Language and Ethnicity in Modern Japan

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Abstract: The present article attempts to sketch how language in national studies in 20th Century Japan was connected with the theory of ethnicity, and how these studies about language dealt with the various languages of several ethnicities during the period of Japan’s imperialist expansion. It concludes that it was a failure because Japan read ethnicity excessively into language and this led to an ungraceful lack of imagination about other ethnicities and gave it a sense of superiority over others.

Explicitly and implicitly Imperial Japan expounded on the combination of ethnicity and language, and applied that combination only to the ruling language. Even when Japan confronted varieties of other languages it attempted to manage these varieties by appointing the Japanese language as the leader of the alliance. Imperialist Japan attempted to control “East Asia” and the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” using the hierarchical status of language led by the Japanese language. If we take this fact as a lesson in disguise, we would conclude that in the “East Asian Studies” of the 21st Century a hierarchical concept of language is not necessary and that the study of languages should reflect the multi-farious and multi-ethnic “East Asia” as it is.

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I. Introduction

Albeit old-fashioned, the 20th Century was an era of ethnicities. Moreover, it was an era when politics dominated ethnicities. Ethnicity as a unit demanded self-rule and independence; Political movements are interrelated to cultural movements. Such movement for self-affirmation and self-assertion of what an ethnicity is, to start with. At that point, the so-called national studies emerge. When an ethnicity forms a state and ethnicity and state become identical (this is particularly marked in the case of Japan, because when both terms are translated into English, are identical), the term “national” becomes paramount in national studies. This marks the birth of the “study of national language,” “national literature,” and the “study of national history.” (“The study of nation” was interpreted as being national studies.”)

The end of the 19th Century to the first half of the 20th Century covers a period when Japan was forced to open itself under the pressure of Western powers. Japan built a modern nation state to start with, then Japan invaded the Chinese continent, and expanded it to the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.” This was the process of its emergence as a multi-national empire. The national studies born in this process were forced to encompass within their sight not only their own ethnicity but also other ethnicities.

In the Japanese Empire cultural movements by ethnicities other than the Japanese ethnicity were acknowledged albeit under strict conditions. Political ethnic movements (national strives)) which might have shaken the existence of the Japanese Empire was suppressed with violent force. And the collapse of the Japanese Empire was not caused by the independence movements of colonies following the end of the Second World War as in the case of other empires. Thus it deprived Japan of an opportunity to realistically experience nationalist movements. For this reason, from the pre-war period when Japan was clearly a multi-ethnic empire also from the time of Japan’s defeat in the war when it was a latent multi-nation state to
the present a very serious political problems related to ethnicity did not spring up in Japan. And there is a deeply rooted consciousness that even now such a political problem will not break out.

Given this background Japan has a strong conviction that the nation-state of Japan is comprised of “a single ethnicity.” Nevertheless there are studies aimed at crushing such a view as a “myth.” However, what was made clear in such studies arguments were made as to the origin of the Japanese ethnicity whether or not at the level of press level on the “origin” of the Japanese ethnicity was mixed or pure blood. It appears that no arguments were made which doubted the existence of the Japanese ethnicity. Rather because so far as “East Asian ethnicity” exemplified in the “expansion of ethnicity” or the “super ethnic theory” was argued about, we cannot help but discern the risks of ethnicity theory.

To reiterate, in the 20th Century, as evidenced in the usage of the “single ethnic nation-state,” ethnicity was more strongly recognized as the component of the nation-state. In order to dissolve the illusion about the “single nation-state theory,” it would be imperative to re-confirm the meaning of ethnicity, whether it was as a single-ethnicity or multi-ethnicities that were captured as the component unit of the nation-state and whether ethnicity was assumed as an unques-


2. Sociologist Takada Yasuma states as follows: “Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China and Mongolia with a long destiny connected with each other by the three kinds of ties, the same racial origin, the same writing system, and the same area located in the Far East...Several ethnicities of the East Asia, the peoples from Japan, Manchuria, and China form each one’s own ethnicities and then by combining together a single ethnicity in a broad sense, that is, a Supra-ethnicity called the East Asian race. Takada Yasuma, *Discourses on the East Asian Ethnicity*, Iwanami Shoten, 1939, pp. 85-85, At a glance this appears to be an imitation of the Theory of the Same Writing System and the Same ethnicity, but Takada is characteristic in that he regards important the aspect of the “self-realization” in addition to the external elements of the component members.
tionable premise of the state. But even if ethnicity was divided by international boundaries such a view is valid.

