



# Final Particle *-tte* in Formal Japanese Conversations Service Scene Conversations

Risma Rismelati

Graduate School of Humanities, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan  
Email: [u904772i@ecs.osaka-u.ac.jp](mailto:u904772i@ecs.osaka-u.ac.jp)

## ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to examine thoroughly the meaning of *-tte* particles when it is used in formal Japanese conversations, especially in service situation contexts. This study employed the theory of *-tte* usage meanings from Moritoki (1994) to comprehensively understand the context of conversational discourse. In addition, this study also used previous studies of *-tte* particles by Yamazaki (1996), Takahashi (2009), and Rismelati (2022). Regarding the research design, this study used a descriptive method with the data in the form of conversational sentences containing *-tte* particles taken from the Corpus of Everyday Japanese Conversation (2022). The results revealed that the final particle *-tte* in formal Japanese conversations especially in service scene conversations was mostly used as a quotation, hearsay, a oneself-quote, and a topic. As a quotation, *-tte* was commonly used in expressing the provision of information and expressing a depiction of a situation. As hearsay, *-tte* was used to develop a conversation by expressing unexpectedness and implying teasing comments. Meanwhile, as a oneself-quote, *-tte* was used in expressing the speaker's plus-minus feelings and expressing the speaker's surprised feelings toward something. Lastly, as a topic, *-tte* was used in expressing the speaker definition of the topic, and the speaker's appraisal toward the topic. The findings suggest that by using *-tte*, the speakers are still allowed to express their emotions on each utterance for a range of different purposes.

**Keywords:** *Corpus of everyday Japanese conversation, hearsay, quotation, topic, -tte.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The usage of spoken language allows the speaker to express himself abundantly, including to express his emotions, while delivering the purpose of his speech at the same time. It refers to expressing one's own thoughts or feelings in a monologue, trying to convey certain information to the listener, and the speaker influences the listener to take action (Brown, 1978). One of the distinctive features of a spoken word commonly used in expressing someone's feelings or emotion is *-tte*, which is derived from a formal quotation particle *to iu* 'it calls...', hearsay *to kiku* 'I heard that ...', and lastly a phrase *to omou* 'I think/ wonder ...'. *-tte* is generally classified as a final sentence marker, or an abbreviated form with various semantic usages in daily conversations (Burdelski, 2015; Itani, 1998; Kamada, 2000; Matsui & Yamamoto, 2013).

Moritoki (1994) categorized *-tte* and divided it into three usages. The first is that *-tte* is related to linguistic expressions such as utterances and thoughts. It is used in the first person, i.e., to express what the speaker says or thinks. The second is that you can feel the strong assertion of the speaker. This is similar to the first usage and is used in situations where the speaker tries to get the listener to listen to his utterance. In the end, from the flow of discourse up to that point, *-tte* seems to be a paraphrase of another expression that has already been made. In this third usage, *-tte* has been described as a means of expression for the speaker and listener to try to understand the topic in greater detail and accuracy.

In a previous study of the final particle *-tte*, Yamazaki (1996) classified *-tte* into four usages, namely quotation, hearsay, topic, and emphasis. It is said that the usage of *-tte* in quotations is more limited than particle *to*, which presents speech and thought. In addition, *-tte* in hearsay is either used alone or as a compound word, such as *-ndatte* or *-ndesutte*. These compound words are used in two ways, as so-called hearsay (transmission of clear news) and

confirmation of hearsay (information confirmation). These are used so as not to disrupt the flow of information transmission and information confirmation, respectively. The so-called "hearsay" does not only express hearsay but also has the function of transmission and confirmation. On the other hand, in a similar form, there are compound words such as *-ndatte* and *-ndesutte*. It is said that some express unexpectedness and surprise, and those that present the utterance as it is.

Meanwhile, Takahashi (2009) in another previous study discovered that *-tte* which expresses the speaker's thought *to omou* 'to think' has the function of softening the speaker's assertion, and that this kind of 'to think' can be said to be a form of grammaticalization.

