

A portrait of Toshihiko Izutsu, a Japanese scholar, is centered in the background. He is wearing a dark, high-collared traditional Japanese garment (haori).

# The Universality of Language and Its Limitations: Perspectives from Toshihiko Izutsu

AAAS Student Research Symposium 2024

Yasuko Fujita



A portrait of Toshihiko Izutsu, a Japanese philosopher, is centered in the background. The word "Language" in the title below is highlighted in yellow.

# The Universality of **Language** and Its Limitations: Perspectives from Toshihiko Izutsu

Who Toshihiko Izutsu is and his perspective of language

Do different languages result in different thoughts?

The Possibility of having one universal language

海人  
The Eastern

# Toshihiko Izutsu

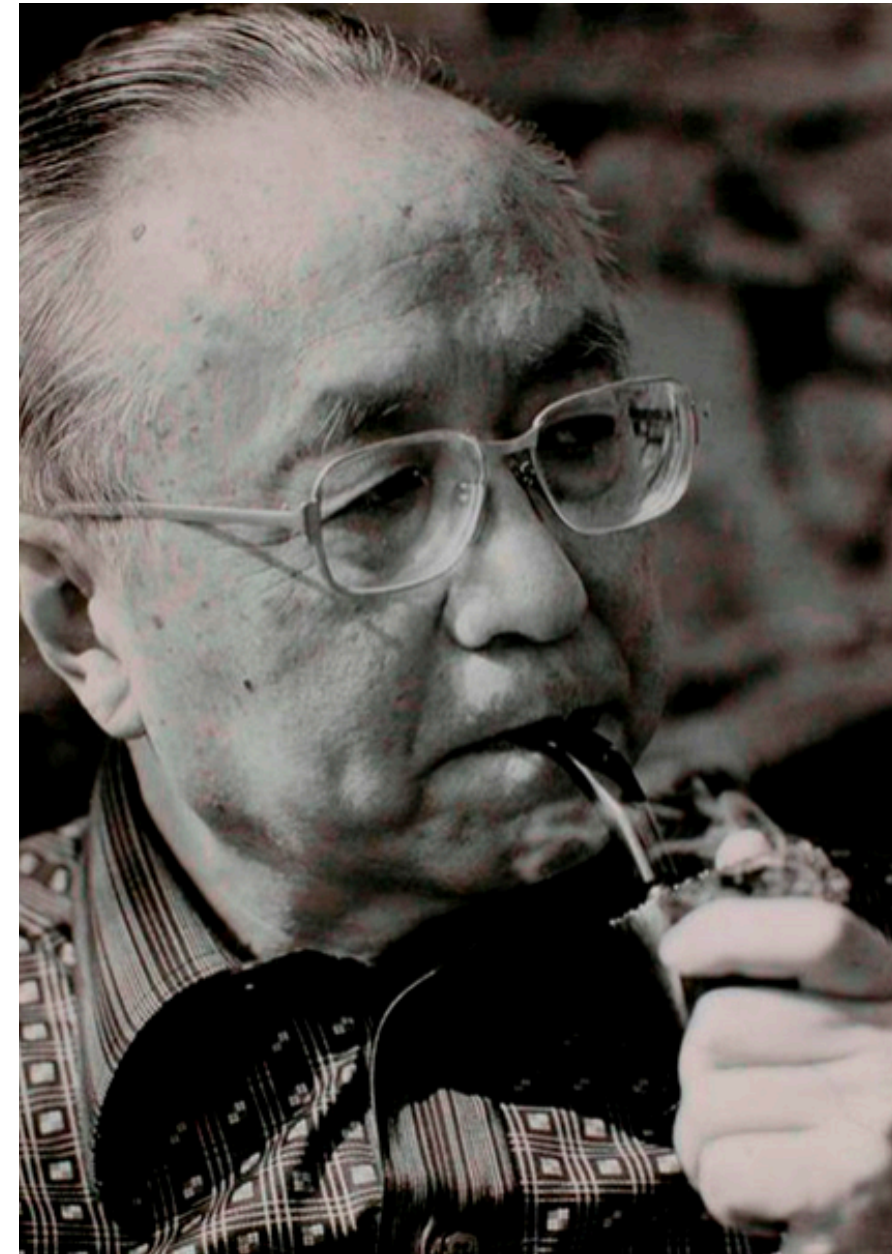
Language of Genius

4 May 1914 --- 7 January 1993

From Tokyo Japan

Scholar, specialized in Islamic studies

Mastered 30 languages



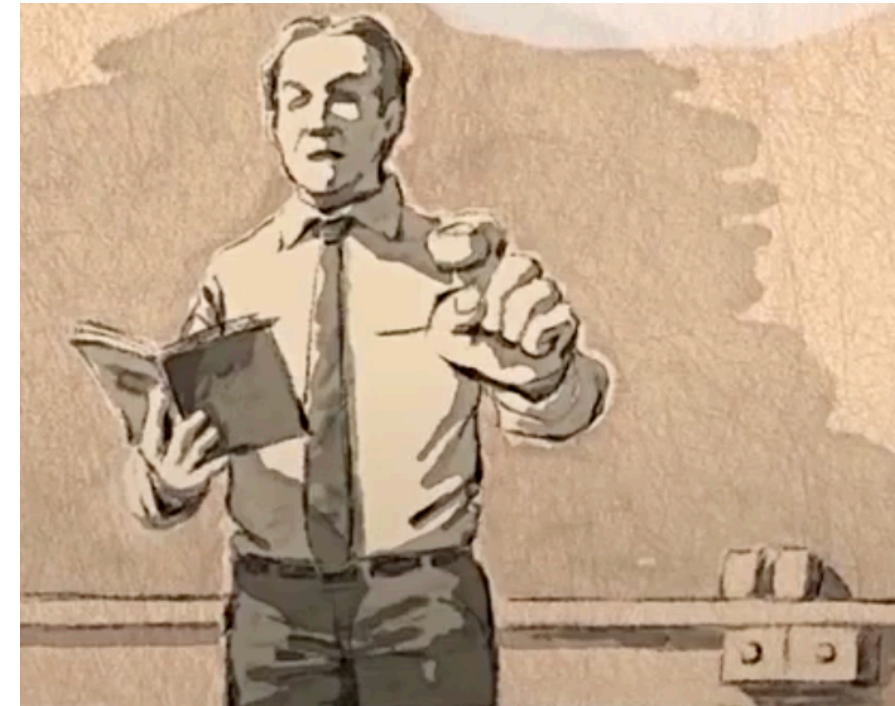
# Different Languages, Different Perspectives

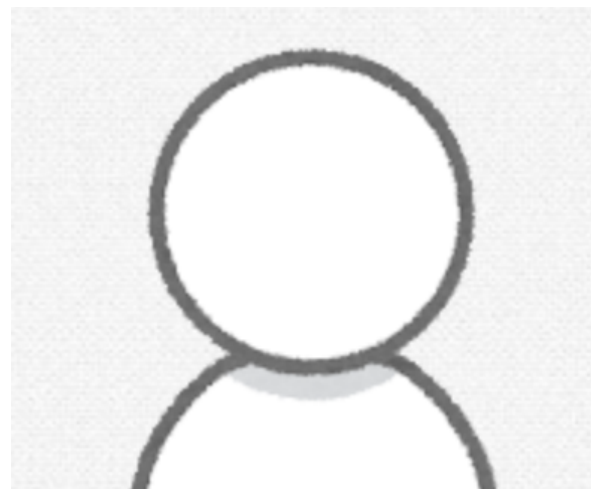
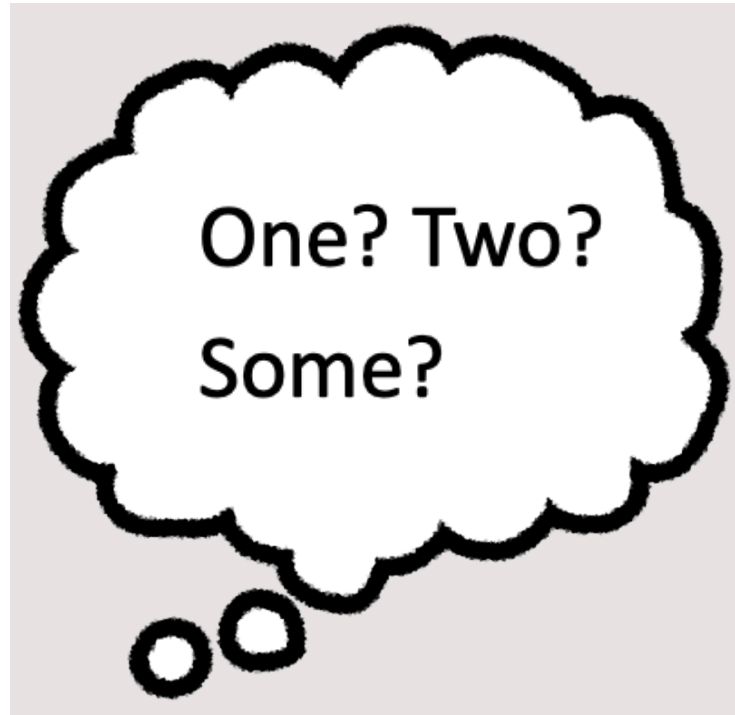
1) There **is an apple** on the table.

