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Tōhoku Dialect in NHK Morning Dramas The Persistent Stigmatization of Tōhoku Dialect in Japanese Media

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Introduction

In contemporary Japanese media, dialects are often employed for naming local products and constructing personas. Japanese dialectologists in general appreciate this trend, arguing that the media now represent dialects, and consequently, native speakers of dialects, in positive ways (Kobayashi 2004; Tanaka 2011, 2016). This paper questions this optimistic assumption. The study focuses on Tōhoku dialect (TD), one of the most stigmatized dialects in Japan, through the examination of TV dramas set in the northeastern regions of Japan; that is, in Tōhoku¹. Most research on the use of Japanese dialects in the media has focused on western Japanese or Kansai dialects, with little attention to eastern Japanese varieties.

My broad concern in this paper is to examine whether TD is still stigmatized in media representations. I address this question by examining the depiction of TD in two TV dramas broadcast by NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*, Japan Broadcasting Corporation) in 2007 and 2013. The study is shaped by three specific questions. First, how is the Tōhoku region depicted in the two dramas? Second, what kinds of TD are used? Third, which female characters speak TD in the dramas? The purpose of the third question is to consider whether the portrayals of female characters function to reduce or challenge negative stereotypes of TD, particularly the image of TD as unfeminine.

Historically, speakers of Japanese dialects have suffered from negative images and stereotypes since the Meiji era (1868–1912), with its promotion of Tōkyō-

¹ Tōhoku consists of six prefectures: Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Miyagi, Yamagata, and Fukushima.

centric political, economic, and cultural systems intended to modernize Japan (Inoue 2006; Okamoto and Shibamoto-Smith 2016; Sunaoshi 2004; Yasuda 1999). The Japanese government established Standard Japanese (SJ), the speech of educated Tōkyōites, as “the national language.” Moreover, a women’s version of SJ, *onna kotoba* (‘women’s language’; WL), was constructed and disseminated in print media such as novels, advertisements, and textbooks, becoming a symbol of Japanese women’s femininity (Inoue 2006; Nakamura 2007).

At the same time, other regional languages, which have never had gendered varieties in the way that SJ has, were denigrated as substandard, incorrect, or rough, and therefore in need of reform or abolishment. TD in particular, often offensively labeled *Zūzū ben* (‘Zūzū dialect’), which refers to a characteristic of the TD accent, has been severely stigmatized. Even now, the language policies of the Japanese government do not seem to have changed considerably², and ideologies elevating both Standard Japanese and women’s language continue to be encouraged and promoted in present-day Japan.

Language Attitudes and Linguistic Awareness: Japanese Dialects

Dragojevic, Giles, and Watson (2013, 20) observed that “language attitudes are not only a product of the present times, but also a reflection of complex histories of domination and subordination.” Therefore, they argued, attention to attitudes toward minority linguistic varieties is necessary “to fully grasp the complex and intricate nature of languages’ social meanings.”

Several researchers on Japanese language attitudes have utilized questionnaire methods (Inoue 1977ab; Satō 1996; Tanaka 2011, 2016). Inoue (1977ab) conducted surveys on attitudes toward Tōhoku dialect, Tōkyō dialect, and Kansai dialect with high school students living in Miyagi (in Tōhoku), Tōkyō, and Kyōto (in Kansai). He found the most negative attitudes toward TD. For example, the students generally felt that TD was not suitable for young women.

As Dragojevic, Mastro, Giles, and Sink (2016, 61) noted, speakers of nonstan-

² For instance, in 1993, the National Language Council announced for the first time that dialects should be respected—with the proviso that SJ was the basic language, while dialects were secondary and appropriate only in informal contexts such as among friends and family.

standard languages often accept negative evaluations assigned to them by others. In Inoue's (1977ab) surveys, even young female respondents in Tōhoku agreed that TD was inappropriate for young women. They had strongly negative images of TD, and strongly positive images of Tōkyō or Kansai speech. While Japan was enjoying rapid economic growth at the time of the survey, Tōkyō-centric political and economic policies meant that the Tōhoku region was still economically behind Tōkyō and Kansai. The lower socioeconomic status of Tōhoku contributed to the negative images of TD (Statistics Bureau of Prime Minister's Office, 1970–1980).

More recently, Tanaka (2011) also conducted surveys to investigate attitudes toward several dialects. The subjects were asked to match the eight descriptors given in Table 1 with dialects of prefectures. The table shows some of the results.

Table 1. Japanese dialect evaluations (Tanaka 2011, 78–79)

Evaluation	Dialect
interesting/funny	Ōsaka
cute	Kyōto
cool	Tōkyō; Ōsaka
warm	Okinawa
simple (<i>soboku</i>)	Tōhoku (Aomori)
scary	Ōsaka; Hiroshima
masculine	Kyūshū
feminine	Kyōto

Note that the dialects evaluated most positively are those of Ōsaka, Kyōto, and Kyūshū, all in western Japan. While Tanaka did not discuss explicitly negative evaluations of TD, the descriptor *soboku* ('simple, unpretentious') connotes rusticity.

Another of Tanaka's (2011) surveys, with university students living in Tōkyō and Akita (in Tōhoku), examined the extent to which they associated the three descriptors given in Table 2 with TD. Table 2 summarizes the results.

