



HÖGSKOLAN  
DALARNA

## **Graduation Thesis**

Bachelor's Degree

***"Metcha suki ya nen"***

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**A sociolinguistic attitude survey concerning the Kansai dialect**

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## **Abstract:**

西日本にある関西弁はたくさん色々な形で標準語と異なる。関西弁は1970年代の後に、全国で人気を得た。この社会言語学の研究の目的は現在の関西弁に対する感情を調査することである。これは関西弁の話し手ではなくて日本語の母語話者に配ったアンケートで調査された。質的また量的な分析である。結果は一般的に関西弁に好意的であったが、人気がある理由もいろいろあり、それらをさぐるために歴史的なそして文化的な見方を通して議論する。

**Keywords:** Japanese, Sociolinguistics, Language attitudes, Dialects, Dialectology, Kansai dialect, Questionnaire survey

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## Conventions

The transcribed Japanese words occurring in this essay are written in italics, and the romanization system used is the Modified Hepburn system. This does not apply to proper nouns such as names of people or geographical places; instead their English counterpart will be used. Consequently, the spelling ‘Kyoto’ will be used, rather than ‘Kyôto.’

A basic knowledge of Japanese is required, but a knowledge of the dialect in question is not required. This is for the reason that the essay in general does not contain any Japanese to English translations: the dialect is instead compared to its equivalents in standard Japanese. For example, the dialect word ‘*akan*’ is explained by ‘*dame*’/‘*ikenai*,’ as opposed to the possible ‘no good.’

## Preface

Though I find the Kansai dialect to give both a warm and lively impression, and despite the conspicuous feeling that it is very unlike standard Japanese – non-Japanese even – my main fascination for the dialect is the degree to which it differs linguistically from the standard Japanese language. Ever since I noticed how it differs I have mentally drawn parallels between the Standard-Kansai relation and the Swedish-Norwegian relation – not only because of the undulating sound that exists in both Kansai dialect and Norwegian – and wondered how come the dialect is not called another kind of Japanese language, the way that Norwegian is another kind of Germanic language.

In February this year, my father told a 21 year old exchange student from Japan about my decided topic for this project, and asked her what she knew of the dialect. In return she asked ”What is your daughter looking for? Is it drama or is it comedy?” This made me think even more about the duality I felt surrounded the dialect, as well as the various (and possibly contradicting) associations that appear to coexist separately in association to the Kansai culture and dialect; for example comedians and *yakuza*. After this, I was even more determined to find out how people felt regarding the dialect.

I would like to thank everyone who has participated in, and helped to realize, this project; teachers, fellow students, family, and survey respondents.

# Introduction

This sociolinguistic research investigates the current language attitudes towards the Japanese Kansai dialect (also commonly referred to as *Kansai-ben*). Although a standard language now exists in Japan, the Kansai dialect once functioned as a sort of lingua franca in the country, which is very rich in language variations. However, this was long ago, and the attitudes towards regional dialects have gone through many changes over the years. A fairly extensive research on the attitudes towards dialects in Japan was conducted by Tessa Carroll in 2001. However, since it was mainly based on material and surveys from the 1990s, it is today over 20 years along in the years. It has served as both inspiration and basis for the outline of this research.

Although the word Kansai is frequently used throughout this research, the focal point is actually Osaka and Kyoto, rather than the entire region. The reasons for Kansai being still referred to as the entire region include the fact that many previous studies are not more specific than 'Kansai' in their descriptions, and that many of the cultural and historical elements concern the entire area. In addition, many non-speakers cannot tell the difference between the prefectural differences, so even though most generalizes Kansai as Osaka, this may not include everyone. Moreover, the differences between the variations existing in the region are said to be minimal, as well as the birthplace being only a slight influence on the speech.

The aim of this thesis is to give a contemporary insight into the attitudes towards the Kansai dialect by Japanese who are not speakers of the dialect in question, and furthermore to provide possible explanations for the liking or disliking. This will be reached by the use of the following two research questions:

1. What is the current attitude towards the Kansai dialect by native Japanese non-Kansai dialect speakers?

I will look into how the situation has developed from previous studies; has the trend of positive attitudes continued? Are gender, age and place of origin important factors for liking or disliking the dialect?

2. What is the reason/s/ for the increased popularity of Kansai dialect in Japan in the last 30 years?

Why is the dialect popular? The dialect experienced a renaissance from the 1980s and onward, and is at present the most widely known dialect in the country. Is it because of its previous status as common language, or are other factors involved?

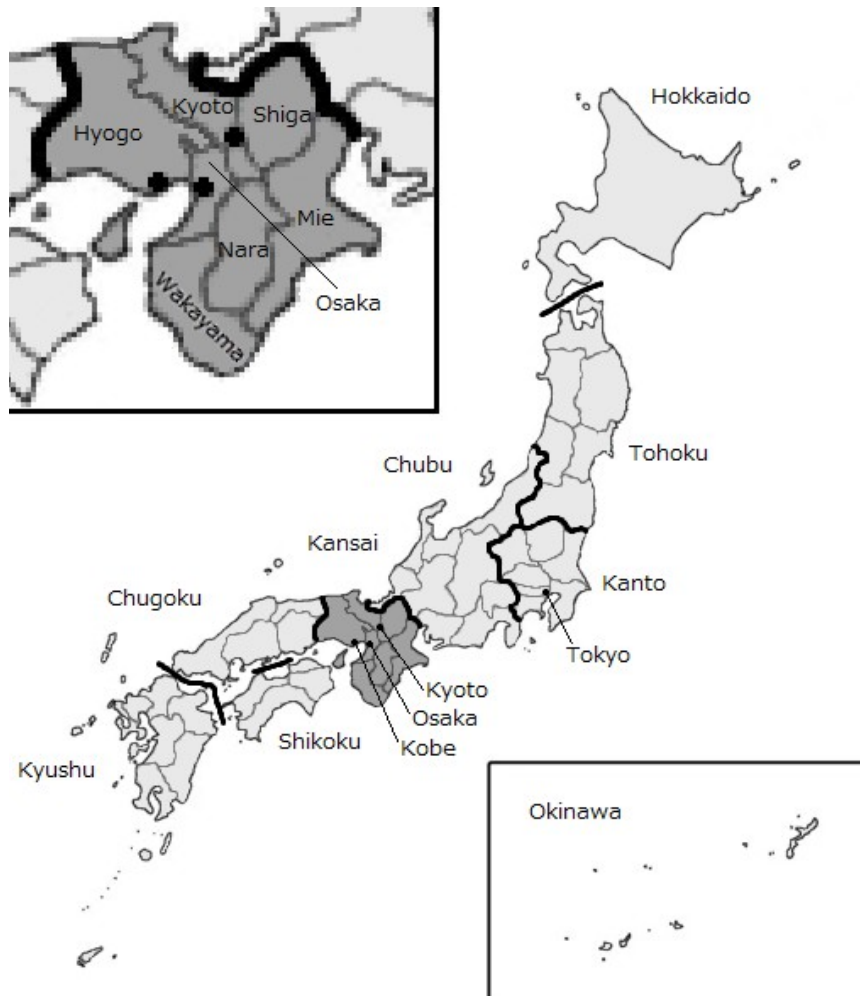


Figure 1. Map of Japan, regional divide and Kansai region

## Method

It is a popular belief that the foundation of language attitude theory should be that of general attitude theory (Oakes, 2001, p. 29), which has been researched by social psychologists since the 1920s (McKenzie, 2010, p. 19); the earliest studies of language attitude in sociolinguistics were conducted in the 1960s (McKenzie, 2010, p. 41). For this reason, the study of language attitudes is dominated by the two psychological approaches “mentalist theory” and “behaviorist theory” (Ihemere 2007:119) – neither theoretical approach believes attitudes are something we are born with, but rather learned, especially during childhood and adolescence (McKenzie, 2010, p. 21).

Behaviorists believe that attitudes can only be found in people's responses to certain stimuli (social situations for example). This is in a way an easy approach to employ for the reason that one need only observe and analyze overt behavior” (Ihemere, 2007, p. 119). The approach is criticized since this requires for there to be a “perfect correlation between attitude and behavior” (McKenzie, 2010, p. 21). Despite being greatly criticized, the behaviorist approach is not thought to be discarded since attitudes are believed to directly influence behavior (McKenzie, 2010, p. 21).

Most research on language attitudes; however, is based on the mentalist theory (Ihemere, 2007, p. 120). According to mentalists, attitudes are mental states which in turn may cause certain behavior (Ihemere, 2007, p. 119). Mentalists believe that there are three components that together form an attitude, namely the cognitive (knowledge), the affective (feeling) and the conative (action) components. However, all three components may not always be represented or distinguishable (McKenzie, 2010, p. 22, Kranawetter, 2012 p. 5). Since mentalists believe that these three components form an attitude, the theory can, according to McKenzie (2010), recognize “the complexity of human beings” and thereby explain “ambivalent attitudes” (Ibid:24).

The example used to demonstrate this is an individual's opinion that smoking in public places ought to be allowed, however still fearing the possible effects of passive smoking. In said example there is a conflict between the cognitive and the affective components (McKenzie, 2010, p. 24); complexity which the behaviorist approach fails to explain. The problem that arises with the mentalist approach is that the attitudes are mental states and thereby not directly observable. Instead it is mainly based on self-reported data, the validity of which cannot be guaranteed (Ihemere, 2007, p. 120).

The major difference between the the theories can be distinguished by stating that the behaviorists believe that stimulus causes a behavior response, and this response is the attitude, which is thereby observable. Mentalists, on the other hand, believe that when stimulus occurs, the

attitudes will influence the response, which *may* take form as certain behavior. However, the response is not the behavior itself, since it is merely a mental state, and thereby unobservable in itself.