2) There **are apples** on the table.

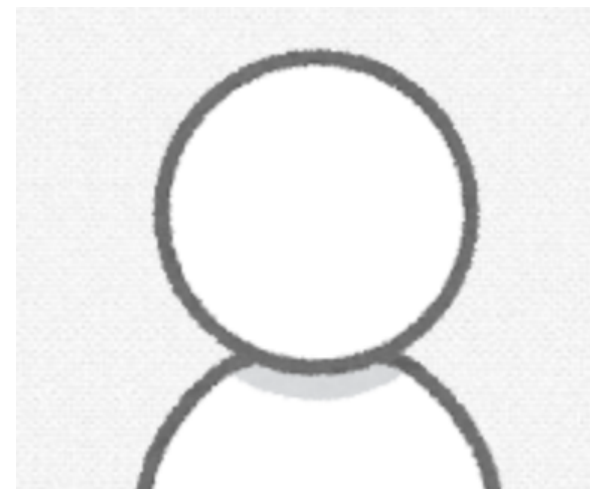
1) テーブルの上にはりんごがあります。

2) テーブルの上にはりんごがあります。





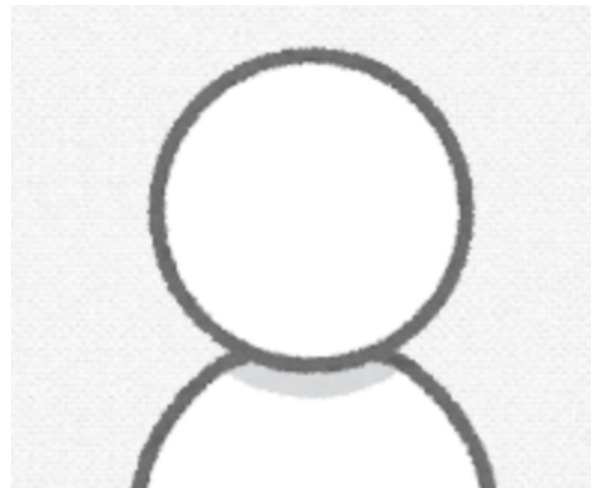
English Speakers



Japanese Speakers

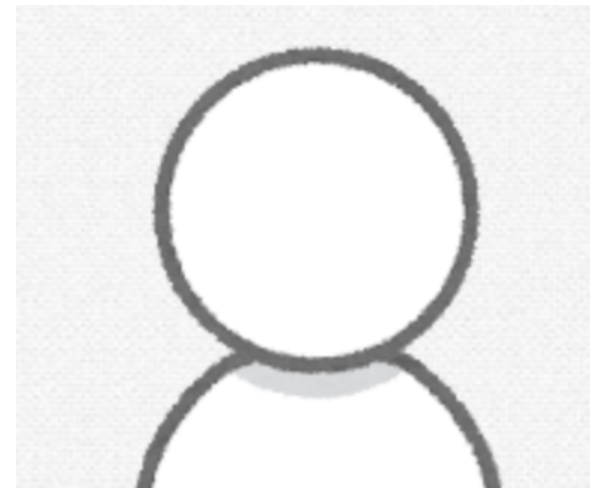
must mention  
how many...

don't have to mention  
how many...



