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Newsletter for The
Japan Exchange and
Teaching Program
Alumni Association,
New York Chapter

We're Talking Baseball

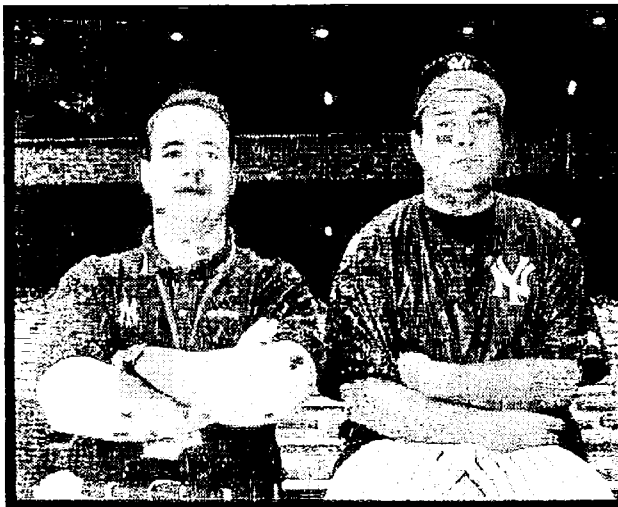
BY BRIAN CHIAPPINELLI

Imagine this . . . it's Valentine's Day 1998, you're seated on the N.Y. Yankee dugout bench between Hideki Irabu, the pitcher who had raised much excitement but had struggled his previous season and Scott Clark, a reporter for ABC Sports. Surrounding you are fifty sports reporters from around the globe shoving microphones and an ESPN TV camera in your face. That's exactly what it was like on George Rose's first day on the job, three hours into his new position as translator for Hideki, whom he had met for the first time three hours earlier. He had never translated Japanese to English like this before in his life.

In the spirit of this newsletter devoted to "language," we look at the experience of George Rose (Souma-shi, Fukushima-ken, 1989-1991), who took time off from Columbia Business School to pursue what many would consider a dream job: translating for a Japanese pitcher on a major league baseball team. And not just any pitcher, on any baseball team, but the 1998 World Series Champion N.Y. Yankees and one of the solid

pitchers who got them there.

George was more than a little nervous. "One reporter told me later he could see hives on the back of my neck," George remembers. He fielded his first questions with flying colors,



translating both the question and Hideki's answer perfectly. Question number two, however, . . . "Scott asked him if he felt that last season was 'overwhelming.' I thought, 'What is the Japanese word for overwhelming?' I was stuck." George drew upon his JET experience to get out of the inning safely. "I turned to

Hideki and said, *Obawerumingu wakarimasu ka?* He didn't, and my attempts to use other phrases weren't getting through. So I asked the Japanese re-

porters if they knew it. After a few minutes, one of them yelled out, "Atto." George went back and asked the question again, drawing chuckles from everyone. "It was probably the best mistake I could have made. Overall, it had a good effect on the atmosphere."

Spot translation is one of the toughest jobs that involves the use and understanding of foreign languages. Not only does it require technical skill but also an appreciation of the nuances of the individual for whom you are translating. If you can develop a relationship with the individual, the translation work becomes more natural, allowing the translator to be, to some extent, a surrogate voice of the individual. Getting to know that person helps you as a translator.

George had a locker between Hideki and second-baseman Chuck Knoblauch throughout the season and was welcomed as part of the team. "Everything you read about this team was true. There were no egos in the clubhouse. Everyone was low-key and down-to-earth." George (a low-key, down to earth individual himself) enabled Hideki to interact with the different members of the organization in a variety of settings. "I would translate for him in social settings as well. David Cone and Hideki and I would go out for dinner, and he would want to learn from David's experience. He would ask about style and delivery." Being able to

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Well, another year gone . . . another one just begun. This was always one of my favorite times in Japan; the spirit of the new year seemed to last for more than just one night. I hope you had a happy holiday and are still enjoying the New Year. Thanks to the hard work of our dedicated alumni, 1999 is off to a pretty good start for JETAA New York.

Stephen and I are grateful to all who attended the *Jetting On* session on January 12th. Dr. Nan Sussman from the City University of New York spoke about re-entry shock and the trials and tribulations of readjusting to life back home after leaving Japan. I hope the recent (and not so recent!) returnees found the workshop useful.

Next month's big event is the JETAA New York Job Fair, to be held on Saturday, February 20th. It will be from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Japan Society. We'll have guest speakers, a panel of alumni who are working in a variety of fields, and potential employers ready to talk with you and take your resume. This job fair is exclusively for JET alumni, and there is *no* admission charge. You should be receiving a notice with all the details very soon.

At the beginning of March I'm off to Tokyo to speak at the 1998-1999 *Conference for Returning JETs*, hosted by CLAIR. This is the second year of this orientation, which aims to prepare JETs for life back home before they leave Japan. Sounds like a great idea, and I'm ecstatic to be a part of it. I'll return with a full report . . .

Finally, I should let you all know I will be leaving the Japan Society (sniff sniff) at the end of January to work at the Center on Japanese Business and Economy at Columbia University. I am excited about my new position, but at the same time I'm a bit sad to leave the Society. It truly is a special place and an invaluable resource for the JET alumni, so we will definitely continue to work with the Japan Society staff to maintain and strengthen our relationship with them.

That's it for now. Enjoy the rest of this fabulous newsletter Win and Christine put together. Happy New Year to you once again, and I hope to see you at the Job Fair next month!

-Yvonne

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

While assembling last month's issue, Chris Watanabe asked if we might be interested in publishing an article he planned to write about language. Not only were we interested in his article but also in devoting an entire issue to the rather vague subject of "language."

Around the same time two of my former students were visiting me in New York for three weeks. One, Yuko, is actually majoring in English now and dreams of becoming a tour guide in Australia. The other, Keiko, is finishing up nursing school and hasn't studied English since she probably burned her Progressive reading textbook. I watched them struggle to understand the typical New Yorker, and while they continuously asked me to repeat words and phrases, they never gave up trying to learn more.

A memorable moment came when they were ordering bagels for breakfast one morning. I could see the mood of the woman behind the counter completely change when the two young, foreign girls politely placed their orders with huge grins on their faces. The woman had nearly bitten off the head of the last customer when he didn't answer to "Cream and sugar?" quickly enough. But it appeared that she would have spent all day with my students making sure they got exactly what they wanted. They went away happy with their choices and with the communication experience.

