

Poststructural Explorations into Relations among Self, Language, Reader-
Response Theories: (Im)possibilities of Autobiographical Inquiry

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ABSTRACT

Poststructural Explorations into Relations among Self, Language, and Reader-Response
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This dissertation explores relations between self and language in the light of Derrida's critique of the traditionally and historically constructed idea of writing and speaking as communication. Further, this dissertation inquires into relations between self and language among reader-response theories through the exploration of Derrida's concept of a relation between self and language. These explorations emerge from the idea of a "purity" of English that extends from the researcher's felt relations to English and to her "maternal" or "native" language, Japanese. Therefore, the researcher autobiographically probes into how she constructed the idea of the "purity" of English by investigating her "experiences" of English, and investigates the idea of the "purity" of English through Derrida's idea of the "pure" French.

This dissertation is not a typical autobiographical inquiry in the way that the researcher recounts her "experiences" and interprets the recounting of the "experiences." This dissertation is partly comprised of explorations in which the researcher does not present herself as the subject of the inquiry. While keenly aware that this dissertation could be considered to fall outside the category of autobiographical inquiry in its Enlightenment assumptions of the wholly intact, rational "self," the researcher presupposes that this dissertation can challenge such assumptions of traditional Western autobiographical inquiry for two reasons: 1) the explorations of relations between self and language are generated from her interpretations of "experiences"; 2) even when the autobiographical *I* is not presented in the text, the researcher's subjectivity drives the explorations. For these two reasons, this dissertation investigates the researcher's subjectivities

through its trajectory, thereby questioning the researcher's possibilities of ever being fully situated within a certain theoretical framework.

The exploration of relations between self and language in reader-response theories and the researcher's felt relations to English in light of Derrida's concept of a relation between self and language will contribute to English teachers and their educators, especially in the area of teaching of the reading. Further, the researcher, through inquiries into her subjectivities, arrives at a questioning stance on any possibility of autobiographical inquiry by puncturing the traditional research category of autobiography.

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my mother and my son, Lloyd-Sho Akai-Dennis, with the hope that this dissertation, which is partly accomplished by my love for my mom and Sho, will connect them in the future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Prologue

“NANI-JING? NANI-JING?” one of the two boys, maybe 3rd or 4th graders, in a “Japanese” school in New Jersey, asked my then four-year-old son.

I got cold sweat. “Ugh. The time is already come. My son, Sho, is not ready for that yet, and me neither. Have expected but not ready,” I whispered to myself. I felt frightened and maddened at this question about “who you are” at the same time. I tried to say something back to the two kids. But nothing came out because I wasn’t able to think about how to say what I wanted to say in any recognizable way to the kids. Before I said something that would be totally incomprehensible to the 3rd or 4th graders, my son answered the question aloud in Japanese. “I am a Japanese and an American.” I looked down and made a little relieved smile and said aloud to him and the kids, “Don’t forget that you have a Jamaican blood, too.”

This incident happened on a Saturday afternoon in a tiny front parking space of a Japanese school in the central New Jersey. The parking space is transformed into a tentative playing yard for about one hour after Saturday school programs. The kids from pre-k school-ers to 4th graders who finish Saturday programs play a bit in the space, while the parents chat with each other on the benches or under the trees. I have a few mother-friends there, but in that afternoon I was sitting alone and watching my then-four-year-old son’s play with other kids. My concern is intensively with his Japanese language development and a little bit with his socialization skills.

My son and his other classmates played a silly game that they created spontaneously. One of them counted numbers in any unordered way and anyways ended it with ten in Japanese,

and then chased the other kids. There seemed to be no point in counting that “incorrect” way, but it looked like so much fun for the pre-k age kids. After a little while, his classmates left the yard with their mothers one by one. There were no classmates of his there. He looked for some other kids to continue the game. He ran towards the two big boys who did nothing but talk under a tree like adults who get bored. My son said aloud to them in Japanese, “Let’s play! 1, 5, 3, 9, 6, 10!” The two boys asked, “NANI-JING? NANI-JING?”

The question pushed, probably him, definitely me, away from within the tiny tentative playground of the Japanese school in New Jersey in the U.S.

The question “NANI-JING” draws a clear border about who fits where, a border between “Japanese” and “non-Japanese” in that context. The question is conceived by a discourse available in Japan. That’s why up to this point I haven’t translated “NANI-JING” into English. A translation of this question in English would have to be made at the risk of being understood within different discourses working in the U.S. context. Direct translation would be “What people are you?” NANI means “what” and JING means “people.” You can change the word NANI into some other nation. For example, CHUGOKU (china)-JING signifies Chinese people: AMERIKA (the. U.S.)-JING indicates American people. An indirect translation would be “where are you from?” BUT, this English sentence would not convey the nuanced meaning of “NANI-JING.” “Where do you belong?” or “What nation do you belong to?” would be closer to my understanding of a connotation of the question in Japanese. But I need to emphasize a difference that I perceive between “NANI-JING” and “Where are you from?” “Where are you from” in English, in my understanding, locates the questioner in the stable center and the questioned in fluid periphery, which implies a power relation between them. “NANI-JIN” in Japanese situates the questioner and the questioned in different spaces without so much signifying

a power relation between center and margin. The question puts more focus on a transparent border between “Japanese” and “non-Japanese.” The question “NANI-JING” reflects an idea that Japan/Japanese should be kept as a discrete nation and a discrete group of people. “X must be X, Y must be Y, and X cannot be Y” (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 93).

The kids might have wondered if my son were a Japanese, or a “pure” Japanese. To my ears, my son speaks Japanese with a very slight accent. The same might hold true to the kids’ ears. Further, he counted numbers “incorrectly” for the two kids who didn’t know my son played the silly tag game with his classmates in counting numbers in that way. My son might be, for the two kids, a Japanese since he speaks Japanese, but not “pure,” for them, since he has a little accent and doesn’t know the correct way to count numbers. His Japanese could be an identity marker for the kids. They might have wanted to know if he was a “pure” Japanese.

Or the two kids might have wanted to position themselves as the majority in the context of the Japanese school by asking the question to my son, who can be considered a minority in that context. The two kids, who go to a local school, might be identified as Asian or Japanese or minority in the school here in the U.S. But here, at the Japanese school in New Jersey, the kids are recognized as the majority. Their questioning my son’s identity might be a reflection of the identification of them as “minority” by the “majority” in the U.S. context.

Or the kids might have implied to my son that he is not a “pure” Japanese and so does not belong to the playground, and so the school and “Japan.” His bronze skin color might have marked him as “non-Japanese” for the two kids. Then, the question was not a question that simply seeks an answer. The answer was already there in the questioners’ mind. The question could read “You are not ‘Japanese’/you do not belong ‘here.’” But where?

In the Beginning

The impetus of research, qualitative or quantitative, can be traced back to the researcher's desire, anger, even revenge and so on toward what is not comprehensible to her (Derrida, 1996). In other words, research starts from the researcher's desire to "make sense of one's life" (Richardson, 1994, p. 520). After the linguistic turn in the 1970's, when language's constitutive force is recognized within postmodern culture, even in the field of physics, which is generally taken as "objective," "the object of research is no longer nature itself, but man's investigation of nature" (Bleich, 1978, p. 33). The linguistic turn insists that researchers acknowledge their agendas and assumptions and investigate the discourses that frame those assumptions (Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Thus, the researcher is responsible for examining how she starts to be interested in certain issues and topics, and in what assumptions and discourses she is embedded in terms of creating the interests. Without the examination, the knowledge that is created and also claimed from research can be naively universalized, which could detrimentally impact on certain groups of people.

The view of research since the linguistic turn especially derives from poststructural feminist critiques about language, self, and knowledge. Working within poststructural feminist critiques, which I find helpful in order to inquire into my interest in relationality between self and language, which extends from another desire to know what English might mean to me, I want to investigate the ways in which I form and even inquire into this interest. In this sense, the big frame of this research is "autobiographical."

I do not consider this research as autobiographical just because I tell stories about English and me. I tell stories about English and me, so this research is autobiographical in its conventional sense. This research is autobiographical also because, informed by poststructural feminist thoughts on self, identity and language, I investigate myself not only as a narrator of the stories by examining my stories, but also as a researcher by examining what discursive, social, cultural and historical forces frame the research trajectories that I take in this dissertation.

Why am I Interested in What I am Doing?

Contexts abound (Culler, 1981; Derrida, 1988). Contexts cannot stabilize “the” meaning, no matter how many contexts are around. Nonetheless, without any contextualization, my assumptions might not be disclosed, even if they could be investigated.

Belonging.

I took four courses in the first semester of my doctoral studies in a U.S. graduate school in New York: two classes in the English Education program to which I “belonged,” the teaching of reading and American literature. And two other courses outside the program: methods of teaching English in TESOL program and bilingual education in the International and Transnational education program. I felt most comfortable in the class of American literature. First of all, this class fits best with my disciplinary background in English Study. More importantly for me those days, the lecturer’s traditional teaching style did not frighten me: I wasn’t forced to “participate” in the class. I didn’t need to be afraid of speaking English. I was also comfortable in the TESOL class since some of the students had teaching experiences overseas and appeared to be more open to “English” spoken by speakers of English as a second language.

The introductory course about bilingual education had a couple of students who seemed to me to speak English as a second language. Their presences made me breathe in the class. In sometimes dealing with, and other times avoiding dealing with, so many differences in the U.S. graduate school, I must have looked for a similarity as a source of comfort. The similarity that I looked for was not any physical resemblance. If so, I would have been comfortable with so-called Asian Americans. The similarity with people that is important to me lies in their relation to the language, English as a second language. Putting the similarity in other way, “We” are with/in different languages from English and so are less close to English than our respective “native” languages. I don’t know how “they” felt about their relation to English, and it did not matter to me. But I assumed that they are less close to English as a second language, and the assumption made me less uncomfortable. Thus, my comfort is determined by how I identify others and me in relation to the language in each class.

I was uncomfortable with the class of the teaching of reading. I got very nervous before 5:10 of every Tuesday night. I smoked with a vain wish to calm down my nervousness before going to the class. My body felt numbed and chilled in the elevator up to the third floor and then in the hallway to get to the classroom. I sometimes climbed up the stairs, counting the number of stairs till the third floor. I didn’t want to go into a classroom too early or too late: I just wanted to get in there without being noticed. I sometimes walked back and forth in the hallway to see the “right” moment when I could get in. It felt to me that my body was somebody else’s. Feeling as if all of the blood in my body was gradually leaked out by a beetle larva that injected his needle in the under chin of the prey, sucked up its internal glands, and made the prey emptied out and flattened out.

Not so nice a metaphor. Maybe like a ghost. This clichéd metaphor would help to see that the way I identified my self in Japan could not be recognized in the U.S. graduate school context. This un-recognition made me identify, in the context of class of the teaching of reading, who I was in a different way. I identified myself as a “non-native” English speaker. Further, this identification brought me to identify myself as a “Japanese,” someone who speaks Japanese as “native” / “first” / “dominant” / “maternal” language. This was not the way I identified myself in Japan, since in the island country most of us/them speak Japanese, even if the language has a lot of variations.

Each time I got into the classroom, I looked for the two particular classmates who at least seemed to me to recognize my “presence.” So I tried to find a seat next to one of them, so that I had a little better chance to be with her when a small group was created to discuss some issues at hand. I looked for them even while I felt that they might not want to be “followed” by me all the time. I was not so lucky always. I sometimes had to sit next to the other students in the class. But also it was not as bad as I imagined when I was with the other students in a small group. When I had to talk, some of them listened to me, my English, attentively nodding their heads and showing agreement or surprise to my comments. Nonetheless, although I liked the reading materials in the class, my discomfort in the class, or my feeling that I do not belong “here,”--where?--never fled away and stayed in my body and mind.

I am similar to the two kids in the Japanese school in terms of how they and I identify themselves and “the others.” Both the kids and I identify “the others” through differences in speaking the English and Japanese languages. “Differences” in speaking the languages led them and me to conjecture who belongs to what language. In the case of the two kids, “who belong to what language” can signify “who belongs to Japan” as a nation, since for them, Japanese must

speak Japanese. Thus, it seems that one's relation to language determines one's identity for the two kids and me. Identity comes after recognition of a relation to language.

I am desperate to have my now 6-year-old-son maintain Japanese. So desperate. I ask myself why? Do I want him to write, read, speak and hear Japanese because it gives him the identity as a "Japanese"? Who he is cannot and should not be named, categorized, pinned down. When it's named, the identity is flattened and so leaks (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 94). Identity, which "is never given, received, or attained" (Derrida, 1996, p. 28), dents a being when it is given, received and attained.

I want my son to feel a belonging to Japanese language as much as I do. My desperate eagerness for his speaking Japanese has not so much to do with his identity. It would be a lie if I said that my eagerness was not concerned with his identification of himself and others' identification of him as well. But my desperation more involves relationality to the languages, Japanese and English. What has become more important to me is a relation between language and my self, although a relation between language and identity and/or identification is important, too.

Introducing this Autobiographical Research: "Origin" of this Research

Poststructural feminist thinking, to which I am strongly drawn, argues against the idea of "origin" since it also assumes a binary -- "parasite" or "fake" -- and this binary is one of the Enlightenment thoughts that poststructural feminist thinking attempts to dismantle. St. Pierre (1995) says, "the search for 'the origin' marks the desire to locate true knowledge and to capture unique identity" (p. 8). However, when marking the desire to locate true knowledge discloses

the researcher's agenda and assumption for the inquiry, the marking should be made and disclosed as much as possible. I write here about one "origin" to show how I have formed the research interest and two of the research questions to dislocate "true knowledge" and make a "possible knowledge" contextual.

My hands feel frozen. Immobilized is a pencil made in Japan that I am holding in my hand. "Write down anything that comes up in your mind," the instructor says. I nervously hear some pens and pencils scribbling on pieces of papers in a quiet classroom. Those pens and pencils sound like cheap polyester dresses rustling on a dance floor. But my Japanese pencil cannot dance on the floor because my hand doesn't know any choreography by donning English on the pencil. The students, including myself, in a class in the teaching of reading in the English Education program in the U.S. graduate school are instructed to jot down any responses to the poems in a handout distributed by an instructor. I feel that the other students even enjoy responding to the poems.

Before this class, I anticipated what the instructor would get us to do, either individually or in a small group (I imagined and tried to picture what a next class would look like after I came to this graduate school in the U.S.) The class's assignment the week before was to read Rosenblatt's book *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1994). It was quite obvious to me that we would enact reader response theory in the next class and create our own "poem," following the pre-staged process. So, the moment I see a couple of poems on the handout in the class on that day, I am comfortable without worrying what to do with the handout. I am supposedly ready for the anticipated activity of writing a response.

But, unexpectedly, uneasiness is permeating through me right after I read the poems and the class starts the activity. Nothing comes out of my body and mind. I cannot write down anything. Maybe I could not have “read” anything.

Well, I am actually writing a word or two words in a very small and faint letter in Japanese. So maybe I could have “read” something.

This incident makes my mind fly back to the days when I was enrolled at the other graduate program of English study in Japan. I didn't read about this theory, reader response theory, those days. In a study group composed of students from other graduate schools in Japan, we read Eagleton's *Literary Theory* (1996), but we skipped a chapter about reader-response theory because some of us assumed that this theory was one modern version of the traditional practice of reading, “impressionist theory,” in which reading is considered to make impressions on readers from a literary work. The study group dismissed the impressionist theory because it was only used in Japanese classes in elementary school up to in high school in Japan and so was not academic enough and “too subjective.”

However, I tended to read a literary work, grounded on my feeling, or “subjectivity” as opposed to “objectivity.” While the English study program trained us to be “objective,” I surreptitiously had a fear that I might slip into this less academic way of reading at any moment. Even with the discipline of being “objective,” I thought and still think that I was/is ingrained into this “subjective” reading in which it is cardinal to focus on how you feel.

But now I can't respond to a poem written in English.

One professor in the graduate program in Japan started her journal article on a literary work in English with a CNN news script about a woman who lost her baby because of a babysitter's detrimental behaviors. The professor talked about how she felt about the news and the woman. Then, finally came her analysis of the literary work.

This professor told me that all of what I wrote about a literary work was "me," "who I was." However, she asked me about my comments in her class and a term paper for her, "Where does this idea come from?" She suggested to me that the idea was not from within the texts but from within myself. By this question, she also explicitly implied that I was "subjective," maybe "too subjective," for her. I wondered where is a border, if there is any, between being unacceptably and acceptably personal and subjective when it is claimed that all I write about a literary work derives from me. There seemed to be an unstated boundary between where we can talk about a literary work in relation to ourselves and where we cannot be "subjective" in doing English study. Not knowing the boundary, I set the rule "Hide everything coming from inside of me" there.

The reading practice in the program in Japan did not just suffocate me. It seemed that I couldn't read as the other graduate students did, which I did not even know exactly, except that I had to kill my "self" in reading. I only knew that I was supposed to make an "appropriate," professional, scholarly "reading" of a literary work. But I didn't know where I should stand for reading. The practice was felt too unstable.

Rosenblatt's reader response theory that I encountered in the U.S. graduate school after this disciplining encourages or even pushes readers to stand on their own personal stance. Rosenblatt's theory that focuses on affective aspects in reading made me feel momentarily

liberated from the suffocating and unstable reading practice. I was excited to enact this theory. My excitement with the theory goes like this, “I can feel ‘it.’ I can even ‘say’ the feeling,” as some advocates for the reader response theory argue (Clifford, 1991; Farrell, 1990; Langer, 1995; Probst, 1988; Wilhelm, 1995).

In spite of this newly found freedom, I can’t respond now in English in this U.S. classroom. What is happening to me, who made enormous efforts to hide my strong feelings toward a city and a female protagonist in Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*?

I am not able to emotionally engage the poems in the class in the way that some reader response theorists such as Rosenblatt (1982, 1985a, 1985b, 1995) and Bleich (1969, 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1978) claim. According to Rosenblatt, the reader responds to the text through her feelings triggered by the text in relation to some personal experiences. These responses help the reader to in the end create her own “poem” that she argues is another way of reading “literature.” On the other hand, I must have “read” the given poems in the class in the way I used to do. Trying to catch “the” meaning in them. Trying to find a symbol or metaphor in them. I couldn’t dismember the reading practice from me. It is deeply embedded.

But is that it? Is this all that happens to me in the class, when my Japanese pencil feels numb in the classroom in the U.S. graduate school?

In another class a couple of weeks later, my pencil danced clumsily. I came to be able to fill in the margins after some readings on teaching literature through reader-response theories, for example, Dennis Sumara’s work (1996). I “learned” how to write something in the margins through Sumara’s research. Dennis Sumara does research in classrooms on the teaching of

literature by two teachers in different schools that enact the reader response theory by Roland Barthes and the pedagogically oriented reader response theory by Rosenblatt. Those students researched in the book are portrayed as enjoying making responses and being “liberated” from doing the task of analyzing, “dry” and “impersonal” task from New Criticism. But I didn’t feel liberated as I expected. Instead, I feel something is there in and about reading based on my experiences. The reading inevitably entails Japanese, my “first” language, since experiences are always mediated in language (Scott, 1999). Different from New Criticism, Rosenblatt’s reader response theory causes me to face my “self” that is entangled with the two languages, Japanese and English.

One of the alumni from the graduate school in Japan told me once that I could understand Faulkner better since I grew up in a small city with a long history in the south-west of Japan, which is “similar” to the Yoknapatowfa county in his literary works in some ways. But could I? I sympathized with Temple, the female protagonist in Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*, and even “understood” the acts and behaviors of Temple: Arrogance coming from a well-established family; reckless behaviors coming from the idea that the family would help, whatever I did. I doubt that I was/am able to understand Faulkner’s South just because I lived in the South that is “similar” to his South. I thought that was a *pretty crude and incongruent association*.

I do not present this anecdote in order to argue for dismissal of reading grounded in a different culture, a reader’s culture that is different from the one in a text. “Cultural differences” are constituted not only among different “nations” or groups of people, but also even between two people in a family who supposedly share the “same” culture. So it is dangerous to simply divide the culture in a literary work from a reader’s.

The issue I want to bring up here through this little story is my feeling in reading a literary work written in English through Japanese: The feeling that Japanese obstructs me from “reading” the literary work written in English. But I am not discussing being lost in translation, either.

The activity of reading a poem based on experiences and writing responses to it in the U.S. graduate school was performed, of course, “in” English. I read a poem written in English but I might have read it “in” Japanese. I didn’t write my responses solely “in” English, although I wrote English. Mysterious spaces are generated between the text and my self and between my written responses and my self. There was/is a wiggling thin wall between my self and English, which does not allow me to place myself “in” English. I even felt that something was missing in my self in reading and writing (in) English. At the same time, something is already filled up there in my body and mind, something that induces some friction in reading and writing English. Attempting to be beyond or through the wiggling wall, I feel as though I buttoned myself in a wrong buttonhole of a shirt and so the shirt didn’t fit my body. In enacting the theory in the U.S. graduate school context, I find my “self” less close to English but on the other hand constricted and even subjugated to the language, Japanese.

These relations between my self and the two languages already revealed themselves in the thought-feelings that I had had in Japan about reading Faulkner’s *Sanctuary* through my experiences in the South in Japan. I described association between me as a reader, who grew up in my South in Japan, and the South in Faulkner’s works as “crude.” The idea of “crude association” suggests that I, who lived my South in Japanese, could not “match” the South in Faulkner’s works that are written in English. This description as “crude association” between

the reader and the literary text presupposes “pure association” between them. I have thought that pure relation between Faulkner’s South and mine would be possible if I were “in” English.

The Rosenblatt version of reader response theory that I encountered in the class of the teaching of reading in the U.S. graduate school more viscerally makes me feel the wiggling wall. I had the feeling in the beginning of my history with English, of course. I learned expressions, such as “this is a book,” but I didn’t feel what this “a” is. I learned sentences, such as “I am a student.” However, this “I” was not a necessary “I” in Japanese. As time goes by, these sentences feel “natural” to me, seem to mean to me what they are supposed to mean. I even feel closer to English, the longer I learn English, if not as close to Japanese. However, the wiggling wall that I have in relation to English is not shortened just because I live with/in English and learn English for a longer period of time. The relation, as symbolized in the image of the wiggling wall, came out from the activity of reading and writing in English by using reader response theory. I started to delve into an exploration of relations between English and me and also relations between self and language that are presumed in reader response theory and how the possible precepts are related to my felt “wiggling wall.”

In *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prothesis of Origin* (1996), Derrida talks about his “experiences” with the French language, which he says he is deprived of, but speaks as “his” language. “A place of fantasy, therefore, at an ungraspable distance” (p. 42), Derrida describes French. I felt “this is it” when I encountered this phrase, because the phrase appears to express my feeling about a relation between my self and English.

Further, Derrida (1996) confesses his “hyperbolic” taste for French. He writes:

[I]nsofar as the language is concerned, I cannot bear or admire anything other than pure French. As I do in all fields, I have never ceased calling into question the motif of “purity” in all its forms, . . . I still do not dare admit this compulsive demand for a purity of language except within boundaries of which I can be sure: this demand is neither ethical, political, nor social. It does not inspire any judgment in me. It simply exposes me to suffering when someone, who can be myself, happens to fall short of it. (p. 46)

Again, I felt that Derrida spoke for me about a relation between English as “non-maternal” language and me. English is at “a fantasy of place” for me and because it is fantasized, it looks “pure.” The wiggling wall also leads me to think there is “a purity” of English. However, at the same time, Derrida “admit[s] to a purity which is not very pure” (1996, p. 46). Anything but purism. It is, at least, the only impure “purity” for which I dare confess a taste” (p. 47). This work of Derrida’s on self and language allows me to critically investigate my felt relation between English and me and to examine the possible presumed relation between self and language in reader response theories. His discussion on the so-called “maternal” language also helps me to interrogate my felt relation between Japanese and my self that is not at “the place of fantasy” for me.

Therefore, this research

1.) interrogates my visceral feelings about relations between the two languages, English and Japanese, and me, as symbolized in the image of the wiggling thin wall, including how my idea of a “purity” of English is constructed. I will tell stories about English, and interrogate them through Derrida’s thinking on self and language in *Monolingualism* (1996)

2.) explores the ways in which reader response theories presume relations between self and language in light of Derrida's concept of a relation between self and language.

I must draw attention, again, to the point that the second question derives from the first question. Even with Derrida's work as an interpretive framework, the "origin" of this research interest should be investigated. In order to avoid making intact or smooth or comparable this exploration of reader response theories' presumptions about self and language and my idea of relations between the two languages and me, I also pose another question:

3.) how do my subjectivities as effects of social, cultural, historical, and unknown discourses intersect with my exploration into the relations between my self and language and those between self and language in reader response theories?

This last question brings to light a contested issue about notions of self in autobiographical research. One way to conceptualize autobiographical research hinges on a notion of self. Janet Miller (2005), working from poststructural feminism perspectives about self, identity, and subject, argues that an autobiographical researcher is responsible for monitoring, to any extent that she can, given the unconscious and immersion in dominant discourses, her self, her subjectivities. As Spivak (1994) says, "phantom of subjectivity cannot be warded off" (p. 27), subjectivity is everywhere in writing, reading, even situated in a theory. Therefore, when an autobiographical researcher just "tells" her story and creates some "knowledge" from the story, it can be dangerous (Miller, 2005). As Marcus & Fisher (1986) and Geertz (1983) articulate, it has to be acknowledged that research has an agenda and assumptions, since all of those are mediated by language. However, recognition of agendas in research and

assumptions behind research questions is not enough in autobiographical inquiry. One responsibility in autobiographical research lies in “monitoring,” to any extent possible, the researcher’s subjectivity, which in turn might open up a possibility. Therefore, this last question points to an examination of what a version of autobiographical research can do and cannot do.

Itinerary of this Dissertation

Thus, this dissertation is consisted of the two trajectories: One is the exploration of relations between self and language in reader response theories, and the other is the investigation of movements of my subjectivities within the exploration of those relations. Therefore, this dissertation does not have a linear seamless sequence of chapters.

Although the organization of this dissertation is necessarily linearly presented on the table of contents, I would like to give a little more detailed itinerary. I name each chapter for convenience when you and I return to the chapters within the dissertation. I assume that “a name,” rather than a numerical, helps to identify a chapter.

After this introduction chapter and the following “theoretical framework” chapter, I tell my “stories” about English not only in Japan but also in the U.S. context: The stories are segmented by location or time, and thus are not chronological. After the “my stories” chapter (Chapter 3), I “read” my stories to examine how I constructed my idea of a “purity” of English through Derrida’s thinking on self and language. I call this chapter 4 “transition” chapter.

Then, before exploring Derrida’s examinations of relations between self and language in writing and speaking, and Derrida’s concept of a relation between self and language, I investigate the “my stories” chapter and the “transition” chapter in order to monitor how my

subjectivities work in the chapters, in particular, in connecting my idea of “purity” of English with Derrida’s ideas. This chapter is “disruption” chapter (Chapter 5).

I return to the exploration of Derrida’s concept of a relation between self and language and the presumed relations between self and language in reader-response theories. First, I delve into Derrida’s notion of a relation between self and language in Chapter 6, which I call “Derrida” chapter. Then I give an overview of reader response theories in order to see what are contested areas in relation to my research interests in Chapter 7 (“overview” chapter). In the following chapter (Chapter 8) as “reader response” chapter, in light of Derrida’s exploration, I inquire into what precepts about relations between self and language some reader response theories are immersed in, and I return to my “wiggling wall.”

In Chapter 9, I examine my subjectivities in the previous chapters again. By doing so, I think I have examined what a version of autobiographical research within poststructural feminism perspectives can do and cannot do. I call this chapter “agency” chapter. The last chapter is closing this dissertation.

Chapter 2: Methodological and Theoretical Framings for my Dissertation

On Naming My Inquiry about My “Experiences”

If I’m asked at a cocktail party what my dissertation is about, I would say, “I’m looking at a history of my interpretation of my experiences of reading and writing English.” People would say, “Oh, so you are writing an autobiography.” Or some people who are more informed on narrative inquiry would ask, “Ah, well, so are you doing life history, life story or autobiography?”

According to Susan E. Chase (2005), “life history” is the more specific term “to describe an extensive autobiographical narrative, in either oral or written form, that covers all or most of a life” (p. 652). Although some researchers use “life history” and “life story” interchangeably, still others regard “life story” as “a narrative about a specific significant aspect of a person’s life” (p. 652). Following this definition, my work might be framed as “life story” in the sense that the work deals with “specific aspects,” that is, my interpretations of experiences of reading and writing English. But at the same time, since English was imported to Japan before I was born and will be there after I leave the world, my narratives about English will “cover all or most of” my life and could even go beyond the life. Then, my work could be labeled as “life history.”

In addition, “life history” is defined as a form of inquiry in which a story is located in broader contexts and so a wider range of evidence is employed (Cortazzi, 1993; Sparks, 1994). Aside from a point of whether or not I employ a wide range of evidence in my stories, my “stories” or “experiences” should be located in cultural, socio-economical, racial, and gender

contexts, since my “selves,” identities, and subjectivities always are situated within those contexts. In this sense, again, my work can be framed as “life history.”

Nonetheless, I frame and even name my inquiry about relations between self and language as an “autobiography.” That said, it’s already problematic to “name” my inquiry as autobiography. Leigh Gilmore (1994), in *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women’s Self-Representation*, states “[W]hereas names perform a host of functions, only one is properly referential, and it is impossible to distinguish that function – in a word – from others that bear its name” (p. 87). In this sentence, she specifically refers to naming the autobiographical *I*. But the impossibility also applies to the name of “autobiography.”

Names are abundant everywhere. What the names could refer to are more abundant. The referentiality is limitless. When I wanted to describe my obsession with washing my feet for thirty minutes every night as “obsessive compulsive behavior,” I didn’t remember the name. Then, someone said to me, “Naoko, if you don’t know the name, you don’t have that.” I knew that she was trying to calm me because I was so much concerned with my behavior of cleaning my feet. Now I am glad that I didn’t remember the name. If I had named the behavior as such, it would have given various ideas of my behavior, and probably me, to the people present in the conversation. Names fix the referred things and ideas and feelings and so on in a certain way, depending on how one interprets that particular “naming.”

The moment I’ve just named my inquiry as “autobiography,” immediately various ideas of autobiography should come up from this print and for the reader who reads this. Naming is dangerous because it leads one to frame a thing, an idea, a feeling, in the way one thinks as proper in terms of the referred. It has to be explained first what the term “autobiography” would possibly entail.

Tensions in Autobiography as a Historically Situated Practice

Smith & Watson (2001) historicize autobiography in the West as a literary genre in their *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Live Narratives*. Although a practice of writing autobiographically extends further back to, or even before, the Greeks and the Romans, according to Smith & Watson, the recent usage of the term autobiography appeared in the late eighteenth century. The usage is carried out by “the concept of self-interested individual intent on assessing the status of the soul or the meaning of public achievement” (p. 5). Autobiography in this usage celebrates the individual’s personal growth through her public achievement.

The “auto” in this usage of autobiography implies the notion of self that has been traditionally established in Western philosophy. The dominant notion of the self comes from Descartes and Locke (Elliot, 2008; Seigel, 2005; Steinvorth, 2009; Taylor, 1989). According to Steinvorth (2009), the Cartesian self is constituted by “its capacity of judging after deliberation” (p. 23). Therefore, the self has been thought to be rational and capable of knowing. Steinvorth (2009) discusses that the way the self is conceived “commits us to rationality and action” (p. 6). This notion of the self leads to modernist faith in the rationality of the self, which further produces a conception of individuals as “self-contained and self mastering” (Elliot, p. 10). Further, Locke’s notion of self as a “thinking thing,” or consciousness, has been also prevalent since Enlightenment. Although Steinvorth discusses that the Cartesian conception of the self as rational and knowing is incompatible with Locke’s concept of self as consciousness, the two notions of the self have been combined and taken-for-granted and been in use for a long time (Elliot, 2008). In Western thought, the self is traditionally conceptualized as rational in knowing, judging and acting, and is aware of its will (Elliot, 2008). The idea that individual is “intent on

assessing the status of the soul or the meaning of public achievement” comes from this “enlightened,” autonomous, and knowing self.

Autobiography that is thus rendered based on this notion of self as such can be conceived “as telling unified stories of their lives, as creating or discovering coherent selves” (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 7). Gilmore also views autobiography, as a genre, as observing coherence and unity and as being told by the stable and autonomous *I* (1994, p. 11).

However, Smith & Watson argue, “[t]he unified story and the coherent self are myths of identity” (2001, p. 7) that are assumed and even believed by autobiographers within certain cultural and social milieu at certain historical times. Autobiography has been written within a notion of identity that was available to autobiographers at some given historical moments. One of the myths of identity that constitutes the unified stories is that identity is consistent and stable and thus mark-able by others, which of course is linked with the notion of self. This myth establishes itself as “the” principle, and as Gilmore examines, autobiography has been founded upon the principle of identity (1994, p. 18).

Autobiography is a “historically situated practice of self-representation” (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 14). It is situated but sometimes legitimized. Gilmore (1994) sees that the genre of autobiography as the “textual version of the political ideology of individualism” is gendered as “male” (p. 1). Therefore, as Gilmore and Smith & Watson discuss, women’s autobiography has been marginalized or even erased in the history of literary criticism.

Autobiography that is historically and culturally situated has been differently employed by “women.” Of course, this category of “women” is too monolithic. While Minnie Bruce Pratt dismantles her identity as “white” women, the late twentieth century saw the proliferation of the

writing that is called “ethnic autobiography,” one that is written by so-called “women” and “marginalized groups” (Bergland, 1994).

How one reads these “ethnic autobiographies,” Bergland (1994) points out, brings out a debate and highlights tensions between postmodern theories and the emerging narratives of “women of color.” Postmodern theories raise “challenges to traditional notion of the self” and therefore draw attention to “complex relationships between culture and discourses that produce the speaking subject” (Bergland, p. 130). On the other hand, “ethnic autobiography” *seems* to put forward the narrator as the producer of knowledge, although it depends on how it is read. “In short,” Bergland asks, “do we read at the center of the autobiography a self, an essential individual, imagined to be coherent and unified, the originator of her own meaning, or do we read a postmodern subject – a dynamic subject that changes over time” (p. 134)? This tension lies in how a narrator/writer in autobiography is conceptualized – self as an individual or self as a “subject.”

“Self as a subject” is, obviously, disturbing to some researchers. At a conference of qualitative research, a friend of mine presented some issues in representing subjectivity of her research participants. At the conference she represented her research participant as “a subject.” One of the audiences was annoyed at the term that describes a participant as a subject. What I heard from the audience member’s response to the term is that “subject” can connote someone who is experimented upon and under domination, and so loses her independency. “A participant is a human being not a subject” is what she literally said. On the other hand, “the subject” can point to agency, given that “the subject” has a grammatical meaning in relation to verbs (Weedon, 2003, p. 112). However, Bergland’s use of “subject” for self comes from a poststructuralist concept of “subject.”

According to Chris Weedon (2003), poststructuralist idea of the subject is partly influenced by the French linguist Emile Benveniste. Benveniste criticizes Descartes's famous premise "I think, therefore I am," thereby insisting on the distinction "between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the enounced" (Weedon, p. 125). Since then, some theorists think that the subject can not longer be seen as unified and the source of knowledge" (Weedon, p. 125). In the Foucauldian notion of subject, subjects are produced by discourses within relations of power (Weedon, p. 126). Therefore, some poststructural feminists in different fields conceptualize self as subject to some discursive discourses that are multiple and even contested (Butler 1992; Scott, 1991; Weedon, 1996).

However, as is shown in Bergland's cited statement, self as the subject does not necessarily mean only subjectivization. Butler states that, although subject is constituted by power, a subject is never fully constituted because the "power does not cease at the moment the subject is constituted" (1992, p. 13). In this sense, there is no ready-made pre-given subject. As Bergland describes, the subject is dynamic and changes over time.

As Bergland points out the tension, Gilmore also identifies a similar tension between a poststructuralist feminist position that is situated as part of postmodern culture and some other feminist positions in terms of notions of self in relation to experience (1994, p. 18). The latter (Enlightenment) position – although one among a wide range of feminist positions – "grounds autobiographical form and meaning in the experience of the women who write autobiography" (Gilmore, p. 18). On the other hand, according to Gilmore, the former position conceptualizes the self as an effect of language.

Feminist poststructural perspectives draw attention to relations among language, self, and subjectivity (Butler, 1992; St. Pierre & S. Pillow, 2000). For those working from these

perspectives, language produces subjectivity, one conceptualized by poststructuralists as “encompassing unconscious meanings, wishes and desires” (Weedon, 2003, p. 126). However, subjectivity in the Cartesian sense also means our conscious and unconscious sense of self and our emotions (Weedon, p.126). At the same time, when the Cartesian notion of self is capable of judging, its subjectivity must be knowable by its self. But within poststructural thought, subjectivity of the self as subject is unknowable by the self, because, as Bergland critiques, self is not unified but divided. In addition, subject and subjectivity are constituted by language for feminist poststructuralists. Weedon astutely states, “Yet it [language] is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed. . . . Language is not the expression of unique individuality; it constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways which are socially specific” (1996, p. 229-230). Then, the subject and the subjectivity do not “exist” prior to language. Once language’s constitutive force is recognized, it is impossible to refuse to see a separation between “experience” and “identity” and “language.”

In a slightly different vein, Judith Butler (1992) also draws attention to the tension between “a) poststructuralist criticisms of [the Cartesian conceptions of intact, wholly conscious] identity and b) recent theory by women of color that critically exposes the unified or coherent subject as a prerogative of white theory” (p. xiv). Poststructural positions, writ large, see identity as provisional, changing, unstable. On the other hand, “recent theory by women of color,” which I believe signifies a camp of feminists such as Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, Gloria Anzaldúa, astutely pinpoints that a “white modernist version of feminism” makes identity of women monolithic by not taking into account other groups of women. However, this criticism shows ironically that they make their “groups” monolithic.

Though differently addressing tensions, significant and crucial parts of contestation here are that while a liberal, second-wave feminist position is founded on a “fixed” and reified notion of identity and experience, a poststructural position grapples with issues of identity and experience. These issues are tied up with a notion of self. Indeed, arguing that autobiography is a discursive construction, Smith & Watson raises five “constitutive processes of autobiographical subjectivity” (2001, p. 15): memory, experience, identity, embodiment, and agency.

Given my particular and situated “identity markers” and questions, I will delve into the ways in which “ethnic autobiography”--to which I could be seen to be attached--is a contested area – involving tensions of notions of experience and identity.

“Ethnic Autobiography”

Identity.

In *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), Anzaldúa told “women of color” that they should “[w]rite of what most links us with life, the sensation of the body, the images seen by the eye. . . . *Even though we go hungry we are not impoverished of experiences*” (emphasis original, p. 172). Obviously, experiences are the source for their political and personal purposes in writing autobiographical works. Nine years later, in *Making face, Making soul: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Women of Color* (1990), she explained that “[f]ailure to emphasize with (empathy may open the door to understanding) another’s experience is due, in part, to what I call ‘selective reality’” (p. xxi). It seems that the importance of making experience visible was continuing, through much feminist writings in the 1960’s, 70’s 80’s and into 90’s. In the introduction of this book, Anzaldúa attempted to uncover the masks that were written over “them.” I should quote her beautifully written sentences rather than

paraphrase them. She writes, “We rip out the stitches, expose the multi-layered ‘innerfaces,’ attempting to confront and oust the internalized oppression embedded in them, and remake anew both inner and outer faces” (1990, p. xvi). She resisted the identity that was given to her and other women of color, in particular, and attempted to show the hidden and oppressed identity, probably “real” identity.

But her notion of identity has shifted during the twenty-one years between these two books. In *this bridge we call home: radical visions of transformation* (2002), Anzaldúa articulated that “[t]his book intends to change notions of identity, viewing it as part of a more complex system covering a larger terrain” (p. 2). In the preface, Anzaldúa describes where she stands as a bridge, “this in-between space, an unstable, unpredictable, precarious, always-in-transition space lacking clear boundaries” (p. 1). She was articulate about the difference between the 1981’s version of “this bridge” and the 2002’s. In the former, “they” grappled with “the recognition of difference within the context of commonality,” while in the latter, “the recognition of commonality within the context of difference” (Anzaldúa, 2002, p. 2). She attempted to break identity categories by recognizing “commonality” within differences. In spite of this changing of the notion of identity, it seems to me that she still does not problematize the notion of “experience.”

Experience.

In modernist versions of autobiography and autobiographical research, including “ethnic autobiographies,” narrators tell their experiences through which to make meanings. Experiences are usually taken for granted as the source of giving “voice” and thus knowledge by some writers, such as Anzaldúa.

According to Raymond Williams' sketches on the term "experience," in the Anglo-American tradition of the use of the term, one of the senses in which the term is employed is "knowledge gathered from past events, whether by conscious observation or by consideration and reflection" (as cited in Scott, 1999, p. 84-5). Further, in the twentieth century, "'experience' has acquired another 'connotation' in which 'experience' refers to influences external to individuals – social conditions, institutions, forms of belief or perception – 'real' things outside them that they react to" (as cited in Scott, p. 85). An experience in this traditional conceptualization is a reflection, not an effect, of the "world" out there. The notion of experience as "knowledge gathered from the past" and "reflection of something external" supports a humanist notion of "self," autobiography and autobiographical inquiry.

However, experience is not that reliable. When I go through some events together with my friends or family and talk about the events as experiences with them later, I often realize that "experiences" that I tell are different from those that others do. How do these different perceptions of the same events come about? Laurel Richardson, who promulgates different ways of representing research, notes "experience and memory are thus open to contradictory interpretations governed by social interests and prevailing discourses" (2000, p. 929). Would it not be dangerous to assume that experiences generate knowledge, when "experiences" and memory are contradictory, and when discourses available vary by and through each person as well as each social, historical, cultural context?

Olesen (2000), in the delineation of a wide range of feminist theories, points out a growing recognition that "merely focusing on experience does not take into account how that experience emerges" (p. 227). In spite of the twenty-one-year enormous efforts by Anzaldúa and

other writers of "women of color," who struggle to be heard, it also is imperative to demystify this taken-for-granted idea of experiences.

Joan Scott (1999) claims that making experience visible as self-evident only leads to the mere acknowledgement of "identities" and differences (p. 82). "It is not individuals who have experiences, but subjects who are constituted through experience," Scott defines (p. 83). When subjects are constituted through experiences, "identity" becomes contested and/or possibly transformed. By the same token, when subjects are constituted through experiences, differences that the subjects want to make visible are also contested, shifting and conflicting. Thus, as Scott suggests, experiences are "not the origin of explanation" (p. 83) of differences and identities, but "that which we seek to explain" (p. 83) in order to examine how identities and differences are produced within certain social, cultural and political contexts and dominant discourses.

"Experience is discursive," Smith & Watson also declare (2001, p. 25). We live within and through multiple cultural, social and political discourses. However, these discourses are not stable but changeable. What is regarded as experiences "change over time with broader cultural transformations of collective history" (Smith & Watson, p. 26) and, I would add, changing discourses.

Therefore, those scholars, who question experience as "evidence" of "the truth" or of "what happened," argue that writings of women by women should not be grounded on conceptions of either fixed experiences or identities. Testimonials and narratives of resistance based on experiences are necessary to be heard, but there is a pitfall. Caren Kaplan points out the commodification and romanticization of those modernist autobiographical genres (1992, p. 125). Since the "I" in testimonials, especially of "ethnic" or "racial" groups, according to

Kaplan, assume a collective “I,” their stories are likely to be exoticized (1992, p. 125). What is worse, such narratives of resistance might replicate “master discourses” and constructions.

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) designates this “ethnic autobiography” as “the priest-god scheme” (p. 28). In this scheme, the autobiographical subject takes on a standpoint as “I am Goddess.” She writes, ‘The image of God alone making sky, earth, sea, and beings, transported into writing, has led many of us to believe that the author exists *before* her/his own book, not simultaneously *with* it” (p. 29). She also shows a concern with this romanticization, questioning how a woman (of color) can write and read “without indulging in a marketable romanticism” (p. 28). She also states that the claim based on identity and experience indicates a “dangerous tendency” (p. 15), since the tendency only promotes a separate development among a particular ethnic groups and reinforces discrete differences and identities.

In spite of those conceptualizations of experiences, “ethnic autobiography,” including narratives of resistance, still pervades in autobiography by being deeply concerned with an “identity.” Mohanty, one of the advocates for “The Third World Feminism,” notes “the existence of third world women’s narratives in itself is not evidence of decentering hegemonic histories and subjectivities” (1991a, p. 34). Nonetheless, Mohanty demands that autobiographical writings and life-stories by "Third World" feminists be testimonials or narratives of resistance. Moreover, she clarifies significances in this type of narrative, arguing that this way of writing is "a process which is significant not merely as a corrective to the gaps, erasures, and misunderstandings of hegemonic masculinist history, but because the very process of remembering and rewriting leads to the formation of politicized consciousness and self identity" (1991a, p. 34). Kaplan, who cautions against the pitfall of commodification, also writes that testimonials and narratives of resistance as an outside genre of autobiography are "created

out of political conflicts" (1992, p. 120). These theorists appear to believe that writing this genre of autobiography brings about political alliance with a community and consequentially results in politicized identities.

I do not submit myself to this agenda of forming politicized identities. I would argue that testimonials and narratives of resistance shouldn't be sufficient as long as they are committed to simply asserting their racial/ethnic and national identity. To say this is never to imply that I dismiss the enormous efforts and pains made by Anzaldúa, Moraga and other writers in *This Bridge Called my back* (1981). I know that only after they called attention to their struggles, conflicts and pains does it become possible for me to say that to make experiences visible is not enough. Smith & Watson argue, when postcolonial people write their stories, even in the medium of the colonizers, these genres are significant means of putting forward their cultural agency (2001, p. 45).

Nine years after *This Bridge Called my Back*, Anzaldúa in *Making face, Making soul* (1990) argues that women of color need to leave the "opposite bank" toward a new consciousness named "mestiza consciousness" to "break down the subject-object duality" through the work of this consciousness (p. 378-379). However, twelve years after Anzaldúa's idea of "mestiza consciousness," Ana Louise Keating laments in *this bridge we call home* (2002) co-edited with Anzaldúa. Keating says that there are still calls for visibility, a need to break silence, and critique of stereotypes in this extended version (p. 11). It seems that this "mestiza" consciousness and the mere "recognizing, accepting and celebrating" (Molina, 1990, p. 327) of differences as well didn't "work," to both complicate and put forth still necessary versions of "ethnic autobiography."

Both Smith & Watson and Bergland suggest that one should explore autobiographical subjectivities rather than find a unified self in reading or writing autobiography. In order to avoid a further commodification, writers -- not only "women of color" but also "white" women -- need to investigate multiple discourses working behind interpretations of experiences and to interrogate subjectivities generated from dominant constructions of identities.

Narrative Inquiry

How to conceptualize identity, experience and self also makes autobiographical inquiry one of the contested areas in social science, including the field of education. Various conceptualizations have produced similar sorts of tension within educational research, as in theories of autobiography, per se, that employs narrative inquiry and autobiographical forms of such research.

Before examining further such tensions in autobiographical inquiry, it is necessary to briefly look at a notion of narrative in the field of literary study and different notions of narrative inquiry, of which an autobiography is a part. Narrative inquiry is also a contested area, which is connected to tensions in autobiographical inquiry. In the discussion that follows, I will start with a brief look at the notions of narrative and narrative inquiry within other disciplines that seem to influence research practices in the U.S. educational field.

The term "narrative," which is a "home" within literary studies, started to be used within a wide range of the social science, such as law, psychology and medicine during the 1960's (Czarniawska, 2004; Fludernik, 2008). This move is known as "the narrative turn." Fludernik, who writes a history of narrative theory after Barthes' structural narrative theory in literary

study, sees that many social sciences use narratives in conjunction with “acts of storytelling” (p. 46).

According to Fludernik (2008), narratives as stories are considered to “rationalize the behavior and experience observed in their subjects” (p. 47) within other disciplinary fields. The ways in which one rationalizes behavior and experience produce different notions of “narrative” across the disciplines. Narrative and narrative inquiry each is diversely defined, based on different philosophical and political orientations within and across several disciplines, such as cognitive psychology, anthropology and sociology.

Modernist notions of narrative inquiry.

According to Janet Miller (2004), “narrative” within various disciplines is most often traditionally understood and employed in three differing ways. Narrative is 1.) a mode of knowing 2.) a mode of communication 3.) a form of meaning-making. All of these three differing ways converge in terms of how they conceptualize “experience” and “self” based on Enlightenment assumptions, which is different from the way Smith and Watson and Scott do.

Jerome Bruner (1990) in the field of cognitive psychology considers that there are two modes of cognitive function. One is “narrative” and the other is “logico-scientific.” For Bruner narrative is a mode of knowing. The narrative mode of knowing for Bruner allows researchers to “organize experience” with human intention (1990). And these two modes construct “two different landscapes” (cited in Miller, 2004) simultaneously for Bruner. On the other hand, Czarniawska (2004) in the area of organizational management holds that these two modes of knowing do not co-exist with each other, since a logico-scientific mode of knowing looks for the universal truth, while narrative does not.

Donald Polkinghorne (1998) in the field of counseling psychology states that “[n]arrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite” (p. 13). Narrative, in my understanding of Polkinghorne, helps to give so-called experiences coherency to make them into a whole. This concept of narrative is related to Bruner’s. Indeed, Bruner’s ideas give a lead to Polkinghorne’s. When narrative is a way of knowing, in Polkinghorne’s logical extension, narrative can be a form of meaning-making. Narrative consists, Polkinghorne discusses, of a description, an explanation, and a communication of “what happened.” In explaining what happened, narrative is considered to be able to produce unquestioned meaning.

