

《 英語学系 》

[I] 次の英文は、性差とことばの使用をめぐるエッセイである。読んで、あとの設問に日本語で答えなさい。

How many of the following statements have you heard before? And how many do you think are true?

- 1 Women talk more than men.
- 2 Women have more advanced verbal skills than men.
- 3 Women use more emotionally expressive language than men.
- 4 Men's speech style is competitive and self-assertive; women's is co-operative and supportive.

These are all common beliefs in contemporary Western societies. But does the linguistic evidence support them?

In the case of the first statement, 'women talk more than men,' the answer is clearly 'no.'

(1)Research shows that if there's a difference, it is usually men who talk more than women.

The second statement, 'women have more advanced verbal skills,' is supported by evidence from experimental studies. But what's rarely pointed out is that the differences are tiny. Our cultural obsession with differences between men and women prevents us from recognizing how much overlap there is.

The third and fourth statements are misleading, because they fail to acknowledge that the way we talk is more strongly influenced by the context—who we're talking to, what about, in what setting, and for what purpose. Many things that get described as gender differences have more to do with these contextual factors than with gender as such: we confuse the two because of the tendency for activities and roles, and the ways of speaking that go with them, to be associated with either women or men. However, research suggests that it's a speaker's *role* rather than their *gender* which has most effect on the way they speak. Male nurses talking to patients adopt the same emotionally expressive style as their female counterparts; women police officers adopt the same unemotional style as their male colleagues.

(2)There's another problem with all the statements I've listed. They imply that there are groups, 'men' and 'women,' whose members all share certain ways of behaving. But in reality men and women come in many different varieties. What it means to talk like a man or a woman is affected by other aspects of identity and experience: age, race, ethnicity, social class, education, national origin, (dis)ability ... the list could go on and on. A lot of common-sense beliefs about language and gender are based on an idea of masculinity or femininity which is specifically young, white, educated and monolingual (usually in English): this does not reflect the real-world diversity of men's and women's linguistic behavior.

Contemporary Westerners are not alone in having belief about the way men and women talk. Most societies have beliefs on that subject, but (3)what they are can vary considerably. In some traditional

non-Western societies, it's men who are thought to be more verbally skilled than women. (A hundred years ago that was also what Western scientists thought: they assumed men were more intelligent, and that their linguistic behavior reflected that.) In some places, such as the village of Gapun in Papua New Guinea, it's generally agreed that men are co-operative and polite, whereas women are impolite and often downright aggressive. In every culture, the way men and women are said to talk reflects more general ideas about what men and women are like. Or sometimes, what people think they *should* be like. Statements like 'women don't swear,' or 'men don't talk about their feelings' are not so much descriptions of reality as prescriptions for properly feminine or masculine behavior.

So, am I saying that really there are *no* differences? Not at all: if you take any group of people and examine the linguistic behavior of its male and female members, you will usually find some differences (the same applies if you compare group members who differ on some other dimension, like age or education). Many studies of local dialects have found men and women favoring slightly different pronunciations of the same sound. Some researchers analyzing large data samples have found that men use words like 'the' and 'of' more frequently than women, while women use words like 'you' and 'and' more frequently than men. It has also been observed that men are more likely to fill a pause with 'uh,' whereas women are more likely to fill it with 'um.' (4)If these cases are less familiar, it's probably because they resist the popular explanation of gendered linguistic behavior as a direct reflection of what men and women are like. What they illustrated is the way we use small linguistic details to mark identities and social distinctions—a bit like men's and women's shirts buttoning in opposite directions.

Do men and women talk differently? (5)The short answer is 'yes,' but a better one might be 'it depends.' It depends on which men and women you're comparing; it depends on the context they're talking in. And it also depends on what you mean by 'differently': overall, men and women are far more similar than different.

(*The 5 Minute Linguist: Bite-sized essays on language and languages.* Third Edition.)

〔設問〕

- (1) 下線部 (1) の主張は、一般的な考えとどのように対立しているのかを説明しなさい。
- (2) 下線部 (2) において、筆者が指摘している「別の問題」とはどのような点か、本文の内容に即して説明しなさい。
- (3) 下線部 (3) は、男女の話し方に関する考えが普遍的なものではないことをどのように示しているか、本文中の例をふまえて説明しなさい。
- (4) 下線部 (4) について、筆者はなぜこれらの研究結果があまり知られていないと述べているか、筆者の立場がわかるように説明しなさい。
- (5) 筆者は *Do men and women talk differently?* という問いに対して、下線部 (5) の立場を取っているが、この “it depends” が意味するところを具体的に説明し、筆者が最も強調したい結論をまとめなさい。

III 次の設問に英語で答えなさい。

Some people argue that reading books is becoming less important in the digital age, while others believe it remains essential for academic learning. In about 250 words, discuss both views and give your opinion.