

地方語とキャラクターとジェンダーの関わり： 「麦畑」という演歌のスタイリステック分析

ミックマーヒル・カイラン

Dialect, character, and gender:
A stylistic analysis of the Japanese popular song, “Mugibatake”

Cheiron McMAHILL

日本語のレジюме：日本のマスコミや大衆文化においては、方言に対する先入観を生かし、独特の女性キャラクターを描くことが多い。本論では、下町や東北の方言のどこが、共通語の話者に、強い、暖かい、漫才的、荒っぽい、素直、あるいは女らしくない、などというイメージを与えるのかを、スタイリステックな視点から探る。演歌「麦畑」の分析で、共通語と地方語における丁寧語と性差の違いが、地方語に対するイメージの形成の、主な原因になっているのではないかと提案する。

英語のレジюме：The stereotypes associated with certain dialects are used in Japanese popular culture to sketch out particular kinds of female characters. In this article, I have taken a stylistic approach to explore the question of what it is exactly about dialects such as that of Shitamachi or Tohoku that create an impression of toughness, humor, friendliness, directness, and vulgarity, as well as gender deviation, in Standard Japanese speakers. Based on a stylistic analysis of the popular song “Mugibatake”, I suggest that the lack of exactly equivalent gender and

register markers between Standard Japanese and rural dialects such as Tohoku's can account for the way rural dialects are popularly perceived.

1. Introduction

Early sociolinguistic analysis of gender and language in Japan introspectively drew attention to the ways in which men and women were supposed to speak differently (Ide 1979). Certain particles and registers were thought to be always or almost always used exclusively by one sex or the other (Shibamoto 1985, Ide 1990). More recent empirical work draws on discourse analysis and phonological analysis to point out the wide variation in actual usage of so-called "feminine" and "masculine" style markers by female and male speakers (Furo 1996, Matsumoto 1996). Other research investigates gender differences in conversational dominance, and finds differences not in the amount or type of speech per se, but in the predominance of self-oriented styles in males and other-oriented styles in females (Itakura 2001).

Gendered ways of speaking in Japanese have thus come to be seen as ideals, norms, even ideology, rather than necessarily reflecting actual usage for all people (Inoue 1994). It is inevitable then that attention now turn to how gender is performed, and how the impression of femininity or masculinity is created in the mind of the listener/reader through language. One article in particular, Okamoto (1996), looks at how dialects of Shitamachi and Osaka are used by female characters in popular culture such as comic strips, TV shows, and movies. She asserts that certain older, tough or nasty female characters are made to use a regional dialect to a greater extent than younger, sweeter women because of the popular association between these dialects and warmth, directness, crudeness, and humor. After analyzing the speech of characters as portrayed by authors

and screenwriters, Okamoto concludes:

Of course, the linguistic representations in popular culture are not intended as accurate depictions of actual speech practices. Rather, they are what the creators believe to be the most effective for characters in specific social situations in their fictional worlds. Here, the writers often emphasize the diversity of speech styles in emotions, and atmosphere or setting. Such emphases often rely on linguistic and sociocultural stereotypes, which in turn reproduce the same stereotypes (Okamoto 1996: 585).

This seems to be getting very close to a stylistic analysis of fictional works in popular culture. As Okamoto points out, women's speech in such dialects as Shitamachi's and Osaka's is far from the stereotypical Japanese "women's speech" (Okamoto 1996: 580). But what exactly it is linguistically about the use of the dialect by female characters that contributes so effectively to their characterization?

In this paper, I theorize that such popular perceptions of dialects could be due to an equation of certain features of many regional dialects with informal and masculine registers in Standard Japanese¹. The result is that by comparison, regional dialects are perceived, consciously or unconsciously, as more intimate, direct, childish, and hence more humorous than Standard Japanese, and thus also suitable for evoking a certain type of feminine character. To prove my point, I undertake a stylistic analysis of the Japanese popular *enka* song, "Mugibatake," or in English, "wheatfield." Stylistics is the branch of linguistics which deals with

¹ By Standard Japanese, I mean 標準語 or 共通語.

precisely how, linguistically, texts achieve certain literary effects in the minds of readers/listeners (Short 1996). After pointing out the general linguistic features of the song which make it memorable and interesting, I focus on why the use of Tohoku dialect was chosen to characterize the lovers who converse in the song for a national audience. Finally, I explore how the choice of dialect in this particular song contributes to a surprising yet traditional image of gender roles.

