The Discourse Function of the *It Is That*-Construction:
From the Perspective of Reasoning Process behind Discourse Flow*

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1. Introduction

The italicized sentence in (1), which is called the *it is that*-construction, has been investigated in the literature by considering relation between the construction and its preceding context.[1, 2, 3]

(1)   I cannot pay you back today.   *It's just that all the banks are closed.*

(Koops (2007:207))

As a discourse property, for example, some studies point out that the *it is that*-construction typically indicates a cause of what is mentioned in the previous context (Bolinger (1972) and Carlson (1983)).   Based on a causal relation such as *if all the banks are closed, one cannot return the money*, the proposition *all the banks are closed* represented in the form of the *it is that*-construction is interpreted as a cause.   Others argue that the construction frequently serves as an explanation for the preceding sentence of the construction (Kuno (1973) and Delcerck (1992)).   In (1), the proposition in the *that*-clause functions as an explanation for why the speaker cannot pay the hearer back.

However, it should be noted that even if the *It's just that* in the *it is that*-construction in (1) is omitted as illustrated in (2), the two sentences remain coherent.

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[1] Note that *it* in the *it is that*-construction is non-referential and devoid of semantic import (cf. Quirk et. al. (1985), Delahunty (1990), Declerck (1992)).   Hence, the *it is that*-construction must be distinguished from a sentence such as (i).

(i)   I've got a bit of a problem.   *It is that all the banks are closed.*   (Otake (2002:142))

In (i), the *it* refers anaphorically to the lexical NP *a bit of a problem*.   Thus, the italicized sentence is not the *it is that*-construction.

[2] Although I assume that *it* in the *it is that*-construction is non-referential as noted in footnote 1, some studies claim that it is referential (cf. Otake (2009)).   This problem is not related to the argument here.   Thus, I will not deal with this problem.

[3] Like (1), the *it is that*-construction often co-occurs with the adverb *just*, which is semantically equal to *simply* and functions to tone down the speaker's responsibility for what is described in the *that*-clause.

(2)   I cannot pay you back today. *All the banks are closed.*

Like (1), the second sentence in (2) is interpreted as a cause or an explanation. Thus, these are not defining discourse properties of the construction.

There are some important things to consider in clarifying a significant discourse property of the *it is that*-construction. Especially, I demonstrate that reasoning process behind discourse development is highly important. From this point of view, adopting Declerck's (1992) analysis on the semantic aspect of the construction, I propose the hypothesis in (3) concerning the discourse aspect, which can provide a principled explanation for phenomena of the construction.

(3)   *It is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes a process of selecting a
          proposition from a given set of alternative propositions.

Further, the hypothesis in (3) is related to a typological issue. Comparing English with Japanese, Ikarashi (2012a) proposes that English is a language which is not required to indicate the existence of a process in which a proposition has been selected from a given set grammatically. In this respect, it can be said that the *it is that*-construction is marked. Thus, the construction should convey a marked message (cf. Horn (1984)). I would like to clarify this marked massage in terms of a specificational property of the construction.

The organization of this paper is as follows. Section 2 gives an overview of Declerck's (1992) analysis on the semantic aspect of the construction. Then, based on Declerck's (1992) analysis, section 3 proposes the hypothesis in (3), and provides some evidence which supports the hypothesis. Section 4 clarifies why a process in which a proposition is chosen from a set is realized with the *it is that*-construction. Section 5 concludes the paper.[4]

2.   Preliminary Discussion

Before entering directly into an investigation of the discourse aspect of the *it is that*-construction, I would like to provide a preliminary discussion of a semantic property of the construction made by Declerck (1992). Declerck argues that the *it is that*-construction is specificational. In what follows, I explicate a central part of his argument.

First of all, I briefly explain specificational sentences. In the series of his

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[4] I concentrate upon shedding new light on the discourse aspect of the *it is that*-construction on the basis of reasoning process behind discourse flow, which has not been taken into account in the literature. Therefore, I will develop the argument without referring to previous studies unless necessary.

studies, Declerck (1988, 1992) states that 'a specificational sentence is one that specifies a value for a variable (Declerck (1988:2)).' In the following example, the copular sentence is referred to as a specificational sentence:

(4)   A: Who's the committee's chairman?
        B: Mr. Burns is the chairman.

<div align="right">(Declerck (1992:210))</div>

Speaker A asks speaker B to identify a person who is the committee's chairman. Then, speaker B supplies the identifying information, *Mr. Burns*. Thus, the sentence uttered by speaker B 'states that 'Mr. Burns' is the value that satisfies the variable 'the x who is the committee's chairman' (Declerck (1992:210)).' For instance, speaker A in (4) knows that there is someone who is the committee's chairman, but does not know who it is; to put it differently, speaker A cannot identify the committee's chairman, or speaker A cannot pick a chairman out from the set of people that speaker A is acquainted with. The information provided by speaker B makes this identification possible. In other words, speaker B specifies a value for the variable. This specificational act of speaker B enables speaker A to pick out the person in question (i.e. *Mr. Burns*) from a set.