A whole other issue could be devoted to the sociological ramifications of this episode, but it suffices to say that language is one of the keys to successful travel overseas. It can make or break a trip. I'm sure that learning even a little Japanese made our JET experiences all the richer. We hope you enjoy these very well-written articles on "language" and won't hesitate to request a theme for the next issue.

-Win

JETAA NEW YORK



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Interview with Mr. Saito

BY MICHAEL WAXMAN

I'd like to welcome and introduce the new consul for the JET Program, Mr. Koji Saito. His predecessor Mr. Yoshihiro Katayama is now Deputy Director of the Consulate's Japan Information Center.

Seemingly very quiet and reserved at first, Mr. Saito was quite willing to discuss his background and share his thoughts on a variety of topics. Raised

No *gaijin* (oops-uhh, *eeto*) stranger to America. Consul Saito's first stay in this country was while he was a Foreign Ministry cadet studying English and international relations at Swarthmore College for two years. Prior to life in Pennsylvania, he was back at headquarters in Tokyo where he was involved in U.S.-Japan national security affairs (Sshhh-I'd love to tell you more, but I'd have to . . .)

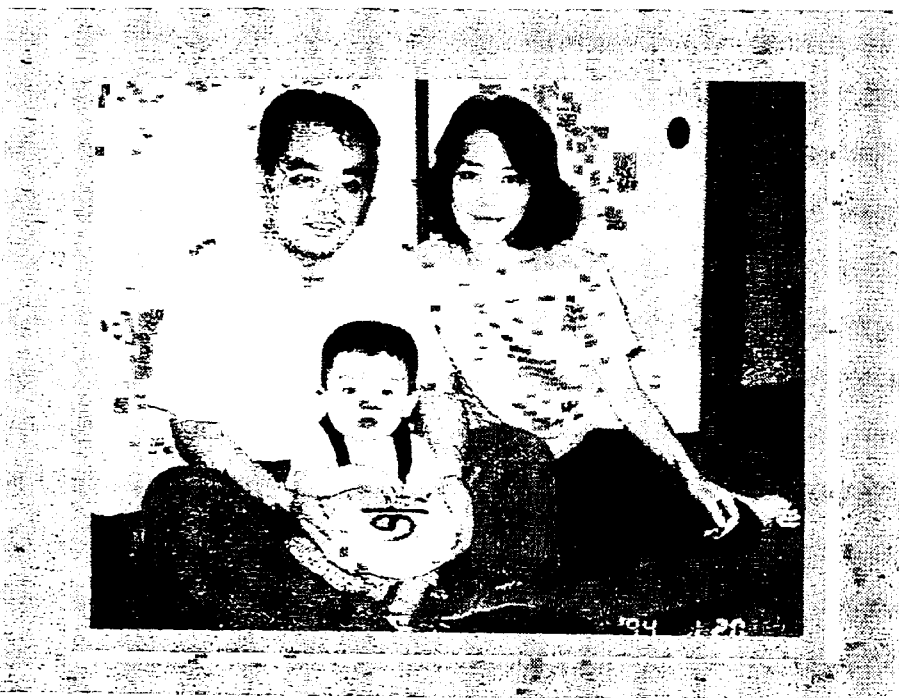
Other overseas postings include

responsibilities included setting up camps in Croatia (*ABUNAI!!* - i.e. land mines), and aid to refugees in Hong Kong and Vietnam. His legal studies background was put to good use as well when he worked on settling trade disputes within the framework of the WTO, GATT and the Uruguay Round.

Married with children, actually child (a 15-month-old son). Mr. Saito is looking forward to meeting all of you (well MOST of you) in support of the JET Program.

Yokoso Nyu Yoku e!

Michael Waxman lived and worked in Ibaraki-ken from 1990-1992.



in Tokyo, he attended private high school and then the prestigious Waseda University, majoring in law. During college, hiking was an especially favorite extracurricular activity, although Saito-san's face lit up when talking about Japanese baseball (Go Yomiuri Giants!). I got the feeling that had he not become a diplomat, a career as a baseball player would have been a close second. Saito believes Japanese ballplayers coming to the United States to play will help to "elevate the standard of Japanese baseball" and that "the Japanese public in general should give their support to play abroad at a higher standard."

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania where this then third secretary worked on overseas development assistance and technical assistance to Africa (author's note: actually it was so technical, he could not really explain exactly what it was; "*muzukashii desu ne . . .*" is the exact quote). "Sampling" the locally-produced, grain-based libations with Japanese colleagues and going on safari ranked high among his memories out of Africa. Spending much time in Geneva on official duty (yes, he DOES have a secret Swiss bank account), Mr. Saito's European work dealt with the United Nation's Human Rights and Refugee Assistance Division. These

From the JET Desk . . .

During the fall of 1998 the JET Office staff along with several JET alumni visited over 20 universities in NY, NJ & PA. Recruitment is a great opportunity for all former JETs to speak about their experiences and assist in promoting the JET Program. I would especially like to thank the following members who shared their stories: Bill Higgins, Liz Bennett, Lance Lieberman, Chris Watanabe, Carla Peterson, Michael Waxman, Justin Zimmerman, Patrick Dwyer and Julie Mokrzycki. Applications for the 1999 JET Program were due in December. Despite continued efforts, in recent years we have seen a decline in the number of JET applicants. I encourage former JETs to continue to spread the word about the JET Program as word of mouth is the most effective means of publicity. Finally, if anyone is interested in interviewing the 1999 JET applicants in February, please contact me @ 212.418.4461 or miho@ny.cgj.org. Thank you again for all your support in 1998. *Kotoshi mo Yoroshiku!* - *Miho Walsh*

English En Vogue?

BY JAMIE CLARK

Greetings from within the island nation of Japan, from within Iwate, from within Kuzumaki, from within Kuzumaki S.H.S., from within this big gray metal desk, from within my long underwear. It's winter and it's cold. Beautifully cold. Those two words together seem to parallel my ambivalent feelings toward English education in Japan. Oxymoronic, oddly juxtaposed, apparently conflicting yet harmonious in afterthought.

