

An analysis of the Japanese pragmatic marker: Elaborative function by *Nanka*

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1. Introduction

This study aims to define the utterance of the word *nanka* and its use in conversations as a pragmatic marker and clarify its function. In everyday conversations, when a speaker tells someone what he or she has experienced, the speaker tries to make the content easier for the listener to understand. The speaker also tends to convey the feelings and sensations gained from that experience and the content of utterances to the other party. In such situations, the word *nanka* is used frequently in Japanese, and many of its functions have been examined (Suzuki, 2000; Uchida, 2001; Iio, 2006). Consider the following example:

(1) *kino tomodachi ni a tta toki ni ne*
'when I met my friend yesterday,'

nanka omoshiroi hon mitsuke ta tte i tte te
'(*nanka*) (my friend) said (he or she) found an interesting book.'

nanka sore mi te mitai tte omo tte
'(*nanka*) I wanted to see it.'

In Example (1), the speaker talks about what he or she experienced yesterday. First, the speaker utters *nanka* before quoting the friend's utterance, *nanka omoshiroi hon mitsuke ta tte i tte te* ('(*nanka*) (my friend) said (he or she

found an interesting book.’) After that, the speaker utters *nanka* in front of the part that expresses what the speaker him/herself feels at that time: *nanka sore mi te mitai tte omo tte* (‘(*nanka*) I want to see it.’). It is used freely many times in various positions within actual utterances, but it seems that there is not much difference in the meaning of the utterance with and without *nanka*. This is because *nanka* seems to be uttered naturally without much awareness, and no clear answer has been found as to how it functions in Japanese discourse. This phenomenon of *nanka*, that is, its use in such a way that it does not affect the proposition even if it is not uttered, should be clearly explained linguistically. The study of words that seem to lack propositional content and have the function of providing text linking and interpersonal functions can be examined from the study of pragmatic markers in the field of linguistics. The main purpose of this study is to hypothesize that *nanka* is a pragmatic marker in Japanese and to clarify its function by investigating linguistic features related to the usage of *nanka*.

The structure of this paper is as follows; Section 2 provides a research background of *nanka*. Section 3 explains definitions and previous research of the pragmatic markers. Section 4 explains the data for this study and its methodology. Section 5 illustrates the data analysis, paying attention to the usages and functions of *nanka* in Japanese discourse. Section 6 discusses how *nanka* can be a pragmatic marker. Section 7 provides concluding remarks.

2. Research background

2.1. Etymology

According to the dictionary (Daijirin, second ed., 1995), the literal meaning of *nanka* is “some, any, something, and anything.” *Nanka* comprises *nan* and *ka*: the original word for *nan* is *nani*, a noun that means “what,” and *ka* is a “question marker.” *Nanka* is based on *nanika*, which comprises these two morphemes. The original meaning of *nanka* inherits that of *nanika* and indicates the “uncertainty” of the speaker’s utterance (Daijirin, second ed., 1995).

2.2. Main usages of *nanka*

Nanka has a characteristic usage that is frequently employed in Japanese conversation. The first observation of *nanka* is its usage as a pronoun, a substi-

tute for a specific noun. The following two sentences use *nanka* to mean “something” or “anything.” In Examples (2) and (3), both use *nanka* as one of the elements expressing a proposition.

(2) *nanka nomi tai.*

‘(I) want something to drink.’

(3) *nsoko ni nanka iru?*

‘Is there anything over there?’

In Example (2), “something” in English is represented by *nanka*, which is a pronoun. Similarly, in Example (3), *nanka* is replaced with “anything” in English, indicating something indefinite. On the other hand, *nanka* often behaves adverbially, i.e., modifying verbs and adjectives to convey ambiguity. These usages can be replaced somehow in English. Let us examine the following two examples:

(4) *nanka samui.*

‘*Nanka* (I) feel cold.’

(5) *nanka zuru site ru ki ga suru.*

‘*Nanka* (I) feel like (you’re) cheating.’

(Morikawa 1991 edited by the author)

In Example (4), *nanka* is used adverbially to modify the adjective *samui* (‘feel cold’). Similarly, in Example (5), *nanka* is used adverbially to modify the verb *ki ga suru* (‘feel like’). In these usages, words that describe the sense of the speaker, “feel like” and “feel cold,” tend to be used with *nanka*. Both usages are currently in frequent use in Japanese discourse (*Daijirin* secondnd ed., 1995).