The most commonly used methods in the study of language attitudes are the direct method and the indirect method. The direct method is by asking the respondents directly about their opinions regarding a language/a language variation, its speakers, certain aspects of the language, its uses, cultural associations etc. (Ng, Wigglesworth, 2007, p. 109), and is most often conducted via a questionnaire or an interview. Questionnaires are said to be the most practical approach when there is a variety of questions to be answered (McKenzie, 2010, p. 24). Since the respondents are aware of what the researcher is looking for, social desirability bias is an important factor to be aware of when employing the direct approach (McKenzie, 2010, p. 43), since the respondent may be unaware of, or unwilling to admit, their true attitudes (Ihemere, 2007, p. 121). As McKenzie (2010) puts it, there is “a tendency for informants to give responses to question that they believe are the most socially appropriate and desirable.” This is said to be more prominent when it comes to interviews (as compared with questionnaires) (p. 43).

The main point of the indirect method is that the respondent is unaware of the purpose of the survey, and is believed to be able to “penetrates deeper” than compared to direct methods (McKenzie, 2010, p. 45). The no doubt most frequently used technique in indirect approaches is the matched-guise technique (MGT), a procedure using voice recordings: one and the same speaker is recorded when reading the same text aloud a number of times, but using different accents. The respondents later get to listen to the voice samples, unaware that they are recordings of the same speaker, assuming different guises. The respondents are finally asked to evaluate the speakers by for example guessing personality traits (McKenzie, 2010, p. 46). The concerns about the MGT include that of the speaker having to be competent enough to assume each guise for the technique to be successful (Beal & McMahan 2011:125).

### ***Method and theory of choice***

Like the majority of research on language attitudes (Ihemere 2007:120) the research conducted in this project will employ the mentalist theory, accompanied by the direct method. The method of choice (direct) is chosen for several reasons, however mainly because of its practicality given the time frame for this project. Under different circumstances, the indirect MTG method mentioned earlier would have been a favorable choice due to its design, however it would have been much too time-consuming and impractical for this small scale project as it requires respondents to be

geographically present, close to perfect recorded readings etc., which, in addition, would be more suitable when comparing several dialects, rather than comparing just one to the standard language. Ithemere (2007, p. 121) states that by combining both the indirect and the direct method, “a large pool of comparable data is obtained and it is easier to see if both sets of data corroborate each other,” but once again it felt too time consuming given the time frame. Therefore, the direct method is employed by use of a questionnaire, as they are said to be the most practical approach when there is a variety of questions to be answered (McKenzie 2010:24). In addition, the “tendency for informants to give responses to questions that they believe are the most socially appropriate and desirable” is said to be more prominent when it comes to interviews (as compared with questionnaires) (McKenzie 2010:43).

Since a questionnaire has already been decided as the means to collect the data, this is accompanied by the mentalist approach theory; I agree with the mentalist approach more than with the behaviorist approach, but mainly because the questionnaire is based on self-reported data, which the behaviorists discard.

Some questions in the questionnaires will be more direct than others, for example open-ended questions are less direct than close-ended (How do you feel about Kansai dialect vs. Would you agree that Kansai dialect is straight forward). The two typed of questions also entails a mix between quantitative and qualitative research (close-ended questions such as multiple choice questions and yes/no-questions, as well as open-ended questions such as free commentary). Hence, the results can be used statistically and generalized to a wider population (quantitative) (Moore 2004), as also gives a more detailed insight (qualitative). Researches employing the direct method are warned about the social desirability bias, but hopefully a more valid result can be obtained as the questionnaire is voluntary and is said to be anonymous (further discussed below).

The questionnaire was marketed as anonymous, which in reality meant they were not to state their name, and the results were not visible to any respondent. The respondents did, however, need to state (at least an approximate) age, gender, and where they live (specifics were voluntary; some answered by country, some by prefecture, some by city). The questionnaire was accessible via a link from March 24<sup>th</sup> to April 24<sup>th</sup> which was posted on media such as Facebook and sent to various people in an arbitrary manner (mainly though the site Lang-8), and participation was voluntary. Furthermore, the same IP address could not complete the questionnaire more than once, some of the questions were obligatory (see appendix for specifics), and the respondents were not aware of the fact that they would be excluded if they answered they were Kansai dialect speakers. Finally, the percent displayed in the section for survey results will be rounded off to contain one decimal.

# Background

## ***Kansai introduction***

“The Kansai dialect is the most widely known non-standard Japanese dialect” (Carvajal 2010:35), and is spoken in the Kansai region (also called the Kinki region<sup>1</sup>) located in western Japan and consisting of the prefectures Osaka, Kyoto, Hyogo, Mie, Shiga, Wakayama and Nara (Palter & Slotsve 1995:11). Generally, the honorific language system in eastern Japan is much simpler compared to that of western Japan, and the people in Kansai use it both when speaking to relatives and unrelated people (Sanada 1989:189-190). Despite this, the usage of Kansai dialect is “usually associated to the lesser level of politeness,” when compared to standard language (Iida 2007:69).

Notably, the material from this section is mainly from the book by Palter and Slotsve (1995), which expressively concentrates on the Kansai dialect of Osaka. However, also stated is that, due to education and national media, the “regional variations in Kansai-*ben* are slowly disappearing,” and the differences were in 1995 “relatively minor” (Ibid:46). Despite the differences that still exist – the southern Osaka prefecture being particularly rough sounding (Ibid:47), Kyoto dialect being both generally softer and more refined (Ibid:48) etc. – most non-Kansai people can rarely distinguish one Kansai variety from another, so people who use Kansai characteristic words and expressions like *honma* will often be regarded as Osakans (Ibid:11). What nowadays affect the speech is to a high degree personality, age, gender and situation rather than the place of birth (Ibid:46).

In addition to cultural differences (see the next section), Professor Yoshitaka Yamashita<sup>2</sup> says the Kansai dialect differs from the standard language due to the influence of Chinese by Chinese merchants who migrated to Kansai thousand of years ago (Shingu 2011, ch. 1), prior to which Japanese neither had pitch nor accent; the accentual traits spread to eastern Japan as well, while the tonal traits only influenced the language in Kansai (Hokkaido University 2012).

## **Phonological and phonetical differences**

There are significant differences in both accent and intonation between standard Japanese and Kansai dialect (McClure 2000:33). For example, unlike in other parts of Japan, rolling the letter /r/

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1 “Officially, Kansai is synonymous with Kinki, but in actual usage it usually applies only to the Kyoto-Osaka area” (Palter & Slotsve 1995:11).

2 A native Kansai dialect speaker who teaches the dialect to Japanese students at Hokkaido University (Hokkaido University 2012)

is not frowned upon (Palter & Slotsve 1995:9). The dialect is furthermore characterized by long, strong vowels and weak, short consonants (Shingu 2011, ch. 1), as well as a less frequent use of vowel devoicing of /i/ and /u/ (Tsuji-mura 2007:23); the word *suki* (好き) would be pronounced as [SU-ki] rather than [ski] in Kansai dialect (Palter & Slotsve 1995:62). One additional phenomenon that occurs in Kansai is monomoraic elongation; the vowel in single mora words is elongated resulting in *ha* (歯) being pronounced as *haa*, *ki* (木) as *kii* and *me* (目) as *mee* (Shingu 2011, ch. 1). The pitch accent patters also differs greatly, as can be seen in the following example<sup>3</sup>:

Meaning	Tokyo	Kansai
Chopsticks	HA-shi	ha-SHI
Bridge	ha-SHI	HA-shi

(Tsuji-mura 2007:426)

Furthermore, the copula *da* is replaced by *ya*, resulting in changes such as *yakara* (*dakara*) (Palter & Slotsve 1995:13) and *yaro* (*darou*) (Ibid:37). A similar change is the /s/-sound often being replaced by an /h/-sound, which has resulted in suffix *-han* (*-san*) and negation *-mahen* (*-masen*) (Ibid:13), as well as *hoya* (*souda*) and *honde* (*soshite*) (Shingu 2011, ch. 1).

### **Grammatical differences**

Verb conjugation *-haru*, a part of the Kansai honorific language, is attached to the -i base (-a base in Kyoto), as demonstrated by the examples in the present positive long form, equal in meaning: *ikiharun desu – ikaharun desu – ikiharimasu*. (Palter & Slotsve 1995:32). Moreover, standard language negation suffix *-nai* and *-nakatta* are in Kansai replaced by *-hen* and *-henkatta*, and, in the same manner, the long form *-masen* can replace *-mahen* (Palter & Slotsve 1995:34). Also, at times double consonants are replaced by a long vowel as in the verb conjugation example:

	Standard	Kansai
<i>Kau</i> (買う)	<i>katta</i>	<i>kouta</i>
<i>Iu</i> (言う)/ <i>Yuu</i>	<i>itte</i>	<i>yuute</i>
<i>Tsukau</i> (使う)	<i>tsukatta</i>	<i>tsukouta</i>

(Palter & Slotsve 1995:14)

<sup>3</sup> For further reading on the subject of pitch accent differences in Japanese, please see Shibatani (1990) and Tsuji-mura (2007).

Regarding the sentence ending particles in Kansai dialect, particle *yo* is replaced by *de* (Shingu 2011, ch. 1), and equally emphasis causing particle *wa*, only used by women in standard language, is used by both male in female speakers (Eastudies 2006, appendix p. 7). Furthermore, the neutral particle *-nen* gives the sentence a “smoother” ending (Palter & Slotsve 1995:36), and particle *na* is used by both male and female speaker, replacing particles *ne* and *sa* in Tokyo Japanese (Ibid:66).

