

# L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA

FACOLTÀ DI LINGUE E LETTERATURE STRANIERE  
UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

1

ANNO XVI 2008

*SPECIAL ISSUE*

Proceedings of the IADA Workshop  
*Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue*

Homage to Sorin Stati

VOLUME 1

EDUCATT - UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

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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

L'ANALISI LINGUISTICA E LETTERARIA  
Facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e Letterature straniere  
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore  
Anno XVI - 1/2008  
ISSN 1122-1917

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Pubblicazione realizzata con il contributo PRIN - anno 2006

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Largo Gemelli 1, 20123 Milano - tel. 02.72342235 - fax 02.80.53.215  
*e-mail:* editoriale.dsu@unicatt.it (*produzione*); librario.dsu@unicatt.it (*distribuzione*);  
*web:* www.unicatt.it/librario

*Redazione della Rivista:* redazione.all@unicatt.it - *web:* www.unicatt.it/librario/all

Questo volume è stato stampato nel mese di luglio 2009  
presso la Litografia Solari - Peschiera Borromeo (Milano)

## 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.

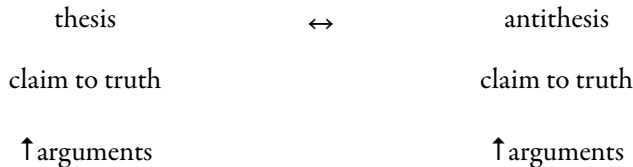
Taking this definition into account, most propositions, oral and written, can be interpreted as a kind of argumentation. Weigand (1999: 54) argues:

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. Bückler (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:



*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:



*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.

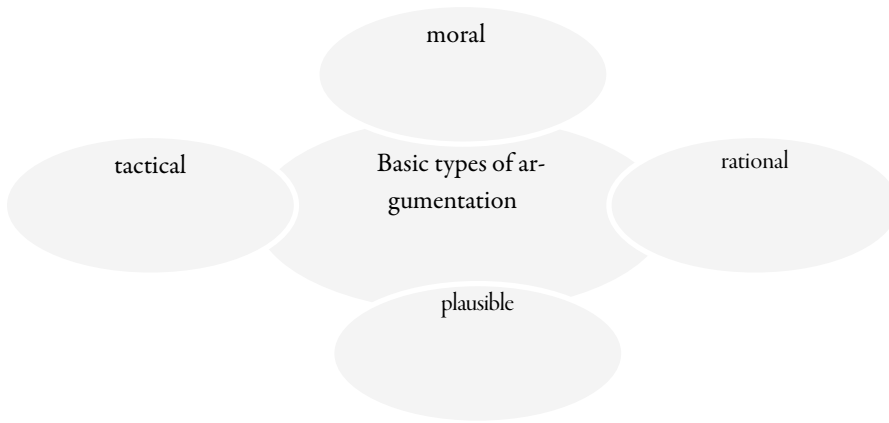
The minimal action game analyzed here could be considered as a directive action game, in which a superior requests an employee to work during the weekend, nil-paid. The analysis, however, concerns the following representative game:

thesis	antithesis
<p>argument of the superior: It is perfectly all right to ask an employee to work on weekends in case of a special occasion.</p>	<p>argument of employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- not ethical</li> <li>- impossible without financial compensation</li> <li>- impossible when other obligations or engagements exist</li> <li>- indirect argument</li> </ul>

*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).



*Fig. 4: Types of argumentation*

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

1992; Eggs 2001). 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 converbial constructions (Grein 1998).

Nominalization (Japanese):

- (7) Tomodachi mo 9ji made mesamete iru *wake*,  
 friend too 9 o'clock till be awake reason  
  
 watashi mo s ô shitai.  
 I too s o 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.

Converbial construction:

- (8) Tomodachi mo 9ji made mesamete *itekara*  
 friend too 9 o'clock till be awake: CONV  
  
 watashi mo s ô shitai.  
 I too s o 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 Japanese 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 action<sup>1</sup>.

