The Construction of the Japanese Language and Culture in Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language

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The Construction of the Japanese Language and Culture in Teaching Japanese as a Foreign Language[1]

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1. Introduction

In this paper we consider the largely unproblematized issue of content in Japanese language instruction. In particular, recognizing the significance of its ideological nature, we examine how Japanese language and culture are represented in language textbooks. Language ideology permeates numerous aspects of linguistic practice, such as language planning, bilingualism, dialect use, style-shift, use of honorifics, male-female speech, and media discourse (Silverstein 1979; Fairclough 1989; Bourdieu 1991; Briggs 1992; Gal 1992; Irvine 1992; Woolard and Shieffelin 1994). Foreign/second language education is no exception in this respect (Pennycook 1989; Auerbach 1995; Rampton 1995; Tollefson 1995; Kubota 1999). Regarding teaching English as a second language, Auerbach (1995:9) states that "[p]edagogical choices about curriculum development, content, materials, classroom processes, and language, although appearing to be informed by apolitical professional considerations, are, in fact, inherently ideological in nature." In teaching Japanese as a foreign language (JFL), this ideological issue is particularly relevant to the notions of Japanese language and culture, which usually seem to be taken for granted. Questions such as what kind of Japanese one should teach and how teaching the language should be related to teaching Japanese culture seem to be regarded as secondary to other issues, such as teaching methodologies and techniques. However, we believe that these questions deserve close attention, because their answers are not as evident as they may appear to be, and because their critical examination will have significant implications for teaching JFL.

For our analysis we chose five reputable textbooks which have been used widely in the United States:

[JSL] *Japanese: The Spoken Language, Part I* (Jorden with Noda 1987)

[IJ] *An Integrated Approach to Intermediate Japanese* (Miura and McGloin 1994)

[IMJ] *An Introduction to Modern Japanese* (Mizutani and Mizutani 1977)

[YK] *Yookoso: An Invitation to Contemporary Japanese* (Tohsaku 1994)

[SFJ] *Situational Functional Japanese.* Vols. 1–3 (*Notes* and *Drills*) (Tsukuba Language Group 1991)

These are successful textbooks that have greatly contributed to the teaching of JFL in the past two decades. Our purpose in this paper is to turn our attention to sociocultural aspects of language teaching, an issue that has not been raised critically in the past. Specifically, we examine the following sociolinguistic phenomena: (1) Japanese communication styles: politeness, indirectness, and self-effacement; (2) levels of speech: formal vs. informal styles; and (3) "standard" Japanese vs. regional dialects. Our analysis will show that language textbooks tend to simplify these phenomena, creating a particular kind of Japanese at the expense of the real linguistic diversity which has been recognized in sociolinguistic studies, and which learners will necessarily encounter when talking with Japanese in real-world situations. Although the purpose of the textbooks' simplification may be to reduce the complexity that learners have to face, we also need to realize that it can result in (re)producing linguistic and cultural norms based on hegemonic ideologies, regardless of the authors' intentions. We will then address two inter-related questions: (1) How can our findings regarding the notions of linguistic and cultural "norms" be incorporated in language pedagogy? (2) To what extent can linguistic diversity be introduced in language instruction in response to the need for simplification in foreign language instruction?

2. Japanese Communication Styles: Politeness, Indirectness and Self-Effacement

Dominant models of Japanese society and culture, in particular those presented in the so-called *Nihonjinron* 'theories of the Japanese' literature, stress characteristics such as homogeneity, group-orientedness, and hierarchy. Because of these characteristics, Japanese are said to be particularly concerned about maintaining harmony, consensus, and interdependence among themselves (Nakane 1970; Doi 1971; Lebra 1976; Reischauer and

Jansen 1995). Japanese interactional styles are often thought to reflect these cultural concerns. Thus, it is commonly said that Japanese are very polite; they tend to avoid confrontations in conflict situations; they try not to assert themselves too much, as illustrated by the familiar maxim *Deru kui wa utareru* 'A pole that sticks out gets hammered down'; they try to be empathetic and supportive of others; they prefer to use indirect or vague expressions, relying on non-verbal and other contextual cues; they consider explict expressions unrefined or distateful; they value silence and taciturnity; and they prefer to use humble, or self-abasing, expressions (Gudykunst and Nishida 1986; Kindaichi 1975; Lebra 1976; Tsujimura 1987; Watanabe 1993; Maynard 1997).

