
Essence of the Sentence:

On the Predicative Function, Modality and Speech Act

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The reason why communicative acts in natural language are segmented into sentences is not quite clear, but we can speculate that there is a kind of alteration or trade-off between data processing and their storage in the memory.

G. v. Gabelentz, in his *Linguistics (Sprachwissenschaft)*, 1891), concludes that the sentence is not the biggest linguistic unit but rather the smallest of those which are capable of independent existence.

Since antiquity, “sentence” has been very difficult to define, e.g. J. Ries in his book *What is a Sentence? (Was ist ein Satz ?)*, 1931¹) offers 141 definitions.

On the other hand, the concept of the sentence is still well-accepted and intuitively well-understood; it is certainly more intelligible to a common language user than the so-called modern linguistic terms, like “subjectivity”, “grammaticalization” or “modality”.

Judged from the etymology, the concept of the “sentence” in Chinese and Japanese tradition and the corresponding concept in the European tradition are very different. Shirakawa Shizuka’s dictionaries show that the Chinese pictographic character 文 (WEN, the Sino-Japanese version of reading is BUN or MON) was originally an aesthetic term referring to a “tattoo”, ornament or decoration, but already in its usage in the historical chronicle *Kojiki* it refers preferably to an idealized, well-arranged graphic expression.

The Greek word “lógos” refers to a principle, reflection or idea, and only in the second instance to a word, utterance or sentence, and the Latin “sententia” refers first to an emotion, impression or assumption, and only in the second instance to a quotation, proverb, judgment or a sentence, also in its juridical and linguistic usage.²

Aristotle

In the search for the sources of traditional ideas, we shall first go back to Aristotle’s concept of the sentence. In his *Analytica I*, Aristotle preferred reason and extra-linguistic truth to emotional or aesthetic functions. In his speculative logic, linguistic expressions reflect somehow the objective external world and are evaluated according to whether they reflect it truthfully and correctly.

Aristotle observes the basic properties of the sentence as follows: 1) semantic completeness,

1 Taussig & Taussig, Prag. Another relevant book is also J. Ries (1928) *Was ist Syntax*. Taussig & Taussig. Prag.

2 Varro, the first grammarian of Latin, living cca. in the first century B.C. still knew only the term “oratio” (“speech”), meaning “phrase”, “clause” or “sentence” without distinction.

2) regular grammar-based composition from the language-specific components, 3) accessibility to an objective logical and semantic evaluation of extensional and intensional adequacy.

According to Aristotle: “First we must define the terms noun and verb, then the terms denial and affirmation, then proposition and sentence”³ (R. Mc. Keon (transl.): *De interpretatione* 1, p. 40) ...

“A sentence (*lógos*) is a significant portion of speech, some parts of which have an independent meaning ...” (Mc. Keon, *De interpretatione* 4, p. 41) [“... even when they are separated from the other parts”, transl. from the Greek original, K. F.].

“[However, such a part is only an “expression” (*frásis*, i.e., a phrase as an isolated utterance of a constituent), not a positive affirmation (*katáfasis*), of its content”, transl. K. F.]...

And further: “Every sentence has meaning.... Yet every sentence is not a proposition; only such are propositions that have in them either truth or falsity. Thus a prayer is a sentence, but is neither true or false ... the investigation of the others belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or of poetry ... (Mc. Keon, *De interpretatione* 5, p. 41) [“... others are one only by conjunction”, transl. K. F.].

“Let us moreover consent to call a noun or a verb an expression only, and not a proposition, since it is not possible for a man to speak in this way when he is expressing something, in such a way as to make a statement, whether his utterance is an answer to a question or an act of his own initiation” (McKeon, *De interpretatione* 5, p. 42).

We can conclude that one of the basic features of the sentence is the occurrence of positive or negative polar modality, and in case of a judgement also the evaluation of its truthfulness.

