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Computers and Japanese Literacy

Nihonzin no Yomikaki Nôryoku to Konpyûta

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Nihonzin no
Yomikaki
Nōryoku to
Konpyūta

Computers and
Japanese
Literacy

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Watakusi wa saikin, gendai
no konpyūta siyō to Nihongo ni
tuite kenkyū site orimasu.
Gengogakusya mo konpyūta no
nōryoku ya mondaiten ni tuite
iken o happyō suru sekinin ga
aru to omou kara desu.

Sate, Amerika no zen- Kōsei
Kyōiku tyōkan, John Gardner-si
no kotoba de hazimetai to
omoimasu. Sore wa "aizyō nasi
no hihan to hihan nasi no aizyō
(Eigo de iu to, "unloving
criticism and uncritical love")
to iu kotoba desu. Gardner-si
wa, Amerikazin no aikokusyūgi ni
tuite Amerika o sukosi de mo
hihan site wa ikenai to syutyō
suru hito wa kanğaetiğai da,
aizyō nasi ni syakai ya bunka no
ketten o hihan bakari suru koto
wa motiron warui keredo, hihan
sore zitai o kiratte
kokusuisyūgi o susumeru koto mo
syōrai no tame ni yoku nai, to
iimasita. Kono koto wa bokoku
igai no syakai to bunka ni tai
suru baai de mo onazi de wa nai
desyō ka? Gengogakusya ya
rekisiğakusya mo "aizyō nasi no
hihan to hihan nasi no aizyō" to
iu ryōkyokutan o sakeru yō ni
sita hō ga ii to omou no desu.
Watakusi wa Nihon no gengo to
bunka o senmon ni site, Nihon ni
tai site aizyō o motte orimasu
kara koso, Nihongo no hyōkiğō ya
Nihonzin no yomikaki nōryoku ni

I am currently engaged in
research on contemporary
computer usage and the Japanese
language. Linguists too, I
believe, have a responsibility
to present their views on the
potentials and problems of
computers.

Let me begin by quoting the
former U.S. Secretary of Health,
Education, and Welfare, John
Gardner. I am thinking of his
phrase "unloving criticism and
uncritical love." By this, he
meant that it was wrong for
proponents of American
patriotism to oppose even the
slightest criticism of the
United States: although it is
bad to dwell unsympathetically
on finding fault with social and
cultural shortcomings, it is
equally bad for the future of
society to advance nationalism
and eschew all criticism. I
think that this is also true
when considering foreign
societies and cultures.
Linguists and historians would
do well to avoid the twin
extremes of "unloving criticism
and uncritical love." As
someone professionally involved
with the language and culture of
Japan, I have an affection for
the country, but for that very
reason, I wish to call into
question the accepted theory of
Japanese script and literacy.

tuite no teisetu o mondai ni site iru wake desu. Iwayuru zyōhōka syakai no zidai ni hairi, ippan no hitobito ga pasokon ya wāpuro o kozin-yō ni tukau yō ni naru ni turete, nettowāku tūsin, kyōiku-yō sohutowea, sōzōteki na puroguramingu nado ga yōkyū sarete kite iru desyō. Mosi sono konpon ni aru yomikaki nōryoku no henka to genzyō o gokai sureba, gōriteki na konpyūta siyōhō o kaihatu dekinai darō to omou kara desu.

Sate, hyōi mozi to iu kotoba wa Nihongo ni tuite no hon ni yoku dete imasu kara kokugogaku no yōgo da to itte mo ii hodo desu ga, hyōi mozi to iu mono wa zissai ni sonzai site iru desyō ka? Kyakkanteki ni kangaete miru to, dono gengo mo konponteki ni wa hanasu mono desu. Mozi wa syakaiteki, rekisiteki na men ga arimasu ga, mozi wa kotoba no imi no moto de wa arimasen. Tatoeba, itizi mo yomenai mōmoku no hito de mo, hoka no syōgai ga nai kagiri, bokokuo ga kanzen ni hanaseru yō ni narimasu. Sitaqatte, hanasi-kotoba to wa mattaku kankei ga nai mozi nado to iu mono wa muimi na gainen desu. Gengo no imi wa gengo no kōzō kara hassei si, mozi wa sono han'ei de sika nai wake desu. Kore wa toku ni kore kara no konpyūta o kangaeru toki ni wasurete wa ikemasen.

