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Language Education  
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Volume 18 ♦ January 2026

# Journal and Proceedings of the Gender Awareness in Language Education Special Interest Group

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The GALE Journal has updated its authorship and editorial policy regarding the usage of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT in relation to the submission of academic work for publication (including but not limited to papers and reviews). The GALE Journal is in agreement with PNAS's following concerns: "In response to user-supplied questions or prompts, ChatGPT can generate a wide range of materials through its use of a massive language model fed by extensive web-scraped data. Use of AI tools for research reports raises questions about authorship and transparency." Although these questions may be answered in the future, the usage of generative AI is still of concern. PNAS's policy notes that if any web-scraping software has been used, it should be acknowledged upon submission. Nonetheless, the dilemma is that this kind of software cannot be listed as an author in the references "because it does not meet the criteria for authorship and cannot share responsibility for the paper or be held accountable for the integrity of the data reported."

In 2023 it was ruled that Hollywood companies cannot claim copyright for AI-generated art. Similarly, academics might find themselves giving away rights to their own research if AI is used.

The GALE Journal does not knowingly accept work that utilizes generative AI. The responsibility for transparency and originality lies with those submitting work. At the GALE Journal, we ask authors to refrain from using ChatGPT or other generative AI web-scraping software to compose their work, considering a main purpose of the journal is promoting authors' research, writing, and distinct voices.

We reserve the right to reject work that we believe to have been created via generative AI. We acknowledge that non-native speakers of English may wish to utilize grammar-checking software in the final stage of proofreading, and we ask that they disclose that fact. However, we will not accept work that seems to have been mostly or completely created via generative AI. We believe that artificial writing does not add value for GALE readers, nor is editing it a productive use of our time, given that the journal's priority is to publish original research and writing.

As this technology continues to develop, the GALE Journal will adjust and publish any changes to its policy when necessary.

August, 2023. Updated January, 2026

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## Editorial Foreword

If you are an instructor, researcher, and/or editor in Japan, it is a busy time of year for you. You may be weary from wading through pages of insipid, vague, and lifeless “fake” AI-generated work passed off as original. It is notoriously difficult to “prove” if a student has used generative AI to write a paper, and institutions are struggling with how to respond to these new realities (Wong, 2024). Is language learning still meaningful in a world shaped by “fluent” generative AI? Some institutions in Japan are exploring the effectiveness of digital technology by, for example, utilizing immersive VR programming for language study. Alternatively, others seem to foist responsibility for academic ethics onto instructors, who flounder. They face the same expectations to increase students’ fluency and raise standardized test scores but lack curriculum changes and support to do so. Generative AI could lessen workload, perhaps: some institutions are testing if generative AI and instructors can work in tandem to grade papers and give effective feedback (Taylor, 2024). Other instructors fret over the reality (pun intended) of graduate students misusing AI even further, by generating not only text, but entire participant interviews via the latest iterations of imagery applications. Thus, although technology is increasingly embraced for language learning at the practice level, the purpose, and especially the relevance, of traditional academic rigor is being challenged by machines that may (or may not) do things better—but which certainly do them faster.

Disclosure: I have dabbled with generative AI when composing business emails in Japanese. I believed that the (very conveniently and speedily generated) language was appropriately polite *keigo*, but my Japanese colleagues remarked that it was unnatural, “weird” Japanese. Did I actually improve my language skills from using generative AI, or was I at least inspired by the realization that I need to improve? Well, . . . excuse me while I get back to grading those student papers.

The programs that power the latest technology are definitively *not* unbiased, as many GALE Journal readers are aware. Dr. Joy Buolamwini discovered—just by chance, as a student on MIT’s campus—that facial recognition software failed to “read” her face because she was a Black woman. Error rates for her demographic group reached 34.7%, compared to less than 1% for light skinned males (Buolamwini, 2024). To re-phrase, 99% of white men were accurately “seen” and recognized by facial recognition software developed by predominately light-skinned male programmers, whereas more than one-third of dark-skinned women were effectively rendered invisible; face-less, by the same technologies. The chilling case of a Black schoolboy in

London who was misidentified and searched as a criminal starkly illustrates the real-world dangers of applying biased software to our “real” lives (Kantaya, 2020; Mullen, 2021). This is just one, albeit famous, example.

Consider the many transgressions of *Grok*, Elon Musk’s own chatbot, in the past year. The sycophantic bot claimed that Musk (Its patron? Parent? Dear Leader?) could beat heavyweight champion Mike Tyson in a boxing match, that Musk possesses a better physique than Michelangelo’s *David*, and that he is in better condition and harder working than basketball great LeBron James (Opentools, 2025). Does this hyperbole sound familiar; this absurd level of (self-)aggrandizement of an outrageously wealthy white man? Although the chatbot has been tweaked repeatedly, it always seems to be getting itself into more, and more sinister, trouble. This is seen most recently in the understandable outcry over sexualized deep fakes, whereby Grok’s editing tool allowed users to alter real-life photos, violating numerous rights of a number of mostly women (Williams, 2026). The guardrails that have been put in place to prevent a repetition of this trespass are hardly robust nor are they universal. Hence, programs running generative AI have not just been perpetuating bias, they actively bend reality to suit particular purposes, no matter how racist, sexist, and elitist those purposes may be. At present, it seems that generative AI is too often a tool used for what I will call “un-truth,” both in academia and in the world at large. Un-truth: At the least, not your words, and often, not the creative and analytical skills of your brain, either.

There are positive developments. UN WOMEN, for example, is compiling data through GLASSDOOR, asking us to envision “training a machine to make hiring decisions by showing it examples from the past” (UN Women, 2025). Examinations of the gender pay gap are in fact serving to expose and narrow that gap (Chamberlain, 2016). PROJECT ALLYAI likewise serves as a hub for the discussion of LGBTQIA+ issues in relation to technology (Gardner, 2025). The previously mentioned Dr. Buolamwini established the Algorithmic Justice League which ensures that facial recognition software is accurate (Algorithmic Justice League, n.d.). Even the infamously horrid *Grok* is kept tabs on by other programs which compile and analyze its output (Opentools, 2025). From the creation of generative AI to the “discovery” of its inherent biases, to grassroots and institutional efforts which utilize these very tools to combat that bias, a clear trajectory emerges. Generative AI may be evolving, diversifying and becoming, in a sense,

“woke.” Fittingly, this transition is delineated by the writings in this edition of the GALE Journal.

In his paper entitled *Where All Women Shine? A Multimodal Feminist Critical Discourse Study of Japanese EFL Textbooks*, Andrew Haddow offers a deft analysis of the *Sunshine English* textbook series used in public schools across Japan. Gender bias in EFL textbooks has been widely examined internationally, and this journal has previously published a number of studies on the topic as well. Haddow’s work stands out as an exemplary contribution. Readers may be surprised by what Haddow has uncovered in his meticulously composed paper regarding how official attempts to correct gendered stereotypes of the past inadvertently reinforce current ones.

This edition of the journal includes a variety of intriguing book reviews of worthwhile publications. In her review of *Hospitable Linguistics: Alternative, Indigenous and Critical Approaches to Language Research and Language Encounters* (Nicholas Faraclas, Anne Storch and Viveka Velupillai), Antonija Cavcic describes how “hospitable” linguistics are “ethical, inclusive, and just” and include “speakers of marginalised languages, racialised communities, colonised peoples, and women and queer-identifying scholars whose voices have long been dismissed or excluded.” From the book, she quotes Fatou Cissé Kane, a scholar in Germany who states, “Being a Black woman with a doctorate doesn’t change my status as a simple ‘foreigner’ in a society where foreigners are not welcome” (p. 197). This question of how power can be redistributed in academia so that linguistic imperialism can be deconstructed will be relevant to many GALE readers. Cavic’s review is, as always, well-constructed and enlightening.

Jonathan Donnellan returns with another excellent review, this time of *Social Justice in Language Education: Taking Action* (Albert Biel and Fabian Maria Esleben, Eds.). He notes that the book is a valuable resource for educators, covering a range of previously underexamined topics such as LGBTIQ+ inclusion, wealth inequality, water access, anti-fatness as a social issue, and effective outcomes for linguistically diverse schools.

*Lifelong Motivation and Foreign Language Learning: Perspectives from Later Life* (Bérénice Darnault) is reviewed by Professor Emerita Amanda Gillis-Furutaka in her engaging, informative voice. This text examines “motivation in language learning, gerontology, and positive psychology, (but not necessarily gender)” in a study on a group of lifelong English learners in France. The text introduces concepts such as ‘motivational ecology,’ highlighting the interconnectedness of

individual behaviors, social influences, and environmental contexts regarding motivation. (As an aside, one must wonder how these mature learners might be interfacing with generative AI in their language study these days).

In my review of the impressive, carefully edited book *Ideologies of Communication in Japan. Speakers, Interaction and the Creation of Difference* (Patrick Heinrich, Florian Grosser and Saana Santalahti, Eds.), I focus upon sections most relevant to GALE readers. Among the many thought-provoking topics is a discussion of how research can be conducted in this brave new digital world by utilizing a “no harm clause for public sphere data” for anonymously recorded language.

Isobel Hook, an experienced professional in the field, has reviewed *Technology-Mediated Language Teaching: From Social Justice to Artificial Intelligence* (Javier Muñoz-Basols, Luis Cerezo and Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez, Eds.). GALE educators involved with self-access learning centers and other implementation of technology at their institutions will find both the book and Hook’s review illuminating. Hook states that access to technology “potentially benefits women and marginalised genders, who are explicitly identified as facing unequal access...due to sociocultural stigma and unequal domestic duties.” The term “digital integrity” from this text is a welcome one.

In his review of *Multiculturalism, Language, and Race in English Education in Japan: Agency, Pedagogy, and Reckoning* (Gregory Paul Glasgow, Ed.), Kevin Lim comments upon issues raised therein ranging from native speakerism in the industry which inspires attempts to develop agency, to teacher subjectivity in the classroom, and finally, to work-life balance. Lim offers impactful insights, and criticisms, but ultimately lauds the anthology’s contribution as creating “a broader understanding of decolonization” in the field.

Finally, the journal concludes with Lily Thukral’s clarion review of *Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context* (Noriko Iwashita, Phung Dao, Mai Xuan and Nhat Chi Nguyen). Thukral notes that past pedagogical focus on L1 based instruction is now seen as “a denial of learner identity” (p. 120). Authority and hierarchy appearing in classroom dynamics, such as gendered honorifics usage, are also addressed in this text. In her review, Thukral convincingly frames and personalizes the book’s message about the construction of “power, gender, and identity” as experienced through common classroom exchanges.

In addition to equity and agency, another issue raised by the writings in Volume 18 of the GALE Journal is relevancy: how can academia sustain relevance on an increasingly compressed,

digitalized timescale? The speed at which generative AI can process vast amounts of data is indeed impressive. Yet while research began from 2021 for a fair number of the publications discussed in this edition of the journal, it did not reach readers in print until 2025. In addition, a certain portion of the research addresses ever-morphing online interactions and demographics. It might thus metaphorically be described as the examination of a single drop of water which has since floated off on a current in a sea— of data. As we pursue digital integrity *and* currency in our own teaching, researching, and writing, we must prepare our students to thrive— to achieve a new kind of fluency, the definition of which may, from now on, always be “flux.”

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**Gwyn Helverson** is an instructor at Ritsumeikan University. Her areas of research include academic writing, gender studies in EFL, sociolinguistics, and art historical feminisms. She has been an editor at the GALE Journal since 2018.

