0. Introduction

What we are aiming at in this report, and others to follow, is an exposition of various aspects of the English and Japanese languages, with an emphasis on the theme of "words and culture", in the form of a series of dialogues between two English teachers, one Japanese and the other British (English).

1. Wind and Kaze

Masamura: The following expression appeared in a Japanese English language newspaper editorial: "As 1989 began, a new U. S. administration was inaugurated Jan. 20, as President George Bush succeeded a Reagan administration that had held power for eight years. At his inauguration, Bush said that a new wind was blowing. But the wind turned out to be far fiercer than even Bush could have foreseen." If I remember rightly, the president said, "a new breeze is blowing ..." not "a new wind", describing the situation of the world they were in as if it were a turning point, with the expectation of some preferable turnabout, The word wind which appeared in the editorial, I guess, came from the direct translation of the Japanese word kaze, which could cover all varieties of winds, from a light breeze to a strong gale. Besides, kaze when used independently or in the normal context, conveys good images — light, gentle, cozy etc. How about your wind? I do not think it is safe to define wind as carrying negative images at all times. Rather, we should know English has two everyday words to describe the way a current of air is or moves and that breeze feels comfortable and wind doesn't all the time.
Kano: You are quite right in your assumption of the difference in nuance between the words wind and breeze in English, as rendered in the two versions of the Bush quote. The term wind has in general an all-embracing tendency, whereas breeze constitutes just one ‘type’ or category of wind. Whereas the general word wind has a necessarily somewhat ambiguous quality, the specific word breeze conveys the distinctive meaning of a wind which is mild, gentle and refreshing in nature. This is particularly so when used metaphorically, as in Bush’s original utterance. “A new breeze is blowing” gives, as you suggest, the idea of the prospect of a new direction, or trend of events, bringing with it new hope or revitalization.

I think it is always interesting how differences in interpretation come about as a result of retranslation. With the Bush quote, the mistake in the first place was on the part of the translation from English to Japanese, where the idea of breeze was not fully understood. Surely, there exists in Japanese a good equivalent for this, in the term soyokaze? Had this word been used, there would have been no problem when translating back into English. Obviously, the Japanese word kaze will become wind in English. Like the Japanese word kaze, the English word wind can, as you say, cover all varieties of winds. Used in a metaphorical sense, however, the word wind standing alone, with no qualifying adjectives, tends to convey a rather strong and forceful image — certainly in comparison with the word breeze. (But is this not also so in the case of the word kaze, as compared with the words soyokaze or even bikaze?) In the ambiguity of the term wind, as used in the Bush quote, the idea of “a new wind blowing” does seem to express just as easily the anticipation of something unpleasant as not. And certainly the quite misleading associative expressions of “an ill wind” or “an evil wind” soon spring to mind here.

Masamura: Thank you very much for your informative comment. Before going further, I’d like to let you know that your bikaze should be pronounced bifū, which belongs to a group of technical or literary terms, rarely used in our daily conversation. This is accidentally confirmed by the fact that your encountering bifū takes place entirely in print, not orally, leading to your mispronunciation of the word.

Well, back to your question of the word soyokaze. Indeed, soyokaze is the nearest in meaning to breeze as you rightly guessed, but soyokaze could be categorized as a quasi-everyday term — known by everyone but not used so often — differentiating very much from your breeze in this regard. Yes, “a new breeze” would be quite unnatural to our ear if it were translated into “atarashii soyokaze”. We seldom use soyokaze in our daily talk, but you do breeze as often as wind.

This conversation reminds me of the fact that Toyota has nicknamed one type of their recent productions Windy. The naming of a product must be decided on through exhaustive discussion by many people, but I am a little doubtful about the possibility of their success should they try to extend the market of Windy to English-speaking countries. May I ask your reaction to this
Kano: I did actually later realize my mistake with the pronunciation of bifū, and wondered if it might have caused some amusement. You are, of course, so right when you imply that it is no good simply to go by the dictionary. Both mispronunciation and wrong usage of words do thus so often occur in the case of English also. Actually, as you rightly thought, I did come across the word bifū for the first time in the dictionary. But this was simply by way of checking how to write soyokaze — a word which I had certainly heard used in spoken Japanese before. If I think about it, though, perhaps I could have heard it used by various adult students of mine, uttered in class as a reaction to my use of the word breeze!

Going back to the expression "a new breeze", however, I would like to stress that this is, of course, an expression coined by Bush himself, and not so far generally used in English. It would seem that, if difficulty arises as to the translation of it into Japanese, katakana is surely the answer. Just as one says nouvelle vague (nuīberu bāgu) in connection with the art world, one could equally well say nyū burīzu in Japanese in connection with the political world. This could itself easily become yet another acceptable new example of "gairaigo". It is, indeed, thus, that all language is constantly changing, being created and recreated.

