On the Identity and Uses of Cantonese Sentence-final Particles in the Late 20th Century: The Case of *wo* (喎) and *bo* (噃)

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Abstract

This paper mainly describes the uses of the frequently used sentence final particles *wo3* and *bo3* in the 1990s in Hong Kong Cantonese by examining speech data. In the past twenty years, most experts treated *wo3* and *bo3* as variant forms, the former being the result of sound change from the latter (Kwok 1984, Luke 1990, Li 1995, Fang 2003). In order to verify whether *wo3* and *bo3* are different particles or free variations of the same particle, the synchronic picture of the two particles will be considered by comparing their uses and functions in the 1990s with the language examples from the Hong Kong University Cantonese Corpus and local movies.

Keywords: Cantonese, Sentence-final Particles, Late 20th Century, Spoken data, Synchrony

1. Introduction

1.1 Cantonese sentence-final particles

Sentence final particles (hereafter SFPs) in Cantonese play an important role in determining the function of sentence. They are scarcely found in formal writing but their presence in common conversation is massive. SFPs function to convey speech act information and often have grammatical functions, such as changing a declarative sentence into an interrogative one.

Most researchers (Cheung 1972, Kwok 1984, Ouyang 1990, Luke 1990, Deng 1991, Matthews & Yip 1994, Li 1995, Fang 2003, Leung 2005, Cheung 2007) have come to consider that SFPs as mainly conveying the speaker's emotions and attitudes, and that they are found in casual conversations only. Some sources on Cantonese have identified thirty or more basic forms (Kwok 1984) and over forty-five possible particle clusters (Leung 2005). Cheung (2007:183-208) pointed out that there are as many as seventeen particles commonly found in everyday conversation, which are often used in clusters of two to four, namely *lo1, bo3, aa3, wo2, tim1, gwa3, me1, ze1, maa3, ne1, ge2, lai4, sin1, zyu6, faat1, baa2laa1* and *hai2laa1*.

1.2 Research motivation

Among the basic SFPs that are used in everyday conversation, *wo3* (喎, mid level tone) is certainly the one with high frequency. In terms of frequency of usage of *wo3* and *bo3*, there is an imbalance between them as *wo3* has entirely surpassed the using of *bo3* (噃, mid level tone) in today's Hong Kong Cantonese. According to the Hong Kong University Cantonese Corpus (HKUCC, see 1.3), the appearance of the two is 602 to 16 in ratio, *wo3* is about 38 times as frequently used as *bo3* in contemporary Cantonese. However, teaching materials and academic books have only occasionally mentioned *wo3* and the explanations are often too short. If *wo3* is not seen as "the same as *bo3*", it is being thought of as the variant or weakened form of *bo3*. Then the major effort is put on explaining the function, usage and meaning of *bo3*. Undeniably, among these archives, we get an impression that the two SFPs *wo3* and *bo3* have very close relationship; in other words, they are described to be the same essentially.

Luke (1990) is the one who firstly realized that *wo3* has already changed to become an SFP with high frequency of daily use and through frequent use has gained itself an independent position different from *bo3*. His work has an entire chapter devoted to the detailed discussion of *wo3*. He has concluded the meaning of *wo3* as "unexpectedness, noteworthiness, remarkableness, unusualness…etc". After Luke has noted the new status of *wo3*, there have been scholars noticing and discussing this SFP continuously over the past decades (Ouyang 1990, Matthews & Yip 1994, Leung 2005). They point out

that the meaning of *wo3* is "reminding, discussing and enlightening", which is very similar to the definition of *bo3* in the earlier works (Ball 1888, O'Melia 1954, Cheung 1972). This suggests the current SFP *wo3* could have been derived from *bo3*. Table 1 concisely summarizes scholars' views on the usage of and the tones expressed by *bo3* and *wo3* from 1888 to 2007. Unlike the particle *bo3*, it can be seen that there was little mention of *wo3* among them before the 1990s. With this background, it seems reasonable to proceed one step further to present a synchronic analysis by examining the data of colloquial speech in detail to verify the differences between *bo3* and *wo3* in Hong Kong Cantonese in the late 20th century, and this is the goal of this paper.

The "Cantonese" in the following discussions is the variety spoken in Hong Kong and the Jyutping Romanization scheme (粵拼, Linguistic Society of Hong Kong 1993) is adopted for the notations of Cantonese sounds.

