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From *truth* to *truly*: The case of *shinni* ‘truly’ in Japanese compared to Chinese, Korean and Thai counterparts

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Abstract

This study traces the development of the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’, a hybrid form consisting of the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* (眞/真) ‘truth’ and the adverbializer *-ni* of Japanese origin, in the history of Japanese. The goal of the study is to compare the developmental pathway of *shinni* with that of ‘truth’-related words derived from the same Chinese word 眞/真 in Chinese, Korean, and Thai in order to seek commonalities and differences among them. In these languages, it is reported that some words with 眞/真 have developed from “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE”, and have further developed a number of interactional functions as discourse markers (DMs). The data were obtained from various historical and modern corpora and database. A total of 1810 occurrences of *shinni* in written and spoken Japanese of various genres were analysed with the focus on their pragmatic function. The study confirms a commonality in the development from “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” in *shinni*, illustrating its evolution from the noun *shin* (“TRUE”) to the use of *shinni* that can be interpreted as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of what is being said (i.e., “INTENSIVE”). In contrast, this study finds that *shinni* does not bear any DM functions that some words with 眞/真 in Chinese, Korean, and Thai have developed. This study discussed the possibility that, due to various factors, the pace of change at advanced stages of grammaticalization may be more diversified than has previously been suggested.

Keywords: *adverb, discourse marker, illocutionary force, intensive, shinni, Sino-Japanese*

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От истины к истинно: *shinni* в японском языке в сравнении с китайскими, корейским и тайским когнатами

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Аннотация

В настоящем исследовании прослеживается развитие наречия *shinni* ‘истинно’ – гибридной формы, состоящей из китайско-японского существительного *shin* (眞/真) ‘истина’ и наречия *ni* японского происхождения – в японском языке в диахроническом аспекте. Цель исследования сравнить траекторию развития *shinni* с траекторией слов, производных от того же китайского слова 眞/真 в китайском, корейском и тайском языках, и выявить их общие черты и различия. В этих языках некоторые слова с 眞/真 развились от «ИСТИНА/ПРАВДА» до «УСИЛИТЕЛЬ» и в дальнейшем приобрели ряд функций дискурсивных маркеров (ДМ). Данные были получены из различных исторических и современных корпусов, а также баз данных. В общей сложности были проанализированы 1810 случаев использования *shinni* в письменных и устных японских текстах различных жанров с акцентом на их прагматических функциях. Исследование подтверждает общность в развитии *shinni* от «ИСТИНА» до «УСИЛИТЕЛЬ» иллюстрируя его эволюцию от существительного *shin* («ИСТИНА») до *shinni* – как усилителя иллюкутивной силы высказывания. Исследование показывает, что *shinni* не несет никаких функций ДМ, которые развились у некоторых слов с 眞/真 в китайском, корейском и тайском языках. Полученные результаты позволяют сделать предположение о том, что из-за различных факторов темпы изменений, происходящих на продвинутых стадиях грамматикализации, могут не совпадать.

Ключевые слова: наречие, дискурсивный маркер, иллюкутивная сила, интенсивный, *shinni*, китайско-японская интерференция

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1. Introduction

This study examines the historical development of the Sino-Japanese noun 眞/真 *shin* ‘truth, sincerity, righteousness, genuineness’ into the adverb *shinni* ‘truly, genuinely, really’, which consists of *shin* of Chinese origin and the adverbializer *-ni* of Japanese origin. It aims to compare it with the development of discourse markers (DMs, hereafter) that originate from the same Chinese word 眞/真 in Chinese, Korean, and Thai (see Rhee & Zhang 2024, Khammee 2024).¹

¹ The Chinese characters 眞 and 真 are both used in the history of Japanese. In modern standard Japanese, *shinni* is written as 眞に (with the latter form 真 and the Japanese phonographic

Kuteva et al. (2019: 443) have demonstrated that some words with the meaning “TRUE” (‘true’, ‘real’) have developed an “INTENSIVE” meaning in some languages, including Chinese, English, French, and Hungarian. Similarly, in Japanese, the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* ‘truth’, i.e., “TRUE”, has developed into an adverb *shinni* ‘truly’ that can be interpreted as functioning as “INTENSIVE”. In Chinese, Korean, and Thai, “TRUE”-related words that share the etymon 眞/真 have also developed into “INTENSIVE” and have further developed a number of interactional functions as DMs (Rhee & Zhang 2024, Khammee 2024). In contrast, *shinni* has not developed such interactional functions. The goal of the current study is to explore the history of the adverb *shinni*, drawing on various historical and contemporary corpora, to seek commonalities and differences in the words originating from 眞/真 in Chinese, Korean, and Thai. It aims to answer the following research questions: (i) whether a “TRUE”-related word 眞/真 *shin* in Japanese has developed into an “INTENSIVE”, and (ii) whether it has further developed interactional functions as DMs in a similar way to “TRUE”-related words that share the etymon 眞/真 in Chinese, Korean, and Thai.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides some background to the current study. Section 3 introduces the corpora and methodology used in the current study, and Section 4 presents the survey results. Section 5 discusses the results in relation to pragmatic functions and gives some examples of Sino-Japanese “TRUE”-related words that carry similar functions to the DMs originating from 眞/真 in Chinese, Korean, and Thai. Section 6 gives some concluding remarks.

2. Background

2.1. From TRUE to INTENSIVE in grammaticalization

Kuteva et al. (2019: 443) provide some words with the meaning “TRUE (‘true’, ‘real’)” that have evolved to serve the function of “INTENSIVE” in Chinese, English, French, Hungarian, American Sign Language, and Baka.² Such examples are summarized in (1) based on Kuteva et al. (2019). Note that in the case of Hungarian *igaz* ‘true’ and *igaz-án* ‘really’, Kuteva et al. (2019) juxtapose them with a comma, instead of showing the direction of change, e.g., *igaz* ‘true’ > *igaz-án* ‘really’; we follow their description here.

character ㇿ). For convenience, the glossing for the noun *shin* and the adverb *shinni* are standardized to ‘truth’ and ‘truly’ respectively in what follows. Discourse markers have been discussed and described using various terms in the literature. In this study, we will use the term discourse marker as an umbrella term for expressions that can serve discourse-pragmatic functions.

