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Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

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日本人学生の英語の非性差別言語変革に対する意識

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過去30年の英語の非性差別言語の使用が増えているにもかかわらず、「伝統的な」性差別言語が非性差別言語と共に使われ続けている。日本の大学生の英語の非性差別言語に対する意識を確かめるため、性不定男性代名詞「he」と接尾辞「man」のある名詞に関連したアンケート調査が行われた。結果は「he」に関連した非性差別言語の方が接尾辞「man」がつく名詞に関連した非性差別言語よりも、意識が高い可能性があることがわかった。「he」の場合においても非性差別言語改革に関する意識が一貫した方法で学生の英語の中間言語に影響を与えているという確かな証拠はなかった。

The term *sexism* was coined at the end of the 1960s (Talbot, 1998, p.215) in the wake of the attention that the women's liberation movement had given to discrimination based on sex. The term encompasses wide areas of discrimination in society, but all share the assumption "that women are both different from and inferior to men" (p.215). Feminists and others have challenged this assumption in many areas of society, and language has been one of the most prominent of these areas.

In the English-speaking world, feminists began the assault on what they termed "sexist language" in the early 1970s with an attack on the sex-indefinite pronoun *he*. This is the use of the masculine pronoun to refer to all humanity when no definite gender reference exists, as in the sentence "Anyone can do it if *he* tries" (Bodine, 1975/1998, p.125). Along with the nouns *man* and *mankind*, which are likewise used to refer to all humanity, this use of masculine nouns and pronouns has traditionally been referred to as "generic." However, feminists and others have criticized this assumption as sexist for the very reason that to term these words "generic" both subsumes the feminine under the masculine linguistically and at the same time represents society's actual subsummation of women under men.

Key words; Nonsexist Language Reform, Sexist Language, Language Change, Japanese Students, Interlanguage

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

Attempts to reform English to rid it of so-called generic *he*, *man*, and *mankind* have not yet succeeded, although there has been a noticeable change in the use of these words in the last 30 years. During this time, a number of nonsexist alternatives have been suggested and are currently being more widely used in both spoken and written English. Nevertheless, resistance has come from many quarters, and even some linguists have been critical, particularly early on. For example, in 1971, when the debate was still very new, the Harvard linguistics faculty argued in a letter to a campus publication that "the fact that the masculine is the unmarked gender in English ... is simply a feature of grammar" (as cited in Talbot, 1998, p.227). The counterargument from the nonsexist language reform side is "that the generic masculine, far from being a feature of grammar alone, is an aspect of society's sexism and contributes to reproducing it" (p.228).

Just as the question of whether this particular feature of English usage is merely a matter of grammatical convention or a contributing factor to societal sexism remains open to debate, the issues of sexism itself and of sexist language likewise remain controversial. This stands in stark contrast to the attitude toward other social injustices such as racism. For example, whereas racism is nearly universally condemned in the English-speaking world and the movement to eliminate racist language has met with general sympathy and acceptance, a large part of the population appears to view both sexist language and sexism itself as less serious problems. As a result, sexism and sexist language have often not only been downplayed, but also ridiculed by many women as well as men.

Nevertheless, although "generic" *he*, *man*, and *mankind* are still widely used by both women and men today, it is undeniable that the nonsexist language reform movement has succeeded in persuading many English speakers to add nonsexist alternatives to their speech and writing. The issue in this paper is whether or not these and other reforms have penetrated into the consciousness, and the English interlanguage, of Japanese university students. In this paper, I will report on the results of two questionnaires given to Japanese university students to assess their awareness of reforms centering on the above-mentioned "generic" pronouns and nouns. I will begin with a discussion of a linguistically older rival to the so-called generic *he*.

