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The Attitudes toward Gender-Inclusive Language among EFL Speakers in Japan

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Abstract

This study examines the attitudes of Japanese speakers of English as a foreign language toward gender-inclusive language in English, addressing a gap in research that had primarily focused on native and English as a second language speakers. Data were collected from 816 students attending English classes at a university in Japan. The participants were administered the Japanese version of the Inventory of Attitudes toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language-General, and their demographic variables and egalitarian sex role attitudes were measured. Results indicated that while gender and sexist attitudes significantly influence one's acceptance of sexist language, factors such as age and academic field do not. Additionally, the study revealed that men who strongly opposed egalitarian sex role attitudes were significantly more likely to hold negative attitudes toward gender-inclusive language compared to women who held similar views. This may be due to women's expectations of gender-inclusive language and Japan's cultural context. Although there are limitations, such as imbalances in certain variables and the narrow age range among participants, this study revealed the previously unexamined neutral attitudes of Japanese EFL speakers and identified the factors influencing these attitudes using a generalized linear mixed model. Furthermore, at this stage, where learners hold neutral attitudes, exposing them to gender-inclusive language through English education—a language where changes are less likely to cause discomfort compared to one's native language—could not only prevent misunderstandings in communication during study abroad experiences but also lead to a reassessment of the ingrained gender stereotypes and attitudes within Japanese language and society.

Keywords: cross-cultural comparison; English as a foreign language learners; gender gap; nonsexist language; sexist attitude

1. Introduction

Feminist language reform arises from the frequent failure of language to keep pace with social changes, potentially reflecting an outdated social structure (Xiuqin Hong, 2018). While sexism has been minimized in society, linguistic sexism has persisted (Vani, Shuchi, & Kumar, 2023), which, as suggested by the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1929; Whorf, 2012), indicates that language can maintain sexist thinking among individuals. In fact, sexist language has been

shown to severely affect both women and men, who experience ostracism, decreased motivation, and perceived discrimination (De Lemus & Estevan-Reina, 2021). Terms such as "he," "mankind," and "fireman," which are male-specific, and expressions that are derogatory toward women, such as "old wives' tale," are considered sexist language (Parks & Roberton, 2000). Many public institutions have issued guidelines to replace sexist language with gender-inclusive language, but their implementation remains sporadic (Teso & Crolley, 2012).

Understanding language users' attitudes toward sexist and gender-inclusive language is a crucial step in promoting reforms toward gender-inclusive language. While many studies have examined English speakers' attitudes, they have primarily focused on native speakers (Nagle, 2008; Douglas & Sutton, 2014; Parks & Roberton, 1998, 2004) and English as a second language (ESL) speakers (Remigio & Talosa, 2021). Research suggests that native English speakers hold mostly neutral attitudes toward gender-inclusive language, with a few recognizing the negative impacts of sexist language. However, studies on ESL speakers indicate a more positive attitude, suggesting the influence of language distance or other factors on attitudes toward gender-inclusive language. Factors such as gender, age, and academic field have been identified as influencing attitudes toward gender-inclusive language, but studies have not consistently produced the same results. This underscores the importance of environmental and cultural differences in shaping these attitudes. Despite this, little research has systematically investigated the attitudes of learners studying English as a foreign language, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Japan. To address this gap, this study uses the IASNL-G scale to investigate Japanese EFL learners' attitudes toward sexist and nonsexist language. Furthermore, it examines how well factors inconsistently identified in previous studies align with findings in a Japanese context, employing analytical methods that account for individual and item-level differences.

2. Background and Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study comprises six hypotheses derived from factors identified in previous research as influencing gender-inclusive language. These factors are utilized as predictor variables in the analysis to assess their potential impact on attitudes. The following subsections offer a detailed discussion of each factor and its significance within the scope of this study.

2.1 Factors Influencing Attitudes Toward Gender-Inclusive Language

2.1.1 Sexist Attitude

Lakoff (2004) argued that attitudes toward sexist language are linked to feelings about women, regardless of age or gender. Studies have shown that sexist attitudes toward women contribute to support for sexist language (Parks & Roberton, 2004), while opposition to traditional gender roles reduces the use of sex-typed pronouns (Ashrafova, 2024; Jacobson & Insko, 1985). Modern or Hostile sexist beliefs correlate with negative attitudes toward gender-inclusive language and lower usage frequency (Douglas & Sutton, 2014; Sarrasin et al., 2012; Sczesny et al., 2015; Swim et al., 2004). Based on these findings, hypothesis 1 posits that sexist attitudes are proportionally related to attitudes toward sexist language.

