The First Japanese Textbook *cum* Grammar Written in German: Philipp Noack's (1886) *Lehrbuch der Japanischen Sprache*

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1. Introduction

Philipp Noack's (1886) *Lehrbuch der Japanischen Sprache* was the first attempt at a textbook/grammar of Japanese written in the German language. Ironically, the first German man to write a grammar of Japanese was J. J. Hoffmann, who, however, published his *magnum opus* concurrently in Dutch and English in 1868. In 1877 this was translated into German, but is not listed among Noack's list of references, even though it precedes his work by several years.

In terms of structure, the work consists of an introduction, where Noack gives a brief account of the history of Japanese and its styles and dialects, followed by a chapter on writing and pronunciation, then nine chapters containing a detailed account of his nine parts of speech (see section 3. below). After that there are 62 "miscellaneous examples", which consist of everyday sentences (e.g. 6. *Watakussi mo imada jokohama ni wori massu,* I too still reside in Yokohama) or sayings (e.g. 29. *Ihanu ha ihu ni massaru,* silence is better than talking) [re. Noack's system of romanization, see section 2. below]. Thereafter, we find 10 "exercises with translation and explanation" in romanized Japanese, with German

translation, glossary and grammatical explanations. The main part of the work is rounded off by an historical table (names of emperors and year periods), an extensive index of words with page references, and "additions" containing further explanations as well as the actual pronunciations (incl. accent) [see again section 2. for romanization, which is not based on pronunciation but Japanese spelling] of some of the exercises. The work thus far is entirely in romanization, but the appendix gives tables of Japanese writing, including the *hiragana* and *katakana Iroha* (Japanese alphabet), several pages of commonly used Chinese characters, and a sample of a Japanese translation of the *Gospel According to John.*

In terms of organization, this work is similar to a number of other Bakumatsu-Meiji Western works on the Japanese language, in that the main part consists of a "grammar" section (usually just the main body of the work, but by some called "theoretical part, or grammar" (Chamberlain 1888) and a sentences or text part (called variously "practical part, or reader" (Chamberlain 1888), "chrestomathy" (Aston 1888), or "extracts" (Aston 1872). S. R. Brown (1863), who is referred to by Noack in the text, and E. Satow (1873), who appears to have been unknown to Noack (see also 4. below) were perhaps the most consistent in their arrangement in that their example sentences have numbers, which are referred to in the grammar section. Noack's arrangement, however, is not so neat. He has some example sentences as part of his text (grammatical explanations), but the sentences and text examples are not systematically referred to. Regarding the particle *ga,* for instance, which is listed in his index of words (:308), lists three uses; if we look at the 2nd of these, which is explained as "frequent marker of the nominative as a

subject, when it is not particularly emphasized or stressed (häufige Bezeichnung des Nominativs als Subjektes, wenn es nicht besonders hervorgehoben oder betont werden soll)". This is then simply followed by a list of page numbers. Two of these refer to part of the explanation and examples of *ga* (:30f) as a nominative particle, and another two to a passing reference to *ga* along with other particles, but the remaining four are references to the examples section of various other parts of speech. Only in one instance (:54) is the reference unambiguous in that there is only one example sentence involving *ga* on the page, whereas the other three pages (:39, :120 and :132) contain two or more sentences with *ga*, consisting of a mixture of nominative and genitive uses without any indication as to which is which, which is not exactly a user-friendly way of organizing the book.

Like Hoffmann, Noack appears never to have visited Japan, and therefore had to rely on other sources, European and Japanese. As far the grammar of the language is concerned, his sources (listed after the table of contents) were Hoffmann's (1868) *Grammar* and Astons's *A short Grammar of the Japanese spoken language* (3rd ed., 1873), as well as the *kotoba no maki* part of a source quoted as *E-iri chie no wa* (1872) written in Japanese. In the text, he also refers to S. R. Brown (:107) and Aston's *Grammar of the Japanese Written Language* (:108).

His short list of aids also gives Liggins' *One thousand familiar phrases in English and Romanized Japanese* (3rd ed. 1870), Hepburn's *Dictionary* (2nd ed. of 1872, and "Wörterbuch der japanischen und deutschen Sprache, bearbeitet von mehreren Japanern. Tokyo 1877, Verlag von K. Hibiya und S. Kato." As pointed out in Kaiser (1995:78), this seems to be the following work, which was modelled

after Hepburn's *Dictionary,* but arranged in *Iroha* order:

Wörterbuch der Japanischen und Deutschen Sprache, durchgesehen von Herrn R. Lehmann, Lehrer an der deutschen Schule in Kioto, erster Theil, Japanisch-Deutsch, Tokio, 1877. Verlag von K. Hibiya und S. Katō.

