

President's Address/Greetings: Traditional Japanese Culture, Changing Japanese Culture in Japan, and Japanese Language Learning

Masahiko Minami, NCJTA President

Dear Members of the NCJTA,

I hope you had enjoyable summer holidays. I assume some of you visited Japan and discovered something different from the past. Did you find the changed Japanese culture fascinating? Or did you feel it incompatible? Recently, I attended Mr. Baisho Matsumoto's *Shamisen* concert held in the Consulate General of Japan at San Francisco. It was supposed to be a traditional Japanese cultural performance; however, Mr. Matsumoto performed not only Japanese songs but also Western songs using Tsugaru *Shamisen*, Akita *Shamisen*, and Japanese flute. His performance was so energetic and exciting and his lecture was so interesting that I was completely overwhelmed. He continuously conducts *Shamisen* performances overseas dedicating himself in introducing Japanese culture to school-age children. When he came to the United States for the first time, he believed that Japanese people abroad and Japanese Americans must have hardship and tough lives. However, he found those Japanese and Japanese Americans have cheerful and positive attitudes. He said he was given amazing 'energy and confidence' from them.

In San Francisco State University, I teach graduate-level linguistics courses: (1) a sociolinguistics seminar, which covers such areas as cognitive semantics, pragmatics, geographical linguistics, and dialectal geography; such as cultural anthropology and multi-cultural psychology, and (2) a second language acquisition seminars, which covers such areas as psycholinguistics, applied linguistics, and language education. One of the topics that I often take up in these seminars is "effect of cultural recognition." A research of multicultural psychology shows that the culture that a group of immigrants, for instance, Asians, have brought and cherished in the United States is more collective and traditional than their original culture. To understand that immigrants are more traditional than those in their motherland, we have to analyze the facts: First, when people migrate, they also bring their culture into the United States. Their genuine culture is crystallized in their psyche so that their cultural model is transferred to the generation to generation. The majorities of immigrants maintain their cultural identity while learning how to survive in the new multicultural environments. They eventually find their original cultural identity is the one they should respect for and/or be proud of. By means of that belief, they are able to live in a new land and admire their cultural tradition and heritage. To maintain their identity in the new culturally diversified society, they need to recognize their cultural background.

One of my students in San Francisco State University has a middle name, Otojiro. I heard this was a pedigree name succeeded from his grandfather, to father, and to him. However, "Otojiro" is not a usual name these days, and I believe Japanese parents seldom name their sons "Otojiro." That means the immigrants transfer their genuine culture itself to the next generations. On the other hand, the culture in their motherland is constantly changing." Even if their motherland's culture changes, their authentic culture in the new

land stays unchanged. That is, as I wrote above, we can easily speculate that when immigrant groups arrive in the U.S.A., they bring with them the culture of their native group *at that time*. The immigrant group crystallizes their culture – the one that they brought with them at the time – and it is this psychological culture that is communicated across generations of immigrant groups. As they are immersed within a multicultural society, the stress from multicultural life in a different world contributes to the cultural reaffirmation effect. As time passes, however, the native culture group may actually undergo cultural change, while the immigrant group is transmitting the original cultural system they brought with them. After some time, if you compare the immigrant group with the native cultural group on cultural values, you will find that the immigrant group is actually more conforming to the original cultural stereotype than the native group is, because of the crystallization of their culture over time while the native culture has changed. Therefore, it is said that the immigrants' culture is more traditional or more authentic, in other words, it is perceived as a stereotype.

“Fossilization” is a linguistics jargon used in the second-language acquisition. This refers to a case that a certain misrepresentation is not corrected during his/her learning process and the incorrect usage remains forever. The history of Japanese immigrants began in the 19th century. They built Japan towns in the West Coast and some other states. There is Japan town in San Francisco, where many Japanese and Japanese American are living. This year is the 100th year anniversary for the Japan Town in San Francisco. On July 24th the symposium regarding the identity change of Japanese American is held as one of the anniversary events. To summarize the symposium, the Japanese Americans reinforced their civil rights by emphasizing the distance between Japan and themselves and promising loyalty to the United States. Nevertheless the Japanese American culture was based on the old Japanese culture in the Meiji era, which is described as “fossilized” culture according to the presenter from the symposium. In this case, the term, fossilization, does not necessarily mean negativity; however, it also implies that a certain misrepresentation is not corrected during his/her learning process and the incorrect usage remains forever as invalid usage. Therefore, it may bother some Japanese people. Actually, in the second-language acquisition field, the usage of the term, ‘fossilization,’ is avoided these days; then a new term, ‘stabilization’ is used instead. I set the argument over these terminologies aside. We are able to see the issue that immigrants are more traditional—crystal of traditional Japanese culture.

