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Title	RUSSKII IAZYK IAPONSKIKH MOREPLAVATELEI. (XVIII C.) [The Russian Language of the Japanese Seamen. XVIII C.], By I. P. Bondarenko, Tenri University, Nara, Japan, 1996, 233pp
Author(s)	Avakiants, Galina
Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 14, 221-223
Issue Date	1996
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/8100
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	KJ00000034069.pdf



BOOK REVIEW

RUSSKII IAZYK IAPONSKIKH MOREPLAVATELEI. (XVIII C.) [The Russian Language of the Japanese Seamen. XVIII C.]. By I.P. Bondarenko. Tenri University, Nara, Japan, 1996. 233 pp.

The volume under review represents an attempt to systematize and analyze the sparse quantity of data about Japanese seamen in Russia and their perception and study of the Russian language.

Their role was of a great importance, since they served as the first sources for Russian to obtain information about this mysterious and closed country called Japan. The existing in Russia of that time great interest towards Japan is most convincingly shown by the fact, that all seamen were honored by an audience with Russian tsars (p. 6). The author limits his research within the frames of the XVIII century intentionally, since from the beginning of the next century studies and teaching of the Russian language in Japan cease to be considered exotic. And in 1809 there appeared a Japanese governmental decision to organize education for interpreters of Russian and English (p. 43).

The main aspect, though, is made upon the possibilities of self-study and the adaptation mechanisms in the foreign-language milieu. The theories, explanations and conclusions of the author, who has set not an easy task of reconstructing and analyzing in full the knowledge of the Russian language, acquired by the Japanese seamen are even more interesting and veritable if we take into account, that the author spent six years in Japan and therefore has his own experience both in mastering Japanese and teaching Russian to the Japanese. I dare say that subconsciously the parallel comparison can be traced through the book. This particular aspect has attracted the author's interest before. In his previous work [26] similar research comparing the "individual linguistic microsystems" of the non native-speakers, living at different times in a foreign linguistic milieu and learning the foreign language (in the case of the mentioned article — the Russian and the Japanese languages) by themselves has been carried out and allowed to make further conclusions in the present book.

The volume consists of Preface (pp. 5-10), Introduction (pp. 10-16), Part I "Japanese Seamen in Russia in 1695-1804"(pp. 16-52), Part II "The Russian Language of the Japanese Seamen"(pp. 52-174), Resume (pp. 174-179), Commentaries (pp. 179-197), Appendix I: Summarized Russian Vocabulary of Daikokuya Kodayu (based on the materials of Katsurazawa Hoshu's manuscript *Hokusa bunryaku*)(pp. 197-220), Appendix II: The Russian Vocabulary of the Crew of "Wakamiya-maru"(based on the materials of *Kankai ibun* manuscript)(pp. 220-224), Bibliography (pp. 224-232).

The Introduction analyzes in short, all the information on Japan existing in Russia by the XVII century. Part I represents an essay on the history and further life

of the Japanese seamen in Russia. The author not only describes the individuals, but also includes the documental proof of how they mastered the language. Part II is a close survey of the proper Russian language of particular Japanese seamen and is in its turn subdivided into chapters, which are to describe the language of each individual in particular, analyzing the existing documents as well as “direct”—like a Glossary compiled by Gondza (pp. 80-114) or “indirect”—like *Denbei’s Skaska*, which was compiled by the Russia officials. The text of the *Denbei’s Skaska* has never before been analyzed from a linguistic point of view. The author fulfills a thorough and original reconstruction, basing his conclusions on the supposition that Denbei possessed an undoubtful basic level vocabulary, since in the opposite case it would be impossible for the officials to have a profound talk with him.

On the whole, Part II represents an attempt to reconstruct the individual thesaurus of the Russian language, to estimate the degree of their inward and outward motivation in mastering the language and the degree of the practical result, that is: to serve the simplest needs (“Wakamiya-maru” seamen) or more complicated intellectual needs (Daikokuya Kodayu). The connection between inward and outward motivations, the difference between the pure self study (not excluding a certain help from the native-speakers) and the organized study with a teacher (the only case of Gondza and Sodza), which is also a point of the theoretical research for the author. Through the detailed analysis of the Vocabularies an interesting fact is proved, that as soon as the seamen reached a margin of “intelligibility” by the Russian native-speakers (in accordance with their own motivations and needs) the process of learning and improvement slowed down or stopped completely (p. 175).

In addition to the historic and cultural importance of the research based on Vocabularies of the Japanese seamen, which through analyzing the vocabulary allows the reader to draw some conclusions of the details of their life, which they never mentioned in any notes (p. 6), the author sets forward an educational analysis, more precisely the influence of the linguistic milieu upon the self-education of an individual, the connections of the two factors in a process of leaning a second language. The main concept and a point of view lies in introducing the “linguapragmatic position” [or approach/or analysis] (p. 47) [128, 53]. Therefore the importance of the linguistic surrounding, linguistic contexts, its role as the active educational factor and its functions: educational, communicational, motivational, etc. are highlighted by the author (pp. 48-51). Thus the before mentioned research [26] the obligatory minimums of the lexemes acquired by a Japanese native-speaker-housewife during six years, an Arabic native-speaker housewife during one year and a Russian native-speaker during two years for the Russian and the Japanese languages respectively coincide to a great degree with the same lexemes of the Japanese seamen who lived in Russia of the XVIII century (pp. 176-177). This is a strong argument in favour of the “linguapragmatic approach” and to the whole theoretical structure of the reviewed volume, which after every single language analysis of an individual seaman stress the idea of rather not learning the language, but perceiving the whole system of outer world for each language and struggling to express one’s own individuality, part of which with its elementary daily needs does not vary so much from individual to individual (pp. 145, 177).

The amount of documents both in Russian and Japanese used by the author in this work is surprising, the analysis of the Russian and Japanese manuscripts is truly profound, the bibliography of 200 items is also extremely impressive, references to the sources are extremely detailed and precise, the Commentaries are also detailed and most useful, both Vocabularies in the Appendix are of great interest. Though the author presents only two Vocabularies as a separate part a similar Summarized Vocabulary is included in each chapter, where each separate individual's language is analyzed.

On the whole, the work produces the impression of a serious and most useful research. The author operates with confidence with the vast amount of documents, descriptions, lexemes, semantic mistakes and controversial information, proving his position in every instance most convincingly. Theoretical essence is also written with equal confidence and strengthened by references to serious works in this branch. Perfectionists might find certain shortcomings in the book. Though highly interesting in its contents it produces more of an impression of a thesis; the information in the first chapter might be slightly superfluous, since most of the information has already been cited in various works; theoretical basis of the work though of high value and interest for those involved both in linguistic research and teaching language to foreigners would be more advantageous if laid out compactly.

Of course a single volume cannot prove all the answers to complex questions posed in the book and the above mentioned does not in the slightest affect the fact that the reviewed book is a sound and innovational contribution to those involved in the studies on the history of Russo-Japanese relations, for specialists involved in teaching Russian as a second language, linguists and specialists in theory of education.

* Numbers in [] are references to the bibliography in the book.

Galina Avakiants