1.3 Data collection

It is noted that the best source of information for linguistic features is a large corpus of colloquial speech for us to perform statistical analyses. Since a speech corpus is constructed using real data and so is highly representative, our analysis will no longer be based on a small sample or subjective feelings. The Hong Kong University Cantonese Corpus (HKUCC) was set up out of such objective. The language examples for the 1990s in this paper fundamentally come from the HKUCC, and are supplemented with two popular Cantonese movies produced in the 1990s, namely "Fight back to the school I" (Fight 1991) and "Fight back to the school II" (Fight 1992). The movies starred Stephen Chow S. C., one of the best known actors then in Hong Kong. Below is a brief background of the HKUCC.

In the 1990s the University of Hong Kong established a corpus made up of a large amount of Cantonese speech and conversational recordings which have been fully transcribed, segmented, tagged and parsed. HKUCC was built up on the basis of a research project entitled "Constructing a Database of Spoken Cantonese with English Translation and On-line Dictionary", funded by the Hong Kong Research Grants Council (HKU 397/96H). These speech data are all genuine, colloquial, unscripted, spontaneous speech as heard in everyday conversations. In the 150 recordings of this 200,000 word corpus, 67 were conversations between 2-3 speakers, 51 were radio broadcasts and 32 were stories told by one story-teller. It is also equipped with quick and convenient searching and retrieving tools.

By systematically recording a substantial amount of speech, the HKUCC provides researchers with a convenient and reliable way of checking and substantiating speakers' feelings and intuitions about their language. Take frequency information as an example, if it were not with the HKUCC, one would not be able to quantify the relative degree of use of the SFPs *bo3* and *wo3*. A quick check of the corpus reveals that the use of these two particles is in a ratio of 16:602; *wo3* is about 38 times as frequently used as *bo3* in contemporary Cantonese. Of the entire corpus mentioned above, this research focuses on 8 hours of data.

2. The uses of *wo3* in the late 20th century

In modern Cantonese, *wo3* is an SFP used with a high frequency. Some recent researches have shown that this particle is used to show "realization and reminders" (Rao 1983, Kwok 1984, Ouyang 1990, Deng 1991, Leung 1992, Fang 2003). *Wo3* can be commonly used at the end of declarative and exclamatory sentences. Consider some common examples:

Example 1 (Fight 1992)

今日	天氣	好	好	喎
gam1jat6	tin1hei3	hou2	hou2	wo3
today	weather	very	good	SFP

"The weather is very good today!"

Example 2 (Fight 1991)

呢度	唔	准	食煙	喎
lei1dou6	m4	zeon2	sik6 jin1	wo3
here	NEG	allow	smoking	SFP

"Smoking is not allowed here!"

Example 3 (HKUCC)

嘩！	真係	幾	梳夫	喎！
Waa3	zan1hai6	gei2	so1fu1	wo3
INJ	really	quite	wonderful	SFP

"Wow, it's quite wonderful!"

Example 1 is a declarative. *Wo3* in this sentence expresses mirativity (DeLancey 1997, Matthews 1998a). The speaker expresses surprise or wonder at the unusually or unexpectedly pleasant weather. Example 2 is a reminder "you should know smoking is not allowed here". Example 3 is an exclamatory sentence. The particle *wo3* can be used in different types of sentences expressing various tones of voice in conjunction with different lexical and intonational devices. In the HKUCC, the SFP *aa3* (啊), found to be the most frequently occurring, is used more than 2000 times. However, the expressive function of *aa3* is not as specific as that of *wo3* since its major function is to soften the tone of a statement (Leung 2008).

According to our observations of the HKUCC data, in present-day Cantonese, the SFP *wo3* is primarily used to convey the meanings of: (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, (3) Hearsay and (4) Contrast. Two examples of each are shown below with explanations.

2.1 Realization

In Example 4, Speaker A reminds Speaker B that it is nearly three o'clock and as a result Speaker B remembers that there is a scheduled gathering so she may need to do some preparations. In Example 5, the speaker takes some bones to feed a dog, and then remembers that in the backyard there is also a cat, which might be hungry then, and so he takes some food to feed the cat too. Unlike the reminder, the one who "realizes" that something has to be done is the speaker himself.

