

# Language and Gender

• Angela Goddard and Lindsey Meân Patterson

Edited with Notes by

KOYANO Atsushi and YUMOTO Yōko



THE EIHŌSHA LTD.

LANGUAGE AND GENDER

by

Angela Goddard and Lindsey Meân Patterson

Copyright © 2000 by Angela Goddard and Lindsey Meân Patterson

English language textbook with Japanese annotations rights  
arranged with the Taylor & Francis Books Ltd., London  
through Tuttle-Mori Agency, Inc., Tokyo

PRINTED IN JAPAN

## まえがき

確か今年の二月下旬のこと、自民党総裁選の前倒しをめぐって政局が動いていた時、テレビ画面で大勢の記者に囲まれた党政調会長の亀井静香は、女性記者の質問に対して、「きみ女性なのに、かわいくないね」と発言した。ビデオが終わった時、キャスターの久米宏はすかさず、「亀井さん、セクハラです」と言ったのではあるが、この「セクハラ」という言葉は近年やや安易に使われすぎている。より正確に言うなら、これは「性差別」発言であり、それを当人に向かって言ったから「セクシャル・ハラスメント」に当たるのだ。とはいえ、翌日の新聞を見ても、この発言が問題になったとは書かれていなかった。

ところが、程なく始まった前倒し総裁選に立候補し、鰻登りの人気の末に黨員選で圧倒的支持を集め、本選挙で当選した小泉純一郎は、「男として、後へは引けない」といった趣旨のことを言っていた。これも、性差別発言である。決断力、実行力、責任感といった属性が、男こそ備えるべきものだと言っているわけだからだ。めでたく総理大臣となった小泉は史上最多四人の女性閣僚を入閣させ、高い支持率を誇っているが、その内実は一体どうなのか。この発言もまた、ことさら問題にはされなかった。保守党党首扇千景を始めとする女性閣僚も、ずいぶん舐められたものである。

それが「所詮、保守党政治家の言うことさ」とも言えないのは、昨年九月、シドニー・オリンピックの女子マラソンで高橋尚子選手が日本初の金メダルに輝いた時、リベラルをもって任じているらしい『朝日新聞』翌日朝刊の、これを讃える社説は、高橋選手を指導した小出義雄監督の「お前が母親になった時、お母さんはこんなに頑張れたんだよ、と子供に自慢できるように」という言葉を引いている。しかし、これだけならまだ良かった。社説子は興奮してしまったらしく、小出の著書から、ご丁寧にも「本当に輝くのは、彼女たちが妻となり、母親となった時なのだ」「私は(中略)素晴らしいお母さん作りをしているつもりなのだ」という言葉まで引用して

いる。断っておくが、私個人は、健康な女性はなるべく子供を産むべきだと思っている。また、私企業の監督に過ぎない小出氏が、こう考えるのは別に構うまい(構う、という人もいるかもしれないが)。けれども、新聞の社説のような場所で、「女は母親になって一人前」と言わんばかりの文章を肯定的に引用するとなると話は別だ。西洋の何も知らないジャーナリストがこれを見たら、『朝日新聞』というのは保守派のメディアなのだな、と思っただろう。女性が自分の力を発揮したことを讃える、社の意見と見なされる「社説」でこんなことを書いてしまうとは、ふだん男女共同参画社会などと立派なことを言っている、ホンネはこんなものですよと馬脚を現してしまっただけのようなものだ。

しかしこんなことを言うと、「人の言葉尻を捕らえて非難するフェミニスト」と恐れられるかもしれない。本書の著者たちは、読めば分かるとおりに、堂々たるフェミニストである。「言語は意識を規定する」という命題のもと、一步も譲らず、性差別的な言葉のありようを糾弾しているという趣きがある。しかし、英語で書かれた本であるため、挙げられる例は英語のもので、例えば‘he/she’という西洋語特有の人称代名詞の使い方から来る性差別や、‘man’という言葉が、男を表すと同時に人間をも表してしまう、といった側面がやり玉に挙げられている。私がわざわざ最近の日本の例を出したのは、「なんだ、英語(または西洋語)が性差別的にできてるんじゃないか」と多寡を括られないためである。むしろ、米国のような国は、その成り立ちから言って男性性を誇示する国で、そのことへの反動としてフェミニズムが発達したという側面はある。それでも、油断していると冒頭に掲げたような例が出てきてしまう日本もまた、他人事とは言えないのである。

