Two Levels of Blending with Homophonic Compounds in Japanese

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ABSTRACT: This study states that discourse serves as a crucial factor for a precise understanding of Japanese puns i.e. a word play with homophones, and argues that the double meanings of a pun can be processed at the lexical/phonological level and the discourse level in this order. Homophonic compounds provide speakers of Japanese with a chance to create newly derived meanings from an unexpected use of a given homophonic compound; however, such derived meanings blend right in with the immediate discourse. Such information processing in mind and discourse can be accounted for by Blending Theory (Fauconnier, 1997).

Keywords: Japanese puns, homophonic compounds, discourse, blending.

RESUMEN: El presente artículo muestra que el discurso es un factor crucial para poder interpretar de forma precisa los juegos de palabras japoneses, es decir, homófonos con dobles sentidos. Se defiende que el doble sentido de un juego de palabras se puede procesar al nivel léxico-fonológico y al nivel discursivo por este orden. Los compuestos homofónicos ofrecen a los hablantes japoneses la oportunidad de crear significados derivados novedosos de un uso inesperado de un determinado compuesto homofónico; sin embargo, tales sentidos derivados se integran en el discurso inmediato. Este procesamiento de la información en la mente y el discurso se puede explicar mediante la Teoría de la Integración Conceptual (Blending Theory).

Palabras clave: juegos de palabras japoneses, compuestos homofónicos, discurso, integración conceptual (blending).

1. Introduction

This study states that discourse serves as a crucial factor for a precise understanding of Japanese puns i.e. a word play with homophones, and argues that the double meanings of a pun can be processed at the lexical/phonological level and the discourse level in

this order. The theoretical contribution of this study is that such information processing in thought is facilitated in immediate discourse and can be accounted for by Blending Theory (Fauconnier, 1997). Japanese words consist of syllables which usually include a consonant and a vowel; compound expressions are often found to serve an effective unit for puns, because they can create a newly derived meaning from each part. Due to such grammatical properties, homophonic compounds abound in the history of Japanese. In order to precisely understand the double meanings of a pun, the expression should be used in a stretch of discourse, at least in a clause. Otherwise, the double meanings hidden in the expression cannot be fully understood.

In Japanese, the pronunciation of a given Chinese character is written in *hiragana* i.e. the cursive phonetic Japanese syllabary. Hiragana is mostly used for grammatical particles, verb inflection, and Japanese words which are not written in *kanji* (i.e. Chinese character) or which are too difficult even for an educated person to read or write in *kanji*. According to Goo Dictionary (http://dictionary.goo.ne.jp), for example, the sequence of sounds [katei] written in *hiragana* hits twelve words written in Chinese character. For native or fluent speakers of Japanese, such a pronunciation may possibly bring to mind the following Chinese characters with their respective meanings: 家庭 'family', 仮定 'hypothesis', 課程 'course' and 過程 'process'. If the word pronounced [katei] is used in discourse, the Japanese people can imagine which of these [katei] is indicated in the utterance or the mind of the speaker; however, even in discourse, there is the possibility that hearers may misinterpret the real intention that the speaker had in his/her mind. That is, because of such troublesome same pronunciations, homophonic compounds are likely to cause misunderstanding, or might lead to an interpersonal conflict if you take one wrong step (Takashima, 2001).

Nevertheless, homophonic compounds can serve to make an effect on poetry, giving full scope to one's imagination; they can derive two distinct but related meanings in the immediate discourse, and speakers can create a newly derived meaning from an unexpected use of a given homophonic compound. Considering the fact that such a classical and quick-witted training is still part of Japanese compulsory education, the Japanese people seem to be more or less expected to have some knowledge about the effective use of such puns in either poetry or ordinary communication. Whether poetic or ordinary puns, the mechanism for conceptual mapping is the same, and Blending Theory can handle such conceptual mappings in Japanese puns, giving a unified account of them.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I will give a brief account of Japanese homophonic compounds, while in Section 3, I will explain Blending Theory. In Section 4, I will probe into discourse functions of Japanese homophonic compounds in conversation, cosmic story-telling and poetry. In Section 5, I will summarize and discuss the role of Blending theory in homophonic compounds with respect to Chinese character. Section 6 is the conclusion of this study. In what follows, I will use homophonic compounds as a cover term for puns unless otherwise specified.

2. Japanese Homophonic Compounds

As explained in the above, the basic phonological structure of Japanese words comprises a consonant and a vowel, and such a simple syllabic structure necessitates of a large amount of homophones. In this section, I will first present the definition of homophone and compound, respectively, and illustrate two cases of homophonic compounds in Japanese.

2.1. Definitions

'Homophones' and 'compounds' are defined respectively. Homophones are defined as a class of words, either mono-morphemic or compound, which are pronounced alike but written differently (Leech, 1969: 208; Lyons, 1977: 558-59). As to compounds, I will adopt the definition of compounds by Li and Thompson (1981: 46): "all polysyllabic units that have certain properties of single words and that can be analyzed into two or more meaningful elements, or morphemes, even if these morphemes cannot occur independently.[1] Combined together, homophonic compounds can be defined as follows: A group of compounds that are pronounced alike but written differently.

2.2. Two Examples of Japanese Homophonic Compounds

Now, let us consider the following two cases of Japanese homophonic compounds; they are pronounced [kanshou] and [kitoku] respectively. These homophonic compounds are searched by Infoseek (http://dictionary.www.infoseek.co.jp), one of the established on-line dictionaries by which we can search a huge data bank of information for Japanese vocabularies. These are summarized in (1) and (2).

