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# The Ubiquity of the Fluid Metaphor in Japanese: A Case Study\*

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Ceaselessly the river flows, and yet the water is never the same,  
while in the still pools the shifting foam gathers and is gone,  
never staying for a moment. Even so is man and his habitation.  
— *The Hojoki*, translated by A. L. Sadler

## 1. Background

Since the advent of generative grammar, mainstream linguistics has primarily concerned itself with descriptions and explanations of language as an autonomous formal system, assuming that language can essentially be described and explained without regard to human cognition and culture;<sup>1</sup> meaning, in this tradition, is characterized in terms of reference and truth conditions, i.e. whether a given sentence fits the world or not. Metaphor, whose “literal objective meaning” being usually trivially false (e.g. *John is a lion*), is of marginal interest in such a tradition. In fact, this reflects the long-standing view of metaphor as something literary and decorative, hence something we can dispense with in everyday language.

The publication of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) has paved the way for a new conception of metaphor in the field of linguistics. In this view, metaphor is seen as something constitutive of human cognition: “We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (*ibid.*, p.3).

Take, for example, the TIME IS MONEY metaphor (*ibid.*, pp.7-8), which underlies numerous metaphorical expressions such as *You’re wasting my time*, *How do you spend your time these days?* *I’ve invested a lot of time in her.*<sup>2</sup> This conceptual metaphor prompts us to view time in terms of money and to act accordingly; we manage time just as we manage our

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<sup>1</sup> See Nishimura (1992) and Croft (1995) for critical assessments of the so-called “Autonomy Thesis” in the generative tradition.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I follow Lakoff’s convention of representing conceptual metaphors and metaphorical concepts in small capitals.

money, we feel we have lost something valuable when we mismanage time, and so on. A cursory reflection would make us realize that it is virtually impossible to talk about spending time without relying on this metaphor and therefore that this metaphor is not merely a device of rhetorical flourish. This metaphor, however, has a strong cultural basis (cf. *ibid.*, pp.65-68); according to Lakoff (1993:243), this metaphor came into English use about the time of the Industrial Revolution. It is perfectly conceivable that this metaphor would not be in use in a society which had not developed a monetary economy.

Consider another conceptual metaphor, MORE IS UP, which underlies expressions such as *Prices rose, His income fell last year, Phoenix is known for its high temperatures* (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 15-16). This metaphor is presumably grounded in our common experience of adding more physical objects or substance to a pile or a container and seeing the level go up. The experiential basis of this metaphor must be universal, given that we all have (more or less) the same body organizations and perceptual apparatus and that we are all subject to the same law of gravity. Therefore, this conceptual metaphor itself may be nearly universal; at least we would expect that no language will have a LESS IS UP metaphor, which is counter to human experience.

These two examples of conceptual metaphor will suffice to illustrate that metaphor is fundamentally conceptual in nature, being grounded in our (bodily or cultural) experiences, that each metaphorical expression is a linguistic manifestation of conceptual metaphor, and that metaphors vary in degree of universality, some being nearly universal, others being culture-specific.

Since Lakoff and Johnson (1980), research in this field has been growing (see Lakoff 1993 for a survey of metaphor research in the past decade).<sup>3</sup> The view of metaphor and meaning in general advanced by Lakoff and Johnson has been integrated into the subsequent development of cognitive linguistics, one of whose central theses is that meaning is equated with conceptualization (cf. Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1987a, 1991, *inter alia*). Two points deserve brief mention here as important contributions of cognitive linguistics with respect to the research outline Lakoff and Johnson (1980) presented. First, cognitive linguistics has revealed that metaphor plays an important organizing role not only in the lexicon but also in grammar in general (see, for example, Claudi and Heine 1986, Sweetser 1990, Goldberg 1995). Second, it has recognized and revived the role of culture in linguistics. Langacker (1994), taking the

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<sup>3</sup> Vast amount of data of the English metaphor system was compiled as MASTER METAPHOR LIST, 2nd edition, at University of California, Berkeley.

position that “language and culture overlap extensively, and both are facets of cognition” (p.26), states his view on this issue as follows:<sup>4</sup>

Modern linguistic theory—especially generative theory—has of course tended to minimize (if not ignore altogether) the status of language as an aspect of culture. Most of linguistic structure is regarded as being both innate and modular, leaving little scope for cultural intervention and transmission. However, the advent of *cognitive linguistics* can also be heralded as a return to *cultural linguistics*. Cognitive linguistic theories recognize cultural knowledge as the foundation not just of lexicon, but central facets of grammar as well. (*ibid.*, p.31)

And he discusses examples from languages such as Spanish, French, and Cupeño to illustrate his point.

The present paper is an attempt built on the tradition briefly outlined above. The aim of the paper is to describe the ubiquity of what I call “the fluid metaphor” in the Japanese language and discuss this ubiquity in relation to Japanese grammar and culture. The organization of the paper is as follows: in §2 the notion of “fluid metaphor” is introduced. §3 is the main body of the paper and describes prevalent use of “fluid metaphor” in Japanese to conceptualize SOUND, LANGUAGE, THOUGHTS and FEELINGS. §4 discusses how the relationship between WORDS and MEANING is expressed in Japanese. Based on the observations made in §3 and §4, §5 speculates on how the prevalent use of “fluid metaphor” in Japanese might be related to general characteristics of the Japanese language and Japanese culture. §6 is a conclusion.

## 2. On the notion of fluid metaphor

The contrast <individuum> vs. <continuum> is probably one of the basic contrasts human beings are cognitively capable of making in order to make sense of the world (cf. Ikegami 1993).<sup>5</sup> The <individuum> has a well-defined boundary distinguishing it from its background and other entities, whereas the <continuum> has no such well-defined boundary. Among the <continuum>, <fluid> is the most likely candidate for the prototype.<sup>6</sup> There are some

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<sup>4</sup> See Ikegami (1985) for a historical survey of the discussions on the relationship between language and culture.

<sup>5</sup> This contrast may be subsumed under the more general contrast <bounded> vs. <unbounded> (cf. Talmy 1988), which underlies the distinctions of count/mass nouns and perfective/imperfective verbs (cf. Langacker 1987b).

<sup>6</sup> The term <fluid> subsumes both <liquid> and <gas>. Most of the predicates that I discuss in this paper (e.g. ‘leak’, ‘pour’, ‘flow’, etc.) can take a <gas> argument as well as a <liquid> argument. Since <liquid> is probably more basic to human experience (in terms of visibility, tangibility, utility, etc.), I speculate that a <liquid> argument is the prototype for these predicates

predicates whose relevant arguments express a <fluid> entity, e.g. ‘flow’, ‘leak’, ‘spill’, ‘pour’, ‘soak’, etc. Consider the following examples:

- (1) a. He *poured* some wine into my glass.
- b. The fans *poured* into the hall.
- c. She *poured* her energy into the ecology movement.

(1a) represents the prototypical use of the verb *pour*, where it takes a <fluid> argument. (1b) represents an extension where a multiplex (= a group of individua) is conceptualized as a fluid.<sup>7</sup> (1c) represents a further extension in which the abstract notion of ‘personal energy’ is likewise conceived of as a fluid. I will call expressions such as (1b) and (1c) “fluid metaphors” in this paper.

As in (1c), abstract concepts are subject to metaphorical understanding. There are two possibilities: one may use the <individuum> metaphor, or one may use the <continuum> metaphor.<sup>8</sup> The fluid metaphor is an example of the latter. Take a look at the following pair:

- (2) a. *hurl* insults at someone                   (‘insults’ = <individuum>)
- b. *shower* someone with insults           (‘insults’ = <continuum>, <fluid>)

The pair expresses more or less the same meaning; however, the two sentences involve different conceptualization of ‘insult’, reflected in the choice of verbs, i.e., *hurl* vs. *shower*. The verb *hurl* takes an <individuum> as a theme (e.g. *hurl a brick*), whereas the verb *shower* typically takes a <continuum> or more specifically <fluid> as a theme (e.g. *shower oil*). Thus, (2a) represents the <individuum> metaphor, and (2b) represents the <continuum> metaphor, specifically, the “fluid metaphor”.

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and that this prototype is semantically extended to a <gas> argument. It is often the case that the prototype is further extended to a non-fluid mass entity such as sand, powder, etc.

<sup>7</sup> Lakoff (1987: 428, 441) relates such pair as (1a) and (1b) by an image-schema transformation called “the multiplex-mass transformation”. Note that an <individuum> cannot appear as an argument of the verb *pour*: \**A fan poured into the hall*.

