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Broken English: Deviant Language and the Para-Poetic

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THE POETLESS POEM

DEVIANT ENGLISH AND THE PARA-POETIC

*Uttering a word**is like striking**a note**on the keyboard**of the**imagination*

— Ludwig Wittgenstein

“You don’t yourself until now from tomorrow.”

Forming a part of a short essay describing a dream, the above sentence is an example of the kind of writing frequently encountered in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Non-native students of English will often speak and write in ways that, in addition to being technically incorrect, seem both peculiar and provocative to the native speaker. The individual words are often recognized but the awkward manner in which they have been combined creates obstacles that render their meaning anywhere from interesting to incomprehensible. The native speaker detects linguistic disruptions almost immediately, possessing a seemingly instinctive awareness of conventional boundaries and the limits of language. Like a tongue exploring the roof of its own mouth, abnormalities are quickly felt and focused upon. However, regardless of the errors... regardless of the awkwardness, there exists a fleeting moment in the mind of the native speaker when, caught off-guard, the words and sentences register and resonate with potential meaning. The words join together and form an obscure, opaque pattern. “*You don’t yourself...*” Though vague and unsettled, the sentence incites fragile possibilities and strange suggestions. “*...until now from tomorrow.*”

Like Wittgenstein’s keyboard of the imagination,¹ language possesses rich musical qualities of tone and texture, resonance and rhythm. These more mysterious, less quantifiable elements of language are key factors in determining everything from nuance to nonsense. However, textbooks and dictionaries, language classes and language teachers generally present only the most contrived and standardized forms of English. They ignore, perhaps inescapably, the more subtle and intangible qualities of cultural context and linguistic diversity.² In the process, what the

students receive is a decontextualized, abstract language which, in their eyes, is primarily an intricate and obscure web of words and phrases, rules and regulations. What they fail to hear is the music of language, the visceral quality of words to strike and resonate within the imagination.

Imagine trying to teach a student to swim by using textbooks, diagrams, explanations on the blackboard and various other classroom methods. The student may well understand all that has been said, scoring high on essays and examinations. This method of teaching might become so institutionalized and accepted that the very real *action* of swimming in *water* is nearly forgotten. But then the day comes for the student to be thrown into the pool.... the real test! Will they sink or swim?

The non-native students of English may find themselves in a similar, though perhaps less dramatic or dangerous situation.³ They are suddenly thrown into the cold water of English. Shocked by the chill and abandoned of all abstractions, the stunned student attempts various reckless maneuvers — a preposition thrown here, a modifier added there, articles and adjectives tossed about everywhere. Their panicked English is at times desperate and nearly delirious, their

IDLE TONGUE
MOTHER TONGUE
TONGUE-IN-CHEEK
SPEAKING IN TONGUES
CAT'S GOT YOUR TONGUE
ON THE TIP OF THE TONGUE
SLIP OF THE TONGUE
HOLD YOUR TONGUE
TONGUE-TWISTER
TONGUE-LASHING
FORKED TONGUE
TONGUE-TIED

choice of words seemingly random, their use of grammar all but arbitrary, their awareness of syntax and rhythm nearly non-existent. And yet, mysteriously, paradoxically, they remain afloat. Their words and sentences, however mangled and distorted, still manage somehow to convey traces of meaning and fragments of image.

The native speaker reads the writing of such students with a combination of horror and fascination. Perched on the very edge of nonsense and incomprehensibility, the student has alarmingly pulled off a remarkable feat of language. Unknown to its own

creator, their deviant English is possessed of a power that shakes the foundation of the native speaker's carefully constructed house of language. What their writing inadvertently demonstrates is that *in spite of* the formalized and contrived English that they have been taught, *in spite of* the errors and irregularities that they employ, the language *itself* cannot be extinguished and rendered meaningless. The inherent power of individual words and fragments to *mean*, to strike a note on the keyboard of the imagination, reveals the limits and fallibility of linguistic rules and testifies to the latent power and vitality of an expanded, outlaw language.

