

**Social Factors Behind the Usage of Women's Language in English-
Japanese Translation – Through an Analysis of “In the Company of
Women”**

Nanako Komatsubara

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of
Arts in Linguistics

Bryn Mawr College

December 10th, 2019

Abstract

Japanese consists of many sets of word endings which can identify a certain aspect of the speaker, such as being rich, poorly educated, manly, feminine, by being used. In particular, a set of word endings known as women's language is used extremely often in translated works, while in reality women do not use women's language frequently during conversation. This thesis focuses on identifying possible factors which affect a translator's language choice when translating a woman's voice from a foreign language through an analysis of the Japanese translation of "In the Company of Women: Inspiration and Advice from over 100 Makers, Artists, and Entrepreneurs". Through this analysis, I argue how gender norms which define femininity, and values regarding sexuality in Japan are significant factors in a translator's criteria of whether to assign women's language to a certain person or not.

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Introduction

Japanese women's language is a language form which emphasizes femininity by using a set of sentence final endings which are associated with femininity. Women's language, as its name states, has been understood and accepted widely as a language form which women commonly use. In reality though, current women in Japan do not use women's language frequently on a regular basis. Much of their language use consists of gender-neutral words, and are not significantly different from that of men. Despite this, women's language is used on an extremely frequent basis in translated media, such as books and movies. In this paper, through an analysis of "In the Company of Women: Inspiration and Advice from over 100 Makers, Artists, and Entrepreneurs", I will analyze factors behind translators' choice of language for women in translation to Japanese.

1 – Background Information

1.1 - *Yakuwarigo* and Women's Language

Japanese is a language with a large variation of sentence final endings. Sentence final endings can be added on to words at the end of a phrase, which allows one to infer some aspect of the speaker's identity, such as the elderly male (Example 2), the Chinese person (Example 3), and a young lady from a wealthy family (Example 4) (Teshigawara and Kinsui, 2011). Generally, only one type of sentence final ending can be added onto a sentence at once, and only one certain set of final endings are used per person. The choice of word endings are consistent throughout a character's lifetime, even if the character shows some kind of growth and change throughout their story (Furukawa, 2016). For example, take the simple sentence "I

ran to the city”. A direct translation of this, with no word endings would look like Example 1 below:

1. Neutral, Direct Translation: 私は 街へ 走った

Watashi-ha Machi-he hashitta

I-subject City-to Ran

This would be how most people speak in contemporary society. However, in literature and fictional forms of media, unique sentence final endings may be added to the last word of the sentence to highlight a certain characteristic of the speaker. Taking the example characteristics set forth, they could respectively be written in such ways:

2. Elderly Male: 私は 街へ 走ったのじゃ

Watashi-ha machi-he hashitta-**nojya**

3. Chinese person: 私は 街へ 走ったアルよ

Watashi-ha machi-he hashitta-**aruyo**

4. Young lady from a wealthy family¹: 私は 街へ 走ったわ

¹ This language form is equivalent to women’s language which is the topic of this paper. I have categorized it here as “young lady from a wealthy family” as Teshigawara and Kinsui (2011) which I take these categories from introduces them as so.

Watashi-ha machi-he hashitta-**wa**

The sentences shown here only differ by what type of word ending is added to the verb /ran/. However, such verb endings highlight their respective characteristics, allowing the reader to easily understand the type of character that is taking part in discourse. Generally, there are many word endings which highlight one specific characteristic, and choosing what ending to use depends on many aspects, such as whether the final word is a verb, a noun or adjective, how they are conjugated, and if the sentence suggests assertion, questions, etc. Such sets of word endings are known as Yakuwarigo, or role language.

What is unique about Yakuwarigo is that people can spontaneously imagine and create new sentence final endings to highlight a certain character's uniqueness within categories for which word endings are not established. For example, Ojarumaru, the protagonist of a famous anime in Japan named after him, uses the word ending /ojaru/ often. However, this word ending does not exist and was created just for him to highlight his uniqueness. To elaborate on this specific case, Ojarumaru is a young boy who is from 1000 years ago, and has traveled through time to current Japan. In addition, he is a fairy from the high society. Therefore, he is a character who is extremely unique, and his word choice consists of many words which are considered rather old Japanese. The word ending /ojaru/ is made to highlight his uniqueness and difference from everybody, and also to point out that he is from a completely different era, and it was created especially because there are no pre-existing word endings which could highlight such characteristics well. In this way, word endings can be imagined and created, reasonably allowing an infinite number of word endings to exist.

Unique word endings like /ojaru/ can only be used in very limited situations though, as it has less cultural and historical foundation compared to more widely understood and accepted endings such as those that indicate femininity. Therefore, while there are technically an infinite number of word endings, “most role languages are linguistic stereotypes rooted in non-fictional language usage” (Teshigawara and Kinsui, 2011, p.39), therefore the historical background behind its creation can be traced and reasoned. One such form is the set of word endings that indicate femininity, called women’s language.