In recent years the concept of imperial state has become fashionable. The scope of the argument is far and wide, ranging from the attention paid to the next system following the nation-state system, to the study of various past empires, to the analysis of the world control system of the hegemonic United States. However, from the viewpoint of the 21st Century East Asian studies, relativising nation-states in this region are not so simplistic from the viewpoint of East Asian studies in the 21st Century. What I would like to attempt in this article is to sketch the studies about language within national studies in 20th Century Japan, how they were related to the theory of ethnicity, and when studies about such languages during the period of Japan’s imperialistic expansion tried to confront various languages of other races. In conclusion, I believe such studies were miserable failures due to their lack of imagination about others and their sense of superiority over others, as they read the sense of ethnicity excessively into language. This will be attempted in this article.

However, at this point let me add comments on the East Asian studies in the 21st Century. In this area the national studies Japan too excessively read the sense of ethnicity into language in various geographic areas because of modern Japan’s frustration. This should be re-examined. In each region instances should be scrutinized and compared. We should be careful not to overstate the fictitious nature of language, ethnicity, and state as was already pointed out. The reason for this is that there existed real feelings and real behavior as the basis for fictions. How such real feelings and real condition were turned into the materials for fiction, and how national studied intervened in them, should be fully clarified.

In this connection, we should not aim at creating a new fiction by wrapping the “East Asia” into one whole. I believe that we should aim primarily at clarifying the variety at the level of real feeling and real status that exist within East Asia. There have existed the
real feelings about East Asia depending on region, time period, and individuals. Therefore, this writer believes that we should start from the natural fact that individual’ concepts of the contours and contents of East Asia do not always agree. If, starting from these point individuals’ daunting tasks for comparing the real status at the level a framework of “East Asia” should emerge, if so it would be considered fortunate. But this should not be taken for granted. Entanglement of multi-layered and congesting space recognition may entail, and the issue of identify is expected to be similar. One might say there are more unmatched layers. It is difficult to grasp accurately what kind of background and intention are behind the fashionable discussions in Korea about “East Asia,” although it is easily imagi-able there are different contentions within Korea. This writer is inclined to think that given the current condition of Japan that there would be a less likelihood that Japan would be dropped from “East Asia” as conceived in Korea.

Be that as it may, in terms of language and ethnicity, I believe it is a priority task to describe at the individual level the phenomenon of multi-languages beyond international boundaries and beyond ethnicity.

II. Ethnicity and Language

Now, if ethnicity was understood as a component of the nation-state, one of the “objective” criteria for defining that ethnicity was language, without referring to the famous definition by Stalin. However, at the same time if we assume that since the concept of ethnicity was created from various intentions and dynamics, and the people who were included in that reference framework which had to be referred to as one of the indices for self-recognition, the concept of language may have a similar concept. Then, ethnic nature may be sought in language or the indication of ethnic nature may be sought in language. However, we must remind ourselves the fact that when
one recognizes or is made to recognize the language one speaks is a
certain language and one speaks a certain dialect of that language -
this has been done with an extreme degree of artificiality, arbitrar-
iness, and politics. The similar thing may be said of the work
involved to clearly ascertain a certain language or a certain dialect
beyond speaking it without being conscious of it. This is applicable
to the work to construct a national language. And it is often that the
name of a certain language is identical to the name of that certain
ethnicity. Furthermore, sometimes, that certain ethnicity may be the
name of that nation-state. It is often pointed out that when this is
adopted as a criterion, the situation of the multi-language nation
state becomes difficult to understand.

Be that as it may, as it is conspicuous in the ethnic classification
in such socialist nation-states as the Soviet Union, the People’s
Republic of China, and the Vietnam Socialist Republic. In these
countries ethnic classification and language classification are closely
interconnected. When an artificially established language is used to
define ethnicity, artificially established ethnicities are used for defin-
ing, and the whole thing is circular. And it was accepted as natural
and no question was asked about it.

