

world. However, many of the smaller language communities are losing their languages rapidly. To invoke the environmental slogan: We must think locally but act globally. That is, local languages should be used for expressing local identities, and global languages for communicating beyond local levels and for expressing our identities as citizens of the world. The active cultivation of stable multilingualism can provide a harmonious pathway through the clash of values inherent in today's struggle between the global and local, between uniformity and diversity. Baker & Prys Jones (205) adopt Ofelia Garcia's metaphor of the language garden, in which a wide variety of flowers are actively cultivated for their beauty and richness.

Naturally, any reviewer could quibble over the coverage of the encyclopedia, or disagree with the interpretations of controversial topics, or find minor inaccuracies on particular points. (For example, the entry on Papua New Guinea states that the country was taken over by Britain in the 19th century (452); this omits the period of German colonial rule from 1884 to 1914, over the northeastern part of the mainland and the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago.) But all in all, this is a magnificent book, a rich language garden, which I am sure will be widely used and appreciated.

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TAKESI SIBATA, *Sociolinguistics in Japanese contexts*. Ed. by Tetsuya Kunihiro, Fumio Inoue, & Daniel Long. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1999. Pp. xvi, 489. Hb DM 248.00.

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The assumptions made by readers of *Language in Society* and other English-language academic publications, when they begin to read, are so widely shared that they are seldom reflected on or made explicit. These assumptions have to do with European traditions of scholarship; and over time, they have made their way around the world because of the unquestioned belief in their universal applicability. But other approaches do exist, although most are never featured in publications in Western languages. I commented on this situation long ago, but it persists to this day: "The work done by Japanese sociolinguists is virtually unknown to non-Japanese readers. The reason is probably that this work has developed independently of the Western disciplines. The fact that Japanese researchers have worked independently of the Western tradition has inevitably resulted in unique assumptions, orientations or approaches when viewed from an international perspective" (Ide 1986:281).

Now, with this volume, it is for the first time possible for Western scholars to gain an insight into such an alternative approach. This book is a collection of

articles by Dr. Takesi Sibata, the father of Japanese sociolinguistics, compiled and translated by his students and their colleagues. It is not too much to say that most sociolinguists in Japan, with the exception of those trained overseas, are under the influence, indirectly if not directly, of the research goals, methods, and orientation set by Dr. Sibata. The major articles were completed and published on his sixtieth birthday in 1978, under the title *Shakai gengogaku no kadai* [Problems of sociolinguistics], and the book under review is a translation of most of the articles in that collection.

What made Sibata's works unique and independent of Western orientation? He once confessed to me that he would have been interested in the theoretical study of language if he had served at a university, rather than at the National Language Research Institute. He was always acutely aware of the fact that a large number of his fellow students had laid down their lives for their country in World War II, and he took seriously the purpose of the NLRI, where he worked. (It is not rare to find, among his contemporaries, men whose lives are dedicated to the memory of those who died in the war.) The NLRI was founded in 1949 for the purpose of doing scientific research on the Japanese language and on speech behavior in the daily life of the Japanese people, as well as establishing a solid basis for improving the Japanese language.

To appreciate the importance of Sibata's works, most of which are based on mass data, it may be useful to understand how sociolinguistics in Japan developed. It originated as the study of the language life of the Japanese people, as Sibata said (1978:i): "the language problems inherent to Japanese society in the approach indigenous to Japan." He defined the study of language life, which later came to be renamed "sociolinguistics," as "a method of linguistics directly applicable for real world problems" (ibid., ii). Furious over the strong government control of language standardization under the totalitarian regime of pre-war Japan, Sibata adhered to the principle of respecting local dialects. He wanted to see the individual faces of dialect speakers and to describe their dialects, in the hope of combating discrimination against local people based on their accents. His humanistic approach to the speakers has something of the fieldwork approach of the Western ethnographer. Thus, for Sibata and his fellow researchers, the problems of language to be investigated were those that contributed to the welfare of individual people in Japan.

The research design was based on the assumption that individual speakers in a community have different accents. In contrast to Labovian variationist study, Sibata did not integrate such social variables as socio-economic class into his research design, nor did he focus on such linguistic variables as particular vowels. What he did as the director of the NLRI was to take holistic descriptive data of people's language life, e.g. a woman's utterances on a certain day in 1975. "Sociolinguistic studies," he felt, "should not be the discipline for the sake of sociolinguistics per se. It should be the discipline to solve the immediate problems in real life [of Japanese people]" (Sibata 1978:8). Thus he claimed that the

approach to sociolinguistics in Japan should be independent of American sociolinguistics; it should be tailored to solve the problems of language variation in speech communities in the counties and cities of Japan.

The origin of Sibata's strong convictions about the approach to sociolinguistics can be traced back to his research experience as a young scholar. The editors' introductory chapter provides highly relevant information about a major influence that determined Sibata's later approach to sociolinguistic surveys. Just after World War II, a "Literacy Survey" was conducted in order to demonstrate that the Japanese people had waged a desperate war because their presumed low literacy rate, resulting from their complicated system of writing, had hindered the flow of accurate information. This survey was conceived under the guidance of the Civil Information and Education Section of the General Headquarters of the US Occupation Forces. But contrary to its hypothesis, the results of the survey showed a high literacy rate among the Japanese people, which led to the maintenance of their writing system, consisting of three types of symbols, Chinese characters plus two types of phonograms. This was the first large-scale survey in Japan that employed systematic random sampling and statistics, and it was carried out in collaboration with sociologists and statisticians. His experience with this survey led Sibata to recognize the impact that research designs might have on language policy for the Japanese people; and his later work as a major research designer at the NLRI followed the same line as the Literacy Survey. In short, Sibata always placed data over theory.

