Standard Language as a Role Language in Real-life Japanese and Fiction

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/sijp.2021.64-65.3

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to determine to what extent and from which perspectives standard language (hyōjungo) can be regarded as a significant representative of role languages (yakuwarigo). In common perception, standard language is usually contrasted to Japanese dialects (hōgen) and common language (kyōtsūgo) and described as an abstract, conventional, and imposed pattern of language. Accordingly, as a speech style, it is often perceived with more reserve. As a norm of language, it is also often considered as barely existing in real-life speech or restricted to written or formal styles only. However, the research into the models of fictitious speech patterns of the characters of popular TV series, animations, and comic books displays a significant influence of standard language on depicting specific types of roles and poses the characters perform in the plot. The analysis of selected dialogues reveals that the primary function of standard language as a role language is to emphasize the contrast between, especially, normality and extraordinariness, regularity and irregularity, seriousness and jocularity, maturity and immaturity, schemata and deviations from them. However, in this paper, the scope of functioning of hyōjungo as a role language is not only restricted to pop-cultural, fictitious forms. It can be easily noticed also in the dialogues in the textbooks used for Japanese language education. In the case of the materials for beginners, the language is unified and limited to standard addressative forms only, and any possible varieties or registers of Japanese are barely applied. In this regard, standard language can be considered as a role language or, more precisely, a model language of Japanese learning. This model function is motivated by its “reliability” feature, which is based on the fact that standard language exists in real-life Japanese to play the significant role of offering interlocutors the mutual feeling of comfort of sharing the same behavioral and linguistic schemata.

KEYWORDS: standard language, role language, common language, norm of language, honorifics

The Japanese term hyōjungo 標準語, lit. ‘standard language’, refers to the norm of the Japanese language which was constituted in the Meiji era (1868-1912) as a result of national language planning in the modernizing country. From the sociolinguistic perspective, standard language is
regarded as one of the varieties of the Japanese language (gengo henshu 言語変種). More specifically, as the primary form of language, it is used for public communication and official situations and, consequently, it is often acknowledged as the most prestigious language variety. However, because of its codified, fixed, and stabilized character, hyōjungo, in the strict sense, is usually associated with written language or regarded as an ideal variant of language which hardly appears in real-life conversations. Due to its stability and homogeneity, standard language is usually contrasted to Japanese regiolects and sociolects, which are more diversified and reveal certain flexibility. This contrast is also noticeable in Japanese fiction – in Japanese comic books or animations, standard language is applied as a role language (yakuwarigo 役割語) of protagonists and juxtaposed with other varieties of Japanese spoken by antagonists or third-plane characters.

When juxtaposing the background, the scope of functioning, and the correlation with real-life Japanese of both hyōjungo and yakuwarigo, certain noticeable similarities and dependencies can be displayed. The aim of this short paper is to examine whether and to what extent hyōjungo is a substantial component of real-life speech. However, there are questions concerning its use in fiction that also need answering: On what basis and to what degree may such factors as historical motivations for the establishment of standard Japanese (as well as its specific range of functioning) justify the conviction of its fictionality\(^\text{1}\)? In which aspects can standardized Japanese be associated with language stylization implemented in fiction? These questions are to be taken into account in this analysis in order to reconsider the scope of functioning and meaning of contemporary hyōjungo in both real-life and fictitious Japanese.

**Standard Language – Meaning, Origin, Definition**

The term hyōjungo 標準語 was introduced by the linguist Yoshisaburō Okakura (1868-1936) in his Nihongogaku Ippan ‘Outline of Japanese Linguistics’ (printed in 1890) as a translation equivalent for the English term ‘standard language’ (Okamoto and Shibamoto-Smith 2016: 35-36). It was promoted then by another scholar, Kazutoshi Ueda (1867-1937), who insisted that the government of modernizing Japan should institutionalize the normative language for Japan to increase national consciousness (ibid.

\(^1\) In this paper, “fictionality” is understood as being applied and reflected in fiction (narrative forms that are imaginary) rather than reality, and accordingly, as having more abstract characteristics than real ones.
36). He also suggested how and on what basis standard language should be constituted and implemented. As a result, the language of the educated elite of the Yamanote district in Tokyo (yamanote kotoba 山の手言葉) was selected as a norm for standard Japanese (Yasuda 2012: 38) and, consequently, the role and status of other Japanese varieties (hōgen 方言) were diminished. Standard language was primarily implemented in written Japanese; however, due to the spread of radio auditions since 1925, it has also been gradually promulgated as a spoken language used for public communication.

