

# GALE Newsletter Spring 2005

Newsletter of the GALE Special Interest Group (SIG) of  
the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)



**Editors: Steve Cornwell and Andrea Simon-Maeda**

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## Editor's Notepad

We had hoped to get this newsletter out by the beginning of the new school year; now the year is well underway and everyone has probably settled in to their classes and routines. Take a moment to look through this newsletter as Steve and I are confident that the current submissions will provide stimulating reading for everyone, and we encourage folks to respond with their reactions either on the GALE mailing list or as a separate piece for the next newsletter. You will find Conference Announcements, Call for Papers, and a short announcement of some GALE business. There are also two articles, one by Yoko Sabatini and one by Louise Haynes.

**Yoko Sabatini's** article, Midori's Case, is a thought-provoking account of a female Japanese EFL educationist who "deviated from the gender norm" by resisting the subordinate role that her family and society had pre-determined for her. As part of her doctoral studies at TUJ, Yoko is using a narrative inquiry approach to highlight the lived experiences of Japanese women.

**Louise Haynes** participated in the special TUJ workshop in Tokyo, Issues in Gender and Sexual Identity: What Educators Should Know, given by Dr. Cynthia Nelson and has provided us not only with a detailed report but also her own insightful interpretations of the workshop activities. This submission is a must read for those who could not attend, and those of us who were there will appreciate Louise's skillful interweaving of description and reflection. This piece is especially valuable for those interested in classroom applications of queer theory.

Steve Cornwell and Andrea Maeda  
Co-Coordinator

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### **Upcoming Conferences**

In this issue of our newsletter, we have several announcements of colloquia, conferences, and workshops that will be occurring in the next few months

**June 3-5, 2005**

#### **JALTCALL 2005 Conference**

Glocalization through CALL: Bringing People Together

Ritsumeikan University

BKC Campus, Shiga, Japan

The theme of the JALTCALL 2005 Conference is *Glocalization through CALL: Bringing people together*, and focuses on the social dimension of CALL at local and global levels, as represented by the term "glocalization." The conference organising committee particularly encouraged submissions in the following areas:

- Using CALL to encourage communication between learners at the local level
- Using CALL to encourage communication between learners globally
- Collaborative CALL research projects
- Collaborative CALL learning projects
- Local-scale CALL projects with international objectives

Submissions that do not deal directly with the conference theme were also most welcome, provided they demonstrated a sufficient level of innovation, quality of research, or suggestions for improvement of the field. After the review process was completed, there were over 140 presentations accepted for the conference, representing speakers from 18 different countries. A complete list of the presentations at JALTCALL 2005 is available at <http://jaltcall.org/conferences/call2005/presentationlist.php>.

## **June 4, 2005**

### **The Engaged Pedagogy Association**

3rd Annual Conference

Seisen University, Tokyo ( <http://www.seisen-u.ac.jp/map/index.html> )

10 min. walk either from Gotanda or Osaki station

1,000 yen for members, 2,000 yen for non-members

(500 yen for students)

#### \*\*\*\*\* Prospected Program \*\*\*\*\*

10:30-10:50 Annual General Meeting (AGM)

11:00-11:50 Guest Speaker: Christine Pearson Casanave (Columbia University, Japan)  
Getting Engaged with Self, Texts, and Others in Graduate School and Beyond

12:00-12:50 Lunch

13:00-14:00 Guest Speaker: David Peaty (Ritsumeikan University)

Engaged Pedagogy or Advocacy: How Far Should We Go?

14:10-15:00

Session 1: Mark Frank (Keiwa University)

Engaging Food, Engaging Community: Deschooling with Food in the EFL Classroom

Session 2: Sachiko Miura (TsuruBunka University)

Know Other People through Research & Report Project (in Japanese)

15:10-16:00

Session 3: Christopher Summerville (Hyogo University)

Bridging the gap between 'Language' and 'Content': Teaching environmental issues from a student-centered perspective

Session 4: Momoe Waguri (Chuo University)

The students in University International Internship Program (in Japanese)

16:10-17:00

Session 5: Richard Donovan (Ritsumeikan University)

Class Project(ion): Teaching TEFL Film Studies

Session 6: Emi Itoi (Bunkyo University)

English education for the elderly (in Japanese)

Inquiry: Keiko Kikuchi (E-mail: [kikuchik@tiu.ac.jp](mailto:kikuchik@tiu.ac.jp))

**Saturday, June 11th, 2005**

**Linguapax Asia**

The Second Linguapax Asia International Symposium: Language in Society and the Classroom: Preserving Heritage and Supporting Diversity

9:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Nineteen confirmed speakers from Europe and Japan at the Canadian Embassy located at 7-3-38 Akasaka, Minato ku, Tokyo 107 8503. Accessible via the Toei Oedo, Tokyo Metro Ginza, and Tokyo Metro Hanzomon lines. The closest subway station is Aoyama itchome.

**July 24-29, 2005**

**The 14th World Congress of Applied Linguistics**

The Future is Now

Madison, Wisconsin USA. Hosted by the American Association for Applied Linguistics

The theme of this year's congress, "The future is now," is a timely one. International events have made everyone more aware of language and cultural differences among peoples, and these same events have made it imperative to create a world environment where differences can be appreciated. We, as applied linguists, have an important role to play in fostering tolerance through understanding. And the University of Wisconsin-Madison provides an ideal venue. It is a large land-grant university that represents the best of American education and, important to those interested in Applied Linguistics, the university is committed to ethnicity, diversity, and internationalism. The beautiful setting, stimulating intellectual program, and extensive social program ensure that a memorable time will be had by all.

For more information, go to: <http://www.aila2005.org/>

**October 7 - 10, 2005**

**JALT 2005, Sharing Our Stories**

Granship: Shizuoka Convention and Arts Center

Shizuoka, JAPAN

<http://conferences.jalt.org/2005/index/call>

**Call for Papers**

And we also have call for paper deadlines:

**Call for Papers: 13th Korea TESOL International Conference**

**Proposals due by Thursday, June 30th, 2005**

Saturday, October 15th, 2005

Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul, Korea

<http://www.kotesol.org/2005/>

**Call for Papers: 9th JLTA Annual Conference**

**Proposals due by Saturday, July 2nd, 2005**

Conference starts: Saturday, September 3rd, 2005

The 9th (2005) JLTA Annual Conference

National Japan Language Testing Association

Shizuoka Sangyo University, Fujieda City, Shizuoka Prefecture

<http://www.avis.ne.jp/~youichi/INFO.html#Anchor128692735>

**WANT TO JOIN THE G.A.L.E. JALT SIG?**

Contact Diane Nagatomo, Membership Chair, [dsnagatomo@bekkoame.ne.jp](mailto:dsnagatomo@bekkoame.ne.jp) or complete this form and send it along with 10,000 to join/renew JALT and/or 1500 yen to join GALE SIG to:

JALT Central Office

Urban Edge Bldg. 5F, 1-37-9 Taito, Taito-ku, Tokyo 110-0016

Tel: 81-3-3837-1630, Fax: 81-3-3837-1631 E-mail: [jalt@gol.com](mailto:jalt@gol.com)

(For those outside of Japan, see web site for details on Subscription Membership)

**I want to join the GALE SIG in JALT.**

Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Here is 10,000 to join/renew JALT.

