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Rentaishi?

- *rentaishi* 連体詞, lit. ‘noun-modifying words’, eng. ‘prenoun’, ‘adnoun’, ‘adnominal’,¹ make up a Japanese word class (?) that exhibits the criteria **restriction to attributive position, morphological diversity** and the **inability to inflect** and is made up by lexemes **derived from other word classes and frozen/fossilized**
- Whilst they are not universally accepted, and are even absent from most Western Japanese grammars (Hinds, 1988; Tsujjimura, 2014; Hasegawa, 2015) they make an interesting case for the debate on Uninflectedness/Uninflectability (Spencer, 2020)

¹Also *fukutaishi* 副体詞 ‘accompanying words’.

Reminder

- **Uninflectable**: Inflectable in the syntax, just not the in the morphology
- **Uninflecting**: No morphological signature
- See Andrew Spencer's talk
- What is/counts as inflection? What is/counts as inflection from the perspective of Japanese linguistics?

Rentaishi?

- (1) a. **aru** gakusei
certain student
'a certain student'
- b. *gakusei=**wa** **aru** (da)
student=TOP certain (COP)
- (2) a. **rei-no** machigai
mere-no misunderstanding
'a mere misunderstanding'
- b. *machigai=**wa** **rei** (da)
misunderstanding=TOP mere COP

Goals of this talk

- To show that
 - historically the emergence of *rentaishi* is tied to the criterion of Uninflectedness
 - *rentaishi* are the result of the greater awareness of the differences between Japanese and Western languages, filling the slot of dependent attributive modifiers in Japanese, contra the independent and inflecting Japanese adjectives (*keiyōshi*), and with this mark a linguistic turn at the beginning of the 20th century
- To discuss their role in the Japanese word class system and in typological perspective and evaluate whether they deserve a status as an independent word class, i.e. whether we are dealing with Uninflectedness or Uninflectability (Outlook)

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Japanese and the Japanese Word Class System

- Japanese: SOV, syntactically strictly head-final, agglutinative
- Japanese grammarians, at least since the Edo-period (1603–1868), have drawn a distinction between word classes based on whether they are **inflecting** and **independent** (cf. Hashimoto 1948 (1934); Lewin 2003)
- For example, nouns are **independent** but **uninflecting**; they need particles (which are **dependent** and **uninflecting**) to mark case

(3) sake-ga / sake-wo / sake-ni /
alcohol-NOM / alcohol-ACC / alcohol-DAT /
sake-no
alcohol-GEN

Inflecting Word Classes

- Word classes that show **inflection** are the lexical classes of verbs and adjectives
- However, what is actually meant by inflection?
- **Inflection** (*katsuyō* 活用) denotes the alternation of the stem vowel to host suffixes (which can themselves be inflectional)
- In fact, the existence of **uninflectable** lexemes is not expected in this taxonomy

Verbal Inflectional Paradigms

- (4)
- a. sake-wo nom-**u**
alcohol-ACC drink-PRS
'drink alcohol'
 - b. sake-wo nom**i**-ta-i
alcohol-ACC drink-VOL-PRS
'want to drink alcohol'
 - c. sake-wo nom**e**-ba
alcohol-ACC drink-if
'if X drank alcohol'
 - d. sake-wo non-**da**
alcohol-ACC drink-PST
'drank alcohol'

Adjectival Inflectional Paradigms

- (5) a. aka-**i** hana
red-i flower-TOP
'the red flower'
- b. hana-wa aka-**i**
flower-TOP red-PRS
'the flower is red'
- c. hana-wa akake-**reba**
flower-TOP red-if
'if the flower was red'
- d. hana-wa akak-**atta**
flower-TOP red-PST
'the flower was red'
- e. hana-wa aka-**ku** na-ru
flower-TOP red-ADV become-PRS
'the flower becomes red'

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The Role of *rentaishi*

- Now what are *rentaishi*?
- In their first mentioning by MITSUYA Shigematsu (1915/16, published 1932) described as “attributives that are **entirely uninflecting**”, that are “**adjective-like without being adjectives**” (Mitsuya, 1932, 238)
- Were introduced into the word class system in MATUSHITA Daizaburō’s (1878–1935) *Revised Standard-grammar* (*Kaisen hyōjun Nihon bunpō* 1976 (1928))
- Part of the school grammar since Hashimoto (1948 (1934))

