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Takesi Sibata
Sociolinguistics
in Japanese Contexts

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0. Dr. Takesi Sibata and the principal trends in Japanese sociolinguistics

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1. Purpose of this chapter

This chapter is intended as an introduction to the whole content of this book. The main purpose is to point out the relationships of Dr. Sibata's works with the trends of sociolinguistics in Japan. Some evidence will be produced to argue that he was really the founder of Japanese sociolinguistics. Characteristics of his methodology will also be pointed out.

Dr. Sibata is in short the father of Japanese sociolinguistics. He has many followers all over Japan. His "disciples" consist not only of those who studied direct under him at various universities, but of those affected through the indirect influence of his voluminous body of work.

2. The importance of Dr. Sibata in sociolinguistics

This chapter is indispensable because the accomplishments of Japanese sociolinguistics have been little known in the outside world. In this sense Japan even now continues to be an isolated island in the Far East. Whereas commodities and technologies have been hindered by customs duties, scholastic knowledge has been hindered by language barriers. This itself is a sociolinguistic problem regarding international communication.

We scholars of Japanese often experience the irritating feeling when staying abroad of seeing the results of Japanese studies almost neglected just because these are published in Japanese. But if papers are written in English or other foreign languages, only a few Japanese scholars read them. Moreover, writing in Japanese is a necessity for scholars to be understood by the lay people here. In the meantime, writing papers of the same content in two languages is both laborious and time consuming for scholars in Japan. Sibata has been no exception to this. Only a small portion of his works have been written in foreign languages. This is why his contributions were not hitherto known to the world, while in Japan Sibata is actually one of the most famous linguists. His name is known to the general public due to his activity in the Media.

The accomplishments of a person can be estimated in many ways. Here we will evaluate Dr. Sibata's importance to the study of sociolinguistics both quantitatively and qualitatively. First we resort to concrete data (a routine sociolinguistic technique) to prove Dr. Sibata's great contributions.

2.1. *The quantity of Dr. Sibata's contributions*

Here we will examine these different bodies of quantitative data in order to evaluate Sibata's contribution to sociolinguistics.

(1) Dr. Sibata's great contribution to the development of Japanese sociolinguistics can clearly be seen in a bibliographical survey of Japanese Sociolinguistics of the past 40 years, which was jointly prepared and analyzed by Sibata and Shinji Sanada (1982). Counting the number of articles according to author, the most prolific author is Kikuo Nomoto, who was once Dr. Sibata's colleague at the NLRI (National Language Research Institute), and the next is Dr. Sibata himself. He has produced an enormous number of articles in his life. The volume of his work can also be seen in the "Complete Works of Takesi Sibata" at the end of this book.

(2) The amount of his papers can be appraised from a different set of quantitative data. Tsunao Ogino (1993) has recently assembled a large amount of bibliographical and biographical data on Japanese linguists. In the statistics of the total number of papers written by about 3000 scholars, Sibata placed eighth. Among the top contenders were Japanologists and language educators, but Sibata was first among sociolinguists. The total number of pages written was also calculated by scholars, with Sibata placing 14th.

Though we should be aware that the period under survey coincides with the period when Sibata was most active, it is still clear that he is one of the most productive scholars in sociolinguistics in Japan.

(3) The frequency of citation is also an index of an individual's scholastic contribution. A tentative statistical count of a recently compiled database of citations in the field of linguistics shows that Sibata has been cited very frequently in this area.

2.2. *The quality of Dr. Sibata's contribution*

Dr. Sibata's importance can also be understood according to the quality or content of his contributions. Generally speaking, productive scholars write papers of excellent quality and this tendency applies to Sibata as well. His works are of good quality and represent the academic tendencies of this half century in Japan. Below we will examine the contributions of Sibata's work from three qualitative standpoints.

(1) He has lead the trends of Japanese dialectology after the Second World War. Sanada once characterized trends of Japanese dialectological studies after the War as follows (Sanada 1990):

1950's	descriptive studies
1960's	geographical studies
1970's	sociological studies
1980's	mathematical (statistical) studies

It is true that main interests of scholars changed in this manner. In all these trends Sibata has been the leader of the decades. Sanada's characterization of the trends of Japanese dialectology closely match the trends of Sibata's own works. He has produced influential studies for so many years. This shows the breadth of his studies. As his scholastic interest was manifold, he has written papers on

descriptive, geographical and mathematical topics.

