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# *Self-updating in a narrative context\**

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## **1. Introduction (=abstract)**

It often seems to be the case that in the course of an extended turn or series of turns, a speaker will return to the same particle on the same ‘note’ as it were, or momentary tone-of-voice. A common and well-researched example would be the English *y’know*, which is unconsciously inserted at various junctures in phrase structure. Each token of *y’know* has the same or strikingly similar acoustic properties to the one that preceded it.

Here we focus on the particles *na* and *ne* in Japanese--roughly understood as ‘declarative’ and ‘confirmative’, respectively. Unlike *y’know*, these forms have important syntactic (rather than parenthetical) functions, and tend to be more prominently displayed in terms of loudness (relative to their surroundings) and pitch--itself a composite of higher-order frequencies (F3, F4, etc.). Here even the slightest variation can signal changes in speaker attitude or sentiment. In addition (we claim), their tone indicates the speaker’s intentions with regard to staying on topic and/or willingness to cede the floor.

We first examine the distribution of *na* and *ne* in select samples of everyday Japanese. The focus is on situations where the speaker has an obvious conversational goal, such as having a household item dropped off for repair. In explaining the circumstances, the speaker has a clear right to hold the floor and control the topic. In such self-projecting narratives, the acoustic properties of the tokens (*na/ne*) are shown to be remarkably similar; only when the (self-perceived) goal of imparting the necessary information has been met does the characteristic bundle of frequencies begin to change. The relevant data was analyzed using PRAAT, and checked by native speakers.

Our explanation of these observed phenomena is that the speaker is performing a kind of self-updating exercise as per what s/he intends to do through repeated display of his or her internal states. In this regard, the intoning of *na* and *ne* can be understood as a form of politeness, inviting the listener to follow and/or participate in the train of thought. The analysis suggests that interactants orient themselves to conventional, recognizable aspects of the acoustic signal that point to particular emotional stances, vocally expressed. One can therefore speak of an ‘emotional stance’ in terms of tone of voice. In the course of an utterance, a speaker conveys his/her information (or ‘take on things’) to the listener--who, in turn, can only imagine what it would take to produce an utterance such as that. A vocal stance is thus an important moment in a conversation (as it were), to some extent determining its course as planned or interpreted, perhaps even bearing on the relationship between the speakers themselves--be it personal, casual, formal, or socially prescribed. It is also vital to the notion of politeness in the pragmatic sense, which in turn has important consequences for research in that field as well.

## 2. Preliminaries

### 2.1 Previous studies

Both *na* and *ne* have been extensively discussed in the literature.

Although most studies have focused on their role as sentence-final particles, we will consider them with respect to the utterance, i.e. final or non-final (medial). The following is a small sample of observations on **na** and **ne**, mainly concentrating on their meaning but in some cases on sound as well. See Appendix A for the actual sentences containing these forms.

According to Makino & Tsutsui (1998), **ne** is "...a sentence-final particle that indicates the speaker's request for confirmation or agreement from the hearer about some shared knowledge." The **ne** of agreement uses falling intonation, whereas the **ne** of confirmation uses rising intonation. As a non-sentence-final particle, **ne** "...draws the hearer's attention to something, or confirms [the hearer's understanding] up to that point. This [self-projecting] **ne** is often used in telephone conversations."

Kawashima (1999) lists eight ways in which the particle **na** can be used: 1) as a men's exclamatory particle expressing emotion (non-translatable); 2) for casual emphasis on a decision, suggestion, or opinion (non-translatable); 3) as a 'response elicitor' in men's language (cf. Eng.'right?'); 4) as a casual remark of wishful thinking (cf. Eng.'I wish'); 5) as a means of asking a favor in women's language following *-te kudasai* or *nasai* (non-translatable); 6) as a way of "setting the tone" when the speaker (a man) is lecturing the listener (non-translatable); 7) as a negative imperative (Eng.'Don't!'), and 8) a colloquial command (non-translatable). No doubt there are others, given the particular circumstances in which it is used. This begs the question: What can't the particle **na** mean?

According to Kawashima the particle **ne** can be used as 1) a casual exclamation (non-translatable); 2) a casual gesture of confirmation (cf. Eng.'right'); 3) to elicit agreement from the addressee (cf. Eng.'okay?'); 4) a question 'softener' (non-translatable); 5) as a meaningless particle for rhythmic purposes (non-translatable), or 6) as part of fixed expressions like *Ano-ne*. (cf. Eng. "Listen."). Needless to say, in most of the examples cited here (and elsewhere), both **ne** and **na** appear at the end of a sentence and/or utterance. In this talk, I will concentrate on their appear-

ance in a larger context, i.e. internal to a longer turn or utterance). I will refer to this usage as ‘narrative’ inasmuch as the speaker does not intend to cede the floor and bears in mind a specific conversational goal to be worked out.