1.2. The song and its English translation

The written lyrics that accompany the commercially sold cassette recording of the song are copied below in each numbered first line in bold. The second line is the Romanized version in italics. The third line is a linguistic gloss in English in shaded italics. The fourth gloss is a free translation into English.

麦畑 (Wheatfield)

VERSE 1

- 1 (男) 俺らと一緒に暮らすのは およね おめえだと
Ora to isshou ni kurasu no wa oyone omee da to
I and together with live which topic particle Oyone you copula say
- (Man) I say the one who will live with me, is you, Oyone
- 2 ずーと前から決めていた 嫁っこさきておくれ
zutto mee kara kimeteita oyomekko sa kite okure
All the time before from decided was bride come please
I've had my mind made up a long, long time- Please come be my bride
- 3 (女) やんだたまげたな 急に何言うだ

ya n da tamageta na kyuu ni nani yuu da

Disgusting is surprised, how suddenly what say copula

(Woman) Oh my, but I am surprised- What do you say so suddenly

4 俺らも前から 松つつあんを 好きだと思ってた

ora mo mee kara mattsuan o suki da to omoteta

*I too before from Matssuan direct obj. love copula
thinking was*

I've also thought from a long time ago, that I love you,
Mattsuan

5 (男) 鍬を持つ手が震えてる

kuwa o motsu te ga furueteru

Hoe direct obj. hold hand subj. trembling are

(Man) [My] hands holding the hoe are trembling

6 (女) 鎌を持つ手も震えてる

kama o motsu te mo furueteru

Sickle direct obj. hold hand also trembling are

(Woman) [My] hands holding the sickle are also trembling

7 (男・女) 二人の心は 沈む夕陽に 真赤っ赤に染められて

*futari no kokoro wa shizumu yuushi ni makkaka ni
somerarete*

*Two people possessive particle heart topic part. sink sun
by deep-redly dyeing*

(Man, woman) Our two hearts are dyed deeply red by the setting sun

8 (女) 俺らでええのか

ora de ee no ka

I at good emphatic particle interrogative particle

(Woman) Am I really right for you?

9 (男) 俺らおめえでええてば

ora omee de ee teba

I you at good say exclamative particle

(Man) I said you were right for me!

10 (男・女) 愛の花咲く 麦畑

ai no hana saku mugibatake

Love possessive particle flower bloom wheatfield

(Man, woman) Where the flowers of love bloom· the wheatfield

VERSE 2

11 (男) もしも嫌いといわれたら 俺らなじょうしたべ

moshimo kirai to iwaretara ora najou shita be

*If perhaps hate quotative particle was told, I what do
conjectural copula*

(Man) If you had said no, what would I have done

12 生きる希望も 夢もなく 一人で死んだべな

ikiru kibou mo yume mo naku hitori de shinda be na

*Live hope also dream also not, alone by died conjectural
copula affective particle*

Without a hope or a dream to live· I probably would have
died alone

13 (女) あいやかわいそう 馬鹿なこと言うな

aiya kawai sou baka na koto iu na

Exclamation of horror, pitiful, foolish things say not

(Woman) Oh, you poor thing· Don't say such silly things

14 俺らも毎日 松つつあんの プロポーズ待っていた

ora mo mainichi mattsuan no puropoozu matte ita

*I also every day Mattsuan poss. particle propose waiting
was*

- 15 (男) I, too, every day, was waiting for your proposal, Matsuan
 交わす目と目が震えてる
kawasu me to me ga furueteru
Exchange eye and eye subj. particle trembling are
 (Man) The eyes (with which we) gaze at each other are trembling
- 16 (女) さわる手とても震えてる
sawaru te to te mo furueteru
Touch hand and hand also trembling are
 (Woman) The hands (with which we) touch each other are trembling
- 17 (男・女) 二人の心は 沈む夕陽に 真赤っ赤に染められて
futari no kokoro wa shizumu yuushi ni makkaka ni
somerarete
Two people poss .particle heart topic part. sink sun by
deep-redly dyeing
 (Man, woman) Our two hearts are dyed deeply red by the setting sun
- 18 (女) 俺ら信じてええのか
ora shinjite ee no ka
I believing good emphatic part. question part.
 (Woman) Can I really believe you?
- 19 (男) 俺ら絶対嘘つかね
ora zettai uso tsukane
I absolutely lie affix-not
 (Man) I would never ever lie!
- 20 (男・女) 愛の花咲く 麦畑
ai no hana saku mugibatake
Love poss. part. bloom wheatfield
 (Man, woman) Where the flowers of love bloom the wheatfield