These characteristics of Japanese communication styles are also often emphasized in Japanese language textbooks. Regarding the preference for indirect or vague expressions for the sake of politeness, YK, IJ, and SFJ, for example, note the following:

> *Sumimasen ga, chotto* . . . (Dialogue 3 [our Example (1) below]) literally means *I am sorry, but a little bit* . . . In Japan it is considered clumsy and impolite to say no directly. (YK, p. 39)

> Japanese people think it is polite to express themselves vaguely rather than clearly and directly. This tendency extends to unexpected areas like telling time. When you would like to tell time politely or give an approximate time, use *goro* (about). *Nan-ji ni uchi o demasu ka*. 'What time do you leave home?' *Hachi-ji goro demasu.* 'I leave about 8:00.' *Ni-ji goro ikimasu.* 'I'll go at 2:00 (lit., at about 2:00). Don't be fooled by the use of *goro*. Japanese tend to be extremely punctual and expect the same of others. (YK, p. 43)

> Japanese people are known for being indirect and vague about declining invitations. When they cannot accept an invitation, they, as a rule, do not say *iie*, because they feel that it would be too curt. They prefer expressions such as *Sono hi wa chotto* . . . , meaning "That day is a bit . . ." Since the word for inconvenience is often left out, one is expected to guess what is implied. (IJ, p. 140)

> We have seen on various occasions so far that the Japanese avoid saying *No* directly and explicitly; this is especially so when turning down an offer or invitation. (SFJ, vol. 3 *Notes*, p. 22)

> *Keiji-ban ni kore ga hatte atta n desu kedo.* [This was posted on the notice board, but . . .] *Sentaku-ki no basho wakaranai n desu kedo.* [I don't know the place of a washing machine, but . . .] . . . Leaving unsaid the actual request or question, which is obvious to the listener anyway from the situation, is considered more polite. (SFJ, vol. 1 *Notes*, p. 129)

Conversations (1)–(3) are some of the examples of indirect expressions given in the texts:

(1) (YK, p. 38; at the student cafeteria of the University of Tokyo)

Kawamura: *Sumimasen. Supagetti wa arimasu ka.*
'Excuse me. Do you have spaghetti?'

Ueitoresu: ***Sumimasen ga, chotto . . .***
'Waitress': 'I'm sorry, but . . .'

Kawamura: *Ja, hanbaagaa wa arimasu ka.*
'Then, do you have hamburgers?'

Ueitoresu: *Hai, arimasu.*
'Yes, we do.'

Kawamura: *Ja, hanbaagaa o onegaishimasu.*
'Then, I would like a hamburger.'

Ueitoresu: *Hai, 220-en desu.*
'Certainly. That's 220 yen.'

(2) (YK, p. 457; an example of "saying no politely")

Ashita, depaato e ikimasen ka.
'Would you like to go to the department store tomorrow?'

Tabun.
'Maybe.'

(3) (SFJ, vol. 2 *Drills*, p. 59)

Ten-in (Salesclerk): *Kochira nado, saikin ryuukoo no dezain desu ga.*
'This is a design which is in fashion at the moment.'

Kyaku (Customer): *Soo nee.* ***Iro ga chotto . . .***
'Let me see. The color is a bit . . .'

With regard to conversation (1), for example, the text explains that "in this case, to say *Iie, arimasen* (No, we don't have any) would be grammatically correct but socially inappropriate" (p. 39). However, it seems quite likely for a salesperson to use a more explicit expression than *Sumimasen ga chotto . . .* ; for instance, saying *Sumimasen, nai n desu kedo* 'Sorry, we don't have any' seems fine at a college cafeteria. In fact, (4) below, an excerpt from a natural conversation, illustrates this.[2] Similarly, it is not clear whether the response in (2) can be always interpreted as polite.

(4) (Sukle 1995, p. 125; A 28-year-old female customer talks with the vendor.)

C1 *gureepu wa aru?*
grape top. have-I
'Grapes—do (you) have (any)?'

V1 ***nai n desu yo.***
have-neg-I EP Cp-I SP
'(It's the case that I) don't have (any).'

More importantly, this emphasis on the importance of indirectness and vagueness may suggest that the Japanese communication style is vague and indirect across all contexts. However, the use of such expressions is dependent on a variety of situational factors, such as genre, setting, nature of the relationship between the participants, goals of talk, and the degree of conflict. For example, Sato and Okamoto (1998), examining audio-taped conversations, report that family members often express themselves straightforwardly, as illustrated in (5) below. Conversation (6) is a similar example from Sukle 1994 (see also Cook 1998; Sato and Okamoto 1999).

(5) (Sato and Okamoto 1998, p. 197; A daughter is asking her mother to buy her an expensive bag.)

Mother: *Shaneru no baggu ja nakereba donna baggu ga ii no?*
'If it's not a Chanel's bag, what kind of bag would you like?'

