When the Japanese speak a foreign language: Part of wartime Japan's scenario

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Combined with forces such as religion and trade, the spread or promotion of languages has occurred from ancient to modern times. The use of language as a tool and a weapon for the establishment and maintenance of empires was noticeable from the early expansionist phase of imperialism. When Colombus set off to 'discover' the new world in 1492, a language expert named Nebrija presented Queen Isabella of Spain with an ambitious project proposal to consolidate the queen's language with the first ever grammar of a modern European language and to teach it as a standard in an education system.[1] Linguistic penetration was never purely Eouropean phenomenon;it occurred in Asia too, an instance of which is illustrated in this paper.

I have found an introduction to the dominant national language of Sri Lanka written in Japanese and published as a booklet in 1943, which can be considered as part of the Japanese attempt to promote the Japanese language in Asia and their strenuous attempt to reach a land far away as Sri Lanka to achieve the perceived goal. The Japanese title of the book I am going to introduce is *Kanyou Ceylon-go Kaiwa* 'Practical Ceylonese Conversation'.[2] The author Kageyama Yoshimasa has lived in Malay and Sri Lanka for eighteen years, according to the brief 'introduction to the author' appearing at the end of the book, though we cannot judge the exact number of years he lived in Sri Lanka. My survey through personal communication with the author's wife and daughter reveals that the whole number of years he lived in Sri Lanka might be seven or eight and during this period he was there as a planter running a farm in Anuradhapura, North-Central Province.

In this survey I have undertaken to investigate the distinctive characteristics of the Japanese cultural intercourse as revealed by Kageyama's work *Practical Ceylonese Conversation* which not only reveals the author's brave attempt to step on an untrodden path and his first-hand experience in the rural life in Sri Lanka but also provides some important clues to a hidden aspect of Japan's massive war-time cultural project. I will first discuss the purpose of the Japanese author in the context of the dominant politico-cultural discourse in the contemporary Japan and then turn to analyze some features of the text.

I begin with the assumption that a language textbook brings certain types of knowledge and images with it, in addition to the valuable knowledge of the target language, and thus effectively transfers an ideology. Certain types of images and values are generated and reproduced through dialogues, vocabulary and pictures. We can see that the same mechanisms of ideological transfer operate in varied forms and varied degrees, across cultures and across periods of time. A textbook designed to teach American English, for example, presents a dialogue with a background picture across which beams the yellow McDonald mark. Drawing upon Said(1978), which used the term 'orientalism' to cover a wide range of hegemonic beliefs and practices used by a dominant group

to shape a dominated group, we can show how Kageyama's *Practical Ceylonese Conversation*(PCC) unfairly delimits the ideas, attributes and verbal expressions of the Ceylonese even within a restricted local context.

Let me present a caveat, which should precede the discussion. There is, or was, no language called Ceylonese (*Ceylon-go*, in Japanese) in Sri Lanka. The two national languages of Sri Lanka are Sinhala and Tamil, former being the majority language and the latter the minority language within the territory. Even the European colonists, who called this country Ceylon, never used the term for its languages. Through the content of the text and an introductory note offered by the author, we come to know what is understood by *Ceylon-go* is Sinhala. However, from a linguistic (including linguistic human rights) point of view, it is a gross injustice for both the speakers of the majority language and the speakers of the minority language to call one language Ceylonese. Sinhala speakers would feel that their ethnic identity is not respected by not choosing the real name of their language. Tamil speakers, on the other hand, would feel that they are discriminated against by purposely presenting others' language as the sole language spoken in Ceylon or Sri Lanka. I will correct this misconception by using the term Sinhala instead of Ceylonese in this paper insofar as it refers to the language.

The author has prefaced the book with a short account of how he was motivated to step on this field, as follows:

> With the rise of our empire as the leader of East Asia, the world is experiencing a revolution in a scale unprecedented in the history. When the twelve hundred million people in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere are liberated and allowed to occupy their own proper places under the honorable authority of the Emperor, realizing the ideal of *Hakko ichiu* 'everyone under one roof' (literally, "eight corners of the world, one roof"), it is of great urgency to send the base of language, which is part of a culture, to the southern countries. With this thought in mind, I have compiled this book.
>
> I will be more than happy to see this volume will be of immense help to the imperial military officers and soldiers at the front and at pacification work with civilians or to those people who set out to be engaged in public service in the economic field and come into contact with local people.

