The Handbook of Japanese Semantics and Pragmatics
Ed. by Wesley M. Jacobsen and Yukinori Takubo

The volume on Semantics and Pragmatics presents a collection of studies on linguistic meaning in Japanese, either as conventionally encoded in linguistic form (the field of semantics) or as generated by the interaction of form with context (the field of pragmatics), representing a range of ideas and approaches that are currently most influential in these fields. The studies are organized around a model that has long currency in traditional Japanese grammar, whereby the linguistic clause consists of a multiply nested structure centered in a propositional core of objective meaning around which forms are deployed that express progressively more subjective meaning as one moves away from the core toward the periphery of the clause.

Following this model, Section I and Section II of the volume treat aspects of meaning associated with the propositional core, including elements of meaning that are structured in lexical units making up the propositional core (lexical semantics), as well as elements of meaning that are defined at the level of propositions as a whole or between different propositions (propositional logic). Outside this core are forms that situate propositions in time as events, with a shift in the direction of greater subjectivity, as events are not only oriented in language relative to the time of the speaker (the study of tense) but are also attributed by the speaker to have differing shapes and qualities in time (the study of temporal aspect), topics that form the subject matter of Section III.

It is then but a short conceptual step from situating events in time to situating events in reality. Section IV examines the numerous mechanisms available in Japanese for distinguishing events that are seen to occur in the actual world of the speaker from those that are seen to occur in any of a number of possible, non-actual worlds, including those hoped for (desiderative meaning), denied (negation), hypothesized (conditional meaning), or viewed as ethically or epistemologically possible or necessary (epistemic and deontic modality). Located yet closer to the periphery of the Japanese clause, and a step in the direction of even greater subjectivity, are a rich array of devices for marking propositions as relatively closer to or farther from the speaker according to the degree to which the speaker is committed to their veracity, including devices that mark differing perceptual and cognitive modalities by which information enters the consciousness of the speaker and devices for distinguishing information variously presupposed by and asserted by the speaker. These and other aspects of meaning having to do with speaker-oriented modality form the content of Section V.

The final section, Section VI, treats aspects of meaning that are most highly subjective in being most grounded in the context of the speaker, including those that gauge the social relationships and distance between the speaker and other speakers (honorifics and polite language), as well as meanings that are not conveyed by conventional linguistic forms but that are generated by an interaction between linguistic form and context (conversational implicature and pragmatics).

The volume seeks to achieve a balance in highlighting both insights that semantic and pragmatic theory has to offer to the study of Japanese as a particular language and, conversely, contributions that Japanese has to make to semantic and pragmatic theory in areas of meaning that are either uniquely encoded, or encoded to a higher degree of specificity, in Japanese by comparison to other languages, such as conditional forms, forms expressing varying types of speaker modality, and social deixis.

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Table of Contents and Chapter Abstracts

Introduction (Wesley Jacobsen and Yukinori Takubo)

Section I. Word-level semantics

1. The semantics of predicates (Yo Matsumoto, Kobe U)

This chapter surveys the semantic nature of Japanese predicates and considers various proposals regarding their nature. The first part discusses Japanese verbal and adjectival predicates in terms of their meaning characteristics, pointing out that there are relatively few stative and manner verbs (including both manner of motion and manner of speech) in Japanese in contrast to a relatively high number of change of state verbs. These tendencies are discussed in light of verb typologies such as have been proposed by Leonard Talmy and others. The nature of transitivity is also considered from the standpoint of typology, in light of proposals made by Yoshihiko Ikegami, Prashant Pardeshi, and others. Japanese exhibits morphologically marked causative-inchoative verb pairs, but the causative member of these
pairs does not always “entail” a resultant change of state, and the inchoative member of such pairs is sometimes used
when the causer is known to be present, in a way different from English, as pointed out by Yoshihiko Ikegami, Wesley
Jacobsen, Beth Levin, and others. As for adjectival predicates, there are two categories, often called i-adjectives and
na-adjectives. Distinct tendencies can be seen in the semantic range covered by these two categories, as noted by
Satoshi Uehara.

