



On the Licensing Condition of Predicational Adverbs in Japanese

Miura, Kaori

(Citation)

神戸言語学論叢, 15:115-135

(Issue Date)

2026-03-28

(Resource Type)

departmental bulletin paper

(Version)

Version of Record

(JaLCD0I)

<https://doi.org/10.24546/0100502634>

(URL)

<https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14094/0100502634>



On the Licensing Condition of Predicational Adverbs in Japanese*

Kaori Miura

Kyushu Sangyo University

1. Introduction

This study investigates the syntax and semantics of predicational adverbs in Japanese, paying special attention to the particle *-mo* ‘also’ on these adverbs. Certain predicational adverbs in Japanese such as *orokani-mo* ‘stupidly,’ *kasikoku-mo* ‘wisely’ and *sinsetuni-mo* ‘kindly’ bear the particle *-mo*, which modifies the proposition (Sawada 1987, Nakau 1980, Kubota 2015, Ernst 2015, Miura and Fujii, 2021, den Dikken 2025). For instance, as in (1), the predicational adverb *orokanimo* ‘stupidly’ describes the foolishness of the acceptance of the proposal that the subject *Taroo* should have rejected.¹

- (1) Taroo-wa **oroka-ni-mo** sono teian-o syoodakusita.
Taro-NOM stupidly-COP-MO the proposal-ACC accepted
‘Taro stupidly accepted the proposal (obviously, he should not have done that).’

Kubota (2015) proposes that these *mo*-attached adverbs form a natural class and they are derived from their *mo*-less counterparts (e.g. *orokani* ‘stupidly,’ *kasikoku* ‘wisely’ and *sinsetuni* ‘kindly’) through a process termed “*mo*-attachment.” Following Kubota (2015), Miura and Fujii (2020, 2021) note that this transformation competes with the so-called clausal-manner alternation of English adverbs (McConnell-Ginet 1982, Ernst 2002) and states that *-mo* plays a crucial role in yielding a predicational meaning of the adverb. Although previous literature has pointed out the importance of the function of *-mo* in this alternation, its syntax and semantics remain underexplored, which is what this study tries to address. This study advocates two proposals. First, predicational adverbs are CP-level (FocP) adverbs that take TP as their scope. Second, when the adverb is marked with *-mo* it functions as a sentential adverb that introduces a contrastive interpretation at the propositional level. Specifically, the *mo*-attached adverb indicates that the proposition *p* is true, despite it not being expected to be true. In this way, it highlights a difference between what is anticipated and what actually occurs, making the realization of an event contrary to expectation.

The structure of the paper is as follows: In section 2, I will outline some basic form and meaning properties of predicational adverbs in Japanese, reviewing the previous literature. In section 3, I will revisit Kubota's (2015) proposal and highlight some issues that need to be restated. Section 4 presents an analysis of the morpheme *-mo* and proposes a licensing condition for the morpheme and the predicational adverb based on Aoyagi (2008). Section 5 concludes the discussion.

2. Form and meaning of predicational adverbs

Predicational adverbs are often referred to as “Subject-Oriented adverbs” (henceforth, SO adverbs) and are observed cross-linguistically (Jackendoff 1972, Sawada 1978, Nakau 1980, McConnell-Ginet 1982, Ernst 2002; 2015, Wyner 2008, Kubota 2015). Ernst (2002) observes that these adverbs can be divided into two types: “Agent-Oriented (AO) adverbs” such as *stupidly*, *cleverly*, *wisely*, *tactfully*, *foolishly*, *rudely*, *secretly*, *ostentatiously*, *intelligently* and “Mental-Attitude (MA) adverbs,” including *reluctantly*, *calmly*, *willingly*, *anxiously*, *eagerly*, *frantically*, *absent-mindedly*, *gladly*, *sadly*. The previous literature has suggested that the AO adverb is predicated of the agentive subject, while the MA adverb is not. To capture the subject orientation of the AO adverbs, some studies analyzed AO adverbs as containing PRO, which is controlled by the subject (Ernst 2002, Miura and Fujii 2020). In terms of morphology, English AO adverbs and MA adverbs look alike. They all have an adverbial suffix *-ly*. Contrastively, in Japanese, AO adverbs and MA adverbs are morphologically distinct. AO adverbs bear *-mo*, while MA adverbs do not.

2.1. The interpretation of clausal adverbs and their distribution

Predicational adverbs in English can serve as either clausal adverbs or manner adverbs (Jackendoff 1972, Nakau 1980, McConnell-Ginet 1982, Ernst 2002, 2015, Kubota 2015, Miura and Fujii 2021). As the contrastive reading of (2) shows, they can be associated with a different meaning depending on where they occur in a clausal structure. In (2a), where the adverb is placed post-verbally, *John* is judged rude because of his manner of leaving (e.g., slamming the door), whereas in (2b), where the adverb is in the sentence-initial position, it asserts the fact that *John* left the place is judged rude (e.g., as opposed to *not* leaving).²

- (2) a. John left **rudely**. (manner reading)
 b. **Rudely**, John left. (clausal reading)

This meaning difference corresponds to the different morphology of predicational adverbs in Japanese, namely whether *-mo* is attached or not. Adverbs without *-mo* as in (3a) induce a manner reading, whereas those with *-mo* as in (3b) induce a clausal reading.

- (3) a. Taroo-wa **busahoo-ni** sono heya-o deta. (manner reading)
 Taro-TOP rudely-COP the room-ACC left
 ‘Taro left the room rudely.’
 b. Taroo-wa **busahoo-ni-mo** sono heya-o deta. (clausal reading)
 Taro-TOP rudely-COP-MO the room-ACC left
 ‘Rudely, Taro left the room.’

Mo-less adverbs can be marginally accepted in the position right next to the main predicate *deru* ‘leave,’ thereby retaining a manner reading as in (4a), whereas *mo*-attached adverbs are not, as shown in (4b).³ This means that the *mo*-attached clausal adverb cannot modify the main predicate.

