



GÖTEBORGS
UNIVERSITET

INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

THE PREVALENCE OF OMISSION

About the function and frequency of particle ellipsis
in Japanese

Robin Olsson

Essay/Thesis:	15 hecs
Program and/or course:	JP1520
Level:	First Cycle
Term/year:	Spring semester 2021
Supervisor:	Lars Larm

Examiner:

Report nr: xx (ifylles ej av studenten/studenterna)

Abstract

Essay/thesis: 15 hecs

Program and/or course: JP1520

Level: First cycle

Term/year: Spring semester 2021

Supervisor: Lars Larm

Examiner:

Report nr: xx (ifylles ej av studenten/studenterna)

Keywords: zero particle, particle omission, particle ellipsis, Japanese, mujoshi

The aim of this thesis is to investigate current perceptions of what is commonly referred to as particle omission, and in order to compare these perceptions to those of native speakers of Japanese, an online survey consisting of example sentences to be graded by 49 participants between the ages of 18 and 29 was carried out. A short summary of relevant particles will be covered, followed by extensive summaries of two different perspectives on the concept of particle omission. Firstly, the concept known as *Zero Particle*, which portrays what is commonly referred to as *exclusion* of a particle as simply another *type* of particle. This is followed by a more conventional approach, which poses rules for using particle omission based on statistical findings from the CHJ corpus. Results from the survey are then presented in groups based on grammatical category. Through analysis and discussion conditions for the use of particle ellipsis will be confirmed or disconfirmed. Strengths and flaws of theories are pointed out. Through this thesis, it is concluded that existing theories concerning particle ellipsis are wanting, and that the subject is in need of further research.



INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my fellow students for providing their continuous support, and I would especially like to thank my supervisor Lars Larm, for his constant reassuring tone when working on the thesis, for his invaluable guidance and generally uplifting teaching manner. I could not have asked for a better supervisor and he managed to make me feel good about the process as a whole despite the unusual and sometimes troubling circumstances of writing a thesis in the year of 2021. I also want to express my gratitude towards Professor Korenaga Kanako and my friend Ueno Yura, who helped with the translation and formatting of the survey. Lastly, I want to thank everyone who took the survey. Without their input there would be no data to base the findings of this thesis on.

Conventions

1. Romaji

Romanization of Japanese in this text will be based on the modified Hepburn system. Long vowels will be written with double letters. The sound represented by a small *tsu* i.e. つ/ツ will be written with double consonants. Romaji imported from other works is modified for consistency.

2. Example sentences

Unless otherwise stated, all examples in this thesis are my own.

3. Typographical conventions

bolding emphasis

italics 1. Japanese words and sentences in the running text
2. titles of written works, figures, etc.

4. Symbols

∅ particle ellipsis

* grammatical unacceptability

single quotes (‘ ’) translations of Japanese words and sentences in the running text and in example sentences



Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Conventions	i
Contents	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Purpose of the study	1
1.2. What are particles?	2
1.2.1. Wa	3
1.2.2. Ga	3
1.2.3. O	4
1.2.4. Others	5
1.2.5. Particle ellipsis	5
2. Previous research	6
2.1. A grammatically independent entity	6
2.2. Properties of the zero particle	7
2.2.1. Grammatical use	7
2.2.2. Co-occurrence	8
2.2.3. Formality and written language	8
2.2.4. Compensatory reinforcement	9
2.2.5. Absolute specification	10
2.2.6. Summary	11

3.	Particle ellipsis - other research	13
3.1.	Corpus analysis	13
3.1.1.	Speaker's sex	13
3.1.2.	Syntactic factors in particle ellipsis	14
3.1.3.	Animacy and definiteness	15
3.1.4.	Focus and particle ellipsis	16
3.1.5.	Summary	18
4.	The survey	19
4.1.	Choice of method	19
4.2.	Method	19
4.3.	Limitations	20
5.	Results and discussion	21
5.1.	Results	21
5.1.1.	Speaker's sex	21
5.1.2.	Inquiring words and sentences	21
5.1.3.	Sentence variables	23
5.1.4.	Verb adjacency	24
5.1.5.	Animacy and focus	24
5.1.6.	Nuance	25
5.1.7.	Absolute specification	26
5.1.8.	Compensatory reinforcement	27
5.1.9.	Written language	28
5.2.	Participants' comments	28
5.3.	Summary and discussion	29
6.	Conclusion	32
	References	34
	Appendix: Survey questions	36

1. Introduction

In Japanese, words are often marked with grammatical entities called *particles*. When starting to learn Japanese, students will encounter most of these particles very early on in their studies. It is taught when to use which particle as necessary to form grammatically correct phrases and sentences, and there are a number of resources on the topic and most beginner textbooks cover the subject in close detail. However, in colloquial Japanese it is extremely common to omit many of these particles. Many learners are likely to find themselves starting to (clumsily) adapt to this concept as they become more accustomed to speaking and hearing Japanese. In spite of this, it seems rare for the subject to be covered in Japanese classes at any given level. The concept, generally referred to as *particle omission*, *particle ellipsis*, *null particle*, *zero particle*, among others, is an interesting phenomenon and there appears to be no general consensus on how to define the rules for it. Most prevalent in this thesis will be the research of Professor Duck-Young Lee, and it may be viewed as an extension of his research on the topic. In this section, a brief overview of relevant particles will be covered, followed in section 2 and 3 by previous research on the subject, mostly by Lee (1999) and Fry (2003). In section 4, the methodology for this thesis, a survey, will be covered. Section 5 covers the results and analysis of the survey, and section 6 adds concluding remarks by the author.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The aim of this thesis is to compare available research to native speakers' opinions on real life examples, in order to gain a more accurate understanding of which conditions trigger the use of a zero particle. This is investigated through the use of a survey. Previous studies have been conducted through interviews and analysis of corpora. The major difference between the method adopted by this thesis and those of previous researchers, is the fact that with the help of this survey, we are questioning native speakers directly about the acceptability of certain uses of the zero particle. This may produce different results, as informants will be more aware of the phenomenon.

1.2. What are particles?

In the Japanese language, there exist grammatical entities called *particles*. They are postpositional words that convey a variety of syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic data, and are most commonly attached to the end of a noun phrase (Iwasaki, 2013: 66). Among the various types of particles there are case particles, topic marking particles, adverbial particles, conjunctive particles, quotative particles, and pragmatic particles, and others (Iwasaki, 2013: 66-67). For this thesis, only the most relevant particles and their function will be explained. Aside from these, there are many more which will not be explained in this text. In example (1) below, particles are in bold.

(1) *Gakusei wa jitensha de gakkou ni ikimashita.*

‘(The) student/students went to school by bicycle.’

There is also another distinction we need to make; that of case particles and postpositional particles. As Tsujimura explains, postpositions in Japanese are the counterpart of prepositions in English. From the name we can infer that they will be placed after a noun, as opposed to the prepositions we are used to. Compare (2) a-b below, where particles are highlighted in bold. (Tsujimura, 133-137).

(2) a. *gakko de*

‘at school’

b. *machi kara*

‘from town’

Moreover, postpositions cannot be placed alone. They rely on the noun to convey relevant information.

Case particles are a different group of particles, whose function consists of relaying syntactical information. They include the particles *ga* (nominative), *o* (accusative), *ni* (dative), *no* (genitive), and *wa* (topic marker). As Tsujimura notes, this type of case system is common

in other languages, such as Latin, Russian, and Old English. However in contrast to these, within the Japanese case system the nominative and accusative case particles may sometimes be dropped. Tsujimura also notes that these two types may be replaced with other morphemes, like *mo* (also), and *sae* (even). Case particles, like postpositions, cannot stand alone in a sentence, but they are different in the aspect that some of them can be left out. For this thesis, the most relevant particles will be those eligible to be left out, i.e. *wa*, *ga*, and *o*, which will be further explained below.

