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## The perceptions of Japanese language varieties by foreign workers in regional Japan: A pilot qualitative approach to language regard

### 地方在住外国人労働者の日本語バラエティに対する意識 —質的アプローチによる予備研究—

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#### 要旨

日本では地方への外国人労働者の流入が進んでいる。これにより、外国人労働者が地域方言等のより多様な日本語に触れる機会が多くなってきた。この点を踏まえ、筆者はグラウンデッド・セオリー・アプローチ (GTA) のフレームワークを用い、福井県の嶺北地域に住む外国人労働者4名に二度のインタビューを行った。各回とも、半構造化インタビューを行い、日常生活の中で状況別に使用される日本語のバラエティに対する日本語非母語話者の意識の理解を試みた。本論文では、このインタビューにおける被験者の回答について、質的グラウンデッド・セオリーを用いたコード化と結果の分析方法を詳細に説明する。そして、最終的にデータから定義できる状況別の日本語のバラエティを4つのカテゴリー、(1)【丁寧な日本語】、(2)【普通の日本語】、(3)【やさしい日本語】、(4)【方言】とし、本研究の【地方在住日本語非母語話者による状況別の日本語のバラエティ (Situational Properties and Uses of Japanese varieties by non-native Japanese speakers in regional areas)】という理論的概念 (theoretical concept) として説明する。結論では、言語意識の分野におけるGTAの有用性を説明する。そして、本研究の結果を踏まえ、地方に居住する外国人労働者を対象とした日本言語政策及び地域日本語教育の多様化の必要性について議論するとともに、今後の研究の方向性を示す。

#### 1. Introduction

The overall number of foreign residents in Japan is increasing at the same time the foreign population distribution within Japan is changing rapidly. More foreign workers are locating to smaller regional areas instead of larger cities; this foreign worker influx is increasing year on year, including Fukui Prefecture, in which there are over 15,000 residents, with an average foreigner resident increase of over seven percent per year over the last three years (Fukui Prefecture, 2017; Fukui Prefecture, 2019). Even by

2016, foreign workers in the entire Hokuriku region occupy nearly four percent of the working population as a whole, compared to three percent nationwide (Bank of Japan – Kanazawa, 2016). And the number of domestic Japanese language learners has also increased 13 percent from 2015 to 2016 to over 210,000 people (Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, 2017). However, foreign residents moving to regional areas often face the task of dealing with a regional dialect not taught in traditional Japanese courses.

Against this background, the researcher, as a foreign resident of Fukui Prefecture, conducted and published small-scale research in 2016 and 2017 using perceptual dialectology research tools, such as questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, with local foreign residents of Fukui City and local native Fukui residents to understand and assess perceptions of the local dialect (Hennessy & Kuwabara, 2016; Hennessy & Kuwabara, 2017). The results of these studies suggested having some level of communicative ability in the local dialect could have positive effects for foreign residents for creating better communication within the community, and especially for foreign workers because of dialect use in the workplace. Related to this, the Japanese government is calling for newcomer foreign workers to be “foreigners as ordinary citizens” (*seikatsusha toshite no gaikokujin*) in order to make a smooth transition into Japanese society and workplaces, including proper Japanese language education initiatives at the local level (Cabinet Secretariat of Japan, 2018).

However, through own research and an investigation into the literature, it is not clear how foreign workers, particularly in regional areas, understand and interpret the varieties of Japanese language spoken around them. This lack of research literature along with the initiative by the government to create “foreigners as ordinary citizens” led the researcher to want to further understand the perceptions that foreign workers had of their own Japanese linguistic environments at a deeper level. For this purpose, the researcher chose to eschew more traditional forms of language regard research methods, and conducted an in-depth pilot interview study using a Grounded Theory Approach from August to October of 2019 on four foreign workers living and working in a variety of professions within Fukui Prefecture. The aim of this paper is to identify how foreign workers in a regional area of Japan perceive the varieties and situational uses of Japanese language in their daily life through an analysis of a series of interviews and conceptualize a basic framework of foreign workers described varieties of Japanese

language based on their perceptions. Furthermore, the researcher hopes to newly apply qualitative research methods to the field of language regard to more fully understand the perceptions foreign workers have of Japanese language use in their everyday life.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Perceptual Dialectology

The inspiration for this research was originally based on previous research efforts by the researcher in a perceptual dialectology (also referred to as ‘dialect consciousness’ in the Japan-related literature in English and more recently as ‘language regard’) approach mentioned above (Hennessy & Kuwabara, 2016; Hennessy & Kuwabara, 2017), which is rooted in understanding what nonspecialists believe about a language or dialect, or the folk facts. This understanding is important because as Preston (1999) argues, when there is a lack of data on linguistic folk facts, people in applied fields “will want to know what nonspecialists believe if they plan to intervene successfully” (p. xxiv). He further suggests, through this understanding, “a more intelligent approach to instruction, materials, teacher education... and a number of other applied matters that touch on language diversity may be taken once the folk as well as the scientific facts are known” (Preston, 1999, p. xxv).

