AN INTRODUCTION TO JOSEIGO:
THE ORIGINS AND CHARACTERISTICS
OF WOMEN'S LANGUAGE IN JAPAN

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1.1 General Introduction

In Japan today, there is markedly less distinction between the speech of men and women than in the past. This results partly from the post-war constitution which set down the principles of sexual equality. The phenomenon of a sex-determined language has existed since historical times and arises from the tradition of women's subservience in both the social and domestic spheres. Despite the constitutional granting of equality however, women's mental and actual experiences which are determined by this tradition perpetuate the existence of a special and distinct women's language.

The term joseigo, or fujingo as it is otherwise called, refers to the special words and manner of speaking characteristic of women. In the broad sense, it incorporates the terms and phases used exclusively or mostly by women as well as the differences in accent, intonation, pronunciation and grammar. It is the more refined, polite and gentle speech found in the Japanese language which is used mainly by women and is frequently described as onnarashii (feminine). Women's language should not be regarded as a language exchanged exclusively among women but as one used by women towards society at large. It is reflective of the position of women and their way of thinking and feeling.

The differences between the language of men and women is regarded as one of the linguistic peculiarities of the Japanese language. Although it is a phenomenon which can be traced in other languages such as Chinese, Korean and the language of the Caribbeans, it is so striking in the Japanese language that such sexual
distinctions in language have been described as excessive and constrictive. Compared to the European languages where women's language does exist but not in such a strict and formal manner, it is certainly so.
1.2 **Nature and Scope of the Investigation**

In comparison to language in general sex-determined language does not have a long history. Early studies trace the first occurrences of women's language as far back as the Heian Period (9th-10th centuries) and scholars often cite examples from Genji Monogatari, Makura no Sōshi and the Man'yōshū but a true "women's" language did not really come into existence until the Muromachi Period (circa 1392-1568). In modern history, this view is substantiated by the fact that while differences are observed in urban areas, there is no evidence of them in most rural villages and in earlier times, they were not even observed in most urban districts. The historical developments which had the most impact on modern women's language are the language of the court ladies of the Muromachi Period and the language of the prostitutes of the Edo Period (circa 1600-1868). Both are invaluable and prolific sources of words which constitute women's language.

Women's language today comprises approximately 5,000 words which include vocabulary characteristic of women's speech or used more often by women and also terms which originally developed as part of women's speech and later came to be used by men as well. There are numerous words today which many people do not realise belong to the latter category, eg, onaka (stomach), ohiya (cold water), oden (Japanese hotchpotch), shamōji (wooden ladle), oishii (delicious) and oneshō (bed-wetting).

In order to understand the reason for the existence of a separate language for women, it is necessary to study it from a linguistic as well as from a social and historical angle. There exists in Japanese linguistics the term isōgo, or phase languages, which refers to various levels of language which differ according to age, sex, social status and occupation among other factors. The differences are
usually most striking in the vocabulary. Women's language is one of these phase languages determined by sex. On the linguistic level, it is also of value and interest to study the relationship between women's language and honorific language in Japan. It is said that they are inseparably linked and this view is strengthened by the very polite and deferential nature of women's language of both the present and the past.

The final part of this essay will entail an examination of the situation and features of women's language in Japan today. I will also take a brief look at women's language in the written form where it is usually quite clear which sex the speaker or writer is from differences in vocabulary, syntax and style. This is once again a phenomenon unique to the Japanese language and like the spoken language, it has a historical base.
CHAPTER II

THE PLACE OF WOMEN'S LANGUAGE IN THE
JAPANESE LANGUAGE

2.1 Women's Language and Phase Language

The distinctions in language resulting from distinctions in sex, which led to the development of the unique linguistic phenomenon of women's language is not an isolated event. It is necessary to look at women's language in the wider context of a whole variety of special sets of vocabulary belonging to certain groups of individuals. In Japan a special name has been coined for these sets of words - いさご. いさ is a scientific term meaning 'phase' and it was first applied to linguistics by Kikuzawa Minoru to describe words which had phases or variant forms. These variant forms occur in syntax, vocal sounds and vocabulary but are most striking in the latter category. They are similar to the synonyms of the English language except that in Japanese, each phase word is reserved for and used only by certain individuals.

In very early society no sex-orientated words seemed to exist but as the society became more advanced and specialised so did its language. The differences in language, particularly in vocabulary are a result of various factors:

(a) geographical and regional differences. This gave rise to the numerous Japanese dialects each with a unique vocabulary and style of their own;

(b) sex - women's language and men's language;

(c) age - children's language, adult's language, elderly people's language;
(d) occupation - the speech of the farmers, fishermen, shopkeepers, prostitutes, priests, thieves, etc;

(e) social class and education - the speech of the imperial courtiers, aristocracy, warriors, commoners, students, etc;

(f) specialist and scholarly jargon which depends on the content of one's speech, eg, a talk about aerodynamics;

(g) spoken language which depends on whether one is speaking in a monologue, dialogue or debate; or whether one is speaking to a real audience such as in a play, or to an invisible audience such as on the radio or television. It also matters whether it is a casual conversation with a friend or a formal introduction to a stranger, eg, aisatsu and use of honorific language;

(h) written language such as the differences between the style of diaries, letters, narratives, fiction, factual accounts and biographies.

The first five groups depend on the speaker - his or her age, sex, educational level and status in society. In these cases, it is social conditioning and pressure which influences one's choice of the "proper" way to speak. The latter three are determined by the situation in which speech occurs and is a matter of choosing the linguistically correct form of expression. In the case of (g), there is also a social element involved because one sometimes has to choose speech according to one's position in relation to the listener such as in the use of honorifics. Child-adult, male-female, in group-out group, inferior-equal-superior, and intimate-distant distinctions are all proof and result of this complicated system of choosing the right speech and women's language is undeniably entangled in it.

In the Japanese language there are many words which hold no social implications, for example, denkyū (lightbulb) and empisu (pencil). Assuming that no-one adds the polite prefix o- to them, such words offer
no clue whatsoever as to the sex, age, social class or occupation of the speaker. Anyone can use them. In the case of words which have variant forms, however, it is usually strictly decided and enforced by social conditioning as to who may use which word. Take for example:

me or omeme (eye); and
biiru or obiiru (beer). (3)

In the above cases where the variant forms are limited to two words, the choice of word to use is determined either by:

(a) whether a person is a child or an adult as in the case of me;

(b) or whether a person is a man or a woman as in the case of biiru.

When there are three variant forms (and there are normally no more than this) the "correct" word to use is selected according to whether one is a child, a male adult or a female adult, for example:

bonbon - hara - onaka (stomach); and
okuchuri - kusuri - okusuri (medicine). (4)

The first word belongs to children's language, the second to men's and the last to women's.

It is clear then that in social relations in Japan, age and sex play a fundamental and important role and this is reflected in the language. Differences in the words used by children and adults are visible in most other countries but it would be safe to say that the difference in the language of men and women is a feature peculiar to Japan.

