Notes to this edition

This is an electronic edition of the printed book. Minor corrections may have been made within the text; new information and any errata appear on the current page only.

Japanese Research Monograph 16
*The Kokugo Revolution: Education, Identity, and Language Policy in Imperial Japan*
Paul H. Clark


Please visit the IEAS Publications website at http://ieas.berkeley.edu/publications/ for more information and to see our catalogue.

Send correspondence and manuscripts to
Katherine Lawn Chouta, Managing Editor
Institute of East Asian Studies
1995 University Avenue, Suite 510H
Berkeley, CA 94720-2318 USA
ieaseditor@berkeley.edu

May 2015
The *Kokugo* Revolution

Education, Identity, and Language Policy in Imperial Japan

Paul H. Clark
A publication of the Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley. Although the institute is responsible for the selection and acceptance of manuscripts in this series, responsibility for the opinions expressed and for the accuracy of statements rests with their authors.

The Japan Research Monograph series is one of several publication series sponsored by the Institute of East Asian Studies in conjunction with its constituent units. The others include the China Research Monograph series, the Korea Research Monograph series, and the Research Papers and Policy Studies series.

Send correspondence and manuscripts to

Katherine Lawn Chouta, Managing Editor
Institute of East Asian Studies
2223 Fulton Street, 6th Floor
Berkeley, CA 94720-2318
ieaseditor@berkeley.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Clark, Paul H., 1967-
The kokugo revolution : education, identity, and language policy in imperial Japan / Paul H. Clark.
   p. cm. -- (Japan research monograph ; 16)
   Includes bibliographical references and index.
   ISBN 1-55729-095-4 (alk. paper)
PL524.73.C53 2009
306.44'952--dc22
2009007553

Copyright © 2009 by the Regents of the University of California.
Printed in the United States of America.
All rights reserved.
Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................. vii
1. Introduction ....................................................................................... 1
2. Writing, Literacy, Language Reform, and Education Reform in Early Meiji Japan .............................................................. 12
3. Creating Kokugo Consciousness: Education Officials and the Emergence of National Language Ideology .................................. 42
4. The Birth of the Genbun’itchi Movement and Futsū bun in the Middle Meiji Years ............................................................................ 62
5. Ueda Kazutoshi, Systemic Linguistics, and the Academic Legitimization of Kokugo ................................................................ 78
6. The Genbun’itchi Society and the Establishment of the National Language Research Council ..................................................... 107
7. Grammar, Textbooks, and the Implementation of the National Language ...................................................................................... 133
8. Kokugo, the State, and Yamada Yoshio ........................................... 156
9. Conclusion ......................................................................................... 174
Bibliography ........................................................................................... 186
Index ......................................................................................................... 193

Acknowledgments

I have incurred many personal and professional debts as this book has taken shape and would like to thank those who have helped make its publication possible. While this work was in the early stages of development, I had the good fortune of working with several professors at the University of Pittsburgh. In particular, I wish to thank Richard Smethurst. His support has extended far beyond that which was required of a graduate adviser. Without him, this study would never have begun and would never have been completed. I am grateful to Evelyn Rawski, Thomas Rimer, and Ann Jannetta for helping me conceptualize the project and for the numerous comments they have provided.

During the research phase of the project in Japan, I encountered a number of language specialists and researchers who were very accommodating. Koide Izumi, formerly of the International House of Japan, was gracious in helping me make initial contacts with scholars, libraries, and research institutions. This proved invaluable and opened many doors that would have remained closed otherwise. I thank Yamada Sadao of the National Institute for Japanese Language for giving me access to his research room and for directing me to important document collections. I also wish to thank Matsuda Kōichirō for acting as my host at Rikkyo University and for providing important perspective on my research. A project of this scope is possible only with outside support. It was funded by a Fulbright-Hays Faculty Research Abroad award, a National Security Education Program Fellowship, faculty development awards from West Texas A&M University, and awards from the Center for Asian Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.