- (4) a. (**Busahoo-ni**) Taroo-wa (**busahoo-ni**) sono heya-o (?**busahoo-ni**) deta.
 ‘Taro left the room rudely.’ (manner reading)
 b. (**Busahoo-ni-mo**) Taroo-wa (**busahoo-ni-mo**) sono heya-o
 (***busahoo-ni-mo**) deta.
 ‘Rudely, Taro left the room.’ (clausal reading)

In contrast, the *mo*-less manner adverb can serve as the complement of predicates (e.g. *omou* ‘think’) that selects small-clause as their complement, as (5a) demonstrates, while the *mo*-adverb cannot do so as in (5b). (5a) means that *Hanako thought Taro was kind*, while (5b) cannot be associated with such a meaning.

- (5) a. Hanako-wa Taroo-o **sinsetu-ni** omotta.
 Hanako-TOP Taro-ACC kindly-COP thought
 ‘Hanako found Taro kind.’
 b. *Hanako-wa Taroo-o **sinsetu-ni-mo** omotta.
 Hanako-TOP Taro-ACC kindly-COP-MO thought

When both adverbs appear simultaneously in a small clause as in (6a), the *mo*-attached adverb must be followed by the *mo*-less adverb, but not vice versa as in (6b). This means that the *mo*-attached adverb cannot modify the main predicate, while the *mo*-less adverb

can.

- (6) a. Hanako-wa Taro-o (**busahoo-ni-mo**) **sinsetu-ni** omotta.
 Hanako-TOP Taro-ACC (rudely) kind-COP thought
 ‘(Rudely,) Hanako found Taro kind.’
 b. Hanako-wa Taro-o **busahoo-ni-mo** (***sinsetu-ni**) omotta.

The same contrast can be found in a clause with non-small-clause predicates, as in (7a) and (7b).

- (7) a. Taro-wa sono heya-o (**sinsetu-ni-mo**) **busahoo-ni** deta.
 Taro-TOP the room-ACC politely rudely left
 ‘(Politely,) Taro left the room rudely.’
 b. Taro-wa sono heya-o **sinsetu-ni-mo** (?**busahoo-ni**) deta.

A possible context for (7) to be accepted is that Taro was intentionally rude when leaving the room, and that was taken as polite and kind (e.g. he may have done so for someone else). As in (7a), the clausal adverb can be omitted, whereas in (7b), omitting the manner adverb *busahoo-ni* ‘rudely’ is not as bad as (6b), however it is somewhat odd. I interpret this as evidence that the clausal adverb cannot directly modify the main verb.

2.2. What do clausal adverbs describe?

Another prominent property of clausal adverbs is what they describe or modify. As is already seen, previous literature has suggested that the *mo*-attached AO adverb is predicated of the proposition and the agentive DP.

- (8) a. Sono daizin-wa **oroka-ni-mo** zibun-no hisyo-o tataita.
 the minister-TOP stupidly-COP-MO self-GEN secretary-ACC hit
 ‘The minister stupidly hit his secretary.’
 b. Sono hisyo-wa **oroka-ni-mo** daizin-ni tatakareta.
 the secretary-TOP stupidly-COP-MO minister-DAT hit-PASS-PST
 ‘The secretary was stupidly hit by the minister.’
 c. [Sono hisyo-ga **oroka-ni-mo** daizin-ni tatakareta koto]-ga
 the secretary-NOM stupidly-COP-MO minister-DAT hit-PASS-PST fact-NOM
 ookiku hoodoosareta.
 widely broadcasted

‘The fact that the secretary was stupidly hit by the minister was widely broadcasted.’

Oroka-ni-mo in (8a) adds speakers evaluation of what happened, i.e., *the minister’s hitting of his secretary*, and it seems that it condemns the minister for such a behavior. (8b) is the passive counterpart of (8a), and it says “the secretary being hit by the minister is stupid.” This is somewhat different from the subject-orientation, since the surface subject *sono hisyo* ‘the secretary’ initially bears the theme role, and as (8c) shows, this interpretation does not always arise, which suggests that the subject orientation of clausal adverbs is not a necessarily and sufficient condition for the adverb to be licensed in a clause.⁴ The same fact can be underscored by the passive sentence in (9b), where *mo*-attached adverbs still modify the deep subject, but not the surface subject.

- (9) a. Sono roozin-wa wakamono-ni seki-o yuzutta.
the old.man-TOP young.man-DAT seat-ACC offered
‘The old man offered the seat to the young man.’
b. Sono wakamono-wa **sinsetu-ni-mo** roozin-ni
the young.man-TOP kindly old.man-DAT
seki-o yuzu-rare-ta.
seat-ACC offered-PASS-PST
‘The young man was kindly offered the seat by the old man.’

The event that the old man offered a seat to the young man is judged kind and polite, while the derived subject *sono wakamono* ‘the young man’ is not necessarily understood as kind in (9b).

2.3. Can *-mo* attach to any kind of adverbs?

All the observations so far suggest that adverbs’ clausal interpretation arises when the particle *-mo* is attached. However, it is still unclear whether or not it is always true that the attachment of *-mo* to any adverb gives rise to the clausal interpretation. For example, the particle *-mo* can be attached to *k(u)*-adverbs, which are derived from adjectives (e.g. *kawaii* ‘pretty,’ *omosiroi* ‘interesting’) and *de*-adverbs, which are derived from nominals, besides *ni*-adverbs, in which adverbial suffix *-ni* is attached to nominal adjectives (Kishimoto 2024). The *de*-marked adverb can serve as depictive predicate, which describes a change of state of the argument in the event given (e.g. the subject or the object). For example in (9a), the DP *Taroo* is the agent of the running event, and simultaneously, he was barefoot in the event, which is described by *hadasi-de* ‘barefoot’.