It becomes explicit from these words that Kageyama found inspiration for the study of Sinhala from the vision of *Dai Toa Kyoeiken*, or "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", which had sprouted in the Meiji era and gained momentum in the contemporary Japan. Kageyama may have genuinely believed that his effort would contribute to achieve the perceived goals—both military and civilian—enveloped in the Pan-Asian ideal.

It should be noted that the urgent need, as the author feels, is "to send the base of language, which is part of a culture, to the southern countries". It is not clear what 'the base of language' meant to the author. It cannot be the Sinhala language since the author mentions of it as the one to be sent to the southern countries. We cannot take it as human language in general in spite of

the author's inclination to imply so. My firm conviction is that 'the base of language', though in implicit terms, refers to the Japanese language. The author seems to be interested in the linguistic needs of a specific section of Japanese community, which is engaged in military action, pacification work or public service in southern countries like Sri Lanka. I will provide evidence for my argument from historical facts, with collaborative documents and through the text.

It is highly interesting that a strong recommendation of a high-profile official of the Japanese military forms a prelude to Kageyama's book. In his recommendation to the book, Yamada Tetsujiro, a Lieutenant General of the Imperial Army and Director General of the Central Training Institute for Overseas Brethren provides some important clues to understand the overall cultural project. First, Yamada Tetsujiro takes a critical look at the Japanese attitude towards foreign people. "Compared with the large number of Indian people in industrialized European countries, there are a few Indians in Japan. For one thing, England has taken a conciliatory policy, inviting many Asians to study there. On the other hand, Japanese themselves were responsible for the situation with their unkind treatment of non-Japanese people"(PCC, 1943). Then he brings forth his philosophy:

> The term Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere is often heard these days. But I think that it should be Greater East Asian Co-Existence Sphere. "Co-existence" has a stronger sense than co-prosperity because it transcends the material. Japanese people should think of Greater East Asian Co-Existence Sphere in spiritual terms. It might be good to advance the thought of material co-prosperity to the southern people. But ultimately it should lead to the spiritual co-existence. ..... Though humans are divided according to appearance, for instance, by hair, color of skin, face, and eyes, the Japanese and the southerners must indisputably be unified and be in harmony with each other. Some researchers prefer to call it 'the philosophy of blood.' There will be no problem whatsoever, even if one million Koreans would immigrate to Japan. It is to be taken for granted that the southerners and the Japanese remain unified. This is possible if the Japanese nation would improve the cultures of the southern nations. Even within Japan, for example, if we call Kyushu islanders or Okinawans "You are descendents of *Kumaso*",[3] they will reply with a smile, "oh, yes. So what?" We should come to that level (in terms of cultural intercourse). While there are many measures to be taken towards that goal, the most urgent thing is to be intimate and talk with them. We should be able to peep into their minds. For that purpose, we need language study.

From the mid-nineteenth century Japanese leaders had surveyed the world and learned from Western powers in their drive to catch up the world, even to the extent of how to penetrate the world. Comparing with Western countries, the writer correctly estimates Japan's status of inferiority to the Western powers. Then he proposes a union of the Japanese and the southerners. Though the criterion for this classification is not clear, the writer clearly imposes the dichotomy of Self and Other on these components of union. He sees southern cultures as inferior and backward and perceives that it is the great duty of the Japanese nation to 'civilize' them.

Powerful Western countries and the Japanese leadership following them attempted geo-political expansion and wider 'civilizing' goals by means of stick (force), carrot (bargaining), and ideas (persuasion).[4] These Western or industrialized powers assigned themselves a missionary role of civilizing Others, based on racial prejudices, according to which Asian cultures are backward. The author of PCC and the writer who recommends it created a rigidly binomial opposition of "we" vs. "they". The writer draws this boundary by identifying some ethnic or provincial groups, like Okinawans and Kyushu islanders, within the Japanese territory with *Kumaso*, a savage tribe appearing in an ancient legend. What Said said about Orientalism and its instrumentality in colonization is very true of the Japanese leaders of the 'civilizing' mission: "Formally the Orientalist sees himself as the union of Orient and Occident, but mainly by reasserting the technological, political, and cultural supremacy of the West"(Said, 1978). Thus, the writer's union theory becomes a division theory in the final analysis.