You next bring up the topic of the new Toyota car Windy. This is another example of all the wonderful Japanese–English, or, as I like to call them, "Japanglish" words I love! I am afraid, though, that manufacturers in Japan never really seem to give enough thought to the connotations of the English words they choose for their products. In Japan, of course, generally-speaking, any English word, regardless of how nonsensical it might be, tends to have a special prestige value. However, I am afraid that if Windy were being aimed at the export market, its name would go very much against it. Certainly, a car which is windy conveys the not-very-desirable image of a somewhat cold and draughty vehicle. Which brings one now to the question of whether the terms draught or draughty exist in Japanese. And what then of a gust of wind, or gusty?

Masamura: I understand that a new breeze is not well enough established to be regarded as a usual expression, but, I do not think that the collocation is as queer as atarashii soyokaze. You mentioned that if breeze in the Bush quote had been translated as soyokaze, there would have occurred no problem in re-translation, but as you can see, this is impossible in the first place. Close observation of our conversation reveals that soyokaze is surprisingly rarely used and that it almost never collocates with another adjective like suzushii (cool), kokochiyoi (cozy), let alone atarashii (new). Although kaze is, in a sense, too big to describe every minute variation in the strength of wind, the word itself is used comfortably, leaving how strong and what sort it is to
our unconscious judgement given the context.

The word *draught* immediately made me think of *sukimakaze* as an equivalent, which used to be used mostly when describing an uncomfortably cold current of air coming from incompletely closed shōjis (traditional papersliding-doors) or shōjis with broken holes or tears in them. The change in lifestyle brought about by economic and scientific development has been expelling this word out of our daily vocabulary. Rather than uncomfortable, *sukimakaze* sounds to me a little bit nostalgic, reminding me of my homelife when I was a child. As for *a gust of wind*, I hit upon the word *topū*, which describes a sudden rush of violent wind, causing as often as not some damage to us (like pulling an open umbrella inside out, etc.).

I think we'd better conclude this discussion here, if it's O.K. with you; I am afraid of our getting too involved in the wind and being blown away!

2. "As ... as any ..."

**Masamura:** One of the most misleading explanations that appears in most of the grammar books and dictionaries for Japanese English students would be the one concerning the meaning or nuance coming from a sentence structured *as ... as any ...* (eg. John is as tall as any student in the class) interpreted as a superlative. It wasn't until recently when I was informed by professor Michio Kawakami of Hiroshima Women's University of the real meaning conveyed by the structure in question that I was able to recognize that it could hardly be equivalent to a superlative. In the past, I used vaguely to think that though it did not sound superlative, the difference must be fractional, causing no practical problem in our understanding. I find, however, with a little astonishment, that you claim it does not carry any superlative shade of meaning in it at all.

This failure to comprehend the structure correctly, I presume, is due to our lack of proper understanding of the word *any*, which depicts a certain unspecified aspect of things and describes a world of uncertainty, *So, any student* in the above, is to be imagined as a certain group of students who measure average or more in height, but not any particular student in the group. Does this explanation go along with your process of understanding of the structure?

**Kano:** The sentence "John is the tallest (of all the students) in the class." could equally well be rendered as "John is taller than any (other) student in the class." So I do not think the problem lies with the word *any* here. If you compare the two sentences: "John is taller than any (other) student in the class." and "John is as tall as any student in the class." it is clearly obvious that they are completely different in meaning. The former conveys the information that it is John, and John alone, who is really tall. Whereas the latter tells us, rather, that John is not,
anyway, small. He is, at least, the same reasonable height as several other students. If he is the same height (= as tall as) other students, he cannot possibly be the tallest! And, as one could equally render the sentence "John is the tallest in the class." the other way round, as "No student in the class is as tall as John.,” it is evident that it is the pattern as … as (⋯ to onajigrurai ⋯) that was misunderstood in the early days of producing English grammar books in Japan, and which has simply been perpetuated in its incorrectness right up to the present!

Masamura: Your information about the two sentence patterns in question being completely different in meaning should be shared with all Japanese English students and also with Japanese English teachers. To the best of my knowledge, no domestically produced dictionaries provide us with correct and proper information about the patterns. This may strike you as very funny, mayn't it?

