

GALE Newsletter Spring 2007

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



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Editor's Comments

I'm happy in conjunction with Louise, to bring you the Spring 2007 Gale Newsletter, starting with a greeting from our co-ordinator, Salem. Our presentations at JALT were well attended and in this issue we have Kathy Riley's write-up of her presentation topic, which includes a discussion of unintended teacher prejudice as it may operate in the classroom.

In her article, Jane Joritz-Nakagawa explains the position, passion and workings of some contemporary women poets. We also have reproduced in this issue, the words of the rhythmical, chanted and danced poem about AIDS by the South African Penina Nafuye. If you attended JALT in November, you may remember this poem presented by Bonny Norton on screen as a demonstration of how English can be taught and used to encompass learner identity.

Andrea Simon-Maeda and Robert Mochain, bring us back valuable information from the 4th International Gender And Language Association conference. For those of you interested in knowing more, you may be able to order IGALA publications from the web. It took me quite a few follow up emails but I managed to order back issues of conference proceedings, which I found included some valuable research on subjects specific to Japanese sociolinguistic contexts.

In our last article, Ayano Fukui, explains her feelings about English as her second language, learnt as an academic subject and produced within Japanese borders. She reflects upon the personal gender implications of her English use. She says, I think, that she feels her Japanese voice does not differ in English, at least these days.

Actually, how Japanese users of English feel about language use and gender, is almost a reversal of my presentation topic at JALT which was “Resistance and Adaptation to the Japanese Language by Women Married to Japanese Men”. Immersion in second culture communities can have huge implications for how we enact gender and identity in general and it is clear that new voices can emerge with the new language (Baez, B., 2002; Besemeres, M., 1998; Kanno, Y., 2000; Kinginger, C., 2001; Pavlenko, A. 1998,2001, etc). So immersion is indeed different from learning the language in an academic context as Ms. Fukui ambivalently proposes.

I agree with Ms. Fukui that a second language is a tool for intellectual expression, which can free us from cultural binds, so that, as she says, staying “in-between” languages can help us express ideas in more “elaborate” ways. I think a second language also gives us an opportunity to experience the gender differently. So here’s to lots of dialogue in that in-between space! I hope you enjoy this issue.

Joanna

Message from the Coordinator

At the JALT National Conference in Kita-Kyushu last November I became the new coordinator of GALE. It has been a very exciting few months since then with events being planned, new ideas being introduced and lots of ideas being discussed.

Andrea Maeda gets full kudos for spearheading the organization of the coming October event with renowned language and gender researcher Janet Holmes. Several GALE members are involved with the planning of this event as well as the Osaka Chapter of JALT, the Pragmatics SIG, and the GILE SIG offering their support and help with making the event a success.

My experience with using a popular online course management system (CMS) called Moodle inspired me to suggest it for GALE and thanks to Paul Arenson’s generous gift of space on his web host server, it quickly came to fruition. Although GALE has been successfully using two separate Yahoo group lists for communication, one for general membership and the other for executive officers, I thought Moodle would further enhance the GALE ‘community’ and be a perfect online place to centralize and more easily organize all communication and resources. However, as a new Executive Member I didn’t want to ‘rock the GALE boat’ too much too soon. Thus at the AGM in Kita-Kyushu I discussed using the Moodle for GALE and all executive members present at that meeting were enthusiastic about the possibilities that Moodle

offered to our SIG and supported the usage. Of course, innovation and change, especially involving technology, often takes time for many people to get used to. Even though all members are registered in the Moodle, not all have actually accessed the site to date. All members do receive general news and information postings from the Moodle site and are encouraged to log on and take a look. Those who have in most cases are very enthusiastic. Come visit the Moodle GALE environment! Contact one of the officers for information on passwords. If you have any problems just send me an email salemhicks2@yahoo.com.

Some of the ways Moodle can enhance our SIG:

- ✓ Moodle is a private space for GALE SIG members to discuss issues, ideas and share resources
- ✓ All communication between members, as well as the executive members is accessible to all members. In this way, the organization and proceedings of our SIG is more transparent.
- ✓ GALE's history/herstory can be located and stored in one central place.
- ✓ Separate discussion forums can/have been established for different topics. In this way, members can choose whether to join certain discussions or not or whether to receive postings to their home email accounts.
- ✓ Any member at any time can access all discussions on any forum when they log on to the Moodle.
- ✓ Members can upload pictures of themselves and create profiles. In this way, our community becomes more personal especially since we are living all over Japan.

GALE is a member driven organization and thus how active and dynamic it is relies on the participation of its members. Unfortunately, at this time our membership is a little low, not because of lack of general interest in gender issues I believe, but more because our SIG has been recently inactive. This we have the power to change. I encourage all our members to become more involved in GALE, may that be start a discussion on a gender related issue in one of the forums; upload an attachment of your favourite gender teaching resource to the Teaching Resources Forum; contribute to the organizing of the Janet Holmes event; suggest an idea for another event; or join the executive members discussion and make suggestions on how to improve our SIG. More outreach from GALE is necessary into JALT with other Chapters and SIGs, into the Japanese community interested in gender issues, and into the global arena.

I have been teaching gender issues in the classroom for years and have been part of many gender related organizations. I strongly believe in the necessity of the GALE SIG in the JALT organization and I was overwhelmed by how much support and interest many JALT members showed at this past Executive Board Meeting that I attended in February. I am very confident that our present board Executive Members will do our best to continue to make GALE a dynamic SIG. This is proving to be an interesting and exciting year in GALE.

Salem Hicks 2007



GALE Forum Report

by Kathy Riley

I thought I had my presentation topic set: I wanted to start discussion about what how gender research impacts what we actually do in our classes. I'm still wondering about that—the connections between the discourse of gender studies and what happens in our classrooms. But a few weeks before my participation in the GALE forum in Kitakyushu (November, 2006), I discovered a book—one that continues to fascinate me.¹ My topic shifted, and drew me into a different aspect of my original question.

The book is called *Blink*², written by Malcolm Gladwell, a writer for The New Yorker magazine. Gladwell asks us to consider the power of “rapid cognition”—the ability we all have to make quick judgments on very little information. It's a powerful, positive ability that has helped our species to survive but has also tripped us up; rooted in our “adaptive unconscious” (not intuition—more like a kind of computer inside the brain), it draws on all of our experiences—including our stereotypes and prejudices.

The question I had—and still have—is how this rapid cognition (which some might call “our instincts”) relates to our treatment of our students—the gendered beings who enter our classrooms. On a conscious level, we may say, “gender had nothing to do with my evaluation of that student.” But the research cited in *Blink* cautions us, “How can we be so sure?” Gladwell argues that our attitudes toward race and gender, among other things, are formed on two levels. First, there's what we believe consciously. (All students are equal and of course I treat them equally). And then there's this other level—the unconscious, automatic associations and judgments that affect how we actually relate to the boy or girl in front of us. These two are often not the same.

In addition to being a cautionary tale, *Blink* uses a lot of ink convincing us of the power and accuracy of so-called snap judgments. Early in the book (p. 13), Gladwell asks us to consider how long it took us, as college students, to decide how good our new teachers were likely to be. Then he notes an experiment in which students were given three ten-second videotapes of a teacher, with the sound turned off; they were then asked to rate the teacher's effectiveness. Their snap judgments (a process Gladwell calls “thin-slicing”) correlated very strongly with the actual evaluations made by students after a semester of study.