In addition, many studies have been done in the field of perceptual dialectology for the Japanese language among native speakers of Japanese over the years (Mase, 1964; Inoue, 1992; Preston, 1999). Domestically, Tanaka et al. (2016) and Aizawa (2013) have in recent years used perceptual dialectology research methods to describe and categorize dialect regions based on native Japanese speakers’ perceptions. Internationally, researchers in the United States have recently been using perceptual dialectology tools to investigate how citizens of individual states perceive their own dialect compared to other states (Preston, 2013; Cramer, 2016). However, research into the perceptions non-native Japanese speakers have of the Japanese language and its use is scant, adding to the originality of this research. Otomo (2019) even argues there is a need for more sociolinguistic and ethnographic research procedures in Japanese language policy and planning to determine future language policy among foreign migrants to Japan (p. 101).

## 2.2. The dialects of Fukui Prefecture and their usage

There are two primary dialect regions contained in Fukui Prefecture: (1) *Reihoku* – the northern area, and (2) *Reinan* – the southern area (Sato, 2003, pp. 1408-1409). The split in these two dialects occurs north of Tsuruga City, which is also an area of a geographical split due to a mountain range within the prefecture. The *Reihoku* dialect is also included in the overall set of dialects in Hokuriku region of Japan, which includes Fukui Prefecture, Ishikawa Prefecture, and Toyama Prefecture, and is the dialect that is used in the area in which informants in this study live.

As for how people of Fukui use the local dialect, Tanaka et al. (2016) conducted a nationwide survey on different areas of Japan and the local perceptions of the dialects of those areas. In this study, 300 people from the Hokuriku area – ranging from age 20s to 60s – participated and results show that over 96% of participants, more than any other area, believe there is a “dialect” in their area. Further, the results suggest people of the Hokuriku area “like” their local dialect and have ample opportunity to use it compared to the common language.

## 3. Methodology

In this section, the researcher will explain the methodology used in conducting this pilot research study, as well as the data collection and informants who participated in the study.

This research employs a Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) in analyzing the data. Depending on the version of GTA followed, the literature review for a research paper may take place anywhere from before the research framework is developed (Clarke, 2005) to after the analysis is conducted (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Delaying any literature review ensures the researcher does not enter a research project with any preconceived ideas or bias, which Glaser & Strauss (1967) called “received theory” (pp. 123-125). Charmaz (2014) suggests “tailor[ing] the literature review to fit the specific purpose and argument of [one’s] research report” (p. 307). The researcher has already produced a number of perceptual dialectology research papers, and so cannot come in with the clean slate suggested by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in their initial iteration of GTA. In this way, the research framework and interview questions used here are guid-

ed by the researcher's past experiences and reviewed research literature mentioned above.

In addition, this research was conducted as a pilot project, and is by definition exploratory. It is through this project that the researcher hopes to identify relevant research methods and literature to progress to a more significant and streamlined research project.

### 3.1. Explaining Grounded Theory Approach

This research was conducted using a Grounded Theory Approach. GTA as described by Charmaz (2014) is a "rigorous method of conducting research in which researchers construct conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive theoretical analyses from data" (p. 343). It employs a variety of different analysis techniques, such as coding and memo writing, and requires a back-and-forth approach to data, which means that new data is constantly compared to old data to validate analysis and steer the research in new directions. This is often referred to as the constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Analysis can begin with the first set of data and usually begins with *coding*. *Coding* is done by breaking apart the data into small segments and analyzing each segment individually in order to avoid any bias from the researcher when analyzing the data. Utterance length for analysis can vary, however, the researcher conducted *line-by-line coding*, which means to as much as possible look at the smallest segment possible for analysis. This *line-by-line coding* leads to *focused coding*, in which certain codes seem more prevalent than other codes and are therefore grouped together and tested against larger batches of data. This procedure is then followed by *categorizing*, in which the researcher is able to see enough evidence of a salient, broadly applicable code and raise it to a more abstract level through the process of *memo writing*. *Memo writing* is an intermediate step between data collection and writing paper drafts, in which the researcher analyzes their own ideas about the codes and develop categories (See Figures 1 and 2 for examples of coding and memo writing). *Categories* then are related to other categories and codes in order to achieve *theoretical concepts*, which in turn are interconnected in order to generate *theory*. *Theory* itself in GTA is described as an organized set of concepts that are designed to rationally and clearly explain a certain