English Speakers

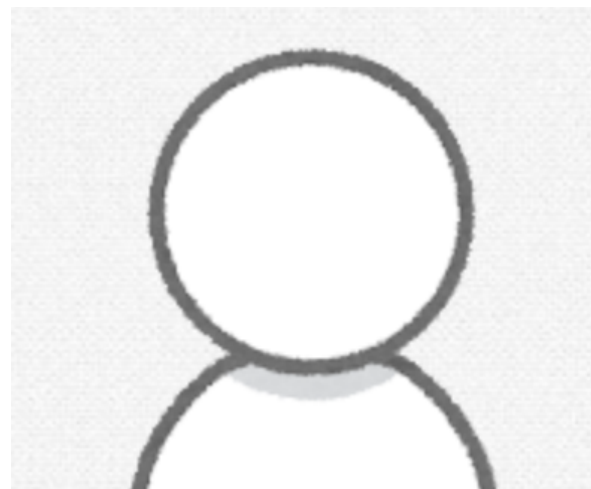
Notion of  
number



Japanese Speakers

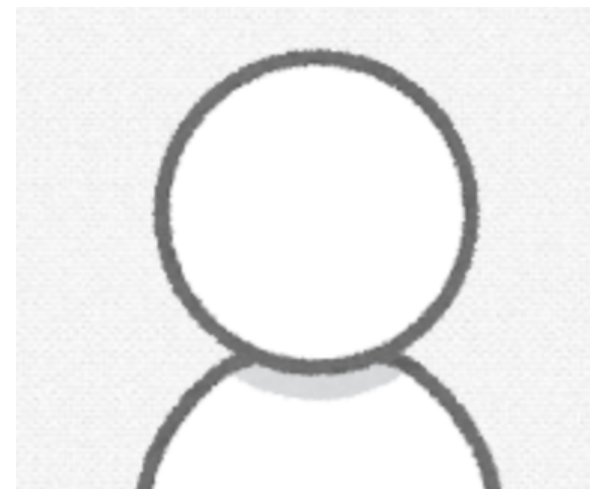
I did it. (past)  
I do it. (present)  
I will do it. (future)

しました。 (complete)  
します。 (incomplete)  
します。 (incomplete)