1.2.1. *Wa*

Wa is often referred to as the topic marker or sometimes the subject marker. The term "topic" can be loosely defined as "the focus of the discussion." It can be used to express what is being referred to, such as in (3) a. (Hasegawa, 2018: 276-299).

(3) a. *Saifu wa teeburu no ue ni aru.*

‘The wallet is on top of the table.’

When using *wa* in this way, there is an assumption that the interlocutor is already aware of the wallet in question. If the interlocutor is unaware, it would be inappropriate to use *wa*, and the speaker should instead opt to use *ga*, which will be explained below (Hasegawa, 2018). It may also be used to express contrast, such as in (3) b.

(3) b. *Saifu wa teeburu no ue ni arukedo, kagi wa nai.*

‘The wallet is on top of the table but the key is not.’

1.2.2. *Ga*

Very similar to *wa* is the subject marker *ga*. Out of context, *wa* and *ga* may be used interchangeably. One difference between the two is that of the listener’s awareness of whatever is being mentioned. If the listener is unaware of the topic/subject, *ga* must be used. It would, for example, be ungrammatical to say **dare wa kita?* as *dare* means *who*. *Who* by definition is unknown, and therefore *wa* is ungrammatical (Hasegawa, 2018).

Another aspect of *ga* is that of focus-marking. In a sentence such as (4a), if *wa* is used, the translation would be something like “This is delicious” while in (4b), the focus, or as Hasegawa puts it, “the most informative part” (Hasegawa, 2018: 276-299) lies on the subject, rather than the properties of the subject.

(4) a. *Kore wa oishii.*

‘This is delicious. (As for this, it is tasty.)’

b. *Kore ga oishii.*

‘This is delicious. (It is this which is tasty.)’

An easy way to think of the difference between the two is to think of sentences like (3) b as a reply to a question such as *which?*, *who?*, or *what?*. In this case, it would be a question like “Which flavor do you like the most?” and (3) b can therefore be loosely translated to “This one is tasty” (Hasegawa, 2018). Note that a sentence with *ga* does not necessarily need to be the answer to a question. This is simply a way to highlight the difference in nuance between a *wa* marked sentence and a *ga* marked sentence.

Moreover, when a sentence describes a temporally transient state of affairs of an entity, a focal interpretation does not necessarily arise. Rather, such sentences are interpreted as unmarked in terms of information structure. (5) is an example of such a sentence.

(5) *Ame ga futteiru.*

‘It is raining.’

1.2.3. *o*

The accusative case particle *o* is very easy to explain. It is used directly following a noun to mark it as the direct object, as in (6) a-b below.

(6) a. *Gohan o taberu.*

‘I eat food/rice.’

b. *Tomodachi ni pen o kashita.*

‘I lent my friend a pen.’

1.2.4. *Others*

Apart from the ones mentioned above, other particles will play a part in this thesis. However, these are not the main focus and explanations will therefore be very brief in this section.

Noteworthy are *ni*, which may be used to mark time or direction and may be omitted in some cases, *ka*, which is placed at the end of a sentence to indicate that it is a question, and is normally omitted in casual speech (in which case intonation marks it as a question instead), *mo*, which may be used to indicate emphasis (‘as much as’) or as a binder (‘too’; ‘and’; ‘also’), sentence final particles like *da* and *desu* (copula), *yo* and *zo* (emphatic) and several others. Any such particles will be further explained where relevant.

1.2.5. *Particle ellipsis*

As has been explained above, when one or more of these particles are excluded from a sentence (usually a spoken sentence), this is referred to as particle ellipsis, or particle omission. This thesis also covers the idea of Professor Duck-Young Lee, who suggests that in many cases, what is commonly referred to as particle ellipsis is not the absence of a particle, but actually the presence of an “invisible” or “non-phonetic” particle. This will be explained further throughout the rest of the thesis.

2. Previous research

Particle omission appears to be a somewhat understudied subject, at least outside of Japan. Resources available in English are few and the quality varies. A lot of these studies conclude only that the omission of particles is a way of communicating more effectively, while reducing the formality of the language. Professor Duck-Young Lee, at the Australian National University, however, has a different idea on the matter. In his 1999 paper, he explains that particle omission is not in fact the absence of a particle, but the absence of the phonetic realization of a completely independent particle. He refers to this particle as the “zero particle” (ZP). These two concepts may be used somewhat interchangeably. For this thesis, research related to Lee’s (1999) findings will mostly be using the term ZP, while other research will be using the term particle omission.

2.1. A grammatically independent entity

This subsection will summarize the research of Lee (1999). He argues that particle ellipsis is not in fact the removal or omission of a particle that “should” be included, but rather that because of the unique nuance of a sentence where such a “necessary” particle is removed, it should be regarded as its own unique grammatical entity. Compare the following:

(7) a. *Osake o nomanai.*

‘I do not drink alcohol.’

b. *Osake wa nomanai.*

‘I do not drink alcohol (As for alcohol, I do not drink it)’.

c. *Osake Ø nomanai!*

‘I won’t drink alcohol!’

In (7) a, the speaker is calmly informing the listener of the fact that he or she does not drink alcohol. Perhaps he or she is very sensitive and therefore has chosen not to consume it at all, or simply does not like the taste. In (7) b, the nuance of the sentence is that they do not drink alcohol in particular, but they may drink something else. However, (7) c is different from (7) a and (7) b in that it conveys a stronger emotion from the speaker. We may infer that the

speaker is agitated for some reason; perhaps they are being forced to drink against their will, or maybe the mere suggestion has made them emotional due to some traumatic event in the past. As Lee explains, this effect of conveying strong emotion would not be present in the same manner if the “empty” spot was instead occupied by any other particle. In other words, this “null position”, as Lee refers to it, has its own independent function and this may serve to prove that it should be regarded as a grammatically independent entity.

2.2 Properties of the zero particle

2.2.1. *Grammatical use*

As Lee points out, the zero particle is rarely seen in written language, with the exception of newspaper headlines (Lee, 1999: 648). It is most commonly seen marking a direct object, due to the close connection it has to the verb. Furthermore, it is used primarily with NPs that are required for the use of the verb they belong to: subject and direct object when the verb is transitive as in (8)a, subject and directional when the verb refers to directions as in (8)b, and finally subject and locative when the verb refers to locations as in (8)c.

- (8) a. *Eiga* \emptyset *mitemasu ne.*
‘(He/she) is watching a movie.’
- b. *Hoka no mise* \emptyset *ikeba ii yo.*
‘Just go to another store.’
- c. *Soko* \emptyset *ojiichan sundemasu.*
‘Granddad lives there.’

The zero particle may be used whenever an NP has to occur along with the verb. In other words, as Lee puts it: “The zero particle may be used with NP’s which belong to the valency frame of a given predicate” (Lee, 1999: 650). On the other hand, the zero particle is usually *not* present with NPs with a case role, like place, instrumental, or indirect object (Lee, 1999: 650). This is mainly due to the confusion which arises when doing so, which in turn is a result of the unclear relationship between, for example, the predicate and an indirect object. See (9).

(9) **Musuko wa minna haha Ø omakase shite ta nde.*

‘All the sons just left everything to mother, and so.’ (Lee, 1999: 650).