The (internal) unity of the proposition with Aristotle is supported by the *rhéma* (*rheme*=“*what is said*”, i.e., verb, the “focus”, or also the “predicate”, the “predicative phrase”, etc.), or by the concatenation of the *rhéma* with *onoma* (“noun”, “noun phrase”, corresponding to the Prague School’s term “theme”, i.e., the “topic”, the “subject”, the “subject phrase”, etc.).

According to Aristotle: “A simple proposition is a statement, with meaning, as to the presence of something in a subject, or its absence, in the present, past, or future, according to the divisions of time” (McKeon, *ibid.*, pp. 41–42).

As to the concept of *onoma*, Aristotle points out that “we mean a sound [obviously, a fluent utterance of sounds. K. F.], significant by convention, which has no reference to time, and of which no part is significant apart from the rest.

In the noun “Fairsteed”, the part “steed” has no significance in and by itself.... Yet there is a difference between simple and composite nouns; for in the former the part is in no way significant, in the latter it contributes to the meaning of the whole, although it has not an independent meaning.

Thus in the word “pirate-boat” the word “boat” has no meaning except as part of the whole word...⁴

This means that another basic feature, noted by Aristotle, is the correct grammatical compositeness of the sentence from its components.

Consequently, for Aristotle it is important whether the sentence expresses the external world. The composition of the sentence from its constituents is relevant only as a secondary distinctive feature.

3 Aristoteles: *Texte zur Logik. Elemente der aristotelischen Logik. Griechisch und Deutsch*, B. 11 Rowohlt 1967. English transl. R. Mc. Keon (1941) *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Random House. Cf. also W. D. Ross (1980) *Aristotle’s Prior and Posterior Analytics*. Garland, New York & London. 日本語訳の参照文献：山本光雄他訳 (1971). 岩波書店.

4 He adds: “The limitation ‘by convention’ was introduced because nothing is by nature a noun or a name, —it is only so when it becomes a symbol; inarticulate sounds, such as those which brutes [animals] produce, are significant, but none of these constitutes a noun.”

1. Modality

Classic Philosophy and Modality

Aristotle was not concerned with linguistic mood as such. However, we find the verb mood with Dionysios Thrax of Alexandria, who lived from the second to the first century B.C. He distinguished five moods (*modi*): *indicativus*, *imperativus*, *optativus*, *subiunctivus* and *infinitivus*.⁵

These verb moods are both morphologically and semantically tied to concrete verb forms, and can never operate as pure expressions of sentence modality:

In the sixth century, Priscianus, in his *Foundations of the Latin Language* (*Institutiones linguae Latinae*), added also the term “finite mood (*modus finitus*)”, as a counterpart of the infinitive forms.

The two centuries before Priscianus wrote his grammar are connected with the activities of St. Augustine, who lived in the fourth and fifth century, and with Boethius, who was active in the fifth century. These two philosophers of the new Christian era imported the metaphysical and subjective Christian concept of an omnipotent God into the system of objective modalities, and thus produced the epochal link between the objective modalities and their subjective interpretation.

The scholastic tradition was connected with Petrus Abelard, who was active in the eleventh and twelfth century. In his *Logic for Beginners* (*Logica ingredientibus*, before 1121), Abelard, revisiting Aristotle and Boethius, distinguished two moods: *modus de dicto* (the mood, concerning the content of the judgment), as in the sentence “It is possible that Jean is running”, and *modus de re* (i.e. the mood, concerning properties of a person, animal or thing in the content of the sentence, as in the case of the sentence “Jean can run”).

The novelty of the *modus de re* was that not only the omnipotent God, but also a man with his arbitrary actions could now become the “modal subject”, i.e., the source of the modality.

Descartes

R. Descartes (1596–1650) tried to examine logical modality in the framework of a set of possible worlds. In his *Principles of Philosophy* (*Principia philosophiae*) of 1644. He believed that the natural laws hold in all possible worlds, so that even the omnipotent God, who created the laws, has to obey them, and this, consequently, implies limits to his omnipotence, i.e. offers the assumption that the natural laws have already left God’s hands and have become, in a way, more powerful than God himself.