Example 4

A：

三	點	嘞
saam1	dim2	laa3
three o'clock		SFP

"It's three o'clock already."

B：

係	喎，佢	哋	會	嚟	嘞
hai6	wo3, keoi5	dei6 wui5		lai4	laa3
yes	SFP, they	AUX		come	SFP

"Oh yes. They are coming soon."

Example 5

拎　　啲　　骨頭　　　去　餵　吓　狗　先，橫　　掂　無　　嘢

ling1 di1　　gwat1tau4 heoi3 wai3 haa5 gau2 sin1, waang4dim1 mou4 je5

Take　CL　bone　　　go　feed ADV dog first，　anyway　no　　thing

做……　係　喎，　後　面　重　有　隻　貓，　　唔　　知　　餓

zou6……hai6 wo3, hau6min6 zung6 jau5 zek3 maau1,　m4　zi1　　ngo6

do….　yes SFP,　back　　still　have CL　cat,　　NEG know hungry

唔　　餓　　　呢？

m4　　ngo6　　ne1?

NEG hungry　SFP

"Let me take the bones and feed the dog as I have nothing to do now…Oh, there's also a cat in the backyard, is it hungry or not?"

2.2 Reminder

"Reminding" and the above-mentioned "Realization" are two sides of the same coin. In "reminding", it is the speaker who reminds the hearer and consequently the hearer remembers something, while in "realization", the speaker suddenly realizes something as a result of the reminder by someone or some situations, and in this case it is the speaker who remembers something. Each of the two examples below shows a situation where the hearer remembers something as a result of the reminder of the speaker. In Example 6, Speakers A and B are discussing Chinese tea and milk tea. Prior to this exchange, Speaker B said that milk tea certainly does no harm to his stomach and he always drinks Chinese tea. But Speaker A reminds B that Chinese tea is mild, which is different from milk tea. In Example 7, someone asks the speaker to help return some books to the library, but the speaker refuses and gives the reason that he is too busy, and he also reminds the hearer that returning books to the library is very simple as one needs only to place the books in the bookdrop.

Example 6 (HKUCC)

A：飲　　奶　茶　同　飲　茶　都　唔　　同　　喎，唔知　　　點解

　　jam2　naai5caa4 tung4 jam2 caa4 dou1 m4　tung4 wo3, m4 zi1 dim2gaai2

　　drink　milk tea　　and drink tea ADV NEG　same SFP, NEG know　why

　　飲　　奶　茶　會　削　　　　　啲　嘅，　因　爲　佢

　　jam2 naai5caa4 wui6 soek3　　　　di1 ge2,　jan1wai6　keoi5

　　drink milk tea AUX weaken-stomach　ASP SFP,　because　it

　　濃　　　　　得　　　滯　　　呀？

　　nung4　　　dak1　　zai6　　aa4

　　concentrated　COMP　excessive　SFP?

　　"You know, milk tea and plain tea taste different. I don't know why milk tea weakens the stomach. Is it because it is too concentrated?"

B：係　　啊　　濃　　　啲。

　　hai6　　aa3　　nung4　　di1

　　COP　SFP　concentrated　ASP

　　"Yes, it's more concentrated."

Example 7 (HKUCC)

你　千祈　　唔好　搵　我　啊，我　已經　　九　個　project　啊，
nei5 cin1kei4 m4 hou2 wan2 ngo5 aa3, ngo5 ji5ging1 gau2 go3　project　aa3,
1SG ADV　NEG good find 1SG　SFP, 1SG already nine　CL　project　SFP,

你　自己　去　還　啦，你　自己　隊　埋　去　　喎
nei5 zi6gei2 heoi3 waan4 laa1, nei5 zi6gei2 deoi6　maai4　heoi3　wo3
2SG self　go　return SFP, 2SG　self　hand in　ASP　go　　SFP

"Don't ask me to do it as I have nine projects at hand already. Why don't you go yourself? You just need to drop it."

