

Stereotyped image through essays in opinion columns
— awareness of university students toward gender —

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The previous analyses of writing style in opinion columns in newspapers have concluded that there is a certain difference in gender. The researchers have analyzed the writing with the sex of the writer given. That is to say that they know whether the writer is male or female. This paper, on the other hand, approached the gender issue of writing in the experiment carried out on university students (120 male students and 112 female students). After reading the five essays in the opinion column, students were asked to guess the sex of the writers and to give some reasons in terms of vocabulary, expression, and content.

The result reveals that university students have a strong stereotyped image in gender, i.e. men as busy businessmen and women as idle housewives. The image has been molded through social and historical context, since the students, male or female, have a certain stereotype in common, at which they felt shocked. For example, over 70 % of students wrongly guessed one writer to be female because the essay was concerned with cooking and written in polite form.

Moreover, the students, male or female, have a negative stereotyped image toward women. In their image, women are nearsighted, only concerned with cooking and child care, or fussy about trivial matters, while men are productive and concerned with politics and economics. After the experiment, they shared the result and discussed what it meant. They became aware that the stereotype has been molded so natural that they thought it to be innate and rational. After the experiment and discussion, the students and I strongly feel that we should be aware of the stereotyped image molded naturally and be ourselves as much as possible.