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Static Expressions in Japanese Proverbs

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Abstract

Japanese is a highly static language, which is mainly focused on the description of objective facts, and focused on the display of results and states. Proverb is a kind of language closely related to people's life, and also a language with obvious characteristics. The verb sentences and noun sentences in proverbs are the concrete manifestations of static language and fully reflect the language habits and linguistic psychology of Japanese.

Keywords

Japanese; Proverbs; Static expressions; Intransitive Verbs.

1. Proverbs and Static Language

Proverbs are concise and vivid phrases or sentences, which is widely used and spread among the people in the form of oral English. Proverbs are fixed statements to express the real life experiences and feelings of people. KOUJIEN is defined that "古くから人々に言いならわされたことば。教訓・諷刺などの意を寓した短句や秀句" and is also defined that "風刺・教訓・知識・興趣などをもった簡潔な言葉"by dictionary. Generally speaking, proverbs are "古くから言い伝えられてきた民衆の知恵・教訓・真理". Static expression is one of the existing states of language and has strong stability, which is mainly manifested in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, syntax.

Kindaiichi(1985) points that "日本語は静かである" . Matsumoto（1992）believes that the word order of Japanese—SOV has not been changed since ancient times; Sakuma (1936) holds the ideal that Japanese tends to express the natural formation of things; Ikeami Yoshihiko (1983) even believes that the expression ways of Japanese are taking "nature as subject" and "human not the subject". He Wu (2008) argues that Japanese belongs to "なる" type， which focuses on the object and objective things are the target to narrate and the sentences focus on displaying results and status. Its characteristics are mainly reflected in the use of intransitive verbs, inclined to the noun sentences, good use of passive expression, object sentence and so on.

2. Static Expressions in Proverbs

Japanese belongs to SOV type and theme-centered language, which is based on the explanation of the theme, that is, the theme is used as the focus of the sentence to narrate. Therefore its static expression is particularly prominent. For Proverbs is a language which is the most closely connected with the people, its linguistic characteristics are particularly obvious. This paper respectively focuses on discussing the proverbs in Encyclopedia Nipponica from the noun sentence and verb sentences.

2.1. Verb Sentence

Japanese belongs to the SOV structure, whose themes or subjects are at the beginning of the sentence. Although verb sentences could actions or results, Japanese prefers sentences denoting results and states. The analysis found that Japanese become static linguistic by the following sentences structures such as: NPがV. , NPになる, passive expression.

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① NPがVi.

In Japanese, there are transitive verbs and intransitive verbs. Transitive verbs primarily emphasize the results of human actions; Intransitive verbs are non-volitional verbs, which focus on the description of phenomena and states and have strong objectivity. At the same time，auxiliary word が is widely used for objective description and faithfully reproduces a complete image. Therefore "NPがVi." is widely used to express, namely Vi. The person or thing affected by the action become the subject of a sentence, such expressions is 286 in total.

The analysis found that there are some special situations, such as: auxiliary word が omits, "も" replaces "が". For example, in the sentence "愛想が尽きる", "愛想" means "kind, friendly"; "尽きる" and "尽くす" are verbs and mean "finished". So there are two kinds of expression "愛想を尽かす" and "愛想が尽きる". But "尽きる" is intransitive verb, which focuses on describing the objective facts; however "尽くす" emphasizes the process of the action.

In the proverb-"余す所なく", "余す所" is a noun, which means "the rest of thing". "なく" is the change form of "ない" and has the same meaning with "残らず". Therefore there are two sentence structures to express the same meaning, "余す所がなく" or "余す所を残らず". But Japanese pay much attention to results; therefore they are inclined to use the former expressions. There are more than 40 idiomatic words "影も形もない" "血も涙もない" and so on . When " Nがある・ない" is used , there are some special situations, such as: auxiliary word "が" omits, "も" replaces"が".

② NPになる

The model of "する" is a dynamic expression focusing on making movements and paying attention to behavior and change. However, the model of "なる" based on the thing itself, focuses on results and situations which are formed by the action, it can weaken the tone of self-determination and let expression become more implicative and euphemistic.

