

## A Classification of the Final Particles of Japanese Sentences and an Examination of their Co-occurrence

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Japanese sentence-final particles are divided into two groups: the first includes *sa*, *yo* and *ne*, which follow particles in the other group; the second group includes *no*, *wa*, *tomo*, *mono*, *zo* and *ze*, which do not follow other particles. First-group particles convey the speaker's view to the listener. Second-group particles are further divided into three groups based on their co-occurrences with first-group particles.

The co-occurrences of these two groups are determined by the degree of confidence which each particle, from both groups, implies. Among the second-group particles this degree of confidence is implied by the co-occurrence with the verb of supposition, *daroo*. Particles which co-occur with *daroo* imply a low degree of confidence. Among particles of both groups, the degree of confidence depends on whether the particle is used to indicate "sente-hatsugen" or "ukete-hatsugen", and on whose view it expresses. Particles indicating the speaker's view imply a strong degree of confidence and those indicating the listener's view imply a low degree of confidence. Particles implying greater confidence from the second group co-occur with those particles implying greater confidence from the first group, and vice versa.

## 0. Introduction.

Sentence-final particles play a very important role in Japanese, especially in conversation. The present paper deals with the classification of sentence-final particles and their co-occurrences with each other, not a detailed discussion of their meanings or of the differences in meanings among them. In the course of the discussion I will show that these co-occurrences can be explained in terms of the speaker's confidence in what he is saying, which I will refer to as his "view".

In the first section, I will classify Japanese sentence-final particles into two groups, based on their co-occurrences and explain the meaning of those in the first group. In the second section, I will further divide the sentence-final particles in the second group into three groups based on their co-occurrences with those of the first group, and support for this division will be provided by examining the meanings of these sentence-final particles. In the third section, we will try to explain the co-occurrences of the first-group and second-group particles from the point of the degree of the speaker's confidence in his view. In the conclusion, I will summarize my analysis.

## 1. Classification of particles into two groups

Japanese sentence-final particles are divided into two groups: those of the first group follow other particles and those of the second group do not. The first group includes *sa*, *yo* and *ne*. It is believed that these particles have an effect on the listener: *sa*

indicates “finality” or “obviousness” (“naturalness”, “a matter of course”). *Yo* indicates “assertion” or “emphasis” (“indeed”), and in using this particle, the speaker is providing the listener with new information. Finally *ne* seeks a “confirmation” or an “agreement” from the listener (“Don’t you think so?”). The following are three simple sentences that include these particles.

- (1) Kyoo wa ii tenki sa.

today TOP good weather

It is clearly obvious that it is fine today.

- (2) Kyoo wa ii tenki da yo.

today TOP good weather COP

I am providing new information for you indicating the weather

is fine today.

- (3) Kyoo wa ii tenki da ne.

today TOP good weather COP

The weather is fine today, isn’t it?

It is said that based on the degree of force to which the speaker tries to convey his view to the listener, *sa* is the least “listener-oriented,” *yo* is the second and *ne* is the most listener-oriented.

## 2. Classification of second-group particles into three groups

At this point I will classify second-group particles based on their co-occurrences with first-group particles. Table 1 indicates their co-occurrences. I must add that this table is based on a description of the syntax of formal grammar, contained in

*Nihonbumpoo Daijiten* (The Comprehensive Dictionary of Japanese Grammar) (Meiji-shoin); that is to say, this table is not based on data that I have collected or on my own judgment. "O" mark indicates that the co-occurrence is possible and "x" mark indicates that it is not possible.

speaker-oriented ←————→ listener-oriented

	sa	yo	ne	meaning	relation to listener
no	O	O	O	affirmation	/
wa	x	O	O	mild insistence	
mono	x	x	O	explanation	response to the listener's question
tomo	O	x	x	re-assertion	
zo	x	(O)	x	(warning)	insisting on his view to the listener
ze	x	x	x	emphasis	

Table 1

Table 1 shows second-group particles divided into three groups. 1) *no* which indicates affirmation and *wa* which indicates mild insistence are followed by almost all first-group particles and they have no special connection to the listener. 2) *mono* which indicates explanation and *tomo* which indicates the strong re-assertion of the previous statement are followed by few particles and they both indicate the speaker's response to the listener's question. 3) *Zo* and *ze* are followed by almost no particles and they both indicate the speaker's strong insistence on his view to the listener. This classification schema is supported by the meanings of the particles themselves. The following sentences give possible co-occurrences. "Ashita kare ga kuru. (He will come

tomorrow.)” is the base sentence.

