Chapter 8  Language in Women's Magazines

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Section 1  "Femininity" and "Masculinity" expressed by Fashion Copies

Each Magazine has an assumption as to the image that the female reader may want to identify themselves with. Language, complemented by other types of graphic codes (photographs) plays an important role in the construction of women's images.

The copies in fashion pages--language placed near the clothing worn by a model--have the function of making the readers believe that they are potential dressers of the presented fashion modes and of providing necessary information as to the style, material, how to wear, price, etc. Women's magazines emphasise the characteristics of women's language while men's magazines express "manliness" in subtle manners despite the fact that the fashion itself is quite different from the traditional men's clothing (It should be pointed out, however, that whether "Playboy" is a good sample of men's magazines remains to be seen by conducting further studies of other men's magazines. The result of the language of "Playboy" agrees with what is known as the stereotype of manliness. "Playboy" is tentatively considered to represent men's magazines here.)

Impressionistically, a similar tendency is observed in both Japanese and American magazines. In the case of American magazines, the difference between the language in women's magazines and those in men's magazines is not sufficiently distinct for numerical comparison since American English does not have as many conspicuous differences between men's and women's language as in Japanese. In Japanese, which has a number of gender differentiated syntactic and lexical characteristics, the magazines can linguistically emphasize the femininity of photographic images by explicating such characteristics to the maximum. The result of text counting analysis all the magazines in 1986 support this view as discussed in the following sections.

1. Femininity and Masculinity observed in the use of writing symbols

It is well known among Japanese that the gender differentiation based on letter type that "Chinese characters = men, kana characters = women" is a historical fact since the Heian period. An examination of letter type used in Non-no, COSMOPOLITAN-J, Shuhu no Tomo, PLAYBOY-J,
revealed that this differentiation in the use of letter types and its social meaning have not significantly changed although they have been adjusted to the modern times... .......... 

2. Femininity and Masculinity observed in the sentence ending

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Section 2
Readers' pages in Japanese and American magazines

1. Japanese magazines with emphasis on “chatty style”

2. Seriousness in women's magazines and joking talk in men's magazines

(Conclusion)

This analysis of fashion pages and readers' pages suggests that details of each magazine needs to be further analyzed. There are many points desired to be supported by more data covering more magazines over a longer period. However, some important points have become clear from the analysis of non-no, Shuhu no tomo, COSMOPOLITAN-J: What kind of women's image these magazines each intend to project towards their readers and what linguistic features of the complex sociolinguistic structure of Japanese are effectively exploited for their purposes. As for American magazines, a systematic analysis based on sentence patterns, vocabulary, typography, etc, which are not gender differentiated, is not possible, so an analyses referring to semantic and/or rhetorical differences must be considered. This suggests that this is an area that requires a radical expansion of the scope of linguistics and a more interdisciplinary approach.