The trends above of Japanese dialectological studies can be understood to reflect the destiny of dialects in a modernized country like Japan. The first decade of descriptive study (1950's) was a period when traditional dialects in rural areas were becoming unstable through language standardization (or language commonization according to Sibata's standpoint). The description of dialects while they were still vivacious was considered to be of the utmost necessity at that time. In the next decade (1960's) of geographical interest, the differences among various dialects attracted more interest, partly because basic linguistic systems have already been sufficiently described. In the decade of sociological study in the 1970's, the population movement towards urbanized areas became more conspicuous. Thus sociological variation became prominent over geographical differences. This is conterminous with the American interest in sociolinguistic themes as a result of population movements from the South to northern industrialized areas. Japanese sociolinguists can however boast of their leading status in the field worldwide because they began systematic sociological surveys far earlier than Western scholars. In the next decade of statistical study (1980's), linguistic variation in local communities became more complicated. Thus mass surveys seemed to be necessary to acquire more detailed results. The development of computers also contributed to this trend as it became more practical for many researchers to easily apply statistic techniques to large bodies of data.

By locating tendencies against the sociological background of dialects as above, the state of the art in the academic world is found to be dominated by actual movements in society. As Sibata has produced works which reflect the trends above, he must have been sensitive to general movements in the secular world. Thus it can be said that he introduced impetus from the outside world into the academic world and lead the main trends of research.

(2) Sibata's interests in sociolinguistic matters seem to pervade his works of all the decades. As the first chapter of this book tells, the term corresponding to "sociolinguistics" was almost non-existent just after the War. Instead the term "language life" newly coined at that time was advocated in order to study those phenomena which lay on the fringes of purely linguistic phenomena. It is worthy of note here that he was an influential editor of the popular periodical "Language Life" during its beginning stages. He himself contributed multifarious articles to this periodical which continued publication for nearly 40 years from 1951 to 1988. We can thus point to the existence of an "undercurrent" of sociological interest in Sibata's various studies for more than half a century. This interest in society culminated in the decade of sociological study in 1970's, when many more scholars began writing papers related with sociolinguistics. Reviewing Sibata's research life as follows, we gather the impression that his works on sociolinguistics are a reflection of his interest in the secular world. He seems to have tried to find orderliness in actual complicated phenomena through research and description. There seems to be no apparent model in the Western world for each of the concrete matters which he pursued. His works seem to be based on original ideas.

(3) Moving finally to secular matters, Sibata's essays are often cited and used in school textbooks on Japanese language. "Japanese Dialects" a mass market sized paperback book, written by him from sociolinguistic viewpoint in 1958 is one of the long sellers in the field. Sibata's contributions in the field of linguistic

geography have also been fully established. This was symbolically shown by a special session of the American Dialect Society on Sibata's works in 1992. The periodical "American Speech" published a special issue in the summer of 1996 on Sibata's activities in which a review of his work in the field of linguistic geography appears. In order to summarize Sibata's activities it is useful to mention his awards as well. He was awarded the "Broadcast Culture Prize" from the Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK) in 1985 and was also awarded the National Order for Cultural Contribution from the Japanese government in 1992.

3. Dr. Sibata's life history and sociolinguistics

In this section we will concisely review Dr. Sibata's academic life in order to more appropriately understand the works translated in this book against the social background of the Japanese people of the era.

3.1. Romanization

Dr. Sibata was born in Nagoya city in 1918. As a young student, Sibata's linguistic interest were pragmatic taking the form of the movement for the Romanization of Japanese. This interest in a new orthography during the Second World War explains why the author's name is spelled "Sibata Takesi" in this book, even though the actual pronunciation sounds to English speakers closer to "Shibata". (As some libraries abroad spell his name "Shibata" without knowing of the author's use of "Sibata" in his articles written in English, the cataloging of the current volume may unfortunately cause confusion among librarians and bibliographers.) This early interest in romanization reappeared later in his career in the form of a large scale cooperative study of "language standardization" executed in the 1980's.

3.2. The "Literacy Survey"

The "Literacy Survey" conducted just after World War II must have furnished a foundation for Sibata's later sociolinguistic surveys. This survey was conceived under the guidance of the CIE (Civil Information and Education) Section of the GHQ (General Head Quarters) of the U.S. Occupation Forces. The Literacy Survey was executed with statisticians at the Institute of Statistical Mathematics. Here Sibata seems to have acquired the techniques and basic ideas of statistics. The survey was executed in order to prove that the Japanese people had waged a desperate war because the low literacy resulting from the complicated system of writing had hindered the flow of accurate information. The survey showed instead, however, that the literacy rate of the Japanese was quite high.

