

Japanese adjective SUGOI and adverb SUGOKU in conversations

Tomoko Takeda
San Francisco State
University

Adjectives and Adverbs

- Adjectives:

omoshiroi hon

interesting book

‘an interesting book’

Adjectives and Adverbs

Adverbs:

(1)

- a. Ano eiga-wa **totemo** kanashii.
that movie-Top **very** sad-non-past
“That movie is very sad”

Adjectives and Adverbs

(1)

b. Niku-wa **zettai** tabenai.

meat-Top **never** eat-not-non-past

“(I) never eat meat”

Adjectives and Adverbs

(1) c.

Taroo-wa Hanako-yori **zutto** hayaku kita.

Taroo-Top Hanako-than **by far** early come-past

“Taroo came a lot earlier than Hanako”

Adjectives and Adverbs

- (1) d. **Ainiku** ame-ga furi-dashita.
unfortunately rain-Nom fall-start-past
“Unfortunately it started to rain.”
(Tsujimura, 2007:120-121)

Adjectives and Adverbs

Many Japanese adverbs are derived from adjectives:

Adjective

ooki-i

taka-i

sugo-i

Adverb

ooki-ku

taka-ku

sugo-ku

gloss

‘big’

‘high; expensive’

‘very’

Data

- **Ten spontaneous Japanese conversations between friends; approximately 190 minutes in total**
- **Only SUGOI and SUGOKU which modify a sentence constituent are examined**

Overall distribution

Table 1: (Total: 109)

SUGOI	SUGOKU
90	19

What SUGOI modifies

Table 2-1: (Total: 90)

Noun	Adjective	Verb	Adverb
2 (2%)	54 (60%)	29 (32%)	5 (6%)

What SUGOKU modifies

Table 3: (Total: 19)

Adjective	Verb	Adverb
9 (53%)	6 (35%)	2 (12%)

Verbs modified by SUGOI

- Of 29, four are in “-teiru” form functioning like adjective

(A is describing a man she saw on TV)

A: **Sugoi** futo-tteru no.

“(He) is very fat.”

--> added to “adjective”

What SUGOI modifies

Table 2-2: (Total: 90)

Noun	Adjective	Verb	Adverb
2 (2%)	58 (64%)	25 (28%)	5 (6%)

Adjectives modified by SUGOI

- *Attributive* (objective) adjective
- *Affective* (subjective) adjective

Adjective modified by SUGOI

- *Attributive (objective) adjective*

M: .. *sugoi mijikai,*
.. *sanjuppun gurai*
de.

(gloss)

M: ..(that class is) **very**
short,
.. (it's) about 30 minutes.

Adjective modified by SUGOI

- *Affective (subjective) adjective*

*K:..minna to onaji
sutanpu no yatsu-
kurenakute=,*

Y:.. [u=n].

*K: [**sugoi** kanashi
katta no].*

(gloss)

K:.. the same stamp as
others,

(they didn't) give (me)

Y:.. [uh-huh].

K: [(I) was **really** sad.].

Adjectives modified by SUGOI

Table 4: (Total: 58)

<i>Attributive</i> adjective	<i>Affective</i> adjective
22 (38%)	36* (62%*)

Conclusion

- **SUGOI** is primarily used to express the degree of the speaker's affective state.
- It appears as if **SUGOI** is replacing some functions of **SUGOKU**
- Look at the result applying prototype theory following Hopper and Thompson (1983)