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Japanese Sentence-final Particles as Commitment Markers
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1. Introduction. Speakers of Japanese use a class of lexical items called "sentence-final particles" (SFP's) to indicate their attitudes about the content of their utterances. I list examples of typical SFP's and the meanings usually associated with them in (1).

- (1) a. **yo** -- I tell you, you know (strong assertion)
Mado ga aite imasu **yo**.
'The window is open, you know.'
- b. **sa** -- naturally, of course (emphasis--the information is self-evident)
Mado ga aite iru **sa**. (fn. 1)
'The window is open (naturally).'
- c. **zo** -- strong emphasis
Mado ga aite iru **zo**.
'The window is open, (damn it)!'
- d. **ze** -- fairly strong emphasis
Mado ga aite iru **ze**.
'The window is open, y'know.'
- e. **ne** -- isn't it so? (tag question marker)
Mado ga aite imasu **ne**.
'The window is open, isn't it?'
- f. **na** -- tag question--like ne only stronger
Mado ga aite iru **na**(!)
'The window is open, isn't it!'
- g. **ka** -- question
Mado ga aite imasu **ka**.
'Is the window open?'
- h. **wa** -- insistence/femininity
Mado ga aite iru **wa**.
'The window is open.'
- i. **no** -- interrogative or softener (depends on intonation)
Ashita iku **no**?
'Are you going tomorrow?'
Ee, ashita iku **no**
'Yes, I'll go tomorrow.'

This is not an exhaustive list of items that have been labeled SFP's; rather these are the uncontroversial examples.² Still, the examples in (1) give the flavor of the information SFP's add to utterances. SFP's don't change the truth conditional meaning of utterances (most of the utterances represented in (1) are about the window being open); they instead show how speakers feel about what they are saying. The speaker may be quite convinced that the window is open, in which case a strong particle like yo could be used. Or the speaker might be unsure whether the proposition "the window is open" is true or false. In this case ka, which makes absolutely no claims

about the window's status, may be used, since ka requires the hearer to determine whether the window is open or not.

SFP's have been analyzed in a number of ways, but here I concentrate on demonstrating the problems inherent in two previous characterizations of their functions. Uyeno (1971) describes SFP's as performatives marking illocutionary force (IF), while Givón (1982) and Tsuchihashi (1983) (G&T) look at them as markers that fit on a speech act continuum from declarative to interrogative. I show how these analyses are both inadequate and outline an approach which builds upon the useful insights of the earlier accounts but more accurately reflects the kinds of attitudes that SFP's allow Japanese speakers to express. I utilize a framework based upon a "strength of commitment" scale that accounts for the use of SFP's in a principled way. I now turn to Uyeno's IF analysis.

2. SFP's and Illocutionary Force. Uyeno lists the syntactic properties of SFP's and she notes the sociolinguistic constraints on SFP use in detail, yet her account is inaccurate in that it does not capture the actual nature of the function of SFP's in utterances, it excludes certain lexical items from the class of SFP's, and it does not consider SFP's that may occur in non-final position. Each of these problem areas is discussed below.

Uyeno looks at SFP's as performative predicates, and particles like wa, yo, zo, ze, and sa are grouped together as particles of "insistence," while SFP's like ne and na are called "requests for compliance" (Uyeno 1971:27). The performative verb and associated IF of utterances with SFP's of the first class she labels as like STATE, while utterances with ka, the question particle, are associated with performative verbs and IF's like ASK (39). This leads us to wonder exactly what the IF's and/or higher predicates associated with each individual SFP are. Uyeno however, suggests neither Japanese performative verbs nor English equivalents that might differentiate the various SFP's.

Indeed, considering IF marking to be the primary function of SFP's (also the tactic of R. Lakoff 1972) leads to much difficulty when one tries to assign a performative sense to all SFP's. Although ka and yo might be paraphrased as Japanese equivalents of "I ask you" and "I tell you" respectively, the other particles are harder to associate with any specific IF. For Uyeno, the only difference among the SFP's with IF's like STATE is the strength of the speaker's insistence, so perhaps she intends to associate them as in (2), using two IF's, STATE and INSIST.