As this work neared completion, there were scholars and friends who provided additional insight on the project and who have been supportive of my work. I thank my colleagues in the Department of History at West Texas A&M University for allowing me to bounce ideas off them and for helping to create an environment at a teaching institution where scholarship and creative thinking are highly valued. Particular thanks go to Bruce
Brasington for his willingness to engage in conversation about my project and for challenging me to persevere in the face of adversity. Though many have assisted me in ways too numerous to mention, I am, of course, solely responsible for the errors and omissions in the work.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of my spouse and original reader, Elizabeth Morrow Clark, in the successful completion of this book. From beginning to end, her support, comments, and editing have enriched the work and made it more meaningful. I thank her and my three children—Katherine, Charlotte, and Phillip—for their forbearance and for making it all worthwhile. Special thanks go to James Vardamen, who got me started in all this.

This book is dedicated to my father, Dale Clark, and in memory of my mother, Eugenia Clark.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This study chronicles the development of the Japanese national language in the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa eras. The issues I examine here—the movements to reform the language and education system, the nationalization of language, the creation and manipulation of an ideology that placed the Japanese language at the center of modern cultural identity—were a part of the second series of reforms initiated by the authorities in the middle and late Meiji years. The first series of reforms instituted by the Meiji leadership in the years immediately after the Meiji Restoration had been farsighted and generally successful. Japanese society had been restructured, a new system of government had been put into place, and the new economy and military were transforming Japan into a regional power. Yet one issue seemed to plague the Meiji leadership: the reform of education.

The Education Ministry, which had been formed in January of 1872, seemed unsure of its mandate in the early years of its existence and unable to successfully reform the education system. The problems, which were both ideological and practical, were intimately connected to the numerous difficulties reflected in the Japanese language itself. For example, the Education Order of 1879 stated that primary schools were to be “a place where children received ordinary education and where they took their first steps in reading and writing, math, geography, history, and ethics.”\(^1\) However, this decree and those that followed proved surprisingly difficult to implement in part because the Japanese language, the mode through which knowledge was to be transmitted, was neither standardized nor codified. In this, an era of centralization, education reform could not be effectively carried out

---

\(^1\) Yamane Yasutarō, *Kokugo Kyōkushikenkyū* (Hiroshima: Shitanda Insatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, 1967), 75. This directive was one of forty outlining the purpose and scope of education in Meiji Japan.
without language reform. Thus, the linguistic chaos of the Meiji years threatened not only to undermine education reform but also to retard Japan’s development as a nation. Unrecognized and underappreciated by the early Meiji leadership, language reform gradually became a priority in the second phase of reforms initiated in the third decade of the Meiji era.

Language and the Problem of Basic Communication

In the immediate post-Restoration years, the Japanese language was distinguished by linguistic regionalism, cultural decentralization, and class differentiation. Communication between provinces and among the various classes of society could be problematic. While it is difficult to determine with certainty the extent to which poorly educated peasants were able to communicate orally with others from outside their han in the latter part of the Edo era, fragmentary and anecdotal evidence suggests that some level of linguistic interaction, while possible, was often difficult. For example, Furukawa Koshōken recorded in his travelogue of 1783 that government officials on an inspection tour of Japan sometimes had great difficulty communicating with the local population. Even with translators they were, at times, unable to order a meal in a restaurant.2 Conversely, peasants in the early nineteenth century often made pilgrimages, especially to the Grand Shrine at Ise, and seemed to have had the language skills necessary to travel from place to place. Individuals from the highest levels of society also had sufficient language skills to enable them to communicate in different regions of Japan. Richard Rubinger writes in Private Academies of Tokugawa Japan (1982) that the oldest sons of ruling daimyo traveled to schools outside their han for instruction. He makes no mention of the need for remedial language instruction or of communication difficulties.3 However, second sons of ruling daimyo were sometimes not schooled in the Edo dialect and were able to communicate effectively only in provincial dialect.4

---

4 For a fictionalized account, see Ryotarō Shiba, Drunk as a Lord (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2001), 137.
CHAPTER TWO

Writing, Literacy, Language Reform, and Education Reform in Early Meiji Japan

I have divided Meiji-era language movements into two discrete eras distinctive for their orientation to education reform and the introduction of the concept of a Japanese national language. In the years before 1887, many Japanese scholars and intellectuals participated actively in a lively and far-ranging public discussion on the reform of the Japanese language. Some sent petitions to government agencies, others wrote journal articles or newspaper editorials, and a small number taught or wrote using a simplified form of the Japanese language. Later, societies devoted to the advancement of one or more language-reform options were established. Many scholars assumed positions consistent with one of three prominent philosophical schools of the Meiji era: kokugaku, the “national learning” school; kangaku, the “Chinese learning” school; and bunmei kaika or the “civilization and enlightenment” school associated with “Western learning.” For these scholars, issues of language reform reflected their broader vision of the future Japan. Still, language reform was in its infancy during the first two decades of the Meiji era. There was little consensus on the shape and function of language in the modern era. Even those who advocated radical change were largely unable to enunciate precisely how it should be carried out. Many government officials and intellectuals also believed that no change at all should be made to the language.