By this, the space that Christianity once opened to subjective modality was closed again. The absolute power of the natural laws proposed by Descartes, became thus, paradoxically, also an obstacle to studying the motives of human or animal action. The human being has learned a reassuring way to use reason to confirm his or her existence, but simultaneously discovered also new limits to his or her freedom.

F. Kafka or Murakami H’s world in some of their works seems to have been supported by these Cartesian concepts, namely by the concept of possible worlds. Perhaps this is the reason why the ideas of these authors are easily intelligible to European readers.

In his *Meditation IV* (1641), Descartes calls the real freedom of action “indifference”, and continues: “We are indifferent only when our perception of the true, or of the good, is less than clear

⁵ The verb has eight accidents: Moods, Dispositions, Species, Forms, Numbers, Tenses, Persons and Conjugations. There are five Moods: Indicative, Imperative, Optative, Subjunctive and Infinitive. There are three Dispositions: Activity, Passivity and Mediality (*Grammar of Dionysius Thrax*. Translated by Th. Davidson. St. Louis, 1884, p. 12).

and distinct.”

Obviously, unless we can become indifferent for the above-given reason, we are supposed to obey the moral principles. Consequently, we cannot become “indifferent” enough to be “free” unconditionally.

Leibniz and Kant

G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716) in his works *Metaphysical Essay* (*Metaphysische Behandlung*) of 1686, *Monadology* (*Monadologie*) of 1710 and *Theodicy* (*Theodicee*) of 1714 turned this Cartesian model partially upside down.⁶

He recognizes the following types of modality:

1) “Metaphysical” Modality

This modality is supposed to be “undeniable”, as certain as God’s existence itself. In the framework of Leibniz’s theory, this modal layer is directly related to God’s existence, but in common everyday language, the interpretation of this term changes with the person who judges the problem in question, and corresponds to what this person considers to be eternal truth from his or her own point of view. This type of modality cannot easily co-occur with subjective comments, with marked tenses and with any type of epistemic modality.

Besides, within this zone, several sublayers are contained. In all possible worlds, apart from the judgments that can become eternal truths, there are instances of a type of truth which is always true only in the real world, or in a certain fictive world or in a limited set of such worlds.

Descartes believed that the natural laws belong to all possible worlds, but Leibniz views them only as specific types of regularities.

2) “Moral” Necessities

There is a layer of Leibniz’s “moral” necessities, which may partially change with the flow of time. Such moral necessities do not represent real certainties but only high probabilities; they are epistemic, but not ontological. They are not related to real existence or real necessity, but only to God’s decisions, to other highly probable decisions or to partially founded beliefs. In reality, they may even be reduced to what is usually called common sense, or to a social norm. These modalities co-occur with certain marked tenses, but rarely with the future tense, and they are “weaker” than other moral modalities.

There is also another, “lower” modality, hinted at by Leibniz. Here belong accidental events that became necessities only “per accidentem”, i.e. just because they really happened. Human and animal moves without any clear motivation also belong here, and subjective hobbies and tastes, like the “Geschmacksmodalität”, mentioned by I. Kant. Deontic and boulomaic (=desiderative) modalities belong mostly here, too. Further also completely unmotivated guesses and judgements, and all kinds of other subjective modalities, are supposed to belong here.

These modalities co-occur not only with marked tenses, but also with aspects. Leibniz’s thought had a decisive impact on Kant, who in 1781 published his immortal *Critique of pure reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*), in which he challenged the limits of our “objective” capabilities and paid proper attention also to subjective movements of the human heart.

Thus, we can conclude that it was Leibniz who, directly or indirectly, opened the way to the modern linguistic concept of modality.

