

International Lecture of the Eurasia Foundation, Fall Semester 2022

Series Lectures (6): “Asian Community: The Construction and Transformation of East Asiaology”

Topic: Japanese, Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka as a family

For the 6th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 2022 academic year of Chinese Culture University, Professor Ji-Li Luo, Professor and Chair of Department of Japanese, University of Soochow University, was invited to give a speech entitled “Japanese, Hokkien and Hakka as a Family.” Professor Luo is a Hakka and makes good use of the bilingual advantages of his native Hakka and Japanese. For many years, he has focused on the analysis and research of Hakka language data during the Japanese occupation period, and actively participated in Hakka language education. He gained “Hakka Language Heritage Teacher” certification from the Hakka Affairs Council. This lecture starts by introducing the “common vocabulary” in Japanese, Taiwanese and Hakka (hereinafter referred to as “Taiwanese-Hakka”), analyzes the characteristics of these words, and then thinks about how to use these words to help Japanese learning.

Common vocabulary of Japanese, Taiwanese and Hakka

After the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese used Chinese characters and made good use of translation or word formation methods to create many modern Japanese words, such as “Kagaku” (科學 science) and “Shakai” (社會 society), that reflect new Western knowledge and concepts in Early Modern and Modern periods. Except for these words, words, reflecting Japanese culture from the closed exchanges between Taiwan and Japan since 1980s, has been borrowed to Taiwanese-Hakka language whether in the form of “homograph” or in the form that borrowing the words but directly pronounced these characters with Taiwanese and Hakka languages. This is the “loan” relationship of words, and “homophones in Japanese and Taiwanese and Hakka languages” can be said to be the “homology” relationship originated from the same roots.

There are many common words in Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka languages. For example, the word “aluminum (can)” is “アルミ (a-ru-mi)” in Japanese, “a33 lu55 mih3” in Taiwanese, and the same in Hakka, “Alumi, a11 lu55 mi31.” Another example is the word “company,” which is called “会社 (kai-shya)” in Japanese, “hui33 sia33” in Taiwanese and “huis fi55 sa55” in Hakka. We can call such words “common words.” In other words, words with similar pronunciation or basically with the same meaning and

form are the “common words” in Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka languages. There are quite a few common words between common Taiwanese-Hakka languages and Japanese, showing that Japanese, Hokkien and Hakka language can be viewed as “family.”

“Common Vocabulary Comparison Table between Japanese, Taiwanese, Hakka language” and Japanese Education

Using knowledge of common vocabulary can be used as a learning strategy to help learners learn each other’s language. The purpose of this speech is to clarify how much the knowledge of common vocabulary helps Taiwanese Japanese learners to learn Japanese. We first discuss common vocabulary with similar pronunciation, and create the “Common Vocabulary Comparison Table between Japanese, Taiwanese, Hakka language.” Through the analysis of the classification of the language and meaning, and the comparison with the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) benchmark, we explore the possibility to use “Common Vocabulary Comparison Table between Japanese, Taiwanese, Hakka language” as supplementary teaching material for learning Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka language at the same time.

As a result, the following five conclusions were obtained: (1) Regarding pronunciation, it was confirmed that Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka languages have many common words. After crawling and sorting, Professor Luo found 136 common words in Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka languages, and created the “Common Vocabulary Comparison Table between Japanese, Taiwanese, Hakka language” with similar pronunciations. (2) Among the common words with similar pronunciation in Japanese, Taiwanese-Hakka languages, 67% of these words in Japanese language is *gairaigo* types. It can also be said that the Taiwanese and Hakka groups have absorbed a lot of Western culture through Japanese *gairaigo*. Japanese learners can take advantage of this table that showing the similarities between Japanese and their native language. They may obtain more sources of learning *katakana* vocabulary, and thus, eliminate anxiety in the primary stage about learning *katakana* vocabulary, and improve learning efficiency. (3) The “common vocabulary of Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka” with similar pronunciations is centered on “life vocabulary” such as food, leisure and entertainment, transportation, utensils, clothing and beauty, and less vocabulary in the fields of political economy, science, technology, etc. The parts of speech, similar to international common words, mainly are nouns. (4) 64% of the “common vocabulary of Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka” with similar pronunciation appear in the general vocabulary (level 1~4) of the JLPT benchmark. Of the 49 words that were not included in the JLPT

benchmark, 39 were included in the “Basic Vocabulary of Education” by the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (2009), and 4 were included in *Wiktionary: 日本語の基本語彙 1000* [Wiktionary: Basic Vocabulary of Japanese Language 1000]. In other words, the “common vocabulary of Japanese and Taiwanese-Hakka” with similar pronunciations contains vocabulary that is indispensable in education and social life. (5) When Taiwanese-Hakka speakers are learning Japanese, they can use the “Common Vocabulary Comparison Table between Japanese, Taiwanese, Hakka language” with similar pronunciations and they can increase the speed of learning through the association of pronunciation and meaning.

In the end, Professor Luo reminds us that it is important to pay attention to the following four points: (1) We should learn Japanese pronunciation and tones correctly and should not be affected by the negative interference of Taiwanese and Hakka languages. (2) Correctly recognize the semantics. (3) Remember the Japanese kana spelling and glyphs. (4) Think and confirm its type of language. By doing these, we may achieve the effect of mutual assistance in the learning of native language and foreign language.

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