THE STUDY OF ENGLISH

OCTOBER 10 1969

インタビュー・言語学者M. ハレ／《小特集》留学・ガイド志望者へ／英文隨筆・アップダイク「英國と英國人」
アメリカの世界的言語学者

Dr. Morris Halle

Interviewer:
Shigeki Kawamoto

残念なことであるが、このインタビューでは、この The Sound Pattern of English の内容にも、またもっと一般的に変形生成文法にも、触れることができなかった。それらの話題は、短時間の対談においては、いかにして処理しきれない性質のものだからである。しかし、言語についての Halle 教授の一般的な見解や態度や立場が、あまり気かないことばかりあちこちに含まれているので、その辺を拾いとれていただければ幸いである。東京でのセミナーでは、この The Sound Pattern of English のなかの accentuation に関する部分が主として持ち上げられたが、刊行後1年にならないのに、その後の研究による新しい見解が述べられ、著者その人には触れることのできないことが感じられた。 

モーリス・ハレ教授略歴

Morris Halle 教授は 1923 年 7 月、パルト海沿岸の Latvia 共和国に生まれ、13 才の時、アメリカへ移り、1943 年に City College of New York を卒業、48年 The University of Chicago で MA を、55年 Harvard University で Ph.D. を得ている。その間、48-49 の一年間 Columbia University の Fellow をつとめ、61年に M.I.T. の教授となり現在に至っている。一方 62年より、American Academy of Art and Sciencesの Fellow である。著作には、The Sound Pattern of English (Chomsky と共著)、Preliminaries Speech Analysis (Jacobsen, G. Fant と共著)などがあり、ほかに論文多数。

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Halle 教授との会面にあたって

去る7月14日から24日まで、日曜を除いて10日間、東京言語研究所の主催によって、東京にて「第4回理論語学国際セミナー」が開催され、M.I.T.のながわ Massachusetts Institute of Technology (マサチューセッツ工科大学)の言語学科主任教授 Morris Halle [mɔːris hæli]博士が講師として来日された。セミナー開催期のある午後、ここに収録したインタビューが行われた。

M.I.T.は、現在アメリカ言語学の一大中心地である。工科大学がどうして言語学で名を馳せるようになったか、不思議の感じられる事態があるかもしれないが、その主たる原因は、ここにはNoam Chomsky [nɔːm tʃɔmski]という天才的な言語学者がいて、その創始による変形生成文法 (transformational generative grammar)という言語の理論と方法が言語学を刷新し、これを強力に推進してきたからである。Halle教授は Chomsky教授の良き理解者、協力者として活躍し、Chomsky博士が言語学のみならず、平和運動という政治的分野にまでで面足をつけて活躍している。M.I.T.の言語学科を統率して、研究者として教育者として、よくその職務を果たしておられるのである。

Halle教授はまださほどのお年でもないのに円熟した人柄で、柔らかいい人あたりによって同僚・後進・学生の信望を集めて、M.I.T.の旺盛な研究活動の中核となっている。教授の著 The Sound Pattern of English は、長い間期待されていた論作が昨年遂に刊行に至った大著で、Chomsky教授との共著であって、日本の中学生でももちろんたちまち関心の焦点となった。
Impressions of Japan and Japanese

Kawamoto: Well, Professor Halle, you have been in Japan for the past ten or more days and perhaps you have formed some impressions of this country, of the people that live there. May I ask something about your feelings on this subject?

Halle: Yes. I certainly am very deeply impressed and moved by what I have seen here. To me the surprising thing about Japan which I have not expected is the mixture, very radical mixture of the old and the new that one constantly observes here. This mixture was very striking for me, especially when I took up my trip to Kyoto and Nara. I was very happy to see the way in Kyoto the old and the new live side by side. But you see that in other places, too; it is not only in Kyoto that one observes this. Now, in a way Japan, from the very short observation I have had, resembles Italy most of the many countries I have ever been to, partly because of this mixture of the old and the new, and in even down to some of the less notable achievements of Japan, for example, the peculiar type of motor traffic you have here which must be the Japanese attempt to control the population, and which very much resembles my experiences in Italy. In general I had a very favorable impression; I am really quite moved by this very beautiful country. I regret very much, however, that I have no facility whatever in the Japanese language. I should have acquired some last winter, but I was prevented from doing it. Had I even had some of elementary knowledge of the language, I am sure I would have been able to penetrate somewhat more deeply. So my impression about Japanese culture is so superficial that I would hesitate to make any serious comments about this.

