

Real Time Change in Intra-speaker Variation: Evidence from Kushiro Japanese

Yoshiyuki Asahi

NINJAL

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to report a real-time change in intra-speaker variation with a special reference to a Kurshiro dialect in Hokkaido by using two survey results in 1985 and 2011/2012. One lexical item is chosen to examine the real-time change in two stylistically different settings in the two surveys.

Nearly a half-century's history in urban dialectology/sociolinguistics has enabled us to conduct a real-time study to describe to what extent linguistic changes actually have been taken place during two or three survey periods. In other words, we could examine what apparent time change indicates. In fact, a number of real-time studies have been conducted in English, French, Finish, Japanese, and so forth (Sankoff and Blondeau 2007; Blondeau 2001; Boberg 2004; Yoneda 1997; Nankola and Saanilahti 2004, etc.).

This paper pays a close attention to one of the major city dialects in Hokkaido, i.e. Kushiro. Fortunately enough, Circle of Hokkaido Dialect and Hokkaido University conducted a dialectological survey on Kushiro dialect in 1980s. Yoshimitsu Ozaki and the author had an opportunity to conduct a second survey in 2011 and 2012 towards 206 Kushiro residents, using the same questionnaire as the first survey. This survey was designed and conducted as one of the research activities of the project at NINJAL, called 'Contact dialectology and sociolinguistic typology' in 2010-2012. Twenty years' real-time change in this dialect can be observed using the two survey results.

What characterizes this study most is that it focuses on the intra-speaker variation and its real-time change. Most urban dialectological studies have paid a close attention to the Labovian sense of the 'vernacular.' Realizations of the variants in any linguistic categories of the vernacular have been well studied. However, taking it into consideration that many dialects including Japanese have been disappearing, it is necessary to examine the process of standardization/other kinds of linguistic changes with a strong relationship to the stylistic variation. In other words, once non-dialectal features in casual settings replace one dialectal variant, it is not possible to conduct further researches as long as the survey only deals with the vernaculars.

On the other hand, an increase in non-dialectal variant enables us to examine how changes in the stylistic variation are realized in the change especially from dialectal features to non-dialectal features. What is more, real-time analyses of this stylistic variation should be intriguing in the sense that we could construct a more exact path of linguistic change from either below or above.

This paper will firstly illustrate the survey design, survey site, and informants. Secondly, analysis of one lexicon, ‘tookibi/toomorokosi’(in English, ‘corn’) will be made. Thirdly, I will discuss on the directions of linguistic change. Lastly, based on these discussion, this paper will provide summary and point out possible future research topics.

2. Survey design

This section gives an overview of the two surveys conducted in Kushiro.

2.1. Location

As shown in Figure 1, Kushiro is located along the coastline of Hokkaido, and it is one of the major cities within Hokkaido. The population is 182,372 in 2012 (Kushiro city 2012).



Figure 1: Location of Kushiro

2.2. Dialect divisions in Hokkaido Japanese

Hokkaido Japanese is said to have two major dialect divisions: a coastal dialect and an inland dialect. A coastal dialect of Hokkaido has distribution along the coastline whereas an inland dialect of Hokkaido has it in the middle of the Hokkaido (for the detailed distribution, see figure 2).

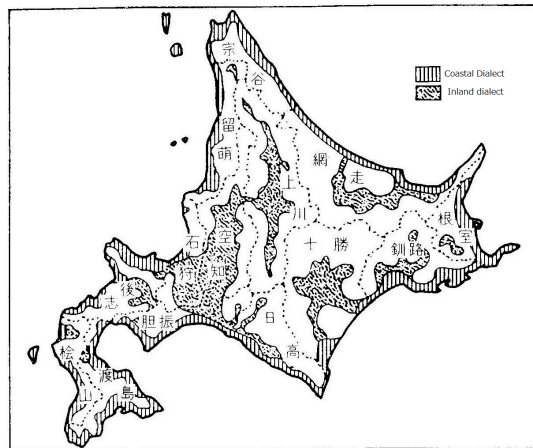


Figure 2: Dialect division of Hokkaido Japanese (Igarashi 1982)

It is said that a coastal dialect has stronger accent than an inland dialect. This difference has a lot to do with the immigration pattern. Coastal area of Hokkaido has more migrants from the northern part of mainland Japan, i.e. Tohoku region, whilst inland area of Hokkaido has more migrants from other parts of Japan. This is reflected in the differences between two major dialect divisions. Kushiro dialect, a target dialect in this paper, belongs to the coastal dialect. It follows that the results in this paper does show the real-time language change from the coastal dialect features in favor of Tokyo Japanese features.

