**Shojo and Adult Women: A Linguistic Analysis of Gender Identity in Manga (Japanese Comics)**

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the linguistic behavior of female characters in *shojo* (girls) and *ladies* (women) *manga* (Japanese comics) and discusses the portrayal of female gender identities in the context of popular print media. Considering the great impact that Japanese print media has had over Japanese women’s speech patterns throughout history, a linguistic analysis of female characters’ speech patterns in *shojo* and *ladies manga* may reveal the kinds of representations of language and gender in *manga* and how these representations may affect Japanese women’s gender identity today. Based on data collected through quantitative and qualitative approaches, the discussion focuses on the gender identities of *shojo* and adult women in *shojo* and *ladies manga*.

**Introduction**

Language symbolizes social identity. Through language, certain social identities, including gender identity, are crafted that may either correspond to or oppose mainstream norms and values (Holmes, 1997). This study explores how gender identity is expressed through language use in *manga*, Japanese comics. On the surface gender identity in the Japanese language appears to be relatively straightforward. Gender differences in Japanese are usually marked both syntactically and lexically. For example, Japanese women and men are expected to use particular sentence final expressions and certain words that are different from each other in order to be considered “feminine” or “masculine” (Ide, 1990). The linguistic differentiation of gender tends to make Japanese women’s language sound softer, politer, and less assertive, and makes Japanese men’s language sound more assertive, vulgar, and less polite.

In her theory of indexicality, Ochs (1992) states that many linguistic features associated with one gender or the other “index social meanings (e.g. stances, social acts, social activities), which in turn help to constitute gender meanings (p340).” According to her theory, indexicality is defined as a property of speech through which particular stances or acts constitute cultural contexts, such as social identities. This connection between speech and social meanings is evident in the use of Japanese women’s language. The softer and politer characteristics of Japanese women’s language index “femininity,” or the preferred image of Japanese women in society. Several studies report, however, that the speech styles of Japanese women have recently begun to change (Kobayashi, 1993; Miyazaki, 2002; Okamoto, 1996; Takasaki, 1993, etc.). Specifically, young Japanese women have been found to use feminine speech less often; they have started using masculine and neutral speech.

These findings are based on the actual speech of Japanese women and/or their self-report on their language use. No systematic studies, however, have previously investigated how Japanese women are linguistically depicted in contemporary print media. Print media has greatly influenced Japanese women’s speech in the past. Sentence final expressions, which are typical of Japanese women’s language were originally constructed in popular print media, specifically the genre of domestic novels in late Meiji period (late nineteenth century) (Inoue, 2002). In that period, women began to use feminine linguistic forms from domestic novels, and they became prominent in women’s speech. At the same time, the ideological meanings behind these forms, *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), also became widespread. Therefore, popular print media can influence one’s speech choice and the social identity associated with it. *Manga* are an extremely popular pastime among Japanese people regardless of sex, age, education, occupation, and social classes (Ito, 2000). It is most commonly published in a magazine form that normally contains about twenty serialized and concluding stories (Schodt, 1996). These *manga* magazines sell approximately 1.7 billion copies per year, or 465,000 copies per day (Ito, 2000). Even though *manga* is read by all sorts of Japanese people, different *manga* magazines target specific genders and age groups, and the range of a particular *manga*’s topics largely depend on the intended audience.

This study focuses on *shojo manga* (comics written for girls) and *ladies manga* (comics written for adult women) magazines. *Shojo manga* is targeted primarily at girls from elementary school through high school (Tsurumi, 1997). The majority of themes in *shojo manga* is romantic love, though other themes, such as fantasies, mysteries, and science fiction are also included. *Ladies manga*, in contrast, aims predominantly at adult women. *Ladies manga* deal with the typical reality adult Japanese women often encounter, such as love, career, mother-child relations, social problems, divorce, relationships with the in-laws, and others (Ito, 2002).

*Shojo* and *ladies manga* magazines are selected for analysis because their readers and writers are almost entirely female. They are written “of women, by women, and for women (p 54)” (Fujimoto, 1991). As Talbot (1992) discusses, even though the characters in print media such as books and magazines are imaginary, a writer can use a variety of strategies to establish a rapport with the readership. Some techniques include claiming a common background, showing that one knows what the reader is like, and ‘speaking the same language’ as the targeted readership (Talbot, 1992). The projected gender identities of female characters in *manga* magazines, therefore, are likely to reflect the characteristics of the desired readership.