6 Cf. H. Bruckhardt (1988) “Modalities in language, thought and reality in Leibniz, Descartes and Crusius.” *Synthese* 75, pp. 183–215. Ishiguro, H. (1972) *Leibniz’s Philosophy of Logic and Language*. London. Verburg, P. A. (1976). “The Idea of Linguistic System in Leibniz.” *History of Linguistic Thought and Contemporary Linguistics*. Berlin, pp. 593–615.

Modern Sentence Modalities

In *An Attempt at a New Theory of German Linguistic Theory (Versuch einer neuen Lehre von der deutschen Sprachlehre, 1778)*, Kant's contemporary G. Fränklin mentions the sentence under the term "speech (Rede)" and defines it already on the basis of sentence modality: "Speech consists of words and implies an attitude to the object, expressed by these words."

On the basis of such attitudes, Fränklin distinguishes "five sentence types: assertive, exclamative, interrogative, requesting and optative."

This was the moment when basic awareness of modern sentence modality and of its contribution to the definition of the sentence was born.

H. Delacroix in his *Language and thought (La langue et la pensée, 1824)* writes as follows: "Sentence consists of one or more notions, of the relation between them and of the speaker's mental attitude to it" (p. 207). His definition is thus based on a fusion of the concept of composite syntactic structure with subjective modal evaluation of the judgment.

Around 1850, Kr. W. L. Heyse noted that the predicative mood refers actually not to a syntactic constituent, but to the whole sentence or clause, and is often expressed periphrastically, in an "analytic form". He seemed to be the first to use terms like "modality (Modalität)" and "speech act (Redeakt)" in relation to an utterance or sentence.⁷ Besides, also the term "speech act" ("Redeakt") was produced in a very modern meaning in German linguistic texts of the first half of 19 century.

O. Jespersen included the concept of communication directly in his definition in the *"Philosophy of Grammar"* (1924): "(The sentence) is a (semantically) complete and independent ... utterance. ... To be recognized as a sentence, an utterance **must be such as might be a piece of communication, were there so one to it.**"

On the other hand, Saussure has not used terms like "function" or "modality" in their modern sense. Only one of his successors, Charles Bally, cites in his *Treatise of Stylistics (Traité de stylistique)* of 1909 and in his *Language and Life (La langue et la vie)* of 1913 "emotionality" (émotionalité) as one of the decisive features of the sentence.

In 1922, F. Brunot published the book *Thought and Language (La pensée et la langue)*, in which he introduced the concept of modalities of the "idea" ("l'idée"), as an operation "du jugement, sentiment et de la volonté", namely, "Les grandes classes de modalités: le réel et l'éventuel" (pp. 511–512), "Moyens d'expression de l modalité" (pp. 513–514), "Les modes" (pp. 515–519), "Modalités dans les comparaisons" (p. 737 and following). The chapter includes paragraphs: "On compare une réalité à une réalité, assurée ou imaginaire, On compare une réalité certaine à une possibilité, a seconde idée est présentée comme douteuse, On compare une réalité à des éventualités, Après si l'indicatif remplace le conditionnel." Further also "Modalités des différences (Précisions et imprécisions, Trop, autrement", etc. are introduced (p. 739). The whole Book XXV. (pp. 869–898) is about the modality of "Hypotheses (Les hypothèses)".

Obviously, Bally was impressed by this work, because in his book *General Linguistics and French Linguistics (Linguistique générale et linguistique française, 1932)*, he used the term "modalities of the sentence" ("modalités de la phrase"), which can be almost literally translated also as "types of sentence modality".

However, considering Bally's text example (p. 39):⁸

I am sure (*modality*)—that you are lying (*the dictum*)

⁷ K. F. L. Heyse (1856) offers also a very similar definition.

⁸ "... la phrase explicite présente deux rapports chevauchant l'un sur l'autre : l'un qui unit la copule (et) le corrélatif de la représentation transposée, c'est à dire le dictum ... l'autre qui rattache le dictum au sujet modal au moyen de la copule (acc. to ed. A. Fracke, S. A. Berne, 1944)."

Je crois (*modalité*)—que tu ments (*dictum*).