phenomenon (Charmaz, 2014), and is usually written in summative ways by offering general relationships between concepts, which help to explain what is happening and predicting what might happen (Hull, 2014). In this paper, the researcher will attempt to establish some initial categories found in the data and how they group into a theoretical concept, but refrain from creating actual *theory* as the complexity involved is beyond the scope of this paper.

### 3.2. The rationale for Grounded Theory Approach versus other qualitative research methods

This paper utilized GTA in analysis of semi-structured interview data. Since there is a dearth of research into the perceptions of foreigners in their everyday Japanese language use, qualitative methods like GTA are often appropriate to first understanding a research subject. Denscombe (2017) identifies five main forms of “talk and text” analysis: (1) content analysis, (2) GTA, (3) discourse analysis, (4) conversation analysis, and (5) narrative analysis (pp. 310-320). The researcher chose GTA as the analysis method firstly since the researcher must first analyze all data line by line as explained above, which reduces bias as much as possible for a qualitative research method. Furthermore, since the researcher is investigating the perceptions that informants have of their language use and the language use around them, a deeper analysis that pulls out the implications of a collection of informant utterances rather than the simple surface meaning of the utterances in the actual stream of conversation is required, such as established views towards Japanese language varieties and their usage. Content analysis, discourse analysis, and conversation analysis focus more on the actual linguistic properties of an informant’s speech, and so would not be sufficient for towards this goal. Narrative analysis is not necessarily concerned with “truth” of the informant’s data, but more on the story or episodes surrounding the informant, making it also unsuitable for the purposes of this research (Denscombe, 2017, p. 320).

### 3.3. Data collection method

There are various data that can be collected and analyzed in GTA (Saiki-Craighill, 2014). However, most GTA projects utilize interviews (Charmaz, 2014, p. 57), which is also the collection method for this research project. Seidman (2013) claims in-depth interviewing allows the researcher to get into the true “lived experience” of the informant

and the meaning they make from that experience compared to other research collection methods (pp. 9, 17-18). In-depth interviewing as described by Charmaz (2014) means a “gently guided, one-sided conversation that explores a person’s substantial experience with the research topic” (p. 56). To capture this spirit of one-sided conversation, the researcher designed a semi-structured interview guide based on previous research (Spradley, 1979; Weiss, 1994; Charmaz, 2014; Seidman, 2013; Denscombe, 2017).

For each informant, the researcher conducted two interviews. Multiple interviews allow the interviewer to create a controlled rapport and trust with the informant, which allows for stress-free interviews in which the informant provides as much detail as possible to the researcher (Spradley, 1979; Seidman, 2013). Each interview lasted between 100 and 130 minutes. The content of the interview guide developed for this research study includes a number of different types of questions, including linguistic-related questions, questions on interactions, views on social hierarchy at the workplace, and experiential questions. The researcher went outside the realm of pure sociolinguistics-related questions to get the full social experience of each informant’s time in Japan and Fukui Prefecture in order to ultimately lead the informant to reflect more deeply on the language they use and the language used around them.

Though the GTA research process is lengthy, through this qualitative research and interview data collection method the researcher could delve much deeper into the beliefs of informants than can be achieved with more traditional quantitative collection methods such as questionnaires, which are often used in the field of language perception. Also, the method allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions immediately in real time, giving much more flexibility in understanding the data produced by the informants.

#### 3.4. NVivo Software for data organization and analysis

The researcher used the NVivo software, a qualitative data analysis computer program, to organize and analyze the data of this research project. Particularly, the researcher created and linked codes and memos for organizing the research data and analysis. Codes could be simply sorted to understand and see relationships between all informants’ comments. Memos served as a platform for brainstorming the researcher’s ideas as coding progressed in order to create and connect categories, and generate



theoretical concepts. Figures 1 and 2 show screenshot examples of both the coding and memo writing process through the software.

