

## Essay about Margaret Maeda

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Margaret Maeda and I have been colleagues in this faculty for almost twenty-four years, but we have known each other for even longer than that. Our mutual acquaintance began more than thirty years ago when we were colleagues at a certain high-level language school in Osaka for a year. Although we were of different nationalities, British and American, we both had Japanese spouses, and she was already the mother of two small children. I remember her telling me about the special challenges of raising bilingual children. Within a few years, I would find myself facing the same challenges.

After I left to take up a position at a Japanese university, we were out of touch with each other for several years, until by a combination of fortuitous circumstances we became colleagues again in this faculty of foreign languages. I was very pleased to be reunited with an old acquaintance and former colleague although our belonging to two different departments has limited our interaction mostly to faculty meetings and the entrance examination committee.

I greatly enjoyed working with her on that committee, although I must confess it may not have always been so enjoyable for her. I can attest that her work on that committee was always conscientious, her contributions in the form of texts and exercises were consistently well-chosen and carefully constructed, and her comments about others' contributions constructive, insightful and incisive. I tended to rely on her comments (or absence of) as a confirmation of and standard to evaluate the quality of my own contributions. There were times when I disagreed with her, but such occasions were generally far fewer.

I cannot speak from direct experience about her classroom teaching, never having sat in on any of her classes, but I have no doubt that she is an excellent teacher. Back in the early days when we would sometimes walk to Hakuraku station together, I remember that she sometimes had to decline to do so because she was still in her office preparing for her classes the

next day; sometimes she stayed until very late in the evening. If the mark of a good lesson is one that is well-prepared, then her lessons must certainly have been very good. However, the best indication of the worth of a lesson is how it is evaluated by the students themselves. In this regard, I have seen the results of one of those student surveys that used to be done that was available to be viewed in the library. While my own evaluation was less than excellent in a couple of dimensions, hers was excellent in all dimensions—a perfectly shaped circle. I was most impressed by that and I think any one would be. As a further confirmation, I heard directly from a foreign student who praised her teaching, in a matter of fact way, and who would have had no incentive to exaggerate. In summary, I have no doubt that Margaret has been a consistently conscientious and very competent classroom teacher, and I hope that through this essay she will at last be given the measure of general recognition that she greatly deserves.

As for that other important dimension of our status as academics, her research, I have read some of her articles published in our in-house journal, and found them to be quite interesting, as well as scholarly. The fact that the relevant faculty committee recommended that she be promoted to full professor speaks for itself. I hope that through reading this essay, those among our colleagues who may have doubts will come to accept that the lack of a doctorate does not necessarily indicate an absence of scholarly ability. (Nor in my experience, does having a doctorate necessarily mean that one is a capable, and respected, scholar.) In her case, as well as in my own, I know that family circumstances—the demands of being a parent and the need to support a family, among others, were the determining factors that postponed and ultimately prevented our obtaining the full academic ‘license.’ Nevertheless, we both achieved promotion to full professorship, based on solid evidence of competent scholarship, and, now that we are retiring from this faculty and leaving our teaching responsibilities (in my case), and committee duties behind, we will have much more time to devote to our favorite research projects.

Finally, on a personal note, I wish to add that although Margaret joined this faculty a year later than I did, I consider it an honor and a privilege to

be retiring with her. It has been a pleasure being her colleague, and my only regret is that we did not have the opportunity for a closer collaboration in the same department. Needless to say, I wish her every success in her part-time teaching and in whatever research projects she chooses to undertake, as well as all happiness and fulfillment in her post-retirement years.