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Scope

“Global Perspectives on Japan” focuses on developing a global perspective on the study of Japan and Asia. The journal promotes innovative, interdisciplinary, inter-regional and transnational approaches to Japanese Studies.

The journal aims to be a venue for scholarship in E.M.E.A. region with a special focus on Turkey and neighboring regions. It especially encourages scholars from the Middle East, Balkans, Central Asia and the Mediterranean but also welcomes scholars from other parts of the world.

GPJ invites papers in the fields of history, humanities, and social sciences including topics of the past and the present. In addition to articles, the journal publishes occasional article size translations, book reviews, and surveys of current trends in Japanese and Asian Studies.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN

No. 6

Table of Contents

Editor's Note

Erdal K. Yalcin 9

Abstracts 13

Articles

Narrative Development across Cultural and Historical Contexts: A Case Study of the Asian Versions of *The Homecoming Husband*

Saida Khalmirzaeva 19

Japanese Sōtō Zen Monastery as a Worldly Institution

Merve Susuz Aygöl..... 38

Strengthening Germany-Japan Security Cooperation: An Examination of the Trends, Reasons, and Challenges

Weijing Xing..... 70

An Elite Analysis: Reimagining LDP's Factions, 1955-1993

Yalın Akçevin 100

Selected Abbreviated Translations

International Comparison of Constitutional Reform Processes In Terms of The Requirements of Indirect And Direct Democracy

Takashi Kitamura 125

The Image of "the State" Seen in Japanese Historical Novels: From Nation-state to a New Public Order Like The EU

Inoue Noriyuki 157

**Current Status and Issues of Basic Education Guarantee
in Japan under the Corona Crisis**

Makiko Shinya, Yohei Tanada 171

**Cognitive Linguistics and Japanese-Language Education:
How to deal with cross-cultural conflict?**

Michiyo Moriya 181

**From The Perspective of Language Simplification
Easy Japanese and Sign Language News**

Matsumoto Miho 197

**Constitutional Amendment Debates in Japan
Translated Abstracts of Selected Recent Japanese Literature**

**Public Opinion on Constitutional Amendment in Postwar Japan:
An Analysis of a “Pooling the Polls” Method**

Hirofumi Miwa, Shiro Sakaiya 217

**A Study on the Civilian Control concerning the Constitution of Japan,
Article 66th Paragraph 2**

Isaku Shibata 217

**Democracy and Constitutional Amendment regarding
the Constitution of Japan**

Ryosuke Yamada 218

**The Process of Making “Draft of Constitutional Revisions by Hisatada
HIROSE”: The Note of Arguments About Constitutional Revisions**

Keisuke Arakuni 219

**On Liberal Democratic Party’s Draft Revision of
Japanese Constitution**

Shigeaki Iijima 220

Problems of the Bill for a Referendum on the Amendment of the Constitution of Japan	
Shigeaki Iijima.....	221
Memorandum on the Referendum Law for the Constitutional Amendments: From the Perspective of the People's Freedom of Speech on the Right to Know	
Hiroyuki Ota.....	223
The Making of the Amendment Clause in the Japanese Constitution of Japan - Formation on Process of the MacArthur Draft and its Background	
Masatoshi Takahashi	224
Significance of Unwritten Constitution in England and Japan: As Help of Consideration of the Problem of Amendment to the Japanese Constitution	
Yoshimine Komori.....	226
Comments on the Chapter 1 “The Emperor” of the Draft for the Amamdment of the Constitution of Japan by the Liberal Democratic Parly of Japan: In Contrast to the Current Constitution	
Toru Enoki.....	227
A Short Bibliography on Recent Scholarship	
Hiroto Naiki.....	229
Book Review: Late Ottoman Istanbul Theater from a Japanese Perspective by Yuzo Nagata and Hikari Egawa	
Selçuk Esenbel	237

Cognitive Linguistics and Japanese-Language Education: How to deal with cross-cultural conflict?*

Michiyo Moriya

(SOKA University)

Introduction

As we all know, globalization has spread all over the world for a long time. It is widespread in various spheres of Japanese society as well. Even every Japanese university is promoting globalization under the name of the “300,000 International Students Plan” by means of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, and other ministries. Companies are also proactively expanding their employment quotas for international students and foreigners, and that is why many international students now hope to get a job at a Japanese company. This movement has exceeded expectations and is having a major impact on the field of Japanese language education.

