

論文

Representations of Men and Women in the Media and the Effects on Language Construction

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要 旨

メディアは社会において大衆の思考を引き出しうる現代の典型的イメージに影響を及ぼす。女性は家庭での役割、男性は仕事中心の役割を描き出す広告を通して、男女のイメージはしばしばジェンダーに特化した役割でカテゴリ化される。本小論では、ジャパントイムズ紙の記事“*Womanlike, manlike, beware what you ask for*”に男性と女性がいかに示されているのか、そして各々の役割が課せられているのかを調査した。文章や発話の有用性、テキストの中における共通のパターンを見出し、いかに言語と関連しているのかを調査することは価値があると思われる。日本の職場における性差の不平等性、そしてそれがいかに可視化されているか、は重要な問題である。本論では、それが日本社会の中における女性と男性のステレオタイプの役割を支えているかを示したい。

Keywords: media (メディア), Japan (日本), gender roles (性役割)

Media influences our knowledge of the world and influences our perception of how we fit into the grand scheme of society. It often presents women as beautiful, skinny, mother-like figures who are in domestic roles as homemakers. It then presents men,

as the hard earning, breadwinners, who are emotionally distant, and only need women for satisfaction. These are examples of the ingrained biases we are exposed to about gender, which are commonly reinforced by a particular use of words and codes of conduct popularized by the media. The present paper aims to analyze an article from a popular Japanese newspaper, titled “Womanlike, manlike, beware what you ask for”, elaborating on the representations of men and women found in the article. Section 1 will discuss written and spoken discourse, and how it relates to society. Section 2 will examine some common patterns found in texts to support the previous argument. Section 3 will focus on significant gender inequality and how this disparity materializes in the Japanese workplace. Finally, Section 4 will analyze the text of an article, and show how it contributes to stereotypical roles of women and men in Japanese society.

1. Discourse and Society

Systems of writing have existed for many years in different cultures around the globe. Over time, the relationship between language and the contexts was formed (McCarthy 1991:5). Linguists such as Malcom Coulthard, and Michael McCarthy termed this phenomenon “discourse”. Discourse can be divided into two groups, spoken and written forms. Spoken discourse includes everyday speech, and elements such as intonation and word stress. The second form is written discourse which includes anything inscribed, fact and fiction, word patterns, direct and reported speech (Cook 1989:115). Written discourse allows time to stop, reflect, and for the reader to process what is being understood, however spoken discourse is immediate. Discourse exists in all areas of our society.

Politics and societal pressures are highly manipulative. Critical discourse exists through social power abuse, dominance and inequality (Van Dijk 1997:352). A main influence is media which has the power to promote controversial ideas through advertising and contributes to gender disparity. The media has been known for exposing biases, stereotypes, sexist or racist ideologies in text, illustrations and photos (Van Dijk 1997:352). Some images that are being published in magazines depict dominance and inequality between genders, as well as men and women fulfilling

stereotypical roles as those in appendix 1. Men are represented as strong, muscular, and rugged and recognized professionally, while women are beautiful, skinny, and present for pleasure. Messages that are sometimes conveyed in media can be powerful and to some extent abusive, it can sway the reader's thoughts, beliefs and can cause people to change. Not only do they exist in media as images but also in the way articles are written. The choices of words in text have the power to persuade which is one of many patterns used in text to capture the reader.

2. Patterns in text

The message the reader gets from the text can be interpreted differently depending on how the text is written. Since the media has more access, and control over, various types of public discourse (Van Dijk 1997:356) they are highly influential. Patterns such as repetition helps retain information; as it helps with memorization and is commonly used in classrooms drills. Patterns that repeat can become deeply ingrained as part of our cultural knowledge. It can lead the reader into what is the most important information (Van Dijk 1997:358) or what the writer thinks the most important information is. Concepts that promote gender disparity such as the notion of the beautiful homemaker wife, and the strong business man will certainly over time influence our perceived and potential image of self. Patterns of repetition have the ability to influence the mind and become ingrained as part of what we should do.

