Semantic Analysis of the Wa Tautology in Modern Japanese

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ABSTRACT

Japanese boasts a wide range of tautological expressions, some of which carry particular semantic features, by which these tautologies fall into three categories indicated by particles, namely, ハ (pronounced wa), ガ (pronounced ga) and モ (pronounced mo). Based on the semantic differential of the wa tautology, this paper aims at analyzing the intrinsic semantic properties of this category.

KEYWORDS
Tautological expression, particle, semantic flexibility, intrinsic property, emphasis, tautology, tone, category.

CATEGORIES OF TAUTOLOGIES IN JAPANESE

There are a wide range of tautological expressions (トートロジー表現) in Japanese, such as the following sentences:

(1) 基準は基準だ。
(2) 時間は時間だ。
(3) セフィロスもセフィロスだよ。
(4) 昔は昔、今は今。
(5) 遊びは遊びだしかないと。
(6) ペンギンでも鳥は鳥だ。
(7) 負けは負けでもやっぱり横綱だけあって堂々たる戦いぶり（『助詞・助動詞の辞典』）
(8) 三上は三上で、生来の性向が一匹狼であるにもかかわらず、佐久間を自分の唯一。

の師として、出会いの日から最終まで、敬意と感謝をもって接した。（『主語を抹殺した男』）。
(9) 水野エミの件は私にまかせていただけませんか？ことがことだけに、大臣が直接
動くのは危険です。私が泥をかぶります。（『パンドラ』）
(10) 年が年だから、もうそんなことはできないよ。

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時代が時代なら、この本も売れたかもしれないが、今の時代では人間の生き方を問うような本は若い人には読まれない。『日本語文型辞典』
子供も子供だが、親も親だ。
この生徒はいつも教師に口答えばかりして困る。親もすぐ学校にどなりこんでくるし、まったく、親が親なら子も子だ。『日本語文型辞典』
主要テーマが人類の歴史であり、かくも分厚い大著であるため、文系の人によって書かれたものと思われるかもしれない。しかし、著者は理系も理系、カリフォルニア大学ロサンゼルス校医学部教授である。（《銃・病原菌・鉄下》）
そんなことを言う彼も彼だ。
To categorize these tautological expressions, there are two methods:
i To categorize by connective particles:
① 理由節 だから(だし、なので、なもので、だけに)
② 並列節 (sometimes「で」is omitted), だが(だけど)
③ 仮定節 なら、でも
④ 連体修飾節
ii To categorize by particles of the tautological part:
② ハ类 wa category X1はX2だ
② ガ类 ga category X1がX2だ
③ モ类 mo category X1もX2だ
Subdivision of next step is as follows:
i To categorize by connective particles:
① 理由節
[tautological part]だから(だし・なので・なもので、だけに)[non-tautological part]並列節
[tautological part]で(Sometimes「で」is omitted)[Non-tautological part]
[tautological part]で[tautological part]
[tautological part]だが(だけど)[tautological part]
② 仮定節
[tautological part]なら[non-tautological part]
[tautological part]なら[tautological part]
[tautological part]でも[non-tautological part]
[non-tautological part]でも[tautological part]
③ 連体修飾節
[non-tautological part][tautological part]
To categorize by the particle of the tautological part:
ハ类 wa category
① ～X1はX2(だ)
② X1はX2(で)、Y1はY2(だ)
③ X1はX2でも～
③ X1はX2で～
Through careful observation of the above two categories, we can see that under the i tautology, the semantic features of the sentences in the same category is not the same, and the similarity and relevance cannot be found. For example, the following two sentences that belong to the "理由節" category with the same noun in the tautological parts are greatly different semantically.

(16) 奥さんは奥さんだから、よっぽどひどくなければ大目に見てあげてください。(After all your wife is your wife. Be tolerant if she doesn’t go too far.)
(17) 奥さんが奥さんだから、離婚したのも不思議ではない。(His wife has a such a bad temper. No wonder he divorced her.)

