

## **President's Address/Greetings: Language and Culture – Understanding Cultures Revisited**

Masahiko Minami, NCJTA President

Dear Members of NCJTA, Happy New Year!

My winter vacation was rather busy, spending the end of the year in Japan, the middle part of January in Hawaii. Every time I return to Japan, it stimulates me with new items. Even the new versions of the existing ones are impressive with their improvements and uniqueness. This time I was surprised by wild ideas of “animals,” “lucky charms,” and “flush drives shaped food samples (such as *toro-sushi*, *mentaiko*, *takoyaki*)” found at a mass retail stores of the electronics. I used a rented car traveling in Japan. A navigation system announced in Japanese was impressive. I was also surprised to find more self-service gas stations. I admired the way the change was given by reading bar codes on the receipt when purchased gas. I was of course hooked by the new kind of bread sold at bakeries. I also found “*ahona*” myself watching TV shows, such as ones by Razor Ramon HG who shouts the meaningless word “*FOO!*” and Kumi Koda who successfully changed her carrier from a singer to a comedian, late at night feeling *baka bakashii* (silly, silly).

However, I had a chance to learn seriously the traditional culture and language of Polynesia. “Aloha” means wide range of things such as “hello, good-night, good-by, love you, and love.” The word came to Hawaii from Polynesia more than 1,500 years ago, and still shares its similarity as dialects with their Polynesian counterparts. I found “alopha” in Samoan, “aroha” in Tahitian and “aloha” in Hawaiian, all of which mean “love,” are similar. There is no /r/ and /l/ distinction in pronunciation in Polynesian languages similar to Ural-Altai languages such as Japanese and Korean. Samoan “talofa” and Hawaiian “aloha” are also similar as greetings.

I lived in a town near Boston on the East Coast for ten years before came to here to teach at San Francisco State University (SFSU). It was about ten years ago. After moving to San Francisco, I was impressed by the fact that Japanese TV programs were broadcasted abundantly here. There was very limited number of Japanese programs broadcasted in Boston. We had to rent videos when we wanted to see them. We were happy and comfortable with this new environment. However, we soon found something was wrong, or different from what we see in Japan. The programs themselves are only 2-3 weeks old because they are imported from Japan. Soon we found that the advertisement or commercial segment inserted between the programs were ancient looking. When we watch programs in such frames, everything looks inevitably old. They looked not 2-3 weeks older, not 2-3 years older, but 20 or 30 years older. For example, we heard the announcement of a concert of an *enka-kashu* who was not heard of for so many years. I suspected such facts might have caused to make us feel odd. I also have read that a popular Japanese *enka-kashu* said “I found the Japanese atmosphere which was forgotten in Japan. I felt nostalgic and want to remember it to keep going,” after singing in front of Japanese Americans in California. Why this kind of phenomena keeps happening? It might have a possibility twenty years ago or even ten years ago, but we are in the modern society where the internet connects us instantly with remote places.

I teach a social linguistic seminar for graduate students titled "Language and Culture" at SFSU. I discuss there the above phenomena with the concept of "Center for Innovation." Immigrants crystallize the cultures they brought from their mother countries. As a result their emotional cultures tend to be preserved for a long period of time, sometimes over generations. However, in their mother countries, in Japan in this case, their cultures change with the passage of time. There is a gap between the speed of "the change of the culture" and that of "the change of the culture" which the immigrants bring out. The former is much faster. In Hawaii, the Japanese language is more widely used than in San Francisco and a free newspaper in Japanese, "*Nikon Sun*" is published. I found an advertisement of a new CD by a new group "*Sanarei*." Toshiaki Hidaka, one of *Mahina stars* (who the young people might never heard of) created this group together with a female vocalist. The new CD contains songs, which younger people have never heard of but are very familiar for the older generations, such as "*Kitakami-yakyoku*," "*Samui Aasa* (cold mornings)," and "*Dare Yori Mo Kimi O Aisu* (I love you more than anyone else)." I thought these songs are a part of their lives among the Japanese immigrants in Hawaii.