\_\_\_ Here is 1500 yen to join/renew GALE.

\_\_\_ Here is 2000 yen or USA \$20.00 (Subscription Membership for GALE).

My JALT Number is \_\_\_\_\_. (if known)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation: \_\_\_\_\_

JALT Chapter: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**GALE Business**

Anyone interested in volunteering for GALE, please contact Steve Cornwell <[stevec@gol.com](mailto:stevec@gol.com)> or Andrea Maeda <[andrea-m@nifty.com](mailto:andrea-m@nifty.com)>. At the GALE business meeting at JALT this October, several officer positions will be open. Positions can be shared, so if you and a friend are interested in helping raise gender awareness, please consider coming and volunteering.



## **A Japanese Woman's Life**

### **Midori's Case**

Yoko Sabatini

#### **Introduction**

I visited Midori [pseudonym], a friend of mine who is one of my classmates in the doctoral program at an American university's branch in Osaka, in Ehime prefecture for five days in the fall last year, and I stayed at her house for four nights. Midori is one of my research participants for a study in which I plan to study three active Japanese women's lives. The main purpose of this trip was to see the environment where she works and to observe how she acts as an owner of an English school, Amic English Center. The second purpose was to communicate with her personally for three days while we took day trips on the island of Shikoku in order to develop a sense of trust in each other. I left my house in Kyoto early in the morning in order to take the plane from Itami Airport in Osaka to Ehime Airport. It took about an hour by plane; then I took a bus for about 30 minutes to downtown Matsuyama. Finally, I took a streetcar for about 20 minutes and got off at a local station.

From the platform, I saw Midori waving her hand from the other side of the station where she stood beside her car. She wore a long brown skirt and a thin half transparent khaki colored shirt with a brown flower pattern. Her short hair was dyed light brown, her eyebrows were sharply drawn with a similar color, and her makeup fit her noble-looking face – physical features which were familiar to me from seeing her in Osaka. She greeted me with a glowing smile, so I finally felt relaxed. I had been tense because I missed my originally reserved flight due to my own mistake; therefore, I was worried that I would cause Midori trouble. We rode in her car, a metallic silver BMW, to go to her main school, the Amic English Center *Shigenobu* school. In the car, she told me, “It takes quite a long time to get here, doesn't it? About four hours. I'm doing it every week.” She has been commuting from Ehime to Osaka to attend the doctoral program in which we came to know each other. I replied saying that I didn't realize how hard it was to get here until I actually did it because I only thought about the flying time, but actually I needed to get to the airport, check in, wait to take off, and change to the bus and train. She also sometimes comes to or returns from Osaka by train, bus or ferry boat depending on her schedule. In those cases, it takes much longer than by air.

The sky was clear blue and the moderately round mountains were a fade blued

green. Most of the eye level views from the car were rice fields, and some of them had been heavily damaged by a strong typhoon that had hit Shikoku two days before I visited. From a road in the middle of widely spread rice paddy fields, suddenly a huge shopping mall showed its shape with another big building under construction. Midori pointed to the mall and said that her main school is in it, and a large medical research center building was under construction right next to it. I said that it would be good for her business because future employees at the medical research center were potential students of her English school. She drove around the shopping mall to park her car and we walked to her school. She has two more schools; one is the first school which she opened in 1998 located close to the main school and the other, the *Kinuyama* school, located in *Matsuyama* city which is about 30 minutes by car from the two schools in *Shigenobu* town. From the station where I got off to the school, it took about 15 to 20 minutes.

When I entered the school, there was a large reception desk in front of a wall which had a large sign with the school's name drawn in gold rising diagonally up to the right and lit by the bright lighting in the entrance room. There were two chairs in front of the desk, and a waiting sofa on the right side. She went behind the reception desk and checked whether there were any phone messages for her. About five minutes later, a young man came to ask for her school's information. Midori smiled at him and asked about his English learning experiences and weekly schedule. Then she explained about possible classes which he might be able to attend. I sat on the waiting sofa while she talked with him. Later she showed me all three rooms, two of which were classrooms and another narrow room in which there was a tall white book case in which she kept teaching materials, such as textbooks, audiocassette tapes and compact disks, and also a tiny washing up area with a sink and coffee maker.

Midori said that she opened her school in 1998 because she wanted to provide people who live in this local area with opportunities to learn English from native speakers. She herself teaches adults' English conversation, English-Japanese interpretation, and elementary school children's English classes. She also works as an interpreter and as a translator. On this trip, I observed two classes she taught: one for two adult women who want to become interpreters and one for elementary school children. I also observed her meeting with her three full-time native English speaking teachers and her secretary. At that time, her school had about 300 students. During this

meeting and while observing her conversations with the teachers at other times, I learned that Midori knew almost all of the students' English abilities and their behaviors in class.

Running the school and working as an English teacher, interpreter, and translator are very busy and difficult to handle for one person. Why did Midori decide to study in the doctoral program at an American University in Osaka? How did she become the owner of the school? It is hard to say that she is a typical Japanese woman. However, was her life atypical as a Japanese woman? In this short paper, I would like to describe her life story with these questions in mind. Then later I plan to discuss my observations from the point of view of feminism and education. For this narrative study, I used a transcription of a 60 minute interview with her, her chronology and "Narrative of Myself as a Doctoral Student" written by herself, and email communications with her.

### **Midori's Life Story**

Midori was born in January 1959 in Ehime prefecture as the first child. Her mother was a housewife, and her father was a medical doctor specializing in obstetrics-gynecology with his own hospital. Therefore, when her mother delivered her, her own father took care of the delivery. Midori heard from her mother that he said, "*Nanjya bee no ko ka.* (Well, we got a baby girl.)", when he picked her up. "*Bee no ko*" means a girl, and "*boo no ko*" means a boy in *Ehime* dialect. Midori thought that he expected a boy for his first child who would become a doctor. At that time, there was a strong tendency that the first son who was born in a doctor's family should also become a doctor. Midori's parents later had a son who received strong unspoken pressure from them to become a doctor. He actually became a doctor, but when he was unsuccessful in his entrance examination to a medical school just after he graduated from high school, the father was so shocked that he was hospitalized for a short time.

Midori explained to me that in general the parents of a medical doctor family had different expectations for children depending on whether the child is a girl or a boy. In the case of a boy, his becoming a doctor and inheriting the hospital is necessary. In the case of a girl, she is allowed to choose her job whether she becomes a medical doctor or not. However, if she is the only child, her becoming a doctor or the wife of a doctor becomes necessary.

