

Changes from Dialect Use to Standard Language Use along the West Coast of Japan

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1. Introduction

This study focuses on the variations between dialect use and standard language, especially in the use of honorific expressions. I will discuss what kinds of factors cause the language changes. First, I will explain honorific expressions in Japanese and the methodology used in the survey. Then the results of the survey will be shown using tables and graphs. Finally, I will discuss the causes of the language changes.

The survey was carried out along west coast of Japan from 2004 to 2008. The total distance traveled to conduct the survey by train was almost 1000 km. When you go by car, it takes about 25 hours (Aomori to Niigata 467.2Km, Niigata to Kyoto 571.1Km). There are no recent studies on language changes all the way from Aomori to Kyoto along the west coast of Japan and this study could provide the newest language usage data and discussion of such available.

2. Honorific expressions in Japanese

Honorific expressions in the Japanese language are systematically included in grammar. There are mainly three different types of expressions (Tsujimura 1992: 226). Honorific expressions are ornately structured and highly prescribed so one cannot communicate without them. First, so called *teineigo* (standard polite form), adding the polite copula *-desu* to nouns and adjectives. For example *Kyo wa yasumi desu* (Today is a holiday). When you say this with a non-polite verb, it becomes *yasumi-da*. This is done using the polite affirmative inflection *-masu*, which is affixed to verb-stems derived from the plain or non-polite verb. For example the *teineigo* form of the verb *taberu* (to eat) becomes *tabe-masu*. The noun-adjective-prefixes, *o-* and *go-* are used for *teineigo*, such as *o-misoshiru* (miso soup), and *go-aisatsu* (greetings).

Second, there is a humble form, applied to oneself, called *kenjogo*. The humble form of the verb 'to say' is expressed by means of productive honorific (*o-hanashi-suru*; that is, *o-/go-* is prefixed to the stem of the plain verb *hanasu* further followed by the light verb *suru*), or the honorific humble verb, *mooshiageru*, may be chosen.

Third, there is an exalting form, applied to others, *sonkeigo*. For example ‘to say’ is produced as either *ohanashi-ni-naru* (that is, *o-/go-* is prefixed to the plain verb stem *hanasu* further followed by *ni naru*), or the exalting verb, *ossharu* may be chosen.

For the use of honorific expressions in Japanese, the addressee and referent related concerns operate together. The relative social position of the speakers and in- or out-group membership, gender, age and other social variables are also taken into consideration (Tsujimura 1992: 506-507).

3. Previous Studies

According to result of an opinion poll on language consciousness in Japan (NHK 1996: 343-356, 357-363), Honkawa (2010:63) clarified prefectural differences in language consciousness. These differences were classified by degrees of attachment to dialect use and how much people are embarrassed by using their dialect. The prefectures were divided into four parts. Firstly, prefectures where people like their dialect though they are embarrassed about using it, such as Akita, Aomori and Iwate (mainly the Tohoku region). Secondly, prefectures where people like their dialect and they are not embarrassed about using it, such as Okinawa and Hokkaido (areas far from the central part of Japan). Thirdly, areas where they don’t like their dialect and are embarrassed, such as Ibaraki, Tochigi and Fukui (North Kanto and Hokuriku districts). Fourthly, places where people don’t like their dialect but are not embarrassed, such as Chiba and Saitama (areas near Tokyo).

“Higher” and “lower” regions historically and culturally also have impacts on the use of language (Jin-nouch 1996:9). Through Japanese standardization advanced by education or by mass communication, whether they like it or not, most Japanese people mastered language competence in both their spoken dialect and standard Japanese (Kobayashi 1996:6). They can choose which language style to use depending on the situation, topic or partner to whom they are speaking.

Miyaji(1996:294) says that in northern parts of Japan (Tohoku region), honorific expressions are gradually declining in power. This is because honorific expressions were originally used in specific classes and functions of expressions were very limited. On the other hand, people change their manner of speaking to suit the occasion with both standard Japanese and their dialect in honorific expressions in western parts of Japan where it was developed by frequent use.

