WORKING PAPERS ON
LANGUAGE, GENDER & SEXISM

5 Language and gender research in the 1990s: A new forum for ideas.
   ANNE PAUWELS AND JOANNE WINTER

11 Women and men speaking: The roles played by women and men in the process of language shift.
   TOVE BULL

25 Feminist linguistics and linguistic relativity.
   MARLIS HELLINGER

38 Metaphors Japanese women live by.
   MASAKO K. HIRAGA

58 Doing disagreement: The case of gender.
   MARIANTHI MAKRI-TSILIPAKOU

88 Having fun and thinking deeply.
   PAM NILAN

105 Style Guide for WPLGS.

A Publication of the
AILA Commission on Language and Gender

ISSN 1036-4099
Metaphors Japanese women live by¹

MASAKO K. HIRAGA
The University of the Air, Japan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to reveal some of the hidden assumptions and evaluations about women implied in conventional metaphorical expressions of modern Japanese, and to show how these have influenced the actual customs and behavior of women as well as men in Japanese society.

Metaphors are powerful. When they are new, they present a novel way of seeing reality. When they are old, that is, when they are idiomatic, they reflect a collective way of seeing reality. In other words, what is behind the conventional metaphors is the shared assumptions about the reality unconsciously taken for granted by the members of a certain linguistic community.

Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980) I distinguish metaphors as concepts from metaphors as linguistic expressions. Metaphors as concepts (or metaphorical concepts) are what I have referred to above as 'the hidden assumptions and evaluations,' or 'a way of seeing reality' which are implied in metaphors as linguistic expressions (or metaphorical expressions). The relationship between metaphorical concepts and metaphorical expressions is defined in such a way that 'metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person's conceptual systems' (Lakoff & Johnson 1980:6).

Having this view of metaphor in mind, I have collected and analyzed metaphorical expressions about women conventionally used in modern Japanese, and used these as concrete data to speculate about some of the conventional metaphorical concepts about women in Japanese society in the hope of increasing linguistic awareness of the sexism which is so prevalent but not widely recognized by the speakers of this language. The discussion which follows is not meant to be definitive, but only illustrative to show some of the hidden principles which govern our thoughts, beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors about and around women in Japanese society.

2. COMMODITY, THY NAME IS WOMAN²

One of the most prevailing metaphorical concepts about women in Japanese is that

A. WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY

We say, for example.

1a Aru onn- wa or- no mono da³.
   that woman-TOP R(M)-GEN thing be-PRST³
   (That woman is mine.)⁴

but not

1b ?? Aru on- no-wa watsuz- no mono yo⁴
   that man-TOP I(F)-GEN thing be-PRST(F)
   (That man is mine.)

We can also say

2a Ore- no on- ni te- o dasu-na.
   R(M)-GEN woman-DAT hand-ACC hold-out-NEG-IMP
   (Don't make an advance to my woman.)

but not

2b ?? Watari- no o- no ni te- o dasu- ni de⁹
   I(F) GEN man- DAT hand-ACC hold-out-NEG-IMP(F)
   (Don't make an advance to my man.)

¹ A part of this research was conducted during the tenure of a Fulbright Junior Research Grant (1989-1990) at Cornell University. I am indebted to Sally McConnell-Ginet, Hal Reiss, Robert Smith, Linda R. Waugh and John Whitman for their invaluable comments.

² Metaphorical concepts are indicated by the statements in capital letters.

³ Metaphorical expressions are indicated in italics.

⁴ A word-by-word English translation is given beneath each example sentence. The following is a clue to decide interjections about grammatical relations marked in capital letters: TOP (topic); R(M) (examinee or subject); ACC (accusative or direct object); DAT (dative or indirect object); GEN (genitive); LOC (locative); INST (instrumental); PROF (progressive tense); PRST (gerund tense); PAST (past tense); IMP (imperative); SUBJ (subject) ; NEG (negative); CAUS (causative); HON (honorary); P (personal) M (male); and POL (polite style).

⁵ Free English translation is indicated in parentheses.

⁶ Chotto (soon) and onna (woman) are polite words. Note that if we use a word like (human being), instead of o- ni, it is acceptable among the young generations.

