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# The myth of a homogeneous speech community: a sociolinguistic study of the speech of Japanese women in diverse gender roles*

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*Abstract*

*The overall objective of this paper is to provide empirical evidence against a mythical, stereotyped view of Japan as a homogeneous speech community. As the most revealing variable, I have focused on the speech of Japanese women whose gender roles have undergone drastic transformation in contemporary society. The study uses a variationist approach to analyze the speech of three groups of women leading distinctive social lives: full-time homemakers, full-time employed women in clerical positions, and those in positions of authority. The results refute as overgeneralizations the claims of past mainstream work on Japanese gender differentiation, which has consistently defined women's language use based exclusively on middle-class full-time homemakers under the influence of the traditional ideology of complimentary gender roles. Variable rule analysis reveals that differential performance grammars are operating among the three groups of women, and that the intergroup differentiation can be interpreted as social stratification more meaningfully correlated with speakers' concrete occupation-bound categories than with abstract categories such as social class membership. Potential causes for such differentiation are accounted for in terms of speakers' everyday contacts with people and types of communicative routines and experiences in their occupation-bound communication networks.*

This paper is focused on neglected internal heterogeneity in sociolinguistic grammars[1] of the Japanese language. Past studies of Japanese sociolinguistics have been subject to profound influences of native prescriptive ideologies, which promote "normative/stereotypical linguistic usages rather than accurate descriptions of actual language practices" in the speech community (Okamoto et al. 1997: 140; Endoo 1991; Okamoto 1997). Most sociolinguistic descriptions of Japanese language use have

thus far been "folklinguistic" in large part rather than the results of an objective analysis (Miller 1989: 38). As discussed below, this seems to be mainly the consequence of a long-standing methodological tradition in Japanese sociolinguistic inquiry, in which native speakers' introspection has been primary data for investigation through self-report question-naires, informal interviews on language use, and researchers' anecdotal evidence (Shibamoto 1985; Miller 1996).

Past sociolinguistic work that *is* based on naturalistic data, however, still suffers from biased sampling. Speech data in Japanese sociolinguistics are typically restricted to a particular sector of the speech community, usually the educated Tokyo speaker (Miller 1995), as well as the intuitions of the researchers themselves, typical "linguistic lames," who are also part of the elite (Labov 1972a: 290–292). It follows that the Japanese speech community has consistently been portrayed as a homogeneous culture with one language consisting of unique linguistic devices, despite abundant empirical evidence for social stratification within single speech communities in western societies. This prescriptivist scope of investiga-tion has contributed to homogeneous, cross-culturally noncomparable images of Japanese language practices and has deprived Japanese socio-linguistics of vigorous research on a wide range of internal diversity within the speech community.

The overall objective of the present paper is to provide empirical evidence against this widespread fallacy in Japanese sociolinguistics, especially as regards gender differentiation, one of the core facets of variable use in Japanese. Among a variety of problematic dimensions of sociolinguistic stratification in Japanese speech community, I have selected gender differentiation as the target of my investigation mainly because of the extent of its social significance in the speech community today.

## Myths of homogeneity in the grammar of Japanese women's language

*The mythical monolithic approach to Japanese gender differentiation and the neglect of intra–gender-group diversity*

A traditional view of social construction of gender in Japanese society emphasizes men's public roles as heads of households and women's domestic roles as housewives and mothers. Bernstein (1991), a historian of Japan, however, calls this monolithic definition a "myth." Through-out Japanese history, male–female relationships have been more diverse and more subject to constant dynamic revision than they have been

credited with, and the complex realities of the apparently fixed division of gender roles seem to have been oversimplified or greatly misunderstood. Feminine roles have been defined variably under the influence of such complex factors as women's position within the family, their social class, the religious and social values of the society, and the pressure from legal, economic, and political institutions of the times. In addition, the socially prescribed norms (i.e. women's domestic roles and men's public roles) are usually observed only by a small minority sector of the population (typically, women and men from the upper and upper-middle classes), and norm-breaking women attempting to enter the public sphere have constantly played significant roles in influencing gender construction. Our neglect of such diversity in the definitions of gender construction has perpetuated the "myth that Japanese women never 'worked' and have always been mothers first and foremost" (Bernstein 1991: 12).

Research on gender differentiation in Japanese has been caught up in what Bernstein calls a myth: working Japanese men, typically white-collar businessmen in Tokyo, are considered to be typical Japanese men and to represent men's language, and Tokyo middle-class full-time homemakers, who are considered to be typical Japanese women playing traditional female roles within the domestic sphere, are the exclusive focus of research on Japanese women's language.[2] A 1989 demographic survey, however, shows that full-time homemakers constitute only about 30 percent of the total female population (Inoue and Ehara 1991: 83). In a 1991 survey, the number of full-time homemakers had become even smaller, falling to 24 percent (Soorifu 1993: 329). About 50 percent of the female popu-lation worked in 1989, with 34.1 percent of Japanese women participating in the labor force as third-party employees (i.e. working for a party other than the family business), and about 75 percent of those women being full-time workers. The female working population has been growing since 1989 (49.5%): 50.1 percent of Japanese women worked in 1990, and 50.7 percent in 1991 (Soorifu 1993: 100). Neglecting the possible impact of women's social mobility and the dynamic transformation of their gender roles on language use, past studies have put forward static definitions of Japanese women's language almost exclusively on the basis of the speech of the traditional, but the currently minority, sector of the female population (i.e. full-time homemakers) (Ueno 1987).

Researchers of gender and language, especially those in western con-texts, have long called for the necessity of shedding light on the neglected heterogeneity of the social meanings of gender and their linguistic mani-festations in the local community (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). This perspective compensates for the prevalent defects of traditional approaches to gender and language: stereotypes of women's (and men's)

language and overgeneralization of intra–gender-group diversities. The majority of previous studies have dealt with women (or men) as a linguistically homogeneous group, and this common assumption has created a myth that all women (or men) in a particular community speak in the same way. A more locally constructed, emic analysis of individual everyday social practices in the very local community, however, has proved that a great deal of heterogeneity exists within gender groups, as demonstrated by such investigation of individual patterns of local network structures (Milroy 1980), degrees of participation in the local marketplace (Nichols 1980, 1983, 1984; Bortoni-Ricardo 1985; Brouwer and van Hout 1992), social ambition (Douglas-Cowie 1978), loyalty to local heritage and identity (Labov 1963; Gal 1978; Thomas 1988), and locally affiliated acts of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Eckert 1988, 1989).

In her paper entitled "Women's language in a groping period," Takasaki (1988) begins to account for such internal heterogeneity. She claims that Japanese feminine speech is in transition (toward "defeminization") and attributes this to ongoing changes in women's gender roles, including both quantitative and qualitative changes in their patterns of participation in a variety of nondomestic activities in recent years. Whereas the prescribed view of male/female complementary relationships still rigidly survives as an ideology, the great majority of Japanese women now desire careers beyond the home (Kashima 1993: 106). Marriage and becoming a wife are not necessarily recognized as a top priority in life (Soorifu 1993: 29–30). Increasing numbers of Japanese women actively participate in labor-market activities, even in traditionally male-held positions of authority and leadership in the public sphere, in which they are expected to manipulate or even innovate particular types of strategies to meet communicative requirements from their roles (Reynolds 1990; Smith 1992b; Abe 1993; Sunaoshi 1995).

All these theses strongly suggest that the degree to which speakers are integrated into marketplace activities outside the home can be an important variable to consider when conducting sound analysis of sociolinguistic variation. It has been hypothesized in sociolinguistics that the shape of linguistic behaviors of individual speakers changes rapidly as the speaker's social position changes in a speech community where linguistic evolution proceeds hand in hand with the social change (Labov 1972b). Past studies have critically overlooked complex realities of women's social mobility and gender roles and their impact on their language use in the changing society today. With no empirical evidence, typical characteristics of homemakers' speech have automatically been applied to other sectors of female population (e.g. full-time employed women), who would naturally gain extensive access to a wider range

of socioeconomic activities and presumably construct quite distinctive structures of communication networks in their everyday lives.

## The deficit model of women's language in Japanese society

One of the most significant practical contributions sociolinguistics has brought to the understanding of social problems is a rigorous attempt to dismiss language-related prejudice against speakers of nonstandard varieties — a folklinguistic view of verbal deprivation or "restricted code" concerning the speech of social minorities (Bernstein 1961, 1972). Early sociolinguistic work (Labov 1972a; Wolfram and Fasold 1974; Fasold 1975; Trudgill 1975) that closely examined their actual linguistic performance demonstrated that verbal deprivation is indeed a mythical consequence of linguistic ideologies, the cultural conceptions of communicative behavior associated with particular socioeconomic groups (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

The view of linguistic deficiencies has also represented a dominant ideology in interpretations of gender differences in language. Beginning with Jespersen (1922), women's speech has long been given the status of a "marked" variety (Spender 1980: 20). However, since Lakoff's (1975) provoking work characterized women's speech in American English as immature, nonassertive, and hyperpolite (representing inferior status) based on her own standard-speaking white-middle-class intuitions, a number of studies in western societies have empirically tested the validity of these stereotypes, analyzing performance data from a variety of contexts. In many cases, the stereotypes turned out to be problematic. A number of linguistic features that had been presumed to be the properties of feminine speech were found to be correlated with a variety of contextual factors other than the speaker's sex category per se (Crosby and Nyquist 1977; Brouwer et al. 1979; Leet-Pellegrini 1980; O'Barr and Atkins 1980; Edelsky 1981; Yaeger-Dror and Sister 1987; Cameron et al. 1988; Holmes 1984, 1988; Jones 1992; Takano 1998).

The stereotyped view, however, still constitutes mainstream linguistic ideologies on linguistic gender differentiation in contemporary Japan. The tradition of prescriptivism in sociolinguistic inquiry (i.e. introspective data and exclusive focus on a middle-class, standard variety of Japanese) has been married with cultural conceptions of the ideal "social personality" of women (Bourdieu 1977: 655): being "modest" in behavior and opinions, and being "'polite' and 'gentle' to others" (Mashimo 1969: 46). Primarily through education (both institutional and domestic), Japanese women have been taught to acquire or at least parade such

personalities, which have consistently fostered prescriptive views on how they (should) talk as well as idealistic images of Japanese women. Politeness and indirectness as linguistic manifestations of women's social personality have thus become the culturally recognized norms for the speech of Japanese women in general (Mashimo 1969; Endoo 1991). While it is evident that women's gender roles and identities have recently undergone drastic changes in the society, definitions from a number of major language-related dictionaries and essays publicized in Japan still exemplify the "static," prescribed definition of how Japanese women (should) speak in the changing society: women's language in Japan is typically blanketly attributed to being indirect, polite, deferential, and emotionally loaded, but deprived of logicality, solemnity, and authority (see Endoo 1991 for nice examples of such definitions).

