

ENVIRONMENTALISM AND ITS
RITUALIZED FAKENESS:
A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF
ONOMATOPOEIC
DISCOURSE ON NATURE

by
Yuichi Asai

‘Nature interpretation’ is an activity largely practiced in the field of environmental education and its goal is commonly understood as ‘bridging between humans and non-humans’. The present paper examines nature interpretation activity as ‘environmentalism’ and reveals its similarities with ritual speech from a semiotic/linguistic anthropological viewpoint. First, the paper investigates how nature interpretation consists of highly stylized (hence ‘naturalized’ in the semiotic sense) ‘interactional text’ through multi-layered ‘poetic structures’ in three aspects: (1) the nature interpreter’s linguistic description of animals using onomatopoeia, (2) ‘mimicry’ or ‘impersonation’ of animals using bodily movements, and (3) the entire discourse structure constructed in a series of segments throughout the nature interpretation program. Second, the paper examines the process in which nature interpretation poetically, i.e., iconically, mediates the deictic center of the communicative event (‘here-and-now’) and its context outside the immediate surrounds of communication (‘there-and-then’). This allows nature interpretation to achieve three tasks: (1) to metaphorically evoke the notion of ‘mother nature’, (2) to vividly enact a ‘direct experience’ with nature, and (3) to ‘ritualize’, by ‘naturalizing’ it, the entire interaction and the participants’ experience of nature interpretation. Based on these examinations, the paper points out how nature interpretation presupposes the dichotomy of humans and non-humans (culture vs. nature), and thus intentionally/ideologically mediates, i.e., epitomizes the fake ‘bridge’ between two equipollently conceptualized spheres. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes that this intentional, ritualized fakeness, or ‘spuriousness’, is a distinct sign of post-modern environmental discourse, as manifested in the persona of the nature interpreter and his/her intentionally spurious speech acting.

1. *Introduction*

As the world being threatened by climate change has become ‘reality’ with such cases as the Pacific Islands facing the risk of being submerged, the environmental discourse, ‘environmentalism’, has been increasing its presence (cf. Jinbo 2007, BBC News 2013)¹. Environmentalists argue that the root cause of today’s environmental problems is the separation between people and the natural environment, and thus stipulate that (re)constructing the (lost) coexistence or ‘bridge’ between humans and non-humans is a key step towards a ‘sustainable future’. In such a context, an ecologist activity, known as ‘nature interpretation’, has recently gained recognition in the field of environmental education. Nature interpretation traces its origin back to activities introduced by Enos A. Mills (1870-1922), who guided people around the Rocky Mountains in the United States during the late 19th century (cf. Nash 1967: 189, Regnier 1992). These guides, known as rangers or ‘nature interpreters’ today, provided visitors with various opportunities to ‘directly experience nature’ in national parks. Quoting the words by Freeman Tilden (1883-1980), the ultimate goal of this activity was understood “as an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information... Interpretation is the revelation of a larger truth that lies behind any statement of fact” (Tilden 1957: 8).

In a more explicitly academic context, an interdisciplinary approach to environmental studies has been found to play a significant role in bridging the disciplinary divide between socio-cultural interpretive (idiographic) and the natural scientific (nomothetic) approaches in the field of sociolinguistics, pragmatics (cf. Mey 2001), and linguistic and environmental anthropology (cf. Milton 1996, Anderson & Berglund 2003, Argyrou 2005). For instance, at the 15th conference of the Japanese Association of Sociolinguistic Sciences Symposium,

conducted under the title of ‘Interpretations as a Mediatory Act: People, Work, and Nature’, nature interpretation was understood as a mediatory practice bridging the divide between people and nature. By examining nature interpretation as a communicative event or ‘discourse’, the symposium identifies an intersection between socio-linguistic studies, discourse analysis and environmental studies. In doing so, it sheds light on the nature interpreter (hereafter ‘NI’) as a mediator, hence interpreter/translator, who discursively connects humans with the natural environment (cf. Hiraga 2007).

Although such an interdisciplinary approach has been proposed for analyzing environmentalism, an attempt to theoretically apply a linguistic and communicative perspective to the examination of environmental activities and to a critical scrutiny of the characteristics of environmental discourse is yet to be satisfactorily conducted. Since the field of environmental studies also has a tendency of adhering to practical/functional subject matters, such as the improvement of interpretation skills, methods of assessment, or dissemination of activities, its theoretical insights into the activities as communicative and linguistic events remain to be adequately incorporated. If we fully understand that ‘nature’, or ‘the environment’, exists socioculturally mediated by communicative events and a type of ‘ideology’ discursively constructed, a meta-analysis of how such genred discourse is ideologically produced and reproduced will be a crucial key in revealing the relationship between ‘humans’ and ‘non-humans’.

Based on such recognition, this paper examines nature interpretation chiefly from a linguistic/semiotic anthropological viewpoint. In doing so, it will primarily focus on the theoretical works of Roman Jakobson (1953, 1960a, 1960b) and Michael Silverstein (1993, 1996, 2004, cf. Silverstein & Urban 1996), while also incorporating the work of other linguistic anthropologists, such as Dell Hymes (1996) and John W. Du Bois (1986), using the semiotic notions of poetic function, indexicality, and entextualization. First, the paper

investigates nature interpretation as consisting of highly stylized, and/or ‘naturalized’ in semiotic terms, creating an ‘interactional text’ through multi-layered ‘poetic structures’ under three aspects: (1) the linguistic description of animals by the nature interpreter using onomatopoeia, (2) the ‘mimicry’ and ‘impersonation’ of animals using bodily movements, and (3) the entire discourse structure constructed with a series of segments throughout the nature interpretation program. Second, by revealing the similarities with ritual speech in shamanism, the paper examines the process in which nature interpretation poetically, or iconically, mediates the deictic center of the communicative event, the ‘here-and-now’, and its context, the ‘there-and-then’, thereby allowing nature interpretation to (1) metaphorically evoke the notion of ‘mother nature’, (2) vividly enact a ‘direct experience’ with nature, and (3) ‘ritualize’, thereby ‘naturalizing’, the entire interaction and the participants’ experience of nature interpretation. Based on these examinations, the current paper tries to indicate how nature interpretation presupposes the dichotomy of humans and non-humans (culture and nature), and thus intentionally/ideologically mediates, i.e., epitomizes the ‘fake bridge’ between two equipollently conceptualized spheres. Further, the paper emphasizes that this intentional, ritualized fakeness is a distinct sign of post-modern environmental discourse, as manifested in the persona of the nature interpreter and his/her intentionally spurious speech acting.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Poetic function

Before analysing the narrative data of nature interpretation, I shall briefly review the theoretical background of this paper’s analysis. Jakobson (1960a) posited that a speech event has six components:

(1) message, (2) context, (3) addressor, (4) addressee, (5) contact, and (6) code. He pointed out that depending on the component to which each speech event is oriented, different functions correspond, to varying degrees, to those components in order to generate a message; these are, respectively, (1') poetic function, (2') referential function, (3') emotive function, (4') conative function, (5') phatic function, and (6') metalinguistic function. Within these six functions, the theoretical innovativeness of the model is especially acknowledged in the poetic function, which operates as "the message for its own sake" (Jakobson 1960a: 356). As defined by Jakobson, the fundamental principle of poetic function can be rephrased as 'repetition' or 'parallelism': the principle of equivalence, which constructs a paradigm, is projected onto the syntagmatic axis, which is constituted by the principle of continuity (ibid: 358). This repetition or parallelism, which emerges on the syntagm axis, provides messages with their structures; thus, messages are generated as *messages*. That is to say, messages are inherently dialogical, as they are created, and emerge, in the course of speech events (cf. Jakobson 1953: 13).