With the recession has come a decline in people's desires to acquire the English language; it's going out of fashion as some would say. With a recession comes higher unemployment, greater difficulty for first-time job seekers to land that first job, belt-tightening, saving rather than spending, less disposable income, etc., etc. With all of these factors playing themselves out, naturally, people tend to

prioritize their activities, and the demand for English falls. In other words, it goes out of fashion. Why not the opposite? Why not a rise in demand to make oneself more attractive as a prospective job applicant?

All of that really makes no difference. That is only a reflection of national averages and not real day-to-day lives. English as a kind of fashion has not wavered despite the seriousness of the storm.

On one front, there's a flood of class representatives around my desk at school. It's time for the Kuzumaki S.H.S. Festival '98 and advice is sought on themes for the individual classes. Then there is the endless stream of vocabulary requests: "What is *bunkasai*?" "How to say *okonomiyaki*?" "What's English *natto*?"

On another front, outside of school, our eyes meet beautiful colors arrayed

on the walls of the highway underpass. Japanese graffiti. If only I could read it, what a perspective on the youth of this town that would give. And, of course, I can read it. It's all in English.

English isn't going out of fashion. It's only becoming more difficult to acquire.

OK, time for me to check out, my cup of green tea has grown empty and it's time to refresh it. Cute cup, too. It has a bunch of little cows on it. I bought it at Koiwai Farms, it says so right on the side, in English of course.



Jamie Clark,
Kuzumaki-shi,
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Learning to Bow in New York

BY SANDHYA R. RAO

"*Moshi, moshi.*"

"Oh no, I've called Japan! My parents are going to kill me!" my friend thought when he called me one morning soon after I had returned to "America."

"Old habits die hard, I guess," I replied sleepily. He had woken me up, and by instinct I answered the phone in Japanese. He was just relieved that he wasn't costing his parents a fortune.

By going to Japan, we set out to find ourselves, the meaning of life, and an organized way of living only to find ourselves more confused, disoriented, and a little older upon returning. CLAIR warns us that, yes, we will undergo reverse culture shock, often severe, and goes so far as to graph our feelings during culture shock and reverse culture shock. Their graph is great preparation for what to expect, but what about the little things such as strange nuances, odd gestures, and cultural habits that you've picked up, and that rich American culture that you've missed out on for a few years. It all adds up to create rather comical and sometimes frustrating experiences in reacclimating yourself to the U.S.

I was so excited to call my best friend from home but then I realized I had forgotten her number which I had known since kindergarten! I decided to call directory assistance, "Is it 411—or 911?" Unfortunately, I figured it out the hard way.

Returning to the States is an experience that has forced me to come to grips with the fact that, well, yes, I was born yesterday—in a sense. I have to be constantly briefed on current pop culture icons such as Ally McBeal and Jewel and still wonder why the media makes so much fuss over them. I completely missed the whole "Soup Nazi" incident, and who is this Austin Powers dude and why

is he "shagging . . . baby"? Wait, Ross is getting a divorce? When did he ever get married?

Then I have to get reoriented with the new technologies of the times. In my day people surfed the net, wrote simple e-mails, and made personal Web pages—none of this downloading, uploading, e-bay, e-cash, e-shopping business! Don't forget the new—or not so new—MetroCards. What a great idea, but I still refuse to ride the bus for fear that the bus driver will yell at me for inserting my card incorrectly.

It's not just learning and relearning that's tough, changing what you are so used to saying also proves to be a challenge. I have to chant over and over to myself—U.S., U.S., U.S., not America! *Makudo* has to change back to McDonald's or Mickey Dee's. "I'll have a Coca-Cola—I mean a Coke," I say to the bartender. "Wait. Make that a gin-tonic," I confidently change my order—it sounds right to me. Lately redundancy seems to be a theme in my speech, "Yes, let's go together," or "Let's see it together." On my Christmas cards this year I actually started writing "A Happy New Year" until I received one and realized my faux pas. Little things, once so foreign to me, that made my sides hurt from laughing upon hearing them have now become a part of who I am, where I've been, and how clueless I look to the average American.

It's not just speech, either, how many times have you stumped someone with your gestures or speech patterns.

"Next," the bank teller nonchalantly calls out.

"Who me?" I say, pointing my finger at my nose. A sudden realization, and then I'm playing it off as if my nose is itchy. The woman sneers as if to say, "No, the Boogieman." Her sarcasm instantaneously reminds me that I am in New York. I apologize, my hand rising in a chopping motion towards my face, my head bowing slightly. My transaction is finished, I thank her, apologize for taking up her time, step back, take a

bow and head towards the door. She's shaking her head at me as she calls out to the next person. A man holds the door open for me, I thank him kindly and bow to him too. He looks puzzled, as do the toll booth attendants to whom I still inadvertently bow after paying my fare to use the highway.

My sister called me the other day to ask if I was free on the weekend. I replied, "Well, I would love to see you, so maybe we could get together some time, but I understand if you are too busy and I have some things to do as well, so I don't want to inconvenience you . . . perhaps." She, being the quintessentially impatient, on-the-go New Yorker retorted that a simple "yes" or "no" answer would suffice.

Perhaps we have a hard time finding the right words in English to express our thoughts or we pronounce them incorrectly because of disuse, but let's face it, sometimes we really are not the ones at fault. So many times I have wanted to express the fact that someone is *genki* but cannot seem to find a suitable word in English that does not sound corny. How do you give justice to the expression of "*natsukashii, ne . . .*" or the fact that some strange food you are eating has an *otsuna-aji* in English? And don't forget all those wonderful onomatopoeic words we would try to memorize from Monday's Daily Yomiuri such as *peta-peta* and *itcha-itcha*. Of course, the all-purpose phrase for when you are completely stumped "*wake wakarahen* [mocking your students who would use the phrase when they didn't understand a word you were saying" just can't be expressed in that same degree of cluelessness in English. Let's just face it these expressions are missing in the English language. The beauty of knowing more than one language is the ability to express yourself in ways that are not possible in your native tongue.

Finally, all this reverse culture shock business has made me conscious of the ignorance—or rather just poor language abilities—of most Americans. Yes, the

(Continued on page 12)

Coming Home

BY STEPHEN COOLEY

"There's no place like Home"

"Home is where the heart is"

"Home is where you lay your hat"

"Home, Sweet Home"

Home. What do people mean by this? Is home the place where we have our roots, a place we know we can always return to regardless of how far and wide we venture out into the world? Or is home the place we spend our lives searching for and striving to attain? Is the place we call our home our birthright, or is it a function of choice and declaration? Is home a place at all? Perhaps it is merely a state of mind or a way of being. What is "home," anyway?