- (2) a. wa = "I state that I weakly insist that x"
 b. yo = "I state that I insist that x"
 c. sa = "I state that I strongly insist that x"
 d. ze = "I state that I quite strongly insist that x"
 e. zo = "I state that I very strongly insist that x"

There is something counterintuitive about an analysis of the class of SFP's as indicators of IF where most of them indicate basically the same force, yet Uyeno tries to do so with some combination of stating

and insisting like (2). The matter is further complicated when Uyeno discusses SFP's like ne and na, because she says they can be associated with at least four performative highest predicates: STATE, ORDER, ASK and SUGGEST (p. 132). With which of these verbs speakers associate ne/na must be determined by the addressee from other clues, since these two SFP's are treated by Uyeno as ambiguous for IF. If context or other factors are indicating IF, then what are the SFP's doing?

Speakers also use SFP's in utterances with many different IF's, regardless of whether the SFP's are more like "ask" or "tell" in traditional descriptions. The examples in (3) show instances of zo and yo with reported speech acts, which show that the same SFP may be used with varying IF's or underlying performative verbs.

- (3) a. kore wa okashii zo to omotta
 this strange quot thought
 'This is strange,' I thought.' (Uyeno 1971:73)
- b. Taroo, ki-o-tsukenai to kega o suru zo to chuishita
 not careful when injury get quot warned
 'Taroo, if you are not careful you'll get injured!' he
 warned.' (Uyeno:75)
- c. Naguru zo to odokashita
 hit threatened
 'I'll hit you!' he threatened.' (Uyeno:76)
- d. Otoko wa "Nihon wa madamada mazushii kuni na-n-da yo"
 man Japan yet poor country be-comp-be
 to tsubayaita.
 muttered
 'The man muttered, "Japan is still a very poor
 country."' (Maynard 1984:14)

Furthermore, when describing one's own speech act, SFP's may be used with utterances containing speech act verbs.

- (4) a. ano hito wa kimi o butsu kamo shirenai to keikoko
 that man you hit ..might..... warn
 shiteiru-n-da yo/zo
 ing-comp-cop
 'I'm warning you that he'll hit you!'
- b. uchi ni iro to teian shite iru-n-da yo/zo
 home to come (imper) suggest do -ing
 'I'm (strongly) suggesting that you come home!'
 (Tsuneko Nakazawa, consultant)

Utterances like those in (3) and (4) reveal that the SFP's are not indicating any specific IF but are instead somehow affecting IF's that have been marked in other ways (verb endings, lexical items, intonation, context, etc.), i.e. the SFP's in (3) and (4) demonstrate how strongly speakers feel about both the truth conditional content and the IF's of their utterances.

Another minor difficulty with the characterization of SFP as IF's

using STATE and INSIST that was proposed in (2) shows up whenever SFP's are combined, as in (5).

- (5) a. Kono bun ja jiki-shachoo wa, ore da yo ne
 this rate at-topic head-of-company top. I cop SFP's
 'At this rate, I tell you, I'll be the next head of
 the company.' (Martin 1975:919)
- b. Ane da wa ne
 rain cop. SFP's
 'It is raining, isn't it?' (Uyeno 1971:64)

If each SFP in (5) is a verb of IF, the first predicate in each is no longer the highest, since the final SFP must be analyzed as another performative verb. Representing the IF of SFP's in a lower clause would rule out SFP's as IF markers under Uyeno's strict characterization of performatives as highest clause verbs (Uyeno:13), although this poses no problems for less stringent frameworks that allow for embedded performatives ("I regret to inform you that we are out of steak this evening").⁵

More problematic for Uyeno's SFP treatment are occurrences of SFP's which cannot be analyzed as highest clause performative verbs at all and therefore must be treated as members of different syntactic categories to continue to maintain the performative analysis. Some SFP's can occur in non-sentence-final positions (this is possible with sa, ne and perhaps the particle wa⁴) as shown in (6).