2.3. Kushiro Surveys

Hokkaido Dialect has been studied from a number of perspectives. It goes without saying that dialectological studies have dealt with the Kushiro dialect. As mentioned earlier, a quantitative study was designed and conducted in 1986 by the Dialectological Circle of Hokkaido and Hokkaido University. At this survey, a total number of 246 Kushiro residents (aged between 15 and 69) were interviewed. Interviews were conducted with a questionnaire, which consists of questions on greeting expressions, lexicon, morphology, phonology/phonetics, accentuation patterns, and language attitudes.

In this questionnaire, some lexical items had two survey settings to measure stylistic variation. One informal situation (‘when talking to your friends’) and the other formal situation (‘when interviewed by TV announcers.’) were prepared in the questionnaire.

A second survey was designed and conducted in 2011 and 2012, following the research methods in the first survey. With a close look at the survey results of the first survey (Ozaki and Asahi 2010), some questions were replaced by other questions especially when dialectal

forms were not used at all or rarely used. Instead, more questions dealing with the stylistic variation were added to the questionnaire. Two stylistic settings in the second survey were revised: one informal situation (‘when talking to your friends’) and the other formal situation (‘when interviewed by a TV foreign announcers.’).

It is true that formal situation in two surveys may be different. Foreign TV announcer might not be appropriate. However, the reason why we chose this situation is that it would be quite common for the local people of Kushiro to use their local dialect when TV announcers interview them. The main purpose of this ‘formal’ situation lies in that speakers are expected to use standard Japanese. We thought that they would be in more formal situation when a foreign announcer who speaks Japanese fluently interviews them.

A survey company, not by authors, conducted survey itself. They employed their sampling technique to choose respondents. Respondents’ age ranged between 15 and 69. This sampling technique is different from the first survey. At the first survey, respondents were chosen on the basis of the families or households with three generations. In a strict sense, the randomness is different between the two surveys, but we decided to treat two survey data in the same way. We had two survey periods (November 2011 and May 2012), each had three weeks, and aimed to collect 100 respondents. At the end, a total number of 206 responded to the interview.

With a close look at the questions in two surveys, we found that one lexical item (‘tookibi/toomorokosi’) was included in both surveys with two stylistic situations. At the interview, the data for this item was obtained from the question to ask respondents to name the corn both in casual and formal situations by showing a following picture. The rest of this paper will look into the survey results of this particular item.

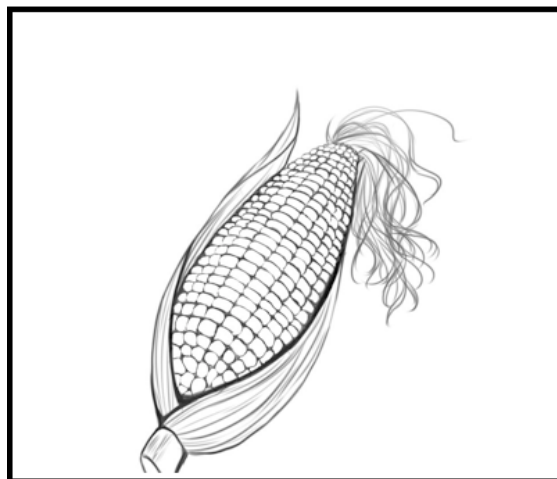


Figure 3: A picture used at the interview

3. Results

This section looks into the survey results of ‘tookibi’ and ‘toomorokosi’ in both informal and formal settings. Firstly, let us take a look at the result for the ‘tookibi’ in the two situations.

Figure 2 shows that the percentage of ‘tookibi’ in the informal situation (i.e. ‘at home’) does not change in the respondents’ birthyear. The percentage itself remains quite high in the 1900-1909 group (100%) and 1990 and 1999 group (85.7%). The percentage in the formal situation (i.e. ‘interviewed’) ranges between 66.7% and 21.1%. It can be said that at casual situation, ‘tookibi’ is widely used regardless of the birthyear of the respondents.

Secondly, comparing the two survey results, the percentage of ‘tookibi’ in formal situation increases in birthyear group of 1940-1949 and 1970-1979 whereas that of ‘tookibi’ in informal situation decreases in the birthyear group of 1930-1939 and 1950-1959. As a tendency, we could infer that the ‘tookibi’ itself can be used in both situations.

