

## Gender Related Expressions

Musashino University

Prof. Mizue

Sasaki

(2003 年ワルシャワ大学で開催された EAJJS(the 10th EAJJS Conference in Warsaw (Poland) in August 2003) .大会で発表した原稿です)

### 1. The Theoretical Background to Differences between Men's and Women's

Speech (R. Lakoff and A. Jugaku)

What differences are there in the way that men and women speak? R.

Lakoff ① gives the following examples of distinctive features of women's speech:

1. When will dinner be ready?
2. Oh... around six o'clock...?

According to Lakoff, if a woman were asked a question such as (1) she will very often answer in a manner (2), suggesting that if the other person agrees, she would like to do so. In other words, the nuance is that she is prepared to go along with the other person's feelings. Lakoff also found a distinctive use of tag question forms such as,

3. The way prices are rising is horrendous, isn't it?

In order to find out whether this form was indeed peculiar to women's speech, Siegler, D. and Siegler, R. (1976)② asked a number of students to read sixteen sentences, four of which contained the above tag question pattern, and to choose which sentences they thought had been said by a woman. Almost all of the students said that they thought the four sentences with tag questions were spoken by a woman.

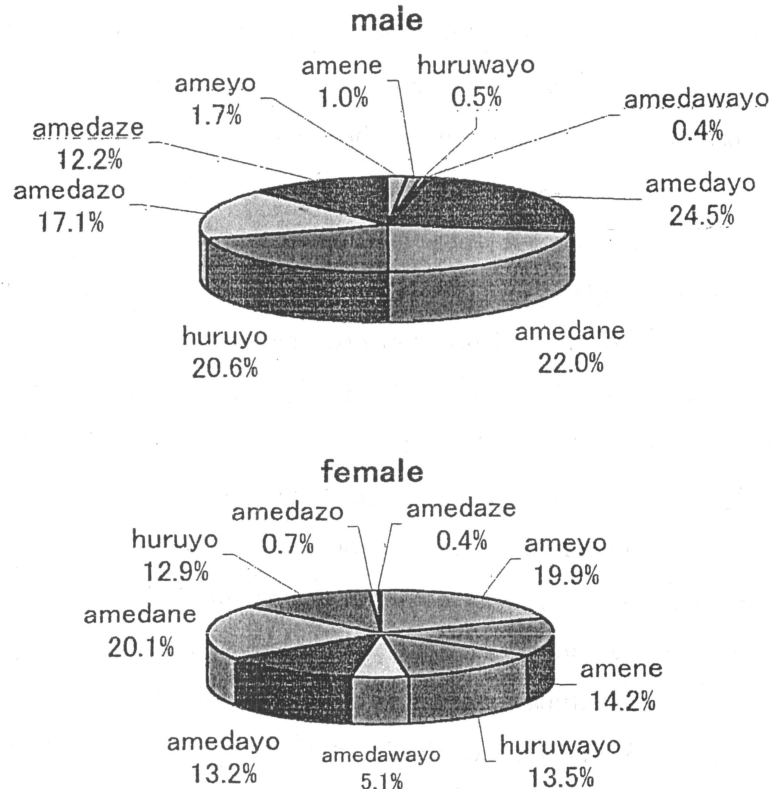
This and the examples below are all taken from "Stereotypes of males' and females' speech", in "Psychological Reports", 39 (p.167- 170). Of course, the students were only guessing, what they were saying in fact was, if there was a tag question, it was probably a woman speaking, and the reasoning behind these guesses was that when women speak, they do so without conviction in what they are saying. It can be said, I feel, that tag questions are not peculiar to women's speech, but to anybody, male or female who is not confident in what they are saying or who does not wish to assert his or her opinion in front of a particular person. However, the Siegler's research shows that many of the students felt that, "women do not have confidence in their own opinions". This research is only possible, however, because of the fact that the tag question is a grammatical form which is employed in the language of both men and women.

