

## “Responsible” Japanese vs. “Intentional” Indic: A Cognitive Contrast of Non-intentional Events\*\*

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The goal of this paper is to: 1) provide a comprehensive descriptive account of transitively encoded non-intentional events in Japanese and 2) offer a principled explanation for the fundamental issue: Why a predominantly BECOME-language like Japanese freely permits transitive encoding of such events, through a contrastive study with their counterparts in Indic languages. The *raison d'être* for such a comparison is that such events can be rendered using a transitive verb only sporadically in Indic languages. This will thus offer a unique opportunity to see a clear-cut contrast pertaining to linguistic encoding of non-intentional events.

We claim that the similarities and differences between Japanese and Indic languages with regard to non-intentional events follow from the ways these situations are conceptualized. We propose that the differences in conceptualization of the same external reality are guided by socio-cultural factors that shape our cognition. The cognitive account proposed here suggests that Japanese is more sensitive to the notion of “responsibility” than its Indic counterparts, while Indic languages are more sensitive to the notion of “intentionality” than Japanese — not in absolute terms but in a relative sense. Crossing the threshold of grammar, a non-native learner of a language needs to master such cognitive parameters in order to sound “natural” in that language. The notions of a DO- vs. a BECOME-language or a PERSON-FOCUS vs. a SITUATION-FOCUS-language are not a matter of all or nothing (i.e., dichotomy) but a matter of degree (i.e., continuum).

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## INTRODUCTION

In linguistic literature on Japanese, a reference is often made to the contrast between what are called **DO** (*SURU*) vs. **BECOME** (*NARU*) languages. It is argued that English belongs to the former category, while Japanese represents the latter (Alfonso 1971; Teramura 1976/1993; Ikegami 1981, 1991; et al.). Following are the oft-cited examples to buttress this argument:

- (1) kanojyo to kekkon suru koto ni narimashita  
 she with marriage do thing to became  
 “It’s been decided that I’ll get married to her.” [Teramura 1993: 213, glosses mine]
- (2) kunizakai no nagai tonneru o nukeru to yukiguni de atta  
 border of long tunnel ACC pass on snow-country was  
 Lit. “On passing the long tunnel at the border, (it) was a snow country.”<sup>1</sup>  
 [Ikegami 1991: 288]

Note that the literal translations provided above sound “unnatural” in English and should be rendered respectively as “I decided to marry her” and “The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.” Ikegami (1991: 290) sums up this contrast as follows:

*There is a contrast between (1) a language that focuses on “the human being (especially, one acting as agent)” and tends to give linguistic prominence to the notion and (2) a language that tends to suppress the notion or “the human being (especially, one acting as an agent),” even if such a being is involved in the event.*

Alfonso (1971: 885) makes a similar observation, comparing how an American and a Japanese would react to an identical external reality:

*An American and a Japanese are observing some gentlemen who are fishing off a dock, and as they watch, one of the man starts reeling in excitedly. The American says “He’s got one!” or “He’s caught one!” — he thinks of what the MAN has done. The Japanese reacts with AA TSURETA or AA KAKATTA — he thinks of the FISH’S BEING CAUGHT . . . . For the American the situation was a change from not-catching to catching; for the Japanese, the situation was a change from not-being-caught to being caught. . . . It can be safely said, then, that the viewpoints and reactions, and consequently the type of verb used to express situations of the kind described, differ for English speakers and Japanese speakers.*

Alfonso rightly observes that it is the **viewpoint** or **perception** of the conceptualizer that dictates linguistic encoding of a particular situation and that viewpoint can vary across languages.

Kunihiro (1974) and Monane & Rogers (1977) have introduced a distinction

interpreting their contribution, however, solely lies with me. Thanks are also due to Benjamin Tobacman for stylistic corrections.

<sup>1</sup> Ex. (2) is the opening sentence of the celebrated novel *Yukiguni* (Snow Country) by Nobel-laureate Yasunari Kawabata. The translation rendered is from the famous Japanologist, E.G. Seidensticker.

between **PERSON-focus** and **SITUATION-focus**. According to them, English is a **PERSON-focus** language, while Japanese is typically a **SITUATION-focus** language. One of the examples Monane & Rogers provide is reporting the possession of a car. In English it is rendered as “I have a car,” while in Japanese, although it is possible to say “*kuruma o motte imasu*,” the more common way to say it is “*kuruma ga arimasu*.”

Hinds (1986), drawing insights from Monane & Rogers (1977), systematically demonstrates the difference in the way an English speaker and a Japanese speaker would report the same event:

*If a child causes the milk in a glass to leave that glass and spreads it all over the table, the English speaker will say, “Oh, no, she spilled the milk.” The Japanese speaker, on the other hand, will say, 「あら, ミルクがこぼれた」. . . . The English speaker likes to put a person into the subject position while the Japanese speaker tries to avoid this. [Hinds 1986: 27]*

It should, however, be borne in mind that more often than not, a holistic typological categorization of a language to a particular type — **DO** or **BECOME**, **PERSON** or **SITUATION-focus** — can be misleading and, as a matter of fact, languages often exhibit a blend of the two. Japanese — considered to be a canonical **BECOME** (*NARU*) language — is a case in point. In Japanese, we find a well-defined domain in which it behaves like a **DO** (*SURU*) language as exemplified below:

- (3) a. watashi wa kubi o **nechigaeta**  
 I TOP neck ACC twisted  
 “I twisted my neck.”
- \*b. watashi no kubi ga **nechigatta**  
 I GEN neck NOM twisted  
 Lit. “My neck got twisted.”
- (4) a. kare wa atama o tsuyoku **utta**  
 he TOP head ACC strongly hit (tr.)  
 “He strongly hit his head (against something).”
- \*b. kare no atama ga tsuyoku **utareta**  
 he GEN head NOM strongly hit (intr.)  
 Lit. “His head got strongly hit (against something).”

