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The discourse function of the quotation marker *tte*
in conversational Japanese

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1. Introduction

Tte, which frequently occurs in spoken Japanese discourse to mark quotations, has been treated as an informal variant of another quotation marker *to*. While *to* occurs both in spoken and written discourses, *tte* only occurs in spoken discourse. The alternation between *to* and *tte* in spoken Japanese has been considered to be optional for the speaker.¹ The purpose in this study is to refute the absolute optionality of this alternation. It will be shown that *tte*'s discourse function is distinct from that of *to*.

Tte is realized as *te* when the preceding sound is nasal. I will refer to both *tte* and *te* as *tte* in this paper for convenience. The identical form, *tte* (or *te*), may be used for purposes other than the marking of quotations. For example, it may be used as a topic marker or as a sentence-final expression. I have discussed these other uses and their common characteristics elsewhere (Suzuki 1996a).² The scope of this paper is limited to *tte* which marks quotations.

To and *tte* are not the only markers of quotations in Japanese conversation. There are other expressions such as *toka* and *nante* as in the following examples.

- (3) *Nde /nanka warito ano amerika ni ita toki mo /nihongo*
and somehow relatively FL³ America in was time also Japanese
oshietekure TOKA itte /
please-teach QT say
'And when I was in America, they said things like "Please teach me Japanese".'
- (2) "*Sanjuu sugita kara na*" NANTE *iwaretara, kuyashii janai.*
thirty passed because FP QT if-said vexing TG
'I would be upset if somebody said something like "(She looks old) because she is past thirty", you know?' (More: Aug. 1995: 361)

These expressions are excluded from the scope of this study since they seem to involve special functions other than the marking of a quote. The use of *toka* indicates that the quote marked by *toka* is not the exact repetition of what was said or thought. The same suggestion is present in the use of *nante*. In addition, *nante* seems to be used when the speaker feels dissociated from the content of the quote (For detailed discussion of *nante*, see Suzuki (1996a)).

Data used in this paper are taken from a collection of taped conversations from twelve Japanese undergraduate students who were enrolled in a Japanese university at the time of the recording. The students were either from Tokyo or areas around Tokyo. The conversations between two students at a time were recorded for about thirty minutes without the presence of an observer in order to enhance the naturalness of conversations.

In the transcription of the data each utterance is divided into what Maynard (1989) calls Pause-bounded Phrasal Units (PPUs⁴). PPU's are bounded by pauses

or skipped beats and marked by distinct intonation contour. Maynard (ibid.: 24) observes that the addressee often gives responses such as back-channeling expressions at the end of PPU. This means that the addressee recognizes PPUs as significant units of discourse (ibid.: 26). In the examples the boundaries of PPUs are marked by a slash.

In the first glance, it seems that the quotation markers *to* and *tte* are interchangeable. In many cases they are. However, examination of the data indicates that there are contexts that clearly favor *tte*. The standard word order⁵ in a sentence that contains a quotation is [Subject/Topic + Quote + Verb of saying/thinking] with the subject/topic often ellipted.⁶ When a quote occurs in this location (i.e., immediately preceding the verb of saying/thinking), it is marked by either *to* or *tte* in conversational discourse. However, if a quote does not immediately precede the verb of saying/thinking, it is most likely marked by *tte*. The following example illustrates this contrast.

- (3) *Waseda tte aji ga atta n da naa TTE / ... / aa sooyuu tokoro*
 TP taste S existed NM CP FP QT oh that-kind place
ni korete yokatta naa TO omotte ne /
 to can-come was-good FP QT think FP
 'I thought, "Waseda has character. [...] Oh, I'm glad to have been able to come to such a place", you know?'

Note that the quote which is physically separated from the verb *omotte* 'think' (*Waseda tte aji ga atta n da naa* 'Waseda has character') is marked by *tte* while the quote that immediately precedes the verb (*aa sooyuu tokoro ni korete yokatta naa* 'oh, I'm glad to have been able to come to such a place') is marked by *to*. (3) shows a typical distribution pattern of *to* and *tte*. In the following sections I will specify three types of contexts in which *tte* is clearly preferred to *to* and discuss the implication of such preference.

