

## **President's Address/Greetings: The effects of the "role language," and what we can see from them**

Masahiko Minami, NCJTA President

Dear NCJTA members,

How did you spend the beginning of the New Year? I spent the end of the year and the beginning of the year in San Francisco. As I wrote in my previous greetings, 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. Therefore, it is essential for me to obtain new information about sociolinguistics and other fields, and, in this sense, I introduced "The Mystery of Virtual Role Language in Japanese" by Professor Satoshi Kinsui (published by Iwanami Shoten Publishers in 2003) in my last greetings (below, I will introduce Professor Kinsui in detail). I called such a phenomenon "role fixation words/expressions," and I have taken this phenomenon as a topic in my graduate seminar for more than ten years.

Now, I have big news. First, steady efforts are proving successful, and NCJTA membership has turned for the increase. The number of members who pay annual membership fees exceeds seventy. I believe that this is very happy. The NCJTA holds a joint fall conference with the *Foreign Language Association of Northern California* (FLANC), and holds a joint spring conference with the *International Conference on Practical Linguistics of Japanese* (ICPLJ) (at San Francisco State University every other year. Because ICPLJ is held this time on Saturday, March 1, and Sunday March 2, the NCJTA spring meeting/workshop will be Sunday, March 2. It is the second big news here, but I invite Professor Satoshi Kinsui as the keynote speaker, who studies Japanese historical linguistics at Osaka University's graduate school literature graduate course. Professor Kinsui is a young and spirited linguist who won the Izuru Shinmura Prize in "the history of the Japanese existence expression" in 2006. Therefore, please attend the spring regular meeting/workshop jointly held by the ICPLJ on the second day. As you know, the purpose of the ICPLJ is to "to provide a forum in which to examine contributions in a variety of areas of Japanese linguistics to the teaching and learning of Japanese in the L2 classroom." Of course, Professor Kinsui's plenary lecture is about the "role language," which is his research field, but, we are all aware that animated cartoons and comics are the treasure houses of the "role language," and, at the same time, that the number of learners is on the increase because they are interested in Japanese animated cartoons and comics. Therefore, I think that this is the perfect opportunity for us because the lecture will give us hints about how to utilize the "role language" for Japanese-language education. You can look forward to Professor Kinsui's plenary lecture at the NCJTA workshop, which will start at noon.

Here, let me briefly explain what Professor Kinsui calls the "role language" and what I call "role fixation words/expressions." Professor Kinsui describes the "role language as "unusual language use tied to a particular character," and he has investigated its effects and meanings from a historical point of view in the field of comics and translation. For example, Dr. Ochanomizu and Mr. Hige-oyaji (who is described as a typical Tokyoite) both appear in a comic "Astro Boy."

Through the observation of utterances of Mr. Hige-oyaji (which literally means “mustache father”) who hates unfair things, you can understand “the role language.” For example, it is reported (with the use of typical feminine words/expressions) in translation that an American female singer who visited Japan said so and so.” Likewise, it is reported (the use of typical female-specific expressions and words) that an American actress said “Tokyo was not so good, but I really liked Kyoto” and “What is important is to be confident.” In translation translators and interpreters use such expressions as nominalization, which is peculiar to female speakers. In addition, there are many foreign players playing in Japanese professional baseball, but when what they are translated by an interpreter, they all sound very masculine, like “I hit a home run because I had swing as I had imagined.” The reader will then develop a stereotyped image of the player (a macho).

In the Japanese language you can add particular nuances to describe people by changing the end of a sentence expression. Such a technique does not exist in English (unless you sue a dialect). Of course, the use of the “role language” is not limited to comics and translations. For example, a TV drama was broadcasted just until recently in San Francisco, but the novel version was written a long time ago by Ms. Toyoko Yamazaki. The story is about a distinguished family in Kobe of the Kansai area. However, though main stage setting is Kinki region, main characters in the play (except for servants and others) speak the standard dialect (instead of the Kansai dialect). Of course, it would be strange if the father and his eldest daughter and second daughter used the Kansai dialect whereas the mother and her eldest son and second son used the standard dialect. However, characters belonging to the upper class use the standard dialect (which signals that they keep a distance from each other). If the Kansai regional dialect was used, the relationships among the characters became much closer, and the viewer/reader might take the drama as a kind of comic story. I think that the “role language” will be an interesting topic.