VERSE 3

21(男) 俺らの嫁っこに来るってが およね えがったな
ora no yomekko ni kuru tte ga oyone egatta na
I poss. part. bride-child to come say subj. part. Oyone
good-was emphatic part.

(Man) You are the one I wanted to come be my bride
22 うんと大事にすっからよ も少しこっちゃさこい
unto daiji ni sukkara yo mo sukoshi kotchasakoi
Very importantly treat so emphatic part. a little more
come- imperative

I'll take real good care of you- Come over here a little closer

23(女) やんだはずかしな ちっと気が早えな
yanda hazukashina chitto ki ga hayee na
Disgusting, embarrassing, a little spirit subj. part. fast
emphatic part.

(Woman) Now stop that, how embarrassing, aren't you a little too forward

24 俺らも一生松つつあんを たよりにすっからよ
ora mo isshou mattsuan o tayori ni sukkara yo
I also together Mattsuan dir. obj. depend on do so
emphatic part.

Remember I am going to depend on you the rest of my life

25(男) あわす口びる震えてる
awasu kuchibiru furueteru
Tbush lips trembling are

(Man) The lips that meet are trembling

26 (女) うれし涙も震えてる

ureshi namida mo furueteru

Happy tears poss. part. trembling are

(Woman) The tears of joy are trembling

27 (男・女) 二人の心は 沈む夕陽に 真赤っ赤に染められて

*futari no kokoro wa shizumu yuushi makkaka ni
somerarete*

*Two people poss. part. heart topic. part. sink sun deep-
redly dyeing*

(Man, woman) Our two hearts are dyed deeply red by the setting sun

28 (女) 俺ら本当に ハッピー

Ora hontou ni happii

I truly happii

(Woman) I am truly happy

29 (男) 俺らも本当に ハッピー

Ora mo hontou ni happii

I also truly happy

(Man) I too am truly happy

30 (男・女) 愛の花咲く 麦畑

Ai no hana saku mugibatake

Love poss. part. flower bloom wheatfield

(Man, woman) Where the flowers of love bloom the wheatfield

1.3 Some background on Tohoku and Tohoku Dialect

Tohoku is the northernmost region of the main Japanese island of Honshuu. Tohoku exemplifies “the countryside” for many Japanese, especially those living in the Tokyo and Kanto Region. The Tohoku regional languages are stereotyped nationally as unsophisticated, rough, but simple and warm, characteristic of peasants (in contrast to the dialect of Kyoto, for

example, which is supposed to be refined and sophisticated, since Kyoto was the ancient capital of Japan). Many Japanese comedians have parodied the dress and speech of Tohoku farmers in their routines.

I believe one linguistic reason dialects such as Tohoku's are viewed as simple and unsophisticated is that they have a different and little-known system of honorifics and gendered usage compared to standard Japanese. In such dialects, personal pronouns, verb and verbal adjective suffixes used between equals or even to express politeness are reminiscent on the surface of impolite and masculine forms used in standard Japanese. Although formal registers including honorifics exist in regional dialects, these forms are falling into disuse due to the influence of the Standard, and even young people in rural communities are unfamiliar with them. In other words, what were originally differences in syntax, lexis, and phonology between a regional and a standard language may generate certain interpretations of politeness, social distance, and/or gendered demeanor in the minds of people who aspire to the prestigious Standard. I will now illustrate this point using examples from "Mugibatake."

2. Analysis of "Mugibatake"

2.1 Dialect and characterization

In the song "Mugibatake," there are two characters, a man and a woman, engaging in the speech act of marriage proposal and acceptance. The song lyrics are a conversation between them. The couple refers to the setting sun, so we can infer that the couple is at the end of a long day's work in the field, covered with dirt and sweat, holding dirty farm tools in their hands.