1.2 - Women’s Language as a Construct

Women’s language, called either *Onna Kotoba* or *Joseigo* – both meaning women’s language – was created in the late 1800s as a part of Japan’s modernization. This was created for multiple reasons. One reason was that leaders of the time felt that Japan needed a standardized form of language to give a sense of unity. In pre-war Japan, communication between people living in different geographical areas proved difficult because of the various dialects spoken (Furukawa, 2013). Because of this, there was a weak sense of identification with the country compared to the geographical area they live in. However, Japan needed to unify the country in order to westernize, compete against other countries and prepare for war. This led to the government and the Japanese literary community creating and spreading standard Japanese, which was based off of the dialect which the emerging bourgeoisie class of the *Yamanote* area in Tokyo spoke (Furukawa 2013, Inoue 2002). By creating a standard language, this also created a hierarchy amongst dialects, and made it possible to identify people based on the way they speak (Furukawa, 2013).

Unification of the Japanese population did not stop here. In order to further accelerate their modernization, the Japanese government started to create clear gender roles for men and women. Men were to enter the work force and eventually fight for the country, while women were to stay and take care of the house and the family, supporting the men. The saying 良妻賢母 (*ryosai kenbo*), meaning “Good wife, wise mother” was strongly enforced. However, it is not that there were drastic changes in gender roles through this enforcement, as it was true before the Meiji modernization period that women were expected to more or less stay in the house and men to work. Such sayings and gender roles existed before modernization and they were intertwined with the culture, but this was the first time the government had explicitly enforced these roles onto people. In 1878, Japan had prohibited co-ed education by laws, dividing girls and boys, teaching them different values (Furukawa, 2013). Girls were taught how to take care of the house and support men through education. During this process, women’s language was created as a variation of standard Japanese, and enforced with governmental policies, which associated the language form with attributes such as politeness, kindness and elegance.

It was not just governmental policies which lead the creation of women’s language. The creation of standard language and gendered language was also led by the *gembun’itchi* movement, a language modernization movement which was started by the literary community (Inoue, 2002). With exposure to Western cultures, the Japanese literary community started writing a genre called *shosetsu*, similar to that of the narrative prose. This genre required “a literary style that was truthful and faithful to reality” (Inoue, 2002, p.398). To achieve this, writers chose to use non-standard language forms and specific sentence final endings to group

people and emphasize certain characteristics. When figuring out a language form for women, as standard Japanese was based off of the upper-middle class in Tokyo, writers turned to schoolgirl speech. At the time, being able to go to secondary school as a woman in Japan was not common, and was generally only possible for wealthy families. Therefore, schoolgirl speech was the perfect fit to standard Japanese. Schoolgirls used a unique form of word endings such as /-teyo/, /-dawa/ and /-noyo/, called *teyodawa* language, which at the time was considered vulgar.

While it was initially used within conversation by young girls, its use eventually widened to include conversations by women of all ages, becoming a generic women's language. According to Furkawa (2013), the first instances where *teyodawa* language was used in writing was for translating female dialogue in Western texts to Japanese. At that time, Japan was making nationwide efforts to Westernize, and had impressions of the West as more cultivated and sophisticated. Therefore, by using women's language in translation, writers succeeded in tying women's language together with feminine elegance and politeness. What was first considered as vulgar language by young girls, was transformed into a widely accepted form of women's language through literature and modernization.

As new novels which used women's language were consumed, women embraced and reenacted the use of women's language through letters which were published on magazines and sent to close friends (Inoue, 2002). By the 1920's, such magazines had spread so that women from both high and low social classes would be consuming them, further enforcing the use and embrace of women's language amongst women. Inoue (2006) shows how by the 1930s advertisements used women's language to indicate the modern Japanese woman.

Through governmental policies and change in literary styles of writing, women's language was created, and is still widely accepted as a language form in which women are expected to talk in. Women's language is understood as a "cultural category and unavoidable part of practical social knowledge" (Inoue, 2006, p.1).

1.3 - Language Choice in Contemporary Society and Media

However, in recent years, the use of women's language amongst women has significantly decreased. In her study on the use of gendered word endings by women, Okamoto (1996) showed that young female students used less feminine forms (12.3%) compared to middle aged women (36.3%) when speaking with each other. In addition, she also showed that the use of masculine forms by women have increased with the younger generation. This is explained by how some masculine word endings have changed over time to become more gender neutral. Okamoto (2004) shows that when women were prompted about their use of women's language, many answered that they would not use such language on a normal basis, and would generally only use it when talking with people who are older or of higher status, and when they wanted to exaggerate femininity in joke-like situations. This is because generally, feminine speech is considered to connote elegance, politeness, gentleness, etc. (Okamoto, 2014, Furukawa 2013, Inoue 2002). This does not fit with everyday casual discussions, and so it is either used when one intends to exaggerate femininity in casual situations to make a joke, or when speaking with people of higher status to show politeness.