### **Lexical and unsorted differences**

Due to historical reasons, there are several lexical differences between Japanese dialects (Palter & Slotsve 1995:13), such as Kansai typical expression *honma kaina*, consisting of *honma* and *kaina*, the latter of which is used to, for example, express serious doubt (Ibid:100). The following are a few of the other differences and expressions that occur in the dialect.

#### Verbs

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Kansai</b>
<i>ugoku</i>	<i>inoku</i>
<i>iu</i>	<i>yu</i>
<i>desu</i>	<i>dosu</i> <sup>4</sup>

(Tsujimura 2007:427, Palter & Slotsve 1995:64, Ibid:52)

#### Adjectives/adverbs

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Kansai</b>
<i>isogashii</i>	<i>setsurashii</i>
<i>totemo</i>	<i>metcha</i>

(Tsujimura 2007:427, Eastudies 2006, appendix p. 14)

#### Expressions

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Kansai</b>
<i>hontou</i>	<i>honma</i>
<i>onegaishimasu</i>	<i>tanomu (wa)/ tanomimasu</i>
<i>shikata ga nai</i>	<i>shaanai</i>
<i>sumimasen</i>	<i>sunmahen/sunmasen/ suimasen</i>
<i>jaa ne</i>	<i>hona na</i>
<i>dame/ikenai</i>	<i>akan</i>
<i>doushite da yo</i>	<i>nande ya nen</i>

(Palter & Slotsve 1995:24, Ibid:97, Ibid:95, Ibid:31, Eastudies 2006, appendix p. 57-58, Adams 2010, ch. 15)

<sup>4</sup> Use is limited to Kyoto area

## **History and Culture**

The following section will cover some of Japan's dialectal history and the introduction of a standard language, as well as some historical and cultural aspects relevant for the project. Especially Osaka, the city of merchants and humor, and Kyoto, the city of *geisha* and culture will be explored more deeply. It is included in order to provide the reader with background information about the Kansai dialect speakers of the past, their history and what society they lived in. This because it is possible that language is an extension of its users, and that the users are affected by historical and cultural events. Therefore, this kind of background should be of significant importance. However, this will all be further discussed in the section for discussion.

### **Dialectal climate**

The geographical layout of Japan (natural border such as mountains and islands) is one reason for its many language variations (Shibatani 1990:185). Furthermore, the language of each region has developed without much influence from the rest of the country, due to poor ways of transportation and communication (Palter & Slotsve, 1995:12), to the point of speakers from different regions being unable to understand one another (Shibatani 1990:185). Japan both has been, and still is, defined more by region than as a nation (Maxwell 2005), and since the 10<sup>th</sup> century also has a linguistically and culturally significant east-west divide. The two opposing regions, Kansai and Kanto, are commonly defined by their respective metropolises; Osaka and Tokyo (Whelan 2014:10).

Prior to the standard language (*hyōjungo*), there was a common language (*kyōtsūgo*) based on the Kyoto dialect, but the common language began to be increasingly based on the Edo (presently Tokyo) dialect after the government moved there in 1603 (Shibatani 1990:185). For this reason, when a standard language was introduced in the 1850s (Carroll 2001:7, Gerstle 2000:xi), it was based on the language of Edo (Shibatani 1990:185). The standard language was supposed to aid mass education and national homogeneity, and was deemed as a necessity for catching up with the West after the national isolation (Carroll 2001:7).

It was mainly national broadcasting that spread the new preferred language form, since the entire nation was exposed to it on a daily basis (Carroll 2001:10). Chun (2007) states that TV-culture has a tendency to “standardize the differences between regions” (Ibid:122); the introduction of television in both urban and rural homes helped to create a sense of cultural uniformity – one example being that people started to wear the same kind of clothes that were shown on TV (Ibid:122-123).

According to a 1960s survey, respondents enjoyed being able to travel between regions and cities without language comprehension difficulties (Carroll 2001:10); however, an old person has been reported claiming that “everyone has become television-ish” (Chun 2007:146).

Television promoted an image of Tokyo as a modern, westernized city of middle-class, standard language and technology, which many Japanese dreamt of and therefore moved to. Since the actual Tokyo consisted of a lot of migrants, standard language became a central part (just like on TV) due to communication reasons. Hence, the standard language was spread by popularization (Ibid:125-6).

In a society where media and education partially spread the use of the “good” standard language by discouraging “bad” and “incorrect” regional dialects (Carroll 2001:8), the Kansai region, proud of its heritage (Whelan 2014:14), along with other areas, resisted the Tokyo culture (Chun 2007:126). For this reason, Kansai was made into the antipole of Tokyo, thus further defining the latter. (Ibid:126-7). However, while national broadcasting promoted the standard language, it did in fact also raise the status of Kansai dialect (Maxwell 2005), and Osaka dialect became heavily popularized (Chun 2007:126-7). Yet, since the television producers were mainly from Tokyo, and the comprehension of a nationwide audience was crucial, it was not the authentic Osaka dialect featured on screen but a simplified Tokyo-version of it (Ibid:128).

The discouragement of regional dialects remained in practice in education until the 1970s, but a more tolerant stance was employed after it was feared that the dialects would disappear (Carroll 2001:11), and in order to preserve local culture and variety, thus countering the “social dislocation” caused by the post-war period (Ibid:13). Carroll (2001) further writes that “the survival of regional dialects is promoted as evidence that Japan has not lost touch with its past, whatever the reality may be” (Ibid:13-14). At present, standard language and regional dialects co-exist by use of code-switching, which was considered to be appropriate behavior by 75.1% in a 1995 survey (Ibid:10).<sup>5</sup>

## **Dialectal borders**

Important to remember, for the sake of the larger language differences even within a certain region, is that it can probably not be expected of language variations to abide by administrative border as it does with natural ones, as demonstrated regarding the Kansai region in the following paragraphs.

Though it is a part of Kansai region, Mie prefecture can also be included into the sub-region of Tokai (Mitsuhashi 1978:18), whose dialects belong to eastern Japan (Fairchild 1964:88). In

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<sup>5</sup> For further reading on the history of the standard language of Japan and its effect on Japan, please see Carroll (2001) and Chun (2007).

addition, when Long (1999:185) gave informants prefecturally specified maps of Japan, and asked them to draw lines to mark off the Kansai dialect, several informants from Aichi Prefecture<sup>6</sup> excluded the northern half of Mie, as well as the Shiga prefecture (Long 1999:185).

Additionally, the border between east-west dialects is not always clear, demonstrated by Sanada (1989): according to 1906 material, the imperative form *miro* (見ろ) (typically eastern) also exists in places such as parts of Kyushu and Okinawa. Sanada comments that "therefore, strictly, *miro* (east) versus *miyo* (west) should not be called an opposition, since the situation is that *miyo* is distributed inside the distribution area of *miro*" (Ibid:111). Regarding the opposition of copula *da* versus *ja/ya*, a map from 1978-79 shows that *da* dominates the Aichi prefecture, *ya* dominates the Mie prefecture, and all three copula forms (*da*, *ja* and *ya*) exist in Gifu prefecture as well as around the borders between the three prefectures. The east indicating copula *da* is also largely distributed in the San'in sub-region<sup>7</sup> (Ibid:111).

Also, the dialects in Nagoya, Hiroshima, Okayama and all of southern Honshu are said to have more in common with Kansai dialect than with the standard language (Palter & Slotsve 1995:10).

## History of Kansai and Japan after 1850

The Kansai region has reason to be proud of its history, as it was the place for three very important former capitals: Osaka, Nara and Kyoto (Whelan 2014:10). Osaka was the first imperial capital (McClain & Osamu 1999:3), Nara the first permanent, and Kyoto was the capital for over a thousand years (For varying reasons, the capital of Japan has been moved several times) (Dougill 2006:1).

Kyoto is known as the cultural center of Japan, but also functioned as a political center in the 1700s (along with Nara) (Whelan 2014:16), and due to its many artisans it was also famous for its luxury crafts (Berry 2012:48, Howell 2012:357).

Osaka, on the other hand, had been an economic center since the 5th century (Inoue 2006:27) and "developed into a great commercial center" during the Edo period (Whelan 2014:12). It dominated the Japanese economy for approximately 250 years (Ibid:16) until surpassed by Tokyo at the end of the 1800s (Inoue 2006:27, Rowthorn 2010:384). Osaka is still an important business city, though described by Dunfield (1993) as a "capitalist purgatory" and adds that "even among the Japanese, Osaka is often seen merely as a place in which to do business" (Ibid:vii). Nevertheless, it

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6 Also included in the Tokai sub-region (Information Resources Management Association, USA 2010:1682)

7 Located in northern Chugoku and includes Tottori and Shimane prefectures, the northern part of Yamaguchi prefecture, and may include the northern part of both Hyogo and Kyoto metropolitan area (Daijisen 1995:1102).

is Japan's second largest city, and “may view itself as more Japanese when compared to Tokyo which is more international” (McClure 2000:33).

In addition, a historical note on the language used in said mercantile city may be of interest: Inoue (2006) writes that the “merchant culture views laughter as something that harmonizes human relations and makes people feel closer to each other” (Ibid:28). Furthermore, since merchants wished to develop a horizontal relation to their customers, and needed to be able to both negotiate and lighten the mood in order to get the customer to spend as much money as possible (Ibid:28,30), humor and laughter became important factors, and the Osaka dialect developed accordingly in terms of words and intonation: it was designed to help generate humor (Ibid:28).

During the new period (Edo, 1603-1868), the country isolated itself from the outside world (Whelan 2014:11). When Japan had again been opened to the world in the 1850s (Gerstle 2000:xi), its leaders became aware of the progress that the West had accomplished in 200 years, and it was decided that Japan would catch up in “a single generation” – and they succeeded (Simon & Schuster 2009:15). During this time, Japan borrowed a lot from the West (Gerstle 2000:xi), and in order to change into a modern industrial state in such a short period of time, they had to sacrifice a lot of their “institutional heritage” (Pyle 2007:42).

