

Kuitsuki ga chau de: Gender, Language and Change in a Women's University

Kuitsuki ga chau de – a phrase in Kansai dialect that can be roughly translated as “The response is different.” This phrase encapsulates the feelings of a small group of women discussing the change in atmosphere they have perceived with the arrival of male students to their formerly all-female university. Demographic trends and economic factors have led to significant changes in Japanese universities in recent years, including amalgamation and privatization (Tsuruta, 2003), and the introduction of coeducation into single-sex institutions. The way that women talk about these changes can provide rich material for studies in gender and language. This paper examines the specific case of Kyoto Tachibana University, an all-women's liberal arts university that became a co-educational institution in April of 2005. As an all-women's university, the institution had a student population of approximately 2,200. In terms of its membership (all female students of approximately the same age), location (large percentage of students coming from the Kansai region) and purpose (advanced education), the university was a relatively homogenous community of practice. In the initial year of the new co-ed system, approximately 140 men enrolled as first-year undergraduate students in the faculties of Liberal Arts, Cultural Policy and Nursing. In this paper, I will examine how a small sample of female students perceive and talk about the change from all-women's to co-educational institution, and how gender informs their perceptions and discussion of this topic.

Japanese language, since classical times, but especially since the Meiji period, has been considered a highly gendered language in areas of lexical choices, level of

politeness, and sentence ending patterns. Inoue argues that modern, standard women's language was in effect created through state intervention from the end of the nineteenth century as part of the conscious attempt to create a modern nation incorporating a gendered division of labour (Inoue, 2002). The ideology encapsulated in the slogan "Good Wife, Wise Mother" was promoted by the state, and language usage was manipulated to further the state's modernization project. This manipulation also included the introduction of the idea of Standard Japanese, based on the upper-middle class dialect spoken in the Yamanote area of Tokyo. The women in this study are defining their speech patterns both in relation and in reaction to this now prevalent ideology concerning norms for speech for women.

Most of the women whose conversation was recorded for this study come from the Kansai region and speak some form of the Kansai dialect, rather than standard Tokyo Japanese, as their mother tongue. It should be noted that, within the Kansai region, many variations of the dialect exist, with some, particularly the Kyoto variation, considered softer and less direct than other forms. However, in terms of generally accepted cultural knowledge, and with respect to differences within the region itself, in the plain form, Kansai dialect is considered to be less marked for gender than standard Japanese. Furthermore, although the use of honorifics is common (Itose, 2004), communication in the dialect is considered more direct (Palter and Slotsve, 1995). Particularly when women use it, it tends to be considered less refined than the standard. However, Kansai dialect is currently enjoying a covert prestige boom in Japan (Miyake,

1995¹), partly because many of the most prominent entertainers and comedians come from the Osaka area and consciously use the dialect in their performance.

The data for this project was collected in June of 2005 as part of an investigation of speech patterns among women in the Kansai region of Japan. Subjects were interviewed and recorded in groups, pairs and individually. Three sets of pairs also agreed to have their conversation videotaped when the investigator was not in the room. The sample size for this study is small, and extracts from just four participants are used, so this may limit the extent to which the results can be generalized. Recordings were transcribed by a native-speaking female university student, and reviewed again by another native-speaking female student. Transcripts and tapes were analysed using techniques borrowed from Conversation Analysis, but informed by the view that ideologies not recognized or accepted by the participants may be at work as a subtext in their production of spoken discourse.

The excerpts quoted in this presentation are taken from approximately two hours of taped conversations and interviews with two pairs of subjects, four women chose the pseudonyms Satomi (S), Emiko (E), Mametaro (M), and Xavier (X). The choice of male pseudonyms by Mametaro and Xavier is interesting, and suggests a choice to identify more closely with male norms and standards. In June of 2005, all four were either 20 or 21 years old, and third-year students in the Department of English Communications at Kyoto Tachibana University. All four had returned home in the spring of 2005 from a six-month study abroad term in either Canada or Australia. Both of Satomi's parents work, Emiko's father is a professional and her mother is a full-time homemaker.

