The Comparison of the Cantonese Sentence Final Particles

bo (咗) and wo (喎): From the 1940s to the 1970s

Wai-Mun Leung
Department of Chinese, The Hong Kong Institute of Education
10 Lo Ping Road, Taipo, Hong Kong
Tel: 852-2948-7223 E-mail: waimun@ied.edu.hk

Abstract
In the past decades, researchers of Cantonese treated the frequently used sentence-final particles (hereafter SFPs) wo3 (喎, mid level tone) and bo3 (咗, mid level tone) as variant forms, the former being the result of sound change from the latter (Kwok 1984, Luke 1990, Li 1995, Fang 2003). However, Leung (2010) argues that wo3 in the late 20th century performs the functions of realization, reminder, hearsay and contrast while the main function of bo3 is only to show contrast, thus they are not entirely interchangeable. To explore the development of the two particles from the historical perspective, this paper attempts to examine them in Hong Kong Cantonese diachronically based on the spoken data of old Cantonese movies of 1940s and 1970s.

Keywords: Cantonese, Sentence-final Particles, Historical prospective, Spoken data of movies

1. Introduction
As a sentence-final particle indicating mood and tone-of-voice, wo3 (喎, mid level tone) is used very frequently in modern Cantonese. Most of the previous scholars (Kwok 1984, Deng 1991, Li 1995, Fang 2003) considered wo3 as the variant or phonetically weakened result of the SFP bo3 (咗, mid level tone) and the focus of discussion in their work is often on bo3. Obviously there was not much explanation of wo3 in the previous work until Luke’s observations (1990), let alone distinguishing them. However, according to the Hong Kong University Cantonese Corpus bo3 is a SFP used in a low frequency in the late 20th century; it only appears 16 times. When the single use of it is considered, it only appears 5 times (Leung 2010). They therefore seem not to be free variations of the same particle.

In order to trace the development of the use of the SFPs bo3 and wo3 in the past several decades, this paper attempts to examine the two SFPs in Cantonese diachronically with the spoken data of old Cantonese movies produced in 1940s and 1970s for further observations. The Cantonese discussed in this paper is the variety spoken in Hong Kong and the Jyutping Romanization scheme (Linguistic Society of Hong Kong 1993) is adopted for the notations of Cantonese sounds.

2. Data Collection
As the bases of language analysis in the following sessions, we have chosen Cantonese movies for the collection of language examples in the 1940s and 1970s. The characteristic of the samples is that language in the movies is natural colloquial. According to the level of naturalness, oral communications can be categorised according to whether there is any restriction to the topic of conversation, whether there is any text preparation, whether the speech involves reading from scripts, see in the following table:

Insert Table 1 Here

Movie belongs to level 4, the category of “Topic-restricted / text preparation needed / not reading from scripts”. Cantonese movies produced in Hong Kong, containing a record of the colloquial speech, are an important source of information since SFPs are a feature of colloquial speech but appear less often, and may not be fully represented, in written materials. The Cantonese movies produced in Hong Kong in different periods of time can reflect, to a large extent, of the characteristics of the contemporary Cantonese speech. Cantonese movies have become popular since the 1940s and copies of many of them are easily accessible nowadays. With the movies, we have another reference in addition to the written records which may not record exactly the use of SFPs in all situations. However, it is still needed to be aware that the dialogues in movies, though not purely reading of scripts, are nevertheless not natural; they are “topic-restricted” and “text preparation needed”. 
To build a collection of SFP instances for the given time periods, the occurrences of the SFPs wo3 and bo3 in each selected movie were recorded in the following way: the movie was played and then paused whenever an SFP was heard, the related sentences were copied word for word, and the entire context where it appeared was also noted down, and the movie was then played until another SFP was heard, and the above steps were repeated. The time at which each SFP appeared in the movie was also marked down for future reference. The movie was then played till the end. This procedure of extracting the SFPs applies to the movies of the 1940s and 1970s.