Direct and Indirect Speech

Information in text can be interpreted differently by using words and patterns that reflect a sense of detachment or a neutral position. Changing certain words in the text can alter the meaning, persuading the perception of the reader. The writer's position on any given topic can be persuasive and can influence the minds of readers significantly. Using direct and indirect speech is an effective pattern that can reveal the writers stance on the topic. In the example below, the reader understands that a report was lost by a male.

1. He *claimed* that he lost his report.
2. He *said* that he lost his report.

In sentence one, the writer uses *claim* which suggests a sense of detachment from the information being reported. However, in the second example, using *said* implies a more neutral position on the topic (Caldas-Coulthard 1994:295). Depending on the words used, and the pattern they form when written, specific information can be emphasized, making the reader focus on it as primary information.

Problem-Solution Pattern

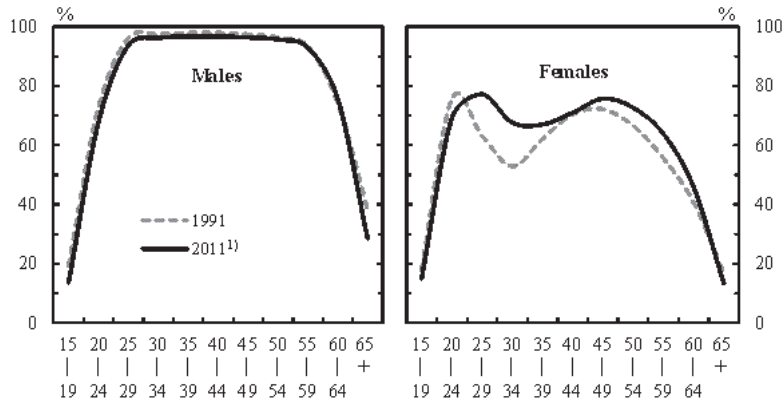
A common pattern in writing is the problem solution pattern. The reader is presented with a problem or situation, the writer points out the complications or problems, and then describes a response to the problem while giving a positive evaluation of the response (McCarthy 1991:30). In articles like “Womanlike, man like—Beware what you ask for by Kaori Shoji, this pattern is visible almost to a T. Section 5 will analyze this article in more detail showing how the writer has utilized this pattern. These patterns exist in many magazines and editorials, especially with popular topics like sexual division in sectors of society like the workforce, which is prominent in some Asian countries like Japan.

3. Gender roles in society

In Japanese society it is common for women quit her job voluntarily once married to stay at home and raise the children while taking care of the house. This trend, even today, is something that promotes the sexual division between men and women especially in the working environment. In Table 1 below, the amount of males to females in the workforce in 1989 was 98% for men comparing that to a range of 65% to 79% for women, which is represented by the dotted line. The statistics show an odd “M-shaped curve for females which indicates that women leave the labor force when they get married or give birth to a child and then rejoin the labor force after their child has grown and the burden of child-rearing is reduced”. <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/handbook/c12cont.htm>

Table 1 Labor Force Participation Rate by Sex 2009 7

Figure 12.1
Labor Force Participation Rate by Gender



1) Excluding Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures.
Source: Statistics Bureau, MIC.

However, the results in 2009 represented by the black line, shows that the number of males to females in the labor force, according to the statistics Bureau Japan was 72.0 percent for men and 48.5 percent for women, which indicates that based on the statistics, disparity still exists. The low numbers of women in the work force indicates that there are more males who are career oriented and are expected to be stronger financially whereas women are in a more domesticated passive roles. Women are rarely seen in positions of power and are “in general are part of the un-accessed voice” (Caldas-Coulthard 1994:307). In 2001 in Japan 1.4 percent of senior government officials were women compared to 23.1 in the United States (Marikkar 2007:96). In numerous aspects of Japanese society supports this disparity, from the workforce to the media, the influence seems to feed off each other. The ads in appendix 1 are examples of how the genders are naturally divided into set roles. Men are shown to be dominant powerful figures because they are in the work force and women take a gentler position due to the fact that they are care takers. In the workplace, women are still expected to fulfill a subordinate role to that of her male counterparts; a Japanese company called Kanematsu had a policy paying workers according to their jobs. It stated that men worked in the core positions dealing with corporate services whereas women engaged in support services (Marikkar 2007:95).

