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Contrastive Analysis of Potential Sentences in Japanese and Indonesian

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the similarities and differences between potential sentences (*kanou hyougen*) in Japanese (JL) and Indonesian (IL), focusing on their original forms, construction, meaning, and main characteristics. The analysis reveals that potential sentences in both languages share several key similarities. First, they can be derived from either transitive or intransitive base sentences, as long as the predicates express volitional actions or processes. Second, they display comparable syntactic functions, word categories, and semantic roles. Third, both languages convey similar meanings through potential constructions, namely: (a) natural ability, (b) ability acquired through learning or training, (c) ability based on situational conditions, (d) ability resulting from natural phenomena, and (e) functionality or operability of an object or system. A significant similarity can also be seen in the construction patterns of potential expressions: Japanese uses “*N-ga DEKIRU*,” while Indonesian uses “*BISA—N*.” These constructions share structural features: (a) the subject is typically an animate noun, (b) the noun (N) commonly refers to languages, sports, musical instruments, or songs, and (c) when Japanese uses a verbal noun (NV) after “*dekiru*,” the equivalent in Indonesian becomes “*Bisa-V*.” However, one area that still requires further research is the use of intransitive verbs in potential constructions, especially in Japanese, where the rules for forming potential expressions from intransitive verbs are more complex and less straightforward compared to transitive ones. This gap presents an opportunity for deeper comparative linguistic analysis in future studies.

Keywords: Potential Sentences; Intransitive Sentences; Contrastive Analysis; Japanese Language; Indonesian Language

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1. Introduction

Potential sentences (*kanou hyougen*) in the Japanese language (JL) are one of the most complex materials. In JL, the potential form is expressed with four constructions, namely: (1) the dictionary form verb (basic) plus *koto ga dekiru* to form the pattern “*V-ru + koto ga dekiru*” as in the sentence *Kanji wo yomu koto ga dekiru* “(I) can read kanji”; (2) the potential form verb or *V-areru* as in the clause *Kanji ga yomeru* “I can read kanji”; (3) the ending *~eru/uru* or *V-kaneru* such as “*arieru*” can exist”, *kangaeuru* “can be thought of”, *yarikaneru* “can be done”; and (4) certain active form verbs (intransitive), such as *doa ga akanai* “the door cannot be opened”.

The first two forms have appeared in elementary level JL textbooks such as in the *Nihongo Shoho* (The Japan Foundation) book in lesson 23, the *Shokyuu Nihongo (toukyou gaidai)* book in lesson 16, and the *Minna no Nihongo (surie netto waaku)* book. The *~koto ga dekiru* material appears in lesson 17, while the *V-rareru* material appears in lesson 27. This means that both materials are presented in elementary level textbooks (*shokyuu*). Meanwhile, the *V-uru/eru*, *V-kaneru* and intransitive verb materials appear in intermediate level textbooks.

The presentation of both materials in textbooks generally emphasizes only the syntactic structure, while the issue of meaning receives less attention. Learners are only fed with equivalents in Indonesian (IL). At first glance, it seems that all potential expressions of JL correspond to the construction “can/can (able)~” in IL, but not all constructions “can/can (able)~” in IL are potential forms. Mistakes that occur in JL learners in Indonesia generally occur because they assume “*N-ga DEKIRU*=can~”. In short, many mistakes are made by learners due to the lack of clear information about the potential sentence material in JL presented in IL.

The potential form of IL can be expressed by using the adverbs *Bisa*, *dapat*, *mampu*, and *sanggup* as expressers of dynamic and diontic modality^[1]. The word *Bisa* is used more in spoken language or informal language, while the word *dapat* tends to be used in formal situations and in official language. The large number of uses of the word *Bisa* in spoken language causes the occurrence of omission of elements in potential IL sentences, both in the subject and predicate elements. As a result, many constructions of the word *Bisa* appear that do not have a predicate such as *Bisa lagu Jepang*,

Bisa bahasa Jepang, *Bisa tenis*, and so on, forming the construction “*Bisa--N*”. This construction is considered the same by JL learners as the construction “*N-ga---DEKIRU*” in JL which of course can cause various errors in Japanese.

To avoid language errors, especially the use of potential JL sentences for JL learners in Indonesia, a contrastive analysis of potential sentences in JL and IL is needed^[2]. Contrastive analysis can explore the similarities and differences in character in potential JL and IL sentences.

This study attempts to describe the similarities and differences in potential sentences in JL and IL from a syntactic and semantic perspective, to overcome the problem of learning JL in Indonesia. Syntactic studies relate to potential sentence constructions that include syntactic functions and categories, as well as semantic roles, while semantic studies concern the problem of meaning expressed in potential sentences in JL and IL. By knowing the similarities and differences between potential sentences in JL and IL, they can later be applied in teaching JL in Indonesia, or teaching IL in Japan. The minimum errors that have ever appeared in learning JL can be reduced or avoided as much as possible. The objectives of this study are to: (1) describe the types of verbal sentences that can be changed into potential sentences both in JL and IL; (2) describe the construction of potential sentences that include their syntactic functions and categories, as well as semantic roles in each type of potential sentence in JL and IL; (3) describe the meanings that can be expressed by each potential form in JL and IL; (4) describe the similarities and differences between the construction “*N-ga DEKIRU*” in JL and the construction “*BISA---N*” in IL.

2. Previous Research Results

Numerous prior studies have been conducted by linguists, both within Japan and internationally, concerning potential constructions in Japanese. For example, Japanese potential sentences have been examined by Koyano^[3], Yoshikawa^[4], Nakamura & Fujita^[5], Niwa^[6], Nakano^[7], Yoshio et al.^[8], Yamaoka^[9], and Nakai^[10], whose works are frequently cited in linguistic research. These were later followed by international scholars such as Sutedi et al.^[2], Lin^[11], and Lu^[12]. The scholars mentioned above have employed a variety of theoretical frameworks and analytical perspectives, leading to diverse interpretations and findings.