In fact, such change in language usage is reflected in Japanese *shojo manga*, which is a category of Japanese romance comics aimed towards young women. In her study, Chou (2016)

shows the change in amount of gendered word endings used by female characters in a Japanese *shojo manga* magazine from 1967-2015. She showed that there was an over 50% decrease in female language use amongst female characters within the 50 years. In addition, she also shows that there has been a gradual increase in the use of masculine language by female characters, as was shown in Okamoto (1996). The use of feminine word endings had decreased significantly over 50 years, with the exception of a few word endings which are thought to have changed to a rather gender neutral word ending than a strongly feminine one.

However, when texts are translated from a foreign language to Japanese, this change in language usage by women is not reflected. The majority of women which appear in any form of translated media, regardless of genre, context, situation, etc., have a high ratio of women’s language in their speech. This is evident regardless of the translator’s gender, while based off of Furukawa (2015), men do seem to use women’s language on a more frequent basis. Furukawa (2013) shows that in all of the translated novels analyzed, at least 40% of a women’s speech is consisting of feminine word endings, when real life studies of women’s language usage show that the use of such language generally only rises to about 20% at maximum (Figure 1).

Gendered Sentence Finals	“The Devil Wears Prada” (2006)	“Chasing Harry Winston” (2009)	Okamoto and Sato (1992), 18-23 year olds	Okamoto and Sato (1992), 27-34 year olds	Okamoto (2010), 18-20 year olds
Feminine forms	43.07%	42.30%	14%	24%	12.3%
- Strongly Feminine Forms (such as /-wa/ /-dawa/ /-yo/ /-kashira/)	25.98%	28.98%	4%	12%	N/A

- Moderately Feminine Forms (such as /-no/ /-ne/ /-desho/)	17.09%	13.32%	10%	12%	N/A
Masculine Forms	2.22%	0.00%	29%	14%	18.9%
- Strongly Masculine Forms (such as /-zo/ /-ze/)	0.00%	0.00%	5%	0%	N/A
- Moderately Masculine Forms (/ -da/ / -dayo/ / -nanda/)	2.22%	0.00%	24%	14%	N/A
Neutral Forms	54.70%	57.69%	57%	62%	68.8%

Figure 1 – Comparison of Gendered Language Usage in Translation and Contemporary Women’s Speech
adapted from Furukawa (2013)

1.4 - Analysis Methods

Based on this background, I will do an in-depth analysis of translated literature to see exactly what seems to affect a translators’ choice of language form in their work. For doing so, I have chosen the book “In the Company of Women: Inspiration and Advice from over 100 Makers, Artists, and Entrepreneurs”, originally written by Grace Bonney in English, and translated by Maki Tsukitani, a female translator in Japanese. “In the Company of Women” is a book consisting of interviews with over 100 females who have started some sort of business on their own. The book aims to empower female readers by writing about success stories of female achievers. Each of the women in the book is asked questions about themselves and their experiences starting a business. The majority of these women are interviewed face-to-

face, with the exception of women who live outside of the US. Most the women interviewed in this book are from the United States, while there are occasionally women from other countries, such as the UK, Australia and Mexico. The book provides a photo of every interviewee, which plays a large role in my analysis as a large portion of it will include explanation on what impressions their appearances would make to the Japanese audience and the translator.

There are various reasons as to why I chose this book. One of the reasons is because it provides a large sample of women with varying personalities and backgrounds, and so the differences (or non-existence of differences) in the translator's choices can be easily spotted and analyzed. Secondly, this book was published originally in English in 2016, and was published in Japanese in 2019, translated by Maki Tsukitani. As it is a recently published, non-fictional book both in English and in Japanese, I believe that the word choices are meant to represent contemporary, common language usage, which is significant to my analysis as my focus is on analysis of word usage between translation and common language use in contemporary society. Not only so, but it also reflects the current values which a translator takes in consideration when translating. Lastly, I find this book especially interesting to analyze compared to other books as it is a book focused on female empowerment. Japan is currently putting effort into promoting gender equality and empowering women. Based on this aim, this book would be something perfect to recommend to Japanese women. However, when translated into Japanese, even though this book promotes gender equality and empowerment, this book has a heavy use of women's language, which creates a clear categorization of gender and reinforces femininity. I found this choice to be very ironic, and so thought that this book

would act as a good resource to analyze and identify possible factors that affect a translator's use of women's language.

