Japanese Sentence-Final Particle NE: A Relevance-Theoretic Approach*

REIKO ITANI

Abstract

In this paper, I survey the ways in which utterances appended with *ne* (often translated into English tags such as 'isn't it?' and 'don't you?') achieve relevance. The sentence-final particle *ne* is often associated with illocutionary force or speaker's commitment to the proposition expressed (e.g. Uyeno 1971, Tsuchihashi 1983 and Kendal 1985), but this line of analysis does not cover the full range of data adequately. Also this particle is associated with politeness, supposedly decreasing the degree of 'face-threat' (Brown & Levinson 1987). However, I will show that this is not the intrinsic feature of *ne*, though this effect can arise in the appropriate context. I claim that notions introduced by Relevance Theory do enable a convincing account of this particle.

1 Introduction

Japanese grammarians agree that sentence-final particles including *ne* does not affect the propositional content of an utterance and that their primary function is to 'act upon the addressee' (Haga 1953: 59, Watanabe 1953: 26-27, Saji 1956: 26-31, etc.). However, they do not clarify what it means to act upon the addressee and I feel we need an explicit account of the intrinsic nature of *ne* in terms of the hearer's utterance interpretation process. In this paper, I will

make an attempt to arrive at the semantics of this particle. I will first look at kinds of usage listed by the National Language Research Institute (1951):

(1)   Exclamation, e.g.

Baka *ne*. Anta wa hitori ni narya shinai.
silly! you alone will not be
How silly (of you to have such an idea)! You won't be left alone.

(2)   Speaker's insistence, e.g.

Kohii to chiisana pan dake desu kara *ne*.
coffee and tiny bread only were since
Since there were only coffee and a tiny bread roll, you know.

(3)   Seeking for agreement, encouraging a response, e.g.

Anna daisuisei wa mettani arawarenai deshoo *ne*.
Such big comet rarely appear will
Such a big comet will rarely come into sight, won't it?

(4)   Questioning, e.g.

Nan to kaite aru *ne*?
what written is
What is written (there)?

(National Language Research Institute 1951)

The alleged differences among these four uses are not clear at all: e.g. some might argue that in (4) the speaker is encouraging the hearer to respond to her question and so this utterance should be under (3). In fact in all of the examples above, the same aspect of meaning such as exclamation, speaker's insistence etc. can be communicated to the hearer even without *ne*, if an appropriate tone of voice and contextual information are given. This shows that none of the above uses is intrinsic to this particle. Now what is the intrinsic nature of this particle? I will first show that existing analyses of *ne* are not accurate and then present a Relevance-based analysis of *ne*.

2 Problems with Existing Analyses

2.1 Uyeno (1971)

Uyeno (1971) analyses Japanese sentence final particles including *ne* within the framework of generative semantics and presents detailed sociolinguistic constraints on the use of these particles. She argues that *ne* can be associated with at least four underlying performative verbs: i.e. STATE, ASK, ORDER and SUGGEST. For example, Uyeno (1971) would argue that (3) and (4) above have the following underlying structures:

(5)   The speaker STATES that such a big comet will rarely come into sight.
(6)   The speaker ASKS what is written (there).

Although Uyeno (1971: 125) claims that *ne* cannot be appended to exclamative sentences, this needs further consideration as (1) and the following (7) show. What makes an utterance exclamative in Japanese is basically an exclamatory tone of voice. Words such as NANTE (=what a ...!) and MAA/WAA (dear!/boy!) might be used but such words do not have to be used. Now, Uyeno (1971) would have had to include EXCLAIM in the underlying performative verbs:

(7)   Nante takai n deshoo *ne!*
      how expensive is s.f.p.
      How expensive! (s.f.p. = sentence final particle)

According to Uyeno (1975: 12), "Generative semantics claims the illocutionary force of a sentence is to be represented in logical form by the presence of a performative verb...". Therefore, the underlying performative verbs *ne* can be associated with might indicate the range of illocutionary forces an utterance with *ne* can have: i.e. *ne* can be associated with the force of stating e.g. (3), force of asking e.g. (4), force of exclaiming e.g. (7), force of ordering e.g. (8), and force of suggesting e.g. (9) (SHIMASHOO/SHINAI N DESU KA = Let's/Why don't you constructions).

(8)   (Mother to her little boy) Katazuke-nasai *ne.*
      tidy up-imp.inflection, will you?
(9)   Nichiyoo wa eiga ni ikimashoo *ne.*
      Sunday film to let's go, shall we?
      Let's go to see a film on Sunday, shall we?

So *ne* can be associated with just about every speech act verb; then what job does it do in indicating anything about speech act/illocutionary force to the hearer? *Ne* does not perform any function of picking out any particular illocutionary force, i.e. it is not definitely an illocutionary particle.

Naturally, linguistic clues or other clues such as contextual information etc. are necessary to determine which of illocutionary force *ne* is associated with. For example, in (4) the illocutionary force ASK is indicated by the use of an interrogative NAN (= what) and *ne* in (4) is thus to be associated with the underlying performative verb ASK. Now factors other than the particle *ne* are indicating a specific illocutionary force of an utterance and *ne* does not even constrain the choice of the illocutionary force of the utterance. Then, it seems natural to conclude that *ne* is better NOT analyzed from the viewpoint of illocutionary forces of basic sentence types (i.e. declarative, interrogative, imperative, exclamative and hortative).

