

# The Formation of Standard Japanese

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## 1. Japanese Language Used in a Textbook for Foreigners, “*Kaiwashō*”, in the Meiji Era

J. C. Hepburn, who is known as the originator of the Hepburn system of romaji, in the preface to his well-known Japanese-English dictionary for foreigners, “Japanese-English and English-Japanese Dictionary (*Waei Gorin Shusei*)”, wrote on the use of Tokyo Japanese as the standard to use as follows:

In Tôkyô *kûa* is pronounced *ka*; *kwan*, *kan*, *gwai*, *gai*, as *gun-kwan* is pronounced *gunkan*; *kenkwa*, *kenka*; *kwanji*, *kanji*; *gwai-koku*, *gaikoku*, *Yû* is frequently changed to *i*. as, *yuku* into *iku*, *yuki* into *iki*, *yugamu* into *igamu*, *juku* into *jiku*, *isshu* into *isshi*, *shuku* into *shiku*.

*Hi* is pronounced *shi*. as, *hibachi* is pronounced *shibachi*; *hi-no-ki*, *shi-no-ki*, etc. *Na* is changed into *ne*; as, *nai* into *nei*, *shiranai* into *shiranei*, *sô de nai* into *sô de nei*.

The hard *g* sound is softened into *ng*. as, *kago* is pronounced *ka-ngo*; *megane*, *mengane*; *sugiru*, *su-ngiru*; *ne ga takei*, *ne nga takai*, etc.

Besides the above mentioned, many other differences exist; but one conversant with the Tôkyô dialect will have no difficulty in being understood in any part of the country, amongst the educated classes.

James Curtis Hepburn: “Japanese-English and

English-Japanese Dictionary” 1886

“Introduction” (xiii~ xiv)

Hepburn believed that Tokyo Japanese, in spite of pronouncing “*kwaji*” as “*kaji*” or “*hibachi*” as “*shibachi*”, was understood everywhere in Japan among the educated classes, and he edited the dictionary based on Tokyo Japanese.

Nihongo kaiwasha “JAPANESE CONVERSATION (*Eiran Kaiwa Yakugo*)” was published in 1868 by a Dutchman named Gratama. Its preface stated: The style of conversation in this textbook is described in Edo Japanese.

1. Kon'nichiwa
2. Konbanwa
3. Oyasuminasai
4. Ohayoo
5. Kudasai
6. Okashinasai
7. Ano hitoo Otsurenasai
8. Watakushidomoo, oyarinasai
9. Tadaima
10. Watakushini, oiitsukenasai
11. Watakushini, oiitsukenasai “Watakushie, ohanashinasai”
12. Watakushidomoo, tsureni, oidenasai
13. Watakushiniwa, dekimasenu
14. Anatawa, shienai
15. Ano hitowa shinakaroo

Sorewa, hittsuni, soodesu.

Ano hitowa, guaikokuno, hitodesukara.・’

Hai, ano hitowa, imajibun, tachimashitaroo.

Garatama:“JAPANESE CONVERSATION” 1868.

Japanese conversation was written in the Tokyo language of the time. From the end of Edo(=Tokugawa shogunate) era to the early Meiji era, many books for conversation, dictionaries and books on grammar were compiled as textbooks for foreigners learning the Japanese language. They were published in overseas cities such as London, Paris, New York and Shanghai as well as in Japan: cities such as Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka and Nagasaki. The Japanese language employed in these textbooks was clearly Edo or Tokyo Japanese.

For example, in S.R. Brown’s “Colloquial Japanese, or Conversational Sentences and Dialogues in English and Japanese (*Nihon Kaiwa*)” published in 1863 in the late Edo era, in Shanghai, the conversational style of Edo Japanese was employed as in the example sentences:

#### DIALOGUE IV.

##### ON BUYING SILK.

- Native. 1. – Do you not wish to buy silk?*  
Kiitowo o kai nasarimasen ka?
- Foreigner. 2. – Yes what sort have you?*  
Hai, donnanowo motte o ide nasaru ka?
- N. 3. – I have Maibashi.*  
Maibashiwo motte imas.
- F. 4. – It is No.1 Maibashi?*  
Goku j’oō no Maibashi de arimas’ ka?
- N. 5. – It is No.1. and 2.*  
Ichi ban no mo, ni ban no mo de gozarimas’.
- N. 6. – Have you a muster of it?*  
Sono mihon nga arimas’ ka?
- N. 7. – Yes, here it is.*  
Hai, kokoni arimas’.

