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# The Pragmatics of Represented Speech and Thought: A comparative approach to French/English/Japanese

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**Abstract:** A recent definition of RST notes that deictics are resolved on the Context of Utterance in ordinary discourse, but on the Context of Thought (the origin of the thought) in RST (Schlenker 2004). In Western languages, tenses play a major role in the identification of RST. In Japanese, the main clues to RST investigated have been hearsay particles. We have compared the original Japanese to the French and English translations of a corpus of Japanese twentieth century writers (Kawabata, Mishimi, Oe, Ogawa, Yoshimura) to make a more complete inventory of clues to RST in Japanese, including tenses.

**Keywords:** Represented Speech and Thought; comparative analysis; tense, modalization, exclamation

## 1. Introduction

It is difficult to give a precise and unitary definition of Represented Speech and Thought (RST) but, in a recent paper, Schlenker (2004) suggested that a hallmark of RST is that, whereas the deictics (including tenses) in ordinary discourse are resolved on the Context of Utterance (a *speaker*, a *hearer*, a *time of utterance*, and a *world of utterance*), in RST they are resolved on the Context of Thought, that is relative to the origins of the thought (a *thinker*, a *time of thought*, and a *world of thought*). In European languages, such as French and English, novels are usually written in the past tense. In French, there are two simple past tenses, a progressive tense (*imparfait*) and an accomplished tense (*passé simple*). In English, there is a single simple past tense, ambiguous between a progressive and an accomplished reading. In both languages, a strong indication that a passage is RST is the co-occurrence of *now* and past, though in French, it may also be indicated by the switch from the accomplished to the progressive tense. In Japanese, novels are usually written in a mixture of past and present tenses. These tenses can be in either an accomplished (unmarked) or a progressive form.

Though Japanese was the origin of the linguistic interest for RST, notably through a paper by Kuroda (1976), the main descriptive effort has concerned RST in European languages and the investigation in Japanese has mainly concentrated on particles, especially hearsay particles. However, RST is not so much a structural, as a pragmatic or interpretive phenomenon, and it seems to us that a more widespread investigation in RST clues in Japanese is needed.

We propose to begin by a systematic comparison between a Japanese original passage in RST and its translation in both French and English, concentrating on widely recognized clues to RST, i.e., tense change, modalization, question, exclamation and parentheticals. Though we have examined novels by Kawabata, Oe, Ogawa, Mishima and Yoshimura, and can thus claim to have found the same type of occurrences in all of them, we will here concentrate on examples from Mishima's 『潮騒』, translated in French as *Le tumulte des flots*, and in English as *The sound of the waves*, as this is the book for which we had all three versions available.

## 2. Tense change

As said above, in French at least, the change from the accomplished to the progressive tense is a standard indication of the occurrence of an RST passage. Here is a typical illustration taken from the French version of Mishima's novel:

- (1) Regardant toutes les maisons qui s'étagaient sur les pentes, il *aperçut* la maison de Miyayata illuminée. Toute la lumière dans le village *était* donnée par les mêmes lampes à huile mais

celles-ci *paraissaient* un peu différentes, plus brillantes. Même s'il ne *pouvait* voir la scène du banquet, il était certain que ces flammes sensibles *faisaient* vaciller sur ses joues l'ombre de ses sourcils tranquilles et de ses longs cils.

Interestingly, we also find a shift from the accomplished past to the accomplished present in the Japanese original:

- (2) 彼は斜面に重なって建っている家々の一つに、宮田家の灯を見出した。灯りはどこも同じランプである。その宴の様子は見えないが、ランプの感じやすい焰は、少女の静かな眉や長い睫を、頬の上にゆらめかせているに相違ない。

By contrast, in English, though it would have been possible for the translator to use the progressive construction (*be -ing*), he didn't choose to avail himself of that possibility and kept all along the same preterit tense:

- (3) Looking up at the village houses, built one above the other on a steep rise, he *picked* out the lights shining from the Miyata house. All the lights in the village *came* from the same oil lamps, but these *looked* somehow different, more sparkling. Even if he *could* not see the actual scene of the banquet, he *could* clearly imagine how the sensitive flame of the lamps there must be throwing flickering shadows from the girl's tranquil eyebrows and long lashes down onto her cheeks.

Thus, though the shift does not occur in the aspect in Japanese (as it does in French) there is nevertheless a shift in tense (past → present). It might be thought that such a shift in tense/aspect is necessary for an RST interpretation, but as the English shows this is not the case: the shift in tense is a clue, but is not necessary for an RST interpretation.

### 3. Modalization

Though tense change could be seen as structural, modalization is a "content" clue to an RST interpretation. In as much as the narrator in Mishima's novel is the standard omniscient narrator, any indication of uncertainty (such as adverbs like 恐らく, *probably*, etc., or modal verbs such as ちがいない, *must*, etc.) is naturally interpreted as relative to the state of mind of someone else, i.e., one or another of the novel's character. This is what we find in the following example:

- (4) このとき上方で、木と石のぶつかるような軽い音がした。若者は耳をすました。音はたえた。気のせいだったにちがいない。

And indeed, the French and English versions also show modalization:

- (5) Just then there was a faint sound from overhead as though of stone and wood striking together. The boy listened intently. The sound ceased. It *must* have been his imagination.  
(6) Juste à ce moment, il entendit en haut comme un bruit de pierres et de bois entrechoqués. Il écouta attentivement. Le bruit avait cessé... C'était *surement* l'effet de son imagination.