<sup>8</sup> This type of metaphor corresponds to what Lakoff and Johnson (1980: ch.6) call “ontological metaphor”: “Understanding our experiences in terms of objects and substances allows us to pick out parts of our experience and treat them as discrete entities or substances of a uniform kind. Once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them — and, by this means, reason about them.” (*ibid.*, p.25). <Fluid> is a subtype of Lakoff and Johnson’s “substances”.

### 3. The fluid metaphor in Japanese

This section describes and discusses how fluid metaphors are used in Japanese to conceptualize our domains of experience; I will examine four domains, namely, 1) sound, 2) language, 3) thoughts, and 4) feelings.

#### 3.1. Sound

Despite being a physical object of perception, sound is invisible and intangible; therefore, it is subject to metaphorization. Let us look at the following conventional expressions:

- (3) a.    tennai-ni                   ongaku-o     *nagasu*.<sup>9</sup>  
          inside shop-LOC     music-ACC   let flow  
          ‘play (background) music in the shop’
- b.    Supīkā-kara   ongaku-ga   *nagareru*.  
          speaker-from   music-NOM   flow  
          ‘Music comes from the speaker.’
- (4)   Heddofon-kara     oto-ga       *moreru*.  
      headphone-from    sound-NOM   leak  
      ‘Sound escapes the headphones.’
- (5)   a.    *sunda* oto  
          limpid sound  
          ‘clear sound’
- b.    *nigotta* oto  
          turbid sound  
          ‘thick sound’

The verbs *nagasu* and *nagareru* in (3) are morphologically related, the former being a transitive verb and the latter an intransitive verb. They typically take a <fluid> entity as their relevant argument, which indicates that *ongaku* ‘music’ is conceptualized as a fluid in (3). The same thing can be said about (4). Examples in (5) involve synaesthetic expressions, where terms from the domain of sight are used to modify terms from the domain of hearing. The antonym pair *sunda* and *nigotta* in (5) are attributive forms of the verbs *sumu* and *nigoru* respectively, which express certain changes of state in a <fluid>: *nigoru* expresses a change of state where a fluid becomes turbid by stirring or a similar action, while *sumu* expresses a change

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<sup>9</sup> By metonymy, one could replace *ongaku* in (3a) with *rekōdo* ‘record’ or *Shopan* ‘Chopin’ and say *rekōdo-o nagasu* ‘play a record’ or *Shopan-o nagasu* ‘play Chopin’.

of state where the turbid fluid becomes limpid after solid matter has settled (note that these Japanese verbs are commonly used in everyday language, unlike their English translations “turbid” and “limpid”).<sup>10</sup> Examples in (5) thus suggest that *oto* ‘sound’ is conceived of as a fluid.

Let us next take a look at a couple of examples from literary texts and see how this metaphor is elaborated and extended:<sup>11,12</sup>

- (6) Tonari-no kodomo-ga rensū shite iru hetakusona baiorin-ga nakaseta. Kokoro-no naka-ni utsushi dasareta aozora ippai ni, marude *shimikomū* yōni sono neiro-ga *nagarete* yuku noda. (YOSHIMOTO Banana, “Rasen” in *Tokage*)  
“It made me cry to hear a next-door child playing the violin unskillfully. The sound *flowed* as if it would thoroughly *soak* the blue sky in my heart.”<sup>13</sup>

In this passage, music is conceptualized as a fluid “flowing” (*nagarete*) and “soaking into” (*shimikomū*) the heart. Let us look at the next example, where music is again conceptualized as a fluid:

- (7) Boku-wa me-o tojite, sono tsuzuki-o hiita. Daimei-o omoidasu to, ato-no merodī to kōdo-wa shizen ni boku-no yubisaki-kara *nagare* dashite kita.  
(MURAKAMI Haruki, *Sekai no owari to hādoboirudo wandārando*)  
“Closing my eyes, I resumed playing the song. Once I recalled the title, melodies and chords *flowed* naturally from my fingertips.”

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<sup>10</sup> See Araki (1985: 50-54) for the cultural importance of the verb *sumu*, which is, according to him, polysemous for ‘limpid’, ‘be finished’, and ‘live (at a certain place)’ in its origin, though these different senses are distinguished in writing by different Chinese characters. Note also that in Japanese, *sunda oto* and *nigotta oto* in (5), when used to describe speech sound, can refer to voiceless and voiced consonants respectively.

<sup>11</sup> Otherwise mentioned, translations of literary texts are my own; I omit word-for-word glosses and try instead to translate passages as literally as possible. A Japanese author’s name is represented in the order of family name and given name.

<sup>12</sup> See Lakoff and Turner (1989) for a discussion of the relationship between conceptual metaphor and literary metaphor.

<sup>13</sup> This passage is translated by Ann Sherif as “From next door, I could hear a little girl practicing the violin, and the screeching brought tears to my eyes. The tones, as she clumsily drew her bow across the strings, spread through the blue sky filling my mind.” (Yoshimoto Banana, “Helix” in *Lizard*). Notice that *nagarete* ‘flow’ and *shimikomū* ‘soak’ are translated as “spread” and “fill”.

Here the piano player’s body (more specifically his fingertips) is conceptualized as a container from which music as a fluid “flows” (*nagare*). Lastly, let us look at an example where non-music sound is metaphorized as a fluid:

- (8) Sairen-no oto-ga *waite* kuru hō-ni kao-o yatte haha-wa itta.

(TATEMATSU Wahei, *Tamago arai*)

“Turning her head toward where the sound of the siren was *welling up*, my mother spoke.”

We have so far looked at metaphorization of non-human sound; human voice, being a kind of physical sound, is also commonly metaphorized as a fluid. Let us see some conventional expressions:

- (9) basei-o            *abiseru* / *abiru*  
 booing-ACC    douse / be doused  
 ‘boo (someone) / be booed’

- (10) tansei-o                            *morasu* /    tansei-ga                            *moreru*<sup>14</sup>  
 sigh of admiration-ACC    leak (vt) /    sigh of admiration-NOM    leak (vi)  
 ‘heave a sigh of admiration’

- (11) koe-o                    *shibori-dasu*<sup>15</sup>  
 voice-ACC    squeeze-out  
 ‘speak in a forced whisper’

The first two examples involve Sino-Japanese compound nouns ending with *-sei* ‘voice’, and the third example involves the native Japanese word *koe* ‘voice’. In (9), *abiru* is transitive verb and *abiseru* is its lexical causative verb. The verbs *morasu* and *moreru* in (10) are transitive and intransitive verbs respectively. The above examples suggest that VOICE is conceptualized as a fluid (that comes out of the human body, as we will see shortly).

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<sup>14</sup> In the following example, the person, who is conceptualized as a container for voice as a fluid, is inside the room, which in turn is conceptualized as a container for voice (note that *goe* is derived from *koe* by so-called Sequential Voicing rule):

- (i) Kanojo-no    heya-kara    hanashi    goe-ga    morete    kita.  
 she-GEN    room-from    talking    voice-NOM    leak    came  
 ‘Talking voice was heard from her room.’

<sup>15</sup> cf. (55), (56)



Let us examine two more examples. Example (12) is a case where the noun *koe* ‘voice’ is used with words expressing states of fluid, and example (13) involves the metaphorization of the emergence of collective voices as the emergence of a fluid:

- (12) Ano hito-no koe-wa *sunde* ite, *nigori-ga* nai.  
 that person-GEN voice-TOP limpid be, turbidity-NOM NEG  
 ‘That person’s voice is clear (lit. limpid and without turbidity).’
- (13) Kansei-ga *waku*.  
 cheer-NOM well up  
 ‘A cheer arises.’

Now let us look at some examples from literary texts, where VOICE is conceptualized as a fluid:

- (14) “Nēsan” to yobu koe-ga sono araarashii hibiki-no naka-o *nagarete* kita.  
 (KAWABATA Yasunari, *Yukiguni*)  
 “‘Sister!’ The calling voice came *flowing* through the roar (of the freight train).”
- (15) Nodo-kara, onaka-no soko-kara, kireina oto-ga sarasarato *afure* dete iku no-ga mieru yō datta.  
 (YOSHIMOTO Banana, *Amurita*)  
 “It was as if I could see beautiful sound *overflowing* from my throat, the bottom of my stomach.”
- (16) “U, uuuuu, motto, motto, funzukete, fumi koroshite kurei!” Kotoba tomo umeki tomo wakaranu oto-ga, otoko-no kuchi-kara *morete* kita. (EDOGAWA Rampo, *Kage otoko*)  
 “‘Once more, more, trample me, trample me to death!’ A sound distinguishable neither from words nor from a groan *leaked* from the man’s mouth.”

Notice that in the last two examples the “human body” is conceptualized as a container from which VOICE as a fluid “flows” or “leaks” (more specifically, VOICE flows from the stomach, through the throat, and finally out of the mouth). This conception is motivated by our general understanding of our bodies as containers, which is presumably grounded in our daily experiences such as breathing, ingestion, and excretion (cf. the CONTAINER image schema in Johnson 1987, Lakoff 1987).