This was during the 20th Century.3 The fact that what was ques-
tioned was not dividing ethnicities or languages itself, and rather it
was the way of dividing or one was in a position to divide lends
support to such a view. Also, the fact that the theory of systematiza-

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3. For the classification of ethnicities, for the Soviet Union see Naiharo, Bofdan,
Sovovoda, and Victor, its translation edited by Tanaka Katsuhiko, Takao
Chizuko, and Tsuchiya Reiko, A Complete History of the Problems of Ethnicities
and Languages in the Soviet Union, Akashi Shoten, 1992. For the People’s
Republic of China, see Yokoyama Hiroko, Minority Ethnicities and Discourse,
Aoki Tamotsu and others edited, “The Growth of Ethnicities and Logics,” in
Cultural Anthropology, Iwanami Lectures, Vol. 5, 1997, and Mouri Kazuko,
China from Peripheries—The Ethnicity Questions and Nation-State, Tokyo
University Press, 1998, for Vietnam see Itou Masako, “The classification of
the Publicly Designated Ethnicities—An Unexpected Pitfall in the Vietnam’s
tion used in comparative languages and the systematization of ethnicities were discussed in the same vein is an evidence of this. What should be questioned is rather the significance of dividing itself.

III. Languages and Ethnicity, National Language and National Character

According to Yasuda Hiroshi, the word,” language”, in Japanese is a newly coined Chinese-character word was introduced toward the end of the 19th Century, and for this reason it is difficult to find the usage of this word during the first half of the Meiji era. And he also pointed out that following the change in the ruling structure of the Meiji government in about 1890s, the word, ethnicity, was used as a concept signifying the collective consciousness of the blood relations with the emperor as the common ancestor. On the other hand, the view on ethnicity became one-sided to attach to it heavily nationalistic understanding. And the cultural multiple-dimension as a factor for forming ethnicity was pushed back into the background; with the consequence that ethnicity as a national existence only became conscious.

The concept of ethnicity in modern Japan was a fiction called a pseudo-blood-related-community with the emperor at the top. And approximately during the same period the concept of national language served as a material to reinforce such a fiction.

The national language was thus both a national language was for

4. The word, ethnicity, formed first in Japan, thus have flowed into the Chinese, Korean, and Vietnam. There is an instance of its use in the Chinese in 1895, and it was widely used it the 20th Century, and its flow in the Vietnames is said to be roughly the same period. See, Okada Takeshi, “The Concept of Ethnicity in Vietnam in the Early 20th Century,” in Oriental Culture, No. 78, 1988.

carrying out national task and also the language of the people. The state, which established this naturally, regarded the people who were naturally expected to speak such a language as a united collective. What we must be careful about is that even if it was required of the people to speak the national language as a part of the social system, to capture this as an ethnicity was at a different level. However, as ambiguity was visible in the fact that the English word, nation, translated into Japanese as kokumin and minzoku, it is often confusing. One thing that can be considered as one of the features of modern Japan is the fact that, rather than the concept of Japanese as an artificially demarcated language, the national language with a higher degree of artificiality with the clear-cut state intervention was indeed regarded as the language spoken by the nation and the ethnicity. For instance, in his speech in 1894 under the title of “the national language and the state” the Japanese language scholar Ueda Kazutoshi stated, “The national language is the spiritual blood.” From this time on the national language as a social system was pushed into the background. Thus the Japanese language was now spoken as an essence could not be replaceable like blood, that an ethnic metaphor, and also as “natural,” and “genuine.” Furthermore, as was succinctly stated that “the national spirit was inherent in the national language, to the intrinsically institutional word, national language, the word representing non-institutional concept, spirit, was naturally connected. In the meanwhile, even seemingly non-artificial dialects were arranged and interrelated in the name of the national language. Through the

6. Some argue that in a reaction to the domination of the Korean language by the Japanese during the colonial period the Koreans acquired the “concept of the mother tongue” as “the most effective device to realistically feel homogeneity as essential and indigenous,” and that the equation: “The Koreans+Korean Literature+the Korean Language” was indispensable to the invention of the “mother tongue.” Jeong Baek-su. Korea’s Modern Colonial Literature and Bi-Lingual Literature, Ajia Bunkasha, 2000, pp. 39-40, written in Korean.

concurrent structuring called the arranging of dialects and the temporary structuring for historical grounding and reading the ethnic character into it, we may say; the national language for the first time is constituted. Thus the national language became the nucleus of the Japanese nationality, its history was narrated, and it was given the national character. And then, the particularity of the Japanese language was emphasized. Because in the case of Japan, “one nation-state, one ethnicity, and one language” were combined as a trinity and this allowed such a manipulation.

