Language, Nation and Language Ideologies in Japan

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Abstract

The scope of this paper is limited to setting up a theoretical framework for examining the question of the relationship or interdependency between the *Japanese language* and the *Japanese nation*. It is written as an introduction to research into the historical development of 'language ideologies' and their relationship to the formation of national identity in Europe, and examining how these views on 'language' and 'nation' were appropriated in Japan in the Meiji period, either through acceptance or through rejection.

Keywords: language, nation, ideology, philology, linguistics, kokugaku, kokugo.

1   Introduction

It goes without saying that the emergence of nations and national identities as modern forms of organizing societies into identity groups cannot be treated as a natural phenomenon that materialized *ex nihilo* at some particular or definable point in human history and which just sprang into peoples' awareness unnoticed, but is rather a result of a very complex network of interdependent historical processes and ideological changes in political, economical, cultural as well as scientific (or, rather, theoretical) spheres of human activity.

It is not for us to dwell now on the fact that each of the respective spheres of social conduit articulated itself in the same manner only through complex historical processes that shaped the ideological background in which they appear today to be self-evident. However, employing concepts like *ideology*, *appear* and

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self-evident in a single sentence amounts in a way to nothing more than a tautology, since in the manner that we define the concept of *ideology*, we must argue that *no* meaning exists 'outside' ideology, so to speak, since all that is *self-evident* to people, all that *appears* to them, is *ideology* anyway. Any *meaning* is ideological.

Exactly in what terms we define ideology for our purpose will be explained in the second chapter but first let us touch on the question of the relationship between language and nation.

2 Language and nation

The idea that the history of a certain language is inseparably intertwined with the history of a certain nation is neither new nor especially surprising, but precisely because it appears so *self-evident* (i.e., ideological) it should be subjected to further theoretical scrutiny.

The concept usually applied when describing or defining a nation is *culture*. Without a common culture there can be no nation. Nations emerged as identity groups through *opposition* (to larger imperial organizations[1] and to each other), through their differences with *the other*, and thus in fact exist only through opposition, through the fact that the sole definable characteristic of nation *a* is that it is not nation *b*. Rather than through any positive characteristic (e.g., having a flag, having a national anthem, speaking a national language, having a national cuisine, in short, sharing a 'common' *culture*) nation is inevitably constructed through its *differences* (i.e., having a *different* flag, having a *different* anthem, speaking a *different* language, being culturally *different*, etc.).

In this manner, through theoretical abstraction, we can define nation in more or less the same way that Ferdinand de Saussure theoretically constructed the concept of language as an abstract system of oppositions in its synchronic

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[1] For example, if we take a look at the Roman Empire, it lacked practically every characteristic that defines modern nation states, as Patrick Geary writes: "Thus, the *populus Romanus* alone, unlike foreign "peoples," had a history. That history was the story of how the Roman people, as a body of individuals who lived according to a single law, came into being. Here was no question of putative unity of ancestry, geography, culture, language, or tradition. Throughout its long history, membership in the *populus Romanus* was a question of constitutional law, not natural law, and, thus, theoretically accessible to all" (Geary 2002: 50).

dimension as something existing outside its concrete manifestation in the form of human speech. However, if nation is an abstraction on a par with language, if nation is saussurian *langue*, so to speak, what then is its *parole*, its concrete manifestation? The answer here must of course be: *culture*. Culture represents the idiosyncratic component of any nation that ensures its diachronic dimension, which manifests itself in the form of 'cultural practices', i.e., in the actual way people lead their lives.

In the same way that language, as a system of grammatical norms, exists only as an abstraction based on the actual linguistic activity of its users, nation in its core is only an intellectual abstraction based on actual cultural practices and their ideological interpretations, which constitute what we term a nation's *history* and *tradition*. From this perspective, we can see that the question of what forms of speech become the platform for a coherent language system, as well as what cultural practices are seen as pertinent to a certain nation, which practices actually define that nation, is, theoretically speaking, completely arbitrary.

From that point on, it is the language (*langue*) that begins to influence our speech (*parole*), just as it is nation that begins to influence and sometimes determine our cultural practices. Only after we have a *language* does it become possible to make linguistic mistakes, and only after we establish a *nation* can we exclude certain cultural practices as 'foreign' or impose others as 'forgotten', even on those who never practiced them.

Human speech and cultural practices are therefore supposed to be concrete material products of human social activity, while language and nation represent abstract systems based on speech and culture, respectively. The connection between the concepts of language and nation is not however only a structuralistic construct, as might appear from what has been said above, but is in fact a connection based on concrete or material historical conditions. The beginnings of linguistics as a 'scientific' discipline historically coincide with the period of Romanticism, whose ideological horizon was delineated by the novel idea of *nationalism*.

3   Ideology, linguistics, and nation building

At this point, I would like to introduce the theory of ideology and language as set out by Valentin Vološinov in his *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. As is evident from the title of his book (discussions about this disputed work being in fact written by Mikhail Bakhtin are irrelevant to our purpose) Vološinov's theory is based on the theory of ideology as explained in *German Ideology* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. For them, ideology is not just a 'false' consciousness as the concept is usually misunderstood, but is in fact *any* consciousness, since consciousness for Marx and Engels is always only a reflection of 'real' conditions of existence and, therefore, can be neither 'true' nor 'false'. [2] Consequently, ideology is always something *external*, something that 'exists' outside consciousness. Ideology, too, according to Marx and Engels, has no independence from material production and material intercourse, in short, from real human existence.