Tokoro de, genzai, Nihon de urete iru pasokon nado wa hotondo iwayuru Nihongo zyōhō syori nōryoku ga tuite iru to iu koto ni natte imasu ga, zitu wa Nihongo zyōhō syori to iu yori, kanzi kanamaziribun syori to itta hō ga seikaku desu. Sono ue, Nihon no sohutowea kaihatu

As we enter the age of the so-called informational society, and as more and more ordinary people begin to use computers on an individual basis, demands on network communications, educational software, creative programming, and so on, will steadily increase. Unless we understand the present situation and history of literacy, which underlies all these applications, we cannot hope to develop a rational basis for computer usage.

The term "ideographic characters" appears so often in books on the Japanese language that one might say it has become a stock phrase of Japanese linguistics. I wonder, however, whether such things as "ideographs" actually exist. When examined objectively, all languages are fundamentally speech. Characters are not the source of the meanings of words, although they do have their social and historical aspects. For example, blind people who cannot read a single character can nonetheless speak their native tongues perfectly, unless they suffer from some other handicap. The very idea of characters totally divorced from speech is therefore meaningless. For the meaning of language emerges from the structure of language, of which writing is merely a reflection. It is particularly important that we not forget this when we consider the computers of the future.

Today, however, virtually all the personal computers sold in Japan are supposed to provide so-called Japanese information processing capabilities. But it would be more accurate to say that they provide Japanese script manipulating capabilities; moreover, Japanese

ga hādowea kaihatu hodo susunde inakute, sono hotondo zenbu wa mada Eigo ni motozuita puroguramu gengo (tatoeba BASIC ya FORTRAN) de okonawarete iru no desu. Tumari, Nihon wa sohutowea kaihatu ga okurete iru no ni, "kanzi ga tukaenakereba hontō no Nihongo wa kakenai" to iu kangaekata ga ōkō site iru no desu. Kō iu yō na kangae wa, tatoeba Keiō Daigaku no Suzuki Takao kyōzyu no Tozasareta gengo ya Tukuba Daigaku no Kaiho Hiroyuki zyōkyōzyu no Kanzi o kagaku suru to iu hon nado ni dete iru to site mo, gengogaku no zyōsiki kara hazurete imasu si, mata sinkei-gengogaku no zikken kekka ya rinsyō keiken to mo kuitigatte iru no desu. (Kore ni tuite wa, Canada no McGill Daigaku no Paradis, Hagiwara, Hildebrandt syosi no sugereta ronpyō o zehi sankō ni site itadakitai to omoimasu.)

Yō suru ni, Nihongo o konpyūta de atukau toki ni, sono kotoba no imi sae wakareba, kanagaki de mo rōmazigaki de mo zyūbun desu. Motiron, meibo sakusei, insatu nado, sunawati kanzi sore zitai ga dēta to naru baai ni wa, kanzi o nyūryoku suru hoka sikata ga arimasen ga, nitizyō no ōku no sigoto ni wa sonna hituyō ga arimasen. Sitaqatte, "kanzi ga tukaenakereba, Nihongo ga kakenai" to iu taido wa kangaetigai bakari de wa naku, sohutowea no mondai no omo na gen'in no hitotu ni tigai nai no desu. Dōyō no koto o, tatoeba Kokuritu Minzoku Hakubutukantyo no Umesao Tadao hakusi ya Tōkyō Daigaku Rigakubu no Yamada Hisao kyōzyu nado ga sude ni siteki site imasu ga, Nihon no seizi to bunka no sekai de wa kō sita tyūoku o ki ni tomete iru hito ga sukunai yō desu.

software development is not keeping up with hardware development, and is still being carried out in programming languages (such as BASIC and FORTRAN) based on English. In other words, the idea that "you can't write Japanese without Chinese characters" is widespread even though Japan lags behind in software development. Although this kind of thinking can be found in books, such as Suzuki 1975 and Kaiho 1983, by faculty at big-name universities, it flies in the face of the common sense of linguistic science, and is contradicted by both experimental and clinical results in psycholinguistics (Paradis et al. 1985).

To put it as briefly as possible, when one is dealing with the Japanese language on computers, all that matters is that word-meanings can be understood; either kana alone or Latin letters alone are sufficient. Of course, in applications such as preparing name lists and typesetting, in which Chinese characters serve as data in their own right, there is no option but to input Chinese characters; however, for most daily tasks, there is no such necessity. Therefore, the idea that "you can't write Japanese without Chinese characters" is not only a misconception; it is unquestionably one of the main reasons for Japan's software problems. This has already been pointed out by prominent Japanese such as Umesao Tadao (1972) and Yamada Hisao (1984).

