Some Puzzles Concerning Connectives in Japanese*

Mayumi Masuko

Connectives in natural language tend to behave rather strangely, and Japanese ones are no exception. Connectives and similar expressions in Japanese combine with verbs in a certain tense. Most prefer non-finite verb forms, though it is difficult to distinguish non-finite from present-tense forms; in this paper, I shall call verbs non-finite whose forms are indistinguishable from present-tense forms and which cooccur with connectives. Some, on the other hand, must cooccur with finite verbs.

(1) Watashi-wa nemu-ru-maeni  ha-wo  migaita.
I-TOP   sleep-PRES-before  teeth-ACC  polished
"I cleaned my teeth before going to bed."

(2) *Watashi-wa nemut-ta-maeni  ha-wo  migaita.
I-TOP  sleep-PAST-before  teeth-ACC  polished
"I cleaned my teeth before going to bed." [intended]

(3) *Watashi-ga nemu-ru-atode  dareka-ga  tazunete-kita.
I-NOM  sleep-PRES-after  someone-NOM  visit-came
“(Someone) came (to visit) after I went to bed.” [intended]
As can be seen from (1) and (2), *maeni* 'before' requires the verb it combines with to be non-finite regardless of tense of the main verb. *Atode* 'after', in contrast, must combine with the main verb in the past tense. This seems on a par with the semantics of the connectives. *Maeni* 'before' suggests that the event denoted by the cooccurring verb has not taken place at the time the event referred to by the main verb occurs. On the other hand, *atode* 'after' implies that the event conveyed by the cooccurring verb has taken place: past tense verbs in Japanese are often used when perfect is used in languages like English.

However, the semantics of connectives alone does not seem to explain how the cooccurring verb should behave. The connective *kara* has the same meaning as *atode*, i.e. 'after', when it is used with a non-finite verb plus *-te*. (5) and (6) show that tense of the main verb does not matter at all.

(5) Shokujishi-te-kara nemutta.
    have a meal-CONJ-after slept
    "(Someone) slept after having a meal."

(6) Shokujishi-te-kara nemuru.
    have a meal-CONJ-after sleep
    "(Someone usually) sleeps after having a meal."

When the main verb is finite and *kara* combines with a verb also in the past tense, the sentence as a whole means something different, as evidenced by (7). This is because *kara* combined with a finite verb form
could only express a causal relation; (8) and (9) support this:

(7) Shokujishita-kara nemutta.
had a meal—because slept
"(Someone) slept because of having had a meal."

(8) Shokujisuru-kara nemuru.
have a meal—because sleep
"(Someone) sleeps because of having a meal."

(9) Shokujisuru-kara nemutta.
had a meal—because sleep
"(Someone) slept because of having a meal."

There are, however, cases where a non-finite verb and a stative verb form\(^1\) that combine with the same connective convey quite different meanings. When *nagara* 'while' cooccurs with a simple non-finite verb form, it simply expresses an action that is simultaneously performed while an event expressed by the main clause takes place.

(10) Sangurasu-wo kakeru.
sunglasses—ACC put on.
"(Someone) puts on a pair of sunglasses."

(11) Sangurasu-wo kake-te-iru.
sunglasses—ACC put on—CONJ—STATIVE.
"(Someone) is wearing a pair of sunglasses."

(12) Sangurasu-wo kake-nagara hashitta.
sunglasses—ACC put on—while ran
"(Someone) ran/ was running while putting on a pair of sunglasses."
Since *kakeru* 'put on' is not a process verb, it only refers to an event that is completed in a short period of time as in (10). If one wishes to describe the resultant state, i.e. wearing sunglasses for a certain period of time, the stative form has to be used. Hence (12) could only mean that the agent performed the action of putting on sunglasses while running. Because the act of putting a pair of sunglasses on does not take long, (12) can only describe an even that lasts for a short period of time. It cannot express an event where the agent was wearing sunglasses all through the run: (13) will have to be used to convey this.

(13) Sangurasu-wo kake-te hashitta.
sunglasses-ACC put on-CONJ ran
"(Someone) ran/was running wearing a pair of sunglasses."

When *-i*, the stative morpheme, is added to (13), the resultant sentence becomes pragmatically odd. This is because *VERB-te-i-nagara* suggests that the event described by this phrase is not usually performed while the event expressed by the main clause occurs.

(14) ?Sangurasu-wo kake-te-i-nagara hashitta.
sunglasses-ACC put on-CONJ-STATIVE-while ran
"(Someone) ran in spite of wearing a pair of sunglasses."

Since many runners wear sunglasses, especially in summer, (14) sounds strange. It does not violate any grammatical rules in Japanese, however, and is thus grammatical. There do not seem to be any reasons, whether semantic or not, why *-i* should change meaning in this way, but it does.

In this paper, we have seen behaviours of some connectives in Japanese. Some do behave as they are expected to, but others do not.
When their behaviours are rather unusual, no apparent explanation can be found. Aspectual characteristics of verbs do seem to have influence in some cases, as we have seen in (10)-(14). This does not explain everything, and more data and analyses are required to determine what determine their choice of tense.

Notes
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1 An auxiliary verb suffix -i may be taken as progressive. Since the resultant verb form expresses a state, it is simply treated as a stative in this paper.