
Editorial Foreword

One of the early works of Mithu Sen, a highly successful Bengali Indian multimedia artist, depicts a trope of the Eurocentric art world (McCormack, 2021): a reclining, female nude. Yet in Sen's version, the figure is lying under an expedition tent, stretched across a map of unknown territory (Sen, n.d.). Entitled "Can We Really Look Beyond the Map?," Sen critiques female objectification and colonialism with this painting (Chatterjee, 2016). It was thus decided by art critics thereafter that she must be a "women's artist." While Sen respects the freedoms that "the legacy of feminist struggle" has brought to her (Norman, 2014), she refuses to be labeled as one particular kind of artist (Thomas, 2017). Then, when the Western art world attempted to pigeonhole her as "exotic," "spiritual," so very "Indian," and "Asian," she deconstructed images of Kali or of the Taj Mahal in her works, again defying categorization (Norman, 2014). Moreover, the artist's drawings of male nudes (some on washi paper she handcrafted in Tokushima) (Hosaka, 2008) resulted in her being celebrated as a LGBTQIA+ ally abroad yet censored as outrageous and indecent in her home country (Eisen, 2022). Sen became increasingly frustrated by what, she says, was the art world's attempt to package and commodify her for its own financial gain.

The diversity of her oeuvre does indeed defy attempts at categorization: vivid red and black expressionistic drawings, surprisingly moving and humanistic performance works which interface with AI (Wijekumar, 2023), concept-laden installations, and glitch poetry readings are just some examples of her forms of expression (Sen, n.d.). Later, Sen was invited to present at the Venice Biennale, one of the most prestigious art events in the world. She first created a looped track of Western male art historians pontificating. At the Biennale, she stood in front of her various artworks, and, alongside the track droning on in that distinctive artspeak, proceeded to explain her philosophy in what she calls "gibberish." After years of frustration at her work being misinterpreted by the hegemonic Western, often white and male, art world, Sen succeeded brilliantly at silencing it: The audience was flabbergasted by her "nonsensical" performance, at least for a few minutes (Bhullar, 2020, para 3, DMello, 2019). The name of that artwork? (*Uñ*)Mansplaining. It must also be noted that Sen's deliberate utilization of "gibberish" is the result of her experience as a child of losing her native Bengali and being forced to function in "elitist" English after a move to New Delhi (Eisen, 2022).

Sen's art gives visual form to a question posed by Japanese feminist Ueno Chizuko: In seeking to succeed on one's own terms within an existing power structure, does one become subsumed by it in the process, in essence destroying oneself? (Yanagi & Ueno, 2004). "Language, identity, cultural

losses, and domination...the crisis of minor languages...” (ACCA, 2023) are all issues evident in Sen’s work. “I am trying to redefine everything, with a non-language. It’s for the sake of unlearning identity,” she has stated (Sukant, 2020, para 13). Perhaps it can be said that Sen seeks to redefine the identity politics of our era by attempting to transcend them with her guttural, visceral, confrontational artworks questioning what we “as human beings” are actually doing (Bose Pacia, 2007).

Indeed, this tension between embracing one’s identities or being hemmed in by them due to the stereotypes generated by dominant ideologies exists not only in the art world. Authors in this edition of *The GALE Journal* attempt to define, then re-define, identities in relation to gender studies in language education in Japan (and beyond). This field may sometimes, to an audience from different disciplines, at the least seem to be outside of certain academic parameters, or at the worst, to be “gibberish.” The paper, interview, and book reviews found in Volume 16 of the journal also seek to evaluate qualitative and quantitative research methods and the invaluable data each type provides. In particular, the voices of persons perhaps underrepresented in what can be a rather rarified academic world are heard here. Engagement on one’s own terms can be, as is evident in Volume 16, a struggle, but it is possible. In this increasingly globalized world, it is crucial for furthering academic discourse.

Benjamin Neil Smith’s perspective paper, *The Study of Language and Gender in the Digital Age*, provides a sweeping historical summary of research regarding male and female language usage in (American) English from Labov (1966) to Lakoff (1975) to Tannen (1990) to Cameron (2005) and into the modern era of digitalized linguistic research. For those of us who are old enough to remember when these works first appeared, the re-visit is refreshing in that it delineates just how concepts related to binary-based gender differences have been evolving over the past 50 years. Smith’s recommendation to expand research to contextual-based data collection, i.e. to diverse CoPs encompassing a variety of identifications, orientations, and interactions beyond the “outdated” binary, is thought-provoking.

