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When Anomalous Language Is Acceptable: Suspension and the Motivations Behind Breaking Convention in Shaun Tan's *Cicada*

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Abstract
The English on display in the picturebook *Cicada* by Shaun Tan includes various breaks with grammatical convention, such as a lack of tense morphemes, subject omission, and non-use of the first-person pronoun. However, not only are these deviations acceptable to native speakers, but the anomalous English plays a crucial role in showcasing the protagonist as a communicatively undeveloped outsider (Ikarashi and Maher). Building off Eugenio Coseriu's integral linguistic ideas, this article investigates how what may seem grammatically insufficient language can in fact function quite naturally given appropriateness at the textual level. In exploring the motivations for a writer to opt for such non-standard expressions, this study proposes that the protagonist's characterization demands a strange, nuanced manner of speaking, though such deviation is not without its own peculiar conventions. Furthermore, comparison with the Japanese translation of *Cicada* will allow for a better understanding of just what kind of unique leeway exists at the textual level for defying linguistic standards in English as opposed to Japanese.[i]

Keywords: integral linguistics, functional language, inappropriateness, incorrectness, suspension (sublation), evocation, incongruence

Shaun Tan published the picturebook *Cicada* in 2018. The protagonist is the titular cicada (a cicada nymph, to be exact), who faces constant bullying from human coworkers at its company job. The story's narration, delivered

in idiosyncratic English by the cicada itself, stands out immediately, well at odds with everyday English. The following three spreads illustrate this anomalous manner of speaking:[ii]

(1) Cicada work in tall building.
Data entry clerk. Seventeen year.
No sick day. No mistake.
Tok Tok Tok! (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2)

(2) Seventeen year. No promotion.
Human resources say cicada not human.
Need no resources.
Tok Tok Tok! (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 3)

(3) Cicada no afford rent.
Live in office wall space.
Company pretend not know.
Tok Tok Tok! (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7)

This unusual language is investigated in detail by Keita Ikarashi and Patrick Maher, according to whom "this manner of speaking will undoubtedly convey the image of a communicatively undeveloped, foreign-if-not-altogether-alien being" (51-52). Particularly instrumental in constructing said image are the following:

(4)
a. protagonist's use of *Cicada* instead of *I* to refer to itself
b. lack of the present tense morpheme (use of non-finite forms)
c. lack of the plural morpheme
d. lack of definite and indefinite articles
e. lack of the *be*-verb
f. subject omission
g. frequent use of sentence fragments as complete thoughts
h. use of *no* instead of *cannot*, *do not* or *have never* in negative sentences
i. lack of *to* in *to*-infinitive clauses

(Ikarashi and Maher 52, with slight modifications)

Such peculiar English would indicate that the protagonist (hereafter referred to as *Cicada*) exists outside the greater sociolinguistic community, thus the image of a "foreign-if-not-altogether-alien being." However, the notion of Cicada's being "communicatively undeveloped" (Ikarashi and Maher 51) requires more in-depth consideration.

At first glance, the linguistic features in (4) may appear unrelated to each other, perhaps only by chance cooperating to contribute to the aforementioned communicatively undeveloped image. However, Ikarashi and Maher argue, with Yukio Hirose's framework as foundation, that these quirks collectively serve to erode Cicada's public self, "the subject of communicating," thereby highlighting its private self, "the subject of thinking" (Hirose, "Direct and Indirect Speech" 230), i.e. a non-communicative aspect of the speaker; hence, the character's non-communicative image.

For example, the first-person pronoun *I*, according to Hirose, is "a special word for public self" because "the speaker's *I* defines the addressee as *you*, and the addressee's *you* defines the speaker as *I*" ("Public and Private Self" 1634; see also Benveniste 224-225). Thus, Cicada's self-reference with *Cicada* instead of *I* functions to dilute its public self, in turn making its private self more conspicuous. The lack of articles also leads to similar erosion of public self. Definite and indefinite articles are normally utilized in interaction by taking into consideration the addressee's state of knowledge (cf. Hawkins). The lack of articles in Cicada's narration implies unawareness of or indifference to any reader's existence, again resulting in private self outshining public self. Subject omission, again, works in a similar fashion. English declaratives do not usually allow subjects to be omitted (e.g. "*Am here." "*Is a doctor." (Schmerling 578)). However, such grammar is not without its niche, as shown in the following diary example: "It's so quiet here. ( ) Am scared." (Fielding 372, qtd. in Hirose "Nikki Eigo" 277, parentheses Hirose's). The intended audience of a diary often does not extend beyond the author, as diaries prove a quintessential example of a private-self-centered environment. Given that subject omission is a phenomenon observed in such specific genres, Ikarashi and Maher claim that "subject omission can indicate that one's private self is exclusively involved" (60), and indeed Cicada's private self stands out.[iii]

Ikarashi and Maher's analysis helps in defining the relationship between Cicada's language and its image as a communicatively undeveloped character. Nevertheless, questions do remain. Do all of Cicada's linguistic idiosyncrasies contribute toward characterization in exactly the same way?; that is, might it be possible to more distinctly

classify them by considering the textual sense in *Cicada*? For example, both the non-use of *I* and that of articles seemingly function to erode Cicada's public self. However, the non-use of *I* results from toying with the conventions of English's personal pronoun system, whereas the non-use of articles not only involves English grammatical standards, but also the readers' state of knowledge; the latter something beyond the historical linguistic level of the English language itself. Furthermore, explaining subject omission with reference to genre-specific practice in diary writing begs the question of whether such reasoning might somehow contrast with the prior analyses of first-person pronouns and articles. Last, and by no means least, just how is it that native speakers can so easily intuit and accept Cicada's English without rejecting it as criminally ungrammatical?