This monumental work published in 1949 was the first large-scale linguistic survey based on the stratified systematic sampling method, and it was effected under the influence of American sociological tradition of pragmatic experimentation. The methodology of the field research was fresh, and must

have been influential to Sibata. It was useful for the introduction of original methodologies into the field of sociolinguistics. This led to the first applications of exact statistical methods in linguistic surveys, which were realized far earlier in Japanese than in American sociolinguistic studies. The tradition in Japanese sociolinguistics of using larger samples than in Western surveys can be explained by tracing their starting point back to the nationwide Literacy Survey.

The results of the Literacy Survey are reflected in this book in Chapters 2 and 11 on standardization and age structure.

3.3. Surveys on language standardization

After conducting research in literacy for one year Sibata became one of the first members of the NLRI (National Language Research Institute) which was newly established in 1949 for the study of modern Japanese language.

Of Sibata's activities, those most well remembered are related to this institute. The section for the study of local languages which he headed was the most active in the NLRI in producing voluminous reports. The research projects most influential to later sociolinguistic studies are those concerned with the problems of language standardization. Field research was conducted on Hachijō Island, in Shirakawa City, Tsuruoka City, Hokkaido and several other places. Contact situations between Dialects and Standard Language were surveyed in those areas. An exact sampling method was applied to select informants (subjects). The Tsuruoka survey was especially successful in clearly showing the process of standardization. The same type of research was repeated there 20 years later, and a third time 20 years after that. These repeated surveys provide invaluable data to show "linguistic change in real time". Sibata provided the starting point for this real time survey. The results of these studies on standardization are utilized in this book especially in Chapters 3, 11, 13.

In these inspiring surveys another characteristic of Sibata's research materialized: the cooperative study. In the NLRI cooperative work or joint study was a necessity. He was the most diligent in initiating this tradition. This kind of cooperative study had not been attempted by linguistic scholars in Japan before the Second World War, but the members of the research institute formed groups and executed large scale surveys which would have been impossible for an individual.

Throughout his life thereafter, Sibata often formed research groups. The Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research of the Ministry of Education also gave financial support for some of these cooperative works. Recent surveys of sociolinguistics are becoming so enormous that many scholars are doing joint research, but Sibata was surely one of the precursors of this trend.

3.4. Survey of Honorifics

One of the conspicuous areas of variation observed in the Japanese language is that concerned with honorific systems. Up until the 1950's, prescriptive and descriptive studies had been conducted, but practical studies of the usage of honorifics had seldom been attempted. Sibata's survey of honorifics in a

traditional community on the Noto peninsula was conducted with the new technology of tape-recording and the fresh technique of arranging multiple pairings of participants to observe their dialogues. This is actually a predecessor to later developments in discourse analysis.

Large scale surveys of honorifics usage in Ueno City (1952) and Okazaki City (1953) followed, and various experimental methods were utilized in the field. The technique of observing and recording people's behavior was applied. A kind of participant observation was also attempted. These techniques were useful in evading the problems later pointed out by Labov (1972) as the "observer's paradox".

The sociolinguistic research of this decade (1950's) constructed the basis for later developments in Japanese sociolinguistics, both in basic ideas and in methodology. The interest evident in this era in social factors in language was revived later in the 1970s.

Chapters 5, 8 and 9 of this book are directly connected with honorifics and an interest in honorifics can also be seen in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book.

3.5. Linguistic Atlas of Japan and Linguistic Atlas of Itoigawa

According to the bibliographical statistics mentioned previously (Sibata & Sanada 1982), works in sociolinguistics diminished once in 1960s, characterized as the decade of geographical studies. At that time Sibata himself shifted his interest. His section of the NLRI undertook a new national project for the "Linguistic Atlas of Japan", shortened to "LAJ", and Sibata devoted his energy to this new research.

The survey was executed under his direction in corroboration with many local dialectologists in 2400 localities all over Japan, including the Ryūkyū Islands which at that time were occupied and governed by American forces. During these days the activity of his section was so prominent that a misunderstanding arose that the NLRI was an organization solely for dialectal research.

In spite of the sociolinguistic leanings of Sibata's previous studies, social factors were not taken into consideration in the research for the "Linguistic Atlas of Japan". Unlike American dialectological research in New England, only average, ordinary informants, i.e. those called "NORM" (Non-mobile Old Rural Male) by later dialectologists, were selected from each locality. In this sense Japanese linguistic geography may be seen as following models of European research, but this may also have been because geographical variation was considered to be far greater than social variation in Japanese dialects at that time.