2.1 Cantonese Movies of the 1940s

One of the spoken corpuses used in this paper was movies in the 1940s. The earliest Cantonese sound movie preserved in the Hong Kong Film Archive (hereafter HKFA) was “Twin Sisters of the South”, which was shown in 1939. Seven movies have been chosen from the 1940s as the subjects of research, the details are as follows (source from the HKFA):

Insert Table 2 Here

2.2 Cantonese Movies of the 1970s

Similarly seven films have been chosen as the subjects of this research, the details are as follows (source from the HKFA):

Insert Table 3 Here

2.3 Abbreviations

Examples are given below to illustrate the features of the particles. For each example, the source and year of the data are given after the example number, and the abbreviations of the source and year will be used when quoting the example. The abbreviations are given in the following table:

Insert Table 4 Here

3. The Use of wo3 and bo3 in the 1940s

The language examples of this period of time mainly come from the seven Cantonese movies that were produced in the 1940s (section 2.1). This section focuses on the functions of the two particles wo3 and bo3 in this period. We begin with the particle wo3.

3.1 The Use of wo3

The SFP wo3 appears 99 times in the language examples obtained from the movies. The analyses of the examples obtained from the movies enable us to conclude that wo3 had the following three functions: (1) Realization, (2) Reminder and (3) Hearsay. Moreover, it could also appear at the end of imperative sentences.

3.1.1 Realization

The first function of wo3 is showing “realization”, that is, if wo3 is omitted, then the tone-of-voice of the utterance will not be perceived as “realization”. In the first example below, the background is a party of a high-class family. Some thieves pretend to be visitors and stay in the party. One of the thieves turned around and saw that a gentleman sitting at the next table is wearing a precious diamond ring; the thief is taken by surprise and immediately reports this to his leader who is sitting next to him. The wo3 at the end of the thief’s utterance points out what others do not know or sense, that is introducing a new message. If the particle wo3 were removed from the utterance, then the utterance would become a simple declarative sentence. The SFP wo3 serves to express the tone-of-voice of an unexpected discovery which is known as mirative (a pragmatic extension of evidentiality).

Example 1 (New 1947)

“...don’t you see the diamonds in the next table? Precious stuff!”

In the second example below, the background to the dialogue is that a girl thinks that her boyfriend has stopped loving her and has started romance with another girl. The girl feels lost and helpless, and runs up a mountain. Her friends start to look for her, and Speaker A asks Speaker B where she has gone.
This is the pre-published version. Copyrights for articles published in CCSE journals are retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

Speaker B replies that he does not know. The particle \textit{bo3} in Speaker B’s reply is to show an element of contrast, which comes from the presupposition inherent in A’s question. A believes that B might know where the girl has gone to but apparently B has no knowledge about this matter. Speaker C looks around and sees that the girl is located not far away. The SFP \textit{wo3} at the end of his turn indicates “realization” and draws other people’s attention to what he found.

Example 2 (Twin 1939)

\begin{verbatim}
A: 佢 擔 忍 係 哪 邊 度？
    keoi5 kaam4 zo2 soeng5 bin1 dou6
3SG climb ASP up where?
 "Where is she hiding?"

B: 我 吳 知 嘢!
    ngo5 m4 zil1 bo3
1SG NEG know SFP
 "I don’t know."

C: 嗨 嘢 度 佢！
    hai2 go2 dou6 wo3
COP DEM SFP
 "She’s there!"
\end{verbatim}

3.1.2 Reminder

The second function of \textit{wo3} in the 1940s is “reminder”. The context of the example below is that Guangzhou has been occupied by the Japanese enemy and so refugees have to move to Hong Kong. At the very beginning Speaker A promises that he will find a job for Speaker B if B helps take the luggage. When they arrive at the train station, A uses an excuse to try and get out of paying B for his work. This irritates B who then quarrels with A:

Example 3 (Roar 1941)

\begin{verbatim}
A: 你 激 笨， 我 吳 佢 面 你 嘢！
    nei5 wan2 ban6 ngo5 m4 bei2 min2 nei5 wo3
2SG find clumsy 1SG NEG give face 2SG SFP
 "I am telling you that I will not give face to you if you deceive me."