Let us now return to the *it is that*-construction. Declerck (1992) claims that the *it is that*-construction specifies a value for a variable contained in its preceding sentence. Consider the following:[5]

(5) a.   I cannot pay you back today. *It's just that all the banks are closed.*
    b.   The speaker cannot pay the hearer back for reason x.
    c. x = All the banks are closed.

<div align="right">(Koops (2007:215) with slight modifications)</div>

The first sentence contains the invisible variable *for reason x* as shown in (5b), and the *it is that*-construction specifies the value *all the banks are closed* for the variable, as in (5c).

Declerck provides four pieces of evidence to demonstrate that the construction has specificational properties. First, he points out that the construction may not be used discourse-initially, as in (6).

(6)   [Discourse-Initial] *It's that I'm late home tonight.

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[5] Here, for the sake of convenience, I use Koops's (2007) representation, which makes it easier to understand a specificational relation between two sentences in (5a).

(Declerck (1992:212))

Declerck attributes this fact to the specificational property of the construction; the construction is not appropriately used unless an invisible variable is recoverable for the hearer. In (6), the hearer cannot recover an invisible variable, because there is no preceding context which contains it; hence, the *it is that*-construction is unacceptable.

Second, Declerck refers to the exhaustiveness implicature of the construction. According to Declerck (1988), when a value (or set of values) is specified for a variable, it is interpreted that there is no values satisfying the variable other than the one(s) that is (are) referred to. For example, when we say "It was Bill and Nancy that came late (Declerck (1992:213))," *Bill* and *Nancy* are construed as the only values satisfying the variable 'the x who came late.'[6] In other words, these two values are selected from the set exhaustively. The following example confirms that the *it is that*-construction also implicates the exhaustiveness:

(7)   It was not that I didn't want to go.   It was <u>only</u> that I had no time.

(Declerck (1992:213))

The adverb *only* in (7) does not convey the restrictive reading; rather, it functions to tone down the speaker's responsibility for not going to a place in question. This fact can be ascribed to the exhaustiveness which the construction implies. Due to the exhaustiveness, the construction as such conveys the understanding that there are no other values apart from the one *I had no time*; thus, it is redundant to interpret *only* as a restricter; as a result, it receives the alternative interpretation, i.e., it makes the speaker's responsibility lower down.

Third, Declerck focuses on a contrastive meaning of a specificational sentence. According to Declerck (1988), a specificational sentence has a contrastive meaning which is derived from a specificational act itself. The fact that a particular value is exhaustively selected to be specified for a variable automatically indicates that all the other potential candidates have not been selected. Thus, a selected value contrasts with all the other alternative values. Recall the example *It was Bill and Nancy that came late*. In this example, only *Bill* and *Nancy* have been selected as a value, and they contrast with other candidates (for example, *Tom* and *Mary*) which have not been selected. Declerck (1992) observes that the *it is that*-construction shows contrastiveness. Observe the following:

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6 It is generally said that the cleft-construction is specificational (cf. Declerck (1988)). In this construction, a proposition in the *that*-clause contains a variable, and an element, or elements in the focus position is/are a value.

(8)   If she hasn't told you anything about it, it's either that she doesn't trust you or that she doesn't know about it herself. — *No doubt it's that she doesn't trust me.*   (Delcerck (1992:214))

In (8), the first speaker gives two alternatives (*she doesn't trust you* and *she doesn't know about it herself*) as possible reasons for why she hasn't told the second speaker anything about it.   The second speaker then chooses one of them.   In this case, the selected proposition is interpreted to contrast with the other.   Thus, the *it is that*-construction shares the same characteristic with a specificational sentence in terms of contrastiveness.[7]

     Lastly, Delcerck points out that the *it is that*-construction is parallel with specificational sentences with respect to interpretation of negation.   Delcerck (1988) argues that in sepecificational sentences, sentence negation denies specificational relationships rather than contents of variables or values.   Look at the following example:

(9)   What John said was not that he was ill.   (Delcerck (1992:215))

In (9), *not* denies neither that John said something nor that he was ill.   Rather, it denies that the proposition *he was ill* is the appropriate value for the variable 'the x which John said.'   When sentence negation is used in the *it is that*-construction, the same effect is observed.   Delcerck cites the following examples from Delahunty (1990:23):

(10) a. ? One does not fear treachery, though of course one does.
     b.   It is not that one fears treachery, though of course one does.

In (10a), *not* denies that one fears treachery; thus, the first sentence contradicts the subsequent statement.   In (10b), on the other hand, such contradiction does not arise.   *Not* does not accordingly deny the content in the *that*-clause like (10a).   This fact can be explained if we assume that the *not* in (10b) denies the specificational relationship, because the content in the *that*-clause is not affected by denial of such relationship.