Narrative inquiry is, however, variously defined. Chase (2005) lays out different definitions of narrative inquiry within sociology, psychology, anthropology, and autoethnography. However, Bruner’s notion of narrative as a way of knowing and Polkinghorne’s as a form of meaning-making seem to influence conceptualization of narrative research in the field of education. Casey (1995) states that narrative is widely accepted as the essential human activity. In *Narrative Analysis* (1993), Riessman describes narrative as an “organizing principle for human action.” Some educational scholars argue that teachers’ narratives as stories of teaching experiences need to be studied as teachers’ perceptions and experiences that make it possible to improve and reform educational systems (Cortazzi, 1993; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002). Clandinin & Connelly’s concept of narrative inquiry (2000) is founded on this view of experience and story. They consider that narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience.

Feminist poststructural critique on modernist versions of narratives.

These teachers' narratives as stories are metaphorically seen as "voices." Casey (1995) in her *The New Narrative Research in Education* describes how "voice" as a metaphor is used to make "marginalized people's" stories visible – similar to "ethnic autobiographies." Some narrative inquiry within women's studies of certain groups of people calls attention to emerging "voices" through experiences that have been oppressed and now wish to be seen as sources of knowledge. Problematizing the idea of "just tell your story," Miller (1998a) from feminist poststructuralist perspectives points out that "teachers' stories" are often rendered by the assumption that self is unitary and transparent, and further "open to observation, rational analysis, and even 'correction' by herself and others" (p. 150).

When "your story" is defined and represented as "voice" arising from the unitary and authentic self, it can be dangerous for the reader and the researcher. The unitary and authentic self always entails a fixed identity (gender, class, race, national), which by extension is recognized as the collective identity. Further, the stories told by foregrounding the identity of an autobiographer might be read as "insider's voices" (Olsen, p. 227). Then, it will be dangerous again because "your story" will be essentialized and universalized, which would erase the other ways of being and doing.

Olesen (2000) explains that "voice" is a worrisome problem for feminist qualitative researchers writ large. Chase (2005) also points out the issues of "experience and voice" that feminists, writ large, raise about narrative inquiry (p. 655). Their concern is not only with "voice" per se, but also with an idea of "finding" and "giving" and "representing" women's voices. This concern is involved with power relations. Olsen asks, "With what authority and in what form" are women's voices heard (2000, p. 231)? Michelle Fine (1992) also addresses the

issues related to voices, such as taking “your story” to reflect group ideas. Casey, according to Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubuman (1995), is one of those who give her research participants their “places” and “voice” in her research on five woman teachers in 1990 (p. 530). Casey, working from a different theoretical framework from poststructuralist thinking, even recognizes another unsettling issue of “voice.” However, Casey states that the problem “is not with the voices that speak but with the ears that do not hear” (1995, p. 223).

Some camps of thoughts, mostly feminists, in education field further complicate narrative inquiry by calling attention to this issue of “voice.” Cortazzi (1993) makes some reservations about an idea of “voice” of teachers in their stories. Riessman (1993), though she might not call herself a poststructural feminist, concerns herself with the agenda of “giving voice” to the silenced people and rephrases it as “hearing voices.” Carter (1993) points out that an extreme emphasis on teachers’ voices in turn give their stories an “authenticity” that is not always warranted (cited in Casey, 1990, p. 223). Petro Munro (1998) autobiographically talks about how she changed her idea of “voice.” In the beginning she believed in “recovering the marginalized voice” (p. 6). However, she sees the idea of “giving voice” unsettling and becomes cautious about the idea. Further, in terms of researchers who “hear” the voices of the participants and “tell” the stories, Munro (1993) calls attention to the need for a “methodology that would allow me to practice self-reflexivity necessary for revealing my biases as well as the emergent and evolving nature of my understandings” (cited in Casey, p. 238). Some scholars, therefore, go further to looking at relations of power (Behar, 1996; Munro, 1998; Weiler, 1999).

This worrisome call to the idea of “giving voices” to the “marginalized people” only concerns – but still importantly so – a position of a researcher who perhaps gains power by “giving voice.” Casey (1995) suggests that one “must move beyond the inevitability to

explaining the extraordinary self-conscious fascination with story telling that prevails at present” (p. 212). In order to move beyond the explanation of fascination with story telling, Casey suggests that the speaker’s self need to be explored.

Indeed, Miller (2005) in *Sounds of Silence Breaking*, working from poststructural feminist perspectives, questions the very concept of “voice” as a “‘factual’ recording of memories of events” or as “a means by which to find, reflect on, improve, or celebrate a complete and whole ‘self’” (p. 53), “the” voice from one unitary self. She argues that since self is “mediated by discourses, cultural contexts, and the unconscious” (p. 53), and so too are changing and incomplete “voices” “irreducibly multiple” (p. 6). What is now imperative, according to Miller, is not only to be concerned with “power” of a researcher, but also to complicate and interpret multiple and contested “voices,” rather than represent them as “authentic,” and further “to even call attention to interpretation as always incomplete” (p. 53). Therefore, Janet Miller (1998, 2005) warns us narrative researchers to investigate how “voice” is constituted contextually, discursively and intersubjectively. In narrative inquiry, Miller (2005) proposes, a researcher who tells a “story” about her participants or herself must study her self/subjectivity as well as the discourses used by that subject; otherwise the story, “voice,” and “experiences” told by a researcher can be universalized.

However, modernist versions of narrative inquiry do not look at how teachers “see,” what makes it possible for them to see what they think they see (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Cortazzi 1993; Lyons & LaBoskey 2002).

Clandinin & Murphy (2009) are not alone among those narrative researchers who just exhort educators to tell the stories. However, they attempt to promulgate that “the stories” need to be explored. Drawing on Dewey’s notion of experience, Clandinin & Murphy articulate that

experiences are fluid and changing “as both researchers’ and participants’ lives are lived out in situations shaped by social, cultural, institutional, and linguistic narratives” (p. 601).

Experiences would change when a “person” lives a life in differently constructed situations.

Hence, they state that narrative research explores the stories that people live and tell. Therefore, they take narrative as a research methodology. This take on narrative is still a broad definition of narrative research as methodology, and probably might still represent consensus among some narrative researchers.

What I want to call more attention to are crucial differences in terms of notions of “stories,” “experiences,” and “self” between Clandinin & Murphy (2009), or Clandinin & Connelly (2000), and Miller, who all see narrative not just as stories but as a methodology. Clandinin & Murphy presume that stories are “the result of a confluence of social influences on a person’s inner life, social influences on his or her environment, and his or her unique personal history” (p. 599). This idea of “stories” is rooted in the notion of self as intact and autonomous. Self of “the researcher” and “the researched” in these humanistically oriented notions of stories is unwavering. In particular, the researcher in Clandinin & Connelly’s idea of narrative inquiry needs to be “wakeful” in reflection on research, per se, representation, and so on (p. 184). When “stories” are conceptualized as coming from those notions of self, they would never conceptualize stories out of dominant discourses that frame those “stories,” as Miller strongly argues. Poststructuralist perspectives presume that narrative indicates complexities of how a subject constructs and is constructed through discourses, history, and contexts, as are “selves” and “events” (Miller, 2005).

Although Clandinin & Murphy states that experiences are fluid and changing depending on differently constructed situations, they seem to believe, as Clandinin & Connelly (2000) do,

that experience comes out of other experiences and thus is accumulative and helps to create knowledge. This is one of the modernist and enlightenment forms of narrative inquiry that is generally based on an assumption that experience is chronologically ordered and can be understood in the order of what happened (Miller, 2005). On the other hand, drawing on Scott (1991), Miller (2005) argues that a narrative inquirer should “explore and theorize social, discursive, historical or cultural contexts and influences on constructions and interpretations of ‘selves’ who ‘have those educational experiences’” (p. 93). Clandinin & Connelly do not conceptualize experiences as constituted.

This idea of experience, again, is taken for granted because those modernist versions of narrative inquiry do not take language into account. In *The Evidence of Experience* Scott (1999) emphasizes an inseparable relationship between language and experience. Experience in her conceptualization is “a linguistic event” and “doesn’t happen outside established meaning” (p. 93). Drawn on Scott’s argument that experience is a linguistic act that “through discourse, position[s] subjects and produce[s] experience” (Scott, p. 90), Kathleen Weiler (1999) recognizes experience “as the object of study, as knowledge, the processes by which people make sense of their lives” (p. 45). What is important, however, is to see how experience as a linguistic event gets produced or what historical, social, cultural concepts and discourses make some events experiences.

Narrative as a story is a linguistic act that is discursively produced. No one can and should construct, founded on experience, any universal knowledge that is beyond language, time and location. Scholars working from poststructuralist perspectives, in which a subject is recognized as being positioned by different discourses, pay attention to how their resulting “stories” are permeated with dominant discourses. Narrative inquiry, or any educational inquiry,

should engage with how researchers and research participants know what they think they know when they tell a story.

Autobiography / Autobiographical Inquiry: Self in Educational Research

Like narrative inquiry, autobiography is not just the telling of a story but also a method of research (Miller, 1998). Autobiography as a mode of inquiry “initially characterized ‘the reconceptualization’ of the curriculum field” (Miller, p. 146) in the late 1970’s. Casey (1995) also views the rise of autobiographical reflection in narrative research from autobiography as conceptualized by William Pinar, Madeleine Grumet, Janet Miller, and others, including many contributors to the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* (p. 217).

Janet Miller, who was a part of the curriculum movement in the U.S. known as the reconceptualization, gives a history and an overview of how autobiography is utilized as a mode of inquiry within this movement (2005). According to her, some scholars who questioned behaviorally oriented perspectives in the curriculum studies began to explore the very processes of knowledge production. In order to examine how knowledge is produced “as” curriculum, autobiography became a predominant mode of inquiry in curriculum studies. Thus, autobiography is conceptualized to examine “the interwoven relationships” among not only one’s perceptions and understanding of her experience, but also one’s contextualizations of that experience (Miller, 2005, p. 151).

Introducing an idea of “cuerre” as a method of autobiography, Bill Pinar and Madeleine Grumet developed “a method by means of which students of curriculum could sketch the relations among school knowledge, life history, and intellectual development in ways that might function self-transformatively” (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubuman, 1995, p. 515). Working

from existential phenomenology and psychoanalysis, Pinar and Grumet “reconceive[s] the relation of self to knowing through autobiography” (Miller, 2005, p. 93). Casey (1995) also sees that Pinar’s works represent “the phenomenological drive to take nothing for granted, the psychoanalytic need to integrate all parts of the psyche.” (p. 218).

According to Miller, Pinar and Grumet argue for the necessity of telling multiple stories of one’s experiences and one’s selves. However, even if they attempt to construct multiple stories, Pinar’s works also represent “the existential search for *the authentic self*” (emphasis mine; Casey, 1995, p. 218). His works might not consider poststructuralist critiques that stories as “voice” come from enlightenment notions of the authentic, unified self. Miller (2005) points out that Pinar’s call to rendering multiple stories aims to “cultivate our capacity to see through the outer forms, the habitual explanation of things” (p. 51). The idea of “cultivating our capacity” might derive from the notion of self as “capable of judging after deliberation.”

Indeed, it seems that those forms of incorporation of autobiography, or autobiographical reflection, into curriculum studies point to connecting “public” and “private” and ultimately constructing the whole authentic self. Miller critiques Pinar’s idea by arguing that “analyses of those very multiple stories are necessary in order to discern ways in which they are not ‘simply external to the language that unwittingly writes us’” (p. 51).

While Pinar argues for multiple narratives, Stanley (1992) pinpoints the common practice of writing autobiography as a form of narrative inquiry as “a seamless whole in which there is seemingly a clear linear development from beginnings to if not an end, then at least a plateau” (p. 114), which indeed is a “traditional” usage of autobiography. She also points that this common form of autobiography has “taken (as its purpose) its tracing out the unfettering of a real inner self” (p. 117). As Gilmore argues (1994), this traditionally legitimized practice reinforces the

notion of self as outside not only of the social, cultural and temporal conditions but also of writing itself. Here, the self is recognized as autonomous. Agreeing with Miller and Gilmore, I posit that this autonomous self is even more problematic for me than the idea of the authentic self. This self could not examine herself, her subjectivity, in constructing knowledge through language. However, as long as “education” is conceived as a linear development to fit into a nation or society, or more specifically economic system, it is more likely that a researcher in the education field would tend to write this type of story.

Louis M. Smith in his *Biographical Method* (1998) recognizes that writing autobiography is one of the most controversial forms within life writing as an inquiry in terms of knowledge claims and ethical issues. In Smith’s explanation, autobiography blurs the distinction between fact and fiction. This destabilizing of the binary challenges postpositivistic social science in the way that autobiography “eulogizes the subjective, the ‘important part of human existence’ over the objective” (1998, p. 198). He even claims that autobiography is at the center of late twentieth-century “paradigmatic shifts in the structures of thought” (p. 188). In spite of this recognition, I think, he polarizes the “subjective” and the “objective” into logical extensions of a binary of the humanist self and others.

Thus, it is no small wonder that Smith states autobiography suggests the power of agency that is “given” exclusively to the self. Smith states that the self in autobiography knows larger political and ethical and social issues (1998, p. 190). Because of this possible ability conferred on the self in autobiography, Smith thinks that self in autobiography through othering “gives voice to people long denied access” (p. 187). This is the same premise about “story” and “self” by “ethnic autobiography” and some narrative researchers who think that they can retrieve “voices” that have not been heard. When those researchers claim to “give” voices to their

participants, the researchers not only seem to fix the identity of the participants, but also position themselves as “more powerful” than those they are representing.

Likewise, Smith (1998) essentializes the identity, in this case, of the autobiographical researchers who are traditionally considered to construct knowledge and meaning about themselves. He argues that students, especially “the feminists and minority members of our culture,” can find liberation, oppression, and political issues within autobiography. Louis Smith’s argument implies to me that researchers’ identities even might decide a mode of inquiry. This idea of autobiography that can allow “the feminists and minority members of our culture” to liberate from oppressions by telling stories about themselves, of course, is tied up with the proliferation of “ethnic autobiographies.”

Do researchers “choose” a theoretical framework by their “identities”? My answer is “No.” What would be a theoretical framework given based on my “identity” that is supposedly fixed and given within the humanist conceptions. My identity would be a woman. “Would be?” you might think. Yes, I am a woman. But since “a woman” is more tightly related to the body than other identity categories, an identity of “a woman” tends to be naturalized and so universalized. However, “a woman” is also constructed culturally, historically, socially, and discursively. Hence, an identity as a woman does not lead all of the women in the world to run to “feminist theories,” which are quite various. I am attracted to a feminist theory, feminist poststructural perspectives, not because I am a woman, but mostly because this form of feminism helps me to see how my identity is discursively constructed, provisional, multiple and even contested.

Within Enlightenment humanist conceptions, however, my identity could be narrowed down to, say, “a Japanese woman.” What theoretical framework would this identity marker

bring me into, if a researcher's "identity" led her to a certain theory? As far as I know, there is no "Japanese feminist theory." There might be one, but however, just because I am "a Japanese woman," I do not choose a possible "Japanese feminist theory." Or, this identity category could be placed in "Third World feminism,"¹ which already sounds antiquated after many communist nations have collapsed. Although I am drawn to Chandra Mohanty's writings (1991a, 1991b, 1998) on "Third World feminism" to some extent, and I am "persuaded" by her perspective about what issues feminisms should take into account to some extent, at the same time I resist her perspective of "identity." My subjectivity resists some part of Mohanty's thinking.

In the discussion that follows, I will explore how I "am drawn to" Mohanty's thinking to some extent but at the same time resist her perspective. I also aim to autobiographically explore a notion of identity. This exploration in this next section will highlight that even a "choice" of a theoretical framework involves "autobiography," which it seems to me is something that has been avoided in much of the literature. The phrase "I am persuaded by (here insert your favorite theorist)" makes me wonder if subjectivity of this researcher "I" is also involved in "being persuaded." Probably, it might not matter so much to show how a researcher gets to "choose" a theoretical, ontological, epistemological framework, as long as she is situated in a certain framework – but what does it mean to "situate" oneself, and what constitutes "choice" if indeed the subject is produced by and through discourse?

¹ It could be changed to "women of color," or "transnational." But I want to show respect for Mohanty by keeping its designation.

“Third World” Feminism by Chandra Mohanty

My first encounter with Mohanty’s writing was through the book by Ella Shohat, *Talking Visions* (1999). In Mohanty’s essay in the book, *Crafting Feminist Genealogy: On the Geography and Politics of Home, Nation, and Community*, she argues how and why transnational feminist engagement should be constructed in the post-cold war era. I didn’t know anything about transnational feminism, but her anecdotes as a South Asian in North America spoke to me.

The most significant moment for her in the fifteen-year long stay in the U.S., she said, is the transition from “foreign student” to “student of color.” I have been in N.Y. for ten years as of this writing. In the graduate school at which I study, I am named “international student” instead of “foreign student.” I don’t feel uncomfortable with this designation. Rarely have I been made to realize that I am seen as a “student of color.” My significant moment was when I noticed that I was named as a woman of “color” outside the university context. From this moment on, I started to speculate on this designation and constantly attempt to interpret my “experiences” in terms of race/nation and gender. Hence, I identify with Mohanty when she says “practices of racism and sexism became the analytical lens through which I was able to anchor myself here” (1999, p. 491).

In *Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (1991), she explicates differences between “Third World” (women of color) feminisms and “Western” (white) feminisms. The difference she pinpoints between the two feminisms is “the contrast between a singular focus on gender as a basis for equal rights, and a focus on gender in relation to race and/or class as part of broader liberation struggle” (p. 11). I agree with her in that feminisms need to anchor on conjunction among gender, race, and class. It has to be noted that

since then, various feminisms do deal with complexities of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, for example.

In another often-quoted essay *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse* (1991), Mohanty elaborates further this intersection of gender, race and class in constructions of women. It was even eye opening to me, who just came from Japan, that the problem in "Western" feminist discourses that she pointed out is that "some writers confuse the use of gender as a superordinate category of organizing analysis with universalistic proof and instantiation of this category" (p. 69). This article made me notice how the "Western" feminism discourses in 1970's and 80's ended up colonizing women of "color" and other categories of "women," including "lesbians," and so on, even though they demonstrated well-meaning intentions.

The woman-ness that some people in the city of New York find and paste on me is strongly connected from where I "come from" – my nationality. Nation, native, innate. It seems that my "woman-ness" is inherent in me. My "woman-ness" has to possess some aspects from my "race" and "class" of Japan. But, of course, the class difference that has been made in Japan is not so obviously visible here, so that type of difference is eradicated from whom I am identified with, "a Japanese woman," in the U.S.A. context, but I don't know who she is. However, in identification or probably identity, gender cannot be disconnected from race or nationality.

Yet, these issues that Mohanty urged me to look at cannot convince me of "situating" myself in her feminism. Professor Chandra Mohanty, when you name your thinking as "Third World feminism," I do get some sense that you are putting women from the nations designated

as “third world” into a box. If so, isn’t this re-inscribing your very criticism of “White” feminism that “they” universalize the notion of women?

Mohanty’s notion of identity and agency.

Identity.

Mohanty’s notion of identity is ambivalent in the three essays, *Feminist Politics: What’s Got Home To Do With It* (1986), *Cartographies of Struggle*, and *Under Western Eyes*. In the first essay on Minnie Bruce Pratt’s “Identity: Skin Blood Heart,” she and Biddy Martin highly appraise the way that Pratt destabilizes her identity as a “white lesbian” in relation to each location in which Pratt lived. Caren Kaplan (1987), who also advocates for a form of transnational feminism, takes this essay as pivotal since the essay complicates a feminist theory of location and positionality by dismantling Pratt’s identity “as” a white lesbian (p. 193). As far as the terms West/East and white/non-white polarities are left unproblematized, such polarities continue to be reproduced and this reproduction could eventually lead to the totalizing of “Western” feminism(s). Martin and Mohanty argue that Pratt’s essay is politically and theoretically important in questioning identity politics. They write that Pratt’s narrative “calls into question the notion of a coherent, historically continuous, stable identity” (1986, p. 5).

In the second article, “Cartographies,” Mohanty reiterates that a difference between “Western” feminism(s) and “Third World” feminism(s) does not lie in the identity category such as “women of color” and “white” (1991a, p. 4). Nevertheless, in the section on “consciousness, identity, writing” of the same essay, her thought on identity politics became ambivalent for me. In the beginning of this essay, she proposes that being a woman, or being poor or black or Latino, is “not *sufficient ground* to assume a politicized oppositional identity” (emphasis mine;

1991a, p. 33). A question comes up: what does she mean by “not sufficient” and “oppositional identity”? Did she want to say that identity such as “Latino” is *necessary* but not enough for political alliance of “Third World” women? This particular statement seems contradicting with her and Martin’s reading of Pratt’s narrative in terms of destabilizing the identity category of “white lesbian.”

It seems to me that while she wanted “white” people to interrogate their identity as "white," she left the identity category of women of “color” intact. She desperately emphasized that “white” feminists must look at how “whiteness” is constructed. But when she explicitly located “Western” (white) feminisms as oppositional to her feminism to create “political oppositional identity,” I think that she essentialized the identity category of women of “color,” too. I understand her urges, considering her description about overwhelmingly colonial characteristics in “Western” feminist discourses in those days. Yet.

In the last essay among the three that I mentioned, *Under Western Eyes*, Mohanty’s notion of identity shifted. After fourteen years had passed since the original version of *Under Western Eyes* published in 1986, she vocalized her theoretical orientation in “*Under Western Eyes*” *Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles* (2000). She proclaims that she is not a postmodernist in the sense that she does not “argue against all forms of generalization” in the original essay (p. 502). She calls herself a standpoint theorist and even a post-positivist in this essay. She, obviously, conceives an identity as fixed and stable.

For the first year I lived in the U.S., my lower proficiency of English caused me to cling to the feeling that “I am a Japanese.” What languages I speak and do not speak make people identify me, I thought. So, it seemed that I was afraid of losing myself in the classes in the U.S

graduate school. I think that speaking the Japanese language, which I felt made my “identity” intact, prevented me from a total loss of myself. This feeling initially brought me to take sides with feminist standpoint theory, which “foreground women’s knowledge as emergent from women’s situated experience” (Olesen, 2000, p. 222). I therefore did a case study with a “Japanese-German” woman. I thought I would be able to understand and even share her experiences in the schools in the U.S., even if her “identity” is hyphenated. However, standpoint theory didn’t help me to understand her “experiences.” In other words, the standpoint, at least for me, helps to do another “othering.” I became an “othering machine” by flattening out my “identity” and her “identity.”

For Mohanty, a certain standpoint is vital in research about “the most marginalized group of girls and women” in “Third World” nations. She seems to be obligated to speak as “Third World” female academic and activist for “the most marginalized communities.” Jayatil Lal (1999) problematizes the fixed boundary between the knower and the known and points, “one’s identity within the research context is thus neither fixed nor predetermined” (p. 112). The fixed boundary, I too, widens the gap between self and other.

Agency.

Further, it seems that Mohanty needs to believe, as an anti-capitalist activist, that human beings hold agency. On the other hand, the notion of identity in the postmodern culture as shifting, discursive, multiple, fractured, contextual and sometimes contested would *seem* to break down any standpoint theory based on a fixed identity. The postmodern notion of identity, of course, is constituted by the notion of self as “subject.” This notion might make it difficult to conceive of the traditional notion of agency of human beings.

Self is produced because it is subjected to dominant discourses. This idea of self as subject might seem to imply that self is “powerless.” “Subject” is an interesting and contradicting word. According to Merriam Webster’s College Dictionary, to name a few, “subject” means 1.) one that is placed under authority or control and 2.) the mind, ego, or agent of whatever sort that sustains or assumes the form of thought or consciousness. These two meanings are contradicting to each other. The word has two connotations, “controlled” and “controlling” in the sense that subject has agency. Thus, the autobiographical subject is both controlling and controlled. Is it?

This oxymoronic state of the subject could be interpreted as a possibility for agency. When one conceptualizes self as autonomous, one can readily lose a sight of some discourses that surrounds her. Then, self will lose chances to analyze and challenge social and cultural norms that limit the possibilities for some groups of people. However, when self is seen as subject to those norms by social and cultural discourses, interpretation of the self might bring to surface some mechanism of subjugation, which might open up some chances to destabilize and even mobilize the stagnant norms. But of course, I wonder, how could self as subject to multiple discourses possibly “interpret” the mechanism? Would it be even possible for self to “get out of” any social, cultural, historical discourses?

Smith & Watson (2001) briefly give some possible “conceptions” of thinking about agency from Elizabeth Wingrove, Michel de Certeau, Arjun Appadurai, Judith Butler, and Teresa de Lauretis who grapple with this thorny quagmire about agency when self is constituted as subject. Smith & Watson briefly talk about Certeau’s idea of “re-use,” Appadurai’s “imagination,” and Lauretis’s “unconscious.” Further, Smith & Watson write that Wingrove suggests that since multiple ideologies put both the subject and the system to reconfiguration,

new possibilities might emerge from this reconfiguration (2001, p. 43). Smith & Watson also mention that in *Gender Trouble* (1990) Judith Butler sees possibilities of agency when a person fails to conform fully to norms constituted in great part by dominant discourses because of the multiplicity of norms (2001, p. 44). This failure “signals the ‘possibility of a variation’” (Smith & Watson, 2001, p. 44).

Judith Butler (1992), therefore, does not completely deny a possibility of agency of the subject. She says “But to claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency” (p. 13). Butler does not think that agency priori takes, in a conventional way, some forms or lies in something or someone. If agency is presumed, Butler discusses, this presumption even refutes to inquire into its construction (p. 13). Instead of discussing “where” agency resides – a modernist way of thinking because it assumes that agency is pregiven – Butler asks, “What possibilities of mobilization are produced on the basis of existing configurations of discourse and power?” (p. 13). The subject is “never fully” constituted, Butler says. Therefore, the subject itself can be a possibility of mobilization. Butler (1992) argues “[t]hat subject is neither a ground nor a product, but the permanent possibility of a certain resignifying process, one which gets detoured and stalled through other mechanisms of power, but which is power’s own possibility of being reworked” (p. 13).

On the other hand, Mohanty considers that agency arises from the political consciousness “born of history and geography” (1991a, p. 37). In “Cartographies,” she demanded that a constituency of a coalition of “Third World” women be considered as a “social category” rather than racial and color identifications (1991a, p. 6). “Social category” means a group of women

who have “common context of struggle” (p. 7) and “oppositional political identity.” Thus, the fixed identity brings agency in Mohanty’s thinking.

In the essay *Crafting Feminist Genealogy*, she explains that Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga's ground-breaking book *This Bridge Called my Back* (1981) inspired her to think about the coalition of “Third World” women. Reading through the pages of this beautifully written book, I found a Japanese name “Mitsuye Yamada” and leaped at her essays, probably because of ironically seeking some “solidarity” or identification with her. The essays spoke to me to a certain degree, but yet didn't speak to me to the extent that I could feel “common context of struggle” in my bones. I read the other contributors' essays, too. I felt them compelling and I felt their urgent necessity to “voice” their experiences toward “white” feminists in the 1980's. Yet, they did not help me to “have” “an oppositional political identity” on the basis of “common context of struggle.”

My Subjectivity in Reading Mohanty’s

I ask myself why is it that I don’t necessarily feel that I possess an “oppositional political identity?” One reason might be that I don't know any struggles of women of “color” “under western eyes.” Another might be that I don't have an interpretation of experiences that allows me to see the struggles. Another might be that I now have “western eyes.”

Mohanty asks herself why it “continue[s] to feel more appropriate, experientially and strategically, to call myself a woman of color or Third World woman” (1999, p. 498) than a South Asian. Her answer is that what matters for constructing the alliance is not geography but

political consciousness, or home as political space. I ask myself why I, in contrast, felt it more appropriate to call myself a Japanese woman than a “woman of color” or “Third World” woman.

As is widely seen, Japan is considered an economically “developed” nation, even though nowadays it is supposedly deteriorating and will be more so because of the disastrous earthquake and tsunami in 2011. And Japan is one of the nations that exploit Third World nations through hegemonic global capitalisms. I grew up in the 70's and 80's under the climate in which Japan was the second biggest capitalist nation and even became an economic threat to the U.S. Before explaining the climate more profoundly in these two decades, I need to briefly look at a history of Japan particularly in relation to the “West,” at the risk of shamefully oversimplifying history in Japan.

That said, I hesitate to start from the beginning of history with the “West,” because when is the “beginning” must be a controversial issue. What I need to say about Japanese history with the “West” represented by the U.S. is that, interestingly, I didn't learn about World War II in schools. But when I was a little kid, I already knew that Japan lost the war. I knew this historical fact because Japan has memorialized the days of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as the day of the end of the war in August – but not the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor. In those hot humid summers in Japan, my mother used to tell me about her childhood memories during the war, how she felt happy to know that the war ended, and how pensively her mother was listening to the announcement by the emperor himself about the end of the war, drooping her head, in spite of losing one of her sons in the war.

I need to repeat this: I didn't learn about World War II in schools. My understanding of this absence is that Japan/Japanese evade confronting histories of World War II. It seems to me

that they/we deliberately avoid parts of the histories on the war, because the cause that the nation proposed for World War II was too abominable.

My knowledge surrounding this particular war and numerous repercussions of this war comes from my current perspectives intermingled with my own learning from talks with my friends and readings while I was in Japan, and my interpretation of the experiences by being identified as a “Japanese woman.” The defeat in the war led Japan to discard the notoriously erroneous cause for the war: Japan had been supposed to save the other East Asian countries from Western imperial threats (Fletcher, 2009). What made Japanese believe in this cause during the war was that the Emperor Hirohito was a “living God.” However, with the end of the war, Japanese needed to accept the declaration by the emperor himself that he was not God but a human being. This meant that Japanese had to abnegate what they considered valuable before and during the war.

It was imperative, I think, for Japanese of those days to seek some new cause with which they could leave the abominable past and move forward. The choice they made was to become “Westerners,” or more specifically, the “Americans.” Japan desperately intended to emulate the U.S. and the West economically after the war. And they “succeeded” in this sense. They were proud of the success of Toyota, Honda, Sony, to name a few. “Asian” commodities from India, Thai and so on sold well as “ethnic goods” in Japan, as though Japan were not one of the Asian countries.

I grew up in this historical, economical and cultural milieu. Embedded in this milieu, I came to the U.S. without noticing this embedded-ness. I was somewhat astonished to be told by a professor in the graduate school in the U.S. that my interest in the spread of “American”

culture in Japan could be pursued from a postcolonial perspective. At that time, I didn't know anything about postcolonial theories. My initial response to his advice was, "Postcolonial?? Japan was not colonized. Why is he saying this to me?" I even felt a little offended at his advice, because, I think, I too saw Japan different from other Asian countries which were territorially colonized by the West. The first time I went to China Town in New York City, I felt that "those Chinese people" were different from me. Of course, they are different. But this feeling is grounded on the idea that Japan is economically successful and therefore Japanese don't need to migrate to this nation permanently for economical reasons. I perceived "them" as "Third World" people and myself as non-"Third World," which was equivalent to the West in those days. That cultural and economical climate embedded in me did not stay away so drastically and easily from my consciousness.

Mohanty's elucidation and criticism of the representation of "Third World" women by "Western" feminist discourses made me notice that I was one of the people who were immersed within this discourse. I took "Third World" women as "victims of male violence" (1991b, p. 57) and "universal dependents" (1991b, p. 58). While my skin is "yellow," my gaze toward "Third World" women is closer to that of "white people." My major identity marker in the humanist sense is a "Japanese woman." But this identity too is fractured, contextual, discursive, and sometimes contested.

Even if one often identifies me as a woman of "color," I resist Mohanty's "Third World feminism" not just because of difference in theoretical orientation. My provisional "identity" as a woman of "color" in the U.S. almost persuades me into Mohanty's theory in that I also think that gender issues should be interrelated with issues of race and nationality. But her notion of

identity and agency is not commensurate with that to which I am persuaded. Of course, I cannot “situate” myself in her theory.

But not just that. My subjectivity, a subject position as coming from culturally and economically “Westernized” or “Americanized” Japan in certain historical moments, leads me to resist her theory, resist “situating” my self in “Third World” feminism. Difference rather than identity stops me from situating myself into the theory.

I do autobiographical inquiry about relations between self and language. However, this is not because I count myself among “the feminists and minority members of our culture” (Smith, 1998). I wrote the following clip for a presentation at a conference with a study group:

My autobiographical inquiry is being done without resting on a fixed identity. But a shifting identity is not really a place where I want to repose. I want to do and write research with differences that have so many names, but at the same time, no names. I am a woman, but I am not that name. I am a Japanese but I am not that name. I am a daughter but I am not that name. And so on. I am a nomadic inquirer. I want to ride and work differences and move in the thought that, unsure of where I am going, I am moving somewhere different from where I am now. (Akai, 2006)²

So, then, “what” is my theoretical framework for my autobiographical inquiry? Since I have the similar gaze as “white” people to a certain extent, am I a “white” feminist, which does not seem

² This “blurb” reflects the writings by Denise Riley (1988), St. Pierre (2000), and Minh-ha (1991).

to be prevalent any longer? Should I just name myself a "postmodern/poststructural feminist?" But this name encompasses so diverse different perspectives within "the" name.

Is a name important? A name that shows a researcher's theoretical position also can be one of the identity markers. An identity marker is sometimes used for convenience, but at the same time quite misleading. Minh-ha succinctly says, "Categories always leak" (1991, p. 93). There is no such thing as "a poststructuralist" (Miller, a personal conversation).

"You know a Russian looking boy in Sho's class? He said,,," My husband and I have decided not to use those identity markers to describe our son's classmates. But we also found how difficult it was not to use convenient identity markers. What is this difficulty supposed to mean? We can't do away with identity markers and categories. But still resisting by fixing and unfixing the identity categories.

I do not name my theoretical position "as" some-ist. I cannot name my theoretical framework, because subjectivities that I occupy might leak, because they see excessive beyond the framework. My contested subjectivities haunt me, even when I try to "situate" myself in a framework. It is, for sure, responsible for a researcher to nail herself in a certain framework. But keenly aware of my insinuating subjectivities, I (have to) constantly re-frame that framing.

Another Version of Autobiography

However, the subjectivity is not always something with which I am threatened. The subjectivity can entail the workings of some discourses of which one is not fully aware. Therefore, as Gilmore argues, "the subject of autobiography, upon which so much scrutiny has recently focused, can be more accurately described as the object of production for the purpose of

cultural critique” (1994, p. 12). Investigating subjectivities is an “object” in one mode of autobiographical research. But whose subjectivities need to be addressed.

It is vital to grapple with the question raised by Gilmore, “[I]s there a self behind the autobiographical representation of self” (1994, p.19)? As Gilmore argues, the autobiographical subject does not exist *prior* to autobiography. There is no autobiographical subject *prior* to writing of autobiography. Gilmore (1994) contends “the autobiographical subject is produced by autobiography, not by experience” (p. 25). The subject is produced by self immersed in discourses and contexts who writes “herself.” Therefore, there is another self “behind” the autobiographical representation of self – a narrated self and a narrating self, both of whom are “written” by and through discourses.

“I” in autobiography is split. The autobiographical “I” is both the subject who narrates and the narrated subject in stories. The narrating subject is not always contiguous to the narrated “I” in stories. In autobiography as a modernist literary genre, the two subjects are assumed to be the same: Thus autobiography claims for the reality that is thought to be described. However, self as the narrating “I” simultaneously constructs and produces the narrated “I” in stories. Furthermore, according to Shoshana Felman (1993), the narrating “I” is also constituted by and through writing, since language “unwittingly writes us” (cited in Miller, 1998, p.149). Referring to Françoise Lionnet, Smith & Watson write, “the narrated ‘I’ is the subject of history while the narrating ‘I’ is the agent of discourse (2001, p.60). These two subjects are “the object” for investigation.

This dissertation, therefore, will investigate the subject who constructs the narrated “I” by narrating the “stories.” What need to be interrogated are not only the narrated “I” in stories, but also the narrating “I,” subject positions of the narrating “I,” and the subjectivity of the

narrating “I.” The narrating “I” is not in neutral position but is positioned in cultural, social, and historical discourses and discursive practices, including “writing.”

Further, probably more importantly for this dissertation, in my autobiography I posit multiple I’s: the “I”, researching “I” who investigates the self (selves) of the narrating “I” who narrate stories as interpretations of experiences with English by the narrated “I.” The self of investigator, or a researcher, *tries* to situate herself within feminist poststructural perspectives on self, subject positions, and subjectivity in relation to language. As some researchers and scholars in the education field working from feminist poststructural conceptualize self as process and construct that is shaped by cultural, historical and social relations and the accordant discourses (Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 1991; Miller, 2005), the researching self is also a process. Then, no matter how the self “situates” herself in this certain theoretical orientation, the theory itself ironically makes the situated-ness and “choice” impossible.

I am deeply immersed within feminist poststructural thinking, particularly about incomplete selves as subjects. It is possible that another subjectivity might be emerging in writing, and that subjectivity is insinuatingly coming out in writing, a discursive act. Which subject positions, or identities, are given or embraced or reinscribed at certain moments are not always remarked. The subjectivity that comes out through the process in which subject positions are taken or resisted is unknown. Autobiographical inquiry must even look at those possible subjectivities of the investigating self behind the autobiographical representation of self, all “appearing” at the moment of utterance or writing.

“I-the-writer”.

I write with/in these discursively framed multiple subjectivities and subject positions. Not just as a woman writer. It’s theoretically and practically impossible to write “as” a woman. These subject positions can’t be easily transcribed into a discrete one. No pure position as a writer/investigator is possible. As I explained above, an investigating/writing self, “I-the-writer” (Minh-ha, 1989, p.18) cannot sit in a theoretical orientation. “I” consists of infinite iterations.

Referring to Barthes’ statement that “all those outside power are obliged to steal language,” Bergland asks how persons write their subjectivities in “stolen” language (1994, p.135). In spite of her strenuous efforts to dismantle the binary, such as objective and subjective, thought and feeling, Minh-ha (1989) considers that women have to steal language from “masters” who (seem to) possess language. The stolen-language, “words thoroughly invested with realities that turn out to be not-quite-not-yet-mines” (Minh-ha, 1989, p.20), is sometimes deceptive. How, and in what position, am I going to write autobiographical inquiry, or in other words, the possible infinite iterations (subjectivities) in stolen-language?

As a way of writing after the linguistic turn, Laurel Richardson (1994) advocates for creative analytical process for ethnographies in the social science field. The practice is very provocative in terms of destabilizing not only the way of representation but also the traditional notion of validity. I admire her.

However, it seems to me that the practice is founded on the historically constructed distinction of literature and scientific writing. In the second edition of *Handbook of Qualitative Research* by Denzin & Lincoln (2000), Richardson argues, “by writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it” (p. 923). She advocates the CAP ethnography to use different ways of writing from the humanities. In Richardson’s explanation,

science writing has been tied to “objectivity” and the truth by the required and assumed aspect of language as clarity. Literature has been associated within the humanities and subjectivity as opposed to objectivity through the idea of ambiguous language. However, this association makes literature conceal its concerns with the rules such as structure and style, whose totality sometimes allows literature to take on one meaning (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 10).

The CAP ethnography, Richardson (1994) explains, is produced by her concern with legitimized writing within social sciences. Indeed she opens up the range of the legitimacy by incorporating different ways of writing. Nonetheless, it seems to me that this could reinforce humanist assumptions about “self” and the writing “I,” because incorporating one mode from one field to another doesn’t really problematize the legitimacy of the writing in social science’s field. In the third edition of *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2005), she describes the CAP ethnography as moving “outside conventional social scientific writing” (p. 975). She dislodges herself from the social sciences field and brings something *else* back in the fields. This “adding on” practice doesn’t trouble the scientific writing itself. Rather, the CAP keeps intact the distinctions about what the different ways of writing are and do, and what self the writing “I” is in accordance with a way of writing.

I am more drawn to Trinh T Minh-ha’s (1989) concept of language. She writes, “Yet in the articulation of language, what is referred to, phenomenally and philosophically, is no more important than what is at work, linguistically, in the referring activity” (p. 42). Nonetheless, it seems still unusual to encounter “instances where the borderline between theoretical and non-theoretical writings is blurred and questioned, so that theory and poetry necessarily mesh” (Minh-ha, p. 42). To keep the borderline is in fact to observe the language that “the master” possesses. As Minh-ha argues throughout the book, just reversal of the binary need to be

displaced further in order to destabilize the borderline. Therefore, Minh-ha promulgates that a writer writes with/in “the body in theory” (p. 42).

The body in theory. This is how I see myself as “I-the-writer.” Minh-ha differentiates “writing your body” from “the body in theory.” In her idea of “writing the body,” women write (with) our entire bodies rather than only (with) our minds or hearts” (1989, p.36). This idea is a resistance to what Minh-ha calls “master” language. Therefore, this mode of writing as “writing your body” reveals and even can reinforce the Cartesian dualism, the mind and the body, and so men and women. Instead, Minh-ha argues for the idea of “the body in theory,” gesturing toward dismantling the binary.

Minh-ha’s description of “the body in theory” starts with what constitutes a thought. For her, thought is “not just of the brain, but also of the eye, the finger, the foot” (1989, p. 39). Obviously, although referring to the dualism, she does not attempt to reinforce the other “negatively” conceived part. She does not mean to reverse the binary. Minh-ha states that the theory refers to a privileged and, predominantly male social group and the “body” in the dualism signifies women. However, she does not dismiss theory. In order to displace the binary, choice of one or the other does not work. Instead, she phrases her position as “the body in theory,” “because in-between grounds always exist, and cracks and interstices are like gaps of fresh air that keep on being suppressed because they tend to render more visible the failures operating in every system” (p. 41).

Taking flight from the implications of the referents of “the body in theory,” but still drawing on the idea of challenging the dualism, I conceptualize the body in theory in a differing way. As I think I can emphasize in this chapter, the subjectivity cannot be warded off, even by situating myself in a certain theory. The subjectivity is produced in writing. Writing is not only

of the mind but also of the body. Then it can be said that subjectivity is produced from my body. Body in theory for me means that subjectivity is unwittingly with/in myself situated in theory. I “situate” my self in poststructural feminist theories, per se, but because of the theories’ claim on subjectivity, this situated-ness can be ruptured. Knowing this instability, “being” inevitably, not voluntarily, in shifting grounds between “situated-ness” and rupture, but still framing my dissertation into poststructural feminist perspectives, I will write this dissertation.

Chapter 3: My Stories about English

At a Graduate School in New York City

My body and mind in any class at a graduate school in the U.S. focused more on what the other students were doing than on what I was going to learn in the classes. I sometimes couldn't follow what the other classmates said. But this was not tough. It was similar to the moment when I had no clue about what my Japanese friends chatted about in terms of Japanese pop-cultures. I could handle this by just pretending to know them all; when they laughed, I just laughed.

But a more pressing difficulty in terms of doing graduate study caught me up in this U.S. graduate school context. I sometimes didn't even know what to do next in a class, in a small group, or individually. I didn't want to look like an idiot by doing something totally out of point. I looked around the class and saw what the others were doing, so that I could keep abreast with what to do. My friends and I, who didn't speak English as our "native"/dominant/first/core language, laughed loudly at each other about this behavior in any classes.

Cynicism added on to my attitude toward the behavior. I said, "I sometimes have no idea of what the classmates say in English," and I added, casually, "How embarrassing it is, being that I was an English teacher in Japan for darn eight years and now am in an English Education program." I was ostentatiously cynical, but deep in my mind this was daunting.

On the very first day of my brand new semester in the U.S. higher education, I had the class meeting of the teaching of reading, which I so anticipated among the four courses that I was

going to take. The instructor, as she was walking into the classroom, caught my worrisome gaze. I caught a wonder in her gaze, which might have been a reflection of my anxiety. A little later in the middle of the class, the instructor said to a student who had a small chat with me just because the student happened to sit next to me, “Will you take care of Naoko? I’m asking you since I saw you talking to her.”

I was taken aback. “Am I disabled? Oh, yes I am. I, being in the English Education program, can’t even follow the instructor in English. Or is it my English when I introduce myself to the class that brings the instructor to say that? But this is the first class meeting. How can she know about my English?”

The class on the teaching of reading required the students to do a “reading project” with a student at the secondary and/or college level. The students in the teaching of reading were going to read a poem or a novel with a middle or high school student for a certain period of time and observe the student’s reading skills and how they will be developed. Most of the students in the class taught some classes in schools and so had easier access to a project participant. But I did not, newly arrived at the U.S. I didn’t have any reading partner and had difficulty finding one. The talk to the instructor about this was immediately needed.

I puffed in front of a building at campus. “Relax,” I said to myself. I took a deep breath. I climbed up stairs to the fourth floor. The instructor’s room was a cubicle. It was early winter. The heat was too high in the cubicle. Suffocating. I tried to be “American” in the tight air. I wasn’t viscerally familiar with “the U.S. cultural and behavioral idioms”, but tried to work in them.

On the board of the wall in the cubicle, I glimpsed a postcard by Edward Hopper, a painter whom I liked. So I tried to start a small talk by chatting about the postcard with a picture of a swimming pool. Serenely catching a quiet moment in perhaps vociferous summer. But I couldn't remember the artist's name. Dennis Hopper was the name that came to my mind at that time. "No, no. that's an actor's name. I always forget names when they are really needed." So I asked the instructor for the artist's name, but the instructor was obviously not interested in it. Again I failed. The things do not go well with this instructor somehow, I thought. I "knew" some grammar of communication in English and even its idioms, too, since I taught those in English classrooms in Japan. But I could not work in its idioms. I didn't have them in my veins.

I didn't remember the flow of conversation or any exchange of words between the instructor and me. After the failed small talk, I became reticent and so no exchange seemed to take place between us. All I remember is bits of what the instructor said. "Don't worry. We'll figure it out," "I also needed help with Japanese in Japan. Oh, My goodness. It was tough."

The instructor smiled, not a genuine smile. The smile was what my Japanese friends and I called, an American fake smile in which the eyes do not smile. Together with this fake smile, the instructor started a talk with "Don't worry" that sounds so typical of "the Americans" for me. That was so clichéd that it sounded superficial to me. Of course, I would have been able to appreciate, in this remark, the instructor's "understanding" of my circumstance regarding being an international student in a graduate school in an alien country and my linguistic situation.

Nonetheless, I had an irksome discomfort with this "understanding" that was readily congruent with her "fake" smile. This discomfort might be interpreted as reflection of one of cultural conditions that constituted my "being." I might just get used to a stern or poor facial

expression of Japanese people, so full ex-pression is not considered “real” but fake to me. Or I might learn from reading Japanese stories and novels that something on the surface is not trustful. Or my instincts tell me that the instructor does not or cannot really understand it. I didn’t know what caused this feeling of discomfort. And it didn’t matter so much to me those days. What mattered to me at that time was only how to carry a conversation within this discomfort in English.

After showing this “understanding,” the instructor got on the business of how I was going to do the required project. She had another Japanese student in another session of the same teaching of reading class. One of the “American” students in the session was interested in how the Japanese student read in English and proposed to do a “reading project” with the Japanese student. I wondered how the Japanese student felt about this proposal and also how the proposal had something to do with her project. Then, the instructor suggested to me to join in the proposal.

Patting me on my thigh, she also said “and she can speak English better, by the way.” I saw a smirk on her face. This can be illusion, of course. The smirk might be there or might not be. This illusionary reality and real illusion made me repellent against this suggestion. I showed hesitation, which the instructor luckily perceived. She didn’t ask me why, which I appreciated for the first time.

I heard the instructor’s remark on her student’s proficiency of English with a little reluctance and yet full of wonder. “I was a teacher of English for 8 years in Japan.” This fact emerges in my mind whenever I am lost in and out of English. Since then this sentence has been slowly but steadily digging into my mind and heart. A friend of mine who majors in engineering

seems to have less difficulty in asking for help with English; he could say that he speaks only Japanese and English is not “his,” so he needs help. English is not mine, either. But I must be closer to English than he is. I taught English and on top of it I am at the English Education program, in which English is the subject that I teach but do not need to learn supposedly. I must supposedly have a “better” command of English than he does.

I had already experienced and so kind of “knew” what an instructor in an advanced academic writing class for the international students at the graduate school in the U.S. said briefly about some differences among four or five languages spoken by majority of international students at TC: “Japanese is a language that is roundabout while English takes straight and linear ways to convey some meanings.”

In Japan, I was told that my talk took too much detour and so much time to get to the point. “Why do you need to be so defensive about what you want and need to say? Just say what you want to say” a then-boyfriend complained. “That’s a family inheritance and tradition” I evaded his point by making fun of my way of speaking. Actually, my grandma, a little famous woman in a tiny community as a woman leader, talked like that. But this shouldn’t be genetic, of course. I thought, instead, that my circuitous way of talking was a ramification of work at a women’s graduate school in Japan. I got to be defensive against all possible criticisms on my analysis, so I talked a lot before getting to the point. However, contrary to my desire of blaming the discipline at the graduate school on my circuitous way of getting across meanings in Japanese, Professor M would say that my circumlocution did not result from the discipline there. The professor also used to tell me to get to the point when she advised my master thesis. “Why didn’t you say this up front?” “Why are you saying this here after all this?”

I could have ascribed the dispersed way of writing and speaking to English as my second language or my “command” of the language. But then this didn’t explain my circuitous talk in Japanese.

I did not recall those memories during the class of advanced academic writing. At the moments in the class, my mind was brimming with numerous questions about the natures of the two languages. While the instructor went on describing the “natures” of other languages, I wondered, “but how can I be straightforward in writing English? Can English make me straightforward? Linearity is a nature of English, no matter who uses it? Mmmmm, then, circumlocution is Japanese’ innate character? I don’t know about that.”

My thought was taking me into further conjecture, far-fetched, maybe. Japanese don’t like to be straight with others because they have to be polite and respectful to them. That’s why I couldn’t help being roundabout and expect others to see my point. I sometimes didn’t finish a sentence and let the others guess and finish it. So, most likely, circuitousness does not lie “in” the language, but rather comes from so-called “culture,” something intangible that has been shared by a certain group of people. “Well,” I was wondering, “but, but, but, language is a culture, too, like some people say. Then, each language possesses its own culturally loaded nature in itself. How oxymoronic! If so, whoever uses a language, her writing inevitably shows the nature of the language. Is that it? Mmmmmm. A bit iffy...”