The example (9b) is a buying event where the agent is *Taroo* and the theme is *kuruma* ‘car.’ In the event the depictive *tuuko-de* ‘second hand’ is predicated of the theme describing a situation of the car (i.e. it was a second hand) when it was sold.

- (9) a. *Taroo-wa hadasi-de hasit-ta.*
 Taro-TOP barefoot-COP run-PST
 ‘Taro ran barefoot.’
 b. *Taroo-wa sono kuruma-o tuuko-de kat-ta.*
 Taro-TOP the car-ACC second.hand-COP buy-PST
 ‘Taro bought the car as second hand.’

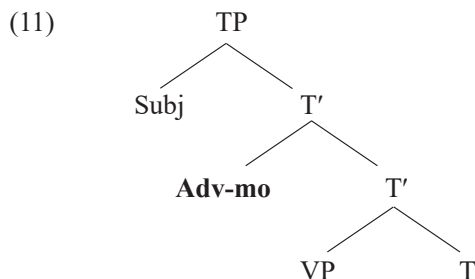
It seems that the morpheme *-mo* can attach to these adverbs as in (10). The derived adverb, *sabisi-ku-mo* ‘sadly’ in (10a), for instance, does not express the speaker’s evaluation regarding the event described by the clause *Taroo-ga saki-o isogu* ‘Taro get going.’ Rather, the adverb in question, which is based on a psychological adjective *sabisi* ‘sad,’ describes a mental state of the experiencer. Similarly, in (10b), *hadasi-de-mo* is a depictive predicate saying *even with barefoot*, *Taro ran*, but it is not about the speaker’s evaluation of the event described by the clause *Taroo-ga hasiru* ‘Taro run.’

- (10) a. *Taroo-wa sabisi-ku-mo saki-o isoi-da.*
 Taro-TOP sadly-COP-MO next.place-ACC get.going-PST
 ‘Taro got going although he felt lonely.’
 b. *Taroo-wa hadasi-de-mo hasit-ta.*
 Taro-TOP barefoot-COP-MO run-PST
 ‘Taro ran even if he was barefoot.’

Thus, the function of *-mo* is to set a contrast. For example, the depictive predicate *hadasi-de-mo* in (10b) conveys that Taro runs with shoes on his feet, but even with barefeoot he ran. Furthermore, the lexeme to which *-mo* attaches must be adverbs with evaluative sense. From these, we can expect not every adverb can serve this function. In section 4, I focus on each issue. However, before doing so, we will revisit Kubota (2015) and try to provide an alternative account to address some of the issues concerning her analysis.

3. Kubota (2015) and Miura and Fujii (2020)

Kubota (2015) proposes that the *mo*-attached adverb in Japanese, unlike its English counterparts, attaches high, specifically to T-bar below the agent position in the clause structure, as shown in (11).



Kubota's proposal is motivated by two observations. Ernst (2015) observes that when an AO adverb such as *oroka-ni-mo* 'stupidly' precedes a manner adverb such as *riroseizen-to* 'articulately,' the sentence is acceptable, as shown in (12a). However, if it is preceded by the manner adverb, the sentence becomes degraded, as shown in (12b).⁵ This indicates that AO adverbs may resist being located lower than VP.

- (12) a. Taroo-wa **oroka-ni-mo** riroseizen-to situmon-ni kotaeta.
Taro-TOP stupidly-COP-MO articulately answers-to answered
'Taro stupidly answered the questions articulately.'
- b. *Taroo-wa riroseizen-to situmon-ni **oroka-ni-mo** kotaeta.
Taro-TOP articulately answers-to stupidly-COP-MO answered
- (Ernst 2015: 1050, (3))

Furthermore, Kubota observes that Japanese predicational adverbs do not show the kind of ambiguity that English predicational adverbs exhibit in active-passive alternation. The sentence (13) in English can receive either a Surface-Subject-oriented (SSO) reading meaning that Mary was stupid to let John hug her, as shown in (13a), or a Deep-Subject-oriented (DSO) reading meaning that John was stupid to have hugged Mary, as in (13b).

- (13) Mary was stupidly hugged by John. (Kubota 2015: 1036, (31))
- a. (??) It was stupid of Mary to have been hugged by John. (C(ontroller): SS *Mary*)
- b. It was stupid of John to have hugged Mary. (C: Agent *John*)

Unlike English, as shown in (14), predicational adverbs in Japanese only convey the SSO reading that Mary was stupid to let John hug her, as shown in (14a), but it does not convey the DSO reading in which John was stupid to have hugged Mary, as in (14b).

- (14) Mary-wa **oroka-ni-mo** John-ni dakishime-rare-ta.
 Mary-TOP stupidly-COP-MO John-by hug-PASS-PST
 ‘Stupidly, Mary was hugged by John.’
 a. It was stupid of Mary to have been hugged by John. (C: *Mary*)
 b. NOT: It was stupid of John to have hugged Mary. (Kubota 2015: 1037, (32))

Kubota (2015) also notes that the derived subject of unaccusative constructions such as (15) can control the predicational adverb.

- (15) a. John-wa **oroka-ni-mo** {sinda/koronda} (Kubota 2015: 1033, (16)) (C: *John*)
 John-TOP stupidly-COP-MO {died/fell}
 ‘Stupidly, John died/fell.’
 b. Jim wisely got out of bed. (Ernst 2002: 55) (C: *Jim*)

We have already seen in Section 2 that Kubota’s proposal can only account for a certain subpart of the distribution of predicational adverbs. In particular, the structure (11) cannot explain the existence of the impersonal sentence like (8c). Furthermore, “*mo*-attachment” is not so almighty as it does not account for the fact in (10). For the worse, the theory has no implication to the issue of the diverse property of *-mo* itself, and the reason why it can connect with the manner adverb like *X-ni*, *X-k(u)* and *X-de*.