These are some of the questions we addressed on November 3rd in Session 4 of Jetting On, Reestablishing Relationships. Unfortunately, there were only four of us in attendance, but I felt the activities and discussions worked well, nonetheless. In this essay, I would like to share a little bit about the discussion we had on "home." Many of you may find it valuable as you deal with the challenges of readjustment to your home.

Most people use the word home to refer not only to a particular place, but also to the memories, feelings, and routines associated with a particular place. Home is the place where we know and trust others and where we are known and trusted. It is a place of routine interactions and predictable

events. When we think of home, words like security and safety come to mind.

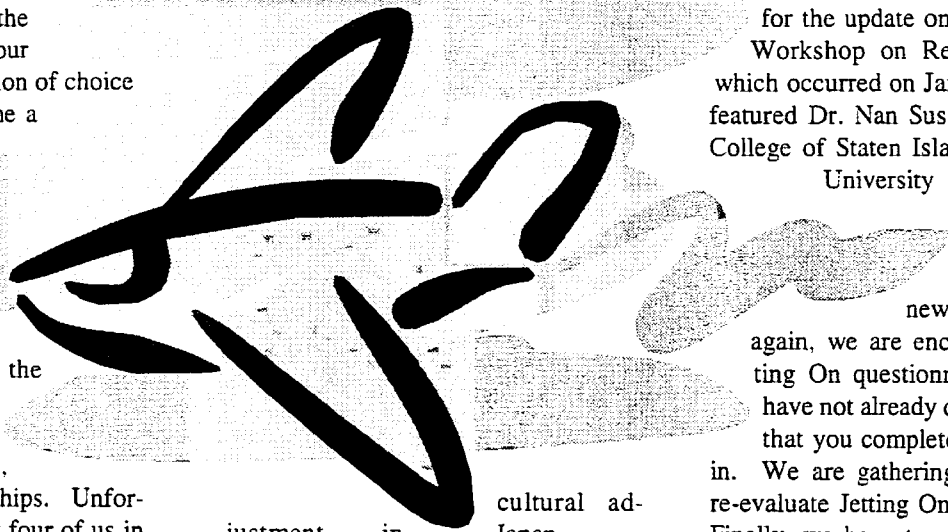
To many of us, home, with all its familiarity, may have seemed a bit boring before we embarked on our once-in-a-lifetime-yeah-let's-go-for-it journey to Japan. Now that we are back, many of us may wonder why our home has become so strange and different. What makes the experience of readjustment for many JET returnees so challenging is the realization that home is really not home anymore. Not the way we assumed it would be while we were still facing the challenges of

with the places and people in our community and by re-establishing our routines.

For those of you who have recently come home, how does the place that you have returned to measure up to these three criteria? Is home that land of familiar places, people and routines you were counting on? It may take some time before home feels like home again. The process can be speeded up, however, with a little bit of understanding and effort. Accept the disparity between being "home" and your expectations of being home, and keep on Jetting On.

In the next issue, please look for the update on Session 5: A Workshop on Re-entry Shock, which occurred on January 12th and featured Dr. Nan Sussman from the College of Staten Island of the City University of New York.

I'll be reporting on this in the next newsletter. Once again, we are enclosing the Jetting On questionnaire. If you have not already done so, we ask that you complete it and send it in. We are gathering the forms to re-evaluate Jetting On for next year. Finally, we hope to see you at Session 6: Beyond JET on March 1st. In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments about Jetting On, please contact me, Stephen Cooley, at (914) 328-5905 or via email at gutcho@aol.com. Have a Wonderful 1999!



cultural adjustment in Japan.

There are three key elements of "home" according to the most recent studies on re-entry, and an understanding of these elements can aid us in the process of readjustment. The first element of home is the familiar places. The second is the familiar people. Finally, "home" means familiar routines and patterns of interaction. If any one of these three familiar elements is disrupted, we will no longer feel "at home", so to speak. This is just what happens when we return home after having lived abroad for an extended period of time. We must readjust to our home by re-familiarizing ourselves



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BY CHRIS WATANABE

I recently subjected myself to the hell that is the Japanese Proficiency Test, or as it is more commonly known among JETs and other ex-pats who have spent time in Japan, the *Nihongo Noryoku Shiken*. There were no surprises for the most part. The format is much the same now as it was in 1994 when I last took it. That is to say, an endless stream of questions on arcane grammar and vocabulary that infuriates so many *gaijin* throughout the world year after year and leaves so many Japanese friends and colleagues scratching their heads wondering, "Why are you studying that? We don't speak that way anymore."

One of my main reasons for participating in the JET Program was that I thought it would help improve my Japanese language skills. Now, I can hear the JET, CLAIR, and Embassy rank and file moaning in a back room, saying to themselves, "That's not a reason to go on JET. Don't say that. You'll give prospective JETs the wrong idea." True, but I was dead serious in my desire to study the language and made a concerted effort throughout my stay do so. It paid off. By the time I left Japan after my three-year stint in Saitama Prefecture, I was able to hold my own in just about any conversation with the Japanese as well as function without any problem in daily situations whether in the workplace, at home, or on the streets of Tokyo.

Fast forward three and half years later, and I'm still wondering why the *noryoku shiken* is such a tough nut to crack. Yet, as exasperating as the experience may have been, once I was able to put the test behind me, I started to recall some of the joys and benefits to learning Japanese, and how in some ways, I wish English were more like Japanese.

The day after the test, I spoke with a colleague of mine who also took the exam. He was particularly upset over

the amount of *katakana* English that was included. Words such as *kya-puten* (team captain) and *akusesori* (fashion accessory) were included with other foreign words as possible answers to some questions. "Why should we be tested on that? That's not Japanese! How are we supposed to know what foreign words are *used* and *not used* by the Japanese? It seems so random." I tried to lend a sympathetic ear, but I wasn't complaining because, quite frankly, I found those particular questions to be

way to incorporate into their language what mathematically constitutes an entire language unto itself.

For better or for worse? At the time, it seemed fair to say that a majority of native English speakers within the expat community were appalled at how their mother tongue was being imported and even packaged as just another trend. The notion that English words and phrases (along with those from other languages) were being claimed and incorporated or "made" Japanese was laughable if not blasphemous.