2006 Spring Workshop Report

NCJTA 2006 Spring Workshop was held from 12:00 to 1:30 on March 5th, Sunday, on the second day of International Conference of Practical Linguistics of Japanese (ICPLJ). The guest speaker was Dr. Naomi Hanaoka McGloin from the University of Wisconsin Madison. Questions were raised regarding the methods to use her book, *Intermediate Japanese* and the upcoming new edition of the series. During the workshop, Dr. Kazue Masuyama at California State University, Sacramento was recommended as the new Vice President of NCJTA, and it was approved.

2006 Fall Officers' Meeting Report (by Sakakibara, Secretary)

The Meeting began at 12:00 Sunday, Aug. 27, 2006

Place: The College Preparatory School

10 Officers attended: Minami, Imase, Kambara, Clark, Morse, Saito, Sakakibara, Shimabe, Tanaka, Masuyama

Agendas:

1. Topics for the Fall Workshop with Foreign Language Association of Northern California
2. How to keep up with the officers' register of names: Secretary will fill in the updates of the length of terms of each officer, and the president will be responsible.
3. We will continue our series of column writing in *Nichibeï Times*. The purpose of this activity is to create more ties between educational endeavors at schools and the community. It will also contribute to the record keeping of the history of Japanese teaching in this area.
4. Next "Japanese Language Proficiency Test" will be on Sunday, Dec.3.
5. Nailing down the procedures and process of the publication of next Newsletter.
6. To vitalize the activity of NCJTA, we can consider the creation of "Junior Board" in addition to the current "Senior Board." This idea is to give opportunities for the graduate students and the graduates of CSSF to work with us and prepare them to become the main members of NCJTA in the future. (Currently, Kosaka, Urayama, Imase are the members of the Junior Board.)
7. The advertisement of Temple University Study Abroad Program can be put on our web with their contribution of \$200 per year.
8. Among the officers, the representative to attend FLANC (Foreign Language Association of Northern California) is supposed to alternate with someone from California Japanese Language Teachers Association. Negotiation is necessary.
9. We seem to be able to attain the qualification to become a non-profit organization by the end of this year. The cost will be about \$740.

2006 Workshops and Events

•Along with San Francisco Japanese Consulate, we are going to offer the workshop on "Future Directions for Culture Teaching and Learning." Please see the information from the Consulate regarding the schedule and how to apply for it. College educators are interested in how to incorporate the teaching of the

Japanese culture in the language classroom. High school educators are interested in the culture teaching especially because it is one of the topics used in AP programs, and they believe teaching of the culture is an integral part of the language classes. Based on such needs, this workshop was planned.

The guest speaker is going to be Dr. Seiichi Makino from Princeton University. His main topic will be the validity of the consideration of Culture as Universal aspect. Linguistic aspects have been viewed as universal factors for some time now, but he believes that the other cultural aspect, which is left after the linguistic aspect is eliminated, still remains with universal factors. In that sense, each culture possesses the element of foreign factors as well as universal factors. Dr. Makino is the author of the textbook, *Nakama*, and he has published the *Dictionary of Basic Grammar of Japanese* and the *Dictionary of Japanese Grammar for Intermediate Level* as well. He is also renowned for his presidency at Association of Teachers of Japanese. In addition, he was the head coordinator of the International Conference on Japanese Language Education held on Aug. 5th and 6th in New York. We would like to find answers to our questions of how to teach culture in our classes in his lecture as well as in our question and answer session. It will be great if we can gain some knowledge we can reflect upon our future curriculum.

Please tell your colleagues to attend this workshop with you.

