

## A STUDY OF JAPANESE SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLE *NE*

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### 1. Introduction

This paper presents some problems with Kamio's theory and suggests its modification.

Sentence-final particles play an important role in keeping the conversation flowing smoothly in Japanese daily interaction. However, they have been less explored than they deserve to be. It is not only because they do not assign cases to a sentence as case particles do and seem to be less important, but also because they express the speaker's various feelings and thoughts about the proposition and cannot be fully accounted for by sentence grammar. Moreover, a sentence-final particle *ne* does not have a function of determining or forming a sentence type as *ka* (question particle) does, but just adds the speaker's sentiments to the sentence. Therefore, *ne* has been considered to be less important and not so many studies have been done on this particle.

Kamio (1996, 1990) revealed in his theory of territory of information that there is an interesting correlation between sentence final forms and the location of the information expressed in a phrase or a sentence. Particularly *ne*'s occurrence is closely related to the location of the territory of information. This particle is an obligatory element when the

given information belongs to the hearer's territory (including the case that this information also falls into the speaker's territory at the same time), while the particle is used as an optional choice when the information does not belong to the hearer's territory.

The discussion in this paper is focused on the cases that the given information is outside the hearer's territory in Kamio's theory. Some sentences that cannot cooccur with *ne* are included in these cases. In addition, sentences that are considered to be unacceptable with the cooccurrence with *ne* in his examples can be acceptable in certain speech situation or context. Examining these examples, I will modify Kamio's theory.

## 2. Kamio's theory of territory of Information

Kamio has established and developed the conceptual category, the theory of territory of information. He hypothesizes that there is one-dimensional psychological distance between the speaker or hearer and a piece of information expressed in a sentence and that this distance has only two scales, either proximal or distal (non-proximal). Further, he assumes that the speaker and/or hearer's territory is a set of all the information considered to be proximal to the speaker and/or hearer. Thus, the speaker's territory of information is defined as a category which accommodates information close to the speaker, and the hearer's territory of information as a category which the speaker assumes accommodates information close to the hearer. He conceived four logical possibilities: (A) Speaker's

Territory, (B) Speaker and Hearer's Territory, (C) Hearer's Territory, and (D) Non-speaker-or-hearer's Territory. He distinguished simply possessing some information from possessing it in one's territory, and claimed that his concern is with the latter<sup>1</sup>.

He also showed that the distinctions of territories correlate with sentence final forms. He roughly made a distinction of two forms: direct forms and indirect forms. The former expresses the speaker's information the most definitely and directly, taking predicate words that convey the meaning of definite affirmation with or without stylistic auxiliaries such as *desu*, *masu*, or *gozaimasu*. The latter expresses indefiniteness or uncertainty, avoiding or softening assertion. It takes sentence final forms that signal inference, hearsay, or subjective judgement or thoughts, such as *rasii*, *sooda*, or *datte*. Sentence final particle *ne* must be used in cases B and C, and is not required in cases A and D.

The following matrix shows the associations between four cases and sentence forms:

		Speaker's Territory	
		in	out
Hearer's Territory	out	A direct form (direct f. + <u>ne</u> )	D indirect form (indirect f. + <u>ne</u> )
	in	B direct <u>ne</u> form	C indirect <u>ne</u> form

Case A represents the case that some information is held within the speaker's territory alone. Direct forms must be used with *ne* in the sentence final position as an optional choice. The following sentence (1a) and (1b) convey the speaker's personal information. Both examples belong exclusively to the speaker.

( 1 ) a . (Watasi wa) kyonen Shiga ni hikkosimasita.

I T. M.<sup>2</sup> last year to move-PAST

'I moved to Shiga last year.'

b . Boku wa ha ga itai.

I T. M. tooth S. M.<sup>3</sup> ache

'I have a toothache.'

Case B indicates that some information is held both within the speaker's and the hearer's territory. In (2a) and (2b) the speaker and the hearer share the same experience in this speech situation: coldness in (2a) and thirst in (2b). The speaker expects the hearer to have the same feelings that he has. Therefore, the former assumes that the information about the weather in (2a) and the physical condition in (2b) fall into the latter's territory as well as his. This case requires direct forms with *ne* at the end of a sentence.

( 2 ) a . Kesa wa hiemasu *ne*.

this morning T. M. chilly-PRESENT

'It's chilly this morning, isn't it ?'

- b. Nodo        ga        kawakimasita        *ne*.  
 throat        S. M. become thirsty-PAST  
 'We are thirsty, aren't we ?'

