

A Pilot Investigation into Non-Japanese Perceptions and Attitudes Towards the Fukui Dialect

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Abstract

The researcher conducted a pilot investigation in December of 2018 to understand non-native residents' identification, perception, and attitudes towards the Fukui dialect. The survey was conducted using a questionnaire at a Japanese language school in Fukui City and included 24 respondents. The questionnaire included demographic questions, as well as two draw-a-map tasks often used in the field of perceptual dialectology: one of the whole of Japan and the other of Fukui Prefecture. For the respondents who identified a dialect in Fukui Prefecture, there were follow-up questions to assess the language regard these respondents had towards the Fukui dialect. Results showed a majority of respondents could identify a dialect in Fukui Prefecture. Furthermore, the respondents who identified a dialect in Fukui thought favorably of the dialect. The majority also believed that there was somewhat of a difference between the Fukui dialect and the standard language they are taught in Japanese class, though for many respondents this difference did not seem to pose a problem in terms of comprehensibility. In the final summary, the researcher concludes with some observations from the data as well as issues to be resolved in this pilot investigation in order to conduct similar research on a larger scale in the future.

Keywords: perceptual dialectology, dialect consciousness, Japanese linguistics, dialectology, Fukui dialect

1. Introduction

The field of perceptual dialectology, which looks at the language regard non-specialists have towards language, has often focused on native speakers of a language or dialect as a research group. There have been some studies in assessing non-native speakers' perceptions of language, but in general this is not the case (Prikhokdine 2018). Through previous studies, the researcher has observed a possible need for limited Japanese dialect acquisition of dialect or dialects by non-native Japanese speakers in Fukui Prefecture, located on the Sea of Japan two hours north of Kyoto (Hennessy & Kuwabara 2016). Follow-up studies conducted by the researcher on the dialect perceptions of native residents of Fukui Prefecture exhibit daily use of a dialect, even in working

conditions, as well as multiple dialects reported within Fukui Prefecture itself (Hennessy 2018; Hennessy & Kuwabara 2017). This makes understanding how non-Japanese perceive the Fukui dialect important, as it is something that they may encounter and have to deal with during their entirety of time in Fukui Prefecture.

In this research paper, the researcher wanted to explore more in-depth non-native Japanese residents' perceptions of the dialect or dialects of Fukui Prefecture. Specifically, the researcher will report the findings on whether or not foreign residents can identify a dialect or dialects in Fukui Prefecture compared to the rest of Japan using draw-a-map tasks to create dialect boundary maps, a task that is based on a wealth of previous literature in the field (Preston 2018; Montgomery and Cramer 2016; Long & Yim 2002; Long 1999; Preston 1999; Preston 1989). Next, for the foreign residents who identified a dialect within Fukui Prefecture, the researcher will show results of a language attitude assessment conducted after these draw-a-map tasks to understand further their perceptions and image of the dialect they reported as being surrounded by. Finally, the researcher will discuss the results.

2. The Fukui dialects

From a descriptive linguistics standpoint, Fukui Prefecture has two overarching dialect boundaries in Fukui: (1) Reihoku – the northern area, and (2) Reinan – the southern area. The boundary split occurs at the furthest north part of Tsuruga City, which is also an area of a geographical split due to a mountain range within the prefecture. The Reihoku dialect is also included in the overall set of dialects in Hokuriku, which comprises Fukui Prefecture, Ishikawa Prefecture, and Toyama Prefecture. The Reinan dialect is part of the Kinki set of dialects, which also encompasses major cities such as Osaka and Kyoto. The vocabulary of the two areas can be quite different, however, the grammar of both areas is very similar (Sato 2003).

Within the Reihoku area, there are smaller dialect boundaries between the eastern and western parts. In the flatter western area, the major cities of Fukui City, Sabae City, and Takefu City are considered accentless. However, Ono City and Katsuyama City situated in the mountain areas of the east part of Reihoku are considered part of the Keihan-type accent dialects, which is connected to the Kansai dialect, specifically the dialects of Kyoto and Osaka (Kindai'ichi 1977). Keihan-type accent dialects circle around the eastern part of the Reihoku area and continue into the northern Ishikawa Prefecture and Toyama Prefecture.

3. Methodology

In this section, the researcher will describe the methodologies used to gather and analyze data. The basic modes of data gathering were a questionnaire, which first featured a set of demographic questions, then hand-drawn dialect maps, followed by language attitudes assessment of the identified

dialects. The research was carried out during a break time between classes at a Japanese language school in Fukui City, Fukui Prefecture with 24 students of the school.

