

## A Pilot Investigation into Japanese Speakers' Perceptions and Attitudes of Dialects in Fukui Prefecture

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### Abstract

Recent research papers in perceptual dialectology have shown strong evidence for awareness, use, and affinity towards a Hokuriku dialect (Tanaka et al. 2016; Aizawa 2012). However, these recent research advances have a gap in that the dialect-rich Hokuriku area is described as one dialect boundary. The author conducted a pilot survey in November of 2017 to identify in general the perceptual dialectology map of Fukui Prefecture, understand a number of different aspects of attitudes towards the Fukui dialect, and further define the overall perceptual dialect maps of the Hokuriku region. This survey included 64 respondents from inside and outside of Fukui. Results indicated that Fukui natives tend to describe three overarching dialect boundaries within Fukui Prefecture (*Fukui dialect*, *Kansai dialect*, and *Ono dialect*) compared to two described by Fukui non-natives (*Fukui dialect* and *Kansai dialect*). Furthermore, the research showed a tendency for Fukui natives to find their own northern Fukui dialect to be the most pleasant, but there were also a large number of northern Fukui natives who described the Kansai dialect spoken in the southern part of the prefecture as most pleasant. Finally, both those from the northern and southern parts of the prefecture described each other's dialect as either "slightly different" or "completely different."

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

### 1. Introduction

The author, as a recent resident of Fukui City in Fukui Prefecture, conducted small-scale research in 2015 and 2016 using perceptual dialectology research tools, such as questionnaires and interviews, with local foreign residents of Fukui City and local Japanese residents native to Fukui City to understand and assess perceptions of the local dialect (Hennessy & Kuwabara 2017; Hennessy & Kuwabara 2016). Within the above research, participants described a number of different perceived dialect boundaries within Fukui Prefecture. Based on that, the author began investigating these perceptual dialectology maps in other research and discovered both Tanaka et al. (2016) and Aizawa (2012), which suggested different attitudes towards the Ho-

kuriku dialect, but did not look deeply into the attitudes towards dialects within Fukui Prefecture.

To fill this gap, the author has conducted a small-scale pilot investigation that seeks to understand more the attitudes and perceptions towards dialects within Fukui Prefecture from both a Fukui native and non-native perspective. Specifically, the author will investigate: (1) perceptions of the number of dialects within Fukui Prefecture, (2) the areas and names of those dialect boundaries, (3) the level of pleasantness respondents feel towards the different dialects described, and (4) the level of similarity between the dialects described.

## **2. Methodologies**

In this section, the author will describe the research method utilized for collecting data from the 64 respondents, as well as the methods for determining the number of dialects, the naming of those dialects, the pleasantness level respondents have towards a dialect, and the similarity level the respondents feel between described dialects.

### **2-1. Questionnaire**

The author chose to use a questionnaire-style survey because of the ease in collecting larger amounts of data compared to other methods such as research interviews used in the author's previous research (Denscombe 2017). The research used standard demographic questions as well as hand-drawn map methods utilized over many years in the field by Preston (1989; 1999), Long & Yim (2002), and Long (1999). The initial demographic portion contained seven questions in Japanese: (1) Gender, (2) Hometown, (3) Age, (4) Often-used dialects, (5) Occupation, (6) Length of time lived in Fukui Prefecture and areas lived, and (7) Length of time lived outside of Fukui Prefecture and areas lived. The hand-drawn map section of the questionnaire is described in detail below.

### **2-2. Hand-Drawn Maps**

Respondents were given a blank map of Fukui Prefecture with only city lines. They were then given directions in Japanese to: (1) draw circles over areas where they believe dialect boundaries occur, (2) give dialect names of drawn areas, (3) numerically rank the drawn areas from the most pleasant dialect to least 'pleasant' dialect, where '1' equals the most pleasant dialect, and (4) assign the drawn areas a similarity ranking to their own spoken dialect from (A) to (D), where (A) equals the same, (B) equals slightly different, (C) equals very different, and (D) equals incomprehensibly different. The research tools described in (1), (2), (3), and (4) are utilized in much of the previous literature in the field (Preston 1989; Preston 1999; Long 1999; Long & Yim 2002; McKinnie and Dailey-O'Cain 2002).