Midori grew up as a well-behave, intelligent child in her elementary school years and was almost always academically on top. She grew tall; in fact, she was the tallest

student among her schoolmates until the seventh grade. She told me that she studied seriously because she thought that it would be embarrassing if she were considered dumb because she stood out as the tallest child. Even throughout her junior high and high school time, she had been one of the academically top students as well as being very tall. However, she was worried that if she was academically the best she would not be able to find a husband who would be more intelligent than her.

In Midori's case, since she was a daughter and had a brother in her family, she had a choice for her profession; however, it was a matter of course that she become the wife of a medical doctor. She told me in her email that she had thought that if she could not marry a doctor she would become a failure in life. Therefore, she said that becoming the wife of a doctor was a necessary game for her to win, and if she could not she thought that there was no meaning to her life. She won her game by marrying a medical doctor when she was in her mid twenties, but had she not considered becoming a doctor herself?

In her "Narrative of Myself as a Doctoral Student", she wrote:

When I was a first-year student in high school, we, the students and our teachers, had meetings to discuss our goals for the future because the school courses were divided into two, a science course and a liberal arts course, when we became second-year students. My teacher advised me to pursue my favorite thing in life. Because I liked English, I decided to choose English as my life career. My second choice was to become a medical doctor. My father was a doctor. In Japan at that time, the children of doctor's families were implicitly expected to become a doctor, especially boys. Even after I entered a university to major in English, I was still indecisive and sometimes hesitated to go that way and thought about changing my mind to become a doctor. I told my parents about entering a medical school after I graduated from the university. At that time my younger brother was in a medical college and my parents said I did not need to. I felt kind of relieved and continued to keep English as an important tool for my life.

In my interview with her, she explained in more detail about the time while she was a first-year high school student when she decided to take a liberal arts course to prepare for university entrance examinations. She said that about five days after she had chosen the course she went to see her teacher and said that she had changed her mind to

take the course to prepare for a medical university entrance examination. However, the teacher told her that it was too late to change her course.

When Midori was a second-year high school student, she went to see three top private universities in Tokyo, Jochi, Waseda, and Keio, since she definitely wanted to go to Tokyo. Growing up in Ehime on Shikoku Island, she had often thought about why she needed to live in a local area and she longed for an urban life that would suit her. She thought that Jochi University seemed similar to her high school where she would need to study seriously and Waseda University did not seem sophisticated enough for her to spend her *ojosama* (young lady from a high class family) college life in Tokyo. When she saw Keio University's library she felt very fond of it and thought that she definitely would like to spend her free lady-like life in that university. Therefore, she studied hard to pass Keio's entrance examination. However, she stopped studying seriously once she entered the university and wanted to avoid taking an examination which she needed to pass in order to major in English and American literature from her second year. When she told her mother that she wanted to major in Japanese, a course that did not require an examination, she told her that she should try the examination to major in English anyway since there was an opportunity. Therefore, she tried it and passed although she expected to fail because she had not studied seriously for a year.

After Midori graduated from the university, she worked as an office clerk using her English skills in an export related department of TDK Corporation in Tokyo; however she felt that it was not her place to work for a long time although she liked her co-workers and the company's atmosphere. She thought that there was not enough value in it to spend most of her lifetime doing this work. She kept studying English while she was working in the company for nearly two years and after she quit her job for another half year in Tokyo. Then she went to the United States for four months to study English intensively in a language school attached to the University of Pennsylvania. She was impressed by the ways in which the teachers taught communicatively which she liked and felt they were much more effective than the classes she had experienced in Japan.

Midori wanted to work in Tokyo after she came back from the United States; however, her mother came to see her at Tokyo International Airport when she arrived and suggested she to go back to her hometown. Since Midori also thought that it was better for her to stay at her parents' house and have *o-miai* (match-making meetings for marriage) in order to get married around the age she had planned rather than living

alone in Tokyo, she went back home with her mother. Even though her parents suggested to her to have *hanayome shugyo* (homemaker skill learning, such as cooking, tea ceremony and flower arrangement), she felt it was not valuable for her to spend her time only doing the *hanayome shugyo*. She wrote resumes and went to English conversation schools to have interviews to become an English teacher. At the beginning, she taught at a few different schools.

As soon as Midori started teaching English, she found it very interesting. In the interview with her, she told me:

M: “*Oshie hajimetara ne, sugoi omoshiroi no yo!*”

(When I started to teach, it was so interesting.)

Y: “*Hee.*” (Really.)

M: “*De ne, oshie hajimete suguni kore wa ne tenshoku da to omotta.*”

(So, as soon as I started teaching English, I thought it was my life work that God gave me.)

She later chose to teach in one of the schools as a part-time teacher where she felt the working conditions were the best. However, she did not become a full-time teacher because she thought that she would quit a year later when she got married. She liked to work part-time because she was able to use her time more freely; she went shopping and to flower arrangement and piano lessons when she did not teach. As she had planned, she found a husband who was a medical doctor through *o-miai*, and she quit her job.

Soon after she got married, she gave birth to a son. She returned to work at the English conversation school where she had worked before when her son became 2.5 years old. She left him at a day care center until 6:00 p.m. since she worked until that time. However, her flexible working time conditions changed when the school decided that all part-timers needed to teach until 9:00 p.m.. Therefore, she found a person to take care of her son until 9:30 after the day care center closed. As she worked under this strict condition for three to four months, she came to think that it would be difficult to continue doing so because her son missed her and started crying at night, as well as her time spent with her husband becoming overwhelmingly small. Thus, she quit the school and found a part-time lecturer’s position at a vocational school where she was able to work only in the daytime. Recalling this period, she thought that she had not wanted to

become a full-time teacher because she had wanted to enjoy her time for child rearing.

While she taught English at the conversation school and the vocational school, she continuously studied English herself to become a simultaneous interpreter. She wanted to acquire the highest level of English skills and thought that a simultaneous interpreter's job required such a level of skills, which she thought was more prestigious than teaching English to lay persons. Although she studied very hard and got the interpreter license, she felt that the job required more than she expected. In the interview with her she expressed:

*“Doji tsuyaku no buusu ni haitte mite, kore wa jumyo ga chijimu to omotte, nankai ka yatteritan dakedo, yappari teaching no ho ga muiterukana to omotta.”*

(Even though I tried several times, I felt that the job would make my lifetime shorter when I went into a simultaneous interpreter's booth. And I thought that teaching English suited me after all.)

Therefore, she kept teaching English as her main job and worked as an interpreter occasionally. While she studied for and worked as an interpreter, she met other interpreters, with whom she conversed with sometimes about the necessity to get at least a master's degree in English.

