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DIALECTOLOGY IN THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Takuichiro Onishi

National Institute for Japanese Language

takoni@kokken.go.jp

Abstract

The National Institute for Japanese Language has researched Japanese dialects in wide field of dialectology and taken the lead in Japanese dialectology for the past 60 years all through the history of the institute. The fields studied by the institute include descriptive linguistics, sociolinguistics, geolinguistics and making database of conversations. Large area and quantity to survey are characteristic of the dialectological studies in the institute. Collaborating with many dialectologists is another characteristic of the studies. It is sure that dialectology in the institute had reaped rich harvests with the characteristics above, but the procedure to study should be reviewed, since it had been lacking in hypothesizing. Ordinary scientific procedure to study with hypothesis and verification is required for the future dialectological study of the institute. On this way to study, dialectology in the institute and in Japan will be richer as an individual scientific field.

Key words

The National Institute for Japanese Language, descriptive study, standardization, linguistic atlas, hypothesis.

1. Introduction

2008 was the 60th anniversary year of the National Institute for Japanese Language. Since the beginning time of the institute, dialectology of Japanese had been treated as an

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important field to study, and an individual section for dialectology was established in the institute. This paper introduces the short history of dialectology in this institute. It is described as what and how Japanese dialects had been studied in the institute.

2. Descriptive studies

First of all, the dialectological section aimed to research all of the dialects of Japanese. For this purpose, the section made descriptive studies all over the Japanese dialects and edited a detailed dictionary of a particular dialect.

2.1. Documentation

There had been so many dialectologists in Japan. They had researched and made papers for the dialect of each area where they were living. The institute asked them to study and describe reports about each dialect from 1950 in official ways, and they were called as *chihoo kenkyuuin* 'local researchers'. Each local researcher was selected for each prefecture. The number of local researches was around 50.

The local researchers made annual reports and they submitted them to the institute. All the reports are kept in the library of the institute still now.

After receiving the reports, the institute asked some of the researches to describe dialects in a same format. The format included the fields to study which were phonology, morphology and some special expressions of each dialect. At the same time, researchers in the institute went to local areas to do fieldworks by themselves and they made descriptive studies for the dialects.

The descriptions of the dialects were edited in one documentation report book

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including 15 dialects, which is *nihon hoogenno kizyutsuteki kenkyuu* 'Descriptive Studies of Japanese Dialects' as in figure 1. The style to describe dialect had been kept and influenced other series of dialectological descriptions (Sato 2008).



Figure 1. Descriptive Studies of Japanese Dialects

2.2. Dictionary

There are many islands in southwestern area of Japan. These islands are called as Ryuukyuu islands, and Ryuukyuu language is used there. Ryuukyuu language and main land Japanese are cousins. Until 150 years ago Ryuukyuu had been independent kingdom, but after then Ryuukyuu became one area of Japan. With this political change Ryuukyuu language had been treated as a dialect of Japanese.

Ryuukyuu language has many dialects, and Shuri dialect which is the language

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used in the capital place Shuri was standard language of Ryuukyuu language.

The National Institute for Japanese Language edited *Okinawago Ziten* 'Dictionary of Okinawa Language' as in figure 2. Okinawa is a name of the island where Shuri is placed and a name of the prefecture.

This dictionary includes around 12,000 words and description of phonology and grammar of Shuri dialect. In Japan many dialectal dictionaries have been edited, but most of them are loaded with words different from standard Japanese. On the other hand 'Dictionary of Okinawa language' carries basic words used as Shuri dialect without considering that each word is same or different from standard Japanese. With this characteristic 'Dictionary of Okinawa language' is thought to be an ideal dictionary in dialectology and there are no other dialectal dictionary like this still now.

