Preliminary Study on Young Children's Acquisition of Sex Difference in Language

Yoshifumi Kohro

I. Introduction

There has been growing interest in the acquisition of communicative competence which is referred to as the ability to speak in a socially and contextually appropriate way. A native adult speaker of a language is supposed to have acquired this ability before he reaches his adulthood, although there may be an individual difference in proficiency to control the language with socio-cultural appropriateness. Communicative competence is not inherent to a man but something to be obtained through his observation of other people's speech and his interaction with them within a speech community, and the acquisition is a long process in which various aspects of communicative competence is gradually attained.

In this paper children's acquisition of the sex difference in language, which seems to be an essential feature of socio-culturally proper speech, will be deliberated for the purpose of providing a clue to an approach to the problem of children's acquisition of communicative competence, by referring to previous works of literature on the problem. In the later section of this paper some speech samples by a young child showing a developmental stage in the acquisition of sex difference in Japanese and those by caretakers who are considered to be continuously providing linguistic input for him will be introduced, and the problem of the caretaker's influence on young children's acquisition of sex difference will be discussed. Furthermore, the problem of what the caretaker's influence on child's acquisition of sex difference means will be considered from the viewpoint of a function of language to hand down cultural traits to the next generation.

II. Children's Acquisition of Communicative Competence

1. Communicative Competence and Children's Language Acquisition

As Andersen indicates, referring to Hymes's concept on communicative competence, children acquire not only vocabulary and grammatical rules of a language but also socio-cultural appropriateness in language use in the process of language acquisition, and this broadened view of language acquisition is in contrast with Chomsky's earlier standpoint that language acquisition is determined by an innate biological process of the Language Acquisition Device which facilitates one to produce the infinite set of grammatical sentences. Namely, unlike Chomsky's linguistic competence, communicative competence is not inherent in mankind but something to be obtained in the course of linguistic socialization in a certain speech community (1-3).

Saville-Troike, presenting essential components of communication such as linguistic knowledge, interaction skills and cultural knowledge, maintains that "communicative competence refers to knowledge and skills for contextually appropriate use and interpretation of language in a community" and that it is shared by the group (24). She puts emphasis on major roles of language played in the process of children's enculturation: (a) language is part of culture, and through language, knowledge, attitudes, and skills are transmitted from one generation to the next; (b) language is a medium through which other features of culture are bequeathed; (c) language is a tool to be utilized by children to explore their social environment and establish their status and role relationship within it. Through acquisition of language, children become enculturated in the sense that they learn to speak like a male or a female, an Englishman or a Chinese, and the rich or the poor (230).

She further describes the significance of observation and interaction as a prerequisite for children's acquisition of socio-culturally appropriate language use as follows: "Children are essentially participant-observers of communication, like ethnographers, learning

and inductively developing the rule of their speech community through processes of observation and interaction" (221). However, it should be noted that this is based on her presumption that all human children are provided with the inborn capacity to develop patterned rules for socio-culturally appropriate language use just as they are considered to be given innate abilities to generate both phonologically and syntactically proper utterances (221). She also believes that either conditioning derived from psychological stimuli or the innate capacity does not ensure the acquisition and that children are far more active in establishing the ability while making use of available social and linguistic input (225-6).

In short, it may be safely said that children acquire communicative competence, with the help of their innate ability, through observing what is going on in their speech community, taking social and linguistic input while interacting with people and further reconstructing their rules for socially appropriate language use. Therefore, it seems indispensable to consider the socio-linguistic environment in which they receive the input, so that we may realize when and how the acquisition of communicative competence takes place. This problem of children's socio-linguistic environment will be discussed in the later section of this paper.

2. Dialectal Variation and Register Variation

Before deliberating the emergence of children's communicative competence, distinction needs to be made between dialectal variation of language and register variation.

Andersen indicates that children must achieve a set of dialects of a language, register variation, and social interactional rules in order for them to acquire communicative competence (32). According to her, sets of dialects refer to aspects of language which mark social identity, including the region of origin, social class, ethnic group, age and gender. Register variations are something which allows children to express social meaning relevant to the specific contexts in which they speak, in terms of power, solidarity, purpose

and formality of the situation (32). She further explains the notion of register utilizing the parameters of registers such as mode of discource, field of discource, and manner of discource (8). Mode of discource indicates the medium of the language activity as seen in the distinction between written and spoken language. Field of discource is referred to as what is going on, the topic, the speaker's aim in the activity. This is observed in the difference between technical or non-technical language. The last parameter, manner of discource, means the personal relationships among the participants and their social functions, i.e., their social attitudes and their social roles in the discource as in the distinction between the language used by an employer or the one used by an employee in a certain situation.

Any native speaker of a specific language who has acquired communicative competence is considered to be able to speak with features marking his social identity while manipulating these parameters in register variation, consciously or unconsciously.

3. Period of Emergence of Communicative Competence

As Andersen points out, some studies have suggested that children aged 4 or 5 are unaware of rules for socio-culturally appropriate speech but that by age 10 or so they can differentiate registers of speech, but others have indicated that children are able to adjust their speech to context-sensitive style much earlier than expected (4).