4. Research Methodology

The Glottogram method, which draws a map geo-linguistically by railways and the age of informants¹, was used. Correspondence analysis is also used for statistical processing. Survey data from the northernmost part of Japan to Kyoto (2004-2008) is used.

5. Survey

The total distance covered by the survey is 1078 km (Figure 1). The number of places is 147 points². The number of people surveyed is 588. The informants ranged in age from 12 to 70. The number of questions is 74 in the north parts and 98 in the south west. Depending on the participants, some questions were not meaningful. In such cases, some questions were omitted.

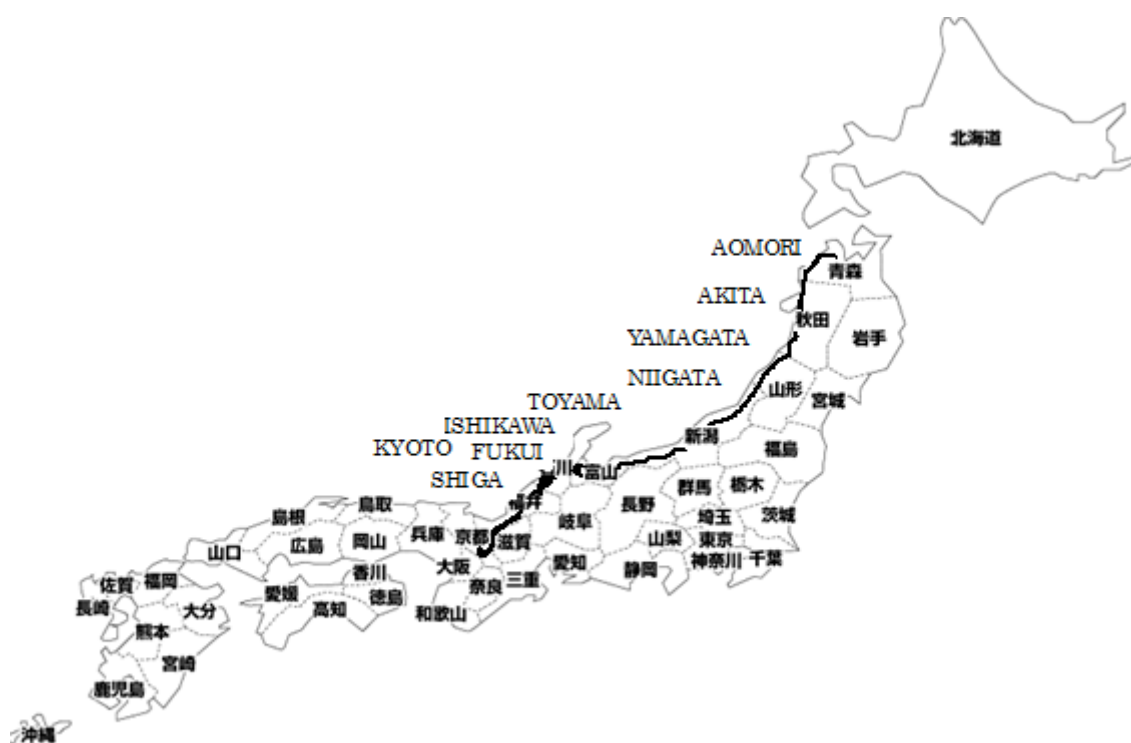


Figure 1: Map of the survey along west coast of Japan from 2004 to 2008.

Questions in the questionnaire were as follows;

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Yasushi Hanzawa (Fukushima University) who created the glottogram software and collaborated in making graphs.

² This study had received the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research of JSPS (Japan Society for the Promotion of Science) from 2006 to 2007 and 2008 to 2010. This project was represented by Prof. Fumio Inoue. When the research group for the survey was organized, I was one of the members of this study and participated in the survey.

