Proceedings

한국사회언어학회 창립 10주년 기념

국 제 학 술 대 회

New Directions in Sociolinguistics Research
in the 21st Century

・일 시 : 2000년 10월 13일(금) 09:30 ~ 17:30

・장 소 : 고려대학교 인촌기념관 제 1회의실

SSK

한국사회언어학회

Time	Event	Moderator
9:00 ~ 9:50	Registration	Moderator
9:50 ~ 10:00	Opening Remarks	Park Youngsoon President
10:00 ~ 10:30	"Towards Critical Sociolinguistics in Korea" Hwang Juck-Ryoon (Seoul National University)	Park Jeong-woon (KUFS)
10:30 ~ 11:10	"Corpus Perspectives in Sociolinguistics" Douglas Biber (Northern Arizona University)	〃
11:10 ~ 11:30	Coffee Break	
11:30 ~ 12:10	"Market Value of Languages" Inoue Fumio (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)	Shin Hyekyung (Sogang Univ)
12:10 ~ 12:30	Photo Session: (Each and every participant is invited!)	
12:30 ~ 1:30	Lunch provided by the Society (International Hall cafeteria: 국제관 식당)	'
1:30 ~ 2:10	"On the Functions of Russian Computer Sublanguage" Nina Vinogradova (Moscow State Social University)	Kim Hyesook (Dongguk Univ)
2:10 ~ 2:50	"Sociolinguistic Studies in China" 太平武 (中央民族大學, 北京)	Chae Seo-young (Sogang Univ)
2:50 ~ 3:10	Coffee Break	
3:10 ~ 3:30	"Outdoor Advertisement Language" Lee J-H (Chung-Ang Univ)	Kim Hyesook (Konyang Univ)
3:30 ~ 3:50	"Some Suggestions on Sociolinguistics Research Methodology" No H-N (Korea Univ)	〃
3:50 ~ 4:10	"Interaction Strategies in Cyber, Computer-mediated Communicaton: Metaphor and Repetition" Song K-S (Dong-eui Univ)	〃
4:10 ~ 4:30	"The term of address 'nim' as a Computer Communication Language" Lee J-B (Taegu Univ)	〃
4:30 ~ 4:50	"Cybernyms as a Sociolect" Larry D. Chong (Kyongju Univ)	〃
4:50 ~ 5:30	Panel Discussion Moderator: Park Juneon (Soong Sil Univ) Discussants: Lee Jinsung (Inchon College), Ahn Jung-Keun (Chonbuk Univ), Kim Sul-ong (Yonsei Univ)	

Market Value of Languages

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0. Introduction

In this presentation an attempt at estimating market value of language in the case of Japanese will be discussed. This is an attempt at a new field of "linguistic economy", but emotional or pathetic facet of language will also be discussed.

It may sound rather ridiculous to discuss economical or market values of languages. Decent scholars were not supposed to talk about money. To add to this, the first thing linguistics students were taught was a dogma that all languages in the world are equal. Languages are surely equal as objects of linguistic study. However, scholars in sociolinguistics have recently begun to pay more attention to language use in the secular world, and they have noticed that there are differences among languages, and that languages are actually bought and sold in the world. The market values of languages can be calculated if some suitable means are found.

1. Means to Measure the Market Value : Languages in Japan

First, several means will be discussed which may enable us to measure the market values of languages, taking examples in the present-day Japan.

1.1. Language Industry in Japan: Broadcasting

The fact that languages have market values is shown typically by the word "language industry". The publication of language textbooks is a good key to measure the market values of languages. NHK or Japan Broadcasting Corporation has statistics for nearly 40 years on numbers of textbooks sold for language education programs in TV and radio.

Fig. 1. Sales of NHK textbooks for language programs --- English and
Fig. 2. Sales of NHK textbooks for language programs -- other languages
show the result. English textbooks sell best. The languages ranking next are European languages such as French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian, and neighboring languages such as Korean and Chinese.

The order is diachronically fluctuating because of several disturbing factors, but shows fairly good correspondence with the languages discussed later in this presentation. Thus the public media corporation, NHK, seems to be sensitive to market values of languages in Japan.

1.2. Language Industry in Japan: Language Schools

Language school is another example of language industry. Based on two catalogs of conversation schools, the numbers of schools for each language were counted.

Fig. 3. Languages Taught at Conversation Schools in Japan
shows the result of calculation. The most popular language is of course English, but it has become difficult to count the exact number of conversation schools of English because many chain schools have appeared recently. This phenomenon exemplifies that English conversation school is becoming more lucrative in Japan. The number of English conversation schools in Tokyo in the telephone directory in 1990 was 408. In this figure I also added information about Japanese language schools. As Japanese language schools are separately treated both in lists of language schools in telephone directories and official statistics, the numbers were rarely compared in the same statistics. This graph shows that Japanese language schools are now becoming popular in Japan.

