

THE USE OF THE THAI FINAL PARTICLE *NA* BY JAPANESE LEARNERS OF THAI¹

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อวิเคราะห์หน้าที่การสื่อสารของอนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” และ การใช้อนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” ของผู้พูดภาษาญี่ปุ่นที่เรียนภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่สองเปรียบเทียบกับเจ้าของ

¹ การใช้อนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” โดยชาวญี่ปุ่นที่เรียนภาษาไทย
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ภาษา เนื้อหาแบ่งออกเป็นสองส่วน คือ ส่วนการวิเคราะห์หน้าที่การสื่อสารของอนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” โดยใช้ข้อมูลจากคลังข้อมูลภาษาไทยแห่งชาติ และ ส่วนการวิเคราะห์การใช้อนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” ในการสนทนาของผู้พูดภาษาญี่ปุ่นที่เรียนภาษาไทยเป็นภาษาที่สอง 10 คนเปรียบเทียบกับการสนทนาของเจ้าของภาษาคนไทย 10 คน การศึกษาส่วนแรกพบว่า อนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” มีหน้าที่การสื่อสารหลักทั้งหมดสาม ประการ คือ ทำให้ถ้อยคำมีความอ่อนโยน เน้นถ้อยคำให้เด่นชัด และเกริ่นนำหัวเรื่อง สำหรับการวิเคราะห์ส่วนที่สองนั้นพบว่า เมื่อพิจารณาความหลากหลายในการใช้อนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” ตามหน้าที่การสื่อสารและบริบทต่าง ๆ ผู้พูดภาษาญี่ปุ่นที่เรียนภาษาไทยใช้ “นะ” คล้ายคลึงกับเจ้าของภาษาคนไทย กล่าวคือ ทั้งสองกลุ่มใช้ “นะ” ในหน้าที่การสื่อสารเพื่อเน้นถ้อยคำให้เด่นชัดมากที่สุด และใช้เพื่อเกริ่นนำหัวเรื่องน้อยที่สุด ทั้งนี้อาจเนื่องมาจากการถ่ายโอนภาษาเชิงบวกจากภาษาที่หนึ่งของผู้เรียน อย่างไรก็ตาม พบว่าการใช้อนุภาคลงท้าย “นะ” เพื่อเกริ่นนำหัวเรื่องของผู้พูดภาษาญี่ปุ่นน้อยกว่าเจ้าของภาษาคนไทยอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ เนื่องจาก “นะ” ในหน้าที่นี้มีตำแหน่งการปรากฏต่างจาก “นะ” ในหน้าที่อื่น ๆ อีกทั้งข้อมูลจากคลังข้อมูลภาษายังแสดงให้เห็นว่า “นะ” ในหน้าที่นี้มีความถี่ในการปรากฏต่ำ จึงอาจทำให้การเรียนรู้เป็นไปได้ยาก ผลการวิจัยยังชี้ให้เห็นอีกด้วยว่าความสามารถในภาษาที่สองของผู้เรียนมีผลต่อการใช้ออนุภาคลงท้ายในการสนทนา

Abstract

This research aims to analyze communicative functions of the Thai final particle na and to explore the use of na by Japanese learners of Thai, comparing to that of native speakers. The study consisted of two parts. The first part involved an analysis of na using data from the Thai National Corpus (TNC). The findings showed that na had three main communicative functions. It was used to soften the tone of an utterance, to emphasize an utterance, and to mark a topic of an utterance. The second part of this research concerned conversational data in a pair discussion task of 10 Japanese learners of Thai and 10 native Thai speakers. The results showed that, when different functions and contexts were considered, the use of the Thai final particle na by the Japanese learners was similar to that of the native Thai speakers. That is, both groups used na most frequently to emphasize an utterance and least often to mark a topic of an utterance. This could result from a positive transfer from the learners' first language. However, it was found that the Japanese learners showed significantly fewer instances of na as a topic marker than the native Thai speakers. It is possible that its marked position and low frequency in the learners' linguistic input as suggested by the corpus data made na in this function difficult to acquire. This research also pointed to the importance of proficiency in a second language as a factor affecting learners' use of final particles in conversation.

1. Introduction

Final particles are areal features in Southeast Asian languages and some East Asian languages (Goddard, 2005). They are linguistic elements that are generally used to express pragmatic meanings such as social status, politeness, age, and attitude of speakers or listeners. Cross-linguistically, a number of studies have been done to explore characteristics and functions of final particles (for example, Chan 1999 in Cantonese, Blood 1977 in Cham, Fujiwara 1973, Ide and Yoshida 1999, Kamio 1994, Martin 2004, Maynard 1993, Uyeno 1971, in Japanese, Deepadung and Ratanakul 1997 in Mal, Teekhachunhatean 1984 in Northern Thai, Strauss and Xiang 2009 in the Shishan dialect of Chinese, Bhamoraput 1972, Cooke 1989, Peyasantiwong, 1981 in Thai).

Even though final particles in each language differ in many aspects, there are four similarities among languages that have final particles. First, the final particles appear at the end of a linguistic unit such as a phrase, a clause or a sentence. Secondly, final particles are used to express pragmatic meaning, not referential meaning. In this way, final particles can be viewed as a sentence modifier (Bhamoraput's 1972 term) since they change the meaning of the whole sentence, not a particular word. Thirdly, most languages that have final particles allow more than one particle to occur together in a single utterance. When

two or more final particles co-occur, the order of their positions is not arbitrary but follows certain rules. Languages also impose constraints for the co-occurrence of final particles. The last similarity is that every language that has final particles always has ones that express feelings, emotions, and the attitudes of speakers. Additionally, most of those languages also have final particles that show sociocultural factors such as relationships between speakers and listeners, intimacy, politeness, age, and formality. Examples are Japanese, Mal, and Thai.

Following are examples of sentences that contain the final particle *na* in Thai.⁵ Final particles in Thai can appear after phrases, clauses, and sentences.

- (1) phû:jǐŋ khon ní:
 woman CL this
 ná hěnkà:tua mâ:k
 na-FP selfish very
 ‘This woman is very selfish.’

- (2) we:la: dɛ:n kin
 time Dan eat
 ná na:n mâ:k
 na-FP long very
 ‘When Dan eats, it takes very long.’

⁵ Abbreviations used in this article are CL = classifier, COMP = comparative, FP = final particle, MOD = modal, NEG = negation, and PAR = particle

- (3) su: paj thale:
 Sue go sea
 ma: ná
 come *na*-FP
 ‘Sue has been to the sea.’