It is clear that his concept of “clause (or sentence) modality” remained, at least partially, within the limits of Aristotle’s logical and truth modality.

Bally did not approach his “sentence modality” in the way it is treated in modern linguistics.

The Prague Linguistic School

In 1911, V. Mathesius, the founder of the Prague Linguistic School, published his epochal paper “On Potentiality of Linguistic Phenomena” (“O potenciálnosti jevů jazykových”, *Věstník královské české akademie nauk II.*, pp. 1–24), in which he demonstrated that the statistical data, and also what linguists would nowadays call a phenomenon’s “functional load”, are of essential importance to the interpretation of the phenomenon. According to this paper, observations about the limited statistic dispersion of linguistic phenomena have proved that the dispersed values centre around one value, namely the value which corresponds to the centre of the system, displaying thus a certain characteristic trend.

This was a breakthrough discovery, by which Mathesius envisaged both the advantages and the limits of the structuralist approach and the problems of what Saussure called *langue* and *parole*.⁹

Mathesius, as many other contemporary intellectuals of Czech nationality, was a bi-lingual scholar, fluent in both Czech and German. He studied under Prof. J. Gebauer at the Czech University of Prague, who, similarly as the young Saussure, belonged to the neo-grammarians school, which appeared to be a new branch of comparative historical linguistics, or even linguistics in general.

At the same time, Mathesius was greatly influenced by professors of the German University of Prague, who belonged to F. Brentano’s school of Gestalt Philosophy, and, together with W. Wundt, believed in the role of apperception in interpreting syntactic facts.

In 1926, Mathesius with R. Jakobson, who originally belonged to the Moscow Linguistic School, were the main founders of the Prague Linguistic Circle as a new, and perhaps first really international school of functional linguistics.

This school attempted to revise some of the too strict structural dogmas of Saussure’s approach, searching for links and compromises between *langue* and *parole*, and between diachrony and synchrony, replacing thus these strict terms with terms like centre and periphery of the system, or marked and unmarked distinctive features.

The *Prague School Theses* were selected as a program to be discussed at the first international congress of linguists, held in Copenhagen.

Arisaka H., in his book *Phonology (On’iron)*, 1940), criticized N. S. Trubetzkoy’s *Foundations of Phonology (Grundzüge der Phonologie)*, 1939), and, a year after their author’s death, questioned the uniformity of treating all phonemes as if they had the same functional load, namely, as equal idealized units, which was a characteristic feature of most strictly structural studies of that time.

However, Arisaka’s book reveals that he quoted some works by Trubetzkoy, but very little of Jakobson and almost nothing of Mathesius and Kartsevskij, although these authors shared a common view of linguistic phenomena. Generally, they distinguished very transparently the different roles of distinctive features on different levels of the linguistic structure, and (with their theories of markedness and periphery, cf. below), they proved to be sufficiently aware of the deficiencies of any one-level approach.

On the other hand, Arisaka himself proposed to define phonemes on the basis of their idealized

9 For details cf. e.g. Nekula, M.: “Vilém Mathesius, Historical Survey”. Published in Verschueren, J., etc. (1999) *Handbook of Pragmatics*. Benjamin, pp. 1–14.

articulation, which would have been hardly accessible to empirical verification in his time.

After the foundation of the Prague Linguistic School, Mathesius carried out detailed studies of syntax and discourse linguistics, namely of the problem of topic and focus.

In 1940 and after, Mathesius published important works focusing mostly on problems of pragmatics. According to Mathesius, functional linguistics deals “with the speaker’s views of reality, as they are articulated in the language”.

Mathesius (*Language and Style, Řeč a sloh*, 1942) distinguished explicitly two constituents of speech: the “fact-related contents” which, according to him, “grow out of the specific (communicative) situation”, and “the speaker’s actual view of the reality that is expressed in the utterance, and his relation to the listener, whether he be real or imaginary” (*ibid.*).

