

President's Address/Greetings: When we change our point of view, we can see something new

Masahiko Minami, NCJTA President

Dear members of NCJTA, Happy New Year! How did you spend your New Year? I spent the end of the year and New Year in Japan as usual. For this trip, I decided to travel with the business class. As soon as I boarded on the plane, a flight attendant took my coat and hanged it with care so that I did not have to push my coat in the cabinet over my head. As soon as I had taken my seat, the flight attendant brought a glass of orange juice and champagne. The meals were served with ceramic containers, instead of plastic containers, on tablecloth, and drinks such as champagne and wine were served continuously. It was a pleasant experience, which was very different from my usual trip in economy class. Moreover, on my way back to San Francisco from Japan, I even received a bottle of French champagne because the meals weren't served on time.

At the same time, I recalled my experience when I took a flight from the same airline several years ago. At that time, I was doing some research on language development indicators with funding from Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from Japan Society for the Promotion of Science in Japan. It was the time when I was going to attend the meeting at Gakushi Kaikan in Kanda Nishiki-town in the district of Chiyoda, Tokyo. After the boarding for the first class and business class was over, the boarding for economy class began. When I boarded the plane, I bumped into a flight attendant who was carrying a cup of orange juice, and my jacket got wet badly with the orange juice. I just stood there in utter amazement. On the other hand, the flight attendant stared at me for some time, and stuck out a towel abruptly without saying a word. I ended up going to Japan – even attending the meeting with the orange-color stained jacket. I recalled this miserable event when I boarded on the plane as a business class customer. I thought that at that time the flight attendant regarded me a sort of obstacle for her to serve customers of the first class and business class.

The reason why I am writing this story is to talk about a possibility of different interpretations of the event. We tend to judge events based on our fixed viewpoints, but when we change our viewpoints, we will have different perspectives. This is a story when I was a high school student. In my classroom, there are a couple of students from Wakayama prefecture. When they said “*Boku aru de*” (I am here), I vividly remember that I felt odd about their language usage. Both “*iru*” and “*aru*” are stative verbs, but when they use as existential verbs, the usage is different. “*iru*” is used for living things (animate) and “*aru*” is used for non-living things (inanimate). The distinction of living and non-living matter influences a choice of predicate. So I felt odd about the combination of “*boku*” and “*aru*.” At the same time, I probably felt that the combination had to be “*boku*” and “*iru*”

This story does not lead to the argumentation of superiority of lingua franca or standard language. In old Japanese, “*aru*” is used for people, and if this is the case, there is no issue on the utterances such as “*boku aru*.” In the case of Wakayama prefecture, when old Japanese “*aru*” arrived at Kii peninsula, the language was preserved as it was and remained in that remote region since there is Pacific Ocean beyond that point. That is, the language was easily locked up in the

peninsula and preserved in remote areas. When we teach “*aru*” and “*iru*” in elementary language classes, we don't permit such a usage. This is because teachers follow prescriptive grammar in Japanese language class. So when we take a look at the use of language from descriptive grammar based on observations, we will be able to see something very different. When we use “*zenzen*,” Japanese language teachers do not accept the use of affirmative expression with “*zenzen*.” “*Zenzen*” is naturally used with negative expression, but recently young people use “*zenzen*” with affirmative expressions such as “*zenzen daijyobu*.” We tend to view that “*zenzen*” with negation or negative expressions are the correct usage. Indeed, Japanese language textbooks instruct the use of “*amari*” and “*zenzen*” with “*masen* (negation).” However, “*zenzen*” without negation has been used from old days. In fact, during Meiji period, “*zenzen*” was used with affirmative expressions, and these usages were found in literatures of Mori Ogai and Natsume Soseki during Meiji and Taisho periods. We can find this use of old expressions among young people, which is often being criticized. We also find old expressions among expressions that people may regard as new expressions. For example, when we look at “*nantomo nayamashii toshi no se da*,” we imagine that the end of year may have sensual events. This actually described a difficult situation of a baseball contract negotiator, with bitter smile, who had not been successful in negotiating contract renewal with all of main baseball players by the end of the year and would have to deal with it in coming New Year.