THE PARA-POETIC INTER-VIEWED

*Somehow it seems
to fill my head
with ideas —
though I don't
exactly know
what they are.*

Alice in Wonderland

Q: What is the para-poetic?⁴

A: The para-poetic is any use of language that accidentally or unconsciously employs words or sentences in interesting and unexpected arrangements. With the para-poetic, rules of correct language use are often violated resulting in unusual formations of grammar, word-choice, syntax, punctuation, spelling, etc.. However (and significantly), these violations are not deliberate transgressions but instead an unintentional straying beyond boundaries otherwise unknown.

Q: Who writes para-poetry?

A: The most interesting examples come from those who fall *between* languages. For my purposes I have focused upon the writing of non-native, low-to-intermediate level Japanese students of English. Their weaknesses with the language, their lack of poetic pretention, combined with the radically different structure of the Japanese language often generate extraordinary inter-lingual effects.

Q: How is para-poetry written?

A: Varying according to individual ability, the student's level of English generally allows a limited and insecure grasp over what they are trying to say. Their

bond with the mother-tongue remaining strong, they commonly attempt to transfer thoughts directly from one language into another. Though discouraged from doing so, the students often pre-write their essays in their native language. Later they go back through with a Japanese-English dictionary in the frenzied but feeble hope of finding approximate equivalents. Not surprisingly, in this situation and for their purposes the dictionary does more harm than good. It is clearly *not* the bridge between languages that they had intended it to be.

- Q:** Do the students know that they've been para-poetic?
- A:** No! Understanding some of the particulars, they miss the overall tone and texture. As was suggested before, they are generally *not* attempting to be poetic or particularly creative. They *are* in most cases simply struggling to use the English they possess while fulfilling a modest homework assignment. It is precisely through their absence of creative intention that they succeed. They are *not* using language poetically but rather language is using *them* para-poetically! They are not innovators, they are not poets, they *are* vectors of influence through which language is filtered and scattered about.... surrogates whose brains and bodies are used to conceive otherwise unforeseen results.
- Q:** What makes the writing 'para-poetic' and not simply *bad* English?
- A:** Interestingly, it is both. In fact, it is precisely through its *badness* that it is good. As it fails on one level, it succeeds on another — presenting forms of language that, though technically incorrect or conventionally awkward, remain strange and evocative. For the native speaker who reads a student's writing, the reassuringly familiar nature of language is quite radically disrupted. Yes, it is full of errors, an affront to 'fine writing,' but through its benign disregard of linguistic and poetic conventions a remarkable freshness and aberrant vitality emerges.
- Q:** Is it really possible to write poetically without trying to — in other words, to 'be a poet and not know it'?
- A:** Yes! In fact, the opposite situation is often a much greater obstacle — the poet trying *too* hard, full of intention, sound and fury signifying... too much and nothing... simultaneously. The weaknesses and whims of individual ego so often produce at best a self-indulgent boast or a cloying confession. Language is arrogantly assumed to be a tool that one controls towards some kind of precise description of a delicate inner event. Perhaps it is just as much the contrary that is true — *we* are the tool and *language* is in control of us. And besides, language probably has more to say than we ever could. *We* get in the way of allowing language to speak!⁵ The para-poet doesn't for a moment forget the immensity and strangeness of language. Never boasting any mastery, the non-native student remains humble and beholden before the power and complexity of this impenetrable

network of signs. They do not presume to manipulate its meanings and are instead, either consciously or unconsciously, receptive to *language's* cunning manipulations.

- Q:** What is the relation of the para-poetic to the more conventional language of the native speaker?
- A:** Language is an historical repository of inherited forms of communication and expression. Born of context and situation, language emerges from the needs and desires of a culture and a community. It is larger than the individual because it *precedes* the individual. Absorbed and assimilated from birth, *we* are precisely our own linguistic limits and language far exceeds our own capacity to use it. We breathe our language as a vital, sustaining element — a life-giving force.



