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# **Revelation through omission:**

## **Treatment of National Language in Japanese History Textbooks and General Works**

### **ABSTRACT**

In spite of the great diversity within the dialect continuum stretching from Kagoshima to Aomori, consistent state-endorsed language policies since the later Meiji period were highly successful in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in achieving a high degree of homogeneity regarding ethnic and linguistic identity. The successful implementation of a standard language was one of the key factors in the process of the building of Japan as a modern nation-state. The present study deals with the conspicuous absence of an appropriate treatment of the role these policies played, in the high school history textbooks and general readership monographs and with its possible intellectual background regarding the scant attention paid by researchers and textbook writers to the establishment of the Japanese national language and pre-WWII language policies in Japan.

The central hypothesis of the study is that this conspicuous absence stems from the projection of the modern nation-state on the past, resulting in a perception of Japanese polity as a basically homogeneous and unchanged continuum in time and space. In particular, the analysis of texts for the general public by prominent Japanese scholars of the national language has revealed important differences in perception. One group, mainly those preoccupied with the didactics of the national language, tends to view the past in the light of a “homogenized” present. On the other hand, those scholars researching Japanese in the wider context of general linguistics seem to treat national language related issues in a much more critical and theoretically informed way.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Occupying about 380,000 sq. km and stretching over about 1,400 km as the crow flies, from Satsuma, Kyushu, in the Southeast to Shimokita, Honshu, in the Northeast, the manifold Japanese dialects that historically populated this area are now dialects in a single polity: Japan, including also Ryukyus and Hokkaido, with a single Japanese ‘national language’ - *kokugo*.

Compared with the South Slavic linguistic continuum, covering an area similar in size and at present split into seven polities, even if we do not take into account Japan’s fragmented ‘Medieval’ history with its wars and changing allegiances, etc., for the Meiji regime, unification of the widely stretched area under one rule and the creation of a modern nation state with a single national language which nowadays permeates every pore of society, was no mean feat. In the words of Gottlieb:<sup>1</sup>

Consistent, state-endorsed, and often state-enforced language policies from the second half of the Meiji period onwards, which were aimed at the dissemination of the national language (*kokugo*), though finally failing in colonial territories, achieved their goal in the “inner provinces” (*naichi*) as well as in Hokkaido and Okinawa, contributing in the first half of the 20th century to a high degree of homogeneity regarding linguistic and ethnic identity in Japan...

The processes that led to this accomplishment and their historical, ideological and cultural contexts have only begun receiving closer and systematic attention during the past twenty or so years.<sup>2</sup>

1 Nanette Gottlieb, “Japan”, in Andrew Simpson (ed.), *Language and National Identity in Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 186-199.

2 cf. Lee Yeonsuk, *Kokugo toiu shiso: kindai Nihon no gengo ninshiki* [*The Ideology of National Language: An Understanding of Language in Modern Japan*]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1996; Shizue

Based on the importance of *kokugo* and the central role it played in the consolidation of the national identity and national unity in Japan during and after the Meiji period, its treatment in the high school history textbooks and in texts for general audiences, such as “serious” general works on *kokugo* and linguistic encyclopedias, seems a topic worthy of examination. This study is an attempt to delve into the issue, and being one of the first, is necessarily incomplete and preliminary.

## 2. THE PRE-MODERN AND MODERN LINGUISTIC SITUATION IN JAPAN: A BRIEF SKETCH

It is important to stress also, that the Meiji period *kokugo* reform did not happen in a vacuum. There were historical developments that contributed towards the successful spread of a standardized national language over the whole of Japan.

### 2.1 The Pre-Modern Linguistic Situation

The pre-modern linguistic situation in Japan, prevalent until the end of the Tokugawa period and extending into the early part of the Meiji period is characterized by the following factors:

#### **Diglossia in the Written Language<sup>3</sup>**

Roughly speaking, this pertains to the written literary Chinese (*kanbun* [*kundoku*]) and written literary vernacular (*bungo*). While literacy in these two styles was limited to the elites, since the Kamakura (1185-1333) and Muromachi (1336-1573) periods, literacy in the spoken vernacular had emerged among commoners as well.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Consolidation of Political Power Under the Tokugawa Shogunate.**

Relative peace and an accompanying economic prosperity during the first half of the period resulted in a vibrant literacy not only among the city dwellers, but also in the countryside, in the spread of printed media and the development of a new schooling system (*hankō, terakoya*) (1603-1868). With the political center moving east to Edo, a new contact dialect with elements of both eastern and

Osa, *Kindai Nihon to kokka nashonarizumu* [Modern Japan and State Nationalism]. Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1998; Toshiaki Yasuda, 'Gengo' no kochiku: Ogura Shinpei to shokuminchi chosen [Constructing a Language: Ogura Shinpei and Korea Under Colonial Rule]. Tokyo: Sangensha, 1999; Yoichi Komori, *Nihongo no kindai* [Japanese in the Modern Era]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 2000.

3 cf. Takashi Kamei et al. (eds.), *Nihongo no rekishi 6: atarashii kokugo e no ayumi* [The History of the Japanese Language 6: Towards a New National Language]. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1965.