(1)   [kanshou] by Infoseek (http://dictionary.www.infoseek.co.jp)
       {[kan] 2401 examples,+,[shou] 2244 examples} > [kanshou] 46 examples
(2)   [kitoku] by Infoseek (http://dictionary.www.infoseek.co.jp)
       {[ki] 7681 examples,+,[toku] 377 examples} >[kitoku] 5 examples

The compound pronounced [kanshou] can be decomposed into the words pronounced [kan] and [shou], while the compound pronounced [kitoku] can be decomposed into the words pronounced [ki] and [toku]. As explained above, Japanese has produced huge quantities of homophones. When we look up the word pronounced [kan] for Infoseek, for example, we can find 2401 Chinese characters; the word pronounced [shou] hits 2244 Chinese characters. Even the combinatory sound [kanshou] still hits 46 examples of Chinese characters. The other compound [kitoku] is also a good example of homophone. The first part [ki] hits 7681 examples of Chinese characters,

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1.   For the classification of compounds in Chinese and Japanese, see Li and Thompson (1981: 48-84) and Shibatani (1990: 237-254), respectively.

while the second part [toku] hits 377 examples of Chinese characters. The compounded expression [kitoku] still has the five forms of Chinese characters.

   The homophonic compounds that correspond to these sequences of sounds are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. The meanings of each compound expression are based on Todo (1965); while several etymological meanings of each compound are listed there, I picked out the meaning which is more or less directly associated with the character form in Japanese. For example, 感傷 in Table 1: When the first part 感 'feeling' is combined with the second part 傷 'hurt', the whole meaning becomes 'sentiment'. Note that, out of 46 examples of compounds pronounced [kanshou], I chose to display the five examples of homophonic compounds, not necessarily because of their high frequency in Japanese discourse, but because of the relatively clearer transparency of the original meanings of each part.

Table 1. Homophonic Compounds [kanshou] in Example (1)

Characters [meanings]	Meaning	Pronunciation
観 賞[2] [observe + award]	appreciate, enjoy, etc.	[kanshou]
鑑 賞 [glass + award]	appreciate, enjoy, etc.	[kanshou]
干 渉 [infringe + cross]	interfere with, intervene in, meddle in, etc.	[kanshou]
感 傷 [feeling + hurt]	sentiment, pathos, etc.	[kanshou]
観 照 [observe + reflect]	contemplation	[kanshou]

Table 2. Homophonic Compounds [kitoku] in Example (2)

Characters [meanings]	Meaning	Pronunciation
危 篤 [danger + alert]	critical condition, seriousness of an illness, very seriously ill, etc.	[kitoku]
既 得 [already + obtain]	already acquired, vested, etc.	[kitoku]
奇 特 [crooked + unique]	beneficent, benevolent	[kitoku]
貴 徳 [precious + virtue]	a type of solo dancing in the traditional Japanese dance	[kitoku]
耆 徳 [senior + virtue]	virtuous seniors	[kitoku]

2.   観賞 and 鑑賞 have similar meanings. If we translate 'aquarium fish' into Japanese, we use 観賞 instead of 鑑賞 and produce 観賞魚 [観賞+魚(fish)].

In this section, I have presented the definitions of homophones and compounds, and illustrated two types of homophonic compounds in Japanese. The point of relevance here is that, when such examples are used in conversation or written in *hiragana*, the hearer or the reader may not fully understand what the speaker or the writer really indicates in the expression. Therefore, discourse factors become inevitable in the precise interpretation of homophonic compounds. In the next section, I will introduce the basic ideas of Blending Theory.

3. Blending Theory

Fauconnier and Turner's basic suggestion is that we need a network – i.e. a many-spaced model – in order to give a unified account of the complex phenomena of human thought (Fauconnier; Turner, 1996); they regard the issue of conceptual metaphor (e.g. Lakoff, 1993)[3] as a special case of a much larger one: the conceptual system operates with domains (not just with source and target ones), projecting elements from one domain to another. It is obvious that such a network model – i.e. Blending Theory – is now prevailing in the field of cognitive semantics (Fauconnier; Turner, 2002).

Blending operates on two input mental spaces to yield the third space, Generic Space, and the fourth space, the Blend. The blend inherits partial structures from the input spaces and has an emergent structure. Figure 1 is the basic model of blending. Fauconnier (1997: 149-50) sets forth some conditions to be satisfied when two input spaces are blended.

1. CROSS-SPACE MAPPING: there is a partial mapping of counterparts between the input spaces 1 and 2.[4]
2. GENERIC SPACE: there is a generic space. This generic space reflects a certain abstract structure and organization which two input spaces share, and establishes the core cross-space mapping between them. The generic space maps onto each of the inputs.
3. BLEND: the blend is the fourth space projected partially from the input 1 and 2.
4. EMERGENT STRUCTURE: the emergent structure occurs in three ways: 'composition' (in which new relations emerge from projections from the inputs); 'completion' (in which the composite structure projected into the blend is completed into the larger system by background knowledge and cognitive and cultural models); 'elaboration' (in which the blend is further elaborated according to its own emergent logic).