Matsushita's Definition

- 副體詞(Adjective)は他の概念の實體へ従属する屬性の概念を表して他詞の意義を調整するもので叙述性の無い詞である。(Matsushita, 1976 (1928, 204))
- “Fukutaishi (Adjective) are lexemes that express an attributive concept which is in turn dependent on another concept, that modify the meaning of other lexemes, and that do not have a predicative character.”
- 1. Lexeme status
- 2. dependency
- 3. modifiers
- 4. no predicative use

Why *rentaishi*?

- But why is the group of *rentaishi* 'necessary'? And why was it only integrated into the word class system at the beginning of the 20th century?
- From the beginning of the 20th century, Japanese linguists started to compare their language to Western languages (mainly English and Dutch) and realized:
- Adjectives in those fusional languages neither inflect independently for tense, but need a copula, nor for case, number and gender, but in accordance with their head noun
- While Japanese adjectives (*keiyōshi* lit. 'qualifying words') on the other hand do inflect independently for tense, Japanese has several modifying words, mostly derived from other word classes, that are modifiers but do not inflect

First Comparisons

- ŌTSUKI Fumihiko (1847–1928): “The English adjective merely precedes the noun and bestows it with qualitative features.
- The Japanese *keiyōshi* does the same BUT its morphological build-up is entirely different since it shows **inflection** (Ōtsuki, 1891, 28)”
- YAMADA Yoshio (1873–1958): “English adjectives should be called *baiji*, but not *keiyōshi* (Yamada, 1908, 869)”
- *baiji* is a relict from the so-called *Rangaku* (Dutch studies) period meaning *accompanying word* (Sugimoto, 1967, 1991; Kim, 2006), denoting lexemes with no independent character

Compare the Translations

- (6)
- a. aka-i hana
red-i flower-TOP
'the red flower'
 - b. hana-wa aka-i
flower-TOP red-PRS
'the flower **is** red'
 - c. hana-wa akake-reba
flower-TOP red-if
'if the flower **was** red'
 - d. hana-wa akak-atta
flower-TOP red-PST
'the flower **was** red'

Analysis

- Yamada's use of the term *baiji* can be interpreted as pejorative and potentially politically motivated, highlighting the superiority of the Japanese *keiyōshi*
- *rentaishi* were subsequently 'created' to fill the slot of **dependent and defective** attributive modifiers in Japanese, encompassing all those attributive modifiers, mostly derived from other word classes and frozen, which otherwise do not inflect
- Thus the emergence of *rentaishi* marked an important turning point in linguistics in Japan, highlighting the criterion **Inflection** and setting Japanese word classes in relation to other languages (Kim, 2006)

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Morphological Groups

- *rentaishi* come in many morphological subgroups, contrasting with the main word classes in Japanese which are characterized through unitary morphology (Nitta *et al.*, 2000), most of these items are **derived** from other word classes and **frozen/fossilized**
- Take different verbal groups
 - *aru* 'certain', derived from verb *aru* 'to exist', frozen in non-past
 - *iwayuru* 'so-called', derived from *iu* 'to say' + *iu(-ru)*, a marker of passive, frozen in non-past
 - *taishita* 'important', derived from a verb *taisuru*, frozen in past
- Or the lexeme *rei-no* 'mere', potentially derived from a noun + genitive particle, attested in this use since 900 AD
- Mitsuya (1932); Sekine (1937); Kieda (1938); Suzuki (1972); Komatsu (1973); Tokieda (1941); Mio (1958); Kai (1980); Kim (2006); Matsubara (2009)

Adjective-like *rentaishi*

- There are three lexemes, often classified as *rentaishi*, which look like the defective equivalents of existing (*i*-)adjectives: *ōki-na* 'big', *chiisa-na* 'small' and *okashi-na* 'strange'
- Different to their equivalents, they can only be used attributively

- (7)
- ōki-i** ie
big-i house
'big house'
 - ie-wa **ōki-i**
house=TOP big-PRS
'the house is big'
 - ie-wa **ōki-ku** nat-ta
house-TOP big-ADV become-PST
'the house became big'
- (8)
- ōki-na** ie
big-na house
'big house'
 - *ie=wa **ōki-na** / **ōki-da**
house=TOP big-na / groß-COP
 - *ie-wa **ōki-ni** nat-ta
house-TOP big-ADV become-PST

rentaishi in other Word Classes?