Gladwell's thesis is that we can learn when to distrust our instincts and when and how to rely on them. This well-documented book, which the author calls “an intellectual adventure”, is a popular version of what multidisciplinary research should be. Rooted in psychology, it spans a wide variety of topics, ranging from the discovery of art fakes, tennis moves, race and gender discrimination in the used car business, the election of attractive but incompetent politicians (“the Warren Harding error”), speed dating, the hiring of women in professional orchestras, hospital procedures for identifying likely heart attack victims, the marketing of Coke and Pepsi, and the shootings of unarmed men by police in New York City. In all cases, Gladwell focuses on what he calls “thin-slicing”, the ability of our adaptive unconscious to figure out patterns based on very little information.

¹ I've since reread it and am an avid follower of the author's blog. The author's website is www.gladwell.com.

² Gladwell, M. (2005). *Blink*. New York: Little Brown and Company.

Although the cases discussed are all memorable, two stories left me thinking long after I had finished the book. One is about Bob Golomb, sales director of the Nissan dealership in Flemington, New Jersey. He's an extremely successful car salesman. For him, caring for a customer means, among other things, good follow-up and always putting on a "best face". More to the point, he also has one clear rule: he never judges anyone by appearance, always assuming that every customer is equally likely to buy a car. "Prejudging is the kiss of death. You have to give everyone your best shot", Golomb says. (P. 94)

Of course, on a conscious level, I agree. (Who could not?). But if I acknowledge the power of the unconscious, I know that all sorts of associations are operating when I "thin-slice" a class, especially at the beginning of the year. If I thin-slice someone as "probably a good student", how much does that belief then shape what actually happens? On the other hand, if I unconsciously dismiss someone's ability or motivation--possibly because of her way of dressing or his poor handwriting--how does that attitude shape what actually happens.³

The other story begins with a word matching test, which I asked the participants at the GALE forum to take. Please try it yourself. Find the word in each line that doesn't fit.

1. him was worried she always
2. from are Florida oranges temperature
3. ball the throw toss silently
4. shoes give replace old the
5. he observes occasionally people watches
6. be will sweat lonely they
7. sky seamless gray is
8. should now withdraw forgetful we
9. us bingo sing play let
10. sunlight makes temperature wrinkle raisins

Okay, I tricked you. This test really isn't designed to measure your linguistic ability. Rather, it uses a strategy called "priming" to affect your behavior. If this had been a test situation, before which you walked down a long hall to get to the test room, you would have been observed moving more slowly when you walked it afterwards. Gladwell notes that in this test you were "primed" unconsciously to think of old age; notice the negative words relating to old age. Other examples of priming have been reported in the media; for example, some experiments have shown that asking students to identify their race or gender before a test can influence the results—with those belonging to the least socially powerful category doing less well.

The evidence (tentative or incomplete as it may be) around priming suggests that the topics, words and images that we give students may have effects that we have never imagined. For me, reading *Blink* was a little like putting on glasses allowing me to see the infrared rays around me. Yes, they've been there all along, haven't they?

³ . This idea is not new in language teaching. We've probably all heard of the famous experiment in the U.S. some years ago (sorry, I don't have the citation) in which teachers were told that a particular class was composed of high-achieving students and another was composed of low-achievers. Later results matched the teachers' expectations.

Although discussion time was limited at the GALE forum, for you, my readers, the discussion in your minds can continue indefinitely. Buy a copy of *Blink* and read it. If you'd like to discuss it in this group, we can do so on the Moodle.



IGALA 4th International Conference Report

By Robert Mochain and Andrea Simon-Maeda

Robert Mochain and Andrea Simon-Maeda recently participated in the International Gender and Language Association's (IGALA) fourth international conference in Valencia, Spain. Following a brief introduction to the organization, the authors provide extended reports of their own presentations and then short summaries of some of the presentations they attended.

Begun at Berkeley in 1999, "IGALA is an international interdisciplinary organization that is committed to the promotion and support of research on language, gender, and sexuality" <<http://www.stanford.edu/group/igala/>>. They hold biennial conferences, and the 2010 conference is scheduled to be held in Japan, something that is good news for GALE and other Japan-based teachers/researchers of gender and language issues. Some of the organization's more well-known luminaries include Penelope Eckert, Deborah Cameron, and Janet Holmes. Proceedings of past conferences have been compiled in volumes that can be ordered from the website. Their new journal, *Gender and Language*, promises to be an exciting scholarly publication at the forefront of gender and language studies. What I (Andrea) enjoy most about this organization is how, despite the variety of perspectives on gender and sexuality that its members hold, there is a common goal of exploring more liberatory ways of researching and understanding our sexual lives.

The theme of my (Robert's) presentation, was "Exploring gender and sexuality issues in an EFL college classroom in Japan." I spoke about issues I raised in O'Mochain (2006). I explained about my teaching situation a few years ago in a private, Christian, women's college where I was unsure of how to initiate discussion of gender and sexuality topics. I had considered Barbara Summerhawk's (1998) idea of bringing in guest speakers but I felt a little uneasy about seeking the relevant permissions. More than one work colleague had warned me that they believed my contract renewal in the college might be in danger if my "gayness" or "gay agenda" were "uncovered." The evangelical maxim etched in stone on the front gates of

the college “The truth shall set you free” in my case seemed to mean being set free of a job! I also knew from past experience that many Japanese students feel uncomfortable about addressing issues of sexuality in a formal situation like the classroom. It was also necessary, I believed, to adopt a pedagogical strategy that would allow for some focus on form, on language itself so that students felt the benefit of specific language learning activities.

I decided that I could use life-history narratives from my in-depth interviews with teachers and students for my doctoral thesis. We would read over an interview with for example a young, Japanese lesbian-identifying woman who detailed the sense of isolation she had felt during her adolescence and her deeper sense of well-being after embracing her own sexuality. The life history interview transcript from a Japanese middle-aged high-school teacher who identifies as gay also provided examples of isolation and discrimination which could be avoided in less homophobic social circumstances.

I taped our discussions about these interviews and then used transcripts of classroom discussions to further explore issues involved. This also gave students a chance to think about issues, further clarify their meanings and raise new issues, and to recycle language in a way that should have promoted language acquisition. At the end of the discussion cycle, we had a focus on form and on pragmatics, examining how communication worked or broke down during the interview we had seen. I received positive feedback from the students involved in this type of narrative pedagogy.

In my presentation, I provided five main reasons why I thought this was an effective teaching strategy.: (a) it takes account of surrounding sociocultural conditions in Japan and focuses on queer lives that are local for both interviewees and language learners; (b) it can be adopted for use in learning contexts that have traditionally been averse to issues surrounding sexuality; (c) it affirms the identities and rights of queer-identifying individuals in the face of masculinist ideologies ; (d) it avoids reinforcing sexual identity stereotypes; (e) it harmonizes with principles of effective language teaching and provides valuable data for language analysis.

The classroom discussions in question seemed to indicate that using local queer narratives as teaching material may prove an effective way of exploring issues of sexuality, gender, and language, especially within institutional or regional contexts in which open discussion of sexuality may seem challenging or unfamiliar.

I also provided a section from a classroom discussion transcript which seemed a good example of how a queer story could emerge from discussion in a way that came from students themselves rather than from the teacher. In this extract, Rieko speaks about her former

classmate whose experience shows the error of viewing Japanese society as homophobic in a simplistic or homogenous way.

Robert: I wonder did any of you know of classmates who were bullied like Kaito was? Say in elementary or high-school?

Reiko: When I was an elementary school student next to my class there was a boy who was gay.

Robert: In elementary school?

Reiko: Yeah. And his best friends were girls. But he had really cute face. Guys liked him and girls liked him. He was kind of pop, very popular student.

Robert: What age do you remember him like that in school?

Reiko: Ten.

Robert: Did the atmosphere stay like that when he went to high school?

Reiko: I think he went to a boys high school. My friend told me he had boyfriends. He was very popular. Maybe boys liked him.

Maki: As a friend?