¹ Quoted in Sturtz Sreetharan, 2004

Mametaro and Xavier come from self-employed families where both parents work.

Satomi and Mametaro were born and raised in the Kansai region, Emiko was born in the region but moved away for several years during elementary school, and Xavier came to Kyoto two years earlier from the island of Shikoku.

During the interview, the subjects were asked questions about gendered speech patterns and their own perceptions of how they spoke. During the free conversation segments, the students were told that they could talk about any topic they wanted, but a list of suggested topics was also available. The first suggestion related to how the students thought the university had changed since becoming co-ed. The two pairs, Satomi - Emiko and Mametaro - Xavier, did in fact start out their conversations on this topic.

In the audiotaped interview, participants were asked if they found it easier to speak in all-female or in mixed-sex groups. Satomi and Emiko generally agreed that at this stage in their lives they were comfortable speaking in either same-sex or mixed-sex groups. Mametaro and Xavier, however, clearly stated that they preferred speaking with men in mixed-sex groups. They expressed distaste for the topics discussed in all-female groups and complained that a small number of speakers tend to dominate the conversation. This observation contradicts Coates's claim that female conversations tend to be co-operative and jointly constructed (Coates, 1998), but the comment does reproduce the stereotypical notion that the topics women discuss are fixed and limited (Lakoff 1975; Kramer, quoted in Johnson and Aries, 1998). Mametaro goes on to criticize same-sex female conversations for being insincere. Furthermore, she states that conversations with men are more fun, interesting, and reach a deeper level.

M: Kya:: tte moriagaru tte kanji de	They get all excited like “Kyaa”
otoko no ko wa mou nanka omoshiroku	and guys are like interesting,
shikamo chotto nanka fukaku ikeru	and you can go a bit deeper with them,
toko mo aru shi, nanka tanoshiku ikeru	and it’s like more fun,
kedo, shikamo onna no ko tte kekkou	but with girls, they’re really quite
ura omote ga hageshii to iu ka	two-faced. (Laughter)

Mametaro and Xavier set themselves apart from other women, whom they judge as being two-faced, and seem to value and enjoy their conversations with men more. However, while they orient themselves toward male conversations, they also acknowledge that they themselves use or should use so-called feminine speech. When asked to describe feminine speech, they use stereotypical terms, including soft, gentle, indirect and emotional. Mametaro states that she uses feminine expressions, but this is followed by laughter, possibly indicating that she is speaking ironically. In fact, of the four women interviewed, Mametaro employs the least amount of standard feminine speech patterns, and some of the expressions she uses very definitely index masculinity. Mametaro plans to enter the traditionally male-dominated field of comedy. She currently appears on a local television broadcast, and is an accomplished performer. One native speaker likened her speech and mannerisms to Matsumoto Hitoshi of the comedy duo Downtown. Both Mametaro and Xavier are founding members of the university *rakugo* (traditional storytelling) club.

Xavier reveals some of the contradictions, or difficulties, she feels in using feminine patterns, when she states that she “code-switches” between feminine and

masculine styles. She says that if she becomes conscious that she is talking like a woman, she will immediately follow up with an expression that sounds masculine. In her statement she reveals the extent to which the naturalized ideology of the feminine norm acts on her as a speaking subject, and her own conscious rejection of or resistance to that norm.

(X) Onna pokku shabe, shabeteru natte	If I become conscious that I'm talk, I'm talking
ishiki shite shimattara kyuu ni	like a woman, all of a sudden
otokoppoku nanka kuchou kaetari toka	it's like my tone changes or like I have male
nanka aru mitai na kanji.	mannerisms.
Nante iun desho. Nanka	How can I say this? It's like
nani nani de nai no? toka itta ato ni	after I've said something like "such and such,
	isn't it"? [feminine]
Iya, iya, iya, honna kotonai wa	I like, "No, no, no, it's not like that at all."
Nanka kou jibun no naka de kou nan ka	It's like that way inside of me.

Emiko explicitly states that she speaks in a feminine manner. She says that she consciously rejects vulgar language usage considered "unfeminine."

