

Female Writing Style in a Newspaper Column
— a preliminary study on writing and gender —

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The purpose of this paper is to clarify the characteristics of female writing style in Japanese diachronically. By so doing, I hope to provide an alternative to previous linguistic analyses in relation to gender.

To begin with, the previous analyses on “letters to the editor” column in one Japanese newspaper are overviewed to determine the factors in female writing style. In this paper, attention is focused on four factors, i.e., the use of vocabularies such as *I* and *think*; the use of polite form; and the reference to the writers’ families and relatives.

The result shows that there is a difference in gender, i.e., a high rate of the factors in female writing style. The tendency, however, has been declining gradually during the last four decades. For example, the use of polite form does not crucially characterize female writing style, unlike our stereotyped image. Moreover, the issue of the word *housewife* as a woman’s social status is dealt with in this paper. The image of the word seems to have changed from positive self-esteem to negative self-esteem.

As a final remark, let me point out that this is a preliminary study on gender and language, and I realize that in depth research is needed to capture the relationship between gender and language.