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

<sup>1</sup> For details and critique of the research design cf. Grein (2007a: 151-159).

### 3.1 Conjunctions

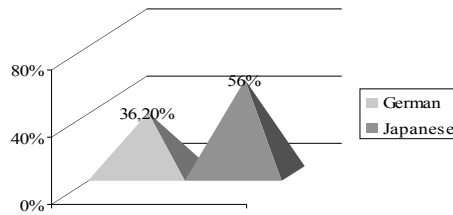


Fig. 5: Conjunctions

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 conjunctive 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

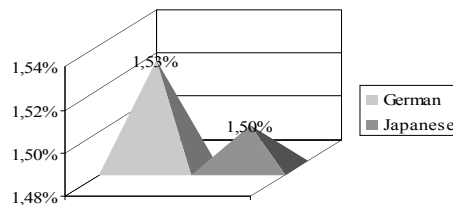
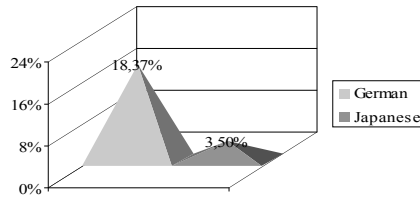


Fig. 6: Prepositional noun phrase

Prepositional – or rather postpositional in Japanese – noun-phrases were equally rare in both languages.

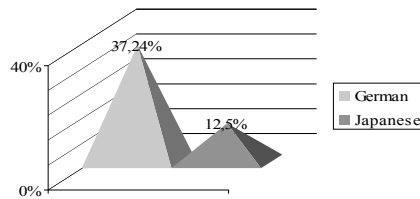
### 3.4 Juxtaposition (unmarked)



*Fig. 7: Juxtaposition*

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.

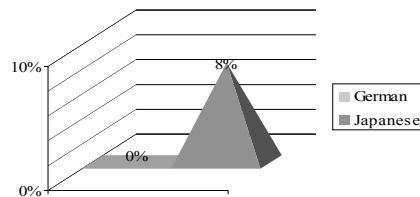
### 3.5 Simple declarative sentence



*Fig. 8: 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. 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<sup>2</sup>. Actually, these constructions are comparable to German prepositional noun phrases. Since, however, Japanese has both, nominalized constructions and pre- or rather postpositional 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) konshuumatsu 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

*Konshuumatsu 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)  $\left[ \begin{array}{l} \left[ \begin{array}{l} \text{konshuumatsu} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{shinyou} \quad \text{no} \quad \text{atsumari} \quad \text{ga} \\ \text{this weekend} \quad \text{TOP} \quad \text{confidential} \quad \text{GEN} \quad \text{meeting} \quad \text{NOM} \end{array} \right. \\ \left. \begin{array}{l} \text{aru} \quad \text{otoko} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{shujin} \quad \text{desu} \\ \text{have:PRES} \quad \text{man} \quad \text{TOP} \quad \text{husband} \quad \text{COP:HON:PRES} \end{array} \right. \end{array} \right.$
- ] <sub>1</sub> ] <sub>2</sub>

1 = noun; 2 = NP

NP is my husband.

The man, who has a confidential meeting this weekend, is my husband.

<sup>2</sup> A listing of these nouns can be found in Grein (1998:137-156).

## 3.7 Converb

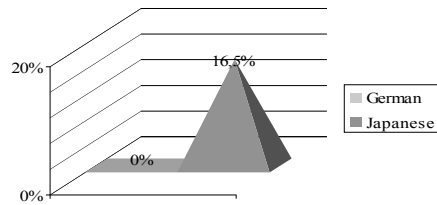


Fig. 10: Converb

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 kofi o nonde,  
 morning TEMP wake-up:CONV coffee ACC drink:CONV  
 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 kofi o nonde,  
 morning TEMP wake-up:CONV coffee ACC drink:CONV  
 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.