These assigned roles can affect the language we use on a daily basis and therefore are contributing factors of how we speak and how certain words can be associated with each gender.

4. Japan Times

The article for this assignment was chosen from a local online paper called The Japan Times. It is a bilingual newspaper that offers updated recent news about aspects of daily life in Japan. It incorporates information in both languages (English and Japanese) and contains Japanese magazines ads. The features of this particular paper are current events in Japan and how it relates to society. The products being advertized cater to a wide range of people. However, the advertisements show men in business oriented roles in ads like studying for TOEIC, and women in ads for dating. This representation of gender deepens the sexual division from a social perspective about the men and women in the workforce.

4.1 *Womanlike, Manlike—beware what you ask for Article analysis*

The article titled “Womanlike, Man like—beware what you ask for by Kaori Shoji was selected because it illustrates interesting codes of conduct for both men and women in that associate them with their gender Japanese society. The text suggests that for women words like *softness or flexibility, kindness, graceful, lightness, modesty, cute, beautiful, and smooth-skinned* are what constitute womanliness. However, workouts and muscles are cautioned, which, according to the article, *ruins the womanly body lines and is considered a stigma*. The preferred modes of *womanly skin texture, bone structure, hair length and condition, the exact curve of the ideal womanly waistline* suggest that there is pressure to fit into the mould of the perfect woman, and not possessing these characteristics creates an unsustainable image. The article stresses that women exhibiting these characteristics will gain respect and be empowered. However, “*A Hairy Woman Will Not Succeed in Anything*”. Men on the other hand are bound to the traditional role of manliness and are expected to be the *pillar of Bushido* (the way of the samurai). They are valued for *being silent, strong in mind and body, uncompromisingly earnest and honest, courageous and bold*.

The article continues to insist that

Men must be muscular, hairy in the right places, are to be messy, abstain from vigorous washing, not care about what they eat, and to drink themselves into oblivion without losing their male demure. Men are not supposed to whine or ask for sympathy and if they do with excess, they're referred to as onna no kusatta yona yatsu which means a man who's like a woman gone rotten.

The codes of conduct presented in this article basically reinforce the social distinction between men and women and assigning specific characteristics to each sex widens the disparity and influences not only the social image of gender but also carries over into the workforce where women are used in supportive roles rather than primary roles. The article confirms that individualism is acknowledged, but *unique personality traits*, can be positive and negative given the situation.

"A person with personality can be entertaining, but they can also be downright weird and difficult to get along with". This signifies seclusion and the unacceptable threshold of those who are different this is also a problem. However, male *"quirks are more tolerated than female ones and less likely to be categorized as wagamama (selfish), or fushigi (freaky)"*.

The choice of words used to describe the woman and man's code of conduct classifies them as strong and weak genders naturally. It implies that women are too weak characteristically to take on a more dominant role in settings like the workforce. Men, nevertheless, being typically stronger are better equipped mentally, to handle the demands of the workforce.

"The onna-rashisa code requires that Japanese women be quiet, unassuming and good at listening to others, especially pontificating men, with an inherent dislike of anything conspicuous".

This confirms Caldas-Coulthard's (1994) notion of women as part of the un-accessed voice (Caldas-Coulthard 1994: 306), and that they are secondary to men which clarifies the reason why

"Women were mostly assigned to roles in support of their male colleagues, should serve tea for colleagues, and visitors at offices, or spend hours doing the photocopying and other menial tasks and speak in artificial high-pitched voices,

serve tea and take photocopies” (Marikkar 2007:92).

