

# Direct modifiers in non-free phrases in Japanese

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## 1 Introduction

This paper investigates modifiers as part of idiomatic and collocated DPs, here summarized as *non-free phrases*, and analyzes them as direct (= attributive) modifiers focusing on Modern Standard Japanese.<sup>1</sup> Non-free phrases or *phrasemes* (Mel'čuk 2012) are made up of at least two constituents, where one of which must be used in a constrained way. This paper argues that modifiers partaking in non-free DPs are *direct*, that is non-predicative, in general and also in Japanese. In doing so, the claim that Japanese does not possess modifiers of this type will be refuted.

This paper is organized as follows. After an introduction to the Japanese nominal domain, which will highlight the research questions, a general overview over the dichotomy direct/indirect modification and non-free phrases will follow in Section 3. Section 4 presents relevant construction in Japanese and derives the syntactic position of the relevant modifiers. Section 5 concludes.

## 2 Introduction to the Japanese nominal domain

Japanese is a strictly head-final SOV language with exclusively prenominal modifiers, which include numerals, verbs, nominals, two adjective groups, here referred to as *i-adjectives* and *na-adjectives*, and demonstratives, but not articles. Additionally, there is a variety of modifiers that co-occur in attributive position with the element *-no*. While this element arguably prototypically appears with nouns, yielding possessive (1-a) and argumental relationships (1-b) among others, it also occurs with more adjectival lexemes. A good example

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is a small part of my PhD project, which I would have never been able to carry out without your help, Katharina. You inspired and challenged me to critically examine every part of this project and my ideas as a scientist. I dedicate this paper to you and wish you joy, health and success in the years to come.

is *mumei-no* ‘unknown’, which (almost) exclusively co-occurs with *-no*, but shares many features with the Japanese adjectival groups, including gradability, at least with adverbs such as *kanzenni* ‘completely’ (2-b) and inside comparative clauses (2-c), the possibility to be nominalized via the suffix *-sa* ‘-ness’ (2-d), and the impossibility to appear with nominative and accusative case particles, (2-e) and (2-f).<sup>2</sup> For these reasons, such lexemes are sometimes referred to as *no-adjectives* (Mio 1942, 1958, Muraki 2012), but I will choose the label *no-modifiers* for modifiers which appear attributively with *-no* but are not unequivocal nouns.<sup>3</sup>

- (1) a. sensei-no hon  
teacher-NO book  
‘book of the teacher’  
b. Itaria-no hakai  
Italy-NO destruction  
‘Italian destruction’
- (2) a. mumei-no haiyū  
unknown-NO actor  
‘unknown actor’  
b. kanzenni mumei-no haiyū  
completely unknown-NO actor  
‘completely unknown actor’  
c. Tanaka-san-yori (motto) mumei-no haiyū-to at-ta.  
Tanaka-Mr.-than more unknown-NO actor-COM meet-PST  
‘I met with a more unknown actor than Mr. Tanaka.’  
d. mumei-sa  
unknown-ness  
‘unknownness; anonymity’  
e. \*Mumei-ga ku-ru.  
unknown-NOM come-PRS  
Intend.: ‘(The/An) Unknown comes.’  
f. \*Mumei-wo mi-ru.  
unknown-ACC see-PRS  
Intend.: ‘I see (the/an) unknown.’

In Japanese, the syntactic role of a modifier inside the DP is not visible from the surface structure. Neither is there, in most cases, a morphological difference between attributively used lexemes and their predicative counterparts, more importantly there is *only one* surface construction available for lexemes partak-

<sup>2</sup>For different analyses of *mumei-no*, see Teramura 1982, Katō 2003, Morita 2013.

<sup>3</sup>Note that for reasons of space and relevance, I omit a discussion of the element *-no* in this paper. I therefore adopt a noncommittal gloss and display it as part of the modifier in syntactic trees.

ing in nominal modification and fairly complex modifiers can be exhibited in attributive position. Essentially, it seems as if the word order has been shifted around as illustrated below for a verbal modifier.