Moreover, a previous study from Rismelati (2022) which tried to focus on *-tte* form used in Japanese informal conversations showed that *-tte* is divided into three groups with three subgroups as a derivation meaning from a quotation. As the result of the analysis, the *-tte* form at the end of sentences is used to express quotation, hearsay, explanation marker, and interjection. As a quotation, *-tte* is divided into three meanings which are emphasizing a strong opinion, revising someone's statements based on actual events/opinions from the experts, conveying surprised feelings, and indirect request form.

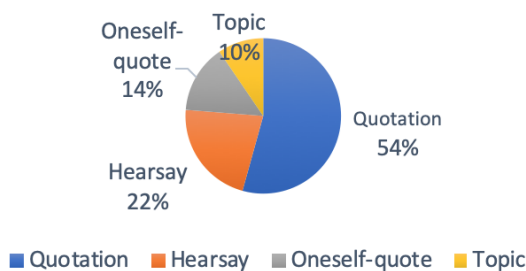
Based on those previous studies, *-tte* at the final sentences in spoken language have various usages. However, until now the research on *-tte* has only focused on morphological and semantic usage in Japanese informal conversation. However, it is very important to analyse the use of *-tte* in formal context conversations in detail, to examine the characteristics of *-tte* that are used in daily formal Japanese conversation (Maynard, 2005). Therefore, to fill the gap, this study aims to examine thoroughly, *-tte* particle in terms of a quotation and hearsay usage seen in a formal conversation especially in service communications situations by using Moritoki's theory (1994) of *-tte* particles and some previous studies on *-tte* particles by Yamazaki (1996), Takahashi (2009) and Rismelati (2022).

## 2. METHOD

This research employed a descriptive method and the data used was taken from Corpus of Everyday Japanese Conversation (version 2022.03), in order to examine all of the classifications of *-tte* at the end of the sentences. While referring to the classification of *-tte* as a final particle pointed out by Yamazaki (1996) and Rismelati (2022), it is also necessary to consider the context of service communication relation which represents the most ideal type of formal conversation. Hence, from the corpus data, there were 20 conversations filtered with a length average of 15 to 35 minutes duration per conversation (conversations from the year 2018 - 2020). There were 105 data of *-tte* that were collected from 21 conversations in total. Moreover, the usage meanings found in the data were classified into the fourth main functions of *-tte* as proposed by Yamazaki (1996), quotation, hearsay, topic, and emphasis, and an additional function which is the oneself-quote proposed by Rismelati (2022).

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The 105 data of the final particle *-tte* which were collected from 21 service communication conversations, were classified into four main functions: as a quotation, hearsay, a oneself-quote, and a topic. All data can briefly be calculated as follows (see figure 1): quotation 54%, hearsay 22%, oneself-quote 14%, and topic 10%. The next part is the details for the explanation of each finding for the final particle *-tte* as a quotation, hearsay, a oneself-quote, and a topic.



**Figure 1** The use of *-tte* on service scene communication, formal Japanese conversations.

### 3.1. *-tte Form as Quotation*

First, *-tte* which has a quotation meaning that appears at the end of a sentence, is limited to the pattern of *-to iu* in order to convey information that has been obtained from the third party. From the collected data, it is found that *-tte* also appears in many situations in the service relations conversation, which indicates a valid fact or information when the speaker is trying to add up a source to their utterance so that the listener becomes more certain to what they believe is true. There are 58 data collected, divided into 2 categories of quotation which are, 46 data expressing provision of information, and 11 data expressing depiction of situation.

#### 3.1.1. *Provision of An Information*

##### Data 1

- 574 IC02\_Utsumi : *Watashi demo Fukuoka naka itta koto nain desukedo.*  
Actually, I haven't gone to Fukuoka yet.
- 575 IC01\_Kawahara : *Un un.*  
I see.
- 576 IC02\_Utsumi : *Nanka sugoi sumiyasui tokoro rashii desune.*  
They said it's a very good place to live.
- 577 IC01\_Kawahara : *Sou mitai.*  
Yeah, I heard that too.
- 578 IC01\_Kawahara : *Ne?*  
Right?
- 579 IC02\_Utsumi : *Nanka tenkin toka de ikuto: (0.228) Uun honto hanaretakunaitte narutte!*  
When we go for a transfer or something like that: (0.228)  
Hmm, they said we gradually would really don't want to leave the place!
- 580 IC01\_Kawahara : *Un un un.*  
Definitely.