Bhamoraput (1972) stated that Thai final particles are different from other types of words in the language in three main aspects. First, final particles are not commonly found in a formal written form. Second, they are not obligatory. Omission of final particles does not result in ungrammaticality. For example, sentences (1) to (3) are still intelligible and retain their core meanings even when the final particle is not present. Last, different from content words, final particles do not have fixed meanings. The semantics of final particles apparently depends on situational contexts.

There are over 20 final particles in Thai. Peyasantiwong (1981) categorized Thai final particles into three types. The first type is status particles which are used to show the gender of a speaker, politeness, register, and intimacy between interlocutors such as *kha*, *khraph*, *ca* and *wa*. Second is question particles. There are used to change an affirmative sentence into an interrogative one such as *maj* and *ruu plaaw*. The third type is mood particles, used to show feelings, emotions, and attitudes of a speaker towards people or topics of conversation such as *na*, *si*, *thə* and *la*. Among the three types of final particles, only question particles have relatively fixed meanings. They denote that the sentences are interrogative regardless of contexts. Those three aspects of meaning that final particles can express

are agreed upon among Thai linguists (see also Anchaleenukoon 2009, Panupong 1998, Peyasantiwong 1981, Phanthumeta, 2010). It can be observed that although final particles do not have referential meanings, they do have pragmatic functions. Of the three types of Thai final particles, mood particles seem to be the most difficult to acquire by second language learners. While status and question particles are taught relatively early in Thai language class, mood particles are typically not taught until the learners take at least 60 hours of Thai lessons (Suriya Sripom, personal communication, August 19, 2015, and Maturos Pensri, personal communication, September 17, 2015). Additionally, mood particles' functions are more variable and context dependent than the other two types.

One of the most commonly used mood particles in Thai is the particle *na*. Based on data from the Thai National Corpus or TNC (Aroonmanakun, Tansiri and Nattianuparp 2009), the particle *na* occurs the most frequently in comparison with other mood particles. Many research studies have explored its use and functions as well as differences among its variants (Cooke 1989, Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2009, Peyasantiwong 1981, Phanthumeta 2010, Pittayaporn and Chulanon 2012, among others). As an example, Peyasantiwong (1981) studied Thai final particles and collected data from spoken language in naturalistic conversations, teachers' instructions in classroom settings, television programs, and also from written language. She found that the Thai final particle *na* is used in many

ways, for instance, to soften a declarative statement, make a contradictory or argumentative utterance more gentle, soften an imperative, request opinions, ask for repetition of information, indicate reproach, show displeasure or complaint, make an invitation or suggestion, express annoyance or a threat, and mark a topic (Peyasantiwong 1981: 133-146). It can be seen that the description of *na* in Peyasantiwong's work is dependent on context of use.

In Cooke (1989)'s study of the Thai final particle *na*, data came from questioning and discussion with native Thai speakers and from works of fiction. Cooke proposed that *na* conveys that the speaker wants or expects a reaction from his listener. He further explained that *na* occurs in various contexts. The particle can appear in "action-inducement utterances", statements, questions, and vocatives (Cooke 1989: 124-135). On the other hand, Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom (2009) suggested that the major function of the Thai final particle *na* is to create common ground between a speaker and a listener, and to soften the tone of a conversation.

Phanthumeta (2010) said that when a speaker uses mood particles, he makes an utterance more pleasing to his listener and also conveys his mood towards the topic of conversation or the listener. She then categorized the final particle *na* according to types of intentional sentences with which it occurs, that is, imperative, declarative and interrogative sentences. When *na* occurs in imperative sentences, it issues either a command or a suggestion

depending on the tone of the speaker. If the speaker uses *na* with a soft tone, the utterance is considered a suggestion or an invitation. On the contrary, if the speaker uses *na* with a strong tone, the utterance is perceived as a command. The second sentence type is declarative sentences. The particle *na* is used in two ways, that is, to ask for permission and to mark a statement as giving information. When *na* occurs in interrogative sentences, it indicates a repetition of a question or a soliloquy.

Japanese is another language that has final particles. Similar to Thai, Japanese final particles do not have referential meanings as content words do (Cook 2006). Their meanings are derived from their usage, context, and the illocutionary force of a speaker. Fujiwara (1973) called Japanese final particles a free speech constituent because they do not connect with any part of a sentence specifically. He further categorized Japanese final particles into two types: primary sentence-final particles and exclamatory sentence-final particles. Primary sentence-final particles help a speaker show his attitude towards a listener or a topic of conversation. Exclamatory sentence-final particles function as interjection words. The forms of these two types of particles are not different, but the exclamatory ones mostly appear in the middle of sentences. Along the same line, Nakayama, Shirai and Mazuka (2006) said that Japanese final particles such as *ne*, *yo*, and *ka* not only appear in the final position of sentences but also in the middle of sentences in order to function as interjections.

Japanese final particles can give a hint to a listener about a speaker's attitudes or

emotions, and some are specific in gender (Ide and Yoshida 1999, Martin 2004). Also, some final particles in Japanese such as *ka* and *na* have certain grammatical functions. In the framework of the Territory of Information Theory, Kamio (1994) stated that when information is in the speaker's territory, the particles *zo*, *ze*, *sa* and *yo* are used. On the other hand, when information is in the listener's territory, the speaker uses the particles *ne* and *na*.

It is evident that mastery of final particles is necessary in order to use the language naturally and effectively. Studies of the use of final particles by second language learners certainly provide a deeper understanding of pragmatic competence in second language learning. Most of the second language acquisition research about final particles has been conducted with learners of Japanese. As *ne* is one of the most frequently used final particles in Japanese, much research about it has been done in the area of second language acquisition. Sawyer (1991), Yoshimi (1999), Ishida (2009) and Masuda (2011) studied how second language learners of Japanese acquire the Japanese final particle *ne*. In Sawyer (1991) and Ishida (2009), longitudinal studies focusing on the development of the use of *ne* were conducted. Sawyer collected data from 11 learners with various first languages for one year in Japan. Data were gathered from interviews with the participants and their Japanese teachers. Results showed that at the beginning participants used *ne* in formulaic expressions such as *soo desu ne* ("That's right") more than *ne* as a single word. Afterward, the use of *ne* as a

single word increased and outnumbered *ne* in formulaic expressions. Nonetheless, Ishida's results were different from those of Sawyer. Longitudinal data with one American learner of Japanese revealed that the participant could acquire *ne* as a single word form before *ne* in formulaic expressions. However, the two studies focused on different aspects of acquisition. While Sawyer's work concerned the frequency of *ne*, Ishida's looked at the first form of *ne* being used.

A study of the use of *ne* by Yoshimi (1999) was conducted with five English speakers who learned Japanese as a second language. Conversations between the participants and native Japanese speakers displayed anomalous usage of *ne* both as a single word and as part of a formulaic expression. It was proposed that the anomalous uses of *ne* came from differences between the first and the second language of the learners.