² Ethnologue (<https://www.ethnologue.com>) gives two languages named Baka; one is Nilo-Saharan and the other is Niger-Congo.

- (1) TRUE (‘true, real’) > INTENSIVE
 Archaic Chinese *qing* ‘truth’ > *qing*, intensive marker, adverb
 Early Modern Chinese *zhen* ‘truth’ > *zhen*, intensive marker, adverb
 Old French *verai* ‘tru(ly), truthful(ly)’ > (borrowing) Middle English *verray* >
 Modern English *very*
 Hungarian *igaz* ‘true’, *igaz-án* ‘really’
 American Sign Language *TRUE* > *INTENSIVE*
 Baka *ko* ‘truly’, ‘really’, ‘completely’, adverb > ‘very’, intensive marker

In a similar manner, the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* ‘truth’, i.e., “TRUE”, has evolved to serve the function of “INTENSIVE”, as in (2). In (2), the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’, a hybrid form consisting of *shin* of Chinese origin and the adverbializer *-ni* of Japanese origin, serves to intensify the illocutionary force of apology, meaning ‘I am very sorry’. At the same time, *shinni* sounds rather archaic in contemporary Japanese. Note that (2) is indeed taken from a historical novel about the Zen monk named Dōgen (1200–1253). The adverb *shinni* has the stylistic effect of creating the impression of a conversation between people from long ago for modern readers.

- (2) Intensive adverb (intensifying the illocutionary force)
 あなたのお心を挫くようで真に申し訳ないのですが、…ご老師の看病を
 お願いできないでしょうか？
anata-no-o.kokoro-o *kujiku-yō-de*
 you-GEN-RES.heart-ACC discourage-way-COP.CVB
shinni *mōshiwakenai-no-desu-ga*, [...]
truly sorry-NML-COP.POL-but
go.rōshi-no-kanbyō-o *onagai-deki-nai-deshō-ka?*
 RES.old.master-GEN-care-ACC ask-can-not-COP.CONJ.POL-QP
 “I am truly/very sorry to discourage you, but [...] could you please take care of
 your old master?”
 (BCCWJ, PB29_00269, 23790, Mizushima Hajime, *Dōgen*, 2002)³

The developmental pathway from the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* ‘truth’ to the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’ that can be interpreted as meaning ‘very’ is in line with “TRUE (‘true’, ‘real’)” to “INTENSIVE” suggested by Kuteva et al. (2019).

2.2. A note on the Sino-Japanese *shin(ni)*

The basic meaning of the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* is ‘truth’ (Kadokawa 1982–1999, Todo 1978, Morohashi 2018). According to *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (Nikkoku 2006), the noun *shin* is attested in *Shōmangyōgisho*, a Buddhist commentary written in the early seventh century, while the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’, i.e., the noun *shin* agglutinated by the adverbializer *-ni* of Japanese origin, is found in *Sasamegoto*, the theory of Renga poems written in 1463–1464. Later, *shinni* is

³ Information on the examples found by the Chunagon corpus search application (Corpora (b)–(j) in Tables 1 and 2) is indicated as follows: the abbreviation for the corpus, sample ID, the beginning number in the corpus, (Author), (Title), and the year of the data. The bolding in the examples is by the authors.

used in conversation in novels written in a colloquial style, as in (3). The adverb *shinni* modifies the verb phrase *o-ide-nansu* ‘(you) will go’ in (3a) and the adjective *ureshii* ‘happy’ in (3b). Note that *shinni* in (3b) can be interpreted as meaning ‘very’, i.e., “INTENSIVE” (Kuteva et al. 2019) (see Section 5.1 for further discussion).

(3) Adverb (modifying the predicate)

- a. じらさづとも、しんにおいでなんすところを、けふはあかしておきかせなんし

jiras-azu-tomo, shinni oidenansu-tokoro-o,

tease-not-even.if truly go.RES-place-ACC

kyō-wa akashi-te okikasenanshi

today-TOP reveal-CVB tell.RES.IMP

“Stop teasing, reveal (to me) and let me hear where you will really go today.”

(Nikkoku, *Sharebon Keiseikaifutasujimichi*, 1798)

- b. 真に嬉しいヨ、どふぞ

shinni ureshii-yo, dōzo

truly be.happy-FP please

“(I) am truly/very happy, please.”

(Nikkoku, *Ninjōbon Shunshokuumeگویomi*, 1832–33)

In contemporary Japanese dictionaries, *shinni* is described as an adverb or an adverb-like phrase that modifies the predicate (e.g., Hida & Asada 2018, Daijirin 2019, Iwanami 2019). Hida & Asada (2018: 196) comment that in contemporary Japanese, *shinni* is employed in formal writing, as shown in (4).

(4) Adverb (modifying the predicate)

- 彼はしんに妻を愛していた。

kare-wa shinni tsuma-o aishi-te-i-ta.

he-TOP truly wife-ACC love-CVB-be-PST

“He truly loved (his) wife.”

(Hida & Asada 2018: 196)

These dictionaries allow us to trace the historical process that led to the evolution of the Sino-Japanese lexeme *shin* from a noun meaning ‘truth’ to the adverb *shinni* meaning ‘truly’. However, to deepen our understanding of *shinni*, we will extend our research by analyzing data retrieved from both written and spoken Japanese corpora. In the following sections, therefore, we will conduct a detailed corpus-based analysis of *shinni*.

3. Data and methodology

The data used for this study were obtained from various historical and modern corpora as well as database listed in Table 1 (see Appendix for further information). Database (a) SZ provides online access to a collection of Japanese classical literature. From this database, we manually collected data, ensuring that each

instance was annotated as *shinni*. Corpora (b)–(j) were developed by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics. From these corpora, examples that are annotated as *shinni* were collected using the Chunagon corpus concordance system. We then checked them manually and removed any irrelevant examples from the database used in the current study.