According to Sanada, since the implementation of hyōjungo was decided objectively by external (social) factors and not internal (linguistic) ones, it is justified to interpret standard language as a tool of language policy (gengo seisaku 言語政策) (1987: 89, as cited in Carroll 2013: 30). As the following quote implies, the establishment of one, fixed, standardized Japanese was decided not only to colligate Japanese nation and respond to the trends of modernization and innovation but also to present Japan on the international arena as one unified and strong nation with one language:

(...) language planning, particularly where it serves modernization, is national planning. (...) Language planning is thus intertwined with national self-image and the image to be projected to the outside world. (Fishman 1973: 31, as cited in Carroll 2013: 21)

In sociolinguistic discourse, hyōjungo is often contrasted to various dialects of Japanese language (especially chiiki hōgen 地域方言 ‘regiolects; regional dialects’) in order to differentiate norm of language, which is usually expected, especially from the adults speaking in public, from local varieties that should be restricted to private communication only. Another sociolinguistic and normative phenomenon that frequently appears in the reflection on varieties of Japanese language is called kyōtsūgo 共通語 ‘common language’. This term was introduced after the II World War to constrict the normative image of standard language (Kinsui 2017: 40). From the beginning, common language has been gaining more popularity than hyōjungo because it was perceived as the language which was actually in use by the Japanese (Shioda 1973: 36-37). Although both terms, standard language and common language, responded to the monolingual vision of Japan and were initiated to serve political purposes (not to mention that they are often considered as two different notions
which refer to the same contents), they have different connotations and, consequently, the Japanese often hold contrasting attitudes towards them.

**Perception of Standard Language**

Words connoting or referring to such phenomena as rules, regulations, prescriptions, or schemata of behaving are usually perceived as imposed from above and, consequently, can be treated with a certain aloofness. Similarly, for the Japanese people, the word *hyōjun* 標準 ‘standard; norm’ in relation to the language in use, was initially accepted with the feelings of suspicion and anxiety. Firstly, the implementation of standard language was decided *from above* and caused the marginalization of dialects that were commonly spoken and thus perceived as natural languages for their users. Moreover, the interrelatedness of standard language with linguistic etiquette and its conventional, prescriptive, and official character resulted in the feeling of certain artificiality.

The research into this language (standard language) exposed its connections with etiquette. Although one century has passed, it is still regarded as something artificial, and the Japanese language appears suffocated. (Takiura 2013: 193, from the afterword)²

Contrarily, from the beginning, common language has had more positive connotations. The word *kyōtsū* 共通 ‘common; conjoint, mutual’ is usually perceived with less reserve as semantically it refers to something that is shared and, accordingly, to something that connects people; and in the discussed case, it refers to the language that is *shared by* people, not to the norm that is *imposed on* people.

The Japanese language used in public domains displays noticeable differences in communicative strategies, especially in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary. The language used in Japanese media also reveals noticeable deviations from the norm, as the speech of radio or TV presenters is diversified and individuated on various linguistic layers: the lexical layer (by implementing various regiolects, sociolects, loanwords, contracted words, colloquial expressions, etc.), the morphological layer (by contracting the Japanese addressative form *desu/-masu* into *-ssu* ending) or

² Orig.: 調べていくと、この言葉(標準語)が「作法」につつながっているところが見えた。どこか “作り物”のにおいが取れなまま一世紀が経ち、日本語の呼吸は息苦しそうに感じられた。
the register layer (by skipping honorificity, mixing it with colloquial expressions or using it incorrectly). Consequently, Japanese sociolinguists underline the necessity to search for the traces of real hyōjungo’s presence in the spoken Japanese language:

In current Japanese, there is no standard language in its strict sense. Although the language of TV and radio announcers is close to it, there are differences depending on the broadcaster, and there are some deviations in their pronunciation and wording. (Takamizawa et al. 2004: 185)³

As mentioned above, Japanese standard language is often perceived as currently not in use in its strict sense, especially in the case of spoken Japanese (hanashikotoba 話し言葉), which is more spontaneous and variable than written Japanese (kakikotoba 書き言葉)⁴. Contrarily, the perception of common language as more flexible and situational makes a more natural impression, and hence, kyōtsūgo is often regarded as “closer” and more presumable to appear in the real-life spoken Japanese than in standard language.