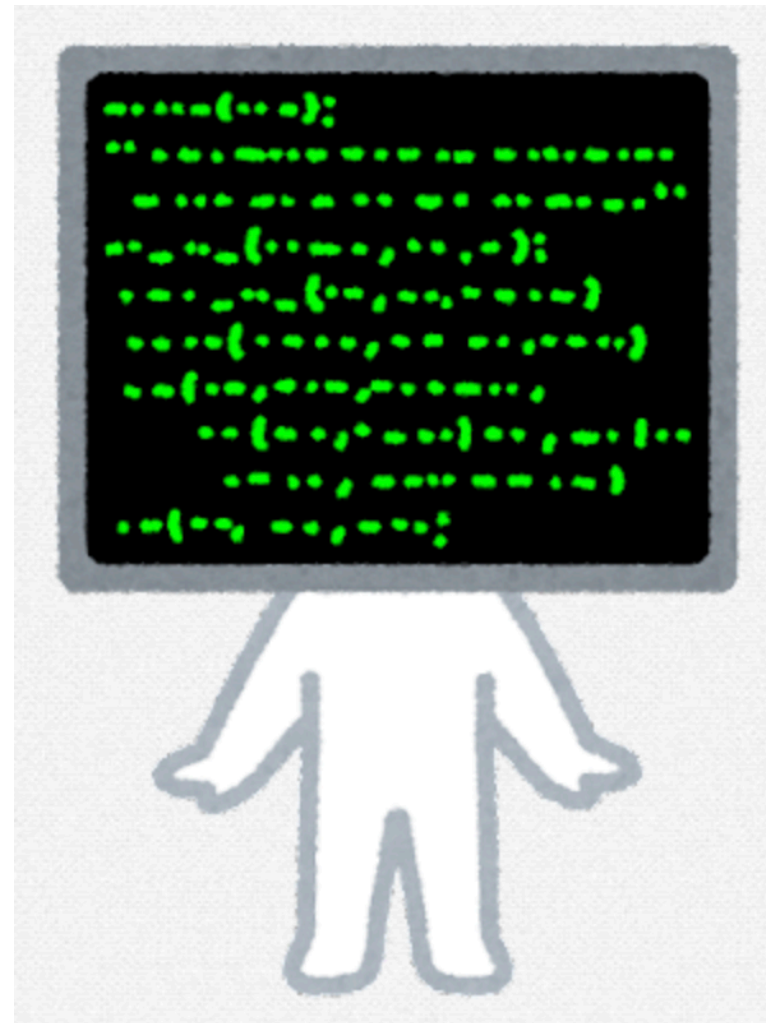
English Speakers

Notion of  
tense



Japanese Speakers

# Possibility of Universal Language





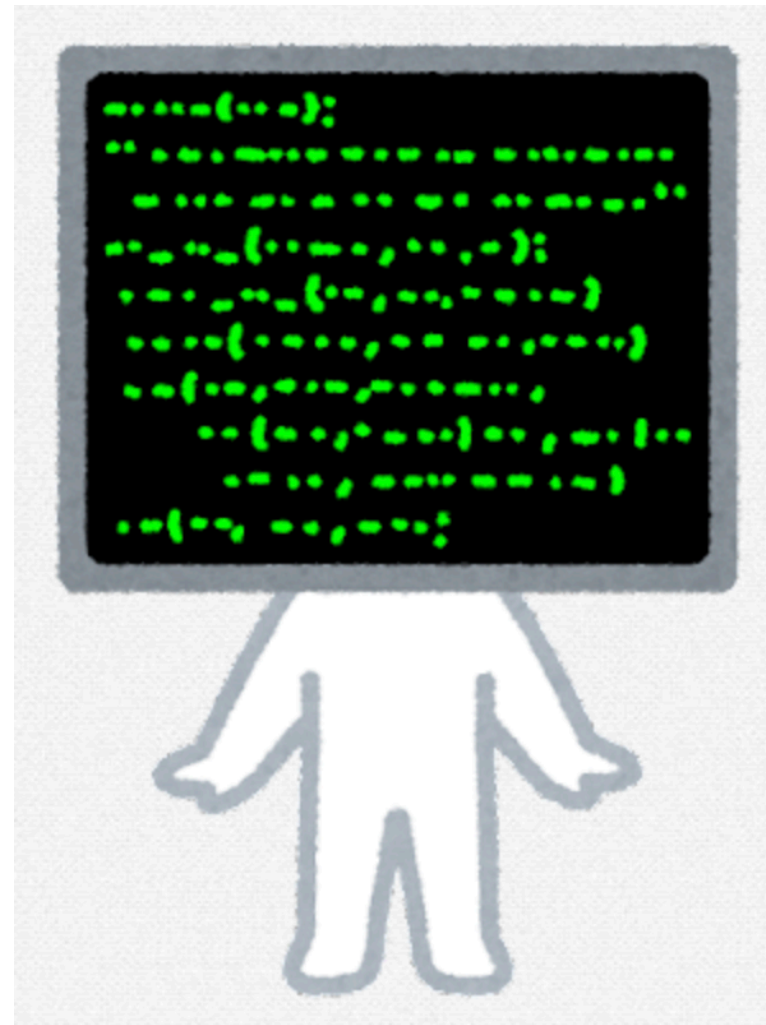
# How language is made

Religion

History

Culture

Weather



Economy

People

Geography

Science

Conclusion:

Languages: Diverse

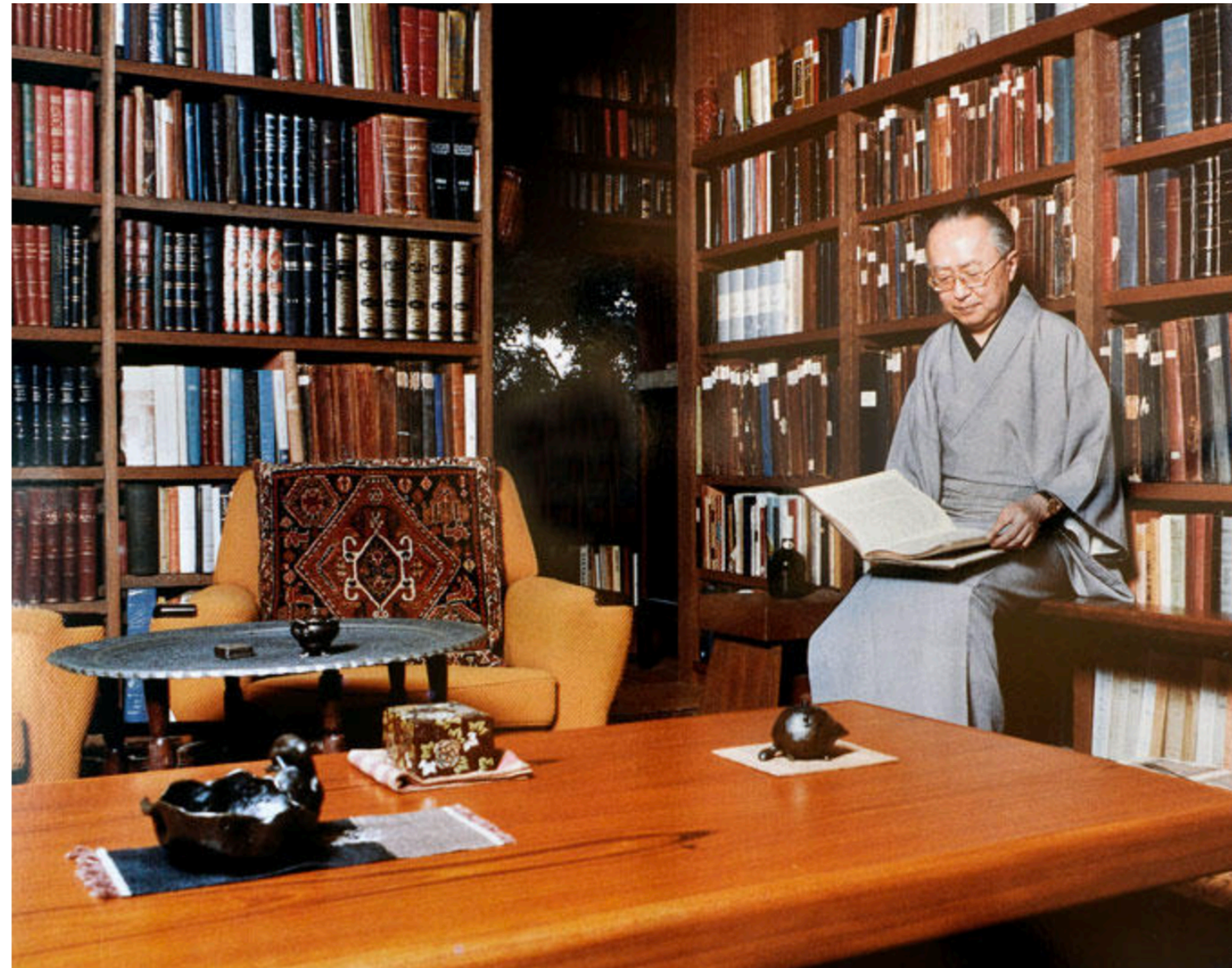
Thoughts: Universal

One Global Language:

Challenging even with AI

Linguistic diversity:

Beauty



# References

- “Toshihiko Izutsu: The Genius That Bridged East & West.” *Keio Times*, 28 May 2021. *Google Scholar*, <https://www.keio.ac.jp/en/keio-times/features/2021/4/>
- NHK, hosted by Sahel Rosa *イスラムに愛された日本人 知の巨人・井筒俊彦* *YouTube*, uploaded by shichokaku\_shitsu, 27 Nov. 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUTw0H4IVbo&t=383s>
- Khalil, Atif. “Chapter 26 Remembering Toshihiko Izutsu: Linguist, Islamicist, Philosopher.” *Islamic Thought and the Art of Translation*, 2023, pp. 528- 529. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004529038\\_027](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004529038_027)
- Koyasan University *第15回高野山大学フジキン小川修平記念講座講演会 高木先生公演「存在とコトバの神秘学—井筒俊彦の空海論—」* *YouTube*, uploaded by the official website of Koyasan University, 13 Jan. 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dVJmIWWfELQ&t=498s>