

The language standardization is a process in which a speech community adopts one linguistic variety for the purposes of public and official communication. Over time, it begins to dominate the media, arts and education and is regarded as the most correct and neutral form, leading to the marginalization of non-standard varieties such as dialects and sociolects. Currently, this process has already taken place in most countries, although its exact course differed depending on historical conditions. However, to this day, it has a significant impact on the way dialects are perceived by members of communities.

Due to geographical and historical factors, a great linguistic and dialectal diversity existed in Japan until the end of the 19th century. The rapid modernization at the beginning of the 20th century gave rise to a need to create a common standard language that was based on the Tokyo language variety. Efforts to promote the new standardized Japanese language were accompanied by aggressive actions against local varieties. Nevertheless, they survived and still remain an essential part of Japanese culture. However, because of the changes related to urbanization and globalization, they are now in danger of complete extinction. In this situation, it becomes necessary to take measures to protect them, which also involves establishing the attitude of Japanese society towards dialects.

The aim of this project is to investigate these beliefs by analyzing dialect representations in contemporary Japanese literature. Contrary to the previous research, conducted mainly through questionnaires and interviews which impose a creators' worldview on the participants, treating literary texts as a record of conscious or unconscious beliefs about non-standard language will help to understand the perception of dialects in Japan. For this purpose, two Japanese dialects of different linguistic prestige were selected: the Kansai dialect, spoken in the vicinity of Kyoto and Osaka, and the Tōhoku dialect, originating in the north-eastern part of the island of Honshu.

At the first stage of the project, the general linguistic situation in Japan will be investigated, with a particular emphasis on their history and the current political, social and cultural significance of the chosen varieties. At the second stage, Japanese prose texts written after 1989, in which one of the dialects appears, will be collected and analyzed using methods from linguistics and literary studies. The analysis will focus on the beliefs about dialects and their users expressed in the texts, both explicit and hidden in the way they are presented. The second stage will also include an analysis of the elements accompanying the texts, such as footnotes, afterword or author's comments in order to establish factors that may affect the production and interpretation of the works. This stage will end with a summary of the features characteristic of the representations of a particular dialect. At the third stage, the literary images of the Kansai and Tōhoku dialects will be compared in order to find similarities and differences, which will also be accompanied by a reflection on their possible causes. Finally, based on the knowledge of the linguistic situation in Japan and the results of the research, conclusions about the general perception of dialects in that country will be drawn.