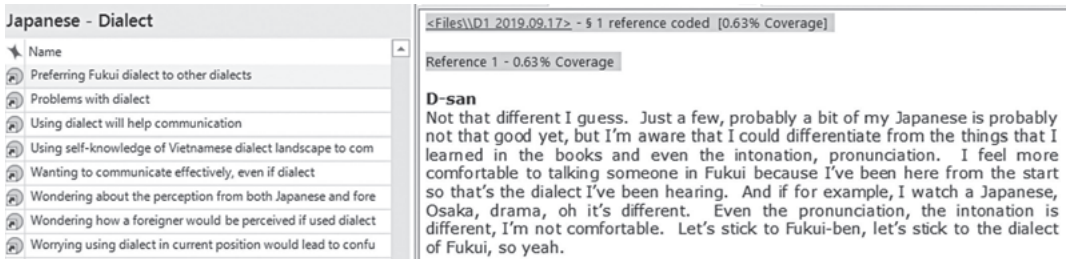


Figure 1 Screenshot of sorted dialect codes using NVivo software.



Figure 2 Screenshot of an example memo generated by the researcher using NVivo software.

### 3.5. The informants

As this type of interview research in the field of sociolinguistics is uncommon the researcher conducted a pilot survey with four informants to test what could be learned from this proposed research framework as well as what parts need to be improved or completely overhauled in future data collection and analysis. In this section, the researcher will explain more about the background of the informants in this pilot study by first giving an overall explanation, then providing more detailed description of each participant.

#### 3.5.1. General background of the informants and selection process

Informants were collected using snowball sampling (Weiss, 1994, p. 25). Informants were chosen based on certain conditions to mimic the characteristics of future foreign workers in regional areas. For example, foreign workers come into Japan at all ages, but the highest numbers come in their 20s and are often single or without family in

Japan (Ministry of Justice, 2019). Those conditions include: (1) Foreigner to Japan, (2) 20s (Informant A turned 30 in between the recruitment period and the actual interview), (3) One year or more of Japanese language study, (4) One year or more of living in the *Reihoku* (northern) part of Fukui Prefecture, (5) Six months or more of working in the *Reihoku* (northern) part of Fukui Prefecture, and (6) unmarried (Informant D became married between the recruitment period and actual interview). Table 1 gives a breakdown of the informants:

Table 1 *The informant backgrounds for the pilot study*

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Time in Japan</i> ( <i>Time in Northern Fukui Prefecture</i> )	<i>Profession</i>
A	Male	30	Nepal	5 years, 5 months (1 year, 5 months)	Hotel Front Desk Clerk
B	Female	24	Vietnam	2 years, 5 months (1 year, 5 months)	Japanese Language School Office Worker
C	Male	29	Mongolia	2 years, 5 months (2 years, 5 months)	Geological Consultant
D	Female	24	Philippines	2 years, 5 months (2 years, 5 months)	Japanese Language School Office Worker

A total of eight interviews (two per informant) were conducted from September to October 2019. Interview times ranged from 103 to 130 minutes. Interviews with Informants A, B, and C were conducted in Japanese. Interviews with Informant D were conducted in English. Ideally, interviews should be conducted in the native language of the informant. However, the researcher and informants had to conduct interviews in the informants' strongest common language, which was the Japanese language in most cases. This decision may weaken the informants' (and researcher's) ability to express themselves as fully as they would in their own native languages. Interviews were recorded with an IC recorder. The researcher obtained signed consent forms from each informant allowing the recording of interviews and the data collected to be used for research and publication purposes.

### 3.5.2. Brief description of the informants

Informant A is a 30-year-old Nepalese working front desk at a hotel in Fukui Prefecture for almost one and a half years, the only foreign worker at the front desk

position in a group of about 30 full-time and part-time workers. He originally moved to Japan on a student visa, and studied at a Japanese language school in Ueda City, Nagano Prefecture for two years. After, he attended a specialized hospitality school for one year in Gunma Prefecture. He then had an interview for a Fukui hotel, was offered a position, and moved to Fukui City.

Informant B is a 24-year-old Vietnamese who has been working at a Japanese language school in Fukui Prefecture for nearly a year and a half. She works in the office with eight other people, two of whom are non-Japanese. She also previously worked for one year at a Japanese-style inn in Ishikawa Prefecture, north of Fukui Prefecture, to fulfill graduation requirements for a Japanese major at a university in Vietnam, and discussed these experiences.

Informant C is a 29-year-old Mongolian who has been working at a geological consulting company for six months with 21 other people. He is the only non-Japanese working in this company. He spends most of his working day out of the office at job sites around the prefecture, almost always with the same coworker. He studied at a Japanese language school in Fukui for a year and a half before obtaining his current position.