Table 1. Database and corpora used for this study

Database and corpora		Periods
Written Japanese		
(a)	SZ= <i>Shimpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū</i>	late 7th c.–late 19th c.
(b)	CHJ= <i>The Corpus of Historical Japanese</i>	8th c.–early 20th c.
(c)	SHC= <i>Showa-Heisei Corpus of Written Japanese</i>	1933–2013
(d)	BCCWJ= <i>Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese</i> , excluding the sub-corpus <i>Diet Record</i> (Corpus (f) DR)	1971–2008
Spoken Japanese		
Formal speech (mostly monologue)		
(e)	SSC= <i>Showa Speech Corpus</i>	1952–1969
(f)	DR=the sub-corpus <i>Diet Record</i> in Corpus (d) BCCWJ	1971–2008
(g)	CSJ= <i>The Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese</i>	1999–2001
Daily conversation		
(h)	NUCC= <i>Nagoya University Conversation Corpus</i>	1993–2000
(i)	CWPC= <i>Gen-Nichi-Ken Corpus of Workplace Conversation</i>	1993 & 1999–2000
(j)	CEJC= <i>The Corpus of Everyday Japanese Conversation</i>	2016–2019

A total of 1810 occurrences of *shinni* in written and spoken Japanese of various genres were analysed with the focus on their pragmatic function.

4. Results

Table 2 presents a summary of the survey results. Here we will highlight two main observations and provide examples to illustrate each point.

Table 2. The occurrence of *shinni* in the database and corpora used for this study

Database and corpora		Periods	Freq. (pmw)	Ill. force
written	(a) SZ	late 7th c.–late 19th c.	5 (NA)	0
	(b) CHJ	Edo (1603–1867)	24 (28.9)	0
		Meiji (1868–1912)	76 (8.1)	0
		Taisho (1912–1926)	116 (23.6)	0
		Showa (1926–1989)	711 (29.7)	2
	(c) SHC	Heisei (1989–2019) ⁴	92 (9.3)	0
		(d) BCCWJ (excl. DR)	1971–2008	701 (7.0)
Total			1725	10

⁴ We would like to thank Jiyeon Park for the comment that it is possible that the use of some complementary words, such as *honto*, was noticeably prevalent in the Heisei period. Although this may be the case, it is outside of the scope of the current study, so we will leave it for future investigation. See the brief descriptions in Table 4 in Section 5.3.

Database and corpora		Periods	Freq. (pmw)	Ill. force	
spoken	formal speech	(e) SSC	1952–1969	3 (5.7)	0
		(f) DR	1971–2008	76 (14.9)	0
		(g) CSJ	1999–2001	6 (0.8)	0
	daily conv.	(h) NUCC	1993–2000	0	0
		(i) CWPC	1993 & 1999–2000	0	0
		(j) CEJC	2016–2019	0	0
	Total			85	0

Freq.=raw frequency; pmw=per million words; Ill. force=raw frequency of the instances in which the adverb *shinni* can be interpreted as serving to intensify an illocutionary force of what is being said.

The first observation is that the adverb *shinni* is present in the database and corpora of written Japanese (Database (a) and Corpora (b)–(d)), as well as in the corpora of formal speech (Corpora (e)–(g), mainly monologues), but no instances of *shinni* are found in the corpora of daily conversation (Corpora (h)–(j)).⁵

In the corpora of written Japanese, (5) is the earliest attestation of the adverb *shinni*, found in a travel story which showcases famous historical landmarks in Edo/Tokyo for readers through two fictive characters visiting there. In (5), *shinni* modifies the nominal predicate *zokushi-nari* ‘(the person) is a vulgarian’.

(5) Adverb (modifying a predicate)

その心徳を得ずんば、真に俗子なり。

sono-kokoro toku-o e-zunba, shinni zokushi-nari.
that-heart virtue-ACC obtain-not.if truly vulgarian-COP

“If (one’s) heart does not obtain the virtue, the person is truly a vulgarian.”

(SZ: Toda Mosui, *Murasaki no Hitomoto*, 1628)

It is interesting to note here that the occurrence of *shinni* is relatively frequent in conversation in novels written in the Edo period (1603–1867), while it is not frequent in the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taisho (1912–1926) periods, as shown in Table 3. To be more specific, 17 out of 24 (70.8%) instances of *shinni* are found in conversation in novels written in the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century.

Table 3. The occurrence of *shinni* in conversation in novels in Corpus (b) CHJ

Corpus	Periods	Total	<i>shinni</i> in conversation in novels	
		Freq.	Freq.	%
(b) CHJ	Edo (1603–1867)	24	17	70.8
	Meiji (1868–1912)	76	11	14.5
	Taisho (1912–1926)	116	8	6.9

⁵ Of the instances of *shinni* across Corpora (e)–(g), only a single example of *shinni* is found in dialogue in Corpus (e) SSC; all other examples are used in monologue.

In the corpora of spoken language, the earliest attestation of *shinni* is (6). In (6), the male speaker is talking about what he thinks is important for new employee training. In (6), *shinni* modifies the verb *shugan-to-suru* ‘think of as the main point’.

(6) Adverb (modifying a predicate)

[略] 言葉遣いが悪かったらもう何にもうまくないんだとゆうことでわたくしえーしんにそういうことを主眼としてですねえー [略] わたし考えているんです

[...]	<i>kotoba.zukai-ga</i>	<i>warukat-tara,</i>	<i>mō</i>	<i>nanni-mo</i>
	language.use-NOM	bad.PST-if	any.more	anything-PT
	<i>umaku-nai-n-da-toyū-koto-de</i>		<i>watakushi</i>	<i>ē</i>
	good-not-NML-COP-QUOT-NML-COP.CVB	I	uh	<i>shinni</i>
	<i>sō-yū-koto-o</i>	<i>shugan-toshite-desu-nē</i>		[...]
	so-QUOT-thing-ACC	main.point-as-COP.POL-FP		
	<i>watashi</i>	<i>kangaeteiru-n-desu</i>		
	I	think-NML-COP.POL		

“[Even if the facilities are good, if the customer service has a bad attitude and] if (the customer service has) a bad language, it won’t be any good at all, and I uh truly think of these things as the main point (of new employee training), [...] I think.”