In the same way, Vološinov himself also criticizes the idealistic philosophy of culture and psychologistic cultural studies that try to locate ideology within the consciousness. As he writes, "Idealism and psychologism alike overlook the fact that understanding itself can come about only within some kind of semiotic material (e.g., inner speech), that sign bears upon sign, that *consciousness itself can arise and become a viable fact only in the material embodiment of signs*" (Vološinov 1986: 11).

According to Vološinov, ideology's real place in existence is not within consciousness but rather in the special, social materiality of signs created by man. Its specificity consists precisely in its being located *between* organized individuals, in its being the medium of their communication. Therefore, and this is the probably the most important conclusion, *individual consciousness is a social-ideological fact* (ibid.: 12).

Anything ideological possesses semiotic value, anything ideological possesses *meaning*: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a *sign* (ibid.: 9). Any sign is a construct between socially organized persons in the process of their interaction, so the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and

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[2] Leaving aside that, according to Marx, the ruling ideas of every epoch are always the ideas of the ruling class.

also by the immediate conditions of their interaction (ibid.: 21). The existence of the sign is nothing but the materialization of that communication.

In this respect, Vološinov identified in his book two trends of thought in the philosophy of language, which he termed *individualistic subjectivism* and *abstract objectivism*. He identified these two trends on the basis of the approach towards the solution of the problem of the identification and the delimitation of language as a specific object of study. *Individualistic subjectivism* regards language as an activity, an unceasing process of creation realized in individual speech acts, governed by laws of individual psychology, while language, as a ready-made product, as a stable system (lexicon, grammar, phonetics) is, so to speak, the inert crust, the hardened lava of language creativity, of which linguistics makes an abstract construct (ibid.: 48). *Abstract objectivism,* on the other hand, takes a linguistic system as its starting point and, while it recognizes each utterance as idiosyncratic and unique, it claims they contain elements identical with elements in other utterances of the given speech group, and so considers these factors (phonetic, grammatical, lexical) to be *identical* and, therefore, *normative* for all utterances, which ensures the unity of a given language and its comprehension by all the members of a given community (ibid.: 53). For *abstract objectivism* the individual act of articulating sound becomes a linguistic act only by measure of its compliance with the fixed and incontestable (for the individual) system of language (ibid.).

Thus *abstract objectivism* defines language as a stable, immutable system of normatively identical linguistic forms, which the individual consciousness finds ready-made and which is incontestable for that consciousness (ibid.: 57). Individual acts of speaking are, from the viewpoint of language, merely fortuitous refractions and variations or plain and simple distortions of normatively identical forms.

Representative thinkers that Vološinov associates with *individualistic subjectivism*, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt or Johann Gottfried von Herder, strongly connected the concept of language to the idea of a nation by proposing that the character and structure of language express the inner life and knowledge of its speakers, so that to the same degree as languages differ from one another, so do the peoples who use them. Humboldtian linguistic ideas later also became a foundation (often through misreading) of Chomsky's theory of transformational-

generative grammar or Sapir-Worf hypothesis of linguistic determination of thought.

On the other hand, the trend of *abstract objectivism* can be traced back to Gottfried Leibniz and his conceptions of universal grammar (*characteristica universalis*), based on mathematical rationalism interested only in the inner logic of the system of signs itself, completely independently of the ideological meanings that give the signs their content. This trend found its final expression in the synchronic linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure. Both trends, however, have origins in the common European grammatical and philological tradition that can be traced back at least to Plato. It is far beyond the scope of this paper to present even the briefest outline of this tradition[3]. However, what is relevant to our purpose is the important ideological change in the conception of language which gave birth to the aforementioned trends and which we trace back to linguistic thought as found in the writings of Dante Alighieri.

3.1   Dante Alighieri

Both of the trends that Vološinov identified in his work belong to linguistics in the modern sense of the word and can be traced back directly to the philological tradition that occupied itself with foreign and dead languages, since treating language as an abstract system inevitably required the view that first perceived language as *dead* or *foreign*. In European tradition, the first theoretical attempt at discussing the question of language as a juxtaposition of a living speech against a dead system can probably be traced back to Dante Alighieri in his essay *De vulgari eloquentia*. In this short text, written completely in Latin, Dante takes as its subject "the language of people who speak the vulgar tongue"[4] the vernacular which "infants acquire from those around them when they first begin to distinguish sounds"[5], i.e., what Saussure would identify as *parole*. Dante thus distinguishes sharply between this and another kind of language "which the

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[3] The reader can refer to a textbook by Vivien Law (2003) The History of Linguistics in Europe From Plato to 1600. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[4] "… locutioni vulgarium gentium …" (Dante 1996: 2–3).

[5] "… quod vulgarem locutionem appellamus eam qua infantes assuefiunt ab assistentibus cum primitus distinguere voces incipient …" (ibid.)