Informant D is a 24-year-old Filipino who has been working at a Japanese language school in Fukui Prefecture for nearly a year, and works in the office with eight other people, two of whom are non-Japanese. She studied at a Japanese language school in Fukui for a year and a half before obtaining her current position. She also initially worked at a local restaurant for a year before starting her current position and also discussed these experiences.

#### 4. Analysis of the interviews: Japanese language perceptions

In this section, the researcher will present an analysis on the data collected by the researcher. Specifically, the analysis shows four categories that represent the varieties of Japanese language perceived by the informants: (1) *polite Japanese*, (2) *regular Japanese*, (3) *easy Japanese*, and (4) *dialect*. *Polite Japanese* refers to Japanese that uses the *-mas-* affix on verbs to express politeness towards the listener, often used in a work setting or towards people who are not very familiar. *Regular Japanese* is Japanese that does not have the *-mas-* affix, which is often used towards people who are very famil-

iar outside of a work setting. *Easy Japanese* refers to Japanese that is spoken in more simple ways (slower pace, simple vocabulary, etc.) compared to everyday spoken Japanese in order to facilitate clear communication. *Dialect* is a variety of Japanese that is spoken in a certain geographic area. The researcher will first present an overall code breakdown for these particular categories. Then, the researcher will provide a rationale and evidence from the data to validate the existence of these categories among the four informants by explaining each category through representative examples from the informants. Specifically, certain utterances from each informant will be highlighted as evidence. Informants' explanation on these utterances is also provided to help define properties for each category, which is a crucial step in raising focused codes to the category and theoretical levels (Charmaz, 2014, p. 150). In many cases, there will be multiple utterances from a single participant supporting the existence of the given category. However, not every utterance and code associated with that utterance will be provided due to the length restraints of this paper. In Section 5: Discussion, the researcher will attempt to connect these categories in order to create a framework describing how foreign workers in a regional part of Japan perceive different varieties of the Japanese language and its uses.

#### 4.1. Breakdown of code number in the data

Using line-by-line coding, the researcher was able to generate hundreds of individual codes within each interview. The total numbers are expressed in Table 2:

Table 2 *Total number of codes generated from eight interviews*

Informant	Interview 1	Interview 2	Total
A	233	254	487
B	209	265	474
C	228	246	474
D	263	281	544
			<b>1,979</b>

As this was line-by-line coding, the researcher assigned codes to all the data, most of which was not usable for any significant contribution to category- and theory-building. For example, greetings between the interviewer and informant were coded, but did

not produce any meaningful insight into the perceptions of language by the informant. Viable codes were sorted into focused codes with a *language* property. The *language*-focused codes were filtered in the four categories outlined above. A breakdown of the coding number is in Table 3:

Table 3 *Breakdown of code numbers supporting proposed categories*

Category	Total number of category-supporting codes	Informant A	Informant B	Informant C	Informant D
<i>polite Japanese</i>	68	21	8	29	10
<i>regular Japanese</i>	44	17	9	10	8
<i>easy Japanese</i>	34	19	6	6	3
<i>dialect</i>	131	23	48	47	13

A number of factors explain large discrepancy in code numbers, but the main reason is the focus of what the informant wished to talk about. For example, due to his lack of ability to speak *polite Japanese* confidently and working in an environment where everyone else speaks almost exclusively *polite Japanese*, Informant C focused much of his conversation on this issue and so the number of codes connected with *polite Japanese* are higher than others.

## 4.2. *Polite Japanese*

### 4.2.1. Informant A and *polite Japanese*

The first category, *polite Japanese*, is represented by example (1)<sup>1)</sup>, which is a word Informant A uses himself towards this style of Japanese speech. Informant A perceives *polite Japanese* to be polite-level Japanese, including polite Japanese (*teineigo*), honorific Japanese (*sonkeigo*), and humble Japanese (*kenjougo*). *Polite Japanese* is also Japanese that is used in professional situations towards anyone – coworkers or customers – in the public areas of the workplace. In example (1), Informant A describes that even when in the breakroom behind the front desk, he and his front desk coworkers must use *polite Japanese* because there is a chance that a guest may hear them. There is further description in examples (2)-(4).

(1) *Furonto wa okyakusama ga kikoeru nanode teinei no kotoba toka wa tsukawanai*

*to ikenai shi.*

“At the front desk guests can hear you so you have to use polite words.”

- (2) *Douryou no naka no nihongo wa teinei na nihongo desu ne.*

“The Japanese I use with my coworkers is polite Japanese.”

- (3) *(Okyakusan ni) futsuu (no nihongo de) shitsumon sarete mo watashi kara dekiru dake teinei na kotoba de kotaemasu.*

“Even if I am asked a question (by a guest) in regular (Japanese) I answer as much as possible with polite words.”

