

A NOTE ON THE SELECTIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF ASSERTIVE DISCOURSE PARTICLES*

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1. Introduction

Japanese, an agglutinative language, may realize the right periphery by rich sentence-final particles. There has been much discussion on the hierarchical structure of the Japanese right periphery, including those particles. The rough structure is shown in (1).

(1) [[[v(*)P Tense] Modal] Complementizer*] Discourse Particle*]

The hierarchy is in part due to semantic and discourse interpretation. At the same time, it is argued in Saito (2015) that the actual distributions of the elements in (1) are also dictated by their selectional requirements. For example, he shows that the discourse particle *wa* precedes other discourse particles when they cooccur and it is incompatible with complementizers and modals because it selects Tense. In this paper, I discuss similar discourse particles in Nagoya Dialect and Ina Dialect, and confirm the conclusion that even discourse particles with similar functions can have different selectional requirements.

In Section 2, I briefly go over Saito's (2015) analysis of Japanese discourse particles. In particular, I discuss his analysis for two discourse particles, *wa* and *yo*, that express assertion. When these particles cooccur, *wa* must precede *yo* because *wa* selects Tense and *yo* does not have this requirement. In Section 3, I introduce Yoshida's (2013) analysis of *ga* in Nagoya Dialect, which also expresses assertion and selects Tense like *wa*. In Section 4, I consider Ina Dialect in a little more detail and show that the particle *ni* with similar discourse function has wider distribution like *yo*. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. The Hierarchy of Discourse Particles

In the so-called standard Japanese, discourse particles can be stacked at the end of a sentence as shown in (2).

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- (2) Hanako-wa soko-ni i-ta (wa) (yo) (ne).
 Hanako-TOP there-at be-Past *wa yo ne*
 ‘Hanako was there.’

When two or more of these particles cooccur, they must appear in the order shown in (2) as discussed in detail in Endo (2010). Saito (2015) first notes that *ne* is expected to follow the other two because of its discourse function. *Wa* and *yo* express assertion whereas *ne* solicits response, typically asking for confirmation.¹ One can make an assertion and solicit a response on it. But it makes no sense to assert a solicitation of a response.

The remaining question is why *yo* has to follow *wa* if both express assertion. Discussing this problem, Saito (2015) observes that *wa* selects Tense. (3) shows that *wa* can be merged with tensed clauses.

- (3) a. Watasi-ga soko-ni ik-u wa.
 I-NOM there-to go-Pres. *wa*
 ‘I will go there.’
 b. Taroo-wa yasasi-katta wa.
 Taroo-TOP kind-Past *wa*
 ‘Taroo was kind.’

(4), on the other hand, shows that *wa* cannot follow a modal or a complementizer.

- (4) a. Hanako-wa ku-ru desyoo (*wa).
 Hanako-TOP come-Pres. will *wa*
 ‘Hanako will come.’
 b. Hanako-ga soko-ni i-ru no (*wa)
 Hanako-NOM there-at be-Pres. *no wa*
 ‘Hanako is there.’

Desyoo, which is a modal that expresses surmise, takes a TP complement and does not carry tense itself. *No* is Finite head and it also selects Tense. *Wa* can follow neither.

The discourse particle *yo*, on the other hand, does not have a selectional requirement of this kind. It can follow a tensed clause, a modal, or a complementizer, as shown in (5).

¹ *Yo* is a more general assertive particle than *wa*, which is stylistically marked. *Wa* is typically employed in female speech though it is used in male speech as well in limited contexts. I abstract away from non-grammatical factors of this kind in this paper.

- (5) a. Watasi-ga soko-ni ik-u yo.
 I-NOM there-to go-Pres. *yo*
 ‘I will go there.’
- b. Taroo-wa yasasi-katta yo.
 Taroo-TOP kind-Past *yo*
 ‘Taroo was kind.’
- c. Hanako-wa ku-ru desyoo (yo).
 Hanako-TOP come-Pres. will *yo*
 ‘Hanako will come.’
- d. Hanako-ga soko-ni i-ru no (yo)
 Hanako-NOM there-at be-Pres. *no yo*
 ‘Hanako is there.’

If *wa* selects Tense and *yo* does not have this selectional requirement, this explains the hierarchical relation between *wa* and *yo*, illustrated in (6).