It should be noted that, though the English is similar to the Japanese in that it uses the modal verb (*must*), the French differs in using an adverb (*surement* = *certainly*). Additionally, whereas the French and English use past tenses in the relevant sentence, the Japanese original version uses accomplished present.

#### 4. Question

That questions are a hallmark of RST has been noted since Banfield (1982) who gave questions a central place of her account of RST in French and English, on a par with exclamations (see below section 5). This led her to the hypothesis of a syntactic unit, alternative to the standard S (for *Sentence*) with specific properties of its own, E (for *Expression*). Though we will not go into details for reason of space (but see Banfield 1982 for further details and analysis), there is no doubt that questions and exclamations, especially in the past tense in French and English, are strong indications that the narrator is not speaking for herself but is reproducing another's discourse or thought. And indeed, we find that in Japanese questions are indeed, just as they are in French and English, indications of the occurrence of an RST passage:

- (7) 光りかがやいて、つかのま自分のそばへ寄って来て、擦過して、消えてしまったあの電車や自動車や高層建築やネオン・サインなどのおどろくべきものは、どこへいったのか？
- (8) Mais ces tramways et ces autos qui étincelaient, qu'il avait à peine le temps de voir arriver et qui disparaissaient aussitôt, ces hauts immeubles et ces enseignes au néon qui l'avaient tant étonné, où étaient-ils maintenant?
- (9) Those gleaming streetcars and automobiles that had come upon him so suddenly, flashed by, and disappeared, those towering buildings and neon lights that had so amazed him — *where were they now?*

Though it is the structural form of questions which interested Banfield, whose aim it was to give an account of the syntactic structure of RST, it should be noted that there is an additional pragmatic reason for the fact that questions are a strong indication of RST, which is again that, unless the question is rhetorical, it shows an ignorance or an uncertainty, which it is difficult to attribute to the omniscient narrator. This, it should be noted, is on a par with the reasoning above concerning modalization. Again, the French and English versions use the past form (progressive, i.e., *imparfait*, in French), while the Japanese version uses the accomplished present. However, in both the French and the English version, there is an occurrence of the present time deictic (*now* in English, *maintenant* in French), which is not the case in the Japanese version. Obviously, the co-occurrence of *now* and past is a strong indication of RST in both European languages. It can be seen here as an attempt by the translator to recapture the immediacy of the Japanese present tense, which communicates the simultaneity of the thought and its expression.

#### 4. Exclamation

Unsurprisingly, exclamations are found in RST passage in Mishima's novel, as shown by the following example:

- (10) いつも青年会では、大人しく膝を抱いて、にこにこ人の意見を傾聴して、子供っぽい顔をしていながら、ちゃんと女を知っていたんだ。仔狸め！
- (11) A l'Association des jeunes gens il était toujours là entourant les genoux de ses bras comme un adulte, écoutant d'un air niais et approbateur ce que disaient les autres, montrant un visage enfantin, et pourtant il connaissait parfaitement les femmes. *Sale petit renard!*
- (12) All the time he had been coming to the meetings of the Young Men's Association, sitting there innocently clasping his knees, smiling and listening attentively to the others' talk, putting on his childish airs — all that time he'd been having women on the sly. *The damn little fox!*

Let us begin by explaining that in European countries, the fox is supposed to be the cunning animal, whereas that attribute is represented by the badger. The French, English and Japanese are very similar, though the presence of particle め in Japanese expresses a negative attitude (anger and/or disgust), which is only implicitly communicated in French and English.

## 6. Parentheticals

Parentheticals, along with questions and exclamations, were among the recorded structures characteristic of RST in Banfield's account. Nevertheless, even in French and English, parentheticals are not very frequent in RST, neither, of course, are they typical of RST, given that they also (and more frequently) co-occur with direct discourse. Indeed, we were not able to find examples of parentheticals associated with RST in Mishima's novel and found a few associated with direct discourse, as in the following example:

- (13) 母親は蝶がやがて突堤を離れ、濁っている海面近く、羽を休めようとしてまた高く舞い上がるのを見た。  
『おかしな蝶やな。鷗のまねをしとる』  
と彼女はおもった。
- (14) La mère vit le papillon quitter la jetée et voler au ras de cette eau sale. Là, il parut reposer ses ailes un instant et puis s'envola haut dans les airs. "Quel papillon étrange! Il imite les mouettes", pensait-elle.
- (15) Presently the mother saw the butterfly take off from the breakwater and fly close to the surface of the muddy water. There it seemed to rest its wings a moment, and then it soared high into the air again.  
"What a strange butterfly", she told herself. "It's imitating a sea gull".

It may be the case that we didn't find any parenthetical associated with RST in the novel, because all of the RST passages concerned perception rather than thought, and presumably perception RST makes parentheticals even less common than thought RST.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, though Japanese does behave differently from French and English on certain aspects as far RST is concerned, there are nevertheless a lot of common features, presumably linked to the fact that RST is an interpretative and hence pragmatic, rather than purely structural phenomenon.

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