However, the fact that they are holding these farming tools is embedded in a noun clause modifying their trembling hands (l. 5 & 6).

The descriptors of their appearance- trembling hands (l. 5-6), trembling eyes and hands (l. 15-16), trembling lips and trembling tears of joy (l. 25-26), add up to an emotional state of great nervousness and excitement, which is quite surprising in this particular setting. In addition, the characters clearly state their happiness using an English loanword- Woman: *ora hontou ni happii* (I am truly happy), Man: *ora mo hontou ni happii* (l. 28-29). Instead of being exhausted, these farmers are confessing their deepest feelings of love and devotion.

A clash between the schema of marriage proposal and farmers ending their day of hard work in a wheatfield, then, is the main way the songs manages to comically characterize the two lovers (Semino 1997). Clearly this combination of romance and wheatfield has been appealing to many Japanese. The original recording sold a million copies in 1990, and twelve years later the original recording artists, Oyoneezu, still tour the country performing at Japan Agricultural Cooperative fairs and events (<http://www.oyones.com>, 2002/09/20). However, we must still ask the question- why use this particular regional dialect for the song, rather than Standard Japanese?

Of course, the lyrics are not an accurate representation of Tohoku dialect, but a fictional representation of a Tohoku-like dialect for speakers of Standard Japanese. The song draws on certain features of regional dialects that appear to be deviant in terms of politeness and gender in order to surprise and captivate the listener. There is some evidence of this in the deviant orthography used to give the written song lyrics. As Culpeper (2001:167) points out:

We need to remember that writers are limited by the medium they are communicating in. They may use conventionalized ways of presenting the dialectal features

of speech in writing, relying on the reader's knowledge of accents and dialects to 'fill in the gaps.' Above all, we need to remember that the norms of writing are at issue. As Hughes (1996:96) points out: 'if a writer chooses to be "realistic," the reader automatically takes this to be a cue that the speaker is abnormal in some way.'

In the written lyrics for "Mugibatake" as well, only certain stereotypical phonetic features of the dialect are represented in phonetic transcription, and these are just enough to clue the reader into what type of dialect this is, as shown in the chart below:

Standard Japanese	Tohoku Dialect in the written lyrics
1st person singular pronoun <i>ore</i> 俺	<i>Ora</i> 俺ら (l. 1,4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, 21, 24, 28, 29) (marked as dialect by adding the syllabary for <i>ra</i> after the kanji usually read as <i>ore</i>)
2nd person singular pronoun <i>omae</i> お前	<i>Omee</i> おめえ (l. 1, 9, marked as dialect by being written in phonetic syllabary rather than kanji as in standard Japanese)
Negative present tense suffix for informal form verbs <i>nai</i> ない	<i>Ne</i> ね (transcribed thus in phonetic syllabary)
Verbal-adjective present-tense suffixes for "good, right" 良い <i>ii</i> or <i>yoi</i> and "fast, forward" <i>hayai</i> 早い; past tense root and suffix of "good" <i>yokatta</i> 良かった	<i>Ee</i> ええ for "good, right" (l. 8, 9) and <i>hayee</i> 早え (l. 23) (indicated by using phonetic syllabary rather than kanji for "good" and kanji plus the phonetic syllabary for <i>e</i> for the suffix for "fast"), <i>egatta</i> for "was good, right" (l. 23)

In fact, in Tohoku dialect all diphthongs such as *ai*, *ii*, and *oi* in standard Japanese are pronounced *e* or *ee*. One example in the song is that “before, ago” *mae* in standard Japanese is clearly recorded on the tape as *mee*, following the same rule as for the second person pronoun *omae* noted in the chart above, but no indication of this is given in the transcription; the kanji 前 is used with no indication that it be pronounced in a non-standard fashion (l. 2). Further, unvoiced intersyllabic consonants such as /k/ and /t/ in the standard are always voiced in the dialect. An example is the title of the song, “wheatfield,” pronounced *mugibatake* in standard Japanese, but clearly sung as *mugibadage* on the tape. It is written using the kanji 麦畑 (see title), with again no indication of the dialectal phonology, though *egatta* for *yokatta*, the last item in the chart above, clearly indicates in the transcription this phonetic k-g variation. Finally, it is common in dialects such as Tohoku’s to pronounce /h/ as /ʃ/ when it appears before /i/; this is clearly the case for the pronunciation of the word for sun in the song’s recording. Although it is sung as *yuushi* instead of *yuuhi* in l. 7, 17, and 27 this is unremarked in the transcription, which uses the kanji 夕陽 without comment.

