The Japanese Language and the Making of Tradition

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This year, 2004, the Kokugo Gakkai, the 'Society for the Study of the National Language', is being renamed the Nihongo Gakkai, the 'Society for the Study of Japanese'. To outsiders, the name change may appear to be little more than a trivial cosmetic detail, but within Japan, it indicates something of greater significance. For decades, the name *Kokugo*, or 'National Language', had remained sacrosanct, and the society dedicated to its study had fiercely resisted change. But on February 23, 2003, when a formal vote was taken among the 2,500 members of the Kokugo Gakkai, 776 of the more than 1,150 members casting votes—some 67%—approved the new name.[1] That vote may mean a watershed line has been crossed. The Kokugo Gakkai, long a bastion of conservative sentiment about Japan and the Japanese language, now had a membership apparently in favor of a more open, international approach to their field of study. Time will tell whether this more liberal attitude results in other, more substantial changes.

Since the end of the Pacific War, the Kokugo Gakkai has served as the single most important society in Japan for the scientific study of the Japanese language, and although it has always had a few foreign members, from its beginning it has been an almost exclusively Japanese organization. Its principles and its goals have functioned independently of linguistics practiced outside the country, its research methods and findings largely unknown or opaque to outsiders. As a name, *Kokugo Gakkai* proclaimed openly the proprietary feelings that Japanese linguistic scholars held about their language. *Kokugo* was, and is, what they studied; *Nihongo*, on the other hand, was something foreigners could study. It was a difference they found important.

Beyond the confines of the Kokugo Gakkai—soon, the Nihongo Gakkai—these two common words for the Japanese language are still kept apart of course. *Kokugo* remains the subject taught in Japanese schools to Japanese schoolchildren. *Nihongo* is what is taught to foreigners. If a non-Japanese were to refer to his Japanese language classes as *Kokugo*, Japanese listeners would find the usage nonsensical and humorous. In

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other words, *Nihongo* (or *Nippongo*) is the more general name for the language. It has a cosmopolitan feel about it that stresses Japan's place in the world's family of nations. *Kokugo*, on the other hand, is an in-group usage. Its literal meaning may be 'national language', but its usage is something more like 'our language, our mother tongue'. There is certainly more than a shade of nationalism in the word *Kokugo*, but some of the other, more innocuous nuances of the word are lost when it is translated as 'National Language'.

What is interesting about these two words, *Kokugo* and *Nihongo*, is that they are both surprisingly new. They began to be widely used scarcely more than a hundred years ago, about the time that Western powers began to put intense pressure on Japan to open its doors. Apparently, the Japanese felt no need for concise ways to talk about their language, at least in general terms, before coming into close contact with the outside world. Most references to the language found in writings before the end of the Edo period were descriptive phrases rather than names. In the textual record of Japanese from traditional times, we find only expressions like "Japan's language" (*Nihon no kotoba*) or "Japan's speech" (*Nihon no kuchi*).[2]

One of these two modern words, *Nihongo*, became a part of Japanese vocabulary around 1854.[3] On the night of March 27th of that year, a young nationalist named Yoshida Shōin, along with a friend named Kaneko Jūsuke, attempted to stow away aboard Commodore Perry's flagship, the USS Powhatan, then lying at anchor just off the coast of Japan. The act was a clear violation of Japan's policy of national exclusion, and both young samurai were taken off the ship and thrown into prison.

Writing his recollections of the incident from prison, Yoshida described what had happened to him on board Perry's ship:

> Although I asked for a brush and tried to make signs with my hands, I couldn't communicate at all. It was extremely frustrating. In time someone [named] Williams who knew Japanese [that is, *Nihongo*, or perhaps *Nippongo*[4]] showed up . . .[5]

This journal entry is one of the earliest recorded uses of the word *Nihongo*. It marked the beginning of what was soon to become the most common way of referring to the Japanese language.

One particularly remarkable aspect of this remarkable record is the circumstance in which the word was used. When he wrote down the new word *Nihongo*, Yoshida was doing so in reference to the use of the language by a foreigner. It was an interesting coincidence. Or was it coinci-

dence? We could certainly imagine that Yoshida, a Japanese nationalist if there ever was one,[6] had conceived of and deliberately used the word as an out-group term. In any event, *Nihongo* became, from its very beginning, the outward-looking face of Japanese.

Use of the word spread quickly. As the Japanese entered the Meiji period, it became the popular term to use when writing on the new, modern world. Most frequent of all was the use of the word in works on foreign travel or on the study of things connected to foreigners and foreign languages. As it had with Yoshida, direct contact with foreigners seems naturally to have brought the word to mind:

> This person previously had come to the Russian consulate in Hakodate and was there more than seven years, and his [ability] to communicate in Japanese [*Nihongo*] was quite excellent. (Mori Arinori, *Kōro kikō*, 1866)[7]

But progressive intellectuals did not confine their use of the word to foreign contexts. A reference to *Nihongo* was oftentimes a sine qua non in the advocacy for the "cultural enlightenment" associated with modernization. Fukuzawa Yukichi, for example, made a special point of using the word when writing on scholarship and education. Advocates of romanization such as Yatabe Ryōkichi and Tanakadate Aikitsu referred to Japanese as *Nihongo* in their discussions of problems with the writing system. Some scholars trained in Western linguistics, such as Ōtsuki Fumihiko, wrote on the grammar and vocabulary of *Nihongo*.[8]

But what about that other, more private word for the language, *Kokugo*? Where did it come from, and how did it take on its present meaning? Today, as we have seen, *Kokugo* is a completely in-group word.

Here is how one distinguished Japanese gentleman, Kamei Takashi, has described the nuances the word evokes:

> For the Japanese there is a feeling of intimacy in the word *Kokugo*. It, even more than *Nihongo*, has put down roots in our soul. The difference is especially great when the latter is written [or pronounced] not as *Nihongo* but as *Nippongo*; *Nippongo* has a standoffish or distant feel about it. There is a calmness resembling a kind of elegant, quiet simplicity [*sabi*] in the word *Kokugo*.[9]

Kamei's description is eloquent testimony to the cultural significance that *Kokugo* has had for the Japanese people. But the feel of tradition, reassuring though it may be, misleads the people most intimately touched by it. *Kokugo* may have been close to the soul (or *kokoro*) of Kamei's generation of Japanese, but at least in its modern, in-group meaning, it is no more ancient than *Nihongo*. In fact, in many ways, it is newer.

On the surface, *Kokugo* does not even appear to be Japanese. The read-

ings of the characters used to write the word, *koku* 'nation' and *go* 'language', are both borrowed from Chinese. ("It feels strange to write the word in hiragana," Kamei says.) What appears to be the same word can be found in classical Chinese literature; it was used at least as early as the eighth century to designate the languages of some non-Chinese states.[10] But unlike today, it was never used then to refer to the official language of the state—just the opposite: what it meant, in traditional times in East Asia, was something like 'the local vernacular'.[11]

In those days the Japanese used the word the same way the Chinese did. Since Classical Chinese was the official written language of Japan as well as China, Japanese writers sometimes referred to their own colloquial language as a 'local vernacular'. In a Japanese preface (dated 1714) to a Chinese commentary on the Lotus Sutra, the Japanese author notes that in preparing the blocks for printing, "the 'local vernacular' [*kokugo*][12] has been added at the side."[13] It is certainly not the modern Japanese word that we see here: the usage was unmistakably Chinese. It would still be a long time before *kokugo* would have the mystical, in-group meaning it does today.

