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Japanese Clausal Coordination and Exemplification

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1. Introduction

English *and*-conjunctions can convey a range of inferential relations between the states of affairs described in the conjuncts. Some communicate a temporal and causal relation, while others, a paratactic one in that the conjuncts are not in any chronological order.¹

(1) John missed the usual train and he was late for work.
(2) We still keep in touch, and we go out for a meal.

In (1), John’s missing the train and being late for work are understood as having a cause-consequence relation. In (2), the speaker’s keeping in touch and going out for a meal with some other person are interpreted as parallel, since the individual conjuncts can lead to the same implicature in a context, such as “The speaker and the person referred to have been (and are) good friends.”

In contrast, Japanese has multiple clausal coordination structures that correspond to English *and*-conjunctions (Ohori 2004: 54–56). Among them are the -tari and -shi structures: they lack a narrative function in which temporal and causal relations are at issue.²

(3) John wa itsumono densha ni |a. *noriokure-tari / b. *noriokure-ta-shi|,
John TOP usual train ACC miss-tari miss-PAST-shi
kaisha ni |a. *chikokushi-tari shi-ta / b. *chikokushi-ta|,
office for be.late-tari do-PAST be.late-PAST
‘John missed the usual train and he was late for work.’ [intended]
(4) Watashitachi wa imademo renraku o |a. tot-tari / b. toru-shi|,
we TOP still contact ACC take-tari take-shi
gohan o tabe ni |a. it-tari suru / b. iku|,
meal ACC eat to go-tari do go
‘We still keep in touch, and we go out for a meal.’

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The -tari and -shi utterances in (3) fail to communicate a cause–consequence relation; but both structures are compatible with a paratactic relation, as in (4), from which the same implicature as that of (2) is derivable. This indicates that the -tari and -shi structures have certain constraints on use that represent a “specialized” function.

Despite the fact that the -tari and -shi structures show functionally similar tendencies, they have not been adequately compared with each other; in fact, researchers have not accounted for the distinctions between them, particularly in terms of utterance understanding. This paper pins down the meanings of the conjunctive suffixes -tari and -shi from Sperber and Wilson’s (1986/1995) relevance-theoretic perspective and argues that the two structures differ in the purpose of exemplification.

The organization of the paper is as follows: section 2 stipulates the encoded meanings of -tari and -shi. Section 3 shows that the purpose of exemplification plays a crucial role in distinguishing the structures. Section 4 serves as the conclusion and presents the implications.

2. The functions of the -tari and -shi structures

2.1. The meaning of -tari

This section focuses on the -tari structure, P-tari, Q-tari suru (‘do’), and presents the meaning encoded by the suffix. This structure is used to introduce examples: by marking the -tari clauses P and Q as illustrations of a certain assumption, the structure aids the addressee in discourse comprehension.

Consider (5), which is part of the description of an Afghan ex-general and his daughter, Soraya, in Khaled Hosseini’s novel The Kite Runner. After they arrived in America as refugees, their relationship changed.

(5) The general’s frailty—and time—had softened things between him and Soraya too.

\[
\text{Hutarī wa isshoni sanposhi-tari, doyōbi ni wa chūshoku o} \\
\text{two.people TOP together take.a.walk-tari Saturday on TOP lunch ACC} \\
\text{tabe ni it-tari, shōgun ga Soraya no oshieru jugyō ni} \\
\text{eat to go-tari general NOM Soraya NOM teach class ACC} \\
\text{de-tari shi-ta.} \\
\text{attend-tari do-PAST}
\]

‘They took walks together, went to lunch on Saturdays, and the general sat in on some of her classes.’

(Kimi no tame nara Senkai demo, p. 303)

The individual events in the tari-marked clauses—their taking walks together, going to lunch on Saturdays, and the general’s sitting in on some of Soraya’s classes—are interpreted as concrete instances of the preceding abstract assumption, “The relationship between them had softened.” In other words, the propositions of the detached clauses have an illustrative
“instance-abstract” relation with the assumption. The -tari structure helps the reader understand how the relationship between the general and his daughter had improved, contributing to the interpretation of the discourse.