A particularly noteworthy problem in the field of Japanese language education is that companies are now demanding higher levels of Japanese language proficiency and the ability to adapt to different cultures than ever before in the international students they hire. In general, advanced Japanese language proficiency for foreigners has been considered to be equivalent to passing the advanced level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, commonly known as N1. However, there are now voices from companies saying that even if foreigners have N1-level Japanese skills, companies

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cannot say that their Japanese skills are sufficient to carry forward their work. International students are demanded not only to write entry sheets and resumes accurately but also to have the ability to make presentations and have discussions at the same level as a senior Japanese university student even during internships. In addition to this, the ability to adapt to different cultures is also demanded.

Japanese language education at many Japanese universities has been unable to keep up with the demands –which can be said to have undergone such rapid changes– of companies in recent years, and there are quite a few cases where collaboration and support are obtained from departments like career centers that provide job-hunting support. It is not that difficult to develop Japanese language skills such as preparing individual documents and giving presentations because even foreign students with a solid foundation in the N1 can acquire such technical skills without too much trouble. The biggest problem lies in the fact that companies look for employees having the ability to deal with different cultures and develop this skill, in addition to communication and Japanese language skills. Even though there are many cases showing that international students, finally landing a place of employment, lose their jobs due to the lack of ability in the Japanese language, in fact, there are also a lot of cases showing that conversations in Japanese trigger cross-cultural conflicts and thereupon, lead to losing their jobs. No measures have yet been taken to deal with such cross-cultural conflicts.

For such situations, for example, from the standpoint of Japanese language education, the first thing to consider is the development of teaching materials that hypothesize cross-cultural conflicts in the workplace and offer hints for avoiding such conflicts. In fact, in the last few years, a series of teaching materials on “Business Japanese in Global Companies” have been published one after another. However, one case does not apply to all learners whose mother tongue is various. Furthermore, there are infinite examples of cross-cultural conflicts, and since the causes are so complicated, covering everything in teaching materials is practically impossible. To begin with, seeing that we live in a global environment, should not we think that cross-cultural conflict is unavoidable? In other words, rather than assuming all cross-cultural conflict possibilities and devising measures to avoid them, the method of having a certain level of knowledge and formulating countermeasures like

what factors are likely to cause a conflict and how to deal with it when it occurs is more realistic and appropriate.

Based upon the abovementioned, this paper examines the current situation and problems surrounding Japanese language education at Japanese universities, analyses the cases of cross-cultural conflicts from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, and based on that, proposes the training of the mentors equipped with knowledge of cognitive linguistics to cope with cross-cultural conflicts.

1. Status and problems surrounding Japanese language education at Japanese universities

1.1 Movements/Trends of Universities and International Students in the Global Era

As mentioned in 1, in 2008, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology; as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare; the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism jointly announced the outline of the “300,000 International Students Plan”.¹

The purpose is ① to make Japan a country more open to the world and to expand the flow of people, goods, money, and information between Asia and the rest of the world by accepting 300,000 thousand international students by 2020 as a part of the “Global Strategy”. In doing so, while taking into consideration countries, regions, fields, etc., Japan is strategically acquiring brilliant international students through cooperating with highly skilled human resources by accepting them. ② For this reason, Japan will systematically implement the following measures, from the motivation to arouse the interest of international students to come to Japan, to the entrance exam, enrollment, immigration, and acceptance in university and society, up until the path after completing a course or graduation like finding employments; and, the

1 Regarding the outline of the 300,000 International Students Plan: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houdou/20/07/08080109.htm

relevant ministries, agencies, organizations, and the like all-embracingly and coordinately cooperate and promote plans. In summary, this is the point.

Under this guidance, universities in Japan have greatly expanded their acceptance of international students, and companies are also making full-fledged efforts to hire international students because the problem of declining birthrate becoming more apparent right now. Also, in the past, most international students would choose to return home or go on to higher education upon graduation, but now 80% of them want to find a job at a Japanese company. However, it is reported that only 20% of this 80% are able to find employment. According to the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), as of May 1, 2006, the total number of international students was 117,927, and the number of people who had permission to change their immigration status was 5,878. It is thought that this is because the communication and Japanese language skills of international students have not reached the level required by companies. Then, what kind of abilities and Japanese language skills do companies look for in international students?