(CEJC, K11\_005)

In Data 1, the speaker (Utsumi) tried to add important information she knew about Fukuoka as a very good place to live as can be seen in utterance no. 579. When the speaker provided information that she had heard from a third party, it was as if she had heard it directly from the Fukuoka citizen, and treated her own thoughts as someone else's utterance, by adding a thought quotation *-tte* at the end of the sentence. It is indicated that the use of *-tte* emphasizes the provision of information. This is in line with what Moritoki (1994), Takahashi (2009), and Yamazaki (1996) stated about the use of the final particle *-tte* which presents speech and thought or expresses what the speaker says or thinks belongs to a quotation.

#### 3.1.2. *Depiction of A Situation*

##### Data 2

- 1047 IC01\_Kawahara : *Ikkome no: (0.665) kore dake nokottete (0.353) Kore to korewa aru node.*  
The first one: (0.665) this is all that's left: (0.353) We have this and this.
- 1048 IC02\_Utsumi : *Uun.*  
Hmm.
- 1049 IC02\_Utsumi : *Uun.*  
Hmm.
- 1050 IC01\_Kawahara : *Da kore to kore dake senmenjo ni oite atte:(0.603) Kao aratte:(0.824) Jikan ga chotto attara papepepepette.*  
Say we put this and this in the washroom: (0.603) Wash your face: (0.824)  
And if you have a little time try to wash it wash it properly.
- 1051 IC02\_Utsumi : *Un un.*  
I see.
- 1052 IC02\_Utsumi : *Un.*  
Okay.

(CEJC, K11\_005)

In Data 2, the speaker (Utsumi) tried to emphasize a situation when she suggested how her customer (Kawahara) should put the materials in the washroom so that she could easily use them when she needed them, and if she had much more time, then she could wash off her face thoroughly by using *-tte*. It is also considered that the use of *-tte* at

the end of the onomatopoeia word on the services relation, has a big impact on implying an indirect request politely. This depiction of a situation that implies an indirect request form also belongs to a quotation (Rismelati, 2022).

### 3.2. *-tte Form as Hearsay*

As hearsay usage meaning in the conversation, *-tte* appears in compound words *-ndatte* (heard that... informal style) and *-ndesutte* (I heard that... formal style). It has also been identified that this compound word of *-tte* has also appeared in formal conversations, while *-ndatte* itself is more often used to indicate unexpectedness as can be seen in data 3. On the other hand, *-ndesutte* appears to imply teasing comments.

#### 3.2.1. *Unexpectedness of -ndatte*

##### Data 3

- 90 IC01\_Ogawa : *Konaida Tokusan ga sa totsuzen kitesa. @Tokusan wa futari no doukyuusei.*  
The other day Toku suddenly came. @Toku is their classmate.
- 91 IC02\_Masahiro : *Un.*  
Oh.
- 92 IC02\_Masahiro : *Hai hai.*  
I see.
- 93 IC01\_Ogawa : *Uun.*  
Ehmm.
- 94 IC01\_Ogawa : *Nanka choushi warukattandatte.*  
Heard that he's unwell.
- 95 IC02\_Masahiro : *(Tokuzou ga) @Toku to onaji.*  
Tokuzou and toku is the same person.
- 96 IC01\_Ogawa : *Un.*  
That's right.
- 97 IC02\_Masahiro : *Uun.*  
Ehmm.
- 98 IC01\_Ogawa : *Hakketsubyou*  
*nacchatandatte.*  
*Apparently he got*  
*leukimia.*
- 99 IC02\_Masahiro : *Aa.*  
Oh.
- 100 IC02\_Masahiro : *Hakketsubyounnatte.*  
Leukimia?
- 101 IC01\_Ogawa : *Un.*  
Yes.