Note that **non-intentional events** like twisting one’s neck and hitting one’s head are rendered in a **DO** (*SURU*) way, that is, using a **transitive** verb, while **BECOME** (*NARU*)-type encoding (i.e., using a **intransitive** counterpart) is ruled out. This is not, however, always the case. Some non-intentional events can be encoded either way, that is, transitively or intransitively, as shown in the example below.

- (5) a. watashi wa denwa no beru de me o **samashita**  
 I TOP telephone of bell by eye ACC woke up (tr.)  
 “I woke up at the sound of the telephone bell.”
- b. watashi wa denwa no beru de me ga **sameta**  
 I TOP telephone of bell by eye NOM woke up (intr.)  
 “I was awakened by the sound of the telephone bell.” [Ooso (1992: 19),

emphasis added]

Note that the subject lacks intention and is not the instigator or the causer of the event in question. Despite this, Japanese encodes such non-intentional eventualities using a transitive verb. This is an area where many languages, if not all, differ from Japanese. Non-native learners of Japanese need to pay special attention to such differences between their mother tongue and Japanese.

This phenomenon has not gone without notice by scholars. Mizutani (1979: 143) and Hinds (1986: 74–81) report usage of **one** transitive verb, viz., *kowasu* “break (tr.)” by Japanese speakers in situations where they have **not deliberately** broken anything. This, however, is merely the tip of the iceberg, and the phenomenon is much more pervasive than envisaged by previous studies. The explanation offered on the basis of a small fragment of a widely pervasive phenomenon is intuitive and unrevealing. Other studies like Ooso (1992) and Oono (1999) confine themselves to reflexive expressions, that is, activities that do not cross the sphere of the subject. Such activities typically involve body parts as objects. The previous studies thus fail to account for the entire range of non-intentional events that can be encoded transitively and skirt around the fundamental issue as to why such expressions are permitted in a predominantly BECOME-language like Japanese. In sum, the past studies are inadequate at both descriptive and explanatory levels.

In light of this, the goal of this paper is: 1) to provide a comprehensive descriptive account of the phenomenon in question, namely, non-intentional events encoded transitively in Japanese and 2) to offer a principled explanation for the fundamental issue — why such expressions are permitted in a predominantly BECOME-language like Japanese — through a contrastive study with their counterparts in Indic languages. The *raison d’être* for such a contrast is the fact that such expressions can rarely be rendered using a transitive verb in Indic languages and thus offer a unique opportunity to see a clear-cut manifestation of such a contrast.

Indic languages also permit transitive encoding of non-intentional events, albeit marginally. This pattern of behaviour is not peculiar or unique to Indic languages but is widely attested across the languages of the world. Transitively encoded non-intentional events in Japanese are thus a potential obstacle for a wide cross-section of non-native learners of the Japanese language. Owing to space constraints, however, we shall confine ourselves to Indic languages.

While the cross-linguistic study taken up here has serious implications for linguistic theory in general, that is not the issue we will pursue. We will rather limit ourselves to a descriptive contrastive analysis of the phenomenon in question and offer a principled explanation for the same. A contrastive study of typologically diverse languages like Japanese and Indic languages not only helps unravel the mystery as to why such expressions are predominant in a BECOME-language like Japanese, but it also makes substantial contributions to linguistic typology in general and to language pedagogy in particular.

## NON-INTENTIONAL EVENTS IN JAPANESE: AN OVERVIEW

In order to understand what non-intentional events are, let us first take a look at the canonical intentional (transitive) events with which they are contrasted. Hopper & Thomson (1980) and Jacobsen (1989, 1992), among others, are representative works pertaining to the notion of “canonical” transitive events. Jacobsen (1992: 29), in his monograph entitled *The Transitive Structure of Events in Japanese*, characterizes the semantic prototype of canonical transitive clauses as follows:

- (6) i. There are two entities involved in the event.  
 ii. One of the entities (called the “agent”) acts intentionally.  
 iii. The other entity (called the “object”) undergoes a change.  
 iv. The change occurs in real time.

A clause that satisfies all these parameters is judged to be a canonical transitive clause. Note the following example.

- (7) sagyouin ga furui tatemono o kowashita  
 workers NOM old building ACC break-PAST  
 “The workers broke (tore down) the old building.” [Jacobsen 1992: 7]

Transitive clauses lacking one or more features listed in (6) above are called non-canonical transitive clauses and Japanese abounds with such clauses. In this paper, however, we shall restrict our attention to those deviating from the prototype along the parameter stated in ii, that is, those NOT involving an intentionally acting agent. For the sake of convenience we shall refer to them as **non-intentional events** in this paper. To get a concrete idea of such events, a few examples are in order.

- (8) Wakanohana ga migi hiza o itame-te  
 Wakonohana NOM right knee ACC hurt-CONJ  
 kyuujoyou shi-te iru  
 abstain from the tournament do-CONJ be  
 “Wakanohana hurt his right knee and is abstaining from the tournament.”
- (9) obaasan ga taichou o kuzushite nyuuin shite iru  
 grandmother NOM health ACC worsen is hospitalized  
 “(My) grandmother’s health deteriorated and she has been hospitalized.”

Note that eventualities like hurting one’s knee or one’s health deteriorating are non-intentional but still rendered using a transitive verb. This defies the parameter (6ii) above.

A note of caution is in order. In Japanese there are constructions that formally look like non-intentional events in that they involve a non-intentional subject and use a transitive verb. This formal criterion, however, is not adequate to call an event non-intentional as stipulated in this paper. The semantic prerequisites for an event to be identified as non-intentional are: 1) a human or quasi-human entity NOT acting intentionally and 2) a non-intended outcome. The following examples thus do NOT qualify as non-intentional events under discussion:

### Natural Force Subject

- (10) teikiatsu ga seiryoku o tsuyomete imasu  
 low atmospheric pressure NOM force ACC strengthen be

- Lit. "The force of the low atmospheric pressure has strengthened."  
 (11) himawari ga hana o **sakasete** imasu  
 sunflower NOM flower ACC bloom be  
 Lit. "Sunflower blooms flowers."

