Implications of Representations of Casual Conversation: A Case Study in Gender-Associated Sentence Final Particles[1]

KAWASAKI Kyoko*
Kirsty MCDOUGALL**

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One of the key features by which Japanese speakers traditionally denote separate men's and women's languages is sentence final particles (SFPs). In recent years it appears that female speakers are shifting from using the traditional feminine forms to neutral and even masculine forms, whilst in Japanese language textbooks a more traditional, gender-specific portrayal of language is maintained. This study compares the distribution of gender-associated SFPs in Japanese language textbook dialogues with that in natural conversation across several age groups, to investigate the extent to which Japanese teaching materials reflect actual spoken language. Female characters in the textbooks examined used feminine SFPs more often than real female speakers from all age groups, indicating that textbooks are promoting a more traditional and stereotypical view of women's language. In the natural conversation data, the younger the age group, the smaller was the number of feminine SFPs used, with the youngest group's usage of SFPs actually resembling that of male characters in the textbooks. It is argued that the discrepancy found between Japanese language as presented in foreign language textbooks and as spoken in Japanese society has significant implications for Japanese language teaching.

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates the extent to which dialogues in textbooks for teaching

  * 川崎享子: Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, University of Melbourne, Australia.

** カースティ・マックドゥガル: Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Linguistics, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) reflect the reality of spoken conversation in the language. The study focuses on presenting to students the use of sentence final particles (SFPs) in conversation, with respect to gender. Data from Japanese textbooks and actual Japanese casual conversations are compared to determine whether SFP usage in textbook conversations reflects current usage.

1   Teaching Casual Conversation in a Foreign Language

While historically foreign language teaching has emphasized the written form of a language, in more recent years, perspectives on language teaching have broadened to include a focus on spoken language (cf. Brown and Yule, 1983a). Spoken language differs from the written form in many ways (see, e.g. Brown and Yule, 1983a, 1983b; Halliday, 1985; McCarthy and Carter, 1994), and Brown and Yule (1983b) highlight some of the problems this presents for language teachers. Attempts at representing natural conversation often reflect the authors' perceptions of how spoken language should be, rather than real spoken language. In particular, an author can be influenced by his or her knowledge of the written, standardized form of the language. On the teaching of English as a Second Language to adults, Slade (1986: 68) asserts that "until recently most mainstream linguistic analysis has been based on either the written text or intuitions of well-formed sentences which reflect a norm close to that of written English." She also criticizes language teaching materials that reduce a conversational situation merely to a vehicle for demonstrating a particular language structure, as opposed to providing an example of real communication (Slade, 1986; Slade and Norris, 1986). In Applied Linguistics, more recent work deriving from spoken English corpora (e.g. Carter and McCarthy, 1997; McCarthy, 1998; McCarthy and Carter, 1994) has begun to address this issue for language teaching.

2   Men's and Women's Speech in Japanese Language

The Japanese language differentiates separate registers for male and female speech (Jugaku, 1979; Mizutani and Mizutani, 1987; Okamoto, 1995; Shibamoto, 1985). The speech traditionally expected of a Japanese woman is "maximally gentle, empathetic, polite" and "monitored," as compared with the "maximally blunt, aggressive" and "dominating" male style (Jorden, 1990: 2). Markers of Japanese female speech highlighted in the literature include phonological features (Haig, 1990), phonetic features (Kitagawa, 1977; Ohara, 1993), address terms (Kanamaru, 1993), and politeness (Ide, 1982, 1990; Suzuki, 1993). The most noticeable feature, however, is the use of sentence final particles (SFPs).

A key issue in the teaching of JFL is whether usage of SFPs should be taught, and how much should be taught about them, if needed at all (Endo, 1990). Cherry (1990), a non-native speaker of Japanese, experienced a dramatic change in Japanese people's attitudes towards her when she started using women's language. However, she is also aware of the lower status of women when she uses women's language, and feels that women's language has been forced by men. Cherry expresses admiration for women who can communicate without worrying about distinctions between

men's and women's language. Endo (1990) observes the experience of some of her non-Japanese female acquaintances whose spoken Japanese is highly skilled although lacking in markers of femininity. These speakers are often told that their language is blunt and that they should speak a more feminine form. Endo attributes the problem to a lack of flexibility in the attitudes of native speakers. She believes that if a woman finds using feminine language helps her to communicate in Japanese then she should use it, but she should not be obliged to use feminine language to ingratiate herself with her interlocutor. According to Endo, students of JFL have many other important things to learn, and teachers should not have the extra burden of teaching men's and women's language.