Kawamoto: You have referred to your lack of familiarity with the Japanese language. I know, on the other hand, that as a specialist you are versed in a large number of other languages. And without having ever studied seriously the Japanese language, perhaps you have some feeling while listening to Japanese as it is spoken in daily life. Do you have any comments to make upon your impressions?

Halle: Yes, I have one comment to make, and that is that this has been probably the first time in my life, really the first time in...
An Interview

my life, that I have been in a country where I have been totally and completely unable to understand one word that people are saying. I do not speak Portuguese, I do not speak Spanish, but when I am in Spain I look at the newspaper, and I understand fifty percent. I do not speak Bulgarian or Czech, but when I am there I can pick up the newspaper and I understand 50, 60 or 70 percent of what's going on. I cannot do that in Japan, and I understand zero. And I am very surprised when I all of a sudden in some conversation I hear a word that I do understand like "tatsu" or some very simple Japanese words, and it is a very peculiar feeling for somebody who lived the long life and always somehow expected to understand and cannot really understand. You understand absolutely nothing, and it is a very peculiar feeling. I now understand how a Japanese must feel who comes to America. So for me that was a good experience.

Interests in Linguistics

Kawamoto: With that comment of yours on language, we may now approach the field of linguistics. Since the magazine for which I have the pleasure of interviewing you is addressed primarily to young students here in Japan, I am sure the readers of the magazine would appreciate to know something about your professional background, especially as it relates to your youthful days. May I ask you how you came to consider linguistics as the object of your professional career?

Halle: I think it is partly because of an accident. As you know, I was born in Latvia and I was always multilingual as the result. When we came to America, I studied engineering and I was not a bad student but mechanical drawing was beyond my limits of power. So, when the war came and interrupted my studies, it seemed like a very welcome interruption. When I returned from the war in 1946 back to the university, I decided not to continue with my studies in engineering, and mainly because I still hated this drawing, I started studying languages. At that time I thought I would become a Slavicist, and in fact my doctor's degree is in the

について、おっしゃっていただけますか。

ハレ：ええ、一つ申したことがありますが、それは人々が言っていることが一語さえ理解することが全くできない、完全にできない国を訪れたのは、今度がおそらく生まれて初めてで、本当に生まれて初めてだということです。わたしはポルトガル語は話しませんし、スペイン語も話しませんが、スペインへ行くと新聞を見て、50パーセントはわかります。ブルガリア語やチェコ語も話せませんが、あちらへ行くと新聞を取り上げ、世の中の出来事の50パーセント、60、70パーセントはわかります。それが日本ではできなくて、理解度がゼロです。それで、突然なのが会話のなかで「つつく」というようなわたしにわかる単語や、なかなか大へん簡単な単語を耳にするといつも驚いてしまい、長い人生を生きてきても、いつもなんとか理解できるものと思いこんできて、本当に理解ができなくなっただという立場になった人間には、とても奇妙な感情が水先案じなのです。アメリカを訪れる日本人がどんな感じをもつか、わかってきました。それで、わたしには、いい経験でした。

言語学への興味

川本：ことばについてのご感想をうかがいたのできょうかに、言語学の分野に話題を進めましょう。先生にインタビューをさせていただき、ている雑誌は主として日本の若い学生諸君を対象とするものですから、読者諸君は先生のご専門に至るまで話題を、特に講義の視点に関連して伺うことに興味をもつことと思います。どんなふうにして言語学を専門家としての生業の目的として考えようおわりになりましたか。

ハレ：一部は偶然のため、と思います。ご存じのように、わたしはラトビアで生まれたので、その結果ずっと言語を多数使用してきました。アメリカへ移ったとき、工学を勉強し、出来の悪い学生ではなかったのですが、製図が力になりました。そこで、戦争になって勉強が中断されただとき、それは大きいに嬉しかったです。1946年に戦争から大学へ戻ったとき、工学の勉強は続けないことに決心し、例の製図が教わったというのが主な理由で、ことばの勉強をはじめました。当時はスタブ語学校になるそうと思い、事実学位論文はスタブ語の研究の分野でした。年月が経つにつれて、関心がもっと一般的になり、スタブ語の研究が今ではわたしの関心の傍らにあり、一般言語学にもっと関心を寄せています。

[* The Sound Pattern of Russian という表題で、1959年に Mouton 社から刊行されている。]

川本：先生の関心が今日ではスタ

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ach the field in which you are working is one of the very interesting areas of Slavic linguistics.