The second part focuses more specifically on the semantic classification of verbs. This topic has been
discussed widely in relation to the aspectual interpretations of the so-called –te iru forms (e.g., Kindaichi). More recent
verb typologies proposed by Mayumi Kudo and Yoshio Nitta as well as by Taro Kageyama (in terms of unaccusativity)
are also compared and discussed. Finally, attempts to formalize such verb classes within the frameworks of Lexical
Conceptual Structure and Image Schemas are considered.

2. The semantics of nouns (Yuji Nishiyama, Meikai U)

A given noun phrase can have various semantic functions, serving variously as a referential NP, a predicate
nominal, or an NP involving a variable (NPIV), depending on its grammatical position in the sentence. Consider the
following examples:

(1) Syatyoo wa tensai da. “The company president is a genius.”
   (predicational sentence)
(2) Taro wa syatyoo da. “Taro is a company president.”
   (predicational sentence)
(3) Anohito ga syatyoo da. “That person is the company president (it is that person who is the company president).”
   (specificational sentence)
(4) Syatyoo wa anohito da. “The company president is that person.”
   (inverted specificational sentence)

In (1), the subject NP syatyoo is referential, whereas the predicate NP tensai is a predicate nominal. In (2), the predicate
NP syatyoo is a predicate nominal. In (3), the predicate NP syatyoo is an NPIV: the subject NP anohito specifies its
value. (4) is an inverted form of (3). Since the subject NP syatyoo in (4) is non-referential in the sense that it is an NPIV,
the subject NP syatyoo cannot stand as the topic of the sentence contrary to a widely held opinion. In the present
chapter, we first attempt to justify these distinctions. Second, we discuss the various types of ‘NP₁ no NP₂’ as shown in
(5).

(5) a. Taro no hon “Taro’s book”
   —semantic relationship between Taro and hon indeterminate
b. Gaka no Taro “Taro, who is a painter”
   —predicate nominal + head noun
c. Taro no kokyoo (Taro’s hometown)
   —parameter + unsaturated noun
d. Hanako no kami (Hanako’s hair)
   —inalienable possession

We will demonstrate the significance of these different types of ‘NP₁ no NP₂’ in how they interact with the semantic
functions of noun constituents located variously in the subject and predicate positions of a clause.

Section II. Proposition-level semantics

1. Argument structure: the interface between predicate meaning and sentence structure (Wesley Jacobsen, Harvard U)

Predicates in human language function to impose discrete structure on a world of infinitely and continuously
interlocked phenomena by packaging the world into individual events, each of which is associated with a set number of
entities participating in the event. The set of participants specified for a particular predicate corresponds to an array of
noun slots, called argument structure, which must be understood in order for the predicate to be coherent. Languages
such as English require that every slot in argument structure be overtly filled in surface structure either by a full noun
or a pronoun, whereas “pro-drop” languages such as Japanese may leave argument slots unfilled as “zero pronouns” if
their identity can be recovered from context or is otherwise mutually understood by the speaker and hearer. In the
absence of a consistently overt manifestation of arguments, the question arises of what objective evidence, if any, can be found for argument structure as a covert, typically invisible, structure. While conceptions of argument structure in the linguistic literature are notoriously theory-dependent, this chapter will seek to provide an empirically based foundation for argumenthood in Japanese that correlates with the possibility or not of a speaker denying knowledge of a noun left unexpressed when questioned about its identity by the hearer. (E.g., A: Tanaka-kun ga katta rasii. “It appears Tanaka bought it” B: Nani o? “(Bought) what?” A: #Siranai. “I don’t know”). Implications will be drawn from this as to how many arguments are maximally allowed in Japanese, what range of case markers are possible in marking arguments, and whether the category of subject can be justified in Japanese, even though no subject typically appears on the surface.

2. Formal logical approaches to meaning in Japanese (Takao Gunji, Kobe Shoin Women's U)

This chapter provides a description of key concepts and methodology in the formal description of semantic phenomena in Japanese, as well as of the kinds of formal apparatus used in such formal description. The question is first considered as to what kinds of linguistic phenomena should properly be treated under the category of syntax as opposed to semantics and, as to questions of meaning, what phenomena should properly be treated under the category of semantics proper as opposed to pragmatics.

