L’ANALISI
LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA
FACOLTÀ DI LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIÈRE
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

ANNO XVI - 2008

VOLUME 1

SPECIAL ISSUE

Proceedings of the IADA Workshop
Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue

Homage to Sorin Stati
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Milan 2008, 15-17 May

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edited by G. Gobber, S. Cantarini, S. Cigada, M.C. Gatti & S. Gilardoni
THE VERBAL MEANS IN GERMAN AND JAPANESE ARGUMENTATION

MARION GREIN

Introduction

The article aims at a comparison of the linguistic means of argumentation in German and Japanese. The first chapter will give definitions of both, argument and argumentation. Furthermore, some basics of argumentation theory are summarized. The second chapter is concerned with the means of language used in argumentation. These can be differentiated into several linguistic devices or markers, i.e. the lexical selection, the topic-comment or thematic structure, illocutionary markers and various connectors. Here, I will confine myself to the analysis of various connectors or discourse markers used in argumentative action games.

The goal of my study was to compare these devices within the languages of German and Japanese. Due to my ample data set consisting of German and Japanese refusals (Grein 2007a), the study will be limited to justificatory argumentation in which one person at a time seeks to justify his or her refusal to undertake a specific action. The given role-play situation consists of a directive in which the test persons are asked to do some extra non-paid work on a weekend. The argumentation being that extra non-paid work is acceptable under special circumstances. Altogether 200 German and 200 Japanese test persons refused to work voluntarily and almost 70% of them, however more Germans than Japanese, argued why they would not work during their leisure without (financial) compensation. Both, German and Japanese, possess equivalent causal conjunctions, yet, next to using conjunctions, Japanese makes frequent use of conjunctive converbal constructions and nominalizations.

1. Arguments, Argumentation and the Minimal Action Game

Within the field of linguistics, there are numerous definitions for the concepts of argument and argumentation (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 60ff.). In the year 1990, Lumer had already outlined a number of 18 diverging definitions (Lumer 1990: 26ff).

The most prominent definition harkens back to van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Kruiger (1987: 7), who define argumentation as

a social, intellectual, verbal activity serving to justify or refute an opinion, consisting of a constellation of statements and directed towards obtaining the approbation of an audience, a form of interaction. An argument is, thus, often defined as “any exchange of information centered on an avowed disagreement” (Gilbert 1997: 104).
Or as van Eemeren et al. (1996: 5) put it:

Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge.

Taking this definition into account, most propositions, oral and written, can be interpreted as a kind of argumentation. Weigand (1999: 54) argues:

From a functional point of view it seems absurd to deny that we would not always try to achieve our communicative purposes by more or less effective means. Thus language use in dialogic action games would always be inherently persuasive from the very beginning.

Typical situations are the request of a child to stay up late, the attempts of an employee to increase his salary, the efforts of a politician to convince the opposition of any innovations or the endeavour of a lawyer to find an accused not guilty. Thus, most dialogic conversations or dialogic action games are arguments justifying one’s actions.

Just as we are confronted with numerous definitions of argument and argumentation, there are frequent theoretical approaches. Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1992: 6ff.) outline ten theoretical approaches. Bücker (2004: 16) summarizes thirteen approaches.

In Weigand’s (2003, 2006, 2008, forthc. this volume) holistic approach argumentation is not interpreted “as a game in the abstract, but starts from human beings’ mind” (Weigand, this volume). Weigand (this volume) distinguishes between games of argumentation and moves of arguing. She considers the classical game of argumentation as a representative game of negotiation about the world between thesis and antithesis:

\[
\text{thesis} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{antithesis}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{claim to truth} \\
\uparrow \text{arguments}
\end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{claim to truth} \\
\uparrow \text{arguments}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{Fig. 1: Representative game of argumentation}\]

Weigand (this volume) conceives moves of arguing, i.e. of providing reasons, as representative subordinate moves which can appear in every game, not only in support of representative claims but also in support of claims to volition:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{representative game} \\
\uparrow \text{arguments}
\end{array} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{directive game} \\
\uparrow \text{arguments}
\end{array}
\]

\[\text{Fig. 2: Arguing in representative and directive games}\]
Both, the speaker with his or her specific interest as well as the hearer who either accepts or refutes the position of the speaker, verbalize their positions with the means of arguments. In any argumentative dialogic action game, the speaker is aware that the hearer might have a divergent opinion concerning the content of his or her argumentation. Thus, the speaker tries to verbalize his or her statements, his argumentation, by such means that the hearer will consider the argumentation as comprehensible, acceptable or at least admissible (van Eemeren et al. 1996). He or she needs to be convincing.