• **Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC)**
Saturday, Nov. 11th at University of California, Berkeley (Dwinelle Hall)

Registration	8:30am – 9:00
1 st Session	9:30 – 9:50
Welcome	10:10 – 10:30
Exhibition	10:30 – 11:00
2 nd session	11:00 – 11:50
Lunch/Exhibition	11:50 – 1:00
3 rd Session	1:00 – 1:50
Exhibition	1:50 – 2:00
4 th session/NCJTA MEETING	2:10 – 4:00 pm

During the above workshop, there is a presentation for Japanese teachers, titles as “Designing Supplementary Grammar Courses for Intermediate Japanese” by Prof. Wakae Kambara and Dr. Yoko Hasegawa and “Computerized Placement Tests-SPOT” by Dr. Seiichiro Inaba.

As usual, NCJTA Fall workshop will be held as a part of the session of the FLANC workshop, from 2:10 to 4:00. Prof. Yoko Clark is planning a panel discussion of “How to Incorporate Anime, Cartoon and Fashion in Teaching Japanese.” Prof. Miyo Uchida at UC Davis, and Mrs. Hideko Akashi at Marin Academy High School, Mrs. Yuriko Miyamoto at UC Davis are scheduled to participate in this discussion as panelists.

Kotoba no Mado

Lost in Translation and Japanese Culture

Tazumi Scarse, De Anza College/Mission College

In my sixth-grade days, I learned how to translate a famous haiku created by Matsuo Basho, a legendary poet in Japan, into English: "The sound of the water splash that a toad makes jumping into an old pond." According to my elementary-school teacher, we have to add an onomatopoeic sound, CHAPON. Significantly, it is not easy to teach an onomatopoeic sound to an English-speaking learner. It is assumed that if a reader of this haiku poem is a native speaker of Japanese, s/he spontaneously hears "Chapon." However, a native speaker of English does not hear "Chapon" when s/he reads the direct translation of this haiku. That time I had not learned English yet and thought English was an inconvenient and strange language. This is an exact example of "Lost in Translation." After I started to study English, I gradually recognized fundamental differences between Japanese and English. When I began to teach Japanese in the United States, this became a very serious issue. Several years ago after my mother passed away, I took a cable car on the way to Mt. Koya. A pre-recorded announcement for tourists read another of Basho's famous haiku, "父母のしきりに恋しき雉の声—a pheasant's cluck (that makes me feel) miss mother and father." I, who was in a sentimental mood carrying my late mother's remains, felt as if I actually had heard a pheasant's sharp cluck in the forest. I even experienced heartache; at the same time, I admired Basho and appreciate the depth of Japanese language. I believe there is a resonance effect in Japanese.

In Western languages based on the nomadic people's culture, it is essential to emphasize the clear rhetoric to communicate with strangers. On the contrary, in the Japanese society based on the rice-cultivation culture, a clear communication was not as important as the Western nomadic culture. In old Japan, almost all the same members lived together in a village for years. Geographically, Japan has a little land compared to the mountainous areas, and the fast river flow made the irrigation job hard so that the entire community had to cooperate with each other. The members of a village worked together on the rice field. Whether to survive or not depended upon the natural conditions and village members' collaboration. It was a village-scale survival. In this society, people could read each other's minds without expressing the clear communication. Japanese language was created in this kind of society. It is said that the Yamato language is of relatively poor vocabulary; however, its ambiguous expression has multiple connotation and metaphoric functions. At the same time, Japanese communication pattern is based on one that both a speaker and listener understand each other because a listener interprets properly even if a speaker's expressions are unclear. It is said that English is digital-type using elaborate codes while Japanese is an analog-style language with mysterious secret codes. In Japan the Zen culture also flourished. In Zen the truth is more than the words; the truth is recognized via meditation; silence does not mean speechless; silence is equivalent as words. The resonance effect seen in Haiku is an example that silence is emitting hidden words.

Also, the natural environment in Japan is an important factor that contributed to Japanese culture. It is common that foreigners visiting Japan express the beauty of old capitals like Kyoto and Nara. Besides, majority of them appreciate the natural scenery of the seashores and mountains in Japan. Japan's volcanic areas often appeal attractive natural

geographical views. Moreover, the gigantic oceans surrounding Japan protected Japanese people from colonization so that Japan enriched its distinctive culture without pressure from overseas. Furthermore, the weather is relatively mild monsoon and provides unique four seasons. A country under such conditions must be rare in the world. The Japanese culture developed in this environment does not confront the nature unlike the Western culture. People accept nature and live with nature. Sky, ground, ocean, river, plants, insects, birds and animals are the main characters or sub characters that are inevitable to Japanese people's lives.