Another project in linguistic geography besides LAJ was conducted in the same period. This was the survey for the "Linguistic Atlas of Itoigawa" (LAI). In this study an "all-locality (hamlet) survey" was attempted in an academically important area lying on the Eastern and Western dialect borders of Japan. This refreshing plan in dialectology was realized with co-workers Willem Grootaers, Munemasa Tokugawa and Yoshio Mase. In order to ascertain the linguistic geographical reconstruction of word histories of the area, "all-inhabitant" blanket surveys were also attempted in some hamlets. By comparison of age-differences with geographical distribution, it was possible to directly observe processes of linguistic change. The fact that new dialectal expressions were still spreading in

spite of rapid standardization was also ascertained. This is a predecessor of the interest in "language change in progress" expressed in later Western sociolinguistic studies. This further stimulated studies on "new dialect" and "neo-dialect" among subsequent scholars in Japan.

Sibata has written many articles on linguistic geography which stimulated younger scholars. This is evidenced in the many linguistic atlases published in this decade, but the "Linguistic Atlas of Itoigawa" itself was not published for a long time. Data for the maps had to be reinterpreted many times, and as the technology of graphic printing were still in the process of developing, maps had to be redrawn repeatedly. The whole set of volumes was completed in 1995, on the occasion of Sibata's 77th birthday.

Chapters 4, 12, 14 of this book are the results of geographical surveys.

3.6. Dr. Sibata's surveys as a University Professor

After establishing the basic procedures for the publication of the "Linguistic Atlas of Japan" volumes, Dr. Sibata moved on to become professor at the Institute for the Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in 1964 where he carried out comparative studies on honorifics in several Asian languages. He also contributed to the making of questionnaires for surveys of various Asian and African languages, utilizing his knowledge of Turkish. At the same time he began work on the lexical description of an individual speaker in the Ryūkyū (South-western) Islands which is utilized Chapter 19.

Later in 1968 Dr. Sibata was invited back to his alma mater, Tokyo University, to the chair of linguistics vacated by Professor Shirō Hattori. There Sibata worked as a professor for 21 years (1968-1979), overseeing the research of many brilliant young scholars in various fields.

Here again Sibata conducted large surveys along with his students. Various field surveys in dialectology and sociolinguistics were executed at that time. Surveys in linguistic geography in some Ryūkyū Islands were published as atlases. He was good at the democratic management of surveys, and his students were given full management of the survey plans. He was unpretentious in his behavior, staying at the same inn (and in the same room) with the students for example. This episode typifies what is perhaps the most important factor in his attracting followers, that is, his warm human nature.

In this translation, the results of honorific usage surveys on the Noto peninsula are reported in Chapters 8 and 9. A certain village was revisited 20 years after the initial survey, and by applying a newer technique known as the "league match survey" to all the inhabitants, the correlation of language use and human relations within a community was analyzed.

After his retirement from Tokyo University at age 60, Sibata moved to the newly established Department of Linguistics of Saitama University. He guided the research of several postgraduate students there, and also conducted a linguistic geographical survey of the Saitama area, a suburban region outside of Tokyo. At the age of 65 he retired from Saitama University and devoted more than a decade of his life to the completion of the "Linguistic Atlas of Itoigawa". He also published several books on the Japanese language during this time. All in

all his contributions to sociolinguistics were the most prominent during his tenure at the National Language Research Institute. At the universities he was most effective in providing stimulus for cooperative studies with the students.

4. Characteristics of Dr. Sibata's Research

Hereafter we will discuss several characteristics of Sibata's studies. Some of these become at the same time the characteristics of Japanese sociolinguistics in general.

4.1. Inductive methodology

Sibata's methodology is mostly inductive, that is, based on the collecting of concrete data and the search for finding some general trends within it. In this sense his feet are always on the ground, on a foundation of concrete data. This stance could also be characterized as positivism. Japanese sociolinguistics in general is often said to be data-oriented and pragmatic. This characteristics can be seen in all of the papers translated for this book.

We may say in other words, he aimed at the pursuit of the "linguistics of *parole*" (or to use an expression more recent among American linguists: performance).