Singular *They*

If even the linguistics faculty at Harvard could argue in 1971 that the generic use of the masculine pronoun in English was merely a grammatical feature of the language, it would appear to be a deep-seated, fundamental part of the English language. In fact, it can be argued that it is not. As Bodine has pointed out (1975/1998, p.125), the little recognized singular *they* is much older than sex-indefi-

nite *he*. Nonetheless, in traditional, prescriptive grammar, which dates only from the eighteenth century, the pronoun *they* is accepted solely in its plural form. This is despite the fact that *they* is also widely and quite naturally used in all varieties of native spoken English as a singular pronoun; for example, when no one individual is specifically meant, especially in conjunction with the indefinite pronouns *somebody/someone* and *anybody/anyone* ("Anyone can do it if *they* try."), or with a singular noun representing a class of people ("... at a hundred pages it is far too much to expect a beginner to plough through before *they* start learning English" [Malone, 2000, p.46].). This is the usage that is referred to as "singular *they*" and that prescriptive grammar frowns upon in favor of the so-called generic *he*, prescribing as the correct versions of the above sentences "Anyone can do it if *he* tries" and "... at a hundred pages it is far too much to expect a beginner to plough through before *he* starts learning English."

The fact that singular *they* is much older than sex-indefinite *he* means, in effect, that attempts by nonsexist language reformers to rid English of sex-indefinite *he* are actually "a counterreaction to an attempt by prescriptive grammarians to alter the language" (Bodine, 1975/1998, p.125). Moreover, before the nineteenth century, singular *they* was "widely used in written, therefore presumably also in spoken, English" (p.126). In addition, more than 200 years of attempts by prescriptive grammarians to rid the language of singular *they* have clearly not succeeded. For that matter, thirty years of recent feminist attempts to rid the language of sex-indefinite *he* have also not succeeded in displacing it from its well-entrenched position in the language, at least among people who have had it drilled into them by prescriptive grammarian school teachers⁽¹⁾. Some prescriptivists argue that indefinite pronouns such as *somebody* are singular (presumably because they take singular present tense verbs; e.g., *somebody wants*), but grammatical singularity and plurality in English are anything but fixed and uniform, as illustrated by the differing American and British treatments of collective nouns; for example, (American) "The team *is* playing in the World Cup," versus (British) "The team *are* playing in the World Cup." Complicating the matter is the fact that a singular verb is also possible in these cases in British English, whereas a plural verb in such cases is rare in American English (Burchfield, 1996, p.157).

The question that nonsexist language reform poses is: Why does/did English need to use the masculine pronoun to represent all humans when there already exists/existed a sex-indefinite pronoun, *they*, that does the same thing, and in a nonsexist way? The answer to the historical question is, of course, that prescriptive grammarians beginning in the eighteenth century (Mueller, 1998, p.95) tried to explain English grammar in terms of Latin grammar, the language of power and learning in Europe for centuries until that time (Bauer, 1998, pp.136-137). Not unexpectedly, this posed a number of

problems when trying to force English grammar to fit Latin rules. Another well-known example of this ill fit is the stigmatization of the object pronoun (*me*) used as a subject complement following a form of the verb *be*. Constructions such as *It is I* and *It is me* can both be found in Elizabethan writings, but by the eighteenth century *It is me* "was common enough for some grammarians to feel it was worth trying to discourage" (p.134) based on the model of Latin grammar.

The zeal with which eighteenth century prescriptive grammarians attempted to force English grammar to fit Latin grammar rules can be seen in questions that are still being debated today: should a sentence end with a preposition; should *who* only be used as a subject and *whom* as an object; should an infinitive ever be split (Mueller, p.95). A further example of prescriptivist zeal, though not based on Latin grammar, is the proscription against double negatives. Not only is double negation found in most of the world's languages (Cheshire, 1998, pp.119-121), but Old English made use of multiple negatives within the same sentence, as did both Chaucer and Shakespeare (cf. *Twelfth Night* III.i.172-174), among others.

If these prescriptions were natural features of English grammar, they would probably be adhered to by most speakers, but, of course, they are neither adhered to by most speakers nor do they appear to be exactly natural features of English grammar. Nevertheless, there does not seem to be much evidence in American English, at any rate, that in formal speech and writing singular *they* is replacing sex-indefinite *he*. In a survey of American newspapers and magazines covering the period 1971-1979, Cooper (as cited in Pauwels, 1998, p.200) found that sex-indefinite *he* showed some decrease in use, although so-called generic *man* was more often replaced by a nonsexist alternative. This is undoubtedly due in part to the often-heard complaint that the nonsexist alternatives for sex-indefinite *he*, such as *he or she*, *she or he*, *he/she*, *s/he*, and occasionally *she*, are cumbersome and awkward. A fair question to ask is: Would there be any need for such "awkward" alternatives if singular *they* were rehabilitated as acceptable in formal speech and writing?

