

A Study of the Japanese Particle *nante*: Its Meaning and Pragmatic Functions*

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There are many kinds of eyes. Even the sphinx has eyes — and consequently there are many kinds of 'truths,' and consequently there is no truth.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

0. Introduction

This paper examines the functions and meanings of the Japanese *fukujoshi* ('adverbial particle') *nante*.¹ The peculiarity of *nante* is not restricted to its appearance in various positions in a sentence. Japanese case (*ga, o, ni*) and semantic markers (*kara, to, ni, etc.*) always follow nominals; however, *nante*'s occurrence is not restricted to post-nominal positions. Consider the following example:

- (1) Wanio wa nete *nante* inai. 'Wanio is not sleeping.'
TOP. sleep not being

Sentence (1) demonstrates that *nante* can intervene between the connective form of the verb *ne-* 'sleep' and the auxiliary, *-inai*.

As for *nante*'s semantic and pragmatic functions, the following examples show how diverse they are:

- (2) a. Tokidoki shinitai *nante* omou. 'I sometimes feel that I want to die.'
sometimes want to die think
b. Ano hito ga sonna koto o iu *nante*. 'It is surprising she says such a thing.'
that person NOM. such a thing ACC. say
c. Natsu wa umi *nante* ii ne.
summer TOP. sea good PRT.

'Speaking of summer, for instance the ocean is good.'

(2a) exemplifies that *nante* expresses the speaker's negative attitude toward the idea of wanting to die. In (2b), *nante* is placed at the end of a sentence, and it is said that *nante* expresses the speaker's surprise; (2c) shows that *nante* functions to provide an example, the ocean, suggesting that there are also other good things associated with summer.

This paper's main focus will be on these diverse meanings and functions of *nante*. Two hypotheses will be considered. Hypothesis 1 regards *nante*'s core meaning as expressing the speaker's derogatory attitude. Next, the inadequacy of this hypothesis will be pointed out, and another will be introduced. Hypothesis 2, which assumes that *nante*'s various functions derive from 'marking inappropriateness in a given frame of context', will be commended as the better one. Discussions of these hypotheses will show the significance of considering the relationship between a given context and the speaker's attitude. A brief survey of dictionary definitions of *nante* is now in order.

1. Dictionary definitions of *nante*

The study of *nante* has not shown significant progress comparable to that of other fukujoshi particles. There are some references in the literature which briefly mention *nante* (e.g. Morishige 1971: 261; Tanaka 1973: 239; Teramura 1991: Ch. 7), mainly for the purpose of comparing the semantically and pragmatically similar fukujoshi *nado*. However, none pays particular attention to *nante*. Apropos of this situation, it is useful to survey the definitions of *nante* provided by six major dictionaries² and by Samuel Martin in his *Reference Grammar of Japanese* (1975). This brief survey will be helpful considering the two hypotheses presented in the following sections.

Most of these dictionaries refer to *nante*'s expressing the speaker's "derogatory/belittling" attitude. Martin (1975) considers *nante* equivalent to another fukujoshi particle, *nado*, in this sense. The following exemplifies *nante* as such a marker:

- (3) *Sonna tokoro e iku nante bakana koto da.* (KKD)
 such a place DIR. go stupid thing COP.
 'It is stupid to go to such a place.'

Second, *nante* is said to express a situation in which "the matter in question exceeds the norm" (KD and NKD), or something "unexpected" (GKD and KKD), and eventually leading to the speaker's "surprise" (Gensen):

- (4) *Kodomo o damasu nante warui yatsu da.* (RSKJ)
 children ACC. deceive bad man COP.
 'He is a bad man who deceives children.'

Some dictionaries acknowledge that *nante* has other functions: 'providing an example' and 'connecting two NPs' (although the latter seems to be related to its syntax):

- (5) *Kono fuku nante doo?* 'How about these clothes?' (Gensen)
 these clothes how about
- (6) *Pinku Furawaa nante kissaten, shiranai wa yo.* (KKK)
 pink flower cafe I don't know PRT. PRT.

'I don't know a cafe called Pink Flower.'

