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QUEER JAPANESE

The modern-day language usage of Japanese
LGBTQ+ people

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Abstract

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Gendered language is a well-known feature of Japanese, but how is it applied by a speaker who does not fit the cisgender or heteronormative standards in society? In a 2010 study, Hideko Abe published a book titled *Queer Japanese*, which addressed this exact question. Although incredibly thorough and informative, the book is now over a decade old, and the findings may no longer be accurate. In order to see if Japanese queer people today still show the same linguistic tendencies, this thesis examines the speech displayed in the 2019 documentary *Queer Japan* Directed by Graham Kolbeins. The documentary features a series of interviews with people under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, and their speech has been analysed based on Abe's book.

Some findings in Abe's research turned out to hold true in *Queer Japan*, such as women using more formal language than men. However, the findings that lesbian women used more masculine language and gay men used more feminine language was not the case.

It appears that gendered language is becoming more and more obsolete and more a stereotype or forced image than a type of language that is actively used in everyday life. The only exception is with first-person pronouns, where defined masculine and feminine words are still being used. It would be very interesting to redo Abe's initial study now, ten years later, and see how much has changed.

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1. Introduction

In several Asian languages, such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Javanese (Brown, Lucien, 2020), every statement must be made considering the formality level of the situation. You would for instance not use the same level of formality with your boss as with your best friend. This is of course true for many languages, including English. Although what makes these languages differ on this point in particular is that it is not only a different choice of words which determine the formality, but also how the words themselves are conjugated. This system in a language is known as *honorifics* and encompasses various things, such as verb conjugation, more formal words in place of existing ones, adding affixes to words etc. (Hasegawa, 2014; Tsujimura, 2014). In this dissertation however, the focus will be not on Asian languages in general, but on Japanese specifically.

Long considered to be an incredibly difficult, complex, and totally unique language even to the Japanese themselves, they long held the belief that no foreigner could even begin to understand the linguistic and cultural intricacies of Japanese (Gottlieb, 2005). One of the possible reasons for this was the existence of honorifics and the very clear societal hierarchical structure in which they fitted, but also the idea of an incredibly split and often stereotypical usage of the language by and between men and women. Traditionally, Japanese women use more formal and soft-spoken language, as well as sticking closer to the standard language rather than using dialects (Gottlieb, 2005; Hasegawa, 2014). Age and social status also have a part to play, and it is here that the use (or lack thereof) of honorifics comes in. In this case, women use more honorifics while men use less. Sentence final particles, another feature of Japanese, is also relevant to gendered language, as these two genders typically use different particles (Gottlieb, 2005; Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017)

Sentence-final particles are used for a variety of reasons, such as forming a question, assuring the listener that you are confident in your statement and to seek a response from the listener (Hasegawa, 2014). For example, the particle *zo* is considered masculine and tough, while the particle *wa* is considered feminine and soft, despite both particles having the similar meaning of stressing or accentuating an entire sentence (Hasegawa, 2014; Tsujimura, 2014). By combining different formality levels, pronouns, verb conjugation and sentence-final particles, it is even possible to read an entire conversation without having to explicitly state the gender or age of the speakers (Hasegawa, 2014). This is something that is not possible in languages such

as English, where one must use names or pronouns to specify who the speaker is. By utilising this, two sentences that have the exact same meaning syntactically can carry different information pragmatically and provide more information to the reader/listener despite not stating it explicitly.

While this stereotypical language use is certainly not groundless, there have been many changes in the Japanese society and the idea of such a segregated way of speaking does not seem to be as accurate any longer (Gottlieb, 2007). It still lives on, but not at the scale one might imagine if one has little-to-no knowledge of the Japanese language and culture. Gendered language is closely tied to societal norms and expectations, hence the use of formal language by women (who were seen as lesser), and as such, is constantly fluctuating. While it may have been relevant many years ago for wives to use formal language with their husbands this usage is simply not an expectation anymore. The same can be said for men being expected to have a certain aggression in order to gain respect. The stereotypical use of gendered language is still used, but mostly in various tv shows, films, anime, and manga. There, it is strongly associated with a set of characteristics and personality traits, giving it the term *role language* (Kinsui, 2017).

This of course only based on a cisgender heteronormative view of society and its speakers, but what if the speaker does not conform to this? What happens, for example, when the speaker is neither a man nor woman? Or if they fluctuate between the two? What if the speaker does not conform with the traditional view of 'husband or wife', and therefore does not want to use this particular language associated with their spouse? What if the speaker is a man by day but dresses up as a woman by night? What if the speaker wishes to be seen as more masculine or feminine, regardless of their own gender? What happens to the illustrious and mystically difficult language then? This dissertation will attempt to shed some light on the language use of the LGBTQ+ community in Japan. In today's ever more changing, and most of all accepting world, how does this reflect in the language? Although little research has been done on the topic, as more and more people feel safe and confident about their identities all over the world, more countries are legalising things such as same-sex marriage. It is worth seeing how this affects the personal language use of such individuals in a language that has a feature of gendered speech. This is only possible to properly and safely study in countries where being LGBTQ+ is

legal, as opposed to the 70 somewhat countries where it is not (United Nations Free and Equal, 2021).

This paper will look at typical and atypical usage of stereotyped gendered language in a Japanese context and see how these language rules and norms can be used, or broken, in accordance with the speaker's preference and identity. Through this paper I hope to display that gender identity can be expressed in a multitude of ways, particularly through language.

I would also like to preface this dissertation by clarifying that the terms 'man', 'woman', 'gay' etc. will be used in very broad terms, as there is no definite way to define how a group of people speak. Additionally, the acronym LGBTQ+ will be used frequently in this thesis. This stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bi(sexual), Trans and Queer, and will be used to refer to people who fit into any of these categories. Finally, when the gender of a person is unknown or unspecified, I will be using 'they' as their pronoun as it is gender neutral.

2. Research questions/ hypothesis

In 2010, Hideko Abe released a book titled *Queer Japanese: Gender and Sexual Identities through Linguistic Practices*. To date, this is the most comprehensive book written about the speech patterns and language uses of Japanese LGBTQ+ people. Although incredibly detailed and painstakingly researched, the research is now over ten years old, and many changes may have occurred since then. My research questions are therefore:

- Has the gendered/queered language use among LGBTQ+ people in Japan changed since Abe's research?
- If so, in what ways?

One important thing to note is that although Abe's researched was published in 2010, she had spent the better part of the previous ten years in and around the bars of Ni-Chome, Shinjuku, to gather material. Due to this, there could be as much as 20 years between Abe's initial findings and the documentary *Queer Japan*, and language is always changing. As such, I believe that there will be some differences between queer Japanese as published by Abe and the queer Japanese observed in the documentary.