For one thing, in Tokugawa-period Japan, the word took a detour in another direction. In a 1773 work on Dutch medicine, the physician Sugita Genpaku used it in an interesting way:

> Because this thing called 'Latin' is the origin of the languages of those various countries, things like the basic terms in medical books are all written in 'Latin', and, immediately following that, there is a translation into *kokugo* [i.e., Dutch].[14]

The usage at first seems curious. In his writings Genpaku usually called Dutch 'Dutch' (*Orandago*), but here he chose to call it *kokugo*. Why? It seems clear that Genpaku thought of Dutch as a 'local vernacular' because it had a status analagous to that of Japanese. Japanese was classed as a *kokugo* because Classical Chinese was the official, standard (written) language. For Dutch, on the other hand, the contrast was with Latin. In other words, Dutch was to Latin in Europe as Japanese was to Classical Chinese in East Asia. For that reason, Dutch could be called a *kokugo*, and Genpaku consistently called it that in contexts connected with Latin.[15] It was an interesting analogy. For Japanese scholars like Genpaku, it seems that Latin-centered Europe was regarded as an alternative civilization, comparable to China-centered East Asia. It was a new but growing way of looking at the world.

The word *kokugo* spread to other contexts. Here, several decades later,

in 1815, an older Genpaku reminisces about the beginning of his fascination with Western learning:

> Thus, because of an eccentric nature, I became a disciple of Mr. Aoki and studied Dutch horizontal writing and twelve nation's languages [*kokugo*] [written with] it.[16]

By the late Edo period *kokugo* had come to be widely used this way — that is, in the sense of the representative language of some country. Sometimes the word referred to Japanese, sometimes to the language of a European country. Which was meant was not always clear, and so sometimes a prefix was added: *go-* or *ga-* 'our [country's language]' if Japanese was meant; and *ki-* 'respected', *kare no* 'their', or the like if some other language was meant. In 1866 Mori Arinori had just returned from a secret trip abroad from Satsuma when he wrote the following:

> I have heard that the national language of Russia [*Rokoku no kokugo*] is, in Europe, the most difficult to learn.

Of course, by this time the general meaning of the word was no longer the dominant one. A narrower sense focusing on Japan as the nation in question had clearly emerged, as can be seen in an 1856 lexical work by Murakami Hidetoshi:

> This book is compiled for the purpose of examining Western language using [our] nation's language [*kokugo*].

But both meanings remained in common use surprisingly late, well into the Meiji period and to the end of the nineteenth century. In fact, in the 1886 edition of Hepburn's Japanese-English dictionary, the entry for the word *kokugo* is: "The language of a country; national language." Even today, this by now archaic usage is the first definition given in most Japanese dictionaries.

As we shall see shortly, an important contribution to the exclusively Japanese meaning of the word came from the nationalistic scholar Ueda Kazutoshi. But in 1894, even he was still influenced by the more general meaning. The task of shaping the word was not yet complete. In his book *Kokugo to kokka to* (National language and nation), which was published in that year, Ueda sometimes used the word to refer to Japanese and sometimes not — as we see in this example: "Because of Luther, he [i.e., an early European language reformer] at first wanted to make a *kokugo* independent of Latin . . ." Moreover, in one of his most famous assertions

about language, Ueda still wrote in a way that most Japanese today would find curious:

> [I]f we take the Japanese national language [*Nihon kokugo*] as an example . . . , we should speak of Japanese [*Nihongo*] as the spiritual blood of the Japanese people.

For Japanese today, the phrase *Nihon kokugo* seems quite nonsensical. It is like saying "Japan's Japanese language."[17]

The present, exclusively Japanese meaning of *Kokugo* was still developing, and it needed considerable, official help. It was an idea that grew out of the national drive toward linguistic unification.

A Fragmented Japan

In the early nineteenth century, before the country began to modernize, Japan was partitioned into various separate domains governed by daimyō, military lords sworn to serve as vassals of the shōgun. These great domains resembled in some ways separate countries, except that each and every one of them was tightly and closely monitored and controlled by the central authority of the Tokugawa shogunate in Edo. Nevertheless, each of them taxed, policed, and carefully controlled the social structure of its own citizenry, and its boundaries were sealed against unrestricted commerce and travel. Simply to visit an area outside the territory to which one belonged could often be as difficult as it is today for North Koreans to travel abroad.

The principal travelers were the daimyō, who were required under the *sankin kōtai* system to reside in alternate years in Edo under the watchful eye of the shōgun. For most other people, travel was permitted only under extraordinary circumstances. An application had to be submitted to the proper authorities stating the purpose of travel, the duration of the stay, who would be contacted, and other such details. If justification was considered sufficient, passport papers were issued, and these were checked at every station along the travel route. In some politically sensitive situations an official escort was also necessary. The emperor and members of his family, who maintained a delicate position vis-à-vis the shōgun, were normally confined to the environs of the imperial residence in Kyoto. Peasants did not normally travel at all.

These political boundaries cut off communication between the people living in one daimyō's domain from the people living in neighboring areas. Although the language spoken within each of the domains remained

fairly cohesive, the linguistic differences between it and other domains began to grow. From the time that Tokugawa Ieyasu became shōgun around 1600 until the Tokugawa shogunate collapsed in the middle of the nineteenth century, each of these political divisions drifted in a different linguistic direction. Domain boundaries became linguistic boundaries.

These boundaries remain the principal boundaries separating the various Japanese dialects today. Yet, a century and a half of modern education and communication have done much to attenuate what were once far greater linguistic differences. In the early nineteenth century, the differences separating Japanese "dialects" more closely resembled the linguistic differences separating Chinese "dialects." Japanese born in one area were unable to understand the speech of other domains.

A graphic illustration of how linguistically fragmented Japan was can be found in the travel diary of Furukawa Kosokan, a government inspector sent to the northern Japanese territories in Tōhoku and Hokkaidō in 1783.[18] According to Furukawa, he had trouble communicating every place he went. At Tajima in Aizu, Furukawa wrote:

> Half of what is said by either side cannot be interpreted by the other. In inn after inn, all one can do is laugh a lot; whatever one does, things are difficult. If you ask the people at the inn to give you *chazuke*, they'll bring out *yuzuke*. In each and every inn you have to go into the kitchen and take care of matters yourself.

When Furukawa got to the territory of the Nanbu Clan in modern Morioka, he made these observations:

> What is said, by both men and women, is gibberish; if it's ten that's meant, you can't make out whether they're saying two or three.
>
> We shogunate inspectors are each granted from the landowner not only a guide, but also two or three fellows familiar with everything in the area around the castle town. These people accompany us at all times. In the area of Nanbu, where it's especially difficult to communicate, we were given two such fellows from the castle town of Morioka to translate. In this place, the fact that the translations themselves could not be interpreted caused everybody to laugh.

Furukawa himself was born in what is now Okayama Prefecture.

