

私自身について言えば、英語の“多様性”について強く意識し始めたのは名古屋国際センターに在って多くの外国人、とりわけ、アジア・アフリカ諸国の人達と接する機会が多くなってからである。オーストラリアやカナダ人はともかく、インド、フィリピン、インドネシア、タイ、ベトナム、中国の人々の話す英語となると正直いって、これまでの知識や文法では理解し得ない部分がかかり出てきたからである。

こういった国際的背景の中で、昨年5月に名古屋で“世界の共通補助語としての英語のあり方について”討論するための日本初の国際会議が開催された。世界各国の著名な研究者約500人を会員に持つ非営利団体、通称 I A W E (INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR WORLD ENGLISHES, PRESIDENT DR. LARRY SMITH OF EAST-WEST CENTER, HAWAII, U. S. A.) が主催したものである。

第一回目は一昨年(1994年)本部事務局の所在するイリノイ大学で開催された。この I A W E たつての要望で地元会員が中心となり『1995年 I A W E 名古屋コンベンション実行委員会』(委員長 田中 春美 南山大学教授)を組織して実現したのが、第二回目の名古屋会議である。このような国際会議が日本で初めて、しかも名古屋で開催できることは、この地域の国際的な専門的レベルの向上に役たち、市民レベルの国際交流と相互理解にも大いに貢献するとの思いから、私も名古屋国際センターの協力を得て、実行委員会の事務局長としてお手伝いさせていただいた。

アメリカ、カナダ、オーストラリア、インド、フィリピン、シンガポール、ナイジェリア、韓国、日本など17ヶ国、延べ約1,200人の参加者が、3日間に亘り活発な討論を展開し盛況裡に終了することが出来た。いずれにしても、この日本初の国際会議が世界の共通補助語としての“英語の在り方”についてこれまで欧米指向であった日本の英語教育の在り方について、地球規模の視点に立脚した語学教育の必要性について考える一石を投じてくれたことは間違いないようである。

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Guest Speech

The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Economic Order

Leila Madge

I would like to begin by telling you what my theoretical interests are and that will help you understand what I mean by the perhaps unintelligible title of “The Aesthetics of Social Relations in a New Economic Order”. But I would also like to add that I have barely begun my research so I am not going to provide you with any interpretations only questions that I am interested in. After all, I may want at some point in the future to ask you about your own thoughts on this subject. In the broadest of terms what I am interested in is: (1) current changes in interpersonal relationships and social organization due to a variety of sociological, political, and economic factors -- needless to say that is very broad. This also includes (2): how we come to understand these changes (in interpersonal relationships and social organization) through our images of the future as something desired or feared. In short, I am trying to consider the relationships between past, the present, and the future focusing on our experiences and images of interpersonal relationships and social organization.

This is of course a very big question but as I am an anthropologist I am interested in how these relationships play out in people's everyday lives -- that is not necessarily what the politicians or academicians have to say about change but what we feel is going on around as we live in our own groups -- families, companies etc. So for example, how are we experiencing the demise of the *ie*, an increase in divorce, what some are calling the lack of work ethic among the young, or the graying of Japanese society etc. I should also add at this point that I am not interested in my thesis to make any direct comparisons between Japan, US or Europe. However, there will be no doubt some points of comparison since we do share some of the present -- whether it be contradictions of late capitalism or what seems to be the breakdown of the welfare state in many first world countries.

Now to hone the problem down more and explain the “aesthetics” part of the title and a little more of the emphasis on the “economic” -- I am focusing on how change appears within the realm of consumption.

I choose consumption because social relations in a consumer society -- in so far as they include money rather than "simply" blood, loyalty, status -- are different from social relations that do not enter the market. In general, they can be less binding and more freeing so that they are often seen as dangerous or worrying in comparison to "traditional" types of relations. This can be seen by how much attention is paid here to young women's habits in the media. Young women who have money are free, at least economically, not to marry which is usually seen as a potential social problem in Japan -- *ie's* or even villages can't continue and companies seem to be suspicious of how much devotion they can expect from their unattached male workers. The notion that shopping can be a hobby suggests that the arena of consumption in Japan is for example seen as much more liberating than say the highly disciplined activities surrounding the family, work or school. Often the person as consumer is seen as such a danger that he/she must be re-educated to think as a producer or citizen.

Another reason why I choose the issue of consumption is related to what we can see in its heavy dependence on advertising and marketing and this brings in the term "aesthetics". By aesthetics, I do not mean women's beauty treatments, which are called "aesthetics" in katakanized Japanese, or *shinbi(sei)* which refers to high art. I mean in general the manners or patterns of presentation that are valued or popular amongst a segment of the population whether it be in current music, fashion, or literature etc. Advertising and marketing suggests that consumer goods are bought not for their mere utility but because they have social meaning which is symbolized through their aesthetic. In other words, we buy as a form of communication or expression. What we chose to buy can tell those around us how we see ourselves either as a member of a class, generation, gender or what we often here in the case of Japan is "lifestyle".

