

Title	Semantic Explications for the Sentence-final Particles Bai and Tai of the Japanese Hakata Dialect
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Citation	Osaka Literary Review. 52 P.1-P.15
Issue Date	2014-01-31
Text Version	publisher
URL	https://doi.org/10.18910/26878
DOI	10.18910/26878
rights	
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Bai and *Tai* of the Japanese Hakata Dialect

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Osaka Literary Review

2013 No. 52

OLR 同人会

OSAKA UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LETTERS
ENGLISH LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS

Semantic Explications for the Sentence-final Particles *Bai* and *Tai* of the Japanese Hakata Dialect

HIRAKAWA Kimiko

1. Introduction

This paper aims to describe two sentence-final particles of the Japanese Hakata dialect, *bai* and *tai*, arguing about their functions and positing explications for each based on Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM; Wierzbicka 1996, Goddard 1998). The particles in question, as well as other dialectal particles such as *kusa*, *yan*, *to*, etc., are especially known for characterizing the Hakata dialect, which is one of the linguistic variations in Fukuoka Prefecture. As their phonological compositions suggest, *bai* and *tai* are thought to be closely related to each other, although their etymology is difficult to identify. They are similar in that they have very much in common in terms of their semantics and grammatical behaviours.

- (1) *Ashita wa ame {bai/tai}*.¹
tomorrow TOP rain PAR
'Tomorrow will be rainy.'
- (2) *Kore wa yoi hon {bai/tai}*.
this TOP good book PAR
'This's a good book.'

As the data of (1) and (2) indicate, *bai* and *tai* are interchangeable; the sentences have almost the same meaning, though native speakers of the dialect may notice a subtle but undeniable difference. This difference is claimed in this paper to be attributed to the functional difference of the particles: *Tai* indicates that the speaker has some information or knowledge that verifies the content of the proposition to which

it attaches, while *bai* has no such special function; instead, it simply introduces a proposition to the discourse. The two particles, on the other hand, share the function of indicating that the speaker has made a judgement that the hearer lacks information or knowledge regarding the contents of the proposition which the speaker posits with *bai/tai*. This is why the two particles seem very alike in their semantics to native speakers.

With special consideration of their similarities as well as differences, this paper proposes descriptions for the two particles and, in the end, posits an explication of each particle using NSM. The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 provides grammatical information on the Hakata dialect (as well as Standard Japanese) and the distribution of the particles in question. Sections 3 and 4 describe the particles and their NSM explications, respectively. Section 5 presents the concluding remarks.

The informant for this research is the author, and all the data in this essay are attested by the author unless otherwise indicated. The author lived in Fukuoka City, part of which was once called Hakata until the 19th century, for 12 years (for year 3-10 as a primary school student and 4 years as an undergraduate student), and both of the author's parents are native speakers of the Hakata dialect. The data provided by the author are translated into Standard Japanese for the sake of intelligibility, except for the particles in question. The other data source is the novel *Hashiranka!*, written by Hosei Hasegawa, who has, since his birth, lived in Hakata Ward, Fukuoka City, where the Hakata dialect is thought to have originated. The data drawn from the novel are not translated, preserving their original form. Ungrammatical sentences are marked with an asterisk (*), and pragmatically inappropriate sentences are marked with a hash (#).

2. Background

The Hakata dialect is spoken mainly in Fukuoka City, which is lo-

cated in the northern part of Kyushu Island, the west-end island of Japan's four main islands. Its grammatical properties are almost the same as those of Standard Japanese, though its speakers rarely use the copular verbs *da* and *noda*, which normally occur in the final position of Standard Japanese declarative sentences, as in (3a). Instead, *bai* and *tai* are frequently used in this dialect (3b).

- (3) a. *Ano hito wa gakusei {da/nanoda} yo.*
 that man TOP student COP PAR
 'That man is a student.'
- b. *Ano hito wa gakusei {bai/tai}.*
 that man TOP student PAR
 'That man is a student.'