In addition, the example sentences (12) and (13) are distinctly different in the category of i, but they are similar in meaning. Examples (10) and (11) are the same.

However, the category of ii is comparatively much regular. For example, the second X in the example sentences (2), (10) and (11) which are all linked with “ga”, all have property or nature (very late, at an old age, the era when young people still like thinking). In the several types of sentences linked with “mo”, except that (14) is slightly different in meaning, (12) (13) (15) have the same semantic structure, all making negative comment on two things in couple. In this way, in the classification of ii, the small types belonging to the same category are similar in the meaning. Therefore, this paper uses classification ii. And the following content of this paper is to discuss the semantic features and common points of the tautologies connected with “wa”.

**TAUTOLOGIES AND CONSTANT TRUE FORMULA**

Besides the meaning “repeated the same thing”, the word “tautology” has a logical meaning, that is constant true formula. One of the biggest reasons why the concept of constant truth is moved to linguistics is that English "X is X" is not only similar to constant true formula in form, but also has a common element semantically, because be verb has the function of equaling two things, the same as "=" in the constant true formula "X = X". According to logic, constant true formula is a kind of thing that does not have any meaning, whose amount of information is zero. The eel sentence (ウナギ text) debate in modern Japanese tells us that the language can not be analyzed with logic, and the language is not equivalent to logic. So it is of no significance to use constant true formula that has no information in logic to analyze tautologies. It can be seen from the following content that among the tautologies in Japanese, there is only one type, whose amount of information is zero, closest to constant true formula, and
the amount of information is not completely zero, because it also carries modality (モダリティ). In Section 6 of this paper the modality of such kind of tautologies will be analyzed.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH MODAL ADVERBS

There is a deep relationship between ハ tautology and modal adverbs; in fact in many cases it will appear with the modal adverb at the same time. For example, the example sentence (6) can be added to by the adverb "やはり" and the whole meaning is almost unchanged. The following examples are also the same:

(6a)ペンギンでも鳥はやはり鳥だ。
(18)そんなやつでも命はやはり命だ。
(19)えらくても子供はしょうせん子供だ。
(20)山田はあいかわらず山田だね。
(21)大型株はさすがに大型株だ. 少々売りがでても変動がすくない.

(Wierzbicka) (1987) elaborated on the relationship between tautologies and inner attitude as follows:

According to Levinson (124), among others, a sentence like Boys are boys is NECESSARILY true. I dispute the validity of this statement, which reflects a mistaken belief that the sentence under discussion is factual. It is clearly not: it expresses a certain attitude, and attitudes can hardly be called ‘true’ or ‘false’. Roughly speaking, it is a call for tolerance, an injunction; and it is no more ‘true’ than the Ten Commandments, or than maxims like Time is money or The early bird gets the worm.

Therefore, it can be seen that wa tautologies are in essence an expressive forms of tones.

SEMANTIC ELASTICITY AND THE CATEGORY DIFFERENTIATION OF TAUTOLOGIES

The form of a language is the way of expressing the meaning, with great flexibility and elasticity. So the meaning expressed in the language is variable. Higuchi (1988) referred to Sato (1986) and made the following exposition:

そもそも「字義的レベルで捉えられる意味」とはどういったものであろうか. それは文脈なしに捉えられるものだというが, 文脈なしには意味は可能性でしかなく, 柔軟性を持つ意味特性的集合体として存在するのみである. 慣用表現や文脈なしに与えられた例文などに感じられる意味は, その慣用化された, ないしは考えられるコンテクストから想定されたものに過ぎない.

It indicates that even the simplest “X1はX2だ” in form can mean differently due to the context.

