Speech without a speaking body: “Japanese women’s language” in translation

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Abstract

Central to the way in which “women’s language” is experienced in the Japanese everyday is a profound cognitive dissonance: The majority of women do not speak “women’s language” and, yet, they recognize it as their own language. This article seeks to understand how metalinguistic devices—such as reported speech and quotation—and the intertextuality that they create serve both to produce and at the same time to normalize such dissonance, and thus women’s language as language ideology. To make my point, I will focus on reported speech in interlingual translation, and its role in the reproduction of the idea of women’s language.

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1. Introduction

“Japanese women’s language” is a cultural knowledge of a feminine speech style distinctively associated with the image of urban middle-class women. The critical question posed by this article is: Who most commonly speaks the most authentic women’s language? The answer is paradoxical: one “hears” Japanese women’s language not so much from living bodies of Japanese women, as from imaginary voices. These voices, attributed to various alterities, are metalinguistically represented through several intertextual practices such as reported speech and quotation. The most common sites of these reports and quotations of women’s language are female characters in novels, movies, TV shows, drama scripts, animation, and computer games. Paradoxically and counterintuitively, it is from the most foreign characters—
Scarlett O’Hara, Dana Scully, Queen Elizabeth II, Barbie, and Minnie Mouse—that one hears the most “authentic” Japanese women’s language in everyday life.

One would have been on eminently reasonable ground to invoke the notion of “stereotypes” or the violence of the economy of the sign to account for the pervasive and mundane ascription of salient and universal gender markers in public representations of women’s voice. It would seem reasonable enough to assume that either most Japanese women came to speak a certain way, or that a particular group of women with high cultural visibility spoke a certain way, and that the idea and ideal of “women’s language” naturally precipitated out of such actual speech. But there is more to it. Reported speech and quotations are not simply the static textual artifacts, or the “recording” of real speech. Rather than a mimetic reflection on how real Japanese women actually speak, these are the primary sites where both the idea and the concrete speech forms of women’s language are produced and disseminated. It is in and through such modes of ventriloquized bodies in the form of reported speech and quotation that the majority of people in Japan—particularly those in regional and economic peripheries—experience “women’s language,” and imagine the empirical existence of “Japanese women who speak women’s language.” In other words, “women’s language,” as a metapragmatic category and knowledge, emerges not so much in the phenomenologically pristine moment of face-to-face interactions, but in semiotic traces of relentless metalinguistic dislocations and relocations of the imaginary voice of Japanese women through quotation and reported speech.

There is thus a profound cognitive dissonance that is central to the way in which “women’s language” is experienced in the Japanese everyday: The majority of women do not speak “women’s language” and, yet, they recognize it as their own language. As in Althusser’s notion of ideology, women’s language represents “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 1971, p. 162), and “hails” them into gendered subjectivity. They do not speak women’s language, but women’s language speaks to them. Moreover, because “women’s language” is metalinguistically inscribed onto the bodies of otherness, Japanese women hear their own (ideal) voice issuing from the other’s body. This dissonance underwrites the complex cultural process of identity construction in which the plentitude of the self, or the normativity of “Japanese women,” is constituted by displacing and inscribing it onto the body of the alter and the imaginary. Women’s language is essentially a disembodied language, disseminated in the dispersion of (inevitably failed) copies produced in the process of constant circulation—a series of de-contextualizations and re-contextualizations. The semiotic condition of Japanese women’s language is marked by the inherent disjointedness between the body and the voice, and by enormous ideological work that erases its traces of mediations by political and historical forces and their agents.

This paper seeks to understand how metalinguistic devices—such as reported speech and quotation—serve both to produce and at the same time to normalize such dissonance, and thus women’s language as language ideology. To make my point, I will focus on a specific mode of reported speech, that is, reported speech in interlingual translation, and its role in the reproduction of the idea of women’s
language. Because translation entails the relocation of text across two distinctive linguistic codes, we can trace the maximum degree to which the voice gets disarticulated from the body. At the same time, translation simultaneously rearticulates the voice and the body by negotiating and regularizing the terms of “equivalence in difference” (Jakobson, 1959, pp. 233–234). Unpacking this process and analyzing the regularity of the distribution of women’s language in dialogues will enable us to understand how semiotic mechanisms constitute the “normal” and the “original” of Japanese women.

