

# *Gender Awareness in Language Education*



*Newsletter of the GALE Special Interest Group (SIG)  
of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)  
[http://members.tripod.co.jp/gender\\_lang\\_ed/index.html](http://members.tripod.co.jp/gender_lang_ed/index.html)*

*GALE NEWSLETTER Summer 2003*

*Edited by Tina Ottman and Kathy Riley. Masthead design by Billie Miracle of Grants Pass, Oregon.*

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## Teaching Gender For Our Lives

Tamah L. Nakamura

Someone once told me that we teach what we need to learn. As a non-Japanese woman living in Japan, understanding the gender constructions of social and professional expectations is a continuous growth edge for me. The implementation of the Japanese Gender-Equal Society Law in 1999 has opened doors toward the opportunity to teach gender-related courses at university and women's centers nationwide, as well as to participate in city gender equality implementation guideline committees. These define the teaching and learning activities in which I have been active in Fukuoka over the past 15 years.

I will limit the information in this article to teaching gender for an undergraduate one-year study abroad international program at a university. Although the program is English-based, the students' home country backgrounds range across borders from France, Belgium, England, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, USA. In addition, Japanese students from the four-year

university to which the international program is attached may register for the courses. Therefore, EFL considerations are necessary in both materials and presentation. The two courses and syllabuses I will introduce can be adapted by creative imagination with supplemental language learning materials, and other non-rational ways of understanding. I have also adapted segments of both syllabuses for use in the women's center discussion classes of gender issues in English. Suggestions for adapting the syllabuses are:

1. Outline the readings in advance for the students;
2. Underline the main points directly in the text of the readings;
3. Identify a 'required' core reading for all students, and 'optional' readings for students whose English level is native or near native;
4. Use supplemental 'viewing materials' such as video, magazines, newspaper updates on current issues, cartoons, etc.
5. Include "non-rational" activities: activist drama techniques (see Theater of the Oppressed techniques), role play, art therapy techniques, movement education.

The syllabuses can be viewed at the following websites under Kyushu University's Japan in Today's World Course Offerings for 2003-2004.

[http://www.isc.kyushuu.ac.jp/JTW/study/framepage\\_study.htm](http://www.isc.kyushuu.ac.jp/JTW/study/framepage_study.htm)  
(1st semester, Gender and Contemporary Japan);

[http://www.isc.kyushu-u.ac.jp/JTW/study/right\\_descrip10-2.htm](http://www.isc.kyushu-u.ac.jp/JTW/study/right_descrip10-2.htm)  
(2nd semester, Gender in a Comparative Perspective)

What is Gender? (the philosophical basis of the syllabuses)

Both syllabuses are presented in detail on the websites and are fairly self-explanatory. Both cover a broad perspective of 'gender' in Japan (historical, political, social, individual) because I base them on Scott's (1999) definition of gender:

".....gender is the social organisation of sexual difference. But this does not mean that gender reflects or implements fixed and natural physical differences between women and men; rather gender is the knowledge that *establishes meaning* for bodily differences. These meanings vary across cultures, social groups, and time since nothing about the body, including women's reproductive organs, determines univocally how social divisions will be shaped.....Sexual difference is not, then, the originary cause from which social organisation ultimately can be derived. It is instead a variable social organisation that itself must be explained. (Scott, 1999, p. 2).

This is closely related to the question of "What is Identity?". Butler (1990) defines woman (and here I read 'human') as the state of permanent openness and resignifiability. This is woman's constructed internal substance re-produced through corporeal signs. It seems to have much in common with Kondo's (1997) discursive definition which maintains the boundaries as flexible and suggests possibilities of shifts meaning of self through power variation shifts. Kondo says that identity is a location in a field of shifting power relations, "opening out the inner spaces of true gender identity to cultural and historical forces" (p. 43). Therefore, identity is neither "an essential inner truth, or external biological equipment" (p. 43) but complex ambiguities, different cultural possibilities, blurred boundaries, and rearrangements of power (p. 44).

