

Vocabulary and Modality in Weekly Column Articles: Adverbs and Sentence-Final Expressions

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Abstract. In composing a piece of written text, writers are expected to do so in accordance with the style, genre, context or *BA* congruent to the purpose and intended audience of the resulting passage. In the writings of non-native learners of Japanese, however, we find interesting examples of words and expressions that native speakers find “inappropriate.” This suggests that clarifying what words and expressions are suitable for which kinds of text would help improve the way learners of Japanese acquire and improve their writing proficiency. In this paper, we mainly focus on adverbs and sentence-final expressions that appear in weekly magazine column sentences in which the writers state their opinions. The survey showed that the kinds of sentence-final expressions are varied, often with some modality elements. Among adverbs, those typically used for statements appear most often, suggesting some correlation between the adverbs and the sentence-final expressions. We also found relatively frequent use of adverbs that do not often appear in newspapers articles or technical papers.

Keywords: style, genre, modality, opinions, statement, sentence-final expressions, adverbs.

1 Introduction

In composing a piece of written text, writers are expected to do so in accordance with the style, genre, context or *BA* congruent to the purpose and intended audience of the resulting passage. When writing an academic paper or other formal documents with objective descriptions, adverbs such as “tyotto”, which sounds colloquial, or sentence-final expressions such as “-hazu-da,” which marks subjective judgments the speaker or the writer, are inappropriate and makes the resulting passage incoherent. In the writings of non-native learners of Japanese, however, we find frequent examples of such incoherence.

This suggests that clarifying what words and expressions are suitable for which kinds of text would help improve the way learners of Japanese acquire and improve their writing proficiency. In this paper, we mainly focus on adverbs and sentence-final expressions that appear in weekly magazine column sentences in which the writers state their opinions.

A pilot survey of relevant data showed that the kinds of sentence-final expressions are varied, often with some modality elements. Among adverbs, those typically used for statements appear most often, suggesting some correlation between the adverbs and the sentence-final expressions. We also found relatively frequent use of adverbs that do not often appear in newspapers articles or technical papers.

2 Related Research

2.1 Genre

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Different genre categorization of written Japanese texts have been proposed and used from various perspectives and with diverse objectives. Hayashi (1977) listed three standards of categorizing written texts into “formal categorization” in terms of forms, styles and structures, “content categorization” in terms of “material and objects of description” and “functional categorization” in terms of actual functions of the written passages.

According to this categorization, both academic papers and commentary are grouped into the same category. Although both state opinions of the writers in persuasively, the way such arguments are developed and linguistic forms used are different. In academic papers, the write must develop their opinions in an objective manner but in commentary, subjective statements are not out of place. In addition to the criteria stated above, objective versus subjective manner of exposition must be added in the categorization scheme of Japanese written passages.

2.2 Characteristics of written passages by learners of Japanese

Various weaknesses have been pointed out regarding written passages by learners of Japanese. For instance, Sato (2000) lists the following: (1) characters (2) written forms (3) words and expressions (4) grammar and sentence structure (5) discourse (6) coherence in the development of material discussed and (7) coherence of linguistic forms. In relation to “coherence of linguistic forms” he mentions (i) frequent use of informal conversational words and expressions and (ii) styles of sentence final expressions, politeness, light-heartedness as against seriousness, and formality in terms of colloquialism as against formal expressions.

Takahashi (2008) points out errors in terms of “excessive self-expression of the writers subjectivity” and tackles with this issue in terms of “expressions addressing the readers” and “expressions addressing the proposition(al content)s” and suggests that these errors are triggered by “learners insufficient understanding of how expressions denoting the writers perspectives are constrained.”

2.3 Sentence-Final Expressions

In Japanese written passages, the writer’s attitude or stance to the propositions are expressed in the sentence-final expressions. What modality appears is related to whether the sentence is subjectively stated or objectively stated. Various researches have been conducted regarding the relationship of genres of the passages and sentence-final expressions that appear in those passages.