When Midori was in her early thirties and enjoyed working hard teaching English and doing occasional interpreting, she heard that her husband would be transferred to a very remote rural area in Shikoku. She did not want to go there. She told her husband that she refused to go with him and cried for about a year. She said in the interview:

*“Otto ga tenkin ni nachatte, atashi wa zettai ni iya da tte ittanoni, mou nakiwameite, zettai sonna hitozato hanareta yona tokoro wa iya datte iunoni, oya wa tanshin funin wa yurusan toka nantoka nacchatte, zettai issho ni ikan to ikan toka mitainde, zettai iyadatte mou ichinen nakiwameita noni, tsuini, nanka hanare kojima no yona shikoku no nanka minami no hashi no ho ni oiyararete, konna tokoro de Nihongo ga tsuujinno kai toka omotte.”*

(My husband had to be transferred. Even though I said I definitely refused to go to live in such a godforsaken place, my parents told me that they would not permit me to let my husband move alone to work and insisted that I definitely had to go

along with him. I wailed for a year saying I hated to go, but in the end, I had to move out to the sticks where it was like a far remote island. I thought I wouldn't even be able to communicate with the local people in Japanese.)

Having been convinced by her parents, she moved after all with her husband and their son to the place where her husband needed to work at a hospital in late March of the following year. She felt extremely lonely and depressed. In early April just after the move, she talked on the phone with her friend and happened to hear about a master's program for teaching English as a second/other language (TESOL) offered by an American university at a satellite campus in Osaka. As soon as she hung up the phone, she made a telephone call to the university to find out about the details, through which she learned that students were required to attend classes at least once a week. For her, going to Osaka once a week and earning a master's degree sounded very attractive, because she would have a good excuse to get out from the rural place where she was deeply depressed.

Midori quickly decided to begin the master's program and started to commute to Osaka. It took her at least seven hours one way by plane; she left home before 10:00 a.m. to arrive 30 minutes before the evening class which started at 6:00 p.m. After the class, she took an overnight bus leaving Osaka at 10:20 p.m. to go home and arrived home next morning at around 8:00 a.m. Even though she needed to spend long hours commuting, she felt happy going to a big city to meet people and studying in English. She also started teaching English at a nursing college in the rural area where she lived at that time. Three years later, she got a master's degree in TESOL and felt that in the future she wanted to go back to the university to study in the doctor's program because she felt that she had just started to understand what she had learned in the master's course when she took the comprehensive examination. Since she had the TESOL degree and wanted to work, and there was also a complicated situation of her husband's working condition, she moved back to her house with her son in Matsuyama city in Ehime prefecture leaving her husband alone in the remote place for a while.

Midori looked for a job teaching English at a university, however, there was not much opportunity because she wanted to stay in Matsuyama where she and her husband had a house. Then, she thought of opening her own school. She thought that running her own English school was the best way for her; she would be able to work as much as she

wanted using her skills, and contribute to the people in the community. She researched how to open an English conversation school using the Internet and found a Web site of a school whose owner was a woman. She contacted her asking about how to run a conversation school. The woman, who was also a wife of a medical doctor and had a child whose age was the same as Midori's son, kindly shared her experiences and gave her advice on running an English conversation school. One day, Midori found a location that seemed suited for her to open an English conversation school, which became the first school of the Amic English Center chain. She also contacted with a licensed tax accountant who specialized in medical institutions through her family's connection, from whom she has been receiving advice on business since then.

Midori hired native English speakers to teach at her school through the Internet and worked long hours teaching, translating documents in different genres, and interpreting. She sometimes did not have time to sleep while translating documents at night to submit them on time. In three years, the number of students increased to about 500, and she opened two more schools and hired secretaries to assist her in their administration. Since she felt confident in her staff to take care of the schools even if she left there for a few days a week, she decided to study in the doctoral program at the American university in Osaka where she had studied for her master's degree. She applied for the doctoral program and was accepted as a doctoral candidate when she was 43 years old. She thought that she wanted to have more confidence in her teaching as well as in running her school by having a firm theoretical backbone.

Midori explained another reason why she wanted to have a doctor's degree:

*“Yappari, ano kazoku de doctor datta kara, souiu doctor tte iu mono ni narukoto ni yotte, jibun mo onaji ichi ni taterunja nai ka mitai na kanji mo atta node, doctor ni wa naritai tte iu fu ni. (...) Ano doctor ni wa naritai, Doctor Tamai tte yobaretai, to iu koto nan desu ne.”*

(After all, my family were all doctors. I felt that I would be able to stand in an equal position with them by having a doctor's degree. Well, I wanted to be a doctor, I wanted to be called, “Dr. Tamai”.)

This was her personal reason why she was eager to have a doctor's degree. Although she did not become a medical doctor, she will become a doctor of education. She

mentioned that she felt that she was blessed and considered herself as a resource for society. She was lucky to be brought up in a good environment and to be able to develop high skills in English; therefore, it would be a shame if she was not be able to use her abilities to help other people. She said that what she learned in the doctoral program should be implemented in her school to contribute to the community.

Since Midori started to study in the doctoral program in 2003, she has deepened her thoughts about teaching and education. One of her important jobs is to educate native English speaker teachers to teach English effectively in order to satisfy the needs and expectations of her school's students and to direct them to work efficiently. The decisions and directions that she gives them have the power to change not only their attitudes toward their work, but also their course in life. Therefore, she needs to consider carefully the ways in which she talks with her employees. She sometimes mentioned to me that she has felt difficulty directing male teachers who were from the United States and New Zealand because they often did their minimum job and did not communicate with her openly. She has an enthusiastic American female teacher who has a master's degree in Applied Linguistics and is able to communicate well with her not only about teaching, but also about administrative issues.

Therefore, the female teacher helps her in a variety of ways; for example, she frankly gave her opinion when Midori talked with her about her plan for a new tuition system and about the employment of a new teacher when I observed their work. When Midori talked with an American male teacher who has an MBA, saying that she wished that he could work using his ability more and that it was possible for him to do more administrative work, he thought it was his promotion and immediately asked her to raise his salary, although her intention was to encourage him to work more efficiently. In the discussion about the conditions for him to have a raise, she asked him to study more seriously about teaching English. He thought about his job and his life more critically after that for a few months and decided to quit her school and move to Tokyo in order to find a job in which he could use his ability in business. He thanked her for the opportunity she had given him to think of what he wanted to do with his life more seriously and explained that he wanted strongly to quit before his contract finished in order to find a new job before he became 35 years old.

Midori told me that she had given her approval for the American male teacher to leave her school before his contract was completed, even though it was inconvenient for

her school; she needed to hire a new native English speaker teacher immediately which is not easy in Ehime prefecture. She thought it was better to consider it as an educational act in which he was able to consider his life work seriously and to move forward. Two former secretaries quit her school; both of them went to Tokyo: one to get a higher education and one to have more chances to improve her life, because they were inspired by Midori's attitude toward her work and study. Her present secretary started studying accounting in order to support her more efficiently. Midori started to think about teaching and education from a wider perspective than before by applying the knowledge that she gained through the doctoral program in teaching and administration at her school.