Figure 1: An example of the Fukui Prefecture map used

### 2-3. The Respondents

For the purpose of this small-scale research, the author received 64 completed questionnaires. All participants were affiliated with a national university in Japan, either as an employee or student. Of the 64 questionnaires collected, 10 were discarded for various reasons such as not being completely filled out or using the city administrative lines seen in Figure 1 as dialect boundaries, essentially identifying every city as having its own dialect.

Of the valid 54 questionnaires left, 39 were from Fukui natives and 15 were from non-natives. The age range of respondents is described in Figure 2:

Fukui Native	
Age Range	Number of Respondents
10s	16
20s	10
30s	3
40s	6
50s	2
60s	2
TOTAL	39
Fukui Non-Native	
10s	8
20s	7
TOTAL	15

Figure 2: Age range of respondents

Among these, all had demographic questions and hand-drawn areas completed for general use, but some were not complete with regards to dialect naming, pleasantness level, and similarity level. However, even if these latter sections were not completed, the questionnaires were still utilized for their dialect boundary element.

### 3. Dialect Boundaries in Fukui

In terms of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary, there are two overarching dialect boundaries in Fukui as given in descriptive linguistics: (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 belongs to the overall set of dialects in the Hokuriku region which comprises Fukui Prefecture, Ishikawa Prefecture, and Toyama Prefecture. The *Reinan* dialect belongs to the Kinki set of dialects, which also encompasses major cities such as Osaka and Kyoto. The grammar of both areas are similar, however the vocabulary can differ significantly (Sato 2003).

Within the *Reihoku* area, smaller dialect boundaries exist between the western and eastern parts. In the west, the major cities of Fukui City, Sabae City, and Takefu City are considered accentless. However, both Ono City and Katsuyama City in the eastern part of *Reihoku* are considered part of the Keihan-type accent dialects, which are best represented again by Kyoto and Osaka (Kindaichi 1977). Ishikawa Prefecture and Toyama Prefecture, situated north of Fukui Prefecture, are also considered part of the Keihan-type accent dialects, meaning the accentless western part of *Reihoku* in Fukui Prefecture is surrounded by otherwise Keihan-type dialects, a remarkable phenomenon.

### 4. Fukui Native Spoken Dialects

In this section, the author will highlight some major parts of the data reflecting Fukui native respondents' own evaluation of their spoken dialects in the demographic section. Out of the 54 valid questionnaires received, 39 were from respondents who identified their hometown as within Fukui Prefecture. From those 39 respondents, there were 29 who identified one specific dialect spoken, with six indicating two dialects spoken.

By far the most named dialect spoken was *Fukui dialect*, which 26 respondents gave as their spoken dialect. All of these listed their hometown as somewhere in the western part of *Reihoku*. There was only one respondent who listed their hometown as Ono City, however, they also listed their dialect as the *Ono dialect*, giving evidence towards a dialect split perception between the east and west parts of *Reihoku* noted above by descriptive linguists. Finally of note, there were two respondents who listed their hometown as Tsuruga City. Both listed *Tsuruga dialect* as their spoken dialect, with one of them also citing *Kansai dialect* as a spoken dialect, suggesting some

sort of perception split between the dialect spoken in Tsuruga City and the Kansai dialect, which is the dialect centered in Osaka and Kyoto, as a whole.

## 5. Fukui Native and Fukui Non-Native Dialect Perceptions

In this section, the author will highlight the Fukui dialect boundaries drawn on the map by respondents from both Fukui and not from Fukui. The data suggests two quite different perceptions of Fukui speech boundaries between these two sets of respondents.

### 5-1. Fukui Native Perception Maps

The dialects boundaries represented in the hand-drawn maps of the 39 Fukui natives suggest an overall average of 3.03 dialects perceived within all of Fukui Prefecture. The mean and mode of actual dialect number are both three, with a range of one to five.

As for the actual dialects with areas circled and described, 24 total perceived dialect boundaries were identified once similar names over similar boundaries were collapsed into single categories (e.g. *Fukui dialect* and simply *Fukui*). *Fukui dialect* with a general placement over Fukui City led the dialects described with 32 total responses, with a potential increase to 35 if the number of respondents who circled the general Fukui City area but did not name the dialect specifically are included. Following this, *Kansai dialect* with a general indication of the *Reinan* area had 18 responses. This number could be further increased by one if we understand one respondent's *Reinan* dialect-marked area as at least something different from what was perceived for the *Reihoku* area. Thirteen respondents perceived an *Ono dialect*. This can also be increased to 18 if we include the five responses that indicated the general Ono City area, but did not actually give a name to the dialect. The two dialects that followed were *Tsuruga dialect* with seven responses and the *Katsuyama dialect* with six responses. Beyond the above, no description received over three responses.