2.3. Previous studies

Some studies have found that *nanka* gradually loses its propositional content and becomes a meaningless filler. Takubo and Kinsui (1997) suggested that *nanka* functions as a filler or softener by highlighting its cognitive func-

tion, which does not point to something concretely, but indicates a mental state of “roughly like this.” In addition, Uchida (2001) asserted that *nanka* is a discourse marker related to new concepts for listeners, but it marks utterances after *nanka* as being vague, implying the speaker’s attitude to or judgment of what remains vague after *nanka*. Furthermore, Lauwereyns (2002) suggested that *nanka* functions as a filler or hedge indicating uncertainty or tentativeness. Moreover, Iio (2006) stated that *nanka* functions as a turn initiator, filler, and softener. These functional analyses indicate the roles of *nanka* in communication, but there is a limit to certifying these functions one by one. Consider the following example:

- (6) *kino no eega de ne, nanka*
 ‘in the movie (we watched) yesterday, (*nanka*)’

minna ga wara tte ta bamen, are omoshiroka tta.
 ‘the scene we laughed at was interesting.’

In Example (6), *nanka* grammatically modifies the predicate verb *omoshiroka tta* (‘was interesting’), but the qualifying relationship¹ is not clear because the two words are far apart. Here, *nanka* does not function as a propositional element; thus, the usage of *nanka*, in which the modifier word is not indicated explicitly, occurs frequently in conversations. While it sometimes may look like an independent interjection or filler, *nanka* must be uttered with some functions. To clarify this point, *nanka* should be analyzed in more detail.

A word that loses its propositional content and becomes an expression with functions other than the propositional content, e.g., text-linking, interpersonal, and emotional expression, is called a *pragmatic marker* (Brinton, 1996, 2017; Fraser, 1996; Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, 2006). The exploration of the process through which an expression acquires its function as a pragmatic marker has become one of the major research themes in linguistics. Considering that *nanka*, like Example (6) above, also loses the propositional content, it may have some functions other than the propositional content, e.g., text links, interpersonal relationships, and emotional expressions. Based on these linguistic findings, this study hypothesizes that *nanka* functions as a

pragmatic marker and investigates its use and function.

3. Pragmatic markers

3.1. Definitions

The study of pragmatic markers in linguistics began with the study of discourse markers. Swan (2005) asserts that a “discourse marker shows the connection between what a speaker is saying and what has already been said or what is going to be said.” After early research on conjunctions, discourse marker research expanded to include adverbs, prepositional phrases, and interjections. Furthermore, Yule (2017) explains that “pragmatic markers can be used to mark a speaker’s attitude to the listener or to what is being said.”

3.2. Previous research on pragmatic markers

Among previous studies, Halliday and Hasan (1976) analyze discourse markers along with conjunctions, viewing cohesion and coherence as central concepts from the perspective of a text-analytical approach. Furthermore, Schorup (1985) analyzes “like,” “well,” and “y’know” as “a clarification of the state of thinking of the speaker at the time of utterance.” Moreover, Schiffrin (1987) analyses the functions of “y’know,” “I mean,” “so,” and “because,” as “utterances that adjust the context of discourse.” Furthermore, Fraser (1996) proposes a new category of pragmatic markers, arguing that “pragmatic markers are interpreted as separate from the propositional content and are linguistically symbolized cues that signal the speaker’s potential communication intentions.” Fraser takes the position that the discourse markers that have been studied so far are within the group of pragmatic markers. Aijmer (2013) adds, “Discourse Marker is a marker for coherence in discourse and text, while Pragmatic Marker is not only related to discourse and text function but also a marker for guiding the listener’s interpretation.” He cites “well” as an example, noting that it is analyzed a discourse marker for changing topics (at the beginning of a sentence) and making requests and suggestions. However, as a pragmatic marker, “well” is viewed as suggesting to the listener that the process of thinking “how to speak” is in progress. In this way, much research on multi-functional markers has been pointing out various functions in discourse beyond language. A characteristic pattern-of-occurrence environment can exist

when a particular word is used (Smith et al., 2005).² It is necessary to analyze in detail what kind of linguistic environment allows *nanka* to be used with such versatility.

4. Data and methodology

4.1. Mister O Corpus

To determine co-occurring words and patterns of expressions, it is necessary to observe the data in which many co-occurring expressions are collected. Thus, the data examined in the analysis is comprised of 13 pairs of Japanese conversations taken from a language/cultural comparison video corpus called “Mister O Corpus.”³ Each conversation between native Japanese speakers was video-recorded in a university conference room under experimental settings. Data were collected in May and June of 2004 and the subjects were Japanese female university students ages 19 to 23. Each pair was given approximately five minutes to talk about the pre-selected topic, “What surprised you the most?” Although a topic was provided, the subjects were asked to speak spontaneously concerning that topic.



