Osaka Aunties: Negotiating Honorific Language, Gender, and Regionality

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Ideas about Japanese Language and Gender (based mainly on studies of SJ)

- **Prescriptive ideas:**
  - Women use:
    - sex specific sentence final forms & pronominal forms;
    - high[er than men] frequencies of honorific & distal forms;
    - use of these forms (above) are indirect indices of feminine characteristics such as: restraint, softness, indirectness, and so on.
  - Men use:
    - sex specific sentence final forms & pronominal forms;
    - low[er than women] frequencies of honorific & distal forms;
    - use of these forms (above) are indirect indices of masculine characteristics such as: direct, aggressive, [but] stoic & silent.

- **Empirical Observations:**
  - **Women:**
    - Frequencies of sex specific final forms & pronouns are context-, stance-, position- & interactional goal-based (Matsumoto 2002; Okamoto 1995; Miyazaki 2004; Lunsing and Maree 2004).
    - Uses of honorifics, distal and neutral forms are likewise based on speaker 'identity' in the moment-to-moment interaction (Cook 1998).
  - **Men:**
    - Very little empirical work done on SJ speaking men.

- **Regional Needs:**
  - How do women regionally positioned respond to SJ language norms?
  - How do regional women’s linguistic practices articulate with code choice(s)?

Kansai Dialect (KD) Practices:
- It is easily identified by all;
- It is a prestige dialect.
- Speakers routinely deny switching to SJ when traveling outside region.
- It can be heard on mainstream TV throughout the archipelago.

Recognizable Regionalisms
- **~hen (SJ: ~na; negation)**
  - *iku* (‘to go’) – ikanai (SJ) – *ikahen* (KD) = ‘not go’
  - *ya* (SJ: *da*; copula) and its relative forms
    - Yanai (SJ: *jana*) = *isn’t*
    - Yaro (SJ: *daro*) = ‘probably’
    - Yakara (SJ: *dakara*) = ‘therefore,’ ‘because’
- **Haru (SJ: *Nahara/Nasaru; Other Honorific)**
  - Ikinasaru – *ikiharu* (‘go’ [+ other honorific])
- **Nen (SJ: *ne*; Sentence final form)**
- **Akan (SJ: *dame*; ‘no’; ‘don’t’; ‘prohibited’)

Kansai in the Domestic Imagination

- **Omoroi Yatsu ‘That Interesting Guy’**
  - Makes up for a lack of sports and scholastic abilities (aligned with Standardness) with friendliness, familiarity, and jokes. (Sato 2000)

- **Doketchi Obachan ‘Super Cheap Auntie’**
  - For items already on sale, she asks for a discount.
  - When a store is selling something with a limit of “only 3 per person,” she makes her family go along to buy the item. (Maegaki 2005)

Why Regional Women? Why Kansai Women?

- **Regional Needs:**
  - How do women regionally positioned respond to SJ language norms?
  - How do regional women’s linguistic practices articulate with code choice(s)?

Why Kansai Women?
- Regional Needs:
  - It is easily identified by all; it is a prestige dialect.
  - Speakers routinely deny switching to SJ when traveling outside region.
  - It can be heard on mainstream TV throughout the archipelago.
Salient Standardisms

- **Distal forms**
  - Desu/masu [+ politeness but not honorific]
  - Deshoo [polite form of ‘daro’ (‘yar(o)’ in KD)]

- **Sentence Final Forms**
  - Stereotypically strongly feminine (Okamoto 1995):
    - Verb/Adj + no yo ne
    - Verb/Adj + no yo
    - Kashira

Participants: Groups 1 & 2
Same participants, two different occasions
Conversations: 4020, 4015

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Participants: Group 3
Conversation: R001

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Participants: Group 4
Conversation: 4039

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Data: ~baru (information in () indicate conversation number and speaker)

- **Ex. 1** (R001)
  - Itsumo joozu ni shiharu yo ne
    - ‘[She] always does it well, doesn’t she.’

- **Ex. 2** (R001)
  - A: Kazoku de ikanerun, okusan mo issho ni
  - B: Asoko mago wa juteharaHEN yo ne
    - ‘They go as a family, the wife also goes with [them].’
    - ‘The grandkids haven’t gone though, right?’

More ~baru

- **Ex. 3** (4039, Sachi)
  - TsuKOCte kurehattrara EE NA:
    - ‘If [they’ll] make it for you, that’s good!’

- **Ex. 4** (4039, Reiko)
  - Demo sensei son’nan luteharaHEN kara, shirihareHEN no CHAU kana:
    - ‘But the sensei hasn’t said that, so you can’t know it, do you, right?’
Data: Janai
- Ex. 5 (4020, Akiko)
  Yappari ki ni naru kara futto nanige ni ashimoto mitara, hiru janai NEN, chotto futsu no . . .
  'And, because I had noticed [her height], I casually glanced down at her feet and it wasn’t heels [she was wearing] it was just regular [shoes].'

Data: Desu, ~masu, and deshoo
- Ex. 6 (4015, Ami, Hana & Akiko)
  Ak: tomodachi wa itteta (‘my friend told me’)
  H: on’na no hito soto derare HEN no deshoo ‘women aren’t allowed outside, you know?!
  A: kon’nan koomutte (‘they suffer so . . .’)  
  H: kao dashitara AKAN ii masu yo ne ‘they say they can’t even show their face.’
  A: nan YAttake, nanka kina AKANkatta yo ne ‘what’s that thing? That thing they have to wear?’

Data: Sentence Final Forms
- Ex. 7 (4039, Reiko)
  Genki na hito ikan, ikiharu hito mo ORU kashira ‘Healthy people can’t go, but I wonder if there will be some there, too?’
- Ex. 8 (R001, Michiko)
  Ima goro kara UMAKU detekitara, de, kyonen wa sore de kekko KIREKATTA no yo ‘If they bloom nicely from now . . . uh, last year with that [treatment] they were quite pretty.’

Discussion:
- Uses of Haru and SJ honorific forms
  - Use of dialect haru far greater than SJ honorific forms.
  - Use of SJ honorific forms tend to be sarcastic and/or highly formulaic.
  - Aside from its virtual exclusive use, the occurrence of haru is unremarkable; that is, its context of use is in line with descriptions found in reference guides.

Some (in)Conclusive Thoughts:
- National Imaginary and Kansai
  - Omoroi yatsu, obachan, old merchant/shopkeeper
  - What might it mean to be a ‘Japanese woman’ amidst standard and regional ideologies?
    - Not lower class
    - Not masculine
    - Not old
    - Not rural
    But still clearly Kansai, female, and not Tokyo
Continuation of (in)Conclusive Thoughts

- How can/does one claim membership simultaneously in a non-Tokyo region and yet index the savvy of ideological ‘Japanese woman’ among friends?
  - Linguistic practices:
    - KD: *haru*, *hen*, *ya*, and a few other “pieces”
    - SJ: *deshoo*, *desu/masu*, *janai*
  - Linguistic avoidances:
    - KD: *yaro*, *yanai*,
    - SJ: *da*, *naharu/nasaru*

A final (in)Conclusive Thought

- With regard specifically to gender & region:
  - Potential for *haru* to be statistically gendered; and thus, an index of stereotypically feminine gender?
  - Potential for *yaro* & *yanai* to be an index of stereotypically masculine gender.

References


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