(CEJC, T15\_08a)

Data 3 shows that the speaker (Ogawa) is trying to convey unfortunate news about a friend (Toku) who is known to the listener (Masahiro) as well. Ogawa told Masahiro that he met Toku and was informed that he had leukemia, which made Ogawa feel very shocked at that time. When the speaker wanted to convey the same unexpectedness he received from the third party (Toku) to the listener, he used the compound word *-ndatte* as the hearsay function 'Heard that...' to emphasize mostly unexpected things, as can be found in the utterance no. 94 *Nanka choushi warukattandatte* 'Heard that he's unwell' and utterance no. 98 *Hakketsubyou nacchatandatte* 'Heard also that he got leukemia'. *-The ndatte* compound word in this utterance is one of the representative data collected which implies unexpectedness hearsay form.

#### 3.2.2. *Teasing Comments of -desutte*

##### Data 4

- 1940 IC02\_Utsumi : *Atashi mou unten ga obotukanakute.*  
I think Im not that confident enough to drive.
- 1941 IC01\_Kawahara : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1942 IC02\_Utsumi : *Mou.*  
I just cant .
- 1943 IC02\_Utsumi : *Uun.*  
Hmm.

- 1944 IC02\_Utsumi : *Kyokuryokushi (0.152) unten shitakunaishi.*  
Guess I don't want to drive no more.
- 1945 IC01\_Kawahara : *Hontou.*  
Really.
- 1946 IC01\_Kawahara : *Mou kyokuryoku kuruma de deketetai.*  
I want to go out by car as much as possible.
- 1947 IC02\_Utsumi : *Uun.*  
Hmm.
- 1948 IC02\_Utsumi : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1949 IC02\_Utsumi : *(L Sou)*  
(Laugh I See)
- 1950 IC01\_Kawahara : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1951 IC02\_Utsumi : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1952 IC02\_Utsumi : *Atashi no kuruma wa senro ga arutte yutte.*  
My car even said that he has his own track.
- 1953 IC01\_Kawahara : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1954 IC02\_Utsumi : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1955 IC02\_Utsumi : *Soko atashino kuruma wa ikenai desu. (L tte)*  
**I heard that my car is not allowed there. (laugh)**
- 1956 IC01\_Kawahara : (L)  
(Laugh)

(CEJC, K11\_005)

Data 4 as shown in utterance no. 1955, while brushing her nails, the speaker (Utsumi) changed the topic of his driving habits by saying, "My car is not allowed there". The speaker shared the information that she was not very good at driving a car with the other party. This utterance was thought to be uttered by a car, and the speaker regarded it as information obtained from a third party and used *-desutte* to indicate 'teasing comments' (Rismelati, 2022; Yamazaki, 1996).

### 3.3. *-tte Form as Oneself-quote*

The thought quotation or oneself thought *-tte* at the end of the sentence strongly indicates the subjectivity of the speaker, and at the same time, it can also express the positive and negative feelings of the speaker. When conveying their own thoughts and feelings to the other party, one characteristic is that thoughts are used in the form of quotation *to omou* 'I think/ wonder that...'. Not only *-tte* by itself is used with the use of final particles, depending on the intention of the speaker. There are 10 pieces of data collected, which consist of 6 data expressing the speaker's plus-minus feelings on something, and 4 data expressing the speaker's surprise feelings related to something.