B: 吳 佢 面 又 點 啊?
    m4 bei2 min2 jau6 dim2 aa3
NEG give face ADV how SFP
 "What can you do if I don’t give face to you?"
\end{verbatim}

A reminds B that if B is to deceive A, A will not treat B nicely. In fact, A gestures to hit B, and so B instantly goes to the station staff for help. In Example 4, the context is that a daughter has found her father with whom she lost contact as a result of the war. She wants to go to his house and see him immediately, but the speaker reminds her that her step-mother is very rude and was not nice to her when they met before and will definitely be very rude if they meet again. The speaker thus suggests that the girl ask her father to come and see her. Here, \textit{wo3}, besides functioning as a reminder, also shows a contrast, telling the hearer that the situation may not be the same as what the hearer has expected.

Example 4 (Twin 1939)

\begin{verbatim}
不 過 你 屋 企 有 個 後 母 好 惡 過， 不 如
    bat1 gwo3 nei5 uk1 kei5 jau5 go3 han6 mon5 hon2 ok3 wo3 bat1 jyn4
but 2SG house have CL step mother INT vicious SFP ADV
叫 你 爸 爸 爸 見 你 嬷 嬷 嬷 好？
    gin3 nei5 ba4 ba1 hai4 gin3 nei5 gun2 ma6 hon2
ask 2SG father come see 2SG DM NEG good
 "But remember that your step-mother is very rude, you’d better ask your father to come and see you."
\end{verbatim}

3.1.3 Hearsay

In this period of time, the third function of \textit{wo3} was “hearsay”. In Example 5, the hearer wants to
continue her work in the office, but the speaker informs her that the baby-sitter said that her baby was very sick and asked her to go home at once. Here, besides reporting other’s speech, an advice is also given against what the hearer originally intended to do.

Example 5 (Scatterbrain 1951)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>keoi5</th>
<th>waa6</th>
<th>nei5</th>
<th>uk1</th>
<th>kei5</th>
<th>go2</th>
<th>go3</th>
<th>bi4</th>
<th>bi1</th>
<th>zai2</th>
<th>meng6</th>
<th>dak1</th>
<th>hou2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>say</td>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>CL</td>
<td>baby</td>
<td>sick</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“He said that your baby is seriously sick, and asked you to come home at once.”

In Example 6, a girl is sick in bed and a man asks her to go out for a walk and get some fresh air. But the girl’s mother tells her that the doctor has advised her to take a rest, and asks her not to go out lest she would get a cold. The mother’s utterance not only reports other’s speech but is also advising against something, that is using other’s words to suggest against the hearer’s decision.

Example 6 (Twin 1939)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ji1</th>
<th>sang1</th>
<th>fan1</th>
<th>fn3</th>
<th>waa6</th>
<th>jin3</th>
<th>jau1</th>
<th>sik1</th>
<th>haai5</th>
<th>wo3</th>
<th>m4</th>
<th>hou2</th>
<th>wan2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>tell</td>
<td>say</td>
<td>AUX</td>
<td>rest</td>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>SFP</td>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>find</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Your doctor told you that you should take a rest, don’t be chilled by the wind.”

3.1.4 Novel Usages

The fourth situation where wo3 was used was at the end of imperative sentences. However, in this situation, the tone-of-voice of the utterance was brought out by the imperative sentence itself and not by the particle wo3. In the example below, a waiter in a hotel tells the customer that he is newly employed and asks for the customer’s forgiveness if he makes mistakes. Even if wo3 did not appear at the end of the sentence “please don’t blame me”, this sentence would still be an imperative one. The use of wo3 at the end of this type of sentence was a new usage, and similarly the tone-of-voice was expressed by the sentence itself and not by the particle wo3.

Example 7 (New 1947)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nei5</th>
<th>jyun4</th>
<th>loeng6</th>
<th>ngo5</th>
<th>co1</th>
<th>lai4</th>
<th>gang2</th>
<th>hai6</th>
<th>m4</th>
<th>zil</th>
<th>sau2</th>
<th>mei5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>forgive</td>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>first</td>
<td>come</td>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>COP</td>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>know</td>
<td>details</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Please forgive me that I don’t know how to tidy up. After all, I am green and new here. If I fetch the wrong item, please don’t blame me.”