3. Method/ material

In order to see just how much gendered and queered language is in use in Japanese today, I will primarily be using the documentary *Queer Japan* (2019) directed by Graham Kolbeins. The documentary features a variety of queer people talking about being queer in Japan, struggles they face and improvements that have been made over the years. I will use the already existing sections of the documentary to analyse the subjects' speech and see whether they make use of gendered or queered language at all. The subjects are mostly 30-40 years old, with a few being slightly older, making for fairly consistent results as people of a similar age and culture tend to speak the same way. Furthermore, all subjects exist somewhere on the LGBTQ+ spectrum, making for a lot of spoken material of which to observe. Only subjects that are given adequate speaking time will be studied (so no one-question, one-answer conversations), as I believe very short interactions will not give sufficient information. The initial method was to conduct semi-structured interviews with Japanese people who identify as queer, but due to the time constraints of this thesis, it was decided to use already existing spoken material by LGBTQ+ people. The issue of the *observer's paradox* (Matthews, 2007) would still be present in either of these methods, as such, it was deemed that they would be equally valid. The subjects knew they were being filmed and therefore most likely monitored their own language use and chose to present a certain image of themselves. This is known as 'the observer's paradox'. The very thing one is trying to observe might be withheld on purpose because the subject wants to seem more 'proper' or worries about how they will be perceived.

The documentary was first viewed in its entirety in order to gather information about the queer experience in Japan, as well as any particular laws/ events mentioned. It was then viewed again, this time to analyse the speech of the subjects. Notes were made for each individual who was given longer speaking time (longer than simply a passing one-question, one answer), and details about their pronoun usage, formality level, gender and sexuality were noted. Additionally, anything concerning their experience and life in being queer in Japan was also noted, in order to be compared to the findings brought up in previous research. The clips ranged from 20-second snippets to longer segments of 3-4 minutes. Several of the interview subjects were featured multiple times throughout the documentary for differing lengths of time, which allowed for more information to be gathered about those particular individuals.

The results were then compared against the findings in *Queer Japanese – Gender and Sexual Identities through Linguistic Practices* to see if any changes had occurred since its publication.

4. Theory/ Previous research

Before we delve into *Queer Japan*, we must first look at previous research that has been made on the topic and which key elements that are and important part of queer language. The key points that have emerged and that I will be presenting are: Gender Norms in Japan, LGBTQ+ rights in Japan, Formality and Honorifics, Gendered Language and the history thereof, Men's and Women's language, the intersectionality of Language and Sexuality. Finally, I will be looking at Abe's research directly and give an overview of Lesbian and Gay speech.

4.1 Gender Norms in Japan

Societal norms are constantly fluctuating, and gender norms are no different. Japan is no exception, and there have been many changes over the centuries. Gender norms in Japan as we know them today started emerging when Neo- Confucianism came to Japan from China in the 17th century (Kincaid, 2019; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). This moral and philosophical ideology values righteousness, integrity, and respect (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). It also puts great focus on putting the family above all else and that those of a higher position than oneself should be respected (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019; Kincaid, 2019). In the case of men and women, this meant that women were always subordinate to a man. In the beginning of her life, she must show respect to her father. When she is married (which all respectable young women should do) she must respect her husband, and when she has children (which she should) she should respect her eldest son. A woman's role in Confucian society was to take care of her family from the home, and what mattered the most was the family legacy (Kincaid, 2019). This meant that more focus was put on having children and continuing the family name than anything else. Although it was a patriarchal society, it was different to what most people in the West would consider it. Women were allowed to own property, inherit titles, and were expected to show the same bravery and loyalty to their country as men. Often they were also heads of the household and took care of finances, while the men were out and earning said money (Kincaid, 2019; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). Men were expected to be all this, and more. They were not only expected to be strong and brave, but also have great leadership abilities and combat ability. A man who could not devote his entire being to his superiors was not, in society's eyes, a respectable man (Kincaid, 2019). They were also expected to be well educated in the arts, in

particular writing, painting, and playing instruments. It was considered an integral part of the warrior to be well versed in many fields, as it proved his skillset (Kincaid, 2019; Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). The concept of a *senpai-kohai* relationship was also very important at this time. *Senpai*- meaning senior, were older and more trained/ educated men who would (and were expected to) coach younger men, *kohai*, and help educate them in whichever field they were active (Kincaid, 2019). The *senpai*, being the older and more experienced man, should be met with respect and obedience, as per Confucianism. His opinions should be respected and followed in all cases. In return, the *kohai* gains knowledge, training, and opportunities through his *senpai* and his contacts (Kincaid, 2019).

During the Meiji restoration and subsequent years, a lot of things, including gender roles, changed in Japanese society. The Confucian norms were still upheld, but in a different manner. Instead of men being loyal to a *shogun*, they were now loyal to a company (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002; Kincaid, 2019). This is when we first start to see the phenomenon of lifetime employment, which is still very common in Japan today. The idea that men should be the breadwinners and be able to provide for his family therefore remained. Group thinking and ideology also remained, and it was vital for employees to put the group (i.e., the company) first as well as all decisions to be made in unison (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002; Kincaid, 2019). The *senpai-kohai* relationships also remained important in any group setting. The older and more experienced men would look out for the younger and offer them advice on life as well as more opportunities both in their personal and business life (Kincaid, 2019). For women, they could still own property and were in charge of the family finances, but this time as housewives. It was important that they take care of the house and children so that men could dedicate themselves to their work (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002).

Are these norms still upheld in modern Japan? A 2002 study conducted by Yoko Sugihara and Emiko Katsurada sought to see which characteristics were desirable in modern-day Japan for women and men respectively. Of the 200 participants, 100 were given a list of 296 adjectives and personality traits and were then asked to label them as desirable attributes for men, and the remaining 100 participants did the same for women. Among the words/traits that were considered desirable for men were *strong willed, leadership capabilities, have guts, relied on by others* and *ability to bring others together* (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). From this, we can see that people find men desirable if they have a strong personality as well as demonstrate good

leadership and group dynamic skills. For women, the traits/words chosen were *innocent, amiable, polite, attentive to the needs of others* and *love children* (Sugihara & Katsurada, 2002). For women there is less emphasis on being strong, but instead to be soft, friendly, and caring.

These studies show that gender norms and stereotypes still exist, but that they are beginning to merge. Let us also bear in mind that these studies are older, and that much can happen in a few years. As of the writing of this dissertation (spring 2021), the employment rate for working age adults (between 15 and 64) in Japan is 77.7%, with 71% of women being employed and 84.3% of men (OECD, 2019). Of those, 39.1% are women working part time and only 14.2% are men. We can see that although the employment rate overall is fairly similar, there is a drastic difference in those who are employed part-time. Furthermore, the age at which there are the least amount of men in part-time jobs is between ages 25-54, when it is only 6.2%. For women however, although the age group is the same, the percentage is not. 33.1% of women between the ages of 25-54 are employed part-time (OECD, 2019). Whether this is due to companies not hiring women after they have gotten married or given birth is a different discussion entirely, but there is a significant difference between men and women, particularly in this age bracket. When it comes to wage gaps between men and women, Japan has the second highest gap in the world, falling only behind Korea. There is a 23.5% gap between men and women, men being the ones who earn the most (OECD, 2019).

4.2 LGBTQ+ rights in Japan

In the Edo period, before the Meiji restoration, gender and sexuality were a very natural part of life in Japan, and discrimination on such grounds were not carried out. In fact, there were not even words to describe ‘different sexualities’, as they were not considered different at all. People liked what they liked, and that was that. As such, no LGBTQ+ specific rights were in place because they were simply not necessary. This started to change with the Meiji Restoration and the introduction of Christian ideals into Japan. Homosexuality or any sort of ‘queerness’ was now seen as abnormal and was punishable by law (Kolbeins, 2019).

