

Tohoku Dialects as a Speech of Rednecks*

—Language Crossing in Japanese TV Programs—

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Abstract

This paper analyzes quite recent examples of language crossing from standard Japanese into Tohoku dialects, which show that crossing in this case reflects hierarchy of language. Language crossing in these examples plays a crucial role in reinforcing stigmatization of Tohoku dialects. Even in the boom of dialects and localization movement, Tohoku dialects, which function as symbolic resources in the media, are suffering from negative stereotyped images such as rural uneducated farmers, i.e. rednecks.

key words: Tohoku dialects, standard Japanese, language crossing, symbolic function, stereotyped image, gender, media

1. Introduction

This paper takes up two examples of language crossing from Japanese TV programs to claim that they reinforce negative stereotypes of Tohoku dialects and their native speakers, such as rednecks or peasants with rural, poor, backward, and unsanitary characteristics through their strategic use for entertainment and characterization (Johnston(1999)).

This paper discusses language crossing with the following two points in mind.

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First, I analyze the case of language crossing from standard Japanese into Tohoku dialects. Second, I focus on topic-based crossing in the programs. Many papers on crossing so far have analyzed where words or phrases were crossed in conversational data, but this paper deals with the type of language crossings in which a different code, Tohoku dialects in this case, is used according to topic or theme in TV dramas or talk shows. In other words, Tohoku dialects are used (crossed) thematically according to a certain topic or theme where standard Japanese is a basic code in the programs.

The language crossing in Japanese shown in this paper reveals that the decline of actual use of dialects in daily lives after WWII, especially among younger generations, has promoted a symbolic function of dialects through mass media, and dialects have functioned as symbolic resources more than ever. Accordingly, Tohoku dialects are more stigmatized than ever (as the title shows) even in the recent booms of dialects in Japan. Therefore, young female native speakers of Tohoku dialects feel ashamed of their dialects and hesitate to speak them in big cities such as Tokyo. They are made to feel an inferiority complex about their dialects, which are stigmatized as unfeminine.

There is quite an interesting coinage: *hoogen jyoshi* ('dialect girl'). This coinage means that beautiful young women speaking dialects are cute and attractive to young men because of the gap between their appearance and speech. However, this trend is not applicable to young female speakers of Tohoku dialects. From the Meiji era on, we can find many episodes and experiences that at first the writers traveling or working in the Tohoku area were fascinated by beautiful women there, but later they became shocked or disappointed to hear their dialects, which sounded vulgar and uncultured to them. Aota (1885), Hyogo (western part of Japan)-born, wrote one episode set in the Tohoku area in which he looked down upon a beautiful young woman as the ugliest woman as soon as he heard her speak.¹

¹ Let me make a brief note on the Tohoku area. The Tohoku area is located in the northern part of Japan, consisting of six prefectures: Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Miyagi, Yamagata and Fukushima. This area is mainly agricultural. Far from Tokyo, the capital city of Japan, Tohoku inevitably became economically behind and tended to be looked down upon.

2. Language crossing and hierarchy

Before going into detailed discussion, let me summarize what language crossings are to clarify my stance. Rampton (1995:14) defines language crossing as ‘the use of language varieties associated with a social or ethnic group that the speaker does not normally ‘belong to.’ He conducted fieldwork in London focusing on adolescents’ use of Panjabi, Creole and Stylized Asian English. He (1999:421) argues that ‘people use language and dialect in discursive practice to appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge influential images and stereotypes of groups that they don’t themselves (straightforwardly) belong to.’

Quite a few papers and books about language crossing claim that language crossings for example, young white speakers’ use of African American English, are valid for solidarity, subversion, negotiation, construction of identity and so on. This paper presents two examples that argue their language crossing reinforces stigmatization of Tohoku dialects and their native speakers after all.

Basically, language crossings presuppose a hierarchy of languages. People usually cross into dominated/oppressed languages. As I explain later, since the establishment of standard Japanese in the Meiji era, dialects were degraded to substandard and vulgar and subject to reform or abolishment. Even now there is a clear hierarchy in Japanese dialects: Kyoto (once a capital of Japan) or Kansai dialects at the top, and Tohoku dialects at the bottom.