The second ranking foreign languages are Chinese, French, Spanish, German,

and the third ranking languages are Italian, Korean and Russian. Generally speaking, the popular languages are European languages, and the next popular languages are Asian languages.

1.3. Language Industry in Japan: Publication

Another good index of the market value of languages in Japan was made by a student. He went to three big bookstores in Tokyo, and at the dictionary corner, wrote down the prices and pages of all the dictionaries exhibited there. He was of course questioned by clerks about the purpose of his conduct. This "priceless" data of the prices was later put in a computer, and several figures were made.

Fig. 4. Prices of Dictionaries per Page presents the main result. The vertical axis shows the numbers of the dictionaries, or titles for each language. English again is the top. The second ranking Japanese dictionaries are mostly for Japanese students, and only a few are aimed at foreign learners. Here too, main languages in Europe and languages of nearby countries are represented. These 8 languages can be considered to have high market values in Japan. Other languages are summarized as SU, because less than 2 dictionaries were found for each language.

The horizontal axis of Fig. 4 shows the prices of the dictionaries per page. English and Japanese dictionaries are cheaper. Next come the other 6 popular European and Asian languages. Students of these 8 languages are privileged because they can learn the languages cheaply. Average prices per page for the other languages are shown by SU. The other languages including Indonesian are economically discriminated against. Their dictionaries are 3 to 5 times more expensive than the 8 popular languages in average. However, even learners of these languages are privileged when compared with people who want to learn a language without any dictionary. The prices of dictionaries of for these languages should be estimated to be infinitely costly.

Of course the sizes of the dictionaries and the sizes of their written alphabets are different. Thus, we could instead count the prices per word, which would be more reliable as a cue for the market value. But it is too laborious to calculate, and also it would be impossible without actually buying all the dictionaries.

1.4. Ranking by Multilingual Signs in Japan

Ranking of languages can also be calculated by observing the actual usage of foreign languages on the street.

Table 1. Usage Patterns in Multilingual Signs shows usage patterns of multilingual signs observed in Japan. The actual numbers or "tokens" of usage are ignored here, and only "types" of combination were listed. Table 1 is based on various sources collected in these several years : posters, bills, notices, signboards, instruction manuals, explanatory notes, newspapers, etc. Of course, the most frequent combination of usage is Japanese and English. The third language was French or German in the past. Chinese has often been used recently. The numbers of appearances of languages in the columns of Table 1 renders the order of Japanese, English, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Korean. These eight languages appear repeatedly in many situations. These languages are actually languages with high market values on the street in Japan.

A mass-sale camera shop once played an advertising tape in front of the shop, using eight languages, namely Japanese, English, French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Arabic. Arabic is exceptional. At that time just after the oil crisis, the Arabic speaking customers must have been considered to be a very good customer. Later Arabic was substituted with Russian. This is an extreme case of market value of languages.

2. Factors Which Determine Market Values of Languages

2.1. Demographic Factors

The phenomena observed so far in various domains in Japan can be explained by sociolinguistic rules which would be applied universally. There are multiple factors which influence the scale of the market value of languages. Let us begin with demographic factors which are easier to quantify.

The first factor is of course the population of native speakers. Here we must ignore the notorious problem of what is one language and what is a dialect of another language. At least the ranking order of the major ten or so languages do not fluctuate so much. According to reliable statistics by Katzner 1995, the ranking order of major languages is: Chinese, English, Spanish, Hindi, Arabic,

Bengali, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese and German from the viewpoint of native speakers. However, the number of native speakers does not seem to solely explain the present situation of global language market.

The "language diffusion index" making use of ratio of the learners was advocated by a French geographer Breton (1988).

"language diffusion index" is the ratio calculated as

$$S/M$$

or number of second language speakers (foreign learners), divided by total population of mother tongue (native) speakers. Breton points out that this index seldom exceeds 1. English would be 6.7 with 2,000,000,000 learners and 300,000,000 native speakers. According to Whiteley (1969), the native speakers of Swahili is less than 1,000,000, while people using it as a second language is more than 10,000,000, making the diffusion index more than 10. The diffusion index of Japanese is 0.016 with about 2,000,000 learners and 127,000,000 of the Japanese population. Thus Japanese language is medium-sized according to this index. The global indices for Hindi, Chinese and Indonesian are small though the sizes of the population of the native speakers are big, while learners are small. This ratio or index is better suited to explain the ranking order of the market value of languages than the simple key of population of native speakers.

The demographic factor considered in a different way is the numbers of countries or states using a language as an official language. When 190 countries were members of the United Nations, the following languages were used by the following number of countries as (one of) their official languages.

