Ageing and gender in Japanese blog posts: From the perspective of fictionalised orality or ”role language”

Yukiko Nishimura

Toyo Gakuen University, Japan

This study discusses the language of blogs, which can reach readers beyond space and time on the Internet. With rapidly rising ageing population in contemporary Japan, the study focuses on blog posts by Japanese older men and women compared with the younger counterparts. It attempts to clarify recently emerging senior citizens’ computer-mediated communication (CMC), which has been understudied, unlike youth’s online behaviour.

The dataset comes from ”senior blogs” by the top 50 most popular male and female bloggers over 60 years of age, and ”miscellaneous everyday blogs” by the top 50 male and female bloggers in their 20s and 30s, on a huge blog ranking, linking, and aggregation site, Japan Blog Village (http://www.blogmura.com/). The study examines linguistic, stylistic and discourse features to reveal how blog authors position themselves to their audience in the blogosphere. In view of the nature of blogging as fictional (Tyler 2004), the concept of fictionalised orality, or ”role language” (Teshigawara and Kinsui 2011) can be useful, as blogs involves a number of spoken features, which are rooted in linguistic stereotypes and often associated with certain persona such as ”well-bred female” and ”macho male.”

More specifically, the study quantitatively examines grammatical features of personal pronouns, auxiliary verbs and sentence final particles, and features specific to CMC, such as emoticons. More detailed analyses reveal generational and gender differences among the four groups, and also a considerable variation within each group. I argue that bloggers take advantage of ”role language” in order to create the kind of persona that bloggers expect their readers to recognise in their blogs, and hence they construct their identity with these resources shared between readers and blog authors in Japanese society. This study is expected to respond to research agenda voiced by Coupland (2004: 83) and expand our knowledge about the elderly’ language behaviour.

Keywords: ageing, Japanese, blogs.