After clarifying the boundaries of semantics as a whole, the following specific topics in semantics are taken up in this chapter: the distinction between object language and metalanguage; the distinction between truth values and truth conditions as denotations of sentences; propositional and higher-order logics and semantic types; the compositionality principle (Frege's principle) and the syntax-semantics interface; syntactic arguments as generalized quantifiers; modal logic (including tense logic) and possible-worlds semantics; the distinction among entailment, presupposition, and implicature; and referential and bound-variable uses of proforms.

The chapter is intended to serve as a brief tutorial for comprehending basic concepts used in the succeeding chapters of this section, emphasizing distinctions to be made among phenomena that appear related and showing how each component of the formal apparatus is exploited in distinct subfields of the semantic analysis of Japanese.

Although some degree of technical formalism will be necessary in presenting the contents of the chapter, no more than a high-school level of literacy about mathematics is assumed, and every effort will be made to make explicit each step of the argumentation presented in the chapter. The reader is only required to think logically in order to be able to follow the logical structure of the arguments presented.

3. The semantics of inference (Shigeru Sakahara, U of Tokyo)

This chapter will examine the role of inference in the comprehension of natural language in general and will propose in particular a usage called 'pseudo-usage', defined as follows:

(1) Definition of Pseudo-Usage

When a sentence P contains an expression E having semantic constraint C, P pseudo-satisfies C, if and only if:
(a) P does not itself satisfy C, and
(b) there is a proposition Q, inferred pragmatically from P, that does satisfy C.

P is in this case called a pseudo-usage of E.

An example of this is the past form ta in (2).

(2) Watashi-wa, ima-wa kawasaki-no kenkyuuzyo-ni ututta.
I-Top now-Top kawasaki-Gen laboratory-Loc move-Past
(I have now moved to the laboratory in Kawasaki.)

The time adverbial ima ‘now’ does not normally co-occur with the past form ta, except in cases where it is possible to infer from the sentence what the present state of affairs is. In such pseudo-usage, the sentence actually uttered, though exhibiting a semantic violation, forms a premise leading to a conclusion where this violation is resolved. So although a certain sentence P is what is actually uttered, hearers will understand the sentence as if its conclusion Q were uttered instead. This usage is widespread and we find it in responses to yes-or-no questions, conditionals, concessives, the particles mo ‘too’ and sae ‘even,’ the verb kuru ‘come,’ and so on. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the validity of the notion of pseudo-usage in natural language comprehension and its usefulness in making it possible to avoid the multiplication of superfluous meanings, in particular those involving logical operators.
4. The semantics of scope (Ayumi Ueyama, Kyushu U)

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the issue of how structure affects scope interpretation. The chapter consists of three parts. In the first part, the observations in (i) and (ii) are introduced.

(i) In a sentence having unmarked word order, such as (1), NP1 can take wide scope with respect to NP2, but NP2 cannot take wide scope with respect to NP1.

(ii) In a sentence having marked word order, such as (2), NP2 can take wide scope with respect to NP1, while the reading in which NP1 takes wide scope with respect to NP2 is also available.

(1) NP1-ga NP2-o Verb
    Nom    Acc
(2) NP2-o NP1-ga Verb
    Acc    Nom

These observations were first made by Kuroda 1969/1970, were further generalized in Hoji 1985, and have been discussed in a number of works on Japanese syntax.

In the second part, the validity of these observations is examined, basically following the arguments given in a series of works by J.-R. Hayashishita. His analysis is superior to others not only in that it takes into account the existence of apparent counterexamples to (i), but also in pointing out a new set of facts that makes it possible to determine when scope interpretation is truly based on syntactic structure.

In the final part, I discuss how a particular interpretation should be derived from syntactic structure, and argue that the semantics becomes much more general and straightforward by employing devices introduced in Ueyama 2012.