この種の本を読んで、「言葉狩り」という言葉を連想する人もいるだろう。確かに一時期、マスコミでは、差別用語の言い換えが機械的に行われたことがあり(最近少し緩んだようだ)、単にマニュアルに従って言葉を置き換えていくだけでは、真に差別をなくすことにはならない、という指摘はほぼ正しい。英語改良フェミニズムでは、例えば‘history’という言葉が‘his’を含んでいて、「男の歴史」だからというので‘herstory’と言い換えられるといった、語源を無視した馬鹿げたことが行われていたこともある。

ただし本書にはその種の主張はない。また、いくら男たちが公の場では言葉を選んで発言していても、夜の酒場へ繰り出せば女性蔑視に満ちた猥談で盛り上がっていたのでは何にもならないだろう。

あるいは本書中でも 'politically correct' として言及されている、略して PC と呼ばれる考え方も、最近では日本でも目にするようになった。これは、言わば弱者の立場、少数者の立場を優先し、社会的不平等を是正しようとする立場で、具体的には、同じ能力の者が二人いた場合、男と女なら女を、白人と非白人なら非白人を優先的に雇用するといった方針 (affirmative action と呼ばれる) がとられることもある。これについては、結果的に能力のない者を優遇することになっているという批判もあるし、例えば男女雇用機会均等法の施行によって女子の深夜労働が解禁されたことも、妥当なのかどうかについても議論がある。ただし、ここで想定すべきなのは、従来の子供保護規定のもとでは、体の弱い男性がワリを食ってきたといった点なのであって、オンナも強くなるべきだという主張にすりかえられるべきものではない。

しかし、「たかが言葉」で済ますわけにはいかない。もし当人が自覚した上であえて使っているならともかく、多数の人間は無自覚に女性蔑視的な、男女差別的な言葉を使っているのが実情なのであり、そのことはまさにそういったことに人一倍敏感でなければならない政治家やジャーナリストの冒頭に掲げたような実例によっても明らかであろう。ならば、次代を担う学生たちにおいては、本書程度の意識をもってもらいたいとの願いを込めて本書を送り出す。

2001年8月

小谷野 敦





# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Unit one: Projections</b>               | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Unit two: Making up gender</b>          | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Unit three: All in the mind?</b>        | <b>24</b> |
| <b>Unit four: Political correctness</b>    | <b>40</b> |
| <b>Unit five: Gender and speech styles</b> | <b>48</b> |
| <b>Notes</b>                               | <b>63</b> |





# **Language and Gender**



# Unit one

## Projections

The aim of this unit is to get you thinking about the relationship between the language we use and the world around us. Consideration of this is important when looking at language and gender, because we need to establish how far our ideas about the sexes are the result of seeing what we want to see—or, rather, seeing what we *have* to see because of the language that is available to us. 5

### The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis

The issue of whether language is simply a direct reflection of the world around us has been debated for many centuries. For example, the Ancient Greek philosopher, Socrates, asked questions about whether there was any intrinsic connection between an object and its name. In more recent times, the linguist, Edward Sapir, and the psychologist, Benjamin Lee Whorf, found themselves asking questions in the same broad area of language and thought as a result of their anthropological work with speakers of different languages, particularly North American Indian languages. They concluded that we are not simply passive recorders of what we find around us in language; rather, we impose our ideas on our environment as a result of the 15

language we have.

This is how they put this concept, which has come to be termed ‘The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis’:

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages.  
5 The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our  
10 minds.

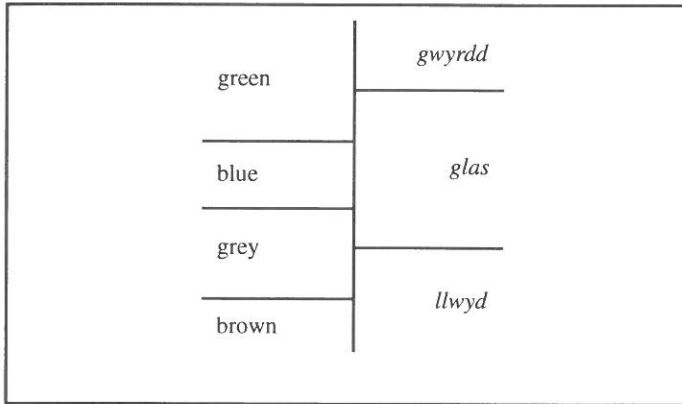
(Whorf, 1956: 213)

