The 'pretty Construction' in English

In this paper, we take 'pretty construction' in English as the object of study. Like "Mary is pretty to look at", 'pretty construction' is made up of the following combination of categories: "subject + copula + adjective + infinitival complement". The syntactic subject is the objective of the verb in the infinitival complement. Pretty constructions have been studied in the field of generative grammar, and when we analyze the properties of pretty construction we cannot avoid comparing them with 'tough constructions' like "The book is easy to read".

The main goal of this paper is to survey the properties of pretty construction in terms of its discourse functions. Now, little is known about the discourse functions of pretty construction. For this purpose, we would like to survey the properties which are explained in previous linguistic studies, and collect examples via corpus. Then, we would like to build an analysis of discourse functions on the particularities of pretty construction.

In chapter 1, we examine the treatment of pretty constructions in reference books for learners by surveying three things:

(i) the actual circumstances of descriptions on pretty constructions. In Japan, pretty construction is not covered as an important construction.

(ii) whether there are differences between Japanese and English reference books. Even in reference books written in English, little is described regarding pretty construction, although it is frequently used by native speakers of English.

(iii) the descriptions of previous linguistic studies. It is very important for pretty construction that the syntactic subject is the objective in the infinitival complement, and that the subject of the infinitive phrase is not accepted.
In chapter 2, after collecting examples by corpus, the steps and the results are shown. We would like to observe the actualities of pretty constructions in terms of adjectives used within pretty construction, and verbs used within the infinitival complement. In circumstances where adjectives are able to choose the verb in the infinitival complement flexibly, it is an indispensable condition for pretty constructions that the meaning of the sentence changes depending on whether the infinitival complement exists or not. Then, verbs related to our five senses like 'look at' and 'touch' are frequently used in infinitival complements of pretty constructions.

In chapter 3, we would like to examine the discourse functions of pretty constructions. Based on the properties which are pointed out in chapter 1 and 2, we survey how pretty constructions work using examples. Pretty constructions, which have a stronger meaning for the evaluation of the subject, are sometimes used with conditional clauses and play second string to other information. Moreover, they may be used to enumerate properties of the subject. This characteristic works most effectively within the fields of advertisement and criticism. Even regarding the case of color adjectives, although they are not used with the infinitival complement, it is accepted under special conditions that they are used to describe the "properties" of a subject which is not "permanent".

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