

Working women on the move

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By Ingrid Piller | September 19, 2010 | Language, migration & social justice



Working women on the move

The [International Gender and Language Association conference at Tsuda College, Tokyo](#), kicked off yesterday with a panel about *Working Women on the Move* organized by Kimie Takahashi. The three papers on the panel explored the intersections between gender, language and migration in three different work contexts in Australia. Kime Takahashi drew on data from interviews with Japanese flight attendants working for an Australian budget airline to show that they were hired because of their bilingual skills and to embody “Asian hospitality.” However, that meant that they had to do much more [emotional labor](#) than their white monolingual counterparts while at the same time also having less

change of being promoted.

Donna Butorac explored how gendered careers and career aspirations become transformed in a migration context. In her interview study with migrant women from a wide range of backgrounds, she found that migration transformed all of them from women in paid employment to homemakers and full-time mothers. Sometimes this was by choice but mostly it was [a byproduct of the deskilling and downward occupational mobility that accompanied their migration](#).

Deskilling and downward occupational mobility also was a major issue for the African women settling in regional New South Wales who were the focus of Vera Williams Tetteh’s paper. Vera drew on a case-study with two women, who were participants in her larger project about language learning and African settlement in Australia, to show how that these women carry a significant work burden, particularly in providing social services and community work. However, that work is not recognized by the wider society and in effect the unpaid work of African migrant women works to subsidize the state.

I will continue this theme in my keynote lecture later today where I focus on the ways in which the neo-liberal work order has come to reproduce – but at the same time obscure – exclusion based on gender, race and language.

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Vol. 20

August 2011
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