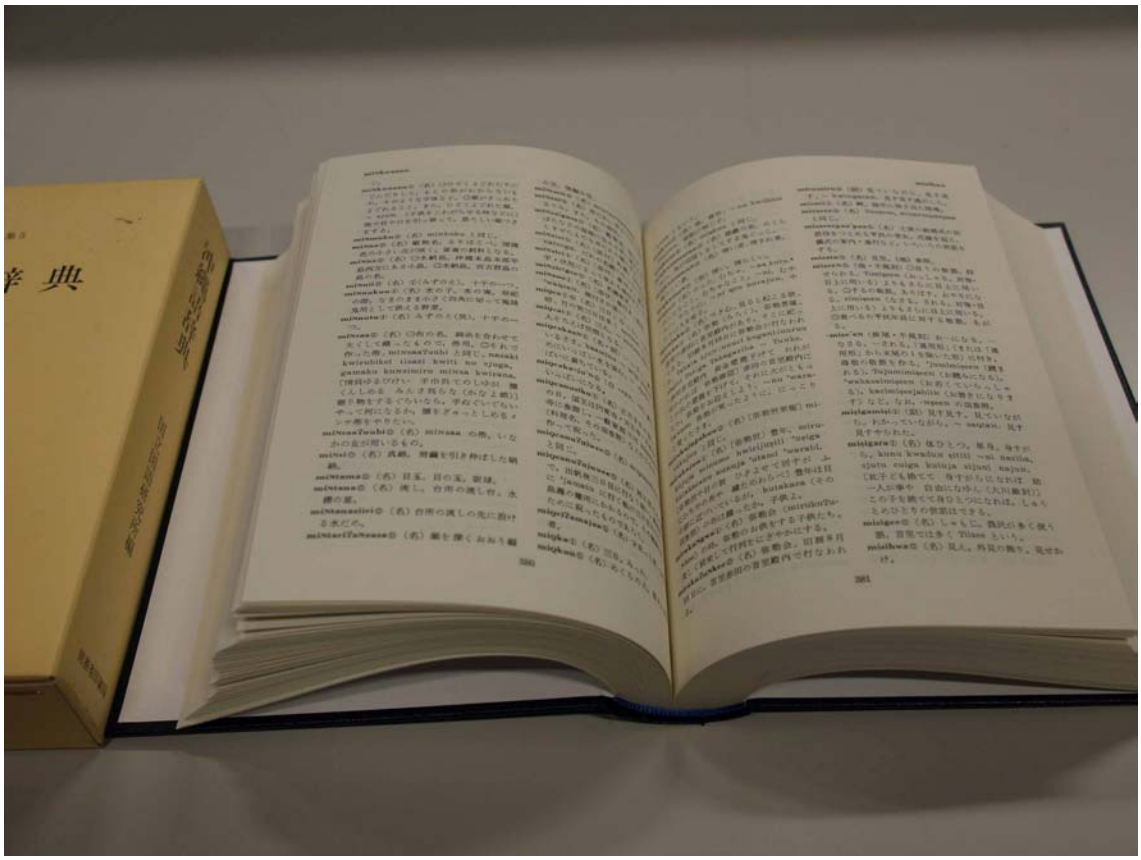


Figure 2. Dictionary of Okinawa Language

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3. Studies on standardization

After World War II, media like radio and television spread rapidly. With these spread standardization of dialects had developed. The National Institute for Japanese Language adopted statistical methods to research the standardization. For example, to keep the represent character of informants in an area, they were selected with random sampling ways. After the survey, the data were analyzed in statistic methods.

3.1. Hatizyoo Island

Hatizyoo Island belongs to Tokyo prefecture, but the dialect used in the island (about 300km away from the mainland) is very different from standard Japanese. After the establishment of the National Institute for Japanese Language (at that time called in English as the National Language Research Institute), the first research was carried for the language and the standardization in Hatizyoo Island. The result of the research was reported in *Hatizyoozima no Gengo Choosa* 'The Linguistic Survey at the Island of Hatizyoo' on 1950 (Figure 3). This is the first report book of the institute. This report compared the languages used by the people living just in the island and the language used by the people living for some years outer the island. It was concluded that the people who had not moved before 15 years old kept the original dialects. With this conclusion, the 15 years old has been to be an index point as a native language keeping age for the following research. This report includes not only the standardization, but descriptions of classical Hatizyoo Island dialect for to analyze the language change as comparison data, then the documentation of the dialects has a value for records of endangered language.