Table 2. TD evaluations (Tanaka 2011, 227–230)

	University students: Akita	University students: Tōkyō
rural-sounding	89.0%	85.9%
cute	34.6%	57.7%
cool	5.9%	2.8%

Even though dialects are increasingly used in the mainstream media, the results presented in Table 2 suggest that stereotypical images of TD have changed little. Students in both Tōkyō and Akita considered TD to be a language of rural people, and did not consider it “cool.” However, the university students in Akita were much less likely than the university students in Tōkyō to consider TD “cute.” This difference suggests that SJ speakers have a somewhat patronizing attitude toward TD speakers.

All in all, Inoue’s (1977ab) and Tanaka’s (2011) survey findings imply a persistent hierarchy among dialects in which the urban dialects of western Japan are at the top and Tōhoku dialect is at the bottom.

Media Representations of Minority Linguistic Varieties

Negative Stereotyping, Language Crossing, and Mock Language

Contemporary sociolinguistic studies have extensively investigated media representations of minority linguistic varieties. Much of this research centers on the role of standard language ideologies in the media, and how they form and reproduce negative stereotypes of nonstandard varieties, causing them, their speakers, and their regions to be marginalized and denigrated as “Other” (e.g., Dragojevic et al. 2016; Johnston 1999; Lippi-Green 2012; Meek 2006). Such studies in general have found that mainstream media depict characters who speak minority linguistic varieties in negative ways, as well as erasing their diversity, in part through inaccurate linguistic representations.

“Language crossing” and “mock language” have strong correlations with linguistic stereotyping (Bucholtz 1999; Bucholtz and Lopez 2011; Hill 2008; Rampton 1995). Rampton (1995, 14) defined language crossing as “the use of language varieties associated with a social or ethnic group that the speaker does not nor-

mally ‘belong to’.” In mock language, majority variety speakers make use, often incorrectly, of a minority variety in order to construct a positive identity for themselves by evoking stereotypes associated with the minority language and its speakers. Hill (2008, 128) argued that Mock Spanish used by white Americans creates “desirable colloquial personas” for themselves, but it results in denigration and marginalization of Spanish and Spanish speakers. Her claim is applicable to the analysis of TD use in the dramas in this study.

Japanese Dialects and Gender in TV Dramas

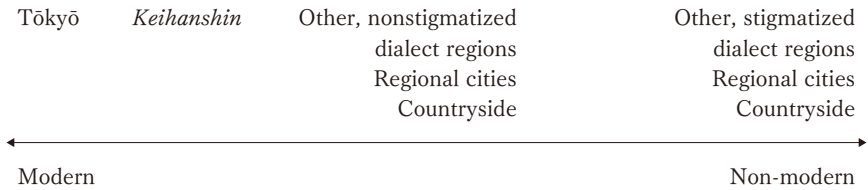
As mentioned, Inoue (1977ab) found that survey respondents did not consider TD to be suitable for young women. The image of TD as unfeminine is influenced by ideologies related to Standard Japanese and Japanese women’s language. Recent theoretical and empirical sociolinguistic research on language and gender has provided important critical discussions of these ideologies (Inoue 2006; Nakamura 2007; Okamoto and Shibamoto-Smith 2004, 2016).

A research group, Gendai Nihongo Kenkyū Kai (1997) analyzed the actual language practices of female workers in metropolitan areas including Tōkyō. The study concluded that few of the women actually used women’s language. Sunaoshi (2004) and Digi-Ogren (2011) investigated the daily conversations of women in rural areas in the eastern part of Japan. They also found little use of women’s language. These studies suggest that women’s language is used less than expected, not only in dialect regions but also in SJ-speaking urban areas. However, traditional Japanese linguistic studies still tend to take it for granted that Japanese is a highly gendered language, which reflects the language ideologies held even by linguists.

The media, including novels and TV dramas, also reflect mainstream ideologies. Female characters depicted positively or as heroines tend to use WL, while other female characters, that is, those who are “not in the ‘romantic heroine’ stakes” (Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi 2009, 532), tend to use nonstandard dialects.

Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi (2009) discussed a 2005 NHK morning drama set in Miyazaki (in Kyūshū), one of the stigmatized dialect regions. The heroine, Wakaba, is from Kōbe and does not speak Miyazaki dialect (MD). Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi argued that Wakaba is depicted as speaking Kōbe dialect (KD)

because MD is not seen as modern enough for the heroine’s character. In contrast, the characters of other young women and Wakaba’s mother speak MD. Drawing on such findings, Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi proposed a “modernity gradient” for the ideological correlations between modernity and regional language variants. The gradient runs from Tōkyō speech as the most modern to the stigmatized regional dialects as the least modern, as shown in Figure 1. (*Keihanshin* refers to the metropolitan area that includes the cities of Kyōto, Ōsaka, and Kōbe.)



**Figure 1. Japanese space and the modernity gradient
(Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi 2009, 540)**

Occhi, SturtzSreetharan, and Shibamoto-Smith (2010, 414) persuasively claimed that female characters in love in TV dramas tend to use “Standard Japanese or one of the few other culturally acceptable (modern, urban) dialects.”

In short, research on Japanese language ideologies has observed that TV dramas have a strong influence on language attitudes, and that they largely depict heroines as SJ speakers rather than dialect speakers. As mentioned, however, recent studies on dialects and the media have mainly analyzed western Japanese dialects or Kansai dialect. Therefore, this study focuses on female characters using TD or SJ in NHK TV morning dramas set in Tōhoku to investigate whether the dramas reproduce SJ/WL ideologies.

