

ON THE JAPANESE SENTENCE-FINAL PARTICLE NE : REVISITED

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ABSTRACT : *In this paper, I investigate the semantics of the Japanese sentence-final particle NE. NE appears frequently in spoken Japanese and it can roughly be translated into English tag questions such as 'isn't it?', 'didn't you?' etc. However, this English tag meaning does not cover all the uses of NE and I will show that NE, like other Japanese sentence-final particles, interacts with contextual information more sensitively than concept words such as 'hot', 'rain' do.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Kamio (1990: 76-7), there are two uses of NE, an obligatory use of NE and an optional use of NE. The obligatory use of NE is characterized as "when the speaker assumes that she and the hearer share the information expressed as already learned one, NE has to be appended", and the optional use of NE, as "when the speaker intends to make the information expressed as such that is more related to the hearer, or at least, as such that is as closely related to the hearer as to the speaker" (Kamio 1990: 76-7). However, there are cases where NE cannot be used at all. These are the cases where "the information expressed by an utterance is more closely related to the speaker than to the hearer" (Kamio 1990: 73). Consider:

(1) (In rainy season). It rains a lot everyday NE (*is'nt it?*).

(2) I'm going to the post office NE (*OK?*).

(3) X: I hear, your sister is expecting NE (*isn't she?*). Y: a. ?? Yes, she is NE (*isn't she?*). b. Yes, she is.

(1) is uttered in rainy season and the information that it rains a lot everyday is well known to the speaker as well as to the hearer. Therefore, the use of NE in (1) is obligatory. In (2), on the other hand, the information that the speaker is going to the post office has not been known to the hearer, and so the use of NE is not obligatory. However, the use of NE communicates extra meaning such that the speaker would like the hearer to know the information for sure. Or, it can communicate a feeling of solidarity, hence can add politeness as NE makes the information as if it was the shared one (Kamio 1990: 65). My question is why NE cannot be used optionally in (3)Ya. and communicate extra meanings such as confirmation and solidarity observed in (2)? Or as in (1), the information is already learned one (though hear-say for X), i.e. known information to the speaker and the hearer. Why then is NE in (3)Ya. not obligatorily used? It appears that Kamio's concept of close relatedness can be paraphrased as evidentiality. That is, it

appears that when the information is more evident to the speaker than to the hearer, NE cannot be used. Indeed, the use of NE in (3) communicates that the information is not so evident to the speaker. Therefore, Ya. in (3) communicates that the news of her sister's pregnancy is not so much of importance to the speaker, which is very odd unless Ya. hardly knows the sister for some reasons or other, or does not want to know about her sister. Moreover, if it is true that NE cannot be used when the information expressed is more evident to the speaker than to the hearer, NE should not be used in (2). In (2) the speaker's going out to the post office is obviously more evident to the speaker than to the hearer. However, NE can be optionally used in this utterance.

Kamio (1990: 77) further presents an intrinsic meaning of NE as the speaker's attitude of desire that the hearer will entertain the same cognitive state as the speaker. In Itani (1998), this idea is interpreted within the Relevance framework as the speaker's desire of increasing the mutual manifestness (i.e. saliency between the speaker and the hearer) as to the information communicated by a NE-appended utterance. This idea can explain the uses observed in (1) and (2). In (1) the speaker would like to increase the mutual manifestness of the shared information that it rains a lot, while in (2) the speaker would like to increase the mutual manifestness of the new information of the speaker's going out. However, this idea does not explain why NE cannot be used in (3)Ya. NE in (3)Ya. could be argued to communicate the speaker's desire of increased mutual manifestness as to the shared information of Y's sister's having a baby. However, the use of NE in (3) is odd and we need to explain why this is so. In (1)-(2) the speaker is confirming the information by using the sentence-final NE. In (3)Ya., the speaker is confirming her own sister's pregnancy to the hearer who has the information just as a hear-say, and therefore, the use of NE is odd.