Daughter: *Ya da. Shaneru no ja nai to.*
'No. It has to be Chanel.'

Mother: *Tatoeba no hanashi.*
'I'm talking hypothetically.'

Daughter: *Nai.*
'(There's) none (that I like).'

Mother: *Demo, Shaneru takai n da yo.*
'But Chanel's (bags) are expensive.'

Daughter: [raising her voice] *Takai kara kaitai n jan*.
'I want to buy it because it's expensive (don't you understand?)'

(6) (Sukle 1994, p.137; The mother speaks to the daughter, handing food for the dog to her.)

Hai, agete ne?
here give-G ok
'Here, give (this to the dog), OK?'

The daughter responds:

e? iya da.
huh dislike Cp-I
'What? No!'

The use of direct expressions in these examples suggests that, in familiar contexts, too much indirectness could be understood as inappropriately distant on the part of the speaker, and that directness can be a sign of intimacy as suggested by Lakoff (1973) and Matsumoto (1988). In other words, indirect or vague expressions are not always perceived as polite.

The setting and the nature of the relationship between interlocutors may also be important factors for the use of (in)direct or vague expressions.

Falsgraf and Majors (1995), for example, found that in classrooms Japanese teachers' speech was more direct than that of English-speaking teachers. Noting that this finding is inconsistent with the commonly held view that Japanese communication style is more indirect than that of American English (Jorden 1992), Flasgraf and Majors argue that the directness of Japanese teachers "reflects asymmetrical status relationships between teachers and students in Japanese culture" (1). They conclude that "[w]hile the stereotype of indirect, 'inscrutable' Japanese communicative style seems to hold true for some social situations, it apparently does not hold true in the elementary classroom" (16–17). Comparing how Japanese and Americans express disagreement and chastisement (in English), Beebe and Takahashi (1989) also found that speakers (in role-play and natural speech) contradicted prevalent stereotypes; that is, Japanese were often more direct and explicit than Americans, especially when a higher-status person was talking to a lower-status person.

The goal of a conversation seems to be another important factor for the use of (in)direct or vague expressions. For example, telling time vaguely by adding a word like *goro* 'about' (in accordance with the precept from YK cited above) does not seem to be appropriate if one is talking about the time of a business meeting, lecture, reservation, etc. There seem to be many situations where precise and explicit expressions are expected. Discourse genres also seem to be closely related to the employment of (in)direct expressions. For example, in political debates, we often encounter blunt and direct exchanges of differing views.

Another aspect of Japanese communication style that language textbooks often emphasize as a reflection of the cultural concern for harmony and interdependence is the preference for humble, or self-abasing, expressions, as illustrated in the following statements:

> When one gives a gift in Japan, one uses an expression that minimizes its importance: *Tsumaranai mono desu ga* (lit. it's something insignificant). The spirit of humbleness has always been valued in Japan. It is the same spirit that makes Japanese speakers say *Nani mo gozaimasen ga* (lit., there's nothing worthwhile) when they serve a meal to guests, or *Iie tondemo arimasen* (lit., it's far from the truth) when they are complimented, for example, on a member of their family. (IJ, p. 184)

> It is more polite to turn aside complimentary statements than to appear to accept them as fact. Mr. Carter's high level of proficiency is modestly described as *sukosi wa dekimasu ga* 'he can handle it a little (at least), but . . .' (JSL, p. 311)

> Praising and expressing modesty when praised is a social convention that is given much importance in Japan. The following expressions come in handy:

a. *Ara, kawaii ojoosan da koto.*	'Oh, how cute your daughter is!'
Iie, tondemo nai.	'Oh, no. Not in the slightest.'
b. *Maa, sugoi kooto! Takakatta desho?*	'Wow, what a gorgeous coat! It must have been expensive?'
Iie, hon no yasu-mono yo.	'No, no. It was very cheap.'

(SFJ, vol. 3 *Notes*, p. 80)

All of the textbooks provide example conversations that include formulaic humble expressions, such as those in bodface in (7)–(9).

(7) (JSL, p. 306)

a: *Kaataa de gozaimasu.* ***Itu mo syuzin ga osewa ni natt(e) orimasu.***
'I'm Carter. My husband is always obliged to you for your help.'

b: ***Kotirakoso.*** *Gosyuzinsama wa, nihongo ga ozyoozu de (i)rassyaimasu nee.*
'*I*'m obliged to *him*. Your husband is very proficient in Japanese, isn't he!'

a. ***Ieie. Benkyoo-sit(e) orimasu kara, sukosi wa dekimasu ga . . .***
'No, no. He's studying so he can handle it a little (at least), but . . . (he isn't really proficient).'