Using this book, I will first analyze how many women in this book are translated with women's language. Based off of this number, I would be able to get an idea of whether women's language is still very dominant in current translation as shown in other studies. After this, I intend to focus on the exceptional cases of women that do not use women's language throughout their interviews and introduce possible underlying factors which may have affected the translator's language choice. In particular, I will be focusing on gender norms and values regarding sexuality in Japan. However, in this argument, I will not be mentioning the translator, Maki Tsukitani's presence often. This is because while I attempted to research on her background and her philosophy as a translator to understand her ideologies and methods while translating, I could only gain very simple information, such as her final education record and a few other titles that she has translated. While I do acknowledge that the translator and her train of thought plays a significant role here, there was too little information in order to form a cohesive argument on her identity and choices. Therefore, while I do indicate that the language choices in this book are based off of assignments by a particular translator, I will not mention the translator's role often.

1.5 - Precautions and Definition of Feminine Word Endings

To understand how prominent women's language is, it is important to know how often it appears within this book, and what type of people are attributed to using women's language.

On that point, I must point out before explaining anymore my criteria on calculating and counting women's language.

First of all, while women's language is definitely prominent in translation, it never dominates a women's entire speech. That is, as seen in Furukawa (2013), in both translation and contemporary language use, neutral language is the dominant form of language used by women, and women's language is the most used in translation when it comes to gendered language. Generally, regardless of translation or not, gendered language only consists of a portion of one's speech, and neutral speech is dominant. However, women's language is considered salient regardless because neutral speech is the standard form of language used by people of all genders and ages, and therefore does not highlight any role, relationship, or membership to a certain group. Therefore, while I will be analyzing the frequency of women's language in translation, I do not expect it to be appearing extremely frequently. In addition, because this book consists of over 100 interviews, each interviewee only has a limited amount of dialogue which I can draw from. In addition, the length of the interviews varies, as one interviewee may have up to five pages of dialogue, while another may only have one. Previous studies on translation or use of women's speech in novels focus on drawing from feminine speech throughout a few characters which appear throughout the whole story, which I cannot do. Therefore, there are interviewees examined who only had one instance of using women's language throughout their interview. Because of such situations, I will not be calculating how often women's language appears, but rather how many people use women's language and what kind of people they are.

Secondly, I must explain on my criteria of what I consider women’s language. While women’s language is a form of language clearly understood and accepted by the large majority, there have been some changes in the impressions of some word endings over time. There are word endings which were originally characterized as a part of women’s language, but have changed over time and now tend to be more gender neutral. For example, there is the word ending /-yone/, which originally was considered very feminine. However, as Chou (2016) shows in her study of women’s language in Japanese manga, while most feminine word endings decrease in usage with time, /-yone/ was one rare feminine word ending whose usage actually increased over time (Figure 2). The increase in use of this word ending is explained partially because it has changed to become more gender neutral making it common for men to use such language as well, and so there are less occasions in which it highlights femininity by being used in dialogue.

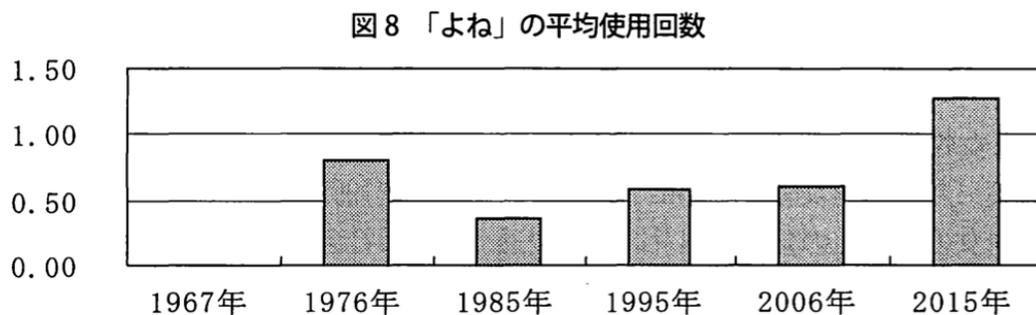


Figure 2 – Average Usage of Word Ending /-yone/ in Japanese Manga from 1967-2015 from Chou (2016)

In addition, some word endings may sound different based on how they are used. For example, the word ending /-yo/ is considered much more feminine when it is attached to a noun and adjectives which use the na-conjugation form, which are adjectives which attach the particle /-na/ to the end of itself when describing a certain object. Adjectives such as /kirei/

(beautiful, clean) and /kirai/ (dislike) are some examples, being conjugated as /kirei-na/ and /kirai-na/ respectively. However, when used in other situations such as with ru-conjugation verbs, /-yo/ becomes gender neutral, and is commonly used by both men and women, like in the below examples.