2.3 Hearsay

The third category is "hearsay", that is reporting other people's speech. Back at the end of the 19th century, the function of *wo* was already identified as "denoting that the statement preceding it has been made by some one before" (Ball 1888). In modern Cantonese, there are two particles which express hearsay function, namely *wo3* and *wo5*. In many situations, these two particles are interchangeable, but there are subtle differences between the two (Leung 2009). In Example 8, the speaker conveys good wishes to the hearer from someone else who is not present. In Example 9, *wo3* also has a hearsay function, as the speaker asks the other party who plays most wildly and the hearer answers that he plays most wildly. The particle *wo3* at the end of the sentence expresses the fact that this assessment is from someone else other than the speaker.

Example 8 (Fight 1991)

佢　話　　問候　　你　喎，　王 Sir！
keoi5 waa6 man6hau6 nei5 wo3, wong2 sir
3SG　say　greet　　2SG SFP,　Wong Sir!

"He has asked me to send his regards to you, Mr. Wong!"

Example 9 (HKUCC)

我　問　　阿甲　呢，邊個　　玩　得　最　癲　呢，
ngo5 man6 aa3gaap3 ne1, bin1go3　waan2　dak1 zeoi3 din1　ne1,
1SG　ask　PRE-A　SFP,　who　　play　COM most wildly SFP,

佢　話　佢　　　喎。
keoi5 waa6　keoi5　　wo3
3SG　said　3SG　　SFP.

"I asked him who played the most wildly, and he said he did."

2.4 Contrast

The fourth category is "show an element of Contrast". In Example 10, Speaker A hears some noises in the car park and feels worried, as there are valuables in the car. He then asks Speaker B whether everything is fine. Speaker B replies that, contrary to A's worries, there is no problem with the car. In Speaker B's reply, *wo3* appears at the end of the utterance and conveys the meaning "in spite of appearances or what you think, the car is okay". Thus, the particle shows that the message contains an element of "contrast". Similarly, in Example 11, Speaker A says that there is no one in the room, but Speaker B discovers that the grandmother is in the room and reminds Speaker A that the actual situation is different from the one he described, despite the fact that Speaker A implies that whether the grandmother is present or not will not affect them in any way. The *wo3* at the end of Speaker B's utterance again carries an element of "contrast".

Example 10 (Fight 1991)

A：有　冇　　嘢　　啊？
jau5 mou5　je5　aa3
have NEG　thing SFP?
"Is there something wrong?"

B：架　　車　冇　嘢　　喎。
gaa3 ce1 mou5 je5　　wo3
CL　car　NEG thing　SFP
"Contrary to what you think, there's nothing wrong with the car."

A：噉　　點解　　會　有　　聲　　嘅？
gam2 dim2gaai2 wui5　jau5　seng1　ge2
DM　　why　　AUX　have　sound　SFP?
"Then why are there some noises?"

B：周圍　　　睇　吓。
zau1wai4　tai2　haa5
Around　　look　ASP

Example 11 (Fight 1992)

A：房　　入面　　　冇　　人
fong2　jap6min6　mou5　jan4
room　inside　　　no　　person
"There's nobody in the room."

B：阿嫲　　　　　喺　　度　　喎
aa3maa4　　　　hai2　dou6　wo3
PRE-grandmother　COP　here　SFP
"Hey but Granny is here."

A：唔　　使　　理　　　佢　　㗎
m4　sai2　lei5　　keoi5　gaa3
NEG　need　care about　3SG　SFP
"No need to care about her."

2.5 Novel usage

It is worth mentioning that *wo3* can also appear at the end of imperative and exclamatory utterances to carry a sense of emphasis. It should be noted that the use of the sentence final particle *wo3* with imperative and exclamatory utterances is possibly new; as such usage is not found in the data of the early 20th century (Wisner 1906, Ball 1924, Sung 1934). Example 12 is a dialogue between a leader and his attendant. "Follow me closely" is an order to be followed strictly. The imperative tone-of-voice is not expressed by the particle *wo3*. If *wo3* is replaced by another particle such as *aa3*, the tone-of-voice of the utterance is not changed, but the particle *wo3* gives the hearer a strong sense of "reminder". In Example 13, the speaker is at a friend's home and expresses his exclamation as he is watching the beautiful sea view from the living room. *Wo3* serves as a reminder to the friend and intensifies the exclamation. This use of *wo3* with imperative and exclamatory utterances seems to be a

novel one. Moreover, the category mirative in this example indicates unexpected information (such a fantastic view) which the speaker does not anticipate.