Serious problems arise when such biased characterization concerning Japanese women's language as a whole is used to make superficial judgments regarding its practical values, leading to stratified "symbolic power" in political economy (Bourdieu 1977: 51). One's success or failure in acquiring an ability to manage discourse in a socioeconomically appropriate way (i.e. the ability to speak and write in a proper language, or a proper variety or style of language) constrains his or her access to economic and political resources available in a particular speech community (Irvine 1989: 255–7). Jugaku's series of work (1979, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1990) argues that given women's recent professional advancement in the public sphere, the prevalent cultural ideology that women should talk in feminine ways (*onna rashiku*) inhibits equality in communication between men and women who are supposed to collaborate or compete with one another in the marketplace. Stereotype images of women's powerlessness in communication (derived from prescribed politeness and indirectness) and stigmatization against those who adopt nonfeminine ways of speaking are both likely to segregate Japanese women from the public sphere (Reynolds 1990). As increasing numbers of women enter into the marketplace today, the linguistic ideologies are beginning to conflict with how women actually speak in playing their new gender roles. This type of conflict tends to become most critical particularly for women who work in positions of authority and leadership, which have traditionally belonged to men (Mogami 1986; Takenobu 1994).

### Problems in data and analytical methods

Data commonly used for analysis in previous studies of Japanese gender differentiation up to now seem to be generated primarily from

the following three types of sources:[3] (1) researchers' introspection on language use or informal observations and anecdotal evidence; (2) questionnaires for eliciting other native speakers' introspective data; and (3) task-oriented naturally occurring interactional data. Data for a majority of mainstream influential studies (which are done mainly by Japanese scholars working within the Japanese sociolinguistics tradition) have been derived from the first two types. Naturally occurring data (type 3) has not been so widely exploited in Japanese sociolinguistic investigation, despite the wealth of evidence that native speakers' reports are "notoriously unreliable" (Sankoff 1988: 145) and more likely to reflect what they think they "should" say rather than what they say in reality (Labov 1972c; Wolfson et al. 1983; Wolfson 1989: 37–44; Schmidt 1993). Moreover, both native and non-native linguists' intuitions and introspection may also be a questionable source of data because their relatively prestigious educational/occupational background tends to segregate them from the majority of vernacular speakers in the community (Labov 1972a: 290–292).

Some influential studies of Japanese women's language are more empirically sound, using questionnaires as a primary source of data to investigate native speakers' grammar with respect to particular aspects of language use (e.g. Ide et al. 1986; Ide 1990). Although the questionnaire method is beneficial in certain respects, such as collecting a large amount of data within a short period of time and obtaining data for particular aspects of language use recurring with low frequencies in naturally occurring interactions, it is methodologically risky (Labov 1972c; Brouwer et al. 1979). Speech patterns that are clarified by the questionnaire method merely represent stereotypic correct, normative responses to preestablished speech situations and rarely meet descriptive adequacy in natural speech production (Sankoff 1988). It does not necessarily guarantee that the speaker would actually behave across diverse communicative settings as they think they would. Self-report data obtained through the questionnaire method also tend to depict a highly reduced picture of native communicative competence (Wolfson et al. 1989). It is thus unfortunate that a great deal of description of sociolinguistic grammars of Japanese women's language available today is likely to be fraught with these biases in data. Many of the characteristics presented so far clearly need confirmation from interpretations of empirical findings based on raw materials from the realities of speakers' social lives.

Another problem prevalent in previous studies of Japanese women's language concerns their analytical methods. While there are a number of challenging studies that quantitatively analyze naturally occurring interactions as data to define the grammar of Japanese women's language

(e.g. Abe 1993; Ikebe 1987; Shibamoto 1985; Smith 1992a) (type 3), the majority do not fulfill a few methodological requirements in dealing with variable linguistic phenomena to obtain empirically sound results. The first requirement is the statistical verification of frequencies of occurrence. Any generalization derived particularly from a large amount of quantification must be evaluated for significance by a statistical test of a body of data (Guy 1987). This procedure is indispensable because of inherent problems of skewedness in the distribution of sociolinguistic data elicited from uncontrolled natural speech (Sankoff 1985) and possible errors and bias in sampling procedures. Most quantitative studies of gender distinctions in Japanese do not follow this elementary procedure but are based on researchers' impressionistic comparisons of bare percentages and subjective judgments about gender differences. It is thus quite plausible for different researchers to come up with contradictory conclusions based on identical figures for their own subjective reasons. And it is not always identifiable whether skewedness in data or bias involved in data collection procedures may have had distorting effects on the characterization. The present study takes advantage of probabilistic accounts of linguistic variation (Cedergren and Sankoff 1974) to compensate for such possible skewedness of raw speech data, as suggested by Guy (1981).

Another crucial requirement of the quantitative paradigm is concerned with the intersecting relationships between the occurrence of a variable under investigation and a large number of other factors that may simultaneously constrain its occurrence (e.g. the nature of the grammatical context, discursive function of the utterance, topic, style, interactional context, and personal or sociodemographic characteristics of the speaker or other participants) (Sankoff and Labov 1979). The importance of focusing on the intersecting relationships among potential factors has not been explicitly verbalized but seems obvious in recent studies of gender and language: apparent sex-related differentiation in language is truly a linguistic manifestation of enormously complex social practices, which stem from the interaction of a variety of sociocultural factors unique to the local community (e.g. Eckert 1988, 1989, 1991). In sorting out the effects of the speaker's gender on the occurrence of a given variable, researchers are required to figure out the effects of various potential factors (both linguistic and extralinguistic) simultaneously influencing the variable in question and to take a more qualitative look at the interfactor relationships in terms of their effectiveness (Takano 1998). Due to the unavoidable skewing of sociolinguistic data and the necessity of figuring out the enormously complex intersecting relationships among a number of potential factors, probabilistic accounts of occurrences or nonoccurrences of

a variable in question have proven to be superior to the use of bare percentages by a number of sociolinguistic studies (Sankoff 1985, 1986, 1988). Multivariate analysis is a particularly useful method for statistically (or probabilistically) understanding such complex relationships and telling us whether gender is truly a crucial factor as compared with the other potential explanatory factors. Until we fulfill these requirements, we cannot claim for sure that the results truly represent gender-based differentiation in language. It is very likely to provide a premature, oversimplified generalization that simply correlates the rates of occurrence with the speaker's biological sex alone.

## Research design

Empirically challenging the mainstream homogeneous definition, the present study aims to reveal neglected internal sociolinguistic variation within the grammar of Japanese women who are playing increasingly diverse gender roles in contemporary society. As discussed so far, the predominant acceptance of prescriptivism in Japanese sociolinguistic inquiry has tended to ignore heterogeneous realities of how women (and men) speak in the speech community. Biased sampling of data (taken from native introspection or middle-class Standard-Japanese speakers in urban communities) has inevitably led to overgeneralizations as to how women (and men) speak in their everyday lives. However, once we shift the traditional, restricted scope of investigation to the speech of the currently dynamic sector of Japanese women, linguistic behaviors of the innovative group hardly conform to some of the biased, even stigmatized, characteristics of Japanese women's language. The traditional static definition of Japanese women's language is particularly problematic in studies of the speech community, where drastic change in the social construction of gender has been taking place.

In order to overcome the methodological problems in previous studies, my investigation (1) takes into account the speech of professional women, who represent the most dynamic sector of the female population in today's society, as well as the speech of full-time homemakers, who have been the exclusive target of previous studies; (2) focuses on natural speech collected through a particular protocol called sociolinguistic interviews (Labov 1972c, 1981); and (3) uses appropriate methods for quantification of speech data, including statistical tests for levels of significance and multivariate analysis of interfactor relationships in terms of effectiveness on the production of dependent variables (i.e. the variable rule approach) (Rousseau and Sankoff, 1978a, 1978b; Rousseau 1989). The outcome of

this investigation will refute the homogeneous definition of Japanese women's language, showing that (1) multivariate analysis of performance data finds statistically verified differences within Japanese women's language in the uses of two morphosyntactic variables that have been defined as female-specific; (2) the internal heterogeneity can be identified as involving social stratification, but it is the one more meaningfully correlated with a concrete social category of speakers' memberships in the marketplace and relate communication networks in their everyday lives than with such abstract categories as social-class index.

### Subjects, data collection, and analytical procedures

A total of 17 women who were born and raised in the Tokyo metropolitan areas participated in this study. All the subjects were recruited through my "second-order networks" (i.e. friends or acquaintances of friends or acquaintances of mine), which are found to be effective in reducing the level of formality of interview sessions thus allowing speakers to produce vernacular-style speech to a greater extent (Milroy 1980: 53). I had never met any of the subjects prior to the interviews. Six of them (group I: EWM) are full-time employed women in managerial positions traditionally held by men. This group can be assumed to represent a leading edge of contemporary Japanese women who are finding increasingly more opportunities to play innovative gender roles in the changing society today. Five of them (group II: EW) are also full-time employed women in nonauthoritative roles, mainly office clerks. The remaining six speakers (group III: HM), acting as a control group, are full-time homemakers who have no employment of any kind outside their households. As mentioned earlier, this group of women has been portrayed as "typical" Japanese women and has consistently been the exclusive target of previous studies of Japanese gender differentiation.

After the interview was done, every informant was given a questionnaire, which was designed to fulfill two objectives. First, it asked the informants detailed demographic questions in order to measure their socioeconomic class scores (SCI). Second, it also inquired about the informants' social network patterns, modifying Brouwer and Van Hout's (1992) method. It asked the number of non-family members the informants regularly talked to at least once a week. Furthermore, it also asked each informant to specify people she interacted with very frequently, particularly their gender, age, occupation, and types of relationships (i.e. friends, boss, subordinates, neighbors, etc.). This latter question was intended to supplement the former question asking about the informants'

regular weekly contacts in order to accommodate HMs who tended to have relatively much fewer regular contacts only in personal ties. The degree of raw frequency of interactions each informant "feels" take place frequently was thus relative to her style of living and did not have to be the minimum of at least once per week.

