11 Dialect cosplay

Language use by the young generation

Patrick Heinrich

Introduction

At the end of the 1990s, Asahi Soft Drinks sought to rejuvenate its products, creating the new brand "Wonda" towards this end. They hired Tiger Woods for the first commercial in 1997, and afterwards cool anime producer Studio Ghibli. In 2014, it employed the Japanese girl group AKB48 for a new commercial of "Wonda Coffee Morning Shot". Its 48 members are from all across Japan. Asahi Soft Drinks placed them with a can of Wonda Coffee in their hand in front of famous local landmarks, and had them say in the respective regional dialects, "Hi everybody in Japan – we are totally supporting you".

On YouTube, a young viewer by the name of Chano Satō comments on one of these commercials, "although I am from Chiba, I have never heard the Chiba dialect before".[1] This is not surprising. The prevalent number of young Japanese no longer speaks dialect, and the Chiba dialect was actually one of the first targeted for extinction in the Meiji period (Hokama 1971: 75). Recent surveys reveal that a quarter of the Japanese population do not know whether a dialect was once spoken in the region where they grew up, and more than 70 percent report to use exclusively Standard Japanese in their lives (Tanaka et al. 2016). This number can be expected to be much higher among young Japanese. It is thus not far-fetched to assume that AKB48 members had to practice their lines for the commercial, and that they needed instruction in order to present themselves "locally" via dialect. We can also infer that speaking dialect is now somehow considered "cool".

The situation of AKB48 members purposefully learning to use dialect is noteworthy if we consider how dialects were viewed only half a century before. Consider an example. When the Heisei emperor and Shōda Michiko became engaged in 1958, this was big news. After all, she was the first commoner to ever marry into the imperial family. Empress Michiko had been born in Tokyo but fled to Gunma Prefecture as a 10-year-old in order to escape the Tokyo bombings of 1944. She returned to Tokyo in 1946, but the brief exposure to the Gunma dialect at young age had made her Japanese unacceptable to many. In particular, the fact that she did not use the nasalized variant of the velar plosive (*gagyō bidakuon*), pronouncing for example "east" as /higaʃi/ instead /hiŋaʃi/ made her the subject of criticism. Soon after she entered public life, newspapers disapproved of her pronunciation,

writing "Cannot pronounce *gagyō bidakuon* – Princess Michiko's pronunciation of the Gunma Prefecture accent" (Tōkyō Shinbun, 27 December 1958, quoted from Shioda 2011: 135) until she purposefully corrected her (mis-)pronunciation. The media promptly approved of her newly acquired articulation.

The principle applied to everyone in Japan then. Speaking dialect was seen as a personal shortcoming, an embarrassment. The complete replacement of dialects in favor of Standard Japanese was propagated, a project that resulted for many in what became known as the dialect complex (*hōgen konpurekkusu*). According to Wikipedia (2016), this complex resulted "in neuroses and sometimes even in murder and suicide" but as the standard language skills "of the young improved, this dialect-based inferiority complex faded". Hence, not so long ago dialects were seen as awkward – the language used by the old folks, the ignorant, or the "countryside bumpkins". Now that the young no longer speak dialect, this image has changed. We have arrived at a situation where members of AKB48 pretend to speak regional dialect in a TV commercial.

In the following, I seek to explain how these changes have come about and what they imply for the young generation in present-day Japan. I do so by relating the effects of language standardization on dialect cosplay (*hōgen kosupure*). The first process is not directly related to the young generation, for they were born at a time when the standardization process was completed. However, the generations of their parents and grandparents have been crucially shaped by it, and their attitudes and behaviors towards language contrast with that of the young generation. The second part of this chapter depicts a novel way of speaking Japanese among the young generation, i.e., dialect cosplay.

Language standardization and its social effects

Every language has the double tendency of diversifying and unifying at the same time (Bakhtin 1987). A living language breathes, so to speak. In the course of modernization, the centripetal forces become prevalent and language becomes less diversified or, in the terminology of Bakhtin, it becomes more "monoglossic". In modern societies, language has to be adapted to an industrial and literate society. It has to ensure access to a nationally unified labor market and enable social mobility for everyone. This, together with the novel idea of the nation, results in language standardization. In Japan, like in most other modern societies, a vernacular language variety was chosen, codified, functionally developed and then spread as "standard language" through the modern education system (Heinrich 2012). Quasi as a side effect, the establishment of Standard Japanese resulted in the creation of "dialects", which were seen to be "wrong", "backward", or "uncultivated" (Masiko 2003: 68–70). Dialects came to be perceived as the exact opposite of standard language.[2]

Along these lines of thought, Standard Japanese was not spread as "an additional variety", but dialect was "corrected" into Standard Japanese through language education. This left everybody not (fully) proficient in Standard Japanese suddenly speaking "incorrectly". This had consequences for such speakers,

because we ultimately speak in order "to do things" and "to be someone". Speaking dialect dramatically restricted the possibilities of "what could be done" and "who you could be". In a large number of contexts, use of dialect indexed speakers negatively. This logic affected all dialect speakers, including speakers of the Tokyo dialect, because Standard Japanese was an artificially created variety that had been nobody's native language (Heinrich and Yamashita 2017; Nomura 2013).[3]

Consider the sociolinguistic situation at the time. A good source for the use of Japanese before standardization is the *Linguistic Atlas of Japan* (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 1966–1974). Informants surveyed for the atlas were born between 1879 and 1903. Their language revealed much variation. "Good morning", for example, was *ohayō gozaimasu* in Standard Japanese, but from north to south researchers found *ohayō gozansu* in Iwate, *ohayō gozarisu* in Miyagi, *hayainee* in Chiba, *ohayō gansu* in Kanagawa, *ohayōsan* across Kansai, *oyaō gowasu* in Tokushima, *okinasattaka* in Shimane, *ohayō arimasu* in Yamaguchi and *ohin narimashitaka* in Kagoshima (Sanada 2001: 135). (By the way, these are the very expressions that are used by members of AKB48 in the commercial). Language standardization before 1945 meant to replace such language by Standard Japanese. Placing stigma on dialects and on dialect speakers was a key mechanism towards this end.