- As mentioned, *rentaishi* are not universally accepted as a word class
- The morphological approach is to sort relevant lexemes into the word classes they morphologically belong to (Kieda, 1938; Mio, 1958; Suzuki, 1959; Lehmann and Nishina, 2015)
- In this sense, *aru* 'certain' is a verb, *rei-no* 'mere' a noun, *ōki-na* 'big' an adjective and so on
- In this perspective, we can attest **uninflectable** in Japanese and **uninflectable** entries inside the group of verbs and adjectives, otherwise inflecting classes (cf. Russian *kenguru* 'kangaroo', Spencer 2020)

The Modern Take

- The modern take on *rentaishi* is to treat them as **mono-attributive adjectives** (Muraki, 2012; Oshima *et al.*, 2019; Oshima and Hayashi, 2021a,b)
- Assuming adjectives in Japanese can appear attributively, predicatively and adverbially, members that cannot appear in one of these scenarios, are often called **defective** or **incomplete** (*fukanzen* 不完全), *mono-attributive* adjectives then synonymous to *rentaishi*
- This often goes hand-in-hand with a reanalysis of lexemes carrying *-no* in attributive position as adjectives

The Modern Take

- (9) a. gen'eki-no gakusha
active-no scholar
'active scholar (active as scholar)'
- b. ??gakusha=wa gen'eki da
scholar=TOP active COP
- Oshima and Hayashi (2021b, 520): *No-Type Adnominals* = "Those lexemes that form a noun-modifying clause being accompanied by the attributive copula form *no*, but cannot be accompanied by other copula forms such as *da* and *de*."
 - In this sense, *No-Type rentaishi* make up the biggest type of *rentaishi*, *rentaishi* being adjectives

Discussion

- We can ask: Do *rentaishi* make up their own (uninflecting) word class or do we accept lexical uninflectability in Japanese?
- *rentaishi* as **uninflectable** adjectives is comparable to the German cases of color adjectives (*oliv* 'olive', *lila* 'purple' and so on) and evaluative adjectives (*super* 'super', *prima* 'great' and so on)
- This is related to **openness**, historically *rentaishi* should be closed, yet can be realized as open when incorporating every mono-attributive lexeme there
- Which option is more economical?
- Do we eventually need to rethink the categories **(in-)dependent** and **(non-)inflecting**?

Problems

- In the Corpus of Historical Japanese, the first entry for *gen'eki* 'active' is from 1895, compare that to *rei-no* 'mere' (900); The same holds for similar lexemes such as *yūkei* 'tangible' (first entry: 1875) or *genkan* 'freezing cold' (first entry: 1976!). This undermines the historical dimension of *rentaishi*
- Treating *rentaishi* as adjectives, the morphological burden needs to be lifted to incorporate lexemes such as *aru* 'certain' which do not have the morphology of adjectives
- In this case, the Japanese grammar also needs to rethink morphological categorizations

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Summary and Outlook

- The group of *rentaishi* was conceptualized as attributive-only modifiers with morphological diversity and the inability to inflect
- These criteria were meant to highlight them as the equivalents of Western (English, Dutch) adjectives, which are always dependent on their head noun or on the presence of the copula, and to differentiate them from the Japanese *keiyōshi* which inflect independently
- Historically, this shows an interesting aspect of **creativity** to deal with the upcoming problem of maintaining Japanese word classes in light of the emergence of higher interest in Western linguistics

Summary and Outlook

- In recent times, researchers attempted to reduce possible members of *rentaishi* to a status as defective members of otherwise inflecting word classes
- While the language itself seems not to make alterations here, i.e. inflecting classes stay inflecting, uninflecting classes stay uninflecting, linguistic descriptions do
- Lexical Uninflectability is not foreseen in Japanese linguistics, but if we accept it we need to rethink several of the notions deep rooted in the Japanese grammar and its formalization

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