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Author(s)	Iida, Maki
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Sentence-final particles in Cantonese and Japanese from a cross-linguistic perspective

Maki IIDA

1 Introduction

Cantonese is a major Chinese dialect spoken in Guangdong (Canton) Province, Hong Kong, and Macau, as well as in the Chinese diaspora. The dialect has been extensively studied in the field of Chinese linguistics, and sentence-final particles (hereafter SFPs) are one of the best-studied areas of its grammar. SFPs in Cantonese occur only in conversation and have a variety of “communicative (pragmatic) functions”, including (a) the indication of speech act types, (b) evidentiality, and (c) affective and emotional coloring (Matthews and Yip 2011: 389). Here are some examples.

(1) 隨便 坐 啦。

Ceoi4 bin2 co5 laa1.

as-you-please sit SFP

‘Please take a seat.’

(Matthews and Yip 1994: 351)

(2) A: 你 緊張 呀?

Nei5 gan2zoeng1 aa4?

you nervous SFP

‘Are you nervous?’

B: 係 啫。

Hai6 gwaa3.

yes SFP

‘I suppose so.’

(Matthews and Yip 1994: 353)

Cantonese is known for its abundance of SFPs, with one influential study listing 30 basic forms (Kwok 1984: 8). The frequency of their use in spontaneous conversation is also outstanding among Chinese dialects.

While SFPs are said to be a major characteristic of Cantonese, they are also attested

to as a distinct word class in genetically unrelated languages outside the Chinese dialects, such as Japanese. SFPs in Japanese, usually called *shuujoshi* (lit. “final particles” or “ending particles”) in Japanese grammar, have also been studied from a number of perspectives and approaches, and are often treated as an important characteristic of the Japanese language. In other words, SFPs in these two languages are well discussed in their individual fields, but there is still little research on the common properties of this word class in different languages.

In the field of cross-linguistic studies, particles or items that occur in the final position of an utterance have been attracting more attention from various linguistic approaches.¹ The most important work among them is Hancil et al. 2015a. Considered “the first cross-linguistic overview of final particles”, this work tries to establish a cross-linguistically valid category under the name “Final Particles” (FPs, hereafter), which contains a wide range of items or particles in many different languages of the world that appear at the end of utterances and that “have no propositional content and do not effect the truth conditions of the unit they accompany” (Hancil et al. 2015b). The languages discussed in the book include European languages like English, Dutch and Finnish as well as Asian languages like Cantonese and Japanese. Some examples from Hancil et al. 2015b are:

< English >

(3) I wouldn't care {actually / anyway / but / even / so / then / though}.

< Dutch >

(4) Die avond moest 't gebeuren {dus / immers / maar / misschien}.

'That evening it had to happen {thus / after all / but / perhaps}.'

< Cantonese >

(5) 你 識 佢 {嗎 / 咩} ?

Nei5 sik1 keoi5 maa3 / me1?

you know him/her SFP SFP

'Do you know him/her {(neutral question) / (surprise, dismay)} ?'

As seen in the English example, the so-called FPs in European languages are a heterogeneous category that includes items recruited from other word classes such as adverbs or conjunctions. In other words, the canonical position of these items in the sentence structure is not the end of the sentence or utterance, rather they may merely appear in the final position in spontaneous conversation. As discussed in the final section of this paper, research on this universally defined category of FPs deserves attention when exploring the diachronic development of SFPs in Japanese and Cantonese.

However, from a purely synchronic point of view, SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese should be kept apart from the broadly defined FPs because they constitute a homogeneous category that primarily appear at the end of an utterance or sentence according to their syntactic rules.

It is true that Hancil et al. 2015b also regard the FPs in Asian languages like Cantonese and Japanese as an independent subtype alongside other subtypes such as the adverbial type and the conjunction type, on the basis of their lexical sources. Yet, there seems to be a more fundamental difference between the Asian type and the non-Asian type as will be discussed below. Alternatively, we propose that the FPs in Cantonese and Japanese as well as in other Chinese dialects be grouped primarily with those in Southeast Asian languages.

In fact, description of such items can be easily found in the grammars of Southeast Asian languages. In Lahu, a member of the Tibeto-Burman language family, there are particles whose functions seem similar to “the final interjectory particles” used “in colloquial Japanese” (Matisoff 1973: 380, 583), i.e. SFPs. Lao, a member of the Tai branch of languages, is also rich in SFPs. The most comprehensive grammar of Lao devotes an entire chapter to describing SFPs, saying that “Lao sentence-final particles are like sentence-final particles found across languages of mainland Southeast Asia” (Enfield 2007: 41) including Cantonese, Thai and Vietnamese.

SFPs in these languages seem to have more in common with those in Cantonese and Japanese than with FPs in European languages. Therefore it may be more constructive to explore the properties of the SFPs in Asian languages before exploring a universally valid category of FPs. In this regard, it will be helpful to discuss SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese as representatives of this type, looking into the similarities between them, despite their respective languages’ lack of genetic or typological commonality.

Thus the present study aims to explore the properties of the SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese by comparing their similarities in order to provide insight into the more narrowly defined category of SFPs, also called FPs of Asian type.

2 What are SFPs in a narrow sense?

Before exploring the similarities between SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese, it is necessary to define the category—that is, to identify the prototypical properties of SFPs—in contrast to the universally defined category of FPs. In our view, SFPs constitute a closed class composed of a number of bound items highly integrated in the sentence but which

primarily occur at the end of the sentence.

“Highly-integrated” means that only the items tightly connected to the host sentence are viewed as a typical member of the category. In this regard, tags or tag-like items, such as “係咪 hai6mai6 (<係唔係 hai6m4hai6 ‘be-not-be’)” ‘isn’t it? / right?’, “呵 ho2” ‘huh?’ in Cantonese should be kept apart from SFPs, although they are occasionally treated similarly (e.g. Yau 1980), likely because they also appear in the sentence final position and serve similar functions.

However, unlike SFPs, these items show relatively low integration into the sentence in the following respects.

First, as others have noted (e.g. Matthews and Yip 1994: 338), tags can be separated from their host sentence by a pose (e.g. 7, 8) whereas SFPs cannot (e.g. 6).

(6) *大家 都 聽倒, 啦。

Daai6gaa1 dou1 teng1dou2, laa1.
everyone all listen-ACP SFP

‘You all heard it, right?’

(7) 大家 都 聽倒 啦, 係咪?