To show that Tohoku dialects are degraded at the bottom in the Japanese language, Inoue (1977) discusses the negative image of Tohoku dialects. Inoue conducted a research by questionnaire to high school and university students, asking how three dialects, i.e. Tohoku, Tokyo (standard Japanese) and Kansai (spoken in the western part of Japan), are judged in terms of intelligence-, emotion- and nostalgia-related associations (I omit the detailed value items and results here. See Inoue (1977) for further discussion). The result is that Tohoku dialects are negatively judged in terms of intelligence- and emotion-related associations. Only a nostalgia-related association is positively judged. In contrast, Tokyo dialect (standard Japanese) is positively judged in these two associations, while Kansai dialects are positively judged in emotion- and nostalgia-related associations. It follows that Tohoku dialects are negatively valued in comparison with the other

two dialects. Tohoku dialects are evaluated negatively, receiving derogatory comments such as “rough”, “not suitable for young women”, and “difficult to comprehend”.

Moreover, Inoue’s questionnaire indicates that native speakers of Tohoku dialects also feel the same way, considering their dialects to be negative in those associations. The norm of standard Japanese is internalized by the younger generation, who are suffering from the derogatory evaluation of Tohoku dialects. In sum, they are severely stigmatized dialects, degraded at the bottom in the hierarchy.

Furthermore, within Tohoku dialects, there is a hierarchy, Aomori dialect (Aomori is located farthest from Tokyo) is at the bottom. Many native speakers of Tohoku dialects say that Aomori dialect has the strongest accent, and they do not understand what speakers of Aomori dialect are trying to say. This kind of hierarchical or authoritative attitude is rampant even among the speakers of stigmatized dialects.

The analysis of language crossings should take history and power differences in language and society into consideration as Hill (1999:554) persuasively claims. I will cite her claim as follows, for clarification.

It is clear that crossings are often seen by source populations as theft, as the illegitimate use of a resource. At the very least, crossings and stylings can be seen as attempts to delimit and control what the resource shall mean. These implications, of denigration and control, may be the inevitable pragmatic effect of speaking in a world that contains such gross differentials of power, a world where the populations who are being ‘styled’ are only a few years out from a history of slavery or genocide, and are even today isolated in poverty by a thousand kinds of fully material discrimination. In such a world it is very hard for a member of a dominant group to simultaneously ‘use’ and yet signal, ‘this is not mine, it is truly yours, and I honor you by adopting it.

In support of her statement I claim that the concept of language crossing itself and the phenomena of language crossing are both historically and socially constructed and should be analyzed as such. In other words, if there are no hierarchy or

power differences among languages or dialects, how can we define or find language crossings? The important point in language crossing is who, as what language speaker, crosses into what language in what context. The politics require a careful and thorough research.

3. Historical overview of dialects in Japan

As Hill (1999) points out, language crossings should be considered historically. This section describes the linguistic situation in the Meiji era and briefly notes that modernization during the high economic growth period after WWII drastically changed political and economic systems, which influenced the linguistic situation in the Japanese language.

3.1. Meiji era (1869~1912)

In the Meiji era, Japan was opening up for other modernized European countries, busy importing foreign goods, technology, culture and philosophy. Accordingly, the Japanese government also paid attention to their own language, which they thought should be more controlled for the unification and centralization of Japan.

Details aside, the establishment of the standard Japanese was encouraged by Kazutoshi Ueda, Professor of the National University of Tokyo and officer of the Ministry of Education. He proposed that standard Japanese should be the language used by educated Tokyoites. Tokyo has been and is the economic and political center of Japan since the Edo era (1603~1868). Standard language was constructed politically for Japan as a modernized nation. In a sense, standard language is a symbol of modernization and national authority. Language is an essential part of “imagined political communities” as Anderson (1991) adequately states.

The establishment of standard Japanese made other regional languages degraded as substandard and vulgar, relegating them to dialects. Since then, dialects started to be considered in need of reform or abolishment. Moreover, as I pointed out in section 2, dialects were differentiated hierarchically, causing Tohoku dialects, degraded to the bottom, to be subject to severe pressure by the reform movement.