Part of the reason has to do with comprehensibility (Short 1996). Words truly unique to Tohoku dialect, and which would therefore be incomprehensible to people in other parts of the country, are not used. Instead, lexical items typical of agricultural regional dialects in Japan, which evoke an image of folksy, “old-fashioned” and rural Japan regardless of specific region, are chosen. These are shown in the following chart:

Standard, modern Japanese	“Regional-sounding” old fashioned Japanese
Terms of address: Add “-san” to the end of someone’s name to denote	Add “o” to the beginning of a woman’s name, add “tsuan” to the first kanji of

respect, add “-chan” to denote a childhood nickname, etc. (Names plus a term of address are preferred in place of second person pronouns in Japanese)	a boy’s name (similar in meaning to chan). In the song, see “Oyone” for a woman named Yone in l. 1 and 21; “Mattsu” for a man whose name starts with the kanji <i>Matsu</i> in l. 4 & 24
Verb meaning “to be surprised”: <i>odoroku, bikkuri suru</i>	<i>Tamageru</i> (see l. 3 in the song)

On the other hand, lexical items are used which one would not expect to appear in the speech of two younger farmers. These items include the English loanwords for “marriage proposal” *puropoozu* プロポーズ in l. 14 and as mentioned before, “happy” *happii* ハッピー in l. 28 and 29. Using lots of foreign loanwords is a way to demonstrate one’s lexical richness and hence sophistication and cosmopolitanism in Japanese. The young, rural lovers using such words while speaking the seemingly old-fashioned and rustic Tohoku dialect is surprising and comic.

Only two syntactic forms are represented that differ from standard Japanese—again these may have been selected as representative and easily categorized markers of regional speech. One is the polite imperative form used in the man’s proposal in l. 2, *okure*, whose equivalent in standard Japanese would be *kudasai*. These could be seen as dialectal or merely old-fashioned. Another is the conjectural form of the copula, *be*, in l. 11 and 12, which would be *darou* or *deshou* in standard Japanese. As with the lexis, these forms are not identifiable only with Tohoku dialect, but more generally with many rural dialects in Japan. Although the Standard “*suru kara*” is written as “*sukkara*” in l. 22 and 24, this can be considered an easily understood phonological elision and not a true difference in

syntax.

What is interesting for the purposes of this discussion is that although there is indication that the two characters are speaking with some politeness or at least friendly equality in the dialect- i.e., the polite forms of address and the man's polite use of *okure* the verb suffixes resemble the rough, impolite forms used by men and small children in standard Japanese. In standard Japanese, for example, the copula *desu* as a final verb form is more polite than the copula *da*, used in l. 1 and 3. Such apparently informal syntactic forms are what characterize the lovers in this song as warm, direct, and a little exotic for standard speakers, although their register of speech does not necessarily connote this within the linguistic world of the dialect itself.

2.2 Dialect , politeness and gender

Let us return to the differences between the dialect in the song and standard Japanese, looking at them again through the lens of prescriptive grammars of gender and politeness:

Standard Japanese	Tohoku Dialect in the written lyrics
1st person singular pronoun <i>ore</i> 俺 is considered vulgar and masculine in Standard Japanese	<i>Ora</i> 俺ら (l. 1,4, 8, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, 21, 24, 28, 29) is used by both the man and the woman in the song. In the village where I live in Gunma, <i>ore</i> or <i>ora</i> are also gender-neutral terms.
2nd person singular pronoun <i>omae</i> お前 Is considered vulgar and used only by men talking to a lower-status person in Standard Japanese	<i>Omee</i> おめえ (l. 1, 9) is used by the man to the woman in the song while the woman calls the man by his nickname, Mattsuan. This seems to imply gender asymmetry, but in fact <i>omee</i> is