Silverstein, a student of Jakobson's, semiotically extended the Jakobsonian linguistic theory of the poetic function explicitly to the sociocultural domain by theorizing the meta-pragmatic metricalization of communicative events as entextualization and ritualization (Silverstein 1993: 48-53, 2004: 622; cf. Koyama 2008: 234-235). Silverstein perceived that poetic configuration plays a crucial role in its reflexively (meta-pragmatically) structuring, and/or 'metricalizing' the communicative events as poetically structured ones. According to Silverstein, ongoing communicative events simultaneously presuppose a certain type of (con)textual framework, i.e., a meta-pragmatic genre of discourse and interaction, being meta-pragmatically structured or calibrated. Through such processes, the communicative events are generated (entextualized) as segmentable, hence interpretable textual forms that can have a socioculturally meaningful interpretation. Metaphorically (semiotically) speaking, communicative

events are entirely embedded in their mundane context, the latter existing and, as it were, occurring coincidentally with the events in the guise of an amorphous spark; in this way, the events do not possess a recognizable form that can have sociocultural meanings. Through being reflexively formalized by the use of multi-layered poetic structures, or meta-level/meta-pragmatic diagrams, however, the amorphous spark, occurring at the deictic center, or *origo*, of the discursive interaction (the ‘here-and-now’) indexes the specific surrounds as its context (the ‘there-and-then’), and thus becomes de-contextualized from the mundane context (cf. Hanks 1990, 1992). In this way, the amorphous spark, along with the discursive interaction ‘here-and-now’, subsequently transforms into a socioculturally recognizable and comprehensible form, figure, or text. This dialectical and dynamic semiotic process is subsequently captured terminologically as *entextualization* (a specific kind of contextualization). According to Silverstein, “the discursive interaction brings sociocultural concepts into here-and-now contexts of use – that is, the interaction indexically ‘invokes’ sociocultural conceptualizations – via emergent patternings of semiotic forms through poetic function” (Silverstein 2004: 622).

2.2 Ritual as interactional poetry

Silverstein (1993, 2004) further explicates that such poetically structured communicative events, often ‘metricalized’ as interactional poetry, are called ‘rituals’; here, he in particular relies on a perception, dear to Goffman, of discourse as ‘interaction ritual’ (cf. Goffman 1967, 1981):

...official ritual is authoritatively effective at figurating terms from a system of cultural beliefs because it is highly – even hypertrophically – and explicitly metricalized into a ‘poetic’

organization such that to participate at all is to participate metrically. (Silverstein 2004: 627)

As Silverstein indicates here, the effectiveness of rituals as social acts stems from a tight, explicit metricity following multi-layered poetic structures, deployed in parallelism throughout the interaction. Thus, a ritual is an 'indexical icon', or 'metapragmatic diagram', in Peircian semiotic terms, epitomizing the cultural concepts (cosmic symbols) of the 'here-and-now' as itself. Silverstein further explains,

Ritual itself works to the degree to which, participants' intentionality and consciousness, not to say 'meaningfulness' to participants, notwithstanding, ritual action, as organized into segments, emerges as a figurative and tropic diagram in the spacetime of performance of its outcome in the culturally real universe from which ritual signs derive their power/value and in which their power/value counts. (Silverstein 2004: 650)

According to this poetics for ritual configuration of discursive interactional process, both the comprehensibility and the efficacy of any discursive interaction depend on its modes and degrees of 'ritualization'. The immediate, micro context of the communicative event gradually expands from its deictic center, 'here-and-now', towards a broader, macro sociocultural context, 'there-and-then', in conjunction with the hierarchy or degree of the event's 'context dependency', i.e., its indexicality. That is to say, the context dependency (indexicality), centered at the deictic center of the communicative event, decreases with an increasing reliance on the symbolic system – the same system that also schematizes the Noun Phrase Referential Hierarchy (cf. Silverstein 1976). In this sense, socioculture is an ever-lasting ritualizing and ritualized process of communication, superimposing iconicity upon indexicality and thus creating discursive (indexical)

icons (figures, texts), anchored onto a specific sociocultural and historical context. In sum, communication is understood as a dialectic discursive process, which is semiotically both en- and con-textualized and en- and con-textualizing in real time.

Based on this semiotic and linguistic anthropological theorization of discursive interactions, I shall examine how the discourse of a nature interpretation activity, as it is practiced in a Japanese eco-institute, presupposes the dichotomy of ‘humans and non-humans²’ as a meta-pragmatic genre of (post-modern) environmentalism, and how it *entextualizes* itself to epitomize and enact a ritualized interaction in the ‘here-and-now’, by poetically invoking a sense of ‘unity’ of the dichotomy as its ritualistic effect. I thereby want to indicate how this discourse fails to ‘connect/bridge’, and ironically contributes to reproducing, the dichotomy of the natural environment and humans (or rather, the pseudo-reality of their coexistence). Even more significantly, it embodies the ritualized fakeness or spurious speech activity that is characteristic of today’s environmental discourse among middle-class urban dwellers.

3. *Case examples*

First, let us briefly review the ethnographic data of the nature interpretation activity to be examined in the present section. In 2006, over a period of four months, I conducted field research in an eco-institute called *Imidas* (a pseudonym), and participated numerous times in a two to three day nature-experience programs organized by the institute. *Imidas* is located in Yamanashi prefecture (in the Kanto region), which is a resort area in the highlands outside Tokyo; all the participants in the program stayed there in accommodations overnight. Most participants were middle-aged and came from urban areas such as Tokyo, Chiba, and Kanagawa prefectures in the Kanto region of Japan. The nature-experience programs of

Imidas comprised various activities, including indoor lectures on the relationship between the body, mental health and the natural environment, collaboratively conducted by nature interpreters (NIs) and medical doctors, as well as outside poetry writing activities and ‘Qigong’ practicing in the woods adjacent to the lodge.

Among the various activities, the nature interpretation activity, which is a guided walk through a nearby forest led by an NI, was consistently set up as the central element within the overall program and had the highest number of participants most of the time. Therefore, I will focus exclusively on the discourse between the NIs and the participants in the nature interpretation activities. Among these activities, I will concentrate on one particular example of nature interpretation, which seemed to exemplify its prototypical structure, as organized by *Imidas*, in the following sections. All data collected during fieldwork on nature interpretation was recorded using a pocket-sized IC recorder from the beginning to the end of the activity. Due to the limitations of this paper, however, I will only focus on, and analyse, part of the transcript.

4. *Mother Nature*

4.1 The prosodic (mora) structure of the Japanese poetic genre *haiku*

After departing the lodge, the group (one NI and ten participants) made their way towards the forest adjacent to their lodge. On their way, they discovered some Japanese nightingales flying and crying above them. Below (Case 1) are the NI’s utterances, translated from the Japanese.

[Case 1]

NI: The bird is crying “*ke-kyo-ke-kyo*”. So, yes. The male nightingale mates with a female here; then with another

over there. In such a way, the male is able to mate with the female nightingales. Yes. Therefore, the male has been chirping all this time. It continues to cry, “*ho-o-ho-ke-kyo, da-re-ka ko-i-bi-to i-na-i-ka* (Is there anyone to mate with me?) *ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*”.

The NI of this nature interpretation explained the two types of chirping by Japanese nightingales using two types of onomatopoeia: (1) ‘*ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*’, which is a sign of courting, and (2) ‘*ke-kyo-ke-kyo*’, which is an intimidating sound used to prevent other nightingales from intruding upon their territory. After explaining the difference between the two types of calls, the NI also described the nightingales’ chirping: ‘*ho-o-ho-ke-kyo, da-re-ka ko-i-bi-to i-na-i-ka* (is there anyone to mate with?), *ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*’. Let us take a close look at this latter call and its mora structure (see Figure 1).