2. Contexts which favor *tte* over *to*

The first type of context in which *tte* is clearly preferred to *to* is where a verb of saying is omitted as in the following examples.

- (4) *De dakara sono terebikyoku dattara dokodemo ii n*
 and so FL TV-station if-CP anyplace okay NM
janakute enuechikee na n da TTE / dakara tashika ni
 not-CP NHK LK NM CP QT so certain A
minpoo no koohai wa mitomeru kedo
 commercial-station LK desolation TP admit but
enuechikee no hoo ga yarigai ga aru kara TTE /
 NHK LK way S reward S exist because QT
 'And so (he was saying) it is not that he will work for any TV station. (He was saying) he admits that commercial stations are certainly in decline, but NHK (Nihon Hoosoo Kyookai 'Japan Broadcasting Corporation') would be a rewarding place to work'.
- (5) *Sasaki no senyoosha o moo ichidai katteromau TTE /*
 LK private-use-car DO more one receive-buy QT

'(Sasaki's friend was saying) Sasaki will have them buy one more car for his private use'.

In both (4) and (5) the verb of saying is omitted along with the subject of saying. *Tte* is used as the quotation marker in both of these examples.

The second context is where a quote is separated from the verb of saying/thinking as we saw in (3). A quote may also be separated from the verb by a pause. This typically occurs when the standard word order [Quote + Verb] is reversed as in (6).

- (6) *De Imai toka mo tatoeba kataru janai desu ka / ore wa*
 and and-others also for-example tell TG CP Q I TP
enuchikkee ikitai n da TTE / sorede sono tame ni kooyuu
 NHK want-to-go NM CP QT and that for A this-kind
koto yaru n da TTE /
 thing do NM CP QT
 'And people like Imai say, for example, "I want to go to NHK. For that purpose I will do this kind of thing".'

The verb of saying *kataru* 'tell, say' occurs in the first PPU followed by the quotes in the second and third PPUs (*ore wa enuechikkee ikitai n da* 'I want to go to NHK' and *sorede sono tame ni kooyuu koto yaru n da* 'and for that purpose I will do this kind of thing'). The quotation marker used is *tte*.

Thirdly, when a quote is so long that it is divided into several PPUs, *tte* occurs after each PPU. We have already seen this in examples (4) and (6). (7) is another example.

- (7) *De aitsu wa datte ano aitsu tonikaku moo saisho kara*
 and he TP but FL he anyway FL beginning from
enuchikkee ni ikitai n da TTE / shuushoku wa enuechikkee
 NHK to want-to-go NM CP QT employment TP NHK
shika nai n da TTE / de ima wa katsuji yori eezoo no jidai na
 only not NM CP QT and now TP letter than image LK era LK
n da TTE aitsu tsune ni itteru shi /
 NM CP QT he always A is-saying and
 'And he, but he, anyway from the beginning he has always been saying, "I want to go to NHK. The only place I want to work is NHK. And this is the age of visual image rather than that of printed letters".'

In (7) the quote is marked by *tte* not only at the end of it, but also at the end of each PPU.

It is not that *to* is never possible in the contexts described in this section. There are a few instances in which *to* occurs instead of *tte*. However, in these contexts *tte* is much more likely to occur than *to*. Table 1 shows the number of occurrences of *to* and *tte* in each type of context.

Table 1

	<i>to</i>	<i>tte</i>
First type of context	4 (6.6%)	57 (93.4%)
Second type of context	5 (13.8%)	26 (83.9%)

In the next section the central function of *tte* is discussed and a hypothesis is given as to why *tte* tends to be assigned that function rather than *to*.