- (6) a. Ano ne, Bill wa ne, ii hito to omou.
 umm SFP Bill top SFP good man quotative think
 'You know, Bill, you know, I think he's a good guy.'
- b. Ee-to sa, hon wa sa, takai yo.
 err SFP books top SFP expensive SFP
 'AND, books (obviously), they're expensive (I tell you).'
- c. Ne(e) Taroo-kun kore wa nan da
 SFP Taroo this top. what cop.
 'Hey, Taroo, what's this?' (Uyeno:49)

The first phrases of (6a&b) both show ne and sa used with "hesitation phenomena" (equivalent to "umm" or "err" in English), which lack the usual finite predicates found in Japanese main clauses. In the second phrases of (6a&b) ne and sa are used with topicalized noun phrases that are associated with the predicates omou 'think' and takai 'be expensive'. In (6c), ne is sentence-initial, used somewhat like a vocative. Note that these aren't cases of "moved" SFP's, because a different SFP can occur sentence-finally, as yo does in (6b). If SFP's are attachable only to highest clauses, as Uyeno claims they are, these instances of SFP's (alone, with noun phrases and with hesitation phenomena) would have to be analyzed differently, perhaps as homophonous lexical items (this is Uyeno's approach). It is true that there is much apparent homophony in Japanese, even among its particles (cf. note 4), yet the effects of these particle uses are similar to their sentence-final effects. This implies that these SFP's are occurrences of

the same lexical items. To list these occurrences as separate lexical items would be to obscure the similarities, creating separate lexical items that convey similar speaker attitudes, yet differ only by syntactic properties. For example, the sa in (6b) adds emphasis and hints that the speaker feels that the information preceding sa is "obviguous" in the same way that the sentence-final sa in (1b) above does.

The Illocutionary Force treatment of SFP's, then, does not account for combined SFP's or non-sentence-final uses of SFP's. (This requires Uyeno to claim that both SFP-like particles belong to other particle classes.) Nor does the IF account make clear how SFP's and their IF's are to be linked. A complete analysis of SFP's should account for these properties.

3. A scalar account of sentence-final particles. Givón (1982) makes a first approximation of what kind of information Japanese speakers actually convey when they use SFP's, and Tsuchihashi (1983) expands upon and provides evidence for the validity of Givón's framework.⁶ Their main claim is that SFP's may be used to express a range of speech acts depending on the context of utterance, and that range prompts G&T to place SFP's on a continuum ranging from assertions to questions. G&T use a loose definition of SFP's, including one combination, wa ne, in addition to lexical items indicating uncertainty like janaika, kamoshirenai, kashira, and daroo/deshoo. These have traditionally been labeled modals or mood markers (cf., for example, McClain 1981). The benefits of the scalar treatment over the IF analysis are that the scale allows for the different illocutionary effects possible with each particle (such as those in (3) above) by not associating whole SFP classes with one IF, and that membership in the class of SFP's is determined by how the use of a lexical item affects the interpretation of the IF's of utterances rather than by exclusive sentence-final use or mono-syllabicity, criteria which I have invalidated in the preceding discussion. Nonetheless, the scalar analysis needs some refinement to accurately account for what speakers can do with SFP's.

I suggest that the scale G&T propose is inaccurate for a number of reasons: they omit speech acts that do not fit neatly on their continuum, they provide no account for most SFP combinations and by concentrating on SFP's as speech acts they cannot capture the kinds of information speakers convey by using SFP's.

G&T gloss over the fact that some of the SFP's may be used with utterances having IF's other than those ranging between assertions and questions, which therefore cannot be placed neatly on a scale in between those two poles—specifically imperatives and exclamations.

