

An interview with Ingrid Piller

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Laurel Kamada (LK): Hello Ingrid. We are so pleased you will be a keynote speaker at the International Gender and Language Association (IGALA) conference in Japan in September this year. Will this be your first visit to Japan?

Ingrid Piller (IP): I had a stopover at Narita airport once and loved the day I spent wandering around Narita. So, I'm definitely looking forward to a more substantial visit. However, while I've physically only spent a 24-hour-period in Japan, my virtual visits to Japan have been more extensive: one of my closest collaborators, Kimie Takahashi, comes from Japan, and I've supervised her PhD thesis on Japanese women learning English in Australia and we've co-authored a paper on *akogare* and English language learning. We are also working on a joint research project exploring the experiences of Japanese tourists in Australia and are running a sociolinguistics portal together, *Language on the Move*, where Kimie often blogs about language issues related to Japan. Over the years, I've also supervised a number of other Japan-related projects, including a PhD thesis by Ikuko Nakane about the learning experiences of Japanese students in Australian university classrooms. So, Japan holds a much larger place in my interests and my heart than my brief stopover in Narita might suggest. I can't wait to actually spend some real time there.

LK: Would you please tell us what kinds of things you have been working on over the years, and what your current interests or projects are?

IP: My research interests are in intercultural communication, language learning, multilingualism, and how they intersect



Keywords

globalization, migration, gender, linguistic diversity, language-on-the-move

Ingrid Piller will be a keynote speaker at the upcoming International Gender and Language Association (IGALA6) Conference in Tokyo from September 18-20, 2010. <orc.tsuda.ac.jp/IGALA/ocs>. This international conference has never before been held in Asia and offers a rare opportunity to connect with such internationally renowned researchers as Ingrid Piller. Ingrid's main work has been as a critical sociolinguistic ethnographer in intercultural communication, language learning and multilingualism, and their intersection with social inclusion and justice. Her IGALA presentation, entitled *Women on the move: English, international romance and the global economy*, promises to be of great relevance to JALT members given its focus on gender and language.

Ingrid Piller は東京で2010年9月18日より20日まで開催される「国際ジェンダーと言語学会」(IGALA)の基調講演者である。これまでアジアでこの国際会議が開催されたことはなかった。この会議は Ingrid Piller のような世界的研究者を知る貴重な機会である。Ingrid は主に批判的社会言語民俗誌学研究者として、異文化間コミュニケーション、言語学習、多言語主義および、それが社会包括・社会正義と交わる分野について研究している。IGALA における講演 “Women on the move: English, international romance and the global economy” は、ジェンダーと言語に焦点が当てられており、JALT 会員に大変関わりの深い内容となるだろう。

with social inclusion and justice. The overarching question of my work is how the social order is produced and reproduced through linguistic practices and ideologies. This has taken me to specific work related to bilingual couples and international romance, linguistic and communicative challenges in the tourism industry, language contact in advertising, and multilingualism and social inclusion in Australia. Most of my published work is available for open access on the resources section of the web-based *Language on the Move*. In addition to publishing my research in the usual academic outlets, I have recently turned into a passionate blogger. Kimie and I run the *Language on the Move* blog, which can be accessed at <languageonthemove.com>.

LK: What kind of methodology and theoretical framework do you use in your research?

IP: If I have to use a label, I call myself a *critical sociolinguistic ethnographer*, but I'm really rather eclectic in my methodological approaches. What matters most to me is arriving at understandings that give voice to the experiences of linguistically diverse people.

LK: I understand that you have lived and worked in many different countries, such as Switzerland, Australia, and Germany, and that you are now back in Australia. May I ask, where are you originally from and what languages do you speak? What has been the effect on your research of you having lived and worked in so many different countries during your career?