This situation continued as long as the Tokugawa shogunate maintained its restrictions. As long as people stayed put, few except peripatetic inspectors were inconvenienced by an inability to communicate. But when the shōgun's control finally collapsed, and civil war and political turmoil brought armies and factions from different areas into contact, the linguistic

fragmentation became immediately apparent. Accounts of that period contain stories of confusion, incomprehension, misunderstanding, and chaos. Here is a well-known (though probably apocryphal) anecdote often repeated in the historiographic literature to illustrate the kind of frustration that arose:

> In 1868, in the turmoil of the Boshin civil war, troops from Yamaguchi and Kagoshima in the southwest were dispatched in an expeditionary force to Tōhoku. When these soldiers reached their destination and tried to talk to the people of the area, they discovered that communication was impossible. Not one among them knew how to speak the local language. The situation became desperate. The army needed to be supplied, directions needed to worked out, and for both purposes the units needed local help. Finally after many things had been tried, one especially well educated soldier tried reciting lines from the repertory of Noh drama, from which he knew expressions such as: "We are in need of rice, can you be of service?"; "Would you show us the way?"; and the like. As it happened, there was a man in the area who had studied Noh drama, and he was able to act as an intermediary for the soldiers.[19]

Bringing the Parts Together

Once order had been reestablished following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the new intellectual leaders turned their attention toward the challenges of building the new state. One obvious need was for unification. The stratified and regionalized society that was Japan at the time could not function as a unified nation. Not only were there geographical divisions; class divisions ran deep as well. All of these divisions served as barriers against the building of a modern state.

In the early Meiji period, the Japanese looked toward the West for models upon which to create a new society. Among other things, it seemed obvious to them that linguistic unity was a sine qua non for building the infrastructure of a modern industrial and military society. To work together people had to be able to talk to each other. The citizens of England, France, Germany, Russia, and America could all do that, the Japanese thought,[20] while within their own country deep linguistic divisions remained. They resolved to establish a national language.

Choosing the Right Word

We do not know who first began using the word *kokugo* as the symbol of the modern unified state, but it is clear how and why the word was

picked. As we have seen, for scholars of Western Learning, the word was already associated with the languages of European states.

But there was another reason why the word fit the needs of the time so well. Japanese intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century had a very special way of accommodating new ideas coming in from the West, and the concept of a "national language" was no exception. The method they chose for importing Western terms was to translate the roots of each new word into Classical Chinese. The coinages of Nishi Amane were typical.

Nishi Amane was one of the most important Japanese intellectuals of the early Meiji. He was among the very first to assert that Western civilization should provide the model for Japan's national reforms, and in proselytizing for Western learning he became a prolific writer and coiner of words. Born the son of a samurai physician, Nishi gave up his samurai status in 1853 and began to devote himself to full-time study of Western thought. By 1862 he was accomplished enough to be sent by the Tokugawa shogunate to Holland to study the social sciences. When he returned, Nishi gave himself over with a missionary-like zeal to the transmission of Western ideology, particularly positivism and utilitarianism. Nishi's goal was to "civilize and enlighten" the Japanese people, and toward that end he lectured and wrote widely, producing books and essays and even, in 1870, a complete encyclopedia of European arts and sciences.

Nishi's specialty was philosophy, and in that Western field of learning he was confronted with an array of bewilderingly complex terms. One of the most important of these was the Western notion of "category." (Perhaps it would be more accurate to say the German word *Kategorie* was what Nishi had in mind.) In a linguistic tour de force, Nishi made up the word *hanchū* to translate the term. Written in formidably difficult Chinese characters, the new word was an elliptical form of the phrase (*kō*)*han* (*kyū*)*chū* 'the Nine Divisions of the Vast Pattern'—a concept described in the *Book of History,* one of the Five Confucian Classics. The classical allusion had nothing originally to do with Western philosophy, of course, but it was a close enough approximation to serve his learned readership as a reminder of the topic Nishi was writing about. The word *hanchū* is doubly interesting because Japanese intellectuals of the time who knew the etymology read the kanji with the pronunciation *kategorī*, showing they were familiar with the German term. There were even those who wrote *kategorī* in *furigana* alongside the characters![21] However clever it may have been, the new coinage was an intellectual conceit, because it implied that only those versed in both Western learning and traditional Confucian philosophy could understand the word and thus the philosophical

concept. Nevertheless, in spite of the pains which Nishi took to draw upon East Asian tradition, the word had no more than a superficial connection to the classical citation. It was a new word for a new age.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the Meiji period's most famous intellectuals, used the same locus classicus from the *Book of History* to introduce another concept, that of the Western public speech. The original phrase, *enzetsu*, was used in the classical Chinese source in connection with conveying the Nine Divisions, but Fukuzawa used it as a word for the speeches given in an 1875 lecture series of an association to which he belonged.[22] The style adopted for those lectures, and which Fukuzawa insisted on teaching, was that of an English debating society.

Fukuzawa was one of the most important coiners of words. A prime example of his inventiveness is the word for 'civilization' itself. In his 1867 work *Seiyō jijō* (The state of things in the West) Fukuzawa introduced the term *bunmei*(*-kaika*) as a translation of the English.[23] *Bunmei* 'civilization' is of course an everyday Japanese word now, but at the time Fukuzawa first used it, it called to mind, at least for any educated Japanese gentleman, a graceful phrase from the *Book of Changes* meaning 'literary embellishments are resplendent'. The allusion made the word more elegant and refined.

It may seem odd to us today that Fukuzawa would need to invent a word for 'civilization'. Certainly he and all other East Asians lived in what we would consider a civilization as old and as grand as any to be imported from Europe. But even as Japanese looked for Classical Chinese allusions to render Western terms, they also sensed a fundamental difference between everything Western and anything in their own tradition. It did not occur to them that *bunmei* existed in East Asia, because it really meant '(Western) civilization'. Another surprising example of an imported concept is 'art'. In the meaning of 'fine arts', the term *bijutsu* was coined in the 1860s, and in the early Meiji it referred only to Western styles and techniques. Traditional painting and sculpture were not originally thought of as *bijutsu*. At first, the word was used to include music and literature, but after the 1870s *bijutsu* came to designate only painting and sculpture. After that narrowing of meaning, another neologism, *geijutsu*, was subsequently coined to cover the broader meaning of 'art'.[24]

This curious blending of Eastern allusion with Western concept was fundamental to Meiji culture. The very symbol of the grandly modern and cosmopolitan in the 1880s had a name with a Classical Chinese pedigree. *Rokumeikan*, the name of the state-owned guest house for visiting dignitaries, meant 'House of the Cry of the Stag'. The name, which by

extension was also the name of the era, was an allusion to a poem in the oldest of Chinese anthologies, the *Book of Odes*.[25] Through this coinage the government proclaimed to the world its legitimacy in the most venerably traditional as well as the most innovatively modern.

The first use of *aikoku* 'patriotism' in the modern sense of 'love of country' was in 1873, when Itagaki Taisuke founded in Tokyo a political party called Aikoku Kōtō, or 'Public Party of Patriots'. The characters for the term had appeared in the *Nihon shoki*, but there they were read *mikado wo omofu* 'revering (or being faithful to) the emperor'. Itagaki's usage was the first one with reference to the Japanese state. It was the first conceptual linking to the advocacy of citizens' rights and welfare. And then, as it was subsequently used, *aikoku* came to have a meaning of 'patriotism' similar to the corresponding words used in Western states.[26]

Words made up in ways similar to that of *hanchū* include *gainen* 'concept', which was a rendering of German *Begriff* as well as the English; *koten* 'classics'; *shisō* 'thought' (a word that existed before the Meiji but had then referred only to thoughts for one's beloved); as well as the myriad of terms of modern society and technology still used today. These include such words as *keizai* 'economics', *seiji* 'politics', *kagaku* 'science', *shakai* 'society', *gunkan* 'warship', *ansatsu* 'assassination'— and so on, and so on.