I blankly stared at figures that describe nature of each language in some shapes like triangle, line or circular. I thought “Ok, let’s start thinking from scratch ... We think in language, we write a thought in language. Language in which we think is culturally loaded and the same is the case with language in which we write. Then what if I think in Japanese and write in English?” I heard many Chinese speaking students chat aloud.

“Doubly cultural, Well, but, it’s impossible for me to separately think in one language and write in another. So, ok, then, what does this mean? Ughhhh...” I wanted to scratch my head, but I couldn’t because I was culturally conditioned not to do so in public. This trace of “culture” was easier to see, I thought. This was truly roundabout. I never got to a point. I brooded over this in Japanese. Maybe, the instructor in the academic writing class was right. Japanese is roundabout, so the language makes my thinking so. Then, when I use English, my thinking and writing would be different.

The American literature course was the most favorite one among the four courses that I took in the first semester. But its instructor’s comments on my first term paper bowled me over. “Your English doesn’t flow well.” This is that, I thought. “Of course, damn, Naoko,” I thought. Just using English didn’t make my writing as straightforward and linear as I wanted it to be, as English speaking people wanted it to be.

“Three hundred years’ solitude”

One time I asked my mother in a bathroom, “Does my daddy speak Tokyo-Ben (Tokyo-dialect or “standard Japanese”)?” Mom was washing my hair and I heard her laughing and saying, “Of course not. He was born in Osaka.” Mom was so “close” to me. Mom was not completely “the other” to me. Yet. At least, at that age. Anyways, my mom was so close to me that I couldn’t remember how she spoke Japanese when I was a child. But I remember my dad, who was “the other” all the time, speaking a dialect that was so different from the one I spoke with my classmates in school. Sometimes my dad made fun of my strong dialect that I spoke at school and started to speak at home, too. This dialect is used in a small town in a small city in

Osaka. The dialect was recognized as a fishermen's colloquial language. However, nobody in my family spoke the dialect. Our family is a bit different from others socially in the small town called Haruki.

Our family has lived in the tiny small patch of the town for more than 300 years, they say, but didn't prosper as fishermen. Our family was one of the upper class farmers in the ages when social class was divided under the Shoguns into four (warriors, farmers, artisans and tradesmen in descending order of rank) and was established as a village headman. In order to pass down inheritance and property from generation to generation for 300 years, the family occasionally had to "graft" on to it when they didn't have a son or a daughter to inherit them. For example, neither of my parents was born in the family. The old couple, whom I called my "grandparents," didn't have a heir, who would have borne an important role to pass down the family name and everything that they inherited from the ancestors. So they had to find a young couple who deserved to be a substitute heir, and must be exempted from something that would lower the family's "name" or "title." In other words, they had (have) to be "a certain species", to come from a certain social class. My parents were chosen respectively from both sides of the old couple: my daddy was a relative of my "grandpa" and my mom was a niece of my "grandma" who is actually my grandaunt. Their marriage was arranged and they got into the Akai family as the adopted heirs. Even though the clan is rooted in the village and the community for so long, my parents are "others" in it not only socially but also linguistically.

“Out of the solitude”

My family has established its position in the town. I was of course a part of the position, but at the same time I was not. I was born in the town, grew up and was schooled there until middle school. I was native there, but I didn't speak the dialect thought to be indigenous to the town – a fishermen's colloquial dialect in Haruki -- before starting school. I spoke my mother's dialect before. My mom's dialect is also different from the fisherman's colloquial, but, unlike daddy's dialect, her dialect didn't make me feel far from her. It was my mother's tongue, anyway, although it might not be my mother tongue if “mother tongue” is defined as a sole language that one has grown up speaking from her schooling. I grew up in the two dialects, which have similar accents and intonations but quite different tones. In addition, the dialect that I spoke with my friends has a feature that my mother's tongue does not have: “peculiar” forms of verbs. I can tell if someone is from the town by those forms. I was not aware of this minuscule but significant difference but I was aware that my dialect was different from my parents' when I was small.

“Into another solitude”

When I went to a high school I again encountered how different my dialect in the vicinity was. I went to a private women's only high school. The school is located in the center of Osaka and 45 minutes away by train from my small town. I used to take an express train at 7:21 in the morning. The big old white clock hung from the roof at the station. The trains were never delayed. My train came at 7:21. Not 7:20. Nor 7:25. The 7:21 train was so so congested with students and businessmen; I then got off at a station and changed trains there to get to another

station that was closest to the school. I was out of the small town, but dialectically/linguistically in the town.

When I got on a train at 7:21, my ears were just comfortable with the tones of the language spoken in the train. At next station, other passengers got in and I didn't hear anything so "different" from them. At the second station, the tones of the new passengers were sort of "tamed" or, more specifically, the forms of verbs got closer to my daddy's words, a standard Osaka dialect. The third stop brought in a totally dialectally different group of people. Then the train runs across one of the big rivers in Osaka. I on the bridge felt that I was getting away from my small village, but at the same time linguistically in the village.

Learning English in Japan

I walked down a street with Professor B after a day at a conference of Japanese Society of American Literature held in a city in Japan. The professor was a big name in the Society and so was said hello to by several participants in the conference several times on the way to a subway station in the city. So I couldn't even carry on a significant conversation with her. I wanted to hear about the professor's experiences of studying in the U.S., but we only chatted about this, that and this.

Professor B. said to me, "I can't say this aloud, but you know what. You never know if some of the Japanese scholars really understand American literature. They can't speak English. They can't even read English. Some of them read literary works in translation version, and then they think they understand the works. Hahaha." I hesitated a moment, but I said "That's also why I want to study in the U.S. I don't want to be one of those scholars. Also, I want to be able

to speak English better.” Professor B’s response was not so encouraging. “Living and studying in the U.S. doesn’t necessarily enable you to speak and communicate with native speakers of English. Some Japanese can’t speak even after living there for 10 years. I saw those people, a lot, in Michigan.” She didn’t laugh this time.

We got to a subway station in a small city in one of the bucolic areas. The subway was newly constructed and so made me feel like being in a big city. But the other passengers around us spoke their dialects that were hard to understand, so we, or at least I, felt isolated from them linguistically. I looked outside a mirror of a train and shifted my eyes, wondering and thinking eyes, on a low skyline with very green-shaded range of mountain. An idea of getting outside of this island country, a linguistically homogeneous country, and being immersed in English, “real” English, was so “unreal” for me. Since it was so unreal, I was confident that I wouldn’t end up as one of “those” scholars. “I had a “basic” knowledge of English,” I thought. I had no doubt that all I needed was an exposure to and immersion in authentic linguistic language environment.

“What is “authentic” English?” My coworker said to herself quietly, looking through some newly published textbooks placed on a desk in the corner of a big room for lectures in a college where she and I taught. We called the room “a big room,” which connoted a place for “non-scholar teachers” who were not provided their individual desks, let alone rooms. The coworker, Ms. Suzuki, questioned a title of an English textbook. But I was not quite sure if Ms. Suzuki was being sarcastic or simply wondering what authentic English was. Meanwhile, I thought that not only my English but also English that Japanese learned would not be authentic--

- probably except the English that was learned at Kobe College, a private school for women that starts from middle school through graduate school.

I met Ms. Suzuki in the big room for lecturers. Both of us were “related” to Kobe College abbreviated as “KC”. But Ms Suzuki didn’t have the characteristic that authentic KC alumnae had, I thought. Both of us were not “pure” KC girls. Ms. Suzuki graduated from the college in the private school and I from the graduate program in the same institution. Both of us were recruited by Professor I., an assistant professor of English at the college where Ms. Suzuki and I taught.

Professor I, one of the “authentic” KC girls who started from middle school in the KC, often came to “a big room” for lecturers and chatted with some of them. Professor I often brought up an English proficiency of the teachers of English, particularly those who graduated public middle and secondary schools. One of her usual complaints was that “they” didn’t even articulate English words properly.

“Um, yes, she is right” I thought. My English teacher at the middle school taught us pronunciation symbols, but some kids didn’t use them: instead, they wrote down Japanese phonetic alphabets under each entry of English words in a textbook. The sounds that were represented by Japanese phonetic alphabets barely corresponded to counterparts of English sounds. Mr. Ito, my first English teacher, told them not to jot down Japanese to show the sounds of words, but they did and changed the sounds. At this “trans”, that was not “English” any more.

“How could someone teach English when she even does not know how to make proper sounds of English?” This is a Professor I’s thesis. “Well, a lot of English teachers are like that, Ms. I” I said. “I know that. Their teachers also could not speak English, of course. In my

parents' generation English was even prohibited from being taught. But you know, they could learn it by themselves. They are just too lazy. Otherwise, this vicious reproduction just continues." How did Mr. Ito learn English, I wondered. He was, for sure, younger than my mother, so he was not in the generation when English was banned as language of the enemy. But it is most likely that he had no native English speakers around him. But he told us how important pronunciation was.

Another issue that Professor I was always concerned with was that the other teachers taught "old" English to the students who must be more interested in Hollywood movies, raps, rocks and so-called American pop culture. "Our students would be laughed at, if they said, say, "I saw the movie thrice"!! ", she said. "If the student can't make a sound "th" but, instead, say "s", people think that the student watched a movie "Slice." A big misunderstanding!!!" Ms. Suzuki mumbled as she always did, "I might teach that kind of nineteenth century English". "You wouldn't. You read Philip Roth." "But what about the professors who do Dickens or Hawthorne? Professor B speaks English quite well, I guess." I said, knowing that this would, without fail, lead Professor I to talk about KC (Professor B was also one of the authentic KC girls.) "It's not just about what and who they read. But it's rooted in how they learned English, I think. At KC,,," Here she goes, I thought.

The private Christian educational institution, Kobe College, comprises a middle school, a high school, an undergraduate and a graduate school. The girls who are schooled from the middle school up through the high school are categorized as "authentic" KC girls. Especially in terms of the way they learn English. They learned it in an "authentic" environment, where native English speakers certified as ESL teachers taught English in English. According to Professor I, the teachers used "direct method" which used English but not the students' first language to

instruct them. In the method, for example, an ESL teacher says, “touch something blue,” and then you are supposed to do so. Of course, the quicker, the better. It seemed to me that the “authentic” KC girls gained some sort of nativity³ to English. Those KC girls tended to look down on the undergraduate students from “outside,” particularly from public high schools, as “common” people who couldn’t truly understand English because of the lack of the relation.

I learned English for the first time at a public middle school in the small town, where it was impossible to find English speaking people. Where even Japanese who are from out of the small town would be called “outsiders.” No native English teachers were in the vicinity. English speaking people only were able to be seen on TV.

“Real” English

“Listen!!” Professor I started to talk even before she sat down in a chair in the big room. One of her cheeks was pulled up. She was already smirking. She must have some funny story again. “One of my students saw Professor X, an English teacher, moving into another car of the trains he took, when another English instructor, Mr. Alex, of course, a native English teacher, got into the same car where Professor X was in the beginning.” Though Professor I tried to problematize the professor, as a matter of fact she seemed to want to make fun of the professor. She was giggling while she was telling the story. Big roomies laughed, too. “I also saw him starting to open a newspaper at his hand when another native teacher of English got in a train. He didn’t get a minute to run away that time. Don’t you think? Right? He hid himself because he didn’t want to, or most likely, couldn’t, speak English with the native speaker.”

³ I am aware that this term “nativity” should be defined. However, in this chapter, I aim to show how I took those terms for granted. Therefore, I do not define here nor put a quote mark in around this word.

Fading out of Professor I's acerbic chat, I was remembering the acute eyes around me when I needed to talk to an English speaking person. I started to teach at the college as a substitute teacher for a professor who was hospitalized then. It was in the middle of a school year. So some teachers in "a big room" wondered who I was and why I was there. None of them, except one, asked me about the circumstance. The one who asked was a white male teacher of English. I felt the eyes from the other lecturers in the big room. One day when I was walking out of the school campus, the English teacher approached to me and chatted with me for, maybe, 3 or 4 minutes. I felt the numerous eyes of students sitting, standing and chatting in front of a building in the school.

I knew that the students thought highly of an ability to speak English. For them someone who could speak English was more respectable than the teachers who read but could not speak English.

Every girl giggled. They gathered for the morning assembly in the field ground of a girl's only high school to be informed of some "stuff" from a couple of teachers. Of course, most of them didn't pay attention to those ritualistic talks. Toward the end or in the middle of the assembly, a certain teacher of English climbed a couple of steps of the podium to address something to them. He rarely talked in those occasions, so the girls became a bit attentive to what was going on up in front. He stood on the podium but he was too short to reach the MC stand, so he had to push it down. Every girl laughed. And he started to speak. The laugh was transformed into a giggle. One of the girls said, "Urgh, such a Japanese English. I can't bear hearing Mr. Y speaking English with Ms. Rowe. Does he really think that he is good at

English?? Such a shame. Who really believes that this school is good to learn English? Bullshit.” The high school kids in a private girl’s school, which has a good reputation for learning English, always made fun of this particular teacher and was embarrassed that they learned English from him. Those teachers might be able to only read. The girls wanted a “real” English, but not the English like the old dead Japanese that nobody used. They wanted a “real” live English that “real” living people used.

On the other hand, I wasn’t ashamed unlike the other girls, but honestly even a little amazed at the teacher since he anyways communicated with Ms. Rowe, a native speaker of English. Of course he didn’t sound like a DJ whom I heard on radio waves from far. But the teacher made himself understood in English anyways.

For some other girls at the high school, English must be “the” English that they heard or saw in the movies and on TV. But I was not as interested in the “real” English represented in the movies or music or MTV. I thought that a woman DJ was cool when she spoke English. But I didn’t think that while English in the English textbooks was “fake,” English in pop cultures was “real.” Rather, the world represented in the movies and TV series were not “real” for me, compared to the stories or the passages that I read in textbooks. The world represented by pop cultures was not down to the earth, the one I lived. On the other hand, stories or poems could be transformed into “real” world I knew in my mind.

The program I was at in a college focused both on British Literature and on “communicative” English in my vague memory. But I remember very well that I learned phonetics for the first two years and I hated that. The class was conducted in English, and the

students had to write down an instructor's dictation of explanation or description of each sound. It was nerve-racking, but not rewarding. Not at all. I thought, "How could I think of how to make sound of each word, the moment I have to talk???" This is ridiculous, I thought. Of course, I failed Phonetic 1.

At the program I was more interested in literature courses than in other courses. One of the literature courses was also conducted in English, but no dictation was needed. I liked to hear the American teacher from Atlanta read poems and passages in English. It felt different from when I read in my mind. It enabled me to imagine the "real" world over there. On the other hand, my friends looked at a different reality, but the same reality as my high school friends longed to embrace. They often went to concerts by musicians from Britain and the U.S. and they wanted to understand what the musicians said in the concerts. Likewise, they wanted to be able to watch movies without subtitles. I, on the other hand, did not like Hollywood movies but movies from France, Italy, sometimes Germany and China. The one aspiration or goal for me in terms of English was to read literature written in English without any help of translation: I didn't like a translation version of literature written in Japanese, because I felt that the Japanese there were not "natural."

However, this doesn't mean that I was very idiosyncratic at the college. I felt a little different in the small women's college because most of the students are locals in Kobe area and spoke differently. Difference from those people is not only dialect, but also cultural. Kobe is a relatively multicultural city where more people from overseas reside. So people can get more natural exposure there to people who speak different languages. Probably due to this, some international conventions of some sorts were held in the city more often. When I was a student in the college, Universidad (Olympics for college students) was held in Kobe and some

volunteers were needed to help college-athletes from overseas in English. My classmates were so, so eager to do the volunteer work and it seemed to me that they had such a wonderful experience there.

I didn't even apply for the position under the pretense that I lived far. But in fact I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to help them in English. I had no experience of even speaking English with anyone outside the college and the high school. English speaking people were the ones that I only saw on TV. So, they were not "real" for me while they were for my friends. English speaking people for me were exclusively "Americans", the ones that I saw on TV in 1976, the U.S. bicentennial anniversary of independence, where the women wore T-shirts with stars and bangles on it without putting on bras – incomprehensible and so unreal to me at the age of 10.

Nonetheless, I joined in a plan to study English overseas. When one of the friends who had volunteered for a translator in the Universidad started to make a plan to study in language school overseas for some weeks in summer, I became a little interested. "Oh, I can do this," thought I. "I'd love to, actually. I don't need to help anyone with English. Oh I want to do this, too." So this friend, another friend and I worked on a plan so that we could convince our parents that is safe and rewarding and significant for our future. We had no doubt about where to go – Britain. I was not interested in the things about the U.S., and one of the others was fanatic about U2, and also all of us wanted to travel in Europe. But we were serious about learning English, so we decided to go and live in different cities in Britain, so that we wouldn't rely on each other.

However, I did not necessarily do well with English in the language school as well as in the "real" linguistic environment.

Folkstone in Britain

After the other two friends took off from London to their respective cities, I was sitting on the ground in the Trafalgar station, maybe for one hour or two hours. It seemed that I missed the train I was supposed to take, or some schedule changed without notice. At a loss. Wanted to cry. But pretending to wait for someone there, since I didn't want to look helpless there. I randomly turned pages of a newspaper, a Japanese book, and a booklet of the language school that I was going to. Sometimes I looked up and looked for someone who looked nice and easy to ask. It took me a few hours to finally get help from a stranger.

Sitting in a train for two hours, I got off the train, took a cab, and opened the white door of a house where I was going to stay. My heart was beating faster, and I felt as if my blood was thinning out. I was so anxious to see my host mother, who is "real" GAIJIN (a foreigner). I rang the bell in front of a white door.

A Japanese woman opened the door for me. I was more relieved than disappointed. I knew that another "Japanese" woman stayed at the house. But I anticipated that the host-mother was waiting for me. The host-mother was not at home. I talked to the "Japanese" lady, "of course", in Japanese, but the lady talked to me in English. I felt weird. It would be more "natural" to talk in Japanese, the shared language. However, I also felt it easier to understand English that Japanese use. Probably because the English came out of the language that constituted them, I thought.

At the same time, it was exciting to hear "real" English by "real" living people. "It's too cold to put the kind of shoes on todie," my host-mother told me. "To die?" Yes, a typical

clichéd story. But this truly happened. British accent. My response was “Wow, a “real” British woman says “todie” for today. Not only this. I also thought, “Wow, “too cold to do” is really used. The expressions I learned in Japan are reeeaaal.” Everyday filled with those responses. And it was fun.

Two Japanese boys and two Japanese girls, my classmates in the language school in the small town called Folkston, were drinking outside in a porch of a bar one summer night. It was summer, but it was not as hot as New York or as humid as Osaka. They needed sweaters in summer there, not wool but some cotton ones. My host mother didn't like me to hang around with “Japanese” people because it didn't help to improve English. Every time I hang around, the host mother asked me what nationality the persons were. That night, I didn't tell the truth.

I wept sitting in a wooden chair on the porch. I didn't cry, I think, when I was sad or helpless. I cried when I felt irritated at myself because I didn't know what to do with a problem. One of the boys curtly said to me, “why can't you speak English? Don't think, just say something in English. Say something, like Keiko. Her English is broken, but she talks. You are in English major, aren't you?” “I don't know why. If I know, it's not a problem. I just feel a rock in my throat.”

I felt stumbling in a time lag between thinking and saying whatever I got to say in English. In need of saying something in English, only my brain started to work. Not in body as I did in speaking Japanese. Keiko, my classmate in the language school in Folkston just, just blurted out anything she wanted to say immediately – it felt like her words were coming out without any time lag that could annoy or baffle others. But English words did not immediately come out of my veins and/or flesh. It felt as if I looked for some words from a small cabinet that

is in my brain, took them from there, and placed them in the appropriate order, and finally let them out.

I was penetrated with the feeling that my body fell apart when I squeezed out some English. Now that I was exposed to “real” English that real living people use, I realized that the “real” was not in me. My body felt filled with something else. With English, I was torn off.

One of my students in a learning center for the Japanese students in the schools in Westchester County in NY State posted a comment about “the” English in Japan on her Facebook page. It was about “the” English for the entrance examination for colleges in Japan and the materials used in English classes for a cramming school in Japan. The student said, “the English here was corpse. Not live at all.” She also said that she was happy that now she found time to read a novel written in English, able to feel “vibrant” and “real” English, which is, according to her, so kicking in and vivacious. I said to myself, “I didn’t think I got it. I wouldn’t feel this way, either.”

“Across Two Rivers”

Five or six 15 or 16-year-old girls were sitting around a couple of desks in the back corner of their classroom on the temporarily added fourth floor, to discuss an issue that one of the girls suffered from: her boyfriend is being stolen by a girl in the same women’s school. The adolescent girls were of course sympathetic with the girl and talked about what to do with the “stealing” girl. They called out another girl who is a friend of the “stealing” girl to their classroom. They told her to do some research on the girl.

I said to the girl, “SIRABE-LIN(investigate it!). The other girls burst into laughter. Other girls in the room also laughed because they also heard it since I said it loud. The girl who was summoned and must have been scared at us also giggled. I didn’t know what was going on. I thought I said it authoritatively enough to the girl who was bowing all the time.

The group of the girls including myself was not a gang, but a bit of “outlaw” and so supposedly, at least from outside, should not look like clowns but put on anti-authority air. And I thought that the way I ordered the girl to investigate something was quite representative of the outlaw group. It seemed that I was playing a clown. A loud laugh filled in the classroom and reverberated in my ears. I was at a loss.

“What the hell is “SIRABE-LIN”? No “SIRABE-LIN”. We say “SIRABE-TOKI.” The girl even couldn’t help but laugh. We are supposed to frighten her. You shut up, Naoko,” one of the “outlaws” told me a law of changing a form of the verb. This incident made me more aware of minute features of my dialect and led me to listen to other girls more than talk. In the high school, I learned and acquired a standard Osaka dialect, my dad’s dialect.

There are some girls from the same dialectal area as mine in the school. When I talked with those girls, I could switch to the dialect that I grew up with/in until 15 years old. Sometimes I was amazed at one of the girls who never transformed the particular dialect and kept using it, whomever she talked to. In the small town I sometimes ran into the friends who went to the public high school in the town. They talked, but I tended to become quiet. I gradually found myself unable to speak the fishermen’s colloquial dialect fluently, feeling a little far from the dialect.

My relation to my pseudo-original dialect was changed in college by traveling two rivers. It was as though I baptized twice. But no more guilty feeling. Eight years later after college graduation, I lived by myself in Osaka city. I often visited my parents who lived 45 minutes away from where I lived now. I took the loop line and Nankai railroad to get home, backward from my parents' house to my high school. The dialects I heard on a train of Nankai railroad made me smile and feel that I was coming "home." I couldn't speak the dialect so well any longer but when I got a chance to talk with my parents' neighbors, I tried but was not embarrassed at my "bad" dialect. And I felt at home. Relation was not gone, but seemed to be still there in my body, though I couldn't speak the dialect.

In a Learning Center in Westchester County in New York State

All of the Japanese students in my SAT prep class -- yes all, not some -- are busy hitting the keyboards on their electronic dictionaries. Those dictionaries let them wander from the Japanese-English dictionary, through the English-English one, the Japanese-Japanese one, and Thesaurus by hitting a key just once. They carry all of the "knowledge" in a small handy-size gadget, a little bigger than one of the slimmest digital cameras.

"Ugh, the more I look up a word in the dictionaries, the more confusing it gets. So what the hell does this word mean?" Another student responds, "I know. When you look up a word in an English-Japanese dictionary, then if you don't know the meaning of the Japanese word in the dictionary, you got to go to a Japanese-Japanese dictionary. And if I check up the word in an English-English dictionary in case, then the meaning from what I got in English-Japanese dictionary is slightly different." Another one goes further, "Yea, but the meaning of a word always shifts, don't you think? Even a meaning of an English word that I understand as

English by talking with English speaking people always slightly slides from the meaning listed in a dictionary and the meaning my other friends use. For a loooong time, I thought that the meaning of “skeptical” is like “obsessed.”” Everybody laughs but none of them responds to this remark in words. They keep hitting the keyboard to get “the meaning” of words.

I agree with the student who conceived the meaning of “skeptical” as “obsessed” in his mind. A meaning of a word shifts or slides whenever I/they (my students) try to put it in another word, English to English, English to Japanese, or Japanese-English. I always seek an appropriate word for a feeling or a thought, but I can’t reach at “that” not only in English but also in Japanese.

“What does this word “conglomerate” mean here in this passage?” I asked.

“How can I put it? It’s like --.” The student makes a gesture of kneading dough.

“Ok, I think I know what you want to say. Can you put it in another English word, or words?”

“No. Ms. Akai. I can’t.” she said sadly.

“That’s ok. I just thought that it might help. But I think what you are trying to show with your hands is “within” the meaning of this word.”

“But, Ms. Akai, Mr. A told me once that if I can’t say a meaning of a word either in English or in Japanese, it means that I don’t understand the word.”

I slowly but strongly reacted. “I don’t think so. We are sometimes bogged down in between. No?”

Silence. I couldn't shape my thoughts on it into words recognizable to them. "Ah, Yes, this is it," I thought. I can't reach at that. Does this mean that I don't understand what I think of? Or does this mean that my thought does not even exist?

"You got only 25 minutes for an SAT essay question. How do you think you can use this allotted time effectively?" I talked as a typical SAT tutor would.

"You can't just start to write without thinking. Jot down anything related to a question and make a connection among those, which will be your outline, a roadmap as an indicator to tell you where you are going. And stick to it." I looked outside a moment. I do this when another thought comes in the way. Then I come back to myself with the thought.

"But, um, I'll tell you this. I usually write an introduction after writing the body parts, because I always wander and take a different direction even with an outline. So I sometime feel stupid," I expected a laugh from my students. But nothing came. Not even a silent nod to show agreement.

Taking a chance, I pushed my point a bit further. "I feel dumb because I can't stick to what I said in the beginning. I keep thinking about being unable to be coherent, for almost 2 decades, actually."

Pause. They stared at me. Blank. "What-the-hell-are-you-talking-about" blank look. Not a good sign. I got to go back to "the point," one that the students wanted.

"Anyway, sooo, I'm telling you to do what I can't do. If I can say what I want to say in one word about how to write "well" in SAT essay section, that is you should stand above the SAT. Don't let the SAT get you. So just go with the things thought through before writing.

Delete everything that comes up in your mind while writing. It's similar to the way of doing the section of critical reading in the SAT; DO NOT hang on to things that come from you. Erase your self. That's the way the SAT wants you to be." They didn't look convinced. I can't reach at them through Japanese, one that my students and I share supposedly.

I was thinking about something else during the pause. I started to teach there four years after I enrolled in the graduate school. I am wondering myself "I keep thinking about this, but I haven't got to anywhere about this." The "this" is a question about this incoherency in writing in English. Is it because I can only think incoherently? Or is it because English is not my first language or because my Japanese has some affect on my English. And in an extension of this brooding, I wonder whether each language has its own nature of a language, again.

Why am I here in the U.S.

From the very beginning of my study in an English Education program, the feeling that I am a mis-fit in the program has permeated my being. I am frightened that my English would make my classmates wonder "Why are you here in this program? You can't teach English in English classes here." I didn't plan to stay in the U.S. and to teach English in English classes. But I wanted to learn how to teach the reading of literature written in English, such as novels, plays and etc, which seems to be centered in English Education. I could feel fit in the program but don't feel fit in the program, and so in my goal.

I complained about my discomfort in this particular program to a friend of mine, who was in Japan and had wanted to study in the U.S. "You complained too much. You wanted to study

in the program, which is prestigious and so will give you such a great credential. Then now what. You are complaining now. Why the heck did you come here?" she asked.

I came to the U.S. to earn a doctoral degree that would widen a possibility of getting a tenured position in a college in Japan. The strongest qualification for the tenured track position in most of the English departments in colleges in Japan was earning a doctoral degree awarded by the U.S. graduate schools those days. I only had a Master of Arts degree from the women's graduate school in Japan. Even though the college is prestigious, with that degree I (only) got part-time lecturer's positions in colleges in Japan. In five different colleges I taught English, chiefly reading literary and non-literary texts in English. I enjoyed interacting with the students at this age range, but at the same time I grappled with teaching the reading of English.

What my students and I do is to read English "in" Japanese. Sometimes they seem to understand a passage or story written in English when I translate it into Japanese. I try not to put it into Japanese, for example sometimes by getting them to draw a picture of scenes in a story without my "explanation" or intervention. Yet, I feel that Japanese is in between the readers and the reading materials. This does not feel right in my teaching the reading of English. I want to learn how to teach the reading of English *in* English without intervention of Japanese.

Deeply linked with this teacher's block, another struggle hover me: how I "do" literature study by myself in order to get a paper published and eventually make it a little more possible to gain a tenured track position in Japan. These two struggles are simply linked this way, though this linkage is more complicated than it looks: when I know how to "do English literature study", I could teach the reading of a literary text written in English better.

So, the solution is to fly and study in the U.S. So I am here. I am in the English Education program at Teachers College, Columbia University, in the U.S.

Initially I aimed to get into a doctoral program of English literary study in the U.S. But I didn't get admitted to any of the programs for which I had applied. I got admitted to all of the English Education programs. A couple of my colleagues and alumna tried to convince me that the doctoral degree in the English Education would be more useful than the one as English major, since "communicative" or "practical" English was more needed than ever in Japan: someone armed with the pedagogy about teaching rather than doing literature written in English would be more marketable and pragmatic for a full-time position, not only within programs of English studies but also in those of general studies in Japan. What my coworkers or alumnae have in mind in this circumstance of teaching and learning English in Japan was a typical TESOL program. Not English Education, for which I applied and got admitted.

The English Education program in which I have studied is for future and current teachers of English at both the secondary and college levels, but not for future or current ESL teachers. My plans before coming to the U.S. were to study pedagogy of reading literary texts written in English there, and then go back to Japan and teach literature written in English in the English department to speakers of Japanese. So my "best" choice for my coworkers might have been TESOL program. However, when I looked into the TESOL programs that offer any course on teaching of reading imaginary literature written in English, I could not locate one: I would say a typical TESOL program do not offer courses on teaching of the reading imaginary literature.

Another Version of Why I Came to the U.S.

This is such a clichéd, fixed, and linear story, which is not a lie but partial. The story is safe for me since this story would represent me as an ambitious teacher of English. I would tell this story to someone who is more interested in what I am doing in the graduate school in the U.S. However, just as any story has another story behind it, so too does this story of mine.

An alternative solution for getting a tenure track position was, in fact, available to ease my struggles in teaching of imaginary literature written in English and doing English Literature study: I could have applied to a doctoral program of English study in Japan, which still would open up a possibility to get a full-time position without a doctorate degree awarded by the U.S. institution. Why didn't I? The TESOL program of Teachers College offers a degree program in Japan, too. If I had listened to my coworkers' advice, I could have applied to the TESOL program in Japan. It would be more pragmatic and practical, financially and career-wise. But what's the point of being at a U.S. institution located in Japan, where Japanese is predominantly spoken? Another issue was (is) involved in not choosing this alternative plan.

A need for "practical" English has been articulated decades in Japan. My students in Japan once asked, "why do we need to study English, while we can't even speak and hear even after 6 years learning of the language?" Some people compared this situation to the one in Korea, where at least some politicians and people who were engaged in international relations could speak English. Even the people in Japan said that the reason Japan couldn't be chosen as a sole location for World Cups was that Japanese who lobbied for that could not speak English while Koreans did. "More practical English" is a slogan for some private language schools in order to differentiate from colleges, where reading is more prioritized. The ministry of education

in Japan built up a program for English Education that invites “native” English speakers to Japan and gets them to teach in English classrooms in public schools there.

While English Literature study engrosses me, at the same time, I also have been occasionally haunted with a need to acquire “practical” English that I think is different from the “English” in imaginary literature, such as poetry and plays, as well as in the “English” in the typical “teaching of English” program in the U.S. This “practical” English could be learned, I thought, by immersing myself in “authentic real” English environment.

If someone I don’t know at all, such as a cab driver, asks me what brought me here, I would just say “I am studying English here.” I wouldn’t say, “I am here because I wanted to study how to teach the reading of literature in English”. When that response slipped out of my mouth, I don’t forget to make fun of myself by saying “although I have to learn English first since my English sucks,” and laugh. And this is not a lie.

My body and mind senses that something about English is lacking in me – perhaps THE holistic command of English, both practical and literary English. Somewhere in there tells me that without understanding and acquiring “practical” English, or a “real” or “live” English, literary study is difficult or nigh impossible.

However, in order to achieve “the” holistic command of English, “knowledge” in the two-segmented domains (practical and literary) of English is not even sufficient. Even if English can be segmented into a couple of domains such as literary English and composition, there seems to me to be something “common” among the domains, which I do not have and I feel I won’t be able to have.

When I say to most Japanese I meet in the U.S. that I major in English Education, they just assume that I am in a TESOL program. I don't like the assumption and so always correct it. Then they ask me what the English Education program is for, what are the differences between the two programs, and then why I am in the English Education program instead of the TESOL program. I still don't know the differences between the two programs in a clear-cut cogent way. In the beginning I just polarized that, as long as TESOL stood for Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages, the English Education program concentrated on the teaching of English, literature, composition and so on, to speakers of English as the first or native language. This is such a simple polarization, and I know that it is not necessarily true: nonetheless here is the polarization.

Their response to this simple description of the differences in the two programs is, without fail, the same: admiration. They say, "Wow, so you are like an American who studies at a graduate program of Japanese education in Japan." "Belonging" to an English education program in the U.S., where English is dominantly spoken, brings some Japanese people to see me as being "like a "native" speaker of English."

This response to my "belonging" to the program is conflict with the others' identification of me as an international student "in need." But, at the same time, I take advantage of this response as a teacher of the SAT critical reading and writing for Japanese students who live in the U.S. When my students' parents are informed that I belong to English Education program, not TESOL program, they shut up about my credential for teaching SAT to their kids who are considered to be almost "native" speakers of English. In fact, one of my students created a hierarchy between his English teacher and his ESL teacher: for him, the English teacher is

“smarter” than the ESL teacher, because the English teacher “knows” English more or better since she teaches English to “native” English speakers.

In the Learning Center

“Sensei⁴, have you been here all the time?” a student, a new comer, asked me right after a class of the SAT reading. She was quiet through the whole class, but she did well in an SAT prep practice on that day.

“Here?” I said. I wonder if “here” is the learning center or the U.S.

“Seems that most of the teachers in this learning center were hired in Japan and transferred here to teach.”

Oh, that’s what she means by “here”, I thought. “Not all of them, though. Like Mr. Kato and I were hired here.”

“Mm, but he is a biology teacher. But an English teacher is different. If an English teacher is transferred from Japan here for us, I’d wonder how good his or her “Eigo-Ryoku” (English proficiency) is.”

“Oh, that’s why you are asking. Well, I came here to study at a graduate school. I major in,,”

The student cut in. It seems that she didn’t care. “And your husband, ,, is an American?”

⁴ “Sensei” is a teacher. In Japan students do not call their teachers by their name. They simply call “Sensei”.

“Um, yeah, he is an U.S. citizen, though he is from Jamaica.”

“Jamaica? Do they speak English?”

“Oh yeah.”

It looks like she “accepts” me as an English teacher in “here” for her.

Some of my students have been schooled here for just a couple of years and others for a long time. Every time I get a new student in my class, I become sensitive about how native their English is to them.

Each year, a few of my students in my class of the “writing section” sometimes argue that my answer to a question in the SAT writing section (but it’s not “my” answer but a study guide’s) is not right. Their reasoning for this argument derives from the fact that their native-English- speaker friends or teachers or coaches do not speak “like that.” The English that the native English speakers use is so “right” for them. Even if an English sentence is grammatically correct, when they don’t feel the sentence “natural,” it is not correct for them. I don’t know whether or not they think that my answer is wrong because I am not a “native” English speaker. But I am afraid of the possibility. I tell them that there is no wonder they feel that an English sentence is not correct because the correct sentences in the SAT exam are academic English and not colloquial. But I feel that the argument is not convincing to them.

Some of my students often say, “This sentence doesn’t feel natural, I wonder why” or “this feels weird, don’t know why.” And then they read a sentence at stake a bit aloud, as if to make sure how it feels by reading it aloud. I don’t have this visceral feeling. I am afraid that

some of the students who are “closer” to the language sense my visceral distance from English. I am not afraid that I don’t have a perfect and brilliant command of English in terms of “basics”. What is fearful is that I have a less “close” relation to, or a lack of feeling of “belonging” to, English. Everyday reveals to me that I have a distance from English and that I don’t “belong” to English but to Japanese. I might have a better command of English as “basics” such as grammar, and so might be able to be “above” English. But I am not “in” English. The student who asked how long I have been “here” – “authentic” English environment – wants her English teacher to be “in” English. That my husband is an “American” seems to give me a not-quite perfect but a close relation.

My English that I learned and taught in Japan is not “English.” Precisely, my English is not English here in the United States. My English. My. Do I possess English? Yes. I do possess English that I call my English. At the same time, the answer is No. I don’t possess “the English”, something without which I can’t be truly “in” English, the purity of English. I am possessed by English, the purity of English.

However, I wouldn’t call my Japanese, my “native” language, pure.

At home with an “impure pure” language

I was “minority” in the women’s college in Kobe in terms of dialect because more local population was at the college. The “majority” spoke another different dialect from Osaka’s. In the beginning I was conscious about my dialect, but gradually I actually enjoyed being different and being renown as a “funny“ girl in the tiny college just because I spoke Osaka dialect, which many comedians spoke on TV. I felt misfit all the time, but not a bad misfit.

When I started to live alone in the Osaka city, I did not feel misfit in Osaka city in terms of my dialects. I spoke “natural” Osaka dialect, I thought. My Osaka dialect was not “natural” to some people, though. My then-fiancé one time had corrected my way of speaking Osaka dialect, which was *mélange* with my pseudo-original language. He said, “I’ve wanted to say this for a long time. Your Osaka dialect is weird. We don’t speak that way. Ours is an Osaka dialect, more specifically, Semba dialect. Listen to my mom’s Osaka dialect. Hers is beautiful. Semba dialect is more genteel.” “Who cares?” I thought. “The pot calling the kettle black.” Who cares, I yelled in my mind, saying to myself “then I can’t speak any more.” I thought that beauty was not in the language but in the mind of speakers. I knew it was a bit naïve but I wanted to believe in it. If I again adjusted my language to another dialect, I felt, I would lose myself. I would lose tones that were rendered in particular conjugations of verbs and that I was comfortable with because they came from my body in thought and my thought in body. I didn’t want to lose those tones and conjugations of verbs through my body by the arranged conjugality with the man.

I went back to the women’s college in Kobe eight years after college graduation as an instructor with/in the way I had spoken my Osaka dialect for a long time. “Ms Akai’s Osaka dialect is strange! That’s not Osaka dialect.” One of the post-adolescent girls told me. It was a long time since my ex-husband pointed at my dialect. The student’s statement took me back. All the way back to the days when I felt the solitude of my language. My language is not the fishermen’s Haruki dialect or Semba dialect for upper middle class in the center of Osaka city. So what is it? I feel close and “natural” to my language. I “belong” to it, no matter what it is categorized, since that is a part of my body. Not that I possess the dialect but that my mind and

body have amalgamated it through the meandering of different dialects and so different from other versions of Osaka dialect.

At home in the U.S.

“Hey, what’s the worst curse word in English in the U.S. particularly, not in Jamaica. Motherfucker?” His mouth was wide open, and he stopped carrying the food into his mouth. “What? What did you say?” “Motherfucker” “Don’t use the word in front of your son.” “I’m not going to speak English with him.” I know that the word is obnoxious. But I can’t feel it. I can say any curse word without any hesitation, not because I am rebel but because I don’t feel anything for those words.

Can you feel this? English is less close to my body and mind that has been soaked and floated into Japanese for so long.

This visceral feeling of “belonging” is not concerned with professionalism, which I think teachers can acquire. This is concerned with something that I think I cannot acquire, which I have no other word to describe than as “purity”.

Is what I am writing here “flowing well” for your ears?

“I want to write well in English”.

I want to write “well” in English. I don’t need to write as “native” English speakers do. I know that. I want to believe that “nativized” English, or “Japanised” in my case, is also English. When I happened to see a journal, entitled as “World Englishes,” I felt a little bit freed

from the struggle, quagmire, and difficulty of writing in English. I agree with some camps of postcolonial theorists' insistence that we be the owners of English in our way. One prominent post-colonial theorist talks about how mimicking can facilitate resistance against power that the "West," including English, exerts over "non-West." That is such a theoretically-profoundly-well-thought strategy. Nonetheless, I wish I could write as "native" English writers do. I want to write "well."

"You'll be a good boy," she said to her great-grandson. Her grandson, my husband, replied, "Of course he will be." Both of them walking toward the door of our apartment. While I'm walking behind them, I whisper to my son in Japanese, "No need to be a good boy. Don't be. It'll be stressful. And it's boring." I don't want him to be "good" to an extent that saying yes to almost everything makes him erase himself.

Getting home from work and picking him up, I say to my son, "Are you a good boy today?" Not too much crying, no screeching, is expected of him. Already. And the moment I say this, I find that to expect a kid to be "good" can mean that parents want to avoid and hate getting into and grappling with kids' problems. While they are good, parents will be out of trouble and don't need to worry about what's going on with their kids and what causes problems with them.

"II KAGEN NI SHINASAI." When I ate too much junk food, my mom used to say "IIKAGEN NI SHINASAI! You can't eat dinner!" This Japanese expression is an admonition when somebody does something in an unacceptable extent. "II" means "good" and "KAGEN" means "a degree." Translation would be "Do it to a good degree": "Don't do it to extremes."

“Good” as “conforming to a standard” according to a definition in the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (1993, p. 502).

Maybe.

Which good is good in “good” writing? A state of erasing self? A state of not getting someone into trouble? If so, who is the someone? Maybe the reader and the author or the writer as well. Or being a conformist to a standard? Then, whose standard? “Good writing” is difficult.

But, please don’t say to me, “This is the case with me, too. Good writing is hard for me, too.” Don’t erase me that way. Don’t erase this difference in the name of similarity and understanding.

I want to write “well.” I want to write as “native” English speakers do. That is “to write well” for me. By being “in” English, I don’t know if this means to erase self as my self in Japanese and/or conform to a standard by native English speakers. I can only write English in Japanese. I cannot write “in” English.

I want to write “in” English because I am, as a writer, also aware of “the sweaty fight for meaning and response-ability” (Morrison, 1992, p. xiii). This correlation that I make between the desire and the awareness reveals my notion of “safety and risk” as a writer. It appears that I assume that writing “in” English would reduce a level of risk of misconstrual of meaning and heighten that of safety. Yes, I think I do so, because I attempt to accomplish meaning. However, at the same time, I am keenly aware that it is difficult, even could be impossible. My “sweaty fight” in writing is more for response-ability than for meaning. I feel a need to be “in” English in order to be able to respond to readers who think in English.

Chapter 4: My construction of the idea of purity of English

“A place of fantasy, therefore, at an ungraspable distance” (p. 42), Derrida (1996) describes French, with/in which he was not born. I felt “this is it” when I encountered this phrase, “ungraspable distance,” because this appears to ex-press my feeling about relation between myself and English. Then, a moment later, a question or a worry came over to me if this ex-pression means, as I read or expected it to mean, that a distance is hard to measure, or hard to fill up. I grasped a dictionary at hand and looked into the word, “grasp.” The first entry says that to grasp is “to seize and hold something firmly,” which I just did. And the second one says “to comprehend fully.” “Ok, most likely,” I thought. I went down to the third entry: it says “to act decisively to the advantage of something.” Mmmm, this is not it, I thought, so probably the second meaning, to comprehend fully. Putting this meaning into Derrida’s phrase, it feels fit nicely: ”A place of fantasy, therefore, at an incomprehensible distance.”

But something is wiggling, again. A distance is hard to measure, for sure. But is a distance something that we can comprehend? Is a distance some length or the point at the other end? Maybe both, or either of them. I can’t tell. In such moments, something is wiggling. I went to my husband, a “native” English speaker, and asked. He answered to me, “mmm, depending on context.” “Agh, here you go. Derrida says context is not bounded,” I said to myself. I’ll never know what this ex-pression truly means. So, indeed, English for me is “a place of fantasy at an ungraspable distance.”

Yet, this does not lead to there being no distance between my “maternal” language and me. In my story, I could not reach the language when I attempted to explain to my students how it was to be in-between two languages. Further, in relation to my “maternal” language, my story reveals how the “maternal” language that is put in “solitude of three hundred years” came out of the solitude. There is a distance between Japanese and myself, too. However, Japanese is not at “a place of fantasy.”

Distance

The contradicting position between my identity as a teacher of English in Japan and the other identity as an international student in the U.S. generates a space by pushing English away from where I have kept it in relation to myself. I yearningly see English “over there.” The English I see is on the horizon without any obstacle. It seems that I could measure and even reduce the distance, if I cannot cross nor be in the place.

However, at other times I feel a little more intricate relation to English. I felt being pushed into “the muddy space.” Depending on how I identify myself as “a ‘non-native’ English speaking student in the English Education program,” or “like a ‘native’ English speaker,” I am placed and/or place myself onto a different rung in the hierarchy of English that I describe in my story. I am “for” “the English”, can be sometimes “above” English, and want to be “in” English. Thus, my relation is so entangled that the distance is ungraspable.

What is always there in my varying relations to English, however, is a wall that is not only wiggling but also thin. This wall engenders a feeling of a lack of closeness. I ascribe this lack of closeness to how I made the first contact with English. In English classes at my middle

school in Japan, the sounds of English were modified into one of the Japanese sets of characters, which is generally used to represent the sounds of “foreign languages.” My ears were not exposed to “real” English sounds, the sounds that real living people who live with/in English make. Unlike Japanese that is in my body, “real” English sounds are not absorbed in my body. Human beings receive waves of sounds in their ears and through the process. They learn to create the sounds out of another organ (mouth) in their bodies. Waves of the sounds of “real” English did not penetrate my body, which is saturated with, and so shielded by, my mother’s spoken language, a so broadly defined mother tongue.

I was not immersed into English at birth. Lots of English words have the etymological root of “birth” or “born,” “nat.”: “Innate” “nature” “native” “nation.” Some of these words are associated with language: native language, national language, natural language and to name a few. I also make this association when trying to trace a lack of closeness to English in my story. In my story, I recurrently say that I am not “native” to English or that I am not close to English. It feels to me that English is not my innate language (I don’t know if English has this expression “innate language” as an idiom, but I want to use this here to show a lack of visceral relation to English). A wiggling wall against this language started to be built up by the closer relation to Japanese, a language called for me “maternal.”

However, Japanese, my so-called mother tongue, is not necessarily my innate language, either. Probably it was when I was within “the three hundred years solitude” in my small town. Being out of “the solitude,” I was more exposed to what I call in my story “pseudo-original” dialect. I don’t even speak the pseudo-original dialect any longer. Nonetheless, in my story I felt “home” when I heard someone speaking the dialect. I feel at home with the language, even while I sometimes can’t arrive at that.

Derrida describes a relation between birth and language called maternal by analogy: “birth as it relates to soil, birth as it relates to blood, birth as it relates to language” (1996, p. 13). Language is related to birth. And yet, Derrida does not argue that language is inherent in us at birth as if it were a part of our body. That birth relates to language, he writes, means that language is entirely other (p. 13). No matter how close Japanese feels to me, it is not innately in my body. It is “the other.”

In spite of Derrida’s discussion about the impossibility of maternal, in my word “innate” language, I sometimes feel that there is no wall squeezing in between Japanese and me. In my story, I remembered how different, no matter how subtle, my maternal language was from my paternal and neighbors’ languages. However, I didn’t even remember my mother’s tongue because I was so close to it; the language my mother spoke felt like a part of my body. In the same token, it was hard for me to hear myself speak, to hear how I sound in speaking Japanese. I didn’t recognize close distance to Japanese when I only spoke, wrote, heard, and read Japanese. Not until I see English “over there,” and so feel something lacking about English, am I aware of closer relation to Japanese, closeness to the extent that I didn’t feel any wall against Japanese.

Purity: Nature or Relation

I lack this “closeness” to English. Because of the wiggling wall and an ungraspable distance, it was impossible for me to fill in the distance between English and me. Simultaneously, I thought I would be able to acquire a part of “something” lacking about English, which I conjecture was (is) the “nature” that English “has,” as if it were something tangible and graspable. I see an ungraspable distance between English and myself, while I

struggle to shorten it by trying to “grasp” some nature, or natural property of English that I imagined must have been “over there.” I preciously place English at an altar, probably a pure one. Since English is situated on a pure altar at ungraspable distance, the imaginary natures of English have to be kept unreachable, untouchable and so pure.

On the other hand, I brooded over the natures of Japanese and English that the instructor in the academic Writing course described. I didn't get to any conclusion about what are the natures of the two languages, much less what constitutes and is a nature of language in general. But my experience in the American Literature course led me to think that straightforwardness defined by the instructor as nature of English is *not* property that English possesses, regardless of who uses it. The natures, such as straight or roundabout, are culturally, or unnaturally constructed. I conjectured that the nature that I thought was in English is an intangible form of culture that “native” English speakers have constructed.

On the other hand, I was equivocal about what identify me as a “non-native” English speaker. The impossibility to pinpoint what it is could easily bring me to jump to the idea of a nature of English that I don't have. Simultaneously, I wrote in my story, “there is something ‘common’ and ‘primordial’ in English. “Primordial” implies an idea of “birth,” “innateness,” purity, or something that is not cultural but natural and universal. On the other hand, “common” could signify that something is “culturally” constructed as a group. “The” holistic command of English that I said in my story that I wanted to acquire would be understood as something culturally constructed, such as English grammar that should be shared to “communicate” in this language.

