

2. Things and Words

Correspondence

Think about what a huge number of "things" surround our lives. As I sit writing this, I see on my desk a desk lamp, a typewriter, an ashtray, books, letters, a writing pad, a ball-point pen, an eraser, a lighter, and pencils lying about in disarray. The drawers of the desk are packed with scores of articles such as stationery, thumbtacks, scissors, keys, a stapler, a knife, and a bundle of calling cards. I myself am wearing many more objects than I can count on my fingers—a suit, a sweater, a necktie, a white shirt, socks, glasses, a wristwatch, a belt, and so on. Once we start thinking in this way about the kinds of products we humans have created and use daily, we realize the incredible variety they represent. In the realm of nature, too, there are tens of thousands of species of birds and beasts. The insect world is known to comprise hundreds of thousands of different species. In addition, there are a tremendous number of plants. Each species has a name of its own.

It is not only concrete objects that have names. The movements of objects and the motions of human beings, even subtle shifts in our mental states are all matched with words. The characteristics of things—and the relationships between things—are assigned appropriate words to express them. Just

trying to imagine how many kinds of things, both concrete and abstract, might exist in the world is staggering.

Besides, the number of objects and of words corresponding to a certain object often exceeds the sum total. Take, for example, the automobile. Although it is only one object, it is composed of about twenty thousand parts, each of which, quite naturally, has a name. A jet airplane is said to require hundreds of thousands of parts. To make the matter more complicated, the parts may be even further subdivided. Many are made of different materials, which in turn have different components, each of which has its own name, and so on. Thus it is that things and words, in mutual correspondence, trap man in the fine meshes of their netting. Nothing is nameless. Everything in the universe has a name. That must be our simple yet firm conviction.

An equally firm conviction is the belief of most people that the name of a particular object varies completely from country to country and from language to language. A dog, for example, is called by various names: *inu* in Japanese, *kou* in Chinese, *chien* in French, *Hund* in German, *sobaka* in Russian, and *köpek* in Turkish. When we study a foreign language at school or consult a dictionary to see what the equivalent of a particular word is in another language, we do so on the basic premise that the same object will just require a different word in a different language.

Words Create Things

Some philosophers and linguists, however, who study the relationship between words and things doubt the validity of this premise. After examining the relations between vari-

ous words and objects and studying the question of the same object being named differently in each language, I have also come to have similar doubts. Most people hold that objects exist independently of language and that words are then devised as labels for them, but I believe, on the contrary, that words create things. Furthermore, despite the common belief that the identical object merely wears a different label in different languages, one should view the difference in name not only as a difference in label; in fact, different names represent considerably different things, although the extent of the difference may vary from case to case.

The first of the two points made just above—the idea that words create things, and not the converse—has been a topic of philosophical argument since ancient times. The labels given these two opposing positions are nominalism and realism. I am going to argue, from a purely linguistic standpoint, that nominalism explains the structure of language more accurately. My argument may be summarized in a single phrase: “In the beginning was the Word.”

I do not, of course, mean that at the birth of the universe, when emptiness prevailed, words alone existed. Moreover, when I say that words create things, I do not mean that words bring forth objects as hens lay eggs. I mean, rather, that we recognize fragments of the universe as objects or properties only through words, and that without words we could not even distinguish dogs from cats.

If words are the key to our understanding of the universe and the only window through which to perceive it, what we perceive must also vary to some extent, depending on the structure and system of the language we use. The reason is,

as I will explain in detail below, that language is nothing but a device with which to determine what parts or properties, from among those impressions impinging on our senses, we should focus our attention on when we try to understand the world in an orderly way. I have just used the metaphor that words are the window through which to perceive the world, but if the size and the shape of the window and the color and refraction of the pane vary, the extent and nature of the perceived world will naturally differ. One may not even see an object if there is no appropriate word for it.