2.1.2 Gender

Many studies have explored potential gender differences in attitudes toward gender-inclusive language (Agustina & Edgardo, 2019; Orgeira-Crespo et al., 2021). Research using the Inventory of Attitudes toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language-General (IASNL-G) scale, which was also employed in this study, has indicated that men tend to favor more sexist language compared to women (Douglas & Sutton, 2014; Nodari, 2024; Parks & Roberton, 1998; 2002).

However, other studies have concluded that there are no significant gender differences (Remigio & Talosa, 2021; Sczesny et al., 2015; Strafelda, 2018). Therefore, this study posits hypothesis 2: attitudes toward gender-inclusive language differ between genders.

2.1.3 Age

Studies on age and attitudes toward gender-inclusive language show mixed results. Some studies suggest that age influences attitudes, with older generations being more accepting (Nilsen, 1984), while others find no significant differences or favor middle-aged individuals (Pesce & Etchezahar, 2019). These inconsistent findings imply that historical and cultural contexts may play a more significant role than age itself. However, age remains a crucial factor for identifying the historical periods that shape these attitudes. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 posits that attitude toward gender-inclusive language vary with age.

2.1.4 Academic field

Significant differences in the prevalence and recognition of sexist language have been observed across academic fields (Cariaga, 2023). Harrigan and Lusic (1988) found that psychology students are more proactive than English students in changing sexist expressions. Building on these findings, hypothesis 4 posits that attitude toward gender-inclusive language vary significantly among students in English, psychology, education, and other academic fields.

2.1.5 English proficiency

A study on deaf children found that lower language abilities were associated with stronger support for masculine occupations, suggesting that linguistic ability influences gender stereotypes (Lewkowicz & Liben, 1993). Additionally, first language has been shown to shape attitudes and use of gender-inclusive language in a second language (Sanchez, 2023), implying that second-language proficiency affects these attitudes. Based on these findings, hypothesis 5 posits that difference in English proficiency influence EFL learners' attitudes toward gender-inclusive language.

2.1.6 Cross-cultural experience

Studies have demonstrated that cultural differences shape the way people conceptualize gender (Mazzuca et al., 2024). Cross-cultural experiences, such as exposure to different cultural values and language practices, can influence one's awareness and attitudes toward gender. Based on this, hypothesis 6 proposes that individuals with more cross-cultural experiences, such as diverse nationalities or extensive overseas stays, will have more favorable attitudes toward gender-inclusive language.

3. Methods

3.1 Participants

Quantitative data were collected between April and June 2024 from students, including some auditors, attending English classes at a university in Aichi Prefecture, Japan, to specifically target individuals learning English in Japan.

3.2 Measures

3.2.1 The Japanese Version of the Inventory of Attitudes toward Sexist/Nonsexist Language-General (IASNL-G)

The Japanese version of the IASNL-G (Sugiyama, 2024), which originally contained 21 items (Parks & Roberton, 2000), was developed through a back-translation process in collaboration with the original scale's authors. This instrument measures attitudes toward sexist language in English using a five-point Likert scale. To ensure its validity and reliability, a factor analysis

was conducted, resulting in the removal of nine items. This scale consists of three factors: beliefs about sexist language, perceptions of sexist language, and willingness to use gender-inclusive language. Total scores of the 12 items can be used to categorize attitudes toward sexist language into three groups: positive (45.34–60), neutral (28.67–45.33), and negative (12–28.66). Additionally, the total scores of the four items within each factor can also classify attitudes into positive (14.67–20), neutral (9.34–14.66), and negative (4–9.33).

3.2.2 Scale of Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes

To measure sexist attitudes that influence or are associated with attitudes toward sexist language, as indicated by the literature, this study used one item from the Scale of Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes (Suzuki, 1994): "More emphasis should be placed on equal rights and responsibilities for men and women both at home and in society." Item scores range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.2.3 Demographic Information

Based on previous research, questions were asked about gender, age, academic field, English proficiency, nationality, and length of time spent abroad, all of which have been suggested to influence attitudes. English proficiency was assessed using Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) standards. The respondents provided their scores in tests corresponding to CEFR standards, such as TOEIC, TOEFL, IELTS, and the EIKEN Test in Practical English Proficiency (a widely administered English test in Japan).