3-1 Demographic questionnaire

The researcher had respondents fill out a questionnaire that featured a number of questions for understanding the background of each respondent. This portion of the questionnaire included the following: (1) gender, (2) home country, (3) mother language, (4) age, (5) occupation, (6) time spent in Japan, (7) time spent in Fukui Prefecture and location within Fukui Prefecture, (8) self-assessment of Japanese level based on a 4-point scale, (9) length of time spent studying the Japanese language within Japan and Fukui Prefecture, (10) time spent studying the Japanese language outside of Japan, (11) the types of people you speak the Japanese language with in your daily life, (12) the frequency with which you speak the Japanese language with Japanese people, and (13) the types of places where you speak the Japanese language with Japanese people. The format of this demographic portion of the questionnaire is amended from the previous research efforts of the researcher as well as includes items that have been previously used within the social sciences (Hennessy 2018; Hennessy & Kuwabara 2017; Denscombe 2017; Hennessy & Kuwabara 2016).

3-2 Hand-drawn maps

Hand-drawn maps of dialects areas is a research tool that has long been used in the field now of perceptual dialectology (Preston 2018; Montgomery and Cramer 2016; Long & Yim 2002; Long 1999; Preston 1999; Preston 1989). In this research method, respondents are given a map with directions to circle areas of the map in which they believe there is a dialect boundary and then label the dialect names for those areas. For the purposes of this research, respondents were asked to draw their perceived dialect boundary maps onto two different maps: (1) a map of Japan with the prefectural boundaries visible (Figure 1), and (2) a map of Fukui with city boundaries visible (Figure 2).



Figure 1: An example of the map of Japan used



Figure 2: An example of the Fukui Prefecture map used

Of the 24 respondents (described in section 3-4), all completed a hand-drawn dialect boundary map onto the map of Japan, and only two respondents completed the dialect boundary map of Fukui. For this reason, the scope of this research will only focus on the map of Japan hand-drawn map task. However, the fact so many respondents did not complete the Fukui Prefecture dialect boundary map suggests something about the respondents' knowledge of the Fukui dialect. This point will be discussed in more detail in Section 5 – Discussion and Conclusion.

3-3 Language attitudes

For respondents who identified a dialect in Fukui on the map of Japan, they were further asked to assess their own language attitudes towards the Fukui dialect based on certain characteristics: (1) correctness, (2) pleasantness, (3) stylishness, (4) beauty, (5) different from the Japanese you learn in textbooks, (6) frequency of use (either spoken or listening), and (7) comprehension of the dialect. The respondents were asked to rank these characteristics based on a 4-point scale: (1) I don't think so at all, (2) I don't think so, (3) I somewhat think so, and (4) I completely think so (Prikkhodkine 2018; Cramer 2016; Long & Yim 2002; Long 1999). Again, these questionnaires were primarily conducted in Japanese, however, there was English glossing of the instructions for conducting the draw-a-map task and for the terms used for the characteristics noted above. These characteristics are standard characteristics used in language and dialect attitude research (Cramer 2016; Long & Yim 2002; Long 1999), with the added exception of (3) stylishness, (5) different from the Japanese you learn in textbooks, and (7) comprehension of the dialect.

The reason for adding (3) stylishness is because, based on the researcher's previous research, there seems to be some image of stylishness or coolness of certain dialects by both Japanese and non-Japanese participants, particularly in reference to the Kansai dialect, which many consider a "stylish" or "cool" dialect (Hennessy 2018; Hennessy & Kuwabara 2016). For (5) different from the Japanese you learn in textbooks, the researcher felt it was important to add this to gain insight into the Japanese instruction non-native learners receive in the classroom versus the Japanese language they receive in regular societal interactions. Most research on dialect perceptions is conducted on respondents who are native speakers of the language or dialect, so this is not a characteristic that is mentioned in previous research. For (7) comprehension of the dialect, much like the reason given for (5), native speakers of the language are often the respondents. Also, they tend to be familiar enough with the dialect to understand it. In the case of non-native speakers of Japanese, it is possible that though they can recognize certain aspects of spoken language to understand that it is a dialect being spoken, they may not be able to understand fully the spoken utterances because of the dialect. For this reason, the research has added this category to assess how much respondents perceive to understand the dialect they have identified.

