

CONTENTS

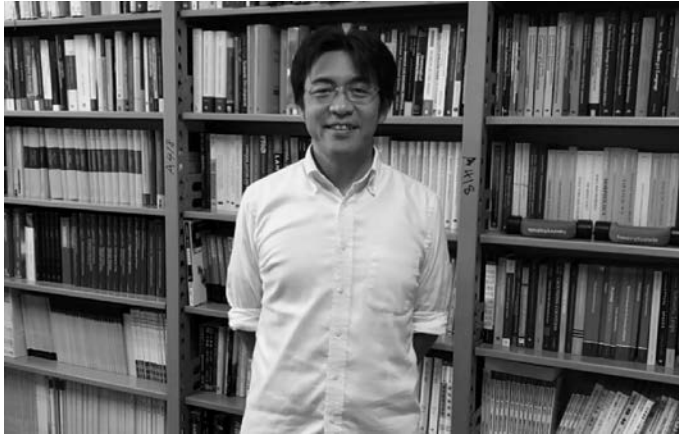
◎Professors Interviews in English

Akira Machida ... p. 2

(町田 章 先生)

Miki Shibata ... p. 5

(柴田 美紀 先生)



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Q. First of all, we would like to know about your experiences in life.

—I was born and raised in Gunma. When I was in high school, I played the guitar in a rock band and I wanted to become a professional guitarist. I decided to go to Tokyo because Tokyo is the center of the music scene. But I knew that I couldn't persuade my parents to go there just to pursue music. So, I told them that I wanted to study at university in Tokyo. However, in Tokyo, I found that there were many amateur musicians better than me, who had no chance to become professional. So, I gave up my dream, but I stayed in the university. One day, a teacher said that undergraduate students must read at least 100 books a year. I was shocked because I hadn't read that much before. But I just trusted him. Although I failed to read 100 books, I completed 99. After I finished reading, I felt something changed in myself, and I found myself living in a completely new world. So, I changed my interest from guitar to academics, and now I'm here, studying linguistics.

Q. What is so special about books that makes people different?

— Ideas in pocket edition books are condensed, sophisticated, and easy to understand because scholars wrote them for ordinary people. I read books from various fields, and I had found that there are many people in this world who can see what I cannot see. That was the main benefit from that reading task.

Q. Some people have many big dreams or goals like becoming a musician, but some points look so hard to achieve. If it happens to us, do you think we should give up or keep going no matter what?

—I don't think I'm old enough to tell about life but as far as I know, life is full of different opportunities, and all experiences are connected in some ways, however irrelevant they may look. I used to ski when I was little. I dreamt of becoming an Olympic athlete, but I gave it up because I hurt my knee. But I learned the importance of practice through practicing skiing. So after I started playing the guitar, I practiced a lot just like how I did with skiing. Then, I went to Tokyo to become a rock musician, and I accidentally encountered the field of linguistics there. Like this,

everything is connected. So, in my opinion, you don't have to stick to your goal. Just concentrate on the present moment. If you work hard and concentrate on what you're doing, you will find a new goal. Then the new goal will bring you another goal, and so forth.

Q. Could you tell us about the difference you felt when you were in a foreign country? What was the difference?

—The difference of thoughts relating to the language we speak is very slight and it is subconscious. Now I am speaking English, but my personality is still the same as when I speak Japanese. It never changes. But there are some slight differences in thoughts among different languages. Let me give you some interesting examples. One is the distinction between *iru* (いる) and *aru* (ある). *Iru* is the verb to express existence of self-movable objects like animals, while *aru* is used for static objects. So, think of a taxi in front of a train station, we use *iru* instead of *aru*, not because it is animate but because it can move. That indicates that Japanese speakers subconsciously look for information of whether an object is self-movable or not. On the other hand, English speakers don't care about the self-mobility. They'd rather pay attention to whether an object is countable or not.

There is another interesting difference in languages. When Japanese speakers touch something extremely hot, they will express their feeling by saying "*Achi!*", which means "HOT!". On the other hand, when they feel pain, they will say "*Ita!*", which means "HURTS!". In both cases, English speakers

will just say "*Ouch!*." What it reveals about the speaker's mind is that English speakers ignore the kinds of pain, whereas Japanese speakers care about that.

Q. I'm interested in whether speaking different languages changes our values or thoughts.

—I don't think that languages dominate our values or thoughts, but it's true that we see the same thing from different perspectives depending on which language we have. There is a famous example of this theory. In a Japanese novel written by Yasunari Kawabata, he wrote

“国境の長いトンネルを抜けると雪国だった。”

and the famous English translation for this sentence is

“A train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.”

Japanese speakers will envision this scene with the narrator on the train. English speakers will envision the narrator is outside of the train. The point is, how they envision the scene is different depending on the language. This is related to whether a sentence necessarily has a subject or not. As you know, subjects can be omitted in Japanese. The Japanese sentence above has no subject like *Boku* (I), which causes the effect of the narrator describing exactly what he is seeing with his eyes. In English, on the other hand, speakers need subjects in a sentence, and so it reads like the narrator on the train sees the train coming out of the tunnel. I have been investigating such differences in languages for more than twenty

years. Basically, people tend to use perspectives incorporated into their native language, and they also subconsciously see the world in this way.

Q. As our final question, do you have any messages or suggestions for students in IGS (国際共創学科) and IAS(総合科学科)?

— As I said, read as many different kinds of books as possible, and you will find something change in you.

Q. Can you give us some recommendations on books?

— I can recommend two amazing books which had a deep impact on my life. One is *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by Thomas Kuhn, and the other is *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff.

