

Journal and Proceedings
of the
Gender Awareness in Language Education
Special Interest Group

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Editorial Foreword

As 2016 closes, we bring to you the 9th volume of the GALE Journal. Anyone with an interest in striving to decrease inequality, violence, and insularity, whether related to gender or otherwise, must stand deeply disturbed by recent political developments in the UK, US, and elsewhere. The growing strength of various nationalist movements, the return to open and aggressive expressions of hatred, and the turn away from education and careful inquiry is troubling and, perhaps, disheartening. While the news in Japan has certainly been less extreme, the general trend is still worrisome. The national government continues to grow more militaristic. The Tokyo District court found that a woman denied the right to continue use of her maiden name in a professional capacity was not suffering a violation of her rights. Japan fell from 101st place in the Global Gender Gap Report to 111th place, despite the government's claim to being committed to Womenomics. While there has been some positive movement in terms of political representation, with Yuriko Koike winning the Tokyo governorship and Renho taking leadership of the DPJ, the overall storyline here has run somewhere from neutral to negative.

How do we proceed in a world where substantial numbers of people in industrialized countries seem to want to turn both inwards (against the world and all "Others") and back to a mythical past that was "great" only for the limited few? Sadly, we, the editors do not know the way forward, at least not concretely. But we would like to offer a...stance, if you will...that may resonate with some of you, a stance that may be our only hope. These words come from Feminist Frequency, a US non-profit founded by Anita Sarkeesian. Originally a feminist media critic focusing on video gaming, Sarkeesian has expanded to become a more general source of education and activism on gender issues. Writing the day after the US election in a Facebook post, she said,

Waking to a new day after a long and sleepless night, many of us are still in deep shock and in a state of mourning. And we must give ourselves permission to grieve. But once we grieve, then we must fight. We must be organized and strategic. We cannot let hate win because this isn't just about us; this is about the world.

And to the world, we say: we refuse to surrender to the forces which seek to silence women. We will not stand idly by and allow the continued intimidation of people of colour, non-Christians, LGBTQ+ folks, and all those who exist at the intersection of multiple identities. We can and will participate in the mobilization of our communities. We will resist the hate. And in the end, we will win.

Most of our readers are teachers, and thus we the editors imagine that many of us do a lot of our feminist work and transactivism within the classroom, when our institutions and other circumstances permit it. This can be a challenging task, especially for those who teach in institutions that aren't fully (or even partially) committed to equality for all genders and

sexualities. In different ways, both articles in this volume address how it may be possible to bring these issues directly into the classroom. The first, by Gwyn Helverson, examines the tendency for university students to (in both the author's experience and in the experience of the editors) segregate by gender in the classroom when the teacher doesn't explicitly assign mixed-gender seating or other mixed-gender groupings. Helverson surveyed students to find out why they self-segregated, and how they felt about working in mixed-gender groups when compelled to do so by the teacher. She also connects this to discussions in the classes about gender issues and to the students' beliefs about gender roles. Her message is hopeful while still pointing out where further work can be done.

The second, by Quenby Hoffman Aoki, is a more personal take on the relationship of feminism to the classroom. In this perspective piece, Hoffman Aoki is compelled to put her beliefs into words after a student asks, "What do feminists actually do?" Describing the experience as an epiphany, the author explains how this question set in motion an exploration of common teaching practices found in feminist pedagogy and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches, and how this further led her to develop and deliver a lecture on feminist principles and behaviors for this student and her classmates. This article underscores the value of sharing our beliefs and values with our students, and the immense potential gender studies holds for the development of critical thinking and self-reflection in content-based language classrooms.

In addition to the two long papers, this issue also contains four materials reviews, all of which look at the lived experiences of various women coming from or living in Japan. Jennifer Teeter reviews a scholarly collection edited by Lisa Freedman, Laura Miller, and Christine R. Yano entitled *Modern Girls on the Go*, which looks at both the private lives and the public representations of *moga*—"modern girls" from Japan who transitioned into more visible roles through workplace opportunities. While the analyses and narratives are not all positive, they may provide us ideas about how women can position and be positioned in public spaces in empowering ways. Second, Aaron Hahn reviews our outgoing SIG Coordinator Diane Hawley Nagatomo's latest book, *Identity, Gender and Teaching English in Japan*. In this book, Nagatomo focuses specifically on foreign female teachers who have chosen to reside permanently in Japan. She demonstrates that the personal and professional identities of these women are closely intertwined, and that they are both shaped by and shape the identities that others ascribe them as educators, wives, mothers, and community members. Emma Dalton's book *Women and Politics in Contemporary Japan*, reviewed by Tanja McCandie, looks at the relationship between gender and politics in Japan, especially with regards to the LDP (the political party which has dominated Japanese politics since World War II). Dalton provides both a general background on Japanese politics as well as an in-depth analysis of interviews of 17 female politicians. She demonstrates many of the reasons why women have so little political representation in Japan, and the consequences that has for gender inequality here. Our final review shifts from our normal focus on academic and teaching materials, in that Michi Saki is reviewing the memoir *The Good Shufu* by Tracy Slater. Slater's memoir provides a first-person account of a foreign female choosing to live in

Japan, and how this act causes her to question her identity in the context of her previous ideas and dreams. Like Nagatomo's academic work, Slater "argues" that identity is not simply a thing imposed by external people and forces, but is rather something that we have agency over via our ability to choose aspects of those identities which are presented to us and then shape them into something that is somewhat of our own choosing.

Perhaps this, then, is a message we can take away into 2017, both into our personal lives and into our classrooms: many choices that will profoundly impact ourselves and the world in general are out of our hands. In *Modern Girls on the Go*, we see how new opportunities can still result in our public images being shaped by our employers, the media, and society at large; in Dalton's book we see that women's lack of political representation is a consequence of systemic inequalities; and in Helverson's article, we see that even students who express a desire to change fail to see how their day-to-day choices reinforce and are reinforced by gendered stereotypes. But Helverson also shows us how making students aware of normally backgrounded inequalities may enable future change; Hoffman Aoki's article shows how we as teachers can be led by our students to find new ways of openly professing our feminist (and other) stances, and both Nagatomo's and Slater's books give us examples of women who have exercised personal agency to develop positive life stories in the midst of the complex demands of family, employment, and society.

In conclusion, we would like to thank those who have made both this year and our entire tenure as the editors of the GALE Journal possible and fruitful. Our Japanese editor, Reiko Yoshihara, has again provided us with excellent care on the Japanese abstracts. We continue to benefit from the hard work of numerous reviewers and proofreaders, listed in full on page 2. And we both learned from Salem Hicks and Robert O'Mochain, prior editors of the Journal.

Finally, we would like to introduce Risa Ikeda, who will be taking over as Editor for the 2017 edition. We are both very grateful to be able to pass the reins to an enthusiastic and conscientious new editor. Aaron Hahn will stay on as an Associate Editor to aid in the transition process, and Kristie Collins will remain active with the journal as a reviewer and proofreader. As always, we would like to encourage you, our readers, to get involved with the running of the GALE Journal. Being a part of the editorial team has been a wonderful experience for both of us. GALE SIG's publications depend on the volunteer efforts of our members, and the undertaking is not only worthy but also fulfilling and enjoyable.

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Heroic Guppies, Happy Piranhas?
Student Perceptions of Mixed Seating in the EFL Classroom at a Private Japanese University and Implications in Regards to Japan's 'Different-but-equal' Gender System

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Abstract

Females on one side of the classroom, males on the other: university students in Japan tend to seat themselves in a gender-segregated manner, even though they have chosen to study at a coeducational institution. Conversely, EFL instructors often utilize the common classroom management technique of seat assignments to integrate students. What do students actually think of this technique? Questionnaire data from 15 classes, first- and second-year, mandatory and elective, indicates that student perceptions of coeducational seat assignments are overwhelmingly positive. This paper first discusses gender issues in education in general, then the contemporary Japanese context in specific, before analyzing the questionnaire data in more detail. The results not only reveal students' attitudes towards "different-but-equal" gender roles in contemporary Japanese culture, but also contradictions in students' comments and behavior. For the EFL classroom in Japanese coed universities, a mixture of single-sex and coed activities is proposed to further investigate potential gender-based imbalances.

概要

日本の大学生は、英語授業の時、教師が何も指示しないと共学であるにも関わらず、女子は女子、男子は男子でかたまってお座る傾向がある。そこで英語の授業において、指導教師は故意に男女混合の座席にするように指示した。果たして、この方法は有効なのだろうか。1年生と2年生の必修及び選択の英語授業15クラスで行ったアンケート調査では、男女混合の座席のほうが圧倒的によいと学生たちが思っていることがわかった。本論文では、アンケート調査を分析する前に、初めに一般的に教育におけるジェンダー問題を述べ、現代の日本の教育状況におけるジェンダー問題を述べる。結果では、現代の日本の文化の中で「異なるが平等」という性役割に対する学生の態度が露わになっただけでなく、学生のコメントや行動における矛盾も明らかになった。日本の男女共学の大学のEFLクラスにおいて、同じ性同士のアクティビティと共学のアクティビティを組み合わせることを提案し、今後は、潜在的なジェンダーの不均衡についての研究も期待する。

Introduction: Piranhas and Guppies

During discussion in a first-year English class at a Japanese university, students were asked to explain their impressions of contemporary gender relations. A Japanese male student raised his hand and said solemnly, "May I use a metaphor? Women are piranhas and men are guppies. Soon all of the guppies will be gone." The class erupted in laughter. When pressed to explain himself by his professor, the student noted that modern females in Japan are simply too aggressive. The class once again laughed.