1.2 Qualifications and Japanese language skills required for international students

According to a company survey² regarding the hiring of foreign students, the qualifications companies look for in international students³ are, from top to bottom: 1. Communication skills 55.1%, 2. Japanese language skills 45.6%, 3. Vitality 27.2%, 4. Ability to deal with different cultures 23.4%, 5. Basic academic ability 17.1%, 6. Cooperativeness 15.8%, 7. Ability to speak languages other than Japanese and English 14.6%, 8. Enthusiasm 13.9%, 9. English ability 11.4%, 10. The richness of ideas 10.1%, 11. Reliability 8.2%, 12. Leadership 7.6%, 13. Sociability 7.0%, 14. General knowledge 6.3%, and 15. Brightness 5.7%. In other words, the “skills” that many companies look for in foreigners are not English proficiency or basic business knowledge, as was traditionally thought, but Japanese proficiency itself, communication skills, and the ability to adapt to unfamiliar cultures if we set aside the vitality. International students who wish to find employment are required to have the

2 November 2015 survey by Disco Career Research Co., Ltd.

3 Here, the case of international students majoring in humanities is shown.

ability to communicate with Japanese people accurately in Japanese and the ability to adapt to different cultures.

International students who wish to work in Japan must learn a wide range of Japanese and improve their skills as equal to that of Japanese fourth-year university students. For example, they are expected to give 1. Documents (resume, entry sheet, and self-introduction) and to take 2. Recruitment tests: ability tests (I language questions, II non-verbal questions, and personality tests), general knowledge, and English tests. In addition to those, they should write motivational letters, self-promotion, career view, etc. These tests have the same content as those Japanese university students are taking and require the same common knowledge and “Japanese language skills”. Common knowledge includes current affairs of Japan as well and the language part includes questions related to the structure, lexicon, and expressions of the Japanese language.

What we can reaffirm here is that Japanese language education up to now has not taken into consideration the development of Japanese language skills that can be used in Japanese society. This is also reflected in the criticism that the N1 level is insufficient for Japanese society. However, as indicated on the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) website,⁴ the meaning of passing N1 is to prove how far you have mastered the advanced level of Japanese, by nature, it does not guarantee the operational ability in the real world. This is well illustrated by the fact that most of the examples of conversations that actually appear on the exam are limited to those within the university. However, companies are now requesting Japanese language proficiency that can be used in Japanese society. This indicates that there is a considerable gap between the knowledge of advanced Japanese learners and that of ordinary Japanese people.

There is a Japanese proficiency exam for Japanese people to measure their Japanese language proficiency. Level 2 of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test is a test of Japanese proficiency equivalent to that of a university graduate.⁵ In that sense, it may serve as a guideline for the Japanese language required of modern international students. Below is an example of the “honorific”

4 Japanese Language Proficiency Test <http://www.jlpt.jp/>

5 Japanese Language Test <https://www.nihongokentel.jp/>

from the past questions of the 2nd grade. For international students with N1, establishing the scene is the first case and this is a quite difficult issue.

[There was a late-night dinner at the house of a senior from your company. Now, it is too late, and your senior recommends you stay overnight.]

1. I know it is inexcusable. I am sorry for the inconvenience. I will accept your kind offer and stay tonight.
2. I know it is inexcusable but that would help a lot. I was hoping you could let me stay. I will accept your kind offer.
3. I am very grateful for your consideration. If you articulate so gracefully, it is really difficult to decline it.