(8) (IMJ, p. 70)

Michiko: ***Kore tsumarai mono desu ga doozo.***
'Here's a little something for you.'

Yamaguchi: *Doomo sumimasen. Chotto matte kudasai. Ocha o iremasu kara.*
'Thank you. Wait a minute, please. I'll make tea.'

Michiko: ***Doozo okamainaku.*** *Sugu shitsurei-shimasu kara.*
'Please don't bother. I'll be leaving soon.'

(9) (SFJ, vol. 3 *Drills*, p. 65)

A: *Kyoo wa hontoo ni gochisoo-sama deshita.*
'Thank you very much for the nice meal today.'

B: ***Iie, nanno okamai mo shimasen de.***
'No, I couldn't do anything.'

The existence of numerous formulaic humble expressions, such as those in examples (7)–(9), suggests that humility is valued in Japan and that it is important to teach such expressions. However, its overemphasis may amount to exoticizing Japanese culture. As with the use of indirect and vague expressions, humble and self-abasing expressions seem to require consideration of the situational appropriateness. For example, in their study of responses to compliments, Saito and Beecken (1997) found that native speakers of Japanese (in role play) not only denied compliments,

but also used other response types (avoidance and positive/acceptance); and the use of different response types was largely related to who gave the compliments (professor or friend). Furthermore, Saito and Beecken report that American learners of Japanese who had completed at least three and a half years of study in the United States denied compliments more often than the native speakers of Japanese. This result, they explain, may be related to "the classroom practice, which neglects positive and avoidance responses in favor of heavy emphasis on negative response" (372). In a report on an experimental teaching method aimed at cultivating pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence in the classroom, Matsumoto, Shimizu, Okano, and Kubo (2002) suggest that learners who are exposed from the beginning stage to the choices available for responding to compliments become able to produce more naturalistic and varied responses, similar to those given by native speakers of Japanese.

In explaining the use of humble expressions (e.g., *Honno sukoshi desu ga, doozo* 'It's nothing much, but please [accept it]') when offering a gift, SFJ (vol. 3 *Drills*, p. 74) notes that, nowadays, younger Japanese often prefer to use more direct expressions: *Kore kuni no omiyage desu. Doozo.* 'This is a present from my country. Please accept it.' (see also SFJ, vol. 3 *Notes*, p. 149). More information of this sort would be helpful to the learner in developing his or her sociolinguistic competence. In that way, it would be advantageous to the learner to be aware that a wide variety of strategies or speech styles are available in performing speech acts, and that they are differentially used depending on the situation (see also Saito and Beecken 1997 and Matsumoto et al. 2002).

Recently, a growing number of scholars in anthropology and sociology have begun to question the essentialistic characterization of the Japanese society as being homogeneous, group-oriented, harmonious, etc., and to pay more attention to internal diversity and conflicts (Befu 1993; Sugimoto 1997). Likewise, sociolinguistic descriptions of Japanese interactional styles are increasingly becoming more sensitive to situational diversity and appropriateness in their reexamination of stereotypical linguistic preferences. We believe that JFL instruction would benefit from taking such findings into consideration.

3. Levels of Speech: Formal vs. Informal Styles

One of the linguistic phenomena closely related to the issue of communication styles discussed in the previous section is speech levels. The distinction of two major levels, made in the finite forms of predicates, is

commonly referred to as "polite form vs. plain form" or "distal form vs. direct form". The former in each pair is considered to express, among other things, more formality in speech while the latter conveys a more informal level of speech. As reported in Takahashi, Harrington, and Yoda 1995, there is a tendency in Japanese language textbooks (especially at the beginning level) to present more polite or formal expressions than may occur in authentic conversations. The textbooks that we examined also teach mainly formal expressions, as illustrated in example (10).

(10) (YK, p. 123; conversation among classmates in university)

Brown: *Sumimasen. Denwa wa ari**masu** ka.*
'Excuse me. Is there a phone?

Hayashi: *Ee, soko ni ari**masu**.*
'Yes, there is one there.'

Gibson: *Hayashi-san wa i**masu** ka.*
'Is Mr. Hayashi here?'

While it is generally appropriate at the beginning of an acquaintance to use formal expressions, and may be thought safer in general, our informal interviews with native-Japanese-speaker college students reveal that the lack of ability to express informality would hinder the fostering of friendship (as noted in YK). For this reason, the overemphasis on teaching formal styles may actually be detrimental to the development of students' pragmatic competence in learning Japanese. The excessive formality of examples given in textbooks is evident when compared with naturally-occurring conversations among college students in Japan, as illustrated in (11).