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At the same time, however, *manga* may influence the readers in framing their gender identities as well as their linguistic behavior. As Ito (2000) argues, “It is very influential for children and adults alike because it ‘teaches’ the readers the roles, expectations, rights, duties, taboos, and folkways of Japanese society whether the reader is aware of it or not (p.14).” Ogi (2003) also states that one of the roles *ladies manga* performs is to offer alternate role models to adult women. Therefore, in addition to studying people’s actual linguistic behavior, it is important to examine the kinds of representations of language and gender in *manga* and how these representations may affect Japanese women’s gender identity. This study analyzes the linguistic behavior of female characters in *shojo* and *ladies manga* and discusses the portrayal of their gender identities in the context of popular print media.

**Research Questions**

This study poses the following two questions to explore gender identity expressed through language use in *manga*.

1. How and to what extent do the female characters’ speech patterns, the use of gendered forms in particular, in *shojo* and *ladies manga* magazines differ according to the characters’ ages?

2. Under what circumstances or settings are traditional and unconventional women’s language used in *manga* magazines?

**Literature Review**

**Conventional characteristics of Japanese women’s speech**

Japanese male and female speech differences have been extensively examined in linguistic research (Ide, 1979; Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987; Smith, 1992). Traditionally, feminine and masculine speech are largely marked by many grammatical and pragmatic elements such as sentence-final expressions, self-reference and address terms, vocabulary, pitch range, intonation, and the use of honorifics. Among these, sentence-final expressions, which reveal the speaker’s sentiments in a conversation, clearly distinguish the gender of the speaker (McGloin, 1990). For instance, the use of the copula *da* carries the modal function of the speaker’s certainty and definiteness toward the propositional content of the sentence (Matsumoto, 2002). The copula *da* is identified as masculine in most Japanese textbooks (Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987). Other sentence finals, such as *ze, yo,* and *na,* by tradition, are also used exclusively by male speakers. They express abruptness, forcefulness, and assertiveness.

Female Japanese speakers, on the other hand, conventionally use other sentence finals, including *wa,* *no,* and *kashira.* *Wa,* for instance, conveys a delicate and attenuated mood (Matsumoto, 2002). *Wa* was originally used as an exclamation to express the speaker’s light, self-addressed confirmation about the propositional content of a sentence. Because *wa* is coupled with utterances addressed to oneself, the pragmatic meaning of *wa* infers an open-endedness that attenuates the speaker’s assertion, especially when it is pronounced with a rising or sustaining intonation (Matsumoto, 2002). Sentence finals used by women usually imply softness, gentleness, empathy, hesitancy, and a lack of assertiveness (Ide, 1994).

Politeness and formality is another distinct difference between Japanese women’s and men’s speech. Japanese women’s use of honorifics shows how formality is a norm for women in Japanese society. Both men and women are expected to use honorifics correctly in Japan because the knowledge of honorifics is thought to enhance one’s social identity or socioeconomic status (Okamoto, 2002). Ide (1990), however, claims that women generally speak more politely than men in Japanese. For instance, women have no access to vulgar expressions of derogatory connotation or to profanity or obscenity. Women’s avoidance of vulgar expressions displays a gentle demeanor and makes women’s speech sound more polite (Ide, 1990).

These gender differences in linguistic practice are inexorably linked to social ideology. Ochs (1992) argues that gender ideologies are socialized, sustained, and transformed through speech. In her theory of indexing gender, Ochs (1992) states that linguistic forms may help construct the social images of male and female by specifying the kinds of meaning men and women are likely to index through language. Therefore, Japanese gendered sentence finals indirectly index the speaker’s gender by directly indexing intensity or assertiveness of the speech. The masculine sentence final “*ze,*” for instance, directly indexes the coarse intensity of the statement, hence indirectly indexing a male voice. A feminine sentence final “*wa,*” however, directly indexes delicate intensity and the soft affective disposition of the utterance, therefore indirectly indexing a female voice (Ochs, 1992). These affective dispositions reflect the preferred image of women in Japan, and express social norms and expectations with regard to the identities of the speakers, referents, and addresses (Ochs, 1992). Suzuki (1997) also claims that women have to select their speech styles within a range of feminine speech expected by society in order to maintain their feminine identity. Hence, these forms convey a range of social meanings and social identities.

**Changing speech patterns of Japanese women**

These days, as social diversity among Japanese women increases, speech styles have also started to change. Several studies report divergent cases of women’s language use in Japan. Kobayashi (1993), for example,
conducted self-report surveys and analyzed Japanese women’s speech patterns in conversation. Her findings indicate that older speakers (the generation of mothers and grandmothers) use more feminine speech than younger speakers (students). Okamoto’s (1995) study analyzed less feminine speech among young Japanese women. Based on an examination of tape-recorded informal conversations of female college students, she found that young Japanese women have increasingly discontinued the use of feminine speech; instead, they tend to use moderately masculine and neutral speech. These young women associate their speech with “youthfulness” and “playfulness,” which is also precisely how they want to identify themselves. Using these forms also helps young women establish solidarity among their peers. Okamoto (1995) asserts that speech styles are used to construct the speaker’s identity in specific relational contexts.