Reiko: Not as a friend. Boyfriend. And serious relationship

Robert: Yeah. That's surprising. And you said he had a cute face. Is that a big factor in being liked?

Reiko: I think so. But not just face. His character is friendly and he likes to talk with boys and girls. He never spoke ill of somebody. Very warm atmosphere. Still now I heard he have surgeon of penis. Took it off.

Robert: A gender re-assignment operation?

Reiko: Yes. We live very close area. People around this area know that. And I think they don't have any shocking feeling. They encourage. A very good atmosphere.

Regarding other presentations at the IGALA conference, I would say that most of them were of interest from a linguistic/sociolinguistic perspective, rather than from a pedagogical point of view. I noticed that quite a few speakers cited Judith Butler's work in their theoretical sections. I think it's very positive that Butler's work has gained this kind of prominence among applied linguists, but sometimes familiarity with Butler's work seems rather superficial. One speaker spoke of Butler's theory of performativity in such a way that it almost gave the impression that Butler was a linguist who dedicated herself to reworking Austin's theory of speech performatives. Other speakers seemed to read Butler and note resonances with Foucault only. In fact, Butler is a philosopher with many more resonances in Hegelian conceptual systems. She also has relied on the psychoanalytic work of Jean Laplanche to

develop her own vocabulary. Yet most speakers at the conferences we attend often reduce Butler's work to that of radical social determinism. Perhaps they should re-read her 1993 work "Bodies that Matter" and take note of the fact that performativity refers to repetitions on the level of the psyche. This is why the citations we perform in sociocultural contexts have such a powerful effect. As one commentator put it, performances are done by a subject; performativity brings the subject into existence.

However, one presentation I attended at the conference that did seem to have an appreciation of the complexities of Judith Butler's work was by Surinderpal Kaur of Lancaster University who titled her presentation, " 'Men are built for combat, women are not!' : An analysis of argumentative discourse about women soldiers in online discussion forums." Kaur analyzed texts from U.S. military website discussion forums and the assorted discursive strategies that are used to subject position women soldiers as inferior to their male counterparts. She used Butler's performativity theory and van Dijk's work on critical discourse analysis as analytical frameworks to interpret discussion texts. However, she noted that she sometimes experiences a strong tension between the two frameworks and her work, in some ways, is an attempt to harmonize both perspectives.

This has helped her to find similarities in both approaches, such as in seeing Butler's understanding of "citation," and van Dijk's work on "knowledge scripts" as "pretty much the same thing." It was more difficult to harmonize more rationalistic elements of van Dijk's work, Kaur explained. He speaks of cognition as the place where ideology and discourse come together.

After the presentation, I had a chance to converse with Kaur and I suggested that an effort to harmonize with Butler's perspective might focus on "psyche" as the place where ideology and discourse co-exist, rather than "cognition." The repetitions Butler speaks of as bringing the gendered subject into existence performatively are repetitions on the level of the psyche, so this seems to resonate with a Butlerian analysis.

Kaur agreed that such a revision might work for her doctoral dissertation text and she took note of it. Of course, I shall have to read her thesis to find out if she actually liked my idea! For those who are interested on my Butlerian musings above please refer to the 2006, December edition of the *Language Teacher* as this contains my report of Butler's lecture at Ochanomizu university last January.

If you would like more details about the pedagogical strategy I spoke about at the conference, please refer to the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* which provided a special issue this year (2006) on language and sexuality issues. Cynthia Nelson, whom you may

remember for her workshops on gender and sexuality in language education March last year in Tokyo and Osaka, was the guest editor for that issue. Many GALE people gave Cynthia a warm reception when she visited.

Another example of the use of the Internet as a source of research data was the presentation by Helen Staunton of the University of Birmingham in England. Staunton spoke about “An appraisal analysis of gender and sexuality in an electronic corpus of coming out narratives.” The website in question – <http://www.comingoutstories.com> – contains thousands of narratives by queer people from all around the world detailing the circumstances of their disclosure of sexual identity to family and friends. Staunton used a complex appraisal system to organize data analysis, focusing on appreciation, judgment, and behavior. She found a high level of essentialistic notions of gendered and sexual identities in the coming out narratives. This is something we need to be aware of, Staunton argued, and she paraphrased Bucholtz and Hall (2004) to say that social actors use an ideology of gender essentialism to organize and understand identities itself, so that we cannot simply ignore that ideology or pretend it has no relevance to our understanding of all social subjects.

I appreciated the fact that Staunton attended my own presentation and then later e-mailed me to say that she found my talk interesting, especially as she had also experienced similar difficulties dealing with homophobic norms in her own educational institution. This experience probably has a growing relevance for many educators around the world, as the power of fundamentalist discourses seem to be on the rise in many sociocultural contexts (cf. Figlio, 2006).

A final conference presentation of note was “Consuming the community: The discourse of gay and lesbian conservatives” by Veronika Koller of Lancaster University. Koller also made use of Internet websites, examining blogs and websites of lesbian and gay people who are members of the Republican party in the United States, and of other politically conservative institutions. She also conducted interviews with gay conservatives, finding out that their discourse often reduces the notion of “community” to one of friendship with individuals. The notion of any sort of empowerment through a sense of community with other who have experienced similar types of stigmatization is absent.

Koller argued that in such a case, all that is left are scattered individuals who anchor their identity in what they buy rather than in what they feel with and for others. Conservative gays and lesbians are, then, “the logical extension of consumer capitalism.”

I think Koller made a strong case. It should be remembered though that her words can also be applied to many other queer people, which is not so surprising, as we live in a globalized

society that is itself the logical extension of consumer capitalism. Think of the popular television show “Queer eye for the straight guy.” Often amusing, sometimes informative. But isn’t the queer eye lifestyle also a “logical extension of consumer capitalism?” If one’s wardrobe, accessories, and furniture constantly adhere by the maxim “Out with the old and in with the new,” then a future of chronic over-consumption, with all its consequent ecological pitfalls, seems inevitable.

Returning to Koller for a moment, she emphasized the negative dimensions of an individualistic focus where consumption becomes paramount. Once we use up goods, they no longer exist and any sense of solidarity is as ephemeral as the goods that are soon “obliterated.” If Koller is right in saying that consumption means obliteration (of community), then it is more than conservative gays and lesbians who constitute one of the many present-day logical extensions of consumer capitalism. My final thought, then, following on from Koller’s presentation, is that we need to be more aware of the potential implications of cutting bonds of solidarity and adopting lifestyles of hyper-consumption. Implications for queer communities and implications for a planet facing a tremendous range of environmental disasters. Consumption does mean obliteration, in more ways than one.

As for my own (Andrea’s) presentation, “Bigger is better: Masculinist and consumerist discourses in Viagra advertisements,” I followed a critical discourse analytical approach to show how a universal standard for male performance framed by heterosexual desire is discursively fashioned and exploited for marketing purposes. I explained to the attendees, by presenting examples of internet advertisements for vasoactive agents and sexual enhancement formulas, how the sexual pharmacology industry depends on marketing strategies for products like Viagra and Cialis that highlight prevalent notions of heterosexual relationships wherein effective hydraulic performance of the “power tool” is conflated with ideas of “authentic” masculinity.

In addition to provocative images and vocabulary, advertisers appeal to the implied sexual needs and expectations of “consumption communities” through the use of particular discursive features that create a simulated sense of solidarity with the reader of the text (“I’ve been there and trust me, I empathize with you”). Overwording and the use of biometaphors (“throbbing member,” “torpedo”) and (hetero)sexist depictions of function/dysfunction (“Can’t perform in bed?”) problematize aspects of male biology that can be repaired or enhanced with medications offered to the consumer in “the friendly voice” of advertisements.