In case C, some information lies exclusively in the hearer's territory. The information expressed in (3a) is considered to be within the hearer's territory because this information is about the marriage of his sister, a person very close to him. Thus, this sentence takes indirect form *sodesu* and obligatory *ne*. In (3b), the speaker knows that the hearer lives in Oregon, and so the information on the weather in winter there belongs only to the latter. Indirect form *rasii* with *ne* in a sentence final is appropriate here.

- (3) a. Imooto-san        wa        rainen        kekkon        suru  
 younger sister        T. M. next year        marriage        do-PRESENT  
*soo desu ne*.  
 'Your (younger) sister will get married next year,  
 won't she ?'

- b. Oregon        wa        huyu        yuki        ga        furu        *rasii ne*.  
                  T. M. winter        snow        S. M. fall  
 'It snows in Oregon in winter, I hear, doesn't it ?'

Case D indicates that some information is held neither within the speaker's nor the hearer's territory. (4a) is appropriate unless the speaker or the hearer is a weatherman.

This example illustrates that the information on this year's weather is non-proximal to both the speaker and the hearer. Thus, indirect form *rasii* occurs here. Likewise, (4b) indicates that neither the speaker nor the hearer is closely related to Mr. Yosida and that neither of them has the information about Yosida's promotion within his territory. Therefore, indirect form *soo desu* is appropriate.

- (4) a. Kotosi        wa        atui        *rasii*.  
           this year    T. M.    hot  
           'I hear it will be hot this year.'

- b. Yosida    san        wa    kachoo        ni    shosin  
      Mr.        Yosida    T. M. section chief   to   promotion  
      sita        *soo da*.  
      do-PAST  
      'I hear that Mr. Yosida was promoted to section  
      chief.'

The use of *ne* in non-hearer's territory (cases A and D) needs to be examined more closely. There are cases where some sentences in cases A and D cannot cooccur with *ne*. The scope of this paper is confined to the use of *ne* outside the hearer's territory.

First, compare the following examples:

(5) X : Uchi no musuko, Toodai ni hairemasu  
 my P. M.<sup>4</sup> son Tokyo Univ. to able to enter  
 deshoo ka ?  
 copula Q. M.<sup>5</sup>  
 'Can my son get into Tokyo University ?'

Y : Toodai wa muri desu.  
 Tokyo Univ. T. M. impossible copula  
 'It's impossible (for him) to get into Tokyo  
 University.'

Y' : Toodai wa muri desu *ne*.

(6) X : Kinoo doko e irasshaimasita ka ?  
 yesterday where to go-honorific-PAST Q. M.  
 'Where did you go yesterday ?'

Y : Doobutuen e ikimasita.  
 zoo to go-PAST  
 'Yesterday I went to the zoo.'

?? Y' : Doobutuen e itte kimasita *ne*.

The conceivable situation in (5a) is that X, a student's parent, is talking with Y, his/her son's teacher, about the university of the son and the parent's preference. The information that the hearer's son cannot get into Tokyo University falls exclusively into Y, the speaker, since this

information is related to his profession. Thus, it applies to case A with *ne* as option. Both (5Y) and (5Y') are acceptable.

(6Y) is also applicable to case A where Y has within his territory the information that he went to the zoo yesterday, because of his own act in the past. Nevertheless, the occurrence of *ne* shown in (6Y') is unacceptable. Kamio (1986) gave an explanation for (5Y') and (6Y'): In (5Y'), the speaker conveys sympathy toward the hearer, actively using his mental power to coordinate with the hearer or share information with him. (6Y'), in contrast does not require any such mental act or effort because it is a simple statement of a behavior or a straightforward report of it. Therefore, (5Y') cooccurs with *ne*, while (6Y') does not.

Kamio (1990) gave another account for unacceptability of (6Y'), introducing a new constraint on *ne* that this particle cannot be used when the speaker is more deeply involved in the content of the information conveyed in his utterance than is the hearer. In (5Y'), the hearer has deeper involvement with the information than does the speaker because it is the information on his/her son. (6Y'), on the other hand, expresses the speaker's own act or behavior, and complies with the constraint on *ne*. Therefore, *ne* cannot occur in (6Y').