Masuda (2011) collected data from six Americans learning Japanese as a foreign language and having Simple Performance-Oriented Test (SPOT) scores between 57-92%. Conversations between the participants and native speakers were recorded twice within six weeks. The results showed that the performance of the participants improved in the second phase of data collection; the participants began to use *ne* in an appropriate context. Moreover, similar to Sawyer (1991), after the learners gained more proficiency, the use of *ne* in formulaic expressions was found to slightly decrease while the frequency of *ne* as a single word increased. In addition, proficiency in the

second language affected the use of the final particle. A participant with the lowest SPOT score did not use *ne* at all in both phases of data collection. Interaction between the participants and surrounding people also influenced their performance as it helped them develop the use of *ne* in both frequency and accuracy.

Besides the acquisition of final particles in Japanese, there was a study by Chan (2008) pertaining to the acquisition of Cantonese final particles by native Mandarin speakers. Participants were 20 Mandarin learners of Cantonese and 10 native Cantonese speakers. The targets of the study were four groups of Cantonese sentence-final particles. The first group was *le1* and *laa3*, which have similar functions and pronunciations with Mandarin particles *ne* and *le*. The second group was *gwaa3* and *laa1*, which have similar functions with but different pronunciations from the Mandarin particle *ba*. The third group was Cantonese sentence-final particles *ze1* and *wo5*, which do not have any counterparts in Mandarin. The last group was clusters of Cantonese sentence-final particles. Interpretation and usage tests were employed in order to gauge comprehension and use of the Cantonese particles. Findings showed that first language transfer affected the acquisition of the final particles. A positive transfer impacted the acquisition of Cantonese particles which had counterparts in Mandarin, except for *laa3* and *laa1*. The tone of *laa3* and multi-functions of *laa1* might create confusion among the learners. Moreover, there were also negative transfers from the learners' first

language as could be seen, for example, in the use of Mandarin sentence-final particle *ma* in the context of Cantonese.

In sum, previous research has shown that language proficiency is an important factor in the acquisition of final particles. When learners gain more proficiency in their second language, use of the target final particle improves. Another factor that has an influence on the acquisition of final particles in a second language is language transfer. If the first language of learners contains similar final particles, it can assist them in acquiring the target final particles in the second language.

The present study is interested in the use of the final particle *na* in Thai by Japanese learners. It should be noted the final particle *na* has some variants. Cooke (1989) claimed that the particle has five main variants, namely, /ná/, /nâ/, /náa/, /nâa/, and /naa/. This study will focus on the simple form /ná/. Japanese learners of Thai are of particular interest because Japanese is also a language with a variety of final particles. Some final particles in Japanese seem to have overlapping functions with those in Thai. For instance, to seek confirmation or agreement from a listener, the particle *na* is used in Thai and *ne* is used in Japanese (Peyasantiwong 1981 in Thai, Uyeno 1971 in Japanese). Since both languages contain final particles, it is intriguing to investigate how Japanese learners use *na* and whether they use it similarly with or differently from native Thai speakers.

The aim of the research is to analyze communicative functions of *na* as found in the Thai National Corpus (TNC), and to

explore the use of *na* by Japanese learners of Thai, compared to that of native Thai speakers. The study consisted of two parts. The first part involved an analysis of *na* using data from the TNC, and the second part concerned conversational data in a pair discussion of 10 Japanese learners of Thai and 10 native Thai speakers.

2. Communicative functions of the final particle *na*

Even though the use of the Thai final particle *na* has previously been examined in different studies, we find it necessary to offer a revised analysis of *na* that is based on data from a large corpus. In earlier studies (e.g., Bhamoraput 1972, Cooke 1989, Peyasantiwong 1981), data of *na* included instances in which the particle appeared together with other mood particles. It could then be the case that the derived meaning of *na* was influenced by its co-occurrence with other particles. Moreover, from our investigation of corpus data, there exist functions of *na* that had not clearly been explicated. Categorization of functions of *na* also needs to be reconsidered. For example, the particle was found to soften a request (Bhamoraput 1972, Cooke 1989, Iwasaki and Ingkaphirom 2009, Peyasantiwong 1981, Phanthumeta, 2010) and also to soften criticism (Bhamoraput 1972, Peyasantiwong 1981). The two functions could in fact be grouped under one main function, namely, to soften an utterance. Thus, the current study reexamines

communicative functions of *na* from a new set of data, at the same time taking into consideration findings from previous studies.

To analyze functions of *na* as used in everyday spoken Thai, data were drawn from the Thai National Corpus or TNC (Aroonmanakun et al. 2009). The corpus contains approximately 32 million words from six main genres: fiction, newspaper, non-academic text, academic text, law and miscellanea. Since *na* is mainly used in spoken language, we looked up instances of *na* only from the fiction genre (2008-present), which had a large number of monologues and dialogues, and found 30,474 tokens of *na*. Five hundred sentences that contained *na* as a final particle were randomly selected. It should be noted that to fully understand the functions of *na*, consideration of the context of the occurrence is indispensable. As pointed out in Peyasantiwong (1981), an utterance could be regarded as a command or a request depending on the context as well as a speaker's tone of voice. Hence, both surrounding utterances and narration of the scene were also taken into account in analyzing the data. Excluded were sentences with variants of *na* and those in which *na* was accompanied by other mood particles. Hence, 400 sentences were included in the data analysis.

The analysis showed that *na* has three main communicative functions. It is used to soften the tone of an utterance, to emphasize an utterance, and to mark the topic of an utterance. As stated earlier, contexts play an important role in

determining the functions of *na*. Each function is explained in detail follows.

1) Softening the tone of an utterance

The final particle *na* is used to soften the tone of an utterance when the speaker wants to ask the listener to do something but does not want to sound forceful. It is therefore observed when the speaker makes a request, a suggestion and an invitation, or when he tries to persuade the listener to perform a certain act. *Na* is also seen when the speaker tries to seek agreement from the listener on evaluative comments. In addition, the speaker uses *na* when he wants to contradict what was said by his interlocutor in a previous utterance. In such contexts, the use of *na* helps to tone down the utterance. Without *na*, the utterance would sound like a command. Examples of *na* as a tone softener from the corpus are provided below.

1.1) Context: Making a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion

The final particle *na* adds a gentle tone to a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion. Example (4) was uttered in a meeting by a boss who asked his subordinate for a short report. The use of *na* helped soften his request.

- (4) khǒ: pràden sân sân
ask issue short short
sák sǎ:msíp wína:thi:
about thirty second
ná
na-FP
'A short issue of about 30
seconds, please.'

In (5), the speaker wanted to invite the listener to have dinner with him. Again, *na* in this utterance made the invitation less forceful, indicating that the speaker did not want to impose on the listener.