Finally, I would like to report what we did last fall. On Sunday, October 7, we held a “Advocacy and the AP program” workshop for elementary, junior, and senior high school and community college and university teachers in Northern California, at the Japanese Consulate General’s Public Information Cultural Center. On Sunday, November the Japanese American Association of Northern California (JAANC) and the thirty-fourth Japanese Speech Contest was held at the Consulate General of Japan. We, NCJTA, participated in the speech contest as a supporting organization. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, *Foreign Language Association of Northern California* (FLANC) was held in San Francisco State University (SFSU) on Saturday, November 10, and at least one Japanese presentation was included in each time slot, and I believe that you thoroughly enjoy the Japanese related presentations. In addition, the NCJTA fall meetings was held as one of the sessions in the afternoon of the FLANC conference, but I believe that you fully utilized the meeting for a networking purpose. In addition, Japanese education-related articles will appear in FLANC newsletters in the future. Finally, NCJTA members supported the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test, an internationally accredited language examination designed to measure Japanese language skills. The JLPT is given only in nine cities: Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Honolulu, Atlanta, Washington, DC, Seattle, and Fayetteville. Since 2003 our SFSU test site, which drew over five hundred and forty applicants in December 2, has consistently been second only to Los Angeles in number of test takers. To conclude, I want to study with NCJTA members for further development and activation of the NCJTA through various events in this spring. Thank you for your cooperation in advance.

## **Report on 2007 Fall Conference**

Masahiko Minami

NCJTA 2005 Fall Conference was held on November 10, Sunday at San Francisco State University (SFSU), as a part of the Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC) conference. Taeko Morioka of Rosa Park JBBP Elementary School, introduced several activities for elementary school children. Everybody including both Midori Yamamitsu and Hisako Takahashi of Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco, enjoyed those activities like elementary school children. We also had a nice time networking later. At the FLANC conference, there was at least one Japanese presentation for each session, so it was significant and we enjoyed them very much.

## **2008 Spring Officers' Meeting Report**

Date & Time: January 21 (Sunday), 2008, 12-3 p.m.

Place: 286 Dwinelle Hall, UC Berkeley

Officers who attended were: Minami, Saito, Kosaka, Goji, Imase, Searce, Kambara, Sakakibara,

Agendas:

1. NCJTA Spring Conference

Spring Conference will be held as a part of the ICPLJ6 on March 2.

Place: San Francisco State University, College of Humanities, Room (TBA)

12-1: Lunch & announcement

1-2:20: Key note speech by Prof. Satoshi Kinsui (Osaka University) and question and answer session

Other plans: Prof. Kambara will prepare copies of Manga. Prof. Minami will talk if it is necessary.

2. Situation of current members: There are one hundred NCJTA members. Seventy of them have paid their membership fee.

3. Spring Newsletter: • Decide content and the due date, and split the work. • Prof. Kosaka will be in charge of interviews. • The membership fee should be paid in March. • The newsletter will be sent on Feb 15 (Friday).

4. FLANC Newsletter: We should write an article on the FLANC Newsletter more actively since we might have financial support for NCJTA conference or workshop from FLANC. The candidates for the next articles are the principal of Odyssey School and Mr. Goji.

5. Consulate of Japan education seminar (2/24): The education seminar will be held for Japanese language teachers and JFMFTP (Japan Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program). Two lecturers will be invited and they will talk about the relationship between Japanese events and religion. They will also introduce some useful curriculum for class.

6. Nichibei Times new series "From Japanese classroom": It will start in September and it will replace "The present and future of Japanese language education".

<Object> We would like to think about various aspects of Japanese education with people who live in the US and speak Japanese at home. We will emphasize on the link to the local news papers as a place for publicity of NCJTA activities.