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## Where All Women Shine? A Multimodal Feminist Critical Discourse Study of Japanese EFL Textbooks

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This study is a multimodal feminist critical discourse analysis of the *Sunshine English Course* series of EFL textbooks used in Japanese junior high schools. Textbooks—which convey not just curriculum but are also active in the reproduction of ideology—are a powerful tool in influencing how students think about their world. Gender inequality remains a problem in Japan, and this analysis seeks to critique how these textbooks are engaged in the reproduction of potentially harmful gender discourse. Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is used to expose the connections between language use, ideology and social power. A hybrid of multimodal, feminist, and Fairclough’s foundational Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches was applied. It was found that despite overall increased representation of women and girls compared to older textbooks, some aspects of the textbooks were consistent with traditional and stereotypical gender discourses which marginalize women. Textbooks should offer more progressive alternative discourses if gender equality in Japan is to be achieved.

**Keywords:** CDS; EFL; Feminism; Gender; Textbooks

### 概要

本研究は日本の中学校で使用されている英語の教科書シリーズ『Sunshine English Course』に関するマルチモーダルフェミニスト批判的言説分析(CDA)である。教科書は単にカリキュラムを伝えるだけでなく、イデオロギーの再生産にも関与し、生徒が自分たちの世界をどのように考えるかに影響を与える強力なツールである。日本ではジェンダー不平等が依然として問題であり、それを解決するために、本教科書におけるステレオタイプ的なディスコースの有無を調査し、批判的に分析する。本研究は、言語使用とイデオロギー、そして社会的権力との結びつきを明らかにするために批判的談話研究(CDS)を用い、マルチモーダルCDA、フェミニストCDA、およびFaircloughの基礎的CDAという三つのアプローチを統合的に採用する。本教科書では女性や女の子の登場数などは過去の教科書より多かったが、女性を周縁化する伝統的でステレオタイプ的なジェンダーディスコースが認められた。日本においてジェンダー平等を達成するために、教科書は積極的に進歩的で代替的なディスコースを提示する必要があると考えられる。

**キーワード:** 英語教育、フェミニズム、ジェンダー、教科書

This study offers a multimodal gender-focused critical discourse analysis of a series of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks used in junior high schools in Japan, the *Sunshine English Course* from Kairyudo (hereafter *Sunshine*; 2021a, 2021b, 2021c). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), more broadly referred to as the field of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), is a collection of approaches and tools aimed at analyzing how social power, ideology and inequality are constructed and reinforced within discourse (Fairclough, 2010; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018). In CDS, discourse is not just language, but language as part of the materialization of social life in relation to identity, relationships, social hierarchies, and social systems. Thus, CDS can show us how ideology and the unequal distribution of social power and resources are reinforced through language use (Fairclough, 2015). Textbooks are one possible site of this phenomenon. Not only are they specifically designed to convey knowledge and skills, but they also contain a hidden curriculum in which cultural values and norms are asserted in subtle and indirect ways (Mustapha & Mills, 2015). Furthermore, textbooks in Japan must be approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, also known as MEXT (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.-a), and are thus directly connected to the Japanese state and, it can be surmised, its dominant ideology.

CDS helps reveal not just how certain groups or individuals are represented in discourse, but enables researchers to critically analyze and push to change the discourse itself. By focusing this analysis on gender, the manner in which EFL textbooks are connected to Japan's gender inequality can be critiqued, keeping in mind that young students internalize ideology through the hidden curriculum. The goal of this study is ultimately to help close the gender gap and contribute to the creation of a society in which one's gender does not reflect social outcomes. CDS research is described as a first step of political action towards emancipation (Fairclough, 2010; Gee, 2011; Lazar, 2018). Thus, the present study aims to answer the following questions: what discourses of gender are active in the Japanese EFL *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) textbooks, and what can CDS tell us about how and if these textbooks play a part in the reinforcement of harmful gender ideology in Japanese society?

### **Background and Literature Review**

Gender remains a significant vector for social inequality around the world, including in Japan, which ranks 118<sup>th</sup> of 148 economies on the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2025). Japan's ranking has improved compared to recent years but remains the lowest of the G7 countries (So, 2024). However, it must not be forgotten that Japanese feminism has a long and rich history of debate around gender inequality (Kano, 2016, 2020), and even the Japanese government itself has

been vocal about their commitment to promoting a “society in which all women shine” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.-c). Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s economic policies of *Abenomics* also featured *Womenomics* (Gender Equality Bureau, 2017), showing that the Japanese government is at least aware of the issue, despite a lack of progress in closing the gap (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Social and cultural issues around gender and feminism have been part of active discussion in Japan. Coates et al. (2020) detail the rise of the #MeToo movement in Japan, and examine high-profile legal cases like that of Itō Shiori, which the authors argue were ahead of Western discourse around gender-related abuse. Further, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), one of which targets gender equality, are actively promoted by the Japanese government (MEXT, n.d.-b), and 39.7% of local governments were working towards SDGs as of 2021 (Government of Japan SDGs Promotion Headquarters, 2021). Despite increased awareness and efforts, however, gender inequality in Japan persists. CDS, thus, can help us understand how inequality is both created and reinforced through everyday discourse and discourse practices.

Informed by scholars like Butler (2014, 2024) and Connell (2020), the present study is influenced by understandings of gender as a socially constructed and ongoing process, which is separate from that of biological sex. The work of Lazar (2005, 2018) was also instrumental in understanding the relationship between gender and discourse with their Feminist CDA (FCDA) approach. As a preliminary exercise before this paper, the author conducted a multifaceted literature review in which one of the goals was to familiarize oneself with gender issues specific to Japan so as to avoid applying a Western-only perspective (Haddow, 2022). While the literature collected was written in English, the author was careful to pull from a variety of Japanese and international writers in an attempt to ensure diverse perspectives. The following analysis begins from the understandings that gender inequality remains prominent in Japanese social life, and that analyzing discourse practices, in this case the use of textbooks as an extension of dominant ideology, can illuminate how this inequality is reproduced through language use.

### **Gender Bias in Textbooks**

In reviewing the relevant literature for this study, several trends were identified regarding gender bias in learning materials. Disparities in gender representation in textbooks have been observed worldwide, and by the transmission of ideological norms through the hidden curriculum, textbooks can negatively impact students’ understanding of gender (Mustapha & Mills, 2015; Winter, 2010).

This bias can take several forms, from outwardly sexist or offensive language, to stereotypical depictions of gendered labor such as women performing domestic work at home with men working in positions of power in society, to an imbalance in negatively coded depictions compared to positive ones, and so on. Early scholars who offered influential studies of gender in EFL materials include Hartman and Judd (1978) and Porreca (1984), who pointed out how issues like omission, male firstness, and male generics contribute to gender bias, as well as documented how demeaning these early textbooks were to women and girls. Regarding English textbooks used in Japan over time, authors such as Harashima (2005) provide an analysis of an EFL textbook which still contained offensive portrayals of women, while Mineshima (2008) found that a then contemporaneous English oral communication textbook showed an overall balanced and depiction of men and women, suggesting progress.

This overall progression toward more gender equitable English learning materials in Japan was explained in detail by Hamamoto (2012) who offers an expansive study of 39 EFL textbooks used in Japanese junior high schools. They compare gender issues using books from 1999, the year the Basic Law for a Gender-Equal Society was established by the Japanese government, with those published later in 2008. The author found that there was an overall trend towards an effective balance between depictions of men and women in the newer books, and posited that textbook producers appeared to be actively avoiding gender stereotypes. This was compared favorably to the older textbooks which were emblematic of male-dominant gender ideology. However, Hamamoto notes that outside of the content of the textbooks themselves, the women co-authors who produced the texts represented only 12% for the 1999 textbooks and 15% for the 2008 textbooks, indicating little improvement in this area. More recent still, authors like Levine and O'Sullivan (2010), Cook (2015), Lee (2018), and Svien (2018) have shown us how EFL materials continued to contain gender bias despite the apparent efforts of publishers to move away from stereotypical representations. It is also worth briefly mentioning that gender bias has been identified in Japanese as a Foreign/Second Language (JFL/JSL) textbooks as well (Thomson & Otsuji, 2003; Winter, 2010), highlighting the pervasiveness of the issue.

Understanding the above global and Japanese trends of gender bias in textbooks provides us with an understanding of the types of representations and historic problems to look for in our present analysis, as well as an understanding of positive developments away from stereotypical and unequal

depictions of gender. Before beginning the analysis of the *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) textbooks, the basis of this paper's CDS approach methodology will be explained below.

### **CDS Approach and Methodology**

CDS is a collection of approaches with a shared goal of exposing social inequalities and ideological domination in language use, rather than a single method of analysis. The specific set of approaches that influence this study and concepts and terms that appear within thus require explanation. First, Fairclough's (2015) concept of *orders of discourse* refers to the norms and practices associated within a social organization like a school, for example. In that order of discourse, teachers and students are expected to understand, embody, and project their roles through styles of speaking and acting. Thinking of schools in this way will frame not only a wider understanding of overarching discourses like Japanese students, EFL students, junior high school students, etcetera, but also how said students will likely respond to the content of the *Sunshine* books (Kairyudo, 2021a-c). Next, Gee (2011) offers what they call *tools of inquiry* to aid researchers in critically analyzing discourse. Their *Big C Conversation tool*, for example, prompts researchers to ask what widely understood social debates or issues can be uncovered within a text and its discourse. This tool will help to illuminate how issues specific to Japanese social life, such as Japanese gender-issues, are connected to the textbooks and their content. Lazar's (2005, 2018) FCDA characterizes gender as ideological in nature, an ongoing social process in which individuals are placed on a hierarchy based on assumed sexual differences, and urges CDS scholars to unpack how power and discourse are connected in relation to gender. Finally, Ledin & Machin (2018) and Machin & Mayr (2023) provide an understanding of modern discourse as fundamentally multimodal, in which other elements such as audio and visuals combine with text to produce discourse and ideology. Elements such as the size of illustrations and the gaze of the characters contained in textbooks will undoubtedly shape the meaning perceived by students and teachers, and thus the approach of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), is crucial to the present study. Gender discourses specific to Japan that may prove useful to keep in mind include discourses of traditional gender norms such as the expectation of eventual motherhood framing much of social life for women in Japan (Kano, 2016), and of the hegemonically masculine ideal of the *salaryman* breadwinner (Cook, 2020; see also Haddow, 2022).

Progress towards social equality in dominant discourse is possible, and thus the Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) approach was developed (Bartlett, 2018). Before beginning the data collection and analysis stage of this study, the researcher was careful, to the best of their ability, not to assume the

textbooks in question would be full of stereotypical and harmful gender discourse. The most recent editions of the *Sunshine* books (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) used for this analysis were revised in 2021, and according to the publisher, topics reflecting SDGs are integrated, including the 5<sup>th</sup> goal of gender equality (Kairyudo, 2020). Although this analysis is not explicitly PDA, it is worth noting the progress that has been made.

It must be said that subjects with less discursive power and resources do not necessarily respond passively to discourse. When a student encounters dominant ideology in their textbook, they can have the capacity and agency to disagree, push back, or even opt out of the learning entirely. Macgilchrist (2018) labels these opportunities as ideological fragility, wherein teachers or students can criticize a lesson, or discuss or offer alternative discourses. An arguable criticism of the current study is that the *Sunshine* textbooks (Kairyudo 2021a-c) are analyzed without access to the teachers and students who engage with the material, but this would require an entirely different scope and analytical approach. Finally, as CDS is qualitative in nature, the following analysis also relies on the interpretations of the present author, although extensive literature has previously been reviewed to ensure a familiarity with Japanese gender issues (Haddow, 2022). Now, before analyzing what gender discourses are present within *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c), the textbooks themselves must be briefly introduced.