Such questions suggest that the initial analysis based on the dichotomy of public and private selves can be further developed, helping us better comprehend how textual sense arises. Doing so will begin with Eugenio Coseriu's integral linguistic theory, one which gives scrupulous attention to language itself as well as to other linguistic theories, thus providing an insightful framework to help deepen analysis and interpretation of the *Cicada* text. Coseriu's ideas (together with references to Ikarashi and Maher's analysis as needed) will propel this investigation into author Tan's adept characterization through language.

Additionally, this article will delve into the Japanese translation of *Cicada*. Japanese has quite a different language system from English, and naturally, it would be a daunting, if not impossible, task to thoroughly cram the sense of the original English text in its entirety into the Japanese text. Therefore, a comparison of the original with the Japanese version can shed more light on the noteworthy ways in which textual sense arises in the original English text.

Suspension: Theoretical Background

Beginning with the most fundamental question, why is it that native speakers take no issue with Cicada's anomalous English? Cicada's narration earns acceptability thanks to *suspension* (*Aufhebung*, sublation), an idea better understood with reference to Coseriu's distinction between

levels of language (and other related notions): the universal level, the historical level, and the individual level. According to Coseriu, "the 'universal' aspects apply to language in general, to everything linguistic, the 'historical' aspects to the language of a particular community, the 'individual' aspects to certain bits of discourse or to kinds of discourses" ("Linguistic Competence" xxviii). The historical level, arguably the easiest to comprehend, concerns each language itself, such as English and Japanese: "[i]f we realize that English, French, or German is being spoken, we perceive the historical level of language" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxviii). The universal level, on the other hand, goes beyond the historical. Specifically, whether one's speech is clear or unclear belongs to this level because clarity or a lack thereof is possible in any given language (English itself is neither clear nor unclear) (Coseriu, *Sprachkompetenz* 77). The absurdity of the following example is also related to the universal level: "The left horn of the unicorn is black" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxvi; see also Coseriu, *Sprachkompetenz* 78, for the discussion of this example). Unicorns, as the word implies, are imaginary creatures with a single horn, and so it is absurd, or contradictory, to say "the left horn of the unicorn," a statement which presupposes more than one horn. This judgement is based on our mental perceptions, not on the English language or any other language for that matter. Finally, the individual level is where a particular speaker engages in a specific speech act in a certain situation: "if we understand that X utters, for instance, a request, gives an order, or asks a certain question, we perceive the individual level of language as discourse" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxviii).

Coseriu makes a further threefold distinction among points of view, two of which are relevant to this study: the distinction "between language as activity and language as the knowledge underlying this activity, as the knowledge which is in a "concrete" and "actual" way realized in this activity" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxvii).[iv] Notice here that the activity is not a mere realization of the knowledge; the former can go beyond the latter:

> Language as activity, which, by the way, must be understood as 'speaking and understanding,' does not exhaust itself in the mechanical realization or

> application of an already existing knowledge. It is in the proper sense ἐνέργεια, *actus*, that is, a creative activity, which makes use of δύναμις, an already acquired knowledge, in order, however, always to say something new, something in one way or another unique; and to the extent to which it is creative, inasmuch as it manifests 'facts of speech' in the narrower sense, it goes beyond its own δύναμις and produces new, virtual knowledge, facts which can be taken over in the δύναμις for further speech acts. (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxvii)

Language as "activity" corresponds to the three levels of language: "speaking in general, the particular language *in actu*, that is, speaking a language, and the discourse" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxviii). Activity at each level is further underpinned by three different kinds of knowledge. Behind "speaking in general" at the universal level lies *elocutional knowledge*, which "comprises everything that applies in principle to all languages independently of their respective linguistic structuring" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxix). The absurdity of the prior unicorn example, for instance, derives from this knowledge, specifically, "the general knowledge of the world" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxix). The knowledge underlying "speaking a language" at the historical level is *idiomatic knowledge*, knowledge of how to speak a particular language. English grammar rules and morphology, for example, are included in this knowledge. Lastly, discourse at the individual level depends on *expressive knowledge*, knowledge of how to speak in specific situations: how to communicate with a small child, how to greet people in the morning ("Good morning" in English), how to tell a folktale (see Coseriu, "Die Ebenen" and *Textlinguistik* for details).

Returning to the unicorn example, judging an expression about a multi-horned unicorn as absurd means that this notion is as odds with our elocutional knowledge. Coseriu uses the term *incongruent* to describe such a judgement ("Linguistic Competence"). On the other hand, an utterance which reaffirms elocutional knowledge is judged as *congruent*. Both idiomatic and expressive knowledge similarly travel in tandem with respective dichotomies of judgement: correct/incorrect and appropriate/inappropriate. Correct utterances conform to idiomatic knowledge. Thus, "I am here." is a correct utterance, whereas "*Am here" (Schmerling 578), which deviates from standard English grammar, is

regarded as incorrect. An appropriate utterance is "the suitable realization of . . . expressive knowledge in speech" (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxxiv). It would be appropriate, for example, to use grammatically simpler, clearer, and shorter sentences when talking with a small child. However, if one talks to children exactly as one talks to adults, such speech would be inappropriate (Coseriu, "Die Ebenen").

The following table is a summary of Coseriu's ideas as introduced in this section:

Levels	**Activity**	**Knowledge**	**Judgements**
Universal	Speaking in general	Elocutional knowledge	congruent/incongruent
Historical	Speaking a particular language	Idiomatic knowledge	correct/incorrect
Individual	Discourse	Expressive knowledge	appropriate/inappropriate

Viewed through Coseriu's theoretical framework, the suspension on display in *Cicada* can be analyzed and classified anew. The several varieties of suspension present in the text will be dealt with in turn below.