1. Feminine use of /-yo/: 嫌いよ

Kirai-yo (Kirai being a na-conjugation adjective)

Don't like-(it) (feminine)

I don't like you/it (feminine)

2. Gender neutral use of /-yo/: 知らないよ

Shiranai-yo (Shiranai being a ru-conjugation verb)

Don't know (gender neutral)

I don't know (Neutral)

Because English is generally a much more gender neutral language compared to Japanese, it is hard to convey such differences through explanation. There have been several studies (Chou, 2016, Phillips, 2013) on the analysis of gendered word endings in Japanese, which require categorization of word endings into feminine, neutral, and masculine. Based on their categorizations, I consider women's language word endings as follows:

Feminine Word Endings	Variations	Usage
1. /-wa/ and its variations	/-wane/, /-wayo/, / -wayone/, /-dawa/	Used to express assertion

2. /-no/ and its variants	/-nanone/, /-nanoyo/, /-nanoyone/	Used to express assertion or explanation, used after a na-conjugated adjective
3. /-noyo/	NA	Used for assertion and explanation
4. /-kashira/	NA	Feminine question particle
5. /-yo/, or /-yone/	NA	used after a noun or a na-conjugated adjective for assertion
6. /-desho/	NA	for a statement which seeks agreement from an other

2 – Analysis of “In the Company of Women”

In this book, there are a total of 106 interviews, and 111 women. While the majority of women are featured individually, there are a few women who were interviewed in pairs, as they run a business together, which explains for the additional 5 women. Based on my criteria of feminine word endings, I first collected information on how many interviewees used women’s language. In addition to collecting their name and whether they used women’s language or not, I also took note of where they are from, and their occupation. I counted an interviewee as a person using women’s language as long as they had at least one token of women’s language in their interview. From this data, I found that out of the 111 women interviewed, a total of 99 women were assigned women’s language at least once in their

interview, and it was only 12 interviewees who did not. 12 interviewees are only about 10.8% of the whole pool of interviewees, which shows how women's language is still dominant and a very commonly used form of language in translated media. In addition, I categorized the women who are not assigned women's language into two groups based on possible reasons that affected the translator's choice of language. I name these two groups as the LGBT group and the miscellaneous group, and there are also a few who are complete outliers, which I explain later on.

2.1 –The LGBT Group

The LGBT group is formed by a number of interviewees in this book who mention that they have been supported by their female partners when running their business, indicating that they are not heterosexual, but identify with the LGBT community. I classified interviewees into this group almost solely based on whether they mentioned a female partner or not, because this is a book on business, and so one's sexuality is not deeply discussed. The female partner is mentioned occasionally in this book because there are questions regarding lifestyle and support which one receives that helps them run their business, in which some mention their partner as a significant influence. Therefore, I must admit that because of this, I may have not been able to identify all interviewees who identify with the LGBT community, and therefore my classification of this group may be incomplete. In addition, none of the interviewees clearly state their sexuality. While I do understand that there are many categories and ways of identification within the LGBT community, I have no choice but to classify them all as just "LGBT". However, based on this data, it seems that such women are not translated using women's language, but

rather tend to be assigned a gender neutral, casual form of speech. Their speech does not consist of strongly feminine or masculine word endings. However, there are some exceptions to this group, as there are some LGBT-identifying interviewees who still use women's language.

An example of this is Elise Kornack and Anna Hieronimus, who are chefs and restaurateurs from Brooklyn, NY (Figure 3). These two are a married couple, that run their

Elise Kornack and Anna Hieronimus

Chef, Restaurateurs

Brooklyn, NY



Anna Hieronimus (left) and Elise Kornack

Figure 3 - Elise Kornack (Right) and Anna Hieronimus (Left) in "In the Company of Women" (2016)

business together. The sexuality which they identify with are unclear, but it can be inferred that they are part of the LGBT community. Anna, who has long hair and wears a dress, is assigned women's language, while Elise, who has extremely short hair, wearing glasses, with a white shirt, apron, jeans and sneakers, is assigned neutral language. Based off of this, we can think that Elise was assigned neutral language both for her sexuality and physical appearance, which looks more masculine rather than feminine.

However, Anna, who is also most likely part of the LGBT community, is assigned women's language. This can be because of the difference in her physical appearance, as she wears a long

business together. The sexuality which they identify with are unclear, but it can be inferred that they are part of the LGBT community. Anna, who has long hair and wears a dress, is assigned women's language, while Elise, who has extremely short hair, wearing glasses, with a white shirt, apron, jeans and sneakers, is assigned

dress with heels making her look more feminine, but I believe that it also has to do with the pair's relationship, and how it would be perceived in Japanese standards regarding gender and sexuality.

2.1.1. – Political and Social Backgrounds Behind LGBT Acceptance in Japan

Japan has a long way for LGBT accommodation and acceptance. Unlike the US, same-sex marriage is not legalized in any part of Japan. The Japanese laws clearly state that marriage is to be done between people of two different sexes, and therefore does not allow same-sex marriage. While some cities in Japan allow same-gender partnership, which allows couples to share rights and privileges similar to a legally married couple, the first case for this only started in 2015, and the total number of cities which offer this partnership are very little. However, there are a few improvements. This July, an openly gay man was elected as a member of the Diet, becoming the first ever member of Diet that identifies with the LGBT community. In addition, in December this year, Yokohama city, one of the most populous cities in Japan, is planning to start offering same-sex partnership.