RSKJ provides the following example, which is very similar to (5), and points out that here *nante* is used to soften the assertive power, i.e. *nante* as a hedge:

- (7) Yane no iro wa midori *nante* doo daroo. (RSKJ)
roof POS. color TOP. green how about
'How about green for the color of the roof?'

RSKJ also acknowledges that *nante* can be used to 'emphasize' a preceding element. In this case, it seems that *nante* cooccurs with negative predicates:

- (8) Ame *nante* futteimasen yo. 'It is not raining.' (RSKJ)
rain not raining/falling PRT.

This brief survey of dictionary definitions of *nante* has shown that *nante* is expected to function as the marker of (i) the speaker's derogatory attitude, (ii) unexpectedness/surprise, (iii) provision of an example, (iv) the connection of two NPs, (v) emphasis, and (vi) hedge. The focus will now be on how to explain these diverse functions/meanings of *nante*. Two hypotheses will be reviewed in the following sections to consider (i) the questions of why such a particle has so many (seemingly) unrelated functions and (ii) whether there is any 'core' that accounts for all of these functions.

2. Hypothesis 1: *nante* as a marker of negative evaluation

It might be desirable to assume that *nante* has only one core function, with other meanings/functions derived from that. Introduction to Hypothesis 1 requires the comparison of two examples:

- (9) a. Watashi wa konpyuuta ga tsukaenai. 'I cannot use a computer.'
I TOP. computer NOM. cannot use
b. Watashi wa konpyuuta *nante* tsukaenai.
I TOP. computer cannot use

The propositional content of (9a), i.e. the speaker cannot use a computer, is also conveyed by (9b). One might wish to argue that the substitution of *ga* with *nante* conveys the speaker's 'derogatory' feeling toward the referred object. *Nante*, then, is a kind of modality expression which conveys the speaker's emotion or feeling towards the object/event referenced by the preceding element; *nante* is used to convey the speaker's subjective point of view. Hypothesis 1 reads as follows:

HYPOTHESIS 1:

The Japanese fukujoshi particle *nante* has as its core pragmatic function the marking of the speaker's derogatory/belittling attitude toward the referred event, object, or

quality. Such an attitude is associated with strong negative evaluation, and it is construed to express the speaker's strong denial or surprise. On the other hand, when the speaker's derogatory attitude is toward her/his own thoughts, it can be taken that the speaker self-monitors these thoughts and attempts to preempt the other interlocutor's rejection of the speaker's idea.

The speaker's negative evaluation can easily be associated with the negative *-nai* and predicates with negative connotation. However, it should be noted that easy association with negative predicates does not mean that *nante* always requires such predicates.

The speaker's derogatory attitude can be detected in the following material in which the male speaker has a negative opinion of a Japanese singer. The singer's name is followed by *nante*:

- (10) Yo no naka niwa doomo rikai o koeta kappuru to yuu no ga arimasu ne. Ano onna ga nande konna otoko to, tte yatsu. Tamaki Kooji *nante* no wa watashi nanka, tsukiaitakunai taipu no hittoo na n desu ga, josei kara miru to ii rashii.

(Santee Mainichi, January 27, 1991)

'Lots of couples are beyond our comprehension. I mean, we often wonder why this woman has chosen this man. As for me, Tamaki Kooji is the type of person I would least want to go around with, but from some women's points of view, he seems to be good.'

Tsukiaitakunai taipu no hittoo 'the one with whom I would least want to go around' itself indicates that the speaker does not have a positive opinion of the singer. As a marker of the speaker's derogatory feeling toward the referred person, *nante* is appropriate in this case.

When a speaker faces a shocking event or a statement impacting on emotions, her/his negative evaluation seems simply expressed as surprise. On the one hand, it is shocking because it is unexpected; on the other, the speaker attempts to deny the possibility of the given situation or reality. Observe the next sentence:

- (11) Watashi ni kusa o kureru *nante* watashi wa ushi kai?

I DAT. grass ACC. give I TOP. cattle Q.