In contrast to the English language, the Japanese language employs particles at the end of the sentence which show clearly whether the speaker is male or female. For example, although some men use the particles *~zo* and *~ze*, women almost never do, and on the other hand, although some women frequently employ the particles *~wa* and *~da wa* at the end of a sentence it is very rare in male speech. In Japanese, therefore, if you look at the end of a sentence, it is immediately clear whether the speaker is a man or a woman.

**Shuujoshi** ('sentence final particles') are added at the end of conversation in Japanese to fulfill a number of different functions—to express one's intention or decisiveness, to soften an expression or to offer an invitation. The addition of a single syllable can perform a significant function. Of the various particles, the function of the particle *~wa*, used exclusively by women, correlates closely to Lakoff's discussion of 'tag questions'. Sentence final particles are considered to be unique to Japanese, however, as regards their function, (at least, with respect to the particle *~wa*), the phenomenon of 'tag questions' is common to both Japanese and English. English and Japanese do differ, however, in that,

in English, you cannot go so far as to say that tag questions 'are used by women', to the extent that they are in Japanese.

In his study, *Shinpuro Nihongo Kenkyuuhan 2* (The National Japanese Language Research Institute", 1999) Kiyomitsu Ozaki<sup>③</sup> further clarified this.



Japanese final particles which indicate a female speaker:

*'ame yo' 'ame ne' 'furu wa yo' 'ame da wa'*

Japanese final particles which indicate a male speaker:

*'ame da yo' 'ame da ne' 'furu yo' 'ame da zo' 'ame da ze'*

The results of his study showed that the use of feminine forms was extremely

frequent in women aged 50 and over, but women in their 20s used them hardly at all. Masculine forms were used the least by men over 50 and the most by those in their 20s. According to this survey, almost no women at all used masculine forms.

If we consider these results from the standpoint of the period of high economic growth, the following points become clear:

1. The use of feminine forms peaked with the *Dankai no Sedai* ( after World War II, it was the twenty million members of the 'baby-boomer generation' who were responsible for rebuilding the Japanese nation. ) and has since gradually decreased. It is possible that these forms may disappear in the future.
2. There is a tendency for men in their 20s to use the masculine forms more than those in their 50s.

What grammatical forms, therefore, do women use when speaking to people with whom they are intimate? Compared to those who use feminine forms, the number of women who use masculine forms is on the increase.

As might be expected, the masculine forms **da zo** and **da ze**, which are used to express an opinion very forcibly and sound very rough, are not used by females in any age group. Other expressions, however, which were formerly purely masculine forms, are now being used by more than 80% of women in their 20s. In short, as far as final particles are concerned the differences between male and female language, in Japanese at least, is disappearing.

In contrast to this, there are almost no males in any age group that use feminine forms. If a man uses feminine forms, he is in fact saying, 'I want to be feminine' and trying to communicate this feeling to his listeners and his language is carrying a special message. There is a type of song where this technique is used intentionally when a male singer is trying to express a woman's feelings. The fact that this technique exists shows how firmly the idea of 'women's language' is entrenched. If the use of feminine forms continues to

decrease at the present rate, it is possible that they will cease to exist except in the world of literature, cinema and song.

When conducting an analysis of female speech, it is usually possible to tell the age of the speakers from their use of final particles.

It can be seen from the strategy termed 'the avoidance of polite language' that this is commonly achieved by the judicious use of final particles.

For example, if the expression **Ashita mata kimasu** ('I'll come back tomorrow') is used it is impossible to convey friendliness and familiarity. To do so, the polite form must be avoided and **Ashita kuru ne** used instead, which sounds more intimate and affectionate. On the other hand, the form, **Ashita kuru zo** sounds like someone is being threatened by a debt collector!