Eventually, World War II both arrived and passed, which had its consequences. Professor Nurdan Karasu Gökçe (2007) writes the following concerning the post-war period:

The immediate post-World War II era was a difficult time for Japanese people. /.../ the popular trend was to reject the styles and thoughts of the past. Many Japanese had feelings of inferiority. Their desire to gain equal status to the Americans led many to “Americanize” themselves by adopting American culture and values (Karasu Gökçe 2007).

She further quotes a statement from Jacob Raz, that reads “the Japanese were torn between an obsession with progress and refuge in nostalgia” (Ibid).

Specific examples of the effects caused by the re-opening of the country as well as the being defeated in World War II will be given in the chapter regarding culture.

## **Culture of Kansai**

*Kabuki*, the theatrical art form, was founded in Kyoto (Kominz 1997:18), and has been developed in both Kyoto-Osaka and in Tokyo (Cavaye 1993:20). Though the most popular theatrical form in Japan between the 1600- and the 1800s, it has been believed that the art of *kabuki*

would not survive, due to inferiority complex after the isolation (Ibid:20-21), along with the “new national inclination to reject old customs and vestiges of traditional culture” after the war (Kominz 1997:232). Another art form that has been developed in both Kansai and Tokyo is *rakugo*; comic story telling (Parkins & Soneda 2006:80), which had a hard time surviving during 1920-30s and the war; mainly due to the introduction of cinema (Kôdansha Intânashonaru Kabushiki Kaisha 1998:662).

An additional comedy art is *manzai*; a comic duo consisting of the straight man (*tsukkomi*) and the funny man (*boke*) who entertains the audience through a comic dialogue (Whelan 2014:16, Stocker 2006:299). The art developed in the late 1800s and the early 1900s in Osaka, and is characterized by the Osaka dialect (Ibid) to the point of performers from elsewhere learning to perform in the dialect (Stocker 2006:74). It was mainly due to the adaption to radio in the post-war years that *manzai* became nationally popular (Chun 2007, p. 127). Several comedians continue to come from Osaka due to the Yoshimoto Kôgyô agency, based in the city since 1912 (Carvajal 2010:36). One of the most famous duos at present is Downtown, who started their career at said agency during the “*manzai* boom” in the 1980s (Katayama 2006:62). Due to the enormous success of Downtown, the duo has made “the region's dialect almost the de-facto language of comedy in Japan” (McBennett 2014:Yoshimoto Kogyo), and they are the reason for typical Kansai expressions to have become part of the common vocabulary (Ibid:Downtown).

Kansai is furthermore associated with the *yakuza* (Kobayashi 2006:246), the reason for which may be that Kobe is headquarters to Japans biggest *yakuza* clan: the Yamaguchi-*gumi* (Kingstron 2013:253). According to a 2001 list of the major *yakuza* syndicates, the Yamaguchi-*gumi* at the time had 17 500 members, compared to the second largest clan, seated in Tokyo, that had 6 200 members (Dubro & Kaplan 2012:128).

On a different note, the *geisha* community flourished in the 1920s, but was said to be outdated 10 years later; Dougill (2006) said “the fashion setters of one age were becoming the dinosaurs of the next,” and that it was a wonder they survived both World War II and the post-war period (Ibid:182). The number of *geisha* decreased significantly, but according to Dalby (2008) their number stabilized in the 1990s (Ibid:xix). The *geisha* have their origin in Tokyo, but are today associated with Kyoto (Dougill 2006:173), where they are both a symbol of the city (Dalby 2008:xx) and a tourist attraction since at least 1995 (Dalby 2000:xx).

## Previous research

This section will cover some of the previously conducted research on the subject of language attitudes regarding Japanese regional dialect, focusing on those regarding the Kansai dialect. The first research that will be presented is by Carroll (2001), which for this project may be the most essential of the previous studies used, since her research on certain points is very close to this one, and since she has utilized several surveys conducted in Japan during the 1990s. She has researched the change in attitudes regarding Japanese dialects in general, and how they in recent time have become rather well-disposed to the matter (p. 7). There are speakers who use both their local dialect and the standard language, but they switch between them depending on the situation and depending on to whom they are speaking. This phenomenon is called code-switching, regarding which Carroll writes that “a large part of the adult population now sees this [code-switching] as appropriate linguistic behavior” (p. 10). This is followed by the results of a 1995 survey in which 75.1 % of the respondents answered in agreement with the statement (p. 10) – notably, the positive attitudes towards code-switching seemed more common amongst the younger respondents (p. 11).

Carroll writes that the sociocultural and psychological associations of standard language and regional dialects differ greatly; the former is associated with “modernity and efficient communication” while the latter is associated with tradition and human relations, as demonstrated by a 1990s Tokyo research where the standard language was described as ‘correct,’ ‘polite,’ and ‘formal,’ while dialects were most commonly described as ‘warm,’ but also as ‘for among friends’ (p. 15). Furthermore, she writes that dialects and accents are associated with the characteristics of the region of origin, rather than the sound of them; the common view of Kyoto dialect as more gentle and more refined than the standard language could therefore be the result of the city's long history as the imperial capital (p. 16).

Although it is a popular belief that Japan is a homogeneous society, there are several differences throughout the country, which, on several occasions, have been accentuated in order to be used as attractions (p. 16-17). She writes that “culture has become a commodity, and language is part of that culture” (p. 17). In addition, “if regionalism as social and economic policy can be linked to the resurgence of pride in dialects, the most influential factor within this range of policies is probably the *furusato* boom.” The success, Carroll writes, of the so called *furusato*<sup>8</sup> boom in the 1980s is due to the fact that the concept combines both local and national identity. It is associated with rural dialects since it is the image of a rural home village, promoted to people living in the cities. She writes that Jennifer Robertson in 1988 explained the concept with descriptions such as “nostalgia,”

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<sup>8</sup> Could be translated as ‘native place’ (Carroll 2001:17)

“camaraderie,” “local dialect,” and “enriching lifestyle” (p. 17).

Regarding urban dialects, especially the Kansai dialects (with emphasis on the Kobe, Kyoto and Osaka dialects), has experienced a renaissance; particularly since the 1980s. This generated expressions such as “*Osaka-ben boom*” and “‘*Kansai-ben counter-attack*’ (against the standard)” (p. 18). Carroll writes that the growing popularity of Osaka dialect is “an example of how sociolinguistic attitudes interact with socioeconomic and cultural factors,” and believes that the factors may be the commercial power and entertainment history of the city. The latter of the two continues to be associated with the region as it is the origin of many television celebrities who continue to use their local dialect (p. 18).

In 1993, *Yomuri Shinbun*<sup>9</sup> conducted a survey (possibly in Tokyo) on the attitudes of non-Kansai speakers regarding the Osaka dialect, the result of which Carroll has divided into two groups: respondents in their thirties and above, and respondents in their teens and twenties. The reason for this is that the first group in general had a negative view of the dialect, and used words such as ‘pushy’ and ‘garrulous’ to describe it, while the second group used ‘warm,’ ‘lively,’ and ‘straightforward/frank;’ all in a positive tone, it would seem, according to Carroll (p. 18).

Furthermore, *Yomuri Shinbun* (also in 1993) reported the use of the phrase *ôkini* at a *takoyaki*<sup>10</sup> stall in Tokyo as part of the marketing, as well as a professor at Tokyo University used his native Osaka dialect during lectures since he believed the Tokyo students, who only had the artificial standard language, “need[ed] the rich expressive possibilities offered by dialects” (p. 19).

However, Carroll adds the arguments made by Tokugawa in 1992; that the renaissance of dialects will not reach much further than “‘hometown song festivals’ and novelty key-rings,” and she compares his views to the *furusato* phenomenon (p. 19). Finally, Carroll concludes her research by stating that the Japanese ideal still is a nation fluent in standard language, and that dialects are restricted to local culture; thereby, they are not likely to compete with the standard language in formal situations (p. 20).

Chun (2007), in his research of television influences between 1953 and 1973, writes that the Kansai culture was made fashionable by being made into appearing as a counterweight to Tokyo, through Tokyo television. He further quotes the observation of an Osaka resident: “In the past, people made fun of me when I used Osaka dialect, but recently I can speak more confidently, because leading Tokyoites copy Osaka dialect, you know. This is all because of the mass media.” The national broadcasting of the Kansai area led to certain influence of the standard language by Osaka dialect, such as the abbreviation of words; *nama komâsharu* (‘live commercial’) became *NamaKoma*.

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9 One of the major newspapers in Japan

10 “Fried octopus snack” (Carroll 2001:22)

Today, this is as Chun describes it, “a national trait,” which at the time fit well in with the “busy modern times” (p. 127).

In 1999, Long conducted a research where he asked 811 informants from all eight regions to fill out maps of Japan (with only the prefectural boundaries pre-drawn), where they were to rank speech variations according to pleasantness, as well as provide them with positive and negative characteristics (p. 199). In the regards of pleasantness, the Kansai region was overall ranked as the most pleasant (p. 224). Concerning the characteristic provided by the Kanto informants regarding the Kansai area were both positive and negative; despite the facts that Kyoto and Osaka are very close geographically, and the respective dialects are very close linguistically, the Kyoto dialect was viewed positively while the Osaka dialect was viewed negatively. Long believes the explanation for this is “sociopsychological factors associated with the two dialects,” but does not specify what these might be (p. 214).