In connection with the speaker’s view, Mathesius referred to “informative speech with a communicative function” that, according to him, “conveys facts to the addressee”, and of expressions with an “emotional function”, which covers a whole range of sentences (utterances), re-classifying them and summarizing the conclusions of the most advanced studies of his age.

On the other hand, Jakobson expanded K. Bühler’s functional model, consisting of three functions: expressive, representative and appellative, and enriched the system with a number of new functions. Thus the Prague School’s theory envisaged the theory of performative verbs and J. Austin, J. R. Searle and P. F. Strawson’s approaches to speech acts.

2. Sentence and Syntactic Structure

In parallel with modal studies, syntactic studies based on the co-occurrence of the subject and predicate were performed throughout the history of Western thought, and Yamada Y., in his *Theory of Japanese Grammar (Nippon bunpō ron*, 1908), was greatly influenced by this way of syntactic segmentation. However, there is no indisputable grammatical agreement in Japanese. Besides, the explicit occurrence of the grammatical subject is limited, and even its identifiability may be low.

Yamada was obviously embarrassed by this weak presence of the subject in Japanese and searched for some meaningful philosophical confirmation of the universality of the pair “subject-predicate” as the basic functional identifier of the sentence. While respecting the classical “Dionysian” concept of the sentence as a segment expressing “one thought”, as it was conceived also by J. C. A. Heyse and H. Sweet, he attempted at certain enrichment by combining it with Wundt’s theory of “apperception”, as an expression of the assumed universal relation between the sentence subject and the sentence predicate.

This concept of apperception was proposed by Leibniz and developed by Kant. The concept was originally designed to mean adaptation of a new piece of perception to the record of the preceding piece of perception in the human memory, but it was extended by Kant to refer to the human capability to recognize the unity of an object on the basis of perceiving its individual properties.

The concept was further developed in the phenomenological school of “Gestalt” psychology. This school, denying isolate observation of individual phenomena, pursued language phenomena in their complexity, and concluded that a sequence of isolate phenomena, following each other speedily, is perceived by the human subject as a consistent, fluent movement. Of course, this observation, which was later applied to the technology of movies, does not have its reasons in objective external facts, but only in the properties of human perception.

In his *Outlines of Psychology* of 1897, which is an English version of a German work of 1894, Wundt manifested profound interest in the language, and even in the essence of the sentence,

but in this work he did not mention the notion of apperception. Only seven years later, in his book *Psychology of Ethnics. A Study of Development Laws of the Language, Myth and Customs. Language II. (Völkerpsychologie. Eine Untersuchung der Entwicklungsgesetze von Sprache, Mythos und Sitte, Sprache II)*, he operates with the notion of a mutual fusion of the respective images of the subject and the predicate, as they co-occur in an intra-sentential sequence. This discovery was of essential importance for the interpretation of the concept of sentence.

Wundt obviously adopted this idea from several linguists. In the years 1849–1850, in an essay on teaching German grammar, which was published in the journal *Education of the German Language (Unterricht der deutschen Sprache)*, J. C. A. Heyse defines the sentence as usually as “one thought”, but adds that the speaker first divides the sentence into subject and predicate, and then integrates these components again into one integrate complex:

“When a sentence is transformed into an utterance, the spirit has to divide an (internal or external) concrete concept into the subject and the predicate, and then re-unite them again.”

H. Steinthal, in his book *Characteristics of main sentence types in the system of language structure (Charakteristik der hauptsätzlichen Typen des Sprachbausystems, 1860)*, explains about the rise of a sentence and about the principle of apperception, using this term quite explicitly.

“In the sentence the constituents (first) become separated, and then their individual images are re-integrated again. ... The content of the spirit and of the conscience is apperceived (!) in the form of intensive activity the agent is directing towards the external world” (p. 99).

In 1891, G. Burghausen applied the term introduced by Leibniz and Kant in his study in the *Journal for Teaching the German Language (Zeitschrift für Deutsche Unterricht)*.