- (14) Sushi o tabetekara hon o yomu.  
 Sushi ACC eat:CONV book ACC read:PRES  
 While I am eating Sushi, I will read a book.
- (15) Sushi o tabetekara hon o yomu.  
 Sushi ACC eat:CONV book ACC read:PRES  
 If I eat 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.

- (16) Von ihren Tanzfähigkeiten singend betrat sie  
 about her abilities to dance sing:CONV enter she  
 den Saal (present participle)  
 ART hall.  
 While singing about her dancing abilities she entered the hall.
- (17) Von ihren Tanzfähigkeiten überzeugt betrat sie  
 about her abilities to dance convince:CONV enter she  
 den Saal (present participle)  
 ART hall.  
 Being convinced that she could dance she entered the hall.  
 (Grein 1998: 84)

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		argument
claim to truth		claim to truth
REPRESENTATIVE		NON-ACCEPTANCE
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:

DIRECTIVE	↔	NON-CONSENT
'You have to work this weekend'		'No'
thesis		thesis
argument		argument
claim to truth		claim to truth
REPRESENTATIVE		REPRESENTATIVE (NUNTIATIVE)
It is perfectly all right to work honorary at special occasions		I have an important engagement My mother is sick

*Fig. 12: Representative game of indirect argumentation*

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) haha      no      joutai      ga      warukute  
 my mother    GEN    health    NOM    bad:ADV:CONV
- 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) sono      hi      wa      doushite      mo      ikanai  
 that      day    TOP    how      too      go:NEG:PRES
- t o      ikenai                      youji    ga      atteka ra  
 COM P   go:POT:NEG:PRES      plan    NOM    have:CONV
- dekin      dekimasen  
 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

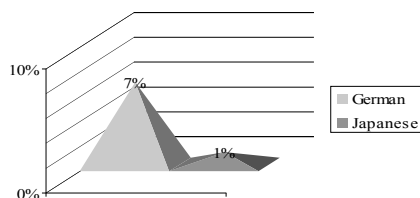


Fig. 13: Question

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?



(22) In meiner Position? Ist das ein Witz?  
 In my position? Is that a joke?  
 In my position? Are you joking?

4. Comparison

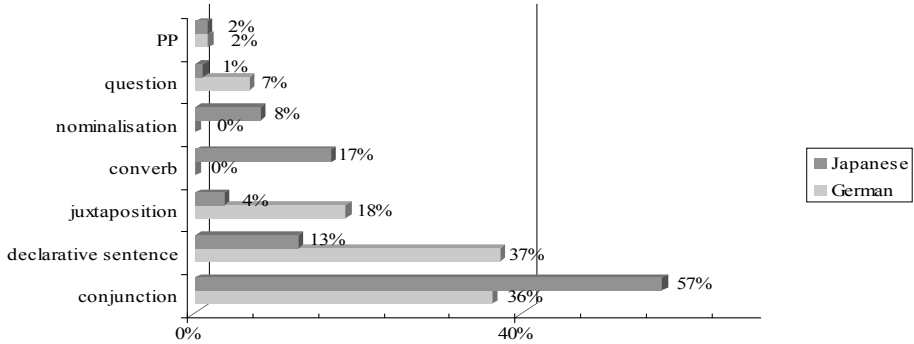


Fig. 15: Comparison verbal means

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:

DIRECTIVE	↔	NON-CONSENT
‘You have to work this weekend’		‘No’
thesis		thesis
argument		argument
claim to truth		claim to truth
REPRESENTATIVE		REPRESENTATIVE (NUNTIA-TIVE)
It is perfectly all right to work honorary at special occasions		I have an important engagement My mother is sick

Fig. 12: Representative game of indirect argumentation

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.

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### Glossary

ACC	Accusative	HON	Honorifics
ADV	Adverb	NEG	Negation
ART	Article	NOM	Nomination
CONV	Converb	PAST	Past tense
COP	Copula	POT	Potential
DAT	Dative	PRES	Present tense
DESI	Desiderative	QU	Question marker
GEN	Genitive	TEMP	Temporal marker
		TOP	Topic