(E) Jibun ga shaberu no ha onna kotoba	The fact is that what I speak is women's
nan desu yo	language
Kitanai kotoba zukai ha shaberanai shi	I don't use dirty language
Onnappoku shabeterun desu yo ne	I speak in a feminine way.

In fact, of the four women interviewed, Emiko's speech exhibits the greatest number of examples of structures and sentence-ending particles that index femininity, for example, the *yo ne* combination seen above. In terms of pitch, her range is much higher, and she uses a greater range of modulation, with the effect being that she seems more emotionally engaged.

Satomi, on the other hand, comments that while she always thought her language was "normal," since coming to university and meeting people from other places, she has been told that her language is vulgar, or *kitanai*, a term usually associated with male speech, and furthermore that her dialect is very strong, *kitsui*. Satomi was born and raised in Kyoto, and when asked what style of speech epitomizes femininity, she identifies the Kyoto dialect. Satomi uses the terms *yawarakai* (soft, gentle), *ochitsuite shizuka* (calm and quiet) and *shitsu ga aru* (refined) when describing Kyoto dialect as spoken by women. All of these terms are commonly associated with traditional norms for feminine speech and resemble terms and qualities identified by university students in an earlier study (Satake 1998). Satomi's comments here illustrate the disconnect between norms and realities for young women today. While Satomi appears to accept and reproduce the idealized norm, she herself speaks something quite different, and in fact she rationalizes her own "*kitanai*" speech by saying she comes from a part of Kyoto where all kinds of dialects (Kyoto, Osaka and Nara) are mixed in.

These four women represent a range of speaking styles and illustrate the fact that even among women of similar class and regional backgrounds, there is a broad spectrum of non-homogenous femininities performed through speech (Matsumoto, 2002). These women are consciously or unconsciously choosing to speak in different modes that can

be considered, to a greater or lesser extent, constrained by norms for feminine speech. However, while it appears that these women are conscious of gender stereotypes, and do not necessarily use stereotypical standard Japanese gendered speech patterns at all times and in all situations, the content of a large part of their speech recorded here tends to reproduce traditional stereotypes regarding accepted or acceptable behavior for females and males. The following extracts concerning the transition to co-education at Tachibana illustrate underlying assumptions surrounding norms and expectations for behaviour.

Satomi tentatively characterizes the change as a rejuvenation.

- | | |
|---|--|
| S: Kyougaku ni natte wakagaetta. | It's been rejuvenated since it became co-ed. |
| Koto nai? Nanka wakagaetta tte | Hasn't it? Rejuvenation. |
| iikata hen yakedo | It's, like, a strange way to call it. |
| E: Hai. Ee--, na. | Yes, yeah, right. |
| S: Nanka, joshidai niwa nai genki sa | Somehow, it's like there's something like an |
| | energy now |
| mitai na no ga dete kita. | that there isn't at a women's university. |
| E: Ee:: Datte, sou iu hodo otoko no ko | Really? But, there aren't that many boys here. |
| inai yo. | |
| S: Iya, inai kedo, e, demo nanka otoko no | No, there aren't, but, uh, but somehow guys |
| ko wa otoko no ko de sonzai kan, nanka | are guys, somehow they're projecting the feeling |
| dashitoru, jibunra de | of their existence, by themselves |
| E: A—naruhodo. Katamatteru yo ne. | Oh, I get it. They're hanging out in groups, |
| | aren't they. |
| S: Orera o mirun janai iu kanji de. | It's like "Don't be looking at us." |

Satomi expresses a direct opinion which she then mitigates with “hasn’t it?” or “isn’t that the fact?” and then “it’s a strange way to call it.” In fact, Emiko doesn’t seem convinced, expressing only weak agreement, and then fairly direct disagreement with her intonation and her statement “there aren’t that many boys here.” She uses the term *otoko no ko*, or boy, emphasizing their youth, despite the fact that the “boys” are only two years younger. Satomi then backtracks, but comes back with her opinion, invoking a boys-will-be-boys explanation. She feels that somehow, despite their small number, the male students manage to make their existence known, in this case in terms of energy and vitality, with a touch of attitude.

