Gendered Language in Japanese: Origins, characteristics, and differences between gendered language use in contemporary Japanese and Japanese animation

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1. Introduction

The Japanese language has attracted much attention over time, both from a Japanese and an international academic prospective, and one of the reasons why is the existence of gendered speech patterns. While not unique, this linguistic differentiation between genders has existed in the Japanese language for centuries and it was attested by the first western scholars to arrive in Japan, such as Jesuit João Rodrigues. Rodrigues left a record of spoken language during the period he spent in Japan (1561-1614) in his massive linguistic work - '*Arte da Lingoa de Iapam*' -, which next to the informative descriptions of Japan, its dialects, classical language and various slang, it also lists many words categorized as women's language. While this speech style did certainly change since the time that Rodrigues recorded it in his vocabulary, it did not disappear with the creation of the *hyoujungo* (standard Japanese language) and the implementation of a Western inspired government model.

But scholars of *kokugogaku* (National Language Studies) often date the origins of women's language even earlier, around the start of the fourth century, constructing an uninterrupted narrative where this language passed through history until nowadays Japan. However, while it is true that some of the ideal women's speech is linked to court-ladies' speech (*nyoubou kotoba*) during Muromachi Period (1336-1573), Miyako Inoue (2006) argues that to make it look like women's speech had a continuative history from the fourth century until Meiji Period (1868-1912) is a simplification. For starters, it is true that historically women spoke differently from men, but the historical framework in which this has happened has to be more specifically determined. Inoue affirms that since the *kokugogaku's* argument denies historical contingency and ignores emergent phenomena, this discourse paradoxically erases the material traces of women's diverse linguistic experience and affirms the transcendental national narrative of culture and tradition. It hides *histories* by articulating a theological *History* (Inoue, 2006, p. 76). In fact, the fourth century is a period for which we do not even have any written historical records, since there the first written documents in Japanese we have were produced during Nara Period (710-784 CE). The written records we have before Heian Period (794-1185) simply do not leave us with sufficient elements to make validated assumptions. This only changes during Heian Period with the introduction of the two phonetic lettering system, *hiragana* and *katakana*, born from the simplification of the Chinese characters. The new abundance of

written records and literature works, gives us new insights on women's language, also because the majority of literature works written in this period are authored by court-ladies using the new writing systems.

It is very plausible that women and men spoke differently during Heian Period, if only because they did not have an equal amount of independence. Although they were valued, since a daughter could give his family more prestige marrying into another important family than a son could by having a good career inside the court, women without a strong family behind their back did not lead an easy life. Women were economically dependent from their family or their husbands and lovers, and their subordinate and economical-dependent status would of consequentially influence the way they spoke and behaved. They could not be assertive or straightforward like men, and thus became associated with the softer and politer linguistic register, being indirect and mindful of their reputation. Moreover, Susan Gal (1989) demonstrated how economic power influences linguistic choices of societal groups, supporting this theory.

On one hand, then, court ladies, nuns, and women in the pleasure's quarters (such as geisha and prostitutes) had different speech styles compared to officials, samurai, and countrymen. On the other hand, though, women in different social class would speak differently as well, depending on their status but also origins. For example, a court-lady in Kyoto would speak differently from a noble lady living in Kyushu, other than from farmers and prostitutes living in Kyoto.

As for today, women's language is generally described as a distinctive speech characterized by indirect expressions, politeness, modesty, and generous use of honorifics. Over the years, it ended up attracting more academic attention than the corresponding male's language, firstly because as a speech used by women it is not normalized as the standard language, and secondly, because it was analyzed from various points of view, such as feminism and gender studies'. However, as many scholars have noticed, even before the economic bubble burst, the working class did not use gendered language much, since women's language was seen as something one learned to appear more like the daughter of a wealthy family (Inoue, 2016).

In fact, gendered behavior and speech do not necessarily conform to the traditional set of norms and expectations anymore. However, following the growing emancipation of women in Japan, the so called *onna kotoba* ('women's speech') has left space to more neutral forms that are commonly used by both genders with minimal differences. It is indeed very rare, today, to find someone who speaks the strongly gendered Japanese that

many books targeting foreign students present as common (Meryl Siegal, Shigeko Okamoto 2003). Confronting examples contained in various learners books, they show female speakers are represented almost exclusively in more subordinate job roles (such as housewives and secretaries) while using an extremely gendered and formal language. In contrast, men in these books are represented as speaking a casual Japanese, also thanks to the books assigning them more high-profile positions, like managers or chief directors. It is obvious, then, that linguistic issues are closely tied to problematics related to traditional gender roles in Japanese society, as most scholars on this or related fields of interest usually point out.

The gender issue is particularly relevant when we wish to explain why women's language is often treated and talked about like a subject of national relevance, almost like a collective obsession. In fact, out of the so variously heterogenic linguistic practices in Japanese, only women's language is usually taken as focus. This is because women's role in society is at the center of an acute public debate over emancipation, while men's role stays substantially the same, normalized as their traditionally assigned style of language (Inoue, 2016).

Cindi SturtzSreetharan tries to give an introductive classification of the classical differences between men and women's language, since she choose to focus on men's language in all men's conversation groups. Following her main points, we find the already cited less frequent use of polite forms; a different use of sets of first and second person pronouns and sentence-finals particles; phonological reductions (*dekee* < *dekai*); fewer minimal responses (*aizuchi*); and the fact that men are more likely to interrupt and take control of the topic (Sturtz, 2004). Sturtz gives particular importance to sentence-final particles which are markers used to categorize gendered language. And yet, in the spoken Japanese language of today, native speakers tends towards a more neutral use of language, with women using some elements of male's speech and men using polite elements of female's speech, depending on their social context.

It is often noted in the literature that native Japanese speakers give much thought to the language pattern they utilize, being sensitive to situations. Inoue brings various examples of context-specific language awareness in her book, describing how a couple of people she interviewed made the conscious choice of always speaking in the most neutrally polite Japanese speech in order to neither put pressure on those under them nor having to stress hierarchy using too strongly polite forms with their superiors (Inoue, 2006). Also Siegal and Okamoto (2003) attest that this phenomenon is not exclusive of native

speakers, but also of Japanese learners, focusing on female students and their linguistic strategies. Although in their examples we see reluctancy in acknowledging and using a language that stereotypes women by students, who come up with strategies that have a lot in common with the ones used by native speakers. They reported that they prefer to stay as neutral as possible, using *desu/masu* when talking to elders but otherwise speaking in plain form and ignoring the behavioral gender-related rules, such as being indirect and not taking charge of the conversations.

Even so, the strong gendered elements of Japanese language still send a powerful message when used, since they represent a shared ideology. Ultimately, gendered speeches are tools than an individual can utilize or not depending by context. However, the stereotypical image they evoke is strongly utilized by various media to characterize a fictional character or a talk show persona..

Since these hyper-gendered speeches are not context-flexible enough to be consistently used in modern Japanese society, where discourse on gender roles evolved and is trying to surpass most of these traditional concepts, this dualistic aspect of the language found itself mostly relegated in Anime and other media. Speech patterns are an important point to take notice of when analyzing a character ad its design. In this paper, after an analysis on existing academic works concerning the use of women, men and LGBT+'s language in modern Japan, I will be taking gendered speech and speech patterns in anime as main focus, trying to observe how much of a character's personality is expressed through gendered markers in their speech pattern. What linguistic elements does the register contain to bring forward the character's personality? Does it contain social status implications or gender prejudices? I will try to answer these questions by taking the *shounen* anime *Gintama* as source of linguistic case studies, presenting some of its characters and their speech patterns.

2. Women's Language

Given the attention received over the years, there have been various definitions that were used to describe women's language. Miyako Inoue (2006), in the introduction of her book on this subject, starts by defining women's language as a complex ensemble of practices, institutions, representations, and powers in which the Japanese woman is objectified, evaluated, studied and normalized through her imputed language. She searches for the reason why women's language is often treated as a national issue by most researchers, when the women's language as we know does not have a uniform and continuous history in Japanese language through the centuries. As explained in the previous chapter, gendered languages are attested in literature of the Heian Period, mostly written by court ladies. However, modern's standard Japanese had to be 'invented' in order to follow the Western ideals of nation state, described as a 'sovereign state of which most of the citizens or subjects are united also by factors which define a nation, such as language or common descent'. And Japan, at the very beginning of its modernization period, had to invent a national language in order to be taken seriously. This is why to Inoue the whole discourse on women's language as something cohesive and historically traceable almost feels like a national obsession. Especially given how much was written about it only over the last century, while Japanese men's language is taken as granted and it has seen only few field studies in the recent years. (Inoue, 2006). The heterogenic linguistic practices in Japanese are often reduced to a binary set of gendered languages, out of which only women's language is usually taken as main or even only focus. Women's language, as the pristine idealization of a whole gender, can be 'corrupted' by today's speakers, while men's language is almost never discussed in this way, as if it would not have the same possibility of 'corruption'. Inoue notices

> how the linguistic consciousness of how women speak is closely connected with notions of culture and tradition in the assumption that women's language is uniquely Japanese and with unbroken historical roots in the archetypical, imaginary Japanese past, and inescapably linked to an equally traditional and archetypical imaginary Japanese womanhood (Inoue, 2006, p. 2).