Lakoff seems to take the former position. She indicates that both boys and girls learn women's language first but boys discard the features showing women's speech in getting involved in male peer pressure by the age of 10 or so while girls keep them (6). However, her following description about Japanese boy's acquisition of men's features in speech is a little precarious, although she admits that it is not based on her own observation; "I am told that in Japanese, children of both sexes use the particles proper for women until the age of five or so; then the little boy starts to be ridiculed

if he uses them, and soon learns to desist" (6).

Labov also seems to support a similar view. He argues that a speaker begins to acquire a set of evaluative norms of sociolinguistic patters and become sensitive to his own speech forms and other forms fairly late. Familiar forms of his own community are obtained at the age of 17 or 18, and a speech form with prestige such as pronunciation of post-vocalic [r] in New York City residents does not appear until relatively late (138).

Furthermore, Piaget, a cognitive-psychologist, insists that children under 7 think ego-centrically and have no real social life among them (60-61). For that reason, it is supposed that he considers it difficult for children to manipulate rules for socio-culturally appropriate language use.

In contrast to these positions, there are several research findings which support the position that socio-culturally conscious speech is acquired at a much earlier age, although the feature in speech on which the research focuses is different from one research to another. Romaine reports that she found some evidence for sex differentiation in the use of certain phonological variants by Edinburgh children as early as 6 years of age (113).

Saville-Troike also reports that an English-speaking boy of 3 years and 7 months performed style-shifting during a single outdoor play, depending on the addressee of his speech, i.e., peers, a girl he wants to play with or adult caretakers. She argues that his communicative competence already contains variability for different levels of politeness and formality (226).

In Andersen's research, which investigated children's ability to deal with register variation in English, the subjects were 24 children aged between 4 and 7. In her study children demonstrated their capability to make utterances appropriate for their assigned roles in controlled role-plays, although there were differences in the degree of proficiency depending on the subjects' age. She provided children with three settings such as the family situation, the doctor situation, and the classroom situation, and they were expected to

play with puppets such roles as a parent, a child, a doctor, a patient, a teacher and a student, etc. Subjects were able to play their roles in accordance with both social and contextual significance of their assigned roles. She describes further that "one might find evidence of some knowledge of register variation much earlier than 4" (173).

In Ervin-Tripp's study on children's use of directives, Corsaro's report on kindergartner's spontaneous role-play and Clancy's study on Japanese children's communicative style as well, children at an earlier age than those referred to by Labov and Piaget show emergence of socially and contextually conscious utterances, if not perfect ones.

As far as these descriptions are concerned, it appears reasonable to add weight to the latter position that emergence of scocially and contextually conscious speech by children are observed at an earlier age than expected. However, the following points must be taken into consideration. The period of children's acquiring socially and contextually appropriate utterances are not identical in all speech communities and cultures. In one culture children might be encouraged to obtain a certain feature of socio-culturally appropriate speech style earlier than in another. There may also be variables derived from differences of social classes as well as individual variations even in one culture. Furthermore, a certain aspect of speech recognized as socially and contextually proper may be acquired earlier than in another, and one researcher might be interested in one aspect of utterences and another researcher in another to acknowledge the emergence. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to specify the period of emergence.

III. Children's Acquisition of Sex Difference in Language

1. Sex Difference of Language in English and Japanese

Lakoff argues that several features of women's language are reflections of their social subordination to men and their psychological insecurity due to it. She points out that women's language in English comprises their more frequent use of politeness formulas, hedges, tag questions, precisely discriminatory naming of colors, meaningless particles, and intonation patterns showing the unsureness of the statement. Andersen summarizes features observed in women's speech, and they are women's frequent use of (a) intensifiers such as *so* and *quite,* (b) meaningless particles such as *Oh* and *dear!,* (c) politeness markers, (d) non-basic color terms such as *mauve* and *lavender,* (e) expressive adjectives such as *adorable* and *lovely,* and (f) euphemisms like *passed away* (41). On the contrary, men are inclined to use more commands and non-standard phonological forms than women, and to initiate conversation more often than women.

However, a few points should be taken into account. The descriptions of characteristics in women's speech and men's speech mentioned above are based on English in which marking of politeness, which is closely related to women's speech, is not always accompanied by changes in speech forms. In English substantial research has been conducted with respect to phonological features rather than grammatical ones. It should be remembered, however, that sex specific utterances with grammatical marking are observed in other languages. Another point is that there are not many sex-exclusive expressions which are exclusively used by a certain sex in English but they are easily found in such a language as Japanese.