3.3 Analysis Plan

This study used total scores for each factor and the overall score to assess attitudes toward gender-inclusive language among Japanese EFL learners. Demographic information and one item from the Scale of Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes were used as predictor variables. A linear mixed-effects model, with students and items as random-effect factors, was employed to test whether the hypothesized model fits the data while also accounting for individual differences among respondents and variations across items. Numeric variables were standardized, and categorical variables were converted into factors. Data analysis was conducted using R version 4.4.1 (R Core Team, 2024).

4. Results

4.1 Attitudes toward Gender-Inclusive Language in English among Japanese Learners of English

The overall average score was 37.375, with average scores of 14.382 for beliefs about sexist language, 10.442 for perceptions of sexist language, and 12.550 for willingness to use gender-inclusive language. Based on the IASNL-G scale indicators, these scores suggest a neutral tendency, meaning that participants did not display strongly positive or negative attitudes toward gender-inclusive language. As previously mentioned, research indicates that native English speakers generally hold neutral attitudes toward gender-inclusive language. In contrast, studies on ESL speakers suggest a more positive attitude, implying that factors such as language distance or other influences may play a role in shaping these attitudes. However, the findings of this study reveal that Japanese EFL learners, whose linguistic distance from English is greater than that of ESL speakers, exhibited attitudes similar to those of native speakers. This suggests that factors such as gender and cultural background may have a stronger impact on attitudes toward gender-inclusive language than linguistic distance.

4.2 Data Preprocessing

Table 1 shows the predictor variables. Before applying the linear mixed-effects model, categories with extremely little data were either removed or consolidated to ensure the stability and reliability of the analysis results. For the gender variable, the categories "other" (1.7%) and "no response" (1.2%) were excluded. Regarding age, data for two nonresponses and one 79-year-old auditor were removed, and those for ages 21, 22, 23, 24, and 26 were consolidated (10%). For the academic field variable, data from auditors and unidentified responses were excluded. To examine the influence of academic field as discussed in research, the remaining data were grouped into four: English (18%), psychology (7%), education (3%), and others (70%). English proficiency was categorized into three levels based on the CEFR: respondents who had never taken an English test (67%); below A1, A1, and A2 combined (25%); and B1, B2, and C1 combined (8%). For overseas experience, most respondents reported having none, so the data were divided into three: 0 days (84%), less than one month (8%), and one month or more (8%).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for numerical and categorical predictors.

Numeric predictors	Min.	Max.	Median	Mean	SD	McDonald's omega
Egalitarian sex role attitudes	1	5	4	3.53	0.94	.83

Categorical predictors	levels (number of participants)
Gender	women (258), male (534), other (14), no response (10)
Age	eighteen (253), nineteen (337), twenty (148), twenty-one (57), twenty-two (11), twenty-three (2), twenty-four (4), twenty-six (1), seventy-nine (1), no response (2)
Nationality	Japanese (784), others (32)
Academic field	English and American studies (147), Japanese history (42), media studies (31), psychology (59), Japanese language (9), engineering (212), business administration (20), applied biology (130), nursing (47), medical engineering (45), sports emergency medical services (37), education (28), auditors and responses that were not possible to identify (9)
CEFR*	not taken (551), less than a1 (6), a1 (43), a2 (153), b1 (61), b2 (1), c1 (1)
Duration of stay abroad	none (690), less than one week (16), one week to less than one month (46), one month to less than six months (51), six months to less than one year (1), more than one year (12)