3.1.5 Short Summary

To sum up, in the 1940s, the three main features of the particle wo3 were: (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, (3) Hearsay. Besides, wo3 could also appear at the end of imperative sentences. When we compare the usage of wo3 in the late 20th century, it is seen that wo3 had undergone changes in a period of several decades, and its areas of use had obviously been extended. It is important to point out that the function of showing “contrast”, which is commonly found in modern Cantonese, was apparently not one of wo3’s characteristics in the 1940s.

3.2 The Use of bo3

The particle bo3 is one of the basic SFPs in Cantonese language. In the language materials obtained
from the movies of the 1940s, bo3 appeared 215 times, a frequency of occurrence higher than that of wo3. The main function of bo3 in this period of time was “emphatic” (O’Melia 1954, Cowles 1965). We can conclude from the language materials obtained from the movies that this particle possessed the following two functions: (1) Emphasis and (2) Contrast.

3.2.1 Emphasis

The first feature of bo3, emphasis, as observed in the movies, was not different from that suggested by O’Melia (1954) and Cowles (1965). In the example below, Speaker A cannot go home because of her bad-tempered mother, and Speaker B invites Speaker A to stay at his home for a few days. Speaker A replies that it is not good to bother Speaker B and his family. The particle bo3 at the end of A’s utterance “I feel sorry to bother you” explains a different viewpoint from the hearer’s and emphasizes the speaker’s sense of reluctance:

**Example 8 (Twin 1939)**

A: 不過 攤 倒 你 吱 吱 好 意思 嘛！

but 2PL trouble good meaningful SFP

“I feel embarrassed to bother you.”

B: 唉，有 啥 問題 呀。

INJ, have what problem SFP

“Don’t mention it.”

3.2.2 Contrast

The second feature of bo3, “contrast” (showing an element of contrast, showing disagreement or different points of view), was not mentioned by O’Melia (1954) or Cowles (1965). In fact, this function occurred quite frequently during the 1940s. Let us look at the following first example. The hearer thinks that buying a diamond ring and proposing marriage to a girl is not very difficult, so long as one works hard and saves money. But the speaker disagrees and says that the girl requires him to buy five carats of diamonds, not ordinary glass stones, and so such demand is not affordable by common people. The particle bo3 in the example shows contrast to the other party’s views and also expresses disagreement.

**Example 9 (Scatterbrain 1951)**

五 卡 鑽 石 嚈 嚈， 你 估 玻 璃 頭 呀？

Five carat diamonds SFP SFP SFP 2SG guess glass head SFP

“Contrary to what you think, they’re five-carat diamonds. Do you think they are just glass?”

The bo3 in Example 10 below also shows contrast and different points of view. In this example, the speaker’s friend persuades him to do opium deals to earn money, but the speaker responds by saying that they should not commit crimes for money, which is contrary to his friend’s suggestion.

**Example 10 (Roar 1941)**

不 過 我 唷 唷 能 夠 爲 吃 自 己 去 做 嘛

but 2PL NEG for ASP self go do DET

犯 法 嚈 嚈。

illegal stuff SFP

“(contrary to your view) But we cannot do anything illegal in order to serve our own interests.”

3.2.3 Short Summary

Regarding the frequency of occurrence, bo3 in the 1940s appeared more frequently than wo3. The two main functions of bo3 in this period were shown in our data: (1) Emphasis and (2) Contrast. The “emphasis” function was addressed in previous studies (O’Melia 1954, Cowles 1965), but the “contrast” function was not. The two functions of bo3 had a common characteristic, that is, explaining different viewpoints from the addressee’s. The “contrast” function later became the sole function of bo3
in the 1990s (Leung 2010). Therefore, the areas of use of the particle bo3 became narrower than those of bo3 in mid 20th century. It is worthy to look into the expansion of the areas of use of wo3 and the increasingly narrower areas of use of bo3.

4. The Use of bo3 and wo3 in the 1970s

The language examples of this period of time mainly come from the seven Cantonese movies of the 1970s (section 2.2). This section focuses on the usages of the particles wo3 and bo3 in that period, beginning with wo3 for further discussion.