In fact, most of this gendered language's characteristics are superimposable on the Japanese traditional ideal of femininity, following the stereotype of the *yamato nadeshiko*, the 'perfect woman'. The *yamato nadeshiko* is the personification of the idealized Japanese woman, a discourse that can be found in literature as early as the Genji Monogatari (early 11th century). The ideal woman in Japanese tradition is supposed to be of calm and quiet demeanor, attractive but not ostentatious. She has to talk elegantly, without talking back in a vulgar or in a too direct way, like men are allowed to. In general, modesty is the quality that seems to be held more into account. These characteristics of perfection are still a model for many Japanese women, even though sometimes they contrast with modernity. Being emancipated implies studying to get a good job alongside with men, which seems to cause a feeling stress over the 'good old days', when women were not threatening men's position and status in society. Corruption and crisis of modern society is always male's crisis, usually over some demonized aspect of women, as if taking some distance from tradition could turn a whole gender morally threatening. Language is just one of the hundred things easier to attack when it comes to the feeling of unexpressed crisis of the shifting gender roles in modern society. There are many examples that could be done over this point, such as the strenuous resistance to women's demand to change the working dressing code, which imposes uncomfortable high heels[1] (#KuToo movement, 2019). The overly attachment over something as neglectable as the heigh of the heels of female cannot be explained otherwise. An even worse example could be found in the 2018 scandal at the Tokyo Medical University,[2] which was found guilty of penalizing female students, lowering their score to facilitate males. This happened with the excuse that 'women doctors are not reliable because they will marry, get pregnant and quit their job'. While such arguments are a phenomenon of the Japanese workplace, these should be not be taken as an excuse to discriminate against women, but rather as an encouragement to find a solution. In fact, the main reason why Japanese women tend to quit their job and stay at home after marriage is not personal choice, but how difficult is for them to receive career advancement, united to a heavy social pressure. The harassment against pregnant women in particular is so widespread that in Japanese it exists a specific word for it, *matahara* (maternal harassment).

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[1] Here the article https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/03/women-in-japan-protest-against-having-to-wear-high-heels-to-work-kutoo-yumi-ishikawa
[2] The scandal then came to involve other universities, even though Tokyo Medical School was the first and more quoted case: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/08/tokyo-medical-school-admits-changing-results-to-exclude-women

It is interesting to note that women's language, which in Japanese is called *onna kotoba* or *joseigo*, has origins that are more recent than might be assumed, given how much 'tradition' is invoked. In fact, the celebrated women's language finds its origins in the so-called schoolgirl speech (*jogakusei kotoba*), which first appeared in print media around the mid- to late 1880s. This speech is also called *teyo-dawa* speech because of the utterance-ending such as *teyo*, *noyo* and *dawa* (Inoue, 2006). Between the intellectuals that condemned this speech at the time, because of how vulgar and jarring sounded, mostly for bouncing intonation and high pitches, we find Ozaki Kouyou (1867 - 1903). Kouyou wrote in his *Kijo no tomo* (Her ladyship's friend, 1888) that this speech style likely emerged between elementary school female students and then spread out in other grades. Schoolgirls probably took inspiration from the language they heard used by lower class women, which gave to it the vulgar ring that resulted so infuriating for Meiji intellectuals, to the point of reporting this speech on print media as a national issue (Rika Saito, 2010). Nonetheless, as Inoue noticed, it is rather ironical how many aspects of the so vulgar schoolgirl speech are now instead invoked as the lost 'women's speech' of the timeless Japanese tradition. It does seem a complain that completely overlooks historical circumstances more than an actual worry for the preservation of an interesting linguistic case study.

While Inoue is more concerned on the speaking usage of the women's language, Saito focuses on the forced introduction of women's writing style in Meiji Period, which gives an ulterior point of view on feminine language. As we said, during Meiji period standard Japanese did not in fact exist and had to be 'invented', primarily through the writing process put in act by great literates of the time, such as Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859- 1935). The Japanese that is learned in classrooms today is nothing but the standardized variety of Japanese, called *hyoujungo*, taken from the regional dialect spoken in the Tokyo area (the *Yamamote* dialect in specific). Shōyō and other intellectuals of that time started the movement of the *genbun itchi* style, or the utilization of the common spoken language in narrative literature, for the Western's imported novel format. The movement's motto was 'write as you speak' (*hanasu youni kaku*), which was a huge change from the classic writing style used until then, a written style that had not be changed since the Heian Period. But which spoken language was to be considered worth of becoming standard? In a still modernizing Japan, where commonly spoken Japanese was a multitude of mutually unintelligible dialects, intellectuals and politicians had to confront with the lack of a nation-wide intelligible standard language. The huge and heavily male-dominated

intellectual movement that eventually gave life to the Japanese that is spoken today is the same that also felt the need to rule on gendered linguistic diversification.

It should not come as a surprise, then, that the 'common language' they spoke of was in reality the standard men's language, normalizing its use to the point to be later considered and perceived as a rather neutral style. In her research, Saito shows well just how gendered the newly written 'common' language was in reality. She reports some translated documents of the correspondence between Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896), one of the few celebrated female novelists of her time, and her mentor, Nakarai Tōsui (1860-1926). In his letters, Tōsui suggests Ichiyō to improve the femininity of her writing style by going to see *onnagata* (male actors interpreting female roles) performances at Kabuki's theatre, since she is required to write in modern style (*genbun itchitai*) but not in the common (men's) language. It is quite ironical how the request implied that she had to use women's spoken language without using the actual women's spoken language, and that even *onnagata* could be a better insight of femininity than other women. She found herself struggling to respect all the restrictions on her writing, having to compromise between her style and the femininity she was supposed to demonstrate in her publications. To do so, her writing had to be woman-like but not as vulgar as the schoolgirl speech, respecting the modern motto of 'write as you speak' but without actually doing so. This meant that Ichiyō could not make her protagonists speak in the real women's common language, but at the same time she could not write using the same style as her male colleagues, since it was not considered feminine enough for her. It is quite disconcerting why signaling her femininity – and that of other female's writers of this period - through the writing style was considered fundamental. The pressure on female writers to be both modern and feminine is what is defined as 'writing in female drag' (*josou buntai*) by the scholars of the field, such as Seki Reiko. She uses the concepts of this 'drag' for female writers only as a concept that enforces the normative and therefore is suppressive. Saito agrees with her point and notices how the idealized femininity in literature had the effect to suppress cognitive thought by denying their personal femininity and trying to adapt to the idealized one that their male counterparts thought as correct.

Normative and 'modern' feminine expressions were created by male writers to represent femaleness in the way they thought it should be, effectively creating a suppressive environment for female writers, who had to find their own style between the lines of what it was already traced for them. Higuchi was probably more inclined in writing

how real-life women spoke, in colloquial Japanese, to show reality as she experienced it, just like her male colleagues did, but she had to do as her mentor requested.

Seeing this, Saito argues that femininity is not an inherent trait of female gender, but a learned behavior. As a matter of fact, society and male dominance in most of sectors shapes femininity, most of the time by the sheer superiority in number, and authority of individuals, as for the case of Higuchi and Nakarai. Women's language and behavior are not the manifestation of a woman's own character, but largely a product of men's imagination.

Some of these considerations could be taken out of the linguistic context and even out of the Japanese linguistic context to be discussed in different scopes related to womanhood, which only confirms how much effort have men gone through to over the years to elaborate a femininity all women should try to imitate.

Varieties of Women's Speech

In light of the multitude of information on women's language, the question of how women in Japan actually speak does come to mind. The so-called 'women's language', being strictly tied to the standard Japanese, excludes all the Japanese women born and raised in the periphery, where local dialects are still used and usually penetrate and influence the standard language of these regions. For example, to speak what it is considered a feminine language, the use of honorifics and polite forms is just one of the main characteristics. However, since most of the regional dialects do not use honorifics and polite forms women born far away from the center are even more less likely to use them without having to learn it like any student of Japanese language would. Of course, today's *hyoujungo* is understood and spoken in all Japan, thanks to television and the focus on schooling made since the Meiji Period, but that was not the case at all at the time that the discourse about women's language started.

Inoue conducted fieldwork hoping to have a deeper understanding of women's language and its actual use in corporate offices. She remembers hearing on television how Tokyo's women would speak and trying to imitate them when playing with dolls, since the language she heard sounded so different from her everyday life in a regional area of Japan, where she grew up. In her research, Inoue takes as case studies nine Japanese women of different ages and positions, giving a realistic picture of the use of the language in a modern office setting. Out of these nine coworkers, one of them is a middle-aged female manager that explains how and why she intentionally does not use any gendered marker of women's

language. During her career she decided to switch from her original feminine and regional speech to using exclusively *desu/masu* forms and staying as neutral as possible, following a precise and well-thought linguistic strategy. She neither speaks with honorifics when talking to superiors nor she speaks in casual feminine forms with her subordinates or colleagues. In fact, she became so used to her speech pattern that she stopped using women's language altogether. Her choice of language allows her to be always of easy access to talk with, but it also does not make her too much obsequious to her seniors, which builds her 'serious and reliable' kind of image at work, allowing her to stay perfectly in the middle. But this is just one of the cases that the author examines in the book. There is also women's speech used mockingly between friends, for example, because this style of language feels old and hyper-gendered to the younger generation. Women at the office use it to make compliments to other each other on their exterior appearance or to make jokes between themselves, often parodying the stereotyping situation of the conversation by speaking as an old woman would. There is an association between women's language and a backward society in which women are expected to sacrifice their life to focus entirely on their family, which in younger women produces the absolute rejection of the speech pattern itself. Neutral language becomes then a way to signal their opposition to this way of life, linguistically marking that they consider themselves equal to their peers, only switching to honorifics when speaking at the phone for work. However, we also see the usage of the ideal *onna kotoba* to put distance between a dialect-speaking upbringing. In fact, the only speaker using it was a Tohoku dialect speaker using feminine speech because for her it felt so much more sophisticate comparing to her childhood language. It is interesting to notice how no women that was interviewed ever talked badly about women's languages, instead they used it in the measure they wanted and on the occasions they though it was needed in a very personal and situational way. Using a feminine language was also never an imposition in the workplace, contrary to all the push to its 'traditional and elegant beauty' in national discourse (Inoue, 2006).

From Inoue's work it can be seen how much more variegated the linguistic situation in Japan is than the way it is projected in textbooks that follows gendered models. The angle of this research follows a specific category, which is women's whit-collars working low-ranking to high-ranking jobs in a company in Tokyo, even though it has a rich diversity within the relatively small group. It is also important to underline that it is not representative of every woman in Japan and that the research materials were collected through 1991 until 1993. However, the study brings up many useful information about

standard linguistic requirements at the workplace, and most importantly it introduces the concept of having a conscious linguistic strategy. At least two of the interviewed women explicitly said that they thought about the kind of image they wanted to project and consequently they choose a specific speech pattern for themselves.