### 3.2. Language

It is a small step from conceptualizing VOICE as a fluid to conceptualizing WORDS as a fluid: ‘voice’ accompanies ‘words’ in prototypical situations, that is, they are in a metonymic relationship. Nomura (1995) classifies the LANGUAGE IS A FLUID metaphor into four facets: 1) PRODUCTION OF WORDS IS LETTING OUT A FLUID, 2) FLUENCY OF SPEECH IS THE SPEED OF FLOW OF A FLUID, 3) INTELLIGIBILITY OF WORDS IS TRANSPARENCY OF A FLUID, and 4) RECEPTION OF WORDS IS TAKING IN A FLUID. In this section, I will describe these four facets of the LANGUAGE IS A FLUID metaphor in detail.

#### 3.2.1. Production of words is letting out a fluid

We saw in the previous section that VOICE is conceptualized as a fluid coming out of the human body (or mouth, to be more specific). The same metaphORIZATION applies to language: production of words is metaphorized as letting out a fluid (from the body). Below are some conventional expressions reflecting this metaphORIZATION:

- (17) shinratsuna kotoba-o abiseru<sup>16</sup>  
biting words-ACC douse  
‘shower someone with biting remarks’
- (18) kotoba-o morasu / kotoba-ga (kuchi-kara) moreru<sup>17</sup>  
words-ACC leak (vt) / words-NOM (mouth-from) leak (vi)  
‘utter words in spite of oneself / Words escape (one’s lips)’
- (19) kotoba-o shibori-dasu  
words-ACC squeeze-out  
‘force out one’s words’
- (20) fuman-no kotoba-o kobosu / fuman-no kotoba-ga  
complaint-GEN words-ACC spill (vt) / complaint-GEN words-NOM  
koboreru<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The noun *kotoba* encompasses the concepts of ‘language’, ‘speech’ and ‘word’. I will gloss *kotoba* as “words” throughout this paper, using the plural form; readers are reminded, however, that Japanese nouns lack the morphological singular-plural distinction.

<sup>17</sup> The transitive verb *morasu* ‘leak’ can express an unintentional leak, as is reflected in the translation “in spite of oneself” in (18).

<sup>18</sup> The verb *kobosu* usually implies spilling something that should have been contained. The reason that *kobosu* is usually associated with the notion of ‘complaint’ (*fuman*, *fuhei*, *guchi*) might be that ‘complaint’ is understood in Japanese culture as something to be contained inside and not let out.

spill (vi)

‘make a complaint / Words of complaint escape (one’s lips)’

- (21) uwasa-o        *nagasu*  
rumor-ACC    let flow  
‘spread a rumor’

Note the parallelism between (9)-(11) and (17)-(19), where the same set of predicates is being used to conceptualize VOICE and WORDS. Also, example (21) is comparable to example (3).

Of particular interest is the fact that the verbs *morasu* ‘leak’ and *kobosu* ‘spill’ can take a complement clause followed by the complementizer *to*. This suggests that these two verbs can essentially function as speech verbs.

- (22) Tarō-wa        Jirō-ga        gan    dearu    to        *morasu.*  
Taro-TOP      Jiro-NOM    cancer be    COMP      leak (vt)  
‘Taro confides that Jiro has cancer.’

- (23) Tarō-wa        Jirō-ga        urusai    to        *kobosu.*  
Taro-TOP      Jiro-NOM    noisy    COMP    spill (vt)  
‘Taro complains that Jiro is noisy.’

The conceptualization of the speaker as a container of a fluid (= words) is shown in the following cliché, where the speaker is conceptualized as a reservoir of water (=words):

- (24) *seki-o*        *kitta*    *yōni*    *hanasu*  
dam-ACC      broke    as if    speak  
‘speak as if a dam has burst’

Now let us look at some examples from literary texts, where the metaphor PRODUCTION OF WORDS IS LETTING OUT A FLUID is elaborated and extended:

- (25) Tokoroga sōko-ga mata ii mashita. “Iya shimpai shinasanna. Kono koto-wa kesshite hoka-e-wa *morashimasen* zo. Washi-ga shikkari *nomi komi* mashita.”

(MIYAZAWA Kenji, *Shigunaru to shigunaresu*)

“But Warehouse said again, ‘Don’t worry. I will not *leak* this to others; I have *gulped* it down securely.’”

What is interesting about the above passage is the relationship between *morasu* ‘leak’ and *nomi komu* ‘gulp/swallow down’: if a person gulps something down, s/he is not likely to let it out. Here WORDS are conceptualized as something more than a mere fluid, namely, as a drink, and the role of the person as a container of fluids is brought to the fore. The next example also explicitly expresses a person as a container of words:

(26) “Aa, akunin me! Omae koso hitogoroshi da. Nasake-o shiranu hito oni da.”  
Totsuzen, Ruriko-no kuchi-kara osoroshii kotoba-ga *hotobashitta*.

(EDOGAWA Rampo, *Hakuhatsuki*)

“‘Villain! Murderer, merciless devil.’ Suddenly, horrible words *spurted* from Ruriko’s mouth.”

This example also indicates that the intensity of a fluid correlates positively with the (emotional) intensity of an utterance; thus, verbs like *koboreru* ‘spill’ and *moreru* ‘leak’ are very unlikely to replace *hotobashiru* ‘spurt’ in the context of (26).

Let us look at two more examples:

(27) Sō shinakereba, rongu intabyū to iu mono-wa tada no kotoba-no *tarenagashi*-ni natte shimau. (MURAKAMI Haruki, *Murakami asahidō no gyakushū*)

“Otherwise, a long interview would become nothing but *letting* (a sewer of) words *flow*.”

(28) Tokoroga soko-e niwakani “konogoro-no neko-wa nezumi-o toranaku natta” to iu hihan-ga *waki* agatta. (INOUE Hisashi, *Hyakunen sensō*)

“All of a sudden a criticism *welled up* that ‘cats of today do not catch mice any more.’”

The word *tarenagashi* in (27) usually means “to leave sewage or toxic waste water running”; the whole sentence thus equates a long interview with a useless and meaningless flow of words. In (28), the emergence of criticism is conceptualized as the emergence of a fluid (cf. (13)).

Thus far we have considered cases where the production of spoken language is conceptualized as letting out a fluid; the same metaphorization applies to written language as well, though this is less conventionalized:

(29) kaki-nagasu  
write-let flow  
‘dash off (a letter, etc.)’

- (30) Ippanron-o iu nara, shōsetsuka to iu mono-wa bunshō-o *nagashi, nagashi*, soshite tome, mata *nagasu*. (MURAKAMI Haruki, *Za sukotto fittsugerarudo bukku*)  
 “Generally speaking, novelists are those who let sentences *flow, flow*, stop, and again *flow*.”
- (31) Dōshitemo, katsute no yōna *nagareru* ga gotoki meibun-o, pen-no saki-kara, *hineri dasu* koto-ga dekinai node aru. (INOUE Hisashi, *Bun to fun*)  
 “He just can’t *squeeze* out of his pen point *flowing* beautiful passages that he used to write.”

All these examples show that written words are conceptualized as fluids. *kaki-nagasu* in (29) is a compound verb, meaning “to write as if pouring out water; dash off”. Example (31) indicates that words as fluids flow out of a pen.<sup>19</sup> In the case of spoken language, our body is conceptualized as a container for words as fluids; in the case of written language, on the other hand, a pen serves as an extension of our body and is conceptualized as a container for words as fluids. This conception may also be motivated by the fact that pens contain ink, which is fluid.

We have considered above the metaphor PRODUCTION OF WORDS IS LETTING OUT A FLUID. Now the question arises: where do words go that are let out, and how do they get there? There is some evidence that words issued from the speaker go toward the hearer. In line with this, a directional phrase such as *Tarō-ni* ‘to/toward Taro’ can be added to some of the predicates we discussed above:

- (17)’ shinratsuna kotoba-o Tarō-ni *abiseru*  
 biting words-ACC Taro-LOC douse  
 ‘shower Taro with biting remarks’
- (18)’ kotoba-o Tarō-ni *morasu*  
 words-ACC Taro-LOC leak (vt)  
 ‘confess to Taro’
- (20)’ fuman-no kotoba-o Tarō-ni *kobosu*  
 complaint-GEN words-ACC Taro-LOC spill (vt)  
 ‘make a complaint to Taro’

Next, there are a couple of expressions in Japanese that suggest that words issued from the speaker go through a conduit to the hearer:

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<sup>19</sup> The compound verb *hineri-dasu* (turn-let out) in (31) might invoke the image of a faucet turning on and water coming out.