In the same year, v. d. Gabelentz, in his above-mentioned book *Linguistics (Sprachwissenschaft)*, calls the sentence “mental dialysis” of an “integrate notion”, and explains: “Before the eyes of the spirit floats always an integrate image. However, in order to reconstruct, or re-build this image, it is first necessary to split it.”

In 1904, in the same year in which the above-mentioned Wundt’s book was published, also J. v. Rozwadowski finds the essence of the sentence in “apperception” (Apperzeption), while in 1905, H. Siebeck proposes the term “synthesis of images” (Synthese der Vorstellungen), and G. Körting prefers the characteristics “a substance notion + a notion which is assessed as purely functional” (Substanzbegriff + rein funktionel gefasster Begriff).¹⁰

3. Japanese Linguistic Studies: Tokieda and After

Tokieda M. in his *Studies of the National Language (Kokugogaku genron)* of 1941 inherited Yamada’s phenomenological methodology and integrated it with Hashimoto’s distinction of independent and dependent words. In contrast to Hashimoto, he developed a theory of discontinuity between neighboring grammatical words, related to sentence formation, and full-content words, unrelated to it, which was based on a re-interpretation of Saussure’s theory of the conceptualization process. By this he rejected Hashimoto’s analysis into tacts (“bunsetsu”), which was based on rather superficial one-level phonetic criteria.

Tokieda assumed that a grammatical word does not have to be necessarily described as related to the nearest independent word, as it can be functionally attached to constituents of various levels, on the basis of the so-called “nested-boxes structure” (ireko gata kōzō).

However, this model has defects. For instance, Tokieda, influenced by the poetics of the

¹⁰ The data given in this paragraph are based on J. Ries (footnote 1) and could not be easily verified.

Muromachi period (*Teniwoha shō* and *Teniwoha besshō*), interpreted the grammatical words as necessarily subjective, and consequently assumed that the predication is also carried by subjective words.

This would actually imply that Japanese grammar is totally subjective, which is hard to imagine and seems to be unacceptable within the framework of any reasonable linguistic theory.

Integration of Modality and Syntactic Structure in Watanabe's Grammar

Watanabe M. (1949, 1952, 1953, 1955, 1957,¹¹ and namely in his *Kokugo kōbun ron*, 1971), inherited Tokieda's methodology and refuted Tokieda's purely subjective model, which seems fairly transparent and persuading at first sight, but is actually full of dummies and inaccuracies. On the other hand, distinguishing between the function of full-meaning forms (*sozai hyōji no shokunō*) and grammatical forms (*kankei kōsei no shokunō*) he proposed a multi-layer analysis of syntactic constituents and a layered analysis of the structure of inflectional and non-inflectional grammatical words.

However, as syntactic, modal and communicative functions in Japanese are partially fused and overlapping, Watanabe's unique functional model, labeling these functions, integrated them successfully into an integrate sentence-culminating function ("chinjutsu no shokunō", i.e. the predicative function, or, lit., "the narrative function").

Watanabe thus released Japanese syntax from Yamada and Tokieda's narrow subjectivity and obtained an objective model of syntax and modality.

Moriyama T. (1991) summarizes these results as follows: "(Watanabe) succeeded in arranging the conditions of sentence generation, which consist of grammatical relations, specified by the speaker in his relation to the content of the dictum, and of the magic function of the speaker's modal attitude. Accepting Haga's proposal of 1954, he added also the outward layer of the sentence, which expresses the communicative aspects, directed towards the hearer."

Watanabe's thought developed in seventies and eighties into a detailed layered analysis of Japanese syntax, was reflected in various forms in the works of Hayashi Sh., Kitahara Y., Minami F., Sakakura A., who continued to develop these models. The layered model was adapted also to English (e.g., R. D. v. Valin, Jr. & R. J. La Polla, *Syntax: Structure, meaning and function*, 1997).