1. Kiita (I have heard)

You greet an extremely respectable older person.

When you say I have heard he was sick in bed from his wife the other day, what would you say for the part, “I have heard?”

2. Iruka (Is he present?)

What would you say when you have met the principal of a school and you ask if professor X is at school now?

3. Kaita (Did you draw it?)

You ask a respectable teacher if they drew this picture. How would you ask?

According to the degree of politeness of expression, scores are given for each expression.

6. Results of survey

6.1. Areas less polite and the most polite

Correspondence analysis was used (Figure 2). Areas using polite and less polite forms are shown in the X axis. Perceptions of near to Tokyo and far from Tokyo are shown in the Y axis. Areas are divided into three.

The area where the most polite language is used is Kyoto and this area is the farthest from Tokyo culturally in the west coastal survey areas of the main island of Japan. The areas where the less polite language is used are Yamagata, Akita, Aomori, and Niigata. People recognize these areas are far from Tokyo. The third area includes Toyama, Ishikawa, Fukui, and Shiga.

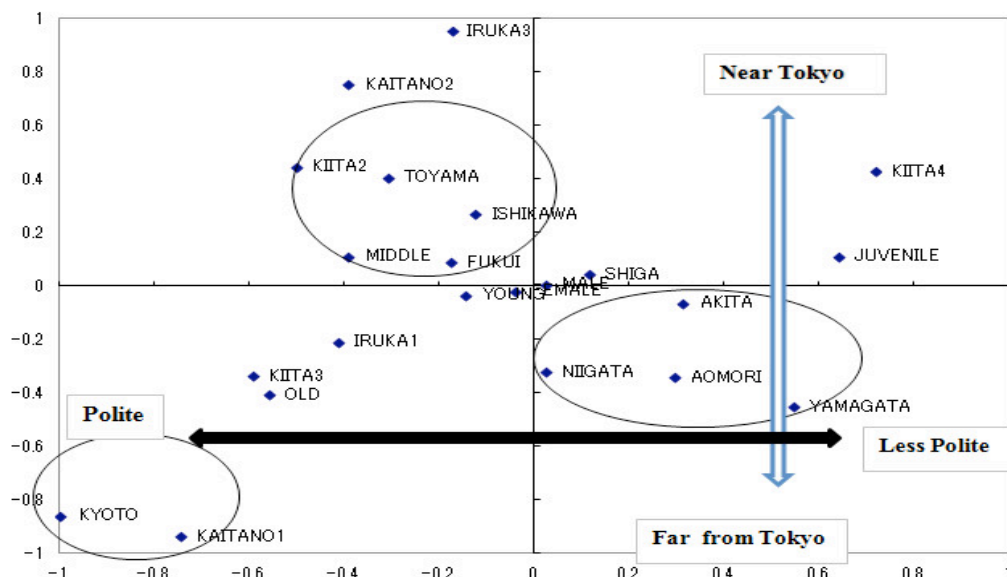


Figure 2: Correspondence analysis on honorific expressions

6.2. Dialect and honorific expression use

Table 1 shows an average proportion of dialect use to standard language in honorific expressions. By the ratio of standard language, the west coast side of Japan is divided into three areas. The highest ratio of areas such as Niigata, Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui are the most advanced areas in standardization. Second is the Kyoto area, and the farthest part of the Main Island to the north from Aomori to Yamagata is third. The northern areas largely maintain their dialect. Dialect use in the north, which includes Aomori, Akita, and Yamagata, was between 22% and 35.4%.

Based on the establishment of social class, honorific expressions were developed around Kyoto, where the imperial family lived. Use of “-haru” like “kaka-haru” (the person being addressed draws or you draw) of honorific expressions is one of the typical dialects developed in the Kyoto area.