### Non-Natural Force Subject

- (12) kabuka ga 80 sento ne o **agete** imasu  
 stock price NOM 80 cents price ACC raise be  
 Lit. "Stock prices have raised by 80 cents."  
 (13) biiru koubo ga uriage o **nobashite** imasu  
 beer yeast NOM sales ACC improved be  
 Lit. "Beer yeast is improving its sales."

Having clarified what we mean by non-intentional events let us explore them in detail.

## NON-INTENTIONAL EVENTS IN JAPANESE: A CLOSER LOOK

Non-intentional events under discussion are typically Janus-faced in that they show affinity to transitive as well as intransitive events. Depending on the type of the object involved — body-part or non-body part — they can be construed either as intransitive or transitive. In the case of a body-part object, the activity depicted by the verb is confined to the sphere of the subject (the possessor of the body-part), while in the case of a non-body part object, the activity goes beyond the sphere of the subject and impinges on the object.

### 1 Reflexive Events: Non-Intentional Human Subject + Body-Part Object

In the case of a body-part object these events are close to intransitives in that the activity depicted by such expressions is typically confined to the sphere of the subject. Note the following examples.

- (14) Taroo ga {byouki/kega o **shita**}  
 Taro NOM illness/injury ACC do  
 "Taro {took ill/got injured}."  
 (15) mikka maeni kata o **kowashita**  
 three days before shoulder ACC broke  
 "(I) injured my shoulder three days ago."  
 (16) shougakkou yonen no toki me o waruku **shita**  
 elementary school 4th grade of time eye ACC bad did  
 "(I) damaged my eyesight when I was in the 4th grade in elementary school."  
 (17) watashi wa houchou de yubi o **kitte** shimatta  
 I TOP knife with finger ACC cut finished  
 "I accidentally cut my finger with the knife."  
 (18) hanako ga ashi o **suberasete** koronda  
 Hanako NOM leg ACC slip tumble down  
 "Hanako slipped on her leg and tumbled down."

- (19) *nikai kara ochite migite no hone o otta*  
 2nd floor from fall right arm GEN bone ACC broke  
 “(I) fell from the second floor and broke a bone in my right arm.”

In Japanese, in addition to the aforementioned reflexive events, non-intentional events involving objects other than body-parts are also attested. Let us take a look at such expressions.

## 2 Non-Reflexive Events: Human Subject + Non-Body Part Object

Non-reflexive clauses are close to transitive clauses in that they have two distinct entities — the subject and the object — and the action goes beyond the sphere of the subject and impinges on an object that is distinct from the subject. Note the following examples.

- (20) *hitogomi no nakade saifu o otoshite shimatta*  
 crowd of in wallet ACC drop (tr.) finished  
 “I dropped my wallet in the crowd.” [Yoshihiro Nishimitsu, personal communication]
- (21) *Taroo wa mato o hazushita*  
 Taro TOP target ACC missed  
 “Taro missed the target.” [Yoshihiro Nishimitsu, personal communication]

## 3 Extended Non-Reflexive Events: Quasi-Human Subject + Non-Body Part Object

Japanese also permits group or organizational entities as the subjects of non-intentional transitive events. Since groups/organizations are typically constituted of human beings, they are conceptualized as quasi-human.

- (22) *ano ie wa kaji o dashita*  
 that house TOP fire ACC send out  
 Lit. “That house sent out fire.”
- (23) *ano koujyou ga jiko o okoshita*  
 that factory NOM accident ACC brought about  
 “That factory caused an accident.”
- (24) *jyaiantsu ga yuushou o nogashita*  
 Giants NOM championship ACC miss  
 “The Giants missed the championship.”
- (25) *jimintoo ga toshibu o chuushin ni giseki o herashita*  
 LDP NOM urban areas ACC center LOC seat ACC reduced  
 “The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lost parliamentary seats mainly in urban areas.”

## 4 Idiomatic Expressions or Chunk Phrases

In Japanese, a large number of idiomatic expressions or chunk phrases expressing non-intentional events are attested. A few examples are: *kami o nabikaseru* (Lit.

float/stream one's hair in the wind; with one's hair streaming out in the wind), *me o kagayakaseru* (Lit. shine one's eyes; with a gleam [of hope] in one's eyes), *shinkei o togaraseru* (Lit. sharpen/point one's nerves; get nervous), *fuau o tsunoraseru* (Lit. accumulate uneasiness; aggravate anxiety), *yume o fukuramaseru* (Lit. inflate/blow dreams; dream) and the like. Idiomatic or frozen expressions lack systematicity and are not non-intentional events *per se*; hence, we will therefore exclude them from the scope of our study. They are mentioned here just to describe the full gamut of non-intentional events.

Let us now turn to Indic languages and see how they encode non-intentional events.

### NON-INTENTIONAL EVENTS: INDIC COUNTERPARTS

In this section we will discuss how Indic languages encode non-intentional events under discussion and contrast them with the Japanese counterparts discussed in prior sections.

In sharp contrast to Japanese, reflexive non-intentional events, that is, those involving a human subject and a body-part object, can marginally/rarely be rendered using a transitive verb in Indic languages. They can, however, encode non-reflexive type non-intentional events like forgetting something, losing something, or making a mistake more freely using a transitive verb. Note the following examples.