- (3) a. Kare-ga [hon-wo kat-ta].  
       he-NOM book-ACC buy-PST  
       ‘He bought a book.’  
       b. [kare-ga kat-ta] hon  
       he-NOM buy-PST book  
       ‘the book (which) he bought’

Since the relationship between a head noun and its modifier is not morphosyntactically marked, and neither are relative clauses – for example via relative pronouns or complementizers (Kuno 1973, Comrie 1998) – the standard assumption has been for decades that this language simply lacks direct (attributive) modification and all modifiers form a relative clause structure (Kuno 1973, Hinds 1988, Whitman 1981, Kaplan and Whitman 1995, Sproat and Shih 1991, Baker 2003, Laenzlinger 2011). As will be shown in this paper, however, modifiers in non-free DPs are one type of direct modifier.

### 3 Direct and indirect modifiers, idiomatic modifiers, collocations

#### 3.1 Direct and indirect modifiers

The difference between direct (attributive) and indirect (predicative) modification concerns the internal syntactic structure and hierarchical position. Concretely, indirect modifiers are structurally larger and embedded in a clause. Now, admittedly, most DPs in English that consist of a simple adjective and a noun are equally ambiguous in the sense that we do not know what the underlying structure is. For example in (4), nothing can be deduced about the nature of the adjective *big*.

- (4) the big table

However, crucially, different to Japanese, English has other mechanisms of modification available. The adjective *big* can be embedded in a *relative clause*, such clauses being prime examples of indirect modifiers. See (5).

- (5) the table which/that is big

As visible in (5), the relative clause contains a relative pronoun/a complementizer but also the copula *is*, therefore alluding to the predicative structure of the adjective. Another type of indirect modifier are *reduced relative clauses* (RRCs) (Cinque 2010: 54–55, Douglas 2016, Harwood 2018). They are reduced in the

sense that they, at least in English and most Indo-European languages, lack a relative pronoun or a complementizer and a copula or verb respectively. As noted by several authors (Kayne 1994, Sadler and Arnold 1994, Larson 2000, Larson and Marušič 2004), English postnominal adjectives are prototypical examples of this category, although most adjectives are only licit in this position when they occur with a complement, in which case they are banned from the prenominal position.<sup>4</sup>

- (6) a. the man proud \*(of his children)  
 b. \*the proud of his children man (Williams 1982: 160)

We know that the postnominal position of adjectives in English equals indirect modification via checking for available readings of ambiguous adjectives. One concerns the famous dichotomy *non-intersective* vs. *intersective* reading for adjectives such as *beautiful* (Vendler 1957, Siegel 1976, Larson 1995, Cinque 2010). In prenominal position, the adjective is ambiguous between a non-intersective reading, in which the dancing of Olga is being characterized as beautiful, and an intersective reading, in which the beauty of Olga is characterized irrespective of her dancing skills. This is visible via the paraphrases given in (7).

- (7) Non-Intersective vs. Intersective (Larson 1995: 145)  
 a. Olga is a beautiful dancer. (ambiguous)  
 b. ‘Olga is a dancer that dances beautifully.’ (non-intersective reading)  
 c. ‘Olga is a dancer and Olga is beautiful.’ (intersective reading)

However, when the adjective appears postnominally, it can only be interpreted intersectively.

- (8) Non-Intersective vs. Intersective (Cinque 2010: 9)  
 a. Olga is a dancer more beautiful than her instructor. (only intersective)  
 b. #‘Olga is a dancer that dances beautifully.’ (non-intersective reading)  
 c. ‘Olga is a dancer and Olga is beautiful.’ (intersective reading)

That the intersective reading is the predicative reading can be verified by embedding the adjective in a full relative clause. Then, again, only the intersective reading is available and the non-intersective is inaccessible, thus equivalent to the postnominal use (Cinque 2010: 18–19). This is shown below.

<sup>4</sup>This observation goes back to Williams (1982) and has been dubbed the *Head-Final Filter*. See Alexeyenko and Zeijlstra (2021), Richards (2023) for recent contributions.

