Contrastive and non-contrastive use of kedo in spoken Japanese

Yukari Fukuchi Meldrum and Tsuyoshi Ono
University of Alberta

1. Introduction

This study presents findings on an ongoing study of Japanese native and non-native talk anchored in a discourse-functional approach to grammar (Ochs et al. 1996, Hopper 1998, Bybee 2006, etc.). The data comprises approx. 20 hours of recorded interaction. Thus far, systematic differences between native and non-native talk have been identified. Usage of subordinators (e.g., -temo, -te, -tara, kedo, kara) in native talk is a particularly striking example, as illustrated in (1):

(1) Talking about staying in Canada
1 koko ja naku-temo ‘even if (it’s not) here (the city I live now)’
2 hoka no tokoro ni it-te= ‘(I go somewhere else (in Canada) and’
3 Hatarakeru n dat-tara ‘if (I) can work’
4 ii na= toka omotteru kedo ‘(I am thinking that (that) would be good but’
5 kedo ne okane toka mo karaku kara= ‘but it costs money so…’

Such examples are rarely found in pedagogical materials and absent from non-native talk. This paper focuses on kedo, known and taught as a contrastive marker, as illustrated in line 4 in (1).

2. Analysis

First, a more common use of kedo in native talk does not involve a contrastive meaning. In line 2 in (2) (another clause chaining example), the contrastive meaning is weakened and some discourse level function seems to have arisen: kedo marks background information of why the speaker's high school was far away (Nakayama/Ichihashi-Nakayama 1997).

(2) Talking about commuting long distance to high school
1 kookoo ga suigoi tookute= 'my high school was far and'
2 nanse watashi hazure no tokoro ni sundeta n desu kedo 'I (was) living on the outskirt and'
3 nanka 2 jikan 2 jikan daka tte '2 hours (and) 2 hours and'
4 oofuku 4 jikan gurai kakatte '(it) took about 4 hours for both ways and'

In native talk, the above use accounted for 40% of kedo occurrences, whereas the contrastive use 29.5%. The prevalence of clause chaining in native talk shows that so-called subordinators such as kedo, -te, etc. are much better understood as clause chaining devices to maintain turns in talk-in-interaction (Iwasaki/Ono 2007).

Second, another common use of kedo is illustrated in line 2 in (3): the kedo clause represents a correction of A's wrong assumption in line 1.

(3) Asking if B's high school is a private school.
1 A: shiritsu 'private'
2 B: iya ano toritsu nan desu kedo= 'no, (it is uh municipal'
This clause is not followed by its main clause and seems to be complete on its own, suggesting that *kedo* may have become grammaticized as a final particle (Nakayama/Ichihasi-Nakayama 1997). This use represents 25.7% of *kedo* in our data.

Third, our re-examination of the less common contrastive use reveals another interesting trend: contrastive *kedo* is often repeated as seen in lines 4-5 in (1) or appeared together with another contrastive form such as *demo* 'but'. It looks as though since *kedo* is in the process of losing its contrastive meaning, it tends to be repeated or used with another contrastive form to properly express the contrast. In other words, the doubling of contrastive forms may be motivated iconically (Haiman 1983).

Fourth, in non-native talk, *kedo* is used much less frequently. No instance of *kedo* providing background information is found despite the fact that it is the most frequent use in native talk. When *kedo* is used, it is almost entirely with a contrastive meaning. This is not surprising because it is the only use the students are explicitly taught.

**3. Discussion**

A clear gap between actual speech and teaching materials has been identified. Standard Japanese textbooks used in North America generally target at spoken language, but typically other contrastive forms *ga* and/or *demo* are introduced first and focused on throughout the entire book. Some books explicitly state that *kedo* is a spoken form, but intriguingly their dialogues and exercises still focus on *ga* and *demo*. Occasionally *kedo* is also included, but only for its contrastive function. Non-contrastive uses which we discussed above are sporadically mentioned, but we are yet to find a unified treatment of *kedo*, a more frequent form in actual talk. We think that this partly accounts for its extreme rarity in non-native talk. Non-contrastive uses of *kedo* seem to reflect its on-going change, which supports a linguistic model which integrates both synchronic and diachronic dimensions (e.g., Hopper 1998). It also asks for sensitivity and flexibility on the part of language teachers, which allow them to adapt teaching materials and methodology to newly evolving functions. These results lend support for recent discourse-centered approaches to language pedagogy (Jones/Ono 2005; Mori 2005), which propose that pedagogy should be based on what speakers actually do, not on what we think they do.

**References**


**List of Technical Terms**

Grammaticization: phenomenon in which lexical items such as verbs become grammatical items such as suffixes.