

Reference by common nouns and pronouns: Where grammar and cognition merge.

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Grammar, i.e., formal and semantic conventions of linguistic expressions, seems to play an important, if not predominant, role in our daily verbal communication (discourse), and it is often assumed, at least in the field of linguistics, that grammar is more or less an independent, self-contained (autonomous) cognitive faculty that should be given a primary focus of interest. However, other cognitive faculties, such as perception, working memory, frame (a body of structured knowledge; a subset of one's long-term memory), are observed to play an equally important role in reference (verbal act of referring to an object). In this talk, I discuss reference by common nouns and pronouns in spoken Japanese and English discourses within the general framework of Watanabe 2015, and show two cases where grammar and other cognitive faculties merge.

First, I discuss reference by common nouns in English and Japanese. Both English and Japanese common nouns may refer to a specific referent along with their relevant frames. Their grammars, however, requires different linguistic constructions. In Japanese, a specific referent may be referred to by a naked noun phrase (a noun phrase composed of a common noun and no modifying element(s)), while in English a noun phrase composed of a common noun and the definite article *the* is often used to refer to a specific referent.

Pronouns in both languages exhibit yet another aspect of grammar/frame collaboration. In English, the pronouns *he* or *she* have no problem in referring to a hypothetical referent, provided that such a referent is introduced and established in the current discourse session. The Japanese pronouns *kare/kanajo*, however, fail to do so. The referent of Japanese third person pronouns has to be backed up sufficiently in one's long-term memory, and, thus, a hypothetical referent fails to be referred to by the Japanese pronouns.

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