

## Abstract

### Commitment and Discourse Particles in Japanese

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This dissertation first presents a formal, semantic and pragmatic theory for *sentence final particles* (SFPs) in Japanese. The SFPs to be analysed include *yo*, *ne* and *sa*, and their dialectal and idiolectal analogs. They are argued to express a particular conversation participant's *public commitment*. Commitment is defined as a tripartite relation among a person *a*, a person *b* and a sentence radical: *a* is committed to *b* to act upon the content of the sentence radical. Public commitment refers to a special type of commitment, where  $a \neq b$ . Thus, the SFPs are argued to express a particular person *a*'s commitment to *b* to act upon what is described in a sentence radical. With this idea, I claim that the basic semantics and pragmatics of the SFPs are straightforwardly explained in a strictly formal (thus, predictive) fashion.

Furthermore, the dissertation also pays close attention to the intonational tunes associated with the SFPs. To be precise, it is argued in this dissertation that there are three types of intonations that can be associated with *yo* and *ne*; Namely, the rising contour, falling contour, and flat contour. The specific proposal I make with respect to the relation between the SFPs and the intonations is that the latter reflect the information structural status of what is encoded by the SFPs in a particular context of the utterance. It is also shown that *sa* can only be associated with the falling contour, and I demonstrate that this is naturally expected given the semantics and pragmatics of the particle revealed by the proposal made in the present dissertation.

Also, I argue for the idea that the specific discourse effect derived from the combination of the SFPs and the intonations should be captured *via* pragmatic reasoning. Especially, I argue that the idea of pragmatic implicature should be incorporated into the proposal so as to provide a comprehensive and persuasive explanation for the concrete discourse effects of the SFPs, the importance of which has been widely acknowledged in the literature.

In addition, on the basis of such a semantico-pragmatic account, the syntax of the SFPs is fleshed out, by which I corroborate the conceptual and empirical validity of the proposal from the perspective of Chomskyan linguistics.

Chapter 1 is devoted to the explication of the theory to be adopted to the analysis of the discourse particles in question. There, the notion of Context Change Potential is introduced along with (public) commitment.

Chapter 2 explains the semantics and pragmatics of *yo* and its analogs on the basis of the framework laid out in Chapter 1. In this chapter, it is shown that the particle expresses the speaker's public commitment to act upon the propositional content it embeds.

Chapter 3 expands the analysis to *ne* and its analogs. There it is argued that the particle is the addressee counterpart to *yo*, in the sense that it encodes the addressee's public commitment to act upon the propositional content embedded by the SFP.

Chapter 4 combines the results of Chapters 2 and 3, and claims that *yone* expresses that both the speaker and the addressee are publicly committed to act upon a proposition.

In Chapter 5, the semantics and pragmatics of *sa* are fleshed out based upon the framework laid out in Chapter 1. In this chapter, it is claimed that *sa* expresses the speaker's public *dis*commitment. To be precise, the central idea is that *sa* makes the speaker *not* liable to the truth of the proposition embedded by the SFP. This neatly explains the fact that the addressee cannot felicitously blame the speaker for saying "proposition+*sa*" after it turns out that that the proposition is false.

Based upon the results of the preceding chapters, Chapter 6 fleshes out the syntax of the discourse particles in Japanese. This chapter also compares the present account with some other alternatives proposed in the literature, and sees that the former should be favoured on both conceptual and empirical grounds.

In Chapter 7, the analysis for the SFPs is further expanded to uncover the nature of the same particles used phrase-finally. Calling such particles *phrase final particles* (PFPs), this chapter provides an account that enables us to treat SFPs and PFPs in a unified fashion. The particular proposal is made on the basis of the semantic theory proposed by Paul Pietroski, which is built upon the illuminating idea of event semantics by Donald Davidson.

Finally, in Chapter 8, the theoretical, evolutionary and psychological implications of the account are discussed. Specifically, the idea of public commitment has a potential of elucidating the nature of human language communication and its evolution in a substantial way, and hence the idea has a therapeutic value from the perspectives of evolinguistics and psycholinguistics.