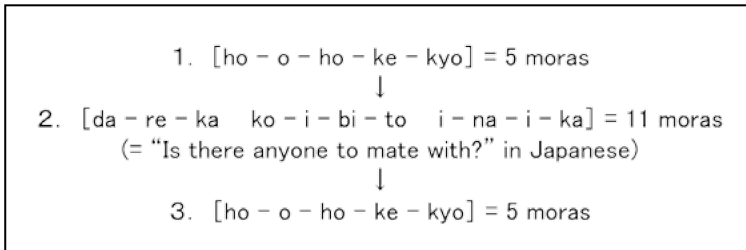


Figure 1: Mora structure of the nightingale call as offered by the NI

As shown here, the “*ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*” part of the call, at the beginning and at the end, contains 5 morae, while the question part inserted in the middle, “*da-re-ka ko-i-bi-to i-na-i-ka* (Is there anyone to mate with me?)” contains 11 morae. As a whole, the call is constructed as [5-11-5] morae.

Dell Hymes (1996) classified texts into construction elements such as lines, verses, stanzas, scenes, and acts, on the basis of phonological and grammatical characteristics. He also clarifies that those elements

exhibit the hidden patterns of texts that have been discursively developed through sociocultural and historical processes. For example, the speakers of languages such as Chinookan, Finnish, English, and Japanese usually prefer numbers ending in 3 or 5, in terms of verses and stanzas (ibid: 143-163), whereas speakers of languages such as Zuni prefer numbers ending in 2 or 4 (ibid: 121-135).

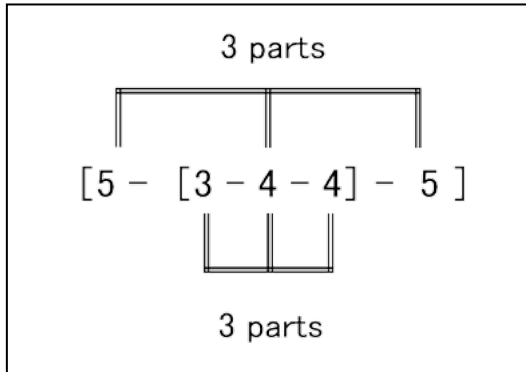


Figure 2: *Haiku-esque mora structure of the NI's nightingale rendering*

Figure 2 illustrates that the NI's rendering of the nightingales' call is constructed as a three-part [5-11-5] mora structure. Furthermore, the question part in the middle of the call, '*da-re-ka ko-i-bi-to i-na-i-ka* (Is there anyone to mate with me?)' is likewise composed as a three-part [3-4-4] mora structure, included in the outer three-part [5-11-5] structure. By incorporating the 3 and 5 mora numbers within each verse, the same rhythm with the number 3 and 5 is repeated as the basic model for the overall call, creating multiple layers of poetic structure. Such a structure is similar to a prosodic formation shaped by the [5-[3-4]-5] mora, which is the prototypical mora structure of the Japanese succinct poetry genre known as *haiku*. It consists of 17 syllables in total, arranged into 3 groups of 5, 7, and 5 syllables. One of the most well-known *haiku* is the one written by the Japanese poet, Basho, during the late 17th century.

It is on ‘eternal stillness’ with natural tranquility and is formed as *[shi-zu-ka-sa-ya [i-wa-ni shi-mi-i-ru] se-mi-no-ko-e]*. It clearly consists of the 5, 3, 4, 5 linear mora structure, divided into 3 parts as verses (cf. Hiraga 1987).

Because of the similarities to the *haiku* mora structure, which is composed of 3 separate verses, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, the NI’s rendering of the nightingale call evokes for Japanese-speaking participants the poetic genre image of a *haiku*, with its eminently recognizable and patterned textual structure. In this way, the nightingale call *entextualizes* itself as *haiku*-esque poetry, which contributes to direct the participants’ attention to the aesthetic form of the expression itself with its rhythmical sonority. The *haiku*-esque structure of the utterance possibly also contributes to a sense of ‘unity’ among the participants concerning the meaning of the utterance as denoted in the NI’s utterance (cf. Hiraga 2003: 132).

4.2 Syllable/rhyme structure

Next, let us focus on the syllables of the nightingale call as transcribed by the NI. As indicated in Figure 3, the onsets of the final syllables in the words/verses are all constructed with an unvoiced oral plosive sound, such as [k] (a velar consonant) and [t] (an alveolar consonant). These consonants are also weakest in the sonority hierarchy.

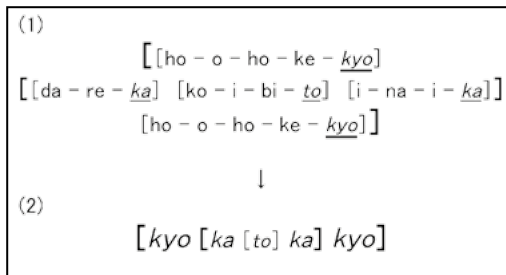


Figure 3: Embedded rhyme structures

Furthermore, the majority of the compositional elements of syllables that follow such consonants are vowels, such as [a] (a low vowel) and [o] (a medium vowel). These are vowels with stronger sonority than are high vowels, such as [i] and [u], which are uttered by narrowing the oral cavity. In other words, these syllables maximize the contrastiveness in sound sonority rendering a prototypical structure of the syllable: a combination of consonants of the least sonorous sounds within the sonority hierarchy, [k] and [t] (prototypical consonants), with the low and medium vowels having the most sonorous sounds (prototypes of vowels), the vowels [a] and [o], respectively.

These syllables ([kyo], [ka], [to], [ka]) are used to conclude each word and verse in the NI's rendition of the nightingales' calls. In addition, as Figure 3 indicates, the pair of [ka] and [ka] is embedded within the pair of [kyo] and [kyo], while [to] is present in the middle. In this manner, a structure that employs the same syllable at the beginning and the end is embedded in a multi-layered fashion; in this way, a rhyme is constructed.

4.3 Mother (*kaka*) nature

Jakobson (1960b) stated that the repetition of a maximal sonority contrast, i.e., a combination of consonants and vowels in which the sonority contrastiveness is maximized, can be seen prominently in early child speech. Such combinations are mostly represented in onomatopoeia, diminutives, and mimetic words. Typical examples include 'papa' and 'mama', which repeat high contrast syllables either in a nasal or in an oral manner. In modern Japanese, one finds dialectal monikers such as *toto* and *kaka*, widely used in the western parts of Japan, that respectively refer to father and mother (cf. Sanada 1983). These words, too, prominently observed during the infantile period, tend to be composed of repeated syllables forming a maximal contrast between vowels with high sonority, such as [a],

and consonants with low sonority, including voiceless oral cavity plosives, such as [p], [t], and [k].

This tendency is seemingly well observed in various languages. The repetition of syllables with maximal sonority contrast between consonants and vowels, such as ‘papa’ and ‘mama’, tends to be relatively easier to recognize, especially when the listener is further away (‘there-and-then’) from the scene (‘here-and-now’) where the word is uttered. In other words, due to attention being diverted to the form of the message (owing to its clear and palpable structure), the message is more vividly recognized and easier to remember. And this is perhaps the reason that repetition of syllables with maximal sonority contrast is widely observed in language use throughout infancy (or in general during the acquisition period of a first language), as we have seen in the typical examples of monikers for parents, who are the ‘Great Providers’ (Grégoire 1937)³, the mothers and fathers, who provide all the indispensable needs, such as protection, nutrition, and care to their infants, who cannot fend for themselves.

Building on Jakobson’s insights on onomatopoeia in child speech, it should also be noted that onomatopoeias are likely to be found in adult speech. Consider, for example, the register of adult speech called ‘motherese’, the speech used to address both children and adults (or even pets) who are in an intimate relationship with the speaker; or the vividness and other metaphorical effects of onomatopoeia in discourse. The kind of adult speech which employs onomatopoeia is sociolinguistically characterizable, as it often plays upon the (morpho-)phonological characteristics of a particular language. As it is also ‘notoriously’ difficult to analyse child speech, any appeal to the categories of adult language would risk the danger of adult ethnocentrism, as they are often considered ‘ideologically’ as being parts of child speech (or even called childish) by adults. In short, although it may be true that children preferentially use the perceptually salient linguistic features often found in onomatopoeias, such as diminutives and mimetic words, onomatopoeias are part of adult

speech, often imposed upon (ideologically attributed to) and then acquired by children⁴.