IV. The National Language and the Colonies

If we assume that the national language is a system that sustains the nation-state, in the case of Japan, which since 1895 integrated lands of different ethnicities and languages, disseminating the national language as a system to its colonies was taken for granted, since the colonies were regarded as a part of the same nation-state.

However, as was referred to, since the Japanese language included the spirituality and national character of Japan, language education in colonies did not remain as a simple language education. That is to say, the language education in Japanese colonies was a discipline, or the language education was a spiritual education at the same level of forcing colonial people to bow toward the direction of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo and the Japanese rising sun, and to sing the Japanese national anthem. Such vague thinking was that there was “something” in the national language, even if that “something” pursued all the way to the end would only yield some vague answer such as ethnic character or ethnic spirit its reasoning.

9. For how to understand properly dialects see Yasuda Toshiaki, Between the National Language and Dialect: the Political Science of Language Structuring, Jimon Shoin, 1999.
was circular.

However, disseminating the Japanese language to its colonies would eventually result as a counter-action vector in aiming at the Japan “proper.” For instance, to quote from the statement of an official of the Government General of Chosen (Korea) in the 1940s: “When once a friend from Korea told me that since the Japanese language he spoke was an excellent standard version of Japanese and also since his Japanese would not have mixed dialect as in the case of Japanese from Japan proper because he practiced Japanese as he learned the textbook-version of Japanese, I found myself in cold sweat. When the Koreans kept sweating blood in the daily use of Japanese, how could we Japanese from Japan proper refrain from the efforts for practicing the standard Japanese?”

To put it another way, in discussing the national language and writings in Japan proper its problems were referred to outside such as Japanese colonies, but such a viewpoint was fallen into oblivion for a while.

Because various languages spoken in colonies that could not be considered Japanese these were ranked one notch below Japanese, the relation between the language and ethnicity on the side of the ruled people was made invisible.

Such perception was well manifested in the groundless contention that, for instance, since both Japan proper and Japanese colonies were equal under Japanese emperor, that is, under the so-called imperial impartiality, disseminating Japanese in Japanese colonies was a favor, and that in the Japanese empire the language problem would not be politicized as in European and American empires and no problem would break out. Then, such perception

11. For details, see Yasuda Toshiaki, A Vantage Point to Superseding the Japanese Language: Rethinking the History of the Modern Japanese Language, II, Sangensha, 2003, Chap. 3.
12. For instance, Andou Masatsugu who served as high as the position of
was manifest also in the assertion that those who spoke languages different from Japanese should of their own choose Japanese because of the “national superiority of Japanese” and so as to discard their own languages and this would be their best way over anything else for their own interest and welfare.\footnote{This a theory advanced by Tokieda Motoki who was a scholar of the Japanese language at the Keijo (Seoul) Imperial University. The thinking that subjectivity of a language speaker forms the basic process of the language process. However, his contention had serious limits in that he advanced arguments by replacing without reservation subjectivity with such concepts as ethnicity and people. Tokieda also argued for grasping the national language as a system, thus attempted to ascertain firmly the position of the Japanese language in colonial Korea and by extension within the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.” Nonetheless, even Tokieda reached the logical conclusion that the Koreans should adopted the national language (Japanese) as their mother tongue. For details, see Yasuda Toshiaki, \textit{The National Language Studies within Colonies: On Tokieda Motoki and the Keijo (Seoul) Imperial University}, Sangensha, 1997.}

Such an argument influenced by the then pervasive low estimation of bilingualism. Thus not only was there a low estimate of the concurrent use of Japanese and Korean but also of the concurrent use of the standard Japanese and its dialects, and this provided also the ground for correcting Japanese dialects. If language and ethnicity and by extension spirit were combined on a one to one basis, those who used multiple number of languages were assumed to have multiple ethnic characteristics and spirits and this was considered to be strange and inferior.\footnote{For various aspects of cognition of the nature of multi-language in modern Japan, see Yasuda, op. cit., \textit{Angle of Vision toward Going beyond the Japanese Language}, Chap. 2.} Such theory would have been one of the consequences

\textit{Governor General of Taiwan maintained that the “national language” was endowed by the emperor and for this reason it was different from colonial rule of European and American empires as in the “exploiting and being exploited” relations. For details, see Yasuda Toshiaki, \textit{Reconsideration of the History of the Japanese Language: The Imperialistic Japanese Language the Language Problems}, Sangensha, 2000, Chap. 3.}
of the excessive combination of language and ethnic character.