Youth language has been criticized as disorderly use of language. In the last several years, there are some instances that those expressions have been created in some region and spread over the nation. At the same time, as I described above, some youth languages are based on old expressions and dialects. It is important to think about why they have come to be used in this manner from the perspective of description grammar. Of course, when we teach, there are many instances that we should only teach prescription grammars. However, when we say that these usages are “different from prescriptive Japanese,” there are many instances that we “cannot simply judge those language changes as correct or incorrect.” I think that we need to have a different perspective and/or multiple perspectives on the change of the language usage.

We will have a variety of events this spring. On Sunday, March 11, there was a speech contest for elementary students at the Japan information center, General Consulate of Japan at San Francisco. On Sunday, March 25, there was a workshop on “How to use technology in Japanese language classes.” From NCJLT members, Imase sensei (middle school representative), Takamatsu sensei (high school representatives), and Masuyama sensei and Searce sensei (university/college representatives) made presentations. Both events were well received. California Language Teachers Association (CLTA) conference will be held at Hyatt Regency Hotel, Santa Clara from Thursday, March 29 to Sunday, April 1. On Sunday, May 6, NCJLT Spring Conference will be held at San Francisco State University. We invited Dr. Emiko Konomi who taught at California State University, Monterey Bay and is currently teaching at Mountain View High School. She will talk about how to teach Japanese at high schools and colleges, and her presentation title is “Practical pedagogy focusing on context.” Please come and join us.

Report on 2006 Fall Conference

Masahiko Minami

NCJTA 2006 fall conference was held on Saturday, November 11 as the afternoon session of the FLANC conference at UC Berkeley. The theme of this panel discussion is "How to teach Japanese using anime, manga, fashion." Prof. Yoko Shioiri Clark, California State University, East Bay, talked about anime "*Majo no takkyu bin* (Kiki's delivery service)" with Ms. Yuriko Miyamoto (technical support). Clark sensei thought of the use of anime when she was teaching intermediate Japanese to motivate her students' learning. After having watched many anime, she decided to choose Miyazaki Osamu's Kiki's delivery service because of the following reasons: the language is presented beautifully; male, female, polite, regular and informal speech are present; and content is cheerful and positive. Every Friday, she introduced a part of the anime, and conducted listening, reading, and kanji practice. She shared her material at the conference. Prof. Miyo Uchida, University of California, Davis, talked about "Japanese language and culture teaching using anime." She talked about "how to enhance students' interest, concentration, positive attitudes towards learning through Japanese anime and manga." She also discussed how to introduce an review grammar points and vocabularies through these visual materials appeal to students' various senses.

2007 Spring Officers' Meeting Report

Kazue Masuyama, Secretary

Date/Time: Sunday, January 28 at 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Place: University of California, Berkeley

Attended: Minami, Saito, Clark, Imase, Morse, Kambara, Tashiro, Tanaka, Masuyama

Agendas:

1. Nichibei-kai Speech Contest
The Japan Information Center, General Consulate of San Francisco, reported on the Speech Contest in March 11. Several officers requested to give awards to many participants and clarify the scoring methods of speech contest for the adult speech contest.
2. Japanese Language Proficiency Test by Minami sensei
There was a drastic increase in the number of test takers from 400 to 540. This could be due to the presence of "repeaters" (the ones passed Level 4 took Level 3; the ones passed Level 3 took Level 2). More helpers are needed to administrate this test.
3. Membership fee
The officers agreed with the increase of the membership fee to \$15. Students' membership fee remained \$5.
4. Strategies to reduce the cost of dissemination of newsletters
The officers agreed that they would take a poll about sending the newsletter via email at the Spring Conference.

5. Web page
In order to rejuvenate NCJLT, the officers agreed to post school/college links on the NCJLT webpage
6. Officers' vacancy
The officers agreed to announce the vacancy of three officers' positions: (1) newsletter editor (after Tanaka sensei); (2) representative of elementary school after (Itamura sensei); (3) FLANC lesion (after Clark sensei). Tanaka sensei, Itamura sensei, Clark sensei, thank you very much for many years of your service for NCJLT.