Miura and Fujii (2020) demonstrate the possibility that clausal adverbs can be controlled by the agent (as indicated by the *by*-phrase) in passive constructions, contrary to Kubota’s proposal. Their investigations of the relevant examples revealed that the position that they merge is not necessarily T-bar; rather, it can be somewhere within *vP*, where the agent is introduced, since (16b), where the inanimate surface subject cannot be modified by the predicational adverb, is acceptable. In this sentence, they argue that the controller is the deep subject.

- (16) a. Taroo-wa **oroka-ni-mo** eki-no mae-ni biru-o tateta.
 Taro-TOP stupidly-COP-MO station-GEN front-at building-ACC constructed
 ‘Taro stupidly constructed a building in front of the station.’ (C: *Taroo*)

- b. **Oroka-ni-mo** biru-ga Taroo-niyotte eki-no mae-ni
 stupidly-COP-MO building-NOM Taro-by station-GEN front-at
 tateraremasita.
 construct-PASS.POLIT.PST
 ‘Stupidly, the building was constructed by Taro in front of the station.’

The observations presented above suggest that what is crucial is that clausal adverbs can be licensed in a clause without an agent. These adverbs demonstrate a licensing possibility across a wider range of clausal structures, including passive clauses, unaccusative clauses, clauses with impersonal subjects (den Dikken 2025).⁶

Before concluding this section, let us provide two pieces of counter-evidence that the position of clausal adverbs is T-bar. The pseudo-cleft construction in Japanese places vP in its focus position (Kishimoto 2016). Thus, an element that originates in vP can constitute a focus of the cleft. For example, the object-oriented depictive, *tyuuko-de* ‘second hand’ as illustrated in (17), can make a focus clause of the cleft, whereas it cannot make a presuppositional clause of the cleft. This indicates that the depictive predicate in question must be contained within vP.

- (17) a. [Taroo-ga si-ta] no-wa [**tyuuko-de** kuruma-o kau] koto-da.
 Taro-NOM do-PST NOML-TOP second.hand-COP car-ACC buy that-COP
 ‘What Taro did was buy a car in second hand.’
 b. *[Taroo-ga **tyuuko-de** si-ta] no-wa [kuruma-o kau] koto-da.
 Taro-NOM second.hand-COP do-PST NOML-TOP car-ACC buy that-COP
 ‘What Taro did in second hand was buy a car.’

The subject-oriented depictive *hadasi-de* ‘barefoot’ shows a different pattern from the object-oriented depictive. As given in (18), it can appear in either the focus or the presuppositional clause of the pseudo-cleft. This indicates that it can be positioned either within vP or outside of it.

- (18) a. [Kodomo-ga si-ta] no-wa [**hadasi-de** hasiru] koto-da.
 child-NOM do-PST NOML-TOP barefoot-COP run that-COP
 ‘What the child did was run barefoot.’
 b. [Kodomo-ga **hadasi-de** si-ta] no-wa [hasiru] koto-da.
 child-NOM barefoot-COP do-PST NOML-TOP run that-COP
 ‘What the child did barefoot was run.’ (Kishimoto 2025: 246, (22))

As shown in example (19), the predicational adverb does not follow either pattern. The example demonstrates that it can appear in the presuppositional part of the pseudo-cleft, while it cannot serve as the focus of the construction. This indicates that the predicational adverb must be merged at a level higher than vP.

- (19) a. [Sono roozin-ga **sinsetu-ni-mo** si-ta] no-wa
 the old man-NOM kindly-COP-MO do-PST NOML-TOP
 [seki-o yuzuru] koto-da.
 seat-ACC offer that-COP
 ‘What the old man kindly did was offer a seat.’
 b. *[**Sinsetu-ni-mo** si-ta] no-wa
 kindly-COP-MO do-PST NOML-TOP
 [sone roozin-ga seki-o yuzuru] koto-da.
 the old man-NOM seat-ACC offer that-COP
 ‘*What did kindly was the old man offer a seat.’

The same pattern can be identified with time adverbs and modality expressions, as illustrated in examples (20) and (21), respectively. This underscores that clausal adverbs attach to a position higher than TP.

- (20) a. [**Kinoo** Taroo-ga si-ta] no-wa
 yesterday Taro-NOM do-PST NOML-TOP
 [heya-o katazukeru] koto-da.
 room-ACC tidy that-COP
 ‘*What Taro did yesterday was tidy a room.’
 b. *[**Kinoo** si-ta] no-wa
 yesterday do-PST NOML-TOP
 [Taroo-ga heya-o katazukeru] koto-da.
 Taro-NOM room-ACC tidy that-COP
 ‘*What did yesterday was Taro tidy a room.’
- (21) a. [Taroo-ga **tabun/osoraku** si-ta] no-wa
 Taro-NOM probably do-PST NOML-TOP
 [heya-o katazukeru] koto-da.
 room-ACC tidy that-COP
 ‘*What Taro probably did was tidy a room.’

- b. *[**Tabun/Osoraku** si-ta] no-wa
 probably do-PST NOML-TOP
 [Taroo-ga heya-o katazukeru] koto-da.
 Taro-NOM room-ACC tidy that-COP
 ‘What Taro probably did was tidy a room.’

A relative interpretation of the *mo*-attached adverb and negation provides further evidence that it may merge higher than TP. As indicated in example (22b), the negation -*nai* can take wide scope over it, but not vice versa. Thus, the *mo*-attached adverb cannot serve as the focus of the negation. In (22b), the only available interpretation is that it modifies the negated clause, indicating that the young man did not take drugs, which is wise. The Neg > Adv-*mo* reading that it is unwise for the young man to take drugs is not obtainable in this sentence. In the standard Japanese clause structure, -*nai* appears lower than the tense marker -*ta*, which shows that clausal adverbs are located higher than NegP.