Data and Methodology

This study examines two dramas set in Tōhoku: *Dondo hare*, broadcast in 2007, and *Amachan*, broadcast in 2013. Data were collected by transcribing the lines of female characters speaking TD or SJ. In both dramas, the heroine characters are not native speakers of TD; they are from the large cities of Yokohama

(*Dondo hare*) and Tōkyō (*Amachan*).

Language in the NHK TV morning drama series is worth investigating for several reasons. First, these dramas are broadcast every day except Sunday, in episodes of about 15 minutes, with each drama lasting for six months. They attract large audiences all over Japan, and the locations of the dramas often become popular tourist destinations. In fact, according to the *Iwate Nippō* newspaper (September 8, 2013), after *Amachan* aired, about 23 times more tourists visited Iwate Prefecture, where it was located. For such reasons, I consider NHK morning dramas to have an important influence in constructing and reproducing stereotyped images of regions, their dialects, and native speakers of dialects.

Second, as mentioned, Japan continues to promote a Tōkyō-centric political and economic system. One effect of this system is that other regions, especially those far from Tōkyō, suffer from serious depopulation. Both dramas are set in two contrastive places: Iwate Prefecture, which is in the Tōhoku region, and either Tōkyō or Yokohama, large cities outside of Tōhoku. The former tends to be represented as traditional and natural, and the latter as built-up and modern. Thus, Tōhoku and its people are rusticated through contrast with the urban locations. This contrastive depiction of the dramas' locations contributes to the contrastive images of TD and SJ.

Third, the general theme of NHK TV morning dramas is that a heroine goes through some sort of psychological development to arrive at a happy, successful ending. The heroines are typically young, beautiful, well-intentioned, and considerate. In other words, they are idealized women in love. This representation has changed little since 1961, when the first drama was aired. Long-running and popular, the NHK TV morning drama series has functioned to set the standards of femininity in Japan, with the heroines' speech an important element of their ideal femininity.

I will briefly explain the two dramas' plots to provide the background for the analysis of the data. First, the title of *Dondo hare* comes from a patterned expression for closing a story in *Tōno Monogatari* ("Folk legends from Tōno" [part of Iwate]), by Yanagita Kunio (1960); it means that everything went well. The heroine, Natsumi, is from Yokohama. She is training to be an innkeeper at an old, traditional Japanese-style hotel in Morioka in Iwate. At the end, she successfully

completes the difficult training and marries her fiancé, who has inherited the hotel at Morioka. Despite her trials, Natsumi is positive and cheerful. In an image from *Tōno Monogatari*, she is sometimes symbolized as a *zashiki warashi*, a spirit-child who hides in a house's guest room (in TD, *zashiki* is 'guest room', *warashi* is 'child'), who was believed to bring luck and wealth to the house where she settled.

Amachan can be considered a response to the extremely destructive earthquake and tsunami that hit northeastern Japan in 2011. In the following years, the Japanese government and media encouraged the country to show support for the region in a variety of ways. The title comes from *ama*, a woman diver for sea urchins, and *-chan*, a suffix attached to names to show intimacy. The heroine is Aki, born and raised in Tōkyō. Leaving difficulties in Tōkyō, Aki and her mother come to the mother's hometown, Kita-sanriku (an imaginary place; the series was shot in Kuji, a northern coastal area in Iwate). Aki trains to be an *ama* like her grandmother, putting in great effort and gaining confidence through the hard work. At the same time, she comes to be an *aidoru* (literally, 'idol'; a pop star), along with her classmate Yui, a local beauty queen. She also goes to Tōkyō to make her debut. She eventually decides to return and work as a woman diver and a singer to revitalize Kita-sanriku, which is suffering from the tremendous damage and aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Analysis

This section examines, first, how the two dramas depict Tōhoku. It then looks at what kinds of TD linguistic features are used in the dramas. Next, the female characters who speak TD or SJ/WL are described. Finally, the discussion focuses on the heroine of *Amachan* and her language crossing.

Contrastive Depiction of Tōhoku (Iwate) and Tōkyō/Yokohama

Both of the dramas contrast Iwate with cities. The heroines often spend time in Tōkyō or Yokohama, which are their hometowns. Iwate is represented with images of rice fields, mountains, and the coast, as well as of traditional sprawling houses with thatched roofs and sunken fireplaces, which, in reality, largely disap-

peared more than 40 years ago. In contrast, Tōkyō/Yokohama are depicted by images of skyscrapers and stylish shops.

In *Dondo hare*, the senior head innkeeper, the oldest character, is the head of the hotel and her family, and is respected as an authority on traditional ways, and the heroine is often associated with the *zashiki warashi*, the imaginary child of folklore. Thus, Iwate is depicted as a place where traditional and superstitious people live. In *Amachan*, Tōkyō is mentioned 365 times and the word *inaka* ('rural area, countryside'), 109 times. These two words are often contrastively used, as in Examples (1) and (2), which show typical utterances by TD-speaking characters. In all examples, TD is marked by boldface, and the drama (abbreviated as D for *Dondo hare* or A for *Amachan*) and episode number are noted in parenthesis at the end.

