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Aidan Aannestad SIL-UND

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Hiding your emotions in plain sight

Differences between real anger and feigned anger in Japanese girls' speech

Aidan Aannestad University of Texas at Austin

This paper demonstrates the use of non-denotative meaning markers as a way of indicating a speaker's emotional state. Japanese has a number of such markers, and they pattern differently according to the speaker's emotion; creating distinctions between speech acts under various emotional circumstances. This paper examines the dialogue of three fictional characters from Japanese television and demonstrates visible differences in their speech patterns between real anger and feigned anger.

1. Introduction

The Japanese language is replete with ways of lexically and grammatically expressing non-denotative meaning. It is primarily famous for its extensive honorific marking systems, and to a lesser degree for the stark differences it presents between masculine speech and feminine speech. These categories have been the primary focus of scholarly study on Japanese sociolinguistics, with comparatively little on other phenomena that occur within these systems. There are, however, other such phenomena—this study demonstrates that one of these other phenomena involves speaker emotion.

This study focuses on the relationship between Japanese non-denotative meaning markers and a speaker's emotional state (in this case anger), and demonstrates and analyses the differences between how (female) speakers speak when truly angry and how they speak when trying to use anger to hide a different emotion. These differences surface in the use of various kinds of non-denotative meaning markers—markers and combinations of markers are used with different frequencies in angry versus fake-angry speech.

The data in this study comes from the Japanese animated television show *Nichijou*, which aired in 2011. Three characters, all high-school girls, are compared. One character exemplifies the *tsundere* character archetype, which is primarily defined by the use of anger to hide emotions. The other two do not conform to this archetype, and instead get truly angry with some frequency in the show.

On the use of fiction for this study

This study uses data gathered from fictional characters, and thus it is wise to consider the relationship of fictional speech to real speech from a sociolinguistic perspective. Stamou (2014) presents two opposing views on the status of fictional speech—the 'fiction as mirror' view argues that fiction reflects an accurate view of sociolinguistic reality, and

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the 'fiction as construct' view argues that fiction is significantly mediated by its creators' (potentially incorrect) perceptions. Interestingly, the papers she cites that fall on the construct side seem to primarily deal with fiction about sociolinguistic situations that the creator is not a part of, while those that fall on the mirror side deal with situations that the creator is a part of.

It's not immediately obvious whether *Nichijou*'s creator is a part of its sociolinguistic situation or not. On the one hand, he is a member of the Tokyo-area Japanese-speaking linguistic community; on the other hand, he is neither a high-school girl nor a tsundere. Is he a valid source for sociolinguistic data about high-school girls and tsunderes? Perhaps his perceptions are accurate, perhaps they are not. Whether or not they are accurate, though, they are interesting in and of themselves—this is how a member of this community at large thinks this particular subgroup of his community speaks. He must have learned somehow, whether by interacting with members of that subgroup or simply hearing how others perceive their speech. The data in this study may accurately represent how real people speak in these situations, but if it doesn't, it still is an accurate representation of what people think about high-school girl and tsundere speech. That on its own is interesting.

This study will assume that this data from fiction is an accurate representation of real speech patterns, but the reader should bear in mind that it may instead be a representation of stereotypical speech patterns.

2. Linguistic background

This section describes some of the mechanisms by which Japanese can mark non-denotative meaning.²

2.1. Sentence-final particles

Japanese sentences typically end in one or more sentence-final particles. These are used primarily as a way of indicating the purpose of a sentence within a discourse context—Katagiri (2007) describes this as 'dialogue coōrdination'. (1) gives some examples.

- (1) a. koko=ni kuru here=ALL come '[subj] is coming' [relatively neutral]
 - b. koko=ni kuru **jo** here=ALL come SFP

¹At least, I assume.

²The transcriptions used here are not a romanisation scheme, but instead (relatively) phonemic IPA.