(11) (Aki and Emi [pseudonyms] are college classmates.)

Aki: *Emi, piano no renshuu shiteru?*
'Emi, have you been practicing the piano?'

Emi: *Un, shiteru yo.*
'Yeah, I have.'

Aki: *Itsu dakke? Juu-gatsu?*
'When is it? October?'

Emi: *Juu-gatsu no juuyokka.*
'October, the 14th.'

Aki: *Juushi?*
'The 14th?'

Emi: *Un.*
'Right.'

Aki: *Moo sugu jan.*
'That's very soon.'
Emi: *Nee, moo sugu.*
'Right, very soon.'
Aki: *Nishuu-kan gurai, ato?*
'In about two more weeks?'
Emi: *Soo da nee.*
'It is, isn't it?'

It is thus important, for both practical and academic reasons, for learners to know and to be able to use informal expressions. Some of the textbooks we examined provide some example conversations in informal styles. For example, JSL gives some examples of informal conversations in Lesson 9 and in some other lessons (see also SFJ, vol. 3). An intermediate level textbook, IJ, illustrates the use of the informal form through conversations, as in (12) below, and role-play.

(12) (IJ, p. 28; conversation between female dorm-mates)
Yuri: *Ooame yo. Ame ga sugoku* ***hutteru*** *no yo.*
'Heavy rain. It's raining terribly.'
Carol: *E! Iya* ***da*** *naa.*
'Oh, that's disgusting.'
Yuri: *Zya, isoideru kara sakini* ***iku*** *ne.*
'OK. I've got to run now.' (lit. I'll go first as I'm in a hurry.)
Carol: *Zya, mata atode ne.*
'OK, see you later.'

Both (10) and (12) are ostensibly conversations among peers at college. While the predicates used in (10) are in formal style, the predicates used in this part of the conversation in (12) are all in informal style accompanied by sentence final particles and include some vowel deletion (*hutteru* rather than *hutteiru*), all of which suggest informality. Example (12) presents a mixture of styles that is associated with stereotypical female speakers (e.g., *ooame yo, hutteru no yo*) and with stereotypical male speakers (e.g., *iya da na, iku ne*). This mixture tends to suggest a speech style more commonly found among women in their 30s or older (Matsumoto 2002) rather than college students, who tend not to use styles stereotypically associated with female speakers, as exemplified in (11). Nevertheless, this sample conversation in (12) indicates a relatively uncommon attempt to teach informal conversation in a Japanese classroom.

While it is quite limited, most textbooks make some reference to the existence of different speech levels. As guidance for determining which

forms to use, formal or informal, polite or plain, the most common explanations relate to social status and to in-group and out-group distinctions. Such explanations are found in SFJ and JSL, which emphasize the importance of social structures. For example, the in-group/out-group distinction is explicated in JSL as follows.

> Japanese society is group-centered, not individualistic, in its basic orientation. An individual Japanese belongs to a number of different groups—the family, school, workplace, clubs, etc.—and depending on the context of the moment, the appropriate group-membership becomes the speaker's in-group and everyone else the out-group. On those occasions when the speaker is indeed representing only him/herself, it is perhaps most accurate to regard that individual as a 'minimal in-group'. (JSL, p.19)

This characterization of Japanese society is a common stereotype. How strongly Japanese society should be characterized as group-centered, however, is disputable, as we pointed out in the last section. Further, the very principle of taking the in-group and out-group distinction as the deciding factor of linguistic choice can lead to a rather unintuitive analysis. For example, Sukle (1994), taking formal and informal (distal and direct in his terms) forms as direct markings of *soto* 'out-group' and *uchi* 'in-group', respectively, analyzes customer/vegetable vendor conversations and mother/daughter conversations (in his naturally-occurring data). This analysis leads to the conclusion that the mother/daughter relationship represented in (13) is that of an "out-group," while the vendor/customer relationship illustrated in (14) is that of an "in-group"—a conclusion that strains credulity.[3]

(13) ([24] in Sukle 1994, p.139; The mother speaks to the first daughter [21 years old], who is near the drawer containing the paste.)

Nori o totte kudasaimasen?
'Would you please get me the paste?'

(14) ([8] in Sukle 1994, p. 126; customer and vegetable vendor conversation)

C1: *Kore, dore ga urete n no?*
'These — (it's the case that) which one is ripe?', 'Which one of these is ripe?'

C2: *Dotti ga ii?*
'Which one is good?'

V1: *Kore ii yo*
'This one is good.'

V2: *Kore ni sitara?*
'How about deciding on this one?', 'Why don't you decide on this?'