#### INDO-ARYAN

##### MARATHI

- (26) a. maadzha poT bighaD-l-a  
 my stomach.N upset (intr.)-PERF-N  
 Lit. "My stomach got upset." [私のお腹が壊れた]
- \*b. mi poT bighaD-aw-l-a  
 I stomach.N upset (intr.)-CAUS-PERF-N  
 Lit. "I caused my stomach to become upset." [私はお腹を壊した]
- (27) a. raam-laa dzakham dzhaa-l-i  
 Ram-DAT injury.F become-PERF-F  
 Lit. "An injury happened to Ram." [ラムに怪我が起こった]
- \*b. raam-ne dzakham ke-l-i  
 Ram-ERG injury.F do-PERF-F  
 Lit. "Ram caused an injury to himself." [ラムが怪我をした]
- (28) a. maadzha boT kaap-l-a ge-l-a  
 my finger.N cut-PERF-N go-PERF-N  
 "My finger got cut." [私の指が切れた]
- \*b. mi boT kaap-l-a  
 I finger.N cut-PERF-N  
 "I cut my finger inadvertently." [私は思わず指を切ってしまった]
- (29) a. maadzha paakiT haraw-l-a  
 my wallet.N disappear-PERF-N

Lit. “My wallet disappeared.” [私の財布がなくなった]

- b. mi paakiT haraw-l-a  
I wallet.N lose-PERF-N

“I lost my wallet.” [私は財布をなくした]

**HINDI** [Sunil Lakhera, Tomio Mizokami, personal communication]

- (30) a. bacce-kaa pair phisal-aa  
child-of leg.M slip-PAST.M  
Lit. “The child’s leg slipped.” [子供の足が滑った]
- \*b. babacce-ne pair phisal-aa-yaa  
child-ERG leg.M slip-CAUS-PAST.M  
“The child slipped his leg.” [子供が足を滑らせた]
- (31) a. uskaa peT kharaab ho gayaa  
his stomach bad become went  
Lit. “His stomach got upset.” [彼のお腹が壊れた]
- \*b. us-ne anaap-shnaap khaakar peT kharaab kiyaa  
he-ERG this-that eating stomach bad did  
“He ate this and that and upset his stomach” [彼があれこれ食べてお腹を壊した]
- (32) a. meri ungli kaT gayii  
my finger.F cut(intr.) went  
Lit. “My finger got cut.” [私の指が切れた]
- \*b. mai-ne ungli kaaTii  
I-ERG finger.F cut (tr.)  
“I cut my finger.” [私は指を切った]
- (33) a. aaj usne apane jiwani-meN sabse baDi bhul ki  
today he self life-in most big mistake did  
“Today he made the biggest mistake in his life.” [Machida 1995: 598, 29883] [今日彼が人生の中で最大の間違いをした]
- b. usase sacmuc baDi bhul hui...  
by him really big mistake become  
Lit. “By him a really big mistake happened.” [Machida 1995: 599, 29920] [彼に本当の大きな間違いが発生した]

**PUNJABI** [Tomio Mizokami, Nasir Awan, personal communication]

- (34) mere gardan vich bal pae giaa  
my neck in pressure fall go  
Lit. “My neck got twisted.” [私の首が捻じれた]
- (35) soNi daa pair phisal giyaa te vo Dig pai  
Sony of leg slip go thus she fell  
Lit. “Sony’s leg slipped and thus she fell down.”  
[ソニの足が滑って彼女が転んだ]
- (36) a. thaali mai-thon TuT gaii  
plate me-from break (intr.) went  
Lit. “The plate was broken by me.” [私に皿が割れた]

- \*b. main thaalii toD dittii  
I.NOM plate break gave  
“I inadvertently broke the plate.” [私は皿を割った]
- (37) a. raam daa baTuaa kho giyaa  
Ram of wallet lose went  
Lit. “Ram’s wallet got lost.” [ラムの財布がなくなった]
- b. raam baTuaa kho baitha  
Ram wallet lose sat  
“Ram carelessly lost his wallet.” [ラムが財布をなくした]

**GUJARATI** [Babu Suthar, personal communication]

- (38) a. Eno pag laps.y.o  
his leg slipped  
Lit. “His leg slipped.” [彼の足が滑った]
- \*b. E(N)e eno pag laps.aav.y.o  
he his leg slip.CAUS.PERF.M  
Lit. “He caused his leg to slip.” [彼が足を滑らせた]
- (39) a. maar.uN peT bagD.y.uN  
I-GEN stomach got spoiled (intr.)  
Lit. “My stomach got spoiled.” [私のお腹が壊れた]
- b. mEN maar.uN peT bagaaD.y.uN  
I-ERG my stomach spoiled (tr.)  
“I spoiled my stomach.” [私がお腹を壊した]
- (40) a. mari aaNkho bagD.y.i  
my eyes got spoiled (intr.)  
Lit. “My eyes got spoiled.” [私の目が悪くなった]
- b. mEN mari aaNkho bagaaD.y.i  
I-ERG my eyes spoiled (tr.)  
“I spoiled my eyes.” [私が目が悪くした]
- (41) a. raam.ni OngaLi kapaai gayi  
Ram’s finger cut went  
“Ram’s finger got cut.” [ラムの指が切れた]
- \*b. raame OngaLi kaapyi  
Ram.ERG finger cut  
“Ram inadvertently cut his finger.” [ラムが指を切ってしまった]
- (42) a. maari bhul thayi  
my mistake happened  
Lit. “My mistake happened.” [私の間違いが起こった]
- b. mEN bhul karyi  
I.ERG mistake did  
“I made a mistake.” [私は間違いをした]
- (43) a. EnuN pakiT khovaai gayuN  
his wallet lost went  
“His wallet got lost.” [彼の財布がなくなった]

- b. E(N)e EnuN pakiT khoyuN  
 he his wallet lost  
 “He lost his wallet.” [彼が財布をなくした]

**BENGALI** [Ibrul Hassan Chowdhuri, Tomio Mizokami, S.N. Bandopadhyaya, Tanmoya Bhattacharya, personal communication]

- (44) amaar ghaaDe bEtha hoye gEche  
 my neck pain become gone  
 Lit. “My neck has become painful.” [私の首が痛くなった]
- (45) a. ami agath peesilaam  
 I injury got  
 “I got injured.” [私は怪我を受けた]  
 b. amaar agath legechilo  
 my injury struck  
 Lit. “Injury struck me.” [私に怪我が起こった]
- (46) a. amaar haath bhenge gEche  
 my arm break went  
 Lit. “My arm was broken.” [私の腕が折れた]  
 \*b. ami amaar haath bhenge phelechilam  
 I my arm break threw  
 “I broke my arm inadvertently.” [私は腕を折った]
- (47) a. amaar bhul hoye gechilo  
 my mistake become went  
 Lit. “To me the mistake happened.” [私に間違いが起こった]  
 b. ami ekTi bhul korechilam  
 I one mistake have done  
 “I inadvertently made a mistake.” [私は間違いをした]
- (48) a. amaar manibEg haarie gEche  
 my wallet lost went  
 “My wallet got lost.” [私の財布がなくなった]  
 b. ami manibEg haarie phelechilo  
 I wallet lost threw  
 “I inadvertently lost my wallet.” [私は財布をなくした]