- (32) kotoba/kangae/kimochi-ga *tsūjiru*  
 words/idea/feeling-NOM go through  
 ‘make oneself understood’
- (33) imi-ga *tōra-nai* <sup>20</sup>  
 meaning-NOM go through-NEG  
 ‘does not make sense’
- (34) *tsutsu-nuke*  
 conduit-going through  
 “(information) leak”

The number of examples that suggest the existence of a conduit is relatively small and thus we do not have solid linguistic evidence to show that words issued from the speaker necessarily go through a conduit to the hearer; <sup>21</sup> we could simply say that words move toward the hearer, the presence or absence of a conduit in this case being irrelevant.

### 3.2.2. Fluency of speech is the speed of flow of a fluid

The mapping between LANGUAGE and FLUID enables us to export our general knowledge of fluids to the domain of communication. Part of our general knowledge about fluids is that they flow (cf. river): sometimes they flow rapidly and smoothly, sometimes they flow slowly, and sometimes they cease flowing and stagnate, etc. This knowledge gives rise to the metaphor FLUENCY OF SPEECH IS THE SPEED OF FLOW OF A FLUID, which is shown by the following expressions:

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<sup>20</sup> The verb *tōru* does not always imply the existence of a conduit: *kuruma-ga* (car-NOM) *tōru* can simply mean ‘A car passes by’, as well as ‘A car goes through (a tunnel)’.

<sup>21</sup> The verb *tsumaru* ‘be clogged’ and its morphological causative *tsumaraseru* ‘clog up’ take either a blocking object or a conduit as their relevant argument:

- (i) paipu-ga tsumaru / paipu-o tsumaraseru  
 pipe-NOM be clogged / pipe-ACC clog up  
 ‘The pipe is clogged up / clog up the pipe’
- (ii) (paipu-ni) gomi-ga tsumaru / gomi-o tsumaraseru  
 (pipe-LOC) garbage-NOM be clogged / garbage-ACC clog up  
 ‘The pipe is clogged with garbage / clog up the pipe with garbage’

The expression *kotoba-o tsumaraseru* (words-ACC make clog) ‘be stuck for words’ may thus suggest the existence of a conduit, whether *kotoba* itself is a conduit or it just goes through a conduit.

- (35) a. *yodomi-naku*          *hanasu*  
 stagnation-without      speak  
 ‘speak fluently’
- b. *ii-yodomu*  
 say-stagnate  
 ‘hesitate to say’
- (36) *tōtō-to*          *hanasu*  
 swiftly                  speak  
 ‘speak volubly’
- (37) *tateita-ni*                  *mizu-o*          *nagasu*          *yōni*      *hanasu*  
 upright board-LOC      water-ACC      pour          as if      speak  
 ‘speak fast and fluently’

The examples in (35) involve the verb *yodomu* ‘stagnate’ and its nominalized form *yodomi* ‘stagnation’, whose subject has to be a fluid entity (such as water and air) in Japanese. (35b) is a compound verb. Example (36) has the onomatopoeic adverb *tōtō-to* ‘swiftly’, which is usually used to describe a rapid flow of a fluid (cf. *kawa-ga tōtō-to nagareru* (river-NOM swiftly flow) ‘The river flows rapidly’). This adverb is metaphorically used here to describe the rapid flow of speech. Example (37) involves a simile, which literally means “speak as if pouring water on an upright board”; if you pour water on an upright board, it flows down quickly, which metaphorically means speaking fast and fluently. All these examples show the correlation between fluency of speech and the speed of flow of a fluid.

Observe that in the following attested example, all three of the above expressions are included in one sentence:

- (38) *sanagara tateita-ni mizu mo yoroshiku, tōtō yodomi-naku enzetsu suredo*  
 (TSUBOUCHI Shōyō, *Tōsei shosei katagi*)  
 “made a speech volubly and fluently like pouring water on an upright board”

Let us take a look at a couple of more examples from literary texts:

- (39) *Pureibōi intabyū-no kihon porishī-wa daitai kō iu mono dearu. [...]* (3) *Hanashi-no nagare-o kirazu, yodomasezu, shitsumon-wa kanketsu-ni suru.*  
 (MURAKAMI Haruki, *Murakami asahidō no gyakushū*)

“Basic principles of Playboy Interview are roughly as follows. [...] (3) Don’t cut the *flow* of conversation, don’t let it *stagnate*; make questions short.”

In this example, an interview is conceived of as a flow of fluids, as the words *nagare* ‘flow’ and *yodomaseru* ‘make stagnate’ suggest. Let us see the next one, where the author creates new images out of a conventional metaphor:

(40) Kimie: Shita-ni abura demo hīte aru no kai.

Inoue: Haa?

Kimie: *Tateita-ni mizu* dokoro ja nai. Berabera to kyūkōbai-ni arare ja naika.

(INOUE Hisashi, *Yaa, ogenki desuka*)

Kimie: “Is your tongue covered with oil?”

Inoue: “What do you mean?”

Kimie: “Your talking is more than *pouring water on an upright wooden board*; it’s more like scattering hailstones on a steep slope.”

This dialogue concerns Kimie’s comparison of two metaphors to aptly describe Inoue’s volubility: the first metaphor is an idiom we saw in (37), namely, ‘pouring water on an upright board’ and the second metaphor is a novel one ‘scattering hailstones on a steep slope’. Note that the idiom ‘pour water on an upright board’ itself does not say anything about what a ‘board’ refers to; however, Kimie’s first line “Is your tongue (surface) covered with oil?” prompts one to view Inoue’s ‘tongue’ and ‘words’ as ‘an upright board’ and ‘water’ in the first metaphor and as ‘a steep slope’ and ‘hailstones’ in the second metaphor. This is an instance of a novel, creative interpretation of an idiom.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2.3. Intelligibility of words is transparency of a fluid

Another piece of knowledge that is exploited in the mapping between LANGUAGE and FLUID concerns transparency of a fluid: a fluid can be clear and transparent, or it can be muddy. When a fluid is transparent, it is easy to see through it; when it is muddy, it is hard to do so. This experiential knowledge, combined with the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1980:48), gives rise to the metaphor INTELLIGIBILITY OF WORDS IS TRANSPARENCY OF A FLUID. Take a look at the following example:

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<sup>22</sup> See Gibbs (1990, 1994) for a discussion of idiom comprehension.



- (41) kotoba-o      *nigosu*  
 words-ACC    make turbid  
 ‘speak ambiguously’

The transitive verb *nigosu* ‘make turbid’ takes a <fluid> entity as its direct object (e.g. *mizu/kūki-o nigosu* (water/air-ACC make muddy) ‘make water turbid’ ‘make air foul’).<sup>23</sup> Thus, example (41) shows that words are viewed as a <fluid>; “making words turbid” means ‘making words hard to understand’, that is, ‘speaking vaguely or ambiguously.’

There is no conventional expression to mean the opposite of example (41), that is, there is no conventional phrase like “make words limpid” to mean ‘speak intelligibly’; however, the following literary example might be regarded as exploiting this possibility:

- (42) Tadashi, nagai saigetsu-no aida-ni-wa, itsuka *nigotta* mizu-ga *sunde* yuku yōni, Kōshi-no okotoba naru mono-no *nagare* mo, itsuka kyōzatsubutsu-wa shizumi, Kōshi-no okotoba dakega, *sunda nagare*-o tsukutte yuku koto dearō to omoi masu.

(INOUE Yasushi, *Kōshi*)

“In the course of time, just like turbid water eventually becomes limpid, among what are alleged to be Confucius’ remarks, only the true ones will make a limpid flow, while impurities will be deposited.”

Here an alleged body of Confucius’ remarks is conceived of as a river where only his true remarks will constitute a limpid — that is, clear and intelligible — flow, which future generations will appreciate.

### 3.2.4. Reception of words is taking in a fluid

We have so far looked at metaphors that concern the speaker’s role. Now we are in a position to consider the metaphorization of the hearer’s role in communication. The fluid issued by the speaker flows toward the hearer, who has two choices: either accept the fluid or ignore it. These two choices are exemplified by the following examples:

- (43) kotoba-o      *kumu*  
 words-ACC    draw (water)  
 ‘take someone’s words into consideration’

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<sup>23</sup> The verb *nigosu* ‘make turbid’ is morphologically related to the verb *nigoru* ‘become turbid’ (cf. (5b)) and the noun *nigori* ‘turbidity’ (cf. (12)).

- (44) Tarō-wa Jirō-no kotoba-o kiki-nagasu.  
 Taro-TOP Jiro-GEN words-ACC hear-let flow  
 ‘Taro lets Jiro’s words go in one ear and out the other.’