While Japanese language is traditionally characterized by these separate male and female registers, it appears that language norms for Japanese women are changing. Okamoto and Sato (1992) and Okamoto (1995) draw attention to anecdotal evidence that suggests that some women, in particular younger women, are increasingly using neutral and even masculine forms instead of traditional feminine speech forms. These writers provide some empirical evidence to substantiate this suggested trend for the domain of SFPs in casual conversation. Asada (1998) reports the use of SFPs among young female students as infrequent, if present at all.

This paper compares SFP usage in Japanese textbook dialogues with its occurrence in natural conversation data. Data on SFP usage is collected from a number of JFL textbooks and compared with the spoken conversation data presented by Okamoto and Sato (1992), to determine the extent to which SFP usage in the textbook dialogues reflects actual usage in spoken language.

SENTENCE FINAL PARTICLES IN JAPANESE

The Japanese language has many elements that mark the speaker's subjective attitude or emotion towards the proposition, the speech act, or the speaker's addressee. SFPs are among the most frequently used of these elements, and as they express the speaker's attitude or emotion, they are often associated with gender. The following outlines the main SFPs in Japanese, as investigated in this study. The classification is a slightly modified version of that provided by Okamoto and Sato (1992).[2]

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[2] The present study does not use Okamoto and Sato's terms "Moderately Feminine/Masculine" or "Strongly Feminine/Masculine" as it is difficult to measure the degree of masculinity or femininity. In this paper, Okamoto and Sato's "Strongly Feminine" and "Strongly Masculine" are labeled as "Feminine" and "Masculine." "Moderately Masculine" is treated here as "Neutral." This pattern consists of a gender-neutral SFP and a copula or predicate, and does not involve any gender-associated word or morpheme, although the literature does suggest it has a sense of masculinity as mentioned earlier in the text. The two items in Okamoto and Sato's "Moderately Feminine" (*desho* and the independent use of *no*) is classified as "Other" and excluded from the investigation as researchers do not agree on their femininity.

Gender Neutral
ne
yo
yone
plain predicate without SFP

Masculine (i.e. associated with male speech)
zo
ze
sa
na
plain imperative form of a verb alone or followed by *yo*
(e.g. *ike* 'Go!', or *ike yo* 'Go!')

Feminine (i.e. associated with female speech)
deletion of copula
wa (to be used independently or with *ne* and/or *yo*)
no with *ne* and/or *yo* after a noun or a *na*-adjective
kashira

Although *ne* and *yo* are gender neutral, a woman who uses them with a casual copula *da* is usually regarded as blunt, vulgar, or even rude (Okamoto and Sato, 1992; Suzuki, 1993), because such usage is considered assertive (McGloin, 1990). These forms are thus traditionally associated with male speech; it is expected that a woman should delete the casual form of the copula. Furthermore, when the copula is not required, that is, when the predicate is a verb or an adjective, in casual speech it is preferred that a woman insert an additional SFP before *ne* or *yo*, to make her speech softer and more elegant. This softness gives the addressee room to choose whether he or she should take the speaker's utterance into account. According to Suzuki (1993), this is the basis of politeness in Japanese women's speech. McGloin (1990, 1993) argues that women's use of SFPs is a positive politeness strategy in the sense described by Brown and Levinson (1987), because SFP usage creates an atmosphere of shared knowledge and establishes rapport between the speaker and her addressee. Ide (1990), without denying McGloin's account, argues that the use of SFPs is also a negative politeness strategy because it softens the force of a statement and minimizes its imposition. Researchers are not completely in accordance as to the nature of the politeness strategy being utilized, however they do agree that women's use of SFPs is one of the features that makes Japanese women's speech more polite than men's.

