

# THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE AND CHARACTER PARTICLES, AS SEEN IN DIALECT: CHARACTER PARTICLES AND SENTENCE-ENDING PARTICLES

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## **Abstract**

The article deals with the following three views and concludes that (1) the phenomenon in which a word related to the identity of the speaker (a sentence-ending particle with its origins in the first-person pronoun ["first-person sentence-ending particle" hereinafter]) appears after other sentence-ending particles may be observed in dialect; (2) the phenomenon in which a word related to the identity of the listener (a sentence-ending particle with its origins in the second-person pronoun ["second-person sentence-ending particle" hereinafter]) appears after other sentence-ending particles also may be observed in dialect; (3) the phenomenon of occurrence of the first-person sentence-ending particle at the end of the sentence has a different nature than the phenomenon of occurrence of the second-person sentence-ending particle at the end of the sentence.

**Keywords:** sentence-ending particles; first-person sentence-ending particle; expressing his or her own view; second-person sentence-ending particle; a way of polite expression

## **Povzetek**

Članek obravnava tri točke in zaključuje, da (1) je pojav, ob katerem se beseda, ki se nanaša na identiteto govorca (tj. končniški stavčni členek z izvorom v zaimku 1. osebe [spodaj kot 'stavčni členek v prvi osebi']), pojavi po kakšnem drugem stavčnem členku, opažen v narečjih; (2) je pojav, ob katerem se beseda, ki se nanaša na identiteto slušatelja (tj. končniški stavčni členek z izvorom v zaimku 2. osebe [spodaj kot 'stavčni členek v drugi osebi']), pojavi po kakšnem drugem stavčnem členku, opažen v narečjih; (3) da je pojavnost zgoraj omenjenih dveh končniških stavčnih členkov različna.

**Ključne besede:** povedni zaključni členki; stavčni členek za prvo osebo; izražanje osebnega mnenja; stavčni členek za drugo osebo; izrazi spoštljivosti

## 1 Introduction

This paper examines the relationship between character particles as proposed in character studies and sentence-ending particles in dialects, considered to have developed from personal expressions.

Sadanobu (2005, p. 118) defines character particles as "particles that express the character one wants to convey." He provides the following example (hereinafter, the author has underlined the relevant part of each sentence).

*O-hisashi-buri desu. Kuri de gozaimasu puu.*

"It's been a long time. I'm sorry for not keeping in touch puu."

He explains that *puu*, as used in the above example, "seems to be used to establish a noncombative, easy-going character" (Sadanobu, 2005, p. 120).

Sadanobu (2007, p. 37) identifies the following three points concerning the conditions under which character particles may appear in a sentence to give "a fitting end to the sentence":

1. they are relatively less likely to appear in inverted sentences;
2. they are positioned even later than sentence-final particles;
3. they are relatively less likely to appear at the end of a clause within a sentence.

Sentence-ending particles were proposed by Yoichi Fujiwara in a study of dialects. Fujiwara re-examined the particles usually called sentence-final particles in the light of the importance to Japanese expression at the end of the sentence, calling them "sentence-ending particles." The study attracted attention for its view that such sentence-ending particles have originally come from personal expressions, pointing out that a *wa* at the end of a sentence originally was a word referring to the speaker (*watashi*), indicating that he or she was expressing his or her own view. Fujiwara (1986, p. 211) gives examples including:

*Shiran wai. (I dunno.)*

In Kyushu dialect, this would be:

*Shirimasshen bai.*

In these sentences, *wai* and *bai* are in fact first-person pronouns. The *wa* used in an expression such as *iyada wa*. ("Yuck!") also can be considered a first-person pronoun, since it belongs to the same family as *wai*.

Similarly, while expressing some doubt as to whether the particle is in fact in the first person, Fujiwara (1986, p. 431) also cites the following sentence from a dialect in Ishikawa Prefecture:

- (1) *Sonna mon kisesasshanna wa-*.

"Don't make me wear something like that!"

He says of this example:

'Perhaps this use of *wa*- to express one's own opinion is, after all, a first-person *wa* sentence-ending particle. Other uses of *wa*, such as its usefulness in expressing commands, also may have developed naturally from this use of *wa*.'

