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Trends in Japanese Language Studies: from Comparative to Typological

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Abstract: The key-note speech on the first international workshop held at the Graduate School of Letters, University of Hokkaido is reported. Researchers on Japanese language are demanded to see the language in a broader linguistic perspective, that is, from not only comparative but typological viewpoint. Typological viewpoints lead us to new comparative concepts. The reduplicative form of Japanese nouns can be an explicit point of the number system, although Japanese are implicit in the number system. Moreover, ancient Japanese may have a dual number system at least on the body-part nouns. Numeratives have been considered as classifiers. But we can find another type of classifiers such as onomatopoea “*koro-koro/goro-goro*” with typological comparing to American-Indian languages. The linguistic contact between Korean and Japanese are typologically considered. The loan type in Korea changed from “intimate” to “cultural” at the liberation from Japan’s colony. The “language purification movement” hunted Japanese loanwords, but some words pronounced similarly to Chinese-origin ones are left and Korean people feel them as native Korean words. A few affixes borrowed from English are modified to fit the pronunciation of Korean native affixes.

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1. Introduction

The first international workshop on Japanese Language Studies in the East-Asian Region was held at the University of Hokkaido on 4-th and 5-th, August, 2007. It was adopted as the 2007 Characteristic Educational Research Project of Graduate School of Letters and entitled “the Development of Researchers on Japanese Language Studies in the East-Asian Region.” Five guests were invited from China, Taiwan, Korea, and Russia to the workshop. A key-note speech, three invited lectures, and several poster presentations were on the first day, and three research presentations and two sets of panel discussions were on the second day. To inform our project abroad, I propose this English translation of my key-note speech at the workshop.

2. Research attitudes

I have entitled the speech “Nihongo Kenkyû no Hôkô: Taishô Kenkyû kara Ruikei-teki

Kenkyû e no Hatten” (Trends in Japanese Language Studies: from Comparative to Typological), and at this title, I called my research field “Nihongo Kenkyû” (Japanese language study). The Japanese society of scholars have altered the spelling of the field name from the traditional “*Kokugo-gaku*” (*Kokugo* means “national language” and *gaku* means “studies”) to the “*Nihongo-gaku*” (*Nihongo* means “Japanese language”) since 2004. Simultaneously, the name of the academic society was also changed. Various arguments had been arisen against this alteration and as a result we have done it with a sort of generational change in the academy.

We have criticized for tending to look inward of studying “*Kokugo*.” We are demanded to see our own language in a broader linguistic perspective, that is, to see it as one of the languages in the world. This alteration of the name is not only renaming but sounds determined, in which we are going to change our own perspective on the language.

In Korea, incidentally, words “*Kukeo*” and “*Kukeo-hak*” are used, which are the same in Kanji (and also in meaning) as Japanese words. Korean academicians sometimes use the words “*Hanggukeo*” (the Korean language) and “*Hanguk-eohak*” (the society of Korean linguistics) but usually the traditional ones together.

2.1 Comparative linguistics

Activity of comparative studies of Japanese language and a foreign language closely depends on the Japanese-language education. In the early stage of the studies, comparisons were focused at abusing words for the needs of language learning. For example of Japanese-Korean comparison, there were once accepted such a mere report as noted that Japanese dative particle “*NI*” in “*hito NI au* (to see a person)” and “*kuruma NI noru* (to ride a car)” is misused by Japanese accusative “*O*” because the accusative particle is used in Korean for these verbs. In nature, the quality of comparative studies progresses and such reports are never accepted.

Researchers on comparative linguistics would make some sort of consideration about the linguistics of the target languages. However, the linguistic facts need be particular to neither language. We have to consider whether the facts are particular to their target languages or are in common among any other languages. This academic requirement indicates that we should train ourselves to analyze linguistic facts from a broad perspective, in other words, from a viewpoint of both diversity and universality of the language.

2.2 The concept of “implicit/explicit point”

Being helpful to consider this characteristic of languages, Dr. Izui (Hisanosuke IZUI 1905-1983) has brought out a pair of word “*Kenten*” (explicit point) and “*Senten*” (implicit point) in Izui1939.