Although sexist depictions of women continue to predominate advertisements and the objectification of bodies operates in gay and lesbian communities as well, a considerable investment is now being made by advertisers in the appropriation of male bodies and masculinity for the sake of contemporary capitalist enterprises intent on promulgating the slogan “bigger is better” among consumer and heterosexual cultures.

One comment after my presentation from a male participant from Iraq was interesting in that he said that in his country Viagra and sexual practices were taboo topics, and that women, especially, would never discuss such a topic in public. However, an Algerian woman approached me later, and after thanking me for an interesting presentation, commented that sexuality is indeed discussed by women in Arab cultures, and that cloaking this topic in a veil of mystery only serves to hinder, rather than advance, women’s equality in matters concerning sexuality.

For me personally, perhaps the most memorable event of the conference was the opening plenary by Janet Holmes, who is a renowned feminist sociolinguist from New Zealand. In 1995, I had attended Janet’s workshop at TUJ (Temple University Japan) in which she presented theories and implications of gendered linguistic asymmetries in society as a whole and in ESL/EFL in particular.

This workshop was an inspiration for me and led to my continuing interest in gender and language studies. Janet’s IGALA plenary address focused on where the field of gender and language studies has been and where we are now. It seems that a postmodernist interpretation of gendered discrepancies that takes into full account the intersections of class, gender, race, ableism, and so forth when interpreting sexism, may in effect, be doing a disservice to critical feminists’ goals of eliminating sexism. That is to say, a multiple realities, everything-is-relevant perspective may detract from the primary source of sexist practices in society – power differentials in various sectors of society based primarily on one’s being male or female.

To demonstrate how sexism is still rampant in, for example, the workplace Janet presented some discourse samples of business meetings wherein women, although in managerial positions, still mitigated their speech or deferred to men present at the meeting through different discursive devices. Collaborative talk, often described as a characteristic linguistic feature of female speech, is often not acknowledged or used by men in male/female interactions and thus women resort to what they perceive to be “manly” talk. This, however, is a linguistic concession that, in the long run, does not resolve gendered imbalances in the workplace.

Because many of the presentations were conducted in the local languages (a recent practice of international conferences held in non-English dominant countries), Spanish and Catalan, my choice of which presentations to attend was made easier since my high school Spanish proficiency is almost non-existent. However, there were still many stimulating topics to choose from, and my selection criteria and attention span were ultimately based on my jet lag fatigue level.

Masami Saito, from Ochanomizu's Gender Research Center, gave an interesting talk entitled, "Body politics through the media: Japan's first female voters with babies on their backs." She spoke about the role of the media concerning Japanese women's getting the right to vote during the U.S. occupation.

Although newspapers at the time printed photos of women with babies on their backs casting their ballots at the voting station, something which would appear to be a progressive reform for women, Saito explained that the main purpose of this media reporting was to support the U.S. military's strategy to de-militarize Japan by instituting a democratic, as opposed to an imperialistic, government. In effect, the media gave only superficial attention to the situation of women, who in reality continued to remain in subordinate positions in and outside of the home, although they had gained the right to vote. Saito proposed that we need to critically investigate the media's hegemonic control over images and textual material that reinforce social inequities between men and women.

Another interesting presentation was by Ingrid Piller, "Sexing multilingualism: the semiotics of the sex industry in Switzerland." Using the situation in Switzerland as an example, Piller showed the attendees some samples of sex shop and night club signs, escort agency advertisements, and blogs by customers of prostitutes that together illustrate the ways that multilingualism works to eroticize the sex industry.

English is used in much of the textual material and thus could be seen as being part of the eroticization process. Piller explained that in Switzerland many of the sex workers are monolingual migrants from non-English speaking places in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia, and yet the advertisements (mis)represent the workers' multilingual language skills as an enticement for the international customer.

Another aspect of the textual material is how the stereotype of Switzerland as being a clean and safe country is reinforced in advertisements for the local sex industry claiming that customers need not worry about catching a 'nasty' disease from the prostitutes. I offered a comment to the presenter that there were commonalities with the sex industry in Japan where many migrants from Southeast Asian countries are employed. In Japan, English or *katakana*

have become part of the eroticization process of foreign women's bodies that are being exploited for the global sex trade among developed and developing countries.

In addition to the many fine presentations, the poster sessions were also very interesting. I had a chance to listen to Yuji Kitajima talk about his work on translating Japanese gay manga (*Gunji*, by Tagame Engoroh) into French. It seems that one of Yuji's challenges was finding the approximate French translation for the many sexual onomatopes (*slurp, slurp*) in the manga. What left the biggest impression on me, however, was Yuji's deliberately changing the original (very young) age of the boy who appears in the Japanese manga to a slightly older age in the translation because of his strong opposition to the pornographic exploitation of young children.

There were conference attendees from 32 different countries, and we had the wonderful opportunity to interact with some of these gender and language scholars. We were also able to relax with delicious sangria at night and Valencian orange juice in the morning! The IGALA organization plans to publish a collection of contributions to the conference, and this information will be posted to the GALE list when it is available. In the meantime, here is the link for the book of conference abstracts: es.geocities.com/igala4/Book_of_Abstracts.pdf

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Honoring diverse voices: gender and the literary avant-garde by Jane Joritz-Nakagawa

Jane is a former coordinator and publicity chair of GALE, a frequent contributor/contributing editor to the GALE newsletter, and the coordinator of the GALE-supported EFL textbook Gender Issues Today. She is also a widely published poet whose first poetry collection was published by Avant Books (Tokyo) in 2006, and an associate professor at Aichi University of Education. A second poetry collection will be available in summer, 2007. Email is welcome at <janenakagawa@yahoo.com>.

Honoring diverse voices: gender and the literary avant-garde

Numerous female-led and female-only writing forums exist in Japan and abroad.

Literary journals edited by women include Japan's English language journal Yomimono edited by Suzanne Kamata (<http://yomimonomagazine.blogspot.com/>); Tinfish, edited by Susan Schultz of the University of Hawaii (www.tinfishpress.com); Factorial, edited by Sawako Nakayasu (<http://www.factorial.org/journal.htm>); Aufgabe (<http://www.litmuspress.org/pages/aufgabe.htm>) and many others.

Journals which exclusively publish female-authored literary works include the online journals How2 (<http://www.asu.edu/pipercenter/how2journal/>) and Her Circle (<http://www.hercircleezine.com/>). Print literary journals which publish female authored works or feminist works exclusively include So to Speak (<http://www.gmu.edu/org/sts/>), Calyx (<http://www.proaxis.com/~calyx/>) and Kalliope (<http://opencampus.fccj.org/kalliope/index.html>), among others.

Reading series organized by females include Four Stories (www.fourstories.org), held both in Japan and the USA. In October 2007 will be the first annual Japan Writers Conference, the current staff of which is comprised of four women including myself (visit <http://www.viversimples.ezhoster.com/writerconference.html>). As of late December, 2007 however conference proposals submitted by males well-outnumbered those submitted by women, although I was able to rectify the imbalance by inviting women whose proposals had been accepted to do a second session and to refer highly qualified women writers who had not submitted proposals to the organizers for review.

Is there a need for women only and/or female led writing spaces and forums? In the past few days I have been looking for textbooks to use for a course I will teach from April this year which will comprise an introduction to American poetry for 3rd year undergraduates (most of whom will be female). One of the first and better ones I found under the title "America shi nyumon" (introduction to American poetry) includes only 6 female poets (24 males). Another book I looked at, the title of which in English would be "Famous American poems" has a much tinier proportion of female to male American poets. Not long ago I ordered some poetry audio CD from Small Press Distribution (spd.com). One CD titled American Text Sound Pieces has performances from the mid 1960s til the early 70s. Only one of the 13 pieces is a work created/performed by a female poet. Another CD which arrived, titled Snake Hiss: A Transcendental Friend Audio Project, from 1999, shows some progress as nearly half of the poets/performers are female. Yet when putting together of list of journal editors names' to acknowledge in my poetry book (Nakagawa, 2006) -- for selecting the book's poems for their

literary journals -- I noticed that the ratio of female to male journal editors was 3 females to 9 males. A recently received book I ordered from amazon.com called Poetry Speaks that I planned to use in the aforementioned course includes only 12 female poets among 42 poets total.