Though such words are virtually without exception Japanese coinages, they were so cleverly cloaked in Classical Chinese form that the Chinese themselves later adopted the usages without question as Chinese words. An irony of the modern Chinese state is that much of its vocabulary—including such things as 'imperialism' (*dìguózhǔyì*, from *teikoku-shugi*); 'capitalism' (*zìběnzhǔyì*, from *shihon-shugi*), and even 'communism' (*gòngchǎnzhǔyì*, from *kyōsan-shugi*) and 'socialism' (*shèhuìzhǔyì*, from *shakai-shugi*) are actually words made in Japan.

Thus, it is no accident that *Kokugo* seems to have a venerable Chinese ancestry. It, too, like so many other such terms, was reintroduced into China earlier in this century to become *Guóyǔ*, the name for the Chinese standard language, a meaning it still has in Taiwan.[27] But in all of its modern meanings the word is clearly a Meiji-period Japanese creation.

We may wonder why the Japanese would bother to look in the ancient Chinese classics for ways to translate Western terminology. There is probably not one true synonym to be found in those sources for any Western technical term, as the Japanese well knew. On the face of it, the world of Classical Chinese seemed almost the polar opposite of the modern West. It represented the old way of thinking that the Japanese leaders had

resolutely decided to reject. Yet, this blending of the seemingly incompatible represented the thought processes of the Meiji intellectual (and to some extent many Japanese intellectuals today). Men of samurai background such as Nishi Amane and Fukuzawa Yukichi had grown up with the Chinese classics, much as Americans in the nineteenth century grew up with Shakespeare and the King James Bible. Education was grounded in the Confucian canon, and they had learned to write in a style that borrowed heavily from Classical Chinese. For men of that background there was no other way to present formal argumentation about intellectual issues. Writing dense with kanji was the norm for serious essays. (We still see that legacy in the kanji-filled newspaper and magazine editorials of today.) Kana was for lightweight topics. Kanji was associated with learning. Writing overloaded with kanji had a certain authoritarian prestige, and many formal expressions in Chinese had no easy Japanese equivalents. Moreover, the economy and brevity of Classical Chinese had an enormous esthetic appeal for a Japanese society in which forbearance and taciturnity were highly prized virtues. The unstated and suggestive qualities of the Classical Chinese allusion were part and parcel of the style.

We must also remember that with the opening of Japan new words came into the country in such a flood from the West that it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to remember and assimilate them in their original English, German, or French forms: unlike today, few Japanese in the mid-nineteenth century had a familiarity with English or any other Western language. For the Meiji elite, Classical Chinese was the vehicle for serious thinking. It was the only medium those educated men could use to take in so many new things so quickly.

Looking for a Standard

At first, the people who spoke of this new *Kokugo* were not quite sure what they meant by it. There was a great deal of searching and confusion. Many suggestions for what kind of national language could be used to unify the Japanese people were breathtakingly, but also sometimes refreshingly, radical. It goes without saying that in many of these suggestions there was no awareness at all of the difference between writing and speaking.

One of the earliest mentions of *Kokugo* in its modern meaning comes from a petition submitted in 1866 by Maeshima Hisoka[28] (the man who later founded the Japanese postal system) to the shōgun advocating the complete abolition of kanji. The "National Language [*Kokugo*]," Maeshima

asserted, should be written as simply as possible. Kanji, which are difficult to learn, should be abolished, he continued, and the people should be encouraged to use "phonetic letters" like kana and write in ordinary sentences. This was the way to spread education among the common people, Maeshima concluded. Of course, despite his advocacy of kana, Maeshima drafted his petition using a *sōrōbun* style dense with kanji. It was the only style allowed in the situation.[29]

A few years later, in 1869, Nanbu Yoshikazu submitted a petition entitled "On Reforming the National Language [*Kokugo*]" to the new Meiji government. Nanbu's proposal went farther than Maeshima's. His was an essay advocating the abolition of all of the Japanese writing systems. He argued that the twenty-six letters of the Roman alphabet should be used to write Japanese. It is curious that, unlike later advocates of romanization who preferred to speak of *Nihongo*, Nanbu referred to Japanese only as *Kokugo*.[30]

But the strangest and most radical proposal for the National Language unquestionably came from the American-educated statesman Mori Arinori, a man who was later (in 1885) to become the Minister of Education in Itō Hirobumi's cabinet. In those early days of Meiji state-building, when Japan seemed irredeemably far behind the West, Mori despaired completely of the possibility that Japanese could be used as the vehicle for modern civilization. Thus, in 1873, he wrote:

> Our meager language . . . is doomed to yield to the domination of the English tongue, especially when the power of steam and electricity shall have pervaded the land. Our intelligent race . . . cannot depend upon a weak and uncertain medium of communication . . . The laws of state can never be preserved in the language of Japan. All reasons suggest its disuse.[31]

Mori believed that the only way out was to replace Japanese with English. He argued that English should be adopted as the national language, and he campaigned widely for this proposal. In his eagerness for the English solution, he corresponded with distinguished Western linguists in order to solicit their opinions about how it might be carried out. He went so far as to travel to New Haven, Connecticut, in order to consult with the eminent Yale linguist, William Dwight Whitney. However, in response to Mori's question about the feasibility of his solution, Whitney coolly replied that he had never heard of such a thing being accomplished and did not think the Japanese could manage such a thing even if it were in their best interests, which he also doubted.[32]

As Meiji modernization moved ahead, thinking began to focus upon

the selection of a national standard out of what already existed. Miyake Yonekichi, later to become president of Tokyo Normal University, first addressed the problem of selection in 1884, when he was twenty-five years old. In *Kana no shirube* (Friends of the syllabary), the journal used as a forum for the so-called Kana Club, the young Miyake discussed the various methods of unifying the language that had by this time been proposed.[33] First of all, he argued against the prevalent idea that Classical Japanese be made the standard. The national standard should be "refined and elegant," he said, but should also as far as possible be something modern. Three modern choices had been suggested: (1) the language of the old capital Kyoto should be made the standard; (2) the language of the new capital Tokyo should be made the standard; and (3) there should be a national survey of the dialects and the dialect with the most speakers should be made the standard. What was to be done? Miyake's solution was a laissez-faire one, in which, he said, modern improvements in transportation and communication would automatically bring the people of Japan together, and they would unconsciously make corrections in order to talk to each other. In other words, the citizens of the new Japan would develop a standard on their own without interference and without even realizing that they had changed their speech habits.[34]

Miyake's approach, in other words, was one that would fit well into the ethos of twenty-first century America. No action was necessary. Without government interference, and without forcing linguistic minorities to conform, the Japanese people would by themselves, through the natural forces of a kind of linguistic free market, arrive at a common language. It seemed at the time an eminently reasonable idea.