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3. For the critical comments on Lakoff's (1990) 'invariance hypothesis' see Turner (1990) and Brugman (1990).
4. For the analysis of compounds such as homographs, this partial mapping does not always seem to be required (Shibasaki, 2001, 2006). Yet for the semantic analysis of single Chinese characters or Kanji, it seems obligatory. See Hiraga (2005: ch.7) for a brief blending analysis of Kanji.
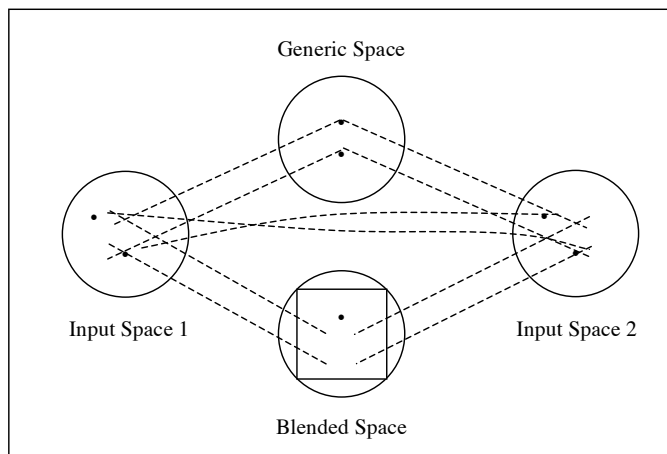
Figure 1. The Basic Blending Model

According to Fauconnier, the basic direction of cognitive mapping is from Generic via inputs to Blend, so the blend is a rich space integrating them. Importantly, the completion of the blend depends on background knowledge and cognitive and cultural models; subsequently the blend is further elaborated of its own accord via an 'emergent logic'. In Fauconnier's opinion, blending becomes conventional and is not consciously perceived. This description is not quite clear; however, it implies an important thing: the process of elaborating the emergent structure may be culture-specific. In other words, the 'emergent logic' may unfold from common inputs to culture-specific blends. This possibility has not yet been explored as fully as it could be in the blending literature. In fact, a series of studies on blending (e.g. Turner; Fauconnier, 1995; Fauconnier; Turner, 1996; Fauconnier, 1997) seem to be only based on the conceptual structure of a given language.[5]

Blending Theory has neither fully been applied to any phenomenon in cultural areas in which Chinese characters are more or less used, nor pervasively throughout the culture in one way or another, i.e. China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam (Hanna, 1997; Murata; Lamarre, 2005; but see Hiraga, 2005; Shibasaki, 2001, 2006, for pilot studies). The objective of this study is to uncover the potentiality of Blending Theory to serve a unified account of homophonic puns with Chinese characters. Homophonic compounds, as explained in the previous section, have the same pronunciations with different meanings, which intuitively goes against the idea of the blend. How can we produce the different meanings from the same sound? How can listeners or readers choose to imagine a compound appropriate for the immediate discourse? If homophonic compounds can be explained in the framework of Blending Theory, that expands the theory's potential. In the next section, I will thus examine three cases of Japanese homophonic compounds.

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5. Coulson and Oakley (2005) include several new proposals on Blending Theory. However, no blending models with many empirical data seem to have been suggested.

4. Homophonic Compounds in Japanese Discourse

We have thus far reviewed the key words for this study: homophone, compound, and Blending Theory. In this section, I will account for the way in which homophonic compounds can be processed in discourse from the perspective of Blending Theory. The three examples of homophonic compounds to be examined in this section are from different sources. The first one is from my Japanese conversational database; the second is from a historical text which includes various types of puns; the third consists of traditional Japanese poems which often include *kakekotoba*, i.e. a homophonic or syntactic device used to create multiple readings. These examples are excerpted from different genres of discourse; however, they can be accounted for in a unified way in the framework of Blending Theory.

4.1. Homophonic Compound from a Conversational Discourse

The first example is from my conversational database,[6] which includes the word pronounced [kitoku] explained in Section 2. Let us look at the following passages.[7] The elements in focus are underlined and boldfaced. In the romanized transcripts (on the basis of IPA), the underlined *kitoku* appears to be the same; however, the meanings are totally different from each other, as in the translations. Nevertheless, Speaker A can understand what Speaker B indicates in the expressions. As shown in Table 2, there are five examples of *kitoku* that can be realized with different Chinese characters. How can the Japanese people make a choice of one particular form among several others?

(3) Discourse 1
    A: *souieba*   *kare*   *wa*   *dou*   *shimasita?*
       by.the.way   he   TOP   how   did
       'So, how about him? (i.e. Is he doing okay?)'
    B: *aa,*   *kare*   *wa*   **_kitoku_** *da*   *yo.*
       well   he   TOP   KITOKU COP   FP
       'Um, he is in a critical condition.'

(4) Discourse 2
    A: *souieba*   *kare*   *wa*   *donna*   *hito*   *desu* *ka?*
       by.the.way   he   TOP   what.kind.of   person   COP   FP
       'So, what kind of person is he?'
    B: *kare*   *wa*   **_kitoku_** *desu*   *yo=*
       he   TOP   KITOKU   COP   FP
       'He is beneficent.'

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6.   These conversational databases were recorded and transcribed in 2005. The speakers were all male and in their early thirties at that time.

7.   The glossing conventions are as follows: ACC=accusative; COMP=complementizer; COP=copula; FP=final particle; GEN=genitive; NOM=nominative; PERF=perfective; POL=politeness; PST=past tense; PT=particle; QP=question particle; TOP=topic; 'lengthening.