In the last years of the 1880s, a series of events converged that forever changed the discussion on the form and function of the Japanese language. First, there was the professionalization of the Japanese government bureaucracy. The first cohort of Japanese elites who had been sent abroad to be trained in the West began to return and assume positions of influence. Among the most
CHAPTER THREE

Creating *Kokugo* Consciousness: Education Officials and the Emergence of National Language Ideology

In the previous chapter, I described a few of the discussions about language reform in the early years of the Meiji era. While these discussions were important for defining language-reform issues and for bringing them to the attention of the Meiji leadership, they yielded no standard, codified language for Japan. In fact, as this period came to an end in the early 1880s, intellectuals and scholars seemed no closer to reforming the Japanese language than they had been at any time since the Restoration. Many interested parties had become frustrated and disillusioned by their inability to effect real changes to the language. Indeed, many scholars would argue that the movement to reform Japanese in the early Meiji years had, in fact, hardened resistance to language reform among government officials and proponents of the classical forms. For example, in 1873, the Ministry of Education had taken steps to revive interest in the classical forms of the language by insisting on the teaching of *kanbun* as the proper form of the written language in the new education system.

In the period of experimentation that characterized the first fifteen years of the Meiji era, issues of language reform had most often been raised by enlightenment scholars interested in “Western” learning. These included influential men such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, Nishi Amane, and Shimizu Usaburō, who were generally outside the government or who held relatively minor government positions. Language reformers had little official power to implement the changes for which they called. Maejima Hisoka was, of course, an exception. Later in the 1880s and early
CHAPTER FOUR

The Birth of the Genbun'itchi Movement and Futsūbun in the Middle Meiji Years

In the same period that policy makers, educators, and language specialists were beginning to conceptualize the language as a national entity, several literary and intellectual movements important to the development of a reformed Japanese language emerged to assume a position of prominence in the intellectual landscape. Two of these, the genbun'itchi and futsūbun movements, dealt mostly with issues of language reform and literary convention. The other was the movement to reenergize the kokugaku. As mentioned previously, many policy makers and intellectuals came to consider this ideology as the cornerstone of the nationalizing movements that would strengthen Japan and assist in the development of a more cohesive nation. These three movements converged in the late 1880s and early 1890s to lead to the first significant reform of the Japanese language in the modern era.

The genbun'itchi movement was distinguished by young, adventurous intellectuals who were not bound by the philosophical paradigms of the old Confucian order and who were seeking an appropriate outlet for literary expression. More traditional elements within the intellectual establishment who had sought some measure of language reform themselves became alarmed by the strength and speed of the radical language reform revealed in the early genbun'itchi movement. This reflected a generational divide between advocates of moderate language reform and adherents of radical language reform and a philosophical separation among members of the educated classes regarding the disposition of the Japanese language. The evidence presented in this chapter demonstrates that, though the origins of the genbun'itchi movement can be traced back to the late Edo period to authors such as Terakado Seiken (1796–1868), the movement came into its own in
CHAPTER FIVE

Ueda Kazutoshi, Systemic Linguistics, and the Academic Legitimization of Kokugo

The discourse of *kokugo* ideology, which had come to dominate discussions of language reform, was still in a transitional phase in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Though it had become clear that many Japanese intellectuals had agreed upon the need for a new language and that, for the short term at least, it should be *futsūbun*, a new, entirely different era was ushered in during the 1890s. During this period, the Meiji authorities began to redouble their efforts to consolidate the "nation." The appearance of the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1890 and the Meiji Civil Code in 1898 demonstrated the extent to which the Meiji authorities were prepared to go to "shape the contours of subjecthood according to its view of an obedient citizenry."¹ Carol Gluck describes this as the institutionalization of the *kokumin*, or more precisely "the effort to draw all people into the state, to have them thinking national thoughts, to make kokumin of them."²