The above concept of "Center for Innovation" can be explained in languages by the fact that American English is closer to the English language of the Shakespeare's age than modern British English (which may upset the Americans) and French spoken by Canadians are older than that of France. Kunio Yanagita called "*kagyuu-koo*" of this phenomenon that dialects are distributed concentrically with the ancient capital as a center, and proposed a theory called "*hoogen-shuukenn-ron* (dialect circulation theory)." "*hoogen-shuukenn-ron*" is a theory of dialects circulation, which proposes the change of the language has occurred from the outside to inward when the same kind of words or sounds in dialects exist concentrically. Yanagita took the example of "snail." He found it is called "*namekuji*" in northern part of the Tohoku area and western part of the Kyusu area, "*tsuburi*" in Tohoku and Kyusu, "*katatsumuri*" in Kanto and Shikoku, "*maimai*" in Chubu and Shikoku, "*dede-mushi* (or *denden-mushi*)" in Kinki around Kyoto. From this distribution of the word, he concluded that Kyoto dialect of the word "*katatsumuri*" changed in the following fashion: "*namekuji*" → "*tsuburi*" → "*katatsumuri*" → "*maimai*" → "*dede-mushi*," and that then each word was spread to the east and the west as well as to the south and the north. This concept is a very interesting concept for understanding the languages and the cultures. (Please think which is older between "*aho*" and "*baka*." "*baka baka shii* (silly, silly)" or "*baka to hasami wa tsukai yoo* (a silly person and scissors are possibly useful depending on how they are used)" are used commonly, but not "*aho aho shii*" or "*aho to hasami wa tsukai yoo*" even in Kansai. These facts are some clues to which one, *aho* or *baka*, is older.)

In the previous newsletter, we announced that this year's theme at the spring and autumn conferences is "How to introduce the Japanese culture including pop cultures." The above mentioned flush drives shaped *toro-sushi*, *mentiko* or *takoyaki*, Razor Ramon HG (a comedian) and Kumi Koda (a singer) may be only temporary popular and will disappear. Or they might be already gone in Japan but popular in San Francisco when you are reading this news letter. However, there are some pop cultures which remain in the main stream such as "*Sanarei*" in Hawaii. We, the Japanese language instructors have an important role to introduce Japanese culture to the Japanese language learners. We tend to focus on something special. However, I believe that it is possible to see the structural and directional differences in thinking between Japan and US through these popular cultures. I also believe that we can feel the ties of "mutual

feelings/understanding” beyond cultural differences. Please join us at the second day of International Conference of Practical Japanese Linguistics (ICPLJ) held at SFSU on Saturday, March 4 and Sunday, March 5. Naomi Hanaoka-McGloin -sensei, the current president of Association of Teachers of Japanese will talk as a keynote speaker on “Te-iu ka.” As you may already know, ICPLJ aims to offer the chance to promote the exchange between the teachers who are actively involved in teaching the language and the researchers. Hanaoka-sensei will join us for lunch after the lecture and talk on the topic related to the Japanese culture. Please do join us at the conference.

### ***Report on the 2005 Fall Meeting/ Workshop***

Masahiko Minami

NCJTA's 2005 Fall Workshop was held from 2:10 to 4:00 on November 12, Sunday, as a part of FLANC conference. The workshop was presided over by Dr. Masahiko Minami of SFSU, the current president of NCJTA with “How to introduce the Japanese culture including pop cultures” as a topic. Presenters were Haruko Sakakibara of UC Davis, the former president of NCJTA and Yasuhiro Omoto of UC Berkeley representing college level, Fumiko Grant of City College of San Francisco representing community college level, Naoko McHale of Davis High School representing public high schools and Rie Tanaka of Woodside Priory representing private high schools. Power point by Tanaka-sensei and posters of McHale-sensei and other presentation showed us how the Japanese cultures are presented to the students of various levels. There was a heated panel discussion after the presentation. The workshop was held longer than expected.

### ***2006 Spring Officers' Meeting Report***

Sakakibara, Secretary

The Meeting began at 12:30 Saturday, January 21, 2006

Place: San Francisco State University

8 Officers attended: Minami, Morse, Iimura, Shimabe, Saito, Imase, Sakakibara, Tanaka,

#### **Agendas:**

1. NPO registration procedure (by Tanaka)  
NCJTA is registered as NPO with the secretary of state as of January 20, 2006 by Mr. Steve Doi, a lawyer.
2. Spring Workshop (by Minami)  
It is decided that the spring workshop will be held on the second day of ICPLJ, Sunday, March 5.  
NCJTA will sponsor the keynote speaker of that day.
3. Nichibei-kai Speech Contest (Iimura, Morse)  
Teachers wish Nichibei-kai take teachers' points view to consideration in speech contest. Shimabe-sensei will be a member of Nichibei-kai's speech contest committee. Officers hope Shimabe-sensei would convey our concerns to Nichibei-kai.