Soon after, Satomi likens the male students to her younger brother. Emiko comments that the boys are *kawaii*, or cute, further emphasizing the fact that they are younger. Between the two of them, although more on Satomi’s part, as demonstrated by the minimal responses from Emiko, they seem to be building up an image of youthful, energetic “younger brother” category members who are cute, sweet, but able to establish their own territory.

S: Nanka toriaezu, kyougaku ni natte uchi no otouto ga iru mitai na.	Well, for now anyways, since it’s become co-ed it’s like my little brother is here.
Choudo ikkai sei ya shi	He’s just a first year student, too
E: Kawaii na:: minna	They’re cute, aren’t they, all of them.
S: Nanka kyapi kyapi shiteiru.	Like, there’s all this energy.
E: Un. Nanka.	Yeah, or something.

Satomi uses the expression *kyapi kyapi* which evokes unruly and noisy youthful energy, and is usually used in reference to girls, implying that the energy she feels created is partly due to the reaction of women to the men's presence.

The talk moves into a discussion about the formation of the baseball team at Tachibana. Baseball in Japan is an exclusively male sport with very nostalgic associations to an image of an idealized young athlete who exemplifies dedication, hard work, sportsmanship and spirit. This reference to baseball serves to bring to mind an image of male youth around which most Japanese share a common understanding and feeling of nostalgia.

Mametaro is unequivocally enthusiastic about the appearance of male students on the campus, although she also refers to them as boys.

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|--|---|
| M: Watashi wa, ano:: zenzen mou
sugoi ii to omou. Meccha ee. Mou, ne.
nanka. kimochi ga chau ne. | I think, um, it's absolutely,
it's really fabulous, It's really great,
Somehow the feeling's different, isn't it. |
| X: Dou iu, dou iu toko ga ii no? | What kind, what kind of things are good? |
| M: Nanka, otoko no ko ga yappari ii yan. | Like, boys are, you know, just good. (Laughter) |

Mametaro code switches here, starting off in relatively standard Japanese and changing immediately into Osaka dialect. This kind of code switching is not unusual, but suggests here that she is going into performance mode. Kansai dialect is very closely associated with the comedy performance known as *manzai*, and, as stated earlier, Mametaro wants to become a famous comedian. The switch could mean she is turning on the role and embarking on a comedy routine. She takes the part of the *boke*, or wild

and crazy half of the *manzai* team, to Xavier's *tsukkomi*, or straight "man." Xavier sets Mametaro up with the question, "What's good about it?" and Mame replies with no particular explanation, just good delivery, "Boys are just good (as we all know)," followed by laughter.

Later Mametaro also emphasizes the male students' youth and "cuteness," and calls upon a traditional stereotype when she uses the term *shounen* to refer to them. *Shounen* tends to be a more literary word and appears in textbooks and literature that students would read in school. It is always used to refer to young male teenagers, and tends to evoke an image of youthful energy and purity.

M: Ano, otoko no ko na, nanka na, kawaii ya.	Um, guys, eh, like, they're cute!
Honto kawaii yo. Shounen ga oru yo	They're really cute. There's shounen here!
Kawaii shounen ga ippai otte na, demo na,	There's a whole bunch of cute shounen, but
yappa na, kawaikunai shounen mo	of course, there's some not-so-cute shounen
oru wake. Maa, ittara akan kedo	around too. Shouldn't say it, but...
X: Ossan mitai na ko ookunai?	Don't you think there's a lot of slobby
	types?

As indicated above, Xavier is more ambivalent about the changes. She may be contradicting Mametaro and advancing her own opinion here, or just playing the "straight man" and giving Mametaro the opportunity to digress about *ossan*. (*Ossan* is the Osaka version of *ojisan*, middle-aged man, and carries connotations of rumped and distracted.) This section in fact leads into a separate "routine" regarding different types of men.

Xavier also points out that she doesn't come into contact with the male students directly, but she notes that she feels that in some way the atmosphere has changed. She focuses on the change in relation to how it felt for her before, as opposed to how it feels now. For Xavier, the emphasis is more on the "oppressiveness" she felt in an all-female environment.