Perceived Dialect (Response rate > 3)	Number of Respondents (Respondent total = 39)
Fukui	35
Kansai	19
Ono	18
Tsuruga	7
Katsuyama	6

Figure 3: Perceived dialects within Fukui Prefecture identified by Fukui natives

### 5-2. Fukui Non-Native Perception Maps

The dialect boundaries drawn and described by the Fukui non-natives have an average of

2.07 dialects perceived per map. The mean and mode are both two, and the range is one to five.

Fourteen total perceived dialect boundaries were identified once similar names over similar boundaries were collapsed into single categories. The main two dialects described are the *Fukui dialect* and the *Kansai dialect*, both with nine responses. The *Fukui dialect* may be increased to 11 though if one response overtly labeled *Reihoku dialect* and another response of *Reihoku* area with no specific dialect label were included. The *Kansai dialect* can increase as well by three to 12 if the response of *Reinan dialect* plus the non-labeled responses indicating the general southern portion of Fukui prefecture were included. Beyond this, no other dialect described garnered more than two responses.

Perceived Dialect (Response rate > 3)	Number of Respondents (Respondent total = 15)
Kansai	12
Fukui	11

Figure 4: Perceived dialects, within Fukui Prefecture identified by Fukui non-natives

### 5-3. Prototype Dialect Perception Maps of Fukui Native and Non-Natives

Using the average of three dialects based on the 39 Fukui native responses combined with the three most described dialects by this same group – (1) *Fukui dialect*, (2) *Kansai dialect*, and (3) *Ono dialect* – we can use the following respondent-drawn map as a prototypical perceived dialect map for the Fukui native (Figure 5).

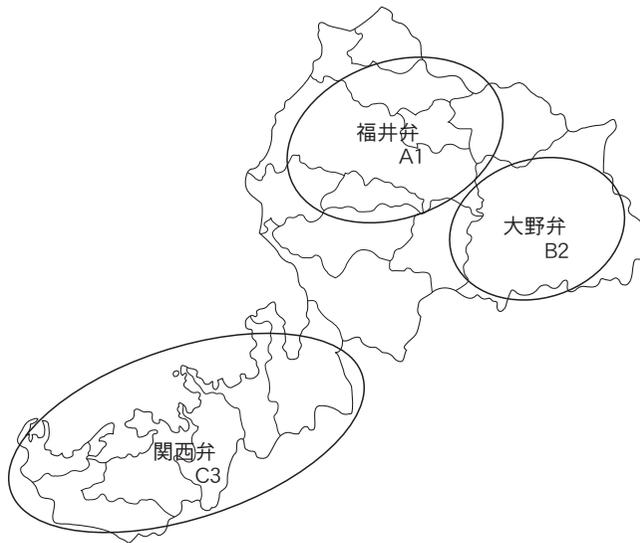


Figure 5: Fukui native-drawn map with Fukui dialect, Ono dialect, and Kansai dialect boundaries.

Conversely, using the average of two dialects based on the 15 Fukui non-native responses combined with the two most described dialects — (1) *Fukui dialect* and (2) *Kansai dialect* — we can use the following respondent-drawn map as a prototypical dialect map for the Fukui non-native (Figure 6).

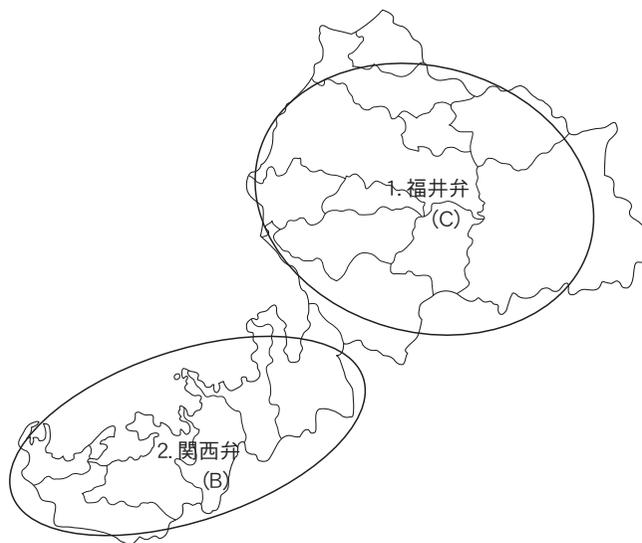


Figure 6: Fukui non-native-drawn map with Fukui dialect and Kansai dialect boundaries.