- (9) Non-Intersective vs. Intersective, full relative clause (Cinque 2010: 9)
- a. Olga is a dancer who is beautiful. (only intersective)
  - b. #‘Olga is a dancer who dances beautifully.’ (non-intersective reading)
  - c. ‘Olga is a dancer and Olga is beautiful.’ (intersective reading)

This means that while the intersective reading equals indirect, that is predicative, modification, the *non-intersective* reading equals *direct* modification.<sup>5</sup>

Abstracting away from ambiguous modifiers, there exist unambiguously direct modifiers, or direct-only modifiers. Keeping in mind that the relevant indirect readings for ambiguous modifiers only surface in predicative contexts, it becomes clear that direct-only modifiers completely resist predicative use and never have access to predicate position. In other words, while adjectives such as *beautiful* live a double life in English and can serve either as a direct or as an indirect modifier, this is not true for adjectives such as *former* or *alleged*. Not only can these adjectives never appear in predicative position, and by extension neither in relative clauses, they are also characterized by having a distinct non-intersective reading (Bolinger 1967, Kamp and Partee 1995, Alexiadou et al. 2007, Cinque 2010, Panayidou 2013).

- (10) a. a former president  
 b. \*This president is former.  
 c. \*a president who is former
- (11) a. an alleged murderer  
 b. \*This murderer is alleged.  
 c. \*a murderer who is alleged

It is such modifiers, then, that we need to determine in Japanese in order to prove the existence of direct modification.

### 3.2 Idiomatic modifiers and collocations

Another type of direct-only modifiers are those partaking in non-free phrases. First, look at the idiomatic expression in (12).

- (12) a white lie (Cinque 2010: 88)

Crucially, in English, adjectives as part of idiomatic expressions – henceforth referred to as *idiomatic adjectives* – are confined to the prenominal position

<sup>5</sup>There are several more such dichotomies, such as *modal* vs. *implicit relative clause* reading, *relative to a comparison class* and *absolute* reading among others. Furthermore, direct modifiers reside lower in the DP which predicts that they appear closer to the head noun and they are also ordered rigidly. See Cinque (2010: 23, 28–30) for an overview.

if they are to retain their idiomatic character. In (12), the combination of the adjective *white* and the noun *lie* leads to the idiomatic meaning approximate to ‘a lie that is not hurtful’. When modifiers of this kind appear postnominally they can only be interpreted literally, although the combination of *white* and *lie* in the literal sense does not seem to have any meaning in the first place. At any rate, keeping in mind that the postnominal position equals indirect modification, this is expected, as is the fact that the idiomatic reading is equally inaccessible in predicative position or inside a relative clause. This is shown below modeled after Cinque (2010: 88).

- (13) a. \*a lie white in spirit  
 b. ??This lie is white.  
 c. ??a lie that is/was white

Now, there is a fine line between idiomatic expressions on the one hand, and so-called *collocations* on the other. Both need to consist of more than one element and the combination of the elements partaking in the relevant expressions lead to a certain meaning. Mel’čuk (2012) defines both as *non-free phrases* or *phraseemes*. A phrase is defined as non-free if “at least one of its lexical components  $L_i$  is selected by the speaker in a linguistically constrained way.” (Mel’čuk 2012: 33). In the combination *white lie*, the noun *lie* retains its meaning, but the adjective *white* is constrained in such a way that the intended meaning is only available if it modifies said noun. Another characteristic is the semantic *opacity* of this adjective which is no longer related to the concept of color.

Mel’čuk (2012) separates idioms, for which he gives the alternative names *set phrases* and *multi-word expressions*, in *full*, *semi* and *weak* idioms. Combinations such as *white lie* are arguably semi-idioms since one of the constituents contains the original meaning, in this case *lie*, whereas the other can be replaced, for example via *non-hurtful*. A weak idiom is an expression in which all lexical components keep some of their meaning, an example given by Mel’čuk (2012: 38) is *barbed wire*, whereas a full idiom is an expression in which neither constituent keeps its semantic meaning. A potential example of a strong idiom is the following idiomatic DP in German.<sup>6</sup>

- (14) Er ist ein alter Hase.  
 he is a old hare  
 ‘He has great experience/he is a veteran.’ (lit. ‘He is an old hare.’)