On the one hand, such SFPs as *no*, *wa*, and *kashira* are symbols of Japanese feminine speech. They make a statement soft and less assertive, or a speech act indirect (Uyeno, 1971; Reynolds, 1985; Ide, 1990). On the other hand, such SFPs as *zo*, *ze*, and *na* are symbols of masculine speech. They indicate the forcefulness of an utterance (Ochs, 1993) or strong insistence of the speaker (Uyeno, 1971). Whereas

SFPs conveying softness are associated with women's speech, SFPs conveying force are associated with men's speech.

Although SFPs are not the only indicators of gender, the difference between female speech and male speech in Japanese owes much to them. It is often said that identifying the gender of the speaker in a Japanese novel is made easy by SFPs (Mizutani and Mizutani, 1987). However, consistent with the trend away from traditional women's language, sentences without the feminine particles are increasingly common in the speech of Japanese women today (Asada, 1998; Matsumoto, 1996; Okamoto, 1995; Okamoto and Sato, 1992). Even strongly masculine SFPs are now appearing in young women's speech (Okamoto, 1995; Okamoto and Sato, 1992).

METHOD

This study compares SFP usage in model conversations in three Japanese language textbooks with SFP usage in the natural conversation data presented in Okamoto and Sato (1992), to determine the extent to which conversations in JFL textbooks reflect current usage.

Since the data from Okamoto and Sato's (1992) study were recordings of casual conversations between close friends, the present study did not examine textbook conversations that portrayed completely different situations or styles. Namely, conversations between strangers, conversations involving a power difference (e.g. a boss and an employee, or a teacher and a student) or conversations taking place in a formal situation (e.g. a ceremony or a job interview) were eliminated from the present study. Such conversations were conducted in formal/polite style that is marked by a verbal morpheme *mas* or a formal copula *des*. This exclusion was also appropriate for an examination of usage of gender-associated SFPs, since nowadays such SFPs rarely appear with *des/mas* forms. A few sentences in formal/polite style that appeared in casual conversations in the textbooks were included in the examination. The types of conversations selected are outlined in the list of textbooks below.

Intermediate-level textbooks[3] were chosen for this investigation, since most of the conversations at elementary level are carried out in a formal or polite style and do not contain many SFPs except for *ne* and *yo*. The three textbooks chosen were designed in such a way that model conversations are the central focus of each lesson. The books contained a variety of conversation models including many in a casual

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[3] The textbooks used for this investigation are:
Textbook 1:
Higurashi, Yoshiko. 1992.   *Current Japanese*. Tokyo: Bonjinsha.
Textbook 2:
横山節子 (1992)　『見て，聞いて　わかる　会話式日本語文法〈応用編〉』三修社.
Textbook 3:
Sasaki, Mizue and Masami Kadokura. 1996. *Japanese Through Dialogues for Intermediate Learners*. Tokyo: The Japan Times.

style. The authors of the textbooks were all female, but this was not a factor in the researchers' selection of the books. Rather, they were chosen because, at the time of the data collection, all three books were easily available in Australia and used at universities and language schools in Japan and overseas. The characters participating in casual conversations within each textbook were as follows:

Textbook 1
    Conversations between:
- 2 male students
- 2 female students
- a Japanese host mother and an American female student

Textbook 2
    Conversations between:
- a husband and wife
- family members
- office colleagues
- a Japanese high school student and a non-Japanese office worker

Textbook 3
    Conversations between:
- a husband and wife
- a boyfriend and girlfriend
- office colleagues

The first 400 sentences (determined by placement of full stops) were selected from the conversations in each textbook. The textbooks usually indicated the gender of a speaker by name, picture, or a code such as (M) for male and (F) for female; sentences with the speaker's gender unspecified were excluded from the sample. The remaining sentences in each sample were categorized as either masculine, neutral, or feminine, as determined by the presence of the SFPs as outlined in the previous section, or assigned to a fourth category, "Other," and a frequency tally of sentence types kept for each male or female textbook character. The "Other" category included incomplete sentences that had no predicate, and hence no SFP. Such incomplete sentences are frequently used by Japanese speakers, regardless of the level of formality of the situation, and indeed many JFL textbooks present incomplete sentences as fixed expressions to memorize. Mizutani and Mizutani (1987) note use of incomplete sentences as a politeness strategy. Also included in the "Other" category were sentences ending with other sentence final expressions, such as *desho* and *no*, which are not examined in this paper.