IP: I've always liked Virginia Woolf's adage, *As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world*. I could slightly adapt it to say, *As a woman, I have no language. As a woman I want no language. As a woman my language is on the move*. I grew up in rural Southern Germany speaking a Bavarian dialect. When I arrived at university as the first girl from my village to have ever gotten that far in terms of educational achievement, one of my professors noticed I had trouble speaking Standard German and told me it was very unusual for a dialect speaker to be so intelligent! I suppose he meant it as a compliment, but it was my Scarlett O'Hara moment (*I'll never go hungry again*), and I started to reinvent myself

as an English speaker. Since then, I've pursued my career in English. Being a second language speaker in Applied Linguistics has had a profound influence on my career, as my perspectives have always been a bit different from those of the monolingual TESOL hegemony. Even today, Applied Linguistics and TESOL are largely informed by the perspectives of monolingual speakers of English and by strong beliefs in the primacy of the *native speaker* as the basis of both theory in the field and professional practice. Like many people nowadays, I see myself as a contemporary nomad and internationalist. I think our field needs new approaches to deal with the realities of language-and-communication-on-the-move. In a blog post a while ago I argued for Sociolinguistics 2.0 (Piller, 2009)!

LK: Your work on the discursive construction of hybridity and bilingualism is very fascinating for me and other expats residing in Japan and is also very close to my own work. Also you have done a lot of work in sociology and globalization and migration. Could you tell us something about these research topics and how they are connected with gender and language studies?

IP: Gender is such a central category in social life, and it obviously also intersects with the ways in which we experience migration and globalization. I'm particularly interested in the intersection of gender and work in migration contexts. For instance, hegemonic narratives of heterosexual romance have become instrumental in outsourcing the work of being a wife from the global North to the global South, as I've argued in my work on the discourse of mail-order bride websites.

LK: What other work have you done in gender and language?

IP: I won't bore you with a list – you can always go to the resources section of *Language on the Move* and click on *Language learning, gender and identity* or *Multilingual families*.

LK: Finally, could you kindly talk a little bit about the topic of your paper, which you will be presenting at the IGALA conference in Tokyo?

IP: I've called my paper *Women on the move: English, international romance and the global economy*. I will explore ways in which the global

English language teaching industry is implicated in making certain gendered identities desirable and how those gendered subjectivities serve to structure the migration experiences of women as romantic partners and as workers.

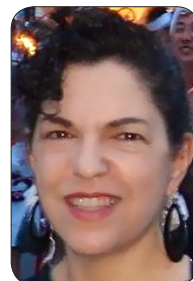
LK: Thank you very much for taking time to discuss these topics with us. We very much look forward to meeting you and attending your keynote address in Tokyo this September at the IGALA conference.

Reference

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Laurel Kamada, senior lecturer at Tohoku University, serves on the editorial board of BSIG and the Advisory Council of IGALA. She has published in areas such as bi/multilingualism in Japan, gender and ethnic studies, marginalized identities, masculinity, theoretical/methodological discourse analytic approaches, intercultural communication, and EFL. Her recently released book is entitled: *Hybrid Identities and Adolescent Girls: Being 'Half' in Japan*.



An interview with professor Momoko Nakamura

Dodi Levine

Tenri University

Dodi Levine (DL): Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. To begin, could you tell us about your current research?

Momoko Nakamura (MN): I have three main interests: the historical analysis of Japanese women's language, language and sexuality, and globalization, affect, and language.

Japanese women's language has been considered to be what Japanese women have actually been speaking, but I propose to redefine women's language as a language ideology historically constructed by metalinguistic discourses. In 2002, I started analyzing such discourses from the 14th century and have written a series of papers on the subject (Nakamura 2003a, 2003b). In these papers,



Keywords

gender, linguistics, translation, women, sexuality

Momoko Nakamura will be a keynote speaker at The International Language and Gender Association (IGALA6) Conference to be held 18-20 September, 2010 in Tokyo. Professor Nakamura is an internationally recognized scholar and feminist. Her article, *Onna kotoba wa tsukurareru* [Constructing women's language] received the 27th Yamakawa Kikue Award in 2007, the first time this was awarded for linguistic studies. Professor Nakamura currently teaches at Kanto Gakuin University in Yokohama.