As we can see from (9) above, *haha* (mother), which would be the indirect object if used with the correct particle, can easily be mistaken for topic or subject, which in turn changes the meaning of the sentence.

2.2.2. *Co-occurrence*

As for the case particles *ga* and *o*, they cannot be paired with some focus particles, like *wa*, *mo*, and *shika*. See (10) a-c:

(10) a. *Taroo wa {*ga wa} kita yo.*

‘As for Taro, he has come.’

b. *Taroo mo {*ga mo} kita yo.*

‘Taro has come too.’

c. *Kono eiga shika {*o shika} mite nai yo.*

‘I have seen only this film.’ (Lee, 1999: 651).

Lee argues that the zero particle behaves in a similar way to these focus particles. The zero particle may be used interchangeably with other focus particles, but the case particle is omitted in both cases. Compare (11) a and b below:

(11) a. *Kono eiga shika {*o shika} mite nai yo.*

b. *Kono eiga Ø mite nai yo.* (Lee, 1999: 651).

2.2.3. *Formality and written language*

Concerning the zero particle and formality, many researchers claim that the ZP becomes less frequent the more formal the language is. Lee agrees to this, but disagrees with what many imply: that the particle itself expresses informality. Formal conversations are often held between people who are not well-acquainted with each other. In such situations, the speakers

are more limited in what they feel is appropriate to say, and in how it is appropriate to say it. Lee's opinion is that this has to do with the situation, the setting of the conversation, and not so much with the grammatical structure of Japanese. If the predominant function of the ZP is to help express strong feelings, it is not strange that the particle is rare in formal settings where strong feelings are seldom expressed. See (12) a-c.

(12) a. *Sorya, Katoo Mizue san Ø kyuujuu moojiki hyaku de irassharu.*

‘Well, Ms Mizue Kato is ninety, soon to be hundred years old.’

b. *Anata, okusama Ø tsurete oarukini naru wa ne.*

‘You often go for a walk with your wife, dont you?’

c. *Mitsukoshi de mo yoku kooen Ø nasaru deshoo?*

‘You often give public performances at the Mitsukoshi Theatre too, don't you?’ (Lee, 1999: 673).

In the case of written language, this is true as well. Lee argues that ZP may very well be used within written language, “if the expression involves a strong interactive mood” (Lee, 1999: 670).

2.2.4 *Compensatory reinforcement*

According to Lee, “the use of the zero particle influences the degree of the interactive attitude of the speaker” (Lee, 1999: 667).

(13) a. *Watashi wa heya de hon o yonde ita.*

‘I was reading a book in the room.’

b. **Watashi Ø heya de hon Ø yonde ita.*

(Lee, 1999: 667)

Lee argues that (13) b is unacceptable as a normal descriptive statement. However, if it is said as an answer in a dialogue with spontaneous interaction between the two speakers, it is quite acceptable:

(14) A: *Nani shiteta no?*

‘What were you doing?’

B: *A, watashi Ø heya de hon Ø yondeita.*

‘Oh, I was reading a book in the room.’

Using the zero particle in this way, “the speaker strengthens the involvement with the listener” (Fujiwara, 1992, cited in Lee, 1999: 668). This strong involvement manifests as the speaker being more frank with the listener. Compare the following sentences:

(15) a. *Watashi wa mizu o nomi tai.*

‘I want to drink water.’

b. *Watashi Ø mizu Ø nomi tai.*

‘I want to drink water.’

(Lee, 1999: 668)

2.2.5. *Absolute specification*

Lee suggests that the grammatical function of the zero particle is to specify an object or event without relating it to any other object. “I propose that the grammatical property of the zero particle is ‘absolute specification’, by which the speaker specifies an object or event represented by the NP, without referring to other objects/events.” (Lee, 1999: 662). If focus particles’ function is to describe the type of relationship between various NPs, the function of the ZP is to announce that there is no relationship between them. With this definition, the ZP is similar to *wa* in that it draws attention to something. However, it is distinguished from *wa* through its “absolute specification”, i.e. not involving any other parts of a sentence, while with *wa*, depending on the type of *wa* (topical or contrastical), it can relay either implicit or explicit exclusion. The model below is borrowed from Lee and illustrates this.

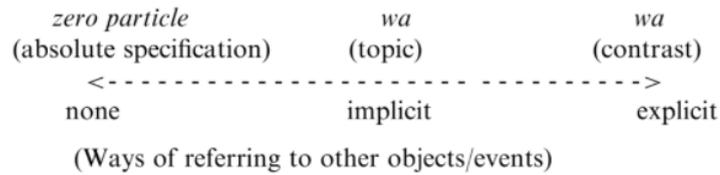


Fig. 1, *Reference model* (Lee, 1999: 663)

With this in mind, it should be clear that the ZP cannot be used in a context where the relationship is of importance. Compare the following sample conversations:

(16) A: *Kono kuruma Ø enjin Ø ii desu ne.*

‘As for this car, its engine is good.’

B: **Shatai Ø dou?*

‘What about the body?’

(17) A: *Kono kuruma Ø enjin Ø ii desu ne.*

‘As for this car, its engine is good.’

B: *Shatai wa dou?*

‘What about the body?’

2.2.6. *Summary*

In this chapter, the results of the investigations by Lee (1999) have been covered. It has been established that according to this research, the following can be assumed:

- The zero particle may be viewed as its own grammatically independent entity, separate from the otherwise normally agreed upon concept of particle omission.
- ZP is used primarily with NPs that are required for the use of the verb they belong to.
- ZP is usually *not* present with NPs with a certain case role, like place, instrumental, or indirect object.
- As for the case particles *ga* and *o*, they cannot be paired with some focus particles, like *wa*, *mo*, and *shika*, and ZP behaves similarly.
- ZP itself does not express informality, but may appear to at first glance, due to context.

- ZP may be used in written language, *if* the context allows for a more interactive mood.
- ZP influences the degree of interactive attitude of the speaker.
- The grammatical function of ZP is to specify an object or event without relating it to any other object. That is, if focus particles' function is to describe the type of relationship between various NPs, the function of the ZP is to announce that there is no relationship between them.

3. Particle ellipsis - other research

3.1. Corpus analysis

A different approach to the methodology of research on particle ellipsis can be found in *Ellipsis and wa-marking in Japanese Conversation*, a dissertation by John Fry (2003). Using the CHJ Corpus, Fry attempts to find out if particle ellipsis can be somewhat predictable depending on the linguistic factors present in a given situation. As Fry notes, previous researchers have seldom been able to gather large quantities of data, but using a corpus eliminates this issue and allows us to look at less misleading statistics. These previous researchers, however, have been able to gather some evidence for linguistic factors playing a role in predicting particle ellipsis. Fry mentions three (for clarification, N refers to the noun):

- Syntactic factors: the grammatical construction of N and N's position in the utterance.
- Semantic and pragmatic factors: the semantic properties of N (whether it is human, animate, definite, etc.), and whether or not N represents the focus of the sentence.
- Sociological factors: the speaker's age, gender, hometown, etc.

(Fry, 2003: 97).

There are certain disadvantages to using a corpus. Fry (2003) seems to agree with Lee (1999) that there are cases where particle omission alters the nuance of a given sentence. He refers to this as “mandatory particle ellipsis”, and gives the example *Watashi samishii* ‘I’m lonely’, which if changed into *Watashi wa samishii* has a different, more rational nuance. Due to the nature of corpus research it is impossible to differentiate between these cases of “mandatory particle ellipsis” and those of what Fry refers to as “ordinary particle ellipsis”.