'[subj] is coming, you know' [informing listener]

 c. koko=ni kuru ne here=ALL come SFP
 '[subj] is coming, right?' [expecting verification or agreement]

Nothing about the basic message of these sentences changes with the addition of the final particle; instead, the particle adds information about why the sentence is being spoken. jo, in the above example, indicates that the speaker intends the sentence to inform the listener of something they are as yet unaware of; while ne indicates that the speaker is seeking some sort of confirmation from the listener about the sentence. These are very commonly used—in the data presented here, out of 357 sentences with non-imperative verbs, 265 (5/7) of them appear with some sort of sentence-final particle or similar item, and only 92 (2/7) appear with nothing but the verb.

These particles form a closed class,³ though they can vary by dialect; and some are decidedly more common than others. Certain particles are associated with a given gender of speaker, as well; and particles may have significant meaning differences with different intonational patterns. Table 1 gives a list of the most common final particles in informal Tokyo-area Japanese.⁴

particle	primary use	speaker gender
jo	informing listener	
jo?	informing listener who should know better / preceding speaker action	
jo jo? ne?	requesting confirmation	(f)
ne	expecting agreement	(f)
na?	requesting confirmation	(m)
na	requesting confirmation / expecting agreement	(m)
ka	expressing mild surprise or understanding	` ,
ka?	requesting information (interrogative marker)	
no?	requesting information (interrogative marker)	
no	informing listener / providing explanation	${ m f}$
n da	informing listener / providing explanation	
ZO	informing listener	\mathbf{m}
wa?	expressing femininity? (unclear)	f
wa	expressing strong surprise / emotional investment	m

Table 1: Some final particles common in Tokyo-area colloquial speech.

These particles can be combined, and the combinations often have idiomatic meanings. **jo ne/na**, for example, can be used to mark realisations that should have been obvious—compare (2) with the examples in (1) above.

(2) koko=ni kuru **jo ne** here=ALL come SFP SFP

³Though in less serious fiction, unusual (typically non-human) characters can be given distinctive novel final particles that appear in all sentences they speak.

⁴Intonational differences are indicated with the presence or absence of a question mark.

'[subj] is coming, isn't he. (I should have known.)'

In feminine speech, it's possible to delete a copula and have a bare noun phrase followed directly by one or more sentence-final particles; (3) shows an example. Masculine and gender-neutral speech allows deleted copulas, but only if there are no final particles following them.

a. kore=wa neko da jo this=TOP cat COP SFP
'This is a cat.' [masculine / neutral]
b. kore=wa neko this=TOP cat
'This is a cat.' [masculine / neutral]
c. kore=wa neko jo this=TOP cat SFP
'This is a cat.' [feminine]

Exactly what counts as a final particle and what doesn't is not fully clear. Conjunctions can also be used sentence-finally, leaving the second member of the conjoined pair to be understood, as in (4).

- (4) a. o-cha=ga hairi-masi-ta **kedo**, itu-demo ki-temo ii HON-tea=NOM enter-HON.ADR-PAST but, when-ever come-CVB.CSS good desu jo HON.ADR SFP

 'The tea's ready, but you can come [drink it] whenever you want.'
 - b. o-cha=ga hairi-masi-ta **kedo** HON-tea=NOM enter-HON.ADR-PAST but

'The tea's ready [and you can feel free to decide for yourself what to do about that fact].'

Itani (1992) argues that these sentence-final conjunctions as a class express reservation, due to prematurely ending the utterance; this is clearly the case with **kedo** but less so with other conjunctions—**kara** 'because' in particular can be used to abruptly contradict someone.⁵ These may well be in the process of becoming new sentence-final particles, as suggested by Ono et al. (2012), and this paper will treat them as such.

This paper considers two additional categories of marker to be final particles—the uncertainty markers **desjoo** and **daroo**, and the negative copula forms **zja nai** and **zjan** as used in tag-question-like phrases such as **jaru zja nai** '[subj] really does it, (doesn't he)'.

⁵See Nakamura (2012) for a discussion.