The Japanese language is in a constant and rapid state of change., both men's and women's language is changing. As Akiko Jugaku (1979) ④ says in **Nihongo to Onna ('Women and the Japanese Language')**,

*"One of the facets of language is that it can regulate human behaviour. When used in this manner, people can be restricted and trapped into a set of behaviours and the existence of such language can result in the formation of a certain type of person with a certain type of ideas. For example the existence of the word 'sabi' allows a Japanese person to admit that the concept of 'sabi' exists too.*

When Akiko Jyugaku published the above book, the period of high economic growth had ended and Japanese society had entered a period of stability and the status of women had risen. Marriage had become just one of the life choices that women could make and the number of women working outside the home had increased. In 1965, women accounted for 8,510,000 of the total number of employees, and by 1975 this had increased to 11,370,000.

\*These figures on employees were obtained from a study on labour carried

out by the Prime Minister's Office, Bureau of Statistics. The figures do not include those working in agriculture or forestry.

Nevertheless, women are still mainly to be found working in the clerical, sales and manufacturing fields, those who have the opportunity to enter managerial positions still number less than 10 per cent. (For a comparison between Japan and other countries see the graph on page 111, 'Women's Occupations in Different Countries.')

This, then, was the sort of background against which the book *Nihongo to Onna* was written. Women and their activities were limited by words 'femininity' and 'womanliness' and the use of linguistic strategies such as 'Sasshi-yoohoo', an utterance started but not finished, suggesting that the speaker is not able to make a decision alone but requires the listener to decide instead. Akiko Jugaku also makes this point (p. 29) by the following examples,

**Hanabira ga harahara to chirikakatte . . .**

**Kore wa ano hito no . . .**

**Soko ni kare ga . . .**

which show how the sentence is left unfinished leaving the reader (listener) to imagine what has been left unsaid. This is another example of J.V. Neustupny's ⑤(2000) 'Avoidance of politeness' strategies. In *Nihon no Josei no Gengo Kankyoo* on p.102 there are a number of headings showing expressions which are only used towards women. In Japanese, there are not only expressions only used towards women but also those used only towards men. Akiko Jugaku analyses examples of the former phenomena but not the latter, and this could be said to be a form of reverse discrimination. A complete analysis should be inclusive of both forms.

## **2. Fourteen Points For Analysing gendered expressions in Japanese (M. Sasaki's View)**

The following 14 points examine vocabulary taken from novels, magazines, journals, newspapers, commercials, books, the Japanese classics and other materials in order to analyse gendered expressions as used towards both men and women (M. Sasaki 2000 ⑥). In the past, studies of language and gender have, for the most part, only looked at the topic from the point of view of discrimination against women. In this study I intend to show the importance of analysing both forms.

1. Expressions in which the meaning differs between men and women.
2. Women and children and expected personality traits.
3. Men and expected personality traits.
4. Expressions peculiar to a patriarchal society and the vestiges of the *ie* system<sup>6</sup>.
  - a. Those expressions which have an historical base.
  - b. Expressions connected with marriage and the male point of view.
  - c. The vestiges of the *ie* system.

Within the system, males took precedence over females who were their inferiors in law, the concept upon which the '*ie*' system is based.

"All persons must be members of an '*ie*' and must be obedient to the wishes of the head of the family." "The head of the family is to be succeeded by his oldest son."

The head of the family was always a man so this meant that women could own no property and their status was low.

<sup>6</sup> Note: The system of the *ie* or 'household' is evident in the system of family registration made part of the civil law by proclamation in 1898. The law stated that the head of the household must register all births, marriages deaths and any other matters related with the local government. In this way, the state attempted to unify and standardise information about the population.



5. The division of labour according to sex and the resulting terminology.
6. The sexual division of roles and the implications for the employment of women.
7. Naming and forms of address:  
in women  
in men
8. 表現 Expressions used by men to evaluate women on physical attributes.
9. Terms used to imply a masculine connotation when attached to certain words, e.g. ~ **kan**, ~ **man**.
10. The figurative use of male or female images when referring to animals.
11. Expressions which have arisen from cultural differences.
12. Expressions which show changes in women's status and roles.
13. Words which have become obsolete as a result of changes in the way society views men and women.
14. Other points.