     From these facts, Declerck (1992) concludes that the *it is that*-construction is specificational.   The remainder of this paper investigates the discourse aspect in conformity with Declerck's proposal summarized here.

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     [7] As I will discuss in section 4, the contrastiveness plays a significant role when we define a discourse function of the *it is that*-construction.

3. Realization of a Process of Selecting a Proposition

This section clarifies a discourse aspect of the construction. Before starting discussion, it is worth remarking that although previous studies exclusively deal with the construction used in a dialogue (Delahunty (1990), Declerck (1992), Otake (2002, 2009)), it is used to express one's thought as well.[8] Here is a very clear example:

(11)   With Ana's help, I just barely made it through algebra and plane
          geometry, but that was it for me.   My career as a scientist is going to
          be pretty limited without higher math. *Mom thinks it is just that I
          don't apply myself*, and while there is some truth to that, the real reason
          is that I just don't have the family knack for numbers.

          (Doug, Turnbull, *The Man Who Conquered Mars*)

In (11), the construction appears in the complement of the verb *think*, which, following Hirose (1997), allows only the level of linguistic expression corresponding to the non-communicative, thought-expressing function in its complement. Thus, the *it is that*-construction in (11) is described as a part of *Mom*'s thought.[9] To account for phenomena pertaining to the construction comprehensively, we must take into consideration the construction used in a dialogue as well as representing one's thought. Thus, I would like to analyze the construction representing one's thought and that used to communicate information to others respectively.

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[8] For instance, Delahunty (1990:20) argues that the *it is that*-construction "can be viewed as a pragmatic instruction to <u>its audience</u> to infer a relationship between the construction and its context that goes beyond the mere addition of the information conventionally denoted by the [*that*-]clause (the underline is mine)." Clearly, this proposal cannot deal with the construction when it is used to express one's thought.

[9] Note that when the verb *think* is used in a form such as *think to oneself*, the subject communicates a content of a complement to her/himself. In this case, the complement takes the form of direct speech. Here is an example:

(i)   I thought to myself, "She's a little deaf — or maybe she hasn't washed her ears recently."
          (Bernard Hartley and Peter Viney, *American Streamline Destinations*,
          cited from Hirose (1997:27-28))

One may think that in (11), *Mom* communicates what is described in the complement to herself like (i). But, this is not true. As is clear from the pronoun used in the complement in (11), unlike (i), *thinks* takes indirect speech in its complement. Further, *to herself* may not be added to the sentence in question as shown in (ii).

(ii) * Mom thinks <u>to herself</u> it is just that I don't apply myself, [...]   (cf. (11))

Thus, the *it is that*-construction in (11) is said to express *Mom*'s thought.

3.1.   The It Is That-*Construction Expressing One's Thought*

Let us start with the case in which the construction functions to express one's thought.   Consider the following:

(12)   She has been avoiding me.   *It's just that I'm so devastatingly handsome.*

Based on a causal relation such as *if someone is so devastatingly handsome, others avoid him*, the proposition in the *that*-clause is construed to be a cause of what is described in the first sentence.

Note here that the construction makes inferential relation with the first sentence; the proposition in the *that*-clause is interpreted as a conclusion of inference; thus, example (12) can be paraphrased as *from the fact that she has been avoiding me, I conclude that I'm so devastatingly handsome.*   Put another way, the two sentences in (12) are ordered in a way that reflects the speaker's inferential process from an effect to cause.   This type of inference behind the discourse flow in (12) is termed *Abduction*.

In abduction, we first observe a phenomenon (=effect), then 'make up the list of possible explanations [=causes] of the phenomen[on] under consideration (Delaney (1993:15)),' and finally, 'select [an explanation] from our list of possible explanations (Delaney (1993:16)).'[10]   This reasoning process can be schematized as in Figure 1.   A solid line is used to represent the proposition which has been selected as a conclusion, and a strike-through indicates propositions which have not been chosen.
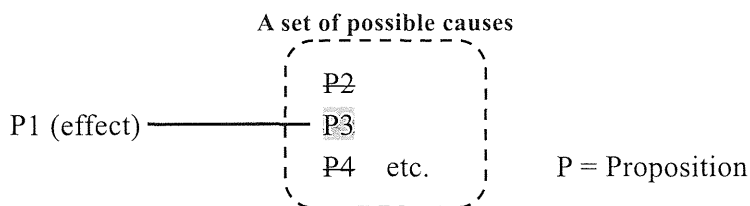
FIGURE 1

Let us turn back to the example in (12).   Because abduction exists behind the discourse flow in (12), the proposition *I'm so devastatingly handsome* is interpreted

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[10] Abduction is originated in a philosophical work of Peirce.   Peirce formulates it as follows:

(i)   The surprising fact, C, is observed;
        But if A were true, C would be a matter of course,
        Hence, there is a reason to suspect that A is true.   (Peirce (1940:151))

to have been singled out from a set of possible causes of what is described in the first sentence as illustrated in figure 2. For the sake of convenience, I call the discourse flow reflecting abduction *Abductive-Discourse Flow* (henceforth ADF).