An Arbitrarily Segmented World ←

I should put a stop to abstract argument here and turn to some concrete linguistic facts. Let us begin by taking a *tsukue* ‘desk or table’ as an example of a commonplace object. What is this thing called a *tsukue*? How should it be defined? A *tsukue* is sometimes made of wood, sometimes of steel. In the summer, some people use glass ones in their yards; in parks we even find concrete ones. The number of legs a *tsukue* has also varies. For example, the one I am using now has no legs because it is built-in, attached to the wall. While there are one-legged *tsukue*, there are also many-legged ones such as those used for conferences. These are usually oblong, square, or round, but there are also triangular *tsukue*, the kind placed in the corner of a room on which a vase might be placed. In height, they range from low ones used without chairs in Japanese-style rooms to high ones used with chairs.

From this analysis, it becomes clear that we can hardly define a *tsukue* on the basis of concrete external characteristics

such as shape, material, color, size, or number of legs. If we must, nonetheless, try to define a *tsukue*, a possible definition might be "an object which provides a surface on which to do something." The shape, size, and material of a particular *tsukue* in a given country at a given time will, within a certain predictable range, be determined by the conditions that make it necessary to provide that kind of surface in a certain area. Various restrictions imposed on the commercial production of the article may also influence its design.

But then, are all surfaces on which we do something *tsukue*? Not necessarily. For example, the definition given for *tsukue* also applies to a shelf. A floor also belongs to the same category in the sense that we do something on it. In order to distinguish *tsukue* from shelves and floors, we must change our definition to "a surface that is detached from the floor, and on which one does something while sitting or standing in front of it for a certain period of time."

I would like the reader to note that the important part of this long-winded definition is the human element, that is, the practical use which a person makes of the object, or its relative position vis-à-vis a person. Although a *tsukue* is made from materials that exist apart from man, their many properties do not contribute to the definition of the object referred to by the word *tsukue*. If we detach ourselves from our human perspective and look around a room as if through the eyes of a pet dog or cat, we will not be able to distinguish a *tsukue* from some types of shelves or chairs. A *tsukue* is a *tsukue* due to man's particular viewpoint. And the power of language is what makes us think that a *tsukue* is there.

Thus one function of language is to divide the chaotic world of nonentities into fictitious segments and to classify

them according to human perspective in a way significant to us. Language intrinsically contains a fictitious quality whereby it presents to man the ever-growing, ever-changing world as groups of neatly subdivided objects. We often hear the common expression "the magic of language," but apart from the commonplace implication of this expression, language is indeed magic. It may even be a binding curse in that it leads us to mistake this dynamic world for a static one.

Let us return to the consideration of concrete examples from language, this time taking up entities that exist in the world of nature instead of such manufactured products as desks and tables.

Linguistic Relativity

The novelist D. H. Lawrence once wrote a short story entitled "Prelude." In it there is a description of a woman making tea.

. . . and catching up the blue enameled teapot,
[she] dropped into it a handful of tea from the
caddy, and poured on the water.

Japanese readers unfamiliar with English customs may think that because customs vary from country to country, tea must be made with cold water in England. Others who have learned in school that the Japanese word *yu* corresponds to *hot water* in English, may suspect that in the passage above *hot* in *hot water* must have been left out by mistake. Neither interpretation, of course, is correct.

English people are world famous for their love of tea. They are fastidious about tea making. In particular, they demand that tea be made with boiling water. Some people

even go so far as to warn, "Don't carry the kettle to the teapot. Carry the teapot to the kettle." Moreover, warming the teapot in advance with a cup of hot water is only common sense to the English. For them, it would be totally unthinkable to make tea with cold water.

The British attitude toward tea is vividly described in the following passage from Agatha Christie's mystery *A Pocket Full of Rye*. Here, a newly hired typist, a spiritless and slovenly woman called Somers, is making tea in the office. She is being scolded by the head typist, long an employee of the firm.

The kettle was not quite boiling when Miss Somers poured the water on the tea . . . Miss Griffith, the efficient head typist, . . . said sharply: "Water not boiling again, Somers!"

As is clear from these two examples, in English there is actually no single-word equivalent of *yu* 'hot water.' The English word *water* may mean either *mizu* 'cold water' or *yu*, depending on the context.

Of course, in English, it is possible to say *hot water* when it is necessary to make a clear distinction between hot and cold water. But the fact that *hot* has to be deliberately added to *water* in this way indicates that the word *water* in itself has a neutral quality with regard to temperature.

