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2011 THESES DOCTORAL

Poststructural Explorations into Relations among Self, Language, Reader Response Theories: (Im)possibilities of Autobiographical Inquiry

[Akai, Naoko](#)

This dissertation explores relations between self and language in the light of Derrida's critique of the traditionally and historically constructed idea of writing and speaking as communication. Further, this dissertation inquires into relations between self and language among reader-response theories through the exploration of Derrida's concept of a relation between self and language. These explorations emerge from the idea of a "purity" of English that extends from the researcher's felt relations to English and to her "maternal" or "native" language, Japanese. Therefore, the researcher autobiographically probes into how she constructed the idea of the "purity" of English by investigating her "experiences" of English, and investigates the idea of the "purity" of English through Derrida's idea of the "pure" French. This dissertation is not a typical autobiographical inquiry in the way that the researcher recounts her "experiences" and interprets the recounting of the "experiences." This dissertation is partly comprised of explorations in which the researcher does not present herself as the subject of the inquiry. While keenly aware that this dissertation could be considered to fall outside the category of autobiographical inquiry in its Enlightenment assumptions of the wholly intact, rational "self," the researcher presupposes that this dissertation can challenge such assumptions of traditional Western autobiographical inquiry for two reasons: 1) the explorations of relations between self and language are generated from her interpretations of "experiences"; 2) even when the autobiographical I is not presented in the text, the researcher's subjectivity drives the explorations. For these two reasons, this dissertation investigates the researcher's subjectivities through its trajectory, thereby questioning the researcher's possibilities of ever being fully situated within a certain theoretical framework. The exploration of relations between self and language in reader-response theories and the researcher's felt relations to English in light of Derrida's concept of a relation between self and language will contribute to English teachers and their educators, especially in the area of teaching of the reading. Further, the researcher, through inquiries into her subjectivities, arrives at a questioning stance on any possibility of autobiographical inquiry by puncturing the traditional research category of autobiography.

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Ph.D., Columbia University

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May 17, 2011



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