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JAPANESE (*Nihongo*) is spoken by virtually the entire population of Japan—some 121 million people as of 1986. In terms of the number of native speakers, it surpasses major European languages such as German and French, ranking sixth among the languages of the world. Despite this—and its long literary history, which goes back to the 8th century—the virtual isolation of Japanese from other languages sets it apart. Unlike the languages spoken on the Asian, European, and American continents, Japanese has been geographically isolated from other languages so that there is no linguistic contiguity like that often observed in Europe. Also, unlike some major European languages, Japanese is primarily spoken within the confines of its national boundaries. No other countries use it as either a first or a second language—though a few immigrant groups exist in Hawaii and the Americas, where daily users of Japanese are found among first and second generation residents. (For reference, see Sansom 1928, Alfonso 1966, Miller 1967, 1971, McCawley 1968, Kuno 1973, Martin 1975, Shibatani 1976, 1990, and Hinds 1986.)

1. History and dialects. Japanese is also internally insulated: it is the only actively used language native to the island nation. The other indigenous language, Ainu, once widely spoken in the northern island of Hokkaidō and the northern part of Honshū, is no longer in daily use; and Ryūkyūan, spoken far southwest of the main islands, is a separate group of language variants related to Japanese proper as part of a Japanese language family. [For details, see the Language List at the end of this article.] Thus, although Korean and Chinese as well as English and other European languages are used by foreign residents, Japan is virtually a one-language nation, inhabited mostly by monolinguals. This physical isolation is paralleled by the fact that Japanese is the only major language of the world whose genetic affiliation to other languages has not been clarified.

Despite its linguistically isolated status, Japanese is far from homogeneous. Indeed, a long-standing tradition

in studies on the origins of Japanese lays special emphasis on its mixed character. A hypothesis of genetic relationship of Japanese to Korean and to the Altaic family [q.v.] remains strong; but other hypotheses, now attracting increasing attention, consider Japanese to be a mixed language, deriving its lexical and grammatical properties from both Austronesian and Altaic, possibly with additions from Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. Modern Japanese, too, is a clear case of lexical mixture which parallels in scale that of the English lexicon.

Spoken in a mountainous country with numerous islands, Japanese is extremely rich in dialect variation. The major divisions are between the Ryūkyūan dialects and the mainland dialects—and within the latter, between the Western dialect group, represented by the Kyōto dialect of the ancient capital, and the Eastern group, centering on the modern capital of Tōkyō. Different dialects are often mutually unintelligible; but communication among their speakers is made possible by *kyootuu-go* 'common language', based on Tōkyō speech. *Kyootuu-go*, or its idealized version *hyoozyun-go* 'standard language', is used both in newspapers and on the national networks of radio and television broadcasting, as well as in college teaching; it provides a sense of linguistic unification throughout the country.

The apparently paradoxical status of Japanese as an isolated and unified, but internally heterogeneous language, results both from its geographic setting and from its long history of contacts and influence from abroad. Among the foreign languages that have influenced Japanese, Chinese occupies a special status. It has lent numerous words, as well as the writing system itself. Like the Latinate words in English, Sino-Japanese words constitute the learned vocabulary. The proportion of Sino-Japanese entries in Japanese dictionaries is as high as 60 percent, whereas other loanwords, primarily from Western languages (English in particular), amount to roughly 10 percent of the total entries. Words have often been borrowed into Japanese even when native equivalents already existed. This can result in a triplet consisting of a native Japanese word, a Sino-Japanese loan, and an English loan—e.g. *torikesi* (native), *kaiyaku* (Sino-Japanese), *kyanseru* (English), all referring to 'cancelation' of some kind. This may seem unmotivated and uneconomical, but the ostensibly synonymous words are in fact associated with different shades of meaning and stylistic values.

2. Writing system. Japanese is indebted to Chinese, a genetically unrelated language, in yet another respect.

The Japanese writing system evolved from both semantically and phonetically based uses of Chinese characters. The semantic use involved writing Japanese words with semantically equivalent Chinese characters, which correspond largely to the word unit; the phonetic use employed only the sound of the characters, disregarding their meaning. Alongside the original Chinese characters, which have been simplified to a certain degree, Japanese has developed two syllabaries known as *katakana* and *hiragana*. The former arose through the abbreviation of Chinese characters, and the latter from the 'grass' (cursive) style of writing those characters. These two *kana* syllabaries are set out in Table 1. Contemporary writing practice mixes Chinese characters and *hiragana*: the former are used primarily for content words, and the latter for grammatical function words, such as particles and inflectional endings. *Katakana* is used in writing Western proper names, loanwords from Western languages, and telegrams. *Rōmaji*, a system based on the Roman alphabet, is also used in writing the names of train stations (as an aid for foreigners), in signing documents written in Western languages, and in writing foreign acronyms (e.g. *ILO*, *IMF*). Sometimes all four scripts can be found in one sentence. The traditional way of writing is vertical, with the lines progressing from right to left; accordingly, books open in the reverse

