SPEAKER'S PERSPECTIVE IN LANGUAGE

Shoichi Iwasaki

0. INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces the concept of "speaker's perspective" and shows how it influences grammar and discourse. After defining "speaker's perspective," I will draw examples from selected languages to support my claim. Then I will discuss how this concept explains the use of the non - past tense form which points to past time in Japanese narratives.

1. SPEAKER'S PERSPECTIVE

"Speaker's perspective" is one of three types of subjectivity observed in language (Iwasaki 1988). The other two types of subjectivity are identified as "speaker's attitude" towards the information he conveys (e.g., epithets) and "point of view" or "empathy" (cf. Kuno 1987)

"Speaker's perspective" is regulated by a cognitive principle called the perspective principle and is defined as follows.

(1) Perspective Principle
A speaker views "primary perspective" and "secondary perspective" situations differently.

"Primary perspective" situations are situations in which the speaker is involved. Hence the speaker plays the double role of "reporter" of and "participant" in these situations. "Secondary perspective" situations, on the other hand, refer to situations in which the speaker is not a participant. Thus, when describing a secondary perspective situation, the speaker is simply a reporter. It is my claim that grammar and discourse are influenced by the Perspective Principle.

The difference between primary and secondary perspectives also represents a difference in the degree of "information accessibility." This scalar concept refers to how direct the speaker's relation is to the information he is conveying. In a primary perspective clause, the information accessibility is high because the speaker himself is a participant (i.e., a direct experiencer). It is lower for a secondary perspective clause because the speaker is outside the situation under description (i.e., an indirect experiencer). Information accessibility will be referred to from time to time throughout this discussion.

Perspective differences affect grammar across languages systematically in at least two ways. First, morphological codings for primary and secondary perspectives are distinguished in some languages. Also, when transitivity differences distinguish perspectives, higher transitivity forms are always employed to indicate primary perspective. Second, more levels of information accessibility can be expressed within primary perspective than secondary perspective, but more levels can never be expressed in secondary perspective than primary perspective. I will discuss each point below.

2. PERSPECTIVE CODINGS

Japanese predicates which describe internal states, including sensations, emotions, and intentions are clear cases of different morphological patterns regulated by Principle (1). These predicates code the difference between primary and secondary perspective situations most clearly because internal states are not observable from outside. Consider the difference in predicate forms in (2) and (3).

(2) boku wa   kanashii. [1]
    I   TOP sad:NPT

    I am sad.

(3) jon   wa   kanashi - gatte - iru. [2]
       John TOP sad-show sigh of-SAT:NPT

John is sad.

(2) is a primary perspective sentence because the speaker is the experiencer of the emotion ' sadness '. In this case, the adjective form of ' sad ' is used. On the other hand, if a sentence is in secondary perspective as (3), the predicate must be modified to show that the sentence reports an indirectly observed situation.

The influence of perspective is not restricted to Japanese but is observed in other languages as well. In Lhasa Tibetan and other related dialects and languages, volitionality is indicated morphologically only in primary perspective sentences. Newari is one such language. (DeLancy 1987: 63 - 4)

(4) na - s deb der bźag-pa-yin.
       I-ERG book there put-PERF/VOL.

I put the book there.

(5) *kho-s   deb   der   bźag-pa-yin.
       he-ERG book there put-PERF/VOL.

He put the book there.

The (perfective) volitional marker *pa-yin* cannot be used in a secondary perspective sentence such as (5). For (5), the simple perfective marker *son* must be used instead. DeLancy's explanation for the distribution of the volitional marker perfectly coincides with my explanation. He says: " the reason for (the restriction of volitionality marking) to clauses with first person actors is that one can have direct knowledge of the volitionality or non-volitionality only of one's own acts; volitionality is a mental state not observable by others. " (p. 64).

Transitivity split between perspectives can be observed in some ergative languages which show a split in the case marking pattern according to noun phrase referents. Dyirbal is an example of a language of this type. In this language, primary perspective situations are always coded in the nominative-accusative pattern, and secondary perspective situations are always coded in the ergative-absolutive pattern (Comrie 1981:124, Dixon 1979:87). (Note there is no split language which exhibits the opposite pattern.)

Another perspective difference shows up in Japanese predicates of mental activities. Notice in the following examples, the more transitive form codes primary perspective situations and the less transitive form (a stativized form) codes secondary perspective situations.