Section III. The semantics of time

1. Linguistic categories of time: tense, aspect, and their interrelationship (Wesley Jacobsen, Harvard U)

One of the signature properties of predicates in human languages is their ability to situate events in time. In linguistics, they have traditionally been seen to do so in one of two ways—first, in ordering events in time with respect to each other or to some reference point (the category of tense) and secondly by giving shape and structure to events in time (the category of aspect). These two temporal functions are often assumed to be distinct from each other, but in practice it is not at all clear where the boundary between them is to be drawn. This is because reference to temporal structure inherently involves reference to subparts of the structure that are themselves ordered in time and, conversely, events ordered in time can often be conceived of as subparts of a larger temporal structure under which the events are subsumed. In the case of Japanese, this has led to controversy as to whether certain basic morphological forms, such as the “nonpast” affix –ru and “past” affix –ta, mark categories of tense or aspect. By adhering to a careful definition of what is meant by tense and aspect, this chapter will argue that both categories are marked in Japanese morphology, but that individual forms such as –ru, –ta, and the progressive/resultative -tei- form exhibit uses that range over both of these categories, due to the fundamental interrelationship existing between these categories as described above. Other areas of overlap between tense and aspect considered in this chapter include the phenomenon of “relative tense” (tense that takes as its reference point something other than the time of speech) and the behavior of temporal adverbs such as mada “still” and moo “already.”

2. Formal treatments of tense and aspect (Stefan Kaufmann, Northwestern U)

Tense and aspect are closely intertwined and can therefore not be treated separately. Nevertheless, this chapter has two separate parts, one for each of them. While the main focus is on formal treatments, attention will be paid to neighboring issues in two directions: in one direction, topics that help situate the theoretical approaches to Japanese in their empirical (i.e., the relevant linguistic data) and philosophical (i.e., questions of ontology and properties of time and events) context; in the other direction, comparisons with other (mostly Indo-European) languages for comparison and contrast.

Each of the two parts starts with an overview of the formal background necessary to understand the main approaches (e.g., Reichenbach-style SRE systems; Priorian tense logic; assumptions about the structure of time embodied in branching-time models). This is followed by a semi-formal discussion of Japanese data that either have
figured prominently in the literature or deserve more attention (e.g., examples highlighting the major split between statives and non-statives, such as grammaticality and interpretation in combination with different tenses and embedding temporal connectives). Next is a discussion of prominent approaches to these data (e.g., relational approaches to tense such as Ogihara’s; also a more fine-grained look at aspectual classes, including Kindaichi’s taxonomy vis-a-vis Vendler classes). For reasons of space, this discussion will be brief and aimed at getting the gist across. The goal is to enable the reader to consult the primary sources for more information. Space permitting, interactions of tense and aspect with other categories (e.g., modality) will also be discussed. The chapter will aim to be comprehensive yet opinionated - i.e., to do justice to the major ideas and contributions while also weighing in on debates from the perspective of my own work in the area.

3. Tense and aspect in text and discourse (Mayumi Kudo, Osaka U)

This chapter considers what functions tense and aspect play in two discourse types in modern Japanese: spoken discourse and the narrative text of novels. The following four forms are fundamental to the tense-aspect system of modern Japanese:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Aspectual meaning</th>
<th>Discourse function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-past: suru</td>
<td>Completive</td>
<td>Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past: site-iru</td>
<td>Continuative</td>
<td>Contemporaneous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past: sita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past: site-ita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aspect in modern (standard) Japanese has the following discourse functions:

When site-ita is used to express perfect meaning in the narrative text of novels, it functions to mark out of sequence meaning, giving rise to a flashback interpretation in the temporal order of a story. In spoken discourse, past forms (sita, site-ita) and non-past forms (suru, site-iru) are distinguished on the basis of time of speech, but the situation is different in the case of narrative texts in novels (narrative discourse). When free indirect discourse is employed in novels, temporal adverbs and the past form of modal expressions exhibit a unique usage, giving rise to a sense of intermingling of perspectives of the narrator with those of the characters in the story.

Section IV. The semantics of reality

1. Conditionals (Yukinori Takubo, Kyoto U)

This chapter discusses conditionals in Japanese. It consists of four sections. In section 1, a general account of conditional constructions is given, together with an overview of past works on conditionals in Japanese, focusing on expressions that have traditionally been understood to express the antecedent clause of a conditional construction, e.g. -reba, -tara, -to, and -nara. Aspectual forms and modals most often associated with conditionals will also be discussed. Section 2 is dedicated to a discussion of counterfactual conditionals in Japanese. In Japanese, there are no overt markers for indicating counterfactuality. By examining factors that conspire to indicate counterfactuality, various features of conditional constructions will be uncovered that have hitherto not been noticed in the linguistic literature, such as tokoro-da conditionals discussed in Takubo 1993, 2002, 2012. Section 3 deals with constructions related to conditionals such as concessives and topics. Section 4 is the summary.