Watakusi no tatiba kara mireba, Umesao-si ya Yamada-si no siteki wa akiraka ni tadasii no ni, ōku no Nihonzin ga Suzuki-si ya Kaiho-si ni sansei site iru no wa zitu ni husigi na koto desu. Sono riyū ga wakattara, gendai Nihon no syakai-gengogaku o daibu sinpo saseru koto ga dekiru no de wa nai ka to omoimasu. Watakusi wa kotosi, Kokusai Kōryū Kikin no fellow to site kono mondai nado ni tuite kenkyū site orimasu ga, ima made ni wakatte kita koto wa tugi no tōri desu.

Mazu, Nihonzin no gengo taido wa Dainizi Sekai Taisen no ato wa kanari kawatte itta to iu koto ni tyūmoku site itadakitai no desu. Tatoeba, ima wa "Gaikokuzin wa kessite Nihongo ga masutā dekinai" to iu kangae o motte iru hito wa ōi desyō ga, Dai-Nihon teikoku zidai no Taiwan to Tyōsen ni tai suru kyōiku seisaku o sukosi de mo mireba, Nihon no kokusuisyugisya de mo gaikokuzin ni mo Nihongo ga masutā dekiru si, Nihonzin de nai hito ni Nihongo o kyōsei suru no wa tōzen da to omotte ita yō desu. Mō hitotu no rei wa kokuzi kaikaku no koto desu. Genzai wa Nihongo hyōkihō o sara ni kantan ni siyō to iu koe ga sukunaku narimasita ga, Meizi zidai syoki kara Taiheiyō Sensō no owarigoro made wa, seizi ga motto hosyuteki datta ni mo kakuwarazu, Rōmazikai ya Kanamozikai, sara ni Monbusyō no Rinzi Kokugo Tyōsakai ya sono ato no Kokugo Singikai nado ga zutto katuyaku site ita no wa zizitu desu. Sono 70-nenkan no zyunbi kikan ga nakattara, Senryōgungawa no aturyuoku ni ōzite, iwayuru tōyō kanzi to

but it seems that few Japanese in the worlds of politics and culture have taken their advice to heart.

From my point of view, it is quite incredible that so many Japanese agree with Suzuki and Kaiho when the arguments of Umesao and Yamada are so obviously correct. Surely, if we could understand the reason for this, we could greatly advance Japanese sociolinguistics. I have been doing research on this problem this year as a Japan Foundation fellow, and what follows are the conclusions I have reached so far.

First of all, I think we need to pay attention to the fact that Japanese attitudes towards languages underwent a considerable change following World War II. For example, there seem to be many people who hold the belief that "no foreigner can ever master Japanese," but if we look at the educational policies in Taiwan and Korea during Japan's imperialist phase, it seems that even the ultranationalists, so far from thinking that foreigners could not master Japanese, thought it reasonable to force Japanese on non-Japanese. Script reform provides another example. Not many people are calling for more script reform today, but it is a fact that the Romanization Society, the Society for Kana Writing, the Ministry of Education's Provisional National Language Survey Committee, and its successor, the National Language Investigation Committee were active from the Meizi Period right on to the end of the Pacific War, despite a far more conservative political

gendai kanazukai nado o tadati
ni kimetari dekinakatta hazu
desu.

Sono go, Syōwa 20-nen goro
kara Nihonzin no gengo taido ni
wa ziminzoku-tyūsinsyugi no
keikō ga dandan tuyoku natte
kita yō desu. Genzai no
konpyūta yūza no aida ni aru
"kanzi o tukaenakereba Nihongo
ga kakenai" to iu kangae nado ga
kono keikō no hitotu to sureba,
kore wa sensō o taiken sita hito
bakari de wa naku, sensō o
siranai hito ni mo aru kangae na
no de, sore wa haisen to iu
syakai no itidekigoto kara
hassei site kita hazu wa nai no
desu.

De wa, Syōwa 20-nen ga dō
site zyūyō na magariado ni
natta ka to ieba, watakusi wa
sinkyōiku seido no zissi ni yoru
senzen no kyūsei kōkō no haisi
de wa nakatta ka to omoimasu.
Sengo wa, seito ga danzyo byōdō
ni atukawareru yō ni natte,
nōryoku sae areba hotondo dare
de mo kōkō ya daigaku made
susumeru yō ni natta wake desu.
Kono koto wa senzen to
kurabereba yahari kakumeiteki na
henka desita. Sikamo mozi
kaikaku to dōzi desita no de,
Nihonzin no yomikaki nōryoku ni
bakudai na eikyō o ataeta no de
wa nai ka to omoimasu.

