

Discursive management of *space* and *textual* deictics in Japanese spatial monologues (and beyond)

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Following ethno-syntactic orientations pursued in Enfield (2002), this article examines indigenously motivated uses of *space/time* and *textual* deixis in Japanese narratives, and propose that highly complex manners that Japanese deictics exhibit could be, at least partially, attributed to different modes of verbalization. In order to address this question, a new type of data is employed from a bodily exploited and emotionally charged activity—monologic description of rock-climbing experiences. Based on a discourse analytic approach, the researcher will argue that the switches among *ko*-(proximal), *so*-(medial), and *a*-(distal) deictics in use are a cognitively/culturally mediated practice for achieving differential evaluations built upon the “figure vs. ground” distinction.

Japanese is widely known as a language with “person-oriented three-term deictic system” (Anderson & Keenan 1985). Specifically, those three terms are *ko*-, *so*-, and *a*- prefixes, among which the *so*-cluster is exclusively associated with the addressee’s territory in dialogic interaction (cf. Kinsui & Takubo 1992, Kamio 1997). The system, however, may also resort to the “distance-oriented” distinction in terms of the speaker’s perception, especially when s/he refers to objects around them in monologic description (Shibata 1980). Given this, the use of Japanese deictics is determined by differential perceptions of discourse participants and the environment. This is where indigenous practice comes into play to cultivate pragmatic effects, not to mention lexico-semantic extensions of deixis (cf. Matsumoto 1997, 2017). In that sense, studies of Japanese deixis have largely neglected the actual behaviors of deictics in discourse (especially in monologues: cf. Hasegawa 2010). This is in part inevitable, given the complex ways in which deictics are used and interpreted—but it is absolutely necessary to incorporate naturalistic data in order to reach more realistic accounts of deictics.

In order to investigate this question, informants were required to achieve a specified verbal task—monologically narrating their rock-climbing experience on a rock-climbing wall. That way, it was possible to focus on how they realized differential perceptions and evaluations by managing spatial/textual deictics online with respect to specific modes of (inter)subjectivity. Building upon the contrastive distributions of those deictics in inner thinking (mainly *ko*- and *a*-), verbalized monologue (mainly *ko*- and *so*-), and dialogue/conversation (*ko*-, *so*-, and *a*-), this article finally proposes a tentative account of how Japanese came to exhibit a “double binary” (Shoho 1981), (or even “triple binary” including *do*-(unknown) prefix), rather than “tripartite,” deictic system.

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