Pragmatic functions of scalar discourse markers in Japanese

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This talk discusses two particular instances of pragmaticalization observed in Japanese discourse markers, where a shift from the lexical meaning (that can be mediated by a grammaticalization stage) towards speaker-oriented use (Traugott 1995) has occurred. The common property shared by the discussed expressions is their scalarity, i.e. the existence of some meaning component (gradable property) that can be ascribed an ordered set of values.

First, the pragmatic functions of the *p dokoroka q* 'q let alone p' construction will be considered. On the semantic level, it can be considered a form of negation where both *p* and *q* can be ascribed some common scalar property, but the speaker denies the degree that can be inferred from *p* (or not *p*) and claims it to be some value ascribed to *q* instead, the latter being fairly remote (Masuoka and Takubo 1992, Hattori 2006). The lexical motivation of *dokoroka* is *tokoro* 'place', which will be assumed to refer to some point (value) mapped on the underlying scale. Syntactically, *dokoroka* can host a variety of arguments: verbal and adjectival predicates, nouns and adjectival nouns. Also, both *p* and *q* can appear in the affirmative or negated form, which yields four possible sentence patterns. Having discussed the above semantic properties, based on data from literary works and dialogic discourse we shall argue for the existence of an additional pragmatic input contributed by this construction, where the speaker puts emphasis on the (relative) lowness or highness of degree ascribed to *p* by presenting some *q* the degree of which is located on the scale far apart from *p*.

In the second part of the presentation, a three-staged pragmaticalization process of nouns lexically based on some scalar property as their lexical source (*kurai*, *bakari*, *hodo*) will be considered. The language change starts from nouns the lexical meaning of which is based on the notion if degree that are grammaticalized to degree adverbials capable of functioning as approximation markers, phrase particles forming adverbial phrases with meanings such as degree, frequency, volume or amount. In the subsequent stage of the change, this approximation plays various pragmatic roles, being used as a means of linguistic hedging or for indicating speaker's attitude. In particular, the analysis will be focused on *gurai* that can be used to demonstrate speaker's indignation or irony.

References

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