### **Materials: The Sunshine English Course**

The three textbooks in the *Sunshine* series chosen for this analysis correspond to an academic year of study in Japanese junior high schools: *Sunshine 1* for first year students, *Sunshine 2* for second year, and *Sunshine 3* for third year (Kairyudo, 2021a-c). The textbooks feature colorful designs, cheerful illustrations, and photographs. Students get to know a consistent set of recurring characters who interact socially using English and participate in real school events like the school trip and workplace experience program.

Broadly divided into numbered Programs, *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) are then subdivided into sections referred to as Scenes, Think, Retell, and Interact. Scenes introduce a grammar point with two-panel comics featuring a set of characters separate from those featured in the main Think sections. The Think sections serve as the center of each Program and are accompanied by what the Teacher's Book refers to as Oral Introductions. These are printed in pink text in the Teacher's Book, but students will most likely encounter them as audio played via supplementary DVD software.

After a brief section analyzing the opening pages of *Sunshine 1* (Kairyudo, 2021a), this analysis will be organized by exploring the Oral Introductions, Think and Scenes parts of the Programs, using samples pulled from the three *Sunshine* books as necessary (Kairyudo, 2021a-c). This deviates slightly from the order in which the elements appear in the textbooks, but was considered a necessary shuffle based on the results of the analysis. A final section commenting on the content of the publisher's self-proclaimed focus on the 5<sup>th</sup> SDG of gender equality (Kairyudo, 2020) is offered last. In all cases, the Teacher's Books were used as the basis of the study, as they include transcripts of audio segments otherwise only available through the DVD software, which was not available for analysis. Finally, descriptive language of the visual elements was chosen over reproducing the visuals due to potential issues of copyright and ownership.

The main Think characters are, as listed in order of appearance on the Main Characters page, Furuse Mao (F), Wada Ken (M), Daniel Smith (M), Ono Miki (F), Emily Jones (F), and their Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) Chloe Miller (F), totaling three girls, a grown woman, and two boys (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 3, preliminary section). The Scenes characters are Ami (F), Ben (M), Shou (M), Sue (F) and Joe (M), totaling three boys and two girls. To preface the main qualitative analysis with some quantitative data, the number of illustrations and number of spoken turns for each character were manually counted and tallied over the three books. In total, the girl characters were featured more heavily than the boys, with 299 total illustrated appearances and 407 dialog turns compared with 274 illustrations and 341 dialog turns. Examining only the Think characters, the four female characters outweighed the males totaling 179 illustrations and 292 spoken turns compared to 129 illustrations and 213 turns. Conversely, the Scenes favor male representation with 145 illustrations and 128 turns compared with 120 illustrations and 115 turns for the girl characters. The male-leaning Scenes data is explained by the fact that characters are occasionally paired with a supplementary character of another gender. If these extra characters were counted, the gender distribution would likely be more equal, but these characters are often unnamed and are not listed on the Main Characters page, such as boy characters paired with a sister or mother, for example. This ultimately has the effect of backgrounding the main female Scenes characters. Finally, it should be noted that although total appearances and spoken turns are distributed relatively evenly, in the cases of both the Think and Scenes characters, individual boys appeared and spoke most frequently. See Tables 1-5 below for a breakdown of this data.

**Table 1***Think Character Rankings*

Rank	Character (Think)	Illustrations	Rank	Character (Think)	Turns
1	Daniel	68	1	Daniel	148
2	Ken	61	2	Mao	129
3	Mao	57	3	Emily	76
4	Emily	38	4	Ken	65
5	Miki	31	5	Miki	46
6	Miller	15	6	Miller	41

**Table 2***Scenes Character Rankings*

Rank	Character (Scenes)	Illustrations	Rank	Characters (Scenes)	Turns
1	Ben	90	1	Ben	82
2	Sue	71	2	Sue	66
3	Ami	55	3	Ami	49
4	Shou	47	4	Shou	44
5	Joe	8	5	Joe	2

**Table 3***Sunshine 1-3 Think Totals*

Total Female Illustrations	179	Total Female Turns	292
Total Male Illustrations	129	Total Male Turns	213

**Table 4***Sunshine 1-3 Scenes Totals*

Total Female Illustrations	120	Total Female Turns	115
Total Male Illustrations	145	Total Male Turns	128

**Table 5***Sunshine 1-3 Grand Totals*

Total Female Illustrations	299	Total Female Turns	407
Total Male Illustrations	274	Total Male Turns	341

Regarding the above data, it must be noted that in some cases, Think pages deviated from the usual A/B dialog formula. Single characters sometimes give a presentation about the Program topic or are depicted as having looked up an article online. In these instances, they were counted as one turn for the featured character, even if verbal speech was not implied. If one assumes the Think characters carry more significance than the Scenes characters, then this appears to suggest that female representation in the books has become more balanced, but these representations must be analyzed within their broader context.

Finally, regarding the perceived gender of the characters, the researcher assumes the characters are cisgender, and their genders were determined through their depicted physical characteristics and gendered school-uniforms. The researcher wants to recognize the fluidity of gender and the undoubted diversity that exists in Japan, despite its perceived homogeneity (Narzary, 2004). Additionally, although there has been news of schools across Japan beginning to offer non-gender-based uniform selection for students, such headlines generally started appearing in national outlets from 2020 onward (Goto, 2023; Kyodo News, 2020; Nippon.com, 2021; Tanaka, 2022) around the same time as the publication of the current editions of the *Sunshine* textbooks (Kairyudo, 2021a-c). While last minute changes in production are possible, nothing in the textbooks suggests an acknowledgement or promotion of this trend or of the existence of transgender, non-binary, intersex, or x-gender people in Japan (See S. Dale, 2020). Having introduced the *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) textbooks, CDS analysis follows.

### **Analysis & Discussion**

When first opening the pages of *Sunshine 1* (Kairyudo, 2021a), students are greeted by the characters that will be the center of the textbook's stories across their next three years of study. Four smiling characters, at this point unnamed, direct their gaze at the reader, encouraging students to form a connection. On the leftmost page are the two international students, both white and blond/blonde, while the Japanese students, presented in larger illustrations, are on the right. The biggest of the illustrations is an apparently Japanese girl wearing a skirt and pink ribbon, the skirt flaring to the side slightly as she waves to the reader with a hand on one hip. The non-Japanese girl poses with one loosely clenched hand close to her face, and the other draped to the side, bringing to mind idols in Japan or a cute anime character. The female characters embody traits traditionally associated with girls, specifically *kawaii* cuteness and friendliness (J. Dale, 2020). Such comforting and inviting depictions may be read as consistent with the discourse of women as future mothers (Kano, 2016).

The male international student's gaze is confidently pointed at the reader, his arms crossed, and the male Japanese student is wearing glasses and scratching the back of his head as if slightly shy. The visual depictions of the two male characters may bring to mind stereotypical masculine elements such as confidence and strength on the part of the non-Japanese boy, and academics and professionalism with the Japanese boy. The Japanese boy's professionalism can be understood within the context of Japanese masculinity discourse and the salaryman, which Cook (2020) explains is tied with gendered expectations of the male breadwinner, economic productivity, and familial loyalty. Students may imagine this boy being successful in school and going on to a prestigious university to ultimately get a job at a large company or another position of high social status.

The large size of the illustration of the Japanese girl, who students will soon learn is Mao, suggests this is the main character. On the one hand, a female main character represents progress. However, when considering the context critically in terms of Fairclough's (2015) orders of discourse, it can be said that the discourse relationship between student Mao and the school system is an unequal one. If Mao is the ideal student, as suggested by her placement as the apparent main character, she will likely comply with the authority of the education system and the state, a discourse relationship which Fairclough (2010) has described as one of unequal institutional power. Mao being a girl also puts her in the context of gender inequality in Japan, another unequal relationship (World Economic Forum, 2025). Furthermore, because the textbooks are certified by the Japanese government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, n.d.-a), any progressive material contained within can be said to exist because it does not pose a threat to the dominant ideology and will not disrupt the order of discourse. Although a female main character seems to be a reasonable and even positive choice on the part of the textbook producers, CDS helps us understand how such choices are done so within the context of discourse, ideology, and social power. Finally, referring back to the data in Table 1, it can be seen that Mao ranks third in the number of total illustrations, and second in terms of spoken turns, bringing her status as the main character of the textbooks into question.

### **Oral Introductions and Synthetic Personalization**

Throughout the *Sunshine* books (Kairyudo, 2021a-c), the Oral Introductions are often a site of synthetic personalization (Fairclough, 2015), described as a tactic when a vast number of people are addressed as one to build intimacy and rapport (Machin & Mayr, 2023). The reproduction of ideology is often achieved through persuasion and the convincing of citizens to accept the hegemonic narrative as the norm, and synthetic personalization is one subtle way of both achieving

this and obscuring the process (Fairclough, 2015). The Oral Introductions in *Sunshine 1* feature rhetorical questions such as “What do you like? What do you usually do? What do you like to do?” (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 32). The language is lexically simple, by way of academic necessity, and seeks to establish a friendly rapport with individual students. This masks the authoritative power of the textbook and the power relationship between school and students. The narrator appears benevolent, so that when imperatives and hortative modalities such as “Look at the students in the picture,” and “let’s listen,” (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 32) are used, they are likely to be followed without question as the friendly rapport is continuously reinforced elsewhere throughout the textbooks. As synthetic personalization masks the commonsense nature of the textbook’s discursive authority, any gender discourse is also likely to be absorbed as factual and natural, which we will examine below.

The use of synthetic personalization (Fairclough, 2015) through rhetorical questions in the Oral Introductions continues into *Sunshine 2* (Kairyudo, 2021b). In Program 2 the narrator poses questions about Canada, where Miki, one of the Think characters, has gone to study abroad. The narrator asks, “If you go to Canada ... Do you want to see Niagara Falls? A-kun, what about you? B-san, what do you want to do in Canada?” (Kairyudo, 2021b, p. 20). These Japanese honorific suffixes can mark one’s place in the social hierarchy (Inoue, 2020), and as Mogi (2002) explains are also implicated with marking gender. The honorific suffix of *kun* is generally (though not exclusively) used for addressing men or boys of lower hierarchical status than the speaker, and although *san* is considered gender neutral, it has been found to be commonly used when addressing female students (Mogi, 2002). Thus, by choosing to use *kun* and *san* together rather than a neutral *san* exclusively, the textbook’s narrator implies referents of different genders. Within the context of Japanese gender discourse and the broader social context of gender inequality, these utterances can be said to contribute to the continuation of the gendered status quo. The order of discourse of the Japanese school as a gendered and unequal one is maintained, and the masking of the commonsense authority of the school and state make alternative discourses difficult to imagine and realize.

Finally, *Sunshine 3*’s first Program and its Oral Introductions center around the idea of Japanese *bentos*, or boxed lunches (Kairyudo, 2021c, pp. 10-12). The Oral Introduction for Program 1 introduces the concept of the *kyara-ben*, in which the included dishes and garnishes are arranged in a way meant to resemble a cute character (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 10). This preparation is a very laborious process, and surveys say that most of the housework in Japan is still likely to be done by women (Fukutomi, 2024). The second Oral Introduction for the following page asks the rhetorical questions

“Who made your bento? Did anybody make it by yourself?” (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 11) which continues the friendly rapport with students to mask the perpetuation of the unequal relationship of discursive and social power. This Program’s third Oral Introduction suggests to students “If [they] like chicken, [they] can ask [their] mother[s] to put some chicken in [their] *bento*” (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 12). On the one hand, this could be interpreted as recognition for the many mothers in Japan who are in fact performing the labor of *bento* preparation, but we may also view it critically as a failure to offer ideological alternatives to dominant gender discourse. If the textbook producers had deliberately chosen to use father or parent instead, for example, this could help normalize the increased participation of men in the domestic sphere, easing the inequality reported above. Cook (2020) tells us of the discourse of the *ikumens*, for example, which refers to men who take on an active role in childcare. The fact that the textbook creators, through the voice of the narrator, make the discursive choice to say that mothers are the ones who make *bentos*, normalizes and perpetuates the unequal power relationship between women and men in Japanese society.