Nihonzin no yomikaki
nōryoku wa senzen mo sengo mo
amari tigatte inai to iu koto ga
teisetu ni natte iru yō desu ga,
sengo wa kanzi no siyōsū no
gensyō ya onkun-yomi no seigen

atmosphere than exists today.
Indeed, had it not been for this
period of 70 years of
preparation, it is unlikely that
the so-called tōyō kanzi and
gendai kanazukai reforms could
have been implemented so quickly
in response to Occupation
pressures.

It was later, from around
1945, that the ethnocentric
tendency in Japanese language
attitudes gradually grew
stronger. To the extent that
the attitude among today's
computer users that "you can't
write Japanese without Chinese
characters" is part of this
trend, it is something which
belongs to those who know
nothing of the war, not just
those who lived through it;
therefore, one cannot explain it
be saying that it came from a
single event, such as the
surrender, which traumatized
society.

What was it, then, that
made 1945 a turning point? I
would suggest that it was the
abolition of the prewar higher
schools effected by the
implementation of a new
educational system. After the
war, students, regardless of
sex, were treated equally, and
almost anyone could go on to
high school or university as
long as he or she had the
talent. This was a truly
revolutionary change when
compared with the prewar
situation. Moreover, it took
place simultaneously with script
reform, and so had an enormous
influence on Japanese literacy.

It is generally believed
that there is not much
differences between Japanese
literacy before and after the
war, but when one looks at the
whole Japanese nation today, the

ni mo kakawarazu, Nihon kokumin zentai o mireba, ippan no hitobito no gengo seikatu wa kanarazusimo kantan ni natta to wa kagirimasen. Naze ka to iu to, senzen wa, ôku no hito wa amari kanzi o yondari kaitari suru koto ga dekinakute mo ii to omowarete ita kara desu. Ippan no hitobito wa huriqana ga nakereba sinbun ya zassi wa yomemasen desita si, seikai ya keizaikai no sidôsyô ga kansin suru yô na bunsyô de, sakubun dekuru hazu wa arimasen desita. Zyosei wa syôgakkô o sotugyô site mo, kôdô zyôgakkô ni susumu koto wa mezurasikatta no desu. Sore dake no riyû de mo, zenkoku no yomikaki nôryoku no heikin suizyun wa sengo ni kurabete yaya hikukatta wake desu. Sosite dansei no hō wa nanwari gurai ga tyûgaku izyô ni singaku sita ka to ieba, 2-wari ni mo tassite imasen desita. Kono setumei wa ato de simasu ga, ima wa kô iu zizyô ga atta koto o zentei ni site okimasyô.

Senzen to genzai o kurabete mita toki, yomikaki nôryoku wa dô kawatta desyô ka? Genzai no Nihon de wa tekirei zinkô no 95% gurai ga kôkô ni haitte iru sô desu. Kôkô ni yotte yôbô ni sa ga aru ka mo siremasen ga, Monbusyô wa kôkô ni hairu mae ni sukunaku to mo zyôyô kanzi gurai made wa syûtoku suru yô ni to itte iru yô desu. Zissai ni wa zyôyô kanzi de ziyû ni tukaikonasenai gakusei ga ôi no de wa nai ka to omoimasu ga, kore wa seihi no hōsin desu kara, tonikaku kizyun ni simasyô. De wa, senzen ni wa, kono kizyun no teido made kanzi ga dekuru no wa zinkô zentai no nanwari datta desyô ka? Rakkanteki ni mite mo, yahari 2-

"language life" of the average Japanese has not necessarily gotten any easier despite the reduction in the number of Chinese characters in use and limitations on character readings. This is because, before the war, it was generally believed that most people didn't have to be able to read or write Chinese characters at a very high level. The average person couldn't read newspapers or magazines unless they had huriqana (sidenotes in kana giving the readings of characters), and no one expected them to be able to write in the style approved of by the country's political and economic leaders. It was unusual for a girl to go on to secondary school, if she graduated from primary school at all; for that reason alone, the average level of literacy had to be low relative to the postwar period. And the number of boys going beyond junior high school couldn't have been more than 20%. (The justification for this estimate will be given later.)