On the other hand, *mizu* in Japanese distinctly implies cool or cold water. *Atsui mizu*, literally 'hot cold water,' sounds unnatural because it is as self-contradictory as saying a *square triangle*. In everyday Japanese, the material expressed by the chemical formula H_2O has three distinctive names: *kōri* 'ice,' *mizu* 'cold water,' and *yu* 'hot water.' English, however, has only two names, *ice* and *water*, in-

stead of three, and Malay has only one, *ayër*. This is shown graphically in table 1.

	H ₂ O		
Malay	ayër		
English	ice	water	
Japanese	kōri 'ice'	mizu 'cold water'	yu 'hot water'

Table 1

In Malay, one could say *ayër panas* 'hot water' to signify specifically the idea of *yu*, but this is merely the equivalent of *hot water* in English. One could also say *ayër beku* 'solidified water' if one wished to clearly distinguish ice from water, but *ayër* by itself may also be used for *ice*. These words from three different languages referring to H_2O in different ways are often cited as a good illustration of how differently and arbitrarily each language slices the objective world.

If a person has lived in one language environment all his life, he tends to take the correspondence between things and words more or less for granted; he hardly looks at it with suspicion. Only by comparing one's language with others in the above fashion does one begin to understand that even such commonplace words as *mizu*, *yu*, and *kōri* actually represent arbitrary subdivisions dependent for their very existence on the particular language called Japanese.

Bringing Order to the World

Cold water, hot water, and ice are three separate, independent entities in the minds of the Japanese because we project on the world of phenomena a linguistic system which distinctly separates *mizu*, *yu* and *kōri* from one another, treating each as an independent item.

It should be clear to everyone that the distinction between *mizu* and *yu* is based on a slight difference in temperature and is therefore merely a relative one. Between *kōri* and *mizu* (or *yu*), on the other hand, there is indeed an obvious distinction: one is a solid while the other is a fluid (although the difference can, in the final analysis, be explained in terms of temperature). Some people may wish to insist that the distinction between the two is not merely linguistic, but is rather attributable to an objective and visible difference which justifies it. But if this is so, what can we say about the distinction between *kōri* 'ice' and *tsurara* 'icicle'? The same substance ordinarily called *kōri* acquires the name *tsurara* in Japanese under certain limited conditions (in terms of location and shape). The substance itself undergoes no change. In other words, that which distinguishes these two items are the two words *kōri* and *tsurara*, which were assigned to two different ways of looking at one and the same object. It is not so strange, then, that in Turkey, where icicles do indeed exist, there should be no special word for them and that they are called simply *buz* 'ice.' Turks just do not see icicles as anything other than ice.

Pursuing this line of reasoning, we find that the lines of demarcation made in Japanese between *kōri* 'ice,' *hyō* 'large hailstone,' *arare* 'small hailstone,' *yuki* 'snow,' and *mizore*

'sleet' also become unclear, since all these things turn into rain when the temperature rises. The differences between *ame* 'rain,' *kasumi* 'haze,' and *moya* 'mist,' too, are based merely on the size of drops of water; moreover, they can all become clouds, depending on relative distance from the ground.

Why are these natural phenomena, each composed of the same elements, given different names? Because it is more convenient for us in our daily rounds to have labels for certain parts of our environment. Giving something a name simply means that we have recognized the value of treating one portion of the world separately from all the other sections and fragments. The same object that can be summed up in a chemical formula as H_2O is called by tens of different names in Japanese, ranging from *kōri*, *mizu*, *yu*, and *yuge* 'steam' to *tsuyu* 'dew' and *shimo* 'frost,' as well as *harusame* 'spring rain' and *yūdachi* 'late afternoon shower.' One cannot conclude, however, that H_2O is the only word which represents something certain while all the other words are names which do not refer to real objects, representing fictional entities with no substantial counterparts in the real world.