Daai6gaa1 dou1 teng1dou2 laa1, hai6mai6?
everyone all listen-ACP SFP TAG

‘You all heard it, didn’t you?’

(8) 大家 都 聽倒 啦, 呵?

Daai6gaa1 dou1 teng1dou2 laa1, ho2?
everyone all listen-ACP SFP TAG

‘You all heard it, huh?’

Second, the allowance of vocative expressions and SFPs before tags also demonstrates their loose connection with the host unit, as the following examples show:

(9) 其實 我哋 由 開始 認識 嗰 一 日,

Kei4sat6 ngo5dei6 jau4 hoilchi2 jing6sik1 go2 jat1 jat6,
in-fact we from begin know that one day

梁 山 伯 同 祝 英 台 嘅 歷史, 就 開始

Loeng4 Saan1baak3 tung4 Zuk1 Jing1toi4 ge3 lik6si2, zau6 hoilchi2
(Name) and (Name) LK history then begin

改 寫 咗 喇, 賢弟! 係 唔 係 呀!

goi2 se2 zo2 laa3, jin4dai6! Hai6m4hai6 aa3!
rewrite PFV SFP brother TAG SFP

‘Actually, [we] since the day we met, the history of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai began to be rewritten? Brother! Right?’

([Loeng] 93)

- (10) …咪 講 我 啦! 可能 最後 唔 係 我 走,
 mai5 gong2 ngo5 laa1! Ho2nang4 zeoi3hau6 m4 hai6 ngo5 zau2
 don't speak me SFP maybe in-the-end not be I leave
 係 你哋 是但 一個 唔聲唔聲 走 咗 呢!
 hai6 nei5dei6 si6daan6 jat1 go3 m4seng1m4seng1 zau2 zo2 nel!
 be you-PL any one CL silently leave PFV SFP
 阿 志 呵?
 Aa3 zi3 ho2?
 (Name) TAG

‘Don’t talk about me! Maybe in the end, some of you will leave silently if I don’t leave, Ah-Jee, huh?’

([Baat] 352)

Thus, it is more appropriate to say these tags are attached to a text which may consist of a set of sentences, rather than attached to a single sentence. In other words, tags and SFPs function on different levels.

Similar to Cantonese, SFPs in Japanese are tightly connected to, or highly integrated into, the sentence.

- (11) *ちゃんと聞こえた、よ。
 Chanto kikoeta, yo.
 well hear-PST SFP
 ‘I heard it clearly.’
- (12) *ちゃんと聞こえた、ね。²
 Chanto kikoeta, ne.
 well hear-PST SFP
 ‘You heard it clearly, didn’t you?’

To summarize, the structural or formal properties of SFPs stated above suggest that SFPs constitute a part of the sentence structure in these two languages. In this sense, they are different from the universally defined FPs, which “do not participate in the organization of sentence structure” (Hancil et al. 2015b).³

As to the semantic or functional properties of SFPs in a narrow sense, it can be argued tentatively that at least the typical members have the function of expressing the speaker’s

communicative or expressive attitudes concerning the content of the sentence at the time of speech.⁴

While we have thus far spoken mostly of SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese, this definition may also apply to a limited extent to SPFs in other Southeast Asian languages mentioned above.

3 Similarities between Cantonese and Japanese SFPs

In addition to the defining characters of SFPs discussed in the previous section, there are a number of other similarities between SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese. While some of these similarities may be limited to these two languages, they are nevertheless of great significance considering that the two languages belong to different language families with little in common among their major typological characteristics such as phonology, morphology and syntax.

This section will focus on the similarities, while typological differences will only be mentioned in each particular discussion briefly.

3.1 Syntactic characteristics

The first common characteristic that attracts attention is that some SFPs can occur in a non-final position in the sentence. SFPs by definition occur at the end of a sentence. However, some of them can be attached to the end of a phrase or word within a sentence.

(13) 我 話 呀, 今日 好 好天氣 呀, 冇 落雨 呀,

Ngo5 wa6 aa3 gam1jat6 hou2 hou2tin1hei3 aa3, mou5 lok6 jyu5 aa3,

I say SFP today very fine weather SFP not-have rain SFP

同埋 呀, 我 想 知 你 究竟 有 幾 鍾意 我

tung4maai4 aa3, ngo5 soeng2 zil nei5 gau3ging2 jau5 gei2 zung1ji3 ngo5

plus SFP I wants know you on-earth have how like me

呀!

aa3!

SFP

'I say, it's a lovely day today. No rain, too. And also, I want to know how much you like me.' ([Hou] 286)

(14) J: …係 呢, 頭先 你 見 唔 見倒 佢哋 呀?

Hai6 ne1, tau4sin1 nei5 gin3 m4 gin3dou2 keoi5dei6 aa3?

yes SFP just-now you see not see-ACP they SFP

‘That reminds me, did you see them just now?’

M: 邊個 佢哋 呀?

Bin1go3 keoi5dei6 aa3?

who they SFP

‘Who are they?’

J: 阿 Stephen 啦、黃仔 啦、陳 經理 啦, 佢哋 都 係

Aa3 Stephen laa1, Wong4zai2 laa1, Can4 ging1lei5 laa1, keoi5dei6 dou1 hai6

(Name) SFP (Name) SFP (Name) manager SFP they all be

喺度 買 緊 餸 呀。

hai2dou6 maai5 gan2 sung3 aa3.

there buy PROG ingredient SFP

‘Stephen, Wong and Manager Chan, they were also buying groceries there.’

([John] 148)

Similarly in Japanese, SFPs such as “ne” and “sa” can be inserted into a sentence to seek the hearer’s reaction (NKBK 2003: 240).

(15) それでね、この間 ね、みんなに あった 時 にね、…

Sorede ne, konoaida ne, minna ni atta toki ni ne,

and SFP the-other-day SFP everyone to meet-PST time at SFP

‘And so, the other day, when I met everyone…’

(NKBK 2003: 260)

(16) 昨日 さ、田中 に ばったり 会った んだ けど さ、どうも

Kinoo sa, Tanaka ni battari atta nda kedo sa, doomo

yesterday SFP (Name) to run-into-PST NOM-COP but SFP somehow

いつもの 元氣 が ない んだ よ。

itsumo no genki ga nai nda yo.

usual LK energy SUB not-exist NOM-COP SFP

‘Yesterday, I ran into Tanaka, but somehow he lacked his usual energy.’