The combination of *alt* ‘old’ and the noun *Hase* ‘hare’ above yields the idiomatic meaning of someone who has great experience in something. In other

<sup>6</sup>For this and similar examples see Strakatova et al. (2020).

words, neither the meaning *hare*, nor *old* are preserved, crucially neither in the intersective meaning ‘aged’ nor in the subsective meaning ‘longtime’. Different to *white lie*, the literal meaning ‘old hare’ is a sensical combination and therefore theoretically available, but not probable when referring to human entities (abstracting away from contexts in fantasy novels, etc.). This means, however, that the adjective in this phrase is better suited to appear in predicative position with a copula or inside a relative clause. If it does so, however, the idiomatic meaning disappears and only the literal meaning is available.

- (15) Dieser Hase ist alt.  
 this hare is old  
 1. # ‘This is a veteran.’ (idiomatic)  
 2. ‘This is an old hare.’ (literal)
- (16) Er ist ein Hase, der alt ist.  
 he is a hare who/which old is  
 1. # ‘He is a veteran.’ (idiomatic)  
 2. ‘He is a hare which is old.’ (literal)

This shows that modifiers in weak (# This wire is barbed), semi and strong idioms are equally well analyzable as direct modifiers.

Coming next to collocations, the important difference is that those are *compositional* (Mel’čuk 2012, Strakatova et al. 2020). In other words, they are composed of a *base*, which must be semantically transparent, and a *collocate* and it is the collocate which is restricted (Strakatova et al. 2020: 4368). Examples given for German in Strakatova et al. (2020) with the adjective *tief* ‘deep’ are *tiefe Liebe* ‘deep love’ and *tiefes Misstrauen* ‘great mistrust’. In this case, the meanings of the nouns are always preserved, and the adjective *tief* ‘deep’ does not refer to the depth of something but rather designates the strength of a certain feeling. Nevertheless, it is less opaque and figurative than modifiers in idiomatic expressions discussed above.

A useful application in which collocations and frequencies of lexeme-combinations are given for German is the Wortprofil (Geyken et al. 2009) as part of the DWDS (Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache, DWDS 2019, <https://www.dwds.de>),<sup>7</sup> For example, the adjective *stillschweigend* ‘tacit’ appears most frequently with the noun *Duldung* ‘toleration’ followed by *Übereinkunft* ‘agreement’ in the DWDS.

Interestingly modifiers that are part of collocations sometimes have access to predicative use. For the collocation *tiefes Misstrauen* ‘great mistrust’, we

<sup>7</sup>This tool is comparable to the *Word Sketch* tool in the application Sketch Engine <https://auth.sketchengine.eu> (Kilgarriff et al. 2014).

do find some, albeit not many, results on Google where *deep* ‘tief’ occurs predicatively.

- (17) Das Misstrauen ist tief in der rot-rot-grünen Koalition.  
 the mistrust is deep in the red-red-green coalition  
 ‘The mistrust is great (deep) in the red-red-green coalition.’<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, this does not seem to be the case for collocations including the adjective *stillschweigend* ‘tacit’. According to my native speaker judgment and emphasized by the lack of examples on the DWDS and even on Google, predicative use is impossible as exemplified below.

- (18) a. Aber es gilt die stillschweigende Übereinkunft, dass man  
 but it counts the tacit agreement that one  
 einander in Ruhe lässt.  
 each.other in peace leave  
 ‘But the tacit agreement holds that people leave each other in  
 peace.’<sup>9</sup>
- b. \*Die Übereinkunft ist stillschweigend, dass man einander in  
 the agreement is tacit that one each.other in  
 Ruhe lässt.  
 peace leave  
 Intend.: ‘The agreement is tacit that people leave each other in  
 peace.’

### 3.3 Syntactic position

Finally, another important feature of modifier-noun idioms is that if the noun is modified by another modifier, this additional modifier cannot intervene between the idiomatic modifier and the head noun without causing the modifier to lose its idiomatic interpretation.

- (19) a. Er ist ein erfahrener alter Hase.  
 he is a experienced old hare  
 1. ‘He is an experienced veteran.’ (idiomatic)  
 2. # ‘He is a hare that is experienced.’ (literal)
- b. Er ist ein alter erfahrener Hase.  
 he is a old experienced hare

<sup>8</sup><https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/berlin-gleich-mal-krach-1.3300497>,  
 access: 2023/11/09.