3-4 The respondents

The researcher is trying to understand, first, if non-Japanese residents living within Fukui Prefecture actually identify a dialect in Fukui and, second, what sort of language attitudes they may hold towards that dialect. For the purpose of this pilot research, the researcher visited a Japanese language school in Fukui City in order to obtain data from the school's intermediate and advanced class of students. A total of 24 valid questionnaires were obtained. Respondent nationalities included Nepalese, Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Sri Lankan, and Mongolian. Respondent gender was 20 male and 4 female. Respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 41, with the average age being 25. Time living in Fukui Prefecture ranged from 2 months to, in one case, over 9 years, with the average time living in Fukui Prefecture just around 18 months. Nearly all respondents live in Fukui City, with only one living in Awara City, which is situated about 20 kilometers north of Fukui City. The average length of Japanese study inside Fukui Prefecture was around 14 months, and outside of Fukui Prefecture was 18 months, meaning the total length of study on average per respondent was 32 months or 2 years and 8 months. Finally, all respondents identified their Japanese level as *chukyu* (中級), or intermediate. As for the questionnaire itself, the quickest respondent completed the questionnaire in around 10 minutes with some taking upwards of 30 minutes to complete.

4. The results

4-1 Respondents who identified a Fukui dialect

Of the 24 respondents, 17 respondents identified a Fukui dialect or at least something different happening in the Reihoku region of northern Fukui Prefecture on the draw-a-map task featuring the map of Japan as a whole. This shows that there is awareness by non-native Japanese speakers of something different in the way Japanese is spoken in this area.

As for other dialects, only 2 respondents failed to identify at least some dialect on the map of Japan. The most numerous directly identified dialect other than Fukui dialect is the Tokyo dialect, which was described by 9 people. If we amalgamate the description terms *Kyoto*, *Osaka*, and *Kansai* into just *Kansai*, then Kansai dialect was identified by 12 respondents. This is interesting as a Fukui dialect was then the most identified dialect in this draw-a-map exercise for non-native relative newcomers to Japan. Other dialects mentioned by the respondents included: Hokkaido, Okinawa, Nagoya, Chiba, Kanagawa, Tohoku, Ishikawa, Aomori, Shimane, and Shikoku. Clearly, there is some level of dialectal awareness by the respondents.

4-2 Language attitude results

As mentioned above, the respondents were asked to assess their attitude towards a perceived Fukui dialect based on seven characteristics: (1) correctness, (2) pleasantness, (3) stylishness, (4) beauty, (5) different from the Japanese you learn in textbooks, (6) frequency of use (either spoken or

listening), and (7) comprehension of the dialect, using a 4-point scale: (1) I don't think so at all, (2) I don't think so, (3) I somewhat think so, and (4) I completely think so. Of the 17 respondents who identified a Fukui dialect, 14 respondents filled out this portion of the questionnaire. The other three for some reason unknown to the researcher did not fill out this portion. One reason could be the length of the questionnaire fatigued the respondents.

For (1) correctness, 11 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect correctness as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 3 respondents assessing it as (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 3.07, suggesting the respondents somewhat agree that Fukui dialect is "correct".

For (2) pleasantness, 10 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect pleasantness as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 4 respondents assessing it as (1) I don't think so at all or (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 2.92, suggesting the respondents somewhat agree that Fukui dialect is "pleasant".

For (3) stylishness, 10 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect stylishness as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 4 respondents assessing it as (1) I don't think so at all or (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 2.85, suggesting the respondents somewhat agree that Fukui dialect is "stylish".

For (4) beauty, 10 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect beauty as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 4 respondents assessing it as (1) I don't think so at all or (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 3.07, suggesting the respondents somewhat agree that Fukui dialect is "beautiful".

For (5) different from the Japanese you learn in textbooks, 9 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect difference from Japanese in textbooks as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 5 respondents assessing it as (1) I don't think so at all or (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 2.57, suggesting the respondents somewhat weakly agree that Fukui dialect is "different from Japanese in textbooks".

For (6) frequency of use, 12 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect frequency of use as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 2 respondents assessing it as (1) I don't think so at all or (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 3.15, suggesting the respondents somewhat agree that Fukui dialect is "frequently used".

For (7) comprehension of the dialect, 9 respondents assessed the Fukui dialect comprehensibility as (3) I somewhat think so or (4) I completely think so, with 5 respondents assessing it as (1) I don't think so at all or (2) I don't think so. The mean for all 14 respondents is 3.07, suggesting the respondents somewhat agree that Fukui dialect is "comprehensible".

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the above results, we can understand that the greater majority of foreign residents in Fukui Prefecture are able to identify a Fukui dialect on the map of Japan draw-a-map task. The dialect boundary maps drawn though are not in accord at all with those produced by native Japanese respondents in Hennessy (2018). This suggests that while the respondents understand there is a Fukui dialect that is somehow different from the way Japanese is spoken throughout Japan, their knowledge stops there; they do not know the details of different varieties of Fukui dialect. Lack of exposure to different dialects throughout Fukui may be a reason for this, but another reason may be the phenomenon of dialect leveling, in which dialects are merging into the standard language at the cost of dialectal features as exhibited in other societies (Kerswill & Williams 2002). The Fukui dialect may be merging more and more with standard Japanese.