- (6) a. [[[TP ...] wa] yo]
 b. *[[[TP ...] yo] wa]

This analysis implies that discourse particles with similar discourse function can have different selectional properties.

3. Yoshida (2013) on the Nagoya Dialect *Ga*

Among the discourse particles discussed in Saito (2015), *wa* is the only one that specifically selects Tense. However, Yoshida (2013) points out that *ga*, the counterpart of *yo* in Nagoya Dialect, has this property as well. I introduce her findings in this section.

Yoshida presents a formal analysis for some well-known Nagoya Dialect expressions. One of them is *dagane* at the end of a sentence. Some examples are shown in (7).

- (7) a. Kyoo dagane.
 today *dagane*
 ‘It’s today.’
- b. Sizuka dagane.
 quiet *dagane*
 ‘It’s quiet.’

Although *dagane* is often referred to as a unit, Yoshida first notes that *ne* is optional and should be analyzed as the same particle as the *ne* that occurs in many other dialects.²

Further, she points out that *da* occurs only when the present tense copula *da* is required. A copula is required in a predicate after nouns, nominal adjectives and postpositions, but does not occur after verbs and adjectives. *Da* in *dagane* shows the same distribution. It appears after a noun in (7a) and after a nominal adjective in (7b). The examples in (8) show that it does not occur after verbs and adjectives.

- (8) a. It-ta (*da)-ga-ne.
go-Past *da ga ne*
'I went.'
- b. Taka-i (*da)-ga-ne.
expensive-Pres. *da ga ne*
'It's expensive.'

Then, *da* in *dagane* should be analyzed as the present tense copula that commonly occurs in many dialects. In fact, if the tense is past, the past tense form of the copula, *datta*, occurs in place of *da*, as shown in (9).

- (9) Sizuka dat-ta -ga-ne.
quiet *da-Past-ga-ne*
'It was quiet.'

Given that *ga*, in isolation or as part of *dagane*, has similar discourse function as *yo* in other dialects, Yoshida concludes that what distinguishes Nagoya Dialect from others here is not the expression *dagane* per se, but the usage of *ga* in place of *yo*.

Then, Yoshida points out that *ga* has a selectional restriction that is not observed with *yo* despite their similarities in function. It selects for Tense just like *wa*. (10) shows that it cannot follow a modal.³

- (10) Hanako-wa ku-ru daroo (yo/*wa/*ga).
Hanako-TOP come-Pres. will *yo wa ga*
'Hanako will come.'

Yoshida goes on to show that *ga* cannot follow another discourse particle and must be placed at the bottom of the hierarchy of discourse particles, just like *wa*. If the Nagoya *ga*

² See (2) for an example.

³ *Daroo* in (10) and *desyoo* in (4a) and (5c) are basically the same modal for surmise. *Desyoo* is the polite form.

is indeed the counterpart of *yo* in other dialects, this analysis implies that discourse particles vary across dialects not only in their forms but with their selectional properties as well.

4. *D̄ura* and *Ni* in Ina Dialect

Much variation is observed in clause-final expressions among Japanese dialects. Ina Dialect is known for expressions like *d̄ura* and *dani*. In this section, I show that *dani* consists of the present tense copula *da* and an assertive discourse particle *ni*, and that *ni* shares the selectional properties with *yo*.

In the preceding section, I introduced Yoshida's (2013) argument that *da* in *dagane* is the copula in present tense. The argument applies to *da* in *dani* as well. Examples of *dani* are shown in (11).

- (11) a. Kono atari-wa sizuka dani.
 this neighborhood-TOP quiet *dani*
 ‘This neighborhood is quiet.’
- b. Ano densya-wa Nagoya-kara dani.
 that train-TOP Nagoya-from *dani*
 ‘That train is from Nagoya.’

As noted above, *da* is required in a present tense predicate after nouns, nominal adjectives and postpositions, but does not occur after verbs and adjectives. And *da* is missing from *dani* in the latter cases as shown in (12).

- (12) a. Yuki-ga hut-te-ru (*da)-ni.
 snow-NOM fall-ing-Pres. *da ni*
 ‘It’s snowing.’
- b. Susi-wa oisi-i (*da)-ni.
 sushi-TOP tasty-Pres. *da ni*
 ‘Sushi is delicious.’

