

***Ideologies of Communication in Japan. Speakers, Interaction and the Creation of Difference.* Patrick Heinrich, Florian Grosser and Saana Santalahti, Eds.
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The editors of *Ideologies of Communication in Japan. Speakers, Interaction and the Creation of Difference* depict a nation in transition, one whose historically self-declared monolingual foundations are being eroded by rising tides of diversity. Heinrich, in the introduction and Chapter 6, examines the palimpsest of a major shopping district in Tokyo by recording multilingual “sound maps”, or “fragments of the manifold international encounters that occur daily, particularly in large cities” (p. 1). This theme—that language can no longer be “tied to geographic space” (p. 82)—is emphasized throughout the volume. The book’s 13 chapters examine how (mostly non-majority) persons create communities which utilize and mold Japanese language in attempts to transcend the overarching narrative which, until recently, sought to deny their existence.

Each chapter includes a comprehensive literature review drawing on the works of well-known Western sociolinguistic researchers such as Spitzmueller, (2022), SturtzSreetharan (2009), and Gal & Irvine (1995 & 2000) alongside compelling case studies. Part I, *International Encounters*, details the changing landscape. In the past, *jutsuugo* (common language) had been promoted even to the far corners of Japan’s colonies (pp. 3-4), however, as globalization spreads, language, too, is transformed. In Chapter 2, Länsisalmi explains how the term “*seikatsusha*,” an alternative word for non-Japanese living and working in Japan (variously translated as “consumer,” “resident,” or “one who lives in society”), has replaced the politically charged term *imin*, or “immigrant laborer,” in accordance with a new national narrative of diversity (p. 23). Nonetheless, Hashimoto states in Chapter 3 that despite the greater focus upon Japanese language classes for these *seikatsusha*, students are still taught in a manner which reaffirms “the dichotomy between Japan and the rest of the world” (Hashimoto, p. 36). Unsurprisingly for GALE readers familiar with gendered work in Japan, two-thirds of instructors of these classes are part-time, mostly university-educated, female, and have relatively little international experience (p. 38, MoJ data). Given their traditional pedagogy, as well as lack of language ability, they do not use L1 with linguistically diverse L2 students. The students, however, do desire L1 support, or “code-switching” to aid their language study.

This chapter contrasts strikingly with Chapter 4 in which questionnaire data from mostly white, Western educators living in Japan with varying degrees of fluency in the Japanese language is analyzed. The key phrase of this chapter is *unwanted* code switching. The participants complain when a Japanese person engages them in English, especially if that English is “bad.” Author DiBello Takeuchi discusses how unwanted code switching is being experienced as a “linguistic microaggression” (p. 52) and results in “feelings of othering” (p. 54) for the non-Japanese participants who are attempting to integrate into Japanese society. However, the author also convincingly critiques the participants’ irritated, disdainful, and even vengeful attempts to control the linguistic narrative by forcing Japanese people to speak Japanese with them as manifestations of their unconscious privilege; their “entitlement” in believing that they should get to decide which language is used for each of their interactions (pp. 63-64).

In Chapter 5, Grossner examines emotion, competence, and context in the multicultural relationship of an Austrian-Japanese couple residing in Japan. A technique which could be applied to the classrooms of GALE readers is self-language silhouette portraits (Busch, 2018), skillfully analyzed here (pp. 70-74). Also of further interest to researchers/educators regarding ethical implications are the previously mentioned “sound walks” utilized by Heinrich (Chapter 6). The author discusses criteria for a “no harm clause for public sphere data” which have been applied to this research in which subjects have no idea that their interactions are being recorded, let alone analyzed (p. 84). This topic will intrigue researchers accustomed to complex bureaucratic procedures and participant consent protocols traditionally required for (non-anonymous) data collection.

All of the chapters in Part II, *Mediated Communication in the Digital Age*, deal with the intersection of gender and sociolinguistics. In Chapter 8, Diegoli discusses *Hatsugen Komachi*, a text-based online Q&A forum, mostly for the Japanese female public. Women lament *machiga* (mistakes) made by themselves, but especially, made by others regarding the usage of “proper” Japanese. For GALE readers, many of whom are educators living in Japan and thus familiar with linguistic challenges and embarrassments, this chapter will resonate. Inoue (2006) explained that, historically, *joseigo* (women’s language) was an artificial construct that the majority of Japanese women could not actually produce (p. 4). Diegoli emphasizes how a mythical ideology of a standard Japanese still drives online expressions of shame, self-loathing, and roasting within this demographic group (p. 125).