Then, not only woman's language is not used by the majority of Japanese woman, but there is also more than a women's speech. Some of these patterns are so out of touch with today's reality that became a codified language used to play with the fictional or historical persona they are associated to. Because of this, most of these codifications, such as the schoolgirl speech or the ladylike speech (*Ojousama kotoba*) are more often than not heard in anime, especially in their more 'exasperate' and consistent use.

Ojousama kotoba

Ojousama kotoba or 'ladylike' speech, is one of the many feminine speeches often grouped under the label of women's language. Given its use in present days, it could be defined as a stereotypically hyper-feminine speech, massively used by anime characters to evoke the *ojousama*-persona to the viewer. In fact, the main difference between the Japanese women's language and the *ojousama kotoba* is that women's language is a linguistic ideal, while *ojousama* speech is a characterological style used to index particular personality traits that can anticipate a fictional character or persona (Dahlberg-Dodd, 2020).

The Japanese word *ojousama* is both a polite way to refer to another's daughter and an appellative that indicates a young, pampered woman from a rich and socially well-established family. The so-called *ojousama kotoba* derived from the Meiji's schoolgirl's speech, which uses the same *teyo-dawa* speech style that it was mentioned previously. The connection between the persona of a young lady from a rich family and the language of female students in Meiji period is relatively easy to understand, since only the daughters of the upper class had the money and the possibility to receive an education in one of the newly founded all-girl schools. Even if considered vulgar by most intellectuals of the time, it was spoken by young and rich girls, who kept using it after graduation, helping further spreading the speech until it became so commonly heard that it began to be associated with women's language and regarded as a feminine quality. It emerged in Tokyo, where the first all-girl schools were founded, but then, given its usage in novels and magazines at the time, it became widespread nationwide through girl's schools. Young female students from everywhere in Japan wrote in girl's magazines, using this speech pattern,

effectively determining the emergence of a persona connected to this language and creating a virtual community (Kinsui, 2003). The decline and progressive disappearance of the *teyo-dawa* language started during the Second World War, when the country's societal structure rapidly changed. In 1946 it was implemented the coeducational schooling system, which permitted the creation of mixed classes. In the same year the Japanese aristocracy was also formally abolished, and the private schools brought to the level of normal schools, at least from an institutional point of view. The Meiji's identity of the rich *ojousama* disappeared and changed following the post-war society, only remaining alive as a concept of a past figure.

Linguistically, the *teyo-dawa* speech did not completely disappear, but it underwent some modifications, such as the gradual disappearance of the expressions ending in *-teyo*. It kept evolving with society, following the tendency to fill the gap between male and female's specific languages towards gender neutral expressions of modern Japanese.

But even with the evolution of feminine speech through time, this pattern remained linked to the ideal of a well-educated and upper-class woman who attended an all-girls' school with stereotypical visual elements, like curled hair and clear appearance. There are many examples of the modern and sometimes ironized usage of this speech, mostly because over the years, this speech has found a place firstly in *shoujo* manga (manga targeting young girls) and then broadened their space in other genres, such as *shounen* (targeting young adolescent boys) and *yuri* (works with the theme of lesbian love).

The *ojousama kotoba* is characterized by both the *teyo-dawa* speech and the overuse of honorifics. Following Kinsui Satoshi's analysis, there is an extensive use of the forms ending in *-te(yo)*; verb + *wa*; noun + *da*/*desu* + *wa* and verb (+ *masu*) + *no*. Grammatically speaking, there is a conspicuous use of the sentence-final particle *-wa* (but only with rising intonation); *-no*; *-koto*; *-nano*; *-ne*; nominal *-yo* and combinations between these. The particle *yo* is interesting in its feminine use, since it is not specifically gendered, but it tends more on the neutral when alone, while resulting very feminine when composing the ending *-teyo*. There is also the tendency to use the shortened form of the *no da* (that would become *-n da* in masculine speech and simply erases the *da* in feminine) in declarative sentences. Compare, for example:

Masculine: *Kore, kinou katte kita <u>n da</u>*.

Feminine: *Kore, kinou katte kita <u>no</u>*.

'Yesterday I bought this!'

Other linguistic characteristics are the use of the feminine informal personal pronoun *atashi* or *watashi/watakushi*, even though the last two forms are formal and neutral; while for self-interrogative forms we have -*kashira* and -*desu mono.*

However, Dahlberg-Dodd objected to Kinsui's work saying that his analysis is too much grammatic oriented, and since this speech is used as a persona's marker some of its specific uses of typical expressions and exclamations should be cited. There are for example heavily honorific phrases that sounds archaic in modern Japanese language, such as a *go-kigenyou* (hello), that are heavily used by an *ojousama* persona. In fact, this speech is so impregnated by archaisms that there are online vocabularies to learn how the *ojousama* character speaks. Looking for archetypical anime speech pattern in internet, there is even an online site explains the vocabulary of eight anime famous personas (the gangster, the samurai, the old man, the *ojousama,* the butler, etc). The presence of this site alone should give an example on how much some of these expressions became ingrained in the ojousama speech. Even in this simplified online vocabulary made for Japanese language learners, we find under the 'character dictionary' of the Lady, phrases that we found in Kinsui's examples, which he takes out of Meiji literature. Here we find expressions such as *yoroshikut<u>teyo</u>* (it's ok) or soshite <u>*kudasaru?*</u> ('Will you please do this for me, then?'). This last one in particular ends with a rising intonation to indicate the question – another typical element of this speech – and the use of the honorific form of the verb *suru* (to be).

The *ojousama* as fictional persona began to acquire popularity again from the 1970s, appearing in manga, anime and other kinds of fictional works. Inoue links the return of the figure of the ojousama in the popular culture using Susan Gal's theory (1989) on how the historical and material conditions have a direct relationship with linguistic practices. Inoue applied it to Japan's situation pre-burst and after the burst, starting her analysis from around the 1980s, when the general lifestyle in Japan was more relaxed. Despite the fact that in the '80s Japan's economy was already heading towards a slow decline, it was a period of time where most women were sure to find the means to live well even with only a temporary job, which was a choice, not a compromise. Women before the economic recession lived a consumeristic life, while men working in companies had the luxury to be sure of the upward curve of their careers. Pre-burst women were working women, able to support themselves working for a limited number of hours and free to indulge to activities that were traditionally linked with men, such as drinking or smoking. However, meanwhile women tasted the possibilities given by their new economic and social emancipation, the

archetypical image of the *ojousama* made it back through the media as a now reachable model for women. An old model of womanhood, as if it wanted to counter the new-found independence, encouraged by the average increase of income in Japanese families. Suddenly, there were magazines teaching the way to be a better *ojousama*, from the fashion down to the speech style, listing everything one could need to come closer on that old and privileged figure. This changed during the 'lost decades', when, due to the economic circumstances, women started entering the workforce, worrying the traditional view on gender. The *ojousama* speech discourse lost its steam on the media and started to be associated not with a rich young girl, but with women in general. At the same time this speech began to be also ironized upon, until it became a character trait instead of a real-life language usage, linked with other character design trait, as 'curled blond hair', the gothic style fashion and the typical laugh ('*ohohoh*'). Inoue concludes saying that the women's language no longer indexes ideal femininity in modern society, but it still carries on with its idealized characteristic into the virtual space.

As a matter of fact, since the *ojousama* kotoba is not the only feminine speech, when it is given to a character it is not usually to emphasize womanhood itself, except when it is used in *yuri* genre. *Yuri* is often influenced by the chronotope of an affluent, often religious, or elite all-girls' school, which is also the perfect setting to place characters speaking with the *ojousama kotoba*. In a setting where guys rarely play a substantial part, *yuri* works – especially the ones targeting female audience – have a substantial use of *ojousama kotoba* and this speech is almost exclusively used by the love interest, while the protagonist uses a more neutral or even 'masculine' form of speech (Dahlberg-Dodd, 2020). The hyper-feminine *ojousama* speech in this case is used to mark the love interest as someone more elegant and feminine than the protagonist herself, following a typical trope in homosexual works that links the couple together also under a blurred heterosexual aesthetics.

Kogals Kotoba

If inside women's language the *ojousama kotoba* reminds of an historically existed group that crystalized into a fictional persona, the *gyaru-go* goes the opposite direction, representing a modern subcultural group.

The Kogals (or *kogyaru* コギャル) are a subcultural movement made of young Japanese women who challenge dominant roles of gendered language and behavior through linguistic and cultural innovation. The etymology of the name itself, even though still

uncertain, brings the attention on the gendering of the movement. It is believed to be a combination of the word *koukousei* (high schooler) and the English word 'gal', or *gyaru*, following the Japanese phonetics (Laura Miller, 2004).

Kogals fashion esthetic, which started around 1990, is easily recognizable by both cuteness and studied ugliness, with loose white socks, bleached hair, distinctive and heavy make-up, tanned skin, and shortened skirt. Kogals showed their distrust toward their contemporary Japanese society by dressing up and reversing every concept associated to women's beauty in Japan. In general, Japanese girls are not encouraged to dress in clothes that reveals their bodies or to wear flashy make-up. The trend is more towards the 'natural make-up' style, without sparkly eyeshadows or darker lipstick shades. Kogals took this tendency and subverted it to the point of attracting attention and shock from the general public and mainstream media. There are many different fashion preferences inside the Kogals subculture, from the less flashy to the more exaggerated ones, such as the so called '*ganguro*' (extremely dark tanning associated with white and wide eyeshadows).

However, this subculture challenges the traditional ideal of femininity not only under a purely fashion-wise point of view, but also with the very way *kogyaru* speak and write. The movement went as far as coding a new written language (*gyaru moji*) made with Chinese characters, Cyrillic and Roman letters, and even mathematical symbols. 'Kogals language' or '*kogyaru-go*', which Miller defines as 'deviant' when compared with the dominant ideological model of women's speech, it is a recognizable sign of resistance in opposition to the dominant and traditionally patriarchal culture, following instead a new self-affirmation of one's identity kind of mentality.