The writer understands the priority of language or linguistic penetration for all other kinds of expansion including territorial acquisition. So he recommends language study. All colonizing forces in history carried with them the weapon of language, the primary means of transmitting ideas, values and norms to the colonized people. Linguistic research in the nineteenth century assumed that as languages were distinct from each other, so were human beings. Divided as races, nations, and civilizations, they were supposed to be in a hierarchical order. These assumed ontogenetic boundaries helped the powers in the Center to control the groups in the Periphery. Japan, which was in the Periphery in the nineteenth century, later emerged as a colonizing power, following the European examples and asserting its proper place in Asia.

Until the mid-twentieth century, the Asia for Europe was a vast territory with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance. Having felt victimized for a long period, Japan wanted to change this history and turned to Asia and Asian heritage, which it had cast away after Meiji Restoration,to assert its proper place. It believed that all it's source of morals and power, and even the sense of national fulfillment could be gained from Asia. By building one big, harmonious family under one umbrella by the name of "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere", it could gain the power necessary to resist the colonizing West. It will help other nations of Asia to find each its own proper place. If it takes the leadership of this project, Japan will be popular among other Asian nations and inevitably will gain its own proper place, which had been denied by the West.

Motivated by its sense of natural hierarchy and determined to realize this ideal, Japan began to go on expanding and militarizing. When they were confronted with resistance to their effort, Japanese leaders didn't hesitate to choose force to solve the problems. They overcame Chinese resistance through force in 1937. In 1938, Japanese government issued its declaration on 'The New Order in East Asia', justifying its plans for Asia. It claimed, "What Japan seeks is the establishment of a new order which will ensure the permanent stability of East Asia. In this lies the ultimate purpose of our present military campaign".[5] Japanese government decided on its expansion southward in 1940. By launching Pearl Harbor attack in 1941, Japan entered war with the United States and Britain and, after few months, secured the Malay peninsula, the British forces in Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia.

Leonard Butler, a prisoner of the Japanese military in Singapore, recalls the situation: "Then, all of a sudden, the Japanese planes started to dive in and out of the clouds. They came at us in different directions and scored direct hits on the ship virtually immediately. The guns were going off like the clappers and all hell was let loose. There was smoke, steam and yells, and the steering of the ship had gone to pot. The Japanese bombs had found their mark".[6]

At this point, one may ask the question "Did Japanese operations extend as far as Sri Lanka?" In fact, the question was raised by British authorities based on reasonable grounds in March 1942, according to a news report with the title "Will Japanese Operations Extend as far as Ceylon?" that appeared on 12th March 1942 publication of The Ceylon Observer. The news report says, "The Japanese might extend their activities as far as Ceylon, or concentrate their offensive on Darwin, or, with the bases they have obtained, they might spread their activities further eastwards towards Fiji, which lies to the south east of New Hebrides".[7]

Proving the prediction made by the British sources, just after a few weeks, Japanese airforce attacked Colombo on Easter Sunday morning of April 5, 1942. The British military boasted of, and perhaps exaggerated, its resistance to Japanese offensive: "ANNALIST, the well known British military commentator writes: The best news of the week in the British war zone comes with the announcement of a sharp defeat inflicted on the Japanese air force which attacked Colombo on Easter Sunday morning. Twenty-five enemy aircraft were shot down for certain. Five more probably destroyed and 25 damaged in addition. This is an encouraging "bag"".[8] However, within a few days of this bombing raid, Japanese airforce again attacked the British naval base in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka on March 12, 1942.

While all these operations were carried forward across Asia-Pacific nations, a vast political, educational, and ideological network was built in order to mobilize all the strengths of the state, public and private institutions, and individual lives toward this goal. That is, Japan set out on a cultural, political, and military program of establishing a model socio-political structure in which it could enjoyed a sense of resentment relative to Western powers and a sense of brotherly love and paternal authority relative to other Asian nations. With Japan's territorial acquisition in Asia, the question of transmitting the norms of this socio-political structure was greatly felt, and the inevitable result was a linguistic penetration across Asia. Kageyama, consciously or unconsciously, offered to fulfill the great need for a practical guide to the majority language in Sri Lanka.