Imperative

Example 12 (Fight 1991)

一陣	你	要	跟	實	我	喎，
jat1zan6	nei5	jiu3	gan1	sat6	ngo5	wo3
later	2SG	must	follow	closely	1SG	SFP

咪	又	再	闖禍	啊
mai2	jau6	zoi3	cong2wo6	aa1
NEG	again	again	make trouble	SFP

"Remember, follow me closely and don't make trouble again."

Mirative

Example 13 (Fight 1991)

嘩，個 景 好 靚 喎！

waa3, go3 ging2 hou2 leng3 wo3

INJ, DEM view INT pretty SFP

"Wow, the view is very beautiful!"

2.6 Short summary

We saw in this section from our observations of the spoken data, in the 1990s, the particle *wo3* was mainly used to convey the moods of: (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, (3) Hearsay and (4) Contrast. It is also used with imperative or exclamatory utterances, in which the tone-of-voice is not expressed by *wo3* but by the imperative or exclamatory utterances themselves. This usage of *wo3* is hardly found in the past corpus data; it is a novel usage and serves to indicate the fact that the functions of the particle *wo3* are still evolving. In the next sections, the uses of *bo3* in the late 20th century will be discussed and compared with those of *wo3*.

3. The uses of *bo3* in the late 20th century

In the HKUCC, the SFP *bo3* occurs very rarely as an independent SFP. Only five cases were found. Out of the five cases, four are used in short negative sentences while only one case is positive. It is clear that the mood conveyed by this particle is to show "contrast". The following are the five examples of *bo3* used singly found in the HKUCC. It is used with short negative sentences in four examples to indicate "contrary to the listener's expectations" (see 3.1), and is used in one single example conveying "realization" (see 3.2).

3.1 Contrast

The SFP *bo3* in the first four examples below is used with short negative utterances to show "contrast":

Example 14 (HKUCC)

A：你　　fang4　　機，　　　我　　　開　　　大　　　啲

　　nei5　　fang4　　gei1,　　　ngo5　　hoi1　　daai6　　di1

　　2SG　　play　　machine, 1SG　　turn on　　loud　　ASP

"A: You want to play the Hi-Fi, I turn it louder."

B：唔 係 嗻，但係　　你 fang4 機，　佢　可以　搵　差人　喎

　　m4 hai6 bo3, daan6hai6 nei5 fang4 gei1,　keoi5 ho2ji5 wan2 caai1jan4 wo3

　　NEG COP SFP, but　　2SG play machine, 3SG AUX　find　police　SFP

"No, but if you play it too loud, s/he can call the police".

This dialogue happened late at night. Speaker A said that it was possible to increase the volume of the Hi-Fi, but Speaker B immediately reminded him, contrary to his expectation, that if the volume was too high, his neighbour could complain about it to the police. In Speaker B's utterance, *bo3* shows "contrast", and *wo3* at the end of the last utterance "s/he can call the police" has a reminding function, bringing the hearer's attention to the situation which the hearer should have knowledge of, but is not currently thinking about. Therefore, the functions of these two particles are different.

Example 15 (HKUCC)

唔　　係　嗻，佢哋　　都　　係　　嘅　　嘅，　因爲……

m4　　hai6 bo3,　keoi5dei6 dou1　　hai6　gam2　ge3,　jan1wai6

NEG COP SFP,　3PL　　ADV　COP　this　GEN,　because

"No, (contrary to what you think) they also did so because….."

In the above example, the hearer dislikes the way some people have acted and believes other people may not act this way. The speaker immediately explains to him that the situation is actually the same, and that there must be a reason why the people acted that way, and then he provides the reason to the hearer. The SFP *bo3* functions to show contrast, that is, to show the thing which is different from what the hearer thinks.

The two examples below also reveal the crucial function of *bo3* is to show that something is contrary to the hearer's expectations. In Example 16, the speaker means he does not have the knowledge or control of the matter that the hearer asked, and he asks the hearer to seek the answer from the persons who are responsible for the matter. In Example 17, Speaker A asks Speaker B whether C has ever gone out. The particle *bo3* in Speaker B's reply "No" carries a sense of "contrast" meaning despite of A's doubt, C keeps staying in the room.