3.1.1. *Speaker's sex*

One of the first and most obvious variables to look at is the sex of the speaker¹. Examining this using the CHJ corpus gave interesting but somewhat troublesome results. Fry concludes from his own research that particle drop of N1 and N2 is more prevalent among male speakers

¹ Dialect may also be an important variable; for further reading, see Fry (2003).

(N1 particle drop for males: 40%, N1 particle drop for females: 31%, N2 particle drop for males: 56%, N2 particle drop for females: 52%). However, this is contradictory to what previous researchers have found. This phenomenon raises more questions than it answers. Is particle omission completely independent from sex of the speaker? Or, is it just that even more statistical research is required in order to draw a conclusion? Or does the speech style “in fashion” change so fast that the outcome of analyses like this will yield different results depending on the year it was performed? Fry also poses the question of whether a certain kind of particle is favored more by one of the sexes, or if one sex simply uses more particles in general. It does seem that more particles are used in general by women than men. This further spurs the notion that females in general tend to opt for a more polite speech style, *if* we assume that particle omission in general also makes for a less formal style of speech.

3.1.2. *Syntactic factors in particle ellipsis*

Fry was also able to confirm that particle ellipsis seems more common following a “**wh-word**”, such as *nani* (what) and *dare* (who). He was able to gather that within the corpus, “wh-words” in the N2 position were followed by a particle only 29% of the time. In other words, “wh-words” as direct objects were followed by a zero particle 71% of the time (“non-wh-words” had a following ZP 53% of the time). Compare this result to that of N1 particle ellipsis. “Wh-words” in the N1 position were only followed by a zero particle 25% of the time. It may be worth noting that this is an even lower rate of ZP than that of normal (“non-wh-words”) N1s, which were at 33%.

In a similar vein, particle ellipsis seems generally very common in **questions**. Backhouse (1993) claims this is especially common with questions containing the verb *aru* (to exist; to have). Fry notes that textbooks for Japanese learners will translate sentences like “Do you have X?” or “Is/are there X?” into *X ga arimasu ka?* or *X ga aru?* A normal understanding is that *ga* is optional in such sentences, but Backhouse opposes this, claiming that the use of *ga* is not optional, but in fact unnatural, even in formal sentences (Backhouse 1993: 179). In this case, the natural expression would be *X arimasu ka?* or *X aru?* respectively. Of note, Fry’s study of the CHJ corpus seems to confirm Backhouse’s claims. Within a total of 47 questions ending in *aru*, only three contained the *ga aru* combination. Of

these three sentences, only one was a non-idiomatic expression²: *Rei auto ga aru no?* ‘Do you have the layout?’.

Questions in general seem to gravitate more towards particle ellipsis, especially after N2. Fry’s study concludes the ellipsis rate for N1 inside questions at 45% (31% outside of questions), and 65% for N2 (52% outside of questions).

The next factor is the **length of a sentence**. Defining a long sentence as over ten tokens, and a short sentence as below ten tokens, the study investigated the occurrence of particle ellipsis within the two. Expectedly, particle ellipsis was found more common in shorter sentences. For N1 in short sentences, the rate was 41% (27% in long sentences), and 59% for N2 (48% in long sentences). The reason for this is likely the fact that the longer a sentence is the more complex it will be, and therefore has a higher likelihood of presenting ambiguities. “As syntactic complexity increases, particles become more necessary for semantic disambiguation” (Fry, 2003: 108).

There also seems to be a correlation between particle ellipsis and **longer nouns**. Fry was able to confirm that 31% of multisyllabic N1s were followed by particle ellipsis (compared to monosyllabic, followed by particle ellipsis 21% of the time). For N2, the difference was miniscule.

Finally, Fry brings up **verb adjacency**. The common consensus is that *o* is likely to be omitted if the object argument appears directly before the verb, as in (18).

(18) *Watashi wa banana Ø agetasu.* ‘I will give (you) a banana.’

The corpus data also confirmed this, as N2s adjacent to verbs were unmarked by a particle 59% of the time, as opposed to N2s not adjacent to verbs, which were unmarked only 42% of the time. For N1, adjacency seemed to not make a difference.

3.1.3. *Animacy and definiteness*

It has been found that languages with overt case marking of direct objects tend to mark some types of objects while leaving others unmarked. The general trend, which has been found in

² Idiomatic expressions (like *you ga aru* ‘to have business’ are often obliged to include a particle (Fry, 2003: 106). In many cases, two different idiomatic expressions are distinguished only by the type of particle used.

over 300 languages, appears to be that direct objects that are case marked are more semantically and pragmatically prominent than those that are not. Animacy and definiteness are two dimensions that Aissen (2000; cited in Fry, 2003) uses to describe semantic and pragmatic prominence. Case marking is more common in objects that are higher in one or both of the hierarchies shown below.

- a) Animacy scale: Human > Animate > Inanimate
- b) Definiteness scale: Personal pronoun > Proper noun > Definite NP > Indefinite specific NP > Non-specific NP

Fig. 2 *Animacy and definiteness hierarchies*

This part of Fry's dissertation gets a little complex, but can be summarized as follows:

- *O*-ellipsis is less common in semantically prominent nouns (proper nouns and nouns that refer to people and other animate entities) than in other forms of nouns.
- Subject (N1) particle ellipsis is closely correlated with animacy and definiteness, with animate and definite subjects being slightly less likely to be directly case marked.

3.1.4. *Focus and particle ellipsis*

Some argue that in Japanese, particle ellipsis corresponds to the concept of focus: particles must be retained following NPs that represent the focus (the point of contrastive or essential information) of an utterance, but NPs that are not focused are free to drop them. Theories include:

- *Wa* is never dropped if the NP it marks is the focus (or part of the focus) of the sentence (Tsutsui, cited in Fry, 2003).
- If the referent of X in X *wa* is psychologically close to the speaker and the hearer, *wa* tends to drop unless X is under focus (Makino and Tsutsui, cited in Fry, 2003).
- The direct object marker *o* can be omitted unless the NP *o* is under focus (Makino and Tsutsui, cited in Fry, 2003).

- The assumption is that whenever the pertinent NP is “deemphasized” or “defocused”, the case marker can be deleted (Masunaga, cited in Fry, 2003).

It seems, however, that no definition of what a focused NP is exists. Though Masunaga suggests that if another element in a sentence is labelled with a so-called emphatic particle, a subject or object NP may be defocused indirectly (cited in Fry, 2003). The grammatical particle can then be dropped by the defocused subject or object. The NP particle *mo* (even/as much as), as well as the sentence-final particles *yo* and *zo* are such emphatic particles that have this defocusing impact, according to Masunaga. She also gives three examples, listed in (19) below:

- (19) a. *Boku wa Ran Ø san do mo mita.* ‘I saw Ran (as many as) three times’.
 b. *Kinou Boston de Ran Ø mita yo.* ‘I saw Ran yesterday in Boston’.
 c. *Onnanoko Ø kita zo.* ‘A girl came’. (Fry, 2003: 115).

According to Masunaga, without these “emphatic particles” the particle ellipsis within these sentences would not be acceptable. On top of these, Fry (2003) also lists *dake*, *bakari*, and *shika* (the three meaning ‘only’), *yone*, *yona*, *wa*, *wayo*, *wayone*, and *wana*, (these being sentence-final, emphatic discourse particles). With this knowledge, Fry was able to investigate the occurrence of particles within sentences containing “grammatical defocusing”. As per his analysis, particle ellipsis is more common in arguments in grammatically defocused positions than in other arguments. This backs up Masunaga's proposition that defocusing enables particle ellipsis. However, the end result could be deceiving. It is important to keep in mind that particle ellipsis is usually more prevalent in a colloquial setting, due to the nature of the relationship between the speakers, and similarly, so is emphatic sentence-final discourse particles. Therefore, it is not possible to say with certainty that the high rate of particle ellipsis can be explained by the expressive focal effects of the emphatic sentence-final discourse particles, but rather is just a byproduct of the casual setting.