**SINHALA** [Dileep Chandralal, personal communication]

- (49) mage bella æmbaruna  
 my neck got twisted  
 Lit. “My neck got twisted.” [私の首が捻じれた]
- (50) puta-Ta una hæduna  
 son-DAT fever came  
 Lit. “Fever came to my son.” [息子に熱が来た]
- (51) anatur-en lamaya næti unaa  
 accident-in child lost become  
 Lit. “In the accident, my child got lost.” [事故で子供が亡くなった]

**DRAVIDIAN****TELUGU** [K.V. Subbarao, personal communication]

- (52) neenu jabbu paDD-aa-nu  
I sickness.3SG.N fall-PAST-1SG  
“I fell sick.” [私は病気になった]
- (53) naa ceyyi wirig-in-di  
my hand.3SG.N break-PAST-3SG.N  
Lit. “My hand broke.” [私の腕が折れた]
- (54) neenu maech-i-pooy-ee-nu  
I forgot-CONJPRT-GO-PAST-1SG  
“I forgot it.” [私はそれを忘れた]
- (55) a. naa walla tappu ayy-in-di  
me by mistake happen/occur-PAST-3SG.N  
Lit. “A mistake happened/occurred to me.” [私に間違いが起こった]  
b. neenu tappu cess-ee-nu  
I mistake do-PAST-1SG  
“I made a mistake.” [私は間違いをした]

**TAMIL** [N. Venkatesan, personal communication]

- (56) En kazuthu suluki kondathu  
my neck got twisted  
Lit. “My neck got twisted.” [私の首が捻じれた]
- (57) Enaku juram adikuthu  
to-me fever is running  
Lit. “To me fever has occurred.” [私に熱がある]
- (58) a. Enudaiya purseai thulaithuviten  
my purse lost  
Lit. “My wallet got lost.” [私の財布がなくなった]  
b. Nan enudaiya purseai thulaithuviten  
I my purse lost  
“I lost my purse.” [私は財布をなくした]
- (59) a. Ennal thavaru nadanthathu  
I.INSTR mistake happened  
Lit. “The mistake happened through me.” [私に間違いが起こった]  
b. Nan thavaru seithen  
I mistake did  
“I made a mistake.” [私は間違いをした]

**MALAYALAM** [Vijayan Machingal, personal communication]

- (60) a. avanDe vayar keDu vannu  
his stomach bad came  
“His stomach got upset.” [彼のお腹が壊れた]  
\*b. avan vayar keDu varti  
he stomach bad bring  
“He upset his stomach.” [彼がお腹を壊した]

- (61) a. *avanDe kaal vaLudi poi*  
 his leg slip go  
 Lit. “His leg slipped.” [彼の足が滑った]
- \*b. *avan kaal vaLudicu*  
 he leg slipped  
 “He slipped his leg.” [彼が足を滑らせた]
- (62) a. *avanDe viral murunnyu*  
 his finger got cut  
 “His finger got cut.” [彼の指が切れた]
- b. *avan viral muraccu*  
 he finger cut  
 “He inadvertently cut his finger.” [彼が指を切ってしまった]
- (63) a. *avanDe pursa kalanju poi*  
 his purse lose went  
 “His wallet got lost.” [彼の財布がなくなった]
- b. *avan pursa kallanyu*  
 he purse lost  
 “He lost his wallet.” [彼が財布をなくした]

It is evident from the data above that while Indic languages freely permit transitive encoding of non-reflexive type events, they do so only sporadically in the case of reflexive events (i.e., those involving body parts as objects). Japanese, however, widely permits transitive encoding of reflexive as well as non-reflexive events. In light of this, let us take a closer look at the similarities and variations between Japanese and Indic languages.

## CROSS-LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS & TYPOLOGICAL GENERALIZATIONS

In the preceding sections, we offered a detailed descriptive account of non-intentional events in Japanese and provided their counterparts from numerous Indic languages. We pointed out that languages — cutting across genetic affiliation — exhibit similarities and variations in the encoding of non-intentional events. Japanese exhibits a wide domain of transitive encoding of non-intentional events, while Indic languages exhibit a narrower one. Let us explore the similarities and differences between Japanese and Indic languages and see what generalizations we can make from such a cross-linguistic study.

In the domain of non-reflexive type events such as losing a wallet, making a mistake, or forgetting something, Japanese and Indic languages behave alike to a large extent. This is evident from the fact that all the languages under discussion permit encoding of such events using a transitive verb. It is interesting to note that while Indic languages permit intransitive encoding of an event like making a mistake, Japanese does not [Cf. (33) from Hindi; (42) from Gujarati; (47) from Bengali; (55) from Telugu; and (59) from Tamil]. The same holds true for the event of forgetting. Note the following examples from Marathi:

- (64) a. mi te kaam wisar-l-o  
I.M that work forget-PERF-M  
“I completely forgot that work.” [私はその仕事を忘れた]  
b. ma-laa tyaa kaamaa-tsaaw wisar paD-l-aa  
I-DAT that work-of.M forgetting fall-PERF-M  
Lit. “To me, forgetting of that thing fell.” [私にそのことの忘れが落ちた]

In present day Marathi, the intransitive expression sounds more archaic, and it seems that the intransitive counterpart is gradually fading away.