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|---|---|
| M: Jibun wa dou omou? Kawatta ka na
tte omou? | What do you think? Do you think it's
changed? |
| X: Kawatta tte, datte, uchira no mawari tte oran. | You say changed, but there aren't that
many around us. |
| M: Un, oran na. | Yeah, there aren't, are there. |
| X: Tada, nan darou. Na:nka, a, demo nanka.
Ano, nan te iun. Joshi bakkari no toki
no you na, nanka, uttoshisa ja nai kedo | But, hmm, like, ah, but somehow...
Um, how can I say this? When it was only
women
The kind of, not gloominess, but, something, |
| M: Un, wakaru wa. | Yeah, I know what you mean. |
| X: Atsugurushisa ja nai kedo, nanka
kigurushisa wa nanka | Not oppressiveness, but the, like,
uncomfortableness has
Decreased? |
| M: Hetta? | Decreased? |
| X: Chotto chigau ki ga suru | It feels a bit different. |
| M: Kawatte kita. Funiki chau? Mazu. | It's different. Don't you think the
atmosphere is different? First of all. |
| X: Un. Funiki ga. Ii imi demo warui imi demo. | Yeah. The atmosphere. In both a good
sense and a bad sense. |

Xavier is very tentative in advancing her opinion, and her uncertainty is evidenced by the way she produces out a word and then negates it – not gloomy, not oppressive – as she searches for an appropriate word. Obviously these words have occurred to her, but she perhaps does not want to make the situation sound as bad as these words would imply. Her mannerisms here display what would in traditional language and gender studies be characterized as “feminine” – tentative, excessive hedging, indirect, inconclusive, but these mannerisms serve to convey in concrete terms the ambivalence she feels in regards to the all-female environment.

Both pairs of participants comment directly on the change in the women, particularly in relation to appearance. Emiko notes the appearance of *gyaru* on the campus, coinciding with the arrival of male students. The word “*gyaru*,” from the English “gal,” refers to a teenage girl who chooses a particular style which includes long wavy dyed hair (usually brown but sometimes blond), heavy makeup (sometimes silver, white or bright blue eye shadow), tanned skin, and leg-revealing apparel and high heels.

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|--|--|
| E: Na, do-donnan daro. Onna no ko no shitsu mo
kawatta yo ne | Hey, wh-what about it. The quality of
the girls has changed too, hasn't it. |
| S: Onna no ko mo kawatta. | The girls are different, too. |
| E: Watashi wa sore wa omou yo. | I think so. |
| S: Un. | Yeah. |
| E: Onna, nante iu no, gyaru ga ookunatta. | The women, what's it called, there's more
gyaru |
| S: Aa, wakaru.. Gyaru ne. Nanka heikin
nenrei ga hikukunatta kanji ya na. | Ah, I know what you mean. Gyaru. It's like
the average age has lowered. |

- E: Sou. Un, nanka na--, mi, mita me ga
chiteki na hito ga inakunatta. That's right. Yeah, like, people who lo-
look intelligent have disappeared.
- S: A--, un. Ah, yeah.
- E: Kurogami ga inakunatta ssho Black hair has disappeared, hasn't it.
- S: Chapatsu ga ooi na. Lots of brown hair, eh.
- E: Un, sou, sou, makigami ga ooi Yeah, right, right, lots of curls
- S: Nna, kon nan, Omae, Beru Bara mitai na. Like this, eh. You look like The Rose of
Versailles. (Laughter)
- E: Sou ya na. Sore o omotta. Na. That's right. That's what I thought.
- S: Un Yeah.

Emiko and Satomi participate in the construction of an opposition between cute, pure, young men and ultra feminine (and not so pure) young women. In terms of category pairs discussed in the literature concerning conversation analysis (Ohara and Saft 2003), *shounen*, would normally be paired with *shoujo*, also traditionally an image of youthful purity, although arguably one that has taken on a different connotation in contemporary culture. Here, however, instead of *shoujo*, we see *gyaru*, who are defined by appearance, and in the opinion of these women, an object of disdain, going beyond the limits of acceptable or “proper” expressions of femininity, and not taken seriously as students.