Language is a thick, pressurized substance, an atmospheric event comprised of words, expressions, metaphor, rhythm, tones, tropes, textures, tenses, noises, nuance and nonsense.... Inevitably and necessarily, the culture that produces language also confines it. Left to its own devices, it can quickly break through boundaries meant to hold it in. Inherently promiscuous, language is divided by a fragile barrier separating carefully contained expression from the perverse screams of a madman. Belonging to another language and another culture, it is this delicate boundary that the non-native student is not in a position to fear nor respect. They cross the line of correct, conventional language use *not* out of courage or curiosity but out of ignorance.... like a child innocently straying beyond the fenced-in playground out onto the raging freeway.

WHERE ARE WE? WHEN ARE WE?

Language is a labyrinth of paths.

You approach from one side

and know your way about;

you approach the same place

from another side and

no longer know where you are.

— Wittgenstein

Before presenting a larger group of student writings I'd like to make a more detailed examination of two individual examples of the para-poetic — one full of errors, the other containing only a few. Perhaps a more concrete and specific analysis will yield some understanding of what makes the para-poetic poetic.

The following piece of writing was done by a 19-year old Japanese college student. The assignment was to write a paragraph describing sounds heard at night.

One night when my parents are going on a trip, I'll go to bed in my room. Then I heard sound of window's broken from the first floor. I was very surprised and went down stairs with fearful. Then clock has just struck twelve. In outside, a dog is howling and I heard siren of a police car. I got weirder and weirder. I opened door of living room. Then the phone has just rung.

Full of outrageous and fascinating "errors," this paragraph is a remarkable example of the parapoeitic. Along with the many incorrect and incongruous elements contained within it, perhaps the most striking and disorienting feature is the student's use — or abuse — of verb tense. Taken so much for granted by the native speaker, it remains a thorn in the side of the non-native student even after years of study. However, to incorrectly or inconsistently conjugate the verbs describing an event is to deny a solid foundation from which that event can be imagined. Verb tense has the fundamental and, one could say, metaphysical function of situating the subject *in* time, structurally sustaining frames of temporal perception. Lacking a strong and unshifting point of view, any and all action fails to settle and cohere upon an orderly time line. This violation of linear development presents a radically unstable stage upon which seemingly little intelligible or coherent could occur. And yet, something *does* occur. Regardless of the errors and irregularities, language is *not* neutralized nor rendered impotent. Though employed with a degree of blindness, language still functions as a generator of images and meanings. With the para-poetic, events don't simply unfold, they unravel in ways that defy and challenge conventional methods of description.

With a focus on verb tense, look again at the student's piece of writing. Suspend for a moment your demand for linguistic correctness. Forget this was written by an insecure student. Forget that it was written in response to a humble homework assignment. Treat this piece of writing as a found artifact of language existing beyond 'good' or 'evil'. Follow her through the description *just* as it is provided, move with each of the twisting tenses, allow yourself to be swept about in the chaotic flow of words and images.

The student begins with the temporal designation, "One night..." From this, the reader immediately locates the action, assuming that the events about to unfold will occur in the *past*. However, midway through the sentence we are suddenly shifted into the *present continuous* as we hear that the parents are "going on a trip." Already wavering between two times (Where are we? When are we?), she then proposes a third — announcing in the *future tense* that she "will go to bed." Within one sentence, we find ourselves inhabiting three distinct time zones. As if that isn't confusing enough, she then begins her next sentence by disorienting us even further — dropping us solidly back into the *simple past* with "Then I heard..." She proceeds along in this manner through two sentences and we quickly adjust to our placement in the *past*, perhaps thinking that we've finally settled. But no! With the next sentence we are pulled back into the *present* with the *present perfect* (appropriately enough with the striking of a clock). Settling for a moment in the *present* where a "dog is howling" we then slide back into the past with the "heard siren of a police car." The action proceeds in the past and we seem again to be settling *but* only to be struck by the final *coup de grace*: a sudden acceleration towards a conclusion in the *present perfect* — "the phone has just rung."