According to the dominant ideology, girls should talk with politeness, modesty and innocence, while Kogals speak creating their own language, both by innovating and creating new expressions and words, and by freeing themselves from society's expectations. They do not care about appearing innocent or polite, instead they speak without filters of modesty, openly talking about having sex and many other taboo topics. Thy also seem to have a particular hate and dislike for elder men, to who they refer with the disrespectful appellative of '*ossan*', going the opposite direction compared to the importance given to elders in Japanese culture.

Miller provides various examples of this speech in her research, both in written in text form and some out of the speech style. It is interesting to notice how some of the new coined terms of these language gained so much popularity outside the movement that it

became part of the mainstream slang vocabulary used by the younger Japanese population. For example, one of the terms that started as *kogyaru*-go and went mainstream is *mukatsuku*, which means 'to feel irritated, angry' or 'nauseous', an impolite and casual expression that today can be heard commonly, mostly by younger speakers and by media characters of every kind, from modern drama to fantasy anime.

In order to give an idea about how much of this speech is differentiated from commonly used Japanese language, here are some of the general characteristics, some of them already integrated in the common speech (even though they are not grammatically correct).

1. The liberal use of emphatic prefixes and intensifiers (es. ***chou maji** de mukatsuku = really super irritating*)

2. Widespread lexical truncation (*kimochi warui = kimoi,* 'disgusting')

3. Compounding ('*kogyaru'* itself is a compound of a Japanese word with an English hybrid)

4. Affixation of the verbal suffix -ru on nouns (*maku-ru* = going to McDonald's)

5. *-ra* used as a plural suffix to create new words (*kiti-ra* = those who love Hello Kitty)

6. English-derived hybrids (*ikemen* = cool guy, formed by *ike(teru)* 'cool' and 'men' in English)

Other than the vocabulary, though, Kogals are also known to have a raw, direct, and almost 'masculine' kind of speech with a recognizable pitch accent (rising intonation). However, the only reason why kogyaru-go is defined as 'somewhat masculine' speech, is because it does not even come near to the ideal of women's language, since Kogals are proud of their gender identity. They do not attempt to sound masculine, they are reclaiming the right to be feminine in the way they like. Miller sees their slang as a usurpation of male privilege by exercising the freedom to use language in every way they please, just as they take back the concept of femininity and reshape it freely. Kogals' behavior and language undermine Japanese patriarchal society by giving an alternative to traditional women's standards. An alternative created by women for women, without any input for traditional ideology unless it is for reaction to it. Once reached this conclusion, it is not surprising how the media has been paying a persistent attention to the phenomena by worrying about how badly Kogals are 'ruining' Japanese language. And yet this hyper-attention over Kogals does nothing but show yet again the stress and anxiety over the changing morality and the neoliberal positioning of women in modern society.

Ironically, all the attention that this subculture received since the first appearance in 1990 has done nothing but giving visibility to Kogals, spreading their speech by

representing it various anime and showing to the bigger public that alternatives to the traditional women's model exist. Although the moralistic assumption that all Kogals are prostitutes and that their statement is nothing but a 'phase' that they will eventually outgrow it is still present in the discourse, so it is the positive representation of Kogals as free and self-assertive women.

Following Inoue's work, we can affirm that traditional women's language has a shorter and more variegated history than is generally believed. However ideal and archetypical, this language takes its origins from a specific group of speakers during a specific period of time. During Meiji Period and again around 1980s, this language took form in well recognizable linguistic elements, and it is still used, even though not as much in today's Japan out of the Anime's persona discourse. While societal pressure does shape the way in which Japanese women express themselves and behave, most of the elements associated with women's speech are today used ironically, to joke on the stereotypical image of women. Ultimately, linguistic choices are all a matter of social context and personal preference, which is why it may be important to remember that there is not a singular women's language, but instead there is a rather rich choice in a plurality of possibilities, even within the feminine category of speech. In the light of these considerations, it may be better to stop referring to women's language as if was a singular and historically cemented linguistic practice, and start taking women's language as an umbrella term in which varieties of feminine identities can coexist.

Ojousama kotoba and *kogyaru-go* are only two of the highly gendered speeches that could have been mentioned inside of the women's language discourse, but they are indicative in showing two opposite sides of the linguistic 'feminine spectrum' out of which every Japanese speaker construct their identity through language.

3. Men's Language

When looking at the amount of research written on women's language over the years, one would expect at least an equal amount of studies for Japanese men's language. However, in comparison men's language has been heavily understudied. This is the result of the normalization of men's language into *hyoujungo*, almost as there was only 'common' Japanese language instead of a masculine speech. Since society does not seem interested in regulating or to limiting how men speak, we also have less material on men's language heterogeneity. Luckily, with the emerging of the field of gender studies, Japanese linguistic also demonstrated new interest towards male gender. As a matter of fact, most of the recent scholarship on Japanese linguistic is less focused on the study of 'traditional' and normalized language, which includes the gender binary languages, and more on the Japanese language spoken by minorities. Instead of dividing speakers into male and female and analyze how they should speak, scholars have begun to be much more interested in the way they do speak. At first, this process started thanks to the emerging studies on regional dialects in Japan, since they are not mutually intelligible and have several important differences with *hyoujungo* that a lot of Japanese people learned through television. This eventually helped broadening the linguistic field outside the *Nihonjiron*-like theories, which have the strong tendency to speak about Japanese language as it were a traditionally hegemonic and homogeneous language, marginalizing de facto every other non-standard variation as a 'grammatically incorrect' and for that unworthy of consideration. Even so, not only numerous scholars – such as Cindi SturtzSreetharan and Satoshi Kinsui – confirmed the closing of the linguistic gender gap in today's linguistic practices, but they also affirmed having difficulty in hearing strongly masculine language at all.

Men's stereotypical language is usually described as almost the complete opposite of the women's one, since it is supposed to be assertive where women's are encouraged to be unassertive; casually impolite and direct when women are supposed to be as polite as they can; and to have in generally less empathetic speech. Men's language also has a series of gendered markers, such as the use of masculine first (*ore*, *boku*) and second (*omae*, *kimi*) personal pronouns, and the masculine sentence final particles *zo* and *ze*.

Kinsui (2003) traces the development of the men's language, which he calls male language, to Meiji Period, around the same time when the schoolgirl speech began to spread among young girls. In Meiji Period, we have the appearance of the *shosei*, the male

student of the first national universities founded in Japan. Comments on the characteristic speech used by this new protagonist of Meiji society can be even found in the work of Shouyou Tsubouchi, an important theorizer of the genre of the novel. *Shosei kotoba* was characterized by conspicuous use of loanwords from English, especially not commonly heard ones, such as *ankonshasu* (unconscious), but also by a parallel use of Sino-Japanese expressions, such as *shikkei* (rude) and *shokun* (gentlemen), two words apparently very used by *shosei* of the time. These students would then graduate and start working, retaining their speech, as shown by Kinsui's analysis of the Professor in one of the most famous novels of this period, *I Am a Cat* by Natsume Souseki (1867-1916). Kinsui also tries to single out some of the typical expressions of this precursor today's men's language. There is for example 1. The extensive use of the first-person pronouns *boku* and *wagahai*; 2. The conspicuous use of '*kimi*' as a second-person pronoun or the name of the interlocutor without adding any other honorifics; 3. The use of '-*tamae*' and '-*benshi*' as imperative, which are now rarely heard outside hyper-masculine speech in Anime; 4. The already cited *shikkei*, also used as a greeting; 5. Uncommon loanwords from English.

Shosei kotoba became the standard male language around the 1930s, as reported by the Ministry of Education's Etiquette Guide (*Reihou* youhou) in 1941. Interestingly enough, the pronoun *boku* and *kimi* have acquired a weaker and politer connotation compared to Meiji Period, projecting the image of the 'model student'. *Ore* and *omae* are on the contrary considered 'strong' linguistic markers and give the idea of masculinity in a rather roughish and assertive way of speaking. Kinsui dates this change and polarization of the identity connotations of these personal pronouns after the end of the Second World War (1950s). As in today, the role of '*boku*' and '*ore*' for male speakers remains mostly the same, with *ore* to be used in specific and informal situations. Instead *boku is* for more formal occasions, to speak with a professor or an elder, but almost never in front of a job interview, where the big majority of men would switch to the neutral '*watashi/watakushi*', according to interviewed boys.[3]

Moreover, the traditionally conceived men's language is not heard as frequently as it is presented when speaking of gendered speeches in Japanese. If asked, there will be an affirmative answer on his existence, but a scarcity of viable example, since men's language is generally considered roughish and for that reason it cannot be used in formal situations or with people one is not familiar with. It is a similar reasoning as the one behind

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[3] Reported by Satoshi Kinsui himself, since he conducted a questionnaire survey in a University in Hyogo Prefecture (2003, pg. 78), but also by various native speakers on Youtube and language blog in Japanese.

the situational usage of first-person pronouns referred by Kinsui. Cindi SturtzSreetharan (2004) wonders when strongly masculine forms are actually used in conversation, in which context and for what reason. She takes her focus on white-collared salaried Japanese men – since they are thought as the normative model of masculinity in Japanese modern society – and investigates their linguistic strategies during vis-à-vis informal conversations with other males. Echoing the call to broaden the studies on men's language, understudied even in front of a plurality of possible men's personas other than the normative one, such as, for example, the hyper-gendered *yakuza* one or the casual schoolboy speech.