The verb *kumu* in (43) means ‘scoop up’ or ‘draw’ in the sense of ‘drawing water’ and its direct object has to be a <fluid> entity. Example (44) involves a compound verb *kiki-nagasu* (hear-let flow), which means ‘listen inattentively.’ I suspect that the image behind this expression is that the hearer lets the fluid continue “flowing downstream”, without accepting it.

Example (44) expresses a case where the hearer intentionally ignores someone’s words; when the hearer accidentally fails to catch someone’s words, the different compound verb *kiki-morasu* (hear-leak) is used:

- (45) Tarō-wa Jirō-no kotoba-o kiki-morasu.<sup>24</sup>  
 Taro-TOP Jiro-GEN words-ACC hear-leak (vt)  
 ‘Taro fails to catch Jiro’s words’

The image behind this expression would be that the hearer inadvertently fails to scoop up a fluid (=words) and the fluid leaks.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> There is also a compound verb *more-kiku* (leak (vi)-hear), which means ‘hear a rumor’:

- (i) Tarō-ga kekkonsuru hanasi-o more-kiku.  
 Taro-NOM get married rumor-ACC leak-hear  
 ‘I hear the rumor that Taro will get married.’

The image behind this compound verb would presumably be that one catches WORDS leaking accidentally from some source of information.

The verb *morasu* ‘leak (vt)’ also makes the following compound verbs: *ii-morasu* (say-leak) ‘fail to mention/let out’, *kaki-morasu* (write-leak) ‘fail to write’, and *yomi-morasu* (read-leak) ‘fail to read’. It seems to be the case that *morasu* cannot combine with verbs other than communication verbs to mean ‘fail to do something’: *\*iki-morasu* (go-leak), *\*koroshi-morasu* (kill-leak), *\*benkyōshi-morasu* (study-leak).

In addition to *morasu*, the verbs *otosu* ‘drop’ and *nogasu* ‘let escape’ can also be used to make the following compound verbs: *kiki-otosu* (hear-drop) ‘fail to catch words’, *ii-otosu* (say-drop) ‘fail to mention’, *kiki-nogasu* (hear-let escape) ‘fail to catch words’, *ii-nogasu* (say-let escape) ‘fail to mention’.

Interestingly, the verb *miru* ‘see’ cannot combine with fluid predicates *morasu* ‘leak’ or *nagasu* ‘let flow’ to make a compound verb ‘fail to see’; it can only combine with *otosu* ‘drop’ and *nogasu* ‘let escape’: *mi-otosu*, *mi-nogasu* ‘fail to see’, but *\*mi-morasu*, *\*mi-nagasu*.

<sup>25</sup> The following attested example indicates this conceptualization more vividly:

Ani-no kotoba-wa, Daisuke-no mimi-o kasumete soto-e koboreta.

(NATSUME Sōseki, *Sorekara*)

Parallel expressions exist for expressing the reader's role in receiving written language:

- (46) hon-o            yomi-*nagasu* (cf. (44))  
book-ACC    read-let flow  
'read a book inattentively, skim through a book'
- (47) hon-o            yomi-*morasu* (cf. (45))  
book-ACC    read-leak  
'miss the opportunity to read the book'

Expressions (43)-(45) concern cases where the hearer plays an active role. The following expressions, on the other hand, describe cases where the hearer plays only a passive role and words just soak/douse the hearer:

- (48) Kanojo-no    kotoba-ga    kokoro-ni    *shimiru*.  
she-GEN    words-NOM   heart-LOC    soak  
'Her words sink into my heart.'
- (49) shinratsuna   kotoba-o    *abiru*    (cf. (17))  
biting        word-ACC    be doused  
'be showered with biting remarks'

Let us look at a literary example:

- (50) [...] to tsugitsugi mimi-ni haitte kuru fusuma goshi-no sono kotoba-wa, marude atama-kara *nieyu-o abise* rareru yōna atsusa-de Mitsuno-no tainai-ni *shimi* konde itta.  
(MIYAO Tomiko, *Kinone*)  
"Those words that she overheard one after another through the papered sliding door soaked into Mitsuno's body, as if being doused with boiling water."

This passage is built on the conventional expression (48). Furthermore, a simile is added in this example to explicitly compare WORDS to *nieyu* 'boiling water'. This simile serves to bring the original fluid image of the conventional expression back to our consciousness.

It is generally assumed that we use language to express our thoughts and feelings. We might say that language is more palpable than thoughts and feelings in that it can be materialized

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"His brother's words grazed Daisuke's ear and spilled outside."

as sound waves or patterns of ink. Now that we have observed that language is likely to be conceptualized as a fluid in Japanese, the next task is to consider how thoughts and feelings are conceptualized in Japanese, which is our topic for the next two sections.

### 3.3. Thoughts

It is common in Japanese to conceive of THOUGHTS as fluids. First of all, the emergence of thoughts is conceptualized as the emergence of fluids:

- (51) kangae/hassō/imēji/kyōmi/kōkishin/gimon-ga                      *waku*  
 thought/conception/image/interest/curiosity/doubt-NOM    well up  
 ‘hit upon an idea/concept/image/get interested/become curious/have doubts’

Presumably related to this expression is:

- (52) kangae-ga                      (atama-ni)    *ukabu*  
 thought-NOM                      (head-LOC)    rise to the surface  
 ‘hit upon an idea’

The predicate *ukabu* ‘rise to the surface’ is used to describe ‘cloud’ in the sky, ‘oil’ on the surface of water, ‘boat’ in the river, etc; in other words, the argument that the predicate takes does not necessarily refer to a <fluid> entity, but the entity has to be located in a fluid (‘sky’, ‘water’, ‘river’ in the above examples). Expressions (51) and (52) have in common that emergence of thoughts is conceptualized in terms of the upward motion of an entity.

The following expressions show that a collection of thoughts is conceptualized as a fluid that can “overflow” or “exude” from a container:

- (53) chisei/kyōyō/sainō-ga                      *afureru / nijimi deru*  
 intelligence/knowledge/talent-NOM    overflow / exude  
 ‘very intelligent/knowledgeable/talented’ / ‘one’s intelligence/knowledge/talent reveals itself’

The above expressions concern cases where one’s knowledge spontaneously reveals itself by “overflowing” or “exuding”; when one has to rack one’s brains, the following expression is used:

- (54) atama/chie-o            *shiboru*  
 head/wisdom-ACC    squeeze  
 ‘rack one’s brains’

A word of explanation for the verb *shiboru* ‘squeeze’ is in order here. This verb takes as its direct object either a <fluid> entity or an object containing a <fluid>:

- (55) a.    mizu-o            (suponji-kara) *shiboru*  
           water-ACC    (sponge-from) squeeze  
           ‘squeeze the water (from the sponge)’  
       b.    suponji-o        *shiboru*  
           sponge-ACC    squeeze  
           ‘squeeze the sponge’

When the verb *dasu* ‘let out’ is added to *shiboru* to make a compound verb *shibori-dasu*, only a <fluid> entity can be its direct object:

- (56) {mizu/\*suponji}-o    *shibori-dasu*  
       water/\*sponge-ACC    squeeze-out  
       ‘squeeze out the water’

With this in mind, now let us go back to (54) and replace *shiboru* by *shibori-dasu*:

- (54)’ {\*atama / chie}-o    *shibori-dasu*  
       head / wisdom-ACC    squeeze-out

This shows that *atama* ‘head’ is conceptualized as a container for *chie* ‘wisdom’, which is a fluid.

Expressions (51)-(54) thus appear to form a coherent picture in which THOUGHTS are conceptualized as fluids in a container (= head, mind, heart). The following passage from a literary work is suggestive:

- (57) Ima, jibun-no mune-wa hitotsu no omoi de fukurande iru. Senkoku, Shō-ō-no hitsugi-o ookuri shita ato, ano yomichi-o aruite, koko-ni kuru made ni, watashi-no mune-ni umare, fukurami, *afureru* hodo ippai ni natta omoi-ga aru. Sore-o hirō suru.

(INOUE Yasushi, *Kōshi*)

“At this moment, my heart is bursting with a certain thought. This thought was conceived after we saw off King Chao’s coffin a short time ago and were walking along the night-time street. By the time we arrived here, it had been born, had grown and now feels as if it is *overflowing*. I shall now share it with you.”

(INOUE Yasushi, *Confucius*, translated by Roger K. Thomas)

In this example, *mune* ‘heart’ (lit. ‘chest’) is conceived of as a container for a thought, which is a fluid on the brink of overflowing.

