

Splitting, cutting and breaking talk in Japanese

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Metaphoric and literal

Small idiosyncrasies in literal meaning
often seem to be determining factors in
available metaphoric senses

- Sullivan 2007, 2013 on mapping between source and target frames
- Croft 2009 on metaphors of eating
- Bouveret and Sweetser 2009 on French and English cutting/breaking verbs

Metaphoric and literal

Sullivan 2007, 2013

Literally, *brilliant/ bright/ *sunny lamp*
(light source intensity)

*sunny/ bright/ *brilliant room*
(degree of ambient illumination)

Metaphoric and literal

INTELLIGENCE IS LIGHT SOURCE INTENSITY
CHEERFULNESS IS DEGREE OF
AMBIENT ILLUMINATION

Metaphoric uses:

brilliant/ bright student (= 'intelligent')

**sunny* = 'intelligent'

sunny/ bright and cheerful person (= 'cheery')

**brilliant* = 'cheery'

Since *bright* can refer literally to both light source intensity and ambient illumination, it can have both of the metaphoric uses.

Japanese separation verbs

LITERAL senses

- ORU – often translated as ‘break’ or ‘fold’
- KIRU – most often translated as ‘cut’ but also refers to some breaking situations
- WARU – typically translated as ‘break’

Frame correlations: Literal ORU - bending and breaking

FORCEFUL BENDING is recognized by Majid, Bowerman et al. 2007, 2008 as a salient parameter of separation verbs, since it competes with IMPACT as a likely cause of breakage of a rigid object.

With a rigid and brittle entity (stick, carrot), the frame of forcefully bending the object over itself naturally correlates with a particular result, namely the *breaking* of the object; with a flexible entity (paper, cloth), it does not.

Frame correlations:

Literal ORU - bending and breaking

Japanese ORU (*v.t.*)/ORERU (*v.i.*) specifically refers to bending something over itself, whether a 1-D or a 2-D entity, and including events of bending which cause breakage.

Translatable as 'fold' (e.g. *origami*) as well as 'break'.

Frame correlations:

Literal ORU - bending and breaking

- (1) *purasutikku-ban* *o* (*kanetu site*) *otta*
plastic-board OBJ heat.and ORU.PAST
'[I] folded the plastic board (by heating it).'
- (2) *purasutikku-ban* *o* (*pakin-to*) *otta*
plastic-board OBJ with.a.snap ORU.PAST
'[I] broke the plastic board (with a snap).'

Frame correlations: Literal ORU - bending and breaking

(3) *napukin* *o* *otta*
 napkin OBJ ORU.PAST
 ‘[I] folded the napkin.’

(4) *koeda* *o* *otta*
 twig OBJ ORU.PAST
 ‘[I] broke the twig.’

Conflation of parameters: Clean separation and blade use

If you consider (almost) only examples where clean separation correlates with blade use,

- (a) clean separation and blade use will emerge from your data as a single parameter, and therefore
- (b) you won't see the differences between English CUT, which pretty much has to involve a blade-like instrument and therefore generally involves clean separation, and Japanese KIRU, which must involve clean separation but only canonically involves a blade-like instrument.

Conflation of parameters: Clean separation and blade use

In the scenario below with KIRU, a blade does not necessarily have to be involved:

- (5) *kono sinbun kizi dare ga kitta no?*
this news article who SUB KIRU.PST PART
'Who cut out / precisely tore out this newspaper article?'

Sub-lexical constructions: literal KIRU/KIRERU

- (6) *kutu-himo* *o* (*hasami* *de*) *kitta*
shoe-string OBJ scissors INST KIRU.PAST
'[I] cut the shoelace (with a pair of scissors).'

- (7) *kutu-himo* *ga* *kireta*
shoe-string SUBJ KIRERU.PAST
'The shoelace broke/snapped.'

Intransitive KIRERU

KIRU's intransitive counterpart, KIRERU

- need not involve a deliberate agent or a blade
- refers to events like unintentional breakage of 1-D themes (shoelaces) or tearing of 2-D ones (towels)

Hanasi ga kireta 'conversation KIRERU.PAST' can refer to a conversational lull – no agent is assumed to create the lull, just as no agent deliberately causes accidental shoelace-snapping.

Literal WARU

- (8) *kukkii* *o* *hutatu* *ni* *watta*
cookie OBJ two DAT WARU.PAST
‘[She] broke the cookie in two.’

- (9) *maki* *o* *watta*
firewood OBJ WARU.PAST
‘[She] split the firewood.’

