Constructing "development" A historical discourse analysis of newspapers regarding the creation of terminology and public discourse on Autism and Hattatsu Shogai in Japan

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In this dissertation, Yasushi Miyazaki analyzes the linguistic influence of public policies on the public discourse about Autism and Hattatsu Shogai by studying usage patterns in Japanese newspapers. For some of these corpora, over a century of data was examined; however, this study focuses on the past two decades of newspaper data in order to understand the important language change which has occurred during this period. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and text mining are employed to gain the diachronic linguistic insights which Miyazaki uses to enrich our understanding of how people talk about and understand disability, which he explains from the perspective of Disability Studies. Within this context, this dissertation succeeds in its general aim to examine the interaction of discourse, public opinion, and public policy.

Chapter 1 provides the background of “Hattatsu Shogai” research. The changing definitions for this term, the perspectives of medicine and sociology, and the changes of government statutes and policies are all introduced. There is an excellent discussion of the influence of US policy on Japanese policy, and Miyazaki argues that Hattatsu Shogai should properly be conceptualized as a social, rather than medical, problem.

Chapter 2 covers the theoretical frameworks used and their associated methodologies. In addition to traditional religious and medical models of disability, the newer social models of disability are very well reviewed. In fact, Table 2.2, which reviews and masterfully characterizes several models identified within Disability Studies, is itself an admirable encapsulation of knowledge and a valuable contribution to scholarship.

Chapter 3 identifies the diachronic focus of this study. Figure 3.1 represents Miyazaki’s earlier identification of the language change that occurred during 1999-2007, and he describes the analytical
methods which can be used to better understand this change. The use of network analysis and cluster analysis shows clearly that the ideological differences of the various newspapers had no effect on the observation of this language change. It is clearly shown that the concept of 支援 “support” is a key element in the public discourse about Hattatsu Shogai.

Miyazaki’s qualitative analysis of negation in Chapter 4 is indeed masterful. Quantitative analyses corpora are not always sufficient to identify subtle changes in usage, and this discussion of negation is an excellent illustration of this problem. Also in Chapter 4 is a small, but suggestive, “pilot” analysis within the framework of the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), where the topoi of Responsibility and Humanitarianism are profitably discussed.

Chapter 5 provides the answers to this dissertation’s initiating research questions:
(1) How does the Japanese society and politics affect the policy about Hattatsu Shogai throughout the newspaper?
(2) What kind of ideology is behind the specific language expression about Hattatsu Shogai?
(3) What kind of topics regarding Hattatsu Shogai are frequently mentioned in print media?
(4) How has the frequency of mention of the subject of Hattatsu Shogai changed?
(5) How has the definition of Hattatsu Shogai changed over recent decades?
(6) What are the agents of changes?

Chapter 6 offers some recommendations for public policy. First among these is the suggestion that the social-model insights of Disability Studies scholars be explained to the general public, especially to the professionals who are tasked with the public’s interaction with the disabled.

In conclusion, this dissertation reports two major findings. First, newspaper texts do not represent two separate conflicting models of disability: the medical model and the social model. In other words, these two models are both represented in the reports of the characteristics, practices, and policies regarding Hattatsu Shogai. Second, the use of semantic negation has both a medical model function for criticizing people’s ability and a social model function for criticizing the social barriers against persons with disabilities. However, beyond these, this dissertation is noteworthy for its successful application of three analytic perspectives: text mining, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Disability Studies. Overall, this shows the feasibility of applying theoretical models of disability for linguistic analyses. We can further hypothesize that the consequences of the global transition of disability policy following the United Nation’s Convention of Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, such as the globalization of the conceptualization of disability in Japan and the progress of medical education and special education, can be better analyzed and understood in the manner illustrated by this dissertation.

論文審査結果の要旨

On Saturday, 21 January, Yasushi Miyazaki made a public presentation of his doctoral dissertation research. The hour-long talk was given in Japanese, accompanied by a well-organized slide presentation.
Afterwards, Miyazaki invited questions in either Japanese or English, and there were questions in both languages from the enthusiastic audience. Overall, this was an informative, engaging, and memorable talk, which could have easily succeeded as a plenary talk for a specialized conference on sociolinguistics or disability studies.