(NKBK 2003: 252)

As is apparent above, the meaning of the particles occurring in a sentence-internal position is related to the meaning of the sentence-final use. For example, the Cantonese SFP laa1, which has the meaning of establishing or seeking “common ground” (Luke 1990,

Matthews and Yip 1994) in the sentence-final position can also be used sentence-internally for enumerating or listing items (as in 14). As Luke 1990 elaborates, this listing use of *laa1* is another manifestation of its “establishing common ground” meaning. As to the other SFPs mentioned in (13–16), their sentence-internal uses are also usually described in relation to their sentence-final uses (Miyazaki et al. 2002 : 274, NKBK 2003, etc.).

Thus we consider the sentence-internal uses of these particles as extensions of their sentence-final uses. Diachronic evidence also supports this view. According to Onodera 2004: 198, the Japanese SFP “*ne*” and its variants developed first into the sentence-internal particle (as in 15) and then finally into the sentence-initial marker, namely, the interjection or the discourse marker as in:

- (17) ねえ、さっき 何 て 言った の？
 Nee, sakki nan te itta no?
 INTJ just-now what QT say-PST SFP
 ‘Tell me, what did you say just now?’

This is in clear contrast to the positional shift of FPs in the previously mentioned European languages, which developed in the exact opposite direction—from utterance-internal to utterance-final.

3.2 Phonological characteristics

3.2.1 Vowels

SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese also exhibit similar phonological characteristics.

The first notable characteristic is their similar phonological shape.

Let us first examine Cantonese SFPs. It is difficult to enumerate exactly how many particles the language has because there is a great divergence in view on how to identify members of this word class. As is often the case with word classes, there are typical members and marginal members in the SFPs class.

The following list presents some typical members of the Cantonese SFPs class. Some of them contain additional meanings such as aspect (as for *laa3*, *lo3*) or focus (as for *ze1*) apart from their communicative or expressive meanings, yet there is no denying that their phonological shapes are all very similar.

- (18) *ge3*, *laa3*, *lo3*, *ze1*, *aa3*, *wo3*, *aa4*, *wo5*, *laa1*, *aalmaa3*
lo1, *gwaa3*, *me1*, *aa1*, *le5*, *le4*, *ne1*

As is shown here, they are almost all monosyllabic except the particle *aalmaa3*. Furthermore, the vowel phonemes consist of relatively open vowels such as “a, o, e”. There

are no close vowels like “i, u”.⁵

The Japanese counterparts are also monosyllabic and consist of relatively open vowels. As in Cantonese, determining the exact number of SFPs in Japanese is also difficult due to the presence of marginal members in the category. However, the vowel phonemes in at least the following items, which “can be identified as SFPs without dispute” (Miyazaki et al. 2002 : 262), are the same as the ones used in Cantonese SFPs.

- (19) よ、ぞ、ぜ、わ、さ、ね(え)、な(あ)
yo zo ze wa sa ne(e) na(a)

It is not surprising that the SFPs in both languages consist of open or half-open vowel phonemes, that is, sonorous vowels, since SFPs are the grammatical means for expressing the speaker’s communicative / expressive attitudes.⁶

3.2.2 Tones

In the area of supra-segmental phonological characteristics, SFPs in Cantonese and Japanese also exhibit a striking resemblance. However, due to the difference in the languages’ phonological systems, the similarities are not obvious at first sight.

In this section, let us begin by explaining how tones or intonations of the SFPs are used in both of these languages.

3.2.2.1 Tones of the SFPs

It is well-known that Cantonese is classified as a tone language, in which each syllable is pronounced with a fixed pitch pattern. SFPs are not an exception, with each SFP described as carrying one of the six lexical tones, e.g. laa1, laa3, in the same way ordinary content morphemes do, such as si1 ‘poem’, si3 ‘try’.⁷

Below are listed all lexical tones in Cantonese for reference.⁸

Table 1.

Tone 1	[55]	(High level)	Tone 2	[25]	(High rising)
Tone 3	[33]	(Mid level)	Tone 4	[21]	(Low falling)
Tone 5	[23]	(Low rising)	Tone 6	[22]	(Low level)

However, several studies (Cheung 1972: 170–195, Cheung 1986: 256) have pointed out that the so-called ‘tones’ superimposed on SFPs differ from lexical tones and are more similar to intonation. Phonetic studies like Wu 2008, 2013 also support this claim by using acoustic

analysis. For instance, the pitch contour of the SFP *me1* is rising (Wu 2008) despite the fact that the particle is described as having Tone 1, namely the high level tone. Also, the pitch level and contour of the SFP *wo5* was found different from that of Tone 5 for ordinary content morphemes (Wu 2013: 46).

Japanese SFPs, on the other hand, do not have fixed pitch shape since, unlike Cantonese, Japanese is not a tone language. Yet, interestingly, several studies have noticed that SFPs may take on several distinctive types of intonations to modify the shades of meaning (Moriyama 1989, Koyama 1997, Oshima 2013, among others).

For example, Koyama 1997 points out the following three types of intonation for the SFP ‘*ne*’.

(20) あなたが 田中 さん です ね。

Anata ga Tanaka san desu ne.

you SUB (Name) Mr. COP-HON SFP

‘You are Mr. Tanaka, right?’

————— < falling-rising > (confirmation)

(21) そろそろ 野茂 も 打たれ 出した ね。

Sorosoro Nomo mo ut. are dashita ne.

it’s-almost-time (Name) also hit-PASS begin-PST SFP

‘Nomo is starting to get hammered.’

——— そうだ ね。

Soo da ne.

so COP SFP

‘Yeah.’

————— < rising > (seeking agreement, reminding)

(22) どう です、やってもらえます か。

Doo desu, yatte morae masu ka?

how COP-HON do for-me HON SFP

‘What do you say? Could you do it for me?’

——— いやあ、どうも、困り ました ね。

Iyaa, doomo komari mashita ne

no really at-a-loss HON-PST SFP

‘Well…Gosh, what should I do?’

————— < rising-falling > (seeing for oneself, exclamation etc)

‘Yo’ can also be pronounced at least in two different ways (Koyama 1997), as in ⁹:

(23) 髪 に 何か ついてます よ。 < rising >

Kami ni nanika tsuite masu yo.
hair to something stick-PROG-HON SFP

‘There is something in your hair.’

(24) 冗談 じゃありません よ。 < falling >

Joodan jaarimasen yo.
kidding COP-not-HON SFP

‘No kidding!’

These two variants of ‘yo’ have been studied in other works (e.g. Hasunuma 1996, Inoue 1993) as well.