As of the writing of this thesis (2021), there are no rights or laws to protect or validate LGBTQ+ people in Japan in any legal way, including protection at one’s workplace or when attempting

to get a housing contract. Homosexuality was decriminalised in 1881, but only made legal in 2018 and is still highly stigmatised. Marriage among partners of the same sex is not legal (Abe, 2010, Equaldex, 2021; Free and Equal, 2021; Kolbeins, 2019; McKirdy, 2020).

In March of this year, a court ruling concerning same-sex marriage in Sapporo was the first to actively state that not allowing two people of the same sex to marry was unconstitutional. During previous discussions on this issue, then Prime Minister Shinso Abe's government stated that allowing same-sex marriage would be a violation of Article 24 of the Constitution of Japan (McKirdy, 2020)(The full article can be found in the reference section). The article states that mutual consent is required of both *sexes* and not both *people*, therefore implying that only a man and a woman can get married legally. In retaliation to this statement, many people referred to a different article in the constitution, article 14 (once again, found in the references). The argument brought forward was that according to the same constitution, no Japanese person should be treated differently than another (McKirdy). So, the constitution contradicts itself, and Article 14 should be upheld. In some cities and wards (among others Shibuya, Setagaya, Sapporo, Fukuoka and Kumamoto) same-sex *partnerships* are recognised, but they are not legally binding like a marriage (Kolbeins, 2019; McKirdy,2020). These partnerships mainly allow for such things as renting flats and hospital visits, which would otherwise only be allowed by one's family or spouse (McKirdy, 2020).

In the case of transgender people, it is similarly legal, but no protection or rights are given. This makes it very difficult for people to find jobs, get insurance&/ healthcare or purchase housing of any kind, since their birth sex does not match their presented gender (Equaldex, 2021; Kolbeins, 2019). Up until very recently one could not legally change one's gender, but in 2018 a motion was passed allowing it. Although it is not quite that straightforward. There are five criteria that have to be fulfilled in order for it to be legally changed:

- The person has to be over 20 years of age (the age of legally becoming an adult in Japan)
- The person cannot be married
- The person cannot have a child under 20 years of age
- The person's appearance has to match the gender they wish to change to
- The person must undergo surgery to have their reproductive organs removed

Many, including people and organisations outside of Japan have complained about these restrictions, saying that the final point violates the human rights acts (Kolbeins, 2019; McKirdy, 2020).

In the lead up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics (as of now postponed to the summer of 2021), various organisations and athletes in Japan have pledged for equality among all in the matter of discrimination. According to the Olympic Charter, discrimination of any nature is not allowed, including on the basis of one's sexuality. Since Japan does *not* comply with this, many are saying that Japan should rectify this before the Olympics begin, both for the many Olympic athletes themselves but also for the greater good of the Japanese people. Despite Japan being one of the nations pushing the bill when it comes to LGBTQ+ issues at the United Nations, they have not done the same within their own borders. The legalisation of homosexuality in 2018 was a step (some believe) mainly taken because of the upcoming Olympics, and the looming wave of foreigners whose home countries do not ban homosexuality (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

4.3 Formality and Honorifics

According to Oxford Bibliographies, Honorifics are “...*linguistic forms that are used prototypically to express regard or esteem toward an entity worthy of respect, most typically a person of superior social standing.*” (Brown, 2020).

Japanese has several levels of polite language known under the umbrella term *keigo*, which involves different types of politeness depending on the situation and the people involved. These include the *referent* and *addressee honorific* forms (Tsujiura, 2014; Hasegawa, 2014). This rather intricate system of verb forms, nouns, and adjectives is often seen as overly complicated or even unnecessary to people not familiar with Japanese. But ask the Japanese themselves and they will say it is an integral part of the language (Hasegawa, 2014). Honorifics play a key part in gendered language, as women are thought to use more formal language, and therefore more honorifics

4.4 Gendered Language

Gendered language, specifically male and female, has long been a feature of Japanese. Due to the fact that Japanese is a high-context language (Hua, 2019), it is even possible to have an entire conversation without ever stating the gender of the speakers. In high-context cultures, most of the information is implied and alluded to rather than being said explicitly. The speaker's choice of words and conjugation will therefore often tell of their gender, age, and status for you as the listener/reader (Hasegawa, 2014; Hua, 2019). To demonstrate this, let us look at a short conversation:

“The spring flowers are beautiful. Especially the cherry blossoms.”

“They're pretty, but to me they all look the same.”

“Then, do *you* know the difference?”

“Yes, I can tell they're different. “

If we were to have the conversation like this in English, we would have no context of the speakers. In order to know a bit more about them, we would have to alter the conversation to look a bit more like this:

“The spring flowers are beautiful. Especially the cherry blossoms.”, said Charlotte.

“They're pretty, but to me they all look the same.”, replied Levi.

“Then, do *you* know the difference?” Charlotte asked.

“Yes, I can tell they're different.” Robert answered.

We now have the context to know the presumed genders of the speakers based on their names as well as adding a better flow to the conversation of previously unknown speakers. Since this type of information is not transmitted the same way in Japanese, the sentences would look a little different:

“haru no o-hana wa kirei desu wa. toku ni wa sakura desu”

SPRING - part. – FLOWER - top.mark. -BEAUTIFUL - copula - sfp. -ESPECIALLY -
part - CHERRY BLOSSOMS - copula.

(the flowers of spring are pretty. especially the cherry blossoms)

"kirei kedo, ore ni totte zenbu wa onaji da zo"

BEAUTIFUL – but – me – part. – when it comes to - EVERYTHING - part. - SAME -
copula – sfp

(even though they are pretty, to me they all look the same)

"jaa, anata wa chigasa wo shitteimasu ka"

THEN – YOU – part- DIFFERENCE - part. TO KNOW (present continuum) – part.

(Then, do you know the difference??)

"washi ga shitt-oru."

I – part- TO KNOW (presens continuum)

(Yes I know)

Despite being short, this conversation is packed with information and once we break these sentences down, it is quite plain to see the gender, age, and status of who has made the utterances. In the first line, the word '*o-hana*' is used, which means flower. However, only *hana* means flower. The '*o*' in this case is a beautification prefix or formal marker that makes a word more formal or pretty (Hasegawa, 2014; Tsujimura, 2014,). At the end of the sentence there is also the sentence-final particle (sfp) '*wa*' which is used to soften the expression. Finally, the speaker uses the more formal version of the copula *da*, which is *desu* in both sentences. All these are features of women's speech in Japanese (Hasegawa, 2014; Tsujimura, 2014; Okamoto; Shigeko, 2018 (in Hasegawa, 2018). Using softer expressions, prettier words and more formal language are (stereo)typical components of speaking like a woman in Japan, therefore we can conclude that the first speaker is a woman. Most likely a younger woman, as she is using *teineigo* with her speaking partners to show respect, something that older people would not have to do.

If we instead look at the second utterance. The first thing to note is that the speaker uses the first-person pronoun *ore*, a typically masculine pronoun used mostly by young, 'manly' men. Based solely on this, we can assume that the speaker is a young, tougher man. This is further supported by the fact that they use the less formal version of the copula, *da*. This indicates that

the speaker is a man, and that he and the listener have the same status, and therefore need for him to be overly polite. Finally, he ends his sentence with the sentence-final particle *zo*, which is the more typically manly version of *yo*, which is used to express assuredness in your statement and to present new information (Hasegawa, 2014; Okamoto, 2014).