(6) boku wa   soo omou.
       I   TOP so think:NPT

I think so.

(7) jon   wa   soo omotte-iru.
       John TOP so think-STA:NPT

John thinks so

It is not accidental that the more transitive form is employed to code primary perspective (or higher information accessibility). Actually, this is related to a phenomenon observed in some languages that more transitive clauses code volitional (or controlled) actions such as " killing a tiger " and less transitive clauses code non - volitional (or non - controlled) actions such as " falling asleep ". [3] This is because volitional acts are more " action-like " actions than non - volitional acts. (Hopper and Thompson 1980, DeLancy 1987). From the actor's point of view, since he is a more involved participant in a volitional action, he has higher information accessibility. To put it differently, since a volitional (or controlled) action entails the actor's initiation of the action, his awareness of the action is higher (i.e., high information accessibility). On the other hand, the actor has only a lower degree of information accessibility for non - volitional, non - controlled actions. This establishes the association of higher transitivity and higher information accessibility. Thus, it is understandable why primary perspective (higher information accessibility) is associated with higher transitivity features.

To summarize so far, there is a pattern which codes primary and secondary perspective situations differently. This is a reflection of an information accessibility difference. When a transitivity difference is associated with a perspective difference, more transitive features code the primary perspective and less transitive features the secondary perspective. In the next section, I will discuss levels of information accessibility observed in primary perspective.

3. LEVELS OF INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY

In the previous section, I showed the differentiation in coding for the two types of perspective. In this section, I will show that there can be more

levels of information accessibility within the primary perspective but not in the secondary one. This fact supports the existence of the cognitive principle which I call the Perspective Principle.

Though there are languages in which volitionality is distinguished both in primary and secondary perspective sentences, there are also languages in which it is marked only in primary perspective sentences. There are no languages, however, in which volitionality is only marked in secondary sentences.

The following examples, (8) and (9), show that primary perspective situations can be expressed in two levels of control (or information accessibility) in Japanese.

(8) boku wa yama o mita.
I TOP mountain ACC look at:PST

I looked at the mountain.

(9) boku ni wa yama ga mieta.
I DAT TOP NOM see:PST

I saw a mountain.

There is no counterpart of (9), a level of lower information accessibility, in a secondary perspective situation as shown in the next examples.

(10) jon wa yama o mita.
John TOP mountain ACC see:PST

John looked at the mountain.

(11) *jon ni wa yama ga mieta.
John DAT TOP NOM see:PST

John saw a mountain.

Notice also that when the distinction is marked in primary perspective, a volitional (or controlled) action is expressed with a transitive verb with accusative marking on the noun, *yama* 'mountain,' while a non - volitional (non - controlled) action is marked with an intransitive verb with nominative marking on the same noun.

Tibetan shows a parallel case: more levels of information accessibility are only possible for primary perspective situations. The following examples are from (Chamdo) Tibetan. (Iwasaki 1985).

(12) ŋe tš'eraŋ la ñen dzin yin.
I:ERG you DAT listen FUT AUX

I will listen to you.

(13) ŋa ñop tšin re.
I:ABS fall asleep FUT AUX.

I will fall asleep.

In the future tense, the two different auxiliaries (*yin* and *re*) appear for controlled and non - controlled actions for primary perspective situations. This distinction is neutralized in secondary perspective situations as shown in the next examples.

(14) k'oŋ ŋa la ñen dzin re.
he:ABS I DAT listen FUT AUX.

He will listen to me.

(15) k'oŋ ñop tšin re.
he:ABS fall asleep FUT AUX.

He will fall asleep.

The reason why primary perspective situations allow more levels of information accessibility is that the speaker can distinguish different internal states of his own. Whether or not a third person has the intention to control an action, a speaker as an outside observer cannot penetrate the third person's mind.

Some " fluid S marking " languages (Dixon 1979) mark first person S (i.e., subject of an intransitive clause) with the ergative case if S represents a controlling agent of an event and with the absolutive case if S represents a non - controlling agent. Bats (Comrie 1981:53 - 4) and Spoken Tibetan (Chang and Chang 1980) are said to be such languages.

A similar case can be found in Yidin (North Queensland) which can distinguish controlled and non - controlled actions for primary perspective situations only. The following examples are from Dixon (1977:283 - 4).

