The affective morphology of Japanese

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ABSTRACT
The western linguistic tradition tends to study language as a cognitive, non-affective means of communication, meant to only carry the information that lies in its structure. As such, emotion is considered irrelevant to the processing of language. While new paradigms seem to emerge, with models including emotions within the frame of structural linguistics (such as Van Berkum's Affective Language Communication model, ALC), the traditional Japanese studies had already incorporated emotions in its linguistic analysis for more than two centuries. This is in part because Japanese, more than any Western language, has emotions embedded at the very core of its structure, in the shape of morphological elements, referred in the traditional Japanese studies as *kokoro no koe*, 'voice from the heart'. This paper reviews the literature on two such morphological elements, namely the sentence-final particles *ne* and *no*. Both particles seem to have different interpretations depending on the context. On the one hand *ne* is on turn considered to be used as a softener, driven by polite intimacy, a marker of rapport, to help consolidate common feelings towards a subject or to manifest agreement and to be characteristic of women's speech, or more generally to request emotional and social alignment from the listener. On the other hand, *no* seems to have an explanatory purpose, to imply evidentiality, manifest politeness and to be characteristic of women's speech. In general, *no* can be generalised under the broader concept of indexing harmony between the speaker and the addressee. Through the prism of the Japanese society and with the help of illustrative examples from the ALC mode, this review investigates how these interactional particles ultimately perform emotional communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The western linguistic tradition tends to study language as a cognitive, non-affective means of communication, meant to only carry the information that lies in its structure. As such, emotion is considered irrelevant to the processing of language. This view of linguistics has been widely adopted with the rise of structuralism in the last century, carried by Ferdinand de Saussure and Noam Chomsky, and tend to study language as a logical referential tool. While many fields in social sciences related to human cognition have now incorporated emotions as a key factor in their studies, linguistics still seems not to do so, to a large extent, despite growing empirical research on language and emotions (Van Berkum, 2018).

However, it turns out that emotions have long been included in some non-western linguistic models, such as in the *kokugogaku*, the traditional Japanese language studies. As explained in Maynard (1993, p. 258) (see page 34):

During the Edo period[1] ... the Japanese grammarians perceived language not as mono 'thing', but as koto 'event' which requires active participants – both the speaking self and the other. And it was to overcome the rational thinking (... conceived to be represented by Chinese ways of thinking) that they introduced the concept of emotion mono-no-aware 'the pathos of nature, an aesthetic emotion' to unite the events of human life. As being symbolized by Suzuki Akira's (Suzuki, et al., 1979/1894) phrase, kokoro no koe 'voices from the heart', kokugaku 'Japanese studies' found in human emotion the answer for giving meanings to often unrelated and isolated events – including human lives.

What Maynard explains here is that conceiving language strictly as a rational and emotionless system to share information (the then Chinese and now the Chomskian and Saussurian views) did not fit the Japanese grammarians' understanding of their language, nor did it agree with their philosophy. Therefore, emotion was included as an integral part of linguistic analysis.

Unfortunately, Japanese studies have until recently been overlooked by western linguistics and very little documentation is available in English. Seiko Maynard undertook to synthetize and transmit part of the literature in her books, among which Maynard (1993), on which this paper relies, regarding the entanglement between the Japanese society and the Japanese language.

The aim of this paper is twofold. First, to study how languages can have emotions lying at the core of their structure. Two sentence-final particles, *ne* and *no* have been particularly documented in the literature. Second, it is investigated how the Affective Language Comprehension model (ALC) from Van Berkum (2018) interacts with a language such as Japanese, in which affective indicators manifest themselves in a different way than in the western languages. Van Berkum's ALC model was designed with the purpose to broaden the classical western linguistical models and implement the emotion factor in it. This review attempts to answer the following questions. What is the role of sentence-final particles *ne* and *no*? How are they used in discourse and with what underlying intent are they used?