Thirty years after the Harvard linguistics faculty dismissed calls for the elimination of the generic use of *he*, the sociolinguist R.A.Hudson (1996) echoes the support of many contemporary linguists for nonsexist alternatives. Noting that it "has been used for centuries," Hudson finds singular *they* to be "a genuinely neutral pronoun distinct from both *he* and *she*, comparable with *Ms* for *Miss* and *Mrs*" and, therefore, "the most promising candidate" as an alternative to sex-indefinite *he*. Despite this glowing recommendation, Hudson expresses a common feeling of uneasiness among native English speakers with the idea of completely replacing sex-indefinite *he* with singular *they*. He concludes that, aside from its use after *anyone* and *everyone*, "it still feels very awkward" (p.104). Whether this feeling of awkwardness has anything to do with the influence of prescriptive grammar, Hudson does

not say.

The stigmatization that leads to the feeling of "awkwardness" when using singular *they* has, if anything, been promoted by current guidelines on avoiding sexist language in writing. Instead of singular *they*, it is plural *they* that is frequently recommended as a nonsexist alternative in formal writing today. For example, the guidelines for avoiding sexist language in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (1994, pp.50-51), which is the standard for much of academic writing in the social sciences in English, including linguistics, recommend plural *they* as one of a number of "preferred" alternatives to both sex-indefinite *he* and the several variations of *he* and *she* in the preceding paragraph, which the guidelines term "tiresome," "awkward," and "distracting" (p.51). Alternating between *she* and *he* is discouraged as "distracting...; doing so implies that *he* or *she* can in fact be generic, which is not the case" (p.51). While this supports the trend against accepting *he* as generic, it makes no mention of singular *they*. Likewise, Cooper (as cited in Pauwels, 1998, p.200) found that changing the noun to plural and using *they* was more common in the American newspapers and magazines surveyed than the other alternatives. This is generally accepted today in academic writing as a nonsexist alternative, despite the fact that it is often more natural to use a singular noun, which in unmonitored speech would very likely be followed by singular *they*. The natural tendency of a large percentage of English native speakers to follow a singular noun with singular *they* together with the long history of its proscription in careful speech and writing have, in all likelihood, led to the apparent preference for compromise at present: substitute *they*, but treat it as plural by using a plural noun with it.

Japanese Students' Choice of Sex-Indefinite *He* Versus Nonsexist Pronouns: Questionnaire Part I

The questionnaire whose results are being reported in this paper was adapted from Beebe (1998, p.10) and consisted of two parts. Part I was administered to a group of 32 Japanese students at two different private Japanese universities in the spring of 1999 in order to gauge awareness of alternatives to the sex-indefinite English pronoun *he* (and its variant forms *his* and *him*) (see Appendix). Twenty-seven were first-year students majoring in English at one university (20 females and 7 males). The remaining five were third or fourth-year students at the other university: two females and two males majoring in European-American studies, and one male majoring in politics and economics. The questionnaire was piloted on the smaller group of third and fourth-year students, and no problems were found. Finally, so as to compare student responses to those of adults, the question-

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

naire was given to three Japanese adults in their fifties, two women and one man, who were in a private English class at a local community center. Putting the responses of the students and adults together resulted in a total of 35 respondents for part I (24 females and 11 males).

Part I consisted of six Japanese sentences followed by their English equivalents with one part left blank. The part left blank required the student to produce either sex-indefinite *he/his/himself* or a nonsexist alternative. Table 1 shows the antecedents in each sentence, the main pronouns produced, and numbers of respondents who produced them listed in order from the most nonsexist pronouns produced to the fewest.