First, let’s compare the following sentences:

(22)戦争は戦争だ.
(23)ルールはルールだ.
(24)結婚は結婚よ.
The sentences above are all simplest tautologies in form, but their associable contexts are not identical. For example, (22) and (23) can be associated with such sentences as “どんなに悲しんでいても戦争は戦争だ”， “君が納得しなくてもルールはルールだ”， or such contexts as “確かに戦争で多くの無罪の人が死んでもした。しかし、戦争は戦争だ。しかたがないことだ。” “確かに君のいうところ、このルールは納得がいかないところが多い。しかし、ルールはルールだ。嫌いでも従うしかいない。”

And the other three sentences can be associated with the same sentences as the former two, but they can also be associated with other different sentences. For instance, it is easy to be associated with the following situations:

(24a)恋愛は恋愛、結婚は結婚よ。
(25a)兄さんは兄さん、私は私です。(夏目漱石『虞美人草』) (Natsume Soseki “Gubijins”) と
(26a)それとこれとは、別だわ。恩は恩、貸しは貸し。あたしはそういう主義なの。(源氏鶏太)

It can be seen that (24), (25) and (26) can become sentences different from (22) and (23) semantically. Sayama (1994) argues that the meaning of a tautology in essence has a great relationship with the nature of the noun X itself. Therefore, after investigating the noun X in tautologies, it is considered that such sentences as "ゴミはゴミだ” is easier to accept (容認度が高い) in Japanese, while “空は空だ” is more difficult to accept (容認度が低い) in Japanese. But in the light of the elasticity of linguistic meaning and the cases of the above sentences, this paper holds that the semantic nature of a tautology does not have much to do with the nature of the noun X itself. For example, complete “空は空だ” into a complex sentence, and it is much easier to accept as Japanese:

(27)多少濁っていても空は空だ。

Similarly, the two sentences (22) and (23) can also be changed to sentences which have the same semantic category as (24a), (25a) and (26a). For example, in the following context:

(22a)戦争は戦争、和平交渉は和平交渉。戦争を和平交渉の手段の一つにするとはまったく呆れた話だ。
(23a)ルールはルール、法律は法律。ルールを破っても法律違反にはならないから、心配するな。

It can be seen that the semantic categories of tautologies can be differentiated.

SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF TWO CATEGORIES OF TAUTOLOGIES

In the previous section, the differentiation of two categories of wa tautologies has been discussed. The semantic features of these two categories will be specifically analyzed in this section.

Higuchi (1988) divides these two different tautologies into "TOKEN-TOKEN category" and "TYPE-TYPE category". The former is equivalent to (24a) ~ (26a) of the example sentences, namely, the category ② in this paper, while the latter is
equivalent to (27), that is, the category ①. For the former, Higuchi believes that it is the emphasis of the character and identity, indicating people’s understanding of a thing’s unique character and individual concept. For the latter, Higuchi argues that what the noun X refers to is not a typical of X, but a tiny part of the thing’s attributes that X can flexibly refer to in all different situations.

Higuchi’s argument for the latter is slightly abstract, and for the differences between the two, the most clear should be the induction of Sakahara (2002). Sakahara adopted the concept of classification and category (カテゴリー), making the following induction:

タイプ①(~X1はX2(だ))は「すべてのXはXだ」(差異否定の意味)
タイプ②(X1はX2(で), Y1はY2(だ))は「Xをそれと類似したYとはっきり区別せよ」(差異強調の意味)

Sakahara’s induction is very clear. For the category ①, he denies the existence of the differences, that is, no matter how X is not like X, it still belongs to the category of the things of category X; and for category ②, he emphasizes the differences between the two things, that is, although X and Y belong to the same category, it is not about recognizing two things at the level of cognition, but refusing to see the two things equally from the individual details of the members of the same category, emphasizing the differences.

Although Sakahara’s induction and interpretation is very clear, it is only limited to the explanation of the differences between them, and there are other defects in Sakahara's paper. Sakahara holds that for the two things of originally different nature, that is, the things that originally do not belong to any of the same category, category ② is very strange to use. For example, the following sentence:

(28) ビールはビール、言語学は言語学だ.