Kotoba no Mado No. 8

“Google and I” by Kazue Masuyama, California State University, Sacramento

Well, I have to teach Japanese cultural concepts “wabi and sabi”. A couple of technical and specialized books on the desk are “sitting” on the desk as if they would like to order me to “open the book right away.” However, my fingers have already been typing key words on my computer. In fact, in the last couple of years, my biggest helper to search out words has been google. Instantly, a list of websites for “wabi” and “sabi” appeared on the computer screen. First of all, I would say that Wikipedia always appears without fail. Wikipedia is called something like “toilet seat of public bathroom” since it is the site that anyone can edit anytime and we really don't know who visited the site – as if we don't know who “sat” on the toilet seat in the public bathroom. I also recalled a university course syllabus that states students should not use Wikipedia when they write papers. As I scanned and skimmed the information on Wikipedia, I began my “stroll” to various sites. While I was visiting a number of sites, run by experts and educational organizations, time passed quickly.

Suddenly, the title “Ashikaga Yoshimasa, who has no talent in politics, but who is a genius for his sense of beauty. Ashikaga Yoshimasa who discovered Japan's beauty” by Donald Keene appeared in front of me. In a webpage that collects old Japanese, “wabi” describes as “to worry about, to feel sad, to feel lonely.” In a column that a company president wrote, “wabi” is described as “imperfect beauty” which was sought out by Sen no Rikyu who accomplished tea ceremony as an art form, and it was also explained as “elegant simplicity that abandoned extravagance and arrogance.” Further, he added wabi as life philosophy by saying, “in modern society, one should not be captured by current secular social values such as wealth, power, and fame, but seeks out the highest virtue beyond its time and one's social status.” “Sabi” is described as “the ideal circumstance of Basho's Haiku world,” and indicated as “loneliness or total isolation” and seek out some meaning of “continuously changing ruthless world.” It was added to seek out beauty that are free from interest of others and complicated human relationships and be coincident with the nature. I added the last slide that included my own interpretation of wabi and sabi into PowerPoint, and said to myself “I am ready for the class.”

It has been while since I taught Japanese culture course. I am often surprised by patchwork of meaningless paragraphs in students' essays. I thought that students have engaged themselves into

googling information, captured a piece of knowledge that is running like a revolving lantern in front of them, and cut and paste those information without much thought. Then, they felt that they have done some research. For this generation, digital native, I wonder if they really digest an ample amount of information as their knowledge when they can get the information “instantly” by simply typing? It seems that this generation may look knowledgeable but they have not quite digested overwhelming amounts of information and gain them as knowledge. In my junior high school and high school days, my favorite subject was history. I spent at least two to three hours a day on creating my own history note using color after the history classes. I still have those notebooks and they are my treasure. While I have benefited tremendously by the use of google, I feel that my old hand-written notes may lead me to the wonder of learning more substantially than a large amount of information instantly obtained through google. Actually, I am having digestive problems just like digital natives.

Today, I am googling again. I found that a new meaning of *nara* in Nara period. It is a Korean language and the meaning of *nara* is country. When Korean people came to Nara region in ancient times, they would want to make their own country and named the place “*nara* (country).” I also found another theory that Nara is named after its geographical feature, *nadaraka* (gently-sloping) because it contrasts with the meaning of *yamato* in the Yamato period, which means “mountain gate” or “mountain place.” I must make my own history note in order not to have this new knowledge disappear instantly.

2007 Workshop / Events

- Speech Contest for Elementary School Students
Date/Time: Sunday, March 11
Location: The Japan Information Center, General Consulate of Japan at San Francisco

- Workshop
Date/Time: Sunday, March 25
Registration: 10:30 am, Session: 11 am - 2:40 p.m. (noon-1:30 pm: lunch networking; 2:20-2:40: questions and answers
Location: The Japan Information Center, General Consulate of Japan at San Francisco
Presenters:
11:00 a.m. – noon, Imase sensei (middle school), Takamatsu sensei (high school)
1:30 pm – 2:20 pm, Community college: Scarce sensei (community college), Masuyama sensei (university)
Topic: How to use technology in Japanese language class

- California Language Teachers Association (CLTA) Conference
Date/Time: Thursday, March 29 – Sunday, April 1 from 8 am to 6:30 pm.
Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel, Santa Clara.