An important fact to be mentioned here is that Standard Japanese *yo* is optional, while dialectal *bai/tai* is almost obligatory. Judging from this fact, *bai/tai* and *da/noda* might seem parallel to non-native speakers. However, it is argued that *bai* and *tai* are more similar to *da yo/noda yo* than to *da/noda* (Tsubouchi 1995). Tsubouchi pointed out that neither *bai* nor *tai* co-occurs with *yo* or *da/noda*. This observation might lead to the conclusion that *da yo* and *noda yo* are the Standard Japanese counterparts of dialectal *bai* and *tai*. However, they are not completely interchangeable and, in addition, there is argument over the denotation of *noda* in the literature. We do not explore this topic further here although it is very much intriguing on its own right.

As we have seen so far, *bai* and *tai* occur in sentence-final position, but they are restricted only to declarative sentences, whether they are negated or not, as demonstrated by (4) to (6).

- (4) *Kyou wa getsuyoubi (ja-nai) {bai/tai}.*
 today TOP Monday (COP-NEG) PAR
 'Today is (not) Monday.'

- (5) **Kyou wa nan youbi* {*bai/tai*}?
 today TOP what day of the week PAR
 'What day of the week is today?'
- (6) **Shizukani sir-o* {*bai/tai*}.
 quiet do-IMP PAR
 'Be quiet.'

As far as the sentence is declarative, *bai/tai* can be attached to any type of predicate ((7), (8), and (9) are verbal, nominal, and adjectival predicates, respectively).

- (7) *Kuruma ga ki-teiru* {*bai/tai*}.
 car SUBJ come-PRG PAR
 'A car is approaching.'
- (8) *Kore wa kinoko* {*bai/tai*}.
 this TOP fungi PAR
 'This is fungi.'
- (9) *Kono fuku wa kawaii* {*bai/tai*}.
 this clothes TOP pretty PAR
 'These clothes are pretty.'

In Japanese, grammatical markers for verbs and modal particles occur in sentence-final position, as demonstrated in (10).

- (10) *Dareka ga ki-tei-ta* *you desu*
 someone SUBJ come-PERF-PAST EVD COP

 {*bai/tai*} {*ne/na*}.
 PAR PAR
 'I suppose someone came (here).'

Among other markers and particles, *bai/tai* occur at the right periphery, just before the definite final particle *ne/na*. When an item occurs in a leftward position in this region of a sentence, it is more related to

the propositional content, and when rightward, it has more relation to the speaker's attitude toward the hearer. Thus, it can be claimed that the particles in question are generally more related to the speaker's attitude toward the hearer in that they convey something about the speaker's thoughts, ideas, desire, or judgment concerning something about the hearer.

3. Description

3.1 *Bai*

Examples (11)-(13) are prototypical examples of utterances in which *bai* is used:

- (11) (To the speaker's friend who was absent from this week's class)

Raishu no jugyo wa kyukou bai.

next.week GEN class TOP cancelled PAR

'Next week's class is cancelled.'

- (12) (To the speaker's child who is leaving for the park)

Bangohan wa 6ji bai!

dinner TOP 6 o'clock PAR

'(Remember) Dinner will start at 6 o'clock!'

- (13) (Noticing the lecturer coming to the classroom)

A! Sensei ga ki-ta bai.

Look teacher SUBJ come-PAST PAR

'Look! The teacher is coming (so we should be seated).'

What is common in these contexts is that (the speaker assumes that) the hearer has, at the time of utterance, no information about the proposition the speaker is presenting. In (11), the hearer was absent from the class in which the lecturer announced that the next week's class was cancelled. Therefore, it is appropriate in this situation for the speaker to use *bai* at the end of the proposition. In (12), the child is hurrying to a park in order to play with his/her friends after school. The speaker (the child's parent) wants to make sure he/she will be back in

time for the dinner but is afraid that the child will come home late. Note that in this context, the speaker has no idea whether the child remembers about dinnertime. The point is that the speaker assumes his/her child might forget dinnertime as usual and marks the proposition as new to the hearer by attaching *bai*. (13) is uttered in a situation where a few students are chatting before their class begins, and one of them (the speaker) has noticed that their teacher is coming. In this case, the proposition is new to both the speaker and hearer(s). In all the data of (11)-(13), the speaker thinks, with or without obvious evidence, that the hearer knows nothing about the information which he/she is going to express in the proposition, and this is the condition under which *bai* can occur in a sentence.

The accounts so far are verified by testing the occurrence of *bai* in contexts where it is clear to the speaker that the hearer has some portion of the information that the proposition expresses.