Ide describes several characteristics in women's language in Japanese (1982, 378-382). The first one is that Japanese women use expressions including honorifics more frequently than men. Women's frequent use of honorifics is attributed to women's deferential attitudes towards men because of their socially subordinate position

in the society and women's desire of showing off their well mannered behavior. The second feature of women's speech is observed in their frequent use of high-level/formal forms as in such verb forms meaning 'did' as *itashi-mashita* or *shi-mashita,* as opposed to men's use of *yari-mashita* or *yatta.* Thirdly, women rarely use vulgar expressions like *tikusyo* 'Damn!' or *kuso* 'Shit!', or utterances such as *sugee* and *umee,* stigmatized phonological forms of the adjectives *sugoi* 'great' and *umai* 'delicious' respectively. Finally, women are likely to use more softening expressions which weaken the impression of the statement on the addressee. This is recognized in women's use of sentence final particles such as *wa* or *kashira,* in contrast to men's frequent use of *zo, ze, yo* and *na,* which indicate self-confidence, assertion, or confirmation. In addition to the features above, in the use of the first person referent [1] or the second person referent, clear distinction is made between women's language and men's, as in *watashi* 'I' for both men and women and *boku* 'I' exclusively for men.

It should be noted that the above descriptions about features showing sex difference in English and Japanese are extremely partial and superficial.

2. Literature on Children's Acquisition of Sex Difference

Children achieve such linguistic features as mentioned above, which are appropriate for their sex, in the course of their acquisition of communicative competence, although their proficiency in manipulating these aspects is not equal to that of adults. Coates describes the significance of acquiring sex-differentiated language as obtaining gender identity (121-22). According to Coates, children learn the cultural role assigned to them on the basis of their sex when they learn to speak, and this is a two-way process in that they learn to become a male or female in the speech community while becoming linguistically competent, and that they perpetuate social order creating gender distinction once they have achieved appropriate speech behavior to their sex. Several studies regarding chil-

dren's acquisition of sex difference of language will be referred to here so that the problem of how acquisition of sex difference takes place may be considered.

In Fischer's research, phonological variants of [iŋ] recorded in interviews with two groups of 24 children living in a village in New England, one from 3 to 6 years of age and another from 7 to 10, were analyzed (483-8). The result revealed that the girls preferentially used the standard variant [iŋ], as opposed to boy's frequent use of non-standard variant [in], and Fischer argues that the children have acquired features of male speech as in [in] and female speech as in [iŋ] by the age concerned.

Romaine describes that some evidence for sex differentiation in terms of the use of certain phonological variants by children as young as 6 was found in her study of Edinburgh school children (113-5). She states that certain non-standard phonological variants were used by boys more frequently than girls in Edinburgh school children, and that this corresponds to the result from Macaulay's study of Glasgow adults in which male speakers used these variants more often. Furthermore, she argues that the decreasing frequency of non-standard variants in both sexes in proportion to children's growth is reflection of their acquisition of sex-appropriate speech, and that older children may have acquired the ability to style-shift. In other words, children are gradually becoming able to distinguish their speech style depending on the situations such as playing with peers or an interview, in addition to the sex-appropriate speech already acquired (101-3).

Meditch argues that boys acquire sex-appropriate speech earlier than girls, losing some features of earlier speech in the course of their developmental process, while girls learn additional features after discarding some features obtained earlier (426). This is in contrast to Lakoff's position that boys and girls learn women's language first because of their environment full of female language and that boys later come to reject female features and obtain male's on account of their peer pressure, while girls retain them,

although this is based not on actual statistical data but on her own insight. In Meditch's research, the speech of 6 girls and 5 boys aged 3 to 5 was recorded, and university students as respondents were instructed to make judgements as to whether each speech was produced by a girl or a boy. The results indicated that respondents were able to predict the sex of the subjects fairly accurately only through listening to the recorded speech, and Meditch mantains by the results that "At the age studied, children have learned sex-specific markers sufficiently well to allow their sex to be identified by Rs solely on the basis of speech" (424).

In Edelsky's study on acquisition of communicative competence with reference to sex difference, subjects, 122 adults and 122 children aged 7, 9, and 12, were presented with a list of 24 sentences including 12 linguistic variables relating to sex difference in speech, and they were instructed to answer as to who is the most likely speaker of each sentence, men, women, and both men and women. According to the result, children gradually become proficient in relating some features in speech to sex, with children of 12 years old being closest to adults' norm. However, in other features, such as the use of *'Damn* + adjective' and *'Won't you please'*, children's stereotypical judgements coming from their overgeneralization were different from those of adults who could manipulate their experience in judging them. She states, with respect to the expression of profanity as in *damn it,* it is learned first as an isolated routine, then an overgeneralized abstract rule is deductively learned through cultural training to the point where anything profane is male, and the rule is distinguished at adulthood, taking contextual features such as topic, setting, audience, event, etc (241).

As far as the author knows, the amount of research conducted with reference to children's acquisition of sex difference in speech in Japanese is very limited.

In Ide's study on nursery school children's sex-differential use of first person referent and second person referent, variants sex-differentially used by children aging 1.5 years to 5, which were

collected through the medium of note-taking in observation, interviews with nurses, and a questionaire provided for their parents, were analyzed. Ide maintains that *boku* 'I' for boys are acquired earlier than girls' *watashi* 'I' but still girls obtain it by the time they enter kindergarten at the latest, and that, in Japanese, consciousness of one's sex plays an important role in self-cognition on the grounds that Japanese children start using the first person referent appropriate for their sex comparatively earlier while American counterparts do not have to make distinction between men's use and women's (64–5).