In addition, onomatopoeias are ‘naturalizing’ in semiotic terms in the sense that they appear as motivated, non-arbitrary, i.e., ‘natural’ signs. When utilized in the course of discourse, such natural signs create the effects of vividness and immediateness. Clearly, this naturalizing effect created by the use of onomatopoeia is linked with the evocation of a type of metaphor about nature in the nature interpretation activity discussed here. In other words, I suppose that the naturalizing character helps the NI to interpret and present nature as a ‘natural’ realm which is located beyond, or de-contextualized from, the contingencies of the socio-cultural. That is, it is located in a mythic, symbolic realm seemingly beyond the confines of the dynamically changing sociocultural interactions taking place in the ‘here-and-now’ of the human cultural realm.

Recognizing this sociolinguistic fact, I would like to propose the following hypothesis. Firstly, the NI’s description of the nightingale’s chirping phonologically shows a clear metrical structure and the characteristics of a stylized intonation contour with a *haiku*-esque prosody; this strongly de-contextualizes the bird call and *poetically* arouses a sense of nature. This also contributes to ideologically displacing the de-contextualized avian ‘utterance’ from the human realm, the ‘here-and-now’, to the faraway, symbolic natural realm, a ‘there-and-then’. In order to successfully achieve such effects, NI’s onomatopoeias repeat syllables with maximal sonorous contrast, as typically found in motherese and toddlers’ speech (compare the Western Japanese names for sustainers: *toto* (‘father’) and *kaka* (‘mother’)) and thereby naturalize the NI’s utterances. It also indirectly evokes the cultural concept of nature as the great provider, by alluding to the metaphor of ‘Mother Nature’, which represents a space for solace/care, or a place for finding a ‘mate’.

Here, it is important to underline again that this linkage and association of the use of onomatopoeias with nature is not ‘natural’,

but ‘naturalizing’; that is to say, the association is not logical, but ‘connotative’ or ideologically-mediated. In this way, the Romantic metaphor that the NI tries to invoke is a type of cultural concept, an ideological construct of nature that is clearly addressed to adults, not children. As the association of the use of onomatopoeias with nature is merely suggestive and ideological, the audience is invited to fill in the logical gaps, in this way involving themselves in the co-construction of the metaphorical schema along with the NI.

5. Ritual speech; the NI as ‘shaman’

So far, this paper has mainly focused on the ‘denotational text’, on ‘what is said’ by the NI in the course of nature interpretation. In the present section, the analytical scope will be broadened to the level of the ‘interactional text’, on ‘what is done’, i.e., the level of “doing-things-with-words” in the process of discursive interaction. I will examine the characteristics of NI’s utterances, comparing them with ritual speech (as in shamanism), and viewing the NI’s role as that of a so-called shaman⁵, who discursively mediates and interprets the representational divide between humans and non-humans.

5.1 Du Bois’ analysis on quotation and ritual speech

To begin, I will provide an overview of Du Bois’ arguments regarding the correlation between quotation and ritual speech. Du Bois bases himself here on the semiotic notion of context dependency, that is ‘indexicality’ (Du Bois 1986); in particular, Du Bois elaborates on the issue of ‘quotation’ in language use, linking it to ritual speech and shamanistic interaction, and lucidly schematizing the correlation between ‘linguistic and behavioural features’ and the ‘categories of speech’. Du Bois shows that both aspects are interrelated and

stratified in accordance with the hierarchy of ‘personal presence’, in order of increasing/decreasing indexicality (and context dependency), understood as the degree to which the ‘proximate speaker’ (who is giving the actual speech at the deictic center, the ‘here-and-now’), is indexed as the origin of the speech.

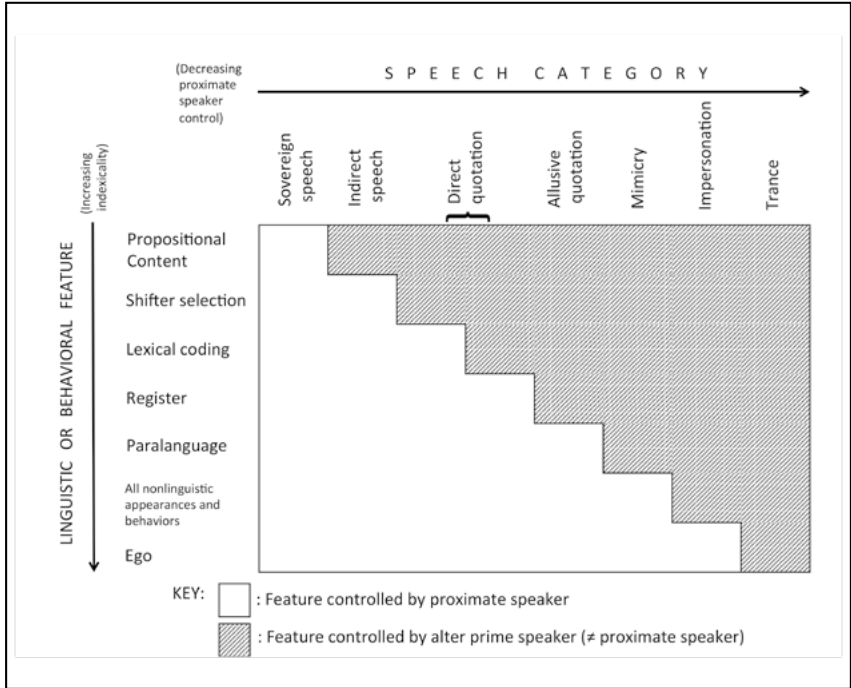


Figure 4: Hierarchy of transfer of control (Du Bois 1986: 328)

In particular, says Du Bois, within the phase of speech categorized as ‘sovereign speech’ (ordinary direct speech), the proximate speaker and prime speaker are equivalent; the utterance including all the linguistic elements and bodily actions as well as its propositional content are fully controlled by the proximate speaker who is giving the speech (Du Bois 1986: 327). Therefore, in other words, the hierarchy of ‘personal presence’ of the proximate speaker is maxi-

mized in sovereign speech. However, within the speech categorized as ‘indirect speech’, the propositional content of the speech cannot be regulated by the speaker him/herself. That is, the propositional content is transferred to an alter prime speaker (Du Bois 1986: 329). Therefore, compared to sovereign speech, indirect speech indicates a relatively low personal presence of the proximate speaker. Furthermore, within the speech categorized as ‘direct and allusive quotation’, the speaker does not have any control over linguistic features such as shifters, lexical coding, and registers. Consequently, while the personal presence of the proximate speaker decreases in stages, the directness of quotation (the presence of the quoted speaker) increases, in accordance with the same stages reversed.

In the ‘mimicry’ phase, the paralinguistic features⁶, such as voice tone and rhythm of speech, are likewise quoted, and not controlled by the proximate speaker. Moreover, during the ‘impersonation’ phase, all the non-linguistic physical factors such as appearance and behavior are similarly quoted. Lastly, during the phase of ‘trance’, the proximate speaker enters a state in which s/he loses his/her ‘ego’. In other words, the speaker completely loses control of his/her own speech, which is depersonalized and totally regulated by the alter prime speaker, whose ‘voice can index no personal origin’ (Du Bois 1986: 333; cf. Irvine 1979). As a result, during the ‘trance’, the personal presence in which the proximate speaker is indexed (his/her indexicality, in other words) becomes the lowest in the hierarchy (cf. Becker 1979)⁷.

In this way, Du Bois indicates that there is a correlation between linguistic and behavioural factors and the category of speech, operating along a continuum on the degree of personal presence, that is, the degree of directness in relation to the deictic center of the speech events, the ‘here-and-now’. The personal presence becomes relatively low in the hierarchy within the speech/interactional categories of ‘mimicry’, ‘impersonation’, and ‘trance’. Consequently, in these speech/interactional categories, an alter prime speaker, i.e., the

quoted speaker, gradually takes control of the speech, thereby increasing the directness of quotation. The elimination of the proximate speaker's personal presence in an utterance through quotation is the semiotic principle in force of which ritual speech gains its authority. In other words, the ritual speaker explicitly rejects any credit for, or influence on what is said, anonymizes it through quotation or formulaic speech, and transforms him-/herself into a medium (an 'animator', to use Goffman's expression) between the pragmatic and indexical present of the speech event and the sacred, mythical, ancestral and symbolic space-time that lies beyond historical time (Du Bois 1986: 319; cf. Geertz 1973, Becker 1979).