As for the attitudes held by the respondents towards the Fukui dialect, the majority on average found it somewhat correct, pleasant, stylish, beautiful, different from the Japanese you learn in textbooks, frequently used (either spoken or listening), and comprehensible. Particularly with correctness, pleasantness, stylishness, and beauty, this is interesting as many of the non-native Japanese respondents to a previous study conducted by the researcher exhibited negative feelings towards the Fukui dialect, particularly towards any sort of spoken acquisition of it (Hennessy & Kuwabara 2016). Also, interestingly, the respondents from the current study believe that Fukui dialect is different from the Japanese language they learn in textbooks, yet also believe that this dialect is comprehensible, meaning that they do not believe the dialect is so far from the Japanese language they learn as to cause issues when encountering the Fukui dialect. This point also is somewhat counter to the results of Hennessy and Kuwabara (2018), in which many of the non-native Japanese respondents expressed frustration, particularly in work situations and daily lives, when encountering people with a pronounced Fukui dialect due to a lack of comprehensibility. However, in the current study, the majority of respondents also believe they regularly encounter the Fukui dialect, which suggests that there is recognition of the dialect at some level. The researcher hopes to continue pursuing this connection between dialect contact and dialect awareness in the future.

Through this study, the researcher could extrapolate the above conclusions, however, this research was done as a pilot project to see how it may be done on a larger level to obtain a larger number of results, which would give a fuller account of the perceptions of the Fukui dialect by foreign residents. As a pilot research project, a few issues became apparent during the research process. First, the questionnaire takes upwards of 30 minutes for completion. Such length in a questionnaire can lead to respondent fatigue, which in this case may have been a factor in not completing the Fukui Prefecture draw-a-map task, as it was the last portion to be completed (Denscombe 2017). One reason in the length difference could be the Japanese reading level of the respondents and so more English glossing could be beneficial.

Another issue is that while the majority identified a Fukui dialect, it is not clear from the data why they knew about the Fukui dialect. The point of draw-a-map tasks is to document non-linguists' perceptions of a dialect or language. However, one respondent mentioned to the researcher after completing the questionnaire that they had heard about the Fukui dialect from a local Japanese acquaintance. This suggests the respondent may not have been aware of any overt difference between how people spoke in the Fukui City area compared to standard Japanese, but instead relied on knowledge given to him by another party. This fact may be true for others who completed the questionnaire as well, and so having some question on how respondents know about the Fukui dialect may be a worthwhile addition.

As a next step, the researcher hopes to make the necessary amendments to the questionnaire and expand the research area out to other parts of the prefecture to include the different dialect boundaries defined in the literature. By doing this, we can start to see the perceptions of different varieties of dialects in Fukui Prefecture by foreign residents. This understanding will give further, fuller documentary evidence regarding the Fukui dialect, and may even open up possible ways to address social needs of foreign residents in regional areas through increased integration into local communities both from a language and cultural perspective.

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福井方言に対する非日本人の意識と態度に関するパイロット調査

ヘネシー・クリストファー

筆者は、2018年12月に、福井方言に対する非日本人居住者の意識、及び態度を理解するためのパイロット調査を行った。この調査においては、福井市の日本語学校に通う24名の学生からアンケートへの回答を得た。アンケートには、回答者の属性を問う質問のほか、方言意識学の分野でよく用いられる方言分布図の作成課題を二つ取り入れた。一つは日本全体の、もう一つは福井県内の方言分布図である。福井県に特有の方言の存在を認識している回答者にはさらに、福井方言に対する態度を理解すべく、追加の質問への回答を依頼した。その結果、大半の回答者が福井県に特有の方言の存在を認識していると回答した。また、福井方言の存在を認識している回答者は、その方言を良く思っていることがわかった。さらに、大半の回答者は、福井方言と日本語の授業で教わってきた共通語には何かしらの違いがあると考えていると回答した。但し、そのうち多くの回答者にとって、その違いは言葉の理解に支障をきたすほどのものではないようだった。最終的に筆者は、アンケート調査結果に関する考察、及び同様の研究を将来的により大きな規模で行うために解決すべき当パイロット調査の問題点を踏まえ、結論を述べている。

キーワード：方言意識、日本語学、方言学、福井方言、日本語教育