4. "Japanese Language Proficiency Test" (Minami)  
More than 500 took the test.
5. *Nichibei Times* article (Sakakibara)  
It is popular and will continue. The writers (of the article after May) are wanted.

## **Kotoba no Mado**

Atsuko Morse, College Preparatory School

"Every word has a rhythm. Read a poem and express it with your body! Let's study rhythm in English! Let us try, all together, Big Tree Big Tree Tall Tree ..." When I first came to America, I took a playful class of the rhythm in English as a part of ESL at an adult school. I started to think to teach the rhythm of words incorporating into teaching the Japanese language. Now I teach *Haiku* in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

I like *Haiku* first of all. *Haiku* and *Waka* also have 5-7-5 basic rhythm. *Kabuki* and *Joruri* scripts are written with this rhythm. I thought this 5-7-5 may be a basic rhythm of the Japanese language, although I am not an expert of Linguistics. I decided to teach how to write *Haiku* as well as reading them. However, I wondered if the students could actually write *Haiku*. They actually came up with some wonderful *Haiku* after counting sounds with left fingers and consulting dictionaries in their right hands. Please let me introduce some of them.

春の風、たくさんともだち うららかな  
ローレン・スタート class of 99

愛います。大きい空に、ヒバリ歌う  
エイサ・ソルウェイ class of 00

パスタ沸騰、食器きらめき、キッチン激怒  
ジョン・カウパーズワイト class of 00

夜半の日、洞窟おどる 消えうせる  
エレン・チョング class of 03

星の空、心一つに 恋人どうし  
ジュリア・リー class of 03

俳句書け、俳句書けない、俳句バカ  
マイケル・フィッシャー class of 05

## **2006 Workshop / Events**

### Announcement of conference

- 1) Performing Language: International Conference of Drama and Theatre in Second Language Education  
Feb. 3-5, 2006  
University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, CANADA
- 2) International Association of Asian Studies  
National Conference  
Feb. 13-18, 2006  
Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
<http://www.naaas.org/>
- 3) CARJ 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference  
March 4<sup>th</sup> (Sat) – March 5<sup>th</sup> (Sun), 2006  
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor  
The 5C's of the National Standard for Teaching Japanese  
<http://www.Isa.umich.edu/asian/Japanese/catj/index.html>
- 4) 21<sup>st</sup> Southeastern Association of Teachers of Japanese (SEATJ)  
March 18 (Sat) and 19<sup>th</sup> (Sun), 2006  
Washington and Lee University, in Lexington, Virginia
- 5) Fifth International Conference on Practical Linguistics of Japanese (ICPLJ)  
March 4 & 5, 2006  
The College of Humanities, San Francisco State University  
<http://www.sfsu.edu/~japanese/conference/>
- 6) The Association for Asian Studies Conference, which will be held in San Francisco  
April 6-9, 2006  
<http://www.aasianst.org/2006Workshop.html>  
Presentations related to ATJ's Special Interest Group are scheduled in the afternoon on April 6. The conference for the members are scheduled on April 8. Please see the details on the above web page.
- 7) NCOLCTL 2006  
The Ninth Annual Meeting of the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCLTL)  
"Expanding the LCTL Capacities in the United States."  
April 28-30, 2006  
Madison, WI (with a pre-conference workshop scheduled for April 27<sup>th</sup> )
- 8) Pragmatics in the CJK Classroom: The State of the Art  
June 5-7, 2006 – Hawaii, HI  
The University of Hawaii – Manoa National Resource Center

East Asia in conjugation with the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawaii – Manoa  
<http://www.hawaii.edu/nrcea/CJLCALFORPapers.html>

- 9) International Conference on Japanese Language Education (2006 ICJLE)  
August 5-6, 2006  
Columbia University, New York  
“Japanese Language Education: Entering a New Age”  
<http://www.japaneseteaching.org/icjle/>  
\*Please note that ATJ will have a joint conference with ICJLE, not with AAS this year.  
Please see the details on the web page above.

## **Announcements**

### **NCJTA became NPO.**

We are pleased to announce that NCJTA is NPO now with the completion of procedures which are reported at spring workshop, 2005.

We wish to expand our activities as a public organization from now on.

### **NCJTA Spring 2006 Workshop**

New members, and those who were absent from recent workshops, please join us!

Sunday, March 5, 1:15-2:15 p.m.