<Content> We will write a short essay about interesting incidents which happened in class. We will provide readers with some ideas such as "These things happen when you are involved with Japanese language class." in a legible sentence. For example: What does an unexpected success or error of my students suggest? What does an exchange between a teacher and a student or students bring to their lives? What do you learn from helping each other with their differences in culture? How do we introduce the new generation's interests, and how do we help them grow? What does getting involved with Japanese education mean for teachers? What is the enjoyment of teaching and the difficulty of teaching?

<Methods> Anyone who would like to write can write as many articles as he/she wants. However, it would be better to have writers in a wide range. In order to participate, it would be nice to write down some comments daily, so we can use them as an article later. Several people from one school can all write since it is an individual essay.

<Contact> As a small committee, Sakakibara and Minami will be in charge of planning and contacting others with Mr. Okada (Nichibei Times Chief Editor). We will encourage our members to support Nichibei Times by becoming a reader using a one month free trial.

#### 7. Announcement:

The Japanese speech contest was over.

The Japanese Language Proficiency Test was over. The numbers have increased to 540 examinees and 30 proctors.

8. Confirmation of the money collection for the NCJTA web site advertisement.

9. Confirmation of the election for NCJTA officers.

### ***Announcement from NCJTA Officers***

The term of the following NCJTA officers will be over. They are vice president, secretary, accountant, newsletter editor, representative for primary schools, representative for language schools, and representative for community colleges. Please send the attached form to the address below if you would like to run for one of the officer positions.

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### ***Announcement from Accountant***

Mayumi Saito

The membership fee for NCJTA is \$15 for teachers and \$5 for students.

I would appreciate it if you could send me the check for your 2008 membership (valid from 4/2008-3/2009) or pay at the Spring Conference. NCJTA's income is dependent on the membership fee. I would like to have your cooperation.

### ***Announcement for Workshops and Events***

Education Seminar

Date & Time: February 24 (Sunday), 12:20-3:30 p.m.

Place: Consulate General of Japan in San Francisco Japan Information Center

For: Japanese language teachers, Returnees from Fulbright Memorial Fund Teacher Program  
NCJTA Spring Conference

Date & Time: March 5 (Sunday), 1:-2:20 p.m.

Location: San Francisco State University, College of Humanities, Room (TBA)

The Spring Conference will be held as a part of biannual International Conference of Practical Linguistics of Japanese (ICPLJ).

Topic: "Mystery of virtual role language of Japanese"

This book was published in 2003 from Iwanami Bookstore.

We will have a lunch meeting with the author Satoshi Kinsui. Mr. Kinsui is a professor at Graduate school of letters, Osaka University. His research areas are wide and he studies from history of grammar to modern Japanese language. His book "History of Japanese language Existence expression" was awarded the Izuru Shinmura award in 2006. Please look forward to his keynote speech.

Ms. Noriko Nagata, professor at San Francisco State University and former Foreign Language Association of Northern California (FLANC) president, will also present. She will introduce a new online textbook "Robot teacher". We can say that its features are to process natural language and generate feedback. In other words, this is a convenient program for Japanese learners because they can practice in making sentences freely and receive detailed feedback immediately when they make a mistake. Please look forward to her presentation, too.

### ***Introduction of Teachers***

Yoko Uda-sensei

What's your name?

My name is Yoko Uda.

What is the name of the school(s) you teach?

I teach at a community college in San Francisco and Soko Gakuen.

How long have you taught?

I taught in Tokyo for two years from 2001. I have taught in US from 2006.

What are your hobbies?

Making handcrafts and traveling.

Which part of Japan are you from?

Hyogo prefecture.

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

Four and a half years.

Are there any thoughts on your job?

I feel that there are totally different needs of students depending on the school.

So, I would like to deal with students by not sticking to one way, but with flexibility.

Do you have any messages to NCJTA Members?

I have not been teaching in the US for a long time, but I would like to learn different things and make the best use of them for my classes. Thank you very much.

### ***Editors' Notes***

Dear members, you must be busy working hard after the spring term 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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