- (22) a. Sono wakamono-wa **oroka-ni-mo** mayaku-o sessyusi-ta.
the young man-TOP stupidly-COP-MO drugs-ACC take-PST
‘The young man stupidly took drugs.’
b. Sono wakamono-wa **kasiko-ku-mo** mayaku-o sessyusi-nakat-ta.
the young man-TOP wisely-COP-MO drugs-ACC take-NEG-PST
‘The young man wisely did not take drugs.’

(*kasiko-ku-mo* > NEG, **kasiko-ku-mo* < NEG)

4. Proposal I: What is the function of *-mo* of clausal adverbs?

4.1. The function of -mo

Section 3 highlights that the presence of *-mo* on clausal adverbs is crucial for the clausal-manner alternation (Nakau 1980, Kubota 2015). However, its function has not been well examined in the existing literature.

In traditional Japanese linguistics, the particle *-mo* is classified as “Toritate” (focal) particles (Kuroda 1965, Numata 2008, Aoyagi 2008).⁷ Aoyagi (2008) argues that it is a clitic in morphology and syntax.

Aoyagi (2008) outlines the syntactic environments of *-mo* in detail. As illustrated in (23), *-mo* cannot intervene between an NP and its case particle. *-mo* also can freely attach to a wide range of XPs, as shown in (24).

(23) hon-o-mo ‘book-ACC-MO’ / *hon-mo-o ‘book-MO-ACC’ (Aoyagi 2008: 44, (17))

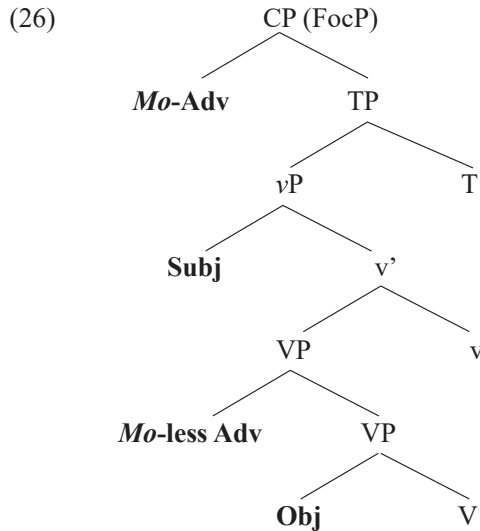
- (24) a. Taroo-wa [DP susi(-o)]-mo tabeta. (DP)
 Taro-TOP sushi-MO ate
 ‘Taro also ate sushi.’
- b. Kyaku-ga [PP Seoul kara]-mo kita. (PP)
 guest-NOM Seoul from-MO came
 ‘A guest came even from Seoul.’
- c. Hanako-wa [VP hono-o yomi]-mo sita. (VP)
 Hanako-TOP book-ACC read-MO did
 ‘Hanako also read a book.’
- d. Jiroo-wa [AP buka-o isogasiku]-mo sita. (AP)
 Jiroo-TOP subordinate-ACC busy-MO did
 ‘Jiro made his subordinate also busy.’
- e. Taroo-wa [CP Hanako-ga kaetta to]-mo itta. (CP)
 Taro-TOP Hanako-NOM went.home C-MO said
 ‘Taro also said that Hanako went home.’ (Aoyagi 2008: 40, (8))

The morpheme *-mo* can scope over an XP even if it attaches to an X^0 -level element (e.g. V, N), as long as the element is dominated by the same XP. For instance, in (25a-c), although *-mo* is attached to the verb *hiku* ‘play,’ it can take the vP *Taro played the piano* as its scope, which contains the verb.⁸ The same holds true with (25b) and (25c).

- (25) Kinoo-no paatii de-wa Hanako-ga
 yesterday-GEN party at-TOP Hanako-NOM
 dansu-o odotta-dake de-naku...
 dance-ACC danced-only COP-NEG
 ‘Not only Hanako danced at the party yesterday but...’
- a. Taroo-ga piano-o hiki-**mo** sita. (V)
 Taro-NOM piano-ACC play-MO did.
 ‘Taro also played the piano.’
- b. Taroo-ga piano-**mo** hiita. (Obj)
 Taro-NOM piano-MO played.
 ‘Taro played also the piano.’

- c. Taroo-**mo** piano-o hiita. (Subj)
 Taro-MO piano-ACC played.
 ‘Also Taro played the piano.’ (Aoyagi 2008: 47, (28))

Adopting Aoyagi’s (2008:49) argument, I propose that *-mo* of predicational adverbs shares the focal function with others as given in (25), and the adverb is attached to somewhere in CP where the Focus head is involved. Furthermore, I assume that adverbs without *-mo* attach to VP, following the previous literature (Kubota 2015, Miura and Fujii 2021). Based on these assumptions, I argue for the following analyses: i) *Mo*-less adverbs take VP as their scope, inducing a manner reading, ii) *Mo*-attached adverbs take TP as their scope, as it is attached to FocP as illustrated in (26), thus inducing a clausal reading. As demonstrated in the previous section, neither the deep nor the derived subject may directly be relevant to the interpretation of the predicational adverb. This explains why clausal adverbs can appear in unaccusative or impersonal constructions.



5. Proposal II: What is the semantic scope of *-mo* of clausal adverbs?

5.1. Scope of clausal adverbs

Previous literature on clausal adverbs has paid too much attention to what the subject of the clausal adverb is within a clause, without considering the other essential nature of this

type of adverb. As Ernst (2002) and den Dikken (2025) clearly define, the clausal adverb is predicated of a proposition. The following focuses on this issue.

Section 4 shows that *-mo* can attach to XP or X^0 -level categories. What they have in common, however, is that they all describe unexpected or often surprising events that arise or simply happen in the speaker’s narrative. For example, no one expects or welcomes someone taking drugs, but if such an event does happen, the speaker evaluates the situation as silly. In this scenario, (27) is a good fit as an utterance.

