The use of frequent verbs as reactive tokens in Japanese everyday talk: Formulaicity, florescence, and grammaticization

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A number of recent studies (Wray 2008, Bybee 2010, Corrigan et al. 2009, and Tanabe et al. 2014) have highlighted the formulaic nature of actual language use. The present paper is part of our larger project which examines the mechanism of formulaicity observed in Japanese conversation and seeks implication as to the nature of human language in general. Japanese is known for its extensive "backchanneling" behavior (e.g., Maynard 1986, 1987, Clancy et al. 1996, Iwasaki 1997, Nagata 2004, Ohama 2006) and presents a case of florescence (Chafe 2000) by boasting an extensive repertoire of diverse expressions used for such a purpose including non-lexical expressions such as *un*, *ee*, *aa*, *hai*, *haa*, *hoo*, *hee*, *huun*, etc. and phrasal expressions such as *honto* 'Really?', *uso* 'I don't believe it!', *soo* 'Is that right?', *naruhodo* 'I see', *maji* 'Are you serious?', etc. In the talk, we report a case where a previously unrecognized type of expression is joining the group where frequently used verbs with general meanings such as *aru* 'exist', *iru* 'exist', *yaru* 'do', *kuru* 'come', and *wakaru* 'understand' appear to be grammaticized, most typically in a reduplicated form, as reactive tokens. We will examine these emergent formulas in context with attention to their prosody, structure, semantics, and function.

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