# JAPAN: Places, Images, Times & Transformations

Suggestions for the Middle and High School Classroom

# Language Variation - Hiroshi Nara

* **Objectives:**
  + Identify factors that affect language variation in Japanese and languages in general.
* **Suggested Units for Inclusion:**
  + ELA or Linguistic classes that explore the development and evolution of language or debate issues surrounding standard vs. non-standard dialects.
  + Intermediate to Advanced Japanese classes that explore language variation in Japanese.
* **Lesson Ideas:**
  + 1. Individual Research Homework
    - Students can be assigned the *study questions* or *develop questions for the class to discuss*
  + 2. Class Discussion / Debate
    - Using this article and other resources, students should attempt to answer the question: What is standard American English (or Japanese)? Students can either participate in a debate or a Socratic circle, while offering various viewpoints on language variation and who/what controls variations in a particular language.
  + 3. Skits
    - Japanese students can demonstrate their understanding of dialectal variation through putting on a skit in two different dialects. Students should research two different dialects and put together a handout of the key lexical and grammatical features of each dialect to give to their peers.
* **Study Questions:**
  + What are some of the factors that may vary language according to the author?
  + What kinds of barriers may contribute to dialectal variation in a country?
  + What dialect areas are in Japan?
  + List a few of the ways the Japanese government controlled language in Japan. Why do you think they made some of these changes?
  + What dialect is widely understood in Japan? What has helped this dialect become so widely used?
  + Other than the government, what were some other causes of language variation in Japan? What changes were made, who was affected, and why were these changes made?
  + One type of language variation includes changing vocabulary words or grammar patterns, but what is another way that language variation occurs in Japanese and give an example from the article.