Abbreviation: CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

4.3 Application of the Linear Mixed-Effects Model

After data preprocessing, a total of 9,480 data points were obtained. Analysis began with 9,372 data points after excluding missing values. Multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs), whose values ranged from 1.04 to 1.72, which were well below the commonly accepted threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model. Additionally, the normality of residuals was confirmed through a Q-Q normality plot and other visual inspections. Model fit was evaluated using Nakagawa's R^2, which considers both fixed and random effects to provide an overall fit. The resulting conditional R^2 was 0.359. The model's predicted values and the actual response variable distribution were visually compared using the ggplot2 package in R, which confirmed no significant discrepancies. Additionally, the check model function of the performance package was used to verify the model's linearity, confirm the absence of outliers, and ensure consistency between the actual data and the model's predictions. The selection of students and items as random effects was made initially, but the model did not converge when random slopes for items were included. Therefore, the final model included random intercepts and slopes for students and random intercepts for items. Given the significant influence of the gender factor and potential interactions with other factors according to the literature, the linear mixed-effects model was first applied assuming no interaction among the predictor variables to confirm the significance of gender. Subsequently, the linear mixed-effects model was applied separately to the female and male subgroups to examine the significance of predictors other than gender. For factors with more than three levels, Tukey's post hoc multiple comparisons were conducted to determine significant differences. Table 2 presents the results of the linear mixed-effects model. Figure 1 illustrates the corresponding visualizations, with the relevant figure letters indicated in the table.

Table 2. Random-effect and fixed-effect structures of the mixed-effects model.

Random effects	Groups	SD	Corr			
Students	(Intercept)	0.37				
	Egalitarian sex role attitudes	0.23	0.12			
Items	(Intercept)	0.47				
Residual		0.90				
Overall Results		Estimate	SE	*t*-value	*p*-value	Figure 1
(Intercept)		2.935	0.153	19.133	<.001	
Gender (women)		0.139	0.039	3.584	<.001	A
Female Subgroup		Estimate	SE	*t*-value	*p*-value	Figure 1
(Intercept)		3.117	0.161	-2.531	<.001	
Egalitarian sex role attitudes		0.121	0.033	3.684	<.001	A

Nationality (others)	0.221	0.161	1.376	.169	F
Female Subgroup: Multiple Comparisons	Estimate	SE	*t*-value	*p*-value	Figure 1
Academic field (psychology vs. education)	-0.217	0.148	-1.459	.464	B
Academic field (psychology vs. English)	-0.275	0.118	-2.327	.095	B
Academic field (psychology vs. others)	-0.176	0.093	-1.904	.230	B
Academic field (education vs. English)	-0.058	0.150	-0.387	.980	B
Academic field (education vs. others)	0.040	0.127	0.318	.989	B
Academic field (English vs. others)	0.098	0.090	1.097	.692	B
Duration of stay abroad (0 days vs. < 1 month)	0.140	0.105	1.330	.380	C
Duration of stay abroad (0 days vs. ≥ 1 month)	0.231	0.135	1.711	.203	C
Duration of stay abroad (< 1 month vs. ≥ 1 month)	0.092	0.164	0.558	.843	C
Age (18 vs. 19)	-0.012	0.068	-0.172	.998	D
Age (18 vs. 20)	0.077	0.093	0.837	.837	D
Age (18 vs. 21–26)	0.028	0.140	0.200	.997	D
Age (19 vs. 20)	0.089	0.088	1.015	.741	D
Age (19 vs. 21–26)	0.040	0.137	0.289	.992	D
Age (20 vs. 21–26)	-0.050	0.143	-0.346	.986	D
CEFR (not taken vs. less than A1 + A1 + A2)	0.055	0.071	0.777	.717	E
CEFR (not taken vs. B1 + B2 + C1)	-0.024	0.125	-0.187	.981	E
CEFR (less than A1 + A1 + A2 vs. B1 + B2 + C1)	-0.079	0.126	-0.626	.806	E
Male Subgroup	Estimate	SE	*t*-value	*p*-value	Figure 1
(Intercept)	2.923	0.170	17.171	<.001	