- (1) *Wazawaza Tōkyō gara?*
'You came all the way from Tōkyō?' (A-144)
- (2) *Yūmei na jōyū-san ga wazawaza kon na inaka **sa** kite, me no mae de, utatte kureru, sore dake de minna ōyorokobi de **gansu**.*
'Such a famous actor comes all the way to this rural area in order to sing songs, which itself makes everyone here extremely delighted.' (A-152)

The adverb *wazawaza* (all the way, with much effort) is frequently used, as in these examples, to emphasize not only the geographical but also the cultural marginality of Tōhoku in contrast with Tōkyō.

The dramas depict Tōkyō/Yokohama favorably as ideal and sophisticated cities and Iwate as a dull and isolated region, far away from them geographically and culturally. Such contrastive depictions of places in turn contribute to forming contrastive images of TD and SJ.

Linguistic Features of TD in the Dramas

This section describes the TD linguistic features (phonological features, morphosyntactic features, and vocabulary) used in the dramas to argue that the two dramas employ and emphasize only a small number of TD features, which does not reflect authentic TD in daily conversations, and consequently reproduces its

stereotyped images of TD. The only linguistic elements specific to Iwate are the interjection *je* and the polite forms based on Nanbu dialect³. In what follows, the

Table 3. Phonological features of TD

Feature	Examples	
	TD	SJ
(a) Voicing of /k/, /t/ word internally and word finally	[igu] ‘go’	[iku] ‘go’
(b) Monophthongization: Diphthongs such as /ai/, /ae/, /oe/, and /oi/ become short vowels such as /e/	[uume] ‘delicious’	[umai] ‘delicious’
(c) Centralization of /i/ and /u/ to [i]	[sʲisʲi] ‘sushi’	[susʲi] ‘sushi’

Table 4. Morphosyntactic features of TD

Feature	Examples	
	TD	SJ
<u>Modality</u>		
(d) <i>be/pe</i> for conjecture, confirmation, suggestion, or invitation	<i>suru be</i> ‘let’s do it’	<i>shiyō</i> ‘let’s do it’
(e) <i>kero</i> for requests	<i>itte kero</i> ‘let me know’	<i>itte kure</i> ‘let me know’
<u>Honorifics</u>		
(f) <i>on, nosu, gansu/gasu, nahan</i> particular to this region, i.e., Nanbu dialect	<i>Ohaya gasu.</i> ‘Good morning.’ <i>Sō da nahan.</i> ‘Yes, it is./That’s right.’	
<u>Case markers</u>		
(g) goal marker <i>sa</i> instead of <i>ni/e</i>	<i>fune sa noru</i> ‘take a boat’	
(h) object marker <i>ba</i> instead of <i>o</i>	<i>Okami ni naru michi ba eranda.</i> ‘You chose to be an innkeeper.’	
<u>Diminutive suffix</u>		
(i) <i>ko</i> for nouns to show intimacy	<i>sakekko</i> ‘sake’	<i>sake</i> ‘sake’

³ Iwate was divided between the Nanbu and Date feudal clans in the Edo period (1603–1868). Nanbu dialect, reminiscent of a past strongly hierarchical society, is characterized by a wealth of polite forms.

TD forms are all taken from the dramas; the descriptions of the linguistic forms and rules draw on the work of several researchers (Hondō 1983; Komatsushiro 1961; Kumagai and Okamoto 2013; Sunaoshi 2004). Though the dramas are set in Iwate, in the northern part of Tōhoku, the linguistic features they use are quite common to TD used in other regions of Tōhoku.

Table 5. Lexical features of TD

Feature	Examples	
	TD	SJ
(j) first person pronouns <i>ora</i> and <i>ore</i> ^a	<i>ora</i> ‘I’ (men and women) <i>ore</i> (men and women)	<i>watasi</i> ‘I’ (men and women) <i>ore</i> (men)
(k) adjectives	<i>menkoi/menke</i> ‘cute’	<i>kawai</i> ‘cute’
(l) nouns	<i>warashi</i> ‘child’	<i>kodomo</i> ‘child’
(m) interjections of surprise ^b	<i>je</i>	<i>e</i>
(n) interjections of agreement	<i>nda</i>	<i>sō (da)</i>

^a [ore] is used exclusively by men in SJ, but by both men and women in TD. Therefore, it sounds rustic or rough when women use *ore* in TD.

^b Only used in *Amachan*, particular to this region and often used repeatedly as in [je je je].

The dramas, however, sometimes present incorrect uses of TD. In the following examples, the segment of interest is in bold; the correct form is given first, and the incorrect form is marked with an asterisk.

Phonological features:

- (a) Incorrect voicing. Voicing does not occur after devoiced vowels such as /i/ and syllabic nasals such as /n/ in TD;
e.g., TD *nasite* vs. **naside* (‘why’, in *D*)

- (b) Diphthongs become long vowels, which is found in rough SJ, and is not particular to TD;

e.g., TD *moguridagune* vs. **moguridagunē* ('I don't want to dive', in *A*)

Morphosyntactic features:

- (g) Incorrect use of the TD goal case marker [sa] as a subject or object noun marker;

e.g., TD *mēru o okutta* vs. **mēru sa okutta* ('I sent you an e-mail', in *D*);

TD *minna ga miteru mae de* vs. **minna sa miteru mae de* ('in front of everyone', in *A*)

Because TD is not widely known throughout Japan, the dramas' rare use of its vocabularies in particular is reasonable. Nevertheless, it also seems reasonable for the TD that is used to be correct since the dramas indicate that they have TD advisors, who are native speakers. Nevertheless several incorrect uses of TD appear. Furthermore, the dramas very often contain not TD, but SJ colored with inconsistent voicing, reflecting the view that voicing is an easy to recognize and (stereo) typical TD feature that sounds rustic and masculine (Meek 2006).