(SSC: C52_06_CT, 65150, 1952)

The second observation concerns the adverb *shinni* that can be interpreted as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of what is being said, as in (2). In our written Japanese database (Database (a) and Corpora (b)–(d)), there were only 10 instances of this specific usage out of 1,725, representing approximately 0.57% (see Section 5.2 for further details). No instances were found in our spoken Japanese database (Corpora (e)–(j)).

Example (7) illustrates that the adverb *shinni* can be seen as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of regret, expressing ‘I truly/deeply regret’ or ‘I am truly/very sorry’.

(7) Intensive adverb (intensifying the illocutionary force)

[略] また快方に向つたことをいつて居られたので、安心して居つたのは真に相済まなかつた。

[...]	<i>mata</i>	<i>kaihō.ni.mukat-ta-koto-o</i>	<i>it-te-orare-ta-node,</i>
	again	convalesce-PST-NML-ACC	say-CVB-be.RES-PST-because
	<i>anshinshi-te-ot-ta-no-wa</i>	<i>shinni</i>	<i>aisumanakat-ta.</i>
	relieve-CVB-be.HUM-PST-NML-TOP	truly	be.sorry-PST

“Because (he) said (he) was getting better again, (I) truly/deeply regret that (I felt) relieved (and didn’t do anything for him)”.

(SHC: 70MChūkō1933_05049, 3550, 1933)

In summary, our survey results indicate that *shinni* is predominantly used in written Japanese and rarely appears in spoken Japanese; if at all, it is typically found only in formal monologues. Additionally, our data reveal that *shinni* serves to intensify the illocutionary force in only a few instances.

5. Discussion

5.1. “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” seen in the Sino-Japanese *shin*(ni)

This section traces the historical development of the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* ‘truth’ to the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’ that can be interpreted as functioning as “INTENSIVE”, as in (2) and (7), presenting examples found in our database (see Table 1), to confirm that the development is consistent with “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” in grammaticalization (Kuteva et al. 2019).

In a similar way to the description in dictionaries mentioned in Section 2.2, the noun *shin* occurred earlier than the adverb *shinni*. Example (8) is the earliest attestation of the noun *shin* ‘truth, sincerity, righteousness’ used in a history book.

(8) Noun

性に率ひ真に任せ、矯飾する所無し。

sei-ni shitagai shin-ni makase, kyōshokusuru-tokoro nashi.

nature-PT following truth-PT depending distort.embellish-NML not

“(Emperor Suinin) following (his) nature and depending on (his) sincerity, (he) did not distort or embellish (things).”

(SZ: *Nihonshoki*, 720)

The adverb *shinni* was attested in later centuries in our database. The earliest example is (5), in which *shinni* modifies the nominal predicate. Example (9) is the second-earliest example of *shinni* in our database. It modifies the nominal adjective *iya* ‘unwilling’.

(9) Adverb (modifying the predicate)

真にいやと思ふ客人が来ても

shinni iya-to omou-kyakujin-ga ki-te-mo

truly unwilling-QUOT feel-guest-NOM come-CVB-even.if

“Even if a guest (you) think (you are) truly/very unwilling (to entertain) comes (to you), [you must welcome (him).]”

(SZ: *Umeborikogaku, Sharebon Keiseikaifutasujimichi*, 1798)

It is worth noting here that when *shinni* modifies a nominal adjective (e.g., *iya* ‘unwilling’ in (9)), or an adjective (e.g., *ureshii* ‘happy’ in (3b) and *kanashi* ‘sad’ in (10)), it can be interpreted as meaning ‘very’.

(10) Adverb (modifying the predicate)

そんな無理な事ばかり。おつせへすとしんに哀しくなりいす

sonna murina-koto-bakari. ossēsu-to shinni kanashiku-nariisu

such impossible-thing-just say.RES-if truly sad.ADV-become.POL

“If (you) say just such impossible things, (I) become truly/very sad”.

(CHJ: 52-Share1822_01062, 187720, Hanasanjin, *Sharebon Satokagami*, 1822)

It is likely that this ambiguity in interpretation may have given rise to the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* that can be regarded as serving to intensify the illocutionary force, as in (2) and (7), because the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* was found later in the early twentieth century as far as our database is concerned. Therefore, the use of *shinni*

to modify a nominal adjective or an adjective can be seen as a “bridging context” (Heine 2002, Narrog & Heine 2021: 58–61) or a “critical context” (Diewald 2002).

In conclusion, although, as reported in Section 4, the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* occurred infrequently, it is suggested that the developmental pathway of the noun *shin* ‘truth’ via the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’ to the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* ‘very’ conforms to “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” (Kuteva et al. 2019).

5.2. Pragmatic functions of *shinni*

In this section, we will focus on the pragmatic functions of *shinni*. According to Rhee & Zhang (2024) and Khammee (2024), “TRUE”-related words in Chinese, Korean, and Thai that originated from 眞/真 have also developed into “INTENSIVE” and have further developed a number of functions as DMs. More specifically, the Korean *cinnca* serves to mark emphasis, frustration/annoyance, challenge, surprise, pause-filling, and sudden remembrance, while these functions are marked by *zhende* and *zhenshi* in Chinese; *zhende* is used to mark emphasis, and as a preface to noteworthy information, surprise, or upcoming disalignment, and *zhenshi* marks discontent, sudden remembrance, reproach, and annoyance (Rhee & Zhang 2024). Khammee (2024) identifies the following DM functions in the Thai *zin*: agreement response token, sudden realization/remembrance, surprise, confirmation/agreement solicitation, perspective shift, elaboration, emphasis, and disagreement response token.

In contrast, it appears that the Japanese *shinni* does not have DM functions similar to those of the Chinese *zhende* and *zhenshi*, the Korean *cinnca*, and the Thai *zin*, except for marking emphasis (but see Note 13 on the usage of *zhenshi*). In other words, as noted in Section 4, the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* carries the pragmatic function of intensifying the illocutionary force, although we only identified 10 examples of this specific function in our database.⁶ For example, in (2) *shinni* can be interpreted as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of apology, meaning ‘I am truly/very sorry’, and in (7) it can be seen as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of regret, expressing ‘I truly/deeply regret’ or ‘I am truly/very sorry’.