Table 1 Pronoun Production

	Nonsexist				Total	Sexist
	Sing. <i>they</i>	<i>you; we</i>	<i>he/she his/her</i>	<i>he or she his or her</i>		<i>he; his</i>
<u>Antecedents</u>						
A student/-s...	24 (69%)	—	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	[78%]	7 (20%)
Anyone...	9 (26%)	15 (43%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	[75%]	4 (11%)
A student...	5 (14%)	4 (11%)	2 (6%)	3 (9%)	[40%]	18 (51%)
Somebody...	9 (26%)	^a 2 (6%)	2 (6%)	—	[38%]	11 (31%)
The 3-year-old...	2 (6%)	^b 6 (17%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	[29%]	19 (54%)
A doctor...	4 (11%)	—	1 (3%)	—	[14%]	24 (69%)

Note. Numbers and percentages of respondents producing each pronoun are being reported. Incorrect pronouns and blank answers were omitted.

^a*one's and our* ^b*oneself*

The results show that more nonsexist pronouns were produced in half of the sentences, although in one (*somebody*) two of the produced pronouns are nonstandard in this context, leaving an equal number who produced standard English nonsexist and sexist pronouns. The sentence that elicited the highest number of nonsexist pronouns required respondents to translate Japanese *gakusei* as either singular a *student* or plural *students* and supply the following pronoun ("[A student/Students] must do ... homework every day."). Of the 24 respondents who produced singular *they*, 16, including one adult, chose the plural option with *their*, while 8 produced the singular noun with *their*, which may be an instance of singular *they*.

The sentence with the highest production of the sexist pronoun ("a doctor ... *his* patients...") revealed an apparent inconsistency in respondents' mental image of the word *doctor* and their pronoun choice. The overwhelming choice of the English masculine pronoun *his* in part I (69%) could have

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

been predicted to be the result of the perceived stereotype of a doctor as male if not for the fact that in a different questionnaire (Burger, 2001) a minority of only 43% of respondents, including those in this study, reported having a male image of the Japanese word *isha* [generic doctor]. This makes it more difficult to interpret the production of *his* in this questionnaire.

Table 2 shows pronoun production by sex. A higher percentage of males than females produced a sexist pronoun in exactly half of the sentences (*a student/-s*, *somebody*, and *the 3-year-old*), while a higher percentage of females than males produced a sexist pronoun in the other half of the sentences (*anyone*, *a student*, and *a doctor*). Overall, however, females were more likely than males to produce a nonsexist pronoun. A higher percentage of females than males produced nonsexist pronouns in four of the six sentences, but in three sentences a higher percentage of females than males produced a sexist pronoun (highlighted in Table 2). Within the female group itself, a majority produced a sexist pronoun in three sentences (*a student*, *the 3-year old*, and *a doctor*), while within the male group a majority produced a sexist pronoun in three sentences, two of them the same as the females (*somebody*, *the 3-year old*, and *a doctor*).

Table 2 Pronoun Production by Sex

Antecedent	Male Respondents Pronoun Type		Female Respondents Pronoun Type	
	Nonsexist	Sexist	Nonsexist	Sexist
A student/-s...	6 (55%)	4 (36%)	19 (79%)	1 (4%)
Anyone...	9 (82%)	1 (9%)	18 (75%)	5 (21%)
A student...	5 (45%)	5 (45%)	11 (46%)	13 (54%)
Somebody...	4 (36%)	5 (45%)	9 (38%)	8 (33%)
The 3-year-old...	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	8 (33%)	^a 12 (50%)
A doctor...	2 (18%)	7 (64%)	4 (17%)	17 (71%)

Note. Numbers and percentages of respondents producing each type of pronoun are being reported. Incorrect pronouns and blank answers were omitted.

^aIncluded are three females who produced *herself*.

Although more females than males produced nonsexist pronouns in general, in only two cases (*a student/-s* and *anyone*) did a majority of females produce a nonsexist pronoun. In fact, these were also the only instances of a majority of the males producing a nonsexist pronoun. The sentence in which *gakusei* had to be translated was a general statement about students so that a greater tendency to produce a plural noun and the pronoun *they* is not surprising. However, it is difficult to explain the majority's choice of a nonsexist pronoun with *anyone* but not with *somebody* unless the

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

production of a possessive pronoun in the sentence with *somebody* ("Somebody forgot ... notebook.") was developmentally more difficult than the production of a subject pronoun in the *anyone* sentence ("Anyone can drive a car if ... try/tires hard.").