About sentence-finals particles in particular, Sturtz (2004) conducted several studies on masculine-associated ones and their use in native speakers informal conversations. In Japanese language, sentence final particles have the function of communicating the speaker's attitude and emotions, as they are always attached to the end of the phrase, both in colloquial and in polite register. Sturtz divides them in masculine (strongly and moderate), neutral (*yo* and *ne*) and feminine (strongly and moderate). There is documented overlap of particles located in the middle of the spectrum, which are used by both speakers groups, while particles as *ze* and *zo* in particular are generally thought as male-only particles, since they sound imposing. They are one of the many elements that speakers use to create their own gender identity and Sturtz uses them to investigate how the stereotypically gendered sentence-final particles are used by men between 19-68 years to create and construct their masculinity (2004). By utilizing the quantitative method and not restricting her research to only Tokyo-born *hyoujungo* speakers, but including speakers of different Kansai dialects, she tries to go over the homogeneous language narrative to establish the frequency with which men use highly masculine markers and how these are used in particular contexts for specific ends. She uses language-in-interaction approach, which is the listening of normal conversations through of speakers locate or dislocate themselves or others in particulars identities thorough an ongoing interaction (Sturtz, 2006, cf. Tretcher and Bucholtz 2001). This approach helps a closer and more natural examination of the study of construction of masculinity. It allows to see how native speakers in friendly terms, although all white-collar workers, use language not only as a resource for creating, maintaining, or refuting a masculine identity, but also to create and reiterate an internal hierarchy.

Masculine identity, following Scott Kiesling's studies (1996), is not just one and universal, even inside the same class of individuals. Kiesling examines the University's fraternities in the Unites States and demonstrate how males shift between various

archetypes of dominant masculine identities. In the case of USA, these archetypes includes the 'father knows best' and the 'working class hero' model, since these are characteristics culturally associated with male authority, withing his family and society. Unfortunately, there are not similar studies focusing on Japanese culture, but some of the discourse can be assimilated in the all-male Japanese group that Sturtz takes as a reference. For example, in both Kiesling and Sturtz's analysis we find the concept of domination and subordination regarding social groups of males. Kiesling, citing Robert Connell, writes

> Chief among these patterns is hegemony, which refers to "the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life". Thus, hegemonic masculinity is "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (1995:77)." Within this cultural pattern there are relationships of domination and subordination among groups of men. (Kiesling, 1996, p. 114)

Sturtz, investigating sentence-finals particles usage on how Japanese men creates ongoing positions of superiority, seniority, and masculinity in their conversations, tries to detect when these markers are used to assert one's dominance. In her findings, we see that white-collar workers have the highest frequency of avoiding first or second personal pronouns, which only makes these markers more relevant when inserted in a conversation, using them for strong and personal statements. Sturtz highlights in particular the stances in which the personal pronouns *ore* is used, since is too strong for polite conversations. She concluded that overall, all speakers normally favor neutral and moderate forms and only occasionally use strongly masculine final particles, usually when they need to assert their own authority and knowledge of themselves. Furthermore, younger speakers are more likely to use strong masculine forms compared to older men, since they have no capital other than their language to assert themselves and their social identity. Senior speakers, on the contrary, are more likely to use a polite speech, leaning linguistically more towards feminine characteristics. Sturtz then concludes adding that according to her findings and analysis, life stages seem to be more powerful than gender in discerning the linguistic style used, other than the strong input given by the context of the conversation (2004).

To support this affirmation, ideological masculinity is divided by Ian Buruma (1984) between "hard" (aggressive and macho-like) and "soft" (placid and industrious) and has different characterizations linked to life stages. Kiesling refers to Connell again in saying that the dominant cultural identity for males is associated through paid labor, while the dominant cultural model of femininity relies on the role of the subservient mother and devoted wife. But paid labor also divides male ideologies into the two categories cited by Buruma, since on one hand we have the "hard" (or 'physical' for Kiesling) masculinity as the physical toughness associated with the working class, emphasizing muscle power and their affinity with machinery. On the other hand, there is the model of "soft" (or 'hierarchical') masculinity, which is defined as the industrious man, high in hierarchical positions that requires professionalism over physical prowess. This second archetype of 'soft' masculinity is the man that assert his dominance and authority with social skills, personal knowledge, and ambient control. Both of these archetypes are then associated with different types of work, and consequentially to different models of language. The normative Japanese model of masculine identity, as pointed out by Sturtz, is more of the latter, 'softer' model of masculinity. Of course, these two archetypes are not always separated and can be mixed depending on the kind of male's identity that the speaker decided to assume depending on the context. The model of affirmed and successful man is tied to company workers that begin on the lower step of the company's hierarchy and then work their way to the top positions through a reward-for-labor kind of system. The model of male identities that became the normative narrative in Japan influences the type of language men are supposed to be using. This is the point where Sturtz begin her investigation on typically masculine markers – which are more present in the 'hard' archetype – in white-collar workers' conversations.

Sturtz investigates not only sentence-final particles, but in a later study, also the usage of first and second person pronouns, terms of address to create an ongoing sense of superiority, seniority, and masculinity (2006). To do so, instead of a group of close friends with no other ties, she takes as focus groups of white-collared men in friendly terms, but with different hierarchical positions inside the same company. She noted early on her analysis how hierarchical superiors not only makes use of the personal pronoun *ore*, but also take the liberty of adding the suffix *-chan* (term of endorsement generally associated to girls, younger pupils and puppies) for one of his younger male interlocutors as term of address to endorse the big brother strategy of communication. In general, any instance in which a linguistic marker strongly associated with men's language (as *ore* or the final

particles *ga, sa* and *na*) is used, the speaker does so to assert masculinity, taking a stance o signaling authority. It is a pragmatic choice of linguistic strategy that gives visibility to socially accepted hierarchical ties, implying both the dominance and submission of the speakers towards each other, but that also underling the familiar context given by the friendly context.

However, even in these situations it is still pretty rare to see strongly masculine markers, unless the social context calls for it. When this happens, Sturtz notices how, in order to sound less aggressive and to give a conciliatory signal to the other, especially when marking a personal remark that could be taken as offensive, dialect forms could be added to mitigate. As for Kiesling's theory, Sturtz concludes that Japanese men call more often the "elder brother" model of masculinity, indexing hierarchy, familiarity, and solidarity, as well as the "manly men" model, indexing authority and roughness. The speech of Japanese salarymen is neither homogenous within particular classes, ages, working contexts, and geographic regions nor across interlocutors, topics, and contexts. It is instead fluid and highly responsive to a plurality of extralinguistic factors (Sturtz, 2006).

Indeed, the "elder brother" model of masculinity analyzed by Kiesling does have some resemblance to Japanese hierarchy between members of the same company, even though Kiesling's work is focused on the hierarchy inside an American College's fraternity. Fraternities are all-men inter-college social communities founded as an exclusive brotherhood which requires freshmen various tests and probation periods in order to gain the respect of the older members – the older brothers – and prove themselves worthy of being party of the group. In many ways, it does resemble the Japanese model, though their model of the 'big brother' (higher member) taking care of his juniors (little brothers) is looser.

There are two brief mentions of men and their use of the language also in the book about women's language in modern Japanese companies written by Miyako Inoue. The first one is cited while talking about the strategy of the neutral speech used by the only female manager. In this occasion, Inoue tells us about another male manager she met while working there, a middle-aged Japanese man who used a similar strategy to the interviewed female manager. The middle-aged men was speaking as neutral and polite as possible while in the office, following a linguistic strategy very similar to the one that his female colleague would adopt. This case is compatible with Sturtz findings on how older men have less reasons to be speaking using strongly masculine forms, since with their seniority they have no need to assert their dominance in that way, but also worth of the

attention of Inoue, which tells us that it was not a common case between male managers. Another example for male speech is brought up when one of the interviewed women recalls an incident regarding a male colleague tutoring a new entry in the office. This male tutor would use extremely polite speech when talking to his superiors, but he would switch to colloquial, and more masculine speech when speaking to his junior. This resulted in the younger men quitting his job after trying several times to switch his tutor with someone not as linguistically aggressive, demonstrating one of the reasons why men's speech between corporation workers is not systematic. For these two cases, the author reflects on how important is to choose the right communication style at work, not only for women but for men too. In fact, the middle-aged manager had a good reputation (being perceived as reserved and cordial) between his subordinates, while the tutor did not manage to achieve a good relationship with the younger colleague since he was being too rough in his communication. (Inoue, 2006)

Varieties of Men's Language

We have seen, then, as men's language is not homogenous and does not lack varieties of possible linguistic strategies, depending by the social context, personal status in the hierarchy and age of the individual. However understudied, then, it does present gender models that speakers share and linguistically re-elaborate to reflect their masculine identity in society. Japanese society, then, sees more of the normative men's language, which is generally neutral with occasional informal masculine markers. However, looking at the media representation of masculine identities in media, especially in anime, we notice that there are other male sub-archetypes of possible character's personae that are not heard as much in today's Japan. The two that will be presented as linguistic archetypes are the old man's speech and one of the hyper-masculine kind, the gangster's speech.

Old Man's Speech

Old Man's speech, which Kinsui (2003) takes in analysis while writing of Doctor's Language in anime, is characterized by an overlap of Eastern and Western Japanese dialects. It is a speech used by elderly male characters in anime, often in a wise elder kind of role, like Doctor or Professor. Some of these grammatical characteristics are 1. the substitution of the copula's *da* in *hyoujungo,* becoming *ja* as in some of the Western dialects (*ame da > ame ja >* it rains!); 2. the negation in *-n* (*shiranai > shiran >* I don't

know); 3. The substitution of the verb of existence verb *iru* (*hyoujungo*) with *oru*. As a first-person pronoun, *washi* and *wagahai* can be used by this character, while *boku* and *ore* are rarely utilized. A sentence-ending particle, *nou,* often follows the copula in a highly recognizable way linked to this character. Even though these characteristics can be associated with Western dialects, the speech used in anime does not hint to a recognizable prefecture, but rather, it wants the listener to associate it with old age. The anime personas using this speech, though, are not simple frail elderly men, instead they are represented as bearers of ancient and powerful knowledge that the protagonist needs, worth of respect and consideration. In short, they are the symbol of the authority associated with elderly men in many Asian cultures. They do not need to affirm their status with vulgar and roughish words, and neither do they need to use honorifics for others. They are at the receiving end of that respect because of their old age and wise knowledge, representing the authority of the sage patriarch, although their speech is not used in today's Japanese society at all. In fact, it was elaborated through presenting this archetype of character in novels and magazines written in Meiji Period.