⁷ Waga- no o- ni te- o chotto ni de is not acceptable, either. This example is acceptable only when you use a loan word such as 'boyfriend' or a 'translation-style' word such as Karu (be) boyfriend instead of o- ni (man).
Women are 'things' men possess, but men are not possessed by women. Compare the following pair:

3a Taroo-wa* ano onna-o kizu mono-ni sita.
Taroo-TOP that woman-ACC flaw thing-DAT do-PAST
(Taroo made that woman a flawed article.)

3b *Hanako-wa* ano otooko-o kizu mono-ni sita.
Hanako-TOP that man-ACC flaw thing-DAT do-PAST
(Hanako made that man a flawed article.)

Women are described as if they were not just 'things' but 'sales products'. Therefore, we have a subcategory of the WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY metaphor shown in B;

B. WOMEN ARE SALES PRODUCTS

What is their sales value? It is implied in the pair of examples above that it is their virginity that matters as a commodity. The following pairs of examples, describing prostitution, are further suggesting that it is also their sexuality that women sell to men and not vice versa.*

4a Taroo-wa yuube onna-o kureta.
Taroo-TOP last night woman-ACC buy-PAST
(Taroo bought a woman last night.)

4b *Hanako-wa yuube otooko-o kita.
Hanako-TOP last night man-ACC buy-PAST
(Hanako bought a man last night.)

5a Ano onna-wa karada-o u-tte kurasio-tte i-ta.
That woman-TOP body-ACC sell-PROG, life-ACC build-PROG be-PAST
(That woman sold her body to support her life.)

---

8* Taroo is a common male name in Japanese. I avoid using a pronoun, karu (he), because it is a translation vocabulary item employed in modern Japanese and often used as a noun meaning a boyfriend or a lover.

9* Hanako is a common female name in Japanese. I avoid using a pronoun, hanako (she), because it is a translation vocabulary item employed in modern Japanese and often used as a noun meaning a girlfriend, a lover or a mistress.

10* It is the practice of prostitution by women that allows the discrepancy in linguistic expressions. It should be possible to say 'a woman buys a man' in our society in which the reverse type of prostitution would be as popular as the one we have in our society.
Some of the actual customs of engagement and marriage in Japanese society prove these metaphorical concepts. In Japan marriage is regarded more as a union of the two families than that of the two individuals. Arranged marriages are still practiced and common in upper to middle-class families because they believe that the balance of the two families in terms of their social status, financial and educational background is important to keep the married couple together. In other words, there are some factors other than love that play an important role in deciding a marriage partner. And we can speculate that these factors are more readily measured and evaluated by 'commodity' values than the love and the commitment of the two people which are too abstract to measure.

It is generally assumed that a woman after marriage belongs to her husband’s family. She changes her surname to her husband’s; it is very rare that a married woman keeps using her birth name. Underlying this custom is an assumption that a woman is a possession of the family to which she belongs, namely, that she does not have her own identity; and that she has an identity only by way of belonging to either her parents’ family or her husband’s family, or later in her life, to her son’s family.

The social pressure on young women to get married at an appropriate age (usually at 24 or 25) is strong in Japan. In order to increase the ‘sales value’ of women, there are a lot of finishing schools for young women where they can take classes on cooking, flower arrangements, tea ceremony etc. Usually in a wedding reception, a bride is introduced not only by her name, family and educational background, but also by her hobbies and talents which include what kind of finishing school classes she took before the marriage.

Moreover, this COMMODITY metaphor shows up in the most unique way in the custom of engagement in arranged marriages, where there is an exchange of money between the two families involved. Often at the time of engagement, the man’s family gives a certain amount of money called yusinokō (engagement money) to the woman’s family and the woman’s family gives half of the amount received back to the man’s family. This arrangement is conducted by the match-maker so that both families know in advance what amount of money they should prepare. It is assumed that this money will be spent on the wedding and on the preparation of the wedding by the bride’s family. This custom of yusinokō provides clear and convincing evidence of the existence of the metaphorical concept, MARRIAGE IS BUYING AND SELLING, and particularly the prominence of the concept of it is ‘buying a bride’.