'Am I a cow that he should offer me grass?' (Genius: 1750)

Here, being offered grass by someone is perceived as a shocking event. The rhetorical question, *watashi wa ushi kai* 'Am I a cow?' indicates that such an offer is regarded as an object of derogation. The speaker is offended by such an act because it downgrades his/her position to that of an animal! It can be said that the same act is surprising because such treatment has not been expected.

Third, consider the following example:

- (12) Sotsugyooiwai niwa udedokei *nante* doo ka na.
 graduation gift for watch how about
 'How about a watch for a graduation gift?'

If the speaker holds a negative opinion of watches as graduation gifts, why would s/he suggest such a thing for a graduation gift? On the contrary, it can be the case that the speaker evaluates watches highly as graduation gifts, and still uses *nante*. Does not the explanation based on 'derogatory attitude' hold in this case?

Rather than being a counter-example against Hypothesis 1, sentence (12) supports it when the situation is considered more carefully. In a case such as (12), the speaker seems to express a reserved attitude, namely, 'no imposition'. The hearer may not have the same attitude toward watches for this purpose and may reject the speaker's proposal. If the speaker pretends that s/he does not evaluate the object highly, it is easy for the hearer to reject the proposal. In this sense, then, it can be said that *nante* functions to express the speaker's derogatory feeling. Unlike those cases in which *nante* is followed by negative morpheme or predicates of negative evaluation (i.e. expression of the speaker's 'true' negative attitude towards the object), when *nante* appears in a proposal, it should be construed as a 'pretentious/seeming' derogatory marker. Because the source function of *nante* is to express the speaker's derogatory attitude, such a function is extended to a situation such as that proposed so that the speaker can preempt the hearer's rejection. The speaker self-monitors his/her own thought and tries to show negative evaluation toward it.

There are cases in which *nante* functions to annihilate the effect of the preceding speech act; *nante* seems to mark that what is said is not what the speaker means:

- (13) ... Okaasama ga totsuzen irashitemo, "Ara Kazuko-san kirei ni shiteru wa ne" *nante* homerarechau wa. Eraku natta mitai yo. Shufu no kagami *nante* ne.

(Asahi Journal, February 15, 1991)

'... Even if my mother-in-law suddenly visits us, I'm sure that I'll be praised by her with words like 'Oh, Kazuko, everything is spic-and-span!' I feel like I became somebody. [I am] A model housewife! ... No, just kidding!'

The first occurrence of *nante* can be characterized as a marker of the speaker's surprise. A common problem for Japanese housewives is getting along with their mothers-in-law. It is very difficult to meet their standards in such areas as raising children, cooking, keeping the house clean, etc. *Ara, Kazuko-san kireini shiteru wa ne* 'Oh, Kazuko, you keep everything spic-and-span!' can be an unexpected compliment from her mother-in-law, who might well have complained about the condition of the house. But the second appearance of *nante* relates to self-monitoring of Kazuko's own thoughts. As pointed out above, in a case of proposal, speaker can mark an object which s/he wants to suggest with *nante* to preempt the other interlocutor's

rejection. The same line of argument is possible in this case as well. Declaring that she is a model housewife is self-affirming. Even if praised by her mother-in-law, praise itself does not certify her as a model housewife, for a declaration can be denied by other people. The speech act of declaration requires felicity conditions which include the speaker's sincerity. The use of *nante* in this case functions to reject the effect of the speech act by denying that she has not expressed herself seriously because she herself regards the speech act negatively.

The possibility of *nante*'s source function as a marker of the speaker's negative attitude/derogatory feeling has been the subject of this section. Such a feeling or attitude can be directed to certain objects or events; this use of *nante* is associated with the negative and the predicates expressing the speaker's low evaluation. It was also noted that such a negative evaluation is related to the speaker's surprise in a given situation. In the case of the offer of grass, for example, such an event can be described as 'shocking', leading to the denial of someone's treatment of the speaker as if s/he were cattle. On the other hand, the speaker's negative evaluation can be directed toward his/her own thoughts. In the case of a proposal, the speaker self-monitors him/herself and facilitates the other interlocutor's rejection by (pretentiously) saying that the speaker him/herself regards the thing in question without value. In the same line of argument, it was suggested that *nante* can function to annihilate the preceding speech acts; the speaker wishing to express that a certain speech act is not conducted seriously is able to derogate his/her own action to convert this effect by adding *nante* after the performance. The arguments in this section are summarized in Chart 1.