For any of you that have read any of the various *shoohiron* that have been popular from the mid '80's, you are familiar with this idea. Of course within the *shoohiron* there are different agendas; for example in some *shoohiron*, buying for expressive reasons is a habit of the *shinjinrui* that departs radically from the functional buying of an earlier generation and will lead to the end of Japan as we know it. These kinds of writings about current Japan by Japanese academicians are of interest to me because they play on a general

concern, even fear of change, especially in regards to the morality of interpersonal relations due of the effect of the market.

So again this is my starting point -- if you look at what people buy, when, where and why you can understand how they see or situate themselves in their social world. And how they are choosing to variously situate themselves has to do in part with larger changes -- social, political, economic -- that they are being affected by. This approach stresses that popular cultural representations have meaning and should be studied rather than denigrated or ignored as bad art.

Now to try to give you some concrete examples of these kinds of aesthetics. One that I have been working on for quite a while is the *kawaii* or cute consumer aesthetic which you may or may not have thought about. By the way, the job of the anthropologist has been described as making the strange seem familiar and the familiar seem strange -- so I will be trying to do the latter for you. Initially present in the small gift producing industry, the *kawaii* aesthetic gradually spread to medium priced electric appliances, e.g., pink colored, round (in some cases even heart-shaped), small, and soft telephones, vacuum cleaners, personal computers, and televisions. By 1985, the most expensive personal expenditures such as cars and houses were being manufactured in a style referred to as "*kawaii*". Institutions also begin taking up *kawaii* labels -- local governments, and banks for examples,

In 1988, president of the Sanyo Sogo Bank in Okayama made headline news in the economics section of leading Japanese newspapers for the new *kawaii* name and logo he had chosen to represent his bank -- the Tomato Bank. The occasion for the new name was the bank's planned change in status from a savings and loan association to a commercial bank following a recent reform in Japanese domestic banking. The hoopla that arose around the choice of the name Tomato, with its bright red animated character, was related to the associations that it conjured up in many Japanese minds -- which somehow seem incongruent with the image that banking institutions have held in Japan.

Although initially some opposition occurred among bank employees because they felt that the Tomato name lacked the proper tone of authority and suggested an agricultural cooperative, the public response seemed only positive. Sanyo Sogo, a prefectural bank, normally ranked toward the bottom among other banks was being

inundated with inquiries from all over the country on how to open up accounts in the new Tomato Bank. In interviews about the unexpected attention and popularity that the bank was receiving, Yoshida explained that he thought that it was important to send the message that he was "breaking the status quo" and it seems that the connotation that the tomato has was somehow supposed to deliver this message.

And these image changes continue in 1990, the Public Employment Security Office (*Shokugyoo Anteisho*), operated by the Labor Ministry, decided to advertise their new "friendlier image" by adopting the name "Hello Work", suggestive of the popular animated cat character Hello Kitty. Shukutoku Junior College, not our one in Aichi, redesigned their campus as a replica of Disneyland's Main street in an attempt to maintain their enrollment numbers. (The result was a tripling in the number of applications.) And in 1993, the Communist Party chose an animated giraffe (which ranks among the most *kawaii* animal characters) as a logo for the National Election. I even heard of a case of the former Prime Minister Nakasone dancing on stage with the Sailor Moon character during a political appearance.

From my American eyes something needs to be explained. Why does *kawaii* appear at the time it does? What would voters see in the *kawaii kirin* of the communist party or Nakasone dancing on stage with Sailor Moon? Why would a customer want to put their hard earned money in a bank that sees itself as cute? Wouldn't you rather want to put that money in a bank that sees itself as fiscally responsible? So why would women buy *kawaii* goods -- *obaasans* included? Why would men buy *kawaii* goods -- why would men want *kawaii* women? For example, the motherly image of the pre-war years is replaced by the *kawaii* childish girl as the sex object in the post war years and the "Lolita complex" (*roricon*) is seen as national obsession. To me, all of these examples have a logic that suggests a new kind of sensibility regarding interpersonal relations and social organization.

Other examples, of wide spread consumer aesthetics include the use of "*furusato*" to sell products especially food, but also houses and government saving bonds. The *furusato* aesthetic most clearly brings together the issue of change through the past, present and future which I spoke of in the beginning. The *furusato* future focuses on social relations as full of warmth, trust and often motherly love that

are often seen as lacking in present-day interpersonal relations that have been affected by urbanization and industrialization. This future however uses an image of a rural past that many have never experienced.

