

Nakajima, Fumio (1904-1999)

Terasawa, Jun

Professor, University of Tokyo

Tanabe, Harumi

Professor, Seikei University

Professor Fumio Nakajima's field of study centered on English linguistics, covering English grammar, semantics, the history of the English language, etymology, English language education as well as close reading of various literary works from Old English to Modern English. This versatility of his is a reflection of philological attitude in his day in which literature, linguistics and related disciplines were all inseparable. He was particularly excellent in organizing projects such as publishing *Eigogaku Raiburari* [English Linguistics Library], a series of booklets introducing overseas English linguistics studies into Japan, which helped to train numerous English linguists in Japan. He demonstrated his ability as administrator, acting as dean and president on campus, and president of academic societies outside campus. He indeed proved himself to be an almighty Renaissance figure over a wide range.

#### Biography

Born in Nihombashi, Tokyo in 1904, Nakajima entered the Tokyo Prefectural First Junior High School in 1917. In his third grade he had a chance to have English lessons from Itsuki Hosoe, who later became an eminent English grammarian. In 1921–24 he studied at Tokyo Metropolitan First Senior High School. Strongly influenced by Professor Sanki Ichikawa's *Eibunpo Kenkyu* [The Study of English Grammar], Itsuki Hosoe's *Eibunpo Hanron* [The Universal Grammar of English], the works of Sweet, Jespersen and Brugmann, he had already decided to pursue English linguistics. In 1924, he entered the Imperial University of Tokyo (later the University of Tokyo), majoring in English linguistics in the Department of English, the Faculty of Literature, and enjoyed attending the classes of Professors Sanki Ichikawa, Torajiro Sawamura and Takeshi Saito. The title of his graduation thesis was 'The Structure of English'.

After the graduation, Nakajima became a lecturer at Keijo Imperial University, Korea in 1928, where he taught for 17 years as associate professor from 1931 and as professor

from 1939. From 1929 to 1931, he was granted overseas academic leave and while staying mainly in London visited various historic sites in Europe and the USA. In London, he attended R. W. Chambers' class of Old English and A. H. Smith's Middle English class. Coming back to Japan after the World War II, he was appointed as professor in the Department of English, the Imperial University of Tokyo, in 1947 and retired in 1965. Then he moved to Tsuda College (currently Tsuda University), joining the Department of English as professor and acted as president in 1973-80 until his retirement.

Professor Nakajima performed prominent roles outside the universities. First, he was appointed to be president of Nihon Eibun Gakkai (Japan Society of English Literature) in 1952–74. In 1960 he worked as Secretary of the Advisory Committee for the Training of Teachers of Foreign Languages and chaired the Working Committee, funded by the Ford Foundation, the task of which was to dispatch Japanese university teachers to the University of Michigan for promoting studies in linguistics and English language education in Japan. He stayed in the USA half a year for preparation of this project. Next year, in 1961, the Shakespeare Society of Japan was reorganized with Professor Nakajima elected as the first president. His presidency continued until 1975. He was enthusiastic in the field of English language education and in 1961 he took up a position as president of the Language Laboratory Association (currently the Japan Association for Language Education and Technology) until 1974. To culminate his scholarly achievements, he was admitted to be a member of Nihon Gakushi-in (the Japan Academy) in 1974 and held the membership until his passing in 1999.

#### Academic Publications

Professor Nakajima's publications are numerous, their wide scope extending from English linguistics and literature to English lexicography, teaching English as a foreign language and Japanese linguistics. In consideration of the nature of this essay, however, we would like to focus on his contributions to the history of the English language.

In 1951, Professor Nakajima published *Eigohattatsushi* [A Historical Development of

the English Language] with Iwanami Shoten. Following the introductory chapter ('A History of English and its Background'), Chapter 2 lucidly describes the growth of the vocabulary with reference to the social history of England. Chapter 3 turns to phonological change in English. One of the consequences of sound change is the weakening and loss of inflectional endings, which is the topic pursued in Chapter 4. As the loss of inflection results in the introduction of other grammatical means (e.g. fixed word order compensating for the loss of case and agreement endings), the final chapter naturally deals with the syntactic developments in English.