Kinsella (2014, p. 183) writes of "the recurring fear and fantasy of female revolution" in Japan, an undercurrent since the Meiji Era: women's power is increasing and brings with it a sense of siege. This phenomenon of perceiving any increases in power and autonomy as threatening—despite data showing gains are not necessarily significant enough to be labeled revolutionary—is illustrated in numerous examples such as the one above.

If Japan is undergoing a gender revolution, then perhaps that could explain why some male students think women are like piranhas and why males and females tend to separate themselves at the beginning of every English class. During the semester, the professor asked the students why they segregated themselves in class, but they always responded with, "No reason." This lack of introspection was surprising since each course included a four- to six-week gender module in which students compared various cultural and historical gender systems from around the world. Given the lack of response to the main theme of the module, that "gender is performative" (Butler, 2006, p. 61-71), and therefore choosing to segregate is a performative act, it was decided to further investigate the phenomenon via written questionnaires. As experience had shown that students were substantially more open and intellectually responsive on paper than verbally in front of their peers, the questionnaires were distributed in the last class of the semester. In addition to providing supporting evidence that mixed seating is perceived as being positive academically and socially by these students, the results also presented contradictions in regards to the issues of single-sex and coed education, and to gender issues in Japan.

Educational and Cultural Background

Single-sex and coed education

In recent attempts to transition from a male-chauvinistic to a gender-equal society in Western countries, some educators have gone from outing sexism, which causes females to underperform in schools (Cameron, 2007; Ehrlich, 1997; Lakoff, 1973), to championing single-sex education as a remedy (Marsh, 2008; NASSPE, 2015; Younger & Warrington, 2012). For example, females have "a sense of ownership and territoriality" in single-sex classes, which enables them to succeed academically and in leadership roles (Streitmatter, 2002, p. 212). Case studies from various countries and cultures suggest that single-sex classes do in fact result in higher achievement rates, particularly for females (Alfaro, 2006;

Masubuchi, 2015; Ramazani & Bonyadi, 2012; Shibuya & Mimura, 2002; Vernier, 2008; Yang, 2001).

However, there has recently been a so-called "boy turn" lamenting underperforming males (Alfaro, 2006; Gurian, Stevens & King, 2008; Jackson, 2002; Neu & Weinfeld, 2007). The backlash includes one example in which successful females were required by their school to volunteer to tutor those underperforming males (Ivanson & Murphy, 2006, p. 163-179). In previous decades, however, it must be noted that successful males had not been required to tutor underperforming females. Numerous case studies reveal that when females' and males' needs conflict, males' needs are prioritized at the expense of females' education, achievement, and general well-being (see Younger and Warrington, 2012, p. 607).

This trend appears in other countries as well. Hernandez (2015) writes of China's new policy to re-masculinize schools, which critics say have become too feminine with too many female teachers, producing 'weak' males incapable of drive or defense. Saidin and Brahmin (2010) focus on Malaysian males' underachievement and recommend single-sex classes as a solution. Other studies in the U.S. discuss the issue of troublemaking, underachieving males and macho posturing which are more detrimental to males' performance in male-only classes (Campbell & Sanders, 2002, p. 39-40). In Japan, there are conservative teachers' groups that promote single-sex education (Nakai, 2010; Nihon Danjyo Begaku Kyoiku Kenkyukai, n.d.) using elementary school drill books, the covers of which are distinctly gendered (Nihon Danjyo Begaku Kiyoiuku Kenkyukai, n.d., p. 1) as shown in Figure 1. The boy's textbook cover image is in dark blue, showing a *manga*-like drawing of an aggressive student flying out of the cover with the title "Heroes" in bold print, whereas the girls' drill book cover shows girls in pink dresses with big eyes and curly hair mixing cake batter next to the title "Happy" (Nihon Danjyo Begaku Kiyoiuku Kenkyukai, n.d., p. 1).



Figure 1. Cover images of *Heroes* (boy's drill book) and *Happy* (girls' drill book)

Arnot (2013) notes that historically, "the use of single-sex schooling had been the major form of reproduction of gender relations—relations that constituted the bourgeois ideal of the family form, of male hierarchy and female dependency and subordination" (p. 87). Norms of the "good" student: caring, concerned, and connected, are not only female norms (McLeod, 2012, p. 45), but also middle-class (Bank, 2007, p. 532) and heterosexist ones (Mac an Ghail, 1994). On the one hand, it seems that females are succeeding with their maternal behaviors in the classroom, but in fact they are dominated in mixed classes by aggressive, self-focused (often male) students. Nor do females achieve (economic) parity outside the classroom by utilizing these "feminine" skills. The "hidden agenda" may reward maternal females for good behavior with higher grades and test scores, but this actually results in less external achievement and economic freedom later in life.

According to scholars concerned with gender rights in the classroom, then, the purpose of education is to challenge "the assumptions of the gender consciousness-privilege continuum," and to create "alternative versions" via "critical transformation" so that equity can be achieved (Schmuk, Nagel & Brody, 2002, p. 196-209). Although these ideals are espoused in education systems such as Japan's, the 'hidden agenda' of maintaining the status quo over the long-term may hinder the achievement of equality.

Gender roles in contemporary Japan's so-called 'different-but-equal' society

Single-sex/coed education in general, and mixed seating specifically in EFL, have effects on students in the classroom. These issues, however, are closely related to issues of gender equality in Japan. Japan has a history of oppressing and mobilizing women for service to men. While it is certainly true that men have been oppressed and mobilized to serve the nation-state, women's status in this hierarchy has been lower. This "gender apartheid" of "rigidly constructed gender roles and severely enforced separation of men and women" excludes women "from a great range of the benefits of society" (Reardon, 2001, p. 37). It also limits "their influence over the society and the capacity to control their own lives" (Reardon, 2001, p. 37). This phenomenon is not uniquely Japanese, but nation, state, and gender in modern Japan are an artificial construct in which males and females have "different and unequal relationships" particularly in regards to heterosexist marriage and reproduction (Peterson as cited in Germer, Mackie & Wöhr, 2014, p. 1-2).

The "good wife, wise mother" tradition was promulgated to support the nation-state (Koyama as cited in Germer, Mackie & Wöhr, 2014, p. 85-100) until World War I, then women's role as consumers between wars was emphasized (Inoue as cited in Germer, Mackie & Wöhr, 2014, p. 96), which has since laid the foundation for Japan's current 'different-but-equal' essentialist feminism. Thus, there is even now an "ideological importance" to the post-World War II *sarariiman/shufu* (businessman/housewife) model—even though in reality this ideal has sometimes not been achievable (Osawa as cited in Germer, Mackie & Wöhr, 2014, p. 13).

Japanese women are said to suffer from "golden handcuff" syndrome. Japan is currently a comfortable country for many middle- and upper-class women, yet women's skills are under-utilized (World Economic Forum, 2015). The debate in Japan has been whether women have victim status because of their dependency on spouses and lack of economic freedom, or if they have such a high quality of life via alternative routes that they have successfully escaped the system (Okano, 2009, p. 5-6). As Ueno (2004) notes, working from within to change an oppressive system often backfires in that one is assimilated into it. Therefore, refusing to play along with the rigged system—in other words, not working and/or working part-time—is seen as a statement of defiance in and of itself.

However, the recent skyrocketing single-mother and child poverty rates (Yamano, 2015, p. 104), ranging from 16-40% depending on the news source, call into question both "opting out" and of the "different-but-equal" system. In addition, Prime Minister Abe, while on the one hand mobilizing women to work to revitalize Japan's dreary economy, has, until now, offered little in the way of child- and elder-care support, which is still overwhelmingly performed by women.

The Japanese work world is rigged against women, with only 30% of women returning to work after childbirth (Spitzer, 2016, p. 1). Disappointment at work in regards to content, annual leave, overtime, and so on leads to high attrition rates and conditions which force women out of the promotion track (Okano, 2009, p. 131-143). Career choices for women are stratified by gender in terms of "the short length of service," "auxiliary position," and "low remuneration" (Suzuki, 2007, p. 10). The latest data shows that 21.4% of women aged 25-44 experienced maternity harassment, including earnings losses and bullying about time off, and 28-43% experienced sexual harassment (Dokuritsukouseihounin, 2016, p. 1-19). What, then, is "equal human value" (Reardon, 2001, p. 37), particularly in Japan's supposedly different-but-equally-valued discourse of gender?