If you look at the handbook of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, you will see differences in reference books for foreigners. For example, in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, questions about giving and receiving expressions have decreased in recent years, while questions related to giving and receiving expressions are extremely common in the Japanese Proficiency Test for natives. This suggests that Japanese people frequently use giving and receiving expressions in their daily lives and that they are conscious of calling attention to this point. In this regard, the Japanese Language Test proclaims, "It's everyday Japanese that we use causally, but there are many unexpected misunderstandings and false impressions. The Japanese Proficiency Test is a means to become able to use Japanese correctly." Again, the Japanese Proficiency Test says, "In order to measure overall Japanese proficiency, a wide range of questions will be asked from six areas." The six areas that the Japanese Proficiency Test referred to are lexicon, grammar, the meaning of words, kanji, honorifics, and expressions. The "meaning of words" and "honorifics" which include historical phrases and idioms are separate items, and it is close to the framework of "national language." The problem is that the Japanese Proficiency Test targets native Japanese speakers after all and assumes communication among mutual Japanese speakers; consequently, it does not suppose the communication of people from different cultures of the global era. For this reason, although it is useful for understanding and organizing concepts that are unique to Japanese people, it is unlikely that this

will lead to support for acquiring the ability to adapt to different cultures.

If so, what should be done to cultivate the ability suitable to different cultures in Japan? I would like to consider this point from the perspective of cognitive linguistics by citing several examples.

2. Examples and analysis of cross-cultural conflicts

2.1 Cognitive linguistic perspective

Cognitive linguistics sheds light on the existence and characteristics of native speakers who control linguistic forms and activities behind them. Therefore, when considering the field of Japanese language education addressed in this paper, I am interested in the differences between Japanese native speakers and native speakers of the Japanese learner's native language. It can be said that many learners are always thinking about how they can truly understand Japanese. For this reason, with a mere "because it is a rule" kind of superficial explanation, learners cannot get intellectual satisfaction. As a result, they often stall teachers by asking questions such as:

- ① "Why don't you say 'I' which is the first person in Japanese?"
- ② "Why are sentence-ending particles often used in Japanese?"
- ③ "Why are honorifics necessary in Japanese?"
- ④ "Why is there so much use of give-and-receive verbs in Japanese?"
- ⑤ "Why are intransitive expressions preferred in Japanese?"

In fact, by giving explanations based on the perspective of cognitive linguistics, these questions can promote and deepen the understanding of the learners. In other words, the key concept here to understand is the tendency of the Japanese speaker to grasp the situation subjectively and the tendency of the learner, supposing s/he is a Chinese native speaker, to grasp the situation objectively. (Ikegami & Moriya, 2010) Japanese speakers do not objectify or abstract the situation they are trying to verbalize. So, they do not reflect their own image in the situation and verbalize the situation as they

perceive it subjectively. As a result, one of the clearly observed characteristics is the natural tendency of the speaker not to verbalize himself. ① The one above is a typical example. In this regard, in English and Chinese, which are characterized by their objective grasp of the situation, the speaker is abstracted and verbalized with personal pronouns such as “I” or “我”. On the other hand, Japanese speakers, who tend to grasp things subjectively, are inclined *to* talk to themselves or we can say, be self-spoken in terms of verbalizing the situation while they are in the situation. Therefore, the statement of utterance is likely to be said without it being clear whether it is intended for the listener or not. Therefore, as in ②, we need a final particle that has a function aimed at the listener, such as sharing the situation with the listener or calling the listener’s attention to the situation. This can be confirmed by removing the sentence-ending particle 「ね」 “ne” from the greetings like 「いい天気だね」 [ii tenkidane] “It’s nice weather, isn’t?” and 「そうだね」 [soudane] “That’s right”. This orientation leads to the direction of verbalizing the social relationship with the speaker without abstracting the speaker’s perception of the listener with personal pronouns. As a result, as in ③, starting with respectful expressions, modesty expressions, polite expressions, language differences between men and women, and the like forms that express the social recognition of the listener are used attentively. Then, the tendency of the subjective grasp is the speaker’s own relationship with the situation – mainly emotions and psychological changes- while avoiding abstracting and verbalizing her/himself. This point is extremely prominent in Japanese, in situations related to the speaker, we observe phenomena accompanied by passive expressions, the giving-and-receiving expressions④, and tendency verbs such as 「来る」 [kuru] “to come”, and in many cases, they are grammaticalized. In this sense, Japanese speakers have developed to emphasize expressions as receivers. This tendency of speakers to place their own stances as receivers lead to their tendency to find value in expressions in which their actions are realized by natural trends, rather than expressions in which their actions are carried out by the speaker’s will. This tendency leads to the preference for spontaneous passive expressions by means of intransitive verbs including 「ナル」 “naru” expressions, as in ⑤. In Japanese, “naru” is related to respectful and polite expressions, as well as expressions of inevitability and obligation.