The adult group did not show any greater tendency than the students to produce a nonsexist pronoun over a sexist one. However, because the number of adults was so small, the only generalization that can be made is that in this case the adults' production did not differ markedly from the students'.

Japanese Students' Choice of *-man* Nouns Versus Nonsexist Nouns: Questionnaire Part II

Part II of the questionnaire was separately administered to three groups of Japanese students at the same two private Japanese universities after first being piloted with the class of third and fourth-year students who piloted part I (part II $n=8$, six males and two females). One group was the same group of first-year English majors who had done part I, plus another male, ($n=28$, 20 females and 8 males), and another was a new group of first-year Japanese culture studies majors at the second university ($n=21$, 14 males and 7 females). The third group consisted of 17 second, third, and fourth-year students of various majors at one of the universities: 11 European-American studies (five males and six females), four Japanese culture studies (three males and one female), and two child studies (one male and one female). Finally, the same group of adults ($n=3$, two females and one male) participated for purposes of comparison.

Part II was in a multiple-choice format consisting of four Japanese words followed by three possible English translations for each. Respondents were asked to choose the best translation in each case (see Appendix). These four Japanese words were chosen because the traditional English translation of each has the suffix *-man*. One of the three translation choices in each case contained the suffix *-woman* and was not chosen by anyone (one, *firewoman*, was not a true English word). Consequently, Table 3 lists only the two other translation choices, one the sexist word with the suffix *-man*, and the other a common nonsexist alternative.

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

Table 3 Choice of *-man* Nouns vs. Nonsexist Alternatives

Nouns	委員長 <i>iinchou</i>		消防士 <i>shouboushi</i>		警察官 <i>keisatsukan</i>		郵便配達人 <i>yuubinhaitatsunin</i>	
	<i>chairman</i>	<i>chair</i>	<i>fireman</i>	<i>fire fighter</i>	<i>policeman</i>	<i>police officer</i>	<i>mailman</i>	<i>mail carrier</i>
Male	32 ^a (84%)	6 (16%)	30 (79%)	7 (18%)	24 (63%)	11 (29%)	20 (53%)	16 (42%)
Female	30 (77%)	9 (23%)	29 (74%)	10 (26%)	25 (64%)	14 (36%)	24 (62%)	15 (38%)
Total ^b	62 (81%)	15 (19%)	59 (77%)	17 (22%)	49 (64%)	25 (32%)	44 (57%)	31 (40%)

^aNumber of respondents who chose each word. ^b*n*=77 (Male *n*=38; Female *n*=39); invalid answers were omitted.

As shown in Table 3, in every case, both female and male respondents chose the sexist word with *-man* most frequently. Of all the words, *chairman* was chosen by the highest number of respondents, perhaps indicating greater familiarity with this word. *Chair* was listed as the nonsexist option rather than *chairperson* for the reason that as early as 1983 Sorrels (p.27) observed that *chairperson* was even then often mistakenly used by native speakers to refer only to women. However, one female adult and one male student added *-person* to *chair*, although the female adult then chose *chairman* as the best translation. On the other end of the scale, *mail carrier* was the most chosen nonsexist alternative, although by only 40% of respondents and by a slightly higher percentage of males than females.

Part II asked respondents to choose the "best" English translation. To avoid prejudicing the responses, no mention of nonsexist or sexist language was made. In two cases (*policeman* and *mailman*) a higher percentage of female than male students chose the sexist word, in contrast to the two female adults, who chose the nonsexist words in every case except *chairman* (the male adult likewise chose the nonsexist word in every case except *mailman*).