Egalitarian sex role attitudes	0.225	0.026	8.711	<.001	A
Nationality (others)	-0.012	0.117	-0.101	0.920	F
Male Subgroup: Multiple Comparisons	Estimate	SE	*t*-value	*p*-value	Figure 1
Academic field (psychology vs. education)	-0.334	0.179	-1.865	.245	B
Academic field (psychology vs. English)	-0.162	0.117	-1.384	.510	B
Academic field (psychology vs. others)	-0.118	0.098	-1.208	.622	B
Academic field (education vs. English)	0.172	0.168	1.028	.733	B
Academic field (education vs. others)	0.216	0.155	1.398	.501	B
Academic field (English vs. others)	0.044	0.077	0.569	.941	B
Duration of stay abroad (0 days vs. < 1 month)	0.036	0.085	0.429	.903	C
Duration of stay abroad (0 days vs. ≥1 month)	0.049	0.095	0.517	.863	C
Duration of stay abroad (< 1 month vs. ≥ 1 month)	0.013	0.122	0.105	.994	C
Age (18 vs. 19)	-0.011	0.055	-0.204	.997	D
Age (18 vs. 20)	0.031	0.067	0.460	.968	D
Age (18 vs. 21–26)	-0.076	0.082	-0.922	.793	D
Age (19 vs. 20)	0.042	0.063	0.661	.912	D
Age (19 vs. 21–26)	-0.064	0.080	-0.806	.852	D
Age (20 vs. 21–26)	-0.106	0.085	-1.250	.596	D
CEFR (not taken vs. less than A1 + A1 + A2)	-0.047	0.065	-0.725	.749	E
CEFR (not taken vs. B1 + B2 + C1)	0.168	0.102	1.653	.224	E
CEFR (less than A1 + A1 + A2 vs. B1 + B2 + C1)	0.215	0.100	2.151	.081	E

Abbreviation: CEFR - Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Figure 1: Partial effects of the linear mixed-effects regression model. The bands reflect 95% confidence intervals.