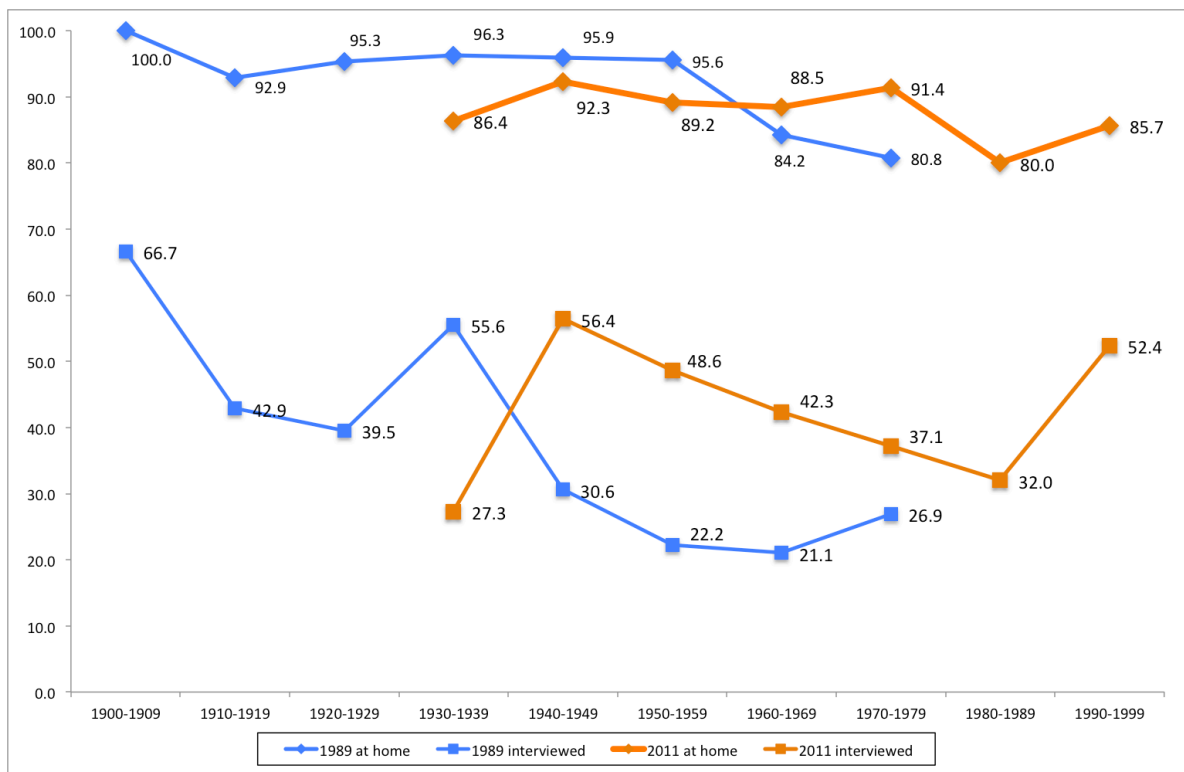


Figure 2: Percentage of ‘tookibi’ in two situations

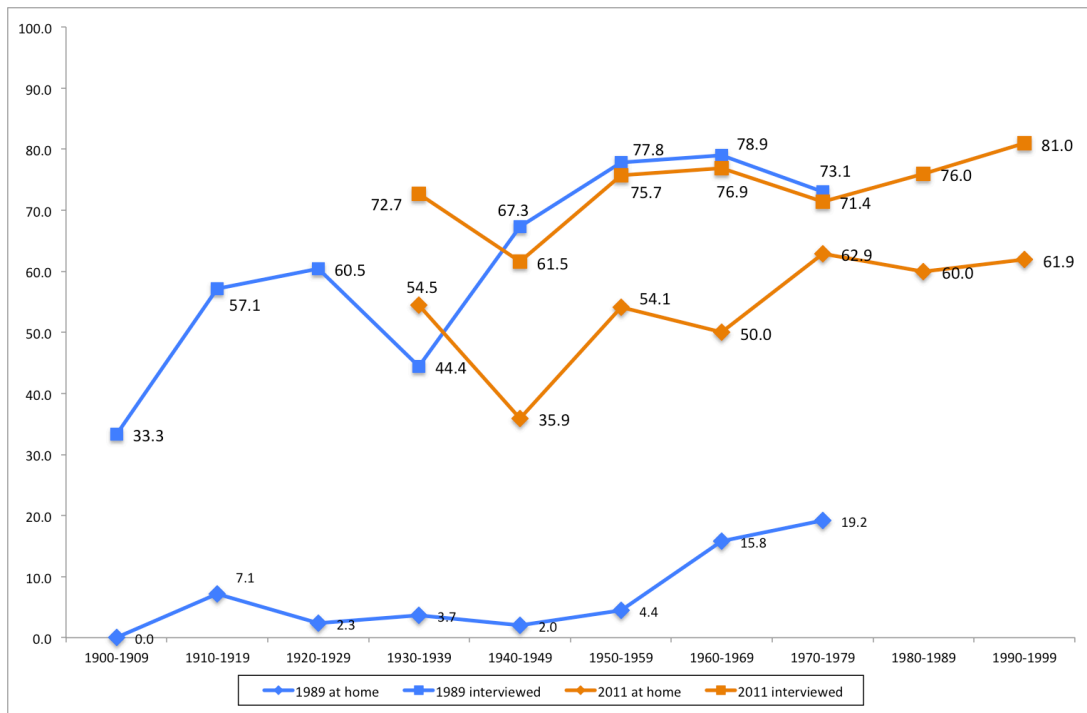


Figure 3: Percentage of 'toomorokosi' in two situations

Thirdly, the differences of the percentage in the same birthyear group become smaller in the second survey. It indicates that 'tookibi' show a weaker correlationship of the stylistic variation.

Let us now take a look at the other form, 'toomorokosi.' Figure 3 shows that 'toomorokosi' is more frequently used in the formal situation ('interviewed') than the informal situation ('at home') in the two surveys. Also, the difference between the two surveys is very small for the formal situation.

On the other hand, the percentage of 'toomorokosi' in the informal situation is quite low in the first survey. It increases in the second survey. The difference of the percentage between the two situations becomes smaller in the second survey whilst that of the percentage in the first survey was large enough to judge the stylistic differences in this form. In this sense, the second survey has smaller stylistic differences.

4. Discussions

Last section showed the survey results of the 'tookibi' and 'toomorokosi' in the two situations. Result indicated that 'tookibi' and 'toomorokosi' is basically stylistically distinguished: 'tookibi' is preferred in the casual situation whereas 'toomorokosi' is preferred in the formal situation.

With a close look at the survey results themselves, we could infer that ‘toomorokosi’ has become more widespread in the second survey than the first survey. Figure 3 showed that ‘toomorokosi’ has been used in both situations whereas the use of ‘tookibi’ is frequently used primarily in the informal situation. In this sense it is possible to assume that the ‘tookibi’ and ‘toomorokosi’ maintains the stylistic differences on the one hand, the replacement of ‘tookibi’ by ‘toomorokosi’ is taken place especially in the informal situation on the other. Change from ‘tookibi’ to ‘toomorokosi’ appears to be the typical case for standardization. It may be true that we saw this change in this lexical item. However, previous studies on dialectology/urban dialectology did not look into the process of HOW this change occurs. In this sense, this study did look into this process, and managed to explain the process itself more in detail.