- (14) (The speaker and hearer are eating the same kind of cake)

Kore wa oishii {#*bai*/ \emptyset } (*ne*).

this TOP good PAR (PAR)

'This is good.'

- (15) (To the speaker's child who is crying after receiving a shot)

#*Chusha wa itai bai*.

shot TOP painful PAR

'A shot is painful.'

In (14), both the speaker and hearer have already learned that the cake they are eating at the time of the utterance is very good. In addition, it is obvious to the speaker that the hearer knows the cake tastes good. In (15), the hearer has just received a shot, and it is clear to the speaker that now the hearer knows a shot will cause sharp pain. These contexts do not satisfy the condition for *bai* to occur, so they render the sentences pragmatically inappropriate. The sentences, therefore, turn out to be acceptable when they are used in contexts

which satisfy pragmatic conditions.

- (16) (At the speaker's favourite café, which is new to the hearer, looking at a menu)

Kore wa oishii bai. (= 14)

- (17) (On the way to the general practitioner, where the hearer is going to receive a shot for the first time)

Chusha wa itai bai. (but you don't need to be too worried) (= 15)

Notice that both (16) and (17) are uttered in a situation where the speaker provides the hearer with information which he/she thinks the hearer does not yet have.

This property of *bai* encourages speakers of the dialect to use the particle in question particularly when they talk to young children.

- (18) *Maa maa, korobu bai.*

well well fall.over PAR

'Well well, (running like that, you would) fall over.'

- (19) *Houra, Benkei-san bai.*

see, Benkei-san PAR

'See, (this is) Benkei-san.'

(*Hashiranka!*)

In the novel, examples (18) and (19) are spoken to a young child of just a few years of age. *Bai* is used very frequently, especially to young children, because it is reasonable for the speaker to infer that a young hearer does not have the relevant information due to his/her lack of life experience.

In summary, the function of *bai* is, on the basis of the observation above, formulated as in (20):

- (20) *Bai* is a sentence-final particle introducing a proposition whose contents are thought by the speaker to be missing in the hearer's knowledge, belief, thoughts, or ideas.

3.2 *Tai*

Prototypical utterances containing *tai* are exemplified as follows:

(21) *Sakki hanashi-ta ya-nai. Sutaato no aizu tai.*
 just.now talk-PAST COP-NEG start GEN signal PAR
 '(I) told you just now, didn't I? (That's) the signal of the start.'

(22) A: *Nashite chiketto ga 2 mai desu-to kai-na.*
 why tickets SUBJ 2 CLASS COP-COMP Q-PAR
 '(I wonder) Why (there're) 2 tickets?'

B: *Gaarufurendo no bun tai. Wakaro-u mon.*
 girlfriend GEN portion PAR understand-ABI PAR
 '(That's his) girlfriend's (ticket). Can't you see?'

(21, 22: *Hashiranka!*)

(23) *Kono mondai tok-eru yone.*
 this problem solve-ABI PAR
 'Can (you) solve this problem?'

Atarimae tai.
 no-wonder PAR
 'No wonder!'

Tai is commonly used with phrases such as *atarimae* and *touzen*, both of which mean 'it is natural' or 'there is no wonder'. In (21), the speaker confirms that he/she explained the same thing just a short while ago. In (22), the speaker says that it is quite reasonable to guess that the other ticket is for the girlfriend (of the speaker's brother in the novel). Similarly, the speaker claims in (23) that it is reasonable to assume he/she is capable of solving the problem. All these data indicate that *tai* is used when there is some reasonable ground or proof available to the speaker for uttering the proposition. Thus, when the speaker does not have any ground or proof verifying the proposition, he/she cannot use *tai*.

(24) (a conversation between brothers)

- A: *Okasan wa doko.*
 mom TOP where
 'Where's Mom?'
- B: *Shira-nai, tabun beranda {#tai/ ∅}.*
 Know-NEG maybe balcony PAR
 'I don't know. Maybe on the balcony.'
- (25) (trying Vegemite for the first time)
Uwa, kore wa mazui {#tai/ ∅}.
 gee this TOP awful PAR
 'Gee, this is awful.'