In Chapter 9, Moretti’s interviews of male Japanese game dialogue creators uncover noteworthy data. Second person pronouns are said to sound impolite when used in real life but are used heavily

in games to delineate characters' gendered identities (pp. 134-135). In games, male and female characters tend to take the same number of conversational turns (p. 135) (LGBTQIA+ issues of identity are not addressed by these game creators). What are the implications? As GALE readers know, women's voices are "heard" significantly less in real life contexts (even when they do, in fact, speak up) (McKinsey & Company, 2024).

SNS usage is addressed in the next chapter: "One person's erudite *kanji*-heavy user is another's pretentious nationalist, just as one person's hip *katakana* use is another's proof of antiquated lechery" (p. 110) writes Robertson in Chapter 7. In one example, young women roast (predatory) adult males and the outdated *katakana*-ed language they use online but have enough self-awareness to laugh at their own over-use of *hiragana* which will mark them as "old" in the near future (p. 109). Intriguingly, this phenomenon contrasts with that from the previously mentioned chapter on male game dialogue creators who claimed that the use of *katakana* "increases a sense of innocence (*mujakisa*) and mysteriousness (*misuteriasu-sa*)" (p. 135).

Vitucci (Chapter 10) presents nuanced analysis on *yakumarigo* (stereotypical characterization through speech) to uncover "a collective imaginary" of "Japanese hegemonic masculinity" (p. 153) in the Netflix teen comedy *Never Have I Ever* (2020). Vitucci draws attention to a touching and subtle scene between an injured son and his worried father which has been transduced from its original American English into Japanese. Vitucci notes that MM (male markers) are employed to make the scene more realistic and relatable to a mainstream Japanese audience (p. 145) via altering the language to that of a heterosexual, hard-working, self-sacrificing Japanese male (p. 154) embodying traits of "dominance, control, authority, virility and imposition" (p. 155). Certainly, it would be enlightening to investigate the implications of the chapters in Part II. At the least, such discussion could lead to further insights on linguistic generation and gender gaps, and particularly, the rapid transformation of gendered language "norms" in the digital era.

Participant voices heard in Part 3, *Minoritised Communities*, indicate how much there is yet to be done regarding diversity and equity. In Chapter 11, Nakashima confronts ableism, explaining that to the Deaf, sign language is their L1. Moreover, their needs as Japanese for whom the Japanese language is L2 have not been adequately addressed (p. 166). "...[T]reating physically diverse people the same way (as if they were not diverse) is the key mechanism for (re)producing inequality," Nagashima writes (p. 164). A mechanism which persons in the Deaf community have employed to transcend difficulties with honorifics, particles, *kanji* and so forth is the usage of emoji and symbols to realize

the creation of a unique written register (p. 170). Some inspiring examples of self-directed research which could increase “empowerment and growth” (p. 171) are mentioned (but not explained in detail, unfortunately).

Santalahti’s chapter on the potential for tourism to empower Ainu people while preserving Ainu language and culture is equally poignant: Participants are well-aware that various pitfalls, including exploitation, can occur, but generally remain positive about tourism as a means of achieving increased “agency” (p. 186). In Chapter 13, Ohara investigates Ainu and Uchinaaguchi persons challenging the dominant language ideology in Japan. The following quote by a student from Sapporo is emblematic of the struggles faced by minoritized communities: “...there was a person who I think was then a member of the City Council in Sapporo, and he had stated there were no more Ainu people on Twitter or something like that. ...my father actually exists, and also some of my relatives were raised in Ainu culture. Some of them even raised bears right next door!” He explained, “I could not even raise my voice” at that time. Therefore, he decided to confront erasure by attending the Urespa university program in Ainu language and culture (p. 196). Thus, while the contents of these three chapters are sobering, it is this emphasis on transformation that makes for an inspirational end to the volume.

There are a few points of concern to mention. The majority of contributors appear to be Western researchers, the reference data is often in English, and it sometimes seems that ethnocentric “norms” may be the lens through which Japanese language and culture have been viewed. Each chapter could have arguably been 10-20% longer to flesh out the theory, literature reviews, and illuminating case studies with further analysis. For example, the issue of how data from anonymous internet users and/or small participant numbers can be analyzed and meaningfully extrapolated from could be addressed more explicitly. GALE readers would also appreciate more acknowledgement of the gender-related issues evident in these research studies, particularly, but not limited to, Part II. These criticisms, however, do not detract from what is overall a dense yet highly readable, carefully edited, and thought-provoking volume. GALE educators and researchers will find it invaluable for its engaging examination of issues related to linguistic diversity in the contemporary Japanese context.

References

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