Further, when the examples in (11) are turned into past tense, the past tense copula *datta* is substituted for *da*. (13) shows this for (11a).

- (13) Kono atari-wa sizuka dat-ta-ni.
 this neighborhood-TOP quiet *da-Past-ni*
 ‘This neighborhood used to be quiet.’

Thus, what characterizes Ina Dialect here is its use of *ni* in place of *yo* in other dialects.

Ina Dialect is like Nagoya Dialect in having its own form for the assertive discourse particle. However, the Ina *ni* is similar to *yo* and is different from the Nagoya *ga* in its selectional property. The Ina Dialect counterpart of the modal for surmise *daroo* is *dʒura*. The distribution of *dʒura* is identical to that of *daroo*. *Dʒura* does not carry tense of its own and selects Tense. A couple of examples are listed in (14).

- (14) a. Kinoo-etu anta-wa hatake it-ta dʒura.
 yesterday-around you-TOP field go-Past *dʒura*
 ‘You must have gone to the field around yesterday.’
- b. Kawai-i dʒura.
 cute-Pres. *dʒura*
 ‘(I imagine) it’s cute.’

Interestingly, *dʒura* even shares an exceptional pattern with *daroo*. The present tense copula *da* is obligatorily deleted before both *daroo* and *dʒura*.

- (15) a. Asu-wa ame (*da) daroo.
 tomorrow-TOP rain *da daroo*
 ‘It will rain tomorrow.’
- b. Asu-wa ame (*da) dʒura.
 tomorrow-TOP rain *da dʒura*
 ‘It will rain tomorrow.’

Thus, *dʒura*, like *daroo*, is a modal element that lacks tense.⁴ And *ni* can follow *dʒura* as the examples in (16) show.

- (16) a. Asu-wa ame dʒura ni.
 tomorrow-TOP rain *dzura ni*
 ‘It will rain tomorrow.’
- b. Taroo-wa asu Nagoya-ni ik-u dʒura ni.
 Taroo-TOP tomorrow Nagoya-to go-Pres. *dʒura ni*
 ‘Taroo will go to Nagoya tomorrow.’

This shows that *ni* does not specifically select Tense.

Ni can also follow the question complementizer *ka*, as shown in (17a).

⁴ See Murasugi (2018, 2019) for a more detailed discussion on *dʒura*.

- (17) a. *Sonna hen-na toko-ni ik-u ka ni.*
 such strange place-to go-Pres. Q *ni*
 ‘(I) will not go to such a strange place.’
- b. *Sonna hen-na toko-ni ik-u ka yo.*
 such strange place-to go-Pres. Q *yo*
 ‘(I) will not go to such a strange place.’

As *ni* expresses an assertion, the question embedded under *ni* in (17a) must be interpreted as a rhetorical question. This is observed with *yo* as well in dialects that employ this discourse particle, as shown in (17b). (17a) constitutes further evidence that the distribution of *ni* is not constrained by the selectional requirement for Tense.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I considered four assertive discourse particles, *wa*, *yo*, *ga* and *ni*. As discussed in Section 2, Saito (2015) argues that *wa* selects Tense whereas *yo* does not have this selectional requirement. In Section 3, I introduced Yoshida’s argument that *ga* in Nagoya Dialect selects Tense. Finally, in Section 4, I showed that *ni* in Ina dialect, like *yo* and unlike *wa* and *ga*, does not specifically select Tense. The discussion showed that discourse particles at the sentence periphery not only have discourse functions but have clear selectional properties that dictate their distributions.

The four particles have similar discourse function, that is, to express assertion. It remains to be seen whether there are subtle differences in the interpretations they yield. If there is a difference between *wa* and *ga* on the one hand and *yo* and *ni* on the other, then it may explain their difference in the selectional property. But if the difference in the selectional property cannot be accounted for in terms of meaning, it presents an interesting learnability problem. How do children find out that *wa* and *ga* specifically select Tense in the absence of negative evidence? For example, given that *yo* can follow modals and complementizers, how do children find out that *wa* cannot? Discourse particles, which are acquired at a very early stage, can be a valuable resource for research in language acquisition as well as for research in syntax.

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