One can conclude from this section that women's language does not hold a significantly unique place in the Japanese language and that women are not singled out for discrimination in language. Women's language is but one of a number of languages developed to cater for certain groups of people which are determined by various factors including
sex, age, social class and occupational status. Seen in the light of the information provided, particularly the fact that sex plays a fundamental role in many aspects of Japanese society, it is inevitable that language is also affected.
2.2. Women's Language and Honorific Language

In general, women use a more polite form of speech than men. This has been so ever since the mid-7th century when the concepts of class and status were an integral part of society. The need to use keigo was most strongly felt in aristocratic circles, especially among the court ladies. The fact that women use a more courteous form of speech has not changed much from the time of these court ladies. Although it is still tied to the vertical status system of Japanese society today, modern keigo does not possess so much of its past honorific nature. Rather, it is of a more polite or respectful nature which encompasses honorific forms, humble forms and polite forms. This polite form of speech seems to be favoured by women because it fulfils an intrinsic, feminine need for politeness and gentleness in contrast to the masculine traits of directness and authority. There is therefore a deep relationship between women's language and honorific language which extends back to early times and which is also related to the psychological wants and needs of women. The existence of such a relationship is further substantiated by the fact that in dialects where there is no form of keigo, there is also no joseigo. The intrinsic need of these women for politeness and gentleness, I presume, is not as highly developed as in other regions and thus needs not be so urgently satisfied.

In the Muromachi Period, the ladies serving in the imperial courts spent a great deal of time concerning themselves with the question of correct diction. It is well known that they avoided words associated with the Chinese style of writing along with coarse and abrupt expressions. As a result, the honorific form of words, composed of the prefix o- and the substantive, adjective or adverb, came to be adopted by these women. Although this o- + substantive form was not used exclusively by women it did tend to be employed predominantly by them. The prefix belonged
to the group of honorific prefixes which included on-, go-, gyo- and mi- and from the Muromachi Period to the beginning of the Edo Period it was in such frequent use that it was criticised for being over-used. Today the tendency for women to use the prefix o- is still likewise criticised. In general, women's language in the Middle Ages was much more honorific than men's. The use of honorifics was the means of relieving women of the distaste felt at having to use "unfeminine" words which seemed coarse and vulgar to their ears. Social conditioning relegated them to a subordinate position in society which necessitated them to show honour and respect to men. Etiquette and custom required them to be courteous and polite to others around them. Women therefore adopted the use of honorifics to alleviate these pressures. Then as the use of honorifics became widespread among women, it became a general means of polite, refined expression. This has passed on into modern times to the extent that a striking feature of women's language is its highly respectful and polite nature in comparison with the language of men.

In the Edo period, the prostitutes also adopted much honorific speech to cater for their needs which were to show courtesy and deference towards their clients. Verbs ending in -nsu were of a honorific nature and commonly heard in the red light quarters. Honorific verbs such as okisansu, ukesansu and nasansu are still seen today in the dialect of Kyoto-Osaka. Another remnant of honorific prostitutes' language sometimes used in speech today is asobase kotoba. These are hónórific words used by women who wish to emphasise their femininity and they are created by adding the verb asobasu to the honorific form of a verb eg, sensei ga oide asobimasu. The women who still use it (and this is rare nowadays) usually come from the upper classes.
In the National Language Research Institute's survey of honorific language consciousness in 1957, two of the conclusions it reached which are pertinent to keigo's relation to women's language were:

(a) the most important factor in determining a speaker's honorific usage is the speaker's sex;

(b) men show greater discrimination in honorific usage in situations calling for different varieties of discourse, while women tend to a more uniform usage of honorifics regardless of situation.

A later similar survey in 1964 showed general support towards the view that women should use honorific language more than men.

It can be said therefore, that women's language operates within the larger system of speech levels in general, and may be classified (as it frequently is) as a sub-group of honorific language. It is obvious that keigo has left its mark on women's language today in the many honorific and polite substitutes used by women for countless terms and phrases, eg, ohiya for misu, osake for sake and obiiro for biiro, and also that in Japanese society, women are the predominant users of honorific language.
CHAPTER III

HISTORY

3.1 General History of Women's Language

Differences in opinion arise when attempts are made to pinpoint the precise time that women's language came into existence. Compared with the history of language as a whole, its origins do not stretch very far back. The earliest evidence of a distinction between the speech of men and women can be retraced to the Heian Period but linguists seem to believe that the differences at that time were rather insignificant. Originally in Japan, men and women lived a co-operative life in an equal society and there were no distinctions in speech apart from the natural differences in intonation and vocal sounds. However there seems to have existed some words which men used more frequently than women and others which women used more frequently than men. Literary works pertaining to that period provide us with some evidence of such words. For example in the Man'yōshū (mid-eighth century), it seems that kimi was a term used by a woman to a man and rarely vice versa except in jest. Men addressed close female friends by imo (_iso_ ) and wagimo, words which were not used by women in return. In Genji Monogatari (early 11th century), a distinction between men and women's speech can hardly be felt but Nakano Hiroshi cites an example in Genji Monogatari where someone is surprised at the unfeminine speech of a female character, Hakashi, because it contained a lot of Chinese words. In Makura no Sōshi (about 1002) the phrase "Kotokoto naru mono. Bōshi no kotoba, otoko onna no kotoba, gesu no kotoba ni wa kanarazu moji amari shitaru" is encountered but it would be rash to interpret this as final proof of the existence of an advanced sex-determined language in the tenth century. We
could probably say that during this period the gap between the
everyday speech of men and women was as slight as in the modern
European languages. I emphasise everyday speech because in the
Heian Period there was a group of women, the imperial princesses, who
created a set of words to replace certain words which were tabooed
by superstition. These words did not greatly influence daily speech
but I shall go into more detail about this in the following section.
Gradually, however, the gap became more and more distinct.

By the latter part of the Heian Period, the written language of
men and women began to diverge and follow separate paths. The men chose
to use a strict and formal Chinese style of writing based on Chinese
characters, compounds and style while the women preferred the use of
a style full of words of Japanese origin, written in the cursive Japanese
syllabary (which was hiragana, with various hentaigana forms). The two
different written styles had a lasting effect on the modern written
language of men and women. Strictly speaking, the language which
is generally called joseigo or fujingō today has its origins in the
Middle Ages in the language of the ladies serving in the imperial
palaces and courts of the Muromachi Period. As we shall see,
nyōbōkotoba or the court ladies' language began as a secret language
used by women and later became regarded as a polite and refined manner
of speaking which eventually slipped unnoticed into daily speech. The
other important event which was to have a profound effect on modern
women's language occurred in the Edo Period with the language devised
by the prostitutes of the major red light areas of Edo, Kyoto and
Osaka. Like the language of the court ladies, the language of the
prostitutes developed in a female society and eventually spread to
and influenced the everyday speech of that time. To complete the
study of the origins of women's language I shall also look into the
language of two other female societies, that of the nuns in the Middle
Ages and that of the ancient imperial princesses serving in the Ise and Kamo Shrines in the Heian Period which I mentioned earlier. All the above four types of language originated in a female society and developed either as a secret, euphemistic, indirect or substitute form of speech.