Peng, et al.'s strenuous work on sex differences in Japanese presents interesting data regarding children's acquisition of sentence final particles and person referents. The report says that the first emergence of sex-differentiated speech was observed in children of two years old in the form of the first person referent appropriate for the sex as in *ore* 'I' for boys and *watachi* 'I' for girls, with proper sentence final particles for their sex appearing gradually after that only in the situation where children are specially conscious of their sex (91). However, it is after three years in age that they come to use first person referents with consciousness of one's sex (212). It describes furthermore concerning the acquisition of sentence final particles that two-year-old subjects were not able to use sentence final particles appropriately enough for their sex, and that they are under the influence of speakers in their environment (94). However, sex-differential sentence final particles used by boys drastically increase in their boyhood, while those used by girls of the same age still sound like those of boys. At the age of university students, sentence final particles characteristic of the opposite sex are rarely used by both sexes, although particles used by adults are likely to be chosen on the basis of such factors as occupation and psychological distance between speakers rather than one's sex (96).

It seems, from the descriptions above, that children acquire something sex-exclusive in their boyhood with sex difference in speech appearing in their preschool age, and that there still exists a

difference between children's use and adults' use in which situations and contexts are taken into consideration. Furthermore, it is understood that acquiring appropriate utterances for one's sex as in adults' speech is a long process taking many years.

IV. Children's Linguistic Inputs and Acquisition of Sex Difference

1. Caretaker's Speech as Children's Input

Because the focus of the present study is on young children's acquisiton of communicative competence with special attention to acquisition of sex difference in language, it seems crucial to consider the nature of social and linguistic input which young children are supposed to be taking constantly from their environment.

A primary source of social and linguistic input taken by children under three years old is considered to be mainly from their mother's or caretaker's speech which is adjusted or modified for children's linguistic cognition in many aspects. Elliot summarizes the characteristics observed in caretaker's speech which he refers to as 'motherese' (151).

(a) Paralinguistic features	(i) High pitch (ii) Exaggerated intonation
(b) Syntactic features	(i) Shorter mean length of utterance (MLU) (ii) Fewer verb forms and modifiers (iii) Fewer subordinate clauses/ embedding per utterance (iv) Shorter mean preverb length (v) More verbless utterance (vi) More content words, fewer

	function words
(c) Discourse features	(i) More interrogatives and imperatives (ii) Speech more fluent and intelligible (iii) More repetitions, whether complete, partial or semantic

Ferguson describes the major functions which caretaker's speech, referred to as 'baby talk' by him, has in many speech communities (232-5). The first function is that of communication and self-expression, as observed in the modified speech in the situation where one of the participants in conversation is inferior in the ability to manipulate the language. Based on his position of regarding 'baby talk' as a simplified register, 'foreigner talk' directed to a foreigner incapable of speaking the target language and 'teacher's talk' used in foreign language instruction have a similar function as 'baby talk'. Moreover, by the use of 'baby talk', adults can express their emotions toward children such as affection, irritation, and protectiveness.

Secondly, modified speech has a function of language teaching, although he is not affirmative in saying that 'baby talk' is a crucial element in language acquisition process. We can show children when certain utterances are addressed to them by special signs of 'baby talk', and topics relevant to children's concern are chosen in conversations between children and parents within the limitation of children's perception. It is also possible to restore the difficulty in certain grammatical structures until they are proficient enough and to increase the complexity gradually in accordance with their linguistic development.

The third function of 'baby talk' is for children's socialization. It provides a means of identifying the social roles necessary for our

social behavior, as is observed in the early introduction of modified words indicating male and female caretakers. Through this input, children become able to identify age, sex, and kin roles of the participants. With regard to the last function, Blount emphasizes the significance of interaction between caretakers and children through which cultural bases of communication are manifested (298-301). He mentions that parents pay almost no attention to linguistic correctness of children's speech but they do pay attention to the social appropriateness of their speech, and that children can assess the adequacy of their speech and remedy inadequacy by changing their linguistic and interactional performances through the interaction with caretakers who assess children's overall communicative competence in terms of socially defined categories.

It appears from these descriptions that input from caretakers plays a crucial role in young children's linguistic and social development. In the next section the problem of how gender-related variation of language appears in the utterances produced by young children will be deliberated from the viewpoint of caretaker's input directed to them.

2. Caretaker's Input Based on Sex Differences

It may be possible to hypothesize that young children under 3 acquire certain features of sexually differentiated language use mostly through inputs from their caretakers and interactions with them because of their limited linguistic interrelation with other peers. Several studies indicate the existence of qualitative or quantitative differences in caretaker's input depending on the caretaker's sex or on the child's sex.

In Cherry and Lewis's study on the quantitative difference in mothers' linguistic inputs between those directed to 2-year-old boys and those addressed to girls of the same age, mothers of girls talked more, asked more questions, repeated their children's speech more often, and used longer utterances than boy's mothers (278-80). They argue that it is mothers rather than children who are

responding sex-differentially, and that mothers may have sex role expectations for girls that they should be more verbally involved in conversational exchanges (281).