Miyazaki (2002) further confirms the significance of the speaker’s identity in the choice of language. She investigated how the Japanese junior high school girls’ peer group relations mediate their linguistic behavior. She found that several Japanese junior high school girls used boku, a plain male pronoun and/or a depreciatory male pronoun, ore, even though women are normally expected to avoid these pronouns in Japan. Miyazaki (2002) argues, however, that gender alone cannot explain the variety in the girls’ pronoun forms. The girls’ linguistic practices are relational in that they take their peer affiliations and other multiple social contexts into account when using a particular pronoun.

By using a questionnaire and tape-recorded conversations, Ozaki (1998) has also examined how the stereotypes of Japanese women’s language are changing. Her findings are congruent with the other studies. In her conversational analysis, younger females frequently use neutral sentence final particles, whereas older females more often use feminine sentence final particles. Moreover, there were some striking differences in the responses to the questionnaire by the younger and older females with regard to how they perceive women’s use of masculine forms. Younger respondents had a positive reaction; they thought that a woman’s use of masculine forms reflects independence and assertiveness. Older respondents, on the other hand, stated that women who use masculine language seem uneducated and are willing to look masculine merely because it is fashionable. Getting older or becoming mature often changes how one perceives her/his role in society. Age, along with or perhaps more than gender, may be a critical factor in a Japanese woman’s identity and may affect her choice of speech style. Studying shojo and ladies manga, because they are created for specific ages, will therefore contribute to a better understanding of the gender identities and speech styles of Japanese women of different age groups. Furthermore, print media has significantly affected Japanese women’s language use in the past.

The importance of print media for Japanese women’s language use

Historically, men and women spoke the same way in Japan before the Heian period (8th c. – 10th c.) if their social status was equal (Endo, 1997). Japanese women’s speech spread in the Heian period, when female servants of the Imperial court began to use different language from men (Ozaki, 1998). Inoue (2002) argues, however, that specific gendered speech forms did not exist until the late nineteenth century, when Japan went through modernization practices, including language standardization. She claims that the emergence of Japanese women’s language is closely linked to print media, particularly, the rise of the novel.

Even though school girls’ language was considered vulgar at first, writers in Meiji period started to use certain sentence final particles such as reyo and dawa that school girls were using in the speech of their female characters in the domestic novel. The vulgar implications of these particles changed in the context of domestic novels. Inoue states, “the domestic novel textually displayed bourgeois gender ideology, in which class and gender differentiation are channeled and normalized through the politics of sentiment (p408).” By narrating the ideal of modern middle- and upper-class Japanese women’s role of “good wife, wise mother,” the domestic novel appealed to women who were taught to desire to fill that role. Beyond the context of the domestic novel, these women readers began to use feminine sentence final particles in the form of letters to other readers that appeared in girls’ and young women’s magazines (Inoue, 2002). Endo (1997) states that these magazines often contained articles about how women’s speech should be elegant, reserved, and nonassertive. Hence, women’s language became “a ‘quoting’ voice as young women claimed their new modern Japanese identity and constructed their virtual speech community (Inoue, p409).” Their linguistic behaviors and identity echoed what was advocated in domestic novels and young women’s magazines – “good wife, wise mother.”

The use of Japanese women’s language started, therefore, in late Meiji period, and print media played a vital role in the construction of Japanese women’s language and their gender identity. Even now, print media attempts to describe ideal Japanese women and their language use. Okamoto (2002) notes that the media circulates the idea that speaking politely is an essential ability for a sophisticated and educated woman. Many books regarding how women can become “attractive” stress how important it is for women to speak “properly.” Ozaki (1998) also points out that there are many prescriptive books on women’s speech in Japan. Horii’s book (1990), for instance, asserts that women should be good listeners, modest, polite, and speak femininely (quoted in Ozaki, 1998). The readers of these prescriptive books are exposed to an ideal of how women should act. This ideal extends to language use.
Manga may portray different images relating to gender, however. As Fujimoto (1991) states, because the age and the sex of the readership is strictly determined, manga reflect their readership’s attitudes more readily. Moreover, writers and readers tend to be close in age in shojo and ladies manga (Fujimoto, 1991), even though editors tend to be male (Ito, 2002). The content analyses of manga in previous studies show mixed findings. Fujimoto (1991) asserts that heroines in shojo manga have become “from self-sacrificing, stock characters to free, carefree, and slightly self-centered individuals (p57).” Tsurumi (1997) analyzed a popular shojo manga series, Yukan Kurabu (Leisure Club) and concluded that female representations in Yukan Kurabu are physically and psychologically strong and do not conform to gender stereotypes. Ogi (2003), however, claims that both shojo and ladies manga display a conventional sense of femininity, and that they do not always encourage women to be independent, and to fight traditional, patriarchal values. Ito (2002) also states that even though the women of ladies manga have various occupations, they mostly play traditional and gender roles.