<sup>9</sup>Andres Wysling, Reggio Emilia: Jedes Selfie bringt Stimmen. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 11.01.2020;  
<https://www.dwds.de/wp/?q=stillschweigend>, access: 2023/11/09.



1. # ‘He is an experienced veteran.’ (idiomatic)
2. ‘He is a hare that is experienced.’ (literal)

Another well-cited example is given by Svenonius (2008: 36–37).

(20) wild rice

In the idiomatic interpretation, the combination ‘wild rice’ denotes a grain, not a specific kind of rice. However, a reading in which *wild* denotes being ‘uncultivated’ is also possible. As expected, this is the only reading if the adjective appears in predicative position.

(21) This rice is wild.

Similarly, if another modifier co-occurs, the idiomatic reading is only retained in case of direct adjacency of idiomatic adjective and noun and lost in the other order.

(22) wild Minnesotan rice (Svenonius 2008: 36–37)  
 1. uncultivated rice from Minnesota  
 2. # wild rice from Minnesota

For collocations, again, this must not necessarily be true. Take the case of *deep love*, a collocation in German and by intuition also English. Nevertheless, an example such as the following does not seem in any way unnatural, as backed up by several results on Google.

(23) They are connected by a deep passionate love.

In any case, modifiers partaking in non-free phrases are a source for direct modifiers and will now be investigated with regard to Japanese.

## 4 Modifiers in idiomatic phrases and collocations in Japanese

### 4.1 Examples

Although the Japanese language is arguably rich in idioms, I am not aware of a dedicated study to idiomatic phrases in the nominal domain. The only idiomatic expression of this sort given in the literature can be found in Nagano and Shimada (2015). They give the *no*-modifier *aka-no* ‘red’ which in combination with the noun *tan’in* ‘stranger’ denotes a complete stranger.

- (24) aka-no tan'in  
 red-NO stranger  
 'a total stranger' (lit. 'a red stranger')  
 (Nagano and Shimada 2015: 122)

Similar to *white lie* given above, this seems to be a case of a semi-idiom since the noun 'stranger' keeps its meaning and is modified by a modifier with an abstract meaning. As expected, predicative use is completely impossible.

- (25) \*Kono tan'in-wa aka-da  
 this stranger-TOP red-COP  
 Only: #'This stranger is red.'

Not only is a figurative meaning involved here, the phrase can also be defined as *non-free* pace Mel'čuk (2012) as the two constituents only yield the intended meaning when they co-occur.

In fact, many such non-free phrases in the DP-domain can be found in Japanese and strikingly almost all are found with *no*-modifiers.<sup>10</sup> These include for example the DP *anmoku-no ryōkai* 'tacit agreement'. The lexeme *anmoku* 'tacit' – which is translated as 'tacit', but literally means something akin to 'not saying anything' – is attested 470 times on the Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese (BCCWJ).<sup>11</sup> Upon closer inspection, it occurs as an attributive modifier *anmoku-no* 'tacit' 350 times, but never in predicative position or as a noun. Besides miscellaneous (6 times), all other uses are either adverbial (22) or as part of Sino-Japanese compounds (92), most prominently *anmoku-chi* 'tacit knowledge'. Out of the 350 attributive occurrences, 112 are in combination with the noun *ryōkai* 'agreement', others include *rūru* 'rule' (36) and *zentei* 'hypothesis' (14). Given below is an example sentence containing *anmoku-no ryōkai* and illustrating the impossible predicative use. This is also argued for in Muraki (2012).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Some exceptions are given in Okami (2012), namely *i*-adjectives denoting COLOR for example *aka-i ito* 'red string' denoting a close connection. However, since they apparently do not have to be adjacent to the nouns they modify, their actual status is questionable and I will omit them in the discussion here.

<sup>11</sup><https://chunagon.ninjal.ac.jp/auth/login> (Maekawa et al. 2014). Unfortunately, no tool for tagging collocations is available for the BCCWJ. The numbers reported in the following, regarding attributive predicative and use as noun can be verified here <https://osf.io/u9txp/>. See also Abe et al. (2022) for a similar analysis.

<sup>12</sup>I thank Ken Hiraiwa for confirming the judgment of the corresponding predicative examples.