Dialects also started to take on a symbolic function in the Meiji era. Shimei

Futabatei (1864~1909), Tokyo-born novelist, employed Tohoku dialects to translate the speech of peasants in Russian novels into Japanese. His idea was inspired by Samba Shikitei (1776~1822), Tokyo-born novelist in the Edo period (Tokyo was called Edo during the Edo period), who wrote about daily lives of various people through lively conversation with wit. The settings of his novels are public baths or barber shops where he thought he could portray frankly speaking people. Shikitei employed dialects spoken in the eastern part of Japan, such as Edo or Itako, which is close to the Tohoku area. As a result, the speech of working-class people and peasants came to be expressed in Tohoku dialects. Futabatei's idea of translation still occurs in contemporary novels and media discourse in Japan. Note that Tohoku dialects are also used for translation of the speeches of slaves, African Americans, or working-class people in American literature such as *Gone with the Wind* and *Scarlett*. It is well-known that Black English or southern dialects are translated into Tohoku dialects.

Moreover, a female version of standard Japanese, i.e., women's language, was considered necessary for the modernization and unification of Japan. Nakamura (2007) reveals the motivation and process of the establishment of Japanese women's language. She claims that patriarchal societies like Japan insisted that men should be trained as soldiers and workers, and women should be trained as mothers and wives, i.e. a sex-based division of labor. Women were marginalized as second-class citizens. Men and women were positioned in an asymmetrical relationship in the Meiji era.

Details aside, women's language was established employing schoolgirls' speech called "teyodawa" speech. ("Teyo" or "dawa" are final particles put at the end of a sentence.) Women's standard Japanese was symbolized ideologically as urban, middle or upper class, polished, feminine women. Since dialects, at least Tohoku dialects, basically have little linguistic difference in gender, dialects (except Kyoto dialect, which is admired as a feminine image of speech) took on a gender image of unfemininity². Thus, female native speakers of dialects, especially Tohoku ones, were forced to feel doubly stigmatized: substandard and unfeminine. This point

² Sunaoshi (2004:193) investigates one Japanese dialect in terms of gender. She argues that gender difference in the dialect is not nearly as observable.

will be taken up in section 4.

As for language crossing, standard Japanese enabled men and women to use the constructed language of the opposite sex. Namely, men cross into women's language, and women into men's language. Take for example, the first person pronoun, 'ore'. 'Ore' is men's language in standard Japanese, but young girls or women sometimes use it, crossing into men's language. But this kind of crossing does not mean anything in Tohoku dialects because 'ore' is used by both men and women in Tohoku dialects. As Hill (1999) states, a historical consideration is necessary in the analysis of language crossing.

3.2. High economic growth during 1960s and 1970s

After WWII, Japanese dialects substantially took on symbolic functions. This is because use of dialects in daily lives has been declining, especially among the younger generation, since Tokyo-centered economic and political systems have been encouraged, and standardized education and media have promoted the gaps between rural and urban, rich and poor, men and women, and so on. As a result, the Tohoku area has been symbolized as the image of rural, poor, backward, elder, vulgar, uneducated peasants or rednecks, i.e. negative stereotyping as the title of this paper indicates. Tohoku dialects are used as an index of that image. The index is still rampant and persistent in present Japan even though there is a boom of dialects and localization movement. Tohoku dialects are strategically employed with a negative image for entertainment in mass media and novels.

3.3. Summary

This section overviews the historical situation of the Japanese language, pointing out that Tohoku dialects have been marginalized and, accordingly, have taken on symbolic functions, which were originally constructed in the Meiji era and reinforced through translation of foreign novels especially after WWII.