Standard Japanese spread from Tokyo across Japan. However, Tōhoku in the north, Shikoku in the west and Kyūshū in the south initially lagged behind. The standard was subsequently spread with yet more fervor there. As an effect, it was already noted in the mid-1970s that Tōhoku dialect speakers spoke dialect in their hometown but had shifted to Standard Japanese in the neighboring municipality (Jugaku 1978). In Ōsaka, Kyōto and the surrounding Kansai plain, the local dialects were maintained relatively well even when Standard Japanese was spread there (Kumagai 2016).[4] Put simply, Kansai speakers did not buy into the language ideology, claiming that their way of speaking was "wrong" while speaking a language associated with the archrival Tokyo was "correct". We will return to this issue further below.

Standard language spread changed its rational after 1945. It now became seen as an important means for democratizing Japanese society. The idea of "Standard Japanese" was relaxed, shifting from a strict 100 percent adherence to the norm (*hyōjungo*) towards the recognition of efforts to follow the norm in the best way possible (*kyōtsūgo*).[5] Towards the end of "language democratization" the Japanese National Language Institute was established, and the numerous surveys on standard language spread it subsequently conducted give us insights into how different generations in Japan speak.

Let us quickly consider two studies to illustrate the language standardization process, firstly an analysis of attitudes towards dialects and standard (Tanaka and Maeda 2012), and then a longitudinal survey of standard language and dialect proficiency (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 2013). In a study clustering types of speakers on the basis of attitudes towards dialect and standard language, Tanaka and Maeda (2012) show three important findings. In order to capture the dynamism

of change, I contrasted their findings with a similar survey carried out in the mid-1970s (Jugaku 1978).

- Individuals using exclusively (or almost exclusively) standard language have been centered in Greater Tokyo for many decades, but we can witness more recently a spread of such types of speakers into the regions surrounding it (Northern Kantō, Koshinetsu, Hokuriku, and Tōkai). Many individuals in Greater Tokyo and its surrounding regions have difficulties identifying the dialect once spoken in their home region.
- Speakers of dialects have predominantly been centered in the Kinki region (Ōsaka, Kyōto, and its surrounding), and recently the use of dialect has been spreading from there into the neighboring regions of Chūgoku and Shikoku.
- In Tōhoku and Kyūshū, informants report to be differentiating between dialect and standard language according to the sociolinguistic situation in which they speak, thus coming closest to the post-war policy ideal of *tsukaiwake*, i.e., a differentiated use of standard and dialect according to context (formal/informal).

We need to be careful when drawing conclusions from these results as they simply reflect what people *state* about their language use. Let us therefore consider how standard language and dialect proficiency has changed after 1945.

Tsuruoka in Yamagata Prefecture was chosen as a case by the Japanese National Language Institute because the linguistic distance between the local dialect and Standard Japanese was large there, and because the city was also geographically isolated. The first survey of 1950 showed that Standard Japanese had not widely spread. The survey was repeated in 1971, 1991, and in 2011 (see Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 2013). Consider the results for *karasu* (crow). Whereas 40 percent of the oldest informants of the first survey (born in 1896) came up with the Standard Japanese expression, the youngest informants (born in 1916) averaged already 60 percent. Slightly less than 60 percent of the oldest informants (born in 1901) produced the standard variety term in 1971 versus 97 percent of the youngest informants (born in 1961). In the third survey, 84 percent of the oldest persons surveyed (born in 1934) answered with the standard variety term while the youngest (born in 1994) accounted for 99 percent. Finally, in the last survey 99 percent of the oldest locals consulted (born in 1934) answered with the standard term, while everybody born afterwards used without fail the standard term. In other words, the standardization process was completed, as everybody could produce the standard language form then.

In preparing the 2011 survey, the National Institute of Japanese Language suspected that most informants were by now speaking Standard Japanese, and it therefore added a new question. Participants were now also asked whether they could imitate (*mane dekiru*) the local dialect. The result showed that informants had retained only partial knowledge (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 2013: 7). It disclosed that there was basically no knowledge that *iki* ("breath") had been *eki* in the local dialect, that *eki* ("train station") had been *iki*, and that *hebi* ("snake")

had been *febi*. Less that 10 percent remembered that *karasu* ("crow") had been *karashi* and that *uchiwa* ("fan") had been *utsuwa*. Almost 90 percent remembered that *neko* ("cat") had been *nego*, though. In the short time span of 60 years, Japan had thus transformed from a dialect-speaking society, where the standard language was learned at school and where speakers were linguistically insecure, into a standard language speaking society where only isolated dialect token were remembered (e.g., *nego*).

While language use between all age cohorts was very similar in the 2011 survey, the linguistic experiences between the generations differ. An analysis of all four surveys shows that the greatest advances in language standardization were made between 1950 and 1970. The remaining gap to full standardization was closed between 1970 and 1990. Everybody born afterwards, that is, everybody born in the Heisei period, has been linguistically socialized in a standard language speaking society. We can therefore infer that those born in the Heisei period have not experienced linguistic insecurity due to speaking dialect, and that they have not made efforts to rid themselves from speaking dialect in order to pass as a speaker of "correct language".

