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Japanese Women's Language

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ABSTRACT

Japanese women's language has a long history. At first, it was created by women themselves. Its important characteristic was the avoidance of Chinese words. As time went on, men took advantage of women's language to condition women.

For the most part, contemporary women's language was established in the Meiji period, reflecting prewar values. Therefore women's language has traits such as a higher level of politeness than men's language, sentence final particles to soften the statement, and avoidance of assertive and imperative forms and of derogatory expressions. Women born after the war, who were educated based on the ideal of sexual equality, began to feel awkward using women's language.

Evidence of gender difference in language was obtained from the analyses of survey results and of two TV programmes. Most feminine expressions are used predominantly by women, and most masculine expressions are used predominantly by men. Women use politer expressions than do men in the situations surveyed. However, some contrasting tendencies were also demonstrated. Two feminine expressions which strongly demonstrate femininity (*no* when used with polite forms, and *kasira*) are not used by many women. Two masculine expressions which do not have derogatory connotations but function to show solidarity, *dekkai* and *umai*, are used by many women. One feminine expression which has emotional function but does not sound feminine, *Ussoo!*, is used by many men. Women's and men's social roles are beginning to overlap, so too therefore are women's speech and men's speech.

From comparisons of the results between Japan and New Zealand, it was verified that in general women's speech is less feminine and men's speech is less masculine in New Zealand compared with that in Japan. This would appear to be a result of the influence of New Zealand society, in which gender difference in social roles is small and there are many mixed-sex interactions. As far as ways to ask a favour of a person are concerned, generally speaking, both women and men in Japan use politer expressions than women and men in New Zealand, respectively. This would appear to be a result of the strong reflection of the importance attached in Japan to conforming to social conventions (a phenomenon labelled "discernment" by some authors, and called *wakimae* in Japanese).

It was certified that most women and men in both Japan and New Zealand regard women's language as necessary. Even though the gender difference in roles is becoming smaller, there is little possibility of the gender difference in language disappearing, as well as the gender difference in social roles in Japan. This is because *wakimae* is deep-rooted in Japanese people's minds.

It seems likely that, in the future, stereotyped feminine expressions which demonstrate femininity, and masculine expressions which have derogatory connotations, will be abandoned. However, Japanese people will leave the gender difference in language to a certain extent, because of their desire for discernment.

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Introduction

It is said that there are salient differences between women's language and men's language in Japanese.

Makino (1990) claims that in written Japanese discourse, females tend to show greater empathy towards readers than do males. From his experiments conducted in 1978, he found four differences in empathy towards the readers: *No da* construction, parenthetical remarks, abrupt openings, and personalised statements about the discourse subject. Makino explains that the *no da* construction does express the speaker's or writer's unilateral empathy with a state or an action, but it does not express direct empathy with other humans, especially with the listener / reader. In his experiment the male writers used *no da* 2.8 times more than the female writers, when telling the Cinderella story, therefore the male writers apparently lack proper empathy compared to the female writers. With regard to parenthetical remarks, Makino explains thus, parenthetical remarks are a forcible imposition of the writer's *evaluative* ideas upon the reader, therefore the total lack of such parentheticals in the female Cinderella stories appears to show that females tend to be more empathetic towards their readers than males are. Makino states that in both the Cinderella story and the letter writing experiment, female writers tend to become close to the reader at the beginning, by introducing empathetic references in the prologue, and by using the classic *mukasi mukasi* as a kind of story-prologue to avoid an abrupt beginning. Makino also found that female writers used personalised statements 1.8 times more often, passive voice, with the referent as surface subject 4.2 times more often than male writers, when writing a newspaper article on a hypothetical traffic accident. He explains that personalised statements have a function to invite the reader to empathise with the referent, and the passive construction indicates writers empathy with the victim.