While there are some slow improvements in this issue, the reality is that the majority of the Japanese society has very binary thoughts regarding gender, and negativity is rather openly expressed. In fact, one reason why improvement on LGBT rights is taking so much time is because many legislators view non-heterosexual people negatively, and openly express this. For example, during July 2018, a female legislator wrote in a column that she could not understand why Japan has the need to use their budgets for the LGBT community when they do not have any children, and so therefore are not “productive” (Asahi Shimbun, 2018). In the same month,

a male legislator expressed in a TV show that while he does not reject LGBT and accepts diversity, he doesn't feel a need to legalize their rights because it is like a hobby (Asahi Shimbun, 2018). In fact, the National Diet of Japan has understood that LGBT members experience troubles in Japan, and have created a report which states the troubles and further improvements required for this issue. In it, they show how LGBT children are often called names such as *Okama*, *Les*, *Homo*, which are Japanese derogatory terms for gay and lesbian people. In addition, it states cases where people were denied promotions in their job because the promotion required marriage, but were denied because they had a same-sex partner (Nakanishi, 2017).

In such ways, while there are very gradual improvements, gender is still viewed as a very binary factor in Japan, and marriage is viewed as something which is done by man and woman, to become husband and wife. Therefore, going back to the case with Elise and Anna, I believe that it is not only their gender and their physical appearances that affected the translator's language choice, but also their relationship as a married couple. Being married, in Japanese standards states that one must be the husband while the other is the wife. Therefore, based on their appearances, Elise, who looks more masculine, was assigned neutral language while Anna, who looks more feminine was assigned women's language, to enforce the husband-wife relationship between them. This notion of femininity is also a key social value which affected the translator's language choices for interviewees in the miscellaneous group.

2.2 – The Miscellaneous Group

The miscellaneous group consists of people who do not have a specific characteristic that seems to group them together. Each of the interviewees are dressed in different clothing, and photos are taken in different settings, such as in an art studio, office, etc. This allows us to know each of the interviewees' appearances. These interviewees do not have some kind of physical attribute or personal background in common. However, most of the interviewees within the group do seem to violate a sense of Japanese femininity, which seems to be the most significant factor in a translator's criteria on language choice. They are all assigned a gender neutral language form of some sort – most use a casual form like the LGBT group members, but some members also use the /-desu/ /-masu/ honorific form. This book includes photos of each of the interviewees.

2.2.1 - Femininity in Japan

Japan has had strongly enforced gender roles within its culture. One saying which expresses both the history and current understanding of gender is 良妻賢母 (*ryosai kenbo*), meaning “Good wife, wise mother”. This saying was spread and strongly enforced within pre-war Japan through modernization of the country. Women were expected to support the working men in the house, and eventually deliver and raise a boy who can eventually enter the work force and be the heir for the house (Chou, 2016). Women generally were not expected to be in the workforce. In order to enforce such gender roles onto women, the phrase *ryosai kenbo* was used often, and women's language was often paired with it, to show that there is a specific language form in which women should be speaking in (Furukawa, 2016).

Currently, while women have joined the workforce and it is taken for granted to see women in the workplace, the ideology of *ryosai kenbo* is still present, and there are some manners and standards which are imposed on women who work. While a woman can work, once they get married, there is an expectation that women quit their job care for the house and their child when born. Based on the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan, as of 2014, there are 6,870,000 families in Japan which consist of a working husband and a jobless woman, or housewife. While the number of families with co-working parents have increased over the past few years due to economic and political situations which have made it difficult to support a family solely based off of a man's income, becoming a housewife after marriage is still widely thought of as an ideal path for a woman.

In addition, when working in the office, women are expected to dress in specific attire that emphasizes gender differences. They are often expected to wear a suit with a skirt rather than pants, and heels. Some companies even enforce such attire by a dress code. In addition, when a woman is doing a job search, going to job fairs, and having interviews with the employers, it is almost mandatory for a woman to be in such attire. In the recent years, there have been movements to free women from this expectation, but they have not been very successful. One example is the #KuToo movement, which has started from January of 2019, aiming to enable women to wear sneakers and flat shoes to work rather than heels. This ongoing movement, aims to reduce physical stress and gender inequality in the workplace by submitting a petition to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare of Japan. In fact, in June 2019, the petition was once submitted to the Ministry with over 18,000 signatures. However, in response to this movement, the Minister of Health, Labor and Welfare at the time dismissed

the movement, stating that heels worn by women are “socially accepted as something that falls within the realm of being occupationally necessary and appropriate” (CBS News, 2019).