How has literacy changed from the prewar period to the present day? Currently, 95% of the school-age population enters high school. There are perhaps differences in the quality of high schools, but the Ministry of Education seems to expect that all children will learn the 1,945 zyôyô kanzi before entering high school. There may be many students who do not actually learn how to use all these characters freely, but this is the government's policy, and so can be taken as a standard. Now what percentage of the population attained this standard before the war? Even the most optimistic estimate would not exceed 20%. In other

wari ni suginakatta desyō.
 Tumari, senzen no syōnen syōzyo
 no hobo 8-wari wa genzai no
 gakusei hodo kanzi syūtoku no
 omoni ga nakatta koto ni
 narimasu. Kari ni, muzukasii
 kanzi ga oboerarenai gakusei wa,
 senzen mo sengo mo onazi wariai
 datta to site mo, sengo, kōkōsei
 no kazu ga nanbai ni mo
 narimasita kara, ninzūteki ni wa
 kyūzō sita koto ni narimasu.
 Gyaku ni iu to, senzen wa
 itininmae no Nihongo ga
 kakenakattari, gakumonteki na
 hon ga yomenakattari site mo
 sunda no ni, sengo wa, sono
 gurai dekinakereba hazi da to iu
 kimoti ga oya ya sensei no aida
 de ippanteki zyōsiki ni natte
 iru no desu.

Sate, senzen no Nihonzin no
 yomikaki nōryoku ni tuite no
 tōkei ga hotondo arimasen no de,
 kore ni tuite kansetuteki ni
 kenkyū suru hoka sikata
 arimasen. Siryō wa sinbun ya
 zassi no hurigana siyōritu, hon
 no uriage, tyōhei kensa no
 kekka, bunkazin (tatoeba, Nitobe
 Inazō) no kozinteki iken nado,
 Nihongawa no kansetuteki na mono
 desu. Reigai no hitotu wa,
 Berlin Daigaku no Clemens
 Scharschmidt kyōzyu no 1924-nen
 no "Schriftreform in Japan" to
 iu ronbun desu. Kono ronbun mo
dēta no urazuke ni yowai no desu
 ga, tōzi no syōgakkō no
 sotugyōsei no gakusyū mokuhyō wa
 kanzi ga 2,380-zi yomete, sono
 naka no 1,360-zi ga kakeru koto
 de atta no ni, quntai ni nyūtai
 sita bakari no syōnen wa 1,000-
 zi sika yomenaku, 500-600-zi
 sika kakenakatta to iu tōkei ga
 dete imasu. Scharschmidt no
 kenkyū hōhō ga humei desu kara,
 kono sūzi no sinraisei wa
 wakarimasen ga, hoka no hitotati
 ni yoru sengo no kenkyū mo kōryo
 ni irereba, Scharschmidt no
 hōkoku wa tōzi no zituzyō ni
 kanari tikai no de wa nai ka to

words, a full 80% of prewar
 youth did not bear the burden of
 learning Chinese characters now
 borne by today's students. If
 even that relative number of
 students who cannot learn
 difficult characters, before and
 after the war, is the same,
 there must have been a rapid
 increase in the absolute number.
 To put it the other way around,
 one could get by in the prewar
 period without being able to
 write educated Japanese or read
 serious books, but after the
 war, it became "common sense"
 among parents and teachers that
 inability to do these things was
 a matter of shame.

Since there are virtually
 no statistics on Japanese
 literacy before the war, one
 must investigate the situation
 indirectly. On the Japanese
 side, the evidence consists of
 the hurigana usage found in
 newspapers and magazines, sales
 figures of books, military
 conscription test results, and
 the remarks of prominent
 individuals (such as Nitobe
 Inazō [1931]). One exception is
 Scharschmidt 1924. This article
 is short on data, but it does
 state that although elementary
 school graduates were supposed
 to be able to write 1,360
 characters and read 2,380, young
 conscripts could only write
 about 500 or 600 and read 1,000.
 Scharschmidt's research methods
 are unclear, and I do not know
 how reliable these figures are,
 but when research by others is
 taken into account (e.g. Taira
 1971, Twine 1983), it appears
 that the figures which
 Scharschmidt reports must be
 close to the actual conditions
 of the time.

omoimasu. Sengo no kenkyū de
wa, Amerika no Illinois Daigaku
no Taira Kōzi kyōzyu to
Australia no Griffiths Daigaku
no Nanette Twine kōsi no Meizi
zidai no yomikaki nōryoku to
mozi kaikaku undō ni tuite no
kenkyū ga toku ni tyūmoku ni
atai suru to omoimasu.

Sengo no siryō to site wa,
Syōwa 23-nen no Nihon Yomikaki
Nōryoku Tyōsa ga arimasu. Sono
kekka ga Syōwa 26-nen ni syuppan
sareta toki, itibu no mozi
kaikaku suisinsya ga yosō sita
hodo warui kekka de wa nakatta
no de, ima de mo senzen no
Nihonzin no yomikaki nōryoku wa
zissai ni takakatta koto ni naru
to omou hito wa ōi yō desu.
Sikasi, tyōsa o tyūi site
yomeba, mattaku hantai no
keturon ga deru no desu. Tugi
no in'yō o kiite kudasai:

Nihon kokumin no
monmōritu wa kiwamete hikui
ga, literacy o motu to
mitomerareru mono no ritu
mo kiwamete hikuku, 6.2%
sika nai. (426 peizi.)