On the other hand, Kumagaya (1996) concludes in her research that women are beginning to assert themselves, so that the gender difference in writing style is becoming less significant. She examined 'Koe' and 'Hitotoki', "letters to the editor", in the Asahi, national newspaper, throughout one month (October) each year from 1955 to 1995. She selected four items, *watasi* (I), *omou* (I think), *desu-masu* forms (polite forms) and references to one's relatives. It has been pointed out in previous studies that these four are often used by women when writing. She concluded that after 1975 fewer women used *omou*, and more men than before used polite forms, and that therefore the difference in expressions between women and men was becoming less.

It is thought that in regard to listening and reading, there are also gender differences in interpretation. However, research in these fields has not been carried out to any great extent. Therefore this study will focus on spoken language, in which the gender difference appears most obviously.

Japanese women's language has a long history. Contemporary women's language has been influenced by prewar values, such as Confucianism, patriarchy and militarism. After the Second World War, the ideal of sexual equality was introduced to school education. It is plausible that some of the forms of women's language that reflect prewar values have been abandoned by women who were educated on the basis of postwar values. The purpose of this thesis is to find out which expressions of Japanese women's language are predominantly (sometimes exclusively) used by Japanese women, and why they use them. Features of women's language will be discussed with evidence from literature and a survey conducted specifically for this thesis. It is presumed that Japanese people living in New Zealand are affected by New Zealand culture and society, and that therefore their language might be somewhat different from the language of Japanese people living in Japan. The difference in usage of Japanese language between Japanese living in Japan and Japanese living in New Zealand will be discussed.

In Chapter 1, the theoretical framework followed in the preparation of the questionnaire, women's language in English, and the women's status both in Japan and New Zealand are summarised. In Chapter 2, the history of Japanese women and their language is examined to find origins of contemporary women's language. In Chapter 3, some features of Japanese women's language are discussed. In Chapter 4, the results of the survey are analysed. The difference in actual usage of language between women and men, and the difference between Japan and New Zealand is discussed. In Chapter 5, in order to reinforce the evidence from the survey, a soap opera and a documentary are analysed.

Chapter 1 Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, firstly the theoretical framework followed in the preparation of the questionnaire will be summarised. Later, for the sake of comparison of the survey results between Japan and New Zealand in Chapter 4.5, women's language in English and contemporary women's status in both countries will be discussed.

1. Women's language in Japanese

Makino (1996 : 70-73) discusses the difference between women's speech and men's speech in Japanese language in his series of *Uti to soto no gengobunkagaku*. He states that gender differences are more notable in Japanese language than in other languages. According to Makino, in general, the situation in which people use language to express their gender is that in which they are intensely conscious of the opposite sex and want to emphasise this difference. He mentions seven areas in which gender difference in spoken language is most conspicuous: interjections, vocabulary, sentence final particles, personal pronouns, *aizuti* (affirmative responses given by the listener in the course of a conversation), honorific expressions and syntax. A summary of his theory as it applies to Japanese follows.

It is natural that gender difference is found in interjections, because interjections express direct emotion. *Ara!* (Oh dear!), *Maa!* (Oh dear!), *Suteki!* (Lovely!) and *Ussoo!* (Really!) are feminine expressions, on the other hand, *Che* (Tut), *Kuso!* (Shit!) and *Bakayaroo!* (Stupid fool!) are masculine expressions. However, *Ussoo!* is used by some men, and *Bakayaroo!* is beginning to be used by some women. Men use interjections more often than women.

With regard to lexical items, there are still gender differences, although the number of words is limited. *Dekkai* (big) and *~te yagaru* (~ing form) are male vocabulary. From earliest times Chinese words have been used more frequently by men; however women are also beginning to use them more often.

Sentence final particles, *zo* and *na* are characteristically used by men, whereas *no*, *wa* and *kasira* are characteristically by women. *Wa* is rarely used by the younger generation. Peng (1981)¹ claims that *ne* and *no* are more often used by women than men. *Ne* and *no* have the function of leading the listener into a conversation. It appears that women are more sympathetic than men and therefore use these more often.