The data provided by individual characters was examined to check whether any particular character yielded a noticeably high SFP count; no such case was observed. Indeed, the female textbook characters all used the SFPs associated with feminine speech wherever the linguistic environment allowed. As the purpose of the

study was to observe patterns of SFP usage with respect to gender, the frequencies of SFP types occurring for each character were pooled by gender category, within each textbook. Each figure was converted to a percentage of the total number of sentences selected for examination in the given textbook. As the data was gathered from only three textbooks, a comparison of frequencies and percentages was used rather than a formal statistical test.

The natural conversation data presented by Okamoto and Sato (1992) was derived from nine interactions among groups of native-speaker Japanese female friends of similar age. Group A contained seven students aged 18–23, Group B contained three housewives aged 27–34, and Group C contained four married professional women aged 45–57. Specific conversation topics were not provided; subjects were simply asked to record their "chat."

Okamoto and Sato (1992), omitting from the analysis the first few minutes of each conversation recorded, transcribed 130 consecutive SFPs uttered by each speaker in the natural conversations. For the present study, these results have been tabulated to correspond with the categories of SFP usage described in the previous section.

RESULTS

1 Female Speech in the Textbooks
Table 1 shows sentence types used by female characters in the three textbooks, by percentage.

Table 1　Sentence Types Used by Female Characters in the Three Textbooks

Sentence type	Textbook 1	Textbook 2	Textbook 3	Textbooks combined
Masculine	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Neutral	1 (1%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	4 (1%)
Feminine	90 (69%)	28 (46%)	35 (51%)	153 (59%)
Other	39 (30%)	31 (51%)	33 (48%)	103 (40%)
Total	130 (100%)	61 (100%)	69 (100%)	260 (100%)

The first step was to determine whether the extent of SFP usage by female characters was the same or similar between textbooks. None of the textbook authors included masculine particles in the speech of female characters. Usage of feminine particles for female characters was similar for the three authors; feminine forms were employed in between 46% and 69% of cases, or for the combined data, 59%. The similarity in SFP usage between the three textbooks could reflect a common view as to how Japanese women's speech should be portrayed. Sentences occurring in the "Other" category here were mostly either incomplete sentences or those employing *no*, a particle that Okamoto and Sato actually labeled as "Moderately Feminine." Both sentence types were found in male characters' speech also.

2   Female Native Speaker Speech

Table 2 shows sentence types used by female native speakers by percentage in the natural conversation data presented by Okamoto and Sato (1992) (see also Okamoto, 1995).

Okamoto and Sato report clear differences between the age groups from their results with respect to SFP usage: "Although individual differences were quite

Table 2   Sentence Types Used by Female Native Speakers in Natural Conversation

Sentence Type	Group A (7 subjects) ages 18–23 (n = 910)	Group B (3 subjects) ages 27–34 (n = 390)	Group C (4 subjects) ages 45–57 (n = 520)
Masculine	5%	0%	0%
Neutral	81%	75%	50%
Feminine	4%	12%	28%
Other	10%	13%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Okamoto and Sato, 1992: 483.
Note: Okamoto and Sato provide percentages and total frequencies only. The data here have been retabulated in accordance with the sentence type categories defined by this study, as described in Method section.

large, in general the youngest age group (Group A) used the fewest feminine forms and the most masculine forms, while the oldest age group (Group C) used the most feminine forms and the fewest masculine forms." (1992: 482–83)

Table 3 presents the results from Table 2 alongside those from Table 1 to enable comparisons between the data from the textbooks and the natural conversation data for female speakers.

Table 3   Sentence Types Used by Female Native Speakers Compared with Those Used by Female Characters in Textbooks (%)

Sentence type	Group A ages 18–23	Group B ages 27–34	Group C ages 45–57	Textbook total
Masculine	5	0	0	0
Neutral	81	75	50	1
Feminine	4	12	28	59
Other	10	13	23	40
Total	100	100	100	100

Female characters in the textbooks used no masculine SFPs, as was the case for subjects in the elder two age groups of native speakers; however the younger age group employed masculine forms in 5% of cases. Moreover, this age group employed masculine forms slightly more often than feminine SFPs (4%). Thus the textbook conversations reflect traditional patterns of usage of masculine forms,

inconsistent with developments in the natural conversation of young speakers.