Japanese emphasizes that things naturally occur. There are two expressions: "NPとなる" and "NPになる" . The former expression emphasizes the process of change, while the latter emphasizes the result of change. Based on sum up and inductive analysis, it found that there are 37 proverbs showing changes, and there are 34 proverbs having the end of "～になる". For example, "足が棒になる", it used to describe the situation of standing or walking for a long time, the legs and feet are stiff. With the results of change describe the results of action. Here are some other examples. "いい子になる（pretending to be good ）""おけらになる（spending all money）""お隠れになる（pass away）".

③ Passive Sentences

In English, Chinese and other language expressions, the narrative center is the doer of the action. In the process of expression, Japanese, influenced by the linguistic psychology of taking the position of others, adopts passive expression, which means exerting influence and removing the meaning of driving, so as to achieve the purpose of mild expression. For example, in the proverb-"顔が売れる", "売れる" is the passive form of the word "売る". By adopting the passive form, the center of action- selling has changed into the center of noun-"顔" in this sentence. In the proverb-"角が取れる", "取れる" is a passive form, and it means that interpersonal communication skills are mastered, therefore the character becomes sophisticated.

2.2. Noun Sentences

Noun sentences have static characteristics, which connect the action expression and static situation mainly through lots of nouns and mainly embodied in the sentence pattern "NはN(だ)". Noun sentences, through predicative sentence to express, focus on the state phenomenon

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and objectively describe things. And it is found that there are two sentence types, "NP (だ) " and "NのN" in the process of the analysis of the actual existence.

For example, in the proverb- "一事が万事", auxiliary word "が" is replaced by "は", at the same time it omits judgment auxiliary verbs. This proverb means that "一つの事を見るだけで、他のすべての事がおしはかられる (A leopard may be known by his eye) ". "目じゃない" means "たいしたことはない(no problem)".

2.3. Unagi Sentence

Unagi sentence exits in Japanese, its syntax appear a noun or noun sentence however it actually was the verbal sentences. This kind of sentence, through high concentration, mainly simplifies the complex meaning of verb sentence and restate in predicative sentence. The illogicality of this carrier form is considered as one of the morphological characteristics of static expression. For example, 風の便り. By generating the theory of transformation grammar, the deep structure of its semantics should be: どこから伝わって来たとも分らない噂. "板挟み" is a noun structure, composed of "N + N", but In fact, it changes from "母親と妻との板挟み" .

3. Static Expression and Linguistic Psychology

3.1. Static Expression and Linguistic Psychology

Chomsky believes that language is a mirror reflecting the psychology. Japanese prefers to use the sentence patter: "proposition+ modality", proposition is the message which speakers would pass on. And modality is the soul and key point of language expression

3.2. Language Habits

Japanese people have the aesthetic habits of "mysterious" and "symbolic", so they try to be vague in real situation, but not express directly, and pay attention to the spirit of harmony. Therefore in the process of communication, Japanese only talk about the results in most cases rather than the reasons. They omit the important parts and leave some spaces have a thought for others. The deep structure of the sentence determines the surface structure, and the deep structure has a certain tolerance, and the surface structure tolerates them to some extent to make some unreasonable coding. The adoption of language structures are determined by language habits. In the process of interpersonal communication, when facing the sentence contained a large amount of linguistic information, Japanese are much good at adopting the sentence patter "NはNだ", adopting the sentence patterns contained lots of information.

3.3. The Perspective-taking

As a single-nation state, Japanese use a common language with few language barriers. Therefore, in the process of communication, they are more accustomed to using the mode of perspective-taking. There is a proverb "話し上手の聞き下手" in Japanese, which means that a well-spoken person must be a good listener at the same time. Therefore, the real interpersonal communication in Japanese, it emphasizes thoughtfulness and concern. That is, in addition to direct language communication, but also through observation to understand each other's thoughts. As a result, Japanese have to choose their words carefully and have a tendency to be submissive and consistent with the other side, use simple language structures to express large amounts of information.

4. Conclusion

Japanese is a theme-centered language, whose semantics are encoded as "result-oriented", and the main explanatory part is at the end of the sentence. Whether adopting intransitive verbs,

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use the expression, noun sentences and the form of unagi sentence, it focuses on the occurrence and appearance of natural phenomena, the result of the behaviors and expression of situation. As a reflection of cultural psychology, the habits of language and perspective-taking of Japanese promote their preference for static expressions.

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