2. Key concepts of the Japanese culture

Despite being among the world's most developed countries and being fully assimilated in the global economy, the Japanese society, along with its culture and psychology, is still different to western cultures, and even to other Asian cultures. In the following sections, I will discern two concepts related to the Japanese culture. First will be discussed the concept of *amae*, which can roughly translate to 'amenable'. The second concept is the one of *uchi and soto*, or 'inside/outside'. In short, they describe the importance of the group, over the individual, and seeking solidarity or autonomy, inside or outside a group. While one could point out that these concepts are not exclusively Japanese and have been studied in the discourse analysis literature (for an overview, see Bloor & Bloor, 2013), they are embedded in the Japanese society to a level that is not usually seen elsewhere. Moreover, as will be shown in this review, there are parallels between how emotionality is integrated in the Japanese society and how it is morphologically inlaid in the language.

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1   The Edo period took place between 1603 to 1863.

2.1 *Amae*

The desire for *amae*, as described in Doi (1971) (taken from the translation in Maynard, 1993, p.262), "has the function of seeking to 'melt down' others by *amae* and make them lose their *tanin* 'other' quality". In other words, the only valuable unit in the Japanese society is the one of the group, in which the individual blends and identifies herself in. The result is an aim for psychological and emotional dependence to others (Maynard, 1993, p.262), such that the individual expresses his/her emotional state as the emotional state of the group, and vice versa, and the group exists as a single emotional entity.

2.2 *Uchi* and *soto*

Uchi and *soto*, which has been used "predominantly in anthropology to elucidate various aspects of Japanese society" (Suzuki, 2006, p. 9), describe two different contexts and social frames that organise behaviour, interaction and emotional investment within a group. An *uchi* (home, insider, in-group) environment implies an emotional common-ground with reciprocal *amae*. This allows insiders to express emotions directly, almost in a rude way, confident that the addressee(s) will not be offended and always forgiving, due to their belonging to the same in-group. On the other hand, when communicating in a *soto* (outsider, out-group) frame, one must be aware and cautious about one's 'other' quality and not hurt one's feeling, by always being formally polite (Maynard, 1993, p.262).

Defining what is an in-group and what is an out-group depends on the context, and the *uchi/soto* dynamic is essentially a measure of degrees of inclusion and exclusion (Bachnik, & Charles, 1994). A foreigner is an outsider of the whole Japanese society, which then becomes an in-group, but the society itself is fragmented in a multitude of inside and outside groups (take for example the family/non-family relation, or the sports club/rest of the world relation). According to Bachnik & Charles (1994)[2], "in the *uchi/soto* dynamic, the relationship between individuals and social order is mutually constitutive and contextual." In an *uchi* frame, the speaker will tend to express his/her affects freely both positively and negatively (a behaviour also known as *ura*). In a *soto* situation however, one usually tries to not let one's emotions show (or *omote* behaviour) and is concerned with social appearances (Dunn, 1999). However, there can be situations in which displaying an *ura* behaviour in a formal (*soto*) setting is accepted.

From an anthropological and sociological perspective, many studies pinpoint that "Japanese behave in such a way as to express great sensitivity to the surrounding context, including the participants and their views toward each other" (Maynard, 1993, p.264). Such analysis is also shared by linguists who have studied the relation between linguistic features and social norms, summarised by the iconic expression from Haga (1985), 'harmony with others' (*taijinteki na choowa*, in Japanese). The expression relates to how Japanese people are always "preoccupied with how others feel" (Maynard, 1993, p.264) and seek to maintain social cohesion.

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2   Quoted from Ashby, 2013, p.258, since I could not get access to the original article.

3. Morphological elements

In order to achieve *amae* and maintain *uchi/soto* relationships, Japanese speakers seem to rely heavily on specific morphological elements. Good examples are particles, which can either perform interpersonal purposes (e.g. sentence-final *yo, ne, no*), mood (conditional *ba* shows that the speaker hopes that it will be true; conditional *tara/to* express a negative attitude or warning), strength (sentence-final *zo, ze*, typically associated with males) or softness (*wa, no*, typically associated with females; Ochs, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2009).

Ochs & Schieffelin (2009) propose that speakers use some features in language beyond communicating referential information, namely to affect others or "as a basis of for constructing their own subsequent feelings, mood, dispositions and attitudes towards some uncertain information" (p. 9).

The following sub-sections focus on two specific morphological elements: sentence-final particle *ne* and sentence-final particle *no*. The first interesting aspect of sentence-final particles is that they "do not contribute to the grammatical construction of utterances, and yet their role is closely related to the interpretation of a particular utterance" (Lee, 2007, p.1). This is illustrated in (1).