2.2. Personal pronouns

Japanese has an unusual pronominal system crosslinguistically, in which pronouns are an open class and carry additional information besides simple grammatical person reference.⁶ Pronouns in general are sensitive to honorifics distinctions, and informal pronouns encode some degree of speaker attitude as well—with second person pronouns, this works out to the speaker's opinion of the listener; with first person, it is instead the self-image the speaker wants to project. Additionally, Japanese frequently uses names and titles in place of second-person pronouns.

- (5) gives examples of the phrase 'what are you intending to do?' in several different registers with several different pronouns.
 - (5) a. **sotira**=wa doo suru tumori desu ka you(HON)=TOP how do intention COP.HON INT 'What do you intend to do?' [honorific]
 - b. sasahara-kun=wa doo suru tumori na no Sasahara-HON.EQ=TOP how do intention COP INT 'What are you planning to do, Sasahara-kun?' [neutrally informal]
 - c. **kimi**=wa doo suru tumori you(informal)=TOP how do intention 'What are you planning to do?' [neutral, very informal]
 - d. **temee**=wa doo suru tumori you(pejorative)=TOP how do intention 'What do you think *you*'re going to do?' [agressive]

2.3. Commands and requests

There is quite a variety of ways to express commands and requests in Japanese, and even in informal contexts, speakers have several options to choose from. Imperative forms include a full range from direct command to humble request, and unlike in many languages, none of these require rephrasing beyond changing out the imperative form. As with many systems in Japanese, imperative usage also varies by speaker gender. (6) shows several ways to ask or tell someone to throw something away for you.

- (6) a. kore, sute-te ki-te kure this, throw.out-CVB.SEQ come-CVB.SEQ give 'Go throw this out, will you?' [masculine informal command]
 - b. kore, sute-te ki-te this, throw.out-CVB.SEQ come-CVB.SEQ

⁶These work quite differently from pronouns in most languages, but they are legitimately pronouns—see Noguchi (1997) for an analysis.

'Can you go throw this out?' [feminine informal request]

- c. kore, sute-te ki-nasai this, throw.out-CVB.SEQ come-IMP

 'Go throw this out!' [feminine command / masculine formal command]
- d. kore=wo sute-te koi this=ACC throw.out-CVB.SEQ come[IMP]'Go throw this out!' [masculine informal command]

Imperatives can be combined with sentence-final particles to give additional variations in meaning, as shown in (7).

- (7) a. kore, sute-te ki-te ne this, throw.out-CVB.SEQ come-CVB.SEQ SFP

 'Can you go throw this out [for me]?' [girly informal request]
 - b. kore, sute-te ki-nasai jo this, throw.out-CVB.SEQ come-IMP

 'Go throw this out!' [strong feminine command]

2.4. Dissmissive focus markers

Japanese has a number of focus markers, and among them is a pair of markers (=nante and =nanka) that indicate a speaker's disdain for the item they mark. (8) shows an example.

- (8) a. santa=**nante** dare=ga sinziru ka jo Santa=FOC.DIS who=NOM believe INT SFP 'Who in the world would believe in Santa?'
 - b. atasi=ga baka na koto=nanka iwa-nai kara jo me(feminine)=NOM dumb COP.ADNOM thing=FOC.DIS say-NEG because SFP 'I don't say dumb things.' (or 'I'm not going to say anything dumb.')

2.5. Dismissive question patterns

Besides the focus markers, Japanese has certain question patterns that allow a speaker to ask questions aggressively or dismissively. These typically involve a fronted question word, almost always **nani** 'what', which can frequently translate to 'why' instead. Compare the two phrasings of 'why are you shouting?' in (9).

(9) a. nande saken-deru no why shout-PROG INT'Why are you shouting?' [neutral]

b. nani saken-den no jo what shout-PROG INT SFP'The heck are you doing shouting?' [aggressive]

It's also possible to use **nani** to dismissively question NPs, in the form **nani** [DEMONSTRATIVE] [NP], as in (10).