Suspension of Incorrectness

As observed in "Company pretend not know" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7), the non-use of tense morphemes, articles and *to* (as part of a *to*-infinitive clause) all break with standard grammatical convention. Any ESL teacher would surely regard this sentence as incorrect. The absence of plural morphemes and the *be*-verb, subject omission, and the use of *no* instead of *cannot*, *do not*, etc., all observed in other sentences, obviously mean incorrectness as well. Nevertheless, in each case native speakers are more than likely to deem Cicada's English acceptable. In other words, sentences like "Company pretend not know" are incorrect at the historical level while appropriate at the individual level (i.e. in this picturebook). Moreover, this incorrectness is *suspended* because of the appropriateness. Coseriu gives the following explanation regarding suspension (*Aufhebung*):

> Texte folgen nicht unbedingt in jedem Punkte den Regeln einer Sprache; Abweichungen von den Regeln einer Einzelsprache sind immer möglich. Und was noch wichtiger ist: Diese Abweichungen werden in der Regel nicht als solche interpretiert, sondern sie erscheinen als völlig annehmbar, wenn sie durch die Gestaltung des Textes oder durch eine Textfunktion motiviert sind. Es handelt sich dabei um eine sehr allgemeine Erscheinung, die man folgendermaßen formulieren könnte: Der Text kann Regeln der Einzelsprache aufheben, die dann in diesem besonderen Text nicht gelten, und zwar a) entweder schlicht wegen der traditionellen Gestaltung des betreffenden Textes oder b) aufgrund einer Motivation, die wir in dem betreffenden Text finden. (*Textlinguistik* 50)
>
> (Texts do not necessarily follow the rules of a language in every aspect; deviations from the rules of an individual language are always possible. And what is even more important: These deviations usually are not interpreted as such, but appear to be fully acceptable, when they are motivated by text structure or text function. This is a very common phenomenon, one which could be summarized as follows: A text can suspend rules of an individual language, which will no longer apply in the particular text, either because of a) the conventions of a text's structure, or b) some motivational basis found within the given text.) (trans. mine)

The motivational basis for the suspension of incorrectness in this picturebook is characterization through narration. The incorrectness of Cicada's language works to illustrate its foreignness, suggesting that the protagonist is an outsider unable to use English correctly (i.e. in standard fashion) like other human members of the linguistic community. Native speakers intuitively grasp the role of motivated incorrectness, accepting both the suspension and Cicada's English.

Cicada's communicatively undeveloped image, however, is less a product of incorrectness itself as of its alien image. Most, if not all, of its incorrect expressions seem to indirectly create a communicatively disadvantaged impression via side effects resulting from said incorrectness. Thus, as stated earlier, Cicada's characterization requires more in-depth consideration, the detailed analysis of which will come later.

One potential misunderstanding about suspension needs addressing before concluding this section. The suspension of incorrectness does not mean that incorrectness in its entirety is eliminated from the text. Rather, incorrect language is still recognized as being not correct; however, because it is appropriately incorrect, such recognition is not detrimental to

communication (see Coseriu, *Textlinguistik* 58). If readers' ability to perceive *Cicada's* narration as incorrect were eliminated through suspension, the effects brought about through suspension would similarly become unrecognizable to readers. It is by recognizing the incorrectness that readers can pick up on the intended characterization.

Suspension of Incongruence

Not only incorrect utterances, but incongruent ones can also be suspended through appropriateness (Coseriu, *Sprachkompetenz*). "No promotion" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 3), for example, while a sentence fragment, seems grammatically sound without context, and thus appears a correct utterance. However, the utterance is incongruent, being at odds with elocutional knowledge and linguistically insufficient as an expression of thought (e.g. unclear, less informative, contradictory, incoherent). In context, readers will most likely interpret this noun phrase as meaning "I have never received a promotion" (Ikarashi and Maher 61). This fleshed-out sentential form, with subject and verb dually present, expresses the intended thought completely and clearly. The noun phrase fragment, in contrast, at first glance likely elicits more hesitation than mere incorrect statements might, given that it does not express Cicada's thought as completely and explicitly as elocutional convention demands. In addition, though arguably less likely a reader's ultimate assumption, there do exist other potential interpretations of this noun phrase: "I will never be promoted," where Cicada has no confidence concerning promotion, or "I still have not been promoted," where Cicada believes a promotion is deserved yet overdue (see Ikarashi and Maher 61). After all, readers interpret meaning using contextual clues, and insufficient clues mean ambiguity arises.

Simple noun phrase fragments likely will not communicate thoughts as clearly and informatively as elocutional convention expects. Thus, Cicada's utterance is incongruent, although this incongruity is suspended due to appropriateness. As with previous examples, the motivation is Cicada's characterization, i.e. unable to clearly and concisely convey information; disinterested in the readers' state of knowledge.[v]

Double-Suspension

Many linguistic features of Cicada's English are simultaneously incorrect as well as incongruent. As mentioned earlier, the non-use of articles, as observed in "Company pretend not know" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7), results in incorrectness. However, this is not merely incorrect, as a missing article means unresolved specificity with regards to the referent ("Company"); standard English grammar, as well as readers, expect specification of "a company" or "the company" (not to mention the disentanglement of company as corporation versus company as surrogate for colleagues and superiors). Because Cicada eschews clarifying definiteness, this non-use of articles should also be regarded as incongruent (see Coseriu for a discussion of the German demonstrative pronoun *dieser* ("Die Ebenen" 334)).[vi] It is this incongruence that makes Cicada a less communicatively skilled speaker, whose utterances prove less informative than elocutional conventions demand.[vii]

Piecing together the observations on suspension thus far, the author of *Cicada* adroitly achieves an appropriate intermarriage of incorrectness and incongruence with sentences like "Company pretend not know" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7): the former more associated with the protagonist's foreignness, and the latter with its communicatively undeveloped image. Such double-suspension of incongruence and incorrectness meshes well to meet the motivation of characterization in Cicada.