In addition, this period also coincided with the end of the golden era of the renaissance man in Japan. Men who had spoken with authority on a broad range of issues in the early Meiji years by virtue of their short experience abroad, former samurai status, or recent acquisition of other special skills began to be replaced by men with more professional, job-specific skills. This was a victory for the Meiji leadership and came to demonstrate the extent to which Japan had matured in the two decades since the Restoration. The new education system had begun to produce capable

---

CHAPTER SIX

The Genbun’itchi Society and the Establishment of the National Language Research Council

The various movements to reform the Japanese language had, by the end of the nineteenth century, begun to produce results. Though many of the early language-reform societies had disbanded by then or had stopped meeting, a broader coalition of language-reform advocates had emerged to promote the development of a new national language read, understood, and spoken by all Japanese. In addition to authors such as Futabatei Shimei, Yamada Bimyō, and Tsubouchi Shōyō, who had actually participated in the creation of genbun’itchi, the most promising form, educators and government officials with the power to implement substantive change had begun to consider seriously the development of modern kokugo. For Meiji policy makers and Imperial University educators, the issue was no longer one of simple language reform or of finding new forms of literary expression. Rather, the new language began to be characterized as one of the key components undergirding the new civic nationalism taking shape in the late Meiji era. This reflected the kokugaku agenda also embodied in the Meiji Constitution and Imperial Rescript on Education. Those who promoted the kokugaku agenda and who were interested in language reform—such as Katō Hiroyuki, Shiratori Kurakichi, and Ueda Kazutoshi—considered it their duty both to reform the language and to endow it with almost spiritual elements. For modern kokugo to succeed in all of these ways, it needed legitimization from the highest state organs. It also needed to be worthy of veneration, to be standardized and codified.

This chapter outlines the development of two organizations that were to play a key role in the creation of modern kokugo. Though different in many ways from their predecessors, the
CHAPTER SEVEN

Grammar, Textbooks, and the Implementation of the National Language

Though the struggle to gain official government sanction at the legislative level for the reform of the Japanese language had taken more than twenty years, most of the actual work of linguistic codification still lay ahead for the members of the National Language Research Council. The efforts of many language reformers in the early and middle Meiji years had been focused primarily on shifting attitudes among intellectuals and redefining language ideology in order to fulfill the requirements of education reformers and the Meiji governing elite. As a result, the form and function of the written Japanese language, which for several hundred years had served more to delineate the educated from the noneducated classes than to provide the basis for effective communication, would be forever changed. Most of the work that would produce a standard language, however, had yet to be carried out in 1902. In addition to deciding upon grammar and standardizing orthography, several high-profile members of the National Language Research Council initiated a process implied in their mandate, but not explicitly stated in the council’s rules: to teach Japanese subjects the new, standard language. Indeed, the actual wording of the applicable directive indicated that the NLRC was “to investigate ways of bringing the colloquial style into use in the written form.”¹ Some of these men, therefore, used their positions as members of the NLRC, as Ministry of Education officials, and as textbook authors to carry out more thoroughly the work of language reform. The implementation of the standard language, though secondary to their primary task, took on greater impor-

¹ Kamposição, July 4, 1902; emphasis added.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Kokugo, the State, and Yamada Yoshio

The original movement that led to the creation of modern kokugo was largely finished by the end of the Meiji era. Men such as Ueda Kazutoshi had employed the power of the state to transform the colloquial form of Japanese from an experimental prototype used by novelists and writers to a more mature, rational form that could be used to mold Japanese culture through education. The standardization and implementation phase of kokugo development was also well advanced. Success, though difficult to measure for several years, seemed assured. From the perspective of education officials and language specialists charged with overseeing the language, the new kokugo was making Japan stronger because it facilitated literacy, encouraged a heightened sense of national identity, and strengthened the spiritual bond between emperor and subject. Learning kokugo had become the sacred duty of all Japanese. As Ueda had hoped, kokugo had been transformed into the “spiritual blood of the Japanese people.”¹ From the perspective of pure scientific linguistics, however, the language still required further simplification and rationalization. Ueda and his colleagues would continue to press for additional reforms.