Utterance-internal instances of *ne* (*na*) have different acoustic properties than those found in utterance-final position. We examine this in the data described below.

## **2.2 Data: weather reports and natural conversation**

The data consisted of two kinds: weather reports and spontaneous natural conversation. Several recordings were made of Kansai weather reports broadcast live at 6:55 AM on NHK (Osaka). These invariably involve two people talking in a semi-natural format. The questions are formulated prior to air time, but the answers are left for the ‘guest expert’ to work out in his/her own fashion. They are valued for their high quality and authenticity, as well as for the absence of recording policy issues (Appendix B). In addition, there were recordings of various conversations in natural settings (Appendix C).

An acoustic analysis of the particles and surrounding speech was made using PRAAT, the speech analysis software. The following information about the particles was gleaned from this.

## **3. Analysis**

The particles *na* and *ne* were analyzed for pitch, duration, speech rate and intensity, both in utterance-final and utterance-internal position. The relative properties of each are displayed below.

Utterance-final *ne* can be pronounced at different pitch levels than the words immediately preceding it. In addition, it can carry contours, i.e. pitch changes (rising, falling) during its articulation. In contrast, utterance-internal *ne* is only pronounced at a high pitch level preceded by rising intonation. This continues briefly before returning to various other pitch levels.

(1) Pitch (Hz)

<i>Particle</i>	<i>Tone</i>	<i>Complexity</i>
Final <b>ne</b>	{H/M/L}	±
Internal <b>ne</b>	H	–
Internal <b>na</b>	M	–
Final <b>na</b>	{H/M/L}	±

A similar pattern holds for utterance-final vs. utterance-internal **na**. In terms of pitch, the former varies widely across tokens (higher, lower) and potential complexity (hosting pitch changes). The latter generally has a higher pitch than the elements surrounding it, and is always simplex.

In utterance-final position the duration of **ne** can be long or short, but spoken turn-internally it is always short. The same pattern holds for the particle **na**.

(2) Duration (ms)

<i>Particle</i>	<i>'Longer' (ms)</i>	<i>'Shorter' (ms)</i>
Final <b>ne</b>	+	+
Internal <b>ne</b>	–	+
Internal <b>na</b>	–	+
Final <b>na</b>	+	+

Since both particles are monosyllabic, it is impossible to measure their speech rate in terms of syllables per second, comparing this to the rate of preceding words. However, one can measure the 'degree of separation' between the particles and their clausal 'hosts', i.e. to see if they must be pronounced more-or-less immediately or permit a time lag. The results indicated that utterance-final particles exhibit a moderate degree of separation, but utterance-internal ones do not.

(3) Speech rate (separation from host clause)

*Particle*                      *Degree of separation*

Final <b>ne</b>	‘loosely bound’
Internal <b>ne</b>	‘tightly bound’
Internal <b>na</b>	‘tight but separate’
Final <b>na</b>	‘tight but separate’

The same general pattern seen regarding speech rate also holds for intensity (loudness). Both utterance-final **ne** and **na** can be pronounced at a higher or lower intensity relative to the preceding words. Utterance-internal **ne** maintains the intensity of the preceding material, but **na** represents a veritable constant, sometimes in stark contrast to surrounding sounds.

(4) Intensity (dB)

*Particle*                      *Average differential from host*

Final <b>ne</b>	‘higher’
Internal <b>ne</b>	‘lower’
Internal <b>na</b>	‘lower’
Final <b>na</b>	‘higher’

As these charts show, there are several important differences in the acoustic make-up of the same particle (**ne** or **na**), depending on whether it occurs in utterance-final or -internal position. This corresponds with shifts in functional meaning as well, as discussed below.

## 4. Concluding remarks

We have looked at the distribution and acoustic properties of **ne** and **na**; now we consider their functions (again). Utterance-final particles have myriad functions, as enumerated above. Strikingly, utterance-

internal *ne* and *na* have none of these. Why is that? Note that while utterance-final particles are highly interactional, those found in the middle of the turn are not. It is as though the speaker is using the functional capacity of *ne* and *na* for something entirely different, i.e. the infrastructure of the turn itself. This can be the signal for a narrative style (*ne*), or a ‘self-check’ to maintain affective stance (*na*). The story of each particle is different. For *na* we have an ‘affect check’, a fluctuating display of stance as new lexical items come online. For *ne* the message is “There’s more to come” in terms of necessary information. These are the functions of utterance-internal particles: to update the listener on the status of conversational goals as required by the narrative form, that is, its structure and/or genre.

