

〔研究会記録抄〕

## Aichi University's Culture and Language Symposium: Post-Mortem Summary

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### Abstract

The following is a summary of my experiences organizing and facilitating the Culture and Language Symposium held at Aichi University on Friday, August 5th, 2016. This summary was requested by the Faculty of International Communication to be published in *Civilization 21*.

Among the English-speaking teachers in the Faculty of International Communication at Aichi University, relatively few are actively engaged in academic research. In order to support those doing research and inspire others to engage in their own, I decided to organize a symposium. I felt that a symposium would provide an opportunity for faculty members to not only present their research in front of their peers but also that it would give presenters a supportive environment to receive critical and productive feedback. In Japan, for humanities researchers who write in English, I feel that opportunities to discuss research are particularly scarce. As a graduate student, I've experienced first-hand how crucial symposiums and academic conferences are in nurturing critical research.

I began the planning process for the symposium by soliciting my fellow teachers in the Faculty of International Communication. I circulated a Call for Papers (CFP) via e-mail, social media, and printed flyers. The CFP was also mentioned in the regular

Faculty of International Communication meetings. I announced the symposium at various other Aichi-area academic institutions and associations including the JALT Toyohashi, Nagoya and Hamamatsu chapters. Despite a relatively wide dissemination of the CFP there were unfortunately only four abstracts submitted. Due to the low amount of submissions, all four submitted abstracts were essentially automatically accepted. After I set a date for the symposium, and with the assistance of Professor Michiko Yamada (Comparative Culture Department)<sup>1</sup>, I booked the necessary audio/visual equipment and a conference room on campus. Once the presenters were confirmed, I advertised the symposium through the same channels that I sent the CFP and created a website for the event that included all pertinent information.

The symposium itself ran very smoothly. The presenters arrived in advanced to test their presentation files on the projector. I set up beverages and snacks as well as a sign-in sheet for all participants.<sup>2</sup> I began the symposium by offering my brief opening remarks as well as by introducing each of the presenters. I then explained how the symposium would proceed: each presenter would be given 15 minutes to present, followed by an opportunity for the audience to ask questions. Although a time limit was in place for the Q&A period, I did not enforce this strictly. The audience members were very enthusiastic and engaging which made for very productive feedback and comments. The presenters later told me that they appreciated the Q&A and specifically the candidness and welcoming tone of the audience.

The four speakers at the symposium offered a diverse selection of academic interests and at varying stages of development. Dan Le presented his preliminary research regarding the linkages between Vietnamese-American language acquisition and Vietnamese-American perceptions of middle-eastern refugees in the United States. Le believes that Vietnamese-Americans refugees generally do not identify or empathize with the plight of Syrian refugees despite themselves having gone through their own difficult transition into the United States. Peter Lyons presented his research in progress that looks at cognitive and pedagogical approaches to English learning. Specifically, Lyons considers how the application of unconscious incompetence and unconscious competence influences language learners. His presentation also addressed pedagogical methodologies that he has developed in order to teach variable spoken intonation and fluency. Andree Lafontaine's research looks at the life and work of American Hollywood film director Dorothy Arzner. Through archival and textual analysis of

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1 Professor Yamada was a strong supporter of the symposium from the very beginning. I want to thank Professor Yamada again for all her help and continual support.

2 In addition to the four presenters, only seven individuals attended the symposium.

Arzner and her films, Lafontaine considers how the discourse regarding Arzner's films have been primarily concerned with situating Arzner within feminists frameworks. However, Lafontaine's project considers alternative readings of Arzner's work and the significance of Arzner's work and politic from transgender and queer theory. Finally, Aaron Fox shared his experiences implementing the principles of gamification into his English-language classes. Fox detailed the challenges of incorporating digital/virtual technologies into the physical classroom. In his presentation, he overviewed the use of Classcraft, a virtual classroom management tool that facilitates both classroom communication, activity and incentivisation.

The modest attendance but positive reception to the symposium encouraged me to put on a second symposium. I am currently in the planning stages of the second edition which will likely be held in the last week of the fall semester (mid-January 2017). For the next symposium, I hope to get more papers submitted and that attendance will be much higher. To achieve both these goals, I will disseminate the advertisements for the event to more networks and with more advanced notice. For the next symposium, I also hope more Aichi University Comparative Culture Department faculty will attend. Unfortunately, Professor Michiko Yamada was the only tenured Comparative Culture professor to attend the inaugural edition. I really hope more senior professors will attend the next iteration and share their expertise and experience with the junior faculty in the hopes of creating a robust and engaging research community at Aichi University.

Kevin Michael Lim is an Assistant Professor in the Comparative Culture Department in the Faculty of International Communication at Aichi University. He is currently a PhD candidate in the American Studies Department at the University of Hawaii. Lim's ongoing dissertation research looks at the representation of Multiculturalism in mainstream and independent Canadian media. He also writes about science fiction film, mixed race representation and Asian American media.