4. Femininity and Tohoku dialects

This section discusses Tohoku dialects in terms of femininity. As stated in section 3, the establishment of standard Japanese and emergence of women's

language were motivated by modernization, which promoted industrialization and technological development in Japan. Consequently, agriculture was associated with backwardness, and the Tohoku region is labeled as a typical agricultural area. Salaried people in the urban area were looked up to, while farmers were looked down upon. Young women wanted to marry to salaried men. The following basic image between language and region and class is constructed.

language	standard Japanese	Tohoku dialects
norm	standard, formal	substandard, informal
region	urban	rural
class	middle or upper class	lower or working class
work	salaried people	farmers
education	educated	uneducated
refinement	polished, cultured	backward, uncultured
image	positive	negative

The association in the figure above further applies to women's language³.

language	women's language	Tohoku dialects
region	urban	rural
class	middle or upper class	lower, working class
work	housewife of salaried people, office worker	wife of a farmer, manual laborer
education	educated	uneducated
refinement	polished, polite	unpolished, vulgar

This dichotomized image is further developed and reinforced through translation of literary works such as American literature. In American literature, the speech of whites is translated into standard Japanese or women's language, while that of non-whites, such as African Americans including slaves, is translated into Tohoku dialects. For example, in Japanese translation, *Scarlett*, the heroine of a best-selling novel, *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Michell (1973), speaks women's language, but her maid, Mammy, described as "a huge old woman with the small, shrewd eyes of an elephant", speaks (quasi-) Tohoku dialects.

³ Inoue (2006) also argues the characteristics of women's language.

Moreover, femininity symbolized with women's language does not apply to the type of women associated with Tohoku dialects. Women, living in a rural area, or lower or working class people, wives of farmers, or uneducated common people, are totally excluded from femininity. In other words, femininity is exclusive to middle or upper class women. The association between femininity and class can be illustrated in stories such as *Cinderella* or *My Fair Lady*. The heroines, Cinderella or Eliza, are typical lower class women and as stories develop, male heroes, Prince or Professor, discover their beauty and support them to move upward in terms of class until finally the heroines come to take on feminine characteristics and achieve a happy ending. The stereotypical success story for lower class women is to marry middle or upper class men.

The type of stories symbolically called “Cinderella stories” indicates that women living in a rural area or lower or working class are basically represented as unfeminine. To obtain femininity, these women have to be found and supported (trained) by male heroes of middle or upper classes.

Masculinity, on the other hand, does not exclude men living in a rural area, or coming from a lower or working class⁴. It follows that masculinity presupposes physical strength, while femininity presupposes cultural refinement.

Therefore, female native speakers of Tohoku dialects feel ashamed of them, and avoid using them in big cities because of the negative association of unfemininity.

5. Language crossing and Tohoku dialects

This section discusses two examples of language crossing from standard Japanese into Tohoku dialects. I do not give the detailed transcribed speech data here, but the data clearly show the speech of Tohoku dialects phonetically, lexically and syntactically.

5.1. Some characteristics of Tohoku dialects

Let me explain some of the typical characteristics of Tohoku dialects and some

⁴ Su (2008) persuasively discusses the relationship between language and femininity in Taiwan.

of them are misunderstood as Tohoku dialects by non-Tohoku dialects speakers.

First, phonetically speaking, Tohoku dialects have intervocalic voicing of the voiceless stops /k/ and /t/ in standard Japanese. ‘Iku’ (the infinite form of the verb ‘go’ in English) in standard Japanese is pronounced as ‘igu’ in Tohoku dialects. Second, lexically speaking, as I pointed out before, Tohoku dialects have the first person pronoun ‘ore (ora)’ used by both men and women. Third, syntactically speaking, the direction particle ‘sa’ is used instead of ‘e/ni’ in standard Japanese. Moreover, ‘be’ is put at the end of a sentence to indicate invitation, confirmation and so on.

Note that one of the misunderstood features of Tohoku dialects, ‘da’, is put at the end of a sentence as in ‘igu-da’ (‘I will go’). Tohoku dialects have rarely put ‘da’ at the end of a sentence. As far as I am concerned, I have never used or heard ‘da’ at the end of a sentence⁵. The final particle ‘da’ is often used in the Chubu area such as Nagano or Shizuoka, which are located at the central part of Japan. Novelists or writers must have combined Tohoku dialects with Chubu ones to indicate a stereotyped image of those living in the rural area or lower class. Let me give the following sentence as an example of Tohoku dialects.

standard Japanese	Watashi-wa	Tookyoo-e/ni	iki-masu
	I Topic marker	Tokyo direction marker	go polite form
Tohoku dialect	Ore / ora	Tookyoo-sa	igu-da
	I	direction marker	go final form
English translation	I will go to Tokyo.		