- (26) a. Futari-dake-no himitsu-ni shi-te-ok-ō to  
 two-only-NO secret-DAT do-GER-prepare-EPIS COMP  
 anmoku-no ryōkai-ga deki-te-i-mashi-ta.  
 tacit-NO agreement-NOM can.do-GER-be-AUX.POL-PST  
 ‘To make it a secret shared only by two, a tacit agreement was  
 created.’<sup>13</sup>
- b. \*Deki-te-i-ta ryōkai-wa anmoku-dat-ta.  
 can.do-GER-be-PST agreement-TOP tacit-COP-PST  
 Intend.: ‘The created agreement was tacit.’

Therefore, quite similar to the English phrase *tacit agreement* and the German equivalents *stillschweigende Übereinkunft* and *stillschweigendes Abkommen* respectively, *anmoku-no* cannot appear in predicative position, is direct-only. Since it can occur with a variety of head nouns and keep the meaning ‘tacit’ it is likely a modifier taking part in collocations.

Another non-free modifier, which is considerably more restricted in its choice of head nouns, is *higō-no* ‘unnatural’. It is attested on the BCCWJ 55 times, 47 times out of which are in attributive use (46 *-no* and 1 *-na*), 7 are as adverb, 1 contains a white space. Crucially, no occurrences in predicative position or as a noun are attested. *Higō-no* is attested only with two nouns: *shi* ‘death’ (36 times) and *saigo* ‘end’ (10 times). In fact, although we can translate this modifier with ‘unnatural’ or ‘violent’, what is actually meant is the absence – indicated via the negative prefix *hi-* – of *good deeds* or *karma*. This means that this modifier has a stronger idiomatic flavor.

In this regard, it is striking that most uses of the DP *higō-no shi/saigo* are part of the even larger verbal expression *higō-no shi/saigo-wo togeru*, meaning ‘to meet an unnatural/premature death’, namely 32 out of the 46 results. An example is the following.

- (27) a. Nanninka-no Kirisuto-kyōtō-wa higō-no  
 several.people-NO Christianity-believers-TOP unnatural-NO  
 shi-wo toge-ta.  
 death-ACC meet-PST  
 ‘Several Christians met an unnatural death.’<sup>14</sup>
- b. \*Nanninka-no Kirisuto-kyōtō-ga toge-ta  
 several.people-NO Christianity-believers-NOM meet-PST  
 shi-wa higō-dat-ta.  
 death-TOP unnatural-COP-PST  
 Intend.: ‘The death several Christians met was unnatural.’

<sup>13</sup>Nakanishi, Rei (2003): Yotō. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, via BCCWJ, 2023/11/09.

<sup>14</sup>Ōno, Kazumichi (2001): Translation of Michelet, Jules: *Bible de l’humanité*. Tokyo: Fujiwara shoten, original: 1864, via BCCWJ, 2023/11/09. Note that potentially, sticking to the religious dimension of the modifier, a translation along the line of ‘undignified’ might be more appropriate.

This suggests that *higō-no shi* is an idiomatic phrase, or actually one part of a bigger verbal idiomatic phrase and that *higō-no* is a direct modifier.

Finally, another relevant modifier to be discussed is *kōki-no* ‘curious’. Ignoring the over 700 occurrences of this lexeme in the Sino-Japanese compound *kōki-shin* ‘curiosity’ (*kōki* + *kokoro/shin* ‘curious’ + ‘heart’), this lexeme occurs 69 times as a modifier in attributive position (66 times with *-no* and, interestingly, 3 times with *-na*), once as a noun and never with the copula. All other uses are adverbially (9 times). 61 out of the 69 attributive occurrences are with nouns with the literal meaning ‘eye’ and the figurative meaning ‘look’ or ‘gaze’, namely *me* (39), *manazashi* (6), *gan* (6) and *shisen* (7). Compared to *me*, the others can be described as Sino-Japanese nouns with the same meaning from a higher register. Again, predicative use is impossible as shown below.

