

‘The coffee is ready’: The logic of *ba* or field and language practice

The speech act ‘The coffee is ready’ is the act of offering someone coffee that the speaker has just made. However, it cannot be explained by Austin and Searle’s speech act theory. This is because it involves various contextual elements beyond what that speech act theory encompasses. This utterance is made when the speaker knows that the hearer is expecting to have a cup of coffee, has made coffee to share with the hearer, and expects the hearer to come get the coffee. The speaker-hearer relationship has to be psychologically close, but physically distant although within earshot. The situation should be a sort of daily routine.

There are plenty of such routine expressions in the Japanese language, a language spoken in what is supposed to be a high context culture. For example, we say *Ocha* (tea) *ga* (SUB) *hairi* (enter) *mashi* (ADD.HON) *ta* (PAST). Literally ‘Tea is made.’ How can these expressions be communicated properly?

What we need is some new frame of thinking beyond reductionism, where ‘linear thinking’ by analysis is the assumption. I would like to propose ‘the logic of *ba* or field’ where ‘dual mode thinking’ is one of the assumptions. I claim that the logic of *ba* or field, originated by the bio-physicist Shimizu Hiroshi (1996, 2000), is a useful frame of thinking for coping with context embedded expressions. The expressions to be discussed in the presentation will be mainly natural discourse data taken from The Mr. O Corpus, supplemented by context embedded speech acts from daily routines. The mechanism of the occurrence or non-occurrence of addressee honorifics within the dialogue of teacher-student pairs could be explained with the logic of dual mode thinking. It is my belief that this presentation could contribute to the panel ‘Emancipatory Pragmatics: The Search for Cultural Parameters in Interactional Discourse’ both theoretically and empirically.