Appropriately Inappropriate? Characterization-Driven Suspension of Inappropriateness

Arguably the most obscure example of suspension might be the protagonist's replacement of *I* with "Cicada," as in "Cicada work in tall building" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2). Replacing the first-person pronoun with one's given name or title is not unheard of, given that utterances like "Daddy wants you to sit still" (Hirose, "Public and Private Self" 1635) are grammatically acceptable, although contextually limited to speaking with, say, small children up to about three years old (Mizutani 119). In terms of elocutional knowledge, "Cicada" as sentential subject would not cause any major hindrance to understanding either as it adequately refers to the

narrator. The insufficiency involved in the use of "Cicada" to point to oneself, rather, pertains to expressive knowledge. In English, speakers normally refer to themselves using the first-person pronoun *I* (cf. Hirose, "Public and Private Self"). This convention is a matter of expressive knowledge, not idiomatic knowledge, for "Daddy wants you to sit still." (Hirose, "Public and Private Self" 1635) is at times a perfectly acceptable utterance (if idiomatic knowledge (i.e. the English language) required *I* for self-reference as a grammatical rule, "Daddy" could not serve as a subject). So, while using "Cicada" as subject is indeed an option in English, it hardly seems sufficient as this particular narrator's utterance. Hence, expressive knowledge judges such a choice of subject as inappropriate. Consider the following excerpt from Coseriu:

> Wenn wir z.B. feststellen, daß dieser oder jener Ausdruck zwar völlig korrekt *im Englischen* ist (und auch objektiv gesehen dem entspricht, was man sagen möchte), daß ihn aber ein Engländer *in dieser Situation* niemals gebrauchen würde, dann beziehen wir uns, wenn auch nicht gerade sehr deutlich, auf die Historizität des expressiven Wissens. ("Die Ebenen" 331)
>
> If we state, for example, that this or that expression is entirely correct *in English* (and is objectively equivalent to what one wants to say), but that a native English speaker would never use it *in this situation*, then we refer, even if not very clearly, to the historicity of expressive knowledge. (trans. mine)

Might not one assume that, although Coseriu seems to limit his analyses to the suspension of incorrectness and incongruence, inappropriateness, paradoxical as it may sound, can also be suspended via appropriateness? Self-reference via the first-person pronoun is routine if not social decree, yet using a noun phrase or proper noun instead of *I*, although much less common, seems to serve a specific purpose: characterization. Haruhiko Yamaguchi provides the following example: "'Dobby has known it for months, sir. . .'" (Rowling 20; Yamaguchi 17), in which the character's name "Dobby" acts as subject. While the impression made by "Dobby" (see Yamaguchi for details) does differ from that in *Cicada*, the purpose behind such usage is the same: avoiding using the first-person pronoun to flavor characterization.[viii] Such expressive motivation deems "Cicada" appropriate for self-reference, suspending any inappropriateness

associated with more sweeping expressive conventions (i.e. thou shalt refer to oneself via the first-person pronoun).

Contribution to the Creation of Sense

Analysis thus far has addressed the question of why English native speakers tolerate Cicada's anomalous language, referencing specific quirks of Cicada as outlined in the first section. Understanding that readers, without reluctance, will accept such suspension, next, a detailed look at each particular linguistic idiosyncrasy is essential in order to know what intentions lie behind opting to break with convention in the name of characterization (see Coseriu, *Sprachkompetenz* 125). The following seven sections ((i)-(xii)) (while referring to Ikarashi and Maher's analysis as needed) consider the author's intentionality behind each suspension, spelling out how the likeness of Cicada, especially its communicatively undeveloped image, arises.

(i) Non-Use of the First-Person Pronoun

Beginning with the protagonist's use of "Cicada" to refer to itself (e.g. "Cicada work in tall building." (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2)), as Hirose points out, *I* is paired with *you* in the personal pronoun system of English ("Public and Private Self"). To take Hirose's point from a different angle, the first-person pronoun *I* can be said to *evoke* the second-person pronoun *you* (see Coseriu for evocation (*Evokation*) (*Textlinguistik*)). Such an evocation would not be *actualized* in normal language use (Coseriu, *Textlinguistik*). However, the replacement of *I* with "Cicada," a digression from standard expressive convention, will likely actualize, or make prominent, this evocation inherent to the first-person pronoun *I*, contributing to the creation of a certain sense in the text: the avoidance of *I*, evoking the relation with *you*, will hint that the protagonist pays little consideration to the existence of an audience (i.e. readers). Hence, with each eccentric self-reference, the author adds brush strokes to the portrait of a communicatively undeveloped character.

(ii) Subjectless Sentences

Ikarashi and Maher offer the following analysis on subject omission (e.g. "Live in office wall space" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7)):

> Subjectless sentences are observable in diaries and internal dialogue, both of which are, as it were, private-self-centered situations. In other words, subject omission can indicate that one's private self is exclusively involved. (60)

However, how exactly is it that subject omission signals private-self-centeredness? Of crucial import in this interplay is the notion of *functional languages*.

Coseriu assumes that "a historical language is never *one single* 'linguistic system,' but a 'diasystem'" ("Lexical Structure" 33). To understand "diasystem," first, three types of internal differences require introduction:

> differences in geographical location or *diatopical differences*; differences between the socio-cultural strata of the linguistic community or *diastratic differences*; and differences between the types of expressive modality or *diaphasic differences*. (Coseriu, "Lexical Structure" 33, second and third italics mine)

A functional language is homogenous with respect to geographical locations, socio-cultural strata and varieties of expressive modality. Suppose that someone is chatting with other attendees at an academic conference (*synstratic*), speaking Tokyo dialect (*syntopical*) but in a colloquial and relaxed manner (*synphasic*). The language this person is using, "a technique considered at a single point in space, and a single [socio-cultural] 'level of language' and in a single 'style of language'" (Coseriu, "Lexical Structure" 33), is homogenous in regards to the three types of differences, and hence it proves a functional language. In comparison, a historical language, e.g. Japanese, is regarded as an ensemble of functional languages. In this sense, it is a "diasystem."

Lexical or grammatical items and rules (be they obeyed or discarded) can evoke a particular functional language which they belong to (Coseriu, *Textlinguistik*). In our case, subjectless sentences can evoke the functional languages of diaries and soliloquy. Historically incorrect subject omission in narration would actualize this evocation, or, in Ikarashi and Maher's

words, indicate a private-self-centered situation. Because the functional languages evoked by subject omission are not constructed for communication with others (not taking into consideration situations where the speaker regards him/herself as the hearer), this grammatical strategy would highlight the protagonist's non-interactive attitude.