Romans called *gramatica*"[6] and which can only be acquired through study. For Dante, the vernacular is natural, universal and learned by instinct, while 'gramatica' is none of this. Based on this definition, he already draws a novel and revolutionary conclusion at the beginning of his treatise, when he states that "of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third, because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial."[7] Dante draws a distinction between 'natural' spoken language and the 'artificial' language system used in writing (i.e., Latin or Greek), but he does not argue *language* in terms of its connection to a *nation* as a community. In the eighth chapter of the first book of his *De vulgari eloquentia,* after having told the story of the fall of the Tower of Babel, which led to the settlement of Europe, he explains how the European settlers brought with them a tripartite language (*ydioma tripharium*) (Dante 1996: 17), which he considers to be of one single origin. Each of these three varieties was spoken in a particular geographical area, roughly corresponding to Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe. The Eastern group, which he says settled partly in Europe partly in Asia, are now called Greeks. The Northern vernacular split up into many vernaculars, at which point he mentions the Slavs, the Hungarians, the Teutons, the Saxons, the English and several other nations (*Sclavones, Ungaros, Teutonicos, Saxones, Anglicos et alias nationes*) (ibid.: 16), while the Southern variety, roughly covering modern Italy, France and Spain, is again dominated by a single vernacular, which appears to him in his day again divided into three, which he categorizes according to the word each uses as an affirmative: thus he recognizes the language of *oc*, the language of *oïl* and the language of *sì*.[8]

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[6] "Est et inde alia locutio secundaria nobis, quam Romani gramaticam vocaverunt." (ibid.)

[7] "Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit humano generi usata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur, licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa; tum quia naturalis est nobis, cum illa potius artificialis existat." (ibid.)

[8] "Totum vero quod in Europa restat ab istis tertium tenuit ydioma, licet nunc tripharium videatur: nam alii *oc*, alli *oïl*, alii *sì*, affirmando locuntur, ut puta Yspani, Franci et Latini" (Dante 1996: 16). Dante thus speaks of one tripartite language divided into the vernaculars of *oc*, *oïl* and *sì*, which he geographically delineates and connects to the Spanish (*Yspani*) French (*Franci*) and Italians (*Latini*). However, he never speaks in terms of Spanish, French or Italian languages, since these concepts were not yet in existence. And although he connects the language of *oc* to the Spanish, it actually refers to the speakers of what we would today call Provençal and Catalan.

It is with these three vernaculars, especially with the language of *sì*, of which Dante is himself a speaker, that the rest of the book is concerned. From there on, he discusses the question of linguistic change, i.e., the reasons for humanity's degeneration from linguistic unity and he recognizes that linguistic diversity does not exist only among these larger groups, regions or cities, but even within the boundaries of a single city.

> However, we must now investigate why the original language should first have split into three, and why each of the three different forms exhibits variations of its own, so that, for instance, the speech of the right side of Italy differs from that of the left (since the people of Padua speak one way and those of Pisa another). We must also ask why people who live close together still differ in their speech (such as the Milanese and the Veronese, or the Romans and the Florentines); why the same is true of people who originally belonged to the same tribe (such as those of Naples and Gaeta, or Ravenna and Faenza); and, what is still more remarkable, why it is true of people living in the same city (such as the Bolognese of Borgo San Felice and those of Strada Maggiore) (Dante 1996: 20–21).

In the following pages, Dante sums up the whole question of linguistic change across both time and space and explains his view of language as a living organism, which is destined to grow, change and adapt. He thus realizes that people in his day differ much more from ancient inhabitants of their own city than they differ from their contemporaries who live far off.[9] He then continues with an interesting dialectological journey through the Italian peninsula, where he delineates at least fourteen different vernaculars which, on their part, again differ internally.[10]

However, after he establishes these facts of linguistic diversity, he continues with what is the real purpose of his writing, namely the search for a language that

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[9] "On this account, therefore, I make so bold as to declare that if the ancient citizens of Pavia were to rise from the grave, they would speak a language distinct and different from that of the Pavians of today" (ibid.: 21).

[10] "Thus the language of the Sicilians is different from that of the Apulians, that of the Apulians from that of the Romans, that of the Romans from that of the people of Spoleto, theirs from that of the Tuscans, that of the Tuscans from that of the Genoese, and that of the Genoese from that of the Sardinians; and, likewise, the language of the Calabrians is different from that of the people of Ancona, theirs from that of the people of Romagna, that of the people of Romagna from that of the Lombards, that of the Lombards from that of the people of Treviso and the Venetians, theirs from that of the people of Aquileia, and theirs from that of the Istrians. […] All these vernaculars also vary internally, so that the Tuscan of Siena is distinguished from that of Arezzo, or the Lombard of Ferrara from that of Piacenza; moreover, we can detect some variation even within a single city …" (ibid.: 25).

is the most noble among them, the search for the most respectable and 'illustrious' language that exists in Italy. In the following chapters, he once again considers each of the above mentioned Italian vernaculars, only to dismiss them all by showing that none of them is what he is looking for. The most interesting part of Dante's language ideology reveals itself at precisely this point. His dismissals of all the existing vernaculars are, of course, not based upon anything more substantial than entirely arbitrary arguments which do not for the most part bother to go farther than 'it is obvious that this is not so'. Although Dante apparently sees the problem in the inadequacy or profanity of individual vernaculars, what actually lies behind this ideology concerning the 'nobility' or 'profanity' of individual language is the ideological quest for a unitary language.

The motive behind this quest is mainly the question of what language would be suitable for the art of poetic composition and is not primarily based on nationalistic motives, although Dante, at the same time, also discusses the political aspect of language. He writes about the need for a vernacular that will both answer the needs of the poet as well as fill the void created by the absence of a single political authority or court in the Italian peninsula. For Dante, the answer to what he is looking for, that 'illustrious' language he hunted across Italy, is the vernacular which "belongs to every Italian city yet seems to belong to none, and against which the vernaculars of all the cities of the Italians can be measured, weighed, and compared" (Dante 1996: 41). He writes that just as "one vernacular can be identified as belonging to Cremona, so can another that belongs to Lombardy; and just as one can be identified that belongs to Lombardy, so can another that belongs to the whole left-hand side of Italy; and just as all these can be identified in this way, so can that which belongs to Italy as a whole. And just as the first is called Cremonese, the second Lombardian and the third half-Italian, so this last, which belongs to all Italy, is called the Italian vernacular" (ibid.: 45).[11]

And since such a vernacular obviously did not yet exist, it is up to Dante to create one; which is what he sets out to do in his *De vulgari eloquentia*.