The above groupings differ from previous studies of the Japanese Language and Gender in the following ways. Until now, research tended to be conducted from a feminist standpoint and concentrated on the search for discriminating terms. However, as can be seen from the above 14 classifications, it is my intention to list\* the gendered terms which are still so clearly in use in

\* A Bibliography of Studies on the Japanese Language and Gender.

- 1985 Kotoba to Onna o Kangaeru Kai, ('The Women and Words Study Group') Kokugo jiten ni mirareru josei sabetsu ('Discrimination against women as seen in Japanese dictionaries') Sanichi Shobo
- 1987 Kittredge, Cherry. 'What Japanese Words Say About Women'. Kodansha International
- 1992 Endo, Orie. Josei no Yobikata Dai Kenkyu: gyaru kara obasan made ('Ways of Addressing Women: The big study from "chicks" to the "missus"') Sanseido
- 1993 Ueno, Chizuko. Kitto Kaerareu Sei Sabetsu Go ('Sexually Discriminating Language: It can be changed') Sanseido
- 1994 Ide, Sachiko. Kotoba ni Miru Josei: Chotto matte, sono 'kotoba'. ('Women



the language today and use this for further research.

*'It is only natural that the feminist movement when working for consciousness raising should concentrate on language ... thanks to the Women's Movement, the importance of the role that words have in moulding and maintaining society's awareness of sexual discrimination has become clear.'* (Momoko Nakamura, 1995. ⑦ *Kotoba to Feminizumu* (Nakamura's work and the other five publications mentioned are particularly good examples in the field of the Japanese language and gender studies, but I still feel that it is necessary to consider language that discriminates against men. The above studies were published against a background of a Japanese society which had in some areas started to recognise that sexual discrimination in language was unnatural and no longer reflected the situation in present day Japan. The discriminatory terms that the above studies deal with are quite ordinary words in normal use. If the Women's Movement had not brought it to our attention they would, no doubt, still be in use today.

However, discriminatory language is used towards men too. For as we can see, the equivalent of **obasan** ('auntie') is **ojisan** ('uncle') and recently this too has become quite a common derogatory term. As a result of the high economic growth, working women (**kyaria uuman**) are beginning to deride men.

In particular men, who have found that after the period of high economic growth they are being derided by expressions such as 'large-sized garbage' referring to large unwanted articles such as old washing machines and air conditioners which the garbage collectors won't take unless you pay them. Sometimes they are called 'wet fallen-leaves', which stick to the pavement in autumn after rainfall and are extremely difficult to sweep away. These expressions refer to men who after they have retired, hang about the house and

Reflected in Language: Stop and think about that "word") Crayon House.  
The above five publications on women and discriminating language came out between 1985 and 1998 after the period of high economic growth and show how the status of women had changed.

get in the way of the housework. What are such expressions if not discriminatory?

Nowadays I think it is more appropriate to consider Japanese not only in terms of expressions that discriminate against women but from the point of view of both sexes; that is, the Japanese language and gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, there is also a place for reconsidering much of the women's language dealt with by the above five books. It is also pertinent, I feel, to consider the newer expressions such as *tasogare zoku* and *oyaji gyaru* to which a changing society has given birth. These too, can be considered 'gendered' expressions.

## Notes

- ①R. Lakoff (1975: 17) gives the examples of distinctive features of women's speech.
- ②Siegler, D. and Siegler, R. (1976). "Stereotypes of males' and females' speech", in "Psychological Reports", 39 (p.167- 170).
- ③Kiyomitsu Ozaki, Shinpuro Nihongo Kenkyuuhau 2 (The National Japanese Language Research Institute", 1999)
- ④Akiko Jugaku (1979) Nihongo to Onna ('Women and the Japanese Language')
- ⑤J.V. Neustupny's (2000) Nihon no Josei no Gengo Kankyoo p.102
- ⑥Mizue Sasaki (2000)Onna to Otoko no Nihongo Jiten(Tokyo do syuppan)
- ⑦Momoko Nakamura, 1995. *Kotoba to Feminizumu* ('Language and Feminism') Keiso Shobo. pp.3 ~ 9.