- (10) a. kono e=wa nan na no DEM.PROX picture=TOP what COP INT 'What's this picture?' [neutral]
 - b. nani kono e what DEM.PROX picture'The heck is this picture?' [dismissive]

The force of (10b) is not necessarily aggressive in all contexts, and this pattern can simply be used to good-naturedly jab at something unusual; however, in this data set it is always aggressive.

3. Sociological background

Popular Japanese fiction has a character archetype commonly referred to as tsundere.⁷ A tsundere character is characterised by an inability to properly express feelings of affection—the character will instead go out of their way (often conspicuously so) to act angry towards the object of their affection in an attempt to hide their emotions. The most core type of tsundere is a female attempting to hide romantic affection, but the term can be used for males and non-romantic relationships as well (e.g. a man who feels unable to express his love for his children). This study, however, concerns the core case.

Togashi (2009, p. 4) lists the following as stereotypical characteristics of female tsundere speech.

- Hesitation / stuttering
- Frequent use of the sentence-final conjunction kara 'because'
- (Possibly) frequent use of sentence-final particles **ne** and **jo** (see above)
- Frequent use of verb forms **-te ageru** '[I'll] do [it] for [you]' and **-temo ii** 'it's okay if [you]'
- Frequent use of defensive wordings such as **betu=ni** 'not actually, not at all', **=dake** 'only', or **kantigai sinaide** 'don't get the wrong idea'

⁷Etymologically a portmanteau of two semionomatopoeic words—tsuntsun 'sharp, pointy, aloof' and deredere 'affectionate, loving'.

This study focuses specifically on content framing rather than the content itself, and as such does not concern itself with phrases with denotative meanings (such as is carried by **betu=ni** or **=dake**).

4. Methods

The data in this study is a sample of fictional spoken Japanese from three characters in the 2011 television show *Nichijou*.⁸ All three are high school girls; one is a tsundere and two are not.

The data includes all ways that these characters ended sentences in their lines in the studied segments of the show, and also includes second-person pronoun uses and dismissive question pattern and focus marker uses. The tsundere character is more minor in the show than the other two, and her data encompasses all of her appearances; the data from the other two is limited a similar number of utterances. All 'angry' utterances of the tsundere character are feigned anger; two of the non-tsundere characters' 'angry' utterances are feigned as well and mentioned separately.

Tokens of individual expressions are divided by whether they were spoken while the speaker was expressing anger or not. For the two non-tsundere characters, self-directed speech tokens are separated out as well; the tsundere character had too few self-directed lines to separate out. Any token that occurs only once in the data is eliminated from the table as reproduced here.

The full set of data (minus single tokens) is reproduced in table 2 at the end of the paper; several of the more significant results are pulled out into table 3. Aioi Yuuko and Naganohara Mio are not tsundere characters, Tachibana Misato is.

5. Results and discussion

The data from *Nichijou* reveals a number of contrasts between tsundere feigned angry speech and true angry speech. Tsundere angry speech contains a higher number of **no jo?**, **wa jo**, and sentence-final conjunctions in general; while non-tsundere angry speech contains far more instances of plain **jo**. One of the non-tsundere characters uses several forms that verge on masculinity while angry; the other doesn't. The tsundere also uses the second-person pronoun **anta** very regularly, and is the only character to make significant use of dismissive phrasing.

Each of these results will be discussed separately.

⁸Daily Life', though a fair number of far-from-daily absurd things happen over the course of the show.

5.1. Final particles

Questions

All speakers preferred asking questions with **no?** while not angry. The tsundere speaker, however, strongly preferred the more direct, 'in-your-face' particle combination **no jo?** while angry. One non-tsundere mixed them equally, the other never used **no jo?** while angry. This suggests that the tsundere is going out of her way to be aggressive when asking questions—using more forceful and direct question formatting as a way of drawing attention to her anger.