For native speakers of a foreign language, no matter how much they comprehend the language, it is difficult to master it perfectly. However, their ambition to deepen their intellectual comprehension is by no means insignificant. Cognitive linguistics, especially the concept of grasping the situation as shown above, can be said to be extremely effective in Japanese language education in that it provides clues to understanding for enthusiastic learners and indicates the possibility of support. This is effective not only in so-called Japanese language education but also in understanding cross-cultural conflicts.

In the field of Japanese language education overseas, for example in China, research papers from the perspective of cognitive linguistics have been increasing in recent years. The background to this is that when comparing Japanese and Chinese, it is not possible to generate natural Japanese with only a formal understanding of grammar, and even sentences that have no grammatical problems can produce communicative conflicts in actual use. This is because of the problems that cannot be solved by formal consideration alone and the concept of grammatical categories is different between Japan and China. Along with this, there is growing interest in the characteristics of native speakers of Japanese that exist in the background through the formal characteristics of the Japanese language. It is thought that both teachers and learners in Japan understand and are beginning to be aware of its importance. This progress in awareness of speaker cognition should be welcomed, especially because, it deepens our understanding of conflict in cross-cultural communication. However, even if these learners develop a cognitive linguistic understanding of themselves as native speakers of Japanese as well as being native speakers themselves, this does not mean that the problem of conflict in actual cross-cultural communication will be resolved all at once. This is because information about the Japanese language from a cognitive linguistic perspective is still inadequate, and not only is there a lack of sufficient understanding by learners, but it is also possible that the subjective understanding of Japanese speakers is not sufficient. So, even if a typical example is understood, it is difficult to become a guideline for avoiding cross-cultural friction in actual conversation situations. In other words, there is a big gap between how to aim for the natural Japanese generation and how to avoid conflicts that arise when people from different

cultures (here, a different understanding of the situation) use Japanese to communicate.

It is the listener and reader, not the speaker, who conclude or recognize that a conflict has occurred in cross-cultural communication. Until now, it was assumed that native speakers of Japanese were the ones who felt cross-cultural conflict in conversations in Japanese. However, in a global environment where Japanese is used as a medium language, the problem of conflict is not so simple. Japanese by native Japanese speakers may cause cross-cultural conflict for speakers of different cultures and Japanese by foreign speakers may cause cross-cultural conflicts for native Japanese speakers as well. In the following, using the case of Japanese and Chinese as an example, I will present a conflict caused by a difference in understanding the situation and attempt a cognitive linguistic analysis.

2.2 Case analysis

Case 1. 「おばあさんが横断歩道で困っていたので、手を引いてあげました。」

“An old lady was having trouble at the crosswalk, so I helped her out.”

The above example is given as an example sentence for 「～してあげる」 “~shiteageru” in the book, titled “Japanese Grammar Patterns”. It is an example of natural Japanese, and it can be said that the sentence is extremely context-dependent. In actual conversations, foreigners often encounter such utterances and are puzzled. However, in current Japanese language education, there is no education that generates high-context sentences based on such subjective grasps, and it is extremely difficult to understand even for advanced and N1 level Japanese learners - of course, there are differences depending on their mother tongue -. The example sentence above becomes the following in Chinese.

(1) ‘我看到了一位老奶奶通馬路很困難、就上去牽着她的手、領她通了馬路

(Literally: I saw an old lady having great trouble crossing the road. I went to her, took her hand, and led her across the crosswalk.)