Being born in the Heisei period means growing up in a society where standard language is commonplace (*kyōtsūgo wa atarimae*). This is a fundamental difference from the experiences of the older generations, who had to learn to adapt and change their speech, or suffer the consequences for not speaking adequately. Growing up after 1990 has crucially shaped language attitudes and language uses. As a matter of fact, Japanese sociolinguists are in agreement that the start of the Heisei period coincides with the start of a language de-standardization process (see e.g., Inoue 2011; Sanada 2000). While de-standardization (*datsu-hyōjungoka*) in itself is not a generation-making mechanism, the differing attitudes and uses of language nevertheless set Heisei period-born Japanese linguistically apart from older generations.

From trying to pass as a standard speaker to dialect cosplay

Nobody has better summarized what it means not to speak according to language norms than Pierre Bourdieu. In his seminal essays on language, Bourdieu (1991) showed how speakers of regional and social dialects were undermining their own standing in society by recognizing a form of language as "legitimate" that they were not able to produce. That is to say, he showed how ideas about what constitutes "correct" or "good speech" were more widely spread than such speech was actually possessed. Bourdieu (1991: 45) called such speakers "dominated speakers". According to Bourdieu (1991: 52), dominated speakers "strive desperately for correctness" and, being conscious of the fact that they do not speak according to the standard norms, are left at times " 'speechless', 'tongue-tied', 'at a loss for words', as if they were suddenly dispossessed of their own language." While a great number of Japanese have at one point or another found themselves being "tongue-tied" or linguistically uncomfortable, this is not an experience that the

young generation has had. It is true that Kansai retained the local dialect, but it retained it because they take pride in it. Speaking Kansai dialect does not result in being tongue-tied. (Quite the contrary is often true).

Those born in the Heisei period differ linguistically. Most have never faced difficulties due to dialects. In the rare case that they experienced language problems, these were quickly settled. Consider some excerpts taken from language biographies I collected from university students in the Tokyo Metropolitan area in 2012.

(1) I am of course totally fluent in Japanese, but sometimes I feel that I cannot express myself very well. I mean, I can say what I think and feel, but I do not always find the exact expression. Recently, for example, I wanted to tell my friend "you need a rest", but I did not really know how to say that. All I could think of was "*karada o yashinau ga hitsuyō*" (literally, "it's necessary to cultivate your body"), but you can't really say that to a friend. It's exaggerated.
(Female graduate student)

(2) My family is Japanese, and I was born in Tochigi. Like other prefectures, too, Tochigi has a dialect. But there is not such a strong accent in my hometown of Utsunomiya, and I find it quite easy to speak standard language. I do not speak dialect with my parents and neither with my friends.
(Female graduate student)

(3) I was born in San Francisco, because my father worked there at the time. My parents are Japanese. Both of my father's parents are from Kagoshima and both parents of my mother are from Fukushima. But my parents were born in Tokyo and grew up there. They therefore speak almost no dialect. Only my mother occasionally uses dialect when she speaks with her parents, that is, with my grandparents, because both speak Fukushima dialect. When I was two, we returned to Japan, and we first lived in Chiba. When I was four, we moved to Ibaraki, where we have been living ever since. When I was in elementary school, some people told me that I pronounced some words differently, and that I have an accent. I guess this was part of the Fukushima dialect. I then tried to speak as "normally" as possible, and so I lost this accent.
(Male undergraduate student)

(4) I was born in Tokyo and grew up in Chiba. My father is from Kyōto and my mother is from Tokyo. Since the city where we live is a sleeping town near Tokyo, there is no Chiba dialect there. My father sometimes speaks dialect, but my mother says that I speak without dialect and that my father did not take any influence on my language. I went to kindergarten and elementary school in Chiba, but went to Tokyo for middle school and high school. My classmates in middle and high school all came from Tokyo, Saitama, Kanagawa, Chiba and Ibaraki, but I think we always spoke without dialect.
(Female undergraduate student)

We find little exposure to or influences of dialects in the language lives of these students. If they have a language problem, it's more likely that it stems from

speaking too formally (1), or if dialect is involved, it is quickly settled for good (3). There may be a local dialect where one lives and grew up, but this dialect is spoken by others (2). It does not affect one's own life. Among peers, dialect has never been an option (1–4). If relatives occasionally speak dialect, it remains a rather detached and weak experience (4). The young generation is quite unique in these experiences, and as a matter of fact, all biographies I collected were quite similar in this respect. There was no "linguistic drama" in their lives.

In general, the young generation speaks Standard Japanese. In case they grew up in a more marginal geographical area such as Tōhoku or Kyūshū, they may remember some tokens of dialect (e.g., *nego*). For young Japanese, the standard language no longer indexes learnedness, erudition or modernity. Standard Japanese literally stands for nothing. All of their peers speak it. This constitutes a new problem because Standard Japanese is somewhat "dull" as the seminal Japanese sociolinguist Takesi Sibata (1999[1965]: 206)[6] already noted more than 50 years ago, describing it as "a coarse framework; its flavor is bland. If this is not so, it would be difficult for speakers of various languages and dialects to master [it]" which is why standard language "slims itself down to the bare minimum". It is the experience of speaking only a "coarse" and "slim" language and of never having experienced the anxiety of potential embarrassment that paves the way for the partial return of dialects in the form of dialect cosplay.

