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Pedagogical Linguistics Training for Graduate Students

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1. Introduction

How can we foster diversity and inclusion among peers and potential peers in Japanese language education? This commentary tries to address this question based on my experience with providing pedagogical linguistics training to graduate students at The Ohio State University. Pedagogical linguistics training aims to instill future Japanese-language instructors with the knowledge of how the Japanese language works and to foster their ability to incorporate such knowledge into teaching. The training covers wide-ranging topics, such as Japanese pronunciation, predicates and predicate-related expressions, particles, politeness, and discourse structures. It closely examines the difficulties Japanese-language learners could encounter due to the inherent complexity of the Japanese language and the differences between Japanese and learners' base languages. It draws findings and insight from linguistics, but the main focus of the training is to have future instructors develop analytical skills to provide effective instruction based on a sound knowledge of Japanese (and learners' base languages), not to teach theoretical linguistics. The training of graduate students is an enormous topic. I can only scratch the surface in this short commentary as I attempt to tie such training to the theme of this special section; namely, diversity, inclusion, and professionalism. However, I would like to propose that pedagogical linguistics training can be a powerful tool to help individual teachers achieve their potential regardless of their prior experiences and backgrounds.[1]

The rest of this commentary is organized as follows: In section 2, I will discuss the importance of pedagogical linguistics training and how it empowers future Japanese-language instructors. In section 3, I will discuss issues in pedagogical linguistics training. To train future Japanese-language instructors, we use linguistic rules and analyses in pedagogical

linguistics training. However, if such rules and analyses are not treated sensibly in pedagogical linguistics training, it can interfere with our efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. Therefore, I will examine considerations that pedagogical linguistics training needs to take. In section 4, I will summarize the main message and conclude this commentary.

2. Importance of Pedagogical Linguistics Training

My department has M. A. and Ph. D. programs in Japanese language pedagogy, linguistics, and literature. Between 2000 and 2019, sixty-three M. A. students (excluding those who moved on to our Ph. D. program) and thirty-four Ph. D. students completed their degrees. Of the sixty-three M. A. graduates, 43% (27) were native speakers of Japanese, and 57% (36) were non-native speakers. Of the thirty-four Ph. D. graduates, 38% (13) were native speakers of Japanese, and 62% (21) were non-native speakers.[2] In my experience of teaching both native and non-native speakers of Japanese in our graduate program, pedagogical linguistics training empowers *all* future Japanese-language instructors regardless of their prior experiences or backgrounds. Different teachers bring different strengths to the table, but neither native speakers nor non-native speakers have all the skills they need to teach Japanese effectively without additional training. In this section, I would like to illustrate how pedagogical linguistics training helps future instructors of all backgrounds effectively utilize what they already know and equips them with enough knowledge to succeed as Japanese-language teachers.

First, although native speakers of Japanese have a lot to offer, we all know that just being a native speaker of Japanese is not enough to be a good Japanese-language teacher. This is because native speakers of Japanese may know how to use Japanese, but they do not necessarily know consciously how the Japanese language works. Schools in Japan do not provide adequate instruction on colloquial Japanese grammar (Yamada 2009). Therefore, without proper training, native speakers often cannot explain how the Japanese language works (Fujita 2000). For example, I see that while native speakers of Japanese can catch English-speaking learners of Japanese placing high pitch on the penultimate mora, as in *yamaMOto* or *waTAshi*, they do not always know why English-speaking learners pronounce these words this way. If the role of Japanese-language teachers is to help learners of the Japanese language master instructional targets (whatever they may be) and apply those skills to a wide variety of

contexts, Japanese-language teachers need to go beyond merely noticing what learners are doing.