TABLE 1. *Japanese Writing System.* Voicing oppositions, where applicable, are indicated by diacritical dots on the upper right hand corner of each *kana*; e.g. *gi* *ぎ*, *ぎ* as opposed to *ki* *き*, *キ*.

	a	ka	sa	ta	na	ha	ma	ya	ra	wa	
<i>Hiragana</i>	あ	か	さ	た	な	は	ま	や	ら	わ	
<i>Katakana</i>	ア	カ	サ	タ	ナ	ハ	マ	ヤ	ラ	ワ	
	i	ki	si	ti	ni	hi	mi		ri		
<i>Hiragana</i>	い	き	し	ち	に	ひ	み		り		
<i>Katakana</i>	イ	キ	シ	チ	ニ	ヒ	ミ		リ		
	u	ku	su	tu	nu	hu	mu	yu	ru		
<i>Hiragana</i>	う	く	す	つ	ぬ	む	ゆ	る			
<i>Katakana</i>	ウ	ク	ス	ツ	ヌ	ム	ユ	ル			
	e	ke	se	te	ne	he	me		re		
<i>Hiragana</i>	え	け	せ	て	ね	へ	め		れ		
<i>Katakana</i>	エ	ケ	セ	テ	ネ	ヘ	メ		レ		
	o	ko	so	to	no	ho	mo	yo	ro	wo	n
<i>Hiragana</i>	お	こ	そ	と	の	ほ	も	よ	ろ	を	ん
<i>Katakana</i>	オ	コ	ソ	ト	ノ	ホ	モ	ヨ	ロ	ワン	

direction from those in English. Today both vertical and horizontal writing are practiced, though the formal style requires vertical writing, as reflected in newspaper articles and formal letters.

3. Phonology. As reflected in the development of the syllabaries, Japanese words consist mainly of CV syllables. A (C)V syllable corresponds to one *hiragana* or *katakana* letter, with two major exceptions. One is the syllable-final nasal, seen in words like *hon* 'book': the other is the first part of a geminate consonant, as in *sippai* 'failure', *itta* 'went', *kekka* 'result'. Such a consonantal unit is considered equivalent to a CV syllable in terms of the rhythmic unit known as the *MORA*, which plays an important role in the composition of the Japanese poems called *waka* and *haiku*. In poetic composition, disyllabic words such as *hanpo* 'half a step' and *kekka* 'result' are counted as having three mora units, and would be equivalent in length to a trisyllabic word like *nohara* 'field'.

Japanese has a five-vowel system consisting of *i e a o u*. Among these, *u* is unrounded [ɯ]. This and the other high vowel *i* are often devoiced in a voiceless environment, e.g. between two voiceless consonants. The consonantal system comprises *p t k b d g z h r m n w y*. Palatalization and affrication of dentals affect the system pervasively. The former realizes *s z t d* as [ʃ dʒ tʃ dʒ] before *i*; the latter turns *t* into [ts] and *d* into [dz] before *u*. These allophonic rules also apply across the boundary between a verbal root and an inflectional ending. Thus the following alternations are observed in root-final *t*:

- (1) *tat-e* → [tate] 'stand-INFL(IMPER)'
tat-a + na-i → [tatanai] 'stand-INFL + NEG-INFL'
tat-i + mas-u → [tatʃimasɯ] 'stand-INFL + POLITE-INFL'
tat-u → [tatsɯ] 'stand-INFL(CONCL)'

Loan words are also affected by processes of palatalization and affrication. This, and their need to conform to the basic CV syllable structure, often change the phonological shape of loanwords drastically—e.g. Eng. *simple* → [ʃimpɯrɯ], *cutlet* → [katsɯretsɯ].

