

A use-conditional particle in Kimaragang Dusun

This paper describes a Kimaragang (NE Borneo; ISO 639-3: KQR) discourse particle, *gima*, whose meaning and functions seem to be quite similar to those of German unstressed *ja*. Particles with similar meanings have been reported in several other languages (Zimmermann 2011; Grosz 2016 ms.), but most of the research in this area has been focused on German. This paper provides a case study from a language that is typologically and genetically very different.

Gima is one of several discourse particles which “indicate the status of a proposition relative to the common ground (newness, expectedness, speaker commitment etc.)” (Repp, 2013). Following much previous work on unstressed *ja*, I suggest that *gima* contributes two components of meaning: (a) uncontroversiality, and (b) accessibility. That is, *p gima* indicates that the speaker takes the truth of *p* for granted (not debatable), and believes that *p* is known or knowable by the addressee. This content is “use-conditional” in the sense of Gutzmann (2015): it is conventional but does not contribute to the “at issue” truth-conditional meaning of the utterance. Supporting evidence for this claim comes from the observation that *gima* is “scopeless” (never interpreted within the scope of negation, interrogative mood, etc.) and cannot form the basis for challenging the truth of a statement (McCready 2010).

Grice showed why it is pragmatically odd to tell a person something he already knows. Such a statement is not informative, and so violates the Maxim of Quantity. The particle *gima* can be seen as a Quantity hedge, much like the English phrase *after all* (Levinson 1983). Like unstressed *ja*, *gima* is often used in statements expressing facts which are already known to the addressee, as in (1), and is virtually obligatory when the speaker is stating something that is obvious in the utterance context. *Gima* can even be used to mark information that is newly learned and surprising to the speaker when that information is evident in the utterance context, as illustrated in (2).

- (1) G<in>umu nu **gima** monorimo, orubat nopo ami=i’ naawi mangakan.
 <PST>much 2SG GIMA cook.rice waste only NEG=EMPH finished eat
 ‘**After all**, you cooked a lot of rice; it is a shame that it didn’t all get eaten.’
- (2) Nakaganaru ko=no dīiri **gima**.
 grew.longer 2SG=IAM this GIMA
 ‘You have gotten taller (since I last saw you)!’

Gima is also used in correcting an interlocutor who has failed to access mutually accessible information when it would be relevant to current purposes, much like German unstressed *doch*. Other contexts where *gima* frequently occurs include reason clauses (provided the reason is shared knowledge, as in (3)), scolding, and complaints (4). Like unstressed *ja*, *gima* is unacceptable in breaking news or out-of-the-blue statements, in answers to questions, and in directly contradicting an interlocutor’s assertion (Zimmermann 2011).

- (3) Imboluan yalo’ dilo’ tu’ boboliyan **gima**.
 toll.gong.DV 3SG.NOM that because priestess GIMA
 ‘They will toll the funeral gong for her, because **after all** she was a priestess.’
- (4) Unanawon ku=no itit paray, monuu ko=po **gima**.
 crush 1SG=IAM this rice order 2SG=yet GIMA
 ‘Here I am already crushing the rice seed (e.g. to feed chickens) and you tell me to do it *gima*!’

Sentences containing *gima* sometimes seem to have an exclamatory force, as in (5). Moreover, in certain contexts *gima* can (and sometimes must) be reinforced by “expressive” (non-aspectual) reduplication, e.g. *u<na>nawon* in (4). These observations suggest that in some contexts *gima* contributes an element of expressive meaning (in the narrow sense of the term), expressing the speaker’s surprise, annoyance, disapproval, etc., in addition to its primary function as a marker of status relative to the common ground.

- (5) Woy obo, nakaabir at=takanon, osongow ko **gima** monook!
PRTCL PRTCL scattered NOM=cooked.rice rough 2SG GIMA scoop
‘Now look what happened! The rice is scattered all over because you scooped it out so roughly/carelessly *gima*!’

Selected References

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