Kanzi no kakitori wa,
mondai no uti de mottomo
seiseki ga waruku, sikamo,
tokuten no dankai mo, hoka
no mondai to kurabete, issō
itizirusii koto ga akiraka
ni natta. Nihon kokumin ni
totte mozi gengo no hutan
wa "kanzi no kakitori" no
ue ni ōkiku kakatte iru to
ieru. (426 peizi.)

. . . kokugo
kokuzi mondai o ronzu
hitotati no iu, "Nihon
kokumin no genzai no
yomikaki nōryoku wa seizyō
na syakai seikatu o itonamu
no ni huzyūbun de aru" to
iu kasetu wa seiritu suru.
. . . Toku ni, kanzi no

As for postwar materials,
we have the Literacy Survey of
1948. When its results were
published in 1951, they were not
as bad as had been predicted by
some proponents of script
reform, and even today there
seem to be many who believe that
it showed that the level of
prewar literacy was actually
high. If you read the survey
itself, however, you will see
that the conclusion is
diametrically the opposite. For
example:

Complete illiteracy
among Japanese is extremely
low, but the number of
people who possess full
literacy is also extremely
low, only 6.2%. (p. 426.)

Questions requiring
the writing of kanzi from
dictation produced the
poorest results, and in all
groups tested produced
significantly lower scores
when compared with other
problems. It can be said
that the burden of written
language for the Japanese
depends largely on this
skill (p. 426.)

The hypothesis,
advanced by those who have
studied problems of the
national language and
script, that "the literacy
of today's Japanese is
inadequate for conducting a
full social life", was
confirmed. . . . In

kakitori no tikara wa
itizirusiku hikuku, seizyō
na syakai seikatu ga yōkyō
suru kanzi no kakitori no
tikara wa akiraka ni
huziyūbun de aru to ieru.
(425 peizi.)

Genzai no Nihon no yomikaki
nōryoku ni tuite wa, syōsai na
dēta ga motto ōi koto wa motiron
desu ga, Amerika no John
DeFrancis kyōzyu to Australia no
J. V. Neustupný kyōzyu no kenkyū
ni yoreba, Scharschmidt ga
kiroku sita toki no zyōtai to
genzai no zyōtai ni wa wazuka na
sōi sika nai no desu. Saikin,
tyūgaku o sotugyō sita gakusei
wa, senzen to dōyō, 500-zi sika
ziyū ni tukaenai wake desu.
Kono 60-nenkan ni wa, kari ni
yūtōseitati no tassei suizyun ga
takaku natte kita to site mo,
sore wa zinkō no itibubun ni
tuite no koto desu. Sore yori,
at random (musakui) ni erabareta
gakusei no nitizyō yomikaki
nōryoku no teido nado o zyūsi
sita hō ga ii no de wa arimasen
ka?

Sengo ni kokuzi kaikaku ga
okonaware, ippanzin no gengo
seikatu ga yutaka ni natta to wa
ie, sono kokuzi kaikaku wa kanzi
kanamaziribun no muzukasisa no
konpon o kaeru ni wa itarimasen
desita. Sono tame, kōtō kyōiku
o ukeru hito no wariai ga huete
kuru ni turete, kanzi nado ni
komaru hito ga zitu ni ōku natta
no desu. Iya, kokugo bakari de
naku, hoka no kamoku de mo
yahari onazi yō desita.
Tatoeba, 15-sai kara 24-sai made
no seinen no zisaturitu o miru
to, Syōwa 30-nen to 33-nen no
aida ga pīku to natte imasu.
Syōwa 34-nen kara 45-nen made
gyaku ni gensyō keikō ga
arimasita kara, Thomas Rohlen
hakusi ga 1983-nen no kenkyū de
siteki sita tōri, sengo no
seinen no zisaturitu wa zyuken

particular, the ability to
write kanzi from dictation
was remarkably low, and
clearly inadequate for a
full social life. (p.
425.)

There is, of course, much
more, detailed data regarding
current Japanese literacy;
however, according to DeFrancis
1984 and Neustupný 1984, there
hasn't been that much change
from the situation recorded by
Scharschmidt. Graduates of
modern junior high schools, as
in the prewar period, can freely
use only about 500 characters.
Even if we assume that, over the
past 60 years, the level of
accomplishment attained by the
best students has risen, we are
talking about only a small part
of the whole population.
Shouldn't we focus, rather, on
the everyday literacy of
students selected "at random"?