(1)   a. John ga   eiga   o   miru.
            SUB[3] movie OBJ see
         John sees movies.
      b. John ga   eiga   o   miru no.
            SUB movie OBJ see   PART
         John sees movies.
      c. John ga   eiga   o   miru ne.
            SUB movie OBJ see   PART
         John sees movies.

The translation of the sentence remains the same in the three sentences, regardless of the sentence-final particles (here *ne* and *no*). It seems therefore that these particles carry meaning on the pragmatic and interactional levels, rather than on the semantic level.

3.1 The particle ne

As discussed above, sentence-final particles do not impact the semantic, nor the general structure of the clause. Their purpose is to add meaning to the utterance, by conveying emotion, interpersonal relation and involvement (Lee, 2007; Morita, 2012; Cook, 1990). Researchers argued that it is used as softener, driven by polite intimacy (Ikeda, 1995), a marker of rapport (McGloin, 1990), to help consolidate common feelings toward a subject (Kataoka, 1995), or to manifest agreement.

In order to unify these interpretations under a same concept, Cook's (1990) analysis of the particle *ne* proposes that it creates an "affective common ground" between the addresser

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3   See notes for abbreviations.

and the addressee. In other words, *ne* works as a tool to establish "a cooperative relationship between conversation participants" (p. 42).

Regarding interactions including *ne* and the possible emotional outcomes Lebra (1976) argues the following.

> The fear from deviating from Alter's[4] viewpoint, or the wish to maintain consensus with Alter, is further demonstrated by the frequency with which Ego[5] interjects his speech with the particle *ne*. [...] If properly empathetic, Alter assures and reassures Ego of his receptivity, congeniality, or agreement by frequently nodding and exclaiming, 'I am listening,' 'That is so!' or 'Yes'.

In order to maintain consensus and social harmony with his/her interlocutor(s), a speaker will often end sentences with the particle *ne*. The listener on the other hand will also make use of *ne* to let the speaker know that he/she is listening and agreeing. Morita (2012) describes such uses of *ne* as an explicit "interactional alignment" with the interlocutor.

Sometimes, this expression of interactional alignment can be out of place. Morita gives the example of a woman complaining on an online discussion forum about her 30-year-old boyfriend's extensive use of final-particle *ne*, such as in *kyoo wa tanoshiikatta ne* ('We had fun today, didn't we?'), which she considers childish or even feminine. This is interesting, because we here have an example of the social inferences an interlocutor can make of a speaker's uses of particles, even though, as Morita notes, men and women appear to use *ne* at equal frequencies. The women's argument seems therefore not to assess for the 'girly' speech of her boyfriend, but rather that there are 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' instances of the use of *ne*, depending on the social context and the social identity of the speaker. In her analysis, Morita (2012) argues that the purpose of *ne* to request "alignment" is a foundation, on top of which are constructed the interpretations mentioned in the beginning of this section. In this case, social norms demand that a 30-year-old man be assertive, and do not constantly seek for his partner's approval.

Figure 1 (see page 38) is an example of such "ideology-laden interpretation" about the utterance of the boyfriend mentioned in the online forum discussion, namely *kyoo wa tanoshiikatta ne* ('We had fun today, didn't we?').

Depending on the addition, or not, of the particle *ne* at the end of the clause, the derived implication of the assessment is different. In particular, not using the particle can mean that the speaker relies less on the recipient; the utterer assesses his own opinion, and thus appears as an independent person, a character stereotypically associated with masculinity. On the other hand, making use of *ne* manifests a request for alignment with the interlocutor, that can be perceived as a way to build solidarity or even show solicitude, two features attributed to women, who are stereotypically dependent and therefore more looking for the approbation of the conversational partner.