Again, the number of adults in this sample is too small to generalize, but the results show that this very small sample of Japanese adults was more aware of the nonsexist nouns in these four cases. Extrapolating from their choices in these four cases, the students, in contrast, seem to lack a certain amount of awareness of the use of nonsexist nouns for job titles in English, similar to their apparent deficits in understanding the use of nonsexist pronouns in part I. These nonsexist nouns are not new reforms in terms of the relatively short lives of these students. For example, in a picture book featuring characters from the popular American children's educational TV program *Sesame Street* that was available in Japan when these students were quite young (*The Sesame Street Word Book*, 1983, pp.42-43), job titles with *-man* are not to be found. *Fire fighter*, *police officer*, and *mail carrier* are featured, as is *trash collector* (cf. *garbage man*). However, two other English word books for L1 chil-

dren by the same publisher and also available in Japan in the early 1980s do not contain these nonsexist alternatives, which might make it more confusing for non-native English speakers to choose the "best" word in English. The older of the two books, *Little Golden Picture Dictionary* (Hulick, 1980), originally published in 1959, in its 41st printing in 1980 still uses only *fireman*, *mailman*, and *police-man* along with illustrations of men for each. The newer *Words* (Chambers, 1980), which was originally published in 1974, also lists both *fireman* and *postman*, as well as *ice-cream man*, with illustrations of men, but is somewhat more up-to-date with the inclusion of *policewoman* and an illustration of a woman.

A look at two English grammar guides written in Japanese (Miyakawa, Watanuki, Sugai, & Takamatsu, 1988; Nakahara, 1999) and available in bookstores turns up no specific reference to nonsexist language either in the table of contents or in the index. In each book, gender itself is dealt with strictly in terms of grammatical gender in subsections under the topic of nouns. The traditional feminine endings (e.g., *-ess*) are discussed, including the *-man/-woman* endings, and nonsexist usage is explained in a footnote. For example, Miyakawa et al. note: "性的偏見を避けるために近年用いられるようになってきた語がある" *Seiteki henken o sakeru tame ni kinnen mochiirareru you ni natte kita go ga aru* (p.119) [In recent years, there are words that have come to be used to avoid gender prejudice.]. In an appendix, Miyakawa et al. give examples such as *mail carrier* for *mailman*, *fire fighter* for *fireman*, and *chair(person)* for *chairman*.

Nakahara's explanation and examples of grammatical gender are quite similar. Also in a footnote (p.124), he explains that words ending in *-man*, while referring to males, are also "現在では" *genzai dewa* ["currently"] used to refer to women, but that there is a tendency now to avoid "*-man*, *-woman*, *-ess*を付けた語などを '性差別語' として" ... *o tsuketa go nado o 'seisabetsugo' toshite* [words with *-man*, *-woman*, or *-ess* as sexist language]. He gives as examples *chairperson*, *sporkes-person* [sic], *salesperson*, *police officer*, *flight attendant*, and *homemaker*.

A check of an English-Japanese dictionary (Koine, Yamakawa, Takebayashi, & Yoshikawa, 1985) also turns up similar nonsexist alternatives given as entries, usually with a cross reference to their traditional (sexist) variants. One Japanese-English dictionary (Yamagishi & Gunji, 1990) that differs from most in having extensive notes on, among other things, taboo words and misused loanwords from English also differs in giving the nonsexist English words as translations, sometimes without any mention of the sexist variants; for example, *chairperson* is the only word given for *incho* 委員長, *mail [letter] carrier* is the only name given for *yuubin haitatsunin* 郵便配達人, and *police officer* is the only name given for *keikan* 警官, although *policeman's*, *policewoman's*, and *police officer's* are all given as ways to say *keisatsu* in the expression *keisatsu techo* 警察手帳 (... ID). The only ex-

ception among the four words in part II is that both *fire fighter* and *fireman* are given as ways to say *shouboushi* 消防士, although *fire fighter* is listed first.

Summary and Conclusion

The questionnaire results indicate the possibility that the Japanese students in this study are more aware of nonsexist English pronouns than of nouns. Fifty-three percent of the English pronouns produced from Japanese prompts in part I were nonsexist, while a mere 29% of the English nouns chosen from the multiple choices in part II were nonsexist alternatives to *-man* nouns. The source of this inconsistency is impossible to determine based on this study alone. However, if one were to speculate, the possibility of inconsistency in their exposure to nonsexist language reforms in prior English education needs to be considered, as does the possibility that some of their teachers themselves were either unaware of current trends in nonsexist language use in English or merely chose to teach more traditional usage, particularly regarding *-man* nouns. At any rate, these students do not seem to have been made sufficiently aware of the issue of nonsexist language reform for them to have made it a consistent part of their English interlanguage, despite the evidence from selected L1 English children's word books and Japanese grammars and dictionaries of English that a certain amount of information about nonsexist English language reform has been disseminated in Japan.