- (5) kin khâ:wjen kan ná
eat dinner together *na*-FP
'Let's have dinner together.'

1.2) Context: Seeking agreement on evaluative comments

The particle *na* is used when the speaker makes certain evaluative comments and wants the listener's affirmative response. In a subtle way, *na* indirectly signals an invitation for the listener's positive feedback. In (6), the speaker commented on the good smell of durian and wanted agreement from his listener. *Na* then served as a gentle invitation for the listener's agreeing reply.

- (6) thúrian nî: hǒ:m
durian this smell
di: ná
good *na*-FP
'This durian smells good, doesn't it?'

Example (7) was said when the speaker and the listener were standing together in front of a window and looking outside. The speaker saw that the sky was getting dark and cloudy, so he made a comment about rain. The particle *na* at the end of the utterance was an indirect way of asking for positive feedback from his listener.

- (7) du: mǎan fǒn
look like rain
cà tòk ná
MOD fall *na*-FP
'It looks like it's going to rain, doesn't it?'

1.3) Context: Contradicting a previous utterance

When the speaker wants to show that he does not agree with what was said earlier, the final particle *na* is used to soften the tone of his disagreement. It is usually the case that *na* in this context occurs with negation. For example, in (8), the speaker wanted to tell the listener that he had misunderstood something but at the same time did not want to create a conflict or threaten the listener's face. Therefore, he used *na* in order to soften the tone of his utterance.

- (8) mǎjchâj jà:ŋ thî:
NEG like that
khun khít ná
you think *na*-FP
'It's not quite what you think.'

In (9), the speaker wanted to contradict what his interlocutor said in the previous utterance and used *na* as an utterance softener.

- (9) mây nâ: cà
NEG MOD MOD
penpajdâ:j ná
possible *na*-FP
'It doesn't seem quite possible.'

2) Emphasizing an utterance

Another function of *na* is to emphasize an utterance or to make the meaning of an utterance stronger and clearer. This is seen when the speaker issues a command or a warning, or accentuates his statement. Moreover, *na* also appears in a question asking for information to be repeated. And, finally, it can occur in a soliloquy where the speaker asks a question to himself.

2.1) Context: Making a command or giving a warning

The speaker uses *na* in a command or a warning as a means of putting an emphasis on his utterance so that the listener will comply. It is often observed in a context in which the speaker is threatened or menaced, and wants the other person to stop and change the course of his action immediately. In such contexts, there is no need to soften an utterance or make it more polite. On the contrary, a strong and sharp tone is exerted to achieve what the speaker wants. In (10), the speaker and the listener were fighting over a book. The speaker wanted the listener to back off, so she uttered the sentence with *na* with a strong tone of voice.

- (10) thǎj paj ná
back off go na-FP
ʔǎj ʔim
Title Im
'Back off, Im!'

In (11), the speaker was sexually harassed by the listener. She was angry and wanted

him to stop. She used *na* in order to emphasize her command.

- (11) ʔaw mu: ʔò:k
take hand out
paj dǎwní: ná
go now na-FP
"Take your hand off now!"

2.2) Context: Accentuating a statement

The final particle *na* is used to highlight the message that the speaker is conveying. The particle can be seen when the speaker wants to emphasize his intention or the thought expressed in his utterance. Emphasis through the use of *na* also appears when the speaker confirms that he agrees with the listener. In (12), the speaker talked to her grandmother who came to see her at school. She wanted to stress that she knew her grandmother's hidden agenda in coming there, so *na* was used to accentuate her message in this context.

- (12) nǔ: rú: ná wâ:
I know na-fp that
ja:j ma: ro:ɣrian
grandmother come school
nǔ: thammaj
I why
"I know why you
(grandmother) came to my
school."

In (13), two people were talking about drinking. The speaker of (13) expressed her agreement with the listener's earlier comment about not drinking. The speaker then used *na* to emphasize that she agreed with what the listener thought.

- (13) rûaŋ lâw ʔe:
 story alcohol A
 kô: mâj kin
 also NEG eat
 mǎankan ná
 same *na*-FP
 As for alcohol, I (A) don't
 drink it, either.

2.3) Context: Asking for repetition of information

Na is used when the speaker asks for certain information again due either to surprise or to uncertainty, similarly observed in echo questions. In such case, the speaker assumes that his listener knows the answer to his question. The presence of *na* emphasizes the speaker's surprise or his desire for previously shared information. If *na* were not used, the utterance would sound like a question asked for the first time without any assumption. As an example, the speaker in (14) was trying to come up with the name of the organization he was talking about. He then turned to his interlocutor for help, assuming that his listener knew the answer.

- (14) ʔoŋkɔ:n chû:
 organization name
 ʔaraj ná
 what *na*-FP
 'What is the name of the
 organization again?

Example (15) took place when the speaker could not catch what he had heard and requested repetition. The use of *na* implied that the information had previously been shared but was needed once more.

- (15) ʔaraj ná mûakî:
 what *na*-FP just now
 khun wâ: ʔaraj ná
 you say what *na*-FP
 'What? What did you just
 say?'

2.4) Context: Asking a question in a soliloquy

The last context in which *na* is used to emphasize an utterance is when the speaker asks a rhetorical question to himself. Here, *na* gives emotional strength to the question (or complaint made in the form of a question). When the speaker talks to himself, he does not need to soften the tone of his utterance. Rather, his emotion and feeling are focused upon. In (16), the speaker said the sentence when walking by a house in which a child was left alone. He wondered about the child's safety and talked in a soliloquy using *na* to strengthen of his concern.

- (16) phô: mē: dèk
 father mother child
 paj nǎj kan
 go where together
 mòt ná
 all *na*-FP
 'Where have the child's
 parents gone?'

The speaker of (17) wondered whether his friend knew about his secret or not. The occurrence of *na* in his question to himself again emphasized his anxiety.

- (17) thə: cà rú: rûaŋ
 you MOD know story
 máj ná
 Question PAR na-FP
 ‘Do you know about this?’

- (19) khǒ:ŋ chǎn ná
 of I na-FP
 tham khà:w banthə:ŋ
 do news entertainment
 ‘As for me, I do
 entertainment news.’

3) Marking the topic of an utterance

The last communicative function of *na* is as a topic marker. *Na* in this communicative function is distinguished due to its syntactic difference. It usually appears with a noun phrase to mark it as the topic of a conversation. Hence, in a way, the particle calls for the listener’s attention to the topic. However, it should be noted that *na* is not the only particle that functions as a topic marker in Thai; other final particles, for example, *si*, can be used with presumably subtle semantic differences. In (18), the speaker wanted to talk about himself and his ability in shooting. So, he used *na* to introduce the topic.

