

The aim of this thesis is to provide synchronic and diachronic overview of dialects of the Japanese language spoken on the four main islands of Japan. First, the thesis defines the term ‘dialect’ and then gives a short overview of the history of dialectology in Japan. The third chapter is the core of the thesis—description of Japanese dialects since the 20th century—and it uses the classification by the founder of the Japanese dialectology, Tōjō Misao, to separate the dialects into groups. After pinpointing of some of the dialect features, especially phonetic and grammatical ones, and a short description of their present state, there follows an excursus into the development of Japanese language policy in the 20th century and its impact on the status of dialects in Japanese society. The conclusion summarizes today’s tendencies in the language development in individual regions of Japan.