Let us see more conventional expressions where THOUGHTS are conceptualized as fluids:

- (58) Bukkyō shisō-ga kono hon-no kontei-ni nagarete iru.  
 Buddhism thought-NOM this book-GEN bottom-LOC flowing be  
 ‘Buddhist thought runs through this book.’
- (59) Sono kangae-ga hitobito-ni shintō suru.  
 that thought-NOM people-LOC permeate  
 ‘That thought permeates the people.’
- (60) kangae-o kumu (cf. (43))  
 thought-ACC draw (water)  
 ‘take someone’s idea into consideration’

The following attested example foregrounds the conceptualization of THOUGHT as a fluid by using a simile ‘just like water permeates’:

- (61) Ningen-wa shinde nikutai mo seishin mo tsuchi-ni kaeri, yagate ‘mu’-ni kishite yuku no de wa nai ka to iu kangae-ga hitobito-no aida-ni mizu-ga shimi komu yō ni hirogatte imasu.  
 (IROKAWA Daikichi, *Shōwa shi to Ten-nō*)  
 “The idea that after our death both our body and soul will turn to dust and ‘nothingness’ is spreading among people, just like *water permeates* them.”

### 3.4. Feelings

It is often the case that in Japanese, THOUGHTS and FEELINGS are rather merged so that it is hard to draw a clear line between the two. The noun *omoi* in (57) is one such example: the word is translated as ‘thought’, but it originates in one’s *mune* (lit. ‘chest’; ‘heart’) rather than in *atama* (lit. ‘head’; ‘mind’). It is also worth noting that the noun *kokoro* covers both ‘heart’ and

‘mind’. The following examples involve concepts that have more emotive overtones than mere ‘thoughts’ and ‘ideas’:

- (62) kibō/kitai/kakushin/jishin/yūki/kimochi-ga                      *waku/komi ageru*  
 hope/expectation/certainty/confidence/courage/feeling-NOM      well up  
 ‘hope/expectation/certainty/confidence/courage/feeling arises’
- (63) kibō/kitai/kakushin/jishin/yūki/kimochi-ga                      *afureru*  
 hope/expectation/certainty/confidence/courage/feeling-NOM      overflow  
 ‘overflow with hope/expectation/certainty/confidence/courage/feeling’

The following are examples where EMOTIONS are conceptualized as fluids:

- (64) ikari/yorokobi/kanashimi/aijō/nikushimi/natsukashisa-ga      *waku/komi ageru*  
 anger/happiness/sorrow/affection/hatred/nostalgia-NOM      well up
- (65) ikari/yorokobi/kanashimi/aijō/nikushimi/natsukashisa-ga      *ahureru*  
 anger/happiness/sorrow/affection/hatred/nostalgia-NOM      overflow
- (66) yorokobi/kanashimi/kanshō-ni                      *hitaru*  
 happiness/sorrow/sentimentality-LOC                      be immersed  
 ‘lose oneself in joy/sorrow/sentimentality’
- (67) aijō/jōnetsu-o                      *sosogu*  
 affection/enthusiasm-ACC      pour  
 ‘shower someone with love/put one’s heart into’
- (68) yorokobi/kanashimi-o                      *tataeru*  
 happiness/sorrow-ACC                      brim with  
 ‘be brimming with happiness/sorrow’

Let us take a look at a couple of examples from literary texts:

- (69) Aijō-wa ikura datte *sosogeru*, marude nihon koku-no suidō-no yōni, ikura dashippanashi ni shitemo kitto tsukinai, sonna ki-ga suru mono ne.

(YOSHIMOTO Banana, *Tsugumi*)

“I feel that love is something that you can *shower* on someone as much as you want, just like water in Japan, no matter how long you leave the faucets running, it will not be exhausted.”

In this passage, the predicate *sosogeru* ‘can pour’ is used with respect to *aijō* ‘love’ and the simile ‘just like water in Japan’ makes it all the more salient that *aijō* is conceptualized as a fluid. Let us look at another one:

- (70) Haha no inai Nobuo-ga, onna-no sensei-o shitau awaresa-ga Sadayuki-no kokoro-ni  
*shimita.* (MIURA Ayako, *Shiokari tōge*)  
 “The motherless Nobuo, adoring a lady teacher - the pathos of it stung Masayuki’s [sic] heart.” (Miura Ayako, *Shiokari Pass*, translated by Bill and Sheila Fearnough)

Here *awaresa* ‘pity’ is metaphorized as a fluid that “soaks into” (*shimita*) one’s heart. In the English translation the verb “stung” is used, but a more literal translation would employ “soaked into” instead.

#### 4. The relationship between meaning and words: MEANING BECOMES WORDS

We observed in §3 the ubiquity of the fluid metaphor in Japanese to conceptualize LANGUAGE, THOUGHTS, and FEELINGS. In this section, we will consider how Japanese expresses the relationship between WORDS and MEANING (I will use the term ‘meaning’ to subsume both “thoughts” and “feelings” conveyed by words).

Unlike English where WORDS tends to be conceived of as containers for MEANINGS (e.g. *Try to pack more thoughts into fewer words, That thought is in practically every other word, Can you actually extract coherent ideas from that prose?* cf. Reddy 1979), it is quite odd for Japanese to express the insertion or extraction of meaning into or out of words:

- |         |  |                             |                                 |
|---------|--|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (71) ?? | kotoba-ni  | imi/kangae/kimochi-o        | <i>ireru/sōnyū</i> suru         |
|         | words-to   | meaning/thought/feeling-ACC | put/insert                      |
|         | intended meaning: ‘put meaning into words’       |                             |                                 |
| (72) ?? | kotoba-kara                                      | imi/kangae/kimochi-o        | <i>toridasu/tekishutsu</i> suru |
|         | words-from                                       | meaning/thought/feeling-ACC | take out/extract                |
|         | intended meaning: ‘extract meaning out of words’ |                             |                                 |

There are, in fact, only a very few conventional expressions in Japanese that treat WORDS and MEANING as independently existing entities, as exemplified by the following:

- |      |           |                             |               |
|------|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| (73) | kotoba-ni | imi/kangae/kimochi-o        | <i>komeru</i> |
|      | words-LOC | meaning/thought/feeling-ACC | load          |



- ‘load words with meaning/thought/feeling’
- (74) kotoba-ga imi/kangae/kimochi-o *fukumu*  
 words-NOM meaning/thought/feeling-ACC contain  
 ‘the words contain meaning/thought/feeling’
- (75) kotoba-ni imi/kangae/kimochi-o *takusu*  
 words-LOC meaning/thought/feeling-ACC entrust  
 ‘entrust meaning/thought/feeling to words’

It is, on the other hand, far more common and frequent in Japanese to say as follows:

- (76) a. kangae/kimochi-ga kotoba-ni naru  
 thought/feeling-NOM words-LOC become  
 Lit. ‘one’s thought/feeling becomes words’
- b. kangae/kimochi-o kotoba-ni suru  
 thought/feeling-ACC words-LOC make become  
 Lit. ‘make one’s thought/feeling become words’

These expressions indicate the conceptualization in which MEANING “becomes” WORDS, rather than being “inserted into” WORDS. This suggests that in Japanese, unlike in English, WORDS and MEANING are fused, rather than existing separately and independently of each other.

The fusion of WORDS and MEANING is best observed in the following examples, where either ‘words’ or ‘meaning’ can be an argument of the same predicate:

- (77) {kotoba/imi/kangae/kimochi}-o *kumu*  
 words/meaning/thought/feeling-ACC draw (water)  
 ‘take someone’s words/meaning/thought/feeling into consideration’
- (78) {kotoba/kangae/kimochi}-ga kokoro-ni *shimiru*  
 words/thought/feeling-NOM heart-LOC soak  
 ‘(someone’s) words/thought/feeling sink into (my) heart’

The idea of the fusion of WORDS and MEANING in Japanese has been around for a long time. Ikegami (1988a) cites the following passage from the preface of *Kokin wakashū*, a collection of Japanese poetry compiled at the beginning of the 10th century, to show the metonymic relationship between WORDS and MEANING in Japanese:

- (79) Yamato uta-wa, hito-no kokoro-o tane to shite, yorozu-no koto-no ha to zo nareri keru.  
“The seeds of Japanese poetry lie in the human heart and grow into leaves of ten thousand words.” (Kokinshu, translated by Laurel R. Rodd and Mary C. Henkenius)

In this passage, *kokoro* (‘heart’, ‘meaning’) is conceptualized as “growing into” *uta* (‘poetry’, ‘words’), just like *tane* ‘seed’ “grows into” *ha* ‘leaf’. Here the view that MEANING becomes WORDS is expressed by using the plant metaphor.