Mametaro and Xavier participate in a similar construction, albeit in a characteristically ironic and humorous performance, concerning the way women present themselves differently with the arrival of men on campus. Mametaro parodies the role of expert commentator, employing the discourse particle “*ma*” in the following excerpt that

focuses on appearance. While the performance is meant to be taken humorously, the underlying assumption is that women focus on their appearance, particularly when men are present. With this performance, Mametaro becomes complicit in the reproduction of this stereotype.

M: Joshidai no toki wa, maa, faunde-shon 3 senchi gurai nuttotta ka na.	When it was a women's university, um, we applied about 3 cm of foundation.
Sore ni, maa, kyougaku ni natte kara Sore purasu 3 senchi gurai.	On top of that, um, since it became coed, Add about 3 cm to that.
De, maa, 6 senchi. Bai ni nattoru wake yo	And, um, you have 6 cm. It's doubled, you realize.

In addition to commenting on appearance, Xavier and Mametaro go into an extended conversation about two men in their Korean language class. In this excerpt, gender issues are foregrounded when they comment on how the addition of men to the classroom has affected the class dynamics.

X: Sou. E, Kankokugo ni na, futari na otoko ga oru dake de funiki ga nanka	Right. Um, With just the two guys in Korean class the atmosphere is like,
M: Zenzen chau.	Completely different
X: Chau yo na. Joshi datta toki wa, joshi datta toki wa, nanka, homma ni nanka, joudan toka mo nanka sonna ni “Hai, hai” toka iu hito ga inakutte	It's different, isn't it. When it was just women, when it was just women, like, really, like, there weren't many people going “Yeah, yeah” joking around.
M: Un, oran, oran.	No, there aren't, there aren't.

- X: De, shi—n toshita kanji de gogaku
susundottakedo, danshi ga hitori otte,
nanka, Sensei no ii tsukkomi aite ni
nattotta. Sou yatte ba ga nagomutte iu ka.
- M: Sou.
- X: Nanka koukou mitai na.
- M: Wakaru, wakaru.
- X: “Boku ga ne—“
- M: Demo yappri, sore wa ne--, nani ga
okottoru tte ittara, sensei, onna no
sensei wa na – yappari otoko no ko ga
haitte kite zettai ureshii to omou nen.
Dakara, kuitsuki ga chau nen.
- X: Laughter
- M: Chotto, chotto na, misu tara na, otoko
no ko ga, so, sensei ga “honna ni
machigaitoruka?” tte kou iu.
- And it felt like the language learning
progressed silently, but with one guy
like, he became the prof’s straight man,
And just like that the place thawed out.
- Right.
- Somehow just like high school.
- I know, I know.
- “You know, I...” (masculine)
- But after all, that’s, you know, what
happened was, the prof, the female prof
is, you know, when the guys came in,
I think she’s, happy, for sure.
So, the response is different, you know.
- When he screws up even a little bit, the
guy, yeah, the teacher goes “What’s
with this kind of mistake?”

The women observe and evaluate a reaction on the part of the female teacher that is not unusual. Research shows that male students are given and demand more attention in class (Swann, 1998). It is interesting, however, that these women do not position themselves as *tsukkomi* in this class. Instead, they place themselves outside the frame and characterize the class as being silent and well behaved, learning language but not having much fun. Rather than taking on the role of *tsukkomi* themselves, they allow a male student to be responsible for changing the atmosphere. They believe that everyone,

including the teacher, is relieved that there are now male students in the class. The two women in this case display a disconnect between the role they aspire to as comedians and performers, and the part of the passive student they play in class.

An unacknowledged contradiction appears for Mametaro in particular. She states that she prefers to converse with men because they are more interesting, but she does not appear to recognize the fact that their presence constrains her behaviour. The following extract illustrates this contradiction in a humorous manner.