Figure 1. A Japanese conversation from the Mister O Corpus

4.2. Analytical focus

This study hypothesizes *nanka* as a pragmatic marker and investigates its uses and functions. The 395 cases extracted from the data contain *nanka* with various functions. Considering that pragmatic markers do not have propositional elements, the pronoun *nanka* functions as a propositional element of a

sentence and it does not need to be analyzed as a pragmatic marker. Therefore, 39 cases treated as pronoun usage are excluded from the 395 total cases. Therefore, the target of analysis is the remaining 356 cases.

5. Analysis

As a result of the analysis, it is determined that specific linguistic features co-occur when *nanka* is uttered, and the six analyzed here are (i) *nanka* co-occurring with new information, (ii) *nanka* co-occurring with rephrasing, (iii) *nanka* co-occurring with filler, (iv) *nanka* co-occurring with quotations of utterances, (v) *nanka* co-occurring with inner speech, and (vi) *nanka* co-occurring with onomatopoeia. The situations in which *nanka* is likely to be uttered and its functions are clarified by analyzing these.

5.1. *Nanka* co-occurring with new information

Nanka co-occurring with new information acts as a marker that the speaker is trying to elaborate on to the listener. *Nanka* is used at the beginning of discourse with new information to the listener (Uchida, 2001). Generally, speakers tend to convey settings, e.g., time, place, and characters, at the beginning of the discourse. In such situations, *nanka* is frequently uttered with new information, as in Excerpt (7), when Speaker R talks about her visit to a rural town in the United States:

(7) Rural area in the States

→ 01:R: *un, amerika no nanka mein shu tte yu,*
 ‘um, (I) went to the state of (*nanka*) Maine in the States,’

sugoku inaka no tokoro ni i tta n desu ne.
 ‘which is a very rural area.’

(J-25)

Similarly, in Excerpt (8), Speaker R tried to talk about her experiences in Australia. *Nanka* is used at the beginning of the discourse to introduce time and place as new information.

(8) Homestay

→01:R: *nanka* *watashi ga kyonen no na nigatsu ni*
 ‘(*nanka*), I went to Australia last February’

oosutoraria ni i tta n dakedo hoomusutei de.
 ‘for my homestay.’

02:L: *Un*

‘yeah.’

(J-06)

As seen in Excerpts (7) and (8), the speaker needs to tell the listener when and where the event happens to convey a surprising story. In Excerpt (7), Speaker R utters *nanka* to point out that the place where the story occurs in the United States is Maine. Similar to Excerpt (8), *nanka* tends to be used in this case when the speaker tells the listener when and where the surprising event occurs. The speaker uses *nanka* when introducing new information that the listener needed to understand the speaker’s surprising story. To tell her story in more detail, the speaker implies to the listener that she is proceeding with the story while immediately searching for new information by uttering *nanka*.

From these excerpts, it is clear that the speaker utters the *nanka* before providing detailed information that will help the other to understand, or add more detailed information to the utterance already made. In other words, *nanka* with new information works as a marker that the speaker is about to elaborate on to the listeners.

5.2. *Nanka* co-occurring with rephrasing

Nanka co-occurring rephrasing is a marker to suggest to the listener that detailed information will be provided soon. As a story progresses, the speaker sometimes conveys incorrect information to the listener (Maruyama, 2008). In such cases, the speaker makes corrections, that is, changes or additions to words or expressions. *Nanka* occurs in such a rephrasing situation when the speaker provides additional information so that the listener can understand the story accurately. In the following excerpt, Speaker R tries to say that her

friend is in trouble. Her friend originally is from an old temple, and his family is worried about a successor to the temple:

(9) About a successor

→01:L: *iroiro to momegoto ga momegoto tte yu ka*

‘it seems that (his family) (is) in trouble, I mean,’

nanka atotsugi no koto de mome ta rasiku tte.

‘(*nanka*) (they) seem to have argued over the succession.’

02:R: *un*

‘yeah.’

(J-07)

Speaker L utters *momegoto* (‘trouble’) twice (Line 1). After uttering *nanka*, she rephrases it in a way that supplemented what kind of *momegoto* (‘trouble’) it is, stating, *atotsugi no koto de mome ta rasiku tte* (‘(*nanka*) (they) seem to have argued over the succession’) to explain it clearly to the listener. On the same line, *te yuu ka* (‘I mean’) is used as a “repair preface,” a phrase that indicates to the listener that the speaker is about to rephrase another word or expression (Hayashi et al 2009). From this, it is clear that this context has something to do with rephrasing. Similarly, in Excerpt (10), Speaker L says that she falls down the stairs at the station on her way home from college. She explains that she tries to go to the hospital because she is injured but does not have enough money.

(10) Injured at a station

01:L: *okane o mo [tte naku te sonnani byoin no okane toka.*

‘(I) didn’t have much money to go to the hospital.’