Dialect cosplay

Three things are required for dialect cosplay to emerge. Firstly, it necessitates a newfound appreciation of dialects. Speakers have to be free from the fear that using dialect is a potential cause of embarrassment. Secondly, dialect cosplay requires bits and pieces of knowledge about dialects (token knowledge). Thirdly, dialect cosplay requires knowledge about local stereotypes. Let us consider these three points in this order.

Appreciation of dialects

In a nation-wide survey conducted in 2010, informants were asked about their attitudes towards Standard Japanese and their local dialect (the place where they had live longest until the age of 15). They were asked to what extent they appreciated these two varieties. The survey yielded the following results.

The results displayed in Figure 11.1 have a number of important implications. To start, Tokyo aside, local dialects are more popular than Standard Japanese across Japan today. Secondly, the further the local dialect is linguistically distant from Standard Japanese, the more popular is it. Tōhoku, Shikoku and Kyūshū were regions where standardization efforts were particularly fervent, and standardization took longer to realize (see above). There is a simple pattern here. The more a dialect once had been stigmatized, the more popularity it enjoys today. Elements of dialects are thus used for pepping up standard language speech, but knowledge of dialect is scarce among the young.

15037-0234d-1pass-r03.indd 172 03-04-2018 19:17:35

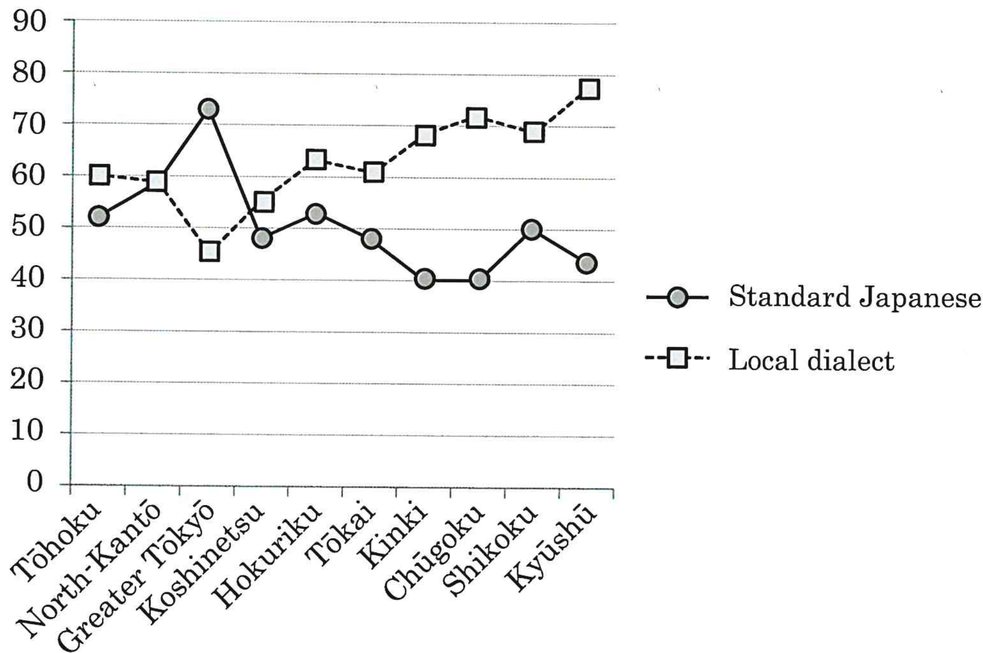

Figure 11.1 How much do you appreciate your dialect and the standard language?
Source: Adapted from Aizawa (2012: 30)

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution

Remaining knowledge of dialects

Dialect proficiency has dropped considerably. As a rule, the younger the speaker, the lower their knowledge of dialects is, and the more pronounced they perceive the differences between standard and dialect (Sanada 1996). There is one exception to this pattern, namely Kansai. Japanese has two prestigious spoken varieties, namely that of Tokyo and that of Ōsaka/Kyōto. While Standard Japanese has been based on the Tokyo language, a standardization process also involves the *acceptance* of the codified standard (Haugen 1966). This acceptance and the subsequent linguistic behavior are not uniform in Japan. In Kansai, speakers never bought into the ideological claim that Standard Japanese was "correct" while the Kansai dialect was supposed to be "wrong". As a result, Kansai dialects were maintained in all informal domains and to some extent also in formal domains (Kumagai 2016). The Ōsaka dialect is more popular than the Tokyo dialect across Japan but for the Metropolitan region, and it is in particular popular with younger people (Sanada et al. 2007: 33–35). All of this implies that the processes of standardization and de-standardization evolve(d) differently in Kansai. To start, young speakers in Kansai have remained active speakers of the local dialect, and they also innovate their spoken language largely independently from Tokyo. Young people's language use in Kansai is then spreading into the neighboring prefectures. In other words, de-standardization in western parts of Japan draws to a considerable extent

Proof

on the Kansai dialect. Yasumizu (2014) shows how present-day youth language is diffusing more or less in concentric circles both from Tokyo and from Kansai. In Kansai, the city of Ōsaka serves as the center of diffusion, and older elements of youth language such as *makudo* (MacDonald's) have been spreading from there throughout the greater Kansai area (Ōsaka, Fukui, Nara, Wakayama, Kyōto, Hyōgo) and it is currently also replacing the Tokyo based *makku* also in Shiga, Mie and in all four prefectures of Shikoku Island. At the time of writing this chapter in summer 2017, MacDonald's Japan was actually showing this distribution on the paper mats that are placed on its plastic trays. The more recent Ōsaka youth language term *sebuire* (Seven Eleven), too, is also spreading throughout Kansai, but it has yet not reached Shikoku (Yasumizu 2014: 134).

