

An overview of clause types in Japanese

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<<Abstract>>

In Japanese, clauses are classified into two types: main clause, which does not modify anything outside the clause itself, and subordinate clause, which modifies or depends upon some phrase or word outside itself. The latter type can be further divided into two subtypes according to the syntactic category of the phrase the subordinate clause modifies: i.e. adjective clause which modifies a nominal phrase and adverbial clause which modifies verbal phrases. Nominal clause is not to be included in this classification because it conventionally refers to the NP accompanied, and also modified, by the precedent adjective clause. Among adverbial clauses are VPs whose head is the verb conjugated in adverbial form, and VPs with *-te* particle. In this study, these VPs are regarded as *semi-clauses*, which are not totally independent, because only voice particles or a Neg particle can be agglutinated into the VP but other grammatical particles cannot appear in the VP. Interpretation about tense, style and modality is determined by the markers of the predicate in the antecedent main clause. But it is lexically independent and grammatical categories such as voice, negation and aspect can be morphologically marked in the VP. Paratactic clause can be formed with particles like *-shi* and *-ga*. In discourse, sentences are rarely closed with one or two clauses. In spoken Japanese, adding subordinate, paratactic or semi clauses to the main clause is preferred, while accumulating independent sentences with finite clauses is preferred in the written style. In the present-day Japanese, formal nouns, which have only grammatical functions and lost their lexical meanings, have been grammaticalized into modality auxiliary verbs. Under this process, the subordinate clause of a complicated sentence has been promoted into the main clause, and the main clause has been demoted into an auxiliary verb. Since this process changes a complicated sentence into a simple sentence it should be called **declausalization**. This study clarifies that declausalization is deeply connected with grammaticalization in Japanese, and that it moves the head leftward in the sentence structure in the language which is strongly head-righted.