### **Analysis and Discussion of Midori's Life as a Japanese Woman**

In the previous section, I described a woman's life over a 45-year span; however, the representation of Midori's life was limited and probably deviated from the intention she had when she talked with me. Although I tried to make use of the data she had provided fully and not to include my understanding of her when I wrote her narrative, it was impossible to avoid imposing my perspectives in the process of selecting what to include in this paper. In this section, I would like to analyze her life course in order to understand the reality of one particular woman's life and discuss significant meanings that emerged in it that may make contributions to the field of education and feminism. However, as Riessman (1993) writes, "[m]eaning is fluid and contextual, not fixed and universal. All we have is talk and texts that represent reality partially, selectively, and imperfectly". (p. 15) Therefore, my discussion focusing on particular times in her life in which I was not actually present shall be limited.

#### ***Identity as a doctor's daughter***

What had emerged most strongly in Midori's narrative was a life as a daughter of a medical doctor's family. It should be noted that her life was not a linear one although she looks like an autonomous independent woman as the owner of an English school. Midori for a long time wondered whether she should pursue medicine as her profession or not. It was clear, however, that she was in a situation in which she was allowed to make her choice; if she had decided to go to a medical university, her family was capable of supporting her financially. It seemed to me that two crucial points at which

she made her choice to major in English were not fully her choice. One was that she was told by her high school teacher that it was too late for her to change her course to prepare for her university entrance examination from that for a liberal arts college to that for a medical university when she went to see the teacher five days after she had initially made her decision. The other was that her mother told her that it was not necessary for her to become a medical doctor when she was a college student.

Is it inappropriate to consider alternative conditions of the times when Midori decided to major in English? What would have happened if she were a male child of the family born in the late 50s or even now? Would not her parents have encouraged her to become a medical doctor? Would the high school teacher have accepted the change of courses which she wanted to make? Would not Midori have argued for the change more strongly? Would the parents have been happy to hear that she wanted to go to a medical university? In talking about legitimate language and symbolic power in society and a person's choice of profession, Bourdieu (1991) states:

The power of suggestion which is exerted through things and persons and which, instead of telling the child what he must do, tells him what he is, and thus leads him to become durably what he has to be, is the condition for the effectiveness of all kinds of symbolic power that will subsequently be able to operate on a habitus predisposed to respond to them. (p. 52)

Being born as a woman may mean that she is told what she is *not*. Midori's family had cultural, economic, and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986); however, she did acquire the symbolic power. What she had missed was the suggestion, which could have told her "what she was", in the process of thinking of her profession. I am not arguing that it was a bad thing. As Midori wrote, "[i]n Japan at that time, the children of doctor's families were implicitly expected to become a doctor, especially boys." A male child seems likely to have higher pressure to become "what he has to be"; therefore in that sense, he might have less choice in his life. Because she was a daughter, she had room for consideration and she made a choice eventually. I recognize that the power of suggestion she had received from her family had been operating in her; for example the high level of bilingual ability she possesses, the importance of being the wife of a medical doctor, and specifically in her personal reasons for getting a doctor's degree – in order to feel like standing in an equal position in her doctor's family.

### *The impact of sociocultural norms upon Japanese women*

The reason why I described the process of Midori's non-linear experience in deciding her major and profession when she was young is not only for illuminating the reality of a woman's life, but because I had a similar difficulty in my life. I think it is not simply a matter of one's free will and choice; there are many factors involved in one's choice of profession, such as socio-cultural norms, family background, financial situation, and knowledge of alternatives. When I was a first year student in high school, I wanted to go to an art university. All of my friends assumed that I would go to an art university, and I thought so too. However, the university that I wanted to go to was famous for being difficult to enter. A male art club teacher told me that I would need to spend at least three years to prepare, and my male seniors were not able to pass the entrance examination. My mother said that it would be very difficult to live as a professional artist because I was a woman, and I felt that it was very difficult for my parents to support extra years of preparation to pass the examination. Therefore, I gave up my desire to major in art. However, I many times thought that I should have tried to pursue what I wanted to do and thought of quitting the university where I majored in English and American literature.

In my case, what I had lacked was a flexibility to seek alternatives (there were art colleges I would have been able to get into and I could have become an art teacher) and critical thinking about whether studying English would satisfy me. My parents had thought that a professional artist's life would not bring their daughter a happy life. Since I did not want to have conflicts with my parents and my art teacher, I simply accepted what they had told me.

Midori and I, born in the 1950s in Japan, seemed to have subscribed to the socio-cultural norm that told us implicitly and explicitly that it would be hard for a woman to live independently in a male dominant society. It was and still is the norm that it is happiness for a woman to get married after working for a while and having a family from a certain age. Therefore, many women often lack critical thinking about their profession and feel it is natural to depend on one's husband financially. Kobayashi (2002) poses issues of "Japanese students' lacking development in critical thinking" (p. 190) and "young Japanese women's persistent choice of feminised roles" (p. 190) from "their uncritical and naïve life perspectives" (p. 190). She introduces a survey "conducted to examine job satisfaction of OL ('Office Ladies', referring to female

clerical workers) [which] reveals not only their neglected status and frustration about their present work but also their vagueness about future plans” (p. 190). Midori and I did clerical work using English at big companies after we graduated from our respective universities, and we were not able to feel job satisfaction. We were uncritical about our future jobs when we were students, and I think that there are not enough opportunities in the education of youth to develop critical thinking in Japan.

The socio-cultural norm that regulates people’s beliefs about femininity, masculinity, and women’s subordinate roles works as if it is a web of power. Ida (2004) describes that gender ideology has been produced and reinforced through most of the surroundings in our lives: culture, politics, media, education, work place, family, etc. (pp. 59 – 63) Therefore, people acquire the gender ideology implicitly, believe it as natural, and perform according to it in their everyday life. Those people see others through the lens of the gender norm and check others’ performances and their own constantly. This mechanism of self-discipline seems similar to Foucault’s (1977/1995) explanation of the ways in which power operates through surveillance in Bentham’s Panopticon; prisoners were not sure when they were watched by the guard, therefore, the power operates always and inscribes them individually (pp. 200 – 203). Foucault explains the effects of power:

He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (pp. 202 – 203)

Midori was conscious about her tall figure that received other peoples’ attention; therefore, she always acted as a good behaving child and studied well. The way Midori described about her preference of university, – a place suitable to spend an “*ojosama*” (high society’s lady like) college life in Tokyo - is an example of how the power of gender ideology affects young women in Japan. She told me about an episode of her college friends’ behavior as “*ojosama*”; she was surprised at how little her female friends had eaten in front of boys, although they had eaten a lot more when they had been with only female friends. Butler (1990) argues that gender is *performative* and

suggests to “[c]onsider gender, for instance, as *a corporeal style*, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘*performative*’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (p. 139). However, gendered performances are “*repeated*” (p. 140). “This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (p. 140). Thus, we are constructing and inscribing the fictional gender identity through our own performances and actions. Then, is it possible to cut, at least some parts, of the web of power of the gender ideology that has been constructed historically and socio-culturally?