### **Think: Main Lessons**

The Oral Introductions ease students into the Think portions of the Programs, which feature the main cast of recurring characters mentioned earlier. The Think section of Program 8 in *Sunshine 1* centers on the international students Emily and Daniel doing various tasks associated with Japanese New Year (Kairyudo, 2021a, pp. 98-99). On the left page, Emily and her brother Mark are doing the “year-end general house-cleaning” together with their father, Jack. In Emily’s case, she is shown diligently cleaning a bathtub while Mark is shown wiping down the TV (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 98). Although both a girl and boy are depicted helping with the housework, the punchline is that Mark is in fact shirking his duties and watching the TV instead of cleaning it. Visually, Emily has her hair uncharacteristically tied back and is wearing an apron, her jeans rolled up, all indicating she is actively engaged in housework. Mark’s illustration does not indicate any exertion or involvement with the housework other than a white cloth clutched in one hand. Textually, the Think piece ends with Mark shouting “Oh, no!” when his father instructs him to switch the TV off, which when coupled with his surprised expression further suggests this is a punchline the reader should find humorous (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 98). Remembering the social reality of gender inequality in the domestic sphere (Fukutomi, 2024), and the Big C Conversations (Gee, 2021) of men taking more of an active role in domestic labor and parenting (Cook, 2020), it can be said that the textbook here

fails to offer an alternative to stereotypical gender discourse, and that the use of humor normalizes and reinforces the discourse of men not contributing properly to family chores.

In Japan, second year junior high school students undergo an on-site job experience program (MEXT, n.d.), and the characters in *Sunshine 2* are no exception (Kairyudo, 2021b, pp. 62-64). Daniel, Mao and Ken visit a supermarket, hospital, and post office, respectively. We can immediately observe some implications for gender discourse as Mao, the only girl character shown participating in the job experience program, is shown working in a caregiving role. This comes at a time when Japan's rapidly aging population means elderly care work specifically is extremely important, and this subfield of medicine is made up primarily of women for reasons intertwined with gender expectations and ideology (Fujita, 2016). Further, nursing has been shown to be perceived by the Japanese public as more suitable for women, while the image of the masculine doctor or medical scientist remains difficult to overcome, despite a proportional rise in women doctors over the last few decades (Ikkatai et al., 2020). By having Mao carry out this work experience, the textbook also misses an opportunity for a positive representation of boys working as nurses or professional caregivers. Mao embodies stereotypical gender discourse further as the main point of her page is focused on emotional labor as she "just tried to be a good listener" while comforting a lonely old man during her work experience (Kairyudo, 2021b, p. 63). This is in line with the gendered expectation that nurturing is a duty that women are naturally suited for (Fujita, 2016). Emotional labor is of course a crucial part of working as a nurse or caregiver and should be portrayed as such in a textbook. Yet working in a hospital would also require physical stamina, dexterity with tools, and medical knowledge, but Mao is neither visually nor textually depicted as engaged in any of these skills. She is praised for her actions, and the Oral Introduction asks students to answer the question "What was her magic?" before engaging with the main text. The magic is unfortunately tied up with gender stereotypes, which aligns with a recent survey on unconscious bias in which 43.4% of students, 58.1% of parents/guardians, and 41% of teachers answered that they believe gender influences what careers one is or is not suitable for (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 2023). This shows a need for learning materials like textbooks to directly address this issue, which *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) does not.

Moving on to the boys' work experiences, Daniel is shown at a supermarket, where his main duties involve placing "many goods on the shelves," emphasizing the physical nature of the job and playing into stereotypes of strong men doing physical labor in society (Kairyudo, 2021b, p. 62). In the

illustration, he has dropped and broken some eggs and is surrounded by two laughing coworkers, both women. While their age is not entirely clear, these women are visually depicted as having grayed hair and rounder physiques, which brings to mind the gendered discourse of adult women workers who, despite overall increased participation in the workforce in recent years, tend to remain in part-time or temporary work rather than in a developed career, as Ikeda (2019) explains. Ikeda continues that although many women quit their jobs to raise children, as the young children require less care and their school expenses begin to rise, many mothers return to non-regular employment. What is crucial to remember, however, is that that pregnant women in Japan have faced workplace *maternity harassment* and often quit their jobs and careers as a result, despite the fact that such harassment has long been prohibited with the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (Assmann, 2020; Enomoto & Bublitz, 2016; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, 2017). Further, Japanese companies have also been shown to restrict career-track *regular* positions to unmarried women, while married women are often placed in *non-regular* support positions (Macnaughtan, 2020). This contextualizes the visual depiction of Daniel's supermarket coworkers, showing how their depictions are in line with established gender discourse rather than a more progressive alternative, such as presenting one of the women as the store owner or manager.

Finally, Ken's experience represents somewhat of a hybrid of the two prior characters, exhibiting both physical and emotional work. Working at the post office, he is shown performing the physical labor of carrying a heavy package together with a professional mail carrier (referred to in the book with the gendered term mailman) to an elderly woman's house. The elderly woman shows a positive reaction to Ken's effort, and he learns "the importance of working for others" (Kairyudo, 2021b, p. 64). Although the emotional aspect of Ken's labor experience could be read as a positive alternative discourse, this feedback was a byproduct of Ken's physical labor, in line with stereotypical gender norms similar to the experiences of the other characters detailed earlier.

### **Scenes: Supplemental Comics**

This analysis will now turn to the Scenes comics of the *Sunshine* series (Kairyudo, 2021a-c), in which the characters are always depicted in female and male pairs. This distribution, while perhaps done in the spirit of fairness, establishes the Scenes comics as a site of navigating the social differences of gender, as there are no comics in which two girls or two boys speak together. Students may be reminded of the way they themselves would interact with students of the opposite gender, and this could impact how they interpret the comics. Lexically, the comics are generally quite simple with

phrases such as “This is my friend Paul,” “Oh, I know him,” (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 70), but like the Oral Introductions and Think sections, a multimodal feminist critical discourse analysis of the Scenes can also show us how dominant gender ideology is reproduced.

One set of comics in *Sunshine 1* (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 62) presents the characters Shou and Sue eating *bentos* made by Sue’s grandmother for lunch. The following panels tell us that Sue’s grandfather makes breakfast, and he is shown to be making an *onigiri* rice ball, a comparatively less labor-intensive dish than a *bento*. The textbook producers seem aware of the need to show both women and men sharing the labor of family food preparation, but the disparity in effort between a *bento* and *onigiri* shows a gendered imbalance consistent with gender-role discourse and domestic labor. In the context of normalized gender inequality, students may find the grandfather’s efforts noteworthy or praiseworthy, as the grandfather is illustrated in a thought bubble but the grandmother is only referred to in text. In the punchline of this set of comics, Shou asks Sue “What do you do for your family?” while moving closer to her on the bench with an unimpressed facial expression, and Sue is shown sweating and silently scratching the side of her head (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 62). Both visually and textually, it is implied that Sue is in the wrong. The lexical decision to use “do” rather than “cook” or something similar flattens and devalues other forms of labor. Sue may do other household chores, be focused on her studies, or otherwise contribute to her household, for example. Further, the textbook’s use of the failure to fulfill gender norms as the punchline of a joke is poignant and normalizes traditional gender discourse. Earlier in *Sunshine 1* (Kairyudo, 2021a, p. 40), Shou tells Sue that he can make sushi (can/cannot being the grammar point for the lesson), while Sue boasts that she can make ramen, accompanied by an illustration of instant ramen. Again, both textually and visually, Sue is used as the punchline of the joke, made clear by the illustration in which Shou stares at her, mouth open, while Sue gestures proudly about her cooking skills, suggesting she is oblivious to Shou’s incredulosity. Furthermore, although Shou can make sushi, it isn’t implied that he is required to prepare food for his family, while this exact expectation is applied to Sue in the comic on page 62 (Kairyudo, 2021a).

In *Sunshine 3*, one Scenes comic of interest to this study comes in Program 5 in a series of exchanges between Ben and Sue, with the goal stated at the top of the page to “learn to describe people in detail” (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 64). In the first set of panels, Ben points to one of two women across the street, saying “Look. I think I’ve met that woman before,” (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 64). When Sue asks which one he means, Ben states “*the woman who* has long hair” (emphasis in original), rather

than the other individual with short hair (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 64). In the following set of panels below, the two read a plaque at the zoo which states “Lions are *large animals* **which** belong to the cat family. Only the male has long hair around its neck,” (emphasis in original) as the characters utter “I see” in unison with interested expressions (Kairyudo, 2021c, p. 64). In terms of Fairclough’s (2015) orders of discourse, the zoo can be said to hold discursive power over the visitors who come to learn and assume the information offered within is correct. The zoo plaque, itself a genre of discourse, uses straightforward authoritative language with little room for interpretation, and the characters passively accept the information. Sue could have responded with an article she found online about rare cases of female lions growing manes (Gilfillan et al., 2016), for example, but such alternative discourses are absent. Although diversity in appearance among women causes confusion in the human world, in the animal world where sex markers are supposedly natural and absolute, the characters are shown happily trusting in the assumed discursive authority of the zoo via the plaque. It should be remembered that actual students are encountering this comic in a government approved textbook, compounding the power imbalance further. By placing these two sets of panels so closely together on the page, a comparison or connection is implied between human gender expression and biological sex. This comes at a time when the struggle for transgender rights is a Big C Conversation (Gee, 2011) in Japan (Chapman, 2020). Although a critical student or teacher can push back against or discuss this disappointing connection, the present analysis of the textbook suggests a potentially harmful commitment and reinforcement of traditional and dominant gender ideology.

### SDGs

Finally, what of the stated commitment to the 5<sup>th</sup> SDG from Kairyudo’s (2020) own website? The lesson centered on the 5<sup>th</sup> goal of gender equality comes near the end of *Sunshine 3*, in the form of a reading with no involvement of the characters, and is centered on the story of Malala Yousufzai (Kairyudo, 2021c, pp. 100-105). Not only does this frame gender inequality as something foreign which happens elsewhere, but the content of the story itself, as relayed in the textbook, is more focused on the importance of education rather than the struggle for gender equality. Each page of the reading has a simple Oral Introduction for students, but the rhetorical questions asked within are arguably unrelated to the SDG of gender equality: “What kind of girl was she when she was little?”, “Later, she was given a great prize. What kind of prize was it?”, for example. The lesson can be said to thus be focused purely on reading comprehension, rather than encouraging students to think about gender issues. The main characters are absent to comment on the story or provide examples

of gender inequality in their lives as well. Although a very important and touching story, the textbooks miss an opportunity to address Japan's internal and long standing gender inequality.

### Conclusion

Within the *Sunshine* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) textbooks, traditional gender discourses were observed and critiqued. Research revealed that female coded characters were presented as cute and friendly and were engaged in forms of labor stereotypically associated with women such as housework and temporary employment. They were also made the punchline of jokes for not living up to dominant gender norms. When male characters were made the punchline of jokes, it did not appear measured against their integrity as boys. These characters were also engaged in physical labor and embodied characteristics which aligned with Japanese hegemonic masculinity. Finally, issues of sex and gender were conflated in troubling ways at a time when transgender people in Japan struggle for legal rights. This was all done while the establishment and maintenance of the textbook's discursive authority and ideological common sense were masked through synthetic personalization. Ultimately, although the total numbers in Table 5 indicate more appearances and spoken turns for female characters than male, suggesting progress, a multimodal feminist critical discourse analysis shows how these representations contribute to the maintenance of gender inequality in Japan.