Table 1 is a summary of the subjects' demographic characteristics. I have used the traditional methods to outline the class distribution of the informants (the Social Class Indices = SCI). My objectives in doing this are to examine the validity of class membership for the analysis of my

Table 1.   *Profile of informants (three groups, 17 speakers)*

| Speaker | Age | Education | Profession (husband's) | Setting | SCI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group I: Employed women in managerial positions (EWM) (six speakers)[4] | | | | | |
| A (M, 1C)[5] | 46 | junior college | division chief at a publishing company | workplace | 15 |
| C (M, 2C) | 53 | Ph.D. | division chief at a research institute | coffee shop | 18 |
| E (M, 2C) | 42 | BA | company president | coffee shop | 17 |
| F (S) | 28 | BA | officer/educator at reform school for female juvenile delinquents | coffee shop | 17 |
| H (M) | 27 | medical school | ophthalmologist at a university hospital | coffee shop | 17 |
| I (M, 1C) | 40 | BA | law office manager | workplace | 13 |
| Group II: Employed women in nonmanagerial positions (EW) (five speakers) | | | | | |
| J (S) | 35 | BA | office clerk at a governmental office | coffee shop | 14 |
| J (S) | 46 | BA | office clerk at a travel agency | coffee shop | 15 |
| K (S) | 28 | technical school | accountant at a travel agency | coffee shop | 14 |
| N (M) | 29 | BA | bank clerk | coffee shop | 15 |
| O (S) | 45 | junior college | office clerk at a kindergarten association | workplace | 15 |
| Group III: Full-time homemakers (HM) (six speakers) | | | | | |
| B (M, 3C) | 43 | junior college | (company president) | home | 16 |
| D (M, 3C) | 62 | high school | (laundry owner) | home | 14 |
| G (M, 3C) | 39 | BA | (independent architect) | coffee shop | 17 |
| M (M, 3C) | 39 | BA | (company employee, managerial position) | home | 16 |
| P (M, 3C) | 35 | junior college | (company president) | coffee shop | 16 |
| Q (M, 3C) | 47 | BA | (company employee, managerial position) | home | 17 |

data and to compare my results with those of previous studies, where class is recognized as a powerfully revealing factor in sociolinguistic variation and change. My measurement of the class index of the informants is based on four major variables according to the traditional systems: occupation (Labov 1966: 139),[6] parents' occupation (Labov 1966: 139), education (Hibiya 1988),[7] and housing (Trudgill 1974: 40–41).[8]

Except for one subject (L in group I; SCI = 13), there is found no noteworthy intragroup difference in individual scores. As far as group scores are concerned, it is group I (EWM) which had the highest class index (16.2). The HM group (group III), however, was only 0.2 less (16.0) than the group I index. The EW group (group II) had the lowest index, which was only 0.6 less than that of HMs (15.4). Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that the differences in the social-class indices of the three groups of women are negligibly small and all the subjects belong to the same social class. The implication of this observation will be discussed further in relation to the results of my analysis in the following sections.

To elicit spontaneous speech from the subjects, I adopted a particular interview technique called the "sociolinguistic interview," which is designed specifically for quantitative sociolinguistic research (Labov 1972c, 1981: 7–16). This technique was found beneficial for the present study in three respects. First, it allows us to obtain the speaker's "vernacular" — a speech style to which the speaker pays the minimum attention (Labov 1972c: 112). Previous sociolinguistic work has prove that the vernacular is most regular in its structure, thus providing the best data for revealing the systematic and regular character of grammar (Labov et al. 1972; Labov 1972b, 1981). Second, conducting the sociolinguistic interview guarantees a sufficient quantity of data for quantitative analysis of various variables with every single subject (Labov 1981, 1996). Last and most crucially, the sociolinguistic interview consists of some formal protocols and allows us to moderately control the content and direction of talk (i.e. chain of topics talked about) in a uniform manner across the subjects (Labov 1981, 1996), whereby the gathered data would involve a high degree of comparability among the three groups of subjects who lead everyday lives in different domains of the society with quite distinct sets of communicative repertoires. The topic-controlled sociolinguistic interviews conducted by the researcher as an interactant whose social status is held roughly constant and neutral to every single subject should provide superior data in terms of both quantity and quality.

The final note about data elicitation through sociolinguistic interviews concerns the interview setting. It can be expected that less formal interview settings (e.g. the home environment) ten to have positive effects on the speaker's production of the vernacular, and vice versa (i.e. the workplace

would inhibit such production). Because the groups' social "territories" are quite different, I attempted to choose neutral places such as coffee shops to make the degree of formality of the interview setting uniform. This attempt, however, could not always be accomplished, usually due to various time constraints of the subjects. Nevertheless, while the distribution of interview settings resulted in some discrepancy between the groups, no systematic correlation between the detected variability and the settings was found (discussed in Results). Thus, I concluded that the interview setting could not be a major factor affecting intra–gender-group variability.

The present study employs one of the most recent versions of the VARBRUL program: VARBRUL 4 (Rousseau 1989). It is a computer application of the statistical model of sociolinguistic variation initiated by Cedergren and Sankoff (1974). It estimates the probability values from observed frequency distributions of the factors in the data across a variety of intersecting linguistic and extralinguistic contexts and allows us to obtain an overall picture of the variable tendencies of a given speaker's linguistic performance. The program conducts a multivariate analysis of data using the maximum likelihood technique and yields a probability estimate of the effect of each contextual constraint on the application of the rule in question in relation to the other remaining constraints.[9] Furthermore, the output of the program allows us to calculate the level of significance of any factorial effect. This can be done using values of log-likelihood; the difference in the log-likelihood between two variable rule runs, the second of which ignores the constraint to evaluate, is multiplied by −2, and the result to be obtained is the chi-square value (Weiner and Labov 1983: 40–1). There is also a way to evaluate how well the obtained overall estimates of probability fit the observe frequencies, resorting to chi-square values (Preston 1989: 15–6).

### Variables examined

*Ellipsis of the topic marker -wa.*   The variables the present study focuses on include two kinds of morphosyntactic phenomena, which have widely been recognized as markers of feminine speech by previous research. The first variable is the ellipsis of Japanese topic marker *-wa*:

(1)  Watashi (*wa*)  misshon sukuuru dattan desu yo.
     I           TOP mission school   was    COP FP[10]
     'My school was a mission school/I graduated from a mission school.'
     [Subject A, a 46-year-old division chief (*buchoo*) at a major publishing company]

Japanese postpositional particles are frequently omitted in the casual, unmonitored mode of discourse without any change in propositional meaning (Hinds 1976, 1982b; Peng et al. 1981; Tsutsui 1981, 1984).[11] Based on single-sex peer-group conversations involving homemakers and white-collar businessmen in Tokyo, Shibamoto (1985, 1990) finds that women tend to omit the topic marker more often than the male counterpart (23.9% vs. 11% in 1985; 35.7% vs. 11.1% in 1990).[12] As evident from the foregoing discussion, however, a serious weakness of the studies concerns a widespread problem of "classification" in research on gender and language (i.e. how to allocate women [or men] to social groupings in order to arrive at a fair generalization of gender distinctions in language) (Graddol and Swann 1989) and an incompatible comparison of the groups of speakers. In addition to the culturally prescribed, mythical view of homemakers as the women representing Japanese women's language use in contemporary society, the two groups of speakers — housewives in the domestic sphere and white-collar businessmen in the public sphere — are not truly comparable in terms of primary domains of social lives where the speakers are engaged in everyday communicative activities and routines.[13] A bald identification of this particular variable as "categorically" female-specific despite those inherent problems is very likely to promote linguistic stereotypes such as noncanonicality, normative deviation, or marked behaviors, even sloppiness. We have to remain cautious of the empirical validity of these characterizations since the status of this particular variable as a feminine marker has not been empirically confirmed with the speech of a majority of Japanese women — other subgroups of women in contemporary society (e.g. professional women).

*Utterance-final forms.*    The second variable to examine concerns various surface manifestations of utterance-final forms. I have chosen these variables because of their role in common characterizations of Japanese linguistic norms and their close linkage to a prescribed image of women as conservative users of such native norms. Japanese language use is often characterized as "vague" involving greater tolerance for ambiguities (as often compared with English) (Hinds 1980b, 1982b) and aesthetic preference for indirectness (Nakajima 1987; Shibatani 1990; Kindaichi 1994). It is also said to be highly context-dependent in allowing a great deal of ellipsis of understood elements from surface forms (Shibatani 1990: 390) or being "situationally focused" (in contrast to English's being "actor-focused") (Hinds 1982b: 226) in relying heavily on participants' cognitive abilities to recover the missing information (Hinds 1980a, 1982a, 1987). It seems that previous studies of Japanese gender differentiation

have characterized women as conservative users of these native norms in Japanese language use. Referring specifically to various surface forms of the predicate, Japanese women are said to take advantage of transformations of canonical structures (achieved by both deletion and addition of grammatical elements) to a greater extent than men as strategies to conform to the norms. Horii (1989, 1990, 1993), for example, consistently claims that the use of incomplete utterances is typical of women's register in Japanese. Kindaichi (1994: 211–213) also points out that Japanese inclinations toward indirectness in language use have historically created a variety of transformations of the forms of the predicate, and that women have been more active than men in innovating and using such strategies as the attachment of connectives to the post-predicate position and uses of stop-in-the-middle sentences, all of which can reduce the degrees of eloquence and explicitness.

Among a very few data-based studies done so far regarding variable uses of the predicate in Japanese, Smith (1992a) also upholds the apparently normative properties of Japanese women's language — indirect, nonassertive ways of speaking. Smith finds that middle-class homemakers engage in same-sex peer interactions were more likely to exploit *gaigen* 'evidentials' modality forms (e.g. -*daroo*, -*yoo da*, -*soo da*) associated with lower degrees of assertiveness, definiteness, and factuality in their statements (20.6%), whereas a male control group was much less likely to resort to the identical modality (9.2%).[14] Smith concludes that the result is indicative of the prescribed roles and cultural images bound to gender (i.e. soft, indirect, and humble for women), and that the still quite extreme degree of sexual division of the society fosters different interactional styles appropriate to each of the sex groups.

These generalizations, however, can be challenged by Endoo (1992), who investigated language use by women who belong to a different social stratum from Smith's subjects — working women participating fully in the marketplace. Moreover, Endoo's study is highly significant, in that it is based on naturalistic speech data of men and women from similar occupational categories. Endoo's comparative analysis of the speech of ten male and ten female professionals disproved the stereotypical claim that women tend to produce more incomplete utterances with ambiguous propositional content: no significant differences were found between the sexes in the use of assertive sentences (*iikiri-bun*) and stop-in-the-middle sentences (*iisashi-bun*) (women: 62.8% vs. men: 69.10%; women: 37.2% vs. men: 30.9%, respectively) (Endoo 1992: 63). Her analysis of suspended utterances (*chuushi-bun*) also obtained counter-evidence (women: 24.1% vs. men: 24.8%) to the claim that women tend to leave utterances incomplete more often than men. These empirical results suggest the necessity

of taking into account speakers' participation in the marketplace as an important extralinguistic factor affecting gender-linked differentiation in uses of this particular variable.