It was in the Edo period that distinctions in men and women's language become remarkable for various reasons. The Edo Period was the age of the patriarch, when the head of the household ruled supreme. It was also a time when the differences in the social status and educational rights of men and women were enforced by law. However, at the same time, it was the age of enlightenment when an infinite number of books were written and published to stimulate the intellectuals of society. Of these, there was quite a large number devoted to the education of women. To name a few, there were Onna chōshōki, Onna ima kawa hime kagami, Onna shōgaku, Onna bunshō tebiki gusa, and Tsubo no ishibumi. The point they all stressed was the modesty of women and female discretion (onna no tashinami). Young ladies were encouraged to be feminine and submissive and their education was limited to the so-called feminine pursuits of poetry and diary-writing. Contrary to liberating women, the books put them firmly into the role of an obedient and submissive wife by encouraging modesty, politeness and onnarashisa (femininity) in all matters including speech. Rather than enlightening them they served to control and subjugate them in the male-dominated society. It is no wonder that disparities in speech increased and flourished during this time.

There are two main factors causing the development of a separate women's language in historical Japan. The first is women's mental and actual experiences as women. Since they are psychologically and physically different from men, women experience events and emotions in a different way which may require a different means of expression.
This is the case with the imperial princesses whose finer sense of discretion and tact caused them to shun words of a coarse and explicit nature. Women are generally more sensitive and acute about other people's vulnerabilities and this shows up in language where they tend to speak in a roundabout and often euphemistic way so as not to offend anyone for fear of incurring wrath upon themselves or wounding others. This factor can be seen to be operating in other societies too, causing minor, if not major, differences in language. It occurs daily everywhere when a woman stops herself from swearing or making tactless remarks.

The second factor is the existing traditional and moral codes. This includes the social conditioning of how women ought to behave, disseminated in the educational literature of the Edo Period, and the domestic environment of the home. Most women were limited in their interaction with the rest of society. Their life centred around the kitchen, family home or imperial court, and an advanced vocabulary related to domestic things such as food and clothing grew out of this daily concern. Social and domestic background, educational attainments and personal status all played important roles in the evolution of women's language as we shall see in the following sections.
3.2 The Tabooed Language of the Imperial Princesses at the Ise Shrine

The tabooed words, or imikotoba, created by the imperial princesses who were serving in the Grand Shrine at Ise in the Heian Period are some of the earliest evidence of the development of a women's language. (8) The princesses were called the Saigū, and were women of royal birth who would not utter words which held ideas of ill-omen, impurity or uncleanliness such as blood, death and disease. (A lot of these words were also tabooed by superstition in society at large.) They would also refrain from using words which were related to Buddhism. Instead they exchanged these words with specially invented ones which came to be known as saigū imikotoba. According to the Engishiki there were fourteen tabooed words which were divided into the inner seven (uchi no nana koto) and the outer seven (soto no nana koto).

The inner seven were:

- 中子 nakago for 仏 hotoke (Buddha or the dead)
- 染絹 shimegami or somegami for 経 kei (sutra)
- 阿良岐 araraki for 塔 tō (tower, steeple, monument)
- 瓦葺 kawarabuki for 寺 tera (temple)
- 髪長 kaminaga for 僧 soo (monk)
- 女髪長 me kaminaga for 尼 ama (nun)
- 片膝 katajiki for 僧 toki (Buddhist fast)

and the outer seven:

- 奉保里 naori for 死 shi (death)
- 夜須夜 yasumi for 病 yamai (illness)
- 塩塚 shiotaru for 哭 nageku (cry, wail)
- 阿世 ase for 血 chi (blood)
- 撫す nasu for 打打 銃 utsu (smite, strike)
- 菌 kusabira for 犬 shishi (meat, flesh)
- 墓 tsujikure for 墓 haka (grave, tomb)
The inner seven are related to Buddhism while the outer seven are outside the Buddhist sphere and concern words describing death and ill-omen.

When we look closely at the tabooed words, we are able to get a general idea of the linguistic consciousness that motivated these women.

(a) They exchanged words with their antonyms -

- *kaminaga* meaning long-haired one for *shō* (monks usually had shaved heads)
- *naori* meaning recovery for *shi* (death)
- *nasu* meaning stroke, pat for *utsu* (hit, strike)

(b) They made up words on the basis of some aspect of the external appearance of the object referred to -

- *shimegami* which was the dyed yellow paper on which sutras were written for *kei*
- *kawarabuki* meaning (a building) roofed with tiles for *tera*
- *nakago* meaning the child in the middle for *hotoke*

(c) They substituted words with others which seem similar but are totally different -

- *ase* (ase) for *sweat* (ase, sweat) to denote *shi* (blood)
- *tsujikure*, a lump of earth to denote *haka* (grave)
- *yasumi* (yasumi, rest) for *yasumi* (yasumi, rest) to denote *yamai* (illness)
- *shiotaru* (shiotaru, drip down salt) to denote *nageku* (cry).

From the above we can say that the tabooed words of the imperial princesses were invented from a comparatively simple perception of language which was not at all as advanced and colourful as the linguistic consciousnesses of the court ladies in the Muromachi Period.
These tabooed words were also used by the women of royal birth who served at the Grand Shrine at Kamo. The women at this shrine were called the Sai-in and during the Great Thanksgiving Festival (Daijōsai) which was performed in the tenth month of every year these tabooed words were used in the festival annals.

The essence of the tabooed words lies in the fundamental concept of kotodama or spirit of the language which Japanese from old have adhered to. This concept encourages them to shun uncleanness and ill luck, and welcome good luck. The avoidance of certain words, because of superstitious beliefs, eventually appeared outside the society of the imperial princesses. For example, the word for 'sceptre' which courtiers carried was pronounced kotsu but because it sounded like kotsu meaning bone they changed the pronunciation to shaku. The pronunciation for the word 'rice' was shinu but because of the association with the verb shinu, to die it was changed to kome. In the Edo Period, as the merchant class became influential and wealthy, to ensure prosperity and success, the shopkeepers avoided words such as nashi (there is no...), suru (to lose, forfeit) and cha ni naru (make light of, make cheap) which had bad connotations according to superstition because they referred to loss of or decline in profits, and modified words which contained these pronunciations with sounds possessing "luckier" connotations. For example, with words containing the sounds suri, suru, su:

susurihako → atarihako (inkstone case)
suribaoshi → ataribaoshi (earthenware mortar)
suriko → atariko (pestle)
surume → atarime (dried cuttlefish)
su → amari (sake)

(It is easy to see why they thought atari meaning success or hit had lucky connotations.)
With words containing the sound cha:

\[ ocha \rightarrow nībana \ (\text{tea}) \]

With words containing the sound nashi:

\[ nashi \rightarrow \text{arimori} \ (\text{pear tree}). \]

This belief in the existence of words of ill portent has persisted into modern times and women (especially those in the entertainment business who are very superstitious) have used and supplemented these tabooed words. For example, other names for \[ ocha \ (\text{tea}) \] were \[ bōbu \] and \[ agari \]; \[ hība \] was used to describe the dried leaves of the radish; \[ shio \ (\text{salt}) \] was described as \[ nami no hana \ (\text{blossoms of the waves}) \] and \[ okara \] became \[ kirasu \ (\text{blossoms of snow}) \] meaning 'tofu refuse'.