4 cf. Yoshihiko Amino, *Nihonron no shiza: rettō no shakai to kokka* [Aspects of 'Theories of Japan' (Nihonron): The Societies and the State in the Archipelago]. Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1990.

western Japanese dialects formed there and consequently grew in importance, while Kyoto speech retained its prestige.<sup>5</sup>

### **No Attempt at Language Standardization.**

The *bakuhau* political system of the Tokugawa period which split Japan into isolated *han* "feudal" domains and discouraged direct contact among them led to a dialectal fragmentation of the country as described by Gottlieb.<sup>6</sup>

The political structure in place during the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868) contributed substantially to the need for placing a standard language high on the linguistic agenda during the following period. In the pre-modern period, Japan was segmented into a large number of local domains, each ruled by a local daimyo who reported to the shogun in Edo (today's Tokyo). Since the domains were relatively tightly sealed off from each other in the interests of the 'divide and rule' principle, and since travel was with very few exceptions forbidden to residents of each, local dialects flourished and little in the way of language (or dialect) contact took place. The de facto standard used throughout Japan by those who travelled during this period was based on the speech of Edo ...

The above situation in the second half of the Edo and early Meiji periods is a typical pre-modern situation, in line with the situation in pre-unification Italy, in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, in Russia etc., during more or less the same period. What makes it different is a relatively high degree of literacy as compared to Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in the same period.<sup>7</sup>

## **2.2 The Linguistic Situation during the Meiji Period and Afterwards**

In spite of many similarities, there are significant differences between mid-19th century Japan and Central Europe. In contrast with Central Europe, Japan was politically unified. Presumably because of this, language standardization was not perceived as an urgent task in the agenda of modernizing Japan.

Modernizing projects taken up by the Meiji regime were the abolition of the caste system, the abolition of the *han* system, the introduction of a centralized administration, the establishment of compulsory education (*kokumin gakkō*), the implementation of universal military service, the inception of a constitutional

5 Byarke Frellesvig, *A History of the Japanese Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, chapter 13.

6 Gottlieb, Japan, pp. 188-9.

7 Hagen Shulze, *Država in nacija v evropski zgodovini*. Ljubljana: Založba \*cf., 2003 (Translation of *Staat un Nation in der europaeischen Geschichte*. Muenchen: C.H. Beck'sche Verlagbuchshandlung, 1994).

monarchy and the spread of modern printed media, colonial expansion, and in the mid-1880s, steps towards the standardization of language.<sup>8</sup>

During this time, influential articles and lectures by Ueda Kazutoshi (1867-1937), a Tokyo Imperial University academic who was greatly influenced by several years spent studying linguistics in Germany, compared the national language to the country's life blood and exhorted the government to ensure that it was treated with the degree of respect the language of a modern state deserved.... In Ueda's view, this involved improving the language through standardization and modernization, contrary to the views of purists who saw any form of artificially induced language change as an unwarranted attack on standards and tradition. Ueda and the group of students he trained in the methods of Western linguistics were instrumental in lobbying for the establishment in 1902 of the first official body charged with working on language issues, the National Language Research Council. As a result of the work of this body, the dialect of the Yamanote area of Tokyo was announced as the standard language in 1916.<sup>9</sup>

The ruthless enforcement of standard language in public use (including methods such as the use of *hōgen fuda* "dialect placards" as punishment in compulsory education<sup>10</sup>) was concomitant with a wish for modernization in the provinces,<sup>11</sup> strict government control of teaching contents, the spread of new media which accompanied the economic prosperity following WWI, and total mobilization under ultranationalist regimes preceding and during the years leading to the war in China, SE Asia and the Pacific.<sup>12</sup>

Language thus played a prominent role in the ideological construction of the Japan for which the war was being fought, possibly second only to the Emperor as the symbol of ultranationalist values.<sup>13</sup>

The successful spread of *kokugo* had as a consequence the view that *kokugo* was a homogeneous entity extending territorially over the politically consolidated territory, as well as extending temporally into the past (i.e., the projection of *kokugo* and the modern nation-state backwards in time). Dialects as its obvious varieties were considered to be enriching *kokugo* itself. Therefore it is no wonder

8 cf. Erica Benner, "Japanese national doctrines in international perspective", in Naoko Shimazu (ed.), *Nationalisms in Japan*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

9 Gottlieb, Japan, p. 189.

10 Dialect placards were based on a method imported from the more 'advanced' France, itself in the 19th century in the process of extensively assimilating non-French speaking minorities. (cf. Pontecouteau 2002).

11 cf. Yufuko Ichimiya, "The Relation Between the View on the Language and Educational Ideology in the Early Meiji Period in Japan Through the Discourse of Regionalism", *Acta Linguistica Asiatica*, Vol. 1, 2011, No. 1, pp. 9-22 (<http://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/ala/index>).

12 Frellesvig, *A History of the Japanese Language*; Gottlieb, Japan; Komori, *Nihongo no kindai*.

13 Gottlieb, Japan, p. 192. See also: Nanette Gottlieb, *Kanji Politics: Language Policy and Japanese Script*. London: Kegan Paul International, 1995.

that the great works of classical literature from *Man'yōshū* to *Ugetsu monogatari* were all seen as written in *kokugo*.<sup>14</sup>

Parallel with this development, a deep penetration of the Japanese language in the colonies, i.e., Taiwan, Korea, and to a lesser extent Manchukuo, was taking place as well.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 Textbooks

In the period after WWII, high school textbooks, just as all the other primary and secondary level textbooks, are subject to government examination, carried out by the MEXT (short for Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology).<sup>16</sup> Approved textbooks, chosen by 'local self-governing bodies' (*jichitai*) are distributed among the pupils free of charge. Textbooks examined for this study are also in compliance with this scheme.

##### 3.1.1 High School History Textbooks

High school history textbooks are divided into two categories: *Nihonshi B* (Japanese History B) with a comprehensive approach to history from the beginnings to modern times; and *Nihonshi A* (Japanese History A) dealing with Japan from the Meiji Restoration onward. The most widely used are the *Nihonshi B* type textbooks.

