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The historical development of saburafu

The roles of communication and cognition

Abstract: This paper proposes an alternative account of the historical development of saburafu, a humiliating honorific marker in Japanese. Traugott and Dasher (2002) established a theory called Invited Inference Theory of Semantic Change (IITSC), in which saburafu is employed as a supporting case study. By inspecting saburafu's semantic changes, including aspects not discussed in IITSC, the compelling difference between IITSC and the analysis I propose is that, firstly, inspired by Keller’s theory of communication (1998), it proposes semiotic ways of communication in place of pragmatic inferencing; and secondly, it shows that the ways in which the viewer and the viewed, the construct central to Langacker’s viewing arrangement, are fundamental to the apprehension of honorification. This new, yet preliminary, account will be enriched by select examples especially from Old/Late Old Japanese.

Keywords: communication, honorifics, Old/Late Old Japanese, saburafu, viewing arrangement

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1 Introduction

The honorific predicate saburafu no longer has a place in the modern Japanese vocabulary. According to extant written documents I have collected, saburafu developed from samorafu in the Old Japanese Period (710–800) and began to manifest itself as a humiliating honorific marker during the Late Old Japanese Period (800–1100), first as a main verb and later as an auxiliary verb. Honorific

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1 In the Japanese honorific system, there are two types of markers to show respect from one person to another. One is 'respect honorific markers' [敬敬] and the other is 'humiliating honorific markers' [恥敬]. The effect is the same but the way respect is delivered is conceptually different.

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