4. Morphology. Japanese is an agglutinative language, and employs a fair number of suffixes in its verbal morphology. Typical verbal expressions involve only a root and an inflectional ending, as in *sin-u* (die-INFL) 'die'; or a root, an auxiliary, and inflectional endings, as in *sin-a + se-ru* (die-INFL + CAUS-INFL) 'cause to die'. But lengthy forms are possible; e.g.,

- (2) *ik-a + se + rare + ta-i*
 GO-INFL + CAUS + PASS + DESID-INFL
 'want to be made to go'

Although both agglutinative morphology and widespread compound formation often yield lengthy forms, Japanese does not seem hospitable to them. Native Japanese words are not very long—generally between two and four syllables—and there appears to be strong pressure to confine word size to this level. The conflict between this ideal size and the lengthy words produced by compounding is commonly resolved by abbreviation; it sometimes applies ruthlessly, practically mutilating the original forms. Abbreviation applies to both native and Sino-Japanese compounds:

- (3) *hiru-mesi* (day-meal) → *hiru* 'lunch' (native)
seyoo-siki (West-style) → *yoo-siki* 'Western style'
 (Sino-Japanese)

Another favorite target of abbreviation is loan words from Western languages. When foreign loans are resyllabified to meet Japanese phonological requirements, the resulting forms are often far longer than source words. Ensuing abbreviation often leaves no hint of the original words:

- (4) *suto* < *sutoraiki* < (labor) *strike*
suupaa < *suupaa maaketto* < *super market*
waapuro < *waado purosesaa* < *word processor*

5. Syntax. Japanese has the word order S[subject] + Indirect Object + O[bject] + V[erb], as exemplified by this sentence:

- (5) *Taroo ga Jiroo ni hon o yatta.*
 TARO NOM JIRO DAT BOOK ACC gave
 'Taro gave a book to Jiro'.

Alternative ordering of these major constituents and adverbials is frequently observed—except for the verb, which always comes in final position. Ordering of other constituents follows the strict OV pattern, with the dependent before the head. Thus postpositions follow nouns and modifiers precede heads:

- (6) *Taroo ga* 'Taro NOM'
hon o 'book ACC'
 (7) *ookii hon* 'big book'
Taroo no hon 'Taro's book'

- (8) *[Taroo ga katta] hon*
 Taro NOM bought book'
 'the book which Taro bought'
- (9) *hayaku hasiru* 'fast run', i.e. 'run fast'

Questions are formed by addition of the sentence-final particle *ka*:

- (10) *Taroo wa kita.* 'Taro came.'
 → *Taroo wa kita ka?* 'Did Taro come?'

Unlike English, Japanese has no movement of a WH-element in WH-questions. Thus *nani* 'what?' remains in object position in a question:

- (11) *Taroo wa nani o katta no ka?*
 T. TOP what ACC bought COMP Q
 'What did Taro buy?'

One of the most important grammatical distinctions of Japanese is that between a TOPIC sentence and a TOPICLESS sentence. The difference between these is indicated by particles, and by the position of the topic constituent: the topic is marked by the particle *wa* and is placed at the beginning of a sentence, while non-topic nominal constituents are marked by case particles such as nominative *ga* and accusative *o*. The topicless sentence 12 is related to the topic sentences 13–14:

- (12) *Taroo ga sono hon o yondeiru.*
 T. NOM that book ACC reading
 'Taro is reading that book.'
- (13) *Taroo wa sono hon o yondeiru.*
 T. TOP that book ACC reading
 'Taro is such that he is reading that book.'
- (14) *Sono hon wa Taroo ga yondeiru.*
 that book TOP T. NOM reading
 'That book is such that Taro is reading it.'

In a topicless sentence, an agent (Taro), the patient (the book), and the activity of reading comprise a propositional content *{Taroo, sono hon, yondeiru}* which is grasped as one unitary entity. The topic construction, however, involves mental isolation of a central unit in the state of affairs. This analytic procedure of knowing or judging results in distinguishing two terms: (i) the topic and (ii) the balance which describes the topic—