Therefore, if gender-constructs are 'variable social organizations' as Scott notes, the inclusion of 1) both mainstream and marginal constructs of gender, and 2) the connection of gender to students' lives is necessary to 'see' society through many lenses toward a goal of deconstructing stereotypes.

## Gender is Human Rights: Connecting Study to Life

Teaching gender is not always pleasurable. Gender is pervasive throughout our experiences and, as such, can be an emotionally volatile topic to broach in a classroom. To bring a balanced approach to gender education, I include the following four elements:

1. Class interaction is based on feminist organizing principles (see Week 1, Course Overview);
2. The Gender Knot (Johnson, 1997): recognize patriarchy as a system;
3. Weekly email submission of a 'gender-related experience'

This concept is based on critical incidents in intercultural communication defined as an event you saw or experienced that created an emotional reaction for you. Students are encouraged to use critical thinking skills to reflexively examine the meaning of their gender perspective in the incident or event.

4. Student-produced texts as discussion material

I compiled a short cut-and-paste handout of their email responses and questions to readings/textbook and used these for in-class, small group discussions.

Heikinen 1998) offers a practical approach based in theory that includes the 'mainstream' in gender studies classes with strategies (such as the 'student-produced texts) for opportunity for them to 'hear' and respond to each others' biases.

In addition to these two courses on gender, gender-related independent study projects (ISP) I either supervise or provide assistance for include NGOs and community work, "comfort women", women in corporate level Japan and "office ladies", gay Japan, the myth of motherhood and the declining birthrate. I use an ethnographical approach to research requiring students to participate directly with an organization or community group taking fieldnotes of observations and interviews.

## Student Feedback

The following is a composite of feedback from students. Although all students gave me permission to use their responses and their names.

### What Went Well (What I learned and found helpful)

1. Sharing weekly "gender experiences" was helpful in realizing not only how I was feeling internally, but how my peers felt in different situations.
2. I loved the small group discussions in which I could hear voices of friends from various societies.
3. I have learned how to think about my everyday life and what happens to me in a gender perspective. This means that I am more aware of the place I occupy in the society and the system, and I can think about my behavior and others' behaviors within the theoretical frame that I discovered.
4. Culture remains as an important factor as we have been raised in different social norms, (family) education ... that it is especially crucial when we discuss certain topics.
5. We learn that gender studies are not just about females but also males. The study will be hopeless if we can only hear voices of victims! We need to know how the co-creators feel (all people).
6. The readings "Nightwork" and "Queer Japan" were not just theory but something experienced by the writers, something unique in Japan, and not easily accessible to foreigners.
7. I learned that it is possible to conform to the ways of patriarchy, even as a woman, and live as a patriarch, without questioning the system that discriminates against women.
8. In most classes that I have had so far in my college experience, there have been written

reading things, but in this class, the information was compiled nicely and it really felt like I was doing the assignment for a reason; like I was helping the class, on an individual level. That was a nice feeling.

#### What Could Have Been Improved

1. More small group discussion to share the 'comparative' perspectives of our peers.
2. Use more multimedia resources: videos, films, magazines, powerpoint, etc.
3. The written reading assignments could be staggered so that some students do them one week and the next week others do them. Then in the small group discussions the onus falls on those who didn't "have" to do the assignment. People will feel compelled to add to the written responses, verbally since there will be less compiled material and, therefore, more 'space' for discussion.

"I am very glad that *The Gender Knot* makes me aware that we do not have to obsess with the (fake) patriarchal tradition and solutions (having more power and control) and there exists alternative ways of thinking and solutions. Once I also thought women should have the same or more power and authority to break down the gender inequality and could not think other ideas because it was all I had seen, heard and learned about problem solving strategies from my patriarchal society." **(SeonJeong, Korea)**

#### Tamah's Reflection

I have always thought of gender as a "continuum of being" which is both external and internal. Externally it is manifested in the way we dress, behave, speak. The 'internal continuum' is how we feel in relation to the external projection of our gendered being. Therefore every human being has both male and female elements inherently. My thinking has been expanded through discussion with the students in this class toward the idea that the concept of a 'continuum of gender' is part of the patriarchal dichotomizing of people into smaller parts of their whole selves, in a positivist mode of organizing the world. I am now beginning to clear my own internalized patriarchy and realize that people are "ungendered human beings" who have been assigned gender.