Utterances recorded in the present study were classified into three major types in terms of the forms of the predicate, which include an adjective, an adjectival nominal with the copula *da* (e.g. *kirei da* 'being pretty'), a nominal either followed by the copula *da* or with the "dummy" verb *suru* 'do' (e.g. *kenkyuu suru* 'to study'), and a true verbal in Japanese (Shibatani 1990):

1. complete utterances with full forms of the predicate;
2. incomplete utterances with nonconclusive forms of the predicate;
3. fragmental utterances with the entire predicate or the copula elided or consisting of noun phrases with/without the postpositions.[15]

The following excerpt from an interview with subject B (a 43-year-old full-time homemaker) illustrates the three types. The letter I designates the interviewer (the author) asking about her everyday activities.

(2) I:  Fudan doo itta koto o shite, jikan sugosarerun desu ka?
        'Usually, what kinds of things do you do to spend time?'
    B:  Fudannnnn, kaji ga taihan de, ato, anoo, shuu ni kai eigo o
        watakushi yatteru nde xxx
        'Usually, mostly domestic chores, and, um, twice a week I do
        (study) English, so xxx'
    I:  Aa, soo desu ka?
        'Ah, is that so?'
    B:  Eikaiwa ₁*yattete*.
        'I study English conversation.'
        ₂*Anoo mishishippii no anoo shusshin no amerika jin no sensei ni.*
        'Well, (I'm taught English) by an American teacher from
        Mississippi.'
    I:  Nannin ka issho desu ka?
        '(Do you study) with several other people?'
    B:  ₃*Soo desu ne.*
        'That's right.'
        ₄*Ima sannin.*
        'Now, (there are) three of us.'
    I:  Sannin de?
        'Only three?'
    B:  Ee, ee, ee, ee.
        'Yes, yes.'
    I:  Otoko no sensei desu ka?
        Is your teacher male?'

    B:  ₅*Otoko no sensei.*
        'Male teacher.'
        ₆*Nijuu-hachi.*
        '28 years old.'
        A, moo sorosoro ..., nijuu hachi gurai de kite, a, nijuuroku ka
        shichi de kite,
        'Ah, soon ... He came when he was 28, ah, no, he came when he
        was 26 or 27,
        ima moo sorosoro sanjuu ni naru to ₇*omoimasu.*
        so now he should soon be 30, I think.'
        ₈*Dakara onaji gurai.*
        'So, about the same age (as you).'
    I:  Donna sensei desu ka.
        'What is he like?'
    B:  Sugoku ne, ano ₉*tanoshii desu yo.*
        '(He's) very, well, entertaining.'
        Anoo, tokai no hito ja nai kara, sugoku soboku da shi, tottemo
        reigi tadashii si ne.
        'And, He's not a city person, so he's very pure, and very
        polite, and
        Tottemo ki o ₁₀*tsukatte kuretari shite.*
        very considerate.'

Italicized segments 3, 7, and 9 are classified as the first type, the complete utterances. Segments 1 and 10 with the gerundive endings are two of the typical nonconclusive utterances observed predominantly in the data. Another relatively frequent ending of this type includes an ending with the alternative particle *-tari* (e.g. *Ato wa zasshi yondetari*, 'and I also read magazines'). Segment 2 is regarded as the third type, a fragmental utterance with the entire predicate (possibly, *naratte imasu* 'I learn' [habitually]) elided. Segments 4, 5, 6, and 8 are all regarded as fragmental with possibly the copula (*-da/desu*) elided.[16]

Differential pragmatic effects among these three forms are our concern here. While the full-forms of the predicate (italicized 3, 7, 9) strike the listener as assertive, explicit, and formal especially when used in distal (polite) style,[17] the nonconclusive forms of the predicate (1, 10) bear the tone of continuation (without surface realization of it) (Jorden and Noda 1987). As discussed below, leaving the following slot for the conclusive element or remark empty is motivated partly by sociocultural aesthetics and a preference for avoiding the overt statement of the conclusion, which is already understood through the context of conversation. This strategy renders the utterances ambiguous to a certain degree, provides

the addressee with the liberty to guess, and thus makes them sound reserved, indirect, and gentler. Subject B ended her utterances leaving something unseated or implied, which was left for me as the addressee to interpret or simply "feel" on my own intuitively. Fragmental utterances (2, 4, 5, 6, 8), on the other hand, as part of an in-group register, strike the listener as highly casual, less distancing, straightforward, but blunt, sloppy, or even childish in certain situations where the speaker is talking with someone who does not share in-group solidarity and rapport.

There is also found another noteworthy pattern of variation in sentence-final forms that is frequent in the data: a combination of the full-form predicate (the first variant above) plus conjunctive particles with the following slot unfilled. The following are the examples from subject A:

(3)  a.  Jimutekina  koto  ga   ooi   n desu *keredomo* …
         businesslike things SUB many EP[18]   though
         'I mainly deal with businesslike matters, but' {in fact, I also encounter other matters once in a while, which are too disgusting or too complicated to mention to this stranger}.[19]
     b.  Watashi buka       mo jooshi  mo nai     to
         I       subordinate and superior also is-NEG QUOT
         itsumo   omotteru *kara* …
         always   think-STAT[20] so
         'I always believe that everyone in this section should collaborate equally, so' {I may have maintained good rapport among the people here}.

As is the case in the second type of the variants described above, leaving the postconjunctive slot unfilled provides the listener with the freedom to infer whatever might make sense to follow in the context of discourse. This formation often works as a common strategy for Japanese mitigation, striking the listener as indirect and polite (Takahashi 1993). In contrast to the second type in which the predicate itself is manifested incomplete, however, this particular formation is more attuned to conveying explicit propositional meanings to the addressee due to its canonical, conclusive shape of the predicate while toning down the illocutionary force.

In my analysis in later sections, I will take into account this type of incomplete utterances (the full-form predicate with connectives) on a different level from the three primary types and take it as a subcategory of the first variant (i.e. the full-form predicate). This decision has been made on the basis of an observation that the functional status of the predicate-final connectives can apparently better be considered equivalent to that of Japanese sentence-final particles (Takahashi 1993). The

postpredicate connectives play interactive roles in communicating the speaker's affect or attitudes toward the proposition with the addressee and in negotiating the mutual stance for communicative rapport. In addition, Peng et al.'s (1981: 86–91) study of gender differentiation in the speech of adolescents provides supportive evidence in interpreting the postpredicate connectives as "new final particles," which stem from sociolinguistic innovation of gender neutralization led primarily by young female speakers in today's society.

## Results

### *Ellipsis of the topic marker* -wa

Table 2 shows individual rates of the ellipsis of the topic marker. The total number of tokens (i.e. the occurrence and nonoccurrence of the topic marker -*wa* in the potentially occurring environment) in the present data was 2356. A grand average of ellipsis rates turned out to be 32.9 percent (776/2356), which lies between 24 percent in Shibamoto (1985) and 36 percent in Shibamoto (1990).

The results also show that there are no consistent relationships between the rates of particle ellipsis of interview settings. For example, it is not necessarily the case that the workplace enhances the level of formality of speech, in that subject L (EWM), who elided the particle (300%) far above the group average (21.7%) among EWMs, was interviewed at her workplace. Although the interviews done at coffee shops appear to involve relatively lower rates of particle ellipsis, subject E (EWM), who elided it relatively more frequently than the others (28%), was also interviewed at this setting. Similarly, while the home environment appears to contribute to higher rates of ellipsis among HMs, subject G, who elided it 50 percent (8% above the group average), was interviewed at a coffee shop. Subjects B and D, who were both interviewed at their homes, do not necessarily elide the particle with particularly higher frequencies (i.e. 39% and 38%, respectively). An average rate of particle ellipsis for each setting is calculated: Office $= 29.3\%$ $(27 + 30 + 31 = 88\%/3$ subjects); Coffee shop $= 31.7\%$ $(14 + 28 + 18 + 17 + 60 + 31 + 36 + 31 + 50 + 32 = 317\%/10$ subjects); Home $= 43.5\%$ $(39 + 38 + 52 + 45 = 174\%/4$ subjects). The differences across the three settings are found to be statistically insignificant $(x^2 = 3.332;$ d.f. $= 2;$ p $> .100)$.

As seen in Table 2, the differences among the three groups of women are large: EWM elided the particle an average of 21.7 percent of the time, EW elided it 36.9 percent, and HM elided it 42 percent. There is also

Table 2.   *Individual sociodemographic characteristics and the rates of* -wa *ellipsis*

| Spk | Age | Class index | Married | Occupational status | Setting | % (# elided/total) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group I: Six employed women in managerial positions (EWM) | | | | | | |
| A | 46 | 15 | yes | division chief | office | 27 (50/186) |
| C | 53 | 18 | yes | division chief | coffee shop | 14 (26/185) |
| E | 42 | 17 | yes | company president | coffee shop | 28 (22/80) |
| F | 28 | 17 | yes | officer/educator at reform school | coffee shop | 18 (24/135) |
| H | 27 | 17 | yes | ophthalmologist | coffee shop | 17 (21/126) |
| L | 40 | 13 | yes | law office manager | office | 30 (42/142) |
| Group I Average | | | | | | 21.7 (185/854) |
| Group II: Five employed women in nonmanagerial positions (EW) | | | | | | |
| I | 35 | 14 | no | office clerk | coffee shop | 60 (84/139) |
| J | 46 | 15 | no | office clerk | coffee shop | 31 (45/145) |
| K | 28 | 14 | no | accountant | coffee shop | 36 (45/125) |
| N | 29 | 15 | yes | bank clerk | coffee shop | 31 (50/160) |
| O | 45 | 15 | no | office clerk | office | 31 (67/219) |
| Group II Average | | | | | | 36.9 (291/788) |
| Group III: Six full-time homemakers (HM) | | | | | | |
| B | 43 | 16 | yes | homemaker | home | 39 (35/89) |
| D | 62 | 14 | yes | homemaker | home | 38 (34/90) |
| G | 39 | 17 | yes | homemaker | coffee shop | 50 (46/92) |
| M | 39 | 16 | yes | homemaker | home | 52 (51/99) |
| P | 35 | 16 | yes | homemaker | coffee shop | 32 (52/163) |
| Q | 47 | 17 | yes | homemaker | home | 45 (82/181) |
| Group III Average | | | | | | 42 (300/714) |
| Overall average | | | | | | 32.9 (776/2356) |

a great deal of variation among individuals, in that the ellipsis rates range from 14 percent to 60 percent. Possible causes for such individual diversities concern the effects of generational and social-class differentiation on the application of the rule. I found elsewhere, however, that there is no systematic correlation with those types of social factor (Takano 1997: 173–181). Though I concluded that all the speakers seemed to belong to the same class on the basis of the traditional system of measurement in the preceding section, the relationships between the ellipsis of the marker and the individual indices do not reflect such homogeneity.