The results of Long's research does not agree with the results of previous studies, but he writes that this is plausibly due to the change (for the positive) in language attitudes that took place during the two decades preceding his own research (p. 223).

In the dissertation by Iida (2007), the language habits of a few salon workers in Kansai are investigated. She writes that the standard language is associated with a sense of remoteness, and a higher degree of both politeness and formality, compared to the Kansai dialect which is associated with psychological closeness. Therefore, it is seen as more polite to use the standard language (p. 69). In concordance, McClure (2000) writes that the “use of a dialect may reflect a sense of intimacy because the standard language is considered more formal and distancing” (p. 33).

Iida (2007) further describes how the salon worker Aki switched from standard language to Kansai dialect when work was over, and compares Aki to her sister Chisato who did not switch to dialect in the same way. “She mobilized the comparison between ‘at work’ and ‘not at work’ and shifted the way she employed the discourse of politeness in relation to it.” This way, Iida demonstrates how individual code-switching is; everyone makes an assessment of the situation and how polite or casual they should be. The two speaking habits are not completely separated, but are in general mixed in different ways, depending on the situation (p. 104).

## Results

This section consists of the compiled results from the questionnaire survey conducted for this project. Everyone who answered 'no' on Question 4 ("Are you a speaker of Kansai dialect?") were included in this survey, which resulted in 71 respondents, 40 of which were women and 31 were men (56.3% and 43.7%). The respondents were between the ages of 16 and 65; 45.1% were in their 20s, 25.4% in their 30s and 19.7% in their 40s. The female and male respondents were fairly equal in number in the ages of 20-29 and those in 40-49, while the group of 30-39 was slightly dominated by the female respondents. The age group 20-29 is over-represented; the benefit of which provides the opportunity to investigate whether the language attitudes have gone through another change, or if the favorable attitude change detected in previous research has continued – note that the research by Carroll greatly used material from the 1990s, around which time the respondents who are in their 20s in this research were born, thus uninvestigated.

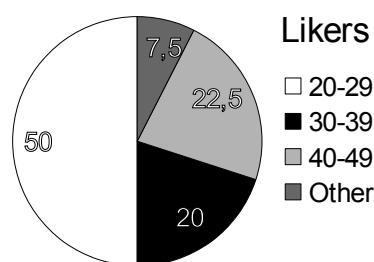


Figure 2. The distribution of participants between different age groups in percentage, *likers*.

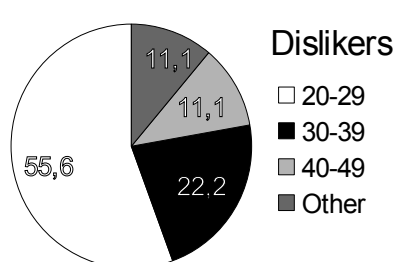


Figure 3. The distribution of participants between different age groups in percentage, *dislikers*.

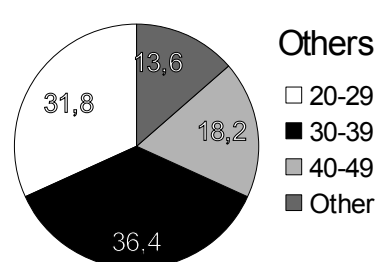


Figure 4. The distribution of participants between different age groups in percentage, *others*.

Question 7 ("Do you like or dislike Kansai dialect") will pervade the section of questionnaire results, as it is the most important divide in the attitudes. 56.3% (QT<sup>11</sup>=40) of all 71 respondents answered that they like the dialect, 12.7% (QT=9) dislike it and 31.0% (QT=22) neither like nor dislike it. (For simplicity, these groups will be referred to as *likers*, *dislikers* and *others*). Gender-specifically, 70.0% of all the female respondents like the dialect, 5.0% dislike it and 25.0% answered 'other,' while 38.7% of the male respondents like the dialect, 22.6% dislike the dialect and 38.7% answered 'neither.' In contrast, when separated into the three respective groups it becomes visible that 70.0% of the *likers* are female and 30% male, the *dislikers* consist of 22.2%

<sup>11</sup> QT = Quantity

female and 77.8% male respondents, and the *others* 45.5% female and 54.5% male respondents.

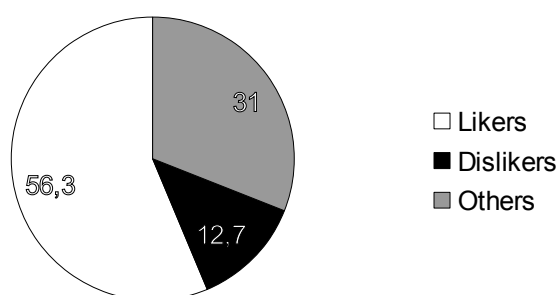


Figure 5. The distribution of *likers*, *dislikers* and *others*, presented in percent.

Geographical place of origin was dominated by two regions (74.6%); the Kanto region (45.1%) and the Chubu region (29.6%). The percentage of people with Kanto origin is between 44.4%-45.5% in the groups of *likers*, *dislikers* and *others*, while those with Chubu origin between 27.3%-33.3%. Concerning the respondents who currently live in the Kanto region (32.4%), 20.0% of the *likers*, 55.6% of the *dislikers* and 45.5% of the *others* live in the region.

The majority of the respondents have come in contact with the dialect through family or friends; 82.5% of the *likers*, 88.9% of the *dislikers* and 63.6% of the *others*. However, the larger part of them did not specify who in their vicinity are Kansai speakers. Six of the *likers* said they have family members (parents, relatives) who are, and seven of them have friends who use the dialect, while two of the *dislikers* specified to have dialect speaking colleagues, and of the *others*, five had friends and two had colleagues.

A possibly interesting part of the questionnaire is how the respondents motivated their answer to Question 7 (“Do you like or dislike Kansai dialect?”), thereby describing the dialect in their own words: Regarding the *likers*, five respondents said they like it because it feels ‘familiar’/‘friendly,’ three because it is not ‘harsh,’ ‘stiff’ or ‘formal’ (“it has a human touch”), and four specifically said they like it since it is different from the Kanto dialect, for example by not feeling ‘cold.’ Furthermore, three respondents like the dialect because it is ‘funny,’ and one additional respondent said “because it's the Mecca of laughter.” In addition, four said it sound ‘cute,’ two that it sounds ‘soft,’ another two said ‘cheerful,’ and four people motivated their answer with the rhythm and strong tone of Kansai dialect. Three respondents said they are simply used to hearing the dialect (for example from home), and seven said they like dialects in general, since they get “a glimpse into the cultural sphere of the speakers” through the dialect, or because “it causes a feeling of *furusato*.” Finally, one respondent likes Kansai dialect because he feels the difference between Kansai dialect

and Japanese is like that between two languages, and gave Swedish and Danish as examples.

The *dislikers* used words like ‘oppressive,’ ‘preachy,’ ‘impolite,’ ‘coarse,’ ‘humorous,’ ‘rough,’ ‘intense,’ ‘dirty,’ and ‘over-familiar’ when motivating why they do not like the Kansai dialect, and additionally, one who elaborated wrote that there are many Kansai people who mistake themselves for being funny, and another said the dialect feels so assertive and has an intimidating feeling.

Perhaps not too surprising, ten of the 22 respondents, who claimed to neither like nor dislike the dialect (the *others*), said they were neutral towards the dialect, and gave no particular reason. Three respondents said the dialect is too intense, and one of these three elaborated by explaining that the dialect is often spoken rapidly, loudly and in a strong tone, which is unpleasant, but on the other hand finds the dialect ‘cute’ when spoken in a slow and polite manner. Finally, there were four respondents who did not dislike the dialect itself; just the speakers and their personalities. One male *disliker* wrote that a friend from his school days made a pushy and rude impression, hence disliking the speakers but not necessarily the dialect itself. The other three are *others*; two male and one female respondents. One wrote that he does not get along well with kansai people, but that this probably is not because of the dialect, a second wrote “I dislike the Kansai speakers more than the dialect itself.” The fourth respondent, which is also mentioned above, wrote that she neither likes nor dislikes the dialect because of the speakers, and later explained that some speakers are too intense (loud, rapid speech), but likes the sound of the dialect when spoken in a gentler manner.

Moreover, the respondent were asked to describe the dialect; 11 descriptions were pre-prepared to choose between (multiple choice question), and they were in addition able to add descriptions of their own. The already available descriptions were chosen based on previous research as well as common comments found on the internet and consist of both positive and negative terms. The results are shown below, but note that the percentages will not add up to 100.0% since the question is of the multiple choice type:

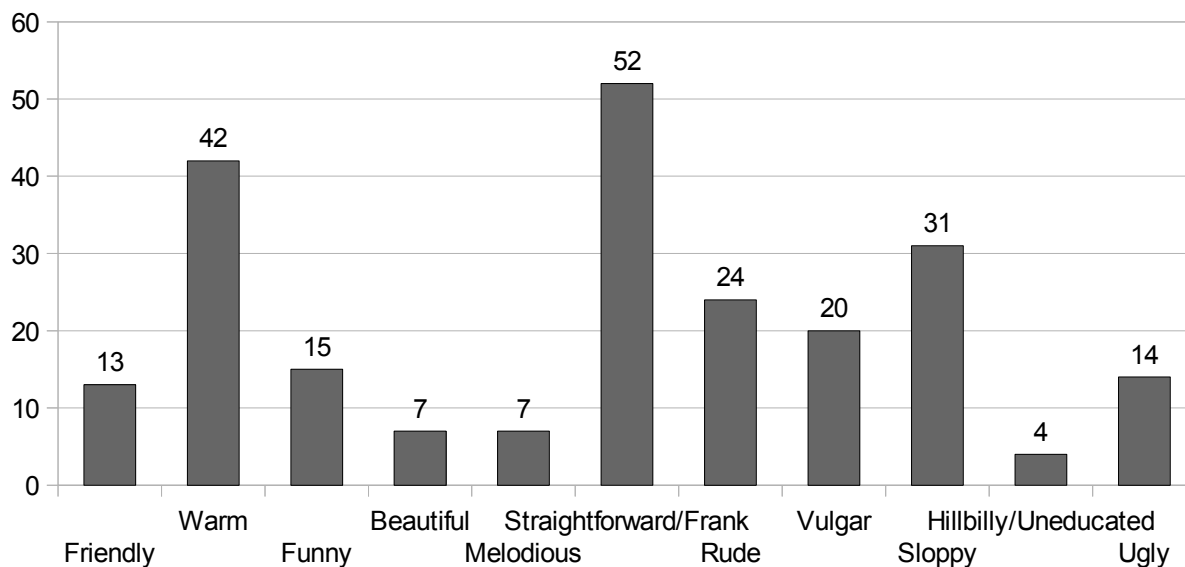


Figure 6. The frequency of the pre-prepared descriptions, presented in percent.