The intonational difference between the two ‘yo’ is conspicuous especially in imperative sentences where the use of the falling ‘yo’ would convey the note of “correction or criticism” (Koyama 1997).

(25) 早く 来い よ。 < rising > (Koyama 1997)

Hayaku koi yo
quickly come-IMP SFP

‘Come quickly.’

(26) 早く 来い よ。 < falling > (Koyama 1997)

Hayaku koi yo
quickly come-IMP SFP

‘Why don’t you come quickly?’

Another SFP ‘ka’ is also said to have two intonational variants, according to Moriyama 1989 :

(27) そう です か。 < rising > (question)

Soo desu ka
so COPS-HON SFP

‘Is that so?’

(28) (なるほど) そう です か。 < falling > (realization or understanding)

(Naruhodo) Soo desu ka.
(I-see) so COPS-HON SFP

‘Oh, I see.’

To summarize, a single SFP can take on two or more types of intonations according to the nuance in Japanese. Recent studies such as Todoroki 2008 have given a more systematic and comprehensive description of these intonational patterns of SFPs.¹⁰

In view of how intonation is used with Japanese SFPs, the tones of Cantonese SFPs can be seen from a different perspective. That is, the tones which are said to be inherent to individual SFPs in Cantonese are equivalent to the intonations which are superimposed on SFPs in Japanese.

There are two cases in which the former can be compared to the latter.

In the first case, a single SFP in Cantonese has tonal variants. A slight change of pitch contour adds some modification to the original meaning, but the resultant form is nevertheless regarded as the same morpheme as the original one. The most frequently observed variation of this type is the one between high level tone and sharp falling tone, as is identified for *laa1*, *ze1*, *me1*, *ne1* etc. Here are some examples.

- (29) 我 當然 唔 會 噉 做 { 啦 / 啦 ↘ }
 Ngo5 dong1jin4 m4 wui5 gam2 zou6 laa1 / laa1 ↘ .
 I of-course not likely like-that do SFP SFP
 ‘Of course, I wouldn’t do such a thing’

- (30) 佢 淨係 得 個 樣 { 啱 / 啱 ↘ }
 Keoi5 zing6hai6 dak1 go3 joeng2 ze1 / ze1 ↘ .
 he only only-have CL appearance SFP SFP
 ‘He looks nice, that’s all, isn’t it?’

Incidentally, the sharp falling tone observed here is reminiscent of the “rising-falling” intonation which is superimposed on the Japanese SFP ‘*ne*’ (as in 22) in terms of auditory impression and perhaps in the change of nuance as well.

The second case in which the tones of Cantonese SFPs can be regarded as similar to the intonations superimposed on Japanese SFPs involves two or more distinct morphemes. A characteristic of SFPs in Cantonese is that pairs or groups of SFPs share the same segment and only differ in tone, e.g. *aa3* and *aa4*, or *wo3* and *wo5*. Considering that different intonations serve to distinguish the nuances of a single SFP in Japanese, it seems possible for these pairs or groups of Cantonese SFPs to be treated as variant forms of a single SFP. This, in fact, is exactly what Cheung 1972 has proposed.

To give one example, the difference between *wo4* (unexpectedness: Lee and Law 2001) and *wo3* (noteworthiness: Luke 1990) does not seem large enough to treat them as separate SFPs. As the following example shows, they are sometimes interchangeable.

- (31) 呢 度 又 有 梳化 { 喎 / 喎 }。
 NilDou6 jau6 jau5 solfa2 wo4 / wo3 .
 here also have sofa SFP SFP

'Here is another sofa.'

(Lee and Law 2001 with modification)

In sum, if Cantonese SFPs are viewed along this line, the number of SFPs would be reduced considerably and the whole class could thereby be described more systematically. Conversely, if we were to treat the variants of a single SFP in Japanese as separate morphemes, the number of the SFP would multiply. The reason why Cantonese treats the SFPs with different pitch shape as separate morphemes is because all morphemes in Cantonese have inherent distinct tones including functional or grammatical morphemes such as the perfective aspect marker *zo2* or the linking particle *ge3*. But this is not the case with many tone languages such as Mandarin. Therefore it can be argued that among the major Chinese dialects, Cantonese is particularly sensitive to the distinctions of tones. As Wu 2008 puts it, "[s]ince the native speakers are very familiar auditorily with the contrastive lexical tones, when a syllable which has *Fx* [=fundamental frequency] values close to one of the tone categories, the native speakers are likely to group this syllable into one of the contrastive tones."

In our view, the same goes for the *-k* ending which occurs in certain Cantonese SFPs, as in 'laak3', 'lok3', 'zek1'. The *-k* ending, which sounds more like a glottal stop according to Matthews and Yip 1994: 339, strengthens the meaning of the original form (Leung 1992: 116). Hence *laa3* and *laak3*, *lo3* and *lok3* etc. are contrasted by the strength of meaning.¹¹ These pairs have often been treated as separate SFPs in previous works.

In Japanese, on the other hand, a similar ending in some SFPs is described as "a high and short brisk intonation" (Hashimoto 1992), for example:

(32) お断り だ ねっ。 ('ne' indicating speaking decisively) (Hashimoto 1992)

O-kotowari da ne?

no-way COP SFP

'No way!'

(33) お断り だ よっ。

O-kotowari da yo?

no-way COP SFP

'No way!'

Aside from the pitch register, the short brisk intonation sounds much like the glottal stop ending in Cantonese. Yet, in Japanese, SFPs carrying this intonation, e.g. 'ne?', 'yo?' cannot be treated as individual SFPs in contrast to the original ones e.g. 'ne', 'yo'. The reason why an SFP with the *-k* ending tends to be distinguished from the one without it

in Cantonese is again due to its phonological structure. In Cantonese, the ending -k makes a phonological distinction, for example, *haal* ‘shrimp’ is distinguished from *haakl* ‘black’. Consequently, a syllable with the -k ending tends to be regarded as an individual morpheme on its own in contrast to the morpheme without the -k, even in the case of SFPs. Again, this causes an increase in the perceived total number of SFPs in the language. Considering how the glottal stop intonation of Japanese SFPs is treated, it may be more appropriate to consider SFPs ending with -k in Cantonese as the variants of those without -k.