Next, in terms of personal pronouns, *Ata(ku)si* (I) is used by women, while first person pronouns, *wasi*, *assi*, *boku* and *ore*, and second person pronouns, *omae*,

temee, *kimi* and *kisama* are used by men. *Kimi* is used by women occasionally. It is generally agreed that women do not acknowledge an addressee as an inferior, and communicate sympathetically with everyone, therefore women do not have second personal pronouns which express their real intentions, except *anata*. Although many young couples refer to their partners by name or nickname, among elderly couples, generally husbands call their wives *omae* or by name, and wives call their husband *anata*.

Ide (1979)² claims that women use *aizuti* such as *hai* (yes), *soo desu ka* (is that so?), *hontoo ni* (really) and *hee* (indeed) to express their agreement, twice as often as men. This also suggests a difference between women and men in the degree of sympathy level. (Makino noted that many more women than men nodded their agreement during his lectures.)

According to Ide's minutely detailed research (1985)³, women use politer expressions than men when they are talking to a workplace inferior, same-status colleague, friend, spouse or delivery person. There are few differences between women and men when they are talking to a workplace superior, their daughter's or son's teacher, the instructor of a hobby group, a child, neighbour, spouse's friend, or parent at a P.T.A. meeting. As long as honorific expressions are used, sex difference is hard to identify.

Shibamoto (1985)⁴ found four main differences in syntax between women and men. These are as follows. Firstly, women use a type of adjectival sentence in which the adjective stands alone or is followed by sentence final particles, 6.3 times as often as men. Secondly, men produced 10.8 percent more subject nominals with copular predicates than women, 18.9 percent more with adjectival predicates, and 9.4 percent more with one-place verbal predicates. Thirdly, women use inverted sentences 2.7 times as often as men. Fourthly, women more often delete the case markers for subject noun phrases and for direct objects.

Zaamasu forms and *asobase* forms (which are used exclusively by some women living in the residential sections of Tokyo) are feminine expressions. The prefix *o-* is used to beautify basic words connected with food, clothing and shelter. This usage of the prefix *o-* is more often used by women than men.

For the questionnaire, interjections, vocabulary, sentence final particles, personal pronouns, ways to ask a favour of a person, and the prefix *o-* were selected. Because interview is the best way of researching syntax and *aizuti*, these two areas were omitted from the survey questions. *Zaamasu* and *asobase* forms were also omitted, because the use of these forms is limited to specific women. As well as the expressions which Makino mentions, some additional expressions were added to the survey questions. Sources of the

expressions are as follows.

Morita (1991 : 70) notes the masculine interjections, *Yaa* (Hi) and *Yoo* (Hi) in addition to the interjections which Makino mentions. From Ujiie (1991 : 139) the feminine interjection, *Kawaii!* (Cute!) and neutral interjections, *Are?* (Oh?) and *Oya?* (Oh?) were included.

Jugaku (1979 : 65) contrasts men's language, *hara* (the stomach), *heru* (to feel hungry), *umai* (delicious) and *kuu* (to eat), with women's language, *onaka*, *suku*, *oisii* and *taberu*. The sets *Hara hetta* and *Onaka suite*, *Umai* and *Oisii*, and *Mesi o kuu* and *Gohan o taberu*, were included. Morita (1991 : 70) claims that in general women prefer gentle expressions such as *totemo/tottemo* (very) and avoid using literary expressions like *kiwamete* and *hanahada*. These three expressions were likewise added.

As *no* with polite forms is exclusively feminine, that plus a neutral sentence final particle, *yo* (with both plain and polite forms), also were included.

Although Makino does not mention third person pronouns, gender differences have been observed in these as well. Morita (1991 : 69) identifies a masculine expression, *aitu* (that fellow). A neutral expression, *ano hito* (that person) and a more polite expression, *ano kata* were also added to the questionnaire. Because *assi* is not used by many men, this word was omitted.

For the prefix *o-*, nine words used relatively often by women at the time of his survey in 1952 were selected from a list compiled by Shibata (1978). Although *su* (vinegar), was not included in his survey, he gave it as an example of a word which is often used with *o-*, therefore it, too was added. Horii (1990 : 62) claims that gender difference is more obvious in words which can be used both with and without *o-*. His examples, *o-tya* (Japanese tea) and *o-kome* (uncooked rice) were also included.