If it is possible, then how, when and for what does a person act in deviation from the gender norm? Is it possible to do it implicitly? I think that it is possible and Midori made it possible implicitly. From a psychological point of view, Sugiura (2004) describes a process of turning points in people’s lives. He argues that a period in which a person notices a gap or a problem that she thinks is unbearable prepares the breakthrough or a turning point. (pp. 65 – 67). He says that the process of the turning point is a process of creative activity (p. 69) and it can provide the person who goes through it with a valuable change. (pp. 70 – 74) For example, he explains that a positive attitude toward one’s job when done unquestioningly following the routine and the attitude one has after going through a crisis in which the meaning of the job was once lost and reconstructed in the process of struggle at the turning point are significantly different. The latter attitude that she acquires after the turning point includes more meanings, such as her confidence developed by overcoming the crisis and her objective vision about herself, than in the former.

Thus, Sugiura argues that the attitudes one acquires after the turning point is the tip of the iceberg under which there is a huge base she has developed through struggle; therefore, it has stability. He also explains this kind of change causes a person to have a wider or different perspective to see the world surrounding her life (pp. 71 – 72). Let me describe how Midori gradually changed by focusing on some of the turning points she went through.

### ***Midori’s search for satisfaction through work and changing views about teachers***

Midori decided to quit her job at the big company clearly feeling that it was not her place to stay there for a long time and went to the United States after she studied

English for about six months. I think that the times when she noticed her uncomfortable feeling while working in the company, studying English in Tokyo for a while after quitting the job and taking the action to go to America were meaningful, and can be marked as a process of a significant turning point in her life.

Midori found that the ways in which the American teachers in the intensive English course instructed were communicative and enjoyable. She had had a negative experience in learning English for taking the interpreter guide examination before going to the US. Her image about school teachers in general was also negative:

*“Tatoeba shougaku chuugakkou koko toka gakusei toshite sugoshitekite, sugoku kyuukutsudattan desuyone. Sore wa, ma ma tabun onna no ko datte iu koto mo aru to omoun desu kedo mo, nanka, kooshinasai to ka, aashinasai toka, nanka sensei ni oshitsukerarete, katani hamerareteru yona kanji ga suggoku kyuukutsuda to omotta no. Nanka sensei wa, kodomo no shiawase wo omotte sodateterutte iu fu ni wa jibun to shite wa omotte nakute, sensei wa watashi tachi wo jibun no kata ni hameyo to omotterudesho, tte iu fu ni zutto omotteta node, sonna nanka jibun katte ni kocchi wo sosa sunna yo, mitaina kanjide, so iu ningen niwa naritakunaito omotte te.”* [In the interview, utterance no.130]

(For example, I felt very uncomfortable spending my time in elementary, junior high, and high school as a student. It might be related to the fact that I was a girl, but I thought it extremely uncomfortable that I was being pushed or ordered as to what and how to do things by my teachers. I felt that I was pushed into a mold. I felt something like, that the teachers did not care about the students' happiness, and I thought that they were just trying to push us into a set mold. So, I thought something like “don't control us selfishly”, and I did not want to become a person like them.)

However, Midori's experience of a communicative approach that her teacher used in the United States was far different from the ones she had in Japan, by which she changed her image about teachers somewhat. Until then, she had never thought of becoming a teacher, however, this experience made her think that it was not a bad idea to become an English instructor.

Therefore, she started to work at English conversation schools in her hometown

after she came back from the States and finding teaching English to be interesting and exciting, and thought that she had found her vocation. However, she made her own distinction between an “instructor” and a “teacher”, and preferred to be an instructor who simply teaches English as communication skills rather than as a teacher. Let me explain some Japanese nuances or implied meanings in the words, *insutorakutaa* (an instructor), *kyoushi* (a teacher) and *kyoiku* (education) that are probably somewhat different from the general American English use of them. *An nsutorakutaa* (instructor) refers to a trainer who simply teaches some special skills, however, a *kyoushi* or *sensei* (a teacher) refers to a teacher who provide his/her students with moral guidance as well as the subject he/she teaches. *Kyoiku* (education) is written with two Chinese characters: *kyo* which means to teach and *iku* which means to raise a child or a person. Therefore, teachers in Japan seem to have been traditionally expected to have the responsibility of providing students with a good moral education and life guidance in addition to whatever subjects they may teach. With the influence from Confucianism, teachers in Japan traditionally have been considered worthy of respect, therefore, they are called “*sensei*” which is an honorific added to a person’s name to show such respect. However, because of her negative experiences with her own teachers while growing up, Midori preferred to be a simple instructor who does not need to take such responsibilities of raising students to become moral persons or to instill discipline in them.

Even after she had a son and went back to teach at the English conversation school where she used to teach before she got married, her image about teachers in general had not changed, therefore, she was satisfied working as an English instructor who did not exert the power to control others while teaching her students. However, Midori mentioned that although she worked as a part-time instructor at that time because she was married and she needed time for child rearing, she thought that if she could work as a full-time instructor she would be able to work much harder using her ability more fully.

Midori’s negative view of teachers changed when she worked as a volunteer interpreter for a 22 year-old American assistant language teacher when she was 35 years old. It happened when Midori was on a stage with her to interpret her speech about Japanese education to an audience that consisted of teachers in which she talked about how everyone had been making an effort in education in order to build a better society, and therefore, in that sense American and Japanese educational systems were similar.

Midori told me that she had realized for the first time that education was rooted in such a good purpose - to make our society better - and that teaching was a profession that was worthy of respect. This change of her view about teachers occurred when she was in the very remote area on Shikoku Island where she had moved for her husband's job.

When she felt that she could not bear her unhappiness living in the remote rural area, she took action to study TESOL at the American graduate school in Osaka. She commuted taking more than seven hours one way every week for more than two years to get her master's degree, and enjoyed studying with the native and non-native speakers of English who were mostly English teachers, whom she met in her different courses. She was also able to release the stress she had felt being in the rural area. I felt her strong agency in this action which she took in order to change her daily life. It is possible that her changed view about teachers in general from negative to positive made her study of TESOL meaningful. Thus, I describe the period in which Midori studied in the master's program to be another significant turning point in her life; she found her teaching job to be meaningful and respectable, and she did not continue performing as a normative Japanese married woman.