---

1. In this sentence may mean that the son is getting publicity in such a field as entertainment, writing, politics etc.

---

11. There is a saying which illustrates this: Owaru wa mairu ao ni nagai, meaning that a woman has no home in the three worlds where she lives - first her parents’ world, second, her husband’s world, and third her son’s world.
So far we have seen the WOMEN AS A COMMODITY metaphor with special reference to marriage. The following is an illustration of how metaphorical concepts concerning WOMEN AS A COMMODITY lead to the concept MARRIAGE IS BUYING AND SELLING.

WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY

WOMEN ARE A SALES PRODUCT

UNMARRIED WOMEN ARE A SALES PRODUCT

MARRIAGE IS BUYING AND SELLING

FIGURE 1

All these four metaphorical concepts form a single system based on subcategorization, since in Japanese society marriage is buying and selling in a way and what is sold in marriage are unmarried women as sales products and being sales products, they are commodities. These subcategorization relationships characterize entailment relationships between the metaphorical concepts. MARRIAGE IS SELLING AND BUYING entails that UNMARRIED WOMEN ARE SALES PRODUCTS which entails that WOMEN ARE COMMODITIES, as they are shown by the arrow in Figure 1. Some expressions listed above refer to commodities (e.g., my thing; my woman; give), another to sales products (e.g., buy, sell; in a box; flawed article) and others to selling and buying of unmarried women (e.g., a daughter for sale; a market for my daughter; a daughter unsold). In this way, metaphorical entailments can characterize a coherent system of metaphorical concepts and a corresponding coherent system of metaphorical expressions for these concepts.

There are two further aspects (subcategories) of the WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY metaphor that I would like to discuss. They are: WOMEN ARE FOOD and WOMEN ARE FLOWERS/PLANTS. Let us examine the first one:

E. WOMEN ARE FOOD

The sexuality of women as we have seen in B. WOMEN ARE A SALES PRODUCT is again very strongly implied in the FOOD metaphor. For example:

12a Ano onna-wa sake-goro da.
That woman-TOP eat-time, be-PRST
(That woman is in the best season to eat.)

12b ??Ano otoko-wa sake-goro yo.
That man-TOP eat-time be(F)-PRST
(That man is in the best season to eat.)

13a Ano onna-wa uke-are da.
That woman-TOP ripe-ripe be-PRST
(That woman is fully ripe.)

13b *Ano otoko-wa uke-are yo.
That man-TOP ripe-ripe be(F)-PRST
(That man is fully ripe.)

These metaphorical expressions describe women as if they were fruits which are edible because of their ripeness. It is this edibility that is implied most strongly in the FOOD metaphor, which is exemplified further by the following expressions.

14a Onna-o kumamon-ni sur-u wari-i otoko da.
Woman -ACC food-DAT do bad man be-PRST
(He is a bad man who makes women his food.)

14b *Otoko-o kumamon-ni sur-u wari-i onna da.
man -ACC food-DAT do bad woman be-PRST
(She is a bad woman who makes men her food.)

15a Taroo-wa onna-o tsusumi-gui sur-u-kara ki-o tuke-nasi.
Taroo-TOP woman-ACC pick-eating do-because care-ACC take-POL-IMP
( Be careful about Taroo because he picks and eats women as casually as he eats food in the kitchen before it is served.)

15b *Hanako-wa otoko-o tsusumi-gui sur-u-kara ki-o tuke-nasi.
Hanako-TOP man-ACC pick-eating do-because care-ACC take-POL-IMP
( Be careful about Hanako because she picks and eats men as casually as she eats food in the kitchen before it is served.)
F. MEN EAT WOMEN (IN SEX)

It has generally been assumed in Japanese society that men are 'doers', active initiators of courtship and copulation. Of course as the society becomes more liberated and modernised, both men's and women's attitudes toward sex are changing. Among young people in Japan, this active/passive role differentiation between women and men does not necessarily apply. In other words, young women can take an initiative in dating. In such contexts, expressions like (16b) and (17b) are acceptable, although their counterpart expressions are far more commonly used.