What gives the feel of someone old and wise are the similarities between this speech and the characteristics of the old language spoken during the last half of the Edo Period (1603-1868) and used in *Gesaku* (popular novels) and *Kabuki* theatre. The reason is that at the start of the Edo Period, the Osaka and Kyoto's style of speech had some of the grammar characteristics of the old man's speech, simply because it was spoken by most of high-class samurai during the first half of the Period, when these two Western cities were still considered the center of the Japanese culture. By the second half of the Period, we see that the center gradually moved to Edo (old name of Tokyo), affirming the language to shift toward the Edo-style speech as well. It would then make sense for an older character of a certain high status to still be speaking in Osaka-style speech, since it represented a recent past. With the increasing usage of Edo-style speech by the government and then the creation of the standard Japanese language, the old Western-style's speech simply became associated with the past.

Gangster's Speech

The anime persona of the young gangster is one using a hyper-masculine speech. Speaking of varieties of possible male's identities, this is one that is usually associated with the 'hard' masculinity mentioned earlier. Linguistically speaking, it is not much different from forms utilized by the boy's language, except that it is taken to the extreme.

Characters that uses it are represented as young adult men, physically strong and verbally aggressive. In fictional worlds they are sometimes represented as instable and prone to anger, which is an emotion generally tied with the archetype of Kiesling's physical (hard) masculinity, even though not the only one possible for this generalized male's identity. Gangster's language is systematically constructed to sound rude and rough, it almost always uses the casual form with no signs of honorifics and the persistent presence of the phonetical reduction (*sugoi* > *sugee* > cool; *hayai* > *hayee* > quick). Verbs are often on the imperative (*damare*! > shut up!) and the lexical choices are very informal too, together with the minimal grammar. The gangster character almost exclusively refers to himself with the personal pronoun *ore* and to others with *omae* (often translated with 'bastard' given the rudeness of the address). Probably one of the most noticeable difference with the boy's language, which it is used in society in informal occasion, is that there is the tendency to express aggressiveness through the exacerbated pronunciation of the /r/ by strongly trilling the alveolar consonant. In short, the gangster persona and his speech is the representation of the dominant, physically strong hyper-masculine identity, which lives untouched by the social rules, just like the *ojousama* persona is the hyper-gendered representation of the ideal femininity in its purer and most unrealistic form.

Male identities are heterogenous and flexibles, allowing speakers to managing their linguistic strategy in a context-effective way. Reading Sturtz's analysis, it is interesting to see how pragmatically and strategically men's language's markers change depending on the situation, asserting their masculinity without being rude to the other interlocutor. Male markers are used to emphasize attributes related to gender role and identity, such as assertiveness when in an argument between peers or protection when taking the elder brother's role. Moreover, contrary to the women's language case, men do not seem to use men's language in a jokingly way, ironizing on traditional gender roles with friends at work. Their strategic use of the male language is more subtle, since the chances to appear rude are higher. The strategical reminder of their own gender's attributes are made by the occasional use of sentence-final particles or strongly masculine personal pronouns, with the situational term of endorsement toward hierarchically lower companions. However, the markers used are still more of a rarity than a rule, while for most part men's speak in a more neutral and politer speech, which is more rewarding, as attested by Inoue.

As for fictional character's personas, there are a variety of different reflections of traditional ideologies about men's authority, linguistically expressed by the wise old patriarch (old men speech) and the unrestrained and aggressively dominant young man (gangster's speech). These are just two male fictional personas that could be grouped under the ideological male archetype, representing two sides of masculinity, which speakers use to construct their social identity through linguistic expressions.

4. Gendered Speech in Anime: *Gintama*

We have seen how the various gendered speeches are an important part of the Japanese language, since speakers use specific and easily recognizable markers to reflect the impression they want to give to their interlocutor. However, while these linguistic elements are used strategically in everyday conversations, anime characters use these stereotypical markers systematically. This happens in anime with abundance of unrealistic elements and many secondary characters that needs to be easily recognizable with lesser background information. For example, in order to make two girls personas easier to distinguish for the viewer, one might use Kogals speech and the other one might talk like an *ojousama*.

All characters listed and analyzed in this chapter are taken from a famous anime called *Gintama* 銀魂, (translated as 'Silver Soul'), adapted from the manga of the same name by Hideaki Sorachi (*Weekly Shounen Jump*, Shueisha). *Gintama* is definitively a big name between the magazine's published works, with over 55 million copies in print, together with some of the most international known manga such as *One Piece* and *Naruto*. *Gintama* was serialized from 2003 to 2018, while the anime adaption debuted in 2006 and ended in 2018, with a total count of 367 episodes plus OVAs, films, and live action adaptations. The genre setting is a mixture between sci-fi and historical Edo Period, where comedy is interviewed to a deepening *shounen* plot. I choose *Gintama* in part because it has a multitude of characters with different speech patterns to match the stereotypical persona it wants to parody, but also because a good part of its comedy power lies in the way characters plays with Japanese language's nuances. Wordplays, breaking of the fourth wall and characters playing a different persona than usual are only few of the unconventional comedic strategies that this anime uses, some of which make it a good material for a case study on varieties of speech in Japanese animation.

Female Characters

Most of female characters in *Gintama's* cast have a slightly different speech style, if not completely. Since the setting is pseudo-historical, we find some characters speaking in modern Japanese and some others speaking with archaic patterns. However, it is interesting to notice that most of the female use a certain degree of women's language in their speech. Some of the more commonly heard markers are the use of *nante* instead

of the more neutral *nado* or the masculine *nanka* (all of three meaning 'such as, like'); and the sentence-final particles *wa/no/ne/noyo*.

The female characters used for analysis are the following.

Hinowa

Hinowa is a refined courtesan that Gintoki helps during a narrative arc that takes place in the Yoshiwara quartier. Yoshiwara, which is the historical red-light quartier of Edo, is the residence of the courtesans and prostitutes, also in Gintama's setting. However, Hinowa does not speak like her companions. Instead of a speech that resemble the historical courtesan speech, filled with old expressions and mixed elements of the with Kyoto dialect, Hinowa speaks the refined women's language. Her speech, even if she mostly speaks in an informal register, makes use of honorific forms. Through her perfect Tokyo-like speech, and her warm and maternal sentences, her language is used to elevate her character, putting her in a higher pedestal than others. She is the weak but courageous 'princess' that needs to be saved from the cruel master of Yoshiwara, a role that is emphasized by her feminine speech and physical weakness. Described as the 'sun of the eternal night of Yoshiwara', she has many features that are traditionally attributed to ideal beauty. Firstly, she has a mother role (since she adopted a young orphan), and she is presented with goodness-like reverence, stating that "only her eyes show no signs of weariness, vulgarity or worry. Even though she's stuck underground, her soul remains unbroken. All the women of Yoshiwara have great respect for her, and all the men love her, even though she's beyond their reach".[4] Secondly, she is modest and ready to sacrifice herself for other's happiness, where selfness and self-sacrifice are two of the more commonly celebrated ideological and traditional characteristics attributed to the perfect Japanese woman. Moreover, at the end of her narrative arc, she stays as the de facto leader of Yoshiwara, taking a leader role thanks to her kindness.

Example 1.

Itta deshou? Nakanaori wo sasete ageru tte. Shitteta no yo, zutto.

Didn't I say it? That I would make you two reconcile. I have known it, for a long time.

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[4] Her character's webpage brings together all the information about her given during various episodes of the anime https://gintama.fandom.com/wiki/Hinowa

Example 2.

Moshikashite terakoya ni najimeteinai no kashira.

Could it be that he is not getting used to the temple school?

As most of Gintama's cast, she almost always speaks casually because she is never put in a situation where the polite form is needed. Her feminine speech is marked by her choice of personal pronoun, which is *watashi* (mostly to underline that Hinowa can speak a perfect *hyoujungo*). As shown by the first example, she uses the polite form of wondering *deshou* to not sound too direct, following with the verb *sashiageru*, a humble form. In the second example, she expresses her doubts by using *kashira*, a strongly feminine marker.

Tsukuyo

Tsukuyo is an ex-courtesan trained as assassin to protect the red-light district and the women working in it. She is a good friend of Hinowa and often appears with her in scenes, which makes the difference between their speech style even more striking and noticeable. As a matter of fact, Tsukuyo's speech is roughish and direct, but it also has a lot of characteristics that help emphasizing her character as ex-courtesan, starting from her use of personal pronouns and copulas. She almost never switches to a standard feminine speech, if nothing, her speech only gets more aggressively rough and masculine when she is drunk, since her character is built on her act of renouncing her femininity to protect Yoshiwara.

Example 1.

Tsukuyo de arinsu. Wacchi no nerai ha nushi ja.

My name is Tsukuyo. My target is you.

Example 2.

Shinpai sezu domo yoi. Mou nigen.

You don't have to worry. I won't run anymore.

In both examples, there are plenty of elements alien to modern Japanese. In the first example, Tsukuyo is introducing herself to the main characters for the first time. She uses the non-standard and archaic copula *arinsu*, which have the same meaning of *dearu/da/desu*, except that it comes from the sociolect – a linguistic variety used by a

particular social or professional group of people – used by the prostitutes during Edo Period. In Japanese it has a specific name, *kuruwa kotoba* (red-light district speech), and Tsukuyo uses it extensively, as we also see in her choice of personal first pronoun, *wacchi* (I, me). Instead of using *anata*, *kimi* or even *temee* and *omae* to call the interlocutor, she uses the archaic pronoun *(o)nushi*, as others inside Yoshiwara do, following with the copula *ja* instead of the previous *arinsu*. The use of *ja* and (o)*nushi* are not strictly part of the courtesan speech, but are more of a common archaism to emphasize a non-modern or dialect speaker, even though *ja* is still used in many regions of Western Japan (such as Hiroshima prefecture). In the second example, we have another two non-standard linguistic elements. Th first is *yoi*, which is the old form of the modern adjective *ii* (good, fine), and the other is *nigen* (don't run away). *Nigen* is the negative form of the verb *nigeru* in some of the dialect-speaking Western regions, which is very different from the standard Japanese form, which would be *nigenai*. All of these characteristics contribute to Tsukuyo's courtesan persona, which is also designed to match her speech, since she is shown as wearing a simple kimono and braided hair in a courtesan-like hairstyle. However, what is interesting is that even though she is not formally employed as a courtesan, she speaks like one, even though Hinowa does not.