The events of this story unravel as though seen on a video screen. However, instead of a linear development of action, one watches the story with a remote-control gone haywire. We push the 'play' button and the action begins. As the story progresses, the 'rewind' button is accidentally hit. In a panic to readjust, the 'fast-forward' is pressed. However it's held too long so when the 'play' is re-activated we've gone too far. Out of frustration we hit 'pause' and stop all the action.... Take a breath, then

once more, the 'rewind,' Over-shooting *again* we hit the 'play' and for a moment re-watch a part of the story already seen. Recognizing it as from the past, we again 'fast-forward' and this whole process goes *on* and *on* and *on*... a desperate search to re-locate the vanished but remembered present — the point in the story that has been so frustratingly, elusively lost.

In addition to the subject of tense and the subsequent confusion of temporal location, an analysis of this writing also demonstrates an equally disorienting *and* equally interesting depiction of space. The most obvious and intriguing example is the student's use of the technically incorrect combination "in outside. . ." from the sentence "In outside, a dog is howling. . ." Though 'incorrect', the use of the preposition "in" *before* "outside" is a clear and fascinating example of the para-poetic. Presumably derived directly from the Japanese equivalent "*soto de*" the student has perhaps speculated that because in Japanese the word for 'outside' (*soto*) is grammatically joined by the preposition for 'in' (*de*), a literal translation should reproduce both words. However, with English the 'in' before the 'outside' strangely and evocatively acts to mentally confine and place boundaries around a conceptual space that in standard linguistic terms *must* be left un-bounded. For the native English speaker, the

FIRST LANGUAGE = MOTHER TONGUE
 SECOND LANGUAGE = (STEP) MOTHER TONGUE ?

word 'outside' immediately and instinctively conjures up in the mind a boundless spatial range.⁶ When one is 'outside,' one is necessarily not 'in' anything. By modifying 'outside,' a conflict immediately arises as a finite and more specific space is envisioned. With conventional language use, being "in outside" is simply *not* permitted and the conscientious English teacher marks it wrong and corrects it. The expression is withdrawn from circulation as though violating some immutable laws of linguistic logic or even more, challenging undefined metaphysical concepts of space. HOWEVER, as para-poetry, "In outside" *is* permitted and, as anyone with an open ear to language will know, this simple, two word, 'incorrect' combination succeeds in evoking a conceptual image otherwise denied by conventional, correct language.

DEFINITELY INDEFINITE/INDEFINITELY DEFINITE

*Words strain,
 Crack and sometimes break under the burden,
 Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
 Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
 Will not stay still.*

— T.S. Eliot

The second example of student writing is of a very different nature from what we have just seen. Written by another Japanese college student, the student's technical ability is remarkably high and her imaginative description of a dream is impressive. As you will see, she has little problem with verb tense, remaining consistently anchored in the past. In fact, this writing just barely passes as para-poetic. It is almost *too* good — there are very few errors and the power of the student's images is seemingly not accidental. However, the errors it *does* possess are forceful, transforming the intended meaning of essential details. Demonstrating a more subtle manifestation of the para-poetic, an already 'good' essay unconsciously engenders a deviant variation of itself.

I was studying in room. I was using dictionary to look up word meaning. Suddenly, word disappeared. I was

surprised and I turned over two or three pages. All page's word disappeared. Then, red spot appeared in the white pages. It became bigger and bigger. At that time I woke up. And I searched for my dictionary. I found the last page was stained with red spot. And I took the other book and turned over the pages. All page's word disappeared. Then I looked at myself in the mirror. All the word was stucked in my face. I shouted and I went down the stairs in a hurry. I went to my parent's bedroom. I shouted again. My parent's face was pitch-black.

This student's description of a dream is vivid and powerful. Like so many dreams, almost everything is precisely as it should be — familiar people, familiar objects, familiar rooms. What stands out for the

sic (sīk, sēk) *adv. Latin.* Thus; so. Used in written texts to indicate that a surprising or paradoxical word, phrase, or fact is not a mistake and is to be read as it stands.

dreamer... what stands out for the reader, are the incongruous details, minor alterations that disrupt habitual expectations. In this piece of writing the parapoetic element is seen in the subtle descriptive features, small errors that create vagueness and incite an underlying confusion. The inherent strangeness of a dream is surreptitiously enhanced through accidental slips of linguistic precision.