Related to this WOMEN ARE FOOD metaphor is a metaphorical concept which views women as flowers or plants.

G. WOMEN ARE FLOWERS/PLANTS

Let us look at the following examples:

16a Oisoo-na onna de.
Delicious-look woman
(She looks delicious.)

16b ?? Oisoo-na otoko dawa.
Delicious-look man
(He looks delicious.)

17a Taroo-wa onna-no karada-o musabotta
Taroo-TOP woman-GEN body-ACC devour-PAST
(Taroo devoured a woman's body.)

17b ??Hanako-wa otoko-no karada-o musabota.
Hanako-TOP man-GEN body-ACC devour-PAST
(Hanako devoured a man's body.)

There is a difference in the interpretation of metaphorical meanings of hana (flower) in 18a and b. In 18a it is an appearance of women, or their beauty, that is emphasized by the FLOWER metaphor, whereas in 18b it is a talent of men, or their excellence, that is emphasized by this metaphor. However, in the latter context, it is more common to use a word hana-gata (flower-form) instead of just hana. Such an emphasis on the appearance of women rather than on their talents shows up more explicitly in the following examples in which only women are described as 'flowers'.

Taroo-GEN both-side-LOC-TOP women-NOM sit-PAST-because both-hand-LOC flower be-PAST
(Because he sat between two women, Taroo had flowers in both hands.)

19b *Hanako-riyo-donari-ni-va dansei-ga suwat-ta-node ryoo-ri hana dat-ta.
Hanako-GEN both-side-LOC-TOP men-NOM sit-PAST-because both-hand-LOC flower be-PAST
(Because she sat between two men, Hanako had flowers in both hands.)

20a Josikoo-no shaon-kai-va marude o-hana-batake-no yoo da13,
girls' school-GEN graduation-party-TOP as-if HON-flower-bed like be-PREST
(A graduation party of a girls' school is just like flower beds.)

20b *Danshikoo-no shaon-kai-va marude o-hana-batake-no yoo da,
boys' school-GEN graduation-party-TOP as-if HON-flower-bed like be-PREST
(A graduation party of a boys' school is just like flower beds.)

13 This is a simile rather than a metaphor. Nevertheless, as the underlying concept is the same here, I have included the simile in my analysis.
Masako Hiraga

21a Hanako-wa masanai, 'tat-ea shukuyaku, suwar-ea botan, aruku sugata-wa yuri-no hana' da.
Hanako-TOP really, 'stand-SUBJ Chinese peony, sit-SUBJ peony, walking posture-TOP illy-GEN flower' be-PRSST
(Hanako is really 'a Chinese peony when she stands, a peony when she sits, and a lily when she walks.')

21b "Tanoo-wa masanai, 'tat-ea shukuyaku, suwar-ea botan, aruku sugata-wa yuri-no hana' da.
Tanoo-TOP really, 'stand-SUBJ Chinese peony, sit-SUBJ peony, walking posture-TOP illy-GEN flower' be-PRSST
(Tanoo is really 'a Chinese peony when he stands, a peony when he sits, and a lily when he walks.')

21a describes the beauty of a woman by listing three beautiful and elegant flowers. Peonies are regarded as gorgeous and fragrant flowers and lilies as pretty and pure flowers. It is interesting to note in passing that there are a lot of female names taken from names of flowers. For example, Hanako (flower-child); Hanue (flower-prosperity); Hanayo (flower-world); Sakara (cherry); Sakurako (cherry-child); Yuri (lily); Yuriko (lily-child); Sayuri (lilte-lily), Momoko (peach-child); Momoe (peach-prosperity); Ume (plum); Umeko (plum-child); Komome (little plum); Kiku (chrysanthemum); Kikuko (chrysanthemum-child); Kikuyo (chrysanthemum-world), etc.

At first glance, it seems that the WOMEN ARE FLOWERS metaphor praises the beauty of women. Yet, the story is not that simple. When we look at some more examples, we will find that it is more the mere appearance of women than the true beauty of their personality that is viewed metaphorically as flowers.