As a similar abuse was the thinking that the attempt to simplify the national language and national writings was considered to be a blasphemy to the tradition and the purity of the ethnicity, and by extension to the emperor and the national polity.

V. The Japanese Language and the Colonies

The steps that Japan took in the first half of the 20th Century formed a history of expanding its territories and influence. In terms of language it was a history of confrontation with multi-languages.

In the 1930s and thereafter the Japanese language played the role of the language for the nation-state Japan and also of the “common language of the Japanese empire.” Within that framework, the Japanese language tried to confront the condition of multi-language. When we think about Japanese as a “common language” it binds together multi-ethnicities outside the framework of the nation-state. If we put in it only the ethnic and national character as in the case of the national language, we cannot expect it to spread beyond the borders of the nation-state. In that case, we have a choice either, after completely discarding the ethnic character, of injecting (or possibly unilaterally in a sense) in Japanese “universal” ideals that may be acceptable to other communities or else after completely discarding ideals we may endeavor to enhance its functionality and thus improving the circulation of the language. This amounts to promoting a visionary goal. In the latter case, an artificial visionary goal is a contradiction itself, but in the later 1930s the simplification goal for devising “basic Japanese” became fashionable. The simplified 300 Japanese words selected by the Information Bureau of the Japanese government in 1942 (Nippon-go) were targeted for circulation mainly in Southeast Asia. However, this was deemed a temporary measure before reaching “the pure and correct Japanese,” and this was never regarded as a system in and of itself. Needless to
say, as poet Hagiwara Sakutaro said, “in order to disseminate the Japanese language throughout the world, as similarly as was done in the case of ancient Rome or China, there is no alternative but to become a world hegemony. If we accept this premise, it is not necessary for the Japanese themselves to painstakingly devise how to simplify Japanese language and how to teach the Japanese language to foreigners for the purpose of the world-wide dissemination of the Japanese language.” This was a sample of a deeply rooted view.

Also, even if we tried to bring in new universal ideals we had only such arbitrary universality as the “Japanese spirit” or the notion of “uniting the whole world like one family.” Moreover, the languages of the former suzerains in Southeast Asia where Japan enforced military government were all European and American, and Japan, therefore, faced the problem of distinguishing between the universality of the Japanese language and especially that of the English language. Even if Japan tried to make Japanese as the common language of Imperial Japan, it never attempted to destroy the circulating power of the English language, nor was it possible. Even if after 1941 in Japan proper the position of the English language was changed from hostile to enemy, Japan faced the reality that ultimately practical military administration was impossible without using English.

At any rate because stripping out the ethnic character inherent in the Japanese language was impossible, this language never became the functional “common language of the empire.” If it had been possible to strip out the ethnic character from the Japanese language, then we might suppose that acquiring the knowledge of the “common language of the empire” as a system would serve as a passport to physical migration and upward social mobility within the empire, thus making it possible for us to scrutinize such aspect.

For instance, Tanaka Katsuhiko termed the “language” that was disseminated following the expansion of territories controlled by the Japanese empire the “language of the empire.” Tanaka claimed that the Empire Center was to help those who were ruled by the empire dissolve their difference in linguistic knowledge between themselves and those who had already acquired the language of the empire as the former went through the process of acquiring themselves the language of the empire. The Empire Center was also to offer the ruled by Japan a space of activity and to take a full advantage of those among ruled who were talented. Tanaka also claimed that the language of the Empire was “a technique of liberation which”being at outside of the ruler and the ruled and created a fair intellectual world,” and that it had the capacity for serving as essential tool of civilization with universality.\(^\text{18}\) Needless to say, there was an aspect of learning the language of the Empire serving the upward social mobility. On the other hand, we cannot overlook the fact that it served as a tool for the imperial control. Furthermore, Tanaka, without differentiating between the language of the empire in the pre-modern empire and that of the modern empire, argued that each had “qualifications to serve as an essential tool for civilization with universality.” However, we may say that all languages of the empire have come through modernization as the national language of the

\(^{17}\) In a certain sense this is linked to what to think of the “English as a current common international language.” In 2000 the informal discussion group of then Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo, “Plans for the 21st Century Japan,” published a report; *Japanese Frontier Is Found Within Japan*. One of the proposals in it were discussions about making the English Language a second official language and this led to various debates about the teaching of the English language and related policies. Source materials for this are found in *Debates: When the English Language Becomes the Second Official Language*, edited by the editorial department of Chuo Koron La Clair Series and Suzuki Yoshisato, Shuo Koron Shinsha, 2002.

nation state.