I will look at two translated works of fiction. One is Sekiryoo Kooya (Solitude Point, 1993), an award winning Japanese novel. The story takes place in Baton Rogue, Louisiana, USA, and the protagonist is a 64-year-old Japanese woman who came to the States as a war bride. Dialogues (in Japanese) in this fiction are “translated” in the sense that they are the Japanese translation of imaginary voices in English. Through their Japanese dialogues, the author intends his readers to hear English voices. The second text is Kaze to tomoni sarinu (Mitchell, 1977), the Japanese translation of Gone with the Wind (Mitchell, 1936). Both stories complicate gender marking through women’s language, for they involve other axes of difference such as race and class.

Through the analysis of reported speech in these works of fiction, I will consider the possibility of “inter-indexicality,” or the movement between two distinctive indexical systems as a semiotic mode of subject formation. Just as intertextuality prescribes that no text can exist independently of a relationship with other texts, the indexical system of women’s language cannot exist without its relationship with other indexical systems, and is not reducible either to the original or a text “prior to” translation. In other words, the normativity of women’s language and the identity of “Japanese women” which it indexes, is, in fact, insured and normalized by this interrelationship and traffic between the two distinctive indexical systems. This then articulates the voice of the self and the body of the alter.

None of this is to say that it is not possible to hear women’s language uttered by real women—either consciously and reflexively or “naturally” as routinized habitus. Sociolinguistic studies have traditionally sought to find such speakers among the urban middle-class standard Japanese speech communities—and have succeeded. My aim here, however, is to understand “women’s language” as language ideology, and to suggest the possibility that it is the discourse of Japanese women’s language—not the actual speech of Japanese women—that animates such studies. It is my argument that the language ideology constitutes the very condition of possibility for such empirical studies, that makes such studies—constructing the knowledge of gender difference in speech—possible and that rather than simply recording or documenting “women’s language,” the studies themselves—widely read and appreciated in Japan—serve to turn the ideology of Japanese women’s language into an experiential fact for Japanese women. The discourse of women’s language gets naturalized by being identified with the materiality of specific speaking bodies, as if those bodies were the origin of women’s language, and as if women’s language were an essential and natural trait of Japanese women. Once the “origin” is so identified, other bodies that do not have access to women’s language are treated
inevitably as “deviant”, “non-normative”, or, at best, “diversity”—liberal humanist tokens which are, by the very process of becoming recognized as “diversity,” necessarily marginalized. The identification of the original body also renders a temporal hierarchy, in which “other bodies” are explained as a historical consequence of women’s language use becoming corrupted. Furthermore, the historical emergence of the discourse of women’s language was closely connected with Japan’s nation-state formation, capitalist take-off, and modernization (Inoue, 2002). Identification of women’s language with specific speaking bodies, i.e., urban middle-class women, is—not surprisingly—driven by the normalization and dissemination of a specific gendered subject position that particular agents, such as elements of the state apparatus and those interested in the development of a national consumer economy, have designated for women. More importantly, forms of metalinguistic practice that reproduce women’s language—citing, quoting, and reporting in the circulation of the modern mass media—came to be naturalized as the faithful reflection of how women actually speak, whereas, I start with the assumption that they actively produce—in the Foucauldian sense of the productivity of discourse—the “reality” of how women speak. Women’s language is not a statistical fact resulting from real historical women speaking it. If there is any speaker of women’s language, what we need to ask is how she came to embody women’s language through “a regulated process of repetition” (Butler, 1990, p. 145) and under what kind of socioeconomic and historical conditions it is possible for her to become the embodied subject of women’s language.

2. Nation and translation

Translation is an intertextual relationship that “involves two equivalent messages in two different codes” (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233). While this might sound like a politically neutral and mere mechanical procedure, negotiating the terms of this “equivalence in difference” is not so much a linguistic as a social matter. For two languages to engage in a translational relationship of equivalence, it must be first recognized metalinguistically that they are incommensurable, mutually distinctive linguistic codes. For them to be incommensurable, each of has to be a unitary language, and therefore internal incommensurabilities and differences within each language have to be erased, just as the notion of “a culture” and “difference between cultures” needs to hide internal heterogeneity. As Sakai compellingly argues (1997), translation retroactively creates the fact that the languages are different and autonomous: “It is not because two different language unities are given that we have to translate (or interpret) one text into another; it is because translation articulates languages so that we may postulate the two unities of the translating and the translated languages as if they were autonomous and closed entities through a certain representation of translation” (Sakai, 1997, p. 2). Internal homogeneity is metapragmatically prerequisite to translation. It is inevitable, then, that practices of translation are complicit with nationalisms. If, as is widely recognized by scholars of the nation-state, modern nationalism is inescapably based on an ethnicization of the citizenry—the conviction of a shared national culture with deep historical roots—this naturalization of “culture” is not possible simply
on the basis of ritual, ideology, or “imagining.” Rather, the imaginative constitution of a national culture is ultimately rooted deep in semiotic processes, such as those to be examined in this article.