But other members of the Kana Club disagreed. In the next issue of the journal, which appeared in 1885, Shimano Seiichirō published an essay promoting middle-class Tokyo speech as the basis of the standard. Others soon wrote expressing their concurrence with this view, and a consensus for a more active governmental role began to build.[35]

By the turn of the century opinions had settled. For most, Miyake's decentralist proposal had become the target of increasingly sharp criticism. In 1902 Okakura Yoshisaburō charged that Miyake's passive method was not only wrong-headed but actually dangerous: it was too indirect, Okakura said, and as such it could not guarantee that some "other national language" (*ta kokugo*) would not creep in from the outside. (Perhaps this criticism was an allusion to Mori's famous proposal advocating English as the standard.) Okakura argued for a direct method of government con-

trol: "When education in *Kokugo* is pressed forward in the schools, regional speech will slowly be corrected as the central language is introduced."[36]

Miyake was the victim of changing times. More than anything, his passive attitude reflected the more free-wheeling spirit of the first two decades of the Meiji era, when a wide variety of ideas were tolerated. By the turn of the century, however, the breadth of intellectual inquiry had narrowed. More positive and artificial methods of unification had come to the fore.

Nationalism and the National Language

The man who best represented this new Japanese spirit was Ueda Kazutoshi. Ueda was the first professor of *Kokugo* at Tokyo Imperial University, but he was not primarily a scholar. His agenda was political. Ueda wanted above all to create a true National Language and to mold a discipline—*Kokugogaku*—that responded to the needs of that National Language.

Ueda's main contributions came as an official in the Ministry of Education, a post he held concurrently with his university professorship. The establishment of the National Language Research Committee (which is now the Council on the National Language) came out of his political skill. This committee produced many important works on the Japanese language, but its primary purpose was to prepare the basic materials for a national language policy.

Virtually Ueda's only published books were the two volumes of collected essays entitled *Kokugo no tame* (For the sake of the National Language). Whatever their value for linguistic scholarship, these works are important because they represent the credo with which Ueda lived his life. Here are the famous opening lines of *Kokugo no tame*:

> The National Language is the bulwark of the Imperial Household;
> The National Language is the blood of the Nation.[37]

Consider also this quote from his book (cited, in part, earlier):

> Just as blood shows a common birth in the realm of the flesh, language, for the people who speak it, shows a common birth in the realm of the spirit. If we take the Japanese National Language as an example of this, we should speak of Japanese as the spiritual blood of the Japanese people.[38]

As a young man, Ueda had been deeply involved in Western scholarship. He had studied under the Englishman Basil Hall Chamberlain at Tokyo Imperial University, and after graduating in 1888 he was sent by the government, in 1890, to study linguistics in France and Germany. He was, in

fact, the first Japanese to have studied Western linguistics overseas. In 1894 he returned home and was given a teaching position at Tokyo Imperial University, where he lectured on Western linguistics.[39] From Germany he had brought back German philological methods (Germany being the country then most advanced in linguistic science), as well as German influence on certain aspects of his thinking, and many of his arguments for the role of the state in language policy were based upon the movement in that country to purify the German language. Ueda also used a variety of other European examples to support his agenda for a standard language, and he was particularly fond of citing the role of the French theater and the French Academy in improving the French language.[40]

But after returning to Japan, Ueda became ever more passionately dedicated to raising national consciousness of the Japanese past and tradition. In his writings and speeches he stressed the importance of Japanese national character in researching the national language and literature. He considered himself a true patriot whose mission in life was to "restore and raise the status of [the] Japanese language to a level above the 'yoke' of foreign (Western and well as Chinese) languages."[41]

Ueda's openly anti-foreign attitude typified a growing nationalism among certain Japanese intellectuals around the turn of the century. Ueda was frustrated by the Chinese cultural legacy of his country and wanted a national language independent of this giant neighbor. For him, like the rest of his countrymen, the most important event of the age was the Japanese defeat of China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. The Japanese people exulted in this victory and rejoiced in their nation's new-found power and prestige. The ease of Japan's victory over China brought Meiji Japanese to a new height of national awareness. It became a symbol of their cultural independence.

Eradicating the Dialects

Aggressive policy abroad led to aggressive policy at home. The turn of the century, just after the victory in the Sino-Japanese War, marked a turning point in the government's attitude toward *Kokugo.*

Ever since the beginning of Meiji, *Kokugo* had been a standard course of study in the school curriculum, but its principal focus had always been reading and writing. To be sure, the spoken language was not completely neglected, but the language of the classroom was more likely to be whatever the local variety of speech was rather than anything passed down from the Ministry of Education. The concept of a standard for the spoken lan-

guage was fuzzy at best. In fact, the term itself, *hyōjungo* 'the standard language', apparently dates only from 1890; in that year, Okakura Yoshisaburō spoke of defining the standard in his lectures on language unification and is said to have been the first to use the word.[42] In any case, it is clear that at least in the early Meiji period, students were not forced to speak in anything approximating the language of the textbook.

With the emergence of Japan on the international scene after the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, however, the classroom situation changed. More positive action was deemed necessary. The language was still deeply divided by regional dialects, and government authorities decided that the only way to unify Japan was to require all its citizens to speak "only one Japanese language." That language was to be the classroom language taught as *Kokugo.*

From this point on, dialects were considered unclean things that needed be eradicated. The idea of government policy from the third decade of Meiji until the end of World War II was to spread the standard language while extirpating regional dialects. The slogans of the day, written on placards and signs hung in public places for all the people to see, became *Hōgen kyōsei* 'correct the dialects' and *Hōgen bokumetsu* 'eradicate the dialects'.[43]

In a sense, the dialects were also parts of *Kokugo.* (What else could they be?) But so were such words as *baka* 'stupid fool', *yatsu* 'guy', and *kuso* 'shit', which were also forbidden. If we Westerners have difficulty seeing why *baka* and *yatsu* were so bad, let us remember that in England and America during the Victorian era even *legs* was almost a taboo word —thus the euphemism *limbs* was used when talking about the appendages of a piano. And in Japan, as late as the 1950s, the Prime Minister was publicly censured for shouting *Baka!* 'Fool!' at a member of the opposition party. Both regionalisms and bad words such as these were considered vulgar and inferior and classed together as things to be corrected. A dialect was a thing that brought deep shame to its speakers.

This movement had Western antecedents, and Ueda and the others had learned them well, consciously or unconsciously. The concept of a uniform *langue national* went back to the French Revolution, when social radicals introduced the idea that equality before the law could only be obtained by eliminating the prejudices and inequities that resulted from differences in speech. It was a strange kind of irony, in which social and ethnic minorities were given legal rights by ruthlessly extirpating their individual languages and dialects. In the Europe Ueda visited there were other intellectual currents, too, and the notions of "purifying" and "preserving the

beauty" of the language were especially strong in nineteenth-century France and Germany.[44]

These ideas appealed to linguistic nationalists in Japan as well, who applied them with great passion. The result was a degree of authoritarian intolerance for non-standard usage that amazed many Europeans.[45]

The government's battleground was the school, and its weapon was school policy. Forces were mobilized nationwide. In some places, such as the hill country of the Northeast (Tōhoku), special measures were taken to correct pronunciation because the problem of standardization was considered especially serious there. One well-documented example involves the study institute (*kōshūkai*) that was established in 1900 in Higashitagawa District, Yamagata Prefecture, in order to devise methods of correcting pronunciation. From that time on, in the elementary schools of the area, conversation practice sessions were held for each grade level once a week, and for the entire school once a month. Parents, too, were of course involved. They attended separate discussion sessions where they were instructed in how they could help correct their children's pronunciation. From 1908 on, the institute pursued these activities vigorously. The importance which the work of the institute was perceived to have is shown by the fact that around that time, for about five years, it was headed by Izawa Shūji (1851–1917), a scholar famous not only as the editor of the first national textbook of the Japanese language, but also as the person who had been instrumental in adapting sign language for use in Japan.