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4   Read: the other, the interlocutor. It can even be a group, or the society in general.
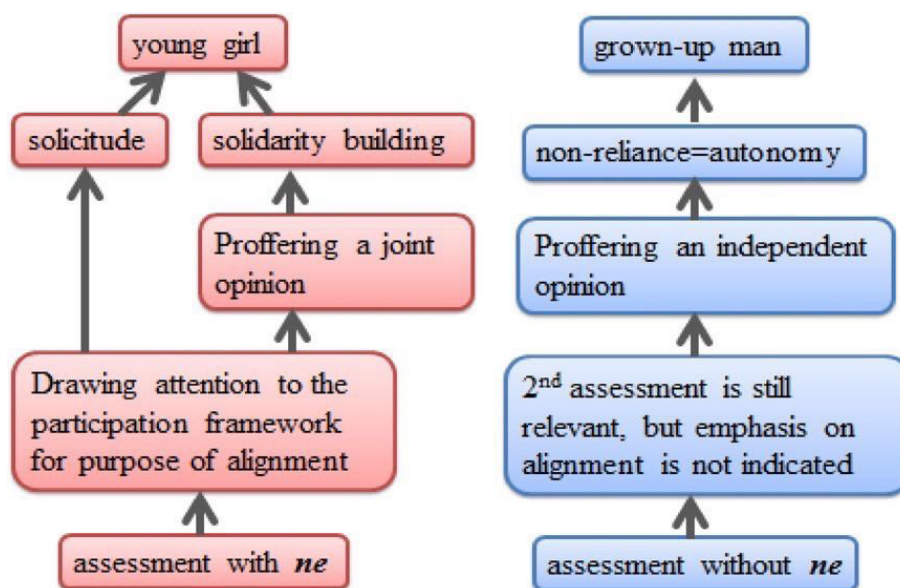
5   Read: the speaker.

Figure 1. Derived implication for the assessment of "kyoo wa tanoshiikatta ('We had fun today ?')" with and without **ne** (taken from Morita, 2012, Figure 1).

3.2 THE PARTICLE *NO*

There is a large body of literature on the sentence-particle *no*, and the conclusions about its meaning are rather different and a priori not much related. According to Kuroda (1973), the particle *no* deals with shared knowledge. For Alfonso (1966), however, it has an explanatory purpose. Kamio (1979) claims *no* implies evidentiality, while it manifests politeness, according to McGloin (2009). In McGloin (1986), lastly, it is described as characteristic of women's speech, in a similar way to the particle *wa*. This illustrates indeed the wide variety of possible uses of *no*, which makes it difficult to pinpoint a specific explanation.

In fact, it is difficult even for Japanese native speakers to explain the use of such particles, and most are unable to describe the difference between (1a) and (1b) (Cook, 1987) (see page 36). It is commonly explained Japanese classes for L2 learners that not using *no* in situations like (2) would lead the addresser to conclude that the addressee is not interested in the conversation and her/his feelings.

(2) A: Kinoo, kazoku to resutoran ni ikita!
       Yesterday, I went to the restorant with my family
     B: Eeee, doo datta **no**? Tanoshikatta **no**?
       Wow, how was it? Was it fun?

According to Cook (1987), all of the meanings that those studies each proposed only cover a limited range of usages, and fail to provide a satisfactory, general picture of the particle *no*. For him, all of these analyses can be put in the light of a broader indexical scope. Cook proposes indeed that the direct meaning of *no* is "the speaker's inclusion of the addressee

in the speaker's group." It "can also index harmony between the speaker and the addressee. A number of instances of *no* in Japanese conversation have this characteristic because the Japanese culture highly values interpersonal harmony" (p. 159). Furthermore, because they are socially less powerful than men, women would be more keen on seeking for harmony, explaining why they would use *no* more often. This is clearly linked to the concept of *amae* and Haga's (1985) expression *taijinteki na choowa* ('harmony with others') that was discussed in section 2.2. Here again, it is not so much the intrinsic meaning of *no* than its contextualisation at a higher, social level that gives it its polite and feminine characteristics. Nevertheless, sentence B of (2) uttered by a man can be totally acceptable and would not challenge the social conventions, whereas its use in another context (such as (3) in the next section) could imply some sort of mothering character.