Today the controversy still remains. Most of the English-speaking community's criticism against Japanese English usage rests with the seemingly random, indiscriminate nature in which English words and phrases are tossed around like used TVs and rice cookers on a Tuesday morning *gomi*-run. Newspapers and magazines talk of *skyandaru* (scandals) coffee shops advertise *dinna-supesherusu* (dinner specials) and baseball players come through in the bottom of the sixth

inning with a *taimuri hitto* (timely hit). Japanese pop singers croon about "MY GRADUATION DAY" and *MisutaMaiserufu* (Mr. Myself) in the middle of a love ballad. The latest *Road Show* refers to a Hollywood blockbuster opening at week's end. Consumer products tout promotional give-aways with the omnipresent *kyampain-jishi-chu* (campaign in progress). In short, sometimes the words fit their context; sometimes they leave you completely baffled.

But is this a sign of the apocalypse? Does the decline of Western Civilization lie in the hands of Japanese pop culture and its corruption of the English language as we know it?

Hardly. The more I think about it, are we so different from the Japanese? How many times have you wandered through shops in Greenwich Village or SoHo and come across T-shirts with random kanji scrawled on them? It's one thing if the characters read *ichi-ban* (at least Japanese lends the concept a certain amount of cache whereas if it

Motokano
Takuru *Suma²*
MAKUBEN
Getto suru **PAPEKI**
SEBUBU or BUNIBON
Rongé **HAGERU** **Waitokikku**
motokare *Osoto*
Esudaburyu
See back page for explanations!

the easiest on the test.

"I thought we were supposed to be tested on our knowledge of Japanese, not English, French, or German!" he went on to say. Again, sympathy welled within, but I couldn't bring myself to nod in agreement.

During my first two years in Japan, I shared the ALT spotlight with a Scottish woman who had a background in linguistics. Of the many little factoids that she used to throw at me about languages and TOEFL education, I'll never forget this one: that in order to attain a functional fluency in any language, it's widely believed that a working vocabulary of 40,000 words is essential. She always followed this by saying that Japan has imported well over 40,000 words from other languages since the Meiji Restoration (1868). Taking this bit of anecdotal evidence into account, it seemed to me an incredible achievement that the Japanese over time somehow found a

were in English, it would just be plain arrogant or puzzling or both!), but a shower curtain that says *Omedeto! Tanjobi!* (Happy birthday)? Does that make sense? I guess the manufacturer had people who sing "Happy Birthday" to themselves while applying their conditioner in mind for that one. Gotta hand it to those folks in R&D. They've got their finger on the pulse of the American consumer.

To be fair, we do get it right some of the time. Who isn't prone on occasion to utter *c'est la vie* for when they're in a *sho ga nai* kind of mood? Or even *ciao*, *sayonara* or *hasta la vista* when they can't bring themselves to say "good-bye."

OK. So we're not so bad to the point of singing about "Mr. Myself." But are we in a position to cast stones?

How many words do we use on a daily basis that were taken from somewhere else? I have no idea. But the Ellis Island Immigration Museum publishes a pamphlet entitled *The Word Tree: Ethnic Americanisms* that lists over one hundred such words. Among them: *bedspread* (Dutch); *cafeteria* (Spanish); *delicatessen* (French/German); *jukebox* (West African). If the Japanese have been pilfering the English language (and others) since 1868, then they're rookies when compared to us. American linguistic larceny dates back to pre-colonial times. The Old World.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. Every language on the planet was spawned from another or combination of others. History can attest to that. But the argument I used to hear all the time in Japan was that at least words like "bedspread" and "jukebox" are considered to be part of the English language and are accepted everywhere within the English-speaking community whether it be Great Britain, Canada, or Australia. But if you mention "Mr. Myself" to a Canadian or Australian, chances are that you'll be having a conversation with "Mr. Yourself" in no time.

Last year *The New York Times* printed an article on the Japanese cul-

tural phenomenon know as *kogyarugo* (a.k.a., high school gal talk), a lingo which seems to have spread (some Japanese would say like a contagion) throughout the nation's population of teenage girls. Forget *sugoi*. Don't even bother with *kakoi*. Now something's either *cho-beri-gu* (ultra good) or *cho-beri-ba* (ultra bad). The object of your affection no longer proclaims his or her feelings for you with a simple *suki* but instead *wonchu* (I want you). Or they reject you with a *disu* (dis).

Is this English? Many would say, no. Is it Japanese? Certainly. It's as much a part of Japanese language today as *kohi* (coffee) and *keki* (cake), *basu* (bus) and *baiiku* (motorcycle), *kyaputen* (captain) and *akusesori* (accessory).

Closer to home, the Ebonics issue presents a similar situation. No matter which side of the issue one takes, one thing remains fundamentally clear, Ebonics is a part of English. Maybe it's not the Queen's English. Maybe it's not your parents' English. But it is a part of our modern day vernacular. Cultural phenomenon? Sociological trend? Linguistic anomaly? These are just theories and labels thrown around by the media when it engages in abstract theorizing about contemporary society. But what's being spoken in Oakland and Tokyo is real, not abstract.

The cases of *kogyarugo* and Ebonics are just two examples of how a language adapts and develops. How it acts like a sponge and absorbs everything around it regardless of age, sex, race, economic status, and as a result provides a glimpse into a society that created it. Nowhere can you find a better example of this than in Japanese.

I can't think of another language today that is as challenging or as interesting. This is a language which requires the use of two separate, phonetically-based alphabets in concert with Chinese characters, that alternates between varying levels of politeness and formality (*keigo*, *son-*

keigo, *kyostugo*), that consists of numerous dialects both regional (*Tohoku-ben*) and location specific (*Osaka-ben*), and that incorporates words from different languages throughout the world.

Yes, Japanese can be spare and rigid, even boring to some. Though many words and phrases are used routinely, they're used with great economy and purpose: *Otsukare sama deshita* for when you leave the office, *tadaima* for when you arrive home. No wasted time or thought. For such a difficult and complex language, there's definitely something to be said for its simplicity.