I am able to comprehend what you mentioned about the meaning of the sentence “John is as tall as any student in the class.”, and I never failed to understand the suggestion of an American whom I showed around Matsue the other day, that, "This restaurant seems to be as good as any.” to refer to it as a sort of reasonably good, average restaurant. As for the cause of our misunderstanding, however, you do not satisfy me yet. You say: the sentence “John is the tallest in the class.” could be rendered as "John is taller than any (other) student in the class.” So you do not think the problem lies with the word any here. Then, my counter-analysis goes: the sentence “John is as tall as Bill.” could be rendered as “John and Bill are (of) the same height.” So I do not think the problem lies with the pattern as ⋯ as here (but probably with the word any).

On second thoughts, the difficulty we have with the sentence "John is as tall as any student in the class.” seems to be attributable to the whole structure, consisting of as ⋯ as and any. In this pattern, I have to struggle to draw a clear image of any in my mind.

Kano: Having emphasized that the meaning of "John is as tall as any boy in the class.” is quite different from “John is the tallest boy in the class.”, I suddenly came across an interesting example of an as ⋯ as sentence recently while watching the BBC news on the satellite broadcasting channel. The topic was the visit of Margaret Thatcher to Czechoslovakia. After saying something to the effect that: "Bad weather meant that the walkabout today had to be curtailed somewhat”, the reporter went on to say: "But the welcome today was as warm as it has been during the whole of this visit to Czechoslovakia. (This could equally be reworded as: "⋯as warm as any welcome during⋯) I suddenly found myself reflecting as to the exact meaning of this rather ambiguous sentence. It could simply mean that Thatcher's previous walkabouts had been warm, and that this one was equally so, as in "John is as tall as any boy".
But the difference with the pattern as ... as, here seems to be that it appears with the perfect tense. In this construction, it certainly seems to imply, or at least feel as if it expresses, the superlative. In other words, this was the warmest walkabout that Thatcher had experienced so far. Another example might be: "She looks as happy as she's looked since she came here." Or, "The weather is as nice as it's been all summer." Or, "That story is as sad as I've heard." It is here that I can see how the misinterpretation of our sentence about John perhaps arose. Or perhaps I am simply raising further confusion?! It was interesting to note, though, that the Japanese subtitle translation of the Mrs Thatcher news simply said something like "but she had a very warm welcome", evading the issue, and revealing that the original had not been fully understood!

3. What is a "short" nose?

**Masamura:** I do not remember where I picked up this sentence, but it surely came from an English book published overseas: "If my nose were a little shorter, I would be quite pretty," This sentence set me thinking along two lines. I understand that our evaluation of the features varies from country to country and from time to time, but why shorter nose? Secondly, which part of the nose does the word shorter refer to? Is it the length of the bridge of the nose or the length of the space from the tip of the nose to the base of it?

**Kano:** Short here refers to the extension of the nose from between the eyes to the tip. A long nose is therefore one which protrudes from the face, with its starting point between the eyes (like mine!). The "bridge" of the nose would be referred to in English in terms of height, (i.e. a high or a low bridge), rather than length, but this is not really taken into consideration when specifying whether or not a person's nose is "long". Thus, making a nose "a little shorter" in English, would mean chopping a little off the end! I must admit that I have always found it difficult to fully comprehend the idea of "hana ga takai" in Japanese. How would you describe, for example, the long nose of the puppet doll, Pinnochio, which to me could certainly never be "high"?!

**Masamura:** I presume that the long nose of Pinnochio would be described as "nagai (long)" in Japanese, too, as is the trunk of an elephant. This is, I guess, in part because this particular shape of nose is rather peculiar to these two cases, being pole or stick-like. This, however, does not seem to be so in the case of the nose of the Japanese traditional goblin, Tengu, whose nose is quite similar to Pinnochio's, but which is referred to as "takai (high)"
"His or her nose is high." is the commonest expression in Japanese meaning that one has a beautifully-shaped or pretty nose. According to my sense of beauty, which, I hope, is not wide apart from our common evaluation or judgement, the good quality of the nose is mainly measured by the length of the span from the base of the center pillar of the nostril to the tip of the nose. In the case of Japanese, we could say that having a "high" nose equals being endowed with a prominent, shapely nose. Is this enough to help you to grasp our idea of the hanaga takai-expression? And my question: What is the most usual and often used English expression to praise the shape of one's nose?

**Kano:** A "long nose" in English is not necessarily an object of infinite beauty. However, as most Western noses are generally reasonably long, the term would only really be used when the object under consideration was of excessive length. Similarly, the term a "flat nose", or a "squashed nose", the opposite extreme, would be not a little unflattering. But, unlike in Japan, where mothers pull at their babies' noses to make them "takai", there is no apparent obsession with wanting a particular shaped nose in the West. Consequently, as noses come in various shapes and, within reason, sizes, it is very difficult to say how one would refer to a beautiful nose in English. One would simply say: "She or he has a beautiful/beautifully-shaped nose.", which utterance would be based on personal taste, and the interpretation of this would be left up to the individual. As one says in the West, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder", and one would rather tend to look more at the face as a whole, when assessing what is, or what is not, beauty.