Hybrid Style as a Recent Communicative Trend – Youth Interference in Standard Language
Recently, there have appeared new tendencies such as the frequent use of regiolects and sociolects in Japanese media, language deviations in the statements of public figures (presenters, politicians), and a trend to skip appreciativeness and modesty in favor of addressative forms, considered as an example of simplification (keigo-no kanketsuka 敬語の簡潔化) or democratization of honorifics (keigo-no minshuka 敬語の民主化 (Inoue

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³ Orig.: 現在、日本語には厳密な意味での標準語は存在しない。テレビやラジオアナウンサーが使うことばがそれに近いが、放送局によって違いがあり、発音と語法のゆれも少なくない。

⁴ In this regard, hyōjungo corresponds to the high norm of language (Pol. ‘norma wysoka’ or ‘norma wzorcowa’), which, due to Polish normative linguistics, is described as codified, stabilized, and sanctioned: Codified norm can be found in the grammars and lexicons and is promulgated in language education and language counseling (Bugajski 1993: 7-8). Simultaneously, kyōtsūgo reveals noticeable congruency with the so-called language usus, which is defined as the customary norm (Pol. ‘norma zwyczajowa’) or the norm of usage (Pol. ‘norma użytkowa’). Similarly to the customary norm, Japanese common language refers to the common usage of linguistic units in a speech community and is considered more liberal, situational, and has more positive connotations than standard language, which is perceived as a high norm.
These tendencies result in a frequent emphasis of the discontinuity of Japanese linguistic tradition. According to the public opinion poll conducted by the Japanese Agency of Cultural Affairs in 2000, 31.5% of the Japanese claimed that the media language and the language spoken in everyday life are disintegrated (midarete iru 乱れている). 54% of the respondents considered the youth generation, especially middle school and high school students, as the most responsible group because they are said to omit linguistic politeness, mix registers, overuse youth sociolect (wakamono kotoba 若者言葉), and deform standard language.

The broadly mentioned “disintegration” (midare 乱れ) of Japanese is a subject of criticism of the conservative part of Japanese society that wishes to preserve the image of fixed, stabilized, and unique Japanese language, and hence, negatively comments every act of linguistic deviation and negligence. However, paradoxically, language purists are simultaneously the most responsible for discrediting the status of hyōjungo. By promulgating the concept of “disordered Japanese,” the status of standard language, regarded as an integrated and stabilized norm of the Japanese language, is undermined. Hence, the current language situation in Japan should be considered not as disordered or disintegrated, but rather as promulgating the so-called “hybrid style” (regarded as a mix of different registers and varieties in one statement or as a tendency to form hybrid expressions which replace standard expressions) as the most comfortable and common language behavior. The sociolects and regiolects intermingling with standard forms and occurring in private and public communication do not discredit the status of hyōjungo, but, in a certain way, indicate mutual concomitance.

What Standard Language and Role Language Have in Common

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5 According to the results of a survey conducted in 1999, 85.8% of the Japanese admitted that the Japanese national language (kokugo 国語) is disintegrated, while a similar investigation carried out in 2015 shows that the number of respondents describing the Japanese language as disordered slightly decreased to 73.2%. (Source: http://www.bunka.go.jp/tokei_hakusho_shuppan/tokeichosa/kokugo_yoronchosa/pdf/h26_chosa_kekka.pdf [Accessed: 12.06.2020])

6 One of the displays of youth interference in the morphological layer of standard language is a trend among Japanese youth to form hybrid expressions of standard stems and regiolect endings, such as kōhen ‘not to come’ (standard: konai), ikahen ‘not to go’ (standard: ikanai). This phenomenon is an example of a Japanese interdialect called neo-hōgen ‘neo-dialect’ (Read more in: Tokugawa and Sanada 1991).
Standard language as a literary convention is often juxtaposed with other speech styles implemented in fiction called *yakuwarigo* 役割語. The term *yakuwarigo* ‘role language’ was introduced by Kinsui in modern times (2003, 2014) and refers to various styles of speech used in dialogues of Japanese light novels (raito noberu), comic books (manga), animated movies (anime), TV series (dorama), etc. All speech patterns used in role languages originate from real-life Japanese, but they have undergone certain modifications. There are six general subcategories of role language which refer to the specific attributes of characters: 1) gender, 2) age/generation, 3) social class/occupation, 4) region/nationality/ethnicity, 5) pre-modern, 6) imaginary creatures (Kinsui and Yamakido 2015: 31-32). Each of these attributes can be introduced into fictionalized orality to emphasize a particular feature of a given character based on their stereotypical traits. In the linguistic analysis, role languages (e.g., *hakasego* ‘doctor’s language,’ *Kansaiben* ‘Kansai dialect,’ *ojōsama kotoba* ‘young lady’s speech’) are frequently contrasted with standard Japanese to indicate significant phonetical, morphological, and lexical deviations from the norm.