Uyeno (1971: 131) also makes the more plausible claim that the particle *ne* gives the effect of softening the basic nature of each illocutionary force: e.g. an imperative force can be softened by using *ne* and so can an assertive force. This claim has led R. Lakoff (1972: 919) to argue that the use of *ne* allows conversational rules such as the maxim of truthfulness to be suspended, and Brown & Levinson (1987: 146) to argue that the Japanese sentence final particle *ne* hedges on illocutionary forces.

These seem better ideas than *ne* being an illocutionary force indicator. However, if Mother utters (8) with an angry tone of voice, this *ne*-appended version does not sound softer than the version without *ne*. That means, *ne* in (8) does not necessarily soften the imperative force of the utterance (8). So the claim that *ne* weakens the illocutionary force of an utterance, is not adequate. Let me now look at Tsuchihashi (1983)'s analysis.

2.2 Tsuchihashi (1983)

Tsuchihashi (1983: 361), following Givon (1982), argues that Japanese sentence final particles "seem to represent the lexicalization of a non-discrete speech act continuum between what has been traditionally labeled as 'declarative' and 'interrogative'".

According to them, types of speech acts are non-discrete categories and they argue that there exists a coherent speech act continuum ranging from assertions to questions on which Japanese sentence final particles including *ne* and modals are placed. However, this analysis ignores the fact that *ne* is sometimes associated with exclamatives as in (1) and (7), and imperatives as

in (8): i.e. her declarative-interrogative continuum does not cover exclamatives and imperatives.

Tsuchihashi (1983: 374) places an auxiliary verb DAROO (= may be) near the interrogative end of the continuum and the sentence final particle *ne* near the declarative end. This implies that *ne* has more assertive force than DAROO and DAROO has more questioning force than *ne*. However, as (10) shows, we have a combination DAROO-*ne* about which she gives no explanation.

(10)   Soto wa ame DAROO-*ne*.
        Outside rain may be-s.f.p.
        It may be raining outside, don't you think?

She might want to argue that the two different forces associated with DAROO and *ne* off-set each other and DAROO-*ne* is placed between the two on her continuum. However, (10) clearly shows that this is not the case: i.e. DAROO indicates the speaker's limited conviction in the proposition expressed by (10) with or without *ne* appended while *ne* indicates that the speaker is seeking for the hearer's agreement with or without the modal DAROO.

The assertive force of (10) (weak due to DAROO) is indicated by the utterance being of declarative sentence type, rather than by the sentence particle *ne*. In (10) *ne* has nothing to do with assertive force, and the placement of *ne* on the declarative-interrogative speech-act continuum does not seem to have any ground.

It is true that some declaratives could be said to have question force although they are not in the interrogative mood. For example, when a speaker expresses her uncertainty towards the proposition expressed by an utterance, the hearer's response might sound as if he was replying to an ordinary interrogative. However, Tsuchihashi seems to be failing to distinguish linguistic mood (a semantic matter) and illocutionary force (a pragmatic matter). Weak assertions in the declarative mood are still declaratives and they are not identical with interrogatives. Even in a declarative with the speaker's weak commitment, the utterance represents a state of affairs whose factuality the speaker weakly believes (as declarative syntax indicates).

On the other hand, an ordinary interrogative does not represent a proposition which can be measured in terms of truth-conditions. This is because the proposition represented is not endorsed by the speaker: i.e. in case of Yes-No interrogatives, the speaker does not know the truth of the proposition represented, and in case of Wh-interrogatives, the proposition is

incomplete (the speaker does not know 'who', 'where', etc.) and truth-conditions cannot be assigned to it.

In Relevance terms, declaratives are 'descriptive' representations which describe states of affairs, i.e. can be measured truth-conditionally, while interrogatives are 'interpretive' representations which do not represent states of affairs but some other similar representations. The proposition expressed in the declarative mood, however weak the assertive force is, is a descriptive representation while an interrogative is an interpretive representation. They are totally different kinds of representations and cannot be placed on the same continuum, though they may give rise to similar effects.

Now some might analyse that *ne* in (10) (repeated below) indicates an interrogative and in fact when the response (11) follows, the status of (10) as an interrogative might appear to be firm.

(10)   Soto wa ame daroo-*ne*.
       outside topic-marker rain maybe
       It may be raining outside, don't you think?
(11)   Iya futte imasen yo.
       No, fall isn't s.f.p.(strong assertion)
       No, (rain) isn't falling. (= No, it isn't)

This might be due to the function of *ne* being 'acting upon the addressee' as is generally claimed by Japanese grammarians (Haga 1953: 59, Watanabe 1953: 26, Saji 1956:31 etc), or more specifically due to the function of this particle being 'seeking the hearer's agreement' as discussed by Mizutani & Mizutani (1987: 133). That is, by seeking the hearer's agreement, (10) communicates that the speaker wants a response from the hearer: this gives it some question force.