Gleason and Greif investigated the qualitative difference between fathers' speech directed to boys and those to girls at home, and between male day-care teachers' speech to boys and those to girls at a day-care center. The speech produced by mothers and female day-care teachers to boys and girls were also collected and compared to those by fathers and male teachers with respect to the occurence of certain sentence types such as imperative, declarative, and questions. According to the result, both fathers and male teachers used more imperatives, especially fathers at home (142-5). Furthermore, in a laboratory setting where the speech produced by child-father pairs in playing and those by child-mother pairs were collected, fathers provided more sophisticated information than mothers and required more information in return than mothers do (145-7). Fathers are more direct, controlling, impolite, and linguistically more challenging than mothers who are attuned to children (148-9). Gleason and Greif state that fathers and mothers are not providing the same sort of cognitive and linguistic input for children, and that children must learn to communicate with a father who speaks differently from a mother as a first step to the outer world (149).

Warren-Leubecker and Bohannon investigated caretakers's intonation patterns adopted in the speech addressed to the equal number of boys and girls of 5 years and 2 years and those observed in the speech directed to adults. The research indicates that both fathers and mothers increased their pitch and ranges to 2-year-old children, and that fathers adopted the same intonation patterns to 5-year-old children as those directed to adults while mothers continued to use exaggerated intonation patterns to 5-year-old children as well.

In Gleason's research on children's acquisition of social speech routines and politeness formulas, mothers provided children with

models of more polite behavior than fathers. In the controlled setting where children were given gifts for their work with their parents, mothers themselves thanked for the gifts more frequently and greeted the research assistant more often than fathers. Gleason interprets this as parents' presenting children with sex differential models of politeness to be learned which are based on the parents' sex differential politeness behavior. She maintains that young children learn sex-appropriate speech patterns through modelling or imitation of the parent's model rather than the parent's different treatment of children according to their sex (26).

As far as these limited descriptions are concerned, it is possible to argue that there are two interpretations regarding the way through which children acquire sex-appropriate speech style : one is through parent's sex-differential verbal treatments of children according to children's sex as in Cherry and Lewis, and the other is through the medium of children's observing parent's sex-differential models based on parent's sex, as in Gleason and Greif, Warren-Leubecker and Bohannon, and Gleason. However, if considered from the view point of children who are taking input, the input taken from their parents is sexually differentiated, whether it is based on children's sex or on parent's sex. In other words, young children are supposed to acquire sex appropriate speech both through parent's sex-differential verbal treatment of children and through children's observation of parent's sex-differential verbal behavior.

V. Sex-Differentiated Speech Produced by a Boy of Two Years Old

1. Data Collection

In this section, the samples of sex-differentiated speech produced by a Japanese boy, the researcher's son, for 14 months from his 17th month to 31st month are introduced so that a vague idea

of how the acquisition of sex-differentiated speech occurred can be realized. In addition, the linguistic input which he seems to have taken during the acquisition process is also analyzed for better understanding the influence of caretaker's speech on young children's acquisition of sex-differentiated speech.

As Dulay et al. indicate, there are two ways in the research design to investigate the language development. One is the longitudinal design which focuses on the linguistic development observed in limited number of subjects for relatively long period, and the other is the cross-sectional design in which data derived from a large number of subjects at a certain point on the developmental process is collected and analyzed usually through tests (244–9). The former is usually utilized to elicit the subject's unconscious use of grammatical rules in a more natural setting, and the latter is for eliciting the subject's conscious application of grammatical rules through tests. In the case of the research on young children's linguistic development, the former is appropriate because of their inability to deal with tests.

The speech samples produced by the subject have been collected every 3 or 4 months since his 6th month from his birth through tape-recording; and after the 24th month when he became competent to express his intentions by his early speech and to understand caretaker's speech to a certain extent, the recording, usually taking 60 minutes, has been carried out once a month, while taking notes on characteristic speech at the same time. In the environment where the subject acquires language, his fater with higher education speaks Japanese with a regional variety of Osaka accent, and occasionally with a standard accent, and his mother with higher education speaks Japanese with almost standard accent. He has had no brother and sister until his 31st month.

2. Emergence of Sex Difference in Subject's Speech

Several speech samples with characteristics showing the subject's developmental process in the acquisition are presented in

chronological order, so that we can have a vague idea about his acquisition process.

Introduced here is his sex-exclusive use of the person referents and the sentence final particles which are likely to be a marker indicating one's sex in Japanese, not the sex-preferential which can be used by both sexes depending on the situation.

(1) Mother: *Dare ga paan shitano. Taa-chan*? (17 month)
(Hereafter M) 'Who broke(the baloon)?' 'Taa-chan?'
Taku: *Taa-chan. Boku.*
(Hereafter T) 'Taa-chan.' 'Me.'