We sometimes hear that the songs of insects may be annoying to Americans. With the virtue called 'manifest destiny' in the 19th century, the pioneers traveled towards the West. For them nature was something to confront, challenge, and conquer. They might not have room to enjoy listening to insect's noise. However, in Japan the songs of insects have been favored, and there are plenty of works that appreciate the insect songs.

この野に虫ども放たせ給ひて、風すこし涼しくなり行く夕暮れに、渡り給ひつつ、
虫の音を聞き給ふやうにて、げにこえごえ聞えたる中に鈴虫のふり出たるほどは
なやかにをかし (Tale of Genji)

秋の野に道まどひぬ松虫の声するかたに宿や借らまし (Kokinshu)

I started with the Haiku of Basho: 古池や蛙飛び込む水の音. I think it an interesting challenge for a Japanese teacher to teach the Japanese culture that praises natural energy, cherishes the small creatures, and transmits hidden onomatopoeic sound in this Haiku.

References:

Bowers, C.A. (1989). *The cultural dimensions of educational computing: Understanding the non-neutrality of technology.*

Kin'daichi, H. (1992). *Nihon'go no bumpo o kangaeru.*

Stewart, E. Bennett, M. (1991). American cultural pattern's: a cross-cultural perspective.

Tsujioka, H. (1996). Pragmatic competence: Making of requests by native speakers and second language learners of Japanese.

www.co.jo/aki/uta.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/manifest_destiny

Information from the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco

1) Seminar for Japanese Teachers

Cosponsored by Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco and NCJTA

12:30 Sunday, Oct. 29, 2006

The guest speaker is Dr. Seiichi Makino at Princeton University.

He is the author of books such as "Language and Culture of In and Out Society" And "Japanese Basic Grammar Dictionary/" His topic will be how to view the aspect of culture in teaching, and the teaching method of the topics of culture.

Place: Japan Information Center at Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco
50 Fremont Street, Suite 2200 (22F)
San Francisco, CA 94105
http://www.sf.us.emb-japan.go.jp/em/e_m01_05.htm)

Schedule:

12:30 Admission

1:00~2:00 Participants' Information Exchange

Common concerns for Teaching Japanese

2:15~3:45 Lecture "Consideration of the Commonality of Culture" by Dr. Seiichi Makino (Princeton University)

3:50~4:50 Questions and Answers

If you are attending this seminar, please contact Ms. Takahashi by Oct. 25th.
The first come, first served. Tel" 415-356-2461 Email: education@cgjsf.org
Admission is free.

2) 33rd Annual Japanese Speech Contest

This year, the speech contest will be held on Sunday, Nov. 5 at Japan Information Center at Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco 50 Fremont Street, Suite 2200 (22F) San Francisco, CA 94105.

The morning contest is for junior and high school students, and the afternoon contest is for college students and adults.

***Qualification for participants College students and Adults section**

1. Above 18 years old. 2. Should hold citizenship or green card
 3. No experience of staying in Japan for more than 2 years continuously after age 6
- *If you have been awarded 1st place in this contest previously, you cannot apply.

The 1st to 3rd prizewinners will be awarded trophies and monetary award.
Also, one participant will receive a round ticket to Japan, by Japan Air Line.
If you are interested, please contact the office of Japan-America Society at 415-921-1782 or Jo Naito at 415-409-0186.

***Qualification for participants for Junior and Senior High School Section**

Students should not have lived in Japan longer than one year after age 6. Prizewinners will be awarded honorable certificates, monetary award and gifts. If you have been awarded 1st place in this contest previously, you cannot apply. Participants will be divided into two groups: one for those who use Japanese at home in daily life, and the other, who do not. Winners will be selected in each group. We will accept recommendation by the Japanese teacher. Each school can recommend one student, and the others an alternate. If you are interested in application, please contact 415-356-2461 or at education@cgjsf.org.

Application for Junior and Senior High School Section is taken care of at the Japan Information Center.

Application for College students and Adults is due 5:00pm on Friday, Oct. 20.