The speaker of (24) does not have any information about where his/her mother is at the time of the speech, nor does the speaker of (25) about how Vegemite tastes, as it is the first time he/she has encountered it. Example (25) also shows that *tai* cannot co-occur with interjections, as the particle indicates the speaker's judgment about the proposition and does not match his/her immediate reaction to the event itself (rather than to the proposition). The pragmatically inappropriate sentences in (24) and (25), however, become felicitous if the contexts or expressions are altered as in (26) and (27):

- (26) A: *Okasan wa doko.*
 'Where's Mom?'
Douse mata niwa ni oru tai.
 certainly again garden LOC exist PAR
 '(She is) in the garden again, certainly.'
- (27) (an Aussie's response to Vegemite at snack time)
 B: *Yappa kore tai.*
 after.all this PAR
 'This (is the best) after all.'

The speaker in (26) guesses, on the ground of her routine, that his/her mother is working in the garden. In (27), the speaker is reconfirming

the fabulous taste of Vegemite. Each speaker in these contexts already has some belief or knowledge which leads him/her to conclude that the proposition he/she is presenting is true. Note that *tai* co-occurs with *douse* or *yappa*, which mean, respectively, that the speaker believes the proposition is highly likely and that the speaker has had the same experience or feeling before.

Another semantic property of *tai* is that it cannot co-occur with a proposition which is already known to the hearer. This is the shared property with *bai*, although native speakers of the dialect suppose that the two particles in question constitute a contrastive set and do not expect that the two have something in common. Note that the same linguistic test that was applied to *bai* in (14) and (15) holds for *tai*.

- (28) (The speaker and hearer are eating the same kind of cake)

Kore wa oishii \#*tai*/ \emptyset (*ne*).

this TOP good PAR (PAR)

'This is good.'

- (29) (To the speaker's child who is crying after receiving a shot)

Chusha wa itai \#(*tai*).

shot TOP painful PAR

'A shot is painful.'

In (28) and (29), the use of *tai* is generally inappropriate because it is obvious that the content of the proposition is already known to the hearer. Still, there are some contexts in which *tai* is acceptable. In (28), if the speaker is confirming the taste of the cake and utters the sentence as a monologue, it sounds quite natural because the information about the taste of the cake is new to the speaker and he/she has (in this case, immediate) access to evidence of the taste, which is the condition unique to the use of *tai*. In (29), *tai* is used naturally when the speaker, following his own knowledge or experience, is reconfirming and positing to the hearer the fact that the shot gives one a sharp pain. This time, *tai* is used in a strategic way; although the hearer as well as

the speaker knows about the pain at the time of speech, the speaker states the proposition as new information to the hearer in order, for example, to encourage the hearer to reconfirm and accept the situation as a matter of course which the hearer cannot do anything about, and to try to persuade him/her to stop crying.

The utterances in (28) and (29) are not meant to tell the hearer about something truly new to him/her. Rather, they are uttered to the speaker himself/herself (28) or employed to encourage the hearer to recognize his/her helplessness and to accept the speaker's persuasion (29). Note that in both cases, the use of *tai* satisfies the condition — the information should be new to the addressee and should be verified by the speaker. What has been argued so far about the function of *tai* is summarized in (30).

- (30) *Tai* is used to present a proposition which the speaker thinks is new to the hearer and to express that the speaker judges the proposition to be reasonably true on the ground of his/her knowledge, information, or evidence available to him/her.

4. NSM Explication

In this section, the explications of *bai* and *tai* are posited on the basis of the observations and formulations provided in the previous sections. We have learned from the attested data that the occurrence of the particles in question is restricted to declaratives, and the position in which they occur (sentence-final) suggests that they are meant to convey something about the speaker's judgments, thoughts, or ideas concerning the hearer. This semantic property of the particles has been demonstrated in the last two sections; it has been argued that the speaker uses either of these particles when he/she assesses the knowledge, information or belief that the hearer possesses at the time of utterance and when, in particular, the speaker assumes that the hearer lacks knowledge about the proposition he/she is going to pre-

sent. Thus, both particles have components which express “I say this to you now” and “I think you may not know this now.” As for *bai*, its function is simpler than *tai* in that it only provides the proposition whose contents are missing in the hearer’s knowledge, and it has no other additional function. Thus, the explication for *bai* consists of two basic components and has no additional ones, as shown in (31).