The first person referent for men, *boku*, was first recorded as early as 17 months, but this seems to be an exceptional use because, since then, he never used *boku* to refer to himself until around the 25th month, using mostly *Taa-chan* or *Taku-chan*. At the 31st month, the first person referents which have been used even once are *boku*, *ore, oira, atachi, wachi* and *watachi*, although variants except for *boku* have not been used in the natural conversation but in his spontaneous role play.

The follwing is an example which appeared in a conversation where T and M were looking at a picture with a boy and a girl talking to a peddler selling TV character masks.

(2) M: *Kore, boku ano omen ga hoshii itteta.* (20 M)
'Did this (picture) say "I want the mask"?'
Oji-chan ga nan-te iu no.
'What does the man (peddler) say?'
T: *Mochimochi chotto oma---.*
'Hey, just wai--.'
(Pointing to the girl)
Watachi kore ii wayo chiteru.
'She is doing (saying) "I like this".'

Watachi, the first person referent for women, and *wayo*, sex-exclusive sentence final particle for women appeared in his utterance. He seems to have been conscious that *watachi* and *wayo* were related to the girl in the picture. Interestingly, he made this utterance with a higher pitch than his usual speech. Furthermore, the mother seems to have intentionally introduced the use of *boku* by way of the dialogue including a boy and a girl.

The following examples are taken from a monologue recorded in the 22nd month.

(3) T: *Ookii fukuro o motte kuru noyo.* (22 M)
'(Someone) is bringing a big bag.'

(4) T: *Nakama wa jeenbu obake ni nachatta noyo.*
'All my friends have become ghosts.'

The sentence final particle for women *noyo* appeared frequently in a single monologue taking a few minutes. The above examples may support the Lakoff's argument that children acquire women's language first, but the subject has come to use only infrequently sex-exclusive sentence final particles for women such as the above before the 31st month. It is expected that he will never use it by 5 when Lakoff says Japanese boys reportedly use them often.

(5) T: *Boku mo churu jo.* (26 M)
'I will do it, too.'

The above utterance was recorded when he was playing with paper. This seems to be the subject's first natural use of men's first person referent and sentence final particle at the same time that are in the record. Around that time, he appeared to have become conscious of the existence of sex and its relation to his speech.

With respect to the relation between his cognition of sex and his sex-conscious use of language, the following examples can be deliberated. On one day in the 31st month, the subject was orally

asked about the sex of certain familiar people around him or TV characters. 32 correct responses were made verbally out of 32 question items, including his relative members, neighbors, friends, and TV characters such as Tom & Jerry, Urutoraman, and Doraemon. This seems to indicate that the subject had already achieved fairly accurate cognitive ability to judge one's sex before 31 months old. However, he had already been able to show the sex of a person referred to much earlier than the time mentioned above in spite of less accuracy, and he seems to have started even to correlate one's sex and his speech around 26 months.

(6) T: *Pikkoro wa atachi-tte iun dayo.* (26 M)
'Pikkoro refers to herself as *atachi.*'
M: *Taku-chan wa nan-te iu no.*
'How do you refer to yourself?'
T: *Boku.*
(I refer to myself as) '*boku.*'
M: *Mama wa nan-te iu no.*
'How about your mommy?'
T: *Atachi.*
(Mommy refers to herself as) '*atachi.*'

(7) T: *Mama oichii?* (27 M)
'Mommy, is it tasty?'
M: *Oishii wayo.*
'Yeah, it's tasty.'
T: *Onna dakara oichii wayo-tte iu.*
'Mommy says "*oichii wayo*" because she is a woman.
M: *Otoko dattara nan-te iuno?*
'Then, how does a man say?'
T: *Oichii yo-tte iu.*
'A man says "*oichii yo*".'

As long as the researcher observed, the subject became able to

recognize the existence of two sexes around the 25th month, and then started to relate it with the speech in spite of the inconsistency in his actual use. This seems to correspond to Ide's statement that sex-specific use of the first person referent emerges at the same time when a child becomes able to recognize the sex difference between 2.5 and 3 years of age (1978, 51). It is certain that sex-specific speech never precedes the recognition of sex difference.

In the 31st month, an open-ended spontaneous role play with his familiar finger puppets was tape-recorded for 12 minutes. The following utterances were taken from it.

(8) (Using two puppets, one male kitten and one female kitten) (31 M)
T: *Oira kokoda yo.*……*Watachi kokoda yo.*(with a high pitch)
'I am here.' 'I am here.'

(9) (Playing the part of a girl kitten right after he was tickled)
T: *Yamenasai yo. Konna koto chitara watachi okkochau wayo.*
'Stop it! I will be mad if you do such a thing.'

At 31 months he occasionally used *boku* in a natural conversation setting, and furthermore he was capable of controlling the first person referents depending on the role he played. *Oira*, a rare form of first person referent for men, seems to have been acquired through a character's use on TV. These examples seem to be indicating that he was in the process of acquiring the register variation, especially the manner of discourse, pointed out by Andersen.