In the domain of extended non-reflexive events, Indic languages behave like Japanese, but only restrictedly. While some extended non-reflexive eventualities can be rendered transitively, others cannot. Note the following examples:

- (65) bhaaratiya sanghaa-ne suwarNasandhi wayaa ghaal-aw-l-i [Marathi]  
Indian team-ERG golden chnce.F waste make go-PERF-F  
“The Indian team wasted a golden opportunity.”  
[インドチームが黄金のチャンスを逃した]  
(66) BJP-ne dilli-ki sabhi siTe gawaaii [Hindi]  
BJP-ERG Delhi-of all seats lost  
“The BJP (political party) lost all its parliamentary seats in Delhi.”  
[BJP 党がデリーのすべての議席をなくした]  
(67) a. tyaa gharaa-laa aag laagli  
that house-ACC fire struck (intr.)  
Lit. “Fire struck that house.” [その家に火事がついた]  
\*b. tyaa gharaa-ne aag laawli  
that house-ERG fire struck (tr.)  
“That house sent out fire.” [その家が火事を出した] [Cf. (22)]  
(68) a. tyaa kampani-t apghaat dzhalaa  
that company-in accident become  
“An accident happend in that company.” [あの会社で事故があった]  
\*b. tyaa kampani-ne apghaat kela/ghadawlaa  
that company-ERG accident did/brought about  
“That company caused an accident.” [あの会社が事故を起こした] [Cf. (23)]

In the domain of reflexive type non-intentional events (e.g., breaking one’s arm, one’s leg slipping, cutting one’s finger etc.) Japanese differs from Indic languages significantly. As mentioned earlier, Indic languages permit transitive encoding of such events only marginally or restrictedly. Japanese encodes a large number of non-intentional eventualities — twisting one’s neck [首を寝違える], slipping on one’s leg [足を滑らす], feeling hungry [お腹を空かす], hitting one’s head [頭を打つ], getting an injury [怪我をする], breaking one’s bone [骨を折る], getting a running nose [はなを垂らす], getting a fever [熱を出す], waking up [目を覚ます], hurting/damaging one’s knee [膝を傷める], cutting one’s finger [指を切る], letting one’s health deteriorate [体調を崩す] — using transitive verbs. No Indic language can encode these eventualities using a transitive verb.

From cross-linguistic comparison an interesting implicational generalization

emerges: if a language permits transitive encoding of reflexive events then it follows that it also encodes non-reflexive events transitively. The converse is not true. We can represent this implicational generalization schematically as the following:

(69) **Implicational Hierarchy: reflexive events > non-reflexive events**

This implicational generalization has predictive power. It predicts that there can be no language that encodes reflexive events transitively but fails to encode non-reflexive events using a transitive verb. Among the Indic languages discussed here, Marathi seems to impose strict restrictions on transitive encoding of reflexive events. But it allows transitive encoding of non-reflexive events quite freely and nicely demonstrates that implicational hierarchy is at work. The prediction is also borne out by non-Indic languages as well [Cf. Pardeshi 2001].

In this section we have summarized the similarities and differences between Japanese and Indic languages and made a typological generalization. While such an implicational generalization nicely predicts what is and what is not possible, it falls short of providing a principled explanation as to why Japanese is more liberal than Indic language with regards to transitive encoding of non-intentional events. In the following section we will attempt such a principled explanation.

## JAPANESE VS. INDIC LANGUAGES: A COGNITIVE CONTRAST

As seen earlier, Japanese and Indic languages exhibit differences with regard to linguistic encoding of non-intentional events — reflexive as well as non-reflexive. This raises a question: Are these variations random or systematic? If systematic, what are the principles that guide them? In what follows we will argue that these variations are systematic and that they explain the cognitive mechanisms behind them.

### 1 Conceptualization and Linguistic Form

Linguistic encoding of a state of affairs reflects how a speaker construes or conceptualizes the situation in question. If a particular state of affairs is encoded differently — within the same language or across different languages — this implies that it is conceptualized differently. The key to understanding the non-intentional events under consideration then lies in unraveling the ways in which speakers of Japanese and Indic languages conceptualize such events. Before explaining how non-intentional events are conceptualized, it is necessary to explore how human beings conceptualize events in general.

### 2 Events, Outcomes, Control, and the Notion of Responsibility

In the world surrounding us, various states of affairs are going on. Some involve human beings while others do not. Human beings conceptualize the things going on around them and categorize them. This categorization is not necessarily “objective.” For example, logically speaking, the event of the melting of snow cannot occur on its own accord. We conceptualize it, however, to be taking place spontaneously. Some states of affairs are thus construed as occurring on their own accord or spontaneously, while others are construed as being brought about by human beings. The

former are construed to fall beyond the purview of **human control**, while the latter typically do fall within the purview of human control.

Furthermore, for human beings, the **outcomes** of some states of affairs are desirable, while others are not. Human beings, in general, intentionally bring about events yielding desirable outcomes and try to prevent or avoid those leading to undesirable consequences. For a state of affairs to be identified as **achievable** or **avoidable**, it must be conceptualized in the first place as **controllable**.

Human beings exercise control for both achieving desired things and avoiding undesired ones. They may succeed or fail in their endeavour. In the case of success, credit goes to them, but if fail, they bear responsibility. In the event of failure to achieve a desired outcome, they are responsible for its non-realization. In the case of failure to prevent an undesired outcome, they are responsible for its non-prevention. We will refer to the former as **responsibility of non-realization**, and the latter as **responsibility of non-prevention**.

With this background, let us characterize how various events are conceptualized.

### 3 Prototypical Transitive Events

As seen earlier in (6), typical transitive events involve two entities — an agent and a patient. The agent intentionally instigates the event and achieves the desired outcome. Prototypical transitive events are thus construed as controllable. The events conceptualized in this way are typically encoded using a transitive verb. We will represent their conceptualization as [+ **controllable**].

Let us see how the antipoles of prototypical transitive events, namely, spontaneous events, are conceptualized.

### 4 Prototypical Spontaneous Events

Spontaneous events are conceptualized as states-of-affairs occurring on their own accord. Typical examples of spontaneous events are: the melting of snow, the withering of plants, the blowing of the wind, and many other naturally occurring events. Spontaneous events are immune to the notion of control and are encoded using unaccusative intransitive verbs. We can represent their conceptualization as [– **controllable**].