However, contrastive studies between Japanese and Indonesian potential constructions remain scarce. This gap has motivated the present author to pursue such an analysis as a continuation of earlier research^[2]. Conversely, scholarly discussions on potential constructions in Indonesian are relatively underdeveloped and have yet to receive extensive attention. Among the few existing works, those considered most comprehensive include studies by Alwi^[1], Alwi et al.^[13], and the more recent contribution by Sukri & Ni Luh^[14]. The topic of potential constructions thus remains a promising and valuable area for continued linguistic inquiry.

3. Research Methodology

This study seeks to describe the similarities and differences between potential constructions in Japanese (BJ) and Indonesian (BI) from both syntactic and semantic perspectives. Accordingly, the method employed is contrastive analysis. The contrastive analysis in this research primarily draws upon the frameworks of Inoue^[15–17] and Kumagai^[18].

The syntactic analysis addresses the structure of potential sentences in both Japanese and Indonesian, focusing on the types of subjects, the verbs functioning as predicates, and the nouns functioning as objects. Subject categories are classified based on animacy—whether the noun is animate or inanimate. Predicate categories are further examined in terms of whether the verb is transitive or intransitive, and whether it denotes an action, a state, or existence. If it denotes an action, further distinctions are made based on whether the action is intentional or unintentional, among other parameters. The semantic analysis involves the interpretation of meanings contained in the potential constructions, such as the ability to do something (capacity), potentiality due to situational factors, results of learning, or natural ability.

The data analysis focuses on the translation of potential sentences from Japanese into Indonesian or vice versa, in accordance with their meanings and contexts. This approach helps to highlight the similarities and differences between the two languages more clearly. Similar analyses have been conducted by Takami^[19], Sutedi^[20–23], among others. Contrastive studies involving Japanese and other languages have also been conducted by Takami^[19], Sutedi^[20,23], Sutedi et al.^[24], Liana et al.^[25], and Nakamaru^[26].

The data analysis techniques used in this study refer

to the methodologies proposed by Sudaryanto^[27], Shibatani et al.^[28], Parera^[29], and Takami^[30]. The sentence analysis techniques, focusing on syntactic functions, syntactic categories, and semantic roles, are based on the works of Takami & Kuno^[31], Sutedi^[21,22], and others.

4. Data Analysis Results

The results of the data analysis revealed several similarities and differences between potential JL and IL sentences as follows.

4.1. Formation of Potential Sentences JL and IL

Judging from its formation, potential sentences JL and IL come from transitive and intransitive verbal sentences. Consider the following examples.

- (1) *Ari san wa kanji wo yomu koto gadekiru.* (JL)
“Ali can read Kanji.” (IL)
- (2) *Ali bisa membaca Al-quran.* (IL)
“Ali can read the Koran.”
- (3) *Ari san ga oyogeru.* (JL)
“Ali can swim.”
- (4) *Ali bisa berenang.* (IL)
“Ali can swim.”

Examples (1) and (3) are potential JL sentences, while examples (2) and (4) are potential IL examples. The verbs that are the predicates are transitive verbs in examples (1) and (2), and intransitive verbs in examples (3) and (4). All of these verbs are volitional (ishi-doushi) action verbs (dousa-doushi).

- (5) *Tarou ga Hanako to kekkon suru koto ga dekiru.* (JL)
“Tarou can marry Hanako .”
- (6) *Ali dan Siti bisa menikah tahun ini.* (IL)
“Ali and Siti can get married this year.”

The verbs that are the predicates in the examples above, namely kekon suru “marry” and get married are not action verbs, but verbs that are momentary events (functional) that can be grouped as process verbs (henka doushi). It turns out that the type of process verb can also fill potential sentences in both JL and IL.

- (7) **Tarou ga akubi wo suru koto ga dekiru.* (JL)

“Tarou can yawn.”

(8) *Ali bisa menguap?* (IL)

“Can Ali yawn?”

The verbs that are the predicates in the examples above are the verb *akubi wo suru* “to evaporate” and the verb to evaporate which are non-volitional (unintentional) action verbs. In the two examples above, the predicate verbs if used in potential sentences become unacceptable. Therefore, it can be concluded that active sentences that can be changed into potential sentences are sentences whose predicates are filled by action verbs (some process verbs) that are done volitionally. Outside of these verbs, all are unacceptable as in the following examples.

(9) **Tarou ga shineru*. (non-volitional process verb)

“Taro can die.”

(10) **Tarou ga otousan ni nirareru*. (non-volitional state verb)

“Tarou can be glared at by his father.”

(11) **Koko ni okane ga areru*. (non-volitional existence verb)

“There could be money here.”

The three examples above show that potential sentences in JL cannot be formed from predicates filled by non-volitional process verbs such as the verb *shinu* “die”, state verbs such as the verb *niru* “similar”, and existence verbs such as the verb *aru* “exists”. This is the same as potential sentences in IL as in the following examples.

(12) a. **Ali bisa mati*. (IL)

“Ali can die.”

b. *Ali juga bisa mati*. (IL)

“Ali can also die.”

(13) a. **Ali bisa mirip ibunya*. (IL)

“Ali can resemble his mother.”

b. *Ali juga bisa mirip ibunya*. (IL)

“Ali can also resemble his mother.”

(14) a. **Ali bisa ada di dapur*. (IL)

“Ali can be in the kitchen.”

b. *Ali juga bisa ada di dapur*. (IL)

“Ali can also be in the kitchen.”

All examples (a) in the sentences above as potential sentences are not acceptable because the predicate is not a verb that states an action in a volitional manner. While in example (b) the sentence is acceptable but not as a potential sentence, but rather states a possibility.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the similarities in the formation of potential sentences in JL and IL seen from the predicate are as follows.

- 1) can be formed from transitive sentences or intransitive sentences whose predicates are filled by verbs that state volitional actions;
- 2) can be formed from transitive or intransitive sentences whose verbs are filled by verbs that state processes or in the form of functional actions in a volitional manner; and
- 3) cannot be formed from transitive or intransitive sentences whose verbs are filled by verbs that state non-volitional actions, state verbs, or existence verbs.