The concern with new deodorizing products and new "sanitation" habits -- such as the *asa shan* -- is also an example of a new understanding of social relations which is communicated in part through a consumer aesthetic. During my first stay in Japan, I heard of women choosing to wash their husbands clothes separately from their own and their children's. Some women, it was even suggested, used chopsticks to transfer their husbands' underwear from the wash to the spin cycle. Men were also referred to as "*sodai gomi*". This aesthetic suggests a reevaluation of the social relationship between male household heads and others, namely women as it seems to be aimed at eradicating the labor and sweat of the male producer/head of the household.

Another aesthetic is the selling of what were seen as male products to young working women -- beer, vitamin drinks, horse racing -- these are the women who are then called "*oyaji gyaru*".

I hope these examples give you an idea of what I am interested in. Unfortunately, as a researcher I can not just go out and ask the consumer why do you buy such and such. Normally we can not provide any answer beyond that of "I like it" or some sort of more functional response -- it is cheap, I needed one, or worse yet what appears to be masquerading as a scientific explanation. For example, it may be true that some men sweat more than some women (although the new cleaning phenomena I spoke of was directed to salary men not farm laborers) So maybe there is some hygienic reason for women wanting to separate men's clothes from the rest of the family. If, however, these clothes washing habits are new and if women don't separate their equally dirty son's clothes than something suggests that cleanliness has less to do with a scientific understanding of hygiene and more to with the symbolic. As many post-modern theorists have pointed out, science is often used in the modern age to make sacred or unquestionable cultural explanations.

Because of the difficulty of directly questioning people about the reasons behind their consumption choices I am compelled to find the explanation for new consumer aesthetics through a longer, less direct

approach. I am now in the process of putting myself in a group in such a way that I can see what people are doing and hopefully through a long process come to understand how they are understanding their own behavior. I have chosen to become active in local consumer groups because I suppose that these people will understand my interest in consumption even if it is from a different perspective -- rather than aesthetics more of how larger social, political, and economic changes can affect their ability to consume what they want to. For example, within the consumer groups I imagine that I can learn much of women's understanding of their role as consuming "family makers" in comparison to their husband's role as producers. I can also learn of consumer attitudes towards private versus public business. How is the increasing privatization of previously owned government run services interpreted. Is it for example interpreted as the inability of the state to support its citizens -- that is the end of the welfare state. Or is it interpreted as the maturing of the private sector? How do consumers see this move -- does it represent more choice at a lower price or a threat to the quality of products? Part of these background understandings bring me back to the issue of aesthetics as I consider how companies, such as Sanyo Sogo Bank, choose their public image.

Within these groups I also will be able to see how an individual's various roles within society affect one's consumption practices. How do consumers see their other roles as producers, family members -- mothers/wives or fathers -- or citizens (either of a city, nation or the world (this is the green movement)), as related or not-related? This relates to the issue I mentioned earlier of how the moneyed consumer is often seen as dangerous and must be re-educated to think as a wife, mother or citizen who behaves not according to the mere vagary of money but deeper loyalties.

I will also be able to observe how attitudes toward the market in general. For example, how do individuals see the commodification of things that were previously seen as something to be merely bought and sold -- for example, what are peoples attitudes to land and houses? With the recent burst of the bubble and ever increasing nuclearization of the family, are houses and land becoming merely investments? How are these attitudes represented in the advertising/marketing of land and houses. For example, in a Sekusikei TV commercial on at present, the commercial seems to be denying the idea that houses are mere

commodities. The commercial starts out with a middle aged man recalling his childhood in black and white he realizes he is returning home but much has changed -- the *tanbo* have been replaced by other houses. However, as the ad suggests the new sekusikei house still retains the same value -- a place for a warm happy family -- an extended family by the way with three generations shown. This ad stresses continuity with the past as a selling point.

And what of services that have been usually provided by the family such as care of children and the aged. One can well imagine that the selling and buying of services that were once seen as invaluable can involve controversy unless a culturally acceptable rationalization is provided. For example, buying child care which is the case of daycare is acceptable if it is done under the guise of education or if there is an economic need to have the mother work. But what kind of reaction is there when child care is bought simply because the mother wants to do something else. In the case of the old, it is acceptable to pay for services to care for them in homes if they are sick. But what kind of reaction is there when children simply pay someone else to fulfill their family responsibilities -- such as the case of a Tokyo service which would send a young couple to the parent's home to act as though they were the son or daughter all for the price of ¥10,000 per hour. In these kinds of cases along with the issue of the privatization of services, background understandings are going to play into how the services and goods are presented aesthetically as commodities. So as mentioned -- daycares have to present themselves as educational services to be sellable.

Well, I think that is about all the time I have to talk about my research interests -- I have provided you with more questions than answers but perhaps you can take these kinds of questions home with you and begin to "make strange what you have taken as familiar". I would be more than happy to come back next year and give the answers to some of the questions I have posed -- if you wish. And also I'll answer any questions you have now. Thank you.

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