This dictionary was used by Noack as a check (Japanese spelling and meaning) for his substantial word list (Wörterverzeichnis), which amounts to over 100 pages (pp. 301–405).

According to the author, Hoffmann, Aston and Liggins were also used for Japanese examples, although the bulk was "mostly collected but in principle not generated by the author (grösstenteils jedoch von dem Verfasser selbst gesammelt, aber grundsätzlich nicht von ihm selbst gebildet)" (:VI), presumably from Japanese informants and/or written Japanese sources such as the Japanese translation of the *Gospel According to John* of 1873, also mentioned in his sources.

In the following, I will examine Noack's work from a number of angles, including his system of romanization, parts of speech and their order, and some of his grammatical explanations against the background of his main sources, Hoffmann and Aston,

2. System of romanizing Japanese

Noack does not explain the rationale for and details of his choice of romanization, except for stating in the preface his reasons for not adopting the system used in English books[1] on the subject:

The author has been unable to make up his mind regarding

the advice given from others concerning the transliteration of Japanese syllable and sound letters according to the system used in books written in English. English authors might well find it appropriate in their works to write the vowels according to German-Latin, and the consonants according to English pronunciation, but a book written in German and for Germans must be based on German pronunciation; apart from having the advantage of a unified pronunciation, this is also required by the national identity.[2] (:VI)

In order to analyze Noack's system, we therefore need to gather information from his "Chapter I., Alphabet and Pronunciation". Chapter I. § 1. deals with "The Alphabet or Irowa", and gives a table of sounds (:21), the contents of which show that he transliterates the Japanese *kana* quite literally (i.e. regardless of their actual pronunciation), as in for instance the sequences *<ta ti tu te to>* (cf. Hepburn: *<ta, chi, tsu, te, to>*), and *<ha hi hu he ho>* (cf. Hepburn: *<ha, hi, fu, he, ho>*). The sound changes (voicing, etc.) given after the table (in different vowel order) confirm the above assumption in that he gives *<da, de, di, do, du>* (cf. Hepburn: *<da, de, ji, do, zu>*), and *<sa, se, si, so, su>* (cf. Hepburn: *<za, ze, ji, zo, zu>*), among others.

Noack's use of <sa> etc. for the Japanese voiced /s/ sound requires an explanation. In the table, the (unvoiced) /s/ sound is transliterated as <ssa>, etc., which reflects German usage, because in German non-final /s/ is a voiced sound, whereas /ss/ is unvoiced. Another transliteration reflecting German spelling is <ja> etc., yielding <jama> <jume> etc. rather than <yama> <yume> according to the Hepburn system. Without any discernible direct

influences, there are in fact clear parallels to earlier, if less consistent, romanizations of Japanese by German authors like Kaempfer and Siebold, ostensibly due to their shared mother tongue (for examples of their romanization, see Kaiser 2008).

The above is then followed by § 2. "Pronunciation of the vowels and consonants", where we find explanations such as the following:

> The syllables *ti* and *tu* are pronounced with a hissing sound ("Zischlaut"), like *tsi* and *tsu*. (:22)

In § 3. "Syllable assimilation", Noack gives examples (and rules) where *itu hai* becomes *ippai,* and *matita* ("written *matuta*") becomes *matta*. In the word list (and the text), these are given as **Itu-pai** … (pron. **ip'pai**), and **Matuta** (pron. **mat'ta**).

The final § 4. in this section deals with "Contracted sounds and syllables", and covers Sino-Japanese sound changes. A few examples again will illustrate his approach:

> *sseu-sau,* das Bild, Ebenbild (the picture, portrait), wie (like) *ss'jō-sō* oder (or) *schō-sō;* … *ten-nin* der Bürger (the citizen), wie (like) *tsĭjō-nin;* (:25)

As in the earlier examples, the hyphens indicate morpheme boundaries; in the above two examples, therefore, two-kanji words are first given in their contemporary Japanese spelling, followed by their actual pronunciation.

In conclusion, we can say that Noack bases his romanization of Japanese not on pronunciation, but on the Japanese spelling of the time (the so-called *kyūkanazukai* (old *kana* usage), whereas the

pronunciation is explained (and needs to be learned) separately. As mentioned earlier, he also gives a detailed pronunciation (incl. indications of the pitch accent) for two of his exercises (nos. 1 and 4) in the "Additions" (:408). Here, we find "spellings" like *chtó* (instead of *hito*, :261) and *tskára* (instead of *tikara*, :261), which according to German pronunciation of these combinations are about as close to the Japanese pronunciation as is possible when using German sounds.