I guess that von Humboldt meant “Eine Sprache” as the universe of maximum linguistic possibility for human being to substantialize, which transcends every language and incorporates all possible linguistic representations whether ever appeared or not. Every language has this universe at the back. Every language only substantializes a part of the universe of its own by its way as explicit points. For example, some languages have the “number” (singular/plural) as the explicit point and other keep the number implicit. Even implicit points can be inspired into explicit by a fact such as a linguistic

contact. Even though implicit points of some languages never turn explicit, the corresponding implicit points in other languages are understandable for their people. It is because both languages of implicit and explicit points have “Eine Sprache,” or the universal language, in common and stand on it. In other words, every language is the same but distributes in different pattern of explicit and implicit points.

Word-order is also the explicit or implicit factor. One language has own word-order rule and it is explicit, but it is implicit for other languages, – and vice versa. Consequently, different word-order systems in foreign languages are understandable and some word-order systems can be variable. It was seen in the history of English and Romance languages. In recent Russian, the verb is established to be placed between the subject and the object. In Celtic languages history, the verb had early been placed at the beginning of the sentence. These were not in the original order but in incidentally fixed ones. (snip)

Furthermore, these languages all belong to the Indo-European language family. The Indo-European language family has free word-order in principle, or it did not have any absolute word-orders. It established the most stressed word (or phrase in some cases) at the beginning of the sentence, and the second at the end of the sentence. Like these, any word-order representation can be possible to be substantiated from the universe of linguistic possibility.

Izui (1936)

What von Humboldt called “Eine Sprache” is not a real language but a metaphysical concept of an absolutely abstract subsistent. Behind all the real languages, the number of which is called 3,000 or 5,000, in the world, the “Eine Sprache” bundles them as is called “universality.”

Dr. Izui regarded the explicit/implicit points to being variable. He cited the historical change of the gender, case and number in English. During the long-term language contact, English has attritted its gender and case forms. Now the gender forms disappear and the case remain only in pronouns. He pointed out that explicit and implicit points historically alternate each other. In addition about word-order, Finnish and Hungarian are well-known to have converted the word order from SOV to SVO under affection of the neighboring languages.

Now, we can see Japanese language from the viewpoint of explicit/implicit. Obviously, number system, or the linguistic category of singular/plural, cannot be seen in Japanese. However, Japanese partially has plurals in the form of the suffix “-TACHI” and the reduplicative form such as “*Hito-bito*” and “*Yama-yama*,” and thus it is not impossible that Japanese does not have the plural concept.

Far from it, we can see an evidence of dual number in ancient Japanese. We can find some nursery words of the body member names formed as the compound of the prefix “*O-*” (politeness) and duplication of a single-mora word, such as “*O-te-te*” (hands), “*O-me-me*” (eyes), “*O-mi-mi*” (ears), and “*O-chi-chi*” (breasts). They are all the pairs of the body member and all components (except “*Mi*” of “*O-mi-mi*”) are the valid word. Izui (1974) showed that there were dual number system in ancient Japanese and claimed that they represented fatal or natural existence.

Being less clear than German or French, even gender forms can be seen in Japanese (Nomoto

1978). The names of dogs, swords, and music instruments in old times and ship names nowadays have suffix “-*maru*,” which originate with the ancient masculine name “*Maro*.” On the contrary, the names of cats sound feminine and the sun is feminine like in German, since the sun is considered, in the Japanese myth, the primogenitor goddess “*Ama-terasu-ô-mi-kami*” (grand noble goddess shining the world). These faint evidences indicate that Japanese language shows its gender system implicit.

3. From Comparative to Typological

Comparative studies between individual languages are applied in a broad range of linguistics from phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics to non-verbal communication, and produce valuable research products in each field. But we should continue comparative studies for many different remaining and unsolved problems. In order to prevent studies from mere comparison, we should explore each of the target languages deeper. To that end, we can apply typological approaches. I will show you my approach in a comparative study as an example of typological one in this section.

3.1 Numerative

I have published the paper (Kadowaki 1992) entitled “Modifying Structure of Nominal Phrases in Korean, Japanese and the Neighboring Languages.” The facts were as follows.

It is impossible that any language have no numerals nor any numeral does not count any nouns. So arose a question with what syntactic structure a numeral modifies (or combines with) a noun. It follows another question how many types of syntactic structures are there among the languages in the world. Consequently I wished research this typology in Japanese and the neighboring languages.