The case in question in this article is a specific aspect of translation, i.e. that of indexical system. The indexical dimensions of language can have meaning only by their connections with the context (Silverstein, 1976). Speech forms associated with women’s language such as noyo and dawa are a case in point. Unless one has a cultural knowledge that they point to elements of the context where they are uttered, including the gender of the speaker and the symbolic ideal of womanhood as soft and gentle, such linguistic forms would have no meaning. The question for this article is, then, how indexical relationships are translated. How, for example, can women’s language be translated into another linguistic code where such formal indexical encoding of gender does not exist? And, vice versa. What is the semiotic process in which, to use Silverstein’s (2000) term, “text-in-context” is mapped onto another “text-in-context”? Silverstein aptly calls this process as “transduction” (2000). It requires the negotiation of terms of equivalence not only between linguistic codes, but also between cultural systems as contexts: “transduction can be successful to the extent that we can calibrate these fundamentally cultural systems of contextualizing value” (2000).

Just as translation in a general sense has the power-effect of producing the idea of difference and borders in the discursive formation of the nation-state, transduction is a critical enabling semiotic process that constitutes the self-evident conviction of “a culture” (“our culture”) as the core of national identity. Transduction creates the nation-wide fantasies that there is such a thing as “Japanese women’s language” and that “Japanese women speak women’s language.”

3. The indexicality of women’s language

In this section I will examine final particles (shuujoshi), recognized as one of the most salient linguistic elements associated with “women’s language”. Final particles are one of the formal linguistic units most systematically linked to and normalized by the prevailing Japanese gender ideology. This ideology entails the symbolic association of “maleness” and “femaleness” with determinate styles of affect, stance, and evidentiality (Ochs, 1992). The ideology also, in its linguistic moment, asserts that certain final particles, such as wa, wayo, no, noyo, dawa, kashira, mark softness, uncertainty, and other “weak” affect. These came to be “female” final particles and came to be the gender marker of femaleness as a consequence of women complying with the socially-accepted and culturally-constituted gendered demeanor. This functionalist narrative of how certain speech forms wound up being “feminine” is implicated in the reproduction of the gender ideology because it creates a logically closed circuit of indexical relationship between gender and affect.

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1 For a concise list of final particles associated with women’s language, see Okamoto (1995)
The indexical saliency of final particles is particularly prominent in written texts. It derives partly from their morpho-syntactic position and function in the sentence. Placed at the end of the sentence, or intonation unit, final particles are relatively insignificant for syntactic construction, and therefore relatively independent of other sentential elements and of syntactic constraints. This in turn allows them to be more segmentable and extractable as a discrete sign. Such relative structural autonomy and extractability makes final particles highly efficient indexes of gender particularly in written texts, into which extra-linguistic forms of index cannot be easily incorporated.

A good example of semiotic efficiency and salient indexicality of final particles as a gender marker in written texts can be observed in newspaper headlines that take the form of reported speech. A successful newspaper headline is concise, eye-catching, and occasionally playful. The use of final particles in newspaper headlines instantly and economically signals that the story is about a woman or women. By being stripped of the context of actual speech production, final particles become universal signs to signify women in general. Let us turn to the late 1980’s and early 1990’s labor shortage at the height of Japan’s “bubble economy”, which brought about demand for female labor as well as women’s entry into previously male-dominated workplaces, and when working women appeared to be gaining both some measure of economic power and social independence. In this context, there was a flurry of news about women’s employment and lifestyles as a critical sign of social change. Here are some examples (Examples 1–3):

Example 1

**IHANSHARYOO MINOGASHIMASEN-WA**
**SHIROBAI NI FUJINKEIKAN**


Reports recent efforts in Prefecture Police Departments to open up previously male-dominant jobs to female police officers, such as graft investigations and chasing traffic violating, and to facilitate better work environments for female officers, including child-care programs, facilitating shower rooms and lockers for women, and equal training programs.