(iii) Frequent Use of Sentence Fragments as Complete Thoughts

Cicada frequently utters noun phrases instead of full-fledged sentences (e.g. "No promotion" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 3)). Here, incongruence plays the direct role in establishing the intended impression of the protagonist. See the section *Suspension of Incongruence* for the details involved in this process of characterization.

(iv) Lack of Articles and Plural Morphemes

The remainder of Cicada's linguistic peculiarities have in common the fact that they are incongruent as well as incorrect (See the section *Double-Suspension*). This subsection deals with Cicada's lack of articles (e.g. "Cicada work in tall building" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2)) and plural morphemes ("Seventeen year" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2)). The absence of such elements obviously violates standard English grammar, and the author deftly utilizes this incorrectness to trigger the incongruence directly responsible for the intended impression. As mentioned in the section *Double-Suspension*, the non-use of articles leads to insufficient expressions, bringing into doubt Cicada's awareness or interest in definiteness. Similarly, the non-use of indefinite articles and plural morphemes means that Cicada does not convey expected details regarding the singularity or plurality of given referents to readers.[ix] In English, failing to clarify information about the definiteness and/or number of referents in question means poor communication skills, and Cicada again proves inadequate and/or indifferent on this front.

(v) Lack of *to* in *to*-Infinitive Clauses

The lack of *to* in *to*-infinitive clauses is also glaringly incorrect (e.g. "Company pretend not know" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7)). This incorrectness would leave information regarding grammatical tense unclear to readers (hence, incongruence): "the tense structure of the *to*-infinitive represents

posteriority relative to a potential base time" (Wada 35). As with the omitted articles and plural morphemes, the lack of *to* implies that the protagonist does not pay attention to, or is utterly unaware of, the ability of its audience (readers) to fully interpret the narration, again building on Cicada's characterization as communicatively-challenged (cf. Ikarashi and Maher).

(vi) Lack of Tense Morphemes and the *Be*-Verb

The lack of tense morphemes can be explained in a similar way to the lack of *to* in *to*-infinitive clauses (e.g. "Cicada work in tall building" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2)). The incorrect form conveys obscured information about tense to readers. This incongruent, less informative utterance can be tied to poor communication skill.

However, this grammar-tweaking strategy may have another function, which, nonetheless, culminates in a similar effect. Consider Coseriu's idea on the relationship between language and communication. Coseriu argues that language involves alterity (die *Alterität* der Sprache); communication *with* another is an essential criterion in defining the notion of language (*Textlinguistik* 83).

The functionality in omitting tense morphemes can also be understood in terms of the alterity of language (while Ikarashi and Maher rely on Hirose's public self). The choice of opting between the present and past tenses in English is "based on a direct relation to the speaker's viewpoint, which adheres to the speech time" (Wada 276). Because of the alterity of language, the tense morphemes, which are born from the perspective of the speaker, should also imply the existence of a hearer, the person the speaker aims to communicate with. The speaker-hearer relationship evoked by tense morphemes would remain inconspicuous as long as they are used consistently and correctly. However, Cicada's use of nonfinite verbal forms, a digression from grammatical norms, will likely actualize this evocation and signal the abandonment of the speaker-hearer relationship. Thus, the non-use of tense morphemes serves to erode the alterity of language, an erosion that reinforces the non-communicative image of Cicada.

The lack of the *be*-verb (e.g. "Human resources say cicada not human" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 3)) occurs as a result of the aforementioned lack of tense morphemes. As Ikarashi and Maher point out, tense

morphemes are fused with the *be*-verb; omitting these morphemes goes part and parcel with the omission of the *be*-verb.

(vii) Use of *No* instead of *Cannot* or *Do Not* in Negative Sentences
The use of *no* instead of *cannot* (e.g. "Cicada no afford rent" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 7)) or *do not* (e.g. "Human coworker no like cicada" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 6)) in negative sentences is, once again, incorrect grammar that provokes incongruence. The lack of auxiliary verbs like *can* and *do*, a result of using *no* instead of *cannot* and *do not*, means that Cicada's thoughts and feelings are not conveyed to readers as completely and clearly as elocutional convention demands; another contribution toward Cicada's characterization.[x]

Comparison with the Japanese Translation

Cicada was translated into Japanese with the title *Semi*, a word equivalent to the English word *cicada*. The language systems and textual traditions of these languages are significantly different, which prompts several questions worth exploring: Does the sense created in the Japanese text mirror that of the original? If not, how does the sense in the Japanese text differ from that of the English text, and how and to what extent are these differences related to differences inherent in the languages themselves? The following brief comparison of the two versions should help highlight the means whereby the sense in the English original text arises.

Observations

Here are the second and third spreads of the Japanese translation.[xi]

(5) *semi* *takai* *biru-de* *hataraku.*
cicada tall building-in work
'Cicada works in a tall building.'
shigoto *deeta* *nyuuryoku.* *17-nenkan.*
work data entry seventeen-for years
'(Cicada's) work is data entry. For seventeen years.'
kekkin *nashi.* *misu* *nashi.*
absence no mistake no
'(Cicada has) no absences. (Cicada makes) no mistakes.'
tuku *tuku* *tuku!*
'Tok tok tok!' (Tan, *Semi* Spread 2, trans. mine)

(6) *17-nenkan.* *shoushin* *nashi.*
seventeen-for years promotion no
'For seventeen years. (Cicada gets) no promotion.'
ningen *erai-hito* *iu,* *semi* *ningen-janai.*
human high position-person say cicada human-not
'A high-ranking human says cicada is not human.'
semi *erai* *hitsuyou-nai.*
cicada high position necessary-not
'Cicada doesn't need a high position.'
tuku *tuku* *tuku!*
'Tok tok tok!' (Tan, *Semi* Spread 3, trans. mine)

On first impression, Cicada's language in the translation similarly reflects "a foreign-if-not-altogether-alien being." This image indeed emanates from the protagonist's unusual and/or incorrect Japanese, including a lack of particles and peculiar word order (these linguistic features will be discussed in detail later). Such unusual/incorrect Japanese will likely leave Japanese speakers feeling that Cicada is an outsider in respect to the greater Japanese linguistic community. In this respect, it would be reasonable to say that the Japanese translation succeeds in bringing about the same sense as the original English text.