- (27) Taro-wa **oroka-ni-mo** mayaku-o sessyusita.
 Taro-TOP stupidly-COP-MO drugs-ACC took
 ‘Taro stupidly took drugs.’

Unfortunately, we cannot compare (27) with its *mo*-less adverbs, as *oroka-ni mayaku-o sessyusuru* does not make any sense at all to me and my informants. But we can ensure the validity of the observation with the data in (28), including *sinsetu-ni-mo* ‘kindly.’

- (28) a. Sono roozin-wa **sinsetu-ni-mo** wakamono-ni seki-o yuzutta.
 the old.man-TOP kindly-COP-MO young.man-to seat-ACC offered
 ‘The old man kindly offered his seat to the young man.’
 b. Sono roozin-wa **sinsetu-ni** wakamono-ni seki-o yuzutta.
 the old.man-TOP kindly-COP young.man-to seat-ACC offered
 ‘The old man offered his seat to the young man in a kind manner.’

In (28a), the proposition such that the old man offered a seat to the young man is not socially expected, which triggers the assumption in the speaker’s mind that this old man is too generous to take such an action (i.e., in general, we expect the other way around). The use of clausal adverbs in this context is the good fit. As (29b) shows, when *-mo* disappears from the clause, this also captures the sense. The adverb *sinsetu-ni* ‘kindly’ simply tells a possible manner that the old man takes in the context (e.g. smiling, saying something nice). Thus, *mo*-adverbs take TP, that denote a proposition, as their scope, and induce a meaning that the content of the proposition *p* is unexpected or surprising, but it happened.

The present proposal that *-mo* requires TP to scope over can be further backed up by the evidence (29).⁹ Clausal adverbs cannot co-occur with nominalised nouns, such as (29a). (29b) is acceptable but the adverb *oroka-na* ‘stupid’ modifies only a manner of taking drugs, but not a proposition.

- (29) a. ***Oroka-ni-mo** mayaku-no sessyu-no sikata
 stupidly-COP-MO drugs-GEN take-GEN way
 ‘*A stupidly way of taking drugs’
 b. Oroka-na mayaku-no sessyu-no sikata
 stupid-COP drugs-GEN take-GEN way
 ‘A stupid way of taking drugs’

Thus, the morpheme *-mo* on clausal adverbs functions to introduce a contrastive interpretation at the propositional level. It indicates that the proposition *p* is true, despite it not being expected to be true, evoking a contrast between what is anticipated and what actually occurs, making the realization of an event contrary to expectation.

5.2. *PRO is not required*

The discussion in 5.1 enables us to claim that clausal adverbs in Japanese do not require any empty element like PRO in semantic terms (cf. Ernst 2002 and Miura and Fujii 2020).¹⁰ This proposal is also supported syntactically. The evidence comes from the subject honorification construction and the coordination construction (Kishimoto 2024).

Kishimoto (2021, 2024) argues that, among Japanese adverbial expressions, *ni*- and *k(u)*-ending adverbs cannot act as a secondary predicate, while *de*-marked adverbs can. All these adverbs form a head of Cop(ula)P with their base lexemes. *De*-marked adverbs, however, exhibit a different structure from others, thus they project a vP whose head is a copula verb *-aru* ‘be’ above CopP (Kishimoto 2024: 254). Drawing the evidence from the subject honorification and the coordination, he hypothesizes that the specifier of the vP is PRO, and this will be controlled by the subject of the main predicate. On the other hand, *ni*- and *k(u)*-marked adverbs do not have this vP, therefore, they do not contain PRO.

The subject honorification morphology in Japanese is always controlled by the subject of the clause. If the subject is not a receiver of deference, the honorification will not be established. For instance, in (30a) *Tanaka-sensei* is the subject of the clause and also the target of the deference, therefore the sentence is properly understood as an honorific expression. On the other hand, (30b) cannot stand as an honorific expression, since the honorific target appears as a dative phrase, and the subject *gakusei* ‘student’ is not a target of honorification because it is not a recipient of deference.

- (30) a. **Tanaka-sensei-ga** gakusei-ni **go-rippuku-de** ar-u.
 Tanaka-teacher-NOM student-DAT HON-anger-COP be-PRE
 ‘Professor Tanaka is angry at the students.’
 b. *Gakusei-ga **Tanaka-sensei-ni** **go-rippuku-de** ar-u.
 student-NOM Tanaka-teacher-DAT HON-anger-COP be-PRE
 ‘The students are angry at Professor Tanaka.’ (Kishimoto 2024: 255, (40))

Although the main-clause object looks as if it serves as a deferential target of the honorification as in (31b), by the assumption that the depictive *kimono-no o-sugata-de* ‘in kimono’ contains a PRO subject, the main-clause object can bind the PRO and be understood as the subject of the depictive predicate. In (31a), the honorified depictive is associated with the subject, *Sato-sensei* ‘Sato-teacher.’

- (31) a. **Sato-sensei-ga** [kimono-no **o-sugata-de**] hanasi-te irassya-u.
 Sato-teacher-NOM kimono-GEN HON-figure-COP talk-GER be.HON-PRS
 ‘Professor Sato is talking in kimono.’
 b. Kyuukyuusya-ga **Sato-sensei-o** [kimono-no **o-sugata-de**] hakon-da.
 ambulance-NOM Sato-teacher-ACC kimono-GEN HON-figure-COP carry-PST
 ‘The ambulance carried Professor Sato in kimono.’ (Kishimoto 2024: 255, (39))

In (32a), when a *ni*-marked *buzi-ni* ‘safely’ gets the honorific marker *go-*, it cannot be interpreted properly, which is in sharp contrast with the *de*-marked *buzi-de* ‘safely.’ *Ito-sensei* ‘Ito-teacher’ can be a target of deference in the *de*-phrase, but not in the *ni*-phrase, which means that the *de*-phrase has PRO inside the phrase, but the *ni*-phrase does not.

