

Person marking and its evolution in the history of Japanese

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In a recent study on person marking, Heine and Song (2011) investigate 'personal pronouns' from the perspective of grammaticalization theory. The main argument of their study is that change is relatively regular crosslinguistically and is subsumed within three aspects. First, personal pronouns belong to functional categories owing to their schematic meaning. Second, their change to a desemanticized category is unidirectional: the movement from noun to pronoun represents linear desemanticization. Third, their evolution involves only a handful of conceptual sources. However, Japanese diachronic data suggest, on the contrary, that: (i) Japanese expressions of person are lexical, open-class items; (ii) unidirectionality is not essential to change; and (iii) their evolution involves factors other than conceptual sources. One reason for these discrepancies is that the evolution of Japanese person markers was invariably influenced by the rules of social verbal interactions, or *taigū* (literally 'treatment'). As the social deixis, they served to reveal interpersonal relationships between speaker and addressee in the form of respect, self-depreciation, or contempt, all of which were integral parts of a hierarchical Japanese society.

This paper provides a new analysis of person markers that is independent of chaining, directionality, or categoriality of conceptual notions. As early as Sakuma (1966), it has been known that Japanese has several person markers derived from nouns or demonstratives. This paper investigates a selected number of first- and second-person markers. Three significant facts should be noted. First, some markers (*koko* 'here, I'; *konata* 'this way, I, you'; *temae* 'I, you') indicate both the first person and the second person. Second, one marker, *anata*, came to indicate the honorable second person based on its reference to spatial remoteness. Third, some markers (*konata*) ceased to be active markers. In order to explain these historical facts, I rely on the theory of the linguistic sign.

Following Peirce (1965 [1931]) and Keller (1998 [1994]), the linguistic sign can be characterized in three ways (index/symptom, icon, and symbol) and it has further triadic constituents. The proposal presented here is 'usage-based' in that it combines semiotic, cognitive, and social components. The fact that a number of person markers were short-lived or replaced by other markers can be explained by the additional fact that person markers were initially indexical and socially driven. Owing to their semiotic structure, different interpretations of person markers were generated: only those that gained a symbolic status survived until today. The fact that the second person was signaled by the first-person marker corroborates the presence of iconicity: there was an *ad hoc* association between the first person and the second person. Both indirectness, realized through defocusing either the speaker or the addressee using demonstratives, and the speaker's impolite or pejorative behavior toward the addressee using nouns, embraced all three components.

The paper concludes that the evolution of person markers in Japanese hinges on the structure of the linguistic sign in collaboration with social and cognitive factors. This approach is inconsistent with the linearity of grammaticalization.

References

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