3. Parts of speech

Noack does not discuss the parts-of-speech division he employs for Japanese; we can, however, see his approach from the way he divides his chapters, as seen in his Table of Contents (pp. IX–XIII). Chapters II. to X. are titled as follows:

II. Das Hauptwort (The Noun), III. Fürwörter (Pronouns), IV. Das Eigenschaftswort (The Adjective), V. Das Zahlwort (The Numeral), VI. Das Zeitwort (The Verb), VII. Das Umstandswort (The Adverb), VIII. Das Verhältniswort (The Relational Word), IX. Das Bindewort (The Conjunction), X. Das Empfindungswort (The Interjection).

Despite some differences in order (Adverb and Relational Words precede Verbs in Hoffmann's arrangement), this is highly similar to Hoffmann's parts of speech, except that Hoffmann does not have Interjections. Aston, however, does have Interjections (:78–79) in his Chapter X. (Interjections); The content of Noack's interjections appears to be partly based on Aston, but if so, Noack expands Aston's contribution to more than twice the number of interjections.

The major departure from the traditional Latin/German parts-of-speech analysis is Relational Words, which Noack's divides into "original" and "derived". The former include items such as *ni, de, to, jori* etc., whereas the latter include *ue, ato, tame* etc. ("derived from nouns"), *motute, kojete* etc. ("derived from transitive verbs"), and *oite, tai-ssite* etc. ("derived from intransitive verbs").

The first section of Relational Words makes for some duplication, as Noack discusses the declination of nouns (:29–35), where he distinguishes four cases, including the dative marked by *ni*. However, most other particles that Hoffmann treats as case markers for dative (*he, to, nite*) and ablative (*kara, yori*) are assigned to the category of Relational Words, which echoes Brown's (1863: xxxiii) distinction between Postpositions (*ni, kara, de* etc.) and Constructive Particles (*wa, nga, wo*). To what extent Japanese particles (postpositions) are assigned to the category of "case" has clearly been a major issue of contention ever since the first Western attempts at Japanese grammars, i.e. Alvarez (1594) and Rodriguez (1604–08).

To sum up Noack's stance on this issue:

1 The nominative is marked by *ha* and *ga,* but the former is not exclusively a nominative marker, and the latter "even less so". (:30)

2 The genitive is marked by *no* and *ga,* but in the modern language *ga* is rarely used, whereas in the older Japanese literature it often alternates with *no.* (:33)

3 The dative is marked by *ni* (indicating the indirekt object). (:33)

4 The accusative is marked by *wo* (indicating the direkt object). (:34)

4. The nominative case and the particles *ha/ga*

The above account of the genitive, dative and accusative is relatively straightforward, but the nominative marker requires a closer look, expecially in relation with Hoffmann's stance on *ga* (quoting Steinthal's 1860 observation that no Altaic language has a nominative, Hoffmann goes to great lengths to claim that *ga* is a genitive marker), but also as part of the rather unsatisfactory Western-language research history of what is now known as the topic marker (*ha/wa*). To illustrate this, a brief synopsis of what Rodriguez, Siebold, Brown, Hoffmann, and Aston had to say on *wa* is needed (as indicated above, Brown, Hoffmann and Aston were being used by Noack, whereas Rodriguez and Siebold were to some extent absorbed into Hoffmann, Siebold because Hoffmann started out as Siebold's assistant, Rodriguez through the rediscovery and subsequent French translation (1825) of his *Arte Breve* of 1620).

Compared to these otherwise very erudite grammars, Rodriguez (1604–08:282) had not all that much to say about *wa*. He comments as follows (there are two or three other places where he says essentially the same thing):

Va. (=wa)

When this article is in the Nominative it has much energy and force, which can only be taught by usage, … it is a denotative, or demonstrative particle, and has a sense of "as regards". … (Este artigo quando he Nominatiuo, tem muyta energia, & forca, que seo o uso a pode ensinar, … he particula denotiua, ou demonstratiua, & tem sentido, de quanto a. …)

In the later (1620:13) work he further says that *wa* functions like

the definite article in European languages (Portuguese, Castilian, Italian).