The orientation toward non-theoretical research espoused by Sibata and his students has not gone without criticism. But Sibata's answer was that a study of language that is to serve the people directly should focus on "parole," not on "langue." Lacking a sophisticated analytic method to investigate the "parole" aspect of language, Sibata gathered holistic data in painstaking fieldwork. When he said, "I wanted to look at individual faces of informants," he meant that his research hopes were placed not on certain aspects of linguistic phenomena, but on the informants' language life – the description of how they lead their life using their language.

Those familiar with Western scholarship might well wonder what was the coherent theme of Sibata's inquiry into the use of language. There seems to be no analytical thinking, or any theory by which one might deepen inquiry into language use. Instead, he made detailed investigation of the language life of speech communities. The foundation of Sibata's claim that his work was scientific was the application of random sampling and statistics, common to sociological research.

Perhaps a comparison of the approaches in the West and the East might make it clearer. It could be said that Western scholarship pursues the truth from a bird's-eye perspective, with scholars attempting to gain the whole picture of the topic in question. In contrast, the Japanese philosophical tradition is based on Buddhism, where there is no aspiration to analyze the whole; human beings are considered so trivial and tiny that they can know nothing, and scholars in this tradition have a

humble attitude. While Westerners look at things from top to bottom, the Japanese approach things from the bottom up and want to investigate what is going on. In the West, theory-driven research is preferred; but in the East, at least in Japan, data-oriented findings are the favored method of research. In addition, Sibata justified the orientation of his research by his particular goal of describing variations of language life of every member of contemporary Japanese society. He wanted not just to find out facts about the Japanese language in general, from a bird's-eye view, but also to look at people and their language life, just as he would examine every tree in the forest.

In this volume, his writings are organized into five parts and 24 chapters; an introduction by the editors precedes each chapter. The diversity of the topics covered provides insight into what are considered sociolinguistic problems in Japan. Part I, "The study of sociolinguistics," consists of "The language life of the Japanese," "The survey of speech community and its methodology," "A twenty-four-hour survey of the language life of the Japanese," and "Individual differences among investigations of linguistic geography." Part II deals with honorifics – the intersection of grammar and pragmatics; the fact that the use of honorifics is a major concern for Japanese speakers is well documented in this chapter. Articles include "Honorifics and honorifics research," "The honorific prefix 'o-' in contemporary Japanese," "Learning to say 'haha' [the formal word for 'mother']," "The language life of Machino – the social psychology of honorifics," and "Honorifics in a community." The survey on the use of honorifics found that the strongest social variables influencing the choice of linguistic forms are gender and the standing of a family, not socio-economic class.

Part III deals with language change. It includes "The rise and fall of dialects," "The age structure of the speech community," "Twenty years of the Itoigawa dialect," "The evolution of common language in Hokkaido," "Dialect formation in a settlement," and "Place names as evidence of Japanese settlement in Ainu areas." Sibata carefully examined dialect variation in communities (a) according to the age difference of the speakers, and (b) by conducting the same survey over a 20-year timespan.

Part IV deals with sociolect and idelect; it consists of "Group language," "Group language and its emergence," "Fad words and language bosses," "Urbanization and language differences in social classes," "Changes in life and changes in language – stabilization of new expressions," and "The microtoponymy of a limited area considered as part of the vocabulary of an idiolect." Part V deals with norms of language; it consists of "Consciousness of language norms," "Standards of pronunciation," and "Discrimination words and linguistic taboos." Discussing the pros and cons of the standardization of language forms and pronunciation, Sibata strongly argues for the maintenance of varieties and against the standardization of language – for the benefit of the community and the country, or in institutional frameworks.

Sibata's work is an excellent example of a non-Western approach to scholarship in general and to sociolinguistics in particular. His lack of references to overseas publications is but one more indication that his research must be interpreted within the context of Japan. Any criticism that Sibata's works lack theoretical or analytical linguistic thinking must be balanced by the realization that they have not been confined to the ivory tower, but have had a positive influence on Japanese people, from Hokkaido to small islands in Okinawa Prefecture. Sibata paid respect to the people's indigenous language variations, which are their means of representing their social and psychological identity.

In the 21st century, when the world needs a new order for coexistence on this globe, one agenda to which students of language might be able to contribute consists of ways to solve conflicts among ethnic groups from the perspectives of language use and language contact. We could begin by describing how people use a language or languages to lead their lives, which should be understood as an important means of representing their identity. The indigenous methods of Sibata's work may not be a model for application elsewhere; but the humanistic spirit embodied in his work – accepting and respecting linguistic variation, and using this to aid local people in their fight against social injustice – points in a direction that should be followed by sociolinguistic research the world over.

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DAVID MCKNIGHT, *People, countries, and the Rainbow Serpent: Systems of classification among the Lardil of Mornington Island*. (Oxford studies in anthropological linguistics, 12.) Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. x, 270. Hb \$75.00.

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Anthropologists have long recognized that Australian aboriginal cultures have a rich repertoire of cognitive achievements, and they have contrasted this richness with the relative impoverishment of their technological repertoire. However, despite the richness of the cognitive repertoire, the anthropological literature contains no overall inventory for any aboriginal cultural group. McKnight's monograph is the first work that covers everything: social structure (including kinship), myth, ritual, dancing, property structure, and biological classification.¹ The quality of the scholarship is very high. At the time of writing, McKnight had