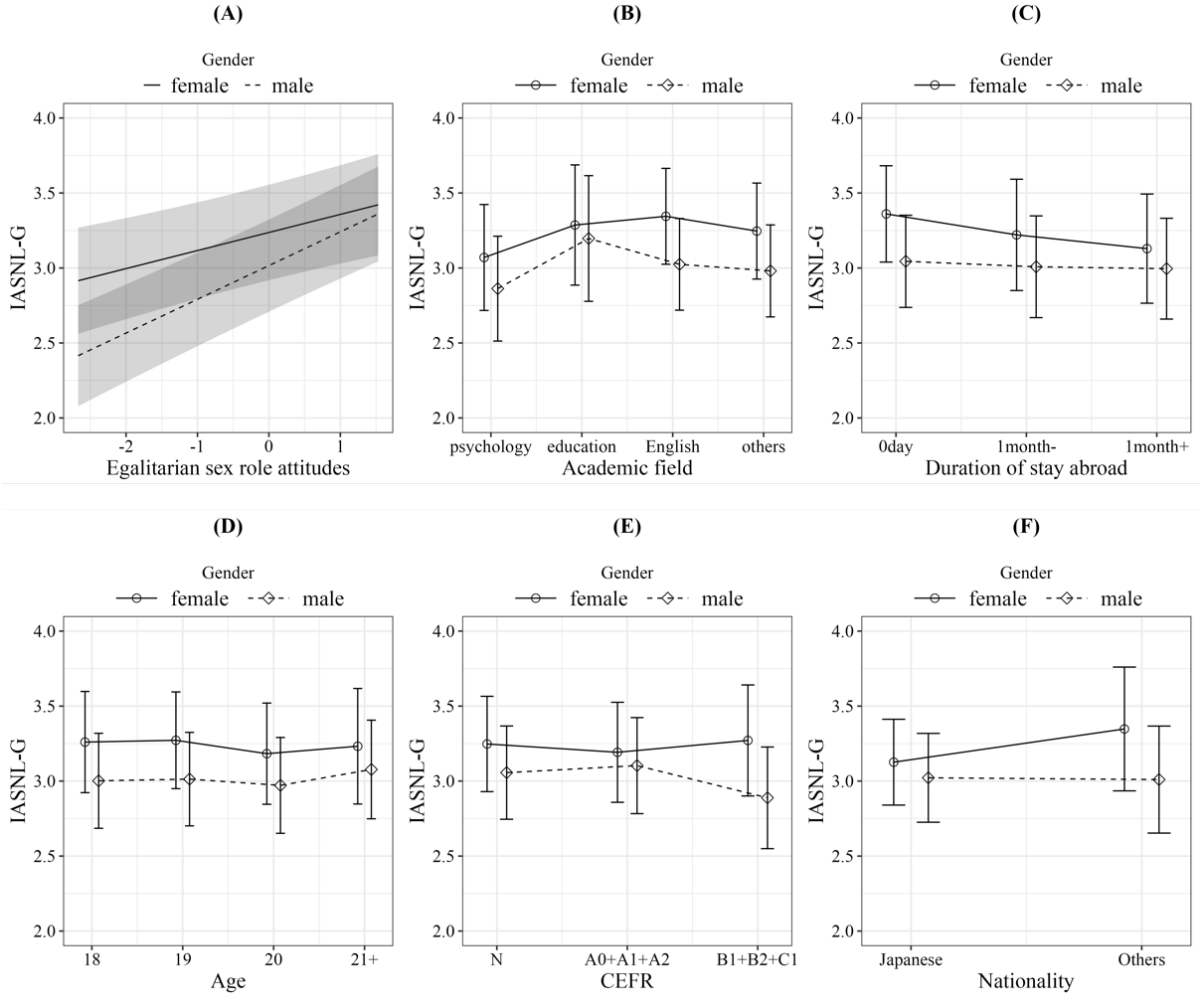

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Table 2 shows a significant effect of gender in the overall results and significant effects of egalitarian sex role attitudes within the gender subgroups for both males and females ($p < .001$). This is illustrated in Figure 1, panel A, where the analysis results from the subgroups divided by gender indicate that hypothesis 1, which states that sexist attitudes are proportionally related to attitudes toward sexist language, is supported. For both males and females, higher egalitarian sex role attitudes are associated with higher IASNL-G scores, suggesting that individuals with lower sexist attitudes tend to have more positive perceptions of gender-inclusive language. Similarly, the results also support hypothesis 2, which states that attitudes toward gender-inclusive language differ between genders. However, panel A in Figure 1 reveals that the gender difference in attitudes toward sexist language varies depending on the strength of egalitarian sex role attitudes. To determine whether there were significant gender differences across specific thought levels, a post hoc analysis was conducted using the estimate_contrasts function from the R package. This function allowed us to test gender differences at various levels of thought (i.e., -2, -1, 0, 1) with multiple comparisons adjusted. The analysis of gender differences in scores at specific values of Egalitarian sex role attitudes revealed that, when Egalitarian sex role attitudes was -2, the difference between genders (men - women) was -0.28 (95% CI [-0.49, -0.07]), which was statistically significant ($z = -2.63$, $p = 0.009$). Conversely, when Egalitarian sex role attitudes was 1, the gender difference was -0.08 (95% CI [-0.19, 0.03]), which was not statistically significant ($z = -1.41$, $p = 0.160$). These results indicate that, at Egalitarian sex role attitudes value of -2, men's scores were significantly lower than women's, while at Egalitarian sex role attitudes of 1, no significant gender difference was

observed. In contrast, for variables corresponding to age, academic field, English proficiency, cross-cultural experience, and nationality shown in Table 1 and Figure 1 panels C, D, E, F, no significant effects were observed. Therefore, hypotheses 3–6 were not supported. However, all panels in Figure 1 visually confirm that, on average, women selected higher scores than males across all categories.

5. Discussion

The results indicate that across all three scores—beliefs about sexist expressions, awareness of such expressions, and willingness to use gender-inclusive language—participants exhibited neutral attitudes. This neutrality may be attributed to the current transitional period in the adoption of gender-inclusive language. As its use continues to evolve, learners may not yet have formed definitive opinions. Furthermore, cultural factors likely play a significant role. In Japan, where relatively conservative views on gender roles persist, there may be a lack of urgency to adopt gender-inclusive language. Even among individuals who express a desire for gender equality, skepticism regarding the relevance of such expressions in daily communication may remain. Regarding linguistic distance, previous research involving both native and second-language speakers has suggested that greater linguistic distance between languages can lead to a higher acceptance of changes, such as the introduction of gender-inclusive expressions. However, the neutral attitudes displayed by EFL speakers in this study indicate that cultural background and gender may exert a stronger influence on attitudes than linguistic distance.