- (18) do:jchàphó chǎn ná
 especially I na-FP
 chǎn jīŋ khraj
 I shoot who
 mây khə:j phlâ:t
 NEG ever miss
 ‘Especially I, when I shoot, I
 never miss the target.’

The speaker of (19) wanted to talk about her responsibility as a reporter. She therefore, used *na* to introduce the topic of the conversation.

To investigate the frequency of *na* in the three main communicative functions, we further categorized the 400 instances of *na* according to their functions and contexts in which they occurred. Half of the sentences containing *na* were also chosen randomly for reliability coding by another native Thai speaker, who coded the data separately. There were 7% disagreements which were settled after discussion. Figure 1 shows the proportion of *na* in each of the communicative functions. It can be seen that *na* was mainly used to emphasize an utterance (316 instances, 79%). There were 77 instances (19.25%) of *na* that appeared to soften the tone of an utterance while only seven instances (1.75%) functioned as a topic marker

Table 1 shows the frequency of *na* in each context. Almost half of the instances of *na* (180 instances, 45%) were used to emphasize an utterance in a statement accentuating context. The second context in which *na* was frequently used was the context in which the speaker made a command or a warning (68 instances, 17%). Next was the context in which the speaker made a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion, and *na* functioned as a tone softener (45 instances, 11.25%).

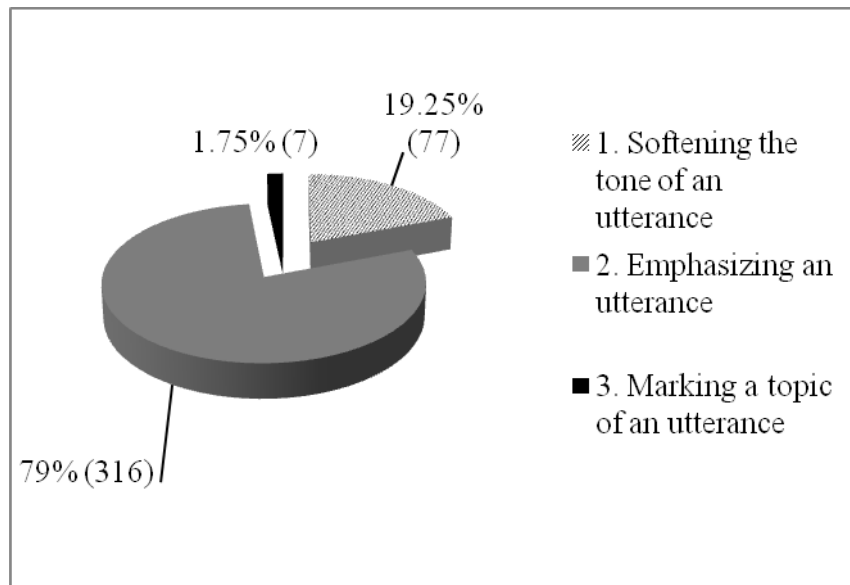


Figure 1 Proportion of *na* in the three main communicative functions

Table 1 Frequency of *na* in different contexts

Functions	Contexts	Tokens	Percentage
1. Softening the tone of an utterance	1.1 Making a request, a suggestion, an invitation or persuasion	45	11.25%
	1.2 Seeking agreement on evaluation comments	4	1%
	1.3 Contradicting a previous utterance	28	7%
2. Emphasizing an utterance	2.1 Making a command or giving a warning	68	17%
	2.2 Accentuating a statement	180	45%
	2.3 Asking for information to be repeated	31	7.75%
	2.4 Asking a question in a soliloquy	37	9.25%
3. Marking a topic of an utterance		7	1.75%
Total		400	100%

3. The final particle *na* used by Japanese learners of Thai

3.1 Data collection

3.1.1 Participants

Ten Japanese learners of Thai (three males and seven females; aged 20-42 years old) and ten native Thai speakers (three males and seven females; aged 20-27 years old) participated in the study. In the learner group, there were three advanced and seven intermediate learners, all of whom had taken Thai lessons for more than 180 hours. Nine learners had taken Thai class at the Intensive Thai Program at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, and one learner had taken Thai class at a different institution that issued a standardized test in each level in a similar way as the Intensive Thai Program. As for the native Thai speakers, they were all university students at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. In this study, J1 to J10 were used to represent the Japanese learners of Thai, and T1 to T10 the native Thai speakers.

3.1.2 Stimuli

A pair discussion task in which two participants were asked to discuss on a given topic was used as a tool in data collection. The participants had to make a conversation in order to reach agreement on different choices in the following four situations.

Situation 1: Three items to take along on a deserted island

Situation 2: Three foreign destinations to travel to

Situation 3: Five dishes for a New Year's party

Situation 4: Seven animals to have in a newly opened zoo

Instructions and the four situations along with their choices were explained to the participants verbally in Thai and also in written Thai texts. A translated English version of Situation 1 is provided below. It should be noted that to help the learners, English glosses accompanied each of the choices. (See appendix A for English translations of the other three situations.)

Situation 1: If you both were left alone on a deserted island for one month, which of the three items (out of 15 items) below would you choose to take? (Decide on the three items together, not separately.) Clearly explain the reasons why the three items would be picked and why the rest would not.

1. Tent
2. Knife
3. Pillow
4. Cigarette lighter
5. Canned food
6. Blanket
7. Water
8. Pot
9. Flashlight
10. Binoculars
11. Gun
12. Compass
13. Shirt
14. Map
15. Instant noodles

3.1.3 Procedure

Each participant was paired up with a partner from the same language group. Each pair was instructed to conduct a pair discussion on the four situations, which were also presented in text. A researcher made sure the instructions were clearly understood, then left the room. An MP3 recorder was used to record the participants' conversations, which lasted from 20-35 minutes. For data analysis, 20 minutes of each pair's conversation was transcribed and cross-checked by another native Thai speaker.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Frequency of *na*

We examined the frequency of *na* in the pair discussion of both the Japanese learners of Thai and the native Thai speakers. Conversations were analyzed into utterances, with an utterance being a meaningful single proposition. Out of the total of 2,902 utterances of the Japanese learners, there were 208 tokens of *na* (7.17%). Table 2 shows the number of utterances and the frequency of *na* used by each Japanese learner. It can be observed that the number of *na* found in the utterances of the Japanese learners ranged from 0 to 62 tokens. While J1 used *na* the most frequently (62 tokens out of 415 utterances, 14.94%), J7 did not use *na* at all in the conversation

For the native Thai speakers, there were 187 tokens of *na* out of 3,343 utterances (5.59%). Table 3 displays the number of utterances and the frequency of *na* used by

each native Thai speaker. The frequency of *na* appeared to vary according to the speakers, ranging from 3 to 44 instances. The participant who used *na* the most often was T7; his conversation contained 44 tokens of *na* out of 418 utterances (10.53%). On the other hand, T10 used *na* only 3 times out of his 237 utterances (1.27%).