- (28) a. Shikashi kare-ga kōki-no me-de mi-rare, ōku-no  
 but he-NOM curious-NO eye-INS see-PASS many-NO  
 hito-ga kare-no hanashi-wo kiki-ta-gat-ta koto[...]  
 people-NOM he-NO story-ACC hear-VOL-seem-PST fact  
 ‘But the fact that he was viewed with curious eyes (a curious gaze)  
 and many people wanted to hear his story [...]’<sup>15</sup>
- b. \*Kare-ga mi-rare-ta me-wa kōki-dat-ta.  
 he-NOM see-PASS-PST eye-TOP curious-COP-PST  
 Intend.: ‘The eye/gaze he was viewed with was curious.’

This restriction to a certain kind of head nouns indicates that *kōki* same as *higō* is non-compositional, therefore closer to the group of idiomatic modifiers than to modifiers partaking in collocations. On the other hand, it should be noted that since both modifiers appear only with a very restricted set of nouns their main feature seems to be non-productivity and since they in each case keep their meaning, the only one they seem to have in fact, they could be argued to be semantically compositional after all (Ken Hiraiwa p.c.). The question then is if they are true idioms, but the syntactic position discussed in the next subsection might bring some light on this.

#### 4.2 Syntax

The next question is where these modifiers are situated in the DP. Taking into account the direct character of the modifiers in question they should be situated in the direct domain of the DP, which is lower than the indirect domain (Cinque 2010, 2020). Svenonius (2008), and see Kim (2019), has argued that idiomatic modifiers are hosted by a specific functional projection. He assumes that this

<sup>15</sup>Ogawa, Ryō (2002): *Doreishōnin Soniē - 18-seiki Furansu no doreikōki to Afurika-shakai*, Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, via BCCWJ, 2023/11/09.

projection is a category-less root phrase, an idea borrowed from Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993, 1994). Such root phrases occupy the lowest position among the functional projections in the extended noun phrase and directly dominate the noun. This, in turn, explains why idiomatic modifiers, as seen in English, must occur in the surface structure directly adjacent to the noun. In the DP *wild Minnesotan rice* in (22), then, *wild* is not embedded in the specifier position of a root phrase but in the specifier of some other functional projection higher in the DP. This, however, raises the question whether also modifiers appearing in collocations are situated in such root phrases, because as shown above they can in some instances be separated from the noun.

The Japanese modifiers discussed above for which a stronger idiomatic flavor and less productivity were detected can never be followed by another modifier when modifying a noun. See first (29).

- (29) a. minna-no kōki-no manazashi  
 everyone-NO curious-NO gaze  
 ‘everyone’s curious gaze’  
 b. \*kōki-no minna-no manazashi  
 curious-NO everyone-NO gaze

Note that this behavior is not due to the nature of *minna-no* ‘everyone’s’. As shown below, this modifier can intervene between non-idiomatic, that is free, modifiers and the head noun (Ken Hiraiwa p.c.).

- (30) a. minna-no aka-i doresu  
 everyone-NO red-I dress  
 b. aka-i minna-no doresu  
 red-I everyone-NO dress  
 ‘everyone’s red dresses’

The adjacency facts apply to other idiomatic phrases as well, for example *aka-no tan’in* ‘red stranger’ given in (24) does not allow an intervening relative clause (31).

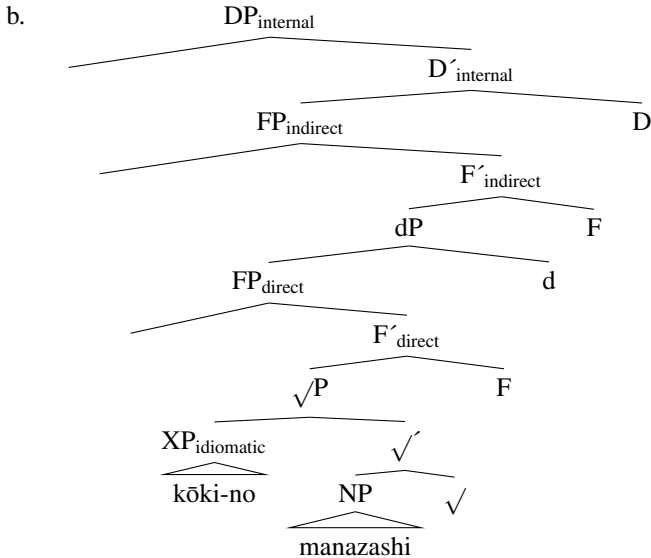
- (31) a. [dare-mo shira-na-i] aka-no tan’in  
 who-EMP know-NEG-I red-NO stranger  
 ‘the total stranger that no one knows’  
 b. \*aka-no [dare-mo shira-na-i] tan’in  
 red-NO who-EMP know-NEG-I stranger

And finally note that this is true also for the DP *higō-no shi* ‘unnatural death’ (Ken Hiraiwa p.c.).