The minimal action game analyzed here could be considered as a directive action game, in which a superior requests an employee to work during the weekend, nil-paid. The analysis, however, concerns the following representative game:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>thesis</th>
<th>antithesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>argument of the superior: It is perfectly all right to ask an employee to work on weekends in case of a special occasion.</td>
<td>argument of employees:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- not ethical</td>
<td>- impossible without financial compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- impossible when other obligations or engagements exist</td>
<td>- indirect argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fig. 3: The game of argumentation analyzed*

Argumentation is understood as a process in which speakers, with their very own cognition, emotions, cultural backgrounds, beliefs etc., depict a specific situation with verbal means. Weigand (this volume) states: “Argumentation starts from divergent views. Different claims to truth are expressed by representative speech acts and then negotiated in argumentative dialogues”. Argumentation is not only subject to semantic content; it also exhibits a particular linguistic structure, including particular verbal means. Both, semantic content and linguistic structure are primarily dependent on contextual and pragmatic factors, i.e. the specific situation and the social distance between the speakers. Thus, the argumentation of the child who wants to stay up late, the attempts of the employee and the endeavour of the lawyer mentioned above will surely have a different structure and different verbal means. Furthermore, nonverbal communication is accompanied with verbal communication in argumentation but will be disregarded in this article.

Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1992: 6ff) – like many other approaches – operate with argument schemes. They differentiate symptomatic, analogical and causal argumentation. Without going into the controversial debate between philosophical ideals and rhetoric, I will confine myself to four basic types of argumentation schemes: moral, plausible, rational and tactic argumentation which are often discussed as fallacies (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2008).
It is possible to appeal purely on moral or ethical grounds. Common values and principles of society are mentioned. Moreover, ethical argumentation predominantly mentions persons of high standing as prominent examples of public opinion (‘argument of authority’). Moral argumentation is often found in China when people refer to Confucius.

In plausible argumentation, arguments can be based on the possibility of adverse publicity or potential damaging effects of a particular action. Plausible evidence is often based on published data, observed experiences of others, public opinion and common sense (‘sanity and reason’). Plausible argumentation is difficult to distinguish from rational argumentation.

In rational argumentation, however, the persuasiveness of facts (statistics, research data, and verifiable hypotheses) is predominant. In due form, the speaker suggests several competing counter-positions and then proceeds to make a rational choice between those positions, based on factual evidence. The conclusion often is not offered as the ultimate truth but rather as the most likely one out of several choices. Rational argumentation appeals to the listener’s intellect and appears to be objective.

Again, tactical and rational argumentation is difficult to distinguish. Tactical argumentation, in fact, seems to be close to some types of fallacies. Instead of arguing the speaker emphasizes his or her alleged supremacy. He or she pretends to consider counter-positions objectively, yet, dismisses all counter-arguments as incomparable exceptions to the rule.

2. Verbal Means of Argumentation

The means of language used in argumentation can be differentiated into a several linguistic devices or markers, i.e. the lexical selection, the topic-comment or thematic structure, illocutionary markers and various connectors (van Eemeren & Grootendorst
Furthermore, the argumentative function can be implicit, and thus linguistically unmarked (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1981). On top of that, non- and paraverbal devices can supersede the necessity for explicit marking of the argumentative function.

Here, I will take a look at the various connectors used in argumentative discourse. These markers are markers of adverbial subordination, i.e. conjunctions, causal adverbs and prepositional noun phrases. They link two propositions, usually indicating a causal relation. The argumentative function can, however, be implicit and thus overt marking is unnecessary. Moreover, non- and paraverbal means can be sufficient when the relation can be implied.

Some examples will illustrate the verbal means:

Conjunctions:

(1) Ich möchte abends eine Stunde länger aufbleiben, weil alle meine Freundinnen auch erst um 21 Uhr ins Bett müssen.

I wanna go to bed late because all of my friends don’t have to be in bed before 9 o’clock!

Causal adverb:

(2) Ich möchte abends eine Stunde später ins Bett. Meine Freundinnen müssen nämlich auch alle erst um 21 Uhr ins Bett. [further German adverbs: daher, deshalb, darum (‘that’s why’) trotzdem (‘in spite of it, nevertheless’)].