- F. 8. – *How much of the No.1 have you?*  
Ichi ban no kuchi wa dono kurai arimas' ka?
- N. 9. – *I have 4 peculs of No.1. and 2 peculs of No.2.*  
Goku j'oō no kuchi wa shi h'yak' kin, tszgi no nga ni  
h'yak' kin arimas'.
- F. 10. – *I will buy the No.1., but do not want the other.*  
Goku j'oō wa, kaimash'oō nga, tszngino wa  
yoshimash'oō.
- N. 11. – *I would rather sell both together if possible.*  
Naru koto nara, rioōhoō issioni uritoō gozarimas'.
- N. 12. – *What is the price of it all together?*  
Mina de nedan wa ikura de gozarimas' ka?

Otonashiku shiro.

Koshio kakete iro.

Kono bara no nioiwo kaide miro.

Ano on' na wa tashikani hatachi no ue daroo.

Omae ano hitowo mita toki shirashite kurero.

Watakushi isogashiikara Sukoshi matte iro.

Ano hito wa sakihodo uchini kaitta.

Kore wa ikurade kattaka.

Samuel Robbins Brown: “Colloquial Japanese, or Conversational Sentences and Dialogues in English and Japanese” 1863

In “*Kuawaiwa Hen*” written in 1873 by E. Satow, the “conjugalional - *desu*”, which was used in the late Edo era in Japanese language, was used in context.

EXERCISE XXII.

THE SEASONS.

*Spring.*

1. *Haru wa kokoromochi ga nani-to-naku yô gozaimasu.*
2. *Shizen to ki ga hittatté yô-ki ni narimasu.*
3. *Oioi at'taka ni narimasu.*
4. *Kiôra wa awasé wo kité mo ii kurai des'.*
5. *Shikashi mada yokan ga kibishiu gozaimasu.*
6. *Késahodo nado wa kanchiu no yô dé gozaimashita.*
7. *Asa ban wa mada samû gozaimasu ga, hiruma wa yohodo shinogi-yô narimashites'.*
8. *Samui to môshité mo haru wa haru daké dô shité mo chigaimasu.*
9. *Ah, nodoka na hi da.*
10. *Zitsu ni yoi jikô ni narimashita.*
11. *Koré, soko no shôji wo akenai ka, daibu mushi-mushi shité kita.*
12. *Oya, soto wa hi ga atatté orimasu, sô shité kazé ga minami ni kawatta to miemashité.*
13. *Daibu o at'taka ni narimashita.*
14. *Yôyaku jikô sô-ô ni.*
15. *Mada dômo asa ban wa hiyatsukimasu na.*
16. *Zikô ga mada tokaku sadamarimasen' des'.*
17. *Kanki mo yurumimashita.*
18. *Shikashi mô jikô ga jikô dé gozaimasu kara.*  
Honkini natte keiko saë sureba nan'-demo-nai koto des'.  
Tokîô ni shite wa zuibun, haya ô-yuki deshita.  
Kono tenki wa mochi-naoshimashô ka, do desho.

The “-masen desita” form was also used.

Iya mo, okite te wo arau koto mo dekimasen' deshita.

Sayô nara; konnichi wa o kamai môshimasen' deshita.

Ernest Satow : “KUAIWAHEN” 1873

The “*-masen deshita*” form was used in the late Edo era in Japanese language, replacing “*-mashi nan da, -mase nan da*”. The form was assimilated into Tokyo Japanese and then to standard Japanese.<sup>1)</sup>

What the above examples show is that the people who were teaching Japanese to foreigners writing textbooks for conversation or dictionaries must have considered Edo or Tokyo Japanese as the Japanese language foreigners should learn.<sup>1)</sup>

## 2. Japanese Language Learned by Missionaries in the Middle Ages

Dictionaries, books on grammar and textbooks of Japanese language used by the Portuguese missionaries in Japan from the Muromachi era to the early Edo era, were published in Amakusa and Nagasaki. A well-known story “*Esopo no Fabulas (Amakusaban Isoho Monogatari)*” is a translation form Aesop’s Fables.

It was published in romaji and was used as a Japanese textbook. The following is a dialogue in conversational style from “*Xemito, aritonocoto (semi to ari no koto)*”, one of the stories from “*Amakusaban Isoho Monogatari*” (The word-for-word translation)

Xemito , aritono koto .

Aru firyuno nacabani aridomo amata anayori go-  
ecuuu daite fini saraxi , caxeni fucafuruuo xemiga  
qite coreuo morōta : arino yūua : gofenua sugūta  
natqu , aqīua nanigotouo itonamaretazo ? xemino  
yūua ; natquto , aqino aidaniua guinquicuni torima  
guirete , fucoximo fimauro yenandani yotte , nanitaru  
itonamimo xenandato yū : ari guenigueni sonobun  
gia , natqu aqi utai asobareta gotoqu , imanio fiqio  
cuuo tçucufarete yocarōzutote , sanzanni āzaqeri fu-  
coxino xocuuu toraxete modoita .