Informative statements

With statements, the non-tsundere speakers tended to primarily use **jo**, with the focus on **jo** especially pronounced in anger (one speaker used it 21 times out of 26 angry informative statements). The tsundere speaker, on the other hand, used simple **jo** once out of all angry utterances; she instead used **wa jo** and **kara** / **kara ne** much more frequently than the non-tsundere speakers. The choice of **kara** may be due to **kara**'s use as a means of direct contradiction, letting her emphasise the fact that she's not merely informing her listener but specifically contradicting them. The tsundere speaker does seem to use the construction [noun] **jo** more frequently, though some of this is due to the tsundere speaker's use of a construction '[noun] **jo**, [noun], [noun] **jo**' inflating the numbers.

wa jo, on the other hand, is somewhat less forceful or perhaps simply more feminine—wa on its own primarily expresses the speaker's femininity, and Moriya (2006) suggests that wa jo is simply a combination of the independent meanings of wa and jo. This may demonstrate a counter-running trend in tsundere speech—emphasising one's own femininity, perhaps as a way of softening the final impact of their anger. The ne in kara ne may also be a reflection of this tendency—ne in certain contexts can be used as a way of femininely softening potentially direct and abrupt phrasing (especially commands, see example (7a)), and thus may be used here as an attempt to be contradictory without being too unkind.

Statements expecting agreement

Statements expecting agreement show less variation across speakers. The tsundere uses negative tag questions like **zja nai?** 'is it not that...?' somewhat more frequently than the other two speakers, but not significantly so. The non-tsundere speakers use the reduced form **zjan** both in anger and not, while the tsundere never does; it's not clear

⁹Though the exact details are far from clear, and it seems to be in the process of disappearing from modern speech.

enough exactly how **zjan** differs in meaning to draw any conclusions from this difference.¹⁰

5.2. Commands

One non-tsundere speaker (Aioi) provided too little data on angry commands to be useful. The tsundere preferred forms with the feminine command -nasai; the other non-tsundere speaker (Naganohara) preferred the non-feminine forceful basic imperative form. Again, this shows the tsundere's unwillingness to be as direct and forceful as possible—she uses the most forceful feminine forms available, but does not go as far as using additionally direct, potentially masculine forms. The non-tsundere speaker (Naganohara) had no such reservations.

5.3. Pronouns

The two non-tsundere characters rarely used pronouns, preferring either to use names or simply leave pronouns out entirely. One non-tsundere (Naganohara) used the masculine and somewhat pejorative **omae** several times; one of her two **anta** tokens comes from an imitation of tsundere speech. The tsundere used the pronoun **anta** quite frequently. Smith (2003, p. 210) describes **anta** as the most 'informal' option available in specifically female speech, leaving the most insulting forms only available in masculine speech—again suggesting that the tsundere is not willing to go as far as switching to masculine speech forms to express her anger. The non-tsundere (Naganohara), on the other hand, is again willing to do so.

5.4. Dismissive phrasing

On the whole, the angry tsundere used dismissive phrasing (focus particles and question patterns) much more often than either non-tsundere (who used almost none at all)—14 instances from the tsundere, and 5 total from both others (2 of which were not used in anger). These dismissive constructions are not strongly gendered in either direction, and aren't considered direct or abrupt in the way that many masculine forms are, giving the tsundere an option to express anger without abruptness or masculinity. The non-tsundere characters seem to have had little need for these constructions, though for one (Aioi) this may not be significant, as she has very few tokens of angry questions to begin with.

¹⁰Saegusa (2004) mentions in passing that it's somewhat more masculine, suggesting the tsundere is trying to avoid masculinity in order to soften her anger. In my experience, **zjan** is quite common in female speech, though perhaps not in specifically feminine speech, so I'm not sure if it truly is associated with masculinity.

5.5. Other notes

Besides the difference between characters, there are interesting differences between self-directed and other-directed speech. Both tracked characters have much fewer self-directed tokens than other-directed, so any conclusions are tentative, but there are noticeable differences. The most immediately visible discrepancy is the dramatically reduced use of **jo** in self-directed speech in favour of simple unmodified verbs; likely due to **jo**'s primary use as marking an utterance as informative—there is no need to inform yourself of anything.