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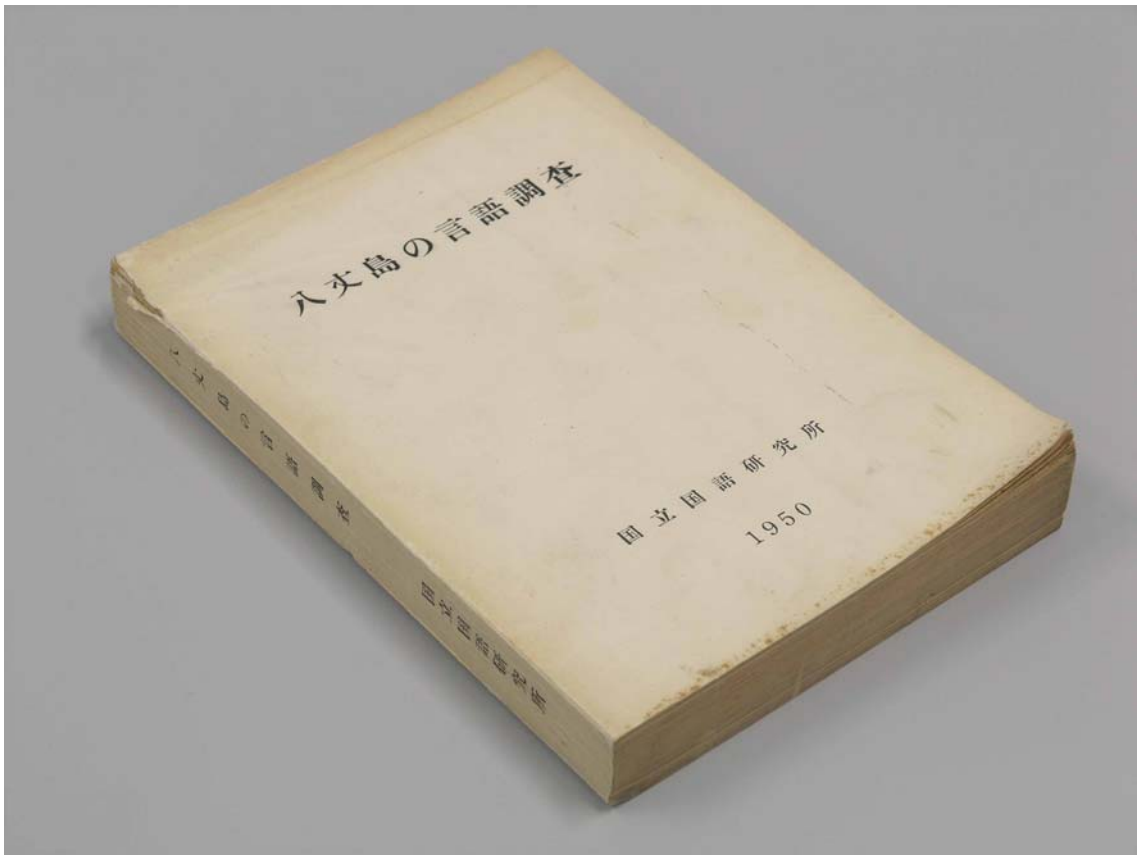


Figure 3. The Linguistic Survey at the Island of Hatizyoo

3.2. Sirakawa

Sirakawa places on the southern part in the northeast area of Japan. Language in Sirakawa was surveyed on 1949, and the result was reported in *Gengoseikatsu no Jittai* 'Language Survey in Sirakawa City and neighboring villages' on 1951 (figure 4).

This report is well known with firstly using a term *kyootsuugo* 'common language'. *Kyootsuugo* is similar to standard language, but not same. There had been some words used as standard language by the people in Sirakawa but they were not understood by the people outer Sirakawa. In this report, the code of language spoken with these kinds of words was called as *kyootsuugo*. After this report the term *kyootsuugo* has been well used in dialectology of Japanese or sociolinguistics in Japan,

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and standardization has been called as *kyootsuugo-ka* (*ka* is a suffix means 'change').