Nevertheless, certain significant similarities can be revealed when juxtaposing standard language and role language with respect to their origin, functionality, and correlation with real-life Japanese.

Firstly, certain stylization patterns in modern Japanese literature were implemented due to the political movements of the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō (1912-26) eras. Two linguistic movements – the establishment and codification of standard language, as well as the imposition of *genbun ’itchi* (言文一致 ‘unification of written and spoken language’) concept – served the ideas of modernization and development of the Japanese country. Japanese literature became more accessible to the public and, consequently, the authors of the Meiji era, such as Sōseki Natsume, started to implement typical features of speech styles, e.g., *onna kotoba* 女言葉 ‘women language,’ to the dialogues of their novels (Hasegawa 2015: 363). Although the term *yakuwarigo* primarily corresponds with speech styles used in pop-cultural forms, the fictitious speech of female characters (especially elderly women or elegant adult women) from *manga* or *anime* was undoubtedly influenced by *onna kotoba*.

Moreover, *yakuwarigo* and *hyōjungo* were both intentionally constituted in order to fulfill certain goals. Standard language was implemented as a norm of language to make education more accessible and reduce the unbalance between written and spoken language. It reflects imposed
schemata and does not evolve spontaneously. Role languages imitate real-life Japanese but are also schematized; hence, similarly to standard Japanese, they can be perceived as tsukurareta ‘produced.’ On this ground, the impression of conventionality and certain artificiality brings these two concepts closer.

Finally, as standard language is considered a variety of Japanese, it can also be applied to fiction as one of the speech styles. In his research on yakuwarigo, Kinsui interprets standard language as one of the role languages. However, he also emphasizes that hyōjungo is a specific type of yakuwarigo which functions as a base, or in other words, as a norm (kijun 基準) for other types of yakuwarigo, which he calls hi-hyōjungo 非〈標準語〉‘non-standard languages’ (Kinsui 2003: 58).

“Standard Language” used here is understood not only as a language associated with issues, such as vocabulary, phonology, grammar, and usage, but also as a speech style and literary style in which these aspects are integrated. (Kinsui 2017: 39).

Kinsui divides standard language into two categories, namely, written language and spoken language, in the following way:

(1) Written language: casual forms and honorific forms
(2) Spoken language: public spoken language and personal spoken language (female language and male language) (ibid. 65).

The author suggests that all these types can be applied to fiction as role languages, although with different role language degree (yakuwarigodo 役割語度), which he evaluates on the scale of 0-0,5-1. Female and male languages are the most distinguished and reveal individual features of the characters. Hence, Kinsui evaluates their role language degree as 1. Contrarily, formal written language does not expose the peculiarity of the speaker and consequently is evaluated as 0. Public spoken language gains 0,5 degree as it falls between written language and personal language (ibid. 68-69). As we can see, spoken standard language cannot be evaluated as 0 since it can be applied in fictionalized speech to perform certain roles, e.g., to juxtapose the speech of a character from Tokyo with the speech of a regiolect user, or to indicate social distance in student/subordinate’s talk to the teacher/superior. However, in the opinion of this paper’s author, in all
mentioned cases, *role language degree* should be evaluated as more than 0. For instance, if a character uses formal written Japanese incorrectly, certain personal features are also clearly exposed.

**Examples of Standard Language as a Role Language**

Kinsui notices that standard language is given a special privilege as a type of role language. As a model language variety, especially with respect to its use in education and public situations, it is also introduced in fiction as a language for protagonists (ibid. 61), while simultaneously, the antagonists happen to speak in one of the non-standard varieties (e.g., regiolects of Kansai).

According to Takiura, *hyōjungo* can be applied as a role language to indicate *tadashisa* 正しさ ‘correctness’ or refer to the matters that are perceived as *kō* 公 ‘public; governmental’ (2013:16-17). As a social-identity marker (Hasegawa 2015: 361, after Kinsui 2003), standard language is used by the protagonists or characters who are depicted as models of normality and mundanity. Therefore, it can be assumed that the general function of standard language applied as a role language is to emphasize contrast. Usually, it indicates the opposition between the protagonist and the antagonist, but it can also be used to contrast such features as, e.g., regularity and irregularity, formality and informality, groupness and individuality, correctness and incorrectness, maturity and immaturity, responsibility and irresponsibility.

In order to illustrate how the character’s sense of responsibility and maturity are reflected using standard language, Ishiguro cites a short dialogue from the popular animated movie *Tonari-no Totoro*7. One of the protagonists, a young girl named Satsuki, uses carefully polite forms of standard Japanese despite her very young age.