One of the recurring and interesting errors in this essay involves the use, or mis-use, of definite and indefinite articles. Like verb conjugation, the application of articles before nouns is very much second-nature to a native speaker of English, but remains a problem and point of confusion for the non-native student. This is often especially difficult for many Japanese students because their language essentially lacks anything comparable to an article. They are therefore obliged to develop and deploy a linguistic form for a concept that their language does not possess. Even more, in many ways the Japanese language exhibits a calculated, systemic vagueness, a determined and desired imprecision that conflicts with the detailed and precise descriptions afforded by articles. Reflecting a cultural attitude as much as a linguistic one, there is a kind of built-in resistance to the more rigid, tightly defined frame of reference imposed by English. In fact, students are often both puzzled by articles and reluctant to bother with them at all; seeming so insignificant, a student once insisted to me that "it's not important" whether articles are used or not. She continued, "You understand what I mean even if I forget 'a' or 'the'."⁷ Of course, this student is partially correct. We do *basically* understand what is meant when we read something like, "I was using dictionary to look up word meaning. . ." What the protesting student fails to realize is that the *absence* of an article is immediately, almost physically felt by the native speaker — like having a small but cherished piece of furniture suddenly vanish from a familiar room.

In addition to this rhythmic irregularity, an even more subtle destabilization of meaning is produced. For example, to say "I was using dictionary to look up word..." is to leave vague a noun's precise position and function. The purpose of articles, both definite and indefinite, is to signal a noun and specify its intended application. Failing to use them correctly creates an ambiguity in which the status of a noun remains obscure.

To say "word" but not "a word" or "the word" is to evoke an odd, generalized image possessing for the native speaker subtly different connotative potential. Using a dictionary to "look up word..." could suggest a possible search for *all* words, words-in-general, an abstract condition of *WORD*-ness that transcends the particular and evokes the idealized. Granted, such bizarre implications are generally not seriously, consciously considered by the native speaker *but* on an unconscious level they strike a note that irrepressibly generates fragments of image and moments of meaning. If only for a fraction of a second, error is not read *as* error but is instead registered in the mind as possibility; received, imagined... and then quickly, too quickly, dismissed as technically incorrect and therefore undeserving of consequence or attention. The logic of linguistic organization reaffirms itself and the aberrant English soon dissipates into non-sense. However, it is from this darker realm of language's excess,⁸ in that fleeting, imaginative moment prior to the restoration of order, that errors and inconsistencies emerge and the parapoetic is born.

Further reinforcing the general, unspecific nature of the noun is the student's use of the singular for what is presumably plural. With the sentence "All the page's word disappeared," the more conventional, appropriate manner of writing would perhaps be "All the words on the page disappeared." The careful language teacher would correct the sentence by rearranging the word order, inserting the definite article, making plural the singular, more or less insisting upon this one form of writing.

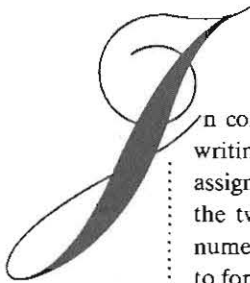
An additional rich example of singular/plural confusion can be seen in the final sentence of the paragraph... "My parent's face was pitch-black." By failing to make plural her parents' faces, the student creates a compelling image in which two logically distinct elements have been conceptually fused into one. Manifesting a kind of Freudian condensation, the student convincingly represents the unstable mental processes and disrupted perception of an actual dream. Within a dream, it is entirely plausible that the faces of parents would *in fact* be condensed and experienced as one. The student's 'error' represents a fusing of the linguistic and the psychic, inadvertently but convincingly depicting a dream's visual presence.