4.2. Similarities and Differences in Construction (Function, Category, and Semantic Role)

Below we will look at the similarities and differences in construction, focusing on syntactic functions and categories, as well as semantic roles in each potential JL and IL sentence.

a. Potential sentences derived from intransitive sentences

(15) *Tarou ga umi de oyogeru*. (JL)

Subj-ga Adv-de Pred-pot

NP1-A NP2-L V-Pot-stative → A---L---Stative (type I)

“Tarou can swim in the sea.”

(16) *Tarou niwa umi de oyogeru*. (JL)

Subj-niwa Ket-de Pred-pot

NP1-E NP2-L V-Pot-Stative → E---L---Stative (type II)

“For Tarou to be able to swim in the sea.”

The two examples above are two types of potential JL sentences that come from intransitive sentences. Example (15) is type I whose syntactic function consists of a subject (subj) followed by the particle GA, an adverb followed by the particle DE, and a predicate filled by a potential verb. The subject function is filled by an animate noun (FN1) in the form of a human (Taro), the adverb is filled by a noun (FN2) in the form of a place (umi), and the predicate is filled by a potential verb, namely the verb oyogeru “can swim”. Seen from its semantic role, FN1 plays an agentive role (A),

FN2 plays a locative role (L), and the predicate has become a state verb (kead), not an action anymore.

Example (16) is type II, there is a change in the particle that follows the subject (Taro), namely the particle NIWA. With the change in the particle, the syntactic function and category are still the same as example (15), but its semantic role changes to pengal (E). Thus, the potential sentence construction derived from intransitive sentences is only one type, but based on its semantic role there are two.

(17) *Ali bisa berenang di laut.* (IL)

Subj	Pred.	Ket.	
NP1-A	V-Pot-Statave	NP2-L	→ A---Statave----L (type I)

“Ali can swim on the sea.”

(18) *Kalau Ali bisa berenang di laut.* (IL)

Subj	Pred.	Adv.	
NP1-E	V-Pot-Statave	NP2-L	→ A--- Statave----L (type II)

“For Ali to be able to swim on the sea.”

This example of a potential IL sentence corresponds to the potential JL sentence above, because its syntactic function, syntactic category, and semantic role are exactly the same.

b. Potential sentences derived from transitive sentences

Potential sentences derived from transitive sentences based on their function, category, and semantic role can be divided into the following types.

(19) *Ari san wa kono kanji ga yomeru.* (JL)

Subj-WA	OBJ-GA	Pred.-RERU	
NP1-A	NP2-O	V-pot-Statave	→ A---O---Statave (type III)

“Ali can read this kanji character.”

(20) *Ali bisa membaca huruf kanji ini.* (IL)

Subj.	Pred.	OBJ.	
NP1-A	V-pot-Statave	NP2-O	→ A---Statave---O (type III)

“Ali can read this kanji character.”

Example (19) is type III whose syntactic function consists of subject, object, and predicate. Each of these syntactic functions is filled by the noun category (FN1) followed by the particle WA, noun (FN2) followed by the particle GA, and the predicate is filled by the potential verb, namely the verb yomeru “can read”. It is clear that the predicate of these

two examples is a state, not an action, so this is what differentiates it from ordinary transitive sentences. The potential sentence type JL (19) above is equivalent to the potential sentence IL example (20), because its function, category, and semantic role are exactly the same.

(21) *Ari san niwa kono kanji ga yomeru.* (JL)

Subj-NIWA	OBJ-GA	Pred.-ERU	
NP1-E	NP2-O	V-pot-Statave	→ A---O---Statave. (type IV)

“For Ali to be able to read this kanji character.”

(22) *Kalau Ali bisa membaca huruf kanji ini.* (IL)

Subj. Pred. OBJ.
NP1-E V-pot-Stativ NP2-O → E---Stativ---O (type IV)

“For Ali to be able to read this kanji character.”

Example (21) is a potential JL type IV sentence, both its function and syntactic category are almost the same as the first type in example (19) above. However, looking at the semantic role there is a difference, namely the subject is filled by FN1 followed by the particle NIWA causing a change in role from actor (A) to experiencer (E). It turns out that this potential JL type is equivalent to the potential IL sentence in example (22).

(23) *Kono kanji ga yomeru ka.* (JL)

OBJ.GA Pred.-ERU
NP1-O V-pot-Stativ → O----Stativ (type V)

“Can read this kanji??”

(24) *(seseorang) Bisa membaca huruf kanji ini?*

(Subj.) Pred. OBJ.
(NP1-A) V-pot-Stativ NP2-O → (A)---Stativ---O (type V)

Can (someone) read this kanji character?

(25) *Kanji ini bisa dibaca (oleh seseorang)?*

Subj Pred.-pot-pass. (Pel.)
NP2-O V-pot-pass-stativ (NP1-A) → O---Stativ---(A) (type VI)

Can this kanji be read (by someone)?

Example (23) is a potential JL type V sentence. This type is actually the first type where the subject function is removed, so it only displays one argument, namely the object function (FN2). In IL this type corresponds to example (24) and example (25). If the subject (FN1) is considered to be deleted then it corresponds to example (24), whereas if FN2 is considered as the subject (topic) then it corresponds to example (25), thus requiring a change in the form of the verb from active to passive. Thus, in IL there are active potential verbs and passive potential verbs which are not found in JL. In IL, example (25) is often used in everyday conversation.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that potential JL sentences can be divided into five types (I~V) based on their function, category and semantic role as compiled in the following **Table 1**.

Table 1. Similarities and Differences in Potential Construction JL and IL.

TP	Element	Japanese Language			Indonesian Language		
I	Example	Tarou ga	Umi de	Oyogeru.	Tarou	Bisa berenang	Di laut.
	Function	Subj.	Adv.	Pred.	Subj.	Pred.	Adv.
	Category	NP1-GA	NP2-DE	V-ERU	NP1	V-pot	NP2.
	Role	Agen (A)	Loc. (L)	Stative	Agen (A)	Stative	Loc(L)
II	Example	Tarou niwa	Umi de	oyogeru.	Kalau Tarou	Bisa berenang	Di laut.
	Function	Subj.	Ket.	Pred.	Subj.	Pred.	OBJ./Compl.
	Category	NP1-NIWA	NP2-DE	V-ERU	NP1	V-pot	NP2.
	Role	Exp. (E)	Lokative (L)	Stative	Exp.(E)	Stative	Loc.(L)
III	Example	Ari san wa	Kono kani ga	Yomeru.	Ali	Bisa baca	Huruf Kanji ini.
	Function	Subj.	OBJ.	Pred.	Subj.	Pred.	Obc.
	Category	NP1-WA	NP2-GA	V-Pot.	NP1	V-Pot	NP2
	Role	Agentive (A)	Objektive (O)	Stative	Agentive (A)	Stative	Objective(O)

Table 1. Cont.