Semi to, Ari to no koto

Aru fuyu no nakaba ni aridomo amata ana yori gokoku wa daite hi ni sarashi, kaze ni fukasuru wo semi ga kite kore wo morouta.

Ari no yuu wa 「Gohen wa sugita natsu, aki wa nanigoto wo itonamaretazo?」  
Semi no yuu wa 「Natsu to, aki no aida niwa ginkyoku ni torimagirete, sukoshimo hima wo enanda niyotte, nanitaru itonami mo senanda」 to yuu.

Ari 「Genigeni sono bunzya, natsu aki utai asobasareta gotoku, ima mo hikyoku wo tsukusarete yokaroozu」 tote, sanzani azakeri sukoshi no syoku wo torasete modoita.

“Esopo no Fabulas” 1593

Despite the places of publication whether in Amakusa or Nagasaki however, the Japanese language used in these textbooks was not the Japanese used in those local areas. It was the Kyoto Japanese of that time which was employed in the books. From the use of the language such as the second person “*gohen*”, or expressions “(*hima o*) *e nan da ni yotte*”,

or “*geni geni sono bun ja ~ (hikyoku o) tsukusarete yokaro zo*”, we can see the influence of Kyoto Japanese of the time.

Portuguese missionary, J. Rodriguez who was the author of the first full-scale Japanese grammar book “*Arte da lingoa de Japam (Nihon Dai Buntan) 1608*”, commented that he has described the grammar in the “language that was admitted by the authorized people or the literate of Japan as expressions widely understood, and mainly the language used by the nobles in Kyoto, the capital city”. He described the dialects as being: Pure and graceful words or pronunciation patterns which are maintained among the nobles. In any language, if it is used inaccurately by local people in their areas, it has various accents and incorrect language use which is considered as a defect and vulgar so that it should not be employed” (translation by Doi Tadao).

He considered that the language for missionaries to learn should be the language used among the nobles in Kyoto.<sup>2)</sup>

### 3. The Composition of Edo Japanese

What kind of Japanese language, then, should be taught to foreign learners? This is an important aspect when considering standard Japanese.

The Japanese language taught to missionaries in the Middle Ages was Kyoto Japanese, and later from the end of Edo era to the early Meiji era, the Japanese language foreigners learned was Edo-Tokyo Japanese. Therefore, in a period of over two hundred years, the concept of which the standard Japanese language was moved from the west to the east of Japan.

Edo Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai described Genroku Edo society in his essay “*Dokugo*”. Genroku Edo was around the end of the 17th century and it was the period when almost a hundred years had passed



since the beginning of the Edo (Tokugawa) feudal government. He commented that “nowadays copying of Kyoto“ extends from hair styles, male and female fashions to language usage of naming things.

Edo (presently Tokyo) was just a small village when the founder of the Tokugawa (Edo) feudal government, Tokugawa Ieyasu, settled in Edo castle in 1580. However, around the time of Genroku, Edo had grown to be a big city with a population of almost one million people. The population growth in Edo was due to the migration of people from all over Japan. Interaction among dialects generated, then cultivated a sophisticated Japanese language in Edo.

A very strong influence on the language came from the samurai retainers and their families from the Tokai region – Mikawa, Totomi Suruga which are presently known as Aichi prefecture and Shizuoka prefecture. They followed Tokugawa Ieyasu to Edo and settled there. Another strong influence was the settlement of merchants from the Osaka region which was encouraged by the Tokugawa feudal government’s policy of inviting business to Edo. These people formed the upper class society of Edo and exerted a strong influence of Kamigata (= Kansai) Japanese on Edo Japanese.

Honorific expression was, for example, one area that Kamigata Japanese influenced. Honorific expression had been developed in the Kansai area centering on Kyoto. Compared to Kamigata Japanese, the Kanto dialects lacked honorifics (in the language structure). Kamigata Japanese brought by the new settlers to Edo generated a development of systematic honorifics which was lacking among the Kanto dialects. As a consequence, Edo Japanese was developed.

Edo Japanese, which was strongly influenced by Kamigata Japanese, was cultivated separately from other Kanto dialects, therefore, it was called “*Edo kotoba*”. The time was around the beginning of the Genroku period.

Shoonin no urimono ni ne o tsukete, maketaru toki, kawanu wo Edo-  
kotoba ni, shooben no suru to yuu.