However, it would be oversimplification to read “the” holistic command this way. This article “the” that I put to “holistic English” does not indicate to me the English grammar or English idiom. I have thought that, even if I am well tuned in grammar, I think, it would be impossible for me to reach English. Therefore, this “the” signifies to me “something” that I keep longing for and, I think, “native” English speakers have in common besides grammar. Contradictorily, it’s almost impossible for me to tell what is the something “common,” much less if the something is natural or cultural, because I don’t have it. Whether it is culturally constructed in relation to people or naturally inherent in English, it is intangible and ungraspable so as to become “pure” for me. At this point, a nature of English is not pure any longer since I made it pure. Further, while I considered the imaginary nature of English cultural after my experience in the American Literature course, I tend to think of the imaginary nature of English as viscerally learned and so relatively pure in the sense that nothing “externally” added is in the language. I don’t know what it is that I “lack” in relation to English. So I have made it up as purity.

Without exactly knowing what is lacking in me, I would not be able to examine whether I can arrive at English. So there might be occasions when I might be able to reach English. But, again, I cannot know it. My contention that the inability to reach English is a visceral *feeling* would make one argue that there might not be even that kind of ability to arrive at English. However, the ability looks purer and more unreachable, as I feel a wiggling wall in me as an obstacle to arrive at a “place of fantasy.” I wish for a relation between English and me without an obstacle. I long for a transparent and pure relation.

At ungraspable distance, English is idolized and purified, to culminate into an idea of “pure” English. I have constructed an idea of a “purity of English,” the extent of which is

dubious because it is constructed within me. And, the pure relation between Japanese and me is not pure since this is also what I construct. However, the pure relation between Japanese and me might not be as impure as a “purity of English” or “pure” English, since it is for sure purer compared to relation with a wall between English and me.

Derrida’s Idea of a Purity of French

Derrida talks about his experience of French as non-maternal language in Chapter 7 of *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin* (1996). Derrida, who always calls an idea of purity into question in every other matter, confesses that he “cannot bear or admire anything other than pure French” (p. 46). He adds that this demand for pure French is “neither ethical, political, nor social” (p. 46). However, he does not specify what is pure French. Rather, I think, he cannot. He cannot pinpoint, since the purity “does not coincide with anything that is given” (p. 47). The purity of the language for him also does not include grammar or style or idiom. It is something else. He recounts this purity in a certain metaphor: “a more hidden rule” “the domineering murmur of an order,” “a last will of the language,” “a law of the language,” and so on.

Derrida doesn’t lucidly state about whether those attributes of the purity belong to “native” speakers of French – as a matter of fact he does not even use the term “native” speakers. But he pronouncedly argues that any language is not possessed by anyone. When language is not possessed by anyone, then the purity of language cannot help, for a moment, being ascribed to the language as a nature or a natural property rather than as a cultural construct such as grammar. But this way of thinking about where or what the purity of the language belongs to is

based on “either or” perspective and so is limited. I need to more examine how Derrida sees the purity of language, French in his case.

Just as I partly take “purity” as something innate and so physical when I mention the sounds of English words that are transfigured into Japanese sounds, so too does Derrida consider his idea of purity of French to be related to body. He states that an accent, “a hand-to-hand combat with language in general” (1996, p. 47), ruins an admiration of his youth for French. His “hyperbolic” taste for a purity of French that is sublimed by Derrida from admiration for the language is “a pronounced taste for a certain pronunciation.” The purity of French is partly constituted by the sounds that people make vocally. But, of course, particular vocal sounds do not solely constitute my idea of the purity of language. But it is a part of it, an essential part of it.

“Talk clearly.” “Speak from the belly. Do not just mumble.” Often, I hear those pieces of advice when I speak English. One of my college professors in Japan even said that in speaking Japanese we don’t need to breathe from our abdomen, but in speaking English we have to breathe from the belly and so “we” Japanese speaking people have to try to talk from the belly when speaking English. Probably she was technically right. But this is not the reason I didn’t speak “from the belly” or clearly.

I am terrified how I sound and how the way I sound is taken. I am not good at a small-talk taking place, for example, in an elevator. “I miss those days when my boy was like yours,” I said to a young mother with a tiny baby in a subway elevator in Jamaica, Queens of NY. She didn’t say anything to me. I was discouraged. I was wondering “Is it because of my pronunciation? But this is such a simple sentence. No “r” or “l” sounds that Japanese language

don't have. Or is it because my sentence doesn't make sense? Or is she just rude? Or am I out of the place, Jamaica station in the edge of Queens?" I complained to my husband about no response from the young mother. He said to me, "talk loud." You know why I don't talk loud. Because I am scared that my articulation might not go through or be taken to an unexpected direction.

Derrida (1996) spoke for me here: "I was the first one to be afraid of my own voice, as if it were not mine, and to contest it, even to detest it. If I have always trembled before what I could say, it was fundamentally because of the tone [au fond], and not the substance [non du fond]" (p. 48). A tone in general refers to a quality of some musical and vocal sounds. A tone is not related, at least as directly as pronunciation is, to body. I could learn and acquire the English vocal sounds, even though I feel that I just mimic "native" English speakers. However, a quality of sounds is something over which I don't think I can execute control.

It seems that in order to "convey" a meaning, a tone has to be shared between the speaker and the listener. At the college in Japan, I learned about tone and intonation of English and how intonation conveys a certain meaning in phonetics class. So, probably, intonation could be acquired to "convey a meaning," even if it could not be possessed. The professor in the class at the college told her students an anecdote in order to make us see how important to learn intonation is. She saw an officer at customs at Heathrow airport in London shout at a young Japanese boy when the boy said, "thank you." According to the professor, he didn't say "thank you" in a correct intonation, which annoyed the officer. I thought immediately that it was not because of the intonation. Rather, I thought, as long as the boy was truly sincere, he wouldn't have annoyed the officer. Consciousness was more important than intonation to convey a meaning, I thought. I didn't think it was necessary to learn intonation of English. Applying the

learned pitch, the rise and fall when speaking English would thin out my meaning and intention, I even thought. Also I had no need to worry about intonation at the college because the “native” English speaking teachers could move themselves outside of the purity. At least for me they look like doing so. They can hear “us” even when “we” have nothing “common” and “primordial,” tone and intonation.

Now I am afraid “of my own voice.” It seems that intonation even decides and identifies the substance. So I can’t help speaking softly, so that I could hinder others from “misunderstanding” what I said just because of a “wrong” tone, which I would use without knowing what the tone will create. No matter how “well” I can make or mimic intonation used by some groups of English speakers, the intonation does not come from me. And this feeling largely constitutes my idea of the purity of English. Another version of the idea about “closeness to body.”

However, the “purity” of English, something sharable but something unreachable to me, is not just constituted by tone and intonation. “What gives its tone to the tone” (Derrida, p. 48), rhythm, is another constituent of my idea of the purity. Rhythm that I aspired to and dreamed for when a “native” English speaking lecturer read poems written in English. I don’t possess that rhythm: I don’t and can’t absorb it in my body. Even if somebody occasionally happens to recognize one in my utterances, it still is something that does not come from me. It belongs somewhere else, to the purity, “the incalculable origin of rhythm” (Derrida, p. 48).

The tone and the rhythm are essential in speaking for sure. The tone founds itself on a relation between the speaker and the listener in engaging in speaking English. Hence, the tone might not be implicated in a relation between the writer and the reader in non-spoken, non-vocal

setting. But, in fact, I have seen many questions about an author's tone in the SAT critical reading section. The tone or the intonation does not only belong to vocal communication. So, the tone is not just the pitch, the rise and fall that we hear through our ears. But the tone is mine and not the author's. When I read English or Japanese silently, probably I make an intonation of the sentences that I am reading. But the tone I hear in my head is my tone but not the author's. Then, how could it be possible, ever, to know and understand the author's tone in writing? I cannot help but reason, from this type of question in the SAT, that the author's tone shows itself in the writing and that the tone is sharable with the reader in a reading and writing environment.

I sometimes got the answers for those questions about tone, but sometimes not. I sometimes think and feel that most of the five choices that test makers create for a question can be "answer," depending on how I read it. If my answer is "right" or my tone is the same as test makers', I was recognized successful in sharing the tone with the author. But if not, it means that test makers' tone is alien to mine, that I can't share the tone. One of the students got the right answer to a question about the author's in a short passage in an SAT reading prep-class. I asked her what makes her feel that the tone is "breezy." She couldn't give a convincing answer. She only said "it "just" feels to me the ending is 'breezy'." The tone "breezy" changes the meaning of the whole short passage. It seems that the tone is not only shared among so-called "native" English speakers but also can even dictate content and meaning. That's the main reason I am afraid of the tone. As Derrida describes, "it begins before beginning" (1996, p. 47).

A lack of this purity of English, or "incalculable origin of rhythm," might explain that I am relatively comfortable with the people who don't speak English as "native" or "maternal" languages. No expectation or promise is awaited between us or on the other side, the moment I speak, since "we" do not share the rhythm, or "the incalculable origin of rhythm." I don't need

to be very attentive to the sounds, the tone, or the rhythm. It felt as though what was there was only the substance or content, nothing else. I experienced that the exactly same phrases and sentences that went through to the “non-native” English speakers did not arrive at “native” English speakers. I see “what-the-hell-are-you-talking-about” look on them. I am not saying that the “non-native” English speakers do truly understand what I mean. But at least there was a feeling that “we” tried to understand outside the purity of English.

Purity: Being at Home in Language

One tends to feel that s/he is “at home in” language, the maternal language. However, Derrida (1996) writes that the “maternal” language is “the other.” At the same time, Derrida writes in the beginning of *Monolingualism of the Other*, “I am monolingual. My monolingualism dwells, and I call it my dwelling; it feels like one to me, and I remain in it and inhabit it. It inhabits me. . . . Not a natural element, not the transparency of the ether, but an absolute habitat” (p.1). We say “my language” quite often, but language does not belong to us. Derrida noticeably states that no one possesses language. Rather we live in and remain in language, belong and surrender to language. But the feeling of being at home misleads us to consider that we can control and contain the language.

My relation to Japanese also operates this way. As I talk about my “pseudo-original” language in my story, I don’t feel any wiggling wall between Japanese and myself. However, despite the difference about the way the verb is conjugated and the tone between my mother’s dialect and the “pseudo-original” language, I feel at “home” in Japanese. I would have never been aware that it “inhabits” my body without a relation to English. But I am certainly

comfortable with and at home in Japanese. I remain in the language. The more I remain in the language, the more I feel it remains in me. Further, sometimes I feel it remains in me to the extent that it is controllable and containable.

This feeling of belonging in, being at home in, Japanese contributes to my creation of a feeling of a lack of something about English and a construction of my idea of “purity” of English, which I thought only “native” English speakers possessed without even noticing that they do. On the other hand, I don’t know and so can’t point at what is the “purity” of Japanese. Moreover, in my story, I articulated that there was no pure Japanese for me. Neither can I professionally explain accent, tone, intonation and rhythm of Japanese. But I think I have those “attributes” in my body, even though I am aware that my Japanese is not “natural” to some Japanese. I didn’t find that something is lacking in me in relation to Japanese. Probably, the lack of lacking might be the “purity” of English

The lack of lacking further brings me to surmise that “native” English speakers might have a relation to English similar to the one I have to Japanese, a relation that there is no wall felt in-between and that I feel at home with the language. The absence of the feeling of the lack, or that of a wiggling wall between Japanese and me, makes me feel that the wall between English and me “contaminated” my English. In a reverse way, the feeling of “the lack” of the purity would even make my English void.

This notion of being at home can be problematic. Derrida (1996) warns of this idea of “being at home” in language. Being home “disturbs the inhabitants, the fellow citizens, and the compatriots” (p. 57). One believes that one is at home in a language, and assumes that the language speaks to anyone who also inhabits it. However, Derrida states, language “remains

always mute for the one who inhabits it, and whom it inhabits most intimately” and “remains distant, heterogeneous, uninhabitable, deserted” (p. 58).

Further, Derrida argues that “the language called maternal is never purely natural, nor proper, nor inhabitable. . . . One never inhabits what one is in the habit of calling inhabiting” (1996, p. 58). Being at home in language called maternal, which is never purely natural, does not mean that there is no wall between one and the language called maternal. The relation with the maternal language that is not inhabitable would not be “pure” for anyone, for even “native” speakers.

Then, is the “purity” of English that I have is truly just a “fantasy,” or even my ungrounded obsession? The “purity” of English that I have felt is constructed by the perception of the lack of such an intimate feeling as I have in relation to Japanese. But when the relation as being at home is not naturally pure, the “purity” of English should not be pure. Then I do not need to fantasize it.

Purity: Iterability

But this is not the end of the story about the purity of language. Since one is deprived of a language called maternal, one could not have an anchor to reach, for instance, what happened in childhood. A language called maternal is not, Derrida discusses, “a source language,” but only “target language[langue de d’arrivee]” (1995, p. 61). I sometimes grapple with how to say what I want to mean in order to reach it, “even” in Japanese, my maternal language. In those moments, I feel that I long for an anchor in order not to make what I want to mean drift away. However, I find that I don’t have any and, indeed, I feel what I said drifting away.

Derrida expounds on language as an anchor, in his words, a “source language.” When “maternal language” is a target language, as Derrida states, then from where or what? There is only “something,” such as an idea or a feeling, which is waiting to be shaped into words. We only arrive at the “something” by means of the language. At arrival without any anchor, we, at least I, often feel that I (we) can’t explain a “whole” thing thoroughly. Some residues of the “something” that I want to say are left with/in me. We drift without an anchor, a source language that already supposedly shapes the “something.” Derrida argues that only making arrivals somewhere without a departing point arouses a desire for the originary language, a desire to “invent a first language that would be, rather, *a prior-to-the-first* language” (p. 61).

However, as Derrida is clear, “a prior-to-the-first language” does not exist (1996, p. 62). Therefore, instead of another “language” as a source language, we need to “project up to the idea of a route” in desert, so that we can make language available to us speak to the others (Derrida, 1996, p.58). The project has to create a mechanism of a route, because language supposedly arrives “there” and returns “here,” even without a start. In order to make this route happen, we have to forge a concept of “repetition, return, reversibility, iterability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary” of language (Derrida, p. 58). As Derrida argues, “it [a prior-to-the-first language] must be invented. Injunctions, the summons of another writing” (p. 64). To reach “others there” by and through language, and hopefully to make it return to me “here,” the language has to be identifiable and repeatable. What makes a sentence “I love you” make sense is the fact that the sentence has been repeated in numerous occasions and so, or but nonetheless, the sentence has been identified as “I love you.” Injunction of what a word, a phrase and a sentence identifies has to be needed and summoned to give meaning to it.

However, “repetition, return, reversibility, iterability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary” of language is not recognized when we do not wish for a “prior-to-the-first-language” or, in other words, we feel we can reach a destination. This un-recognition is similar to the absence of my feeling that something is lacking in relation to Japanese. And when I do wish for a “prior-to-the-first-language” because I can’t reach a destination, “repetition, return, reversibility, iterability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary” of language is not available. I can’t find it. I think that this unrecognizable iterability was the “purity” that I see and feel.

Chapter 5: Disruption

I took a break from the writing of the chapter on my idea of “the purity of English” and Derrida’s description of “pure French.” I got out of the apartment, to which I moved recently. We recently moved to the neighborhood where some “Japanese” people resided, because I hoped that my son could make friends with kids who speak Japanese in this city in NJ. I was walking around in a small courtyard in front of the apartment complex. I literally got a fresh air, metaphorically “getting out of” the writing.

Is my inquiry, in which I use Derrida, still an autobiographical inquiry? This question hovered over me. However, the ways in which I construct the “purity of English” are autobiographical and so is the move of my work along with Derrida, in the sense that the ways and the move manifest my subjectivities.

The Ways in which I Construct the Idea of the “Purity of English”

Identity as difference.

In the “my story” chapter (chapter 3), I just told, or “blurted” would be more accurate, stories about English, without so much focusing on the idea of “purity.” In the “transition” chapter (chapter 4), I aimed to explain how I construct my idea of “the purity” of English by looking at the stories I told. As I articulated in the chapter, I construct the idea of “the purity” by comparing my feeling and relation to Japanese as language to the counterpart to English as “the wiggling wall.” I attempted not to dichotomize the felt relations to the two languages, Japanese and English. I use the term “native” often in my story, while aware that this term is problematic. But I do not delete the word from my story, since I thought my “story” was

supposed to be spontaneous and so it would be acceptable to leave this overloaded word without quotation marks to show that I know it's problematic. On the other hand, I deliberately delete the word "nativity" from the previous chapter. Obviously, I gestured toward avoiding the binary between "native" and "non-native," by, instead, using the word "close."

Also, I see the "I" in the "transition" chapter (Chapter 4) sweating over to detail the contradicting relations between Japanese and me, with the purpose of avoiding making stark differences between "the wiggling wall" and a relation between Japanese and myself as transparent. As I describe in the previous chapter, I do have moments that I can't reach what I want to say in Japanese, that I feel that Japanese is a little far from myself.

I did not want to make "apartheid-like" differences (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 82). But my description of the relation to my Japanese might put some people who identify themselves as "native" English speakers into a box that has a tag with "native" English speakers on it and also that inscribes fine prints saying "you are supposed to understand any "native" English speaker." When I say "'native' English speakers might have a relation to English *similar to* the one I have to Japanese," some of "native" English speakers must respond, "I am sometimes at a loss with English, too." When I construct the idea of the "purity" of English in comparison with Japanese, despite my struggles to avoid the dichotomy, I might be making crystal-clear differences. I might have done so, besides "myself" as the researching "I" which is supposed to frame itself in the theoretical framework.

I made the same "othering" in the "my stories" chapter (Chapter 3). In the very end of "my story," when writing about "writing well," the narrating "I" says, "Don't erase me that way. Don't erase this difference in the name of similarity and understanding." This is/was my voice.

But, I do not claim that this is my “authentic” voice. This “voice” is founded on a position of the narrating “I that is superadded on the narrated “I.” The “me” in “Don't erase me that way” is the narrated “I” as a student who freshly came to the U.S. graduate school from Japan. The narrated “I” is the student, who seven years ago started a term paper on “Contact Literature”⁵ with a poem written in English by an Indian poet, Kamala Das. The poem is:

I am Indian, very brown, born in
 Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
 Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said.
 English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
 Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
 Everyone of you? Why not let me speak in
 Any languages I like? The language I speak
 Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness,
 All mine, mine alone. . . . (Walder, p. 53)

The narrating “I” took a very solid standpoint, the moment when I was writing “Don't erase me that way. Don't erase this difference in the name of similarity and understanding.” And now, right now, right here, citing the poem by the poet, I am doing this claim again. (Simultaneously, I am keenly aware that this poem might shut up the “native” English speakers.) In the “my stories” chapter (Chapter 3), the narrating “I” told how my “maternal” language is not purely “natural.” However, in this sentence “Don't erase me,” despite my struggle to indicate that differences are not so clear, “the other is almost unavoidably either opposed to the self or

⁵ Literature written in “Englishes” by writers who use a colonizer’s language, English, in ex-colonized countries (Spooner, 1987)

submitted to the self's dominance" (Minh-ha, 1997, p. 415). This narrating "I" in my stories might have made an "apartheid-like" difference.

According to Smith & Watson (2001), the narrated "I" is "the subject of history," and the narrating "I" is "the agent of discourse" (p. 60). The narrating "I" in my stories is the subject to multiple cultural, social, historical norms and discourses. The voice in "Don't erase me" emerges in my story as a manifestation of the narrating "I"'s subjectivities. The narrating "I" in my story, which unwittingly makes the difference "visible," might derive from the dominant notion of identity as (stark) difference from the "other." I do not believe in my backbone that identity is constituted by the sameness within a being and within a group of people. The narrating "I" might reveal the self as the subject to the notion of identity as (stark) difference.

Making a Difference Visible, Erasing Another Difference

What can be problematic is the researching "I" in the "transition" chapter (Chapter 4). The researching "I" eliminates my other "self" as a "Japanese woman." The researching "I" focuses on the idea of the "purity" as the natures of English and relations between English and me. This "I" does not at all go back to the other stories that center on my ideas of "English" in my high school and college. The stories headed under "Learning English in Japan" tell the way I learned English, the way I feel about the way I learned English, the way I feel about "real" English, and so on. I can't know what those stories might "tell" the readers of this dissertation, but these are what I "intended" to tell. Through those intentions in the stories, I also "intended" to point to the lack of the visceral relation with language. Thus, these stories are connected to

my construction of “the purity of English.” Nonetheless, I didn’t return to the stories in Chapter 3.

These stories are important. These stories could provide many ways in which I can investigate a relation between English and me “as a Japanese woman/student” living in Japan 40 years after the WWII – the post-war ages in Japan. I went to a girl’s only high school that is well known for English education (as the second language). I also went to a women’s college that is locally famous for the education of “women,” plus English education. Further, I went to a women’s graduate school that is not only famous but also ranked as “one of the top tens” for English Literature study among women’s colleges. So these stories could be possibly considered as those of women and English in Japan during the 1980’s and 90’s. Or more specifically, me and English in Japan during the 1980’s and 90’s.

I can think of many questions from this association of “women” and “English.” First of all, what would this association mean? Or how did the women’s only schools, in general, come to have a high level of expertise in teaching English as the second language? What does it mean for a “Japanese woman” to major in English, not in the other fields, such as business management, or physics? I also could explore the ways in which I pursued to learn English and “do” English Literature Study. I could do all of those by placing these possible questions in the time frame of the ages after the WWII. Then, this placing might even lead me to examine what my classmates and I mean by “real” English and what my resistance to “real” English might possibly mean. Very post-colonial.

[I bracket the following paragraphs about one interpretation of the eliminated stories, because it is supposed to be secret: The stories that I

eliminated also indicate another issue that is deeply entangled with nationality. The narrated "I" is at the surface level a Japanese female student who learned English. In the previous chapter, the narrating "I" attempts to focus on how the narrated "I," a Japanese female student, learned English and what "English" was for the "I." However, when the narrating "I" starts to talk about the "real" English for her classmates and friends as the U.S. pop culture and the "real" English for me as literary texts written in English, this narrated "I" is coming to take on another identity. I did not attempt to show my idiosyncrasy or my snobbishness as a book lover and a European movie lover. The "real" English that my friends want to acquire from the Hollywood movies, the U.S. pop-culture and the British rock was not "real" for me, because I, a Japanese girl who grew up in the "solitude," linguistically and socially, in the small town, did not get an access to those "cultures."

My parents, particularly my mother, do not love the things the U.S. stands for. She has a contradicting feeling toward "America." She sometimes said that "America" saved Japan from the possibility of being under the Soviet's influence. But she hates "America" because she lost her beloved brother in WWII and the property that her family had after the reformation of Japan by the U.S. She even called "a betrayer" the daughter of the prime minister who got sentenced to

death in the Tokyo Court, when she got married to an "American." I often heard those "stories" when I was a kid. I do not remember how I felt about the stories. I just wondered why she was so preoccupied with those memories. I do not think that she prohibited any access to the "real" English from the pop cultures. But I was not exposed to them when I was a kid. Further, my mother wanted her two daughters to stay in the social class: She did not want them to be "outside" of the social class and the system that is so incomprehensible to me, much less outside of Japan. The narrating "I" seems to be under the sphere of the influence, which inadvertently reveals the other narrated "I" as a girl whose mother has a complicated feeling toward the U.S. which represents "English."]

These explorations can also shed a light on the idea of the "purity" of English, too, in the sense that the examination could entail what counts English in Japan and how I put the English at an altar. However, I did not take up this approach. This focus on the "purity" of English eliminates the possibility of those examinations about me as a "Japanese" woman and English in Japan. This type of elimination has to be sometimes made since a researcher can't focus on all the issues. However, my avoidance of focusing on the possible issues about a "Japanese" woman and English is not a necessity as a researcher.

The explorations for sure must deal with the issues of nation, ethnicity, and gender. And inevitably I need to talk about "Japan" and "women." Smith & Watson (2001) point out that "the pact between narrator and reader" requires "the narrator's winning and keeping the reader's trust in the plausibility of the narrated experience and the credibility of the narrator" (p. 28-9).

When and if the readers of my stories as “a Japanese woman” look for “the credibility of the narrator,” it might essentialize the identity as “a Japanese woman.” I hate to be categorized as a “Japanese woman,” since this identity category seems to be most often based on the sameness among a group of people and therefore suffocates me. I wanted to avoid the identity that I might inscribe from being consumed as the identity as the sameness and eventually essentializing “Japan” and “a Japanese woman.”

This fear of essentializing an idea of “a Japanese woman” appears contradicting to the unconscious desire of making visible the differences as a “non-native” English speaker. Is this fear of essentializing also a manifestation of a subjectivity of the researching “I,” as the narrating “I” in my story reveals its subjectivity when it says “Don’t erase me that way”?

The researching “I” in the “transition” chapter (Chapter 4) was not aware that the issues of gender, nation, and ethnicity lurk in the representation of me as a “Japanese female student” who learned English. Gilmore hypothesizes that “the significance of nonrecognition is an act of resistance, a refusal to speak when spoken to in the language of address” (1994, p. 20). My refusal to talk about how it was to be a woman in Japan indicates a resistance to the prevalent idea of identity as the sameness. Then, the fear, no, the refusal to essentialize a “Japanese woman” *is not* contradicting to the unconscious desire of making the difference as “non-native” English speaker visible. The refusal might manifest, as Craig Calhoun (1994) argues, “a shift from identity politics to a politics of difference” (p. 21). Suffice it to say, the unconscious desire of making visible the differences as “non-native” English speaker is founded on an idea of identity as difference.

Difference as “lack”

Further, the way I constructed the difference as a “non-native” English speaker and the idea of “the purity” of English is involved with one of the ways in which gender and race and class is often differentiated -- as deficit.

The difference as a “non-native” English speaker that I construct is simply based on an idea of “lack.” In the “transition” chapter (Chapter 4), in explaining a tone, an intonation, and rhythm as a part of the “purity” of English, I keep saying, “I don’t possess,” and “I can’t absorb it in my body.” In my story, I also said, “I might have missed something ‘rudimentary’ in the very beginning stage,” “because of the lack of the relation,” “something about English is lacking in me, “something ‘common’ among the domains, which I do not have and I feel I won’t be able to have,” and so on. I also showed in my stories that my being is so filled with Japanese language. Thus, I might have wanted to indicate that the difference is not a deficit, but the idea of “deficit” hovers through the two chapters.

The idea of difference as deficit is linked to, for me, a conventional view of women. (I am, in fact, astonished that the way I construct the difference from the “native” English speaker, whose relation to English I do not know at all, might come from a conventional view of a woman. And I am afraid to talk about a conventional view of women, of course, in Japan, because this talk might be made at the risk of essentializing a Japanese woman and even romanticizing her). A conventional view of women that I only know is the one that permeated in the small town, and in my family. The reader might predict that a conventional view of woman in Japan is that the woman is very subjugated and is taken away freedom, and so on (Tajima, 1989; Uchida, 1998; Villapando, 1989). However, this is not the conventional view of the woman for me.

Within my family in the small town, my memory in terms of gender is that my father struggles for a “stupid” meaningless symbolized power of a man as a head of the household. Retrospectively, my father tried to recover a patriarchal system in the family. He didn’t want “us” women, my grandma, my mom, my sister and me, to leave the shoes in the front door. He yelled at us, “The women’s shoes are only allowed to leave at the back door.” But we women ignored. I have so many other anecdotes that are as stupid as this. No matter how my father showed off those superficial powers, I know that my grandmother always made the final decisions. I didn’t take differences of women from men as deficit since I was a kid. But I heard him seeing women “lower” and “deficit” by saying some derogatory comments on women as shortcoming of many things.

This family background would not be the only source where I internalized a concept of difference as deficit or inferior. However, I am certain that the way of constructing differences from “native” English speakers betrays my subjectivity that is embedded in this discourse that difference is constituted by the binary and hence separate.

Difference within myself

When I constructed the idea of the “purity” of English, I might have not been succumbed to the prevalent notion of difference as separate (Minh-ha, 1989). I do not have any other way of constructing the “purity” of English than comparing “the wiggling wall” and a relation between Japanese and me, and then constructing a possible difference in the name of similarity about relation between language and self. I do not have an empirical subject who could tell me her version of a visceral relation to English as “native” or “maternal” language. I can only construct this “other,” in my case a “native” English speaker, from within myself as a “native” Japanese speaker. The differences that I make “visible” are, in truth, within my self.

Minh-ha writes about self that is constituted by differences within and between beings;

“I” is, itself, *infinite layers*. Its complexity can hardly be conveyed through such typographic conventions as I, i, or I/i. . . . Of all the layers that form the open (never finite) totality of “I,” which is to be filtered out as superfluous, fake, corrupt, and which is to be called pure, true, real, genuine, original, authentic? (1989, p. 94)

“I” is infinite layers, Minh-ha says. And layers are porous without any core. Even if I divided myself into “me” in relation to English and “me” in relation to Japanese, the division is blurry. Therefore, the pure relation between “me” and Japanese is impossible, when myself is layered and its layers are porous and non-developmental.

This notion of “I” as infinite iterations can shed another light on the desire for visibility of difference, which I argued is a manifestation of my subjectivity to the discourse of identity as stark difference. In this description of “I,” Minh-ha contends against a notion of “core” or “authentic” self. On the other hand, I might have thought that, in stating that identity comes after recognition of a relation to language, I differentiated language from the other identity categories, such as gender, sexual orientation, class, to name a few. If I might, possibly, have assumed that language is immune from those identity categories, it must be because I might have assumed that there is a “core” self that can be only connected to language without getting involved with any other social, cultural, discursive identity category. Minh-ha’s conceptualization of self that is constituted by the porous layers discloses the humanist Enlightenment notion of self as “authentic and original” latent in my desire.

Further, Minh-ha's notion of self also can explain more the researching "I"'s inadvertent elimination of the stories as a "Japanese female student." It is true that, as I just argue, the elimination indicates a refusal to a prevalent idea of identity as the sameness. At the same time, I can see another layer of my "selves" in this unrecognition. My refusal to talk might come from my self who went through hard times by being pinned down as a submissive Japanese woman in the U.S. context. Thus, the researching "I is not discretely split, but shifting through different porous layers.

Minh-ha (1989) conceptualizes difference as "difference (within) between *difference* itself and *identity*" (p.95). This notion of difference "subverts the foundations of any affirmation or vindication of value and cannot, thereby, bear in itself an absolute value" (p. 95). Let me repeat the sentence that makes stark difference; "Don't erase me this way. Don't erase this difference in the name of similarity and understanding." I put this sentence in the end of my story. In fact, this difference "as" non-native English speaker--now this "as" is already impossible--comes from difference between difference from my self as a speaker of English and identity as a speaker of Japanese without a wiggling wall.

Knowing that my idea of the "purity" of English and "pure" relation is not pure and that differences within my self constitute my idea of "purity" of English, I further want to explore another constituent of my "purity of English," the idea of "repetition, return, reversibility, iterability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary" between self and language through Derrida's investigation of writing and speaking. Also I examine the ways in which some reader response theories presume relations between self and language in the light of Derrida's investigation of the

iterability and his concepts of a relation between self and language. Then I return to my construct of the “wiggling” wall. The following chapters are Derrida’s concept of a relation between self and language (Chapter 6), overview of reader-response theories (Chapter 7) and explorations of relations between self and language in reader-response theories (Chapter 8).

Chapter 6: Derrida's Concept of a Relation between Self and Language

Soliloquy

(T)he language called maternal, about birth as it relates to soil, birth as it relates to blood, and birth as it relates to language, which means something entirely other.

(Derrida, 1996, p. 13)

My mom. Why didn't you understand my decision to keep my baby, your grandson, Sho? I am your daughter. I came out of your womb. Why can't you understand that?

We speak the "same" language, supposedly. I neither remember nor know since when you have not "understood" me. Well, I also might have not "understood" you, maybe. At least you could have respected my decision. Well, respecting a decision is an idea that is not possible in Japan.

"You are not my daughter any longer, a daughter I gave birth to after two miscarriages. A daughter I gave birth to should not do what you did to me," you said. You wanted me to be "like" you. I knew that. You even assumed that as long as you gave birth to your daughters, you could reproduce the daughter whom your mother made you. Without specifically "indoctrinating" me into the idea of being "the" daughter, a daughter who observes values cherished in the family system, you assumed that I would keep a promise that was already made even before I was born – a promise that my sister and I would get married to men whom the Akai family arranged for my sister and me, well, not for us, but for the family.

Yes, I did get married to a man you and daddy arranged for me. I might have thought that I could be “like” you, that I could possibly reiterate the itinerary that you took for your parents’ family’s lineage. I am sorry. I just did not, and could not, keep the iteration. I am/was “like” you, but simultaneously I am/was not “like” you.

The former father-in-law told you that you should have repeatedly “taught” and “told” that I had the responsibility of maintaining the family lineage. When I got divorced from the man, you regretted that you didn’t teach me that the Akai family is different from “others.” Don’t put it on yourself, mom. Do you think that we, my sister and I, were so idiot that we did not notice that the promise came out of your mouth on many many occasions? You didn’t give us lectures about how to be “the daughter” within the family system. But everyday we, my sister and I, received the idea from you, mom.

Then, you would say, “That’s worse... You knew what I wanted you to be, but you shattered my desire. How could you...?” Ah, yes, mother, you are right. We did not really “talk.” I mean, I did not “talk” with you.

But we talked a lot, right, mom? Especially we talked more after I got divorced from the man you and daddy arranged for me, no, for you. But what did we really “talk” about? About how daddy’s idea of being a head of the household is silly, about how my sister dominates her husband, about my friends’ kids and parents, about the neighbors. But not about my future, what I want to do, where I head for metaphorically. Well, I did not even know “where” I was heading for. Retrospectively, we might have sensed that no matter how much we talked, we would not “understand” what we say when it came down to who I was or I wanted to be. The promise

would be broken, the desire would be broken into pieces. What else would be “there” in our talk? This might be in us, separately.

I don't know “what happened” to us that have, sort of, bred some distance between us. Many, many variants feed in this distance, I am sure. But, thinking about “what happened” makes me remember one thing that you said. “After you went to the graduate school⁶, you started to talk differently. You speak a foreign language to me.” We laughed at it at that time. But you must be right about that, mom.

I speak the “same” language as the one you do. A “maternal” language. But the maternal language you passed on to me has been disunited from its “soil,” your body, your blood. Even the “maternal” language might have been estranged, the moment I was born. Maybe. I don't know. I could not totally be positive about this. I am a mother, now.

Iterability; Derrida's Notion

One of the things/ideas that I covet so much in relation to English is “repetition, return, reversibility, iterability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary” of where language reaches (Derrida, 1996, p.58). I assumed and believed that a language was repeatable and iterable, probably regardless of who used a language and where one used a language. Iterability of English that I thought/think I did/do not possess became “the” purity of English for me, since it seemed that iterability of language enables one to arrive at other. However, what is exactly iterability? What is it that I so much want in relation to English as pure, which is not so pure?

⁶ A graduate school in Japan

A notion of iterability is elucidated by Derrida in *Signature Event Context* (1988). In this article Derrida starts with how a notion of communication as transference is constituted and, as Derrida always does purport, goes on to “deconstruct” the widely conceived and perceived notion of communication. Then, he examines more the concept of the iterability that constitutes the idea of communication.

What Derrida means by communication here is a means of transportation of ideas, thoughts, information, and facts through language. It seems that, although he shows his chief concern with writing, he includes both spoken and written communication without rigorously differentiating them. Rather, he dismantles some historically established differences between them by pointing out that an iterability constitutes the notion of communication, either spoken or written. First I briefly look at a few of differences between speaking and writing that Derrida problematizes and even dismantles in the article; in this way, I hope I could prevent some questions from hindering readers in reading my “focus” in this chapter.

One difference between speaking and writing is easy for me to recognize. I always feel it a difficulty that there is no written sign/form in speech, but only sound that substitutes for written signs. This particularity of spoken language partially causes me to construct my notion of “the purity” of English: More precisely, what I refer to as a lack of visceral closeness to English demonstrated in its accent, tone, intonation and rhythm. Derrida (1988) states that through these phonic signs, “we must be able to recognize the identity of a signifying form” (p.10). The identity of a signifying form through the phonic unit is peculiar to spoken language.

Then, Derrida (1988) asks, “[W]hy is this identity [of a signifying form through phonic units] paradoxically the division or dissociation of itself, which will make of this phonic sign a

grapheme?” (p. 10). According to him, the unity of phonic units and graphemes is constituted by “the possibility of being repeated in the absence not only of its ‘referent,’ which is self-evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or of the intention of actual signification” (p. 10). And Derrida designates this possibility as iterability. In spite of this peculiarity of spoken language, Derrida argues that this tangible difference from writing is equivocal because the iterability constitutes the identification of signifying forms, whether they are written marks, signs, phonic units, etc.

Derrida problematizes another particular difference between speaking and writing. Derrida considers that writing is traditionally positioned in a hierarchical relation to speech. Writing historically tends to be regarded as a “potent means of communication, *extending* enormously, if not infinitely, the domain of oral or gestural communication” (Derrida, 1988, p. 3). According to Derrida, writing is taken as a supplemental way to economize “the most space and time possible by means of the most convenient abbreviation” (p. 4) of actions and sounds. As a supplement to speaking, writing has also been recognized as communication. Derrida refutes this hierarchical relation through an exploration of how the iterability constitutes both speaking and writing.

Derrida (1988) indicates another constructed difference between writing and speaking: A speech is different from writing in the way in which, unlike writing, speech can accomplish effects of what the speaker intends in a certain context. J.L. Austin’s concept of speech as “performative” is primarily constructed by this idea that speech accomplishes acts. Derrida also questions this difference by pointing out the iterability working in both speaking and writing as communication.

Thus, Derrida discusses that this idea of communication, spoken and written, as transference has been established by the iterability throughout history: He does so through discussion of Condillac's notion of absence of a writer and a reader in writing in *the Origin of Human Knowledge*, Husserl's idea of absence of the signified, Austin's idea of parasite and iterability in his speech act theory, and Derrida's reading of "signature" as iterability. I examine Derrida's investigation of Austin's theory among them, mainly because two reader response theorists, Iser and Fish, "use" Austin's speech act theory.

In the section headed by "Parasites. Iter, of Writing: That It Perhaps Does Not Exist" of this article, Derrida examines Austin's conceptualization of a speech act -- what speech does, not what speech is. He both questions Austin's line of thought on the conceptualization and investigates the iterability hidden in the theory, an idea that Derrida explicates buttresses Austin's theorization of speech.

Austin's Speech Act Theory

Performative speech.

Austin (1975), widely known for the theory called Speech Act Theory, conceptualizes speech in a different way from a conventional way in which speech or an utterance is recognized as a statement that tells either "truth" or a "falsity." Rather than categorizing utterances into either true or false statements, Austin conceives the utterance as accomplishing an action *in* saying something, not *of* saying something. One of the often-cited examples of the utterances that accomplishes an act is "I promise to pay you tomorrow." This utterance, which is, according to Austin, not a statement that tells either true or false, accomplishes the act of performing a promise. Austin writes in *How to do Things with words* (1975):

Such a performative formula as 'I promise' makes it clear *how what is said is to be understood* and even conceivably that the formula 'states that' a promise has been made; but we cannot say that such utterances are true or false, nor that they are descriptions or reports. (p. 70)

He purports in this book to theorize the idea of speech as "performative," as opposed to "constative" speech in which the utterance "shows" true or false.

However, in the middle of the book, Austin realizes--or rather he shows (probably he plans to proceed this way)--that he sometimes has trouble in distinguishing performative utterances and constative ones. There are times when a phrase or a "formula" that shows an act of performance, such as "I promise" in the previous example, is omitted and it goes, "I will pay you tomorrow." This statement looks like a "constative" statement that does not perform an act in saying this. Austin needs to construct another idea to make the idea of "performative" more tenable.

Illocutionary force.

Austin (1975) introduces an idea of force, called "illocutionary force," to redefine the performative utterance. The Illocutionary force in the utterance performs warning, promising, threatening, and so on, instead of describing something as true or false. When an utterance carries this illocutionary force, it performs. Austin asserts that this force is also contained in a statement that looks like a constative statement; therefore, Austin contends, a constative statement also can be a version of the performative statement. The illocutionary force makes for the "performative" speech.

The conceptualization of the illocutionary force with/in the utterance allows Austin's theory of speech to be placed outside of the idea of communication as transference of meaning. When defined as communication, speech aims to transfer "the" meaning, what a speaker intends through and by an utterance. On the other hand, the utterance in Austin's conceptualization does not signify something outside language such as meaning and intention: The utterance for Austin only designates what is said, not what is meant. Derrida (1988) considers that for Austin "the performative does not have its referent (but here that word is certainly no longer appropriate, and this precisely is the interest of the discover) outside of itself or, in any event, before and in front of itself" (p. 13). Indeed, in Lecture IX, Austin (1975) emphasizes that the illocutionary force is different from meaning. His idea of illocutionary force does not "send" a meaning out of the sentence toward the receiver.

Austin (1975) argues that this force does not necessarily involve grammatical structure: Grammatical structure only explains what is said in the performative speech in Austin's theory. For him, what is said in the utterance is a locutionary act. Austin warns us not to think that an illocutionary act is the consequence of a locutionary act (p.114). However, Austin states, "to perform an illocutionary act is necessarily to perform a locutionary act" (p.114). In other words, any illocutionary act is accompanied with what is said, but is not caused by it. Although these arguments by Austin create a gray zone, Austin's assertion is that an utterance with an illocutionary force acts and effects and transforms a current circumstance (Derrida, 1988, p.13). Derrida even acclaims him for "shatter[ing] the concept of communication as a purely semiotic, linguistic, or symbolic concept" (p. 13).

Derrida's Critique on Austin's Speech Act Theory

In spite of Austin's conception of speech as "acts, effects, and transformations" of a current circumstance, Derrida argues that Austin's speech act theory still shows a version of communication. Derrida discusses that Austin's idea of speech is to communicate "a force through the impetus (impulsion) of a mark" (1988, p. 13). Speech in Austin's conceptualization transfers "an original movement, an operation and the production of an effect" (1988, p.13). Recognizing that this type of communication is "relatively new" (1988, p.13), Derrida contends that Austin's speech act theory is rooted in the idea of communication as transferring, either a meaning or an effect, from the sender to the receiver.

"Infelicities": Predicate for "felicities".

Austin's discussion becomes problematic to Derrida, when Austin explains what determines the performative speech act. In the very beginning, Austin refutes the binary system that supports the idea of constative statement, either true or false. However, his argument comes to hinge back on another binary system, when Austin (1975) investigates when performative speeches "have happily brought off our action" (p.14). Austin proposes that he can discover some conditions that can make the performative speech "happily bring off our action" "by looking at and classifying type of case in which something *goes wrong* and the act – marrying, betting, bequeathing, christening, or what not – is therefore at least to some extent a failure" (p.14).

For example, if an utterance is not made "by certain persons in certain circumstances" and/or does not invoke the particular procedure, the utterance falls into the category of "infelicities" or failure. Austin enumerates four other conditions⁷ that can produce "happily

⁷ See Appendix A. Austin itemized six conditions and grouped them into three. I only cited the first two

bring off” an action by looking at cases which make performative acts “to some extent a failure.” “Infelicities,” the performative speeches that (un)happily do not bring off our action, take place when any of these six conditions are not met. Austin’s conceptualization is plunged back into the logic that is founded on the binary, in which one of them, a negative side, is only a supplement to the other one as positive and ideal.

What is more problematic to Derrida is Austin’s avoidance of investigating a relation between the constructed polarization than his return to the binary system that he rejected in the beginning. Austin’s theory does not ignore the possibility that performative utterances “fail,” or (un)happily do not bring off our action. He even recognizes that the possibility of the “infelicities” is inherent in “conventional act,” a structure that makes performative utterances possible. Austin (1975) states that “infelicity is an ill to which all acts are heir which have the general character of ritual or ceremonial, all *conventional* acts” (pp.18-19). The binary is not taken as mutually exclusive. Yet, Austin’s theory does not delve into how “infelicities” are related to “successful” performative utterances.

Jonathan Culler (1981)⁸ gives an example to show a possible relation of the two seemingly incompatible categories in Austin’s theory of the performative speech. Culler (1981) states, “‘I perform you man and wife’ is not a performative unless it is possible for it to misfire” (p. 19). (“Misfire” is one category among the “infelicities”: “Misfire” takes place when the act is not achieved due to inappropriate persons and circumstances and loss of invocation of procedure

conditions: “the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriated for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.” See Appendix for all the conditions by Austin

⁸ Derrida’s investigation on Austin’s construction of speech act theory after this point proceeds a little quickly. Particularly so when he moves on to Austin’s other exclusion of case or possibility of *every* utterance being quoted. Jonathan Culler reads this article by Derrida scrupulously in his “Convention and Meaning,” so by reading Culler’s reading of Derrida, I think I can get a better grip of Derrida’s examination of Austin’s speech act theory.

(Austin, 1975, p. 18)). Culler's point is that without a possibility of an infelicitous performative speech, a happy one would not even be produced.

Derrida (1988) contends that it is necessary to examine a relation between failure and success to see how the binary is constructed. Derrida's examination of the binary in Austin's performative speech is that the possibility of failure is "an essential predicate or as a *law*" "the very force and law of its emergence" (Derrida, p. 15) for a successful performative speech. In order to theorize the successful performative utterance, failure must be examined as *necessity*, not just as a possibility as Austin sees. What Austin does instead is to categorize the "infelicities" into six and separates them from "felicities, instead of investigating them as *necessity*."

Further, from the categorization of the "infelicities," Austin (1975) again excludes some of the "other 'unhappy' features of the doing of actions" (p. 21). Those performative speeches are "unhappy" because they are issued either "under the heading of 'extenuating circumstances'" or "parasitic" (Austin, p. 21). The first one is the speech "under duress, or by accident, or owing to this or that variety of mistake, say, or otherwise *unintentionally*" (emphasis mine; Austin, p. 21) and the second is the utterance "said by an actor on the stage" or "introduced in a poem, or spoken in soliloquy" (Austin, p. 22). Language in the second group is "in special ways—intelligibly--used *not seriously*, but *in ways parasitic upon its normal use*" (emphasis mine; Austin, p. 22). These "unhappy" utterances are "void" in Austin's theory. Austin regards those utterances as falling unfortunately and accidentally on performative speech. He states that "we must just remember, though, that features of this sort can and do constantly obtrude into any case we are discussing" (Austin, p.16). Apparently they are not a predicate or a necessity for the

successful performative speech for Austin. In Austin's construction of the speech act theory, these "parasitic" utterances are deliberately excluded.

"Felicities" and "infelicities" both are iterable.

Derrida (1988) dismantles the binary that Austin develops between some "infelicities" as parasitic and "felicities" as singular.

In Austin's theory, the cited utterance is "parasitic" because it is dependent on the successful performative speech and so is not issued seriously. However, Culler (1981) argues that the dependency works the other way around: Successful performative utterances are dependent on the utterances that are recognized as parasitic and so failed. Culler (1981) writes:

If it were not possible for a character in a play to make a promise, there could be no promises in real life, for what makes it possible to promise, as Austin tells, is the existence of a conventional procedure, of formulae one can repeat. For me to be able to make a promise in "real life," there must be iterable procedures or formulae, such as are used on stage. (p. 21)

I understand, to some extent, the last sentence in this quote. Without the identity of utterances, they would not perform the act through the illocutionary force. In order to identify an utterance as "the" utterance, the prototype is needed for an utterance. Austin (1975) expounds that a model is the "ordinary" utterance that includes conventional formulae; a "parasitic" utterance only repeats the ordinary one without seriousness. On the other hand, Culler (1981) considers that utterances on stage are the "original" model that are repeated to become conventional formulae, making other utterances in "real life" "successful."

Culler's critique on Austin's exclusion of the "parasitic" utterance only attempts to turn over the hierarchy or re-order the "original" and the "parasitic." This turnover can't change the structure and how it works; rather it could even reinforce the binary idea that one is original, the other supplemental. Is it possible to tell which utterance, in real life or in fiction, can be a model that could be repeated and produce the conventional procedure? Or would this argument change anything about the binary structure? Derrida does not attempt to change the hierarchical binary.⁹

Rather, Derrida (1988) poses a question to lead us to think of the working of the binary system of Austin's speech act theory. I here cite a long quotation of questions posed by Derrida:

Is this general possibility [of "parasite"] necessarily one of a failure or trap into which language may fall or lose itself as in an abyss situated outside of or in front of itself?

What is the status of this parasitism? In other words, does the quality of risk admitted by Austin surround language like a kind of ditch or external place of perdition which speech [la locution] could never hope to leave, but which it can escape by remaining "at home," by and in itself, in the shelter of its essence or telos? Or, on the contrary, is this risk rather its internal and positive condition of possibility? Is that outside its inside, the very force and law of its emergence? (1988, p. 17)

He states that to answer the question, it is necessary, first of all, to be clear what constitutes the felicitous utterance. The felicitous performative utterance, Derrida argues that Austin claims, is an "allegedly present and singular emergence" (Derrida, p.17-8). However, Derrida contends

⁹ It is Derrida's significant and even monumental tenet and legacy to lead us to consider a negative part of a binary not to be supplement or negative but essential to the other "positive" part. In Derrida's approach to binary, each one of the two poles in binary should not be erased just because they are opposite to the extent that they were not entangled.

that the performative utterance could not succeed, if it “did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance” (Derrida, p. 18).¹⁰ The felicitous performative utterance is constructed by iterable utterances, as is the “parasitic” utterance. Then, the performative utterance is not singular emergence, as is the “parasitic” utterance.

In this view of the performative speech by Derrida, unlike in Culler’s, there is no oppositional relation between “original” and “parasitic,” or “single” and “iterable,” or “inside” and “outside.” Derrida’s argument is that the performative utterance could “happily bring off our action” when the formula of the utterance is “identifiable as conforming with an iterable model” (Derrida, 1988, p.18).