Now let us turn to the content of the book. At the beginning of the book the author says,"I wrote the reading of Ceylonese characters in Kana, the Japanese syllabary, so that it will be easy to use for those who are not familiar with Ceylonese characters. I also extended some consideration to local readers who want to know Japanese, and I am thinking to re-edit it someday adding Sinhalese characters, which will be convenient for local learners".[9] These introductory remarks of the author show that the book is primarily aimed at Japanese readers, as we mentioned earlier. This is also proved by the fact that in the long list of words that covers a large section of the book, all the entries are given in Japanese.

Next, the author adds some of his ideas about language learning in general and learning Sinhala in particular. The author deserves praise for recording these valuable ideas that represent

some basic tenets of language learning, which, till recently, had been forgotten in foreign language classrooms and have remained as a lost paradigm in language education in Japan.

> With his long-time experience in foreign countries, the author believes that Foreign language acquisition will be most effective when it is thoroughly based on conversation patterns that are often used in everyday life and that can be put into immediate use. First try to remember two hundred words and then increase your vocabulary. If you learn how to use these words in daily conversation, you will catch the language without much difficulty. Then you can gradually improve your standard of language proficiency.
>
> Since I wrote this book while being in the land where the language is used, I hope it will be practically useful to the beginners as a textbook.
>
> Sinhalese, like Malay, is a language relatively easy for us, Japanese, to use. One doesn't need to stick to the grammar so much like in Chinese-type expressions or English; you can put yourself across easily by combining words.

Kageyama's approach to language is very practical. The author seems to believe that grammatical rules are useful for **the study of language**, but not for **the learning of a language**. He never attempts to specify rules, subrules and exceptions, etc. Instead he presents lists of vocabulary and some rudiments of conversational expressions applicable to particular situations. These situations include social greetings, describing people and places, talking about time and weather, talking about families and homes, food and drinks, events of motion, modes of transportation, farming, buying and selling things, giving directions and military activities, etc. It is a widely accepted fact that presenting language with **situational focus** makes language learning more rewarding, meaningful and efficient.

Another important fact the author has noted is that Sinhala is a language relatively easy for the Japanese. Though the author has not gone to detail about the point, any language student who has learned or tried to learn Sinhala will admit that the fact can be easily attributed to its grammatical structure which is similar to Japanese in many respects. With the least interest in grammar, the author perhaps chose not to bring the point into focus.

Any serious student of the language understands that Sinhala has two varieties as Literary and Spoken, though the difference between the two has narrowed down recently. The variety generally used in daily life for real-life communication is the Spoken, albeit with slight dialectical differences. The variety used by the speakers of the South-Western coastal region has developed as the standard language and easily understood by all members of the Sinhala community, irrespective of their provincial attachment, social class, or educational level. The text of this book does not represent this standard language that is commonly heard in the present-day society and that can be easily adjusted to a speech dialect of any region or to a literary variety, for that matter. Rather, it seems that its focus is on a colloquial variety used by, or at least towards, the members of a social class of some lower rank.

There are two ways to look at this problem. According to one point of view, the book

represents the standard spoken language commonly used in the contemporary Sri Lanka society. According to this view, today's standard language is a new adaptation developed with the influence of mass media. The other point of view supposes that the book is clearly biased in favor of the restricted spoken dialect mentioned above. The former point of view can be supported by some evidence from an authoritative source. One may think that the imperative form, ending in *-pan* and the second person pronoun *umba* frequently used in the book do not represent the standard language. However, contrary to such expectations, Professor Wilhelm Geiger, in his comprehensive grammatical description of Sinhala, has given these morphemes as commonly used forms, not as features of a particular variety.[10]