In the Muromachi Period many words concerning weddings were tabooed, for example, \[ kaesu, mōsōu, saru, kireru, kiru, noku, okuru, deru, dasu, usui, sameru, aku, shimaru, wakaru, kirau, itoma, kasanegasane, matamata, naonao, \] and \[ iyoiyo \]. These were all words which the Japanese thought contradicted the joy of a wedding, and the words with repeated syllables such as \[ kasanegasane \] and \[ iyoiyo \] were thought to be words of extremely ill portent. The appearance of these tabooed words were the result of widespread superstitious beliefs and customs coupled with women's keener sense of discrimination in language usage. The tabooed words of the imperial princesses influenced the everyday language of the time and were also supported by society's superstitions.
3.3 The Language of the Nuns

In a situation similar to that of the imperial princesses who served at the Ise Shrine, from the time of the Middle Ages there were women of royal or noble birth who entered temples and became head priestesses. These women were called amamonzeki or nun princesses and the temples they served in were called amamonzekidera. In Kyoto the Daishōji, Hōkyōji and Donge-in were amamonzekidera with imperial connections and the Sameichionji, Hokkeji and Inai-in were temples with noble connections. (9)

The temples of these nuns differed from the imperial court in that they comprised only a few people. In the Daishōji for example, there was the head of the temple called the gozen, her successor was called the gofuteisan, then two elderly nuns called ichirō and niro, followed by two or three young nuns called wakai hito and finally the nakadōri who was equivalent to a servant and the jochū who was, as her name implies, a maid. (10) There were a few male retainers but those beneath the rank of wakai hito had no rights at all in the administration of the temple.

Since the nun princesses came from imperial or noble circumstances the language of the women down to the rank of niro was very close to that of the court ladies of the imperial palaces. For example, words such as the following were used by the nuns as well as the court ladies: kashi (for kōka meaning high price), ohinaru, ohinaru (honorific terms for okiru, to get up), gyoshinaru (neru, sleep), oshiamaru (sleep), okabe (bean curd), tareru (suru, shave), ishi-ishi (troiro, various), okashin (mochi, rice cake), somoji (soba, noodles), nyaku (konnyaku, plant name), aka (azuki, red beans), mushi (miso), onaka, shamoji (ladle), ohiya, and oishii.
However, there were also many expressions which were peculiar to the temples. These have been transmitted to us today as either ancient court ladies' language or as words created in the cloistered society of the temple. For example, in expressing gratitude the nuns used the word katafikenō (in earlier times they also used okantai). For shitsuree shimasu they used oyurushi asobase and they also used osore irimasu (I am overwhelmed with shame/gratitude) a lot when addressing persons of high status.

The Emperor was equivalent to the overlord of this society and so the nuns always used the highest honorific language to him alone and called him okami. With other persons of high status the honorific suffix san was employed and with people of lower status, the less honorific suffix don was used. In the case of verbs, they used the verb ending -masharu to express the utmost respect, e.g., narimasharimashita and the auxiliary arasharu to express politeness, e.g., de arasharimashita (the equivalent of modern gozaimasu). These verb endings were unique to the language of the nuns.

The majority of these temples were situated in the towns and so some words invented in the temples gradually slipped unnoticed into the speech of the townswomen and today quite a few of these unique words still remain in women's language.
3.4 The Language of the Court Ladies

The tabooed words of the imperial princesses of the Ise Shrine did not develop as a result of a consciousness of the position of women in society. Rather they were the result of a strong feeling that certain things related to religion and bad omen had to be expressed in a more euphemistic way in their cloistered society. However in the case of nyōbōkotoba, or the language of the court ladies, it is certain that it was a language designed by women on the basis of a clear perception of their existence as women, an existence which was quite distinct from men's in a society where the social status and educational upbringing of the two sexes were quite different and unequal. Nyōbōkotoba, also called jochūkotoba, goshokotoba and Yamato kotoba, was a prototype of women's language developed in the early Muromachi Period for use by the court ladies serving in the imperial palaces and courts. Earliest records of this language are found in Ama no mokuzu (1420) and Ōjōro no gyomei no koto (Ashikaga Era) (11) and the term nyōbōkotoba is taken from the latter work. The other terms, jochūkotoba, goshokotoba and Yamato kotoba were coined later. In the Kyoto-Osaka area, they preferred to use the terms goshokotoba and Yamato kotoba because it was the language first used by the noble women at court whereas in Edo, they called it jochūkotoba because it was used mainly by the maids serving in the mansions. Ama no mokuzu records in minute detail facts concerning clothing, manners, names and terms connected with the imperial court and famous temples of that time. Ōjōro no gyomei no koto centred on the women of royal and noble birth who were serving at the palace and also the women of less noble birth. It begins by recording their names and proceeds to give meticulous details about their clothing, coiffure and appearance.
As recorded in Ama no mokuzu, nyōbōkotoba was thought to have been invented as a secret language used only among women so that it was incomprehensible to outsiders of that society. It is thought that the women did not like to speak frankly about matters related to food and clothing in front of high-ranking people. Special words and expressions were created on the basis of women's natural sense of discretion which shunned anything coarse or indiscreet. These words described food and other things concerning daily life in a more indirect and euphemistic way. In 1420 there were approximately 120 such words but it eventually increased to about 500. The majority of the words, about 80%, were related to food but many were also related to clothing. The skill and ingenuity of some of the words invented suggest that it may perhaps have been a form of linguistic amusement which had a practical use.

As time passed and the number of words invented by the women increased, the origins of this language, first devised as a secret language, were forgotten and came to be regarded as a form of refined, polite and elegant speech. It spread from the palace to the women serving in the Ashikaga and Tokugawa Shogunates (1338-1537, and 1603-1867 respectively), daimyo mansions, warriors' residences and eventually to the ordinary townswomen. Some parts of it even slipped into the speech of men. Early nyōbōkotoba were limited to food and utensils but in the Edo Period more were invented to cover, in addition to food, clothing, manners, actions and occupations, eg., odenchi (shanchankō, padded sleeveless kimono jacket), ohike (neru, sleep), osusugi (washing in clear water), hayasu (kiru, cut), kumoji (sake, wine), ohitsu (meshibitsu, tub for boiled rice). Oyudono no ue no nikki (15th century) records that nyōbōkotoba was used liberally from the Middle Ages onwards. In the Edo Period works on it appeared, eg., Nyōbō shitsukesho (Muromachi Period), Fujin yōsō (1689), Onna chōhōki (1692) Jochūkotoba (1712),
Onna kotoba (1722), which were used for the education of young ladies. (13)

Many words which belonged to the language of the court ladies remain in women's language today although their origins are forgotten, for example, sumoji (guess, consideration), samoji (side dish), onashi (hug, embrace), kinako (ground beans), and ohiya (cold water) and many are used by men too, eg, odon (hotchpotch), ohiya (water), onaka (stomach), shamoji (ladle), oishii (delicious), so one cannot deny that they have had a profound influence on modern women's language. To finish off this section, I shall look at the concepts by which the vocabulary of the court ladies came to be invented.