The conflict between traditional sexism and contemporary gender rights in Japan is illustrated by another example. Single-sex schools are actually recommended by a Shizuoka prefectural report as a means to improve Japan's notorious and dangerously low birth rate (Reizei, 2014, p. 1). The report, which is described in an editorial, states that because girls mature faster, segregated classes are useful. In coed classes, females lose respect for underperforming, immature males if their own grades are higher, and later, don't want to mate with them. The writer of the editorial disagrees with this assessment and states that single-sex schools for females should be maintained as they foster high-achieving women in areas such as science where they otherwise might not be able to succeed (Reizei, 2014, p. 1-2).

Can men really be described as "guppies" and women as "piranhas," given these data and examples? Japan also seems to be experiencing an out-of-proportion "boy turn," or backlash against females. Japan's society is not "different-but-equal" by any measurable standards as the above data indicates, even if university students believe it to be so. It is

within this cultural and political milieu that gender issues were studied and the mixed seating questionnaires were administered to students.

Methods

The students in this research study were first- and second-year students enrolled at a private coeducational university in Japan. The TOEIC score range of students was 200-500, and these students were considered to be amongst the lower levels of English learners at this university. The first-year students were Humanities or International Relations students, departments that have academically-oriented English components required for graduation. The first-year students were all enrolled in mandatory communicative and academic skills courses, which met twice a week. The second-year students were all enrolled in elective academic skills courses, which met once or twice a week in order to prepare to study abroad. Approximately one-third of the classes focused on gender studies as a theme, in which the majority of students seemed to participate enthusiastically. In first-year mandatory classes, students viewed videos and read articles on gender systems in various societies around the world. In elective classes, students studied the Global Gender Gap Report (the World Economic Forum's yearly study of the state of gender equality in 145 countries) in more detail and researched short presentations on a topic of their choice from the GGGR. Students were required to write TOEFL-style essays on the topics studied for examinations.

The questionnaires were written in both English and Japanese and the students were told that they could reply in either language. Participation was voluntary, so students could choose not to respond at all. In fact, all 320 students who were given the questionnaires responded. Some students in the second-year classes responded in English, whereas the first-year students almost always used Japanese. The questionnaires were administered anonymously. After ten minutes, the questionnaires were collected and students tended to chat amongst themselves in Japanese. Since the professor understands Japanese, their comments provided anecdotal feedback in addition to the questionnaire data.

The questionnaires were divided into two sections. Part I consisted of three closed-choice questions, each of which had a corresponding free comment section allowing students to write further thoughts. Part II consisted of five multiple choice questions about the effectiveness of mixed seating in general for English language learning. There was also an open comments section at the end of Part II.

The questionnaires were distributed at the end of the semester after students had taken part in many bonding activities and got along with each other quite well. During the class in which questionnaires were administered, students were not required to mix seats. This meant that they tended to sit with classmates who were also friends who identify as the same gender. The professor intentionally did so thinking that students might feel relaxed when filling out the questionnaires, but noted that herd mentality may have emerged when one friend expressed their opinion and others concurred verbally. Since the questionnaires were anonymous, this trend could not be confirmed.

Questions and Responses

Overall, 115 students identified as male and 205 as female.

Responses to each question follow. It must be noted that the responses were startlingly uniform for each class and each year. In fact, the data for each question was cross-checked to determine if the male/female ratio changed, but it did not. Comments were sorted to determine main types, as well as to differentiate exceptional comments from the norm.

Part I of the questionnaire: seating and participation

1. Do you think your usual seat-taking pattern is conscious or unconscious?

1.	Conscious	Unconscious	Don't Know	No Answer
Total	82	233	2	0

The main themes in the comments for this section were that students don't consciously choose to sit with males or females, but that their friends just happen to identify as the same gender that they do. A few gallant males said they didn't want to make their classmates uncomfortable by mixing genders. Other students, both male and female, said that they feel nervous speaking with the opposite gender, and therefore choose segregated seats consciously.

Representative sample comments:

- I don't purposely choose, but the people I get along well with are the same gender as me. (First-year male)
- I don't want the person I'm sitting next to me to feel uncomfortable. (First-year male)

Exceptional Comments:

- I think about it if the classroom is small. (Second-year male)
- I used to think about it in high school, but in university I don't. (First-year male)

2. Does the gender of your partner/teammates affect the quality and/or amount of participation in class?

2.	Yes	No	Don't Know	No Answer
Total	102	217	2	0

Of the approximately 30% of students who noted effects, approximately half stated that the effects were positive in that they were more motivated. The remainder noted that they have trouble expressing themselves in front of students of the opposite gender, that they go along with the group when members are the same gender, or that males can be *urusai* (loud and distracting). Studies conducted outside of Japan often focus on high school students who are

more immature and who seem to have more difficulties getting along in coed classrooms. Particularly, heterosexual male posturing to show off and impress females is reported to be a problem in those classes, but this seems to be less of a problem here.

Representative sample comments:

- I lose at exchanging opinions with boys. (First-year female)
- I get pulled in another direction with mixed groups when there are girls. (First-year female)
- I'm not sure what to talk about with a boy. (First-year girl)
- I get nervous in mixed groups. (First-year male)

Exceptional comments:

- I went to a boys' school, but the English and biology teachers were women and it was tough. (First-year male)
- It depends on the question. (First-year female)

3. Do you prefer gender-integrated or gender-segregated activities?

3.	Gender-Integrated	Gender-Segregated	Whichever	No Answer
Total	295	18	6	1

By far, the most common comments about preferring gender-integrated activities were that while males and females are inherently different, their skills and outlooks should be equally valued. Therefore, coed classes are the means for differently gendered individuals to learn to get along with each other. Since the students had chosen to attend a coed university (for females there are numerous single-sex universities available in most regions in Japan), these results are not surprising. However, students did not make any connection between segregating themselves at the beginning of each class and wanting and requiring the professor to integrate them.

In addition, students' answers implied that their previous educational and/or life experience has been extremely segregated, hence, the need to learn how to get along with each other. Despite this positive intention of gender harmony, there was little reflection on the matter. Only one female student who had attended a girls' high school noticed that coed classes were sluggish because females are slow to express themselves in coed classes. Also, only one student implied that there may be more than two genders, when she used the term "different genders" in her comment. In part, the questionnaires focused on a two-gender system, thereby biasing the students towards the gender binary system. It had been hoped that the gender module with its study of various gender systems would help students transcend the binary model, but only two students out of 320 did so, as reflected in their comments.

Representative sample comments:

- I prefer integrated activities because the sense of value is different. Men and women

are equal. (First-year male)

- It's necessary in order to deepen communication and eliminate the wall between men and women to create a good atmosphere. (First-year female)
- There's value in the differences between the sexes. Things like sports should be segregated because of differences in strength, but that's all. Men and women have to get used to being together. (First-year female)

Exceptional responses:

- I went to a girls' high school and those classes were more useful because discussion was faster and lively so we could really express ourselves. (First-year female)
- It's important to acquire communication skills to talk with people who identify as different genders. (Second-year female)
- If separated, then one or the other will think they are at an advantage. (Second-year male)

Part II of the questionnaire: The effectiveness of the class and of mixed seating

The survey explained to the students that EFL instructors change seats for certain reasons. Students were then asked to rate the effectiveness of seat changing on a 3-point scale. Initially, it was thought that students would be uninterested in responding to this questionnaire, so that a simple three-point scale was used to encourage them to participate. In fact, the rate of participation was extremely high in that only a handful of students left some sections of their questionnaires blank. Therefore, a four-point scale perhaps could have been used for more precise evaluations of the teaching technique. A section for comments was included at the bottom of the page, in which approximately 60% of students wrote comments.

What actually is an effective class or course? Students' evaluations of their own English levels and enjoyment of the class were measured via the questionnaire. In addition, each department at this university requires students to take TOEFL or TOEIC tests regularly. Because student scores for these classes rose consistently, they were deemed effective from an English-learning perspective by myself and by the university administration.

The questions were as follows:

Rate the following: Was this technique effective for:

4. Generating English in a 'live' environment?
5. Encouraging students to get to know one another and therefore feel comfortable and confident in the classroom?
6. Generating a variety of input based on each student's experiences and opinions?
7. Encouraging students with varying skill levels to support one another during all class activities?
8. Simulating a variety of social environments students will experience in their future careers and lives?

The students circled "effective," "somewhat effective," or "ineffective" for each question. Table 1 summarizes the responses. There was no significant difference in the genders of students responding to each question: the responses were representative. The technique of mixed seating was deemed effective because of the positive ratios of students answering "effective" or "somewhat effective" for each question.

Table 1. *Effectiveness of Mixed Seating*

Questions	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Ineffective	No Answer
Q4.	190	126	3	1
Q5.	224	93	2	1
Q6.	212	106	2	1
Q7.	208	108	4	0
Q8.	220	95	5	0

The open comments section presented certain patterns. One pattern was concerned with positive comments about the class in general and thanking the professor for the course (approximately 60%). Another pattern was that students said that switching seats was effective and fun (approximately 30%). In addition, some students commented on the need to study about and eliminate gender discrimination (approximately 20%).