22a Hanako-wa yuube-no dansu-pasui-de kabe-no hana dai-ta.
Hanako-TOP last night-GEN dance party-LOC wall-GEN flower be-PAST
(Hanako was a wall flower at a dance party last night.)

22b *Tanoo-wa yuube-no dansu-pasui-de kabe-no hana dai-ta.
Tanoo-TOP last night-GEN dance party-LOC wall-GEN flower be-PAST
(Tanoo was a wall flower at a dance party last night.)

The meaning of 22a is that there was no one who wanted to dance with this woman so that she stood along a wall as if she were a decoration of the wall. Note that even when she is not wanted, her appearance is described as being like a flower. The following example is more degrading:

23a Ano onna-no daikon-asiga ki ni ir-ana-i.
that woman-GEN daikon legs-NOM liking-DAT enter-NEG-PRSST
(I don't like that women's daikon [Japanese radish] legs.)

23b *Ano otoko-no daikon-asiga ki ni ir-ana-i.
that man-GEN daikon legs-NOM liking-DAT enter-NEG-PRSST
(I don't like that man's daikon [Japanese radish] legs.)

Daikon is a Japanese radish which is fat and white. Hence, daikon-asig describes rather ugly fat legs of women and not of men.

24a Tanoo-wa mono-firi-musume ni kaku-are te go-kigen dai-ta.
Tanoo-TOP peach-buttock-girls-DAT surround-PASS-PROG HON-humor be-PAST
(Tanoo was in good humor, surrounded by the girls who have peach buttocks.)

24b *Hanako-wa mono-jiri-otoko ni kaku-are-te go-kigen dai-ta.
Hanako-TOP peach-buttock-men-DAT surround-PASS-PROG HON-humor be-PAST (Hanako was in good humor, surrounded by the men who have peach buttocks.)

Again, women's bodies are seen metaphorically in terms of the appearance of fruit. Women having buttocks like peaches is of sexual appeal to men, but not vice versa. As we have seen

15 Since daikon is a food, we can classify this metaphorical expression in the WOMEN ARE FOOD metaphor. However, it seems more plausible to classify it in the WOMEN ARE PLANTS metaphor, because it is its shape rather than its taste that is emphasized by this metaphorical expression.

16 This metaphorical expression has a double image - peaches as their shape as well as peaches their taste. Hence, it is also legitimate to see it as an example of the WOMEN ARE FOOD metaphor.
in the other COMMODITY metaphors, we can trace the sexuality of women implied in the

WOMEN ARE FLOWERS/PLANTS metaphor too. Here are some more examples of this

implication.

25a Hanako-wa kats-i tuboni da.
Hanako-TOP firm bud be-PRST
(Hanako is a firm bud.)

25b *Taro-o-wa kats-i tuboni da.
Taro-o-TOP firm bud be-PRST
(Taro is a firm bud.)

The firmness of the bud signifies the immaturity of women, particularly from the viewpoint of

their appearance.

26a Musume-ni mus-ga taka-nos- to uru-ni hayaku kekkon s-ase-neba.
daughter-DAT bug-NOM stick-NEG before quickly marriage do-CAUS
(We must have our daughter married quickly before a bug eats her.)

26b *Musuko-ni mus-ga taka-nos- to uru-ni hayaku kekkon s-ase-neba.
son-DAT bug-NOM stick-NEG before quickly marriage do-CAUS
(We must have our son married quickly before a bug eats him.)

Finally, 26a is another variation of the MEN EAT WOMEN metaphor, but this time men are

viewed as bugs, and women as plants. Therefore, whether it is a 'taste' or an 'appearance' or

a 'smell,' women's sexuality is emphasized in both FOOD and FLOWER/PLANT metaphors.

As a consequence, both metaphorical concepts eventually lead to the MEN EAT WOMEN

metaphor.

WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY

WOMEN ARE FOOD

W OM E N A R E

FLOWERS/PLANTS

MEN EAT WOMEN

FIGURE 2

As we have seen in the case of the WOMEN ARE A SALES PRODUCT metaphor, the

WOMEN ARE FOOD and the WOMEN ARE FLOWERS metaphors form a system. That is,

the MEN EAT WOMEN metaphor which entails that WOMEN ARE FOOD and WOMEN

ARE FLOWERS/PLANTS, which entail that WOMEN ARE COMMODITIES (see Figure 2).