Kawamoto: I know, Professor Halle, that your interests are more in general linguistics than in Slavic language nowadays, and I know also that you are certainly the most important collaborator of Professor Noam Chomsky in developing the ideas and procedures of transformational generative grammar. Now, I would like to know something about the reaction to this kind of linguistic study, on the part of your students at M.I.T. where you are the chairman of the Department of Linguistics. How do the students come to be interested in linguistics, or do they simply come to M.I.T. because they have some preliminary interest in linguistics?

Halle: Well, there are two parts in this question. Why students come to M.I.T.—I suppose that question is rather straight forward. As you know, our department has people who have published a number of interesting books, and it is a place where linguistic research is very active and very productive. Anybody who is interested in linguistic research would know that that is one of the places to which you would go, and we get a certain number of students that way. The second part of the question is addressed more to the reaction of students to our work, and I would like to say something about that. We are very, very fortunate, unusually fortunate; I don't think that this happens very often in the history of a science. We have in the last 10 or 15 years really achieved what one might call 'breakthrough' or 'a real turn' in the interest of the field in a way one might compare it, let us say, to the situation that prevailed in linguistics in the 1870s when the major discoveries were made of the Neogrammarians or in physics that prevailed in the 1920s. What this means is that all of a sudden, there are numerous problems which are amenable to investigation by anybody reasonably competent, hardworking and intelligent. And these problems seem to yield to hardwork, and it is not as if you are

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knocking your head against the wall. Moreover these problems are important, they are not trivial, they are problems which have immediate consequences. The study of linguistics at the moment is tremendously exciting to even a beginning student, because he sees that the student who is maybe a year or two further along in his studies than he is, already does work that gets published or discussed at meetings, and that is right in the main streams of the field. There is the feeling that there is so much to do. There is, in our students, a real feeling of tremendous conquest to make, and because of this M.I.T. is at the moment a very exciting place for a linguist to be.

Aspects of Language

Kawamoto: Well, I can well understand the sort of excitement your students must feel when they discover that, even at the end of the first years at the Institute, they begin to participate actively in the development of linguistic discoveries. I am also aware that there are so many questions to be solved in the development of techniques and so much work to be done in establishing linguistic facts, from the point of view of transformational generative grammar. But at the same time I know that your interests as well as the concerns of your colleague, Professor Noam Chomsky, are turning more and more to more general questions of language as it relates to the human mind. Could you tell us something about that sort of your interest?

Halle: As you remarked now, our interests are really in understanding language as a kind of intellectual accomplishment. You see, language is in a very interesting position among the intellectual accomplishments of man. By intellectual accomplishment, I mean nothing really very profound; most people know how to add, let us say, and that is some sort of intellectual accomplishment. Now, most people, all people know how to speak, and this is not merely a physical ability. It is an ability that is only very partly physical but is obviously very much more; properly we call this intellectual activity. You learn how to make sentences in some languages you learn. This is a sort of competence that is only developed by human beings, and is not
developed by any kind of other living beings. When you start studying what it is really that a person speaking a language L must know in order to be able to say and understand the sentences of the language L, you are beginning to describe what is this intellectual competence of his, because it is in his mind, not in his muscles, that this competence exists. Hopefully, when you understand a great deal of what it is that the mind does or must be able to do in order to speak, you will then be able to say something about what is the mind. For this language is especially favorable, since it is not very much determined by intelligence; you know, any kind of any normal human being learns language, learns it without difficulty, learns under conditions of minimal instruction.

Kawamoto: I have this feeling, perhaps mistakenly, that your interest lies, at least at the present moment, rather in the field of human logical thinking in connection with linguistic expressions. And I feel that when you use the word ‘mind,’ you are thinking more in terms of intellectual or cognitive faculty rather than in terms of anything else, for example, the aesthetic side of the human soul. Do you see any future prospect of extending the interest of your research to other aspects of the human soul or mind than purely logical?