Representative sample comments:

- It was a good study to learn about unconscious gender problems in this class. (First-year male).
- Thank you for good class. (Second-year male)
- It was really good to change seats in every English class. I got to know a lot of people and had fun talking. (First-year female)
- This course was very meaningful for me. Again we have realized the need of English from this lesson. (First-year male)

Exceptional Comments:

- I think Japan has a lot of discrimination. Because I went to a girls' junior and senior high school, I didn't realize it until now. (First-year female)
- In the future in Japanese society men and women will be separate so it's good to have classes together now. (First-year female)
- Differences will disappear in the future because power and sexual harassment are disappearing. (First-year female)

It is interesting to note that the one student who actually discussed her experience at a girls' school had only become aware of gender issues after entering a coed university. The

implication is that a combination of single-sex and coed activities could serve to sensitize students to gender issues.

Contradictory comments:

These comments perhaps indicate that the issue is still somewhat confusing for some students. Flaws in the question structure and/or communication difficulties due to the language barrier may also play a part.

- I think about my seat, but it's unconscious. (First-year boy)
- I was born free, I feel free. I want to study hard with freedom. (First-year male who always sits with his male friends, but wants the professor to integrate seating)
- It's good to study about gender issues but not to focus on gender issues during a class. (First-year female)
- I think that gender-integrated activities are more useful because men can lead teammate. (From a first-year female who said gender has no effect on her participation rate)

Verbal Remarks in Japanese

As previously mentioned, questionnaires were administered in the last class of the semester, after students had studied gender issues and also had experienced a few single-sex (i.e. in which they sat with their friends of the same gender), but mostly mixed, seating activities. During the semester itself, students could be heard remarking that switching seats via nametags reminded them of elementary school. These comments seemed disparaging and were in fact part of the impetus to determine via questionnaires if seat switching was a useful technique. In fact, a few students also wrote on the questionnaires that they haven't switched seats in this manner since elementary school.

Students took their time filling out the questionnaires and seemed to put thought into answering. While passing in the completed questionnaires, some students were heard remarking that they didn't realize that mixing seats was a technique for improving class atmosphere and, thereby, English levels. In each class, a few students made comments such as, "Wow, I didn't know that, but it really works," or "So that's why English teachers do that."

Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

To summarize, the majority of students believe that assigned mixed seating is beneficial to their learning. They also claimed that sitting with classmates of their own gender means nothing and is an unconscious choice. However, they want the professor to arrange mixed seating for them. They believe that mixed seating is important for males and females to learn how to get along, because they have such different mindsets. Appreciating and equally

valuing these differences are skills necessary for future success. The students showed a distinct lack of introspection as to how gender socialization influences their choices and their lives, specifically in that the students will not choose mixed seating on their own, even though they feel that it is valuable and necessary.

The overwhelming majority of students espoused the ideal of "different-but-equal": that males and females are different by nature, but should be equally valued because of these gender-based differences. Students seem to firmly believe in this gender system: Japan's 男女平等社会 (danjyo byoudou shakai). During the first three years of classes at the end of which questionnaires were distributed, students repeated the idea that Japan's current gendered system is "natural," the implication being that not only are other systems unnatural, but that Japan's current system could not and should not ever change. However, during the fourth year, students began to objectify the system. On the latest questionnaires, a handful of students actually wrote that Japan's gender "system" must change to allow more women into the workplace. It seems that Prime Minister Abe's pronouncements on women in the workplace and the need for social transformation in Japan may be having an effect upon students.

Mixing up seats randomly has been proven to be effective academically for a variety of reasons, especially in EFL classes (Bolstad & Watari, 2015; Greer, 2013). Therefore, students who do not choose to attend a single-sex school should not necessarily be left to sit in the single-sex seating they do choose in their supposedly co-educational classroom. However, the conflicting data suggests that the study of gender could lead to more self-reflection. In addition, a combination of single-sex and mixed activities may lead to true introspection on the part of the students, as well as allow females to function more optimally in single-sex groups, thereby balancing out the gender discrimination they generally experience.

A study comparing these types of activities in an EFL class would be most interesting as the students would be more aware of whether single-sex or coed education affects their learning and why. However, some students might resent becoming guinea pigs for research, and might complain about the artificiality of such a plan, particularly at a private coed institution. Preliminary trial results in these classes in the 2015 academic year echo those of international studies: males tend to goof off and underperform in single-sex groups whereas females stay on task and even exceed expectations. While this is a complex and interesting subject, research data implies that to maximize performance, a variety of single-sex and coeducational activities should be used in EFL classes in coeducational Japanese universities.

Conclusion: Heroic and Happy?

Japan's current 'different-but-equal' system actually entrenches gendered behavior by nullifying discussion, as can be seen in the questionnaire results. In fact, what is the definition of 'equally valued?' Girls outperform boys at school, in EFL and other classes, but

do not achieve comparable success as adults, which, according to some scholars, could be seen as evidence of a 'hidden agenda' in regards to maintaining discriminatory gender norms.

This research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of mixed seating as well as to study students' self-awareness as to why they choose gender-segregation at a coeducational institution. Attempts to sensitize students to gender systems' effects upon their lives were made, but were only somewhat effective in changing students' 'party line' attitude that Japan's current gender roles are natural and equal. This disappointing result is found in other research as well, for example, Hendricks (2015, p. 40) noted, about implementing gender studies in a Japanese university, "Students stated a high desire for personal and societal change, but showed only slight improvement in reducing stereotypical attitudes due to the activities." Further research is therefore indicated.

Japan is at a crossroads: a dramatic shift in consciousness is taking place. Given that a few municipalities now accept single-sex marriage (BBC, 2015) and protesters have forced Prime Minister Abe to announce plans to improve access to child-care with 500,000 new day care slots in 2016 (Spitzer, 2016, p. 1-2), a more diverse gender system may be on the horizon. One hopes that Japan will be able to realize a fair and just system, not one in which overburdened superhero-women work, rear children, take care of elders, and perform household duties all at the same time as a 'reward' for their previous success in a 'maternal' educational system. Where is Japan headed? Will these students still state that men are guppies and women are piranhas, that boys should be heroes, and girls should be happy, or will their belief in an ideal 'different-but-equal' society materialize? Will they soon be shocked and disappointed in regards to gender discrimination at work and at home, or will they achieve "happy" *and* "heroic" states of being?

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Appendix 1: The Gender Studies Module

Topics studied in class included the following:

A. *Gender Binary Society*

1. Male chauvinistic: The Obokata Case in the Media, Female Genocide in Rural India, Honor Killing
2. Female chauvinistic/essentialist feminist society: *Mad Max Fury Road*, "Venus of Willendorf" statues and their interpretation through the ages
3. Gender-equal society: Affirmative action in Scandinavian countries, The Global Gender Gap Index's attempts to balance out inequalities
4. Different-but-equal society: Current Japan (theory vs. application) including topics such as maternity and paternity harassment.

B. *Gender-neutral or "Gender-free" society*: Sweden's Preschool System, Storm the Genderless Baby, Chizuko Ueno's Theory and the Related Backlash

C. *Multi-gender society*: The Bugis of Indonesia (a 5-gender society), The Gender Book, the controversy over public facilities used by transgender students in the U.S. and Japan

A sample topic about *gender binary societies* used in listening and discussion activities:

Cameron gives one compelling example of how our gendered social subjectivities are fabricated discursively from the day we are born. Recently, a woman who had just had a baby told me that in the hospital nursery, each newborn's crib bore a label announcing its sex. The label said either, "I'm a boy." or "It's a girl." Obviously none of the infants was yet capable of speech. But on the day they were born, the culture hailed them differently: boys were hailed as active "speaking subjects," unproblematically "I"; girls were not. This is the order which, as they grow older, these children will be forced to enter. (Holmes as cited in Healey, 2009, p. 92)

She Asked Me, "What Do Feminists Do?": A Teacher's Reflection

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Abstract

Students' questions can surprise, challenge, and even lead us as teachers to reconsider our deeply held values and beliefs. This paper describes such an experience, which occurred in a content-based discussion class subtitled "Introduction to Gender Studies," when a student asked for concrete examples of feminist action. The result was a minor epiphany, even a paradigm shift. Here I reflect upon the ways in which I found myself questioning several aspects of my role as a teacher and clarifying my beliefs as a feminist. In particular, I realized that lecturing can provide students with valuable context, especially in a content-based course, that the basic principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are in fact highly compatible with those of feminist pedagogy, and that sharing personal experience and beliefs with students can encourage critical thinking and help students find their own voices, empowering them to apply what is discussed in the classroom to their own lives.