On the other hand, the communicatively undeveloped image, which the English text creates in spades, does not stand out to as significant of a degree in the Japanese translation (as far as this author is concerned). Instead, there permeates a greater sense of Cicada as a *cognitively* undeveloped being. It is this image in particular that creates a distinction between the Japanese text and the original.[xii] Why, then, did the translator (be it consciously or otherwise) opt to depict Cicada as a more cognitively, rather than communicatively, undeveloped being? Perhaps this stems from a greater difficulty, in Japanese, in showcasing the same manner of communicatively undeveloped-ness as is on display in the original *Cicada*.

Difficulty in Creating Cicada's Non-Communicative Image in Japanese

As discussed earlier, English has special elements, such as *I*, which imply the existence of a hearer. In Japanese, the situation is quite different. Hirose lists linguistic expressions "that semantically presuppose the existence of

an addressee" ("Direct and Indirect Speech" 226), which he calls "addressee-oriented expressions," as follows:

(7) a. certain sentence-final particles: *yo* 'I tell you', *ne* 'you know', *sa* 'let me tell you', *wa* 'I want you to know', etc.
b. imperative expressions like *hashire* 'Run!'
c. vocative expressions like *ooi*/*oi* 'hey'
d. response expressions like *hai*/*iie* 'yes/no'
e. pragmatic adverbials of various sorts: *sumimasen ga* 'Excuse me, but', *zannen desu ga* 'I regret to say', *kokodake no hanashi dakedo* 'between you and me', *socchoku ni iu to* 'frankly speaking', etc.
f. polite verbs like *desu*/*masu*/*(de)gozaimasu*
g. hearsay expressions like *(da)souda*/*(da)tte* 'I hear.'
(Hirose, "Direct and Indirect Speech" 226-227, with slight modifications)

Take sentence-final particles as an example. Below is the opening sentence from a picturebook, where sentence-final particle (SFP) *yo* signals the narrator's intention to interact with readers.

(8)

Nezumi-ga	*tabi-o*	*shiteita*	*yo.*
mouse-nominative	travel-accusative	was-doing	SFP(I tell you)

'A mouse was traveling.'

(Sasaki, Spread 1, trans. mine)

By contrast, in *Semi*, the linguistic expressions in (7) are absent, meaning that Cicada demonstrates no intention to communicate with an audience. However, this does not directly correspond to a character also necessarily being communicatively undeveloped by mere association. In the English text, the linguistic strategies at play that create the communicatively undeveloped impression (the avoidance of *I*, the non-use of tense morphemes, etc.) involve insufficient language at odds with standard grammar. Conversely, in the Japanese text, the non-use of addressee-oriented expressions, for example, will unlikely be deemed incorrect, as Japanese grammar does not require such elements to complete sentences. In fact, the sentence in (8) would still be fully correct without the sentence-final particle *yo*. Thus, the non-use of addressee-oriented expressions does not render Cicada's Japanese incorrect, and contributes little toward characterization (the incorrectness of its language arises from different grammatical/morphological matters).

Furthermore, non-interactive sentential forms, as well as interactive sentential forms, are textual norms in Japanese picturebooks (for related discussion see Haijima). The following picturebook spreads include no addressee-oriented expressions:

(9) *natsu-no* *asa-wa* *minna* *shiroi*
summer-genitive morning-topic everything white
'In the early morning of summer, everything looks white.'

(10) *kusa-mo* *michi-mo* *mada* *nemu-sou*
grass-also road-also still sleepy-look
'Both grass and roads still look sleepy.'

(Taniuchi, Spreads 1 and 2, trans. mine)

This picturebook's story progresses via a protagonist boy's narration. Because of the non-use of addressee-oriented expressions, the narrator sounds like he is simply expressing his perceptions and thoughts with no intention of interacting with readers (and thus, readers likely feel as if they have a window to the boy's private thoughts) (cf. Ikuta et al.).

Semi is written in a similar style as the prior example. In this respect, it conforms to Japanese picturebook textual norms, and, just as the aforementioned boy protagonist would not be judged as communicatively immature due to his manner of narration, Cicada's indifference toward interaction will similarly not conjure up the image of a communicatively undeveloped being.

To sum up, contrary to English, it would prove difficult, if not impossible, to rely on merely omitting expressions that evoke the speaker-hearer relationship (i.e. addressee-oriented expressions) as a characterization strategy. That said, naturally, the peculiar Japanese in *Semi* was surely carefully considered and crafted with some purpose in mind. As mentioned earlier, it might be assumed that this purpose was to portray Cicada as cognitively undeveloped. The following three sections ((i)-(iii)) unpack how Cicada's Japanese narration elicits such an assumption.

(i) Self-Reference in Narration

One significant feature which characterizes Cicada in the English text is the use of "Cicada" instead of *I*. In the Japanese text, the protagonist refers to itself as "semi," a word equivalent to "cicada." Knowing this, one might

conclude that self-referential "semi" would function similar in characterization as "cicada" does in the English text. However, the conventions of Japanese differ in this regard.