Next, consider (6), which describes Isaka, a man who helps a detective with his housework, in Miyuki Miyabe’s novel Kasha. Here, the whole -tari structure is embedded in the complement of the verb kangae- (‘think’).

(6) His smiling face was reflected in the tabletop, which had been cleaned.

He was a domestic person who regarded rings’ having been made by putting down bowls or cups and coffee stains’ having been got on the table as unforgivable.’

(Kasha, p. 39)

The states of affairs in the -tari clauses—rings’ having been made by putting down bowls or cups and coffee stains’ having been got on the table—are interpreted as concrete instances of an assumption readily derivable from the preceding assumption that the tabletop had been meticulously cleaned so that Isaka’s smiling face was reflected. The sentence that includes the -tari structure illustratively expresses this derived assumption: he was a fastidious housekeeper who regarded even only a few marks left on the table, which most people would not care about, as unforgivable. Thus, the -tari structure might contribute to making it easy for the reader to derive implications about Isaka’s stance, thereby helping her understand his general character.

The -tari structure is used to illustrate a manifest but elusive assumption: it enables the addressee to better identify and understand the underlying assumption needed for the interpretation of discourse. The encoded meaning of the suffix -tari can therefore be summarized as follows: an utterance of the form P-tari, Q-tari suru demands that the clauses P and Q illustrate a manifest but elusive assumption.

2.2. The meaning of -shi

This section examines the -shi structure, P-shi, Q, and stipulates the meaning encoded by the suffix. The key function of this structure is to reinforce a claim by providing examples.

Consider (7), an excerpt from an interview with a man who has worked on growing organic rice. He tried a variety of means to remove weeds from his paddy, but all of them failed.
(7) Carp and tadpole shrimps, which I have tried before, are aquatic creatures and their living conditions are restricted.

Suion ga takai to hataraka-nai-shi, mizu ga nakunat-tara
water.temperature GEN high if work-not-shi water GEN is.gone-if
shinde.shimau.
die
‘They are not active at high water temperatures, and they cannot live without water.’

(Professional Shigoto no Ryūgi, p. 31)

The states of affairs described in the -shi structure—that carp and tadpole shrimps are not active at high water temperatures and that they cannot live without water—are interpreted as independent pieces of evidence for the preceding assumption. “Their living conditions are restricted.” The first clause is used as a premise and leads to the implication as a conclusion that the living conditions of carp and tadpole shrimps are restricted. The second clause is also used as a premise, deriving the same implication as a conclusion. That is, the propositions of the detached clauses function as distinct premises resulting in the same conclusion. Both clauses reinforce the precedent assumption, and the second one in particular strengthens it by providing evidence beyond that provided by the first clause.

Notice that there are some -shi utterances in which the first clause is taken to be a “reason” for the second clause (cf. (3b)). Consider (8), uttered by a detective who was asked to find a man’s missing fiancée. He had an interest in the job, but he was hesitant about undertaking it.

(8) Don’t expect too much, now. I’m not saying I’ll take the job.

Mada wakaranai koto no hō ga ōi-shi, toriaezu kono jōkyō still unknown thing GEN side NOM many-shi for.now this situation
o dōnika deki-nai mono ka.do.ka, atatte.miru to.tu.teido da.
ACC somehow can-not thing whether try to.the.extent COP
‘There are still too many unknowns. I will only see whether or not we have a way out of the current deadlock for now.’

(Kasha, p. 39)

The first clause of the -shi structure, there being still too many unknowns, is interpreted as a “reason” for the detective’s decision in the second clause that he would only see whether or not he and the client had a way out of the deadlock. The first clause is used as a premise from which the implication of the detective’s limited power might be derived as a conclusion. On the other hand, the second clause can be viewed as strengthening the implication not by providing another piece of evidence, but rather by expressing it more explicitly; the decision is an
example of the limited number of things that the detective can do at present. Thus, the -shi structure contributes to emphasizing his statement that he is not ready to commit to the job.

The -shi structure is used to reinforce a claim to the extent that the second clause, regardless of its particular contents, strengthens an implication derivable from the first clause. The encoded meaning of the suffix -shi can therefore be summarized as follows: an utterance of the form P-shi, Q demands that the clause Q strengthen an implication for which the clause P provides evidence.