### 3. Some problems with Kamio's analysis

However, both of his interpretations need close examination. The interpretation made by Kamio (1986) explains acceptability in (5Y') and unacceptability in (6Y'), by using the notion of sympathy. This concept is not just simple passive mental



attitude in an ordinary sense. It exerts a positive, fairly complex mental effort called processing and is attentive to the hearer's specific concern or his focus of attention in a speech situation. (5Y') triggers the speaker to express sympathy toward the hearer, while (6Y') is just a statement of the speaker's behavior and does not touch off sympathy toward the hearer. However, there is a situation in which (6Y') is an acceptable utterance. If an investigator is questioning a suspect face to face, they might exchange the following conversation:

- (7) I : Sengetu no 24 ka, dokoka e itta daroo?  
 last month P. M. 24th somewhere to go-PAST copula  
 Doko e itta n da.  
 where to go-PAST N. L.<sup>6</sup> copula  
 'You went somewhere on 24th of last month, didn't you ?'  
 Where did you go ?'

- S : Eetto --- ah, doobutuen e ikimasita *ne*.  
 well ah zoo to go-PAST  
 'Well, --- Ah, I went to the zoo.'

I indicates an investigator, and S a suspect. Though (6Y') is unacceptable, (7S) is acceptable. The high acceptability of utterances such as (7S) unexplained by Kamio's interpretation of *ne* in 1986. In (7S), it is clear that the hearer does not have an exact knowledge of the speaker's act, but the former at least knows that the latter went somewhere. It might be

plausible that the speaker exerts mental processing and try to comply with the hearer's concern in this case.

But still, this example reveals that we cannot draw a clear line between types of sentences describing a report or fact and types of sentences involving mental processing. Further, it also shows that the use of *ne* is acceptable as long as the hearer has related knowledge of the speaker's utterance, even if it is not complete knowledge obtained through the flow of the conversation or the development of a topic pursued in a speech situation.

Another approach for explaining (5Y') and (6Y') with the introduction of constraint on *ne* is also problematic. There is ambiguity in the speaker's deeper involvement in information as compared to the hearer in the constraint on *ne*. Observe the following conversation:

(8) K : Naruhodo. Mazu jibun ga kandoo suru.

indeed first oneself S. M. touching do  
sono tame ni wa nani ga taisetu  
that for T. M. what S. M. important  
deshoo ka ?  
copula Q. M.

'Indeed. What is important to be touched (moved)  
first of all?'

M : Kokoro desu *ne*, yappari.

heart copula sure enough  
'It's heart, sure enough.'

K is a male interviewer (not professional), and M a female newscaster. As the information expressed in the utterance *Kokoro desu ne, yappari* is closely related to her profession, this information lies exclusively in her territory and it falls into case A. In contrast with (5Y'), that is, the example that the hearer is deeply involved with the content of the information, we can find that there is not any evidence or fact that the hearer K does not have deep involvement with the information as that in (5Y'). In comparison between the speaker and the hearer in (8M) by the degree of involvement with the information, the speaker is more deeply involved than is the hearer. Therefore, (8M) seems to be applicable to the constraint, but actually *ne* appears here. (8M) might be the case in between two typical cases (5Y') and (6Y'), but still, this present constraint needs some modification about the degree of involvement. Otherwise, this constraint excludes the cases as in (8M). Furthermore, although the concept of mental processing seems to be well conceived and serve to give a plausible explanation for the use of *ne*, there is a case that the speaker is not so attentive to the hearer or his concern. Observe the following conversation:

(9) Y : Sagasite      n      no      ka      naa,      niichan.  
          look-for-Prog      S. F. P.<sup>7</sup> Q. P.<sup>8</sup> S. F. P.      big brother  
          'I wonder if my big brother is looking for (her).'

A : Siranai      *ne*.  
          know-Neg  
          'I don't know.'

Y and A are a mother and a son, who are talking about Y's big brother. Since the information on (9A) is about the speaker's thought, it belongs exclusively to her territory. This is applicable to case A, and the occurrence of *ne* is optional. Providing that sympathy involving mental processing is operating in (9A) and it causes this utterance to take *ne*, the speaker A is supposed to be more attentive to the hearer Y's concern, with his brother. Nevertheless, her utterance sounds indifferent to her son's concern and refusing to talk about this matter. The interpretation of (9A) with the application of sympathy does not seem to be plausible.

Moreover, if (6Y') is detached from the context in (6) and turned into a negative sentence as in (9), the degree of its acceptability increases.

- (10) a. Doobutuen e ikimasen desita *ne*  
           zoo           to go-Neg       coupla-PAST  
           'I didn't go to the zoo.'