- (4) Ashita kare ga kuru no{sa/yo/ne}.
- tomorrow he NOM come
- He will come tomorrow.
- (5) Ashita kare ga kure wa {(sa)/yo/ne}.
- (6) Ashita kare ga kuru mono ne.
- (7) Ashita kare ga kuru tomo sa.
- (8) Ashita kare ga kuru zo (yo).

### 3. Speaker's degree of confidence and co-occurrences

Table 1 shows that the meanings of particles of the second group determines the degree of the strength of the speaker's ability to convey his view using first-group particles. Notice that *ze* and *zo* are weak (in their strength) compared with *tomo* and *mono*. *Ze* cannot co-occur with any first-group particles and *zo* rarely co-occurs with *yo*, while *tomo* co-occurs with *sa*, and *mono* co-occurs with *ne*. Recall that *sa* is the least listener-oriented, *yo* falls in the middle and *ne* is the most listener-oriented

In this section I will propose that these co-occurrences of particles of the first and second group can be explained by the degree of the speaker's confidence in his view, a view that is implied by particles of both groups.

#### 3.1. Second-group particles and speaker's confidence

First, consider the degree of confidence implied by second-group particles. This confidence is indicated by a particular

second-group particle. Some of these particles can co-occur with the verb, *daroo*, which indicates a supposition on the part of the speaker, while others cannot. Ueno (1972) and others pointed out that *ze* can co-occur with *daroo*, as in (9).

- (9) Ashita kare ga kuru daroo ze.  
 tomorrow he NOM come suppose  
 I suppose he will come tomorrow.

This means that *ze* can be used even if the speaker is not quite confident in his view. I must add, however, that this does not imply that he has no confidence. If he has not confidence, he would use *ka* ("question-marker"). So, I am only claiming that compared with other particles, the degree of confidence is low.

*Tomo* also can be used with *daroo* in the following form.

- (10) A: Boku kare no tameni taihen doryoku shita n da ze.  
 I he of on behalf very effort did NOM COP  
 I made much effort for him.  
 B: Soo daroo tomo.  
 so suppose  
 Indeed, you did, I suppose.

It means that *tomo* can also be used when the speaker is not completely confident in his view. But the co-occurrence of *tomo* with *daroo* is restricted; it cannot co-occur with *daroo* in sentences containing a subject and a predicate like ungrammatical sentence (11), while *ze* can freely.

- (11) \*Ashita kare ga kuru daroo tomo.  
 tomorrow he NOM come suppose

Indeed, he will come tomorrow, I suppose.

So, *ze* expresses less confidence than *tomo*. Other particles cannot co-occur with *daroo*, which means that the speaker is confident in his view, or is more confident than when using *ze* or *tomo*.

(12) *Ashita kara ga kuru daroo \* {no, wa, mono, zo}*.

Table 2 is a slightly revised version of Table 1, where the positions of *zo* and *tomo* have been changed to reflect the previous discussion.

confidence

strong ← speaker-oriented ————— listener-oriented →

	sa	yo	ne	speaker's/listener's view
↑	no	○	○	the speaker's view
	wa	(○)	○	the speaker's view
	mono	x	x	the speaker's view
	zo	x	(○)	the speaker's view
	tomo	○	x	the listener's view
↓	ze	x	(○)	the speaker's view
weak				

Table 2

Now let us consider the relation between the meanings of these particles and the degree of the speaker's confidence. As mentioned before, both *ze* and *zo* indicate the speaker's strong insistence on his view to the listener. *Ze*, in particular, functions only to insist one-sidedly on the speaker's view. When using *ze*, the speaker insists on his view to such a degree that the listener is not given an opportunity to respond or to ask questions<sup>1</sup>. And

this statement is usually informal and blunt. It means that the speaker, using this particle, can say whatever he likes and he feels little responsibility for what he has said. Thus he can express his view even if he has little confidence. If the speaker desires to express something using second-group particles, he needs to have some degree of confidence in his view. *Zo*, like *ze*, indicates the speaker's strong insistence on his view, which means that he needs little confidence. But there are cases where this particle also functions to imply the speaker's view which he wants the listener to notice. This usage is particularly true when the speaker wishes to warn the listener; (13) illustrates this point. It is important to remember, however, that *zo*, used as a warning, is contextual because *zo* itself does not have the meaning of a warning.

(13) Sokoni iru to abunai zo.

there exist if dangerous

I warn you that it's dangerous to be there.

For the speaker to utter (13) he must have confidence in his view that it is truly dangerous for the listener to be in that place. Without some degree of confidence he cannot give a warning.

The table shows that *tomo* needs less confidence than *zo*. The reason is that *tomo* merely indicates the speaker's answer to the listener's question in such a way that it only re-asserts the listener's view, which means that the view expressed by *tomo* is, in fact, the listener's view, not the speaker's. Consider the sentence.