Although I read widely, a chief literary interest of mine is stylistically innovative poetry written by women, the kind of poetry usually referred to in literary circles as either post-modern, experimental, avant-garde and/or language-based (not that these terms are synonymous; they are not). Wright (2006) explained that post-modern literature "... breaks traditional frames of genre, structure and stylistic unity... and other forms of artificially imposed order" (p. 18).

Recent books devoted to stylistically innovative women's poetry include Rankine and Spahr (2002), Mark and Rees-Jones (2000), Frost and Hogue (2006), Frost (2003), Simpson (2000) and Kinnahan (2004). Major female poet Lyn Hejinian, quoted in Rankine and Spahr (2002, p. 284) describes innovative poetry as that which:

...invites participation, rejects the authority of the writer over the reader and thus, by analogy, the authority implicit in other (social, economic, cultural) hierarchies... often emphasizes or foregrounds process...and thus resists the cultural tendencies that seek to identify and fix material, turn it into a product.

Innovative poetry by women though abundant has not been without its critics. As noted in Kinnahan (2004) for example, in the early 1960s poet James Dickey dismissed (the now widely acclaimed late) poet Barbara Guest's work as "incoherent, irresponsible, and capricious" (p. 49) and complained about poets who

....expect the reader to work devotedly for them to solve conundrums, to supply transitions, to make, out of a haphazard assortment of building materials, a habitable dwelling....They will be satisfied with fragments of thoughts, melanges of images...(Dickey, in Kinnahan, p. 49)

As Kinnahan notes, the above describes rather well characteristics of language-oriented poetry which has risen to prominence in more recent literary history, currently a major genre of poetry somewhat dominated by female poets such as Rosmarie Waldrop and Susan Howe (among many others). Yet according to Megan Simpson (2000),

...language oriented poetry by women has been doubly marginalized, avoided by most university and large publishers as well as women's presses and magazines (p. x).

The female led and authored print journal HOW(ever) was launched in the early 1980s as an attempt to create and foster dialogue among a female, feminist avant garde literary community. In the 1990s it morphed into the web journal known as HOW2, which has been described as "an archival space" that can 'disturb, disperse, and distribute' the power of knowledge production and control" (Kinnahan, 2004, p. 39). Although in the 1990s writing by women had, by then, gained wider attention, Meredith Stricker asserted that a women-only space was still needed: "What happens if increasingly diverse work by women is available, but no one can find it? (in Kinnahan, 2004. p. 39).

Many of the poets published by journals such as HOW2 are stylistically associated with language poetry, a trend which arose on the west coast in the 1970s and is associated mostly with male poets such as Charles Bernstein. (Although a majority of the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poets were male, not all were.) Yet many have pointed out that language-oriented poetry has stylistic roots in works that well preceded the 1970s; Gertrude Stein's 1914 work, *Tender Buttons*, is one frequently mentioned in this regard.

Hoover (1994) notes:

Implicit in the language poets' break with traditional modes such as narrative, with its emphasis on linearity and closure, is a challenge to the male-dominant hierarchy (p. xxxiv).

Yet one of the criticisms of language poetry is that it is inaccessible, overly academic and/or that it places too many demands on the reader, ala James Dickey's comment above.

Interviewer Lynn Keller posed the following question to Susan Howe:

People objecting to experimental writing sometimes complain that whatever claims are made for its social engagement or Marxist perspective or its changing "hegemonic structures of consciousness," that, in fact, the audience it reaches is a very narrow, highly educated one, that the reader has to have tremendous intellectual confidence to even grapple with these texts. What do you think? Does that concern you?

Howe replied:

No. The objection offends me. I think it is part of a really frightening anti-intellectualism in our culture. Why should things please a large audience? And isn't claiming that the work is too intellectually demanding also saying a majority of people are stupid?

(in Frost and Hogue, 2006 p. 166)

The 4th edition of *A handbook to literature*, by C. Hugh Holman, defined a "lyric" as

A brief subjective poem strongly marked by imagination, melody, and emotion, and creating for the reader a single, unified impression.

Although lyric poetry is defined variously, many works blur distinctions between accepted (or contested!) categories and many poets attempt to work in or blend together a number of styles and genres over a career or even in a single work- critics refer to subverted lyric, a late lyric, etc. --one way of understanding experimental poetry is that the latter may not tend to aim at a single, unified impression (of anything) but rather invite a multiplicity of readings.

Harryette Mullen describes her work “Muse and Drudge” as:

...not really a complete thought about anything. It is very much a book of echoes. Some of the fragments rhyme and some don't, and that is basically the principle of the book--the recycling of fragments of language.

(in Frost and Hogue, 2006, p. 194)

An excerpt from this work:

double dutch darky
take kisses back to Africa
they dipped you in a vat
at the wacky chocolate factory

color we've got in spades
melanin gives perpetual shade
though rhythm's no answer to cancer
pancakes pale and butter can get rancid

go on sister sing your song
lady redbone senora rubia
took all day long
shampooing her nubia

she gets to the getting place
without or with him
must I holler when
you're giving me rhythm

members don't get weary
add some practice to your theory
she wants to know is it a men thing
or a him thing

wishing him luck
she gave him lemons to suck
told him please dear
improve your embouchure

(excerpt from Mullen's “Muse and Drudge”
in Frost and Hogue, 2006, p. 213)

Mullen's work has been described variously and appears to contain elements both of lyric poetry and language-based work.

Mullen's poem "Sleeping with the Dictionary" may provide an additional example (excerpted below):

I beg to dicker with my silver-tongued companion, whose lips
are ready to read my shining gloss. A versatile partner, conver-
sant and well-versed in the verbal art, the dictionary is not
averse to the solitary habits of the curiously wide-awake reader.
In the dark night's insomnia, the book is a stimulating sedative,
awakening my tired imagination to the hypnagogic trance of
language.....

.....To go through all these motions and proce-
dures, groping in the dark for an alluring word, is the poet's
nocturnal mission.....

...

.....
Beside the bed, a pad lies open to record the meandering of
migratory words. In the rapid eye movement of the poet's night
vision, this dictum can be decoded, like the secret acrostic of a
lover's name.

(Mullen, 2002; reprinted in Poetry Kanto 21, 2005)

Hoover (1994) comments:

Language poets see lyricism in poetry not as a means
of expressing emotion but rather in its original context
as the musical use of words. Rather than employ
language as a transparent window onto experience,
the language poet pays attention to the material nature
of words. Because it is fragmentary and discontinuous,
language poetry may appear at first to be automatic writing;
however, it is often heavily reworked to achieve the proper
relation of materials (pp. xxxv-xxxvi).