Example 16 (HKUCC)

我　　都　　唔　　知　　嗻，哩啲　　嘢　　係　　人事部，

ngo5 dou1 m4　zi1　　bo3, li1di1　je5　hai6　jan4si6bou6,

1SG ADV NEG know　SFP, DEM-PL stuff COP　personnel department,

你　　　問　　返　　　人事部

nei5　　man6 faan1　jan4si6bou6

2SG　ask　ASP　personnel department

"I don't know either. This is the business of human resource department, you should ask them."

Example 17 (Fight 1991)

A：哦，噉　　　有　　冇　　出　　過　　嚟　　啊？

o2,　gam2　jau5　mou5　ceot1 gwo3　lai4　aa3

INJ, DM　　have　NEG　out　ASP　come　SFP?

"Oh, then has he gone outside?

B：冇　　　嚿

mou5 bo3

NEG SFP

"No."

3.2 An exceptional case

Out of the five cases of the single *bo3* found in the spoken data, only the following example is an exceptional case which appears in the positive sentence and conveys the mood of "realization":

Example 18 (HKUCC)

A：係　　啊，四　代　　　　同　堂　　吖　　嘛　　　我哋。

hai6 aa3, sei3 doi6　　tung4 tong4　aa1　maa3　ngo5dei6

COP SFP, four generation same house　SFP SFP　　1PL

"Yes, we are four generations in a house."

B：真係　　　犀利，　　果然　　係　　大　　家族　　嚿

zan1hai6　sai1lei6, gwo2jin4　hai6　daai6 gaa1zuk6 bo3

Really COP　great,　ADV　　COP　big family　SFP

"Wow! You really have a big family!"

In the above example, the particle *bo3* can be substituted by *wo3* in modern Cantonese, not only with no change in meaning but also with more naturalness. Speaker A tells Speaker B that his parents, grandparents and great grandparents are alive and well, and so four generations are present together, which is regarded as a blessing in the eyes of the Chinese. Speaker B agrees with Speaker A that Speaker A does have a big family, showing his realization of something that he did not know before, and the particle *bo3* in this example functions to show "realization", different from the four examples above. "Realization" was once the old usage of *bo3* (table 1) and is infrequently used to show "realization" nowadays. It is the basic function of modern Cantonese particle *wo3* (see 2.1). Since in the HKUCC there is only one example of such use, we lack evidence to prove that such usage is the function of the particle *bo3*. It would be better to treat this function as a residue of the old usage of *bo3*. Moreover, in Hong Kong Cantonese the particle *bo3* can normally be used together with *gaa3* (and its variant *go3*), *laa3* (and its variant *lo3*), *tim1* and *zaa3* to form the two-particle clusters *gaa3bo3, laa3bo3, timbo3* and *zaa3bo3*, and three-particle clusters *gaa3laa3bo3* and *gaa3zaa3bo3*.

3.3 Short summary

The data show that in modern Cantonese, the fundamental function of the SFP *bo3* is to show contrast in the short negative sentences. It is less often used singly and appears very rarely as an independent SFP. *Bo3* tends to be used mainly with other particles to form particle-clusters, such as *gaa3bo3, tim1bo3, zaa3bo3* and *golobo3*. This characteristic of *bo3* makes it distinct from other Cantonese SFPs, some of which can only be used singly but not in particle clusters (e.g., *aa5, le5*), others can be used both singly and in particle-clusters (e.g., *gaa3, laa3*) but their primary uses are not in particle-clusters as is the case of *bo3*.

Earlier literature shows that *bo3* could be used singly as well as in particle-clusters such as *gaa3bo3, laa3bo3* and *gaa3laa3bo3*. In contrast to the very few examples found in the spoken data, quite a number of examples of *bo3* used singly can be found in earlier literature. The decline in the single use

of *bo3* may be due to its replacement by *wo3* in the situations where *bo3* could once be used independently, that is to say, the two particles have merged as speakers chose to use the less effortful particle *wo3*, and consequently *wo3* has gradually taken up the various functions of *bo3* and appears more frequently nowadays than *bo3*. However, *bo3* has not become extinct; it still retains its importance in particle-clusters such as *gaa3laa3bo3* and has not been totally replaced by *wo3*.