3. The difference in the purpose of exemplification

The encoded meanings of -tari and -shi suggest that they constrain the inferential phase of interpretation; they indicate how -tari and -shi utterances should be interpreted. Following the notion of conceptual and procedural encoding put forward by Blakemore (1987, 2002), we can say that both meanings are procedural. This section discusses the validity of the meanings and demonstrates that the purpose of exemplification is the key factor in distinguishing the -tari and -shi structures.

As seen in section 1, both -tari and -shi structures are acceptable in some contexts. In (9), uttered by a person who is asked about her friendship with some other person, either structure can be used:

(9) *Watashitachi wa imademo renraku o*       [a. tot-tari / b. toru-shi],
    Top still contact ACC take-tari take-shi
    gohan o tabe ni [a. it-tari suru / b. iku].
    meal ACC eat to go-tari do go

    'We still keep in touch, and we go out for a meal.'  (= (4))

What both structures have in common is exemplification: illustrating something in the -tari structure and providing evidence in the -shi structure. The speaker indirectly answers with exemplification how long and to what extent she and the person referred to have been getting along, so the context is compatible with either form. The -tari structure is used to illustrate what they still do to know each other's latest news and contributes to deriving the implicature about their strong and lasting friendship, and the -shi structure is used to provide evidence and strengthen the implicature.

However, these different purposes of exemplification might affect the use of -tari and -shi. Consider (10), which is the opening of a newspaper article reporting on an event for would-be fathers:

(10) On the 14th, Honjo Public Health Center in Sumida City, Tokyo, held an event called "A Class on Child Care for Fathers," in which men were taught some basic information about
pregnancy and practical hints for taking care of infants.

Shussan o hikae-ta 20, 30dai.no hūhu 15kumi
childbirth ACC be.due-PAST in.(their.)twenties.and.thirties couple 15.pairs
ga sankashi, akachan no mokuyoku no hōhō o
NOM participate baby GEN bathing GEN way ACC

[a. manan-dari / b. ??manan-da'shi], hara ni omori o tsuke-te
learn-tari learn-PAST-shi stomach on weight ACC put-and
ninpu no kurō o
expectant.mother GEN trouble ACC

[a. taikenshi-tari shi-ta / b. ?? taikenshi-ta].
experience-tari do-PAST experience-PAST

'Fifteen couples in their twenties and thirties who would welcome their new babies in a few months participated in this event; the men learned how to bathe a baby and experienced the troubles that an expectant mother would have in her daily life by putting a weight on their bodies.' (BCCWJ; (b) is mine)

The purpose of the -tari structure is to give the addressee a better understanding of an abstract or elusive topic through illustration, while that of the -shi structure is to reinforce a claim by providing evidence. In (10), the writer tries to help the reader understand the basic information and practical hints given by citing what the participants did; however, she does not try to advance a claim and support it by providing evidence. This context fits the interpretation required by the -tari structure (10a), in which the tari-marked clauses illustrate the preceding assumption, “The would-be fathers learned the information and hints in the event”; but it does not fit the interpretation required by the -shi structure (10b), in which the second clause should strengthen an implication derived from the first clause by providing further evidence. This shows that the purpose of exemplification can play an important role in the acceptability of the two structures.

Consider another case, (11), in which a researcher gives his opinion that the Chinese character at issue in an old manuscript was incorrectly transcribed:

(11) I assume that the word bikō (‘a wide tail’) must have been mistaken for biyoku (‘a tail’) in the description of sea bass.

jūbun {a. naritatsu-shi / b. ??naritat-tari}, kore nara ue-no
well is.plausible-shi is.plausible-tari this if above
The idea that the (Chinese/kanji) character is wrong is plausible in terms of its shape, and this view is compatible with the word kōdai (‘a big mouth’) in the preceding passage. (BCCWJ; (b) is mine)

The purpose of exemplification can also explain the difference in acceptability in (11). In this context, the researcher does not try to help the addressee understand something better by illustrating it, but rather tries to support his opinion by providing evidence. Thus, the context is compatible with the interpretation required by the -shi structure (11a), in which the second clause strengthens through further evidence the opinion that the word bikō must have been incorrectly transcribed into biyoku. The same context, however, is incompatible with the interpretation required by the -tari structure (11b), in which the -tari clauses should illustrate a certain assumption although the addressee cannot identify it. Here, too, the pair of examples suggests that the purpose of exemplification is a major element distinguishing the -tari and -shi structures.