02:R: [ee ee ee [ee
‘yeah.’

→03:L: [nande ichimanen o

‘so, 10,000 yen’

[*futsu ni nanka*

‘as a matter of course, (*nanka*)’

04:R:

[*ee*

‘um.’

→05:L: *sono hito ekichosan* [*no nanka otsu okane*

‘of the stationmaster’s (*nanka*) own money.’

06:R:

[*Ee aa.*

‘ah.’

07:L:

[*futsu no eki no okane toka zya* [*naku te*

‘it is not the station’s.’

pokettomanee kara dashi te kure te.

‘(he) gave me his own money.’

08:R:

[*ee ee n.*

‘oh, I see.’

09:L: *de, atode kaeshi te kurere ba ii* [*kara mitaina kanzi de.*

‘and he said, like, “You can pay back after that.”’

10:R:

[*aa sugoi*

‘oh, good.’

shinsetsu desu yo ne

‘(the stationmaster) is so kind.’

Thus, when she does not have enough money, the stationmaster gives her the money for the hospital. After stating *ichimanen o futsuni nanka* ('as a matter of course, (*nanka*)') (Line 3), the speaker utters *nanka* and *sonohito ekichosan no nanka otsu okane* ('of the stationmaster's (*nanka*) own money') (Line 3), explaining that the money comes from the stationmaster personally. Unless this part is rephrased, the source of the 10,000 yen will not be revealed, and the listener cannot understand that the stationmaster paid the money personally. This way, *nanka* is uttered with a rephrasing, and the speaker tends to explain detailed information through trial and error. The speaker tries to speak seriously to the listener but uses *nanka* to suggest that word selection and expression accuracy have not yet been determined.

As mentioned above, *nanka* is used in the process of trying to convey more detailed information to the listener. When the speakers utter incorrect information, they utter a *nanka* and continue to replace the word or expression. Therefore, *nanka* co-occurring with rephrasing is a marker to suggest to the listener that detailed correcting information will be provided soon.

5.3. *Nanka* co-occurring with filler

Nanka co-occurring with filler functions as a marker that suggests a continuation of utterance through trial and error by the speaker. As can be seen from the co-occurrence with new information and rephrasing, *nanka* seems to have something to do with proceeding through "how to speak in detail." However, when thinking about how to do so, the speaker also may utter some fillers with *nanka*, as in the following example:

(11) Final exam

→01:L: *bikkuri shi ta to yuka nanka nto*,
'(I) was surprised, (*nanka*) hmm,'

ninensei no [kooki no kimatsusiken no toki ni
'at the final exam in the second semester of the second grade,'

02:R: [ee, ee.
'yeah.'

03:L: *sugoi tetsuya de repoto* [o siage te
 ‘(I) finished the report all night long.’

04:R: [ee, ee ee.
 ‘yeah.’

(J-03)

Speaker R utters a filler *nto* (‘hmm’) in Line 1 with *nanka*. Fillers are words or sounds spoken to fill an intermittent gap between previous and subsequent utterances. Cognitive delays can occur when the speaker tries to select the most accurate words or expressions (Maruyama, 2008). In such cases, a filler is used between the previous utterance and the next one. As in Excerpt (11), the speaker seems to be constantly thinking about what to say first and what to explain next to develop a surprising story. As evidence of this, the speaker was surprised after showing cognitive delay by uttering, *ninensei no koki no kimatsusiken no toki ni* (‘at the final exam in the second semester of the second grade’) along with filler. The speaker selects what to say from the time it happened (line 1). In other words, the speaker spends a certain amount of time constructing a discourse through trial and error about what should be said and where. If only the filler is uttered by the speaker in this scene, the speaker’s cognitive delay may cause the listener to supplement or assist the utterance. However, in the case of *nanka* that co-occurs with fillers, as in Excerpt (11), *nanka* has the function that indicates an attempt to convey information in detail, suggesting to the listener that the speaker’s utterance should continue.

In summary, the speaker uses *nanka* and filler together in the process of discourse construction when the speaker is unsure of how to convey the information the speaker has. Joint use with *nanka* maintains the continuation of speech that cannot be obtained by using filler alone. *nanka* co-occurring with filler works as a marker to suggest the continuation of utterance through trial and error by the speaker.

5.4. *Nanka* co-occurring with quotations of utterances

Nanka co-occurring with quotations of utterances serves as a marker that suggests the speaker's interpretation of the third-person utterances to the listener. Some researchers have indicated an interest in *nanka* with a quotation that leads to a third party's remark or to discourse in the speaker's mind (Iio, 2006; Uchida, 2001.) Quotations of utterances convey a phrase or a sentence that someone else has said. In (12), speaker R talks about her experience in a foreign country, where she makes friends with Korean girls at a party.