What has not been conducted in these content analyses, however, is a linguistic investigation. As mentioned, Japanese feminine and masculine speeches directly index the degree of assertiveness of the speaker and indirectly index a female or male voice. Therefore, traditional or nontraditional female identities can be expressed linguistically as well as by gender roles in manga. It is also important to note that manga is a very influential form of Japanese print media (Ito, 2000) like the domestic novels that created Japanese women’s language and gender identity in the Meiji period. Hence, a linguistic analysis of female characters’ speech patterns in shojo and ladies manga may reveal how gender identity is portrayed in relation to social and cultural norms in the current Japanese society.

Method

This study explores the construction of Japanese women’s identity expressed in shojo and ladies manga - Japanese popular print media tailored to women of different ages - through examining the language use of female characters of separate age groups.

Nine manga magazines – four shojo and five ladies manga – are used for analysis. All of these magazines were published in 2003 or 2004. All the stories used for analysis included female characters. The shojo manga magazines selected for analysis were:

1. Nakayoshi (Close Friends) published by Kodansha
2. Ribon (Ribbon) published by Shueisha
3. Hana to Yume (Flowers and Dreams) published by Hakusensha
4. The Margaret published by Shueisha
5. Ribon (Ribbon) published by Shueisha
6. Office You published by Sobisha
7. You published by Shueisha
8. For Mrs. published by Akita shoten
9. Jour Sutekina Shufutachi (Jour Wonderful Housewives) published by Futabasha

Ladies manga magazines used for analysis were:

1. Young You published by Shueisha
2. Office You published by Sobisha
3. You published by Shueisha
4. For Mrs. published by Akita shoten
5. Jour Sutekina Shufutachi (Jour Wonderful Housewives) published by Futabasha

In order to examine the speech patterns of female characters and identity, gendered linguistic forms, mainly the sentence final particles were elicited from complete sentences that the female characters uttered. The female characters’ ages were usually specified in the stories. When they were not specified, their roles in the stories (student, mother, etc.) of the stories were used to gauge their ages. These tokens of gendered forms were divided into the categories of feminine, neutral, masculine, then further classified into strongly feminine, moderately feminine, neutral, moderately masculine, and strongly masculine. This classification scheme was based mainly on the one used in Okamoto and Sato’s study (1992), but other studies (McGloin, 1990; Suzuki, 1990) were referred to as well when the particular forms were not identified in Okamoto and Sato’s classification'. Examples for the classifications are shown in Appendix A. The analysis focused only on the gendered forms that appeared in the utterances of the informal dialogues. Formal conversations were excluded because gender differences normally do not appear in formal grammatical forms in Japanese.

Subsequent to classifying the gendered forms, the total number of each style was tallied for each age group in both shojo and ladies manga magazines to examine if any common speech patterns exist based on age. Next, the percentages of gendered forms (strongly feminine, moderately feminine, neutral, strongly masculine, and moderately masculine) were calculated for each age group in all manga magazines. Age groups were divided into three categories; teens, 20s, and 30s and above. The percentages of gendered sentence final classifications were also computed separately for shojo and ladies manga magazines'. Finally, the settings or the circumstances in which traditional and unconventional women’s speech appeared were examined through qualitative analysis.

Results

Speech patterns in all manga magazines

Table 1 illustrates the percentages of gendered forms in all the manga magazines examined in this study. SF refers to strongly feminine forms, MF means moderately feminine forms, SM stands for strongly masculine forms, and MM refers to moderately masculine forms. N is neutral forms. These abbreviations are used hereafter.
According to Table 1, the use of gendered forms by female characters shows different patterns in different age groups. Teenage female characters use N most frequently (51.3%), and MM follow in usage (21.4%). These findings appear to coincide with those of Okamoto's study (1996), in which female college student participants mainly used N and MM rather than SF and MF. Even though SF are not used frequently (8.3%), MF are uttered relatively often (15%). The use of SM is the least frequent (4%). Overall, the teenage female characters' use of N was 51.3%, that of SF and MF was 23.3%, and that of SM and MM was 25.3%. Thus, the female teenager characters showed a variety of the use of the gendered forms.

Similar to teens, female characters in their 20s also use N most frequently (42.2%). Unlike teens, however, the second most frequently used gendered forms are SF (26.8%), succeeded by MF (23%). The use of MM (6.6%) is much lower, and these characters use SM least frequently (1.4%). On the whole, they use N 42.2% of the time, SF and MF 49.7%, and SM and MM 8% of the time. Therefore, their use of gendered forms is skewed towards the feminine.