e.g. *{Taroo}* vs. *{sono hon yondeiru}* or *{sono hon}* vs. *{Taroo yondeiru}*. The topic particle *wa*, in other words, has a function of both separating an entity from another term, and connecting the two. The Japanese topic construction, viewed in this manner, closely corresponds to the subject/predicate pattern of Western philosophical and grammatical traditions. The notional definition of subject as 'what is being talked about' in Western grammatical tradition is in fact a definition of topic. However, another popular Western definition of the subject sees it as an actor; this derives from the semantic property of the non-topic nominative noun phrase of a transitive clause. This confusing situation, where two separate notions are applied to the grammatical category of subject, results from the fact that, in English and other European languages, the topic and the subject are structurally merged. By contrast, a sentence like *Taro is reading that book* is translatable into Japanese either as the topic sentence *Taroo wa sono hon o yondeiru* or the non-topic sentence *Taroo ga sono hon o yondeiru*: the two notional definitions of the subject in the Western grammatical tradition can be appropriately assigned to the topic *Taroo wa* and the non-topic, nominative agent *Taroo ga*, respectively. The characteristic of the topic construction, as the representation *{Taroo} {sono hon o yondeiru}* indicates, is that the topic is not directly related to the lexical predicate; rather, the topic is predicated by the rest of the sentence elements. From this derives the notional definition of the topic as 'what is being talked about'. This indirect connection between the topic and the lexical predicate permits two distinctive constructions which are characteristic of topic-prominent languages. One is the 'double subject' construction:

- (15) *Zoo wa hana ga nagai.*
 elephant TOP nose NOM long
 'An elephant has a long trunk.'

This is analyzable as *{zoo} wa {hana ga nagai}*, where only *hana* 'nose' is predicated by the lexical predicate *nagai* 'long'. Note also the 'illogical' equational sentence of the following type:

- (16) *Boku wa unagi da.*
 I TOP eel COP
 (Lit.) 'I am an eel.'

The semantic connection between the topic and the nominal predicate of the sentences of this type, which

abound in Japanese colloquial speech, is supported by pragmatic factors. Thus the above sentence actually means 'I've decided on eel' or 'I want to order eel', when uttered in a restaurant serving eel dishes among others; or 'I've caught an eel' when uttered by someone on a fishing expedition.

6. Sociolinguistics. The strong contextual dependency of Japanese utterances goes beyond the interpretation of this kind of topic construction. The formality of speech setting, the nature of speaker and hearer, and the identity of persons referred to in the sentence (including the physical and social locations of these people) enter into the shaping of a Japanese utterance. Formal occasions call for polite language, which is characterized by the endings *desu* (for the copula *da*) and *masu* (for the verbal ending). For example, the plain form *Taroo ga iku* 'Taro goes' will be made into a polite form by the addition of the polite ending: *Taroo ga iki-masu*.

Polite forms express deference toward the addressee, and hence are addressee-controlled; but honorifics are referent-controlled. Thus a subject nominal referring to someone worthy of respect calls for the subject-honorific predicate form; a non-subject nominal with a similar referent requires the object-honorific form. There are two subject-honorific verbal forms. One involves the suffix *-(ra)reru*, which is identical to the passive suffix; the other uses the prefix *o-* attached to the nominalized form of a verb, followed by *ni naru* 'to become as'. Thus the subject honorific forms of the sentence *Sensei ga aruku* 'The teacher walks' are *Sensei ga aruka-reru* or *Sensei ga o-aruki ni naru*. The object-honorific form involves the prefix *o-* attached to the nominalized form of a verb, plus the verb *suru* 'do'; e.g.,

- (17) *Taroo ga sensei o tasukeru*. 'Taro helps the teacher.'
→ *Taroo ga sensei o o-tasuke suru*.

Since the addressee-controlled polite forms and the referent-controlled honorifics are independently parameterized, each can occur independently of the other, as in the above example. However, the addressee and the referent are often identical; or both may independently require honorific expressions. This leads to a situation where a polite form is combined with an honorific form:

- (18) *Aruka-re-masu ka?*
walk-HON-POL Q
'Are (you) going to walk?'

- (19) *Sensei ga oo-aruki ni nari-masu*.
teacher NOM HON-walk HON-POL
'The teacher walks.'

Both general and specific features are associated with men's and women's speech in Japanese. Overall, women's speech is characterized by softness and politeness. The impression of softness in women's speech derives from the less frequent use of Sino-Japanese forms in preference to native Japanese forms, and from the general avoidance of the 'rough' forms used by men. Women also use a higher politeness level than men, in that they use more polite language than men to describe the same situation. Specific lexical items are characteristic of different sexes. These include interjections or exclamatory expressions that are exclusively used by women, e.g. *maa* 'Wow!', *ara* 'Oh!'; 1st-person pronominal forms such as *boku*, *ore* (exclusively male forms); and sentence-final particles that modulate the force of a statement, e.g. *wa*, *wa-ne* (exclusively female forms) and *zo*, *ze* (exclusively male rough forms). Such forms are characteristic of informal speech. Most of these features disappear when the speech level is raised, and sex-neutral forms then dominate utterances.