This form remains also in Shiga prefecture. The honorific expression “-reru” like “kaka-reru” (you draw) is also popular around Kyoto and the west part of Japan. We also see the strong influence of Kyoto and western Japan in “-reru” form use, and this tendency has spread to Toyama, the middle part of Honshu, the main island. The dialect is maintained and on the other hand the standardization is also advancing around Kyoto. Standardization is advancing toward the north.

	Number of Answer (13)	Dialect Use (8.9%)	Standard Language use (79.2%)	Honorific -haru use (5.3%)	Honorific -reru use (17.8%)
AOMORI	8	25.0%	70.8%	0.0%	4.2%
AKITA	64	35.4%	61.5%	0.0%	7.3%
YAMAGATA	59	22.0%	76.3%	0.0%	4.0%
NIIGATA	89	15.4%	83.1%	0.0%	10.1%
TOYAMA	76	17.1%	82.0%	0.9%	43.4%
ISHIKAWA	69	11.6%	87.4%	0.0%	24.2%
FUKUI	63	2.6%	94.7%	0.0%	20.1%
SHIGA	81	24.3%	73.3%	22.2%	22.2%
KYOTO	4	16.7%	83.3%	16.7%	25.0%

Table 1: Standard language use and honorific expression use

6.3. Glottogram from Aomori to Niigata “Shinai (do not do)”

To conform the results of the survey on honorific expressions, we refer to the result of the Glottogram from Aomori to Niigata “Shinai (do not do)” (Figure 3).

As Honshu, Japan’s Main Island, is long and slim, the whole Glottogram is too long. The figure was divided into two parts. This is the northern half of the Glottogram.

This is the Glottogram of the nai-form, the negative form Shinai (do not do). The question is “What would you say to describe the situation when someone does not do something although you asked them to?”. From the left line, the ID code, prefecture, name of the railway station, and the year of the birth of the respondents are shown. ◇ A lozenge mark means Shin-ne and its variation. / An oblique mark indicates Shin or Sen and their variations. Both ◇ lozenge and / oblique are dialect use. • Black dot means standard language of Shinai. Standardization of Shinai is developing in teenagers of Akita and Niigata. Niigata is the nearest place to Tokyo by Shinkan-sen (the bullet train) among all of the places chosen for the survey.