Location: San Francisco State University

For Directions and campus map, please visit <http://www.sfsu.edu/~sfsuemap>

10:45-11:45 a.m. HUM 133

Keynote Lecture Dr. Naomi Hanaoka McGloin

12:00-1:00

Lunch with Dr. Naomi Hanaoka McGloin

1:15-2:15

Spring workshop

### **Using Email Address List**

NCJTA started to use email to announce the timed information such as announcement of presentations on Japanese culture or concerts. The confirmation of NCJTA workshop date and time and the call for the newsletter articles will be made by email. Please understand that this emailing system will not be used to exchange opinions. We are using the addresses which are registered with us. We still need to organize the list. Please email us at [webmaster@viwvedo.com](mailto:webmaster@viwvedo.com) if you do not receive any emails from us. Omoto-sensei is in charge of this new system.

## ***Introduction of Teachers***

### **Akemi Uchima-sensei**

- 1) What is your name?  
My name is Akemi Uchima Decena.  
Mi in Akemi uses Traditional character. But I use Simplified letter, because Traditional character cannot be found often in word processing programs.
- 2) What is the name of the school(s) you teach?  
At many places  
City College, SF  
S.F. State University, SF  
Laney Collage, Oakland  
Soko Gakuen (Associate Coordinator), SF
- 3) How long have you been teaching?  
In late 1960s, I was working at the information center at Japanese Embassy in Manila, Philippines. People in Manila were eager to learn Japanese because of Expo 70 in Japan. I was asked to teach Japanese, and started to teach at the center.
- 4) What are your hobbies?  
I like singing, although I am not good at it, any singing from musical to opera songs.
- 5) Which part of Japan are you from?  
I am from Nakano-ku, Tokyo.
- 6) How long have you been in America?  
I came to the States in 1973.
- 7) Are there any thoughts on your job?  
I have been Associate Coordinator at Soko Gakuen and involved in administration. Soko offers classes for high school students to adults. Majority of the students are professional; mostly computer related or business related. Classes are small, from 5 to 19 students per class. Soko is a non-profit organization, and its tuition inexpensive. It is a nice place for an instructor to teach.  
My current challenge is how to teach a large class, since other places I am currently teaching have bigger classes.
- 8) Do you have any messages to NCJTA members?  
I go back to Japan twice a year, due to my mother's illness. When I went back Japan last time, an ANA representative at SFO called me "Sensei!," and told me "I was able to be hired here because of the Business Japanese you taught me." I feel particularly happy to be a Japanese language instructor at such moments.

I am sometimes unable to attend NCJTA workshops due to my work on Saturdays. However, I enjoy learning other people's method of teaching when I can attend. Our job is really never-ending project!

### **Kyoko Suda-sensei**

- 1) What is your name?  
My name is Kyoko Suda.
- 2) What is the name of the school(s) you teach?  
I teach at a private university in San Francisco.
- 3) How long have you been teaching?  
I have been teaching Since the 1990s. I had a chance to teach as TA at San Francisco State University, when I was a student for master's degree there. I started to teach at Soko Gakuen after that.
- 4) What are your hobbies?  
I feel sad that I have nothing particular as a hobby. My hobby is to do a little bit with anything. I was a member of a tennis club in my school days, and love to play tennis.
- 5) Which part of Japan are you from?  
I was born in Hiratuka-shi, Kanagawa, which is famous its Tanabata festival. I was raised in Koyama-shi, in southern Tochigi, since the early school years,
- 6) How long have you been in the United States of America?  
I came to America in June 1983.
- 7) Are there any thoughts on your job?  
A long time ago, when I was still a student for master's degree, one professor of teaching method of English told me , " Teaching languages is the same as performing on the stage." I connected his words with "一期一会" (Treasure every encounter, for it will never recur.) in tea ceremony and go to class thinking, "This is my first and last stage (class), thank you for coming." (I do not pretend to be an actress, of course.) There are times that I think, "The activities I prepared were not good," or "I talked too much." But I feel that I can teach class joyfully with surging energy when I think this way. I have been teaching Japanese for a long time, but I still do make mistakes, self reflect and bounce back. I am trying not to lose the energy, vitality.
- 8) Do you have any messages to NCJTA members?  
I have been unable to attend the workshops recently. After being interviewed this way, I would like to be a participant of the workshop as much as possible. See you there.

## **Editors' Notes**

Dear members, you must be busy working hard after the spring semester has begun. This newsletter is enriched with full range of topics regarding teaching the Japanese language. We are waiting for your input. Please let us know your opinions, questions and thoughts.

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