The Japanese Language through Time

3rd and 4th quarters, Sophomore

Instructor: Christopher Hennessy M.A.

Style of Class: Seminar

Number of Credits: 2

Day and Period: Tuesday, period 1

Course Description

There are around 130,000,000 million speakers of the Japanese language in the world today. This makes modern Japanese one of the most spoken languages in the history of the world. Yet go back 200 years into history, and already most modern speakers of the language would have trouble comprehending Japanese at that time. What has changed? Why has it changed? Using key principles learned in ENG 200: Introduction to Linguistics as well as introducing important concepts and tools of historical linguistics, this course will take a chronological look at the Japanese language over time – from the Pre-Nara period to present day – and examine issues of historical language change in Japanese, the socio-linguistic dimensions of Japanese, Japanese language instruction, and Japanese in the context of the world’s languages.

Course Objectives

Students will:

1) Examine the historical changes in the Japanese spoken and written languages
2) Analyze real language-change phenomena using historical linguistic methods
3) Reinforce and apply key linguistic skills and concepts learned in ENG: Introduction to Linguistics
4) Understand the Japanese language in a global context

Prerequisites

ENG 200: Introduction to Linguistics (Introduction to Linguistics)

Class Materials

Textbook:


Reference book:


Course Methods

The teaching method used in this course will follow a seminar style. The instructor will regularly offer lectures on the assigned readings. Each student should come to class prepared to actively discuss the assigned texts, as well work in small groups on certain questions or problems presented in class.

Evaluation/Assessment

Historical Linguistic Assignments: Students will be given four homework assignments throughout the semester which highlight the tools historical linguists use to determine historical change in languages.

Mid-Term Report: Students will write a three-page report on a Japanese historical linguistic topic assigned by the instructor. Students should synthesize and express their view on the given topic based on factual evidence obtained in class or in their own independent studies.

Analytical Paper: Students will write a five-page paper in which they analyze some aspect of the Japanese language in a historical linguistic context. Students are free to choose their own topic. At the end of the semester, students will present their analytical paper in class.
Grading

20% Active In-Class Participation
20% Historical Linguistic Assignment (4)
10% Mid-Term Report
20% Analytical Paper Presentation
30% Analytical Paper

Course Schedule

Week 1: Japanese and the Language Families of the World
   Topics Covered: (1) World Language Families
                    (2) Japanese Language in the World

Week 2: Old Japanese (700-800 A.D.)
   Topics Covered: (1) Phonology [Consonant and vowel structure]
                    (2) Grammar [Verbs, adjectives, particles, pronouns]
                    (3) Loanwords [Ainu, Chinese, Korean, Sanskrit]
                    (4) Proto-Japanese

Week 3: The Written Language of Old Japanese
   Topics Covered: (1) Adaptation of Chinese Script
                   (2) Logographic/Phonographic Writing [Kojiki and Nihongi]
                   (3) Man’yogana and Senmyo-gaki

Week 4: Early Middle Japanese (800-1200 A.D.)
   Topics Covered: (1) Phonology [Syllable structure, long syllables, onbin]
                   (2) Grammar [Verbs, adjectives, auxiliaries, particles]
                   (3) Development of kakari-musubi

Week 5: The Written Language of Early Middle Japanese
   Topics Covered: (1) Development of kana [hiragana, katakana, hentaigana]
                   (2) Kanji-kana majiribun
                   (3) Sinification of Japanese

Week 6: Late Middle Japanese (1200-1600 A.D.)
   Topics Covered: (1) Phonology [nasality, loss of /w/, long vowels, onbin]
                   (2) Grammar [verb morphology, existential verbs, syntactic changes]
                   (3) Honorific language

Week 7: The Written Language of Late Middle Japanese
   Topics Covered: (1) Rekishiteki kanazukai
                   (2) Fujiwara Teika’s contributions
                   (3) Kamakura and Muromachi era kana usage

Week 8: Early Modern Japanese (1600-1868 A.D.)
   Topics Covered: (1) Common language of the Edo period
                   (2) Phonology [Merger of /d/ and /z/, delabialization of /i/, phonemic changes due to loanwords]
                   (3) Grammar [formation of volitional verb form, adjectives and copula]

Week 9: The Written Language of Early Modern Japanese
   Topics Covered: (1) Historical kana usage of Keichu
                   (2) Writing conventions in the Edo Period

Week 10: Modern Japanese (1868-Present)
   Topics Covered: (1) Unification and Standardization in Meiji Japan
                   (2) Westernization of Japanese
Week 11: The Written Language of Modern Japanese
Topics covered:
(1) Meiji-era reforms to the Japanese writing system
(2) Post-World War II reforms to the Japanese writing system

Week 12: Dialects of Japan
Topics covered:
(1) Dialect divisions and their development
(2) Theories of dialect division in Japan
(3) Accent

Week 13: Japanese Language Education
Topics covered:
(1) Missionaries and Japanese language education from Edo to Meiji
(2) American military and the “Army Method” in World War II
(3) Japanese language education in internment camps
(4) Modern Japanese and National Language education

Week 14: Japanese Language in Modern Pop Culture
Topics covered:
(1) Modern youth language
(2) Japanese language and information technology

Week 15: Presentations on Final Report Topic

Preparation and Follow-up
- Preparation: Read the relevant portions of the reference materials (about one hour)
- Follow-up: Review the content of the lecture and note any points you are not sure of (about one hour)