

Influences of a potential interlocutor on the utterances of the speakers who try to describe objects

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Abstract: Two sets of production tests were conducted in January and February in 2012, both in Tokyo and in Mannheim (Germany) to capture differences of utterances which subjects produced with or without the presence of another person, who sat at 45 deg. left in front of them, remained silent, but pretended to be ready to talk with them. The subjects were requested to describe or comment on objects appearing on the computer display at an interval of 10 sec. Our working hypothesis is that intersubjective expressions such as end-particles in Japanese (JEPs) and modal particles in German (GMPs) would be more frequently observed with the presence of a potential interlocutor. The result was that although the influence was confirmed, GMPs were rarely used even in her presence, while JEPs were frequently used even without her presence. This suggests that there is a crucial difference in terms of interlocutor's commitment.

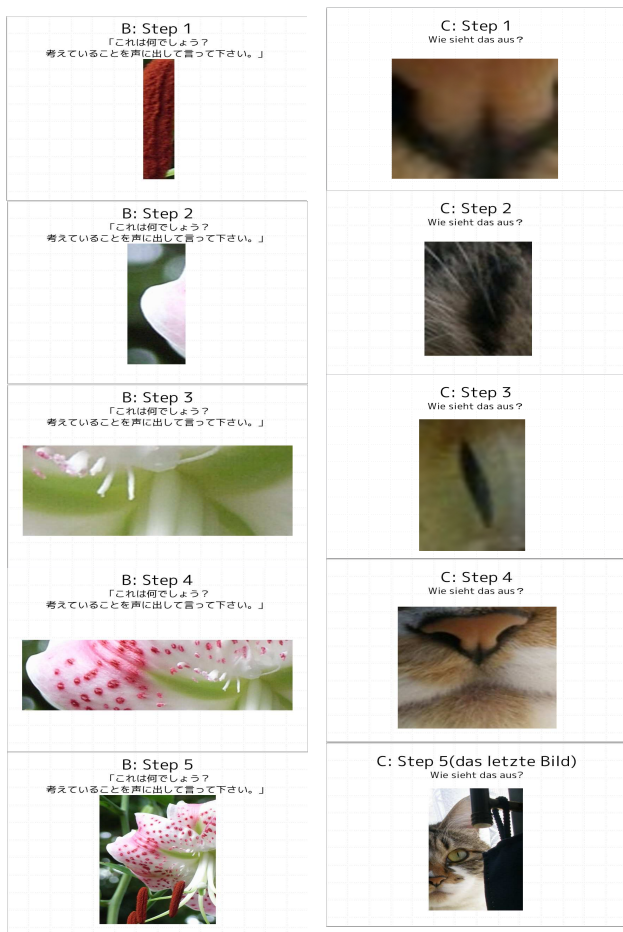
Keywords: intersubjective meaning, presence of an interlocutor, modal particles in German, end-particles (Shūjoshi) in Japanese

Motivation: End-particles (Shūjoshi) in Japanese (= JEPs) are one of the devices to express "one's personal attitude toward the content of information and toward the addressee" (Maynard 1993:4) and it is really difficult to speak Japanese without JEPs in the daily conversation. The same is also true with modal particles in German (GMPs). People usually speak German using a variety of GMPs expressing one's personal attitudes (=Sprechereinstellungen). JEPs and GMPs are both observed mainly in the spoken language, which is considered to presuppose the presence of an interlocutor. **Question:** *Is there any way to detect the effect of an interlocutor on the use of JEPs or GMPs?*

Experiments: Type: (phonetic) production tests, stage: still a pilot study
Japanese part: where: Gakushuin University, Tokyo
 when: Jan. 26, 2012
 Mar. 15 - 16, 2012 (reverse order)
 subjects: 12 persons
 (Data of the 2 subjects were later excluded.)
German part: where: Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Uni Mannheim
 when: Feb. 15 - 16, 2012
 subjects: 5 persons

Procedure:

- The experiment in German has a title "Produktionstest: Gedankenprozesse äußern", the experiment in Japanese has a title "Kotoba-to shikou-no kankei-wo shirabemasu" (We are going to investigate the relation between language and thought.) We conceal our specific interest in GMPs or JEPs.
- The experiment has 2 parts.
- The only difference between the 2 parts is that there is an assistant sitting at 45 deg. left in front of the subject in the 1st part, while there is no assistant in the 2nd part. She remains silent and is not allowed to speak with the subject. (She is allowed to nod, give a slight laugh and give occasionally a consent signal like 'AHA'.)
- Each part consisted of 5 different sets of photos, i.e. B to F and G to K. (A is reserved for the demonstration each subject watches at the outset.)
- Each set of the photos is shown in 5 steps, i.e. B:Step-1, B:Step-2, ..., B:Step-5.
- A photo of each step represents a different part of the same object, i.e. beginning often with an unclear mass in the 1st step and ending with a clearly recognizable photo in the 5th step.
- Every photo is shown for 10 sec. (Impress/LibreOffice, PowerPoint2010/Microsoft)
- Subjects are requested to describe or comment what they see on the computer display.
- 5 Min. intermission will be given after the 1st part. (During the intermission a series of scenery with music will be played to cool them down.)
- Utterances of the subjects are digitally recorded (Roland: R-09HR).
- All utterances are transcribed and morphologically processed by mecab (0.99) in case of Japanese.
- Utterances with GMPs or JEPs are analysed with Praat(5.3.02) to check intonational patterns and accents.



What we anticipated:

1. Subjects will use expressions of uncertainty at first and as the step goes further, they will use more expressions of certainty.
2. While describing or commenting the photos, subjects will make inference, getting information from what they have seen/what they see.
3. After having realized what the object is, they will probably express that (i) their expectation is fulfilled ("That's just what I thought", "I'm pleased") or (ii) their expectation is not fulfilled ("I'm surprised", "I'm disappointed").
4. With the presence of a potential interlocutor intersubjective expressions such as JEPs and GMPs would be more frequently observed.