Japanese does not have a single, generalized first-person pronoun akin to English, where *I* alone basically holds a monopoly on self-reference, irrespective of who is conversing with whom. Rather, Japanese speakers must consider context and select an appropriate expression from among a vast array of first-person pronouns, kinship terms, occupational titles, and even one's own name for self-reference (Suzuki; Hirose, "Public and Private Self"). When lecturing, a male teacher will probably choose *watashi* (formal *I*) to refer to himself, but then might opt for *ore* (informal *I*, generally for males) when talking with friends. In some circumstances, however, preference might be given to kinship terms for self-reference. The same hypothetical male, talking to his small children, might use *papa* (Daddy), but as those kids grow up, he likely switches to *(o)tousan* (father). Those small children, on the other hand, probably use their given names to refer to themselves, especially when interacting with family members.

The English *I* is essentially the entirety of the first-person pronoun system, evoking the second-person pronoun *you*. Japanese self-reference words, on the other hand, behave in a more complex manner. Some self-reference pronouns work naturally in tandem with pronouns for the addressee; for example, *ore* pairs well with *omae* (informal, impolite *you*). In contrast, *watashi* has no conventional partner, especially when talking with someone of higher status. Takao Suzuki points out that it seems there exists no one, exclusive Japanese expression which can appropriately address any and all individuals with social/psychological superiority relative to the speaker. It is natural to opt for kinship terms or occupational titles in such situations; case in point, students should address their teachers by using *sensei* (teacher) (Suzuki). Referring to one's teacher with *anata* (formal *you*) sounds rude.

Hirose can provide a brief summary of the above discussion:

> What is characteristic of Japanese words for self and others is that we start from speaker and addressee and think about what words to apply to them. In English, on the other hand, the words *I* and *you* come first and

> linguistically restrict their referents to the speaker and the addressee. ("Public and Private Self" 1637)

Thus, most Japanese speakers (author included) would not intuit that "semi" is an odd replacement for some end-all-be-all first-person pronoun. Rather, "semi" was seemingly selected as one option among many potential means of self-reference, including first-person pronouns. Thus, "semi" is a linguistic, but not a functional, replacement for "cicada," which serves to actualize the evocation of the first-person pronoun, i.e. its connection with the second-person pronoun. "Semi" does little if anything to contribute to characterizing the protagonist as communicatively undeveloped.

That is not to say that this choice makes no contribution toward characterization. The fact that the creature selects its own name (assuming for now that "semi" is its name, and not a distinct species of cicada) for self-reference is telling of something. As mentioned above, in Japanese small kids often refer to themselves using their given names or nicknames. In other words, names used for self-reference will evoke the image of a rather young speaker. Because Cicada, though it appears to be a nymph, works in a human company, a setting consisting of only adults, it, like other human adults, should not use its own name for self-reference (usually *watashi* or *watakushi* is preferred for such formal situations). Thus, "semi" is inappropriate here, and this inappropriateness likely actualizes the idea of a child narrator; the resulting dissonance leading to a cognitively immature impression.

(ii) Non-use of Complex Structures

The Japanese text, like the English original, includes some incorrect expressions. Take the following sentence from Spread 3 given in (6):

(11) *ningen erai-hito iu, semi ningen-janai*
'A high-ranking human says cicada is not human.'

This sentence sounds incorrect because the clause "semi ningen-janai" (cicada is not human) comes after the reporting verb "iu" (say). Standard Japanese would normally require the following structure (particles absent from Cicada's utterance have been added):

(12)	*ningen-no*	*erai-hito-ga*		
	human-genitive	person in a high position-nominative		
	[*semi-wa*	*ningen-janai*	*to*]	*iu*.
	cicada-topic	human-not	quotative	say

In (12), the verb "iu" takes the bracketed clause, with the quotative particle "to," as its reported-clause complement. This sentence with its embedded structure proves grammatically more complex than the incorrect sentence in (11). Cicada's avoidance of such embedded structures will lead readers to believe Cicada incapable of dealing with complex grammatical structures. In English, the incorrectness itself mostly serves to create an alien image, while the incongruence caused by the incorrectness is more closely associated with its communicatively undeveloped image (the section *Double-Suspension*). The incorrectness of the non-embedded sentence in (11), on the other hand, is suspended due to a motivation to imply Cicada's foreignness together with its lack of higher cognitive capabilities.

Other sentences also suggest Cicada's inability to handle complex grammar. For example, "semi erai hitsuyou-nai" (essentially 'Cicada doesn't need a high position.') in Spread 3 should grammatically be:

(13)	*semi-wa*	*erai*	*no-wa*	*hitsuyou-nai.*
	cicada-topic	higher position	nominalizer-topic	need-not
	'Cicada doesn't need a high position.'			

"Erai," an adjective, must be nominalized, as seen with the nominalizer *no* in (13), if it is to be used as argument to the predicate *hitsuyou-da* (need). Cicada's original sentence indicates that nominalization is beyond its grammatical prowess. Again, such incorrectness in the Japanese text, unlike that in the English, directly affects characterization of Cicada's alien-ness and cognitively undeveloped-ness.

Sentence fragments also appear repeatedly in both versions. In the English text, sentence fragments like "No promotion" prove incongruent in the sense that they do not express Cicada's thoughts clearly and concisely as elocutional convention dictates, which implies Cicada's inability to satisfactorily communicate information to readers. Although similar sentence fragments appear in the translation as well, their function should

be understood from a different perspective. As noted in the section *Difficulty in Creating Cicada's Non-Communicative Image in Japanese*, the Japanese text consists of utterances that imply a speaker with no intention to interact with readers, thus the functionality of these sentence fragments in characterization cannot and should not be analyzed in terms of communicating with an audience. Instead, focus should shift to Cicada's linguistic or intellectual ability. That is, akin to Cicada's inability to produce embedded and nominalized structures, its repeated use of simple sentences and phrases further indicates a failure to grasp and create complex grammatical structures.[xiii] So while similar breaking of grammatical and/or lexical conventions can be found in both the original and translated texts, the effect these deviations have in actualizing sense within the two texts shows substantial variation.