English 61
French 35
Arabic 23
Spanish 22

If a diplomat wants to speak with a delegation using their native languages, English is the most effective language. If the diplomat can speak the 4 languages above, he can approach more than 100 countries using the partners' official languages. These languages are useful and profitable languages, and can be said to have high market values. The same reasoning can be applied to any international sales people and travelers.

2.2. Economical Factors

The second factor is the economical power of languages concerned. If one calculates Gross National Product of the languages, the following values are acquired as shown in Fig. 5. GNP of the Languages in the World. Full GNP of English speaking countries such as the USA, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand was added and half of the GNP of bilingual Canada was added and so on. In 1989 English value was monopolizing 1/3 of the world economical power, and other Indo-European languages occupy 1/3 in sum, making the total GNP of Indo-European languages about 2/3 of the world. As for non-Indo-European languages, the Japanese language occupy 14%, Chinese 3% and other languages have less than 1/4 in all. This order of economical power seems to correspond to popularity of languages or market values of languages, though there are some inconsistencies.

The fluctuations of the market value of the Japanese language in the past shows that the market value of languages is often influenced by the economical growth and decline of the country of the respective languages. However, the factor of economical power is not enough to explain the market value of languages.

2.3. Cultural Factors

The third factor connected with culture or information is also important to explain the high values of French and German languages for example. It can be explained by splendid cultural assets accumulated in the past several centuries by French and German speaking people. Works in literature, philosophy and science are studied and translated even centuries later. Quantity of information offered can be measured by publication as shown in Fig. 6. Ratio of Publication by Language. More recent computerized information can be conjectured by number of homepages on Internet. Again English language offers by far the largest amount of information.

Factors which may explain the global market value of languages were discussed above. Demographic, economical and cultural factors were found to be influential regarding the market value.

3. Absolute and Relative Difficulties of Languages

3.1. Absolute Difficulty

So far the discussion has been on social factors surrounding language, that is, the external, extra-linguistic factors. However, the internal linguistic factors should also be considered in order to fully explain the market value of languages in the world.

The number of students learning foreign languages is not pure reflection of the market value of languages. It is sometimes rather a reflection of the difficulty of the languages. In differentiating languages by difficulty, we should discern two kinds : one, relative difficulty and the other, absolute difficulty. *

Absolute difficulty is realized when acquiring one's native language. Linguistics students are told that there are no differences in difficulty between languages because any speaker can acquire one's native language in a different environment. The differences of difficulty can however be discerned by the ages when a native speaker child acquire one's language skill for individual linguistic phenomena. People are aware of this kind of difficulty and children are often exempt from mistakes or misuses of certain aspects of language until at a certain age level.

Absolute difficulty is basically a function of structural complexity of the language. Studies of language acquisition will make the quantitative comparison possible in the future.

To take phonetics for example, the Japanese language has only five vowels and about 12 consonants, which is simpler than most European languages. Japanese children can acquire the pronunciation at the age of 5 or 6. But a child brought up with Arabic acquires the most difficult pronunciation of the glottal sound very late in his or her childhood. Adults who have mastered Arabic do not blame the children for not being able to pronounce the difficult consonant properly.

A similar argument is possible in grammar. Languages with simpler grammatical rules are easy to learn even for native speakers.

Degrees of difficulty can also be pointed out in lexical items. The lexicon is more simple and systematic if lexical items are correlated in form and in content, thus the meaning being transparent. Languages which express things with combination of independent words are easier to use. Languages with many

synonyms having minute nuances (like Japanese, with words of Japanese, Chinese and European origin coexisting) is more difficult than languages which do not have many synonyms.

Sociolinguistic rules should also be considered. The Japanese honorific system of showing respect is grammatically and sociolinguistically complicated. Japanese people are aware of the difficulty, and children and foreigners are permitted even if they talk without honorifics.

The writing system is an independent problem which also regulates the difficulty of languages. The Japanese writing system is so complicated and difficult that even the intellectual adult cannot write sentences without sometimes using a dictionary.

The Japanese language is considered medium on the absolute difficulty scale, when honorifics and the writing system are ignored. As children and foreigners are sometimes exempt from correct usage of language, the Japanese language can be said to be easy for beginners, but for native speakers it is a difficult language.

In other words, languages which can be utilized with less "initial investment" is absolutely easy. This kind of language can be spoken with a shorter period of learning; a small child can acquire language skill quite early. However, objective quantitative comparison of the absolute difficulty of languages is still imperfect.

3.2. Relative Difficulty and Language Education

In contrast to the absolute difficulty discussed above, concrete data on relative difficulty of languages have been made public recently. Relative difficulty is important for language education, and experiences of teachers for years can be utilized for comparison.