For this reason, even if a “fair intellectual world” may emerge on the surface, the center of the empire on one hand and those who have acquired the “language of empire” from the standpoint of the ruled on another hand should be different in their understanding of the language. That is to say, in the language that has come through modernization as the language of the modern nation-state is nonetheless endowed with its own ethnic and historical nature. Therefore, it cannot be expected to become the “language of the empire” which can be anybody’s and yet nobody’s. It is the language of the empire, which assumes that it is nobody’s but is actually somebody’s. No matter how much one clamors for “universalism” amid this, that side which is being pushed by the faintly visible particularity, that is, nationalism, still remains and is likely to become sensitive. For this reason, no matter how fluently one speaks of the “language of the empire,” it has nothing to do with ethnic character. Thus, it is imposed with the intrinsic limitation so that it can never become “pure” forever and a “genuine” element. Needless to say, language is a means, with this means speeches tuned to the intentions of the Center of the Empire were reproduced and yet ideological actions to emasculate such intention were carried out.

In the case of Imperial Japan, the “common language of the empire” was not an existence that could be someone’s and could not be anyone’s. The reason for this was that the concept of language and the concept of ethnicity particular to the modern empire were inseparably bound together, in spite of the fact that political control and economic control accompanied by military might form its major premise. It is not too excessive to say that the national language supported by the trinity combination of “language-ethnicity-nation state” was at its nucleus.

VI. The National Language That Continues to Be Protected and Supported

It is believed that after Japan accepted the Potsdam declaration Japan was forced to return to the trinity society without tasting the pain of escaping from the position of a colony. Even in terms of the relationship between language and ethnicity, the recognition that in the connection between ethnic character and language in Imperial Japan was sometimes problematic has been completely forgotten. As if the combination of “language-ethnicity-nation state” were natural the national language has been set again as a nucleus of the structure of the nationality of the newly born national state, Japan.

Specifically, the “democratization of the national language” was advocated and making the national language easier to understand was linked to the democratization of society. As Hoshina Takakazu, who advocated in 1940 “strengthening the control of the national language” under the New System, now advocated in 1948 “strengthening the control of the national language under the new democratization system.” Thus “democratization” was identical with the “control” from top.

Furthermore, if we asked for whom, Hoshina as ever meant it for the people and he had no qualms about that it was connected equally to the “Japanese ethnicity.” As the national polity was protected and supported in the postwar period, the system of the national language with the ethnic character and history included has been protected and supported to this date.

In the flow of “globalization” the “internationalization of the Japanese language” has been noted especially since the 1980s. Amid this the intention to strip up the ethnic character of the national language has been hardly noticeable. Although on the surface a simple

and a steep differentiation have been made whereby to foreigners it is not the “national language” but the “Japanese language.” Nonetheless, the idea of the “beautiful Japanese language,” “the correct Japanese language,” and the “education of the Japanese language for transmitting Japanese culture” has been incorporated into the Japanese language without verification.

Also the situation surrounding the national language has not shown any change in its status. In 1902 the national language investigation committee was organized for the purpose of investigating the language policy of the nation, the Sub-Committee of the Deliberation Council, the Ministry of Education and Science, organized in 2001 in the lineage of the afore-mentioned organization. It summarized “Concerning the power of the national language demanded in the time period from now on, an outline of the discussion.” (January 29, 2003). Its argument may be said to clearly represent contemporary Japanese society leaning to the right and totalitarianism. For whom and what is meant is not quite clear in the reference that “what is expected in the time period from now on” In spite of the fact that multi-languages are already used in Japanese society, in that reference not even a bit of such understanding is revealed. The argument is on the firm premise that “society as a whole” is managed only by the national language. The society seen by the entire 25 members of the National Language Sub-Committee seems to be a society that is integrated by the national language. Also it appears