概要

学生たちからの質問は我々を驚かせ、試し、昔から抱いている価値観や信条を考え直させることさえある。「ジェンダー入門」という授業で学生たちに、フェミニストが何をしているか具体的な例を示してくれと聞かれた時が、まさにそのような経験だった。その経験は一つの驚くべき発見であり、パラダイム・シフトとさえ言えるものだった。この質問がきっかけで、教員としての自分の役割を考え直し、フェミニストとしての信条を明白にすることになった。特に、講義を通して、学生たちにとって価値のある内容を伝えられることに気づいた。そして、コミュニカティブアプローチの基本的な方針は実はフェミニスト教育法と共通点があることを発見した。また、学生たちと個人的な経験と信条を共有することは学生たちの批判的思考を促し、学生たちの声を引き出し、学生たちをエンパワーすることになる。そして、学生たちは教室で学んだことを自分たちの生活の中で生かすことができるのである。

Introduction

After more than ten years of including gender-related topics in my English language classes at every opportunity, in 2015 I had the pleasure of teaching an Introduction to Gender Studies course (content-based, but officially called "Discussion and Conversation A and B" on the university website). Feminism was one of the keywords upon which students were asked to focus. Since the main language goal of the class was oral communication, in lieu of a written midterm, small groups were asked to discuss, review, and reflect upon the class up to that point. They then wrote one question per group on the board for further discussion. One of the questions was, "What do feminists actually do?" and it stopped me in my tracks. I have focused on gender issues in many classes, having taught hundreds of students, throughout my teaching career. However, this was the first time anyone had ever asked me this question. I am rarely at a loss for words, but it definitely gave me pause. This paper tells the story of that transformative moment in my teaching career, and I will reflect upon the following questions: Why was this particular question such a huge surprise that resulted in a paradigm shift for me as a teacher? Which beliefs did it challenge, and what about it caused me to reconsider my approach and even my identity as a teacher? And finally, how can we as teachers make the concept of feminism come alive for our students, while still respecting their autonomy and encouraging them to develop critical thinking skills?

What Happened: A Critical Incident

For this class of 25 female undergraduate third-year students, I was told to create a content-based syllabus using authentic materials, a policy which reflects what I have seen as a general trend toward content-based instruction at higher education institutions in Japan. I was strongly encouraged by my supervisor to teach gender studies, and throughout the year I received nothing but support from him and the administration. After spending the first semester focusing on gender issues in contemporary Japan, in the second semester we focused on global gender issues. I based my syllabus on three key concepts described in Shawn Meghan Burn's (2010) excellent text, *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective* (3rd ed.). The topics were feminism, multiculturalism, and intersectionality. By the fifth or sixth week of the term, the class had discussed the definition of feminism, whether the students personally identified as feminists, whether Japan is or can become a gender-equal society, and the status of women in various societies around the world. In lieu of a written midterm, small groups of students were asked to reflect on the class, generate questions, and write one of their questions on the board. All of the questions showed critical thinking and various degrees of understanding of the material that had been covered in the course. My plan was to have them pick one of the questions, either their own or from one of the other groups, and write a short reaction paper for homework and further discussion. One of the questions, from a quiet student in the back of the room whom I will call N, quite literally stopped me in

my tracks. The exact words N wrote were "What is the action of feminist?" When I asked her for a bit more clarification it turned out that her meaning was, "What do feminists actually do?" (In Japanese, *Feminisuto tte, ittai nani wo shiteiru hito-tachi desu ka?*)

In all my years of including gender issues in every class in which it was allowed, no one had ever asked me to state and clarify my beliefs in this way. Clearly N and the rest of the class wanted a more concrete, specific explanation of how feminist beliefs and values can be put into practice. I realized that I was probably going to have to talk about my personal beliefs about feminism, so that I could present the concept to them in a way that really "clicked."

Luckily, class ended soon afterwards, so there was time to think carefully about how I would answer N's question. After extensive reflection and digging through many sources of information, the result was a mini-lecture, the text of which is in the Appendix at the end of the paper. After my talk, students discussed what I had said, asked more questions, and then wrote a reaction paper. This was a formative experience in my journey as a teacher of both English and Gender Studies, because it forced me to explicitly identify myself as a feminist, clarify and back up my own beliefs, and take a serious look at how I "walk my talk" both as an educator and as a feminist. Furthermore, it helped me to reevaluate my reluctance to lecture in class. My degree is in TESOL, and my training emphasized Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which will be explained in more detail below. In my 20 years as a trained TESOL professional, I had always held a core belief that my job was primarily to encourage the students to communicate, and the less I spoke in class, the better. From my experience, I believe most of the other TESOL-trained instructors I have met would agree with me. Clearly, however, in content-based classes, students need to start with basic background information, which serves as a basis for developing language skills and provides food for critical thought. Thus, a short lecture here and there is helpful—and even necessary—in order for students to acquire the tools to explore and apply key concepts. Coming to this understanding was, for me, nothing less than an epiphany or a paradigm shift.

My Role: Communicative Language Teaching

Because I have been highly influenced by CLT, I have always seen the teacher's role as that of a moderator or facilitator, especially in a discussion or conversation class. Lecturing, to my mind, had no place in a communicative language classroom. Nevertheless, as a result of N's question, I realized that, in order for the students to understand and choose how to apply (or not to apply) the concept of feminism in their lives, I was going to have to give them more context. That context would be more effective if it were concrete, and it would be more concrete if it were personalized.

Thus, I broke my own rule and lectured. It took only about 15 or 20 minutes of class time, and I assuaged my communicative conscience by reminding myself that the lecture was

inspired by a student's question, which arose during a small-group, student-to-student discussion. I also made sure to have the students exercise their own voices afterward: they discussed the lecture in small groups, made further comments, asked questions about what I had said, and wrote reaction papers for homework, which they shared with a partner before submitting. I felt that no one (including my worst critic, myself) could accuse me of not sharing power, of discouraging my students from participating actively, or of denying them agency in the classroom.

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, the simple definitions of feminism are "the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities" and "organized activity in support of women's rights and interests" (Feminism, n.d.). While almost all the students agreed immediately with the first definition, many expressed the belief ("common sense" as one student put it) that "men and women are different". Due to this belief, which many had probably never questioned before, some of them were reluctant to label themselves feminists. This elicited my strong personal conviction that men and women being "different" is one issue, while "equal rights and opportunities" is another thing entirely. What I found myself wanting to communicate to the students was that although some societies exhibit greater gender equality than others, no society on earth is truly gender-equal, so we cannot actually know how great or small any "natural" differences between men and women are. To be honest, I think that these differences are probably much smaller than "common sense" would have us accept, but I hoped students would come to their own conclusions. I had no intention of indoctrinating them.

Personal Stories and Beliefs: To Share or Not to Share

Regardless of what I believe, as a language teacher I have always done my best to remain as objective as possible, encouraging students to express and develop their own opinions while refraining from presenting what I perceive to be right or wrong ideas. My goal was always that, whether or not they ever felt comfortable calling themselves feminists, students would become more aware of gender as a social construct, examine the gender roles people are expected to play in this culture, carefully consider which aspects of their own gender identities are "nature" and which are "nurture," and use this understanding to make informed and empowered choices in their lives after graduation.

While I would generally answer most questions students asked about my background if they were relevant, I did my best not to pursue any specific agenda other than that described above. For example, I told the class that my mother finished graduate school and worked full-time when I was a child, and that I was a full-time homemaker myself for five years when my children were small. As a result, several of them felt comfortable sharing stories of their own families, and of their hopes regarding their own futures.

Hello, Feminist Pedagogy. Meet CLT!

As I researched for this paper, I found evidence that feminist pedagogy has a great deal in common with CLT. In the widely used textbook for language teachers, *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Teaching* (4th ed.), H. Douglas Brown (2015) points out that CLT is an umbrella term for a variety of methods and practices, a broad-based approach, which includes the following characteristics:

- There is a strong, practical connection between form and function. Language is meant to "engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes", emphasizing real-world contexts which students will be able to apply outside the classroom.
- Students are encouraged to develop and exercise "autonomy and strategic involvement," actively engaging in their own learning process.
- Teachers act as facilitators, guides, and coaches, rather than unquestioned dispensers of information and wisdom (Brown, p. 31).

It is clear that parallels exist between this approach and feminist pedagogy, and can be applied to subjects other than language. In her 1992 article entitled "Feminist Pedagogy: A Means for Bringing Critical Thinking and Creativity to the Economics Classroom," Jean Shackelford outlines qualities common to both the CLT approach and to feminist pedagogy which include "a focus on practice, with an emphasis on process over product or content," and the prioritization of "knowledge that students construct rather than memorize...because it is about them, and therefore important to their lives." Shackelford further clarifies the teacher's role, asserting that a feminist educator encourages "open dialogue and conversation" among students so that they can be "actively engaged in the process of knowledge, as opposed to being the passive recipients of teacher-imparted 'truth.'" (p. 571) Finally, the feminist goal "to empower, to give voice and influence to those who have been excluded from traditional power structure....an environment that relies on democracy rather than dominance" is very much in accordance with what TESOL-trained instructors would call a communicative, learner-centered classroom (Shackelford, p. 571). These beliefs and practices reassured me that, although I have no formal training in feminist pedagogy, my TESOL background has encouraged me in that direction all along.