So far, Hypothesis 1 has been very promising providing explanation for the four cases of *nante*. However, two other cases remain outside the framework of Hypothesis 1. Consider the following example:

- (14) A: Anata Yamada-san to yuu hito o shitteimasu ka?
 you Mrs. Yamada named person ACC. know Q.
 B: Iie, Yamada-san *nante* hito wa shirimasen.
 No person TOP. don't know
 'Do you know a person named Yamada?'
 'No, I don't.'

It would be unexpected to assume that B shows derogatory attitude/negative evaluation toward a person whom B does not personally know. On the other hand, when *nante* follows a quotation (i.e. not the speaker's words), it is not obvious whether the speaker has a negative attitude toward it. It is difficult to classify the following case simply as expression of the speaker's surprise:

(15) S: Iya ni nacchattari shita toki wa, nihon ni denwa shitari suru?

M: Hai. "Nande kichatta n daroo" toka, shujin ni ittari.

"Omae ga kimeta n da kara, naitemo shooganai n ja nai?" *nante* iwarechatte.

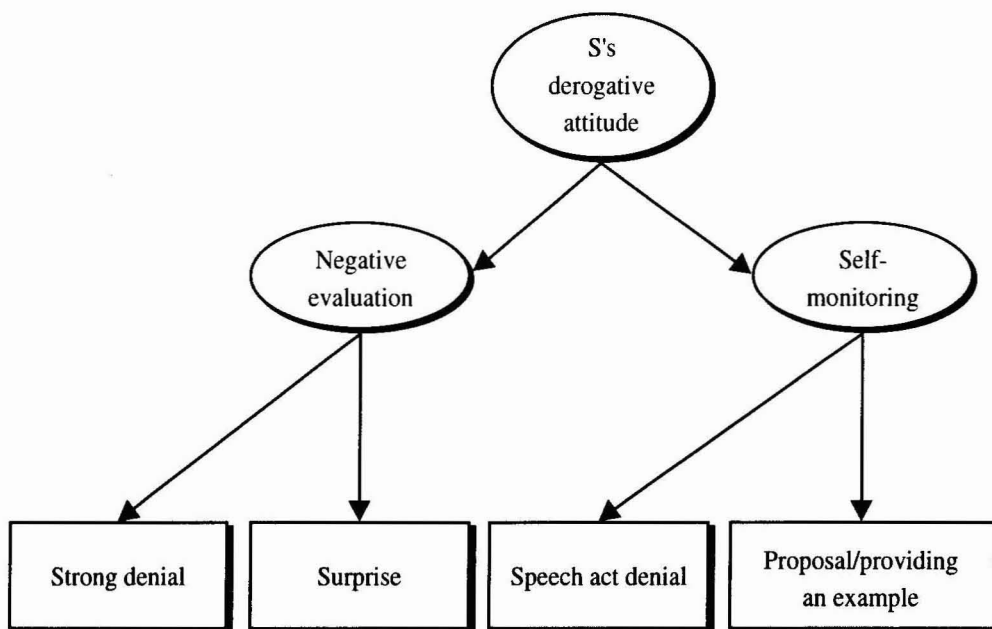
(Asahi Journal, January 4, 1991)

'Do you phone Japan when you are depressed?'

'Yes, I sometimes complain saying "Why did I come [to the United States]." In such a case, he says "It was you who decided, so there is no point in crying."'

These two cases require us to reconsider the core function of *nante* from a different perspective. An approach which focuses more on the relationship between *nante* and its context will be considered next.

Chart 1: Hypothesis 1, *nante* as a marker of S's derogatory attitude



3. Hypothesis 2: *nante* as a marker of inappropriateness

Rather than discarding Hypothesis 1, which is applicable to some extent, one should adapt its meritorious aspects to produce a new hypothesis.