In the third sentence, the speaker uses the word '*anata*' ('you') to refer to one of their speaking partners. In typical male speech this is a formal pronoun, but in female speech it is used both formally and informally, thus perpetuating the stereotype that women use more formal language (Tsujimura, 2014; Okamoto, 2014)). They go on to use *teineigo* with the verb, stating it formally. Since we have already been introduced to a speaker who uses these more polite characteristics, we can assume that they are the same person, making this speaker a young woman.

If we look at the final sentence, it begins with the pronoun '*washi*', which means I/me. This pronoun is typically used by elderly men (or in media, male doctors (Kinsui, 2017)), which gives us a clue as to the identity of the third speaker. They go on to use '*shitt-oru*' instead of the standard '*shitte-iru*', yet another feature of elderly speech. They also utter the verb in short form as opposed to the longer, more formal *teineigo*. Basing our assumptions on the choice of pronoun as well as not using the formal version of the verb, we can assume that this speaker is an elderly man who does not need to be so polite, since he is the one who should warrant more respect in the conversation (Kinsui, 2017).

This type of contextual information is very common in Japanese, and the sentences above demonstrate just how much information can be put into a single utterance. Looking at these examples, we can see that information about gender, age and status in speech can be shown through pronouns, prefixes, verb conjugations, and sentence-final particles (Hasegawa, 2014; Okamoto, 2018; Tsujimura, 2014). Gender can also be shown through directives, questions, interjections, specific vocabulary, requests, the dropping of particles and different usage of the copula (Hasegawa, 2014; Tsujimura, 2014). Since the focus in this study is only gender, we will forego the other factors for the time being and take a deeper look into what constitutes 'male' and 'female' language.

4.4.1 The History of Gendered Language

The concept of gendered language is not a new phenomenon in Japanese. In fact, records of it can be found as early as the ninth century (Hasegawa, 2014). After several centuries, during the Muromachi Period (1392-1568), the difference in language use became more cemented and noticeable. This is where we start to see the difference in formality levels, with women more often using the polite *-masu* form. During the same period beautification prefixes and separate, more polite words became a norm for women, at least in the higher classes. This type of language became known as *nyōbō kotoba*, or ‘court women’s language’ (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017) and is featured most prominently in surviving literature of the time. Examples of such words include *oishii* (delicious), *o-hada* (skin) and *o-hiya* (cold water), which are still used today. Most of the specific characteristics that we see today however emerged during the Meiji period (1868-1912). It was then that certain sentence-final particles in particular became more associated with a certain gender, a phenomenon that had not been prevalent before (Hasegawa, 2014). In a study by Komatsu Hideo in 1988 (“Tōkyō-go ni okeru danjo-sa no keisei: shūjoshi o chūshin to shite” (Formation of gender differences in Tokyo dialect: focusing sentence-final particles), in Hasegawa, 2014 and Kinsui, 2017), texts from the Meiji and Edo Periods (1603-1867) were compared to see how the language had changed from a gender perspective. Sentence-final particles like *ze* and first-person pronouns like *ore* that were used heavily by both genders in literature from the Edo period, had in the following period been clearly assigned to just one gender. Several of the SFP structures had also been shortened during this time period.

Furthermore, the Meiji period saw the birth of *shosei kotoba* or ‘schoolboys’ language’, in which the use of *boku* as a first-person pronoun emerged (Hasegawa, 2014, Ishiyama, 2008, Kinsui, 2017). This was mostly used at elitist schools for the upper class but had a great influence in shaping modern day masculine language. Since the young men who studied at these prestigious schools often became appointed in high positions or leadership roles after finishing their education, *shosei kotoba* subsequently became the standard language for the leaders in areas of politics, economics, business, and academics (Kinsui, 2017). Due to the change of capital city from Kyoto to Tokyo during this time, there were many young men that were sent from the old capital to the new to be educated. This, coupled with many new students from Tokyo, made it so that the *shosei kotoba* became a mix between Western and Eastern Japanese at the time (Kinsui, 2017). Elements of Western dialects that are apparent in student language

are ending verbs with *-oru* or *-choru*, changing the ending of certain adjectives from *-i* to *-ka*, and usage of the SFP *wai* to name a few. These characteristics were not taken from any one dialect, but from several Western dialects due to the mix of students. Since *shosei kotoba* was also influenced by samurai language, several words and expressions were taken from there. As previously mentioned, the use of the first-person pronoun *boku* is taken from this type of speech, as well as the second-person pronoun *kimi* (you) and the imperative (ordering) expression *tamae* that comes from the honorific verb *tamau*. *Boku* is a quite gentle and polite pronoun, that signalled a certain refinedness and prestige among the schoolboys. But as the years went on, the image of the ideal Japanese man changed. In the mid 1900's it was no longer as important to be well-educated and aristocratic, but to be strong and to put in effort for the good of one's country (Kinsui, 2017). Due to this, the choice of first-person pronoun shifted from *boku* to *ore*, to convey that toughness and tenacity that was needed in Japan during and after World War II.

Parallel to that, 'schoolgirls' language' or *jogakusei kotoba*, also emerged at girl's schools, as can be understood from its name. The Meiji period was the first time that schooling was made readily available for girls because of the strong influence from the West, but it was still a matter of class and prestige and so only wealthier families could send their daughters to school (Kinsui, 2017). Schoolgirls of this era used many of the characteristics associated with women today, such as the SPF's *da wa*, *kashira*, and *te yo*, as well as speaking in a higher tone (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017). Due to the heavy use of especially *te yo* and *da wa* at the end of their sentences, this type of speech became known as *teyo-dawa kotoba* (*teyo-dawa* language). Here are two examples:

“22 (b) *Ara iya da wa*
 oh disagreeable COP SFP
 ‘Oh, I don’t like it’

(d) *Kuru kashira*
 Come SFP
 ‘I wonder if she will come’”

Hasegawa, 2014, p.364

Here, the interjection *ara* as well as the SFPs *da wa* and *kashira* are used, all traits of modern as well as Meiji era female language. *Josei kotoba* was regarded by scholars, journalists, and other writers to be vulgar, shrill, uncivilized, and unbecoming of young women (and future wives) (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017). Many articles and columns were written complaining about the speaking habit of young women, but that did not seem to affect them very much. *Josei kotoba* spread throughout the communities and social ranks and by the turn of the century it was considered an inclusive language and well established among women of all social standings. This type of speech was also heavily used by geishas of the time, but then with some rules to go along with it (Kinsui, 2017). For example, *atai* and *atashi* were both used frequently within the establishment but was not to be used with outsiders. These words, along with expressions such as *yokutte-yo* and *iya-yo*, were thought of as more a type of ‘business terminology’ or slang words (Kinsui, 2017). Nevertheless, the language use spread across the classes despite its bad reputation (mostly among men). In fact, in the 1930’s even upper-class women used *teyo-dawa* language, and it was frequently used in articles, novels and magazines, further enforcing its use (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017). This is also where the concept of “Princess Speech” or “Young Lady from a Good Family” (Kinsui, 2017) comes from, as the women of upper-class families used this type of language. By this point *josei kotoba* had become the norm and standard and was no longer seen as a blight upon the Japanese language. Not only had it spread across sociocultural boundaries but also geographical ones, as more and more schools for girls opened all over the country from the Meiji restoration going forward. This, coupled with its frequent use in popular magazines of the time, spread *josei kotoba* across the country and made it more accessible for all girls and women (Kinsui, 2017). *Josei kotoba* started to decline after the Second World War, as Japan went through major societal changes. For one, schools were no longer segregated by gender and so both boys and girls started going to the same schools (Kinsui, 2017). Gender-specific schools still exist in Japan, but they are no longer the norm. In addition, the class system was abolished which meant that the richer children from aristocratic families now went to the same schools as ‘regular people’. This also meant that there was no real use for overly formal language to be used by servants and suchlike in the families that they served. Similarly as with the schools, incredibly rich families who have employees such as maids still exist, but the idea of them as having higher status is now purely conceptual and a perpetuation of older times rather than reality (Kinsui, 2017).