Now what about the case of *ne* used in a strong assertion as in (12)A? Nobody would argue that the following (12)A is an interrogative (indicated by *ne*) to which B responds:

(12)   A: Zettaini gogo wa ame da *ne*.
            For sure afternoon rain copula
            For sure it will rain this afternoon.
       B: Iya furi masen yo.
            No, fall is not s.f.p.
            No, (rain) won't fall. (= No, it won't rain)

Here again, the function of *ne* seems to be 'seeking for the hearer's agreement'. However, as seen in this example, this function of *ne* is not particularly related to the force of asking, nor to the force of asserting: i.e. in (10) and (12)A it was the use of DAROO (auxiliary verb meaning 'will/may') and ZETTAINI (adverb meaning 'for sure') respectively that affects the assertive force of the utterances. It follows then that placing the particle *ne* on the declarative-interrogative continuum is unfounded since *ne* is not more strongly associated with assertive or question force.

2.3 Kendal (1985)

Kendal (1985: 172) does not stipulate any one-to-one relation between *ne* and illocutionary force types or speech act types as Uyeno (1971) and Tsuchihashi (1983) do. She argues that Japanese sentence final particles and modals can be placed on a speaker commitment scale ranging from strong to weak. According to Kendal (1985: 171), "commitment refers to a willingness to be held accountable to the truth-conditional content and illocutionary force of an utterance". Here, the relation between speaker commitment and truth-conditional content/illocutionary force is unclear.

By speaker commitment, she might mean a greater or lesser degree of strength or conviction toward the truth-conditional content and illocutionary forces such as telling, asking, warning etc. For example, when a speaker TELLS strongly, she might want to indicate that she is strongly committed to the truth of the proposition expressed by an utterance. When the speaker WARNS strongly, she might want strongly the event expressed by the warning not to come true for the sake of the hearer. And when the speaker ASKS strongly, it might mean that the speaker strongly demands the hearer's response.

According to Kendal (1985: 171), using *ne* shows that speakers would like the hearer to confirm what they say. Although she admits this is a simplistic characterization, she mentions the case of *ne* being used to just seem like they want confirmation in order to be polite (see Example (12)A). Here, she does not basically clarify the relation between the particle *ne* and speaker commitment, either. Seeking for confirmation, as claimed by Kendal (1985: 171), does not have a direct relation with speaker commitment to the truth-conditional content of an utterances (see the previous section). If there is a relation between *ne*'s function of seeking for agreement and speaker commitment, Kendal has to make it explicit.

Let me nevertheless present Kendal's argument. Like Tsuchihashi (1983), Kendal (1985) considers *ne* to have the speaker's stronger commitment than DAROO (auxiliary verb meaning 'will/may') does, but again she does not talk about the combination DAROO-*ne* which I discussed in the last section:

(13)   (strong).....yo.....ne...ka......daroo...(weak)

(adapted from Kendal 1985: 171 - only relevant s.f.ps and modals are given)

She (1985: 171) places YO (see (11) and (12)B) nearer to the strong end of speaker commitment than *ne*. However, in the following utterance (14) *ne* is used to convey the mother's insistence on the son's agreeing to tidy up and replacing *ne* with YO in (14) does not make her insistence any stronger.

(14)   (It is clear to Mother and her son that he has to tidy up and Mother says to him in an angry tone of voice)

Katazukenasai *ne*.
tidy up, I say!

So it isn't always the case that *ne* indicates weaker speaker commitment than YO: i.e. the speaker wants only weakly the state of affairs described by (14) to come true. As for the speaker's commitment to the truth-conditional content, *ne* can be used in both weak and strong assertions (see (10) and (12)A respectively). That is, *ne* can be used when commitment expressed is both weak and strong, and this shows that *ne* cannot in fact be associated with a particular point on a scale of commitment.

Thus, the analyses of *ne* in terms of speech act/ illocutionary force types and speaker commitment failed. I would like to reanalyze this particle and then present a Relevance- based analysis.

3 Reanalysis of *Ne*

3.1 Showing/Seeking Agreement

Ne is a sentence-final particle. This is a syntactic notion and as for the function of this type of particle in utterance interpretation, the only feature agreed by Japanese grammarians is that sentence final particles do not affect

the propositional content of an utterance (Watanabe 1953: 27, Saji 1956: 26, etc.). So the following utterances have the same truth-conditional content:

(15) Pari wa kirei desu.
      Paris topic-marker beautiful is
      Paris is beautiful.
(16) Pari wa kirei desu *ne*.
      Paris topic-marker beautiful is s.f.p.
      Paris is beautiful, isn't it?

Does the particle *ne* then affect the speaker's propositional attitude? The answer seems to be 'No'. As shown in the last section, I have argued that *ne* cannot be associated with any specific level of commitment. *Ne* can be appended to utterances in which sentential attitudinal adverbs such as TABUN (= probably) and ZETTAINI (= for sure) are used and it can be appended to auxiliary verbs such as DAROO (= will/may be) and NICHIGAINAI (= must be). *Ne* in TABUN-*ne*/DAROO-*ne* and ZETTAINI -*ne*/NICHIGAINAI-*ne* does not further convey weakened and strengthened speaker commitment respectively. Contrary to Brown & Levinson (1987), *ne* itself is not a hedge which communicates the speaker's limited commitment. *Ne* has some other function than having to do with the propositional content or attitude.