Sentence Modality and Traditional Syntax

As for sentence modality, Kindaichi H. (1953) described non-inflectional auxiliaries (*fuhenka jodōshi*), and Mikami A. (1959) distinguished "*koto*" ("*dictum*") and "*mood*".

The author of this paper has attempted to analyze the layered structure of Japanese modality in several monographs and in a number of papers (e.g., Fiala 1970, 1971, 1972,¹² rev. by Okuda Y., 1973, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1989, 1992, 1996a,¹³ etc.), approximately two decades before general concern for modality in Japan arose.

Since the late eighties, Okuda Y., who adapted V. V. Vinogradov's model, and entirely independently also Masuoka T., Moriyama T., Nitta Y. and others have attempted to isolate Japanese modality and describe it in detail. The prevailing Japanese concept of sentence modality encompasses periphery categories like politeness, honorifics, tense and aspect.

In contrast with Fiala (1981, 1982, 1984, 1989, 1992, 1996a), later papers (Fiala 1996b,

¹¹ The papers are generally known, and therefore omitted here.

¹² Fiala, K. *Bi-planic Approach to Japanese Semantics*. Charles Univ., Prague.

¹³ The data are omitted here but they can be searched easily.

2000a,¹⁴ 2000b, 2000c,¹⁵ 2004, 2005, 2006, etc.), influenced by Japanese linguistics, also focus on the periphery categories of the communication frame, for example by re-opening the topic-focus problem from the point of view of the new generation of the Prague School and from the standpoint of his own model. In this sense, this new project also represents another stage in the investigator's linguistic thought.

In the usual linguistic usage, the modality source may be unmarked and unexpressed, but simultaneously it is understood as a generally acceptable truth, common sense or social norm. A more subjective modality source is for example "the most usual attitude", "the attitude of most people", the attitude of a specific person or explicitly the speaker himself, etc., but these modalities are particular, marked modalities.

Modality expressions are expressions evaluating the truthfulness, the logical integrity or the desirability of the dictum from the position of the modal source, and the scalar degree of the intensity of this evaluation, of the probability of the truthfulness of a statement or the degree of the warranty offered by the speaker.

From a Broad-scope Concept of Modality to Speech Acts

For a trained scholar, engaged in the analysis of syntactic structures, the sentence, or, more accurately, "sentence-like utterance", is usually, or at least traditionally, the maximal unit which is in the focus of his or her concern.

On the other hand, for those scholars who, like v. d. Gabelentz, conceive of the sentence as of a kind of autonomous expression, which can be evaluated as an expression of extra-linguistic facts, the sentence is the minimal segment that satisfies fully the criterion of autonomy.

Therefore, the sentence is the maximal fully integrated grammatical unit, which is clear also from the fact that it must be translated from one language to another, but it is also the minimal discourse unit the content of which can be evaluated autonomously.

Thus the sentence is integrated internally by its syntactic structure, and externally by its communicative aspects.

The length of the sentence seems to be ruled preferably by biological factors and later further adjusted in the framework of a concrete communicative situation. A much more thorough reassessment of the sentence as the minimal variant of communicative interaction in natural human languages might become the first stage of a new linguistic paradigm, opening thus new perspectives both in human sciences and in their technical application.

Sentence-supporting modality is not any kind of evaluation of the dictum whatsoever, but only a modality, which can be interpreted as a speech act, localizing the content of the sentence as an utterance within the framework of communication. On the other hand, the modality does not have the strength to integrate the sentence exclusively.

Consequently, the sentence is not a faithful objective reflection of the extra-linguistic world, neither is it generated by the modal evaluation of this reflection, as Aristotle assumed. The sentence modality only specifies the character of the speech act in a way, which the participants of the communication act should know in order to be able to interpret the utterance properly.¹⁶

14 Fiala, K. *Informational and Syntactic Structure of Japanese (Nihongo no jōhō kōzō to tōgo kōzō)*. Hitsuji Shobō, Tokyo.

15 Commented on by Watanabe M.

16 Detailed references to the usually used and minor original texts are not cited in this brief handout.