However, if we observe the language of novels and short stories written contemporarily with this book, we will not be able to find enough evidence to support the former point of view, and consequently will have to shift to the latter point of view to grasp the book's content as well as its motives more clearly. One conspicuous feature common to the all lists of words in the book is that verbs are given in imperative forms in almost all cases. In sinhala, indicative form of the verb is considered as the 'dictionary form' customarily included in vocabulary lists, a tradition our author was genuinely unaware of, or consciously turned away from. Instead, the author preferred the imperative form, which can be readily used in giving directions, ordering or commanding people of low rank. Observe the following verbs selected from the author's word lists (The horizontal order follows the original one used in the book: Japanese word in Chinese Characters, Sinhala word in Japanese kana syllabary, Sinhala word in Roman characters, and finally, Japanese word in Roman characters):

来い	ワレン	Waren	koi
行け	パレヤン	Paleyan	yuke
やりなさい	デイパン	Dipan	yarinasai
書きなさい	リヤパン	Liyapan	kakinasai
開けなさい	エラパン	Erapan	akenasai
取りなさい	ガニン	Ganin	torinasai
植付なさい	シトワパン	Sitowapan	uetukenasai
働きなさい	ワダカラパン	Wadakarapan	hatarakinasai

A careful reader of the text will naturally be compelled to wonder what necessity made the author put so much emphasis on imperative forms. In language education, learning a particular form presupposes knowing its meaning and function, which helps the learners to use it according to the purpose and role of the participants in a particular situation.[11]

A casual glance at the text reveals that the whole text carries the heavy weight of a hierarchical order of superior vs. subordinate status imposed on the speaker and the partner of conversation respectively. Look at the following conversational utterances:

オフンタ　ヤンダ　キヤパン
Ohuta　yanda　kiyapan
彼に　行けと　言いなさい
Kare ni　yuke to　iinasai
オウ　マハテヤ
Awu　Mahatmaya (Yes, Sir)
はい　旦那様
Hai　dannasama
オフンタ　ヤンダ　キヤノワダ
Ohuta　yanda　kiyanawada?
彼に　行けと　言うのですか
Kare ni yuke to yunodesuka?
デン　オフンタ　キヤパン
Den　ohuta　kiyapan
今　彼に　言いなさい
Ima　kare ni　iinasai
メ　ミニスンタ　ヤンダ　キユウワダ
Me minissunta　yanda　kiyuwada?
皆に　行けと　言ったのか
Minnani　yuke to　ittanoka?
タワマ　キユウエ　ネー
Tavama　kiyuwe　ne
まだ　言って居りません
Mada　iimasen
ウジハタ　キヤパン
Vigahata　kiyapan
早く　言いなさい。
Hayaku　iinasai
マハテヤ　キユウエ　モカダ
Mahatmaya　kiyuwe　mokada?
旦那様は　何と言われましたか
Dannasam wa nanto iwaremashitaka
ウンバ　キユウエ　モカダ
Umba　kiyuwe　mokada?
Anata no ittanowa nandesuka?
お前の　言ったのは何か

To further prove my argument, I will compare the last two utterances. First look at the sinhala sentences. The only difference we can see is in the initial position occupied by the sentential subject, denoting the addressee in this case. It is an honorific term in the former utterance and a second

person pronoun in the latter. Irrespective of the form of subject, the predicate takes the identical form. Now turn to the Japanese sentences. The former sentence has a marked, honorific form of the verb, whereas the latter's verb is an unmarked, neutral form. Also note that the second person pronoun used in the same sentence has two forms: *anata* in Roman characters and *omae* in Japanese writing. The two forms represent different speech levels, the latter being lower than the former. This kind of treatment shows that the author, from the beginning, has been very conscious of different social ranks and fond of using different speech levels.

Some facts regarding the arrangement of the text, choosing model sentences, and their interpretation provide evidence for our initial assumption that some sort of cognitive/pragmatic transfer, from Japanese to Sinhala, has occurred in the process of acquisition of the language and writing the text. As many linguists have demonstrated, there is a marked vertical polarization or a higher-lower distinction apparent in various areas of Japanese language, including its structure, vocabulary, and nominal and verbal categories.[12] It seems that the author has thought, consciously or unconsciously, to use the rules related to this superior-inferior relationship in interacting with the members of the host community. For example, observe the following interaction:

ウバ　ヤナワダ
Umba yanawada?
お前　行くのか
Anata wa yukimasuka
オウ　ヤノワ
Ohu, yanawa
はい　参ります
Hai mairimasu.

