DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE
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DEPARTMENT OF JAPANESE STUDIES

jointly present

a seminar

Sukaaretto-sama, arigatoogozeemasu-da: the linguistic inferiorization of black slaves and poor whites in the Japanese translation of Gone with the Wind

Date: Friday, 12 September 2008
Time: 4.00 pm
Venue: AS5 / 05-09A
Speaker: Dr Mie Hiramoto

Abstract:

In her study of Japanese women's language (JWL) in two translated novels, Inoue concludes that translations represent "an intertextual relationship that 'involves two equivalent messages in two different codes.'" (2003: 318). Her study clearly demonstrates that JWL is reproduced in translation through the use of language ideology and also that this reproduction is accomplished by erasure of certain attributes that are presumed to exist in the characters' original states, a process known as "transduction." The main focus of this study is the investigation of minority characters' (namely, enslaved men and women and poor Whites) intertexuality and the transduction of their speech attributes in the Japanese translation of *Gone with the Wind* (*GWTW*).

The findings show that none of the slave women use JWL and no slaves or poor Whites use Standard Japanese (SJ) in the translation. Further, I propose that their speech is modeled after a stigmatized Japanese dialect, namely Toohoku dialect, or Toohoku-*ben* (TB). In the data, linguistic features used by minority characters that resemble TB include: the sentence final particles *da* and *bee*; a vowel coalescence (*ai* ~ *ee*) as seen in, for example, the polite verb ending form *goz**ee**masu* ; prenasalizations like *ke**nd**o* ~ *ke**d**o* 'but'; and a merger of high front vowels (***su**ngari* ~ ***shi**ngari* 'last'). The original English *GWTW* text employs eye-dialect orthography to signify minority characters' speech, thus the use of non-SJ in the translation may be understood as intertexual-interdiscursivity. However, assigning speech styles to characters based on a specific regional dialect, namely TB, requires a different explanation.

Following Och's (1990) model of indexicality, use of pseudo-TB serves to directly index the characters' non-standardness, and therefore to indirectly index stigmatization associated with TB. According to Bakhtin's (1973) notion of double-voiced discourse, uses of pseudo-TB by the minority characters are almost parodic. Put another way, following the "n-th order indexical" model, (Silverstein 1996), the 3rd order indexicality here may be non-normativity reproduced through intertexual stigmatization via use of pseudo-TB. That is, a higher-order indexical may override the earlier indexicals and thus conclusively stereotype the minority characters. Pseudo-TB erases certain of the characters' attributes (e.g., gender, place of origin, ethnicity) and indexes non-normativity. This imaginary variety, unrealistic to the point of not even qualifying as an actual dialect, derogate the minority characters, portraying them as a group of people who lack the ability to speak (1) a complete dialect, or even (2) correctly speak a stigmatized dialect.

This study provides linguistic evidence that the use of SJ in translation is based on socioeconomic distribution rather than actual linguistic distribution. Attention to the linguistic representation of marginal characters in *GWTW* likewise underscores the salient marginality of the TB in Japanese language ideology. While it is certain that the minority characters' use of non-SJ (which strongly resembles TB) is a translation of the original non-standard English, the assignment of the pseudo-TB reinforces linguistic inferiorization against the slaves and poor Whites, as well as TB speakers.

About the Speaker:

Dr. Mie Hiramoto is a sociolinguist in the Department of English Language and Literature who is interested in topics such as contact linguistics, language, gender and sexuality, and language ideology. She graduated from the University of Hawai'i in 2006 and has taught at the University of Arizona and the University of Hawai'i.

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