Figure 4. Language Survey in Sirakawa City and neighboring villages

3.3. Turuoka

Turuoka is on the western place in the northeast area of Japan. Language in Turuoka was firstly surveyed on 1950. The result of this first survey was reported in *Chiikishakai no gengoseikatsu* 'Language Survey in Turuoka City, Yamagata Pref.' on 1953.

As was done on Sirakawa, language data in Turuoka were analyzed with comparing to the attribution of informants including gender, age, academic background, and so on. The survey in Turuoka is well known with continuing surveys through

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around 2 decade's interval. Second survey in Turuoka was done in 1971, and third survey was in 1991. Three times surveyed reports are on figure 5.

Using the age data as attribution, it was thought that the language change can be predicted from the relative change data in one area. But there was no verification for this predict, because it was very difficult to survey one area continuously.

From the first survey it was thought that the standardization in Turuoka went on through the relative age data. But the second survey data developed that the standardization did not proceed so well contradictory to the first survey age data.

Actually one person acquires language, when one is in childhood, but the language in one person will not be constant for all the life time. The three times surveys had appeared that language changes in the life time of the people. By this conclusion of the surveys, relative age data can not to be replaced to real time language change data (Yokoyama & Sanada 2007).



Figure 5. Three times surveyed reports of Turuoka

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4. Linguistic atlases

The largest works of dialectology in the National Institute for Japanese Language are two kinds of linguistic and dialectal atlases. One is *Nihon Gengo Chizu* 'Linguistic Atlas of Japan' published between 1966 and 1974 with 6 volumes including 300 maps (Figure 6). And the other is *Hoogen Bumpoo Zenkoku Chizu* 'Grammar Atlas of Japanese Dialects' published between 1989 and 2006 with 6 volumes including 350 maps (Figure 7). Both of the surveys were carried out collaborated with the local researchers.

4.1. Linguistic Atlas of Japan

The survey for Linguistic Atlas of Japan was done between 1957 and 1965. The number of localities surveyed was 2,400. All the informants were male and born before 1903, then they ware over 60 years old, and all of them are native at the surveyed places.

Most of the items surveyed ware lexical, for example potato, sweet potato, scarecrow, frog, toad, tadpole, dragonfly and snail. But some phonological items were treated, for example nasal g, bi-labial k and palatal s.

Linguistic Atlas of Japan has the twofold aim, and one is to present a geographical distribution of contemporary linguistic usage, and the other is to furnish the materials necessary for a historical study of the Japanese language in accordance with the methods of geolinguistics.