This code again being present in the work environment doesn't balance the sexual division but makes it more defined. If women and men take turns with duties of primary and secondary importance in the work place, then this can be a step towards promoting gender balance.

5. *Patterns and the Article*

The pattern used throughout the article is the problem solution pattern mentioned in section 2. The writer presents a problem which is the enduring social differences that exist between men and women and the detailed code of conduct that they conform to in order to get respect. Shoji acknowledges that surplus amounts of *softness or flexibility, kindness, graceful, lightness, modesty, cute, beautiful, and smooth-skinned womanly skin texture, bone structure, hair length and condition, and the exact curve of the ideal womanly waistline for women, and being muscular, hairy in the right places, messy, unclean, unhealthy, and having the ability to drink, not whining or asking for sympathy* for men, will get more respect. These characteristics for the sexes are part of the problem. However, there are two complications with this situation, the first being that it ignores those who are different, such as hairy women not succeeding, and those who possess *personality are entertaining, but can also be weird and difficult to get along with*. The first complication leads to another problem of those who are different running the risk of being neglected. Another complication that arises in the article is that men complain that *Japanese women are all the same and just not interesting*. Shoji defends the issues addressed in the article by stating that the code of conduct is tolerated so it is not classified as inequality because it knowingly exists. She uses personal pronouns which can signify that she identifies closely with the issues discussed, and that she is in agreeance with the topic. Though there are many problems and complications with the content in the article, Shoji does not propose a solution or advises what can be done. She recognizes that *the rashii school of thought extends to other segments of the populace, such as children* but defends the bias as existing due to the fact that it has become deeply ingrained as part of cultural knowledge. The social purpose of the text is to pinpoint the markings of womanliness

and manliness in Japanese society, but showing how unsustainable it is to maintain them and how it deepens the sexual division among men and women in this country.

The segregation of women and men in the workforce has been an ongoing problem in societies like Japan for some time now. Regardless of whether these perceived biases are ingrained as part of culture, or influenced via the media through advertisements or articles that promote women and men in stereotypical roles, there is still not enough being done about this problem to equalize their duties. Despite complaints, and law suits, a majority of women are content with being happy housewives while the big strong men earn the fat salaries. Though there are some women and men who do not fit the stereotype and who want to break the glass ceiling, as a whole, it might not be enough for a significant change. With such a strict ideal as those described in the codes of conduct for womanliness and manliness it is a challenge to find a solution. But, with men wanting something more interesting and something different there is a chance that the roles may change.

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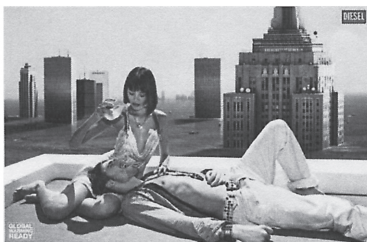
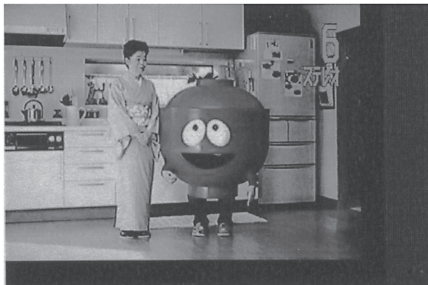
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Appendix 1 Controversial Advertisements

Men in positions of power and dominance



Women in domestic and nurturing roles



Appendix 2

Thursday, Sept. 16, 2004

Japan Times (BILINGUAL)

Womanlike, manlike—beware what you ask for By KAORI SHOJI

Elsewhere in the world, social distinctions between men and women erode on a daily basis, but in Japan, they still endure. Women are expected to be “*onna-rashii* (womanly),” men must go by “*otoko-rashii* (manly)” codes of conduct, and to hell with political correctness. And you know something? We actually like it; or at least we’re well-aware that those endowed with surplus amounts of *onna-rashisa* (womanliness) and *otoko-rashisa* (manliness) are likely to get more respect.