4.1 The Use of wo3

In the 1970s, the analysis of the functions of wo3 in the language sample obtained from the movies shows that it performed the following functions: (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, (3) Hearsay, (4) Contrast. Therefore, compared with the 1940s, wo3 in the 1970s had one more function, that is contrast. One point worth noticing is that by the 1970s, wo3 had already developed into a particle with a considerable frequency of occurrence (110 times in total) and with broader usages, but there was no particular discussion of this particle by the researchers of the Cantonese language in that period, for example Cheung (1972) and Lau (1975). As the four functions have been discussed above, in the following discussion only one example is illustrated for each of these functions.

4.1.1 Realization

The example below illustrates the first function of wo3, “realization”. The context is that someone has placed a bomb in a theatre as blackmail. The staff of the theatre are discussing how to deal with the situation. Some of them think that they should call the police, but others think that they should pay the blackmailers. The following utterance is by one of the staff members, who at first thinks that they should call the police but then changes his mind after a while as he realizes that it if the news of the blackmail is spread, it will affect the business of the theatre and in turn affect his income.

Example 11 (Private 1976)

4.1.2 Reminder

The second feature of wo3 in the 1970s is “reminder”, that is, it serves to remind the hearer of something that the speaker is concerned about. The speaker wants to draw the hearer’s attention to the information. In Example 12, the context is dog racing gambling. The speaker suggests the hearer place a bet of forty thousand dollars on dog number one, reminding the hearer to go for an off-course betting as they can earn much more.

Example 12 (Games 1974)

4.1.3 Hearsay

The third function of wo3 is “hearsay”, as it serves to indicate that a third person’s speech is being quoted. If both the speaker and hearer know from the context who the third person is, then the clause “he said” can be removed, and the addition of the particle wo3 to the end of the quoted speech forms a reported speech. In Example 13, Speaker A says C once said that he saw Speaker B in a hotel, but Speaker B responds that this was not the reality.
This is the pre-published version. Copyrights for articles published in CCSE journals are retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

Example 13 (House 1968)

A: 阿啲 哥話 看到你嘅！
aa3 kai2 keoi5 waa6 hai2 lei1 dou6 zuu2 dim3 gin3 dou2 nei5 wo3
Ah-Kai 3SG say COP here hotel see ASP 2SG SFP
“Ah-Kai said he saw you in the hotel here.”

B: 我 都 有 出 過 街！
ngo5 dou1 mou5 keoi5 gwo3 gai1
1SG ADV NEG go ASP street
“I haven’t gone outside ever.”

4.1.4 Contrast

The fourth function of wo3 is to show an element of “contrast”, that is, it serves to show that the speaker’s view is contrary to the addressee’s view. In Example 14, Speaker A and Speaker B are partners in a dancing competition. During a dance practice, they quarrel as they do not cooperate well. Speaker B thinks that he is dancing well, but Speaker A does not agree and blames him for his bad performance. The SFP wo3 in the third turn of A functions to highlight the different viewpoint, showing the contrastive relationship with A’s willingness, to align A’s dancing with that of her partner on the one hand, and the way the partner is dancing on the other, which makes it impossible for A to align with B.

Example 14 (Modern 1970)

A: 喂 你 點 跳 嘢？
wai3 nei5 dim2 tiu3 gaa3
INJ 2SG how dance SFP
“How come you dance in this way?”

B: 而 家 我 跳 得 好 呀？
jiu4 gaa1 ngo5 tiu3 dak1 m4 hou2 me1
now 1SG dance COM NEG good SFP
“Aren’t I doing quite well?”

A: 夾 我 至 得 叱 嘛！
gaan5 ngo5 zi3 dak1 aal maa3
match 1SG ADV COM SFP SFP
“You’re not matching mine.”

B: 你 唔 夹 我 咚 啥嘅！
nei5 m4 gaan5 ngo5 zaa3 maa3
2SG NEG match 1SG SFP SFP
“You should match my steps”

A: 你 懂 嗦 嘅，你 嘀 度 賣 捧 跳起，我
zei5 laam2 lek1 nei5 hai2 dou6 lynn6 gaa1 tiu3 ngo5
2SG pretend clever 2SG COP here recklessly ADV dance 1SG
點 來 你 跳！
dim2 gaan6 nei5 wo3
how match 2SG SFP
“Don’t pretend to be clever. (Contrary to your view) You dance without following any patterns, how can I match with you?”