In other words, when we acquire language, we acquire ways of thinking—conceptual systems or grids—which we don’t notice consciously because they just feel natural to us. It’s a bit like viewing the world  
15 through a particular pair of spectacles that we’ve got used to wearing. And these spectacles are our culture. Some speakers—bilingual language users, for example—have more than one pair of spectacles. And here, speakers readily attest to the fact that they think differently when they use their different languages. Professional interpreters  
20 spend their working lives trying to match a set of concepts from one language with the words of another. And sometimes, there are gaps where an idea in one language is simply not encoded in another. For example, in Russian, there are no words to label ‘hand’ or ‘foot’ as separate from the arm or leg. Examples such as these give us evi-  
25 dence of the existence of the Sapir-Whorf ‘linguistic systems’ mentioned above.

Further practical examples of different languages encoding ‘reality’ differently are not hard to find. One of the most commonly quoted areas is colour terms. English, for example, has 11 basic words for colours—white, black, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, pink, orange and grey. (This list does not include terms for colours that are incorporated in other colours—for example, beige is a form of brown, sage is a form of green, and so on.) In contrast, speakers of some New Guinea Highland languages have only two terms: ‘dark’ and ‘light’. It’s clear that in labelling colours, speakers of different languages chop up the spectrum in different ways—as below, where some English and Welsh terms are mapped against each other. What’s harder to determine is whether this means the speakers of different languages actually see differently when they look at the same colour.

Another aspect of describing colour which appears to vary on a language basis is **metaphorical** reference. For example, where English speakers talk of ‘blue jokes’, in Spanish these are ‘green’ (but in Mexican Spanish, ‘red’ (Jones, 1999)); while ‘green’ for English speakers has at least two sets of **connotations**: ecologically-minded, and unpractised (with the suggestion of naïvety). English has many negative connotations for the term ‘black’, which many people have seen as the cultural legacy of a white-dominated society. Black is used for bereavement, in contrast to the white clothes people wear to funerals in India. In English, white often stands for purity, while red connotes danger (or anger, as in ‘seeing red’) and yellow connotes cowardice. The list is long but that doesn’t mean there’s any logic in any of the relationships between the colour terms and the ideas that they call up for any group of speakers. These meanings are **arbi-**

Text: Colour terms map



**rary:** if we have associations for a particular colour term, it's more likely to be because we put them there than because they occurred somehow 'naturally'. If they occurred naturally, then everyone would have the same system.

- 5 The way speakers establish categories in language can be shown to relate to what they need language for—in other words, what the preoccupations are in their particular community. Frequently discussed examples of this are that Inuit people have different words for snow, nomadic Arabic groups many words for different types of camel, and
- 10 Australian aboriginal languages many words for different types of hole in the sand. Different lifestyles mean that some groups need to pay more attention than others to particular aspects of the environment, leading to more or less fine **discriminations** within language categories. These discriminations are important for the members of

the community in question: a mistake about the weight that a patch of snow can carry, about the value of a camel, or about the type of creature that may inhabit a hole in the sand, all have real-life consequences. Snow, camels and sand-holes all have ‘reality’, but the fine distinctions between the various different types are unlikely to be noticed by outsiders, for whom variations are not significant, or **salient**. If variations are noticed, they will be seen as minor variations that can easily be accommodated by the single terms they already have: to people from a temperate climate, snow is just snow, whatever its condition.

But languages don’t only differ in the names they have for objects. They also differ in how they organise abstract ideas, such as ways of talking about relationships, or the qualities that people have. And here the possible effects of language upon thought seem more significant. For we are talking about our social values, how we treat each other and organise ourselves within society. However, abstract ideas are more elusive to grasp than the names of objects, and their effects are more difficult to plot.

## Anthropomorphism

**Anthropomorphism** means ‘giving something a human shape’, and describes another kind of projection that we often see in language. Exploration of this area will provide some more exemplification of the relationship between language and thought.

Perhaps human beings are essentially very lonely and insecure creatures. For it seems that we need to constantly project the idea of hu-

manness onto the inanimate world. We make cartoons for children where objects like brooms and spoons talk and sing; we give our cars affectionate names and even call death-making bombs and hurricanes after human beings. Perhaps we hope that if we can humanise the  
5 inanimate world, it will seem friendlier and therefore less terrifying. The persuasive potential of this anthropomorphism is not lost on advertisers: see the advert on the next page.