According to stories of the time, pronunciation practice at these elementary schools was treated like physical training. Each morning, when all the children gathered together in the schoolyard for their usual morning exercises, they were required to do an additional fifteen minutes of *kuchi no taisō* 'oral calisthenics'. These "oral calisthenics" began with the children reciting in a loud voice the syllabic units of the traditional syllabary: *a, i, u, e, o*; *ka, ki, ku, ke, ko* . . . Later, after the children were warmed up, they began reciting individual words, which were also chanted in unison. Finally, after lunch, all the children of the school were gathered together one more time for another fifteen minutes of this kind of pronunciation practice.[46]

To make the eradication of non-standard speech more effective, many regional schools put up what was called a *hōgen-fuda* 'dialect board', which was used as a kind of punishment record. If any pupil was caught using a dialect form or any other kind of "vulgar" word, his name was put on this *hōgen-fuda*. There were even punishments that involved sticking

the board on the offending pupil's back. After about 1905, this system was adopted in various schools nationwide.[47]

Standard language education took its harshest from in Okinawa. The language of this southern island, like forms of speech throughout the Japanese archipelago, was referred to as a "dialect" of Japanese, even though the relationship of Okinawan to the speech of Tokyo could only be unraveled by the comparative linguist; anyone else would have trouble discerning that the two languages were related at all. In Okinawa as elsewhere, the system of the punishment board was also introduced, sometime around 1907, but there the application was more draconian. In Okinawan elementary and middle schools, the punishment board was utilized not only for pupils, but for their parents as well![48]

Until that time, there had been considerable enthusiasm in Okinawa for learning the "Common Language" (*futsūgo*, as the standard was called in this outlying region). Clubs and societies dedicated to standard language education had been spontaneously established and were thriving. Many middle school students had voluntarily taken a vow to stop using dialect. But then, with the institution of the punishment board system, Okinawan attitudes suddenly changed. The punishment board was viewed as cruel and oppressive. Now, instead of cooperating, the same students who had vowed to stop using dialect began resisting the system, speaking Okinawan openly even in the schools. The movement for the furtherance of the Common Language had unexpectedly hit a stumbling block.

School authorities did not relent. In 1917 the Dialect Control Edict was laid down, and the punishment for dialect offenses increased. A wooden tag 1×2 inches in size was readied, and for each Okinawan word used each day one was given over to the offending student and two points deducted from his deportment grade. It is said that this system resulted more often in student failure and expulsion from school than all academic transgressions combined.[49]

Feeling frustrated and helpless, one student struck out in the only way he knew how, pasting a satirical verse on the main gate of the school for all to see:

> Yamatoguchi fuda toru goto ni omofu ka na
> Hōgen no fuda wa yame-takunosuke.

On the face of it, the poem was slightly humorous: "Each time I get a Yamato-language [i.e., standard Japanese] tag, I think (to myself), I'm Mr. Want-to-stop the dialect tag." On another level, however, obvious to everyone who read this piece of doggerel, it was an irreverent jibe at

school authorities, because the first word, *Yama(to)guchi,* and the last phrase *takunosuke,* formed a parody on the name of the principal of the school, Mr. Yamaguchi Takunosuke. In its own way, considering the place and time, this particular piece of student graffiti was a biting criticism of the system. The poem expressed well the indignation that Okinawan students felt in those days.[50]

The Results of the Language Policy

Standard language education was furnished to virtually every Japanese citizen, and it was expected that all would become proficient in speaking the standard. But that did not happen — at least not as a result of the school system. Here is a case that has been cited[51] to show what actually happened:

> In northern Japan in the hills of Iwate Prefecture, near the Sanriku coast, lies a very isolated part of Honshū often referred to as Japan's Tibet. The people in this areas traditionally did not speak the widely derided *zūzū-ben* ['*zūzū*-sounding dialect'] for which the Northeast is famous [mimetic *zūzū* referring to an inability to distinguish the pronunciations of /i/ and /u/ after /s, z, t/]. Old women who have never once been outside their own village clearly pronounce /si/ different from /su/, and /ti/ different from /tu/. However, the young people in the area no longer distinguish the sounds. Unlike their parents, they do speak *zūzū-ben*. Like all children in the Northeast, they learned in *Kokugo* class at school that *zūzū-ben* is bad and inferior, yet they began speaking that way anyway. Why? The reason can be found in the fact that *zūzū-ben* is what is spoken in Morioka, the nearest big city. For these young country folk, relatively sophisticated Morioka is more to be admired and imitated than anything they hear in school. Prescriptive language policy does not have the persuasive power of the natural language children hear around them.

The policy to eradicate dialects through school policy did not succeed, but what it did do was to plant in the psyche of the children affected by it feelings of inferiority. These feelings would dog them throughout their later lives whenever they ventured out of the country to the city — particularly if the city was Tokyo. In Japanese society the painful burden of this derision was worse than that of the *hōgen-fuda*.

In the May 22, 1957, issue of the *Tōkyō Shinbun,* an article appeared describing the gruesome suicide of a young mother who had thrown herself and her child on the railroad tracks of the Tōbu Line. The woman, who had arrived in Tokyo a half year earlier from Shimane Prefecture, was said to have committed suicide as a protest against the cruel heckling she had experienced from neighborhood children because of her country

accent. Whatever the truth of this reportage, the article precipitated a storm of fault-finding in the op-ed columns of major Tokyo dailies. The people of Tokyo were arrogant, one letter said; they made fun of other accents so easily, without thinking, and had no idea how much other people were hurt by this teasing.[52]

The "dialect complex" that resulted from government policy earlier in the century still exists and is felt, to a certain degree, by everyone from a place the Tokyoite would deem *inaka* 'the country'. Even natives of the dignified old capital of Kyoto are not completely exempt from this feeling.

But the stigma is of a different dimension entirely for people from Tōhoku, the Northeast. These speakers of the so-called *zūzū-ben* of Tōhoku are treated as the hicks of Japan. Most Japanese think this accent sounds very funny, and a lot of jokes are still made about it. But the humor came after the image. Features similar to those of Tōhoku *zūzū-ben* are also found in the coastal dialects of Hokkaidō[53] and, here and there, on the far western coast of Honshū as well. But people from these other "*zūzū*" areas are much less often made the butt of jokes, and the "dialect complex" is less pronounced in those places. Tōhoku has been singled out because it is a part of the country that developed economically very late, and in the twentieth century thousands of migrant workers came from there to Tokyo seeking jobs. The relatively low social status of Tōhoku speakers, combined with their conspicuous presence in the city, made the dialect into a symbol of underdeveloped mental and social capacity. To find a parallel, Americans only have to think of the thousands of workers from the rural South working on Detroit assembly lines after World War II. Just as Americans used to laugh at *Hee-Haw* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, so too did Japanese laugh at jokes about *zūzū-ben.*

More positive results came out of the official manipulation of language through the medium of radio. In a little more than a year after radio broadcasting was begun by Tōkyō Broadcasting Station in 1925, the Japanese government took steps to insure that anything sent over the airwaves was standard. In August of 1926, the Communications Ministry dissolved the three broadcasting stations that had been set up a short time earlier and established the government organ, the Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK), that would monopolize the country's broadcasting industry until after World War II. Under NHK's supervision, all radio announcers had to be certified speakers of *hyōjungo* 'the standard language', and all words and usages to be broadcast had to be scrutinized to make sure they were standard before being approved.