Sperber & Wilson (1995: 246) argue that speech acts of saying, asking and telling are genuinely communicative acts unlike thanking, bidding, promising which are more of social-institutional categories. Here I would like to argue that confirming might as well be a very basic communicative act, as it is certainly closely related to an act of asking. My claim here is that NE might contribute to the formation of a higher-level representation:

(4)The speaker is confirming.....

NE can be appended to an irony, metaphor, interrogative, exclamative, imperative and hortative as well. NE in these cases communicates the speaker's confirming the irony, the metaphor, the question, the exclamative, the imperative and the hortative. In this paper, I will show that the analysis of NE as communicating (4) would explain various examples.

2. CONFIRMATION AND NE .

NE in (1) has a falling tone and the English translation *isn't it?* would have a falling tone as well. The tag with the falling tone invites confirmation of the statement, and has the force of an exclamation which an exclamatory yes-no question with a falling tone has (Quirk et al 1980: 194-5). Like the tag with the falling tone, NE in (1) is used to confirm the proposition that it rains a lot. However, the point of the utterance could lie with the

the exclamative force which a yes-no exclamatory question i.e. *Doesn't it rain a lot!* communicates.

If (1) is a genuine interrogative, the speaker of (1) guarantees that the logical form given by the question would be relevant to the speaker if true (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 253). In other words, the truth of the proposition that it rains a lot is relevant to the speaker. Obviously, (1) is not a genuine question as the information is a known fact to the speaker and the hearer. However, by using NE, the speaker of (1) is making it explicit that they share the same information and that the point of the utterance lies not with the information itself, but with the fact that they share it. NE in (1) might communicate a higher-level representation such as (5):

(5) The speaker is confirming that the speaker and the hearer share the information that it rains a lot.

NE in (2) cannot be translated into an English tag meaning as in (1). It does not concern the true or false status of the proposition as in (1). Rather, what NE is confirming is whether the speaker's going to the post office is OK or not. The speaker of (2) is not quite asking permission of her going to the post office. However, the speaker may be making her utterance as if she was asking permission, thereby sounding more polite. Or, (2) may communicate politeness since the speaker's confirmation implies that the matter of going to the post office concerns the hearer, thereby communicating some 'common ground' shared by the speaker and the hearer. NE in (2) might communicate a higher-level representation such as (6):

(6) The speaker is confirming to the hearer that it is alright that she goes to the post office.

In contrast, NE in (3)X concerns the true or false state of the proposition that Y's sister is expecting. NE in (3)X communicates a higher-level representation such as (7):

(7) The speaker is confirming the information that the hearer's sister is expecting.

The oddity of (3)Ya. is that NE here communicates (4), thereby communicating a higher-level representation such as (8):

(8) The speaker is confirming (to a non-family member) the information that her own sister is expecting.

We can observe that the scope of the speaker's confirmation in (6)-(8) is not necessarily only over the logical form encoded by an utterance, but over the development from the logical form (i.e. that it is mutually manifest to the speaker and the hearer, that it is alright, etc.).

In Itani (1998), it was argued that NE encodes mutual manifestness, thereby giving a unified meaning to sentence-initial, medial, and final uses. However, it is unlikely that the speech act of confirming in (4) is encoded by utterance-initial and medial uses of NE. In an utterance-initial case of NE, the particle functions as an attention getter and there is a

pause between NE(e) and an utterance, and all sentence-types can follow as in the following (9)-(13):

(9) NE(e), Yamada-san wa kimasu YO.

prt Yamada-Mr. top come prt

'Hey, Mr. Yamada is coming for sure.'

(10) NE(e), Yamada-san wa kimasu KA.

prt Yamada-Mr. top come prt

'Hey, Is Mr. Yamada coming?'

(11) NE(e), ki-nasai.

Prt come-imperative

'Hey, come.'

(12) NE(e), nante takai n deshoo.

Prt how expensive nom. is

'Hey, how expensive it is!'