Going from the 10th century to the 18th century, we can see the same view of poetry in HATTORI Tohō’s *Sanzōshi*, which described the teachings of his master, the haiku poet, Matsuo Bashō:

- (80) Kuzukuri ni, naru to suru to ari. Uchi-o tsuneni tsutomete mono-ni ōzureba, sono kokoro-no iro ku to naru. Uchi-o tsuneni tsutomezaru mono-wa, narazaru yueni shii ni kakete suru nari. (HATTORI Tohō, *Sanzōshi*)  
“There are two ways to compose a poem: becoming and doing/making. If you endeavor to develop a keen sensitivity to the things around you, your heart becomes a poem; if you don’t, your heart does not become a poem so that you end up doing/making a poem.”

Here the two ways of composing a poem, “becoming” a poem and “doing/making” a poem, are contrasted and the former is deemed as ideal.

A similar conception of literature is espoused by present-day writers:

- (81) Sono uta-o marude wata-ni mizu-o shimikomaseru yōni kokoro-ni *shimikomase*, sore-o gyutto *shibotta mizu-ga* kono shōsetsu shū da to shitara, Hara-san hodo kono hon-no kanmatsu-ni fusawashii hito-wa imasen. (YOSHIMOTO Banana, *Shirakawa yofune*)  
“If this collection of stories is the product of *soaking* my heart in his songs — just like soaking cotton in water — and *squeezing* it, there is no one as fitting as Mr. Hara to appear in the afterword of this book.”
- (82) Tsumari sa, bungaku to iu mono-wa sore-o senmon ni benkyō shitari, kenkyū shitari suru mono ja nakute, goku futsū no jinsei kara shizen ni *waki* dete kuru mono ja nain darō katte sa. (MURAKAMI Haruki, *Nejimakidori kuronikuru* Vol. 1)  
“I suppose literature is not something you study or do research on, but rather something that *wells up* naturally from your ordinary life.”

These two passages have in common that literature as a collection of words is viewed as a fluid that originates in one's heart, again illustrating the idea that MEANING becomes WORDS.

Thus, we find that, from *Kokin wakashū* of the early 10th century to the modern writers of the late 20th century, the conception of WORDS as metamorphosis of MEANING has not changed. This conception is observed not only in literary works, but also in conventional expressions such as:

- (83) Kare-no kangae/kimochi-ga bunshō-ni nijimi dete iru.  
 he-GEN thought/feeling-NOM passage-LOC exude out be  
 'His thoughts/feelings exude from the passage.'

Again THOUGHTS/FEELINGS and PASSAGE are fused here, rather than the latter being a container for the former.

We have seen above that the conception of MEANING becoming WORDS is more prevalent in Japanese than the idea that MEANING is put into WORDS. Why is this the case? It seems that this conception fits in with our observation in §3, where it was seen that both language and thoughts/feelings are likely to be conceptualized as fluids in Japanese. It is rather difficult and unlikely for a fluid to become a container for another fluid; in this respect, it seems natural that Japanese has very few expressions to indicate the conceptualization of WORDS as containers for MEANING.

## 5. Discussions

### 5.1. The <fluid> metaphor and the <individuum> metaphor in Japanese and English

We observed in §3 how prevalently the fluid metaphor is used in Japanese. This does not, of course, mean that Japanese never construes abstract concepts in terms of <individuum>. Let us see some examples:

- (84) a. hageshii kotoba-o butsukeru/nagetsukeru  
 biting words-ACC fling/throw  
 'snap at (someone)'  
 b. kotoba-ga kuchi-kara deru  
 words-NOM mouth-from go out  
 'Words come out of one's mouth'  
 c. kotoba-ga mimi-ni tobikomul/todoku/hairu  
 words-NOM ear-LOC jump into/reach/enter

- ‘catch words’
- d. kangae/kyōmi/gimon-o      *motsu*  
 thought/interest/doubt-ACC    have  
 ‘have an idea/interest/doubt’
- e. kangae-ga      *matomaru*  
 thought-NOM    be collected  
 ‘one’s ideas come together’

The choice between the <fluid> metaphor and the <individuum> metaphor is a matter of cognitive style, which does not work to the absolute exclusion of one for the other. It appears to be the case, from the observations in §3 and §4, that the fluid metaphor is at least no less common than individuum metaphor in Japanese.

Let us briefly turn to English. Reddy (1979) shows, with voluminous data from English, that communication is conceptualized by what he calls “the conduit metaphor”, according to which the speaker inserts his thoughts and feelings in words and transfers them through a conduit and the hearer extracts the thoughts and feelings out of the words.<sup>26</sup> This metaphor is described and exemplified as follows (*ibid*, p.290):

- (85) a. language functions like a conduit, transferring thoughts bodily from one person to another (e.g. *Try to get your thoughts across better, None of Mary’s feelings came through to me with any clarity*);
- b. in writing and speaking, people insert their thoughts or feelings in the words (e.g. *Try to pack more thoughts into fewer words, Don’t force your meanings into the wrong words*);
- c. words accomplish the transfer by containing the thoughts or feelings and conveying them to others (e.g. *That thought is in practically every other word, The sentence was filled with emotion*); and
- d. in listening or reading, people extract the thoughts and feelings once again from the words (e.g. *Can you actually extract coherent ideas from that prose? I don’t get any feelings of anger out of his words*).

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<sup>26</sup> The term “conduit metaphor” is presumably conceived with respect to (85a), but (85b)-(85d) should more aptly be called “container metaphor”; see Lakoff and Johnson (1980:29-32) for other examples of the container metaphor.

The conduit metaphor is crucially different from the metaphORIZATION of LANGUAGE and MEANING in Japanese we saw in §3 and §4 in that WORDS and MEANING are conceptualized as discrete entities that exist independently of each other, and that the latter is inserted into or extracted out of the former in communication. Communication is consequently viewed as the giving and taking of discrete entities. This last point is illustrated by the following examples:<sup>27</sup>

- (86) a. *accept* one's word for it  
b. He could scarcely *catch* the words.  
c. They *exchanged* a few words.  
d. He *flung* words at me.  
e. I *gave* him a word of advice.  
f. I hear that words *passed* between them.  
g. He *sent* word that he wanted to see me.  
h. You should never *take* his words just as they are.  
i. "I ..." He saw the fist being raised. "Yes! I ... I ..." The words came *tumbling* out. (Sidney Sheldon, *Sands of Time*)

This does not mean, however, that English does not employ fluid metaphors for communication. Consider the following:

- (87) a. For some reason, I felt an overpowering urge to *pour* out my story to this stranger. (Paul Auster, *Moon Palace*)  
b. Only a couple of weeks ago she was *gushing* about the glamour of the now discredited and discarded Sandinistas. (*Times*, 1990)<sup>28</sup>  
c. She *leaked* the news.  
d. She *showered* him with praise.  
e. He *spilled* the news that he got fired.  
f. He started talkin'. It was like a *faucet got turned on*. (Robert. J. Waller, *The Bridges of Madison County*)

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<sup>27</sup> Reddy's (1979) formulation of the conduit metaphor deals with cases where what is transferred is 'thoughts' and 'feeling' and he didn't discuss cases where 'words' are transferred (cf. (85a)).

<sup>28</sup> I am indebted to Eijiro Tsuboi and Shun Morimura for kindly letting me have access to the *Times* corpus.

- g. During 1974 and 1975 a *torrent* of research notes and telephone conversations was *flowing* in both directions between Paul Postal and David Perlmutter.  
(Geoffrey. K. Pullum, *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax and Other Irreverent Essays on the Study of Language*)
- h. Rumors *flowed* through the crowd surrounding the institute grounds that he was perhaps the long-lost Louis XVII, [...]. (Russ Rymer, *Genie: a scientific tragedy*)
- i. Speaking and understanding share a grammatical database [...], but they also need procedures that specify what the mind should *do*, step by step, when the words start *pouring in* or when one is about to speak.  
(Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct*)
- j. He *soaked up* the words of praise.

Furthermore, just like Japanese verbs *morasu* ‘leak’ and *kobosu* ‘spill’ can be used with the complementizer as speech verbs (cf. (22), (23)), English verbs such as *gush* and *ooze* in the following examples can be regarded as functioning as speech verbs:

- (88) a. “She’s one of the finest human beings I have ever interviewed,” Mr Ochiai *gushed*. “She made me proud to be a member of the human race. [...]” (*Times*, 1991)
- b. “It’s a very big day,” *oozed* the continuity announcer happily, “after 40 years, it’s Jack and Peggy’s wedding day.” (*Times*, 1991)

These examples may suggest that it is not uncommon in English to use the fluid metaphor for WORDS; however, if one compares examples (86) and (87), one will immediately detect the emotional overtones the expressions in (87) tend to have. In this connection, two points are worth noting. First, English has a general metaphor that LARGE MASS IS A FLUID (e.g. *a flood of letters*, *Checks and money orders have poured in*, *The sunlight streamed through the windows*). Notice that with the possible exception of *ooze* and *leak*, the predicates used in (87) may imply that a large mass of fluid is involved. Second, just like in Japanese, emotions are very likely to be conceptualized as fluids in English (e.g. *Anger/Joy welled up*, *outpouring of rage*, *I feel drained of emotion*). These two points seem to motivate and constrain the use of the fluid metaphor in examples in (87). Note also that English examples in (87) are largely confined to the PRODUCTION OF WORDS IS LETTING OUT A FLUID metaphor.