The verb forms in the Sinhala dialogue cannot be characterized in terms of a higher-lower relationship. The verbs in the corresponding Japanese, on the other hand, clearly show the signs of polarization along a vertical line. The verb form *mairimasu* is used by a subordinate member to indicate "go" or "come" in addressing a superior member, but not vice verse. That is, the author has presupposed that the given response comes from a member of a lower rank. Put in other way, the author's mind is conditioned by the rules of the Japanese vertical society.

The author's commanding tone can be heard through the following imperative sentences also:

マゲ　トピーィヤ　アランワレン
Mage toppiya aran waren
私の帽子を持って来なさい
Watakushi no bosi o motte kinasai
ゲイ　ドラ　エラパン
Gei dora arapan
家の　戸を　開けなさい
Ie no to o akenasai

ウジハタ　アリンタ　キヤパン
Vigahata　arinta　kiyapan
早く　開けと　言いなさい
Hayaku　aketo　iinasai
ボーイ　マゲ　キエマ　ゲニン
Boy　mage　kema　genen
絵仕　私の　食事を　持ってきなさい
Boy　watakushino shokuji o motte kinasai
ポール　カダパン
Pol　kadapan
ココナッツを　取りなさい
Yashi (coconuts) o torinasai

All these sentences can be found scattered randomly over the text; none of them is included in the separate sub-section allocated for dialogues between a master and a servant, which means the whole text has been produced with a particular purpose and situation in mind. The work seems to be pervaded by the idea of a total control of the target culture, rather than the recognition and non-judgmental observation of, and the respect for, the host culture. The text became a poor, inaccurate depiction of the mainstream culture of Sri Lanka because the logic behind the project has been governed not by empirical reality but a cluster of desires, dreams, fantasies, and projections emerging from the contemporary Japan. Therefore I think this book contributes to an understanding of the way that socio-cultural narratives influence intercultural communication.

In general, the text is produced on an authoritarian line. In the text, the speaker has an authoritarian voice, or the author seems to have assumed to be so. The humble addressee always represents the silent voice. Thus the text is a microcosm of the imaginary world-order mapped out by the contemporary Japan. In a restricted sense, the language of the text centers on a master-servant relationship, which binds the Sri Lanka community to servitude under the Japanese linguistic hegemony. In a wider sense, it may encompass the self-promoting vertical relation between Japan(master) and other Asian countries(servants). Just as the idea of European identity emerged as a superior one relative to all the non-European cultures in nineteenth century, the idea of Japanese supremacy manifested itself dominating all the non-Japanese peoples and cultures. The ideology of Yamato(Japanese) spirit, which was built on ideological constructs borrowed from Buddhist, Shintoist and Confucian traditions, stressed the virtues of loyalty, benevolence, trust, personal probity, and harmony. These qualities identified as being the hallmark of Japanese civilization as well as the guarantor of ethnic superiority allowed the Japanese leaders to see other Asian cultures as backward and extend the benefits of civilization to the rest of the world, transforming the rhetoric of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere into a new global partnership and dreaming of a profound global harmony.

In the years leading up to World War, Japan was resolute to acquire other Asian countries geographically, politically, and culturally, incorporate and assimilate them, and 'civilize' them at

will. Though the sabre-rattling tactics faded with Japan's defeat, the *hakko ichiu*—the unity of the whole world under one roof—paradigm continues in postwar Japan in different forms, whether religious, cultural, or political.

Notes

1.Illich, *Shadow Work*
2.Kageyama, *Kanyou Ceylon-go Kaiwa*
3.A savage tribe living in the southern part of Japan, according to the legends recorded in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* chronicles.
4.Phillipson, *Linguistic Imperialism*, p.53
5.Maki, *Conflict and Tension in the Far East: Key Documents* 1894-1960, pp.78-79
6.National Heritage Board, *Singapore History Museum.*
7.*The Ceylon Observer* (12.3.1942)
8.*The Ceylon Observer* (6.4.1942)
9.Kageyama, *Kanyou Ceylon-go Kaiwa*
10.Geiger, *A Grammar of the Sinhalese Language*, p.150
11.Lyons, *Language and Linguistics: An Introduction*
12.Mizutani, *Japanese: The Spoken Language in Japanese Life*

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