As well as giving animacy to inanimate objects, we also ‘humanise’ the animal kingdom, often giving characteristics to animals that are  
10 completely unrelated to their behaviour in their natural habitat. For example, no one who has ever observed wild bears would think of them as the cuddly, soft items that populate the current ‘Teddy Bear’ shops.

### **‘God bless her, and all who sail in her’**

15 We have looked at the way we project human qualities onto both inanimate objects and animals. But, we also project gender. The title above is part of a well-known ritual whereby a ship is launched and blessed. But why is it not: ‘God bless it, and all who sail in it’? Or even: ‘God bless him, and all who sail in him’?

20 Some commentators (for example, Spender, 1980) have suggested that cars, as well as boats, are seen as female because they are objects of status that have traditionally been under the control of men. Certainly, the physical attractiveness of such objects is often at the fore-front of descriptions, in the same way as women are often described  
25 in terms of their looks. For example, here is an extract from a news report on the de-commissioning of the Royal Yacht *Britannia*:



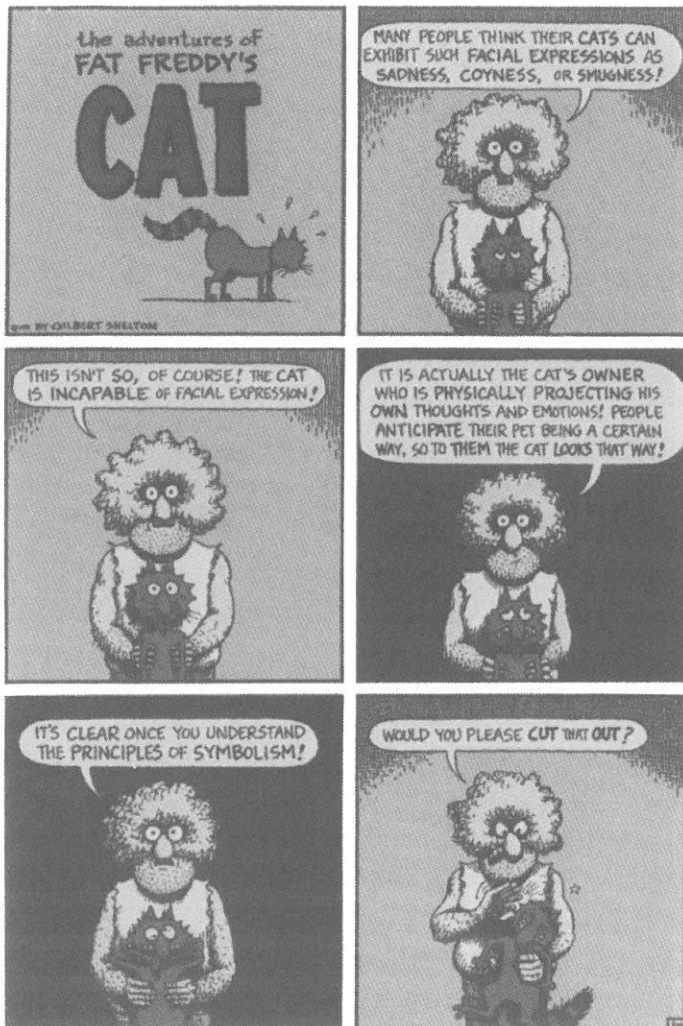
Text: Electric switch

AROUND 15% OFF ELECTRICITY.  
AVAILABLE NEXT YEAR FROM BRITISH GAS.

With the opening up of the electricity market during 2008, we'll be a major player. And, providing we satisfy both your gas and electricity, you can look forward to significant savings on your current electricity bills. Needless to say, no one is more experienced at providing you with everything gas. But we aren't exactly strangers to the world of electricity either. Witness the savings that's available on electrical products at our Energy Centres. For more information, call us on 0345 30 33 33. Among other things, you'll discover how changing to British Gas for your electricity needs could be simpler. No digging. No drilling. In fact, no inconvenience whatever for those who decide, so to speak, to make the switch.

**British Gas**  
POWER

Text: Fat Freddy's cat



‘a ship which has given good faithful service for 44 years, and which is still as elegant now as when she was commissioned . . .’.