The female characters in their 30s and above use SF most often (36.3%) and N second most frequently (32.1%). Their use of MM comes next (21.5%). Their use of MF, however, is much lower (9.3%). The SM are used the least frequently (0.8%). By and large, female characters in their 30s and above predominantly use feminine forms, SF in particular.

Overall, SM are the least frequently used in all age groups. Even though the difference is slight, younger female characters use them more often than older characters (teens: 4%, 20s: 1.4%, 30s and above: 0.8%). The use of N is high across all the age groups, even though younger characters use them more frequently (teens: 51.3%, 20s: 42.2%, 30s and above: 32.1%). The use of SF is much more prevalent among female characters in their teens than among characters in their 20s and 30s and above (21.4%). A clear distinction is also apparent among age groups with regard to the use of feminine forms. The percentage of SF is very high in the utterances of the female characters in their 20s and 30s and above (20s: 26.8%, 30s and above: 36.3%). The female characters in their teens, on the other hand, show a lower usage of SF (8.3%). A similar trend is apparent in the use of MF. Older female characters use them more often than characters in their teens (teens: 15%, 20s: 23%, 30s and above: 21.5%). Thus, in the context of manga, younger women tend to use more masculine speech than older women. Older women’s speech tends to contain more feminine forms than younger women’s. These findings are congruent with previous studies (Kobayashi, 1993; Okamoto, 1995; Ozaki, 1998).

Speech patterns in shojo and ladies manga magazines

Tables 2 and 3 display the distributions of gendered forms in different age groups in shojo and ladies manga magazines by percentage.
SF and MF significantly more than MM in both *shojo* and *ladies manga* magazines. All age groups use SM least frequently in both types of *manga* magazines.

The comparison between Tables 2 and 3 indicates, however, that the linguistic practice of female characters in their teens and those in their 30s and above are depicted differently in *shojo manga* magazines and *ladies manga* magazines. Teenage female characters in *ladies manga* magazines use MM (41.4%) much more than those in *shojo manga* magazines (20.2%). Furthermore, their uses of SF and MF are slightly lower in *ladies manga* magazines (SF: 6.7%, MF: 13.1%) than in *shojo manga* magazines (SF: 8.4%, MF: 15%). Thus, from a linguistic perspective, young female characters are portrayed more masculinely in *ladies manga* magazines than in *shojo manga* magazines. The speech patterns of female characters in their 30s and above may seem to be similar between *shojo* and *ladies manga* with respect to their use of SF and N. They use MM in *shojo manga* magazines (5.5%) much less than in *ladies manga* magazines (10.3%), however. These findings suggest that older female characters may be depicted more femininely in *shojo manga* magazines than in *ladies manga* magazines in terms of their language use.

The settings of traditional feminine speech usage in *manga* magazines

In *shojo manga* magazines, MF appear sparingly throughout the conversational settings, normally mixed with N and MM among a majority of the female characters in *shojo manga* magazines (i.e. teens). SF, however, are used infrequently. Even though no generalizations are implied here, SF seem to appear in particular settings in *shojo manga* magazines.

First, young female characters use SF when they wish to stress their femininity. For instance, when a high school student, Rai, in “*Para Dice*” (from Ribon) pretends to seduce her friend, Mitsuru, she uses SF, *kashira* and *wayo*.

Rai: *Fuku o nilai kurenai kashira.* “I wonder if you could undress for me.”

Rai: *Konna koto wa hajime te kamishinenai kedo, ataschi ga oshieru kara hazukashigaru koto nai wayo.* “You may be experiencing this kind of thing for the first time, but you don’t have to be embarrassed, because I will teach you.”

SF appear when female characters have a noble background as well. For example, in “*God child*” (from *Hana to yume*), Marie, a daughter of the wealthy Hargurigs family, uses SF *wa*.

Marie: *Hontoo no akuma wa anata dawa.* “The real demon is you.”

SF in *shojo manga* magazines are also used in somewhat more formal circumstances than conversations with friends. In the following example, Chiaki in “*Oyayubi kara Romance*” (Romance from the Thumb) in *Hana to Yume* presents for her classmates the proper method for massaging.

Chiaki: *Ryoohoo tomo kubi o sayuu ni futari shita toki ni ukideru kinniku no ue ni aru kara mitsukeyasui wa! Iitaigawa no tsubo o yokkuri osu no ga punto yo! “Both pressure points are located on top of the muscle which goes up when you shake your head from left to right. They are easy to find. The idea is to press the pressure point on the painful side slowly.”*

In her speech, she uses SF, *wa*, and the sentence final, *yo*, immediately after the noun, which also belongs to SF.

Additionally, older female characters in *shojo manga* magazines use SF very frequently. For instance, in “*Ultra Maniac*” in *Ribon*, SF *wa* and *dawa* appeared in the speech of the mother of the main character. The mother is in her late 30s or early 40s.

