

A d v e r b i a l   C l a u s e s   o f   T i m e  
i n   J a p a n e s e  
M a e   n i   a n d   - N a i   u c h i   n i

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0. Introduction

When we translate an adverbial clause beginning with the conjunction 'before' into Japanese, there are mainly two ways of expressing it. One is mae ni and the other is -nai uchi ni. The former simply represents a 'before and after' relationship (purely temporal relationship). On the other hand, when we use -nai uchi ni, it has an additional implication, which is a reflection of the speaker's intention. Since the meaning of -nai uchi ni is complicated, the discussion of it will be divided into four parts in the first section. In the following section, we will consider the cases of mae ni. The last section concerns the scope of using mae ni and -nai uchi ni.

1. -Nai uchi ni

1.1 'Affirmative→Negative' and 'Negative→Affirmative'  
Relationship

Let us start with considering some examples.

(1) Let's go back before it gets dark.

a. Kuraku naru mae ni, keroo.

b. Kuraku naranai uchi ni, kaeroo.

[kuraku naru: it gets dark; kaeroo: let's go back]

[Hereafter, S<sub>1</sub> and S<sub>2</sub> will be used as follows:

[S<sub>1</sub> -nai uchi ni, S<sub>2</sub>; S<sub>1</sub> mae ni, S<sub>2</sub>.]

In (1a), the relationship between the subordinate clause and the main clause is just a 'before and after' relationship. On the other hand, in (1b) the relationship between the clauses is more than just a 'before and after' relationship. The additional implication caused by the speaker's intention is reflected here.

The relationship between the clauses in (1b) can be expressed as follows:

Formula 1: S<sub>1</sub>=Negative→S<sub>2</sub>=Affirmative

This formula means that the speaker regards S<sub>1</sub>:kuraku naru (it gets dark) as a negative fact--the fact which the speaker thinks is undesirable if it happens before S<sub>2</sub> and S<sub>2</sub>:kaeroo (let's go back) as an affirmative fact--the fact which the speaker thinks is desirable if it happens before S<sub>1</sub>. For it is dangerous after it gets dark (negative) and it is better to go back earlier (affirmative).

Similarly,

(2) Let's hide the chalk before the teacher comes.

a. Sensei ga kuru mae ni, chooku o kakusoo.

b. Sensei ga konai uchi ni, chooku o kakusoo.

[sensei ga kuru: the teacher comes; chooku o kakusoo: let's hide the chalk]

Since S<sub>1</sub>: sensei ga kuru (the teacher comes) can be considered a negative fact and S<sub>2</sub>: chooku o kakusoo (let's hide the chalk) an affirmative fact if it happens before S<sub>1</sub> by the speaker, the formula 1 applies to (2b). On the other hand, (2a) represents the same simple temporal relationship as (1a).

In the following instances, (3a) shows the similar relationship as (1a) and (2a), while the relationship between the two clauses in (3b) is opposed to that in (1b) and (2b).

(3) Before he reached the goal, he gave up.

a. Kare wa gooru ni tuku mae ni, akirameta.

b. Kare wa gooru ni tukanai uchi ni, akirameta.

[kare wa gooru ni tuku: he reaches the goal; akirameta: he

gave up]

The speaker regards  $S_1$ : kare wa gooru ni tsuku (he reaches the goal) as affirmative, and  $S_2$ : akirameta (he gave up) as negative if it happens before  $S_1$ . Accordingly, the formula for (3b) is as follows:

Formula II:  $S_1$ =Affirmative $\rightarrow$  $S_2$ =Negative

In the same way,

(4) Before he entered the university, he committed suicide.

a. Kare wa daigaku ni hairu mae ni, jisatsu shita.

b. Kare wa daigaku ni hairu nai uchi ni, jisatsu shita.

[kare wa daigaku ni hairu: he enters the university; jisatsu shita: he committed suicide]

The same relationship as (1a), (2a), and (3a) applies to (4a). In (4b), the speaker thinks of the fact [ $S_1$ ] that kare wa daigaku ni hairu (he enters the university) as affirmative and the fact [ $S_2$ ] that jisatsu shita (he committed suicide) as negative for  $S_1$ . So the formula II applies to (4b).