3. Caretakers' Input for Acquisition of Sex Difference

As mentioned in the previous section, young children are constantly taking linguistic inputs from their caretakers, and caretakers' input seems to be varied in accordance either with children's sex or with parents' sex. Here some speech samples indicating the variants used by parents will be presented so that the fact may be

confirmed in Japanese as well.

The first examples were taken from the tape-recorded dialogues which took place when father-subject or mother-subject pairs were working on the identical picture puzzle. The time consumed by the former pair was 17 minutes, while the latter took 12 minutes. Attention was paid to the difference between the use of sentence final particles used by the father and those by the mother. The following table indicates the frequency of certain sentence final particles occurring in the course of completing the picture puzzle.

Table 1 Frequency of Sentence Final Particles

Particle	Father–Subject	Mother–Subject
no(n)	22	18
ka	29	2
ne(nee)	2	18
na(naa)	9	0
kana	3	4
zo	1	2
ze	1	0
noyo	0	1
none	0	1
yo	1	2
da+yo	4	0
wa	0	0

Both the father and the mother produced many interrogative sentences including *no (n)* and *ka*, encouraging the subject to find appropriate pieces. However, the father used *ka* as a question marker more frequently than the mother, while frequent use of *no* as a question marker was observed in the mother's interrogative sentences, in addition to the use of rising intonation. Another difference was found in the use of *ne (nee)* and *na (naa)* which add the connotation of agreement between the speaker and the addressee to the sentence. The father used *na (naa)* in many cases, but the mother never used it and used *ne (nee)* instead. As for the sex-

exclusive use, *ze* appeared in the father's utterance, and *none* and *noyo* were recorded in the mother's speech, although they were not frequent.

Another difference was observed in the use of copula *da* as well. The father used it 44 times including *da* + sentence final particles, but the mother used it only 7 times. Furtermore, the father used 12 imperative sentences, including both direct and indirect ones, but the mother used only 4 indirect ones. In the father's speech, direct imperatives such as *Yadamon sagase* 'Look for Yadamon' and *Yatte mite kure* 'Try it (for me)' appeared, but never in the mother's speech. Instead, the mother used sentences which gave suggestion to the child in the form of *janai* in rising intonation and tried to make the subject work on the puzzle spontaneously. With regard to the use of the person referents, the first person referent, *papa*, appeared only once and no second person referent was used in the father's speech, while the mother used the first person referent, *mama*, once and the second person referent, *taku-chan*, twice.

Although the data recorded was very limited, it seems to suggest that the inputs which the child received from his parents were different both in quality and quantity, depending on the sex of the

Table 2 Comparison of Mother's Sentence Final Particle Use

Particle	Picture Puzzle	Role Play
no(n)	18	19
ka	2	8
ne(nee)	18	1
na(naa)	0	4
kana	4	0
zo	2	8
ze	0	0
noyo	1	0
none	1	0
yo	2	0
da+yo	0	0
wa	0	0

parent. And it is supposed that the difference in inputs is enough for a child to perceive the sex difference in speech if such inputs are continuously provided for him.

The second speech samples were taken from the dialogues between the subject and his mother, which were recorded in their open-ended, make-believe role playing of a TV character played by the subject fighting a bad man performed by his mother. The role play took 16 minutes.

The above table shows a comparison of the frequency of sentence final particles used by the mother in making a picture puzzle and that of used in the role play. It should be noted that the quantity of speech recorded in the role play is much smaller than that in the picture puzzle because the subject and his mother spent much time in 'fighting' only with a yell, and that all their time was not spent on performing their roles, sometimes the mother asking the subject what he was doing and listening to his reply. Differences were found in the mother's use of *ka, na, zo* and *ne*. The frequency increased in the former three items and it decreased in the last one. It is interesting that *ka, na (naa),* and *zo,* which are preferentially used by men, appeared often in the mother's speech in the role play of fighting. *No* appeared in high frequency here as well, but all use was found outside the lines of the role play. In addition, four direct imperative sentences, which had not been found in the picture puzzle session, appeared in the role play, and the varieties of the person referent, *taku-chan, omae* and *koitsu* as a second person referent, and *mama* and *wate* as a first person referent were present in the role play. The copula, *da*, took place 6 times, which seems to have increased, considering the quantity and contents of the dialogues.

Although the two activities in which these utterances were recorded were different in quality, a few conspicuous changes in speech happened when the mother played the role of a bad man. Through this, the subject seems to have an opportunity to observe two different speech styles presented by the same person. It appears that the mother provides her child with more masculine features

of speech which she never uses in her daily life. This might be an example of varied inputs adjusted to the child's sex in that boys like this sort of play as early as 31st month and are considered to take such inputs through play. On the contrary, it is hypothesised that a father might adjust his speech to his young daughter's sex, if he played keeping house with his daughter, in such a way that she could easily perceive what women's speech sounds like. In other words, caretakers are continuously providing inputs for their boys and girls so that they may achieve an appropriate speech pattern for their sex, although the influence of TV as children's input should not be made light of in modern society.