(12) Conversation with a Korean girl

01:R: *soshitara sono onnanoko ga watashitachi ni*,
'then, the (Korean) girl said to us,'

iya muko no nanka^A naisugaitachi ga,
'ah, (*nanka*) some nice guys over there,'

02:L: *aa*.
'yes.'

→03:R: *nanka* *anatatachi to shaberi tai tte*
“(*nanka*) (some boys) want to talk to you.”

itte ru kara hanashi te age ta age te yo
“why don't you talk with them?”

mitaina koto iwa re te
'(the Korean girl) said to me like that.'

(J-06)

In Lines 1 and 3, R explains that one of the Korean girls points at some boys and says, “They want to talk to you. Why don't you talk with them?” In Line 3, *nanka* is used at the beginning of the Korean girl's utterance: *anatatachi to shaberi tai tte itte ru kara hanashi te age ta agete yo*. (‘(some boys) want to talk to you. why don't you talk with them?’) As for the Korean girl's lines that

Speaker R quoted, each word does not necessarily and accurately express what the Korean girl said. In other words, R technically expresses that *mitaina koto iwa re te* ('(the Korean girl) said to me like that') through her interpretation. Each word is not an exact repetition of what has been uttered before, but rather expressions that the speaker has reproduced intuitively.

Although some researchers have indicated an interest in *nanka* with a quotation that leads to a third party's remark (Iio, 2006; Uchida, 2001), quotation markers, e.g., *tte* (a quotation marker), *toka* ('and'), and *mitaina* ('like'), are used without using *nanka* when a speaker wants to quote somebody's utterances in Japanese. Although it is not certain whether *nanka* and the quotation inevitably have an interconnected relationship, according to Nabatame and Oshima (2018), quotations are frequently used when interpretation is given in discourse. Certainly, by Excerpt (12), the speaker is trying to convey her interpretation to the listener, such as "that's how I was told." *Nanka* is presumed to be used when quoting a third party's statement and suggesting that it is specifically the speaker's interpretation.

In this way, *nanka* works to introduce third-party remarks and elaborate on the situation of the story. At the same time, this pattern of co-occurrence tends to be used in contexts that convey the speaker's interpretation, such as "that's how I was told." In other words, *nanka* co-occurring with quotations of utterances serves as a marker that suggests the speaker's interpretation of the third-person utterances to the listener.

5.5. *Nanka* co-occurring with inner speech

Nanka co-occurring with inner speech functions as a marker that introduces the speaker's inner thoughts or feelings and suggests attitudes and evaluations. Regarding this inner speech, Abe (1999) stated, "Inner speech is the arrangement of verbal sounds in the speaker's mind." In the following excerpt, both speakers are students, who talk about how they were surprised when they didn't receive the email they thought they had sent.

(13) Email problem

01:R: *keitai de sa nani kite ru [noni*

'(to) (the address) (you) sent (me) on (my) cell phone.'

02:L : [so da yo ne [meeru kaeshi
 ‘yeah, (you) replied to (my) email,’

→03:R: [ki te sonoue
 ‘and,’

adoresu ni kae shi ta noni
 ‘though (I) transformed into the address,’

okure naku te
 ‘(I) couldn't send it,’

de nanka are toka omo tte
 ‘and (nanka) (I) thought something was wrong.’

uchi ga kengai nano kana toka cho omo tte
 ‘(I) was wondering if this place is out of range,’

demo sore arienai yo na toka omo tte
 ‘but (I) don't think it's possible,’

e, nanka hen da yo toka omo tte
 ‘(nanka) (I) thought it was weird.

(J-22)

In the first line, R states that she has already sent the message to the email address she got from L. From the second line, L has already known the story, however, in fact, it seems that the mail from R could not be sent easily, and R describes the situation at that time in detail in the third line. First, R uttered *nanka* how she felt when the email he sent did not reach L, and then she frankly states, *nanka are toka omo tte* (‘(nanka) I thought something was wrong’). Next, R wonders if there is something wrong with her side, but immediately dismisses it and utters with *nanka, nanka hen da yo toka omo tte*

(“(*nanka*) (I) thought it was weird”). In the third line, the speaker expresses her mind in a direct quotation. Speaker R cites the direct utterance in her mind *are* (‘something was wrong’) and *hen da yo* (‘weired’) and said *to omo tte* (‘(I) thought’) to convey the interpretation that “I think something is wrong with this situation.” The speaker expresses her feelings as if they were a monologue of her inner speech so that her listener would be informed of them in detail at the time. Inner speech is intuitive and improvised. The speaker conveys her candid feelings about the event by expressing her feelings at that time in inner speech. In short, *nanka* functions as a marker to introduce the speaker’s inner speech, which spontaneously expresses subjective emotions at that time in detail.