Table 2. Relative Difficulty of Languages for American and Japanese Learners shows the relative difficulty of languages for American and Japanese learners.

This is a table of difficulty combining two data, one published by the Department of States of the USA and the other by a language school in Tokyo. The vertical lines show degrees of difficulty for Japanese speakers, horizontal columns degrees for English speakers. In the upper left-hand side cell we find Swahili, a lingua franca in African countries for commercial interchange, which is considered easy for both learners. In the lower right-hand side cell we find

Arabic, with colloquial and literary diglossic situation and consonant-representing writing system, which is difficult for both learners. In general English and Japanese learners seem to show partly reverse correlation. The Indo-European languages which are marked by # in Table 2 are distributed in the lower left-hand side, showing that these languages are generally easy for the American while difficult for the Japanese. In the upper right-hand side are Asian languages like Korean, Chinese and Turkish showing that they are easier for Japanese learners. It is especially noteworthy here that Korean is easiest for the Japanese while it is one of the most difficult languages for English speakers. It is well known that Korean is similar to Japanese in grammatical structure (word order, above all) and lexical items and so on.

The results above clearly show that there definitely is relative difficulty of languages independent of absolute difficulty. These phenomena reconfirm the theoretical surmise that the relative difficulty is governed by two factors: absolute difficulty of the target language and its similarities with the first language. The latter factor is different for respective languages, but the former factor is universal world-wide.

A proverb properly expresses that "time is money". When students learn different languages, time consumed to achieve a certain degree of ability can be converted into money. For both Japanese and Korean people, these two languages are the most economical language because it can be acquired in a shorter period.

4. Emotional Value of Languages

So far, the discussions have been around economical factors in languages which are connected with money. But we should not forget that the language has another important characteristic connected to a psychological factor. Hereafter the pathetic or emotional value of languages will be considered. Language values can be subdivided into (1) intellectual and (2) emotional factors. The market values of languages thus far discussed have been only one sided. It is only a reflection of the intellectual factor. The emotional factors of languages should not be ignored. The emotional factors can again be subdivided into absolute and relative emotional factors.

An absolute emotional factor is something similar to patriotic or parochial ideas. All human beings seem to have a special love for their own native

languages. For this reason, the right of using one's native language should be observed.

In the meantime, the relative emotional value of language is in inverse correlation to intellectual factors, that is, it works in the opposite direction of the intellectual market value of language. If a foreigner speaks a major, highly valued language in broken style, with mistakes, he will not be praised. But if a foreigner speaks a language which is considered low in market value, his language ability will be praised even if he speaks it with mistakes. Speaking a language which is spoken in small areas by a small number of speakers raises a feeling of solidarity and sympathy, or a kind of group consciousness to native speakers. A foreigner and a native speaker can have intimate feelings by speaking a language with a low market value. This relationship can be typically observed in Asian and African countries. This relationship can also be observed in historical changes of the Japanese language. When there were only a few foreigners who spoke Japanese in prewar and postwar Japan, the Japanese people almost always praised the language ability of the foreigners, even though their Japanese was horrible and halting. But as the numbers of foreigners speaking the Japanese language increased recently, Japanese people are becoming accustomed to foreigners' Japanese, and Japanese people nowadays do not praise the language ability of foreigners so much. This is a reflection of the change of the market value of Japanese. When the market value of Japanese was low, the relative emotional value was high. When the market value of Japanese became high, the relative emotional value became low.

5. Towards Multilingual World in the Future

Though one may feel reluctant to admit it, there exist inequalities among languages in the world, as has been discussed so far. We should realize that the market value of languages exists, and that the market principles work discriminatingly. It must be pointed out that the existence of differentiated market values of languages is unreasonable, leading to inequalities of basic human rights. From the standpoint of humanity, there should not be differences in the market value of languages. It is discriminating that one person is privileged because one can discuss or travel around the world in one's mother tongue, and another person having the inconvenience of having to learn a foreign language in order to get education, to pursue academic question and to

travel abroad.

However, if all human beings speak two languages, things would be different. If everybody could use a native language and another foreign language, we could communicate more easily. And then, through language education for those who need it, this discriminatory situation can be avoided.

As the language market is in principle free economy, demand and supply of language learners will balance in the long run. Most of the leaners unconsciously select a language with higher market value. But there are also learners who pay more attention to the pathetic or emotional value of language. Business people agree that use of native language of the respective country is profitable for business contract and also for personal relations. We can be optimistic for the future of language learning, as language education will surely prosper in the future.

Knowing a foreign language widens learners' world view. It also enlarges equality of basic human rights. Language education is often controlled by discriminatory market economy. However, it is also a sublime activity aiming at equal treatment of human beings.