Many of you will remember the inspirational presentations of Alex Sanchez, GALE’s Featured Speaker at JALT 2022. Long-term GALE member Kristie Collins interviewed the successful author. A poignant depiction of society’s repeated negations of Sanchez’s selfhood is revealed through the conversation. In his youth, he hid his multifaceted ethnic, linguistic, and gendered identities to “pass;” to survive. Sanchez’s story of his struggles on the path to becoming an award-winning YA author is a testament to his strength, providing insights on many important aspects of LGBT+ history in the contemporary US, including the importance of representation.

An array of book reviews in this edition illustrates the struggles and triumphs of the ever-evolving fields of gender studies and language education. Elizabeth Hashimura skillfully examines *Language Ideologies and L2 Speaker Legitimacy: Native Speaker Bias in Japan* by Jae DiBello Takeuchi. Hashimura notes that this book will resonate with a certain demographic in Japan: persons from Global North countries who came to Japan on the JET program and have made their lives here. Hashimura discusses Chapters 3, 4, and 5 in which Takeuchi emphasizes “three distinct Japanese speech styles: *keigo* (polite language), gendered language, and dialect” that are used as a means of “linguistic gatekeeping,” or Othering, even amongst an L2 person’s closest relations. Hashimura is sobered to realize how L2 speakers are “discredited and invalidated” by microaggressions yet is also inspired to question her own wielding of linguistic capital in Japan as a native English speaker, in and out of the classroom.

Sunao Fukunaga thoroughly examines *Exploring Language Teacher Efficacy in Japan* by Gene Thompson. Thompson discusses the various factors influencing severe teacher shortages in Japan, thereby developing a 25-item Japanese Teacher of English Teacher Efficacy Scale (JTE-TES) in the process. Once again, GALE readers, many of whom work within the secondary school system, will find Fukunaga’s comprehensive and insightful review to be of great value regarding contemplation of their own effectiveness. Teacher efficacy is determined to be “impacted by factors such as student motivation and school academic strength” rather than levels of L2 proficiency for this particular demographic.

Carolyn De Vishlin examines *Cultivating Professional Development Through Critical Friendship and Reflective Practice: Cases from Japan* by Adrienne Verla Uchida and Jennie Roloff Rothmann (Editors). Contributors from Canada, Malaysia, Ireland, Japan, India, and Hong Kong delve into the significance of critical friendships. The editors clarify three types: intra-, inter-, and extra-institutional friendship, with De Vishlin emphasizing their “potentially transformative impact.” A fascinating project would be if the previous author and these authors/editors could collaborate on further research on teacher efficacy and reflective practice for both L1 and L2 instructors here in Japan.

Some reviews in this edition deal more closely with gender studies. Chelanna White assesses the timely and informative *The Japanese LGBTQ+ Community in the World: The COVID-19 Pandemic, Challenges, and the Prospects for the Future* by Masami Tamagawa. Tamagawa describes Japan’s “passive systemic homophobia,” including family register and marriage issues, as well as how tension was heightened during the pandemic, for example, by fears of being outed and difficult family relationships when quarantining. Various research techniques employed by Tamagawa, such as

questionnaire data from an online survey of Japanese persons, case studies of non-Japanese respondents living in Japan, and a cross-cultural analysis of South Korea and Japan media coverage, are contrasted effectively in White's review.

Antonija Cavcic, with her usual humor and intellectual breadth, reviews *Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism: And Other Arguments for Economic Independence* by Kristen R. Ghodsee. Cavic notes the relative freedom women experienced under socialism where "sex was something to be shared rather than sold" (Ghodsee, 2018, p. 120). This review provides needed perspective on the well-documented failures of socialist states in relation to successes which are not generally acknowledged, particularly the far-reaching impacts of relative economic gender equality on women's actual lives.

