

■ Usage of Sentence Final Particles

Sentence final particles concern the speaker's communication attitude as to how the speaker utters the sentence to the listener. Their function is often directed toward the listener, but some of them specifically do not concern the listener. Major sentence final particles include *yo*, *ne*, *ze*, *sa*, *naa*, *na*, *zo*, and *wa*.

Yo expresses that the speaker wants the listener to pay attention to the speech because the speaker is not talking at the listener one-sidedly, that the speech concerns the listener as well. When the speaker finds a purse on the street, the speaker may say, *A, saifu ga ochiteru* 'Oh, here's a wallet on the ground,' to the listener, but if the wallet is the listener's, the speaker must say, *Saifu ga ochiteru yo* 'Look, (Your) wallet is on the ground.'

Ne expresses that there is no contradiction between the speaker and listener in understanding or recognition. In *Kore de ii ne*, 'This is OK, isn't it?' the speaker confirms with the listener what the speaker understands is correct. The speaker seeks agreement with the listener in *Ii tenki da ne*, 'Nice weather, isn't it?' The speaker answers, *Eeto, sanji desu ne* 'Let's see, it's 3 o'clock, right?' in response to the question, *Ima, nanji desu ka?* 'What time is it?' What the speaker is doing here is to make sure her/his watch is correct or if her/his memory is correct first before answering.

Ze is used when the speaker notifies her/his thought one-sidedly to the listener, as in *Mō kaeru ze* 'I'm going home now.' It is a very curt expression, and it does not sit well with a polite form (e.g., *Shio nara asoko ni arimasu ze* 'The salt is over there.' Basically only male speakers use this form.

Sa expresses the speaker's certitude about the message s/he conveys to the listener, as in *Shinpai shinakutemo sono uchi kaette kuru sa* 'No need to worry. She'll eventually come back.' One can use it to relay a story one has heard from a third party in a light-hearted manner, as in *Kare, kyō korarenai tte sa* 'I've been told he cannot come today.'

Naa, as in *Kirei na hana da naa* 'What a pretty flower!' and *Yoku kita naa* 'So nice of you to come!,' is a sentence-final particle used monologically with an attributive expression to make the sentence exclamatory. *Sōda naa* is used in dialog to indicate that the speaker has to think for a while before answering a question.

Na signals that the speaker becomes aware of something, as in *A, dareka kita na* 'Oh, someone is here.'

The basic use of *zo* is for the utterer to reflect in her/his mind on the newly recognized content, as in *Sakkino hanashi, hen da zo* 'About the story we've heard earlier, it is fishy.' Mostly male speakers use this form. When used in dialog, it has a function of forcing the listener to acknowledge the speaker's utterance, as in *Mō kaeru zo* 'I'm going home.'

Wa with a rising intonation is mainly used by female speakers. It expresses the speaker's recognition of a situation monologically, as in (having recognized a friend) *Ara, Tanaka san da wa* 'Oh, that's Ms. Tanaka.' In dialog, it softens the outpouring of emotion and declaration of the intention, as in *Ureshii wa* 'I am happy' and *Watashi, mō iku wa* 'I am leaving now.'

→モダリティ Modality (2-H), 助詞 Particles (2-B)

● References

Ueno, Tazuko (1972) ‘Shūjoshi to sono shūhen’ (Sentence Final Particles and Its Periphery) in *Nihongo Kyoiku*, 17.

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