What makes this quite heterogeneous picture of individual linguistic behaviors more comprehensible stems from an account of more concrete categories of speakers' participation in the marketplace. While the

increasing number of women who desire careers over purely domestic lives have been neglected in traditional definitions of gender distinctions in Japanese, one would expect that active participation in the marketplace, the associated formation of extensive social networks, and increased opportunities for a wider range of interpersonal communication should affect communicative competence. Figure 1 recaptures this aspect of sociolinguistic variability as a continuum, which clearly reveals the systematic, gradual nature of performance grammars across the three occupation-bound groups.

Table 3 shows that the results of variable rule analysis confirm that the occupational categories affects the ellipsis of -wa to a statistically significant extent (p < .001). The input probability given at the bottom of the table represents the likelihood that this rule (i.e. -wa deletion) will operate independently; that is, my analysis shows that there is a tendency
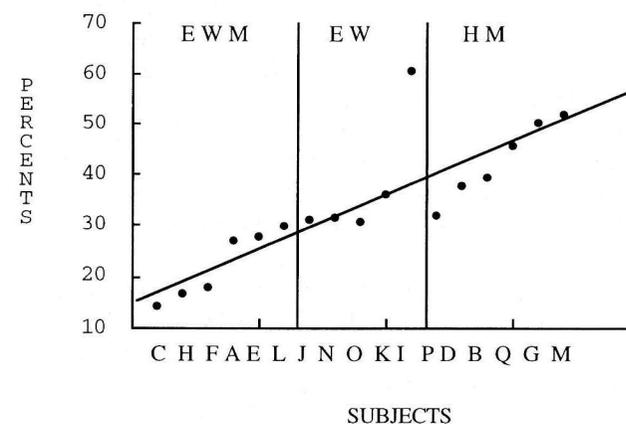


PERCENTS=14.771+2.135*RANK

Figure 1.   *Occupational categories and* -wa *ellipsis*

Table 3.   *Variable rule analysis of correlation between occupational categories and* -wa *ellipsis*

| Factor groups | Factors | % -wa unmarked | VR weight | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Occupational categories | HM | 42 (300/714) | 0.6 | |
| | EW | 37 (291/788) | 0.54 | 56.824/2 |
| | EWM | 22 (184/854) | 0.39 | p < .001 |

Input probability: 0.302
Chi-square/cell: 1.0206
Mean % of deletion: 33 (775/2356)
Total no. of tokens: 2356

for this rule to operate (0.302) aside from the independent factors in question. The average chi-square per cell indicates the degree to which the factors considered (i.e. the hypothesis constructed) account for the data. The smaller than 1.0 this figure is, the surer we can be that it is not necessary to consider additional variables. Values below 1.5 (conservatively, 1.0) indicate that the fit between the model and the data is good (Preston 1989: 15–16), and the value of the present analysis, 1.0206, is within that range.

The VARBRUL program calculates a probability weight (VR weight in Table 3) for potential contributing factors and assigns each of them a value from 0 to 1. A weight of .50 indicates that the factor has no effect on the production of the dependent variable (i.e. -wa deletion). The closer the weight is to 0, the more strongly the contributing factor disfavors the dependent variable. The closer the weight is to 1, the more strongly the factor favors it. The group of HM favors the ellipsis of -wa at 0.60. In contrast, the group of EWM disfavors it strongly at 0.39. The effect of the group of EW is close to neutral (.54).[21] The divisions into the three occupation-base categories help account for the wide range of individual variability in particle ellipsis. It is now empirically proved that the use of the marker that has been uniformly attributed to Japanese women in previous studies involves distinct social stratification subject to the degrees of publicity and domesticity of speakers' social lives, the former of which is further divided into finer layers according to their status and roles in the marketplace.

Among a number of intersecting factors that are assume to affect particle ellipsis simultaneously,[22] the effects of stylistic differentiation are discussed here because of their significance. It has been argued that data elicited through interview sessions are stylistically deprived (Coupland 1980; Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994). The results of stylistic analysis in the present study, however, support Labov's (1996) rebuttal that sociolinguistic interviews are capable of providing fairly rich resources to analyze stylistic variability in grammar.

Variable uses are found to involve differential sensitivity to particular phases of the interview (Guy et al. 1986), which roughly corresponds with Labov's (1996: 5–10) decision tree for stylistic analysis. Within the decision tree (Labov 1996: 23), the speech style used by speakers responding to the interlocutor's questions is regarded as being most objective and careful. Interactions that consist of asking and answering questions constitute a relatively formal phase of the sociolinguistic interview where more attention paid to speech is likely to lead the speaker to produce careful-style speech (Labov 1972b). The narrative phase of the interview (i.e. dramatized accounts of past events), on the other hand, is considered

to contribute to casual-style speech but to involve a relatively higher degree of objectivity than the other phases, such as the speech addressed to third persons other than the interviewer, a talk about kids' games, experiences, etc., and any speech digressing to topics that strongly interest the speaker, where the degree of subjectivity increases. That is, the theory claims that even within a single sociolinguistic interview, hierarchical stylistic differentiation can be observed among various interactional phases, according to degrees of the speaker's attention paid to speech and subjectivity of the talk.

In the present study, the sociolinguistic interviews for data elicitation were considered to consist of three stylistically distinct phases of information exchange in interpersonal communication. I divided tokens into (1) response style, in which the speaker responds to my information questions; this particular phase of exchange was usually observe at the beginning of the speech event initiated by a new topic and tends to be followed by some series of narratives; (2) narrative style, in which the speaker is primarily engaged in telling stories, without seeking a great deal of involvement from the listener; and (3) conversational style, in which the speaker involves me as a conversation partner in her talk, seeking my feedback and active interaction. Though Labov's (1996) decision tree for stylistic analysis does not include a branch for "Conversational exchange" or "Chat" (between the subject and the researcher), I observed that active interactions between the subjects and the researcher greatly facilitated the smooth flow of interviews as a whole, and that speech produced in this phase of the interviews was stylistically distinguishable from the narrative phase in the same casual-speech branch.

In accord with the decision tree, the results on a VARBRUL analysis depict such hierarchical differentiation among the styles, which is statistically significant at p < .025 (Table 4).

While narrative style has almost a neutral effect on particle ellipsis (.51), the conversational phase, in which both the speaker and the listener

Table 4.   *Variable rule analysis of stylistic differentiation in -wa ellipsis*

| Factor groups | Factors | % -wa unmarked | VR weight | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Styles | conversational | 40 (164/406) | 0.55 | |
| | narrative | 32 (438/1351) | 0.51 | chi-sq. = 7.788/2 |
| | response | 29 (173/596) | 0.45 | p < .025 |

Input probability: 0.308
Chi-square/cell: 1.0658
Mean % of deletion: 33 (776/2356)
Total no. of tokens: 2356

are more emotionally involved in interactions, thus reducing psychological distance and enhancing sharedness, displayed a promoting effect on particle ellipsis (.55) (Tsutsui 1983, 1984; Masunaga 1988). This tendency also coincides with the aforementioned finding that particle ellipsis is highly promoted by the insistent/assertive or interrogative mood of utterances, both of which can be considered to be typical components of conversational interactions (Hasegawa 1993; Matsuda 1992; Takano 1998). It appears that this phase of the sociolinguistic interview has a stylistic status distinct from that of the narrative phase, with a higher degree of subjectivity and involvement encouraging casual-style speech with more extensive ellipsis of particles (Hinds 1976; Tsutsui 1983, 1984). In contrast, the speech style used by speakers immediately responding to my information questions is found to disfavor particle ellipsis (.45), as also predicted by the decision tree.

In sum, variable phenomena of Japanese particle ellipsis are not only constrained by such social factors as occupational categories but also involve the dimension of stylistic differentiation, which must also be taken into account as an intersecting variable. It is quite problematic that previous sociolinguistic studies have attributed this variable unidimensionally to the speaker's sex.

### Utterance-final forms

Table 5 outlines the major sociodemographic characteristics of each speaker and her production rates of the three types of utterance-final forms. The total number of tokens code was 2119, among which complete utterances were produced 74 percent of the time, incomplete ones 7 percent, and fragmental ones 19 percent. As is the case with the ellipsis of the topic marker -wa, striking intragender differences as well as individual diversities can be observed in the rates of the three subgroups of women. While EWM predominantly use complete utterances (86%), HM use the same variant 65 percent of the time. EW manipulate the same variable to a medial extent (73%). As for uses of fragmental utterances, the statuses of the two extreme groups are reversed: EWM use the variant only 8 percent; HM 27 percent; and EW fall in between with 19 percent. No such noteworthy difference among the groups is observed in the use of the second variant, nonconclusive utterances (EWM: 6%; EW: 7%; HM: 8%).