As a preliminary step, several *Nihonshi B* (Japanese History B) textbooks, put out by prominent publishers such as Sanseido and Yamakawa, were examined.

First, keywords such as *kokugo* (national language), *nihongo* (Japanese), *genbun itchi* (a written language style based on the modern spoken language or the eponymous movement for the affirmation of this style) and so on, were examined in the indexes of the respective textbooks. Other than the exception of *genbun itchi*, no textbook contained any of the above keywords in the index.

14 Toshiaki Yasuda, *Kokugo to hōgen no aida: gengo kōchiku no seijigaku* [Between the 'National Language' and 'Dialect': The Political Science of Language Construction]. Kyoto: Jinbun Shoin, 1999.

For a typical case of a similar projection common in Slovene 'patriotic' history and language circles, Janko Prunk (*A Brief History of Slovenia*. Ljubljana: Založba Grad. 1996) is a good example. Also see Shulze (*Država in nacija v evropski zgodovini*) for Germany's projection onto the Holy Roman Empire (i.e., the 1st Reich).

15 Toshiaki Yasuda, *Shokuminchi no nakano 'kokugogaku': Tokieda Motoki to Keijo Teikokudaigaku o megutte* ['National Language Studies' in the Colony: Tokieda Motoki and the Seoul Imperial University]. Tokyo: Sangensha, 1997; Osa, *Kindai Nihon to kokka nashonarizumu*.

16 <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/taisen/kentei.html> (retrieved Aug. 25, 2010); [http://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/kyoukasho/gaiyou/04060901.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/kyoukasho/gaiyou/04060901.htm) (retrieved Aug. 25, 2010).

In the text itself, *Nihonshi B*, published by Sanseido, seems to have by far the most references related to national language in the various historical and social contexts from among all the textbooks that were examined. Nonetheless, even in this textbook, the references were brief and often included other information not directly relevant to the issues of language in the same sentence.

### 3.1.2 The High School *Kokugo* (National Language) Textbooks

In addition to the history textbooks, high school textbooks dealing with *kokugo*, i.e. readers, compilations of literary texts, essays, etc. with commentaries, such as “*Kokugo sōgō*” (general Japanese), and “*Gendai bun*” (modern writing), put out by publishers such as Chikuma Shobo, Tokyo Shoseki, etc., were examined. The concept of these textbooks is to convey to learners the potential richness of variation of expression that is inherent in the Japanese language, presented as *kokugo*. In the case of *gendai bun* textbooks, the topics treated are limited to modern texts. In the case of *kokugo sōgō* textbooks, the whole span from modern to classical texts, including *kanbun* classical Chinese texts read on-the-fly in a Japanese way (i.e. the so called *kanbun kundoku*), is covered. These textbooks are intellectually and aesthetically appealing and typographically well executed. The basic orientation of these textbooks also has the potential to include relevant information on the historical, social and political context of the development and role of the unified (and unifying) national language from the Meiji period on. In spite of this potential, no such attempt was observed in any of the books examined.

Since the general supervisor of the edition for one of the textbooks was Kato Shuichi, one of the most prominent liberal thinking Japanese intellectuals of the post-war period, it can also be surmised that such omissions were not directly related to authors’ and compilers’ ideological biases such as conservative vs. progressive, traditionalist vs. modern, etc., neither were they influenced by the aforementioned process of textbook approval.

## 3.2 Analysis of the Sanseido’s *Nihonshi B* Textbook

In this section, the textbook that relates most extensively to the national language issue, *Nihonshi B* (Japanese History B) by Aoki Michio et al.<sup>17</sup> published by Sanseido, will be examined in more detail.

The Contents at the beginning of the textbook (pp. iv, v) display chapters such as Chapter 15 ‘The Meiji Restoration and the Modern State’ (*Meiji ishin to kindai kokka*), prime candidates for the description of the so called ‘national

17 Michio Aoki et al., “*Nihon shi B kaiteiban*” [*Japanese History, revised edition*]. Tokyo: Sanseido, 2009.

language issue' (*kokugo mondai*) in Japan. Yet section titles and subheadings do not hint at anything related to language policies at the time. A similar situation can be seen in the index at the end of the textbook. The only explicit reference is to *genbun itchi* (a written style based on the contemporary spoken language). There are no direct references to *kokugo* (the national language) or to *nihongo* (Japanese).

In the main text though, there are several references to the national language and various language policies. I will examine these in the rest of this section.

At the end of Chapter 15, in Section 5, 'Equality of the Four Classes of People and Opening towards Civilization'<sup>18</sup> (*Shimin byōdō to bunmei kaika*), there is, under the subheading 'The Spread of Enlightened Thought and Development in the Sphere of Religion' (*Keimo shisō no fukyū to shūkyō no ugoki*) a short mention of *nihongo* (Japanese) in the context of the publication of newspapers while still under *bakufu* rule:<sup>19</sup>

After the opening of the ports, newspapers were published in the residence areas permitted for foreigners [such as ]Yokohama, Kobe (Hyogo) etc, and after 1851 (Kaei 4) when Motoki Shōzō succeeded in casting lead printing type, newspapers as well as journals and books in Japanese (=nihongo),<sup>20</sup> printed in moving type, began to be published. (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

The text says that in addition to the foreign newspapers that were beginning to be published in the late Edo period, newspapers in Japanese were also published after the moving type for Japanese characters had been invented.