Japanese grammarians seem to agree that the primary function of the sentence final particle *ne* is to 'act upon the addressee' such as seeking agreement as seen in the example (3) (Haga 1953: 59, Watanabe 1953: 26, Saji 1956: 31). Mizutani and Mizutani (1987: 133), analyzing politeness in Japanese, state that "several sentence (final) particles are used in conversation to express the speaker's feelings and attitude toward the listener". According to Mizutani & Mizutani (1987: 133), *ne* is used to show agreement or to seek the hearer's agreement. For example:

(17) Honto-ni soo desu *ne*.
      Certainly so is s.f.p.
      That's certainly true, isn't it?
(18) A: Ii otenki desu *ne*.
          Lovely weather is s.f.p.
          Lovely day, isn't it?
      B: Ee, soo desu *ne*.
          Yes, so is
          Yes, isn't it?

(19) A: Kore-de juubun deshoo *ne.*
            This enough will be s.f.p.
            This is enough, don't you think?
      B: Saa, chotto tarinai kamo-shiremasen.
            Well, a little insufficient may be
            Well, it may be a little insufficient.

(Mizutani & Mizutani 1987: 134)

In (17) and (18)B, the speaker shows her agreement with what the other person has said. In (18)A and (19)A, on the other hand, A seeks B's agreement and B does or does not agree with A as seen in (18)B and (19)B respectively. Now let me try to explicate what this means.

Ne in (17) and (18)B is considered to show speaker agreement (Mizutani & Mizutani 1987: 133). However, (17) and (18)B would convey speaker's agreement without *ne* being appended: i.e. 'Soo desu'(= That's true) alone can communicate the speaker's agreement.

So the argument that ne is used to communicate speaker agreement is too weak. Some might give the following example (20)B and argue that *ne* alone can convey speaker agreement.

(20) A: Atsui desu *ne.*
            hot is isn't it?
            It's hot, isn't it?
      B: Nee.
            Indeed.

Ne in (20)B carries intonation and is therefore prolonged. Here the particle is pronounced 'nee' and it expresses the speaker's attitude to the proposition that it is hot. The speaker of (20)B might not like the hot weather and communicates her displeased attitude in using intonation. The reason that the speaker agreement is communicated in (20)B is that the proposition towards which the speaker's attitude is expressed is the one that has just been uttered by A: i.e. the proposition that it is hot, and so this proposition is shared by A and B.

In fact, *ne* can be appended to disagreement phrases such as 'Sore wa chigaimasu *ne*' (= It isn't so, in fact) and this particle itself does not communicate speaker agreement, nor does it necessarily seek hearer agreement. When *ne* is used sentence-finally and communicates speaker agreement, it has to be appended to agreement phrases.

As in (20), *ne* can be used to carry intonation and express certain attitudes. Other than that, however, it seems that *ne* can be used to communicate the speaker's desire to share with the hearer the proposition expressed by a *ne*-appended utterance. In cases of (17) and (18)B in which *ne* is considered to 'show agreement', this particle seems to communicate the speaker's desire that the hearer understands that they are in agreement regarding the truth of the proposition expressed by the utterance. (17) and (18)B sound more polite than the corresponding versions without *ne* appended, and Mizutani & Mizutani (1987: 133) argue that this particle is a linguistic device of politeness to express friendliness and intimacy (positive politeness in Brown & Levinson's term).

According to Brown & Levinson (1987: 103), 'claiming common ground' is a positive politeness strategy. The use of agreement phrases is one means of complying with this politeness strategy as seen in (21)B, but the particle *ne* which additionally communicates the speaker's desire to 'claim common ground' would make (21)B sound even more polite.

(21) A: Kyoo mo atsui desu *ne*.
           today too hot is s.f.p.
           Today is again hot, isn't it?
      B: Honto-ni soo desu. Iya-ni narimasu yo.
           Indeed so is. fed up become s.f.p.
           Indeed, it is. I'm fed up with this.

Now Mizutani & Mizutani (1987: 34) state that in (18)A and (19)A *ne* is used to seek agreement. This is another way of saying that *ne* is used to communicate the speaker's desire to establish 'common ground'. If it is desired that the proposition expressed is established as common ground between the speaker and the hearer, it is also desired that the hearer would agree with what the speaker said. This means the speaker's 'seeking agreement'.

In (18)A, the speaker is uttering what is obvious to the hearer (suppose that A and B are outside, looking at the blue sky). (18)A cannot achieve relevance by communicating that it is a lovely day today, which is a redundant piece of information. But rather, it achieves relevance by communicating explicitly (by using *ne*) that the speaker has a desire to 'establish common ground'.

This way, the speaker can be polite and fulfill the social function of 'greeting'. In fact, (18) cannot function as 'greeting' if *ne* is not appended. It is odd to say that *ne* in (18)A indicates 'seeking agreement'. Why does the

speaker have to seek agreement, when she knows clearly that they share the same experience (i.e. a lovely weather) and the hearer will agree with her? I is true that 'a lovely weather' is already common ground between the speaker and the hearer. However, by using *ne*, the speaker's desire to establish this piece of information as common ground is explicitly communicated to the hearer. So *ne* has a function of communicating the speaker's desire that would be taken to be a positive politeness strategy in (18).