3) JET Program

The Japan Exchange & Teaching (JET) Program invites young college and University graduates from overseas to participate in international exchange and foreign language education throughout Japan as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and Coordinators for International Relations (CIRs). The program is cosponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology: the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications and local governments throughout Japan, in cooperation with the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR). Begun in 1987 with fewer than 1,000 participants, the JET Program has grown tremendously. Today, the program is one of the world's largest international exchange programs with over 3,500 participants taking part in the program this year from 44 different countries. Nearly half of these participants are from the United States. Participants are invited to Japan as representatives of their home countries and play an important role in promoting mutual understanding between nations. Although no language skills are necessary (for ALT position), successful JET Program applicants must have a strong sense of responsibility, a genuine interest in learning about Japan, and must be able to adapt to a different culture and new situations. Applications for the 2007 JET Program will become available in early October 2006. To request information or to be placed on the application mailing list for the 2007 JET Program, please contact the Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco at jet@cgjsf.org or 415-356-2462

Japanese Language Proficiency Test will be held

Japan Foundation has been conducting Japanese Language Proficiency Test for the learners of Japanese inside and outside Japan since 1984. It is a method to measure and certify the level of Japanese learning objectively and publicly. In the west coast, Los Angeles used to be the only place for this test, but San Francisco became another place to take such a test since three years ago. This year, the test will be given at SFSU on Sunday, Dec. 3rd. Since there are four levels for this test: Level 1 is the highest and level 4 is the lowest. The participants can choose the level that fits them. The content of the test has three parts: language and vocabulary, listening, reading and grammar. The cost is the same as last year: \$50 for level 1 and 2, and \$40 for level 3 and 4. You can apply for this on-line or by mail. In case of mailing, please write to the Japan Foundation, Language Center in Los Angeles. In either case, the details are at <http://www.jflalc.org/?act=tpt&id=23>.

You can also call 213-621-2267 (9:30 ~ 5:30 from M to F) or please email to noryoku@jflalc.org. Application deadline is Oct. 6th. Teachers of Japanese and people who are interested in Japanese as heritage language, please recommend this test to the learners. (by Masahiko Minami State University of San Francisco)

Introduction of Teachers

Kazue Masuyama-sensei

- 1) What's your name?
My name is Kazue Masuyama.
- 2) What is the name of school(s) you teach?
I teach at California State University, Sacramento. Since last year, it has been officially called as "Sacramento State University."
- 3) How long have you taught?
My first teaching experience was a TA at East Asian Languages and Literature in University of Oregon. Later, I have been engaged with Japanese-language education and teacher training as a lecturer at University of California at Davis, Japanese coordinator/lecturer at New York State University at Buffalo, a Japanese language specialist for the Japanese-teacher training program at Mary Tsukamoto Japanese-Language Program. Also, I taught the upper level of summer program and bilingual classes at International Christian University. To recollect my experiences, I have met various kinds of students.
- 4) What are your hobbies?
I think my hobbies are yoga, ping-pong, tennis, hiking, travel, etc. My most favorite places are Alps in Switzerland and Serengeti in Tanzania.
- 5) Which part of Japan are you from?
I am from a country town called "Sagamiko" in Kanagawa. I was raised in the mountain with rivers and lakes.
- 6) How long have you been in the United States of America?
It's about eighteen years. In summer I usually go back to Japan or travel other countries.
- 7) Are there any thoughts on your job?
It is enjoyable to teach Japanese after those years. My students encourage me. I focus on the implementation of computerized instruction because there are many students in classes at Sacramento State University.
- 8) Do you have any messages to NCJTA Members?
A Japanese teacher needs physical strength. Let's stay healthy.

Rie Tanaka-sensei

- 1) What's your name?
My name is Rie Tanaka.
- 2) What is the name of the school you teach?
I teach at Woodside Priory School at Portola Valley, Castilleja School at Palo Alto, and Soko Gakuen in San Francisco.
- 3) How long have you taught?
I have taught since 2001.
- 4) What are your hobbies?
Although I have no time enjoy my hobby during the semesters, I sew, knit, and drive during a free time. Recently, I enjoy camping.
- 5) Which part of Japan are you from?
I am from Okayama.
- 6) How long have you been in America?
It is my eighth year as I came here in 1999.
- 7) Are there any thoughts on your job?
I enjoy teaching to have great masters and colleagues. Although it takes time for preparation, it is a worthwhile, wonderful job.
- 8) Do you have any messages to NCJTA members?
Let's support and develop Japanese-language education in Northern California.

NCJTA 2006 Fall Conference will be held on Saturday, Nov. 11

New members and existing members, please bring your friends !
Place: UC Berkeley.

Editors' Notes

Dear members, you must be busy working hard after the fall 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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