In conclusion, there are differential scales among the world languages, and economical principles seem to prevail among them. Japanese language presents a typical case of shift of the market value in the global language market. Still we should not overlook the emotional or pathetic side of language which is important for communication between human beings.

Fig. 1. Sales of NHK textbooks for language programs
--- English

Fig. 2. Sales of NHK textbooks for language programs
--- other Languages

Fig. 3. Languages Taught at Conversation Schools in Japan

Fig. 4. Prices of Dictionaries per Page

Table 1. Usage Patterns in Multilingual Signs

Fig. 5. GNP of the Languages in the World

Fig. 6. Ratio of Publication by Languages

Table 2. Relative Difficulty of Languages
        for American and Japanese Learners

Fig. 1. Sales of NHK textbooks for language programs
--- English

単位：万部

Fig. 2. Sales of NHK textbooks for language programs
--- other Languages

単位：万部

Chinese
Italian
French
Spanish
German
Korean
Russian

フランス語
ドイツ語
中国語
ロシア語
スペイン語
ハングル講座
イタリア語
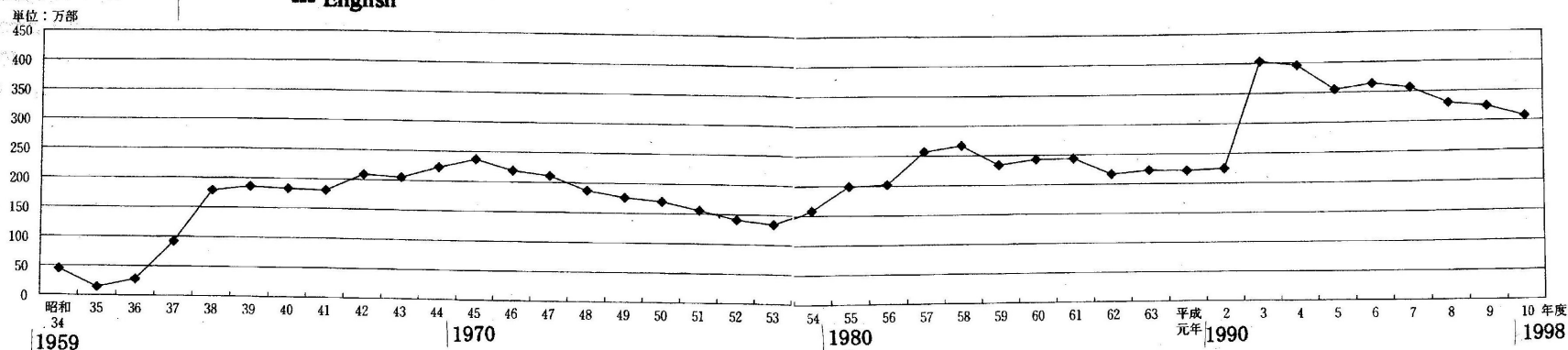
外国語学校で教えられる言語
ケイコとマナブ1995　イカロスmook1999
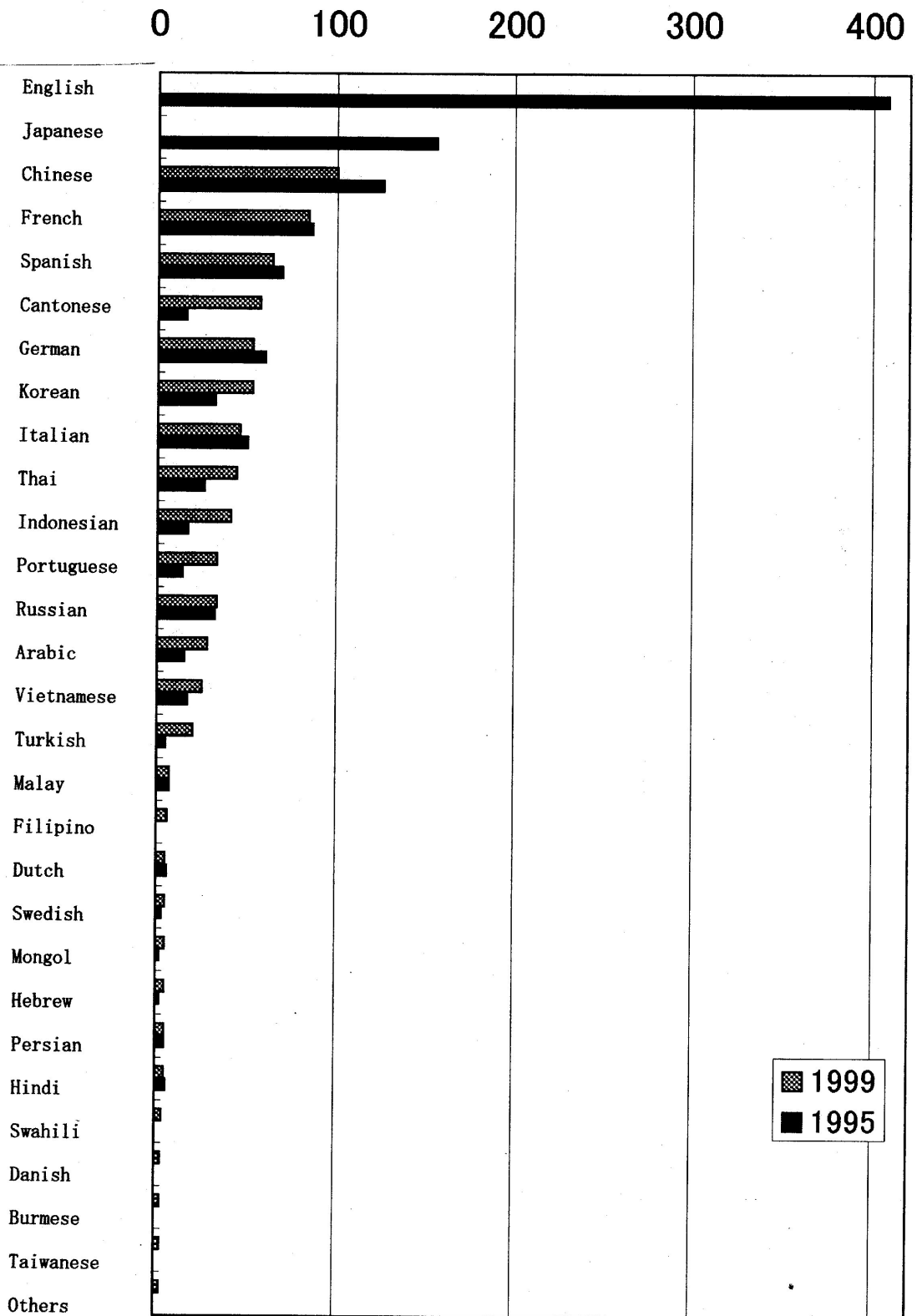
Fig. 3. Languages Taught at Conversation Schools in Japan