Let us consider next an example of how dialect is used when dialect proficiency among the young is low, that is, everywhere outside Kansai. Sanada (2000: 127–128), for example, explains the return of the interjectory particle *-bē* in Tōhoku dialects among young speakers. Originally, this particle has three functions.

(1a) The particle indexes that the speaker is making a guess:

- *aitsu wa iku-bē* (I guess that guy went)

(2a) It is used to make a solicitation:

- *issho ni iku-bē* (will you go with me [please]?)

(3a) It is used to express an intention:

- *ashita koso iku-bē* (I will go tomorrow, too!)

While it has been noted that the particle *-bē* is seeing a comeback among younger speakers in the Tōhoku region, it has also become clear that the particle is used only in order to make a guess, as in (1a). This new use pattern of the dialect particle *-bē* can easily be explained when taking into consideration that the expression of guessing, on the one hand, and those of solicitations and intentions, on the other hand, have different inflections in Standard Japanese.

(1b) In order to make a guess, the volitional form of the copula is used:

- *aitsu wa iku darō* (I guess that guy went)

(2b) Solicitations are expressed by the volitional from of the verb:

- *issho ni ikō* (Will you go with me [please]?)

(3b) Intentions are also expressed by the volitional form of the verb:

- *ashita koso ikō* (I will go tomorrow, too!)

Young speakers' use of *-bē* corresponds to expression for (1a) only, because (2b) and (3b) use a different grammatical construction in Standard Japanese. In other words, young speakers insert the dialect feature *-bē* into their otherwise Standard

Japanese repertoire. The dialect particle is not part of their mental language system (matrix language). It is simply an element inserted into an otherwise Standard Japanese utterance. Kinsui (2003), therefore, calls dialect particles used in this way *kyara gobi* ("character suffixes"), i.e., suffixes attached to standard language utterances in order to invoke or play a particular social role. Such use requires stereotypical knowledge about the speakers of various dialects.

Dialect and social stereotype

The use of character-invoking particles and inflections is not based on anybody's actual use of dialect. It is mimicking the language of dialect speakers. Such use of dialect implies crossing a line between one's bare self (*su no jibun*) in order to assume the role of somebody else. Due to the specific sociolinguistic profile of young Japanese speakers, nobody doubts their Standard Japanese proficiency when they engage in dialect cosplay. Hence, it involves no risk of embarrassment and no social stigma. Not much knowledge about local identities is required either, in order to leave one's bare standard language speaking self behind. Consider an inventory of dialect elements and the corresponding social stereotype among young speakers of Japanese.[7]

Table 11.1 illustrates (albeit in a simplified manner) how local stereotypes and some partial knowledge of dialects can be applied to stylize one's utterance. That is to say, any given utterance can be rendered "simple-minded", "naïve", "funny", "frightening" or extremely "manly" by just adding the respective *kyara gobi* at the end.

It is also a noteworthy fact that individuals engaging in dialect cosplay do not simply play with the regional dialect where they grew up, but that they may choose to use any Japanese dialect in order to assume a role. That is to say, dialect cosplay

Table 11.1 *Kayra gobi* and associated stereotypes

Stereotype / *Region*	*Simple-minded (suboku)*	*Funny (omoshiroi)*	*Frightening (kowai)*	*Manly (otokorashii)*
Tōhoku	-dabe, -dabesa, -ppeka, ndadomo			
Kansai		-yan, -yaro, -ja, -nandeyanen		
Chūgoku			-yake, -kee, -jaken	
Kyūshū				-ken, -tai, -desutai, -degowasu

Source: Adapted from Tanaka (2011: 17–18, 28)

is no longer simply a new way of indexing one's regional background. Dialect use has become layered, involving *nise hōgen* ("fake dialect") and what is called *jimo hōgen* ("homesick dialect").[8] "Fake dialect" refers to using a regional dialect with which one is not regionally associated, e.g., using elements of the Kansai dialect when you are actually from Kyūshū. The "homesick dialect", on the other hand, is engaging in dialect cosplay with one's home dialect. (This is what the AKB48 members did in the commercial). In particular, fake dialect strongly plays with regional stereotypes in order to stylistically pep up utterances (Tanaka 2011: 21–23). What is missing in the linguistic practices of the young generation is the "conventional" use of dialects – Kansai being the usual exception.

It has now become clear how much things have changed for the young generation. The difference between its employment of dialect and the conventional use of dialect is considerable. Recall that conventional dialect is "a form of a language spoken in a particular geographical area or by members of a particular social class or occupational group, distinguished by its vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation", constituting thereby "a form of a language that is considered inferior" (Collins 2017). This definition only holds true for older generations in Japan. Young Japanese apply their fractured knowledge of dialects in order to stylize their utterances. This constitutes a new form of diversity that is the direct result of their language repertoire formation. While most Japanese from the older and middle generation acquired and use(d) dialect in private domains such as the family, among peers or in the neighborhood, the young generation has always used the standard language in these domains (Kansai aside). In a way, Standard Japanese is the "vernacular" of the young generation, the language they speak with the least effort. The older generation, and partly also the middle generation, added the standard language later in life, usually at school and at work. As a consequence, they are sometimes insecure about what is dialect and what is standard – or in their minds what is "wrong" and what is "correct" language use.