Psychologists Jayne Stake and Frances L. Hoffmann (2000, p. 30-31), in their article "Putting Feminist Pedagogy to the Test," identify the following four key characteristics of feminist pedagogy, to which I add my own observations:

- Participatory learning (this clearly fits in with a communicative focus)
- The validation of personal experience and *development of confidence* (italics mine)

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- The development of political/social understanding and activism (similar to the cultural awareness and sensitivity that teachers and students are encouraged to develop in CLT)
 - The development of critical thinking and open-mindedness

Although some may argue that CLT is intended to be politically neutral, these core values, which inform feminist pedagogy, are clearly aligned with those of CLT. Indeed, most of my colleagues with TESOL backgrounds would likely agree with these principles, whether or not they consider themselves feminists.

As stated previously, my reluctance to lecture arose from my strong belief that I would be taking power from the students and denying them agency in developing their own communication skills. However, I found further reassurance in Carolyn Shrewsbury's 1993 article, "What is Feminist Pedagogy?" which concludes with a statement that feminist classrooms "need not always reflect an equality of power, but they must reflect movements in that direction" (p. 10). Shrewsbury further states that feminist pedagogy "does not dissolve the authority or the power of the instructor", but instead advocates a move from: "power as domination to power as creative energy. In such a classroom, the teacher's knowledge and experience is recognized and is used with the students to increase the legitimate power of all" (p. 11). Shrewsbury is writing as a professor of political science, but from a TESOL perspective, this means that an occasional lecture can, in fact, serve communicative purposes, provided that the goal is to empower students. While traditionally reflecting a hierarchical model of teaching, a lecture can lead to greater learner autonomy. Indeed, "empowering strategies allow students to find their own voices, to discover the power of authenticity," an outcome which is certainly desired in a communicative language classroom (p. 11).

Classroom Application: The Moment of Truth

The lecture I ultimately gave my students was inspired by a student-generated question, and was followed by discussion and a reflective writing assignment that aimed to encourage critical thinking about the application of feminism in the students' lives. As Shrewsbury concludes, feminist pedagogy can be "phased into a traditional teaching approach....it is not all or nothing, although practitioners find that taking one step makes the next step (empowerment of students) logically compelling" (1993, p. 14-15). Depending on the context in which instructors share knowledge and experience with students, and provided that we introduce concepts and follow up with the "next step" of encouraging students to discuss, question, and exercise critical thinking, our consciences can remain clear that we are not sacrificing any of our communicative goals.

Throughout my career, an issue which has always concerned me has been "whether one could actively advocate on behalf of women in the classroom or in the university and still uphold standards of impartiality," as Bonnie Smith (2013) puts it in her invaluable introductory text, *Women's Studies, the Basics* (p. 136). However, as I read the above criteria

of feminist pedagogy, I realized that, although I had not explicitly been practicing feminist pedagogy, I had always embraced and attempted to practice its fundamental values, as have many of my colleagues. Whether or not we consider ourselves feminists, whether or not we consider it appropriate to share our personal beliefs with students, teachers who encourage communication, learner autonomy, and a student-centered classroom are in many ways "on the same page" as feminist educators.

This was my first time to "come out" as a feminist in front of a class, standing before the students and saying, "I am a feminist, and this is what I believe," instead of attempting to remain objective and couching my beliefs in more general language. N's question asked me to clarify not only feminist principles but feminist behavior, and it required me to make this personal statement in order for my students to fully grasp and hopefully implement their own version of my list of feminist principles. It was not my goal to convince them to be feminists. In fact, fear of forcing my beliefs on the students was exactly the reason I had always avoided verbalizing my beliefs in front of a class. I realized that if I did not share my beliefs in a clear, point-by-point manner, I would be unable to respond to this student's question. In other words I would be neglecting, even failing my students, if I answered the question in a manner that was anything less than direct and honest. If teachers are aiming for a more egalitarian environment in the classroom, there are times when we would do well to open up and share when we are asked, so that students can continue to think, question, and ultimately form their own opinions as they reflect on ours.

Conclusions and Further Directions

This experience was, as described above, a critical incident in my teaching career. It has led to further study for me, and hopefully for my students. Not only was it necessary to review the basics of CLT, but also my academic exploration of feminist pedagogy, which is just beginning. This is hopefully helping me to develop and improve my classroom practice. In the future, I intend to add to the lecture more details about the history of feminism in Japan, of which my knowledge is sadly lacking. Indeed, having examples from their own culture may make it easier for students to connect with and apply the concept of feminism. Along those lines, and with deep respect for the cultural background of my Japanese students, the lecture will be amended to clarify that, in practice, feminists do not always live up to the ideals of egalitarian communication and relationships, and also that these ideals may be different in different cultures—but they always endeavor to improve at doing so.

As I type these words, my adopted hometown of Tokyo has just elected its first female governor. Her very presence in Japan's political landscape is an achievement, which I will ask future classes to consider as a sign of change and growth. If any ideas or information I can offer in class help my students to be more conscious of roles they can play in the process of increasing gender equality in Japanese society, in their own lives, and in the world as a whole, I can safely say that I have managed to make a small but worthwhile contribution.

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Appendix 1: The Text of My Reluctant Lecture

N asked me last week about what feminists actually do, and I think it's an important question, which deserves a clear answer. You probably know this already: I am a feminist. Not all feminists think the same way as I do, but the following are my thoughts about how feminists can live their beliefs. You have also probably noticed I usually do not stand in the front of the classroom and lecture. In fact, this is the first time I've actually lectured to a class, but I'm doing it because I want to make things clear for you.

1. Feminists ask questions, most particularly, "Why?" We don't just accept something because people say it is normal. "Because that's the way it is" "It's natural" or "It's just part of the culture" are not acceptable answers.
2. Feminists have goals and dreams. We know (or claim the right to search for) what we want to achieve in life. This can include everything from motherhood to a PhD, or both. If family, teachers, or society tell us not to try, see point one, above, and insist on asking "Why?"
3. Feminists speak up. This can be done gently or aggressively, according to the situation

and one's personality. A corollary to this would be never to mistake gentleness for weakness. There are as many ways of expression as there are human beings on this planet. What we try hard not to do is passive-aggressive manipulation, or letting our resentment fester as we turn our anger and frustration inward. These are unhealthy ways to communicate, used by the oppressed who have perfected them as the only way to survive prejudice and abuse in society. Communicating with integrity is much more effective, even when it's uncomfortable and scary. That does not mean we have to be rude or cruel, but ideally we can find ways to be honest and true to ourselves.

4. Feminists help and support other women (just to be clear, I do not mean that we hate men!). We do not spread gossip and cruel rumors behind each other's backs. We do compete, but fairly and proudly, not at the expense of another woman's human dignity. We may disagree with one another, but always with basic respect, and we do so while acknowledging other women's strengths, skills, and fundamental right to their own beliefs.
5. In relation to number 4, above, feminists work on the principle of intersectionality which, as we have discussed, acknowledges the connections among race, class, age, physical ability, and other inequalities in society. For example, feminists have been accused of overlooking the double discrimination experienced by African-American and Latina women in the United States. Those of us who come from privileged backgrounds must acknowledge the advantages we have, and ally ourselves with other marginalized groups in order to promote justice and equality for all. We listen to the voices of those who struggle against racism, classism, ableism, and other forms of inequality, and we recognize that their struggle is ours.
6. Feminists do what we love and are good at, whether it's soccer or sewing, cooking or computer programming. Talent has no relation to our gender, and we insist on our right to use and develop it.
7. Feminists own our choices. We wear make-up, or don't. We go to graduate school, or don't. We get married and raise children, or don't. The point is, your life is yours, and ultimately only you have the right to decide what to do with it.

Now I'd like to know what you think. Are there any comments or questions?

Book Reviews

***Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan.* Freedman, Lisa; Miller, Laura; and Yano, Christine R. (Eds.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013. 280 pp.**

Reviewed by Jennifer Teeter
Kyoto University

Countering preconceived views and stereotypes of working women in Japan, *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan* contributes to a growing body of scholarship revealing the complex intersections between gender, class, technology and social/physical mobility for Japanese women. Academically rigorous yet accessible for the newcomer to Japanese or gender studies, the work of scholars from fields as diverse as anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies, history, literature, and media studies is woven together cohesively to provide a multi-layered glimpse of how women employed in jobs across several decades have participated and contributed actively to the shape of "modern" Japan.

This edited volume of eleven chapters is organized into four parts all of which touch on the theme of women as intermediaries between multiple binaries, and often-contradictory realms. Part I explores the experiences of women in new service jobs in the city, walking the thin line between social mobility and tradition. In Chapter 2, Elise K. Tipton explores archival data to uncover the financial and gendered complexities of women attracted by the potential upward mobility department stores could bring in the interwar period. Drawing on a variety of secondary and primary sources, in Chapter 3 Laura Miller highlights the elegant "code-switching" of elevator girls when moving between their roles as both purveyors of modernity and keepers of tradition, and how they managed to emancipate themselves from the restrictions of these roles while contributing to the expansion of the department store culture. In Chapter 4, Vera Mackie uses popular portrayals of the dance hall worker to show how, like in many gendered professions, women were forced to tolerate physical, sexual, and/or financial exploitation for the sake of the overall capitalist agenda.