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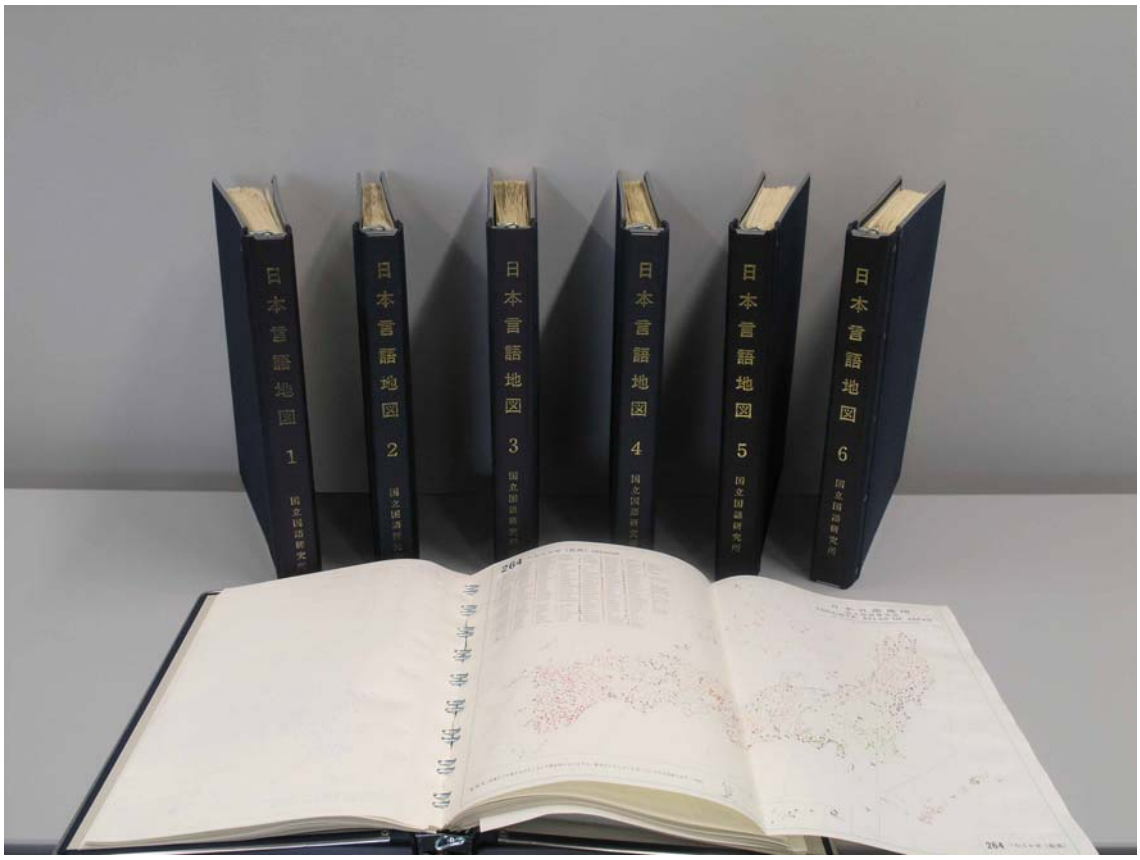


Figure 6. Linguistic Atlas of Japan

4.2. Grammar Atlas of Japanese Dialects

The survey for Grammar Atlas of Japanese Dialects was carried out between 1979 and 1982. The number of localities surveyed was 807. Almost all of the informants were native male but some of them were native female, and they ware born before 1925 (over 65 years old at the surveyed times).

The surveyed items are grammatical, but most of them are morphological. They are for example case markers, conjugations of verbs, verbal suffixes and honorific expressions.

The aim was to ascertain the language used by the people living in each area

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within their communities for the grammatical items. The data were published through the atlas and appendix books of each volume, and in addition computed data are opened on the web site, then any one can get and see the data through internet.