- (4) *Nande iu to okyakusama ni taisetsu shite chotto teinei na kotoba wa tsukawanai to ikenai shi.*

“The reason why is because I have to value the guest and use polite words.”

#### 4.2.2. Informant B and *polite Japanese*

Informant B also speaks about her use of *polite Japanese*.

- (5) Interviewer: *Yappari teinei, ‘masu’ kei, toka. Sore wo tsukatte imasu ka.*

“So polite ‘masu’ form and such. You are using that?”

Informant B: *‘Masu’ dake desu ne.*

“Only ‘masu’ form.”

Interviewer: *Keigo toka wa.*

“What about honorific Japanese?”

Informant B: *Keigo wa amari tsukatte nai desu.*

“I don’t use much honorific Japanese.”

Interviewer: *Sore wa nihonjin demo.*

“Not even with Japanese people?”

Informant B: *Hai. ‘Masu’ kei dake desu.*

“That’s right. Just ‘masu’ form.”

- (6) *(Nihongo de douryou to tairitsu shita toki no setsumei) hotondo, sumimasen, ano ken desu kedo. Ima wa, dou ni narimashita ka toka, kanryou shimashita ka to. Hontou ni okottara, dondon, watashi no joushi to iu no wa, mou chotto ue desu ne. Desu kedo, anata shinai to, watashi wa zenzen susumimasen yo tte. Susumeraremasen yo. Ima kono puroguramu, owarimashita, kore? toka. Sore de okotte. Watashi, kekkou, iya desu.*

“(Explanation about how she confronts a coworker in Japanese) I just say ‘Sorry, about that, what is going on with it? Are you finished?’ If I am really upset, for my boss, I raise it up a little. ‘If you do not do it, then nothing will move forward. I can’t move forward. This program is finished now. This?’ and so on. I get upset over that. I don’t like it very much.”

In example (5), Informant B confirms her use of *polite Japanese*, and also rejects using honorific Japanese in the work environment. In example (6), she gives actual examples of how she might word something when speaking to her boss, and this confirms how she describes her language use in example (5) with *polite Japanese* (=des-, -mas-) style used, but not honorific Japanese when confronting her boss.

#### 4.2.3. Informant C and *polite Japanese*

Informant C defines *polite Japanese* in much the same way as others, but seems to have more of a complex about his use of it. It seemed he only used dictionary style at his Japanese language school, and has no natural inclination for using *polite Japanese*. This is shown in example (7) below where he says he is not used to speaking *polite Japanese* to the point of even addressing the president of the company in dictionary style form, and is further accentuated in example (8), where Informant C states clearly that his biggest problem at his workplace is not being to speak in *polite Japanese* and honorific Japanese forms, particularly since everyone else speaks in those forms at work. In example (9), Informant C states that *polite Japanese* is the form of Japanese people use when first meeting someone and, in addition with example (10), further defines *polite Japanese* as -mas- form. Finally, it should be mentioned that while in example (10) Informant C states his coworker speaks in the polite -mas- form, in reality, which further solidifies his view on the usage *polite Japanese* in the workplace.

(7) Interviewer: (*Teinei na nihongo wa*) *nan de muzukashii to omoimasu ka.*

“Why do you think (polite Japanese) is difficult?”

Informant C: *Narete nai kara kana. Anmari tsukawanai kara. Tabun shigoto de sukoshizutsu tsukaeba, dekiru you ni naru kamo shirenai kedo, tsukaenai kara.*

“Because I’m not used to it, maybe. And I don’t use it much. Prob-

ably if I use it little by little at work, I may be able to use it. But I can't use it."

Interviewer: *Ima no shigoto, anmari hanasu chansu.*

"You don't have much chance to speak it at your current job?"

Informant C: *Futsuu ni joushi to hanasu toki wa, jisho kei (no nihongo) de hanasu kara.*

"I usually use dictionary form (Japanese) when I speak to my boss."

(8) Interviewer: *Ichiban, muzukashii no wa nanda to omoimasu ka. Nihongo de shigoto suru koto.*

"What do you think is the most difficult thing when you work in Japanese language?"

Informant C: *Teinei... keigo... kana.*

"Polite Japanese... and honorific Japanese... maybe."

(9) Informant C: *Nihonjin wa saisho ni atteru hito to, teinei ni hanasu.*

"Japanese people always speak politely when they first meet someone."

Interviewer: *Desu yo ne.*

"That's right, isn't it."