FIGURE 2

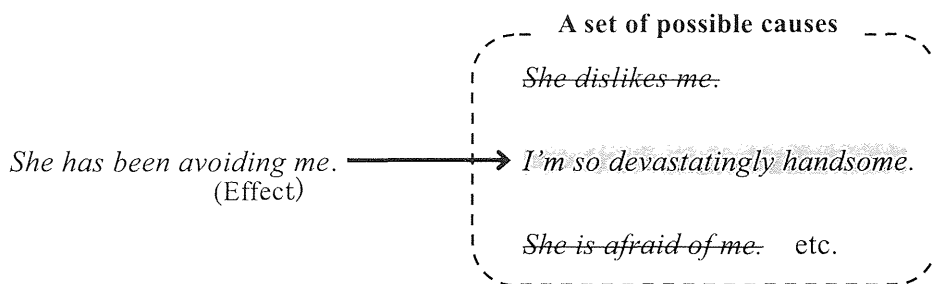Recall here that the *it is that*-construction is specificational. Then, it should be noted that there is a parallelism between an act of selecting a proposition in ADF and an act of specification which is performed when the *it is that*-construction is used. Namely, a proposition expressed in the form of the *it is that*-construction is interpreted to be selected from a given set in terms of not only ADF, but also specification. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that the speaker realizes a process of selecting a proposition from a given set occurred in ADF with the *it is that*-construction, which is specificational. This hypothesis is summarized in (13).

(13)　　*It is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes a process of selecting a proposition from a given set of alternative propositions.

Given the hypothesis in (13), it can be predicted that even if the *it is that*-construction represents a cause, it may not be used when ADF is not involved in the discourse, because a process of selecting a proposition does not exist in such a context. This prediction is borne out by the following example:

(14)　　The sun is going up. **It is (just) that the earth is turning.*

Considering our knowledge that because the earth is turning, the sun is going up, the first sentence expresses an effect and the *it is that*-construction a cause. Note that this causal relation is scientifically evident. Thus, it is not necessary to obtain the cause through inference. To put it differently, the discourse flow developed in (14) is not interpreted as ADF. As predicted, the *it is that*-construction is unacceptable in this context.

There is anther piece of evidence confirming the hypothesis in (13). First of all, consider the following examples:

(15) a.   I think this car needs a tune-up, doesn't it?
  b. * I assert that inflation will continue, won't it?

(Hooper (1975:103))

Hooper (1975) classifies the verb *think* into weak assertive predicates and the verb *assert* into strong assertive predicates. Following Hooper (1975), weak assertive predicates like *think* as such do not make an assertion; rather, only their complements are asserted.[11]   On the other hand, sentences with a strong assertive predicate like *assert* make two assertions, namely predicates themselves and their complements. These two types of assertive predicates are distinguished in terms of a tag question. As shown in (15), it is possible to form a tag question from the complements of weak assertive predicates, while strong assertive predicates do not allow a tag question to be formed from their complement clauses.

With this in mind, let us consider the following example of the *it is that*-construction:[12]

(16)   A$_1$:   Will you go out with me?
  B: Sorry.   It's just that ...
  A$_2$:   *It's just that you don't like me, <u>do you</u>.*

A$_2$'s utterance shows that the proposition of the *it is that*-construction can be a focus of a tag question. Thus, like (15a), the proposition in the *that*-clause is asserted, whereas the main clause *it is* is not. This fact can be explained by appealing to the hypothesis in (13). An act of choosing a proposition is obvious for the speaker, because such action is a part of her/his thought process (cf. Lakoff (1969)). To put it differently, the speaker knows the existence of a process of selecting a proposition to be true. Therefore, *it is*, which realizes that process, is not asserted to be true by the speaker.[13]

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[11] Here, I use the term *assert(ion)* in the sense of Hooper (1975). Following Hooper (1975:97), the term *assert(ion)* means 'a declarative proposition or a claim to truth that, on at least one reading, may be taken as the semantically dominant proposition in the discourse context.'

[12] The *it is that*-construction in example (16) is used in a dialogue. Notice, however, that the proposition in the *that*-clause is a conclusion obtained through an inference, i.e., "from the fact that B says, "sorry," I (=A) conclude that B doesn't like me." Therefore, the *it is that*-construction in (16) expresses the speaker's thought.

[13] The other possibility is that a focus of a tag question falls on a main clause, as in (i).

(i)   A$_1$: Will you go out with me?

From these observations, I tentatively conclude that the hypothesis in (13) is valid. The next subsection demonstrates that this hypothesis applies to the *it is that*-construction used in a dialogue.

