Gender and cultural differences in linguistic constructions of identity in Japanese and Polish

バルトシュ, ヴォランスキ

氏　　名　：　ヴォランスキ　バルトシュ

論 文 名　：

Gender and cultural differences in linguistic constructions of identity in Japanese and Polish

（日本語とポーランド語におけるアイデンティティの言語的構築に見られる
ジェンダー差および文化差）

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論 文 内 容 の 要 約

This thesis is a sociolinguistic comparative study of modern Japanese and Polish, focusing on identity management in discourse, with special attention given to gender differences. It studies what speakers consider to be a desirable or undesirable identity, how multiple discourse participants negotiate and co-construct identities and how identities may be contested or attacked.

First, the research background concerning identity and gender is summarized and the stance of the present study is formulated in relation to it. Namely, this research uses self-identification as a basis for categorizing informants into gender categories and stresses the diversity of gendered displays in language. As for identity, while it can be freely manipulated within talk and instilled with subjective meanings, it may also in some cases be at least partially grounded in objective reality.

The following chapters analyze recorded conversations, internet communication, corpora of written texts and the results of questionnaires distributed among native speakers. A mix of qualitative and quantitative analyses is intended to provide both informative descriptions of individual linguistic occurrences and a basis for generalizations which allow comparisons between cultural and gender groups.

The third chapter is concerned with address terms as labels of identity. It looks at how blogs of celebrities constitute a form of self-presentation to which commenting fans respond. Apart from basic factors such as age or gender, the manner of self-presentation clearly affects the way the blog owners are addressed. Furthermore, although the biological sex of the celebrity is a factor, planned gendered displays of masculinities and femininities also influence the address terms received. The questionnaire results relevant to this section show that when it comes to the preferences of the speakers, Polish has a tendency towards more reciprocal egalitarian address, whereas in Japanese asymmetry is more common. It must be noted, however, that address terms alone are incapable of fully reflecting the nuances of the underlying social relationship and thus egalitarian address does not always mean actual social equality.

The fourth chapter explores taboo language and verbal aggression as attacks on

identity of others and potential corruptions of the speaker's own image, but also as a solidarity building strategies and a source of covert prestige in particular groups. The corpus analyses reveal that in both Polish and Japanese writing, "rough" language is associated with certain forms of masculinity. The corpus analyses together with the analyses of online communication and survey results suggest that in most cases taboo language is not used to attack the identity of another person, but rather to express feelings, or for emphasis. The study of online communications shows that when speakers do engage in direct attacks, they are more likely to be male than female, and such acts were more common in Polish discourse compared to Japanese.

The fifth chapter describes quotations as a way to mimic the identity of another, or to create a fictional identity from scratch. Using examples from natural conversations, it shows how gender markers can be utilized to create personas, to the extent that for some scholars such markers seem to be more associated with fictional characters rather than real people. The survey results show that some speakers report feeling discomfort when quoting speech including markers of a gender with which the speakers do not identify. This tendency is considerably more pronounced among the Japanese informants, possibly suggesting that Polish grammatical gender as a marker is seen as more neutral because its use is obligatory, whereas Japanese pronominal forms and end-sentence particles are considered to be a part of an intentional gender performance which some speakers may not want to conduct.

The final two chapters summarize the findings of the thesis, reiterating the gender differences found in both cultural groups and the differences between the groups themselves. It is suggested that in Polish culture, or at least some parts of it, displaying an aggressive identity confrontational to the identities of others is relatively more likely to be seen in a positive light rather than as a disruption, although some of those displays may be only an act, without the intention to cause real harm. On the other hand, the examples of aggressive interactions between Japanese speakers tended to be quickly concluded when one of the speakers sought reconciliation, which suggests that in Japan conflict avoidance may take priority over having the last word in an argument. Concerning gender, some female speakers in both the Japanese and Polish group made remarks suggesting that they at least partially adopt masculine identities as positive, but the Polish women specifically made references to violent male groups such as gangs or military organizations. The summary also brings attention to nationalistic and normative attitudes to language that seem to be present among Polish speakers (to a greater extent than among Japanese), and their influence on the data, as well as the role of religion in the two countries and how it influences language, for example by motivating Polish speakers to avoid using vulgar language.