Conversational “breaks”

- ORU the hip of a conversation =
‘turn (bend) it to a new topic’
- KIRU the conversation = ‘end it abruptly’
- the conversation KIRERU = ‘undergo a lull,
break off (*v.i.*)’
- WARU-enter the conversation = ‘interject,
insert yourself into it by interrupting,
momentarily taking the floor but not
necessarily in order to keep it’

Conversational “breaks”: KIRU

KIRU the conversation = ‘end it abruptly’

- (10) *mada* *hanasi* *no* *totyuu* *na* *noni*
still talk GEN middle COP although
- kikite* *ga* *hanasi* *o* *kitte-simatta* *baai*
listener NOM talk ACC KIRU-ADVERS.PAST case

‘In the case where the listener unfortunately KIRU the conversation [lit. talk] even though you are still only partway through [your turn].’

Context: A heading on a handout distributed to participants in a workshop on how to improve parent-child communication.

<http://kyouiku.higo.ed.jp/shougai/001/oyanomanabi/>

http://kyouiku.higo.ed.jp/page/pub/default.phtml?p_id=d3923:3:8:5773&f=s5773_1_21.pdf

Literal and metaphoric KIRU

- KIRU: often translated as 'cut'
- typically profiles *a volitional agent creating a clean separation* with a blade-like instrument.

Metaphorically, TEMPORAL CONTINUITY OF
AN ACTIVITY IS SPATIAL CONTINUITY OF A
SUBSTANCE OR OBJECT

In (10), *a volitional agent creates an abrupt temporal discontinuity* by ending the conversation.

KIRERU vs. CUT

Japanese *Hanasi ga kireta (v.i.)* is fine

But English **The conversation cut* is impossible:

- CUT profiles agentive use of an instrument
- correlates with precise separation (vs. imprecisely torn towel-edges, or gradual development of a conversational lull).

Conversational “breaks”: ORU and WARU

ORU the hip of a conversation =
‘turn (bend) it to a new topic’

WARU-enter the conversation = ‘interject,
insert yourself into it by interrupting,
momentarily taking the floor but not
necessarily in order to keep it’

(11)	<i>aite</i> partner	<i>ga</i> NOM	<i>mosi</i> hypothetically	<i>anata</i> you	<i>no</i> GEN	
	<i>itte-iru</i> say-PROG	<i>koto</i> thing	<i>ga</i> NOM	<i>wakaranai</i> understand.NEG	<i>toki,</i> when	
	<i>aite</i> partner	<i>wa</i> TOP	<i>anata</i> you	<i>no</i> GEN	<i>hanasi</i> talk	<i>no</i> GEN
	<i>kosi</i> hip	<i>o</i> ACC	<u><i>otte</i></u> ORU	<i>demo,</i> even		
	<i>kakunin</i> clarification	<i>no</i> GEN	<i>tame</i> purpose	<i>ni</i> DAT	<u><i>wari-konde</i></u> WARU-enter	<i>kuru</i> come
	<i>koto</i> thing	<i>ga</i> NOM	<i>kangaerareru</i> think.POT	<i>no</i> NMLZ	<i>desu</i> COP	

‘When perhaps your interlocutor doesn’t understand what you’re saying, one can imagine that your interlocutor, even at the risk of **ORU THE HIP OF** the conversation, might **WARU-ENTER** [it] in order to clarify [what it is you’re saying].’

Context: From a blog, “A Course on English Communication.” The author explains that Westerners consider it fine to ask for clarification about what the interlocutor meant, even in the middle of a conversation.
http://yamakuseyoji.com/2012/01/29/communication_skills_lesson7/

“Bending” a conversation

- ORU literally means ‘fold, bend [pliable theme] over on itself’ or ‘break [rigid theme] (by bending)’.
- used to refer to both breakage of bones and bending of bodily joints like hips.
- metaphorically in Japanese,
CONVERSATIONAL TOPIC IS DIRECTION OF MOTION;
TOPIC CONTINUITY IS MAINTAINING DIRECTION.
- ‘ORU the hip of a conversation’ means the conversation gets *bent* (shifted to a new topic), but not irrevocably *broken* (stopped); after the topic-shift, it is expected to continue.

“Bending” a conversation

Since English BREAK does not also mean ‘bend’ or ‘fold’, of course it cannot be used to refer to conversational “turning” rather than to discontinuities.

Literal WARU: breaking and splitting

- WARU refers to breakage into largish pieces (breaking dishes).
- However, it also means 'split' — either irrevocable (karate-chop an apple), or reparable (split a crowd by threading one's way through it).

Literal WARU: split a crowd

WARU a crowd = thread one's way through it

- (12) *yukkuri-to* *toori-sugiyoo* *to* *sita*
slowly pass.by.VOLIT QUOT do
- hitodakari* *o* *miru* *to,* *sitta* *koe* *no*
crowd ACC look when know.PST voice GEN
- syoozyo* *ga* *Mooze* *no* *kiseki* *no* *yoo* *ni,*
girl NOM Moses GEN miracle GEN way DAT
- hito* *no* *nami* *o* *watte* *aruite* *kuru*
people GEN wave ACC WARU walk come

‘When [I] look at the crowd about to pass by slowly, [I notice] a girl whose voice I recognize WARU the sea of people and walk toward me, just like in Moses’s miracle.’