5.2 'Ho-o-ho-ke-kyo' as mimicry

Let us now go back to the analysis of the NI's speech. In relation to the nightingales' calls, the NI uses the verb 'say', and mimics the 'sound/voice' of the nightingales while listening to their chirping in the background of the forest: *It continues to chirp, saying, "ho-ho-ke-kyo, is there anyone to mate with me? ho-ho-ke-kyo"*. By using the onomatopoeia 'ho-ho-ke-kyo', the NI describes the chirping of the nightingales, accompanied with the *haiku*-esque mora structure as analysed in the previous section, as a poetically structuralized speech (in terms of phonemes, syntax, and meaning). These traits vividly configure and de-contextualize the entire call at the interactional level, not only by utilizing onomatopoeia, but also by creating a clear change in paralinguistic features such as voice, tone and rhythm. In sum, following Du Bois' diagram in Figure 4, the speech/interactional category of 'mimicry' corresponds to the NI's utterances at this stage⁸.

The chart in Figure 5 schematizes the NI's mimicry of the nightingales along the paradigmatic and syntagmatic axes, showing the relationship between the nightingales' calls, described with

the use of onomatopoeia by the NI, and the NI's own utterances, impersonating such calls through onomatopoeia.

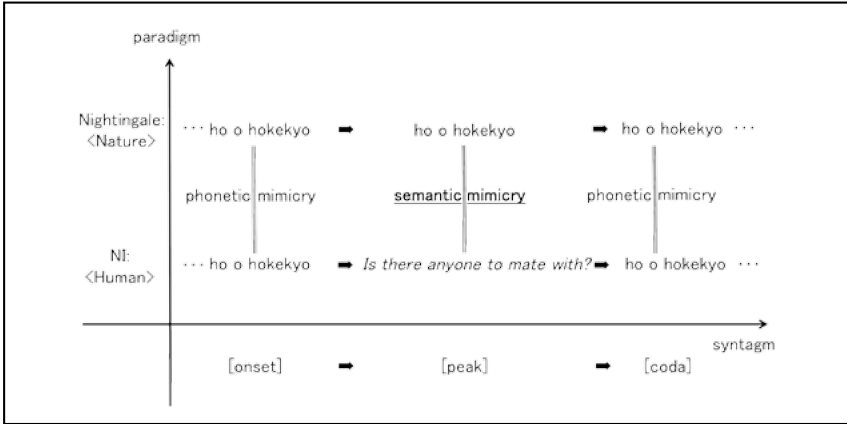


Figure 5: Structure of the NI's mimicry of the nightingales

When the onomatopoeic representation of the chirping of nightingales is posited as belonging to the domain of nature, a parallelism is constructed linking the voices of two dichotomized discursive domains, <Nature> and <Human>, as mediated by the mimicking act of the NI. In this way, we have (1) <Nature>, the repetition of the actual chirping of nightingales, ‘*ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*’ and (2), <Human>, the NI's utterance (“*Ho-o-ho-ke-kyo, is there anyone to mate with me? Ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*”). However, the call of the animal, ‘*ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*’ (the ‘voice’ of the animal, so to speak), cannot be interpreted directly by the participants (humans), who exist in a different discursive domain; it can only have meaning or propositional content when replaced by a meaningful human voice uttering “*Is there anyone to mate with me?*” The NI thereby engages in a meta-semantic mimicry – *nature interpretation* – which establishes the call as being one of courtship.

In other words, this speech is not ‘sovereign speech’, fully controlled by the NI him-/herself. Creating the parallelism defined above,

the proximate speaker frames his/her utterance as if the nightingale were its prime alter speaker. By iconically associating oneself with the nightingales, the NI's mimicry can be seen as interpreting the meaning of the nightingale's call, *ho-o-ho-ke-kyo*, from the perspective of the animal (or natural) discursive domain. That is, the NI's mimicry can be seen as interpreting the propositional content of the nightingale's call 'allegedly' from the perspective of the animal: the NI is deliberately 'acting as a bird', by pretending to embody the animal (or natural) perspective.

5.3 Impersonation of animals in 'trance'

The NI's mimicry can move up further, from mimicry to the stages of 'impersonation' and possibly 'trance', including speech categories with increasingly lower personal presence of quotation, in accordance with Du Bois' schema (see Figure 4). To illustrate this, let us take a look at another of the NI's utterances.

[Case 2]

NI: So, there is a creature over there that is jumping *pyon-pyon* [the sound of jumping up and down]. So, when you look upward hazily like this, you can also see birds perched on a tree or squirrels moving *pyo-pyo-pyo-pyo-pyo* [the sound of running briskly]. Crows are pretty interesting if you observe their walk. Depending on the birds, there is a type that moves *chon-chon-chon-chon* [the sound of hopping] and one that walks *hi-kko-hi-kko-hi-kko* [the sound of walking with a gait]. Birds always walk in either style. The ones that walk like *pyon-pyon* can only walk like *pyon-pyon*, and those that go like *cho-ko-cho-ko* [the sound of toddling about] can only go like *cho-ko-cho-ko*. However, crows can do both...

Upon reaching the entrance of the forest, the NI presented the participants with a variety of the five sense perceptions (mainly sight); such perceptions are not consciously registered in everyday life. In the course of the presentation, the NI drew attention to a crow, which appeared in a clearing near the forest entrance, and described its movement using various onomatopoeias, such as *'pyon-pyon'* (the sound of hopping) or *'hi-kko-hi-kko-hi-kko'* (the sound of unsteady gait). Additionally, the NI explicitly mimicked the crow's movements, using non-linguistic features: his/her own body (legs and hands), his/her appearance, and his/her movements. Based on Du Bois' schema, these characteristics of the speech can be categorized as the interactional stage of 'impersonation', a state immediately preceding the stage of 'trance'.

In impersonation, the degree to which the proximate speaker controls his/her own speech is extremely reduced; the only factor that the proximate speaker controls in speech is 'ego'. In the next interactional stage, that of 'trance', the speaker whose utterances are quoted and impersonated 'there-and-then' (the alter prime speaker) may enter the proximate speaker's body, possessing him/her, and using his/her body as a medium to effect a present in the 'here-and-now'. Accordingly, the audience can now 'directly' communicate with the quoted/impersonated speaker who is absent from the 'here-and-now' of the communicative event, only being linked to it or emerging in it through the mediator's speech. In the present case, what is being quoted and impersonated by the NI is a wild bird (animal/nature) in the forest. Performing as the animal using all its physical elements in this way, the NI's utterance erases his/her personal presence, or indexicality, to the maximum extent possible, and transforms him-/herself into the medium of an animal, as a mediator or shaman.

In the current segment, the NI raises the meta-pragmatic equivalence beyond the level of denotational semantics to that of interactional pragmatics. In this way, the human discursive domain,

where the communicative event involves the participants in the ‘here-and-now’, is relocated in the discursive domain of nature, where the wild animals live. In short, the boundary or ideological divide between the two dichotomized domains becomes fluid, such that the discourse indexes ‘no specific origin’ in the ‘here-and-now’ of the human world. In this sense, the NI plays the role of a discursive medium, or ‘shaman’, discursively creating or enacting a ‘direct experience’ with nature in the human world by evoking of the physical materiality of nature ‘at hand’⁹.