Figure 2 summarizes the process in which conversational participants decode the intended meaning of *kitoku* in each discourse. In what follows, I will give an account of this blending process, referring to the three steps of blending i.e. 'composition', 'completion' and 'elaboration'.
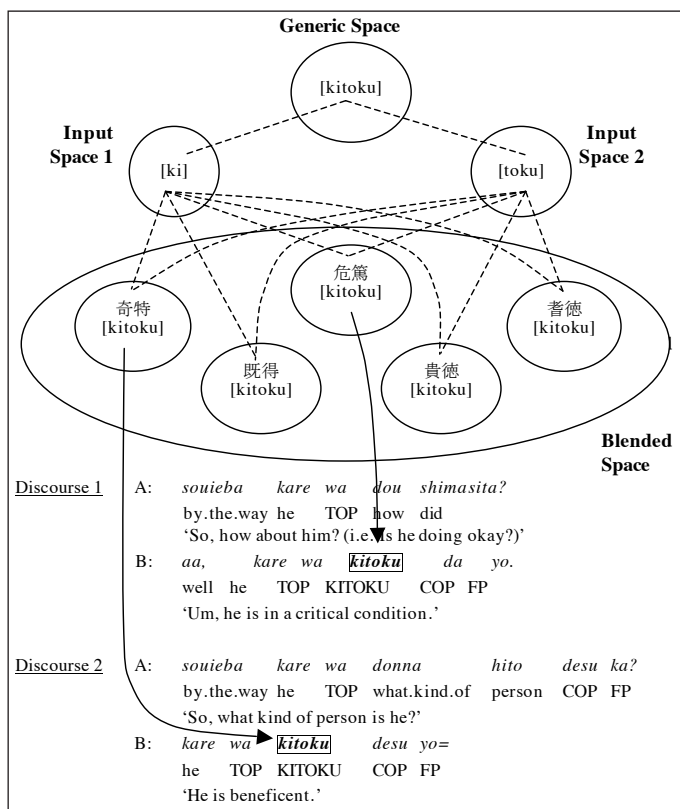

Figure 2.

First, each part of the compound, [ki] and [toku], is blended and produces compounds; this step corresponds to 'composition', because new phonological relations emerge from the inputs. Second, the newly derived compounds are associated with their respective Chinese characters in Japanese; this step is compatible with 'completion', because each compound is completed in the Japanese writing system, and creates a sound-form pair with Chinese characters; in other words, homophonic compounds emerge at this stage. Notice that Chinese characters are directly related to their meanings in essence (DuPonceau, 1838): homophonic compounds take on their meanings at this stage. Third, these homophonic compounds are sorted out in discourse, and only possible homophonic compounds can be chosen as expressions appropriate for the immediate discourse. This step can be regarded as 'elaboration', because the selected

homophonic compound plays a role in making the discourse coherent, semantically and grammatically.

These three steps of blending can be categorized as the one without discourse factors and the one with discourse factors. In this study, I will label the first as 'lexical/ phonological' blending and the second as 'discourse blending'. The lexical/phonological blending serves as a step for producing possible blends, lexically and phonologically, associated with their respective Chinese characters, while the discourse blending serves as a step for making a choice out of those blends in relation to a given discourse. These two steps can single out possible homophonic compounds for a given discourse.

In discourse 2, Speakers A and B were worrying about their friend's physical condition; in other words, this discourse condition invites health-related expressions. Then, Speaker A asked Speaker B about their friend's health condition, and Speaker B answered that the friend slipped into critical condition, indicating that the word *kitoku* [kitoku] means 危篤 [kitoku] 'in a critical condition'. Speaker A immediately reacted to this sound [kitoku], imagining possible Chinese-character forms in this context. Finally, Speaker A succeeded in relating *kitoku* [kitoku] to 危篤 [kitoku]. The same is applied to Discourse 2. Speakers A and B were talking about their friend, and Speaker A went on to ask Speaker B about the friend's personality; this discourse topic brought to their mind related expressions. Speaker B told Speaker A that the friend is beneficent, referring to the word *kitoku* [kitoku] with the form of 奇特 'beneficent'. Speaker A promptly responded to this sound [kitoku], imagining possible Chinese characters. Finally, Speaker A came to make sense of this sound in relation to the form 奇特. This series of blending is processed for a fleeting moment; however, considering the fact that native speakers of Japanese sometimes need time to make the connection between the sound and form of a word, the actual sequence of blending is likely to be from lexical/ phonological to discourse blending.

In this section, I have examined homophonic compounds in Japanese conversational discourse. Through the analysis of such an on-line information processing of homophonic compounds, I have suggested two levels of blending. One is lexical/phonological blending in which the Japanese speakers put inputs together into a compound; subsequently, the compound is completed with its associated Chinese characters. At this level, the Japanese speakers are supposed to have several homophonic compounds in their mind. The other level is discourse blending in which completed homophonic compounds are sorted out with respect to discourse factors. This series of blending serves as steps for searching for appropriate choices of homophonic compounds.

In the next section, I will apply this information process of blending to homophonic compounds to a historical text.

4.2. Homophonic Compound from a Cosmic Story-telling

The next example of homophonic compound is from a historical text called *Kaseiki Rakugobonshuu*, a collection of cosmic stories. This text, which includes cosmic stories from 1789 through 1802, seems to have been edited in the early nineteenth century. In

Pre-Modern Japanese i.e. the Edo period (1603-1867), there were many books on cosmic stories, amorous anecdotes, entertaining yarns, etc., and the following example is from one of those books. Since early cosmic story tellings still have some effects on puns in present day Japanese (Muto, 1988), the following example is worth investigating.