Siebold (1826:97–98) is the next in historical line to give an account of *wa*. Having said that its use is very complex and alien to European ears, making it impossible for him to give firm rules, and stating that *wa* can only be understood through language use, he divides *wa* into three uses. 1, with negative predicates after the combination nominative and accusative. 2, without exclusively designating anything, *wa* is used to indicate an accusative or adverb that has been placed before a nominative. From his examples, this is what is now called "contrastive use of *wa*". 3, used in questions, where it corresponds to the Latin enclitic *ne?* His source of information can safely be assumed to be the Japanese interpreters that were attached to the Dutch trading post in Nagasaki, excepting of course the information on Latin. (In his explanation of *wa* (:98), Siebold in fact states "according to the interpreters' explanation (Secundum interpretum explicatione)".)

Hoffmann (1868:60) states that *wa* is used to emphasize what precedes it, and to isolate and separate it from what follows, in the sense of "with regard to". It not only isolates the nominative, but "every dependent case".

Brown (1863:xxxiii), who is also quoted at length in Hoffmann (:66), also calls *wa* an isolative particle, which "serves to give definiteness to this group of words, distinguishing it from other elements of the proposition. …Nga or ga is used for the same purpose, except it seems to be more emphatically definitive".

Finally, Aston (1873:3–4). "*Wa* is a distinctive or separative particle. It has the force of isolating or singling out one object

from among a number, or of opposing one thing to another. In English the same idea is usually expressed, ... by means of a greater emphasis on the noun. ... The French *quant à* has very nearly the same force as *wa*."

Noack does not give any translation of *wa* in his main text, but appears to be influenced by Hoffmann's "with regard to" and Aston's "quant à" in his Word List (:310), where he says 'kann zuweilen durch "was betrifft oder anbetrifft" übersetzt ... werden (may occasionally be translated by "with regard to")'. As far as its function is concerned, however, *wa* has almost uniformly been characterized as a "separating or isolating particle", and Noack is no exception to this:

> As such (=separating particle) *ha* is often used for isolating and emphasizing the subject, and in that respect is indicative of the first case, but can also isolate and emphasize a noun in other cases, follow a word belonging to other parts of speech, draw together several words as a unit, especially in order to separate a subject sentence, i.e. a subject that is expressed in sentence form from its predicate, or also separate additional determinations, such as of time, place, mode and manner, reason and others.
> The separating particle *ha* thus serves chiefly for structuring a sentence clearly and emphasizing the subject in sentences that contain something generally applicable, e.g. *Uma ha inu jori ohoi nari,* the horse is bigger than the dog.[3] (:30–31)

On the last point, Noack adds on the following page that "Occa-

sionally one finds *ga* instead of *ha* in generally applicable sentences too (Zuweilen findet sich *ga* an Stelle von *ha* auch in allgemein-gültigen Sätzen)". One of the examples he gives is the following:

Kami ga ban-min wo ssiju-go ssi tamahu, Gott behütet alle Menschen (God watches over all humankind).

A note on the same page quotes a personal communication by "Herr Aoki" (according to the preface (:V), Herr Aoki was the former Japanese plenipotentiary in Berlin, who read the work and suggested some improvements), the difference between *ga* and *ha* is that the former is used for a definite expression, whereas the latter is general. The example given is *hito **ha** kassikoi mono de aru,* where *hito **ga*** cannot be used. *Ga* is however used when one wants to say: this man is an intelligent being (or, you are…). (:32)

Noack's main contribution to explaining *wa* therefore is his statement that *wa* is used in generally applicable sentences.

Despite correctly pointing out that *ha* can be used for other cases beside nominative, all of Noack's examples are in fact subject sentences.

Regarding the emphasizing and distinguishing function of *ha* he gives examples such as *Kore ha nani,* was ist dies? (What is this?), with the evident implication that "this" is being distinguished from "that", etc.

Noack goes on to discuss *ga,* which he describes as being similar to *ha* in marking the subject, but not sharing other functions of *ha,* especially not its use for emphasis, which he claims is limited to *ha.* Brown (ibid.), however, says that *ga* is "used for the same purpose (i.e. definiteness, S.K.), except that it seems to be more

emphatically definitive."