Within CDS, it is beneficial to ponder who benefits from a given discourse or discourse event. At a time when public opinion and government initiatives appear to be promoting a more equal society, textbook producers will benefit monetarily from having their book align with this sentiment, gain approval from MEXT, and be sold to Japanese schools. The Japanese government themselves can also be said to benefit through increased satisfaction polls before elections. Yet Multimodal FCDA shows that whether the gender discourse contained within is traditional or progressive, these government certified textbooks do not threaten the status quo and can be considered both ideologically permissible and materialistically advantageous to those with social power. The order of discourse of the school setting is one of unequal social power, and though beyond the scope of this analysis, the discourse of learning EFL as a means of participating in the global economy vis-à-vis American and Western hegemony is itself a ripe subject for a separate study. *Sunshine's* (Kairyudo, 2021a-c) relationship with gender discourse is a complex one, offering both more female appearances than male and relatively even distribution of spoken turns throughout the books, yet it does not offer criticism or an alternative to Japan's dominant gender ideology. As textbooks are extremely influential to young learners, this is a missed opportunity in pushing for gender equality in

Japan. It is the hope of the researcher that this analysis will help spread awareness of how gender inequality is maintained through discourse practices and ideology, and in turn offer a humble step towards a more balanced society.

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***Hospitable Linguistics: Alternative, Indigenous and Critical Approaches to Language Research and Language Encounters.* Nicholas Faraclas, Anne Storch, Viveka Velupillai. *Multilingual Matters*, 2025, pp. 368.**

**Reviewed by Antonija Cavcic  
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In *Hospitable Linguistics*, the fourth volume in the *Global Forum on Southern Epistemologies* series, editors Nicholas Faraclas, Anne Storch, and Viveka Velupillai curate a multifaceted and genre-blending volume that is both immensely interesting to read and invites one to reconsider what it means to research language/s in ways that are ethical, inclusive, and just. It builds on the political momentum of earlier works in the series, such as *Decolonial Voices*, *Language and Race* and *Shades of Decolonial Voices in Linguistics*, and continues to challenge the oft Eurocentric and exclusive traditions of mainstream linguistics while offering diverse alternatives drawn from Indigenous, feminist, postcolonial, and Global South voices and perspectives.

The central concept of “hospitable linguistics” signals a significant departure from disciplinary norms. Rather than treating hospitality as a simple metaphor, the volume approaches it from an ethical lens. In *Hospitable Linguistics*, hospitality more or less means opening up linguistic research to those who have historically been silenced—speakers of marginalised languages, racialised communities, colonised peoples, and women and queer-identifying scholars whose voices have long been dismissed or excluded. Hospitable linguistics is defined as a lifelong journey and engagement with the diverse possibilities of examining language at large. It is about accepting “epistemic diversity,” and seeking to understand “how the violent marginalisation of most of the world’s language practices and the silencing of Indigenous knowledges” contributes to our complicities with ecocidal, patriarchal, and racist systems (p. 30). Simply put, linguistic hospitality is not framed as politeness per se, but as resistance and responsibility. The book itself is divided into four thematic sections—‘Language as a Gift’, ‘Language and Sharing’, ‘Language, Resisting and Undoing Enclosures’, and ‘Language and Reassuming Sovereignty’. Each section offers a series of short to long essays that vary in tone, style, and form—some scholarly, others poetic or epistolary. As a result, this plurality of styles enacts the book’s call to destabilise academic hierarchies.

Exemplary of such is researcher in sociolinguistics and critical African studies Anne Storch’s chapter, “Sunset at a Place Visited for No Ordinary Reason.” Written rather poetically and in a semi-autobiographical style, it invites readers to reimagine fieldwork in linguistics as an intimate encounter rather than an extraction of knowledge or transaction of sorts. She takes aim at linguistic fieldwork

practices, which seem to be “a performance of expert identity” rather than “intellectual excitement”, adding that we need the “*jouissance* part of fieldwork” to free ourselves” (p. 60). Storch’s account of fieldwork in Nigeria emphasises not only the joy and curiosity involved in fieldwork, but also vulnerability and the unlearning of stale practices. Written in a similarly casual yet more critical tone, Fatou Cissé Kane’s contribution is another standout. Kane critiques institutional racism and epistemic violence in German academia and museums based partly on her personal experience. “Being a Black woman with a doctorate doesn’t change my status as a simple ‘foreigner’ in a society where foreigners are not welcome,” she writes (p. 197). Her chapter is both a raw, personal narrative and a critical intervention into the politics of academic labour, museums, and state-funded research systems. She denounces the continued silencing of African voices in German academia, arguing that nowadays “many projects deal with colonialism and decoloniality [...] but those who really suffered the misdeeds of colonization are left completely out in the cold” (p. 198). For educators and researchers concerned with gender, race and decolonising linguistics, Kane’s contribution provides a model of critique grounded in lived experience.

In the collaborative piece “Pastiche: A Conversation Between Kenyan Sheng and South African Tsotsitaal Youth Language Speakers,” Ellen Hurst-Harosh and Fridah Kanana Erastus do away with scholarly authority to foreground young voices instead. Their goal, they suggest, is to take their “voices out of the data” and “to allow speakers themselves to explain their language use” (p. 288). The result is what could be called linguistic humility—an approach deeply relevant for educators facilitating student-centred learning, especially in multilingual or multicultural classrooms. In this fashion, the entire volume challenges the institutional structures of academia. The afterword also calls out the “gatekeepers” of knowledge—editors, publishers, reviewers, and elite institutions—who continue exclusionary practices. Hospitality, as the editors argue, “should be at the very heart of (almost all) linguistic research,” especially in contexts of “migration, encounter and creating or maintaining a sense of belonging in the face of Otherness” (p. 390). These insights resonate strongly in Japanese universities, where internationalisation efforts often emphasise surface-level diversity while leaving structural inequalities unchallenged. For scholars invested in feminist pedagogy, *Hospitable Linguistics* is a reminder that inclusivity is not about representation alone—it is about the redistribution of power.

Although many chapters take liberties with academic writing conventions (or do away with them altogether), it is clearly by design. The editors argue that rigid disciplinary norms, especially in the field of linguistics, often exclude the very knowledges they seek to include. While this has the potential to be disorienting for readers expecting a stuffy 400-page text in linguistics, I argue that it

aligns with the book's decolonial mission to unsettle who gets to produce and define knowledge. Whether teaching ESL, sociolinguistics, or even intercultural communication, this book provides rich material to deconstruct linguistic imperialism. It encourages us to interrogate how our own classroom practices may replicate colonial dynamics and foster learning environments based on “hospitality”, humility, and dialogue. The inclusion of gendered and racialised experiences in academia (particularly from women in the Global South) opens important space for critical reflection within Japanese academic institutions—which remain male-dominated and hierarchical in many respects. *Hospitable Linguistics* is not a traditional academic text, nor does it intend to be. It is a deliberately unruly and intellectually courageous work which challenges the field of linguistics—and by extension, universities—to become more generous, ethical, and inclusive spaces. For researchers and educators in a time when DEI policies are being rolled back, this volume offers a toolkit for reimagining language education and research not only as a technical skill, but as an ethical practice of solidarity, care, and resistance.

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*Social Justice in Language Education: Taking Action*

Albert Biel and Fabian Maria Esleben, Eds.

Multilingual Matters, 2025, 256 pp.

Reviewed by Jonathan Donnellan

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The editors of this volume start by stating that, as language teaching is a political act that cannot be separated from context, a renewed focus on acting for social justice in language education is necessary to face many of the crises in the world today. To this end, this volume contains 15 papers drawn from the 2022 “Taking Action” conference held in Dortmund. In these papers the authors describe a variety of social justice issues related to language education and language policy in education from their teaching or research contexts, with a focus on action rather than theory.

Part 1 consists of four chapters which set the scope for the rest of the book. Chapter 1 (Blume & Gerlach) demonstrates a need for socially just action by focusing on two aspects of ELT in German contexts: the experiences of neurodivergent learners and the role of teacher-training. The interview of L. J. Randolph Jr. and Stacey Margarita Johnson by Albert Biel in Chapter 2 introduces interpretations of the key terms *social justice*, *transformative learning*, *representation*, and *reflection*. In Chapter 3, Hightet reflects on her role working with a Delhi-based NGO to investigate what is meant by and who benefits from action. Chapter 4 (Kong & Wang) describes research carried out with teachers of languages other than English and discusses the agency they feel they have in acting for social justice.

Part 2 is titled “Looking at Language(s) in Social Justice Language Education”. The duoethnography in Chapter 5, written by the mother and daughter pairing of Wicaksono & Wicaksono, describes a series of critical incidents in the professional lives of the English teaching authors and is bravely presented as “a chapter about the socially (un)just educational practices that we have participated in” (p. 95). The authors look at ontologies of English and ask how they, as teachers, are implicated in potentially limiting conceptualizations of English through practices such as labeling students as learners rather than users or by setting ‘native’ English as the standard to which they aspire. This chapter also includes some thought-provoking guiding questions for teachers to ask themselves about their own journeys. Chapter 6 (Guarda & Mayr) presents some conclusions from the COMPASS project, which advocates for more equitable plurilingual education through a 2-year

professional development program in the linguistically diverse Italian region of Bolzano-South Tyrol. This chapter has a great deal to recommend it, though I question the authors' uses of the term 'translanguaging', as the cases they describe seem to be focused on the use of multiple discreet languages rather than language as single resource. Chapter 7 (Erling & Foltz) is about improving learning outcomes for students in linguistically diverse middle schools in Austria, as students at these schools often lag behind their peers from less diverse schools.

The papers in Part 3 are grouped around the theme of content, and each touches upon a different battleground. Five propositions for the queering of ELT to further LGBTIQ+ inclusion are the focus of Chapter 8 (Merse). Güllü and Lüke's paper in Chapter 9 is the first that I have read on anti-fatness as a social justice issue in language education. Likewise, I was heartened to see sustainability presented as a social justice issue in Chapter 10 (Römhild). The inclusion of these topics expands the usual scope of social justice issues in a language related volume and is a positive aspect of this book. These chapters include teaching ideas for ELT teachers wishing to approach these topics, and they may also be good resources for university teachers writing rationales for language courses touching on these issues.

Part 4 continues with reflections on social justice projects carried out in language classes. A task-based learning activity on the topic of jobs, taught in plurilingual and pluricultural classrooms in Germany, is described in Chapter 11 by Berg and Blume, while Pérez et al. describe the creation of socially-just and locally-responsive classroom materials by English teachers in Colombia in Chapter 12. A large part of this chapter is given over to a description of the materials which, while interesting, left me wanting to know more about the decision-making processes involved in their creation. In Chapter 13, Collissi describes a podcasting project he carried out as a trainee teacher. Collissi discusses not only the creation of the podcast, focused on raising awareness of discrimination and privilege in Germany, but also the impact that the interviews had on his own journey. Chapter 14 (Kansy et al.) returns to the initial conference that inspired the book and contains reflections from four of the student organisers. The volume concludes with a chapter by Staunton that recaps the preceding papers and discusses the theories of social justice that inform them.

A major feature of this text is its variety. Interviews rub shoulders with duoethnography, reflective narratives with empirical research. Many issues are covered. As well as the expected linguisticism and racism, lesser discussed topics such as wealth inequality, water-access, and anti-fatness also appear.