(16) ŋayu gunda :dinu
I:NOM cut SFX:PST

I cut myself (on purpose)

(17) ŋanan gunda :dinu
I:ACC cut SFX:PST

I cut myself (accidentally)

The Yidin case is interesting since the " control " marking in primary perspective is a consequence of split ergativity and the suffix -:di-n. Example (16) is a reflexive sentence signaled by the -:di-n suffix and the patient noun phrase is marked with nominative. Example (17) is a transitive sentence with an (unspecified) inanimate agent (e.g., an ax), which is also signaled by the same suffix and the patient is marked with the accusative. Since third person patients in secondary perspective cases are marked with the absolutive, no distinction can be made.

The linguistic phenomena which I have mentioned from different languages are often accounted for by appealing to some version of the animacy hierarchy (cf. Silverstein 1976.) However, many phenomena described by the animacy hierarchy can in fact be described by the distinction between the speech act participants [4] and human third person (Comrie 1981 : 179, 186 - 7, 188; DeLancy 1981:639, 643). This distinction is indeed the distinction between primary and secondary perspectives. In other words, the speaker's experience is qualitatively different between primary and secondary perspective situations. Some languages recognize these cognitively different kinds of information and code them differently.

I pointed out in this section that it is a natural consequence of the Perspective Principle that more levels of volitionality or information accessibility are found in primary perspective. We have seen perspective phenomena which have already been grammaticized in language. In the next section, we will turn our attention to perspective phenomena observed in discourse. Further, this concept is essential to explain a certain discourse phenomenon in Japanese: tense form variation in first person narratives which depict past events. We will now turn our attention to this discourse phenomenon.

4. TENSE FORM VARIATION IN NARRATIVES

The concept of speaker's perspective explains the use of non - past tense forms which are otherwise puzzling in Japanese narratives. Szatrowski (1985a, 1985b) and Iwasaki (1988) find a systematic appearance of non - past tense forms in past narratives. Szatrowski describes this phenomena as a participant tracking device because the past tense form usually appears with first person subjects and non - past tense forms with third person subjects. However, I attribute the variation of tense forms to a perspective difference. I will present a portion of narrative from a data base which consists of sixteen first person narratives comprising approximately 1,200 clauses.

The speaker of the following narrative explains how she got on a plane with a ticket she had bought using her friend's ID card. I use small bold face for non - past tense forms and LARGE BOLD FACE for past tense forms both in the Japanese original and in the free English translation. In the Japanese transcript only clauses with tensed predicates are indicated

and tenseless non - finite clauses are omitted since they are irrelevant for the present discussion. In the English translation, however, the omitted clauses are inserted for clarity.

(18)
1　chekkuin no kauntaa no hito　　ga　　ne,
　　check-in LK counter LK person NOM EX

　　a kawatta namae da ne nante yuu wake.
　　oh rare　　name　COP EX SOF say SE

(2

(3

4　mo rosheriinii nan - te YUTTA-n da kedomo.
　　EM Rocheriinii SOF　say:PST-SE though

5　kono　　hen　hikitsutte - ru　　　kara
　　this　　area　tense - STA:NPT　because
　　zenzen　dekinai　　　　　　wake.
　　at all　　can : NEG:NPT　　SE

(6

(7

8　nani-jin　　　　　nante kiku　　wake
　　what nationality like　ask:NPT　SE

9　de　ne moshi tai - jin　　wa　motto iro
　　and Ex if　　Thai people Top more color
　　ga　　kuroi-n
　　NOM　black-SE

　　ja-nai　　　ka kikaretara　　　komaru　naa
　　COP-NEG　QU ask:PSS:CON　in-trouble Ex

　　to　　OMOTTA　　　no.
　　QT　think : PST　　　SE

(10

11　yatto NOTTA　　no.
　　finally get on:PST SE

　　1　The check-in counter clerk said it's an interesting name.
　(2　I said yes.)
　(3　He asked how it was pronounced.)
　4　I SAID " Rocheriinii. "
　5　I couldn't pronounce it because my cheek was tense.
　(6　I had to say it three times.)
　(7　He said, " What? Say it again. ")
　8　He asked me what nationality I was.
　9　And I THOUGHT I would be in trouble if I was asked if Thais were darker.
　(10　But I wasn't asked that.)
　11　I finally GOT ON the plane.

Table 1 summarizes the identity of the subject and the tense form in each clause.