(5) *Kaseiki Rakugobonshuu* (18th-19th C. [c. 1789-1802])

Maru:	*Watashi*	*wa*	*mata,*	***uma***	*mo*	*anata*	*mo*
	I	TOP	again	horse	too	you	too
	onaji	*koto*	*ka*	*to*	*zonji*	*masi*	*ta.*
	be.the.same	thing	QP	COMP	judge	POL	PST
Oshoo:	*Naze.*						
	why						
Maru:	*Anata*	*no*	*koto*	*wo,*	*yoku*		
	anata	GEN	thing	ACC	often		
	hito	*ga*	***hin-soo***				
	people	NOM	neighing/horsy/poor-looking/poor priest				
	to	*mousi*	*masu*	*kara.*			
	COMP	say.POL	POL	because			

Maru: I thought that both horse and you are (classified) the same.; Oshoo (priest): Why?; Maru: (That's) because people often say that you are a poor-looking/ horse-looking priest.

Example 5 is part of a conversation between a priest and his disciple. In the disciple's first utterance, he tells the priest about his thinking that the word *uma* 'horse' refers to the priest as well as actual horses. In this utterance, both readers and listeners are supposed to imagine something relevant to *uma* 'horse' in the following interaction. The priest could not understand what the disciple really meant by that, and then asked 'Why?'. The disciple answered: people often say that the priest is *hinsoo*. Either quick-witted readers or listeners would have burst into laughter; even those with no resources could likely enjoy this pun, if sharp-witted people had told them about how to blend *uma* 'horse' with *hinsoo*. Then, what kind of role did the word *hinsoo* play in this cosmic story-telling?

First, the word *hinsoo* usually means 'a meager or poor-looking face' with the Chinese character 貧相 [poor + countenance]; 貧僧 [poor + priest] 'a poor priest' would also be possible because the above interaction is part of a conversation between a priest and his disciple; these two Chinese characters are listed in Japanese dictionaries (e.g. Shinmura, 1973). Grammatically, these interpretations of *hinsoo* have no problem as long as we do not care about the discourse effect on the interpretation of *hinsoo*; however, the blending of *uma* 'horse' with *hinsoo* is crucial for generating fun and excitement around this pun. Second, we have to take into account one specific aspect of Japanese i.e. the sound of neighing in the language. In Japanese, horses are considered to neigh *hin*, *hihin*, *hinhin*, etc. (Shinmura, 1973; Hashimoto, 1980; Kamei, 1998). Once we get to know this culture-specific description of sound symbolism, it becomes easier to associate *uma* 'horse' with the *hin-* part of *hinsoo*. The important thing is that the word *uma* in the prior discourse serves to evoke the neighing interpretation from *hinsoo*. Third, we have

to decode the contextual meaning of *soo* in this discourse, which is related to the culture-specific aspect of Chinese character. The word indicating 'priest' is written 僧, and it is pronounced [soo]; in other words, the blending of *hin* 'horsy' or 'meager' with *soo* 'priest' creates either 'a horsy-faced priest' or 'a poor priest' both of which have a direct correlation with one and the same sound *hinsoo*: a homophonic effect on puns. Fourth, we can take into further consideration the sound-form combination of *soo*. The sound [soo] is also a good example of homophonic compound; in this context, the Japanese speakers may possibly imagine the word 相 'countenance', which is pronounced [soo]. Suppose that the Japanese speakers can make the connection between these choices, we have the following four possible interpretations of *hinsoo*.

(7) a. *hin* meager   + *soo* priest   = *hinsoo* a poor priest
     b. *hin* horsy   + *soo* priest   = *hinsoo* a priest with a horsy face
     c. *hin* meager   + *soo* countenance   = *hinsoo* (a priest with) a meager face
     d. *hin* horsy   + *soo* countenance   = *hinsoo* (a priest with) a horsy face

Of course, it is not easy to state which of these homophonic effects speakers of Japanese tend to imagine. However, we cannot ignore the fact that the homophonic pun in (5) is interwoven with several possible blends, lexically and phonologically, in discourse. Some might hit on the blended correlation between *hin* 'horsy' and *soo* 'priest', as in (6b), and get a lot of fun immediately; others might only imagine *hin* 'meager' and *soo* 'priest', as in (6a), and need some time to realize the homophonic and discourse effect on this pun. Either way, the Japanese people can be considered to process the blending of homophonic puns with help from discourse. Otherwise, people in those days may not have realized the amusing nature of the pun, let alone people in modern times. Figure 3 summarizes the process.

Since this example allows for several possible interpretations of *hinsoo*, I made an experiment with my undergraduate students to see which of these interpretations would be most likely and why. The result was quite clear: they chose (6b) as the best interpretation with no exceptions. They explained that the 'laff' in (5) depends on whether either readers or listeners can combine *uma* 'horse' and the *hin* sound 'neighing' of *hinsoo* i.e. 'a priest with a horsy face'. At the dictionary level, a usual interpretation of *hinsoo* is 貧相 'a poor-looking priest' or 貧僧 'a poor priest'; however, the priming effect of *uma* 'horse' enables another witty interpretation of *hinsoo* i.e. 'a priest with a horsy face', which can only be generated with a specific discourse factor. This conceptual blending across words and morphemes is compatible with the essence of Blending Theory.