4.4.2 Men's Language

As previously mentioned, one of the most defining characteristics of male speech is the use of less formal and more plain/ casual language (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014). This means that instead of uttering the standard '*watashi wa hon wo yomimasu*' (I will read a book), a user of male language might instead say '*ore wa hon wo yomu*' (I will read a book). The difference in these two sentences lies again not in meaning, but in context. Another aspect of formality in Japanese that men stereotypically don't use are 'beautification honorifics' (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014). This type of honorifics uses the prefixes *go-* (used for Sino-Japanese words borrowed from Chinese) and *o-* (used for native Japanese words) to make existing words sound more polite. For instance, one might say *o-kane* (money) or *go-shitsumon* (question) instead of simply *kane* or *shitsumon*.

It is also very common to use more 'slang' or 'rude' speech by changing the ends of verbs and adjectives (Abe, 2010; Hasegawa, 2014; Tsujimura, 2014). For example, saying *umee* (tasty) instead of *umai* or *oishii*, *kuu* (to eat) instead of *taberu* and *dekai/ dekkee* (big) instead of *ookii*. This used to be considered unrefined and vulgar, but not so much anymore. In fact, it is becoming increasingly common for women to use these terms too (Tsujimura, 2014), making them more general slang words rather than gender specific. Interjections also differ between these two genders. *che!*, *oi*, *oya?*, *yō* and *kora* are all considered to be male-coded (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017; Okamoto, 2018). But with many things, these are also increasingly being used by everyone and not just men.

Another point where the two gendered styles differ is the use of different sentence-final particles (also known as SFPs). They are used in Japanese for various reasons, such as making a statement a question, showing one's conviction, or softening an expression (Tsujimura, 2014). The particles *ze*, *zo* and *sa* are considered to be more masculine, and exude a sense of 'toughness'. Often paired with informal verb endings and masculine first-person pronouns, it also makes the speech rougher and sharper. The particles *yo* and *ne* do not seem to have assigned genders but are used in equal amounts by all (Abe, 2010; Tsujimura, 2014).

Finally, we must discuss the use of first-person pronouns. Tsujimura (2014) lists five pronouns as male-specific, two of which are first-person: *boku* and *ore*. Hasegawa (2014) further adds *washi* to this list, and Kinsui (2017) states that *oira*, *wasshi* and *asshi* are also male-coded

pronouns. *Boku* is a semi-formal first-person pronoun and can therefore be used in both formal and casual situations (Tsujimura, 2014). It is mostly used by younger men, due to its history. In Feudal Japan (1193-1868) (Latz et.al; 2021) *boku* was the word used to refer to a *shoguns* servant, who was always a young man. When the feudal system them was abolished in the Meiji restoration in 1868, the former servants continued to use *boku* to refer to themselves, and it spread to other men of their age (Ishiyama, 2008). *Ore*, however, is considered a very informal and sometimes even deprecatory pronoun (Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014). It is only used in casual or close conversations with interlocutors with whom one has a very close relationship, because of its lack of formality. As it is so casual, it would be wrong to use it in tandem with more formal Japanese, such as the verb ending *-masu*. This would create an unnatural clash between formalities, as it is not natural to use a polite conjugation with *ore*, or in fact to use such a casual first-person pronoun when speaking formally (Tsujimura, 2014). This is only from a Standard Japanese perspective however, as there are dialects where *ore/ora* are considered to be gender-neutral words (Didi-Ogren, 2020; Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014) There are a few first-person pronouns that are female-coded, but there are also a number that are considered gender neutral or acceptable to be used by anyone. These are *watakushi* and *watashi*, with the former being more formal.

4.4.3 Women's Language

Many characteristics of female speech are not defined specifically to be used by women, but how they are different from men's speech. For many years, Japanese scholars have written about the 'mysteries' of how women speak and how fitting (or not) it is of them to speak that way. Judging by this, you can also probably see that the people who complained or commented on the language used by women were mainly men. But as with any aspect of a language, the concept of gendered language in Japan is constantly changing.

The first stereotype about women's language is that women use more polite language than men, and are gentler and more softly-spoken (Hasegawa 2014; Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014). Therefore, women are more likely to use the *-masu* ending for verbs and the more polite first-person pronouns *watakushi* or *watashi*. They are also users of the beautification honorifics to sound more polite and refined (Tsujimura, 2014).

A trait that can be found more in women's than men's language is the phenomenon of *right dislocation*. This is when words and information that would normally be in the beginning of a sentence (the left) are pushed to the back instead (the right), scrambling the word order. Take these two sentences for example:

“Kono okashi tabeta?”

this sweet ate

“Did you eat this sweet?”

Tabeta, kono okashi?

ate this sweet

“Did you eat this sweet?””

Tsujimura, 2014, p.420 (Italics added by me)

The first sentence has the correct word order of SOV (subject, object, verb) whereas the second sentence is scrambled and has the verb first. This word order can be used if a pause is added after the verb (above demonstrated through a comma). Women also have a higher tendency to scramble the direct and indirect objects in a sentence, placing them before the subject rather than after. Men also scramble their speech, but with different elements of a clause. Men scramble adverbials and subjects more than women, as well as referring to the scrambled parts in the cases of right dislocation. Take this sentence for example:

“(37) *sore-wa hurui kamo shiremasen yo, wareware-no kankaku-wa.*

that-TOP old maybe we-GEN feelings-TOP

“They may be old[-fashioned], our feelings.”

Tsujimura, 2014, p.420 (italics added by me)

Here, *sore-wa* (that is) takes the topic place of *wareware-no kankaku-wa* (our feelings). However, instead of simply leaving the sentence as is when having placed the verb before the subject, the speaker has added *sore-wa* to refer to the same thing. This type of right dislocation is more common among men and is used for emphasis or as a way to rephrase oneself (Tsujimura, 2014).

Sentence-final particles also differ between these two genders. In the case of women, the particles *kashira*, *wa* (with rising intonation) and *no* (with falling intonation) are considered typical. Combinations of several particles such as *wa yo*, *wa ne*, *no ne* and *no-yo-ne* are also considered typically female. Interestingly, *wa* and *ne* are only female-coded when using particular intonations (rising and falling respectively) (Abe, 2010; Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014). Next is interjections; the words *ara*, *iya*, *mā*, and *sōnē* are considered feminine, (Hasegawa, 2014; Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014)

Finally, we will address female coded first-person pronouns. The pronoun *atashi*, as well as *atakushi* and *atai* are thought to be used by women only (Kinsui, 2017; Tsujimura, 2014). Interestingly, these words are all derived from *watakushi*, which is considered to be gender neutral (Ishiyama, 2008). In male speech there is a clear difference between formal and informal pronouns, but this is not so much the case in female speech. Although there are differences (*atakushi* and *atashi* are more formal than *atai*), there is not the expectation that women will switch as much. Rather, there is the expectation and stereotype that women must constantly use formal pronouns, since there aren't any equivalents of the same level of casualness as *boku* and *ore* specifically for women (Abe, 2010; Tsujimura, 2014). This can however depend entirely on the dialect, as there are some parts of Japan where the use of *ore/ora* is considered gender neutral and not masculine, as in Standard (Tokyo) Japanese (Abe, 2010; Didi-Ogren, 2020; Tsujimura, 2014).