Thus, the *nanka*, which co-occurs with the inner speech, is used by the speaker to spontaneously elaborate on the subjective feelings of the moment when recounting the situation at the time. In other words, the *nanka* co-occurring with inner speech functions as a marker that introduces the speaker’s inner thoughts or feeling and suggests attitudes and evaluations.

5.6. *Nanka* co-occurring with onomatopoeia

Nanka frequently appears with onomatopoeia. Although many studies have pointed out that Japanese is a rich language full of onomatopoeia (Ono, 2007; Tamori and Schourup, 1999),⁵ how does this involve *nanka*? Onomatopoeia occurs when words express various states and movements with sound, i.e., the words describe sounds that can be heard in reality, such as sounds and voices that are found mainly in the natural world and human language (Ono, 2007). In the following excerpt, Speaker R is riding a bicycle and utters *nanka* with onomatopoeia:

(14) On the way home from school

01:R: *konomae ne gakkō kara kaero to omo tte,*

‘a few days ago, when (I) went home from school,’

02:L: *un=*

‘yes.’

03:R: =*chari da tta* [*n dakedo*
 ‘(I) (rode) a bicycle.’

04:L: [*aa un*
 ‘oh, yes.’

→05:R: *chari o koi de nanka kekko saa tte i tta n,*
 ‘(I) pedaled (*nanka*) a bicycle breezily,’

saaaa tte ma shaaaa tte ma [*ga tte ttara*
 ‘turned at the corner smoothly.’

06:L: [*un.*
 ‘yeah.’

(J-20)

In Line 5, Speaker R directly expresses the speaker’s immediate experience and perception through imitation sounds. She tries to explain the situation by uttering the onomatopoeic “*saa*” and “*shaaa*” with *nanka*. She also tries to describe the scene with the feeling that she “(may be inaccurate), but my image is like this.” She uses this onomatopoeia and *nanka* when the speaker details how the bike ran through the wind. Excerpt (15) provides another onomatopoeic example. Speaker R is on a train and is surprised that many other passengers are sending emails without being considerate of other people in the public space:

(15) Experience on a train

01:R: *minna intaanetto shi te ru no kana tte omo tte,*
 ‘(I) thought that everyone was using the Internet,’

[*fu tte mita ra.*
 ‘then (I) glanced around.’

02:L: [*hai.*

‘yes.’

03:R: *ano, meeru soushin [shi te ite.*

‘(I) realized that (they were) sending emails.’

04:L: *[sou desu yone, ha[i.*

‘(I) suppose so, yeah.’

→05:R:

[te, nanka,

‘and (*nanka*)’

soushin shi te, mata, bubububu tte ya tte mata

‘(they were) sending e-mails, then they got emails,’

uketo [tte mata sugu kaeshi te tte

‘(from their partners), and (they) exchanged (emails).’

06:L: *[un, hai*

‘yeah.’

(J-15)

In Line 5, *nanka* functions as a pronoun to indicate that many people were sending emails. In this line, Speaker R uses *nanka* with the onomatopoeic “*bubububu*” to convey the email’s transmission sound, thereby putting an image of her experience into onomatopoeic words. Judging from the above two examples, *nanka* co-occurs with onomatopoeia when the speaker talks about the visuals of her experiences in detail. According to Chang (1990), onomatopoeia makes language vivid, conjuring up imagery instantly in the speaker’s mind, thereby eliciting a synesthetic effect. The speaker uses onomatopoeia because the listener’s understanding and synesthesia are important when speaking in detail.

For these reasons, by uttering *nanka* along with onomatopoeia, speakers can foreshadow in detail her subjective image or feeling of “like this.” In short, *nanka* co-occurring with onomatopoeia functions as a marker to start detail-

ing the subjective image or feelings of the moment.

6. Discussion

6.1. *Nanka* appearing in two situations

As a result of analyzing co-occurring words and specific situations as clues, the following six linguistic features can be seen: (i) *nanka* co-occurring with new information; (ii) *nanka* co-occurring with rephrasing; (iii) *nanka* co-occurring with filler; (iv) *nanka* co-occurring with quotations of utterances; (v) *nanka* co-occurring with inner speech; and (vi) *nanka* co-occurring with onomatopoeia. Using *nanka* with these features seems to foreshadow two particular situations.