GALE members will already be aware that Japan has again dropped in the Global Gender Gap Index to a shockingly dismal ranking of 125 out 146 countries (WEF, 2023). *Voices from the Contemporary Japanese Feminist Movement* by Emma Dalton and Caroline Norma is reviewed by Salem Kim Hicks, providing dramatic illustrations of that fact. Hicks begins by noting that on the surface, Japan seems to be an exceptionally peaceful and safe country for women, yet that the harsh economic conditions, lack of legal and political representation, and actual violence are underreported by mainstream media and academia. Six Japanese feminist activists were interviewed for this book, all of whom have been fighting to improve the situation. Nito Yumeno, for example, leads the NPO *Colabo* which goes out on the streets to assist at-risk girls before touts succeed at trapping them into prostitution. Hicks, another long-term GALE member and in fact, one of the founders of this journal, eloquently and passionately examines this book. It is a must-read for anyone concerned with feminist issues in Japan, and in the world.

Returning to intersectional studies, Lily Thukral evaluates *English Linguistic Imperialism from Below: Moral Aspiration and Social Mobility* by Leya Mathew. Thukral makes explicit that microlevel studies are vital to gain understanding of how the domination of English in the world market affects individuals in their daily lives. She explains that Mathew's data reveals a desperation regarding "moral aspirations, social mobility, and English proficiency" among "non-elite" mothers in Kerala, India which exacerbates gender inequalities for this particular demographic: "Mathew demands context-specific analysis in understanding the global spread of English."

Another review by Salem K. Hicks, *Tension-filled English at the multilingual university: A Bakhtinian perspective* by Maria Kuteeva finds the author's deployment of Bakhtinian theory to be useful on many levels when evaluating EMI programs. Specifically, Kuteeva included qualitative analysis of a small group of international students at a university in Sweden. Hicks, a policy science specialist

involved in an EMI program at her university in Japan, critiques the study in that the intersectional factor of gender is deliberately excluded from the discussion of dialogism and that the research thus suffers from loss of perspective. Nonetheless, both Kuteeva and Hicks remain mostly positive about EMI at the university level.

With even more universities in Japan and Europe announcing EMI programs and/or becoming fully bilingual, what are the long-term implications? The Thukral and Hicks reviews provide vital context: Mathew focuses on English's impacts through a gendered lens, whereas Kuteeva consciously chooses to exclude it. Mathew investigates the impact of class upon the attainment of English language proficiency, whereas Kuteeva provides dialogistic analysis of successful international students. Once again, collaboration between authors could perhaps result even more comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the global phenomenon that is English as a *lingua franca*.

Moving on to another extremely macro-level topic, Julia Kimura reports on *The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet* by Leah Thomas. Kimura expresses surprise and disappointment at how intertwined environmental degradation is with degradation of humans along racial, ethnic, gendered, and class divides. Kimura finds herself drawn to the issue of fast fashion, citing one of many tragic examples from the book: child labour in the Global South which underpins the environmentally catastrophic increase of 400% in clothing purchased by consumers in the Global North. Kimura's enthusiastic response to Thomas's call for activism resonates.

From inspiration must spring action. Amy Toms lauds *We are the Leaders We've Been Waiting for: Women and Leadership Development in College* by Julie Owen. Women are encouraged to recognize how the negative effects of gender socialization can create barriers to their leadership efficacy, such as seen in patterns of perfectionism and imposter syndrome. As Toms has summarized skillfully, "A person may have high levels of leadership capacity, but if their beliefs in those capabilities are low, they are unlikely to seek opportunities to lead." Furthermore, since notions of masculine and feminine styles of leadership fail to include transgender, nonbinary and intersex leaders, Owen addresses the issue of regendering or degendering leadership as a necessary re-adjustment.

If the overarching theme of last year's journal was Communities of Practice in the post-pandemic world, this year's seems to be the challenge of how to incorporate all aspects of intersectionality in an increasingly diversifying one. Attempts are being made, yet can race, ethnicity, nationality, language, gender, orientation, caste, class and so forth be addressed adequately and fairly in every

piece of research? It seems to be a monumental task. In fact, does the attempt to do so ultimately ensnare a researcher in stereotypes defined by a dominant ideology, a parallel for which can be seen in the artwork of the previously mentioned Sen? This edition of *The GALE Journal* explores a wide swathe of research, acknowledging the sometimes contradictory terminology, methods, and conclusions expressed therein. Each paper, interview, and review nonetheless unites themes of our times, and of gender awareness in language education, including technological developments' effects upon research, linguistic imperialism, cultural hegemony, and even the fate of our species on this planet. It is our sincere hope that this exploration proves to be both meaningful and enjoyable for our readers. Engagement *is* transformative.

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