TP	Element	Japanese Language			Indonesian Language		
IV	Example	Ari san niwa	Kono kanji ga	yomeru	Kalau Ali	Bisa baca	Huruf Kanji ini.
	Function	Subj.	OBJ.	Pred.	Subj.	Pred.	OBJ.
	Category	NP1-NIWA	NP2-GA	V-Pot.	NP1-NIWA	V-Pot	NP2
	Role	Exp. (E)	Objective (O)	Stative.	Exp. (E)	Stative	OBJektive (O)
V	Example	(Dare ka ga)	Kono kanji ga	yomeru	(seseorang)	Bisa baca	Huruf Kanji ini.
	Function	(Subj.)	OBJ.	Pred.	(Subj.)	Pred.	OBJ.
	Category	(NP1-GA)	NP2-GA	V-Pot.	(NP1)	V-Pot	NP2
	Role	(agentive/A)	OBJektive (O)	Stative	(Agentive (A)	Stative	Objective(O)
VI	Example				Huruf Kanji ini	Bisa dibaca	(oleh seserang)
	Function				Subj.	Pred	(Adv.)
	Category				NP2	V-Pot-pass	(NP1)
	Role				Objective (O)	Stative	(Agentive)

4.3. Meaning Content in Potential Sentences in JL and IL

The similarities and differences in the meaning content of potential JL and IL sentences, especially those represented by the constructions “*N-ga DEKIRU*” and “*BISA---V*”, include the following.

a. Having the ability to do something naturally.

The first potential sentence meaning is “the subject has the ability to do something naturally”. This ability is acquired since birth as a natural ability according to the growth and development of the subject. Consider the following examples.

(26) *Ningen wa hanaseru doubutsu da.*

“Humans are creatures that can talk.”

(27) *Tori ga toberu doubutsu desu.*

“Birds are animals that can fly.”

(28) *Saru ga ki ni noboreru mono da.*

“Monkeys are animals that can climb trees.”

The examples of potential JL sentences above all show abilities that are possessed since birth. Example (26) explains that every normal human being will definitely be able to talk because it is innate since birth; birds are naturally able to fly (27); and monkeys are destined to be able to climb trees compared to other animals. The meaning of potential sentences like this is also found in IL potential sentences as in the following examples.

(29) *Manusia adalah makhluk yang bisa berbicara.* (IL)

“Humans are creatures that can talk.”

(30) *Setelah berusia 3 tahun anak sudah mulai bisa berjalan.*

“After the age of 3 years, children can start walking.”

(31) *Burung adalah binatang yang bisa terbang.*

“Birds are animals that can fly.”

Thus, one of the similarities between IL and JL potential is that both have the meaning of natural ability.

b. Having the ability to do something as a result of learning/training.

The second meaning in the JL potential sentence is “the subject has the ability to do something as a result of learning or training”. So, not all humans have this ability, but are limited to trained people only. Consider the following examples.

(32) *Kanojo wa kuruma no unten ga dekiru.* (JL)

“He can drive a car.”

(33) *Boku wa Indo-ryouri nante tsukurenai.*

“I can’t make Indian cuisine.”

(34) *Eigo de tegami nante kakenai.*

“I can’t write a letter in English.”

All the abilities possessed by the subjects in the three examples above are not innate, but rather the result of practice and learning. This meaning is also possessed in potential IL sentences as in the following examples.

(35) *Ali bisa membaca Alquran.* (IL)

“Ali can read the Koran.”

(36) *Anak itu bisa memperbaiki radio.* (IL)

“The child can fix the radio.”

(37) *Amir bisa memecahkan soal matematika yang sulit itu.* (IL)

“Amir can solve that difficult math problem.”

(38) *Udin bisa berlari 100m dalam 7 detik.* (IL)

“Udin can run 100m in 7 seconds.”

The abilities possessed by the subjects in the examples above were also not obtained naturally but through a process of practice or learning. Thus, one of the similarities in meaning contained in potential JL and IL sentences is “the subject has an ability to do something as a result of a learning process”.

c. *The subject is able to do something because the situation and conditions allow it.*

The third meaning contained in potential JL sentences is “the subject is able to do something because the situation and conditions allow it”. In this case, the subject has good abilities that are acquired naturally or as a result of the training process, but these abilities cannot always be carried out if the conditions are not supportive. Consider the following examples.

- (39) *Atama ga itai node, osake ga nomenai.* (JL)
 “Because I have a headache, (I) can’t drink sake.”
 (40) *Mottainakute, suterarenai.* (JL)
 “It’s too wasteful, so I can’t throw it away.”

The two examples above show that the subject cannot do something due to conditions that do not allow it. Example (39) states that someone cannot drink sake at that time because they have a headache, and example (40) states that something cannot be thrown away because it’s a waste.

- (41) *Kaiin wa muryou de shisetsu wo riyousuru koto ga dekiru.* (JL)
 “Members can use the facilities for free.”
 (42) *Haru ni nareba, hanami wo tashimu koto ga dekiru.* (JL)
 “When it’s spring, (we) can enjoy cherry blossoms.”
 (43) *Chuugoku dewa, udon wo taberu toki, oto wo taterarenai.* (JL)
 “In China, when we eat udon, we are not allowed to make a sound.”

Example (41) states that “starting today the library can be used freely”, in it it is implied that previously it could not be used freely for some reason. The meaning of the expression “can be used” here is the same as “may be used”, namely stating a “permission”. Likewise, example (43) implies the meaning of a prohibition on making a sound when eating udon. Example (42) implies the right time to do something. This kind of meaning is also found in potential IL sentences such as in the following examples.