Neutral forms were rarely employed by female textbook characters. The frequencies were one for each of Textbooks 1 and 3, and two for Textbook 2 (Table 1). All instances were of the predicate without SFP pattern; no use of the casual copula *da* was observed. Sentences in the same category, including use of the casual copula *da,* which is also associated with male speech, were used by females in all three native speaker age groups, less frequently with increasing age: 81% for the younger Group A, 75% for the middle Group B, and 50% for the elder Group C (Table 3). This result seems to indicate that Japanese women are increasingly using neutral forms in spoken conversation, some of which are also associated with male speech, as mentioned earlier.

Feminine forms were used far less frequently in the natural conversations than in the textbooks. Even the oldest age group, from which the most traditional behavior could be expected, used feminine SFPs about half as often as the female textbook characters, which included young university students (28% versus 59%). The middle and younger age groups used feminine forms even less frequently (12% and 4%, respectively).

It seems that the 45–57 demographic most closely approximates the SFP usage found in textbooks; thus the textbooks are reflecting a more traditional usage of SFPs. This apparent conservatism may have some impact on language learners should they visit Japan or meet Japanese speakers from Japan in their own country.

3   Male Speech in the Textbooks

Table 4 shows percentages of sentence types used by male characters in the three textbooks.

Table 4   SFPs Used by Male Characters in the Three Textbooks

Sentence type	Textbook 1	Textbook 2	Textbook 3	Textbooks combined
Masculine	6 (9%)	17 (19%)	9 (11%)	32 (13%)
Neutral	53 (80%)	46 (51%)	59 (71%)	158 (66%)
Feminine	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Other	7 (11%)	27 (30%)	15 (18%)	49 (21%)
Total	66 (100%)	90 (100%)	83 (100%)	239 (100%)

SFP usage by male characters in the textbooks varied more widely between the textbooks than was the case for the female characters, but there were some similarities. None of the textbook authors included feminine forms in the speech of male characters. Neutral forms were the most common, ranging across textbooks between 51% (Textbook 2) and 80% (Textbook 1). "Other" forms, mainly consisting of incomplete sentences and sentences with other expressions such as *no* or *desho*, were the next most popular, also varying between textbooks, from 11% (Textbook 1) to 30% (Textbook 2). Masculine forms were used by male characters in all three

textbooks but not as often as feminine forms attributed to female characters; usage of masculine particles for male characters was similar for the three authors, within the range 9% to 19% (13% for the data combined).

Comparing the SFP usage of characters in the textbooks with data on SFP usage of male native speakers in natural conversation is also necessary to answer the questions raised by this study. Unfortunately very little male conversational data was available.[4] Asada (1998) provides one relevant study that examines the conversation of Japanese-speaking male university students. He recorded the conversations of three male-female pairs (aged 19–22), all asked to spend ten minutes discussing each of three topics. This data is not necessarily representative of common use of SFP in natural conversation as the number of subjects was small, and the setting was highly controlled. However, it should be noted that all subjects showed some use of feminine SFPs, which was not observed in any of the examined textbooks. Kawasaki (forthcoming) also reports the use of feminine SFPs by male speakers in conversation. Her data from task-based conversations of nine pairs of male and female young Japanese speakers indicates not only that there is no significant difference between men's use of gender-associated SFPs and that of women's, but also that men use more feminine SFPs than masculine SFPs. Although the conversations from her data might not be suitable for direct comparison with the textbook conversations due to their different nature, it should be noted that unlike male characters in the textbooks, male Japanese native speakers do use feminine SFPs, and that the types and frequency of the SFPs they use are not very different from those of women's.