Similarly, in November 2019, it was pointed out that some Japanese companies prohibit women from wearing glasses during work. Some companies, such as airlines, stated that they prohibit glasses for safety measures on board, but many others stated that they prohibited glasses because they make women look colder and indifferent than when they would not have glasses on (BBC, 2019). From this, we can see how Japan still has strong beliefs and expectations towards a woman’s appearance and attitude during work. It is strongly preferred for women to look feminine, and to be perceived as a person with warmth, kindness, and politeness. Such issues have finally come to discussion in 2019, and improvement of such norms still have a far way to go.

2.2.2 - Interviewees Violating Japanese Feminine Norms

Based off of this understanding of Japanese feminine norms, we can see that some of the interviewees in the miscellaneous group were translated into neutral forms of language because of their appearance, and violation of gender norms in Japan. For example, one interviewee, Mary Going, a fashion designer from Berkeley, CA, was dressed in business casual attire, wearing a suit with a tie, and jeans with leather shoes (Figure 4). She sits in cross-legged

in an office-like room with many suits lined up on a rack. She poses in front of the camera with a straight look which doesn't seem to convey any specific emotion. Along with her very short

Mary Going
Fashion Designer
Berkeley, CA



Figure 4 – Photo of Mary Going, interviewee in “In the Company of Women” (2016)

hair, she looks very masculine as to feminine. Her attire does not fit the Japanese norm of skirts and heels, warmth and kindness. When translated, she is assigned neutral language, specifically a form which uses /-desu/ and /-masu/ honorifics at the end of a sentence. /-desu/ and /-masu/ are the most standard form of honorifics

used in Japanese. It is used in various situations, such as in the workplace, with people who are of higher social status, and with people who you have met for the first time or have spent little time with. It is also the first form of Japanese you would learn if you were learning Japanese as a foreign language. In general, using honorifics can give a sense of distance in relationship, a sense of professionalism, and neutrality. Therefore, compared to other women, Mary sounds much more serious and professional, and there seems to be a much more rigid, professional

relationship between her and the interviewer. This sense of word choice seems to be supported by her looks, with short hair and business casual attire which makes her look rather masculine.

Another example is Jasmine Wright, a tattoo artist from San Diego, CA who is assigned gender neutral language. She dresses much more casually compared to Mary, wearing a black t-shirt and jeans, with a pair of black sneakers. Her clothing does not strongly stand out, but instead, she has a mohawk-like hairstyle, and we can notice tattoos all over her arms, spreading to the rest of her body. While she does not necessarily look masculine like Mary, her physical appearance looks non-feminine. In addition, tattoos in Japan have historically been associated with the Japanese mafia, called *yakuza*. Therefore, permanent tattoos like what Jasmine has are traditionally considered inappropriate not just for women, but also for men. Having tattoos in Japan may restrict you from entering certain buildings and receiving certain services, as it indicates that you are part of a mafia group. While some people have started getting tattoos without any actual association to the mafia, the general public still has a very negative impression towards them. Therefore, in Jasmine's case, she is not only violating feminine expectations, but also is dissociating herself from being a normal person within the Japanese standards by showing her tattoos.

One last example of violating femininity is Roxane Gay, a writer and professor from West Lafayette, Virginia that speaks using casual neutral language. At first, Roxane's photo does not seem to show strong violations of Japanese standards of femininity. She wears a blue shirt, and has her hair up with a black hairband. It looks like she's most likely wearing jeans. While it is definitely not what a typical Japanese woman would wear to the workplace, this would not be enough to deem her as violating norms, especially because the picture only shows her

standing against a blue satin curtain, and so does not suggest that she is in an office. However, when reading her interview, we come across a question which asks what she sacrificed in order to succeed in her career, and she answers “Without a doubt, I have sacrificed motherhood” (Bonney, 2015). As explained with the notion of *ryosai kenbo*, eventually becoming a mother and having children are extremely important aspects of a woman’s life in Japan. Sacrificing motherhood for a career is not preferred, and by stating that she did so she is indicating that she has chosen a lifestyle not within the expected feminine norms. This may have affected the translator’s choices in whether to use feminine language or not.

2.2.3 - Neutral/Feminine Language Based on Interviewee Relationships

Many of the interviewees within the miscellaneous group tend to violate some form of feminine norm as explained. However, there are a few interviewees who seem to be assessed in a different manner, which includes consideration of aspects other than feminine norms. This is the assessment of the interviewee’s relationship with other interviewees.

As mentioned before, there are a few interviewees who have been interviewed in pairs, as they run a business together. There is a total of five pairs that were interviewed in this form. Out of these five pairs, two of them consist of one interviewee who speaks in women’s language, and another that uses neutral language. This choice of language definitely has to do with one’s perceived femininity, but these pairs also have their relationship with each other taken into consideration. One pair is Anna and Elise, who were previously explained, and another pair is Maya and Teta Gorgoni, a mother-daughter pair who are fashion designers from New York, NY (Figure 5).