No matter how successfully enacted the direct experience with nature, the fact remains that one can detect the arbitrariness, unnaturalness, and conscious deliberation in the schemas evoked and the acts carried out by the NI in his/her impersonations and ‘trances’. The NI quite apparently and consciously controls his/her utterances, unlike real shamans, who appear to be genuinely in trance during rituals. As a result, the mimicking and impersonating schemas enacted by the NI are not working as faultlessly and naturally as in the case of a *true* shaman, who seemingly is totally possessed by the animal or its spirit, and apparently acts without any deliberate authorial intention. Here, too, it should be emphasized that the NI is intentionally *acting like* a shamanic figure, by being able to ‘naturally’ interpret the natural realm by mediating with the human realm. Arguably, this very intentional fakeness or “spuriousness” (Sapir 1924) is a distinct sign of post-modernism, especially as it appears in the post-modern environmentalism manifested in the persona of the NI and his/her intentionally spurious speech acts.

6. *Nature interpretation as ‘ritual’*

Earlier, in sections 4 and 5, I discussed how poetic structures can be clearly observed at both the denotational and interactional levels of the discourse in nature interpretation activity. The present section

will extend this discussion by positing that such poetic structures actually occur in the entire discourse of nature interpretation.

6.1 Internal structure of the entire discourse

This section will explore the entire discourse structure of the nature interpretation discussed above. The NI's talk began with a sentence uttered by him/her in an open area near the lodge where the participants stayed for the eco-institute, in response to what one of the participants had uttered about the healing effects of a nature visit: "Well, so I will go and get healed as well". This utterance marks the beginning of the nature interpretation program. Then, entering the forest, the NI started providing descriptions of plants such as dandelions and Japanese larch trees. The participants ask questions in related to the NI's remarks; the NI responds and elaborates on his/her answers. Such dialogic segments with questions and answers are repeated several times.

Having entered the woods, the participants are encouraged to use their sight in the forest in ways not consciously used on a daily basis; the NI also describes and interprets the chirping of nightingales and the ways crows walk, as mentioned previously. In addition, the NI gave descriptions of several representatives of the vegetation, such as decayed trees and Dahurian birches, and explained their characteristics. Towards the end of the program, all participants were seated around a large fir tree standing in the middle of a circular clearing. The NI asked the participants to share their impressions of their activities and explained the 'physical' and 'psychological' significance for humans of being directly exposed to the natural environment, while consciously using their five senses. Upon the group's leaving the forest, the NI declared the end of their activities.

Figure 6 schematizes the entire interactional composition of this nature interpretation along the axes of syntagm and paradigm.

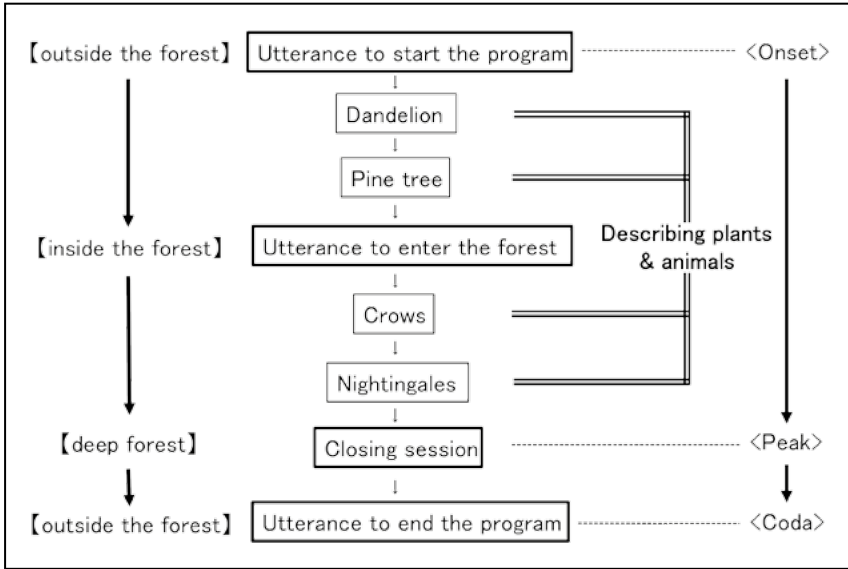


Figure 6: The entire discourse structure

As shown here, the entire discourse structure of this interpretation activity revolves around the three monological ‘meta-pragmatic’ segments in which the NI refers to the ongoing activity: (1) the declaration signalling the beginning of the interpretation → (2) the dialogue at the forest entrance to encourage participants to use their five senses → (3) the closing remarks on the importance for human beings to be exposed to the natural environment. In this tripartite discourse, a structure is embedded in which the same question and response interaction about vegetation¹⁰ occurs between the NI and participants as was described above. Furthermore, this tripartite discourse is also correlated to, and structured around the forest, where the orientation of the activity shifts in stages: (1) ‘outside the forest’ → (2) ‘entering the forest / deep inside the forest’ → (3) coming back ‘outside the forest’.¹¹

6.2 Ritual as interactional poetry

Compared to prosaic genres, poetry (verse) shows prominent repetition of prosodic units (cf. Koyama 2008: 502-503). As a result, the poetic text becomes firmly *entextualized*, gaining de-contextuality or textual ‘materiality’, being prominently recognizable and salient in the context, with a relatively high autonomy. As we have seen in sections 4 and 5 above, these characteristics are also plainly visible in the NI’s description and mimicry of the nightingales.

As Silverstein explains, such textuality (here, a de-contextuality) is most prominent in so-called ‘rituals’ at the sociocultural and interactional levels; thus, he conceptualizes rituals as being ‘interactional poetry’. Specifically, similar to poems, rituals clearly indicate the beginning and end of an interaction; they exhibit high consistency and palpability in their internal structure, and clearly mark off the interactional boundaries. Further, participants in rituals tend to repeatedly perform the same type of action one after another; the ‘traditional’ form (or event genre) in a ritual tends to be repeated as a replica, with the discursive formulae mirroring the mythical past of societies and communities. Thus, rituals are clearly foregrounded/figured from the mundane (casual, indexical) contexts surrounding the interaction, which attracts the interest and attention from the participants in ritual events (both members of the communities and its ‘external’ observers/ethnographers).

As mentioned above, the discourse of nature interpretation clearly presents a beginning and an ending. Furthermore, within the entire discourse, the poetic structure revolving around the forest is being prominently displayed both in the segment pertaining to the description of the plants and in the conversational question/answer sequences occurring between the NI and the participants. In other words, throughout the whole interaction, the multi-layered poetic structures recursively (meta-pragmatically) *entextualize* the discourse as ritual. On the more ‘micro’, denotational level, the NI’s mimicry

and impersonation of an animal (and possibly his/her entering a state of 'trance') use various onomatopoeias and mimetic expressions to create prominent, multi-layered poetic structures. The discourse as a whole also exhibits a palpable structure at an interactional level around the forest, with a culminating segment deep inside the forest, in a kind of ritual centre 'out there'. That is to say, the nature interpretation occurs as a ritual, or poetic interactional text 'here-and-now' in order to symbolically invoke, amplify, and replicate the 'natural world' of the 'there-and-then'.

Recapitulating, then, the NI's language use employs syllables with maximal sonority contrast, as these also typically are seen in motherese or in child speech. Using such syllables and onomatopoeias, the NI's narrative creates a dialogue containing mora structures that evoke the Japanese poetic genre, *haiku*. As noted earlier, in semiotic terms onomatopoeias are 'naturalizing', in that they appear as motivated, non-arbitrary, 'natural' signs. When utilized in the course of discourse, these natural signs (onomatopoeias) create the effects of vividness and immediateness. The naturalizing effect of onomatopoeias is clearly linked to a Romantic evocation of nature metaphors such as 'Mother Nature'. By their naturalizing character, onomatopoeias help the NI represent 'nature' as a natural realm, located beyond, and de-contextualized from, the contingencies of the sociocultural, by its being located in a mythic, symbolic realm that is seemingly beyond the confines of the dynamically changing sociocultural interactions taking place 'here-and-now'. Hence, by de-contextualizing the discourse of nature interpretation anchored onto the context of the 'here-and-now', the denotational text of the NI's utterances symbolizes the 'there-and-then' as a cultural symbol of de-temporal, eternal, mythical, and immutable truth. In other words, the denotational text poetically symbolizes *Mother Nature* as the 'great provider' of care and solace for humans.