3. Discussion

Examination of the third context, in which a quote is so long that it is divided into several PPUs, may give us clues regarding the central function of *tte*. If the function of *tte* was merely to mark quotations, its occurrence should be expected only at the end of what is quoted. Its presence would indicate that the quotation is over and that now the main text of discourse will begin. In (7), however, *tte* appears at the end of each PPU, not only at the end of the quotation. This indicates that *tte* functions not only to mark what precedes as a quotation, but also to integrate the quoted part into discourse. By marking each PPU as a part of the quotation, *tte* helps the PPUs become connected to the rest of the discourse. For example, if the second PPU of (7) (*shuushoku wa enuechikei shika nai n da* 'The only place I want to work for is NHK') was not marked with *tte*, it would not be clear where that PPU stands in relation to the rest of the discourse. Since that PPU is located away from the clause *aitsu tsune ni itteru shi* 'he has always been saying,' it would not be obvious to the addressee that it represents what was said. Because of the presence of *tte*, the PPU becomes integrated in the discourse.

Halliday (1985) observes that the same kind of marking is achieved in spoken English by repeating the clause that contains the verb of saying as in (8).

- (8) My brother, he used to show dogs, and *he said* to me, *he said*, "Look," *he said*, "I really think you've got something here," *he said*. "Why don't you take it to a show?" (Halliday 1985: 228, Italics provided by SS)

Without this kind of repetition, Halliday suggests, the fact that a part of discourse is a quote may easily be lost to the addressee. Thus the phrase *he said* in the above example helps the integration of discourse. In spoken Japanese the speaker achieves the same function systematically by using *tte*.

From this observation, it seems that the central function of *tte* is to identify a part of discourse as a quotation when the identification is not clear. This accounts for why *tte* is preferred in the three contexts mentioned above. In the first context the verb of saying is missing. Thus, it is not easy for the addressee to identify the discourse as what is quoted. In the second context a quote is physically separated from the verb of saying. Again, the identification of the quote is not entirely clear. In the third context the length of the quote makes it hard for the speaker to recognize the quote as such.

The characterization of *tte* as the identifier of quotations also explains why *tte* does not appear in written Japanese. In the written language the identification of quotations is clear. The first context tends not to occur since the verb is usually not omitted. The second context is also rare since the written language normally uses the standard word order and therefore, a quote is not separated from the verb of saying. The third context, which involves long quotes, does not require integration of parts of a quote into the discourse since in the written language the beginning and

end of a quote are signaled by punctuation. A device, which functions similarly to a double quotation mark in English written discourse, is used in written Japanese.

Why is *tte*, and not *to*, assigned this function of identifying quotations? This may be related to the origin of *tte*. My hypothesis is that *tte* has evolved from, or at least related to, *to iite*, which is an older form of *to itte* 'saying that' (a quotation marker + a gerund of the verb of saying). If this hypothesis is correct, it makes sense that *tte* has the function of identifying quotations. In Halliday's example of spoken English, the phrase that consists of the subject/topic and the verb of saying (*he said*) is repeated in order to identify a part of discourse as a quote. It is natural to use the subject/topic and the verb of saying in the identification of quotes. Since in Japanese the subject/topic is often ellipted, the corresponding Japanese phrase would have the verb of saying without the subject/topic. If *tte* contains the verb of saying in itself as my hypothesis claims, it is the appropriate linguistic form in Japanese to achieve the same kind of function as phrases in English such as *he said* in (8).

Why would the verb of saying have the gerund form? Many Japanese grammarians call the form the *te*-form since the ending of the form is *te* (or its voiced version *de*). Makino and Tsutsui (1991: 466) state that if the last element of the predicate of a clause is the *te*-form, "it means that the clause is not the end of the sentence and that another predicate or clause follows it." This is true in the written or formal oral discourse. However, Clancy (1982) notes that in conversation *te*-endings are often used. Maynard (1989: 38) observes that gerund forms in spoken Japanese "may be used repeatedly to connect a long string of utterances." This function of gerund forms is similar to one of *tte*'s functions discussed earlier. When a quote is long, *tte* is used after each PPU to make sure that the addressee will not lose sight that each PPU is a quote. In other words, *tte* is used repeatedly to connect a long string of quotes.⁸