A closer look at a great deal of individual variation in the uses of the variants again reveals that the individual distributions can be accounted for in terms of neither systematic generational nor class-linked

Table 5.  *Individual sociodemographic characteristics and the rates of the three variables*
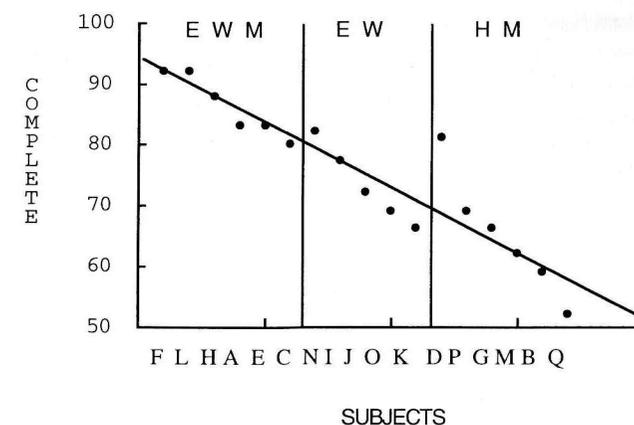
| Spk | Age | Class index | Married | Occupational status | Setting | % (# use/total) complete nonconclusive fragmental |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Group I: Six employed women in managerial positions (EWM)** | | | | | | |
| A | 46 | 15 | yes | division chief | office | 83 (86/104) 13 (13/104) 5 (5/104) |
| C | 53 | 18 | yes | division chief | coffee shop | 80 (96/120) 6 (7/120) 14 (17/120) |
| E | 42 | 17 | yes | company president | coffee shop | 83 (116/139) 9 (12/139) 8 (11/139) |
| F | 28 | 17 | yes | officer/educator at reform school | coffee shop | 92 (108/118) 3 (3/118) 6 (7/118) |
| H | 27 | 17 | yes | ophthalmologist | coffee shop | 88 (80/91) 2 (2/91) 10 (9/91) |
| L | 40 | 13 | yes | law office manager | office | 92 (112/122) 2 (2/122) 7 (8/122) |
| Group I Average | | | | | | 86 (598/694) 6 (39/694) 8 (57/694) |
| **Group II: Five employed women in nonmanagerial positions (EW)** | | | | | | |
| I | 35 | 14 | no | office clerk | coffee shop | 78 (93/120) 7 (8/120) 16 (19/120) |
| J | 46 | 15 | no | office clerk | coffee shop | 72 (90/125) 9 (11/125) 19 (24/125) |
| K | 28 | 14 | no | accountant | coffee shop | 66 (75/114) 12 (14/114) 22 (25/114) |
| N | 29 | 15 | yes | bank clerk | coffee shop | 82 (107/131) 7 (9/131) 11 (15/131) |
| O | 45 | 15 | no | office clerk | office | 69 (85/124) 2 (3/124) 29 (36/124) |
| Group II Average | | | | | | 73 (450/614) 7 (45/614) 19 (119/614) |

Table 5.   *contd.*

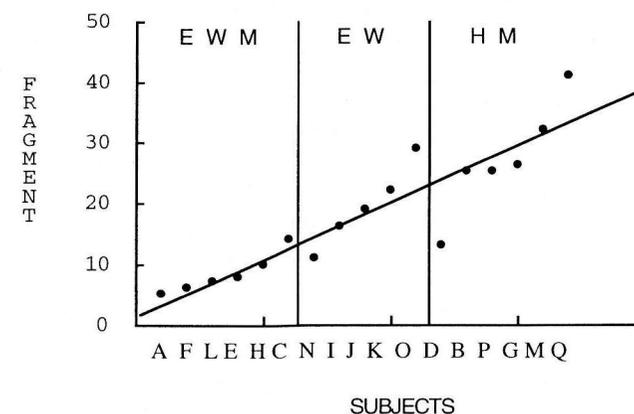| Spk | Age | Class index | Married | Occupational status | Setting | % (# use/total) complete nonconclusive fragmental |
|-----|-----|-----|---------|---------------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Group III: Six full-time homemakers (HM) | | | | | | |
| B | 43 | 16 | yes | homemaker | home | 59 (84/142) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 15 (22/142) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 25 (36/142) |
| D | 62 | 14 | yes | homemaker | home | 81 (109/134) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 6 (8/134) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 13 (17/134) |
| G | 39 | 17 | yes | homemaker | coffee shop | 66 (95/144) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 8 (12/144) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 26 (37/144) |
| M | 39 | 16 | yes | homemaker | home | 62 (80/130) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 6 (8/130) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 32 (42/130) |
| P | 35 | 16 | yes | homemaker | coffee shop | 69 (95/138) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 6 (8/138) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 25 (35/138) |
| Q | 47 | 17 | yes | homemaker | home | 52 (65/124) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 6 (8/124) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 41 (51/124) |
| Group III Average | | | | | | 65 (528/811) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 8 (66/811) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 27 (217/811) |
| Overall Average | | | | | | 74 (1576/2119) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 7 (150/2119) |
|   |    |    |     |           |      | 19 (394/2119) |

correlations (discussed in detail in Takano 1997: 211–222). Parallel to the variability of -*wa* ellipsis, the speakers' uses of the three utterance-final forms do not reflect their class-based homogeneity hypothesized by the traditional measurement of social-class index. The individual diversities can be better captured in terms of gradient correlations between speakers' occupation-bound categories and the two differentiating variants (complete and fragmental utterances) (Figures 2 and 3). On the continuum, the EWM and HM groups are at the extreme ends with the EW group in between.

Accordingly, a variable rule analysis confirms that the occupational categories exert statistically significant effects on the production of the variants in Table 6. Note that the total numbers of tokens differ considerably among the groups (EWM: 693 [six speakers]; EW: 614 [five

COMPLETE=94.404 -2.169*RANKZ

Figure 2.   *Occupational categories and the use of complete utterances*



FRAGMENT=1.235+1.882*RANKJ

Figure 3.   *Occupational categories and the use of fragmental utterances*

speakers]; HM: 812 [six speakers]). This is due to the general tendency of working women, especially those in managerial positions, to produce longer stretches of discourse during the interview sessions, as compared with homemakers, who tended to talk with many fragmental utterances.
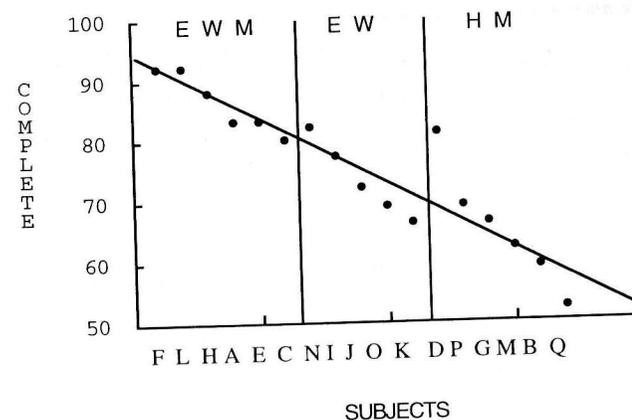
Unlike the case of the first variable (i.e. -*wa* ellipsis), this dependent variable has three levels: complete utterances, nonconclusive utterances, and fragmental utterances. Therefore, a weight of 0.33 indicates the neutral effect (i.e. no effect). A weight higher than 0.33 indicates a more positive effect, and a weight lower than 0.33 indicates a more negative

Table 5. *contd.*

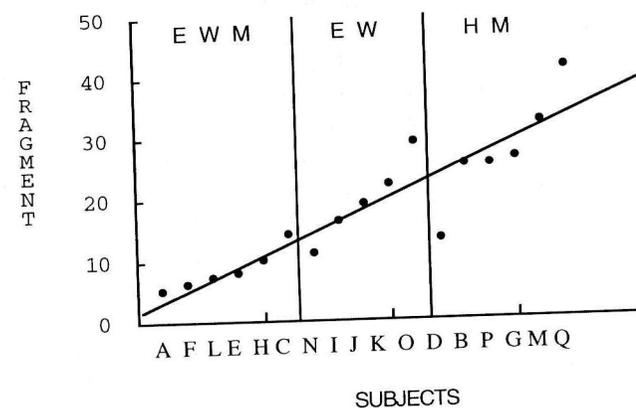| Spk | Age | Class index | Married | Occupational status | Setting | % (# use/total) complete nonconclusive fragmental |
|-----|-----|-------------|---------|---------------------|---------|--------------------------------------------------|
| **Group III: Six full-time homemakers (HM)** | | | | | | |
| B | 43 | 16 | yes | homemaker | home | 59 (84/142) 15 (22/142) 25 (36/142) |
| D | 62 | 14 | yes | homemaker | home | 81 (109/134) 6 (8/134) 13 (17/134) |
| G | 39 | 17 | yes | homemaker | coffee shop | 66 (95/144) 8 (12/144) 26 (37/144) |
| M | 39 | 16 | yes | homemaker | home | 62 (80/130) 6 (8/130) 32 (42/130) |
| P | 35 | 16 | yes | homemaker | coffee shop | 69 (95/138) 6 (8/138) 25 (35/138) |
| Q | 47 | 17 | yes | homemaker | home | 52 (65/124) 6 (8/124) 41 (51/124) |
| Group III Average | | | | | | 65 (528/811) 8 (66/811) 27 (217/811) |
| Overall Average | | | | | | 74 (1576/2119) 7 (150/2119) 19 (394/2119) |

correlations (discussed in detail in Takano 1997: 211–222). Parallel to the variability of -*wa* ellipsis, the speakers' uses of the three utterance-final forms do not reflect their class-based homogeneity hypothesized by the traditional measurement of social-class index. The individual diversities can be better captured in terms of gradient correlations between speakers' occupation-bound categories and the two differentiating variants (complete and fragmental utterances) (Figures 2 and 3). On the continuum, the EWM and HM groups are at the extreme ends with the EW group in between.

Accordingly, a variable rule analysis confirms that the occupational categories exert statistically significant effects on the production of the variants in Table 6. Note that the total numbers of tokens differ considerably among the groups (EWM: 693 [six speakers]; EW: 614 [five

COMPLETE=94.404 -2.169*RANKZ

Figure 2.  *Occupational categories and the use of complete utterances*



FRAGMENT=1.235+1.882*RANKJ

Figure 3.  *Occupational categories and the use of fragmental utterances*

speakers]; HM: 812 [six speakers]). This is due to the general tendency of working women, especially those in managerial positions, to produce longer stretches of discourse during the interview sessions, as compared with homemakers, who tended to talk with many fragmental utterances.

Unlike the case of the first variable (i.e. -*wa* ellipsis), this dependent variable has three levels: complete utterances, nonconclusive utterances, and fragmental utterances. Therefore, a weight of 0.33 indicates the neutral effect (i.e. no effect). A weight higher than 0.33 indicates a more positive effect, and a weight lower than 0.33 indicates a more negative

Table 6.   *Occupational categories and utterance-final forms*

| Variables | % EWM | VR weight | % EW | VR weight | % HM | VR weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complete | 86 (597/693) | 0.48 | 73 (450/614) | 0.3 | 65 (528/812) | 0.24 |
| Nonconclusive | 6 (39/693) | 0.32 | 7 (45/614) | 0.32 | 8 (66/812) | 0.32 |
| Fragmental | 8 (57/693) | 0.2 | 19 (119/614) | 0.38 | 27 (218/812) | 0.45 |

Significance: 110.46/4; p<.001
Input probability: 0.77 (complete utterances)
            0.06 (nonconclusive utterances)
            0.17 (fragmental utterances)
Chi-square/cell: 0.31
Mean %: 74 (complete utterances)
         7 (nonconclusive utterances)
        19 (fragmental utterances)
Total no. of tokens: 2119

effect on the production of the dependent factors. Table 6 shows highly significant effects of occupation-linked grouping on the variable production of the predicate at p<.001. The low value of chi-square per cell, 0.31, also indicates a high degree of reliability of the results.

