Differential manifestations of subjectification in the development of Japanese and English modal auxiliary systems

Key words: grammaticalization, subjectification, modal auxiliary, Japanese, English

Until the Middle Ages, many of the Japanese modality expressions could express both deontic and epistemic modal meanings. For example, -*mu* had both deontic (intention) and epistemic (probability) meanings, and -*beshi* had both deontic (obligation) and epistemic (certainty) meanings (Narrog 2007, 2012). Contrary to the arguably universalist claim of unidirectional development of modal expressions from deontic as in (1a) to epistemic as in (1b) (Traugott 1989, Sweetser 1990, Bybee et al. 1994), Japanese shows no conclusive sign of such directionality (Kurotaki 2005, Narrog 2012). English modal auxiliaries are known to have evolved from matrix verbs (Traugott 1989). For example, the modal auxiliary *must* originated from the Old English verb *motan*, which means "be obliged to". On the other hand, Old Japanese modal auxiliaries such as -*beshi* (obligation; certainty) and -*mu* (intention; probability) had already been present by the time the oldest extant documents were written (Kitahara 2000).

Furthermore, the form-meaning correspondence of modality expressions underwent a radical change in the early Modern period (around the 17th century) when the synthetic modality expressions of Old Japanese were replaced by more analytical/periphrastic modality expressions such as *nakere-ba-nara-nai* (obligation) and *kamo-shire-nai* (weak possibility) (Kitahara 2000). Deontic modality expressions and epistemic modality expressions thus became differentiated in Modern Japanese.

In this presentation, we will argue that subjectification, which is often considered a concomitant factor of grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 2003), is manifest both in Japanese and English modal auxiliaries but in a different manner. We adopt the view that subjectification is "a shift to a relatively abstract and subjective construal of the world in terms of language" (Hopper and Traugott 2003:86).

In the case of English, matrix verbs changed into auxiliary verbs through grammaticalization, and the process of subjectification affects the extension from deontic to epistemic meanings (Sweetser 1990). In the case of Japanese, older auxiliaries deriving from synthetic forms tend to express the speaker's subjective judgment while newer periphrastic modal auxiliaries tend to express more objective judgments. For example, in (2a), -*daroo* is a modal auxiliary derived from Old Japanese -*mu* and expresses the speaker's subjective, often ungrounded, judgment. In contrast,

kanoosei-ga-aru (lit. ‘the possibility exists’) in (2b) is a periphrastic modal auxiliary form consisting of a noun (*kanoosei*), nominative marker (*ga*), and the existential verb (*aru*), and it expresses the judgment based on objective external evidence.

The contrasts observed in Japanese modal auxiliaries can be interpreted to suggest that older modal auxiliaries have undergone subjectification as predicted by grammaticalization theory, while newer periphrastic modal auxiliaries are less likely to undergo that process.

Data

(1) a. John *must* be home by ten; Mother won't let him stay out any later.
b. John *must* be home already; I see his coat.

Sweetser (1990: 49)

(2) a. *Asu-wa* *ame-ga* *furu* *daroo*
tomorrow -TOP rain-NOM fall will

b. *Asu-wa* *ame-ga* *furu* *kanoosei-ga-aru*
tomorrow -TOP rain-NOM fall possibility-NOM-exist

"It will rain tomorrow."

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