In the interview with Usami, Reynolds (1995. 08 : 34) states that American people do not know exactly what women's language is; on the other hand, Japanese people who are studying in the United States, when asked what is characteristic of Japanese women's language, can answer correctly with an example of women's language. In the questionnaire in Question 1, the respondents were asked whether there is a gender difference in the Japanese language.

Makino claims that people express gender in language when they are conscious of the opposite sex. In order to examine his claim, the female respondents were asked in which circumstances they use women's language.

Most female linguists who have written about women's language are critical of stereotyped feminine expressions. Reynolds (1995. 08 : 38) suggests that women should acquire a functional language to clearly tell the addressee what they want. In order to collect ordinary people's opinions, the respondents were asked to answer whether women's language is necessary or not.

2. Women's language in English

In comparing the survey results in Japan with those obtained in New Zealand, it is necessary to understand gender differences in English.

Robin Lakoff (1975 : 7) defines the meaning of women's language as both language restricted to women, and language descriptive of women alone. She (1975 : 53-57) summarises the forms that she sees as comprising "women's language" as follows :

1. Women have a large stock of words related to their specific interests, generally relegated to them as "woman's work".
2. "Empty" adjectives like *divine, charming, cute...*
3. Question intonation where we might expect declaratives.
4. The use of hedges of various kinds.
5. The use of the intensive "so".
6. Hypercorrect grammar: women are not supposed to talk rough.
7. Superpolite forms: women are supposed to speak more politely than men.
8. Women don't tell jokes.
9. Women speak in italics, and the more ladylike and feminine you are, the more in italics you are supposed to speak.

Lakoff (1975 : 19) notes that a word that may be used to refer to either women or men, when applied to women assumes a special meaning that, by implication rather than by outright assertion, is derogatory to women as a group.

Spender (1980) accepts Lakoff as one of the early feminists who began to explore women's language; however she is critical of Lakoff's argument. Spender (1980 : 8) criticises Lakoff's view that "in comparison with the (ostensibly) forceful and effective language of men, women are tentative, hesitant, even trivial, and are therefore 'deficient'." Spender (1980 : 36-37) explains women's politeness as follows: as there is a social expectation that 'subordinates' should be more polite than their 'superiors', it is nothing less than consistent that women should be more polite than men. However, she claims (1980 : 38) that "the findings of women's politeness have not been refuted could be an indication of the pervasiveness of patriarchal assumptions rather than proof of women's 'politeness'."

Maltz and Borker (1982 : 205) conclude that basically, girls learn to do three things with words : (1) to create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, (2) to criticise others in acceptable ways, and (3) to interpret accurately the speech of other girls. They also conclude (1982 : 207) that speech for boys seems to have three uses : (1) to assist one's position of dominance, (2) to attract and maintain an audience, and (3) to assert oneself when other speakers have the floor. They identify (1982 : 213) five areas in which the sexes are likely to possess different rules so that miscommunication results : (a) Women seem to see questions as a part of conversational maintenance ; men seem to view them primarily as requests for information. (b) Women's rules seem to call for an explicit acknowledgement of what has been said and making a connection to it ; men seem to have no such rules and in fact

some male strategies call for ignoring the preceding comments. (c) Women seem to interpret overt aggressiveness as personally directed, negative, and disruptive ; men seem to view it as one conventional organising structure for conversational flow. (d) Women have a system in which topic is developed progressively and shifts gradually ; men [seem to] operate with a system in which topic is fairly narrowly defined and adhered to until finished and in which shifts between topics are abrupt. (e) Women tend to discuss problems with one another, sharing experiences and offering reassurances ; men, in contrast, tend to hear women, and other men, who present them with problems as making explicit requests for solutions, and they respond by giving advice, by acting as experts, lecturing to their audiences.