- b. Tabako           wa       suimasen *ne.*  
      cigarette       T. M.     smoke-Neg  
      'I don't smoke.'

A question arises why *ne* with negation shows higher acceptability than affirmative counterpart. In order to account for this phenomenon, first we have to give a speech situation to (10). It is plausible to think that both examples in (10) are answers to the preceeding questions. The question for (10a)

might be "Did you go to the zoo yesterday ?", and the question for (10b) "Do you smoke ?" Therefore, (10a) and (10b) are not just statements of the speaker's personal behavior and in most of the cases those utterances are not given as a new topic that the speaker wants or intends to go on. The hearer in (10) does not have complete information but some related information with which the speaker expects him to share or accept the speaker's sentiments indicated in his utterance. Thus, negative forms seem more speaker oriented than affirmations in conversational exchanges and form the more appropriate conditions for the occurrence of *ne*.

Another interesting case is presented in next section.

#### 4. *N* or *no (da)* form

As (6Y') is a straightforward report of a simple fact this sentence cannot cooccur with *ne*. However, if *n* or *no* was added to this sentence, *ne* can be used as shown in (10):

- (11) Kinoo            doobutuen    ni   itta        *n*    desu.  
          yesterday        zoo            to    go-PAST  
          'Yesterday I went to the zoo.'

In comparison with (6Y'), (11) is not just reporting the speaker's act or behavior but providing the hearer with some information on the topic that the speaker intends or wants to pursue. Before discussing why the use of *n* or *no (da)* form with (6Y') creates the condition that allows the cooccurrence with *ne*, I will review the previous studies on nominalizer *n*

(52)

or *no*.

Kuno (1973) argues that *no desu* gives some explanation for what the speaker has already said or done, or for his condition or situation such as being in poor shape or being fully prepared for going out. Consider the following:

- (12) a . Ame        ni        nuremasita.  
         rain        with        get wet-PAST  
         'I got wet with rain.'
- b . Kaze        o        hikimasita.    Ame    ni    nureta        *n(o)*  
         a cold O. M. catch-PAST    rain with get wet-PAST  
         desu.  
         copula  
         'I caught a cold. I got wet with rain.'

(12a) is a statement reporting that the speaker got wet with rain. The latter sentence in (12b) explains the reason the speaker caught a cold.

Aoki (1986) offers another interpretation on the use of *n(o)*. He argues that *n* or *no* removes the statement from the realm of a particular experience and makes it into a timeless object and that the concept thereby becomes nonspecific and detached. Observe the following:

- (13) a . \* Kare        wa        mukamuka        suru.  
         he        T. M.        sick        do  
         'He feels sick (to his stomach).'

- b. Kare wa mukamuka si-teiru no da.  
 he T. M. sick do -PROG copula  
 'It is a fact that he feels sick to his stomach.'

(13a) where the experiencer is a third person is ungrammatical. The addition of *n* or *no*, however, changes (13a) into a grammatical sentence as in (13b). It is because that *n* or *no* converts a statement for which ordinarily no direct knowledge is possible into a statement which is asserted as a fact. Aoki further argues that this nominalizer is a despecifying evidential, and is used to minimize the speaker's involvement.

McGloin (1980), on the other hand, argues that *no desu* presents information which is known only to the speaker or the hearer, as if it were shared information. She pointed out that *no desu* has the effect of emphasizing particular information by claiming an appearance of shared knowledge with the hearer, thereby creating rapport or involving the hearer in the conversation or the speaker's point of view in declarative sentences. Compare sentences (14) to (16):

- (14) Anata wa Tanaka san desita ne.  
 you T. M. Mr. Tanaka copula-PAST  
 'You are Mr. Tanaka, aren't you ?'
- (15) Chiisai kodomo o hutari mo kakaete iru to,  
 small child O. M. two C. P.<sup>10</sup> have be when  
 sigoto ga nakanaka hakadoranai deshoo.  
 work S. M. not easily progress-Neg-PRESENT copula

(54)

'When you have two children, work does not progress too well, right?'

(16) a. Soo desu.

so copula

'That's right.'

b. Soo na n desu.

so copula

'Really! (=That's really the case!).'

(16a) can be used as an answer to a statement or a question such as (14) simply to acknowledge the hearer's assumption. (16b), with an expression with *no desu*, in contrast, would be used as a response to a statement such as (15). (16b) exhibits the speaker's strong emotional involvement/rapport with the hearer.