Mother: *Sugoi wa, Nina chan.* “That’s awesome, Nina.”

Mother: *Konya wa oiwai dawa.* “We must celebrate tonight.”

Even a woman in her early 20s uttered a strongly feminine sentence final, *wane*, in “*Ani World*” (Older Brother World) in *Ribon*. The following example comes from a female character, Soko, who is 22 years old.

Soko: *Ato yonen tateba kekkon dekini wane.*

“You can get married in four years.”

Soko: *22 sai de warukatta wane.* “I’m sorry that I’m 22 years old.”

Thus, female characters that are older than teenagers are often depicted as using SF in *shojo manga* magazines.

Unlike the female characters in *shojo manga* magazines, most female characters in *ladies manga* magazines, who are in their 20s and 30s and above, frequently use SF, usually coupled with MF, N, and MM. This usage is seen throughout the stories instead of in particular settings.

Overall, traditional feminine speech, or SF, seems to be the mainstream in *ladies manga* magazines whereas they appear only in certain settings in *shojo manga* magazines. MF, however, are seen throughout the stories in both *shojo* and *ladies manga* magazine. In *shojo manga* magazines, SF are found when female characters stress their femininity, when they have a noble background, and in semi-formal situations. Additionally, the use of SF is frequent when the speakers are older female characters in *shojo manga* magazines. The use of SF and MF is low among younger female characters in *ladies manga* magazines.
Usage of unconventional feminine speech in manga magazines

In shojo manga magazines, N are very frequently used along with MM and MF throughout the stories. The following example comes from “Heartwarming” in The Margaret. It is a conversation among three high school girls, the main character, Miya, and two of her girl friends.

Friend 1: Matsuda itsu made neteru ki nan daro. (moderately masculine) “I wonder when Matsuda intends to sleep till.”

Friend 2: Hiruyasumi ni haitta no, kizuite nai yone (neutral). “He hasn’t noticed that we are already on lunch break, has he?”


As shown in this conversation, unconventional speech styles (neutral and masculine forms) appear to be the linguistic norm for female teenage characters.

Even though SM are rarely uttered in shojo manga magazines, they are used occasionally when a female character expresses strong emotion. An example is seen in “Perfect Looks” in The Margaret. Kotobuki is the main female character. She is conversing with two other high school girls.

Friend 1: Chotto anta iyama. Hajime ga mienai. “Hey you, you’re in my way. I can’t see Hajime.”

Friend 2: Matsuda itsu made neteru ki nan daro. (moderately masculine) “I wonder when Matsuda intends to sleep till.”

Friend: Nai. “No.”

Miya: Rin? Moo, ohiru dayo. (moderately masculine.) Kanako, the main female character, yells at her. She who is in her 70s, is complaining to her son, Takeo, after Matsuda is just going to sleep. “Akiba’s family. I wonder why she came over.”

Further, MM are used when older female characters show strong emotion. This is similar to the use of SM among younger female characters in shojo manga magazines. The following example comes from “Shuutome no Mimi ni Nenbutsu” (Mother-in-law never listens) from for Mrs. In this scene, the mother-in-law, who is in her 70s, is complaining to her son, Takeo, after Kanako, the main female character, yells at her. She repeatedly uses MM, daro and dayo to express her upset feelings.

Friend: Tashika ni akiba no osyuutome san yo. Nanishi ni kita n daro. “It was definitely the mother-in-law from Akiba’s family. I wonder why she came over.”


N and MM are also used very often among younger female characters in ladies manga magazines. For example, MM, such as nda, dayo, and daro appear in “Deigo no Kokage” (Tree Shades of Deigo) in You when a teenage daughter talks about her father with her girl friends. No feminine forms, however, are seen in this conversation.


Daughter: gokokokugo gurau shabereru. “He can speak about five languages.”

Friend 2: Suggoi. “Awesome.”

This is an emotional scene in which three girls are arguing aggressively, repeatedly using SM, such as the sentence final, koyo, the vulgar form of you, omae, and a command form, dokeyo. In the story, Kotobuki is portrayed as a boyish girl who likes to play succor with boys. Therefore, Kotobuki’s masculine speech may sound natural. The other girls, however, are depicted very femininely with make-ups and girly clothes. Their use of masculine speech seems to be provoked solely because of the confrontation. Older female characters above 30 in shojo manga magazines, on the other hand, do not use SM at all. In the next example, from “Sakikake no Hana” (About to Bloom Flower) from The Margaret, the mother is clearly irritated with a daughter who does not study. Yet, she uses a polite command form, shinasai, and SF, wane, despite of her strong emotion.