Let us see how the non-intentional events under discussion are conceptualized.

### 5 Non-Intentional Events

As mentioned earlier non-intentional events are Janus-faced, that is, they show an affinity for both transitive and intransitive events depending on the type of the object involved. They lie, so to speak, midway between transitive and intransitive events on the continuum of transitivity and can thus potentially be identified with either side, depending on the way in which speakers conceptualize the situation in question.

The non-intentional events under discussion involve two entities — a human subject lacking intention/volition and a state of affairs. The crucial point is how the state of affairs in question is conceptualized by native speakers. If it is conceptualized as

[+ controllable], then there are two arguments — a human or quasi-human subject and a potentially controllable state of affairs. Such a conceptualization approximates that of transitive events, and hence such a state of affairs would be encoded using a transitive verb. On the other hand, if the state of affairs in question is conceptualized as [– controllable], then there is only one argument — a human or quasi-human subject undergoing a spontaneous event. Such a conceptualization approximates that of a spontaneous (intransitive) event, and hence would be rendered with an intransitive (unaccusative) verb.

With this background, let us explain the cognitive mechanisms behind the similarities and differences between Japanese and Indic languages with regard to non-intentional events.

## 6 Cross-Linguistic Variations: A Cognitive Account

As mentioned before, surface variations in linguistic form attested across languages stem from the difference in conceptualization of the state of affairs depicted by non-intentional events.

In the case of non-reflexive events, such as losing a wallet, missing a target, making a mistake, etc., Japanese as well as Indic languages behave similarly and permit transitive encoding. As for extended non-reflexive events, such as losing a championship or losing electoral seats, Japanese and Indic languages exhibit variation. Japanese is more liberal than Indic languages in this domain. When it comes to the domain of reflexive events, Japanese and Indic languages exhibit significant variation. Japanese permits transitive encoding predominantly, while Indian languages can do so restrictedly or marginally. These facts beg a question: Where do these similarities and differences come from? As mentioned earlier, the key to unraveling the mechanisms behind these similarities and variations lies in the way these events are conceptualized.

### 6.1 Non-Reflexive and Extended Non-Reflexive Events

Eventualities like losing a wallet, missing a target, making a mistake, losing a championship, losing electoral seats, etc., are construed as **avoidable** or **controllable**, that is, falling within the purview of human control, in Japanese as well as in Indic languages. This is evident from the fact that negative imperatives can be formed. Note the following examples in Japanese and Indic languages.

(70)	Japanese	Marathi	Hindi
a.	財布をなくすな	paaKit harwu nakos	baTuaa naa kho denaa
b.	ペンを忘れるな	pen wisru nakos	pen naa bhulnaa
c.	チャンスを逃すな	sandhi wayaaa	maoukaa naa gawaanaa
		ghaalawu nakaa	
d.	的を外すな	nem tsukawu nakos	nishaanaa na cukaanaa

Eventualities in (a), (b), (c), and (d) lead to undesirable consequences if they are not prevented. If the subject takes precautions, the realization of the undesirable outcome may be avoided. If the subject fails to prevent the undesirable consequences he/she is construed to be **responsible** for it. We refer to this notion as

**responsibility of non-prevention.** This is evident from the following examples.

- (71) a. *watashi no fuchuu de saifu o nakushita* [Japanese]  
 my ignorance by wallet ACC lost  
 “I lost my wallet due to my carelessness.”  
 b. *watashi no fuchuu de mato o hazushita* [Japanese]  
 my ignorance by target ACC missed  
 “I missed the target due to my carelessness.”
- (72) a. *mi kaaLji na ghetlyaa-na paakiT harawla* [Marathi]  
 I care not take-due to wallet lost  
 “I lost my wallet due to my carelessness.”  
 b. *mi halgarjipaNaa karun nem cukawlaa* [Marathi]  
 I carelessness did target missed  
 “I missed the target due to my carelessness.”

In the case of extended reflexive eventualities like such as something setting fire or getting into an accident, Japanese and Indic languages differ. Japanese permits transitive encoding, while Indic languages do not [Cf. (22), (23) from Japanese and (67), (68) from Marathi]. This difference again stems from the difference in conceptualization of the situations in question. Indic languages treat these eventualities as spontaneous or [– controllable], while Japanese treats them as avoidable or [+ controllable]. This is evident from the variation observed in the formation of negative imperatives below.

- (73) Japanese Marathi  
 a. 火事を出すな \*a. *aag laavu nakos* [Prevent fires!]  
 b. 事故を起こすな \*b. *apghaat karu/ghaDawu nakos* [Prevent accidents!]

Note the subtle difference. The Marathi examples are fine if the intended meaning is “Don’t set fire” and “Don’t cause an accident.” They are at odds with the intended meaning of “Take care to prevent/avoid fire” and “Take care to prevent/avoid an accident” if a transitive verb is used. The natural way to say this in Marathi is with an intransitive verb: *aag laagNaar naahi ashi kaaLji ghe*, “Take care so as to avoid the eruption of fire” or *apghaat hoNaar nahii ashi kaaLji ghe*, “Take care so as to avoid the occurrence of an accident.”

We can deduce from these facts that the similarities and differences observed between Japanese and Indic languages stem from the similarities and differences in the conceptualization of non-reflexive and extended non-reflexive events.

It should be added that these events can also be construed as [– controllable] in Japanese as well as Indic languages, in which case they are rendered intransitively. We thereby obtain a pair of sentences encoding the same event differently. Transitive encoding highlights the responsibility of the subject, while intransitive encoding highlights the result/outcome of the event. In other words, transitive encoding is person-focused, while intransitive encoding is situation-focused.

## 6.2 Reflexive Events

In the domain of reflexive non-intentional events such as breaking one’s arm, having one’s leg slip, cutting one’s finger, and the like, Japanese differs from Indic

languages. The Indic languages discussed herein marginally permit transitive encoding, while Japanese does so more freely and frequently. Again, this difference stems from the way these in which events are conceptualized. Applying the formation of the negative imperative as a litmus test of controllability, we find that while Japanese allows negative imperatives, Indian languages do so only sporadically.