- (44) *Ali tidak bisa minum sake, karena dia seorang muslim.* (IL)
 “Ali cannot drink sake, because he is a Muslim.”
 (45) *Saya tidak bisa merokok di dalam rumah.* (IL)
 “I cannot smoke in the house.”
 (46) *Di Jepang Amir tidak bisa membuat masakan Padang, karena bahannya tidak ada.* (IL)
 “In Japan Amir cannot make Padang food, because the ingredients are not available.”

Thus, the potential meaning content of “the subject can do something because the conditions and situation support it” is in both IL and IL. This shows the many similarities in the meaning content in potential JL and IL sentences.

d. *Something can happen because of the laws of nature.*

The fourth meaning of the potential sentence JL is to state “something can happen because of the law of nature”. The subject in this sentence is not a human but a natural phenomenon. Consider the following example.

- (47) *Mizu wa zerodosesshi ni nattara kooru.* (JL)
 “Water can freeze if it reaches 0°.”

In the example above, although the predicate is not presented in potential form, in terms of meaning it is included in potential. Natural phenomena such as “water” can freeze at zero degrees Celsius, so if expressed in JL it becomes the sentence above. Examples like this are also found in IL, such as the following.

- (48) *Air bisa membeku pada suhu 0 derajat celcius.* (IL)
 “Water can freeze at a temperature of degrees 0 Celsius.”
 (49) *Besi bisa meleleh pada suhu 1000 derajat celcius.* (IL)
 “Iron can melt at a temperature of 1000 degrees Celsius.”
 (50) *Tanaman itu bisa mati kalau tidak disirami air.* (IL)
 “The plant can die if it is not watered.”

The events that have potential meaning in all the examples above are natural phenomena, or something that happens naturally. Therefore, this is also another similarity in JL and IL potential sentences.

e. *Something can work fine*

The last meaning content in the potential JL sentence

is stating the meaning of “something is functioning well”. Consider the following examples.

- (51) *Kono kuruma wa 100 kiro de hashiru koto ga dekiru.* (JL)
 “This car can run at a speed of 100 km per hour.”
- (52) *Kono senzai wa otoseru.* (JL)
 “This soap can remove dirt well.”
- (53) *Kono kansouki wa kawakaseru.* (JL)
 “This dryer can dry well.”

The examples above show an ability possessed by a subject in the form of an inanimate noun such as a machine or a tool. The car as the subject in example (51) has the ability to run up to 100 km per hour indicating that the car can function well. Likewise, “soap” in example (52) has the ability to remove stains that stick to laundry indicating that the soap functions well. The dryer in example (53) also shows its function well. Therefore, the other meaning content in the potential JL sentence is “something can function well”. This is not limited to tools, it can also be used for humans as in the following example.

- (54) *Ano sensei wa soudan dekiru.* (JL)
 “The lecturer can be used as a place to confide.”
- (55) *Kare wa shin-you dekiru.* (JL)
 “He can be trusted.”

The subjects of the two sentences above are humans, namely sensei “teacher/lecturer” and kare “he” followed by the expressions “can be used as a place of consultation” and “can be trusted”. This means that a lecturer can function as a good guide for his students, and he can be trusted or can function as a human being who has trust.

This kind of meaning is also found in IL potential sentences as in the following examples.

- (56) *Mobil ini bisa mengangkut barang 10 ton lebih.* (IL)
 “This car can carry more than 10 tons of goods.”
- (57) *Alat ini bisa digunakan untuk memotong kaca.* (IL)
 “This tool can be used to cut glass.”
- (58) *Alat ini bisa menahan beban lebih dari 20 ton.* (IL)
 “This tool can hold a load of more than 20 tons.”
- (59) *Dosen itu bisa diajak bicara.* (IL)
 “The lecturer can be invited for talk.”
- (60) *Dia memang bisa dipercaya omongannya.* (IL)
 “His words can indeed be trusted.”

All of the examples above can generally show the meaning that something can function well.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the meanings contained in the potential sentences of JL and IL which are also the points of similarity are as follows.

- 1) “Can” in the sense that the subject has the ability to do something naturally.
- 2) “Can” in the sense that the subject has the ability to do something as a result of the learning/training process.
- 3) “Can” in the sense that the subject has the ability to do something because the situation and conditions allow it.
- 4) “Can” in the sense that something will happen due to natural phenomena.
- 5) “Can” in the sense that something can function or play a role well.

The relationship between the five types of meanings contained in the potential sentences of JL and IL can be described in **Figure 1** below.

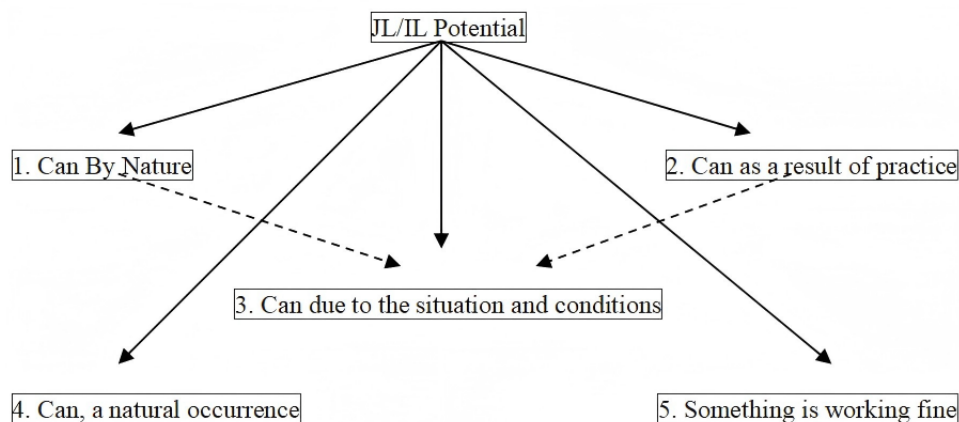


Figure 1. Meaning Content in Potential Sentences JL and IL.

