The Gender of Takarazuka Otokoyaku and the Fans Expectations

Megumi Okugiri
okugiri@u-sacred-heart.ac.jp
University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo

Among many Japanese popular cultures, Takarazuka Review Company, a musical company, illustrates a significance in gender because both members and fans are female. All members of the company are female, and about a half of them are *otokoyaku*, who play male roles. For the fans, the 90 % are women (Nakamoto, 2011). This study will argue the gender and identity of otokoyaku by illustrating their stereotypical speech, specifically their use of first person pronoun “watashi/boku/ore” in their speech on and off stage. On stage as a male role, *otokoyaku* actors use “boku” or “ore,” i.e., first person pronouns used by male (Kinsui, 2016). Meanwhile, on television programs, they never use such pronouns but “watashi,” i.e., a first person used in female casual speech (Takarazuka Sky Stage). The phenomenon shows that otokoyaku actors have two personas in public (on stage and TV); as both male and female.

This study will explain the reason for the personas lies the fans’ unique attitude, expectation and desire. The fans can meet their favourite actors waiting at the stage door or a fan club party, and many of them want to watch affectionately as *otokoyaku* grows up for years (often more than a decade); from Takarazuka Music School to their retirement (Nakamoto, 2009; Miyamoto, 2011). They have a special feeling similar to parental love (Nakamoto, 2009). That is just like the fans are raising a girl (namely their favourite actor) as their ideal child. Another notable phenomenon is that younger generation fans see and admire *otokoyaku* as an icon of their perfect dream working woman (Robertson, 2000), who has overcome many difficulties in the school and company: well-known as being extremely difficult to enrol and strict in disciplines and art. *Otokoyaku* is their dream who can behave regardless of the gender, therefore being considered to be a successful woman (Robertson, 2000).