After Midori got her master's degree, she decided to leave the rural area where her husband worked and moved back to her hometown in Ehime prefecture. She then took another significant action to start her own English school. She explained to me that the frustration she had felt when she was not able to work to her full ability when her son was small, built her motivation to found her own school when she no longer needed to take so much time for child rearing. She thought that she would be able to work as much as she wanted using her abilities fully and it would be interesting to see the results of her work directly. She researched thoroughly about the management of English schools and worked very hard to make her school business successful. It was true that because of her particular situation she had enough money to start her school and she met a good tax accountant through her family, which made her plan possible, however, it was her continuous earnest efforts which really made her dream come true.

I thought that Midori considered herself as an educator when she talked about her experiences with the teachers and secretaries and felt confident and responsible in directing them. She seemed satisfied because she was able to work as much as she wanted using her abilities fully. She made an effort to know all of her school's students' names, English proficiency levels, needs, and their behaviors in class. Even when she

felt difficulty communicating with male foreign teachers, she acted as a patient employer and educator. I thought that she had been applying the knowledge she acquired in the graduate school programs and from her experiences effectively. I saw her way of communication both in Japanese and English in her school – a fair treatment of others and open mindedness – as a reflection of her thoughts about the power of teachers; she realized the importance of accepting the plurality of others.

### **What I have learned**

Now I would like to briefly summarize what I have learned by analyzing and discussing Midori's life. Although I reduced her life from my limited perspective, the rich data she provided made me think seriously about the complexity of women's lives, gender ideology, gendered performances, and education.

Midori successively constructed her identity as a medical doctor family's daughter throughout her life, which made her think that becoming the wife of a doctor and getting a doctor's degree were important goals of her life. In order to reach the former goal, she performed as a lady and chose a university majoring in English in Tokyo where she lived a lady-like college life. It seemed clear that the power of gender ideology operated in her, therefore, she performed as a lady following the sociocultural norm in Japan in which women's subordinate roles were assumed. However, her life was not a linear one. She had a turning point in which she was not satisfied working as an office lady after graduation and went to the United States. After she came back to Japan, she found teaching English interesting and thought of it as her vocation. Even though she succeeded to have a life as a medical doctor's wife for which she quit her teaching job, she was not fully satisfied to spend her life as a full-time homemaker.

There were three times when she took action to change her life as a housewife: 1.) when her son was 2.5 years old she went back to work at the English conversation school where she had worked before she got married, 2.) when she started to study in a master's program taking seven to eight hours to commute from a remote area in south Shikoku where she had to move for her husband's work, and 3.) when she got the master's degree and left the area to go back to her house with her son and started her own English school to work as much as she wanted using her full abilities.

She was not able to be satisfied being merely a lady or a doctor's wife and took actions to change her unsatisfied daily life. She made earnest efforts to find a

meaningful life and created her world, her own school, in which she could work as much as she wanted at the same time that she felt responsible for her students and employees. As the owner of her school, she no longer needed (or was unable) to perform subordinate roles. When she felt confident in the management of her school, she decided to enroll in a doctoral program for the sake of her school as well as for her private reasons; she wanted to have a firm theoretical TESOL backbone for her school and wanted to stand on an equal position with the male members of her family by having a doctor's degree. I learned that because Midori tried and made efforts to do what she really wanted to do, she inevitably deviated from the gender norm – performing subordinate roles as a woman - that was historically and socio-culturally constructed in Japan.

I have also learned that gender ideology intersects when a person considers her future job. Parents' expectations and education in schools are crucial and they have suggestive power for her to inscribe social values and acquire the ways in which she sees the world. Midori's negative image about teachers in general poses the issue of teacher behaviors toward students. It also reminds me of Foucault's (1977/1995) words about Panopticism: "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, *schools* [emphasis added], barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?" (p. 228). I think that it is important for us, who are involved in education, to critically rethink school education whether we accept it as a system that reproduces the status quo or whether we have the power and will to change it by providing students with opportunities for critical thinking (Atkinson, 1997) and connected knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986; Clinchy, 1994).

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**Cynthia Nelson Seminar, Tokyo**  
**Issues in Gender and Sexual Identity: What Educators Should Know**  
**Louise Haynes**

Cynthia Nelson was invited by Temple University to give a weekend workshop March 12-13 in Tokyo. On Saturday there were over 30 in attendance. Dr. Nelson gave an introduction as to how the play, *Queer as a Second Language*, came about from her research transcripts and interviews with teachers and learners. In small groups, the attendees were given scenes from the play, and after a brief “rehearsal” went to the front of the room and read the scenes. In order to clearly show which person was reading which part, each reader wore a sign with their character’s name written in large letters. After we had finished reading all the scenes, we discussed the play and how it felt to be the characters. Several people observed that because they had not read earlier scenes, it was a bit difficult to understand how their scene fit into the overall story, but that as they watched the performance, the pieces more or less fell into place and they were able to follow the plot and character development. The play had humorous as well as very touching moments, and was quite well received by those in attendance.

Dr. Nelson discussed how gay and lesbian issues have been presented in classrooms in the past. For example, from a psychological frame of reference, the teacher might focus on the feelings and attitudes of the students, and through class discussions students might become more self-aware which could lead to personal transformation and a change in discriminatory attitudes. From a sociological perspective,

the issues are discussed with a focus on changing society as a whole, and on ending power imbalances, and ultimately, discrimination. Dr. Nelson discussed how these two categories might include a portion of language teachers, but not the majority. She raised the question of how it is possible to bridge the gap between those teachers who are advocates/activists and the more mainstream teachers who tend to limit the main part of their teaching to linguistic aspects of language teaching. She explained that since our expertise is the language, we can step back from discussion of the issues to also look at the discursive elements that are involved in the discussions themselves.

<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Heteronormativity</b>
Personal	Social	The textual, the discursive
Fear/hatred of gay people	Institutionalized discrimination	Ways of normalizing heterosexuality
Feelings, attitudes	Social issues	Acts of language/culture
To emphasize	To challenge/confront	To analyze
Heterosexuality as norm	Oppressor/oppressed	To see how sexual identities permeate sexual practices
End personal discrimination	End social discrimination	Focus on textual/discursive analysis

On Sunday, Dr. Nelson went into more detail about how teachers can deal with discussions of sexual identity issues as well as further the students' language learning goals. Although they are not complete, I have written out transcripts/notes (not necessarily verbatim) of a portion of her presentation, in bold below. For example,

**Students make their own meanings from our responses – or lack of response. We may think we share understandings with the students, but often what they are receiving and interpreting is quite different from the message we are trying to deliver.**

Not only students, but people who attend seminars. We hear the message but we probably interpret it through our own particular filters. During the entire weekend, I found myself filtering the messages in the play/discussion/lecture through my own experiences as an AIDS educator. Here, from this position, I would like to give my thoughts as I reread my notes.