EWMs' speech is characterized both by the extremely frequent use of complete utterances with a VARBRUL weight of 0.48 and by the rare use of fragmental utterances at 0.20. In contrast, the variability in HMs' speech displays diametrically reversed characteristics. Complete utterances are inhibited at a weight of 0.24, whereas fragmental utterances are highly promoted at 0.45. EWs' variability again displays a weak, intermediate tendency falling in between the two groups (0.30 for complete utterances and 0.38 for fragmental utterances).[23]

In the preceding section, I described two possibilities for incomplete manifestations of Japanese utterances — the nonconclusive predicate, and as a secondary variant, the full-form predicate followed immediately by connectives. Though the use of the former was itself found to involve no sociolinguistic implication (Table 5), the latter variant seems to fulfill meaningful functions for linguistic mitigation differentially among the three subgroups of women. To recapitulate, the tone of continuation in both variants strikes the listener as having reserved, indirect, and softer pragmatic effects. The significant difference made by the choice of the full-form predicate (with connectives) over the nonconclusive one, however, concerns the encoding of a dual pragmatic function — propositional (or locutionary) explicitness in addition to affective (or illocutionary) indirectness and formality. The full-form predicate allows the speaker to convey more explicit intent. At the same time, the speaker's choice of

distal style (formal, polite style) over direct style can efficiently impart a flavor of formality and politeness to an utterance.

A variable rule analysis of intergroup differences in uses of mitigation strategies focused on the choice of the two variants (Table 7). The value for chi-square per cell (0.6635) is fairly low for reliable results. The overall frequencies of mitigation strategies (i.e. combine frequencies of nonconclusive predicate and the full-form predicate with connectives) do not involve any striking inter-group discrepancy: 22.9 percent (159/the total number of tokens, 693) for EWM, 22.5 percent (138/614) for EW, and 24.4 percent (198/812) for HM. The results in Table 7, however, find salient intergroup differentiation in preferred types of the strategies (p<.025). EWM are most likely to adopt the explicit strategy (i.e. the full-form predicate plus connectives) (.59), in contrast to the other groups, both of whom are more likely to choose the less explicit, casual alternative (i.e. nonconclusive forms of the predicate) (.54 for EW; .55 for HM). Furthermore, Table 8 shows that EWM seem to strongly prefer the distal-style predicate in exploiting the mitigation strategy (78.3%), whereas HM tend to use the style to the least extent (51.5%); EW do to a medial extent (67.7%), though not to a statistically significant extent (.10>p>.05).

Table 7.   *Mitigation strategies and occupational categories*

| Variables | % EWM | VR weight | % EW | VR weight | % HM | VR weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nonconclusive | 24 (39/159) | 0.41 | 33 (45/138) | 0.54 | 33 (66/198) | 0.55 |
| Full predicate+ connectives | 76 (120/159) | 0.59 | 67 (93/138) | 0.46 | 67 (132/198) | 0.45 |

Significance: 8.47/2; p<.025
Input probability: 0.30 (nonconclusive utterances)
                0.70 (full predicate followed by connectives)
Chi-square/cell: 0.6635
Mean %: 30 (nonconclusive utterances)
        70 (full predicate followed by connectives)
Total no. of tokens: 495

Table 8.   *Preference for styles in the use of the full-form predicate with connectives*

|  | Distal style % (no.) | Direct style % (no.) |
|---|---|---|
| EWM | 78.3 (92/120) | 21.7 (26/120) |
| EW | 67.7 (63/93) | 32.3 (30/93) |
| HM | 51.5 (68/132) | 48.5 (64/132) |

$x^2 = 5.534$; d.f. = 2; .10>p>.05

The interpersonally formal and polite, but propositionally explicit, alternative seems to be an effective strategy for EWMs to adopt, due to the communicative requirements from their occupational roles. Contrary to a general finding that mitigated speech is likely to be used by lower-status people and unmitigated, forceful speech by higher-status people (Ervin-Tripp 1976, 1977), several previous studies of interactions between speakers of unequal status demonstrate that a paradoxical coexistence of the most direct and the most indirect speech is typical of language use by higher-status people (Kirsh 1983; Pearson 1988, 1989). While higher-status people need to maintain their authoritative power by taking advantage of assertive, explicit speech, it is equally important for them to resort to negative politeness strategies to save subordinates' face, gain their willing support, and establish good rapport at the workplace. "Powerful" speakers are also characterized as skillful negotiators of audience support who are capable of utilizing those complex repertoires of sociolinguistic strategies (Owsley and Myers-Scotton 1984; Myers-Scotton 1985). It can be assume as to the present findings that EWMs' occupational roles and relate language use experiences in their everyday lives have a direct impact on how they talk. Individuals who are required to manipulate a formal register by the nature of their jobs and are constantly exposed to public evaluation maintain this unique mixture of sociolinguistic strategies, which can be taken as a manifestation of the speaker's social identity fostered through her occupation-bound social practices (Nichols 1980, 1983, 1984).

Finally, Table 9 describes the results of VARBRUL analysis of the effects of styles on the production of the three types of utterance-final

Table 9.   *Variable rule analysis of utterance-final forms: styles*

|  | Narrative | VR | Conversational | VR | Responsive | VR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Complete utterance | 74 (792/1074) | 0.28 | 74 (309/416) | 0.36 | 76 (475/629) | 0.35 |
| Nonconclusive | 9 (99/1074) | 0.46 | 5 (19/416) | 0.27 | 5 (31/629) | 0.29 |
| Fragmental | 17 (183/1074) | 0.26 | 21 (88/416) | 0.37 | 20 (123/629) | 0.36 |

Significance: 10.92/2; $p < .05$
Input probability: 0.77 (complete utterances)
                          0.06 (nonconclusive utterances)
                          0.17 (fragmental utterances)
Chi-square/cell: 1.584
Mean %: 74 (complete utterances)
               7 (nonconclusive utterances)
              19 (fragmental utterances)
Total no. of tokens: 2119

forms. Stylistic differentiation has been found to be a statistically significant factor at $p < .05$, but the relatively high value of chi-square per cell, 1.584, is slightly higher (0.084) than the confidence range (i.e. below 1.5) (Preston 1989: 15).

The results show that the production of nonconclusive utterances is strongly promoted by narrative style with a VARBRUL weight of 0.46, whereas the other two types are disfavored to a similar degree (i.e. 0.28 for complete utterances and 0.26 for fragmental utterances). The nonconclusive ending allows the speaker to leave a trace of continuity without her conclusive statement. The form not only is syntactically suitable for the continuation of narrative stories but can also make potential moments of next-speaker turn ambiguous, creating an environment favorable for the current speaker to maintain his or her turn. In contrast, both complete and fragmental utterances provide advantageous environments for the next speaker to jump in when s/he is seeking a turn. The results reflect this difference in turn-taking potential in light of the favoring effect of conversational style on uses of complete forms and fragmental utterances (.36 and .37, respectively). Furthermore, the favoring effects of responsive style on those two surface forms can also be accounted for in terms of the speaker's cooperative strategies for transmitting explicit messages to the interviewer (Complete utterances: .35; Fragmental utterances: .36 in responsive style).

Variable uses of utterance-final forms are found to be highly context-dependent and subject to a particular dimension of interpersonal communication, the stylistic aspects of information exchange, which must also be taken into account as an intersecting factor to the speaker's sex. Obviously, it is an oversimplified, misleading approach to attribute incomplete, fragmental utterances a priori to the female sex and complete utterances to the male sex. The empirical results obtained so far suggest that the researcher needs to take a closer look at the particular types of interactional styles involved in conversational data under investigation in order to provide a legitimate characterization of gender differentiation of this variable.

### Discussion

All these results from systematic analyses of natural speech empirically prove that sociolinguistic subgroups can be identified in terms of their performance grammars among Japanese women in contemporary society. The speech of full-time homemakers, whose lives are restricted to the domestic sphere, is correlated with a relatively less canonical, informal

variety of speech that allows for a great deal of particle ellipsis and frequent uses of fragmental utterances. In contrast, working women in positions of authority and leadership, whose lifestyles and everyday experiences are predominantly oriented to the public sphere (i.e. job-related relationships), are associated with a more formal, canonical variety of speech involving less ellipsis and frequent use of complete utterances and mitigation. Office clerks' speech patterns are always found to be situated in between.

The potential causes of the group-specific patterns of variability stem from both quantitative and qualitative differences in social network structures of the groups of women and the speakers' communicative experiences and routines in their unique domains of everyday lives. As mentioned earlier in Data Collection, I informally investigated the informants' social network structures in two respects through the questionnaire and the sociolinguistic interviews: the degree of openness or closure of the network and demographic characteristics of network links. As a result, differential patterns clearly emerged among the three subgroups of women (discussed in further detail in Takano 1997: 229–233). The network structures of EWMs seem to be most open, involving a larger number of regular contacts. EWM subjects are far more likely to have 15 or more contacts per week. EWM's networks of frequent contacts are also found to be composed of both single-sex and mixed-sex interactions predominantly in job-related, public ties. The social network of HMs, on the other hand, tends to involve a diametrically restricted, closed structure with ten or fewer contacts. Their frequent contacts are predominantly colored by single-sex interactions almost exclusively with people from domestic domains (i.e. friends, neighbors). And EWs' patterns are again found to be intermediate in both respects.

Based on these observations, it can be argued that the noncanonicality and casualness of full-time homemakers' speech are fostered through typical communicative activities and routines the speakers are likely to encounter in their everyday lives in their local communities (Finegan and Biber 1994). Full-time homemakers are likely to be engaged in interactions involving a restricted set of single-sex, in-group locals who share mutual rapport and ties in linkage to the domestic domain. Through the dense, peer-oriented social network relationships, uses of covert, vernacular types of variants are likely to be encouraged (Milroy 1980). Less distancing, informal, and positive-polite uses of language tend to be valued as interactional norms in close-knit, dense networks (Brown and Levinson 1987; Brown 1980). Common background and the greater degrees of share knowledge and assumptions promoted through dense communication networks tend to allow for a greater degree of "linguistic

economy," a reduction of the code, and a greater reliance on implicit meaning (Finegan and Biber 1994: 320; Coupland 1983).