Part II examines the hypothesis that the presence of women in the transportation industry helped ease the anxiety arising from the increasing use of new technologies. Informed by interviews of Pan Am flight attendants during the Jet Age of the 60s and 70s, in Chapter 5 Christine R. Yano notes that these women strategically took advantage of the "means to be mobile and modern in ways not offered to men," despite being required to perform as stereotypes of Japanese femininity (p. 105). In Chapter 6, Alisa Freedman

intricately, and often humorously, examines films, novels, toys, memorabilia, and songs about female bus guides to show how women in these roles, while autonomous in their pursuit of self-improvement, shaped and continue to shape Japanese history, their bodies appropriated for a variety of purposes across the spectrum of gender performance.

Part III includes case studies on how women have challenged preconceived gender roles through employment in jobs previously reserved for men. Female soldiers in Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) are the focus of Sabine Frühstück's Chapter 7. She highlights the experiences of female service members to show how, while women joined the service seeking upward mobility and freedom from gender-based restrictions, the SDF often imposed stricter gender expectations upon them. In particular, the military sought to use enlisted women in public relations stunts to project a softer image. In Chapter 8, Elise Edward puts professional women soccer players in Japan at the forefront of her analysis. Given that women's soccer was banned in the UK despite its popularity among both genders (see Matheson & Congdon-Hohman, 2011), the trivialization of women's soccer in Japan, echoes this global history. Edwards elucidates how under paternalistic circumstances, "Ladies'-Leaguers" are used by corporations as a tool for projecting a progressive image despite the women's lived realities with strict regulations and a lack of opportunities for upward mobility.

Part IV takes the reader outside of Japan, highlighting the achievements of Japanese women overseas while elaborating on how their "Japanese femininity" is commodified by their domestic and international counterparts. In Chapter 9, Jan Bardsley traces the life of Itō Kinuko, who placed third in the Miss Universe contest in 1953. She discusses how Itō served as a symbol of new opportunities for global Japanese advancement on one hand, yet was denigrated for defiling Japanese society with her new unwomanly ways on the other. In Chapter 10, Sally A. Hastings traces how women, who eventually became leaders of Japanese institutions, traveled to the United States from 1900 to 1941 in order to further their education. An essay by Yoko McClain, the granddaughter of renowned novelist Natsume Sōseki, elegantly closes the volume in Chapter 11 by touching on the way women of different classes crossed paths through the conduit of work and education pre- and post-war.

Collectively, the authors contribute a more spectral portrayal of women than the commonly held view of women as simply victims of a male-dominated system. While there were women whose public and often private lives were appropriated and manipulated to serve patriarchal capitalist agendas, there were also women who asserted agency in navigating the changes that made them the center of debate over appropriate performative gender roles in the midst of modernization. What makes this volume unique is not only the privileging of "ordinary workers...as pioneers of modernity" (p. 3) but also the way it addresses how Japanese women have successfully navigated the stereotypes imposed upon them by people outside of Japan. And while the book could have included more of a balance of chapters written by both non-Japanese and Japanese researchers, with more contributions by Japanese women themselves living the actual experiences of *moga* ("modern girls") on the

go, the authors did ensure that they were representing the voices of the women in the volume accurately. *Modern Girls on the Go*, should not just stop here. I would like to see this develop into a series that would facilitate introspection into what has and has not changed for working-women in Japan.

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***Identity, Gender and Teaching English in Japan.* Nagatomo, Diane Hawley. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2016. 307 pp.**

Reviewed by Aaron Hahn
Fukuoka University

Diane Nagatomo is an expert at applying identity analysis to the Japanese context, having published a full-length book on the personal and professional identities of Japanese university teachers of English (Nagatomo, 2012), as well as a variety of journal articles and conference papers on the identities of other educators in Japan. In her most recent book, *Identity, Gender and English Teaching in Japan*, Nagatomo continues to provide excellent scholarship in this field—in this instance, looking at the personal and professional identities of ten foreign female English teachers living in Japan who are or were married to Japanese men.

Following a brief introduction, Nagatomo provides three chapters of background information that contextualize her project. Chapters 2 and 3 cover a concise but thorough overview of the history of English language education in Japan from the pre-Meiji era to the present, paying particular attention to the role that foreign educators have had on/within the system. This background also provides ample explanation of how the current status of English as a compulsory academic but non-communicative subject in Japan is strongly linked to the history of both Japan's education system and its larger sociopolitical interactions with the world. In Chapter 4, she reviews research on the ways that gender interacts with language teaching and learning in Japan, ranging from the way language schools (and, to a lesser degree, universities) take advantage of a semi-sexualized *akogare* (desire) for the West

to sell their programs to Japanese women, to the *Charisma Man* image that Western male teachers take on (or position themselves against) to take advantage of their students and other Japanese women, and to the pervasive sexism and sexual discrimination found at many universities and other schools. The final background chapter (5) covers Nagatomo's research methods. Her primary sources of data were interviews that she examined using narrative analysis. She frames her analysis of these teachers' identities within Gee's (2000) 4-part identity categorization and Wenger's (1998) concept of a community of practice. In addition, she stated her intention to follow the ideas of Geertz (1988) and Wolcott (2000) in mostly allowing the women's narratives to speak for themselves without including too much "interpretation."

The core of Nagatomo's book are the selections of the subjects' narratives that she has chosen to tell, found in Chapters 6 through 9. Chapter 6 discusses why each of the participants came to Japan, their career tracks, how the participants' extended families (their own and their husbands') reacted to the intercultural marriage, and, in some cases, the reasons those marriages eventually ended in divorce. Chapters 7 through 9 divide the participants into sub-groups based upon their primary income source—chapter 7 looks at those who run/have run their own *eikaiwa* (English conversation) business, chapter 9 at those teaching full time at a university, and chapter 8 at those with mixed income sources, including teaching (to all ages and levels) and non-teaching work.

For me, Nagatomo's primary "message" is that identity building among her participants was a complex interaction of internal and external factors. On the one hand, the personal and professional identities of these women, especially those aspects of identity that were externally imposed, were partially determined by innate characteristics such as their gender and non-Japanese nationality. On the other hand, many of the narratives demonstrated ways in which the women actively negotiated their own identities and roles in their schools, marriages, families, and communities, as they both took advantage of and resisted the identities that others attempted to ascribe to them. This resistance was not always successful, but Nagatomo portrays the participants as having significant agency in finding ways to live in Japan as teachers, business owners, community members, mothers, and wives on, at least in part, their own terms.

Another issue that runs throughout the book is the connection between identity formation and broader political and pedagogical issues in Japan and Japanese English education. In both their personal and professional lives, several of the women were affected by the negative perception of *eikawa* work, as opposed to the positive image of *eigo* (English language, especially used in reference to grammar-focused study done for test preparation) classes conducted by Japanese teachers in Japanese. Additionally, many of the participants had to negotiate the complicated expectations placed on women in Japanese families and businesses regarding the elevation of family responsibilities over professional ones (though Nagatomo notes that her participants reported few examples of overt gender-based discrimination in the workplace, at least recently).

I feel that Nagatomo does a strong job of providing a book that is accessible to those living and teaching outside of Japan, in that she gives careful explanations of Japanese cultural and institutional norms. At the same time, I, as an "insider" currently teaching in Japan, also felt like I was learning new things about the Japanese educational, social, and institutional systems.

On the other hand, I was somewhat concerned about the way Nagatomo represents these narratives and the conclusions she draws from them. She notes that her interpretation is necessarily colored by her own experiences (she is also a long-term foreign female resident of Japan teaching English) and research lenses. But while she states this several times, the bulk of the book feels like it's intended to be read as an "objective" analysis of the narratives. Nagatomo doesn't provide us with either direct insight into or justification of why she chose the particular aspects of these narratives, or alternative readings for most of her interpretations. Most strikingly, we never hear Nagatomo's voice in the narratives themselves—that is, while she provides her analysis at the ends of chapters and in the final chapter, we don't hear what questions she asked or how she responded to the participants, and, without that, it's hard for us to evaluate how her role as interviewer and insider affected the participants' responses and her analysis of them. While the push towards self-reflexivity in ethnographic/qualitative research is not universal, calls for greater inclusion of the researcher into qualitative research have been growing in the last several decades, and I believe Nagatomo's research would be better presented with more explicit self-reflexivity included in the analysis.

Overall, the book provides an interesting insight into a population that is rarely researched, particularly in Japan. In addition, Nagatomo's use of the Gee and Wenger frameworks allow her to build a meta-narrative that, while still recognizing the uniqueness of each participant's story, shows how these stories fit into the context of larger sociopolitical issues.

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***Women and Politics in Contemporary Japan.* Dalton, Emma. New York: Routledge, 2015. 157 pp.**

Reviewed by Tanja McCandie
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Men talk with authority and women listen attentively. (p. 1)

Emma Dalton is the author of *Women and Politics in Contemporary Japan, Positive action for women in Japan's Liberal Democratic Party: A one-off?* (2012) and *The Utilization of Discourses of Femininity by Japanese Politicians: Tanaka Makiko Case Study* (2008). *Women and Politics in Contemporary Japan* dissects numerous explanations as to why women are so poorly represented in the political sphere in Japan. Dalton not only looks at current issues in Japan but also at historical and cultural baggage that plagues women who may want to step into the political ring.