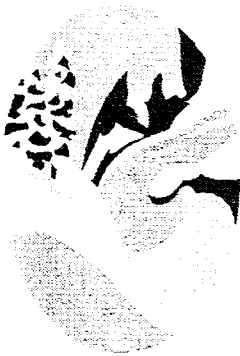
Next time you receive a letter from a Japanese friend, scan the page for seasonal motifs and greetings or parting comments (*Okarada ni ki o tsukete*). Do you think that the average Japanese person worries about repeating the same word in the same paragraph when he should be consulting a thesaurus instead? Or that he might be using a cliché or a trite expression in a letter to a friend? English seems to punish those who commit any of these sins.

I suppose what I love about Japanese is that it's a language of contradictions. On the one hand, it carries the appearance of formality and discipline, simplicity and economy. In Japanese, less really does mean more. On the other hand, Japanese can be colorful and loud, adventurous creative. At times it can be *cho-berimaddening*, while at others, it can be *tottemo-comforting* (*itadakimasu*) for instance. No, Japanese can never become the language of the Internet. Nor would it ever survive as a language of diplomacy. Whatever the case for or against Japanese the language, it will continue to develop and change in the years to come. With the 21st century quickly approaching, the so-called Asia-Pacific Century, it'll be interesting to see how much more Japan absorbs from its neighbors as well as the West, and what kind of effect it has on the *Okaasan-tongue*. But more importantly, it'll be interest-

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)
ing to see whether
Mr. Myself and oth-
ers like him find their
way in the *noryoku*
shiken. *Sore wa, o-*
tanoshimi-ni.

Chris Watanabe was
based in Saitama-
ken from 1992-1994.
Currently, he works



Receiving Your Pension Refund (Summarized from CLAIR News):

Once a JET participant completes the program and leaves Japan, the JET will be eligible to receive a portion of the amount paid into the pension system. Request the following documents from your local Social Insurance Office (*Shakai Hoken Jimusho*): *Dattai Ichijikin Saitei Seikyusho* for the *Kokumin Nenkin/Kosei Nenkin*. These forms must be filed from overseas after you have left Japan. You must meet the following conditions:

1. You do not possess Japanese citizenship.
2. You have paid Employee's Pension Insurance premiums for six months or more.
3. You do not have a place of residence in Japan; this has been determined to mean that you no longer have an alien registration card (which you would've given up upon leaving Japan at the end of your JET Program contract).
4. You have never qualified for pension benefits (including Disability Allowance).

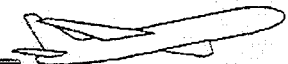
In order to claim the benefit, you must attach the following documents with your application:

1. **Your Pension Book** - The orange one you received a few weeks after arriving in Japan (or your Employees' Pension Insurance Registration number as noted in your Pension Book).
2. **Passport Photocopies** - A photocopy of your passport (page(s) showing your name, date of birth, nationality, signature, and the date of departure from Japan).
3. **Bank Information** - A document verifying the name of your bank, name of the branch office, address of the branch and your bank account number in your name (Social Insurance Agency asks that you specify a bank in your home country). Give U.S. and Japan.

- You must mail the application from outside Japan once you have left the JET Program and Japan.
- On average, the refund takes three to six months to be deposited.
- JETs have up to five years from date of departure to file for this refund.
- In the next issue, we will reiterate the instructions for **Tax Refund on Lump-Sum Withdrawal Payment of**

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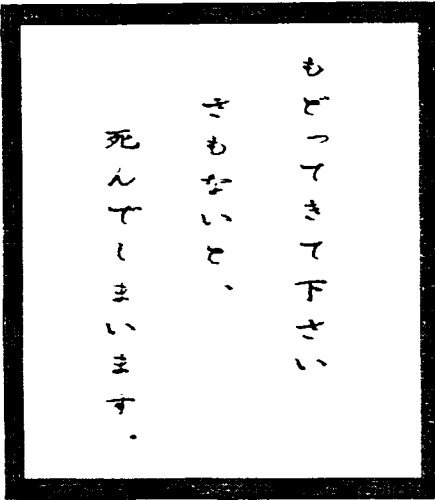


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Silk

BY T. WINSLOW TRAINOR



The antiqued sepia photo of a Japanese woman's profile on the cover of a slender paperback book was what caught my eye in Barnes & Noble. The simple title of a love story translated from the Italian author, Alessandro Baricco, drew me in, and the provocative acclaims on the back compelled me to purchase it. Although the volume is only 91 pages long, it contains a potent story full of imagery and symbolism. It's a tragic love story set in two lands worlds apart—a small village in rural, southern France and a powerful *daimyo*'s estate in northern Japan in the late 1800's.

The job of Hervé Joncour, the married 32-year-old main character, in his small silk-producing village in France is to procure the silkworm eggs that, when hatched, would leave behind "a fortune in silk to the tune of a thousand metres of raw thread, and in cash a handsome sum in French francs." (Baricco, p.4) Joncour progressively traveled further abroad in search of eggs that had escaped the pestilences ravaging worms in European hatcheries, spreading east unchecked. That is what propelled him to Japan—a country shut off from outside traders for over 200 years thereby virtually guaranteeing a disease-free batch of

silkworm eggs.

The danger lied not only in traversing unknown territories to reach the island nation but also, and more importantly, in entering Japan, buying the merchandise and exiting with the contraband without being executed for the criminal offense of trading goods for export. Hervé Joncour, however, was not aware of one final danger—the emotional peril of falling in love with a *daimyo*'s concubine.

Because there is no common language between Joncour and his new love (therefore, no dialogue between the two), imagery is used to explain feelings and the development of the relationship. One metaphor for the woman and her situation is the group of birds kept in an aviary that she frees one time, revealing her desires to be freed from her bonds and to pursue her love. Herve too expresses his desire for liberation by flushing a flock of wild birds into the sky with six shots from his revolver. His violently abrupt expression seems to be more out of frustration than longing for a true love.

The only "direct" communication between the lovers are two letters from the young woman in Japanese. However, since Joncour knows nothing of that language, he has them translated by the Japanese madame of a brothel in Paris. The first (replicated at the beginning of this article) simply says, "Return or I shall die." Joncour keeps this on his person every moment he spends away from Japan. The second letter you must read on your own . . .

Whether you buy this book, borrow my copy or plop down on a soft couch at Barnes & Noble for a free read, *Silk* is worth the couple of hours it will take you to breeze through this short novel.

Silk, Alessandro Baricco, translated by Guido Waldman, Vintage International, 1998, \$10.00.