Even the term H_2O is something born out of man's effort to organize his world from one particular angle and is therefore nothing ultimate or definite. Obviously H_2O is hydrogen and oxygen combined in a particular configuration. One must in turn analyze these elements in terms of even more minute components, repeating the subdividing process. Thus, the object represented by the sign H_2O , a scientific term, shares the same fictitious quality as *tsurara* 'icicle' and *samidare* 'early summer rain.' All the words coined by man as he responds to the universe around him are based on this same arbitrariness.

Man cannot come into direct contact with the elements composing his world as such. These elements constitute a world meaningless in itself, one which might aptly be described as disorderly and chaotic. One must conclude that the role of language is to bring order to this world and fashion in it meaningful and controllable objects, properties, and actions.

Lip versus Kuchibiru

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that man-made objects such as automobiles and airplanes are composed of a great number of parts, each of which has a name of its own. The human body may also be considered in the same way since it too consists of different parts with different names. A car has four wheels, two doors, and two headlights. A person can be described as having two legs, two arms, a face with two eyes, one nose, and so on. It is impossible to think of even one part of the body that does not have a name. I am sure that even the tiniest bones and muscles have names given them by anatomists.

This may lead one to believe that, just as the automobile is composed of about twenty thousand parts with different names, the human body is also the sum total of thousands of parts, each with a name of its own. But there is actually a great difference between them.

To begin with, automobile parts are all obviously independent of and separate from one another but the parts of the human body are all connected. For example, even though we say there are eyes, a nose, and a mouth in the face, they are not really marked by clear boundaries. Every-

one realizes that cheeks and jaws are different parts of the face, but no one knows where the line of demarcation lies. Eyes and lips may at first seem to be more clearly marked off than are cheeks and jaws, but upon closer examination we see that even this is a misconception.

Let us consider another example from the English language. John Galsworthy once wrote a short story about tragic love, "The Apple Tree." Many Japanese are familiar with it since it is often used in Japan in college-level textbooks. At the beginning of the story, the facial features of Ashurst, one of the main characters, are described in the following way:

Ashurst, rather like a bearded Schiller, grey
in the wings, . . . with . . . bearded lips just
open.

If we translated *bearded lips* literally as *hige no haeta kuchibiru*, it would sound funny to thoughtful readers, because in Japanese *kuchibiru* normally refers only to the two red areas surrounding the mouth. They cannot possibly grow any hair!

A little further on, we come to a passage about the face of the heroine, Megan:

Her face was short, her upper lip short, showing a glint of teeth.

Although we Japanese talk about the thickness or the thinness of a *kuchibiru*, the expression "a short *kuchibiru*" would be quite abnormal. We would be at a loss to figure out the shape of such a *kuchibiru*.

These two quotations about lips show that in English *lips* can refer to not only the protruding, distinctively colored areas outlining the mouth but also to a fairly large area

surrounding them. The term *upper lip*, in particular, often seems to refer to the section which would be called *hana no shita* 'under the nose' in Japanese. It is this section of the face that Galsworthy has in mind when he describes Megan's upper lip as short. It is now clear why, if the upper lip is short, a glint of teeth is visible.

I began studying English over thirty years ago. I have also spent several years in the United States and Canada. Nevertheless, believe it or not, I only became aware of the difference between *lip* and *kuchibiru* two or three years ago! Needless to say, this difference is not mentioned in any dictionary that I have consulted, nor has any scholar of English or English literature whom I have asked shown any clear awareness of this.

However, now that I am aware of the difference, I take note of more and more examples. I often come across them in stories as I reread them. In Saroyan's "Seventeen," for instance, there is a "small woman of fifty with hair on her upper lip"; in Agatha Christie's *The Labors of Hercules*, the famous sleuth Poirot has an "immense mustache that adorned his upper lip." In short, the place where a mustache grows is called the *lip* in English.

I once wrote an article about this particular discovery and published it in a linguistics magazine. Afterwards, I received letters from many readers reporting more findings of the same nature, including examples from German, French, and Italian. My friend and colleague, Noboru Fujii, a classical Latin scholar, kindly provided me with the following interesting example from Martial:

iam mihi nigrescunt tonsa sudaria barba

et queritur labris puncta puella meis.