Further, in my analysis our class has reached Freire's first stage of conscientization – awareness that is also an action stage. Freire (1970) emphasizes that "action and reflection are not a dichotomy but occur simultaneously, and further, when action is inappropriate, critical reflection is action" (p. 135). To facilitate learning beyond the cognitive I introduce non-rational ways of knowing from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and others. The students are encouraged to include non-rational (artistic, kinesthetic, etc.) methods for their final presentations on an issue of gender of interest to them. These forms of reflection access deeply held socialized beliefs which discussion and written work make cognitive. It is this cycle of taking the emotional, kinesthetic knowledge and making it cognitive, that makes our 'felt' knowledge available to the world. This cycle of 'knowing' offers empowerment for human beings.

Note on the textbook: I found I needed to supplement the Tree of Patriarchy in Chapter 1 with the Cycle of Socialization Diagram (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997, p. 80, Appendix 5C) to more clearly represent the influences of socialization on our lives, as well as offer an illustration of a place in the cycle where we have an option to make choices not to perpetuate the cycle.

#### About Tamah

Tamah L. Nakamura, an M.Ed. in second language education and an M.A. in Human Development, is a university teacher in the areas of intercultural communication and comparative gender studies. An American permanent resident of Japan, she has also taught in Korea, Singapore, and the United States. Her workshops in the community include gender

issues discussion groups for Japanese and non-Japanese women as well as "Movement for Refreshment of the Heart" workshops. She is a doctoral candidate in Human and Organizational Systems at Fielding Graduate Institute with an emphasis on social identity and community re-creation of the social body through somatic movement. She is currently training as a Registered Movement Educator (RME) and Therapist (RMT) with ISMETA (International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy) faculty, Professor Sondra Fraleigh [www.brockport.edu/~dance/somatics](http://www.brockport.edu/~dance/somatics). She is a member of Butoh Seiryukai Dance Group.

I invite feedback, critique, and questions which will help me to further the process and applications of teaching gender in future courses.

#### *Acknowledgment to Colleagues*

*I am grateful to Dr. Beverley Yamamoto, University of Sheffield, School of East Asian Studies, for her many supportive phone conversations, and sharing of materials and knowledge on gender, some of which are reflected in these syllabuses and the newsletter article.*

*Also, Cathy Collins' recommendation of *The Gender Knot* was perfect as was the related gender game in Week 5 of the syllabus. She co-facilitated it at the Healing Racism Institute, Little Rock, Arkansas. Cathy is presently completing her doctoral work in Human and Organizational Systems at the Fielding Graduate Institute.*

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#### **Need a Laugh?** by Kay Hammond

If you are going to the annual JALT conference in Shizuoka this year, there might be some funny in it for you. I have been invited to talk about how to put comedy into the classroom. I'll be giving out easy to use tips on how to bring the funny into child or adult classes. I am not sure of the exact details at this time, but it all sounds promising.

For those of you in the Tokyo area who are in desperate need of a laugh, why not come down to **Bar Isn't It?** in Roppongi on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday nights for a great comedy show in English (The show is in Japanese on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays). For only 2000 yen you get to see some good stand-up comedians in the first half and then you are treated to quality improvised comedy for the second half. Improvised comedy is where a group of people ask the audience for a suggestion and then they build a whole scene around that one item or location. There are no scripts. You also get a drink included in the price of admission.

For those of you who would like to try some comedy, you can join the comedy workshops. Yes, you can be taught to be funny. Try out the techniques on your students when you have finished laughing at yourself! For more information about the show or workshops, see the **Tokyo Comedy Store** website at [www.tokyocomedy.com](http://www.tokyocomedy.com)

For those of you who can get to **The Pink Cow** in Harajuku on a Sunday night, you can laugh at my expense when I perform with *The Standard Deviants*. We perform improvised comedy one Sunday night a month. There is no cover charge. The Sunday nights vary, so contact me and I'll tell you then next time I'm throwing my dignity to the wind.