Clearly, some other factors are at work, such as multiple functionality of formal and informal expressions in various social situations, topics and speaker's styles (for further discussion of this issue, see, Ikuta 1983; Cook 1998; Okamoto 1997; and Matsumoto 2002).[4] The *uchi-soto* group distinction may be a useful explanation for certain linguistic phenomena in Japanese, but, as indicated by the above examples, it is not always determinative. More generally, we should be cautioned against painting, perhaps inadvertently, an essentialized picture of Japan as being group-oriented and homogeneous.

Although the complexity of choice between formal and informal expressions may be too difficult for beginning learners to fathom, we should also be aware that language learners are not best served by over-emphasizing one style or by an over-simplified explanation based on a stereotype of Japanese society.

4. "Standard" Japanese vs. Regional Dialects

In Japanese sociolinguistics it is well recognized that there exists a wide variety of regional dialects. However, in teaching JFL, a single variety—the "standard"—is presented as the Japanese language without reference to the rich regional variation. This may be a common tendency also found in the teaching of other foreign languages and may be justified by pedagogical concerns for efficient instruction. In this section, we suggest the importance of presenting Japanese as a language with variation by illustrating the wide variability of the language, the sociopolitical background of the notion of "standard" Japanese, and native Japanese speakers' psychological responses to the notion of "standard" Japanese.

Among the textbooks we examined, only IMJ explicitly notes that the language used in the text is "standard" Japanese, but other textbooks present basically the identical variety of Japanese without reference to the existence of significant variation. The introduction to IMJ states that "[t]he Japanese introduced in this book is up-to-date and standard; it is the language actually used by educated people and acceptable to Japanese everywhere regardless of age, sex, or occupation" (p. i). Indeed, "standard" Japanese is the variety promulgated in the Japanese educational system, and in that sense it might be considered "acceptable to Japanese everywhere regardless of age, sex or occupation." However, as we illustrate below with examples of regional varieties, it is not the only variety of Japanese, nor is it accepted by all Japanese in all situations. Further, we cannot overlook recent discussions about the ideological basis underlying the

standardization of modern Japanese (Lee 1996; Yasuda 1999), which suggest that to regard the "standard" variety taught at school as acceptable to all Japanese is itself a political assessment based on the ideology of fostering standardization. We should be aware that for many speakers of regional varieties of Japanese, the historical memory still remains that this variety was imposed on them as a matter of national language policy by means that included severe punishments for students who used their own dialect, particularly during and before World War II (Yasuda 1999).

As is well known, there are widely spoken regional dialects that are noticeably different in phonology, morphology, and syntax from "standard" Japanese. The divisions among dialects can be made in various ways, but the major dialect divisions are usually (a) between Ryukyuan (Okinawan) dialects and mainland dialects and (b) in the mainland between the Western dialect group and the Eastern dialect group (Shibatani 1990:187). The examples in (15) provide a glimpse of the differences between a regional dialect and the variety used in school textbooks. These examples, which are based on Shiraishi 1997, contrast the language used in a Japanese first-grade textbook (marked "T") with the corresponding utterances "translated" into a regional dialect currently spoken in Saga prefecture on the southwestern island of Kyuushuu (marked "S" for "Saga"). This "translation" was originally intended to be part of teaching materials for raising students' awareness of the linguistic variety that they use in their daily living environment. Shiraishi states that the variety used in the "translation" includes some "standard" vocabulary reflecting such daily practice, in contrast to the textbook variety and to the exotic regional "souvenir shop" dialect. A similar mixture of the "standard" and regional varieties is also documented in conversational data of other dialects, as we illustrate later in this section.

We present the examples without elaborating on the details of the differences simply to illustrate the extent of regional diversity in speech. Morphosyntactic differences are shown in boldface; underlining in the "S" examples indicates the parts pronounced with high pitch in the Saga variety, which are often low pitched in the standard variety.

(15) T1: *Usagi wa kusa* ***o tabemasu***
S1: *U<u>sa</u>gi wa ku<u>sa</u>* ***ba <u>ta</u>bu.***
'A rabbit eats grass.'
T2: ***Yawarakai kinome mo tabemasu.***
S2: ***Ya<u>waa</u>ka kin<u>me</u> den <u>ta</u>bu yyo.***
'(It) also eats soft buds.'

T3: *Usagi no mimi* ***wa nagakute ookii*** *mimi* ***desu***.
S3: *Usagi no mimi* ***yaggii nagoosite hutoka*** *mimi* ***bai***.
'The rabbit's ears are long and big.'