(Mart. XI, xxxix, 3-4)

This passage is about a young man who is always teased by everyone for being childish. He protests that even he finds the scarf around his neck black with bits of hair after each shave, and that when he kisses his girl, she complains angrily about how much his lip stings her because of his mustache. This poem shows clearly that in ancient Rome, too, a mustache grew on the upper lip.

Two Levels of Understanding

Our discussion of *lip* and *kuchibiru* may be summarized as follows. First, even with regard to such seemingly clear-cut parts of the human face as lips, each language possesses a term with a different range of meaning. Second, some languages do not have a word specifically referring to the area immediately under the nose. Third, despite the discrepancy in range of meaning between *kuchibiru* in Japanese and *lip* in English, many scholars of English have failed to notice it. And finally, our failure to notice this difference apparently has not affected our comprehension of what we hear or read.

The first point above means that *kuchibiru* belongs only to Japanese, and that *lip* refers to part of the face which exists only in the eyes of English-speaking people. Since *lip* and *kuchibiru* are not identical in meaning, one cannot argue that an object initially existed independently of individual languages and was later labeled *kuchibiru* in Japanese, and *lip* in English.

The second point merely states that every single part of

the body will not necessarily have a name in every language.

The third point tells us that although it is not really difficult for the student of a foreign language to reach a certain level of proficiency in terms of understanding what he hears or reads or of making himself understood in the language, minute differences in the meanings of words between the student's native language and the target language are not grasped as correctly as one might expect.

The last point suggests that when we read a foreign language, we are really thinking in our native language most of the time. We are helped by the logic of the subject or the context in which the word occurs. When a Japanese comes across the expression *bearded lips*, therefore, he does not take it to mean "*kuchibiru* covered with hair," but understands it correctly as "hair around the mouth." But his understanding takes place through Japanese, which explains why he will never use such an expression when he writes English, and why he will not remember ever having seen it used.

Vague Reference

While talking about the face, I wish to discuss the eyes and the nose as well. Cheeks and jaws are rather difficult to define. But surely no reader would suspect that eyes might be equally hard to define. Contrary to expectation, however, eyes are actually very vague areas also.

To clarify this point, I will list five uses of *brick* and *eyes*, respectively.

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 This brick is rectangular. | 1' His eyes are round. |
| 2 This brick is red. | 2' His eyes are blue. |

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3 This brick is heavy. | 3' His eyes are large. |
| 4 This brick is hard. | 4' His eyes are good. |
| 5 This brick is chipped. | 5' His eyes are sunken. |

Examples 1 through 5 are sentences about several characteristics of a given brick; sentences 1' through 5' are various attempts to describe someone's eyes.

Sentences 1 through 5 are all descriptions about the same referent. In them, the relationship between the word *brick* and the referent remains unchanged. On the other hand, in sentences 1' through 5', which are structurally quite similar to the former group, the relationship between the word *eyes* and its referent varies significantly. *Eyes* in 1' refers to the shape of the eyes as outlined by the upper and lower eyelids, and not to the roundness of the eyeballs. In 2', *eyes* refers to the irises. Sentence 3' is a comment on the size of the portion of the eyeballs that is exposed between the upper and lower eyelids, while sentence 4' is about "his" eyesight. In sentence 5', the eyeballs themselves are not sunken; what is described here is the location of the eyes in relation to the surface planes of the face.

When one says "a chipped brick," one means that a part of the brick is missing. Likewise, *red*, *heavy*, *hard*, and *rectangular* are all descriptions of the brick itself. In comparison, the way the referent of the word *eyes* changes each time is indeed amazing. What part of the head does the word *eye* really refer to?

When one compares the names for the parts of the human face with one another, *eye* at first seems more easily definable than such words as *cheek* and *temple*. However, when one tries to focus on the eyes, what exactly constitutes them suddenly becomes less clear.

Discrepancies in Areas of Meaning

What about the nose? I stated earlier that certain languages lack words specifically referring to the area under the nose. However, probably no language lacks a word referring to the nose itself. But even the nose is not free of problems.