Holmes (1992 : 167) describes gender differences in language as follows: “in Western communities where women’s and men’s social roles overlap, the speech forms they use also overlap...They use different quantities or frequencies of the same forms...Both the social and the linguistic patterns in these communities are sex-preferential...women tend to use more of the standard forms than men do, while men use more of the vernacular forms than women do.” Holmes (1992 : 321) argues that “Analyses which take account of the function of features of women’s speech often reveal women as facilitative and supportive conversationalists, rather than as unconfident, tentative talkers.” In a radio programme Holmes⁵ explains women’s greater use of standard forms than men thus : “Standard forms are generally easier to understand, therefore by using more of them women are taking account of the listeners’ needs and ensuring what they say is intelligible. Standard forms are also associated with more education and higher social status. By using more standard forms, women treat the listeners as well-educated people.” Holmes (1984 : 154-155) found in her research that women use more tags which can be categorised as primarily expressing solidarity or ‘positive politeness’ than any other meaning, and they use three times as many of these tags as men do, therefore women tend to put considerably more effort than men into maintaining and facilitating conversation and discussion. She explains (1992 : 329): “Women’s cooperative conversational strategies, however, may be explained better by looking at the influence of context and patterns of socialisation. The norms for women’s talk may be the norms for small group interaction in private contexts, where the goals of the interaction are solidarity stressing — maintaining good social relations. Agreement is sought and disagreement avoided. By contrast, the norms for male interaction seem to be those of public referentially-oriented interaction.” She also claims (1992 : 336-342) that the use of an additional suffix to signal ‘femaleness’, the use of forms such as *he* and *man* as generic forms, and the use of the suffix *-man* reflect society’s view of women in many English-speaking communities—women are often assigned subordinate status by virtue of their gender alone, and treated linguistically as subordinate, regardless of their actual power or social status in a particular context.

Loveday (1986 : 299-300) states that “Loveday (1981)⁶ found that Japanese female subjects adopted a falsetto mode, while males took a low pitch profile. This contrasted with

the performance of English informants of both sexes, whose pitch level were less differentiated, suggesting that the Japanese sex-role expectations are more rigid than those prescribed by English norms.” Loveday (1986 : 301) also points out that “Japanese females are generally expected in formal situations to talk much less than males or even remain silent.” Holmes (1992 : 324) points out the similar view in English-speaking communities thus : “In a wide range of contexts, particularly non-private ones such as television interviews, staff meetings and conference discussions, where talking may increase your status, men dominate the talking time.”

3. The status of Japanese women

Today Japanese women have great freedom. Because of economic growth and the development of electrical appliances, wives who once were tied to home can now do culturally enriching activities in their spare time, or can work outside the home to fulfil themselves. Compared to women’s rich and fulfilled lives, men’s lives are stressful because of being chained to the company. Iwao (1993 : 07) states an interesting comment : The Confucian ethic of the three obediences formerly binding women⁷ could be rewritten today as the three obediences for men: obedience to mothers when young, companies when adult, and wives when retired.

After the Second World War, equality of the sexes was guaranteed by the Japanese Constitution, which was enacted in 1947. However, women born before the war were brought up by parents with prewar values, in which men were superior and women were inferior, and the *ie*, “household”, system (a hierarchy, with the father at its head) was absolute. Women were expected to conform to the ideal pattern expressed in the phrase *ryoosai-kenbo* (literally: good wife and wise mother). In the *ie* system, everyone’s roles are determined vertically. Women of this generation sometimes use honorifics to their husbands and are critical about young women’s speech. The worlds of women and men in this generation were far apart, therefore women had autonomy and independence in their own world, and they were content with their roles as wives and mothers.

On the other hand, the generation born after the war was educated based on the ideal of sexual equality at school⁸. The women of this generation therefore sought out husbands on an equal basis, or as friends. It is a characteristic of their speech that they rarely use honorifics to their husbands but often use feminine expressions. Iwao (1993 : 22) argues that the lives of the women of the first postwar generation (born between 1946 and 1955) have been profoundly affected by postwar values and institutions and bear witness to the transition between traditional sex roles and behaviour and those of the “liberated” woman of the post industrial age. The husbands of this generation still define the roles of women along traditional lines.

