



Liu and Furuhashi

CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS: UNTRANSLATABILITY BETWEEN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE

Seminar Leader: **Benjamin Liu**

House Leader: **Shoko Furuhashi**

Course Description

What is the relationship between language and society? This seminar will introduce the field of sociolinguistics and look into how cross-cultural differences are reflected in languages. By the end of the seminar, students will have an understanding of the interconnectedness between language and society and how each plays a part in the formation of the other. In this seminar, students will learn the fundamentals of sociolinguistics, gain an understanding of the many different areas of sociolinguistics, examine the untranslatability between English and Japanese, and apply their own experiences learning English in discussions and activities in the classroom.

Schedule

Day 1: *Language and Society - Introducing Sociolinguistics*

What is sociolinguistics? We begin by defining and discussing what linguistics and sociolinguistics are. We provide an overview of the variety of topics that sociolinguistics deals with – from social status and gender to age and geographical regions – and discuss the relationship between the language we speak and the society we are a part of.

Day 2: *Language and Untranslatability - English and Japanese*

What makes languages different? In the second class, we make a linguistic examination of the different aspects of English and Japanese, such as syntax, idioms, and grammar. We look into issues of untranslatability and how they affect our language learning and perceptions, applying our own experiences of learning English or other foreign languages to class activities and discussion.

Day 3: *Culture - Reflections of Language*

How are we reflections of our societies? How are the languages we speak representative of our cultures? This class will look into the sociological side of sociolinguistics, and tie in what we learned in linguistics with an examination of the American and Japanese societies. We discuss topics such as politeness, conversational style, pragmatics and our own experiences and views.

Day 4: *Cross-Cultural Untranslatability - Final Presentations*

In the fourth class, we have a final exercise (see below). Students will learn how to apply their knowledge of sociolinguistics to English and Japanese untranslatability issues, and explain how their linguistic issue ties in with aspects of society.



Final Exercise

Students will be asked to present to the class on a specific example of untranslatability between English and Japanese. In the presentation, students will choose one of the aspects of sociolinguistics we have covered in class, and apply it to an analysis of their untranslatability issue. Examples of possible topic areas include: idioms, grammar, syntax, conversational style, pragmatics, and politeness.

Pre-Seminar Assignments and Readings

An Introduction to Sociolinguistics, Ronald Wardhaugh and Janet M. Fuller, 7th edition (pgs. 1-15)

Message from the House Leader

Hi all, I'm Shoko, a 23-year-old graduate school student majoring in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). I like to walk and cycle around on sunny days, sing and dance by myself in my room (of course I go to karaoke too!), travel, and have good foods (I love chocolate, coffee, garlic and curry).

I graduated from university in Tokyo (International Christian University) in 2015, and moved back to my hometown Nagoya to start my Masters Course. In addition to SLA, I am widely interested in Education, Language Learning, and other related fields. If you want to discuss how people acquire languages or anything else, please feel free to talk to me!

In this course we are going to deal with Sociolinguistics. You have never heard of this subject? Don't worry, it will be interesting to know the linguistic phenomena and its relation to cultures because we use languages every day in many ways. I'm looking forward to learning together with you all!

Message from the Seminar Leader

Hey guys! I'm Ben, and I am an 18 year-old going into my 2nd year at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. My major is currently undeclared, but I plan on doing at least a double major and maybe even a minor, and I want to make Japanese one of my majors because of my love of the language and the culture! In my spare time, I enjoy doing a lot of things from cooking, baking, and gardening to playing video games, watching TV and anime, and reading. I also really like travelling and experiencing all kinds of new things as well. I was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, but when I was little my family moved to southern California, where I grew up. I am fluent in English and Mandarin Chinese, but I hope to be able to become fluent in Japanese as well! I am also studying French and Spanish. My love for learning languages and learning about their cultures motivated me to choose sociolinguistics as my seminar topic, because I feel that this subject combines both. I hope that you guys will enjoy this seminar, as



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I'm sure many of you are learning or have been exposed to English before. I look forward to meeting all of you and having fun experiences learning together with you all. See you soon!