There is, however, another way of expressing focus in Japanese: by using prosodic focus, which can be measured acoustically. Examining the nouns with the highest peak F_0

values (which are valuable hints for finding points of focus in Japanese sentences (Venditti, cited in Fry, 2003)), Fry found that there seems to be no relation between the occurrence of particles and sentences containing prosodic focus. In other words, we can summarize that particle ellipsis does not seem to be related to focus. However, as Fry states, we cannot completely dismiss the possibility, as “[...] the grammatical defocusing effect proposed by Masunaga might be tested in a way that controls for the level of colloquial language” (Fry, 2003: 118).

3.1.5. *Summary*

In this chapter, the results of the investigations based on the CHJ corpus in *Ellipsis and wa-marking in Japanese Conversation* by John Fry has been covered. It has been established that according to this research, the following can be assumed:

- Particle ellipsis is more common among women than men in general (contradicts previous research).
- Particle ellipsis is more common following a “wh-word”.
- Particle ellipsis is more common in question sentences, especially prior to the verb *aru*, where it may even be considered unnatural.
- Particle ellipsis is more common in sentences with less than ten tokens in total.
- Particle ellipsis is more common following a multisyllabic noun than a monosyllabic noun.
- *O* is likely to be omitted if the object argument appears directly before the verb.
- *O*-ellipsis is less common with semantically prominent nouns (proper nouns and nouns that refer to people and other animate entities) than in other forms of nouns.
- Subject (N1) particle ellipsis is closely correlated with animacy and definiteness, with animate and definite subjects being less likely to be directly case marked.
- The existence of a relationship between particle ellipsis and focus is unlikely.

4. **The survey**

4.1. **Choice of method**

The goal of this thesis is to find out the views of native Japanese speakers using examples, and compare those results with the claims of previous researchers. The example sentences were written specifically for this thesis, but based on the examples and assumptions made by the researchers mentioned earlier in the thesis. Participants were selected based on age and availability. Most are students or graduates (although this was not a requirement), some have lived abroad for a period (or periods) of time, and some have never lived outside of Japan.

4.2. **Method**

The survey was made using google forms, and was taken by 49 different native speakers of Japanese between the ages of 18 to 29. 15 were female, and 34 were male. The survey consisted of 56 questions, each one representing a supposed behavior or “rule” regarding the zero particle presented earlier in the thesis. For a number of the questions, participants were asked to grade the grammatical acceptability of the sentence from 1 to 5. In the thesis, these scores will be converted to percent in order to compare it more easily to previous research. For example, a score of 4,55 out of 5 will be represented as 91% ($4,55/5=0,91$). For other questions, participants were asked whether there was any difference in meaning, nuance, or emotions between sentences where the only visible difference was whether it contained a particle or not. The survey was presented only as “statistical research on colloquial Japanese”. In other words, the survey participants were semi-informed on the subject in question. However, there were no control questions so it would be quite simple for a native speaker to become conscious of the difference between sentence pairs. The survey was proof-read by a native speaker, was test-run once and adjusted accordingly with the help of another native speaker before official use. The survey's strengths lie in the number of participants, and the number of questions. Unfortunately, some of the example sentences were constructed in such a way that they cover not only that which was being tested, but may include other parameters as well. This obscures the results of these questions. More on this in the following section.

4.3. Limitations

Due to time restrictions, a number of problems remain with the finished survey itself. Firstly, the survey presents the participants' opinions on where a zero particle can be used and where it cannot, but it does not present the participants' motivation for answering the way that they did. This is intended to confirm or debunk the results of previous research. The survey touches briefly on the effects of the zero particle, but is not intended to investigate this subject. The final question allowed for participants to present their own opinions on the subject and there are a few insightful answers. Moreover, due to time restrictions and inexperience, some necessary questions are missing, and some example sentences include uses of the ZP where they should not. For the relevant questions, this will be stated in the text. Note that even the flawed questions do provide some insight into the subject, which is why they are kept in the final thesis. Finally, wording could have been improved upon in a few places. In particular, asking the participants to grade sentences according to grammatical acceptability (文法的, *bunpouteki*, En. 'grammatical') may have caused some confusion, as depending on who you ask, *grammatical acceptability* and *colloquial acceptability* do not necessarily correlate. Therefore, some answers may reflect that some sentences are not acceptable according to textbook Japanese, but they may be used regularly in spoken language. A few of the questions have been omitted from the thesis due to them being severely faulty. These questions still remain in the survey provided in the appendix.

5. Results and discussion

In this section follows the results of the survey. Where relevant, the subject of each subsection will be talked about briefly. The most important findings of the survey are then talked about at length in the discussion section.

5.1. Results

5.1.1. *Speaker's sex/gender*

Because Japanese is considered a so called gendered language, one of the biggest differences in speech style between people is the sex³ of the speaker. Therefore, the first variable to look at is distribution of answers between the two sexes. On average, sentences containing one or more zero particles were scored at 66% for females, and 73% for males. In other words, the results seem to correlate with the research found by Fry (2003), that men are more accepting of the use of ZP. This may be due to a recent shift in speech fashion between sexes.

Considering the recent evolution of gender norms, such an explanation does not seem too far-fetched.

5.1.2. *Inquiring words and sentences*

Wh-words (such as *nani* (what), *doko* (where), *dare* (who), *dore* (which)):

Participants scored the question sentence where no particle followed *nani* 'what' in the N2 position at 91%. In Fry's research, wh-words were unmarked 71% of the time. For reference, participants scored the question where all particles were omitted at 57%. See fig. 3 below.

³ *Gender* may be more appropriate terminology, but *sex* has been kept for consistency with previous research.

Sentence	Average score
<i>Sumimasen, toire wa doko ni arimasu ka.</i> 'Excuse me, where is the toilet?'	99%
<i>Sumimasen, toire wa doko arimasu ka.</i> 'Excuse me, where is the toilet?'	59%
<i>Sumimasen, toire doko arimasu ka.</i> 'Excuse me, where is the toilet?'	55%
<i>Sumimasen, toire wa doko ni aru?</i> 'Excuse me, where is the toilet?'	75%
<i>Sumimasen, toire doko aru?</i> 'Excuse me, where is the toilet?'	57%

Fig. 3, Questions

The table above illustrates the scores for question sentences. Results for these sentences are skewed due to an overlook in the making of the survey. Particle ellipsis within the survey should only include omission of particles *wa*, *ga*, and *o*. However with these questions, *ni* has been omitted as well as *wa*. *Ni* can be counted as N3, N5, or N8 (Ind. Obj., Goal, or Locative, respectively). Note however that Backhouse (1993: 179) claims that *ni* is also licensed for particle ellipsis in questions, and therefore these results *should* also show a score expressing acceptance for all of the questions since none of them should be considered unnatural.

Sentence	Average score
<i>Eeto, kyou wa satsumaimo ga arimasuka.</i> 'Um, do you have sweet potato(es) today?'	81%
<i>Eeto, kyou wa satsumaimo arimasuka.</i> 'Um, do you have sweet potato today?'	87%
<i>Fuun, wagyuu ga aru?</i> 'Hmm, do you have <i>wagyuu</i> ?'	60%
<i>Fuun, wagyuu aru?</i> 'Hmm, do you have <i>wagyuu</i> ?'	83%

Fig. 4, Aru-questions

As the fig. 4 table above illustrates, the formal sentence where all particles were included was graded 81%, the formal sentence where only N2 was omitted was graded 87%, the informal

sentence where all particles were included was graded 60%, and finally, the informal sentence where N2 was omitted was graded 83%.