B: 欸，你 擋 捱 佢 嘅 啊！
aai2, nei5 gaa1 dim6 keoi5 aai3
INJ, 2SG make well 3SG SFP
“You sort it out yourself then.”

4.1.5 Short Summary

In summary, the main functions of the particle wo3 in this period of time were: (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, (3) Hearsay, and (4) Contrast. By the 1970s, wo3 had broadened its usage and developed one more function than in the 1940s, namely “showing contrast”, and these four functions of wo3 basically remained the same in the 1990s (Leung 2010). Moreover, in terms of frequency of occurrence; its appearance was 99 times in the language samples of 1940s but was increased to 110 times in the
This is the pre-published version. Copyrights for articles published in CCSE journals are retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

4.2 The Use of bo3

For the usage of bo3 in the 1970s, two points are needed to be mentioned. The first point to note is its frequency of occurrence. In the language samples obtained from the Cantonese movies of the 1940s, bo3 appeared 215 times, but after thirty years, in the 1970s, it only appeared 90 times, a frequency less than that of wo3 in the same period, which appeared 110 times. The second point to note is its usage. As the language samples are analyzed, it is found that the characteristics of bo3 in this period of time were the same as those in 1940s, (1) emphasis and (2) contrast. This shows that in a period of three decades, the particle bo3 did not undergo any major changes. As the two basic functions of bo3 have been discussed above in 3.2, here only one example is illustrated for each of these functions.

4.2.1 Emphasis

The following is an example of how bo3 performed the “emphasis” function. The dialogue takes place in a tea house, where a customer complains that the tea is so dark. The waiter says that he will find another colleague to serve the customer, but the customer is irritated. The customer emphasizes the fact that he comes to the tea house to be served and reminds the waiter that the tea house should provide good service to him. In this example, the particle bo3 also conveys the idea that “the reality is contrary to what you thought”, that is, it was not up to the waiter to decide how he should serve.

Example 15 (Romance 1968)

4.2.2 Contrast

The second function of bo3 in this period of time was “showing contrast”. In Example 16, the dialogue happens in an office. Speaker A says it is not appropriate for him to criticize his boss, however, Speaker B expresses his disagreement with Speaker B’s way of doing things. The particle bo3 at the end of
Speaker A’s utterance has the function of putting forward a different viewpoint, highlighting the fact that the two persons hold different viewpoints.

Example 16 (House 1968)

A: 雖然就是下属唔應該批評上司，although ADV subordinate NEG AUX criticize boss
not though I think you are not very fair"

B: 點呢？
then SFP

“In what way?”

4.2.3 Short Summary
In summary, the main functions of \textit{bo3} in the 1940s were (1) Emphasis and (2) Contrast and in the 1970s were not much different from those. However, it is clear that the frequency of occurrence had been decreasing when the movies data of the two periods are compared. According to the findings of the researches on Cantonese in that period, the particle \textit{bo3} performed the functions of providing opinion, emphasizing, and reminding the hearer to take something into special consideration (Cheung 1972, 2007, Lau 1975, Kwok 1984). These findings are in line with what is shown by our analysis of the language samples obtained from the movies in the 1970s. However, the “contrast” function, which is the main function of \textit{bo3} in present-day Cantonese, was not specifically mentioned in these studies.

5. Major Findings
In this section, the two SFPs will be analyzed in terms of “frequency of occurrence” and “usages”. By observing the increase and decrease in the frequency of the usage, it is discovered that while the usage of one prospers, the other declines. This may be one of the reasons why the researchers of Cantonese always link the two particles together. The amount of the SFPs \textit{bo3} and \textit{wo3} in each of the time periods are listed in the following table.

Insert Table 5 Here

Observing from the above table, the appearance of \textit{wo3} was apparently less than that of \textit{bo3} in the 1940s, then in the 1970s \textit{wo3} was more frequently heard and became much more common than \textit{bo3}. The appearance of \textit{bo3} was apparently more than that of \textit{wo3} in the 1940s and it began to show a decrease in the 1970s. Based on Leung’s observations (2010), in the corpus of the 1990s the particle \textit{bo3} was rarely heard in conversations, and was seen almost exclusively in the company of other particles, such as \textit{gaa3}, \textit{lau3}, \textit{tim1} and \textit{zaa3}, forming SFP-clusters. In this sense, its independent existence has become unnecessary. Since its functions in daily life have been replaced by \textit{wo3}, it is becoming an SFP with a low frequency of occurrence and its future appearance in the system of Hong Kong Cantonese SFPs seems controversial.