Let us look at some other examples of the “INTENSIVE” *shinni*. In (11a), *shinni* can be regarded as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of wish, meaning ‘I truly/very much pray’, while in (11b) it can be interpreted as intensifying the illocutionary force of gratitude, meaning ‘I am truly/very honored’.

⁶ Out of the 10 examples of *shinni* in this specific usage, 3 occur in essays written by authors who were born in the late nineteenth century (e.g., (7)), 1 in an essay written by an author born in the early twentieth century (11b), 1 in a historical novel written in 2002 (2), 1 in a story of a mythical creature written in 2003 (12a), 1 in a judicial decision text cited in a newspaper in 2002 (11a), and 3 in blogs written in 2008 (e.g., (12b)).

(11) Intensive adverb (intensifying the illocutionary force)

- a. 生活共同体として、あらたに復興することを真に祈念する

seikatsu.kyōdōtai-toshite, aratani fukkōsuru-koto-o
 life.community-as newly restore-NML-ACC

shinni kinensuru

truly pray

“As a community of life, (I) truly/very much pray (you would) newly restore it”.

(BCCWJ: PN2d_00010, 13070, Sangyō Keizai Shimbunsha, *Sankei Shimbun*, 2002)

- b. 真に光栄でございます。

shinni *kōē-degozaimasu.*

truly honor-COP.POL

“(I) am truly/very honored.”

(BCCWJ: PB30_00030, 74380, Umehara Takeshi, *Umehara Takeshi Chosakushū*, 2003)

In (12), *shinni* can be seen as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of affirmation, meaning ‘I truly/very much agree’. Example (12a) is taken from a story in which a Yōkai, a supernatural being from Japanese folklore and mythology, is the main character. In (12a), the speaker in the story expresses strong agreement with what was said in the preceding discourse. In (12b), the writer of the blog extends his/her strong agreement with the opinion s/he received from a reader.

(12) Intensive adverb (intensifying the illocutionary force)

- a. 真にその通り。

shinni *sono-tōri.*

truly so-just.like

(Thanks to those creatures with magical and psychic power who processes us, we, the fox family, are able to have strong power of transformation.) “(I) truly/very much agree.”

(BCCWJ: PB39_00749, 72330, Kyōgoku Natsuhiko, *Tōfukozō Sugoroku Dōchū Furidashi*, 2003)

- b. 真にその通りですよ。

shinni *sono-tōri-desu-yo-ne.*

truly so-just.like-COP.POL-FP-FP

(I have received the opinion that it is not right to ask people to vote for you while also telling them not to require them to register as fans of your blog.)

“(I) truly/very much agree.”

(BCCWJ: OY14_14139, 7550, *Yahoo! Blog*, 2008)

The remaining three examples of the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* can be counted as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of apology in a similar way to (2).

This specific pragmatic function of “INTENSIVE” *shinni* ‘very’, as well as the meaning of the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’, may be characterized as an increase in discourse orientation in semantic change and grammaticalization (Narrog and Heine 2021: 92–116). Narrog and Heine (2021: 92) point out that “in semantic change in general and in grammaticalization in particular, meanings tend to become increasingly oriented toward the speech act participants, that is, speaker and hearer, and toward organizing speech or discourse itself”, as summarized in (13).

- (13) I increasing orientation toward the speaker’s perspective (increased speaker orientation)
 II increasing orientation toward the speech situation including the hearer (increased hearer orientation)
 III increasing orientation toward speech (text) and discourse itself
 (Narrog & Heine 2021: 93)

Tendency I and Tendency II may be seen in the overall development of the adverb *shinni* and the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* from the Sino-noun *shin*, while Tendency III cannot be identified in this development.⁷ We may see Tendency I (increased speaker orientation) in the later development of *shinni* than *shin*. In other words, the adverb *shinni* acquired the speaker-oriented meaning in that its use is dependent on the speaker’s/writer’s subjective judgment. Tendency II (increased hearer orientation) may be observable in the “INTENSIVE” *shinni* that serves to intensify the illocutionary force of apology that is directed to the hearer by the speaker (in conversation in novels as far as our database is concerned). On the other hand, the use of *shinni* as an intensifier seems to remain mostly within the range of the speaker’s side, because the hyperbolic or expressive functions of intensifiers attest to the effect of the speaker’s involvement in the immediate discourse or interaction (Athanasidou 2007), and do not necessarily exert influence on the hearer’s side, especially in written discourse.

5.3. Why has *shinni* not become a discourse marker?

Why, then, has *shinni* not become a DM like the corresponding forms in Chinese, Korean, and Thai? One reasonable explanation is that *shinni* has been specialized in written discourse, as clearly seen in Table 2. It is true that one of the spoken corpora, Corpus (f) DR (Diet Record), includes a relatively large number of examples; however, parliamentary statements during the Diet session appear to reflect formal tones close to written language.

⁷ According to Narrog and Heine (2021: 99–100), Tendency III is “a distinctive tendency that cannot be subsumed under speaker- or hearer orientation”, for example, the development of complex clause constructions out of independent speech acts, such as concessive conditionals out of imperatives. The development of the adverb *shinni* out of the Sino-noun *shin* does not involve Tendency III because *shinni* does not “serve to connect two or more propositions in discourse and indicate semantic relationships between them” (Narrog and Heine 2021: 100).

In addition, it is worth noting that each reading of a given Chinese character has its own stylistic role in Japanese discourse (Shibasaki 2008, see also Widdowson 1975: Chap 2, Farb 1993); the same can be applied to 真. For example, 真に can be read in at least the following three ways: *shin-ni*, *makoto-ni*, and *ma-ni* in the collocational phrase *ma-ni ukeru* [truth-as take ‘take (something) seriously’]. The first two are described as written language, while the last is described as everyday language (Ohno & Hamanishi 2012 s.v. *shin-ni*). It is well known that the spoken and written languages have developed in different ways (Miller 2011: Chap 11), and interestingly, both *shinni* and *ma-ni* are used in one text in the first half of the nineteenth century, as follows. (3b) is repeated here as (14), with the addition of the Chinese character 真 for *shinni*; *ma-ni* in (15) is recorded as the earliest example according to Nikkoku.