In summary, the tones which are treated as inherent in individual SFPs in Cantonese are equivalent to the intonations which are superimposed on SFPs in Japanese. Therefore, it might be fruitful to group together the two or more SFPs in Cantonese which share the same segment and treat them as variants, in the manner Cheung 1972 did. This looks even more promising when we refer to Enfield’s Lao grammar, which states that “they [SFPs in Lao, another tone language] are under-specified for tone, picking up their pitch contours from the kinds of natural principles of iconic-indexical motivation that determine pragmatically meaningful pitch contours in non-tonal languages.” (Enfield 2007: 73)

3.2.2.2 Relationship between tone and meaning

In the previous section, we argued that the tones of the SFPs in Cantonese (and possibly in Lao as well) are equivalent to the intonations (hereafter ‘tones’) of SFPs in Japanese. This suggests that it is possible that the relationship between tone and meaning is not arbitrary but subject to more or less similar, that is, iconic-indexical (Enfield 2007), constraints, since SFPs are a class of words which specifically serve the function of expressing communicative or expressive attitudes. In other words, there should be universal cross-linguistic tendencies in how tone is used with SFPs.

However, due to the lack of detailed analysis in this research area, we must confine ourselves to pointing out a few particular cases.

First, SFPs which indicate the “seeking of common ground” (Luke 1990, Matthews and Yip 1994) such as *laal* in Cantonese or the “seeking of agreement” (Uyeno 1971, Miyazaki et al. 2002 etc.) such as ‘*ne*’ in Japanese are given a high pitch register. As seen in table 1 of the previous section, Tone 1 in Cantonese belongs to the high register as opposed to the middle or low register. In Japanese, ‘*ne*’ has three tonal variants according to the detailed description made by Todoroki 2008: “accentual rise” (e.g. 21), “interrogative rise” (e.g. 20) and “rise-fall” (e.g. 22), which respectively correspond to “rising”, “falling-rising” and “rising-falling” in Koyama 1997’s terminology. These can all be seen as relating to the high register.

Even the “rise-fall” (“rising-falling”) tone, which is equivalent to “the sharp falling tone” in the previous section, is connected to the high register in that the beginning of the tone must be high enough to present a sharp drop.

(34) どう です、 やって もらえ ます か。

Doo desu, yatte morae masu ka.

how COP-HON do for-me HON SFP

‘What do you say? Could you do it for me?’

—— いやあ、 どうも、 困り ました ね。 —— < rising-falling >

Iyaa, doomo komari mashita ne.

no really at-a-loss HON-PST SFP

‘Well…Gosh, what should I do?’

Second, meanings that are related to receiving information tend towards a low falling tone, namely a slight drop in the low register. The Cantonese *wo4*, which has Tone 4, and the Japanese ‘*ka*’ are a case in point.

Let us first look at the Japanese ‘*ka*’. The Japanese ‘*ka*’ takes a rising tone when it is used in an interrogative sentence, as in:

(35) 彼 は 行きました か。 (Moriyama 1989)

Kare wa ikimashita ka.

he TOP go-HON-PST SFP

‘Did he go?’

On the other hand, when it is used to express “realization or understanding” on the part of the speaker, it takes a low falling tone.

(36) なるほど 2 たす 2 は 4 か ↓ (Moriyama 1989)

Naruhodo ni tasu ni wa yon ka

I-see two plus two TOP four SFP

‘Oh, I see. Two plus two equals 4’

(37) (独り言で)

今 3時 か ↓ (Moriyama 1989)

Ima san ji ka

now three o'clock SFP

‘(Saying to oneself) Oh, it’s already 3 o’clock.’

According to Moriyama, the ‘realization or understanding’ use of ‘*ka*’ expresses that information which did not previously exist or was incomplete has been incorporated into the speaker’s knowledge at the moment of speech.

This is reminiscent of the description of the Cantonese wo4 by Lee and Law 2001, that “it indicates an item of information as previously not in the knowledge store of the speaker”, although the SFP is characterized in the same work as an evidential marker expressing unexpectedness. Here is an example.

(38) 原來 佢 食 過 大麻 嗰。 (Lee and Law 2001)

Jyun4loi4 keoi5 sik6 gwo3 daai6maa4 wo4.
realization-marker s/he eat ASP marijuana SFP

‘(I discovered that) s/he tried marijuana before’

In a similar vein, the Cantonese aa4 appears to be connected with the meaning of receiving information, based on the explanation made by Chao 1947: 102 “Do I hear you right? Am I repeating your statement correctly?”. It suggests that aa4 marks the information or message which the speaker has received from the hearer or the environment (also see Iida 2005).

(39) 阿水：我 決定 咗… 送 你 番 屋企 喇， 兩 點

Ngo5 kyut3ding6 zo2, sung3 nei5 faan1 uk1kei2 laa3, loeng5 dim2

I decide PFT send you back home SFP two o'clock

幾 喇！

gei2 laa3!

some SFP

‘I’ve decided… to take you home. It’s already 2 o’clock!’

阿煩：兩 點 幾 喇?¹² 咁 快 嘅？ 唔 駛 送 喇， 我

Loeng5 dim2 gei2 laa4? Gam3 faai3 ge2? M4 sai2 sung3 laa3, ngo5

two o'clock some SFP so fast SFP not need send SFP I

搭 的士 得 喇！

daap3 dik1si2 dak1 laa3!

ride taxi OK SFP

‘It’s 2 o’clock? So soon? Now you don’t have to (take me home).

I’m fine to take a taxi.’

([Sei] 74)

While it is difficult to make generalizations about the meanings of tones or intonations, much less find similarities between two languages, we suggest that investigation into particular cases as we have done here will prove more fruitful than a simple and abstract generalization of the meanings of particular tones of SFPs in both languages.

4 Degree of grammaticalization

Having explored the similarities in various formal aspects of SFPs, we now discuss the degree of grammaticalization, in a synchronic sense, of the category in both languages. In what follows we will argue that SFPs constitute a highly grammaticalized category in both languages. This is reflected in two respects: 1) frequency of use, and 2) obligatoriness.

First, let us look at frequency.

As is often suggested in previous studies in Cantonese, SFPs are used frequently in conversation. According to an informal count, SFPs are used every 1.5 seconds on average (Luke 1990: 11).

In addition, we would like to highlight that in Cantonese (almost) every sentence can carry an SFP.¹³

To illustrate this point, let us present an excerpt from a scenario book written in Cantonese. Most of the sentences or sentence fragments are accompanied by SFPs as shown below (e.g. 40).¹⁴ However, what is more important here is that SFPs can be added even to the end slots where there are no SFPs in the original text. The SFPs shown in parentheses were provided by the native speakers.