Hadano (1988) surveyed words and sentence-final expressions used in textbooks, experiment manuals and technical papers in scientific subjects and concludes that sentence-final expressions in research papers can be categorized into “statements of facts” and “statement of judgments” and the former can be exemplified by expressions such as “... did/do such and such,” “... indicated/indicate such and such,” “... obtained ... result ...,” and “... differ ...,” while the latter can be exemplified by expressions such as “... can be considered ...,” “we consider ...,” and “... can be viewed.” Most express results and reflections by the authors and the variety of modality is limited.

Takahashi (2005) surveyed sentence-final expressions of (literary) essays into 82.5% of unmarked sentences without modality expressions and 17.5% of marked sentences with modality expressions, with diverse modality expressions. According to this study, passages with many marked sentences are descriptive and emotional, whereas unmarked sentences are logical and intellectual and concludes that (literary) essay includes elements of both.

A survey on sentence-final expressions characteristic of newspaper articles show that in the “local news” section of Japanese newspapers passive and stative forms are often used to feign

objectivity of the content to the readers. Choice of voices and aspects affect apparent objectivity of the passages.

The results of these studies make it clear that according to the genres of the passages, different sentence-final expressions are employed. However, we have not found analysis based on the distinction of passages into those in which authors present themselves to give subjective statements and those in which facts are stated objectively and existence of authors and strengths of their claims are hidden behind those fact statements. One problem with passages produced by learners of Japanese is that their subjectivity is overly expressed and analysis from this point of view would be in order.

2.4 Adverbs

According to the study of meaning and usage of adverbs conducted by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (1991), adverbs are used to (i) elaborate on the action or state, (ii) express feelings and/or attitudes of the speaker and (iii) pre-state what is going to be expressed later in the sentence. Masuoka and Takubo (1994) categorize adverbs into adverbs of “condition/state,” “degree,” “quantity,” “tense and aspect,” “statement,” “evaluation,” “assertion,” and “others (such as delimitation).” Speakers (and writers) act on and convey subjective judgments to listeners (and readers) by means of adverbs.

Frequency of word usage differ according to context or “BA” and adverbs are no exception. It is reported that in daily conversational discourse, use of adverbs are markedly more frequent than in written texts such as newspapers or novels or spoken utterances in news and commentaries (The National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics, 1991). Tanaka (2009), referring to an earlier survey results that show different adverbs are used in spoken discourse and written texts, in the former, such adverbs as “*moo* (already), *yappari* (as expected), *tyotto* (a little bit), *sugu* (right away), *ichiban* (first / foremost)” are frequently used whereas in newspapers and weekly magazines, “*sarani* (further), *mazu* (in the first place / first of all), *sudeni* (already), *tokuni* (in particular), *syoosyoo* (to some degree/extent), *mottomo* (foremost), *nao* (in addition), *tadatini* (immediately), *subete* (all)” are most frequently used. Adverbs of “tense and aspect” and “degree” abound. Some adverbs share similar meanings, such as “*moo*” and “*sudeni*,” both of which mean *already* or “*ichiban*” and “*mottomo*,” both of which mean *foremost*, but are used in different contexts or “*ba*.”

In addition to the difference between written texts and spoken utterances, genre affects the usage of adverbs. Term papers and technical reports are “written passages with certain public nature” and are expected to “develop the main argument logically and with empirical support” (Kouno 2004) and aims to “convey information and opinions without emotional commitments” (cf. Kinoshita 1992). Thus, use of adverbs for subjective judgment does not belong.

Muraoka *et al.* (1997) conducted vocabulary frequency study of agricultural research papers, listing adverbs used. The most frequently used are adverbs of “degree” and “quantity” such as “*hobo* (for the most part),” “*hotondo* (most),” and “*mottomo* (the most)” and adverbs of “aspect” such as “*zyozyoni* (steadily)” and “*tuneni* (always)” and no adverbs of “statement” was listed. Based on this result, we can say that for research papers, adverbs of statements are not used as they are intended to state facts and results objectively.

