

The Culture of Language and Learning CTFD Faculty Associate Masahiko Minami

In the day-to-day hurly-burly world of day care and Muni rides and grocery shopping, we rarely have time to give thought to how we communicate. Yet an understanding of how individual language and cultural background shapes both a person's outlook and ability to be understood is a necessary consideration for the classroom, and not to be overlooked in the world outside of it, either.

San Francisco has always been a global village, and SF State, the city's university, echoes and strengthens the city's cultural and linguistic diversity. And in an era of increased internationalization, the study of language and how we communicate becomes ever more crucial.

Dr. Masahiko Minami, a Fall, 2007 CTFD Faculty Associate, has devoted his academic life to these issues. A Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, he teaches Japanese to undergraduate students. He also teaches sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics to graduate students through two of his seminars, "Japanese Language and Culture" and "Second Language Acquisition," respectively. In his research, however, Dr. Minami focuses on the linguistics of bilingual language development—demarcating between child and adult learners of Japanese and English.

Several years ago, Dr. Minami began a project analyzing the different narrative constructions of children bilingual in Japanese and English. He provided each child with a picture book that depicted a story—

Frog, Where Are You?—and asked them to tell the narrative in both English and Japanese. His findings have elucidated important points about how bilingual children differentiate between two languages, and what features of each language they emphasize in narrative.

While part of his research has already been published in *Applying Theory and Research to Learning Japanese as a Foreign Language* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), a scholarly text which Dr. Minami edited, he is devoting his time as CTFD Faculty Associate to concentrating on analysis of the data through a slightly more specific lens: that is, the study of connective use among the same study subjects.

Dr. Minami's goal with this on-going project is to distill his findings and analysis so that they can be utilized by educators of every level. His plans include a workshop for CTFD illustrating how bilingual students tell stories, thus exploring and explicating the language and learning relationship.

Dr. Minami, who graduated from Harvard in 1995 and is celebrating his eleventh year as a faculty member at SF State, is enjoying his work at the Center very much—he says it makes him "very happy" to be able to devote weekly time to his research. CTFD is equally happy and thrilled to be working with such an outstanding scholar and linguistics expert!



From the Garden of Culinary Delights ... December Recipes!

Whether you're celebrating the end of the semester or a holiday, December is a month when cooking seems like fun ... especially with some snazzy winter recipes to liven up your dinner plan.

Try one of these recipes (more on the back!), all of which are part of the many festivities and holidays of winter.

Potato Pancakes (Latkes)

Not sure what to do with all of those left-over mashed potatoes? Try some delicious and comforting latkes.



- 2 cups mashed potatoes
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon butter

In a medium bowl, mix together potatoes, beaten egg, salt, and cheese. Melt butter on a large griddle at medium heat. Drop potato mixture onto griddle 1/4 cup at a time. Flatten with a spatula to 1/2 inch thick. Fry approximately 5 minutes on each side, until golden brown. Serve hot. Makes 10 pancakes.

For different flavors, you can add minced garlic, chives, or 1/4 cup of any shredded raw vegetable, or substitute the cheese with a tablespoon of sugar and serve with maple syrup.

Additional recipes follow on page 4