(40) 阿煩：得 喇， 喂， 陳占， 我 自己 响 度 等 車

Dak1 laa3, wai3, Can4 Zim1, ngo5 zi6gei2 hoeng2 dou6 dang2 ce1

OK SFP INTJ (Name) I myself here wait car

得 喇， 你 走 啦。

dak1 laa3, nei5 zau2 laa1.

OK SFP you leave SFP

'It's okay. Hey, Chan-Jim. I'm OK waiting for a bus here. You should go.'

陳占：唔 駛 啦， 我 都 冇 嘢 做 (嘅)， 陪 你

M4 sai2 laa1, ngo5 dou1 mou5 je5 zou6 (ge2), pui4 nei5

not need SFP I also not-have thing do SFP accompany you

等 埋 車 先 啦。

dang2 maai4 ce1 sin1 laa1.

wait also car first SFP

'No I don't have to. I have nothing to do. I will stay with you till the bus comes.'

阿煩：星期 六 晚 嘞， 冇 嘢 做 呀？

Sing1kei4 luk6 maan5 wo3, mou5 je5 zou6 aa4?

Saturday night SFP not-have thing do SFP

'It's Saturday night. You have nothing to do?'

陳占：冇 呀……哈。

Mou5 aa3 ha2.

not-have SFP INTJ

'No,, Nothing……,you know.'

阿煩：咦， 冇 車 囉 嘞。

Ji2, jau5 ce1 lo3 wo3.

INTJ have car SFP SFP

'Hey! Here comes the bus.'

陳占：冇 冇 散紙 (呀) ？

Jau5 mou5 saan2 zi2 (aa3) ?

have not-have small change SFP

'Do you have any small change?'

阿煩：冇 八達通 (嘅)。

Jau5 Baat3daat6tung1 (ge2).

have (Name) SFP

'I have an Octopus.'

陳占：咁 得 啦……Bye !

Gam2 dak1 laa1, baail.

then OK SFP bye

'Okay, then. See you!'

阿煩：你 冇 冇 拍拖 呀 宜家？

Nei5 jau5mou5 paak3to1 aa3 ji4gaal?

you have not-have date SFP now

'Are you dating anyone now?'

陳占：我？ 冇… 嘅……

Ngo5? Jau5 ge2

I have SFP

'Me? Well… I think so.'

阿煩：我 都 有 (嗶) …… 上 車 喇 我, Bye。
 Ngo5 dou1 jau5 wo3 soeng5 ce1 laa3 ngo5, baail.
 I also have SFP get-on car SFP I bye
 'Me, too. OK. I'm getting on the bus. Bye!'
 陳占：Bye。
 Baail.
 bye
 'Bye!'

([19] 145)

This illustrates that SFPs can occur in every sentence, that is to say, they are firmly incorporated into the grammatical system of the language. Again this makes another striking contrast with the FPs in the European languages mentioned in section 1.

The second point, which is closely related to frequency, is obligatoriness. The obligatoriness of the SFP in Cantonese is most prominently reflected by the following.

As has often been mentioned in previous studies, sentences or utterances without SFPs sound incomplete or unnatural in conversational Cantonese. The most typical case is interrogative sentences. There are three types of structurally formed interrogatives in Cantonese, namely Yes-No (or A-not-A) questions, wh-questions and alternative questions. All of these types are usually accompanied by an SFP, most commonly aa3.

(41) 買 咗 個 波 未 呀？ (Kwok 1984: 71)

Maai5 zo2 go3 bo1 mei6 aa3?
 buy ASP CL ball not-yet SFP

'Have you bought a ball yet?'

(42) 我 哋 幾時 去 呀？ (Kwok 1984: 72)

Ngo5dei6 gei2si4 heoi3 aa3?
 we when go SFP

'When are we leaving?'

(43) 你 食 飯 定 食 麵 呀？ (Cheung 1972: 176)

Nei5 sik6 faan6 ding6 sik6 min6 aa3?
 you eat rice or eat noodle SFP

'Will you have rice or noodles?'

These interrogative sentences are formed structurally, and the SFP aa3 here "does not add a great deal of meaning to the sentence" (Kwok 1984: 176). Yet, the sentence would sound "curt and abrupt" without it (Cheung 1972: 176, Kwok 1984: 71).

This suggests that SFPs in Cantonese are a highly grammaticalized category in that it is

almost necessary or obligatory as part of the rules of the Cantonese grammar to add an SFP at the end of sentences in a dialogue. The first point mentioned above about the frequency with which SFPs are used also shows the category's high degree of grammaticalization, that is, the language is equipped with a set of mutually exclusive or distinctive items to serve the speaker's different communicative or pragmatic purposes. Or to put it differently, Cantonese has grammaticalized the marking of communicative / expressive attitudes.

Next we turn to Japanese. As with Cantonese, many scholars have pointed out that the use of SFPs or quasi-SFPs in dialogue is almost obligatory in Japanese. In other words, bare sentences, that is those without (quasi-)SFPs, sound unnatural. (Ide and Sakurai 1997, Maynard 1992: 120-121, Onodera 2017, Miyazaki et al. 2002: 261, etc.)

SFPs or quasi-SFPs do not occur if the sentence is accompanied by a sentence-final intonation, and tend to be omitted in monologic sentences (cf. Uehara and Fukushima 2004). However, excepting these cases (as in lines 7, 8, 11 in the following dialogue 44), every sentence can take a (quasi-)SFP. The sentences would in fact sound quite strange without them.

(44)

1 阿煩: いいよ、ねえ、陳占、私ここでバス待つから。
 Ii yo, nee Chan Jim, watashi koko de basu matsu kara.
 good SFP INTJ (Name) I here at bus wait because

2 帰りなよ。
 kaeri na yo.
 go-back IMP SFP

'It's okay. Hey, Chan-Jim. I'm OK waiting for a bus here. You should go.'

3 陳占: いいよ、俺、別にやることなんかなし。一緒に
 Ii yo ore, betsuni yaru koto nanka nai shi. Isshoni
 good SFP I especially do thing not-have and together

4 バス待っててやるよ。
 basu mattete yaru yo.
 bus wait-PROG for-you SFP

'No I don't have to. I have nothing to do. I will stay with you till the bus comes.'

5 阿煩: 土曜の夜だよ。やることないの？
 Doyoo no yoru da yo. Yaru koto nai no?
 Saturday LK night COP SFP do thing not-have (NOM) SFP

'It's Saturday night. You have nothing to do?'