The results revealed a tendency for the learner group to use the final particle *na* more often than the native speaker group. However, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test indicated that the frequency of *na* from the learner group and that from the native speaker group was not statistically significant at $p < .05$. It should be noted that the frequency of *na* did not seem to correlate with the number of utterances in the conversation. While it is the case that the average number of utterances was higher in the native speaker group than in the learner group (334.3 versus 290.2 utterances), the frequency of *na* in the former group did not exceed that in the latter. Moreover, the participant with the smallest number of utterances in the learner group (J10, 167 utterances) showed frequent use of *na* (13.17%) whereas the participant with a relatively high number of utterances in the native speaker group (T3, 418 utterances) used *na* only 2.63%. The use of *na* appeared to depend on the communicative intention of the speaker as will be discussed in the next section.

Table 2 Frequency of *na* in pair discussion of the Japanese learners

Participants	Number of utterances	Tokens of <i>na</i>	Percentage
J1	415	62	14.94%
J2	411	28	6.81%
J3	342	27	7.89%
J4	246	7	2.85%
J5	214	3	1.4%
J6	240	7	2.92%
J7	282	0	0%
J8	268	15	5.6%
J9	317	37	11.67%
J10	167	22	13.17%
Total	2,902	208	7.17%

Table 3 Frequency of *na* in the pair discussions of the native Thai speakers

Participants	Number of utterances	Tokens of <i>na</i>	Percentage
T1	308	16	5.19%
T2	261	22	8.43%
T3	418	11	2.63%
T4	345	24	6.96%
T5	409	14	3.42%
T6	438	16	3.65%
T7	418	44	10.53%
T8	276	24	8.7%
T9	233	13	5.58%
T10	237	3	1.27%
Total	3,343	187	5.59%

3.2.2 Communicative functions of *na*

Data analyses were conducted to investigate the functions of *na* as appeared in the conversations of the Japanese learners and the native Thai speakers. Each instance of *na* was coded for its communicative function as well as its context of occurrence. A reliability coding by another native Thai speaker showed 5.06% disagreements, which were settled after discussion.

To begin with, like the native Thai speakers, the Japanese learners of Thai were found to use *na* in all three main communicative functions: softening the tone of an utterance, emphasizing an utterance, and marking the topic of an utterance. Example (20) was taken from a discussion between J1 and J2 about the three items they would have chosen to take along if they had been left on a deserted island. In the first turn, J1 used *na* as a tone softener when he made a suggestion to J2. J2, on the other hand, used *na* to emphasize that she believed in what J1 had suggested. In her next utterance, *na* appeared in the context in which the speaker asked a question to herself in a soliloquy. J2 seemed to talk to herself as if trying to remember what the pair had talked about earlier. She did not wait for an answer from J1 as evident by her immediately following question.

- (20) J1: thín paj di: kwà:
drop go good COMP
ná khráp
na-FP *krap*-FP
'We'd better drop this
item.'

J2: díchăn chûa ná
I believe *na*-FP
chûa dɛ:n⁶ ná
believe Dan *na*-FP
'I believe you. I believe
you, Dan.'

ʔo:khe:y lé:w ʔaraj
okay then what
ná khēmthít māj
na-FP compass NEG
ʔaw chāj
get right
māj khá
Question PAR *kha*-FP
'Okay, then what?
We did not choose a
compass, right?'

Example (21) showed a conversation between J3 and J4 about dishes to take to a party. J3 suggested that they should not take a papaya salad to the party and used *na* to soften the tone of his suggestion. J4 responded that she agreed with his choice. In her turn, she used *na* to accentuate her statement.

- (21) J3: māj ʔaw
NEG get
sôm tam ná
papaya salad *na*-FP
'We won't choose a
papaya salad.'

⁶ All the names in examples in this research are pseudonyms.

J4: u:m somtam
um papaya salad
mâjpenraj ná
all right na-FP
'Um, it's all right (that we
won't choose) the papaya
salad.'

In a conversation in Example (22), J7 and J8 were discussing the animals that they had to choose to include in their new zoo. They disagreed with each other about whether penguins lived in sea water. In the final utterance, J8 used *na* when she wanted to contradict what J7 had said. The communicative function of *na* was to mitigate the tone of the speaker's disagreement.

(22) J8: thammaj jù: dâ:j
why live can
'Why can (penguins) live
(in sea water)?'

J7: jù: naj ná:mkhem
live in sea water
'They live in sea water.'

J8: mâj mâjdâ:j mâj dâ:j
NEG unable NEG get
jù: naj ná:mkhem
live in sea water
ná
na-FP
'No, they cannot. They do
not live in sea water.'

Example (23) showed a conversation between J3 and J4 about a foreign destination that they wished to visit. J3 used *na* to introduce the topic of the conversation, Mexico. In addition, after introducing the

topic of the conversation, J3 added more information about it.

(23) J3: méksiko: ná mi:
Mexico na-fp have
phû:jîj sǔaj
woman beautiful
'As for Mexico, there are
beautiful women.'

Table 4 shows the Japanese learners' use of *na* as summarized by communicative functions and contexts of occurrence. It can be seen that *na* was used most often to emphasize an utterance (149 instances, 71.63%), and it occurred most often in the context where the speaker's statement was accentuated (107 instances, 51.44%). The next frequent function was to soften the tone of an utterance (52 instances, 25%). The context where *na* could be observed frequently was when the speaker tried to seek an agreement on evaluative comments (26 instances, 12.5%). The function of *na* that appeared the least for the learner group was to mark the topic of an utterance (7 instances, 3.37%).

Table 5 displays the frequency of *na* categorized according to communicative functions and contexts of occurrence in the native speaker group. Similar to the Japanese learners, *na* was seen most commonly to emphasize an utterance (108 instances, 57.76%), with the statement accentuating context being of the highest number (82 instances, 43.85%). Next, there were 51 instances of *na* as a tone softener (27.25%). However, different from the learner group, the context in which *na* in this function occurred most often was when the speaker made a request, a suggestion, an

invitation or persuasion (28 instances, 14.97%). Furthermore, the native Thai speakers were found to use *na* as a topic marker in the same number.