#### 3.3.1. *Plus-Minus Feelings*

##### Data 5

- 13 IC02\_Watari : *Dore (0.456) kurai.*  
How (0.456) short will be.
- 14 IC01\_Makihara : *Aa.*  
Oh
- 15 IC01\_Makihara : *Sore de, etto.*  
Well, ehmm.
- 16 IC02\_Watari : *Hai.*  
Yess.
- 17 IC01\_Makihara : *Daibu:(0.117) mijikakushitekudasai.*  
Please shorten:(0.117) quite a bit.
- 18 IC02\_Watari : *Ee.*  
Okay.
- 19 IC02\_Watari : *Mou (paama) nokoranai gurai.*  
I don't wanna have a

- perm left anymore.
- 20 IC01\_Makihara : *Nokonnaku nacchaimasu yone.*  
It will going to be gone, isn't it.
- 21 IC01\_Makihara : *Mou demo daibu. kitanakunattande.*  
Yea its already pretty dirty anyway.
- 22 IC01\_Makihara : *Mou muridanatte.*  
**I think that I can't stand it anymore.**
- 23 IC02\_Watari : *Kakkoissuyone.*  
You look great though.
- 24 IC01\_Makihara : *Iya.*  
Nah.
- 25 IC01\_Makihara : *Mou muri desuyo.*  
Just can't stand it no more.

(CEJC, T20\_22a)

In Data 5, the speaker Yamashita, wants to show his pride in his child to the listener, but it is a fragment that he wants to convey indirectly. Therefore, Yamashita intended to praise his child, and said, "It's a lot: (0.263) I've grown up." In order to convey my self-evaluation softly, I changed the quoting particle *to* to *-tte* in the expression 'to wonder' to express one's opinion can be considered (Moritoki, 1994; Yamazaki, 1996).

### 3.3.2. Unexpectedness

#### Data 6

- 1512 IC01\_Kawahara : *De kini suruto: nanka (0.294) mendokusaku nattekichau node.*  
And if you worry about it, somehow you'll be getting troublesome.
- 1513 IC02\_Utsumi : *Uun.*  
Uhuh.
- 1514 IC01\_Kawahara : *Soko made chanto yarou to suru to.*  
If you try to do it properly.
- 1515 IC02\_Utsumi : *Uun.*  
Uhuh.
- 1516 IC01\_Kawahara : *Daitai de daijoubu (desu).*  
Its okay to do it roughly.
- 1517 IC01\_Kawahara : *Mannaka sae (0.581) hikattereba.*  
As long as the center (0.581) shines.
- 1518 IC01\_Kawahara : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1519 IC02\_Utsumi : (L)  
(Laugh)
- 1520 IC01\_Kawahara : *Daijoubu kana.*  
It's all right.
- 1521 IC01\_Kawahara : *Sou so.*  
That's good.
- 1522 IC01\_Kawahara : *Kokogane: nanka: fujuubun: (0.878) dato hikarase(0.185) tatokini: (0.179) arette.*  
When you tried to make it shine in this part but it turned out to be insufficient. **Oh**
- 1523 IC02\_Utsumi : **no.**  
*Uun.*  
Oh.

(CEJC, K11\_005)

Data 6 is a scene where the speaker Kawahara teaches a customer-Utsumi how to polish their nails. In the underlined fragment, Kawahara said, "When you tried to make it shine in this part but it turned out to be insufficient. Oh no!" When expressing unexpectedness, especially dissatisfaction when conveying to the other party that the situation is not something the speaker is fond of, she used the demonstrative word + *-tte*. In this utterance, *-tte* tends to be often used to indicate the speaker's reaction towards something by adding *-tte* after a demonstrative word (Rismelati, 2022; Yamazaki, 1996).

### 3.4. *-tte* Form as Topic

To express one topic conversation in formal Japanese, there would be *to iu no wa* or *wa* as a topic marker particle is used. But in informal Japanese, this particle is contracted to *-tte*, and located right after the topic in a sentence

(Yamazaki, 1996). Surprisingly, from the collected data, it is found that *-tte* also appears in the service relations conversation, which indicates a strong emotional feeling from the speaker when they are trying to bring up a topic with their thoughts/ opinion about it. There are 10 pieces of data collected, 6 data expressing the speaker's definition of the topic, and 4 data expressing the speaker's appraisal of the topic.