3.3 PRESENCE AND ABSENCE OF *NE* AND *NO* IN SPEECH

Cynthia Dunn (1999) showed that Japanese speakers shifted "along a culturally-meaningful continuum from more emotionally expressive to more emotionally distanced or restrained speech styles" (pp.108-109), by altering between formal, or distal, and informal, or direct, forms of speech and their choice of sentence-final particles such as *ne, no*, and *yo*, which are used as "emphatic assertion of the speaker's statement" (Maynard, 1993). She studied the speech of two officers of an English speech and debate society, Ritsuko and Akiko, who were giving a report to the membership of the club. Both speakers expressed themselves in different ways. While Ritsuko used and combined the earlier mentioned linguistic features to "display affective involvement and build rapport with the audience" (p. 113), Akiko was more restrained and distanced with the goal to "encourage greater participation in club activities."

Rikuko's speech begins with a formal focus but switches to an informal focus in the second half as she "directly referred to the affective experience of her audience and exhorted them to put forth greater effort" (p.118). (3) is an example of such display of emotional involvement (Excerpt 1, 12 in Dunn, 1999).

(3)   Demo,/ nanka   sono kaikan   tte iu ka, suteeji ni tatsu
        but   somehow that pleasurable-feeling QT say Q   stage   on stand
        kaikan   toka   ga wakaru   to omou no   ne./
        pleasurable-feeling such-as SUB understand OT think NOM IP
        But, somehow I think you'll understand that wonderful feeling, that, how can I
        put it, things like that wonderful feeling of being onstage

Dunn explains that the direct form *omou* ('I think') communicates "intimacy, empathy, or strong feeling". The particle *no* "frames Ritsuko's statement as shared group knowledge within the speech club". The particle *ne*, on the other hand, "asserts common affective ground with the audience, soliciting their understanding and agreement with Ritsuko's projection of their future emotional state" (p.116). Ritsuko confessed that she did not consciously choose to reduce her use of distal forms, but that she strongly felt the need to communicate to the younger members of the club.
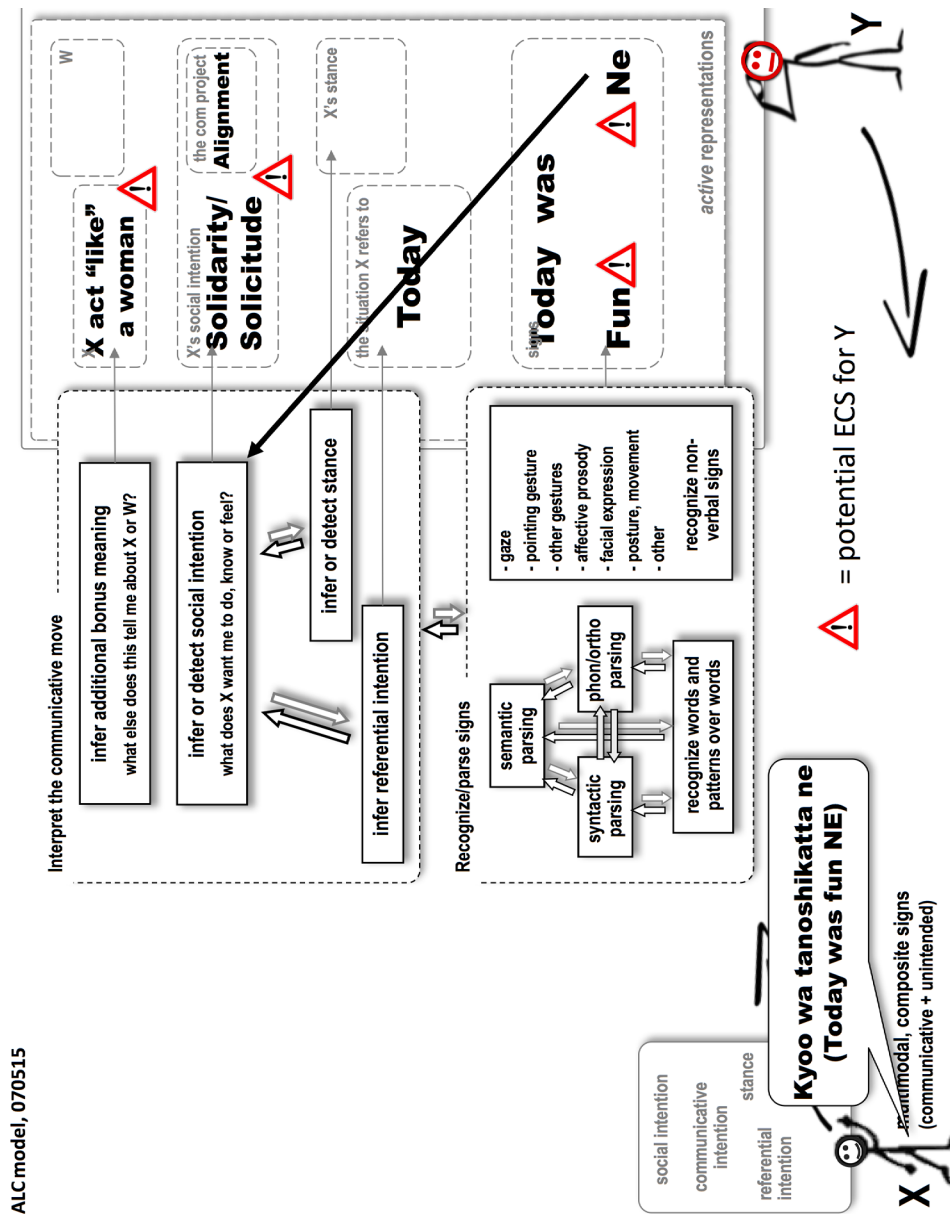
Figure 2. "Example processing in the *Affective Language Comprehension* model. Mental processes and the associated retrieved or computed representations are expanded for addressee Y only. Y's computational processes draw upon (and add to) long-term memory traces, and involve currently active dynamic representations that reflect what is currently retrieved from LTM, composed from elements thereof and/or inferred from context, in response to the current communicative move. Y's active representations can be conscious or unconscious. ECS = emotionally competent stimulus; com project = communicative project." (Figure 2 in Van Berkum, 2018).