Interactionally, by creating parallelisms, mimicking and impersonating wild, 'exotic' animals such as crows, and using bodily

movements, the NI raises the meta-pragmatic equivalence, from the denotational/semantic level, up to the level of nature interpretation as an interactional, pragmatic activity. In other words, the boundary or ideological divide between the two discursive domains becomes fluid, or even erased, without indexing any ‘specific origin’ of the speech in the ‘here-and-now’ (the human domain). In this sense, the NI plays the role of a discursive medium, a ‘shaman’ creating or enacting a ritualized space-time of ‘direct experience’ with nature in the human world – in Benjamin’s words (1982), a *phantasmagoria*¹² in the forest. In this way, the entire interactional text of the nature interpretation is composed of a chain of segments in speech and action, simultaneously and recursively creating a clear poetic structure around nature (the forest). This strong poetic structure, at both the denotational and interactional levels, allows the nature interpretation to emerge as a ritual replicating the natural world of the ‘there-and-then’, conceptualized as the polar opposite of the ‘human world’ of the ‘here-and-now’. By doing this, the NI mediates the ideological dichotomy between nature and culture. In this sense, what this ‘shaman’ does is not just fusing together, but presupposing and fusing together, the human/animal or culture/nature divide. Clearly, and as also recognized by the participants, the NI was neither a wild bird nor any animal, but definitely a human being mimicking birds, and wilfully doing so spuriously.

7. Conclusion

Based on a semiotic and linguistic anthropological perspective, I have tried to understand nature interpretation, the way it is largely practiced in the area of environmental education, as environmental discourse or environmentalism, and investigated how it discursively and meta-pragmatically creates ‘direct experiences’ with nature, building a ‘bridge’ between humans and non-humans. I also have

attempted to address the linguistic characteristics of the nature interpreter's discourse, focusing on his/her use of onomatopoeias, and highlighted this discourse's similarities to ritual speech, which allows the nature interpreter to mediate as a shamanistic figure between humans and non-humans.

My analysis leads to the conclusion that nature interpretation is a type of ritual (a ritual process or 'rite of passage'; cf. van Gennep 1909; Turner 1969). In this ritual a 'shaman', the NI, invites participants, mostly middle-class urbanites, to leave behind their modern, human space-time, the 'here-and-now', and enter the 'lost', pre-modern, 'blissfully sustainable' space-time of the 'there-and-then'. In the middle of the woods, far from the urban hustle and bustle, the participants learn to understand the tie between the 'physical' and the 'psychological', and thus enter into a direct experience with, and 'feel' nature, as they, physically and materially, try to coexist in harmony with it. Having been integrated with the natural environment, the 'shaman' and the participants then happily return to the (post-)modern life of urbanity. In this ritual process, the NI takes the role of mediator, and the entire ritualized discourse becomes a mediatory communicative device between humans and non-humans, (post-)modern and pre-modern, culture and nature. This frame of interaction creates a discourse genre which has become prevalent among today's middle-class urbanites, a genre which I will call 'post-modern environmentalism'. In the nostalgic gaze of romanticism, this environmental discourse ideologizes nature (the pre-modern) as a lost mythical paradise, a Shangri-La: an exotic, 'other' domain for privileged, modern human agents (cf. Kosek 2004). In doing so, this type of discourse inherently presupposes, epitomizes, and proactively reproduces the very (post-)modern ideological divide that it intends to overcome, viz., the dichotomy of culture/nature, human/non-human, and modern/pre-modern. While this environmental discourse tries to naturalize 'nature' with onomatopoeias or motherese, creating the effects of vividness

and immediateness, it poetically evokes physical/bodily sensations through the use of the five senses; it represents nature as a 'romantic partner' for humans to become one with, or '*mate with*': the 'Great Provider' or 'Mother Nature' of care and solace. However, this bridge of courtship between humans and non-humans is spurious, as post-modern middle-class urbanites leave their modern, urban life behind only to be temporally and symbolically integrated with the natural world, wandering through the forest of courtship led by a pseudo-shamanistic figure.

Through attempting to clarify the semiotic and linguistic reality of nature interpretation, I have presented it as an issue of communication. The communicative aspect of this activity has been papered over by phrases such as 'conveying the significant meaning behind things' in the field of environmental studies, whereas the participants' physical direct experiences with the natural environment tend to be conveniently over-emphasized. In other words, my analysis has revealed that a physically direct experience with the natural environment is inherently ideological and emerges as a communicative, poetic, or ritualistic effect by presupposing the human-nature dichotomy and then (begging the question) bridging the ideological divide. By fully recognizing 'nature' or the 'environment' as something discursively, culturally, and ideologically constructed, research on nature or the environment should be able to squarely address the communicative and discursive aspects of the environment, as embodied in what is called 'environmentalism'. A meta-analysis of how the dichotomized discursive spheres, the human and the non-human, are ideologically and pragmatically created and reproduced, and therefore, how these dichotomized spheres are ideologically and pragmatically unified through the communicative event, provides us with an important and possibly crucial key to understand and reveal the intrinsically semiotic relationship between humans and non-humans.

*Department of Science and Technology,
Keio University
7-19-3-502 Takinogawa
Kita-ku, Tokyo 114-0023, Japan
asai@z6.keio.jp*

Notes

1. In February 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) announced that it is almost certain that the sea level will have risen by more than 26 cm over the next 100 years. In fact, there have been reports that coastal erosion and inland flooding are becoming everyday occurrences in Oceanic islands, such as Tuvalu and Kiribati (cf. Jinbo 2007). In October 2013, the BBC reported about a man from Kiribati in the Pacific region attempting to claim asylum in New Zealand on the grounds that climate change is threatening his country. It was also reported that environmental degradation, caused by both slow and sudden-onset natural disasters, is faced by the Kiribati population generally. Reportedly, the Kiribati government was taking steps to tackle the risks posed by climate change and in 2012 the Kiribati government approved a plan to buy land from Fiji in case rising sea levels forced it to relocate its citizens (cf. BBC News 2013).
2. The dichotomy between humans ('here-and-now') and nature ('there-and-then') is clear in the epistemological framework known as the gaze of the so-called 'noble savage'. This framework perceives the 'here-and-now' of the communicative event as belonging to the human-cultural domain, whereas the 'there-and-then' is the far away, eternal, mythical, and symbolic domain of nature. Such a dichotomy was constructed and became observable through the process of 'modernity' in the 19th century, centred on the city, by standardizing the various constitutive parts of the nation-state with railroads, postal service, printing systems, schooling, and the circulation of linguistic, geographic, and calendrical paraphernalia (such as dictionaries, encyclopedia, maps, clocks etc.) (Koyama 1997: 3 cf. Williams 1989). Such a modern gaze locates the

'here-and-now' in the city and urban areas, and evokes the notion of 'the lost' in the process of modernization (in the guise of countryside, dialect, and nature). These lost elements are located in 'there-and-then' or identified as 'pre-modern' from the point of view of the modernized 'city gaze' (cf. Koyama 1997). Such dichotomies between humans/culture and non-humans/nature have been regimenting our contemporary epistemic/historical context.