The conclusion that we can draw from these examples is that the -tari and -shi structures differ in the type of exemplification they perform: the former helps the addressee understand what is hard to grasp by illustrating it, while the latter reinforces a claim by providing evidence. The argument so far indicates that some Japanese clausal coordination structures are sensitive to functional applications.

4. Concluding remarks

The present paper has argued that the difference between the -tari and -shi structures can be attributed to the specific purposes of exemplification. The examination of the meanings of the conjunctive suffixes might offer a new perspective on aspects of Japanese clausal coordination systems.

The comparative analysis here may point to another contribution to a discussion about discourse relations. In her examination of elaborative coherence relations in discourse, Blakemore (1997) argues that there is a significant difference in exemplification between elucidating what the speaker means and providing evidence. This distinction seems to correspond to the one between the -tari and -shi structures, so her suggestion, based on the analysis of discourse elaboration, can be supported by the fact that Japanese clausal coordination lexically distinguishes the purposes of exemplification. If this line of argument is correct, though further explorations are needed, the examination of the -tari and -shi structures can also make a theoretical contribution to the account of discourse understanding.
Notes

* This paper is a revised version of a paper presented at the 13th International Pragmatics Conference of the International Pragmatics Association, held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, on September 9th, 2013. I would like to thank the audience for their useful comments. I am also very grateful to Takashi Masuoka and Akiko Yoshimura for their invaluable comments and suggestions. All remaining errors and inadequacies are my own.

1 For recent pragmatic analyses of English and-conjunctions, see, for example, Carston (2002), Blakemore and Carston (2005), and Ariel (2012).

2 The abbreviations used for word-by-word glosses in this paper are as follows: ACC (accusative), COMP (complementizer), COP (copula), GEN (genitive), NOM (nominative), PAST (past), SFP (sentence-final particle), and TOP (topic).

3 For distinct examinations of the -tari and -shi structures, see, for example, Moriyama (1995) and Nakamata (2009).

4 The -tari structure has another use called “repetition,” in which the movements represented in P and Q are interpreted as repeated.

(i) Taro ga Hanako no ie no.mae.de it-tari ki-tari shite-iru.

Taro NOM Hanako GEN house in.front.of go-tari come-tari is-doing

'Taro is wandering in front of Hanako’s house.'

However, as Iwata (2007: 98) points out, this use is restricted syntactically and semantically: only a verb appears in Q, and the predicates in P and Q represent opposite concepts (e.g. go vs. come, open vs. close, and stand vs. sit). We do not discuss this usage here; it lies outside our present scope, with a focus on the -tari structure in which both P and Q are clausal.

5 This paper uses the term “manifest” in a relevance-theoretic way: “[a] fact is manifest to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true” (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 39).

6 For the argument that -tari and -shi encode procedures, see Nagatsuji (2015).

7 -Dari is an allomorph of the suffix -tari.

8 -Da is an allomorph of the past tense -ta.

References


Sources of examples


Corpus
Abstract:
The Japanese language has multiple clausal coordination structures that correspond to English *and*-conjunctions. Among them are the -tari and -shi structures that lack a narrative function in which temporal and causal relations are at issue. Even though these structures show functionally similar tendencies, they have not been extensively compared with each other. In fact, researchers have not accounted for the distinctions between them, particularly in terms of utterance understanding. This paper pins down the meanings of the conjunctive suffixes -tari and -shi from Sperber and Wilson's (1986/1995) relevance-theoretic perspective and argues that the two structures differ in the purpose of exemplification.

The -tari structure is used to illustrate a manifest but elusive assumption, thereby enabling the addressee to better identify and understand the underlying assumption needed to interpret the discourse. However, the -shi structure is used to reinforce a claim. The second clause strengthens an implication for which the first clause provides evidence. Thus, the purpose of exemplification is the key factor in distinguishing the structures. The examination here may contribute to a grasp of part of Japanese clausal coordination systems, and also to a discussion on discourse relations.