In general, the positive descriptions were chosen by the *likers* and the negative by the *dislikers*, but there were some deviating answers: seven of the *likers* described the dialect as sloppy, four as vulgar and two as rude, while one of the *dislikers* (female from Okinawa with friends or close relatives speaking Kansai dialect) not only described the dialect as ‘rude,’ ‘sloppy,’ ‘vulgar,’ ‘hillbilly-like/uneducated,’ and ‘ugly,’ but also as ‘warm,’ and further wrote that she likes the sound of Kyoto dialect.

Additionally, 17 descriptions were provided by the respondents themselves, for example ‘annoying,’ ‘cheerful,’ ‘familiar/close,’ ‘conceited,’ ‘beautiful’ (restricted to Kyoto dialect), ‘cute’ (regarding female users), and ‘infectious,’ the latter explained by the impression that people who are not originally native speakers of Kansai dialect are lured into speaking in it if there are Kansai speakers in their vicinity. Further comments describe it as a dialect that sound better in quarrels, sounds scary when used by someone who is being coercive, feels like another Japanese language rather than a dialect, as well as a rapid dialect with good rhythm, strong tone and a unique ability to express emotions.

In Question 10, the respondents were asked to choose one or several options provided, with which they associate the Kansai dialect, namely ‘*geisha*,’ ‘*yakuza*,’ ‘comedians,’ ‘merchants/businesspeople,’ and ‘upper class.’ The answers from one respondent was not included, as he commented later he did not want to check any of the boxes, but had no choice since the question was obligatory, and there was no alternative for ‘none.’ Note also that since this was a multiple

choice question, the percentages will not add up to 100.0%; one respondent may have chosen between 1-4 associations (since no-one chose the fifth one).

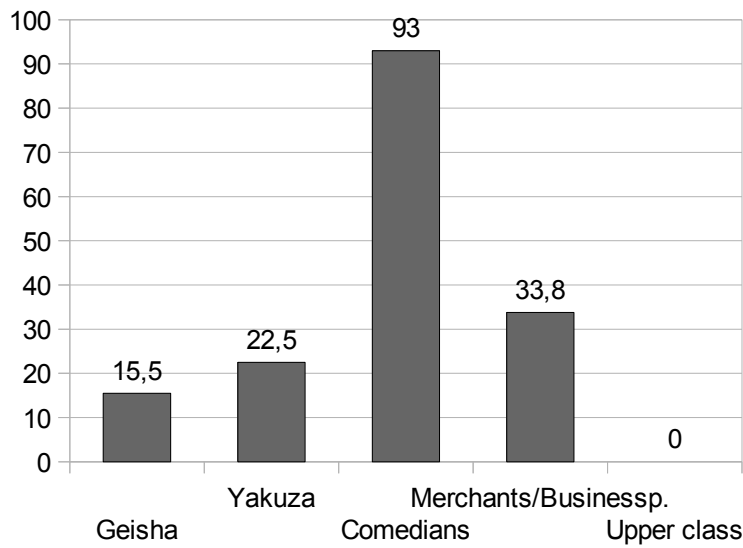


Figure 7. Number of associations in percent

Regarding the three major groups, *likers*, *dislikers*, and *others*, there were smaller differences, as demonstrated by both the table and the chart below. Notable is that the percentage below is based on each group individually, for the percentage to be comparable to the survey-general presented above. Yet again, multiple choice entails a collected percentage that does not add up to 100.0%.

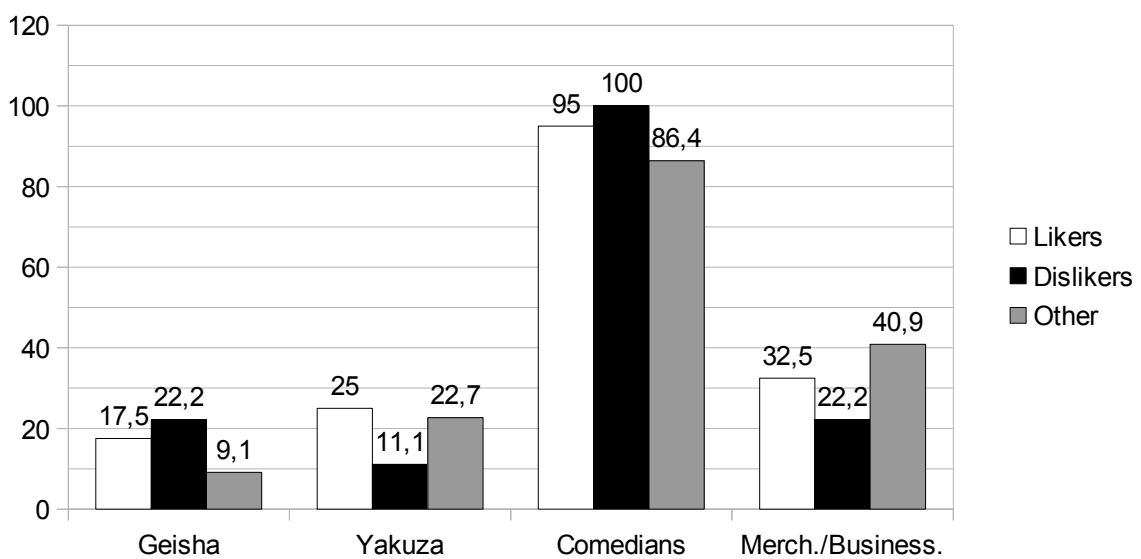


Figure 8. Associations in percent, per respective major group

	Likers QT	Dislikers QT	Others QT	Likers %	Dislikers %	Others %
Geisha	7/40	2/9	2/22	17.5	22.2	9.1
Yakuza	10/40	1/9	5/22	25.0	11.1	22.7
Comedians	38/40	9/9	19/22	95.0	100.0	86.4
Merchants/ Businesspl.	13/40	2/9	9/22	32.5	22.2	40.9

Figure 9. Associations per major group, in quantity and percent

The ages were similarly mixed in all cases except for 'geisha,' where all the male respondents were between the ages of 20-29, while the female respondents were mixed ages. Also, 15.0% of the women associated the dialect with 'yakuza,' while 32.3% of the male respondents made that association; the most substantial difference percent-wise between the two genders.

20 of the 50 respondents who answered Question 11 ("Free commentary") chose to comment on the difference between Osaka/Kansai and Kyoto dialect. 14 of these (*likers*, *dislikers*, and *others*) simply confirmed that there is a difference; six of them said that all the Kansai dialects differ. Furthermore, while one respondent said the difference between Osaka dialect and Kyoto dialect is subtle, a second respondent said they differ a little, but that he himself is unable to tell them apart, and a third respondent said that for him personally, Kyoto dialect (nor Kobe dialect for that matter) is not Kansai dialect at all, which he defined as Osaka dialect. An additional respondent reasoned that even though Kyoto and Osaka are geographically close, their dialects differ since the cities' cultural backgrounds do. Of the respondents who were more specific regarding this difference; five said Kyoto dialect is more elegant, four said Osaka dialect is familiar/friendly, three found Kyoto dialect to be gentler/more polite than Osaka dialect, and, according to an additional three, Kyoto dialect sometimes sounds sarcastic. One of the *dislikers* likes the sound of Kyoto dialect, even though she thinks it feels exclusive, and a second *disliker* in fact finds both Kyoto and Kobe dialect beautiful. A third, however, finds the Kansai dialect overall to be ugly (too hard on the ears), except when used by particular people (such as comedians), while a fourth avoids hearing the dialect at all, to the best of his abilities. Moreover, five respondents in total expressed a specific liking towards Kyoto dialect, regardless of what they felt regarding Kansai dialects in general.

One additional respondent was intrigued by how, in her experience, everyone who speaks Kansai dialect continue to do so even if they live somewhere some place else. Another respondent tells how he feels his friends from Osaka seem to have confidence in both their language and their region. Moreover, a respondent from Kagoshima speculated whether Kansai people find the dialect used in

movies and dramas unnatural, since she feels that way regarding her own dialect. The theme of dialects in movies was commented by another respondent who wrote that in the older movies, the *yakuza* was strongly associated with Kansai dialect, and since traces of this still exist, an image of harsh (*kitsui*) people as Kansai dialect speaker is being established. A third respondent said that she wanted to learn Kansai dialect after she had seen a drama where the main character spoke the dialect.

Additional comments provided read that the undulating sound of Kansai dialect is charming, it is very friendly, beautiful and traditional; Kansai dialect has a kinder feeling than the Kanto dialect, and that conversations in Kansai dialect always have the rhythm of *boke* and *tsukkomi* (the roles of funny man and straight man in *manzai* comedy). Furthermore, a respondent wrote that, rather than the Kansai dialect, Kansai people have something remarkably individualistic that Tokyo people do not.