- (14) Adverb (modifying the predicate)

真に嬉しいヨ、どふぞ

shin (真) *ni* *ureshii-yo*, *dōzo*
truly be.happy-FP please
“(I) am truly/very happy, please.”

(Nikkoku, *Ninjōbon Shunshokuumeigyōyomi*, 1832–33)

- (15) Collocation

嬉しがらせを真にうけて、今日まで尽した心の操

ureshi-gar-ase-o *ma* (真)-*ni* *uket-te*, *kyō-made*
be.happy-V.AFF-CAUS-ACC truth-as take-CVB today-until
tsukushi-ta *kokoro-no-misao*
serve-PST heart-GEN-chastity

“I have (ever) taken seriously (my partner, Tōbei’s) kindness and love, and preserved (my) chastity up to now.”

(Nikkoku, *Ninjōbon Shunshokuumeigyōyomi*, 1832–33)

While the Chinese character 真 is used in one and the same text, the two instances differ from each other from both semantic and stylistic points of view. In (14), *shinni* modifies the following predicate *ureshii* ‘be happy’ and can be interpreted as meaning ‘very’, i.e., “INTENSIVE” (Kuteva et al. 2019, see Section 5.1 for relevant discussions). In (15), on the other hand, *ma-ni* collocates with *ukeru* ‘to take’ and this collocation means ‘take (something) seriously, accept (something) as true’: *ma-ni* does not serve as an intensifier. In other words, the collocational phrase retains its truth-related meaning rather than following the shift to an abstract meaning ‘very’ of intensification or to a DM.⁸ Stylistically, the author of this

⁸ The collocational phrase *shin-ni semaru* (truth-PT close.in) ‘approach the heart (of the matter)’ also retains the original nominal function ‘truth’ of *shin*. Note that *shin-ni shikari* (truth-PT as.it.is) ‘that is correct’ quoted in *Genkai* (Otsuki 1889 s.v. *shin-ni*) might have been another collocation in the late nineteenth century. Further, this specific expression was likely to be a clausal pragmatic marker ‘certainly’ to prompt language users to ask themselves something, especially in written discourse as

human-interest story, Tamenaga Shunsui, might have used *shinni* and *ma-ni* for different purposes, which would have become a springboard for a phraseology of written vs. everyday language uses in later stages. A BCCWJ search provides 107 examples of *mani ukeru*, 25 of which are used in online question–answer interactions and blogs in *Yahoo!* as below. This survey proves that *shinni* is skewed toward written language, as in Table 2, while *ma-ni ukeru* is used in a wider variety of discourse genres.

(16) Collocation

しかしあの久保は何者ですか？あんなの言うことなんて真に受ける
必要なし。

shikashi *ano-Ōkubo-wa* *nani-mono-desu-ka?*
but that-PN-TOP what-person-COP.POL-QP
anna-no-no-iu-koto-nante ***ma-ni*** ***ukeru*** *hitsuyōnashi.*
like.that-fellow-GEN-say-NML-EMPH **truth-as** take unnecessary

“But who on earth is *Ōkubo*? (You) don’t have to take seriously what he says.”

(BCCWJ, OC06_05208, 1040, *Yahoo!Chiebukuro*, 2005)

(17) Collocation

あなたの思うことすべてを真に受けますから、あなたの為になることを
望んで下さい。

anata-no-omou-koto-subete-o ***ma-ni*** ***uke-masu-kara,***
you-GEN-think-NML-all-ACC **truth-as** take-POL-because
anata-no-tame.ni.naru-koto-o *nozōn-de-kudasai.*
you-GEN-benefit.bring-NML-ACC wish-CVB-please.do

“because (your subconsciousness) takes all you think about at face value, (please wish yourself) what turns out to be good for you.”

(BCCWJ, OY14_08390, 2530, *Yahoo! Blog*, 2008)

What kinds of expressions have been used in everyday language instead of *shinni*? As explained above, *ma-ni* could be one of the candidates but it appears to be restricted mostly to the collocation *ma-ni ukeru* ‘take (something) seriously’. Table 4 summarizes some typical adverbs meaning ‘truly’ based on Ohno & Hamanishi (2012) and Nikkoku. This table tells us that some truth-related words are used in a complementary style and that *shinni* assumes a role in written discourse.

below, although it sounds old-fashioned now. We will develop this point in our future study. Note that # means a sentence boundary, while the last comma is equivalent to a period.

(i) 見ろ、見ろ、あれ 溝道を出たぞ# 真に然り、

miro, miro, are *kōdō-o* *de-ta-zo.* *shinni* *shikari,*
look.IMP look.IMP that (=the French army) trench-ACC go.out-PST-FP truly be.correct

“Look out, the French army went out of the trench. No doubt (they are closing in).”

(CHJ: 60MTaiyo1901_14016, 311710, 1901)

Table 4. Some ‘truth’-related words in Japanese (based on Ohno & Hamanishi 2012)

Form	Genre	Earliest use as adverb
<i>masa-ni</i> ‘literally, very’	written	828 onward
<i>jitsu-ni</i> ‘indeed, in faith’ ⁹	everyday	1231-53 onward
<i>shin-ni</i> ‘truly’	written	1463–64 onward
<i>masashiku</i> ‘truly’	written	1657 onward (according to CHJ)
<i>hontō(-ni)</i> (or <i>honto(ni)</i>) ‘really’	everyday	1787 onward
<i>ma-ni ukeru</i> ‘take (something) seriously’	everyday	1832–33 onward
<i>makoto-ni</i> ‘truly’ ¹⁰	written	1887 onward
<i>jissai</i> ‘in fact’	everyday	1896 onward

In addition, one can see a process of change: once a form begins to be used to some extent in everyday language, it is likely to extend its function to a DM, as illustrated below. In contemporary Japanese, *hontō(-ni)/honto(ni)* ‘really, truly’ is one of the most commonly used ‘truth’-related words that can serve DM functions of expressing the speaker’s surprise, assurance, agreement, etc., akin to the Chinese *zhende* and *zhenshi*, the Korean *cinnca*, and the Thai *zin*.¹¹ For example, in (18), *hontō* marks the speaker’s surprise, knowing that their uncle said to “sister-in-law” that he felt relieved when his wife was hospitalized because he had been caring for her before her hospitalization.