So far, as for the sentences with -nai uchi ni, we have seen two cases: 'negative $\rightarrow$ affirmative' and 'affirmative $\rightarrow$ negative'. This is because it seems to be unnatural to use -nai uchi ni in the sentences which do not have the relationship of 'negative $\rightarrow$ affirmative' nor 'affirmative $\rightarrow$ negative'.

(5) Wash yourself before you go to school.

a. Gakkoo ni iku mae ni, kao o arai nasai.

b. <sup>?</sup>Gakkoo ni iku nai uchi ni, kao o arai nasai.

[gakkoo ni iku: you go to school; kao o arai nasai: wash yourself]

Both  $S_1$ : gakkoo ni iku and  $S_2$ : kao o arai nasai are normally affirmative factors by the view of the speaker. When we use -nai uchi ni instead of mae ni, the sentence is unnatural unless we try to make rather a peculiar interpretation: the speaker regards  $S_1$ : gakkoo ni iku as a negative factor for  $S_2$ : kao o arau. In other words, we can only interpret the sentence (5b) as 'negative $\rightarrow$ affirmative'.

On the other hand, when we try to make sentences which

appear to have the relation of 'negative→negative' like (6), the sentence including -nai uchi ni is unnatural.

(6) Before the criminal murdered A, he murdered B.

a. Han'nin wa A o korosu mae ni, B o koroshita.

b. ?Han'nin wa A o korosanau uchi ni, B o koroshita.

[han'nin wa A o korosu: the criminal murders A; B o koroshita: he murdered B]

In order to make the sentence (6) sound natural, we have to assume that the speaker holds the intention that the criminal should have murdered A before B--that is 'affirmative→negative' relationship. Thus, when we use -nai uchi ni, there are only two cases: 'affirmative→negative' and 'negative→affirmative'.

## 1.2 The Content of 'Negative→Affirmative' and 'Affirmative→Negative' Relationships--the Implication of the Sentences

So far, we have found the 'negative→affirmative' and 'affirmative→negative' relationships in  $S_1$  -nai uchi ni  $S_2$ . Then what is the content of these relationships? Actually, the implications of 'negative→affirmative' and 'affirmative→negative' are different. In the former case, the implication is expressed as follows:

It is undesirable if one does  $S_2$  after  $S_1$ ; so one should do  $S_2$  before  $S_1$ .

For instance, the implication of the sentence (1b) is:

It is undesirable if one goes back after it gets dark; so let's go back before it gets dark.

On the other hand, in the case of 'affirmative→negative', the implication can be described as:

One should not have done  $S_2$  before  $S_1$ ; nevertheless one had done  $S_2$ . (The further implication here is that it is undesirable if one does  $S_2$  after  $S_1$ . But it does not necessarily mean that it is desirable if one does after  $S_1$ .)

For example, the implication of the sentence (3b) is:

He should not have given up before he reached the goal;  
nevertheless, he had given up.

### 1.3 Similar Expressions of -nai uchi ni in English

In 1.2, we have discussed the content of 'negative→affirmative' and 'affirmative→negative' relationship. Now we will see how those situations can be expressed in English. There are no English expressions exactly equivalent to -nai uchi ni. However, the following three kinds of expressions in 1.3.1-1.3.3 seem to be close to the Japanese -nai uchi ni.

#### 1.3.1 -Nai uchi ni in 'Negative→Affirmative' Relationship--Is it equivalent to 'lest--(should)', 'in case--(should)', 'for fear that--'?

As we see the 'negative→affirmative' relationship, it may appear to be explained in terms of a causal relationship. In the sentence (1b), for example, one could say the cause of S<sub>2</sub> (to go back) is S<sub>1</sub> (it gets dark). The causal relationship in this sentence, however, is not as simple as 'why--because' relationship. This sentence (1b) implies that the situation of S<sub>1</sub> is somewhat undesirable which the speaker wants to avoid. So, when we look for English expressions which can show this causal relationship, the followings are the closest ones in meaning: 'lest--(should)', 'in case--(should)', 'for fear that--'. So, the sentence (1b) might be expressed as:

(1') Let's go back lest (in case, for fear that) it should get dark.