This book consists of an introduction, five complementary and interwoven central chapters, and a conclusion. The in-depth introduction includes statistics on the gender imbalance within the Diet (Japan's parliament), the change in political parties over the past few decades, and a crash course on the Japanese government and how it functions. Dalton does an excellent job laying the groundwork for how political parties are gendered institutions that disadvantage women and uphold male privilege. While heavy on acronyms, Dalton kindly includes an abbreviation page to ensure that readers are not left wondering who is who as there are numerous political parties and groups discussed throughout the book.

Chapter one, *Women, power and politics under LDP rule: Gender equity discourse and practises 1955-93*, starts with the history of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and provides descriptive information as to how the party runs, what "koenkai" (local political support groups) are, and how party factions work. The beginning of chapter one could easily be entitled "Japanese Politics for Dummies" due to the extensive, clear explanations and knowledge shared with regards to how the Japanese political system functions. Additionally, it discusses the gendering of the party system and the laws and benefits that mothers and wives receive, while concurrently highlighting the LDP gender "norms" and assumptions that women will get married and toe the party line expectation of being housewives and producing children.

Post 1993 political power structures and gender equity policies is the title of chapter two. It examines the period in which the LDP lost control of the Lower House for the first time since 1955. Topics in this chapter include how the electoral system reforms helped women gain seats, how the LDP losing control of the Lower House actually led to the creation of a "gender equal society" (p. 43), the push for better life/work balance and then-

Prime Minister Koizumi's "utilization" of women to gain popularity with the public. The chapter also discusses the government's push for fathers to take larger roles in parenting as female participation in the workforce increased, but notes that while attitudes towards parental roles have changed, actual domestic situations have not (p. 47). Dalton makes a very strong case in asserting that the LDP is really only concerned with the declining fertility rate and not with empowering women and attaining gender equality.

In chapter three, *Ambivalent ambitions*, Dalton's first paragraph asserts the powerful statement, "Ambition in women is viewed as unattractive" (p. 68). This one sentence sums up the entire chapter and the sentiments of the 17 Japanese female politicians Dalton interviewed for her research. Subtitles in the chapter include "Because I was asked to," "A sense of 'civic duty'," and "Connections with a man as explanation for a political career." These subtitles are self-explanatory with regards to what this chapter entails and the comments are thought provoking and at times, heartbreaking. One that stands out is "In Japan, people don't like it when women occupy higher positions than men. Those women are regarded as having bad personalities and as being pushy" (p. 72).

In Chapter four, *The importance of women in politics*, it is affirmed that all the Japanese female politicians Dalton interviewed agree that the lack of women in Japanese politics is a problem (p. 83). The chapter explains the different agendas and beliefs women bring with them when they enter the political circle and how females engaged in politics here often exploit the *seikatsusha* (lifestyler) (p. 86) and *shufu* (housewife) (p. 87) discourse. In other words, political women represent themselves as simple housewives but are actually far removed from your ordinary housewife in Japan (p. 90). Much like the LDP, many Japanese female politicians seem to abide by the stereotype that women's issues are only mother's and wives' issues—leaving out and/or ignoring the issues of women who don't get married and/or don't reproduce.

Chapter five, *Negotiating a masculine party culture*, starts with a quote from female politician Inoguchi Kuniko: "Any field is difficult if you are a woman" (p. 103). In this chapter, Dalton looks at the experiences of the Japanese female politicians she interviewed with regards to facing sexism within their party and the political system. Dalton looks at the support system and (financial) benefits men receive from their wives (including domestic duties, child care, and serving as de facto private secretary) and then compares it to the support—or lack thereof—many women in politics receive from their husband. Trying to balance motherhood and work, the balancing act many women seem to have to perform to look like a great mom while also being a part of a male dominated world, are also discussed. In this chapter, Dalton also makes comparisons and correlations with gender and politics in the United Kingdom and Australia to appease interviewees who might view her as attacking Japan. By pointing out similarities, wounded feelings are avoided and attention is effectively drawn to the fact that many of the issues Japanese women face in politics are similar to the ones that women face everywhere.

In her conclusion, Dalton outlines how the Japanese government, and more so the LDP, has consistently failed at increasing the gender balance, in both politics and society, and how the system is failing women. Equality discourse and quotas are discussed, as are the responses to these quotas by various political parties. Dalton wraps up the book by pointing out that change is happening in Japan, but clearly more needs to be done.

Throughout the book, Dalton impresses with her knowledge and expertise, not only in relation to the Japanese political system, but also with the issues that "ordinary" Japanese women face due, in large part, to the lack of representation they have within the diet. Dalton makes a strong case as to why women need more representation in the Diet while flawlessly outlining why there are so few willing or able to participate. The book contains countless one-liners based on her observations that sum up feelings and frustrations that so many of us have with the system – the opening line to this review being just one of them. The Japanese political system is often confusing to understand but, after reading this book, I feel I have a much better understanding of how things are meant to work—and how they actually do. In closing, while some might categorize this as solely a "women's studies" book, in reality *Women and Politics in Contemporary Japan* is a valuable asset to all those interested in Japanese politics and gender inequality in Japan.

***The Good Shufu: Finding Love, Self and Home on the Far Side of the World.*
Slater, Tracy. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2015. 323 pp.**

Reviewed by Michi Saki
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I was first introduced to this book by one of my good friends, a fellow expat who has also rooted herself here in Japan for more than 10 years. When I read the title, *The Good Shufu* (In Japanese, the word "shufu" means "housewife") for the first time, I assumed that this would be another book lecturing me in an ignorant, one-sided manner about stereotypical foreign housewives in Japan, with a skewed perspective of how they should identify themselves in this country. However, while reading the first chapter, I was pleasantly relieved to be proven wrong. *The Good Shufu* tells the story of the author, Tracy Slater, who decides to leave her comfortable and promising career as an academic and social justice advocate to follow her heart and move to Japan to be with her true love. Much to the author's surprise, true love presented itself in the form of Toru, a Japanese salaryman from Osaka, with whom she embarks on an exciting adventure that would change her life forever. Throughout the book, Slater's story takes us on her journey of self-discovery, describing personal experiences, from

the early stages as a young newcomer to Japan, discovering everything with a bright new fascination, to the inevitable cultural and language barriers. Slater subsequently shares with readers many personal experiences of uncertainty, loneliness, insecurity, anger, frustration, disappointment, and sadness while struggling to identify herself as an academic, a wife, a daughter-in-law, and an expectant mother in Japan.

In the following excerpt, the author encourages expats to embrace their uncertainties of what "could have been," noting:

You make sacrifices and admit failures no matter where you live: but for expats, sometimes it's too easy to believe the grass was actually greener on the side you'd already left. In your new country, feelings of longing and regret magnify easily, but are they really just falsely sharpened by the occasional isolation of being a foreigner? From the other side of the world, it becomes all too easy to let slip your gimlet-eyed view of home. (p. 206)

Throughout the book, Slater struggles with giving up her academic goals and her strong American female identity. She shares with the reader her discoveries in trying to make sense of what her identity in Japan could or should be, stating:

Sometimes, I was learning, what mattered most wasn't the category of our roles, or even the limitations we confront and the sacrifices we make, but whether we've chosen these roles or sacrifices and have some way to shape them ourselves, whether we've been given alternatives and still found a way to make the more traditional scenarios fit us. (p. 206)

The author suggests we need not feel so obligated to force ourselves into the cookie-cutter roles laid out for us when negotiating our identity in society, whether it be in our academic careers, in everyday Japanese society, or within our relationships with family and friends. Rather, we should utilize our individual power to shape the facets of these roles in the way we—as unique individuals—see fit, in order to maintain and sustain who we are or what we wish to become.

Slater ends the last section of the book by sharing experiences of taking on conventional gender roles from the caretaking of her father-in-law, to frustration with fertility issues, leading up to the last few months of her pregnancy:

I spent so much of my early adulthood terrified of losing myself, grasping onto some illusion of having firm control over life, an unshakable plot. But I'm starting to realize – after having immersed myself so deeply in the quagmire of Japan, of Otosan's illness and death, and modern marriage, that you can't properly find yourself if you haven't let yourself get lost in the first place. (p.316)

The author calls out to readers that in searching for our future selves, we need to go ahead and take risks, even if they are uncertain ones that may not guarantee future success, or which may threaten the identity that we fiercely protect from slipping away or from being taken from us.

While reading this book, I caught myself gently nodding, snickering and crying when reading the descriptions of her many personal experiences which so many of us here in Japan can relate to. This book verifies our bittersweet relationship with Japan on so many levels, and the author validates it in a fresh, humorous and honest way. This was certainly an interesting and very entertaining read. Highly recommended for all long-term foreign residents of Japan.