The distinction between FOOD and FLOWER/PLANT is fuzzy which I show by the wave

symbol in the figure. The reason for fuzziness is that the prototypical image highlighted by the

FOOD metaphors is also that of fruits. Fruits are plants which have flowers. Therefore, we can

probably say that these two subcategories of the COMMODITY metaphor form one system

rather than two. However, to clarify this point we need more examples.

3 SEXIST NOUNS, VERBS AND ADJECTIVES

All the examples in our discussion above show discrepancies in the acceptability of these

sentences with male and female referents. In other words, either the sentence is acceptable

when a woman is a referent and unacceptable when a man is a referent, or vice versa. In the

following discussion, I would like to look at another set of examples in which both referents

are acceptable but the meaning differs according to the sex of the referent.

Lakoff (1975: 30) discusses this type of discrepancy in English.

27a He's a professional.
27b She's a professional.

28a He is easy.
28b She is easy.

The difference in meaning between a and b in 27 and 28 is twofold: first, a conveys a literal

meaning whereas b is a metaphorical one, and secondly a conveys no sexual connotations,

whereas b does. Therefore, 27a means that he is in a profession where his intelligence matters,

whereas 27b can mean that she is in a profession where her sexuality matters". 28a means that

he is an easy-going person (a good connotation, in fact), whereas 28b means that she is easy

sexually -- it is easy for a man to convince her to have sex.
The nouns and adjectives in modern Japanese also show this type of discrepancy. Let me present some examples:

29a Yogoreta otoko
dirty man
(a dirty man)

29b Yogoreta onna
dirty woman
(a dirty woman)

29a means that the man is literally dirty: e.g., his body is not clean or his clothes are not clean. On the other hand, 29b means that the woman is metaphorically dirty: e.g., she sleeps with many different men.

30a Kagare-nak-i seinen
dirt-NEG young-man
(a pure young man)

30b Kagare-nak-i otome
dirt-NEG maiden
(a pure young maiden)

30a means that the young man is pure in mind, whereas 30b means that the maiden is pure in body, i.e., she is a virgin.

31a Ano otoko-wa kagawashi-i shoohbai-o si-te ir-u.
that man-TOP questionable business-ACC do-PROG be-PRST
(That man is engaged in shady business.)

31b Ano onna-wa kagawashi-i shoohbai-o si-te ir-u
that woman-TOP questionable business-ACC do-PROG be-PRST
(That woman is engaged in indecent business.)

Kagawashi-i shoohbai (questionable business) in 31b means indecent business related to sex, e.g., prostitution, pornography, etc., whereas 31a does not necessarily mean that sort of business. It simply means shady business which might involve swindling, smuggling, selling and buying of illegal products such as drugs, engaging in the sex-related industries, etc.

32a Ano otoko-wa waka-i toki-no ayamari-de mi-o toosi-ta.
that man-TOP young time-GEN mistake-INST body-ACC fall-PAST
(That man has ruined himself by the mistakes of his youth.)

32b Ano onna-wa waka-i toki-no ayamari-de mi-o otsuu-ta.
that woman-TOP young time-GEN mistake-INST body-ACC fall-PAST
(That woman has ruined herself by the mistakes of her youth.)

In 32a ayamari (mistake) probably means a crime that he committed, whereas in 32b it means a sexual relationship that she was involved in. Also mi-o otsu (to degrade, to fall, to ruin oneself) means that he is a failure in life in 32a, whereas it means that she is a prostitute in 32b. The following table (Table 1) is a list of adjectives, nouns and verbs which show discrepancies in their literal and metaphorical meanings with regard to the sex of their referent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JAPANESE WORDS</th>
<th>MEANINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JAPANESE WORDS</td>
<td>WITH A MALE REFERENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kareta (adj.)</td>
<td>a matured (man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kai (adj.)</td>
<td>a serious (man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kurooto-no (adj.)</td>
<td>professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi-moci-no-warai (adj)</td>
<td>a loose (man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>siooto-no (adj)</td>
<td>non-prostitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sidarsku-na (adj)</td>
<td>a slovenly (man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takari (noun)</td>
<td>peak, prime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kegasu (verb)</td>
<td>to disgrace (a man)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mi-sawaru (verb)</td>
<td>(man) to get chaotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seifuku-suru (verb)</td>
<td>to conquer (a man as power)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Literal and metaphorical meanings of various Japanese adjectives, verbs and nouns.
H. WOMEN ARE SEXUAL OBJECTS