As for imperatives, although G&T do hint that perhaps, by extending their scale past questions, it could cover imperatives (Givón 1982:107), they do not provide details to show how or why this is accomplished. This could be because they realize that particles like yo, na, and ne, which are near the declarative end of their continuum, may be used with imperatives, as in (7).

- (7) a. (O)kakenasai/kakete-kudasai/kakete-kure yo
sit-command
'Sit down, would you?/would you please!'
b. Kakete kudasai na
'Sit down please, would you?' (Uyeno:116)
c. Mado o akenasai ne
window open-command
'Open the window, will you!' (Uyeno:122)

They would then be forced to try to put these SFP's at two different points on the continuum (cf. Table 1). Doing so would require G&T to call for yo₁ and yo₂, na₁ and na₂, and ne₁ and ne₂. In other words they would create another unnecessary set of homophonous particles in Japanese.

Table 1: Tsuchihashi's Continuum (1983:374)

Interrogative										Declarative										
β_2																				
	JANAIKASHIRA	JANAIKA	DARCO	KA	NA	DESHOO	KAMOSHIRENNI	KASHIRA	NE	KANA	YO	WANE	β_1	SA	WA					

Additionally, G&T do not consider all of the illocutionary effects of marking exclamations with SFP's, although SFP's are quite commonly used with exclamations in conversation.⁷ On the G&T continuum, exclamatory SFP's are placed further from the declarative pole than those that are neutral or assertive. This works out fine for them only because G&T do not include all the possible SFP's in their list. Some of these missing particles, particularly zo, may be used to indicate either surprise or strong assertions (which G&T consider different IF's because one may express some doubt when surprised). For example, (8) can be considered not only a strong declarative, it may be used as an exclamation, depending on the context of utterance, and could be used when a speaker is surprised at the hearer's actions.

- (8) Kimi wa hontoo-ni bakarashii zo!
you top true-ly ridiculous sfp
'You're really ridiculous! (and I'm certain of it!)

To account for speakers' use of zo with both very strong assertions and exclamations, G&T would again be required to place a SFP on two points in their scale.

A second difficulty with G&T's characterization is that the particle combinations (or polysyllabic SFP's) like those in (5) are not covered. This is odd, especially since they list wane as a SFP. Japanese speakers use many additional particle combinations. Uyeno includes wa ne, wa yo, wa yo ne, sa ne, yo ne, ka na, and ka ne

(1971:126), and Watanabe cites occurrences of zo yo and sa yo (1968:133). The effects that can be achieved by combining SFP's are complex—using yo ne, for example, expresses something paraphrasable as an emphatic tag:

- (9) ano onna wa kimasu yo ne
 that woman come
 'She will come, won't she?'

Deciding where an utterance with this kind of effect lies on a continuum from assertions to questions to imperatives will be difficult—is (9) less assertive than an equivalent utterance with only yo but more so than one with ne alone, or is (9) stronger than either? The other combinations pose similar problems for G&T's scale, which implies that the scale should not be based on speech act type after all.

That the speech act type scale does not actually capture what information speakers convey with SFP's is the final difficulty with the G&T analysis that I will mention. In the previous discussion we have seen many instances of utterances with SFP's where sentential elements other than the SFP's serve to indicate what speech act is occurring. For example, in (3) and (4) phonetically realized verbs indicate the speech act that is occurring while in (7) verbal morphology marks the utterances as imperatives, and in (8) only the context of utterance would determine whether the speaker is exclaiming or forcefully stating.⁸ The following examples further demonstrate that an utterance may be an emphatic assertion, an order or a warning with the same SFP.

- (10) a. Ano hito ga kite-imasu yo.
 that man come-ing
 'He's coming, (I tell you!).'
 b. koi to itte-'ru n' da yo
 come-imper please quot telling nom cop
 'I'm telling you to come!'
 c. Ki o tsukero yo
 care take-imper.
 'Be careful (I warn you)!' (T. Nakazawa, consultant)

Obviously, factors that include verbal morphology and lexical meaning determine the IF, not the SFP yo alone.