Example 2

**SENGYOOSHUFUDATTE’HATARAKITAI-WA-A’**

“Housewives Want to ‘Work’, too.” (Asahi Shinbun, 9 May 1991a) The subheadlines read: “Sixty-four percent of women in their thirties and forties wish to work” “to expand their outlook.”

Reports the result of a recent survey administered to housewives regarding their interest in working outside the home. The survey shows that sixty-four percent of women in their thirties and forties wish to get a job and work outside of the home.
Example 3

OTOKO WA YAPPARI... KAO-YO

“Men are, After All... Looks” (Nihon Keizai Shinbun, 2 April 1992). The subheadline reads: “(They are) sticklers about their taste.”

Reports that an increasing number of young women register with dating/marriage services and that in the selection of their partner they give priority to his “looks”.

The examples shown above are the headlines for news stories about women, which is indexed by the use of “female” final particles such as wa and nominal + yo (bolded segments in the headlines). In written texts, such gendered final particles appear only in the form of reported speech, which is always colloquial. Once quotation marks are put around an utterance, it is subjected to the metalanguage of quotation: the utterance is represented as a more or less accurate reconstruction of that which was actually uttered in the past. Regular headlines would not include final particles, since economy requires the maximum nominalization—changing verbs into nouns, for example. The colloquialization of headlines is partly due to the morpho-syntactic environment that allows final particles to appear. Some final particles require a predicate, namely, a verb and verb-forms preceding final particles (as, for example, in Examples 1–3). This, of course, goes against economy, and renders them into “colloquial” and “informal” forms. The written style, as opposed to the colloquial, thus also involves the deletion of tense markers and modalities. The appearance of final particles makes headlines colloquial or “spoken”, as if readers were “hearing” a real person’s voice; the reporting voice of standard written Japanese is that of the universal. To put it differently, the indexicality of final particles when represented in written texts inevitably accompanies stylistic features of the colloquial and the informal, and is rendered as private speech, a language incapable of speaking by itself in the official public sphere of media and public discourse.

3.1. Sekiryoo kooya (Solitude Point)

One of the key sites of gendered reported speech in contemporary written Japanese is narrative prose, where the allocation of distinctively different speech styles to male and female characters is unproblematically present, both in high-culture literary work and popular novels. In fact, Japanese language and literary
scholars often compare narrative prose dialogues in Japanese and English, and emphasize the superior “efficiency” of Japanese, since the reader knows the gender of the speaker without the narrator noting, “she said” or “he said.” Even though the work is fiction, these sources must be recognized as a particular kind of fiction that is characteristic of modernity: the realist (or “modernist”) novel, in which event and characters are believable and recognizable. Once quotation marks are put around a phrase or sentence, it immediately becomes a “real” utterance, since, indeed, it “could have” really been said and understood, and it can really be spoken and intelligible, and the reader can, if she chooses, imagine hearing and understanding the words, or actually read them aloud and comprehend them or have them comprehended by others present. In other words, quotation marks metalinguistically signal that the written phrase is a copy of—or script for—real speech. This metalinguistic effect of quotation marks is maximally prominent in fiction in the case of female speech, for the written word makes women’s language “real” speech—as if real people were its original speakers.

*Sekiryoo kooya* is the 109th Akutagawa Award-winning novel authored by Haruyoshi Yoshimeki. It is a story about an elderly couple living in Baton Rouge, Louisiana—a 64-year-old Japanese woman, Yukie, and her 69-year-old American husband, Richard Griffith. The story revolves around Yukie’s progressive development of Alzheimer’s disease, and the differences and conflicts emerging between her and her family—including her son’s Japanese wife—at the end of her life.

Yukie was a war-bride. According to the story, she met Richard Griffith in 1953, right after the Korean War, at the American military base at Iwakuni, 600 miles west of Tokyo, where she was working at her father’s laundry on the base. Richard was a maintenance mechanic for combat planes. Released from duty, Richard moved to Baton Rouge with Yukie, where they have lived for 37 years and raised two sons. The crop-dusting company Richard formed with his friends after working for an air cargo company for 15 years was sued as a result of an accident at one of their client’s farms and subsequent betrayal by one of his partners. The lawsuit took everything away from him, including his dignity. As Yukie’s disease progresses, she begins to express long-hidden memories of incidents that and people who hurt her deeply, including racism.