“Shoojiki Banashi Ookagami” 1687

Suidoo nominarete, Edo-kotoba kikinarai, Kamigata ni ‘*karei*’ toyuu  
wo ‘*hirame*’ to uru mo minarekeru.

“Irozato Sanjotai” 1689

These examples are considered as the earliest example of “Edo Kotoba”<sup>3)</sup>

#### 4. The Maturing of Edo Japanese

In the middle of the 18th century, around the time of Horeki-Meiwa, influence of the Kamigata Japanese on Edo Japanese had been fading and expressions such as “*genki da*”, “*kaka nai*” and “*katta*” were replacing “*genki ja*”, “*kaka n*” and “*kota*”. In 1770, the masterpiece of *Edo sharehon* (a brothel-quarter novelette), which described the customs and manners of people in Yoshiwara, was published. An interesting point in the book is the conversation between the customer “*Daijin Hira*” and the wife of the inn keeper and a male servant.

wakaimono 「 Oide asobashi mashita 』

hira 「 Oo, nikai e tooroka 』

wakaimono 「 Chito omachi nasaremase 』

hira 「 Goteishu wa mada ka? Gonaishoo wa? 』

wakaimono 「 Tadaima nikai ni orimasu. Omachi mooshite orimashita 』

nyooboo 「 Kawasama wa oide nasaremasenuka? 』

hira 「 Kore mo ookata mieyooga, goteishu mo moo kaeraresoona

monogya. Mottomo kore wa Toranomom no hoo e yoru to yuu kotode  
atta 』

nyooboo 「 Hai, sayoode gozarimasu. Itsudemo Toranomom e yorimasuto,

nagoo gozarimasu 』

“Yuushi Hoogen”1770

It is old-fashioned in tone. However, we can recognize, as a whole, the conversations with the customers are not so far from modern usage.

Expressions used are graceful and refined as a formal language in situations of welcoming or being welcomed by guests. The description of the people who could use such refined and elegant language informal situations indicates the maturity of Edo language. Some scholars consider this aspect as the formation of a standard Japanese based on Edo Japanese.

About the same time “*Yushi Hogen*”, “*Hama ogi (Shonai Hama ogi)*”, which is considered as the first book contrasting dialects to Edo Japanese, was edited by Hori Toshikatsu. The book compares the language used in Shonai in the Dewa area (presently Tsuruoka-shi area) to Edo language. As an example: “*Koshi obi* (in Edo) is (in Shonai) *tan’na*. *Tan’na* (in Edo) means the bridle of a horse. *Koshi obi* (a tie around the waist) without blind stitching is named and understood as *shigoki* in Edo”.

Up to this time, books of dialects were written referring the dialects to Kyoto language. Publication of a book contrasting dialects to Edo Japanese indicates that Edo Japanese had evolved into the central language in the eastern part of Japan.<sup>4)</sup>

1720	“Sendai Kotoba Irohayose”	Sendai	Kyoto
1748	“Owari Hoogen”	Owari	Kyoto
1767	“Hamaogi(Shoonai)	Shoonai	Edo
1775	“Fukyu Nichireki”	Izumo	Kyoto
1775	“Butsurui Shooko”	Various districts	Edo•Kyoto•Osaka
1790	“Mikuni Tsuujii”	Morioka	Edo
1819?	“Naniwa Hoogen(Naniwa no Kikigaki)”	Osaka	Edo
1827	“Hoogen Tatsuyoo shoo”	Sendai	Edo
1841	“Shisen Osaka Kotoba Daizen”	Osaka	Edo
1845	“Tsukushi Kotoba”	Tsukushi	Edo

## 5. The Formation of a Formal Style Language

The population of Edo, in the beginning of the 19th century Bunka-Bunsei eras, exceeded one million and the city of Edo had developed to be the largest populated city in the world at that time. Around that time, Shikitei Sanba, who was the author of the books “*Ukiyo buro*” and “*Ukiyo doko*”, adopted many times “*Oyashiki kotoba*”, the language used among young women, who went to work in samurai households.

osame 「 Oyaoya, ‘oshamoji’ towa ‘shakushi’ no kotode gozaimasuyo.  
O Ho Ho Ho 」

musu 「 Osamesan, Hon’nikae? Watakushi wa mata ‘oshaberi’ no koto  
ka to omoimashita 」

osame 「 Yagate oyashiki e oagaridato wakarimasunosa 」

hatsu 「 Sayoosane, oshitsuke gohookoo ni oagari asubasuto, sorekoso  
moo ‘yamato-kotoba’ de ohitogara ni onari asubasuda. Omususan  
osenaka wo onagashi mooshimashoo. Saasaa, odashi asobase 」

musu 「 Hai, sayoonara odashi asubashimashoo 」

“Ukiyo Buro” 1809

The dialogue above describes an incoherent conversation between a girl who was working at a samurai household, coming back to her parents’ house for a visit, and a girl in the neighbourhood.