One might say that, due to
the script reform of the postwar
era, the "language life" of the
average person became richer,
but the script reform did not go
far enough to alter the
fundamental difficulties of the
mixed kana/kanzi writing system.
Consequently, as the proportion
of people who received post-
primary education increased, the
number of those who experienced
problems with kanzi actually
grew larger. Indeed, this seems
to be the case not only in
Japanese language classes, but
in other subjects as well. For
example, there was a peak in the
suicide rate of 15- to 24-
yearolds between 1955 and 1958.
From 1959 until 1970, there was
a decline; therefore, as pointed
out by Rohlen (1983), one cannot

benkyō no aturyoku ni seihirei
suru to wa setumei dekimasen.

De wa, naze Syōwa 30-nen to
33-nen no aida ga tyōten ni
natta ka to ieba, sono toki wa
sentyū ni umareta kodomotati ga
sinsei kōkō o sotugyō suru ziki
to itti site iru kara de wa nai
ka to omoimasu. Sotugyō ga
tikazuku ni ture, singaku suru
ka, syūsyoku suru ka ni mayotta
koto desyō. Sensei ya oya nado
wa sono sinkyōiku seido ni tuite
no zyūbun na keiken ga nakatta
no de, gakusei wa tekisetu na
sigoto ya gakkō wa doko ka to
nayande mo dare ni mo sōdan ga
dekinatta desyō. Sore igo,
zyugyō ni tuite ikenai kōkōsei
no zettaisū wa huete ikimasita
ga, sore ni mo kakawarazu,
seinen no zisaturitu ga sagatta
no wa, sono saisyō no ziki hodo
huan o kanzinakatta kara desu.

Tada no gūzen ka dō ka
sirimasen ga, tyōdo sono Syōwa
32-nen wa Kindaiti Haruhiko
kyōzyū no Nihongo ya Oono Susumu
kyōzyū no Nihongo no kigen nado
ga besuto-serā ni natta ziki ni
atari, "Nihongo bōmu" to iu
kotoba ga sinbun nado ni yoku
deta mono desu. Kokugo Singikai
wa okurigana kisoku o Syōwa 34-
nen ni happyō simasita ga,
Monbudaizin ga Zimintōnai no
aturyoku ni sitagatte sono iin
no hotondo sono yokunen made ni
kaete simaimasita. (Kono sisai
wa Ookubo Tadatosi-si no 1971-
nen no kenkyū ni kakarete
imasu.) Gengo ni okeru genzai
no ziminzoku-tyūsinsyugi no
keikō no kizasi wa yahari kono
koro kara hakkiri site kuru no
desu.

Matomete ieba, sono gen'in
wa sinkyōiku seido no zissi ni

explain the juvenile suicide
rate by saying it reflects
increasing entrance examination
pressure.

Why, then, the peak between
1955 and 1958? I think it is
because it corresponds to the
time when children born during
the war were graduating from
high school. As graduation
approached, those children had
to decide whether to try for
college or seek employment.
Their parents and teachers had
not had sufficient experience
with the new educational system,
and so the students had no one
to talk about the kind of jobs
or schools they could expect to
get into. Later on, the
absolute number of high school
students who couldn't keep up
with the class increased;
nevertheless, the juvenile
suicide rate fell off because
they didn't feel as much
uncertainty as existed during
this initial experience.

Perhaps it was just
coincidence, but it was at just
this time that Kindaiti 1957 and
Oono 1957 became best-sellers,
and the newspapers were talking
about a "Nihongo boom." The
National Language Investigative
Committee announced rules for
okurigana usage in 1959, but by
the following year, the Minister
of Education, under pressure
from the Liberal Democratic
Party, had packed the committee
(see Ookubo 1971). It was from
this period that the signs of
linguistic ethnocentrism
become clearly visible.

The cause of this, to
summarize, was the establishment

arimasu. Syakai zentai no seisaku to kozin no sinri o nani ga tunaide iru ka to ieba, Nihongo no hyōkihō desu. Mondai wa hitokuti de ieba kanzi desu. Yō suru ni, tōyō kanzi nado no dakyōteki mozi kaikaku wa sore zitai waruku arimasen desita si, tōzi no kyōiku kaihō seisaku wa kitto yokatta to omoimasu ga, sorera o dōzi ni zissi sita koto ga omoigakenai kekka o unda no de wa nai ka to omoimasu. Kusuri ni tatoereba, betubetu ni nondara kiku no o ukkari site dōzi ni nonde simatta tame ni kaette byōki ga hidoku natta no to onazi de wa arimasen ka. Hukuzatu na sinrigakuteki riron o tateru hituyō wa issai arimasen.

