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Problems of Gender in Editing a Textbook of Japanese Language

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This paper presents the experience and the problems in editing a new textbook of the Japanese language in Hungary from the viewpoint of gender. The project of writing a new textbook started in September 2007. One of the authors of this paper is an editor of the Japanese-Hungarian dictionary which has been edited since 2001. She noticed so many gender biased sentences and expressions during checking the entries written by the Japanese language teachers. Also we earlier examined the issue of the gender in Japanese business textbooks published in Japan. Then we found many gender biased words and illustrations in them.

It was one of the reasons why we made sure as the editors and the authors of a new Japanese language textbook, the DEKIRU 1-2 that gender biased expressions and illustrations didn't get into the textbook. Drafts of the textbook have been written by several native and non-native Japanese language teachers. We found so many gender biased sentences, expressions and illustrations that we had to rewrite, change, revise the texts and order the illustrations again. We present here some examples from the book in categories such as distributions of gender of the characters, names of occupations, gender biased expressions. We will also present the experience of the process of recording the text to CD.

It is still very easy for both Japanese and Hungarian teachers to fall into gender biased traps because not only the Japanese but also the Hungarian language has many gender biased expressions and we Japanese language teachers are unconsciously bound by prejudice, conventions and gender biased ideas.

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