An interesting comparison can be made between the speech of the male textbook characters and the natural conversation of the youngest group of female speakers in Okamoto's study. As mentioned above, SFP usage by male textbook characters varied between textbooks. The only feature shared by all three textbooks was the absence of feminine SFPs in male speech. Focusing on the use of masculine and neutral forms in Textbook 1, frequencies are actually similar to those of Okamoto's youngest group of female speakers (Table 2). This suggests that, in terms of SFP use, male speech in Textbook 1 is actually close to that of young female speakers.

DISCUSSION

Comparison of the textbook data with Okamoto and Sato's natural conversation data reveals discrepancies that support the argument that the textbooks are creating a stereotypical image of female speech. The three textbooks surveyed are generally

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[4] Obtaining data on Japanese male casual conversation is generally very difficult, due to the long working hours of most Japanese males. Recording conversation at a workplace is not suitable for our purpose as this language is normally formal in style, with forms not showing much gender difference. Regardless of how long they have known each other, it is obligatory for speakers to mark politeness using formal style when there is a difference in age and/or status (Matsumoto, 1989).

similar in their portrayal of Japanese female speakers with respect to the use of SFPs, with female speakers in the textbooks tending to use feminine SFPs excessively compared with female speakers in Okamoto and Sato's study. The textbooks present female characters using feminine SFPs in 46% to 69% of the utterances. However, the level of feminine SFP usage in natural conversation varies between 4% and 28%, according to speaker's age (Okamoto and Sato, 1992), as seen in Table 2. The usage of some SFPs in the textbooks is a complete reversal of the situation in the natural conversation data. First, there is no variation in SFP use between female characters throughout the textbooks. As noted above, the utterances of all female characters, regardless of their age or position, are allocated a feminine SFP where the linguistic environment allows. Second, the use of *wa* independently of other SFPs was noted, with all female characters in casual conversation in the textbooks making use of independent *wa* without *ne* or *yo* attached. The use of independent *wa*, however, was not observed by Okamoto and Sato, neither was it observed by Asada (1998). Ozaki (1997) and Kawasaki (forthcoming) noted very little independent use of *wa*. Furthermore, Okamoto and Sato, Asada, and Kawasaki found female speakers frequently using the casual copula *da*, which McGloin (1990) and Suzuki (1993) claim is considered unsuitable for women's speech. No examples of such forms were found in the textbooks. One textbook even marked such forms with (M) indicating that the form is available only for men. The neutral forms used by female characters in the textbooks were only found in questions and all assumed the same pattern, that is, a predicate in plain form without any SFPs.

Compared to female characters, the male characters in the textbooks in general do not strongly mark their masculinity by SFPs, and they use fewer SFPs. However, they tend to show more variation in their speech and have greater choice in their use of SFPs. Their speech sounds more assertive but not offensive. The lower frequency of masculine SFPs in male characters' speech suggests that this assertiveness comes from the contrast with female characters' speech, which has very little assertiveness due to an excessive number of feminine SFPs.

Many writers argue that the use of feminine SFPs is a politeness strategy (e.g. Ide, 1990; McGloin, 1990; Suzuki, 1993). The textbooks present female characters as more gentle and polite through the use of more feminine SFPs and hence appear to be perpetuating the myth of the submissive Japanese woman. This is also reflected in the limited range of roles played by the female textbook characters. Most of the female characters are either housewives or students. Some work in offices or as language teachers or nurses, but such positions as office managers, professors, and doctors are always portrayed by men (Kawasaki, 1997). The female characters are almost always as polite as or more polite than their interlocutors. The situations in the textbooks in which a woman can use casual speech are also limited: only when the interlocutor is either female or her husband. Even when her husband is talking in casual style, a woman often uses formal speech.

There are many empirical studies indicating that Japanese women speak more politely than Japanese men (Abe, 1992; Ide, 1982; Ide, 1990; Ide, Hori, Kawasaki, Ikuta, and Haga, 1986). One might claim that the women's politeness seen in the

textbooks reflects the politeness of women in society. However, the argument proposed here is that the textbooks are portraying stereotypes in which women are not seen in "a higher social position" or a position with "power" (Kawasaki, 1997). Ide (1982: 366–68) puts forward three rules of politeness in Japanese: 1. Be polite to a person of a higher social position, 2. Be polite to a person with power, 3. Be polite to an older person. By excluding female characters who have positions of status, which require politeness as in these rules, the textbooks are not reflecting the true nature of Japanese society. As a result, conversation scenes where only men receive honorifics will be imprinted in the learner's mind.