(13) NE(e), iki-mashoo.

Prt go-hortative

'Hey, let's go.'

As argued in Itani (1998), NE communicates an increased mutual manifestness of what the speaker is going to say/show, thereby gaining an attention of the hearer. NE does not encode the speech act of confirming as described in (4). Let us consider the medial use of NE.

(14) Yamada-san wa NE, kondo NE Rondon ni NE iku-n-da.

Mr. Yamada top prt next prt London to prt come-nom-is

'Mr. Yamada, you know, is going, you know, to London, you know, next time.'

Here, NE increases mutual manifestness of segments of an utterance, thus marking each processing unit. This makes interpretation process easier and (14) is very likely to be uttered by children. Like NE in initial uses, NE in medial uses does not encode the speech act of confirming.

Now I would still like to maintain that NE in utterance-initial, medial, final uses increases mutual manifestness as this is true with the final use of NE as well. In (1)-(3) the information given by an utterance has increased mutual manifestness. In (1) this is manifested as confirming that the speaker and the hearer share the information. In (2) the

final NE makes it sure that the hearer understands the information, which is the manifestation of increased mutual manifestness. In (3)X, the final NE makes the information of the hearer's sister's having a baby more manifest to the speaker and the hearer, which is manifested as confirming as to the truth of the information. The question is why the utterance-initial and medial NE does not encode the speech act of confirming while the initial NE does. In the following I will discuss this matter.

3. HIGHER-LEVEL EXPLICATURE AND NE

While an utterance is usually assumed to have only one identifiable propositional form (= the proposition expressed by an utterance), it can have many explicatures. Sperber & Wilson (1986: 182) define explicatures as communicated assumptions which are developments from a logical form encoded by an utterance. An explicature can be the propositional form of an utterance which is recovered by enriching a linguistically encoded logical form to the point where it expresses a determinate proposition, or can be a further developed one which is recovered by embedding the propositional form under higher-level descriptions of speech act or attitudinal verb type.

A simple proposition expressed such as (15) can contextually be developed into higher-level explicatures such as (16)-(22):

(15) You will go to Tokyo.

(16) The speaker has said that the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(17) The speaker believes that the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(18) The speaker is asking if the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(19) The speaker is confirming that the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(20) The speaker is surprised that the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(21) The speaker is pleased that the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(22) The speaker is telling that the hearer will go to Tokyo.

(16)-(22) are all developed from the proposition expressed by the utterance (15) by embedding it into attitudinal or speech act type descriptions, and they are all higher-level explicatures. While (16) is always true in that the speaker has uttered (15), (17)-(22) are not always so as they are contextually developed assumptions. For example, (17) can be false if the speaker utters it ironically. Apart from contextual information, intonation is a main factor to determine which assumption(s) of (18)-(22) the utterance (15) communicates. For example, (15) with rising intonation communicates either (18) or (19). (15) with rising intonation and a surprised tone of voice communicates (18) and (20). Moreover, the emphasis on 'you' in (15) could communicate an imperative force, i.e. (22) and so on. The higher-level explicatures (16) (18) and (22) are of speech act type descriptions, while (17) (20) and (21) are of attitudinal type descriptions.

The assumptions (5)-(8) (repeated below) communicated by (1)-(3)XYa (repeated below) are all developed from a logical form encoded by an utterance. The logical form encoded by an utterance is embedded into a higher-level speech act description of the speaker's confirming.

(1) It rains a lot NE? (=isn't it?)

(2) I'm going to the post office NE (=OK?)

(3)X: Your sister is expecting NE (=isn't she?)

(3)Ya: *My sister is expecting NE (=isn't she?)

(5)The speaker is confirming that the speaker and the hearer share the information that it rains a lot.

(6) The speaker is confirming to the hearer that it is alright that the speaker is going to the post office.

(7) The speaker is confirming the information that the hearer's sister is expecting.

(8) The speaker is confirming (to a non-family member) the information that her sister is expecting.