## 6. Dialect Pleasantness

In this section, the author will describe the respondents' perception of pleasantness towards a dialect, which is based on ranking the dialects they have described on a pleasantness scale where "1" equals the "most pleasant." Two particular points came through from data analysis. The first is connected to the *Reihoku* Fukui native respondents' perceptions of their home dialect versus the *Kansai dialect*. The next has to do with Fukui non-native respondents' perceptions of *Reihoku* and *Reinan*.

### 6-1. Fukui Native — Home Dialect Pleasantness vs. *Kansai Dialect* Pleasantness

Out of the 39 Fukui native respondents, 30 filled out the dialect pleasantness ranking activity. Of these 30 responses, 16 from the western part of *Reihoku* described the *Fukui dialect* as the most pleasant of the dialects they described. Both the respondents from Tsuruga City described the *Tsuruga Dialect* as the most pleasant, and the lone Ono City respondent described the *Ono dialect* as the most pleasant.

The most interesting part of this portion of the research though is that 11 respondents who are from *Reihoku*, the northern part of Fukui Prefecture, described the *Kansai dialect*, the dialect

marked for *Reinan*, the southern part of Fukui prefecture, as the most pleasant dialect. This means that these 11 respondents perceive the dialect they speak with in their daily life as in some way inferior to a dialect separate from them. Perhaps this phenomenon is connected with the popularity of the *Kansai dialect* within modern culture. Similar research in the perception of Korean dialects has shown that the standard dialect being perceived as the most pleasant dialect in Korean for many Koreans, despite the fact it is not their native dialect (Long & Yim 2002). While not the standard dialect, the *Kansai dialect* more than any other enjoys a place among Japanese dialects almost equaling that of the standard dialect. For similar reasons, perhaps *Fukui dialect* speakers put more value on the *Kansai dialect* compared to their own dialect.

#### 6-2. Fukui Non-Native — *Reihoku* vs. *Reinan* Split

In contrast to Fukui native speakers, non-native speakers seemed more split on the pleasantness of the *Fukui dialect* versus the *Kansai dialect*. Of the 11 valid responses to the questions of pleasantness, five perceived the *Fukui dialect* as the most pleasant, while six described the *Kansai dialect* as the most pleasant.

### 7. Dialect Similarity

In this section, the author will describe respondents' perceptions of the similarity of described dialects to their own home dialect. Respondents indicated this through a ranking scale between (A) and (D). Describing the rankings of the scale, (A) is the same as their dialect, (B) is slightly different, (C) is completely different, and (D) is incomprehensible.

#### Fukui Natives' Similarity Perception of the Opposite Side

In general, two points of interest arose from this data analysis regarding Fukui natives' dialect perceptions. First, 21 Fukui natives from *Reihoku* viewed the *Kansai dialect* as "(C) completely different" from their own *Fukui dialect*. A further 12 Fukui natives from *Reihoku* identified the *Kansai dialect* as "(B) slightly different." On the opposite end of this, three respondents from the *Reinan* area described the *Fukui dialect* as "(C) completely different." This suggests a reciprocal perception between *Reihoku* and *Reinan* regarding the difference of their dialects, even if there is some discrepancy between the actual level of difference. Furthermore, a number of these from *Reihoku* who marked the *Kansai dialect* as "(C) completely different" from their own *Fukui dialect* also marked the *Kansai dialect* as the most pleasant dialect, suggesting that great difference between a native dialect and another dialect is not a barrier to the pleasantness one derives from a different dialect.

## 8. Discussion

There are a number of points that can be summarized from the Fukui Prefecture perceptual dialect map data presented in this paper. First, native Fukui people from the western part of *Reihoku* identify themselves as speaking a Fukui dialect. Though far more scant, there is evidence that shows native Fukui people from the eastern part of *Reihoku* identify themselves as speaking something different from that of the western part, such as *Ono dialect*. This distinction conforms to an overall dialect boundary division described in a traditional analysis by descriptive linguists of dialects in this area, with the eastern part of *Reihoku* and all of *Reinan* considered part of the Keihan-type family of dialects, and the western part of *Reihoku* considered part of a non-accent area. The fact this western area is surrounded by Keihan-type dialect area could suggest that the *Fukui dialect* itself may be some deviation from an older dialect.