The reported speech of the character of Yukie in *Sekiryoo kooya* conforms to the patterns of reported women’s speech discussed above. But the situation is complicated in an interesting way because the characters in the story are supposed to be speaking English, and readers are expected to hear their English voice through Japanese translation. In fact, according to the story, Richard made it a rule in his house that Yukie never speak Japanese when he is around. One of the signs of the development of her disease was her sudden bursts into speaking Japanese in front of him.

As in conventional in fiction writing, Yukie speaks women’s language marked particularly by the female final particles, including no, yo, noyo, da, dawa, and

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4 The Akutagawa Award (Akutagawa-shō) is one of the most prestigious national Japanese literary awards.
kashira, which readers are expected to “hear” in her English voice. This has the effect of eliding a critical problem in translating the speech of this woman. The “women’s language” given to Yukie’s dialogues in fact betrays her lived experience as a character in the novel, her historical background of being from a geographically- and economically-peripheral Japan. Female final particles fail to mark her as the daughter of the laundry owner at American base, or of immigrating to the States as a war-bride in the 1950s. Mediated by the inter-lingual recontextualization from Japanese (her unknown vernacular) to English (her supposedly original voice), and from English back to Japanese (note: Japanese women’s language), her geographical/economic origins as well as her racial experience (a non-white woman married to a white man in the American South) is lost in the process of translation. Her body is doubly displaced, first, by women’s language, and then by her unheard English voice to be imagined from within the discursive constraints of women’s language.

The following is Yukie’s conversation with her sons, Michael and Randle (Examples 4 and 5):

Example 4: Yukie to Randle

[Yukie told them that she felt somewhat suffocated to see her husband, Richard, working so hard to help to cure her disease, and that she realized that there was a specific reason why she felt suffocated.]

“Soone muzukashii-wane. Dooittara iino-kashira. Tsumari, otoosan wa, watashino kono difficult-FP(F) FP(F)(‘I wonder’) joojai wo nanika futoona kotoda to omotteiru-none. Futoona koto nanodakara, futoona genin think-FP(F) ni yotte okottani chigainai to kangaeteiru. Sokowo tadaseba, motoni modoruhazuda to iuyooni ne. Demo, watashi wa ningen to iunowa, sonna guainiwa dekiteinaiyooni omou-noyo. think-FP(F) Ikigurushiku kanjiirunowa, tabun, sonohenni riyuu ga aru-none. is-FP(F) (Yoshimeki, 1993, pp. 461–462)”


English Translation

“Well, it is difficult. I wonder how I can put it. In short, your father thinks that my situation is something unfair. Because it is unfair, he thinks that it must have been caused by something unfair. If we have the origin corrected, then he thinks that my disease can be corrected, too. But I do not think that human beings are made that way. The reason I feel suffocated probably has something to do with that.”…

Example 5: Yukie to her son Michael

[Then, Yukie’s son Michael asked her what she thought she would do.]

Yukie: “Nanimo. Dooshitai to iu kangae wa nai-noyo. not-FP(F)
Datte, ichi kara juu made kangae ga atte,

ikiteiru wakeja nain desu-mono. Byooki wo naosuyooni tsutometewa miru. Tsutometewa miru not-POLITE-FP(F)

keredo, kaifukusuru tameni chikara wo tsukunose no mawari, naninimo mashite neuchino aru kotodato

madewa omowanai-wane. (Yoshimeki, 1993, p. 462)

not-think-FP(F)

English Translation

"Nothing. I have no particular desire to do anything. We do not live in a way that we always have clear ideas from one to ten. I will try to make efforts to cure my disease. I will try, but I do not go so far as to think that making efforts to recover is worth more than anything else."

Yukie’s voice is thus represented through women’s language.

The absence of her vernacular (dialectal) voice needs to be read critically. Yukie’s historical identity, other than merely being a “Japanese woman,” has been silently erased by the metalinguistics of women’s language. There is no concrete indication in her voice of where she came from (other than “Japan”), or who she was (other than a “Japanese woman”). Furthermore, there is erasure here of both national and international political–economic differentiation and cultural fractures: both the internal heterogeneity of Japan and the center-periphery relation of America and Japan in the 1950s are lost in the dialogue. There is no politics of culture in this representation. Could one read, for example, a novel about the struggle for civil rights in the American South in the 1960s and expect to “hear” dialogue only in standard English?