Although this sentence appears to be close to (1b) in meaning, the actual content expressed here is slightly different from that expressed with -nai uchi ni. When we express the sentence (2b) using these phrases, the difference will be more obvious.

(2')? Let's hide the chalk, lest (for fear that, in case) the teacher come.

The sentence with 'lest (in case, for fear that)' (e.g.  $S_2$  lest  $S_1$ ) implies that the situation  $S_1$  is undesirable, so one should do  $S_2$  so that one will not be in the situation of  $S_1$ . On the other hand, the sentence with -nai uchi ni has a different implication. As is said in section 1.2, the implication of the sentence with -nai uchi ni, which has the 'negative→affirmative' relationship, is that it is undesirable if one does  $S_2$  after  $S_1$ ; so one should do  $S_2$  before  $S_1$ .

To sum up, when we compare the two sentences, one with -nai uchi ni (negative→affirmative) and the other with 'lest (in case, for fear that)', we find that the temporal relationship, 'before and after', is not a main concern in the one with 'lest (in case, for fear that)'. Therefore, the sentence with -nai uchi ni (negative→affirmative) cannot be the same as that with 'lest' and the like, which express causal relationship alone.

### 1.3.2 -Nai uchi ni of 'Affirmative→Negative' Relationship--Is it close to 'nevertheless'?

As mentioned above, the implication of -nai uchi ni which has the 'affirmative→negative' relationship is that one should not have done  $S_2$  before  $S_1$ ; nevertheless one had done  $S_2$  before  $S_1$ . Accordingly, the sentence with 'nevertheless' might be able to express the similar situation as that of -nai uchi ni of 'affirmative→negative' relation. In the same way as the sentences with 'lest' and the like, however, in the sentences with 'nevertheless', the temporal relationship, 'before and after' is not the main concern. In other words, when we use the sentences with 'nevertheless', we are insensitive to the temporal relationship. Thus 'nevertheless' is not completely equivalent to -nai uchi ni either.

1.3.3 'While'--in Both 'Negative→Affirmative' and 'Affirmative  
→Negative' Situation

So far, we could not find the English expressions exactly equivalent to -nai uchi ni. Then, is it impossible to express the same content as that of -nai uchi ni? In the sentences in (7), the situation described in both English and Japanese is the same.

(7) a. Kuraku naranai uchi ni, hoshikusa o tsukure.

b. Make hay while the sun shines.

[kuraku naru: it gets dark; hoshikusa o tsukure: make hay]

However, one must keep in mind that when we use 'while', the way of expressing the situation is different. If we translate the Japanese clause 'kuraku naranai uchi ni' word for word, it will be like:

'during the time when it does not get dark (lit.)'

On the other hand, the English clause 'while the sun shines' can be paraphrased as:

'during the time when the sun shines'

Since -nai in the expression of -nai uchi ni has the function of negation and uchi ni means 'during the time when' in the clause, the situation 'getting dark' is negated here. On the other hand, in the English clause, the situation of 'the sun shines' is directly expressed. Therefore, when we translate the Japanese expression -nai uchi ni into the English expression 'while', we have to think about the opposite situation. Then, in Japanese, why do we refer to the situation of getting dark, instead of simply expressing the situation of the sun shines? When we think of the situation opposite to the present situation--undesirable condition, in this case, the sentence comes to have a connotation, something like urgency, which cannot be expressed in terms of 'while'. We will discuss this connotation of -nai uchi ni in more detail.

#### 1.4 Further Semantic Analysis of -nai uchi ni in Japanese

As mentioned above, the sentence with -nai uchi ni has the special connotation, which cannot be equivalently expressed in English. When we use the expression -nai uchi ni, we think of a kind of boundary, from which the opposite situation can be distinguished.

This notion of boundary in -nai uchi ni brings out the obvious difference in concept from mae ni. As we discussed in 1.1, 'S<sub>1</sub> mae ni S<sub>2</sub>' simply shows the before and after relationship. So, if we illustrate the concept of 'S<sub>1</sub> mae ni S<sub>2</sub>', it will be represented by two temporal points: one for S<sub>1</sub>, the other for S<sub>2</sub> (Figure 1). On the other hand, 'S<sub>1</sub> -nai uchi ni S<sub>2</sub>' cannot be represented simply by two temporal points. What underlies 'S<sub>1</sub> -nai uchi ni S<sub>2</sub>' is a concept of process in the boundary, and this expression implies the completion of the event described by S<sub>2</sub> within that boundary, although the event of S<sub>2</sub> itself can be designated by a temporal point (Figure 2).