Satsuki: *Kyō-wa sumimasen deshita.* ‘I am sorry for today.’

Kanta’s mother: *Kotchi-koso. Oyaku-ni tatenakute-nē.* ‘We’re sorry too. We couldn’t help you.’

Satsuki: *Ano, kono kasa, Kanta-san-ga kashite kureta-n desu.* ‘And this umbrella, I borrowed it from Kanta.’ (Ishiguro 2013: 98)

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7 *Tonari-no Totoro* となりのトトロ ‘My neighbor Totoro’ is a famous animated movie directed by Hayao Miyazaki and produced by Studio Ghibli in 1988.
Satsuki is speaking to an older person; hence, she carefully uses addressative forms (-masen deshita; n desu). However, this kind of polite language is not typical for the speech of a very young person. Although Satsuki is still a primary school student, she often takes care of the household and her younger sister. Despite her young age, she is portrayed as a very diligent and responsible girl, and these features are reflected in her polite language, which resembles the speech of adults (ibid. 98-99).

Another function of standard language applied as a role language is to accentuate a specific pose the character attempts to strike to make a particular impression. This kind of show-off characters often appears in a popular comedy manga Kureyon Shin-chan written by Yoshito Usui. In the two scenes introduced below, the main character, a kindergartener Shin-chan, participates in calligraphy class and encounters a master of shodō calligraphy, Mr. Mizuru Hongōji.

(1) Hongōji: Shodō-wa moji-no shugyō-wa mochiron, seishin-no shugyō-ni-mo narimasu. Watashi-no yō-ni shodōreki 50 nen-to-mo narimasu-to keshite torimidasu yō-na koto-wa arimasen. ‘The calligraphy is indeed a practice of characters. However, it is also a practice of souls. If you experience calligraphy for 50 years like me, you will never lose your self-control.’

Shin-chan’s mother: Honto-ni ochitsuite onwa sō-na sensei-ne. Shin-chan-mo isshokenmei yareba ano sensei mitai-ni nareru-wa-yo. ‘He seems to be a really calm and gentle teacher. Shin, if you do your best too, you could become a similar person.’

Shin-chan: Ė? Ja ora-mo anna fū-ni ago-no tokoro-ni kabi haechau-no? ‘What? You mean that my chin will also get moldy like his?’

Hongōji: Ka...kabi ja nakute ohige da-yo hahaha... ‘It’s not mo... mold, it’s my beard.’ (1990: 94)

(2) Shin-chan: Kāchan mite mite. Ora-mo sensei mitai-ni mimizu-san kaita-yo. ‘Mom, look, look. I also drew an earthworm like the teacher’s.’

Shin-chan’s mother: Kora’ sensei-no-wa mimizu ja nai-no. ‘Hey, what the teacher drew was not a worm!’

Shin-chan: Ja unagi? ‘So an eel?’
Hongōji: Daunagi kaichau-zo. Ora orā’. Shodō-wa bakuhausto ja!! Shodō-wa batoru ja!! Gya hahaha. Shikkari mitero-yo. Muda-de narai-ni kita seito-domo. ‘I will write a huge eel. Me mee. Calligraphy is an explosion!! Calligraphy is a battle!! Yeah hahaha. Watch me carefully. You useless pupils!’ (1990: 95)

In the first scene, the teacher explains to his pupils the essence of practicing calligraphy. The addressative forms of standard language (ni-mo narimasu, to-mo narimasu, koto-wa arimasen) are introduced in his speech to fulfill two major goals. The first one is to depict the position (role) of Mr. Hongōji as an experienced calligraphy master. Mr. Hongōji skips addressative forms in his final short comment (ja nakute, da-yo) as he partially speaks to himself to give an excuse for Shin’s impolite remark. He is slightly confused at the end of the scene, and hence, he pays less attention to the suitable use of language.

The second goal, and probably the more interesting one, is to depict the peculiar pose Mr. Hongōji attempts to strike. The teacher wants to be perceived as a professional, competent, and sophisticated person whose attitude corresponds well with the art of calligraphy, which is calm, elegant, and harmonic. Although slightly irritated by the immature behavior and comments of his pupils, he still attempts to keep his heijōshin ‘the presence of mind’ and stay calm and cool. However, although his role does not change in the second scene, Mr. Hongōji loses the ability to keep his pose of a professional and sophisticated person in the second scene. After being flustered by the protagonist, his presence of mind finally deserts him. Accordingly, his language becomes more expressive and even aggressive, which is reflected by the use of expressive particles (zo, yo) and a variation of the copula de aru (ja), which are typical for informal and rather inelegant speech of elderly male characters. In the presented example, the use of standard addressative forms serves to emphasize appropriate behavior, namely the type of behavior that is expected from a mature and serious person (in this case, the teacher). The change of attitude is demonstrated by the deviations from the standard (such as the use of the archaic pronoun ora, etc.).