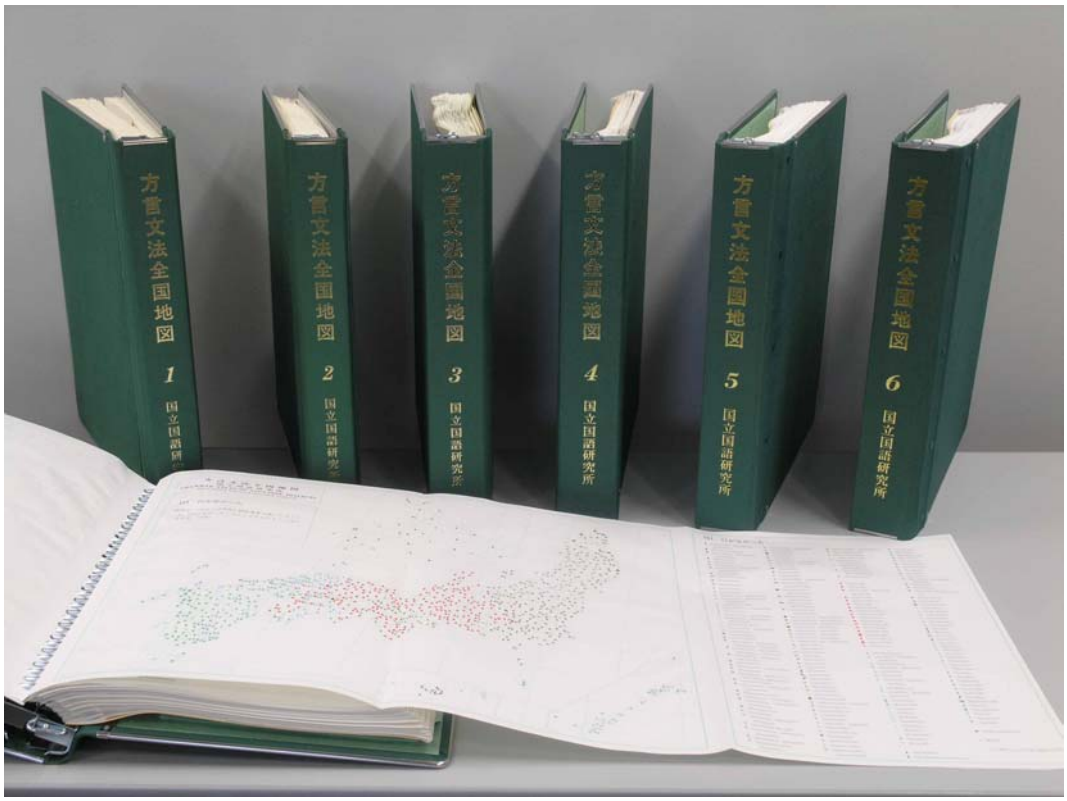


Figure 7. Grammar Atlas of Japanese Dialects

5. Dialectal texts of conversations

Even if reading the description of dialects like Descriptive Studies of Japanese Dialects or using the linguistic atlases like Linguistic Atlas of Japan and Grammar Atlas of Japanese Dialects, it is difficult to realize the dialectal conversation in each place.

To record dialectal alive fact, the National Institute for Japanese Language made two kinds of dialectal texts of conversations.

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The first one was published between 1978 and 1987 as *Hoogen Danwa Siryoo* 'Texts of Tape-Recorded Conversations in Japanese Dialects' with 10 volumes (Figure 8). These data were recorded between 1974 and 1976 at 20 localities, and published with dialectal texts which are accompanied by standard Japanese translations and recorded cassette tapes.

The second one is *Nihon no Furusato Kotoba Syuusei* 'Database of Dialectal Conversations in Japan' published between 2001 and 2008. Database of Dialectal Conversations in Japan are published with 20 volumes, and they treat 47 localities which apply to one locality in each prefecture. These databases include characterized texts printed in books, CDs and CD-ROMs. Computerized texts and sound files are recorded in the CD-ROMs.

There are not so many papers using those conversation texts as materials to study still now. But they are very useful for to study phonology, grammar, and discourse of dialects. It is expected to use more for dialectology.