Dante thus drew a clear distinction between the 'living', 'natural' spoken language (*parole*) and the 'dead', 'artificial' written language system (*langue*) and

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[11] Dante does not of course call the language *Italian*. *Cf.*: "Et sicut illud cremonense ac illud lombardum et tertium semilatium dicitur, sic istud, quod totius Ytalie est, latium vulgare vocatur" (ibid.: 44).

gave the former absolute priority. Then, however, he inevitably realized that this 'natural', 'living' language is in fact impossible to discover or to delineate since it can be limited neither to a larger group, nor to a region or even to a city, i.e., it cannot be conceptualized at all. Therefore, with the help of impeccable ideological acrobatics, he sets out to create a new common language that will simultaneously transcend the indefinite number of idiosyncratic speeches of regions and cities and yet, this time around, will not be 'artificial' and 'dead' but will remain 'natural' and 'living'. It is on this ideological background that much later linguistics as a science will be established. Linguistics became science in the modern nomothetic sense exactly at the moment when philological preoccupation with ancient languages gave way to the treatment of modern languages, their genealogies, accomplishments and their *spirit* – that is with the articulation of philology to *nation building*. Modern living languages took the place of classical and dead languages, an operation by which the distinction between *langue* and *parole* became the ideological blind spot *par excellence* when language as a system and language as the spoken word apparentingly became *one and the same thing*. Let us now take a look at this process of aligning language to nation building, through reconceptualization of 'living' languages as linguistic systems.

3.2   Johann Gottfried von Herder

In 1772, Johann Gottfried Herder published his *Treatise on the Origin of Language,* in which he primarily attacked ideas concerning the divine origin of language. Herder argued in his essay that language is essentially a product of mankind and, consequently, linked to the *spirit* of the nation. He states at the beginning of his *third natural law* that, just as it was impossible for the whole of mankind to remain one single herd, in same vein it was impossible to preserve one single language; thus *national languages* were formed.[12]

The argument that traces the source of language to the *spirit* of the nation requires Herder to give preference to *living* speech over *dead* grammatical

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[12] "So wie das ganze Menschliche Geschlecht unmöglich Eine Heerde bleiben konnte: so konnte es auch nicht Eine Sprache behalten. Es wird also eine Bildung verschiedner National-sprachen" (Herder 1959: 97).

construct, to put *parole* before *langue,* so to speak. Herder is thus a pioneer of the linguistic trend that Vološinov termed *individualistic subjectivism.*

In other words, we can trace back to Herder the key moment of re-articulation of an ideological paradigm that discovered in language the *spirit* of the nation and basically conceptualized it as a nation's *culture*. The ideological background that allows Herder an understanding of language as an abstract system lies in the philological tradition we traced back to Dante, as we showed in the previous chapter. However, in order to conceptualize language as a differential 'cultural' moment of each respective 'nation', he must also presuppose language as *living speech*, as *parole* in saussurean terms and, accordingly, attack the concept of the language as a grammatical system.[13]

Herder's argumentative position is therefore one of *parole,* i.e., *living language,* as opposed to a philological approach that deals with foreign and dead or classical languages. In this way, he establishes the ideological background upon which modern linguistics – which will take as its object the *national language* – will form itself. At the same time, he explicitly identifies language within the sphere of *culture,* i.e., the common set of human practices that represent the *spirit of the nation*.

The process of language diversification, according to Herder, proceeded in the following manner: he begins by stating that in the metaphysical sense even with male or female, father and son, child and old man one language is never possible. Since his argument here is obviously one of *parole* and not of *langue*, he finds himself in the sphere of phonetics. He mentions 'Orientals' and their long and short vowels, a series of aspirated and guttural sounds, as well as a myriad of other details in the elements of language (Herder 1959: 97). He goes on to mention differences in vocal organs depending on gender or age, from which he concludes that, since there are can be no two people completely alike in their appearance, likewise we cannot find a language uttered from the mouths of two people and still constituting *one* single language (ibid.: 97–98).[14]

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[13] "… und was kann denn der Philosph und Philolog in seinem todten Museum an einer Sprache verbessern, die in alle ihrer Würksamkeit *lebt*?" [… and what can philosopher and philologist in their dead museum improve upon language, that in all its effectiveness is *living*?] (Herder 1959: 85).

[14] "So wenig als es zween Menschen ganz von Einerlei Gestalt und Gesichtszügen: so wenig kann es zwo Sprachen, auch nur der Aussprache nach, im munde zweener Menschen geben, die doch nur Eine Sprache wären."

Herder next makes a leap from the idiosyncratic phonological characteristics of an individual speaker to family idiosyncrasy of speech and states that each kinship group will add to its language a *household and family tone* (*Haus und Familienton*) which, on the basis of pronunciation, will turn into a variety of *dialects* (*Mundart*). Climate, air and water, food and drink will affect the speaking organs and, accordingly, also the language. Social customs and the mighty Goddess Habit will thus consecrate such characteristics and varieties and a dialect (*ein Dialekt*) will be born (ibid.: 98).