On the other hand, (19)B appears to be a reply to (19)A and *ne* in (19)A might be taken to convey 'questioning' as in (4) presented by the National Language Research Institute. However, as I argued, the proposition expressed by (19)A is endorsed by A: i.e. A is uttering what A believes (even if A believes only weakly). This is indicated by (19)A being a declarative sentence type, and *ne* does not change (19)A into an interrogative.   Now I have said that *ne* communicates explicitly the speaker's desire to establish that she and the hearer share an idea/opinion with the hearer. From this it follows that the speaker is seeking agreement. That is, the speaker (= A) desires to share with the hearer (= B) the opinion that this is enough, i.e. to share the proposition expressed by (19)A. In other words, the speaker desires to get the hearer's agreement, i.e. seeks agreement.

In fact (19)B can have *ne* appended to it. This shows that B desires to share with A the proposition expressed: i.e. B's desire to establish common ground. 'Desire to establish common ground' is a much weaker notion than 'seeking agreement'. So in an exchange such as (19) where A and B have different opinions, B's seeking A's agreement right after disagreeing with A seems a bit impolite to A. The notion of 'desire to establish common ground' seems a better analysis as, though A and B have different opinions, they are communicating their desire to come to an agreement.

Now what does it mean in Relevance-theoretic terms for a speaker to desire to establish as common ground with a hearer an idea/opinion? It might appear that the particle *ne* communicates that the speaker desires that the hearer as well believes the truth of the proposition expressed, and *ne* thus appears to communicate (22):

(22)   The speaker desires that the hearer as well believes the proposition expressed by a *ne*-appended utterance.

However, in figurative utterances such as (23) and (24), *ne* does not communicate the speaker's desire that the hearer as well believes the proposition expressed, but her desire that the hearer believes what is communicated by the utterance.

(23)   Yamada-san wa hotoke-san desu *ne*.
        Mr. Yamada topic-marker Buddha is s.f.p.
        Mr. Yamada is Buddha, isn't he? (He is very kind etc.)
(24)   (Mother to her little boy who has spilt milk)
        Orikoo-san desu *ne*.
        a smart child is s.f.p.
        You are a smart child, aren't you?

In (23) which is a metaphor, it is clear to the speaker that the hearer would not believe the truth of the proposition that Mr. Yamada is Buddha. However, the speaker would like to share with the hearer the same opinion on Mr. Yamada such that he is very kind which is a standard implicature of the utterance that someone is Buddha. So *ne* here communicates the speaker's desire that the hearer share with her belief in the implicated assumptions.

Also in (24) which is an irony, it is clear to the speaker that the hearer will not believe the truth of the proposition that the little boy is a smart child. However, by using *ne*, Mother is conveying to the child that he would as well agree that he is, for example, a clumsy boy. Again, *ne* here communicates the speaker's desire that the hearer as well believes the truth of implicatures, i.e. what is communicated by (24). Now we need to revise (22) as in (25):

(25)   The speaker desires to establish the assumptions communicated by the utterance as common ground

However, *ne* appended to exclamatives and interrogatives as in (1) and (4) does not appear to indicate speaker's showing or seeking agreement. Therefore, (25) might not appear to apply to *ne* appended to exclamatives and interrogatives. In the following sections, I will look into the use of *ne* in exclamatives and interrogatives.

3.2 *Ne* Appended to Exclamatives

Exclamatives which involve the use of exclamative words such as NANTE (=what a...!/how...!) are non-truth-conditional representations. In Relevance terms, the speaker who says (7) (repeated below), for example, guarantees the truth of some relevant enrichment of the incomplete thought or incomplete logical form she has expressed (Sperber & Wilson 1986: 253). Let us again consider (1) and (7) which have exclamative force:

(1)   Baka *ne*!
       silly s.f.p. How silly of you!
(7)   Nante takai n deshoo *ne*!
       how expensive is s.f.p.
       How expensive (it) is!

The hearer might recover that he is very silly for (1) and that it is very expensive for (7), which are thereby truth-evaluable after the indeterminacy of these utterances has been resolved pragmatically.

The above-utterances without *ne* can have exclamative force if appropriate intonation is given. Also, *ne* does not weaken, nor strengthen the effect of exclamation in (1) and (7): i.e. it is in fact intonation that affects this. As I have already argued, the intrinsic nature of *ne* cannot be associated with exclamative force, nor with the strength of the force.

In 2.1., I argued against Uyeno's (1971: 117) claim that *ne* cannot be appended to exclamatory sentences by giving examples (1) and (7). As for (1), it can be argued that it is in fact a declarative sentence though uttered with exclamative tone of voice, and the translation might better be "You are silly, aren't you?" rather than "How silly!". However, (7) is definitely an exclamative sentence which involves the use of NANTE (an interjective meaning 'what a...!') and yet, contrary to Uyeno's (1971: 117) claim, *ne* is appended to (7). So I would still like to maintain my claim that *ne* can be appended to exclamative sentences.