S<sub>2</sub>                      S<sub>1</sub>

Figure 1

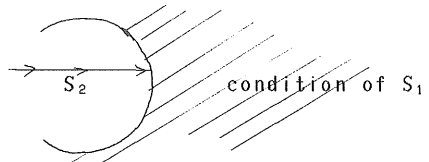
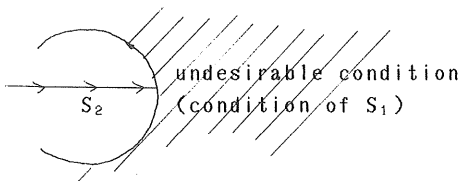


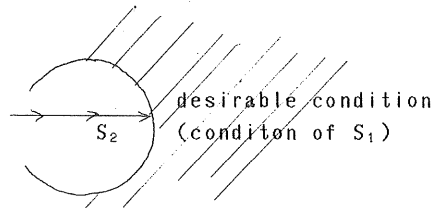
Figure 2

In order to make clear the concept of '-nai uchi ni', we will give some illustrations.



(negative → affirmative)

Figure 3



(affirmative → negative)

Figure 4



(i) Negative→Affirmative

(1) b. Kuraku naranai uchi ni, kaeroo.

If we illustrate the situation of this sentence, it will be like figure 3. Since the opposite situation (S<sub>1</sub>--getting dark) is undesirable, the speaker thinks that one has to or should do S<sub>2</sub> (going back) inside the boundary. The reason why this sentence has the implication of urgency as mentioned in 1.3.3 can be explained with figure 3. Since the undesirable condition is actually referred to by S<sub>1</sub> (it gets dark) and one is afraid of going over the boundary, one tends to feel a kind of urgency.

(ii) Affirmative→Negative

In the same way, 'affirmative→negative' sense can be illustrated with figure 4.

(3) b. Kare wa gooru ni tsukanai uchi ni, akirameta.

If S<sub>2</sub> did not happen, one could have attained the desirable condition. In other words, although one knows the opposite situation is good, one could not attain it. Since the desirable condition is referred to, one would naturally think that one would like to attain it; but in fact, one could not. This means the feeling of regret or pity: 'one should have done it'.

## 2. Mae ni--the Cases in Which mae ni Cannot Be Used

So far, we have found that -nai uchi ni has different connotation from mae ni. In the previous section 1, we have discussed the problems of -nai uchi ni. Now we will give some consideration to the expression mae ni. There are some cases that the phrase mae ni cannot be used. For instance:

(8) I'll do my homework before I forget it.

a. \*Wasureru mae ni, shukudai o yatte okoo.

b. Wasurenai uchi ni, shukudai o yatte okoo.

[wasureru: I forget it; shukudai o yatte okoo: I'll do my homework]

As was mentioned above, mae ni represents just a 'before and

after' relationship. For example, the sentence (1a) simply shows the fact 'kaeroo' (let's go back) happens before 'kurakunaru' (it gets dark). The sentence (8), however, does not show just the fact that 'shukudai o yatte okoo' (I'll do my homework) happens before 'wasureru' (I forget it) or that 'wasureru' happens after 'shukudai o yatte okoo'. Although there exists a 'before and after' relationship in (8), it is unnatural to use mae ni in this case. The reason is that the connotation of -nai uchi ni in this situation is so conspicuous as to weaken the simple temporal relationship.

On the other hand, there are some cases when you cannot use -nai uchi ni. Those situations show the purely temporal relationship. For example:

(9) Christmas comes before the New Year comes.

a. Shoogatsu ga kuru mae ni, kurisumasu ga kuru.

b. Shoogatsu ga konai uchi ni, kurisumasu ga kuru.

[shoogatsu ga kuru: the New Year comes, kurisumasu ga kuru: Christmas comes]

The sentence (9b) sounds unnatural, because the situation described here is just the purely temporal relation, and there is usually no implication such as that expressed by -nai uchi ni.