Well folks, there is plenty of funny around if you look for it. So take the time, round up some friends and get set to laugh yourself silly.



### **Two new DVD/video resources for gender studies classes by Kathy Riley**

A chance conversation at this year's TESOL conference brought a wonderful new video/DVD resource to my attention. "**Women in Japan: Memories of the Past, Dreams for the Future**" showcases six women who have created international lives and who share their stories on this 52-minute documentary. It's current (filmed in 2001), interesting, professionally made, and available in a very viewer-friendly bilingual format. Who could ask for more? I used this production in both my media literacy and gender studies classes, and in each case, it got very positive response from students.

Women in Japan is produced by two teachers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Joanne Hershfield, a teacher of women's studies and film, and Jan Bardsley, who teaches women' studies, literature and popular culture. The documentary focuses on the stories of six women of different ages and backgrounds and from various parts of Japan. What they have in common is international experience, and it is this focus that makes this documentary particularly interesting to Japanese students of language and culture.

The interviewees, by telling their stories, cover a lot of historical ground in Japan and elsewhere. Reiko Ishihara, who grew up in the U.S. and was incarcerated in a World War II internment camp, lived there again in the 1960s when she was married to a Buddhist priest, raising four children. She is now a school board president in Shiga prefecture. Ryuko Kubota, a teacher and scholar, talks about her life as a professor in the U.S. and a daughter in Nagano Prefecture. Taeko Tomiyama, famous for her paintings of Thai women in Japan, talks about her passion for social justice and resistance to expectations for women in the 1940s and 50s. Yoshiko Nakata, chair of the Hokkaido branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, works on issues relating to women and children in developing countries.

In addition to the four Japanese women described above, the documentary includes two non-Japanese women, both of whom are farmers in Hokkaido: Lourdes Matsumoto, who ran away from her home in the Philippines to be a dancer in Japan, and Rohei Shimada, a college grad who talks about what it has been like to trade her professional, urban life in China for the family melon farm. Clearly, these stories are fine discussion starters on a variety of topics, and they also

show the power of a story to make history and social issues come to life.

Women in Japan has a website <[womeninjapan.com](http://womeninjapan.com)>, which includes a synopsis, lesson suggestions and a list of English-language references on a variety of topics touched upon in the women's stories. It's available in VHS or DVD format. I bought the DVD, which is ideal for a multicultural class, as Japanese language sections are subtitled in English and English sections, in Japanese. The price is a drawback--\$150 for non-profit customers and individuals (more for institutions). However, for those who can handle or share that cost, it's well worth the investment.

Another excellent up-to-date resource comes from the Media Educational Foundation <<http://www.mediaed.org/>>. **Killing Us Softly** is a 34-minute documentary—expose is more like it—of images of women in advertising. It's actually a lecture, which the creator, Jean Kilbourne, delivers at colleges across the U.S. She illustrates her talk with dozens of photos of ads using women's bodies to sell products. Her focus is images of women in advertising over the past 20 years. The section titles give you an idea of Kilbourne's perspective: Does the beauty ideal still tyrannize women? Does advertising still objectify women's bodies? Are the twin themes of liberation and weight control still linked? Is sexuality still presented as women's main concern? Are young girls still sexualized? Are grown women infantilized? Are images of male violence against women still used to sell products? I have not yet shown this video to students, but after previewing it, I think it will work well in my intermediate level gender studies seminar. **Killing Us Softly** is English-only—with English subtitles available on the DVD version and close captioning on the VHS. Like the other documentary mentioned above, this one is not cheap--\$150 for high schools and non-profit groups and \$295 for universities. (As an individual teacher, I was able to get the non-profit rate). If interested teachers could pool their resources, other gender-related offerings from The Media Educational Foundation would become accessible. The list is impressive.