Tumari, naze genzai no Nihonzin ga kopnyūta de kanzi ga tukaenakereba Nihongo ga kakenai to iu kangae o motte iru ka wa, kono yō ni syakai-gengogakuteki ni kaisyaku dekiru no desu. Sikasi, kono kangaekata wa, gōriteki na setumei ga arinagara, kekkyoku, kagakuteki na konkyo wa arimasen. Itirei to site, wāpuro o mainiti ka no yō ni tukatte iru Nihonzin no genzyō ni tuite kangaete mimasu. Kibōdo ni wa nōritu ga takai kizyun haireru wa mada arimasen. Kanzi henkan nyūryoku wa naraiyasui desu ga, Eibun no tatti taipu no supīdo to kosuto de wa dekimasen si, gairaigo ga hueru ni turete, sono kōka ga sukosi zutu sagatte ikimasu. Sono ue, kanzi henkan nyūryoku wa zituzikan tūsin (tumari tūsinmō tanmatu sōti) nado ni wa hutekitō desu. Sono kawari ni facsimile o tukatte mo ii to iu hito ga arimasu ga, ima de mo tegami ga kakitaku nai no de denwa o syottyū tukatte iru bizinesuman nado ga wazawaza tegaki nyūryoku o yorokonde suru desyō ka. Wāpuro o tukau to benri na men mo arimasu ga,

of the new educational system. The link between social policy and individual attitudes is to be found in the Japanese writing system itself. In a word, the problem is kanzi. The tōyō kanzi reforms were not bad in themselves, nor was the liberalization of education; but the combined effects of these two changes seems to have produced an unintended result. To make an analogy, it is like an illness which gets worse because one mixes two medicines which, taken individually, would effect a cure. There is absolutely no need for an elaborate psychological theory.

To put it another way, the question of why Japanese believe that Japanese cannot be written without kanzi can be given a sociolinguistic interpretation. The explanation of this way of thinking is rational, but the way of thinking itself is devoid of any scientific basis. To give an example, consider the case of Japanese who use word processors daily. There is no efficient keyboard standard. Kana- or rōmazi-to-kanzi conversion input is easy to learn, but cannot compete with English touch typing in speed or cost; moreover, as the number of loanwords from Western languages increases, the efficiency of such input systems declines. Furthermore, conversion input is inappropriate for real-time communications. Some people think that facsimile equipment can be used in these cases, but it is hard to believe that businessmen who avoid writing letters and are constantly on the telephone will happily switch to handwritten input systems. Word processors have their points of convenience, but

sizen ni kanzi no tukaisugi ya okurigana no matigai nado ga okori, rōdō no kōritu o takameru dokoro ka, kaette rōdō zikan ya sutoresu ga huete mo iru yō desu. Saigo ni, wāpuro ni tayotte iru hito wa genkō yōsi nado ni kaku toki kanzi o wasurete simatte iru koto ni ki ga tuku to iu gensyō ga arimasu. Desu kara, kanzi no syuturyoku ga hituyō na baai ni dake kanzi no nyūryoku o suru yō ni seigen site, zyūrai no tegaki mo heiyō sinakereba, sekkaku no kanzi bunka o ukkari nakusu yō ni naru desyō.

Iikaereba, syōrai, Nihonzin wa konpyūta no tame no hyōkihō to site kanzi to kana ni rōmazi o kuwaeta hō ga ii to omoimasu. Nihongo no dēta ya puroguramu o rōmazi de kaite mo aikawarazu Nihongo desu kara, kanzi sae tukawanakereba, ima sugu ni de mo Eigo nado to onazi sokudo de nyū medhia ya konpyūta ga riyō dekiru no desu.

they also encourage the overuse of kanzi, errors in okurigana usage, and, so far from raising productivity, often increase labor time and stress. As if this weren't bad enough, people who rely on word processors notice that they forget kanzi when they try to write with pencil and paper. Therefore, unless Japanese restrict kanzi input to those situations which require kanzi output, and integrate computers with the earlier handwriting technology, they will unwittingly lose the very kanzi culture they seek to preserve.

In short, I believe that Japanese will in the future have to add rōmazi to kana and kanzi in their writing system. Japanese data and programs written in rōmazi are after all just as much Japanese as those written in conventional script. In order to move into the new world of computers at the same pace as the English-speaking world, all that is necessary is giving up kanzi.

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Editor's Note: J. Marshall Unger is the author of The Fifth Generation Fallacy: Why Japan Is Betting Its Future on Artificial Intelligence. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

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