Although most Japanese women live primarily on their husband's income, they hold the purse strings of the household and enjoy economic independence. Therefore most women begin working in order to pursue their identity as an individual, but they are reluctant to become a breadwinner at the sacrifice of their freedom. Iwao (1993 : 87) points out that electronic banking is undermining the status of fathers and their authority within the family without any compensating change in the awareness and behaviour of fathers themselves.

Once children are born, most Japanese couples begin to call each other by family-centred names, *otoosan* (father) and *okaasan* (mother). This practice shows that parental roles dominate over the roles of husband and wife. Supporting children's education is an important element of a Japanese women's role as mother. However, when children enter primary school, women begin working to seek their identity. Most women content themselves with part-time status in order to maintain the household chores. Studying at university, working full-time, resignation for child rearing, and reentry into the labour force became a common female life cycle. Tanaka (1995 : 306) claims that "Less-educated women are more likely to be movers between the home and the labor market. Four-year university graduates are more likely to be polarized into two groups, career seekers and full-time housewives." Government tax policy also makes wives content themselves with part-time status. Within the earning limits, they do not have to pay any income tax and are covered by their husband's national health insurance and annuity. Caring for the elderly is another factor which keeps women as part-time workers. On the other hand, career-oriented women who chose *soogoosyoku*, "management-track positions", are expected to fit into a workplace where they work long hours and transfer if necessary. Consequently these women are divided into a small elite group separate from the others.

Among the younger generation, whose parents are the first postwar generation, alongside an increasing number of women who enter the work force and attain fulfilment, men have also begun to pursue more freedom. Men are no longer solely responsible for household income. They can now seek careers which suit their abilities, and enjoy quality of life. This generation, both women and men, desire more time for family and leisure. The younger generation of men are more cooperative with housework and childrearing, and more easily approachable by women, than the older generations. This change has also appeared in their speech, use of polite and modest expressions, and avoiding rough language.

4. The status of New Zealand women

In New Zealand, like other developed countries, the number of women entering the job market has been increasing. Increased affordable child care services, prepared food, laboursaving devices, and the opportunity to share domestic responsibilities with partners or family members⁹ lead to higher participation rates of women in paid work. The gradual breaking down of barriers, with women moving beyond the roles of wife and mother, has

motivated women to enter the labour force. The number of partnered women who are the sole breadwinners for their families has increased. A revolution in contraceptive technology has also opened up new opportunities for women. It has provided women with access to more effective means of control over the number and the timing of births. Greater equality in employment opportunities and in pay¹⁰ encourages women to achieve economic independence and to take control over their lives. However, women continue to provide most of the unpaid work, especially domestic labour.

Marital dissolution by divorce and separation has increased and more women are delaying marriage or not marrying at all. Longer periods of formal education and increased career opportunities for young women are the main factors in the postponement of marriage. De facto unions have become more common in recent years. Women living in non-traditional, non-nuclear family and household types, such as sole-parent families, step-families or blended families, couples without children and women living alone, have been increasing. Simultaneously, women are having fewer children and beginning their childbearing later than before.

Separation as a means of ending an unsatisfactory marital relationship has become more commonplace¹¹. The majority of children involved in marriage breakups are placed in the custody of their mother, although this proportion has declined recently. The number of divorced women who are living in a de facto relationship has increased.

Single parent families have been the fastest growing family type in New Zealand in recent years. The majority of single parents are women. A major factor in the predominance of women single parents has been the steady increase in recent years in never-married parents, which is largely a female phenomenon. Another factor is the greater likelihood of mothers taking custody of children after a marriage has ended.

Despite the growth in women's part-time employment, the proportion of women in full-time work is still greater than the proportion in part-time work. Overall, women are much more likely than men to work part-time. Many women work part-time when their youngest child is less than five year old, and start working full-time when the youngest child reaches school age. In general, the more education a woman has the more likely she will enter into the labour force. The most common reasons why women work full-time, are extra family income, as well as the enjoyment and satisfaction gained from paid employment.

The majority of employed women work in the service sector. Men continue to dominate supervisory and managerial positions, while women are concentrated in the lower rank positions. Although the number of women who are self-employed has increased, they are still much less likely than men to be self-employed. Women's representation in a number of professional occupations characterised by high status or high pay has increased.