(a) There were very many words already used by women such as the nuns and imperial princesses which were adopted unchanged:

uchimaki (for kome meaning rice)
ebikasura (budō, grapes)

kigisu (kiji, pheasant)

kanraku (byōki, sickness)

kayu (kai, rice gruel)
tsumuri (atama, head)
tatogami (hanagami, paper handkerchief)

chōmoku (seni, money)

ryōshi (yōshi, writing paper)

(b) There were many words created by the omission or abbreviation of syllables in words. These can be further sub-divided into:

(i) omission of first or last syllable(s). Omitting the last syllable(s) is much more common, eg:
unagi → u (eel)
kabura → kabu (turnip)
kabocha → kabo (pumpkin)
denraku → den (baked bean curd coated with miso)
nasubi → nasu (eggplant)
hamaguri → ohama (clam)
ketare → tare (razor)
konnyaku → nyaku (a herb plant)
shimobe → bei (manservant)
chimaki → maki (rice-dumpling)

(ii) omission of syllable(s) and repetition of the remaining one, eg:
kukudachi → kuku (stem)
sake → sasa (sake)
katsuo → kaka (bonito)
okasan → kaka (mother)
omisō → omimi (miso)

(iii) omission of syllable(s) and repetition of remaining two, eg:
asazuke → asa-asā (a fresh radish preserved with salt and malt)
katsuo → katsukatsu (bonito)
surume → surusuru (dried cuttlefish)
iridōfu → iriiri (dried, seasoned tofu)

(iv) addition of prefix o- to abbreviated forms, eg:
koishimaki → okoshi (underskirt)
kotatsu → okota (Japanese foot warmer)
satsuma-imo → osatsu (sweet potato)
tsukurimi → otsukuri (sliced raw fish)
miyage → omiya (souvenir, present)
tsumuri → otsumu (head)
denraku → odon (Japanese hotchpotch)

hiyashi → ohiya (cold water)

(c) Addition of prefix omi- to words beginning with a vowel.
This turned the word into an honorific term, eg:

ashi → omiashi (foot)
akashi → omiakashi (light, lamp)
ase → omiase (blood)
onaka → omionaka (stomach)

(d) Retention of the first one or two syllables and addition of
suffix -moji, eg:

ane → amoji (sister)
ika → imoji (cuttlefish)
ebi → emoji (shrimp)
obii → omoji (sash)
koneetsu na koto → konmoji (kindness)
shakushi → shamoji (ladle, scoop)
sempō → senmoji (the other party, person)
netamashii koto → netamoji (envy)
funa → fumoji (carp)
hasukashi → ohamoji (shame)

(e) Naming an object by attaching the suffix -mono to a term which
clearly indicates the striking feature of the object:

yogi → yonomono (night clothes, heavy kimono-like quilt)
egekkei → getsu no mono (menstruation)
kōro → nioi no mono (vessel used for pickling vegetables)
shitagi → shita no mono (underwear)
tōfu → shiromono (tofu, bean curd)
yasai → aomono (vegetables)
daikon → karamono (turnip)

ebi → kagamimono (shrimp, prawn, lobster)

yo (night), getsu (month), nioi (smell), shita (beneath),
shiro (♂ shirō, white), ao (♂ aoi, green), kara (♂ kara, salty, pungent) and kagami (♂ kagami, stoop, bend forward)
all describe the distinctive characteristics of the objects they denote.

(f) Words invented from the alternative readings of characters,
especially kun readings, eg:

海老 - kairō (usually read as ebi meaning shrimp)
土筆 - tsuchinofude (tsukushi, a field horsetail)
午袈裟 - umafusa (gonbō, burdock, cocklebur)
穂 - yaita (momi, unhulled rice)/yaita is the kun reading of 答/
沢山 - sawayama (takusan, many)
人日 - hitonohi (jinjitsu, seventh day of the first month)

(g) Words invented from the shape of the object being named, eg:

saji → yugami (spoon) (♂ yugamu, be bent, curved)
kine → nakabose (wooden pestle) (♂ nakaboso no, slender,
narrow in the middle; which is what a pestle is like)
iwashi → ohoso (sardine) (♂ hosoi, long, slender)
tai → ohira (sea bream, red snapper) (♂ hira, broad, flat)

(h) Words invented from the colour of the object being named, eg:
kabura→ yuki (turnip) (from the white colour of the turnip)
negi → shirone (spring onion) (from the white colour of the onion bulk
asuki → aka or oaka (red bean)
tōfu → kabe (bean curd) (from an association of its
resemblance to whitewashed walls)
mame no ko → kina-ko (ground beans) (from kī meaning yellow)
(i) Words invented from the state or appearance of the object being named, eg:

gekkei → meguri (menstruation) (< meguri, circulation, flow; for getsu no meguri, monthly flow)

misu → hiyashi or ohiya (cold water)

natto → ito (fermented soy beans) (< ito no, threadlike, stringy; the matured soy beans which were imported from China were threaded)

zeni → yukue (money) (< yukue, whereabouts; money is constantly exchanging hands and so its whereabouts is never fixed).

(j) Words invented to name objects by their situation, source or usage:

misu → i no naka (water) (from i meaning well; the source of water being a well)

yōji → oeoseri (toothpick) (from sesuru meaning "to pick")

kamaboko → oita (boiled fish paste) (from prefix o- and ita of manaita meaning chopping block)

These are the main ways that the court ladies invented words. They are also the simplest. The women also made words up from words associations, play on words and metaphoric comparisons. To grasp the fundamentals behind the creation of such words would require a sound and deep knowledge of Japanese literature and language and so I shall not describe in detail the methods by which they were invented.
3.5 The Language of the Prostitutes

Prostitutes' language or kuruwa kotoba, kuruwa namari, satokotoba, satonamari, yūrikotoba, and yūjogo as it is also variously called, refers to the special words used by the prostitutes in the red light districts of the Edo Period. The speech of the Yoshiwara prostitutes is usually regarded as the most famous source of prostitutes' language. However, its true origins lie in Shimabara, the red light district of Kyoto, from where it eventually spread to Shinmachi in Osaka and east to Yoshiwara in Edo.

The language of these three major red light districts had many points in common. This was partly because there was much interaction between the prostitutes as a result of frequent moves to brothels and red light districts in other provinces and partly because the original prostitutes' language of Shimabara spread to and influenced the other two. However after the Genroku era (1688-1703), the increasing rate at which the prostitutes' language was invented and adapted to cater for each individual red light quarter meant that by the Hōreki era (1751-64), the three centres had each developed a language with quite distinct and peculiar features.

The language of the prostitutes was quite different from that of the townswomen. This was probably because the prostitutes grew up under a different set of customs and morals. However, there is the popular theory that prostitutes' language originated in the language of the townswomen, and then after it had developed in its own way, reciprocated the action by exerting a strong influence back on ordinary women's language. By the Meiwa-Anei eras (1764-80), the language of the prostitutes was virtually stabilized. Then as the Tokogawa Shogunate came to an end (circ. 1868), it fell into dis-use and was eventually assimilated back into the language of the townswomen. After the Meiji
era (1868-1911) it remained only in popular ballads and folk songs.
The influence of the language of the prostitutes on everyday women's
language is said to have been remarkable in the speech of the Kyoto-
Osaka region but weak in the Edo language. The group of honorific
verbs of the -neu type (-sanshu, -sashansu, -nansu ... ) which is
widely used in Kyoto-Osaka originated in the language of the Shimabara
prostitutes.

There are two main causes for the prostitutes' development of
a special language. The first was to hide their native or provincial
accents, which if they were not already ashamed of, did not care to
disclose. The second was to invent a language which would not make any
distinctions of rank among their clients. Since they dealt with
people from all levels of society, in order that they would not lose
customers, the prostitutes had to have a language which treated all
men in the same way without any worry or impropriety. They wanted
to keep expressions of rank based on the class structure of ordinary
society out of the red light districts.