4.4. Similarities and Differences between the Constructions “N-ga DEKIRU” and “Bisa--N”

In the previous sections, several similarities between potential JL and IL sentences have been identified, both in terms of construction and meaning. This section will present the results of the analysis of the similarities and differences between the construction “N-ga---DEKIRU” and the construction “Bisa---V” in particular. This construction is quite unique, because in IL the word “Bisa” is immediately followed by a “noun” even though the word is not a verb but an adverb. Meanwhile, in the construction “N-ga DEKIRU” it is clear that the word “dekiru” is the verb that is the predicate.

Actually, in formal language the construction “Bisa---N” cannot occur because the standard is the construction “Bisa---perbuatan”, but in spoken language omissions often occur, so that in this construction the parts of the verb that are the predicate are often omitted. Here are some examples.

- (61) *Watashi wa nihongo ga dekiru.* (JL)
“I can speak Japanese.”
- (62) *Saya bisa (ber)bahasa Jepang.* (IL)
“I can speak Japanese.”
- (63) *Yamada san wa eigo ga dekiru.* (JL)
“Yamada can speak English.”
- (64) *Yamada bisa (ber)bahasa Inggris.* (IL)
“Yamada can speak English.”
- (65) *Anata wa araILago ga dekimasu ka.* (JL)
“Can you speak English?”
- (66) *Kamu bisa (ber)bahasa Arab?* (IL)
“Can you speak Arabian?”

The construction “N-ga---DEKIRU” in the examples above can be used exactly the same as the construction “Bisa---N” with the provision that the noun (N) that is the object must be filled by a word that states the name of a language, such as JL, English, AraILc, and so on. This shows that both of these constructions can be used to express the ability to use or understand a language.

Thus, we know that the similarity (a) between “N-ga DEKIRU” and “Bisa...N” is that N in both of these constructions can be filled by a noun that is the name of a language. The word “Bisa” in all of the examples above cannot be replaced with the word “dapat”. This shows that “Bisa” is used in spoken or informal language, so it can be followed

directly by the name of the language without requiring the prefix “ber-”. Therefore, the words Bisa and dekiru in both of these constructions contain the meaning of being able to understand or being able to use the language.

- (67) *Watashi wa sakkaa ga dekiru.* (JL)
“I can play football”
- (68) *Saya bisa (bermain) sepak bola.* (IL)
I can (play) football.
- (69) *Ari san wa pinpon ga dekiru.* (JL)
“Ali can (play) ping pong.”
- (70) *Ali bisa pingpong.* (IL)
Ali can (play) ping pong.
- (71) *Tanaka san wa juudou ga dekiru.* (JL)
“Tanaka can do judo.”
- (72) *Tanaka bisa judo.* (IL)
Tanaka can do judo.
- (73) *Yamada san wa karate ga dekiru.* (JL)
“Yamada can do karate.”
- (74) *Yamada bisa Pencak-silat.* (IL)
Yamada can do pencak silat.

In the examples above, the construction “N-ga---DEKIRU” and the construction “Bisa---N” can both be used if the noun (N) that is the object is filled by a word that states the name of a sport. Thus, it can be seen that the similarity (b) in these two constructions is that N is the name of a sport, so it states the ability to do the sport. In short, Bisa and dekiru in these two constructions state the meaning of being able to do the sport.

- (75) *Watashi wa gitaa ga dekiru.* (JL)
“I can play the guitar.”
- (76) *Saya bisa (memainkan) gitar.* (IL)
I can (play) the guitar.
- (77) *Yamada san wa piano ga dekiru.* (JL)
“Yamada can play the piano.”
- (78) *Yamada bisa (memainkan) piano.* (IL)
Yamada can (play) the piano.

In the example above, the object of the noun is a musical instrument, so the construction “N-ga DEKIRU” in JL can be transferred into IL through the construction “Bisa---N” which means “can play the musical instrument”. However, in formal IL, the expressions “I can play the guitar”, “I can play the piano” can be understood because they imply the meaning of “playing”. This kind of meaning is not limited

to musical instruments, but also applies to songs as in the following examples.

- (79) *Watashi wa nihon no uta ga dekiru.* (JL)
 “I can sing Japanese songs.”
- (80) *Saya bisa (menyanyikan) lagu Jepang.* (IL)
 I can (sing) Japanese songs.
- (81) *Watashi wa “kokoro no tomo” to iu uta ga dekimasu.* (JL)
 “I can sing *Kokoro no Tomo*.”
- (82) *Saya bisa lagu “Kokoro no Tomo”.* (IL)
 I can sing “*Kokoro no Tomo*”.

In the example above, the noun that fills the object function in the JL sentence is filled by the word *nihon no uta* “Japanese song” directly followed by the verb *dekiru*. This corresponds to the expression in IL such as in example (80) “I can sing Japanese songs” which contains the meaning “I can sing Japanese songs”. However, in spoken language the word “sing” is often omitted so that it becomes “I can sing Japanese songs”. This meaning can be understood that what is meant is “singing Japanese songs”, not anything else. This extends to song titles such as in examples (81) and (82). Therefore, the equation (c) is that the other noun as the object filler in the construction “N-ga---DEKIRU” and “Bisa---N” is a musical instrument or song (song title). Thus, the words *Bisa* and *dekiru* in the example above express the meaning of being able to play a musical instrument or sing a song. Both in IL and in JL to express the ability to play a musical instrument, it is not necessary to include the verb that means “to play” but it is sufficient to use these two constructions. In short, the expressions “can play the piano”, “can play the guitar”, and so on express the meaning “can play the guitar”, or “can play the piano”. Likewise, with the ability “to sing a song” as in examples (81) and (82), the verb that expresses the action of “to sing” does not need to be shown again, because the expression “can sing the song *Kokoro no tomo*” alone contains the meaning “can sing the song *Kokoro no tomo*” and there is no other meaning.

However, in the following examples, the N-ga DEKIRU construction can be used, while the “can....N” construction cannot be used.

- (83) *Watashi wa e ga dekiru.* (JL)
 “I can paint.”

- (84) a. **Saya bisa lukisan (gambar).* (IL)
 I can paint (picture).
 b. *Saya bisa melukis.* (IL)
 I can paint.

