

C: Patterns

■ Sentential Components

The components of sentences that are discussed most often include subject, predicate, supplementary components which accompany the predicate, modifying components, independent components, and conjunctive components in complex sentence structure. In the sentence, *Aa, ame ga futta kara, zannen nagara undōkai ga asu ni enki sareru* ‘Oh, since it rained, the athletic meeting will regrettably be postponed until tomorrow’, *aa* is an independent component, *ame ga futta kara* is a conjunctive component, *undōkai ga* is the subject (here, of the passive construction), *ashita ni* is a supplementary component to *enki suru*, and *zannen nagara* is a modifying component.

Depending on one’s intention, how one classifies the components differs. In school grammar, supplementary components, such as *ashita ni*, are not separated from modifying components; they are both discussed as adverbial modifying components.

Some scholars, such as Mikami Akira, do not recognize the subject, and propose that the subject be broken down into the topic and the nominative case. This is because Japanese verbs do not show agreement with grammatical person of the subject, and because Japanese allows sentences with multi nominative cases, such as *Zō wa hana ga nagai* ‘An elephant has a long nose’ and subject-less sentences, such as *~shiteiru watashi desu* ‘here I am doing ~’, and *Aki danaa*, ‘Ahh, it’s autumn...’.

Others propose that we must establish our own concept of subject gleaned from the observation of certain phenomena, such as the limitations on person with the sentence final form of volition and invitation *~yō*, with private predicates (e.g. *Watashi ga/*Kimi ga/*Kare ga*) *ikō*, ‘I’ll go,’ and *{Watashi wa/*Kimi wa/*Kare wa}* *kanashii* ‘I’m sad’), honorifics, the use of *~jishin*, ‘self’, and the way subjects appear in complex sentence structures.

Semantically, at the core of a sentence there are the predicate and noun arguments that bind with the predicate. To this core, further components that modify by specifying temporal and spatial circumstances, or manner, and so on, are added to complete a sentence. (Please note, however, that it is difficult to determine how essential a nominative argument is. Also, adverbial modification, as in *samuku kanjiru* ‘It feels cold,’ may become semantically essential enough to be qualified as a required component.) The component of the core of the event concept thus established is called “propositional content” or “*kotogara*.” Sometimes complex sentence elements such as time clauses, (e.g., *~suru ya inaya* ‘no sooner than’ and conditional clauses (e.g., *~sureba* ‘if ...’), may be added to the core.

Once one reaches the stage where the independence as a sentence is established, the sentence final forms that express degree of certainty, such as *~ni chigainai* ‘without doubt’ and components of comment and evaluation are appended to the structural components that express the content. Components of comment include those that are related to the act of utterance, such as *shōjiki ni ieba* ‘to be honest’, and ones that show the basis for a judgment, such as *Heya ga kurai kara, kare wa inai* ‘The room is dark, so he’s not there’. These are called “proposition-oriented” components.

When there is no overt form to express certainty at the end of a sentence, it can be construed that predication is the unmarked meaning. This is because the speaker’s attitude is manifested in the fact that the sentence has established its independence.

As for the aspect of communication, there are components that seek attention from the listener, express hesitation, and sentence final forms, such as *ne* which shows the speaker is aware that there is a listener, and so on. Which politeness level to choose from is determined at this stage. These components are called listener-directed components.

The different levels of these components roughly correspond to the degrees of independence in a complex sentence structure and the order in which related morphemes are arranged. However, when we examine individual forms, we cannot stack everything into strata so neatly. There are still many problems to solve: the problems of how to fit tense and negation into place, how to handle grammaticalized lexical forms, and so on. Surface morphological characteristics do not always correspond with their meaning and function in the sentence structure.

● References

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