### **Osaka Women's Clinic opens** by Barbara Summerhawk

What could drag me away from our annual WELL retreat in January? A request from an Osaka women's health group to speak on the history of America's women's health movement could. What an exciting weekend it turned out to be!

The **Osaka Women's Clinic Group** facilitates women's health counseling and networking all over the Kansai region. They soon hope to open a women's clinic that would be feminist, run by women and staffed by likeminded professionals. The focus of the day-long event on January 29, 2003 (Saturday) was the problems and prognosis of such a project.

The group had originally invited a woman from the original Boston Women's Collective that had issued the first *Our Bodies, Ourselves* in 1971. Because of a family emergency, she suddenly was unable to come, and eventually recommended contacting me, since I was a founder of the **Emma Goldman Clinic for Women** in Iowa City in 1973. No one knew how to get hold of me, but Sumie Uno and others called Naeko Wakabayashi here in Tokyo to see if she knew how to contact me; she did, so away I went ...

The morning session featured a panel with three of us talking about the problems, perils and promises of creating a clinic. The nearly 50 women attending this workshop were women who staffed hotlines for women who had suffered sexual harassment or abuse or needed abortion or birth control information. There were lesbians who worked at centers concerned with domestic violence between lesbian partners and other health issues concerning lesbians. There were housewives who volunteered at local and regional women's information centers and so on. Many

were afraid that if the Osaka women's group opened a clinic, they'd lose out on their wonderful networking energy. It was a very interesting discussion.

In the afternoon, I spoke on the problems that faced women before and after *Roe v. Wade* and how we built the Emma Goldman Clinic. I also spoke about the three generations of women in my family, from my Mom, who had an illegal abortion in 1934 when she was 18 years old--Catholic, alone in a dingy hotel--to my generation, who organized clinics and movements around women's health issues, to my daughter's generation, who had many choices about where to go to consult about AIDS, abortion and sexuality.

Then there were many interesting questions from the audience of over a hundred women about building and maintaining a feminist clinic. there were many radical professionals and feminist legislators, common women applauding, and other organizers wondering where they fit in. I was so glad to be part of it.

The Osaka Women's Clinic representatives will speak at PGL 2003, so keep September 27-28 on your calendar too. Thanks.

***For more information about the Osaka Women's Clinic presentation, Creating a Feminist Women's Clinic, check out the Peace As A Global Language conference website at: <http://www.elcalendar.com/PGL2003/>***

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## **GALE goes out & about**

**This a new section of the newsletter in which we invite GALE members to let us know interesting comings and goings ... what's happened/what's happening socially & culturally, vis- à- vis gender events, in the big wide world OUT there ... All contributions greatly welcome!**

### **Impressions from Alice Walker's Yokohama Visit**

*Alice Walker, April 23rd, 2003 at the Yokohama Women's Forum*

By Kris Mizutani

When I first heard she was coming to the Yokohama Women's Forum to promote her 1997 book "Anything We Love Can Be Saved" I panicked with excitement. Two months before the event, I was sure tickets were already sold out. I was able to procure a few seats for myself, my students and a few friends (also GALE members). I was curious about what her audience would look like. Would they be old? Women? Radical?

Much to my pleasant surprise, there was a wide mix in age. Though a predominately Japanese audience, my gaydar was on high alert. I spotted at least 8 other dykes, and wondered where I could find so many again in Yokohama.

Then I noticed these funny little earcups everyone had. They were just like in television, the ones they wear at the United Nations. I felt so special. There were two simultaneous interpreters working in a pseudo-soundbooth within sight. Tre cool!

Walker spent the first 45 minutes or so basically reading from her book. Though I was thoroughly moved by her reading, many of my students who attended later reported how disappointed they were that she didn't dialogue more with the audience. They felt the brief question and answer period afterwards was the most fruitful. The audience questioned her about her views on female genital mutilation, to her impressions of Japanese culture (I thought it classic that a culture question was asked. I teased my students later that its SO Japanese for Japanese to ask a non-Japanese about Japanese culture. I waited with baited breath for the "Do you like *natto*?" question. It never came.