Additionally, four of six instances of markedly masculine forms¹¹ (not represented in the table) occurred during self-directed speech. Female use of male forms is something that the Japanese speaker community is aware of¹², but the phenomenon seems to be mostly unmentioned in scholarly works. The common wisdom seems to be that 'women mostly use male forms when men aren't around'; this data suggests that some women only use male forms when no one's around. This is a phenomenon that deserves its own study, however.

6. Conclusions

Overall, the tsundere spoke more dismissively but less directly and forcefully than the non-tsundere speakers while in anger. This seems to be a linguistic reflection of the tsundere's conflicting motivations—she desires to seem angry, but she isn't actually angry enough to want to be mean. She uses constructions that express dislike and disdain but avoids constructions that indicate aggression and direct attack. The non-tsundere angry speakers, having nothing to hide, had no reservations about using aggressive speech and felt no need to use dismissive constructions. There's also a small visible difference between the two non-tsundere speakers—one (Naganohara) is more willing to use direct and potentially masculine forms in anger than the other (Aioi).

Interestingly, the tsundere speaker deviated somewhat from Togashi (2009)'s stereotypes of tsundere speech. She used the sentence-final conjunction **kara** frequently as expected; but the sentence-final particle **ne** only occurred with **kara** in angry speech, and **jo** on its own was consistently softened with **wa** (though it did appear more frequently in questions with **no?**). Stereotypical verb forms **-te ageru** 'do for [you]' was rare (though absent from the other speakers' data) and **-temo ii** 'it's alright if [you] do' was wholly absent. The discrepancy in verb forms may be due to the speaker having no semantic need for these constructions over the course of her appearances in the show; but the other differences suggest that people's conscious knowledge of tsundere speech patterns does not

¹¹Outside of the direct command forms, which are masculine primarily due to their directness.

¹²I have found several forum posts on the topic, such as http://oshiete.goo.ne.jp/qa/1914927.html.

quite reflect the reality. This is perhaps evidence that this fictional data can be used to draw conclusions about real speakers—at the least, it doesn't align exactly with what people claim their perceptions are, and the simplest explanation for this discrepancy is that it aligns more properly with actual usage.

Additional data on this topic would be nice, especially if it concerned a single character; though truly angry tsundere characters (indeed, truly angry characters in general) are quite rare in Japanese fiction. At the least, this paper demonstrates that non-denotative meaning markers in Japanese have uses beyond formality and gender marking, and can reflect a speaker's emotional state as well. More research into this domain of marking uses is needed, both on a larger scale and into different emotional states—sadness and happiness may also differ from baseline minimally-emotional speech. There may well be other uses of these markers as well.

final particles etc.	spoken	⊳ l	to self not angry	angr	Naganol spoken y not angry	Naganohara Mio sn to t angry angry	self not	Tachib angry	Tachibana Misato angry not angry
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Table 2: Data from Nichijou.

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	Graffic track	man particles etc. no jo	wa jo kara	kara ne	NOUN jo	commands and requests IMP IMP io	2nd person pronouns	dishlissive locus nanka nante	dismissive questions

Table 3: Some more noticeable contrasts from the Nichijou data.

List of glossing abbreviations

ACC	Accusative	HON.EQ	Equal-level honorific
ADNOM	Adnominal form	IMP	Imperative
ALL	Allative	INT	Interrogative
COP	Copula	NEG	Negative
CVB.CSS	Concessive converb	NOM	Nominative
CVB.SEQ	Sequential converb		
DEM.PROX	Proximal demonstrative	PAST	Past
FOC.DIS	Dismissive focus	PROG	Progressive
HON	Generic honorific	SFP	Sentence-final particle
HON.ADR	Addressee honorific	TOP	Topic

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Aidan Aannestad 912 Biscayne Austin, TX 78734 aidan@aannestad.com