3.2. The It Is That-*Construction Used in a Dialogue*

According to Hobbs (1978), when an addresser attempts to communicate a message to an addressee or addressees, the addresser can exercise some control over the way in which the addressee(s) interpret(s) a relation between a given sentence and the preceding context by choosing and ordering the addresser's utterances in a particular fashion. Thus, it is safe to assume that *it is* in the *it is that*-construction used in a dialogue realizes a process of selecting a proposition lying in a discourse flow which is organized by an addresser so as to be interpreted as ADF by an addressee or addressees. For example:

(17)   I cannot pay you back today. *It's just that all the banks are closed.*

In (17), the speaker first gives the fact that s/he cannot pay the hearer back. At this point, the speaker is anticipating that the hearer seeks to infer the reason why the speaker cannot pay back (cf. Koops (2007)). Then, the speaker provides the conclusion *all the banks are closed* in the place of the hearer. In other words, the speaker makes the hearer understand that ADF takes place in (17) as a conversational strategy by putting the cause after the effect. In (17), it is supposed that the *it is* realizes an act of singling out the proposition *all the banks are closed* as a conclusion of abduction.

Let us first confirm that a proposition expressed in the *it is that*-construction is a conclusion of abduction. If the above assumption is on the right truck, it can be predicted that even if the *it is that*-construction represents a cause, the construction may not be used when a causal relation is obvious for an addressee or addressees, because ADF does not take place in such a context (see section 3.1). This prediction is confirmed by the following example:

   B: Sorry,   It's just that …
   A$_2$: *It's just that you don't like me, <u>isn't it?</u>*

Some native speakers judge that the tag question in (i) is unacceptable, and others consider it to be fully acceptable. According to the latter, the interpretation of the tag question in (i) is different from that of the tag question in (16). Namely, in (i), A$_2$ focuses on the causal relation, and in (16), on the truth value of the proposition in *that*-clause. What is important here is, however, that any native speaker considers that a tag question can be formed from the complement of the *it is that*-construction.

(18) [A and B are students majoring in chemistry. They often boil water for experiments.]

A: The water is boiling.

B: *It's (just) that it's at 100 degrees centigrade.

In (18), A first informs B that the water is boiling, and then B states the reason why the water is boiling. Note that this causal relation is scientifically evident to them. Thus, it is not necessary to obtain the cause through inference. In other words, ADF is not involved in (18). As predicted, the *it is that*-construction is unacceptable in this context.

The assumption that a proposition represented in the form of the *it is that*-construction is a conclusion of abduction in a dialogue is also confirmed with main clause phenomena such as Negative Constituent Preposing (henceforth NCP).[14] First, consider the following:

(19) a. I exclaimed that never in my life had I seen such a crowd.

(Hooper and Thompson (1973:474))

b. * I doubt that not a bite would she eat.   (Fukuchi (1985:200))

As exemplified in (19), NCP is allowed to occur in the complement of the verb *exclaim*, whereas it is not in that of the verb *doubt*. Following Hooper and Thompson (1973) and Hooper (1975), NCP may take place in a complement which is asserted by a speaker. Thus, the complement of *exclaim* is asserted, while that of *doubt* is not.[15]

In view of this fact about NCP, consider the following example of the *it is that*-construction:

(20) A: Everyone here dislikes Tom.

B: *It's just that never in his life has he kept his word.*

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[14] In the framework of the generative school, NCP is a syntactic operation in which a negative constituent is fronted and Subject Auxiliary Inversion is triggered. The examples in (i) typifies NCP.

(i) a. I have never had to borrow money.
   b. Never have I had to borrow money.

(Hooper and Thompson (1973:465))

(ib) is derived from (ia) by means of putting *never* at the sentence initial position and inverting the order of *have* and *I*.

[15] On the classification about which predicate takes a complement asserted by a speaker, see Hooper and Thompson (1973), and Hooper (1975).

In (20), NCP is triggered in the *that*-clause of the *it is that*-construction. This means that the speaker asserts the proposition in the *that*-clause. This fact can be attributed to the above assumption that the proposition in the *that*-clause is concluded in abductive reasoning process, because a conclusion of an inference is asserted to be true.

Next, I demonstrate that *it is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes a process of selecting a proposition. First, let us consider complement preposing. According to Hooper (1975), when a complement clause is asserted, that clause can be preposed. Compare the following examples:

(21) a.　The wizard will deny your request, I think.
　　　 b. * Many of the applicants are women, it's likely.

<div align="right">(Hooper (1975:94))</div>

As noted in section 3.1, the complement of the verb *think*, which is classified into (weak) assertive predicates, is asserted. In this case, the complement clause is permitted to be preposed as illustrated in (21a). On the other hand, following Hooper (1975), the predicate *be likely* does not fall into a class of assertive predicates. Its complement is not asserted, but presupposed. As shown in (21b), the complement of *be likely* may not be preposed.