##### 5. The cooccurrence of *ne* with *n* or *no*

Now let us return to the case of *ne* with *n* or *no*. As seen in the previous section, there are various interpretations of *n* or *no*. Understanding the nature of *n* or *no* needs more evidences. However, as the chief concern in this present study is the use of *ne* outside the hearer's territory, data offered here is on the cooccurrence of *ne* and *no* (*desu*) and is very limited. When we take into account the nature of *ne*, which is attentive to the hearer and his concern, the character of this particle falls into line with Aoki's or McGloin's interpretations. If we take Aoki's interpretation of *n* or *no* as a despecifying evidential, grammaticalness in (11) is explicable as the case that



the exclusive involvement of the speaker in (11) is minimized by the use of *n* or *no*. If this sentence is applied to McGloin's analysis, *n(o)* has a function of taking on the appearance of shared information which in fact is only known to either the speaker or the hearer and information in (11) appears to be shared by both persons. Thus the sentence with *n(o)* is in line with the use of *ne* and *ne* cooccurs.

The occurrence of *ne* in either interpretation converts the exclusive information of the speaker or the hearer into a shared one. That is why *ne* can be used in the sentences that describe the speaker's personal behavior or fact.

It might be explained that *ne* occurs in the case that the speaker assumes that the hearer can share or accept the same sentiments or thoughts as he has about the information conveyed in his utterance.

These sentiments might be or negative or unfavorable to the hearer such as refusal or strong assertion as well as rapport or solidarity. Moreover, the hearer does not necessarily have the exact knowledge that the speaker does, but has some related information, even if it is in complete one, either already learned or newly learned through the flow of conversation or surroundings during the interaction.

Kamio (1990) also maintained that *ne* is used when the speaker wants to ask the hearer for sharing the same cognitive condition as his.

However, he emphasizes this cognitive condition as information-oriented and it means the deep involvement with the information.

## 6. Conclusion

This present study pointed out some problems with Kamio's theory and presented modification with it. The scope of this paper is confined to outside the hearer's territory of information. As *ne* is most frequently used in conversation, most of the examples were taken from conversations and the speech situations they offered.

Some problems on Kamio's interpretations (1986, 1990) are the degree of involvement of speaker and/or hearer with information on the constraint of *ne*, and some inappropriate cases that sympathy cannot give satisfactory explanations. This paper also revealed that negations with *ne* shows higher acceptability than affirmatory ones, that utterances expressing fact or behavior can cooccur with *ne* in certain situations, and that *ne* and *n* or *no desu* can cooccur. Moreover, though Kamio's explanation for the occurrence of optional *ne* (1990) seems basically appropriate but information-oriented. This paper modified his interpretation and presented it as follows: The speaker uses *ne* when he assumes that the hearer can share or accept the same sentiments or thoughts as he has about the information conveyed in his utterance. Sentiments include not only rapport or solidarity but also unfavorable or negative ones to the hearer. In addition, there might be a case that the hearer does not have the same knowledge that the speaker has. Even if his knowledge is incomplete, the speaker uses *ne* when he judges that the hearer has enough information to share or accept his feelings and ideas. This hearer's information is either already learned or newly acquired through

the speaker or the flow of conversational exchanges. This analysis of optional use of *ne* is tentative and more data is needed to verify it.

I also would like to emphasize the need of examining data or evidence in actual conversation. The findings of conversational analysis will contribute to the study of sentence final particles, and studies in this field in return, will do the same. For future studies, we need more mutual cooperation particularly in functional approach such as Kamio's theory and conversational approach.

## NOTES

1. Information that falls into the speaker's territory is as follows:

- (a) Information acquired through the speaker's direct experience
- (b) Information on the speaker's past personal history and personal facts about his belongings
- (c) Information on the speaker's definite schedule and future plans
- (d) Information on personal facts about the speaker's close relatives or close personal relationships
- (e) Information on important fixed or future plans of the speaker's close relatives or close relationships
- (f) Fundamental information on the speaker's profession or avocation
- (g) Information on geographical locations with which the speaker has close ties
- (h) Other information which is meaningful to the speaker

\* These conditions are also applicable to the hearer.

- 2 . T. M. = Topic Marker
- 3 . S. M. = Subject Marker
- 4 . P. M. = Possessive Marker
- 5 . O. M. = Question Marker
- 6 . N. L. = Nominalizer
- 7 . Q. P. = Question Particle
- 8 . S. F. P. = Sentence Final Particle
- 9 . O. M. = Object Marker
- 10 . C. P. = Conjunctive Particle

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