- (32) a. Watasi-wa Ito-sensei-o (***go-**)**buzi-ni** eki-made okuritodoke-ta.
 I-TOP Ito-teacher-ACC HON-safely-COP station-to send-PST
 ‘I sent Professor Ito to the station safely.’ (Kishimoto 2024: 264, (61))
 b. Watasi-wa Ito-sensei-o (**go-**)**buzi-de** eki-made okuritodoke-ta.
 I-TOP Ito-teacher-ACC HON-safely-COP station-to send-PST
 ‘I sent Professor Ito to the station safely.’ (Kishimoto 2024: 266, (64))

The coordination construction in (33) shows a similar contrast. As in (33b), the *de*-marked phrase can constitute a separate clause from the main clause and also describes a state of the subject in the running event. If *kimono-sugata-de aru* has PRO that is

controlled by the subject *Eri*, although the predicate itself depicts a state of the subject *Eri*, but it can be also connected to the main event via control. Therefore, we can say that the depictive predicate itself is indirectly involved in the main event.¹¹

- (33) a. *Eri-wa kimomo-sugata-de hasit-ta.*
 Eri-TOP kimono-figure-COP run-PST
 ‘Eri ran in kimono.’ (Kishimoto 2024: 241, (12a))
- b. *Eri-wa kimomo-sugata-de at-ta-ga hasit-ta.*
 Eri-TOP kimono-figure-COP be-PST-but run-PST
 ‘Eri ran in kimono, but run.’

A *ni*-marked adverb, such as *kibin-ni* ‘quickly,’ exhibits a different state from that of the secondary depictive. *Kibin* ‘quick’ can be marked either *-ni* or *-de*, but when it co-occurs with the primary predicate *aru* ‘be,’ it selects only *-de* (e.g., *Eri-wa kibin{-de/*-ni} atta* ‘Eri was quick’). Hence, *kibin-ni* in (34a) is a realisation of *kibin-de aru* in (34b). Since *kibin-de aru* in (34b) is not properly understood as referring to the subject *Eri*, we can see that it is not controlled by the main subject, but it simply describes a manner of running event. This, in turn, means *kibin-ni* in (34a) has no PRO inside the phrase.

- (34) a. *Eri-wa kibin-ni hasit-ta.*
 Eri-TOP quick-COP run-PST
 ‘Eri ran quickly.’
- b. *#Eri-wa kibin-de at-ta-ga hasit-ta.*
 Eri-TOP quick-figure-COP be-PST-but run-PST
 ‘Eri was quick, but run.’ (Kishimoto 2024: 245, (21b))

If clausal adverbs had PRO inside, and that PRO was controlled by the clausal subject, they should have patterned together with the secondary depictive. However, the result is the opposite: as in (35a), the honorific marker *go-* on the adverb cannot be associated with the clausal subject that the deference of *go-* is directed to. The same holds true with (35b). The honorific adverb *go-fukoo-ni-mo* ‘unfortunately’ cannot be properly understood to describe the state of *Tanaka-sensei* ‘Tanaka-teacher,’ the subject of the clause.¹²

- (35) a. **Tanaka-sensei-wa go-sinsetu-ni-mo gakusei-o tetudat-ta.*
 Tanaka-teacher-TOP HON-kindly-COP-MO student-ACC help-PST
 ‘Professor Tanaka kindly helped students.’

- b. *Tanaka-sensei-wa **go-fukoo-ni-mo** siboosi-ta.
 Tanaka-teacher-TOP HON-unfortunately-COP-MO die-PST
 ‘Professor Tanaka unfortunately died.’

What are clausal adverbs semantically associated with in the coordination construction? As in (34b), a *ni*-marked adverb cannot describe the state of the subject, but simply describes a manner of motion. This is also found in clausal adverbs as in (36) and (37). Unfortunately, we cannot test the *mo*-attached adverbs as they cannot be followed by the copula verb.

- (36) a. Taroo-wa **kenmei-ni** sono moujiire-o kotowat-ta.
 Taro-TOP wisely-COP the offer-ACC reject-PST
 ‘Taro rejected the offer wisely.’
 b. #Taroo-wa **kenmei-de-at-ta-ga** sono moujiire-o kotowat-ta.
 Taro-TOP wisely-be-PST-but the offer-ACC reject-PST
 ‘Taro was wise, but rejected the offer.’
 (37) a. Taroo-wa **kasiko-ku** sono moujiire-o kotowat-ta.
 Taro-TOP wisely-COP the offer-ACC reject-PST
 ‘Taro rejected the offer wisely.’
 b. #Taroo-wa **kasikoku-at-ta-ga** sono moujiire-o kotowat-ta.
 Taro-TOP wisely-be-PST-but the offer-ACC reject-PST
 ‘Taro was wise, but rejected the offer.’

In both examples above, the adverbs in a-sentences have a manner reading. Thus, both (36a) and (37a) talk how Taro rejected the offer. As b-sentences show, these adverbs cannot be separated from the verbal event, therefore, we say that they are modifiers but not predicates.

6. Conclusion and implications

In this study, I propose that predicational adverbs in Japanese are CP-level (FocP) adverbs that takes TP as their scope. They introduce a contrastive interpretation at the propositional level. In particular, they indicate that the proposition *p* is true, despite it not being expected to be true. In doing so, they highlight a difference between what is anticipated and what actually occurs, making the realization of an event as contrary to expectation.

If this proposal is on the right track, we can expect that when English predicational adverbs appear pre-verbally, they may contain a silent focal element like *MO* underlyingly, which providing a contrastive meaning to TP. On the other hand, when they appear post-verbally, they may not contain such an element, therefore they modify only VP. This will be left for future research.