中村桃子氏は、東京で2010年9月18日より20日まで開催される「国際ジェンダーと言語学会」第6回大会(IGALA6)の基調講演者である。中村氏は国際的に認められた学者でフェミニストである。彼女の著書『「女ことば」はつくられる』は2007年に第27回山川菊栄賞を受賞し、言語学分野では初の受賞となった。中村氏は現在、横浜の関東学院大学で教えている。

I analyzed how the polite, indirect norms of women's language have been constructed by etiquette books since the 14th century. Another paper, which I presented at IGALA4, was about Meiji schoolgirls (Nakamura, 2006). This paper was also included in *The Language and Sexuality Reader* in 2006. In 2007, I published the whole analysis in Japanese, *Onna kotoba wa tsukurareru* (Nakamura, 2007), for which I received the 27th Yamakawa Kikue Award. This is an award given for distinguished research on women's studies, and I am proud that it was the first time the award had been given for linguistic studies. I hope more researchers in Japanese women's studies will get interested in language. I am now looking for a publisher who will publish the work in English. The following year, I wrote another paper on the topic of masculinity and national language in *Gender and Language* (Nakamura, 2008). I am also on the editorial board of this IGALA journal.

In addition to how homosexuality has been presented by language, I am particularly interested in what kind of linguistic resources are available to maintain heteronormativity in Japanese. In 2009, three other researchers and I just published the Japanese translation of *Language and Sexuality*, written by Cameron and Kulick (2003), which aimed to emphasize the importance of considering sexuality in studying language, identity, and power. That same year I wrote another paper in which I analyze spam mails of reverse prostitution in Japanese (Nakamura, 2009). The revised version of this paper will appear in the proceedings of IGALA 5.

Regarding my interest in globalization, affect, and language, it has been pointed out that affective labor is strongly gendered. How the norms of women's language are related to affective roles given to women in Japan is an interesting question. I am preparing a paper right now, which analyzes why Japanese people came to possess such a strong affective attachments to women's language. With the aid of other researchers, I am also editing the Japanese textbook on language and gender (Nakamura, 2010). This book will come out in April, 2010.

DL: How did your interests develop in the area of language and gender studies? Was there any particular person or event that helped guide you?

MN: There was no field called language and gender studies when I started my research. I pursued what I personally wanted to know. My personal interests drove me, rather than my desire to contribute to linguistic studies. My encounter with Professor Yoshihiko Ikegami at the Sophia University Graduate School (he now teaches at Showa University) meant a lot to my career. Although his fields are semantics, poetics, and cognitive linguistics, he has encouraged me to continue my research throughout my career.

DL: How did you first go about bridging language and gender studies?

MN: One day, after class, Professor Ikegami mentioned Deborah Cameron's (1985) *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*. I was thrilled to know that somebody was doing exactly what I wanted to do. I translated the work into Japanese, and that was the beginning of my research into this field.

DL: You have written about how children develop a sense of self by using language imposed on them. Could you expand on this?

MN: Many factors, both local and ideological, affect their pronoun and style choice. In addition to these factors, I explained their choice of male personal-pronouns from the aspect of sexuality. In Japan, children are taught to use gendered pronouns. Previous studies did not explain why the use of gendered pronouns had become taken-for-granted common sense. I argued that forcing children to use gendered pronouns as a common sense functioned to maintain heteronormativity. Asking children to refer to themselves either with *watashi* or *boku* is asking them to present themselves either as a girl or a boy long before they have any sense of gender identity. Since the use of gendered pronouns is naturalized as common sense, it is very difficult to refuse it even though some children have difficulty making the choice (something proven in retrospective essays by non-heterosexuals). The system of gendered pronouns makes it possible for the binary conception of gender to be realized in everyday interaction.

DL: Your reference to the speech of Hermione in the translation of *Harry Potter*, and how no Japanese girl would speak that way, is fascinating. Can you give some other examples of this type of stereotyped language?