The examples below of a dialect spoken in Miyagi prefecture in northern Japan were elicited in a similar fashion to the above examples, i.e., a native speaker of the dialect "translated" a folktale from a standard Japanese version (marked "T") into his dialect (marked "M"; Sebuchi 2000). Morphosyntactic and phonological differences are in boldface.

(16) T: ***Ti*** *darake no te* ***ni*** *nuno o* ***maite***, *boosan no* ***toko ni*** *itta*
M: ***Tu*** *darake no te* ***sa/nu*** *nuno o* ***maide***, *boosan no* ***dogo sa/nu*** *itta*
'He wrapped a cloth around his bloody hand and went to where the priest was.'

(17) T: *Inu* ***ni kamituk****-are-****nai*** *yoo* ***ni*** *suru* ***ni*** *wa doo* ***si-tara ii ka osiete kure***
M: *Inu* ***nu kamiduk****-are-****nee*** *yoo* ***nu*** *suru* ***nu*** *wa doo* ***su-tara ii-be ga, osuete kero***
'Please teach me what I should do so that I won't be bitten by the dog.'

Even in these elicited examples of dialects, it is evident that the differences are beyond simple variations in pronunciation. In fact, noticeable divergences in grammar and vocabulary of various regional dialects have recently begun to attract more serious attention in Japanese linguistics. Indeed, dialectologists such as Inoue (1989) claim that varieties spoken in different major dialect areas are often mutually unintelligible. This observation may be viewed as providing a rationale for the teaching of a single "standard" form of Japanese, and we can speculate that this was the pedagogical decision taken by textbooks such as IMJ—a point that foreign language educators and learners can sympathize with. However, despite its possible practicality, it is a disservice to learners to treat the rich variety of regional dialects as nonexistent or unimportant, since many learners will encounter regional dialects if they live in Japan.

The same introduction to IMJ also states that "[t]he dialogues in this book are based on actual conversations heard in the offices, homes and streets of Tokyo" (p. ii). Considered in conjunction with the earlier statement about the use of "standard" Japanese in the textbook, this remark implies an identification of standard Japanese with a variety spoken in Tokyo. YK indirectly suggests that the variety used in the text is based on the Tokyo dialect by choosing its main social setting to be Tokyo University. The tacit assumption that "standard" Japanese corresponds

more or less to the Tokyo dialect must date back to the language policy for standardization that began in the late 19th century under the Meiji government. The standard language, or *hyōjungo*, in its conception and nature is a constructed language, primarily based on the variety (presumably) used by "intellectuals" of the newly designated capital, Tokyo (Morioka 1988; Lee 1996; Komori 2000). The Meiji government regarded the establishment of a unified national language (*kokugo*), or standard Japanese, as essential for the development of the modern nation-state (Lee 1996; Yasuda 1999). Standard Japanese, thus conceived, has been promulgated through a variety of avenues, such as education and media. After World War II, the use of the term *kyōtsūgo* 'a common language' has been considered more appropriate than that of *hyōjungo* in that the former technically refers to any variety of the language that is mutually intelligible among the speakers (Shibata 1997). However, *kyōtsūgo* is generally understood as a more democratic sounding version of the term *hyōjungo*—'the standard language', which is based on the Tokyo dialect.

The government's efforts to establish (a particular speech variety of) Tokyo dialect as standard Japanese have no doubt had a significant impact on the language practices of Japanese people. To be sure, speakers certainly comprehend each other more today than in the Meiji era. At the same time, however, there also have been negative political and psychological reactions from many speakers who remain defiant toward the notion of standard Japanese defined as such. Long (n.d.), for example, reports that among his 756 informants from various regions in Japan, only 281—roughly one-third of the total—assigned geographical areas as the region(s) where "standard" Japanese is spoken. Interestingly, those assigned areas vary significantly. Long found that informants from Osaka, which used to be geopolitically more central before the Meiji era, were "reluctant to acknowledge the Tokyo region as a standard-speaking one, a finding which reinforces the evidence of Osaka's linguistic rivalry with Tokyo seen in previous studies" (p.11). The "linguistic rivalry" mentioned by Long reflects the fact that regional dialects are perceived as carrying different degrees of prestige within and outside their speech communities. For example, Inoue (1989) surveyed the dialect perceptions of high school and junior college students from three regions of Japan and found that speakers from Miyagi prefecture (in northern Japan) tend to have a negative image of their own speech and to admire the dialects of Tokyo and the old capital, Kyoto, whereas Kyoto speakers tend to evaluate their own speech most highly. Tokyo speakers rated the Kyoto dialect more positively than their own in some respects.