Female Characters' Use of TD or SJ/WL

This section deals with female characters who speak TD or SJ/WL in the dramas in terms of age, profession, physical attractiveness, and other characteristics, as summarized in Tables 6 and 7. Among "other features," "supportive" indicates that the character supports the heroine. The characters in boldface are those who are supposed to be native speakers of TD, as they are natives of Tōhoku.

Table 6. Female characters who use TD or SJ in *Dondo hare*

(◎: very attractive; ○: attractive; ×: not attractive)

	Role/Profession	Age	Physical attractiveness/ Refinement	Other features
TD speaker	fiancé's grandmother/senior head innkeeper	very old (80s)	◎	supportive, often use polite SJ
	head server	old	×	not supportive
	servers	middle/young	×	not supportive
SJ speaker	fiancé's aunt/junior head innkeeper	old	○	not supportive
	fiancé's elder sister-in-law/housewife	young	◎	supportive
	servers	young	○	supportive
	fiancé's ex-classmate	young	◎	rival in love
	heroine	young	◎	
	heroine's ex-classmate/colleague at fiancé's company	young	◎	
	heroine's mother/housewife	middle	○	
	photographer	young	○	supportive
	guest at the hotel/economist	middle	◎	single mother, career worker
	guests at the hotel	middle/old	×	

In *Dondo hare*, the innkeepers and servers in general tend to use polite forms in TD or SJ to the guests at the hotel. First, among the TD speakers, the senior head innkeeper and the head server speak with strong TD accents. But there is a clear difference between them. The senior head innkeeper uses politer forms of TD in Nanbu dialect as well as polite forms of SJ. (3) and (4) are examples of greetings she often uses, especially to the guests at the hotel.

- (3) *Yogu ode an shita!* 'How nice of you to visit our hotel!'
 (4) *Arigato gansu.* 'Thank you.'

She is depicted as a traditional and refined TD speaker who represents the hotel with pride since she can handle the polite forms of Nanbu dialect well. In contrast, the head server, who is neither attractive nor supportive, speaks TD with a rough and loud voice, often when telling the younger servers what to do. On the other hand, when she talks to the senior and junior head innkeepers, whom she respects, her TD sounds as if a servant or slave were humbly talking to her master. Moreover, she often scolds or blames the heroine harshly, as in (5), which she says after a guest slips and falls at the hotel's entrance.

(5) *Ame no hi wa shigimono shigu godo ni natteru be.*

‘On rainy days, we should put a mat at the entrance, shouldn’t we?’ (D-15)

As you can see, her TD is characterized especially with voicing, which sounds unpolished and rustic.

Thus, both of these characters speak strong TD, but the senior head innkeeper’s TD is represented as polite and refined in an old-fashioned and very local way, that is, as a symbol of tradition, while the head server’s TD is either harsh or too humble, that is, as a symbol of roughness and obedience. The other TD speakers are servers, who are neither attractive nor supportive of the heroine. Additionally, even the female TD speakers with strong accents do not use the masculine sounding *ora/ore*⁴.

The SJ speakers tend to be young or middle-aged, attractive, and supportive of the heroine. Those marked in boldface in the table, who play natives of Tōhoku but do not speak TD, are the characters who are especially attractive or supportive of the heroine. Therefore, it can be said that SJ speakers are characterized as attractive and well-motivated characters of the middle class such as housewives or career workers. In sum, physical attractiveness and personality have a crucial role in the characterization of female speakers through the contrastive use of TD or SJ. Interestingly and strangely, all the guests are SJ speakers, which implies that this drama targets audiences in cities such as Tōkyō.

Table 7 shows the female characters in *Amachan* (omitting some who speak

⁴ Note that the male TD-speaking characters use *ora/ore* without hesitation.

nonstandard dialects other than TD).

Table 7. Female characters who use TD or SJ in *Amachan*

(◎: very attractive; ○: attractive; ×: not attractive)

	Role/Profession	Age	Physical Attractiveness/Refinement	Other features
TD speaker	heroine's grandmother/woman diver	old	○	
	women divers	old/middle	×	
	public servant at the tourist section	middle	×	
SJ speaker	heroine's mother/housewife	middle	◎	yearned for Tōkyō when young
	heroine/high school student	young	◎	
	heroine's classmate/high school student	young	◎	yearns for Tōkyō, beauty queen
	mother of heroine's classmate/housewife	middle	◎	ex-TV newscaster
	actor	middle	◎	

Table 7 shows a clear division between the TD speakers and the SJ speakers. The TD speakers are middle-aged or old, not attractive, and working class, while the SJ speakers are young or middle-aged, attractive, and middle class. Moreover, the heroine's mother hated her hometown and went to Tōkyō when young to try to become an *aidoru*. The heroine's classmate, Yui, also yearns for Tōkyō and wants to be an *aidoru*. These characters are supposed to be native speakers of TD, but, as in *Dondo hare*, they rarely speak TD except strategically. In (6), Aki expresses her surprise that Yui does not speak TD when she meets her for the first time, on a train in Kita-sanriku, and a male conductor responds to her surprise.