Within short order, the sounds of this standard were heard in every cor-

ner of the country. In 1932 there were over a million radio sets in Japan. Within three years that number doubled, and by the time the country was in the midst of the Pacific War, at least half of the households in the country had sets and were tuning in to the standard sounds of government-supervised broadcasts.

Radio was a very passive way to spread the standard and by itself did little to change how people in outlying regions actually spoke. But the medium was not without effect. Its listeners may not have changed their pronunciation very much in imitation of it, but they did learn to understand the broadcasts. Moreover, radio was also a significant factor in raising public awareness of the spoken standard. In both of these ways, NHK did much to create among the Japanese people an acceptance of linguistic unity in a national standard.

The Universality of Standard Japanese

Government policy has changed since the end of World War II. No longer are dialects a social evil to be rooted out and destroyed. Instead, there is a positive nostalgia for these colorful reminders of the past, just as there is for other aspects of regional Japanese culture. Today there are dialect speech contests. Dialect souvenirs and gift items are hawked to tourists throughout Japan, the kitsch for sale including such things as dialect towels, dialect picture postcards, and even dialect key cases. The government, through the National Language Research Institute, has poured hefty sums of money into a study of Japan's regional variety, producing, among other things, an enormous and detailed dialect atlas for the whole country. Oral histories produced by the "purest" dialect speakers have been preserved on tape and put into archives. The old unbending policy of standardization has long since become a distasteful symbol of an earlier, more autocratic era.

Yet, the fact is that much of the regional variation in the Japanese language has already disappeared. (It is perhaps easier to become nostalgic for that which no longer threatens.) Moreover, the standard language continues to spread today, now more rapidly than ever before. As was mentioned above, this spread, as well as the demise of dialects, has not been primarily due to *Kokugo* education. Nor has radio, nor even the ubiquitous television, had the standardizing effect usually imagined. Japanese researchers tell us that there are other, more important factors that have raised the ability of the average Japanese citizen to speak the standard language.

The most potent stimulus for learning, we are told, is the creation of situations where communication is only possible through the standard language. The experience of the military was in this sense very important to young men from the provinces. But the turmoil of the war years brought Japanese together in a variety of other ways. After the Pacific War, the rapid change in Japanese society accelerated the mixing process. As the country continued to industrialize, young men and women left the sealed world of the village to work elsewhere, invariably coming into close contact with people from other parts of the country. Even housewives in the cities, who in earlier times had been confined to the neighborhood around their own household, began leaving to go to the workplace.

The most important migrants have been the *dekasegi*, seasonal workers who return from metropolitan areas to their home villages during the off-season. *Dekasegi* increased dramatically in number in the latter decades of the twentieth century; millions of these workers from other parts of the country were found in the Tokyo –Yokohama area. When they returned to their villages, they brought with them not only money but also the culture and language of the capital.

There is almost certainly not a single Japanese citizen alive today who does not understand standard Japanese as it is normally spoken. In 1958, the dialect researcher Shibata Takeshi reported that, of the more than one thousand people he had interviewed over the length and breadth of Japan during the preceding twenty years, only one had not been able to understand an interview conducted in standard Japanese.[54] That one person had been a woman over eighty years old that he had met in 1949 in the village of Mitsune on Hachijōjima, an island located approximately 112 miles off the southeastern coast of Honshū. For her, Shibata says, he had required an interpreter to conduct an interview. Understanding does not mean speaking, of course. Shibata hastened to add that, at least in 1958, there were still many people who did not speak standard Japanese. The same may well be true today. Still, what had happened was, and is, a remarkable achievement. In scarcely more than eighty years after the founding of Meiji, Japan had become a nation in which virtually every man, woman, and child could understand the standard language.

Tradition, Old and New

It is a mistake to think that cultural traditions are always old. At Christmas time, we Americans tend to forget that our image of jolly old Saint Nick was largely shaped by the cartoons of Thomas Nast in the nineteenth

century and, later, by Coca-Cola advertising in the twentieth. But we are not alone. The same is true in older cultures. What is thought of as traditional French bread—the baguette—was introduced into Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century as an imitation of a Viennese-style loaf; until that time the staple of the city had been a round sourdough *boule*, a fact most Parisians today have forgotten.[55] Young Koreans believe that their martial arts tradition is at least a thousand years old, when in fact (as their grandparents often remember) Taekwondo as practiced today is an offshoot of karate that was Koreanized in the 1950s. (The Japanese, for their part, took karate earlier in the century from the Okinawans, who, in turn, had adapted an earlier martial arts form imported from China, where, in the meantime, the techniques were for centuries forgotten, or at least neglected.) The ancient appearance of something like *Kokugo* can often be an illusion. The content of tradition is constantly being "revised, renewed, and renegotiated."[56]

For the Japanese, *Kokugo* is an intimate part of their cultural tradition. As Kamei has testified, "the word *Kokugo* has put down roots in the soul" of the Japanese people. The content of this particular tradition may not be as old as it seems, but it was nurtured carefully by men like Ueda Kazutoshi. It was, after all, "the blood of the nation." In constructing the *Kokugo* textbook, authors wrote of things close to the spiritual life of the Japanese people. In 1885 the schoolchild opened his *Kokugo* text and read: *Takaki yama. Hikuki tani . . . Naku mushi. Mafu tefu . . .* "The high mountains. The low valleys . . . The crying insects. The dancing butterflies . . . " (How different are our American primers, with their "See Dick run, see Mary jump" examples!) *Kokugo* classes today have kept much of the kind of content of which Ueda would have approved. Generations of Japanese have grown up feeling close to *Kokugo.*

Now, on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Kokugo Gakkai, the place of *Kokugo* in Japanese society appears once again to be changing. Almost everywhere, it is gradually being replaced by *Nihongo*. Reforms have been underway in Japanese higher education for some time, and already, well before the renaming of the Kokugo Gakkai, many universities had begun changing the names of their language and literature departments with the intention that they conform to newer, more international ways of thinking. *Nihon bungaku* is what 'Japanese literature' is now called at Tsukuba University. Such changes are also underway at the University of Tokyo, as well as at many other national universities. The question is how deeply these changes will penetrate the Japanese educational system and Japanese life.

NOTES

1. *Asahi Shinbun*, 25 February 2003.
2. Kyōgoku 1990: 64. Also cf. Kyōgoku 1986: 8, where a few other such expressions are cited. Phrases like *Nihon no gengo*, however, seem to be found only in documents from the middle or late nineteenth century.
3. At the very least, the word was extremely rare before that time. Kyōgoku (1986: 9) cites a single, isolated example from the mid-Edo period:

   > In translating Dutch [*Orandago*] into Japanese [*Nihongo*], although for each form one must know the name for that form . . . (Mori Yoshinaga, *Wakai reigen*, 1790).