The next mention of *nihongo* is in Chapter 16. 'Formation of the Constitutional System of Meiji' (*Meiji kenpō taisei no seiritsu*), in Section 5. 'Promulgation of the Imperial Constitution' (*Dainippon teikoku kenpō no seitei*) under the heading 'Establishing Regional Self-Rule' (*chihō jichi seido no seibi*) in the context of policies in the newly officially incorporated territories of Hokkaido and the Ryukyus:<sup>21</sup>

In Hokkaido the [Hokkaido] Development Agency *kaitakushi* was abolished and in 1886, the Hokkaido Administration (*Hokkaidō chō*) was established. Vast amounts of land and state-owned factories etc. were sold to the nobility (*kazoku*) and 'businesses with close links to the government' (*seishō*), with prisoners being mobilized for the construction of roads and opening of mines. In addition there was development of virgin lands by colonists, and the Ainu, being robbed of a place where they could live,

18 'Civilization' was synonymous with westernization.

19 Aoki et al., "*Nihon shi B kaiteiban*, p. 244.

20 It is interesting to note that in the *kokugo* type of textbooks, reference to the language in such cases would probably be the much more ideologically loaded *kokugo* (actually Japanese viewed as the national language) and not the more neutral *nihongo* (Japanese) as here.

21 Aoki et al., "*Nihon shi B kaiteiban*, p. 259.



were, under the Hokkaido Former Aboriginal People Protection Law (*Hokkaidō kyū dojin hō*) which was promulgated in 1899 ostensibly to protect them and encourage them to work in agriculture, expelled to 'protected areas' (*hogo chi*) where they were subject to assimilation policies such as being compelled to learn Japanese and forced to change their names to Japanese ones (*nihonshiki no namae*)<sup><4></sup>. In Okinawa there was persistent resentment against the Ryukyu solution (*Ryukyu shobun*). The Prefectural Office, trying to proceed smoothly with prefectural politics, appeased [the powers to be] by choosing the policy of preservation of the original landowning system. But on the Miyako and Yaeyama Islands there was resistance against the uniform head tax introduced since they were under rule by the Satsuma han and against the government's selling off communal land and fishing grounds (*iriaichi*) cheaply to powerful noblemen and merchants ... (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

In the passage above, in one long sentence, colonial policy in Hokkaido towards the indigenous Ainu people, including the promulgation of the Hokkaido Former Aboriginal People Protection Law and as one of its prominent consequences, the forced removal of the Ainu to 'protected territories' and the forced imposition on them of the Japanese language (*nihongo*) and of Japanese names (*nihonshiki no namae*), are mentioned. The text continues with related policies in Okinawa but it does not mention the issue of the language at all, even though it was Ryukyuan, a language related to Japanese but differing to the extent that they were mutually unintelligible, which was the language of the Ryukyu kingdom before the incorporation of Ryukyu into Japan as Okinawa.

From this difference in the treatment of Hokkaido and Okinawa it can be surmised that, to the authors, language policies towards the newly acquired minorities were just a marginal issue in the historical context.

The next mention of *nihongo* occurs in Chapter 17, 'The Industrial Revolution and the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars' (*Sangyō kakumei to Nisshin-Nichiro sensō*). In Section 1. 'The Sino-Japanese War' (*Nisshin sensō*) under the heading 'Taiwan and Korea After the Sino-Japanese War' (*Nisshin sensō go no Taiwan to Chōsen*) as cited below, the Japanese language is mentioned in the context of Japanese policies in Taiwan which was ceded to Japan after the Sino-Japanese War:<sup>22</sup>

In 1895 in Taiwan, which had become a Japanese territory, there was a strong resistance movement spearheaded by the islanders. Japan sent the army to suppress it. Furthermore, the Taiwan Governor's Office (*Taiwan sōtokufu*) was established with a former marine soldier being sent in as the first governor. The Taiwan islanders were forced to become subjects of Imperial Japan through assimilatory policies such as being forced to

22 Ibid., p. 263.

learn Japanese. In addition, a land ownership registry as well as a tax system were set up, and the construction of roads, railways and ports was undertaken. In 1897, the Bank of Taiwan (*Taiwan ginkō*) was established and the ground was laid for Japanese companies to advance into Taiwan. (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

Here, even though it is short, we have a straightforward description of Japan's language policy orientation in Taiwan. It is interesting to note that later on, too, in the context of the colonial rule of Korea, policies such as the forced introduction of Japanese as the only language in public and education or forced name changes (*sōshi kaimei*) are also mentioned.

The longest passage related to *kokugo*, language policies and education is also in Chapter 17, Section 5. 'Culture in the Meiji Period' (*Meiji no bunka*):<sup>23</sup>

Since 1886, elementary school textbooks were subject to government approval (*kenteisei*) and from 1903 onwards they became government-designated (*kokuteisei*). As for the subjects taught, Japanese grammar was being developed, the national language (*kokugo*) was established and the teaching of standard language (*hyōjungo*) began both in Japan proper and in Taiwan, which had become a Japanese colony, and also [songs such as ] Chocho (Butterfly) and Hotaru no hikari ('The Light of Fireflies', actually a remake of Auld Lang Syne), based on Western musical scales, were sung in chorus. In 1907 compulsory education was extended from four to six years and the rate of elementary school attendance, which was 50% in the middle of the Meiji period, increased to 95%. (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

In this passage, important developments such as progress on the codification of Japanese grammar, the introduction of *kokugo* as a subject in school textbooks and the teaching of standard Japanese (*hyōjungo*) within Japan proper (which seems to include, according to the authors, the so called *gaichi* external territories such as Okinawa and Hokkaido) as well as in Taiwan, the only colony at that time, are mentioned. While this is the most exhaustive mention in any of the textbooks that were examined, even here it seems that the intent was not so much to explain the far-reaching developments in language-related issues, as to stress the steps made towards modernization. This observation is underlined by the fact that the passage devoted to language policy developments is expressed in the same sentence as the reference to the introduction of Western musical scales and Western singing into the curriculum.