Prior to Professor Nakajima's work, there were four books on the history of English published in Japan, three of which happen to bear the same title of *Eigohattatsushi*: Ujiaki Nagai (1900), Motoi Kurihara (1910), Kenji Kaneko (1932), and Sanki Ichikawa (1940).<sup>1</sup> While these four works devote different chapters to the linguistic characteristics of Old English, Middle English and Modern English, Professor Nakajima's *Eigohattatsushi* gives a continuous account of the phonological, morphological and syntactic developments from Old English through Modern English. This format of presentation enables us to easily follow the linguistic developments in the course of the history of English. Another important feature of Professor Nakajima's book is its treatment of syntactic change. Except for Ichikawa (1940), the term *togoho* 'syntax' rarely appears in the earlier works on the history of English published in Japan. In light of the fact that in 1950s few studies of English historical linguistics are concerned with syntax, the inclusion of a chapter on syntax showed Professor Nakajima's prescience. We hasten to add that there is no mention of syntax in Karl Brunner's *Die englische Sprache: Ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung* (1st ed. 1950–51), which was published in almost the same year as Professor Nakajima's book.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ujiaki Nagai, *Eigohattatsushi*. Kyoto: Bunkodo-shobo, 1900; Motoi Kurihara, *Eigohattatsushi*. Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1910; Kenji Kaneko, *Eigohattatsushi*. Tokyo: Kenbunsha, 1932; Sanki Ichikawa, *Eigoshi Gaisetsu*. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1940.

In 1979, Professor Nakajima fully revised his *Eigohattatsushi*. While the first edition devotes less than a page to American English and makes no mention of World Englishes, the revised edition appropriately responds to a new phase in the history of English by adding subchapters entitled ‘The Establishment of American English’ and ‘Englishes in the World’. While he admits some weaknesses of English as an international language (e.g. discrepancies between spelling and pronunciation), Professor Nakajima makes a pertinent remark that the cosmopolitan nature of vocabulary, abundance of monosyllabic words and simplified inflection make the English language suitable for a lingua franca.

Another important contribution by Professor Nakajima to the historical study of English is the publication of a concise dictionary of etymology. *Eigogogenjiten* [Kenkyusha’s Little Dictionary of English Etymology] (1962), co-edited with Yoshio Terasawa (one of Nakajima’s pupils), is the first etymological dictionary published in Japan. Although the number of words listed is limited (c. 2000 words), the etymological description in each entry is precise and of high academic standard. In addition, if a (borrowed) word is first attested in and after Middle English, this dictionary provides a useful list of Old English words to denote the same or similar meaning, so that we can see at first glance lexical change for a particular semantic field in the history of English. This unique feature, which does not seem to be found in etymological dictionaries published abroad, is taken over to the full-fledged dictionary of etymology edited by Yoshio Terasawa (*Eigogogenjiten*, 1997).

Finally, the following two works by Professor Nakajima are relevant to the history of the English language: *Eigo: Bunpo to Kansho* [English: Grammar and Appreciation] (1951) and *Kindaieigo to sono Buntai* [Modern English and its Stylistic Features] (1953). The former contains chapters or sections entitled ‘Spelling and Pronunciation in English’, ‘Bible and English’, and ‘Shakespeare and English’. In the latter, Nakajima

traces a history of English prose style by providing detailed notes to excerpts from thirty-one authors (from Sir Thomas Malory to Jane Austen) and the Authorized Version.

#### Anecdotes

One of his students in the graduate school of the University of Tokyo, recalled that Professor Nakajima was ‘a tall, handsome man, looking nice in his grey suit, and spoke in his lively native Tokyo accent’.<sup>2</sup> In class, he invited his students to the world of academia, through reading Chaucer, Thomas More and delivering a course on the history of the English language. At home, according to his wife Chizu, he was ‘so clumsy as to be unable to hammer a nail properly’<sup>3</sup> but extremely gentle towards her, and her perfect support made it possible for him to indulge himself entirely in his studies.

After having moved to Tsuda College, every year from 1968 to 1977 he enjoyed travelling extensively in Europe and North America with his wife and some members of Tsuda College Alumnae Association, welcomed by the numerous linguists he had already known. His entire life was devoted to the study of English linguistics and the promotion of English language education during the turbulent period before and after World War II.

(The account of his biography is based on his brief biography in *Nakajima Fumio Kyoju Kanrekikinenronbunshu* [Festschrift for Professor Fumio Nakajima on his Sixtieth Birthday], Kenkyusha Shuppan, 1965.)

---

<sup>2</sup> Michiko Hoshino, ‘Tsuda-no-Omoide (Memoir from Tsuda), Nakajima Fumio-sensei to Chizu-fujin (Professor Fumio Nakajima and his Wife Chizu)’, *Tsuda Tayori (Letter from Tsuda)*, Vol. 64, No. 11, pp. 34-35, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Chizu Nakajima, ‘Shosai-Meguri, Mattaku Mugai (Visit to a Study, Totally Harmless)’, *Kenkyusha Geppo (Kenkyusha Monthly Report)*, Dec. 1. 1954.