As exemplified in (20), the *that*-clause of the *it is that*-construction is asserted, and hence, one might predict that the complement of the construction could be preposed like (21a). However, this is not the case:[16]

(22)　　* He didn't have the money, it was.　　　　(Bolinger (1972:37))

I claim that the difference between assertive predicates such as *think* and the *it is that*-construction in complement preposing stems from their discourse functions. Hooper (1975:96) states that the discourse function of the *I think* in (21a) is to "[inform] the hearer that the speaker may have mild reservations about the truth of the complement proposition." Therefore, it is possible that like modal adverbs such as *perhaps* and *probably*, the speaker shows his attitude toward the truth of the proposition by putting *I think* at the sentence initial position as well as the sentence final position. On the other hand, the discourse function of the *it is that*-construction is to realize a process of selecting the proposition. Note that such a process does exist between a premise and a conclusion (see Figure 2). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that *it is* cannot realize an act of choosing a proposition

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[16] Bolinger (1972) merely points out this fact, and does not give a satisfactory explanation.

unless the *it is* is put at the front of the proposition chosen as a conclusion. Given that *it is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes a process of selecting a proposition, the unacceptability of example (22) can be accounted for.

To sum up, whether the *it is that*-construction is used to express one's thought or to communicate information to an addressee or addressees, *it is* in the construction realizes a process of selecting a proposition which takes place in ADF.

3.3.   The It Is That-*Construction Representing an Effect*

As noted in section 1, the *it is that*-construction typically indicates a cause of what is mentioned in the previous context. In fact, the construction representing an effect is not acceptable as shown in (23).

(23) A_1: Tom looked ill when I saw him at school yesterday.
        B: What did he do then?   Did he go to the hospital?
        A_2: No.   *It's (just) that he left school early.*

Based on our knowledge that if one does not feel well, s/he leaves school early, the proposition expressed in the *it is that*-construction is interpreted as an effect and the proposition uttered by A_1 a cause. No study deals with an example such as (23) seriously, and thus, little is known about the phenomena concerning the *it is that*-construction representing an effect.[17] This subsection demonstrates that if it is supposed that *it is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes an act of choosing a proposition, the unacceptability of the construction in (23) is explained straightforwardly.

Let us consider the interpretation of the discourse in (23) in more detail. A_1 first provides a fact that Tom looked ill the previous day. Then B infers from the fact the conclusion that Tom went to the hospital. A_2, however, rejects B's

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[17] Otake (2009) observes that the construction only occasionally takes a proposition interpreted as an effect. For example:

(i)   Writers, on the other hand, live in a floating world, where ideas swim up to audition all the time. So *it is that out of the Niagara Falls, where this diary found me last week, the bubble of a story has suddenly surfaced.*
                    (*The Times Magazine*, Nov. 13, 1993, cited from Otake (2009:58))

In (i), the *it is that*-construction makes a causal relation such as *because writers live in a floating world, where ideas swim up to audition all the time, the bubble of a story has suddenly surfaced out of the Niagara Falls.* Thus, the construction in (i) is interpreted as an effect.

Otake (2009), however, does not discuss in what context the *it is that*-construction is allowed to indicate an effect. Although it is intriguing to investigate what conditions underlying the use of the construction representing an effect might actually be, I leave this question open for future research.

conclusion, and gives the proposition *he left school early* as a valid conclusion. In other words, A_1's utterance and A_2's *it is that*-construction are ordered in a way of reflecting the inferencial process from a cause to an effect. This type of inference is termed *Deduction*. I call the discourse flow reflecting deduction *Deductive-Discourse Flow* (henceforth DDF) to distinguish it from ADF.

Unlike ADF, an act of choosing a proposition from a given set does not seem to occur in DDF because of the nature of the deductive reasoning process behind DDF, which is shown in (24).

(24)   If A then C

        A

        Therefore C   (Hirose (1991:20))

In deduction, a conclusion C (= effect) is automatically derived from a major premise *If A then C* when we are given a minor premise A; that is, a cause tends to be related with one effect.

With this in mind, let us now return to the example in (23). Since two effects, i.e. *Tom went to the hospital* (uttered by B) and *Tom left school early* (uttered by A_2), are at stake in (23), the proposition of the *it is that*-construction appears to have been selected from a set of possible effects at first sight. However, due to the nature of the deduction behind DDF, the proposition of the construction is deductively concluded based on A's major premise, whereas the proposition *Tom went to the hospital* is obtained through B's major premise; thus, there is no effect obtained through A's major premise other than the one described by A_2 in this context. In other words, the proposition of the *it is that*-construction is not construed to have been selected from a set of possible effects. This is schematically shown in Figure 3.
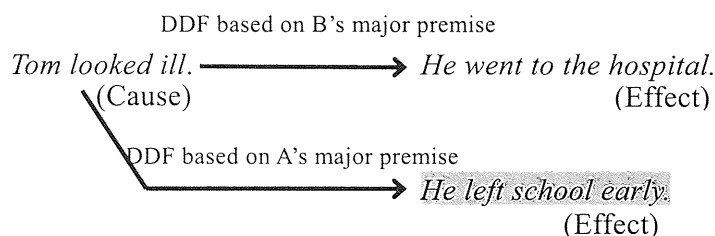
DDF based on B's major premise

Tom looked ill. ⟶ *He went to the hospital.*
   \(Cause)   (Effect)

DDF based on A's major premise

                     ⟶ *He left school early.*
                                 (Effect)

FIGURE 3

Since there is no process of selecting a proposition, the *it is that*-construction is not acceptable in (23).