I wanna go to bed late. You see/you know, all my friends don’t have to go to bed before 9 o’clock.

Prepositional noun phrase:

(3) Aufgrund meines 12 Geburtstages wäre es nur fair auch bis 21 Uhr aufbleiben zu dürfen.

Because of my 12th birthday it would only be fair if I could stay up till 9

Juxtaposition (not overtly marked):

(4) Ich möchte abends eine Stunde später ins Bett. Meine Freundinnen müssen auch alle erst um 21 Uhr ins Bett.

I wanna go to bed late. All my friends may stay up till 9 o’clock.

Simple construction:

Due to the fact that all these utterances are part of a dialogic action game, it is perfectly all right just to give the justification in a simple construction. The justification is given in reference to an initially uttered proposition.

(5) Meine Freundinnen müssen auch alle erst um 21 Uhr ins Bett.

All my friends may stay up till 9 o’clock!
Question:
Just as the argument might consist of a simple declarative sentence, a question can be interpreted as an argument.

(6) Warum dürfen alle anderen länger aufbleiben als ich?
Why may all my friends stay up late? (later than I do)

In Japanese, next to conjunctions, adverbs and juxtaposition, causal subordination can be marked with two further means: nominalization – which is different from prepositional noun phrases – and converbal constructions (Grein 1998).
Nominalization (Japanese):

(7) Tomodachi mo 9ji made mesamete iru wake, friend too 9 o’clock till be awake reason
wataki mo so shitai.
I too so do: DES I
Because my friends may stay up till 9 o’clock, I wanna do that too.

The complete first sentence ‘tomodachi mo 9ji made mesamete-iru’ is desentialed by the noun wake (‘reason’) and has the status of a regular NP.
Converbal construction:

(8) Tomodachi mo 9ji made mesamete itekara
friend too 9 o’clock till be awake: CONV
wataki mo so shitai.
I too so do: DES I
Because my friends may stay up till 9 o’clock, I wanna do that, too.

3. Comparison of the Data

As mentioned before, the data are taken from my ample data-set on German and Japa-
nese refusals (Grein 2007a). This study will be limited to justificatory argumentation in which one person at a time seeks to justify his or her refusal to undertake a specific action1.

The verbal means listed in chapter 2 are presented within the chapters 3.1 to 3.8 for German and Japanese.

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1 For details and critique of the research design cf. Grein (2007a: 151-159).
3.1 Conjunctions

Although Japanese has a more elaborated set of markers than German (i.e. converbs and nominalization), the Japanese use more conjunctions than the Germans. It is furthermore notable that in 67.9% of all conjunctional constructions the conjunction node (‘because’) is used. Actually, node has been grammaticalized into a conjunction, historically being the nominalization marker no and the converbal form de of the copula desu. A second causal conjunction, next to node, is kara. Yet, constructions with node are considered to be more objective than those with kara, and thus are, obviously, more frequent. Constructions marked with node put their emphasis on the result whereas constructions with kara focus on the reason or cause (Grein 1998: 158f). In German, the conjunctions weil and da (‘because’) are most frequent.

3.2 Causal Adverbs

Neither the German nor the Japanese data displayed any causal adverbs. This might be due to the (hierarchical) constellation of employee and employer. Causal adverbs seem to lack the appropriate politeness. Within different interpersonal constellations causal adverbs were used in both languages.

3.3 Prepositional Noun Phrases

Prepositional – or rather postpositional in Japanese – noun-phrases were equally rare in both languages.
3.4 Juxtaposition (unmarked)

Whereas juxtaposition is the third most frequent means in German with 18.4%, it is hardly used in Japanese at all. In Japanese, a conversation between equals is strongly dependent on context and thus arguments and connectors are omitted. Yet, when talking to a superior the arguments and thus the verbal markers are obligatory (Grein 2007a, b). This is also reflected in the usage or rather the absence of simple declarative sentences in Japanese that will be presented in the next chapter.

3.5 Simple declarative sentence

As mentioned in section 3.4, the Japanese are obliged to mark their argumentation with connectors in the given situation. Thus, the employment of simple sentences – in which the causal context is implicit – is frequent in German (37.2%) and scarce in Japanese (12.5%).