In her investigation of how to teach pronunciation to Japanese-language learners, Katagiri (2002) points out that what English-speaking learners of Japanese do is often systematic and is influenced by English phonology.[3] In English, a group of Latin origin words has stress on the penultimate syllable:

(1) **clus**-ter de-**ter**-mine de-**ve**-lop in-**her**-it

In *yamaMOto*, high pitch is placed on a penultimate mora. Therefore, it is possible that English-speaking learners of Japanese are unconsciously transferring their knowledge of the English penultimate stress rule and waiting to place high pitch toward the end of the word. In contrast, in Japanese (Tokyo dialect), the pitch of the first and second morae is always different, as in *I-ku-ra* (HLL), *wa-TA-SHI* (LHH), *ko-RE DE-su* (LHHL) (Tanaka and Kubozono 1999).

Another rule of English that is useful to be aware of when teaching English-speaking learners of Japanese is that words or phrases in English normally have only one primary stress on a single syllable (Katagiri 2002). However, in many Japanese words and phrases, high pitch continues across multiple morae (e. g., *waTASHI, oMOSHIROkatta*). This difference between English and Japanese can affect the pronunciation of English-speaking learners of Japanese, such as with *waTAshi,* and makes it harder for English-speaking learners to retain high pitch across multiple morae.

Each word has a distinct accent pattern. Not everything will be predicated or explained by rules. However, even in pronunciation that appears to be highly random, there are patterns that can be incorporated into Japanese language instruction. If we understand how the Japanese language works and which aspects of it may pose difficulties to learners (whether they concern pronunciation, grammar, or pragmatics), then language teachers can zero in on what is going on with learners' performances. In sports, top athletes do not necessarily become great coaches. Effective coaches are the ones who see what each player needs in order to be better and stronger and know how to guide players through the process. In Japanese language pedagogy, if teachers are analytical and caring and pay attention to details with the knowledge of how the Japanese language works and how to teach it, they will become effective coaches of learning Japanese. With strong knowledge and expertise, native teachers

will be able to go beyond simply noticing and correcting what learners are doing. With enough training, non-native teachers will know exactly what they should look for and where they should direct learners' attention. Furthermore, non-native teachers who know the sources of learners' challenges clearly will understand not only why learners struggle but also how hard it is to not be influenced by the patterns of a base language. Such an understanding attitude will make them sympathetic teachers who can support Japanese-language learners both academically and emotionally.

Pedagogical linguistics training not only fosters sound knowledge of how Japanese language works, but also creates a learning space in which individuals with different experiences and backgrounds can think about how to help students learn Japanese better together. For example, a graduate student whose native language is Chinese and who conducted brief research on this topic shared with us that Chinese-speaking learners of Japanese tend to have the particle *no* between an adjective and a noun, as in **ōkii no kyōsitsu* "large classroom," because in Chinese, *de* (的) needs to be used between an adjective and noun.[4] In another case, after reflecting on his own experience, an English-speaking graduate student studied several linguistics papers on Japanese conjugation mistakes and reported why some conjugations, such as the past tense of *ōkii* "is big," are particularly difficult for English-speaking beginning learners of Japanese, who tend to produce a wrong form, **ōkii deshita,* instead of *ōkikatta desu* "(it) was big": (a) English adjectives do not conjugate (i. e., it is the copula that conjugates) but Japanese adjectives do (e. g., *ōkii* "is big" vs. *ōkikatta* "was big"); and (b) *desu* in *ōkii desu* "is big" is a politeness marker, whereas *desu* in *Tanaka-san desu* "(it) is Ms. Tanaka" is the copula in the non-past affirmative polite form, which alternates with past tense *deshita*.[5] Non-native speakers have recent memories of encountering problems in learning the Japanese language themselves. If non-native speakers are trained to utilize their experiences and analyze them, they will bring to light the aspects of the Japanese language that may pose difficulty to learners of Japanese. Likewise, if native speakers are trained to articulate their linguistic intuitions and analyze the Japanese language in relation to other languages, they will be able to develop observations and insights that they can share with others to understand where problems may lie for Japanese-language learners and how to help learners overcome these problems. Therefore, pedagogical linguistics training prepares both non-native and native speakers to contribute and exchange ideas. Above all,

such a collaborative learning space will enrich the entire field of Japanese language pedagogy.