As most of you have already studied Japanese, maybe you can use these selections to build upon your foundation.

***Kanji-a-Day Practice Pad*, Richard Keirstead, Charles Tuttle, \$14.95.** A 1999 daily calendar with a new kanji every day.

***Magne Haiku*, Sohsei, Inc., \$19.95.** 350 magnetic tiles for the refrigerator poet. Kanji and kana on one side, English on the other. One drawback—you can't conjugate verbs (no "ed", "ing", "want to", etc.)

***T-shirt Japanese versus Neck-tie Japanese: Two Levels of Politeness*, Fukuda Hiroko, Kodansha, 1995, \$10.00.** Good for finding out what kind of Japanese you learned in the *inaka*. Learn polite forms of phrases you've always used and vice versa.

***Flip, Slither & Bang: Japanese Sound and Action Words*, Fukuda Hiroko, Kodansha Power Japanese Series, 1993, \$9.00.** Japanese onomatopoeia.

***Strange But True: A True-Life Japanese Reader*, Tom Gally, Kodansha, 1997, \$15.00.** Interesting way to learn reading real Japanese. Each section has the Japanese text followed by the English translation and line-by-line explanation.

***Reading Japanese*, Eleanor Harz Jordan & Hamako Ito Chaplin, Yale University Press, 1994, \$28.50.** Good for improving speed and kanji recognition.

***Rapid Reading Japanese: Improving Reading Skills of Intermediate and Advanced Students*, Miura Akira, Oka Mayumi, The Japan Times, 1998, \$29.25.** Similar to Japanese textbooks for learning English reading skills.

***An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese*, Miura Akira & Naomi Hanaoka McGloin, The Japan Times, 1998, \$37.25.** Works on all four skills: reading, writing, listening and encourages reading out loud for speaking and pronunciation.

(Continued from page 1)

ask these questions of David and other Yankee players outside of practice accomplished two things: it allowed Hideki to visualize and reflect on the descriptions, but it also helped to develop a relationship with Cone and other members of the team. This made him much more relaxed and helped him improve as a player.

George was the only one in the clubhouse who spoke Japanese, making him indispensable to Hideki and to the rest of the players and coaches. Hideki's English speaking abilities were "limited." He knows the basics, of course, like ordering food and easy conversation. But George was relied upon for everything from arranging meetings with the press to understanding where to send the check for the electric bill. He also kept busy translating questions to Hideki from other players. Many of them were interested in professional baseball in Japan. "What were the umps like there? How was the game played? It was interesting for them to compare their major league experience with the high level of pro baseball in Japan."

The language barrier in the clubhouse was a big challenge for George, even with his extensive knowledge of Japanese. George studied "pretty hard" during his two years in Fukushima, eventually passing the 2nd level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. When he returned to the States, he worked at Key International, a Japanese import/export and business furniture sales company. George spoke Japanese every day, going on sales calls to Japanese clients in New York and speaking with importers overseas. "Hideki was born in Okinawa but grew up in Osaka. Just about everyone at Key was from Kansai, so I didn't have much trouble with his accent. But he only used it when he got excited about something." Even with this, George does not consider himself to be at a native speaker's level.

His secret to success with the language was keeping a notebook. "Everyday I would hear new vocabulary from Hideki and from Japanese reporters' questions. When I didn't under-

stand a word, I'd write it in the notebook and look it up later. It was amazing how much I learned."

Many JET alumni come back to the States and think about translation work and utilizing their JET experience. George cautions that there is much more to translating work than knowing the language. In his case, the tools he learned on the JET Program, in and out of the classroom, played a major role in getting him this job. The Yankee organization, at the end of the interview, asked him why he should be hired. George highlighted four reasons that many returning JETs can take a page from:

- 1) His Japanese speaking/comprehension ability.
- 2) Having lived in a rural Japanese setting, he could empathize with what it is like to be a foreigner who can't speak the language.
- 3) He played softball with a local team in Souma, participating in a Japanese team atmosphere.
- 4) As an English teacher, he knew how to teach and respond to questions about English from Japanese students.

For George, the future is bright. A World Series ring is coming his way, and a new contract for 1999 looks promising. And when this is through? "I am hoping to finish my MBA and be a portfolio manager for wealthy individuals." Pay attention, JET Alums! New Japanese players are coming to the Major League each year!

Brian Chiappinelli, a former president of JETAA New York, lived and taught in Matsudo-shi, Chiba-ken from 1992-1994.

Learning to Bow in New York

(Continued from page 5)

Japanese say *chokoreeto* or *Makudonarudo*, but is it really so hard to say *huton* instead of "ffuutoonn." I still stumble before I decide whether to say *karaoke* or "kaa-ri-oo-key." The other day I told my friend that I was going to *Aikido*. He said, "Hi Kiddo, what's that, some new musical or something?" I had to repeat it three times and explain that it was a martial art similar to Karate before he finally said, "Oh, you mean 'I-kec-do.'" "Right, whatever," I said.

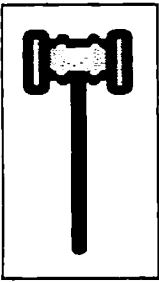
So, with all these mis-sayings, mis-gestures, and mis-sing words in the English language, the question is what we, as English language mis-fits, should do about it. Well, of course relearning what we've forgotten is a start, but should we forget what we've learned? Of course not. We should savor all these strange sayings and gestures. They make us remember our Japanese experiences and friends. They make us laugh, cry and feel *natsukashii*. So the next time you want to bow, bow. Or the next time you are saying "cheers" at a toast but it just does not do you justice, let out a hearty *kampai* and be at ease—at least with yourself. Yes, you'll get some strange looks, reminiscent to your days in Japan, ne?

Our Japanese gestures and words are a part of our identities and our experiences. We must fight the urge to just sweep them under the *tatami* in our efforts to re-Americanize ourselves. So, let's fight—I mean *Gambaro*.

Sandhya Rao lived in Yao-shi, Osaka-fu from 1996-1998. Currently, she is working at The Japan Foundation in New York City.

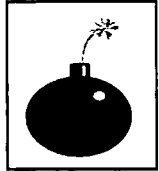


Announcements



The next Jetting On Meeting is on Tuesday, March 2nd at 6:30pm at The Japan Society, 333 East 47th Street between 1st and 2nd. 212.752.0824.