Shimura Tae

Shimura Tae, or Otae, following the old costume of putting the honorifical O- at the beginning of a woman's first name, initially is presented speaking women's language. She seems as a rather common archetype of a female character, the big sister of one of the main trio, Shimura Shinpachi. Tae wears modest but feminine clothes, usually a pink and flowery kimono with a blue obi. She works in a hostess bar to pay his father's debts, having to charm his male clients to spend more money at the club. That is the reason she speaks in women's language, at least right up to the point something makes her angry. She is a character whose language does not match her true personality, making it seems like she only puts on a gentle young woman's mask. When something does not go her way or irritates her, her language switches to better accommodate her changing mood, turning from the archetype of femininity to an aggressive and roughish speech, often accompanied by well-landed punch. She drops her feminine persona to show her true assertive personality. Sometimes she will mix up the two styles, speaking in refined and feminine language to express aggressiveness, as a comic strategy.

Example 1.

Ikinasai. Ano hito no naka ni nanika mitsuketa n desho. Itte mitsuketekuru to ii wa.
Go. You saw something in that man, didn't you? It's fine if you go find it.

Example 2.

Nani wo shitonno onore wa! Nande gorira ga konna takarazuka bijin ni nari kusatto nno ja. Nee. Doitsumo koitsumo ittai nanna no? Iyami ka, iyami nano ka, kore!
You, what the heck are you doing? Why did this gorilla turned in such a freaking Takarazuka beaty?![5] Oi. What the hell is going on with everybody? Is it sarcasm? Is this sarcasm, oi!

Shimura Tae uses language strategically, switching back and forth depending on the situation. In the first example we see how she uses the polite imperative ending in *nasai*, which is less aggressive than the normal imperative ending in *-ro*, used by males. She also uses *desho* to make her sentence softe. Moreover, as a sentence-final particle she uses *wa*, one of the particles more strongly associated with femininity. The sentence of the first example, then, gives the idea of a caring woman, that knows how to be maternal and knows how to give advices. In the second example, though, the language changes drastically. The lexicon switched to include a more vulgar choice of terms, such as *onore*, which is a derogatory word to say 'you', and the verb *kusaru* (to rot) used as a pejorative. There are also stronger expressions at the end or at the start of the sentences, such as that emphatic *no ja* standing as a verb and that aggressive *nee* right at the start of the next phrase. *Doitsumo koitsumo* is also not part of polite language, more often used in an extremely casual and rude context, often by men or anime characters that are about to fight. She effectively turns from a gentle big sister persona to one that can remind the viewers of the Kogals' speech.

Male Characters

As for the female's cast, most of male characters speak with some degree of men's language. There are of course some exceptions and differences between one speech to another, depending on the character's age, status, and situation.

Following there are the three male characters analyzed.

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[5] *Takarazuka* beauty refers to a popular musical theatre troupe (*Takarazuka* Revenue) in Japan composed only by women who play both male and female's role.

Sakata Gintoki

Sakata Gintoki is the main character of *Gintama*. Presented as a lazy and uncouth samurai working as a handyman with his two young assistants, Kagura and Shinpachi, he hides his identity as an outlaw that fought with the rebels during the latest civil war. His speech is casual to the point of being rude, but he is perfectly in line with the characteristics of the men's speech. His language stays mostly the same, except turning more masculine during high-tension fights or petty arguments, making his speech more similar to the gangster's speech than the male language. On this aspect in particular, when he is not involved in a serious fight or the scene does not need him to emphasize his strength through language, most of the gangster speech's usage happens when he is involved in petty arguments with other male characters. It seems to be in line with the findings of Cindi SturtzSreetharan on men's language, since the strongly masculine markers in her recorded conversations were used when the speaker needed to be assertive and communicate dominance. However, Gintoki and other characters of the Gintama's cast already use a lot of strongly masculine markers in their lines for most of their screen time, so the only way to reproduce the mentioned linguistic strategy is to switch to an even more masculine speech, which is the gangster's speech.

Example 1.

Gintoki: *Oi, niichan, abunai yo.*

Oi, mister, it's dangerous.

H: *Abunee darou ga!*

That's dangerous!

G: Dakara abunee ttutta n darou.

That's why I said it was dangerous!

H: *Motto tenshon agete ya!*

Say it with more tension!

Example 2.

Gintoki: *Hora, koushite kao wo tsukiawaseru douse mata kenka ni naru kara, kao wo awasenee de ikou to shigoku otona no iken to itta n darou.*

Well, since as we keep bumping into each other and ending up fighting, trying not to be together should be the most adult's choice, right?

H: *Dakara temee ga deteikeba ii darou.*

Then if you leave wouldn't it be alright?

G: *Dakkara omae ha iu na yo. Ore ga ima deteikou to omotta noni, omae ni iwarete kara deteittara omae no shitagatta koto ni nandarou ga! Mou derarenee darou ga. Sa wo shiro yo, gaki.*

Then don't say it! Even though I was just thinking of leaving now, If I left after you said so, it would be like I was following your orders! I can't leave now, can't I?! Read the difference, brat.

H: *Urusee, omae mo gaki darou ga!*

Shut up, aren't you a brat too?!

In examples 1 and 2 Gintoki is having an argument with a male rival, Hijikata, a cop. Reading their interactions, even without the emphasis given by the voice acting, with the aggressively angry tone and the pronunciation of the rolled /r/ typical of this speech, we can still see an escalation in the usage of masculine markers. In the first example, Gintoki opens the conversation using a neutrally casual Japanese, since he calls his interlocutor *niichan* (little brother, used to get the attention of strangers), and uses the correct form of the adjective *abunai* (dangerous). But Hijikata answers aggressively, taking *abunai* and turning it into the masculine *abunee*, while also ending with that '*darou ga*', making his expression stronger. Gintoki answers the provocation by escalating with his '*abunee ttutta n darou*', where the *ttsuttan* is the casual form of another casual form, having a distinctive roughness. In the example 2 the conversation takes a similar curve, with Gintoki starting in a casual men's language and then having to switch to stronger expressions, as the use of two imperative (*iuna* and *shiro*), the repetition of the pronoun *omae,* and of the emphatic *darou ga*.

Example 3.

Mou inee yo. Sensei nante mou dokonimo inee. Oretachi wo tomerareru yatsu wa mou oretachi shika inee ndayo. Kinikuwanee nara, magerannee nara, temē no genkotsu de tomeru shika nee nda.

He isn't (here) anymore. There is no one like Sensei anywhere. There is no one beside us that can stop him now. If you are unable to accept it, if you can't ignore it, you can only stop him with your fists.

In this third example we have a quote from Gintoki before an important fight about a serious issue, in a totally different situation compared to the ones in examples 1 and 2. Here Gintoki does not feel in competition with anyone. Because of that, even though he still uses men's language, he does not escalate it. He is sure of what he is communicating as much to his interlocutors, who he puts on his level with the plural *oretachi* (us), without any imperative. In general, though, Gintoki makes the almost exclusive use of the first pronoun *ore* to refer to himself, while it switches between *anta* (a more colloquial way to say *anata*, 'you') and *temee/omae* when he has to address someone else directly with the second person pronoun. Gintoki, as most of *shounen* anime protagonists, uses them pretty often, contrary to their effective use in everyday Japanese language. In both the examples, it is easy to see how many times the phonetical reduction occurs in the frame of only one sentence. It is almost systematic, to the point of creating a continuous repetition of the vowel /e/ every time the characters need to show their strong masculinity. In the third example, the verb *inai* (negative form of *iru*, 'to exist') becomes *inee*, just as the other verbs of the sentence, since the diphthong /ai/ is the more likely to become /ee/. Although there are other diphthongs that can be object of phonetical reduction as well, such as *sugoi > sugee* and *omae > omee*.

We can see from these two examples how different Gintoki's speech is when compared to the one that Hinowa or Otae would use, even though Otae does make use of some expressions of the gangster's speech when angry.

Shimura Shinpachi

Shinpachi is one of the two young assistants of Gintoki and the little brother of Shimura Tae. He is younger than most of the cast, being only sixteen, with a plain, 'good-boy' image. Being young and not as physically strong as other men in the cast, he is also less experienced. The way he linguistically expresses and affirms his male's identity consequently differs, resulting in boyish speech, with more honorifics and signal of respect. Although depending on the context Shinpachi can also utilize a roughish speech, his standard throughout the anime follows more or less the examples reported below.

Example 1.

    Tsuki de koko ni kite n dayo. Tsuki de anta to issho ni ita n dayo.

I came here because I want to. I am with you because I want to.

Example 2.

> *Boku mo mada benkyouchuu nanode, eraisouna koto wa ienai n desukedo, kore dake wa wakarimasu. Ken no tame ni nanika wo suteru n janai.*
>
> I am still in the middle of my studies so I can't say anything too definitive…but this much I understood. A sword it's not something to throw away things for.

In Shinpachi's speech, we see some elements associated with boys' language. Compared to men's language, more manly and assertive, boys' language is softer and more educated. It is index of a the 'soft' kind of masculinity, with less hyper-emphasis on the assertive characteristics that are part of male identity. As we see in example 1 and 2, Shinpachi uses the copula-ending *-n dayo*, which is still in the informal register, even though it is not rude per se. Another important difference with the speech that Gintoki usually uses is the choice of personal pronoun, which, in Shinpachi's case, happens to be *boku*. These characteristics seems to be compatible with Satoshi Kinsui's statement on the use of the pronoun *boku*, which is considered only a step under the formality of *watashi*, highlighting Shinpachi's clean-cut personality.

