

■ Aspectual Forms of the Formal Noun System

Sometimes a formal noun collocates at the end of a verbal predicate to define an aspectual situation, as in *Kare wa ryōri o shite iru saichū da* ‘He’s in the middle of cooking’ and *Kare wa hon o yomihajimeta bakari da* ‘He’s just started to read a book.’

Tokoro da and *saichū da* collocate with the *teiru* form, as in *Kare wa sara o aratte iru tokoro da* ‘He’s in the middle of washing dishes,’ to pick out an instant from the ongoing process. They can also specify the maintenance and continuance of a result, as in *Danbō de mado o shimetei ru saichū da* ‘We are keeping the windows shut because the heater is on.’ They are good for delineating the type of state within a specific context.

Tokoro da differs from *saichū da* in that it can be combined with the *teita* form, as in *Sō omotte ita tokoro da* ‘I was just thinking the same thing.’ (*Teita tokoro da* is used to describe the situation objectively.)

When *bakari da* collocates with the *ta* form of a movement (non-stative) verb, as in *Tatta ima, shokuji no junbi o shita bakari da* ‘I have just fixed a meal,’ it expresses the current state of the action having just taken place. Usually there already exists a context in which the point in time is the focus when, as in the example above, the time “immediately after” is picked out. *Bakari da* also approximates the situation right before the action, as in *Kaiten suru bakari ni natteiru* ‘We are ready to open the store any time’ and also expresses what is to happen will be limited to the said situation, as in *kimochi ga aseru bakari de nanimo susunde inai* ‘I feel rushed, but I have made no progress.’

Tokoro da also collocates with a movement predicate. When it collocates with the *ta* form, it expresses the state that is immediately after, as in *Kare wa nihon ni tsuita tokoro da* ‘he just arrived in Japan.’ *Bakari da* and *tokoro da* are used in a similar manner, but *bakari da* is used when time hasn’t lapsed very long after a situation occurs, as in *Kare wa kyonen rainichi shita (bakari desu/?tokoro desu)* ‘He came to Japan just last year’, while *tokoro da* is generally used to express the state immediately after a situation occurs.

Tokoro da may express the supposition of an unreal situation under a hypothetical condition, as in *Mō sukoshide shinu tokoro da* ‘he almost died,’ *Kare ga okuretara oite iku tokoro datta* ‘Had he been late, we would have left without him,’ and may also express a specific situation of the subject, as in *Hannin ga nigeru tokoro o tsukamaeta* ‘we caught the culprit as he tried to escape.’

Ta koto ga aru, which expresses past experience from some time ago, and *ta mono da*, which expresses past habitual actions, are also aspectual forms of the formal noun system.

→アスペクト Aspect (2-G), 最中・ウチニ・アイダ *Saichū, Uchini, Aida* (2-J), コト・ノ・ト
コロ 名詞節 *Koto, No, Tokoro* –Noun Clauses (2-J)

● References

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