In this case, the mother is assigned women's language while the daughter is assigned



Mother and daughter Teta Gorgoni (right) and Maya Gorgoni

Figure 5 - Maya (Left) and Teta Gorgoni (Right) from "In the Company of Women" (2016)

neutral language. However, appearance wise, Maya, who is assigned neutral language, does not seem to violate feminine gender norms. In addition, based on the content of the interview, she does not seem to identify with the LGBT community.

My possible hypothesis for this is that the mother-daughter relationship between the two removes Maya from the feminine framework. As mentioned before, the saying *ryosai kenbo* or "Good wife wise mother", is highly valued in

Japan, and so mothers are generally expected to be caring, looking over their children. By running a business with her mother, the mother-child relationship is emphasized, and so this interview is portrayed as a business ran by the mature mother and the still-growing child rather than a business ran by two women. This then excludes Maya from the feminine framework as she is depicted as a child, and not a woman. However, I do not have any concrete evidence or data which could support this hypothesis. In addition, there is another mother-daughter pair interviewed in this book, where both the mother and daughter are assigned women's language,

which indicates that there must be another factor other than the mother-daughter relationship affecting this language choice.

2.3 – Outliers

Through my analysis, while I found that most women were assigned women's language based off of their perceived femininity, there were a few interviewees which I could not draw a good reason to their assigned language forms.

One such woman which I could not find reason for their language choice was Maya Lin, an artist, architect, sculptor and designer from New York, NY. She dresses casually, in a gray t-shirt and jeans, with gray sneakers which does not seem feminine nor masculine. It is unknown exactly where the photo is taken, but considering that she is an artist, it could possibly be her studio. She doesn't violate feminine gender norms, nor does she seem to identify with the LGBT community. However, she uses neutral language, along with the /-desu/ and /-masu/ honorifics. I am thinking that this was possibly because of how short her interview was. Her interview is featured over two pages, but her photo dominates the two pages, and the text only takes about one fourth of the two pages. In addition, her interview only consists of five questions, each which are answered with just one or two sentences. Compared to how there are many interviewees in this book who are asked over 10 questions and answer with paragraphs and interviews lasting up to five pages, her interview is extremely short. From this interview, it is hard to infer anything about her personality and femininity. Therefore, I hypothesize that the translator used the /-desu/ /-masu/ form as it is a neutral and standard

form of Japanese, and using specific word endings which highlight a certain characteristic prove hard with just this amount of text.

Conclusion

Women's language is a construct which highlights femininity, and is accepted as a language form in which women are expected to speak in. However, as women's language is more of a social construct widely accepted within the Japanese community rather than an actively used language form, women do not use this language form often in contemporary society. One of the only situations where women's language dominates in media translated from a foreign language to Japanese. One of the major aspects which I found through analyzing "In the Company of Women" was the feminine gender norms in Japan. Because women's language is the way in which a woman is expected to speak, social expectations enforced on women are closely tied together, and if such social expectations do not seem to be met by the interviewee, they are assigned a form of neutral language. These choices also reflect gender and sexuality values in Japan, which are understood as very binary and open compared to American standards.

While this shows that language choice in translation reflects societal norms of the country in which the language is spoken, this case also reflects how ironic the current language choices are considering Japan's current efforts to achieve equality and diversity. Japan has been making efforts to achieve gender equality, especially since the current prime minister, Shinzo Abe, who created a new post named the Minister of Female Empowerment in the cabinet. More companies have tried to accommodate working mothers through flexible working times since this. However, as I have shown through this thesis, there is still much to be achieved, and

gender norms are still evident. This is reflected through the salient use of women's language in translation, as the majority of women are assigned women's language considering that they are expected to speak like how an ideal woman should be speaking. If women's empowerment is really to be advanced, then language use in translation should start to show a gradual change to show more variation in a woman's speech to reflect their individuality, rather than labeling most people as just a plain woman.

In addition to these findings, it is clear that there are limitations to this thesis and that further research must be done in order to have a clearer view language choice in translation. While I have pointed out how gender norms and sexuality values of the country and society can affect the translator's language choice, this is an analysis on only one book and one translator. Each translator definitely differs on their views regarding gender, and so this is not enough to make a claim that gender norms affect language usage. While it is most likely a significant factor considering the fact that women's language is commonly used amongst the majority of female characters in Japanese translated media, other works must be analyzed as well to consider other translators and possible factors which were not noticed through this analysis. In addition, this book is rather unique considering that it is a collection of interviews, and not an autobiography, novel, or some sort of book which has a lengthy story to it. Therefore, as suggested in the outliers, it is hard to infer their personalities for some interviewees. In order to see whether this is a recurring situation in such books, more analysis must be done on similar books, and there definitely should be research on other forms of books, to see whether such outliers still exist in books where there is extensive character depiction.

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