First, when (i) *nanka* co-occurring with new information, (ii) *nanka* co-occurring with rephrasing, and (iii) *nanka* co-occurring with filler are used with *nanka*, the speaker is trying to convey new information to the listener about a surprising story. Because of the improvisational nature of utterances, speakers sometimes convey ambiguous timelines and information. In such cases, the speaker modifies the information so that it is better understood by the listener. Furthermore, speakers sometimes use fillers when they are unsure of the appropriate choice of expression. When such a situation exists, the speaker uses *nanka*, as appropriate, with three expressions: new information; rephrase; and filler. Thus, in scenes in which *nanka* and these three expressions co-occur, a situation arises in which the speaker creates a detailed story while conveying the information.

Second, when (iv) *nanka* co-occurring with quotations of utterances, (v) *nanka* co-occurring with inner speech, and (vi) *nanka* co-occurring with onomatopoeia are used with *nanka*, the speaker conveys the story in detail and intuitively. By reproducing the characters' utterances in the story and expressing their experiences through sounds, the speaker uses rich, if not accurate, expressions to convey feelings and sensations of "I thought and felt this way" to the listener. When this situation exists, the speaker uses such quotations of utterances, inner speech, and onomatopoeia, i.e., in situations in which *nanka* and these three expressions co-occur, speakers try to convey their feelings and perceptions to the listener.

However, using *nanka* in the two situations, one that conveys information

and another one that conveys feelings or perceptions, does not constitute a propositional element and is not necessarily a word that must be uttered. Nevertheless, speakers often use *nanka* when telling stories, indicating that *nanka* plays an important role as a pragmatic marker in discourse.

6.2. *Nanka* as a pragmatic marker

The frequent utterances of *nanka* indicate that it plays an important role as a pragmatic marker in discourse. It can be inferred that the function of *nanka* as a pragmatic marker is related to “talking in more detail.” In detailed informational contexts, *nanka* is used — along with new information, the rephrase, and filler — to detail concrete examples and reasons for the listener, serving as a link between contexts. Also, in the context of expressing emotions and perceptions, *nanka* is used in situations in which expressions with a sense of realism are used when trying to describe in detail how the speaker felt about the story and how they interpreted it. This *nanka* is the cue for what emotions and feelings are to be described. How these functions should be explained theoretically must be considered as well. Fraser (2009) systematically summarizes the functions of pragmatic markers in this way:

This non-propositional part of sentence meaning can be analysed into different types of signals, what I have called Pragmatic Markers (cf. Fraser, 1990), which correspond to the different types of potential direct messages a sentence may convey. These pragmatic markers, taken to be separate and distinct from the propositional content of the sentence, are the linguistically encoded clues which signal the speaker's potential communicative intentions.

(Fraser, 2009)

He classifies pragmatic markers as (i) basic pragmatic markers, (ii) descriptive pragmatic markers, (iii) discourse markers, and (iv) discourse management markers.⁶ Each has subcategories, and each feature is explained in detail. He notes that his third category, discourse markers, has subcategories that he terms elaborative markers,⁷ which he describes as markers that indicate that the first text element follows his second text element. Among the many functional analyses of pragmatic markers, Fraser's research has advocated for using

elaborative markers as pragmatic markers that suggest “talking in more detail.” Elaborative markers also indicate that the subsequent utterance constitutes some refinement of the preceding discourse. Elaborative marker examples are provided below:

- (16) (a) *Take a raincoat with you, but above all, wear gloves.*
(b) *I think you should calm down a little. In other words, sit down and wait a minute.*

(Fraser, 1996)

In example (a), the sentence “*Take a raincoat with you*” uses the pragmatic marker “*but above all*” to add additional information. Furthermore, not only the raincoat but also the gloves have the function of adding updated information. Similarly, in example (b), after saying “*I think you should calm down a little,*” he added the pragmatic marker “*In other words*” to describe how to spend his time in a calm situation. From these examples, elaborative markers have the function of connecting utterances to each other, as well as the function of guiding the content that has been brushed up more than what was originally uttered.

Fraser’s (1996, 2009) findings provide an opportunity to consider the functions of *nanka*. The elaborative markers that he advocates have two features in common with the functions of *nanka*. The first is that it is a marker indicating that the first text element continues in his second text element. *Nanka* is always speaker-oriented in improvisational narrative scenes and is linked strongly to its continuation. For example, when co-occurring with a filler, the speaker may take time to utter an accurate word, but by uttering it together with the pragmatic marker, i.e., *nanka*, related matters can be stated going forward, and the listener can understand that the story continues. Second, the elaborative function of the pragmatic marker *nanka* indicates that subsequent utterances comprise a sort of refinement of the preceding discourse. It is paraphrased by rephrasing, the speaker’s interpretation and feelings are described in detail, and what is uttered with *nanka* is a more brushed-up discourse with a realistic style. Thus, *nanka* foreshadows to the listener that such an expression will be uttered. From this perspective, *nanka* can be defined as an elabora-

tive marker of pragmatic markers in Japanese discourse.