Poet / critic / teacher Susan Schultz writes:

.....I want
To propose that avant-garde writing, with its focus
On the reader as coproducer of meaning, uses a method
One might call "readers block," whereby the reader's desire
To be "absorbed" into a text is deflected (artificially,
According to [major language poet] Charles Bernstein in his "Artifice
of Absorption")

By means of writing that is "anti-absorptive." It's as if the expected
Sponge were really a ball bearing, except it's a ball bearing
That lends itself to analysis, to critique, to addition rather than
The subtractions that "reading" often presumes in the classroom,
Where "deep meaning" is shorthand for "and the answer is!"
Poetry reduced to the status of game show, with teacher
As host, students at their buttons, and everyone pretending
To have good fun. Thus is "meaning" assumed to involve

“Winning,” either good grades or vacations in tropical places....
(Read “tropic” not in its “trop(e)-ical” sense but literally), where
The avant-garde poet asks the reader to eschew this economic
Model of reading for what Juliana Spahr terms an “anarchic”
Process or which [poet] Ron Silliman describes as “torque,” where
Meaning becomes an activity, free but controlled play if you will,
Inscribed into the political realm, where communities of readers
Are assumed to share leftist politics (when Charles Bernstein
Came to Hawai’i in 1993, the flyer emphasized his status
As a left, Marxist thinker, and Silliman’s
Work in Socialist journalism is well known).....

(from Schulz, 2005, p. 2)

However, as Spahr writes:

Lyric is not and never has been a simplistic genre,
despite its seeming innocence. It is only recently,
after modernism, that it has gotten its bad name
for being traditional, for being romantic in the derisive
sense (Rankine and Spahr, p.1).

Yet Spahr also quotes Maria Rosa Menocal, who wrote:

When the world all around is calling for clear
distinctions, loyalties to Self and hatred of others,
and, most of all, belief in the public and legal discourses
of single languages and single states--smooth
narratives -- what greater threat exists than that
voice which rejects such easy orthodoxies with
their readily understood rhetoric and urges,
instead, the most difficult readings, those that
embrace the painfully impossible in the human
heart? (ibid p. 1)

Poet Lyn Hejinian describes her interest in creating within her poems “....a genuinely ‘open’ or
‘generative’ poetic text, a text that ‘relinquishes total control and challenges authority as a
principle and control as a motive’” (in Perloff, 1996, p. 212).

Poet Kathleen Fraser described Barbara Guest’s work as presenting “very exact and abstract
relations, without telling one what to think” (in Frost and Hogue, 2006, p. 359).

When Elisabeth Frost commented that “a lot of people associate with traditional poetry the
pleasure of closure” poet Leslie Scalapino commented:

Writing a form that implies closure in conventional works
that I’ve heard or read—I find that completely stifling.
You feel that you’re trapped and dead. I have a reaction
of real claustrophobia.

(in Frost and Hogue, p. 309)

Luce Irigaray, in *Je, tu, nous: toward a culture of difference* (translated by Alison Martin, published in English in 1993) stated:

Women's entry into the public world, the social relations they have among themselves and with men, have made cultural transformations, and especially linguistic ones, a necessity (Irigaray, 1993, p. 67).

Kinnahan insists that experimental poetry by women

encourages attention to cultural contexts of nation, gender, and race [and] as importantly shifting the terms by which the experimental is produced, understood, and defined...(Kinnahan, 2004, p. xiv)

and [cf the criticism of women's experimental poetry being overly esoteric] states:

. . . women's experimental poetry has often been overlooked as too untheoretically aware or sophisticated.... women's theorizing about poetry – women's insertions into conversations about poetics -- have been dismissed as insufficiently rigorous (Kinnahan, 2004, p. xv).

Luce Irigaray has said:

Being denied the right to speak can have several meanings and take several forms. It can be a conscious effort to ban someone from institutions, or to banish him or her from the polis. Such an action can mean, if only in part: I don't understand what you're doing so I reject it, we reject it (Irigaray, 1993, p. 52).

Simpson (2000) has commented:

Poetry is neither a luxurious entertainment or pastime, nor a wholly subjective self-expression valuable only to the writer; poetry is a mode of knowing and of exploring cultural and ideological processes of knowing (p. x)

While writers such as Simpson (2000) link philosophy and feminism to avant garde poetry by women, and Frost (2003) discusses a "linguistically based feminism" found in avant-garde poetry written by women, Irigaray has said:

There is not a great amount of fluidity between disciplines and styles of writing these days. The many fields of knowledge and techniques have made the boundaries between forms of knowledge more watertight

now than they were in the past. In previous centuries, there was a dialogue between philosophers and scientists. Nowadays, they are often complete strangers to each other because their languages don't enable them to communicate with one another (Irigaray, 1993, p. 55).

Additionally:

For centuries, whatever has been valorized has been masculine in gender, whatever devalorized, feminine (Irigaray, 1993, p. 68).

The rather flip "Poems We Can Understand" written by my former teacher, Paul Hoover (quoted above), ends as follows:

We want poetry we can understand,

the fingerprints on mother's dress,
pain of martyrs, scientists.
Please, no rabbit taking a rabbit
out of a yellow hat, no tattooed back

facing miles of desert, no wind.
We don't understand it.

(Hoover, 1982, p. 54)

Hoover explained that this poem "...marks a period when I was trying to move from a poetry consisting exclusively of imagery—I'd been raised to think that 'essaying' in poetry is unacceptable -- to a poetry of thought and music" (in Lehman, 1996 p. 102).

Maxine Chernoff (see her poem "Breasts" reprinted in GALE Newsletter, Winter, 1993: <http://www.tokyoprogressive.org.uk/gale/newsletters.html>; also of interest may be Chernoff's comments in an issue of the literary journal Chain on the topic of gender and editing, available online at: http://www.temple.edu/chain/1_chernoff.htm), major US poet known especially for her work in what is called prose poetry and co-editor with Paul Hoover of New American Writing (www.newamericanwriting.com), explains that poetry "...can aspire to enlarge experience -- both the author's and the reader's -- rather than to merely mirror it" (Lehman, 1996, p. 27).

The poet Reginald Shepherd has written that for him:

...Poetry is a way of saying, a mode of attendance to words: in that sense, poetry is a verb, not a noun....I would like each of my poems to be an experience for the reader, rather than simply a description of or a commentary on experience. 'Meaning' is often secondary. I have had many experiences of whose meaning I've been uncertain, though I know what happened and that it made an impact on me. Many of my favorite poems...are poems I cannot claim to 'understand' but they have happened to me and I am

different because of the encounter....I think of the poem as a world one can explore, within and by which one can be changed, if only momentarily” (found online in March, 2005, at <http://www.saltonstall.org/echap2/shepherd.html>).

In *War and Peace 2*, an anthology of experimental poetry and prose edited by Leslie Scalapino and Judith Goldman, Joanne Kyger asks us to:

. . . look briefly at what poets can do to break the obsessive rhetorical hold on certain words the current Bush administration is now using.

Most of these words were in evidence during the so-called press conference and speech Mr. Bush gave on April 13, 2004: “Freedom, Democracy, Liberation, Security, Safety, Terror, Terrorists, War, Thugs, etc.

concluding:

What poets can do, whether or not they believe “a poem” has its own truth and direction, is to write words back into a liberating context, with a refreshed sense of their meaning

(Kyger in Scalapino and Goldman, 2005, p. 55)

Poet Susan Schultz quotes a post 9/11 email received from poet Charles Bernstein:

Because my work originates, at least in part, out of a desire to both confront and acknowledge catastrophe (bad turns, impasses), in the wake of September 11, I felt a continued commitment to poetry, to poetics, and indeed to teaching. If anything, 9/11 made me feel an intensified sense of the relevance of the office of poetry. Not the demeaning sense of poetry as ‘comforting’ in a time of crisis, put forward by such places as *The New York Times*. Rather, by this ‘office of poetry’ I mean poetry and poetics as a way of thinking in, around, and through ‘the real’, and in particular, a way of going beyond the deafeningly deceptive representations of ‘reality’ provided by the massed media

(in Schultz, 2005, p. 211)

When I heard my own first book length collection of poems (Nakagawa, 2006) had been reviewed in the Tokyo magazine (not a literary journal) *Metropolis*, I waited with some dread for the reviewer’s appearance. Would the work be denigrated as incoherent? inaccessible? irrelevant? Fortunately reviewer Wright (2006) found what he called “a logic, a structure, a moral message” within the pages of the book. Maybe an appreciation for and/or understanding of a diversity of voices, styles, and perspectives is, in the post 9-11 era, no longer too much to ask for.