VI. Conclusion

As Clancy describes, a caretaker's speech reflects cultural values, and the study of mother-child interaction reveals useful information regarding communicative style in a culture and its role in transmitting cultural values to children (246). Taking this into account, the comparatively early emergence of sex difference in Japanese children's speech investigated in the present study seems to indicate the fact that there still exists a strong cultural value on the difference in sex role in the society, and that parents encourage their children to act like a man or a woman through their speech from an early age.

Based on the extremely limited data introduced above, it may be possible to hypothesise that the caretaker's speech plays an important role in the young child's acquisition of sex difference, a component of communicative competence, in that parents seem to provide a child with sufficient inputs containing features of sex-specific speech in accordance with their own sex or with a child's sex. Through the inputs, young children come to perceive the existence of sex differences in speech, and they practice the sexually appropriate speech style while playing with caretakers. However,

this is just a first step in the long process of the acquisition, and children have to examine what they have learned from the parent's input and try it out in their interaction with peers and people whom they encounter in their childhood and adolescence. Therefore, studies in the later stages which follow the studies on young children's are indispensable so that we can understand the entire process of the acquisition of sex difference in language.

Needless to say, much more data concerning parents' input as a source of children's acquisition of sex difference will be required in order to confirm the relationship between the caretaker's input and young children's acquisition.

Notes

1) The terminology appeared in Ide (1978), p. 43.

2) The pronunciation made by the subject is in keeping with the traits of young children, as in [č] for [ʃi], [ʒo] for [zo], etc.

Works Cited

Andersen, Elaine. *Speaking With Style: The Sociolinguistic Skills of Children*. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Blount, Ben. "Ethnography and Caretaker-Child Interaction." *Talking to Children: Language Input and Acquisition*. Ed. C. Snow and C. Ferguson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977. 297-308.

Cherry, Louise and Lewis, Michael. "Mothers and Two-Year-Olds: A Study of Sex-Differentiated Aspects of Verbal Interaction." *Developmental Psychology* 12. 4 (1976): 278-282.

Chomsky, Noam. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1965.

Clancy, Patricia. "The Acquisition of Communicative Style in Japanese." *Language Socialization Across Culture*. Ed. B. Schieffelin and E. Ochs. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. 213-250.

Coates, Jennifer. *Women, Men and Language*. London and New York:

Longman, 1986.

Corsaro, William. *Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years*. Norwood, NJ.: Ablex Publishing, 1985.

Dulay, Heidi et al. *Language Two*. New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982.

Edelsky, Carole. "Acquisition of an Aspect of Communicative Competence: Learning What It Means to Talk Like a Lady." *Child Discourse*. Ed. S. Ervin-Tripp and C. Mitchell-Kernan. New York: Academic Press, 1977. 225-243.

Elliot, Alison. *Child Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

Ervin-Tripp, Susan. "Wait for Me, Roller Skate!" *Child Discourse*. Ed. S. Ervin-Tripp and C. Mitchell-Kernan. New York: Academic Press, 1977. 165-188.

Ferguson, Charles. "Baby Talk as a Simplified Register." *Talking to Children: Language Input and Acquisition*. Ed. C. Snow and C. Ferguson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977. 209-235.

Fischer, John. "Social Influence in the Choice of a Linguistic Variant." *Language in Culture and Society*. Ed. D. Hymes. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964. 483-488.

Gleason, Jean. "The Acquisition of Social Speech Routines and Politeness Formulas." *Language: Social Psychological Perspective*. Ed. H. Giles et al. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980. 21-27.

Gleason, Jean and Greif, Esther. "Men's Speech to Young Children." *Language. Gender, and Society*. Ed. B. Thorne et al. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1983. 140-150.

Ide, Sachiko. "Nihongo ni okeru Seibetu to Ninshoodaimeishi Yooji no Baai (Sex and Personal Pronouns of Japanese in the Case of Children)." *Hattatu to Shuutoku ni okeru Gengokoodoo* (Development in Verbal and Non-Verbal Behavior). Ed. F. Peng. Hiroshima: Bunka-hyooron Shuppan, 1978. 41-67.

———"Japanese Sociolinguistics: Politeness and Women's Language." *Lingua* 57. (1982): 357-385.

Labov, William. *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: U. of Penn. Press, 1972.

Lakoff, Robin. *Language and Women's Place*. New York: Harper and Row

Publishers, 1975.

Meditch, Andrea. "The Development of Sex-Specific Speech Patterns in Young Children." *Anthropological Linguistics* 17. (1975): 421-433.

Peng, Fred. et al. *Nihongo no Danjosa* (Male/Female Differences in Japanese). Tokyo: Toozai Shuwa Gakkai, 1981.

Piaget, Jean. *The Language and Thought of the Child*. 1974 ed. New York: New American Library, 1959.

Romaine, Suzanne. *The Language of Children and Adolescents: The Acquisition of Communicative Competence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1984.

Saville-Troike, Muriel. *The Ethnography of Communication*. 1989 ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1982.

Warren-Leubecker, Amye and John Bohannon. "Intonation Patterns in Child-directed Speech: Mother-Father Differences." *Child Development* 55. (1984): 1379-1385.