The features given above are considered to be typical Tohoku dialects.

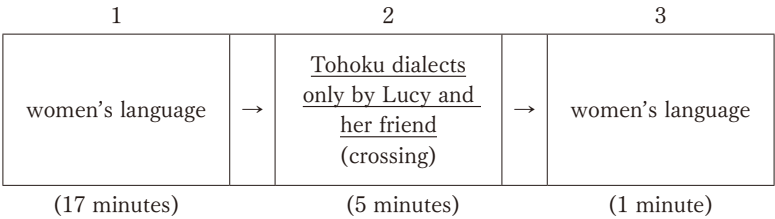
5.2. Language crossing in *I Love Lucy* (American TV comedy)

I Love Lucy, an American TV comedy series, started to be broadcast in Japan in 1957 (it was broadcast in the U.S. in 1950s) and was quite popular at that time.

⁵ Kinsui (2003) claims that ‘da’ is one of the characteristics of the dialects in the eastern part of Japan.

The TV comedy featured an urban, middle class white couple, whose housewife was named Lucy. They were leading happy lives and could afford home electronics such as vacuum cleaners and ovens, or furniture such as sofas, which Japanese couples yearned for in those days. Lucy’s husband was very understanding, the kind of man most Japanese women dream of. This comedy was re-broadcast in 2007 by NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation).

I take up one of the episodes which used Tohoku dialects in Japanese translation. Each story lasts 23 minutes. The title of the drama in question is “Men Are Messy.” The Japanese translation of the drama is as follows. Lucy, usually speaking in women’s language, crosses into Tohoku dialect in 2.



Like most TV show housewives, Lucy is busy and happy cleaning her house. Her husband, like most husbands, does not care about cleaning, just messing up the room as he likes, which upsets Lucy. One day, she gets the news that a photographer plans to visit their house to take pictures of her husband at home in order to introduce his private life in a magazine. She hits on an great idea to teach her husband a lesson. She intends to be as messy as she can.

The scene of the second part started in the totally messy living room. There were old drums and tires, chairs upside down, chickens with eggs, laundry hanging all around, and generally looked like a poor downtown street. Once her husband enters the room with a photographer, he is shocked to see the total mess. In comes Lucy with untidy bobbed hair, wearing overalls and rubber boots, looking like a working class woman living in a dirty street. In the final moment of the second part, Lucy and her friend end up hunting bear for dinner. They come into the room carrying the bear on their shoulders, screaming “yaa”.

Usually, as in the first and third parts, Lucy, as a typically urban polished feminine housewife, is neat, with her hair up at the back, wearing a dress. Lin-

guistically, she usually talks in standard English, which is translated into women's language, ending sentences with 'kashira' or 'dawa'. For example, she speaks women's language, as in "setsumei shite itadakenai *kashira*?" ("Could you explain it?"). However, in the second part, she says things like "Hiii, Ricky honey! Aren't you gonna introduce your itty bitty bride?" and "Please to meetcha". She speaks in rough and ungrammatical English full of slang: a present singular /s/ is put on a verb even when it has a first person subject, as in "I looks pretty good", and a negative form of the verb 'be' is conjugated as 'ain't', as in "it ain't a regular one". This type of English is translated into Tohoku dialects. She says things like 'yameru-da' ('stop it'), 'igu-be' ('let's go') 'itta-da' ('I went'), and 'ore' ('I'), which are considered typical usage of Tohoku dialects as I gave above. Let me give some examples as follows: (J: Japanese translation. The letters in boldface are features of (quasi-) Tohoku dialects)

(1) Aren't you gonna introduce your itty-bitty bride?

J: Anta, okkyakusan ni shokkai shite kun-nee **da** ka

(2) Pleased to meetcha.

J: Aa.. oboe toku yo

(3) Oh, it looks pretty good, don't it? You should see it before I cleaned it up.

J: Kireini natta **be**. Katazukeru mae, misete yaritakatta **da** yo. Hahaha...

(4) You know we don't keep pigs in here, just chickens!

J: iyaa.. buta katte nee **da**. Niwatori dake da

(5) Ohhh! Boy, take my picture, will you, sonny?

J: Nara, **ore** no koto, totte kurero.