Under the next heading 'The Formation of Modern Literature' (*Kindai bungaku no seiritsu*), immediately after, new developments on the literary scene based on the contemporary spoken language and the *genbun itchi* movement are introduced.<sup>24</sup>

23 Ibid, pp. 279-280.

24 Ibid., p. 280.

Even after Meiji, works by light fiction (*gesaku*) authors such as Kanagaki Robun (1829-1894), for example *Aguranabe*, were popular, and people continued to enjoy romantic narratives (*yomihon*) and decadent love stories (*ninjōbon*); fiction genres, translations of European literature such as ‘Around the World in Eighty Days’ (*Le tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours* by Jules Verne), and translations of political novels by members of the civil rights movement (*minken undōka*) were also popular.

In 1885, Tsubouchi Shōyō criticized light fiction and political novels and in his work ‘The Essence of a Novel’ (*Shōsetsu shinzui*) stressed the importance for novels to be realistic, that is, to faithfully depict human psychology and mores. Subsequently, in 1882, Futabatei Shimei criticized Tsubouchi, stressing that what was important was realism based in ideology, and wrote the novel *Ukigumo* (Floating Clouds) written in a simple colloquial style, thus establishing the base of the modern novel. Moreover, at about the same time, Yamada Bimyo began the *genbun itchi* (convergence of spoken and written language) movement to make the written style closer to the colloquial language, and in 1885, together with Ozaki Koyo, he established *Ken’yūsha* (The Company of Ink Stone Friends), and in 1888 the first dilettanti literary magazine *Garakuta bunko* (Trash Library) was established. (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

In the cited segment, in the context of more traditional developments, efforts at modernization in literature through the translation of representative works of Western literature (at the time Verne’s *Around the World in Eighty Days* was considered as such) are introduced. The *genbun itchi* movement is introduced more as one of the articles on the list of important Meiji cultural events. Its relation to the pioneering work of Futabatei Shimei is not obvious at all in this context. Such treatment of language policy developments points to the conclusion that, in this context, the authors had no serious intent to show the importance of the chosen language policies of Meiji Japan for the modernization project *per se*, but, on the other hand, used the facts as an illustration of the various modernizing efforts undertaken at the time.

Colonial language policies in Korea are mentioned in Chapter 21. ‘The Pacific War’ (*Taiheiyō sensō*), Section 1. ‘The Beginning of Japanese-American Hostilities and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Zone’ (*Nichibei kaisen to Daitōa kyōeiken*) under the heading ‘The Real Face of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Zone’ (*Daitōa kyōeiken no jitsuzō*) we have:<sup>25</sup>

Korea, because of the war, was seen as the base for the provision of necessary materials, and the policies of turning people into Japanese

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 330.

imperial subjects (*kōminka seisaku*), such as through forced praying at Shinto shrines and the forced use of Japanese at schools, were thoroughly implemented. In 1939 the change of [Korean] names into Japanese-style names (*sōshi kaimēi*) was enforced and in 1944 the military draft was introduced, which in 1945 was applied to Taiwan as well. Women were organized into female working groups (*teishintai*) to work in military industry factories or were sent to the front as ‘comfort women’ (*ianfu*) together with young women from the Philippines and elsewhere. Japan repressed the people who resisted [such policies], and numerous Koreans and Chinese war prisoners were forced to work in coal mines and elsewhere. The policy of turning people into Japanese imperial subjects was also implemented in Manchuria and [the people there] were mobilized for war purposes or for the exploitation of natural resources <5>. (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

Here again language assimilation policies are mentioned but there are no details as to what was actually happening in the area of language. The same is true of the forced changes of Korean surnames and forenames into Japanese names. All the events are listed as instances of a wider assimilatory policy. Furthermore, a few lines later a similar situation in SE Asia is mentioned:<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, in SE Asia, Japan established puppet regimes under military rule, and as in Korea and Taiwan, enforced praying at Shinto shrines and the spread of the Japanese language. Thus, the Japanese army, while taking possession of oil, iron ore, rubber, wood and other strategic materials by force, continued to mobilize the people and forced them to produce rice or other goods. (Translated and underlined by A.B.)

Here again we have a description of the contemporary situation as a list of policy steps: besides plundering natural and human resources, there is also the forced use of the Japanese language and forced obedience to religious rites such as praying at Shinto shrines.

### 3.3 “Serious” Works for the General Audience

The *Nihonshi B* textbook published by Sanseido is the one that most amply covers the language issue among all the examined textbooks. The passages cited above exhaust the topics covered by all the textbooks analyzed for this study. Examination of the material in Section 3.2 shows that there was some concern with language policy issues during the Meiji period and pre-war Japan. Nonetheless, in spite of the importance of the issue, in the textbooks, this concern does not go

26 Ibid., pp. 331.

beyond introducing such examples as merely illustrations or instances of wider trends.