In this section, we examined two cases in which either -nai uchi ni or mae ni can be used, but not both. Most of the examples cited in section 1, (1) through (4), are those in which we can use -nai uchi ni and mae ni interchangeably. Then, how can we differentiate between -nai uchi ni and mae ni in their usage? We will consider this problem in the following section.

### 3. -Nai uchi ni vs. Mae ni

The purpose of this section is to explore the distinction between -nai uchi ni and mae ni. Considering the problem, we will cite the examples again.



relation in which only mae ni can be used; here, the connotation of -nai uchi ni is minimum (virtually zero). In contrast, the very right end represents the case in which only -nai uchi ni can be used. Here, the connotation of -nai uchi ni is maximum, and the temporal relationship still exists but is so slight and weak compared with the connotation of -nai uchi ni.

If we put the examples on the coordinate line, (9) will be at the very left, because it represents only before and after relation, and it cannot normally have any connotation of -nai uchi ni. On the other hand, (8) stands at the very right. For as we mentioned in section 2, in this case the connotation of -nai uchi ni is so conspicuous as to weaken the simple temporal relationship. At the very middle of the coordinate line come the examples (1), (2), and (3), because both the sentences with -nai uchi ni and those with mae ni are perfectly natural. The sentences (5) and (6) will be placed between (9) and (1), (2), (3); for they originally convey the temporal relationship, but it is possible to use -nai uchi ni if we give the particular (special) situation.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the two ways of expressing the English temporal conjunction 'before': mae ni and -nai uchi ni. Mae ni only represents the temporal relationship (before and after relationship). On the other hand, considering the implication of -nai uchi ni, it can be divided into two cases: 'negative→affirmative' and 'affirmative→negative'. The former implies that it is undesirable if one does  $S_2$  after  $S_1$ , and it has the connotation of urgency. The implication of the latter is that one should not have done  $S_2$  before  $S_1$ ; nevertheless one had done  $S_2$ . It has the connotation of pity or regret.

Among the examples given, we found that some of them are expressed with either mae ni or -nai uchi ni, but not both. In

some of them we can use mae ni and -nai uchi ni interchangeably. But the distinction between these expressions is a matter of degree--that is, the balance between the temporal relationship on one hand and the connotation of '-nai uchi ni' on the other.

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## 日本語の時の副詞節——「前に」と「ないうちに」

山本秀樹

本稿では、日本語の時間的前後関係を表す副詞節の中から「 $S_1$ 前に $S_2$ 」と「 $S_1$ ないうちに $S_2$ 」の相違点を考察する。前者は純粹な時間的前後関係を表すのに対し、後者はそれに加えて、ある種の内包的意味を持つ。すなわち、後者は、話者が $S_1$ と $S_2$ の関係において、「 $S_1$ ：否定的状況→ $S_2$ ：肯定的状況」もしくは「 $S_1$ ：肯定的状況→ $S_2$ ：否定的状況」のいずれかでとらえている場合しか自然な文とならない。さらに、 $S_1$ と $S_2$ の両極の状況に対して、ある時間上の境界を定め、「 $S_1$ ：否定→ $S_2$ ：肯定」の場合には、 $S_1$ の否定的状況に直接言及することによって緊迫性を帯び、「 $S_1$ ：肯定→ $S_2$ ：否定」の場合には、 $S_1$ の肯定的状況を直接表現することによって遺憾や後悔の念を暗示することになる。

「ないうちに」は、この種の内包的意味合いを、単純な時間的前後関係に加えて持っているために、英語のbefore, while, lest, nevertheless等によっては等価の内容を表現し尽くせないことを論じる。また、「前に」と「ないうちに」のいずれも可能な場合、「ないうちに」が不自然ないしは不可能な場合（ $S_1$ と $S_2$ が共に、肯定的もしくは否定的な状況の場合や、純粹な時間的前後関係としてしか解釈できない場合）、「前に」が使えない場合（「ないうちに」の内包的意味が顕著な状況）を対照させることで、この2つの表現の相違は、明確な境界をなすものではなく、「前に」が本来的に持つ純粹な時間的前後関係の極と、「ないうちに」が持つ内包的意味の極との間での程度差の問題であることを論じる。