4. "You had better ...

**Masamura:** Do you really feel embarrassed if you are spoken to by someone senior to you using the you had better-pattern or have you ever experienced some discomfort or unpleasantness in the usage of the expression used by the Japanese? If you have, the fault is certainly due to our established translation of the expression, shitehōga ii, which does not connote any meaning of obligation. It is true that some elaborate English grammar books never fail to add that had better has a meaning of "advisability", similar to the original meaning of ought to or should. Here I am to quote one of the typical explanations about the pattern from "Practical English Usage" by Michael Swan: The expression had better is followed by the infinitive without to. The meaning is present or future, not past. When we say somebody had better do something, we don't usually mean that the action recommended would be better than another one — we simply mean that they ought to do it. (In other words, there is not usually an idea of comparison in this expression, despite the use of the word better.)

As you can see in the above quotation, they never explain any more than the rules of the
structure and its meaning and leave the learner to memorize the rules and the meaning by rote. I feel discontented with this sort of superficial, spiritless explanation that appears in so many cases in which the rules of the language are introduced. Feeling, in language learning, should come first, then grammar, I believe. Going back to the pattern concerned, they should tell the readers why had (past form) is used instead of have and why not had to do (with to) and what factor in the pattern produces such meaning as obligation and the like.

Let me say what I feel about the structure: I think that had (past form) plays a very significant role in bringing about some delicate shade of obligation, because had gives a certain sense of pressure to the listener, not allowing any chance to prepare for or to brood over the situation. In short, we have no alternatives for the action if the suggestion is presented in the past form, as is seen in the expression, "It's time you went to bed."

As for the infinitive-without-to, the learner should be reminded of the imperative mood, which does not allow us any time to think before the suggestion is to be carried out.

Can I have some comments from you about the usage and about my analysis of the structure?

Kano: Certainly, the expression "You had better …" poses a problem for Japanese speakers of English. It can sound extremely offensive to someone unfamiliar with the Japanese language, and the fact that it is simply the accepted standardized translation of "… shitahōga ii". You ask whether I feel embarrassed if I am told I "had better …" by someone senior to me. Depending on the situation, of course, it might be appropriate for an employer to use it with an employee, a parent with a child, or a teacher with a student, etc. An employer might say to an employee, for example: "You had better come to the office earlier from now on.", or a mother might say to a child: "You had better hurry up, or you'll be late for school." Rather than advisability, however, I would say that the expression here contains more of a sense of "admonition", or warning. It is, as you say, almost imperative in nature. I would, therefore, feel more embarrassed, or rather infuriated, if thus spoken to by someone not my senior. I should just say here, though, that the expression immediately sounds less forceful if "You had better …" is contracted and rendered as "You'd better …", which is the far more common and natural form.

I think the main difficulty with the expression lies with the word "You" — the idea that "I" am telling "you" to do something. But this idea can be appropriate, as seen in what I consider to be one other function of the term, and that is in the expression of concern. If Mr. B looks or feels unwell, for example, and Mr. A feels genuine concern, he will say: "You'd better go home to bed." without the fear of inciting any bad feeling on the part of Mr. B. For, as an expression of his concern, Mr. A is simply stating what is the obvious course of action when someone is unwell. The "you" and "I" idea here does not, therefore, come across as being so personal. Otherwise, the prefix "I think" can make a lot of difference in softening the "command" concept of "You'd better …" into more of a suggestion. There are, in fact, several ways of "softening"
this expression, which are more indirect and roundabout, and more commonly used than the straightforward, rather abrupt “You'd better …”, which would, perhaps, be better avoided altogether! For example, “I think you ought to …”; which is still a little forceful; "I think it would be best if you …"; "I think it might be a good idea if you …"; "Wouldn't it be a good idea if you …?"; "Why don’t you …?"; "I would suggest you …"; "Don't you think it would be a good idea if you …"; "If I were you, I would …” etc.

I agree that the past tense "had" form in “You had better …” conveys a definite idea of finality, as if it is almost too late for the proposed action to be carried out. Hence, the sense of forcefulness, pressure and imperativeness.

Well, I’m afraid I don’t think we will have time to add any more to our discussion before the deadline for the journal. I think we’d better (!) submit this anyway, with the idea of its being the first of many parts to follow.

(平成2年10月31日受理)