These results are, interestingly, quite in line with Backhouse's claim (especially that of the informal sentence including the particle) that the natural way to form an *aru*-question is to omit the particle, as both of the questions representing these cases were scored higher than their counterparts.

5.1.3. *Sentence variables*

In this part, we will be looking at results depending on formality, sentence length, and length of nouns.

Formality:

“Informal” sentences where only N2 was omitted were graded 87%. Note that the informal sentences were not actually informal, since they ended in *desu*, being a formal ending particle. The informal aspect of these sentences was intended to be conveyed through the use of the personal pronoun *boku*, as opposed to *watashi*, which is not actually formal in itself. This was overlooked in the construction of the survey. Formal sentences where only N2 was omitted were graded 86%.

What these results *do* tell us is that formality seemingly has little to do with the inclusion or exclusion of particles, judging by the high scores for both cases.

Sentence length:

In the long sentence used in the survey, particles following N2 and the time-marking particle *ni* were omitted, and was graded 65%. The exclusion of *ni* here was unnecessary for the purposes of the investigation, and therefore these results are not entirely reliable. What we can discern from these results is that *ni* (as an indicator of time) should most likely be included where applicable.

In the short sentence where the particle following N1 was omitted, the score was 79% (94% when the particle was included). Note that there was no N2. This is a bit lower than what should be expected, but still high enough to be deemed acceptable.

Noun length:

In the sentence containing the long noun *kokusai yuubinkyoku* as N1 (there was no N2), the score was 70%.

In the sentence containing the short noun *zou*, the score was 67%. Note that *zou* is actually a multisyllabic noun, since the *ou* is two syllables in Japanese. Even so, the noun is only two syllables (*mora*) long, much shorter than *kokusai yuubinkyoku*, and the lower score, although only slight, is therefore unexpected.

5.1.4. Verb adjacency

The sentence where *ranchi* was written next to the verb *ogorimashou*, the score was 87% when no particle was present, and when the particle was kept, the score was 97%. Both sentences should be considered acceptable according to Fry's (2003) research, and the survey results seem to reflect this quite clearly.

5.1.5. Animacy and focus

Animacy:

When N2 was animate (a person: John) and had no following particle, the resulting score was 77%. This score was only slightly higher than the one where only the animate N1 was omitted. When N1 was animate (a person: Mary) and unmarked, the score was 67%.

Both of these results are quite ambiguous. As we might recall from section 3, *o* is less likely to be omitted after an animate noun in the N2 position, while with N1, the omission of *wa* is more likely. It is also strange that not only are the results ambiguous, but the score for the N1 particle drop has a lower score, while according to Fry's findings it should be the higher of the two.

When N2 was inanimate (a phone) and unmarked, the score was 79%. These are opposite results to what should be expected in reference to the research by Fry, which states that inanimate nouns in the N2 position are more likely to be marked. Therefore 79% seems high.

Focus:

As was established in section 3, there is likely no relationship between linguistic focus and particle ellipsis, but three example sentences testing this phenomenon based on the research by Masunaga (1988; cited in Fry, 2003) were included in the survey anyway, for confirmation. They were as follows:

1. *John yonkai mo itta.*
‘John went (as many as) four times.’
2. *Futsukamae ni Pari de Mearii ita yo.*
‘Mary was in Paris two days ago.’
3. *Toshiyori tsukutta zo.*
‘An old person made it.’

The score for the first sentence was 66%. Quite a low score. The score for the second sentence was 62%; an even lower score. The third sentence had not only the lowest score of the three, but the lowest in the entire survey, at only 25%. It is uncertain if this low of a score is due to the omission of a particle, or if the specific words in this sentence made it especially confusing in combination with particle omission. Note that according to Masunagas findings, all three sentences *should* be acceptable.

5.1.6. Nuance

Concerning nuance, participants were asked whether there was any difference, besides formality, between the following two sentences, using a polite speech style:

1. *Watashi wa shokku o ukemashita.*
‘I was shocked.’
2. *Watashi shokku o ukemashita.*
‘I was shocked.’

59,2% answered that there was no difference.

Participants were asked the same question about the following two sentences using a casual speech style:

1. *Watashi wa niku o tabetai.*

‘I want to eat meat.’

2. *Watashi niku tabetai.*

‘I want to eat meat.’

Somewhat similarly, 63,3% answered that there was no difference.

5.1.7. *Absolute specification*

In order to test Duck-Young’s assumption, the following conversation was presented (participants were asked to grade only B’s sentence):

A: *Kono omise shouhin ooi desu ne.*

‘This store has lots of merchandise.’

B: *Kakaku dou?*

‘What about the price?’

Somewhat in line with Duck-Young’s assumptions, the average score for the sentence “*Kakaku dou?*” was quite low, at 52% for females and 57% for males, or 53% for both sexes.

Next, the following conversation was presented (again only grading of B’s sentence was required):

A: *Kono resutoran ryouri oishii desu ne.*

‘This restaurant’s food is delicious.’

B: *Osake wa dou?*

‘What about the drinks?’

For the sentence “*Osake wa dou?*”, the resulting score was significantly higher, at 77% for females, 88% for males, or 80% for both sexes. This is in line with Lee’s (1999) research.

5.1.8. *Compensatory reinforcement*

As we might recall from section 2.2.4., Lee describes ZP as more acceptable if used in a conversation with at least one more person present. This seems quite evident in the survey results as well. In the survey, participants were asked to grade the following sentences:

1. *Watashi wa ie de anime o miteita.*

‘I was watching anime at home.’

2. *Watashi, ie de anime o miteita.*

‘I was watching anime at home.’

3. A: *Nani shiteta no?*

‘What were you doing?’

B: *A, watashi ie de anime miteta.*

‘Oh, I was watching anime at home.’

For the first sentence, as expected, the score was quite high, at 93%. For the second sentence, the score was much lower, at only 72%. Finally, for the third sentence, the score was 89%, confirming Lee’s statement. Note however that the second sentence was graded surprisingly high, considering Lee’s theory. While certainly lower than the first and third sentences, it was still considered quite acceptable by several of the participants.

5.1.9. *Written language*

Sentence	Average score
<i>Jinsoku na taiou, hontouni arigatou gozaimashita.</i>	86%
<i>Kinenhin o tsukete kureta no wa totemo ureshii koto desu.</i>	61%
<i>Jinsoku na taiou o arigatou gozaimashita.</i>	89%
<i>Sanjuuichinichi, chaahan itadakimashita.</i>	52%
<i>Ojiisan, obaasan, touka, keeki oishuu gozaimashita.</i>	38%

Fig. 5, *Written language*

Fig. 5 above illustrates the scores for the different written sentence examples in the survey. Note that according to Lee, all of these are to be considered acceptable, provided that the mood is highly interactive, but the scores collected for the final sentences (especially the last one) are exceptionally low. There seems to be no apparent reason for this. Both sentences follow the exact same pattern provided in the examples by Lee (1999: 670).

5.2. **Participants' comments**

The final part of the survey allowed for participants to add any comments they had on the subject or the survey itself. A few interesting remarks were voiced. First of all, there seems to have been some confusion on what to base the scores for the sentences.