3. Issues in Pedagogical Linguistics Training

I believe in providing pedagogical linguistics training to the future generations of Japanese-language educators. However, this idea can be a double-edged sword in dealing with diversity and inclusion in Japanese language education: Such training empowers teachers with different backgrounds, but if we uncritically identify linguistic rules and analyses in pedagogical linguistics training and apply them to Japanese instruction, we can reinforce "the traditional emphasis on the idealized native speaker of standard Japanese as a model" (Mori, Hasegawa, Park, and Suzuki, this volume, 286) and hinder our efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. Therefore, in this section, I will briefly discuss how we should treat linguistic rules and analyses in pedagogical linguistics training, in the context of the theme of this special section.

First, we should be aware that the rules discussed in pedagogical linguistics training may have hidden biases. For example, the accent rule on the first and second morae discussed earlier (e. g., *I-ku-ra* [HLL], *wa-TA-SHI* [LHH], *ko-RE DE-su* [LHHL]) is a rule of the Tokyo dialect. There are many Japanese dialects that do not follow that pattern (e. g., *i-ku-ra* [LLL], *wa-ta-shi* [LLL], *ko-re de-su* [LLLL] in the Fukushima dialect) (Shibatani 1990). To teach pronunciation, the first and second morae accent rule will be useful, but future teachers should be informed clearly that the rule is specific to the Tokyo dialect.

Second, as the survey respondents in Mori et al. (this volume) point out, we need to train future teachers not to blindly adhere to the rules and analyses of standard Japanese.[6] Because learning and teaching a dialect (e. g., the Tokyo dialect) alone can already be taxing for Japanese-language learners and teachers, especially at the beginning level, it may still be necessary to delay introducing other dialectal variations until after standard Japanese is introduced. However, to treat the rules and analyses of standard Japanese in a sensible manner, it will be important to train future teachers to understand the social context that surrounds standard Japanese and what the rules and analyses used in pedagogical linguistics training enable learners to accomplish. For example, Takeuchi (2015) examines what benefit (i. e., linguistic capital) standard Japanese and dialects bring to native and non-native speakers. The incorporation of such studies into pedagogical linguistics training will allow future teachers to evaluate and treat linguistic rules and analyses more critically and fairly.[7]

Third, to expose Japanese learners to dialectal variations beyond standard Japanese (perhaps at the intermediate or advanced level), pedagogical linguistics training may provide opportunities for future teachers to examine how dialects are understood so that they can explore ways to introduce dialects into Japanese instruction. For example, in the Kyūshū dialect, the sentence-final particle *ne* behaves like *no* in standard Japanese:

(2) *Konomae-no* *kanpōyaku,* *tameshitemita* *ne?*
before-GENITIVE herbal.medicine try NE

"Did you try the herbal medicine (that I gave to you) before?" (Yoshida 2009:151)

Proficient readers of Japanese will recognize that the use of *ne* in (2) is different from that of standard Japanese in this context by picking up on a variety of cues: (a) This dialogue takes place in Kyūshū; (b) the participants in this conversation use vocabulary unique to the Kyūshū dialect (e. g., *ken* "so") in other utterances, as shown below; and (c) this is a context in which the speaker is merely asking a question, not requesting a confirmation.

(3) *Ashita* *ni demo* *Yūichi-ni* *ikaseru* *ken.*
tomorrow at or so Yuichi-DATIVE make go so

"I will make Yuichi go tomorrow or so, so.…" (Yoshida 2009:151)

Just as we analyze the linguistic rules of standard Japanese, we can examine what information enables Japanese-language learners to understand dialects, such as the *ne* in the Kyūshū dialect. If done properly, the analytical skills that future teachers develop in pedagogical linguistics training will be useful to guide learners to comprehend dialects that appear in novels, dramas, manga, or anime that they have not learned in their textbooks or classrooms, as well as to appreciate the features unique to different regional dialects.