Fujiwara (1986, p. 431)

Fujiwara (1986, p. 211) rejects the theory on the origin from the binding particle *ha* (pronounced like *wa*) as follows:

'I would like to point out one doubt about the theory on *ha*. *Ha* is affixed to substantives and secondary substantives. It often is treated as an indicator of the subject. Generally speaking, particles with such a function stress what follows. *Wa* as used in cases such as *Iyada wa* indicates something said with intensity. Its true nature (functional value) is this intensity of the expression, the opposite of stressing what follows. Perhaps ultimately *wa* comes from the first person.'

The following example is from a dialect on the Matsushima Coast in Miyagi Prefecture.

(2) *O shin*ko *ne-su* *ka**wa*  
 "Don't you have any *oshinko*?"

(The indication of accents here differs from Fujiwara's.)

Fujiwara (1994, p. 238) argues that the tone of the sentence as well *wa* give a strong impression that the sentence has reached its conclusion, so that *wa* is unlikely to have come from *ha* since the former "is distinguished by the way it does not put any kind of stress on what is to come next."

In this way, the part of speech appearing at the end of a sentence in standard Japanese has traditionally been considered a sentence-final particle, but today character studies make it clear that a word related to the identity of the speaker (a character particle) may appear even after the sentence-final particle. At the same time, the phenomenon in which a word related to the identity of the speaker (a sentence-ending particle with its origins in the first-person pronoun ["first-person sentence-ending particle", hereinafter]) and appears after other sentence-ending particles may be observed in dialects as well, and Sadanobu suggests a parallelism between the character particle and this first-person sentence-ending particle. Accordingly, this paper will begin with a consideration of how this first-person sentence-ending particle appears in dialects.

The phenomenon in which a word related to the identity of the listener (a sentence-ending particle with its origins in the second-person pronoun ["second-person sentence-ending particle", hereinafter]) appears after other sentence-ending particles also may be observed in dialects.

- (3) *O-shaberi bakari shimashite na-ta.*

"You sure did talk a lot"; Kumamoto Prefecture

NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo

Here *na-ta* is a compound of *na-* and *anata* ("you"). If we understand standard Japanese as permitting only a first-person particle to appear after the sentence-final particle, then it is conceivable that the phenomenon in which a first-person particle occurs positioned after the sentence-final particle, and the phenomenon in which a second-person particle occurs positioned after the sentence-final particle could differ fundamentally in their nature. If both are homogeneous, then it is hard to conceive that only one of them would occur (the phenomenon of occurrence of the first-person particle), while the other one (the phenomenon of occurrence of the second-person particle) would not. Accordingly, as our second point, we will consider the ways in which the second-person sentence-ending particle appears in dialects.

Our third point will involve investigation of the distribution and usage of these phenomena and we will point out that the phenomenon of occurrence of the first-person sentence-ending particle at the end of the sentence in fact has a different nature than the phenomenon of occurrence of the second-person sentence-ending particle at the end of the sentence.

## 2 Usage of the first-person sentence-ending particle

First, let's look at some examples considering the distinctiveness of dialect in which such particles are positioned at the end of the sentence.

- (4) *Do-ra hi ga heran uchi modoimoso wai.*

"Whatever the case, let's return before the sun goes down";

Kagoshima Prefecture

- (5) *Arigato gozairimashite wai.*

"Thank you very much";

Ishikawa Prefecture

- (6) *Unara ma- yokowasshai. Orya mo- inuru bai.*

"Well, good night. I'm going home too";

Saga Prefecture

All three examples above are from NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo.

- (7) *Honai i-mawaraidemo iku ware.*

OK, I've heard enough. I'll go"; said by a 16-year-old younger brother to his 23-year old elder sister;

Tokushima Prefecture

(From Fujiwara, 1986, p. 452)

- (8) *Agekkara wa.*

"Here you go."

(9) *Nagete kunai wa.* ("Throw it!")

(All of the above examples are from the southeastern area of the Tohoku dialect zone (Fujiwara, 1969, p. 205))

While there also are examples of *ore* ("I") being positioned at the end of a sentence, it might be difficult to consider these to be examples of sentence-ending particles.

(10) *Cho- kite cho-chitemo- muridanbe ore.*  
"I don't think I can make it today."

