



audio recording (with Japanese transcript & English translation):
<https://makois.com/video.html> or on Vimeo

O-U
 2020
 act + sound installation (podium placed upside down, loudspeakers)
 sound: approx. 2 min 30 sec (per round) / 15 min 10 sec (total)
 as a part of the project *After-Ripening & Corruption: Recovering the Viridity & Salmon Run* at TOKAS Hongo, Tokyo

The sound is a vocal trace of recognising my distance from the language of the land where I was born and raised, and of rambling around where we could reconcile after the double experience of linguistic estrangement - having my native dialect 'corrected' as a child and my relocation overseas.

With a gliding vowel as a point of departure, I wrote a seemingly poetic text that recites our existence and relation to the surrounding world. I came to note subtle awkwardness in vocabularies, expressions, and intonations, and repeatedly pronounced certain words over and over in attempts to find 'how they should sound'. In this process, I reflected on the amplifying encounters and connections I got in the distant places where I have been grafted.

LINGUISTIC ESTRANGEMENT

Each time I utter in my dialect, my parents corrected to standard Japanese. It started when I was ten. Being interrupted after every single sentence, I lost my appetite to speak and so as my Kansai accent. Since I left Japan, I have picked up several languages abroad, such as English, Dutch, Swedish and French, meanwhile I became not at ease any more to speak in my mother tongue Japanese.

THE VOWEL THAT GLIDES

The gliding vowel [ɔ̃] is repeatedly used in the dialect from my native area. In an attempt to negotiate the distance to 'my language', I started to write a text to pronounce, playing with many words that are written and/or pronounced [ɔ̃] in Japanese: hey (informal greeting), to meet, face, contact, follow, chase, etc.

I extended my play to some foreign languages, with which I became familiar. One of the meanings of [ɔ̃] in Japanese is "to owe" in English, which makes them homophones. From there, I came to the origin of "owe" is Sanskrit "to own". [ɔ̃] is a prefix to express respect and refer people in Japanese, and I found out it is also a prefix to refer people/human in Zulu in South Africa.

RAMBLE TO RECONCILE

While playing with the sound of [ɔ̃], the words reflects my paths and worldview I have acquired: how society is built, how we lives as human, how we are connected to our fate or by chance, and how we accept changes and how we are. For about a month, I had vocalised the script again and again, to search for how it should sound and fine-tune.

At TOKAS Hongo, the audio recording of seven attempts from different period was presented as sound installation. From the bottom of the podium, one hears my voice talking in 'purportedly' Kansai dialect. One would recognise the traces of how I negotiated the distances through time with several attempts.

O-U

[ɔ̃]

Sounds like picking up a fight?
 Feels like 'long time no see'?
 Not sure if getting along,
 Two persons facing each other.

If not facing each other, then
 back to back. The backs meet.
 Like carrying each other
 without looking at the other.

Leaning on the other.
 Maybe both leaning on the other.
 Got to stand, as depending on each other?
 Thanks to the other. Fortunately!
 'Thanks to' in English is also pronounced [ɔ̃] (owe)
 Means also to borrow.
 Originally from 'own' in the old language in India.
 [ɔ̃] has luck, fate, and gratefulness. Impressed.

We also say 'o-u' for following things from behind
 and driving things away, don't we?
 In our life, different things chase us
 and we run after them.

Dreams, workloads. Also musical canons.
 Bananas from remote place
 becoming yellow and sweet.
 Whether hurrying, or taking its time.

[ɔ̃] means anything in your language over there?
 I asked a friend in South Africa.
 owumongameli means 'who is minister'
 owungmulungu means 'who is white'

Putting a prefix [ɔ̃] to point a person.
 Africa is far away, but sounds similar,
 like cops, the Buddha, and porridge also.
 Is it only us who treats food as if a person?

Changes in language is 'corruption'
 Petty politicians cheating is also 'corruption'.
 Means rotting. But isn't it a charming way to 'rot'
 to get some accent?

(left page) installation view with a public listening (right page, above) the English translation of *O-U*, offered together with phonetical transcript of Kansai dialect for the public with auditory problems at the exhibition