(14) A: Kono e hommono?  
this picture real thing  
Is this picture genuine?

B: Mochiron hommono da tomo.  
of course real thing COP  
Yes, of course I did.

Here the Speaker B's view, "kono e wa hommono da" is in fact A's view. Speaker B has only reiterated the view of A. Thus the speaker does not need so much confidence, although he needs some to emphasize that what the listener said is of course true. On the contrary, *zo*, as seen in (13), expresses the speaker's view. The speaker gives a warning based on his own view. This means that the speaker needs more confidence to use this particle.

*Mono*, like *tomo*, indicates the speaker's answer to the listener's question, but the view expressed by this word choice is not the listener's but the speaker's. The following sentence indicates this.

(15) A: Doosite gakkoo ni ikanai no?  
why school to go NEG  
Why don't you go to school?

B: Datte omoshirokunai n da mono.  
but interesting NEG NOM COP  
But it is because it is not interesting.

Here the view expressed by B is not the one of A, but the Speaker B's own view. By using *mono*, the speaker explains the reason for not going to school, trying to convince the listener to believe what he is saying. It means he needs much confidence.

The discussion so far has shown that *ze* requires the least confidence, followed by *tomo*, *zo*, and *mono*, which requires the most confidence. Unlike these particles, however, *wa*, indicating the speaker's slight insistence on his view, and *no*, indicating affirmation, convey no particular meaning to the listener, and their meanings are almost the same as that of "shuushi-kei" (ending form<sup>2</sup>).

### 3.2. First-group particles and the speaker's confidence, and explanation of the co-occurrences of particles of the first and second group

Now let us consider the relation between first-group particles and the degree of confidence of the speaker. Remember that in the degree of force of conveying the speaker's view to the listener, *sa* is the weakest, *yo* falls in the middle, and *ne* is the strongest. Although all these particles co-occur with *daroo* as in (16), there is a degree of the speaker's confidence in the use of *sa*, *yo* and *ne*.

- (16) Ashita yuki ga furu daroo|sa/yo/ne|.
   
tomorrow snow NOM fall suppose

I suppose that it will snow tomorrow.

Chen (1987) pointed out that the difference between *yo* and *sa* can be explained by the contrast of "sente-hatsugen" and "ukete-hatsugen"; the former indicates an utterance which the speaker initiates, while the latter indicates an utterance which the speaker gives as a response to the listener's utterance. He argues that *sa* is most often used to indicate that the utterance is "ukete-hatsugen", while *yo* is usually used to indicate that it is "sente-

hatsugen". Consider grammatical sentence (17), where Speaker B uses *sa* to respond to A's utterance.

(17) (Looking out of the window)

A: Ashita mo yuki ka na?

tomorrow too snow QUES

I wonder if it will rain tomorrow, too.

B: Ashita mo furu sa.

tomorrow too snow

It will snow tomorrow, too.

But the sentence becomes ungrammatical if the speaker utters (18) with *sa* as "sente-hatsugen".

(18) \*Oi, mite-goran. ashita mo yuki ga furu sa.

hey look-IMP tomorrow too snow NOM fall

Hey, look! It will snow tomorrow, too.

If the speaker uses *yo*, it becomes grammatical.

(19) Oi, mite-goran ashita mo yuki ga furu yo.

Because *sa* indicates "ukete-hatsugen", this particle has little force for the speaker to convey his view to the listener; it is the most "speaker-oriented". The speaker cannot or need not convey his view strongly when it is just a response to the listener's statement or question. The speaker needs little confidence in his view because the view expressed by this particle is triggered by the listener's previous statement. On the other hand, *yo* indicates "sente-hatsugen", which means that the speaker need strongly convey his view to let the listener know his view. This particle expresses new information to the listener. The speaker needs

greater confidence when using *yo*, *Yo* is more “listener-oriented”.

Recall that the view expressed by *tomo*, which can co-occur with *sa*, is also triggered by the listener’s view, which means that statements with *tomo* are also “ukete-hatsugen”. We have seen that *tomo* requires less confidence than *zo*. Remember that *zo* can co-occur with *yo*. *Zo*, like *yo*, indicates “sente-hatsugen” as in (13), repeated here as (20).

(20) Sokoni iru to abunai zo.

The speaker gives a warning as the listener has not noticed the danger, which means that the speaker initiated the statement. Recall also that the view expressed by *tomo* is the listener’s view as it is only a re-assertion of the listener’s view and the view expressed by *sa* is the same as the listener’s in the case of (17) B. Although it is not necessarily the listener’s view, it must be triggered by the listener’s, as has been noted. On the contrary, the view expressed by *zo* is the speaker’s view such as a warning and here we have seen that *yo* can also be used to express the speaker’s view, as was the case in (19).