Figure 2 presents a comparison of *na* in each communicative function between the Japanese learners and the native Thai speakers in terms of percentage of use. A

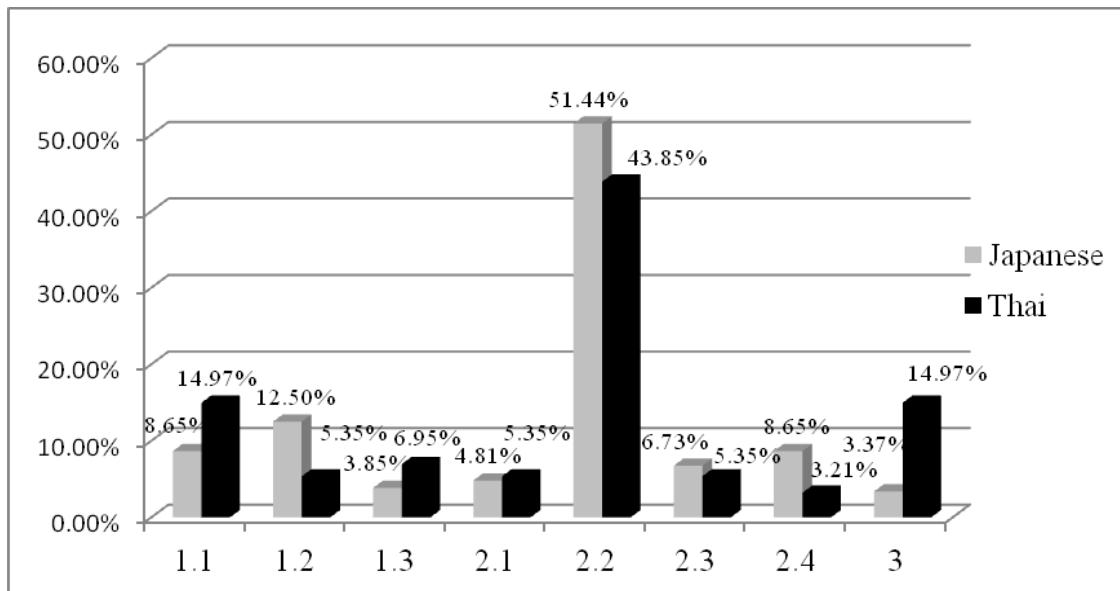
Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test revealed that only the use of *na* to mark the topic of an utterance from the learner group, $Mdn = 0.24$, was statistically significantly lower than that from the native speaker group, $Mdn = 0.80$, $Z = 2.10$, $p < .05$. That is, the native Thai speakers used *na* in this communicative function more often than the Japanese learners.

Table 4 The Japanese learners' use of *na* in different communicative functions

Functions	Contexts	Tokens	Percentage
1. Softening the tone of an utterance	1.1 Making a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion	18	8.65%
	1.2 Seeking agreement on evaluation comments	26	12.5%
	1.3 Contradicting a previous utterance	8	3.85%
2. Emphasizing an utterance	2.1 Making a command or giving a warning	10	4.81%
	2.2 Accentuating a statement	107	51.44%
	2.3 Asking for information to be repeated	14	6.73%
	2.4 Asking a question in a soliloquy	18	8.65%
3. Marking the topic of an utterance		7	3.37%
Total		208	100%

Table 5 The native Thai speakers' use of *na* in different communicative functions

Functions	Contexts	Tokens	Percentage
1. Softening the tone of an utterance	1.1 Making a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion	28	14.97%
	1.2 Seeking agreement on evaluation comments	10	5.35%
	1.3 Contradicting a previous utterance	13	6.95%
2. Emphasizing an utterance	2.1 Making a command or giving a warning	10	5.35%
	2.2 Accentuating a statement	82	43.85%
	2.3 Asking for information to be repeated	10	5.35%
	2.4 Asking a question in a soliloquy	6	3.21%
3. Marking the topic of an utterance		28	14.97%
Total		187	100%



(Note: 1.1 Making a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion; 1.2 Seeking agreement on evaluative comments; 1.3 Contradicting a previous utterance; 2.1 Making a command or giving a warning; 2.2 Accentuating a statement; 2.3 Asking for information to be repeated; 2.4 Asking a question in a soliloquy; 3 Marking the topic of an utterance)

Figure 2 A comparison of the use of *na* in each communicative function between the Japanese learners and the native Thai speakers

4. Discussion

This study showed an analysis of the communicative functions of the Thai final particle *na* as seen in a large corpus. We have found that the three main communicative functions of *na* are to soften the tone of an utterance, to emphasize an utterance, and to mark the topic of an utterance. In terms of frequency, *na* was chiefly used to put an emphasis on an utterance (79% of the time). Its function as a topic marker was rare (1.75%). Furthermore, data were also collected through a pair discussion task performed by two groups of participants, namely Japanese learners of Thai and native Thai speakers. The analysis showed that the use of *na* by the native Thai speakers patterned along with the corpus data. Interestingly, data from the Japanese learners of Thai also corresponded to the pattern observed in the corpus. That is, *na* was used most frequently to emphasize an utterance (71.63 %) and least frequently to mark the topic of an utterance (3.37%). Since the corpus data are regarded as representative of everyday Thai language, the observable usage of *na* should reflect how the particle is in use in the language and presumably forms part of the linguistic input to which learners of Thai are exposed. The frequency of the various communicative functions of *na* in the learner group can then be influenced by the input they receive, resulting in the conformity between the corpus data and the learners' production.

When we compared the use of *na* of the Japanese learners with that of the native Thai speakers, it was found that the learner group used *na* slightly more often than the native speaker group. With regard to the

frequency of *na* in different communicative functions, there was no disparity between the two groups when *na* was used to soften the tone of an utterance and to emphasize an utterance. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that the contexts in which *na* as a tone softener appeared were somewhat quantitatively different between the two groups. While the Japanese learners often used the particle in a context in which the speaker tried to seek agreement from the listener (12.5% of the time), the native Thai speakers tended to use it most frequently when the speaker made a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion (14.97%). This contextual difference, however, was not statistically significant. The results hence suggested that the two main functions of *na*, namely, softening the tone of an utterance and emphasizing an utterance, could be acquired by the Japanese learners of Thai.

A positive transfer between the first language and the second language is assumed to be one of the important factors affecting the Japanese learners' use of the final particle *na*. As Saville-Troike (2009) stated, a similarity between a learner's first language and second language can create a positive transfer, which helps learners acquire certain aspects in the target language. Since Japanese contains final particles, it is possible that the concept of final particles can be easily grasped by the Japanese learners of Thai. Needless to say, there is no one-to-one match between the Thai final particle *na* and another final particle in Japanese, but there are some overlapping functions between the final particles in the two languages. For example, similar to the use of *na* in Thai, a Japanese

speaker may use the particle *ne* in Japanese to soften the tone of an utterance when he tries to seek agreement from his listener.⁷ The results of the current study correspond to those in Chan (2008), who found that a positive transfer between Cantonese and Mandarin helped the Mandarin learners of Cantonese learn sentence-final particles in the target language. Hence, if the first language of learners has final particles, there could be a positive transfer facilitating the acquisition process of the target final particle in the second language.