3.6 Nominalization (Japanese)

Fig. 7: Juxtaposition

Fig. 8: Simple declarative sentence

Fig. 9: Nominalization
In German there are no nominal constructions like the ones found in Japanese. In Japanese a complete clause can be turned into a regular noun phrase. The NP can then be assigned with a case marker and be considered as a grammatical complement (cf. Grein 1998: 135). Most often the nouns *tame* (‘reason’) oder *toki* (‘time’) are used. Actually, these constructions are comparable to German prepositional noun phrases. Since, however, Japanese has both, nominalized constructions and pre- or rather post-positional noun phrases, they were analyzed separately. Examples (9) and (10) will illustrate the nominalization construction, example (10) being a Japanese gap-type relative clause.

(9) konshuumsatsu wa shinyou no atsumari ga
this weekend TOP confidential GEN meeting NOM

aru tame
have:PRES reason

Because I have a confidential meeting this weekend

*Konshuumsatsu wa shinyou no atsumari ga aru* is an independent finite declarative clause that can be translated ‘This weekend I have a confidential meeting.’ Example (10) illustrates the NP status of the clause:

(10) [konshuumsatsu wa shinyou no atsumari ga
this weekend TOP confidential GEN meeting NOM

aru otoko wa shujin desu
have:PRES man TOP husband COP:HON:PRES

1 = noun; 2 = NP
NP is my husband.
The man, who has a confidential meeting this weekend, is my husband.

---

2 A listing of these nouns can be found in Grein (1998:137-156).
3.7 Converb

Converbs are verb forms which are neither finite nor nominal (Grein 1998: 84). They are used in coordinative sequences of clauses or subordinate adverbial clauses. Tense, aspect and modal categories are dependent on the final finite verb.

Coordinative sequence

(11) Asa ni okite kohi o nonde, gohan o tabete, shibun o yonde, rice AKK eat:CONV newspaper ACC read:CONV

kaisha ni ikimasu.
company DIR go:HON:PRES.
I wake up in the morning, have some coffee, eat breakfast, read the newspaper and go to the company.

(12) Asa ni okite kohi o nonde, gohan o tabete, shibun o yonde, rice AKK eat:CONV newspaper ACC read:CONV

kaisha ni ikimashita.
company DIR go:HON:PAST
I woke up in the morning, had some coffee, ate breakfast, read the newspaper and went to the company.

The change of tense refers to all prior given converbs.

Adverbial subordination:

(13) Sushi o tabetekara hon o yomu.
Sushi ACC eat:CONV book ACC read:PRES
After having eaten Sushi, I will read a book.
Grein (1998) differentiates altogether 13 converbs in Japanese. In fact, German provides two infinite verb forms that can be considered as converbs: present participle and present perfect participle.

Within the data-set, there were no converbal constructions in German but 33 (16.5%) occurrences in Japanese. Semantically, most of these constructions do not offer an antithesis but rather the speaker puts up an argument why he or she will not be able to work on the weekend. Indirectly, the speaker thereby indicates that his or her argument is superior to the employer’s argument.

Direct argumentation:

thesis ↔ antithesis

argument

claim to truth

REPRESENTATIVE

It is perfectly all right to work

honorary at special occasions

Extra work has to be paid

Fig. 11: Representative game of direct argumentation
Indirect argumentation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTIVE</th>
<th>NON-CONSENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘You have to work this weekend’</td>
<td>‘No’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thesis</td>
<td>thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argument</td>
<td>argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>claim to truth</td>
<td>claim to truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPRESENTATIVE</td>
<td>REPRESENTATIVE (NUNTIATIVE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is perfectly all right to work honorary at special occasions

Indeed, one could argue that these cases are no argumentations. Yet, I conceive them as indirect argumentation. The employee, by uttering his or her argument, implies that the employer’s argument is of less importance or even non-discussable.

(18)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>haha</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>joutai</th>
<th>ga</th>
<th>warukute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>my mother</td>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>health</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>bad:ADV:CONV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sono   | hi   | wa   | ikesou ni arimasen |
that  | day  | TOP  | go:POT:HON:PRES:NEG |

Since my mother’s health is quite bad, that day won’t work.

(19)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sono</th>
<th>hi</th>
<th>wa</th>
<th>doushite</th>
<th>mo</th>
<th>ikanai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>how</td>
<td>too</td>
<td>go:Neg:PRES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

to     | ikenai | youji | g a  | attekara |
COM    | go:POT:NEG:PRES | plan | NOM | have:CONV |

de kin | de kin masen |

work  | can:HON:NEG:PRES |

Since on that day I have plans that can by no chance be cancelled, I can’t work.
3.8 Question

Again, this type of argumentation is considered as indirect argumentation.

thesis ←→ questioning the thesis

argument question

claim to truth claim to knowledge

REPRESENTATIVE EXPLORATIVE

It is perfectly all right to work
honorary at special occasions

Considering my salary, just a joke, right?