In terms of their meanings and functions, \textit{wo3} and \textit{bo3} were distinctly separate; they were two different particles with different functions. In the 1940s, the main functions of \textit{wo3} were (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, (3) Hearsay. The newly developed “realization” and “reminder” functions of \textit{wo3} originally belonged to \textit{bo3}, and this was the early sign of merging of these two particles. As the 1970s was reached, the development of \textit{wo3} has enabled it to generally “show contrast”, which was also originally a function of \textit{bo3}. Consequently, the SFP \textit{wo3} in this period had acquired an additional function. Beginning from the 1970s, the “contrast” function has been shared by \textit{wo3} and \textit{bo3} up to the present time. These four basic features of \textit{wo3} remained the same in the 1990s, and by this time \textit{wo3} could also be used at the end of imperative and exclamatory sentences (Leung 2010). Whether \textit{wo3} will acquire an imperative tone-of-voice or an exclamatory tone-of-voice in future is too early to draw a conclusion. In
another words, it is shown that the functions of wo3 have been expanding but bo3 seems to have been contracting. Following the expansion of the functions of wo3, its earlier “hearsay” function has now been shared by another particle wo5. Since wo3 can still be used to express “hearsay” in some cases, many people believe that wo3 and wo5 are interchangeable although wo3 is much more versatile than wo5. As a matter of fact, there are differences between the two (Leung 2009). As for the particle bo3, its functions in the 1940s were: (1) Emphasis, and (2) Contrast. In the 1990s, bo3 had only one major characteristic that is to show “contrast”. In short, the functions of bo3 have continuously decreased in the past 60 years.

Finally, the historical development of the functions of wo3 and bo3 in different periods of time can be summarized as follows:

Insert Table 6 Here

6. Conclusions
As a SFP indicating mood and tone-of-voice, the SFP wo3 is used very frequently in modern Cantonese. Some researches have shown that this particle is used to show “realization and reminder” (Rao 1983, Kwok 1984, Ouyang 1990, Deng 1991, Leung 1992, Fang 2003). However, Leung (2010) argues that the meanings of the particle wo3 in the late 20th century are broader than “realization and reminder” as suggested by past researches. By observing the increase and decrease in the frequency of use of the SFPs in the second half of last century, and comparing the corpus of the two periods in the 20th century (1940s, 1970s), it is found that the frequency of use of these two SFPs is inversely proportional to each other. While the usage of one prospers, the other declines. In terms of their meanings and functions, wo3 and bo3 were distinctly separate. In the 1940s, the main features of wo3 were (1) Realization, (2) Reminder, and (3) Hearsay. The newly developed “realization” and “reminder” functions of wo3 originally belonged to bo3, and this was the early sign of merging of these two particles. As the 1970s was reached, the development of wo3 enabled it to generally “show contrast”, which was also originally a feature of bo3. Beginning from the 1970s, the “contrast” function has been shared by wo3 and bo3 up to the present time. These four basic functions of wo3 remained the same in the 1990s, and by this period of time wo3 could also be used at the end of imperative and exclamatory sentences. As for the particle bo3, in the 1940s, its functions were narrowed to the following two: (1) Emphasis, and (2) Contrast. There were no major changes in the usage of bo3 in the 1970s. In the 1990s, bo3 mainly possessed a “contrast” function in short negative sentences and was often used with other particles to form particle clusters.

References

English

Chinese
This is the pre-published version. Copyrights for articles published in CCSE journals are retained by the authors, with first publication rights granted to the journal.