The gay quarters were an excellent source of vogue words.
This is because the prostitutes' language was never stable but constantly
exchanging old terms with newly invented words. It is also abundant
in honorific terms and its most striking features lie in its unique
word endings and peculiar words and phrases. The following is a summary
of the main features of prostitutes' language.

(a) Use of unique personal pronouns waohiki, konan,
watakushi, wachi, oira.

(b) Use of second person pronoun nushi to address clients.

(c) Frequent use of particle e as in moshi, oiran e when one
prostitute addresses another.

(d) Frequent use of words such as isso, bakarashii.
(e) Corruption of sounds: masu → nsu → isu, esu → su
eg, masu → nsu : arimasu → arinsu

nsu → isu : arinsu → ariisu

nsu → su : nasansu → nansu.

(f) Many special honorific phrases and endings such as
    -nsu, -sansu, -shansu, as in okisansu, ukesansu,
    neyashansu, nansu.

In the Kyōhō era (1716-1736), the honorific forms o + verb +
ru, o- + verb + ni naru, namasu and gozansu were frequently used and
after the Gembun era (1736-1741) o- + verb asobasu, o + verb +
kudasarimasu, de gosarimasu, -reru and -rareru were included in the
language commonly used by prostitutes. The Yoshiwara language became
renowned as arinsukotoba because of the use of the verb arinsu for
arimasu; the arinsukotoba was also typified by the use of certain other
verb forms such as zamanu (gozaimasu), namasu (nasaimasu) and oessensu
(oesharu). These verbs gradually slipped unnoticed from the language of
the brothels into the everyday language of even the most respectable
woman. It is these special verb endings which prostitutes' language
has left as its main contribution to modern women's language.
CHAPTER IV

THE WRITTEN FORM OF WOMEN'S LANGUAGE

4.1 Notational Form

The difference in the written expression of men and women is most remarkable in the writing of pre-modern times. I will borrow an example from Haruhiko Kindaichi's *The Japanese Language* to illustrate this. He cites some letters from the Gempei Seisuiki (The Rise and Fall of the Genji and Heike Clans): (i) the man's letter, written by Kumagai Naozane to Taira no Atsumori's father, Tsunemori telling him he has sent Atsumori's head to him, and (ii) the woman's letter, from Shunkan's daughter to her father, who has been exiled to the island of Kikaigashima.

(i) 直伝義言上 不欲奉参会此君之間拝與王得勿踈
秦皇遇燕丹之嘉庇欲決勝負刻 付拜容敬覌忘
恕敵之思怨物威之勇剣加守護奉共奉之知 ...

*Naozane tsutsushinde gonjō tu. Furyo ni kono kimi ni sankai shi tatemitsuru no aidó, Go-o Kösen o e, Shinkō Entan ni oo no kachoku o sashihazunde shōbu o kessen to hossuru no kizami ...*

(ii) そののちたよりなきみなしごととなりはて、おんゆく
へをもうけたまはるたよりもなし。みのありさま
をもしられまるらせず、いぶせさののみつもれども、
よのでかきくらしてはるところもなはべり。...

*Sono nochi tayori naki minashigo to narikate, on-yukue o mo uktamawaru tayori mo nashi. Mi no arisama o mo shirare mairasezu, iburesa nomi tsunoredono, yononaka kakikurashite haruru kokochi naku haberi. ...

(15)
The man's letter is in hybrid Chinese style (a form of writing which contains some sequences characteristic of classical Chinese syntax, but which at the same time also contains elements which represent Japanese syntactic and/or grammatical forms), with the notational form being Chinese characters, while the woman's letter is in the Japanese style written using the kana syllabary (hiragana). The distinctly different forms of writing are a direct result of a development in the Heian Period when a significant gap appeared between the writing of men and women.

In pre-modern Japan, women did not as a rule have the opportunity to learn Chinese characters or the Chinese written style - the province of male writers - as this was regarded as a totally unsuitable occupation for the fair sex. The increasing use of the cursive hiragana syllabary from about 900AD onwards, therefore, provided women with a ready means of writing in Japanese, and from about the 10th century we see the emergence of such famous writers as Murasaki Shikibu (the authoress of Genji Monogatari) and Sei Shōnagon (Makura no Sōshi).

The men on the other hand developed great skills in using the Chinese style and notational form and the result was a Chinese-influenced Japanese style (kundokubun). It was the form of written expression used by the learned people of society who, because of the differences in the education of men and women, were mainly male. In this way, women became the predominant users of kanabun and men of kanbun or kundokubun. It was only with the compilation and publication of the Kokinshū in 905 by Ki no Tsurayuki that kanabun became a respectable and influential writing form for men as well. As time passed, the two styles integrated and the Tosa Nikki (circ. 935) written by Ki no Tsurayuki, is considered to be the pioneer of a revised kanabun based on a combination of wabun and kundokubun.
Today there are no such major distinctions in the prose written by women as opposed to the prose written by men. Since the Meiji Period the differences have gradually lessened and disappeared, especially since the end of World War II. Educational policies have ensured that there are no disparities with the introduction and implementation of the *Tōyō Kanji* and *Gendai Kanazukai* lists in 1946. Every school child, boy or girl, receives the same education and I will emphasize the word same because in Japan the school curriculum is carefully designed and strictly adhered to throughout the country. The result is a universal form of notation based on *kana* and *kanji* which may be used by both men and women. Subject to individual peculiarities and preferences in written language, which may reveal whether a person is male or female, it is difficult to determine the sex of an author of a piece of prose from the notational form alone unless one is prepared to make a statistical comparison of the amount of *kana* and *kanji* used.
4.2 Style, Vocabulary and Syntax

In order to be understood in writing, one has to employ the commonly accepted writing system of the country. In modern Japan, this is kana and kanji and since they are taught to the Japanese people, with strict uniformity, it is virtually impossible today to impart any clues as to one's sex through the notational form of written language. However it is sometimes possible to guess the sex of an author of a piece of work by various lexical, syntactical and stylistic differences. Such is the opinion of Makino Seiichi but there are others like Hatano Kanji, Kabashima Tadao and Jugaku Akiko who will disagree with this.\(^{(16)}\)

The latter have carried out numerous investigations into sexual differences in written language by concentrating on frequency counts of parts of speech such as length of sentences, colour words, emotive words, demonstratives, complex sentences, non-past predicates, quotes and independent words and have come to the conclusion that, statistically speaking, there are basically no sexual discrepancies in written discourses.

In *Sexual Differences in Written Discourses*, Makino sets out to disprove this theory by analysing the written expositions of forty writers, twenty Japanese and twenty Americans with respective male: female ratios of 9:11 and 6:14 but it is the Japanese data that he primarily focuses on. By closely examining and analysing five types of written discourses, namely, narrative, letter, expository essay, diary and newspaper article, and then putting forth his conclusions from his findings as a questionnaire to the participants in the investigation, he found general agreement among the Japanese, both male and female, that female writings:

(a) tend to be less logical than male writings;

(b) tend to be more norm-conforming than male writings;
(c) depend on intuitions more than male writings (that is, women are less objective than men);
(d) tend to be slow to get to the point;
(e) tend to deal with inconsequential details more frequently than male writings;
(f) tend to lack a well-defined introduction and conclusion more frequently than male writings;
(g) tend to describe a hero/heroine (of a story) from his/her viewpoint more frequently than male writings (that is, women are more empathetic than men).