- (18) Wife: えー そんなことゆったの
ē sonna-koto yutta-no
 INT such-thing said-FP
 “Oh, (did he) say such things?”
- Sister-in-law: ゆったよ
yutta-yo
 said-FP
 “(He) said.”
- Wife: 本当
hontō
 really
 “Really”
- Sister-in-law: ん いや
n iya
 uh no
 “Uh well”

(CEJC: T013_009, 17980, 2017)

⁹ The nominal part *jitsu* ‘truth, faith’ can be used as part of the collocational phrase *jitsu-o ieba* (truth-ACC say-if) ‘to tell (you) the truth’ (Hida & Asada 2018: 486).

¹⁰ According to Nikkoku, *makoto-ni* can be written in several ways such as *makoto* (真)-*ni*, *makoto* (実)-*ni*, *makoto* (誠)-*ni*, *makoto* (洵)-*ni*, and *makoto* (寔)-*ni*. All of these forms mean ‘truth’; the last two forms are archaic now. As we mentioned in Note 8, collocational phrases with these adverbial expressions deserve further investigation.

¹¹ Moriyama (2022) analyses the functions of *hontō(-ni)/honto(ni)* and *maij(-de)* as interjections (i.e., DMs in the current study) in contemporary Japanese based on questionnaires.

The historical development of *hontō* is from the noun *hontō* ‘realness, truth’, as in (19a), to the adverb *hontōni* ‘really, truly’, as in (19b), and then to the intensifier ‘very’, as in (19c) (Narumi 2015: 196).¹² This developmental pathway illustrates the shift from “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” (Kuteva et al. 2019).

- (19) a. さては狐ではねへ。ほんとうの北八か
satewa kitsune-de-wa-nee. hontō-no-Kitahachi-ka
 then fox-COP.CV-B-TOP-not real-GEN-PN-QP
 “Then, (you are) not a fox. (Are you) real Kitahachi?”
 (Jippenshaikku, *Tōkaidōchūhizakurige*, vol. 4, jō, 1802 (Narumi 2015: 196))
- b. 此のころはほんとうに、呂律が廻って來たぜ
konogoro-wa hontōni, roretsu.ga mawat-te-ki-ta-ze
 recently-TOP really clarity-NOM flow-CV-B-become-PST-FP
 “Recently, (you) have become able to speak clearly.”
 (Shikiteisanba, *Ukiyoburo*, vol. 4, maki no ge, 1809–1813 (Narumi 2015: 196))
- c. 奥さんが、あの時はほんとに呆れたと云つて、気が附いて僕にあやまる。
okusan-ga, ano-toki-wa hontoni akire-ta-to-it-te,
 woman-NOM that-time-TOP really astonish-PST-QUOT-say-CV-B
ki-ga tsui-te boku-ni ayamaru.
 attention-NOM notice-CV-B I-to apologize
 “The woman, saying that (she) was really astonished at that time, realized and apologized to me.”
 (Mori Ogai, *Uwita Sekusuarisu*, 1909 (Narumi 2015: 196))

To sum up, a variety of words indicating ‘truly’ in Japanese have been in competition with each other but have gradually come to be distributed in a complementary manner. As for *shinni*, it has been skewed toward written language over time, while some other words such as *jissai* ‘in truth’, *jitsu-ni* ‘indeed’, and *hontō(-ni)* (or *honto(ni)*) ‘really’ have found their way into everyday language. Taking into consideration the fact that the latter three words are used as DMs while *shinni* is not, albeit in the majority of cases, what matters is whether a given word is used as an adverb or as an intensifier on a routine basis in spoken or everyday language. This is not a hard-and-fast rule but a diachronic process that is observed in many cases of the words in focus. One may thus get a polite and formal feeling if one hears the use of *shinni*, *masani*, *masashiku*, and *makotoni*, in conversation at all. This will be a plausible reason why *shinni* has not fully reached the DM stage.

¹² Narumi (2015: 201) notes that the etymology and origin of *hontō* is unknown.

5.4. Theoretical implications for cyclicity phenomena

Finally, let us touch on one theoretical issue in the development of DMs across languages. Hansen (2018a, b) proposes that words derived from the same source or carrying the same meaning tend to follow similar historical pathways into DMs, i.e., cyclicity. This proposal provides an explanation with respect to Romance languages and sounds intuitively convincing. That said, there is still some room for a reconsideration on the development of DMs in East Asian languages and Thai. As discussed in Section 5.2, the Chinese *zhende* and *zhenshi*, the Korean *cinnca*, and the Thai *zin*, all of these are historically related to the Japanese *shinni* and are used as DMs (Khammee 2024, Rhee & Zhang 2024¹³, see papers in Higashiizumi and Shibasaki (in preparation) for comparison). In this respect, cyclicity works well other than for *shinni*, except for cases of some significantly different functions of particular DMs (Note 13). Does this mean that *shinni* is an exception to the idea of cyclicity? If so, why does it differ from these cognate-like expressions in the other languages?

One reason is that in contemporary Japanese, *shinni* is specialized in written language, while some of the relevant expressions are prevalent in everyday language. The other reason is that expressions used adverbially and repeatedly in everyday language have a tendency to become DMs. As summarized in Table 2, *shinni* shows a strong tendency toward use in written and formal contexts and in fact has not yet reached the DM stage (Section 5.3).