The academic contents of this public presentation mirror that of his dissertation, which is written in English, and I have summarized those elsewhere. Therefore, my comments here will focus on two things: (1) a review of the public presentation; and (2) the mention of some key comments made by his doctoral dissertation committee members during the closed-door defense which followed the public presentation.

As a sociolinguistic effort, Miyazaki succeeded in demonstrating that the clear change in the usage of the vocabulary item “hattatsu shogai” is correlated with Japan’s 2005 “Hattatsu shōgaisha shienhō” statute and the changes in the public discourse immediately before and after that legislation. Moreover, he showed that this change was reflected across the ideological spectrum of Japanese newspapers, thus suggesting that this was a true change of general Japanese language usage. Miyazaki showed how public debate and legislation brought the term “hattatsu shogai” into more general usage, and also how it changed the meaning of “hattatsu shogai” in this process.

Apart from the members of the dissertation committee, perhaps no one in Miyazaki’ s audience had a sufficient understanding of either linguistics or disability studies to fully appreciate the importance of his research and this finding. In addition to myself, a linguist with some knowledge of disability studies, his committee included Professor Matsuoka, an expert on disability studies, and Professor Sawyer, another expert on linguistics. All three of us agreed that Miyazaki was overly modest, both during his public presentation and in the initial draft of his dissertation, because he failed to highlight this finding. We instructed Miyazaki to revise his written dissertation to address this shortcoming.

Another contribution to knowledge which was similarly understated was Miyazaki’s combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques to yield diachronic linguistic insights. The public presentation was an excellent tutorial about the variation and changes in the ways that people talk about disability. Without his depth of knowledge in disability studies, Miyazaki would have been unable to recognize the range and subtlety of this semantic variation in the public discourse. Fortunately, he could not only recognize it, but his public presentation proved that he could teach this to a general audience.

Miyazaki’s explication of the competing models of disability was again another point on which he was overly modest, and we again criticized him for this modesty. The table he created to show the distribution of features in models of disability is by no means a trivial achievement. He could easily have spent an additional hour lecturing on just this table. However, given the diachronic sociolinguistic focus of his study, his presentation of his obviously profound research in this area was understandably abbreviated.

The diachronic focus of this study was the explosion of newspaper writing about “hattatsu shogai” that occurred during 1999-2007, and Miyazaki described some analytical methods which can be used to
better understand this change. Once again, his use of network analysis and cluster analysis was a novel contribution to this area of linguistic analysis. Using these methods, he could show that the ideological differences of the various newspapers had no effect on the observation of this language change. He also clearly showed that the concept of 支援 “support” is a key element in the public discourse about hattatsu shogai.

We know that the quantitative analyses of corpora are not always sufficient to identify subtle changes in usage, and Miyazaki’s discussion of negation is an excellent illustration of this problem. Similarly, his analysis of two editorials using the Discourse-Historical Approach profitably discussed the topoi of Responsibility and Humanitarianism.

Miyazaki’s research does not fit any extant paradigm. It is not a typical quantitative analysis of a sociolinguistic change. It is not an analysis of disability policy. It is not a history of conceptual development. Miyazaki is trying to apply analytical techniques from linguistics to the public discourse on disability in order to understand the effects of such discourse on public policy and vice versa. Within his new paradigm, he reports two major findings. First, newspaper texts do not represent two separate conflicting models of disability: the medical model and the social model. In other words, these two general models are both represented in the reports of the characteristics, practices, and policies regarding hattatsu shogai. Second, the use of semantic negation has both a medical model function for criticizing people’s ability and a social model function for criticizing the social barriers against persons with disabilities. However, beyond these findings, Miyazaki’s work is noteworthy for its successful application of three very different analytic perspectives (text mining, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Disability Studies), and he has shown the feasibility of using theoretical models of disability in linguistic analyses.

On 21 January, the audience learned a lot about the meaning of “hattatsu shogai” and about models of disability, but Miyazaki’s real contribution to knowledge will not be fully appreciated until he and others apply his new analytic approach to other emerging and developing concepts of public discourse and policy formation, and until the insights gleaned from such studies begin to inform the education and professional practices of those working with disability.