2. Negation (Ikumi Imani, Nagoya Gakuin U)

The purpose of this chapter is to help the reader understand both the linguistic and theoretical aspects of negation in Japanese. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides a basic (and when necessary, advanced) introduction to concepts such as scope of negation, negative polarity, and negative concord, using Japanese texts as examples. In addition, it considers various problems or difficulties posed by Japanese for the traditional understanding of such concepts. In the second part, a survey is made of several studies that have been particularly influential for the study of negation in Japanese, including Kuno 1983, Takubo 1985, Masuoka 1991, Kudo 2000, and Kataoka 2006. In particular, Kuno’s controversial analysis of negation is examined in some detail. The last part takes
up the issue of ‘scope of negation,’ which has given rise to various problems and confusion in the study of negation in Japanese. A logic-based definition of ‘scope of negation’ in Japanese is provided, together with an account of how that definition reduces various points of confusion that have arisen in the literature. Based on this definition, various phenomena on negation are reexamined, such as quantifiers and adverbial phrases, to provide the reader with an overall understanding of how negation operates in Japanese.

3. Possibility and necessity: deontic and epistemic (Magdalena Kaufmann, U of Goettingen; Sanae Tamura, Kyoto U)

This chapter begins with a brief motivation of the distinction between epistemic modality and evidentiality in Japanese. It then discusses particular characteristics of the Japanese modal system, such as the absence in contemporary Japanese of modal elements used for both epistemic and deontic modality and the syntactic diversity of modal constructions. It explores features common to deontic and epistemic modal elements, such as their embeddability and behavior in conditional constructions, before focusing on epistemic and deontic modality in turn. For each of these two types of modality, a list is given of the elements to be discussed and possible restrictions on their use are considered in terms of subtypes of epistemic/deontic modality such as law-like vs. teleological or butelic modality, subjective vs. objective modality, and performative vs. descriptive modality. Imperative(-like) markers are treated as a type of deontic modal construction. The relationship between modality and other semantic categories is then examined, in particular its interaction with negation and tense. For deontic constructions, semantic arguments are explored surrounding the question of whether such constructions constitute phenomena of raising or control. The last part turns to issues that are currently hotly debated from a theoretical point of view and examines the status of the Japanese constructions in the light of such issues. These include weak vs. strong necessity modals; actuality or counterfactuality entailments with deontic modals; embedded and iterated modals; sufficiency modals; anankastic conditionals; action-related modality and its relation to the information state of the agent; and particularities in the inferential behavior of epistemic modals.

Section V. The semantics of information: speaker-oriented modality

1. Evidentials: marking the source of information (Yurie Hara, City U of Hong Kong)

The maxim of quality, one of the conversational maxims proposed by Grice 1975, says, “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.” It is in fact impossible in Japanese to express directly the experience of others, since the speaker can never have direct access to the experience of others, as seen in the unacceptability of *Taroo-ga samui ‘Taro feels cold’ (Kuno 1973). In everyday conversation, however, it is often necessary to convey information for which one may not have sufficient evidence. In such cases, it is still possible to express the information in question without wildly flouting the maxim of quality, by means of devices available in most natural languages to indicate the source of information or the degree of confidence of the speaker in the information, called evidential markers.

This chapter considers three linguistic categories in Japanese that encode evidential meaning: sentence-final auxiliaries, causal connectives, and prosody.

First, Japanese has a rich repertoire of sentence-final auxiliaries that encode the source of information (Aoki, 1986) and lift the first-person constraint on predicates expressing direct experience (Tenny 2006), e.g., *Taroo-ga samui yooda. ‘(I infer from my own experience that) Taro feels cold.’ Second, Tenny argues that the causal connectives kara and node in Japanese bear evidential meaning (see also Hara 2008). One of Tenny’s arguments for this is the ability of these causal connectives to lift the person constraint on predicates expressing direct experience, just as in the case of sentence-final evidential auxiliaries. Third, Hara and Kawahara (to appear) demonstrates that the deaccenting of adjectives in rising declaratives in Japanese gives rise to an evidential interpretation. This chapter provides an analysis of the distribution of linguistic forms in Japanese that express evidentiality.