Mother: kodomo no koro no yume nante, korokoro kawarun dakara, imawa chanto benkyoo shinasai. Wakaatta wane. “Things like your childhood dreams often change, so for now, just study hard. Understood?”
Daughter: Sugokunai yo. Tadano atama no katai kikochuu no oossan dayo. Mama nande anna noto kekkonsihan daro. “No, he is not. He is just a stubborn, self-centered old man. I wonder why mom married someone like that.”

Thus, in *ladies manga* magazines, MM and N are the major linguistic forms young female characters use. The only time SM appear in *ladies manga* magazines is when teachers use them in speaking to their male students. In “Gokusen” in *You*, the female teacher in an all men high school, Yamaguchi, sporadically uses SM along with MM. Yamaguchi is in her 20s.


In this speech, Yamaguchi uses a strongly masculine command form, *kakenaose*, along with MM, *dayo*. The following is another example of a female teacher’s speech from “Yoshizawa sanchi no Asagohan” (Breakfast of the Yoshizawa family) in *for Mrs*. Hatsue is a retired teacher in her 70s. When she speaks to her former male students, she uses SM, such as the phonetic change *ee* and *oo*, and forms, *dai* and *kai*. She does not use these forms when she speaks with other characters, such as her daughter-in-law and friends.


Overall, unconventional SM, seem to appear under particular circumstances in *shojo* and *ladies manga* magazines. Teachers in *ladies manga* magazines occasionally use SM only when they speak to male students. Female characters in *shojo manga* magazines use SM when expressing strong emotion, such as anger even though MM are used in similar settings in *ladies manga* magazines. In both *shojo* and *ladies manga* magazines, neutral and MM are used in all settings, though more frequently in *shojo manga* magazines. Additionally, the use of MM by older female characters is very low, and there are no examples of SM in *shojo manga* magazines. In *ladies manga* magazines, on the other hand, young female characters frequently use MM and seldom use feminine forms.

**Discussion**

**Gender identity of *shojo* in *shojo* and *ladies manga***

The findings of this study show that the language use of young girls, or *shojo*, appears to diverge from traditional language usage. *Shojo*’s speech contains various gendered forms, especially N, MM, and MF but fewer SM and very few SF. In *ladies manga* magazines, especially, *shojo* use MM frequently and seldom use SF and MF. They use SM when they are angry, however. This pattern seems natural; SM index coarseness and assertiveness. The only problem is that these SM indirectly index a male voice, and these characters are female. They appear to follow direct indexing, but not indirect indexing, social expectation. Thus, *shojo*’s variety in speech style indicates that they are not linguistically restricted by the culturally encouraged gender norms.

Stereotypical gender roles, *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother), were emphasized along with feminine language use in domestic novels in the *Meiji* period. Perhaps, the lack of consistent feminine language usage in *manga* shows a desire to oppose fixed gender norms. If *manga* indeed conveys that message, however, female characters of all ages should use unconventional speech. Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate that the divergent speech style is linked exclusively to younger characters. Particularly in *shojo manga*, older female characters are depicted as using even more feminine forms than similar characters in *ladies manga*.

*Shojo* speech in *manga* may show the emphasis of the characters’ youthfulness. In Okamoto’s study (1996), the respondents stated that their speech style is not masculine, but *sedai hoogen* “generational dialect.” Ogi (2003) argues that “The category *shojo* functions as an ideological apparatus for women to be free from social obligations such as marriage (p801).” The knowledge of women’s speech is regarded as unavoidable part of social knowledge in Japanese society (Inoue, 2002). In other words, it is a form of social obligation. *Shojo*, however, are not expected to perform that obligation yet because they are not grown-up. Their unconventional speech style is stressed even more in *ladies manga*, where they are contrasted with other majority of adult female characters who have the social obligation to “speak properly.” Furthermore, when *shojo* do use SM in *manga*, they are used in situations where more maturity or acting older is necessary, such as making a presentation or trying to attract a boy. Hence, the *shojo*’s unconventional speech patterns in *manga* indicate their opposition to act according to gender stereotypes, but it could also mean their lack of or escape from social obligations due to their age.

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Gender identity of adult women in shojo and ladies manga

The results of this study show that in the context of manga, older women seem to use more traditional women’s language. A “feminine” identity is emphasized when they use SF as the norm. As Ochs (1992) argues, through language that indexes softness, a woman’s voice is also indirectly indexed. The use of feminine language by adult female characters, therefore, suggests that these characters express themselves through a voice society and culture index as feminine, i.e. soft, delicate, polite, and, therefore, well-mannered and properly bred. Even though they also use MM, they only do so to express strong emotion, such as anger and frustration. Moreover, choosing MM over SM in these situations indicates that these characters have not moved beyond the traditional feminine parameters of society. Another exception is the female teachers’ use of masculine forms when they speak to their male students in ladies manga magazines. For female teachers, masculine language may be necessary to sound assertive, especially when these characters speak to their male students who primarily use coarse masculine forms. Furthermore, it is not too inappropriate for them to use masculine speech because they possess authority in these circumstances.