There are voices from outside of the usual UK/US axis, with the German context well represented alongside contributions from Colombia, Italy, and Austria. It is also notable that the authors include academics, teacher trainers, and teachers of varying lengths of experience – from those still in training to those who have taught for many decades. Many of their reflections express an endearing honesty in discussing past mistakes and missteps. Another strength is that these voices are not all describing English language education, although as the conference that these papers came from was organised by the participants on an English teacher training program, there is an imbalance towards English that is especially obvious in Part 3. A final positive point is the strong focus on action, not only in Part 4, but throughout the book. Chapter 6, for example, describes not only the COMPASS program but some of the actions taken by teacher participants. There are numerous examples in this volume to inspire readers to take action themselves.

That said, the focus on action does come somewhat at the detriment of theory. The first chapter makes an argument for the term “social justice” having a focus on equitable sharing, but having no commonly agreed definition. However, discussion of the term is not developed until the concluding chapter when the social justice philosophies of Rawls, Sen, and Fraser are summarized with reference to the preceding chapters. This means that at times some of the chapters feel slightly unmoored, as the authors assume a commonly held theory of social justice that the reader may not, in fact, share.

Despite this, this volume would make a good addition to the shelf of any language teacher or researcher interested in acting on social justice issues.

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***Lifelong Motivation and Foreign Language Learning: Perspectives from Later Life.***  
**B er enice Darnault. Multilingual Matters, 2025. 272pp.**

**Reviewed by Amanda Gillis-Furutaka**  
**Professor Emerita, Kyoto Sangyo University**

I was glad to review this book because, being someone who is retired but still teaching and learning, it closely matches my personal and professional interests. It provides insights both into my current experiences of teaching a group of retired university professors and my own efforts to keep up and improve foreign languages I have learned throughout my life. Aside from those in similar situations to myself, the intended audience includes those researching motivation in language learning, gerontology, and positive psychology. For the benefit of readers of this journal, it should be pointed out that Darnault researched male and female subjects, but she does not address issues related to gender in language learning. Her focus is more centered on fluctuations in levels of motivation throughout a learner's lifespan and the factors that induce both high and low levels of focus and satisfaction, together with the influence of language learning practice on feelings of well-being in later adulthood.

This is a timely book for several reasons. Never have so many people enjoyed such long, healthy, and socially active lives. In fact, the world population of people over 65 now outnumbers the under 15 age group (World Health Organization, 2023, as cited on p. 1). Accordingly, there has been a change in research orientation in the fields of social sciences and second language acquisition (SLA) from a focus on vulnerabilities in old age and cognitive decline to the assets of advanced years, such as increased knowledge and cumulative experience (pp. 13–14). The author reflects this new direction by eschewing agist terms like 'senior', 'elderly', 'the aged', and using 'older learners', 'older adults', or 'individuals in later life' instead, while redressing the gap in SLA research into learners who belong to this category.

This book is an adapted PhD thesis and therefore not always relaxing to read. Most of it is very scholarly, but if you persevere, you can gain insights into Complex Dynamic Systems Theory, Directed Motivational Currents, and the role of positive psychology findings, all of which directly impacted me by improving my understanding of my students' and my own motivation to continue studying foreign languages. The focus of this study are Patricia (67), Georges (73), and Josette (81), three friends who participate in an English-language discussion group that meets monthly. They are French and have learned English throughout their lives. The goal of the study was to uncover the choices, strategies, and responses to challenges that have enabled them to achieve a high, stable level

of English, and to find the connections between their language learning practices and their feelings of well-being in later life. From a research perspective, this study shows how narrative data can provide information about motivation in language learning through the various factors that continuously interact and evolve. The author introduces concepts such as ‘motivational ecology’ and highlights the interconnectedness of individual behaviors, social influences, and environmental contexts which maintain long-term motivation and one’s emotional quality of life and wellness beyond retirement.

The book consists of five sections: Parts 1 & 2 – theoretical framework and literature review (comprehensive and informative); Part 3 – background to the field of narrative studies in Second Language Acquisition (of interest to qualitative researchers); Part 4 – the real-life stories of Darnault’s three research participants and an in-depth analysis (unsatisfactory – see below); Part 5 – overall interpretation and discussion of the stories and potential directions for future research (essential reading for a quick overview or to review). The author tells us that we can read the sections in any order, but recommends a chronological approach. However, burning with curiosity about the three exemplary older English language learners, I went straight from the Foreword to Part 4 where we are told with disappointing brevity the life story of each research subject. More details emerge when the author discusses data from the interviews she carried out with all three learners, but there seem to be gaps, especially in the stories of the two female subjects (who did Josette get engaged to and who was Patricia’s husband-to-be?) These were the first of my frustrations with this book.

The figures, graphs and diagrams are poorly reproduced from the original PhD thesis and very difficult to read. Thus, the reader often cannot check the information under discussion. For example, on pages 156 and 157, the print is too small or too faint to read easily and the figure on page 155 is totally illegible (i.e., it looks blank). This is true of the figures, graphs, and diagrams in the appendices as well as all those integrated into the text.

Another annoyance was a clear and confusing contradiction that I am astonished was not corrected. This occurs when the author provides a transcript from Georges’s explanation of the dual roots in his family history with an inventor on his mother’s side and a sportsman on his father’s side (p. 118). It directly follows an analysis of data Darnault generated with Georges (provided in a graphic in which the vital relevant words are illegible). She writes: “...while the father’s side of his family stimulated his intellectual curiosity, the mother’s side nurtured his appetite for physical training, strength and both mental and physical resilience” (p. 117). This may seem a trivial editing glitch, but

for me, such a mistake coupled with the fact that we cannot read the data provided undermines the credibility of the analysis.

A further frustration was with the large number of abbreviations used in the detailed discussions. I realized that I should have followed the author's recommendation of working my way through the book chronologically so that I would be familiar with the meanings of the abbreviations and the concepts being discussed. I made myself a crib list (cheat sheet) to refer to as I read this section, but in retrospect, I strongly recommend working one's way chronologically through the background literature and underlying theories that form the framework of this research project.

To sum up, this book is not an easy armchair read. I had to read a small section a day for several weeks, and make notes as I went, to recall the vast amount of information it contains. I will store these notes carefully for future reference! The takeaway is that language learning during later life, especially when carried out in a pleasurable social context, contributes to one's overall sense of well-being. This book is worthy of a place on a university library bookshelf because it contributes to filling the large gap in research into older adult learners and the different learning processes that operate at later stages of life. The author also answered a question that I am sure has occurred to us all: Why does time seem to pass more quickly as we grow older? There is an answer to this from findings in neuroscience, which I encourage you to investigate for yourselves through reading the original article by Adrian Bejan from the reference section. Please do read this fascinating article!

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*Ideologies of Communication in Japan. Speakers, Interaction and the Creation of Difference.* Patrick Heinrich, Florian Grosser and Saana Santalahti, Eds.  
Multilingual Matters, 2025. 210 pp.

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The editors of *Ideologies of Communication in Japan. Speakers, Interaction and the Creation of Difference* depict a nation in transition, one whose historically self-declared monolingual foundations are being eroded by rising tides of diversity. Heinrich, in the introduction and Chapter 6, examines the palimpsest of a major shopping district in Tokyo by recording multilingual “sound maps”, or “fragments of the manifold international encounters that occur daily, particularly in large cities” (p. 1). This theme—that language can no longer be “tied to geographic space” (p. 82)—is emphasized throughout the volume. The book’s 13 chapters examine how (mostly non-majority) persons create communities which utilize and mold Japanese language in attempts to transcend the overarching narrative which, until recently, sought to deny their existence.

Each chapter includes a comprehensive literature review drawing on the works of well-known Western sociolinguistic researchers such as Spitzmueller, (2022), SturtzSreetharan (2009), and Gal & Irvine (1995 & 2000) alongside compelling case studies. Part I, *International Encounters*, details the changing landscape. In the past, *futsungo* (common language) had been promoted even to the far corners of Japan’s colonies (pp. 3-4), however, as globalization spreads, language, too, is transformed. In Chapter 2, Länsisalmi explains how the term “*seikatsusha*,” an alternative word for non-Japanese living and working in Japan (variously translated as “consumer,” “resident,” or “one who lives in society”), has replaced the politically charged term *imin*, or “immigrant laborer,” in accordance with a new national narrative of diversity (p. 23). Nonetheless, Hashimoto states in Chapter 3 that despite the greater focus upon Japanese language classes for these *seikatsusha*, students are still taught in a manner which reaffirms “the dichotomy between Japan and the rest of the world” (Hashimoto, p. 36). Unsurprisingly for GALE readers familiar with gendered work in Japan, two-thirds of instructors of these classes are part-time, mostly university-educated, female, and have relatively little international experience (p. 38, MoJ data). Given their traditional pedagogy, as well as lack of language ability, they do not use L1 with linguistically diverse L2 students. The students, however, do desire L1 support, or “code-switching” to aid their language study.

This chapter contrasts strikingly with Chapter 4 in which questionnaire data from mostly white, Western educators living in Japan with varying degrees of fluency in the Japanese language is analyzed. The key phrase of this chapter is *unwanted* code switching. The participants complain when a Japanese person engages them in English, especially if that English is “bad.” Author DiBello Takeuchi discusses how unwanted code switching is being experienced as a “linguistic microaggression” (p. 52) and results in “feelings of othering” (p. 54) for the non-Japanese participants who are attempting to integrate into Japanese society. However, the author also convincingly critiques the participants’ irritated, disdainful, and even vengeful attempts to control the linguistic narrative by forcing Japanese people to speak Japanese with them as manifestations of their unconscious privilege; their “entitlement” in believing that they should get to decide which language is used for each of their interactions (pp. 63-64).

In Chapter 5, Grossner examines emotion, competence, and context in the multicultural relationship of an Austrian-Japanese couple residing in Japan. A technique which could be applied to the classrooms of GALE readers is self-language silhouette portraits (Busch, 2018), skillfully analyzed here (pp. 70-74). Also of further interest to researchers/educators regarding ethical implications are the previously mentioned “sound walks” utilized by Heinrich (Chapter 6). The author discusses criteria for a “no harm clause for public sphere data” which have been applied to this research in which subjects have no idea that their interactions are being recorded, let alone analyzed (p. 84). This topic will intrigue researchers accustomed to complex bureaucratic procedures and participant consent protocols traditionally required for (non-anonymous) data collection.

All of the chapters in Part II, *Mediated Communication in the Digital Age*, deal with the intersection of gender and sociolinguistics. In Chapter 8, Diegoli discusses *Hatsugen Komachi*, a text-based online Q&A forum, mostly for the Japanese female public. Women lament *machiga* (mistakes) made by themselves, but especially, made by others regarding the usage of “proper” Japanese. For GALE readers, many of whom are educators living in Japan and thus familiar with linguistic challenges and embarrassments, this chapter will resonate. Inoue (2006) explained that, historically, *jozeigo* (women’s language) was an artificial construct that the majority of Japanese women could not actually produce (p. 4). Diegoli emphasizes how a mythical ideology of a standard Japanese still drives online expressions of shame, self-loathing, and roasting within this demographic group (p. 125).