The young generation, on the other hand, picks up scattered elements of dialects through its rare and fleeting contacts with local speech. Young people's dialect cosplay is a manifestation of (1) using language in novel ways, but, what is more, it is also (2) exploring a novel way "of being someone through language". Language no longer gives the speaker away as it did in the past ("you speak dialect and are therefore not cultivated", or "you speak dialect X so you must be from the X region"). Young people in Japan have turned this principle on its head. They apply language in a way that allows them to take on specific roles and identities ("imagine me being from X and having the stereotypical characteristics of this place"). Playing a stereotypical role presupposes (fractured) knowledge of a regional code, but yet more crucially, it requires knowledge of how language is in the service of characterizing individuals. The young generation is savvy about how identities are constructed and what socially constructed identities do to individuals. They are reflexive.

New linguistic self-representations by the young generation

Dialect cosplay "crosses" into other people's language repertoires in order to evoke stereotypical images. The evocation of stereotypes is the reason why such

kind of language use is never practiced in interactions with the "real speakers" of these varieties (Heinrich 2017). Dialect cosplay cannot be used in such situations, because it would be offensive to use a mock-version of *their language* in order to evoke social stereotypes. This principle ties dialect cosplay firmly to its users, i.e., to the young generation that grew up in the post-standardization society of the Heisei period. It makes dialect cosplay their "we-code", functioning as a linguistic demarcation line between the young generation and the older generations.

Dialect cosplay is the young generation's strategy for being "linguistically diverse" despite having grown up "linguistically uniform". They could have been diverse in many other ways, though. The young generation could have relied simply on its very own linguistic innovations (youth language) or on the incorporation of non-Japanese elements (e.g., English, Korean, Chinese). It is a noteworthy fact that young Japanese chose to draw so heavily on Japanese dialects, i.e., on varieties that were once heavily stigmatized and carried with them the danger of social marginalization and exclusion. As a matter of fact, research on attitudes towards dialects by Tanaka and Maeda (2012), and others, always point to a high popularity of dialects that have once been severely suppressed (e.g. Tōhoku and Kyūshū). It is, therefore, only logical that the least popular dialect for the young generation is that of Tokyo (see Figure 11.1). The language of powerful social actors is out, because power is uncool, and young speakers seek to speak in cool ways (Maher 2005). The practioners of dialect cosplay do not simply use language in novel ways – they purposefully "break the code". They feel empowered by doing so. Dialect cosplay is not simply about fun (*goraku*). Dialect is not merely becoming a toy (*omocha-ka*) or an accessory (*akusesorī-ka*), as Tanaka (2007) believes. Dialect cosplay is also a rejection of the values and attitudes that accompanied language standardization – attitudes, to recall, that discredited the varied ways of speaking Japanese and placed a stigma on non-standard speakers.

We have seen above that those engaging in dialect cosplay have mastered the art of linguistically doing things the "legitimate way", i.e., of using Japanese according to standardized norms. Young speakers' deviance from these norms through acts of transgression makes these norms visible. It reveals their metapragmatic knowledge about the way "things are getting done with language" in Japan, that is, it reveals an awareness that the legitimate language is in the service of power. This metapragmatic knowledge sets the young apart from older speakers of Japanese. The latter, to recall, have been and often remain insecure about "speaking correctly", and they are firm in the belief that some ways of speaking are "correct" while others are "wrong". Their linguistic behavior testifies to such beliefs day in and day out. It is this attitude and the countless code-choices that resulted from such attitudes that resulted in the language standardization process in the first place. The young generation, on the other hand, is critical of how language is employed in order to exercise authority. They break the code – and enjoy doing so – because it is a symbol of power and a tool of dominance of the strong over the weak. Born on the shorter end of the power divide, in a society where the older generations are privileged over the young generation, the young have grown sensitive to such inequalities.

Proof

The "feel for the game" of talking and texting Japanese has changed. The old relation is contested, not explicitly ("I do not approve"), but implicitly through linguistic deviances and transgressions. The exercise of hiding one's regional and social background through the use of standard language has been replaced by a practice where the ability to be quirky, fast and innovative is supreme. In a word, it has been replaced by an ability to be cool and to speak in cool ways (Maher 2005). For young speakers, plurality, variety, contingency and ambivalence have taken the place once occupied by universality, homogeneity, monotony, and clarity in language.

The relation between language, identity, and authority is no longer fixed and solid. Terms like "new dialect" (Inoue 2008) and "neo-dialect" (Sanada 1997) do not capture what is at stake in the use of dialect elements by young speakers. The young generation has moved beyond the stage of new dialects and neo-dialects. The everyday common language of young Japanese today is a "relaxed" use of (Standard) Japanese that is stylistically "pepped up" with dialect elements. Such use is not a new linguistic system – as terms like "new dialect" and "neo-dialect" suggest – it is a new linguistic practice stemming from new and critical attitudes towards language and identity. Dialect cosplay is not a fixed speech repertoire shared in a given community. It is a verbal style that is based on language attitudes that are widely shared among young Japanese due to their unique position in Japan's sociolinguistic history.

What has really changed for the young generation is the presentation of self through language. Consider what Erving Goffman had to say about self-representation:

> When an individual enters the presence of others, they will commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into play information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitudes towards them, his competence, his trustworthiness, etc. [. . .] Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him.
>
> (Goffman 1959: 13)

Young Japanese enjoy flouting this mechanism of social coexistence outlined by Goffman. They do so for two reasons. Firstly, the language in which they were socialized no longer indexes anything (except for Kansai). Standard Japanese says nothing about social background or trustworthiness in an informal setting, but is socially empty. Secondly, young Japanese are critical of power and symbolic violence, as is obvious from their use of once heavily stigmatized dialect elements. They reject the mechanism through which some were silenced, made uncomfortable or insecure on the basis of their divergence from language norms. According to Goffman's theory of individuals as social actors, people seek to be coherent by playing the appropriate role for specific contexts and tasks. By employing dialect cosplay, however, young Japanese purposefully act "incoherently" in linguistic

interaction (Heinrich 2017). What is more, they are conscious thereof. They embrace "anti-roles" and "anti-language" as a means to distance themselves from the dominant norms and expectations. This is a clear break with the practices of those born before the Heisei period.