First of all, the thing called *hana* 'nose' in Japanese is an entity whose full range of meaning is only appreciated by Japanese speakers. Of course, this does not mean that the part of the face referred to as *hana* is lacking in others; non-Japanese speakers are all possessed of *hana*. Furthermore, in Japanese, we also say that the elephant has a long *hana* 'trunk.' To the Japanese speaker, the object hanging down from the elephant's head and the object located in the middle

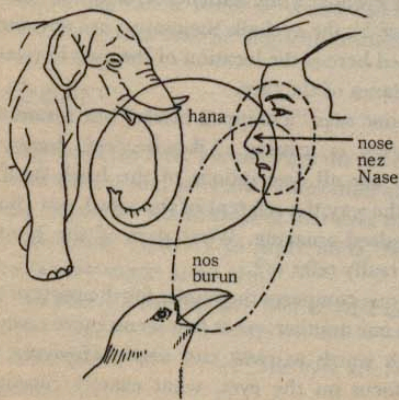


Figure 4

of the human face are both *hana*. In other words, they are members of the same category, the category called *hana*.

In many other languages, however, the thing projecting out of the elephant's face and the one protruding from the human face cannot be called by the same name. In English, for example, the elephant's *hana* is called a *trunk*, as though it belonged to the same category as the trunk of a tree. It is called *trompe* in French and *Rüssel* in German, and is thus differentiated from the human nose, which is called *nez* in the former and *Nase* in the latter. Interestingly enough, *burun* in Turkish and *nos* in Russian may refer to both the human nose and the beak of a bird. In other words, each language has a word for the projection in the middle of the human face, but its range of meaning varies. In this sense, the range of objects that may be referred to by the Japanese word *hana* is peculiar to the Japanese language.

Another problem is that even adjectives used to describe the nose exhibit a great deal of variability from one language to another. I have already discussed this subject elsewhere,¹ so I touch on it here only briefly. Although we describe human noses in Japanese as *takai* 'high' or *hikui* 'low,' the same adjectives we use for mountains, this is rarely the case in other languages.

According to the usage of European languages today, noses may be large or small, or long or short, but are usually not high or low—like mountains. Turkish also uses its equivalents of *long* and *short* to describe noses. In Japanese, on the other hand, we use *nagai* 'long' and *mijikai* 'short' for noses only on limited occasions, as, for example, in reference to the protagonist in Ryūnosuke Akutagawa's short story "Hana," who agonized over his ugly nose. But normally noses are de-

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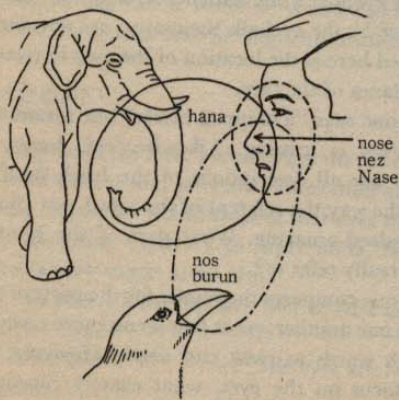


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scribed as *takai* 'high' or *hikui* 'low.' The nose of the imaginary Japanese creature *tengu* 'a long-nosed goblin,' too, is *takai* 'high,' not *nagai* 'long.'

I once treated this problem on the assumption that Japanese culture is extremely nose-oriented. Since then I have noticed linguistic facts which support this view. In Japanese novels, the protagonist's first appearance, if accompanied by a detailed description of his face, invariably includes some information on the nose as well as on the eyes, the mouth, and the eyebrows.

In English novels, however, I have discovered that even when a face is described in detail, there is scant reference to the nose. To illustrate, let me call once more on Agatha Christie's detective M. Poirot:

Hercule Poirot looked thoughtfully into the face of the man behind the big mahogany desk. He noted that generous brow, the mean mouth, the rapacious lines of the jaw, and the piercing visionary eyes. (Agatha Christie: *The Labors of Hercules*)

The famous detective, who never overlooks even the smallest detail, is studying a man's face here, trying to deduce what kind of man he is by observing his eyebrows, his mouth, the shape of his jaw, and the look in his eyes. Nevertheless there is no reference to the nose. I wonder if Japanese authors describing the face of a character under similar circumstances would disregard the nose.

