

A Contrastive Study of Japanese *No(-da)* Constructions and English Related Expressions: From the Viewpoint of Abductive/Deductive Reasoning

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It is widely known that the Japanese *no(-da)* construction like (1a) corresponds to the English *it is that*-construction like (1b) (cf. Kuno (1973), Ikegami (1981), Otake (2009)).

- (1) a. Kaze o hiita no desu.
 cold drew Cop-Polite
 b. *It is that* I've caught a cold.

(Kuno (1973:223) with slight modifications)

However, this is not always the case. Compare the following examples:

- (2) a. You can't have met many decent wizards.
 b. Kimi-wa reigitadasii mahootukai-ni, anmari awanakatta
 you-Top decent wizard-Dat so-many have not met
 n da ne.
 Comp Cop you-know

(J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*,
 Japanese translation: Yuko Matsuoka)

In (2), the *no(-da)* construction is used in the Japanese translation although the corresponding English expression is not represented in the form of the *it is that*-construction. This means that the *no(-da)* construction is not necessarily equivalent to the *it is that*-construction. Here, the following question arises:

- (3) Why does English require no particular construction in a context in which the *no(-da)* construction is required?

Some studies notice the contrast as in (2) (cf. Noda (1997), Otake (2009)), but they do not address the issue in (3).

This thesis proposes that the discrepancy between Japanese and English noted in (3) is due to the difference as to how they linguistically realize reasoning processes. Specifically, the following difference lies between Japanese and English:

- (4) When a conclusion has been drawn through abductive reasoning,
 a. Japanese represents it with the *no(-da)* construction, whereas
 b. English need not express it with a particular construction.

In order to clarify this difference between Japanese and English, let us begin with the *no(-da)* construction. Consider the following:

- (5) Taroo-ga kaettekita. Kare-wa kanozyo-o aisiteita **(n da)*.
 Taroo-Nom came back he-Top she-Acc loved Comp Cop
 ‘Taro came back. He loved her.’

In (5), the proposition in the *no(-da)* sentence *Kare-wa kanozyo-o aisiteita* is inferred from the preceding utterance *Taroo-ga kaettekita*. Notice that, with respect to a causal relation, the first proposition is interpreted as the effect and the proposition in the *no(-da)* sentence as the cause on the basis of our knowledge that if someone loves another person, s/he comes back. In (5), therefore, the speaker infers a cause from an effect. This type of inference is termed *Abduction*. I briefly introduce its concept.

In abduction, we first observe a phenomenon (=effect), then ‘make up the list of possible explanations [=causes] of the phenom[on] under consideration (Delaney (1993:15)),’ and finally, ‘select [an explanation] from our list of possible explanations (*ibid.*).’ This reasoning process can be schematized as in Figure 1, and Figure 2 represents the inferential relation between the two propositions in (5) on the basis of Figure 1. A solid line is used to represent the proposition which has been selected as a conclusion, and a dotted line to represent a proposition which has not.

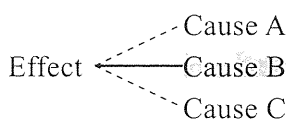


Figure 1

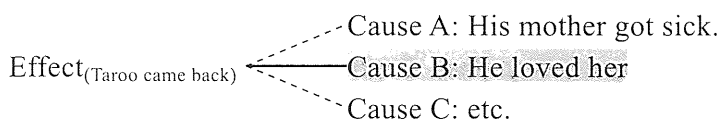


Figure 2 (cf. (5))

Let us now return to the example in (5). In (5), the *no(-da)* sentence represents a conclusion of abductive reasoning. From the fact that *n da* is not allowed to be omitted in (5), it can be hypothesized that the *no(-da)* construction is required when abductive reasoning has taken place. In other words, the *no(-da)* construction serves to indicate the existence of this reasoning process.

Then, the present hypothesis predicts that *n da* in (5) will not be used if the

proposition *Kare-wa kanozyo-o aisiteita* is not a conclusion of abduction. This prediction is confirmed by the following:

- (6) [An omniscient narrator states the sentences:]
 Taroo-ga kaettekita. Kare-wa kanozyo-o aisiteita. (cf. (5))

An omniscient narrator knows everything. In (6), the narrator knows the causal relation between two propositions from the beginning. Thus, abductive reasoning is not involved in (6). As predicted, the proposition in question is not represented in the form of the *no(-da)* construction. (Note that it is possible to express the proposition *Kare-wa kanozyo-o aisiteita* in the form of the *no(-da)* construction as follows:

- (7) [An omniscient narrator states the sentences:]
 Taroo-ga kaettekita. Kare-wa kanozyo-o aisiteita *no da*. (cf. (6))

In this case, however, the relevant proposition is not interpreted as a conclusion of inference. Rather, it is construed as an explanation for readers of why *Taroo* came back. I assume that *no(-da)* constructions like (7) are used to make readers/hearers understand an abductive relation between a proposition to which *no(-da)* attaches and a preceding context. A detailed analysis of such an example is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.)

Here, recall the examples in (2), which show that English requires no particular construction corresponding to the *no(-da)* construction (cf. the question in (3)). In addition, the *no(-da)* construction indicates the existence of abductive reasoning process. Therefore, it can be concluded that English does not require a specific construction which indicates the existence of abductive reasoning; hence, the proposal in (4). This proposal can be confirmed by the following examples:

- (8) a. Ron: We can fly the car to Hogwarts!
 Harry: *Can you fly it?*
- b. Ron: Hogu-wâtu-made kuruma-de tondeikeru yo.
 Hogwarts-to car-by can fly I-tell-you
 Harry: *Kimi, kuruma-o tobaseru no?*
 you car-Acc can fly Comp
 (J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*,
 Japanese translation: Yuko Matsuoka)

- (9) a. I heard you have a flying car. I want to go shopping today. *Can you fly it?*
- b. Kimi-ga soratobu kuruma-o motteiru to kiita n da.
 you-Nom flying car-Acc have that heard Comp Cop
 Kyoo, kaimono-ni iki tai n da yo. *Kimi,*
 Today shopping-Dat go want Comp Cop I-tell-you you
kuruma-o tobaseru?
 car-Acc can fly

The italicized sentences *Can you fly it?* in (8a) and (9a) correspond to both the *no(-da)* sentence *Kimi, kuruma-o tobaseru no?* in (8b) and the non-*no(-da)* sentence *Kimi, kuruma-o tobaseru?* in (9b). This fact can be attributed to the proposal in (4). In (8), the proposition *you [Ron] can fly the car* is a conclusion of abduction, because it explains why *Ron* said that they could fly *the car* to *Hogwarts*. In (8b), therefore, it is represented in the form of the *no(-da)* construction. In (8a), on the other hand, the proposition in question is not expressed with a particular construction (e.g. the *it is that*-construction), because the existence of abductive reasoning is not required to be linguistically indicated in English, as proposed in (4). In (9), unlike (8), the proposition *you [the hearer] can fly the car* is not a conclusion of abduction. Rather, it is a felicity condition of a request. Namely, the speaker requests the hearer to take the speaker to a store by asking the hearer's ability to fly a car. Thus, in (9b), the *no(-da)* sentence is not required. As a result, the proposition *Can you fly it?* in English may correspond to both the *no(-da)* sentence in (8b) and the non-*no(-da)* sentence in (9b) depending on a context.

A question arising here is what the contrast between Japanese and English in (4) stems from. In addition, as shown in (1), the English *it is that*-construction is translatable into the Japanese *no(-da)* construction. This indicates that there is something in common between the both constructions. Although it is intriguing to investigate these issues, I leave them open for future researches.

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