4.5 Language and Sexuality(/gender)

In the history of languages and sexuality, Japanese is not the first (nor, most likely, the last) to have specific ways of speaking. Another well-known example is Polari, a language spoken mostly in the greater London area during the 1900's. In a society where being gay (or queer in any way) was punishable by law and it could be dangerous to make one's sexuality known to anyone, Polari was a secret language used mostly by gay men and lesbians in order to communicate undetected. It was mainly a spoken language, and so very few written extant texts

are available. Polari was most similar to English and could possibly be considered to be a sociolect of sorts, depending on how one wants to define it. Most notably, Polari kept the same sentence structure as English, but had its own words for things, giving it a rather impressive lexicon. It not only took words and inspiration from English, but also from Italian and the lingua franca used among sailors of the Mediterranean Sea at the time. Some examples include *aunt nell* (to listen), *EEK* (face), *ben* (good), *fambles* (hands) and *omee* (man). Polari was only used among various queer groups, but first became more publicly known in the late 1960's with the BBC radio show *Round the Horne*, which featured the main characters sprinkling Polari vocabulary into their speech. This, coupled with the wave of human rights activism in the early 1970's especially for women's rights, is a possible reason that Polari declined in use. Since more and more of their language was becoming known to the general public and not just the gay scene, it was not so secret anymore. This, coupled with the fact that queer people could be more 'out in the open' as it were (but still met with extreme prejudice and stigma), most likely led to the decline of the language (Baker, 2002).

In the case of Japanese, since it has several clear-cut ways of 'sounding like a man/woman', this means that it is fairly easy to play around with one's speech, as we saw in the previous section on role language. The way one speaks is a way to express one's identity and can therefore also be used to express one's sexuality. English-speaking countries for example, particularly America, have the notion that (white, middle-class) gay men speak in a higher pitch, sound like women, articulate more, have a slight lisp, and use more detailed descriptive words (Gaudio, 1994; Piccolo, 2008). Similar notions exist for LGBTQ+ people in Japan, albeit in slightly different ways. In their book *Queer Japanese: Gender and Sexual Identities through Linguistic Practices* (2010), Abe shares their findings of spending ten years in and around the bar scene of Tokyo, both at lesbian and gay bars. These bars, located in Shinjuku Ni-Chome, serve not only the purpose of a 'regular' bar, but also to act as a meeting spot for LGBTQ+ people and to be a space where one can build a community (Abe, 2010). Being queer in Japan is still stigmatised and even looked down upon, so these bars serve as a free space where people can simply be themselves (Abe, 2010; Kolbeins, 2019).

4.5.1 Lesbian's speech

The first thing to note is the use of formality. As mentioned previously, the stereotype is that women use more formal speech than men. In the case of lesbians, it varied greatly, particularly between the employees and the customers at the bar. Occasionally the bartenders would use the standard form of politeness with their supervisors and customers as would be expected, in other cases they would stick to an impolite speech style, regardless to whom they were talking. This could either be to work against the stereotype of women always being polite, or simply the employees creating a friendly space at the bar (Abe, 2010). As the bars are important to the LGBTQ+ community, instilling a sense of closeness by using less formal speech could very well be the case.

First-person pronoun usage also differed between the bars, but they seemed to have one thing in common; nobody wanted to 'sound like a man'. Overall, the women used *watashi*, *atashi*, *ore*, *washi*, and *jibun* as their pronouns of choice, changing whenever the situation called for it. Many women used *watashi* or *jibun* in particular, because they considered them to be the most fitting and gender-neutral words. When asked why they did not use for example *boku* or *ore*, several women said that they did not see themselves as that masculine (even though both pronouns can be used by women, especially in certain dialects). They did not want to sound like men, and some even expressed dislike towards men overall and therefore did not want to associate with them in any way, not even using a male-coded pronoun. One particular case when *boku* was used was when the author was talking to a customer at one of the bars. When asked about her choice of pronoun, she said this:

“(12) Customer: *Atashi wa kyosē o haru toki, “boku” o tsukau*”

”I [*atashi*] use ‘I’ [*boku*] when [I] make a false show of power.”

Abe, *Queer Japanese*, p.46

For her, using the more masculine *boku* was equated with showing more power and authority. *Kyosē* in this case means ‘empty power’. She therefore used a more masculine word when she wanted to *appear* powerful, rather than exercising power currently in her grasp. Another example of a woman using more masculine language when wanting to sound more powerful came from one of the bartenders. While speaking to the author, she stated that she most often used *jibun* no matter with whom she was speaking, because that seemed the most fitting. She

considered both *watashi* and *atashi* too feminine, and *washi* too masculine. She stated with certainty that she did not want to use overly masculine forms. But, upon receiving a call from a customer who had behaved poorly the night before, she displays an interesting switch in speech patterns.

“(11) Employee: *omē na, fuzaken na yo, ore okoru yo*

” Listen, don’t fuck with me. I’m [*ore*] getting pissed off.

[...]

Ore sugē koshi itai mon. Koshi ni kita yo.

”You know what? My [*ore*] lower badly hurts. It really hurts.”

Abe, *Queer Japanese*, p.46

Here we see that the employee does not in fact only use *jibun* but has switched to *ore* when speaking angrily to a customer. She also uses the stereotypical word *fuzaken na*, which is a very much abbreviated version of *fuzakenai de kudasai*, which means ‘please don’t joke around’. She also says *sugē* instead of the standard *sugoi*, as well as using the shorter, more casual form of the verbs. Much like the previous example, this woman uses more masculine and ‘tough’ language when wanting to appear powerful or intimidating.

Abe found that the most frequently used SPFs were *yo* and variations thereupon, such as *da yo* and *da yo ne*. Other SPFs such as *da* and *zo* were also used. What all of these particles have in common is that they are more or less masculine. Although *da* in of itself is not masculine, the combinations of *da* with other particles, is (Abe, 2010). Abe states that while many lesbian women in these bars used masculine language, it was not because they wanted to be perceived as men. Rather, they did not want to use more feminine speech due to the perceived connotations of fragility and softness, but to be seen as tougher and stronger. They therefore used more masculine forms to emulate the power that men have in modern society. Not to ‘use’ men’s power, but to play off of the perceived power that masculine speech patterns give.