MN: Yes. With Scarlett in *Gone with the Wind*, Minnie Mouse, and Lyra in *The Golden Compass*, the speech of many heroines in non-Japanese works is translated into feminine women's language. It is also interesting to note here that the speech of their black characters is often translated into *Tohoku* dialects. It shows the strong connection between femininity appropriate to a heroine with standard Japanese, of which women's language is a female version. It has been shown that many boys living in Tohoku who speak Tohoku dialects themselves don't want girls who speak Tohoku dialects to become their girlfriends.

DL: Do you think this is a conscious choice of the translator in each case? If not, what would you attribute it to?

MN: I don't know, and it really doesn't matter. Derrida (1995) points out that the intention of a speaker does not determine the meaning of the utterance. Whether conscious or not, what is important is the fact that their speech is translated into typical Japanese women's language. This practice functions to maintain both the norms of polite, indirect women's speech, and the myth that Japanese women's language is what Japanese women actually speak.

First, it is assumed that knowledge of the norms affects the translation process. Second, the translator's belief that Japanese women's language is what Japanese women actually speak – that Japanese in effect do speak women's language – influences their translation process. On the other hand, readers of those translations do not think it strange mainly because as they read the women's language in Japanese, they simultaneously listen to the voice of young girls or women speaking in that language. This process is called polyphony. Bakhtin (1981) argues that multiple voices are heard in a text, and that every text is composed of other texts previously produced, typically in the case of citations. In addition, people are used to reading women's language spoken by those foreign characters and consider it as the standard. If the heroine speaks in rough language, that would be interpreted as a marked linguistic practice that indicates the character's peculiar personality.

DL: Do people still evaluate a woman's femininity based on the norms of women's speech?

MN: Yes. Etiquette books on how women should speak and follow the norms of women's language are always on the lists of best sellers. I have wondered whether the norms of women's language and its strong connection to femininity still worked for young men, so I asked one male university student what he thought about a woman speaking typical women's language, such as *-kashira* and *-dawa*. He answered, *Bijin datowa omoimasu* [I would think she is beautiful]!

DL: Professor Nakamura, we are grateful for your thoughtful participation in this interview and look forward very much to your keynote presentation and involvement at IGALA6 in Tokyo this September.

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Dodi Levine is an English Lecturer at Tenri University. Her research interests include gender representation and stereotyping in images in EFL materials, and how children's literature portrays women during wartime, both in text and images.



TLT RESOURCES

MY SHARE

Welcome to the May-June instalment of My Share. In this issue we have some great games and activities lined up for you. First off, **Gary Fogal** uses song lyrics to get students working independently in the classroom. Next, **Takeshi Ishikawa** "deals out" an interesting way to call on students for answers. We then join **Thomas Boutorwick** with his "taboo-style" word guessing game. Finally, **Duncan Minett-Westwood** shows us how to get students running towards good pronunciation. Enjoy!

Music, self-directed learning, and the EFL classroom

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Quick guide

Key words: Self-directed learning, listening and writing, peer feedback, self-assessment, vocabulary building, music, cultural awareness

Learner English level: Upper-intermediate to advanced

Learner maturity: High school seniors, college/university, and above

Preparation time: 30 minutes for initial instructor modeling; thereafter 2 minutes per class

Activity time: 20 minutes per class

Materials: CD player, handout of student feedback template (prepared by students), handout of song lyrics, and new vocabulary words (prepared by students)

Introduction

Self-directed learning (SDL) has received plenty of critical attention in the last two decades. Accordingly, this attention has thrust into the literature copious definitions of what SDL is, what it consists of, or more pragmatically, how in-

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To contact the editor: <my-share@jalt-publications.org>

We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 700 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used which can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see any edition of *The Language Teacher*).

Please send submissions to <my-share@jalt-publications.org>.

MY SHARE ONLINE: A linked index of My Share articles can be found at:
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