- (6) Aki: *Namatte naka tta. Nē! Anoko namatte nai yo.*
 'She has no accent. Look! She has no accent.'

Conductor: *Ā Yui ga ojōsan dagara na.*

‘Well, Yui is a young lady (from a rich family)’ (A-5)

The conductor’s comment suggests, partly in self-parody, that TD is used by those in a lower class. In fact, Yui’s family members do not speak TD, and they have a Westernized lifestyle, such as sleeping in beds and eating Western foods with knife and fork, which is depicted as an abnormal but enviable lifestyle in the rural area.

In sum, female characters who use TD are old or middle-aged, unattractive, working class, and not supportive of the heroine, while those who use SJ are young or middle-aged, attractive, middle class, supportive of the heroine, have a Westernized lifestyle, and yearn for Tōkyō. Additionally, the old female characters such as grandmothers in both of the dramas embody the stereotype of TD speakers as old and traditional.

Crossing into TD

This section discusses how TD is used by Aki, the heroine in *Amachan*, as an example of language crossing. After coming to Iwate, Aki learns TD from her grandmother and other women divers. Her first TD utterance is *je*, and her TD is gradually enriched as she adds the use of the goal marker *sa* and voicing. She crosses into TD especially when talking to TD speakers including her grandmother. But she also does so when talking to SJ speakers to give her comments an assertive or funny tone.

As she learns more TD, Aki uses it in some contexts but not in others, sometimes mixing SJ/WL and TD, and sometimes avoiding TD. Aki’s TD has particular characteristics. Moreover, she herself and other characters comment on her use and nonuse of TD.

As for the first person pronoun, she sometimes uses WL *atashi* (‘I’), but she also utters *ora*, often even where a pronoun is unnecessary. For example, when her mother wants her to quit training as an *aidoru*, she objects at first, as in (7a) but she finally accepts her mother’s advice, as in (7b); *ora* is underlined in (7).

(7) a. *Gomen, demo kore wa ora no mondai da.*

‘Sorry, but this is my problem.’ (A-107)

b. *Shōganē kogo sa kuru mae gara ora mama no musume da.*

‘I can’t help. I am your daughter after all.’ (A-107)

Ora in (a) could be replaced with *jibun* (‘self’), which would sound more natural. In (b), *ora* is unnecessary, which makes the speaker sound as if she wants to prove she can speak TD well. But, also in (b), she uses *mama* (‘mother’), which sounds like a modern, urban SJ usage. Thus, the sentence sounds unbalanced.

In addition, Aki’s TD is inconsistent, as shown in (8).

(8) *Moguri dakute mogu ttari utai takute uta ttari.*

‘I dive because I want to dive and I sing because I want to sing.’ (A-55)

In (8), Aki twice uses the auxiliary verb *takute* (underlined), indicating desire. In TD, the [t] should be voiced, as it is in the first instance; however, she fails to voice it the second time.

Furthermore, Aki mixes WL, rough SJ, and TD in her speech. In (9–11), the expressions underlined are rough SJ.

(9) *Je, yabai jan.*

‘Oh, I’m in trouble.’ (A-8)

(10) *Yabe, kae n na gya.*

‘I’m in trouble. I have to go home.’ (A-57)

(11) *Yappari ora Yui-chan do wa chigau. Tada moguri takute ama yatte n da.*

‘I am different from Yui. I am a woman diver just because I want to dive in the sea.’ (A-26)

By mixing TD with rough SJ, as Aki often does, the TD is made to sound rough as well. However, she also mixes TD with WL, as in (12), when she asks her ex-classmate and boyfriend, Taneichi, to come to her house. WL is double-underlined.

(12) *Kyō nara ī do. mama mo papa mo ie sa inē no.*

‘Today is fine with me because both my mother and father are out.’ (A-123)

Overall, Aki's speech has two modes. As described above, she often mixes vocabulary that sounds urban and modern such as *mama* ('mother') and *papa* ('father') with TD and WL. The result is intentionally somewhat funny in its mix of modernity, femininity and rusticity, and it helps build her character as funny and lovably naïve. The humor is largely based on the "mismatch" between the young and beautiful female speaker and the rough, rustic, and old-fashioned image of TD.

In contrast, Aki tends to use only SJ and WL when she is talking about matters of love. In (13), she uses WL to explain that, in order to maintain her *aidoru* image, she cannot date Taneichi; he notices and comments on her language use.

(13) Aki = A; Taneichi = T

A: *Daiji na toki nano. Gomen ne.*

'It is a delicate time for me. I'm sorry.'

T: *Doshita Amano?*

'What happened to you, *Amano*?' (*Amano* is Aki's family name.)

A: *E?*

'What?'

T: *Namatte nē zo.*

'You have no accent.' (A-113)

In (14), Aki and her mother are talking about her love; here, her mother too notices her use of WL.

(14) Aki = A; Aki's mother = M

A: *Yoso no hito ni wa kikare taku nai no.*

'I don't want to be heard by others.'

M: *Nani yo kyū ni hyōjungo de?*

'Why are you suddenly speaking SJ?' (A-40)

These examples suggest that love is deeply intertwined with femininity, and femininity needs to be dressed up linguistically with WL. It follows that TD is not appropriate for the context of love.

