

EXEMPLIFICATION IN JAPANESE: SPECIFYING THROUGH VAGUENESS

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The aim of this paper is to show that exemplification plays a central role both at a cognitive level in categorization processes and at a pragmatic level in the reduction of the speaker's commitment. Specifically, we will examine the usage and the 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*).

At the cognitive level, exemplification is an important linguistic tool that allows the speaker to specify common categories or make reference to categories where there may be conceptualization or naming problems. Exemplification is useful for categories lacking a specific label but having a conceptual reality: examples are indeed possible members of the category and thus suggest its prototypical features.

The main function of Japanese exemplifying particles is to create open-ended lists of representative items. In (1), the speaker uses *-tari* to refer to a more or less abstract category "things I will do in Osaka" providing some exemplars as a starting point to make associative inference. According to a context-based, simulative reasoning, the hearer is able to infer other potential instances, resulting in the construction of a category. Similar cases are illustrated in (2) - (6).

At the pragmatic level, some Japanese exemplifying particles allow the speaker not to impose his own opinion over the hearer, limiting the assertive force of the speech act. In other words, they can be seen as hedging devices, following the definition provided by Lakoff (1972).

When exemplifying particles are used as hedging devices, their primary function is not creating lists of examples. Taylor (2010) describes the exemplifying and the softening functions as two distinct phenomena, because the former deals with specification, while the latter conveys vagueness. However, the softening effect seems to be produced by presenting the item as an option (from an ideal set of choices) and not as a fact in order to reduce the speaker's commitment towards what she is saying. In (7) the speaker asks to the addressee about his hobby, making noodles. Among the various softening strategies, she chooses a single *-tari* to refer to "making noodles and similar activities". In fact, her only interest is to talk about the activity of making noodles; however, she chooses to present it as a possible member of a set of similar activities in order to make the request vaguer and less direct.

The analysis of Japanese exemplifying particles will be based on data gathered through the following corpora: LCC Japanese plain text and Co-occurrences, Sketch Engine, JEC Basic sentence data. We will conclude by arguing that the link between the cognitive categorizing function and the pragmatic softening function is a diachronic one and we will highlight construction constraints and try to identify semantic maps.

Examples

- (1) *Osaka-de kaimono-o shi-tari kankoku-ryoori-o*
Osaka-LOC shopping-ACC do-TARI Korean-meal-ACC
tabe-tari shimasu.
eat-TARI do.POL
'In Osaka, I will do such things as shopping and eating Korean food.' (Banno 2000:215)

- (2) *Biiru-ya sake-o takusan nomimashita.*
 beer-YA sake-ACC lots of drink.POL.PAST
 ‘[I] drank lots of beer and sake (and stuff like that).’ (Kuno 1973:115)
- (3) *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)
- (4) *John-yara Mary-ga yattekita.*
 John-YARA Mary-NOM come.PAST
 ‘John e Mary (among others) came.’ (Kuno 1973:121)
- (5) *Kurisumasu-ni-wa, hon-dano, karenda-dano,
 Christmas-LOC-TOP book-DANO calendar-DANO
 chokoreto-dano-o moraimashita.*
 chocolate-DANO-ACC receive.POL.PAST
 ‘At Christmas, I received a book, a calendar, some chocolate, and other such things.’ (Chino 2001:116)
- (6) *Watashi-wa Suisu-nado-ni sumitai desu.*
 I-TOP Switzerland-NADO-LOC live.DES POL
 ‘I would like to live in a place such as Switzerland.’ (Lee 2004:317)
- (7) *Anata o-soba-o uttari mo o-deki na n
 desu tte?*
 you POL-noodle-ACC make:TARI also HON-POT COP NML COP QT
 ‘Is that true that you can also make noodles?’ (Taylor 2010:175)

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