(5)-(8) are higher-level explicatures and the reason why utterance-initial and medial uses of NE do not encode the speech act of confirming, follows from the definition of higher-level explicature. Higher-level explicatures are recovered by embedding *the whole proposition expressed*. In the case of the medial use of NE, processing units marked by NE are *not the whole proposition* but only parts of the proposition. And in the case of the initial use of NE, NE does not mark any proposition: here NE just encodes weak information such that what the speaker is going to say/show has an increased mutual manifestness, thus gaining the attention of the hearer. So only utterance-final NE contributes to the formation of higher-level explicatures such as (5)-(8).

Now the speaker's confirming is a speech act description. Therefore, we can argue that the proposition expressed embedded into this description is a higher-level explicature. However, the embedded descriptions such as 'the speaker and the hearer share' in (5) and 'that it is alright' in (6) are not quite attitudinal or speech act types of descriptions as seen in the definition of higher-level explicatures (Sperber & Wilson 1994). In the following, I will discuss this.

4. THE PROPOSITION EXPRESSED AND HIGHER-LEVEL REPRESENTATIONS

In the utterance (1), the point of confirmation seems to be (5) (repeated below) rather than (23) as the information is already well known to the speaker and the hearer, hence (23) is not the assumption with which main relevance lies:

(1) It rains a lot NE.

(5) The speaker is confirming that the speaker and the hearer shares the information that it rains a lot.

(23) The speaker is confirming the information that it rains a lot.

NE does encode mutual manifestness. However, it is not NE but contextual information (i.e. being in the middle of rainy season) that gives rise to the assumption (24). NE is more responsible for the speaker's confirmation as to (24) as seen in (5). (24) is contextually developed from the logical form encoded by the utterance (1). The content of the speaker's confirmation can, of course, be the content of the proposition expressed by an utterance as seen in (7).

(24) The speaker and the hearer share the information that it rains a lot.

(7) The speaker is confirming the information that the hearer's sister is expecting.

As I argued above, the speaker of (2) is not really asking permission, but she uses a linguistic form which communicates (6). It is very odd for the speaker to confirm her own going out to the office. Confirmation has to be as to the hearer's acceptance of the speaker's going to the post office. Thus, NE contributes to hedge the assertive force of the statement that the speaker is going to the post office.

(2) I am going to the post office NE.

(6) The speaker is confirming that it is alright that she is going to the post office.

Now the following assumption (25) is a contextually developed assumption which can be inferred on the basis of the contextual information and the utterance (2). As (15) can be developed into a variety of higher-level explicatures, (2) can be developed into (25) about which the speaker is confirming.

(25) It is alright that the speaker is going to the post office.

The higher-level representations such as (24) and (25) are developed from the logical forms given by the utterances. So some might want to argue that they are higher-level explicatures as observed in (15)-(22). However, the logical forms are not embedded into attitudinal or speech-act types of descriptions and so they are contextual implications. The important criterion of contextual implications is cancellability. (24) and (25) can indeed be cancelled without contradiction.

For example, the hearer of (1) might be from the north of England where it rains regularly, and he might not think that it rains a lot. Then, he does not share the information with the speaker. The hearer can challenge the assumption (24) with 'It is not true that we share the same view'. Then, the speaker of (1) can reply that she has not meant (24). Thus, (24) can be cancelled. On the contrary, note that she cannot say that she has not meant (1). Therefore, the conjunctions (26) and (27) are acceptable, while (28) is not. If (24) is not a contextual implication but an explicature, (26) is a contradictory remark.

(26) It rains a lot NE but strangely, you and I do not share the information that it rains a lot.

(27) It rains a lot NE but I have not meant that you and I share the information.

(28) It rains a lot NE but I have not meant that it rains a lot.*

The hearer of (2) can, on the other hand, challenge (25) with 'No, it is not alright for you to go'. Then, the speaker can reply with 'I know it is not alright, but I'm telling you'. That is, (25) can be cancelled without contradiction as seen in (29). If (25) is not a contextual implication but an explicature, (29) would be a contradictory remark.