This is precisely the point at which we can identify Herder's ideological blind spot; a blind spot that was later conceptualized by Ferdinand de Saussure as the theoretical distinction between *langue* and *parole*, a disinction that Saussure was able to make precisely because it remained an ideological blind spot for him, too, and thus became the point at which his theory slipped into the realm of ideology. What, then, is this blind spot exactly?

The ideological moment that haunts Saussure is none other than *the speaking subject* (*sujet parlant*) itself, which he tries to exclude from language as a system of normatively identical forms. Saussure's structural linguistics, which represents the other trend of thought, which Vološinov termed *abstract objectivism,* falls into the trap represented by the speaking subject, since without the speaking subject there can be no *parole* while, at the same time, there can be no *parole* if the speaking subject does not master the *langue*, if he, one way or another, does not possess knowledge of the linguistic system (Močnik 1985: 11–12). So while structural linguistics wishes to exclude the speaking subject from its sphere of research, at the same time it is unable to construct any signifier without the speaking subject, whom it reintroduces in its theory as non-theoretical 'mystical' knowledge (ibid.: 25).

Dante's redefinition of the vernacular made it possible to conceptualize modern spoken languages in terms of linguistic systems, i.e., to think of them in terms of classical languages. However, since Dante conceptualized *language* exactly in terms of *opposition* to classical language (*gramatica*), he thus established an ideological framework that finally enabled this 'split' view of *language*: an understanding of language on the one hand in terms of *gramatica*, but, at the same time, also as something completely different. To go back to Herder, on the one hand he treats language as an individual and idiosyncratic *speech act* in which, as he says, one language is never possible while, at the same

time, he can also think of this language in terms of *gramatica*, i.e. as an abstract system completely devoid of the speaking subject. He jumps from one to the other without noticing the gap across which he is leaping and without realizing that it is a complete *non sequitur* or, put another way, not realizing that while jumping across this gap the speaking subject accidentally falls into it. Modern linguistics attempted theoretically to conceptualize this ideological gap by way of making a theoretical distinction between *langue* and *parole* but, by doing so, although it made it explicit, it did not succeed in overcoming it.

However, this distinction was not an issue for Herder. Moreover, the fact that this distinction did not exist for him enabled him to glide effortlessly from the characteristics of the speaking organs of an individual through 'household and family speech' all the way to social dialect sanctioned by social convention and 'the mighty Goddess Habit'.

Dialect in his case becomes a kind of boundary area in which *langue* as a language system and *parole* as 'living' speech meet. However, Herder must go further, since what he needs is *language*, or rather, *national language*. Because he understands language as a product of the human soul, since language in his understanding springs from man's inner feelings that need to be expressed through voice, he must, as we have shown, begin by postulating a single origin of language (Herder 1959: 109). Since he rejects the divine origin of language, he has to transfer the burden of its creation to human shoulders, and he thus faces a new task of explaining language diversity in terms of one 'natural' origin. In other words, his argument about the 'natural' origin of language presupposes *one single* and common origin, yet, at the same time, he must explain the present state of linguistic diversity.[15] Precisely at this point he makes the conceptual link of language to the nation's *soul*, i.e., national characteristics; at this point he conceives *language* as *culture*.

How, then, does Herder conceptualize the existent language diversity and how does he introduce the category of *national language*? Since national languages are not of divine origin but, at the same time, also not just 'natural' products of the

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[15] "Wie Ein Menschenvolk nur auf der Erde wohnet, so auch nur Eine Menschensprache: wie aber diese große Gattung sich in so viele kleine Landarten nationalisirt hat: so ihre Sprachen nicht anders." [Just as only *one* single human race inhabits the Earth, so only *one* single human language exists; however, since this enormous species has nationalized itself into so many regional kinds, the same has happened with their languages.] (Herder 1959: 110).

human spirit which by its 'nature' created *one single* language, this linguistic *heterogeneity* must be explained in a different way, by juxtaposing it with a *homogeneity* on a local, in his belief, *national* level (*die Einheit der Familiensprache in Einer Nation*). Herder's own argument thus brings him to the conclusion that the cause of the existence of different languages, different ways of thinking and different lifestyles (*Lebensart*, i.e., *cultures*) among people who live close together is none other than *mutual family and national hatred* (ibid.: 101).[16]

Nations, their different cultures and their different languages were thus formed through mutual antagonism, or 'hate' as Herder puts it. It was therefore impossible for a language to remain unitary and so the same 'family' feeling that produced *one single* language, when it turned into *national hate* began producing linguistic differences by viewing *others* as barbarians speaking a foreign language (ibid.: 103).[17]

Thus, through a process of differentiation based on mutual hatred, as Herder explained the separation and organization of people into different nations, also different languages, which were based on one single common origin, were formed. Dante's ideological framework enabled Herder to understand *language* as living speech and grammatical system at the same time, and so to conceptualize this linguistic Chimera – which differed in the mouth of every individual speaker and yet, at the same time, existed as a unified linguistic system – as *national language*.

4   Japanese language

The last two chapters were concerned with the European philological tradition and the process of the conceptualization of vernacular languages as language systems on a par with classical languages and, later, with the re-articulation of these vernacular language systems as national languages. The reason for the attempt at an analysis of the Western philological tradition is that language ideologies or linguistic discourses in Japan from the nineteenth century onwards, were primarily

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[16] "Der Grund von dieser Verschiedenheit so naher kleiner Völker in Sprache, Denk- und Lebensart ist – gegenseitiger Familien- und National Haß."