Young Japanese speakers in super-aging Japan

This book seeks to explore whether those born in the Heisei period have made unique experiences, and whether they have come up with distinctive cultural and emotional responses. Language undoubtedly constitutes such a unique and generation-specific experience. Language reinforces the boundary between the young generation and those born before them. Practices such as dialect cosplay and the language attitudes that undergird them are distinctive. The young generation is engaged, active, and creative, and it is so in new and unconventional ways. They are re-working and re-using existing materials, images, attitudes, stereotypes and varieties – they are *bricoleurs* of language, and they are so whole-heartedly. Linguistically, they are not driven by ambition ("Speak well!" or "Be someone!"), but by a desire to be quirky and cool. They embrace and rework dialects once regarded as odd and embarrassing. They are not embracing English in order to inform the world about Japan, as official language policy encourages them to do (Liddicoat 2013: 49–59). The young are not consumed by ambition. They have little choice, though. The modernist dream of ever more progress is largely absent in their lives. Japan has been stagnating for as long as they have lived.

For young Japanese, getting along in post-growth and super-aging Japan means having smaller dreams and making the best from what is available to them (Furichi 2011). Being young in a super-aging society makes them feel distant from the modernist dreams of their parents and grandparents. At the same time, this super-aging, former Number One society leaves them abundant material to engage with in their very own ways and with their very own set of attitudes. Metaphorically speaking, Japan is like an abandoned wardrobe and young Japanese enjoy exploring its content with an aloofness and coolness that is new. We can see this in the way they recycle language in order to put it into new uses, citing and quoting from a world they know quite well from school, TV, or accounts of older family members. But this is also a world to which they have never belonged. Young Japanese know this very well. They are conscious about this generational divide. This becomes most evident by the fact that they are "playing" to be part of it.

Notes

1 Online at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCwmCgpZW-hEiMkBZWud1k7A (accessed 24 February 2017).
2 Before language modernization, spoken language was inevitably "dialect". It is therefore of little surprise to find that the concept of *hyōjungo* (standard language) predates that of *hōgen* (dialect) in Japan.
3 An analysis of the *Linguistic Atlas of Japan* (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 1966–1974) reveals that only 62% of the Tokyo dialect vocabulary surveyed corresponded exactly to

that of Standard Japanese. This number stood at 41% for Osaka and 16% for Kagoshima at the start of the language standardization process.

4 Hokkaidō as a settlement colony and the Ryūkyū Islands where the Ryukyuan languages were displaced differ in various ways from this situation and will not be discussed further here (see Hirayama and Ono 1997 on Hokkaidō, and Anderson 2015 on the Ryūkyūs).

5 Sibata Takesi, who had been pushing for the relaxation of standard language norms, (1999[1965]: 201) made clear that this was an important issue if democracy was to take root, writing that "[t]he basis of democracy is discussion. Discussion means using words. It was impossible to have a fair discussion with one person being quite because of his dialect, and another spouting off just because he can speak Standard Language."

6 Some Japanese scholars prefer the *kunrei*-style transcription of their names. Their choices are respected in the text and the list of references.

7 Playing roles through language includes also playing the role of foreign speakers of Japanese by, e.g., adding *aruyo* and the end of an utterance in order to invoke the image of a Chinese speaker of Japanese. Note that such use is often outright racist and is for instance used by extreme right wing groups who add *-nida* (from Korean verb inflection *-mnida*) to statements in order to ridicule or degrade ethnic Koreans in Japan or those sympathetic to them.

8 *Jimo* is a clipped form of *jimoto de asobu*, i.e., "having a good time in your hometown". It is used as a fixed expression when students studying in big cities go back home in order to have a good time there, enjoying food, nature, or hot springs. The advantage of going back home usually also implies that all of this is free of cost. When out of money but in need of spending a good time, *jimoto asobi* is a popular strategy among young Japanese.

References

Aizawa, Masao (2012) Hōgen ishiki no ima o toraeru: 2010-nen zenkoku hōgen ishiki chōsa to tōkei bunseki [Research on Present-Day Dialect Consciousness. Nationwide Survey in 2010 and its Statistical Analyses] *Kokugoken purojekuto rebyū* 3(1): 26–37.

Anderson, Mark (2015) Substrate-Influenced Japanese and Code-Switching. In: *Handbook of the Ryukyuan Languages*. Patrick Heinrich, Shinsho Miyara and Michinori Shimoji (eds.), 481–509. Boston: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bakhtin, Mikhail (1987) *The Dialogic Imagination* (edited and translated by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson). Austin: University of Texas Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1991) *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Collins (2017) *Free Online Dictionary*. Online available at: www.collinsdictionary.com (accessed 21 April 2017).

Furuichi, Noritoshi (2011) *Zetsubō no kuni no kōfuku na wakamono-tachi* [The Happy Youth of a Desperate Country]. Tokyo: Kōdansha.

Goffman, Erving (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Books.

Haugen, Einar (1966) Dialect, Language, Nation. *American Anthropologist* 68: 922–935.

Heinrich, Patrick (2012) *The Making of Monolingual Japan: Language Ideology and Japanese Modernity*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

——— (2017) New Presentations of Self in Everyday Life: Linguistic Transgressions in England, Germany and Japan. In: *Identity and Dialect Performance: A Study of Communities and Dialects*. Reem Bassiouney (ed.), 381–407. London: Routledge.