Halle: Very definitely. I don’t know if I would characterize these necessarily as illogical or unlogical aspect of the human mind. Well, I have always been interested in the very great ability the human mind has to perceive order or regularity or pattern in various forms of experience. And I have in the last few years devoted a certain amount of study, as you know, to what constitutes one of these very simple patterns, namely, meter in poetry. I believe one of the particular aspects of metrical poetry is the ability of the reader to decide, and also the ability of the poet to encode a very simple pattern in the sequence of words, and this pattern is very, very simple-minded, but the encoding is rather tricky and elaborate and of a high—well the only way I can put it,—intellectual sort of type. And so whether a line embodies a particular meter or not is something that is very much on a par with the question whether a particular sequence of words is the sentence and what it means.

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When one appreciates the meter or metrical excellence of a particular poem, to me again this appreciation has an intellectual basis very definite and very similar in kind to the sort of thing that one does when one understands a sentence.

The Best, to Learn English

Kawamoto: As I said before, I am interviewing you for the sake of rather young readers of a magazine which is devoted to the study of English. And so, I would like finally to ask you for some advice, some possible advice for young Japanese who are doing their best to learn English.

Halle: Well, I suppose the best is just to continue. I don't think they are doing badly, and I think that many of them, those I met, have a great deal of practical knowledge of the English language. There are a great deal of interest and many facilities available. There are magazines and newspapers available. And I think that in general they have just all that they need. Simply take advantage of what is surrounding, and I am confident that many of them can learn a great deal.

Kawamoto: In spite of your encouraging comment, I must say that we do have problems in the study of and teaching of English in Japan. To point out one of them, we have a sort of division of labor in the study and teaching of English between its written and printed aspect and its oral aspect, and we are grappling with difficulties in the latter part of the job. A similar situation existed a long time in your country in the teaching of French, German and Spanish, but you have lately been making a great deal of improvement in the teaching of foreign languages in the United States. I imagine perhaps you have some comments from your American experience.

Halle: May I go even a little further? I have, as you know, experience in two very different cultural areas. As a child I lived in Eastern Europe which is a rather different cultural area from Western Europe. It has been traditional at least since the time of Catharine the Great for a member of the upper class in Russia or the Russian intelligence to be very competent in at least two or three foreign languages. And that, you know, is not any matter that people think a great deal about. It is what it is expected you will do as children and what the educational system has done, and done well always, somehow. I don't know if they had any better method of
of English as, we have study and written and and we are itter part of a long time of French, e lately been ment in the the United have some experience.

further? I in two very d I lived in her different ope. It has the time of aber of the asian intellige least two or ..., you know, hink a great ted you will ional system somehow. I r method of
teaching, but I think that there was implicit a certain kind of thought that you could do, that achievement in the foreign languages was something one could reasonably expect of the average person. Now, in America, in France and in Great Britain, and apparently also in Japan, there seems to be this very peculiar psychological attitude that the achievement of competence in foreign languages is a great thing rather than being a trivial thing that is to be expected of any more or less well educated person. I do not think that this has any basis in fact. I do not think it is either a great achievement, or not a great achievement. I will simply tell you a story; my cousin who was a medical student went in 1934 or 33 to study medicine at the University of Bologna in Italy. And she did not know a word of Italian. She bought some books in the summer before she went there, and she expected that when she would matriculate for the first semester, she would be able to follow the lectures somehow or other. And well, I know she got the MD degree four years later; so presumably she must have done something right, and it seems it never occurred to her that that was being a major problem. I notice, on the other hand, when Americans go abroad, all sorts of preparations. Very elaborate things are done, and they don’t learn very well. And I think that really difficulty here is what a culture expects. And if the culture somehow expects people to speak, people speak, and if they don’t, it becomes a very difficult problem. And so I think that in a way we are dealing in some kind of rather deep cultural expectations.

Kawamoto: Well, in Japan, we have a great desire to become really international in our dealings and aspirations, and we often feel that we must first of all be proficient in an international language such as English and then try to become more international. What you have just said seems to suggest that we should try first to be more international, and then we shall become more proficient in English.

Halle: That’s right.

Kawamoto: Well, Professor Halle, thank you very much for the very interesting and enlightening remarks that you have made for our young readers.

(7月18日、社会文化会館にて)

[速記: 楯井万里子]

[写真: 秋山亮二]
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