

Abstract

Ne, one of the most frequently used interactional particles in Japanese, has long been regarded as gender-neutral (e.g., McGloin 1990; Ide and Yoshida 1999; Okamoto 1995b). Recent studies (e.g., Okamoto 1995a; Sreetharan 2004) have argued against a strictly categorical approach to *ne*, and have identified masculine and feminine uses of this particle based on its co-occurrence with different lexical categories. For example, NP+*ne* (e.g., *ringo ne* 'apple+*ne*') is more characteristic of feminine speech than COP+*ne* (e.g., *ringo da ne* 'apple+COP+*ne*'). However, these studies do not take into account the role of prosody in the production of gender differentiation. Filling this gap in research, this paper shows that *ne* interacts not only with accompanying lexical categories but also with prosodic elements to produce gendered effects.

In order to separate the possible effects of biological sex, performed gender and sentential position on the duration and pitch of *ne*, we asked ten male and ten female monodialectal native speakers of standard Japanese to read a set of gender-neutral sentences containing *ne* in sentence-initial, -medial, and -final positions. Participants were recorded in three conditions: 1) a natural speech style, 2) a role-played masculine (RM) style, and 3) a role-played feminine (RF) style. Duration, pitch minimum and pitch maximum were measured for each sentence and for each particle *ne*.

Results indicate that both males and females used several linguistic resources on both sentences and the particle *ne*, when performing feminine gender. First, the RF style was associated with higher pitch maxima than the RM style. Within a group (i.e., males or females), pitch maxima varied significantly while pitch minima did not; both sexes performed RF and RM styles by setting an appropriate highest pitch, rather than an appropriate lowest pitch. Second, for both sexes, RF style was characterized by a significantly larger pitch range than RM style. Third, when performing the feminine style, both males and females realized *ne* with significantly longer duration, and as a significantly larger proportion of the sentence.

Our findings corroborate claims in the existing literature (e.g., Ohara 1992; 2001) regarding prosodic characteristics of Japanese feminine language; namely, that it involves the use of high pitch and large pitch range. However, the sociolinguistic functions of relative duration have not been much discussed in the literature. This study shows that gendered effects in standard Japanese are also expressed in durational patterns. While the particle *ne* has been described as 'gender-neutral' because of its availability for use by both genders, the prosody of *ne* is significantly affected by gender.

416 words.

Appendix

1. Sentence Initial Channeling
Ne, Burugari-wa nan-no burando?
'Say, what brand is Bvlgari?'
2. Sentence Medial Channeling
Yuube ara moana-no mae-de ne, Yamada-san ni atta yo.
'Last night, I met Yamada-san in front of Ala Moana.'
3. Sentence Final Channeling
Gondoo-san rabo-de yoku miru ne.
'Gondo-san is often seen in the lab.'
4. Sentence Final Backchanneling
Un, honmono mitai da ne.
'Yeah, that looks real.'

Speech Styles		Male Group (n=7)			Female Group (n=9)		
		NS	RM	RF	NS	RM	RF
Highest F0 (Hz)	Sentence	193.6	183.5	221.1	340.0	305.5	368.3
	Particle	123.7	111.5	141.3	208.9	192.5	230.7
Lowest F0 (Hz)	Sentence	89.1	90.6	91.2	173.0	138.7	150.8
	Particle	101.4	94.2	103.0	177.9	166.2	169.9
F0 Range (Hz)	Sentence	104.5	92.9	129.9	167	166.8	217.5
	Particle	22.3	17.3	38.3	31	26.3	60.8

Table 1: Average F0 scores of the four sentences

Speech Styles		Male Group		Female Group		P-Value
		Duration	s.d	Duration	s.d	
Sentence	RM	2140.1	723.5	1937.2	638.7	= .01316
	RF	2335.6	807.2	2121.9	660.6	
Particle	RM	228.1	78.7	250.1	57.7	< .0001
	RF	296.5	102.0	314.3	76.6	
Particle: Sentence (%)	RM	11.5	4.4	13.8	4.7	= .0162
	RF	13.8	5.4	15.9	5.6	

Table 2: Mean duration for RM and RF for the male and female groups

Speech Styles		Male Group		Female Group		P-Value for Biological Gender	P-Value for Role Gender
		Ratio	s.d	Ratio	s.d		
Sentence 1	RM	13.315	3.368	14.017	2.566	= 4.083	= .1627
	RF	14.722	3.715	16.014	3.661		
Sentence 2	RM	6.891	1.958	9.105	1.484	= .0058	= .1920
	RF	7.977	2.851	9.845	1.297		
Sentence 3	RM	10.538	2.885	13.022	3.073	= .1711	= .0143
	RF	14.726	4.155	16.209	5.131		
Sentence 4	RM	13.202	2.549	17.295	7.045	= .0391	= .0223
	RF	17.778	5.846	21.917	4.412		

Table 3: Mean proportion ratios of the particle in the sentence