On the other hand, Akiko's speech remains distant and formal, with mostly distal forms and no sentence-final particle, as we can see in (4) (Excerpt 2, 12 in Dunn, 1999):

(4) mina-san   ni,/ igi   (no),/ rikai   o,/ fukame-te   hoshii to
     everyone-TI from significance GEN   understanding DO deepen-and want   QT
     omoi-masu./
     think-DIST
     I hope everyone will deepen their understanding of its significance.

Although Akiko expressed herself in a formal and distant way, Ritsuko reportedly recognised the anger in Akiko, who was disappointed by the lack of help and participation in the club. Typically, her use of polite language in a setting that did not require such level of formality is, as Dunn explains, "one conventionalized way of expressing anger in Japan" (p.122).

3.4 Summary

Akiko and Ritsuko's speeches are clear examples of the use of sentence-final particles and the variation between distal and direct forms to perform emotional communication. The two women spoke according to their personality and following the social codes in which they live since they were born. However, the conclusions drawn principally come from the discourse analysis of the author and the reports of the speakers. It would therefore be valuable to test the use of *ne* and *no* in a more controlled and experimental setting to gather physiological data drawing a line between the use of a certain particle or form, and the emotional reactions of the listener.

Interestingly, the two women said they did not consciously choose to use (or not) the sentence-final particles. This can be linked with the earlier observation that Japanese struggle to explain the difference between (1a) and (1b), namely adding *no* at the end of the sentence. In that sense, one could argue that the use of affective particles resembles to the use of phonological cues in western languages, which can modulate sarcasm and irony, for example (e.g., Bryant & Fox Tree, 2005; Cutler, 1974; D'Imperio, Champagne-Lavau, Loevenbruck & Fouillard, 2013; Ladd, 2008). Similarly, it seems that for Japanese, social codes are so deeply registered in people's minds that the use and interpretation of these particles depend on how they follow, or do not follow social standards.