In fact, there is no significant style difference among any of the female characters in the novel, including Yukie’s other three war-bride friends and American friends from church: they all speak perfectly standard Japanese women’s language. Ironically, as is shown in Example 6, Yukie’s sense of alienation from her daughter-in-law, Yumiko, is completely betrayed by her assigned voice.

Example 6: Yukie talking to Richard about Yukie (in tears)

“Kanojo ga ie wo tazunetekita toki-yo. Mada Lake Crest ni sundeita koro datta-wa time-FP(F) Amerika jin to kekkon shite, kono kuni de kurasu kotoni tsuite, jibun no keiken wo hayashiteagetakatta-no. Demo nandaka hanashi ga tsuujinaiyoona kanjiga-shita-noyo. wanted to tell-FP(F)

Kanojo wa kokusaiken to itta-wa. Watashitachi wa, Makiko mo Mizue mo, minna called-FP(F)

sensoohanayome to yobaretanoni ne.” (Yoshimeki, 1993, p. 435).

English Translation

“It was when she came to visit us. At that time we still lived in Lake Crest. I wanted to tell her about my experience, about getting married to an American and living in this country. But somehow I felt that we were not communicating. She called (her marriage) an international marriage. Makiko, Mizue, and we were all called war brides.”
While Yukie was called “war-bride,” implying both economic and cultural subordination in both Japan and America, Yumiko, who married one of her (American) sons, grew up in the midst of Japan’s economic “miracle”, and Yumiko referred to her marriage as “international marriage” (kokusai kekkon), implying an “equal” status between both the countries and the marital partners. The clear inequality between Yukie and Yumiko, as well as the inequality between America and Japan (Yukie having had good material reasons to abandon the latter in the 1950s), are both denied in this double elision. Here, reported speech as dialogue does not play any role in indexing the very difference Yukie claims from Yumiko. Pragmatic effects thus betray or even contradict the semantic content.

It is important to recognize that none of this “inequality” between women of different generations, or between nations of different eras, is lost on the Japanese readers of Sekiryookooya. Indeed, this personal and international politics is a central theme in the book. And yet, none of this theme is represented in the reported speech of the characters. Translation creates an intertextual space, where the plentitude and the unity of a particular language is predicated upon the very semiotic process of being transposed into another linguistic code by erasing internal contradictions and differences, for they would complicate the essential condition for translation—the economy of commensurability (two linguistic codes as translatable) and, at the same time, of incommensurability (two linguistic codes as mutually exclusive systems). In other words, the certitude of the unitary linguistic self (i.e., “Japanese language” and “Japanese women’s language”) is constructed by transposing it into that of the other. Here we can observe how erasure (Irvine and Gal, 2000) operates in the process of interlingual translation and how this reasserts the unity and homogeneity of Japanese language and, thereby, that of women’s language. This intertextual relationship between Japanese and English through translation ensures the unity of the former: the monologic and universal ascription of women’s language to all the female characters, regardless of the profound differences in life history the reader well knows is at play, reinforces the “reality” of “women’s language” across and (imagined) smooth Japanese national space—even when diasporic—and underwrites the normalizing role of Japanese women’s language. The novel, like the newspaper headline, is one of the technologies of Japanese women’s language. Rather than an actually-spoken form of speech, which is reported as if recorded in written Japanese, women’s language is metalinguistically produced in the very act of its being reported in written text; “women’s language” is a compelling copy which needs no original for its effectivity.

3.2. Kaze to tomoni sarinu (Gone with the Wind)

We have now examined the semiotic practice that universally and collectively allocates female final particles as generic women’s voice, and have considered the role of intertextual transposition as a condition by which the identity of women’s language is reproduced. One can also recognize another—complicating—practice, which selectively and unevenly allocate female exclusive final particles to particular women, and not others. Consider these segments of dialogue in the Japanese translation of Gone with the Wind (1936) (Examples 7 and 8):
Example 7: Melanie talking with Scarlett and her son.

English
"There, there, Wade. You didn’t mean to jiggle me, did you? He doesn’t bother me, Scarlett. Do let him stay with me. Let me take care of him. It’s the only thing I can do till I get well, and you’ve your hands full enough without having to watch him’’ (Mitchell, 1936, p. 432).