In order to put the textbook analysis into proper perspective, I further examined two monographs and two encyclopedias. One of the monographs is one of the 7 tomes in a series of monographs on the Japanese language.<sup>27</sup> The other is a monograph on the cultural history of language, focusing on Japanese in its cultural and historical context by Sugimoto.<sup>28</sup> One of the two encyclopedias is devoted to linguistics in general.<sup>29</sup> The other is an encyclopedia explicitly covering various facts pertaining to the Japanese language.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.4 Analysis of Works for the General Audience

For the sake of expediency, the following shorthand will be used for the sources analyzed:

Kamei Takashi et al. (Eds.), (1965, /2007/) *Nihongo no rekishi 6* (The History of Japanese 6) → (1);

Sugimoto Tsutomu (1982) *Kotoba no bunkashi* (The Cultural History of Language) → (2);

Kamei Takashi et al. (Eds.), (1996) *Gengogaku daijiten* (The Great [Encyclopedic] Dictionary of Linguistics) → (3)

Kindaichi Haruhiko et al. (1990) *Nihongo hyakka daijiten* (The Great Encyclopedia of the Japanese Language) → (4).

Three issues pertaining to the Japanese language were examined: the nature of the Japanese language and *kokugo*, the treatment of autochthonous minorities in Ryukyu/Okinawa and in Hokkaido, and language policies in Japan's colonies.

#### 3.4.1 The Nature of the Japanese Language and *Kokugo*

Kamei et al. eds. (1965/2007) and Kamei et al. eds. 1996, i.e., sources (1) and (3) present a rather detailed discussion of what constitutes *kokugo*, and make explicit its temporal and spatial characteristics. A characteristic aspect of this discussion is the systematic use of *minzokugo* (ethnic language) instead of *kokugo* (national language) in contexts where it is technically impossible to

27 Takashi Kamei, Toshio Yamada & Tokihiko Ôtô (eds.), *Nihongo no rekishi 6: atarashii kokugo e no ayumi* [History of the Japanese Language vol. 6: Steps Toward the New National Language]. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1965/2007.

28 Tsutomu Sugimoto, *Kotoba no bunkashi: Nihongo no kigen kara gendaigo made* [The Cultural history of Language: From the Origins to Modern Japanese]. Tokyo: Ôfusha, 1982.

29 Kamei Takashi, Rokuro Kôno & Eiichi Chino (eds.), *Gengogaku daijiten 2: Sekai gengo hen* [The Great Dictionary of Linguistics vol. 2: Languages of the World]. Tokyo: Sanseido, 1996.

30 Haruhiko Kindaichi, Takeshi Shibata & Hayashi Ôki (eds.), *Nihongo hyakka daijiten* [The Great Encyclopedia of the Japanese Language]. Tokyo: Taishukan, 1990.

use the latter. What is interesting, is the view that the idea of *kokugo* was in a latent form already present in the thought of *kokugakusha* (national scholars) of the Tokugawa period, in the notion of *mikuni kotoba* (the language of the noble land) referring to the language of Japan as opposed to Chinese. At the same time (1) distinguishes a clear cut difference between *kokugakusha's mikuni kotoba* and the notion of *kokugo*, introduced during the Meiji period. The former has the nuance of preservation of the existing vernacular cultural heritage, as opposed to the perceived encroachment of classical Chinese, while the latter is connected with the modernizing project of developing latent linguistic potentials as a communication medium. Kamei et al. in source (1) also make explicit the difference between *kokugo* (the national language [of Japan]) and *nihongo* (the Japanese language) as two different notions, pointing out the polysemy in the use of *kokugo*: (i) language recognized as one nation's own language; (ii) in particular - Japanese; (iii) Japanese linguistic elements remaining after the removal of Sino-Japanese lexical elements, i.e., proper Japanese elements; (iv) not just as an object of scholarly study, but Japanese as a subject in the school curriculum in the existing educational system. Thus, *kokugo* is inappropriate as a term for the object of scientific linguistic study, which can only be *nihongo* - Japanese. From the point of view of *kokugogaku* (*kokugo* studies), the scientific study of Japanese is relevant only as a means for the advancement of *kokugogaku*, and not as an inherent goal of scientific study in itself.<sup>31</sup>

The description in source (3), it being an encyclopedic dictionary of linguistics, is less explicit because of the limited amount of space, but the relevant text is by the same author, Kamei, following the same lines as (1).<sup>32</sup> The overall impression both sources give is that of an impartial, objective approach to the realities concerning the development of the Japanese language.

Source (2), i.e., Sugimoto, being a monograph on the cultural history of language, illustrated with the developments in Japanese, is less extensive in coverage than (1). Here, *kokugo* as a notion is given no explicit treatment, though political implications of *kokugo* education are mentioned from a critical standpoint in several places. Thus there is a critical assessment of *kanji* policies, a critique of the goals the Meiji government had with *kokugo kyōiku* (national language education) at the expense of regional varieties of Japanese, and finally, a critical assessment of the results of Meiji style *kokugo kyōiku*, i.e., the long lasting split between the 'elite' center and the 'coarse' countryside.

The language policies in Meiji are explained in the context of Meiji state policies and goals for the modernization and militarization of Japan.

31 Kamei et al., *Nihongo no rekishi* 6, pp. 197-202.

32 Kamei et al., *Gengogaku daijiten* 2, pp. 1629-32.

Source (4)<sup>33</sup> treats *kokugo* as a given fact. There is no discussion of its historical and ideological properties.<sup>34</sup> The Japanese state and its language are presented as an unchanging and unproblematic temporal continuum at least since the first half of the 1st millennium CE.<sup>35</sup> Such a view is in clear contradiction with established historical facts and is a clear case of projection of the present state of affairs onto the past. In this context the use of the emotionally and politically loaded term *wagakuni* (our country), not found in the other three sources, is emblematic.<sup>36</sup>

In our country (*wagakuni*) there was no indigenous system of letters to write the language of one's own country. From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, through contact with Chinese characters which were *introduced* together with cultural artefacts from China, writing became known. Since then, using various devices, Chinese characters, i.e., the characters for writing Chinese, came to be used for writing Japanese. (Translated by A. B.)