Context: From a work on a website for publishing on-line novels. <http://novel.syosetu.org/7599/4.html>

Metaphoric WARU: “Breaking” and “splitting” talk

- This “reparable splitting” frame is what maps onto conversation in the example we saw before – after the Westerner interjects him/herself, talk will continue.

(11)	<i>aite</i> partner	<i>ga</i> NOM	<i>mosi</i> hypothetically	<i>anata</i> you	<i>no</i> GEN	
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‘When perhaps your interlocutor doesn’t understand what you’re saying, one can imagine that your interlocutor, even at the risk of **ORU THE HIP OF** the conversation, might **WARU-ENTER** [it] in order to clarify [what it is you’re saying].’

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Metaphoric and literal

Careful examination of literal senses motivates – in some cases predicts – the metaphoric uses.

English CUT, being almost exclusively transitive and always instrument-profiling, does refer to agentive cessation of conversation – like KIRU. But it does not extend to spontaneous cessation of conversation.

KIRU has a common intransitive, KIRERU, referring to non-agentive events and thus extendable to unintentional lulls.

Bending and breaking

We cannot predict the extension to conversation of ORU's 'bend' rather than 'break' physical sense.

But English separation verbs, not being ambiguous between bending and breaking, predictably refer metaphorically only to cessation of conversation and not to topic-shifting.

Breaking and splitting

Again, we cannot predict the extension to conversation of WARU's 'reparable mass-splitting' sense rather than the 'irreparable mass-splitting' or 'break into pieces' senses.

But English BREAK cannot be used to mean 'reparable splitting', and thus has no comparable use for conversations.

Conclusion

Yes, literal meanings do motivate
metaphoric meanings!

And a careful analysis of frame-to-frame
mappings can show how these are
motivated.

Thank you

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Metaphoric and literal

Details of literal senses are often crucial in predicting possible metaphoric meanings of words.

Metaphoric uses (Sullivan 2007):

brilliant/ bright student (= 'intelligent')

sunny/ bright and cheerful (= 'cheery')

**brilliant* = 'cheery'

Literally, *brilliant/ bright/ *sunny lamp*

*sunny/ bright/ *brilliant room*

Separation verbs

LITERAL senses of separation verbs:

Max Planck Institute separation verb study
(Majid, Bowerman *et al.* 2007, 2008)

- 60 video clips
- shown to speakers of a variety of languages
- scenes of more and less canonical events of separation (cutting cloth with scissors vs. tearing it with a stick; chopping a carrot into chunks with a cleaver vs. cutting it along its length vs. using a hand to karate-chop it)

Metaphoric and literal

INTELLIGENCE IS LIGHT SOURCE

INTENSITY

CHEERFULNESS IS DEGREE OF

AMBIENT ILLUMINATION

Literally, *brilliant/ bright/ *sunny lamp*
*sunny/ bright/ *brilliant room*

Since *bright* can refer literally to both light source intensity and ambient illumination, it can have both metaphoric uses.

Intransitive KIRERU

KIRU's intransitive counterpart, KIRERU, never involves a deliberate agent or a blade; it refers to events like unintentional breakage of 1-D themes (shoelaces) or tearing of 2-D ones (towels).

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Literal and metaphoric CUT

KIRU, often translated as 'cut', typically profiles *an volitional agent creating a clean separation* with a blade-like instrument.

In (1), a *volitional agent creates abrupt temporal discontinuity* by ending the conversation (ACTIVITIES ARE CONTINUOUS ROPES/SUBSTANCES THROUGH TIME).

KIRU vs. CUT

But English **The conversation cut* is impossible; CUT profiles agentive use of an instrument, and correlates with precise separation (vs. imprecisely torn towel-edges, or gradual development of a conversational lull).

Bending a conversation

ORU literally means ‘fold, bend [a pliable theme] over on itself’ or ‘break [something rigid] (by bending)’. ORU is used to refer to both breakage of bones and bending of bodily joints like hips. Metaphorically in Japanese, CONVERSATIONAL TOPIC IS DIRECTION; TOPIC-CONTINUITY IS MAINTAINING DIRECTION. In (2), ‘ORU the hip of a conversation’ means the conversation gets *bent* (shifted to a new topic), but not irrevocably *broken* (stopped); after the topic-shift, it is expected to continue.

“Breaking” and “splitting” talk

WARU refers to breakage into largish pieces (breaking dishes). However, it also means ‘split’ — either irrevocable (karate-chop an apple), or reparable (split a crowd by threading one’s way through it). This “reparable splitting” frame is what maps onto conversation in (2) — after the person interjects him/herself, talk will continue on the same topic.