Austin (1975) insists that the performative utterance is single and original. However, it is not difficult to see Austin’s performative speech holds some iteration. Austin argues that the six conditions for the felicitous performative speech need *conventional* formulae. For example, Austin defines the “infelicities” are the cases “where there was no procedure or no accepted procedure; where the procedure was invoked in inappropriate circumstances” (p.39). In other words, the felicitous performative speech has to invoke “accepted procedure” “in appropriate circumstances.” Further, in redefining the performative speech through the idea of the illocutionary force, Austin in Lecture VIII states, “we must notice that the illocutionary act is a conventional act: an act done as conforming to a convention” (p. 105). These conventional formulae and acts can be also considered iterable because conventional formulae have to be repetitive.

¹⁰ “[C]itativity in this case” is not “of the same sort as in a theatrical play, a philosophical reference, or the recitation of a poem” (Derrida, 1988, p. 18).

Thus, Austin's exclusion of the performative utterance with the "unhappy" features as "parasitic" produces confusion, even contradiction, because the very condition for the felicitous performative speech is convention, which is repetitive. Austin seems to consider that "convention" is not parasitic, even though it is repetitive. It is important to examine how Austin construes "convention" as different from the parasitic use of language.

How "felicities" are different from "infelicities"?

As I just examined, Derrida (1988) argues that Austin's construction of some cited and so iterable utterances as "parasitic" cannot rigorously separate the two categories, "parasitic" and "single" or original.¹¹ There should be no rigorous opposition when the happily brought off performative speech is also conventional, repeatable and iterable. In this case, the idea of the felicitous performative utterance would be even impossible.

However, Derrida (1988) does not completely deny a singularity, a certain extent of singularity, of the felicitous performative utterance. Derrida discusses that the felicitous performative utterance would be *perhaps* possible if "citational doubling did not come to split and dissociate from itself the *pure singularity of the event*" (emphasis mine; p. 17). Convention, while iterable, could be still associated with "the pure singularity of the event."

Of course, here some questions come up: How could convention or "citational doubling" still hold "the pure singularity of the event?" or how could convention be both iterable and singular?

¹¹ Austin does not "say" that a performative utterance is a "single" event. Austin says that a performative speech is "original." But I think that this polarized positioning of "parasitic" and "normal" by Austin causes Derrida and other theorists such as Culler, Fish (1980), Iser (1978) to extrapolate that Austin regards non-citational utterances as original and single speech.

In Derrida's examination, Austin's felicitous performative speech can be produced in opposition to "other kinds of iteration within a general iterability," or "different kinds of marks or chains of iterable marks" (1988, p. 18), which are what Austin regards as "convention." When the performative speech is comprised of some chains of iterable marks, the speech cannot be a "singular event-utterance." However, it could count as relatively singular or original in comparison to "other kinds of iteration." In fact, later in the process of theorization, Austin (1975) himself acknowledges that there is no pure performative. In Derrida's understanding, difference among "other kinds of iteration," which is conventional formulae, could make the performative speech relatively singular and so felicitous.

In Derrida's discussion, this difference among conventional formulae is supposedly activated by the value of intention in Austin's theory. Derrida discusses that, in order to account for the relative singular felicitous performative speech, one needs to list "the other kinds of iteration" (1988, p.18) to make a difference from each other. This demands a typology of numerous forms of iteration, which Austin in fact does (Derrida, p.18). Further, as Derrida points out, numerous forms of iteration will require a value of intention to account for each utterance and to differentiate from other utterances.

The relatively singular performative utterance in the end hinges on "conscious intention" (Derrida, 1988, p. 18). This is why Austin explains that language in the parasitic use of language is "in special ways – intelligibly – used *not seriously*" (emphasis mine; 1975, p. 22). As the fifth condition of felicities, Austin writes, "a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts, feelings, or intentions" (p. 39). Therefore, Austin conceptualizes the "parasitic" speech as "non-serious" and "void" (p. 22), while "felicitous speech" as intentional.

Austin (1975) discusses that in order for speech to be performative, the speaker's intention of performing an act in following conventional formulae has to be present in an appropriate context in saying something (p. 9). The performative speech can avoid falling into a "void" by being parasitic on intention. The successful performative speech does not depend on, as Austin argues, whether the speech is iterable, but on whether the speaker issues it seriously. This quite makes sense because according to Austin's theory, "parasitic" utterances cannot invoke the procedure because it is not issued seriously.

Culler (1981) also clarifies why Austin's theory requires the value of intention, in a different way from Derrida. Culler points out that the context is one of the necessary determinants for the performative speech. Culler focuses on presence of the listener to see whether the context is determinable or not. According to Culler (1981), the listener imagine a context in which the utterance would make sense, and "graft[ing] a sequence onto a context that alters its functioning" (p. 23). Thus, a context keeps grafted: In the end, a context would diffuse and the supposedly fixable illocutionary force would vary. Therefore, Culler (1981) argues, Austin needs to incorporate the value of intention of the speaker in order to avoid the possibility of grafting a context and destabilize the illocutionary force.

However, Culler (1981) discusses that it is impossible because an intention cannot always signify something that the speaker intends or has in his/her mind in the moment of speaking.

Culler observes:

Either the speaker's intention is whatever content is present to consciousness at the moment of utterance, in which case it is variable and incomplete, unable to account for the illocutionary force of utterance, or else it is comprehensive and

divided – conscious and unconscious – a structural intentionality which is never anywhere present and which includes implications that never, as we say, entered my mind. (p. 28)

Culler (1981) argues that another intention, what Culler calls “the intention as product” (p. 28), could insinuate into the utterance from a relation between the listener and the utterance.

“The intention as a product” can derive from the speaker’s unconsciousness which is “the excess of what one says over what one knows, or of what one says over what one wants to say” (Culler, 1981, p. 27). Culler expounds a notion of “unconscious,” drawn from Vincent Descombes, not as “a phenomenon of the will but as a phenomenon of enunciation” (p. 27). And I do see, hear, and feel this intention many, many times, either in speaking or in writing, either in English or in Japanese.

The Iterability in Austin’s Theory

However, Derrida argues that as long as an utterance is iterable, “the intention animating the utterance will never be through and through present to itself and its content” (1988, p. 18). Intention of “animating the utterance” in the moment of speaking is not needed since “iteration structur[ing] it [intention]” (Derrida, p.18). An intention is a priori inscribed in the iterable utterance. The speaker is of course present, but Derrida argues that “consciousness, the conscious presence of the intention of the speaking subject” (p.18) is absent in Austin’s idea of performative speech. Contrary to Austin’s emphasis on “seriousness” as the decisive determinant for the performative speech, the iteration that can make for the performative speech

essentially entails an “absence of intending the actuality of utterance” (Derrida, p.18) on the side of the speaker.

Culler (1981) gives an example of how intention of the speaker does not make the performative speech brought off happily. At a wedding ceremony, even if one of the parties said that he/she was joking, this intention would not be decisive for the speech that performs. Culler says, “ what he has in mind at the moment of utterance does not determine what speech act his utterance performed” (p. 24). Only conventional formula can produce “how what is said is to be understood” without a conscious presence of intention *in the moment of speaking*.

I sometimes seem to make “felicitous” speeches, either in English or in Japanese in the sense that the speeches invoke a procedure that I expected. According to Austin (1975), an utterance with conventional formula is happily brought off when it is issued seriously. However, when I do not (or can not) follow conventional rules “seriously,” a parasitic use in Austin’s theory, my utterances without seriousness seem to “invoke the particular procedure” and so become felicitous. When I use conventional rules, I do not find myself serious, because I borrow the utterances and statements from an unknown someone, regardless of language. In fact, I even feel that repeating or mimicking some conventional formulae empties my mind out. I feel “fake” when I follow conventional rules and say, for example, some condolence to someone who loses her important person. Yet, my utterances of conventional formula without seriousness, in other words my parasitic use of language, can perform in spite of non-seriousness.

The Iterability in Writing

Derrida (1988) does not solely focus, in *Signature Event Context*, on the iterability in Austin's idea of speech as performative. One of Derrida's articulated purposes in this essay is to examine how both an intention and a context plays an important role, but is not determinable, in the concept of writing as communication as transference throughout history. The section on Austin's theory is a part of this big picture to argue that a context and an intention is not determinant for communication. Now I look at Derrida's analysis of how the predominant concept of writing also works.

In the very beginning of this article, Derrida shows possible different concepts of "communication," and argues that there is a widely accepted idea of communication as a means of transportation of a meaning. Different from oral and gestural communication in which something other than the written sign could represent and convey an idea, written communication as transference of a meaning presupposes that the written sign is a representation of a person's idea, thought, intention, meaning. Derrida (1988) points out that this representational aspect of writing is flatly shown in Condillac's statements: "*To express the idea of a man or of a horse, one represented the form of the one or of the other, and the first attempt at writing was nothing but a simple drawing*" (p. 4-5). In the notion of writing as the communication, the pictorial quality lies in words, language, writing. Words are the mirror of the ideas, thoughts and meanings. Statements, or written signs in Derrida's term, could supposedly reflect and even contain thoughts, ideas, meanings without producing any leak or any residue within the notion of writing as communication.

In this conceptualization of language is neither the writer nor the reader involved. Only the written sign is supposed to represent an idea, thought, and meaning. The written sign "does

the work” without a presence of the writer. Derrida writes, “For a writing to be a writing it must continue to “act” and to be readable when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written” (1988, p.8). The writing should drift from the “author” as the anchor, when it’s cut off from “consciousness as the ultimate authority.” However, in the notion of the communication, the writing must not drift. It has to get to the destination, and it can since iterable written signs, as an iterable utterance does, structures intention in it. Just as the performative speech is possible without the sender’s fully conscious attention to the intention, so is the idea of writing as the communication constructed on the iterability, a possibility of the absence of conscious presence of intention.

“Immanent Structure of Promise or Desire”

Speaking.

When utterances with conventional formulae are almost always expected to be identifiable and iterable, and intentions are almost always expected to be structured in the iterable utterances, it is little wonder that the speaker feels comfortable, and at home, with language. The speaker’s proximity to language makes intact the synergy of conventional formulae and its intention toward “performance” or “communication.” This closeness to language as being at home produces a certain relation between the speaker and language.

However, the relation is not only constituted by self’s proximity to language but also a quality of language. Derrida (1996) explains a quality of language and calls the quality the “solipsism” of language. Derrida states, “a language can only speak itself of itself” (p. 22). Derrida adds, a language cannot and does not have a metalanguage (p. 22). Any other language

or set of terms cannot describe or analyze the language itself. This quality is the “solipsism” of language for Derrida. This “solipsism” is, of course, independent of anyone.

The solipsism reveals that the iterability, the possibility of being repeated in the absence of the intention of actual signification, is constructed by something outside of language, “we”. When language can only speak of itself in itself, how can “we” know if language is repeatable? Without metalanguage, it’s also impossible to see whether language is repeatable or not. The iterability of utterances does not come from the nature of language. “We” make language repeatable.

Derrida (1996) states that all speech is also informed by “an immanent structure of promise or desire, an expectation without a horizon of expectation” (p. 21). He describes this immanent structure of promise and desire: “As soon as I speak before even formulating a promise, an expectation or a desire as such. . . . I am within this promise or this threat” (p.22). The utterance is placed into “the structure of promise or desire.” Austin’s idea of performative speech presupposes the “immanent structure of promise and desire.” The illocutionary force promises, warns and etc, before the sender formulates a promise: This is the immanent structure.

The structure of promise or desire, further, “gathers the language together” (Derrida, 1996, p. 22). The structure, which “gathers the language together,” should not be of the language itself. The structure can gather the language, because one is involved with language. Therefore, “the immanent structure of promise or desire” does not mean the solipsism of language for Derrida. Only when someone involves herself in a language, for example in ‘addressing to the other,’ does the structure come out. The “structure of promise or desire” is constituted by a relation between self and the solipsism of language.

But who is this self in relation to the solipsism of language? The solipsism of language, which cannot allow for a metalanguage, might alienate the speaker from language. Or, when a self tries to engage with language, the solipsism of language constitutes self, not the other way around because the solipsism is self-contained and so independent of anyone. Felman (1993) acutely explains, language “unwittingly writes us” (cited in Miller, 1998, p. 149). This is because of the solipsism of language. Thus, in relation to the solipsism, the speaker must be invulnerable. It seems impossible for the vulnerable speaker who is constituted by the solipsism to construct “the immanent structure of promise and desire,” because the self vulnerable to language can’t gather the language.

On the other hands, in Austin’s theory, when the speaker is considered to recognize the identity of written signs, the speaker might even think that she possesses a language. Such a speaker in Austin’s theory could not even be seen as constituted by the solipsism of language. The speaker is also conceptualized in Austin’s theory to be fully conscious of the intention of actual signification, while conscious presence of intention to the utterance is absent, according to Derrida. However, Austin’s theory takes a value of intention of the speaker for granted. Without this assumption, the utterance cannot be performative in the way that the utterance produces the illocutionary force. Rather, it is more accurate to say that the speaker in Austin’s theory must value an idea of the intention. The speaker for Austin can supposedly control language and thus the speaker’s self is conceived as autonomous.

The speaker, who is constituted by the solipsism of language, seems to be transformed into this different self, who can control and be fully conscious in Austin’s theory—into the self as autonomous. Further, it seems to me the idea of this autonomous self transforms the solipsism

into the manageable repetitive, iterable language and so constructs “the structure of promise or desire” with this idea of language as manageable, repetitive and iterable.

I am afraid of this “expectation without a horizon of expectation” that informs all speech. I am afraid of the other’s unnoticed comfortability with English as home. Feeling at home in a language, Derrida (1996) writes, “disturbs the inhabitants, the fellow citizens, and the compatriots” (p. 57). All the more for that, I covet that feeling in the name of the “purity” of English, so that I am not threatened and disturbed by a “promise” that a speaker presumes is inherent in a (performative) utterance.

“The immanent structure” constructed by the idea of the self as autonomous makes it possible for the speaker to take for granted that language contains what is expected without any leftover or any leak, because the structure “gathers the language together.” In other words, the structure makes language immune to something “strange” from “outside,” or something that cannot be identified. According to Derrida’s theory, an utterance made within the immanent structure is expected to be saturated with the locutionary and the illocutionary force in an iterable utterance and have no residue out of it. Even with the absence of the speaker, the structure of promise or desire already enables an utterance to perform.

Writing.

According to Derrida (1988), Condillac does not completely kill off the presence of the writer. For Condillac, the absence of the writer is continuously repaired, modified and extenuated by representation that “regularly supplants [supplee] presence” (Derrida, 1988, p. 5). The written sign for Condillac “subsists” and “does not exhaust itself in the moment of its

inscription” (Derrida, 1988, p. 9). In Condillac’s notion of writing, the written sign can enfold the writer’s idea, meaning and thought, since language is transparent. As Condillac describes, “writing is picture, reproduction, imitation of its content” (Derrida, p.5). Therefore, the writer’s absence is considered to be modified and extenuated in the subsisting written signs--a difference from speaking that is so much taken for granted but Derrida dismantles. The mechanism of how this idea of the modified absence works is the same as that in Austin’s theory--the iterability. The iterable written sign, like iterable utterance, structures intentions in them.

What this modification of the writer’s absence brings out seems to be another version of “immanent structure of promise and desire.” This modification revives the writer’s intention in the written sign; in other words, the modification puts the written sign into the promise or the threat, an “immanent structure of promise or desire.” In this case, the structure does not seem to be the same as the one that I examined in the above section of speaking, because this structure is constructed by the relation of self to the representational character of language.

The solipsism of language does not seem to be involved in the construction of this structure in the writing. However, the idea of language as transparent might be another transformation of the solipsism by self. Self who feels at home in language might conceive the solipsism as another quality of language to represent an idea or a thing without any help from outside. The solipsism of language can be construed as any idea of language, since it does not have a metalanguage to speak of itself. In Condillac’s notion of writing, again, self is autonomous and neutral and language is transparent. Again these two seem to be in a close proximity.

It's possible to see this relation about self as neutral and language as transparent in Austin's speech act theory. His theory does not put forward the idea of language as transparent. However, Austin's the idea of the illocutionary and the perlocutionary forces might presuppose that language is transparent and representational. The notion of language as representational is inevitable for the illocutionary force that is supposed to carry the speaker's intention to perform. In Austin's and Condillac's theory, language *appears* to the writer and the speaker to be able to contain the intentions of the speaker and the writer.

“The immanent structure of promise and desire” that promotes Condillac's notion of writing and Austin's speech act theory can construct, or simultaneously can be constructed by, the idea that language can contain what the mark, written or phonic, signifies for the writer, the reader, the speaker, or the listener. While I believe that I don't speak the same Japanese as others, still I could grasp some of what the speakers or writers contain into words in Japanese, probably, as their conscious intentions, since I take the unity of written signs and graphemes for granted. In spite of a possible leak from and residue of what language is presupposed to contain, I still might grasp of some of an utterance and writing because of the unity. In a reverse way, when I read something written in Japanese but I can't find the identity of the written signs, I might not be able to “get it.” Or I might find the identities in the writing that is not “intended” by a writer. Thus, in spite of the solipsism of language, a language can be turned into a container by the “immanent structure of promise and desire,” which can gather a language in a place “inside.”

Absence as “rupture in presence.”

While Austin and Condillac take the absence as the modified presence, Derrida (1988) argues that the absence of both the writer and the reader in representation is “a break in presence” (p. 5).

No matter how much the immanent structure of promise and desire can be made unfluctuated, there are some moments when the containability of language by the structure seems to be breakable. As a writer, I wouldn’t hesitate to say that I often, so often, experience that my utterance and my intention in it does not reach a reader. And I suppose most writers have a similar experience. When I was asked, “So, are you saying this, that and this?,” which is totally out of my “intention,” I would get discouraged and even might accuse the questioner of not getting what I intend. I should agree with Culler’s take about this “misunderstanding”: “I may quite routinely include in my intention implications that had never occurred to me before I was questioned” (Culler, 1981, p. 28). This intention, which is never present at the moment of writing, is “the intention as a product,” according to Culler (p. 28). I thought this ‘intention’--or misunderstanding for a writer who believes in the containability of language by being in “the structure of promise or desire”--was produced by a lack of the impure “purity” of a language. A lack of the impure “purity” of a language as the iteration causes “my” English to disperse from what I intend to put into the writing, I thought.

But this is not necessarily true. This “miscommunication” happens in spite of the iterability. My iterable utterance in Japanese sometimes fails to arrive at a receiver. I supposedly “have” the impure pure relation between the iterable utterance in Japanese and its concomitant intention, just because I am a “native” Japanese speaker. But my iterable utterances do not always perform what they are supposed to perform. The “possibility of being repeated in

the absence of intending the actuality of utterance” that constitutes the iterability is not necessarily undergirded by the structure of promise and desire.

The iterability contains two opposing possibilities. One of them is what I have examined so far: the containability of language that is constructed by the “immanent structure of promise and desire.” The other one is that the iterability makes this containability impossible. These two opposing possibilities are due to the absence of conscious presence to intention of the speaker and the writer.

I here recapitulate the relation of the absence of the writer and the speaker to written signs and phonic units. The absence is modified in the iterable written sign and phonic sign, which leads the iteration to structure intentions in it. Further, the absence of conscious presence of intention supposedly makes the written sign and phonic unit intact.

Ironically, however, this intactness is breakable because of the iterability’s inner constituent – the absence. Derrida writes about the iteration in Austin’s theory, “The iteration structuring it [intention] a priori introduces into it a dehiscence and a cleft [brisure], which are essential” (1988, p. 18). The “dehiscence and (a) cleft” that the iteration introduces into it indicates to me the absence, which Derrida argues is “a rupture in presence,” not “the modified absence” as presence. The absence as “a rupture in presence” could give a space for the “intention as a product,” about which Culler talks. The iterability has the double-fold quality because of its necessary absence of the sender and the receiver.

Derrida (1988) also contends, in the analysis of writing as the communication, that written signs are also constituted by “the spacing,” which is tied to “a rupture in presence” (p. 9). This “spacing” implies that a gap lies in the tight relation between a unit (phonic, written and etc)

and a “grapheme,” as an idea, a meaning, a thought. The “spacing” could generate another possibility from the absence. Derrida (1988) explains that this “spacing” is not the “simple negativity of a lacuna” but “the emergence of the mark” (p. 10). “The mark” in this phrase is obviously not the re-markable, identifiable mark. If “the mark” in “the emergence of the mark” were re-markable and identifiable ones, it would be already there and not need to emerge. The differing mark emerges out of “the spacing.”

Somewhere in *Signature Event Context*, Derrida (1988) describes the iterability as “the network of effacement and of difference” (p.10). The iterability effaces some other possible markings of the iterable written sign. And yet, Derrida argues, the “iterability that constituted their [written signs] identity does not permit them ever to be a unity that is identical to itself” (p. 10). “The marks” effaced by the iterability might come out of the “spacing.” Thus, the written sign “carry[ies] with them a force that can break with” (Derrida, p. 9) the containability. This force that might come out of the “spacing” might be embedded in the possibility of the absence that constituted the iterability.

The “spacing” in writing as the communication could hold the same quality as “a dehiscence and a cleft” as a structural predicate of iteration in Austin’s speech act theory. Just as the cleft might give a room for the “intention as a product as a phenomena of enunciation,” the “spacing” might give a chance for the effaced marks to emerge. “The spacing” in the written sign and “a dehiscence and a cleft” of the utterance hold a potentiality to break up with the iterability that on the other hand might make the written sign and the utterance intact--the same logic in which “infelicities” are predicate for “felicities.” The potentiality destabilizes the determinacy of what is contained and communicated.

I am recapitulating what I have discussed before delving into Derrida's notion of a relation between self and language. Derrida uncovers that performative speech and writing as the communication is enabled by the iterability. The iterability is constituted by the possibility of being repeated in the absence of intention to actual signification, while intention of the speaker and the writer is valued in Austin and Condiallac's theories. This emphasis on the value of intention, in spite of the absence of intention, is facilitated by the "immanent structure of promise and desire." This structure makes language containable. However, the iterability could break the containability of language by its constituent.

Thus, the relation of self as fully conscious and autonomous to language as transparent, which constructs the "immanent structure," is delusional. Derrida argues that the relation between self and the solipsism of language is "inalienable alienation." We/I cannot be without a language. So we/I think that we are inalienable from a language. We/I long for a language, while and because self is constituted by language. We/I might not be able to avoid being delusional.

"Inalienable Alienation"

In the process of this two-fold function of the iterability, language is "gathered together in its very dissemination" (Derrida, 1996, p. 22). How could this gathering take place in dissemination that seems opposite to the gathering? This "gathering" itself is produced by "the immanent structure of promise and desire." However, inalienable alienation from language also shakes the rigor of the structure of promise and desire. Its rigor will collapse, thereby possibly making a language disseminate, instead of containing.

Derrida (1996) describes his and anyone's relation to his/anyone's "own" language:

Anyone should be able to declare under oath: I have only one language and it is not mine: my "own" language is, for me, a language that cannot be assimilated. My language, the only one I hear myself speak and agree to speak, is the language of the other. (p.25)

This relation is what Derrida describes as inalienable alienation. This structure of alienation without alienation "structures the peculiarity and property of language" (p.25). But this structure is obviously not the same as "the immanent structure of promise or desire." Inalienable alienation makes it possible for one to assume "the *phenomenon* of hearing-oneself-speak in order to mean-to-say" (Derrida, p.25). However, this phenomenon is also "phantasm" (Derrida, p.25), because of the structure of alienation without alienation; one is alienated from language, so "the phenomenon of hearing-oneself-speak in order to mean-to-say" can be an illusion.

This idea of inalienable alienation constitutes Derrida's notion of writing. In expounding his notion of writing, Derrida (1996) uses the expressions, "the fold" and "the folding." In order to examine Derrida's idea of writing, examining the two words is necessary. I cite one sentence here to break it down to see a difference between "the fold" and "the folding," and Derrida's concept of writing as well: "[O]ne must, still from the abyss, take note of a chance that is bound to complicate the deal or *the folding*, and involve *the fold* in dissemination, as dissemination" (p. 26). The "folding" as present progressive seems to point to what is happening when the immanent structure gathers the language, that is, folding what-I-mean-to-say in the gathered language, which is in fact "the phenomenon" instituted by inalienable alienation. However, this "folding" becomes complicated because the doing is, at the same time, dissemination, according

to this sentence. The “folding” indicates an oxymoronic nature that “the folding” is not just to fold or to gather, but to disperse – here one can remember the two fold of the iterability, and the two-fold is equivalent to the two-fold of this “folding.” On the other hand, “the fold,” as a noun, which is involved in dissemination, *seems* to simply indicate something that has been folded, in this case some chains of marks.

Derrida’s use of the word “folding” is quite suggestive to describe “the deal,” writing. “Fold” as a verb signifies, in a dictionary, not only bending over on itself but also, contradictorily, unfolding. Put these dictionary-meanings of the word in this relatively unstable “context” of this sentence in Derrida’s writing--which I ironically wish stayed put--, I read “the folding” both as a re-marking of chains of marks and as an unfolding of the re-marking. “The folding” can also manifest the double nature of the immanent structure. For Derrida, this double nature of the folding is “gathering in its very dissemination.”

In a quite similar way, Derrida (1996) proposes the two contradicting propositions on the inalienably alienated relation between self and language in speaking: “(1) We only ever speak one language and (2) we never speak only one language” (p. 7).

Derrida (1996) explains how these two contradicting propositions are possible, again, by using the word “fold”:

Because the fold of such a *re-mark* is there, the replica or the re-application of the quasi-transcendental or quasi-ontological within the phenomenal, ontical, or empirical example, and within the phantasm itself where the latter presupposes the trace in language, we are justifiably obliged to say at once that “we only speak one language,” and “we never speak only one language.” (pp. 26-27)

Derrida rephrases “the fold” as “the replica or the re-application.” “The fold” seems to signify an exact copy of a *re-mark*, even though it does not always identify with the transcendental or the ontological, if there is any. When “the fold” as the re-mark is within the phenomenal example,” “the fold” designates the containability of the mark by re-marking – the iterability. “The fold” in this usage leads to the first proposition that “we only ever speak one language.”

On the other hand, “the fold” as re-mark also can be located within the phantasm by re-marking. “The fold” within the phantasm can be (d)elusive, like a phantom, since “the trace in language” presupposed by “chain of marks” destabilizes “the replica or the re-application” of a re-mark. Then, “the fold” of iterable marks could not contain what it is presupposed to do. This phantasmal “fold” can facilitate the second proposition that “we never speak only one language.” “The fold” placed within the phantasm disrupts a possible unity by the iterability. Thus, the “fold,” like changing curves inward and outward that a drape creates, enables the two contradicting propositions in speaking.

This double nature is not separated. Inalienable alienation induces the phenomenon of “hearing-oneself-speak in order to mean-to-say.” However this phenomenon *is* the phantasm, since one is alienated from language. One is alienated from language because of the solipsism. But we cannot be without language. This relation also makes the unity of the mark, written or phonic, impossible. Rather, this relation creates “the trace in language” that chain of marks presuppose.

“The trace in language,” such as passing of marks in memory and experience, creates numerous possible iterations, although porous, of the marks in writing.¹² According to Roland Pata (2007), “trace” in Derrida’s idea is “something that *is appearing*, and understood as *an appearance*” (p. 42). This idea of “trace” in language can readily diminish the iterability. Porous, not constructive, layers of different marks could create an interstice, which might belie the “phenomenon of hearing-oneself-speak in order to mean-to-say” and reveal more phantasm.

Derrida (1988) contends, most interestingly and provocatively to me, “writing [as differentiated from ‘written signs’] will never have the slightest effect on either the structure or the content of the meaning (the ideas) that it is supposed to transmit [vehicular]” (p. 4). Writing for Derrida is not a neutral means of conveying the meaning that is supposedly contained in a language by the iterability. Writing is at once “folding” as phenomena and “unfolding” as phantasm.

When I remain at home in a language or when I deal with a language by hinging on the “immanent structure of promise or desire,” I might say, “My coworker speaks Japanese, so it’s easier to understand each other.” This often-heard statement is founded on the proposition that “we only ever speak one language,” and that we have one idiom only.

On the other hand, I can say, “I speak Japanese, but I don’t speak the same Japanese as someone else who speaks Japanese.”¹³ My mother speaks Japanese, my father also speaks

¹² You might want to call the layers of different marks multiple meanings. However, dissemination in Derrida’s conceptualization in Monolingualism does not designate the idea of a language as a means of transferring meanings, ideas, thoughts, since “the trace in language” interrupt the intention in the iteration as an essential element for writing and speech as a means of transference. Then, a semantic horizon has to be dismembered from writing. Dissemination should be disengaged from the concept of polysemics (Derrida, 1988, 1996).

¹³ Here, I do not talk about different dialects within the language called Japanese.

Japanese, and my sister and on and on. However, not anyone of them speaks “the same” Japanese as the others. One time, my mother said to me, “you are speaking a foreign language, I don’t understand you.”¹⁴ Her claim that I speak a foreign language sheds light on this proposition. No pure idiom exists.

In addition, not anyone would speak the same “language” or the idiom as she has done before. I would be afraid to talk to someone whom I knew before and have not seen for a while. “My” language might not be understandable for the person for several reasons. Probably because of changes in the way I talk¹⁵. Or probably because of linguistic and societal and cultural changes. One never speaks only one language through her life. These seemingly oxymoronic relations are inalienable alienation.

Writing and speaking as the double “fold” creates, and is created by inalienable alienation, the relation between self and language that Derrida propounds. While we try to fold what we want to say in language because we feel at home in language, “the folding” as unfolding is inevitably entailed because we are alienated from language and so are haunted with “the trace in language.” In my understanding, when “the fold” is placed in the “phenomenal example” by the “immanent structure of promise and desire,” which turns out to be inalienable alienation, self is conceptualized as autonomous, and so self controls language. However, “the fold” becomes “the unfolding” because of the “space” “dehiscence” or “cleft” and inalienable alienation, since self is, in fact, constituted by the solipsism of language. I would call the former relation as “belonging,” since Derrida calls the latter as “inalienable alienation.”

¹⁴ This “example” could be extended to address a notion of discourse, but I am not going that way.

¹⁵ But what is this convenient expression or idiom, “the way I talk”? I might not “get it” because it is an idiom and so iterable. In this exploration, it is fully oxymoronic to ask what this “exactly” means, but this question might also show an impossibility of iterability when I use this iterable sentence. I dare to ask as aside “What is exactly “the way I talk?”

The other: receiver, listener, reader

Culler's (1981) idea of "the intention as a product" can derive from the speaker's unconsciousness¹⁶ which produces "the excess of what one says over what one knows, or of what one says over what one wants to say" (p. 27). And I do see, hear, and feel this intention many, many times, either in speaking or in writing, either in English or in Japanese.

This intention as a product shows up only when the receiver, the listener or the reader, is involved. Only the "immanent structure of promise or desire" could avoid this happening. Only when/if the listener also is embedded in the same structure, then, "the intention as a product" might not emerge. Depending on the listener, iteration would generate various possible "meanings" and "intentions."

Further, the force to break the containability by the iterability does not always emerge. Sometimes this force of rupture seems to stay dormant and iterability seems to supersede it: This is the reason we think we communicate well. Both "a dehiscence and a cleft" and the force of the "spacing" could emerge out of the iterability by the reader and the listener involving herself in chains of marks.

Even if the utterance and writing are made in the absence of the sender, they are going to be, in the end, listened and read by someone. Derrida (1988) articulates toward the end of *Signature Event Context* that "[W]riting is read: it is not the site, 'in the last instance,' of a hermeneutic deciphering, the decoding of a meaning or truth" (p. 21). The reader has to be taken into account in notions of writing.

¹⁶ Culler (1981) expounds a notion of "unconscious", drawn from Vincent Descombes, not as "a phenomenon of the will but as a phenomenon of enunciation" (p. 27).

Chapter 7: Overview of Reader-Response Theories.

Jane P. Tompkins (1980) states that reader-response theory is “not a conceptually unified critical position” (p. ix). Reader-response theory is a term that is associated with the criticism which uses the words “reader,” “response” and “experiences.” It is recognized to begin in the 1960’s and 1970’s, particularly in the U.S. and Germany. In the U.S. context, reader-response theory arises in opposition to the New Criticism and /or formalism in which the reader’s role is completely ignored. Wimsatt & Beardsley (1954) pointed out confusion between the poem and its “effect” or “result” in an article entitled *The Affective Fallacy*. This article represents the New Criticism’s abhorrent attitude toward an attention to reader’s role in the poem: The New Criticism focuses on what is in the poem or text, not on what it “does.”

An important predecessor for reader-response theory went back to 1920’s. Although I.A. Richards is widely recognized as the father of the New Criticism, his *Practical Criticism* (1929) is sometimes taken as “the seminal theorization of reader-oriented criticism” (Freund, 1987, p.23). He experimented on Cambridge undergraduates to see how their responses to a group of thirteen poems were constructed. He analyzed the students’ responses and considered that the students’ responses were sometime irrelevantly associated with the poems. The students responded to the poems with “personal obsessions, chance associations, and irrelevant conventional opinions about poetry” (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.61). Richards considers that these students could not respond to the poems “appropriately” partly because of their literary training. However, Richards did not claim this as the neglect of the readers’ responses. Rather, his point is that poetry can keep balance between reader’s emotional responses and “appropriate” responses (Graff, 1987).

I.A. Richards' contemporary theorist, Louise Rosenblatt, is also an important predecessor. In *Literature as Exploration* (1995), she pushed forward Richards' analysis of the students' responses and constructed a reader-oriented theory with John Dewey's notion of experience and transaction as a framework for her theory. Because of, or in spite of her reader response theory that was recognized as radical against the background of literary study in the 1930's, trends of literary study ignored her theory and the New Criticism took a lead (Tompkins, 1980). However, Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration*, first published in 1937, was published again in the second edition and keeps new students reading. She is one of the influential reader-response theorists in the 1960's and 1970's and beyond, especially in the field of English and education.

Reader-response theories bloomed when the Konstanz school of reception theory in Germany, represented by Roman Ingarden and Wolfgang Iser, drew more attention within a field of literary study in the 70s. Simultaneously, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland and David Bleich promulgate their theories in their proliferate works. Each of them situates him/herself in different theoretical beliefs.

Reader-response theory is a generic name for the theory that draws attention to a reader and her response in reading a literary work. Even within the U.S. context, not all of the theorists who are lumped together under this nomenclature name their theories the same: Stanley Fish calls his theory affective formalism; Rosenblatt, aesthetic; Wolfgang Iser's theory, a reception theory and so on. Reader-response theory, rather reader-response theories, has some convergences and divergences among them.

My interest lies in relation between self and language within reader-response theories. However, just focusing on this issue would be misleading because the issue is a part of various conceptualizations of a meaning, a reader, a text and a relation between a reader and a text within reader-response theories. Therefore, first I map out some ideas that underpin the theories and see convergences and divergences, complexities and ambivalences, among them.

On Mapping out

One of the simplest ways of mapping out the field of reader response theory--or any field--would be to select “major” reader response theories and explicate them individually without any connection among them. Another way could be to delve into a theoretical underpinning of each of the selected theories: or to lay out convergences and divergences among the theories. However, any of those ways will turn into a one-dimensional map, since my interests and perspectives frame a selection of, and a connection among, the selected major theorists. For instance, while Lois Tyson (1999) addresses David Bleich’s ideas of symbolization and resymbolization, Davis & Womack (2002) emphasize Bleich’s notion of “communal knowledge.” This different attention to the same theorist is ascribed to the critics’ different perspectives and the different interests associated with the perspectives. Thus, it is inevitable that critics become selective.

Therefore, instead of drawing a one-dimensional map, I propose that a “google” type of map, where we can see depth and breadth of a field, will present multiple dimensions and arrays of connections. One version of a “google” type of map will be a presentation of not only some critics’ different maps of some of the reader response theories but also the different ways in

which the critics map out the theories. This layered map will illustrate different aspects and layers of the “same” theory.

Also along with a layered mapping, I will articulate my position in terms of each meta-critic’s reading of some constituents of the theories. The investigation of complexities of reader-response theories with my reading of different meta-critics’ readings of the theories will allow me to highlight some ideas that underpin some reader response theories, such as transaction, and are deeply entangled in my issue, a relation between self and language.¹⁷

Chiefly, three ways of mapping out the reader-response theorists,¹⁸ whom I name above, are employed by some critics about the theories. One of them is to put some reader response theorists on a continuum about where a meaning resides, in the text or in the reader. The second one is to categorize some theorists by some common aspects that a critic sees among the theorists. Lastly, some critics delve into each theory without categorizing and naming the theories. In the following discussions, I will start with the last category in which a metacritic examines each theory individually, so that I can lay out the roughness of the field. Then I will move to one way of mapping as “continuum” followed by an issue of where the meaning “is,”

¹⁷ I’m doing this intricate mapping-out because I am drawn to Elizabeth Freund’s (1987) thought on a literary theory. Her awareness of unstable intelligibility of language leads her to define a literary theory as “a text, a literary representation, and thus necessarily [it] remains contaminated, indebted to rhetoricity” (p. 18). Furthermore, she warns me about a way of reading a literary theory. She writes “if theoretical and philosophical discourse has no privileged status, no purified metalanguage in which to conduct and express its investigations, it must be read in a double movement: on the one hand, with the same provisional trust or credence, and on the other with the same suspicious scrutiny” (p. 19). Juxtapositions of some critics’ readings/mappings with my reading of the field, I think, will help me read the “same” theories with “suspicious scrutiny”.

¹⁸ Categorization is one of the bricks that feminist poststructuralisms attempt to dismantle. I am making a categorization here, but I aim to make layers of some criticisms of reader-response theories, not to flatten them out. Further, by categorizing the ways in which reader-response theories are criticized, it is possible to see some issues among the theories.

either in the text or in the reader. Then I will examine the other way of mapping as “categorization” followed by the concepts of “transaction.”

1. Individual

Freund’s way of mapping (1987: See Figure 1)¹⁹ discusses six theorists, I.A. Richards, Jonathan Culler, Stanley Fish, Norman Holland, Wolfgang Iser, and David Bleich separately, but sometimes makes some connections among them without naming their theories. She claims that a theorization of reading comes into being with the New Criticism. I’ll also look at the criticisms and the issues that other meta-critics do not raise but that she examines.

Through her examination of Holland’s reader-response theory, Freund calls attention to a relation between self and language. Holland employs Freud’s disciple, Ernst Kris’s aesthetic theory. Ernst (1952) theorizes artistic form as “an expression of the ego’s successful harnessing of the explosive energies of desire in habiting the id” (as cited in Freund, 1987, p. 118). Drawn to this idea, Holland (1976) curtly states, “we can arrive at someone’s identity by interpreting their behavior for an underlying thematic unity” (p. 337). Freund suggests that not only Holland’s theory but also psychologically oriented literary theory lacks the questioning of language as a communicating or mediating tool. Therefore, she criticizes Holland’s idea of identity as not “the product of our linguistic practice” (p. 128).

Freund adroitly examines Jonathan Culler’s shift from structuralism to the deconstructionism in relation to reader-response theory. Freund briefly explains how reader-response theories are crisscrossed with structuralism, which traditionally centers on the rules and grammars of an internal construction of literary text. The structuralist enterprise of reading recognizes the reader

¹⁹ Figure 1 on page 173

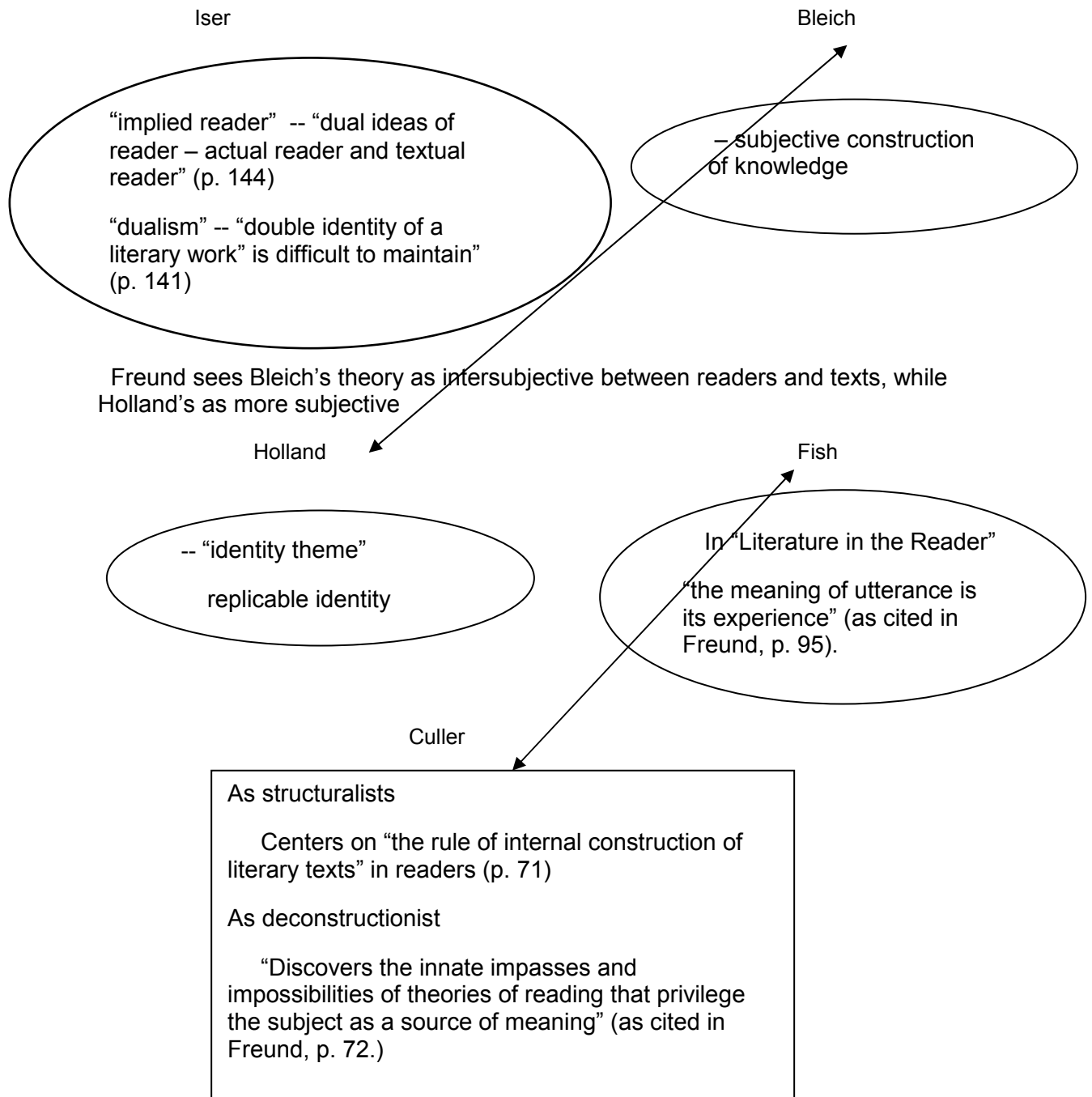


Figure 1. Categorization - Mapping of Freund (1987)

as a “master of literary competence” (Freund, 1987, p. 79). In fact, Jonathan Culler (1982), who sees a continuity of structuralism and poststructuralism, argues that the structuralism and semantics lead some critics to focus on readers who reveal the structure and the codes. The reader for Culler is textualized and “is the result rather than the cause of linguistic structure” (Freund, 1987, p.79).

After Culler shifted more toward deconstruction, he problematizes the notions of reading experience in reader-response theories. According to Culler (1982), there are “the innate impasses and impossibilities of theories of reading” that take up readers’ reading experience as a sole interpretive category. He argues that “what is at stake in the appeal to reader’s experience” is “‘difference and division’” (p. 87). “Difference and division” comes out, according to Culler, because readers’ experience of reading can never be immediately accessible. What is accessible is “a narrative of what readers do” (p. 87). Also, Culler describes feminist literary critics’ employment of reading experience as “not the sequence of thoughts present to the reader’s consciousness as she moves through the text” (p. 63.) Therefore, for him what is actually described is “neither present nor immediate” but is “a hypothesis, an invented construct, for ‘experience’ is divided and deferred - already behind us as something to be recovered, but still before us as something to be produced” (p. 87).

Informed by this critique by Culler, Freund emphasizes a lag between what happens and a story of what happens. In reading Fish’s *Literature in the Reader*, she promulgates that the temporality of reading experience is impossible, since “there is always a lag.” She succinctly articulates, “no discursive *analysis* of the event of reading will coincide with the reading experience” (p. 80).

Culler examines some reader-response theories in different articles (1975a, 1975b, 1976) in the 1970's, when the theories were considered to be a frontier of criticism. The theories that he talks about include Barthes', Fish's, Iser's, and some camps of feminists' theories. In the article *The Frontier of Criticism* (1975a), Culler points out that Barthes looks at how the reader is constituted as the "reader." The reader is considered to hold "the public codes and mental operations, assimilated through an experience of literature and literary training" (p. 610). According to Culler, the text is more important for Barthes. Then, Culler compares Iser's theory with Barthes'. Iser's construction of the "implied reader," Culler says, deals with some of the problems that Barthes raises. However, Culler criticizes Iser's theory as a ramification of the traditional interpretation through the focus on the effects of various narrative techniques, although the theory stresses the involvement of the reader.

In *Stanely Fish and the Righting of the Reader* (1975b), although Culler does not mention J. L. Austin's speech act theory, it is clear to me that Culler sees some influence of Austin's theory on Fish in terms that inquiry of the literary text is to inquire what it does rather than what it is. Also Culler argues that Fish's theory is "an investigation of reading as a rule-governed, productive process" (p.31). In a chapter of *On Deconstruction* (1982), he rivets attention to its use of "experience" in reading, a constituent of reader-response theories, by looking at a history of feminist criticisms.

Mailloux's criticism (1977; See Figure 2)²⁰ centers on status of the text and the reader in terms of interpretation in each theory. Mailloux situates Fish's theory, the most elusive reader-response theory, in the center of his map. Fish shifts his idea of the text's ontology from the view that the text manipulates the reader to the one that the manipulative text itself is constituted

²⁰ Figure 2 on page 176

Mailloux's assumption is that all reader response theories share the phenomenological assumption that it is impossible to separate perceiver from perceived, subject from object.

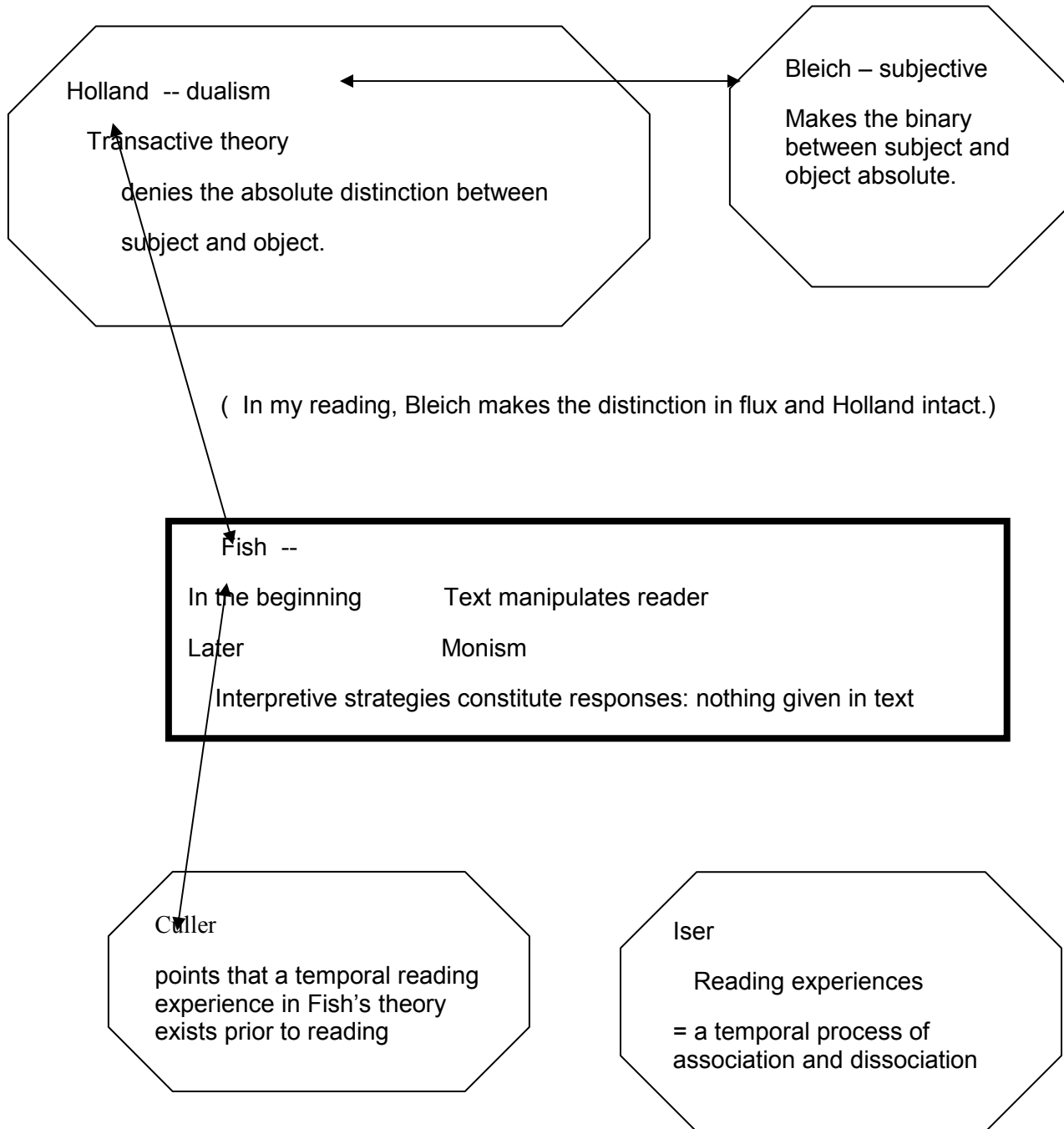


Figure 2. Mapping of Mailloux (1977)

by readers' interpretive strategies. Mailloux juxtaposes Holland's theory with Fish's at the later phase of Fish's career when he postulates that everything is constituted by readers' interpretive strategies and there is nothing given in the text. Holland's theory also changed into the opposite direction to Fish's. Through this juxtaposition, Mailloux points out that both of them fall into the issue of what the text does when the reader takes an interpretative authority. By examining other reader-response theorists, Mailloux investigates the issue of what is an object of literary interpretation among reader-response theories.