   There is no reason to believe that this one occurrence of the collocation of characters now read as *Nihongo* was the tip of an iceberg; Edo-period works on Dutch were notorious for odd use of language, including nonce creations.
4. Herein lies one of the thorniest problems in interpreting the Japanese written records: how was the word actually pronounced? The kanji with which the word is written can be read in at least these two ways, and unless the author or editor included pronunciation indicators to disambiguate the form, there is no sure way to know which to choose. At the very least, we know that both pronunciations of the word existed in the nineteenth century. In an article written in 1874 about a trip to the West, the journalist Kanagaki Robun appended *furigana* giving the pronunciation:

   > We still don't know foreign language, and so if you understand here and there, please go ahead and say it in Japanese [*Nippongo*].

   Kanagaki, writing in a countrified dialect style reminiscent of Mark Twain, may have intended the pronunciation to sound humorous. On the other hand, Hepburn's dictionary of 1886 gives the pronunciation of the word in romanization as *Nihongo.*

   There is very little mention of this problem in Japanese sources. Kyōgoku Okikazu, who has done some of the most thorough research on the use of this word, explicity avoids the issue, assuming that the pronunciation was *Nihongo* (Kyōgoku 1986: 11).
5. Cited in Kyōgoku 1990: 64.
6. Yoshida later gained fame as a nationalistic writer and teacher. He was the founder of the legendary Shōka Sonjuku, a private school he set up in his own home where he trained the group of young samurai intellectuals who were central to the overthrow of the shogunate and the founding of the Meiji government. This sobering stay in prison, in fact, was the period in which he consolidated his thinking on the *Sonnō jōi* 'Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians' movement.
7. Cited in Kyōgoku 1986: 9.
8. Cf. Kyōgoku 1986: 10 for examples of both writers and their works in which the word appears.
9. Kamei et al. 1965: 202. One wonders if the feelings Kamei expresses

about *Nippongo* were shared by intellectuals in the Meiji period, or if that "standoffish feel" is the result of semantic drift in the early twentieth century. Cf. note 4 above.

10. Cf. Norman 1988:133.
11. There is a disjunction between this word, as found in the Classical Chinese tradition, and the modern twentieth-century Chinese form *guóyǔ*, which was deliberately borrowed from contemporary Japanese usage; it is an example of what Victor Mair calls a "round-trip word." Cf. Mair 1994; Ramsey 1991.
12. Again (as mentioned in note 4 above) there is the nagging problem of how the word was actually pronounced. Was the word really *kokugo*? Kyōgoku (1986:11) says that even into the Meiji period the form written with these two characters might possible have been read as *kuni kotoba*. This philological puzzle is another problem inherent in the Japanese writing system.
13. This example is cited in Mair 1994:731.
14. Sugita Genpaku, *Oranda iji montō* (Questions and answers on Dutch medical matters), vol. 1. This and the next three examples are cited in Kyōgoku 1986 and 1990.
15. This observation comes from Kyōgoku 1986.
16. From Genpaku's *Rangaku kotohajime.*
17. This observation about the meaning of *kokugo* around the turn of the century comes from Kamei et al. 1965: 203–204. This work is an especially valuable source for the sociolinguistic history of the Meiji period, and I have relied on it heavily for what is presented here. The same phrase from Ueda is quoted on pp. 113–114 of Tanaka 1981.
18. The diary was published under the title *Tōyō zakki* (Sundry notes of an eastern outing) in 1788. The passages cited here are given in Kamei et al. 1965: 344–346.
19. This particular telling of the story comes from Tokugawa Munemasa 1978: 17–18. But similar versions can be found in Tōjō Misao 1937:100, Yanagita Kunio 1963: 510, and many other sources. Though possibly apocryphal in all its versions, the story is in no way an exaggeration of the linguistic differences between the two regions involved; for without knowledge of the modern standard language, people from Tōhoku and Kagoshima would still be unable to talk to each other. Only diglossic control of that standard links the various regions of modern Japan together.
20. In spite of how these countries appeared to the Japanese, the reality was different. See, for example, Tanaka Katsuhiko 1981, especially chapter 4.
21. Cf. Kamei et al. 1965: 25–27.
22. Inagaki 1992: 68.
23. Fukuzawa used *bunmei* 'civilization' or *kaika* 'enlightenment' alone, or, on

occasion, both together as the translation of *civilization* (Inoue Kiyoshi 1971:252).

24. Takashina et al. 1987:23–31.
25. Seidensticker 1983:69.
26. Inoue Kiyoshi 1971:386.
27. Cf. Mair 1994; Ramsey 1991.
28. The relevant passage from this famous document is the first citation given under the definition 'Japanese' for the entry *kokugo* in the largest dictionary of Japanese, Shōgakkan's *Nihon kokugo daijiten*. However, Kyōgoku (1986: 6) disputes the interpretation, arguing that the underlying feel of the word is still the general meaning of '(some) country's language'.
29. Twine 1991 contains an excellent and detailed discussion of the history and the atmosphere of the time, as well as of Maeshima (i.e., "Maejima") and his role in the *Genbun itchi* Movement; see especially pp. 227–230.
30. Kamei et al. 1965:353.
31. The translation is from Miller 1977:42.
32. This telling of the story is patterned after Miller, ibid.
33. The form of the essay itself is revealing. By modern standards it looks odd. Unlike the "mixed" style of present-day Japanese prose, Miyake's prose is written all in kana, with liberal spacing between words. Like the question of which variety of Japanese was to be chosen as standard, matters of written style were apparently still fairly open in his day. Miyake's work is called *Kuniguni no namari kotoba ni tsukite* (About the dialect words in the various provinces), and it appeared serially in *Kana no shirube* 1884.2, 3, and 6. The importance of Miyake's work is discussed in many sources; e.g., Shibata 1958:110–112.
34. Cf. Twine 1991:215.
35. Ibid., p. 216.
36. Cf. Kamei et al. 1965:349; Shibata 1958:113–114.
37. Cited in Kamei et al. 1965:31.
38. Ibid., p. 204; also cited in Tanaka 1981:113–114.
39. Twine 1991:163–165.
40. Ibid., p. 219.
41. Doi 1977:267–268.
42. Twine 1991:219.
43. Shibata 1976:64 gives a succinct description; Shibata 1958:115ff describes the situation more discursively and in more detail.
44. The French Revolution and language standardization is the subject of dis-

cussion of Tanaka 1981, chapter 4; how the European ideas were transferred to Japan, and in what form, are topics taken up in chapter 5.

45. Shibata 1958:112.
46. After World War II, when language policy had changed dramatically, the National Language Research Institute conducted a follow-up study of pronunciation in the area. Researchers concluded that these 'oral calisthenics' had left almost no trace in the dialects spoken in the area, at either the phonological or phonetic level. Details of the study are published in Report #5 of the National Language Research Institute (1953).
47. Shibata 1976:64–65.
48. Ibid., p. 65.
49. Kamei et al. 1965:367.
50. Hokama Shuzen 1964 is the primary source for this description of Okinawan educational policy. The anecdote about the poem is taken from pp. 668–670 of that work.
51. By Kamei et al. (1965:359ff).
52. Cf. Shibata 1958:93–94.
53. Shibata 1976:79.
54. Shibata 1958:142.
55. Cf. the article on French bread in the January 1995 issue of the *Smithsonian*, p. 52. Like the rest of us, many Frenchmen today associate sourdough only with San Francisco!
56. The quote is from Robert J. Smith's 1989 presidential address to the Association for Asian Studies (cf. Smith 1989:716), which Smith tied into points discussed in Bestor 1989. Both works, Smith's essay and Bestor's book, are helpful for understanding the traditions relating to language as well.

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