In short, the particles *ne* and *no* trigger emotional affect based on social norms and context. While the use of *ne* manifests a request for alignment that is then elaborated into solidarity and affective dependence, *no* is a way to refer to the authority (or knowledge) of the common social group to achieve harmony, thereby carrying the characteristic of caring, mother authority. Those observations are supported by anthropological research that has "demonstrated both the culturally constructed nature of emotional experience and its links to local understandings of personhood and social relationships". (Dunn, 1999, p. 108)

4. In perspective with the ALC model

In order to understand at which levels of linguistics those particles trigger an affective reaction, also known as Emotionally Competent Stimulus (ECS), it is important to consider a

framework that makes explicit the various levels of representation at which speakers and listeners process them. One such framework is the Affective Language Comprehension (ALC) model developed in Van Berkum (2018). The ALC model is composed of two processing modules, representing the parsing aspect of language comprehension, and the other illustrating the communicative processing of the parsed utterance. Connected to these two processing modules is a memory module, to which the information processed earlier is added to and mapped in the comprehender's long term memory (LTM). This is where the representations of the meaning of an utterance are activated, i.e. the semantic meaning of the different words a speaker X says, what they refer to, based on the context and the social intention for using them.

Let us apply two sentences taken from examples in the previous sections to the ALC model. In Figure 2 (see page 40) and 3 (see page 43), two sentences taken from examples in the previous section are used to illustrate emotional reactions that the particles *ne* and *no* elicit in a given context. Figure 2 presents the ECS that would be triggered when the girlfriend of the 30-year-old man hears him say *kyoo wa tanoshikatta ne* ('We had fun today, didn't we?').

Two elements of the utterance provoke an ECS: 'fun', which intrinsically carries a positive valence, and the sentence-final particle *ne*. *Ne* infers the social intention of alignment, which is interpreted as X's need for solidarity and solicitude. Such traits are stereotypically associated with femininity, which is why Y infers as an additional bonus meaning that X behaves like a woman. It is this last inference that annoys Y, as X is a 30-year-old man and Y expects him to behave accordingly to his social role.

Figure 3 is the representation of the sentence *Suteeji ni tatsu kaikan toka ga wakaru omou no ne* ('I think you'll understand that wonderful feeling of being on stage'), taken from (3). Here, three elements trigger an ECS, namely 'wonderful' and the particles *no* and *ne*. Similarly to 'fun', 'wonderful' entails a positive valence, from which the happy stance of X is inferred. The particle *no* expresses an aim towards an harmonisation of feelings, referring to the older member's experience (to which she belongs) of being on stage. With the particle *ne*, Ritsuko requires alignment of the younger member to ensure that they adopt and share the same 'wonderful' feeling towards being on stage. Moreover, the use of the *ne* infers solidarity while the use of *no* infers a sort of comforting authority. This altogether reminds Y of the behaviour of a mother towards her child.