List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADV</td>
<td>Adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUX</td>
<td>Auxiliary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CL</td>
<td>Classifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Complement marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Copula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEM</td>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Determiner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INJ</td>
<td>Interjection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Intensifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFP</td>
<td>Sentence-final Particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>Discourse Marker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables

Table 1. Level of Naturalness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>One person</th>
<th>Two people or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Topic free</td>
<td>Self-talking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Topic-restricted</td>
<td>Talking about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No preparation</td>
<td>self-experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Topic-restricted</td>
<td>Oral examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No text preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Topic-restricted</td>
<td>monologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not reading from</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Topic-restricted</td>
<td>News broadcasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text preparation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading from scripts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Movies from the 1940s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title (in Chinese)</th>
<th>Main Role</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Duration (mins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Twin sisters of the South (南國姊妹花)</td>
<td>NG Chor-Fan, WU Tip-ying</td>
<td>WU Tip-ying</td>
<td>Romance and ethics</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Roar of the People (民族的吼聲)</td>
<td>CHEUNG Ying, WONG Ang</td>
<td>Tai-kun</td>
<td>Anti-war promotion</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>New white golden dragon (新白金龍)</td>
<td>SIT Kok-Sin, CHENG Mang-ha</td>
<td>Great China</td>
<td>Love comedy</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>You are a nice lady, but why (靚本佳人)</td>
<td>TSE Tin, CHENG Mang-ha</td>
<td>Hongkong</td>
<td>Satire comedy</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>The night mourning of Pak Fu-yung (夜吊白芙蓉)</td>
<td>HO Fei-fan, FONG Yim-fun</td>
<td>Tai-nam</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>The scatterbrain (失魂魚)</td>
<td>TANG Kei-chan, Chun Siu Lay</td>
<td>World-wide</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>A couple in love (恩恩愛愛)</td>
<td>HO Fei-fan, FONG Yim-fun</td>
<td>Tai-shing</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Movies from the 1970s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title (in Chinese)</th>
<th>Main Role</th>
<th>Producer</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Duration (mins)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>A house filled with happiness (歡樂滿華堂)</td>
<td>NAM Hung, CHOW Tsu</td>
<td>Hing-fat</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Romance across the miles (明月千里寄相思)</td>
<td>WU Junli, Wu Fung</td>
<td>Kin-shing</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>I'll get you one day (總有一天捉到你)</td>
<td>Connie CHAN, Kenneth TSANG</td>
<td>Miramar</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>The young girl dares not come home (我永遠懷念你)</td>
<td>Connie CHAN, SIT Kar-yin</td>
<td>Fok-hing</td>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Modern school life (學府新潮)</td>
<td>TANG Kwong-wing, LEE Si-kei</td>
<td>Kowloon</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Games gamblers play (鬼馬雙星)</td>
<td>The Hui Brothers</td>
<td>Golden Harvest</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>The private eyes (半斤八兩)</td>
<td>The Hui Brothers</td>
<td>Golden Harvest</td>
<td>Comedy</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Abbreviations of the Source Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>Twin sisters of the South</td>
<td>Twin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Roar of the People</td>
<td>Roar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>New white golden dragon</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>You are a nice lady, but why</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>The night mourning of Pak Fu-yung</td>
<td>Pak Fu-yung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>The scatterbrain</td>
<td>Scatterbrain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>A couple in love</td>
<td>Couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>A house filled with happiness</td>
<td>House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Romance across the miles</td>
<td>Romance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>I'll get you one day</td>
<td>Get you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>The young girl dares not come home</td>
<td>Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Modern school life</td>
<td>Modern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Games gamblers play</td>
<td>Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>The private eyes</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Frequency of occurrence of bo3 and wo3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Periods</th>
<th>Source of Corpus</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>bo3</th>
<th>wo3</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>Cantonese Movies</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
<td>215 (68.5%)</td>
<td>99 (31.5%)</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Cantonese Movies</td>
<td>10 Hours</td>
<td>90 (45%)</td>
<td>110 (55%)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Functions of wo3 and bo3 in different periods of time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Functions of wo3</th>
<th>Functions of bo3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940s</td>
<td>(1) realization, (2) reminder, (3) hearsay</td>
<td>(1) emphasis, (2) contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>(1) realization, (2) reminder, (3) hearsay, (4) contrast (and at the end of an imperative sentence)</td>
<td>(1) emphasis, (2) contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>(1) realization, (2) reminder, (3) hearsay, (4) contrast (and at the end of an imperative or an exclamatory sentence, mirative shift -&gt; extension)</td>
<td>(1) contrast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>