In regard to these young girls working at a samurai household, the fourth Hiroshige Kikuchi kan’ichiro described in his book “*Edo funai·Ehon Fuzoku Orai*” (Tozo Suzuki ed. Tooyo Bunko)

The reason for merchant girls working in samurai households was for them to learn manners and etiquette. Even, if the (girls) own households were more than average, there was no reason (for the parents) not to send their daughters to the samurai households. He described in detail that it was a custom in the established merchant class to send their daugh-

ters to a samurai household to learn manners and etiquette.

The language passed from the merchant class daughters, who worked at samurai households back to their merchant class families, remained as a relatively high class female language and spread to the general population, and were welcomed by women with upward mobility. As it was a graceful language, the training of children and servants were conducted in that language.

In *Edo rakugo* (a verbal comic story), it appears that *Kuma san* and *Hattsuan* who learned New Year Day greetings or a wedding speech (“*kojo*”) from the local elderly intellectual muffed their lines in actual situations. “*Kojo*” was a proper greeting originally used among the samurai, and in the course of time it became widely used among the population in Edo society.<sup>5)</sup>

## 6. The Composition of “Yamanote-kotoba” in Tokyo

Yada Soun described in his well-known book, “*Edo kara Tokyo e*” (Chuo Koronsha) that: Even now, the rakugoka tell of a humorous situation in which a craftsman had to change to formal language suddenly when being invited to the room of *hatamoto* (the samurai class). But (an elleipsis) even an absent-minded member of the craftsman class could automatically have changed to the degree of using “*so de gozaimasu*” or “*ko de gozaimasu*” in responding to the samurai.

The change was much more evident in the merchant class who had dealt with the samurai class to a greater extent than the craftsman class. It was, for them, a type of identity that enabled them to deal even with the samurai class.

The following is a conversation between *Tobei* and a samurai *Honda Chikatsune* in Tamenaga Shunsui’s *Nijo-bon* (a novel) “*Shunshoku Ume Goyomi*” a story which was modeled on a rich merchant *Tsunokuniya Tobei*

at the end of the Edo era.

chikatsune 「 Takini Toobei, Kanete tanomishi gi wa hisokani tadashite  
kurerarataru ka? Tadashi wa imada sono jippu wo saguri gatai  
yoosu Kana? Iya, sono koto wa tomokakumo, kono ya wo mireba,  
on'na-aruji no sumai no yoosu. Mata uchiuchi no koto wo hitonaka  
de tazune moosu mo ikagasii 」

toobei 「 Ieie, kore wa watakushi ga nogare gatai naien no mono no  
taku, sukoshimo goenryo wa irimasenu. Shikashi shibaraku  
minamina ni enryo itasase mooshimashoo.

Kano otanomi no ikken wa kuwashiku sensaku itashimashitaga,  
suzyoo wa rei no chisuji ni sooi gozarimasen 」

“Syunshoku Umegoyomi” 1832

In *Tobei*'s speech to the samurai, we can see clear conformity of the merchant class language to the samurai language, which was different to the merchant language.

The Edo merchants approach of getting closer to samurai society and conforming to the samurai language developed dignity and refined the Edo merchant language which, in turn, generated the formation of a sophisticated social language. As a consequence, respectable merchants in the Edo metropolitan area mastered an elegant and polite formal language, besides using the informal language which was called “*mochimae no kotoba*” at that time. The time is considered to be around the Tenpo era towards the end of the Edo period.

Edo language at the end of the Edo period had the formal and polite aspect mentioned above. This aspect the Edo-Tokyo language possessed is one of the reasons why the conversation books at that time employed the Edo-Tokyo language as the standard Japanese for foreigners to learn.

Yamanote in the Edo period was considered as the samurai's resi-

dential area, but as far as the population there was concerned, merchant numbers were far more than the samurai class population. About the time of the Meiji Restoration many of the samurai class left Tokyo, then it became fashionable among the rich merchant class in the downtown area to move their household to Yamanote. Considering this change, it is reasonable to think that interaction between the new Yamanote residents who had moved there from local regions and the merchant class in Yamanote formed the basis of modern standard Japanese. Tokyo language was divided into the newly formed *Yamanote kotoba* and a traditional Edo language, *Shitamachi kotoba*. At least, until the Kanto earthquake at the end of the Taisho era, the language in Tokyo kept a stable separation both in locality and by occupation.<sup>6)</sup>

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Addendum

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