Onomatopoeia in the background which is explained as the sound of losing one’s presence of mind. 

[buchi ’]
However, what can also be applied as the role language that reflects a specific kind of character is not only standard language but also the language that distorts the standard and deforms it. The protagonist of the last year’s Tuesday series by TBS Television, *Kono koi atatamemasu-ka* ‘Do you want to warm up this love?’9, is Kiki Inoue, a 21-year-old girl who works as a part-timer in the convenience store *Coco Every*. She is a candid, simple-minded, and slightly tomboyish girl whose daily activities focus on posting reviews of sweets on social media. In the second episode, after losing a sweets-making competition, she decides to quit her job in the products section and expresses her gratitude to her co-workers by writing on the board: *Arigatō deshita* ‘I was thankful.’ This incorrect version of the Japanese expression of gratitude [*arigatō gozaimasu* (Present Tense)/ *arigatō gozaimashita* (Past Tense)] occasionally appears on Instagram or Twitter accounts of young Japanese and indicates the negligence of honorifics in their speech. In the mentioned example, the status of a protagonist as a young modern girl who is strongly influenced by the Internet and its language (*intānetto surangu* インターネットスラング) is emphasized. Moreover, by neglecting language etiquette, certain character features of the heroine, such as immaturity, lack of refinement, and rather poor experience in working with adults, are also displayed.

In the third episode, the president of the company asks his employee during a formal meeting whether they will manage to prepare the new dessert and the wrapping durable enough to pass the so-called “delivery test.”

President: *Maniaimasu-ka?* ‘Will you manage to do it on time?’
Kiki: *Maniau... maniaumasu.* ‘Yeah… we will do it.’

The heroine, Kiki, spontaneously responds using the short, non-addressative form of the verb *maniau* ‘to be on time,’ displaying her lack of manners and experience in speaking in public again. After “reading” the atmosphere, she corrects herself by adding the addressative ending *-masu* to the verb; however, she performs it incorrectly (*maniaumasu* instead of correct *maniaimasu*). The negligence of linguistic convention by the incorrect use of standard addressative form indicates her artlessness and cuteness and adds humor to the scene. Simultaneously, it reflects the actual speech of Japanese youth (*wakamono*), who reveal certain aloofness to the

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9 Date of release: 20.10.2020.
linguistic politeness and readily deform standard language, which
highlights their individuality.

The Role of Standard Language in Real-life Japanese
Takiura emphasizes that from the beginning of its implementation,
standard language was regarded as something “produced” (tsukurareta 作られた) and imposed from the above (2013:11). Hyōjungo was indeed a “product” of the Meiji era that was based on the idea/vision (rinen 理念) (ibid. 9-10) of the powerful and educated people of early modern times.

As one of its function is to reduce the unbalance between written and spoken language, standard language is often perceived as a tool for ideal communication (risōkei-na komyunikēshon 理想的なコミュニケーション), which, according to Takiura, cannot be obtained in the case of these regiolects which are functionally restricted to spoken language only (2013, from the introduction: vii). However, as all languages display frequent morphological and stylistic deviations from the norm, it is almost impossible to obtain this ideal level. In this regard, standard language refers to idealized communication (risōka sareta komyunikēshon 理想化されたコミュニケーション) rather than ideal communication (ibid. vii-viii). This assumption responds to the standpoint that standard language, in its flawless sense, does not exist in real-life speech.

However, Takiura also suggests another way of categorizing standard language, which is based on its essential role in communication associated with etiquette (sahō 作法). Although language etiquette is often perceived with certain reserve due to the impression of its artificiality and obligatory character, its significance results from the fact that the use of etiquette offers language users peace of mind. For instance, Japanese greetings (aisatsu 挨拶), fixed phrases (kimari monku 決まり文句), and other formalized expressions that contain Japanese honorifics (keigo 敬語) are used to lead smooth communication without giving it much thought. Takiura notices that if the greeting or honorifics are omitted, the speaker may be considered immature and lacking manners or even reprimanded. However, if the expected formalized expressions will be used (even if in a slightly improper or ungrammatical way), the speaker will not be dispraised (ibid. x). In the cases mentioned above, interlocutors share the same feelings of relief (anshin 安心) due to their use of fixed expressions, which function in speech in a reasonably automatic and predictable way. Similarly, standard Japanese can also be regarded as a tool for reliable
communication (*anshin-no/shinrai-no komyunikēshon* 安心の／信頼のコミュニケーション) based on the feelings of comfort and relief resulting from sharing common knowledge, following schemata, and using the same language variety, which makes the interlocutors feel less burdened (ibid. viii-ix, xii).