5. Summary

Comparing the Japanese language with English, it seems that in Japanese there are many more expressions restricted to either one sex or the other. Moreover the concept that women should use women's language is accepted as a matter of course more strongly in Japanese society than in English-speaking communities. To avoid making any strong statement is a characteristic of women's language in both Japanese and English, but Japanese women's language has neither assertive nor imperative forms. This shows that Japanese women's language reflects social expectations of women and restricts women more strongly. When a woman fails to behave *onna-rasiku*, "as expected of women", she is criticised by its being said, *onna no kuse ni*, "in spite of being a woman". However, two similar aspects are observed between the two languages. Women's speech is more polite or more cooperative than men's speech, and terms used to talk about women indicate women's lower status both in Japanese and English.

Ide and McGloin (1990 : i-ii) explains Japanese people's ways of thinking as follows : "among highly developed industrial countries Japan is unique in that feminism has not revolutionized people's ways of thinking and living. Though it has had a certain influence, most people stick to old ways. The reason might lie in assumptions about what it is to be a man or a woman in Japanese society. In Western societies interaction is carried out on the basis of individualism and egalitarianism. Instead of claiming the same status and role as men, Japanese women prefer a complementary vision of status and role differences, giving them equal dignity, despite differences in form...social and psychological factors dependent on the variable of gender in Japanese are complex and cannot be reduced to questions of power and status only."

In developed countries people are sensitive about gender discriminations because of the influence of feminism. Working outside, delaying marriage and childbearing, and having fewer children are common tendencies among contemporary women both in Japan and New Zealand. They have begun to seek roles other than wife and mother. Compared with New Zealand, Japanese society is less prepared to support working women. Inadequacy of child care services and the public care system for elderly people makes it difficult for women to work full-time. Severe working conditions at Japanese companies keep men away from helping with housework, and keep women away from full-time jobs. Under the seniority system men get higher salary than women, because most women have to resign for child rearing. New Zealand women seem more likely to be independent and career-oriented, and to demand equality with men. Japanese women, on the other hand, are more likely to seek freedom to enjoy their lives, rather than competing with men in order to get the same status as men.

Notes

1. Peng, F.C.C. (ed.)
Male/female differences in Japanese. Tokyo : The East-West Sign Language Association, 1981.
2. Ide, S.
Daigakusei no hanasi kotoba ni mirareru danzyo sai. Monbusyoo kagaku kenkyuui tokutei kenkyuu, 'genjo', Peng han tyuukan hookoku, 1979.
3. Ide, S. and others
Zyosei no keigo no genjo keisiki to kinoo. Monbusyoo kagaku kenkyuui seika hookokusyo, 1985.
4. Shibamoto, J.S.
Japanese women's language. New York, London etc : Academic Press, Inc, 1985.
5. 'The language of gender', 3rd programme of series 'The Language Net'. National Radio, 1997, 07.
(This programme was recorded several years ago.)
6. Loveday, L.
Pitch, politeness and sexual role. Language and Speech 24 : 71-89, 1981.
7. The three obediences for women: obedience to parents when young, husbands when married, and sons when old.
8. The situation is in the process of improving, but inequality of the sexes still exists in school systems ; separate registers for boys and girls in which the boy's roll always comes first, difference in mandatory subjects between the sexes, sexism and gender stereotyping in textbooks, and so forth.
9. In many families, boys and girls are expected to do different tasks at home. Mothers are still the primary care givers, both of children and other dependents. Fathers spend much less time on child care than women, take most responsibility for outdoor tasks. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (1992 : 17).
10. In Japan The Equal Employment Opportunity Law came into force in 1986. However, the act imposes on employers only the duty to make efforts to treat women equally with men.
11. Compared with New Zealand, Japanese couples are less likely to get divorced. Dissatisfaction in marital relationship alone is not usually regarded as a sufficient reason for divorce, and continuing to meet their parental obligations is more important. Another factor contributing to the low divorce rate is the difficulty for women to be financial independent.