## Analysis

First of all, the majority of the respondents like the dialect, while a relatively small percent dislike it. The fact that the *dislikers* were so few makes it difficult to generalize the results in that group. Furthermore, the respondents who answered ‘neither’ are quite large in number.

Secondly, the questionnaire is deliberately steered to a certain point; pre-prepared options were provided for the question on characteristics, the options for associations being fixed (rather than being completely blank, thus allowing the respondent to associate freely), as well as specific examples being provided for the free commentary at the end. Even though it cannot be determined how the results had differed without these close-ended answers, it is evident that it has influenced the answers.

Thirdly, concerning the associations the respondents were asked to choose from, the answers from one respondents were as mentioned not included, since he did not want to check any option. This is a factor that should be taken into consideration as there may have been others who did not wish to check any either, but did not announce this.

Regarding age, it does not seem to have been a factor amongst the respondents, but it is not entirely clear; there are some differences but the reason is unclear, and the respondents in some age groups were very few. The age group of 20-29 was greatly overrepresented, but still rather equally divided between *likers* and *dislikers*. No new differences seem to have appeared, and the trend observed in previous studies seem to continue; the majority, regardless of age, have a positive view of (at least) the Kansai dialect.

Gender, on the other hand, seems to have been a factor, since the female respondents greatly outnumbered the male ones in the group of the *likers*, and vice versa for the *dislikers*. Regarding the *others*, they were almost equal in number.

The geographical place of origin did not seem to influence the answers, since despite the main portion of the respondents were from either the Kanto or Chubu region, they were rather similarly distributed between the three groups. The current place of residence, however, might be a factor, since 55.6% of the *dislikers* live in the Kanto region, while only 20% of the *likers* live there. Although, yet again, it is difficult to determine whether this is a factor or not, since the number of *dislikers* were so few. Probably, it would not be surprising if the current place of residence is an influencing element, due to the longstanding rivalry between Kanto and Kansai.

The clear majority of the respondents have come in contact with the dialect via close relatives or friends. However, while the number was roughly 80% for the *likers* and *dislikers*, it was

approximately 60% for the *others*. The fact that fewer others have come in close contact with the dialect could be a contributing factor to their great quantity. Furthermore, the kind of contact they have had could have been an interesting factor: a few *likers* specified the answer as family members and a few others as friends, while the ones of the *dislikers* who specified did so as colleagues. It is possible that people with Kansai dialect speaking close relatives are more prone to liking/not disliking the dialect, however since so few chose to specify the results are inconclusive.

Furthermore, the results from the pre-prepared descriptions read (on both good and bad) that approximately 50% of the respondents found it to be ‘straightforward’/‘frank,’ and in addition approximately 40% finds it ‘warm.’ Other popular choices were ‘rude,’ ‘vulgar’ and ‘sloppy’ sounding. Additionally, 93% chose the association of comedians; the ratings were similarly high in each of the three groups. Moreover, one of the respondents commented that all conversations in Kansai dialect sounds like *manzai* comedy duos. The second most popular association was merchants/businesspeople. The question is, however, how many associate it with the merchants of old time, and how many associate it with the current business city of Osaka. Furthermore, the fact that not even 16% associated it with *geisha* could be due to the perception of Kansai=Osaka. The *likers* in general like the dialect since they find it familiar and lively, as well as unlike the (cold) standard language. Its association to comedy was also a factor. In addition, many commented that they like dialects in general. However, some of the *likers* did describe the dialect as ‘sloppy,’ ‘vulgar’ and ‘rude.’ Moreover, 25% of the *likers* associate it with *yakuza*. Therefore, an interesting question is whether they like the dialect because of the way it sounds and its association to *yakuza* (whether real life or cinematic), or despite it? It is highly possible that some respondents like the dialect because of its rougher sound, and notably 32% percent of the male respondents made the connection, compared to the 15% of female respondents, most of which were *likers*.

The *dislikers*, like the *likers*, found the dialect familiar, only they found it overly familiar. Though some found it humorous, they overall found it to be too aggressive, intense, and coarse, as well as dirty and annoying. Interestingly enough, one *disliker*, who was one of few who chose to describe the dialect as ‘hillbilly-like’/‘uneducated,’ also described it as ‘warm,’ which could suggest that the dialect has an over all warm impression, however not implying it is likeable. Two *dislikers* (both female) like the sound of Kyoto dialect, which amplifies the idea that people think of Osaka when they think of Kansai.

Almost half of the *others* stated they were neutral towards the dialect, which means that more than half of them have mixed feelings, or maybe did not want to answer truthfully. It is a fact that the honesty of the respondents overall cannot be guaranteed despite the anonymity, and it is possible many have avoided pronouncing dislike towards the dialect (may it be due to the speakers of the

sound) by joining the group of the *others*. There were in fact several who said they did not like the speakers, which may keep them from liking the dialect itself, since the two are evidently closely connected. Some also commented that the dialect is a bit too intense for their liking.

The question (regarding all three groups) is how many (unconsciously) connect their feelings for the Kansai region and Kansai people with the dialect. A few have answered that they do not mind the dialect, just the people, but how high is the true figure? For example, although as much as 93% answered that they associate the dialect with comedians, a mere 15% described the dialect as funny; results that suggest that the respondents have trouble separating their feelings for the sound of the dialect and those for the speakers. Furthermore, can a dialect sound ‘conceited,’ or is this a projection of feelings regarding the speakers and their personalities?

Finally, while Kyoto is mentioned a lot in the comments, Osaka is not. One possible reason may be the perception of Kansai=Osaka; since Kyoto seems to differ, they feel a need to point it out. Although many stated that there is a difference between Kyoto dialect and Osaka dialect, the degree remains debatable. Moreover, five respondents, regardless their opinion on the Kansai dialect in general, expressed a specific liking towards the Kyoto dialect, however the opinions regarding Kyoto dialect is over all mixed: it is on the one hand viewed as elegant and gentle, and on the other hand sarcastic sounding.

## Discussion

There is no doubt that the introduction of a standard language has had great advantages, and still has. It is, after all, an enormous practicality. However, the consequences that have followed might be mainly due to the very rapid way in which the changes took place, and the way it seems like they might have tried to rush the popularity of the standard language by stigmatizing the local dialects.

The standard language was popularized by being linked to Tokyo, which in turn was promoted as what appears to be the idealistic, new Japan: westernized. Kansai, being a very proud region, is said to have resisted the new Tokyo culture. Regardless of the reason why, the region was equally promoted by television as Tokyo was: by creating a contrast, it would be easier to define Tokyo. And they really did create it; the popularity of Kansai dialect increased majorly by the broadcasting, but since most programs were produced by Tokyo producers, the dialect was not authentic. The dialect that gained so much popularity nationwide via media such as television and radio was merely a simplified Tokyo-version – the impact of which is partially unclear.

The question is how much the region resisted. It is evident that television has had, and probably still has, a great influence, and since the national broadcasting managed to standardize (eliminate?) much of the regional differences, it is only reasonable that it in the long run has weakened the differences both between Kansai and standard, as well as the differences existing within the Kansai region. This is after all what Palter and Slotsve (1995) stated; that the variations within the region have been “slowly disappearing,” due to national broadcasting (Ibid:46). It could therefore be related to the Kansai dialect promoted by television; a standard Kansai dialect has been created. A simplified version that won the hearts of Japanese viewers; maybe it was less and less resisted because it was both the way they were perceived and what made them popular and successful again. Maybe it affected the people of Kansai the way standard language affected Japan: the kids started to speak the way they spoke on television.

After the war, they began rejecting thoughts of the past, and by extension possibly their own identity, as they were obsessed with progress and Americanization. Neither *kabuki* nor *geisha* were believed to survive, due to the rejection of traditional culture. However, along with *rakugo*, these today very typically Japanese arts and phenomena somehow did survive. Additionally, they incidentally all have strong connections to the Kansai region. It is definitely interesting that dialects started to be more tolerated from the 1970s and onward (due to the fear of the disappearance of both them and the past of Japan), when the “Osaka-*ben* boom,” “Kansai-*ben* counter-attack,” “*manzai* boom” and “*furusato* boom” all took place during the 1980s, and the *geisha* society in addition is

believed to have stabilized around the 1990s.

According to Carroll (2001), the concept of *furusato* is associated with rural dialects and the combination of national and local identity, but maybe it can be applied to other local dialects as well, such as Kansai dialect. One respondent did mention the concept of *furusato* by name, and included the Kansai dialect in this feeling. It was believed that the “social dislocation” during the post-war period could be solved by the preservation of local culture. It was further claimed that “Japan had not lost touch with its past,” since they had managed to preserve the regional dialects. The concept *furusato* was an important part of this accomplishment, and possibly the Kansai region and Kansai dialect, too, have been important parts, since they seem to represent the old Japan while Tokyo is the new, and since the region houses several culturally and to Japan important arts.

*Manzai* is the art form that seems to have benefited from the changes that took place is comedy art *manzai*, which had not been very popular outside the Kansai region before the war. After its adaption to both radio and the new modern Japan it was a national success, increasing the popularity of both its region and dialect. During the time of the *manzai* boom, the duo Downtown appeared and really secured the Kansai=comedy link. As if echoing the feeling of “culture has become a commodity, and language is part of that culture,” it is thanks to their comedy that Kansai typical words have found their way into the national vocabulary. Almost all the respondents from the survey made the connection to comedians; not too surprising considering flourishing comedy industry as well as long history of humor in Osaka.