As an indicator of genres of written texts, previous research such as Murata’s (2000) suggested connecting particles may be effective. On the other hand, as adverbs are related to the expression of writer’s subjectivity, we may be able to use them as an indicator of subjectivity and objectivity of passages.

3 Survey

3.1 The purpose of the survey

As discussed in the preceding sections, when learners of Japanese are instructed to produce some material, the distinction between written texts and spoken utterances or research papers and statements of opinions may not offer enough clues as to the different linguistic expressions employed. Thus, we would like to know differences in linguistic expressions that appear in subjective passages in which the writers can present themselves and objective passages in which the writers do not.

Here, we will take as an example column articles or commentaries on current affairs in weekly magazines as writers can present themselves in those passages and investigate what kinds of sentence-final expressions and adverbs show up.

3.2 The methodology

First we selected commentaries on current affairs among column articles in weekly magazines published and widely circulating in Japan. Fourteen column articles, most of which are commentaries on current affairs, are selected for analysis. Each article consisted of 450 to 780 words, with a total of 7570 words in the fourteen articles. The following are some of the specific details:

『AERA』2011年7月4日号～25日号

AERA issues of July 4th, July 11th, July 18th and July 25th of 2011

- ① 内田樹の大市民講座 「リアリスト」の現実逃避 (467 words)
- ② 養老孟司の脳博物館 「むごい延命」の政治的な裏 (453 words)
- ③ 内田樹の大市民講座 復興相辞任で見た新聞社の終わり (482 words)
- ④ 養老孟司の脳博物館 耐震基準は怪しい (478 words)

『週刊金曜日』2011年7月1日号～29日号「風速計」

- ⑤ 菅首相と小泉元首相の相似形 北村肇 (433 words)
- ⑥ フィクションのネタばらし 石坂啓 (514 words)
- ⑦ 給費制の議論が再び始まった 宇都宮健児 (479 words)
- ⑧ 「独裁」を許す土壌 中島岳志 (488 words)

『週刊金曜日』2011年7月15日、29日号「メディア仕分け人」

- ⑨ 猿山の力関係で動くこの国 猿山から改革したらいいんじゃない? 北原みのり (377 words)
- ⑩ ネット社会を軽視しては国は動かないですよ 香山リカさん 北原みのり (361 words)

『週刊朝日』2011年7月8日号～29日号「田原総一郎のギロン堂」

- ⑪ 市民運動家に戻った菅首相。「我一人突き進む」か。 (718 words)
- ⑫ 亀井氏の「菅落とし」の裏事情とその手腕 (781 words)
- ⑬ “日本の恥”菅首相がつぶした海江田氏のメンツ (712 words)
- ⑭ 全国紙は「菅内閣は総辞職を」と共同宣言を出せ (695 words)

In this survey, we focused on adverbs and sentence-final expressions. We scanned, OCRed and proofed the text, and conducted lexical analysis using WinCha2000, thus following the part-of-speech categorization of ChaSen.

4 Results

4.1 Sentence-Final Expressions

ChaSen analyzes sentences based on “short unit”, which is the shortest morphological unit in Japanese. This makes it difficult to figure out use of sentence-final expressions with modality, which we are interested in here, as they may be realized as combinations of “short units” thus we needed to look for those multi-unit expressions.

Among the sentence-final expressions that we found, there were 318 total words and seventy-five different words. Based on the distinction between marked and unmarked sentences suggested by Takasaki (2005), we divided those into sentence-final expressions with modality and those without. We counted 213 total words and thirty-four different words of sentence-final expressions without modality such as predicative sentences with verbs, predicative sentences with nouns, sentences ending with nouns, predicative sentences with adjectives. For sentence-final expressions with modality, we found 105 total words with forty-one different words. In other words, sixty-seven percentage of sentences show up without modality and thirty-three percent with modality. Sentence-final expressions that appear more than 10 times are for the most part without modality. With less frequency, expressions with modality are varied.