Cultural Selection

Naturally this does not mean that the nose plays no role

in European literature. There are such famous examples as Rostand's *Cyrano De Bergerac* and Gogol's *Nose*. In both cases, however, the subject is a nose that is too large, cumbersome, and ugly. Generally speaking, when there is a reference to the nose of a character in a European novel, it is often to an ugly nose regarded as a flaw. It seems to me that Europeans and Americans regard the nose as something repulsive.

In other cases, the nose is mentioned as a racial characteristic. For example, "She had . . . the slightly flattened nose of the Slav" (Agatha Christie: *The Seven Dials Mystery*).

The tendency not to pay much attention to the nose is found both in European and in Turkish literatures. A Turkish short story writer Ömer Seyyifetin once wrote a story with the curious title "Human Nature and the Dog." In one scene, a first-class passenger boards a ship in Istanbul and wonders about another passenger, a beautiful woman with a dog, sitting forlornly apart from the crowd. He describes her face.

İnce, uzun kaşlar, solgun ve asabî bir çehre, ciddi kadınlara hâs, meselâ muallime, rahibe gibi, bir hüsn-i lâtif, bir hüsn-i mahrun. . . . Siyah gözleri altın bir gözlüğün camları arkasından daha parlıyor gibi görünüyordu.

Long thin eyebrows, a pale, nervous-looking face with a kind of refreshing but lonely beauty characteristic of serious women such as teachers and nuns. . . . With dark eyes shining even more brightly through gold-rimmed glasses.

The description continues in this way, but there is no mention of her mouth, let alone her nose.

Let me cite one more example, from a short story by the

same author entitled "The Secret of Ugliness." In it, the hero describes the face of a matchless beauty thus:

Bence İstanbulun en güzel kızı odur! Siyah, iri, parlak gözler. . . . Gür siyah saçlar. . . . Sonra inanılmaz derecede saf bir beyazlık! Mukaddes bir rüya beyazlığı!

In my opinion, she is the most beautiful girl in Istanbul! Large, shiny dark eyes. . . . Rich, soft black hair. . . . And incredible fair skin with pure, dreamlike whiteness.

Here, too, the nose and the mouth are disregarded. These two ladies from Turkish stories are portrayed as modern women in Western clothes wearing European-style hairdos; of course their noses and mouths are perfectly visible since they are not wearing the veils traditionally worn by Muslim women.

In Turkey, Islam was recognized as the state religion until about half a century ago, and it still exerts a strong influence on the country, especially in rural areas. For five hundred years after the Turkish nation was converted to Islam, the Islamic way of thinking, with its minute rules and regulations, governed all aspects of national life. It is only natural that even in the Republic of Turkey, which today is on the road to modernization and Westernization, such a long-established view of things should still remain in the minds of the people, though not necessarily in the same form as before.

While Islam was Turkey's state religion, it was considered a taboo for women to show their faces to men other than their closest relatives. Even today, some old women, though they may not usually wear veils, suddenly raise them with

their hands to hide their faces as soon as they see a tourist approaching. In a country with such customs, it is no wonder that female beauty has come to be judged only by certain limited parts of the head exposed to others—the eyes, the eyebrows, the forehead, the color of whatever facial skin is visible, and the hair.

However, in every culture, the choice of criteria for female beauty usually belongs to covert culture and therefore regulates a person's judgment without entering his consciousness. The fact that Turkish authors do not mention a woman's nose or mouth when describing her face might be due to cultural constraints. Beauty is still sought only within the traditional framework. Human eyes do not see things objectively and impartially like cameras. Our perceptions are always subject to cultural selection.

Chins and Jaws

While doing research on different ways of describing faces, I have come to notice another interesting fact. That is, in English novels much attention is paid to the chins and the jaws of the characters. For example:

She had pale blue, rather vacant-looking eyes, and a *weak indeterminate* chin. She had a long upper lip. (A. Christie: *A Pocket Full of Rye*. Italics added.)