All these features, Makino feels, show up in writing through syntactical and stylistic devices. In addition, since it is a well known fact, first discussed by Otto Jespersen, that women "instinctively shrink from coarse and gross expressions" and prefer "refined and (in certain spheres) veiled and indirect expressions", if one were an expert in the finer points of lexical discrimination, it would be a simple task to sexually differentiate written language from the vocabulary employed.

Further, when Makino asked his Japanese participants to guess the sex of the authors of a narrative and two expository essays, the percentage of correct guesses was 80% for the narrative and 75% and 85% for the essays. This result seems to support the theory that sexual differences can be observed in written language through vocabulary, syntax and style.

Any conclusions to this section would be tentative to say the least. On the one hand we have scholars such as Hatano stating the non-existence of any disparities in written language while on the other, we have Makino state the contrary. Hatano seems to have taken a purely linguistic and statistical approach which neglects any non-linguistic evidence or comparative analysis of male and female writings. Makino, on the other hand, uses the latter techniques to prove his theories
and looks at language from a wider and more modern viewpoint, taking into consideration social and biological influences which show up non-linguistically in written discourses. Rather than a statistical survey, a method which has always had weak points, Makino has analysed why women have used certain constructions more frequently than men and looked at choice of language from cultural and social aspects. What detracts from his survey though is the small number of subjects tested which tends to make any conclusions unreliable. I personally favour Makino's study which seems to have analysed sexual differences in written discourses in a wider context than just linguistics and statistics and feel that his rather tentative findings could be validated by further and more concentrated research of the same kind.
CHAPTER V

MODERN WOMEN'S LANGUAGE

5.1 The Characteristics of Modern Women's Language

On examining the features of modern women's language it seems that little has changed since history. There are still words which are used exclusively by women, still the effort to be polite in speech and still the preference for the irregular kana script. These are the differences caused by the emotional experience of women and they are unlikely to disappear in the way that the differences caused by social inequalities have. The following are the main features of women's language today.

The striking feature in written language is that: (a) Women tend to us kana script more often than men.

And in spoken language: (b) There is a strong avoidance of kango because they are regarded as rather formal and unsuitable for daily conversation. Sei Shōnagon in Makura no Gōshi said that the sounds of kango did not suit female expression. Women tend to use fewer kango in spoken language than men because they are not often involved in serious conversations which usually require a lot of Chinese compounds.

(c) Women still tend to avoid vulgar, coarse language and try to find euphemistic, unassertive and indirect alternatives wherever possible.

(d) The polite prefixes o- and go- are very commonly employed by women, eg, otsutome, oshokuji, obiru, osake, obento.
(e) Women tend to choose the polite and honorific alternatives of words and phrases more often than men, eg, *itadaku, aochirasama, irassharu, mairu.*

(f) In general women use honorific language more frequently than men. Words ending in -mase and -mashi typically belong to women's language.

(g) The use of personal pronouns is not as simple a matter as in the English language where *I* and *you* are the only first and second person singular pronouns. In Japanese there are some pronouns used either by men or by women. *Watakushi* and *watashi* are used by both men and women but *washi, ore* and *boku* are part of men's language and never used by women while *atakushi* and *atashi* are first person pronouns used exclusively by women.

With second person pronouns men have a choice of *anata, anta, kimi, omae* and *kisama* while women are limited to *anata* and *anta.* In the woman's case she is also limited to whom she can use the pronouns to; usually it is to her husband.

(h) One of the most striking characteristics of women's language today is the use of final particles. There is a large number of final particles used exclusively by men or by women. *Zo* and *me* are final particles used only by men. They are direct and emphatic particles used in informal situations to attract the listener's attention. The particle *yo* is used in a similar situation by men too so that *omoshiroi zo,* *omoshiroi se* and *omoshiroi yo* all mean the same thing and are said only by men. (*Yo* when used for emphasis is employed by both men and women.) The women's equivalent of *zo is wa yo.* *Wa* seems to have a softening effect on the emphatic particle *yo* and the result is a phrase
which is unassertively trying to gain someone's attention, eg, *omoshiroi wa yo*. Another exclusively feminine particle is *no* which adds a feeling of gentleness and cuteness to a phrase, eg, *omoshiroi no*. It frequently accompanies *yo* to reiterate the speaker's words, eg, *omoshiroi no yo*. In addition to *wa, wa yo, no* and *no yo*, other particles featuring frequently in women's speech are: *yo, ne, kashira, wa ne (as in *anata mo irassharu wa ne*), te? (as in *suo desu tte*?), te yo (as in *ma ni atte yo*), koto (as in *it koto*), koto? (as in *itte minai koto*?), koto yo (as in *ojama desu koto yo*), na (as in *hayaku irasshai na*), da wa (as in *kore wa hon da wa*) and *na no* (as in *kore wa hon na no*).

(i) There are several emotive particles assigned to women's speech. They include *ara, maa, choito*, and *raa* and they serve to express in emotive but polite and gentle terms feelings of astonishment or joy.

(j) Women tend to use a lot more adjectival and adverbial modifiers in speech than men. Adjectives such as *suteki na* (lovely, splendid) and *osoroshii* (terrible), and adverbs like *tottemo, hijō ni* and *sugoku* are emotively very strong and typically feminine.

(k) Sexual differences in speech also appear in the use of imperatives. Imperatives ending in *nasai* are formal and can be used by both men and women. Imperatives ending in *-ro* and *-ro yo* however, are informal and can be used only by men. Women have no informal equivalent and so when placed in an informal situation they use the *-te kudasai* form with the *kudasai* left off. It seems that by omitting *kudasai* the phrase becomes incomplete and therefore expresses indecisiveness and
indirectness. It makes an imperative like *tabete* more like an indirect wish than a direct command.

(1) Finally, the speech of women contains many items of vocabulary used exclusively by them. This vocabulary has developed since historical times and so traces of the language of the court ladies and prostitutes are abundant.
5.2 The Present Situation

Despite the feminists' cries for sexual equality, phrases such as *onna da kara, otoko da kara, onna no kuse ni* and *otoko no kuse ni* are still frequently encountered in conversation. It seems that no matter how liberated society is becoming, there will still be roles or characteristics assigned to either men or women. The attitude that women are marginal to and powerless in face of the serious concerns of life (which belong to the sphere of men) is reflected in the way women are expected to speak. Their vocabulary, like everyone else's, is decided by the environment that surrounds them and concerns the household and neighbourhood. The result is an abundance of words for fashion, cooking, colours and bringing up children. Recently, however, small advances have been made towards a degree of uniformity in language in that women have begun to use men's speech more and more. For example, Haruhiko Kindaichi points out the tendency of female teachers in primary schools to attach *ku* to boys' names instead of *san* and feels that this is an example of male and female speech coming closer together. The 1975 *Kokugo Nenkan* reported that school-girls were using the same language as their male counterparts and this is further substantiated by Jugaku Akiko who makes the observation that girls in middle school in Tokyo no longer refer to themselves as *atashi* but have adopted the male form *boku*. She goes on to say that nowadays women even use the same word endings as men and that no-one says *suru no yo* or *yuku wa yo* anymore. Instead women have begun using phrases such as *nani itte n da* and *boku mo suru yo* which belong to men's speech.
Earlier in this section I said that some progress has been made in the direction of uniformity between the speech of women and that of men. I will qualify that point here by saying that it is not a perfect equality in that men have not adopted any features of women's speech. This is because it is generally regarded as effeminate and hilarious if a man does so. It is a case of the language of the favoured group, that is, the group with power and influence being adopted by the less fortunate groups in a society. The reverse never occurs.