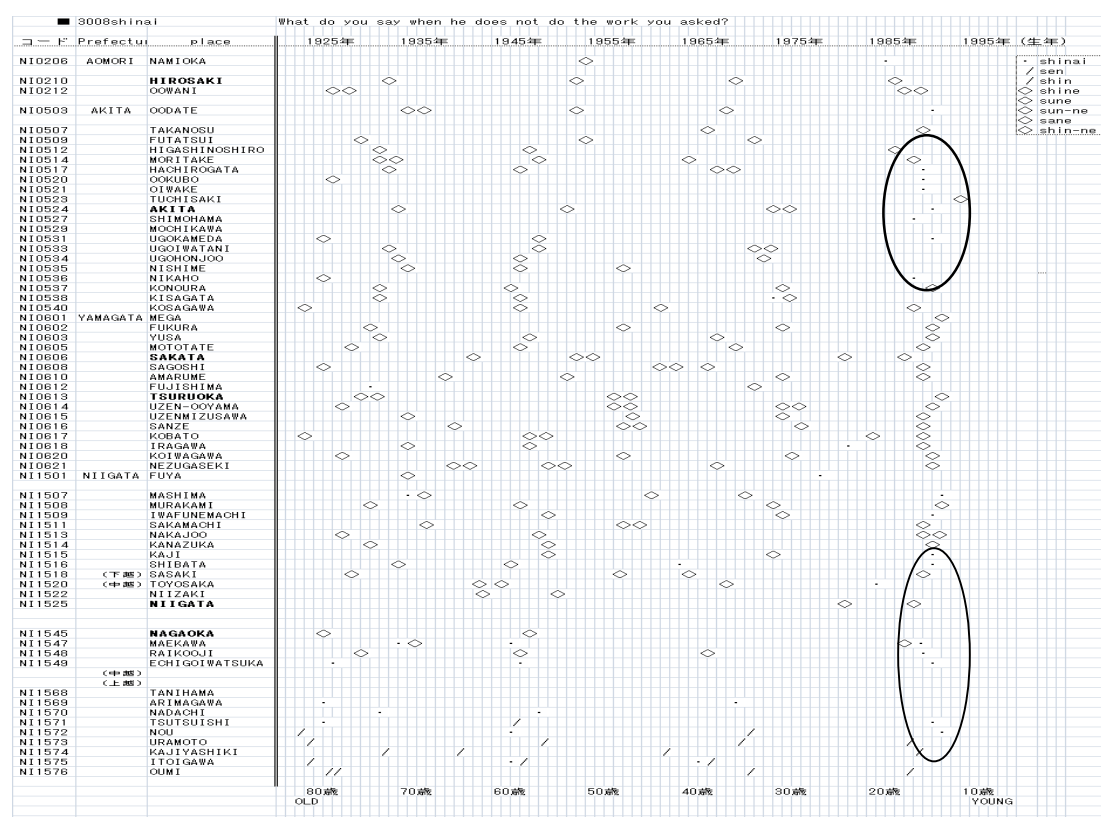


Figure 3: Glottogram from Aomori to Niigata “Shinai(do not do)”

6.4. Glottogram from Toyama to Kyoto “Shinai (do not do)”

This is a glottogram of Shinai (do not do) of southwestern part of the main island (Figure 4). / An oblique line indicates Sen (do not do) and its variations. ▲ A black triangle indicates Shiya-hen (do not do) or Se-hen and its variations. / An oblique and ▲ a black triangle both indicate dialect use. On the other hand, • a black dot, the standard language, Shinai can be seen in Fukui prefecture. Fukui is in between Kanazawa city in Ishikawa prefecture and

Kyoto. Kanazawa city is a historical castle city called little Kyoto. According to NHK, Japan Broadcasting Corporation (1996), people in Fukui are most likely to think that the use of their dialect is shameful. 26.9% of people feel it is embarrassing to speak in dialect and attachment to the regional dialect is very low. The standardization of Shinai is developing in teenagers of Akita in the north also. People in Akita also think the use of their local dialect is shameful.

Shiga prefecture also lies between Ishikawa prefecture and Kyoto. As Shiga prefecture is next to Kyoto, people maintain Kyoto dialect and they don't feel that dialect use is shameful as in Fukui when the language originates from Kyoto. Shiga was once Japan's capital in 663 even though it was for a short time. They prefer to commute to Kyoto. So the sense of distance from Kyoto is closer than in Fukui even though Fukui prefecture is also next to Shiga.

In Akita prefecture, which is in the north, we found little movement of standardization among the young generation. People in Akita feel embarrassed about their dialect just like people in Fukui. The difference is the attachment to the regional dialect is not as low as in Fukui (NHK: 1996:343-356,357-363). Standardization in Fukui penetrates through generations. The lack of attachment to dialect advances standardization more than a feeling of embarrassment.