The potential construction in example (83) is still “N-ga DEKIRU” and N is still filled by the ordinary noun “painting”, while in example (84a) the construction is still “can---N” but it turns out to be unacceptable. This is one of the differences between the two potential constructions in JL and IL. In example (84a) above, it is known that in IL, a potential sentence like this must be accompanied by a verb that is the predicate, as in example (84b). Therefore, one of the differences between the construction “N-ga DEKIRU” and the construction “Bisa---N” is that in IL the verb or predicate must be included, while in JL it is sufficient to only include the object.

The following is an example of “N-ga DEKIRU” which is filled with a noun that states an action (NV).

- (85) *Kanojo wa kaimono ga dekimasu.* (JL)
 “He can shop.”
- (86) *Kyaku ga kita node, benkyou ga dekinakatta.* (JL)
 “Because a guest came, I can’t study.”
- (87) *Ima, jikan ga daibu aru node, yukkuri dokusho ga dekiru.* (JL)
 “Now that I have a lot of time, I can read freely.”

In the examples above, the word DEKIRU can be used with several nouns such as *kaimono* “shopping”, *benkyou* “studying”, and *dokusho* “reading”, all of which are classified as nouns. However, all of these nouns are semantically an action, so in JL they are called verb nouns (NV) or action nouns. Meanwhile, in IL to express this, the construction “Bisa---N” cannot be used but must be the construction “Bisa---V” as in the following examples.

- (88) *Dia bisa (ber)belanja.* (IL)
 He can go shopping.
- (89) *Karena ada tamu, saya tidak bisa belajar.* (IL)
 Because there are guests, I can’t study.
- (90) *Sekarang ini saya bisa membaca dengan leluasa.* (IL)
 Now I can read freely.

The words “belanja, belajar, membaca” in the above construction can be used because they are all classified as

verbs, so the three sentences above can be replaced with the word “dapat”. If the three words are changed into nouns, the three sentences above become unacceptable. Consider the following examples.

- (91) **Dia bisa belanjaan.* (IL)
He can go shopping.
- (92) **Karena ada tamu, saya tidak bisa pelajaran.* (IL)
Because there are guests, I can’t study.
- (93) **Sekarang ini saya bisa bacaan dengan leluasa.* (IL)
Now I can read freely.

Thus, one of the differences between the construction “*N-ga DEKIRU*” in JL and the construction “*Bisa----N*” in IL can be found, namely that the construction “*N-ga DEKIRU*” can be followed by a noun that expresses an action, whereas in the construction “*Bisa----N*” it cannot.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the similarities and differences between potential JL and IL sentences using the constructions “*N-ga DEKIRU*” and “*Bisa----N*” are as follows:

- 1) The subject in both JL and IL constructions must be filled by humans.
- 2) These two constructions can be matched if the N is a noun that states:
 - a. the name of a language, thus stating the ability to master, understand, or be able to speak using the language;
 - b. the name of a branch of sport or game, thus stating the ability to do the branch of sport;
 - c. the name of a musical instrument, thus stating the ability to play the musical instrument; and
 - d. the name of a song or dance, thus stating the ability to sing or do the dance.

The word “Bisa” in the above usage cannot be replaced by the word “dapat”. This shows that the word “Bisa” is used in spoken language, not formal language.

- 3) The construction “*N-ga DEKIRU*” whose N is filled by a noun verb (NV) cannot be matched into the construction “*Bisa----N*” in IL, but must be matched into the construction “*Bisa----V*”. For this case, the word “can” in IL can be replaced with the word “can”.

5. Discussion

From the description above, it can be seen that potential sentences in JL and IL have similarities in terms of their formation process, namely: (a) can be formed from transitive sentences or intransitive sentences whose predicates are filled by verbs that express volitional actions; (b) can be formed from transitive or intransitive sentences whose verbs are filled by verbs that express processes in the form of volitional actions or events; and (c) cannot be formed from transitive or intransitive sentences whose verbs are filled by non-volitional action verbs, state verbs, or existence verbs.

Judging from their constructions which include functions, categories, and semantic roles, potential sentences in JL and IL have similarities, both those with transitive verb predicates and intransitive verbs. Potential sentences derived from intransitive sentences consist of two types, all of which are equivalent or exactly the same as potential constructions in IL. There are three types of potential sentence constructions derived from transitive sentences in JL, all of which are equivalent to the type of potential sentences in IL. However, for the V construction, namely the potential whose subject element is removed, if matched into IL, it becomes two, namely active potential as in JL and another passive potential that does not exist in JL.

The difference between ordinary active sentences and potential sentences is very obvious when viewed from the semantic role or semantic behavior of the verb that is the predicate. For example, the verb to read is a volitional action verb, while the verb can read is a state verb. This shows that between ordinary active sentences and potential sentences are two different diatheses. Moreover, in JL it is quite obvious because of the change in the role-marking particle that follows the noun filling the object.

Changes in semantic roles can also occur in the arguments filling the subject, namely from the agentive role (A) to the experience role (E). This in JL is marked with the particle NIWA, while in IL it begins with the word “*bagi/buat/untuk...*”. If the potential object filler noun in JL is put forward or the potential subject of the sentence is omitted, the equivalent in IL becomes two, namely exactly the same as potential active, and the other one becomes potential passive. This potential passive is not found in JL. Therefore, potential in

IL can also have its predicate filled by a passive verb, while in JL there is none.

The content of meaning expressed in potential sentences JL and IL have several similarities, namely: (a) can in the sense that the subject has the ability to do something naturally; (b) can in the sense that the subject has the ability to do something as a result of the learning/training process; (c) can in the sense that the subject has the ability to do something because the situation and conditions allow; (d) can in the sense that something will happen because of natural phenomena factors; and (e) can in the sense that something can function or play a role well.

Another thing that is the focus of analysis in this research is the similarities and differences between the constructions “*N-ga DEKIRU*” and “*Bisa---N*”. Several similarities are known, namely: (a) the subject in both JL and IL constructions must be filled by humans; (b) these two constructions can be matched if the N is a noun that states the name of a language, the name of a branch of sport, the name of a musical instrument, and the name of a song or dance (cannot be replaced with the word “can”; and (c) the construction “*N-ga DEKIRU*” whose N is filled by a noun verb (NV) cannot be matched with the construction “*Bisa---N*” in Indonesian, but must be matched with the construction “*Bisa---V*”. For this case, the word “*Bisa*” in Indonesian can be replaced with the word “*dapat*”.