[TABLE 1]

Line #	Referent of Subject	Tense Form
1	check-in counter clerk	Non-past
4	speaker	Past
5	speaker	Non-past
8	check-in counter clerk	Non-past
9	speaker	Past
11	speaker	Past

Except clause 5, to which I will return shortly, past tense forms appear consistently with the subject whose referent is the speaker (abbreviated as 1S henceforth), while non - past tense is used with subjects whose referent is the third person (abbreviated as 3S henceforth). This pattern is rather regular across the sixteen different narratives analyzed. See Table 2.

[TABLE 2]

	PAST TENSE FORM	NON - PAST TENSE FORM	TOTAL
1S	169 (78.6%)	46 (21.1%)	215 (100%)
3S	49 (36.0%)	87 (64.0%)	136 (100%)

In the data, past tense is the norm (78.6%) when the subject is 1S. Conversely, it is the non - past tense form which appears normally (64.0%) with 3S.

Szatrowski (1985a, 1985b) proposes that the tense forms are used to keep track of the referent of the subject. However, this explanation does not account for the association of a particular tense form and subject reference. Speaker's perspective can explain not only why clauses with different subject referents are coded differently but also why 1S is associated with past tense forms and 3S with non - past tense forms.

As explained in a previous section, primary perspective is marked with more transitive morphology than secondary perspective when transitivity marks such a difference. This is a consequence of primary perspective for which a speaker has higher information accessibility. Between past and non - past tense forms, the past tense form is more transitive than the non - past tense form, since past tense forms canonically describe definite and realis events while non - past tense forms describe indefinite and irrealis events. The Transitivity Hypothesis of Hopper and Thompson (1980) clearly predicts that past tense forms are associated with higher transitivity than non - past tense forms.

This further explains why clause 5 in the excerpt examined is marked with a non - past tense form despite its first person subject. This clause has a negative irrealis predicate. That is, although the referent of the subject is the speaker, the speaker did not actually perform the act. Hence information accessibility is lower. Participant tracking motivation for the use of different tense forms encounters difficulty in such cases. In fact, many of the apparent exceptions which are observed in the data (see Table 2) can be explained by such discrepancies in the in-

formation accessibility.

To summarize, tense form variation observed in Japanese narrative is due to information accessibility differences. When information accessibility is higher, as in the case of primary perspective, a more transitive variety of tense form, i.e., the past form, is employed, and when information accessibility is lower, as in the case of secondary perspective or the irrealis case, a less transitive form, i.e., the non-past form, is employed.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper has introduced the notion of speaker's perspective which is manifested grammatically across languages. Speaker's perspective is based on a cognitive principle and is influenced by the degree of accessibility which the speaker can claim to have. A higher degree of information accessibility may be expressed with a form of higher transitivity and a lower degree may be expressed with a form of lower transitivity. Perspective difference is also observed at the level of discourse. Narratives especially which describe the speaker's experience in the past show a clear division of perspective differences. It is fruitful to investigate discourse and grammar from this new perspective.

NOTES

1. Abbreviations used in this paper are:

ABS	(absolutive)	NPT	(non-past)
ACC	(accusative)	PERF	(perfect)
AUX	(auxiliary)	PSS	(passive)
CON	(conditional)	PST	(past)
COP	(copula)	QT	(quotative)
DAT	(dative)	QU	(question)
EM	(emphatic word)	SE	(sentence extension)
ERG	(ergative)	SFX	(suffix)
EX	(external information)	SOF	(softening word)
FUT	(future)	STA	(stative)
INT	(intransitive)	TRA	(transitive)
LK	(linker)	TOP	(topic)
NEG	(negative)	VOL	(volitional)
NOM	(nominative)		

2. The language under discussion in this paper is a kind of language which Kuroda (1973) characterizes as " reportive " style. In " non-reportive " style which is employed in certain types of novel, sentences such as (3) are permissible.

3. For example, Cupeno markers for volitional and non-volitional verbs and related to transitive (or causative) and intransitive (or passive) markers in other Uto-Aztecan languages (Hill 1969). In Eastern Pomo (McLendon 1978) and Lakota (e.g., Van Valin 1977), volitional acts are expressed with an agentive pronoun while non-verbal acts are expressed with a non-agentive pronoun.

4. Speech event participants are speaker and hearer, which are grammatically coded first and second person pronouns, respectively. I will not discuss the case of second person pronoun in this paper. See Iwasaki (1988) for a discussion.

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