However, Uyeno's claim highlights one important fact which is that exclamatives are basically expressions of the speaker's state of mind, whether uttered to herself or to the hearer, and the use of *ne* can be anomalous in certain exclamatives. For example, suppose I panic because of a sudden big earthquake in Tokyo. I might exclaim 'Earthquake!' regardless of the presence of the hearer.

Now using *ne* in this situation is incorrect, or rather that it does not communicate the state of emergency. This is because by uttering 'Earthquake *ne*!' even with exclamative tone of voice, the speaker communicates her panicked state of mind and additionally (25).

Communicating states of emergency such as an earthquake requires the most efficient possible means, and so this additional piece of information (25) which is not relevant in emergency only decreases the communicated effect of emergency. Of course if I would like to communicate that I am NOT panicking in the big earthquake, I can utter "Earthquake *ne*" with a calm tone of voice and seeks the hearer's response. This piece of evidence confirms that this particle has an element of 'acting upon the addressee' as claimed by

Japanese grammarians. Now some might argue that the function of *ne* in exclamatives is intrinsically just carrying exclamatory intonation. In fact, *ne* used in exclamatives such as (1) and (7) is pronounced 'nee' and carries intonation such as high-fall which can communicate the speaker's exclamation. It might appear that *ne* in (1) and (7) is little more than, what Bolinger (1989: 115) calls, 'an intonation-carrier'. Bolinger (1989: 115) gives the following examples of 'intonation carrier' in English, though of course, they are semantically distinct in and of themselves:

(26)   It's too late, HUUH?
(27)   She bought the place, EH?
(28)   They're coming tomorrow, NO?

Indeed, *ne* might be used as an 'intonation carrier' as seen in (20)B and might be pronounced 'nee'. However, as I mentioned earlier, it is not the use of *ne* but intonation put on this particle that makes (1) and (7) exclamative. (1) without *ne* appended can be an exclamative if 'Baka' (= silly) carries an appropriate intonation. So it is not the job of *ne* as an intonation carrier that makes (1) and (7) exclamative. That is, the intrinsic function of *ne* is something other than communicating exclamatory force. I would like to argue that *ne* used in exclamatives also communicates the speaker's desire to establish the assumptions communicated by the utterance as common ground. In (1) and (7), the speaker by using *ne* communicates her desire to establish as common ground that the hearer is very silly and that it is very expensive respectively. That is, the assumptions the speaker desires to establish as common ground are those which are pragmatically completed (e.g. the degree of 'how expensive' is enriched as in 'very expensive). Hence I claim that *ne* appended to exclamatives also communicates (25). In the following section, I will examine whether *ne* used in interrogatives also communicates (25).

3.3 *Ne* Appended to Interrogatives

I have argued that the questioning force of (4) (repeated below) is not due to the use of *ne* but due to the interrogative pronoun NAN(I) (= what).

(4)   Nan to kaite-aru *ne*?
      what quotative written-is(plain) Q-marker
      What is written here?

What is communicated by an interrogative is that the completion of the propositionally incomplete assumption is relevant to the hearer and/or to the speaker. In a genuine question, the speaker regards the completed proposition i.e. the answer as being relevant to herself while in a rhetorical question she regards the answer as being relevant to the hearer. My assumption here is that *ne* in an interrogative indicates the speaker's desire to establish the answer as common ground.

Now (4) is a male speech used e.g. by a senior staff speaking to his junior colleague. When *ne* is appended to a plain form auxiliary (i.e. ARU as opposed to ARIMASU (polite form)) interrogatives, the utterance seems to be either male speech or non-standard speech.

Let us consider a neutral standard case of interrogative to which *ne* is appended:

(29)   Ima nan-ji desu ka *ne*?
       now what-time is(polite) Q-marker
       So what time is it now?

(29) without *ne* being appended can be uttered to a stranger on a street when the speaker wants to know what time it is now. However, (29) cannot. This is because the speaker of (29) communicates by using *ne* her desire to establish the answer as common ground. The speaker has of course no reason to establish any common ground with a stranger: i.e. (29) would perplex a stranger.

Of course if the speaker is in a curfew-imposed town when it is getting dark, then knowing the time would be relevant to everybody who is in the town. In such a context (29) can be uttered to a stranger: i.e. the time is relevant to the speaker of (29) and *ne* communicates that she desires the answer (i.e. the time) to be established as common ground because the time is relevant to the hearer as well (especially when it is getting dark).

Here it is important to point out the following. The speaker of (29) seems to be claiming some 'common ground' with the hearer which is a positive politeness strategy. Yet this does not lead to any politeness: on the contrary, (29) could sound rude to a stranger. This is because (29) communicates that the speaker's asking a question is expected, i.e. the speaker assumes that she is entitled to ask a question.

This assumption of the speaker violates one of negative politeness strategies which is 'Don't presume/assume' (Brown & Levinson 1987: 144). This means that the speaker should avoid "presumptions about the hearer, his

wants, what is relevant or interesting or worthy of his attention" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 144).

Brown & Levinson (1987: 147) list *ne* as a hedging device on illocutionary forces which comes under the negative politeness strategy 'Don't presume/assume'. However, (29) demonstrates that there is an aspect of contradiction in Brown & Levinson's framework of politeness.