The analysis revealed that gender and egalitarian sex role attitudes are critical determinants of attitudes toward gender-inclusive language, aligning with previous studies (Douglas, 2014; Sarrasin et al., 2012; Swim et al., 2004). The IASNL-G scores demonstrated notable gender differences, with participants holding stronger egalitarian sex role attitudes being more supportive of gender-inclusive language. A key observation was that men who disagreed with the statement "We should place more emphasis on equal rights and responsibilities for men and women" exhibited significantly more negative attitudes toward gender-inclusive language compared to women holding the same view. In other words, even among those opposing the statement, women demonstrated more supportive attitudes than men toward gender-inclusive language. This contrast can be attributed to the historical privileges conferred by traditional gender roles. Traditional gender roles have historically provided men with privileges and power structures (Hiwarkhedka & Sharma, 2024; Sanday, 1981). Consequently, men who strongly desire to retain these advantages may resist changes like the adoption of gender-inclusive language, perceiving them as threats to their established privileges. Conversely, women, who are more likely to experience inequalities in wages, employment, and other aspects of daily life (Parker & Funk, 2017), may see gender-inclusive language as a potential tool for addressing these disparities—even if they accept traditional gender roles.

The cultural context of Japan further illuminates these findings. Japanese society remains relatively conservative in terms of gender roles and expectations. Japan's rankings in the Global Gender Gap Index over the past three years—116th of 146 countries in 2022, 125th in 2023, and 118th in 2024—highlight ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity (World Economic Forum, 2022–2024). Compared to many Western countries, Japanese society adheres more strictly to traditional gender norms (Murata & Aramaki, 2015; Nakazawa, 2007). This cultural backdrop likely intensifies men's resistance to gender-inclusive language, as such changes may be perceived as challenges to deeply ingrained societal norms. The influence of media and public discourse on gender roles also plays a significant role. Japanese media often reinforces traditional stereotypes (Arima, 2000; Kunihiro, 2003). Consistent exposure to media supporting traditional gender roles may deepen men's resistance to adopting gender-inclusive language. Conversely, increasing the representation of gender diversity and inclusive language

in media could gradually shift public attitudes, including those of men. Educational institutions also play a pivotal role in shaping attitudes toward gender. In recent years, some universities and schools in Japan have begun incorporating discussions on gender equality and inclusive language into their curricula (Okuno, 2006). However, the extent and effectiveness of these programs vary significantly depending on the school and region. Enhancing these educational efforts nationwide and ensuring they reach broader audiences, including male students, could be instrumental in narrowing the gender gap in attitudes toward sexist language.

Finally, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Although the overall sample size was sufficient, the imbalance in group sizes across categories posed a challenge. This uneven distribution may have limited the ability to detect effects beyond gender and sexist attitudes. For example, while prior studies have suggested that factors such as age and academic field influence attitudes toward sexist language (Harrigan & Lusic, 1988; Parks & Roberton, 1998), this study did not confirm such effects. However, due to the imbalance in sample sizes across categories, it cannot conclusively determine whether these or other factors—such as nationality, English proficiency, or duration of stay abroad—have an impact. To address this, future studies should focus on ensuring balanced sample sizes across specific categories of interest. For instance, when examining the effects of age, having approximately 100 participants per age group would provide more robust data. A similar approach should be applied to other variables, such as nationality and academic field. Additionally, this study utilized only one item from the Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes Scale due to concerns that including the entire scale might increase response time and make it more difficult to recruit participants. However, administering the full scale would likely have provided a more comprehensive understanding of participants' attitudes. Consequently, the findings of this study should be viewed as preliminary. Future research should employ more balanced sampling and comprehensive measures to enhance the reliability and generalizability of the results.

6. Conclusion

It was found that attitudes toward gender-inclusive language in English are influenced by sex role attitudes and gender. Additionally, Japanese English learners are currently at a stage where they hold neutral attitudes toward gender-inclusive language in English. This neutrality suggests that learners can be guided toward either supportive or unsupportive attitudes, highlighting the importance of effectively introducing gender-inclusive language at this stage. For instance, incorporating examples and discussions of gender-inclusive expressions into curricula can promote awareness and acceptance. English education, being linguistically more distant from Japanese, encounters less resistance to change compared to the native language, making it a particularly effective medium for this purpose. Learning gender-inclusive language can also help learners avoid using sexist language during study abroad experiences, thereby preventing misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, this approach fosters critical reflection on deeply ingrained gender norms within Japanese society. By using English education as a catalyst, educators can contribute to broader societal changes and advance gender equality in both linguistic and cultural practices.

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