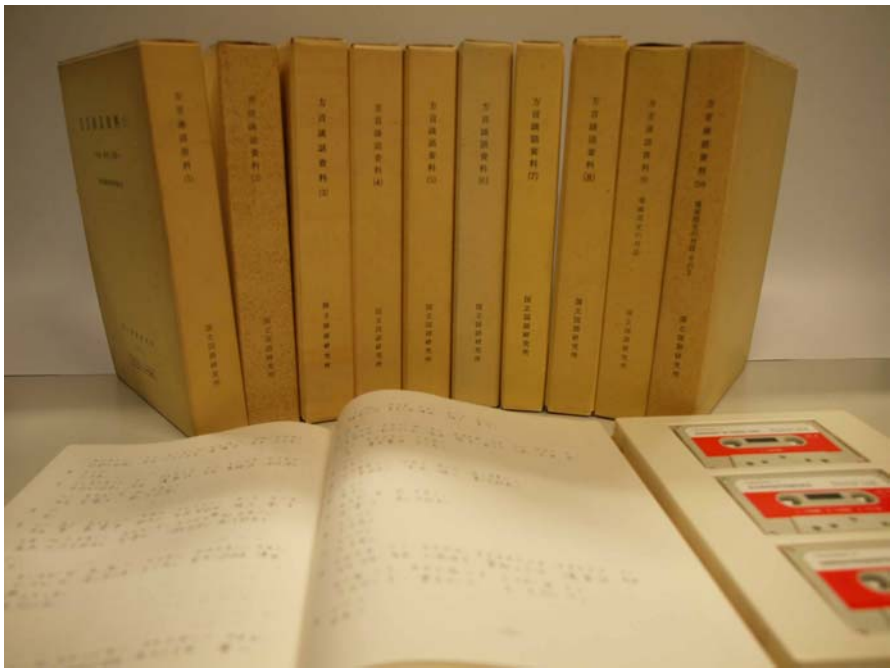


Figure 8. Texts of Tape-Recorded Conversations in Japanese Dialects

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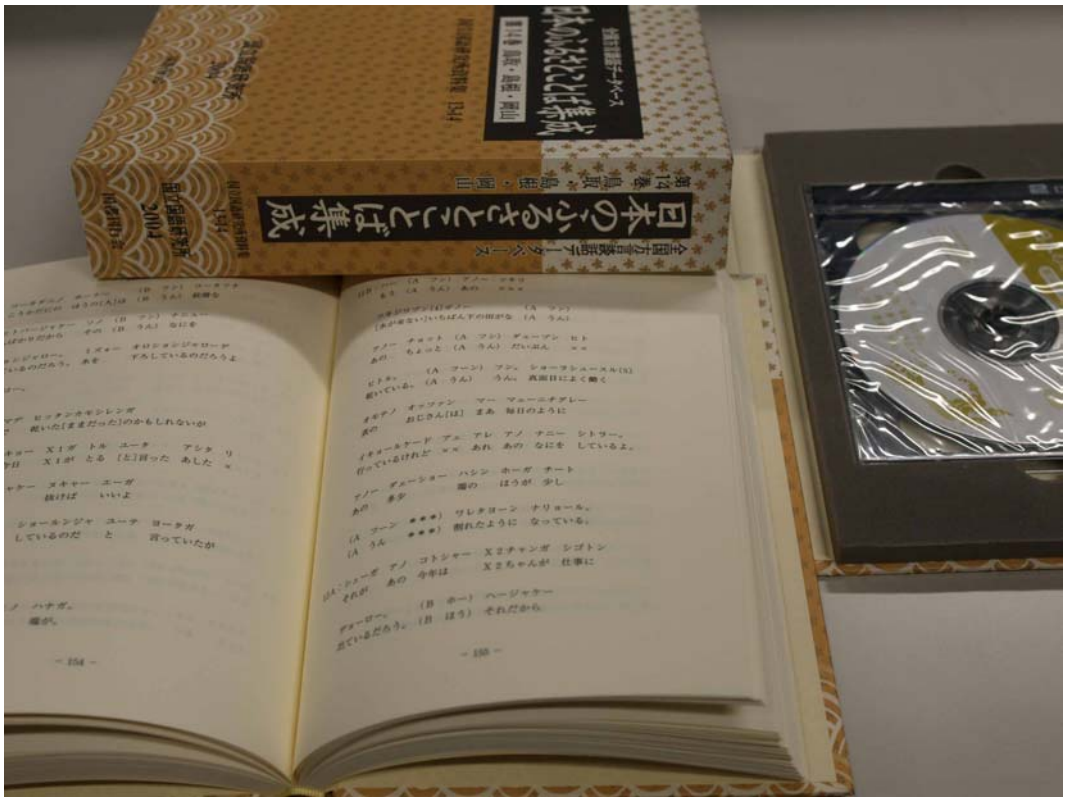


Figure 9. Database of Dialectal Conversations in Japan

6. Conclusions

Dialectological studies in the National Institute for Japanese Language have covered almost all the fields in dialectology widely.

If there are some failings, they had not been done with hypotheses. Researching procedures of the institute for dialectology have been kept to be as firstly gathering wide and great amounts of data and next going to analyze the data.

This procedure to study has some risks to make no result, if there were not any valuable information in dialectology.

Now is the time to turn the style to study. Not all of the studies should be done on

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some hypothesis, but it must be better that most of them are carried on the prospect in the way of hypothesis and verification.

Dialectological section in the institute has played an important role in Japanese dialectology. With upper new but just ordinary ways to study, the institute will have led the Japanese dialectology in the future.

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