Moreover, this change in the stylistic variation is first observed in the real-time, two stylistically different data. In this respect, we can see the significance of conducting the surveys on stylistic variation from real-time perspectives.

5. Conclusions

This paper looked into a real-time change in stylistic variation in Kushiro dialect through looking into one lexicon, ‘tookibi/toomorokosi’ as an example. With a brief description of the literature review, this paper illustrated its survey design. We saw survey results of this form in both casual and formal situations in both first and second survey. The results showed that the stylistic differences in both forms became smaller in the second survey. This paper claimed that this change in the stylistic variation may relate to the standardization process. At the same time, it clearly showed that the stylistic change in each form did help us understand the process more in detail.

There are a number of future research topics to be pursued. Another questions in this Kushiro survey should be studied in details although the number of questions dealing with stylistic difference is not large enough. Another research topic would be the regional differences within Kushiro. This survey was designed to interview respondents in three different residential areas (old town area, fishermen’s area, and new residential area). It seems likely that the regional differences should exist in the future analyses.

The second survey was conducted in Sapporo, too. In this sense, it is necessary to make a comparative amount of the real-time change in both Sapporo and Kushiro dialects. What is most important, on the other hand, is the process of how the change (especially towards standard Japanese) is taken place, and how the process in each Sapporo and Kushiro is related.

These research topics should be covered and studied in details in other papers.

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