In this brief essay about poetry, rather few poem excerpts appear. I’ve quoted liberally from some writers whose work I admire and whose words I believe should speak for themselves; as I do so, replaying in my head are admonishments from former teachers who told me an essay should not merely be a collection of author quotes. However, as poet Rosmarie Waldrop has written: “Since I make the rules, I also feel free to break them” (in Lehman, 1996, p. 221).

Although we may be taught when writing essays not to over-quote, erasing the original words of the writer may be a way of erasing them and superimposing ourselves. I'm thinking of something too I read about the sculptor Richard Nonas, who reportedly gave up anthropology in favor of sculpture because he felt, at a point when his book was halfway finished, that he would not want to be written about by a third party the way he was writing about others in his own book. Thus he abandoned the book and became a sculptor instead. Presumably he decided he was an artist when he noticed that he could place objects such as blocks of wood in various arrangements making "communication" occur between them. I think of language poetry in a similar way, that the arrangement of words may often create a kind of dialogue. In this dialogue, conundrums are often left intact for the reader to ponder. A complex dialogue may occur (versus the simplistic language of political propaganda or advertising).

As a poet one of the techniques I sometimes employ, as other poets do, is the collage technique where a small to large portion of a poem is found words, phrases, images, or sentences I've excerpted/distorted/rearranged. One of the reasons I began using collage was to include more voices, perspectives and ideas in the context and texture of a poem, and more recently in the context/texture of essays as well. I'd like to conclude this somewhat collage-like essay with an excerpt from Rosmarie Waldrop's poem "Conversation 1: On the Horizontal", pp. 9-10, which is preceded by a prologue (Prologue: Two Voices, pp. 3-5):

The difference of our sex, says one voice, saves us from
humiliation. It makes me shiver, says the other. Your
voice drops stones into feelings to sound their depth.
Then warmth is truncated to war. But I'd like to fall
back into simplicity as into a featherbed.

(excerpt from Waldrop, 1999 p. 3)

I *am* here, she says, I've learned that life consists in fit-
ting my body to the earth's slow rotation. So that the
way I lean on the parapet betrays dried blood and
invisible burns. My shadow lies in the same direction as
all the others, and I can't jump over it. My mother's
waves ran high. She rode them down on me as on a
valley, hoping to flush out the minerals. But I hid my
bones under sentences expanding life the flesh in my
years.

Language, he says, spells those who love it, sliding side-
long from word to whole cloth. The way fingers
extend the body into adventure, print, lakes, and Dead-
man's-hand. Wherever the pen pushes, in the teeth of
fear and malediction, even to your signature absorbing
you into sign. A discomfort with the feel of home
before it grows into inflamed tissue and real illness.
With symptoms of grammar, punctuation, subtraction
of soul. And only death to get you out.

(from Waldrop, 1999, p. 10)

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About Books...

Jane's poetry book Skin Museum (Avant Books, 2006) and her second poetry collection Aquiline (available fall, 2007) may be ordered via:

Mr Kawamura
TSSC
Email: kawamura@c-enter.co.jp
Fax (Tokyo, Japan) 03 5688 5802

Coming in October...

GALE will be holding a mini-conference which will take place Oct. 6 and 7 at Temple University's campus in Osaka. It will feature Janet Holmes, a language and gender scholar in New Zealand. With the support of the Pragmatics SIG and possibly others, we're proud to be sponsoring her visit to Japan, offering all of us a chance to learn from her research. The weekend will also offer presentation opportunities for those of us involved in gender research and an opportunity to network with others.

Be sure to keep your GALE membership up-to-date!

Remember that your membership entitles you to access GALE's exciting new Moodle which offers discussion forums, teaching resources, updates on special events, and much, much more. Invite a friend to join as well!

For further information about the GALE Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) see our website at <http://www.tokyoprogressive.org.uk/gale/>



HIV/AIDS

by Penina Nafuye

The following poem was shared by Bonny Norton in her plenary on how “learner identities are central in meaning-making.” It is from Penina Nafuye, one of the participants in here recent work with learners in South Africa.

When preparing for a dance there are two choices
You either go for the dance or you don't go for the dance.
If you don't go for the dance, that's fine.
But if you go for the dance, my friend, there are two choices
You either dance or you don't dance
If you don't dance, that's fine
But if you dance, my friend, there are two choices
You have to either dance with a partner or you dance alone
If you dance alone that's fine.
But if you dance with a partner, my friend, there are two choices
You either dance close to her or far away from her
If you dance far away from her, that's fine.
But if you dance close to her, my friend, there are two choices
You either go home with her after the dance or you leave her there
If you leave her there, that's fine.
But if you go home with her, my friend, there are two choices.
You either sleep with her or you don't sleep with her.
If you don't sleep with her, that's fine.
But if you sleep with her, my friend there are two choices.
You either have sex with her or you don't have sex with her
If you don't have sex with her, that's fine.
But if you have sex with her, my friend, there are two choices
You either have protected sex or unprotected sex.
If you have protected sex, that's fine.
But if you have unprotected sex, my friend, there are two choices.
You either get the virus or you don't get it
If you don't get it, that's fine
But if you get it my friend there is one choice,
That's death.

Thank you very much.
It is so sad.

Penina Nafuye, 2004

Producing Myself in English: A Personal Essay

by Ayano Fukui

Graduate School of Creativity and Culture

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Quite often, on Japanese television or in magazines and newspapers, there are advertisements for language schools that tell audience that being multilingual is special, enchanting and cool. When I was a junior high school, one of the television advertisements had the catch line, *Eigo wa Chikyuu-go* [English is the language of planet earth]. I have been interested in the advertising strategies of language schools in a wry way. Miho Matsunaga, a translator of German literature, cynically points out centralism of the English language: “The possibility for literature works in English language to become bestsellers is higher than for works in German and also the works in English have many opportunities to be adapted for film” (“Tamago wo Dakinagara. Moshiku wa, Kuse ni naru Honyaku” 156). So, Every time I see these advertisements, I wonder, “Is it *so* enchanting for someone to have linguistic skill, especially in English, as one of the most central languages in this world?” In this essay, I will explore myself as English language learner.

Linguistic Skill as Mental Strength

In his essay “Busu ga Moteru Hou wo Kanojo ni Oshiete Agenasai” [Survival Tips for Ugly Girls], the Japanese novelist and essayist Shuusaku Endou writes, “If you girls do not have confidence in your looks I suggest you study English hard” (27). I am not really sure why he picks up on language skill as one way for ugly-looking girls to survive, but the appeal of the combination, “girl and English” might be inspired by the life of Umeko Tsuda (1864-1929), the founder of Tsudajuku University, who is known as a pioneer in Japanese women’s education.

Tsuda went to the USA at the age of 6 as one of the exchange students in the government delegation mission in 1871, stayed in Washington for 11 years and then returned to Japan at the age of 18, with excellent English. At the age of 26, she went to USA again and majored in biology at Bryn Mawr College in Philadelphia. Three years later, she came back to Japan and later she established a university for women. In her letters to her host family written before the arrival at Yokohama in 1882, she wrote, “Tomorrow I will turn to a new page in my life: may it be wonderful!”(Ohba 8). Tsuda gained excellent skills in English, and she was ambitious, but she also had to face the reality that in Japanese society, women were not considered important and she struggled. Her linguistic skill in English must have been the

source of her fearless strength that helped her find her own way. Linguistic skill is not the monopoly of one gender; it is a fair strength for women and men both - there isn't a rule that says, "Girls should not learn languages" or "Boys should not learn languages."