[17] "Die konnte also unmöglich Einerlei bleiben, und so schuf dasselbe Familiengefühl, das Eine Sprache gebildet hatte, da es Nationalhaß wurde, oft Verschiedenheit, völlige Verschiedenheit der Sprache. Er ist Barbar, er redet eine Fremde Sprache …"

influenced by this same philological tradition; whether directly as with the 'father' of modern Japanese language, Ueda Kazutoshi, who brought back European linguistic ideas from his study in Germany, or indirectly through criticism, as in the case of neo-nativist scholars who tried to construct a uniquely Japanese discourse through the rejection of imported ideas or, rather, by appropriating them as uniquely Japanese.

However, language in Japan did not of course become an object of study only in the nineteenth century, and there was indeed a philological tradition in Japan, which had articulated itself throughout the Edo period within the so-called 'nativist' school or *kokugaku*. Or, to be more precise, in the wake of modern nationalism the tradition of *kokugaku* was reinterpreted as a uniquely Japanese version of philological tradition and appropriated as such. It was exactly the desire to create a Japanese nationalism that was on par with, but not derived from, that of Western nation-states that motivated the production of the 'new kokugaku' (*shin-kokugaku*) of the Meiji period (Burns 2003: 225).

Thus neo-nativists such as Haga Yaichi (1867–1927) went through painstaking efforts to construct a narrative of the rise of national consciousness stretching back to antiquity but culminating in the 'philologic' practice of Motoori Norinaga, a narrative that paralleled but never intersected with those of Western nationalisms. Situated within this narrative, Norinaga's work became presciently scientific, academic and modern – but still distinctly Japanese (ibid.: 225). It was Haga Yaichi that coined the term *bunkengaku* (文献学) as a translation for the term *philology* and applied it to the tradition of *kokugaku*, although he simultaneously argued that *kokugaku* was of a completely different status against what he called the 'general view' that *kokugaku* was nothing more than the study of things Japanese and thereby akin to 'Chinese studies' and 'Western studies' (ibid.: 198–99).

Haga, like many others, was sent to Germany at government expense to research "methods for studying the history of literature" and departed from Yokohama in 1900 on the same ship as the most famous Japanese novelist of the Meiji era, Natsume Sōseki, who was on his way to England (ibid.: 199).

Just as Ueda Kazutoshi, who had returned from Europe a decade earlier and on his return to Japan had presented his famous lecture "Kokugo to kokka to" (*National language and nation-state*), in which he employed European concepts of

language by defining it as the '*spiritual blood of the nation',* so Haga Yaichi on his return in 1904 delivered a talk before an assembly of students at Kokugakuin University entitled "Kokugaku to ha nanizo ya" (*What in fact is kokugaku?*). However, in contrast to Ueda, who introduced the study of European linguistics to Japan and set about revolutionizing research on the Japanese language, transforming the field from a tradition relying on Edo period *kokugaku* practices to the adoption of modern scientific methodology, Haga returned to Japan with a rather different conception. Instead of discovering in European scholarship a method for studying national literature, he concluded that there was a method within *kokugaku* practice as modern as anything Europe had to offer (Burns 2003: 203) and thus he set about reinterpreting the *kokugaku* tradition in terms of philology.

In the process of reinterpreting the tradition of *kokugaku*, which had been extremely heterogenous throughout the Edo period, and far from ideologically united, as Susan L. Burns has shown in her extensive analysis of the *kokugaku* tradition[18], Haga had to interpret it in the light of a new nationalist ideology or, in other words, to re-situate *kokugaku* as a point of origin for modern Japanese nationalism. He thus characterized it as the study of 'the character of the Japanese nation' (*kokusui*) and 'the spirit of the nation' (*kokka seishin*) and, as he moved chronologically through the history of *kokugaku*, he demarcated 'true' *kokugaku* by selecting, discarding, and reinterpreting aspects of *kokugaku* discourse and thus creating a new image of Japanese nation (Burns 2003: 200).

Haga set out on a journey of reinterpretation, of aligning the *kokugaku* tradition to his own views, mainly by stating who was a real *kokugaku* scholar and who was not. As previously mentioned, there had been a lively and heterogenous tradition of *kokugaku* discourse throughout Edo period, exemplified by such diverse scholars as Motoori Norinaga, Ueda Akinari, Fujitani Mitsue and Tachibana Moribe. Though it was only natural for scholars to take sides and criticize others, Haga and other neo-nativists had to take the ideological reinterpretation one step further. For them, it was no longer about who was right and who was wrong within *kokugaku* scholarship, but rather about who even deserved to be part of it, and the answer to that was based on the completely novel

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[18] Susan L. Burns. *Before the Nation. Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

argument of who was 'nationalist' enough. Haga, for instance, thus dismissed Ueda Akinari and Tachibana Moribe as mere *wagakusha*, scholars who studied Japanese texts but lacked the nationalism necessary to qualify as practitioners of *kokugaku* (Burns 2003: 200). At the same time, Haga saw in Motoori Norinaga the embodiment of the most excellent *kokugaku* scholar, who held true nationalist views as to how the Japanese nation must be explained and so Norinaga's *kokugaku* tradition – along with scholars such as Kada no Azumamaro, Kamo no Mabuchi, and Hirata Atsutane – became canonized and all subsequent scholarship about Japan relied on and was heavily influenced by this interpretation. Modern post-war studies of the Japanese nation, usually categorized under the term *nihonjinron*, thus employed, and still continue to do so, concepts like 'the thought of the Japanese people,' 'the way of Japan,' and 'the special character of the nation.'