In spite of this a primary school in Toyonaka City in Osaka Prefecture, in consideration of foreign students did not report the name of subject, “national language to the education commission. Instead it changed the name to the “Japanese language.” However, after the Sakei Shinbun report on this, the word was reverted to “national language.” “No national language found,” in Sakei Shinbun, Osak Edition, December 20, 1997, p. 20. Even if it cannot be helped that under the system of the school education act, no other word than national language is recognized as a subject name; it is unreasonable to use “national language in the case of foreigners.” It is certain that the fixed idea of “national language” for the “Japanese” and a sense of discrepancy in the actual site because of this exist.
that a national language is established as a tool necessary for social stability to cope with social changes accompanying globalization and the alienation between generations.23

VII. At the End

Tanaka Katsuhiko says that when by the “monopolistic dissemination of a single language” called the “language of the empire” the language is separated from ethnicity and without distinctions between ethnicity, nation-state, and social strata it becomes possible for all of them to participate in this communication community on an equal basis, and the difference in the same language by social class will be noted.24 Tanaka concludes his remarks with these words: he would like to think about things by treasuring the “intuition” about such a situation. To put it differently, it appears that Tanaka is skeptical about separating language and ethnicity.

As for me, I believe that even if limits are foreseeable from the beginning, separating ethnicity from language, and indeed a will to do so will provide an impetus to distance ourselves from such concepts as the created ethnicity and the created language and their derivative fantasies about the single-ethnic nation-state and the consideration of ethnicity as a component of nation-state. Needless to say, what I have introduced in this article is a short history of the concept of the national language in modern Japan, and the views as above derived from it. Whether such an analysis has a more general application is a problem that must be studied by instances in various areas. Since it is also a fact that there are instances of mutual influence in “East Asia,” it may be possible to create a territory called a

23. On can read this report in the deliberation particulars of the national language sub-committee of the cultural deliberation council in the home page of the Ministry of Education and Science (http://www.mext.go.jp/bmenu/shingi/).
“discipline of comparative language studies” which will enable organic comparison.

At this juncture what I would like to think about is whether where can be a language for common use when we conceive “East Asian Studies.” In other words, can we create a medium of communication suitable for equal participation in the congested and multi-layered “East Asia”? And is the use of a single language separated from ethnicity possible? To be honest, this is not a simple question.

For instance, the Japanese Empire explicitly or ineluctably preached the combination of language and ethnicity, and asked for such combination only of the ruling language. In this scheme the Imperial Japan attempted to control the character of multi-languages led by the Japanese language even if when it faced varieties of languages. If we make a lesson in disguise out of this that the Japanese Empire attempted to control “East Asia” and the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” with a stratified languages system, then in the 21st Century “East Asian Studies” using a stratified language system should not be necessary, and consequently a centralized and hegemonic common language should not be established. It is good enough that the language distribution should reflect congested and multi-layered “East Asia” as it is.

At present I am writing this manuscript in the Japanese language and I understand it will be published after it is translated into English. If I had been request to write it in English, I would have certainly rejected it. The reason for it is that partially my capability of writing in English is limited too, but also I feel I do not see necessity for those who participate in the place of composing the “East Asian Studies” should use the English language. In that sense I do agree with Tanaka Katsuhiko who is skeptical about separating language from ethnicity. However, thinking it possible to separate language from ethnicity-this is at once is to continue to turn the carriers of languages into multi-layered and multi-farious beings. Moreover, it may be helpful in seeking out mutually influencing plural common languages in place of a single common language.
I do not mean at all demanding the return to a “Chinese-character-type Moderated community.” Nor do I advocate again attempting the “Chinese Character Unification Association”\textsuperscript{25} formed by Izawa Shuji in the early 20th Century. I would just like to say that it is precious to write in one’s own language while expecting others to understand. That is to say, in one’s own words, and never in the language of ethnicity. Possibly through trial and error while such attempts continue, a vague community might become visible, (or it may not visible.)

\textsuperscript{25} The Chinese Character Unification Association formed in 1906 published in 1909. \textit{A New Chinese Characters Dictionary} was published in 1906 by the newly formed Chinese character Unification Society. In its preface Kaneko Kentaro, President of the Society, expressed his view that the “new civilization” amalgamated the “civilizations” of East and West, and Old and New by Japan should be spread to the “East Asian Continent” with the medium of Chinese characters. In this new dictionary about 6,000 Chinese characters were arranged according to numbers of strokes and common components. And their pronunciations were in Japanese sounds (Han and Wu sounds), Japanese alphabet sounds, Chinese sounds were in new pronunciation marks and Romanized Wade-Gile Romanization sounds as were uniquely devised by Izawa, and Hagul marks for Korean readings.