Trying to Prove That I am not Invisible

I started learning English in junior high school days, at the age of 13, and at first I was not good at spelling, reading, or speaking in English. Every day I memorized simple sentences like, "I like to play tennis." All I did in those days was memorizing and exams. In the second year of junior high school, I encountered a unique teacher, she told students to create the sentences and say what they wanted to say in English. Her teaching method inspired me, and she encouraged me. She recognized me, and I found I was visible and then I kept on trying. It was a challenge to produce myself in a new language.

I am not really sure if I felt something was wrong with the Japanese language. In fact, I was "good" at reading Japanese novels. It might simply have been because I longed to be the "best" at something at school since, for most school teachers, I was *invisible*. For my teenager self, the key to proving my *visibility* was English. I had read *Senbatsu Test* [The Entrance Exam], Takashi Atouda's fictional story about an invalid and shy girl who seemed exactly like me:

"I am shy and quiet. [...] I don't have guts. It is true that I am not a smart student. I look stupider than I actually am. However, I like learning English. Out of all the tests on school subjects, I did best on the English language exams. How wonderful it would be if I had English skill and could lead a smart life" – she had such a virtual dream in her heart. (72-73)

I was that type of girl. Although it was not serious, I had a congenital illness concerned with the cervical vertebrae. In elementary school, some teachers regarded me and my illness as a bit of an annoyance. I longed to have a fearless passion to feel happy about being myself, let the illness disappear from my mind and I longed to look smart. At high school, I found my interest in reading and writing in Japanese and English---probably my shy self had a passion to express and produce myself in writing. At university, although friends said "It sounds difficult to pass the English writing class," I took many writing classes. Gradually, I came to realize that in Japanese writing, I might not insist on "my own" opinion, but in English, I was encouraged to do exactly that. Perhaps this is what translator Minami Aoyama is getting at in the essay, "Oh My God!":

Most people in Japan do not emphasize “I”---unless they are people in sports or the military. The word “I” is unfamiliar in the Japanese language system, because Japanese is not an “I”- emphasizing language. However, in English, as you know, the word “I” is frequently used, and “I” is essential in speaking. In a sense, when we use the word “I” we realize individuality. (92-93)

What inspired me most in learning English was the *individual* personality represented by the power of “I” in English. I am not saying that I did not have my own personality before learning English, or that Japanese forced me to become shy because of its restraints and atmosphere, as Aoyama suggests. For me, as a tool to express myself, English helped me prove that I was *not* invisible.

Perhaps this answer is not quite enough for a gender essay. I might need to change my opinion, and say, “Yes, English released me from my weakness and femininity based on the Japanese language.” I try to make this shift, though, I realize my strength is simply based on my ambition to live like medically-normal people. Does gender figure in my ambition to be part of healthy humanity? With regards to gender in my first language, personally, I have never thought Japanese language disrupts my strength, my writing in Japanese is never feminine, teachers said that I have a passionate voice and I feel my Japanese voice doesn’t differ in English, although people say “In my second language, I feel my personality more.”

Multilingual People?

When it comes to students and linguistic skill, most people think of *ryuugakusei* [students who study abroad]. For me, they have a special status since they have “genuine” pronunciation skill. As my high school teachers used to say, “You students won’t be able to gain ‘genuine’ English pronunciation until you live in the country where English is a public language.”

Personally, I have always been reluctant to care about whether my pronunciation is genuine or not, but this urge to be identified – or mistaken for—a native English speaker is connected to success and the social hierarchy. Yoko Tawada, the well-known bilingual writer (Japanese and Germany) wryly observes, “Learning languages and studying abroad might mean *rags to riches* symbolically: you compete with people and gain higher social status” (Tawada 10).

Although I may have dreamed of going somewhere to refine my English pronunciation and experience the shift from “rags to riches,” I have never actually tried to do this. Yet I actually envy those people, though I know that I need not wonder whether I have “fake”

pronunciation, or feel that my days as a strictly local English language learner are a waste of time.

I'm encouraged by the sweet opinion expressed by zopp, a famous Japanese popular music lyricist with bilingual language skills in Japanese and English: 「海外にいけば[英語が]話せるようになるっていうのは僕はないと思います。駅前留学でだって英語は十分上達すると思います。ようは、やる気の問題ですからね!」 [I do not think that you gain linguistic skill only when you are overseas. You can learn English anywhere; say, you can brush up your English language skill at a language school in Japan. The key point is your motivation.] (「場所じゃなく気持ち」 <http://yaplog.jp/zopp/archive/445> Blog Entry.).

Yoshifumi Saitou, a linguistic professor at Tokyo University recalls a student in his class who was skeptical about bilingualism and remarked, “Actually bilingual speakers in the world will have to struggle with cultural identity someday in their life” (134). There might be some issues about “cultural identity” if I were one of the students who studied abroad. A short research into bilingual/multilingual students says:

Students who studied abroad must have experienced cultural shock at least twice, first when they need to get used to the school and lifestyle abroad and then after returning to the home country, they need to get used to the home country's lifestyle. (Sato 100)

As in Umeko Tsuda's case, a problem occurs when they go abroad and when they return to home country. Sometimes I have heard some students insisting at school, “When I was abroad, everything was fabulous, however, here in my home country, I don't feel everything is okay with me,” or “I experienced a lot abroad, I am such a multilingual and multicultural person. I can objectively see my home country now and you guys can't, can you?” Whenever I listen to these students, my wry self wonders, “What's their *objective* stance? And what is their opinion that people don't understand students who experienced in abroad?”

I feel that these students are forcing themselves to choose a country as the basis of their mindset. They are forcing themselves to choose between the country where they were born and the country where they studied? It sounds difficult to keep two national identities. There is a proverb “Home is where the heart is”---where is their home? Is it difficult to tell where their heart is? ---Or, their home is everywhere, it doesn't have to be one?

Yoko Tawada rather prefers to locate herself “in-between” (31) languages, and she says she tries to keep on “cultivating both Japanese and German, consciously and passionately everyday, and these bilingual languages have an effect on each other and I feel I gain an ability to express things elaborately; these are what I did not have in my monolingual days” (44). The goal of my own writing stance in Japanese and English as to stay “in-between,” as well. I used

to be eager for “genuine” English writing skill and style. However, my writing teacher said I already have my own style. I much prefer my own style in writing, and as I have longed to the whole time, I will try to keep on producing myself fearlessly in Japanese and English---with a bit of support from what I’ve learned from gender studies.

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What is the purpose of the GALE SIG?

The Mission Statement of the Gender Awareness in Language Education National Special Interest Group (GALE SIG) in the Japan Association of Language Teachers (JALT) has the four following points:

- to research gender and its implications for language learning, teaching, and training, such as differences in discourse styles, preferred teaching and learning styles, interests, needs, motivation, aptitude, achievement, classroom interactions, same- sex versus coeducational classrooms and same-sex vs. opposite- sex teaching, and social identity.
- to improve pedagogical practices, develop language teaching materials, and provide a clearinghouse for materials inclusive of gender and gender-related topics in FL subject areas such as communication, history, literature, linguistics, science, sociology, cultural studies, etc.
- to raise awareness of workplace and human rights issues related to gender for language professionals, such as discrimination, harassment, and violence based on gender and sexual orientation, and discrimination on the basis of marital or parental status, and to provide information for countering such discrimination.
- to increase networking opportunities among language professionals interested in teaching, researching, and/or discussing issues related to gender and language education, such as biological sex, gender identity, gendered language, sexual orientation, gender behavior, gender roles, and gender socialization.

For information on how to join, see <http://www.tokyoprogressive.org.uk/gale/>