As discussed in this subsection, if it is supposed that *it is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes an act of choosing a proposition, the unacceptability of the construction representing an effect like (23) is given a principled explanation.

3.4. *Interim Conclusion*

Focusing on reasoning process behind discourse flow, this section has illustrated that *it is* in the *it is that*-construction realizes a process of selecting a proposition from a given set of alternative propositions.

However, I have suspended a fundamental issue so far.   As noted in section 1, even if *it is that* in the *it is that*-construction is omitted, the sentences remain coherent as shown in (25).

(25)   I cannot pay you back today.   *(It's just that) all the banks are closed.*

Thus, the following question arises: why the speaker realizes a process of selecting a proposition with the *it is that*-construction.   I solve this question in the next section.

4.   Contrastive Implicature

Comparing English with Japanese, Ikarashi (2012a) proposes that English is a language which is not required to indicate the existence of a process in which a proposition has been selected from a given set grammatically.[18]   In this respect, it can be said that the *it is that*-construction is a marked expression.   Following Horn (1984), a marked expression conveys a marked message.   Thus, the *it is that*-construction conveys a certain marked message.

Considering Declerck's (1992) claim that the *it is that*-construction is specificational, it is reasonable to consider that an addresser intends to convey a certain specificational property as a marked message.   Recall that specificational

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[18] I propose that the existence of a process of selecting a proposition is indicated with the so-called *no(-da)* construction (see also Ikarashi (2012b)).   Consider the followings:

(i) a.   You can't have met many decent wizards.
    b.   Kimi-wa reigitadasii mahootukai-ni anmari   awa-nakat-ta   n̲   da ne.
         you-Top decent   wizard-Dat   so-many meet-not-past nominalizer Cop you.know
                                                 (J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*,
                                                                   Japanese translation: Y. Matsuoka)

In (ib), the underlined *n*, which serves to nominalize a sentence, indicates that the proposition *the hearer cannot have met many decent wizards* has been singled out from a given set.   In such context, *n* may not be omitted.   Notice that no corresponding English expression is used in (ia). This means that a process of selecting a proposition is not obligatorily expressed with a particular construction in English.

sentences implicate contrastiveness.　Thus, I assume the following:

(26)　　The *it is that*-construction serves to contrast a proposition in the
　　　　that-clause with another proposition or other propositions.

There is some testimony to the assumption in (26).　First, let us consider the
following example:

(27)　　[The speaker is scratching a leg]
　　　 * It is that I was bitten by a mosquito.　　　　　　(Otake (2009:49))

Based on the assumption in (26), the proposition in *that*-clause should be contrasted
with other propositions which express a reason why the speaker is scratching a leg.
Nevertheless, there is no proposition contrasted with the proposition in the
that-clause in this context.　Therefore, the construction is unacceptable in (27).

　　It is predicted that the *it is that*-construction becomes acceptable if it is put in
a context in which it is contrasted with other propositions.　Look at the following:

(28)　　[B is scratching a leg]
　　　　A:　Have you got the hives?
　　　　B:　No.　*It is that I was bitten by a mosquito.*

In (28), the proposition in the *that*-clause is contrasted with the proposition *B has
got the hives* with respect to a reason why B is scratching a leg; the *it is
that*-construction is acceptable.[19]　Thus, it is safe to say that the construction is
used in contrasting a proposition with other propositions.

　　If the contrastiveness is the defining marked message which the construction
conveys, contrastive implicature should not arise if a process of selecting a
proposition is not realized with *it is*.　First, observe the following:

(29)　　[1] Europe now accounts for more than 30% of Broadvison's revenues,
　　　　up from around 20% a year ago.　[2] *It's not that spending on
　　　　Broadvison software is booming in Europe*, Chen said.　[3] *It's just
　　　　that it hasn't totally collapsed like in the U.S.*
　　　　　　　　　　　(*Fortune*, Dec. 6, 2001, cited from Otake (2009:72))

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[19] Otake (2009) provides the example in (27) to show that information which the *it is
that*-construction explains must be linguistically realized.　However, the example in (28) shows
that such constraint does not exist, because the information which the *it is that*-construction
explains is not linguistically realized like (27).

In (29), sentence [1] states that Europe now accounts for more than 30% of Broadvison's revenues. After that, sentence [2] represents that the proposition in the *that*-clause is not a reason for what is mentioned in sentence [1], and then sentence [3] provides a real reason. Here, let us consider the examples in (30), which are changed in some parts of example (29).[20]

(30)   [1] Europe now accounts for more than 30% of Broadvison's revenues, up from around 20% a year ago.

a.   [2] <u>It's not that</u> spending on Broadvision Software is booming in Europe, Chen said.   [3] It hasn't totally collapsed like in the U.S.

b.   [2] Spending on Broadvision Software isn't booming in Europe, Chen said.   [3] <u>It's just that</u> it hasn't totally collapsed like in the U.S.

c. # [2] Spending on Broadvision Software isn't booming in Europe, Chen said.   [3] It hasn't totally collapsed like in the U.S.