Older characters’ speech patterns in both shojo and ladies manga suggest that they are mature and therefore are able to use socially appropriate feminine forms. It especially coincides with the content of ladies manga, which tends to be more mature than shojo manga. Ogi (2003) notes that ladies manga present what shojo manga cannot. Ladies manga depict how the protagonists change their lives rather than experiencing a simple happy ending. The linguistic behavior of female adult characters may also indicate that they are able to speak “properly,” unlike shojo because they are mature and aware of their social obligations. In shojo manga, older female characters’ feminine language use is even more conspicuous, as if shojo readers should be aware of the connection between a mature woman and feminine speech. Hence, a “female voice” indexed by social ideology appears to be reflected in older women’s speech in manga.

Conclusion

This study reports the findings of the examination of female characters’ speech patterns in shojo and ladies manga magazines. Young girls’ speech style indicates that their projected image in manga does not conform to the cultural norms, though that could be because of their youth. Older adult women’s speech patterns in manga show that they follow the traditional feminine speech. These linguistic behaviors in manga may send a message to young and older female readers that the use of feminine speech comes with maturity. In fact, ladies manga had grown older and wanted a different type of manga than shojo. The adult female characters in ladies manga no longer act like or speak like shojo. At the same time, the linguistic differentiation by age is clearly made in shojo manga as well. Thus, the traditional notion of gender still seems to exist and to be reinforced in the context of manga.

The use of feminine forms has become less frequent among young Japanese women in reality. However, they also seem to be aware that women’s use of masculine forms is associated with youth (Okamoto, 1996). At this point, it is not known if these young women will maintain their current speech style when they become “responsible adults with social obligations.” The message emphasized in shojo and ladies manga certainly implies that they should. Future research should investigate if this message will affect young women’s speech style when they grow older.

Identity formation is a fluid process. The findings of this study do not suggest that a fixed identity exists for Japanese women. Nor does this study imply that age is the only determining factor shaping Japanese women’s linguistic practices and the identity expressed through language use. Many factors, such as one’s occupation and the conversational settings can also affect a Japanese woman’s language choice. Further research is recommended for analysis of the linguistic practices of female characters in other manga magazines, such as shonen “boys” manga magazines, whose targeted readership is men of various ages. Ozaki (1998) reports that all male respondents in her study disapprove of the use of masculine language by Japanese women. Female characters in shonen manga magazines, therefore, may use different speech patterns than characters in shojo and ladies manga magazines. Future research can also examine female characters’ speech patterns in manga magazines from a historical perspective. The female characters in manga magazines fifty years ago, for example, may display different linguistic behaviors from those in current manga magazines. It would be worthwhile to examine how the social and cultural values associated with gender have changed the linguistic practices reflected in popular print media such as manga.

Notes

Thank you to Megan Ferry and Michelle Chilcoat for their feedback on this paper. I am also grateful to Anna Kimura, who assisted me in the compilation of data. Special thanks go to Brian Kerins for his time and dedication in providing me with editorial suggestions at different stages of this manuscript. Finally, I acknowledge the constructive comments from the anonymous reviewers who read the earlier draft of this manuscript.

1 Further, the classification was discussed with the research assistant, who was a native speaker of Japanese in her early 20s, till the researcher and the assistant came to an agreement.

2 The differences of speech patterns in each shojo and ladies manga magazine are not discussed because the difference was found to be slight. Therefore, the patterns are discussed between shojo and ladies manga as a whole.
References


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APPENDIX A

Classification of gendered linguistic forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly feminine forms</th>
<th>Strongly feminine forms</th>
<th>Moderately feminine forms</th>
<th>Strongly masculine forms</th>
<th>Moderately masculine forms</th>
<th>Neutral forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The particle wa and its variants wane, wayo, wayone</td>
<td>The particle wa and its variants wane, wayo, wayone</td>
<td>The particle no after a plain form of a verb or i-adjective The auxiliary deshoo</td>
<td>The particle yo after a plain form of a verb or i-adjective The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td>The particle plain form of a verb, i-adjective The plain form of a na-adjective, noun The particle kana The particle jan-te form of a verb Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The particle kashira</td>
<td>The particle kashira</td>
<td>The auxiliary deshoo</td>
<td>The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td>The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The particle yo after a noun or na-adjective</td>
<td>The particle yo after a noun or na-adjective</td>
<td>The particle ne after a noun or plain form of a verb The auxiliary deshoo</td>
<td>The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td>The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The particle no followed by ne or yone or yo</td>
<td>The particle no followed by ne or yone or yo</td>
<td>The particle ne after -te form of a verb</td>
<td>The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td>The auxiliary da after a noun or na-adjective and its variants dayo, dane, daisy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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