embedded in the very structure of the language. This metaphorical concept together with the WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY metaphor underlies such social problems as prostitution, rape, and sexual harassment. Although prostitution is illegal in Japan, there are a lot of massage parlors called ‘soap land’ in large cities where men can ‘buy women’. It is a problem of Japanese tourism, too, that Japanese men make trips to Southeast Asia for the purpose of ‘buying women’ for their pleasure. Also it is widely known that there are shady agents which ‘buy’ young women from the poor families in Southeast Asia to send them to Japan either as bar hostess or to introduce them to young Japanese men in isolated villages and farms who have difficulties in finding marriage partners. It is reported that many marriages of this sort have not worked because of a lack of love and understanding which are essential to marriage. Among Japanese men in political and business careers, having a mistress was not regarded scandalous until last year when some of the sex scandals of Japanese politicians were revealed; indeed, mistresses are usually given their own houses and are paid regularly by their ‘masters.’

Rape and sexual abuse are reportedly not very common in Japan. Yet, it is very difficult to obtain actual figures, because victims seldom report or sue their cases in Japan. It is only when they result in a murder that rapes and sexual abuses are reported to the public by the mass media.

Sexual harassment is becoming increasingly more of a social concern in Japan, for the recent sex scandals of Japanese politicians have triggered strong reactions among Japanese women. They are beginning to acquire a voice and have talked about the sexual harassment that they encounter quite often in their daily lives. It used to be taken for granted, and still is, that men in a higher position can exercise their power not only in official issues but also in private issues. The degree of harassment varies from dirty verbal comments to an insistence of having a sexual relationship with women inferior in the power structure to them.

Assuming that these social problems clearly reflect the hidden assumptions about women as a commodity and as a sexual object analyzed above, it is important to be aware of the way our language itself shapes our thought and action. I am not saying that linguistic awareness solves these problems. They are far more complex and deeply rooted in the culture - history, tradition, value judgements, world views, etc. Nevertheless, what I would like to emphasize here is that such a linguistic awareness should be a starting point for questioning these problems which women as individuals and society as a whole have been facing for ages, and for uniting voices against discriminations which are so unconsciously built up in linguistic structure and use.

4 CONCLUSION

It has been illustrated that the assumptions implied in conventional metaphorical expressions about women and metaphorical uses of certain nouns, adjectives and verbs referring to women are dehumanizing and derogatory with very few exceptions. They regard women primarily as a ‘commodity,’ and are heavily stainted by ‘sexual’ implications. The following figure summarizes the points in our discussion at a glance.

![Figure 3: Diagram showing the relationships between metaphors]

Figure 3 above combines figures 1 & 2. The entailment relationships are shown by the arrows. It seems that the WOMEN ARE SEXUAL OBJECTS metaphor is the most general metaphorical concept, which is subcategorized by more specific metaphorical concepts such as WOMEN ARE A COMMODITY, WOMEN ARE A SALES PRODUCT, MEN EAT WOMEN, etc.

It has also been discussed how these metaphorical concepts underlie social practices, customs and behavior, and how important it is to have a linguistic awareness of such metaphorical concepts. As our society changes, our conceptual systems and language expressions change. These changes occur very gradually; yet, as we have seen, the acceptability of some of the examples listed above are no longer yes-or-no decisions. For there is a subculture among young liberated women and men in which less discrepancies are observed.
It is the task of linguists to pinpoint where the problem areas exist in language structure and use, as well as how they affect our thinking and behavior as a person and as a society at large and to let people work more constructively on improvements. Metaphors are not just mere words. They are deeply rooted in our conceptual as well as emotional processes.

REFERENCES