In Chapter 9, Moretti’s interviews of male Japanese game dialogue creators uncover noteworthy data. Second person pronouns are said to sound impolite when used in real life but are used heavily

in games to delineate characters' gendered identities (pp. 134-135). In games, male and female characters tend to take the same number of conversational turns (p. 135) (LGBTQIA+ issues of identity are not addressed by these game creators). What are the implications? As GALE readers know, women's voices are "heard" significantly less in real life contexts (even when they do, in fact, speak up) (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

SNS usage is addressed in the next chapter: "One person's erudite *kanji*-heavy user is another's pretentious nationalist, just as one person's hip *katakana* use is another's proof of antiquated lechery" (p. 110) writes Robertson in Chapter 7. In one example, young women roast (predatory) adult males and the outdated *katakana*-ed language they use online but have enough self-awareness to laugh at their own over-use of *hiragana* which will mark them as "old" in the near future (p. 109). Intriguingly, this phenomenon contrasts with that from the previously mentioned chapter on male game dialogue creators who claimed that the use of *katakana* "increases a sense of innocence (*mujakisa*) and mysteriousness (*misuteriasu-sa*)" (p. 135).

Vitucci (Chapter 10) presents nuanced analysis on *yakumarigo* (stereotypical characterization through speech) to uncover "a collective imaginary" of "Japanese hegemonic masculinity" (p. 153) in the Netflix teen comedy *Never Have I Ever* (2020). Vitucci draws attention to a touching and subtle scene between an injured son and his worried father which has been transduced from its original American English into Japanese. Vitucci notes that MM (male markers) are employed to make the scene more realistic and relatable to a mainstream Japanese audience (p. 145) via altering the language to that of a heterosexual, hard-working, self-sacrificing Japanese male (p. 154) embodying traits of "dominance, control, authority, virility and imposition" (p. 155). Certainly, it would be enlightening to investigate the implications of the chapters in Part II. At the least, such discussion could lead to further insights on linguistic generation and gender gaps, and particularly, the rapid transformation of gendered language "norms" in the digital era.

Participant voices heard in Part 3, *Minoritised Communities*, indicate how much there is yet to be done regarding diversity and equity. In Chapter 11, Nakashima confronts ableism, explaining that to the Deaf, sign language is their L1. Moreover, their needs as Japanese for whom the Japanese language is L2 have not been adequately addressed (p. 166). "...[T]reating physically diverse people the same way (as if they were not diverse) is the key mechanism for (re)producing inequality," Nagashima writes (p. 164). A mechanism which persons in the Deaf community have employed to transcend difficulties with honorifics, particles, *kanji* and so forth is the usage of emoji and symbols to realize

the creation of a unique written register (p. 170). Some inspiring examples of self-directed research which could increase “empowerment and growth” (p. 171) are mentioned (but not explained in detail, unfortunately).

Santalahti’s chapter on the potential for tourism to empower Ainu people while preserving Ainu language and culture is equally poignant: Participants are well-aware that various pitfalls, including exploitation, can occur, but generally remain positive about tourism as a means of achieving increased “agency” (p. 186). In Chapter 13, Ohara investigates Ainu and Uchinaaguchi persons challenging the dominant language ideology in Japan. The following quote by a student from Sapporo is emblematic of the struggles faced by minoritized communities: “...there was a person who I think was then a member of the City Council in Sapporo, and he had stated there were no more Ainu people on Twitter or something like that. ...my father actually exists, and also some of my relatives were raised in Ainu culture. Some of them even raised bears right next door!” He explained, “I could not even raise my voice” at that time. Therefore, he decided to confront erasure by attending the Urespa university program in Ainu language and culture (p. 196). Thus, while the contents of these three chapters are sobering, it is this emphasis on transformation that makes for an inspirational end to the volume.

There are a few points of concern to mention. The majority of contributors appear to be Western researchers, the reference data is often in English, and it sometimes seems that ethnocentric “norms” may be the lens through which Japanese language and culture have been viewed. Each chapter could have arguably been 10-20% longer to flesh out the theory, literature reviews, and illuminating case studies with further analysis. For example, the issue of how data from anonymous internet users and/or small participant numbers can be analyzed and meaningfully extrapolated from could be addressed more explicitly. GALE readers would also appreciate more acknowledgement of the gender-related issues evident in these research studies, particularly, but not limited to, Part II. These criticisms, however, do not detract from what is overall a dense yet highly readable, carefully edited, and thought-provoking volume. GALE educators and researchers will find it invaluable for its engaging examination of issues related to linguistic diversity in the contemporary Japanese context.

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***Technology-Mediated Language Teaching: From Social Justice to Artificial Intelligence.* Javier Muñoz-Basols, Luis Cerezo and Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez, Eds. Multilingual Matters, 2025, 330 pp.**

**Reviewed by Isobel Hook  
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*Technology-Mediated Language Teaching: From Social Justice to Artificial Intelligence* is a collection of articles with the overarching purpose of exploring the transformative impact of technology on language education. The book begins with an introductory chapter by Muñoz-Basols et al. outlining the Planning, Personalization, and Implementation (PPI) model which forms the conceptual foundation and structure of the book. These three PPI stages make up the three sections of the book, each with four chapters written by various authors. Furthermore, the chapter topics reflect the stages outlined in the *Application of the PPI (Planning, Personalization, Implementation) model* (p.8) which together form a “tool that encourages readers to reflect on the instructor's role in technology-mediated language teaching” (p.7).

The text addresses digital gaps, describes digital literacy as an “ethical imperative” (p. 3), and positions technology as a central tool for collective and collaborative knowledge construction. The editors aim to provide a useful resource to “educators, researchers, and program or team leaders,” (p.12). They also suggest interdisciplinary reading routes such as a focus on “learning environments, learning agents, upskilling, or teacher training” (p.11).

Planning for technology-mediated teaching is addressed in Part 1, which opens with the chapter *Access to Technology and Social Justice* by Melinda Dooly and Anna Comas-Quinn. Dooly and Comas-Quinn recognise the link between technology-mediated language teaching and systems of “social exclusion due to factors such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, social class or religion” (p. 21). This chapter highlights how closing the digital divide potentially benefits women and marginalised genders, who are explicitly identified as facing unequal access to technology due to sociocultural stigma and unequal domestic duties. As Dooly and Comas-Quinn point out, males have significantly greater access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) compared to their female counterparts in almost all parts of the world (UNESCO, 2019a as cited in Chapter 1, p. 23). The authors call for an emphasis on “digital cultural integrity” (Wang and Winstead, 2016 as cited in chapter 1, p. 29) which encourages young female learners to engage with technology and

aims to counteract the lack of positive gender representation. One significant contribution highlighted in the context of promoting this digital cultural integrity is the role of teachers. Language educators can actively work to help learners overcome the digital divide, not only concerning linguistic and cultural deprivation but also by addressing the lack of positive gender representation online. This initiative aims to foster an understanding and appreciation of the resources and knowledge of different groups, and of linguistic and cultural assets, while also exposing learners to a wider array of languages and cultures.

Moreover, Daria Mizza and Fernando Rubio advocate for Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Part 1 Chapter 4 *Effective Technological Practices and Diversity*. The authors outline how the UDL framework prioritises inclusive and accessible design for *all* learners by anticipating diverse needs and removing some of the specific challenges faced by women and marginalised genders in language learning environments (CAST, 2024). One context in which UDL can be used is in the creation of a participatory language learning environment (p. 85). Such online environments allow for asynchronous access to learning materials, additional preparation time, automated tools for self-correction, moderated communication forums, individual and social reflection, and many other opportunities helpful to marginalised learners. As such, UDL, coupled with strategies for personalizing learning (pp. 90-92), fosters learner autonomy and creates a safe learning environment for all.

Part 2 introduces the *Personalization* stage of the PPI, with four chapters on how technology can be adapted to meet learners' individual needs. These chapters address the topics of motivation, anxiety, interactions, and assessment and feedback within technology-mediated language learning respectively. However, they do not relate these topics to digital cultural integrity or other gender-related issues described in Chapter 1. This section focuses mostly on the potential benefits of using digital tools without analysing the unequal access by gender. A reader may assume that Chapters 4 to 8 present the possibility of environments utilising a UDL framework to create a safe learning environment free from anxiety and judgment which could benefit all participants, regardless of gender. Discussion regarding anxiety in oral interaction and how it manifests in digital environments is covered in Chapter 6, *Anxiety and Virtual Learning*, by Zsuzsanna Bárkányi and Chapter 7, *Interaction in Virtual Learning Environments*, by Javier Muñoz-Basols and Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez. This is a particularly relevant point for the Japanese context, where oral interaction has long been under-encouraged in language education (p. 150). Bárkányi notes that “when faced with speaking with

other learners ... the respondents felt more confident at the end [after participating in lessons modelled on UDL guidelines] compared to the beginning” (p.149). These results regarding an increase in self-efficacy in oral interaction provide valuable contextual examples for how such digital tools as outlined above may be used to benefit any classroom.

Part 3 presents the implementation stage of the planning and personalization stages discussed in Parts 1 and 2. Readdressing some of the social exclusion described in Chapter 1, Chapter 12, *Digital Ludic Pedagogies (DLP): Videogames, Minigames, Extended Realities and Robots*, by Luis Cerezo and Joan-Tomàs Pujolà describes the concept of social transformation through digital literacy. However, the chapter focusses on the research’s results in relation to language learning and not social empowerment through technology.

Overall, *Technology-Mediated Language Teaching: From Social Justice to Artificial Intelligence* provides a comprehensive approach to technology-mediated language teaching, offering valuable insights into curriculum planning, personalization and implementation. In regards to the social considerations of new technologies, it identifies closing the digital gap and increasing digital literacy as an ethical imperative and recognises the role gender plays in these disparities. For readers specifically interested in integrating gender and other justice-oriented initiatives into language education, the book presents general technological examples that, if further combined with frameworks such as UDL, could become the basis for a more equitable and inclusive classroom.

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*Multiculturalism, Language, and Race in English Education in Japan: Agency, Pedagogy, and Reckoning.* Gregory Paul Glasgow, Ed.  
Candlin & Mynard, 2023, pp. 456.

Reviewed by Kevin Michael Lim  
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*Multiculturalism, Language, and Race in English Education in Japan: Agency, Pedagogy, and Reckoning* is an extensive collection of research papers and personal essays that span a wide range of issues relating to English pedagogy and English-language research in Japan. Weighing in at a formidable 456 pages, the anthology consists of 15 chapters in four parts: “Inner Reflections” (chapters 2-4), “Research Perspectives” (chapters 5-8), “Pedagogical Interventions” (chapters 9-13), and “Sustainability Advocacy” (chapters 14-15).

In Part I, university educators share in their respective chapters their experiences with the discriminatory status quo of native speakerism in the English teaching industry in Japan. Tracing their professional journeys, the authors detail how their non-native English-speaking status and/or non-Japanese ethnicity give rise to challenges both inside and outside the classroom. For instance, in chapter 3, Lee expresses that he initially assumed Japanese students wanted to know more about their teacher as an authentically English-speaking Canadian rather than as a Canadian immigrant from Hong Kong. This resulted in him emphasizing his Canadian-ness in classroom content and even “hid[ing]” his Chinese heritage. Describing experiences outside the classroom, Matikainen (chapter 2) shares how her non-native status was graded “D” by her department in an attempt to categorise their English teaching staff—apparently denoting the lowest level English nativism. Lastly, Oo raises the issue of how gender further complicates linguistic and ethnic/racial prejudice as it intersects with sexism when she shares experiences of unfair treatment in the workplace next to “White male colleagues” (chapter 4: Section: Working as a Female TESOL Professional in Japan, paragraph 2). Although the author does not go as far to evoke Orientalism or postcolonial feminist critique by name, she alludes to the long-standing tropes in colonial and post-colonial discourse of disempowering Southeast Asia by feminizing the region and people, writing, “I felt that I was bullied because I was a diminutive southeast Asian woman” (chapter 4: Section: Working as a Female TESOL Professional in Japan, paragraph 2).