The qualities that constitute *onna-rashisa* are pretty much standard fare: *yawarakasa* (softness or flexibility), *yasashisa* (kindness), *karoyakasa* (graceful lightness), *kenkyosa* (modesty). Add to that the traditional demands for women to be *kawaii* (cute), *kirei* (beautiful) and *tsuru-tsuru* (smooth-skinned) and you’ve got a nation of femmes all aspiring to be some character out of a Junichiro Tanizaki novel (refer to “The Makioka Sisters” for details).

Women’s magazines are perpetually coming up with new, and more detailed, definitions of *onna-rashisa*: lately, there’s been an emphasis on good health without the stigma of workouts and muscles (which ruin the *onna-rashii* body lines) and a lot of ink has been poured in describing preferred modes of womanly skin texture, bone structure, hair length and condition, the exact curve of the ideal *onna-rashii* waistline. Interestingly, none of these articles (most written by women) has any intention of promoting inequality, but stress how *onna-rashisa* will actually empower women and inspire self-respect. One headline in the ever-popular An-An magazine threatens: “Kebukai Onna wa Nani o Yattemo Umaku Ikanai (A Hairy Woman Will Not Succeed in Anything).” Scary, huh?

Men aren’t having such a good time either. Bound by the ancient ropes of *otoko-rashisa* (manliness) to the pillar of Bushido (the way of the samurai), men are valued for being *kamoku* (silent), *goken* (strong in mind and body), *ippongi* (uncompromisingly earnest and honest), *yukan* (courageous) and *daitan* (bold). Visually, it helps if they’re *kinnikushitsu* (muscular) and *kebukai* (hairy) in the right places, like legs and wrists (for some reason, chest hair has always been a downer). Naturally, they’re expected to be messy, to abstain from vigorous washing, to not care about what they eat, and to drink themselves into oblivion without losing their male decorum. It goes without saying that they’re not supposed to whine or ask for sympathy. If they do either with excess, they’re referred to as *onna no kusatta yona yatsu* (a man who’s like a woman gone 14 rotten), which I personally feel is one of the most discriminatory remarks in the language, but we’ll forget that for now.

The *rashii* school of thought extends to other segments of the populace, such as children. *Kodomo-rashii* (childlike) is a highly prized virtue even among adults, so imagine the effect and influence of a *kodomo-rashii* child. The traits include *mujaki* (guilelessness), *akarusa*

(cheerfulness), *tenshinranman* (naturally innocent) and *oyaomoi* (loving toward parents). A *kodomo-rashikunai* (unchildlike) child is eyed with slight suspicion and is often labeled *sureteiru* (knowing the ways of the world), *hinekureteiru* (twisted), *kurai* (gloomy) and *kawaikunai* (not cute). No wonder so many kids these days are *kireteiru* (gone off the deep end).

Lately however, there are those who acknowledge that individuals can actually come in all shapes and sizes, each with unique personality traits. We even have a word for it: *kosei* (individuality) — and it can be used in praise or irony, depending on the situation. To the Japanese mind, a *koseiteki na hito* (a person with personality) can be entertaining, but they can also be downright weird and difficult to get along with. The threshold isn't very high: A friend of mine, while out for dinner with her male colleagues, refused beer and then asked for a vegan dish. For weeks afterward, she was described as *sugoku koseiteki* (extremely individualistic), and the dinner invitation was never repeated.

Of course, male quirks are more tolerated than female ones and less likely to be categorized as *wagamama* (selfish), or *fushigi* (freaky). Besides, the *onna-rashisa* code requires that Japanese women be quiet, unassuming and *kikijozu* (good at listening to others, especially pontificating men), with an inherent dislike of anything conspicuous. So I'm always surprised when men complain that “*Nihonjin no onna wa minna onaji de omoshirokunai* (Japanese women are all the same and just not interesting).” Uh, hello? Whose fault is that?