### 3.4.2 Autochthonous Minorities - Ryukyu/Okinawa and Ainu

Sources (1) and (3). In source (1) the harsh treatment of Okinawa, including the use of *hōgen fuda* “dialect placards” in relation to teaching the standard language, is mentioned in detail.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, the same source does not mention the cultural and linguistic assimilation of the Ainu.

In source (3) autochthonous minorities are treated under extensive entries devoted to the Ryukyuu/Okinawan language and the Ainu language while under the entry covering the history of the Japanese language, they are not mentioned.

Source (2). The Ainu people and language are mentioned only in the context of the origins and genetic affiliation of Japanese. Ryukyu/Okinawan receives no mention.<sup>38</sup>

Source (4). The highhanded treatment of the Ainu and Ryukyu/Okinawa people as mere minorities is conspicuous. The issue of preserving minorities' linguistic and cultural identities is presented as too petty for the Japanese state to occupy itself with. In addition, Ryukyu/Okinawan is mentioned as a dialect, even though it is totally unintelligible for people from the Japanese mainland islands and although it had an independent written tradition as a separate literary and colloquial language before the annexation to Japan. The repression of dialects (*hōgen bokumetsu*) is mentioned (without specifics) as an accidental fact which, in

33 Kindaichi et al., *Nihongo hyakka daijiten*, pp. 1227-1242.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 1227.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 1229.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 1229. The emotional load of *wagakuni* can be observed, among others, on blogs, such as Internet source: <http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/success0965/11335415.html> (retrieved April 16, 2011).

37 Kamei et al., *Nihongo no rekishi* 6, pp. 367-8.

38 Sugimoto, *Kotoba no bunkashi*, pp. 282-298.

the less rigid atmosphere after WWII, was “unfortunately” perceived as coercion and the enforcement of *hyōjungo* “standard language”.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.4.3 Language Policies in the Colonies

With Korea being directly annexed and prepared for cultural and linguistic assimilation, and Taiwan also being under very close colonial rule, language policies in the pre-war Japanese colonies were closely connected with language policies in *naichi* (mainland Japan). In the light of research done by Osa<sup>40</sup> and Yasuda<sup>41</sup> among others, on the intrinsic relationship between script reforms in the colonies and the mainland, it is surprising that this issue receives no mention in any of the examined materials.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Source (1), Kamei et al. (eds.), (1965 /2007) is a work meant for both experts and for the wider public. Similarly, Source (2), Sugimoto is a work more oriented towards the general public and technically not very demanding. On the other hand, Source (3), Kamei et al. (eds.), (1996) being an encyclopedic dictionary of linguistics, is a technical work primarily meant as a reference for fellow linguists.

All three sources, despite some limitations, and regardless of whether they are meant for the general public or for experts, provide a rather objective treatment of relevant issues. They share a common focus: while presenting relevant linguistic facts concerning the development of Japanese, they also introduce a considerable amount of social, cultural and historic contextual information in a polemic mode.

Source (4), Kindaichi et al. (eds.), (1990), being an encyclopedic dictionary of the Japanese language, is basically also intended as a reference work for a more technically demanding audience of experts working on various aspects of Japanese language (from teaching Japanese as the first language to teaching it as a second language and for linguistic and philological research). It presents technical facts while providing less context for their understanding. When the context is given at all, facts from the context tend to be presented in a mechanistic way, not revealing the causal relationship with the linguistic facts. Thus, the entries examined in (4) do not compare well with related parts of the other three works; they seem to be less scientifically rigorous and reflect a more utilitarian approach common in mainstream *kokugogaku*. In (4), a priori identification with

39 Kindaichi et al., *Nihongo hyakka daijiten*, pp. 1228.

40 Osa, *Kindai Nihon to kokka nashonarizumu*.

41 Yasuda, *Shokuminchi no nakano 'kokugogaku'*; Yasuda, *Kokugo to hōgen no aida*; Yasuda 'Gengo' no *kochiku*.



utilitarian goals of promoting the national language may be seen in particular from the treatment of the nature of *kokugo* and the Japanese language. It seems that there is no distinction between the two. This is in stark contrast with the treatment in Kamei et al.,<sup>42</sup> which gives a clear picture of the loose usage of the term *kokugo*. Also, in Kindaichi's treatment there seems to be an ideologically based temporal and spatial projection of the term backwards in time and to the territory of the modern Japanese state. In addition, the coercive phase of the introduction of standard language (*hyōjungo*), involving deeply divisive issues such as the aforementioned use of *hōgen n fuda* “dialect placards”, is presented so as to imply that such practices might have only been a remote possibility. Other authors (i.e., Kamei et al.) treat this issue in a much more critical way.

One thing common to all the materials is the omission of any treatment of language policies in the colonies. This omission may reveal an implicit understanding of priorities, i.e., that the Japanese language is indeed a *kokugo* (national language) whose relevant treatment is necessarily limited to the territory of the nation in question. One further fact supporting this view is also the systematic omission in all four materials of any mention of the language problems of the rather numerous Japanese diaspora in the USA and South America.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Consistent, state-endorsed and often state-enforced language policies since from approximately the second half of the Meiji period onwards, which, although they finally failed in colonial territories were successful in the “inner provinces” (*naichi*) as well as in Hokkaido and Okinawa, achieved a high degree of homogeneity regarding linguistic and ethnic identity in Japan by the first half of the twentieth century.