From a pedagogical perspective, this contrast between male and female speech may send a misleading message to language learners. Furthermore, as Sunderland (1992) argues, a textbook can have an unfavorable effect on a language learner's motivation. She claims that "[t]he potentially shaping effect of female characters with restricted social behavioural and linguistic roles does not sound like being particularly empowering for female readers" (Sunderland, 1992: 18). Learners are informed of differences between male and female speech in Japanese, but what the textbooks present is unmarked speech and women's speech. If only women have to use an extra set of particles, this could have an impact on female motivation for learning the language or adapting to Japanese society.

Contrary to the distribution of SFPs in the textbook data, the natural conversation data of Okamoto and Sato presented marked differences between different age groups of female speakers in their use of SFPs. In fact, the youngest female group (18–23) shows a striking similarity with the male characters in one of the textbooks (Textbook 1), except that male characters do not use any feminine forms. The actual use of SFPs by female speakers is more flexible than the situation described in the textbooks. In the textbooks, female characters are given a one-dimensional profile, being merely polite and submissive, especially to their husbands. In the past when women were confined to their homes, they did not have a voice in the public domain and were expected to avoid confrontations by using less assertive speech. However, for the younger generations, who take it for granted that they can enjoy equal opportunities, SFPs are not symbols of power or masculinity. Rather they are symbols of youth and freedom (Okamoto, 1995). Young women enjoy freedom of choice but this choice is missing in the textbooks. This lends support to the argument that the textbooks are promoting a stereotypical image of Japanese women by not reflecting that they have a choice in how they speak.

CONCLUSION

Although the quantity of data analyzed for this study does not enable strong statistical conclusions, several important characteristics of SFP usage in textbooks and in natural conversations were found. First, the use of feminine SFPs by female characters in textbooks is closest to that of the older generation of the population. Interestingly, the younger generation's use of SFPs is close to male speech in one of the examined textbooks. Second, the textbooks reflect a stereotype of female speech.

All age groups of females, including the eldest, use neutral forms in the spoken data, but this was not observed in female speech in any of the examined textbooks. Although neutral forms are used by female speakers of all age groups, the pattern is still strongly associated with male speech in a stereotypical view. Further, SFP use did not differ from one female character to another, or from one textbook to another. In contrast, male speech in textbooks is quite diverse compared with female speech. The only characteristic of stereotypical male speech found in the textbooks was an absence of feminine SFPs, which actually are used by male speakers of Japanese in natural conversations.

These findings suggest that the textbooks are presenting an overgeneralized, indeed incorrect, picture of Japanese society. It is the contention of this paper that exaggerating the differences between male and female speech promotes the stereotype and does not help the learner acquire sociolinguistic competence. For some learners, a textbook is the only representation of Japanese society they will encounter. If a female learner acquires a perfect "textbook language," she might be stereotyped or misunderstood when she uses it in Japan. Textbooks should reflect actual language usage in the society rather than stereotypes. The effect of each SFP form should be made clear so that the learners can make their own appropriate choices. A textbook should not impose the educator's view of "good language behavior," but rather help learners acquire linguistic competence to suit their needs.

The role of textbooks in teaching sociolinguistic competence to foreign language learners is an important issue warranting further research. With regard to SFPs, and further to Japanese language as a whole, this should involve investigation of other language features associated with gender, in addition to other social aspects of the language. From this study, one direction for further work would be to compare the textbook data with a comprehensive survey of male native speaker SFP usage. Given the differences found between female natural conversation and its textbook representation, it would be interesting to see if this disparity holds across the sexes. With SFP usage among younger females becoming less stereotypically feminine, the question also arises as to whether parallel developments are present in male usage, with younger males perhaps shifting away from the male SFP stereotype. Preliminary findings by Kawasaki (forthcoming) suggest that differences between male and female speech are waning. If this is the case, class time should not be spent on teaching men's and women's language to non-native speakers of Japanese. Rather, instead of simply associating each particle with gender, the function and effect of each SFP should be taught.

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