Moreover, there was one comment which stated that “most of the ‘slightly strange’ Japanese spoken by learners of Japanese is apparent through these null-particle words”. This makes a lot of sense. As is apparent through the previous research accounted for in this thesis, the ZP is extremely common in colloquial Japanese. But as we also have found out, when it can, cannot, or even should be used can be complicated to find out. Obviously, this is something native speakers know instinctively. When observed with this in mind, the problem of particle ellipsis in Japanese is very much like the Swedish articles *en* and *ett*. These articles also come with a set of particular rules, in this case stemming from an older version of Swedish. The rules are many and there is a wide variety of exceptions as well, to the point

that most people are recommended to learn the appropriate article for a specific word by heart.

One comment stated that their scores were influenced by their Osaka dialect, and that this increased the overall score for sentences. Although not covered in this thesis, Fry (2003) also found that particle ellipsis is slightly more common (4% difference) in Kansai dialect than in Tokyo dialect. In any further attempts to research the subject, it may be of importance to distinguish certain dialects from standard Japanese, or the Tokyo dialect.

Lastly, another comment stated that when replacing *teiru* and *no desu* with the more colloquial variants *teru* and *ndesu*, their acceptance of the ZP increased.

Overall, judging from the responses to the survey and the final comments in particular, it appears (quite expectedly) that native speakers are not (highly) aware of the use and rules of the ZP, and opinions seem to rely a lot on context and interpretation.

5.3. Summary and discussion

On average, there seems to be a strong correlation between the grades issued by the participants and the statistical analysis done by Fry and research by Lee. The overall score of sentences containing one or more zero particles closely coincided with the overall use of zero particles between the sexes in the research done by Fry. In the corpus analysis, it was found that males use ZP 40% of the time, while females use it 31% of the time. In terms of male preference over female preference, this correlates with the scores found in the survey conducted for this thesis, where males graded sentences containing one or more zero particles at ~73% acceptable and females graded them at ~66%. The scores, while higher overall than the usage in the CHJ corpus, have a 7% difference, while in the corpus it was 9%.

Concerning the *aru*-questions, it is of note that the results of this survey also seem to confirm Backhouse's (1993) theory that the inclusion of a particle in the N2 position in sentences ending in *aru* is actually unnatural, or at least it is less natural than particle omission. Perhaps even more interesting is the fact that the score for the *formal* sentence including a particle in the N2 position was 81%, as opposed to the score where it was excluded which received a score of 87%, one of the highest scores of the entire survey. The natural assumption based on previous research here would be that the informal (short form)

sentence with no particle would be graded higher as the ZP is normally used in more casual settings. This could be further proof supporting Lee's (1999) claim that the ZP itself does not express formality or informality, but rather that its usage depends on the context.

The matter of appropriateness of the ZP in formal and informal sentences, as stated above, did not have a qualified category of its own within the survey, but in many of the categories tested, a formal and an informal variant was tested (such as the *aru*-questions mentioned above). These may also be viewed as a way of testing the acceptance of the ZP in terms of formality, and in that case, the results are quite clear on the fact that there is no relation between the ZP and formality.

Another unexpected result was the lower score for ZP following a short noun. As can be observed in section 5.1.3., ZP following the short noun *zou* had a significantly lower score than that of its longer counterpart, *kokusai yuubinkyoku*. This may be a specific case, or it may have to do with the fact that *zou* is in fact not a monosyllabic noun. Still, as stated before, *zou* is a much shorter noun than *kokusai yuubinkyoku* (2 mora as opposed to 10 mora, respectively), and therefore they should at the very least be equal in terms of score, if not favoring the former.

Moreover, there is the matter of animacy. The results from this survey seem to have found opposite results to those of Fry (2003). The only way to elucidate these results seems to be to conduct deeper interviews with native speakers. The concept of animacy, as stated before, is quite complicated and could have very well served as an entire section on its own. Therefore these results will, unfortunately, remain unexplained for now.

The concept of focus as stated before appears to have no relation with particle ellipsis. As Masunaga (1988, cited in Fry, 2003) claims, the three sentences in section 5.1.5 should be acceptable, due to the emphatic particles *mo*, *yo*, and *zo*. However, the first two sentences, with scores between 60 and 70%, seem questionable at best. The sentence *John yonkai mo itta* may instead be interpreted as the ellipsis of an animate N1. The results in this case strongly reflect the representation in the CHJ corpus, where animate N1 was unmarked with a frequency of 36% (Fry, 2003: 112). The sentence *Futsukamae ni Pari de Mearii ita yo* may be interpreted in the same way, with *Mearii* as the subject. The extremely low score of the last sentence, *Toshiyori tsukutta zo* may actually be explained by the help of Lee's (1999) concept

of distribution of the zero particle, which was covered in section 2.2.1. “The zero particle may be used with NPs which belong to the valency frame of a given predicate” (Lee, 1999: 650). In this case, there is no given predicate, or rather the noun *toshiyori* is ambiguous in that it could serve as either subject or indirect object, depending on if the assumed particle is *ga* or *ni*, respectively.

Concerning nuance, the results are quite divided. Roughly 55% agree that the omission of a particle has no effect on the nuance of a sentence. This is quite interesting, and also quite complicated. It seems natural to assume that particle omission should have some influence over the nuance of a sentence; however, exactly what type of difference this nuance expresses is difficult to explain without getting into lengthy discussions, and is not the focal point of this thesis. The division in score may have to do with the difficulty of defining the type of “proper” Japanese sought after in the survey.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, a comparison between Lee's (1999) and Fry's (2003) view of particle omission/the zero particle and the acceptance of using it in natural conversation according to native speakers has been carried out. As was concluded in section 5.3, for many of the questions posed, results from the survey correlates with the previous research results, however not entirely. This proves that the subject in question still has room for investigation and definition (see Further research below). An important distinction between the topic of this thesis and the previous research is the perspective. While previous research has mostly focused on analyzing corpora or similarly pre-existing examples of language without much involvement of native speakers, this thesis places emphasis on the awareness and opinions of native speakers. As has been covered in section 5.3, most of the survey's results correlate with the previous research, with the exception of a few outliers. Some may be explained by the particular questions or sentences posed in the survey, as was addressed throughout section 4 and 5.

One potential reason for the sometimes ambiguous data may be the terminology. How should one define the sort of "correct" Japanese which participants are asked to base their scores on in the survey? "Grammatically correct" might be misleading, as spoken language often plays by fewer or different rules than written language. Japanese is no exception to this fact. "Proper Japanese" or "acceptable Japanese" are both very subjective, and can depend on the context as well. "Spoken Japanese one might expect to hear from a native speaker" or similar may be one way to get closer to what this thesis aims to establish. It is perhaps important to consider that this definition may also include native speakers who do not speak Japanese very well, for whatever reason. Participants may include these individuals' way of speaking when taking the survey, even though they would find their manner of speaking strange. Finally, "conventional colloquial Japanese" is what I propose to be the most fitting terminology.

Further research

Apart from the last section, which was quite short, the survey constructed for this thesis does not concern itself with the effects of the ZP. It only inquires as to whether using it is

acceptable or not. In order to further understand and analyze these effects, more thorough interviews or a different survey could be arranged, with questions regarding formality, emotional reception and convention, and idiolects depending on age and gender, to name a few examples.

A very important note on the construction of the example sentences in the survey was made by one of the informants. In the survey, ZP was conveyed simply by omission of the original particle. As observed by this informant, oftentimes when there is no particle, there is a “silent” or “invisible” comma, which looks and feels more natural to a native Japanese reader. The informant in question expressed that they even add a “mental comma” in their head when they use or hear particle omission in spoken language.

