

The Ironical usage of Japanese Discourse Marker "Goteinei-ni": Data from Twitter.com

1 introduction

- 1) 自分から連絡さし上げるべき相手から、ご丁寧にも 優しい電話をいただき、涙が出そうに。

'I almost burst into tears because a person whom I had to contact kindly called me. I thought I had to send a letter formally but it turned out that I should have expressed gratitude sooner by telephone.'

- 2) 返品しようにも店員さんが ご丁寧にも ビニール剥がしちゃったから返品できない...

'Because the clerk unnecessarily removed wrapping I can't return what I bought...'

The above two sentences contain the same expression (underlined) "goteinei-nimo." 「ご丁寧にも」 literally means "kindly" or "with great manner." While the former literally expresses the speaker's gratitude, the latter informs that the speaker thinks someone (in this case the clerk) did something unnecessary. In this article I call the former "non-ironical usage," and the latter "ironical usage." My aim is to examine the nature and function of both two usage of that discourse marker, according to cooccurrence with honorifics and benefactives.

2 earlier works

2.1 discourse markers

Schiffrin (1987 [7], 2001[8]) analyzes the nature and the functions of discourse markers. According to Schiffrin, discourse markers are "expressions like *well*, *but*, *oh*, and *y'know* - are one set of linguistic items that function in cognitive, expressive, social, and textual domains (Schiffrin 2001; p. 54)."

Kato (2001) [2] illustrates the whole image of the functions of discourse markers. According to Kato, the functions of discourse markers are fourfold as follows; 1. bracketing, 2. indicating meta-understanding, 3. indicating para-understanding, 4. constructing discourse. In those functions, 4. is important in this article. Kato states that it indicates how the speaker thinks or takes attitude toward the discourse.

2.2 irony

Research on irony from the viewpoint of pragmatics has been executed by many researchers (Leech 1983 [4]; Green 1989 [1]; Raskin 1984[6]; Koizumi 1997[3]). Murakoshi (2000) [5] outlines arguments on irony so far. According to Murakoshi, both the "traditional" view and the criticism to them thought in the way that irony has contrary or incompatible implicature to the "literal meanings" of the expression, and hearer draws out that implicature by pragmatic interpretation.

3 data analysis

In this article, I obtain data from twitter (<http://twitter.com>). On twitter, people make a post easily, like saying themselves. And other user can send a reply to the post. By those feature, twitter is suitable for my research, because I examined "whether the utterance is addressed to the other" and "whether utterer refers to the action of the other." By twitter you can obtain both "saying oneself" and "saying to the others." By the reason above, I focus on the speech act on twitter.

I collected almost 1,000 utterance by simple search on twitter.com. In the data collected, the ironical usage is about one forth of all. 3) and 4) is the example of ironical usage in the data.

- 3) ご丁寧にも 屋根をひっくり返してくれててもう... (Image URL deleted)

'She (dog) unnecessarily overthrow the roof (of the toy house)...

4) (user ID deleted) ご丁寧に送ってくるくらいだから、どんなことが書いてあるのかな、と ...

'Because he took the trouble to send me (the book), I wondered what (something great) is written...'

3) contains a benefactive clitic (くれる) and an expression of dissatisfaction (もう...). In 4) speaker is receiver of the act (sending). Here, If you try to change 3) and 4) as follows, the interpretation of them will be uncertain between ironic usage and non-ironic usage.

3') ご丁寧に屋根をひっくり返してくれて。

'She (dog) (unnecessarily?) overthrow the roof (of the toy house)...

4') (user ID deleted) ご丁寧に送ってくださるくらいだから、どんなことが書いてあるのかな、と ...

'Because he (kindly?) took the trouble to send me (the book), I wondered what (something great) is written...'

In 3') the expression of dissatisfaction is removed. In 4') the action of the sender is marked by honorific benefactive. You can see it from example 1) that non-ironic usage of 「ご丁寧に」 is used with benefactives and honorific expression. Thus, when 「ご丁寧に」 cooccur with benefactives and honorifics, the interpretation of ironic usage weakens.

Thinking from the earlier analysis, you can mark the other's unnecessary action by using 「ご丁寧に」, with contrary meaning. But from my analysis, when the benefits or respects are shown, the interpretation of ironic usage weakens. This fact indicates that there is some pragmatic constraint of ironic usage other than what had been said so far.

It is supposed that "contrary" effect is not only the context and literal expression, but also between the literal expressions. In irony it is said that the gap between literal meaning and implicature is important, but in this expression the gap of literal meaning of 「ご丁寧に」 and the following expression and context is also important. It can be said that 「ご丁寧に」 is uncertain when interpretation started, and at last non-ironic (gratitude) meaning and ironic (conventional) meaning make the gap. That produces the effect of ironic usage of it.

References

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