The followings are well-known in Japanese numeral modification structure: First, there is a simple structure in which a numeral directly modifies a noun, like “*Hito-heya*” (*hito* means **one** and *heya* means **room**) and “*San-shimai*” (*san* means **three** and *shimai* means **sisters**). This is inferior in occasion. The second is a modification structure intervened by a numerative like “*Hito-ri-musume*” (*ri* is a numerative for counting persons and *musume* means daughter) and “*Ip-piki-ôkami*” (*ip*-is one of the euphonic forms of *ichi* which means **one**, *piki* is one of the euphonic forms of *hiki* which is a numerative for counting animals, and *ôkami* means **wolf**); The third is a numeral + numerative modification structure more intervened by the adnominal particle “*NO*” like “*Mit-tsu NO Onegai*” (*mit*- is one of the euphonic forms of *mi* which means **three**, *tsu* is a numerative for counting anything, and *onegai* means **request**) and “*Go-satsu NO Hon*” (*go* means **five**, *satsu* is a numerative for counting book forms, and *hon* means **book**). The last two are in common.

At the beginning of my research, I was confused to compare what with what among languages, because the technical term “numeratives” does not properly represent its linguistic function. So called numeratives do not count nouns by themselves but classify nouns according to their features such as the figure. It became clear by comparing to other languages. Nowadays, the term has been revised and called “(numeral) classifier,” which seems proper to the

function.

3.2 Classifiers other than the Numeratives

“Classifiers” work to classify nouns from outside, that is, on the contrary of the gender form which appears inside of the noun itself. Ohshima (1992) showed other types of outside classifiers than “numeratives” among the world. Numeratives are familiar in Japanese and in the neighboring languages. On the other hand, verbs sometimes classify nouns in some of the American-Indian languages (Ohshima 1992). Although “verbal classifiers” are not usual in Japanese, some onomatopoeic words are regarded as adverbial classifiers. For example, “*goro-goro*” and “*koro-koro*” both represent something spherical rolling down and the former prefers large subjects and the latter small. This pair of words can be said to work as a classifier of subject nouns by their size.

Japanese and Korean (and also the neighboring languages) are similar to each other in the use of their classifiers because each language contains loan words through the long-term contact of Chinese. Even the numerals and most of classifiers are loan words from Chinese. But a different usage can be seen in Korean and Japanese. As is well-known, both the languages contain Chinese-origin numerals and native ones. In Japanese, numerals are used regardless of their origin for ordinal and cardinal numbers. In Korean, however, some classifiers distinguish the origin of numerals. For example, “*-gweon*” is a classifier of book-form objects, like “vol.” in English. When a native numeral precedes it, it means the cardinal number and a Chinese-origin numeral – the ordinal. For comparison, in Japanese a classifier “*-satsu*” explained above prefers to indicate cardinal and the same classifier “*-kan*” as in Korean prefers ordinal. For another example, “*-gye*” (it means floor in Korean) is used in a similar way of “*-gweon*.” The ordinal interpretation (= the floor number) is available when preceded by a Chinese-origin numeral, and the cardinal interpretation (= the number of floors) by a native numeral.

4. Linguistic Contact between Japanese and Korean

I would like to mention, in the speech, another viewpoint “linguistic contact” between Japanese and Korean.

4.1 Cultural contact and linguistic contact

No languages can ever stand isolate. Thus there has been a linguistic contact between each language. It is brought by the interchange of peoples of each country, namely by the cultural contact.

In recent years, Korea boom has been occurred in Japan, and the great number of movies and TV dramas from South Korea were flooded into Japan. This is recent clear-cut example of cultural contact from Korea to Japan. However, we cannot find any traces (something like a symbolic word) of linguistic contact caused by this cultural contact. Consequently, I would conclude that the inflow of culture does not necessarily cause the word inflow.

Quite the contrary, a web site in South Korea announced the Japanese honorific nickname of the most famous Korean movie star Bae, Yong Joon, “*Yon-sama*” and such honorifics became a fashionable amusement among the Korean web for a while.

4.2 The Language Purification Movement in South Korea

The “language purification movement” has been continued in Korea since 1945. Korean people have replaced the words impressing Japanese language by other native words, since they recalled hateful memories on the colonial days. But there appear several words slipping the movement. “*Waribashi*” (disposable wooden chopsticks) and “*tamanegi*” (onion), for example, were hunted and replaced by the corresponding native words which mean “wooden chopstick” and “western onion,” because they were loaned with their Japanese sound. On the contrary, “*yeopseo*” (postcard), “*susok*” (procedure), and “*chuwol*” (passing) were not hunted because they were difficult to identify as Japanese loans. They had been loaned with Chinese-inspired sound from the reading of their kanji spelling in Japanese.

