

Preface and acknowledgements

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Diachrony of Personal Pronouns in Japanese: A functional and cross-linguistic perspective

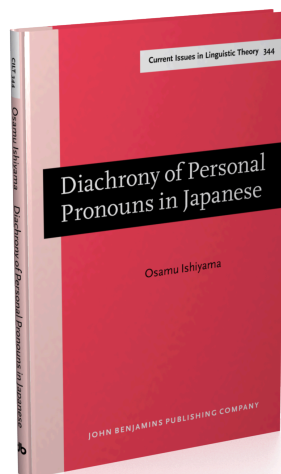
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Preface and acknowledgements

This book is a functional and cross-linguistic investigation of the diachrony of personal pronouns in Japanese. Factors such as the large inventory size, morpho-syntactic similarities to nouns, sociolinguistic implicatures that they carry, and multi-syllabicity characterize the pronominal inventory of Japanese. In other words, personal pronouns in Japanese form a heterogeneous category with fuzzy boundaries with nouns and closely associated classes of expressions, including social epithets, demonstratives, and reflexives. Although Japanese employed a variety of items for person reference throughout its history, the focus of this study is the development of personal pronouns used in Modern Japanese. The Benvenistean view of personal pronouns draws a clear boundary between the first/second person on the one hand and third person on the other, since the latter is a non-person. Diachronically, the close relationship between third person and demonstrative pronouns are well known in previous studies. Based on the examinations of historical texts, this book will shed light on the nature of the tenuous diachronic link between first/second person pronouns and demonstratives in Japanese. Furthermore, I argue that nouns are the major source of personal pronouns, but that items of non-nominal origins are generally unlikely to give rise to personal pronouns because their use for person referents can be resolved within (the extension of) their original functions.

Functionally, personal pronouns are grammatical items, but the processes in which they arise historically are far from straightforward. Grammaticalization is largely consistent only with the change from nouns to personal pronouns. The ways in which personal pronouns arise from forms of non-nominal origins, on the other hand, are diverse and each process must be dealt with separately. Cross-linguistically, demonstratives and reflexives are often used for person referents based on spatial and empathetic perspectives, e.g. the use of speaker-proximal demonstratives and reflexives for the speaker. Speaker-proximal forms may also be used for the addressee if the speaker considers the addressee to be in his/her proximal area. Similarly, reflexives are often used for the addressee, especially in interrogatives and imperatives for epistemological reasons. Crucially, however, these usages can be predicted on the basis of the demonstrative and reflexive functions. Therefore, this book casts some doubt on the cross-linguistic generalization that demonstratives and reflexives constitute the major source of personal pronouns.

Besides nouns, the use of already established personal pronouns for a referent for which they are not originally intended by displacing semantic features such as number and person may contribute to the emergence of new pronoun function. In all of these, politeness emerges as a primary motivation. This book explores how politeness explains the cross-linguistically common source nouns as well as how it affects the formation of new pronoun usage.

Because of the long textual tradition and diversity of source items, Japanese offers a valuable opportunity to examine the development of personal pronouns under a cross-linguistic light. The Japanese Text Initiative housed in the University of Virginia Library deserves special acknowledgement for digitizing classical and modern Japanese literature and making them available online. Parts of Chapter 3 are based on my article, “The diachronic relationship between demonstratives and first/second person pronouns,” that appeared in *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* (2012). I thank the publisher for permission to include revised material from this publication in the present monograph.

Though evolved significantly, many of the ideas explored in this book originated in my doctoral dissertation, *Diachronic perspectives on personal pronouns in Japanese*, written at the State University of New York at Buffalo. I would like to thank my dissertation committee members, David Fertig, David Zubin, and Mitsuaki Shimojo whose guidance and intellectual stimulation were indispensable when this project first started. Over the years, I have benefitted from comments received from fellow linguists at various conferences, though it would be impossible to list them. I am grateful to two anonymous reviewers and members of the editorial board whose insightful and constructive feedback helped make this a better book than it would have been otherwise. I am especially thankful to the general editor of this book series, Joe Salmons, for his guidance and encouragement throughout the lengthy process of revising this work. My thanks also go to Anke de Looper of John Benjamins who helped me navigate the final production stages of this book.

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Osamu Ishiyama