

Reading & Writing Between Linguistic Lines: Exploring the Potential of Exophony

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Abstract

In the last two decades, critics have pointed to the rise in Japan of a new wave of *ekkyō bungaku* or “border-crossing literature” written by non-native speakers. My own book of Japanese-language poetry attracted critical attention for its overt exploration of the ways bilingualism and transnational experience can shape literary expression. Instead of thinking of the terrain between languages as a kind of no-man’s land that simply needs to be traversed and abandoned as quickly as possible, we might think about it as a productive space in which linguistic interactions and cultural dissonance allow new dynamic, creative forms of expression to arise. This presentation will explore this theme, questioning what implications these thoughts might hold for the role of creative writing in language education. In particular, it will look at a recent cross-campus experiment with a language faculty, involving reformulating my own Japanese-language writing in new English versions in advanced Japanese-language language courses.

Bio

Jeffrey Angles is a professor of Japanese at Western Michigan University. His collection of original Japanese-language poetry won the Yomiuri Prize for Literature, a rare honor accorded only a few non-native speakers since the award began in 1949. He has translated dozens of translations of Japan’s most important modern authors and poets into English; he believes strongly in the role of translators as activists and has focused on translating socially engaged, feminist, and queer writers. Among his translations is Orikuchi Shinobu’s modernist classic, *The Book of the Dead*, which won both the Miyoshi Prize and the MLA’s Scaglione Prize for translation.