Informant C: *Dakara mada sou iu hanashi wa shite nai.*

"So I still don't speak like that."

Interviewer: *Mada?*

"Still?"

Informant C: *Nanka, 'masu' kei.*

"I mean, 'masu' form."

(10) *Soshite shigoto no hito dakara, 'masu' kei mitai ni hanasu kara.*

"Also, she is a person from work, so she speaks in 'masu' form."

#### 4.2.4. Informant D and *polite Japanese*

Looking at the examples below, Informant D is clearly delineating her work Japanese language variety from other Japanese language varieties she might speak. She also identifies this working Japanese as "*teinei*," which translates to 'polite' in English.



Example (11) also shows how she purposely doesn't use *polite Japanese* at work towards a boss that she does not respect. This contrasts with example (13), in which she actively uses *polite Japanese* with a different boss. Example (13) also highlights how Informant D does not seem to attempt honorific Japanese towards people in higher authority positions, a repeating pattern in this study. In example (12), Informant D further identifies her different uses of *polite Japanese*. Further, Informant D specifically includes using humble Japanese in example (12) when describing *polite Japanese*, the only informant to make this connection overtly.

- (11) Yeah, I talk to Z-san *teinei* [polite], which is different. It should be not, because it's just like we are the same right? I don't talk *teinei* to Y-san, she is my friend. I talk *teinei* to Shacho [the company president] and X-san because we are not close, I don't interact with them as well, and I talk *teinei* to the teachers. I do not talk *teinei* to my boss, which is very weird."
- (12) But the intonation, the voice and everything, when I'm mad, like that one, I talk to my boss, like *shite kudasai* [please do this], something like that. So, yeah, for someone, I've been here for two years, still new, honestly so I'm not really more on the – but I talk like that. I change my voice when I'm talking *teinei* [polite] they would know, and I would know as well. But when I talk to him, it's clearly different. And then sometimes, I'm *hai, wakarimashita* [Yes, I understand], *hai shochi itashimashita* [yes, I understand] kind of like that, *hai kashikomarimashita* [yes, I will take care of it], *hai, ryokai desu* [yes, I got it], something like that.
- (13) X-san talks to me *teinei* [polite] and so I talk to him *teinei*.

### 4.3. Regular Japanese

#### 4.3.1. Informant A and regular Japanese

Example (3) above also gives us the next variety of Japanese use that can be identified from Informant A's interviews, *regular Japanese*. *Regular Japanese* is essentially dictionary form Japanese, or the non-polite form of Japanese. Through the analysis of the transcripts, the researcher can further identify *regular Japanese* as Japanese towards anyone outside of a professional setting, particularly with examples (14) and (15).

- (14) *Demo ushiro jimusho wa jibun tachi issho ni shigoto suru hito tachi nanode*

*teinei go wo tsukawanaku temo daijoubu da shi futsuu no nihongo demo OK.*

“But in the office in the back it is ok for the people working there to not use polite Japanese with each other, so regular Japanese is ok.”

(15) (*Shokuba dewa*) *futsuu no hanashi wa shinai desu ne.*

(At work) I don't use regular Japanese.

(16) (*Erai hito to hanasu toki*) *igai wa futsuu (de hanasu). Aa, ano hito shachou dakara teinei na kotoba tsukawanai to ikenai tte omowanai.*

“Actually, I (speak) regular (Japanese when speaking with people in high positions). I never think, ‘oh, that person is a company president so I have to use polite language.’”

Example (16) is particularly interesting because Informant A does not feel obliged to use *polite Japanese* outside of a work setting towards the highest social member of his professional circle, the president of the company he works for. This philosophy of *polite Japanese* is applied towards his hotel boss as well as in situations outside of the workplace.

#### 4.3.2. Informant B and *regular Japanese*

Informant B describes her daily Japanese language usage during the interview. For her workplace Japanese, she uses the *polite Japanese* as described above. However, for the little Japanese she speaks outside of work (primarily with her partner). Though Informant B never explicitly mentioned how she spoke Japanese outside of work during the formal interviews, the researcher was able to confirm in follow-up communications Informant B used Japanese without the *-mas-* affix (i.e. *regular Japanese*) with her partner.

#### 4.3.3. Informant C and *regular Japanese*

In example (8) Informant C already has stated his use of dictionary-form Japanese, which is defined through his and other informants' utterances as *regular Japanese*. He further solidifies the meaning in example (17), in which he states that he can use *regular Japanese* freely at his workplace. In the same utterance, though, he realizes that doing so creates a situation where he is not polite. Example (8) and indeed many statements

throughout the interviews suggest that Informant C does not want to speak *regular Japanese* in a work situation, particularly as he mentions those around him use *polite Japanese*.

