

MEASURE PHRASES AND GRADABLE PREDICATES IN JAPANESE

In this talk, I examine the semantics of measure phrases (MPs) occurring with gradable adjectives. In *The road is 5 meters wide*, for instance, the MP gives rise to the “absolute” reading that the width of the road is 5 meters. However, the corresponding Japanese example only yields the “differential” reading that the width of the road is 5 meters greater than that of something else. Sawada and Grano (2011) recently argue that absolute readings are available in Japanese when MPs co-occur with lower closed scale adjectives such as *magat-te iru* ‘bent’, as in (1).

(1) Kono sao-wa 5-do magat-te iru.

this rod-Top 5-degree bend-TE IRU

‘This rod is 5 degrees bent.’ Not: ‘This rod is 5 degrees more bent.’

I demonstrate that i) only the deverbial *-te iru* form gives rise to absolute readings, but that ii) not all *-te iru* adjectives have absolute readings. I account for the data by arguing that the scale structure of the verbal core of the *-te iru* form plays a crucial role. This analysis in turn corroborates the broader claim that gradability is a fundamental semantic property of adjectives as well as of other grammatical categories, especially of verbs.