



Semantic change through the discursive strategy of justification: The grammaticalization of the Japanese connective *datte*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the process of subjectification by focusing on discursive strategy in the grammaticalization of the Japanese connective *datte* 'but/because'. It is found that *datte* shifted its meaning from 'but' to 'because' because it increasingly came to be used with justifications in new contexts of argumentative discourse. In the course of its development, the co-occurrence of an explanatory expression, such as *-kara* 'because', also increased, which further contributed to the entrenchment of the explanatory meaning. It is argued that the preference organization of conversation, which leads participants of conversation to avoid or mitigate face-threatening actions, motivated the semantic change from concessivity to causality.

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1. Introduction

The present study demonstrates that a semantic change involved in the grammaticalization of the Japanese connective *DATTE*² 'but/because' can be better accounted for by discursive strategy than the general notion of subjectification.

In contemporary Japanese, depending on the context, *datte* will be interpreted as either 'but' or 'because' (Maynard, 1993; Mori, 1999). Historically, however, the adversative meaning precedes the explanatory meaning. As shown in (1), the adverbial

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¹ In Japanese, connectives and connective particles are two distinct categories of connective expressions. Connectives are free morphemes that usually occupy clause-initial position and are separated from the rest of the utterance by a pause or some type of intonational break. They primarily serve to create coherence at the semantic and pragmatic levels, similarly to utterance-initial *and*, *but*, and *so* in English. *DATTE* belongs to this category of independent connectives. Connective particles are bound morphemes attached to a finite form of a verb, an adjective, a copula, or an auxiliary, and always occupy clause-final position of the subordinate clause because Japanese is an SOV language. The causal particle *-kara* 'because' is an example of a connective expression of this type. Commonly, connective particles undergo grammaticalization and become connectives (Higashiizumi, 2015; Matsumoto, 1988; Mori, 1996; Tanno, 2016). So-called sentence-final particles, such as *ne*, *yo*, and *sa*, which signal the speaker's assumption of the interlocutor's state of knowledge or cognitive state, can appear after both connectives and connective particles. The term discourse marker will be used as a cover term to refer to that functional category of expressions whose primary function is to signal non-propositional aspects of communicative force, such as discourse organization, cognitive process, modalization, and interactional management. They serve as "overt indicators of ongoing metalinguistic activity in the speaker's mind" (Aijmer, 2013, p. 4) and enable "conversationalists to keep track of what course the discourse is taking and how upcoming talk is related to previous talk" (Rühlemann, 2007, p. 45). This group of expressions consists of a wide range of expressions, including connectives and other types of pragmatic markers such as modal particles (e.g., the German *doch*) and interactional markers (e.g., the English *say*).

² For convenience of reference, the upper-case term *DATTE* is used to collectively refer to all variant forms. The actual forms will be provided with lower-case letters.

form *soredattemo*, which consists of an anaphoric term, a copula, a quotative particle, and a focus particle, first appeared in the late Edo period (early 19th C – 1868) (Baba, 2005; Konishi, 2003; Kyōgoku and Matsui, 1972; Matsumoto, 1998; Mori, 1996; Ōtsuka, 2007; Yajima, 2011). The contemporary form *datte* emerged as a result of form reduction, in particular, the loss of the anaphoric term during the Meiji period (1868–1912).

(1) Morphological structure of *soredattemo*

<i>soredattemo</i>	=	<i>sore</i>	+	<i>da</i>	+	<i>tte</i>	+	<i>mo</i>
		anaphora		copula		quotative particle		focus particle
		'that'		'be'		'said'		'even'

Mori (1996) compares the historically attested use of *soredattemo* with the contemporary use of *datte* and concludes that *soredattemo*, whose propositional meaning was 'even if you say so,' increased its subjectivity and came to index the speaker's disagreeing position by the 19th century. As shown in (2), it served to signal a disagreement and justify the speaker's behavior with the anaphoric component *sore* 'that' referring to the interlocutor's prior utterance.

(2) Mori's example of *soredattemo* taken from *Ukiyoburo* (1809–1813)

- (2.1) Hane: ...*Oya, mata wasureta-wa. Kanjin-no yoo-o*
 oh again forgot-TP important-GEN matter-AC³
ihu-no da-kke.
 say-N CP-FP
 '... Oh, I forgot it again. I forgot to tell the important thing.'
- (2.2) Haha: *Sore mina. Iwa nee koto-ka.*
 that see say not N-FP
 'See, I told you.'
- (2.3) Hane: ***Soredattemo*** *kuchikazu-ga ooi kara,*
 but words-NM many because
tsui osoku naru no da-wa-na.
 unintentionally late become N CP-FP-FP
 '**But/that's because**, you talk so much, I tend to miss the timing.'

(Mori, 1996, p. 205)

Subsequently, the reduced form *datte* came to refer to the speaker's own preceding utterance and provided a justification. Mori explains that this meaning shift from 'even if you say so' to 'even if you do not respond' occurred when the speaker added an explanation upon sensing that the interlocutor would not provide a response of agreement.

Mori also argues that the contemporary use of *datte* is not limited to indicating disagreement but extends to supporting one's agreement with an interlocutor's position. As illustrated in (3), *datte* can be used in an affiliative response and preface supporting evidence.

(3) Mori's example of *datte* in agreement in recorded casual conversation:⁴

- (3.1) Noriko: *Demo oyatsu-no jikan mendokusai-ne, are-ne.*
 But coffee.break-GEN time troublesome-FP that-FP
 'But, coffee break, that's troublesome.'
- (3.2) Emie: *Soo da-yo:: Datte-sa:: hito-ni yotte-sa:: chigau-jan*
 yes CP-FP because-FP person-DT according-FP differ-CP.not
konomi-ga. koohii-wa burakku-toka-sa:
 taste-NM coffee-TP black-GEN-FP
 'Yeah. **Because** everybody has a different taste, right? Coffee, for instance, black or something.'

(Mori, 1999, pp. 60–61)

These results from Mori's study inform us that *datte* exhibits common characteristics of grammaticalization, which Hopper and Traugott (2003, p. 18) define as "the change whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain

³ AC = accusative, CL = noun classifier, CN = connective, CP = copula, DT = dative, FOC = focus particle, FP = sentence-final particle, GEN = genitive, GEP = general extender particle, IMP = imperative, HRT = hortative, HN = honorific, N = nominalizer, NM = nominative, PRG = progressive, PSS = passive, PST = past tense, QT = quotative particle, RST = resultant, TP = topic marker, VLT = volitional.

⁴ Although the two papers by Mori (1996, 1999) do not provide the recording dates for her conversational data, the data were most likely recorded in the 1990s, given the dates of their publication.

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