(From NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo, Tochigi Prefecture)

It is apparent that many cases show compound sentence-final particles in which a first-person sentence-ending particle is combined with some other sentence-ending particle, such as:

*Wai: wai na, wai no, wai ne, wai ya, etc.*

*Wa: wan a, wa no-, wa no, wa ne, wa yo, etc.*

*Bai: bai ta, ban ta, ba mai, etc.*

While *wai* and *wa* above form compound sentence-final particles when suffixed with *na*, *no*, *ne*, *yo*, or *ya*, the *ta*, *nta*, and *mai* suffixed to *bai* are variants of the second-person pronouns *anta* and *omai*.

Next, let's look at the words other than first-person particles positioned after the sentence-ending particle. Fujiwara (1969, p. 213) states that while a compound form *bai + X* is possible, a compound sentence-ending particle *X + bai* is not.

However, Fujiwara (1997, p. 484) also cites the following example from a dialect in Nagasaki Prefecture.

(11) *Sa- oremo sore shiran tobai.*  
"Gee, I don't know either."

Also, the NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo includes the following example from Fukuoka Prefecture.

(12) m<sup>1</sup> *Batten miaidakea sake dashimasshen nabai.*  
*Na- miaintokya- sake dashimasshen bai.*  
"But don't serve sake at a meeting with a view toward marriage.  
Remember, don't serve sake at a meeting with a view toward marriage."

Does not this appear to be a case of *X + bai*? In addition to this one, examples such as the following can also be seen in the NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo:

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<sup>1</sup> 'm' for *male*.

(13) f<sup>2</sup> *Karaimo hottatoba chittobakkae yaro-kananta.*  
"I'd like to give you a little souvenir.  
How about taking some of the yams we've dug up?"

(14) m *Un karaimonara itcho- moro-te ikokanobai.*  
"Yes, I'd love to take a sweet potato with me"; Saga Prefecture

Furthermore, although it does not include *bai*, the following example also fits the pattern.

(15) *Yanka kimonna itchomo motajatta~~o~~ai.*  
"I didn't even have a single long kimono"  
(NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo; Kumamoto Prefecture)

There also are examples of a first-person sentence-ending particle positioned after another sentence-ending particle, as in this one from the dialect on the Matsushima coast of Miyagi Prefecture in Fujiwara (1994, p. 238).

(16) *Oshinko ne-su kawa.*  
"Don't you have any *oshinko*?"

Sadanobu (1986) also points out that *wa* and *wai* may appear after consecutive sentences, as in the following example.

(16) *Achi- na-. Honni yaren wa.*  
"It's so hot. I truly can't stand it"; Okayama Prefecture

Among the three points regarding the conditions under which character particles are likely to occur, the tendency to be relatively less likely to appear in inverted sentences can be said to work for first-person sentence-ending particles as well, and they also are relatively less likely to appear at the end of a clause within a sentence.

Sadanobu (2007, p. 46) describes first-person sentence-ending particles and character particles in the following way.

'Perhaps a case of a word such as *gohon* ("ahem"), an extreme expression of the character of the speaker's utterance, at a position at the end of the sentence where it is grammatically easy to place a *watashi* expression may be considered to be a character particle.'

Regarding the distribution of *wai* and *wa*, Fujiwara (1969, pp. 205–207) says:

'In general, people in the western half of Japan probably can be said to use "*wai*" widely. . . . From an overview of the distribution of *wa* we can see that, in contrast to *wai*, it is distributed more in the eastern part of the country.

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<sup>2</sup> 'f' for *female*.

However, although their distribution is largely split regionally, it is apparent that the first-person particles are used nationwide.'

### 3 Usage of the second-person sentence-ending particle

Now let's look at some examples where second-person particles are positioned at the end of a sentence. There are two usages, namely the *a-ta* and the *nonta* ("you"), in combination with suffix elements.

- (17) *Konyawa a-ta.*  
"Good evening"; Kumamoto Prefecture
- (18) *A-ohayo- a-ta.*  
"Oh, good morning you."; Kumamoto Prefecture
- (19) f *I-e- a-ta kotchikoso gobure-shi mashite*  
"No, you my fault."
- (20) m *So- asakarubatten kya-yo- kana- a-ta.*  
Kumamoto Prefecture
- (21) *Mo- sunde shimo-ta kotsujara nta.*  
"That's all in the past"; Oita Prefecture
- (22) *O-shaberi bakari shimashite na-ta.*  
"You sure did talk a lot"; Kumamoto Prefecture
- (23) *Sanju-guraini narimasuga nonta.*  
"He's about 30 years old"; Yamaguchi Prefecture

*Na-ta* probably comes from *na- + anata*, while *nonta* probably comes from *no- + anata*.