(29) I am going to the post office NE, but I know that it is not alright that I am going to the post office.

I have shown that the scope of the confirmation communicated by NE can be the proposition expressed by an utterance as in (3)X, as well as contextual implications such as (24) and (25) which are contextually derived from the proposition expressed. Now the scope of the confirmation can be straight-forward implicatures. Let us consider:

(30) Kare wa hotoke-san desu NE?

he top Buddha-Mr. is

'He is Mr. Buddha, isn't he?'

Buddha is usually associated with qualities of his extreme gentleness, kindness and so on. Therefore, somebody who is described as Buddha is associated with these qualities. (30) thus communicates (31) in which the scope of the confirmation is not the proposition expressed but an implicature. Then, it looks as if NE contributes to the construction of a higher-level *implicature* as seen in (31).

(31) The speaker is confirming that he is very kind.

However, a higher-level representation such as (31) is contextually derived based on the higher-level explicature (32) in which the speaker confirms *the proposition expressed by an utterance*.

(32) The speaker is confirming that he is Mr. Buddha.

Therefore, only the utterance-final NE can contribute to this higher-level description of speech act, but not the utterance-initial and medial NE. Moreover, I argued that the scope of the speaker's confirmation ranges from the proposition expressed, contextual implications to implicatures.

5. CONCLUSIONS

I have argued that the sentence-final NE contributes to the formation of the higher-level representation (4): The speaker is confirming that It is important to note here that (4) is not the semantics of NE. I argue that the semantics of NE is to increase the

degree of mutual manifestness and this can be manifested as the speaker's confirmation in the case of the sentence-final NE.

It is not acceptable to use NE in the reply (3)Y where the speaker is confirming to a non-family member, her own sister's having a baby. However, NE can be used in the reply to NE-appended utterances. Consider:

(33)X: *Ii tenki desu NE?* Y: *Ee, soo desu NE.*
good weather is Yes, so is
'Good weather, isn't it?' 'Yes, it is so, isn't it?'

In (33)X and (33)Y, the speaker's confirmation is, as in (24), over the fact that the speaker and the hearer share the same information, i.e. share the same experience. Unlike (3), the main point of the utterance here is not the speaker's confirming the proposition expressed. In (3)X, the main point of the utterance lies with the speaker's confirmation as to the hearer's sister's having a baby. The oddity of the reply (3)Y: a. was that in reply to the confirmatory question, the speaker further confirms the content with somebody who has less access to the information.

In this paper, I argued that NE encodes mutual manifestness. I also argued that the sentence-final use of NE contributes to the construction of the higher-level representations where the speaker is confirming some communicated assumptions ranging from the proposition expressed, contextual implications, to contextual implicatures.

BÀN VỀ TIỂU TỪ TÌNH THÁI CUỐI CÂU NE TRONG TIẾNG NHẬT

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TÓM TẮT : Trong bài viết này, tôi tìm hiểu ngữ nghĩa của tiểu từ cuối câu là NE trong câu văn tiếng Nhật. NE xuất hiện thường xuyên trong văn nói Nhật và có thể dịch đại khái như là câu hỏi "có ..không?/có ..phải không?" (tag questions) trong tiếng Anh, ví dụ : 'Phải không vậy?' hay "Có phải bạn làm như vậy không?"...

Tuy nhiên, nghĩa của câu hỏi tag questions của tiếng Anh này không thể hiện tất cả cách sử dụng của NE, và tôi sẽ chỉ ra rằng NE, giống như những tiểu từ cuối câu khác trong tiếng Nhật, tác động qua lại với thông tin về ngữ cảnh một cách nhạy cảm hơn là những từ ngữ chỉ khái niệm như "nóng", "mưa"

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Appendix: Abbreviations

Nom	nominalization
Prt	particle
Top	topic