However, Haga could not, as we argued in the first chapter, construct his view of the nation without reference to *the other*, without having something to set his ideology against. That *other*, of course, was the West. In the speech we mentioned, Haga began by posing questions like: "In the West, what do they call this thing we call *kokugaku*? Is it permissible to speak of *kokugaku* over there? From the perspective of today's science, can *kokugaku* be established as an academic discipline?" (ibid.: 203).

Haga's answer to all of these questions was a definite yes. Arguing that, in its aim and method, *kokugaku* resembled the discipline called philology in Germany, he declared, "Kokugaku too is a science," (ibid.) and he cited with approval Wilhelm von Humboldt's description of philology as *Wissenschaft der Nationalität* (ibid.: 204). Haga's interpretative operation, by which he constructed his ideological paradigm, was twofold; on the one hand, he aligned to his ideas the concept of Western philology and on the other, he did the same with the concept of *kokugaku*. As Susan L. Burns writes:

> But if Haga's equation of kokugaku and philology rested upon a purposeful misreading of the work of the German scholars he cited, it was equally a manipulation of the kokugaku discourse of the late Tokugawa period. While Haga described the texts that were the object of kokugaku practice as examples of "national language and literature," Norinaga and the others scholars of Haga's genealogy never conceived of the texts they studied as "literary" in nature. […] In order to render the Tokugawa discourse into a "science," Haga had to suppress the emphasis on the "divine" nature of the

mythohistories, a defining feature of precisely the forms of kokugaku he valorized. Ironic as well is the description of Norinaga, in particular, as a practitioner of bunkengaku, when the whole of the *Kojikiden* was organized around the suppression of textual issues and the insistence that the "orality" of *Kojiki* meant that it was a transparent representation of the reality of the Divine Age (Burns 2003: 205).

With *shin-kokugaku* scholars such as Konakamura Kiyonori, Haga Yaichi and Muraoka Tsunetsugu, one specific line of *kokugaku* school, and particularly one *kokugaku* scholar – Motoori Norinaga – came to be canonized and thus consecrated as the only true scholarship of Japan, rivalling the philological traditions of the West. At the same time, though, it was also perceived as inherently different from the Western tradition by being uniquely Japanese.

Motoori Norinaga thus became the standard point of departure for discussing the origin of the concept of *national language* or *kokugo* as is the Japanese term for it, coined by Ueda Kazutoshi. However, as Lee Yeounsuk has pointed out, even though the tradition of *kokugaku* since Norinaga is usually employed when discussing this topic, one must be careful with this interpretation. It is true that in Norinaga's line of *kokugaku* the connection between Japanese *language* and Japanese *spirit* had already taken a distinct ideological form, but from a nativist scholar's point of view the ideal language was that of the old texts, especially *Kojiki*, a language free of all elements of the "Chinese spirit" (*karagokoro*), the so-called *Yamato kotoba*. That, though, was far from what was to become the national language (*kokugo*) in the Meiji period (Lee 1996: vi).

We will not proceed with further analysis of the problem of national language and will save the question of how the concept of *kokugo* took shape during the Meiji period in the works of linguists like Ueda Kazutoshi, Hoshina Koichi, Tokieda Motoki and others for another occasion, since our aim in this paper is limited to establishing a theoretical and historical framework in which language ideologies that have been formed in Japan can be discussed.

As we have seen, language ideologies related to *nation building* and *national language* were based on pre-existing philological traditions and were not just invented *ex nihilo*. While nation was being conceived as a concept of identity and connected to the idea of nation-state, language was simultaneously being reinterpreted as *national-language*, based on pre-existing conceptions that

language can be understood in a dual manner, as an idiosyncratic and diachronic speech act on the one hand and as a systematic and synchronic language system on the other.

Such a view was made possible only through the existence of written language, as Karatani Kojin has argued in his paper "Nationalism and *Écriture*", in which he criticized Jacques Derrida's assumptions that phonocentrism dating back to Plato is peculiar to the West (Karatani 1995: 5). Karatani claims that phonocentrism was already present within the *kokugaku* of the eighteenth century, which saw its ultimate expression in Motoori Norinaga who contrasted the *Nihon shoki*, written in Chinese characters, with the *Kojiki*, which appeared to preserve the spoken language of ancient Japan and in which he sought to discover the 'ancient way' (*inishie no michi*) (ibid.). According to Karatani, the buds of nationalism appeared first and foremost in Japan in the movement to privilege phonetic writing within the Chinese character cultural sphere, a situation that was far from unique in Japan, since with respect to the forming of nations, the same problem has emerged all over the world and thus a historical consideration of the case of Japan should look at the problem from a more universal perspective (ibid: 5–6).

As we have shown in the second chapter, so called phonocentrism emerged in Europe in an attempt to write the vernacular as opposed to Latin and one of the first to undertake this project was Dante Alighieri, who not only started writing in the vernacular but also made an effort to attach theoretical significance to the act (ibid.: 6). These vernacular attempts have shaped the languages of every nation. As Karatani says, in every nation these classics can still be read today, not because the languages of each nation have not changed much, but rather because the languages of each nation have been formed by means of these works (ibid.).