Language contacts are research objects on socio-or psycho-linguistics, linguistic psychology, and/or linguistic anthropology. The general or pure linguistics, therefore, focuses on what aspects each other affected on and how they have been changed as a result. The above purification movement is assumed to be a provider of rich source materials for the analysis of linguistic contact. Kumatani (1987) claimed that the research of the linguistic contact in the Korea’s colonial and post-colonial period would become fruitful and be able to contribute particularly to the advancement of the general theory of word-borrowing.

4.3 Phonological Infection

Although Weinreich (1953) argued phonological infection caused by linguistic contacts, we can observe any notable ones caused on neither Korean nor Japanese – during the colonial and post-war period. We can find phonological intervenes on foreign language learners, but they cannot be counted here since they never influenced on each native language.

Note that not Korean natives but bilinguals seem to be influenced from the Japanese phonetic prosody. But this is not verified enough. (This was reported in “Monthly *io*,” no.4,2000, a special issue entitled “*Koko ga HEN da yo ‘Zainichi Chôsen-go’ : Zainich-Dôhō ga tsukau URIMAL o kangaeru*” (Curious Korean spoken by Korean ‘residents in Japan’ : Is the language spoken by our brethren in Japan “our language” ?) One of the articles pointed out that there sound the Japanese-like intonation in the Korean speech of the residents in Japan.)

4.4 Typology of Linguistic contact

The following three viewpoints are necessary to be examined:

- I. Type of borrowing
- II. Constraints among loan word classes
- III. Grade of influence

4.4.1 Loan type

Bloomfield (1933) divided borrowing into three types: “cultural,” “intimate,” and “dialect.” He said the loaning by intimate borrowing occurs under the situation that the people speaking either language are geographically and politically united into one community, and such situations were brought not by peaceful migration but by armed conquest in most cases. He also figured out that borrowing is predominantly one-way from dominating to dominated, and even syntacti-

cal forms of dominated language can be affected.

Although Bloomfield denoted the cultural borrowing is mutual between two languages and “Gengo-gaku Dai-Jiten” (Grand Dictionary of Linguistics written in Japanese) describes at the article of “loan” that cultural borrowing is limited largely to vocabulary, Bloomfield included affix loan and large scale vocabulary loan into cultural types. Thus the scale of borrowing and the affix loan do not distinguish loan type.

The type of Korean loan from Japanese could be said to entirely different between the colonial period and nowadays (tentatively defined as after the South Korean government unbanned Japanese culture). It varied from “intimate type” to “cultural type” stated by Bloomfield.

4.4.2 Constraints among loan word elements

Up to what classes of vocabulary could be borrowed might not be related to the closeness of the contact. But some constraints which are implicational universals can be observed as: “functional words cannot precede material words to be borrowed.”

C. F. Hockette (1958) listed the needs working as constraints: (1) PRESTAGE and (2) NEED-FILLING-MOTIVE. I have ever shown the second examples of the Korean loanwords in the essay entitled “Do Japanese and Korean form a ‘linguistic union’ ?”

There were quite a lot words removed by the purification movement after the war, since they had been imported from Japanese in the colonial period. Despite this, some syntactic elements other than the Japanese origin vocabulary have invaded and fixed into Korean language during these period and afterwards. As a result, both languages now share in no small part.

For example, Korean language has deictic subsidiary verbs as similar to Japanese (“*yari/morai*-verbs” in Japanese terminology), but was ever lacking the representation corresponding to that of Japanese “*V-te-morau*” (the subject receives a benefit for someone by doing V). During the contact of Japanese, the “*-te-kureru*” meaning appears on one of the subsidiary verbs and buried this vacancy of giving/receiving structure as a result. Note that this new usage is not officially accepted.

I suppose that the Japanese substantive verb, “*aru*” and the Korean one, “*issda*” eventually have the common usage as mean “to happen” or “to perform.” In the past, Korean used to reject such use like “*Denwa* (a telephone) *ga* (nominative case particle) *atta* (the past form of *aru*)” in Japanese (the meaning is that it had a telephone call). But now, Korean people usually use “*issda*” in such a meaning.

It is often pointed out that the Japanese apology word “*sumimasen*” sometimes means gratitude. Indeed in Korean language, it is also pointed out that the apology word “*mian-hada*” can imply gratitude in the case of straining the other. In fact, it is also admitted that English word “oblige” used in such a sentence like “I am obliged to you” can imply gratitude (Ikegami 1992).

