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Title: Approximative Expressions with *Ayau* *Tokoro* in Japanese

Approximative expressions *almost* and *barely* are known to have different implications.

- (1) I almost died. (I did not die.)
- (2) I barely survived. (I survived.)

Equivalent expressions are available in Japanese. However, unlike *almost* and *barely*, they can be made out of similar items, *ayau*/*ayauku* and *tokoro*/*tokoro-de*.

- (3) Ayauku sinu tokoro datta.  
almost die TOKORO copula.past  
'I almost died.' (I did not die.)
- (4) Ayau tokoro-de tasukatta.  
barely TOKORO-DE survived  
'I barely survived.' (I survived.)

I will argue that (3) and (4) are in fact derived from common lexical items. *Ayauku* and *tokoro* combined together serve as 'almost' in (3). The intuitive interpretation of 'barely' in (4) is a bi-product of compositional calculation using the same 'almost.' With an invisible proposition between *ayau* and *tokoro*, an informal paraphrase of (4) would be 'Something bad almost happened but luckily I survived.'

This analysis solves the problem of mysteriously ignored negation in Chinese *chayidian* 'almost' constructions such as the one in (5). (Kaufmann and Xu 2015 a.o.)

- (5) Wo chayidian mei si.  
I almost not die  
'I almost died.' (I did not die.)

Similarly to the case of (4), there is an invisible proposition that follows *chayidian*. (5) can be also paraphrased as 'Something bad almost happened but luckily I did not die.' No negation is ignored.

End