NOTES

- * I would like to express my grate gratitude for Prof. Hideki Kishimoto, whose invaluable mentorship has profoundly influenced my research journey. I deeply owe his constructive feedback regarding my inquiries. This study was first presented at the Kansai Lexicon Project (KLP) in 2020 and has evolved through discussions with researchers, including Yoko Yumoto, Miho Mamo, Takeshi Usuki, Yile Yu, Tomohiro Fujii, Masaya Yoshida, and Hideki Kishimoto. I am particularly grateful to Tomohiro Fujii for his expertise and dedication that have played a significant role in shaping this study. Any errors remaining are solely mine.
- ¹ I will separate the *mo*-less part of these adverbs into the adjective base and the adverbial marker (e.g. *oroka-ni* ‘stupidly’), following Kishimoto (2024). This will be applied to all the examples in the paper.
- ² The adverb also has a position right next to the surface subject as in (i). In this case, it shows an ambiguity between the clausal reading and the manner reading.
(i) John rudely left the room
- ³ Although it looks as if this morphological alternation clearly splits the two reading, the positioning of these adverbs sometimes matters regarding the meaning contrast. See Miura and Fujii (2020) for more details.
- ⁴ See den Dikken (2025) for the same argument for English clausal adverbs.
- ⁵ One of my informants accepted this sentence.
- ⁶ Nakau (1980) wisely suggests that some of clausal adverbs can be speaker-oriented, which may be insightful to our current problems. However, I will leave this for the future issue for the sake of the flow of arguments.
- ⁷ It also includes the topic marker *-wa*, *-sae* ‘even,’ *-dake* ‘only,’ and *-bakari* ‘only,’ but they should be distinguished from one another: *-mo* is referred to as “Kakari-jyosi” (binding particles), which *-dake* is termed “Fuku-jyosi” (adverbial particles). We focus *-mo* in this study.
- ⁸ We assume a split vP hypothesis here (Koizumi 1995, Chomsky 1995).
- ⁹ I am grateful to Masaya Yoshida for providing this data (personal communication).
- ¹⁰ The same argument is also found in den Dikken (2025) for English clausal adverbs. His evidence comes from the partial control and split control, and the floating numeral quantifier insertion.
- ¹¹ Kishimoto (2024) argues that this can be done by virtue of metonymy.
- ¹² I am grateful to Hideki Kishimoto for providing this data (personal communication).

REFERENCES

- Aoyagi, Hiroshi. 2008. Toritatesi-no keitaiteki toogoteki imiteki hurumai-ni tuite [On the morphological, syntactic and semantic behavior of toritate particles: with an emphasis on the distinction between kakari-joshi and fuku-joshi]. *Nihongo bunpoo* [Journal of Japanese Grammar] 8(2), 37–53.
- den Dikken, Marcel. 2025. On the subject of subject-oriented adverbs. In H. Kishimoto, M. Kawashima and Z. Xu (eds) *Papers from the International Workshop on the Syntax of Predication and Modification* 2024. Kobe: Kobe University. 21–35.
- Ernst, Thomas. 2015. Evidence for a proper treatment of the clausal/manner distinction: comments on Kubota, “Transforming manner adverbs into surface-subject-oriented adverbs: evidence from Japanese.” *Natural Language & Linguistics Theory* 33, 1047–1055.
- Ernst, Thomas. 2002. *The syntax of adjuncts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kishimoto, Hideki. 2016. Bun no kouzou to kaku kankei [Sentence structures and case relations]. In K. Murasugi, M. Saito, Y. Miyamoto and K. Takita (eds) *Nihongo Bunpou Handobukku* [Handbook of Japanese grammar]. Tokyo: Kaitakusha. 102–145.
- Kishimoto, Hideki. 2021. On secondary predication in Japanese. *Nanzan Linguistics* 16, 33–66.
- Kishimoto, Hideki. 2024. On the forms of secondary predicates: A Japanese perspective. In M. den Dikken and H. Kishimoto (eds.) *Formal Perspectives on Secondary Predication*. Berlin: De Gruyter. 233–94.
- Jackendoff, Ray. 1972. *Semantic interpretation in generative grammar*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kubota, Ai. 2015. Transforming manner adverbs into subject-oriented adverbs: evidence from Japanese. *Natural Language and Linguistics Theory* 33, 1019–1046.
- Kuroda, S-I. 1965. *Generative grammatical studies in the Japanese language*. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.
- Nakau, Minoru. 1980. Bunhukusi no hikaku [A contrastive study of sentence adverbials]. In T. Kunihiro (ed) *Nitieigohikaku kooza 2: Bunpoo* [A comparative study of Japanese and English 2: Grammar]. Tokyo: Taishukan. 157–219.
- Numata, Yoshiko. 2008. Toritatesi-no bunpu to imi-o megutte [On the distribution and meaning of toritate focalizers: A descriptive analysis of *mo* and *dake*]. *Nihongo bunpoo* [Journal of Japanese Grammar] 8(2), 20–36.
- Miura, Kaori and Tomohiro Fujii. 2020. Highs and lows of the syntax of agent-oriented adverbs in Japanese. *Proceedings of the 22nd Seoul International Conference on Generative Grammar (SICOGG)*, 188–200.

- Miura, Kaori and Tomohiro Fujii. 2021. Japanese subject-oriented adverbs in a scope-based theory of adverbs. *Proceedings of the Linguistics Society of America* 6(1), 254–264.
- McConnell-Ginet, Sally. 1982. Adverbs and logical form: A linguistically realistic theory. *Language* 58(1), 144–184.
- Sawada, Harumi. 1978. Nichieigo bunfukusirui no taishoogengogakuteki kenkyuu. [A study on sentence adverbials from the perspective of contrastive linguistics]. *Gengo Kenkyu* [The LSJ Journal of Gengo Kenkyu] 74, 1–36.
- Wyner, Z. Adam. 2008. Toward flexible types with constraints for manner and factive adverbs: In L. McNally and C. Kennedy (eds.) *Adjectives and adverbs: Syntax, semantics, and discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 249–273.