Yagyuu Bimbokusai

Bimbokusai is a secondary character of *Gintama*. He is the old patriarch of the rich and influent Yagyuu family and grandfather of Yagyuu Kyuubei, very close to the main cast. Bimbokusai is a good-tempered master swordsman, whose name is an inverted pun on his high rank ('stinking of poor'). However old and short, he is still capable to outsmart Gintoki in swordplay, giving prove that his age does not mean weakness and senility, but mastery, tradition and experience.

Example 1.

> *Washi no sensaa ha zuibun mae ni kowarete nou. Konaida ha surippa ni hannou shiotta. Shinitakunatta.*
>
> My sensor surprisingly broke earlier. The other day it responded to my slippers. It's dead.

Example 2.

> *Ningen donna ni nattemo hinsei dake wa ushinatte wa ikan yo.*

It doesn't matter what a human being becomes, the only thing one can't lose is their character.

Bimbokusai speaks in a way that emphasizes his status as elder of the family, giving his word a little more credibility due to his life experiences. Even though he does not hyper-accentuate this speech style, he throws few typical markers of the old-man speech in his words. In example 1, he uses the personal pronoun *washi*, which is typically used by elders. He also adds *nou* as a sentence-finals, another of the stereotypical characteristic of this speech as analyzed by Kinsui, and *otta*, which is the past form of the verb *oru* (to be). *Oru* has the same meaning of *iru*, but it fell out of use during Meiji Period, with standardization of Tokyo-style speech. However, it was commonly used until at least the first half of Meiji, which is why it gives a sense of 'old', even though it is still used in Western Japanese dialects. Moreover, in the example 2, Bimbokusai uses *ikan* for the negative form of the verb *ikanai*, another characteristic that came from Western dialects, as Tsukuyo does.

5. The Issue of Gender Ambiguity

Beside the examples of gendered language taken from different characters, there are few observations to make on the issue of gender, language, and representation. The first is that between the heterogenous cast of Gintama, we find more than a character that does not fit the conventional duality of genders. There are in fact at least two important characters that do not fit their biological gender. They are Saigou Tokumori and Yagyuu Kyuubei.

Saigou, also known as Mademoiselle Saigou, is an ex-samurai, very tall and muscular, that owns an *okama* club in Kabukichou, while Kyuubei is a born woman, but educated as a man by her family and with a strong romantic preference for women. Their personal situations are treated in a different way when first introduced to the main cast. On one hand we have **Saigou Tokumori**, an ex-warrior known for their physical strength, that after the war retired and started to accept their feminine side, wanting to be both a father and a mother for their only son (situation that reminds of the male protagonist in the novel's *Kitchen* by Banana Yoshimoto). Mademoiselle Saigou dresses as a woman, owns a bar where transvestite men work as hostess, dancing and chatting with clients. When first introduced, they are called 'monster' for their appearance by the cast, even though thorough the introductive episode Gintoki rethinks his first impression and eventually comes to respect Saigou and their employees. Described and self-identifying as '*okama*', Saigou and her hostess speak in feminine Japanese, even though they tend to switch to masculine when angry or irritated, showing a bit of duality in their gender identification. *Okama* is one of the possible words to indicate homosexual men in Japanese language. Following the analysis by Daniel Long (1996), the term *okama* originated in the metaphorical use of the expression '*o-kama wo horu*' ('to dig or to bore into a kettle', where the play is that '*okama*' also means 'male's buttocks'). Even though the word *okama* today indicates a homosexual male that cross-dresses and acts effeminate, a comedic figure that we often see in anime. It is attested since the Edo Period. The analogic references to kitchen tools in the Japanese gay argot are various and they are probably all derivatives of *okama*, such as for the word indicating homosexual women 'that act like men' (butch lesbian) or *onabe* (pot) in Japanese gay argot (even though in today's Japanese this terminology can be considered derogatory depending of the context).

Hideko Abe (2010) tries to analyze the social construction of gender in relation to linguistic practice and performance by Japanese sexual minorities. Abe attempts to demonstrate that gender and gender identity are not something we own but rather achieve through various resources available to us. To do so, she starts by introducing her take on gender studies, specifying that she rejects the idea of the duality of gender, which she thinks as something much more fluid and negotiable over time and context. Even so, the focus element for the analysis is on the language practice and words usage only, because linguistic choices are a fundamental element for the construction of one's identity. She takes women's language (*joseigo*) and men's language (*danseigo*) as the two gendered and unrealistic linguistic archetypes of standard Japanese, two archetypes that Japanese speakers use to construct their own identity, personalizing it and changing their speaking as they see fit (such as the switching to *desu*/*masu* or to a more gender-neutral form). She thinks that the sex difference in language approach must be abandoned and replaced with the constructionist view of gender, which treats gender as a complex and fluid cultural construct, not like something we own, but rather like something we perform, and try to accomplish with the help of repeated linguistic practice. This take on gender allows us to better understand why, for example, some Japanese gay men reject normative speech style and create instead a new configuration of speech style, like the *o-nee kotoba* (queen's speech). And *o-nee kotoba* is the language style that, Saigou Tokumori in *Gintama* uses when expressing themselves. Looking in the Japanese web dictionary Weblio, we find this definition of the speech:

It is a feminine language that exaggerate and emphasize feminine characteristics. Markers like "*wa*"; "*yo*", "nano" and others are utilized. People that use O-nee kotoba are also called '*onee kyara*'.[6]

Following there are two examples by Saigou. It is important to notice that all the examples were spoken with a rising intonation and a softer voice mimicking a feminine voice to add the effect.

Example 1.

Nani ga atta no? Konna ookega shite. Biyouin yo, hayaku biyouin ni ikanakya! Anta, saikin itsumo kega shite kaerun janai?

What happened? You're all injured! The hospital, we must go to the hospital! Lately you always coming home with injuries!

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[6] Original definition: https://www.weblio.jp/content/%E3%81%8A%E5%A7%89%E8%A8%80%E8%91%89

Example 2.

Tappuri saabisu wa yo.

[We will provide] a full service!

In both examples we see strongly feminine markers, such as the sentence-final particles *wa*, *yo* and *no*, but also feminine ending-phrases in *shite* and *-n janai*.

Abe also studies what she translated as cross-dressers speech (*o-nee kotoba*) and male prostitutes speech (*danshoo*), exploring through interviews their gender identity and sexual desire through linguistic practices, such as, for example their shifting between the usage of *watashi* (neutral and formal) and *atashi* (distinctly feminine and informal) as personal pronouns or other sets of typical expressions (*ara, iya*). These are all markers that *okama* characters such as Saigou, feminine but with evident masculine characteristics to show the duality of their identity, link to the usage of the *o-nee kotoba*. In fact, the apparent clashing of opposite identities is crucial for *okama* characters. Saigou, for example, does not reject the masculine attributes that the still has, such as muscles and strength. They are not interested in becoming woman nor man, but instead they enjoy the best of both, striking to be 'nobler than a woman and stronger than a man'.[7] This is actually an element that Abe finds when interviewing cross-dressers in Shinjuku, the belief that having only one gender is limitative and the individual can choose to identify with both, making for example the conscious choice of using *watashi* instead of a more gendered pronoun.

Yagyuu Kyuubei, though, is a slightly different case. Biologically female but behaving like a male, even though they prefer to use the less strongly masculine *boku*, and with a sexual preference for women. They claim to have chosen to live neither as a masculine nor as a feminine individual. staying on the neutral side of the language when possible, and being more and more open to try feminine clothes as the anime progressed, seemingly settling for a non-binary and very flexible identity.

Example 1.

Boku wa otoko demo onna demo nai.

I am neither a man nor a woman.

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[7] *Gintama*, Episode 24.

Their speech has some of the characteristics that Abe examines while studying how masculine speech is used by lesbians at gay bars in Shinjuku, trying to understand how naming and self-identity (such as the use of personal pronouns like *ore* and *jibun*) construction works and how the bar as a social context helps these women shaping, renew, and revitalize these identities. In fact, much as Kyuubei's speech, lesbians who use masculine language do not use it exclusively, even though extensively. In particular, Abe notices how the same speaker shifts from speech to speech depending on the context (interlocutors, speech types, etc), always negotiating their gender identity. She concludes that linguistic shifts between the two first-person pronouns are strongly related to their notion of gender identity, social role and sexual desire.

6. Conclusion

As the example of Gintama goes to show, anime as media can contain many patterns derived from gendered speech in the Japanese language. Fictional characters announce their identity through speech to deepen and clarify their character design with an accompanying language style. Moreover, characters are usually based on archetypes coming from reality, even though their model speech characteristics are often exaggerated and less context dependent. Having a culturally shared archetype persona characterized by a recognizable speech pattern for reference is fundamental for a quicker communication with the interlocutor. The existence of many personas with recognizable speech patterns facilitate speakers to use those patterns to be more flexible in their identity's negotiation, working de facto as archetype models which can be referenced to even to joke with colleagues, as it happens for the women's language archetype.

Japanese animation, gendered language seems an important feature to better reveal a character's personality, to the point that hyper-gendered types of speech, such the ojousama and the gangster speech, find a place here, whereas in real-life Japanese they are considered outdated or rude. The reason these speech patterns are so hyper-gendered is the heavy presence of gendered markers attributed to traditional men and women's language. Taken out of the traditional gender ideology, speech patterns in anime also contain social status implications and gender prejudices, using these elements to make the characterization easier to understand and remember. The markers that are more used to do so are strongly gendered final-sentence particles, personal pronouns, and vocabulary choices. Speech patterns for anime characters make use of the same linguistic strategies that native speakers use – or have used – to negotiate and reflect their identity, with the fundamental difference that anime personas often can act outside the required context appropriate speech, prioritizing to strongly communicate their identity.

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