## Appendix A: Previous studies

*Makino & Tsutsui (1998)*

(5) Confirmation, extended (exclamatory) p.287

- A: おもしろい映画ですねえ  
B: そうですねえ

*Kawashima (1999) on na*

(6) Exclamatory particle

- a. 少し会わないうちに大きくなったな (あ)。  
‘You’ve grown a lot since I saw you last’  
b. 野菜の値段が随分上がったな (あ)。  
‘The price of vegetables sure went up!’  
c. ビール三ダースか、ずいぶんたくさん飲んだな (あ)。  
‘Three dozen beers—you drank a lot!’

(7) Casual emphasis

- a. あしたも試験だ。いやだな (あ)。  
‘Another exam again tomorrow—what a pain!’  
b. 僕は、そのうわさは本当だと思うな。

'I think that rumor's true'

(8) Response elicitor

- a. お借りした本は、確かにお返ししましたな。  
'I definitely returned the book I borrow, right?'
- b. 去年の春、京都でお目にかかりましたな。  
'We met in Kyoto last spring, right?'

(9) Wishful thinking

- a. 毎日忙しすぎる。少しのんびりしたいなあ。  
'I'm busy every day. I wish I could relax a little'
- b. 南十字星が見えるといいな (あ)。  
'Hope I'll be able to see the Southern Cross'

(10) Asking a favor (women only)

- a. あした必ずお電話くださいな。  
'Give me a call tomorrow'
- b. もう十二時すぎですよ。早くおやすみなさいな。  
'It's past 12 already. You should go to bed soon'

(11) Lecturing style (men only)

- a. あのな、このことは内緒だよ。  
'Listen, this is a secret OK?'
- b. ところでな、いいニュースがあるんだよ。  
'By the way, I have some good news'

(12) Negative imperative

- a. いよいよマラソン大会の日だね。最後までくじけるな。  
'The big day of the marathion is finally here. Don't give up until the end!'
- b. きこの雪が氷になったから危ないよ。転ぶな。  
'Yesterday's snow has turned to ice, so it's dangerous. Don't fall'

(13) Colloquial command

- a. さあ, 早く見せな。  
'Come on, show it to me already!'
- b. とつとつ歩きな。  
'Walk quickly'

*Kawashima (1999) on ne*

(14) Casual exclamation

- a. まあ, バイオリンが上手に弾けるのね (え)。  
'Whoa, you're really good on that violin!'
- b. 立派なお宅にお住まいでいらっしゃいますね (え)。  
'What a nice place you live in!'

(15) Casual gesture of confirmation

- a. 今わたしが言ったこと, よくわからなかったみたいね。  
'You don't seem to have understood what I said just now, no?'
- b. これはやはり本物ではないようですね。  
'It sure doesn't look like this is authentic, does it?'

(16) Desire to elicit agreement

- a. わかったから, もう泣かないでね。  
'I understand, so please stop crying, OK?'
- b. 許してくださいね。もう二度とご心配をおかけしませんから。  
'Forgive me? I won't let you worry again'

(17) Softener to a question

- a. アメリカに旅行したのは, いつだったっけね (え)。  
'When was it that we went to the US?'
- b. 君の故郷はどこかね。  
'Where are you from originally?'

(18) For rhythmic purposes

- a. 五合目まで車で行って, それからね (え), その先は歩いて頂上まで

登ったよ。

'We drove to the halfway point, and after that walked all the way up to the top'

b. あたしね (え), 今日かけっこで一等になったのよ。

'I came in first the running race today'

(19) In set phrases

a. あのね (え), 今晚僕のほうからまた電話するよ。

'Listen, I'll call you again this evening'

b. そうだね (え), もう一年前になるんだ, 卒業したのは。

'Yeah you're right. It's been a year since I graduated'

## Appendix B: Weather reports

Guest (1:00): [Utterance-final]

夜になると西から気圧の谷が近づいてきますので、  
雲が多くなってきそうですね。

In the night, from the west a trough of low atmospheric pressure will approach, so the sky will become overcast.

Host (1:10): [Utterance-final]

それから, 今日はちょっと, 寒いかか気温が低そうですね。

Then, today the temperature seems low [it seems slightly cold].

Guest (1:13): [Utterance-internal]

今日の最高気温はですね, 近畿地方の北部では大体10度くらいでして,  
Today's high is, in the northern part of Kinki, around 10 degree, and...

Guest (1:21): [Utterance-final]

昨日に比べますと10度ほど低い気温になりそうですね。

The temperature will be 10 degrees lower than that of yesterday.