6.3. Elaborative functions through pragmaticalization

This phenomenon in the use of *nanka* overlaps with the study of pragmatic markers, indicating that non-propositional elements begin to have various functions. It can be inferred that this gradual phenomenon indicates that *nanka* is expanding its use. Aijmer (1997) described this as pragmaticalization, a phenomenon in which a propositional content becomes diluted over time, strengthening new pragmatic meanings and implications. It can be concluded that the pragmatic marker *nanka* also has new functions after experiencing such pragmaticalization and contributes to Japanese conversation.

Onodera (2004),⁸ who has analyzed Japanese pragmaticalization, has stated that in an ongoing conversation, in which culturally rigid and defined interaction norms are highly valued, the speakers choose and use specific markers. From the analytical results, the pragmatic marker *nanka* is used in so-called improvisational conversations that are not prepared utterances. Furthermore, *nanka* is uttered with an intuitive and perceptible form in the scene in which the speaker conveys that it is a subjective feeling or sensation. As proof of this, the speaker also utters rephrases and filler with *nanka* and onomatopoeia as intuitive expressions. These improvised and intuitive ways of speaking can cause some difficulty in the listener's understanding. The speaker tries to communicate to the listener, "I'm trying to elaborate on the situation" to alleviate the difficulty. Paradoxically, it is predicted that the pragmatic marker *nanka* would be difficult to employ in a well-planned speech, thus, a specific pragmatic marker *nanka* can be selected in a format that conforms to certain interaction norms, "improvised conversation in Japanese."

7. Concluding remarks

Throughout the analysis, all *nanka* are associated with elaborate and detailed speech. Specific patterns are found that are uttered with some characteristic co-occurrence words. *Nanka*, which co-occurs with new information, rephrasing, and filler, is used to convey specific examples and reasons to the listener in detail and plays the role of connecting context while continuing the utterance. Additionally, *nanka* was used with quotations of utterances, inner

speech, and onomatopoeia, as a marker to reflect the speaker's feelings, interpretation, and direct attitude. Therefore, from these characteristic features, it is concluded that the main function of the pragmatic marker *nanka* is as an elaborative marker. The elaborative marker *nanka* is used to advance the narrative in an improvisational, conversational style in Japanese. Thus, *nanka* foreshadows the variety of ways in which the speaker conveys details to the listener while facilitating discourse when conveying information or feelings.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

Transcription conventions are as follows:

- [speech overlap
- = latching without perceptible pause

Notes

1 Such a relationship is called *continuous modification* in Japanese grammar, and it has the function of detailing or limiting the meaning of verbs, adjectives, and adjective verbs. However, the modifier and the word to be modified are not always paired.

2 In their research on the introduction of new information in discourse, Smith et al. (2005) found that the introduction of important people and things was not abrupt, but rather prepared. Thus, this states that a characteristic occurrence environment and discourse structure pattern exist.

3 The Mister O Corpus contains three kinds of interaction data: task (problem-solving conversations where subject pairs arrange 15 picture cards to make a coherent story), narrative (each subject tells a story that they created with the picture cards), and conversation. The languages collected for the corpus so far include Japanese, American English, Korean (all collected in Tokyo, Japan, in 2004 and 2007), Libyan Arabic (collected in Sebha, Libya, in 2008), Thai (collected in Thailand in 2012), and Mandarin Chinese (collected in China in 2016).

4 Since this *nanka* serves to introduce new information (see 5.1.), it is not analyzed in this section.

5 Yamaguchi (2003) noted that onomatopoeia is abundant in Japanese, and it is a word that characterizes Japanese. Even in terms of quantity, Japanese contains three to five times much more onomatopoeia than Western languages and Chinese.

6 He classified pragmatic markers into four categories: (i) basic pragmatic markers; (ii) commentary pragmatic markers; (iii) discourse markers; and (iv) discourse management markers. Each has a sub-category, and each function is described in de-

tail. He explained the four categories: (i) basic pragmatic marker, which conveys the speaker's illocutionary force; (ii) commentary marker, which is used to comment on some aspect of the basic message; (iii) discourse marker, which is used to indicate a cohesion of discourse; and (iv) discourse management marker, which signals an aspect of the organization of ongoing discourse.

7 Elaborative markers also apply to expressions such as *in particular, also, alternatively, similarly, further, better, by the same token, correspondingly, equivalently, in fact, more precisely, more importantly, more specifically, more to the point, on that basis, above all, otherwise, and likewise* (Fraser 1996).

8 Onodera (2004) analyzed the grammaticalization of the Japanese conjunctions *demo* and *dakara*, as well as sentence-final particles *ne* and *na*.

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