In this section, I have scrutinized the blending of a homophonic pun in a historical text. As demonstrated in the analysis of homophonic compounds in conversational discourse in Section 4.1, we could confirm the two levels of blending 5. At the level of lexical/phonological blending, speakers of Japanese make a compound putting together each input, and search for possible meanings. Then at the level of discourse blending, they stretch the interpretation of the compound to the limit, or flesh them out with some more information from discourse. The sequence of blending may not be reversible, because some people cannot promptly realize the discourse effect on the literal/phonological blending of a given pun.
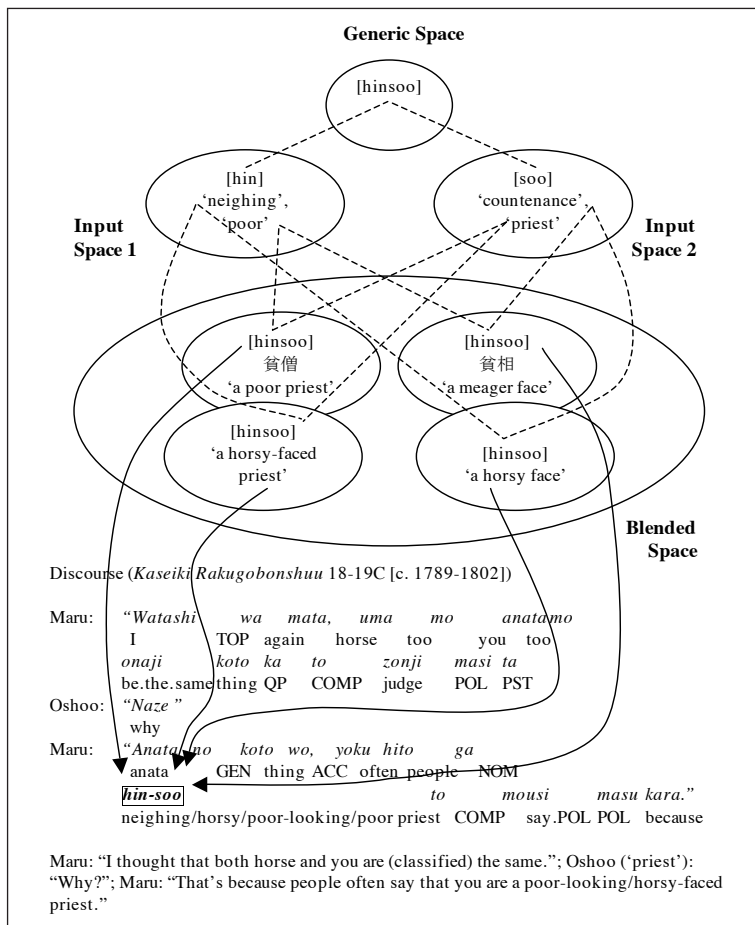
Figure 3.

In the next section, I will probe into one traditional Japanese poem called *waka* 'Japanese song', and see how the two levels of blending work in the interpretation of *kakekotoba*, a homophonic device to create multiple readings in *waka*.

4.3. Homophonic Compound from a Traditional Japanese Poem

The last example of homophonic compound is a traditional Japanese poem which includes *kakekotoba*, i.e. a homophonic device to create multiple readings. With multiple readings, *kakekotoba* sometimes impedes a continous narrative flow by frustrating a one-to-one correspondence between words and their meanings. Nevertheless, the poetic attributes of these words open up a new space in the narrative/poem by drawing on the metaphorical and metonymic aspects of language.

The following *waka* example is by Muneyuki Minamoto (?-939), one of the Thirty-Six Mater Poets in the history of Japan. The *waka* example is included in *Kokinwakashuu*, A Collection of Ancient and Modern Poetry, which was compiled by the imperial command of Emperor Daigo around 905. Muneyuki's *waka* poem was listed as the 315th of 1111 poems, and the unspoiled quality of his work still impresses us beyond time and space. Note that, for convenience, I have added the original Japanese form along with the romanized description.

(7)　*Kokinwakashuu* (10thc. [a.905])

山里	は	冬	ぞ	さびしさ	まさり	ける
yamazato	*fa*	*fuyu*	*zo*	*sabisisa*	*masari*	*keru*
mountain village	TOP	winter	PT	loneliness	increase	PST

人め	も	草	も	かれ	ぬ	と	思へ	ば
fitome	*mo*	*kusa*	*mo*	***kare***	*nu*	*to*	*omofe*	*ba*
people	too	plants	too	KARE	PERF	COMP	think	when

In the mountain area, (we) feel increasingly loney in winter when (we) think that people don't visit (us) and (that) plants have died down.

The *kakekotoba* word in this example is *kare*, and how to associate this sound with its Chinese character forms is crucial for the interpretation of this poem. The whole process of this blending is summarized in Figure 4, and I will explain the two levels of blending based on it. Since this is the final example and is relatively easier to display the two levels of blending, I have illustrated them separately in the figure.