Table 1. Sentence final expressions that appear more than ten times

Sentence-final expressions	Freq	%
Verb- <i>ta</i>	38	11.9%
V	33	10.4%
V- <i>teiru</i>	24	7.5%
V- <i>dearu</i>	20	6.3%
A	13	4.1%
<i>noka?</i>	13	4.1%
V- <i>teita</i>	12	3.8%
<i>nodearu</i>	12	3.8%
<i>noda</i>	11	3.8%
N	10	3.1%
V- <i>nai</i>	10	3.1%

There were sixty-six sentences without modality that end in *-ta* (past or perfective) form and 146 sentences without modality that end in non-*ta* (non-past or non-perfective) forms. It has been pointed out that non-*ta* forms are often used in argumentative commentary or impression statements and for sentences of various topics in general and similar tendencies were confirmed in commentaries on current affairs.

We found forty-eight sentence final-expressions with aspectual elements, which consist of twenty-two percent of sentences without modality. The most frequently used is “... *-teiru*” with forty-two counts both in *-ta* forms and non-*ta* forms. This suggests that in commentaries on current affairs contain sentences that objectively state facts.

We summarized functionalities of sentence-final expressions with modalities based on the categorization in *A Dictionary of Japanese Sentence Patterns* (1998). We found twenty-four kinds of modality functionalities. Table 2 shows those with four counts.

Table 2. Functions of Sentence-final expressions

Function	Freq.	%	Sentence-final expressions
Claim/	24	23%	<i>noda/nodearu</i>

Explanation			
Question	13	12%	<i>noka</i>
The speaker's judgement	13	12%	<i>nodewa naika</i> <i>dewa naika</i> <i>dewa naidarouka</i> <i>hazuda</i> <i>janai no kashira</i>
Estimation	12	11%	<i>darou</i> <i>kamo shirenai</i> <i>youda</i>
Doubt	5	5%	<i>no darou ka</i> <i>darou ka</i>
Restriction	5	5%	<i>shikanai</i> <i>dakeda</i> <i>dake data</i> <i>bakari</i>
Hope, request	4	4%	<i>te hoshii</i> <i>tai</i>

Twenty-three percent of the sentence-final expressions are “claims and explanations” and modality for writer’s subjectivity such as “questions” and “speaker’s judgments” are often found. The distribution somewhat differs from those in literary essays reported by Takasaki [5], where the most frequent was 7% of “judgment” followed by 6% of “explanation” and they show up less frequently than in commentary on current affairs.

This categorization and the one employed in this study is slightly different and we cannot simply compare the percentages but according to Takasaki’s categorization, probability is a kind of “judgment” and we can see the commonality between literary essay in that use of modality for “judgment” and “explanation” are frequent.

We notice in passing that there are many sentences in question forms, even though its functionality is categorized differently. By using (rhetorical) question forms, the writer may be trying to persuade the readers to follow the writer’s lines of thoughts. Use of questions may contribute in changing modality into more objective ones.

4.2 Adverbs

There were 171 total counts of 101 different words analyzed as adverbs, of which 144 counts of 92 different words are considered below, excluding analysis errors of expressions such as “so” and “do”.

Twelve adverbs showed up more than three times in the fourteen articles: *mattaku* (seven times), *ittai* and *sikkari* (six times), *hotondo* and *mou* (five times), *tozen*, *mada*, *motiron* (four times) and *genni*, *tuneni*, *dozini*, *mottomo* (three times).

Regarding the types of adverbs, we followed Masuoka and Takubo (1994) and divided adverbs into eight categories of “condition/state,” “degree,” “quantity,” “tense and aspect,” “statement,” “evaluation,” “assertion,” and “others (such as delimitation).”

“Statement” most frequently show up but adverbs of “degree” and “tense and aspect” appear more often, which may be related to the fact that sentence-final expressions without modality show up often. Sentences without modality serve to convey facts objectively and adverbs of judgment may not easily co-occur.