Finally but importantly, the drama includes several instances of characters,

including Aki herself, commenting on Aki's use of TD. The comments by her classmates, natives of Tōhoku, reveal complex feelings regarding SJ speakers crossing into TD. First, in (15), at an audition in Tōkyō, Aki explains why she came to speak TD.

(15) *O-bā-chan-ko de, saisho wa bā-chan ya ama-san-tachi to shabette de, shizen to utsutta n desu ga, ima wa namatteru hō ga jibun no kimochi o sunao ni tsutae rareru kara.*

'My grandmother took good care of me, and I naturally caught their accent by talking with her and other women divers. Now I feel I can express my true self in TD.' (A-123)

Aki's comment in (15) suggests that TD has come to be part of her identity. On the other hand, she expresses awareness that her TD is inauthentic:

(16) *Ora no namari wa jikoryū da kedo na.*

'My TD is my own way.' (A-74)

(17) *Inchiki Tōhoku-jin da mon na.*

'I know I am a fake Tōhoku-jin.' (A-83)

Moreover, her classmates in Tōhoku criticize Aki's TD, as in the comment in (18) by Taneichi, a native TD speaker.

(18) *Saisho wa mushizu ga hashiri mashita ne.*

'At first her accent sounded disgusting.' (A-126)

In (19), Yui also criticizes Aki's TD use. Recall that while Yui, who is young, beautiful, and wealthy, is from Tōhoku, she does not speak TD.

(19) *Aki-chan ga namatteru no nante uso dashi, fushizen dashi, nan ka...baka ni sareteru ki ga suru.*

'Your accent is just fake, unnatural...I feel as if you are making fun of me.'
(A-17)

Yui's comment about feeling made fun of, in particular, recalls the image of TD as inappropriate for young female speakers and confirms the existence of a language hierarchy in which SJ is superior and TD is inferior. Her comment in (19) expresses some resentment at the SJ speaker's act of crossing into TD. In addition, it recalls Tanaka's (2011, 227–230) survey results in which university students in Akita did not see TD as “cute,” while those in Tōkyō did. In fact, Aki confesses to Yui that she would speak SJ while in Tōkyō, as shown in (20).

- (20) *Tōkyō ittara ora betsu-jin ni naru kara na. Kihon keigo ni naru gara na.*
‘While in Tōkyō, I will be different. Basically I will speak honorifics.’
(i.e., she will speak only in polite SJ while in Tōkyō) (A-67)

Aki's confession underlines the fact that she intends to use TD only when she wants to, and otherwise uses SJ. In sum, even though TD serves to construct her identity, Aki carefully avoids TD when talking about love or when she is in Tōkyō, which the Tōhoku native characters seem keenly aware of. Thus, while *Amachan* makes use of stereotypical images of TD to create humor and draw contrasts among its female characters by age, class, and attractiveness, it also sometimes reveals the complex feelings of Tōhoku natives when SJ speakers cross into TD.

Discussion: Mock TD

This examination of media depictions of Tōhoku, TD, and TD speakers suggests that the TV dramas set in Iwate make use of “mock TD” (Hill 2008). By invoking contrastive social meanings of TD and SJ/WL, by using TD stereotypes, and by depicting characters who cross from SJ into TD, they draw on a range of potential meanings of TD.

According to Eckert (2008, 454), “the meanings of variables are not precise or fixed but rather constitute a field of potential meanings—an *indexical field*, or constellation of ideologically related meanings.” Table 8 presents what could be called indexical fields for TD and SJ/WL: sets of contrastive meanings represented by the female characters who use the different varieties in the dramas (Kumagai and Okamoto 2013).

Table 8. Images of female characters who use TD or SJ/WL

Female characters: TD	Female characters: SJ/WL
rural/rustic	urban/cosmopolitan
traditional/old-fashioned	modern/Westernized
old, middle-aged	young, middle-aged
working class	middle class (e.g., housewife)
unrefined/not attractive	refined/attractive
not supportive of the heroine	supportive of the heroine
	yearning for Tōkyō

As Table 8 shows, TD and SJ/WL function to form female characters through their contrastive indexicals. In the dramas, female characters who use TD are depicted as unfeminine, while those who use SJ/WL are depicted as feminine, constructed through a set of meanings. Thus, TD connotes not only the region of Tōhoku but also images related to age, class, profession, physical attractiveness, and demeanor, which work together to represent a character as an unsuitable person to be a feminine woman.

In general, in NHK morning dramas, the heroines are usually represented as native speakers of the region where the drama takes place. However, as Table 9 demonstrates, in all dramas (35) broadcast between 2000 and 2017, this holds true far less for dramas set in Tōhoku than for dramas set anywhere else in Japan.

Table 9. Location and heroines' use of dialects in dramas broadcast from 2000 to 2017

Location	Total number of dramas	Heroines are native speakers of dialects in the regions where episodes take place
Tōkyō or other SJ-speaking areas	4	4 (100%)
Kansai	12	12 (100%)
Areas other than Kansai or Tōhoku	15	13 (87%)
Tōhoku	4	2 (50%)

Note. Some of the dramas are set in more than two regions; the table shows only the main locations.