4.4.3 Grade of Influence

Winford (2003) installed five grades on the influence of linguistic contact, while he assumed

the influence consecutive from the lowest grade where a sporadic contact causes a small-size loan vocabulary to the highest where a considerably dense contact causes a huge-size loan. His grading is a summary of Thomason and Kaufman (1988). I think it is very compact and convenient to classify the influence. The grades are as follows:

1. Sporadic contact: borrowing only words;
2. A little stronger contact: borrowing a few syntactic elements such as conjunctives and adverbs,
3. Stronger contact: borrowing some syntactic elements such as particles and affixes,
4. Strong cultural pressure: gradually borrowing syntactic elements in rather similar typology,
5. The strongest cultural pressure: borrowing most syntactic elements including different typology.

In addition, the term “strength of contact” is a set of functions which belong to the population ratio of two groups, the sociopolitical relation between them, the duration of their contact, and each degree of bilingualism. The term “cultural pressure” here is a function of social motivation to promote accepting exotic elements. Every grade borrowing always includes any smaller grade borrowings. Thus the borrowing grades satisfy the relation of implicational universal.

As to the grade of borrowing, however, Winford pointed out a problem whether any clear relation exist between the grade of contact / cultural-pressure and the degree of borrowing syntactic elements. I think there remain many considerations.

4.5 Outline of Linguistic Contact between Japanese and Korean

Taking consideration of the above-mentioned factors, the linguistic contact between Japanese and Korean after the colonial period can be outlined as follows:

Its loan type was definitely ‘intimate’ as is defined by Bloomfield, because the government of imperial Japan intended to enforce Japanese language in Korean society as “prestige” one and to substitute the language.

The loan type exchanged to ‘cultural’ after the war. Many loan words from Japanese were substituted and rejected by the language purification movement. Although a few loan word remains at present, most of them have less impression of loanword and are felt native for Korean people. Lee (1984) stated that “on the contrary, most remaining words excepted from substitution seem to establish their native sense. The average Korean people are merely conscious of such words originating with Japanese ones.”

4.6 The Loan of Affixes

Every affix cannot stand alone, but can contain a certain meaning. When some affixes are borrowed into a language from another language, the borrowing language acquire the rule how to combine morphemes, which might be a translation from the rule of the original language or a new but similar rule as native ones.

As an example I will explain loan of “-ism /-ist” from English into Korean.

In recent years, the words “*kwi-cha-ni-jeum*” and “*kwi-cha-ni-seu-tho*” are used broad among

Korean internet users. The Wikipedia Korean version said that “*kwichanijum*” is one of internet dialects and means that one’s mind is fixed into lazy since he feels everything troublesome. There are similar derived words like “*kwaen-cha-ni-jum*” “*nu-di-jum.*” But they seem not to conform to the Korean word forming rules.

The words “*kwi-cha-ni-jeum*” and “*kwaen-cha-ni-jeum*” are derived from the corresponding adjective stems “*kwi-chanh-*” and “*kwaen-chanh-*” removing the tail “*h*” off and combining with the suffix “*-i-jeum.*” On the contrary, the word “*ke-eu-reu-ni-jeum*” is derived from the adjective stem “*ke-eu-re-*” simply combining with “*-ni-jeum.*” In the latter case “*-ni-jeum*” seems to be a suffix and the allomorph of “*-i-jeum.*” Thus, why? Is it because avoiding a sequence of vowels? But “*da-da-i-jeum*” (a loan of “dadaism” in English) exists. The set of words “*nu-deu,*” “*nu-di-jeum*” and “*nu-di-seu-tho*” borrowed from English “nude,” “nudist,” and “nudism” show that “*eu*” can be dropped by the following “*-i*” and this is one of the general rules of the Korean phonology. Thus, according to the rule, “*ke-eu-reu-da*” should derive the forms of “*ke-eu-ri-jeum*” and “*ke-eu-ri-seu-tho.*”

I assume the reason is that such mental aspect that the stem of Korean native words should keep invariable rejects the deletion rule and the same time “*ni-jeum*” and “*ni-seu-tho*” derived from “*kwi-chanh-da*” etc. look like suffixes and allomorphs of “*-i-jeum*” and “*-i-seu-tho.*” Since hangeul piece of the tail /n/ of the stem is written as if it is the head consonant of “*ni*” like “*kwi-cha-ni-jeum,*” the latter misunderstanding was prompted furthermore.

That is, syntactic elements such as affix “*i-jeum*” are not necessarily accepted in the form of the state as it is. They may be accepted with modification of the form adjusting to the structure of the native language.

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