Japanese Translation
"Ii-wa, kokoni irasshai, Wade. Anta wa obasama ni ranbooshitanjanai-wane? OK-FP(F) did you-FP(F)?
Watashi wa, chittomo kamawanai-kotoyo, Scarlett.
not bother-FP(F)
Dakara watashi no sobae oitoite-choodai, Watashi ga oaiteshiteageru-wa.
take care of him-FP
Byooki ga naorumade, watashi ni dekirunowa, sorekuraino-mono-yo.
It’s the only thing-FP(F)
Anatawa, shigoto ga oosugite, totemo Wade ni kamau himawa nain-desu-mono.
there is no-POLITE-FP(F).

Example 8: Conversation between Scarlett and Rhett

English
"I’m not afraid,’’ she said.
"Yes, you are. In another moment you’ll be in a swoon and I have no smelling salts about me.” (Mitchell, 1936, p. 381)

Japanese Translation
"atashi wa, kowagattenanka inai-wa.’’
not-FP(F)
“Iya, kowagatte-iru. Soshite, tsuginiwa kizetsuto kurundarooga, ainiku boku wa
being scared-PLAIN
have-not-FP(M)

Examples 7 and 8 show segments of conversation from the characters Scarlett, Melanie, and Rhett. Both Scarlett and Melanie are accorded “feminine”—and “grammatical”—speech style characterized by female final particles, such as wa, wayo, kotoyo, noyo, and (desu)mono. Rhett Butler, the symbol of desired masculinity in this story, is given male-exclusive final particles, such as ze (Example 8).

Such generic gendered voices are not, however, extended to everyone. In the Japanese translation of Gone with the Wind, the Black house slaves are not entitled to such gendered speech styles. Example 9 shows conversation segments from the character Mammie, Scarlett’s Black nanny, and Example 10 from Peter, Melanie’s house servant.

Example 9: Mammy, Scarlett’s nurse, greeting Frank, Scarlett’s sister’s fiancée.

English
"It shos is good ter see home folks,’’ she said. “How is you, Mist’ Frank? Effen Ah’d knowed Miss Scarlett wuz out wid you, Ah wouldn’ worrit so’’ (Mitchell, 1936, p. 598).
Both Mammie and Peter are assigned an “ungrammatical” speech style. It is highlighted by, for example, a polite verb-ending, gozeemasu, which is considered non-standard or dialectal for its coalescence of vowel from ai (the standard form is gozai masu) to ee (gozeemasu). Furthermore, in standard Japanese, it is “ungrammatical” to attach a plain copula, da(yo), to polite-verb endings such as masu and desu. In sum, the speech of Mammie and Peter is represented in ungrammatical forms, or some unspecified “regional dialect,” at best.

There is no gender-based style differentiation, as is accorded to the speech of the main characters, in the speech of Mammie and Peter. For example, the first pronoun, washi, and a plain copula da(yo)—in addition to the non-standard conjugation of verbs—are often associated with male speech, and regional dialects. Gender difference indexed in speech in the Japanese translation of Gone with the Wind plays a crucial role in constituting the alterity of, and the authenticity of, race and class differentiation between the Black house servants and the white main characters. By not allowing the Black house servants to speak “gendered”—and grammatically acceptable—speech, the normativity of middle-class status (or, aristocratic) and whiteness (and heterosexuality), and the equation between them, are achieved.

This constitutes a noteworthy case of transduction or inter-indexical relationship, where indexical order in one language is transposed into that in another language under certain terms of equivalence. Whiteness is translated into “Japanese woman-ness” by assigning women’s language exclusively to white women, while blackness, whiteness’ diametric other, is represented in Japanese not only by non-standard variations, but, more critically, by canceling gender marking. The normativity of the Japanese woman—and her imputed speech—is powerfully produced by this technology.
4. Translation and the intertextual subject

The cases examined here also demonstrate how the indexicality of gender codes and articulates social relations other than nationalism, such as class, race, and international geopolitics, and how the social power such categories reflect and enact become normalized. And, at the same time, if we do “back-translation,” as it were, they show how “Japanese women’s language” cannot be understood simply as a gender construct. Gender in Japan, as everywhere, is never un-raced, un-classed, or independent of “world-orders”.

An inter-indexical (or intertextual) formation of identity suggests that the subject position which emerges in inter-indexical space is irreducible either to the original text or to the translated text. In fact, any meaning of the translated text is never determined, but is permanently deferred: it is an index of the original text, signaling that there is always “another” text to complement. Likewise, the identity of women’s language and Japanese women can be complete, albeit momentarily, only by its intertextual or inter-indexical traverse with other texts and indexical systems.