Guest (1:29): [Utterance-final]

これで昨日より5度前後低い気温ですね。

This temperature is about 5 degrees lower than that of yesterday.

Host (1:36): [Utterance-final]

一昨日くらいもね、20度を超えたりと暑いぐらいの日が続いてましたから、ずいぶんこう差が大きいですね。

It has been hot these days, for example the day before yesterday the temperature was in the 20s, so there is a big difference in temperature, right?

Guest (1:45): [Utterance-internal]

体調管理、まあ服装などをうまくね、あの、調節等をしていただきたいと思います。

I hope people take care of themselves, I mean clothes adjustment etc.

Guest (1:52): [Utterance-final]

風や波にも注意が必要ですね。

We need to turn our attentions to wind and waves.

Guest (2:06): [Utterance-internal]

で、また波の高さがですね、日本海沿岸では4メートルから5メートル、瀬戸内海沿岸では1メートルから1メートル50センチ、

Then, the height of waves, in the Japan sea coastal areas will be 4 to 5 meters, and in the Inland Sea coastal areas will be 1 to 1.5 meters,

Guest (2:21): [Utterance-internal]

日本海沿岸ではもう湿気るところもありそうですのでね、暴風や高波に注意をしていただきたいと思います。

In the Japan sea coastal areas some parts can already have high humidity, so I hope people pay attention to a windstorm and a high sea.

Guest (2:37): [Utterance-final]

今週の金曜日くらいまでは、気温が平年より低い状態が続きそうですね。

Around until this Friday the temperature will have remained lower than that of the average year.

Guest (2:53): [Utterance-final]

また、内陸部の方では3度近くまで下がりました、霜の降りる恐れがありますね。

In addition, in inland areas the temperature will fall into around 3 degrees, and there is a possibility of frost.

Guest (3:07): [Utterance-final]

明日もあまり気温が上がらないですね。

Tomorrow the temperature will not rise either.

Guest (3:20): [Utterance-final]

明日から明後日ですね、

From tomorrow to the day after tomorrow,

Guest (3:23): [Utterance-final]

天気の崩れるようなところがあるかもしれませんね。

In some parts the weather can break.

Guest (3:37): [Utterance-internal/final]

寒気が流れ込んでいるところに、まあ、雨が降るとことはですね、標高の高いところではひよっとすると、

雨ではなくて雪の降るようなところが出てくるかもしれませんね。

A cold front will come in, and at the same time it will rain. That means there is a possibility of snow falling, not rain, in high elevation areas.

Guest (3:52): [Utterance-final]

おそらく積もるほどは降らないかと思えますけれども、まあ、

それぐらい寒いと思いますね。

It should not snow so much, but I think it will be cold enough to snow.

Guest (4:08): [Utterance-final]

また気温の方もですね、土曜日の最高気温が大阪では大体18度くらいで、

And about the temperature, in Osaka Saturday's high is around 18 degrees,

Host (4:14): [Utterance-final]

あー、ずいぶん上がりますね。

Oh, the temperature will rise extremely, won't it?

Guest (4:22): [Utterance-final]

また、日曜日は20度を上回る場所が多くなってきそうですね。

And in many places Sunday's high will be in the 20s.

Guest (4:36): [Utterance-internal]

週末の土曜日、日曜日は晴れてまずまずのお出かけ日和になりそうですね、

This Saturday and Sunday will be fine and ideal weather for going out, so

## Appendix C: Natural conversation

...の方に寄って行くんで。それ、後藤さん知ってますかね？ 電話した方がいいですか？ そうそうそう、朝有馬に寄って、で... あ、うんうん... うん... ん？ あの... え、どうしよう... お弁当代とかね、もう請求が来とうから、王君に渡しとこかなとかかって思ってんだけど。連絡した方がいい？ 連絡した方がいい？ いい？ えっ、どっちがどっちでもいい？ せんでもいい？ うん分かった、じゃああの... うん、うんうん、そうします、そういうことでよろしく。あ、お昼？ あーお昼かあ、どうしようかな... そうか、お

昼, お昼 ... 9時までにはまた連絡します ... はいはい。

I'm going to ~ first. Does Mrs. Gotou know that? Should I call her? Well... 'Yes yes, in the morning I'm going to Arima first, then... yes... Oh, What should I do... The charge for lunch was already claimed, so I wonder whether I should pass it to Mr. Wang. Should I tell it? Should I tell it? Should I? What? are both ok? Don't I need to do? I see, then... OK, I'll do it, that should be all, please take care of things. Oh, lunch? Well, lunch... what should I do... Well, lunch, lunch... I'll call before 9 o'clock... OK, OK

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