Here we are not intending to argue against Hansen's (2018a, b) hypothesis, but we are focusing on the degree of this specific grammaticalization pathway from "TRUE" to "INTENSIVE" through an analysis of some limited sets of cognate-like examples in an East Asian context. Obviously, Japanese was in close contact with Chinese over a lengthy period, and *shin* 'truth' was borrowed from Chinese as a noun in the early seventh century; it was also used as a nominal adjective, i.e., nominal *shin* plus a copula, which is categorized under the heading of noun (Nikkoku). In the fifteenth century, the adverbializer *-ni* was added to *shin* to serve as the adverb *shinni* 'truly', and *shinni* has been used since then up to the present (Tables 2 and 3). In a nutshell, *shin* has a long history of intensive contact with Chinese, which we believe played a foundational role in the rise of the intensifier meaning 'truly' as a piece of evidence for Kuteva et al. (2019: 443) and Hansen (2018a, b). However, unlike its counterparts in Chinese, Korean, and Thai, *shinni* has not (yet) advanced to the stage of DM, or it is very slow (or conservative) in undergoing semantic-pragmatic extensions to a DM, presumably due to the reasons mentioned above. If *shinni* comes to fulfill a DM function in the future, it would back up the assumption of cyclicity. Only time will tell.

¹³ According to Haiping Long, the Chinese *zhenshi* differs significantly from *zhende* in terms of its pragmatic function, presumably due to the unknown origin of *shi*. We are grateful to him for this invaluable comment.

6. Conclusion

We have traced the developmental pathway of the Sino-Japanese noun *shin* ‘truth’ via the adverb *shinni* ‘truly’ to *shinni* that can be interpreted as serving to intensify the illocutionary force of what is being said. This development is in line with the general pathway of change labeled “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” (Kuteva et al. 2019: 443). It is reported that ‘truth’-related words with the same etymon 真/真 ‘truth’ in Chinese, Korean, and Thai have developed their own expressions from “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE”. Thus, it appears that the extension of the etymon 真/真 from “TRUE” to “INTENSIVE” is one of the commonalities among these four Asian languages as well. On the other hand, in Chinese, Korean, and Thai, these ‘truth’-related words have developed further into DMs, while the Sino-Japanese adverb *shinni* has not taken on any DM function, as of the present: only some examples of *shinni* can barely (but not fully) be seen as serving to intensify an illocutionary force. The extent to which each expression has fully acquired its own DM function differs at least between Japanese and the other three languages (Chinese, Korean, and Thai). The idea of cyclicity (Hansen 2018a, b) would predict that *shinni* would become a DM sometime in the future, but we have to continue our research to test the hypothesis from an East Asian perspective. This study raises the possibility that, due to various factors, the pace of change at advanced stages of grammaticalization may be more diversified than has previously been suggested.

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Abbreviations

ACC: accusative; ADV: adverbial; CAUS: causative; CONJ: conjectural; COP: copula; CVB: converb; EMPH: emphatic; FP: final particle; GEN: genitive; HUM: humble; IMP: imperative; INT: interjection; NML: nominalizer; NOM: nominative; PN: personal name; POL: polite; PST: past; PT: particle; QP: question particle; QUOT: quotative; RES: respective; TOP: topic; V.AFF: verb affix.

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Appendix: Corpora used for this study

	Abbreviation, Database and corpora, URL, date accessed	Period	Chunagon version	Data version	Total number of words in the corpus
(a)	SZ= <i>Shimpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū</i> (The Complete Works of Classical Japanese Literature. new edn.). https://japanknowledge.com/library/ (accessed 1 July 2024)	late 7th c. – late 19th c.	N/A	N/A	Unknown
(b)	CHJ= <i>The Corpus of Historical Japanese</i> . http://clrd.ninjal.ac.jp/chj/ (accessed 1 July 2024)	8th c. – early 20th.c	2.7.1	2023.03	18,550,049
(c)	SHC= <i>Showa-Heisei Corpus of Written Japanese</i> . (Ogiso et al. (eds.) 2023; Ogiso et al. (eds.) 2024). https://clrd.ninjal.ac.jp/shc (accessed 1 July 2024)	1933–2013	2.7.2	2023.05	33,404,844

	Abbreviation, Database and corpora, URL, date accessed	Period	Chunagon version	Data version	Total number of words in the corpus
(d)	BCCWJ= <i>Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese</i> , excluding the sub-corpus <i>Diet Record</i> (Corpus (f) DR). https://clrd.ninjal.ac.jp/bccwj/index.html (accessed 1 July 2024)	1971–2008	2.6.0	2021.03	99,808,991
(e)	SSC= <i>Showa Speech Corpus</i> (Maruyama 2020). https://www2.ninjal.ac.jp/conversation/showaCorpus/ (accessed 1 July 2024)	1952–1969	2.7.1	2022.02	528,589
(f)	DR=the sub-corpus <i>Diet Record</i> in Corpus (d) BCCWJ. https://clrd.ninjal.ac.jp/bccwj/index.html (accessed 1 July 2024)	1999–2001	2.6.0	2021.03	5102469
(g)	CSJ= <i>Corpus of Spontaneous Japanese</i> . https://clrd.ninjal.ac.jp/csj/index.html (accessed 1 July 2024)	1971–2008	2.7.1	2018.01	7,576,046
(h)	CEJC= <i>The Corpus of Everyday Japanese Conversation</i> (Koiso et al. 2022). https://www2.ninjal.ac.jp/conversation/cejc.html (accessed 1 July 2024)	2016–2019	2.7.2	2023.03	2,419,171
(i)	NUCC= <i>Nagoya University Conversation Corpus</i> (Fujimura et al. 2012). https://www2.ninjal.ac.jp/conversation/nuc.html (accessed 1 July 2024)	1993–2000	2.7.2	2020.1	1,135,329
(j)	CWPC= <i>Gen-Nichi-Ken Corpus of Workplace Conversation</i> (Gendai Nihongo Kenkyūkai (ed.). 2011). https://www2.ninjal.ac.jp/conversation/shokuba.html (accessed 1 July 2024)	1993 & 1999–2000	2.7.2	2018.03	186,906

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