Frequent use of adverbs of statement suggests that the writer's attitude toward the content or proposition is expressed. In commentaries on current affairs, we can find objective statements of facts and writer's attitudes toward those facts are simultaneously expressed.

What attitudes are expressed? In Table 3, we have summarized sentence-final expressions that are supposed to correspond to those adverbs of "statement."

Table 3. Sentence-Final Expressions Corresponding to Adverbs of "Statement"

Sentence-Final expressions	Freq.	Adverbs of "Statement"
Questions	12	<i>ittai, naze, hatashite, hyottoshitara, moshikasuruto</i>
Estimation	11	<i>osoraku, hontouhi, masahi, kanarazu, tashikani, tabun, doumo, tonikaku, nandaka</i>
Negation	9	<i>mattaku, douhimo</i>
Request/Order/ Hope	3	<i>nantoka, doushitemo</i>
Excitement	2	<i>konnani, nanto</i>

The most frequently used were adverbs of "statement" corresponding to questions. This may be related the fact that question forms are frequently used in sentence-final expressions with modality. The second group are adverbs of "certainty or probability." This may be related to the frequent use of "opinion" and "presumption" in modality. In commentary on current affairs, if the writers present themselves too strongly, the readers may hesitate to agree. It is conceivable that adverbs relating to questions or presumption are used in order to avoid such situations.

Among the adverbs use, we find such rather colloquial expressions that might be used in spoken utterances as *hyottositara, mosikasuruto, doumo, nandaka*, and so on. These adverbs may serve to convey the message of the writers to the readers in an accessible way, familiarizing the former to the latter and marking the presence of the former at the same time.

5 Summary

In this paper, we investigated sentence-final expressions and adverbs that appear in commentaries on current affairs. This was a small-scale pilot study but it suggested that in sentence-final expression among those passages, sentence-ending forms without modality showed up more often in terms of the total occurrence counts, which suggests that the writers explain the facts first and then state their opinions, which is the basic characteristics of commentaries.

In the previous research on sentence-final expressions in literary essays (Takasaki, 2005), it was reported that marked sentences with modality are considered more logical and intellectual. In comparison with literary essays, there are more sentences with modality (marked sentences) than those without (unmarked) in commentaries on current affairs. This coincides with the general perception that the latter is more logical and intellectual than the former. The relative ratio of sentences with and without modality may be an indicator for how logical and/or intellectual a given passage may be perceived in Japanese.

Adverbs appearing in commentaries on current affairs are somewhat different from those appearing in newspaper and weekly magazines as reported in Tanaka (1999) and adverbs of “statement” were most frequently used, reflecting the fact that the writers often express their attitude toward the statement of facts. On the other hand, it seems that among “statement of attitude,” some are more direct expression while others feign some degree of objectivity. Among the ones often found in the pilot study reported here, we found those corresponding to question forms, which were presumably employed to set some balance between expressing attitudes of the writers and presenting themselves in the passage too overtly. These may be considered characteristics of commentaries on current affairs.

There are sentences with the first person expressions such as “I think that” These are rarely used in research papers and newspaper articles. Use of personal expressions is also an important indicator as to the subjectivity versus objectivity of a given passage in Japanese.

6 Further Research

The pilot study reported here is limited in scope and further research with more substantial data is necessary to validate suggestions obtained by the pilot study regarding how the writer is reflected in the passages. Also, comparison with passages in different genres are indispensable to identify the true characteristics of a given genre. We will continue to conduct similar survey on passages in research papers, term papers and student essays.

In the study reported here, we considered what kinds of linguistic expressions may contribute to the writers’ presence in the text by way of sentence-final expressions and adverbs. However, the writer’s subjective judgments are reflected in adjectival and adverbial expressions and choice of personal expressions as well. Also, we would like to study what linguistic forms may contribute in expressing subjective content such as the writer’s personal opinions in apparently objective manner. By collecting those linguistic expressions, we may be able to clarify what distinguishes apparently subjective passages and apparently objective passages, which would contribute in augmenting writing education for learners of Japanese.

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