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Miki Shibata, Professor, IGS,
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★国際共創学科

柴田 美紀先生

Q. What is your educational background?

— I was born and grew up in Aichi. I went to Nanzan University in Nagoya. Although my department was the English Language and Literature, I did not like the literature. But I was interested in the language systems of English and Japanese, so I focused on the linguistics. After graduation, I went to the graduate school at Ohio University to pursue an MA degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). While studying the MA courses, I taught Japanese as a teaching assistant (TA) for two years. Then, I became a full-time instructor at the same university. After three-year teaching, I decided to go to a Ph.D. program at the University of Arizona (U of A). I lived in Arizona for 5 years. Unfortunately, though, I could not finish my Ph.D. work. Before completing my dissertation, I got a job in Okinawa. Then, while working at Okinawa University, I wrote my dissertation whenever I had time. It took me two years after I came back to Japan. I completed it in the millennium year 2000!

The graduate school work was tough in the States. We had a lot of reading assignments, so during the weekdays we studied very hard. But at Friday nights we played hard and on Saturdays we relaxed. On Sundays, we had to go back to the reality – study! At that time, I slept for 4 hours on average on weekdays, and if I was lucky enough, 6 hours on weekends. Graduate students take around three courses each term. But since I was awarded both teaching and research assistantships, I was responsible for teaching one Japanese class from Monday to Friday and helping my supervisor on her research. So, you know, I was extremely busy. However, I was lucky to get a tuition waiver as well as a chance of working as TA and RA (research assistant) at Ohio University, and as TA at the U of A. That means, I could get a free education plus stipend. Financially, I was very fortunate.

Q. After staying in the U.S. for 10 years, did you experience any reverse culture shock when you returned to Japan?

— In the States, I barely carried much cash with me. So, even after I came back to Japan, I did not have much cash in my purse. Because of this, I have one embarrassing experience. I was going to buy something with my credit card, but a cashier told me that they did not accept credit cards. Unfortunately, I did not have enough cash with me, so I had to return the product to the shelf. I would call it my reverse culture shock. Another experience is at the faculty meeting of the first university where I got a job in Japan. I noticed that people were so quiet. Here in Japan, a majority of participants tend to keep quiet and only a limited number of people express their opinions and give comments. In the States, on the other hand, at a faculty meeting, people exchange words actively, and sometimes jump in and interrupt others when they feel it appropriate and not offending. This is one of the communication style differences between the States and Japan, I guess.

Q. What is your research all about?

— Imagine how fluent you are in your second language compared with your native language. A large majority of people in Japan grow up with Japanese as their first or native language, and then start learning English at the 1st year of junior high school as their second language (L2). But no matter what language you study as your L2, you cannot be as fluent as your native language. How come? This is a very

complicated question since so many factors are involved in an L2 learning process. I have been interested in this puzzle since I started teaching Japanese as TA back in Ohio. My current research has focused on the issue of World Englishes. We say that English is a lingua franca, or a common language among people from different cultures and languages. In any place where English is taught as a foreign language, people make tremendous efforts to pursue native like proficiency and pronunciation, but is it really necessary? Is it a realistic goal for us to achieve? Why do you want to mimic or imitate the way they talk? This is what I would like to know. In particular, Japanese people seem to be so negative about their own Japanese English, so I did an international survey with college students from eight countries including Japan to compare their attitudes toward their own English. I found that the Japanese had the least confidence in their English among eight groups. As for my contribution to English education in Japan, I would like to give some pedagogical suggestions based on my research results.

Q. Besides your research, what are you interested in? What are your hobbies and personal interests?"

— I love exercise including Yoga, aerobics, and jogging. I practice Yoga and do some muscle training almost every morning. Recently, I restarted jogging. I cannot keep up my research and teaching unless I stay healthy.

Exercise is good for your mental health as well. I can release my stress through playing sports. I am also very much into reading a Japanese historical novel, particularly the Edo period. Since we have no TV at home, reading is the only activity I enjoy after dinner. One more thing I spend my time is drawing a picture.

Q. Do you have any future plans?

— Through my research, I would like L2 English speakers to be more confident in using their own English. Also, I would like everyone to be aware that language is power. Whether you are a native speaker of English or not is such a big deal. But in reality, the language status brings people inequality. Thus, I would say that people should be more sensitive to language power, language identity, and language right through language use. It may be difficult to change people's attitudes toward and perception of languages, but I would like to make small changes through my teaching and research. Actually, this is what I have been doing and would love to continue.

Q. Will you give a message to IAS (Integrated Arts and Sciences) and IGS (Integrated Global Studies) students?

— I would say “never say never”. Also, I quite often say this to my students, “Do not think that your efforts make your dream come true for sure.” In Japan, many people say that you can make it as long as you work hard. Personally, I do not agree with this view. The important part is the process you have been through. The result comes after, and this may

not be what you want. However, you still learn so much from the process. This is what you should appreciate. My favorite expression is “一生懸命”, which means devote yourself to whatever you do at this moment. Then, just accept any outcomes and continue to make efforts. Another thing I would like to emphasize is do not make a judgment or evaluate things based on correctness. There is no such correct or wrong answer in our life, so you cannot choose a correct answer all the time. The only thing you can do is to choose the best one you feel at the moment. You should follow your feeling or instinct. If it turns out to be wrong after all, that is OK as long as you worked hard for it and you are happy with it. So, I discourage my students to ask me such question “Shibata-sensei, is this correct?” because I do not know what is correct, and nobody cares even if it is wrong. You can make a choice by yourself, but at the same time, you should be responsible for your own decision.

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