Contributors present their primary research findings regarding both student and teacher-focused research questions in Part II. Carpio and Stewart (chapter 5) compile diary accounts from Filipino English teachers in Japanese high schools and identify some instances of administrative prejudice—such as the failing to include Filipino teachers in safety protocol information. In Okada’s contribution (chapter 8), the author adds credence to Carpio and Stewart’s assertion that there are also important instances of agency whereby non-native teachers are able to maintain simultaneous insider/outsider subjectivity that can be leveraged in ways to motivate students through appreciation for sociolinguistics and to guide students towards a critical stance on native speakerism. Both aforementioned contributions conclude that inclusion of Filipino ethnic/national subjectivity in the classroom provides students the opportunity to broaden their awareness of Filipino culture and also to develop greater self-awareness about their own culture and subjectivity.

In Part III, contributors continue to discuss their experience with teacher subjectivity as it informs their classroom experiences. Minematsu and Morgan (chapter 9) identify “Hidden Diversities” (Chapter 9: Insider/Outsider Perspectives: Utilizing Educator Funds of Knowledge to Explore “Hidden Diversity” in University English Courses in Japan) and offer self-reflexive contemplation of their linguistic teaching biases. Minematsu admits in her chapter that she was surprised that her Japanese students had “grown up overseas, had a non-traditional home culture, or were Japan-born foreign nationals” (Chapter 9: Section: Aiko’s Voice: Uncovering Intercultural Lives, paragraph 1). Coauthor Morgan considers how her English monolingualism limits her lesson planning and potentially introduces a Western bias. Minematsu shares that despite being a Japanese speaker, she intentionally plays “the role of ignorant foreigner” demonstrating that hidden diversities are also ones that can be strategically implemented in the classroom (Chapter 9: Section: Theme 3: Challenges in the Classroom, paragraph 1). Also in Part III, two authors share their experiences teaching both Blackness and issues relating to sexuality/gender in both university and high school classes. Myskow (chapter 10) provides a thorough consideration for how grammar and rhetoric implicate certain ideological discourses surrounding race. He includes lesson/activity outlines that show how processes of teaching linguistic structure also can lead to discussions of knowledge production. High school teacher Ellis’ essay (chapter 12), which reflects in part on his experience teaching topics related to sexuality, is the anthology’s only direct contribution to the subject. Ellis finds that high school students responded generally well to ideas about rethinking sexual prejudice. The author notes that one of his students built on an interest in drag culture and pursued the topic for their senior high school thesis which then inspired two other students to also research this area.

Lastly, in Part IV, co-authors McCandie, Smith, Clark, and Taylor (chapter 14) share their journey to raise awareness of inequality in English-language teaching in Japan through the creation of their website, Equity ELT Japan. While the website's resources focus specifically on issues of gender representation from 2018, in this article, the four co-authors call for a widening of equity discourse to also include "Japanese privilege, Whiteness, sex, and mother tongue" (paragraph 4). In the last article of the anthology (chapter 15), Yokota offers a colorful yet uneven metaphor in which "tilling," "planting," "watering," "weeding," and "crop rotation" act both as section breaks of the essay and represent aspects of teaching practice. These can be read figuratively as scaffolding, supplementing activities, nurturing/inspiring, content filtering, and attending to teacher mental health, respectively, which Yokota frames as a sustainable model not only for effective student learning, but also for teachers' work-life balance.

While the anthology expansively covers a number of topics from a variety of professionals, I believe that the project would benefit from the inclusion of a discussion of religion, specifically, Islamophobia. Japan continues to perpetuate religious discrimination towards Muslims at the highest levels of police and government (Takahashi, 2018; Yamashita, 2022). Given that the anthology underscores the hypocrisy of initiatives that promote global interconnectedness while also sustaining systemic discrimination—and thereby constrain multiculturalism, of which Muslim subjectivity is among the marginalised voices—the perspective of a Muslim educator/researcher would have been beneficial. This would have also fulfilled what the editor sets up in the introductory chapter when he calls attention to an apparent moment in racial politics marked by the murder of George Floyd, the rise in violent anti-Asian hate crime during COVID-19, and the enduring spectre of *Islamophobia*.<sup>1</sup>

Framing this anthology as part of a broader discussion about protecting multiculturalism discourse amid, for example, pushback against affirmative action and Critical Race Theory in classrooms could have more effectively kept the context of these works within the scope of institutional hiring

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<sup>1</sup> The editor situates the contributors' works within an apparent moment in racial politics and evokes the politically charged term "reckoning" in the book's title. Indeed, while the stakes for these educators and researchers are high, likening their experiences to fundamental human rights violations—such as state-sanctioned police brutality, the racialized violence witnessed during the pandemic, and the persistence of anti-Islamic hostilities—all of which have, at their worst, included murder, is, in this reviewer's opinion, an overreach. Admittedly, a more tenable discussion of "reckoning" may emerge given the growing popularity of Japanese nationalism and xenophobic discourse, as exemplified by the formation of the ultranationalist Sanseito party in 2019. Sanseito's political establishment was apparently validated by far-right white nationalist Charlie Kirk when he visited Tokyo in 2025 to meet with the leader of Sanseito (just three days before Kirk's assassination in the US) (Geddie & Smith, 2025). From this reviewer's perspective, efforts to promote multiculturalism and diversity in Japanese institutions and classrooms may face entirely new challenges if Japanese ultranationalism continues to be emboldened.

practices and curriculum—both central topics of this anthology and fixtures in contemporary multiculturalism discourse. Lastly, while the anthology does make interventions into issues relating to gender with regards to intersectionality and women teachers, for the GALE readership, perhaps more representative works also pinning down White male heteronormative patriarchy and its linkages with the English language education could have rounded out this project.

This collection brings together educators and researchers from a variety of professional disciplines and cultural-linguistic backgrounds, united by a shared commitment to interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches in the field of English language education and research. As Japanese institutions and systems continue to wrestle with outdated racial and ethnocentric ideologies and practices, the works represented in this anthology succeed at contributing to and standing with a broader practice of decolonization that seeks to unseat hegemonic notions of authentic and legitimate perspectives and discourse.

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***Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context.* Noriko Iwashita, Phung Dao, Mai Xuan Nhat Chi Nguyen. *Multilingual Matters*, 2025, 220 pp.**

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Early this summer, I met an ex-student. Before we parted ways, she told me that I might be interested to know that she was still good friends with her classmates from my class. She said that they had travelled together and had created an online group to support each other while they were studying abroad. I heartily thanked her for the follow-up, explaining how I have been researching community building in the classroom, and then, with my interest piqued, I explored how her friendships had evolved in my class. Her story allowed me to consider the cognitive-interactionist perspective, the sociocultural aspects, and the language socialization perspectives evident in the classmates' interactions. My on-the-spot analysis of what I was hearing stemmed from the practical application of these perspectives as taught in *Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context* (Iwashita et al., 2025). In this insightful book, the authors acknowledge that for many years their own classroom interactions as teachers were not as inclusive or effective as they had hoped. They also illustrate how instructions that focus heavily on memorization due to assessment demands can restrict diverse students' learning experiences by being unsuitable for communicative tasks (p.163). As a result, for themselves and for teachers grappling with challenges in classroom interactions, Iwashita and her co-authors have brought together the experiences of educators from varied cultural contexts to attempt to address equity in classroom communities. Focusing on the three perspectives outlined above, this volume offers a comprehensive examination of interaction in diverse L2 classrooms such as in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. It emphasizes inclusivity as a cornerstone of effective communication, outlines challenges educators face, and presents evidence-based strategies for equity in teaching.

The book is divided into 12 chapters that blend feasible, interactive guidance such as reflective prompts and classroom activity examples with theoretical insights, making it accessible for both novice and experienced practitioners. Topics include teacher-student interaction, peer interaction, culturally responsive pedagogy, technology-based interactions, and how educational policy shapes classroom dynamics. The authors weigh the cognitive-interactionist perspective, which focuses on how conversational interaction promotes L2 processing and learning, against the sociocultural approach that explains how cognitive development is embedded within social interaction, and the

language socialization perspective, which highlights how learners simultaneously acquire linguistic forms and cultural practices, through participation in communicative activities. For example, the authors make note of language socialization theory with the use of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms, explaining "...exclusive use of the target language could be argued against because it ignores learners' identity. That is, learners' identity is closely associated with language learning... Therefore, not being able to use their L1 may lead to a denial of learner identity" (p. 120). The authors contrast this idea with a cognitive-interactionist viewpoint, noting that heavy reliance on L1 may limit opportunities for input and feedback. However, they then add that from a sociocultural perspective, L1-use "...facilitates learners to maintain their focus and interests and to complete tasks which they may not be able to do if they use the L2 exclusively" (p. 128). By presenting these tensions, the book encourages teachers to strike a balance that supports both learner identity and L2 development.

As a neurodiverse reader, I appreciated the attempt at a structured format of the text. The text is clearly organized, with reflection questions that are particularly helpful for both my own teaching and professional development. Interactive elements, such as scripts, are given to support the visualization of the scenarios. The use of case studies and consistent presentation of key terms aids comprehension, while succinct conclusions at the end of each chapter clarified the complex theory.

Specifically relevant for GALE readers, chapter 11, "Language Socialization and Ethnography in the L2 Classroom," highlights how authority and routines establish politeness norms, socialize learners into respectful roles, and reinforce classroom hierarchies, as seen with the example given of a Vietnamese English class standing in unison to greet their teacher in chorus, and waiting for permission to sit. This demonstrates how interaction not only teaches language but also inducts learners into cultural values around respect and behaviour- which may often be gendered. The book offers a detailed discussion of language socialization, and as the authors explain, socialization includes both linguistic and cultural dimensions, and that "...language socialization refers to the linguistic and interactional processes that mediate L2 learners' participation in routine cultural practices...facilitating the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence as well as the establishment of membership in diverse discourse communities" (p. 146). Key issues considered are authority and power, examining how classroom roles reflect broader hierarchies and gendered expectations reinforced through routines and ideology, how beliefs about authority and respect shape interaction norms. Additional topics include indexicality, where language forms such as honorifics mark not only social roles but also gender roles; participation frameworks, which influence how students learn when and how to speak, and communicative practices, such as turn-

taking and strategies for agreeing or disagreeing, which shape learners' identities as legitimate classroom members.

A potential weakness in the book lies in how sparingly visuals are used. Incorporating more infographics and charts could help distill complex concepts and relationships into easily digestible formats, making the theoretical frameworks more accessible to readers like myself, and would further support diverse learning styles and assist in understanding how various theories interconnect.

*Understanding Interaction in the Second Language Classroom Context* underscores that interaction is central to both language acquisition and socialization. Classroom interaction is, therefore, not simply instructional but intrinsic to students' identities and roles within new communities. As an educator working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners in Japan, this takeaway that everyday classroom exchanges construct power, gender, and identity resonated with me. The issues brought up reflect the challenges I encounter when helping students navigate differing expectations of respect and participation, showing how small exchanges can carry sociocultural weight. The book, offering accessible strategies supported by theory and data, makes a strong case for integrating linguistic and sociocultural development into the classroom. By doing so, it contributes meaningfully to discussions of language diversity, social justice, and equity in education, which aligns closely with GALE's mission to support inclusive teaching and equity in professional practice.

**Lily Thukral** is an adjunct instructor at several universities in Tokyo, including Shirayuri University, Tokyo University of Science, Chuo University, and Keio University. Her research explores language and career readiness, learning communities, applied storytelling, and creative writing as a tool for promoting engagement and intercultural understanding in language education.