Furthermore, given an identical task of participating in the sociolinguistic interview, full-time homemakers' inclination to transform the interaction into conversational exchanges to a greater extent (24%) than the other two groups of women (EW: 18.1%; EWM: 12.1%) (Table 10) may be another piece of evidence for justifying such causes of the group-specific variability. Being exposed to communication networks where positive face for peer solidarity is esteemed, full-time homemakers are likely to resort to a "supportive style" (which "encourages the addressee to adopt an initiating role in the discourse") (Holmes 1984: 171) with the perception of successful communication as a collaborative activity in which both participants play symmetrical and reciprocal roles supporting each other. Involving the interviewer as an active conversation partner is regarded as an attempt to reduce social distance and promote interpersonal rapport and solidarity.

On the other hand, working women in positions of authority and leadership in their more diffused, open, job-linked communication networks are more likely to interact with people from a wide variety of demographic backgrounds and share less overlap in mutual understanding and interpersonal rapport with them in various communicative situations. In striking contrast to those of the full-time homemakers, these types of communicative experiences and routines through their occupational roles tend to inhibit exploitation of linguistic economy, encouraging more standard, explicit encoding of messages (Sankoff and Laberge 1978; Nichols 1980, 1983, 1984), help develop more elaborated, extensive language repertoires (Finegan and Biber 1994), and promote negative-polite uses of language (e.g. mitigated speech), maintaining appropriate polite degrees of distance from interlocutors (Brown 1980; Brown and Levinson 1987). Speakers in open communication networks also tend to be more subject to overt norms for language use and have more opportunities for careful speech production. Their qualifications and abilities as persons in charge are judged to a great extent through their ways of

Table 10.  *Stylistic variability among the three subgroups of women in the sociolinguistic interview*

|  | EWM % (no.) | EW % (no.) | HM % (no.) |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Conversational exchange | 12.1 (84/694) | 18.1 (111/614) | 24.0 (195/811) |
| Narratives | 64.0 (444/694) | 54.1 (332/694) | 50.9 (413/811) |
| Response | 23.9 (166/694) | 27.9 (171/279) | 25.0 (203/811) |

speaking, thus their occupational roles require them to show off their powerfulness through language, speaking assertively and clearly. All these communicative requirements from their occupational roles have resulted in reinforcing a more formal, canonical variety of speech (Coupland 1983; Finegan and Biber 1994).

Working women in positions of authority tended to be engaged in the interaction mainly through producing narratives (64%) (EW: 54.1%; HM: 50.9%) (Table 10).[24] In contrast to that of full-time homemakers, the interactional ethos of working women in charge can be characterized as a sort of "leading style" (which "involves retaining control of the discourse and casts the addressee in the role of respondent") (Holmes 1984: 171). One of the major communicative needs that working women in charge are required to fulfill in their occupational roles is likely to be concerned with verbosity, assertiveness, persuasiveness, and, at times, dominance. It is likely that they are frequently required to maintain the floor, express their opinions in a persuasive manner, and respond explicitly to questions asked.

## Conclusion

The quantitative sociolinguistic approach to variations in the speech of three subgroups of Japanese women in contemporary society has empirically demonstrated that women's language use involves a patterned heterogeneity that has long been neglected in the traditional, intuition-based approach to gender differentiation in Japanese. Statistically verified discrepancies are found in variable linguistic performance of the occupation-bound subgroups of women leading distinct social lives. The internal heterogeneity in Japanese women's language can be identified as involving social stratification, but the individual stratification is more meaningfully correlated with a concrete social category of degrees of speakers' integration into the marketplace and related communicative experiences and routines in their everyday lives than with such abstract categories as social-class index.

Previous mainstream studies, which are primarily concerned with the speech of the "traditional Japanese woman," seem to have overgeneralized the grammar of Japanese women's language and stereotyped the way women speak even as they play increasingly diverse gender roles in the changing society. It is now evident that the negative stereotypes about women's language use, such as their ostensibly marked, non-standard, sloppy grammar, are due to serious oversimplification of a complex reality: women's talk reflects their various gender roles and

social identities. This outcome substantiates Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992) community-based theory of linguistic gender differentiation, which maintains that how women (or men) speak is not derived from the speaker's biological sex per se but is heavily constrained by the social construction of gender, which interacts with a number of local factors: how speakers identify themselves in their everyday social practices determined by individuals' gender roles (both private and public) in the local community. Given women's increasing advance into the marketplace in recent years in the society, further investigation of Japanese gender differentiation should focus more on these dynamic aspects of speakers' practices of gender and their systematic relationships with linguistic variation and change.

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## Notes

1.   "Sociolinguistic grammar" is equivalent to a performance grammar involving structured, rule-governed variation in language use, which is covariate with a composite of linguistic/discoursal constraints and extralinguistic factors (i.e. the speaker's demographic characteristics, setting, and audience design) (Cedergren and Sankoff 1974). Whenever the term "grammar" appears hereafter, the identical definition applies.

2.   Gender distinctions in Japanese defined and circulated so far are also primarily an urban phenomenon (Kitagawa 1977). There are, in fact, a number of local dialects that do not involve male–female distinctions (Kindaichi 1969; see Yamaguchi 1991 for an example).

3.   See Takano (1997: 65–74) for a review of various sources of data in past studies of Japanese gender differentiation.

4.   As compared with group II, group I consists typically of full-time employed women whose professional status is given much higher "social prestige." According to the Occupation Prestige Scores established by Tominaga (1978: 499–503) in Japan, the professions of the group II speakers are assigned scores between 50 and 55.9 (i.e. mainly, clerical jobs), whereas those of the group I speakers have scores ranging from 60.9 to 82.7 (i.e. professional and managerial jobs).

5.   M = married, S = single, #C = the number of children.

6. Following the traditional procedures, homemakers' occupations were rated according to their husband's occupations. In the present study, however, the occupations of working women, whether they are married or not, were rated according to their own rather than their husband's or parents'. Parents' occupation was rated according to either father's or mother's, whichever was higher.

7. I added two extra categories to Hibiya's system: category 4 for women who graduated from junior colleges, and category 6 for those who received advanced degrees after graduating from four-year universities. Entering junior colleges has been a mainstream option of Japanese women who wish to proceed to postsecondary education. About two-thirds of such women attend junior colleges and only 14.7% of them enter four-year universities in Japan (Inoue and Ehara 1991: 116). In the present data, the majority of the informants are highly educated. Nine of them graduated from four-year universities, and two informants received advanced degrees (Ph.D. and M.D.). Four out of 17 informants graduated from junior colleges.

8. The housing scale was based on two different parameters: residence ownership and residence type. Information on age of house was not sought in my questionnaire, thus it was excluded from consideration.

9. A similar program to this is ANOVA. Algorithms for calculating ANOVA, however, normally require balanced numbers of tokens in each cell, which would be possible only with data from controlled experimentation (Young and Bayley 1996). Thus, the VARBRUL programs are the only alternative to successfully handle the extremely skewed nature of sociolinguistic data from natural speech.

10. TOP = topic marker; COP = copula; FP = final particle.

11. The present analysis is limited to the particles of what Shibatani (1990: 276–277) calls the "base-generated topics," as differentiated from "stylistic topics." The latter is primarily stylistic scrambling and typically involves the topicalization of such grammatical elements as adverbial phrases and noun phrases with postpositions. As for stylistic topics, serious difficulties arise in judging whether the topic marker was underlyingly present or the structures resulted simply from stylistic scrambling when the marker is missing.

12. In both studies, the topic marker and the subject marker -ga are collapsed as a single variable.

13. Other weaknesses include no use of statistical tests for significance of intergroup differences, no account of relative degrees of effectiveness among other intersecting factors in addition to the speaker's sex category, and no treatment of potential effects of gender composition of interactions (i.e. single-sex vs. mixed-sex interactions) (Coates 1988; Uchida 1992; Takano 1998).

14. No further descriptions are available with respect to the speakers' demographic backgrounds such as occupation, marital status, and individual age. They are presumably white-collar businessmen and housewives from middle-class neighborhoods in Tokyo, as was the case in her other studies (Shibamoto 1985, 1990).

15. Endoo's "assertive sentence" is roughly equivalent to my "complete utterances," and "suspended sentence" to "fragmental utterances," and "stop-in-the-middle sentence" presumably to my "incomplete utterances," though her examples of this type do not include the particular kinds of forms described below (e.g. the gerundive form or the ending with the alternative particle).

16. The following types of utterance were excluded from the coding: (1) subordinate clauses concurring with surface main clauses; (2) embedded clauses such as relative clauses and quoted speech; (3) nondeclarative sentences by which the speaker aims to achieve particular pragmatic effects, such as questions and directives toward the

interviewer; (4) repetitive utterances that consist of mere repetitions of identical forms; (5) incomplete utterances caused by interruptions of the interviewer; (6) obvious false starts.

17. Japanese distal style indicates that "the speaker is showing solicitude toward, and maintaining sonic linguistic distance from, the addressee" (Jorden and Noda 1987). The style then characterizes the speaker as being less direct and more formal with a sign of deference to the person(s) addressed and/or the topic of conversation. Japanese direct style, on the other hand, allows the speaker to talk directly, intimately, familiarly, abruptly, or carelessly to the addressee(s) and/or about the topic.

18. SUB = subject marker; EP = extended predicate.

19. The sentence-final { } indicates what I as the interlocutor infer as a possible reading of what would have been implied at the moment of the interview.

20. NEG = negative: QUOT = quotative particle; STAT = stative.

21. As the outcome of multivariate analysis, these VR weights indicate the strength relative to other potential independent factors; in other words, they have been calculated in relation to the constraining force of other intersecting factors that were assumed to affect particle ellipsis simultaneously. The other factors whose effects on -wa ellipsis are found statistically significant include (1) particle marking on other NPs in the same clause (p < .001); (2) preceding sounds (p < .001); (3) following phonetic and pausal environments (p < .001); (4) pragmatic force (p < .001); (5) information status of NPs marked/unmarked (p < .001); (6) styles (p < .025). They are discussed in detail elsewhere (Takano 1997).

22. See note 21 for the list of such factors that are found statistically significant.

23. These VARBRUL weights were calculated in relation to text types (descriptions, explanations, opinions) and styles, both of which were also found to be statistically significant at p < .001 and < .05, respectively (Takano 1997: 206–211).

24. The intergroup differences in the three styles are found not to be statistically significant (p > .100; $x^2 = 5.9$; d.f. = 4). But, those only in the two styles, conversational exchange and narratives, are close to the .05 level of significance at .10 > p > .05 ($x^2 = 5.39$; d.f. = 2). Also note that the subgroups' preferences for interactional ethos should be partly responsible for the revealed variability. In the preceding sections, the conversational phase of interaction is found to favor linguistic economy — both particle ellipsis and use of fragmental utterances — whereas the narrative phase is found to be associated with the lesser use of fragmental utterances and has a neutral effect on particle ellipsis.

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