Our examination of translation indicated that the normativity of Japanese women’s language may involve an intertextual relationship between the indexical system of gender in one language (Japanese) and that of race in another language (English). Gone with the Wind demonstrates how the unity of its identity is established by the equivalent exchange of the normativity of gender with the normativity of race in another language-culture. In other words, the fantasy of “women’s language” is sustained only in so far as it has an (indexical) exchangeability with whiteness. In fact, some Japanese writers in the late nineteenth century claimed that they invented “women’s language” out of the necessity to translate specifically white women’s dialogues into Japanese (see Inoue, 2002). Thus, right from the inception of the idea of women’s language, a Japanese understanding of Western whiteness was deeply implicated in its construction.

Let me draw on another set of examples to elaborate on the idea of intertextual subjectivity in conjunction with my initial discussion on the inherent disarticulation between the body and the voice characteristic of Japanese women’s language. A good analogy is foreign films with Japanese language dubbing or subtitling, another site where women’s language is obligatorily used to represent (normative) non-Japanese female characters. In such films, the body and the voice are disjointed or “out of sync,” in that viewers are socialized—and practiced—to hear or to read the translated voice in their familiar language and simultaneously to see the images of racial and cultural others in familiar social terms. Viewers are thus burdened with perceptual work to put in sync the voice of the self and the body of the other. Another analogy can be seen in documentaries and news interviews, in which the translated voice is dubbed onto the original one with some time lag, so that viewers can hear how the original voice sounds. Throughout the interview it is often the case that viewers continue to hear the original voice as background noise, while they listen to the dubbed voice as language. The acoustic presence of the interviewee is irreducible either to the dubbed voice or to the original voice. I suggest that such a mode of a synthetic identity would best characterize Japanese women’s language.
5. Conclusion

In this article I have examined what happens when “women’s language” is dislocated into another signification system through the semiotic process of translation, and how that process is a critical technology that produces the language ideology of Japanese women’s language. No ideological notion is automatically stable or naturally permanent. It has to establish a regime that enables its reproduction. I have argued that the way women’s language achieves its ideological closure and its certitude has to do with the intertextual space that translation mediates, where two linguistic codes interact and transpose one into another, and the identity of “women’s language” is performed by bodies of alterity.

This article also suggests some of the limits of sociolinguistic assumptions about community and communication that privilege face-to-face interaction as a primordial site of, and form of, the sociolinguistics of knowledge and experience. The romanticization of face-to-face interaction results arbitrarily and artificially in breaking up the wholeness of our linguistic life into “real,” “naturally-occurring” language on the one hand, and mediated and reflexive “metalanguage” on the other. Such a distinction misses the point that face-to-face interaction is just as mediated as other forms of communication—what, after all, could possibly be “natural” about “naturally-occurring speech”?—and that the supposedly mediated and reflexive is always present in every face-to-face encounter. It is important to rethink theoretical and methodological models capable of dealing with other forms of communication, particularly, mass communication and mass-mediated texts.

Finally, the focus on intertextuality contributes to the field of language and gender by necessarily locating it in the context of transnational economies of race, class, and gender. The significant recent development of the field of language and gender owes a great deal to increasingly sophisticated—co-constitutional—understandings of gender as a system of difference always in collusion or conflict with other systems of difference, among them, race, class, and sexuality. In North America, feminist theory has been productively challenged particularly by women of color for its systematic exclusion of their experiences from theorization, and, more importantly, the realization that mainstream white feminism with its “generic” paradigm of (raceless) sisterhood threatens to be just one more form of oppression of women of color.

This critique needs to be extended to the horizon of transnational racial and gender economy (“race” relations on the global stage): how are Western women and their whiteness necessarily implicated in the (raced and classed) construction of gender in other locations? Global “difference” is not a natural outcome of simply living in different geographical areas with different languages and discreet cultures. Rather, “international” difference is an inescapably political matter formed out of the historical–material relations of contact, conflict, conquest, and uneven development (colonialism, imperialism, capitalism). As I have discussed above, the normative ideal of Japanese women is sustained by its indexical value of equivalence with whiteness. In other words, the issue of women’s language in Japan is not unrelated

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5 For an excellent review of the current status of the field of language and gender, see Bucholtz (1999).
to the normativity of whiteness in the US. Accordingly, the theory of gender and language is productively complicated and enriched by incorporating the concept of intertextuality. No national womanhood is an island.

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