Looking at these students' responses in more detail, despite the greater number of nonsexist pronouns produced overall, the results of part I reveal a number of inconsistencies in their awareness of nonsexist language reform in English. For example, many students did not treat *somebody* and *anyone* as members of the same class of words that are typically used with an indefinite pronoun such as singular *they*. While an equal number of students produced singular *they/their* in each case (9), a much larger number produced *his* with *somebody* (11), than produced *he* with *anyone* (4). In addition, 15 students produced other nonsexist pronouns with *anyone*, such as *you* and *we*, but only two produced such pronouns with *somebody* (*one's* and *our*), both of which are questionable in this context. The difficulties of producing a possessive pronoun for an indefinite pronoun like *somebody* versus producing a subject pronoun with *anyone* may have caused some of the problems here, but that does not seem to entirely explain the differences in the choice of *he* over nonsexist pronouns.

Another apparent inconsistency was the preference of the vast majority of students for *his* as the pronoun for *a doctor* (23 of 32). This is made somewhat more surprising given that a slight majority of students (27 versus 21) who answered a different questionnaire (Burger, 2001), which included the students who answered part I of this questionnaire, said that they did not have an exclusively

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

male image of the Japanese word for *doctor* (医者 *isha*). Prior English education could have helped negate the influence of the gender image the word had in their first language. In addition, some respondents to the earlier questionnaire may have given an ideal response or the one they thought the researcher wanted them to give.

Another interesting inconsistency was that when given singular *a student* and asked to produce the accompanying pronoun, a slight majority of students (18 of 32) produced *he*, while only five produced *they*. On the other hand, when asked to produce both the noun for *student* and the pronoun, a much larger majority (24 of 32) produced *their* (even though eight used it with singular *a student*). Only seven produced *his*.

As we have seen, far more students chose sexist *-man* suffix nouns in part II. The three adults seemed to be much more aware of this area of English nonsexist language reform than the students. In addition to the possible factors discussed earlier, two others can be mentioned. One is exposure to nonsexist language outside the classroom. It is likely that many of the students had had less contact than the adults with media and other instances of nonsexist English. A second additional factor is the relatively large number of English *-man* words that have been borrowed into Japanese.

Another interesting finding is that female students in the study were no more likely than males to choose a nonsexist *-man* noun. This stands in contrast to the production of pronouns, where females were much more likely than males to produce a nonsexist pronoun.

The four English *-man* words in part II of the questionnaire are not loanwords in Japanese and, thus, were not included among the *-man* suffix loanwords from English in the Burger (2001) questionnaire. However, the students' gender images of the *-man* suffix loanwords in Burger (2001) may help understand their choices in part II. In Burger (2001), more students had a male image of two of the three loanwords, although it was relatively strong only for *serusuman* [salesman]. The one word with a relatively balanced gender image, *fureshuman* [freshman], is one that students should be quite familiar with as designating a group that includes both sexes. In contrast, the English *-man* suffix words in part II could be argued to represent professions that have been traditionally filled by men in both Japan and English-speaking countries: *chairman*, *policeman*, *mailman*, and *fireman*. What is striking is the large number of Japanese nonsexist alternatives produced by the students in the earlier questionnaire compared to the low percentage of students who chose English nonsexist alternatives in part II.

It is not unexpected that these students would be more aware of nonsexist language reforms in their first language than in their second, but this raises the question of the extent to which first and foreign languages are influenced by the social reality that the speakers experience. Gender equality is

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

a topic often taken up in the media in Japan today, and both the central and local governments are at least paying lip service to the issue with laws to promote gender equality on the national level and campaigns to increase awareness of the issue on the local level. The findings of the two questionnaires suggest that the social reality experienced in the native culture may have much less backwash effect on the foreign language than on the first. Therefore, while it is tempting to speculate that the failure of these students to choose English nonsexist alternatives for the job names in part II reflects the social reality they have experienced of men traditionally performing these jobs, that explanation alone is inadequate in light of the differing natures of first and second-language competence.