(iii) Lack of Particles

In the English text, some linguistic features, such as non-use of articles and plural morphemes, result in Cicada's incomplete and unclear expression of thoughts. This incongruence, caused by incorrectness, implies the character's inability to convey information as would be expected in normal interactions, culminating in the image of a character with scarce communicative skills.

In the Japanese translation, certain linguistic features, although not one-to-one equivalents with the original, seem to be associated with Cicada's incomplete thought expression as well. In Japanese, an important means of expressing the semantico-grammatical relationship between elements is case particles. For example, the underlined items in the following sentence are case particles: *Boku-ga* (I-nominative) *ringo-o* (apple-accusative) *tabeta* (ate) 'I ate apples.' Although some case particles are often omitted, particularly in colloquial Japanese, Cicada's non-use of case particles often leads to incorrectness. For example, "ningen eraihito" in Spread 3 is incorrect due to the absence of the genitive marker *no*. The correct expression would be *ningen-no eraihito*. The drop of *no* leaves the semantic relationship between the noun phrases unclear, although context enables us to guess at what said relationship should be. The non-use of case

particles, especially when dropping them is not grammatically permitted, will likely result in incomplete thought expression, or incongruence.

In this respect, the drop of case particles, again, plays a similar role to some grammatical deviations in the English text, such as non-use of articles and plural morphemes. However, further consideration reveals that the suspension of incongruence is motivated by a different purpose. As mentioned in the section *Difficulty in Creating Cicada's Non-Communicative Image in Japanese*, the *Semi* text is written in a style that expresses the internal workings of Cicada's mind, while the character itself shows no intention toward interacting with readers. Thus, incomplete thought expression caused by absent case particles cannot be addressed in terms of Cicada attempting to communicate with readers. Instead, it suggests Cicada's inability to verbalize its thoughts and feelings in a complete manner. This incongruence as well contributes to characterizing Cicada as cognitively undeveloped.

Concluding Remarks

The English in *Cicada* is rife with myriad insufficient expressions. Nevertheless, native speakers do not actively perceive the text as full of mistakes or unreadable. This is because such "mistakes" are suspended due to their appropriateness at the textual level. All of Cicada's mistakes collectively serve to create an intended image of the titular protagonist (cf. Ikarashi and Maher). Native readers easily pick up on this and accept Cicada's language as appropriate in regards to the author's motivations. However, these breaks with grammatical convention do not all contribute to characterization in exactly the same way. Some serve to actualize evocations of linguistic signs; others cause incongruence, hinting at Cicada's poor communicative skills.

The instrumentation behind Cicada's textual sense creation becomes all the clearer through comparison with the Japanese translation. Indeed, both versions aim to conjure motivated impressions of the protagonist by strategically undermining linguistic conventions. However, the means and the ends of this process show intriguing variation, shedding light on systematic differences between English and Japanese, as well as the roads

available to creating and suspending incorrectness, incongruence, and inappropriateness in each language respectively.

Notes:

[i] Acknowledgement: My sincere gratitude to Professor Emma Tămâianu-Morita, who gave me a chance to develop the idea proposed in this article, as well as for her invaluable comments and suggestions. I would also like to thank the reviewers who carefully checked my article and gave me valuable comments. I have also benefited from discussions with Mr. Patrick Maher, who painstakingly proofread my draft and offered invaluable advice on how to accurately and effectively express my ideas.

[ii] The word *Spread* is used to refer to both the left and right pages that appear when opening a picturebook. A story starts from Spread 1, followed by Spread 2, Spread 3 and so on.

[iii] See Ikarashi and Maher for explanations about the other linguistic features listed in (4).

[iv] The last distinction is the "product" (*ergon*), which is created via language activity. Text, for example, is a "product" on the individual level.

[v] Ikarashi and Maher, while referring to the 'recoverability for the hearer' principle (Ikegami 253), point out that Cicada pays little attention to the readers' state of knowledge.

[vi] Ikarashi and Maher assume that the lack of articles (and plural morphemes) will indicate Cicada's ignorance of the existence of readers. On the other hand, this article is analyzing this strategy from the universal point of view.

[vii] The lack of tense morphemes, plural morphemes, the *be*-verb, *to* in *to*-infinitives, and the use of *no* instead of *cannot* and *do not* can all be seen in a similar vein.

[viii] Patrick Maher (personal communication) has pointed out a well-known example. Elmo, a Muppet character on *Sesame Street*, also refers to himself with his own name instead of *I*. The inappropriate use of *Elmo* as a self-referential expression serves to appropriately create the character's image.

[ix] Cicada sometimes uses plural morphemes in the book (e.g. "Need no resources" (Tan, *Cicada* Spread 3)). Ikarashi and Maher point out that motivations other than to just characterize Cicada are involved in the use of plural morphemes. See Ikarashi and Maher for details (fn. 10).

[x] A lingering question is why *no* is a substitute for *not*. Ikarashi and Maher assume that the overreliance on *no* for negation of noun phrases would be a possible reason. Cicada's sentences often do not develop into full sentential forms, such as "Data entry clerk." and "Seventeen year." (both from Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2). When negating such noun phrases, Cicada cannot help but use the negative form "no X," such as "No sick day." and "No mistake." (both from Tan, *Cicada* Spread 2). Such negative forms frequently appear in Cicada's utterances. Thus, *no* would be the primary candidate for any sort of negation, foregoing any pairing with auxiliary verbs or a switch to *not*.

[xi] The following English text is a translation of the Japanese text. Thus, most of the sentences differ from the original ones.
[xii] This image pertains heavily to particular words and phrases that Cicada uses, as well as to orthographic choices deviating from customary kana and kanji use. However, these linguistic features are not directly related to the comparison with the English text, and thus this article will not go into detail on these matters.
[xiii] However, these expressions are likely less conspicuous than those in the English text, as Japanese allows arguments to be omitted relatively freely. One can naturally say a short sentence like *Taberu* (will eat) if the omitted subject and object are understandable from context. Nevertheless, this author believes that Cicada's rudimentary fragments tend to be so short as to lead to incongruence.

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