**We need an approach that can be socio-cultural and socio-political but that is focused on discursive interaction where the aim is much more open-ended.**

**Questioning how texts work... It may be that critical pedagogy does not appeal to many teachers because it often has a final answer, or puts forth a certain way of thinking. In order to bring the issues more into the mainstream language teaching, looking at the language rather than trying to change students' minds or change the world, we can use the discussion of issues to example the language we use (or avoid using). This could be how we can show that discussion of queer issues fits in with language teaching.**

A variety of "issues" are increasingly finding their way into the language classroom in a number of course books. The popularity of these books suggests that teachers are becoming more accepting of the discussion of issues if they appear in EFL texts. Yet if an issue is not included would the same teachers go out of their way to include it? In my own research into why foreign teachers in Japan do/not raise any sort of sensitive or controversial issues, one of the respondents was very clear that the teacher's position should not be used as "a bully pulpit" to put forward the teacher's values and opinions. However, there is the argument that not raising issues sends a message that certain social issues are not important or not acceptable topics for discussion in the language classroom.

For the topic of HIV/AIDS in particular, the reasons most often given for not including it were 1) it's not a problem in Japan and 2) it doesn't fit in with language teaching. Another of my respondents wrote something like, "you can't do a drill with that topic." This seems to be a rationalization for why the teacher would avoid discussion of a topic that they were not comfortable with, since a creative teacher would probably be able to bring out an entire grammar lesson based on a short reading passage about AIDS or anything else. If these teachers realize that as language teachers they are in the unique position of helping their learners observe facets of language and the impact of the language they use, they may be more open to including discussion of issues they might otherwise avoid.

**Students are interacting with these issues all the time (through people around them, news, movies, etc.) and we can make that our field of study rather than raise issues as though they are not already circulating. Challenging the idea that the idea of sexual identities do not already exist – if someone is wearing a wedding ring, or uses the label "Mrs.," it brings up issues of sexual identity. How can we acknowledge the range of sexual identities that exist in our classrooms and schools, not only heterosexuality. By the way language works, terms are defined in relation to each other, are not separate categories.**

Again, through my HIV/AIDS educational filter, there is this myth that students are not interested in this topic. Almost any teacher in Japan who has approached the topic knows that it is one that heightens interest and participation among the students simply because, from my own observations, it has not been adequately discussed in junior and senior high schools here in Japan. I teach at the university level and have seen in comments in student journals that the issue of AIDS is, indeed, very much a concern in many of students' lives, regardless of how much (little) news coverage there is about it. They are also concerned about pregnancy, sexualities, and communicating with sexual partners. So, as Dr. Nelson pointed out, we are not bringing in these issues, they are

already there.

**Perhaps many teachers feel that because they are not experts on a topic, especially with regard to queer issues, they might avoid talking about the topic. But because language teachers are experts on language, they are in a special position to direct students' attention to looking at dialog, the impressions that words carry, the implications of how things are said, intonation, text organization. Facilitating inquiry, "What effect does using a certain word/phrase/pronunciation have on the listener?" How is that part of producing identities?**

Last year I taught a 6-week workshop on HIV/AIDS to 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. One of the classes included an activity in which students were given an authentic handout of phrases in English that people can use when talking to their partner about using a condom. Several students commented that it was a very useful class and gave them ideas on how to approach the subject with their partners. This would be a good point at which to look at language and have students talk about why it's easy/difficult to talk about these issues, how what we say will be interpreted by our partner, how *how* we say it (intonation, etc.) affects their reaction, how our raising the topic changes how our partner views us, and so on.

**Teachers who are reluctant to talk about the topic are often focused on the topic, rather than looking at the text, which is our expertise. It can also work as a safety net. If emotions run high in a discussion, we can step back and look at the discussion from a discourse level. Some teachers tend to start from the language, then ask what everyone thinks about the topic, but do not come back to the language issue and look at how the discussion relates to the language. How would you talk about it differently, what different words would you have used, etc. One of our strengths as language teachers is that we know how to work with texts.**

**We need to come back to the question, what is our aim? What are we trying to do as language teachers? How does what we do further the learning objectives of the class? Are we here to help the student become a better person or to become a better writer/speaker/listener?**

I was packing up my office this week when a couple of students stopped by. We got to talking and I asked them if, in their English classes, they had ever talked about any pair/group conversations from a discourse level. One replied that the teacher had introduced the vocabulary related to the issue, but had never really talked about the interaction, or the effect of choosing particular phrasing or vocabulary over others. They said that although it sounded interesting, they probably wouldn't want to spend too much time discussing it. They really just wanted to talk about the issues. That got me to thinking about how to approach this sort of discussion... Would I make it a regular part of a lesson? Would I keep it in my "bag of tricks" for those awkward moments when I don't know how to respond? Is there "a way" to teach it and "a way not to"?

**Making it normal and not taboo to discuss various issues in the context of language learning, but being frank with discomfort or nervousness. "I'm wondering how to talk about this... Do you normally talk about this? Who would you talk about this**

with? Would you ever write about this rather than talk about it? How would you talk about it?"

...If a student gave a comment such as, "I'm from [country] and this is how people in my country feel about X people [that they don't like them, or those people don't exist in my country, etc.]," it opens up the possibility for examining that, with a response such as, "Oh, that's interesting because I've recently heard about a group of X people who are very active in your society and have a lot of support, etc."

Example, "in Japan, people don't talk about gay and lesbian issues in the classroom." "Oh, really? Actually, I've heard that Japan is taking the lead in raising these issues in the classroom. [Ex. Todai students several years ago requested that courses about queer issues be included in the curriculum, as have many other universities.] Temple University recently invited a world expert in queer issues in English language classrooms to give a seminar in Tokyo and Osaka...."

Over the past few years in addition to AIDS education, I have introduced media literacy skills with my 1<sup>st</sup> year English majors. One of the things I stress is that we should consider just as carefully that which is not covered in news reports as that which is. We need to ask questions about things that are not reported, and to think about why that information is not given, whose opinions are not allowed to be expressed, and what effect that has on the audience. There is a clear similarity between asking these questions of the media and of asking them about issues that people often feel are "sensitive," "controversial," or taboo for the foreign language classroom. Is it all right to talk about some topics in class but not others? Why? Who decides such things? Where/How do we learn what is "OK" to talk about and what isn't? If we were with people whose background/experience/culture allows them to discuss such issues, how would we feel? How would we react? Would we also be able to participate in the discussion? How could we do that? What tools (vocabulary/conversation management techniques/structures) would we use? Just how well-informed are we on such issues?

Cynthia Nelson's seminar was thought-provoking for me. It gave me one more idea as to how we can help those teachers who are reluctant to use more sensitive issues in the classroom to understand that they do not have to take a stand on any issue, but to use it as an authentic text (coming from the students themselves) that can be analyzed discursively.

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