(6) Ohhh! Wait a minute, I gotta comb my hair.

J: Ooo, chotto matte kunro. Kami tokasu kara.

(7) Well, come on Gramma, we're going huntin. Gotta bag our supper.

J: Bacchama. Kumagari **sa igu be**. Yuumeshi no okazu yo.

The second part clearly shows that she is represented as a poor, vulgar, working class woman due to the barbarism of bear hunting. Tohoku dialects play a crucial role in this portrayal. The contrast of images of standard Japanese and Tohoku dialects is given below.

language	women's language	Tohoku dialects
class	middle class (housewife)	lower, working class woman
image	neat, polished, feminine	dirty (messy), vulgar, unsanitary, unfeminine

This is an American TV comedy, but through translation, crossing into Tohoku dialects reinforces and aggravates their negative stereotyped images.

5.3. Language crossing in *Tetsuko no Heya* : TV talk show

Another example of language crossing is found in *Tetsuko no Heya* (lit. Tetsuko's Room), a popular and long-lived talk show broadcast by Asahi TV from Monday through Friday since 1976. This show lasts 30 minutes during the daytime. The host is Tetsuko Kuroyanagi, a famous actor and entertainer in her 70s. She exchanges conversation with one guest per day. I analyze the broadcast of February 27 in 2010, which is a special version celebrating the show's 35th anniversary. The length of the special show was about 105 minutes. In the show, there were 5 guests: Taro Hakase, Kosetsu Minami, Michiko Shimizu, Yuzo Kayama and Yutaka Mizutani. Each guest played the violin or sang songs first (10 minutes) and talked with Tetsuko after the performance (7 minutes). At the finale, everyone, including the audience, sang in chorus. The structure of the show is as follows: (after each talk, CM was broadcast)

type	opening	1 st guest	2 nd guest	3 rd guest	4 th guest	5 th guest	finale
name of guest		Hakase	Minami	Shimizu	Kayama	Mizutani	
length (min.)	3	17	17	17	17	17	17

The show was conducted in standard Japanese except with fourth guest: Kayama, with whom Tohoku dialects were spoken. I would like to focus on his talk with Tetsuko. Yuzo Kayama is a popular singer and actor in his 70s, once called “waka daishoo” (lit. “young boss” in English), a very active star especially during the period of the high economic growth. His image is urban and educated. He can sing English songs fluently: he sang “My way” on the show. Kayama and Tetsuko were born and raised in Kanagawa and Tokyo respectively, where people speak standard Japanese. Tetsuko was once evacuated to Aomori, so she is supposed to understand Tohoku dialects.

The structure of the Kayama portion of the show is as follows:

		1		2		3
singing songs	→	greeting	→	episodes	→	ending
standard Japanese, English		standard Japanese		<u>Tohoku</u> <u>dialect</u>		standard Japanese
10 minutes		1 minute		5 minutes		1minute

When I heard their talk, I was shocked and disappointed by their use of Tohoku dialects, but not because they were poor at speaking Tohoku dialects. Their Tohoku dialects were so skillful and natural that I almost believed that they must be native speakers. What disappointed me was the topic of the dialogue, which perfectly fit the negative stereotype of Tohoku dialects or Tohoku people. Kayama offered the topic and continued talking cheerfully, while Tetsuko encouraged his talk, back-channeling and laughing. They started to speak in Tohoku dialect after Tetsuko said, “Let’s speak in Tohoku dialect”.

His dialogue in the second part consists of three episodes: his sickness, his experience in Aomori, and his grandsons. The last one is short, so I omit the third episode from the analysis.

The two episodes in his talk are tragicomedy. The first episode was about his sickness. Just before the show, he had been suffering from a severe rash, pointing out that he had to go to the toilet seven or eight times at night. Tetsuko described how serious his sickness was, explaining that his skin was covered with bumps. He responded to her by saying “Worse. Even my buttocks got a lot of bumps!” Then, he started to explain the cause of the rash. After using the toilet, he washed his hands, but the faucet was stained with colon bacilli when he turned it off with the same hand, so he guessed that was how he got a severe rash.