There are various ways in which a second-person sentence-ending particle can become a suffix element in a compound form:

<i>na-anta</i>	<i>no-anta</i>	<i>ne-ta</i>	<i>kaia-ta</i>
<i>na-ata</i>	<i>no-ata</i>	<i>kaita</i>	
<i>na-nta</i>	<i>no-an</i>	<i>kanta</i>	
<i>nanta</i>	<i>no-nata</i>	<i>taita</i>	
<i>naeta</i>	<i>no-nta</i>	<i>tanta</i>	
<i>na-ta</i>	<i>nonta</i>	<i>banta</i>	
<i>nata</i>	<i>noita</i>	<i>no-ta</i>	
<i>namai</i>	<i>no-mai</i>	<i>nomai</i>	<i>kamai bamai</i>

Each of the above is a case of suffixing by a second-person particle. Fujiwara (1969, pp. 481–483) also describes a case of *anta + na-*.

- (24) Atsui antana-.  
"It's hot you-"  
(Buzen)
- (25) *Mukashi ha tanokusa wo shihen torimashitagaantana-*.  
"We used to pull out weeds in rice field four times you-"  
(Minamikawachi-gun, Osaka Prefecture)

Second-person particles also are used as interjections.

- (26) m *A- ma- maj omaemo maj rakuna mijan maj buraburashitorya e-njashino-*  
"Ah, well, you should dress casually too. Take it easy";  
from the NHK Zenkoku Hogen Shiryo; Mie Prefecture

#### 4 Distribution of first-person sentence-ending particles and second-person sentence-ending particles

Fujiwara (1986, p. 497) notes that

'In sum, first-person particles such as "*wa*" and "*wai*" are used widely in dialect across the country, . . . while second-person particles are less widely used outside some accents in Kyushu dialect.'

If, as Fujiwara argues, first-person particles are used by 'the speaker to make a point, expressing his or her own point of view to the listener', then they would appear to be unrelated to regional characteristics.

On the other hand, the use of second-person particles is thought to be representative for Kyushu dialect. However, Fujiwara (1969, p. 196) notes that the use of *a-ta* in the following example gives the sentence a medium or higher level of politeness:

- (27) *Konyawa a-ta*.  
"Good evening"; Kyushu

In this way, could not the use of a second-person particle be taken as being dependent on the degree of politeness of the expression? If so, there would only be one method of polite expression in certain regions centered in the Kyushu dialect, and Fujiwara (1969, p. 497) describes it as follows:

'From the general possibility of use of statements such as *ne-anata*, it is conceivable that second-person sentence-ending particles could be more widely used in dialect. However, that is not in fact the case. Perhaps this implies that people prefer to use sentence-ending particles belonging to the *watashi* family when expressing themselves to others in sentence form. (Perhaps use of *watashi* sentence-ending particles is a natural development.)



However, Fujiwara (1986, p. 379) also says the following about forming sentence-ending particles from personal pronouns:

'We can understand the formation of sentence-ending particles from second-person personal pronouns as being the most natural occurrence since those words are used to call others. But why form sentence-ending particles from first-person personal pronouns? If we think about it, this too is natural. The speaker is attempting to express him or herself. He or she is attempting to present his or her own point of view to the other party.

Is it not the case that even when using a second-person personal pronoun, ultimately the speaker is calling the other party with *anata* or a similar word, expressing his or her own (the speaker's) point of view?'

## 5 Conclusion

From the above we could conclude that the sentence-ending particles *wa*, *wai*, and *bai*, which have their origins in first-person pronouns but differ in regions of their distribution, are used across Japan when a speaker attempts to present his or her own point of view to the listener. Also, the use of such sentence-ending particles shows some similarities with the way a character particle embodies the character the speaker wants to convey, and that both may appear positioned after the sentence-final particle (another sentence-ending particle). In this way, we have identified the relationship between these two types of particles.

At the same time, the sentence-ending particles with origins in second-person pronouns, observed in dialects, differ in their nature in that they are a way of polite expression used in regions centered on Kyushu. Still, as Fujiwara (1986, p. 379) says, 'ultimately the speaker is calling the other party with *anata* or a similar word, expressing his or her own (the speaker's) point of view'.

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