Second, from descriptions of Fukui Prefecture's dialects through hand-drawn maps, we know that Fukui natives perceive on average about three dialects within Fukui Prefecture: (1) *Fukui dialect*, (2) *Kansai dialect*, and (3) *Ono dialect*. This is in slight opposition to Fukui non-native respondents, who identified the same two *Fukui dialect* and *Kansai dialect*, but failed to describe as a whole a third *Ono dialect*. This suggests that people from Fukui in general perceive more dialect difference in Fukui Prefecture than those who are not from Fukui. However, this survey was limited particularly with regard to non-native Fukui respondents, as almost all had lived in Fukui for only one or two years. Fukui non-natives who have lived longer might further identify in line with Fukui natives, and so more research is necessary.

Third, on a whole, those from Fukui believe that their own spoken dialect, the *Fukui dialect*, is the "most pleasant." However, nearly one-third of the valid responses from Fukui natives born in the northern *Reihoku* area actually identified the southern *Reinan* dialect, the *Kansai dialect*, as the most pleasant. The reason for this may lie in the perceptions towards the more cosmopolitan *Kansai dialect* versus the more provincial *Fukui dialect*. In previous research, the author through research interviews discovered a sense of "embarrassment" from many Fukui native participants towards speaking the Fukui dialect when in the Kansai area (Hennessy & Kuwabara 2016). This phenomenon has been described in previous literature as a "dialect inferiority complex" (Long & Yim 2002).

Finally, though part of the same prefecture, the great majority of respondents from both *Reihoku* and *Reinan* perceive the other's dialect as at least "slightly different," with the majority going further to say the two dialects are "completely different." These perceptions may have an effect on both *Reihoku* and *Reinan* natives' attitudes towards each other.

## 9. Conclusion

Though on a small scale, this pilot investigation into a detailed perception map of dialects in

Fukui Prefecture gives many insights for understanding how Fukui natives perceive their own dialect boundaries. The author hopes to replicate this research on a larger scale not just for Fukui Prefecture, but all of the Hokuriku region in order to have a more detailed understanding of the dialect perception mapping project of the whole of Japan that has been conducted by Tanaka et. al (2016) and Aizawa (2012), which focused on larger regions such as Hokuriku as opposed to specific prefectures. Also, further mapping based on characteristics such as age, sex, profession, hometown, among others is necessary to have as complete a picture of the perceptual dialect map of the Hokuriku area as possible.

The current goal of the author is to use this research and future research based on it to start creating a system for understanding dialectal importance within the Hokuriku region, which then may be used for connecting to other research, such as dialectal levelling and dialectal need, particularly with regard to learners of Japanese as a second language who live within the region. This system, if successfully developed, could be further utilized to inform Japanese language education within Japan as a whole to help more successfully integrate non-Japanese into the local Japanese community.

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福井県の方言に対する日本人の意識・イメージに関するパイロット調査

ヘネシー・クリストファー

最近の方言意識の研究において、北陸における方言に対する意識・利用頻度・愛着の高まりが示されている（田中等 2016；相澤 2012）。しかしながら、最近の研究の発展においては、方言が豊かな北陸地域が一つの方言地域として分析されている。筆者は2017年11月に、福井県の方言意識の分布を認識し、また福井の様々な方言に対する異なるイメージを理解し、さらに北陸地域全体の方言意識の分布を把握するため、パイロット調査を行った。本アンケート調査では、福井県内外から64の回答を得た。その結果、福井県出身者は県内に3つの方言（福井弁、関西弁、大野弁）が分布していると回答する人が多かった。それに対して、福井県以外の出身者は2つの方言（福井弁、関西弁）が分布していると回答する人が多かった。さらに、福井県嶺北地域の出身者は、自分たちの嶺北の方言（福井弁）が最も「感じが良い」と回答する傾向にあった。しかし、多くの福井県嶺北地域の出身者は、嶺南地域で話されている関西弁が最も「感じが良い」とも回答した。最後に、嶺北と嶺南地域の出身者は、それぞれの方言は「少し違う」、または「かなり違う」と回答した。

キーワード： 方言意識、日本語学、方言、福井弁