

## The role of exemplification in categorization processes: evidence from Japanese

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The aim of this paper is to show that exemplification plays a central role at a cognitive level in categorization processes. Specifically, we will examine the usage and functions of Japanese exemplifying particles, i.e., particles that provide lists of examples. Japanese shows a rich inventory of exemplifying constructions that ranges from dedicated non-exhaustive connectives (e.g., *ya*, *tari*, *toka*, *yara*, *dano*) to synthetic general extenders (e.g., *nado*).

The main function of Japanese exemplifying particles is to create open-ended lists of representative items. At the cognitive level, they immediately configure the presence of a set from which the examples are taken. As a consequence, they constitute an important linguistic tool that allows speakers to i) specify common categories and ii) make reference to those categories lacking a specific label but having a conceptual reality. The latter case encompasses what Cruse (1986:148) labels as “covert categories” and all those categories created for specific discourse goals (Barsalou 1983). Exemplification provides concrete members of the category and thus suggests its prototypical features.

From a cognitive perspective, exemplification can be seen as a process in which the speaker constructs a specific category through an exemplar-driven inferential path (cfr. the category “game” in Wittgenstein 1978:33). The speaker provides some exemplars of the category as a starting point to make associative inferences. In order to achieve that, she must choose the most prototypical members; that is, those which express all the important features of the category (Taylor 1995:40). According to a context-based similarity reasoning, the hearer is able to infer other potential instances, resulting in the construction of a category. The items mentioned as exemplars can be of any kind (i.e. objects, actions, properties), but they have to be presented as a non-exhaustive list of exemplars, in order to suggest the existence of other possible items.

In (1), the speaker uses *tari* to refer to a more or less abstract category “things I will do in Osaka” providing what she considers to be prototypical exemplars of it. Consequently, the hearer is able to infer other potential instances (i.e., other typical leisure activities), leading to the construction of the category. Similar cases are illustrated in (2) - (3).

The analysis of Japanese exemplifying particles will be based on data gathered through a questionnaire specifically created for the purpose of the present study and the following corpora: LCC Japanese plain text and Co-occurrences, Balanced Corpus of Contemporary Written Japanese, JEC Basic sentence data. We will conclude by arguing that exemplification is the cognitive strategy systematically chosen by speakers whenever the label of the category is lacking or fails because it is regarded as insufficient for the communicative purpose.

### Examples

- (1) *Osaka-de kaimono-o shi-tari kankoku-ryoori-o tabe-tari shimasu*  
Osaka-LOC shopping-ACC do-TARI Korean-meal-ACC eat-TARI do.POL  
'In Osaka, I will do such things as shopping and eating Korean food.' (Banno 2000:215)
- (2) *Koohii-toka koocha-toka iroirona mono-ga arimashita*  
coffee-TOKA tea-TOKA various thing-NOM exist.POL.PAST  
There were various things such as coffee and tea.' (Maynard 1990:106)
- (3) *Niwa-ni bara-no hana-nado-o ueata*  
garden-LOC rose-GEN flower-NADO-ACC plant.PAST  
'(I) planted roses and so on in the garden.' (Okutsu 1974:160)

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