As an example of low-context language, you can see that the necessary items

are verbalized. Native Japanese speakers often do not realize that the meaning can only be accurately conveyed when the words are supplemented like this. Japanese speakers find sentences like the Japanese translation above to be repetitive because they say what they understand without saying it, and they find the original sentence to be more quickly understood and much preferable. This is because Japanese speakers, who tend to grasp things subjectively, can imagine the scene even when they are not there, and comprehend it by complementing the meaning of the sentence with the image. In other words, here, Japanese people are envisaging that they are holding the hand of a troubled old lady who cannot cross the pedestrian walkway and walking together with her. Therefore, it is considered that, from a Japanese speaker's point of view, "highly contextual" means both speakers and listeners picture the virtual image of the situation and complement the sentence with it, rather than solely relying on the context of the utterance. On the other hand, in the case of native Chinese speakers who tend to grasp the situation objectively, rather than being present in the situation, they separate themselves from the situation as it were, they are getting a panoramic viewpoint and catch hold of the situation abstractly. In other words, they show a low-context tendency by expressing themselves in a way that is realistic and dependent on the situation observed in the utterance. Therefore, when they read the above sentence, rather than drawing a concrete image, they tend to understand it as, "I held the hand of a troubled old lady on the pedestrian crossway," i.e., they get only the literal meaning. So, it's no surprise that it feels like it doesn't make sense. To put it another way, speakers of low-context languages prefer to express logical consistency in linguistic forms.

These differences are by no means small. Native Japanese speakers must understand that the cause of the conflict in cross-cultural communications with foreign language speakers is that such high-context expressions are based on subjective understanding, and these expressions are extremely difficult to get for foreigners.

Case 2. An e-mail from a university student

At a certain university, a Chinese exchange student was unable to meet with his seminar teacher at the scheduled time and was unable to get his seal of approval for a part-time job. Since he wanted to submit the documents

quickly, he had another faculty member sign them. When he typed to his seminar teacher as 「先生がお留守だったので、他の先生に認印をいただきました」 “Because you were away, I asked another teacher to sign for me,” he was severely scolded by his teacher: “What a rude way of speaking!”⁶

The writer of this e-mail is a Chinese exchange student who has a low context and tends to grasp the situation objectively. From this student’s point of view, he could not understand why he was being scolded so harshly even though he had accurately conveyed the facts as they were. On the other hand, the teacher reading the e-mail is a Japanese speaker and tends to subjectively grasp the situation and having high context, was displeased with his saying that her absence became the source of bother for another teacher and advised him “not to say everything too openly.” In this case, there is a fundamental difference between the Chinese 「好像」 “like” and the Japanese 「ようだ/みたいた」 [youda/mitaida] “similar to/as if”, that is to say, there is a big difference concerning the expressions of deduction between Japanese and Chinese. From the point of view of a Chinese speaker, the Chinese equivalent of “the teacher was absent” is 「老師不在」 “the teacher was absent”, which is an expression that accurately conveys the fact. Here if we choose 「好像」 “like” as the expression of deduction and say 「老師好像不在」 “The teacher does not seem to be there” it becomes an expression that concludes she is absent even if there is no proper confirmation. From a Chinese speaker’s point of view, this is disrespectful behavior towards the teacher, and any speaker who tends to grasp the situation objectively would feel it. On the other hand, Japanese listeners, who tend to grasp things subjectively, are likely to argue that the “absence of the teacher” is the cause of asking another teacher for a seal of approval even if they are almost certain of the “absence of the teacher”. Therefore, by avoiding assertions and using inferential expressions to avoid these dangers, we leave the implication that confirmation of absence is the speaker’s responsibility. It is easy to have the idea that this leads to politeness. The process of thinking and verbalization of both is parallel, so to speak.

Now, what if the positions were reversed? If a Japanese student tells a Chinese teacher, “I’ve requested it from another teacher because you were

6 This is the experience of a Chinese exchange student who was a student of the author.

absent”, the Chinese teacher responds suspiciously, maybe unpleasantly, “Why didn’t you properly check if I was really absent or not?” It should be noted here that, now, both the speaker who sent the e-mail and the listener who received the e-mail believe that the unpleasant emotions that they feel derive from the personality of the addressee. In other words, it is difficult to notice that it is due to cross-cultural conflict caused by differences in understanding of the situation. If conflict is triggered by utterances between different cultures, or rather between speakers with different understandings of the situation, it is necessary to first suspect the possibility that the difference in understanding of the situation is the cause of the cross-cultural conflict.