These findings present a challenge for English teachers in Japan who are concerned about teaching current English as well as for those concerned about promoting gender equality through their teaching. Teachers may not be able to rely on students' awareness of nonsexist language in their first languages being carried over into second-language learning. Consciousness raising seems to be necessary. Beyond that, it is valid to ask whether teaching so-called generic pronouns and nouns to the exclusion of nonsexist alternatives can any longer be justified? Can sex-indefinite *man*, for instance, or its related *-man* suffix nouns any longer be taught without at least noting nonsexist alternatives?

For those teachers who want to create greater awareness and acceptance of nonsexist English among their students, this study indicates that there is still work to be done. Labov (as cited in Ehrlich and King, 1992/1998, p.167) has argued that linguistic change will not take hold if it does not originate with the highest-status group in the speech community, or, as Ehrlich and King have claimed in relation to nonsexist language reform, unless "high-status subgroups within a speech community adopt non-sexist values" (p.167). If this is correct, English teachers as the highest-status persons in the language classroom, need to initiate the reform in their own teaching, and male teachers play a crucial role here. As Ehrlich and King have pointed out, without the support of people in the linguistic environment who have higher status than women "there is much evidence to suggest that innovative, non-sexist linguistic forms... undergo a kind of depreciation" (p.167) resulting in misinterpretation and misuse.

Schools, as high-status institutions in society, also need to adopt nonsexist English in their entrance examinations and in their English-language teaching materials. Textbook authors and publishers also need to incorporate the reforms into their publications in order to support teachers who want to introduce nonsexist language to their students and to persuade other teachers to do so. Additionally, as Ehrlich and King (1992/1998, p.170) have stressed: "When language reform occurs within the context of a larger sociopolitical initiative whose primary goal is the eradication of sexist practices, it

Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

is more likely to succeed." This applies to the language classroom as much as to the outside world. The current favor that the notion of gender equality seems to enjoy in Japanese society creates for both Japanese and native English teachers conditions conducive to promoting awareness of nonsexist language reforms in English language teaching.

Note

1 It is not only people of a "certain" generation, people whose language education was not influenced by more recent trends in nonsexist language, who have difficulty accepting singular *they*. I was reminded of this fact by a 21-year-old American exchange student in a class I taught in the spring semester 2000 who could not quite bring herself to accept either that singular *they* was a natural part of native English or that it could be an acceptable nonsexist alternative to sex-indefinite *he*.

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Awareness of English Nonsexist Language Reform among Japanese Students

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Appendix

I. 次の日本語の文を見てください。その文の一部は英語に翻訳されていますが、かっこの中のヒントを使いながら残りの部分を英語に翻訳してください。[Look at each Japanese sentence. Part of the sentence is translated into English. Use the hints in parentheses inside the English sentence to translate the rest of the sentence.]

1. 誰かがノートを忘れた。
Somebody forgot (所有格の代名詞) _____ notebook.
2. この三才の子は自分で着替えられた。
The 3-year-old could dress (自分で) _____.
3. 学生が遅刻すれば、謝ったほうがいいです。
If a student is late, (主語の代名詞) _____ should apologize.
4. もし努力 (=try hard) をしたら、誰でも車が運転できる。
Anyone can drive a car if (主語の代名詞) _____.
5. 患者を尊重する医者が一番よい医者です。
A doctor who respects (所有格の代名詞) _____ patients is best.
6. 学生は毎日宿題をしなければなりません。
_____ must do (所有格の代名詞) _____ homework every day.

II. 日本語の単語の意味を一番あらわしていると思う英語の単語を選んで下さい。[Choose the English word that you think is the best translation for each Japanese word.]

委員長

- a. chair
- b. chairman
- c. chairwoman

郵便配達人

- a. mailman
- b. mail carrier
- c. mailmen

警察官

- a. policeman
- b. policewoman
- c. police officer

消防士

- a. fireman
- b. fire fighter
- c. firewoman