(74)	Japanese	Marathi	Hindi
a.	足を滑らすなよ	*pay ghasrawu nakos	*pair naa phislaanaa
b.	熱を出すなよ	*taap aaNu nakos	*bukhaar naa laanaa
c.	首を寝違えるなよ	*maan murgaLawu nakos	*gardan naa moDnaa
d.	お腹を壊すなよ	poT bighDawu nakos	peT naa kharaab karnaa
e.	目を悪くするなよ	doLe kharaab karu nakos	aanKhe kharaab naa karnaa
f.	*髪を抜くなよ	*kes gaLawu nakos	*baal naa nikaalnaa
g.	*にきびを出すなよ	*murum aaNu nakos	*muhaase naa nikaalnaa

From the table above it is clear that Japanese as well as Indic languages are not free from restriction. Some eventualities, like (f) and (g), are conceptualized as spontaneous, that is, occurring on their own accord (i.e., void of human control) in Japanese as well as in Indic languages. In others, like (a) through (c), they exhibit variation in conceptualization. Japanese treats them as [+ controllable] and avoidable; while Indic languages treat them as [- controllable] and unavoidable. Those in (c) and (d) are treated as [+ controllable] in Japanese as well as in Indic languages. Variations across languages and across speakers of the same language are attested, but these variations are not random. They are guided by the cognitive construal of the situation in question. The construal consistently assigns transitive encoding for [+ controllable] eventualities and intransitive encoding for [- controllable] ones.

The next question on the horizon then is: where do these conceptual variations come from? To put it candidly, we do not have a conclusive answer at the moment and can only offer a speculative one, namely, socio-cultural factors that shape our cognition or conceptualization. We speculate that the Japanese people/society seem to be relatively more sensitive to the notion of “responsibility” than their Indic counterparts. Indic people/society, on the other hand, seem to be relatively more sensitive to the notion of “intentionality” than the Japanese. This is not to say that Japanese are *not* sensitive to the notion of “intentionality” or that Indic is *not* sensitive to the notion of “responsibility” in absolute terms. We are talking of the “relative weight” a society and/or culture assigns to these notions. Such an analysis is not entirely a speculation void of facts, but is based on some linguistic evidence.

A telling example would be the event of cutting one’s finger **inadvertently** while cutting vegetables. None of the Indic languages conceptualize this as a controllable/avoidable situation and accordingly render it intransitively. In Japanese, however, it is conceptualized as avoidable and accordingly can be rendered transitively. Japanese assigns “**responsibility**” to the subject for having failed to prevent the undesirable outcome. Indic languages view it as a “**spontaneous**” event void of “**intention**” and falling beyond the purview of human control.

Let us take another example of a shop-keeper running out of stock of some goods. In Japanese this situation can be rendered transitively, in which case the shop

keeper takes “responsibility” for having invited such a situation.

- (75) zaiko o kir-ase-te moushiwake arimasen [Japanese]  
 stock ACC cut-CAUS-CONJ excuse not  
 Lit. “(I) am sorry but we have exhausted the stock.”

- (76) a. maaf kijiega sTak khatam **huaa** hai [Hindi]  
 excuse please stock finished **become** is  
 “We are sorry. It is out of stock.”

- \*b. maaf kijiega sTak khatam **kiyaa** hai [Hindi]  
 excuse please stock finished **did** is  
 Lit. “We are sorry. We have exhausted the stock.”

In Indic languages, this situation cannot be rendered transitively. The conceptualization goes something like this: the shop-keeper “discovers” that something is out of stock only at the moment when the customer has asked for it. Such a discovery is construed as beyond one’s control, void of “intention,” and thus rendered intransitively.

Furthermore, in Japanese, one can even assume “responsibility” for eventualities in which he/she is *not* involved. Note the following example.

- (77) musuko futari o sono senba de **shin-ase-ta**  
 son two ACC that war in die-CAUS-PAST  
 Lit. “(I) let my two sons die in that war.” [Adopted from Teramura (1982: 300)]

This is what Teramura (1982: 300) calls “subjective responsibility” toward prevention of undesirable consequences. For the sake of convenience, we will refer to them as subjective responsibility events. Such expressions seem to be impossible in Indic languages. In view of this discussion, we can refine our earlier implicational generalization as follows:

- (78) **Subjective responsibility event > reflexive events > non-reflexive events**

This hierarchy predicts that if a language permits transitive encoding of subjective responsible events then it also encodes reflexive and non-reflexive events transitively. The converse is, of course, ruled out.

All these facts corroborate our speculative analysis that Japanese is more sensitive to the notion of “responsibility” while Indic languages are more sensitive to the notion of “intentionality” — not in absolute terms but in a relative sense. This is why the domain of transitive encoding of non-intentional events in Japanese is wider than that of Indic languages. Crossing the threshold of grammar, a non-native learner needs to master such cognitive notions — popularly put under the rubric of the “feel” of a language — to sound “natural” in the non-native tongue.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we offered a descriptive account of “non-intentional events” and explained cognitive mechanisms behind their linguistic encoding through a contrastive study of Japanese and Indic languages. We proposed that the similarities and

differences between them in the domain of non-intentional events follow from the ways these situations are conceptualized. The cognitive account proposed here suggests that Japanese is more sensitive to the notion of “responsibility,” while Indic languages are more sensitive to the notion of “intentionality” — not in absolute terms but in a relative sense. Such notions as those of a DO- vs. BECOME-language or a PERSON-FOCUS vs. SITUATION-FOCUS-language are not a matter of all or nothing (i.e., a dichotomy) but a matter of degree (i.e., a continuum).

## EPILOGUE

The relationship between language, thought, and society/culture has haunted the human mind since antiquity and is a perfect mystery even now. Numerous speculative analyses have been proposed hitherto and we have added yet another. The purpose of our study will be fulfilled if it proves to be of help to non-native learners of Japanese around the globe and to arouse interest in contrastive linguistics.

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