Finally, for us to cherish diversity and inclusion and move forward, there is a lot that we can do when we train future teachers. At the same time, we do not always know how we should train graduate students *a priori*. Therefore, merely providing the knowledge of established linguistic rules and analyses will not be enough. In fact, the reality is that the limited time available for pedagogical linguistics training does not

allow us to teach everything that future teachers need to know. Mizutani (2005) says that teachers need to acquire the ability to analyze the conditions of Japanese on their own. Thus, if we do not have time to teach everything, and if the linguistic rules and analyses that we should address in pedagogical linguistics training change as our expectations for Japanese instruction change, what we need to do for future teachers in pedagogical linguistics training is introduce elements of basic knowledge of Japanese as building blocks, train future teachers to become able to find more information about the Japanese language on their own, and equip them with the ability to identify and evaluate appropriate linguistic rules and analyses. Importantly, it is crucial to make them aware of the power dynamics associated with standard Japanese and the roles that language teachers play in re-creating that ideology.

4. Conclusion

In this commentary, I discussed how pedagogical linguistics training could empower graduate students regardless of their prior experiences and backgrounds. To provide this training to graduate students, however, we need to properly identify the linguistic rules and analyses that we are conveying. As discussed in section 3, such rules and analyses can have hidden biases and interfere with our efforts to promote diversity and inclusion. Therefore, we need to start paying attention to such biases and develop ways to treat the linguistic rules and analyses in a sensible manner.

Finally, how we train future Japanese-language teachers intricately intertwines with the expectations of the Japanese-speaking community. Toki (1994) claims that to truly promote diversity and inclusion, Japanese society needs to change its attitude toward linguistic variations, and Japanese-language teachers can help promote such a change:

> Some people say that foreigners only need to be able to convey basic meaning and other things do not matter. This statement would be fine only if such ways of communication are widely accepted. However, in reality, I do not think many people are that forgiving in the Japanese society. … To support learners of Japanese, we must promote a better understanding of the Japanese language with a foreign accent among ordinary Japanese people. … Ultimately, the goal is to realize a society where people listen to a variety of Japanese in an equitable manner. (80; my translation)

Well-trained Japanese-language teachers know the difficulties that non-native speakers encounter in acquiring and communicating in Japanese. If

we want to make our field diverse and inclusive, we will need to share our expertise not only with learners but also with members of the Japanese speaking community, so that everyone who is involved in Japanese communication can make the community more diverse and inclusive together.

NOTES

[1] Although I focus on pedagogical linguistics training in this commentary, it constitutes only part of the training that language teachers need. For discussions of comprehensive teacher training, see Christensen and Noda (2002).

[2] The division into "native" and "non-native" is a false dichotomy. While I acknowledge the problematic nature of the terms, for the sake of simplification, in this paper I will tentatively use native speakers to refer to those who received secondary education primarily in Japan and non-native speakers to refer to those who did not.

[3] Although the current discussion focuses as an illustration of what English-speaking learners do, the same ideas and methodology can be applied to learners from other base-language backgrounds.

[4] See Hara (1986) and Mizuno (1993) for discussions of the typical mistakes that Chinese-speaking learners of Japanese make with Japanese structure.

[5] For a good summary of typical mistakes in the conjugations of Japanese adjectives, see Ichikawa (2005) and Trevor (2012).

[6] The survey by Mori et al. (this volume) reports that 88.8% agree with the statement that "a good Japanese teacher provides opportunities for learners to learn about different varieties of Japanese." Most respondents (96.2%) agree that "awareness of different varieties of Japanese (dialects, etc.) will enable students to learn about a greater range of Japanese speakers."

[7] While it is important not to be dogmatic about standard Japanese, this does not mean that knowledge of standard Japanese is not necessary. For example, Iori (2013) claims that when Japanese learners desire to acquire the standard Japanese pronunciation, Japanese teachers should be able to respond to their needs. Iori quotes the following words of Satoshi Toki, who promoted the diversity of the Japanese language (and who is a speaker of the Tōhoku dialect himself): "Accent is not something that everybody must master. However, if a learner wants to acquire the correct accent of Japanese, Japanese teachers must have enough knowledge and skills to accommodate such a request" (40; my translation)

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