Nonetheless, our results also revealed that the learner group used *na* to mark the topic of an utterance significantly less often than the native Thai speakers did (3.37% versus 14.97%). This can be accounted for when the position of the topic-marking *na* as well as the frequency of *na* in this function are considered. While *na* generally appears at the sentence final position, when functioning as a topic marker, it appears after the first noun phrase, i.e., in the middle of the sentence. That a particle can occur in different positions can also be observed in Japanese. Izuhara (2010) claimed that *ne* in Japanese should be categorized into two groups, namely, interjectory particles (IP) (or exclamatory particles in Fujiwara's (1973) term) and final particles (FP), since the pragmatic functions of those two categories are not identical. An interjectory

particle is only used to call the listener's attention and does not have to appear at the sentence final position. On the other hand, a final particle is used to denote informational territory (Kamio 1994) and must occur at the end of the sentence. Examples (24) and (25) show the use of *ne* as an interjectory particle and a final particle, respectively.

(24) kinou *ne* Kensan
 yesterday *ne*-IP Mr. Ken
 ni atta no
 PAR saw *no*-FP
 'As for yesterday, I saw
 Mr. Ken.'

(25) kinou Kensan
 yesterday Mr. Ken
 ni atta *ne*
 PAR saw *ne*-FP
 'We saw Mr. Ken
 yesterday, didn't we?'

Like the interjectory particle *ne* in Japanese, the particle *na* as a topic marker in Thai may belong to a different category from *na* in other communicative functions. The unusual position of the topic-marking *na* may affect learners' acquisition of its particular function. Furthermore, from the corpus data, among the three main functions of *na*, to soften the tone of an utterance, to emphasize an utterance, and to mark the topic of an utterance, *na* as a topic marker is of the lowest frequency. Thus, it is possible that *na* which marks the topic of an utterance may pose a difficulty for second language learners.

Another point of interest concerns the proficiency level of the participants. Since all of the Japanese participants in this study

⁷ The functions of *na* can actually be mapped onto different final particles in Japanese. To illustrate this, in a context of accentuating one's statement where *na* would be used to emphasize an utterance in Thai, the Japanese particle *yo* could be seen.

were at either an intermediate or an advanced level, they had learned about Thai final particles including *na* in class and were expected to be familiar with the use of particles to a certain extent. According to Sawyer (1991), Yoshimi (1999), Fu and Sena (2002), Ishida (2009) and Masuda (2011), the language proficiency of learners is one of the important factors in the acquisition of final particles. As the learners gain more proficiency in their second language, their performance in using the target final particle improves. In the present study, a brief interview about language background and experience was conducted with the learner group after data collection. It was found that the learners who reported that they had long and various experience with Thai were those who used the final particle *na* the most frequently in the pair discussion task (J1, J2, J3 and J9). In addition, one of them (J9) was the only Japanese learner who used *na* in every communicative function and context. Thus, proficiency in the second language plays an important role in the use of final particles in the target language

5. Conclusion

This study investigates the use of the Thai final particle *na* using data from the Thai National Corpus and proposes that the particle has three main functions, namely, softening the tone of an utterance, emphasizing an utterance, and marking the topic of an utterance. These functions correspond to different contexts of use. When *na* functions as a tone softener, it usually occurs in the following contexts: 1) making a request, a suggestion, an invitation, or persuasion, 2) seeking

agreement on evaluative comments, and 3) contradicting a previous utterance. The contexts in which *na* is used to emphasize an utterance are 1) making a command or giving a warning, 2) accentuating a statement, 3) asking for a repeat of information, and 4) asking a question in a soliloquy. The particle *na* as a topic marker, on the other hand, is distinct in terms of its position. It normally occurs at the end of a phrase, sentence medially, to mark the topic of the utterance.

Furthermore, to explore how the final particle *na* was used by Japanese speakers who learned Thai as a second language, data were collected from a group of Japanese learners of Thai and compared with a group of native Thai speakers. It was found that in a pair discussion task, the Japanese learners did not differ from the native Thai speakers with regard to the frequency of *na*. When different functions and contexts are considered, the Japanese learners, similar to the native Thai speakers, used *na* most frequently to emphasize an utterance and least often to mark the topic of an utterance. In fact, no disparity was discovered between the two groups except for the use of *na* as a topic marker. That the Japanese learners showed significantly fewer instances of the topic-marking *na* than the native speakers could result from its marked position, making it difficult to acquire. Moreover, given the learners' linguistic input as suggested by the corpus data, occurrences of *na* marking the topic of an utterance were scarce. We also pointed to the importance of proficiency in a second language as a factor affecting learners' use of final particles in conversation.

Overall, results showed that the Thai final particle *na* could be acquired by Japanese learners of Thai. This can be accounted for in terms of a positive transfer. Since, like Thai, Japanese is a language with a variety of final particles, it is possible that this facilitates the acquisition process of the target final particle in a second language. However, to fully comprehend the effect of transfer, data from learners whose native language contains minimal use of final particles such as English are necessary.

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Appendix A

Situation 2: If you both could travel to a foreign destination, which of the three destinations (out of 12 destinations) below would you choose? (Decide on the three destinations together, not separately.) Clearly explain the reasons why the three destinations would be picked and why the rest would not.

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. South Africa | 7. Spain |
| 2. Brazil | 8. South Korea |
| 3. France | 9. New Zealand |
| 4. USA | 10. Egypt |
| 5. Russia | 11. Mexico |
| 6. Italy | 12. Vietnam |

Situation 3: If you both held a New Year's party, which of the five dishes (out of 14 dishes) below would you choose to take? (Decide on the five dishes together, not separately.) Clearly explain the reasons why the five dishes would be picked and why the rest would not.

1. Pizza
2. Wine
3. Barbeque
4. Fried chicken
5. Soft drink
6. Fried chicken salad
7. Cake
8. Sushi
9. Fruits
10. Water
11. Donut
12. French fries
13. Papaya salad
14. Beer

Situation 4: If you both owned a newly-opened zoo, which of the seven animals (out of 20 animals) below would you choose to be in your zoo? (Decide on the seven animals together, not separately.) Clearly explain the reasons why the seven animals would be picked and why the rest would not.

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 1. Tiger | 11. Crocodile |
| 2. Peacock | 12. Zebra |
| 3. Snake | 13. Giraffe |
| 4. Penguin | 14. Hippopotamus |
| 5. Dolphin | 15. Eagle |
| 6. Elephant | 16. Bear |
| 7. Buffalo | 17. Rabbit |
| 8. Monkey | 18. Lion |
| 9. Deer | 19. Seal |
| 10. Shark | 20. Ostrich |