In recent times Japanese women, along with their counterparts in other countries, have developed a strong consciousness concerning the status of women. At the 1967 annual conference of the International Federation for the Promotion of the Status of Women, conference participants adopted a policy to abolish sexual discrimination against women and appointed 1975 as International Year of the Woman. Since 1975, sexual discrimination in language has become an important issue for Japanese women. The publication of books such as Ide Sachiko's *Onna no Kotoba, Otoko no Kotoba* in 1975 and Jugaku Akiko's *Nihongo to Onna* in 1979 reflects the concern of women towards such discrimination. The *Kokugo Nenkan* is also a good source of information on what women have been doing to abolish a sex-determined language. For example in 1975 there was much protest by women over a Japan Broadcasting Corporation commercial for a brand of instant noodles. They complained that the commercial promoted sexual discrimination because the actress said "Watakushi tsukuru hito" while the man said "Boku taberu hito", thus perpetuating the traditional sex-roles of men and women. In 1980, the *Kokugo Nenkan* carried another article concerning women's aversion to sexist phraseology in popular songs. They felt that phrases such as "omae o yome ni morau mae ni" which appeared frequently in popular songs adopted an imperative tone towards women and were like the proclamation of a domineering husband and were thus degrading towards women.
Nevertheless, although women have been fighting for sexual equality in language, the results of various surveys seem to show that a large number of people support the continuance of separate languages for men and women. The editors of *Kōza Nihongo* sent questionnaires to its readers and a majority of the respondents approved the preservation of distinctions between male and female speech. In 1964 the National Language Research Institute came up with the following statistics after a survey of honorific language: sixty percent of respondents aged over thirty and forty percent aged under thirty supported the view that women should use polite, honorific language more often than men, and sixty percent of respondents over the age of fifty and fifty percent aged under thirty opposed the opinion that women should be able to attach *kun* to the names of men of the same age group. In another survey carried out by Kyoto University's Japanese language research department, over half the respondents answered that they preferred that sex-orientated differences in speech be maintained.

This disparity in the objectives of the women's groups and the result of the surveys is easily explained. The respondents in the survey who support the preservation of a women's language seem to belong to the older age group which has been brought up according to the pre-war traditional values and because of social conditioning see it as the proper way of life. On the other hand, the women advocating the abolition of sexual discrimination belong to a newly emancipated post-war generation which has been brought up on the ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality. They are the young feminists who have become aware of the long-standing inequalities suffered by women and want to stimulate reform.

It is obvious then that there is a conflict of ideas between young and old. As long as the old traditional values persist and have influence, there is unlikely to be any dramatic change in the language
of women. On the other hand, if the consciousness of the Japanese women develops to the extent of the European nations and the United States, reform will no doubt be inevitable. The demand for sexual uniformity in language has been initiated by the feminists and as a liberated society is established, the elements of women's speech dependent on the existence of social inequalities will decline. However, those words and parts of speech which have evolved from women's discriminating feelings of tact and decency will certainly retain a place for women's language in Japan.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY

Women's language in Japan reveals much concerning Japanese women, their psychology and Japanese society both past and present. Japanese women tend to use more polite and refined speech than men, and this suggests that they possess a more discriminating and considerate nature. The development of women's language in early times is undeniably related to the differences in the educational level of men and women, particularly in writing, as well as the long-standing differences in social status. Women's language also fits neatly into and forms an integral part of the Japanese language, especially with regard to phase languages, honorific language and speech levels in Japanese.

In recent times, the language of women has become the focal point of many linguistic and socio-linguistic studies in Japan as well as other countries. As the widespread struggle for sexual equality continues, within the male dominated Japanese society, women's language has become one of the many aspects of daily life that is being questioned. The birth of the feminist movement in Japan has meant that it has become one of the compelling forces behind the efforts to establish sexual uniformity in language. However, as with many other causes, there is also a reactionary movement, led by the older pre-war generation whose upbringing and clinging to the long-existing customs lead them to view a separate language for women as morally proper and socially essential for the maintenance of a traditional Japanese society. The contrasting arguments for the abolition and preservation of women's language are therefore reflective of the conflicting opinions between young and old, the so-called generation gap.
Women's language in Japan continues to survive today because of traditional social conditioning which makes women feel that they ought to project onnarashisa (femininity) at all times and therefore that they ought to be more refined and polite in their speech than men. The relatively high level of its development into a language used exclusively by women when compared to the women's languages of other societies makes it stand out impressively as something unique to Japan. One important question which is being asked, however, is whether or not the gap between men's speech and women's speech ought to be or will be maintained in the future. Naturally, the distinctions are lessening as efforts are being made in the direction of sexual equality through the work of the feminist and equal rights movements. I feel, though, that since Japanese society is steeped in tradition and various codes of social conduct, social pressure and the raison d'être of women themselves will perpetuate the existence of a language exclusive to women for some time to come.
FOOTNOTES

(1) Jespersen in Language, its nature, development and origin (1922) cites as the classic European example of women's language the speech of the Caribs or Caribbeans of the Small Antilles where it is said that only the men speak Carib while the women speak the same language as the Arawaks on the continent. The first person to remark on the language of the Caribs was Dominican Breton in 1664 in his Dictionnaire Caraibe-Francais and it was further discussed by Rochefort in Histoire naturelle et morale des Iles Antilles.

(2) These factors do not refer to the Japanese language exclusively but can refer to languages in general. However I feel that in Japanese their impact is quite remarkable.

(3) Examples are taken from Iwanami Kōza : Nihongo, Volume 1 (1976) page 111.

(4) Ibid, page 112.


(7) 女重宝記
女今川姬鑑
女小学
女文章手引草
つばのうしぶみ

(8) According to Miller in The Japanese Language (1967) pp.296-298, the system of taboo references is still rigidly enforced at the Grand Shrine of Ise. Here, during most of Japanese history, the chief religious officer was an imperial princess selected by lot and sent to Ise, where she remained as a kind of royal hostage dedicated to religion until freed by death or the abdication of the Emperor to whom she was related.
(9) 大聖寺
宝鏡寺
曼華院
三昧智恩寺
法華寺
慈愛院

(10) ごぜん
ご付着さん
一老
二老
若の人
中通り
女中

(11) 海人藻芥
大上蘚御名之事

(12) 太湯殿の上の日記
(13) 女房婦書
婦人養草
女重宝記
女中詞
女言葉

(14) Mashimo Saburō gives detailed examples and explanations of such words in Joseigo Jiten (1967), pp.323-324.


(16) Kabashima and Jugaku (in Buntai no Kagaku (Science of Styles), Kyoto : Sōgeisha, 1965) followed the methods of Hatano (in "Otoko no bunshō, onna no bunshō" (Male and female writings) in Kotoba no Shinri, Tokyo : 1955) and did frequency accounts on parts of speech, using 100 essays written by non-professional female writers, and an unspecified number of essays written by semi-professional female writers. They then compared the statistical results with those from their survey of 100 contemporary novelists of both sexes.

(17) Jespersen, O., Language, its nature, development and origin, (1922), pp.246.

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