

A Tribute to Professor Sige-Yuki Kuroda

Professor Sige-Yuki Kuroda, a great thinker and peerless linguist, left us on February 25, 2009.

I first communicated with Prof. Kuroda when I was a graduate student at UC Berkeley. I wanted to read one of his then-newly written papers, and I asked him if he would send it to me. He did so immediately. The article was, “A remark on certain constructions with the word naka in Japanese.” It was typewritten, with the subscripts and corrections added by hand. I treasure it.

His interest and expertise covered a remarkable range: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and stylistics. Among his numerous highly respected works, the most well-known among members of the Berkeley community probably is his 1973 article, “Where epistemology, style, and grammar meet” (S. R. Anderson & P. Kipirsky, eds., *A Festschrift for Morris Halle*, 337-391. NY: Holt Rinehart & Wilnston), which inspired Professor Ann Banfield of the Department of English to write her celebrated book, *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*.

Prof. Kuroda’s distinct writing style enabled the reader to indentify his writings with no difficulty. It was and is *elegant*. No other terms can characterize his style adequately. My favorite article, “Categorical and thetic judgments: Evidence from Japanese syntax” (*Foundations of Language* 9: 1-37, 1972), is profound to the degree that one can read it as classic literature.

My final communication with Prof. Kuroda was later last year regarding my current research project, *soliloquy*. In fact, the origin of my interest in this topic might be traced back to Prof. Kuroda’s work. A long time ago, I read an article that stated that if the selection of *wa* and *ga* (Japanese particles to mark the grammatical subject) is determined solely by the consideration of communication (e.g., whether the entity is given or new, identifiable or not to the addressee), their behaviors in soliloquy must be quite different from a dialogue. I wanted to cite this statement in my book, but I was unable to find the source. When I asked Prof. Kuroda in which works it appeared, he responded that he was not sure it was his. Well, I’m sure it was. Who else could make such an insightful comment?

Kuroda-sensei, arigatoo gozaimashita ‘Thank you, Prof. Kuroda’.
Gasshoo ‘hands together’.

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