### 3.4.1. Definition

#### Data 7

- 562 IC02\_Kuriki : *Yasumi no hi ni zenbu iroiro shinakya ikenakute.*  
I also have to do the all work during holiday.
- 563 IC01\_Kumi : *Aa.*  
Oh.
- 564 IC01\_Kumi : *Hai.*  
Uhm.
- 565 IC02\_Kuriki : *De yasumi mo 12 gatsutte ichinichi sukunakattandesuyo.*  
Then the holiday duration on December was also one day shorter.
- 566 IC01\_Kumi : *Ee?*  
Really?
- 567 IC02\_Kuriki : *Touji tsutometa kaishatte.*  
In the company I worked before.
- 568 IC01\_Kumi : *Ee.*  
I see.

(CEJC, K08\_04b)

In data 7, the speaker (Kuriki) shares a topic conversation by describing his unpleasant experience working in a company which made him overwork during holiday to the listener (Kumi). He showed how he was pissed off by the company rules at that time, by using *-tte* as a topic marker at the end of the sentences in no. 567 utterance *Touji tsutometa kaishatte* 'In the company I worked before'.

### 3.4.2. Appraisal

#### Data 8

- 1793 IC02\_Kuriki : *Maa, natsu harunimo kireru younatte kanji desuyone.*  
Well, its feel like we can wear it on spring or summer too.
- 1794 IC01\_Kumi : *Ee.*  
That's right.
- 1795 IC02\_Kuriki : *Iya ya.*  
But.
- 1796 IC02\_Kuriki : *Muzukashii desuyone ?*  
Somehow its difficult isn't?
- 1797 IC02\_Kuriki : *Suutsutte.*  
(this) suits.
- 1798 IC01\_Kumi : *Hai.*  
Yes.

(CEJC, K08\_04b)

Data 8 is a scene where the speaker Kuriki conveyed his thought regarding a topic in 'time to wear a suit', on the 1795-1797 utterance "But somehow its difficult isn't, (this) suits". When the speaker tries to express their thought or opinion to the third party in a somehow emotional way, *-tte* tends to be often used at the end of the sentence, to emphasize that the speaker is simply fond or does not fond of something in order to influence the listener to have the same opinion with the speaker (Rismelati, 2022).

## 3.5. Characteristics of *-tte* in Formal Japanese Conversations

As presented in Table 1, *-tte* in formal Japanese conversations commonly used as a quotation (54.3%), hearsay usage (22%), oneself-quote usage (14.2%), and topic usage (9.5%). *-tte* as a quotation, mostly used in expressing provision of information (43.8%) and expressing depiction of a situation (10.5%). As a hearsay, *-tte* used to develop a conversation by expressing unexpectedness (10.5%) in a compound word *-ndatte* form and implying teasing comments (11.5%) in *-ndesutte* form. As a oneself-quote *-tte* used in expressing speaker plus-minus feelings (9.5%),

and expressing speaker surprised feelings toward something (4.7%). As a topic, *-tte* used in expressing speaker definition of a topic (5.7%), and speaker appraisal toward the topic (3.8%).

**Table 1.** Derivation of *-tte* usage meaning

<i>-tte</i> Usage Meaning		Usage Frequency	
<b>Quotation</b>	Provision of information	46	43.8%
	Depiction of a situation	11	10.5%
<b>Hearsay</b>	Unexpectedness	11	10.5%
	Teasing comments	12	11.5%
<b>Oneself-quote</b>	Plus-minus feelings	10	9.5%
	Astonishment	5	4.7%
<b>Topic</b>	Definition	6	5.7%
	Appraisal	4	3.8%
<b>Total</b>		<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the use of *-tte* seen in formal Japanese conversations that focused on service situation contexts mentioned above mainly has a fourth usage: quotation, hearsay, oneself-quote, and topic marker. *-tte* in formal conversations also has an ultimate function in enhancing conversation, so that both parties can still show their emotions naturally when they speak to their colleagues, seniors, or even customers in formal circumstances. By using *-tte*, the speakers are still allowed to express their emotions on each utterance to emphasize a piece of valid information and certain situation, to develop a conversation by expressing unexpectedness and implying teasing comments, to state plus-minus thoughts/opinions politely, and to express surprise feelings, and to add definition on the topic also appraisal toward the topic.

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