2. Deictics in physical space and discourse (Yukinori Takubo, Kyoto U)

This chapter discusses deictic expressions in Japanese, expressions whose characterization crucially involves reference to speech context, including the speaker, speech time, and speech location. The chapter consists of three sections. In section 1, a general overview is given of past works on deictic expressions in Japanese such as temporal nouns defined with reference to the time of speech; spatial nouns involving a deictic perspective, such as migi ‘left’/hidari ‘right’ and mae ‘front’/ushiro ‘back’; and verbs of deictic movement such as kuru ‘come,’ iku ‘go,’ yarul kureru ‘give,’ and morau ‘receive.’ It will be shown how Japanese differs from other languages in its lexical
manifestation of deictic concepts. Section 2 is dedicated to demonstratives in Japanese. It first provides an overview of past works on Japanese demonstratives such as Matsushita 1930, Kuno 1973, Kuroda 1979, and Kinsui and Takubo 1990. It is shown how work by Hoji et al. 2003 and Takubo 2008 on Japanese demonstratives solves various problems encountered in past works. In section 3, an integrated theory of deixis is provided in terms of Discourse Management Theory as proposed in Takubo 1989, 1990a,b.

3. Sentence-final particles: marking the territory of information (Eric McCready, Aoyama Gakuin U; Christopher Davis, Ryukyu University)

This chapter aims to provide an overview of a range of facts relating to the semantics and pragmatics of sentence-final particles (SFPs) in Japanese and to survey some options for their formal analysis. The literature on these topics is vast and cannot be covered in full in a single article such as this. Consequently, a relatively detailed overview is given of selected approaches to the analysis of SFP’s that may be considered to be representative of, or to characterize, possible views on their meaning.

In the English-language literature, the main SFPs that have been discussed are yo and ne (e.g. Takubo and Kinsui 1997; McCready 2005, 2008, 2009; Davis 2009, 2010; Oshima 2011, for a few recent examples). Attention is therefore given to these particles, with a secondary emphasis on the particles wa, zo, and na. This latter group of particles, in particular, exhibits an empirical richness that has not been satisfactorily analyzed in the past. The chapter draws heavily on the Japanese-language (nihongogaku) literature for data of this kind, with an eye to assessing the utility of existing analyses of SFPs of this type.

One aim of the article is to show not only how much is currently understood, but how much remains unsettled or poorly understood regarding them. One area of interest in this respect is the relationship between SFPs and homophonic particle used in more ‘grammatical’ ways, such as focus particles and kakari-musubi. A second is dialectal differences in the use of particles, and the extent to which a “universal” group of particle-type meanings can be isolated across Japanese dialects.

4. Presupposition and assertion (Tomohide Kinuhata, Fukuoka U; Tadashi Eguchi, Fukuoka U)

Languages differ widely in the way they encode the distinction between presupposition and assertion. This chapter addresses the question of how this distinction is reflected both in grammatical form and language use in Japanese. It also considers similarities and differences between presupposition and related phenomena of conventional and conversational implicature. A comparison between what is traditionally taken to be subsumed under the category of presupposition in Japanese, on one hand, and in general linguistics, particularly English, on the other, provides insight into the larger question of what range of phenomena should be seen as encompassed under the category of presupposition across languages in general. Particular constructions and grammatical forms of Japanese analyzed in this chapter include relative clauses, cleft sentences, noda construction, wh and yes/no-questions, focus, exclusive particles such as dake and sika (both ‘only’), scale-induced particles, the topic marker wa, comparative constructions, degree adverbs, and discourse markers such as yo and ne. After providing an introduction to presupposition and assertion in general, the chapter considers the degree to which the above forms reflect presupposition, implicature, or both, and whether the presuppositions encoded in these forms should be considered to be monolithic. A case study is then presented of how differences in presuppositional meaning may affect the way similar constructions are used. For example, dake and sika both have exclusive meanings but may be seen to bear different presuppositions, restricting their respective contexts of use.