HYPOTHESIS 2:

The Japanese fukujoshi *nante* signals that the preceding element (i.e. S, N, V, A) is inappropriate in the given non-linguistic context. The judgment of inappropriateness is based on the speaker's own criteria. When such a 'mismatch' is strongly felt, *nante* often associates with negative predicates to express the speaker's negative evaluation. On the other hand, the speaker may self-monitor the appropriateness of

his/her own thoughts. In both situations *nante* is used to express the speaker's recognition of the inappropriateness of the event, property of a thing, or thing in the given context.

According to this hypothesis, *nante* signals that something does not 'fit' in the given situation. In other words, *nante* is used when the speaker judges that something is not compatible with a 'frame' of given context.³

Let us examine how Hypothesis 2 recaptures the cases considered in the previous section. It was seen that *nante* is easily associated with the negative *-nai* and other predicates of negative connotation. Hypothesis 1 attributes such a property to *nante*'s function to mark the speaker's derogatory feeling. Consider the following example:

- (16) A: Ano eiga wa omoshirokatta desu ka? 'Was that movie interesting?'
that movie TOP. was interesting COP. Q.
B: Iie, omoshiroku *nante* arimasendeshita. 'No, it wasn't.'
No interesting was not

If the explanation utilizing mismatch in the frame or the given context is valid, it can be argued that what B means by the *nante*-sentence is that the adjective *omoshiroi* 'interesting' is not in the frame describing the movie in question. There may be other ways to characterize this movie, e.g. 'boring', 'fascinating', 'fabulous', etc.; however, on the basis of B's observation, the adjective *omoshiroi* 'interesting' is out of the 'frame' of the movie's characterization.

As an example of speech act denial, data (13) was considered. There are two occurrences of *nante* in (13): *Ara Kazuko-san kirei ni shiteru wa ne nante homerarechau wa* 'I'll be praised by my mother-in-law with words like "Oh, Kazuko, you keep everything spic-and-span!"' and *Shufu no kagami nante ne* 'A model housewife! ... No, just kidding.' The first might be an instance of surprise inasmuch as her mother-in-law is regarded as someone unlikely to give words of commendation to the speaker. The most unlikely event in the given situation leads to the mismatch of the situation and the mother-in-law's words of praise. Or if the speaker is self-monitoring her words, she scripts her mother-in-law's would-be praise, and considers that such praise is out of the situation.

On the other hand, the second occurrence of *nante* in (13) is characterized as a denial of the preceding speech act. This case is also explicable with reference to the speaker's self-monitoring her own words/thoughts. The content of the speech act is the declaration that the speaker is a model housewife. By uttering the sentence, the speaker self-elevates from ordinary housewife to model housewife who keeps her house clean and neat. Words of self-elevation suggest that the speaker is boasting, which is usually avoided (cf. Leech's Modesty Maxim: 1983). The use of *nante* immediately after such a speech act, therefore, can invalidate the

illocutionary force of the utterance; the speaker him/herself acknowledges that the speech act is not appropriate in the given situation so that the other interlocutors are required to construe the utterance as such.