Some historical accounts appear to support the hypothesis that *tte* is derived from *to iite*. Tanaka (1977) states that *tte* which marks topics originates from *to itte* 'saying that.' Matsumura (1988) states that *tte* is derived from *tote*. *Tote* is an archaic expression and has the meaning of *to itte* 'saying that' and *to omotte* 'thinking that' among other things (Shinmura 1993). Martin (1975: 477; 1987: 121) states that the *te* of a gerund form was originally the infinitive form of the perfect auxiliary *tsu(ru)*, which was used as the connective particle. Martin goes on to say that the same *te* is present in the particle *tote* (Martin 1975: 477). Many dictionaries assume that *tote* is a combination of *to* and the connective particle *te* (e.g., Wada et. al. 1983; Matsumura 1988; Kindaichi et. al. 1990). However, Nihon Daijiten Kankookai (1975) observes that since connective particles are usually attached to predicates, *tote* may be thought of the contracted form of the combination [*to+predicate+te*] such as *to iite*. If *tote* comes from *to iite*, then *tte*, which is derived from *tote*, is also related to *to iite*.

4. Conclusion

In the preceding discussion it was observed that the quotation marker *tte* functions to identify a part of discourse as a quotation when the identification is not clear and that because of this function *tte* is clearly preferred to another quotation marker *to* in certain contexts. This means that *tte* is distinct from *to*. The alternation between *to* and *tte* is not always optional for the speaker. This supports

the isomorphism hypothesis discussed in Haiman (1985) and others. The hypothesis states that different forms entail a difference in communicative function.

The result of this study suggests that the functional equivalency that has been assumed for other pairs of expressions such as *yoo* 'seem' and *mitai* 'seem,' evidential expressions in Japanese, need to be examined more carefully. When a form is described as merely an informal or colloquial version of some other form, the form may actually serve a different communicative function than that of the other form.

NOTES

1 Miura (1974) distinguishes *to* and *tte*. However, his distinction concerns differences in functions other than the marking of quotations. He treats *to* and *tte* as identical in their function as quotation markers.

2 In Suzuki (1996) various uses of *tte* are related to the notion of incorporation of information. It is argued that *tte* is used when the degree of incorporation of information is low. The degree is considered low if the speaker (i) has acquired information recently, (ii) has acquired information from an outside source, (iii) is not strongly convinced of the truth of information, and/or (iv) is emotionally detached from information. In other words, *tte* is used when the speaker feels psychologically distanced from the information. This connotation of psychological distance might come from *tte*'s function as quotation marker. A quote represents part of a sentence that is not well integrated into the rest of the sentence. What is not well-incorporated grammatically is appropriate in expressing what is not well-incorporated psychologically.

3 The following abbreviations are used.

A	Adverbial marker	NM	Nominalizer
CP	Copula	Q	Question marker
DO	Direct object marker	QT	quotation marker
FL	Filler	S	Subject marker
FP	Final particle	TG	Tag-like expression
LK	Linker	TP	Topic marker

4 Maynard uses 'PPU' to stand for Pause-bounded Phrasal Units. In this paper 'PPU' is used as an abbreviation of a Pause-bounded Phrasal Unit (singular) while 'PPUs' stands for Pause-bounded Phrasal Units (plural).

5 What should be called "standard" is not always easy to determine. Here "the standard word order" refers to the word order that is used in written discourse.

6 In Japanese noun phrases are often ellipted if they are recoverable from the context.

7 The third type of context overlaps with the first and second types of contexts. For example, (2) is used to illustrate the first type of context since the discourse does not contain a verb of saying/thinking. At the same time (2) is an example of the third type of context since it is a long discourse which is divided into several PPUs.

8 *Te* is also similar to the gerund form in its interaction with discourse markers such as *de* 'and'. While the PPUs with *tte* or the gerund form-endings represent continuous flow of discourse, PPUs that are headed by *de* and other similar expressions represent some sort of change, such as a conclusion to a story. Suzuki (1996b) discusses this phenomenon in detail.

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