- (32) a. kōtsujiko-ni-yoru higō-no shi  
 traffic.accident-DAT-due unnatural-NO death  
 ‘an unnatural death due to a traffic accident’  
 b. \*higō-no kōtsujiko-ni-yoru shi  
 unnatural-NO traffic.accident-DAT-due death

Therefore, I argue that the analysis of Svenonius (2008) is correct for Japanese as well and, although (even direct) modifiers do not really abide by ordering restrictions in this language (Sproat and Shih 1991, Laenzlinger 2011), idiomatic modifiers are one type of modifiers for which this is the case. The relevant structure is given below.

- (33) a. kōki-no manazashi  
 curious-NO gaze  
 ‘curious gaze’



To clarify: Such modifiers are situated in the part of the DP-internal domain reserved for direct modifiers. This part is separated from the indirect domain via the projection dP (Cinque 2010, 2020). Inside the direct domain, this root phrase occupies the lowest position explaining the adjacency facts.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>I have displayed functional projections for indirect and direct modifiers respectively simply for the sake of illustration. Following standard cartographic assumptions, all relevant functional projections are always there structurally even when their specifier positions are not filled.

The question is now whether this extends to *anmoku-no* ‘tacit’ which was identified as part of collocations above. As it turns out, as was true for German, such modifiers can be separated from their head noun (Ken Hiraiwa p.c.).

- (34) a. fukakai-na anmoku-no ryōkai  
 mysterious-NA tacit-NO agreement  
 b. anmoku-no fukaka-ina ryōkai  
 tacit-NO mysterious-NA agreement  
 ‘mysterious tacit agreement’

This suggests that modifiers such as *anmoku-no* are not hosted by this root phrase, although they are likely still situated in the direct domain.

The same holds for modifiers receiving an internal theta role from the noun for which Kim (2019: 130) argues based on Korean that they are also embedded in a root phrase. She shows that as with idiomatic modifiers no other modifier can intervene between such modifiers and the head noun as well. This is shown in (35) where *kyengcey* ‘economy’ is the internal (object) argument of *kayhyek* ‘renovation’ and according to the judgment of the author must be immediately adjacent to the noun.

- (35) a. sin kyengcey kayhyek  
 new economy renovation  
 b. \*kyengcey sin kayhyek  
 economy new renovation  
 ‘a new renovation of the economy’ Korean (Kim 2019: 130)

However, this is not the case in Japanese. As the translation of the relevant example shows, permutation is easily possible.

- (36) a. arata-na keizai-no kaikaku  
 new-NA economy-NO renovation  
 b. keizai-no arata-na kaikaku  
 economy-NO new-NA renovation  
 ‘a new renovation of the economy’ (Ken Hiraiwa p.c.)

Therefore, I argue that it is only idiomatic modifiers that are situated in these root phrases.

## 5 Final remarks

This paper has argued that modifiers appearing in non-free phrases in Japanese are one type of direct modifiers, thereby dismissing the claim that this lan-

guage lacks direct modification entirely. It was shown that the relevant type of modifiers cannot appear in predicative position. The modifiers under question then are non-free due to the fact that they undergo some constrained use, both reflecting the choice of their head nouns as well as their syntactic role as direct modifiers. Furthermore, as a side note, the fact that all these *no*-modifiers do not exhibit nominal use either, highlights the distribution of this morphological group across different word classes. Finally, I argued following Svenonius (2008) that modifiers with a more idiomatic character are situated in category-less root phrases immediately dominating the noun, but that this does not seem to be true for collocations and thematic modifiers.

Of course, I essentially only focused on a very small number of modifiers here. For future research, it is desirable to extend the inventory of such modifiers and to, ideally, set up a database, where such modifiers are tagged in Japanese according to their constrained character and the idiosyncratic nature of the DPs they appear in.

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