**Standard Language in Language Education – Role Language or Model Language?**

The above-mentioned *reliable* function of standard language plays a significant role in teaching Japanese as a foreign language. Japanese studies courses begin with the explanation of *hyōjungo*. Students are required to implement standard language forms in dialogues or e-mails exchanged with Japanese lecturers. Any possible language errors, especially at the beginning of the studies, are natural consequences of learning a foreign language. In this regard, in the case of messages written by Japanese language learners, grammatical correctness, although important, is perceived as less crucial than the selection of the adequate register, namely polite addressative forms of standard Japanese (*teineigo* 丁寧語). Since the use of the proper register (speech style adjusted to a given situation) is an essential measure of smooth communication in Japanese, learners acquire it from the very first classes; hence, they naturally get accustomed to its use. If the forms selected by students are appropriate, the receiver (lecturer) feels relieved. However, if the student skips/ignores standard forms, the receiver’s reactions may be just the contrary. For example, the student may use regiolects (e.g., *metcha* ‘very much’ from Kansai dialect instead of *tometo/hijō-ni/kiwamete*), sociolects (e.g., *watashi-teki-ni-wa* typical for youth sociolect instead of *watashi-ni totte/watashi-wa* ‘as for me’), or colloquial expressions (e.g., *itchatta* instead of *itte shimaimashita* ‘I went’). And although the teacher’s reaction may depend on their individual approach, the use of non-standard forms may result in evoking feelings of awkwardness or uneasiness, perceiving the text as incongruous or, in the best case, slightly amusing, but certainly not as accurate.

*Hyōjungo* is the first Japanese language that foreign students approach and acquire during their studies. The explanations and examples introduced in Japanese textbooks for foreign learners are also written in standard language. Although the dialogues included in textbooks imitate real-life Japanese, they are purposely adjusted to learners’ level of competence and accordingly schematized and simplified. As the level of difficulty increases, the language in dialogues becomes more stylized, and certain colloquial,
sociolectal, and genderlectal features gradually appear. Based on this, it can be assumed that the speech styles used in dialogues in textbooks and workbooks are another display of yakuwarigo.

What kind of role does standard language play in textbooks? A simple example from lesson 19 in Shokyū Nihongo “Basic course of Japanese” may help answer this question.

In the following dialogue, two young students, Mana from Thailand and Tanaka from Japan, talk about their families. Although there is no specific information concerning the characteristics of the speakers, it can be deduced from further dialogues included in the textbook that they are quite familiar with each other.

Mana: *Tanaka-san-wa chōnan desu-ka?* ‘Mr. Tanaka, are you the oldest son?’

Tanaka: *Iie, watashi-wa suekko desu. Ue-ni ani-to ane-ga arimasu.* ‘No. I am the youngest one. I have an older brother and sister.’

Mana: *Go-kazoku-wa dochira-ni irasshaimasu-ka?* ‘Where does your family live?’

Tanaka: *Ryōshin-wa inaka-de nōgyō-o yatte imasu. Ane-wa tonari-no mura-ni sunde imasu. Mō kekkon shite ite, kodomo-ga arimasu.* ‘My parents have a farm in the village. My sister lives in the neighboring village. She is already married and has a child.’ (2010: 40)

This dialogue was used to demonstrate the differences in naming kinship relations in Japan, which are based on inside-outside (*uchi-soto*内外) relations. Accordingly, the honorific *go-kazoku* *(your) respected family* was contrasted to the neutral *ryōshin* *(my) parents,* *ane* *(my) older sister,* *ani* *(my) older brother* to accentuate two variants of naming relatives, which depend on the speaker’s perspective. Both participants in the dialogue are students, peers, and – most likely – acquaintances, yet they use addressative forms (*desu/-masu*). Since all dialogues included in the mentioned book serve to teach proper and grammatically correct Japanese, pragmatically determined differences in Japanese language varieties or registers are omitted, and standard addressative forms are used exclusively. On a different note, the use of the verb *aru* ‘to be; to exist’ (used for inanimate objects in modern Japanese) instead of *iru* ‘to be; to exist’ (used for animate objects) while referring to one’s family members is also worth
considering. In the mentioned case (kodomo ga arimasu ‘to have a child’), the use of *aru* results from the specific function of this verb, which is not very common nowadays and is limited to situations when the speaker is talking about unspecified and indefinite matters. The verb *aru* was intentionally implemented in the dialogue to inform learners about this particular function and contrast it with the verb *iru*. Nevertheless, the recent young generation in Japan is usually not aware of this function. Apparently, its occurrence is restricted to language education only and represents slightly stylized (archaic) Japanese.