- (31) *bai* =
 I say this to you now
 because I think you may not know this now

As *bai* is a kind of modal particle in that it expresses the speaker’s subjective judgment at the time of speech, the first component must contain “(here and) now”, which is the notion essentially related to modal expressions. Additionally, the second component should contain the reference of the speech time (= “now”) because the speaker assesses the hearer’s knowledge exclusively at the time of speech. Therefore, it is possible to use *bai* even when the speaker utters what the hearer is supposed to know, in other words, when the proposition is not completely new to the hearer (cf. (12)).

- (32) (to a friend who has forgotten the due date)
Mo, kyou wa shimekiri bai.
 ITG today TOP due.date PAR
 ‘Come on! Today is the due date! (Don’t you remember?)’

In the context of (32), the use of *bai* is justified because the hearer has temporarily forgotten the due date, so the speaker tries to inform the hearer about it as a piece of news. This use of *bai* is demonstrated more clearly when the particle is substituted with its explication, as in (33).

- (33) ‘Come on! Today is the due date, (and) I say this to you now, because I think you may not know this now.’

In a similar way, *bai* is also acceptable in the proposition about the day of the week, the hearer's birthday, and even the hearer's name when the speaker wants to mark the proposition as new information to him/her. Such utterances generate a special effect.

Tai, on the other hand, is not so simple because it has another function in addition to the basic ones which *bai* fulfils. This additional function is identified in Chapter 3, i.e., it conveys that the speaker has good reason or proof to verify the contents of the proposition. Therefore, the explication for *tai* should contain the component "I know this is true", as shown in (34).

(34) *tai* =

I say this to you now
because I think you may not know this now
and because I know this is true

This additional component leads the utterance to generate various pragmatic effects which characterize the use of *tai* and which are not generated in *bai* utterances. Remember, as described in Chapter 3, that *tai* is frequently used with expressions such as 'it is natural that' or 'it is no wonder that'. These phrases are typically employed to make the hearer believe what the speaker is claiming or asserting is true. When someone wants to make his/her assertion more reliable, he/she tries to tell what he/she knows is true. This is why *tai* is used to mark the proposition which is (or which he/she wants to be) free from any doubt or question. This function is sometimes applied even to a false proposition in order to claim its 'legitimacy'.

(35) (a false) claim by a murderer)

Ore wa yat-te nai (t)tai!

I TOP commit-PAST NEG PAR

'I didn't commit (it)'

(The particle tends to be strengthened iconically)

In (35), the speaker is aware that what he/she is saying is false but attaches *tai* in an attempt to deceive people. This explanation is warranted even more when the explication for *tai* replaces the particle, as shown in (36).

- (36) 'I didn't commit (it)!, (and) I say this to you now, because I think you may not know this, and because I know this is true.'

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper explores two distinct but semantically mutually related particles in the Hakata dialect: *bai* and *tai*. Their syntactic (or grammatical) properties show that they are devices which are employed to express the speaker's judgment or attitude, in other words, modality. Both particles indicate that the speaker assumes the hearer lacks information concerning the proposition to which one of the particles is attached. Therefore, the explications of the particles should contain a component which shows this judgment of the speaker. Furthermore, *bai* and *tai* are semantically contrastive in that *tai* has an additional function which *bai* does not bear; *tai* marks the speaker's judgment that the proposition is true according to information, reasoning, or evidence available to the speaker, while *bai* does not. This fact is reflected in the NSM explication of *tai*, which includes "I know this is true."

Note that the definitions posited in (20) and (30) are not very intelligible to people other than native speakers of the dialect in question. On the other hand, the explications based on NSM are accessible even for beginner speakers of this dialect (if there are any). In this regard, the NSM approach is at least advantageous if one wishes to propose a definition of a lexical item (or even a morpheme) in a universally accessible way.

There still remain several points which are problematic and need more detailed analyses and discussion, for example, the various prag-

matic connotations of *tai* and the existence of a zero form in sentence-final position in the dialect etc. Even so, the author believes that the argument made so far is on the right track and viable.

Notes

1 The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows:

ABI: Ability	COP: Copula	EVD: Evidentiality
GEN: Genitive	IMP: Imperative	ITG: Interjection
LOC: Locative	NEG: Negative	PAR: Particle
PAST: Past	PRG: Progressive	Q: Question
SUBJ: Subject	TOP: Topic	

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