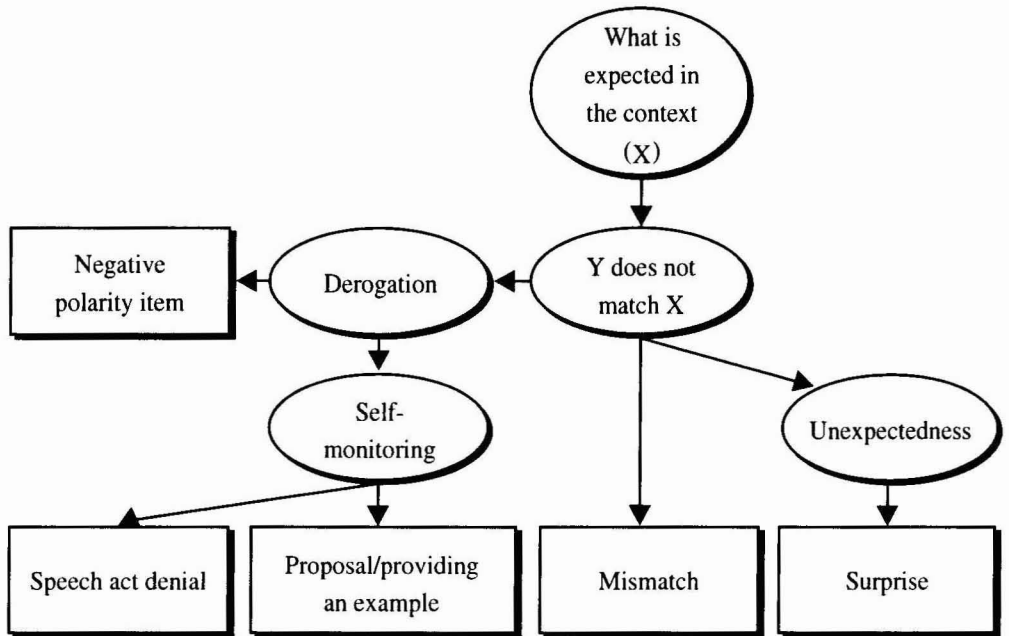
Next, let us see how Hypothesis 2 deals with the problematic cases mentioned at the conclusion of the previous section. Data (15) provides a case in which *nante* is substituted for the quotation indicator *to*: "*Omae ga kimeta n da kara, naitemo shooganai n ja nai?*" *nante iwarechatte...* "It was you who decided, so there is no point in crying" he says.' When *nante* appears in this position, Hypothesis 1 is too strong to assume that *nante* expresses the speaker's negative evaluation towards the quoted words unless *nante* is further followed by a certain word that has a negative connotation. Hypothesis 2 suggests that, when the speaker lamented, *Nande kichatta n daroo* 'Why did I come to [the United States]', she might have expected her husband to respond more compassionately than what he actually said, 'It was you who decided..., so there is no point in crying.' In this sense, her husband's words should be considered to deviate from the anticipated consolation.

The other instance of the problematic case (14) should also be considered. Hypothesis 1 could not explain this case because it is difficult to argue that the speaker tries to show his/her derogatory feeling toward a person named Yamada, whom the speaker does not know. Hypothesis 2 can provide two possible explanations for it. The first is that the mention of the name of the person in question is out of the given context. In this case, it seems that, rather than the person named Yamada not fitting the context (like a person fits the position of the president in the context of a company), A's mention itself is considered not fitting in the given context. The second explanation applies the notion of the frame of the given context to the frame of the speaker's cognitive state, i.e. the frame of acquaintances. B is assumed by A to have a list of acquaintances, which is why A asks whether B knows the particular person. However, B replies that such a person is not an entry on such a list. A's expectation of B's having the person in this frame of acquaintances is not fulfilled. B's use of *nante* in this case is thus also captured, as the person in question is out of the frame (of acquaintances).

These arguments are summarized in the following flow chart. It should convey that the basic function of *nante* is to indicate that 'something is out of context', 'something does not fit the typical frame', or 'something does not match the given situation'. Such out-of-contextness is based on the speaker's expectation in the given situation (e.g. cat is not a food usually served at a party). Although mismatches are observable in cases such as (15), the deviation is easily associated with the speaker's negative evaluation. When the speaker attempts to suggest something, s/he self-monitors, preempting the hearer's condemnation; when *nante* follows a certain speech act, the speaker again preempts the out-of-the-contextness of such speech acts.

On the other hand, some events can impact the speaker's emotions because of their out-of-contextness, in which case, *nante* is eventually recognized as a marker of the speaker's surprise (cf. (11)).

Chart 2: Hypothesis 2, *nante* as a marker of inappropriateness



4. Conclusion

Meanings and functions of the Japanese fukujoshi particle, *nante* have been examined, and two hypotheses have been suggested.

Hypothesis 1 claimed that the core function of *nante* is to mark the speaker's derogatory/belittling attitude. This hypothesis succeeded to a limited degree, but the perspective on the context in which *nante* is used was lacking. In order to remedy its shortcoming, another hypothesis was considered. In Hypothesis 2, the core function of *nante* was recognized as expressing that something is out of context -- inappropriate in the given context -- making it sufficient to capture the various usages of *nante*.