Indeed, in the absence of a specific context and the lack of any language environment, this sentence does make people feel very weird. But if the speaker is a linguist who loves beer, and he has said “言語学はビールみたいに最高にいいものだ” before this, the sentence (28) does not seem to be unnatural at all. In this context, the following dialogues can be made:

(29) A「このビールは最高だな。」
    B「そう?」

A「ああ、私の好きな言語学もこのビールみたいに最高にいいものだよ」
    B「なんというたとえだ。ビールはビール、言語学は言語学でしょう」

So set, then, the category that Sakahara used can be formed. By this time, beer and linguistics have a common attribute "that the speaker A loves", and this common attribute makes them belong to the same category, while B emphasizes their differences from the details of individual members of the same category, refusing to treat the two things equally.

It can be seen that even the category that emphasizes the distinction, still has a prerequisite of one category, which shows that the two things are in common, and the common ground is generally a fundamental attribute or nature and it unifies two different things in the same category in the deep level or essentially. In this way, Sakahara and Higuchi’s points of view can be combined to make category ① and
category ② unified in the essential sense. It can be concluded that ハ tautologies are intended to express or emphasize the speaker’s subjective cognition of X through the repetition of the same noun, and the cognition is: the thing that the noun X refers to has certain fundamental nature, character, or attribute in nature that shows that it must undoubtedly be the thing X, and that this is an unshakable fact.

In other previous studies, there are similar key words in the discussion and interpretation to support this. For example, Hirai (1998) has collated the studies of Wierzbicka (1987) and Fraser (1988) on English tautologies. In these collated meaning description, there are the following important common points:

W それが名詞句の指示対象の特性であり、変わるところはないと——「Xはそういうもの(x)だ」ということを——主張している。

F 話者は自分の認識の裏付けはXの自己同一性、あるいは不変化性にあると——「Xはそういうもの(x)だ」ということを——主張している。

And Moriyama (1989) also has similar elaboration like "identity" and "attribute". From the underlined conclusion above, we can see that although ハ tautologies can produce meaning differentiation, they are essentially the same sentence pattern.

THE TAUROTOLGY CLOSEST TO CONSTANT TRUE FORMULA

When he categorizes tautologies, Moriyama (1989) names one category “記号レベルのもの”, which is considered the type closest to constant true formula. Kubo (1992) and Sakahara (2002) give an example of such tautology respectively:

(30)「セクハラ」ってなーに? ——「セクハラ」は「セクハラ」だよ。
(31)子供:姦淫ってなに?
母親:姦淫は姦淫。
子供はそんなことは知らない。

These two examples are obviously different from previous category ① and category ②. The above two examples are called “説明拒否の用法” “記述拒否” by Kubo and Sakahara. Semantically, it does not seem to make any sense, because for the listener, this is a meaningless repetition that does not make any explanation, namely, like constant true formula, the amount of information being zero. But even so, it is not exactly the same as constant true formula, because it still has tone itself; though the information is zero, the tone is not zero. It has a tone that "children do not need to know the meaning of these words", or the speaker thought that these words were indecent and further explanation would have a negative impact, so he indirectly expressed his rejection. Of course, there is different tone in other situation. For example, in the exchanges of different culture like the short message between Japanese and international students:

(32) Japanese: ウフフ。
   International student: ウフフってなに?
   Japanese: ウフフはウフフよ。

In this case, it indicates the speaker’s mood of thinking that the three pseudonyms "ウフフ" were hard to explain so he simply gave up the interpretation.

Therefore, there is no tautology truly equivalent to constant true formula. It is more or less has other information. And wa tautologies contain a variety of tones, which also carry information.
CONCLUSION

This paper categorizes tautologies in Japanese by the particles of the tautological part and makes semantic analysis and exposition of intrinsic unity of the most common two categories (category ① and category ②) of wa tautology. However, the other wa categories, especially category ④, have a more complex meaning structure, which has been beyond the scope of this paper. The analysis of the semantic features of the category ③ and the category ④ and how to unify it with other categories, as well as the respective characteristics of the tautologies of ga and mo categories will be discussed in the future paper.

REFERENCES