Here, the difference is apparent that in spoken language, the potential of Indonesian can be expressed with the construction “*Bisa---N*” which is a structure born from the construction “*Bisa melakukan N*”. Only certain parts of N can be expressed with this construction.

From the findings above, it turns out that potential sentences in JL and IL, especially those using potential verbs, have more similarities than differences. Therefore, JL learners should not encounter too many difficulties when learning potential sentences in JL. However, in reality, it is still considered difficult and there are many problems faced. This is due to several factors that influence it, both in terms of the learning method and the learning strategy used which is indeed influenced by the learner’s mother tongue or IL.

Generally, when teaching potential JL sentences, teachers immediately enter and present JL material by comparing it with the word “*Bisa~*” or “*dapat~*” in IL. This is where overgeneralization (*kajou ippanka*) will arise, so that learn-

ers assume that “*~dekiru = Bisa~*” or “*Bisa~ = ~dekiru*”. All potential sentences of JL can indeed be matched with “*Bisa~*” in IL, but not all constructions of “*Bisa~*” can be matched with “*~dekiru*” in JL. This is because the meaning contained in the construction of “*Bisa~*” in IL is not all potential, but there are other meanings such as “possibility” or “opportunity”, so that in the construction of “*Bisa~*” it can be followed by non-volitional intransitive verbs, such as in “*Bisa mati*”, “*Bisa kalah*”, “*Bisa bunuh*”, “*Bisa ada*” which do not exist in potential JL.

For that reason, in teaching, before entering the material on JL potential, the construction “*Bisa~*” in IL must first be reviewed. It must be emphasized that the construction “*Bisa~*” in IL can be used to express potential, possibility, or opportunity, while JL potential or “*~dekiru*” is only equivalent to “*Bisa~*” which expresses the meaning of potential only. Thus, overgeneralization of learning on JL and IL potential can be avoided.

At the beginning of the chapter, it was presented that JL potential is presented through five types of construction, namely: (1) *N-ga DEKIRU*; (2) *N-wo V-ru KOTO GA DEKIRU*; (3) *N-ga V-ERU/RARERU*; (4) *N-ga V-URU/ERU*; and (5) special V-intransitive. The order of presentation of the presentation sentences can be determined based on the level of difficulty as follows.

1. N-wo V-ru + KOTO GA DEKIRU
2. N-ga V-ERU/RARERU
3. N-ga DEKIRU
4. N-ga V-URU/ERU
5. N-ga V-special intransitive

The first construction needs to be presented early as an introduction to the potential form in JL. Here there are not too many changes in sentence patterns from those previously studied, because learners simply return the verb that is the predicate to the dictionary form, then add *KOTO GA DEKIRU*. What must be noted and emphasized to learners is that this construction is used for potential sentences only, not including the meaning of possibility or opportunity in it.

After that, enter the 2nd construction, of course in a different lesson. Here learners must begin to realize that the object in a potential sentence must be followed by the particle GA, no longer the particle WO. Then followed by the third construction while being given various complete explanations. The last two constructions would be wiser if

given at the intermediate level and above. The discussion of the last two constructions in this study is not very in-depth due to limited data, so it needs to be studied further.

6. Conclusions

Based on the explanation above, the following points can be concluded.

1. The types of verbal sentences that can be changed into potential sentences of JL and IL are only transitive sentences and intransitive sentences whose verbs are verbs that express volitional actions or processes.
2. The construction of potential sentences of JL and IL in terms of function, category, and semantic role are similar.
3. The meaning expressed by potential sentences of JL and IL are:
 - a. someone (something) has natural abilities;
 - b. someone has abilities as a result of learning/training;
 - c. someone can do something because the situation allows;
 - d. something can function well; and
 - e. something natural law will occur.
4. The special characteristics of potential sentences of JL and IL, especially the constructions “*N-ga-----DEKIRU*” and “*BISA---N*” are as follows.
 - a. The subjects in both JL and IL constructions must be filled by humans.
 - b. These two constructions can be matched if the N is a noun that states:
 - 1) the name of a language, thus stating the ability to master, understand, or be able to speak using the language;
 - 2) the name of a branch of sport or game, thus stating the ability to do the branch of sport;
 - 3) the name of a musical instrument, thus stating the ability to play the musical instrument; and
 - 4) the name of a song or dance, thus stating the ability to sing or do the dance. The word “*Bisa*” in usage 1)~4) above

cannot be replaced by the word “*da-pat*”. This shows that the word “*Bisa*” is used in spoken language, not formal language.

- c. The construction “*N-ga DEKIRU*” whose N is filled by a noun verb (NV) cannot be matched into the construction “*Bisa----N*” in IL, but must be matched into the construction “*Bisa----V*”. For this, the word “*Bisa*” in IL can be replaced with the word “*dapat*”.

Several things that need to be followed up as implications and applications of the results of this study, especially in Japanese language education, include the following.

1. There needs to be a review of the order of presentation of potential sentence material in JL that has been used so far. If sorted by level of difficulty, for example, try going through the order (1) *N-wo V-ru + KOTO GA DEKIRU*; (2) *N-ga V-ERU/RARERU*; (3) *N-ga DEKIRU*; *N-ga V-URU/ERU*; and (5) *N-ga V-intransitive Special*.
2. In this study, the discussion of the construction “*N-ga V-URU/ERU*” and the construction “*N-ga V-intr*” is still incomplete, so it needs to be studied further.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, D.S. and J.J.; methodology, D.S. and A.S.B.; validation, D.S. and H.; formal analysis, D.S.; investigation, J.J.; resources, A.S.B.; data curation, H.; writing—original draft preparation, D.S, J.J., and A.S.B.; writing—review and editing, D.S. and H.; visualization, J.J.; supervision, D.S. and A.S.B.; project administration, H. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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accordance with institutional and national guidelines, ethical review and approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) were not required.

Informed Consent Statement

This study did not involve human participants, and therefore informed consent was not required.

Data Availability Statement

Data are not publicly available. Interested parties may contact the corresponding author for access.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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