

Qualitative Adjectives as Reference Modifiers in Japanese*

Takashi ISHIDA^a (*University of Tsukuba / JSPS Research Fellow*) and Ryohei NAYA^b (*University of Tsukuba*)
E-mail: ^atakashi.ishida1990@gmail.com, ^bnaya.ryohei.kb@u.tsukuba.ac.jp

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.*’
(Larson (1998: 145), Morzycki (2016: 34–41))
- (2) *Olga-wa utukusi-i odoriko-da.*
Olga-TOP beautiful-I dancer-Pred.Nonpast¹
‘*Olga is a beautiful dancer.*’ [Intersective/#Non-intersective reading]
(Morita (2019: 92))
- (3) In English, pronominal 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]
- (5) Modification types and formal characteristics in Japanese (Watanabe (2012, 2017), Nishimaki (2018))
 - a. Referent modification: *huru-i hon* (old-I book) ‘a book that is old’
 - b. Reference modification: *huru-hon* (old book) ‘secondhand book’
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]²
Akaru-i azi...todemo iimasuka. Korega Sitiria 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 that 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-i azi* (= (7))
- a. [Context: Describing an impression of the taste of meatball]
Akaru-i azi...todemo iimasuka. Korega Sitiria teki na azi nandatte 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-i ondo*
- a. [Context: Describing a thermos bottle]³
 THERMOS Hin'yari *oisi-i ondo* o kiipu! Mahoobin-koozoo no tanburaa.
 (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-i osirase*
- a. [Context: Informing on a SNS]⁴
 Rinyuuaru sita Ion-Mooru Miyazaki kara, *oisi-i osirase* ga todokimasita 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

3.1. Predicativity (cf. Levi (1978: 3), Bolinger (1967: 15))

- (15) *huru-i hon* (old-I book) → *sono hon wa huru-i* 'the book is old' (= (6))

- | | | |
|---|---|---------|
| (16) a. <i>akaru-i tuki</i> 'bright moon' | (17) a. <i>akaru-i azi</i> (bright taste) | (= (8)) |
| b. <i>tuki ga akaru-i</i> | b. # <i>azi ga akaru-i</i> | |
| moon NOM bright-I | taste NOM bright-I | |
| 'the moon is bright' | lit. 'the taste is bright' | |

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

3.2. Adjacency (cf. Watanabe (2012, 2017), Sproat and Shih (1991))

[Ordering of *akaru-i* with other QAs]

- (18) QA₁-QA₂-N vs. QA₂-QA₁-N
- a. *tiisa-na sikaku-i ie*
 small-NA square-I house
- b. *sikaku-i tiisa-na ie*
- (Sproat and Shih (1991: 582), Watanabe (2012: 504))

- (19) QA-[N+-no]-N vs. *[N+-no]-QA-N
- a. *sizuka-na yuki-no hi*
 quiet-NA snow-GEN day
 'quiet snowy day'
- b. * *yuki-no sizuka-na hi*
 (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-i* in (20) and (23) shows the parallel ordering behaviour with reference modifiers.

[Ordering of *akaru-i* 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 1: *Two types of reading and their functions*

	Intersective / Predicating function	Non-intersective / Identifying function
<i>beautiful dancer</i>	‘dancer that is beautiful’	‘a beautiful as a dancer’ ‘dance beautifully’
<i>criminal lawyer</i>	‘a lawyer who is criminal’	‘lawyers specialised to criminal cases’

(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.

(cf. Sakamoto (2007: 286), Levinson (2000: 33))

Table 2: *Comparison of akaru-i in akaru-i azi with ordinary modifiers*

	Form	Modification Type	Function
<i>Akaru-i tuki</i> ‘bright moon’	Qualitative adjective	Referent modification	Predicating
<i>Akaru-i azi</i> ‘bright taste’	Qualitative adjective	Reference modification	Identifying
<i>Ki-no hasi</i> ‘wooden bridge’	[Noun + <i>-no</i>]	Reference modification	Identifying

(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))

- a. *huru-i hon* (old-I book), *huru-i ie* (old-I family), *maru-i kao* (circle-I face)
- b. *huru-hon* (古本) ‘secondhand book,’ *kyuu-ka* (旧家) ‘ancient family,’ *maru-gao* (丸顔) ‘round face’

→ When a Japanese adjective is used as a reference modifier, it should take a compound form.

- (31) a. *akaru-i azi*, {*tuyo-i/yowa-i*} *goisyugi*, *oisi-i ondo*, *oisi-i osirase*, *samu-i koe*
 b. ??{*myoo/mei*}-*mi* (明味), ?{*kyoo/zyaku*}-*goisyugi* (強/弱語彙主義), ?*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-i azi* is interpretationally similar to a potential compound form but its context-dependency forces it to take a phrasal form, which labels “*azi* (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*

(Ishida (2018, to appear); cf. Yamanashi (1988), Hall (1973))

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].

[3] <https://item.rakuten.co.jp/ra-beans/0675215/> [accessed in February 2019]

[4] <https://ja-jp.facebook.com/umkpaburofu/posts/2014027701975944> [accessed in February 2019]

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