	commonly used by women in regional dialects and is a neutral or polite term of address (Hirayama 1997).
Negative present tense suffix for informal form verbs <i>nai</i> ない. <i>Nai</i> is considered to be informal, casual, and direct in Standard Japanese. Its use as a sentence-final main verb is supposed to be masculine.	<i>Ne</i> ね is a verb suffix used by only the man in the song. However, it is not marked for gender in regional dialects such as Tohoku's. <i>Nee</i> , virtually identical to <i>ne</i> , is also the common negative verb suffix in dialects such as Shitamachi's and Gunma's. If used in the Standard, it is supposed to be highly vulgar and masculine.
Verbal-adjective present-tense suffixes for "good, right" 良い <i>ii</i> or <i>yoi</i> and "fast, forward" <i>hayai</i> 早い; past tense root and suffix of "good" <i>yokatta</i> 良かった. Using these verbal-adjectives without adding the copula <i>desu</i> at the end is supposed to be the hallmark of casual, informal, and more masculine speech in the Standard.	<i>Ee</i> ええ for "good, right" (l. 8, 9) <i>hayee</i> 早え (l. 23), and <i>egatta</i> for "was good, right" (l. 23). Not only is the copula not used after final verbal-adjectives in the dialect, but the phonological rule whereby all diphthongs are pronounced <i>ee</i> in various regional dialects in Honshuu is considered a sign of vulgarity, crudeness, and masculinity in the Standard.

In addition, the woman uses a verbal suffix *na* of prohibition after the verb *iu* or say in l. 13. This is supposed to be quite imperious, almost rude in Standard Japanese and the preserve of males. However, in the dialect it is a plain and intimate form, such as the standard *iwanaide* or *iwainaide ne*.

There are two possible positive and interrelated effects of hearing this dialect, then, on speakers of Standard Japanese; one of informality and hence intimacy, and one of a lack of gender differences, and hence

innocence and equality. This apparent frankness and closeness may seem enviable to a speaker of the Standard.

On the other hand, there are negative effects as well of childishness and crudeness which make the dialect humorous. This is because by Standard standards dialect speakers *appear* not to have mastered the elaborate rules for altering verbal demeanor according to status differences between speakers, and gender along with age, social class, relationship, and setting is calculated as an important factor in status.

This apparent use of crude and masculine speech by the woman also clashes with her high-pitched voice and conventionally feminine behavior in the verbal interaction of the whole, and can also be considered a reason for the exotic and surprising effects and hence the novelty of the song. Throughout, the man is the initiator and the woman the recipient of the action. The woman plays a reactive role that may remind listeners of the good old days, when Japanese women's goal in life was supposed to be marriage. Although Oyone has as many turns in the conversation and speaks as much as he does, she does so in response to Matsuan's utterances, except when she asks for approval or reassurance. Her main role is to echo, amplify, or express the moral or emotional aspects of the situation. An example of this is her frequent use of the particle *mo*, or also, in the sense of "me, too" in her responses to his assertions.

In addition, the woman characterizes herself as sexually virtuous by describing her own emotional state as *tamageta* (surprised) at his proposal, *hazukashina* (embarrassed) at his "fast spirit" or forwardness as he asks her to come closer. The man promises to take good care of her, and she promises to always depend on him. Despite this less powerful and less aggressive sexual role she takes in the linguistic interaction, however, she uses what to Standard Japanese speaker ears is apparently rough,

informal, masculine language. This amounts to a nostalgically idealized character who is feminine and chaste but also a strong, hardworking, and simple farm woman.

3 Conclusion

It is true that, as Okamoto (1996) notes, the stereotypes associated with certain dialects are used in Japanese popular culture to sketch out particular kinds of female characters. In this article, I have taken a stylistic approach to explore the question of what it is exactly about dialects such as that of Shitamachi or Tohoku that, selectively and symbolically used, create an impression of humor, friendliness, directness, and vulgarity, as well as tough femininity, in Standard Japanese speakers. My tentative answer is that the similarity between informal and masculine registers of speech in the Standard and the plain, gender-neutral speech of rural dialects such as Tohoku's can account for the way rural dialects are popularly perceived and used in the characterization of different kinds of Japanese femininity.

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