Notice, on the other hand, that fluid metaphors for communication in Japanese are more extensive, and that at least some expressions are used in emotionally neutral ways (e.g. *kiki-*

*nagasu* (hear-let flow) ‘let one’s words go in one ear and out the other’, *kiki-morasu* (hear-leak) ‘fail to hear’, *yodomi-naku hanasu* (stagnation-without speak) ‘speak fluently’, *uwasa-o nagasu* (rumor-ACC let flow) ‘spread a rumor’, etc.).

The metaphorization of the emergence of thoughts makes the clearest contrast between English and Japanese. As we saw in §3.3, it is quite common for Japanese to metaphorize THOUGHTS as a <fluid> welling up inside one’s mind, whereas it seems more common for English to metaphorize THOUGHTS as <individuum> coming from outside, as in (89):

(89) A good idea enters/crosses/pops into/springs into/comes to one’s mind

Though more data have to be gathered to say anything definite, the conduit metaphor appears to be indicative of a greater tendency of English toward the <individuum> metaphor.

## **5.2. Homology of language and culture: the fluid metaphor and BECOME-language/culture**

Ikegami (1981, 1988b, 1991) proposes two contrasting types of linguistic construal, DO-language and BECOME-language, and argues, based on a variety of structural and performance phenomena, that English tends toward the former, whereas Japanese toward the latter. DO-language focuses on ‘change in locus’ of an individuum involved in the scene, while BECOME-language focuses on ‘change in state’ of the whole scene (the individua involved in it being submerged in the whole). To put it differently, the former can be characterized in terms of the <individuum> schema and the latter in terms of the <continuum> schema (Ikegami 1993).

The two contrastive cognitive schemas are at work to account for the differences between English nouns/verbs and Japanese nouns/verbs: English is characterized by the presence of the singular-plural distinction for nouns and the higher degree of transitivity of verbs (e.g. *\*I burned it, but it didn’t burn*), whereas Japanese is characterized by the absence of the singular-plural distinction for nouns and the lower degree of transitivity of verbs (e.g. *Moyashita kedo moenakatta* ‘I burned it but it didn’t burn’). Ikegami (1993:809) contrasts a language with the singular-plural distinction (e.g. English) with a language without it (e.g. Japanese) in that the former processes the notion of “thing” in terms of the <individuum> schema, with the result that the essential distinction is made between a single individuum and a group of individua, while the latter processes the notion of “thing” in terms of the <continuum> schema, with the result that no essential distinction is made between a single individuum and a group of individua. In a parallel manner, the two schemas apply to the interpretation of a “goal” of an action: conceiving

of a goal of an action as an <individuum> makes the action “achievement”, whereas conceiving of it as a <continuum> makes the action “non-achievement”. Thus, the <individuum> schema and the <continuum> schema serve to characterize the behaviors of English nouns and verbs, and Japanese nouns and verbs, respectively.

The fluid metaphor we discussed in this paper is essentially metaphorization of an abstract concept in terms of the <continuum> schema. If the <continuum> schema is dominant in Japanese, as Ikegami argues, then it is no surprise that Japanese employs the fluid metaphor ubiquitously.

There is a piece of interesting evidence concerning semantic change that supports the parallelism between DO-language and the individuum metaphor, on the one hand, and BECOME-language and the fluid metaphor, on the other. Ikegami (1981, 1988b, 1991) notes that quite a number of English verbs that express ‘change in locus’ (= <individuum> schema) are also used as verbs that express ‘change in state’ (= <continuum> schema) (e.g. *John came to life*, *John’s dream came true*, *The house went to ruin*, *John went crazy*, *John fell ill*, *The well ran dry*, etc.). On the other hand, exactly the reverse semantic change takes place in Japanese, namely, the verb *naru* ‘become’ used to be employed to express ‘change in locus’ (e.g. *Otonosama no onari* (The feudal lord’s becoming) ‘The feudal lord has arrived’).

The parallel semantic change is observed with respect to the fluid metaphor. In English, verbs that express ‘change in locus’ (= <individuum> schema) such as *run* and *escape* can be used to express the fluid movement (= <continuum> schema):

- (90) a. The water is *running*.  
 b. The gas was *escaping* from a hole in the pipe.  
 c. I could hear music *escaping* from his walkman headphones.

In Japanese, on the other hand, the verb *nagareru* ‘flow’ shows the reverse semantic shift, i.e., from the <continuum> schema to the <individuum> schema. Consider the following:

- (91) a. Mizu/Kūki-ga            *nagareru*.  
           water/air-NOM        flow  
           ‘Water/Air flows.’  
 b. Hitobito-ga    kōen-e            *nagareru*.  
           people-NOM park-DIR    flow  
           ‘People flow into the park.’



- c. Ki-ga (kawa-o) *nagareru*.  
 wood-NOM (river-ACC) flow  
 ‘A piece of wood comes floating (down the river).’
- d. Tarō-ga Hokkaido-e *nagareru*.  
 Taro-NOM Hokkaido-DIR flowed  
 ‘Taro drifts to Hokkaido.’

Prototypically, the verb *nagareru* describes the <fluid> movement as in (91a). Example (91b) is a metaphorical extension from this prototype, where a multiplex of ‘people’ is conceptualized as a fluid. Peculiar in Japanese is the fact that the verb can also describe the movement of an <individuum> along the fluid, as is observed in (91c). Furthermore, the verb can describe the movement of an <individuum> where there is no fluid involved, as exemplified in (91d). Let us take a look at an attested example:

- (92) Doko-ni itemo nandaka negurushii node, heya-kara dondon rakuna hō-e to *nagarete* ittara, reizōko-no waki-ga ichiban yoku nemureru koto-ni, aru yoake kizuita.

(YOSHIMOTO Banana, *Kicchin*)

This passage is translated by Megan Backus as “One morning at dawn I trundled out of my room in search of comfort and found that the one place I *could* sleep was beside the refrigerator” (Yoshimoto Banana, *Kitchen*). Note that the verb *nagareru* ‘flow’ in the original passage is rendered as “trundle” which may suggest a sense of heaviness that the original clearly lacks.

The transitive verb *nagasu* ‘let flow’ and its nominalized form *nagashi* are also commonly used to describe the motion of an <individuum>, such as a cruising taxi and a strolling singer.

Lastly, let us briefly consider how the ubiquity of the fluid metaphor in Japanese might be connected to general characteristics of Japanese culture.<sup>29</sup> It is often noted that the notion of “continuity” is an important feature of Japanese culture (cf. Ikegami 1989). The notion of “continuity” is readily connected to the notion of “flow” or “flowingness”. In fact, the emphasis on “flow” is observed in various facets of Japanese culture, for example, calligraphy, dance, sport, etc. Even an imported sport like baseball emphasizes the notion of “flow” in Japan; one may often hear a TV baseball commentator saying something like “The error by the

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Whorf (1956). See also Quinn (1991) for a discussion of the relationship between metaphor and culture. I leave it for future research to consider the relationship between the notion of *ki* and the ubiquity of the fluid metaphor.

Tigers' third baseman changed the flow of the game and now the flow has inclined to the Giants (= the situation is in favor of the Giants)." The emphasis on "flow" or "flowingness" may also be considered as a manifestation of the Japanese oft-noted preference for the "process" over the "achievement" of a particular goal (cf. Ikegami 1989).

The discussion of language-culture homology has to be necessarily speculative, but I for one do intuitively feel a certain degree of correlation between the ubiquity of the fluid metaphor and the emphasis on "flow" or "flowingness" in Japanese culture.

## 6. Concluding remarks

I hope to have shown in this paper that the fluid metaphor is ubiquitous in Japanese in such domains as SOUND, LANGUAGE, THOUGHTS and FEELINGS. I further argued and speculated that the ubiquity of the fluid metaphor might be correlated to general characteristics of Japanese grammar and Japanese culture; more specifically, I argued that the ubiquity may be regarded as a manifestation of the BECOME-language features.

In reference to Ikegami's works, Langacker (1993:462) states that "Language does not exist in a cultural vacuum, and it is time we began systematically exploring the existence, scope, and import of these higher-level correlations." The present work is hardly "systematic", but I hope it will contribute however little to the "higher-level" or "holistic" (cf. Ikegami 1993) characterization of the Japanese language.

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