In addition to these studies, there is another set of sociolinguistic findings that indicate that the use of standard Japanese is not uniformly accepted by all Japanese in all situations. Specifically, it has been noted that speakers of regional Japanese differentiate the use of regional and standard Japanese depending on the situation (Miyake 1995; Sanada 1996, 2000; Okamoto 2002, 2003). For example, based on her analyses of actual conversations carried out by speakers of Osaka and Yamaguchi dialects, Okamoto (2002, 2003) demonstrated that speakers of regional dialects employ a greater or smaller amount of standard forms as a strategy for creating a speech style appropriate for the given situation. Although there were "exceptions," speakers generally were found to use a greater amount of standard forms in more formal situations (e.g., conversations with higher-status persons). On the other hand, they used regional forms most extensively in familiar situations (e.g., conversations with family members or close friends), suggesting that the use of standard Japanese is not considered appropriate in such situations, since it indexes distancing, or lack of solidarity.

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the choice of a variety of Japanese in JFL textbooks is not ideologically neutral and hence cannot be taken for granted. It is possible that, depending on the situation, the textbook variety may not be emotionally accepted by speakers of various regional dialects in spite of its imagined mutual acceptability, and that Japanese learners' strict adherence to it in all situations may alienate people living in a Japanese community. If, for example, the learner were to spend some time in a particular region of Japan, learning its dialect would be helpful not only for understanding others but also for cultivating personal relationships. While it is unrealistic to suggest that different regional dialects should be taught from the beginning stage, some examples of the major regional dialects (with a dialect map) or dialogues situated in certain regions would be beneficial to students by making them more aware of the scope and nature of the divergence of Japanese from the formalized standard language of their textbooks. This awareness would leave them better prepared for the linguistic diversity that they are likely to encounter in real-world situations.

5. Conclusion

We have found in this study that JFL textbooks tend to simplify the three sociolinguistic phenomena in question, which can lead learners to infer that the Japanese language (and consequently, Japanese society) is homogeneous with little internal variation. As mentioned earlier, the purpose

of this simplification may be to reduce the complexity that learners have to face. However, it can result in proliferating normative linguistic and cultural ideologies, including the essentialistic characterization of Japanese speakers as exceptionally polite, humble, and indirect; a disproportionately strong focus on formal speech; and the representation of the (constructed or assumed) "standard" variety as the Japanese language, while being silent about the existence and value of regional dialects. Our discussions in the previous sections suggest that, while it may be helpful to note generalized cultural values, their over-emphasis is not only misleading but also counterproductive to the development of sociolinguistic competence and sensitivity to diverse real-world social situations.

How then can the discrepancies between the real world and the normative world be appropriately dealt with in teaching JFL? Can sociolinguistic findings contribute to Japanese language pedagogy, or should those be reserved for students' later discovery on their own? We believe that sociolinguistic findings can enrich the learning environment. Although this is true for any other language, such findings are especially relevant in teaching JFL so as to counteract the exoticism and myths surrounding Japanese. The question to ask then is to what extent linguistic diversity can be introduced in light of the need for simplification of input in foreign language instruction. It would be easier to introduce diversity at higher levels, but even at the beginning level, students can be made aware of some diversity, at least as passive knowledge, through exposure to examples followed by discussion or through simple role-plays in various settings. An introduction to linguistic and cultural diversity may be achieved effectively in a concise but careful introductory section of a textbook, as well as through daily interactions between the instructor and learners. To be sure, teaching the basic structure of the language is important, but the language cannot be used and understood devoid of its sociocultural ramifications. We believe that providing more accurate and refined views of the language and society is a significant part of language instruction.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguistics held in Vancouver, Canada. We thank two anonymous reviewers for valuable comments.
2. It is possible that the situation in (4) with a greengrocer may call for less indirect speech, but it still remains true that (1) is not the only choice available.
3. Sukle claims that the mother is negotiating the in- and out-group boundaries in utterances such as (14), which are directives. A customer's utterances in (14), however, are also directives, although Sukle includes them as in-group.

   Note also that it has been observed in recent sociolinguistic studies that speakers often mix formal and informal expressions for the same addressee or referent in the same conversation or even in the same utterance (Okamoto 1999; Cook 1998; Ikuta 1988, 2002). In such cases, the account based on the *uchi-soto* group distinction would have to assume that the same relationship (between the speaker and the addressee or referent) keeps changing (even from moment to moment) between an *uchi* and *soto* relation in the same conversational context—certainly an unrealistic assumption.
4. This issue was also the focus of the Style Shift Symposium, organized by Kimberly Jones and Tsuyoshi Ono and held at the University of Arizona in March 2002.

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