However, the wide-awake and inflexible logic of conventional language would once again insist upon a more *technically* accurate description.... providing the parents with “faces,” not “face.” The student would be required to correct the situation, dispel the vagueness, and return us to the rational precision of a stable, distinct depiction. But in the process, the rich and compelling resonance of the parent’s singular “face” would be lost, the linguistic manifestation of dream condensation denied.

THE POETLESS POEM

*One great part of every human existence is passed
in a state that cannot be rendered sensible
by the use of wideawake language,
cutanddry grammar and
goahead plot.*

— James Joyce



In conclusion I will now present a group of para-poetic writings. All of the writings included were collected from assignments from different Japanese college students.⁹ In the two examples of student writing already discussed, numerous factors have been pointed out as contributing to form the para-poetic. With the first example there was the inconsistent use of verb tense and the unconventional application of a preposition. With the second example it was a confusion of the singular and the plural and the irregular use of definite and indefinite articles. These are only a few instances of the kinds of errors frequently encountered with student writings and in the pages that follow numerous others will be seen. However, the point of para-poetry is not “error analysis” but rather a kind of error *enjoyment*; a pleasure derived from a playful, liberating, inadvertently poetic application of language. Presented from here on out without comment, the student’s writings have been reproduced as faithfully as possible, maintaining the errors and irregularities as they were originally found.

*Sounds me hear from a window is many sounds every days.
Sounds of raining, it makes me melancoly lonely
and become wanted to see someone.
Sounds of wind, it gives me fine and become a fresh
and become wanted to go out.
Sounds of songs of birds I get up as if alarm clock.
My feelings is simple as if be influenced by sound.*

They are really strange guys. They love saké, Tobacco, women and other all bad things. They love break the regulation. And They don't have few money. Guys always say only something like dream. They are the worst person I had ever seen. But I love them. My bad company was formed by six person.

"A really important thing can't see", said Antoine de Saint-Exupery. I was taught it by them. When I talk to them about UFO, God, Stars, nature, make love.... etc. I'm very very happy. I promised that we'll fly in the sky someday. And they are pure in the world, They are kind to their friends. They are the important person by me. They are my all. I've been on top of the world since I met them.

**The day I was alone at home by noon.
My mother came back home noon.
She said "Grandfather?"
I went to see his room.
Then he was died.
He was old age.
I'm sorry that I noticed his dead.
He looks like a sleeping, but his body became a cold.**

One day, I was cheerful that day.
Because it's sunny and enjoyed with my friends
with talking a lot all night yesterday.
I can't suppose tomorrow's things.
Well, that's anybody.
But there is embarrassing experience anybody, isn't there?
I only did an embarrassing experience, didn't I?
I'll explain that my embarrassing story.
I came to a toilet.
And I come to a toilet.
Then Suddenly, The door opened.
What's shame!!
My face is red quickly.
I closed as soon as opened the door.
But I couldn't go out for a few moments.
I was first time such feeling — as an embarrassing.
I tried going out with brave,
no longer,
Nobody was.

**If I were not hear a sound,
I can't quite spread my family's voice, my friend's voice,
town's voice, bird's voice and same tree's voice.
Words are not adequate to express my feeling.
I don't know I should do.
I can't hear a sound now, till I have been heard
the music from radio, and I'll quite hear my favorite music.
It is very stuffy, when I think this problem.
But deaf's man is living such a life.
They are cheerful, and they are like life with the
general public.
I must be able to approach with their, talk with the
sign and communication.
So We are healthy and normal.
We should communicate us thinking for their.**

Recently I am saying, "You are losing heart, don't you?" or "You are losing the brilliancy eyes, don't?" Talking with my friends, eating the lunch, attending the lectures on, too!

The present day I am the cost-off skin of human being: there is the soul and not energy. I know the reason why I change into like this thought.

In spite of my became college student, I am taken "ill of dullness of study". The ill is not related to the result, but is related to my posture against study of English literature.