- 6 陳占: ない よ . . . ねえ?
 Nai yo. Nee?
 not-have SFP INTJ
 'No, nothing……,you know.'
- 7 阿煩: あれ? バス が 来た。
 Are? Basu ga kita.
 INTJ bus SUB come-PST
 'Hey! Here comes the bus.'
- 8 陳占: 小銭 ある?
 Kozeni aru?
 small change have
 'Do you have any small change?'
- 9 阿煩: オクトパス ある から。
 Okutopasu aru kara.
 (Name) have because
 'I have an Octopus.'
- 10 陳占: なら いい や。 じゃあ な!
 Nara ii ya. Jaa na.
 if-so good SFP then SFP
 'Okay, then. See you!'
- 11 阿煩: 誰か と 付き合ってる? 今。
 Dareka to tsukiatтеру? Ima.
 someone with date-PROG now
 'Are you dating anyone now?'
- 12 陳占: 俺? いる…けど…
 Ore? Iru kedo…
 I have but
 'Me? Well… I think so.'
- 13 阿煩: 私 も いる んだ……。 バス、乗る ね。 じゃあ!
 Watashi mo iru nda. Basu, noru ne. Jaa!
 I also have NOM-COP bus ride SFP then
 'Me, too. OK. I'm getting on the bus. Bye!'

14 陳占: じゃあ な。

Jaa na.

then SFP

'Bye.'

(translation of by author)

Where Japanese differs from Cantonese is that quasi-SFPs are used much more frequently.¹⁵ Present-day Japanese has many quasi-SFPs which originate from conjunctive particles (as in line 1 “kara”, line 3 “shi”, line 9 “kara”, line 12 “kedo”) or nominalizing particles (as in line 5 “no”, line 13 “n(o)da”).¹⁶ As SFPs, they serve to make sentences sound less abrupt. These quasi-SFPs are not specialized in expressing communicative or pragmatic attitudes, yet some studies have pointed out the interpersonal or pragmatic attitudes of these items (Shirakawa 2009: 170 (specifically on conjunctive ones), Onodera 2017: 103).

Similarly, in Cantonese, quasi-SFPs or marginal members of the SFP category, also sometimes serve to make the sentence sound less abrupt. The quasi-SFPs “先 sin1” ‘first’, “添 tim1” ‘add’ in the examples below both come from lexical words.

(45) 李: 排 完 舞 之 後 就 書 喇!

Paai4 jyun4 mou5 zilhou6 zau6 buk1 laa3!

rehearsal - finish after then book SFP

'I'll book a ticket after the rehearsal.'

陳: 好 吖, 返 香 港 返 香 港。

Hou2 aal, faan1 Hoenglgong2 faan1 Hoenglgong2.

good SFP return Hong Kong return Hong Kong

'Good! Come back to HK!'

李: 買 張 頭 等 先。

Maai5 zoeng1 tau4dang2 sin1.

buy CL first class first

'Let me get a first class ticket!' ([19] 206)

(46) Tony: 咁 耐 嘅。

Gam3 noi6 ge2.

like-this long SFP

'How come it takes so long?'

何生：等 吓 啦，唔 係 好 耐，幾 分鐘 啫。

Dang2 haa5 laa1, m4 hai6 hou2 noi6, gei2 fan1zung1 zel.
wait CL SFP not be very long some minute SFP

'Be patient. It won't take so long. Only a few minutes'

Tony：我 以為 等 咗 三 個鐘 添。

Ngo5 ji5wai4 dang2 zo2 saam1 go3zung1 tim1.
I thought wait ASP three hour add

'I thought I had waited for 3 hours' ([Dung] 26)

The fact that bare sentences are not preferred in Cantonese and Japanese can be seen as another manifestation of the high degree of grammaticalization marking communicative / expressive attitudes.¹⁷ In other words, there seems to be a slot in the sentence-final position for expressing communicative / expressive attitudes in both languages, making it easier for these languages to develop various alternative forms.¹⁸

5 Conclusion

As we set out in section 1, the aim of this paper is to give a detailed account of the narrowly defined category of SFPs as opposed to the universally defined category of FPs by investigating two languages unrelated in terms of genetic relationship and typological characteristics, specifically Cantonese and Japanese. As the discussion in section 3 has demonstrated, these two languages, which are both rich in SFPs, exhibit striking similarities in many formal characteristics. Furthermore, the SFPs in these languages are highly grammaticalized.

It follows that SFPs in a narrow sense, that is, FPs of the Asian type, as represented by these two languages can be seen as evidence of the existence of a particular grammaticalized category. This is a locally valid cross-linguistic category. Therefore, it may be better to view this category as a characteristic feature of "the linguistic area of East and Southeast Asia" (Chappell and Peyraube 2016). Thus this locally defined category should not be identified with the universally defined category of FPs, at least from a synchronic point of view.

Yet, we are not rejecting all connections between SFPs of the Asian type and FPs. On the contrary, from a diachronic point of view, it is possible that SFPs of the Asian type may have developed from FPs through a positional shift toward the right periphery of the utterance and a subsequent grammaticalization at that position.¹⁹ In that sense, they present a continuum.

Some studies point to this possibility. Concerning Cantonese, for example, Yap, Yang and Wong 2014 argues that the SFP *wo5* as well as *wo3* developed from the right-dislocated phrase “(人哋) 話 ((*yan4dei6*) *waa6*)” ‘(people) say’. Concerning Japanese, Fujiwara 1953 mentions the interesting origins of some SFPs in various Japanese dialects. For example, the imperative form of the verb “come” as well as many dialectal variants of the first-person pronoun became fixed to the final position of the sentence, thus developing into SFPs. The latter case may have given rise to the SFP ‘*wa*’ in contemporary Standard Japanese.

In that case, the SFPs in Asian languages like Cantonese and Japanese are not so different from the universally defined FPs.