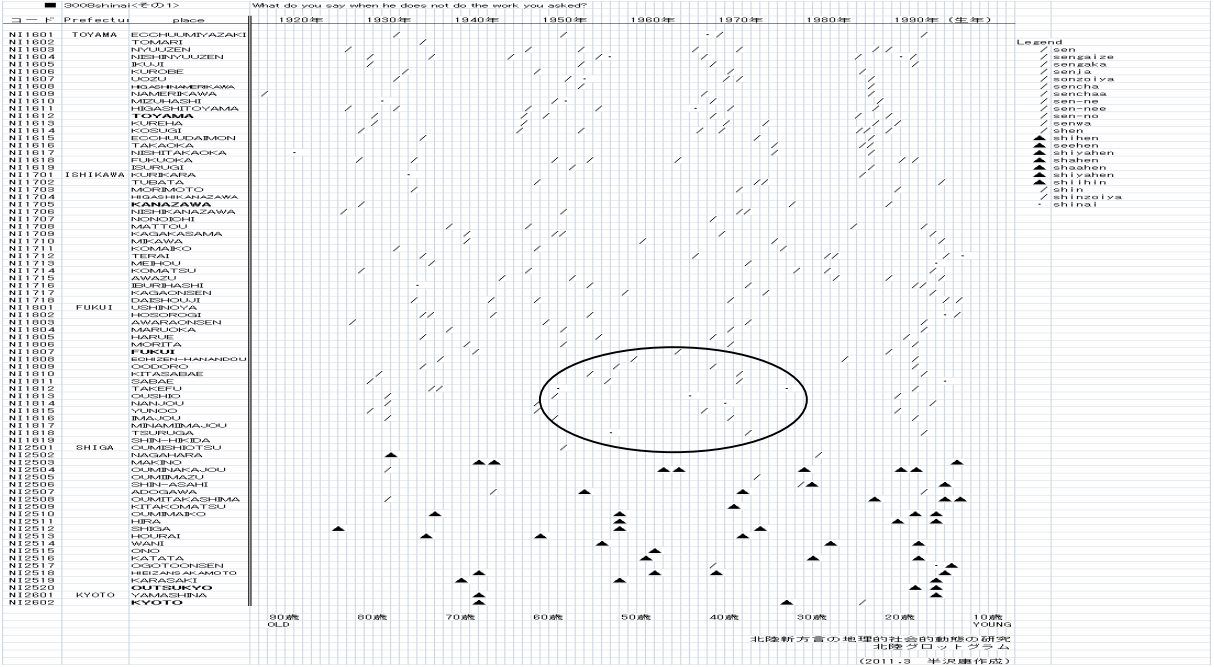


Figure 4: Glottgram from Toyama to Kyoto “Shinai (do not do)”

7. Conclusion

The regions where dialects are maintained and replaced by standard language are divided into three areas. The further north one may go, the more the forms of honorific expressions become simple and there is an increase in the use of dialect. In the areas where the cultural and historical factors are influenced by Kyoto, the honorific forms of Kyoto dialect are maintained. Thirdly, factors that cause language changes and standardization are related to the fact that people are self-conscious about the use of their dialect. In areas closer to Tokyo, there tends to be more usage of standard Japanese due to people being conscious of their language behavior, and this is common in city people.

As a result of this analysis, we can conclude as follows:

- (1) Kyoto dialect of honorific -haru is maintained in Kyoto and Shiga. The maintenance of honorific expressions is related to the historical and cultural background, especially around Kyoto. The honorific expression “-haru” (Kyoto dialect) is used by almost all generations. Language consciousness or confidence supported by the cultural background acts strongly on the use of language. The prestige of their cultural background supports their language use.
- (2) The influence of the western way of saying “-reru” reaches the middle of the main island, at Toyama prefecture. This means the cultural influence of Kyoto might be stronger than the influence of Tokyo in the southwestern part of mainland Japan.
- (3) Standardization is proportional to the distance from Tokyo. However, Fukui prefecture marked the highest ratio of standardization (94%) in the use of honorific expressions. The use of -haru in Kyoto dialect honorific expressions is 0% in Fukui. People in Fukui think that the use of their dialect is shameful and this consciousness might have affected their usage of language.
- (4) When districts are far from both Tokyo and Kyoto, such as in Yamagata, Akita, and Aomori, attachment to language acts on the use of dialect more powerfully than the awareness of language such as in feelings of embarrassment related to speaking in a local dialect. The most simple polite form (to put -masu to the stem of verb) is popularly used among verbs.

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