Conclusion

Cross-cultural conflict over/to concern the Japanese language occurs regardless of whether the person conducting the communication is a native Japanese speaker or a foreigner. In other words, conflict is not caused by one being right and the other being wrong. Conflict is acknowledged only by the listener who perceives it as conflict, and it is not necessarily true that only a native speaker can feel the unnaturalness in the sentence. In other words, even a native speaker cannot become a custodian of cross-cultural conflict through language. In this sense, apart from the tendency of native speakers to assume responsibility for Japanese speakers as listeners, cross-cultural conflict is decisively the responsibility of listeners, and how to produce natural utterances and how to avoid friction are different issues. There is a possibility of cross-cultural conflict to occur between people with different perceptions of situations, for both native Japanese speakers and native speakers of foreign languages who tend to grasp situations objectively, i.e., they are mutually on an equal footing. A native Japanese speaker’s natural Japanese may cause conflict with a foreign-language speaker who has a different understanding of the situation. It seems that neither the field of Japanese language education nor the field of cognitive linguistics has actively dealt with such new cross-cultural conflicts and produced concrete measures to avoid them. On the other hand, while the speaker aims to generate Japanese-like Japanese, it is necessary to pay attention to what kinds of conflicts can be caused by the difference in understanding of the situation between them.

Japanese language education in this paper does not only target foreign language speakers. This is because cross-cultural conflict is a problem for native Japanese speakers as well. Unless Japanese university students take lectures on Japanese language, linguistics, and cross-cultural communication theory, they have very few opportunities to notice their tendency to understand situations as native speakers. Many people join global companies without realizing it. It seems that there are quite a few people who tacitly agree that communication within Japanese companies should be handled in a Japanese-style “polite” manner. When accepting foreigners, there are certainly various acceptance arrangements to prepare. However, there is almost no discussion that it is necessary for Japanese people and native speakers of Japanese to renew their awareness of the characteristics of cross-cultural communication and develop the ability to deal with conflict. This is extremely problematic. On the other hand, in current Japanese language departments overseas, for example in China, almost no lectures entitled “Cross-Cultural Communication” are offered. This might also be an issue for future studies.

Assuming that conflict is inevitable, it is necessary to promote cognitive linguistics as a part of Japanese language education, especially the training of mentors who understand differences in perceiving situations.

When working in a global environment, a mentor is someone who gives advice based on his/her own experiences -when troubles arise due to cultural differences, teaches cultural differences, and helps people when they get angry in order not to cut off communications.⁷ Of course, it is also necessary between international students and teachers. A mentor can be a faculty member or a student. The goal of mentoring for all speakers is to acquire mentoring knowledge and skills. In this way, in the midst of a different culture, everyone understands and respects the characteristics of a native speaker of their own language, and also understands and respects the characteristics of speakers of other languages, aiming for clues mutual understanding. It is necessary to think about the problem in question before aiming to become angry and stop thinking. So, the knowledge of cognitive linguistics provides the time and wisdom to temporarily take care of the problem at such times and reconsider.

⁷ See Berlitz Japan edition.

From here, it is also necessary for students who are native speakers of Japanese to aim to become mentors, and such “Japanese language education” is also necessary. I hope that learners will also enjoy different cultures, explain their own cultures to others, grow as good mentors, and acquire the ability to contribute to cross-cultural communication. This will lead to global mutual understanding. Today, you should not quit the company or finish only with the experience of practicing another culture if a cross-cultural conflict arises.

Some say that if English is used as a common language, the cross-cultural conflict will not surface. However, considering that the tendency to grasp the situation is related to conflict, it turns out that the problem is not so simple. English speakers certainly show a tendency to grasp things objectively, unlike Japanese speakers. In the first place, Japan has not paid much attention to the differences between British and American English. Moreover, even if English is used in Japanese global companies, many of the people who speak -that specific- English are people from Japan and other Asian countries, and of course, they have a different understanding of the situation than native English people. Without solving these problems, it would be too hasty to say that English should be the common language of companies. Taking a closer look at the existence of humans behind words and capturing their close relationship with actual utterance is the homework of cognitive linguistics, and what we can do is promote and support it.

As I was keenly aware through the case analysis, research based on cognitive linguistics has only just begun in terms of dealing with intercultural conflicts. In the future, it will be necessary to clarify the process and conflict between cognition and linguistic forms with the aim of mutual understanding of researchers who grasp different situations.

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