3. Grégoire (1937) referred to 'mother' as the great provider and stated that she is the subject in which the infants' desire is invested the most.
4. The distinction here is slightly subtle but important, as it is related to the distinction between the natural acquisition and the social acquisition of language by children as part of their socialization, as well as to the distinction between (natural) sex and (social) gender.
5. The term 'shaman' was originally used to refer to religious practitioners among the Tungus in Siberia. It now refers to religious practitioners everywhere who engage in activities, such as fortune telling and illness treatment, by approaching various spiritual presences while being in a special state of consciousness known as possession or 'trance'. Generally, shamans are perceived as having an ability to communicate as a medium with spiritual existences above the human level, by freely entering and exiting a state of trance. Such rituals are referred to as shamanism.
6. Other contextual factors (i.e., gaze, expressions, and tone of voice) provide a complementary framework for how to interpret utterances. They function to stipulate the meaning of 'what is being done' through 'what is being said'. For example, if one were to say that a teacher 'praised the student while grinning', the act of 'grinning' fulfils the meta-pragmatic function that causes the teacher's action to be interpreted as being satirical.
7. Becker (1979: 232-233) defines trance speaking as "communication in which one of the variables of the speech act ('I am speaking to you about X at time Y in place Z with intent A') is denied".
8. Onomatopoeia is a sign of iconicity that includes symbolicity; the 'mimicry' of animal cries using onomatopoeia can thus be categorized as iconicity. Since the difference between this two signs is not clearly

formulated in Du Bois' schema (Figure 4), it will be left aside here. However, since 'mimicry' is a 'behavioural and interactional category', it seems fair to include onomatopoeia as a linguistic feature.

9. Du Bois (1986: 317-322) lists the characteristics of ritual speech as observed in different languages and cultures. He points out that in ritual speech, the language used is observed to be considerably different from that used in everyday communication. The distinction is especially applicable to special registers, lexical coding, archaic elements, borrowed elements, semantico-grammatical parallelism, marked voice quality, and disclaimers of personal volition. Further, in the case of shamanism observed in populations such as the Wintu or Cuna, the role of the shaman is to interpret the language used, which is considerably different from what happens in everyday communication with the ritual audience. Even so, it is undeniable that similarities exist between ritual speech (or shamanistic ritual) with regard to the NI's speech studied here.
10. For example, when the group was passing by a field with dandelions, the following conversation structure could be observed: the NI first explained that dandelions are categorized into two types according to their shapes. Next, a participant asked the NI which type the dandelion he had found belonged to. Then, the NI answered the participant's query.
11. This can be understood as the discourse proceeding from a 'shallow forest' to a 'deep forest' and back again.
12. Walter Benjamin used the term 'phantasmagoria' to apply the Marxist concept of 'commodity fetishism' to his sociocultural analyses of the middle class (the bourgeoisie), with special reference to mass consumption. The phantasmagoria itself refers to an apparatus of optical illusion invented in the late 18th century in France, which consisted of a projection of images by a *laterna magica*, a magic lantern. Phantasmagoria is based on mass delivery and inaugurates a first digression from the conventional aura of the artwork's 'here-and-now'. The image projected through phantasmagoria is separated from its real source; in other words, it is alienated, creating a 'fetish'. Here, we can see the connection between the phantasmagoria (as analysed by Benjamin) and the post-modern, onomatopoeic discourse on nature (which the

present paper examines) – a discourse that is filled with naturalizing signs invoking Romantic metaphors of nature as these are prevalent among middle class urbanites (cf. Benjamin 1982).

References

- Argyrou, Vassos. 2005. *The logic of environmentalism: Anthropology, ecology and postcoloniality* (Studies in environmental anthropology and ethnobiology). New York: Berghahn Books.
- Anderson, David G. & Eeva Berglund. (eds.) 2003. *Ethnographies of conservation: Environmentalism and the distribution of privilege*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Becker, Alton L. 1979. Text-building, epistemology, and aesthetics in Javanese shadow theatre. In Alton L. Becker & Aram A. Yengoyan (ed.) *The imagination of reality: Essays in Southeast Asian coherence systems*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex. 211-243
- BBC News. 2013. Man seeks 'climate change asylum' in New Zealand. BBC News, 17 October 2013. Online: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24561231>.
- Benjamin, Walter. 1982. *Das Passagen-Werk* (R. Tiedemann, ed.). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Du Bois, John W. 1986. Self-evidence and ritual speech. In Wallace Chafe & Joanna Nichols (ed.) *The linguistic coding of epistemology*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex. 313-336.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Religion as a cultural system. *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books. 87-125.
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, Erving. 1981. *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Grégoire, Antoine. 1937. *L'apprentissage du langage*. Bibliothèque de la faculté de philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège, 73.
- Hanks, William F. 1990. *Referential practice: Language and lived space among the Maya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hanks, William F. 1992. The indexical ground of deictic reference. In

- Alessandro Duranti & Charles Goodwin (ed.) Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 43-76.
- Hiraga, Masako. 1987. Eternal stillness: A linguistic journey to Basho's haiku about the cicada. *Poetics Today*, 8(1). 5-18.
- Hiraga, Masako. 2003. Poetic language (*Shiteki gengo*) In: Trends of contemporary linguistics (*Gendai gengo-gaku no choryu*), ed. by M. Yamanashi & M. Arima. Tokyo: Keisoshobo. 128-140.
- Hiraga, Masako. 2007. 15th Research symposium: Interpretation as mediatory act. People, work, and nature. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society* 9(2). 127-129.
- Hymes, Dell. 1996. Narrative and inequality. *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice*. London: Taylor & Francis. 107-230.
- Irvine, Judith T. 1979. Formality and informality in communicative events. *American Anthropologist* 81. 773-790.
- Jakobson, Roman. 1953. Discussion. In Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson, Carl F. Voegelin and Thomas A. Sebeok, Results of the conference of anthropologists and linguists. *International Journal of American Linguistics Memoir* 8. 11-21.
- Jakobson, Roman. 1960a. Linguistics and poetics. In Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.) *Style in Language*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press. 350-377.
- Jakobson, Roman. 1960b. Why "mama" and "papa"? In Linda Waugh & Monique Monville-Burston (ed.) *On Language*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 305-311.
- Jinbo, Tetsuo. 2007. Tuvalu: Country sinking from global warming (*Tuvalu: Chikyu ondanka ni shizumu kuni*). Tokyo: Shunjusha.
- Kosek, Jake. 2004. Purity and pollution: Racial degradation and environmental anxieties. In Richard Peet & Michael Watts (eds.) *Liberation ecologies*, 2. ed.: Environment, development, social movements. London and New York: Routledge. 125-165.
- Koyama, Wataru. 1997. Desemanticizing pragmatics. *Journal of Pragmatics* 28. 1-28.
- Koyama, Wataru. 2008. Genealogy of signs and semiotic anthropology (*Kigou no Keifu*). Tokyo: Sangensha.
- Mey, Jacob L. 2001. *Pragmatics: An introduction* (second revised edition). Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.

- Milton, Kay. 1996. *Environmentalism and cultural theory: Exploring the role of anthropology in environmental discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Nash, Roderick. 1969. *Wilderness and the American mind* (revised edition). New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Regnier, K., M. Gross, & R. Zimmerman. 1992. *The interpreter's guidebook: Techniques for programs and presentations*. Stevens Point, Wis.: UW-SP Foundation Press.
- Sanada, Shinji. 1983. *Nihongo no yure: Chizu de miru chiikigo no seitai*. (Japanese language variation: The ecological distribution of dialects). Tokyo: Nanun-do.
- Sapir, Edward. 1924. Culture, genuine, and spurious. *American Journal of Sociology*, 29(4), 401-429.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Hierarchy of features and ergativity. In R.M.W. Dixon. (ed.) *Grammatical categories in Australian languages*. Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Aboriginal [and Torres Straits Islander] Studies. 112-71.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1993. Metapragmatic discourse and metapragmatic function. In: *Reflexive language: Reported speech and metapragmatics*, ed. by John A. Lucy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 33-58.
- Silverstein, Michael. 2004. "Cultural" concepts and the language-culture nexus. *Current Anthropology* 45. 621-652.
- Silverstein, Michael & Greg Urban (eds.) 1996. *Natural histories of discourse*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tilden, Freeman. 1957. *Interpreting our heritage: Principles and practices for visitor services in parks, museums, and historic places*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. 1909. *Les rites de passage*. Paris: Émile Nourry.
- Williams, Raymond. 1989. *The politics of modernism: Against the new conformists*. London: Verso.