It is concluded that Hypothesis 2 is the better hypothesis of the two. However, this should be considered a tentative conclusion because the relationship among *nante* and similar words, such as *nanka* and *nado to*, should be explored. Moreover, although discussion was limited to *nante*, consideration of the extra-linguistic context is crucial to semantics and pragmatics of the fukujoshi particles in general. As has been pointed out in the literature, incorporation of pragmatic factors into grammar is prominent in Japanese. The study of 'context-sensitive' words, such as

modal expressions (Maynard 1991, 1993) and the fukujoshi particles should shed light on linguistics in general where formalization of contextual information, speakers' perspectives and feelings, etc. is often neglected.

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Notes

1 See Hashimoto (1969), Hino (1973), and Konoshima (1966,1983) for useful summaries of the history of the study of *te-ni-o-ha* particles, which correspond to Modern Japanese case, semantic, and fukujoshi particles. It is worth pointing out that before Teramura (1989), *nante* had not been discussed as a fukujoshi particle, partly because its development is restricted to modern Japanese. Etymologically, *nante* has developed from a combination of the words *nado* (fukujoshi particle) and *to* (Kokugo Daijiten 1989; Kokugo Daijiten Gensen 1986; Nihon Kokugo Daijiten 1975).

2 Dictionaries and their abbreviations are: Gakken Kokugo Daijiten (GKD) 1978; Gensen 1986; Kadokawa Kokugo Daijiten (KKD) 1983; Kokugo Daijiten (KD) 1989; Nihon Kokugo Daijiten (NKD) 1975; Reikai Shin Kokugo Jiten (RSKJ) 1988; Gendaigo no Joshi Jodoshi by Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyujo (KKK).

3 The term 'frame' in this paper should be construed in a broader sense than Fillmore's usage. In Fillmore's Frame Semantics (cf. Fillmore 1976, 1978), one can anticipate what kind of frame elements may appear and how they work in the given frame (e.g. a frame of 'eating' may contain foods, restaurants, knives, forks, dishes, etc.).

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副助詞「なんて」の意味と語用論的機能

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日本語の助詞は、かなり大まかに言って文法的役割のはっきりしている格助詞、「は」(トピックマーカ―)などに代表される副助詞、さらに「よ」「ね」といった文末の助詞に大別される。それぞれが、例えば格助詞であれば統語論で、文末の助詞ならば会話分析といった分野で取り上げられることが多いが、副助詞はその意味と機能の多様さも手伝ってこれまであまり焦点が当てられることがなかった。そういう状況にあって寺村(1991)は「取り立ての助詞」の名称の下、副助詞のかなり詳しい議論を展開している。さらに、メイナード(1993)は独自の論理展開で副助詞・文末助詞を大きな「モダリティ」という範疇で捉えることに成功している。

この論文ではこういった研究状況に鑑み、「なんて」という副助詞に焦点をあて、その意味と語用論的機能を二つの仮説を通して検討する。まず辞書の定義を調べ、多くの辞書が挙げている「話者の卑下するような感情を表す」という意味を取り上げ、それを第一の仮説とし、それにそぐわないと思われる意味がそこから派生し得るのかを見る。しかし、この最初の仮説では捉えられない実例などがあることを考慮し、この仮説を発展させた形の第二の仮説を立てる。第二の仮説では「なんて」はある言葉がそれが起こるコンテキストで不適切であることを示すために使われているのではないかと考え、その機能から様々な意味が導かれることを検証する。

「なんて」ばかりでなく日本語の副助詞表現は、英語の助動詞に見られるモダリティ表現から導かれたモダリティの概念では捉えられない(例えば F.R.Palmer "Mood and Modality"(1986)で展開されている mood と modality の概念を参照のこと)。ただし、単なる言語相対論に陥らず、日本語独自のモダリティ・語用論と他の言語のそれを比較検討できる共通の理論的基盤が必要である。そのためには実際の談話のなかで対象となる表現がどういうふうに使われているのかを、談話分析を背景としながら実例を通して研究する必要があるように思われる。