The dramas examined in this study, in which neither heroine is a native speaker of TD, are an exception to the usual rule in NHK morning dramas. Moreover, as shown in the study, even some female characters who are supposed to be native speakers of TD, like Yui, do not use TD. Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi (2009), investigating the relationship between ideal women in love and dialect in *Wakaba*, argued that Miyazaki dialect (MD) is one of the stigmatized dialects according to their modernity gradient (Figure 1), as the heroine does not use MD and speaks only Kōbe dialect, which is a more modern and acceptable speech variety for a woman in love. In *Wakaba*, the heroine's classmate (i.e., a young woman) and her mother both use MD because they are not focused on as women in love. In contrast, in both *Dondo hare* and *Amachan*, set in Tōhoku, not only the heroines but also their mothers and other attractive women rarely speak TD. This indicates that TD is more stigmatized than MD according to Shibamoto-Smith and Occhi's modernity gradient. It also implies that Inoue's (1977ab) finding that TD was considered an unsuitable language for young women 40 years ago is still valid in spite of recent claims that Japanese dialects are viewed positively in contemporary Japan. In sum, TD is apparently employed in these dramas to provide authenticity for the Tōhoku setting, but is carefully avoided by the major female characters.

Linguistically speaking, mock TD is attested in the dramas. Tanaka (2016, 114–121) asserted that stereotypes of dialects are constructed by TV programs. This claim is supported by this study, which has shown that the dramas use TD in inauthentic ways to draw on stereotypical images of TD speakers. TD in general is not well-known outside of Tōhoku, in contrast with KD, which is very popular especially among young people. Entertainers from Kansai do not hesitate to use KD, while those from Tōhoku do not speak TD in the mainstream media. Consequently, when mock TD occurs in media such as TV dramas, most of the audience cannot judge its authenticity. In *Dondo hare* and *Amachan*, mock TD is used to make speech sound rough and unfeminine. It employs emphatic, sometimes incorrect, and inconsistent use of voicing and a few TD morphosyntactic features and words. Voicing in particular is employed intensely in contrastive depictions of Tōhoku and Tōkyō.

Furthermore, *Amachan* depicts crossing into TD by SJ speakers, a practice termed *hōgen kosupure* ('dialect cosplay') by Tanaka (2011). I argue that the

heroine's use of TD is positive for her identity but not for TD's image, as she purposefully avoids TD in the context of love or in Tōkyō, in spite of her claim that she can better express her true self in TD (Example 15)⁵.

As Hill (2008, 144) persuasively argued, mock languages draw on both positive and negative indexical meanings, but when speakers of majority languages use mock language to enhance their identities, they are aware of only the positive indexicals, remaining oblivious to mock language's "negative functions of denigration, marginalization, and racist stereotypes." Hill's claim is applicable to Aki's crossing into TD as she constructs her identity.

Amachan depicts Aki using TD, which has a positive connotation for her. As she is a young and beautiful heroine from Tōkyō, her femininity cannot be canceled by her use of TD. That is, her essential image is of an SJ/WL speaker, who chooses to mix a little TD into her speech. Consequently, the image of TD represented in the drama is unchanged; TD remains essentially unfeminine, as evidenced by the characterizations of other female TD speakers.

However, *Amachan* also makes Aki's act of appropriation visible. Kudō Kankurō, a scriptwriter for *Amachan*, is from Miyagi (in Tōhoku). His experience may have informed the characters' comments that Aki's TD use seems false or patronizing.

Tanaka (2016, 76–78) asserted that Japanese dialects are now valued positively. She claimed that dialects have been freed from locality and become linguistic resources even for nonnative speakers. I would argue instead that some people enjoy using dialects because of their stereotyped images, which are tied to locality, as they are mainly based on regional stereotypes. Tōhoku still has a strong image of being poor and isolated, a geographically and politically marginalized region in a persistently Tōkyō-centric system, which Iwamoto Yoshiteru, a professor emeritus of economic history at Tōhoku Gakuin University, persuasively argues in an recent interview (*Asahi Shimbun*, March 14, 2018). When SJ speakers are depicted using TD to evoke innocence, it may enhance the image of the SJ speakers but only by confirming Tōhoku's marginality.

⁵ Elsewhere, I have discussed TD appropriation by SJ speakers in TV talk shows (Kumagai 2012).

Concluding Remarks

In the dramas analyzed in this study, Iwate is constantly contrasted to big cities. The heroines find Iwate amazing; some lines have the ring of people from developed countries naïvely extolling the “unruined” natural beauty and “primitive” simplicity of a developing country. In *Dondo hare*, for instance, the narrator describes the heroine’s first impression of Iwate thus:

(21) *Natsumi ni totte wa marude yoso no kuni ni kita gurai miru mono subete ga mezurashī koto bakari.*

‘For Natsumi, everything seems totally new to her as if she had come to a foreign country.’ (D-2)

Kudō Kankurō, the *Amachan* scriptwriter, explained that he wanted to depict Tōhoku from an outsider’s point of view (*Asahi Shimbun*, October 1, 2013). I suggest that both of the dramas depict Tōhoku from the outside to attract tourists (King and Wicks 2009) in a Japanese version of Orientalism; in doing so, one of their most effective tools is the use of dialects (Said 1979).

Even in the 2000s, when the Japanese government has decided that dialects are acceptable and Tōhoku requires encouragement after being devastated by the earthquake and tsunami of 2011, NHK dramas still reproduce negative images of Tōhoku regions and native speakers of TD by depicting TD as a stigmatized variety. The acceptability of such images in the media shows the continuing strength of SJ/WL ideologies in contemporary Japan.

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