LANGUAGE MARKET OF DICTIONARIES
OOKAWA REPORT 1994.10

Scatter plot with vertical axis labeled TITLES (0 to 70) and horizontal axis labeled PRICE PAGE (0 to 20).

Data points:
- E at approximately (2, 65)
- J at approximately (2, 44)
- SU at approximately (22, 24)
- D at approximately (2.5, 16)
- F at approximately (4, 16)
- C at approximately (4.5, 13)
- K at approximately (2.5, 9)
- SR at approximately (3.5, 9)
- In at approximately (15, 5)
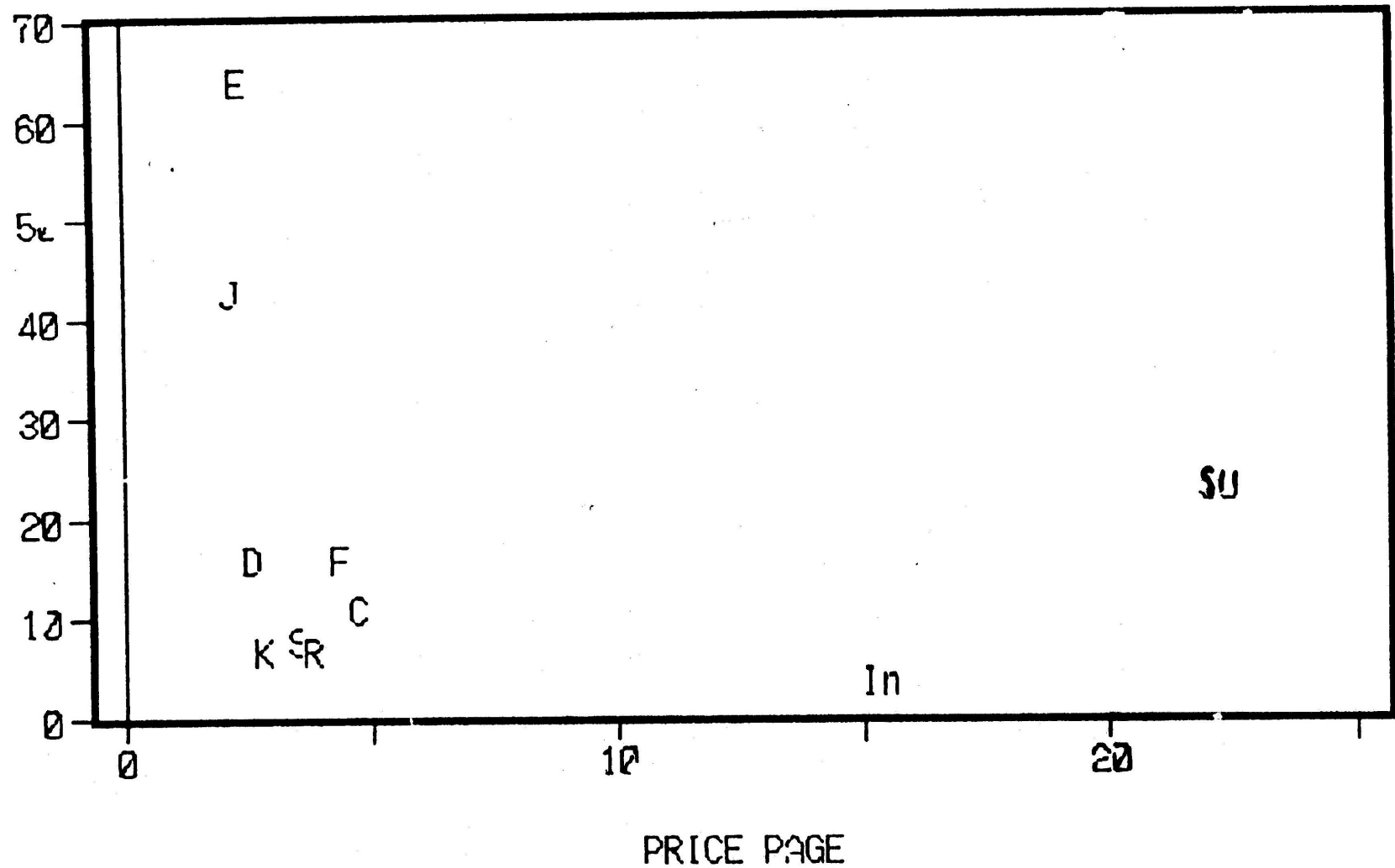
Table 1　Usage Patterns in Multilingual Signs in Japan　　　　2000.10.11