In the actual use of different speech levels, the entire Japanese honorific system (including the use of polite forms and address forms) operates in a non-reciprocal manner: in a speech setting involving a social superior and an inferior, the superior can use either honorific or plain speech, but the inferior can only use honorific speech. It is not like the reciprocal formal/intimate alternations that characterize the use of the so-called T/V address forms in European languages, e.g. German *du/Sie* or French *tu/vous*.

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LANGUAGE LIST

- Amami-Oshima, Northern:** spoken on northern Amami-Oshima Island in northwestern Okinawa, Japan. Also called Oshima, Osima, or Oosima. Speakers over 50 use the vernacular among themselves, but can speak Standard Japanese. Those 20–50 understand the vernacular, but prefer Japanese. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Amami-Oshima, Southern:** spoken on several islands in Northern Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use the vernacular at home, but understand and use Standard Japanese. Most aged 20–50 understand the vernacular, but speak Japanese. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Japanese:** 121,000,000 speakers reported in 1986, in Japan. Also used in the United States and other countries.
- Kikai:** spoken on Kikai Island in northeastern Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use Kikai at home, but can understand and use Japanese. Most aged 20–50 understand Kikai, but speak Japanese. Most people under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Kunigami:** spoken on several islands in central Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use Kunigami at home, but can understand and use Japanese. Those aged 20–50 understand Kunigami, but mainly use Japanese at home. Most people under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Miyako:** spoken on several islands in southern Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use Miyako at home, but understand and speak Japanese. Those aged 20–50 can understand Miyako, but mainly use Japanese at home. Most people under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Okinawan, Central:** spoken on several islands in central Okinawa, Japan. Also called Okinawan or Luchu. Speakers over 50 use the vernacular at home, but can use Standard Japanese. Those aged 20–50 understand the vernacular, but use Japanese at home. Most people under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Oki-No-Erabu:** spoken on Oki-No-Erabu Island in north central Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use the vernacular at home, but can use Standard Japanese. Those aged 20–50 understand the vernacular, but use Japanese at home. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.

- Toku-No-Shima:** spoken on Toku-No-Shima Island in northern Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use the vernacular at home, but understand and use Standard Japanese. Those aged 20–50 understand the vernacular, but use Japanese at home. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Yaeyama:** spoken on several islands in southern Okinawa, Japan. Also called Yayeyama. Speakers over 50 use Yaeyama at home, but can use Standard Japanese. Those aged 20–50 understand Yaeyama but mainly use Japanese at home. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.
- Yonaguni:** spoken on Yonaguni Island in southern Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 speak Yonaguni at home, but understand Japanese. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese. Those in between understand Yonaguni, but most use Japanese at home.
- Yoron:** spoken on Yoron Island in north central Okinawa, Japan. Speakers over 50 use Yoron at home, but also use Standard Japanese. Those from 20 to 50 understand Yoron, but mainly speak Standard Japanese at home. People under 20 are monolingual in Japanese.

JAQÍ LANGUAGES are spoken in western Bolivia, southern Peru, and adjacent parts of Chile and Argentina; see Čestmír Loukotka, *Classification of South American Indian languages* (Los Angeles: Latin American Center, University of California, Los Angeles, 1968), pp. 268–270. Whether the obvious similarities between Jaqí and Quechua are the result of close genetic affiliation or solely of contact remains controversial.

LANGUAGE LIST

- Aymara, Central:** 2,000,000 to 2,200,000 speakers reported in 1987, with 1,790,000 or more in the Altiplano west of the eastern Andes, Bolivia, 300,000 to 500,000 in Peru, and others in Chile and Argentina.
- Aymara, Southern:** spoken from Lake Titicaca toward the ocean in southern Peru.
- Jaquaru:** around 2,000 speakers reported in 1987, in Yauyos Province, Peru. Also called Haqearu, Haqaru, or Haq'aru. There are a few monolinguals, all women; most speakers are bilingual in Spanish. The Kawki dialect is nearly extinct. Jaquaru proper has 73 percent lexical similarity with Aymara; Kawki has 79 percent.

JARAWAN LANGUAGES are spoken in scattered areas of eastern Nigeria and northern Cameroon; they form a top-level constituent of the South Bantoid branch of the Niger-Congo languages [qq.v.].