In a country tinged by politeness, honorific language and evasive ways of replying, is Kansai dialect too frank and too familiar? Or is it exactly what the Japanese miss about their standard language? According to previous research, the attitudes towards the Kansai dialect have been mainly positive during the 1990s, especially amongst younger respondents, and important keywords have been ‘warm,’ ‘frank’ and ‘lively.’ Furthermore, while standard language has been associated with modern society, dialect in general has been associated with human relations. Several respondents in the present survey said to like the Kansai dialect because it is unlike the cold standard language, as well as “having a human touch,” which agrees with the study by Carroll (2001).

In further accordance with previous research, Osaka dialect is more frequently associated with negative feelings, while Kyoto dialect is often viewed positively, “even” amongst Kanto respondents, and most notably: even by respondents who dislike the dialect in general. This suggests two things in particular:

- 1) Osaka is the most prominent part of Kansai.

The fact that so many connected the dialect to typically Osaka phenomena, such as comedy, and furthermore that Kyoto was often mentioned specifically, but Osaka seemed to be implied when speaking of Kansai seems to agree with the theory by Palter and Slotsve (1995), that most non-Kansai people regard speakers of Kansai dialect to be from Osaka, which suggests that many people regard Kansai as Osaka.

- 2) People strongly project their feelings for the region and the speakers onto the dialect itself. As mentioned by both Long (1999) and Carroll (2001), it is often the speakers and the characteristics of the region who influence the attitudes of people, and not always the actual sound of the dialect. This would further add to the explanation of why Kyoto is generally more liked than Osaka, since the history of the speakers and the culture of the city differs greatly from that of Osaka.

Neither age nor place of origin appears to have been influencing factors in the survey, as most respondents regardless liked the Kansai dialect. Gender on the other hand, and current place of residence seems to have been factors, as the majority of respondents who like the dialect were female, while the majority of respondents who dislike it were male and living in the Kanto region. The latter would not be surprising if true; even though they are not from the region originally, some were from the eastern part of Japan and hence might have experienced and been influenced by the east-west opposition; they might have been influenced after their move by the surrounding attitudes; or they might have been partially drawn to the region due to their strong feelings for the standard language, as many people were earlier in history, when Tokyo was strongly promoted via national broadcasting.

The most frequently used description of the dialect was ‘straightforward’/‘frank,’ as well as ‘warm.’ Notable is the respondent who dislikes Kansai dialect, but still find it to give a warm impression, suggesting that even though it feels familiar (the term over-familiar used by the respondents who dislike the dialect) and warm does not by default mean they like the dialect. Similarly, respondents who like the dialect still described it as ‘rude,’ ‘vulgar,’ and ‘sloppy.’ The fact that the respondents found the dialect to be very straightforward might be connected, since it is not typically Japanese to be so direct. Possibly, the *dislikers* are offended by the directness of the dialect, while the *likers* might find it refreshing and expressive, or enjoy a more vulgar language, as many of them were in their 20s. Both the respondents who did not like the dialect, as well as several respondents who neither liked nor disliked it, said it was because it was simply too intense and too aggressive; some said they feel intimidated by it.

Many respondents connected the dialect to businesspeople. Although the link is much weaker,

and Osaka is more often thought of as Kansai than Kyoto; the fact that none of the included respondents associated the dialect to the upper class, despite the city's long history of royalty, politicians and aristocrats, it could be suggested that the connection made between Kansai and businesspeople is not only due to the mercantile history of Osaka, but also because of Osaka's current position as a business city. The facts that Osaka has always been recognized for its business life, and that the language has been such an important part of this success in business (as is was customized to sound familiar and to generate humor, and at the same time being persuading in a friendly manner), are especially interesting when drawing parallels to the popularity of the dialect: might part of the popularity be due to the fact that Osaka people are skilled in business? Merchants from Osaka has made use of their way of speaking, so maybe merchants and businesspeople from other places in Japan are learning from the dialect in hopes of creating a horizontal relation to their customers by sounding friendly, making jokes, being less stiff and being persuasive in a gentle manner.

## Conclusion

Using the previously presented results and material, as well as the discussion and analysis of them, the research questions stated in the introduction will now be answered.

1. What is the current attitude towards the Kansai dialect by native Japanese non-Kansai dialect speakers?

According to the survey conducted, the current attitudes seem to be a continuation of the ones observed during the 1990s being mainly positive. It is viewed as friendly, warm, and most of all very straightforward. Several respondents expressed, in various ways, how they like the way it differs from the standard language that is most frequently used in Japan. A minority did however not like the dialect, as they found it to be too aggressive, or simply ugly. A fairly large group was rather neutral towards the dialect, and despite some of the respondents having some negative feelings, mainly regarding the speakers of the dialect, this result reflects acceptance rather than dislikeness. Respondents in general strongly linked their feelings for the dialect with those regarding the region and the speakers. Almost all the respondents included in the survey showed a strong connection between Kansai dialect and comedy.

2. What is the reason/s/ for the increased popularity of Kansai dialect in Japan in the last 30 years?

One of the reasons for the dialects popularity seems to be its familiar and lively feeling, unlike the cold feeling of the standard language which is associated with politeness. Despite having a generally more advanced honorific language, the Kansai dialect is associated with a less polite impression, due to its psychological closeness. Possibly, this is all related to the soft sounds of strong vowels and intonation, as well as its ability to express emotions in a way unlike that of standard language.

Additionally, while the past was rejected in most of Japan, and the language variations standardized, the Kansai region preserved a lot of its past and cultural heritage; the remains of which may be seen as a link to the Japan of the past, and through that a strong connection to the concept of *furusato*. In other words, while Tokyo is the new and modern Japan, Kansai represents the old, traditional and typically cultural, and therefore cherished by the Japanese.

Furthermore, the past and continued link to comedy remains a major part of its popularity and success; it first put Kansai and its dialect on the map in the 1980s, and has held steady ever since, resulting in *manzai* comedians from elsewhere to learn the Kansai dialect for their performances.

Finally, a highly important part of its popularity from the start may be that it has been simplified. Whether by the influence of television, by the change of time, or both in combination, the differences are said to have been reduced, resulting in a Kansai dialect that may be less different from the standard language, and therefore more appealing to a broader nation.

## **Further research**

One of the reasons for a writing a thesis on this particular subject was the wish to kindle a sense of desire for reading and writing on the subject of dialects in others; there is so much to research and write about. In many cases it is doubtful if even the surface has been scratched. In order to further encourage research on the topic, some suggestions for further research will be given, whether it be Kansai dialect or another language variety (or different language for that matter); several respondents did try to encourage me to research their own dialect next.

First of all, as is made clear by researches included in this thesis; national broadcasting has had a major impact on the Japanese language and its varieties. Partially because of this, there are in my experience a lot of interesting analyzes that can be made from Japanese cinematic material, such as movies and television dramas, where one or several characters speak Kansai dialect: Why are the fictional characters dialect speakers, who is the stereotypical Kansai speaker on the screen, and how has this changed over the years? Does movies with several Kansai speakers differ from those including only one? Furthermore, anime and manga series could be used for analysis instead of movies and/or dramas, and a project regarding musical artists who has chosen to write songs in a language variation rather than in the standard language could be an interesting project as well.

In addition, the attitudes of the native speakers of the language variety were not included in the current project; does the majority of dialect speaker like their own dialect, as indicated in some studies, or do they prefer the standard language? Also, the size of the actual difference between Osaka dialect and Kyoto dialect remains debatable, as does the attitudes of respective group regarding each others dialect: how does a person from Kyoto feel about the dialect in Osaka, or the dialect in Hyogo?

Finally, the linguistic phenomena of communication accommodation theory<sup>12</sup> and neo-dialects should also make for interesting subjects.

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<sup>12</sup> For example adjusting ones speech to accommodate to others

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## Appendix

The following is the questionnaire used for this project. The distributed questionnaire did not feature English, only Japanese. The questions marked with a star were obligatory for the respondents.

### アンケート Questionnaire

\*1. 性 Gender

男 Male

女 Female

\*2. 年齢 Age

\*3. どこに住んでいますか。Where do you live?

\*4. 関西弁の話し手ですか。Are you a speaker of Kansai dialect?

はい Yes

いいえ No

5. 「いいえ」と答えたら、どの地域から来ましたか。If no, which region are you from?

\*6. 関西弁の話しての友達か近親がいますか。Do you have any friends or near relatives who are speakers of Kansai dialect?

\*7 関西弁が好きか嫌いですか。Do you like or dislike Kansai dialect?

好き Like

嫌い Dislike

その他 Other

\*8. どうしてそうですか。Why is that so?

\*9. 関西弁は・・・？ Kansai dialect is...?

親切 Friendly

無礼 Rude

温かい Warm

野卑 Vulgar

雑 Sloppy

率直 Straightforward/Frank

田舎者／無教育 Hillbilly-like/Uneducated

こっけい Funny

美しい Beautiful

耳障り Ugly

旋律的 Melodious

その他（そうだとしたら、関西弁を自分の言葉で書いてください）If you want to, describe the Kansai dialect in your own words.

\*10. 下の単語は関西弁と関係があると思いますか？ Do you feel the following are connected to Kansai dialect?

芸者 Geisha

- ヤクザ Yakuza
- お笑い芸人 Comedians
- 商人／実業家 Merchants/Businesspeople
- 上流階級 Upper class

11. 自由なコメント。なんでもいいです。Free commentary. Write anything you want.

例 : Examples:

関西弁の人気。The popularity of Kansai dialect.

映画の関西弁。The Kansai dialect in movies.

関西弁と標準語の違い。The difference between Kansai dialect and Standard Japanese.

大阪弁と京都弁の違いがありますか。Is there a difference between Osaka dialect and Kyoto dialect?