4.2. Using the "scientific" method

Sibata often told his students that the scientific way of thinking is necessary in linguistic research. This stance can be interpreted as a reflection of the prevailing academic atmosphere at the time. After the War, the influence of American structural linguistics was conspicuous. Linguistics was interpreted as an "exact" discipline, and the closest of the social sciences to natural science. To put it concretely he told his students that the posing of a hypothesis and its verification through testing and proof were necessary procedures in scientific study. Furthermore, he taught that results must be testable afterwards, and that other people should be able to verify the results following the same methodology. Thus an objective and not a subjective method was considered necessary. One of his ultimate purposes in research seems to be the production of a simple and elegant conclusion. According to his belief, simplicity is closest to the truth. His reliance on statistical methods seems to have come from the same belief.

These characteristics can be recognized typically in the papers which make use of statistical methods, especially in Chapters 1 through 15 on language standardization, honorific usage and language change.

4.3. Exhaustiveness

Another characteristic of Sibata's studies is their exhaustiveness. He has always tried to collect as much data as possible (effectively, of course). In this sense he can be seen as a perfectionist. Below are some examples of the exhaustiveness

of his studies.

(a) 24 hour survey of linguistic activity. One of the NLRI's standardization studies, the so-called "24 hour survey" was conducted recording all the utterances of several informants with primitive methods of hand-writing. Soon after this, technological developments helped advance the field, and tape-recorders were used as reported Sibata's paper included in Chapter 1 of this volume. In this incipient era of positivism, many new techniques of linguistic investigation were realized.

(b) The all-locality survey. In this study, one informant from every hamlet listed on official maps of an area was interviewed as part of the linguistic geographical survey of the Itoigawa area. This is reported on in Chapters 4 and 12.

(c) All-inhabitant survey. Every inhabitant in some localities in the Itoigawa area was interviewed to identify age differences in a small community. The application of this all-inhabitant survey of honorifics was afterwards labelled the "league match survey" in sociolinguistic studies on the Noto Peninsula. This is reported on in Chapter 9.

(d) The complete description of an informant's lexicon. The complete description of the vocabulary of an individual speaker was attempted on an island in the Ryūkyū island chain.

4.4. Secular linguistics

Sibata's scholastic interests may be labelled "secular linguistics" in Labov's terminology. His interest is always close to popular ideas; his way of thinking similar to that of the general public. He has thus had deep insights into the social aspects of language by taking the standpoint of ordinary speakers. His point of view is still fresh even now, even though data are sometimes derived from his introspection during the respective time periods or from familiar everyday phenomena. He has not remained in an ivory tower, either in daily life or in his scholastic practices.

This phase of the author's career can be found in Chapters 16 through 24 of this volume.

4.5. Originality

The most prominent characteristic of Sibata's studies is the originality of his ideas. He has almost always introduced fresh viewpoints into the many topics he has pursued. It is difficult to explain why this has been possible. We can only explain this as his individual gift.

In the same context, it is noteworthy that a relationship between Western linguistics and the author's work cannot be seen clearly in his sociolinguistic writings. He certainly is according to Nobayashi's classification (1984) not a member of the "imported sociolinguists", but a member of the "indigenous sociolinguists".

As for the study of linguistic geography, an important western influence on Sibata's work is found in the man of Belgian scholar and Jesuit Priest W. A. Grootaers. Personal influences from Father Grootaers seem to be great in the

adoption of linguistic geography methodology. However in the field of sociolinguistics, no single figure seems to have influenced Sibata's way of thinking.

Sibata's academic life has been full of new techniques and new incentives for linguistic study. Yet according to his own evaluation, he has not consciously attempted to create new fields of study, but has only aimed to conduct that research which seemed necessary and appropriate to the situation and to his position at the time.

4.6. The scholastic endeavor

The scholastic characteristics of Dr. Sibata have hitherto been presented. We must in conclusion surmise that these characteristics are all that are needed for the making of an excellent scholar.

However one tends to wonder how Dr. Sibata has been able to continuously devote his life to this kind of productive and original research. His own answer given at a party on the occasion of his 77th birthday was that he has worked in place of those classmates from his high school (under the old school system) who died young. According to him nearly half of them were killed in the Second World War. In this sense Dr. Sibata's works symbolically reflect, in the field of linguistics, Japan's resurgence and prosperity after the War.

Thus we can confidently position Dr. Sibata as the father of Japanese sociolinguistics. In place of the young lives which were lost in the War he subsequently raised many younger linguists. As members of this group of linguists who endeavored to produce this book, it is our hope that his accomplishments will be known systematically to the world for the first time through this translation.