The second episode was about a noodle shop owned by an aged woman in Aomori (note that Aomori is a most stigmatized dialectal place, which I mentioned before). He ordered a bowl of noodles and after a while an aged woman brought it but banged it down on the table, so that soup was spilled all over. He complained about her rough behavior, but she retorted that it didn’t matter because the noodles had not spilled over. Then, he asked her why she put her thumb into the bowl when carrying it. She complained that she had been suffering from carpal tunnel

syndrome since she had worked at the shop for thirty years, so that she wanted to warm it. After hearing her answer, Kayama advised her to warm it up by sticking it into her anus. She quickly responded to his advice, saying that she had already done so before carrying out his bowl of noodles. Concluding his talk, he emphasized that Aomori was wonderful⁶. Interestingly, he spoke mixing standard Japanese and Tohoku dialect in the conversation between him and the old woman: his speech is like a rakugo. Both His episodes were appreciated with laughter by the audience at the show.

The language crossing in the context of joke illuminates two interesting points.

First, between the episodes, Kayama asked Tetsuko when to stop the talk like that (in Tohoku dialect). It suggests either that he knew what he was doing in the show or that he might have felt uneasy because he was afraid that he used Tohoku dialect too jokingly, making fun of Tohoku dialect with his sick story.

Second, after the second episode, Tetsuko sensed that the joke with Tohoku dialect might damage Kayama's image, so she emphasized that nobody would be disappointed with him, even after he talked about his tragicomic episodes in Tohoku dialect. She repeatedly said that the audience would find him interesting. It reveals that she recognizes that there is a large gap between his persona and the image of Tohoku dialect: he is urban, middle class, educated and cultured while speakers of Tohoku dialects are rural, lower class, uneducated and uncultured.

Additionally speaking, his speech supports the naturalized assumption that it is men who can tell a joke and it is old women who are objects of a joke.

Perhaps, Kayama and Tetsuko did not deliberately try to stigmatize Tohoku dialects, but they were willing to do so to entertain the audience. They used Tohoku dialects strategically for entertainment in the show as Johnston (1999) pointed out. However, crossing into Tohoku dialects in this context, their usage inevitably reinforced and reproduced the uneducated and unsanitary connotations of the negative stereotype of Tohoku dialects. Since they are in their 70s, they must have understood the negative image of Tohoku dialects, which was substan-

⁶ After watching the episode, one of the students in my class told me that this joke was a familiar one. Kayama's story might not be based on his experience. If he told a story that did not happen to him, in addition to relaying the story in Tohoku dialect, not his own native tongue, he turned out to skillfully entertain the audience with two materials not his own. He is such a great actor.

tially aggravated during the period of high economic growth. Tohoku dialects are negatively used as symbolic resources in the TV programs.

5.4. Tohoku dialects as linguistic resources

The cases of language crossing shown in 5.2 and 5.3 deal with Tohoku dialects used in the context of joke/comedy. Kansai dialects, more popular among the younger generation, have been and are well known as dialects used for comic storytellers called “rakugo-ka” or comedians. Therefore, Kansai dialects have to be more appropriate for the context of joke/comedy. If Kayama wanted to entertain the audience with his image intact, he should have used Kansai dialects. Kayama and Tetsuko are great actors, so they must be able to fluently speak Kansai dialects as well as Tohoku dialects. My simple question is why Kayama and Tetsuko used Tohoku dialects.

Kansai dialects are not only associated with jokes but also with urban, industrial and business worlds which are not associated with Tohoku dialects. I argue that the key to the success of their dialogue is not just the jokes but the rural, backward, uncultured and unsanitary connotations uniquely linked to Tohoku dialects. If this is the case, they reinforce the negative image of Tohoku dialects whether they like it or not. In present Japan, Tohoku dialects function as linguistic resources associated with negative stereotyped images such as rural, backward and unsanitary people, i.e. rednecks.

6. Conclusion

I analyzed quite recent examples of language crossing from standard Japanese into Tohoku dialects, which show that crossing in the context of joke/comedy reflects hierarchy of language, this time standard and dialects, and plays a crucial role in reinforcing stigmatization of the language in question, i.e. Tohoku dialects. Even in the boom of dialects and localization movement, Tohoku dialects are still suffering from discrimination through the mass media.

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