Heinrich, Patrick and Rika Yamashita (2017) Tokyo: Standardization, Ludic Language Use and Nascent Superdiversity. In: *Urban Sociolinguistics*. Dick Smakman and Patrick Heinrich (eds.), 130–147. London: Routledge.

Hirayama, Teruo and Yone'ichi Ono (1997) *Hokkaidō no kotoba* [Language of Hokkaidō]. Tokyo: Meiji Shoin.

Hokama, Shuzen (1971) *Okinawa no gengoshi* [Okinawa's Language History]. Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppan.Inoue, Fumio (2008) *Shakai hōgengaku ronkō: Shin-hōgen no kiban* [Studies in Social Dialectology: Foundations of New Dialects]. Tokyo: Meiji Shoin.

——— (2011) Standardization and De-Standardization in Spoken Japanese. In: *Language Life in Japan*. Patrick Heinrich and Christian Galan (eds.), 109–123. London: Routledge.

Jugaku, Akiko (1978) Hyōjungo no mondai [Standard Language Problem]. In: *Iwanami kōza nihongo* (volume 3). Ei'ichi Chino (ed.), 52–55. Tokyo: Iwanami.

Kinsui, Satoshi (2003) *Vācharu nihongo – yakuwarigo no nazo* [Virtual Japanese: The Mysteries of Role Language]. Tokyo: Iwanami.

Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo (1966–1974) *Nihon gengo chizu* [Linguistic Atlas of Japan]. Tokyo: Ōkurashō Insatsukyoku.

——— (2013) *Dai-4-kai Tsuruoka-shi ni okeru gengo chōsa kekka to gaiyō* [Results and Overview of the 4th Language Survey in Tsuruoka City]. Tokyo: Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo.

Kumagai, Yasuo (2016) Developing the Linguistic Atlas of Japan Database and Advancing Analysis of Geographical Distributions of Dialects. In: *The Future of Dialects*. Marie-Hélène Côté, Remco Knooihuizen and John Nerbonne (eds.), 333–362. Berlin: Language Science Press.

Liddicoat, Anthony J. (2013) *Language-in-Education Policies: The Discursive Construction of Intercultural Relations*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Maher, John (2005) Metroethnicty, Language, and the Principle of Cool. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 175/176: 83–102.

Masiko, Hidenori (2003) *Ideorogī to shite no "nihon"* ["Japan" as Ideology]. Tokyo: Sangensha.

Nomura, Takashi (2013) *Nihongo sutandādo no rekishi* [History of Standard Japanese]. Tokyo: Iwanami.

Sanada, Shinji (1996) Shiga-ken Imazu-machi, Fukui-ken Kaminaka-machi gengo chōsa hōkoku [Shiga Prefecture, Imazu-Town and Fukui Prefecture, Kamakura-City Language Survey Report]. *Ōsaka daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 36: 31–64.

——— (1997) *Nishi-nihon ni okeru neo-hōgen no jittai ni kansuru chōsa kenkyū* [Empirical Research on the State of Neo-Dialects in Western Japan]. Ōsaka: Ōsaka University.

——— (2000) *Datsu-hyōjungo no jidai* [The Age of De-Standardization]. Tokyo: Shōgakukan Bunko.

——— (2001) *Hyōjungo no seiritsu jijō* [Circumstances How Standard Japanese Was Formed]. Tokyo: PHP Bunko.

Sanada, Shinji et al. (2007) *Hōgen no kinō* [The Functions of Dialects]. Tokyo: Iwanami.

Shioda, Takehiro (2011) Constraints in Language Use in Public Broadcast. In: *Language Life in Japan*. Patrick Heinrich and Christian Galan (eds.), 124–139. London: Routledge.Sibata, Takesi (1999 [1965]) The Advent of the Age of Common Language and the Fate of Dialects. In: *Takesi Sibata: Sociolinguistics in Japanese Contexts*. Tetsuya Kunihiro, Fumio Inoue and Daniel Long (eds.), 196–206. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Tanaka, Yukari (2007) *Chakudatsu sareru "zokusei" – hōgen "omocha-ka" genshō* [Distinctive Features Put On and Off. Dialect Decoming a Toy Phenomenon]. Online available at: http://skinsui.cocolog-nifty.com/sklab/files/JASS19tanaka.pdf (accessed 12 April 2017).

——— (2011) *Hōgen kosupure no jidai* [The Age of Dialect Cosplay]. Tokyo: Iwanami.

Tanaka, Yukari, Naoki Hayashi, Tadahiko Maeda and Masao Aizawa (2016) *Ichiman-nin kara mita saishin no hōgen, kyōtsūgo ishiki* [Latest Trends in Nationwide Language Consciousness and Standard Language of 10,000 People]. Tokyo: NINJAL.

Tanaka, Yukari and Tadahiko Maeda (2012) Washa bunrui ni motozuku chi'iki ruikei no kokoromi [Regional Typology Based on Individual-level Clustering of Dialect Usage]. *Kokuritsu kokugo kenkyūjo ronshū* 3: 117–142.Wikipedia (2016) *Hōgen konpurekkusu* [Dialect Complex]. Online available at: https://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/方言コンプレックス (accessed 5 April 2017).

Yasumizu, Kanetaka (2014) "Zenkoku wakamonogo chōsa" ni okeru gengo denpa moderu [Language Diffusion Model in the "Nationwide Youth Language Survey"]. In: *Shutoken gengo no kenkyū shiya*. Harumi Mitsui (ed.), 129–151. Tokyo: NINJAL.

Taylor & Francis
Not for distribution
Proof