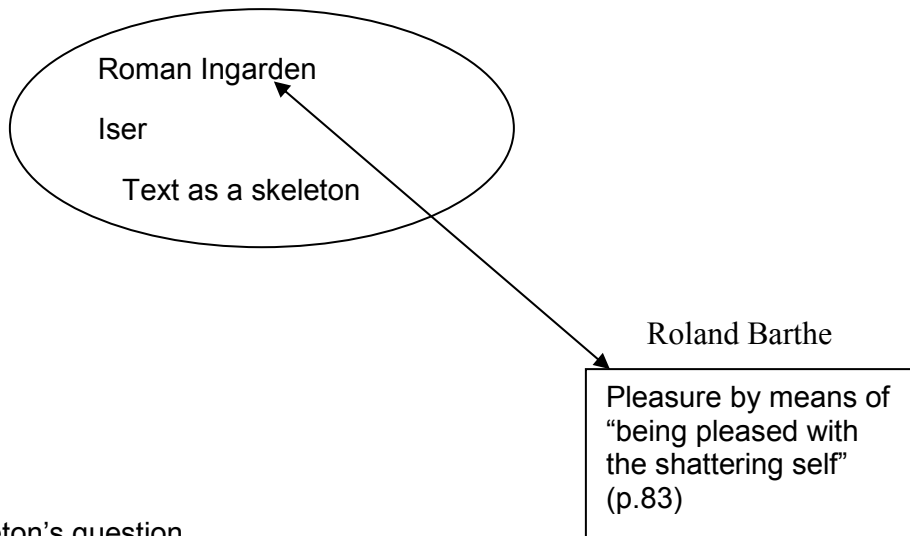
Terry Eagleton's (1983; See Figure 3)²¹ chapter on reader-response theories in his book entitled "Phenomenology, Hermeneutics, Reception Theory" centers on reception theory that originates in a camp of aesthetic theory at Konstanz University in Germany. The chapter only consists of Iser, Barthes, and Fish. Eagleton contrasts Iser with Barthes in terms of differences in their ideas of the readers' roles. Iser's readers aim for consistency of their reading. On the other hand, Barthes' readers run for pleasure or bliss by being pleased with the shattering self.²² In spite of the differences, Eagleton insightfully points out that Barthes and Iser ignore the position of the reader confined in history. Thus, Eagleton examines notions of the reader as self in order to criticize reader-response theories.

What is significant in and distinguished from the other metacritics is that Eagleton's criticism is based on an examination of the reader as self. Eagleton's chapter begins with Martin Heidegger's rejection of Edmond Husserl's idea of the "transcendental subjects and moves on to Heidegger's speculation on "the irreducible 'givenness' of human existence" (1983, p. 62).

²¹ Figure 3 on page 178

²² The difference between Iser and Barthes that Eagleton sees is that Iser reads realist novels when Barthes more focuses on modernist text. This point implies that for Eagleton the text decides the way of reading or that the text has something inherent.

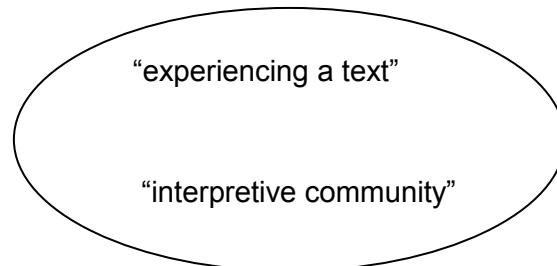
Phenomenology, hermeneutics, reception theory



Eagleton's question

"If one considers the "text in itself" as a kind of skeleton, a set of "schemata" waiting to be concretized in various ways by various readers, how can one discuss these schemata at all without having already concretized them?" (p.84).

Fish



Eagleton sees Fish's theory as anarchical but not completely when Fish constructs the idea of "interpretive community"

Figure 3. Categorization - Mapping of Eagleton (1983)

Heidegger distinguished two forms of self: inauthentic self and authentic self (Steinvorth, 2009, p.7). Authentic self is extraordinary and so difficult to attain, while inauthentic self is in ordinary lives, and is covered by the “givenness” (Steinvorth, p.7). Drawing on Heidegger’s philosophy about the “givenness” of human existence that would make it impossible for readers to be the transcendental subjects.

Eagleton argues that the reception theory founded on Husserl’s phenomenology will disrupt the reading of the text. Eagleton asserts that readers are not capable of taking any “objective” and “transcendental” role in interpretation because of the “irreducible givenness.” “The irreducible givenness” of readers will, Eagleton insists, hinder them from understanding a literary work “as it is” when the reader’s reading of the text becomes the main interpretive category.

2: Continuum

One widely-recognized revolutionary and controversial aspect of reader-response theories is an attempt to shift a location of a meaning toward a reader. Tompkin’s and Belsey’s continuums give an overview of how each theory differently conceives a location of meaning and its attendant idea of a reader’s agency.

In the introduction to her selection of the essays written by some reader response theorists, Jane Tompkins (1980) aligns each of the theorists on a linear continuum about where the meanings “are,” either in the reader or in the text. Putting the reader-response theories on the continuum leads her to find some similarities about the concept of interpretation as a critical activity. She points out that reader-response theories confine interpretation as the only critical activity in a literary study. In *Critical Practice*, Catherine Belsey (1980) titles the chapter on

reader response theories as “Reader’s power.” She also lays out several literary theories on a linear continuum of power distribution in terms of what makes a meaning, a reader or a text and/or an author. Situating herself in critical theory, Belsey focuses on a communication model and criticizes reader-response theories’ lack of consideration of the power of dominant discourses and conceptualizations of language.

Where is a meaning?

The question of where a meaning “is” indicates a big shift from the New Criticism, which purports to objectively examine what is in a text. This question is a hallmark of reader-response theories. They keep a stark distance from the New Criticism by (gesturing toward) placing a meaning “in” a reader. However, a location of a meaning is various, depending on what perspectives each theorist is drawn to.

Tompkin’s continuum.

On one end of Tompkin’s continuum (See Figure 4)²³ where a text has constraints over a reader, is Walker Gibson, one of the New Critics. Around the middle point of the continuum, Iser is placed next to Fish in *Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics*, who is located closer to the other end, where the reader enjoys more freedom and power over text. In Tompkins’ reading, both a reader and a text are essential for Iser’s theory. Without either of them, “literary work is not actualized.” On the other hand, Fish (1980) calls Wimsatt & Beardsley’s idea of affective fallacy as fallacy, and states “the meaning of an utterance, I repeat, is its experience” (p. 65). The reader in Fish’s theory seems to be given a more weight for meaning-making than the

²³ Figure 4 on page 181

Where meaning resides, text or reader

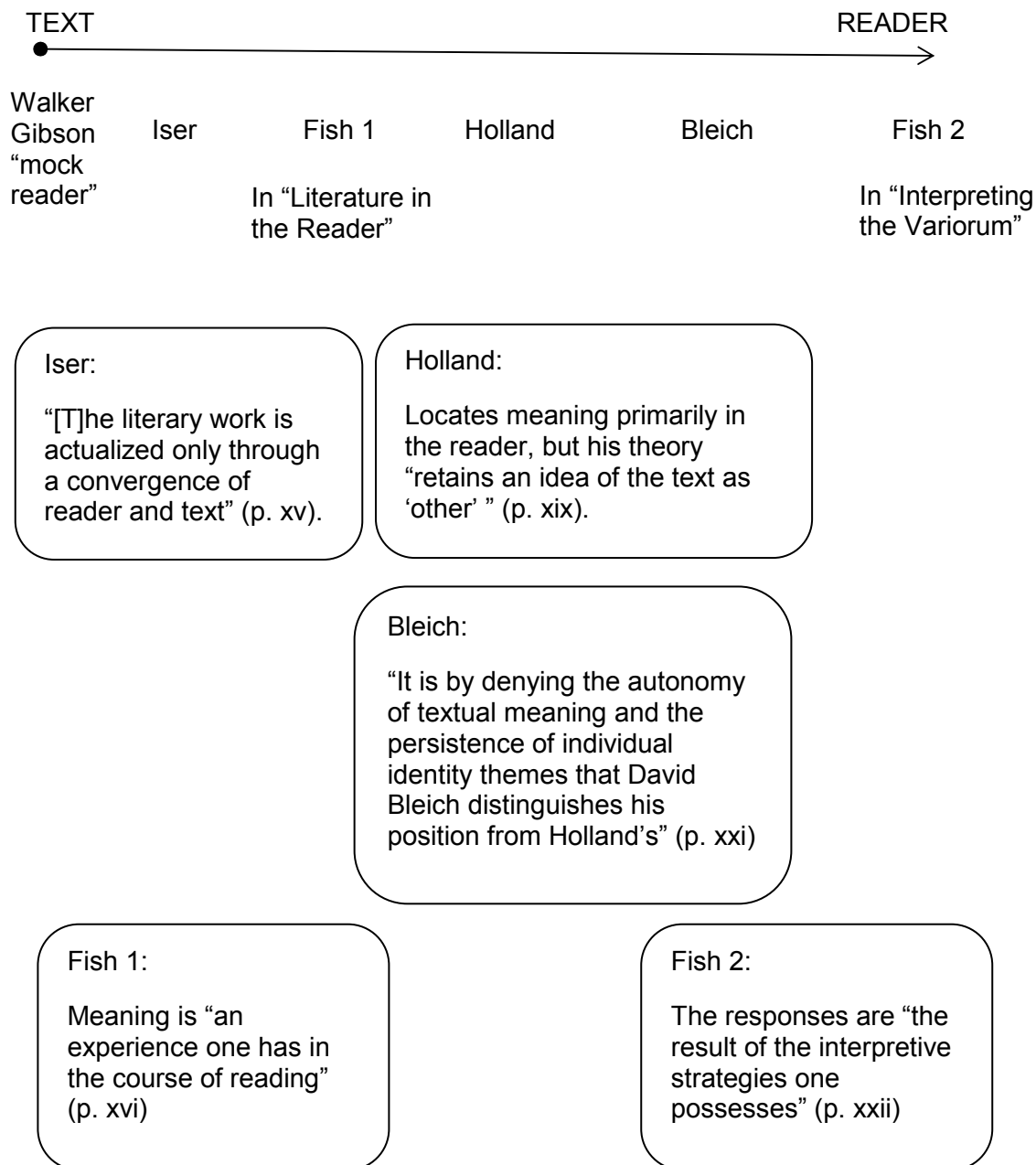


Figure 4. Continuum – Tompkins (1980)

counterpart in Iser's, because a term "experience" implies that a reader's (personal) reading is more respected and even essential. Holland and Bleich are closer to the pole of reader's triumph than Fish in *Literature in the Reader*. Holland (1976, 1978, 1982) asserts that a reader's response to a literary work shows her identity, and that the reader can retrieve her coherent identity. Bleich (1978) argues that a reader constructs a meaning through a reader's "subjectivity" as opposed to "objectivity" in the beginning; therefore, a meaning resides in a reader's subjectivity.

Right on that pole of readers' triumph is another Fish in *Interpreting the Variorum*, whom Tompkins redefines as post-structuralist. Fish in the article contends that readers, who are circumscribed by a certain interpretive method, write texts. Tompkins interprets that a reader for Fish in the article, although bound by an interpretive community, has more "freedom" than the reader conceived in *Literature in the Reader*, so she puts this Fish closer to the pole of the reader's triumph. It seems to me, however, that the reader in this article is differently mired from that in *Literature in the Reader*. The former is bound by something other than a text. On the other hand, the reader in *Literature in the Reader* is controlled by the text. The readers are circumscribed either by the text or the community. In either way, what is important is that transformation of Fish's theory of reading is not contradiction, but shows that he grapples with a notion of the reader and the text.

Belsey's continuum.

What makes meaning, text or reader?

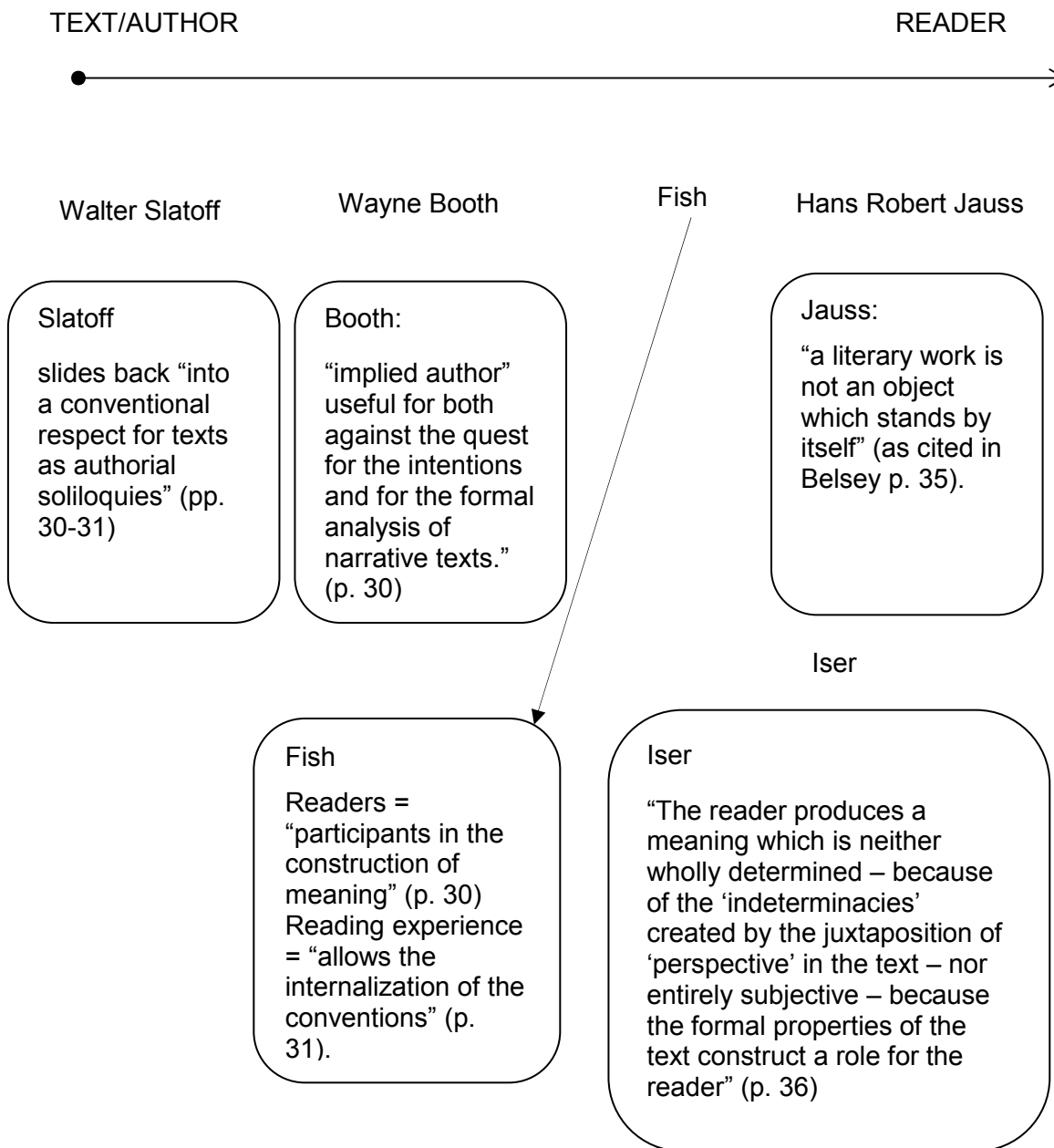


Figure 5. Continuum – Belsey (1980)

In *Critical Practice*, Belsey (1980: See Figure 5)²⁴ sets Walter Slatoff on one end of the continuum where a meaning is located in a text as authorial intentions. In her reading, no matter how Slatoff struggles to give power to the reader, he ends up sliding “disappointingly back into a conventional respect for texts” (p. 29).

On the other end of the continuum where a reader supposedly makes a meaning, Belsey selects none. On that end, probably Terry Eagleton (1983) would place Fish, since for Eagleton Fish thoroughly gives readers an interpretive role. Tompkins indeed places Fish in *Interpreting the Variorum* closer to this end. Belsey places Fish in *Literature in the Reader* closer to the same end where a meaning is located in a reader, while Tompkins puts Fish in *Literature in the Reader* on the middle of the continuum.²⁵ The difference between the two critics about Fish’s position on the continuums lie in how they understand a particular sentence that shows Fish’s thesis in *Literature in Reader*: meaning is “an event, something that happens to, and with the participation of the reader” (Fish, 1980, p. 25).

A reader, in Fish’s theorization, participates in the construction of a meaning. This idea might make some critics, such as Belsey, deduce that Fish gives an authority for construction of a meaning to a reader. However, this “participation” does not necessarily mean that a reader has “power” over a text in terms of making a meaning and interpreting.²⁶

²⁴ Figure 5 on page 183

²⁵ This difference indicates the contested status of the text and the reader: either each critic reads Fish differently, or this particular article could be read differently.

²⁶ However, for me, a reader’s participation in the construction of a meaning sounds just strange, because a “reader”, either empirical or ideal, is supposed to be always needed by any literary theory. I think that, whatever a reader’s participation means in relation to a location of a meaning,

Fish: the participation of a reader.

The “participation” of the reader to construct a meaning is, in Fish’s theory, equivalent to a reader’s experience of a text. In the beginning of his career as a reader response theorist, Fish designates his theory of reading as “affective stylistics” to differentiate from formalism, one tenet of which is to locate a meaning in styles under the assumption that a text is autonomous object. Fish strongly argues against a status of a text as objective, a thing-itself. Against this tenet, Fish (1980) argues that meaning is something that happens to the reader. Further, when affective aspect of a reading, or a reader’s experience of a text, is incorporated into formalism, a location of a meaning inevitably should shift from forms. A new location for Fish might be a reader, more precisely a reader’s experience of a text.

To examine a reader’s experience of a text as meaning construction, Fish (1980) argues, is to ask “what does this text do?” (p. 41). Fish states, an inconsistency that can be seen in reader’s responses is not a problem, but something that happens to a reader (p. 38). In fact, Fish articulates that something that happens is “the key to the way the work works” (p.38). What a text does, according to Fish’s theory, is to provide a reader this key, an idea of how the text should be understood. A reader’s participation is, for Fish, a reader’s experience as an effect of how a text works.

In *Stanley Fish, the Righting of the Reader*, Jonathan Culler (1975b) points out that what a text does for Fish implies Fish’s idea of conventions of reading. To enquire what a text does, one has to explain, “how it is received, organized, and generally experienced by the reader as he proceeds through the text” (Culler, p.27). Fish insists on

a contribution of reader-response theories is to draw attention to a “participation” of a reader that was ignored in a history of literary theories.

analyzing reader's responses, but analyzing readers' responses, Culler (1976) argues, has to involve "analyzing the norms, conventions, and mental operations which make these responses and interpretations possible" (p. 251). In Culler's reading, Fish's analysis of responses is not only an effect of what a text does but also manifests the conventions of reading. Therefore, Culler (1975b) states, Fish is not interested in an actual process of reading. Fish's examination of the process of reading of some poems is prescriptive but not descriptive. What he shows as the examination of a reader's experience is the process he himself takes as convention of readings.

Thus, the participation of a reader for Fish does not necessarily mean that a reader owns an interpretive power. A reader's agency in Fish's "affective stylistics" is not limitless, but circumscribed by a text. A meaning could lie in the reader's experience, but it has to be the effect of a text. The meaning could be still originated in forms in a text, which "offers" an experience prior to a reader's reading.

Going back to Belsey's placement of the theorists, Iser is located closest to the end where the reader holds a sole authority for construction of a meaning. She argues that Iser's construction of the "implied reader" makes it possible to keep text's objectivity intact without relinquishing a role of the reader. Tompkins, on the other hand, puts Iser less close to the reader's pole but instead Fish in *Interpreting the Variorum* (1980) closer to the reader's pole. According to Tompkin's reading of Iser's theory, the reader in Iser's theory "must act as co-creator of the work by supplying that portion of it which is not written but only implied" (p. xv). Unlike Iser's "the implied reader," Fish's reader, in

Tompkin's understanding, does not fill in gaps left by the text, but is "the source of all possible significations" (p. xvii).

Iser: implied reader.

In *The Act of Reading* (1978), Iser examines different concepts of readers, such as an ideal reader, a real and historical reader and so on, and surveys some other critics' constructs of a reader, such as Riffaterre's 'superreader' and Fish's "informed reader." Holland considers that those constructed readers "are drawn from specific groups of real, existing readers" (1978, p.30). But Iser constructs the reader who "embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect – predisposition laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself" (1978, p. 34). The conceptual reader, designated as "implied reader," is generated when "we are to understand the effects caused and responses elicited by literary work" (Iser, p. 30). The "implied reader" is born out of a text as an essential component to detect "all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect."

Contrary to Freund's interpretation that Iser's theory eventually makes readers' role insignificant, the role of the implied reader would not become insignificant. The implied reader reflects the effects of a text, while a "real" reader who might have some constraints of any sort could not do so. Then, an empirical reader might be insignificant for this theory, when she might not be able to retrieve the effects of a text. However, only the "implied reader" can enact Iser's theory because the theory requires someone who receives "the effects produced."

When it comes down to a location of a meaning, it is difficult to locate a meaning either in a reader or in a text in Iser's theory. Iser (1978) articulates that he is drawn to

Austin's Speech Act theory for his "heuristic" guideline (p. 54). Austin (1975) attempts to argue that the performative speech does not "produce" a meaning. In the similar vein, Iser states that performative act *takes on* meaning in virtue of its "situational usage" (p.56). Iser, like Austin, does not say about where a meaning is constructed. Or, I think, Iser is not so much interested in where a meaning is constructed. Iser is more concerned with "the results produced" by "the structure of effects, which causes and is responsible for these results" (p. 30).

Belsey's and Thompson's placement of Iser and Fish on the continuum can and should be interpreted in terms of a reader's role as well as a location of a meaning. As a position moves toward either way on the continuum about a location of a meaning, a reader's role based on a power that a theory gives to her is also changing. The "implied reader" is more involved in the process of the reading in Iser's theory than the reader in Fish's thinking in *Literature in the Reader*. The "implied reader" is supposed to process a literary text and produce some results by the process, while Fish's reader is just a place where a text exerts its effects. In my reading, Iser's theory should be positioned closer to the pole of the reader's power than Fish's, even if Iser writes "the reader's positions must therefore be manipulated by the text if his viewpoint is to be properly guided" (1978, p.152).

3: Categorization

Some other critics of reader-response theories call more attention to their theoretical underpinnings than to the specific question of where a meaning resides. They divide the theories into some categories. Lois Tyson's *Critical Literary Theory* (1999) is a user-friendly guide as its subtitle says. However, it is not sufficient to see subtle differences

about roles of texts and readers and a relation between a reader and a text. Tyson (1999; See Figure 6)²⁷ categorizes five reader-response theories into four groups: transactional reader response, subjective reader response, psychological reader response and affective reader response. Wolfgang Iser and Louise Rosenblatt, then David Bleich, Norman Holland and Stanley Fish are placed respectively in each category.

Those categorization and designations by Tyson can be sometimes misleading. Certainly, Fish promulgated “affective stylistics” at one point in his career, in which he includes affective elements – reader’s responses – into the formalist criticism. However, his focus has shifted since then. Hence, to only designate his theory as “affective reader response” could even lead us to miss the change in Fish’s theory of reading, more precisely Fish’s idea of a reader’s agency. Examination of the change is important, since the change shows how his notion of a reader shifted. As a notion of a reader changes, of course, a relation between a reader and a text changes inevitably.

In Tyson’s map, Holland and Bleich are not placed in the same category, which is often the case. I do not argue against this separation of the two theorists into different groups. However, Tyson’s map does not mention any significant differences between Bleich and Holland in terms of whether a reader-initiating theory is a subjective or an objective paradigm. Highlighting differences between the two paradigms, which I will delve into later, will help understand each of their theories that are often lumped together in the same designation, psychological reader response theory.

²⁷ Figure 6 on page 190

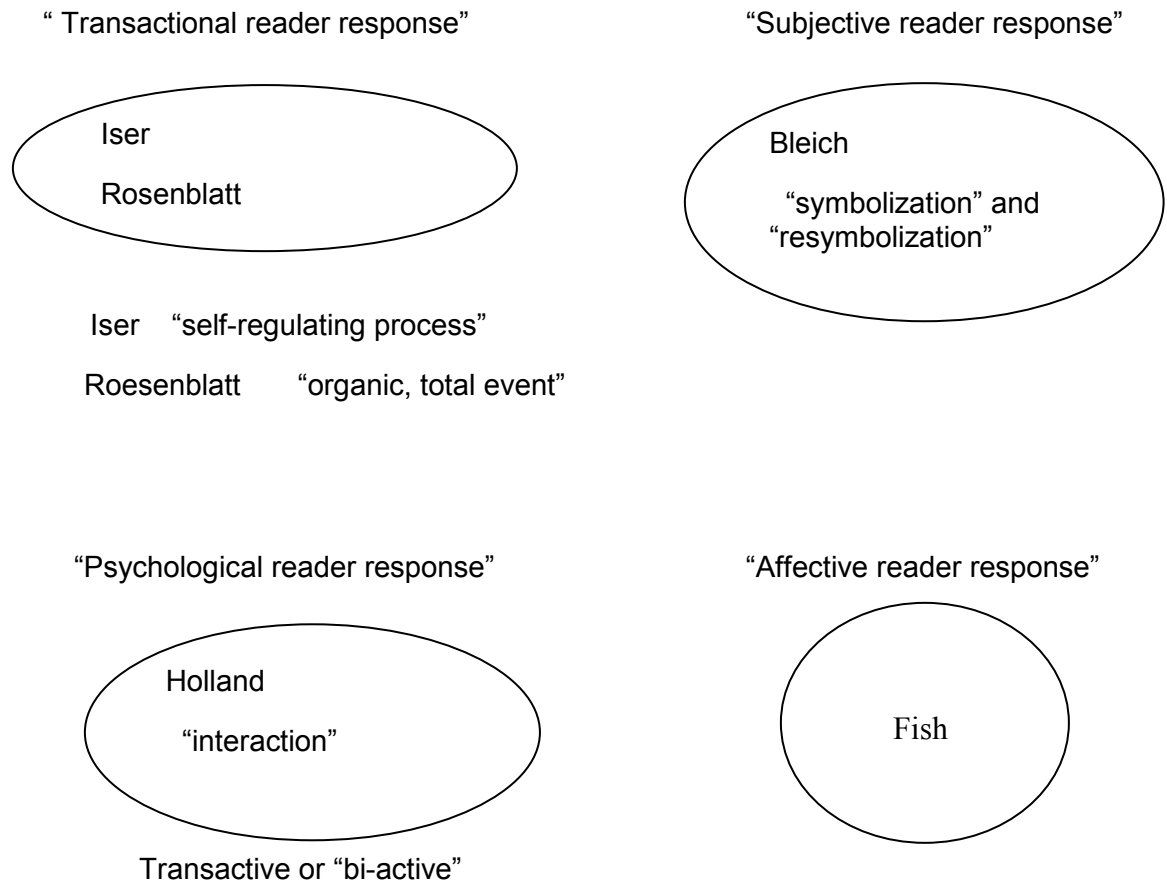


Figure 6. Categorization: Mapping of Tyson (1999)

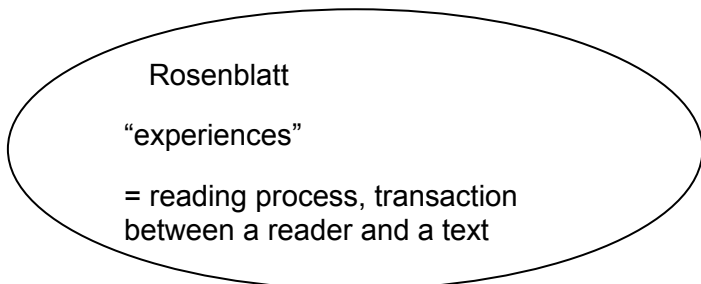
This lumping come from the broad generalization that in both theories responses are considered to manifest the reader's self, either identity or "subjectivity." However, the differences about the paradigm indicate their different concepts of the reader that are not necessarily explored in reader-response theories.

Like Tyson, Davis & Womack (2002; See Figure 7)²⁸ categorize reader-response theories into five boxes: "Transactional" or "communicative model," "Structuralists," "Psychological criticism," "Feminist theory of reading" and "Fish." What is different from Tyson's categorization is Iser's placement within the group of "Structuralists" instead of "Transactional model," Holland's and Bleich's placement into the same group of "Psychological criticism," an inclusion of feminist theories of reading, and "Fish."

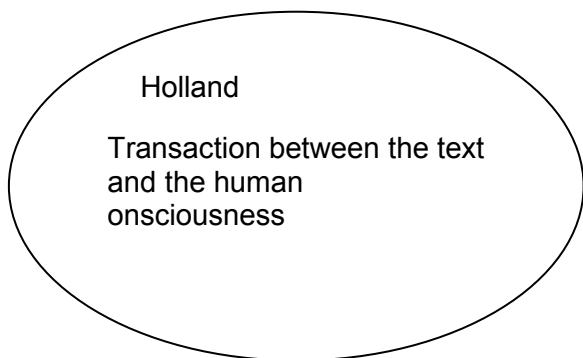
What struck me most about Davis & Womack's categorization is that Iser is categorized into the structuralist group. Davis & Womack aim to locate a possible connection between formalism, most often regarded as the harbinger of scientism in literary study, and reader-response theories, most often recognized as a subjective mode of reading. They argue that structuralism "attempts to delineate the ways in which literature ultimately functions as a series of signs" (2002, p. 58). This trait of structuralism can be seen, according to the critics, in Iser's construct of the "implied reader," a reader who is implied by structures of literature "as a series of signs."

²⁸ Figure 7 on page 192

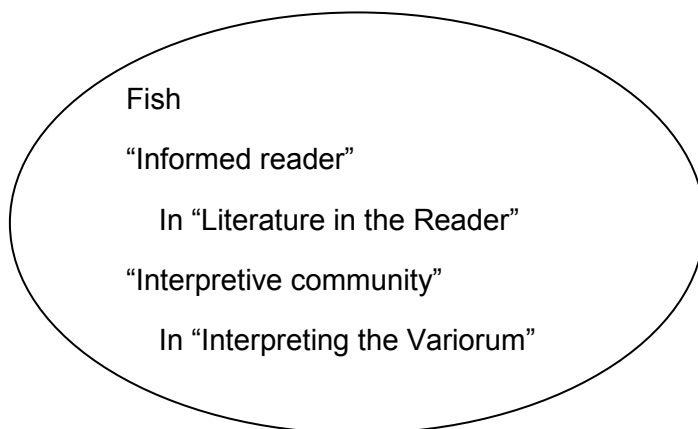
“Transactional/communicative model”



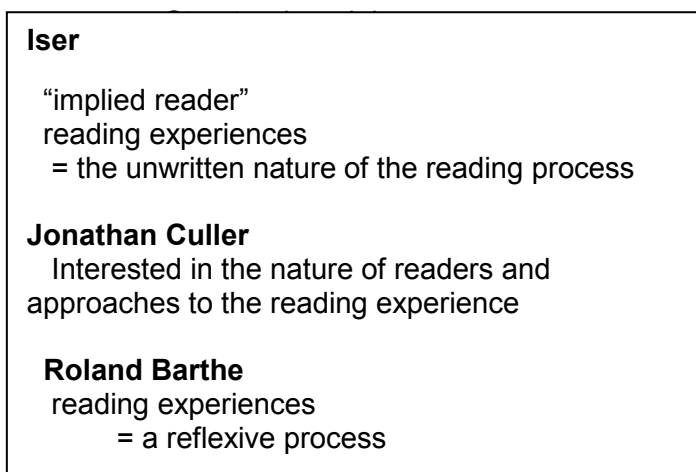
“Psychological model” / “subjective feast”



“Fish”



“Structuralism”



“Reader response theory
 and feminist criticism”

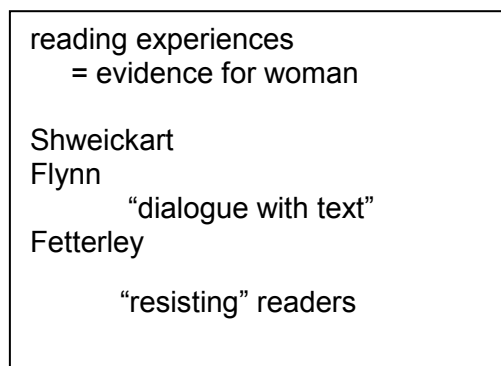


Figure 7. Mapping of Davis and Wamock (2002)

Different from Tyson, Davis & Womack include Roland Barthes' and Jonathan Culler's contributions to the concepts of reading process in reader-response theories. According to Davis & Womack, Barthes puts more focus on the text in relation to the reader, while Culler is more interested in the reader. Barthes makes distinctions between 'readerly' and 'writerly' texts, in which the text "imposes a state of loss" and "unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions" (Davis & Womack, 2002, p.60). On the other hand, Culler looks at different sets of expectations that the reader holds, distinguishing literary and nonliterary operations. The inclusion of Barthes and Culler indicates that a relation between the reader and the text is crucial in reader response theory.

I would not see Culler as a reader-response theorist. At some point in his long career, he was interested in the notion of reading experiences, but that does not mean that he is a reader-response theorist. Barthes, as Culler writes a book about his works, has a wider range of designation such as mythologist, polemicist, semiologist, to name a few. Hence, it is interesting but also a rough categorization of putting Culler and Barthes in one category of "Structuralists."

Another difference from Tyson's criticism and probably some of the "regular" criticism is that Davis & Womack connect the formalism and reader response theories in terms of the ideas of experiences. According to Davis & Womack, the formalism claim that the universe can be known through experiencing a literary work that mirrors "the reality." Based on this claim, these two critics examine different notions of "reading experiences" among the theorists, an important theoretical constituent that makes reader-response theories different from others. For them, Rosenblatt is the one who "reframes

our conceptions of the reading experience” (2002, p.54). According to Davis & Womack, “the reading experience” in Rosenblatt’s theory is the process in which the readers transact with a literary text. Davis & Womack regard the ideas of the reading experience as a hallmark of reader response theories, and thus they include some of the feminist literary criticisms in the second wave that focus on how women’s experience as a writer and a reader play a role in reading.

When looking at the mappings by Tyson and Davis & Womack side by side, one will notice some other minor differences. However, one of them is not “minor” but “major” issue in reader response theories, which has led to the destabilization of the theories (And this is “major” for me, who delves into relations between self and language): Transaction.

Transaction

Instead of giving a specifying answer to the question of a location of a meaning, Fish and Iser and some other reader-response theorists emphasize an interactive relation between a reader and a text. They are sometimes roughly put together, for instance by Tyson and Davis & Womack, only because they noticeably talk about a relation between a reader and a text. But this is a naïve conglomeration, too. Their ideas of a relation are not the same. Even on a very basic plane in terms of a designation, Iser does not call a relation between a reader and a text “transaction.” His term for the relation is “interaction” founded on a concept that a reading of a literary work has communication structure. Further, an idea of “transaction” or “interaction,” which could resolve the

question of where a meaning is, comes to betray another issue of a relation between a text and a reader.

Iser's "interaction".

Rosenblatt (1985a) explains how her idea of transaction is different from Iser's idea of the relation as interaction. According to her, Iser's interaction "concentrates primarily on analyses of the text and sees the reader's contribution only as filling in "the gaps" rather than transactionally creating meanings through the aesthetic stance and *the triadic relationship with all the verbal signs*" (emphasis mine; p. 103). Indeed, Iser writes that the relationship between the text and the implied reader is "a self-regulating process" in which the text and the reader "act[s] upon one another" (1979, p. 15). In Iser's theory, the reader is supposed to actualize a text. But the text still has to regulate the reader when she processes the text in order to complete it.

Iser's view of the relation between the text and the reader is constructed by Ingarden's aesthetic theory that art is partial and a text has to be complemented by a reader. At the same time, Austin's speech-act theory frames Iser's thinking about the relation. However, Iser's use of the two theories from the different fields does not mean that Iser's theory is eclectic and conflicting.

Rather, Iser finds a similarity between Ingarden and Austin in terms of a notion of "literary" language. Austin (1975) regards literary speech as "parasitic" or "void," because literary speech "does not produce a linguistic action," or in other words "cannot invoke conventions and accepted procedures," which make speech performative (p.58, 60). According to Ingarden, Iser (1978) writes, "literary sentences have the same verbal structure as judgment sentences, without actually being judgment sentences, *for they lack*

'the anchoring of the intentions of the meaning contents in the proper reality', i.e., they have no real context' (emphasis mine; p. 63). Ingarden calls those literary sentences “quasi-judgments” (Iser, p. 62). The similarity that Iser finds between Austin’s theory and Ingarden’s is that written utterances in a literary work do not invoke due to a lack of any intention.

However, Iser problematizes Austin’s and Ingarden’s notion of “literary language” as “parasitic” or “quasi-judgmental.” By referring to Hamlet’s speech to Ophelia, however, Iser argues that since Hamlet’s speech evokes weighty matters on the reader, poetic utterance is not surely “void” (1978, p. 58). Iser attempts to argue that although fictional language does not create “real” actions in a “real” context, literary language brings out “real” effects on an empirical reader and therefore can invoke the conventions (pp. 58-60).

After conceptualizing “literary” language this way, Iser proceeds to examine a relation between literary text and the implied reader as “interaction.” The lack of a “real” context in “literary language” generates “indeterminacy” even with the “implied reader.” Iser argues that this indeterminacy has to be solved in order for the reader to receive “real effects” and even produce “appropriate” responses. However, Austin’s theory does not prescribe how to solve the indeterminacy: It only discusses what are and are not performative. Following Ingarden’s theory, Iser extrapolates that the indeterminacy is solved by an interaction between the implied reader and a text. While noting some differences between reading and all forms of social interactions, Iser emphasizes that the “indeterminacy” because of lack of a “real” context can be solved by the reader’s communicating with a text.

Iser (1979) argues that the model of an interaction between the text and the implied reader is formed based on the communication concept (p.14). According to Iser, the reader receives a text, is guided by its structural organization, and fulfills its function by assembling its meanings. However, this process is not linear, but an “interplay of illusion-forming and illusion-breaking” (Iser, 1972, p. 294). Somewhere else Iser (1975) calls the reader’s communication with a text a “dynamic process of self-correction” (p. 20). Iser (1975) explicates this process in detail by inundating the theorization with many terms such as “blank and vacancy,” “negation and negativity,” “background-foreground relationship” and so on.

Rosenblatt’s “transaction”.

In contrast to Iser’s “interaction,” in which the reader and the text communicate with each other and so are divided, Rosenblatt’s transaction takes place in an “organic” and “total situation” where “the human being is not seen as separate entity, acting upon an environment, nor the environment as acting on the organism, but both as parts or aspects of a total event” (1985a, p.98). She attempts not to divide between a text as a stimulus and a reader as embodiment of a response to the stimulus. Instead, she tries to emphasize a “totality” that the text and the reader produce together. Her idea of transaction, different from Iser’s “interaction,” theoretically entails a “totality” *of and by* a relation of a text and a reader.

Rosenblatt’s idea of “transaction” is grounded on Dewey and Bentley’s (1949) concept of “transaction.” In their *Knowing and the Known* (1949), they start to proceed with a theoretical conviction that the observer and the observed are not radically

separated. The observer is not just a passive organism that is only forced to take a stimulus from outside. Drawn to this belief, Rosenblatt (1985a) points out that “the prior state of that organism affected the character of the stimulus” (p. 99). Therefore, Rosenblatt considers that the words on the text, which might be taken as just stimulus, transact with “elements of memory” and “active areas of consciousness” of the reader (1982, 1985b). This transaction “encompasses not only the public referents or objects to which the verbal symbols point, but also the personal aspects” (1985b, p.69). This is the transaction that Dewey and Bentley (1949) promulgate as “processes of the full situation of organism-environment” (p.104). The transaction keeps going as the reader proceeds by selecting some “appropriate” meanings and synthesizing them into a framework. Rosenblatt proposes the transaction as a two way process in which a reader, with the lead of a text, will produce something new as a “poem” in an event of reading.

Thus, it’s a rough categorization to put Iser’s theory and Rosenblatt’s into the same group. Further, not only these two theories but also Holland’s theory talk about an interaction between a text and a reader. Holland describes the relationship between a reader and a text as “transactive” instead of “interaction.” Holland (1977) depicts both Iser’s “interaction” and Rosenblatt’s “transaction” as “bi-active” theories in order to highlight his idea of “transactive.” Half of “the bi-active” (the text-active half) is, Holland argues, “to be contrasted with the ‘transactive’ where the reader initiates the reading transaction” (p. 434). Holland interprets that Iser and Rosenblatt have the text stake out its limits and then a reader respond within the limits. Holland emphasizes that a reader gives her schemata for interpretation. This leads Tompson to put him at a reader’s end on the continuum.

Holland's transaction.

By a psychoanalytic basis, Holland in fact is able to give more weighty interpretive roles to a reader. Holland argues that a recurrence of the same responses to a text is attributed to a reader's identity that Holland premises is uniform and monolithic. In *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (1968), making a parallel between the psychoanalyst's patient and the reader, and the one between the analyst and the text, Holland contends that a reader, like a patient, sometimes finds "some still-alert part of oneself notice[s] a word or a phrase or a pattern, and a significance become[s] clear" (p. 85). Holland calls these situations "transference situation." The "transference situation" is produced while a reader, like a psychoanalysis patient, configures her "defense, expectations, fantasies, and transformations" of a text (Holland, 1976). Through the configuration that Holland calls "DEFT" produced transactionally with the text, the readers can retrieve their stable identities in reading a text.

At this point, one might find a similarity between Rosenblatt and Holland in that both of them think that reading a literary text is re-creating a new "text," a "poem" for Rosenblatt and an "identity theme" for Holland. Holland mentions Rosenblatt's use of the two terms, "re-creation" and "transaction," but finds a difference from her: In her theory, the text still has more power over the reader. In *Stanley Fish, Stanley Fish* (1977), in which Holland attempts to extrapolate differences from Fish, Iser and Rosenblatt, Holland argues that in his theory "the text does not 'cause,' 'control,' or even 'invite' my responses" (p. 435).

All of the three reader-response theorists give the text and the reader an interpretive power differently in the transaction or interaction that each of them

conceptualizes on a different theoretical premise. In my reading of all of the three theorists, Iser puts the weightiest role on the text and, as Rosenblatt sees, places the reader as a medium. Although Rosenblatt claims the nature of totality in the reading event, I would say that, like Iser's theory, her theory also allows the text to regulate the reader's responses. On the other hand, Holland focuses on the reader's responses because of his agenda that the reader can retrieve the unitary identity in reading. However, this is my view, which is not necessary "correct," because the position that critics take in terms of the question changes the view of who and what gains more weighty roles. We (the readers and I) already know this by examining Tompkin's and Belsey's continuum.

These ideas of "transaction" or "interaction" seem to offer a possibility of solving the critical question in reader-response theories, where a meaning resides, by arguing that "transaction" creates a meaning. In Iser's idea of "interaction," the implied reader only plays a "role" as a participant, but not as a sole active meaning-maker. The reader receives all the predispositions from the text and, by interacting with those predispositions, solves the indeterminacy caused by "literary" languages. The meaning comes out of this interaction for Iser. As Fish (1981) describes, in Iser's theory a meaning is something that neither the text nor the reader possesses.

In Rosenblatt's theory, even if some "unrelated" responses have to be controlled by the text, some other responses through the transaction produce a meaning. She states even if the work "possesses" a meaning for a reader, the meaning "derives from the way in which the verbal pattern of the text calls forth an organized new experience" (1969, p. 1008). In Rosenblatt's theory, the meaning is a new experience with the text. With the

agenda of retrieving a unity of the reader's identity, Holland (1968) argues that a reader's "introjecting" and "intellecting" of the text produces "a transference situation" in which the "transactive" process transforms a reader's fantasy toward a meaning (p. 92). Thus, there seems to be no specific location for a meaning for the three theorists. A meaning is produced differently by the engagement between the reader and the text as transaction or interaction.

What converges among them is that all of the three theories cannot do without either the text or the reader, especially because they focus on an idea of "transaction" and "interaction." An idea of "transaction" and "interaction" reveals a premise that the text is separated from the reader. Iser says, in fact, in the article in 1972 that the text and the reader no longer confront each other as an object and a subject. Drawn to Ingarden's aesthetic theory that the text that is partial has to be complemented by the reader, Iser postulated that the text is not taken as objective or autonomous as the New Criticism camps used to take. Nonetheless, for the interaction, the reader is and has to be separated from the text.

Involvement of the reader and conceptualizations of a "transaction," which are hallmarks of reader-response theories, only belies what was taken for granted before. Probably before the advent of reader-response theories, a relation might not have been even taken into consideration; only the text is just "there" while the reader is taken for granted and thus ignored. To ask whether a meaning is in the text or in the reader leads us to be aware that the text is separated from the reader. Whatever an answer is, the question is based on this separation.

Without this separation as a prerequisite, an idea of this transaction is not intelligible. Only when they are separated can they be connected through the transaction. However, the connection should not be randomly produced. The reader has to have a certain relation with a text, or language that constitutes a text. For example, the implied reader has to have “certain feelings” to receive the predispositions of the text. Rosenblatt’s reader also needs to go back to the public relation with language. These relations between the text and the reader, although different, make it possible for the reader to arrive at the text.

Double Identify of the Text

However, Freund (1987) criticizes this focus on these relations between the text and the reader, in particular Iser’s take, as problematic. She problematizes that Iser’s theory depends on the double identity of the text: an indeterminate structure and a dependency on the reader’s realization (p. 141). This duality of the text in Iser’s theory is, as Freund explains, rooted in Ingarden’s philosophy on a work of art. For Ingarden, a work of art is an object that “does not have a full existence without the participation of consciousness, yet does not depend entirely on a subject for its existence” (Freund, 1987, p. 139). This conceptualization of the literary text seems to promise to dismantle the polarization between an object and a subject and even to solve the dualism of a text and a reader as an object of interpretation. However, Freund (1987) argues that the distinction between a text’s objective status and a reader’s subjective realization is difficult to maintain, since it is unclear how the reader in Iser’s theory can concretize the text without infinitely falling into indeterminacy.

On the other hand, Iser argues, a variety of conventions as “the strategies of the text” in fictional text resolves the indeterminacies (1978, p. 60). Iser claims that a literary text is composed of the conventions such as “narrative techniques” or “the strategies of the text” (p. 61). The implied reader has to search for the intentions by finding “narrative techniques” or “the strategies of the text” by communicating with the text.

In the process, the “implied” reader might have occasionally lapses into “subjective responses” to a “literary” language because of the indeterminacy. The reader’s responses, some of them, might be still taken as “subjective.” However, for Iser, in interacting with “the narrative techniques” and “the strategies” in literary text, “subjective element of reading” that causes indeterminacy is eventually eliminated. Therefore, the “result” invoked by the strategies of the text is not “subjective.” Conventions, such as the techniques and strategies, stop the reader from falling into indeterminacy.

Freund’s critique on the impossible division between the text’s objective status and the reader’s subjective realization in Iser’s theory cannot be quite intact. The distinction is between the text’s objective status and the reader’s realization, not the “subjective” one since it is eliminated in the end. Therefore, the distinction in Iser’s theory can be maintained.

Dualism

Through criticism on the double identity of the text in Iser’s theory, Freund attempts to particularly criticize the dualism of the text and the reader as objects to

interpret in an act of interpretation. She problematizes that there are the two objects, instead of one, in an act of interpretation in Iser's theory. In fact, not only Iser but also Holland operates on the two objects to interpret. This operation pivots on the phenomenological assumption that a perceived is never separated from a perceiver (Mailloux, 1977, p. 414). According to the assumption, "an object" is not purely objective, as various views of "an object" explains this. An object is always mediated by a perceiver. This theoretical assumption supposedly dismantles the traditional dichotomy between the subject and the object. This assumption even could go so far as to construct monism in which the reader should be the sole object to interpret. However, it turns out, as Freund strenuously attempts to argue, that the assumption comes to create the dualism when this assumption is applied to a theory of reading. In other words, in spite of the claim on the inseparability between the text and the reader, there must be always something "given" as an object prior to "perception" or "reading."

Fish (1981) also lambastes Iser's theory as the dualism. In Fish's reading of Iser's theory, while Iser says that "pure perception is impossible," Iser also argues that "textual segments" are given and determinate (Fish, p.12). Fish conjectures that for Iser perception means "a compound of the object (purely perceived) plus the subjective perspective of the reader" (p. 2). This view is similar to Freund's, but Fish's perspective is different from Freund's. Fish does not concur with the idea that "textual segments" are given: For Fish there is nothing given in a text. Fish advocates for monism in which a reader has sole interpretative authority. If the text does not offer its shape but take in different shapes according to the different readers' expectations, Fish discusses, "there is no distinction between what the text gives and what the reader supplies" (p.7). Hence,

Fish argues that the reader supplies everything. For Fish, the text has no “brute-facts” (p.7).