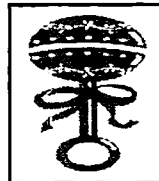
The next JETAA General Business Meeting on Tuesday, February 2nd at 6:30pm at the Japan Local Government Center, 666 Fifth Avenue between 52nd and 53rd. 212246.5542.



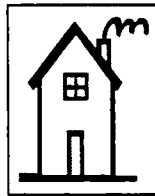
ATTENTION NEW RETURNEES! Please be sure to send in your membership form to Yuki Shimmyo as soon as possible. If you do not send it by March 31, 1998, this will be your last issue of the JETAA NY Newsletter!!!



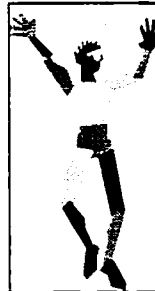
Congratulations go out to Tom Blatcher (Fukuoka-ken '88-'90) who exchanged vows with Yumiko Koga, formerly of Kurume, Fukuoka-ken.



A very hearty congratulations to our JLGC liason featured in our last issue Mr. & Mrs. Nakamura on the birth of their son, Taiichi. The blessed event occurred two days before we went to press for the last issue



Two journalists from China looking for housing until summer. Prefer a 2-bedroom sublet. Neat and responsible. Please contact Abigail at Kyodo News. 212.603.6614. Cheers!



Are you a social animal? Do you like to barhop? Plan events? Meet new people? JETAA New York is looking for a responsible and dedicated member to take over the Event Coordinator role for our chapter. For the past couple of years, Yuki Shimmyo has had this honor, but as our membership grows and the database increases, Yuki would like to focus on that project so that others have the opportunity to get involved in JETAA. If you are interested, please contact Yuki at 212.867.5726 or yshimmyo@aol.com.



Dionne Raines (Iwate-ken, '92-'95) invites all to join The Young Professionals Group of the United Nations. This is a group of young people who believe in the ideals of the United Nations. Please contact Dionne at 201.946.5067 for more information.

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February

1999

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

<p>January 29 6:30 Happy Hour at Coup, 509 East 6th Street (between Ave. A&B), 212.979.2815</p>	<p>1 Lecture: Legendary Japanese Feasts: Memorable Meals from the Past 6:30 Japan Society</p>	<p>2 General Business Meeting 6:30 JLGC</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>5 Anime: <i>Band of Ninja</i> 6:30 Japan Society</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p>	<p>12 Performance: Kabuki Dance 8pm Japan Society</p>	<p>13 Performance: Kabuki Dance 8pm Japan Society</p>
<p>14</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16 Film: <i>The School of Flesh</i> 6:30 Japan Society</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 Anime: <i>1001 Nights</i> 6:30 Japan Society</p>	<p>20 JOB FAIR 10:00-2:00 Japan Society</p>
<p>21</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23 Anime: <i>Ramayana - The legend of Prince Rama</i> 6:30 Japan Society</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26 Anime: <i>The History of Anime & Contemporary Shorts</i> 6:30 Japan Society 6:30 Happy Hour TBA</p>	<p>27</p>
<p>28</p>	<p>Exhibit: "Structure & Surface: Contemporary Japanese Textiles" @ MoMA through 1/26. Exhibit: "Japonism in Fashion: Japan Dresses the West" @ Brooklyn Museum of Art (200 Eastern Pkwy, Bklyn 718.638.5000), thru 2/14. IN JANUARY: Japan Society begins its spring term in Japanese language, kanji & reading courses during the week of January 25! Please call 212.832.1155 for details. JETAA members pay Japan Society member rates. The Japan Society: 333 East 47th Street, between 1st & 2nd Avenues, 212.832.1155. The Japan Local Government Center (CLAIR New York): 666 Fifth Avenue 2F, between 52nd & 53rd Streets, 212.246.5542.</p>					

March

1999

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
	1	2 Jetting On Mtg. 6:30 Japan Society	3	4	5 Performance: John Cage's Four Walls 8pm Japan Society	6 Performance: John Cage's Four Walls 8pm Japan Society
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 Salon Series No. 2: Mai Odori Buyo (Japanese Dance) 3:00 Tenri Cultural Institute (see note)	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26 6:30 Happy Hour TBA	27
28	29	30	31	Salon Series 2: lecture/demo/performance/discussion of Japanese dance at The Tenri Cultural Institute (575 B'way, 925.8500). For info please call 212.627.0265.		

WAKAMONO KOTOBA? (Continued from page 8)

Seburu/Bun Bun

To go to *Sebun-Irebun* or Seven-Eleven (e.g. *Gakko no ato ni sebuo ka?* Or *Bun Bun ni iku?*)

Hageru

To go to Haagen-Daaz

Rekodingu

The bathroom. When you record something, you would *oto o ireru*, *Otoire*, o-toilet, henceforth the bathroom (e.g. *Kono depaato no rekodingu wa doko?*)

Esudaburyu/SW

Seikaku warui or "bad personality" (e.g. *SW no hito wa watashi wa nigate na no*)

Waitokikku

White-kick or *shira-keru* to say a joke that flopped (e.g. *Ima no jooku wa waito-kikku da yo*)

Osoro/Irochi

Osoro comes from *Osoroi* as in a "matching outfit" *Irochi* is an outfit in the same style but *irochigai* or "in different colors" (e.g. *Ano kappuru wa osoro ga suki ne*)

Motokano

Moto kanojo or "ex-girlfriend." Yup. *Motokare* is used for "ex-boyfriend" too

Takuru

Takushii de iku or to "take a taxi"

Suma Suma

As in *sumappu* or SMAP (the popular singing group) fan

Makuben

Makudonarudo de benkyo suru or "to study at McDonald's"

Getto suru

As in "to get something" or "obtain something" (e.g. *Arubaito de getto shita okane de Hawaii ni iku no yo*)

Pa-peki

This is a mixture of "perfect" (*paafekuto*) and the word in Japanese for perfect (*kanpeki*); generally means great or super

Ronge

Rongu-ke or long hair

Try this:

Itsumo waito-kikku shiteru, longe no Tadashi-kun no motokano ga suma suma de konaida bunbun made taku tara rekodingu no naka de SW to kenka shite, papeki ni osoro no teiin ni okorareta no yo. Wakatta?



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