In future studies, one may want to consider the method of conveying the ZP to the informants, without making it obvious. One method could be to provide no text at all, opting instead to only provide recordings of spoken language for the example sentences. There is also room for investigating whether the Japanese comma could represent a specific version of the ZP, perhaps several, or even all versions. In other words, “Can the ZP always be replaced by a written comma?”.

Finally, what captured my interest in regards to this subject was the contrast between how common this phenomenon is and how understudied it is. Its further development could prove quite beneficial to teachers and learners of Japanese alike. A phenomenon playing such a huge part in the use of a language should have a much broader established field of study.

References

- Aissen, J. (2000). *Differential object marking: Iconicity vs economy*. MS, Department of Linguistics, UCSC.
- Backhouse, A. E. (1993). *The Japanese Language : An Introduction*. Melbourne: Oxford U. ISBN: 019553509X
- Fry, J. (2003). *Ellipsis and wa-marking in Japanese Conversation (1st ed.)*. Routledge. doi: 10.4324/9780203484036
- Fujiwara, M. (1992). Joshi shooryaku no goyooronteki bunseki (An analysis of particle omission from the perspective of pragmatics). In: Tajima, I., Niwa, Y. (Eds.), *Nihongo ronkyuu (A study of the Japanese language)*, In Vol. 3. Izumi Shoin, Tokyo: 129–148.
- Hasegawa, Y. (2018). Subjects and Topics. In Y. Hasegawa (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Japanese Linguistics (Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics: 276-299)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781316884461
- Iwasaki, S. (2013). *Japanese (Rev. ed.)*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub. Co.: 66-67. ISBN: 9789027238184
- Lee, D. (2002). The function of the zero particle with special reference to spoken Japanese. In *Journal of Pragmatics*. 34 (2002): 645-682.
- Makino, S. and Tsutsui, M. (1986). *A Dictionary of Basic Japanese Grammar*. The Japan Times, Tokyo.
- Masunaga, K. (1988). Case deletion and discourse context. In *Papers from the second international workshop on Japanese syntax*: 145-156. SCLI Stanford

Stanford, CA.

Tsujimura, N. (2014). *An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics (3rd ed.)*. Blackwell

Textbooks in Linguistics Ser. Web.

Tsutsui, M. (1981). Ellipsis of *wa* in Japanese. In Seiichi Makino, ed., In *Papers*

from the Middlebury symposium on Japanese discourse analysis, Urbana, IL.

Venditti, J. J. (2000). *Discourse Structure and Attentional Salience Effects on*

Japanese Intonation. PhD thesis, Ohio State University

Appendix: Survey questions

口語日本語アンケート

このアンケートは、日本語の話し言葉*における様々な文型の文法的な許容性を調査するものです。私の卒業論文を完成させるための重要な調査ですので、皆様のご協力をお願い申し上げます。アンケートは[]個の質問で構成されており、回答には10分程度かかります。

*特に断りのない限り、すべての文章は口語的な日本語で書かれています。ご了承ください。

* Required

年齢： *

性別： *

女性

男性

3. 海外での生活経験は何年ですか。 *

Mark only one oval.

一度もない

1年未満

2年未満

5年未満

5年以上

②以下の文章の文法的な許容度を1~5で採点してください。1は文法的に許容できない、2はどちらかという文法的に許容できない、3はどちらともいえない、4はどちらかという文法的に許容できる、5は文法的に許容できる、です。

4. 1. AさんとBさんの会話を読んで、Bさんの文章を評価してください。A: このお店商品多いですね。B: 価格どう?

Mark only one oval.

5

5. 2. 私は家でアニメを見ていた。

Mark only one oval.

5

6. 3.1. AさんとBさんの会話を読んで、Bさんの文章を評価してください。A: このレストラン料理美味しいですね。B: お酒はどう?

Mark only one oval.

5

7. 4. 私、家でアニメ見ていた。

Mark only one oval.

5

8. 5. 僕はイチゴが大好きです。

Mark only one oval.

5

9. 6. A: 何してたの? B: あ、私、家でアニメ見てた。

Mark only one oval.

5

10. 7. 私はイチゴが大好きです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

11. 8. 私はイチゴ大好きなんです！

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

9. 僕はイチゴ大好きなんです！

下の2つの文は、敬語の違い以外で、何か違う解釈がありますか。1. 私はショックを受けました。私ショックを受けました。

ある

ない

14. 下の2つの文は、何か違う解釈がありますか。2. 私は肉を食べたい。私肉食べたい。

Mark only one oval.

ある

ない

④次の文は手紙を想定しています。1から5までの評価をお願いします。1は全く不適切、2はどちらかというと不適切、3はどちらともいえない、4はどちらかというと適切、5は適切。

15. 1. 迅速な対応、本当にありがとうございました。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

16. 2. 記念品を付けてくれたのはとても嬉しいことです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

17. 3. 迅速な対応をありがとうございました。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

18. 4. 31日、チャーハンいただきました。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

19. 5. おじいさん、おばあさん、10日、ケーキおいしゅうございました。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

⑤以下の文章の文法的な許容度を1~5で採点してください。1は文法的に許容できない、2はどちらかというとな法的に許容できない、3はどちらともいえない、4はどちらかというとな法的に許容できる、5は文法的に許容できる、です。

20. 1. ね、今日のランチは何を食べたの？

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

21. 2. ね、今日のランチは何食べたの？

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

22. 3. ミーティングでは、昼食に何を食べましたか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

23. 4. ミーティングでは、昼食に何食べましたか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

24. 5. ミーティングでは、昼食何食べましたか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

25. 6. ミーティング、昼食何食べましたか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

26. 7. ええと、今日はサツマイモがありますか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

27. 8. ええと、今日はサツマイモありますか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

28. 9. ふーん、和牛がある？

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

29. 10. ふーん、和牛ある？

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

30. 11. すみません、トイレはどこにありますか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

31. 12. すみません、トイレはどこにある？

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

32. 13. すみません、トイレどこある？

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

33. 14. すみません、トイレはどこありますか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

34. 15. すみません、トイレどこありますか。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

35. 16. 雨が降っていなければ、食べ物を持って行って、5時に駅でお会いしましょう。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

36. 17. 雨が降っていなければ、食べ物持って行って、5時駅でお会いしましょう。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

37. 18. 5時駅で会おう。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

38. 19. 食べ物持っていく。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

39. 20. 食べ物を持っていく。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

40. 21. 国際郵便局を作っています。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

41. 22. 国際郵便局作っています。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

42. 23. 像を彫っているのです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

43. 24. 像彫っているのです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

44. 25. 私がランチを奢りましょう。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

45. 26. 私がランチ奢りましょう。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

46. 27. メアリーがジョンを連れて来たそうです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

47. 28. メアリーがジョン連れて来たそうです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

48. 29. メアリー、ジョンを連れて来たそうです。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

49. 30. ジョンは電話を持ってきた。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

50. 31. メアリーは電話持ってきた。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

51. 32. ジョン電話を持ってきた。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

52. 33. メアリー電話持ってきた。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

53. 34. ジョン4回も行った。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

54. 35. 2日前にパリでメアリーいたよ。

Mark only one oval.

3 4 5

36. 年寄り作ったぞ。

良いことであれ悪いことであれ、強い感情をフォーマルな場・会話の中で表現することは一般的に適切であるとお考えですか。

- はい
- いいえ
- わかりません

57. 公式的な会話では「無助詞*」というのは不適切だと思いますか。*例：私は(助詞)ショックを受けました。私(無助詞)ショックを受けました。

Mark only one oval.

- はい
- いいえ
- わかりません

58. 何か本調査に関してご意見はありますか。