In (30a), *it's not that* in sentence [2] indicates that the proposition in the *that*-clause is not a real reason for what is stated in sentence [1]. Since the proposition in sentence [2] is said not to be a real reason, the readers expects that it should be provided in the following statement (cf. Amagawa (1995)). In other words, *it's not that* contrastively makes the readers evoke the existence of a real reason. Consequently, although *it's just that* in sentence [3] is omitted, the sentences keep coherent with each other.

Similarly, sentences in (30b) can be interpreted coherently. In this case, *it's not that* in sentence [2] is omitted. According to the intuition of a native speaker, sentence [2] is interpreted to be merely added as new information. But when reading sentence [3], the readers find sentence [2] to be provided to show that sentence [2] is not a real reason for the statement in sentence [1]. As a result, the sentences are related to each other coherently. Given the assumption in (26), this coherence can be accounted for; *it's just that* in sentence [3] indicates that the proposition in the *that*-clause is a real reason for the statement in sentence [1] and others are not; thus, when reading sentence [3], the readers expect that there should be a proposition which has not been selected as a real reason, and they find it in sentence [2]. Hence, the readers understand that sentence [2] is provided to show that it is not a real reason.

In (30c), both *it's not that* in sentence [2] and *it's just that* in sentence [3] are omitted. Unlike (30a) and (30b), the sentences in (30c) are not coherently related

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[20] The symbol # indicates that the sentences in question are not related to each other coherently.

to each other; it is difficult to interpret the pragmatic relation between these sentences. This can be contributed to the fact that the expression without *it's not that* or *it's just that* does not implicate the contrastiveness. If sentence [2] and/or sentence [3] in (30c) implicated the contrastiveness like sentence [2] in (30a) or sentence [3] in (30b), the sentences would be interpreted coherently. Thus, it is safe to conclude that an unmarked expression without *it is that* does not implicate the contrastiveness. In conclusion, an addresser conveys contrastive implicature by means of representing a process of selecting a proposition with the *it is that*-construction.[21]

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[21] Further, the assumption in (26) may give a clear distinction between the *it is that*-construction and the *it is because*-construction like (i).

(i) He was shot in his house. *It is because he knew too much.* (Koops (2007:212))

The *it is because*-construction represents a cause of what is said in a preceding context like the *it is that*-construction. Thus, Bolinger (1972) paraphrases the *it is that*-construction into the *it is because*-construction as follows:

(ii) Why didn't he take the plunge? Was it that (= because) he didn't have the money (that he didn't take the plague)? (Bolinger (1972:35))

However, these constructions are not always paraphrasable. Compare the following *it is that*-construction with the *it is because*-construction in (i):

(iii) He was shot in his house. **It is that he knew too much.*
   (Koops (2007212) with slight modifications)

The *it is that*-construction in (iii) is unacceptable, because there is no proposition which is contrasted with the proposition in the *that*-clause. On the other hand, the *it is because*-construction is acceptable in the same context. This means that the latter does not implicate the contrastiveness.

In addition, another difference arises in justifying of speech act as follows:

(iv) A$_1$: Are you free tonight?
   B: Do you want to go out with me?
   A$_2$: No, {*it's just that/*it's because*} *I want you to help with my homework.*

A$_2$'s utterance serves to explain why A$_1$ asks if B is free that night. In this case, *it is that*-construction is permitted, while the *it is because*-construction is not. Hence, the latter is specialized in representing a causal relation between two propositions, whereas the former is not.

To sum up, as discussed so far, the *it is that*-construction focuses on the contrast between propositions in a given set. On the other hand, the *it is because*-construction focuses on a causal relation between propositions rather than the contrast between propositions in a given set. The assumption in (26) can give a clear distinction between the *it is that*-construction and the seemingly corresponding *it is because*-construction.

However, the situation is more complicated. The assumption in (26) does not straightforwardly explains the following fact:

(v) Tom must love her. {**It's just that/*It's because*} *he came back to her.*

5. Conclusion

Focusing on reasoning process behind discourse flow, I have claimed that the *it is that*-construction serves to realize a process of selecting a proposition from a given set. This claim is supported with various examples. Further, from the typological point of view, to realize an act of choosing a proposition is marked in English. In this respect, the construction is a marked one that conveys a marked message. As a marked message, I clarified that the construction conveys contrastive implicature.

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In (v), the proposition *he came back to her* is construed as a premise of the conclusion described in the first sentence. In this case, both of the constructions are unacceptable. Although it is intriguing to investigate the example in (v), I will leave this open for future researches.

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