Report from Account (Saito sensei)

We have not raised the \$10 membership fee for a long time. At the officers' meeting, we decided to raise the membership fee to \$15 (the membership for students remain \$5). We will ask for your approval at the Spring conference and then implement this plan. If you pay the membership fee before the Spring conference, it would be \$10.00. However, when you pay the membership fee at the Spring conference and after the conference, your membership fee would be \$15.00. There is a membership application form with this newsletter. Please use it.

NCJTA Spring 2007 Conference

Date/Time: Sunday, May 6, 1:00 pm – 4:00 p.m.

Location: San Francisco State University (College of Humanities) HUM 115

Presenter: Konomi Emiko

Title: How to teach Japanese at high schools and colleges

Introduction of Emiko Konomi sensei

She received her M.A. degree from Nihon Women's University and her Ph.D. from Cornell University. She taught Japanese at Bucknell University, Williams College, and University of Maryland as an assistant Japanese professor. While she teaches a teacher training program at Ohio State University and Cornell University, she has been teaching Japanese at Mountain View High school. At the Spring conference, she will talk about practical Japanese language pedagogy using context. Please come to join the conference.

Introduction of Teachers

Introduction of Manami Tanaka sensei

- 1) What's your name?
My name is Manami Tanaka.
- 2) What is the name of the school you teach?
I will start teaching at a newly built university called Tokyo Mirai University in the district of Ashidate, Tokyo, from this April.
- 3) How long have you been teaching?
Since 1995.
- 4) What is your hobby(s)?
I have many hobbies. I love to eat delicious food and travel. I have a certified koto instructor of Ikutaryu Tsukushikai, and a tea instructor of Urasenke.
- 5) Which part of Japan are you from?
I am from Nagoya prefecture.
- 6) How long have you been in the United States of America?
I came to the states in 1985. Since then, I have lived in San Francisco.
- 7) Are there any thoughts on your job?
I will launch into a new job in Japan. I have some worries about it and will dearly miss San Francisco where I lived so long. I plan to come back to San Francisco someday. So I will take this challenge as a new professional opportunity and want to come back to San Francisco later.
- 8) Do you have any messages to NCJTA Members?
I have privilege to serve as a newsletter editor by now. I will not be able to see you, but I look forward to meeting everyone someday in San Francisco or Tokyo.

Tazumi Scarce sensei

- 1) What's your name?
My name is Tazumi Scarce.
- 2) What is the name of the school(s) you teach?
I teach Mission College in Santa Clara city in the south bay and De Anza College in Cupertino city. I also teach online course offered at the University of Maryland.
- 3) How long have you been teaching?
I taught Japanese as a teaching assistant in 1990. Then, I did not teach some years and started teaching in 1998.

4) What is your hobby(s)?

My hobby is sport and drawing. In Japan, I devoted myself in playing volleyball since my high school days and I also served as a coach at one time. Since my arrival in the states, I used to participate in volleyball practice once a week. I was surprised by the fact that both men and women practice together here. These days, I began to practice naginata, long sword. Naginata is one of martial arts practiced by women, and the amount of exercise is appropriate. In my practice, Kogatendouryu, which is similar to iaido (art of drawing the Japanese sword), my teacher is a 60 year old. However, my teacher belongs to young teacher since I was told that the highest peak as the instructor is at the age of 80. I am not good at drawing, but I use my skills to develop teaching materials.

5) Which part of Japan are you from?

I was born in Osaka and grew up in Sakai.

6) How long have you been in the United States of America?

It has been over 20 years or so.

7) Are there any thoughts on your job?

I learned a teaching concept of "Lower the difficulty of learning while maintaining the quality of teaching" at my credential course. I always keep this in my mind when I teach.

8) Do you have any messages to NCJTA members?

Our profession is very busy and stressful, but have you been doing anything to release your stress? Please create time that you can relax yourself. Naginata is a good way to release stress with kiai (spirit) and practice vocalization. So I recommend this to teachers. For more information, please visit <http://www.naginata.org/ncnf.html>.

Editors' Notes

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

I would like to thank Tanaka Manami sensei for serving as a newsletter editor. She will work as a faculty as well as campus adviser at Tokyo Mirai University. We truly appreciate her dedication to the NCJLT and wish her continued success and happiness.

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