Advocates of the new kokugo had succeeded in large part because they were able to shape the contours of the discussion in the middle Meiji years. They had characterized language reform as an essential element of the emperor-centered, statist system and as necessary for the continued development of moral education. Ueda and Inoue Kowashi had portrayed it in patriotic terms and had linked kokugaku ideology and kokugo to create a discourse that still resonates today. Though Inoue died in 1895, Ueda and his protégés such as Hoshina Kōichi maintained moral and temporal

¹ Ueda, “Kokugo to Kokka to,” 12.
CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

Reforming the Japanese language was neither a quick nor an easy task. Indeed, the process that led to modern Japanese spanned nearly the entire Meiji period and continued into the Taishō and early Shōwa eras. As demonstrated in this study, advocates of language reform encountered two principal problems as they considered how the Japanese language might be transformed. The most intractable issue was ideological. For Japanese intellectuals in the early Meiji years, kanbun was more than a system of writing based on the Chinese model. It was the foundation of an entire ideological system that had served to inform and undergird Japanese culture, politics, and education in the preceding millennium. The early Meiji governing elite, though moderate revolutionaries in their own right, could not countenance the abandonment of the classical forms in favor of the vulgar, colloquial form in the first decades of the Meiji era. The second issue with which language-reform advocates struggled was practical. Since no form of the colloquial language had been codified grammatically, a great deal of work would be required to determine the form and function of the new language. Before that work could take place, however, a new ideological paradigm would have to emerge as a discourse into which issues of language reform could be situated. The ideological model that allowed for the development of modern Japanese was that of the "nation." This is reflected in the name of the new language itself: kokugo or "national language."

The long and difficult path to the modern language began with the determination that the language in use in the early Meiji years was insufficient for the needs of a modern, cohesive state. This study demonstrated, in chapter 2, the pioneering efforts of language-reform advocates to characterize the deficiencies of the language. Men such as Maejima Hisoka, Nishi Amane, Fukuzawa Yukichi, and Mori Arinori, who were clearly influenced by
Bibliography

Japanese-Language Primary Sources


Kampō. Found in the National Diet Library. August 21, 1900, 313.


Satomi Yoshi. Gazoku Bumpō. Publisher unknown, 1877.

Akebono Shinbun 23
Amagai Yuzuru 34
Asahi Shinbun 165
Asakasha Association 74
Ashino Keizaburō 136
bōdoku 71
Brothers Grimm 88, 104–105
Brugmann, Friedrich 90
Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George Earle 17
Burns, Susan 20, 43
Chaucer, Geoffrey 5, 68, 179
Chie no Itoguchi (First Steps to Learning), (Furukawa Masao) 38
Chōtō Kokugo Tokuhon (The Middle-School National Language Reader), (Ochiai Naobumi), 151
Chōtō Kyōiku Nihon Bunten (A Japanese Grammar Book for Middle-School Education), (Ochiai Naobumi), 151
Chōya Shinbun 23
Chūtō Kokubun Tokuhon (The Middle-School National Language Reader), (Ochiai Naobumi), 151
civilization and enlightenment school (bunmei kaika) 12, 24, 39–40
colloquial idioms in the Edo period: gesaku forms—kyōka, sharebon, 21, 64–65; kyōku, 13, 21; sharebon, 13
colloquial language 4, 5, 11, 34, 77, 125, 132, 154, 174; gazoku sechū buntai, 66; zokubuntai, 66; in poetry 85–87
Dainihon Kokugo Jiten (A Dictionary of the Greater Japanese National Language), (Ueda Kazutoshi), 80
Dainihon Kyōikukai (Greater Japan Education Society) 108–109
Dainihon Kyōikukai Zasshi 109
Darwin, Charles 87
dialects: Hachijōjima 127–128; Kyoto/Osaka (Kansai—kamigata) 3, 13, 22, 56n27, 127, 139, 159; Kyūshū 127; Tokyo (Kantō) 3, 13, 56n27, 127–128, 138–139, 142, 182
Dore, Ronald 34, 35, 37
Edo Hanjōki (Prosperity in Edo), (Terakado Seiken) 64
Education in Japan (Mori Arinori) 27
Education Ministry 1, 89, 122; control of curriculum 3, 145, 148–149, 154, 166–167, 180;