【国際大会 2011 in ハンガリー シンポジウム：ジェンダー意識の背景にあるもの 要旨】

What's in a name? A naive question to gender-specific expressions

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Americans start their presentations with a joke and Japanese, with an apology. So let me apologize for my lack of knowledge and experience in gender studies. My function in this symposium, therefore, is to elicit other panelists' expertise in gender studies by asking a question or two from the layman's perspective.

We are born to be biological existence, but we grow up to be social existence by interacting with each other and expanding our interpersonal relations. In this process of socialization, we acquire language along with social norms and cultural traditions which are shared by members of the society and which are reinforced through the family, the school, the workplace, and so on. These are reflected in the way we use language—what we choose to say or not to say, and how we say it. Sharing social conventions and norms of social appropriateness leads us to build our identity as members of the society, despite that there is considerable variations across speakers and situations. Japanese children paint the sun red while French children paint it yellow because they are taught in that way in their respective cultures while the sun at high noon is too bright to see any color in it.

When language is used through time, its forms, semantic meanings, and pragmatic functions change from specific to general because their specificity, impact or edges are worn down by familiarity. *Terrific* of a terrific job doesn't mean horrible any more, but just intensifier. The Japanese plural suffix, *-tachi,* used to refer to deferential gods in 1,200 years ago, but now used to human beings, animals, inanimate objects, and even abstract concepts as *jikjan-tachi* 'hours' and *eigo-tachi* 'Englishes.' The change is typically from irregular to regular such as *symposia* to *symposiums* and specific to general such as *-tachi*. To borrow the Prague School's terms, these changes are from *marked* to *unmarked* .

Gender specificity reflects socio-cultural norms and traditions of society of the given age. Democratization and growing awareness of human rights have changed such politically incorrect words as *Miss/Mrs.* to *Ms.* and *steward/stewardess* to *flight attendant* or *cabin crew.* Certainly these gender-general expressions hinder possible discriminatory implications, but it doesn't change the reality. The gender of those referred to or the content of their work stay unchanged. Call them Mrs. or Ms., their marital status stays unchanged and call them stewardesses or flight attendants, they are women and they do the same work of attending their passengers. These examples remind us of the lines in *Romeo and Juliet*:

> What's in a name? That which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet.
> (Romeo and Juliet, II. Ii. 43-44)

What then has changed? I believe it is people's gender awareness because society is moving toward that of gender equity. And language reflects these conscious changes. Japanese version of PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) used to be *fukeikai* (Father-Brother Association), reflecting male-dominant Japanese society. It changed to *fubokai* (Father-Mother Association) to include mothers, having recognized that the Association is run by mothers. Now it is called *hogoshakai* (Curator Association) to include those who are not parents but bring up the children. *Business person, chairperson, police officer* and so on certainly express gender equality, but I doubt if we should change pregnant woman to pregnant person when there is no pregnant man. There are features specific to women or specific to men which can not be attributed to both.

Language change reflects the change in people's thought and behavior. Change in discrimination awareness may change gender-specific expressions to those gender-neutral. But if changing the label leads to the change of content may need to be proved. Discrimination resides within the consciousness of speakers who use and interpret language, not language *per se*. Therefore I question when gender-specific expressions are replaced by gender-neutral ones, if it affects the consciousness of users straightforwardly.

Let me take up a typical female sentence-final particle *wa* in Japanese. A questionnaire I conducted several years ago in my linguistics class of 200 undergraduates in my university reveals that Japanese women in teens and twenties no longer use *wa* in their daily conversation. They know that *wa* is still used as a female-specific sign in novels, plays, TV dramas, and movies. But they feel those who use *wa* are women in their fifties or older. Therefore, I conjecture that in thirty years from now *wa* might no longer be in use. I'm interested in what specialists in gender studies have to say about my prediction.

As the supporting evidence, let me refer to two more typical female sentence signs, *–no* and *–koto* as in:

Kino modorimashita no. 'I returned yesterday.'
Mata ocha go-issho shimasen koto? 'Shall we have tea together again?'

My students' reaction to these utterances is that they never use those endings and they assume those speakers are limited to wealthy married women of upper-class in their sixties and older. These ways of speaking seem to be rapidly disappearing. When my students reach their 60s, some of them might be wealthy married women of upper-class, but they don't think they will use *–no* or *–koto* ending in their conversation. Do young women today lose feminine awareness or just change the way of expressing it?

Here I'd like to remind ourselves that the fixed gender role that men work outside and women stay home to do housekeeping and child raising are not inherent or universal. It was brought into societies by industrialization in the 18th century when men began to work as wage-earners. Since the middle of the 20th century, however, these gender roles have gradually moved toward more flexible and varied ones. We might call this phenomenon as 'women's de-housewifing' and men's

'de-companymanning.'

The United Nations Development Program issues GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) in its annual Human Development Report. GEM measures to what extent women make use of their ability in participating in decision-making in politics, business and professional work by counting the percentage of their number in the congress, in administrative and executive positions in business firms, and in professional and technological occupations. According to the 2002 Report, in the most gender-developed country, Sweden, 45.3% are women in the congress while the percentage in Japan is mere 7.3%. The percentage of women in managerial posts in companies is 30.5% in Sweden but only 8.9% in Japan.

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Sweden　45.3%	Japan　7.3%
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Figure 1 *the 2002 Report on GEM, UNDP*

As for the ratio of hours for working and housekeeping of husband and wife during the child raising period, husband works 6.4 hours a day and do housekeeping 2.5 hours and wife spends 3.9 hours for both working and housekeeping in Sweden. On the other hand, husband works 7.7 hours and do housekeeping only 0.4 hours and wife works 3.7 hours and spends 3.8 hours for housekeeping and child raising in Japan (Shiino, 79). As for hours spent for child raising, husband spends 1.2 hours and wife, 2.2 hours in Sweden while in Japan husband spends only, 0.4 hours, and wife, 1.9 hours. Japan's present state of gender roles is said to be that of Sweden 20 years ago (Shiino, 85).

work/housekeeping hours a day during the child raising period	
hus. in Sweden　6.4/2.5	hus. in Japan　7.7/0.4
wife in Sweden　3.9/3.9	wife in Japan　3.7/3.8

Shiino, 79

In an ideal society, where gender, race, religion, and skin color are no longer discriminated,

the right person works in the right place no matter who the person is—man or woman, white or colored, ethnic majority or minority and the percentage of women participation in politics, business or profession no longer matters. In this sense, Sweden, presently one of the most gender-developed countries, still indicates that gender-segregation continues because they are concerned the man-woman ratio of work force.

In my view, gender-awareness changes depending on what role you are playing in your daily life just like actors on the stage in the ancient Greek theater (deixis). When I talk to my wife, for example, I wear the so-called 'husband's mask;' to my daughter, the 'father's mask;' and in my office, I wear the professor's mask to my students, the 'colleague's mask' to my fellow professors, and when I do shopping, the 'customer's mask. In each situation, I change my language according to the mask I wear. Therefore, young women might use the sentence-final article –wa, -no or –koto endings when they want to emphasize their femininity to their conversation partners.

We replace *blind* with *visually-impaired, visually-handicapped, visually-disabled, visually-challenged* and so on, but we don't replace *a blind date* with *a visually-impaired date* because we don't feel there is any discrimination there. When gender equity is realized in society, will gender-specific expressions come back in that they no longer imply discrimination or prejudice, or they will not? I'd like to impose this naïve question upon gender studies researchers. Köszönöm szepen.

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