Mana, a participant in the dialogue and a foreigner, similarly to other exchange students from the textbook, speaks fluent Japanese using perfectly correct standard language in all situations. Textbooks serve educational purposes, and hence, the application of normative language goes without saying. Standard language, especially in its addressative variant, works in such cases not only as a role language but also as a model language that fulfills the significant function of demonstrating and teaching the most schematized and expected linguistic behavior. Therefore, it can be concluded that if someone is searching for the traces of the actual presence of *hyōjungo*, they can easily find it in the basic stages of Japanese language learning. It is due to the general fact that the programs for beginners are more grammar-oriented, and more advanced levels of learning focus on developing students’ communicative and sociolinguistic competence. Consequently, they may offer more variants of non-standard language use.

**Conclusion**

Japanese standard language is regarded as a norm of language, binding from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. As a set of commonly used linguistic rules and assets, it is considered as the most appropriate variety of Japanese language in public and official communication, written forms, and education. In this respect, Japanese *hyōjungo* corresponds with the high norm of language and is frequently opposed to common language (*kyōtsūgo*), which, by its scope of functioning, resembles the customary norm, which is believed to be closer to language users. Although both concepts were implemented due to the

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10 In this sense, the verb *aru* can be used when offering general, not specified information about someone’s existence, e.g., *Kanojo-ni-wa futari-no kodomo-ga arimasu* ‘She has two children.’ Moreover, in the mentioned example, the use of *aru* is thought to reflect the nuance of “possessing someone whom adults want to protect.” However, *aru* cannot be used while giving precise and specified information about someone. Hence, the statement *Kanojo-ni-wa Yuki-to iu kodomo-ga arimasu* ‘She has a child called Yuki’ is incorrect and requires using the verb *iru*. 
national language planning, common language has more positive associations because of its more liberal, situational, and less stabilized character. Standard language, especially in the case of spoken communication, is often perceived as abstract, idealized, and consequently, less achievable. This attitude is usually motivated by the general conviction that every utterance is, to a certain extent, individualized and variable due to the influence of such attributes as, e.g., age, gender, status, education, state of emotions, particular circumstances. Consequently, it is hardly possible to speak in one fixed way, obeying all linguistic rules even in formal situations. However, similarly to formalized and fixed expressions such as greetings, standard language functions in real-life Japanese to play a significant role. While language varieties, due to their diversification and flexible (non-standardized) character, may display differences between interlocutors and lead to miscommunication (provided that the speaker and listener do not share the same language awareness or speak in different registers), the fixed style typical for standard Japanese brings the feeling of relief by demonstrating polite attitude and, at the same time, offering the comfort of sharing the same linguistic and behavioral schemata.

This reliable function of hyōjungo justifies its popularity in Japanese comic books, anime, and TV series as the role language of those characters who present themselves as mature, responsible, and serious, and those who can adjust to particular circumstances. However, on the other hand, not only the use of standard language but also the negligence towards it plays a certain role in depicting a character. By inappropriate or incorrect use of hyōjungo, the characters reveal their personality and individual attitude to the world. Additionally, it makes the plot more comical or unpredictable. Similarly, in both real and fictitious (depicted in comic books or novels) communication, the inappropriate or non-normative use of standard Japanese honorifics may highlight the character of the speaker and their attitude to the world, as well as inform about the changes occurring in Japanese society, which may influence such spheres as, e.g., recent business relations in Japan.

Standard language applied according to its rules can also be considered as a role language functioning in real life. As a model educational tool, hyōjungo is introduced as the primary language for Japanese language education. In the process of acquiring standard Japanese, especially its addressative forms, students gradually familiarize themselves with the most suitable patterns of behavior, which will be appropriable and expected in their future social and professional life within the Japanese...
environment. In this regard, it can be concluded that in both real-life conversation and fictitious speech, the use of standard language plays a similar role – it demonstrates the most appropriate and expected social attitudes and can therefore be regarded as the most reliable linguistic tool.

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