Noack then takes issue with Hoffmann's analysis of *ga* as a genitive particle, which he refutes on the following three grounds:

1. "If in the sentence *neko ga nedumi wo toru,* the cat catches the mouse, *neko ga* is not subject but the second case, and *toru* is not the predicate of *neko* but its subject, then this sentence lacks a predicate, and would have to be construed as "The cat's catching of the mouse", for which then "is" or "takes place" would have to be supplied as a predicate. Apart from the at least notable absence of the predicate, which the Japanese language tends to use abundantly rather than miserly, that explanation seems rather forced."[iv]

2. If *ga* is to be regarded as a suffix of the second case, explanation is required why is does not alternate with the other commonly used suffix of the second case, *no.*

3. Japanese usage goes against Hoffmann's explanation in that *ha* and *ga* are used in parallel (i.e. structurally identical) examples marking the subject (Noack illustrates this with pairs of active and passive sentences taken from *Chie no wa,* e.g. the passive examples: *Aku nin **ha** ten ni batusseraru/Hana **ga** kase ni tirassaruru.* (:32)

Point 1. is debatable as certainly in the classical language a sentence like *neko ga nedumi wo toru (koto)* can, as a nominalized clause, be used for emphasis, and as such does not require a predicate. However, Noack's points 2. and 3. are convincing arguments against Hoffmann's analysis.

Aston's (1873:5) explanation of *ga* is very short and simple. Having said that *ga* is also a possessive particle, he goes on:

Ga often follows nouns in the nominative case.

<div align="center">

Examples.

Kane ga aru ka?   Is there any money?

...   ...

</div>

Kane ga aru, etc. is in fact the very example that Hoffmann (1868: 64) laboriously explains as genitive, so Aston is making a concealed attack on Hoffmann here.

Apart from some native informants, Noack evidently had direct access only to the quoted works by Hoffmann, Aston and Brown. Any history of research on *wa* and *ga* has to assess Noack's position from this perspective. He can thus be given credit for being the first to having straightened out Hoffmann's rather muddled analysis of *ga* in particular (research such as Ernest Satow's *Kuaiwa Hen* (1873, pg. 10–11 of his NOTES), which predates Noack but appears to have been unknown to him, goes to great length in making the same point that *ga* occurs seldom if at all as a sign of the genitive in the Yedo colloquial.

Notes

(1) It is unclear which English books the author has in mind here; the above-quoted Japanese-German dictionary uses the Hepburn system, which Hepburn did not adopt from the Romajikwai until the 3rd edition of 1876.

(2) Auf die von anderer Seite erteilten Ratschläge betreffend die

Umschreibung der japanischen Silben- und Lautzeichen nach
der in english geschriebenen Büchern gebräuchlichen Methode
einzugehen, hat sich der Verfasser nicht entschliessen können.
Mögen englische Autoren in ihren Werken die Vokale nach
deutsch-lateinischer und die Konsonanten nach englischer
Aussprache zu schreiben für zweckmässig finden, so muss
doch in einem deutsch und für Deutsche geschriebenen Buch
die deutsche Aussprache gelten; das erfordert, abgesehen von
dem Vorzuge der Einheitlichkeit der Aussprache, das nationale
Selbstgefühl.

（3）Als solche dient *ha* oft zur Absonderung und Hervorhebung
des Subjekts, und macht insofern den ersten Fall kenntlich, kann
aber auch ein Hauptwort in einem anderen Falle absondern und
hervorheben, oder auf Wörter anderer Wortklassen folgen,
mehrere Wörter als Einheit zusammenfassen, besonders einen
Subjektivsatz, d.h. ein durch einen Satz ausgedrücktes Subjekt
von dem zugehörigen Pradikat abzusondern, oder zusätzlichen
Bestimmungen, z.B. der Zeit, des Ortes, der Art und Weise, des
Grundes u.s.w., abgrenzen. Die Trennungspartikel *ha* dient also
hauptsächlich zur deutlichen Gliederung des Satzes und zur
Hervorhebung des Subjekts in solchen Sätzen, die etwas
Allgemeingültiges enthalten, Z.B. ... das Pferd is grösser also der
Hund.

（4）Wenn z. B. in dem Satze: *neko ga nedumi wo toru,* die Katze
fängt die Maus, *neko ga* nicht as Subject, sondern der zweite
Fall von *neko,* und *toru* nicht Prädikat zu *neko,* sondern Subject
sein soll, so hat dieser Satz kein Prädikat und würde zu
konstruieren sein wie folgt: "Das die Maus Fangen der Katze",
wozu dann "ist" oder "findet statt" als Prädikat zu ergänzen

wäre. Abgesehen von dem wenigstens auffallenden Fehlen des Prädikats, mit welchem die japanische Sprache sonst eher verschwenderisch als sparsam ist, erscheint jene Erklärung doch als eine gezwungene.

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