In response to Fish’s harsh criticism, Iser (1981) points that the parenthesis in Fish’s sentence about Iser’s notion of “perception”--“a compound of the object (purely perceived) plus the subjective perspective of the reader”--is slyly interpolated (p. 87). Iser asserts that the object is not “purely perceived,” but it is there. Although the object is there, Iser continues, it “is not given in determinacy, but given and *subsequently* determined” (emphasis mine; p. 87). Iser argues that what has to be examined is an on-going process of reading and responding to “textual segments” that are given in indeterminacy. Thus, Iser’s notion of interaction, I suppose, has to premise that something is given as an object in order for the subject to respond.

The focal point in Iser’s discussion is that the literary text produces effects that the implied reader is supposed to receive by following the conventions and accepted procedures. Austin’s concept of the “illocutionary force,” a force of “how what is said is to be taken,” is useful for this view of Iser’s on the text, since this concept rejects “brute-facts” in an utterance, but still makes it possible that there is “something” in the text to which the reader responds. Therefore, responding to Fish’s criticism on the dualism in Iser’s theory, Iser explains that the interaction takes place between “*a mediated given*” and “a reshuffling of the initial assumptions” (emphasis mine; 1981, p. 84).

Freund’s examination of other reader-response theorists comes down to this dualism that is created by “double identity” of the text in the end. She says that the double identity of a literary work in the theories has been vexed since I. A. Richards

(1987, p. 30). Eagleton (1983) also questions the dualism, asking “If one considers the ‘text in itself’ as a kind of skeleton, a set of ‘schemata’ waiting to be concretized in various ways by various readers, how can one discuss these schemata at all without having already concretized them?” (p. 84).

Freund, Fish and Eagleton, who criticize Iser’s theory, argue for the monism in which either the reader or the text is the only object to interpret. From this standpoint, the inclusion of the reader or the maintenance of the text as object creates the dualism. On the other hand, I think, this dualism is a dilemma for Rosenblatt and Holland in grappling with how to conceptualize the text. In order to examine reader’s responses in Rosenblatt’s and Holland’s theories, there must be something to which the reader can respond, a *certain* autonomy of the text.

Dilemma

Rosenblatt.

Freund, Eagleton, and Mailloux do not examine Rosenblatt’s theory regarding the dualism that can be produced by an idea of “transaction” or “interaction.” It’s not clear why they do not look at Rosenblatt’s theory.²⁹ One reason would be, as Tompkins (1980) points out, that Rosenblatt constructs her theory from an educational perspective. Another would be, although very slim, that her idea of “transaction” is far from the dualism. However, in fact, Holland points out that Rosenblatt aims to go beyond the dualism through the idea of “transaction.”

²⁹ Some other critics mention Rosenblatt’s theory in footnotes and/or notes.

In Rosenblatt's theory, only the reader's response, or the reader's experience, is the object to interpret, although the text regulates the reader in her theory. If I put Rosenblatt on a continuum of the power balance between the reader and the text, I would put her between Iser and Fish. Rosenblatt does not put as extensive interpretive power on the reader as Fish, even if she also calls attention to an examination of the reader's response and/or experience. Like Fish and Iser, she also believes that the observer and the observed are not rigorously separated. However, it seems that Rosenblatt does not deny the text's objective status. She views the text as "a stimulus activating elements of the reader's past experience" (1965, p.126) and as control. This belief serves to construct her idea of the observer's role in relation to the observed. She argues that the observer, or the reader, is not passively but actively engaging with the observed. Her theory does not fall into the dilemma by admitting a givenness of the text.

Holland.

Holland does not articulate that his theory of reading is phenomenologically constructed. However, Holland (1976) also argues against the "objective" status of the text. He based his theory of reading on an idea that "perception is a constructive act" (p. 335). His argument is that the perceiver "adopts the 'other' to gratify her wishes" (Holland, 1976, p. 335) by projecting the perceiver's peculiar fantasies on the text through the constructive process called "DEFT." Thus, the text as "the other" is there.

But Holland did not, or could not, maintain this stance of taking the text as objective to a certain extent. Holland's theory of reading has changed over time. The change could even show how reader-response theories, writ large, develop and end in the dilemma. Holland, in the beginning of the process of his theorization, attributed

recurrence of the same responses to the text, just as Fish did in the beginning of his career. However, Holland later posits that the text no longer embodies reader's psychological processes and so cannot be autonomous (Mailloux, 1977, p.418). He theorizes that instead of the text, "identity themes" make responses recur.

Then, Holland (1982) came to redirect more attention to the nature of the relation between a reader and a text as "transference." Freund (1987) appraises this idea of "transference," because this idea would "place intersubjectivity in the forefront, replacing the subject/object dualism with a more dialectical and temporal approach to the production of meaning" (p. 129). In order to see if Holland's theory "replaces the subject/object dualism," it is helpful to see Holland's debate with Bleich over whether the reader involving or initiating theory is a subjective or an objective paradigm. It becomes clearer, through the debate between Holland and Bleich, that there is the text's "objective" status in Holland's theory.

Bleich's criticism of Holland.

Steven Mailloux (1977), who examines this dualism in detail, explains that Bleich makes the binary between the text and the reader absolute and therefore criticizes Holland's "transactive" theory, which, according to Mailloux, "denies that absoluteness" (p. 422). However, I read both theorists in a quite different way.

In *Emotional Origins* (1969) Bleich agreed with Holland, stating "meaning we associate with a literary work is part of our defensive response to the fantasy we experience *as governing the work's emotional operation*" (p.30). Bleich focuses more on the researcher's or the reader's subjectivity as opposed to objectivity in doing research or reading a text, by denying the "object's" autonomy. Quoting Hisenberg's, a physicist,

statement that “[E]ven in science, the object of research is no longer nature itself, but man’s investigation of nature” (p. 33), Bleich (1978) criticizes the New Criticism as emphasizing the “scientific attitude” and “the objective autonomy of a work of art.” Adopting this shift about autonomous status of the researched from a different field, Bleich argues that “[a]n object is circumscribed and delimited by a subject’s motives, his curiosities, and above all, his language” (p. 18). The subject frames an object as she sees it but not as it is. Bleich doesn’t make the binary between the subject and the object absolute. He states “subjects decide what shall be real objects and what symbolic objects” (p. 88).³⁰ He thoroughly focuses on “subjectivity” of the reader, or the reader’s emotional engagement with the text. He does not need the given-ness of the text.

From that position, Bleich questions Holland’s “transactive” paradigm: “[I]f there are any instances whatever where the reader must supply the meaning, how can the process of transformation toward meaning be embodied in the text?” (1975a, p. 746). Bleich criticizes Holland’s transactive paradigm as the dualism, since a meaning is both in the text and in the reader. For Bleich the process of transformation toward meaning takes place in the readers.

Further, Bleich (1975a) insists that Holland’s “transactive” paradigm necessitates the absolute division between the text and the reader. Holland agreed with Bleich that one couldn’t know reality apart from oneself. But Holland states, “one cannot know oneself without drawing on things one has learned *from the world-out-there*” (emphasis mine; 1976, p. 337). Indeed, Holland’s theory is drawn upon “the psychoanalytic

³⁰ This seems to also come from the phenomenological assumption. However, Bleich does not advocate for transaction or interaction between the reader and the text, as the other phenomenologically oriented theorists.

concept of self-objective differentiation” (p. 337). Holland employs Winnicott’s “potential space” between “the me and what I relate to as not me” (p. 337). Responding to Bleich’s criticism on his theory as the dualism, Holland says “I do not think we are simply shifting from an objective to a subjective view of the world” (p. 339). Holland even claims that this “transactive” paradigm “makes unnecessary the Cartesian cleaving of the world into ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ realities” (p. 338). The transactive paradigm supposedly goes beyond the dichotomy.

However, as Bleich argues, the transactive paradigm needs the absolute binary of subject and object in the beginning to merge the opposition of subject and object; otherwise, the reader would not be able to create the third space conceptualized by Winnicott, the “transference” for Holland, through engaging with the text. Indeed, Holland argues with Murray M. Schwartz that the critical act of reading is “an interpretation, a coming between the opposition of subject and object, here and there, me and you” (1978, p.8). Toward the end of the process, the opposition might be merged, but in order to merge, the opposition is prerequisite.

As Mailloux (1977) points out, through the evolution of Holland’s model of reading from putting more emphasis on the reader to creating the “transference situation,” Holland falls into the dilemma of “what do texts do” when a reader’s involvement is focused. Holland (1982) can’t help but admit that there is a certain portion of text’s constraints on readers in spite of his thesis that then “identity theme” makes recurrent responses happen.

Fish.

As I examined in Fish's criticism on Iser's theory, Fish advocates for monism. Nonetheless, at some point in his career as a reader-response theorist, he struggled with this dilemma of the text's objectivity. Both Bleich and Fish argue that their theories get off the ground that there is some, no matter how much or little, portion of "given" segments of the text.

Fish's theory was the dualism in the beginning. By giving the reader double roles, "an active participant and critic of his performance" (Freund, 1987, p. 92), Fish attempts to create monism in which only the reader is important. However, in *Literature in the Reader*, his theory needs the text, effect of which the reader reflects. Fish's attempted monism produces the dilemma when he cannot help but return to the text.

In *Interpreting the Variorum* (1980), he develops his argument on monism, stating "the forms of the reader's experience, formal units, and the structure of intention are one, that they come into view simultaneously" (p. 165). However, simultaneously, Fish asks himself what produces "the forms of the reader's experience, formal units, and the structure of intention," when they are "simply different ways of referring to the same interpretive act" (p. 165). Fish also has to grapple with this ultimate question: What is that interpretive act an interpretation of?" Fish does not, or cannot, clearly answer this question. Instead, in the famous article *Is There a text in this Class*, he (1980) creates an idea of "interpretive community" to make the dualism disappear. Fish postulates that reader's responses or experiences are constituted by readers' interpretive strategies constructed in a certain community, and so there is nothing given in a text.

A Riddle

Most reader-response theorists start from negation of the text's objective status. Tompkins (1980) poses a provocative question in regards to a notion of response when the text's objective stance is destabilized by giving the reader an interpretive authority: "if texts have no specifiable properties, then what is reader-response a response to?" (p. xxi). As I have seen, most of the reader-response theorists whom I examine here confront this riddle.

Tompkins (1980) gives a hint to resolve this riddle. While in Holland's formulation of reading "text data exist prior to and independent of the reader's interpretive activity" (p. xxi), she argues, he is not concerned with how these text data "take shape for the reader" (p. xix). In my understanding, Fish and Iser do examine how the text data take shape for the reader. However, both of them create monolithic readers who give a shape to the text data in the prescriptive ways. Which Holland criticizes. However, Holland (1982) does not, or cannot, examine how the text data take shape for the reader, a generic reader different from the conceptualized readers of Fish and Iser. A reader reads "DEFTly," but this is not the way text data take shape. According to Holland's argument, "DEFT" is the way a reader shapes his apprehension and concern.

However, it would be even pointless to criticize reader-response theories as the dualism. As the evolvement of Holland's theory manifests, monism becomes impossible when the reader is involved in a theory of reading, unless, as Fish does, an external interpretive authority is created. The monism in reader-response theories cannot avoid turning into the dualism, or the dilemma.

Just as writing needs a reader, so reading needs a text. There is a text that always needs a reader. Both are necessary in reading. But focusing on reading, what the reader does, ironically surfaces what was hidden, the dualism of the text and the reader as the object to interpret. The dualism, or the dilemma, creates the issue of which has, or should have, more interpretive power, a text or a reader. The theorists and the critics who I examine here all discuss the problem about the reader's "subjective" realization of the text. However, as Freund states about the dispute between Fish and Iser about the dualism, the dispute only leads to a highlighting of the theorists' understanding of and their irreconcilable positions about objectivity and subjectivity. Some of them take those terms as absolute binary and the others move those terms from the traditional notion. This dispute is forever arguable.

Although I have my own take on this issue, I do not join in this dispute. I do not join in this dispute, primarily because the argument diverts me from my aim to investigate what premises constitute the riddle coming out of the involvement of the reader into a literary theory, despite some differences among the theories. The argument about whether reader responses are objective and subjective does not leave me out of the binary of dualism and monism. This argument only circulates from one binary to the other one.

This riddle posed by Tompkins is indicative of what constitutes reader response theories. Tompkins takes a step forward from the riddle by admitting that there is a given-ness of the text, and raises the question of how text takes shape for the reader. This question on relations between the text and the reader helps me to inquire into what underlies the differently conceived relations between language and self. In order to see

what constitutes relations between self and language, the question by Tompkins should not be enough. The question should be reformulated from a little tweaked angle. The question to be asked is how language takes shape as the text for self in reader response theories.

Chapter 8: Reader Response Theories: Self and Language

Soliloquy

Sho, my son. I am sorry that I can't spend time with you when I write this big thing. Writing up this big thing is very important for mommy. Your mommy has come all the way here, the Ph.D. program and the U.S. and you, thanks to your grandparents. If you mommy doesn't write this up, it'll be so difficult to find a way to be thankful of your grandparents, especially your grandma, whom you haven't met yet. It is also important because this is about you and your mommy.

Remember when you were writing a diary in mommy's language about a summer day camp at a Japanese school last summer? Mommy wanted you to write one more sentence. Mommy said to you, "It's good to put how you feel in words. It's like a practice for when you want to tell someone how you feel. So, let's write one more sentence!" Mommy won't forget what you said, and is thankful of you. You said, "mommy, say it. Say why you want me to write." "I already told you, Sho." "No, mommy. If you don't say it, I won't write." Something clicked me. "I want you to write for me." And you picked up a pencil you put on the dining table. Thank you, Sho, for telling me that.

See, how important it is for mommy. Mommy wants to talk with you in Japanese. Your mom can't imagine talking to you in any other language. Mommy can't feel how you really feel in any other language. Is mommy wrong? Mommy just wants to understand you.

But, Sho, mommy also knows that mommy will not be able to understand you always. You are not me. You are not mine. I know, I know, mommy always says to you, “you are mine.” But, someday, some wall will be between you and me. But mommy makes you promise that I won’t make it thick. I will try to listen to you, without thinking that I know you.

Lastly, mommy is telling you, here, mommy’s secret wish. Someday when you see my mommy, please say to her, “Hi, grandma, I’m Sho, your grandson” in Japanese.

My two felt relations, less close to English and confined within Japanese, can be explained by the idea of the containability by the iterability. The two visceral relations to the two languages look different, since while I feel less close to English, I sometimes feel closer to Japanese. However, when the two relations derive from the idea of the containability, whereby self can arrive at a destination, both relations are constituted by the notion of “belonging as arriving” (Probyn, 1996).

The relation as a “lack” of the “belonging as arriving,” as symbolized in the image of the wiggling wall, came forefront from the activity of reading and writing in English by using Rosenblatt’s reader response theory in the U.S. graduate context. In this chapter, I investigate how reader-response theories conceptualize relations between self and language, thereby thinking about possible answers to my question that I posed by tweaking Tompkin’s question: how language takes a shape for the reader? From there, I also examine how the precepts about those relations are related to my “wiggling wall.”

The Theories of Fish and Iser

The reader in the promise.

Fish (1980) states that he is “attracted” to Austin’s theory on the performative speech, which could not come into effect without the conventions that produce and receive an utterance. Fish employs one of the Austin’s theory’s tenets that the performative speech has to invoke a particular procedure on all participants. It seems that Fish is “attracted” to, particularly, the concept of the illocutionary force.

In *What is Stylistic and why are they Saying such Terrible Things About it* (1980), Fish delves into Austin’s idea of the illocutionary force. The illocutionary force “makes it [speech] how what is said is to be understood” (Austin, 1975, p 70). Fish’s idea of “reading experiences” is to experience this “illocutionary force.” The illocutionary force, further, “produces [is] a recognition on the part of a hearer that the procedures constitutive of a particular act have been invoked” (Fish, p. 220). Austin writes as the last two of the six conditions for the performative speech “(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and (B.2) completely” (Austin, 1975, p.15). Fish deploys this inclusion of a hearer in Austin’s theory to elaborate on his idea of “affective stylistics.”

However, Fish (1980) does not count a reaction of a hearer as a condition for the felicitous performative speech. Fish criticizes Ohman as including a receiver’s reaction to a performative speech as a constituent of Austin’s performative speech. Fish says that if a hearer does not respond to a demand of a speaker’s performative speech, the speech is still felicitous as long as a hearer receives its illocutionary force (p. 224). Indeed, although Austin assigns a hearer’s reaction to the perlocutionary force, the perlocutionary

force does not make for a performative speech. Adopting this into his theory of reading, Fish seems to consider that the reader's reaction to a text does not count, but instead the reader's take of the illocutionary force is imperative. The reader experiences a text, but her reaction to a text is not taken into account; the reader only experiences the illocutionary force in a text. The reader arrives at the illocutionary force.

On the other hand, Iser (1978) argues, "For our study of the pragmatic nature of literary texts, it is the illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts that are of particular interest" (p. 57). Iser interprets that the performative speech is successful only when the receiver "shows by his response" (p. 57) that he has received the invocation in what is said. In Iser's reading of Austin's theory, the perlocutionary force, rather than the illocutionary force, determines felicity of the performative speech.

This difference about the perlocutionary force between Fish's theory and Iser's shows a different way of seeing the reader in relation to the text between them. For Fish, effects of the perlocutionary force are contingent because they occur by virtue of the speaker and a hearer being in the same community (Fish, 1980, p.226). He only looks at the effects of a written utterance on the reader. In contrast, Iser (1978) reads Austin's perlocutionary force as partially constituted by the invoked conventions and procedures. Hence, Iser considers that the receiver's response in the end of the procedures is inevitable. It is not the effect, but the results produced by the performative speech, that interest Iser.

In spite of this difference, in Iser's theory, the "implied reader" also reaches the text through the illocutionary force, since without taking the illocutionary force, one

cannot receive the perlocutionary force. Unlike Fish's "informed reader," the "implied reader" does not belong to a "specific groups of real, existing readers." The implied reader belongs to the text more tightly, since the conceptual reader is born out of the text.

The readers both in Fish's and Iser's theories are expected to arrive at the text. One of the last two conditions of "felicitous" performative speech in Austin's theory is that in the utterance in which the invoked procedure

is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves.

(Austin, 1975, p.15)

The participants are supposed to have "certain thoughts or feelings" or an intention that is, as Derrida examines, already embedded in the utterance issued by certain persons in certain circumstances.

These certain thoughts or feelings are possibly shared among the participants who are immersed in "the immanent structure of promise or desire." It is the structure that contributes to the reader's reaching the illocutionary force. Only when both the sender and the receiver are engrossed in the immanent structure, of course without notice, can the receiver arrive at the illocutionary force of a text. In Fish's and Iser's theory, which is underscored by Austin's theory, the reader presumably lies in the immanent structure. Thus, language takes shape as a text through the reader's unnoticed conviction in the iterability and her unnoticed relation to language as the immanent structure of

promise or desire. The reader immersed in the structure already is promised to reach the text.

The Theories of Rosenblatt and Bleich

Concepts of language.

I looked at the relation of the reader to the text in Fish's and Iser's theories. Now, I explore relations constructed by the other theories, Bleich's and Rosenblatt's,³¹ in order to extrapolate some other possible answers to the question that I posed: how language takes shape for the reader. This exploration should start with the concepts of language in each of these two theories.

Rosenblatt's concept.

Rosenblatt lays stress on the reader's "private meaning" of the words, which come out of the reader's past experiences and memories and/or current preoccupations (1982, 1985a, 1985b). In one of the articles, she defines "private meanings" as "the personal, qualitative, kinetic, sensuous inner resources of the word" and also as "primordial situation" (1982, p. 271). According to her theory, "primordial situation," in which the reader finds the "private meanings" of words in the text, is needed to start the "transaction."

In order to explain what this "primordial situation" is and how it is constructed, the section sub-headed as "Entrance into Language" in Rosenblatt's article (1982) provides a brief view of a developmental stage of a child's language acquisition. The child at first "internalizes a 'primordial matrix' of sensations and postural and imaginal elements" (Rosenblatt, p. 270). As an evidence of this sense toward words, following the

³¹ I do not include Holland in this chapter, because, as Freund points out, Holland does not take language into account.

study of the symbol formation by Werner and Kaplan, Rosenblatt states that some young children may believe that “the name is an inherent part of the referent” (p. 271). This relation between the written sign and its referent differs from Derrida’s concept of the relation between them. In Derrida’s view, the unity of the signifying form, such as the written and phonic sign, with “a grapheme” is dissociated, since the unity is constituted by the possibility of being repeated in the absence of its referent.

The child then starts to learn to select one aspect of the word which “serve(s) as the top of iceberg, a light weight mental token” (Rosenblatt, 1982, p. 271). This “mental token” is the “public meaning” of a word, according to Rosenblatt. Then, Rosenblatt points out that in teaching of the literary work, only the top of iceberg is usually taken into account but “the primordial matrix” is ignored. She argues that the broad base of the iceberg, the “primordial matrix,” should be considered in reading the literary work.

Since language is similar to an iceberg comprised of the top and the bottom, Rosenblatt articulates that language holds the transactional nature, drawing to William James and C.S. Peirce. In her view of language, language is socially generated and at the same time personally internalized. Language, as a public system of communication, is grounded in “the shared lives of human beings” (Rosenblatt, 1985b, p. 65). She also discusses that “private meanings” are ultimately part of a particular cultural setting in which a reader lives. Therefore, language is both social and personal, without rigorously demarcating “personal” and “social” aspects. Language is a web of social and personal meanings in Rosenblatt’s conceptualization. In my understanding, Rosenblatt argues that one cannot pull out only the social aspect out of the web. Transaction within the web is inevitable, in her thinking of reading.

Therefore, her theory focuses on the merging between the social and the personal of language, instead of the conflict between them. In the transaction, the evoked “private meanings” of the reader are “raw reactions” to a text and so can be distorted (1995). Rosenblatt argues that “a text makes a reader critical of these assumptions” (1964, p.125) that evoke the “private meanings” from the reader in the beginning. However, this process of selection and organization does not mean to exclude “private meanings” in her theory. What Rosenblatt attempts to do is to find a “public meaning” in a private meaning and vice versa.

In *Viewpoints: Transaction Versus Interaction* (1985a), Rosenblatt states that the transactional view of language “refutes the notion of language as a self-contained, ungrounded system” (p. 99) such as the Saussurean view that stresses the direct relation between the signifier and the signified, even if their relation arbitrary, without any human beings involved. In Rosenblatt’s notion, a word does not always correspond to its object for some readers. A word has several referents, social and personal. So language is not self-contained in that sense.

However, her notion of language is a contained system in a different way. A word symbolized as an iceberg is assumed to hold the broad base as “primordial matrix” and the top part of the “public meanings” as in the “shared lives of human beings.” Language is not self-contained for Rosenblatt in the sense that it always is entangled with the person. But language in relation to person is assumed to contain “primordial matrix” and the “shared lives of human beings.” In this sense, language is self-contained in Rosenblatt’s theory.

Bleich's concept.

The notion of language in Bleich's theory extrapolated in his *Subjective Criticism* (1978) holds vague equivalence to Rosenblatt's. Before examining his notion of language, I give an extremely brief and reduced overview of his theory. Unlike the other reader-response theorists whom I examine, he disagrees with a widespread assumption of reading as an act of communication, or "transaction," between the text and the reader, much less the one between the author and the reader. Instead, Bleich (1975b) sees reading as a transaction between the reader and his feelings, not between the reader and the text (p. 93). Because reading for Bleich is induced by the reader's feelings, generally conceived as subjective, and an object of interpretation for Bleich is the "subjective" feelings, his theory of reading, he proposes, forms a "subjective" paradigm.

Bleich's "subjective" paradigm questions an idea that an object of interpretation is the text. In general, the explanatory process of reading is recognized as an interpretation of the text, and further is supposed to be "universal, repeatable and predictable" (Bleich, 1978, p.38). Arguing against this view, Bleich claims that his subjective paradigm "reconceives what constitutes explanatory adequacy" (p. 39). The reader first responds to the text as a "peremptory perceptual act" (p. 97). The perceptual act, or the "subjective" response, Bleich argues, initiates the reader's explanatory process of, not the text, but the reader's feelings. He contends that an explanatory process is motivated by affective responses. A so-called interpretation in fact explains the reader's motives as "a subjectively regulated cause" (Bleich, p. 44) for the act of reading³².

³² The idea that an interpretation is motivated by the subjective responses derives from Bleich's understanding of Freud. A person who talks about her dream articulates a wish that she *finds* in the dream, or a response to the dream. However, Bleich explains that it is not possible to know

Rosenblatt's theory and Bleich's seem similar since they need the differently conceived ideas of transaction . But Rosenblatt's does not support a "subjective" paradigm: Neither does it support an "objective" paradigm. Although Rosenblatt's theory is sometimes recognized as "subjective," Blech's notion of "subjective" is different from hers. "Subjective" response for Bleich is involved with the reader's feelings and emotions that are opposed to cognition and thought. On the other hand, Rosenblatt's use of "subjective" more points to "personal" as opposed to "public." Bleich's "subjective" responses are not regarded as the "private meanings" of a word as Rosenblatt's does. He would not be interested in "private meanings" of words – he even might not think of the "private meanings."

Bleich states that language is socially generated. In the introduction of *Subjective Criticism*, Bleich (1978) writes, "The use of language, even by all of us who are now literate, depends on the belief in meanings. . . . These beliefs have no other source than *the accumulated social uses of language*" (emphasis mine; p. 7). As the social uses of language promote the beliefs, the meanings used in society become "the" meaning. In Bleich's theory, language is not divided into "private meanings" and "public meanings" as in Rosenblatt's theory.

Bleich argues that language is "so decisively tied to mental functioning" (1978, p. 39). Bleich discusses that the concept of language as a formal system detached from

that the wish is not caused by the dream. The wish only comes out during the talk or interpretation of the dream. In his understanding, Freud's interpretation of dream "does not discover the motives of dreams; rather, dreams are the motive for interpretation" (1978, p. 77). A reader's immediate responses to a text are a reader's motives for interpretation, not an interpretation of a text.

an individual³³ who uses it does not harmonize with the use of language that is involved with “our minds” (p. 39). It seems that he incorporates the “private meaning” into his conceptualization of language. However, he states that the concept of language needs to be “more commensurate with the subjective experience of language, and particularly with *our common feeling of dominion over the language we use*” (emphasis mine; p. 39). In Bleich’s theory, an individual can control language that s/he uses, and further the feeling of control over language is supposed to be “common” among individuals. In my understanding, Rosenblatt’s theory attempts to bring the control over language back to a person by incorporating the “private meanings” in the reading process. While Rosenblatt views language in relation to a person as personal and private, Bleich urges a need for explanation of language in relation to “our minds” as social and communal individual.

Further, Bleich inquires into what language “does” in relation to “our minds.” Presupposing that language is correlated to “our minds,” Bleich contends that language has “motivational character.” Bleich (1978) states that the explanatory act seeks “a language that will better manage them [subjective experiences of language]” (p. 44). The “motivational character” of language signifies that language that the individual uses for making responses and explains them manifests the motive for her reading.

Not only does language manifest the motive of the individual’s behavior, but also language motivates conceptual thought or symbolic formation, for example, for explanatory process (Bleich, 1978). A certain portion of the chapter titled “motivational character of language and symbolic formation” consists of a child language development and Hellen Keller’s story. The reason Bleich describes Hellen’s acquisition of language

³³ In my understanding, human being is “individual” for Bleich and “person” Rosenblatt.

is that the story tells (for him) the development from sensor-motor stage without language to symbolic state with language. With an access to language, Hellen starts to form ideas and thoughts symbolically. Thus, Bleich thinks that language motivates the individual to build up a concept apart from a sensory experience. Therefore, Bleich argues that adults' sentences are not comprehensible "until we think of them as an individual's motivated act" (p.62).

Belonging in Rosenblatt's and Bleich's Theories.

Interestingly, Rosenblatt and Bleich both discuss a child's language acquisition or development for different purposes. Rosenblatt's purpose is to explain that the reader, like a child, is supposed to personally and emotionally engage with the text. She points out that "a bond between language and the inner experience matrix" (1982, p. 271) continues to be emphasized in the studies of children's early language. Therefore, she argues for the focus on the bond in (the teaching of) reading the literary text.

Bleich (1978) talks about a child's language development more extensively than Rosenblatt. The development of a child's ability to name an object with the mother figure suggests to Bleich that language is a means of "representational thought in terms of motivation" (p. 52). Bleich's point is that language is not independent of sensory and physical experience to represent an object and a thought as well, though he puts more weight on language's role as motivator for a conceptual thought. Though conceived in the two theories in different ways, the bond between self and language is visceral for these two theorists. Their discussions about the developments seem to me to show that a

language acquisition of a child assumes an original relation to language and “ideal” for the relation between self and language.

However, in Bleich’s theory, the relation might not be as “personally” bonded as Rosenblatt’s. In his theory, it is true, the visceral bond to language is not ignored. In his idea of the transaction, the subjective experience of language eventually has to be objectified to construct the knowledge for the community to which the reader belongs. This aim might weigh public relations to language more.

In both theories, language is not as autonomous as that viewed by formalism. As I have seen, Rosenblatt’s theory requires a visceral relation with language, the one that the reader constructed in her personal experience of language since childhood. A concise possible answer to the question of how language takes shape for the reader in Rosenblatt’s theory would be that it takes shape by involving this visceral relation with words, or “the primordial matrix,” and “the shared lives of human beings” as well. According to Bleich’s theory, while language motivates a conceptual thought for the reader, language takes shape by the reader’s motivation for a reading. Since “our minds” are deeply connected to language for Bleich, language belongs to us, but not the other way round, and self even controls language in his theory.

This relation of belonging is different from Derrida’s concept of the relation of inalienable alienation. In his concept of the relation, language has the solipsistic nature, which alienates self from language, no matter how the reader wants to be proximate to language. On the other hand, Bleich’s notion of language is that language is socially and communally constructed by something outside of language, that is, “us.”

Rosenblatt does not articulate that the reader controls language. Inclusion of the “private meanings” does not directly mean that the reader can control language. But the inclusion can imply that language belongs to the reader, a personal self. When only the “public meanings” are required for the transaction, the reader might feel alienated from language. The “primordial matrix” can lead the reader to reach language in her theory. But the “primordial matrix” might entail the feeling that language belongs to the reader.

The belonging in Rosenblatt’s and Bleich’s theories might not necessarily entail the idea of arriving at the text. The relation of self and language as the “belonging” in Rosenblatt’s might not appear to be quite related to the unnoticed conviction in the iteration with the illocutionary and locutionary force that supports Fish’s and Iser’s theories. In particular, the relation between self and language in Rosenblatt’s theory does not seem to involve “an accepted conventional procedure” that is imperative in Austin’s theory. The “public meanings” constructed by the “shared lives of human beings” might likely invoke the procedures, but the “private meanings” might hinder the invocation. Involvement of a person’s “private meanings” and affective engagement in Rosenblatt’s theory appears to even refute accepting the invoked “conventional procedure,” if iterable statements are not taken as iterable because of “private meanings.”

According to Derrida, the iterability makes conscious presence of the intention absent in sending and receiving the performative utterance. Engaging with the text through “private meanings,” if “private” especially points to a personal self as consciousness, might invalidate the absence of conscious intention. However, the requirement of the selection of private meanings through the text might mean that it

demands fulfilling the invoked conventions: In that case, the reader might situate herself in the “immanent structure of promise or desire.”

Although Fish’s and Iser’s theory are different from each other, in employing Austin’s theory, their theories presume that language is not only identifiable and iterable, but also creates “the immanent structure of promise or desire” in relation to self. For example, “the way the work works” that Fish argues the reader reads signifies, as Culler (1975b) analyzes, the conventions of reading for Fish. “The way the work works” might be embedded in “the immanent structure of promise or desire.” Thus, the relation presumes that the reader can reach language by controlling it.

Despite some differences among the four theories, self is not seen as constituted by the solipsism of language in any of those theories. Language is not conceived as a formal system, in which language is conceived as autonomous of any empirical subjects. Among the four theories, language is communal or social, if not possessed by any one, and thus is not autonomous of any empirical subjects. According to Austin’s theory, certain feelings and thoughts that are invoked by an utterance have to be shared by all the participants. Rosenblatt’s theory needs not only a visceral, kinetic, sensual relation with words, but also “the shared lives of human beings” in relation to language. In Bleich’s theory, one has to have the common feeling of dominance over the language.

The relation as belonging presumes that self and language are separate. However, language does not just exist as formal systems such as grammar, phonics and so on. Language belongs to self in the way that self can feel the control over it. Further, through

the belonging, which is constituted partly by the “immanent structure of promise or desire,” the reader can supposedly arrive at language.

The Belonging and the Riddle

In this section, I want to examine more “the belonging as arriving” in relation to the riddle that I discern among reader-response theories in the “overview” chapter (Chapter 7). First I am going to return to the riddle a little, and then examine this relation between self and language as the “belonging as arriving.”

One of the aims in this chapter is to inquire into possible answers to a question of how language takes a shape for the reader. This question arises from the dilemma for those who advocate for the transaction or the riddle for some metacritics about the text’s “objectivity” and the reader’s “interpretative authority.” Reader response theories, writ large, agree with a phenomenological assumption of the inseparability between the text and the reader. As I examined in the “overview” chapter (Chapter 7), the phenomenological assumption collapses, and thus the whole idea of the reader response theories would do, when some reader-response theories cannot solve the difficulty or impossibility of completely denying the given-ness of the text. Only the riddle is left.

Instead of resolving the riddle, Tompkins proposes to examine how text takes shape for the reader, assuming that there “is” a certain given-ness of text. I have investigated possible answers for the question that I tweaked from Tompkin’s question, how language takes a shape for the reader. This investigation seems to help to reconceive, though not resolve, the dilemma into one of the tenets in reader-response

theories. The relation of belonging might support the inseparability advanced by the phenomenological assumption.

The relation of “belonging as arriving” between self and language does not deny the text’s given-ness. The “belonging as arriving” is only possible by taking for granted a separation between the text and the reader. But at the same time, the reader’s desire for proximity and closeness to language entails the inseparability in the sense that self controls and so can arrive at the language. Since the “belonging as arriving,” not the reader alone, gives a shape to the text, it can yet position the text as less autonomous without completely losing its traditionally conceived position as “object.”

Hence, the riddle about the text’s objective status in relation to the reader should not be the dilemma: The given-ness of the text is a prerequisite for the reader to arrive at the text, so that they will be bonded again by the reader’s reaching the text. The “belonging as arriving” could support both the inevitable separation and the inseparability. Therefore, Bleich’s theory, in which the reader is not expected to reach the text, is not entangled with this riddle. The relation between self and language in his theory is only the belonging, but not the “belonging as arriving.”

The belonging that presumes the separation to arrive looks equivalent to Derrida’s concept of “inalienable alienation.” But it is not. In the “inalienable alienation” a self is ultimately alienated from language and constituted by the solipsism of language, and therefore the alienation is inalienable. On the other hand, the belonging presupposes separation first and in the end builds up the relation of inseparation. The “belonging as arriving” is enabled by the idea that language is socially and

conventionally constructed by “us,” not by the “solipsism” of language. The belonging does not involve “inalienable alienation.” And now what is this “us,” what notion of self constituted this “us” in reader response theories?

Self in the Belonging

Terry Eagleton (1983) misconstrues the idea of the “reader” in some reader-response theories. He construes that the reader brings in the “irreducible given-ness” that obstructs “the” reading of the text. Further, Eagleton thinks that this “irreducible given-ness” does not make reliable and stable the “schemata” of the text that the readers already concretize before discussing them. His argument is that one can discuss a set of schemata that one sees/reads, but the set is not in the text but in the reader with the irreducible given-ness. If the reader takes a role in interpretation, he argues, “criticism would seem to fall into total anarchy” (p. 85). He dismisses any leading role of the reader, because the reader brings in “the irreducible given-ness.”

“The irreducible given-ness” does not signify the Enlightenment notion of self as conscious being (Eagleton, 1983). According to Eagleton, Heidegger’s idea of existence is not the subject as the autonomous agent. Eagleton argues, drawing on Heidegger, “we are human subjects only because we are practically bound up with others and the material world” (p. 54). Based on this understanding of Heidegger’s idea of human existence, Eagleton conceptualizes self as “sharing a host of tacit assumptions gleaned from our practical bound-upness with the world” (p.53).

On the other hand, in Fish's theory, the reader is not supposed to bring her assumptions or idiosyncrasies. In Iser's theories, "our practical bound-upness with the world" is expected to invade in the reading. Nonetheless, "the schemata" can be made reliable when the implied reader processes the steps, such as negation, which aim to bound the reader into the midst of "the irreducible absence of the receiver" in the writing (Derrida, 1988). Those theories assume that the "irreducible givenness" can be detached from the reader. Therefore, Eagleton's criticism about the unreliability of the reader in reader-response theories is not viable.

However, I do not depreciate Eagleton's criticism thoroughly. It is worthy to note that his criticism centers on the notion of self, which some of the reader-response theories do not explore. Tompkin also points out that reader-response theories should conceptualize a notion of a self when they give some interpretive authorities to the reader. How does each reader-response theory that I examine conceptualize self? The theories do not articulately conceptualize a notion of self, but when they explain the reader, their unspoken notions of self are shown.

In *The Interpreter's Self*, Walter Benn Michaels (1980), who explores "American epistemology" through literary theory, points out a prevalent doubt of self in U.S. literary criticism. M.H. Abrams, Hills Miller, and E.D. Hirsch all have some suspicion of "subjectivity" as opposed to objectivity that is a prerequisite in science (Michaels, p. 187). In particular, when Abrams insists that there "is" a single determinate meaning (p.186), he occludes the subjectivity, the interpreter's 'personal' self. Those critics who can be lumped together in the New Criticism detest "subjectivity" which is prejudiced and so unreliable.

One can see this abhorrence of “subjectivity” in Fish’s theory. Fish (1980) writes that he needs to “suppress what is personal and idiosyncratic and 1970ish” (p. 315) in his responses. For Fish, the self is “personal” and therefore can become an obstacle in his theory of reading. Fish explicitly relinquishes this self: He states that he is not “committed to subjectivity because the means by which they (all objects) are made are social and conventional” (1980, p. 315). Even if Fish argues for the reader’s experience as interpretative authority, his idea of self is the same as that among the camps of the New Criticism.

Holland also understands “self” in the similar way as Fish does, even if Holland is oriented in a different theoretical framework from Fish. Holland even warns about placing a sole authority on “subjectivity,” the reader’s personal and unreliable self. He states that “the word subjectivity becomes a thought-stopper” and “[M]erely calling reality “subjective” leads to the familiar dead-end of solipsism or extreme idealism” (1976, p. 339).

Michael traces this suspicion of the interpreter’s self back to the critique of Descartes’ notion of the self by Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and pragmatist. While the self is “neutral” and “unprejudiced” for Descartes, Peirce argues that self is always committed and can be constrained by “outside.” In rejecting the Cartesian goal of neutrality of self, Peirce also rejects a notion of the self “wiped clean of prejudice” (Michael, 1980, p. 195). Therefore, the self’s consciousness confined by the “outside” is recognized as prejudiced and deceptive.

Later in his career, Fish sees self as implicated in social practices. Fish, in fact, states “the self does not exist apart from the communal categories of thought that enable

its operations of thinking, seeing and reading” (1980, p. 315). This idea of self indicates a development of Peirce’s notion of self as confined by outside. Peirce also “emphasized the community as an ideal” (Michael, p.188) rather than the individual.

Unlike Fish and Holland, Bleich gives weightier role to “subjectivity.”

Although Bleich embraces the “subjective” self in his idea of the transaction, Bleich proposes that emotional responses should be eventually “objectified and translated into a judgment and a thought to create knowledge” (1975b, p. 9). The ultimate purpose of interpretation of a literary work in Bleich’s theory is to “enhance the self” (Bleich, 1978, p. 78) that is a part of the world, or the society, and thence is not neutral from the world out there.

When the self is conceptualized as a part of the world, the self is not supposed to create knowledge by “an introspective analytical conscious awareness of the individual will” (Dunning, 1991, p.331), one of the Enlightenment notions of self. Peirce argues against the intuitive self’s consciousness that is supposed to construct knowledge of ourselves within Descartes’ idea of the self’s introspection as certain (Michael, 1980). Instead, Peirce argues that certainty should be ascribed to external information and reasoning (Michael, 1980). Referring to Michael’s article, Dunning (1991) conjectures that, in Peirce’s notion, one knows and constructs “reality” and oneself “through” signs not through self’s introspection (p.332).

Although language comes in Peirce’s conceptualization of the self, his concept has no common ground with the poststructuralist notion of the self as being constituted by language. Peirce’s thinking is not that one knows reality “in” language as some poststructuralists argue. The self for Peirce is in need of language, but language is still

“out there” to be used as a medium. With the access to language, one can know the things surrounding oneself. This idea of self in relation to language seems to be reflected in Bleich’s concept of “motivational language” in relation to “our minds,” through which the self in Bleich’s theory can supposedly know “herself.”

Rosenblatt’s readers do not need to suppress some personal and idiosyncratic characters as those in Fish’s theory. Rather, the reader pays more attention to the “private meanings.” As Derrida conceptualizes, the fold as “unfolding” would not take place in her “theory.” There is only the consciously constructed fold of the written signs. Thus, the self in Rosenblatt’s theory needs to be fully aware of what she is doing in the reading with the “introspective analytical conscious awareness of the individual will.”

What is convergent among the four theories in terms of the notions of self, especially within the ideas of transaction, the self is conceptualized as “judging after deliberation.” Self in Iser’s “implied reader” is the very embodiment of this concept. The “implied reader” starts from “the wondering viewpoint” through which the reader constructs and produces “correlatives” as effects of the text, which is equivalent to Austin’s idea of the illocutionary force. However, in the end of the transaction, the reader supposedly arrives at the text because self is believed to be able to “judge[ing] after deliberation.”

The arrival of postmodern thinking, such as poststructuralism and feminisms, cast doubt on the concept of the self as judging and knowing that delegitimizes other ways of thinking. Seigel (2005) encapsulates the emerging different notions of the self by stating:

there arise selves generated from within their own being or ones fabricated from outside, selves whose main features are universal or specific to some time and place, selves that are stable or fluid, and selves that are more or less autonomous or dependent, self-governing or in thrall to some power or powers of whose existence they may or may not be aware. (p. 7)

According to Seigel, it is Duchamp, Barthes, Foucault and Derrida who have brought these notions of the self as fabricated, fluid, restricted to time and place and so on.

Derrida's theoretical enterprise partly hinges on the subversion of the Saussurean view of language. In Saussure's theory of language, "the framework language provides for its community of speakers does not only constrain individuals, it also actualizes their powers" (Seigel, 2005, p. 641). The solipsism of language is also independent of human will, but unlike Saussurean notion of language it is not socially instituted but is a property of language. In facing the solipsism of language, speakers would not be able to "actualize powers" in Derrida's thinking. The self cannot be autonomous, fully conscious, and knowing. Derrida's view argues that, with an access to language, one cannot always know external or internal things. The very existence of language does not promise the capacity of judging and knowing.

My "Wiggling Wall" Revisited

"Immanent structure of promise or desire".

I do not like to carry on small talk. A small talk can be "small" when both sides respond to the other conventionally and, therefore supposedly, spontaneously for me. When/if I think how to respond, it's not small talk any longer.

My classmate said to me, “I like your bag. Where was it made?”

“I think in Peru. Don't remember. One of the countries in the South America.”

“Can I have it?”

“Well,” thinking about what to say and taking it seriously, “Um, actually I got it from Randy. So, you know, I wish I could, but,,,”

“Um, Naoko” in his soft voice, “we say “can I have it?” when we see something good. And usually we respond, saying “take it.”

Funny. It's still funny for me. I have numerous anecdotes of this sort and use them to make some Japanese, freshly coming to the U.S., laugh to relieve themselves from some struggles with English. This talk was supposed to be small for the friend, who already expected a certain response to come from me. It was already promised. But it seemed that I was not able to meet the promise.

I know that I need to keep learning those “expressions” and “idioms” forever through lived-experience. And that is just fine. I do not think that this “iterable” statement invokes the same responses among so-called “native” English speakers. The invoked response should vary depending on different elements such as generation, gender and so on.

My point is not the universality of the iterable utterances but the feeling that I construct at those moments. I was afraid to make a response that is beyond the boundary that “the immanent structure of promise or desire” through the iterability circumscribed on all the participants. This feeling of lack for the relation from the structure might help

to create the wiggling thin wall between English and me. I am too far from the illocutionary force to reach it.

“Primordial matrix”.

The idea of “primordial situation” indicates to me a visceral relation with a language. I do not mean that I do not have a visceral relation with English just because I did not grow up with/in English. I do have my visceral relation with this language, (in) which I am writing, and I have the feeling that some of the names in English are “inherent part[s] of the referent.” I remember complaining to my friends at college, “why can’t we memorize some English words, as we did ‘I’ or ‘book’?” I don’t feel those new words went into my veins as deeply as other words that I learned in the beginning. This sense might help me to create the wall, the wiggling wall, between some other names/ideas and their referents.

My “primordial matrix” of English words might be only proximate to “a light weight mental token.” I feel that my iceberg of English only has a top. So fragile. In particular, I learned English through “books,” but not through an empirical subject. I did not learn English as a child often does through someone who takes care of her. I am not certain that Rosenblatt’s idea of “primordial matrix” encompasses the “maternal language.” However, this physicality might also create the wall.

“Inalienable alienation”.

A delayed reader might enact “a disruption of presence” in the “spacing” as a predicate to the writing. “Disruption of presence” can take place in two-fold ways, consecutively or separately. The writing itself a priori disrupts the presence, the body of language, as the general spacing. Moreover, when a reader comes delayed to the writing, the reader might disrupt the other presence, as the modified absence and thus intention, through the spacing.

A written product is “abandoned to the essential drift” with a rupture in it. The written product can be stabilized by the possibility of “the death of the receiver” (Derrida, 1988, p.8). But, the death of the receiver is only a possibility. A reader comes delayed to the writing, a moment when the written product becomes the reading, and then in the latter disruption might be enacted.

A disruption of presence might be enacted by the reader’s relation to the solipsism of language as inalienable alienation. Or a disruption might not be enacted because of the “immanent structure of promise or desire” that constitutes the relation as belonging as arriving. Or a reader might bring in some other relations with the language.

The last reader might not notice the rupture of the body, either. But, at the same time, the reader might slip in the rupture of the writing because of some other relations with the language that are different from “the immanent structure of promise or desire.” Slipping in the rupture in the body of language, the reader would feel uncomfortable, wiggling through the spacing, which “separates it [the written sign] from other elements of the internal contextual chain, but also from all forms of present reference” (Derrida, 1988, p.9 -10).

I have to repeat that I did have the feeling of wiggling. I did not feel that the writing in English “is abandoned to essential drift,” when I was a reader. Rather, the text, or the writing in English, felt rigorous, probably because of the distance between English and me. I was the one who drifted, probably since I did not have the certain relation of belonging as arriving at English.

However, it is also possible that I felt the drifting, or the wiggling, when I slipped into the “spacing” as one of the “essential predicates in a minimal determination of the classical concept of writing” (Derrida, 1996, p.9). Let me repeat. I might have felt wiggling with/in my self in reading of writing in English. The feeling lies in a “disruption of presence” of the modified absence. Then, the wall might have been--and be--my construct by assuming that there is a wall between English and me by placing English at “a place of fantasy, therefore, at an ungraspable distance” out there. I admit that I still believe that there is a visceral distance from English, but the “wall” might not be between English and me. The wall might be between me and me. A-la Minh-ha’s wordings, the wall is between differences from my self in relation to English and identity with my self in relation to Japanese.

“The fold of chains of marks” that Derrida describes as writing as dissemination is relevant to reading. Reading as the fold of chains of marks can be either “within the phenomenal, ontical, or empirical example” or “within the phantasm itself.” This double “fold” takes place through the “trace in language.” My reading of writing in English must be placed in the “phenomenal , ontical or empirical example” by folding the marks into what the marks refer or mean to me. But this “fold” can be at the same time “within

the phantasm itself” when I fold chains of marks, because “chain of marks” presuppose “the trace in language.”

The “trace in language” means iterations of meanings of words that one creates through experiences and memories. The “trace in language” is never the same as Rosenblatt’s idea of the multiple meanings of words in the transaction. Language for Rosenblatt is an iceberg with the private meanings at the bottom and the public meanings at the top, while the trace in language is not constructed as if it were only added up on like an iceberg. The relation between self and language as the iceberg is a self-contained relation, the belonging as arriving. Rosenblatt’s “private meanings” are constructed by an individual’s experiences and memories. However, while the private meanings can be elicited and sorted out by the rational self in the transaction, in Derrida’s notion of writing, the “trace in language” cannot be graspable because the self is constituted by the solipsism of language. And the self that is entangled within the “trace in language” is fluid and indeterminate. “The trace in language” is not something that the self “has,” while the “private meanings” are something that a person “has.” The “trace in language” comes back to a reader at any moment, unexpectedly.

The “trace in language” also might bring about the feeling of the wiggling. In writing and reading (in) English, I, who is constituted by the other language and also English to some extent, more viscerally struggle with “the trace in language.” I am loaded with “the trace in language,” Japanese, English. In writing and reading, “I/i” sweat over trying to at least delete my traces over almost each single word. The “wiggling” is in my self, probably my selves.

Another possible relation between myself and (the) language(s)

The wiggling in myself. Then how is my self constituted *in relation to* the two languages, even when the self is fluid because of the “trace in language”?

On the shore.