Notes

- 1) In Japanese, Fujiwara 1990, 1993 provides a brief overview of final particles across different languages.
- 2) In certain contexts, ‘*ne*’ can also stand alone as an interjection. In that case, it can be attached loosely to the preceding utterance. For the interjection use of ‘*ne*’, see also the following section.
- 3) Yet, Hancil et al. 2015b also admit that there is gradience with regard to syntactic properties among FPs in different languages, and that Cantonese represents a type where FPs interact closely with syntactic structure.
- 4) The latest reference grammar of Japanese characterizes the function of the category as expressing “conveying attitudes” (“*dentatsu taido*”) (NKBK 2003: 240)
- 5) *laa3* may occasionally be pronounced like [lu] with a slightly close back vowel [u]. Yet, this is a variant form of *laa3* with its vowel rounded and centralized (Leung 1992: 128)
- 6) Fujiwara 1990: 20 makes the same point on the SFPs in Japanese dialects: “the more open the vowel of the particle is, the more effectively it can serve the function of appealing to the interlocutor.”
- 7) Note that SFPs in tone languages are not always described as having inherent fixed tones. For instance, the SFPs in Mandarin are said to carry the “neutral tone”, which means that they do not carry any of the four lexical tones and are instead pronounced very lightly.
- 8) LSHK 1993 was consulted for this description of the Cantonese six tones.
- 9) Koyama 1997 identifies another intonational variant for ‘*yo*’, namely the falling-rising tone, which has a longer duration than the rising tone and indicates a strong doubt on the part of the speaker.
(e.g.) ねえ、お鍋 ふいてる よ。 < falling-rising >
Nee o-nabe fuiteru yo.
INTJ pan boil-PROG SFP.
‘Look! The pot is boiling!’
- 10) In her own terminology these intonations are called “tones”.
- 11) *Me1* can also take this ending, such as in *mek1*. To our knowledge, this has not appeared in previous research. See Chow Kafat <http://chowkafat.net/Lingpassage3.html> accessed on October 8th, 2017.
- 12) *laa4* is a contracted form which is made up of two morphemes, i.e. *l-* and *aa4*.
- 13) In a sentence which carries a sentence-final intonation, no SFP can be added any longer. See also Zhang 2014 for the complementary distribution of SFPs and intonation.
- 14) Here we will bypass the fundamental question of what a sentence is.
- 15) Many Japanese SFPs have indexical properties in that they reveal the gender or social status of the

speaker, while Cantonese ones do not. In addition, some gender-marked particles like 'wa' (only used by females) have become obsolete among the younger generation (NKBK 2003: 253). On the other hand, the quasi-SFPs are very rich and used frequently. This is why many sentences in example 44 carry quasi-SFPs rather than typical SFPs.

- 16) 'kara' in line 1 may look like a conjunctive particle that introduces a reason clause with the main clause 'ii yo (It's okay)' dislocated after 'kara'. However, it should be taken as a quasi-SFP which is used to make the sentence less abrupt rather than a conjunctive particle, for the specific word 'kara' is not required. Another (quasi-) SFP, such as 'wa', 'yo' or 'shi', could also do. In fact, the SFP which appears at the corresponding position in the original Cantonese text (e.g. 40) is not a conjunctive particle.
- 17) In order to illustrate the preference for sentences with (quasi-)SFPs in dialogic conversations in both languages, we first presented a dialogue in Cantonese and then its translation in Japanese (e.g. 40 and 44 respectively). Due to limitations of space, we cannot do the same in the reverse direction. However, since almost every sentence can accompany an SFP in Cantonese as was illustrated in e.g. 40, we believe that it would produce the same consequence, that is, a Cantonese translation of a Japanese dialogue would also likely to have an SFP at each sentence end.
- 18) Yap, Yang and Wong 2014 makes a similar claim when explaining the development of some tags into SFPs in Cantonese and Chinese, "This suggests the possibility that an environment rich in sentence final particles, with a strong predilection for clausal integration at the right periphery, facilitates the reanalysis of utterance tags into sentence final particles, when supported by high usage frequency."
- 19) This phenomenon is of great interest, especially in the field of historical pragmatic studies, and has been broadly discussed in recent research (see Beeching and Detges 2014, Onodera 2017).

Abbreviations

ACP	accomplishment (resultative particle)
COP	copula
HON	honorific
IMP	imperative
INTJ	interjection
LK	linker
NOM	nominalizer
PASS	passive
PFV	perfective marker
PL	plural
PROG	progressive
PST	past tense
QT	quotative marker
SFP	sentence-final particle
SUB	subject marker
TAG	tag
TOP	topic marker

Source of the examples

The source of examples have been given in square brackets in the text. The full names of the source are listed below. All linguistic data has been checked by native speakers. Examples without citation are constructed by the author.

- [19] : 《好天氣廣播劇小說續集—十九歲》(《19歲》) [19 years old] . 少爺占 2002 香港 : 商台製作有限公司.
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 [Hou] : 《好天氣》(Hou2tin1hei3) [Fine weather]. 少爺占 2001 香港 : 商台製作有限公司.
 [John] : 《John & Mary》鄧藹霖 1988 香港 : 博益出版集團有限公司.
 [Sei] : 《四點水 廣播劇小說》(Sei3dim2seoi2) [Four drops of Water (Radio Drama Novel)] 少爺占 2001 香港 : 商台製作有限公司.

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《要約》

言語横断的視点から見た広東語と日本語の文末助詞

飯 田 真 紀

近年、ヨーロッパ言語も含む様々な言語の話し言葉において発話末に現れ談話・語用論的な機能を果たす形式群を、「終助詞」(final particles)という新たな言語カテゴリーとして言語横断的視点から統一的に考察する研究が現れてきている。そこでは広東語や日本語における文末助詞(sentence-final particles)のような各言語において明確な語類ないし品詞を構成する形式群も同様に位置づけられている。

本稿は、広東語や日本語のほか、東アジア・東南アジア言語にしばしば見られる文末助詞という語類は、第一義的に文末に出現し、文との統合度の高い拘束のないいくつかの形式群からなる閉じたクラスを構成することから、少なくとも共時的レベルでは、上記のような広義の終助詞とは明確に区別して扱うのが妥当との見方をとる。

そこで本稿ではそうしたアジア言語の文末助詞についての理解を深めるべく、系統や類型を異にする広東語と日本語の文末助詞を比較対照し、その結果、両者の間の言語の別を越えたいくつかの類似点を指摘した。すなわち、統語的特徴としては、文末以外にも一定の伝達内容を持つ文中の句や語の後に生起すること、音韻的特徴としては、母音はいずれも開口度が大きく開音節であること、音調の種類や音調と意味の相関に共通の傾向が観察されることなど、いずれも伝達態度を文法化した語類であるがゆえの偶然とは見なしがたい共通点が挙げられた。

また、両言語では、対話場面における文末助詞ないし準文末助詞の使用頻度や義務性が高いことから、文ごとに伝達態度を標示することが半ば義務的になっており、すなわち文法化されており、文末助詞はその文法的手段として存在していることを主張した。