First, consider the possible grammatical combination of the verb *kare* with the auxiliary *nu*. In Old Japanese, the auxiliary *nu* follows the linking form of a given verb, so the inflectional form of the verb *kare* is considered to be its linking form. Second, we have to decode the intended meanings of the whole expression *karenu*. In classical Japanese dictionaries (e.g. Saeki *et al.*, 1989), there are two verbs that can take the linking form and be combined with the perfective auxiliary *nu*: *karu* 'die down/run dry' and *karu* 'become estranged'. These two steps can be completed at the lexical/phonological level of blending, but how they become meaningful in this poem is yet to be done. In other words, the key to what makes this *kakekotoba* successful is to integrate discourse factors into it. Then third, broadening our perspective, we have to find those expressions that can be semantically meaningful with *karenu*. The possible candidates are the grammatical subjects of this verb: *fitome* 'people' and *kusa* 'plants'; since both of them are juxtaposed by the coordinate particle *mo* 'too', it is unlikely that we can take other options. The possible grammatical combinations are summarized in the following.

(8)　a.　*fitome* 'people + *karenu*　'become estranged'
　　　b.　*fitome* 'people' + *karenu*　'die down/run dry'
　　　c.　*kusa* 'plants'　+ *karenu*　'become estranged'
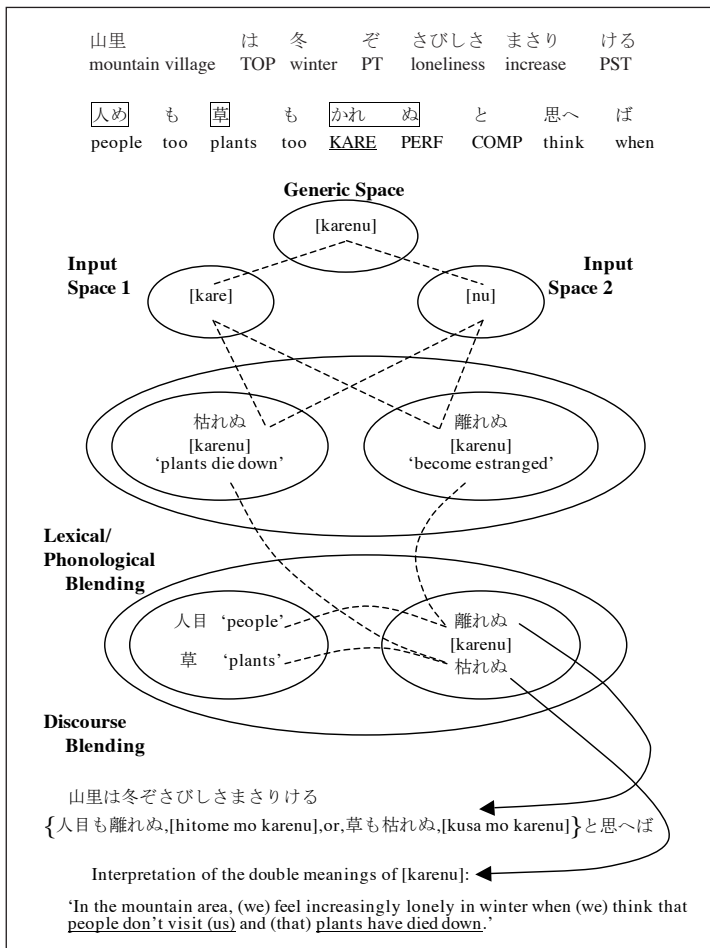　　　d.　*kusa* 'plants'　+ *karenu*　'die down/run dry'

山里　　　　　　　は　冬　　ぞ　さびしさ　まさり　　　ける
mountain village　TOP　winter　PT　loneliness　increase　PST

人め　　も　草　　も　かれ　　ぬ　　と　　思へ　　ば
people　too　plants　too　KARE　PERF　COMP　think　when

Generic Space

[karenu]

Input Space 1　　[kare]　　　　[nu]　　**Input Space 2**

枯れぬ
[karenu]
'plants die down'

離れぬ
[karenu]
'become estranged'

Lexical/ Phonological Blending

人目　'people'
草　'plants'

離れぬ
[karenu]
枯れぬ

Discourse Blending

山里は冬ぞさびしさまさりける
{人目も離れぬ,[hitome mo karenu],or,草も枯れぬ,[kusa mo karenu]}と思へば

Interpretation of the double meanings of [karenu]:

'In the mountain area, (we) feel increasingly lonely in winter when (we) think that people don't visit (us) and (that) plants have died down.'

Figure 4.

These are 'grammatically' possible blends. However, we still have to narrow down the options to 'contextually' possible ones in this discourse. The combination of (8a) is appropriate for this context, because 'people don't visit us' can be compatible with the first part of this poem *fuyu zo sabisisa masari keru* '(we) feel increasingly lonely in winter': since people don't visit us, we feel increasingly lonely in winter. The combination of (8d) is also congruent with the first part of this poem because we can easily imagine that, when plants have dried up, we will feel much lonelier in winter. On the other hand, the expressions in both (8b) and (8c) are grammatically or semantically unlikely combinations. In (8b), when *karenu* means 'die down/run dry', the grammatical subject should be a plant or an inanimate thing at best; in (8c), when *karenu* means 'become estranged', the grammatical subject should be human beings in the real world. Due to such semantic inconsistencies, we can exclude (8b) and (8c) from the possible

blends. The remaining blends (8a) and (8d) can be processed at the level of discourse blending, as in Figure 4.

In this section, I have examined one traditional Japanese poem in the framework of Blending Theory. The information processing of *kakekotoba*, proves to be the same as that of homophonic compounds in both conversational and historical cosmic story-telling discourse in the previous sections. In other words, blending emerges first at the lexical/phonological level, and then at the discourse level; the sequence of blending is fundamental for the successful interpretation of discourse effects on homophonic compounds.

