

■ Expressions of Confirmation

When the speaker is not certain of something, s/he uses an expression of confirmation to ask the listener to confirm or affirm. In Japanese this modality is expressed with affixes at the end of the sentence, such as *darō*, *janaika*, and *ne*. (*Darō* discussed here includes the polite form, *deshō*, and *janaika* includes variations such as *janai* and *janai desuka*.)

Expressions of confirmation are divided into two main types. These two types correspond to the two different levels of the speaker's sense of uncertainty about the object to be confirmed.

One type has the object to be confirmed as the semantic content (called proposition). This type asks to confirm that the semantic content of the sentence is correct (true). This is called confirmation of the proposition. Here are a couple of examples of this type using *darō*.

(1) “*Kasa mottenai darō?*” ‘You don’t have an umbrella, do you?’ “*Aa*” ‘No.’

(2) *Anata Kansai no hito dakara, sōiu ajitsuke suki deshō?* ‘You are from the Kansai region, so you like that type of flavor, don’t you?’

The other type has the listener's knowledge as the object of confirmation. It asks the listener to confirm that the listener has the knowledge of the semantic content of the sentence. What the speaker does not know is whether the listener in fact knows the semantic content of the sentence. The speaker has already confirmed the semantic content of the sentence. This is different from the first type. This is called confirmation of the knowledge. Here are a couple of examples of this type.

(3) *Hora, watashi, konomae hikkoshi o shita bakari deshō* ‘As you know, I’ve just moved lately.’

(4) *Sonna nonki na koto o itte iru baai janai darō* ‘It’s not the time to be so easy-going, is it?’

By confirming the listener's knowledge, the speaker activates the knowledge s/he assumes that s/he and the listener potentially share, as in (3), or the speaker demands that s/he and the listener have the same understanding as the speaker, as in (4).

Janaika also expresses both confirmation of the proposition and that of the knowledge, although there may be some morphological differences between the two functions, such as in the way connection occurs.

(5) *(Hyottoshite) kare wa konokoto o shiranakatta n janaika* ‘(Just maybe) he didn’t know about this, I wonder?’ [Confirmation of the proposition]

(6) *(Hora miro, yappari) kare wa konokoto o shiranakatta janaika* ‘(Didn’t I tell you?) He didn’t know about this after all.’ [Confirmation of the knowledge]

Ne has the usage of confirmation of the proposition, but not confirmation of the knowledge. However, it can express confirmation of the knowledge when it is made into the *yo ne* form, as in (8).

(7) *Kore de ii desu ne* ‘This is OK, I hope?’

(8) *Kimi ni chanto itte oita yo ne* ‘I made sure to tell you, didn’t I?’

Janaika and *ne* have a usage that can be included in expressions of confirmation in the broad sense of the word. In this usage, the confirmation does not work to change uncertainty into certainty, but it asks the listener for some kind of agreement.

(9) *Genkisō janaika/ne* ‘You look good/don’t look good.’

(10) *Ii tenki da ne* ‘Nice weather.’

→疑問形式の用法 Usages of Interrogative Forms (2-H), 終助詞の用法 Usages of Sentence Final Particles (2-H), 助詞 Particles (2-B)

● References

Tanomura, Tadaharu (1988) ‘Hitei Gimonbun Shōkō’ (Essay on Negative Questions) in *Kokugogaku*, Vol. 164.

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