- | | |
|---|--|
| M: Nanka, onna onna shitottara na, nanka
sono ten de na, gabba—tte ashi hirogete
onna no ko bakkari n toki ya de, konna
benchi no ue de gabba—tte netoru ko
ottan ya. Sou iu hito ottan ya. Jissai ni
jibun yattonta yan ka. | Like, when it's nothing but women, like
in that respect, eh, when it's just women
there were girls stretching their legs out
gabba -- sleeping on top of the benches.
There were people like that. In fact,
you did it too, didn't you. |
| X: Shitenai ssho. | I did not! (Laughter) |
| M: Sou hito ga, maa, hette ikeba ii ka na
tte omottottara. Yappa otoko no ko no
kouka de ban ban to herimashita wa. | It would be good if that kind of person, um
decreased, I should think. As expected, as a
result of boys, they have decreased boom. |
| X: Hetta? | Decreased? |
| M: Hetta to omou, watashi wa. | I think they have decreased. |
| X: Hetta ka na. Hetta ka. | Have they decreased? Have they? |
| M: Ammari gakkou kitenai kara shiran kedo | I don't come to school much, so I don't
know, but... |
| X: Gakko kii ya | Come to school! (Laughter) |
| M: Sukunakutemo watashi wa mou | The fact is that I at least don't do it |

shinaku natta to iu koto de.

anymore. (Laughter)

On one hand, the story may be seen simply as material for a comedy routine. Mametaro is as usual in performance mode, setting herself up as the butt of the joke. In reality, she may or may not feel constrained, and it is quite likely that the people who know her would realize that she is being ironic and see the humor there. However, at the same time, with a statement such as “It would be good if that kind of person decreased,” she is reproducing the idea that women *should* be more restrained, and take up less space. She speaks in a neutral or even masculine way, presenting herself humorously as a “badly behaved woman,” but in her jokes she makes fun of stereotypically feminine behaviour, reinforcing traditional norms for acceptable female behaviour and appearance.

The women at this university are not ignorant of current scholarship regarding issues around gender. In the interview, Satomi and Emiko directly comment on being more conscious of gender issues, indicating that the ideas they have been exposed to at university regarding gender have caused them to question the idea of femininity. However, their conversation indicates that they are not sure that being aware of the issues surrounding gender is necessarily a good thing, in that concepts they have always taken for granted have been upset.

E: Saikin jenda- o manabidashichatara

sugoi kimon ni omou koto ippai dete

kite, joseirashisa tte nani mitai na,

otokorashisa tte nani mitai na

S: Sono onna no ko rashii no, nanka sono

Lately since we've started learning about gender

lot's of serious doubts have occurred to me,

like, what's this thing called femininity?

What's this thing called masculinity

That femininity, like, that fundamental thing

It's possible that she is looking at the work situation through the lens of a young person who consciously rejects the traditional ideal, for males at least, of lifelong employment, of dedicating oneself to one's work. She may be buying into the *freeter*, or contract worker mentality, or her stance may reflect the current job market reality where discrimination based on sex is still not uncommon. Satomi, however, immediately rejects the idea of just staying home, indicating that for her, this is not an option. She obviously has strong expectations for a career outside of the home.

It is clear, then, that even within a fairly homogenous group of women in terms of age and educational experience, there is a wide spectrum of speech styles, ranging from more masculine to more feminine, and these women to a great extent consciously choose their style and use language as a resource to construct diverse identities. There also appears to be a range of understanding of what kinds of career options are available to them, from the non-traditional comedian to conventional homemaker. However, while not all of the subjects in this study are necessarily employing norms for feminine speech, I would argue that at the same time, there is an undercurrent of unacknowledged cultural ideology and stereotype that constrains these women, again to a greater or lesser extent, from questioning and de-naturalizing some of the norms traditionally attached to the feminine. They are still reproducing stereotypes – the examples here being men as active agents, representative of a masculine ideal, and women concerned about appearance. Their conversations around the change in their university with the introduction of male students into the environment give us some indication of the conscious and unconscious ambivalence they feel around their place and role as a young woman in modern Japanese

society and raise questions about the extent of significant or progressive changes in gender relations in this community.

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