Ne, on one hand, satisfies a positive politeness strategy which is 'claiming common ground' as shown in the last sections, while on the other hand it violates another politeness strategy which says 'Don't presume/assume'. *Ne* in (29) does not weaken the question force, so again, Brown & Levinson's analysis of *ne* as weakening illocutionary forces (one of negative politeness strategies) does not hold.

Now if (29) is a genuine question, the hearer of (29) without *ne* appended knows that the answer will be relevant to the speaker. In Relevance terms, the enrichment of the incomplete representation (incomplete due to the wh-interrogative 'what time') the speaker has expressed is relevant to the speaker. Interrogatives are non-truth-conditional interpretive representations. The use of *ne* in (29), on the other hand, indicates the speaker's desire to establish the answer i.e. the enriched assumption as common ground.

Let us now consider a rhetorical question. The context would be that there is a big sign saying NO SMOKING a boss and his secretary can see clearly, and yet the secretary has started to smoke. In this case, the answer is relevant to the secretary rather than to the boss.

It is not the use of *ne* that makes (4) a rhetorical question. (4) can be a rhetorical question without *ne* appended in this context. The secretary regards the enrichment of the incomplete assumption as being relevant to herself, rather than to the speaker. A rhetorical question is a non-truth-conditional representation and what the hearer is reminded of is the pragmatically enriched or completed proposition communicated by the utterance. Now the use of *ne* again additionally indicates the speaker's desire to establish the answer i.e. the completed assumption as common ground. That is, the boss makes it explicit that the sign NO SMOKING stands as their common ground.

Ne used in any sort of questions in fact indicates the speaker's desire to establish the answer as common ground. That is, the speaker indicates her desire to establish the completed proposition as common ground. Now can we say that the answer is an assumption communicated by an interrogative?

An interrogative is an interpretive representation of an incomplete (wh-interrogative) or complete (Yes-No interrogative) proposition expressed by an utterance. The hearer assumes that the enrichment of the propositionally

incomplete logical form is relevant to the speaker and/or to the hearer. The answer to an interrogative is a completed proposition of the incomplete logical form communicated by the interrogative, so we can say that the answer is also an assumption communicated by the interrogative.

Then, (25) applies to *ne* used in interrogatives and so we can happily say that (25) (repeated below) is also applicable to interrogatives.

(25)   The speaker desires to establish the assumption communicated by the utterance as common ground.

Now let us examine whether *ne* used in hortative (= Let's constructions) also communicates (25).

3.4 *Ne* Appended to Hortatives

The utterance (9) (repeated below) represents a complete proposition that the speaker and the hearer will go to see a film on Sunday.

(9)   Nichiyoo wa eiga ni iki-mashoo *ne*.
       Sunday topic-marker film to go-let's s.f.p.
       Let's go to see a film on Sunday, shall we?

The speaker of (9) suggests that they will go to see a film on Sunday and the additional *ne* in (9) indicates that the speaker seeks the hearer's agreement. That is, the speaker desires that the hearer as well shares the idea of going to the cinema on Sunday. So *ne* communicates the speaker's desire to establish the idea of going to the cinema on Sunday as common ground: i.e. (25) applies in the case of hortative, too.

Ne is often considered to have intrinsically a social function (Brown & Levinson 1987, Mizutani & Mizutani 1987 etc.). However, this is not always the case. As I mentioned in 3.2. emergency is a case in which politeness strategies such as 'claiming common ground' are not necessary (Brown & Levinson 1987: 96) and *ne* used in emergency does not function as a politeness device although this is claimed by Mizutani and Mizutani (1987).

In fact, *ne* can be used in utterances which bluntly threaten the hearer's face and sometimes it even increases the degree of face-threat. For example, criticism is a face-threatening act and yet *ne* can be used to increase the effect of criticism as seen in the following:

(30) You've broken the glass *ne*.

Here *ne* communicates (25) i.e. the speaker's desire to establish common ground, and it has the effect of urging the hearer to admit that the hearer has broken the glass. So 'claiming common ground' is not always a politeness strategy. It depends on what the speaker wants to establish as common ground.

It seems very likely that *ne* communicates the speaker's desire to establish communicated assumptions as common ground. Social approaches such as politeness were not able to capture the intrinsic nature of *ne*: i.e. Brown & Levinson (1987) and Mizutani & Mizutani (1987) face counter-examples in which *ne* has effects of not communicating the speaker's being polite at all, or on the contrary, of her being rather blunt to the hearer as seen in (30).

This justifies us to turn to non-social approaches such as Relevance Theory which seems promising in explaining the particle *ne* in terms of the hearer's interpretation processes, while capturing social implications such as politeness when necessary.

In fact, Relevance Theory is the only theory which seems to provide us necessary notions to explain the true feature of *ne*, as the other influential pragmatic theory i.e. Gricean theory cannot do this job. That is, neither Grice's four maxims nor his notions of what is said and what is implicated can explain the definition (25). (25) is not calculated on the basis of any Gricean maxim, nor is it communicated as part of what is said: i.e. Japanese sentence final particles including *ne* are usually considered as NOT contributing to the propositional content of an utterance.