4.5.2 Gay's speech

Much like the lesbian bars, the gay bars in Shinjuku double as general meeting points for men and are places meant to bring about a sense of community. Unlike lesbian speech however, gay speech is very much in the eye of the public and can even be seen frequently in various forms of media. It is known under the name of *o-nē-kotoba*, meaning 'big sister speech'. However, defining this is not as straightforward as it may seem. On the surface, *o-nē-kotoba* looks like women's speech, but most interviewees in Abe's research states that it is in fact different. *O-nē-kotoba* is, simply put, the exaggerated and stereotypical way women speak, mostly in media, but does not reflect the way women *actually* speak. Furthermore, many men that were asked about their own usage stated that they had to learn it as a separate entity, they could not simply copy their mothers and sisters. *o-nē-kotoba* is heavily upheld and learned in the various bars, with many men only using it while out for drinks. It creates that same sense of community and friendliness in gay bars as more masculine and casual language does in lesbian ones. As there is a difference between actual women's speech and *o-nē-kotoba*, the problem of 'real' vs. 'fake' *o-nē-kotoba* also arises. Some interviewees claimed that they had little respect for non-gay people using incorrect or fake *o-nē-kotoba* as they had heard in mainstream media, rather than the real language that is used in bars (Abe, 2010).

5. Results

In order to see if Abe's findings hold true almost ten years later, they will be divided into parts. First, the gender distribution of the subjects, sexuality distribution, then the use of gendered language and finally the use of formal language. Since I do not believe the language use between cis women (who are born female and identify as women) and trans women (who are born men but identify as women) to be relevant in this particular study (as they are all women), I have chosen to omit said categories save for the very first figure, which showcases the subjects in the study.

Below, we can see a table of the gender distribution in *Queer Japan*;

5.1 Gender Distribution

Fig.1, Gender Distribution table

Gender	Number of answers
Man	8
Man (transgender)	3
Woman	3
Woman (transgender)	4
Not Mentioned/ unspecified	14
Total:	32

Out of the 32 individuals that were deemed to have had adequate speaking time, there were 11 men (three of whom were transgender), seven women (four of whom were transgender), one person who identified as simply queer, and a further 14 people who did not specify. As for the people who did not specify their gender, either it did not come up during the conducted interviews with the filming crew, because they only stated their sexuality, or because it simply could not be defined that easily. For example, there were two cases where the subject only stated that they were gay. Since the word 'gay' refers to a man who is sexually interested in men, we can therefore assume that their gender is also man. However, since they did not state it outright, I have chosen to include them in the 'Not Mentioned/ unspecified' column. Similarly, one of the subjects talks about how a particular transgender bar was a good place to

gather information about transitioning. Due to the setting (a transgender bar), the topic at hand (transitioning), and that they presented as a man would lead one to believe that they were a man. But, since they did not specify, I have also placed this result in the ‘Not Mentioned/ unspecified’ category. In one of the cases, the subject said that they were a woman, but that being transgender was also part of their identity. They were ‘simply themselves’. I have therefore elected to put them in the ‘Not Mentioned/ unspecified’ category. Conversely, one of the subjects did not explicitly state their gender but mentioned an event where they, ‘as an older MTF, handed a bouquet over to the younger generation of MTF’. MTF in this context means Male To Female (Kolbeins, 2019). She can therefore be assumed to be a trans woman, although not outright stated. She has therefore been placed in the category of ‘woman’, since her statement specifies her as one.

5.2 Sexuality Distribution

Fig.2, Sexuality Distribution table

Gender	Sexuality			
	Gay	Lesbian	Bi	Not Mentioned/ unspecified
Man	6	X	1*	4
Woman	X	2	X	7*
Not Mentioned/ unspecified	1	X	X	14*

Many of the subjects who did not explicitly state their gender did not state their sexuality either or have a sexuality that does not quite fit in with any of the other categories. The asterisk is there to indicate that it is not so clear-cut. For example, one of the subjects stated that they ‘like women, but that it is more complicated than that’. I have therefore elected to place them in the aforementioned category. Similarly, another subject was not sure how to define their sexuality. They used to be a lesbian, but since they are now married to a (transgender)man, they were not sure if they wanted to define themselves as gay, bi or straight. Another asterisk marking is the

only bi man, where the definition is also not as (pardon the pun), straightforward. He said that he was ‘probably bi’ but that the gender of his partner did not really matter so much.

Interestingly, one subject referred to himself, both in the context of gender and sexuality as *hentai* meaning ‘strange’ or ‘abnormal’. He mentioned that in the past, the word ‘queer’ meant everyone of a LGBTQ+ minority, regardless of gender or sexuality. This statement is then repeated later in the documentary by another subject, so we can assume this to be true. He goes on to say that with all these new letters and terms being added to the letter combination (he mentions it as LGBTQAP (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer, Ace, Poly), ‘can’t we be okay with *hentai*?’. It is clear in the context of the documentary that he says this as a joke. However, only two other subjects use the word *hentai* to describe people, then in the context of a monthly party being held every month at a club in Tokyo and a statement that everyone is a bit *hentai* since they have at least one strange thing they like. *hentai* has previously had bad associations and has not been seen as a particularly positive word. Leaning towards the bad side of otherness/strangeness, *hentai* has also been used as a slur against LGBTQ+ people (Abe, 2010; Kolbeins, 2019). As not many subjects used this word in the documentary, we can assume that it is still the case.

5.3 Gendered Language

Fig.3, First-person pronouns table

Gender	Pronoun					None
	<i>watashi</i>	<i>boku</i>	<i>ore</i>	<i>atashi</i>	Other	
Man	1	2	X	X	X	8
Woman	2*	X	X	X	X	5
Not Mentioned/ unspecified	3	1	X	X	X	10

As previously mentioned, it is very common in Japanese to drop pronouns completely, which was also the case for the subjects in the documentary. 23 out of 32 subjects did not use a single first-person pronoun during their segments. Out of those, six out of nine uses were with the pronoun *watashi*. The cell depicting the use of *watashi* for women is marked with a star. This is because one of the women was using Japanese sign language rather than ‘ordinary’ spoken Japanese. The translated subtitles used the word *watashi*, and so that is the pronoun I have

chosen to make a note of. Since I myself do not know whether Japanese sign language has separate signs for *watashi*, *boku*, *ore* etc. or only one word for all of them, I have chosen to give this cell a star.

One characteristic of lesbian bar talk presented in Abe (2010) was that lesbian women tend to use more masculine speech to give a perceived increase in power. The subject was not specifically brought up by the filming crew, but one example was brought up by a subject themselves. The subject is the owner of a lesbian bar in Shinjuku Ni-Chome, and when retelling an interaction had with a customer, said this:

“ *‘moto wa onna da kara ore’*

previously - TOPIC – woman – COPULA – because - I [*ore*]

‘Because I used to be a woman’

‘sengetsu wa haireta janai ka ore’

last - month – TOPIC - let in pas. neg. - PARTICLE I [*ore*]

‘But I was let in last month, wasn’t I [*ore*]?’

‘demo hige haite nakatta jan, sengetsu wa’

but – beard – go in, neg. past. – last month TOPIC

‘But you didn’t have a beard did you, last month’”

Kolbeins, 2019

The interaction took place when a man wanted to come into said bar, despite it being women only. He states that he had been let in the previous month (when he seemingly looked more like a woman) and was upset that he was not being allowed in this time. The owner then retaliates with the fact that he did not have a beard last month, and therefore did not look as much like a man as he does now. The discussion was brought upon due to the fact that there at the time were only gay and lesbian bars in Ni-Chome, but none for transgender people. This conversation is interesting because, although the subject does not use this type of speech in any of the other interview clips, in this particular one they use a very male-coded language. Both the paraphrased customer (the first two sentences) and their own speech (the final sentence) is in short/ less polite form and use more stereotypically masculine forms. The use of *jan* for example,

instead of the full *janai* is more often done by men. Furthermore, the first-person pronoun given to the customer is *ore*, the more macho and tough first-person pronoun for men. Whether this was the actual pronoun used or if it is the owner's way of making the customer sound more 'manly' and tough cannot be said. However, based on Abe's findings this could have been a way to make the customer sound more aggressive and seem pushy, and showcase that they were in fact a man trying to get into a women's only bar.