	orde	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	合計	
English	18	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1		1			21	English
Japanese	21				1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	21	Japanese
Chinese	17	1	1	1	1		1		1	1		1	1		1	1		1	1	1	1							15	Chinese
Korean	13	1		1	1		1		1	1		1		1		1		1		1								11	Korean
French	14	1	1		1		1		1	1	1		1		1		1						1					11	French
Portuguese	15			1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1		1		1										11	Portugue
Spanish	10	1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	1	1														10	Spanish
German	11	1	1		1		1		1	1	1				1		1											9	German
Thai	20						1					1		1							1	1			1			6	Thai
Persian	12			1			1												1									3	Persian
Filipino	16						1					1		1														3	Filipino
Russian	3	1							1																			2	Russian
Arabic	6				1		1																					2	Arabic
Taiwanese	19											1		1														2	Taiwanes
Italian	1	1																										1	Italian
Dutch	2		1																									1	Dutch
Bengali	4				1																							1	Bengali
Urdu	5				1																							1	Urdu
Indonesian	7						1																					1	Indonesia
Vietnamese	8						1																					1	Vietname
Burmese	9						1																					1	Burmese
Ainu	22																										1	1	Ainu

Table 1. Usage Patterns in Multilingual Signs

Fig. 3 GNP of the Languages in the World
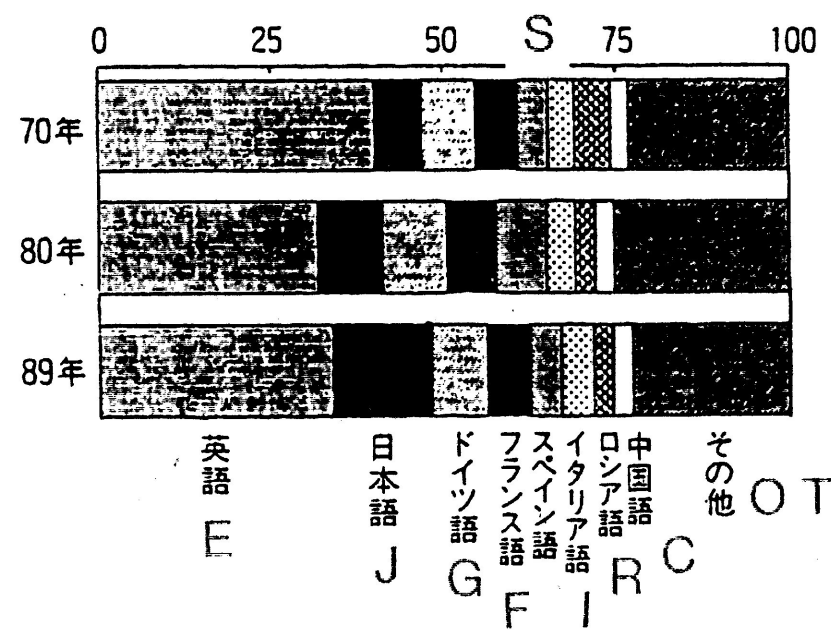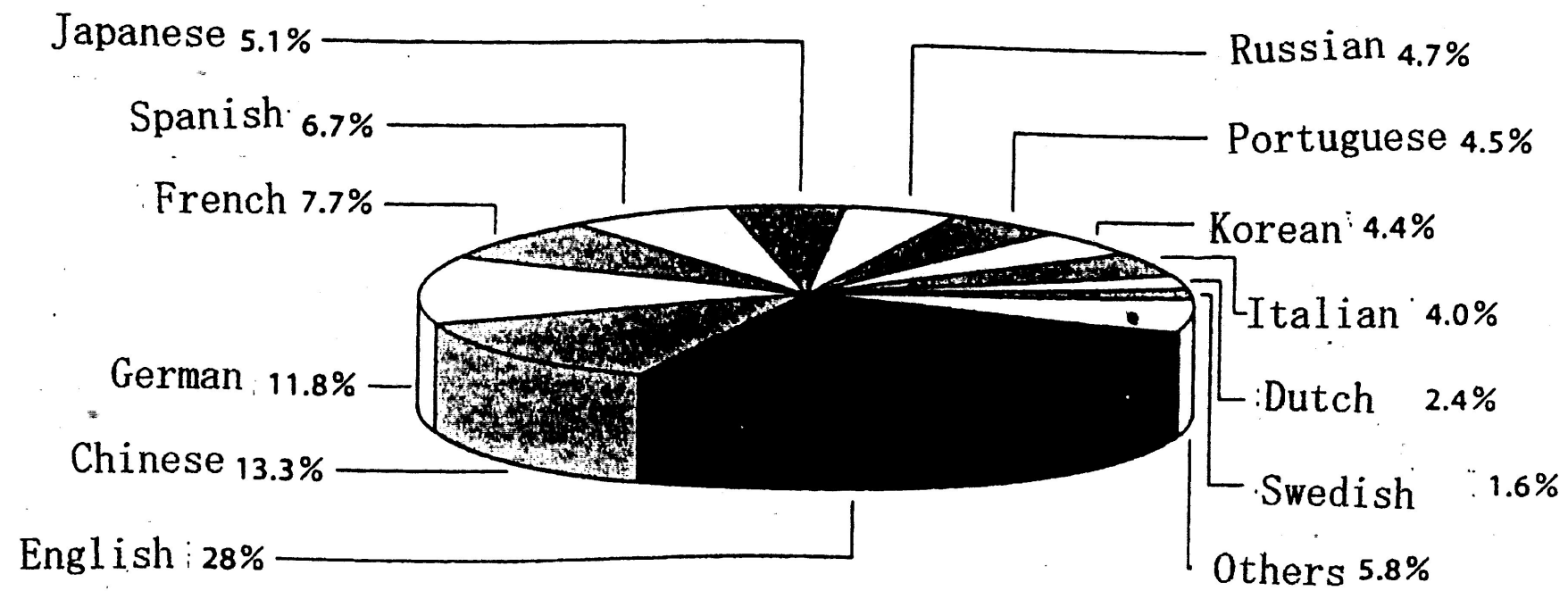
0　25　50　S　75　100

70年
80年
89年

英語
E

日本語 J

ドイツ語 G

フランス語 F

スペイン語 I
イタリア語

ロシア語 R
中国語 C

その他 O T

Fig. 4 Ratio of Publication by Languages

Japanese 5.1%

Spanish 6.7%

French 7.7%

German 11.8%

Chinese 13.3%

English 28%

Russian 4.7%

Portuguese 4.5%

Korean 4.4%

Italian 4.0%

Dutch 2.4%

Swedish 1.6%

Others 5.8%

1

Table 2. RELATIVE DIFFICULTY OF LANGUAGES FOR AMERICAN AND JAPANESE LEARNERS

Difficulty for Japanese Learners	Difficulty for American Learners				
	Group 1 Easy	Group 2 Medium	Group 3 Difficult	Gr4 most Diffclt	
Group 1 Easy	Swhl	Indn Malay	Turk	Kore	5
Group 2 Medium	#Span #Ital #Port		Viet	Chin	5
Group 3 Difficult	#Fren #Germ	#Greek	#Czch Thai Hungr		6
Group 4 Most Difficult		#Hind #Urdu	#Russ	Arab (#Engl) (Japn)	5
SUM	6	5	6	4	21

\# Indo-European languages