I think I am not attending lectures that have only to get credits for it and I am studying English very hard. But the truth is not studying. I have a difference of speaking and doing. Then I thought. Surely this words is like the word that explain me that made for me. I started this phrase. When I heard the result of an entrance examination, I noticed the fact that clearly say of that time.

If that regular business of that company don't give me this words, I will have graduated from college without noticing such a thing.

I think I try to reconsider my thought!

I walk the street with my mother.

But I look away here and there.

I talk to my mother, but no answer.

I talk to her again, but no answer.

I got angry and shout "Mother!!"

I looked at my mother, but She wasn't my mother.

I talk to a different.

I dreamed that I became transparency person.

At first I went to neighbor house and I saw neighbor active. In fact seriously husband neighbor known a man of taste wears a female dress.

I thought that I cannot hear the sight of man. But I doubt my eye the moment that I saw him.

The second I got on by airplane and I went to have a secret longing the Mediterranean Sea.

Therefore I make the best most of transparency person and I ate alot of tasty food and I went to anywhere. Of course I stayed deluxe hotel for a long time. I met famous Madonna in the front of deluxe hotel. I make the best of transparency person again and I touched her big bust and very cute hip.

Madonna seemed to very weird.

But I have not connection... Madonna I'm sorry.

The third I haven't had enough of I had a bath the men's water. I was curious about men's body and stared. Just there my body ought to vanish, strange to say gradually come in sight.

To tell the truth, if my body is splashed with hot water, if will vanish. But I had forgot then.

And on the contrary I was stared by men.

I was very ashamed.

Then I have never become transparency person.

NOTES:

1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. London: Basil Blackwell Ltd. This quotation can be found in Part I, Section 6.
2. Jean-Jacques Lecercle, a French professor of English has elaborated on this point in his insightful book, *Philosophy through the Looking Glass* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1985), "As a teacher of English, of necessity imposing on my students the standard dialect, I know that I am passing on a version of the language that most English speakers would laugh at."
3. Perhaps the dangers are more real than I had supposed. In October, 1992 the Japanese high school exchange student, Yoshihiro Hattori, was shot and killed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in part, it is assumed, because he failed to understand the command "Freeze!"
4. In 1991 I published the essay, "The Accidental Emergence of the Para-Poetic" in the *Bulletin of the Suzugamine Women's College Cultural and Social Science studies*, Vol. 38 (Hiroshima, Japan). In that essay I introduced the concept of the para-poetic and attempted to provide an historical context for looking at student writings from a literary perspective.
5. The notion of language speaking has been elaborated on and developed by Martin Heidegger. "Man acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact language remains the master of man... For strictly, it is language that speaks. Man first speaks when, and only when, he responds to language by listening to its appeal." From Martin Heidegger's "Poetically man dwells..." in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 215-216.
6. In the book *Metaphors We Live By* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), this idea is expanded further with the discussion of "container metaphors." (pp.29-30).
7. The student Yoshiko Iwata made these comments. Due to her excellent but incomplete English, conversations with her have proven valuable in exploring some of the smaller, more subtle errors in English and their effects in conveying (or preventing) a meaning or a point of view.
8. In Jean-Jacques Lecercle's *The Violence of Language* (London: Routledge, 1990), he speaks of the some phenomenon of language's excess and refers to it as "the remainder." "Language is no longer a mere instrument, it seems to have acquired a life of its own. Language speaks, it follows its own rhythm, its own partial coherence, it proliferates in apparent, sometimes violent, chaos... There is another side to language, one that escapes the linguist's attention, not because of his temporary failure or failings, but for necessary reasons. This dark side emerges in nonsensical and paetic texts, in the illumination of mystics and the delirium of logophiliacs or mental patients... I have called it 'the remainder.'" (pp.5-6)
9. I'd like to thank the following students for contributing their writings to this essay: Shiho Takahashi, Koori Miuro, Yoko Higashi, Miko Imae, Naomi Oue, Tomoko Morita, Kumi Komoda, Yumiko Shigeoko, Maki Nakokoge, Kazumi Nobori, Yasuko Miyamoto and Yuko Abe.