In the next section, I will summarize and discuss what we have found in the analysis of homophonic compounds with respect to Blending Theory.

5. Discussion

Coulson; Oakley (2005: 1507) state that "Whether the inputs to blending are grammatical constructions or complex cultural concepts, the integration processes are governed by the very same structural principles and constraints". In fact, there are many interdisciplinary works on conceptual blending: irony, relevance, cultural issues, etc. (e.g. Hiraga, 2005; Kihara, 2005; Slingerland, 2005). In this study, we have examined the possibility that discourse may facilitate and manage the way inputs are blended in a unified way. I have proposed the two levels of blending, analyzing three examples of homophonic compounds from different genres of discourse, and confirmed that the sequential processing from lexical/phonological to discourse blending is common among these examples. In what follows, I will give a further account of blending at different levels.
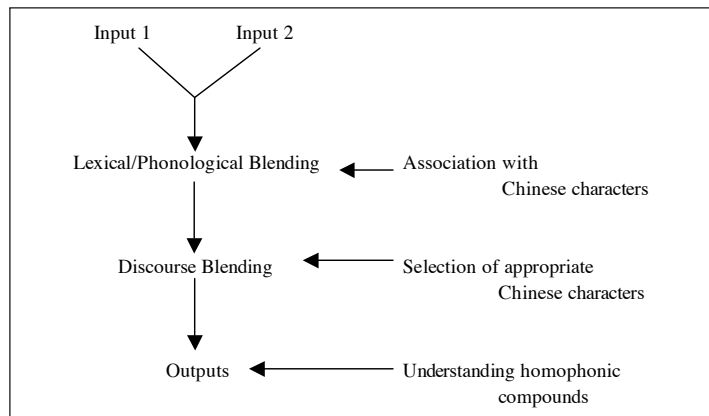

Figure 5.

Figure 5 focuses only on the blending process from inputs to outputs, based on the analysis of homophonic compounds. First, two inputs are blended in the blended space; at this level, the blends are not influenced by any discourse factor. Speakers of Japanese

try to imagine any possible combination of blends, drawing on their background cultural knowledge of Chinese characters. We have called this level the lexical/phonological blending, the one without discourse factors. Yet, we have to pay attention to a triangular relation of form-sound-meaning of Chinese characters (Kwan, 2001; Saussure, 1972: 27). There is no doubt that, whether the relation of form to meaning is stronger than the relation of sound to meaning or vice versa, both sound and form are correlated with the meaning of Chinese characters (see Tyler et al., 1999 for such a controversial issue). Namely, at the lexical/phonological level, speakers of Japanese can associate the sound of a given blend with its possible meanings, imagining their respective Chinese character forms. Second, at the discourse blending, speakers of Japanese are obliged to choose possible homophonic compounds considering discourse factors. As explained in Section 4, some speakers need time to decode the blending process of homophonic compounds in the immediate discourse; others might need some help from sharp-witted people in order to better understand certain blends of homophonic compounds with discourse factors. To put it differently, it is likely that they struggle with realizing the correlation between a sound and its possible form of Chinese characters associated with a given discourse. Therefore, the sequential order of blending is from lexical/phonological to discourse blending, not the reverse. Finally, speakers of Japanese come to understand the intended meaning of a given homophonic compound in the discourse.

Homophonic compounds in the writing system of Japanese may be regarded as being different from those in the writing system of alphabets, in that native speakers have different cultural backgrounds or culture-specific associations with a given sound. In spite of that, we cannot completely ignore discourse factors on the usage of homophones in any language (e.g. Farb, 1993). For example, the English sound [peɚz] enables us to evoke the words *pears* and *pairs* at least. In the utterance "I've no idea how worms reproduce but you often find them in [peɚz]", we can blend the word *worms* with either *pears* or *pairs* in this stretch of discourse, producing two possible interpretations. Of course, a cross-linguistic analysis of discourse factors on homophonic compounds or homophones goes beyond this study. However, the important thing is that speakers of a given language can hit upon forms of a given sound, and then single out possible forms in relation to discourse. The sequential order of blending – i.e. from lexical/phonological to discourse blending – can be confirmed. Of course, these three examples are not enough to conclude that Blending Theory can always predict the most preferred interpretation among several possible choices. This potentiality of Blending Theory will be pursued in my future work, hopefully in relation to text development and lexical cohesion in a wider context.

6. Concluding Remarks

In this study, I have explored two levels of blending be analyzing three examples of homophonic compounds in Japanese. Although the examples are from different genres of discourse, the information processing proves to be done in the same order: from lexical/phonological to discourse blending. Homophonic compounds abound in Japanese at each synchronic stage due to its simple phonological structures. While

speakers of Japanese are faced with such expressions in their daily lives, they can cope with interactions full of ambiguous or vague expressions. Furthermore, they can enjoy homophonic puns in either conversation or poetry. This linguistic situation is seemingly complicated, especially to non-native speakers of Japanese. However, Japanese people have been familiar with this for more than one-thousand years. The key to coping with this linguistic situation is to understand how to code and decode the usage of homophones in discourse. Japanese people utilize discourse to make sense of homophonic expressions. The process is common among them irrespective of genres, and Blending Theory can handle them all.

Acknowledgements

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