Derrida (1996) writes with a little tint of emotion on his relation to French language that he is deprived of:

I am wrong, wrong to speak of a crossing and a place. For it is on the shores of the French language, uniquely, and neither inside nor outside it, on the unplaceable line of its coast that, since forever, and lastingly [a demeure], I wonder if one can love, enjoy oneself [jouir], pray, die from pain, or just die, plain and simple, in another language or without telling anyone about it, without even speaking at all. (p.2)

“I” am not just with/in English but also in Japanese. I say “I” in English but this “I” cannot sit still IN English. I speak English “in” Japanese and I also speak Japanese “in” English. This “I,” my self, seems to dwell in the two languages. My body and mind sometimes yells at me “I belong to Japanese!” as if my body and mind desperately starves for it. Someone might think that I feel at home, comfortable, and safe at Japanese. And truthfully I sometimes feel at home in Japanese. Other times, my body and mind whispers: “I need English.” I don’t have a cry “I belong to English!” But I think I do to some extent. I cannot be without this language, a so-called foreign language. I cannot tell to what extent one of the two languages constitutes me nor if one

constitutes me separately from the other. When I speak and write one of the languages, I do not leave the other end and cross the line, if any, between them.

In *Outside Belongings*, Probyn (1996) suggests, “while belonging may make one think of arriving, it also marks the often fearsome interstices of being and going, of longing, nor arriving” (p.40). I don’t belong to either of the two languages in the sense of arriving through the iterability by being in the immanent structure of promise or desire. Nor do I belong to English through the “primordial matrix.” However, I have to say that the feeling of not belonging to either language does not indicate, as a school of postcolonial theory would point, that I am tragically uprooted and thus cannot even belong to a language as a “place.” So where am I in relation to the two languages which constitute me but to which I do not totally belong?

I am on the shore. Waves ebb and flow. I sometimes walk into the ocean with the receding waves or against the breaking waves. I sometimes go back to the shore, and the waves come after and with me, and pass me; but sometimes they recede further away from me. I can't tell if I am on the shore or in the ocean. When am I crossing a line? I am on the shore, without belonging, but longing for something else.

The “something else” is not the immanent structure of promise or desire that I have so coveted as “the purity of language.” The relation I have had to the two languages is a longing in the alienation. I am in “the in-between zones that are the shifting grounds on which the (doubly) exiled walk” (emphasis mine; Minh-ha, 1989, p.70).

Longing for.

Derrida says, “subjects competent in several languages *tend* to speak only one language” (1996, p.22). This could remind us here of some “Koran English” “Japanese-English” to name a few. But Derrida’s idea of “one language” here is not related to the idea that “a” language has been influenced by another language, or what some camps of linguists call a “nativized” language.

This “one language,” Derrida (1996) explains, is dismembering itself (p. 22). Derrida also states, “it [one language] can only promise and promise itself by threatening to dismember itself” (p. 22). If not dismembered, the “one language” would disrupt the iterability for an itinerary from “there” to “here.” The “one language” has to be dismembered in order to meet the itinerary. Obviously, the “one language” is not any given empirical language. The “one language” is desired, but sometimes has to be cut off to observe the iterability and the structure of promise or desire. And I might long for “one language.” (My “wiggling” might have come forefront at the moment of this dismembering)

Further, Derrida argues that subjects competent in several languages “do” language “with a view to an absolute idiom” and “in the promise of a still unheard-of language of a sole poem previously inaudible” (1996, p. 67). However, this “promise,” Derrida insists, “must be dissociated from the values of the will, intention, or meaning-to-say that are reasonably attached to it” (p. 67). Further, “the performative of this promise is not one speech act among others” (p. 67). It is certain that Derrida alludes to Austin’s theory that is conceived by the idea of “the immanent structure of promise or desire.”

The promise in Austin's idea of the illocutionary force is already inscribed in utterances. In a stark difference, Derrida's "promise" does not lie in the identity or the unity of the written sign (p. 68). His idea of "promise" is for a language (a still unheard-of language) to come, not for a language to arrive. A "still unheard-of language" will come in the breach of the iterability, the disunity of the written signs, which is invoked by the "trace in language." This unknown possibility is "promise" for Derrida.

This promise also might be what I long for on the shore. My "self" that is constituted by Japanese does not identify itself with my "self" that is also constituted by English. This difference, which I took as the wall, is "between difference itself and identity" (Minh-ha, 1989, p.95) as a speaker of Japanese, but not difference from "native" English speakers. Along with the "trace in language," this disunity within my "self" on "the shifting grounds on which the (doubly) exiled walk" might help to cause the disunity of the written sign, either English or Japanese, thereby placing my "self" "in the promise of a still unheard-of language."

Chapter 9: Agency: Self in Autobiography

“Why are you so pessimistic these days?” said a friend of mine to me when I asserted that we are so deeply embedded in numerous norms that are constructed in many differing ways. From her perspective I lose my agency because I am so deeply entangled with a so-called poststructural theory, a theory that is sometimes thought to hold a fatalistic view of the world. In fact, poststructuralism writ large has been criticized as nihilism or pessimism. Responding to this, some camps of this thought, feminist poststructuralist theories, attempt to argue that while we are not fully knowing and accountable individual, we can still construct knowledge (Braidotti, 2003; Miller, 2005; St. Pierre, 2000). One might conjecture that autobiographical researchers within this thinking might be frightened to even imagine a researcher’s subjectivity as impinging on research, which I showed in “disruption” chapter (Chapter 5). This conjecture does assume that the researcher stands outside any discourse and norm, or “objective,” if you like.

In *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler discusses that social and cultural norms constructing subjectivity does not mean that those norms mire the subject. This discussion indicates that there “is/are” one mode(s) of agency, even if self is the subject to numerous discourses; however, of course, it should not be the modernist one in which agency is solely located in the individual self.

Judith Butler (2005) in *Giving an Account of Oneself* helps me to see one mode of agency in autobiographical inquiry. She writes, “[I]n speaking the ‘I,’ I undergo

something of what cannot be captured or assimilated by the ‘I’ since I always arrive too late to myself” (p. 79). I find three different selves in this one sentence: the “I” whose past is told in an account, the “I” who narrates, and lastly “myself” to which I, narrating “I,” always arrive too late.

For Butler, as for Gilmore and Smith & Watson, the narrating “I” is distinguished from the “I” whose “past” story is told. She also writes “I create myself in new form, instituting a narrative ‘I’³⁴ that is superadded to the ‘I’ whose past life I seek to tell” (2005, p. 39). Two different “I”s operate in a story about her/himself. For example, as I examine in Chapter 5, I said in one of my stories in Chapter 3, “Don’t erase me.” This “me,” the narrated “I” is a student who freshly came to the U.S graduate school from Japan, but the narrating “I” is the subject to the taken-for-granted idea of difference as stark and thus identity as such.

Going further from Gilmore and Smith & Watson, Butler argues that there is “I” who institutes the narrating “I.” Moreover, what is crucial in terms of agency in autobiographical inquiry is her statement “I create myself in new form” (2005, p. 39).

But nonetheless, as Butler states, I undergo something of what cannot be captured or assimilated by the “I.” The narrating “I” meanders in and out some different locations, including language, social cultural discourses, or even a theory. This meandering must create the feeling that I cannot capture something, whether it is a story or myself, in writing stories. Further, Butler states the narrating “I,” while it is already written by discourses, is “reconstituted at every moment it is invoked in the narrative itself” (2005, p. 66). A gap is created within the narrating “I”s. (This gap can be the same as

³⁴ I read Butler’s narrative “I” here as the narrating “I” in Smith and Watson’s idea.

Derrida's notion of "rupture in presence" since what the narrated "I" and the narrating "I" could refer to is fleeting through the reconstitution. Further, this gap can be generated by the reader who is without fail entangled with "the two folds.") Therefore, "I create myself in new form" through the gap by the reconstitution.

But the self in "new" form does not imply that the "I" becomes complete in the modernist sense. Rather, it is "new" since it is an unknown self. Butler writes, the narrating "I" "comes to experience itself or, rather, re-experience itself as radically, if not irretrievably, unknowing about who it is" (2005, p. 68). In speaking "I," the narrating "I" does not know who is being reconstituted. Therefore, the other self that "I always arrive too late to" might be the self in "new" form, an unknown self.

An Unknown Self in this Dissertation

When I read my stories in the "disruption" chapter (Chapter 5) and the story under the section sub-headed "My subjectivity in reading Mohanty's writing" in the "theoretical framework" chapter (Chapter 2), I find the two "I"s contradicting and contested. As I examined in the "disruption" chapter (Chapter 5), the narrating "I" in my stories evaded inquiring into the possible relations between a "Japanese woman" and English, because, according to the researching "I" in the "disruption" chapter (Chapter 5)--this is repetitive but important--I didn't want my stories to essentialize "a Japanese woman."

On the other hand, the supposedly "same" researching "I" explained in the section of "My subjectivity in reading Mohanty's writing" that I resisted Mohanty's idea of forming "political solidarity" as "women of color" because of my subjectivity as "a

Japanese,” not as “a Japanese woman,” which evinces the idea that Japan is economically “successful” and “modernized” under the influence or even the “help” of the U.S. after the war, different from the other “Asian” countries. Here I find the researching “I” who does not hesitate to reveal the subjectivity that I am a “Japanese,” a citizen--not the subject to the imperial Japan, but the subject to discourses and norms that are current in Japan-- of the nation that was defeated in the war but is “successful” in terms of economical matters without being forced to apply communism by the then-Soviet. While I attempted to steer clear of a gender issue that might arise from exploring my interpretations of experience as a “Japanese woman,” I do not evade telling my subjectivity as a “Japanese,” or a “Westernized/Americanized Japanese.” I was able to talk about being a “Japanese,” but kept evading talking about being a “woman” in Japan.

These contested “subjectivities” reinforce my strong but unnoticed refusal, resistance, negation to speak about *being a woman*, not being a “Japanese woman.” This was unknown, when the narrating “I” wrote the “stories” in the “my stories” chapter (Chapter 3), of course. The researching “I” in the “disruption” chapter (Chapter 5), in fact, pointed out that the “I” in Chapter 4 eliminated the stories about my self as a “Japanese woman.” However, the researching “I” in the “disruption” chapter only conjectured that the eliminated stories might be interpreted in many differing ways, including gender, race, class and so on – these three categories seem to be most often mentioned without any thoughtful investment in those categories, as I did in the “disruption” chapter. In the bracketed two paragraphs in the “disruption” chapter in which the researching “I” attempted to interpret the eliminated stories, the interpretation pointed more toward issues of the nation than toward gender issues. Here in this chapter,

I am just arriving at – but never fully rendering -- this unknown self who so strongly rejects even touching on the issue of gender.

This unknown self leads me to see how difficult and even impossible it is to talk about “a woman in Japan”--not as “a Japanese woman”--in the U.S. context or probably “outside” Japan. I was not a “Japanese” woman when I lived in Japan. I was marked and itinerated as a “Japanese woman” in the U.S.

The statement that I was a “woman in Japan” but not a “Japanese woman” does not mean to homogenize the woman in Japan. I would need to add on some other categories to this very huge category of woman. I am aware that this statement is problematic, too. However, my aim in this statement is to highlight one difference between a “woman in Japan” and a “Japanese woman.” The latter is always racialized or nationalized, and therefore subjugated.

I became a “Japanese woman” in the U.S. context. Then, when I talk about, in the context, how it is to be a “woman in Japan,” the story is likely to be transformed into a story about a “Japanese woman” by a reader. In the U.S. context the writer “I” has difficulty finding any way to talk about being a “woman in Japan” during the 1980’s and 1990’s before the current material, economical, cultural and political “globalization” started. It seems to me that stories about a “Japanese woman” cannot help being consumed into an issue of power relation between nations.

The shifting attention from gender to nation, or the evasion of gender issue, could be also traced back to my “experiences,” my interpretation of my experiences, in the U.S. More than one “U.S. born white” male and female as well pinned me down into the idea

of a “Japanese woman” as weak and acquiescent. I found myself seen as a “Japanese woman” in need of protection and even instruction, and therefore with vulnerable nature. I thought, and still think, that the idea was deeply entangled with Japan as a nation that needed and still needs protection from the U.S. My interpretation was and still is that possible power relations between nations might project themselves on an identity of “Japanese woman.”

(This interpretation has to be traced back to my perception of my nation, too. For example, the national flag of Japan symbolizes the war and the aftermath to my mother’s generation who lived through the war and probably to some of my generation, who was raised by mother’s generation. In Japan, they/we have had a debate about raising the flag in public schools, because the flag signifies the nationalism that largely led the nation into the war. However, this perception might change over time. Now the national flag is starting to hold a different signification since the earthquake and tsunami in March, 2011. I see lots of the national flag in which the red circle in the center is sometimes transformed into a red heart with “pray for Japan,” “reunite Japan,” and so on.)

I could have talked about the stories about being put into the box of a subjugated “Japanese woman” in the “disruption” chapter, but I did not. Again I could ascribe the evasion to my refusal to essentialize a “Japanese woman.” However, this was not the only force that stopped me from talking about possible stories as a woman.

Obviously to me, I did not want to inscribe a certain subject (one “U.S. born white male”) in my dissertation permanently by mentioning my “experiences” of the subject. Moreover, and more importantly, it seems that I was afraid of “losing” my identity as a

woman” who grew up and lived in Japan in a certain historical, social, cultural moment. The possible stories about the subject (the “U.S. born white male) might nullify my neglect of my father’s classical patriarchal idea of a woman and my stronger resistance to my mother’s attempt to reproduce herself from me. An identification of me as a “Japanese woman” in need in the U.S. context contests my identity as a (Japanese) woman who resisted being nailed down in any box. The silencing of the stories means not so much a resistance to the essentializing of a Japanese woman as the covert embrace of my identity as a “woman in Japan.”

The identity that I attempted to protect is conceived by the difference from some “other” women in Japan whom I assumed did not to resist some constraints, and in its logical extension could be considered vulnerable. The embrace of the identity as difference could cause another “othering” as the identity as sameness.

I do not and cannot know how much I am aware of this possible “othering” of some “other” women by talking about who I was in Japan as “different” from “them.” And it does not seem so important to know how much. I want to draw more attention, again, to the notion of difference as discrete and exclusionary. The refusal to talk about identity might indicate the shift to politics of difference (Calhoun, 1994). However, depending on how a notion of difference is conceptualized, politics of difference could induce the same consequence as the identity politics does; the “othering.”

On Being “Situated”

This unknown self and the notion of difference that constituted the unknown self lead me to my question of what it means to “situate” myself into a theory. As is seen in the “transition” chapter (Chapter4), the narrating “I” in my stories made a stark difference from “non-native” English speakers, while she claims to situate herself into feminist poststructuralist perspectives in which identity and difference as well are conceptualized as shifting, provisional, unfixed.

Moreover, I hedged myself as a researcher from investigating issues about being “a Japanese woman,” while I articulate that I situate myself into versions of *feminist* poststructuralist theories. After the second wave feminisms, a wide range of feminisms deal with other issues, including class and sexual orientation, in intersection with “women.” That feminism, no matter what other category is added to “feminism” (such as “materialist-feminism”), is not just about women any longer, but “it” still, probably, has to grapple with issues about women. One might even say that I am not loyal enough to this declaration that I “situate” myself in poststructural *feminisms*. I might not be able to be “situated” in the feminism enough since I did not deal with issues of women, though now I am doing that.

Further, without examining possible issues about English and me “as a woman in Japan” or “a Japanese woman,” I delve into the other trajectory about relations between self and language in reader response theories in the light of Derrida’s critiques of writing and speaking. The visible “I” is almost completely disappeared in the two chapters. Does this move drop this inquiry from the category of autobiographical inquiry as my research methodological framework? This move is also autobiographical, even if on the surface

the subject in the two chapters is not the researcher's subject. Two "soliloquy" parts in Chapter 6 and 8 manifests the researcher's I who itinerates the previous chapters (Chapter 3 and 4) into this move. Thus, behind the chapters 6 through 8 is the researching "I" also lurking, being armed with Derrida's theory of writing and speaking.

In the section of "wiggling wall, revisited" in the "reader-response" chapter (Chapter 8), the researching "I" becomes visible as "I." When this "I" was just blurting out my thinking through my body/subjectivity about reader-response theories, I wrote:

I didn't know where I stood in the class of the teaching of reading. I do not think that I felt the lack of the visceral and communal bond between self and language. I was at a loss. Or more precisely, I felt blank. In a journal in the class of "diversity" in the following semester, I wrote that I felt like a ghost because I did not feel belonging to the program of English Education. The instructor of the class of "diversity" put a comment that I was a part of the class and so I did not need to feel like a ghost.

My problem in the class of the teaching of reading was not the unbelongingness to English Education. It is not with gender. It is not with race, either. It is not with the cultural national identities. My problem is the relation with English. I would want to send an apology to the instructor of the diversity class: I might have made her feel that she was "excluding" me. No, she didn't. My lack of belonging-ness pointed to English.

I didn't construct the "primordial matrix" that Rosenblatt cherishes. Neither did I feel that I have the "shared lives of human beings" in relation to

English. With reader-response theories, especially Rosenblatt's theory in the class, I had to impossibly force myself as unfamiliar self as a reader of English. Of course I felt like a ghost.

The ghost has been transformed into the wiggling wall now.

Even being “armed” with Derrida’s thinking, the researching “I,” who was superadded on the “I” as a daughter and a mother and was still haunted with the image of the wiggling wall, even blurted that other issues such as race, culture, and nation had nothing to do with the wiggling wall. I might just have been theoretically “drawn to” the theories, but in my body I might be quite a standpoint theorist.³⁵ Again my subjectivity hovers over, under, and through my theoretical stance.

Revisiting the tensions between fixity and fluidity of identity and difference.

The “theoretical framework” chapter discusses the tensions between “ethnic autobiography” and poststructural feminism version of autobiography in terms of the narrator’s identity: The former expects the narrator’s identity to be fixed into a category and the latter presupposes that identity is unstable and provisional. Because subjectivities cannot be averted, I questioned how possible it was for the researcher to be situated in poststructural feminism thinking, and therefore I situated in the idea of “body in theory.”

And as is seen through the chapters, the narrating “I” and narrated “I” as well take a fixing position as “non-native” English speaker. However, this does not automatically make this autobiographical inquiry one of “ethnic” autobiographies. Taking and even

³⁵ However, anyways, I deleted these frightening paragraphs from the first edition of the chapter. Not because I need to be theoretically coherent. I deleted these frightening paragraphs after I wrote the “disruption” chapter (Chapter 5), and found another possibility of the way in which I construct the idea of “the purity” of English – difference within myself.

embracing the fixed identity is sometimes unavoidable, as Ellsworth & Miller (1996/2005) argue that “they [social constructions, such as gender] have acquired a kind of necessity that is not an essential one but rather a product of history and power relations” (p. 183), because without the social constructions, “‘I’ or ‘we’ would become unintelligible” (p. 183).

Further, Ellsworth & Miller propose ideas of “a strategic fixing of identity” and working difference” as the possibility of “engaging with and responding to the fluidity and malleability of identities and difference, of refusing fixed and static categories of sameness or permanent otherness” (1996/2005, p. 181). In “my stories” chapter, I “intended” to strategically fix and unfix the identity as “non-native English” speaker by describing relations between Japanese and me, and the identities as “an English teacher” and “an international student” in the U.S. However, in the very end of the chapter, I represented myself, very strongly (to me), as the fixed, but in fact provisional, identity as “non-native” English speaker. It was an unwitting manifestation of my subjectivity.

Ironically, the embrace of the fixing identity as “non-native English” speaker creates the tensions with my theoretical belief in poststructural feminism thinking about identity. Therefore, in order to “refuse[ing] fixed and static categories of sameness or permanent otherness,” it was imperative to disrupt the two chapters (Chapter 3 and 4) and see how the identity is constructed. As I examined, the fixed identity of “non-native” English speaker, which is constructed on “difference,” might “other” its polarized identity category of “native English speaker,” when difference is conceived as stable and exclusionary.

Hence, it is more imperative to rework and even re-signify difference and identities through the difference (Ellsworth & Miller, 1996/2005), so that one can attempt to unlock “permanent otherness.” The exploration in Chapter 6 through 8, especially about “the wiggling wall,” led me to rework the idea of difference as static and exclusionary and to unfix the difference that I inscribed as “non-native” English speaker. One of the possible readings of “the wiggling wall” that the difference symbolized by the wiggling wall is between my two selves unlocks, and even might re-signify, the identity as “non-native English speaker.”

The very poststructural feminist thinking about fluid subjectivity makes it possible to rework and re-signify the fixing identity as difference. Within the poststructural feminist thinking, the researching “I” does not need to hold on to any fixing identity. The concept of fluid subjectivity allows the autobiographical researcher to leave the fixed identity, and to interpret it. Drawing on Butler and Flax, Ellsworth & Miller pointedly state “fluid subjectivity does not necessarily mean aimless subjectivity” (1996/2005, p. 185).

Agency

In *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler points that agency is usually figured to be located in self in the modernist sense, a self that is understood to have some stable existence prior to the cultural field that it negotiates (p. 182). If agency thus operates solely in self that has some prediscursive stable state, then, the poststructural feminism notion of self (or selves) in autobiography cannot be a location for agency since a writing

“I” is very elusive. Further, when agency does not a priori reside in writing self in autobiography, what might autobiography as a form of narrative inquiry be expected to do? Some researchers who have no doubt that a researcher needs and can be a transparent and fully knowable self would not tolerate the poststructural feminism version of autobiographical inquiry as methodology and dismiss it.

Butler locates agency “in the context of an enabling and limiting field of constraint” (2005, p.19), which I think could be autobiography. She also locates agency “within the practices of repetitive signifying” (1999, p.185), which I think also could be the practice of autobiography in which one repeats signifying one’s selves.

Autobiography as a signifying practice might be limiting because it is made through language that constitutes self in different ways. But at the same time, autobiography as a signifying practice can be enabling because there are variations of significations when the practices are repeated over and over. As Derrida argues, iterability cannot always contain what a speaker wants language to contain, but rather ruptures the containability. Paying more attention to the reader and the hearer, Minh-ha (1991) also contends, “repetitions are never identical” (p.60). I keep signifying my selves in the “my stories” chapter, the “transition” chapter, and the “disruption” chapter. Investigating the practice of signifying and resignifying my selves squeezes out what is silenced by me, the unknown but not fully rendered self, and the discourse behind it.

Butler asks, “Is that the task, to know oneself? Is the final aim to achieve an adequate narrative account of a life?” (2005, p.69). When we rethink about this established and taken-for granted idea of autobiography that these questions suggest,

autobiography in which writing "I" is so fleeting and limited in the sense that the "I" cannot be transparent enough to "know" will still do something "enabling."

Poststructural feminism thinking about identity and difference helps an inquirer of autobiography to make autobiography "an enabling field of constraint." Poststructural feminism thinking is neither suffocating nor nihilistic; rather it can even perforate the fixity of identities and difference. "Situating" one in the poststructural feminist theory does not mean to prohibit one from fixing her identity. One cannot avoid the fixing. Being "situated" in the theory allows one to re-weave the fixing of identities and difference.

Chapter 10: In the closing

Summary

This dissertation takes two complicated trajectories, which are conglomerated in one mode of autobiographical inquiry as the big theoretical and methodological framework. One trajectory is the move from writing the stories in Chapter 3 through “reading” the stories in Chapter 4 to the “disruption chapter” in Chapter 5. Further, this move returns in the “agency chapter” of Chapter 9, in which I interrogate what it means to be situated in my theoretical framework and the two chapters (the “Derrida” chapter (Chapter 6) and “reader response” chapter (Chapter 8)) about my examination of relations between self and language.

The other trajectory, which is already lodged in the other move within the autobiographical inquiry, is comprised of the three chapters 6 through 8. In Chapter 6, I examine Derrida’s notions of the “iterability” and the relations between self and language as “the immanent structure of promise or desire” and “inalienable alienation. Chapter 7 gives a detailed overview of reader-response theories, which leads me to Chapter 8 that explores the ways in which reader response theories presume relations between self and language in light of Derrida’s concept of a relation between self and language. Further, Chapter 8 inquires into my construct of “the wiggling wall.”

In the following section, I will recapitulate the notions of self within a poststructural feminism mode of autobiographical and reader-response theories. Then, I

also encapsulate the relations of self and language that Derrida argues, in relation to reader response theories, in terms of “promise.”

Self: one mode of feminist poststructural autobiographical inquiry.

When self is seen as the Cartesian notions of self as autonomous, capable of judging after deliberation of oneself, and thus all-knowing, knowledge constructed from autobiographical research might exert power over the researched, and the social, racial, national, and numerous other groups to which the researched might be recognized to belong. Thus, some feminist poststructural perspectives problematize the notion of “voice.” One should not downplay “voice.” But at the same time, neither should one conceive it as the authentic voice.

This notion of self has been enabled, since it has not incorporated the constitutive force of language, or it has taken it for granted that language is a mirror of “reality” and oneself. Various camps of thought after the linguistic turn grapple with the constitutive force of language. One of the camps, feminist poststructural perspectives conceptualize self as constituted by language, which partly derive from Derrida’s theory. Thus conceived, self in autobiographical inquiry must be investigated through the self’s subjectivities that are taken up from a subject position, or identity if you like, which self occupies provisionally. This notion of self as incomplete and in process does not aim to abnegate all the possibility of constructing knowledge.

Self: reader response theories.

In reader-response theories, self is not autonomous and neutral. The reader is conceived as intermeshed with language. However, in contrast to the notion of self in the traditionally historically situated idea of autobiography as autonomous, self in Fish’s and

Holland's theories of reading is conceptualized as subjective opposed to objective. Therefore the self as subjective, prejudiced and even deceptive is abhorred in those theories. Instead, the theories are ironically fortified by the Cartesian notion of self as capable of knowing after deliberation.

Rosenblatt and Bleich, different from Fish and Holland, do not reject self as subjective, even though Rosenblatt and Bleich differently conceive "subjective." The convergence between them is the concept of self as fully conscious to its will, need, preoccupation, motivation and so on. (These two theorists are more involved in English Education than Fish and Iser, so here it is possible to connect the notion of self in the theories and the one in English Education, writ large.)

"Inalienable alienation".

The relation of self and language as the "immanent structure of promise or desire" and the relation as "inalienable alienation" both contain "promise." In the former, the promise is thought to be already inscribed in the iterable written and spoken utterances, conventions and invoked procedures in Austin's theory and strategies of the literary text in Iser's theory, through the iterability. In Rosenblatt's theory of reading, the structure of promise or desire might not be so immanent in the process of her idea of transaction, since her idea of transaction does not expect the reader to arrive at the text in the beginning. However, the relation of "belonging" is conjured within her idea of language as iceberg and thus self-contained in the sense that the iceberg consists of public and private meanings. In Bleich's theory, the relation does not aim to arrive at the text, so the structure of promise or desire might not be demanded. But, again, in the relation

between self and language in Belich's theory, self is presumed to belong to language and even control it.

In Derrida's concept of "inalienable alienation," the promise from the structure is not so stabilized. The promise might be possible, but simultaneously impossible because the "fold" of the written and phonic sign, either in writing and reading, can be phantasmal. However, the "trace in language" and "disruption of presence" destabilize and even open up the "fold." This possibility of puncturing the "fold" through the "unfolding" might make another promise.

Derrida's idea of "promise" within the relation of "inalienable alienation" also "gathers language" as the immanent structure of promise or desire does. But, the promise in Derrida's thinking "heralds the uniqueness of a language to come" (1996, p.67). This promise is not made prior to uttering speech and making the statement. Further, Derrida continues, "It [promise] welcomes it [language], collects it, not in its identity or its unity, not even in its ipseity, but *in the uniqueness or singularity of a gathering together of its difference to itself*" (emphasis mine; p. 68). Derrida's idea of promise also takes place in the difference between them in terms of their relations to language, or their "trace" in language. For, language for Derrida is "for the other, coming from the other, *the coming of the other*" (p.68). Therefore, Derrida argues, "this strange promise neither yields nor delivers any messianic or eschatological *content* here" (p. 68).

Whom do I want to read this dissertation? : Implications

I write this section as if I talked to someone whom I want to read this dissertation, since that is what implications signify in my understanding. I list up some “groups” of profession and field, but the order does not mean the priority or importance of what this dissertation could implicate.

English teachers and educators of English teachers.

Rethinking about Response.

Derrida’s idea of promise might help to rethink about a notion of “response” in reader response theories. As a first step to rethink about a notion of “response” in relation to Derrida’s idea of promise that is distinguished from the promise in some of the reader response theories, I need to return to my own statement about response. In the very end of “my stories” chapter, right after the section of “I want to write well,” citing Toni Morrison’s phrase “sweaty fight for meaning and response-ability,” I stated “I feel a need to be ‘in’ English in order to be able to respond to readers who might think in English.” This statement shows my assumption that the reader can only respond to the identified and repeatable statements. This assumption was exactly Austin’s idea of perlocutionary force, which I criticized through Derrida’s work.

However, the exploration into Derrida’s notion of writing and relations among self, language, and reader response theories is leading me to a necessity to differently conceptualize response. Given Derrida’s idea of “promise” in all acts with language, a differing concept of response should take into account the difference between the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer in terms of the “trace in language.” A possible

different concept of response might help to challenge current pedagogical practices and even “values” of reader response theories.

Reader-response theories are still “the” predominant way of teaching of reading in the U.S. (Connell, 2008; Probst, 2004). They are almost the canon of the teaching of reading. By dismantling the presumed relations between self and language in the reader-response theories, never do I mean to construct an alternative way of teaching of reading. Nor do I propose within this dissertation, of course, an alternative way or theory of reading to replace reader-response theories. However, the relations between self and language, especially that in Rosenblatt’s theory that is predominantly adopted in English Education, implicate the possible exclusion of the “responses” that arise from the reader who might not be immersed in the relation as belonging. A possible different concept of response might help to reconsider a different approach to students’ responses.

Understanding differences.

In reconsidering a new approach to students’ responses, it is inevitable to examine how the English educators currently employ the reader response theories, especially Rosenblatt’s theory. Gordon Pradl in his *Reading Literature in a Democracy* (1991) argues how Rosenblatt’s theory of the transaction is useful in education for “democracy,” the U.S. democracy. According to him, her theory promotes a student’s participating in sharing and negotiating her responses with the others’. And obviously these are the values in the U.S. democracy. Carolyn Allen (1991) states that Rosenblatt’s theory aims to develop the abilities of being “self-aware, self-critical, and self-enhancing” (p. 20). Pradl states that learners can learn “how citizens in the American democracy ought to act

if we are to continue this shared experiment of rational development” (p. 35). It is clear that the concepts of self by those educators is the Cartesian one as rational, judging, knowing, and acting. I already repeat how this notion could be detrimental to some other differently categorized “groups.”

In sharing and negotiating one’s responses with others’ and developing the ability of being “self-aware, self-critical, and self-enhancing,” one cannot avoid encountering different responses. In the current prevailing notion of “diversity,” difference is something that one can tolerate or appreciate. Or difference is something that one can “share” with others. Or difference is something that one can celebrate. Those ways of “understanding” difference do not mobilize, shift, or change one’s selves, which is unimaginable within the humanist notion of self as autonomous and rational, nor therefore change relations with “others” who are different from “us.”

In order to negotiate one’s response with others’, first of all it has to be recognized that difference is not present outside one’s self. Negotiating with difference starts with the recognition that difference is sometimes constructed within one’s self, as is my “wiggling wall.” Therefore, it is imperative to interrogate one’s self in responding to a different response to, for example, a literary text. In my “experience,” it seems to be one of the major classroom activities to have the learner write a “reflexive” paper or a “journal.” However, when these activities are presumed by the hidden agenda that a learner is supposed to develop by attaining a pre-determined goal--of course behind this agenda the identity is conceptualized as stable and unitary--thus conceived “reflexive” paper or “journal” does not help to look at how one constructs difference. Self-reflexivity that encourages the student to interrogate her self in encountering difference,

for example, in sharing different responses in English classroom, might start to unlock the fixed identity.

Rethinking pedagogical values of reader response theories.

The adaptation of Rosenblatt's theory by Pradl and Allen is also rooted in how the educators conceptualize literary text and situate a place for it within English Education. It seems that some scholars/educators like Pradl seem to see imaginary literature as effects of social cultural historical conditions and thus use it as a site from which students can learn communal values for "democracy." Citing this point by Pradl, however, I am not arguing for the role of art for art's sake. This is all beyond the scope of this dissertation. The reason I am mentioning Pradl's idea of teaching literature is to think about John Willinsky's (1991) input about one way to adapt Rosenblatt's theory, which is related to autobiographical research. Willinsky states:

There is a certain imperfection in the adaptation of her work, which is to be expected, and there is also the selective use made of it, which is hardly surprising. Yet the aspects selected tend to reinforce my concern that her work has come to stand for reading as an isolated experience of the reader alone with the text, and that, in turn, the book is no part of the political and cultural fabric, which has been Rosenblatt's point. (p. 97-98)

This insight by Willinsky can be connected with and extended by feminism poststructural version of autobiographical inquiry, in which experience is seen as an interpretation of experience and is in need of interpretation. One possible way to use experiences in employing reader response theories, without essentializing experiences and identities, would be to place them in a larger social cultural context, to investigate

self constructions through language, and to call attention to such complications that I've raised throughout this dissertation. Thus, rather than only "learn" communal values for democracy, one might be able to rethink about the values of the U.S. democracy that are recently universalized, and seem to prevail through the efforts, probably well-meant efforts, of some educators (Pradl, 1991; Probst, 1988; Small, 2000).

(Here I am driven to talk about my subjectivity in writing this implication. But this is "concluding" chapter, so it's not allowed. However, thus, autobiographical inquiry is never ended, but always "in-the-making" (Miller, 2005, p.231)).

English teachers and ESL teachers in the U.S. and in the world.

Probably it would be, and will be, impossible to make distinction between "native" and "non-native" speakers, "maternal" or "non-maternal" speakers in this globalization age (Willinsky, 1998, p. 194). According to Willinsky, the concept of the native speaker lives on "a myth propagated by linguists" (p. 195). However, the blurry distinction between "non-native" and "native" English speakers might lead some people assume that there are no differences among speakers of English. One of my arguments in this inquiry tries to indicate some differences within me and between other speakers of English and me.

I do not speak for "non-native" English speakers. I do not argue that anyone who identifies herself as "non-native" English speakers has a version of wiggling wall that I have had. But this inquiry into my felt "wiggling wall" might give some English teachers

or any language teachers some implications about their students' speaking, writing, reading, listening, and silence.

As Pennycook (1994, 1998) discusses, English has spread over the world even after the territorial colonialism was diminished. Some people who have no access to learning English are now being disadvantaged and left behind the transnational flows of culture, money, commodity and so on through many ways of economical and cultural "globalization." Probably nothing and no one would be able to stop this flow – and I don't even know if it should be stopped. As is seen in the title of Pennycook's recent book, *Global Englishes* (2007), and the journal title of *World Englishes* founded by Braj Kachru and Larry Smith in 1981, English is pluralized.

But the "Englishes" in those two titles are differently conceived. Kachru (1992) divides the spread of English into three circles, in each of which he put some nations, for example United Kingdom and the U.S. and so on in "inner circle," India and Nigeria and so on in "outer circle." Then his idea of "Englishes" is still based on discrete differences, like the wiggling wall that I constructed from the comparison to "native" English speakers. Pennycook (2007), on the other hand, examines how the use of English does not become imitative but produces cultural forms such as a local hip-hop in Malaysia, Japan, and so on. It seems that Pennycook's idea of Englishes is not divided into some groups. The spread that he describes takes on the rhizomatic culture, in which no wall should exist.

Further, the two different categories of English will be of a little help in thinking about what "alizations," such as globalization, internationalization and

transnationalization, might entail. Any “alization” is always dangerous depending on who gets to “do” the “alization.” It would be more dangerous when it is not clear to see who gets to “do” the job in this age of post-post-modern cultures that are represented, for example, by the World Wide Web. It might be necessary in teaching English(es) to think about how one could not erase difference without using difference as an impetus for permanent otherness.

I do not take sides with either of the ideas of Englishes. However, looking at my inquiry about relations between self and language by situating it within those differing ideas of Englishes, English teachers and ESL teachers not only in the U.S. and in the world might be able to consider implications for constructing a new approach to teaching English to “diverse” populations.

Student-teachers-researchers interested in autobiographical inquiry.

On writing stories.

Autobiographical inquiry can be solipsistic if it’s situated in the modernist notion of self as all-knowing and self-mastering. The mode of autobiographical inquiry that I adopt in this dissertation could be still seen as solipsistic, since, yes, I talk about “myself.” But the self is not placed in vacuum, but in the given historical moments, locations, and social, cultural, historical discourse. “Monitoring” my subjectivities allows me to at least interpret an unknown discourse constituting my self/selves. This “finding” through interpretation possibly might move not only me but also the reader and me to recognize, even act or “do something” against, the unknown discourse. And this is

a part of what this dissertation as autobiographical inquiry within feminist poststructural perspective can do.

Students in graduate programs in education in particular, and in arts and humanities in general, might wonder if their autobiographical inquiry should be placed in a form of “ethnic autobiography,” if they are identified and identify themselves as “minority.” This dissertation might show the impossibility of situating autobiographical research in “ethnic” or “non-ethnic,” since first of all this humanist idea of identity is impossible because of always changing subjectivities. Even if a researcher thinks that she fully positions herself in a certain “identity” to raise “voice” and speak “for” some groups of people, the solipsism of language does not allow it to happen. Therefore, instead of placing an inquiry in “ethnic” or “non-ethnic” autobiography, the autobiographical researcher needs to constantly monitor and interpret her subjectivities not only in the stories but also *in the writing* of the research, since the writing is a process of inquiry, not its product.

However, I would not argue that not monitoring subjectivities *in the writing* of the whole research is theoretically insincere. What could be insincere for poststructural feminist autobiographical inquiry might be to smooth out the self by rubbing off rugged terrain and edges without edge. For example, I could have removed some segments as “irrelevant” from “my stories” chapter (Chapter 3) in order to cleanly and seamlessly itinerate into “Derrida” chapter and “reader-response” chapter to arrive at the goal to explore relations among self, language and reader-response theories. I still could interrogate the social, cultural, historical, discursive norms and discourses in relation to English.

Eradication of some “irrelevant” stories might be artificial, and thus could be problematic as research. Of course, this is out of the scope of this dissertation, but could and should be further inquired by autobiographical inquirers. Now in the closing chapter, I am certain that the idea of “irrelevant” stories derives from the notion of identity as fixed and stable. In this case, eradication of “irrelevant” stories will even limit unpredictable possibilities of “knowing” in the process of inquiry.

Rather, shifting identities, or constant unfixing of the identity of the researcher, might bring out some unexpected knowing and learning. My “position” in this dissertation is “in-between-ness” in terms of language (English and Japanese), institutional location (English Education), and theoretical framework (body in theory). However, the “position” as “in-between” is not the static third space, but being “on the shore” where I float in and out.

This fluidity allows this dissertation to explore beyond the normative academic writing, a five-chapter dissertation, for example. This fluidity leads the researcher to disrupt the normative seamless flow of the chapters, thereby encountering the unknown self and the discourse that confines the self. Those “anomalies” make it possible to generate “unpredictable and unforeseeable consequences” (Ellsworth & Miller, 1996/2005, p. 186) from the purported inquiry.

On reading stories or research.

Further, the fluidity of identities brings the researcher to address to the reader both directly and in some indirect ways, for instance, as a mother in “Derrida” chapter. The different mode of address through the fluidity might require “response-ability” of the reader. Or, at least, the fluidity might make the reader aware of and alert to the changing

mode of address and its accordant “sweaty fight” for meaning from the writer-researcher. In turn, (student-teacher-)researchers as the reader need to learn how to read and respond to qualitative research writ large, narrative research in particular, even when a research seems to address to “no one.”

In discussing how to teach the graduate students the notion of “validity” in qualitative research, Reba Page (1997) suggests that in reading the interpretive research, researchers read the text “responsively and responsibly,” withholding criticism but “responding on its own terms” (p. 146). Yvonne Lincoln (1997) responded to Reba Page’s influential article, showing concerns about how to teach doctoral students to read the research as “text.” However, Lincoln also argues that the ways of reading and responding to the research becomes more important, and proposes to read “response-ably,” or “care about what author says” (p. 163). Given Derrida’s idea of dissemination by the “trace in language,” I do not submit myself to the ideas of “reading on its own terms” and “caring about what author says,”

However, it is important to keep in mind Lincoln’s point that the researcher should focus more on “the silences, the deliberate discretion, the blind spots, the calculating withholding of authors” (1997). The silences, for example, are absent presence of the fluid identity of the researcher, and therefore of difference of and within the researcher. Thus, the silences might be the location where the researcher-reader might explore into the silenced difference. (Yet, since silences are sometimes resistance to, for example, essentialization of identity, as “compatriot” of the researcher-writer the researcher-reader should be cautious about discussing the silences that she “reads.”

Some silences need to be closed for the researcher-writer. Reading and responding is not voyeurism.)

In reading and responding to Patricia William's *The Alchemy of Race and Rights: Diary of a Law Professor*, Ellsworth & Miller (1996/2005) briefly mention that they read William's work with "response-ability – that is, with shifts in how we perceive our "selves" and others' "selves" so that we do not simply incorporate or appropriate "her" stories into the ones we have been telling about ourselves or her (p. 183). Researchers as the reader should learn this "response-ability," that is, being aware of how we the readers "write" our selves and the writer's selves in reading and responding to qualitative research. Researchers as the reader should be alert to the moments when the iterability is ruptured, the folding is unfolding, through the "trace in language."

Epilogue

In February, 2011

“What? Did the little boy really say that?” I said, when I got home from work.

“Yes,” my husband answered curtly.

It comes from the most unexpected direction for my husband. For me, as a “Japanese,” it did, but after a second thought, it does not.

I taught in the evening and so I was not at home when Sho said to my husband, “Daddy, TM said to me, ‘I don’t like you because you are brown.’” I don’t know how Sho put it to my husband. Neither do I know contexts in which TM, a five-year-old “Japanese” boy, made this statement.

A couple of weeks before this happened, Sho and TM had a play date at my home. The next day after the play date, TM said to me, “I won’t go to Sho’s home any more, since he doesn’t have any game, like “Wi” or “Bayblade.” I laughed at what he said. On that day, TM, Sho, and I played some word games and board games. I thought that it was fun for them. But obviously it was not for TM.

Some time after this play date, when I picked up Sho at his school, his teacher wanted to talk to TM’s mother and me. According to the teacher, TM and Sho spit each other, even in front of the principal. She was of course disgusted at their behaviors. That

was disgusting, of course. But I didn't take it seriously. It seems that TM's mother also didn't. On that night, Sho was made to write by daddy "I won't spit" ten times.

After TM made the racial statement, in picking up the kids at the school, TM's mother came to talk to me about what the teacher said to her on that day. TM elbowed Sho, and Sho cried. The teacher didn't know what caused TM to do so, but she wanted the principal to talk to TM. But it was before the winter recess, so the teacher had to wait for one week. TM's mother seems to just let me know what happened to Sho and her son. Nothing more and nothing less. Although she didn't "say" anything about how she took her son's behavior, I felt that I had to respond to her and the elbowing. I said, "It might be accidental. They are getting along so well, so sometimes they just fight. Don't you think so?" She just nodded. I couldn't tell what was in her mind at all.

In the end of February, 2011

During the winter break, the mothers of the five "Japanese" kids in Sho's class worked on a project that the teacher wanted us to do for a girl's day in Japan on March 3rd. Five mothers and their kids gathered at one of the women's houses. Sho was not there with me because he went to a winter day-camp, but he was going to join us after the camp. When I was about to leave to pick up Sho from the camp, at the door of the house, TM said to me, "Is Sho coming? ... I don't like him because he is brown."

It took me by too much surprise. This kid doesn't know what he is saying. That's what people say about those racial statements by kids. And I actually thought so the first time I was informed of this statement by my husband. But this second time, I wondered how much this post-toddler knew "this thing." His mother was further back in the house, so she didn't hear him. I was frozen momentarily, not able to decide whether to address this to the mother, or scold the boy immediately. What I didn't want to do is to situate "brown-ness" in his mind, even if that must have seeped in his mind. I also didn't want the idea of "brown-ness" to permeate through the other kids in that big living room. I did not want the other kids and even TM to conjecture that "brown" is something to despise or discriminate.

"What about a pink-colored boy?" This is all I could squeeze out at the moment.

"There is no such a thing"

"You never know. You are just five years old. What do you know?"

"I'll kill him."

I can't shape how I felt into words. I can't. I left to pick up Sho.

On the way to the camp in the car, I asked my self, "How could TM say that to me? He has no idea what he was talking about. Otherwise he wouldn't have told that." He must have not known what it is like to be hurt for an incomprehensible reason. Of course, I also wondered where he got the idea of "brown-ness." The first time my husband told me about the statement, I thought that the boy did not articulate why he didn't like Sho, so he only put his dislike on Sho's skin color. On the second occasion, I

still thought so. But at the same time, it is likely that he also got THE idea from some people around him, including the parents, his siblings, the other “Japanese,” and so on. I said to my self in driving, “‘Those’ Japanese...”

Sho and I went back to the house from the camp. Probably some might think that I did not need to go back there. But that choice is not truly to protect Sho, I thought.

We opened the door of the house, and TM was running to us. “Sho. You came? You are brown. You are --” “Yes, isn’t it beautiful? His color is gorgeous, isn’t it?” I cut in. Sho pulled my sleeve, scratching his head, saying “it’s not like beautiful.” TM’s younger brother laughed at what I said.

I was alarmed that day. At the same time, I thought I should focus on Sho, my son, on how he deals with something that is called “racism.” I did not care about TM. He must be taught, but I didn’t care. I only could not understand why the little boy didn’t see what he said would hurt Sho. I still wonder if no game at my home pushed TM to that extreme.

On March, 2011

As usual, after dismissal, some “Japanese” kids played in the playground of the school. It was Friday. I usually pick him up at 3:00 on Fridays, drop him off at a Karate Dojo at 4:15, and then go to work to the learning center: My husband picks him up at the Dojo. I had my son learn Karate at the Dojo where Japanese is primarily used for instruction, so that he could get more exposed to Japanese. Sho could stay at an

afterschool program at the school site since I work on Fridays. However, I want to pick him up at 3:00 anyway, because I want to talk with him even for one hour since he sleeps when I get home from work. Also and more importantly, I want him to play with “Japanese” kids even for a little while.

I saw him standing and watching a couple of kids playing with a soccer ball at the far end of the small school yard. He sometimes just saw some other kids play. So I didn't pay so much attention to his standing alone.

It became 3:30pm. It was time to leave for the Karate Dojo.

“Sho, it's time to go.” Immediately, he was running toward me, which was rare. He always wanted to keep playing and didn't want to leave other “Japanese” kids. It was hard to make him leave the playground. So, when I saw him running toward me, I had a flash of feeling that it was a little strange.

He came to me, and I saw his eyes full of tears.

“What happened?”

“TM didn't let me in.”

“Did you tell him to let you in?”

“Yes”

“What did he say?”

“He said, ‘It was only for three people.’ But the other two kids joined after.” His tears were falling down his cheeks.

“Did he say something to you?”

“No.” He paused. Then he said, “I think it was because I am brown.”

In writing this story, I find myself vulnerable. This story is already an interpretation of experience. It needs to be interpreted. And it can be interpreted in many ways and from many angles. I’m not ready to present any possible interpretation of this interpretation of experience. I am only certain that an interpretation of this story will lead me to reframe this inquiry again, and to re-render the interpretations that I rendered here.

More specifically, I have to interrogate my interpretation that I made in “Prologue” about what I call “NANI-JIN” incident at a Japanese school in New Jersey and “Why am I interested in what I am doing” in “introduction” chapter. I wrote, “it seems that one’s relation to language determines one’s identity for the two kids and me. Identity comes after recognition of a relation to language.” Does it? At some point, I felt that relations between self and language are not so closely involved in issues of race, gender, nationality, class, sexual orientation and so on. It seems to be as if language were the primary identity category, and self is something innate while I claim think that self is discursively constructed. The story in this epilogue leads me to think that it is necessary to explore more self and identity.

(But, this still-lingering recourse to self as innate does not simply mean that I am not “truly” situated in the poststructural feminism notion of self as subject and process. True, I might “still” rely on ontology of self, a nature of self. However, I am not surprised myself at this recourse of mine to the idea of self as innate, intrinsic, or

prediscursive. This lingering in this idea of self comes from Derrida's passage in *The Monolingualism*:

And before the identity of the subject, what is ipseity? The latter is not irreducible to an abstract capacity to say "I," which it will always have preceded. Perhaps it signifies, in the first place, the power of an "I can," which is more originary than the "I" in a chain where the "ipse" of ipse no longer allows itself to be dissociated from power, from the mastery of sovereignty of the hospes. (p.14)

I need to grapple with Derrida's notion of self, or "the power of an 'I can,' which is more originary.")

Dear readers, please allow me to ask, "How would you respond to this story in relation to this whole dissertation?" when I am closing this dissertation now without really ending it but with "sweaty fight for meaning and response-ability" (Morrison, 1992, p.xiii).

One thing that I am sure about, for now, in terms of "what happened" to my son and me is that I blame myself for "what happened" – that he got confused and hurt by the racial statement. My desire to have him as close relation to Japanese as I am has brought this sequence of events. My eagerness to maintain his Japanese by playing with "Japanese" kids, even if indirectly, hurt my son by one of the "Japanese" kids, who I assumed and even believed would feel "closer" to my son because they "belong" to the same language.

My son has been exposed to English and Japanese since he was born. I do not know if he will call Japanese his "maternal" language in the future. I wanted him to feel

that Japanese was close, “native,” “maternal” to Japanese because he is my son, who was a part of my body for nine months. But he does not “belong to” me, as my “maternal” language does not belong to me. Rather, he is the “other,” as my “maternal” language is the “other.” No, this does not sound quite right to me. I am immersed in “the structure of alienation without alienation” from both my son and my “maternal” language.

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Appendix

Austin's six conditions for felicitous performative speech (1975, p. 14-15)

(A.1) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances and further,

(A.2) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

(B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(B.2) completely.

(Γ.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must indeed intend so to conduct themselves, and further

(Γ.2) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.