The paper presents a critical discourse analysis of media representation of Australia as a tourism destination to Japanese post-war baby boomers – the dankai sedai. The term dankai sedai refers to the 8 million Japanese born between 1947 and 1949, who make up 7% of Japan’s population. 2007 has marked the beginning of the dankai sedai’s mass retirement as they have begun to reach the age of 60. Unlike earlier generations of Japanese retirees, the dankai sedai have significant disposable income and are active in their search for alternative lifestyle choices, including travelling and studying overseas both in pre-retirement and retirement. Although their potential as an international market is increasingly acknowledged by national tourism boards and tourism service providers alike in many counties (e.g. Hawaii, Malaysia, Thailand, the United Kingdom, etc.), there is surprisingly little study on how tourism destinations are discursively constructed by and in media to this highly discerning group of senior visitors. Drawing on the work of Adam Jaworski and Ingrid Piller (in press 2008) and Monica Heller (2003), I will critically examine the role of language and media communication in producing desire for tourism, or more specifically, I will investigate the ways in which global and local media discursively construct (1) the connection between old age and international tourism, and (2) the identity of dankai sedai as tourists, as well as of Australia and its competitors (e.g. Hawaii, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia, Thailand, etc.) as tourism destinations to dankai sedai.

The paper is part of a larger critical sociolinguistic ethnography being conducted in Australia and Japan, and two types of data (macro and micro domain) have been collected for the study. Macro domain data include websites of tourism service providers, travel magazines, brochures and travel blogs. Micro domain data comprise in-depth interviews and ethnographic field notes with 15 dankai sedai who are aged 60 and over, and are either visiting or have visited Australia on a short-and long-term basis. Keeping with the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis, I will focus on mediated connections between texts, and social and cultural structures and processes, and investigate the assumptions that underlie particular subject positions, omissions of other positions and power relations produced in micro domain data; who and what is represented (or not represented) by whom, and how are they portrayed in each text and image and in which language? What kind of ideologies underlies such representations? I will further examine how these wider discourses are reflected, enacted, and maybe resisted in the micro-domain data gained from the dankai sedai visitors in Australia. In conclusion, I will illuminate the role of the new media in soliciting desire and fantasy in senior people for a particular type of tourism in a particular country, as well as the political economy of language in producing “global tourism”.