4. Major findings and conclusions

From the above examples and discussions, we see an imbalance of the frequency of use of the particles *wo3* and *bo3* in the language materials of the 1990s. The functions of the two particles mentioned in the previous sections can be illustrated as follows:

Functions of *wo3* and *bo3*

Stage	*wo3*	*bo3*
1990s	(1) Realization	(1) Contrast
	(2) Reminder	
	(3) Hearsay	
	(4) Contrast	

Performing four functions, the SFP *wo3* in the late 20th century can be described as functionally versatile. It can also be used at the end of imperative and exclamatory sentences, a feature which cannot be found in past materials and thus believed to be a novel usage. In other words, the functions of *wo3* seem to be expanding continuously.

As for the SFP *bo3*, the situation goes in the opposite direction. As we consult the past materials, the current finding almost excludes the usual tone of "emphasizing" which was commonly claimed by scholars in the early and middle of the 20th century (Ball 1888, 1924, O'Melia 1954, Cowles 1965). However, in contrast to the functionally versatile *wo3*, in the late 20th century its functions seemed to be contracting and there are no signs of its further development. From the examples of this particle in 3.1, the major use of the SFP *bo3* is to show "contrast" in negative sentences. Moreover, it is remarkable that *bo3* was rarely used singly in the late 20th century but tended to be generally used with *gaa3, laa3, tim1* and *zaa1* to form particle-clusters.

To sum up, the two SFPs carry and serve different meanings and functions in modern Hong Kong Cantonese, and thus they are not exactly the same particles and not interchangeable as previously assumed. Since recent scholars have tended to associate *wo3* with *bo3* (Kwok 1984, Ouyang 1990, Li 1995, Fang 2003) and the frequency of *bo3* has greatly dropped over the past decades, it seems reasonable to figure out the relationships between the two particles diachronically to see how the particle *wo3* has gradually developed in history and what functions it has performed by examining the diverse data in detail. Furthermore, the uses of the particle-clusters involving *bo3* in different periods of time are also worth studying in order to clearly show how *bo3* has changed in the past one hundred years.

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Table 1. Scholars' views on the usage of *bo3* and *wo3* from 1888 to 2007

Scholars	*bo3*	*wo3*
Ball (1888)	Very emphatic, used alone, or used with the final lo (囉) or lok (咯).	denoting that the statement preceding it has been made by some one before
Wisner (1906)	Imperative: the most decisive that can be used Declarative: used in giving a decisive declaration with reference to anything	No mention
Ball (1924)	Very emphatic, used alone, or often after the final lo (囉)	denoting that the statement preceding it has been made by some one before
Sung (1934)	Meaning you do not understand it yet, that deed is really so.	No mention
O'Melia (1954)	Emphatic declarative	No mention
Cowles (1965)	A final: emphatic	No mention
Cheung (1972)	Providing opinion, emphasizing	No mention
Lau (1975)	Sign of an emphatic reminder or complaint	No mention
Rao (1983)	Reminding, advising	No mention
Kwok (1984)	Remind the hearer to take something into special consideration	Weakened form of *bo3*
Luke (1990)	Variant form of *wo3*	Unexpectedness, noteworthiness, remarkableness, unusualness
Ouyang (1990)	Tones of negotiating, addressing criteria and request, waiting for reply, orders and command.	Reminding, discussing or enlightening, same as *bo3*, but

		lighter in tone.
Deng (1991)	Feeling of the speaker, negotiating with others, reminding, urging.	No mention
Leung (1992)	Lack of self-opinion, asking for advice and agreement, begging for reminders, milder than *wo3* in tone.	The meaning of having the responsibility, duty to do so, discussing, ordering, new message.
Matthews & Yip (1994)	Exclamatory, appreciative	Informative (noteworthiness)
Li (1995)	Emphasizing, to draw the hearer's attention to what may be neglected, or the speakers suddenly notice a situation.	Weakened form of *bo3*.
Fang (2003)	Reminding, emphasizing, exclaiming, blaming and enlightening and accusing.	Weakened form of *bo3*.
Cheung (2007)	Providing opinion, emphasizing	No mention

List of abbreviations

ADV   Adverb

ASP   Aspect

AUX   Auxiliary

CL   Classifier

COMP   Complement marker

COP   Copular

DEM   Determiner

DM   Discourse marker

GEN   Genitive

INJ   Interjection

NEG   Negator

PL   Plural

PRE   Prefix

SFP   Sentence-final Particle

SG   Singler