Fig. 14: Explorative game of indirect argumentation

Within the German data 13 employees put forward their argumentation by means of a question. In Japanese only two occurrences were found. Questions are not sufficiently marked for politeness. Concerning the contents of utterances, the Japanese examples are diplomatic, not really giving any argument, while in the German examples the antithesis is easily recognizable.

(20) sore wa watashi ni shika dekinai
    that TOP I DAT alone can:NEG:PRES
    koto na node shimau ka.
    thing because finish:PRES QU
    Is that a job that can only be done by me?

(21) Bei meiner Bezahlung wohl eher ein Spaß?
    With my salary probably rather a joke
    Considering my salary rather a joke, right?
4. Comparison

The Japanese prefer complex constructions and employ overt verbal markers, i.e. conjunctions and converbs (83%). In German, however, simple constructions, i.e. simple declarative clauses, juxtapositions and questions, are preferred. Within the German data merely 37.8% of the sentences are complex and overtly marked with an adverbial subordinator.

Whereas we find ‘real’ argumentation within the German data, the Japanese rather employ the indirect strategy given in Fig. 12:

\begin{align*}
\text{DIRECTIVE} & \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \text{NON-CONSENT} \\
\text{‘You have to work this weekend’} & \quad \text{‘No’} \\
\text{thesis} & \quad \text{thesis} \\
\text{argument} & \quad \text{argument} \\
\text{claim to truth} & \quad \text{claim to truth} \\
\text{REPRESENTATIVE} & \quad \text{REPRESENTATIVE (NUNITATIVE)} \\
\text{It is perfectly all right to work honorary at special occasions} & \quad \text{I have an important engagement} \\
\text{My mother is sick} & \quad \text{My mother is sick}
\end{align*}

\textbf{Fig. 12: Representative game of indirect argumentation}

\textbf{Fig. 15: Comparison verbal means}

In meiner Position? Ist das ein Witz?
In my position Is that a joke?
In my position? Are you joking?
A first glance at the types of argumentation displays that Germans tend to argue plausible and tactical while the Japanese favour implicit moral argumentation. What exactly is implicit moral argumentation? When talking to superiors, the social distance has to be taken into account. Thus, in the given interpersonal constellation, many Japanese do not argue against the employer’s proposition that working on an honorary basis is permissible on special occasions but rather adhere to society’s moral conventions of non-acceptance by using set phrases in which further obligations or even liabilities are mentioned. The establishment and maintenance of harmony is the most important value of Japanese society (cf. Grein 2008a: 195), in order to preserve or maintain harmony, each individual has to adhere to his or her obligations (jap. *giri*). Obligations are of greater moral value than other arguments. As mentioned before a set phrase like ‘the circumstances are a bit bad, but I have another obligation’ is considered a stronger argument than the superior’s argument. Therefore, Japanese games of argumentation need further analysis within different interpersonal relations, especially in constellations where the arguers possess the same social status.

5. Relevance

The study has shown that both, semantic contents (argumentation type) and linguistic devices differ within the analyzed languages German and Japanese. Further analysis and comparison is indispensable since the given interpersonal constellation had an impact on the argumentation types.

These findings are of relevance for argumentation theory, interactional linguistics and cross-cultural pragmatics, where speech acts uttered in identical interaction settings are compared (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Grein 2008b: 21). Results of cross-cultural pragmatics are of relevance for second language research. The findings of the present study could and should be considered in second language instruction and textbooks. Structure, contents and devices diverge. Not considering these differences in a cross-cultural argumentation would lead to miscommunication.

References


Weigand, Edda (forthc.) The argumentative power of words or how to move people’s minds with words. In: L’analisi linguistica e letteraria 16.

Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACC</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ART</td>
<td>Article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONV</td>
<td>Converb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAT</td>
<td>Dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESI</td>
<td>Desiderative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Genitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>HON</td>
<td>Honorifics</td>
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<td>NOM</td>
<td>Nomination</td>
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<tr>
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<td>POT</td>
<td>Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>Present tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QU</td>
<td>Question marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMP</td>
<td>Temporal marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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