In the case of SFPs, they were used by around one third of the subjects (9/32). The most commonly used one was *ne*, which was used three times, followed by *ka na* twice. The remaining SFPs that were used, *no wa*, *de wa*, *yo ne* and *sa* were only used once each. Using *wa* at the end of a sentence is considered more feminine but was used by one woman and one man respectively. The remaining SFPs are considered gender neutral, so I deem that no further interpretation is required here.

Only one interjection was used, *iya*. This word is stereotypically used by women (Abe, 2010) but was in this case used by someone who did not specify their gender. *Iya* is used as a negative word to mean 'no' or 'I don't like that'. In the context of the documentary, it was used as the latter as the subject was talking about how they did not want to be told they are sick or mentally disturbed because they are queer.

Nigh on ten years had passed since Abe's research when this documentary was released, and it was clear that a few things had changed. It was mentioned by Abe (2010), Hasegawa (2014), Tsujimura (2014) and Kinsui (2017) that gendered language is all but non-existent outside of media and stereotypes. This could be clearly seen in all the subjects, as only a handful of them used any sort of gendered language, either in the form of pronouns, verb forms or SFPs. Additionally, the terms used to refer to sexualities has changed. In Abe's study (2010), the term *nenko* was used to refer to heterosexual people, and *okama* was often used to refer to gay men. *Okama* means container or pot, and was viewed like the word queer, a negative word that was being regained by the minority it is means to suppress (Abe, 2010). The word *nabe*, also meaning cooking pot, was also used by the subjects in Abe's study. This was not the case in *Queer Japan* however, as the words used by the subjects were *sutoreeto* (straight) and *gei* (gay) respectively. Only two subjects mentioned *okama* at all, both of them older (seemingly around 50 and 70 years old respectively). When the word *okama* was explained in the documentary it was defined as "1. Cooking pot, 2. A Man's Ass, 3. Gay Slur" (Kolbeins, 2019). This indicates

that *okama* is no longer in popular use and is still considered to be slur. The younger generations favour the English loanwords ‘straight’ and ‘gay’ instead.

5.4 Formal Language

Fig.4, Formal Language use table

Gender	Formality level			
	Only formal	Only informal	Decrease in formality	Mix
Man	4	3	2	2
Woman	4	X	1	2
Not Mentioned/ unspecified				

Out of the men, four used only formal speech, three only informal, two men used formal speech in the beginning but gradually shifted to informal throughout the documentary, and two men mixed their speech levels. Since the filming crew was present, I believe that the men who only used formal speech followed the convention of using more polite language with those that you do not know. One of these men spoke in formal style when addressing the filming crew but used informal when talking to himself. Since he knows himself well and does not need to be polite, I have placed him in the ‘Only formal’ category, since that is what he uses to address the filming team. Likewise, I believe that one of the two men who started using formal speech and then switched to informal did so due to their improving relations with the filming crew. This was not the case for the second individual however, who used formal language when introducing himself and his work, but then almost immediately afterwards switched to informal speech and used that consistently throughout the rest of the documentary.

For the women, four out of seven used only formal language, followed by two that mixed and 1 that decreased their formality. Here we can see that although the number of men and women who only used formal language is the same, there were no women who only used informal language, as there was for the men. In two of the cases, the women spoke formally when introducing themselves, but then went on to either mix formality levels continuously or switch completely to informal speech.

6. Discussion

The most commonly used pronoun (when used at all) was *watashi* for all, even among the men. Although men stereotypically use more informal language, that could not be seen in the case of first-person pronouns. As this was a documentary however, the film crew's presence, as well as the subjects' knowledge that this was going to be available to the public, it is more likely that this was a form of politeness because of relations with the film crew rather than a conscious pronoun choice based on gender. Since *watashi* is more formal and the subjects were not familiar with the film crew, it would be a natural choice for them to choose said pronoun.

As the documentary went on however, there was a change in formality level overall. Many subjects started off using formal speech, particularly when introducing themselves, but then changed as more time was spent with the crew. In relationships in Japan overall, the closer you get to someone the more informal you can be, as has been mentioned previously in this dissertation. This also seems to be the case for the subjects in the documentary, as many subjects gradually started mixing formality levels or even going completely over to informal speech. Furthermore, as some of the subjects were good friends, all interactions between themselves or utterances aimed at their friends were all uttered in informal speech. One instance where the stereotypes seem to be true however, was in the case of subjects who only used formal or informal language respectively. Three men used informal speech consistently, but there were no women who showed the same tendencies. In this case, the notion that women speak more formally than men holds true, as the closest was one woman who used formal language in the beginning of the documentary and then gradually decreased her formality level, and the two women who mixed their formality throughout. The same question arises here as with previous results; were the women more inclined to be polite because of their upbringing or expectations of women, or because they simply felt that distance from the filming crew and wanted to be civil?

As for SFPs, there is an interesting discussion to be had concerning the use divided by gender. Only two subjects used *wa*, one man and one woman. Incidentally, they were both trans, meaning that they both have (assumed) experiences as a woman as well as a man. The question here is whether the man still uses *wa* from when he was a woman, or if that is simply his preferred way of speaking. As I do not know his transition journey or for how long he was lived as a woman, I cannot say for certain. Similarly, does the woman use *wa* because that is her

natural speech pattern, or has she learned that that is how a woman should speak, similar to *o-nē-kotoba*? I believe that although gendered speech is not very much used, it would still be interesting to see if there is a significant difference in transgender and cisgender people's speech patterns.

Because of the observer's paradox, there is no telling to what degree the speech presented in *Queer Japan* was filtered or not, therefore the results need to be taken with a grain of salt. I believe the same can be said for Abe's work as well, but since the findings in that book were collected over ten years, I believe that there is very good reliability as the author had more time to befriend the subjects featured. The filming crew for the documentary seemingly only had a few weeks, and so could not achieve the same level of closeness as Abe did with her subjects. As the documentary went on however, certain subjects did exhibit a change in formality as they got to know the crew better, and I believe this would have continued if the filming had gone on for a longer period of time.

7. Conclusion

It seems that a lot has changed since Abe's initial study, but that certain things still hold true. The notion that women speak more formally than men was the case here. The women also tended to stick to more formal first-person pronouns than men, although the most common case for all subjects was to omit said pronoun completely. Lesbian women do not use masculine language to portray power to the same degree as in Abe's study, although it is still used for that purpose occasionally. Likewise, gay men do not use *o-nē-kotoba* to a great extent.

It appears that gendered language is becoming more and more obsolete and more a stereotype or forced image than a type of language that is actually used. The only exception is with first-person pronouns, where defined masculine and feminine words are still being used. It would be very interesting to redo Abe's initial study now, ten years later, and see how much has changed.

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