In Relevance Theory, a linguistic element which does not contribute to the propositional content of an utterance does not have to be a part of an implicature. A linguistic element can encode a piece of information as to how higher level representations such as higher level explicatures should be constrained. In the following section, I will try to explain (25) in the light of Relevance Theory and see how *ne* contributes to the hearer's utterance interpretation processes.

4 The Role of *Ne* in the Hearer's Utterance Interpretation

I have claimed that the semantics of *ne* is to indicate the speaker's desire to establish communicated assumptions as common ground. Although aspects of the content of the assumptions which the speaker desires to establish as

common ground have to be inferred contextually, the semantic content of *ne* itself is not derived by inference on the part of the hearer. This is the information that the particle *ne* encodes.

In cases of non-figurative declaratives, imperatives, exclamatives, hortative and interrogatives, the assumption the speaker desires to establish as common ground is the pragmatically completed proposition of an utterance. For example, *ne* in (18)A encodes the information (25) (repeated below) and the utterance (18)A communicates (31):

(25)   The speaker desires to establish communicated assumptions as common ground.
(31)   The speaker desires to establish as common ground that it is a lovely day.

(31) is a development of a logical form encoded by the utterance (18)A and so (31) is, what Wilson & Sperber (1990: 98) call, an explicature, more specifically a higher-level explicature which is construed by enriching a linguistically encoded logical form to the point where it expresses a determinate proposition and then embedding it under a higher level description. Can we then argue that *ne* encodes a contribution to a higher-level explicature? The answer is 'No, not always'. Let us go back to the figurative utterance (23) (repeated below):

(23)   Mr. Yamada is Buddha-*ne*.

Here the particle *ne* encodes the information (25). However, the assumption that the speaker desires to establish as common ground is an conversational implicature in Gricean sense. It is not the pragmatically completed propositional form given by (23), but an implicature given rise to by the utterance. (23) might communicates:

(32)   The speaker desires to establish as common ground that Mr. Yamada is very kind.

Now in cases of interrogatives, exclamatives, imperatives and hortatives such as (29), (7), (14) and (9), *ne* encodes (25) and the utterances communicate the higher-level explicatures (33)-(36) respectively:

(33)   The speaker desires to establish as common ground that it is one o'clock.

(34) The speaker desires to establish as common ground that it is surprisingly expensive.
(35) The speaker desires to establish as common ground that the hearer will tidy up his room.
(36) The speaker desires to establish as common ground that the hearer and the speaker will go to see a film on Sunday.

However, (32) is definitely not a higher-level explicature: i.e. it is a development from an implicature: i.e. it is a development of an implicature given rise to by (23) which is then embedded into a higher-level description the particle *ne* linguistically encodes. I would like to call a higher-level representation such as (32) i.e. a development of an implicature, a higher-level implicature which is a term analogous to 'higher-level explicature'.

It seems that *ne* makes a contribution to higher-level representations whether they are higher-level implicatures or higher-level explicatures. *Ne* is not the only linguistic element whose content can make a contribution at either the explicit or implicit level. 'Please' in English seems to be the case. It encodes the information that the speaker is making a request. Yet the content of the request may be the propositional content expressed by e.g. (37) or it may be an implicature given rise to by e.g. (38)[1]:

(37) Please get off my foot.
(38) Please you are standing on my foot.

The word 'please' might make a contribution to higher-level representations, whether to explicatures or to implicatures, and so both (37) and (38) might communicate:

(39) The speaker is requesting the hearer to get off her foot.

(39) embeds an explicature which is a development from a logical form given by (37), or embeds an implicature given rise to by (38). To this extent, *ne* and 'please' seem similar as both can operate over an explicature or an implicature. It seems very much like the case that *ne* linguistically encodes (25) and makes a contribution to higher-level representations.

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[1]Robyn Carston, personal communication.

5 Conclusions

The sentence-final particle *ne* does not contribute to the truth-conditional content of utterances, nor does it affect the speaker's propositional attitude to that content. This particle linguistically encodes the information (25) and makes contribution to higher-level representations, whether they are higher-level explicatures or implicatures.

Although it is true in many contexts that *ne* has politeness implications, I have given counter-examples and argued that the semantics of *ne* has nothing to do with politeness. *Ne* encodes (25) i.e. communicates the following conceptual representation (40) which can operate either over an explicature or over an implicature:

(40)   The speaker desires to establish as common ground that . . .

Ne is non-truth-conditional but conceptual, because it does not contribute to the truth-conditional content of an utterance but it encodes a conceptual representation (40). (40) can operate either on an explicature or on an implicature and the propositionally completed assumption can be communicated to the hearer either as a higher-level explicature or as a higher-level implicature.

The sentence-final particle *ne* is often associated with illocutionary force or speaker commitment to the proposition expressed (Uyeno 1971, Tsuchihashi 1983 and Kendal 1985). However, I have shown in Section 2 that this line of analyses does not explain the full range of data adequately. I have instead presented a Relevance-based analysis which can provide all the necessary notions for the explanation of the way *ne* contributes to the hearer's utterance interpretation processes.

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