(Radio 4 *News*, 12 noon, 10/12/97)

If Spender is right about why some objects are personified as female, 5  
it doesn't follow that it's only men who use language in this way, nor  
does it mean that every usage of this kind is a conscious one. Spender  
is talking about a male perspective, or way of viewing the world, that  
is encoded in the language we all use as a common resource. And it is  
precisely because we use language without analysing each and every 10  
item that a way of thinking can exist without really being noticed. It  
is only when our flow of language is disrupted that we become con-  
scious of the thinking that is embedded in language—and then we  
can ask whose thinking it really is. Here is an example of that process  
in action. The news journalist, Sue McGregor, in covering a world 15  
energy conference, is talking to another journalist about Britain's past  
record on industrial pollution:

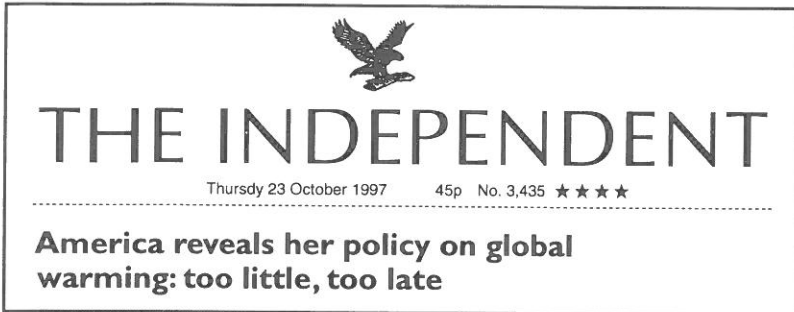
‘but Britain's been a good boy, hasn't she . . . or he?’ (*nervous  
laughter*)

(*Today Programme*, Radio 4, 9/12/97) 20

Sue McGregor finds it difficult to continue her presentation of Brit-  
ain as a ‘good boy’ because as soon as a **pronoun reference** is needed,  
‘she’ emerges automatically, causing the journalist some confusion  
and embarrassment. It appears that as far as pronouns are concerned,  
our ideas about the gender of, not just mechanical objects, but also 25

countries, are deeply embedded in our thinking. Countries are so often depicted as female, as in the headline below:

Text: *Independent headline*



that if the headline had read:

5            AMERICA REVEALS HIS POLICY ON GLOBAL WARM-  
              ING: TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

then it would seem as though America was revealing the policy of a male individual (perhaps the President?). In other words, the 'his' would not appear connected to 'America' at all.

10        Countries do not always appear as 'she', however. For example, during the period of Fascist rule in Germany leading up to World War II, Germany was often referred to in Fascist literature as the 'Fatherland'. But it's interesting to note the link between the idea of Germany as male and the qualities that were being stressed—not Germany's ability to feed and nurture its people, but the military might

of the country, its readiness for adversity. Pronoun usage therefore appears to be part of a larger picture where we use notions of male and female to stand for different sets of qualities.

## Mother Nature, Father Time

The use of ‘she’ to refer to a country often appears to go along with <sup>5</sup> the idea of a matriarchal figure originating and sustaining its people (as in ‘mother country’ and ‘mother tongue’). This idea is also encoded in the idea of ‘Mother Nature’, a nurturing, protecting force. In a popular children’s cartoon, ‘SuperTed’, the teddy bear figure, initially a factory reject, is claimed by Mother Nature and given su- <sup>10</sup> perpowers to fight wrong-doing. Mother Nature, with her friendly wand, here resembles a fairy godmother, a very different figure from that traditionally associated with ‘Father Time’, who is often pictured as stern, authoritarian and inhumane:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back, 15  
 Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,  
 A great-sized monster of ingratitude:  
 Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devoured  
 As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
 As done. 20

(Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, iii: 145–50)

## *Unit* t w o

# Making up gender

The previous unit emphasised the way we project animacy and gender onto the world around us. In this unit, we will be looking at the qualities and characteristics we associate with men and women. We will do this by looking at the language we use to describe the sexes, and asking how far this language is a reflection of our learned beliefs.

This unit is called ‘making up gender’ for at least two reasons: one is to question whether the way we view the sexes is in any sense ‘natural’; another is to suggest that we ‘make up’ gender as we go along. This means that, far from being a fixed and unalterable dimension that is imposed on us from on high, gender is something that we do every day as part of our social behaviour.

## Bodies of description

In school, we are taught that adjectives describe items and nouns name or label them. As usual, such apparent simplicities disguise quite a lot of complexity. For a start, adjectives operate at a number of different levels. For example, the dictionary definition of a word—its **denotation**—is hardly ever the end of the story. A very potent aspect of meaning is the level of connotation a word can call up—all