Now that the disadvantages of the two previous treatments of SFP's have been outlined, I will turn to an alternative approach that will take advantage of the useful observations of Uyeno, Givon and Tsuchihashi and avoid their pitfalls.

4. SFP's and strength of commitment. I propose that SFP's are not used to indicate IF. When used sentence-finally, the effect of using a SFP is that speakers indicate an attitude toward some IF—they are still asking or telling, explaining or warning, etc. (as determined by other elements in the utterance and by context), but with a greater or lesser degree of strength or conviction (which I call commitment). The

scale proposed here hinges on the use of SFP's as indicating speaker commitment, and I believe it will account for conversational occurrences of SFP's in a principled way and will also make some interesting predictions about the kinds of utterances containing SFP's that should or should not have appropriate circumstances of utterance.

Commitment refers to a willingness to be held accountable to the truth conditional content and IF of an utterance (in other words how certain speakers are about the validity of their claims, feelings, suggestions, questions etc.-they know what they're talking about). More concretely, if someone uses yo, the indication is that they are quite certain that they have their facts straight, while using ne on the other hand shows that they would like the hearer to confirm what they say (note that this is a VERY simplistic characterization--I am leaving out the fact that speakers may use ne just to SEEM like they want confirmation in order to be polite, and the general use of SFP's to produce conversational implicatures).⁹ I place the SFP's on a scale ranging from those indicating strongest commitment (zo yo) to weakest (janaikashira 'could it not be?'), as in the rough sketch in (11) (by no means a final OR accurate version since the work of figuring out the precise strengths of commitment implied by the individual SFP's is incomplete).

- (11) (strong) ZO YO..ZO..ZE..SA..YO..WA..NA..WA NE..NE..KA NA
 ..NO..KA..DAROO..JANAIKA..JANAIKASHIRA (weak)

Note that particle combinations are treated as polysyllabic SFP's and are gradations between the other SFP's on the scale. The scale in (11) is inaccurate, however, because it shows the SFP's in a vacuum. SFP's occur in conversational utterances, and the IF and other attitudes present in an utterance in context will affect the relative strength of commitment that the speaker can indicate with any SFP.

These interactions are advantageous for this hypothesis, because they avoid the proliferation of SFP's that caused problems for the G&T analysis. Depending on how lexical choice and SFP choice interact, a speaker can indicate a high degree of commitment with sa in an utterance with reinforcing adverbs as in (12a), a relatively lower degree with yo in a declarative (12b), but indicate somewhat weaker commitment with sa when a judgment verb appears in the utterance, as in (12c).

- (12) a. Mochiron, sonna koto wa atarimae sa
 of course such thing matter of course
 'That goes without saying, of course.' (Uyeno:83)
 b. Kimi wa ii gakusei da yo
 you good student cop
 'You are a good student'
 c. Taroo wa shigoto o yatte shimau-n daroo sa
 work do finish suppose
 'Taroo is finished, I suppose.' (fn. 10)

Sentence-final and non-sentence-final occurrences of SFP's may

receive unified treatment in this approach. Commitment marking need not apply to highest clauses exclusively, as it is not tied to an analysis requiring commitment markers to be performative verbs. Speakers express attitudes by using SFP's, and they may indicate a degree of commitment toward: (i) the truth conditional content and IF of an entire utterance when the SFP is the final element of the utterance; (ii) their beliefs about the truth of a verb phrase when the SFP is non-sentence-final (cf. 6); (iii) their certainty about the referent of a SFP-marked NP. Contextual cues are used to determine what the speaker is indicating commitment toward with sentence-initial SFP's and particles used with hesitation phenomena.¹¹ Speakers may even express different degrees of commitment toward their beliefs about different parts of an utterance (cf. 6b with sa and yo).