As mentioned earlier in Section 3.2, examination of the material taken from the *Nihonshi B* textbook published by Sanseido, shows some concern with language policy issues during Meiji and pre-war Japan. The passages cited above exhaust the topics covered by the textbooks analyzed for this study. Nonetheless, in spite of the importance of the issue, in the textbooks, this concern does not go beyond introducing such examples as merely illustrations or instances of wider trends.

On the other hand, the four general works examined devoted to language issues go into more detail as compared with the textbooks. Yet, in their view of the linguistic processes involving the Japanese language, they do display hints of biases based on the identification of language with the territorial nation-state.

42 Kamei et al., *Nihongo no rekishi* 6, pp. 201-202.

Kindaichi et al.<sup>43</sup> clearly emerges as the odd man out with its apparent lack of objective reflection and clearly discernible patriotic fervor seen in the projection of the modern homogenized nation state and its national language image back into times when both the social and political organization as well as the linguistic situation were entirely different from those in a modern nation state.

This “projectionist” view of national language may also be behind the paradoxical perception and omission of important Japanese language related issues in the textbooks.

Such a tendency may seem surprising at a time when the perception of past events, due to distance in time and advances in research, is expected to have become mature. Yet it seems this is not an isolated tendency. As also reflected in perceptions in Kindaichi et al., the research tradition of *kokugo*, i.e. projecting *kokugo* back into history to the linguistic practices of the pre-modern inhabitants of Japan, succeeded, it seems, in transforming *kokugo* into an entity existing beyond time, akin to the air people breathe, but never questioned in its essence.

Indeed, if we view the national language as basically being present since time immemorial and being homogeneously spread all over the national territory, with the dialects, once safely subdued under the standardization being just a charming addition of the local colour, then the radical and profound language reforms being implemented during the later part of the Meiji period, do not appear as such at all. They are just reforms in a long string of language reforms, which after WWII also include periodical adjustments of the kanji to be learned or of the kana orthography. Thus, these reforms, being just one episode in a long series of such changes, in the view of the history textbook authors indeed do not deserve the attention of high school children cramming for the entrance exams, and as such, can be happily omitted. Which is exactly what seems to be the case.

Such a view is reflected not only in history and *kokugo* textbooks which offer no mention of the genesis of Modern Japanese and its importance for the State of Japan, but is also reflected in the parallel development in the sphere of *kokugo* research itself. The so called *Kokugo shi*, histories of *kokugo*, even those written by respected scholars,<sup>44</sup> skip the socio-political and historical circumstances of the genesis of modern language almost completely. And it is no coincidence, that it is only from the late 1980s or early 1990s onwards that the aforementioned comparatively younger generation of critical *kokugo* scholars, sociologists, literature researchers and historians (Lee, Osa, Yasuda, Komori etc...) have started delving critically and systematically into the ideological, cultural, social, political and historical circumstances of the ‘birth and life’ of Modern Japanese.

43 Kindaichi et al., *Nihongo hyakka daijiten*.

44 Kamei et al. (eds.), *Nihongo no rekishi 6*; Minoru Watanabe, *Nihongo shi yosetsu [The Essential History of Japanese]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten Publishers, 1999.

The marginal view of the '*kokugo mondai*' (national language issue) that we have seen in the analyzed textbook material, is thus a natural consequence of a certain view of society in general and history in particular, where language is perceived as a context and not as one of the essential factors contributing towards developments in society, and at the same time is shaped by those developments. It is hoped that this new perception of the role of language and the advances in the research of Japan's history and society based on this perception, will someday also trickle down to the high school textbook compilers.

This study is just the first step into an enquiry of the treatment of the national language and language policy in general in Japanese high school textbooks. The level of analysis is basically descriptive and no attempts have yet been made to put the findings into theoretical perspective. It is hoped that with a wider amount of relevant material examined it will also be possible to tackle the problem from a more theoretically based approach, ensuring that a more refined picture of the problem may emerge in the future.

## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research presented in this paper was supported by JSPS and ARRS project funding. Earlier versions were presented on several occasions: A Comparative Analysis of Textbooks for History in Japan and Slovenia: Structures, Contents and Interpretations Workshops ("Conspicuous Absence", 1st Workshop, INZ, Ljubljana, 30-31 August 2010; "Images of Pre-WWII: National Language Policies as Reflected in the Field of 'National Language Studies' Itself", 2nd Workshop, Tokyo, 17-18 December, 2010; "One Country, One People, One Language, Since Ever: A Comparison of Backward Projection of Language in The Case of the Ex-Yugoslavia Region and Japan", 3rd Workshop, Ljubljana, 2 September, 2011; "One country, One People, One Language: the View of the Natural State of Affairs in Japan and Southeast Europe", 4th Workshop, Tokyo, 16 December, 2011; ); "Conspicuous Absence: A Perception of Pre-WWII National Language Policies in Japan as Reflected in History Textbooks and 'National Language Studies' Writings", CRLAO / CNRS-EHESS, 24th Paris Meeting on East Asian Linguistics (30 Jun - 1 July, 2011); "A Conspicuous Absence of Concern or One Country, One People, One Language, Since Ever", University of Tsukuba Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences GNP Workshop "State Power: Language and Identity" (Tokyo, 17 February, 2012); "One Country, One People, One Language, Since Ever", The 2nd International Symposium of the Department of Asian and African Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, "Improvement In

Communication” (14-16 March 2012). Last but not least, my warm thanks to ARRS and JSPS for providing support for this project and to my collaborators for their stimulating comments and fruitful ferment.