Now let us consider *ne*. It is used to seek agreement as in (21) and confirmation as in (22).

(21) Kyoo wa ii tenki desu ne?

today TOP good weather COP

It’s a nice weather, isn’t it?

(22) Anatano oniisan wa daigakusei desu ne?

your brother TOP university student COP

Your brother is a university student, isn’t he?

Chen does not mention anything about “sente-/ukete-hatsugen” of this particle, but these two usages indicate “sente-hatsugen”. We have seen that *yo* also indicates “sente-hatsugen” and that it functions to give the listener new information which he does not have. Unlike using *yo*, the speaker, using these uses of *ne*, presupposes that the listener has the same view or information as the speaker in (21) or the information which the speaker is not sure of but that the listener is sure of in (22); *ne* is the most “listener-oriented”. The speaker needs much confidence to give such a view or information.

*Ne*, moreover, is used even if the listener does not have any information. This use is said to indicate the speaker’s mild insistence, as in the case of following (23)B.

(23) A: Konomae no taifuu wa doodeshita ka?

last time of typhoon TOP how was

Did you weather the last typhoon?

B: Ee, hontooni kowakatta desu ne. Ano toki wa.

Yes, really was awful COP that time TOP

Yes, we really had an awful experience, at that time.

Unlike the two previous uses, this use of *ne* indicates “ukete-hatsugen”. We have seen that *sa* indicates “ukete-hatsugen” and that the speaker needs little confidence. But this *ne* requires much confidence. In fact B’s view is triggered by A’s utterance. But the speaker is not just giving an answer to the listener’s question; the view which the speaker gives is new to the listener. Moreover, the speaker desires the listener to have the same view

as his or to sympathize with his view by using *ne*. It means that he needs more confidence than just giving the listener new information by using *yo*. Remember that *mono*, which can co-occur with this *ne*, also requires the most confidence and that the view expressed by it is the speaker's although it is triggered by the listener's.

The discussion so far indicates that the co-occurrences of particles of the first and the second group are determined by the corresponding degree of confidence. This degree of confidence depends on whether an utterance is "ukete-hatsugen" or "sente-hatsugen" and whether the view expressed by these particles is the listener's or the speaker's. Among those of the second group, co-occurrence with *daroo* determines the degree of confidence. Notice that *ze*, indicating the least degree of confidence co-occurs with none of the first-group particles because it has so little confidence that it cannot co-occur even with *sa* which requires the least confidence among first-group particles. *Tomo*, indicating slightly more confidence co-occurs with *sa*. *Zo* can co-occur with *yo*. But, as indicated, the original meaning of this particle is the speaker's insistence like *ze*, and so it rarely co-occurs with first-group particles. When it co-occurs, it does so with *yo*, not *sa*, because both *zo* and *yo* indicate new information. *Mono* co-occurs with *ne*, both of which require the most degree of confidence in each group. The following table summarizes the discussion<sup>3</sup>.

confidence

strong



weak

second/first- grop	seten/ukete- hatsugen	speaker's/listener's view
mono/ne	ukete	speaker's
zo/(yo)	sente	speaker's
tomo/sa	ukete	listener's

Table 3

#### 4. Conclusion.

Japanese sentence-final particles can be divided into two groups based on their co-occurrence with each other. Those particles in the latter group can be further divided into three based on their co-occurrences with those of the former.

It has been shown that the co-occurrences of particles of the first group and second group are determined by the degree of the speaker's confidence which particles of each group imply; particles implying more confidence in the second group co-occur with particles implying more confidence in the first group and vice versa.

#### Notes:

\* This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the Western Conference of the Association for Asian Studies held at the University of Colorado at Boulder on the 24th of October, 1997.

1. Chen (1987) indicates that this quality is related to the fact that *ze* is quite often used in sentences which have a first-person pronoun as a subject.

2. Among these two particles *no* is closer to "shuushi-kei". For example, it can express a question when using a rising intonation.

Kinoo eiga ni itta no?

yesterday movie to went

Did you go to the movies yesterday?

3. Note that except *mono* and *tomo*, which are used as a response to the listener's question, other particles may express the other view or "hatsugen". For example, *ne* is also used in "sente-hatsugen" as in (21) and (22). *Yo* is used in "ukete-hatsugen", too; in (17) speaker B can respond to A's utterance by saying, "Ashita mo furu yo." This table indicates that two particles which can co-occur express the same view (the speaker's/the listener's) and indicate the same "hatsugen (sente-/ukete-)". This needs further study.

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