This scalar proposal also easily handles the occurrences of individual SFP's with many different IF's that were problematic for Uyeno. No close relation between SFP's and IF is stipulated, and SFP generation is restricted as little as possible. The scale's generality predicts it will be possible to use every SFP with any class of verbs, any combination of other attitude markers, any kind of IF, or any politeness level. The strength of commitment scale also does not prescribe that any particular combination of speakers of differing social status or sex role will have limited access to all of the SFP's.

Naturally, some combinations of SFP's and speakers/verbs/situations are less felicitous than others, but there are ways to determine appropriate uses of SFP's. There will be sentences that otherwise "make sense" (appear perfectly ordinary in other semantic-pragmatic respects) with SFP's attached that the grammar generates, that rarely, if ever, are actually uttered by certain groups of speakers or when conversational participants have certain relative social status. However, this apparent over-generation is held in check by a set of appropriateness conditions for SFP use, of the type hinted at by Prince (1978) in reference to "tacit assumptions" (p. 365) and Horn (1984) with regard to many different pragmatic and syntactic facts.

These conditions tell us what the combinations of SFP's with certain IF's, modalities, and social status will be, and they predict that other uses of SFP's will be extraordinary, but not ruled out entirely. Certain combinations of SFP's and verbs, (or crucially for this discussion, of certain SFP's and speakers) are ruled out either by the rarity of the occurrence of situations appropriate to their use or by what is considered polite behavior by segments of Japanese society. For instance, the restrictions on strong assertions (and strongly assertive SFP's) are many in Japanese, but the the appropriateness conditions will not rule out uncommon usages under special circumstances, when standards of politeness change, or when bizarre states of affairs obtain. (If Japan had a woman in a very high office, she would hear men using many "softening" particles and avoiding the assertive ones.)

When the commitment marking scale and the set of principles that determine appropriate SFP use combine and interact, the result will accurately reflect actual SFP use among speakers of Japanese, i.e. which utterances will be extraordinary and require special licensing

contexts and which will be ordinary utterances. Further work is needed, especially in the area of specifying the appropriateness conditions, but this proposal hopes to predict appropriate SFP usage while avoiding the problems of the earlier analyses.

NOTES

1. The change in the form of "the window is open" has to do with formality markings. Some of the SFP's are more appropriate with formal styles (-masu endings) while others are more appropriate with the plain style (-ru endings)--these endings don't change the information expressed in the utterance.
2. In addition to SFP's used singly, as in (1), there are combinations possible, such as wa yo, wa ne, and wa yo ne, and these are discussed below.
3. Actually, the scale proposed below will also take care of this minor problem and also maintain the higher predicate analysis, because I look at these combinations as independent polysyllabic SFP's. Then they could be viewed as a single predicate in a performative analysis.
4. The problem with wa is that it is very hard to distinguish among homophonous particles pronounced [wa], such as the "topic" wa, the "contrast" wa, and the sentence-final particle wa.
5. This topic is further explored in Kendall (in prep.).
6. Since G&T actually use with the same general framework, I discuss their work as a unified whole.
7. A full discussion of the ordering elements on G&T's scale is beyond the scope of this paper.
8. I'm not debating whether exclaiming is an IF--G&T seem to think it is, so any problems with exclamations cause problems for them.
9. Implicatures, ironic uses, sarcasm, etc. will be calculable for SFP's in the same manner as they are for other utterances, i.e. utterances that appear pragmatically implausible will be assumed by the hearer to be cooperative in some way.
10. Note that sa in a question does not necessarily indicate that the speaker is weakly committed. In (i) I would say that the speaker is strongly committed to the question being uttered, which is the flavor of the gloss that Uyeno provided when originally citing the example.

- (i) Kore nani sa?
 this what
 'What is this? (you tell me)' (Uyeno:86)

Also, occurrences of daroo in utterances like (12c), where it acts like a form of the copula or a verb of judgment indicate that perhaps daroo should not be considered an SFP, but instead be grouped with some other type of sentential attitude markers.

11. The mechanics of marking commitment to NP's, VP's, utterances and hesitation phenomena has not yet been worked out to my satisfaction.

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