Such adjectives as *weak* and *indeterminate* are probably not used very often by Japanese writers in reference to chins and jaws. In English novels, however, similar examples can be easily found if one only starts looking: "the *rapacious* lines of the jaw" (A. Christie: *The Labors of Hercules*), "She was a

vigorous looking woman of sixty-odd, with iron-grey hair and a *determined* chin" (A. Christie: *Mrs. McGinty's Dead*). A chin may be described as "the small square *fighting* chin" (A. Christie: *Crooked House*). There are chins which are *indecisive* or *pugnacious* and jaws which are *ruthless* or *aggressive*.

These adjectives refer primarily to the characters of the persons to whom particular chins or jaws belong. In other words, the chin and the jaw are seen as parts of a person by which his vitality, personality, will power, determination or the lack thereof can be judged.

In contrast, descriptions of chins and jaws by Japanese incline much more toward visual shapes. For example, we say in Japanese that someone has a wide or square jaw, a concave, long, pointed, or double (this last adjective is used in English, too) chin, or simply no chin at all. All these frequently used descriptions pertain to external appearances. We appear rarely to consider the chin and the jaw as parts of the face which reveal one's character.

Eijirō Iwasaki, a scholar of German, has told me that, in German, chins are sometimes described as *stark* 'strong,' *brutal* 'brutal,' or *energisch* 'energetic.' Hideichi Matsubara, a scholar of French, has pointed out to me the French expression *mâchoire volontaire* 'strong-willed jaw.' Judging from these examples, the association of the chin and jaw with one's character, spirit, etc., might be the common thing in European cultures.

While considering this problem, I happened to leaf through Michitarō Tada's *Shigusa no Nihon bunka* [Japanese gestures and Japanese culture] and came across the following passage:

Europeans unconsciously stick out their chins to take an aggressive posture. They could not survive in this tough world otherwise. Japanese, on the contrary, pull in their chins to assume a low posture. A Frenchman living in Japan once observed this and asked the interesting question why the Japanese pull in their chins.

To support Tada's view, the following sentence may be cited as an example:

Pennington's jaw hardened. He shot out his chin at them aggressively. (A. Christie: *Death on the Nile*)

There is also the idiom used in America, *keep one's chin up*, which means "not to be discouraged." In Japanese, on the other hand, *to stick out one's chin* means "to be totally exhausted."

If I may digress, the fact that in boxing, a sport developed in Europe, one is supposed to attack the opponent's chin persistently may have something to do with the European view that a man's chin is the source of his vitality. In fist-fighting, too, Europeans readily strike each other on the chin, whereas we Japanese hit the opponent on the head or slap him on the cheek.

To reiterate my point, although the human face is common to all races and all cultures and is a very conspicuous part of the body, the structure of vocabulary items for its parts varies greatly from language to language. This is because the way people view a particular part of the face, as well as the value they assign to it, differs from culture to culture. Even the adjectives used to describe a particular facial feature may be completely different.

After considering all these points, it seems to me linguistically more appropriate to conclude thus: man does not use words to describe things which exist in the objective world; rather words, which reflect a particular view of the world or a specific way of dissecting it, make us feel as though objects with such characteristics and properties actually exist.

3. Adjectives

Adjectival Categories

In the preceding chapter I considered the relationship between words and things mainly with reference to nouns, that is, to the names given to concrete objects. In this chapter, I wish to take up adjectives, the words which refer to properties and characteristics of things.

My examination of nouns unexpectedly revealed that what have so far been regarded as substantive entities are actually viewed in a strongly subjective light, and are created out of necessity by man, the perceiver. The same holds true for adjectives. For example, the expressions *a faraway country* and *a nearby country*, at first glance, look exactly the same structurally as *a strong country* and *a weak country*. One therefore tends to assume that in the former pair, as in the latter, the adjectives describe properties or conditions of certain countries. However, a little careful thinking helps one realize that this is not the case.

The adjectives *faraway* and *nearby* merely refer to the relative distance between a certain object and the speaker. For this reason, a faraway country gradually becomes a nearby country as one travels in that direction. In contrast, a strong country remains strong regardless of its distance from the speaker. The belief that both adjectives in the ex-