5. Discussion

This review researched in which way the Japanese language used morphological elements to convey emotions. In particular, the analysis focused on the sentence-final particles *ne* and *no*. It turns out that, in contrast to western linguistics, the traditional Japanese language studies have for long accounted emotions in its study of language. The literature shows that these particles (and others that were not in the scope of this paper) do not primarily convey emotion but have an interactional purpose. Important concepts are the ones of *amae* (suppression of the other in favour of the group), *uchi/soto* (defining different social behaviours depending of social groups). It results that Japanese are always preoccupied with how others feel, leading as an effort to be in "harmony with others".
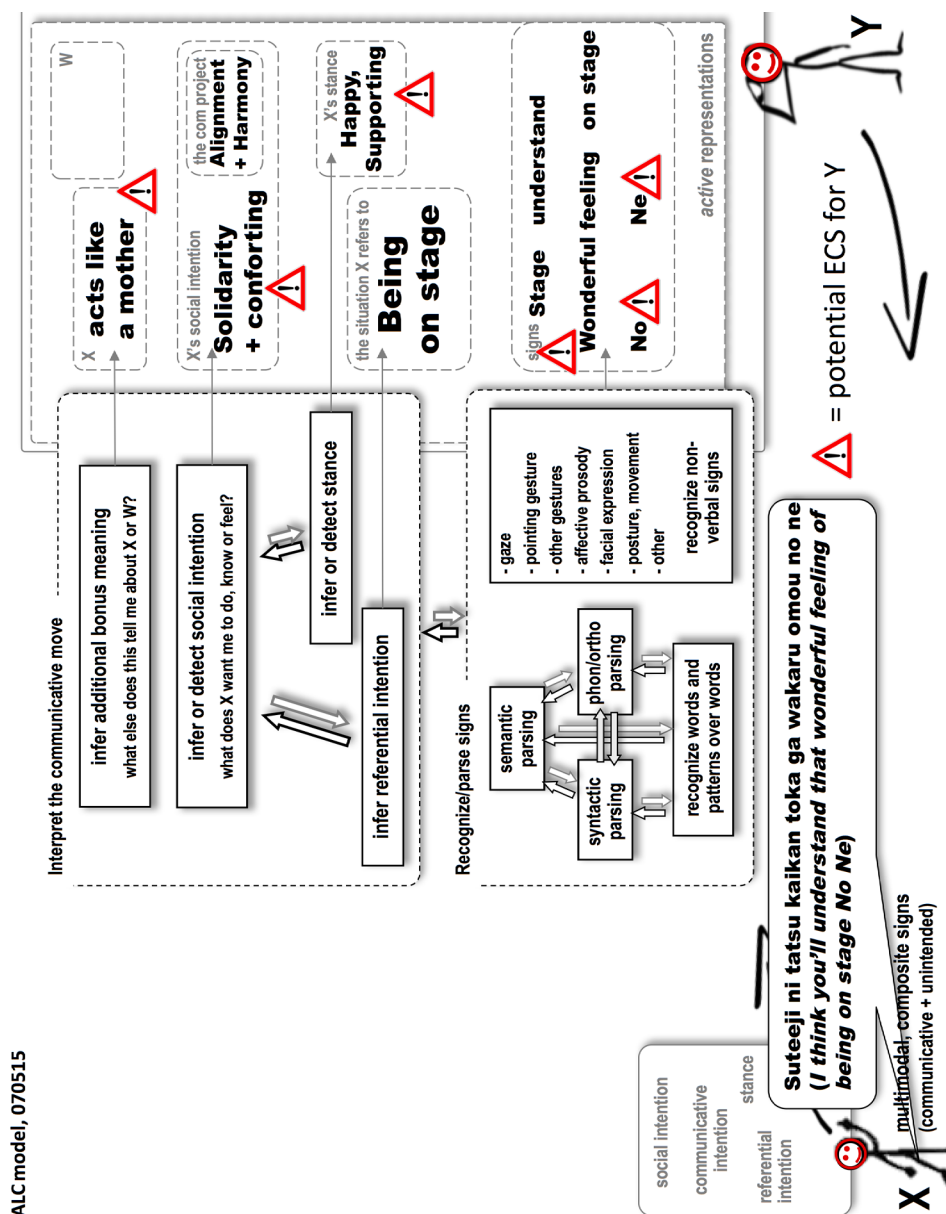
Figure 3. Similar to Figure 2, but applied to the utterance *Suteeji ni tatsu kaikan toka ga wakaru omou no ne* ('I think you'll understand that wonderful feeling of being on stage').

Furthermore, the group is valued over the individual. Based on these aspects of the Japanese society, people have elaborated upon the interactional features of *ne* and *no* to give them affective meaning. Depending on the situation, using *ne* as sentence-final particle can be perceived as a lack of autonomy from the speaker, and thereby qualified as "talking like a girl". On the other hand, *no* is typically used by mothers to impose 'soft authority' on children and is often associated with such figures.

When applying a Japanese sentence containing *ne* and/or *no* to the ALC model, it seems that the function of these particle works similarly to prosody in the western language. They tend however to be less prone to misinterpretation than prosodical features, in that prosody can be harder to control and that the use of sentence-final particles is socially normed and processed almost unconsciously by Japanese native speakers.

Nevertheless, it would be welcomed to experimentally measure the physiological effects of such morphological elements to obtain empirical evidence on their emotional impact. Most of the studies on sentence-final particles are rather old (mostly from the 70s and 80s, the Japanese literature going even further back to the 19th century), besides more recent and valuable work such as Lee (2007) and Morita (2012). Moreover, they often only provide an analysis based on conversational samples. Lastly, the Japanese language is evolving rapidly and it is possible that the existing analyses need to be adapted. ■

Notes

/   Pause-Bounded Phrasal Units

Abbreviations used in glosses: DIST Distal Form; DO Direct Object Marker; GEN Genitive; IP Interactional Particle; NOM Nominalizer; QT Quotative; Q Question Marker; SUB Subject Marker; TI Title; PART Particle

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