Section VI. Meaning in context: inter-speaker modality and pragmatics

1. Social deixis: honorifics and polite speech (Barbara Pizziconi, U London SOAS)

Japanese honorifics and non-honorific polite expressions of various kind have been analyzed and described from virtually all disciplinary angles, and challenged linguists just as much as definitions of language itself. Whether in a narrow (honorifics) or broad (politeness) sense, the language of ‘social deixis’ refers to a domain of human activity whose very boundaries are not easily definable, and which displays a staggering degree of variability. In spite of scientists’ efforts to account for such variability, formulating a sufficiently powerful model of such a complex phenomenon is a remarkably challenging task: its ‘meaning’, functions and workings are all inextricably dependent on variables that are by definition dynamic and ephemeral, such as not only situational settings, social contexts or historical circumstances but also speaker ideologies, affective stances, or the interactionally achieved joint action called
everyday talk itself. It can therefore be argued that our models must be built on concepts that allow us to capture the workings of this very variability. These models must have context as their starting point, reflecting the fact that language use is embedded in social reality. This chapter will first discuss the implications of an indexical view of honorifics (and polite expressions) for the modeling of what we call social deixis (itself a not unproblematic term, as noted in Agha 2007:278) and explore the heuristic potential of semantic and pragmatic approaches from the standpoint of the degree of ‘fit’ between their respective methodological tools and the phenomena being described. Against this theoretical background, it will also discuss specific aspects of Japanese honorific usage that have implications for politeness theory as a whole, such as specific schematic meanings (cf. Pizziconi 2011) that honorific forms are vehicles of, their social distribution, and the mechanisms through which they get transmitted, challenged or eventually transformed.

2. Conversational implicature (Satoshi Tomioka, U Delaware)

This chapter addresses issues surrounding the notion of conversational implicature, the type of non-truth-conditional meaning that is generated via inferences based on the Gricean maxims. The possibility of cross-linguistic variations in conversational implicature has not been fully explored, presumably due to the widely held view that the principles of conversation spelled out in Grice (1975) are, to a large extent, universal. This assumption contrasts sharply with conventional implicature, which is associated with particular lexical items and therefore expected to show some language specific properties. Japanese does not contradict this general portrayal of the two types of implicatures. The language is equipped with many lexical items or expressions that induce conventional implicatures, and not all of them have comparable counterparts in other languages. Conversational implicature, on the other hand, seems to operate in a familiar way. For instance, scalar implicature, the most frequently discussed conversational implicature, arises with the same set of expressions in Japanese as in English - numerals, quantifiers, disjunction, and modals - and can be canceled in the same environment (e.g., under downward-entailing contexts). We will show, however, (i) that the differences in quantificational strategies and scope properties lead to different manifestations of conversational implicature across languages, and (ii) that some instances of seemingly conventional or constructional meaning can be re-analyzed as conversational implicature. The phenomena to be examined include existential quantification, plurality, disjunction, and contrastive topic constructions.

3. Discourse particles and fillers (Noriko Iwasaki, U London SOAS)

This chapter discusses a set of discourse/pragmatic particles associated with hesitations, most of which are used as fillers, including those whose lexical status is dubious, such as ano, ma, maa, nanka, yappari, tte-iu-ka, etto, e, and ah. These particles seem void of propositional or referential meaning and typically are not syntactically integrated into sentences or utterances. Yet they arguably have significant pragmatic meanings in their interactional context. This chapter overviews various perspectives on similar particles across languages (e.g., Stenström 2012), and surveys studies on Japanese particles to discuss their pragmatic meanings. The functions of equally semantically insignificant behavioral phenomena related to hesitations, such as self-repairs and repetitions, are also discussed. Across languages, the linguistic or lexical statuses of some verbal fillers such as English um and uh are debated (see, for example, Clark and Fox Tree 2002 in favor of the their lexical status in contrast to Corley and Stewart 2008); yet, many acknowledge their functions as demarcators, hesitators, and interactional devices for turn-taking and turn-holding (Stenström 2012). Likewise, the pragmatic functions of Japanese fillers are studied by a number of Japanese linguists (e.g., Cook 1993, Fukuda-Karlin 2003, Sadanobu and Takubo 1995). This chapter shows that by modifying utterances, these particles as well as self-repairs and repetitions play important roles in the pragmatics of (spoken) interaction.

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