the Base in both (1) and (4), from which the conclusions “This calculation is easy” and “He is very old” are drawn. Therefore *kànshàngqu* is used here. However, in (2), the Viewpoint is “the friend gave the answer immediately,” and there must be a distinct space that indicates he is weak in arithmetic. From the two spaces, the conclusion “this calculation is very easy” is drawn. Similarly, the Viewpoint in (3) is “the fine weather has lasted for a week,” and there must be a Base “it rains at least one day every week.” From those two spaces, the conclusion “it is likely to rain today” is drawn. In this case only *kànlái* can be used.

Either *kànshàngqu* or *kànlái* can be used for a deductive or abductive conclusion. And they are not distinguished by “territory of information.” In contrast, all of the Japanese evidentials *yooda*, *rasii* and *(-i)sooda* have two types of mental-space

constructions, that is, the one where the Base is distinct from the Viewpoint and the one in which they merge into one.

In conclusion, the criteria for the usage of Japanese and Chinese inferential evidentials are completely different. Therefore the correspondence between Japanese and Chinese inferential evidentials is not one-to-one.

References:

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