We have attempted in this paper to establish a theoretical framework that would enable us to approach the question of the formation of language ideologies in connection with nation building in modern Japan. We have shown how, in European philological tradition, language ideologies concerning spoken vernaculars first came to be formed in opposition to classical and written languages, based on the concept of the priority of spoken language, i.e., on the concept of phonocentrism. The ideology of phonocentrism brought into existence ethnicities and races which had previously been unrelated and therefore nonexistent (Karatani 1995: 13). With the conceptualization of vernaculars as languages on a par with classical languages, it became possible to bring together

ideologically the actual linguistic diversity of speakers but, at the same time, conceive language as a homogenous system that belongs to all individuals of that imagined linguistic group, as we have shown in the case of Herder. In other words, language was conceptualized as a common culture shared by that community. For instance, the idea that Latin was succeeded by French is merely a projection onto language of the inheritance of culture. In other words, historical linguistics saw culture and spoken language as one and the same thing (ibid.: 9).

This ideological background made it possible for structural linguistics to try to conceptualize this difference theoretically by drawing a line that separates language (*langue*) as a synchronic system and thus a social fact, from speech (*parole*) as diachronic speech act and limited to individual psychology.

The phonocentrism of Japan's eighteenth-century nativist scholars contained within it a political struggle against the domination of Chinese 'culture', as well as a critique of the samurai system of which Confucianism was the official ideology of Tokugawa shogunate. As Karatani writes:

> In an effort to find a Japanese that preceded Chinese characters, as well as the "ancient way" that would correspond to it, nativist scholars looked to works written between the seventh and eleventh centuries such as the *Man'yoshuu*, the *Kojiki*, and the *Tale of Genji*. But they totally lost sight of the fact that such *écriture* did not begin as an effort to record speech, but rather as an attempt to translate written Chinese into Japanese (Karatani 1995: 17).

Within these language ideologies, as Karatani claims, the equation was made between language as a system and written language. However, when Dante wrote in the vernacular, he did not directly transpose contemporary spoken language into writing. From the various spoken languages existing all over Italy, he selected one and it is not because he selected the standard one, but rather because he wrote in the vernacular as a form of translating Latin, that his written language later became the standard and the others were relegated to the status of dialect (ibid.). The same happened with other languages. For instance, 'French' did not exist as a spoken language; it was simply that written 'French' later became the spoken language (ibid.).

The same has happened with 'Japanese', since contrary to the opinions of nativist scholars of the Norinaga school, the language of the *Kojiki* did not simply

transpose the contemporary vernacular into writing, but was rather a translation into the vernacular of what was hitherto written in classical Chinese.

The ideological process of the neo-nativists of the nineteenth century was first to canonize a single school of *kokugaku* scholarship and then to reinterpret its teaching to fit their needs of language ideology. The ideological acrobatics they performed can be basically summarized as follows: they adopted the idea of a Western scientific approach only to reject it and find its counterpart in Japanese *kokugaku,* which again they paralleled with Western philology again only to show that it was something different and uniquely Japanese. The ideological platform for the birth of national language – *kokugo* – was thus established.

5   Conclusion

At this point, however, the story was far from over. Ideological background based on national identity did not exclusively support a single view on the nature of national language. Ideas of one single nation, of course, led to a new interest in language issues, but the view was as yet far from being unified. Ueda Kazutoshi, for example, who was very much influenced by western ideas of language, was motivated by the connection he saw between national identity and the treatment of language. He therefore asserted that the 'Japanese language' could be greatly improved by the adoption of a standard form of the language and of the colloquial style in writing. Ueda did not view this as tampering with tradition or destroying a respected cultural icon; far from it, to refine the national language was to treat it with respect (Gottlieb 2005: 45). A standard language and a modern written style were, in his view, interdependent; both were essential to the future development of language in modern Japan (ibid.)

Not everyone shared these views, however. The calls for script reform that began to surface in the 1870s and 1880s were opposed just as vehemently as the development of a modern written style. Ueda's followers in the twentieth century, such as Hoshina Kōichi or Hirai Masao, who were advocates of the so-called *genbun itchi* movement, the unification of written and spoken language, and of the introduction of the Roman alphabet, were strongly opposed by conservative traditionalists such as Yamada Yoshio or Tokieda Motoki, who were in favor of preserving the historical usage of writing and literary style. Tokieda even

constructed his own grammatical theory, called 'language process theory' (*gengo katei setsu*), in part also as a criticism of Saussure and his synchronic language theory.

The ideas of language 'reformists' met resistance not only from the more conservative linguists but also from the official government establishment. If the novel concept of nationalism became the platform for language ideologies, as represented in Ueda's ideas about the formation of a new standard national language (*kokugo*), then the ultra-nationalistic ideology that became prominent after the Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895), brought about a different view of national language, one which saw any reform debate as a direct attack on national values, history and tradition. These 'values', representing a distinct pattern of national unity around the Emperor, eventually received articulated form and official status within the concept of *kokutai* or 'national polity'. Forming one of the basic constructs within *kokutai* was *kotodama*, or 'the spirit of the Japanese language,' a term used to imply an inseparable connection existing between the unique Japanese language and the essence of the Japanese spirit (Gottlieb 2005: 47).

Linguistic thought formed in Europe over the centuries, together with philological tradition in Japan itself, constructed a platform for new language ideologies and ideas concerning national language, its nature and its role as the main building block of the new 'Japanese culture'. These ideas, however, were far from unified. Individual ideas of intellectuals of the early Meiji era were first formed into official language policy only in 1902, when the government finally approved and set up a committee called the National Language Research Council (Kokugo Chōsa Iinkai) within the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, the ideas promoted by Ueda Kazutoshi and the reformists of the *genbun itchi* movement had to wait until the end of the World War II to see their official implementation in public life. Discussions on the nature of the standard spoken language and writing system were, however, at that point far from concluded, but rather continued to occupy linguists, as well as the general public, throughout the second half of the twentieth century and indeed continue to occupy them until this day.

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