But Walker did read and discuss her views on motherhood and the importance of mother/daughter relationships. So I began the question and answer session by asking Walker about her relationship with her daughter because she so beautifully described her relationship with her own mother. My question didn't go over so well with Walker, with a brief "She's 30 (years old)" response. Hmm...did I push a button? Did I ask too personal a question?

Maybe since I've been living in Japan for awhile now, I ask questions that I wouldn't have, had I lived in America. But I know Walker would advocate for freedom. Freedom to ask any questions and the freedom to refuse to answer.

Perhaps more importantly, the freedom to love and be loved no matter one's looks or beliefs.



### **Spencer Kagan Tour**

Spencer Kagan, renowned for his work in cooperative learning, will be presenting a series of workshops in Japan September 15th - 28th, 2003. For further details in English, see <http://www.jalt.org/global/sig/Conferences.htm>. In Japanese see <http://www.jalt.org/global/sig/ConferencesJ.htm>.

Monday, Sept. 15, 2003 (Aichi Small Business Support Center, Nagoya) 1:00-5:00 PM  
"Cooperative structures and language learning" Sponsors: Nagoya, Gifu, and Toyohashi JALT chapters, Teacher Education and Teaching Children SIGs, JAPANetwork, and Trident Preschool  
Tuesday,

Sept. 16, 2003 (Nagoya) Nanzan University 6:30 - 8:30 PM "Cooperative structures to promote critical reflection"

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2003 (Aichi) Aichi University of Education 10:50 AM - 12:20 PM  
"Cooperative structures to improve learning, classroom management, and student social skills"

Saturday, Sept. 20, 2003 (Tokyo) at Teachers College "Kagan Cooperative Structures to Promote Language Learning, Caring, and Peace"

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2003 (Ochanomizu University, Tokyo) "Cooperative structures for any lesson"  
Wednesday,

Sept. 24, 2003 (Tokyo) Soka University "Multiple intelligences: visions, myths, and structures"

Friday, Sept. 26, 2003 (Tokyo) Seisen University, 5:30 - 8:30 PM "Positive human relations via cooperative structures" (Pre-conference workshop at Peace as a Global Language II conference)

Sunday, Sept. 28, 2003 (Tokyo) Seisen University "Cooperative structures, character, and

peace" (Experiential plenary at Peace as a Global Language II conference).

### Peace as a Global Language Conference

Peace as a Global Language Conference 2003 Conference will be held September 27th - 28<sup>th</sup> at Seisen University (Gotanda, Tokyo). Featured speakers at this year's conference are Dr. Spencer Kagan and Diet Member Mizuho Fukushima.

Dr. Spencer Kagan, director of Kagan Publishing and Professional Development, is a former professor of Psychology and Education at the University of California, author, lecturer, and teacher trainer. His structural approach to cooperative learning and multiple intelligences fosters peace, equality, respect for differences, self-esteem and character development, as well as academic success.

Ms. Mizuho Fukushima is both a member of the House of the Councilors (Upper House of the Japanese Parliament) and a very famous feminist lawyer. Since elected a member of the House of the Councilors for the first time in 1998, she has been involved in four main areas - namely environment, human rights, women and peace.

### Friday Night Special Workshop with Dr. Kagan

The Peace as a Global Language conference is pleased to announce a special workshop with Dr. Spencer Kagan, "Positive Human Relations via Cooperative Structures" on Friday, September 26, from 5:30 to 8:30pm.

For further information and to register for the conference, see <http://www.elcalendar.com/PGL2003/featured>

#### 2002-2003 GALE JALT SIG Officers and Volunteers:

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#### HOW TO JOIN G.A.L.E. JALT SIG

Contact Diane Nagatomo, Membership Chair, [dsnagatomo@bekkoame.ne.jp](mailto:dsnagatomo@bekkoame.ne.jp) OR fill out the membership form and send it along with 10,000 to join/renew JALT and/or 1500 yen to join GALE SIG. (People outside of Japan see above 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).

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