(17) Interviewer: *Ima no kaisha wa?*

“What about your company now?”

Informant C: *Ima no kaisha wa zenzen, chigau. Futsuu no jisho kei (no nihongo) de hanashite mo daijoubu. Soshite sonna ni reigi toka nai shi.*

“My company now is completely different. It’s fine if I speak just regular dictionary form (Japanese). And there isn’t much formality.”

#### 4.3.4. Informant D and *regular Japanese*

Informant D’s most clear example of defining *regular Japanese* is found in example (11) above. In this example, Informant D makes a point that she speaks to everyone in her office in *polite Japanese*, except for her boss and one particular coworker. Further hints in the data reveal that she is essentially using the *regular Japanese* explained above. Using *regular Japanese* with her boss, along with use of tone in example (12), is meant to exhibit a sign of disrespect. However, with her coworker, she is so close she almost always mentions her as “my friend” when referencing her throughout the interviews. Use of *regular Japanese* with this coworker is meant to exhibit the closeness she feels towards her contrasted with the strangeness if she spoke to her in *polite Japanese*.

### 4.4. *Easy Japanese*

#### 4.4.1. Informant A and *easy Japanese*

The next Japanese variety identified in the data is *easy Japanese*. It is exemplified in example (18) below and Informant A mentions it a number of times in both interviews.

(18) *Tatoeba ii koto wa moshikashite nihongo narete nai hito toka sou iu hito ni taishite benkyou shite nai hito toka ni taishite wa yasashii nihongo wa sugoi daiji da to omoimasu.*

“The good part, for example, I think it is very important to use easy Japanese with a person who is not used to Japanese, who has not studied Japanese.”

(19) *Ano nihonjin to nihonjin no kaiwa suru toki no nihongo to gaikoku no hito ni kaiwa suru no nihongo wa zenzen chigaimasu ja nain desu ka. Sou iu koto no*

*nihongo desu ne.*

“Isn’t the Japanese language Japanese people speak with each other and speak with foreigners completely different? I mean that kind of Japanese.”

(20) (*Suupaa no ten’in wa gaikoku ni mukete toreeningu toka sou iu yasashii nihongo shinai to wakaranai koto wa wakaranai to omou node.*)

“I think (supermarket workers) don’t know that if they don’t have easy Japanese training for talking to foreigners, the foreigners won’t understand.”

(21) (*Teinei nihongo to yasashii nihongo) no shaberikata (no chigai) wa supiido mazu, kaiwa no supiido toka kotoba wa kotobazukai. Saishuu teki ni wa kotoba wa imi ga wakariyasui imi no kotoba dake tsukatte ru.*)

“The (differences) in the way of speaking (polite Japanese and easy Japanese) are first, speed. The conversation speed and the word usage. At first, they use only words that are easy to understand.”

Example (19) expresses Informant A’s perceptions on the vast difference between the Japanese used between Japanese native speakers in conversation among themselves and the Japanese used by native speakers when speaking with non-native speakers. Example (20) also shows *easy Japanese* as a Japanese that should be used in a specific context compared to other forms of Japanese. Informant A further defines the difference in terms of speed and word choice, as exemplified in example (21). Specifically, *easy Japanese* uses easier words at a slower speed of speech. Finally, Informant A mentions that *easy Japanese* should be used for non-native Japanese speakers who are still in early stages of Japanese study as in example (18).

#### 4.4.2. Informant B and *easy Japanese*

Examples (22) and (23) both highlight Informant B’s experience with *easy Japanese*. Example (22) documents her awareness that the Japanese used with her by Japanese native speakers is different than the Japanese used by Japanese native speakers towards other native speakers. Example (23) shows that she believes it might not be beneficial to be spoken to in this way, as it can be a hindrance to the language development of the non-native Japanese speaker. This belief somewhat reflects Informant B’s overall dislike towards *easy Japanese*.

(22) Informant B: *Sorede, fufu, watashi nimo, a, nanka, yasashii nihongo wo tsukatte kuremasu.*

“So, haha, they also use some easy Japanese with me, even.”

Interviewer: *Aa, yahari, ano, [Informant B] nimo chotto chigau nihongo wo tsukawarete irun desu ka.*

“Ah, so for you (Informant B) as well there is something a little different about the Japanese being used?”

Informant B: *Hai, chotto chigau desu ne.*

“Yes, a little different.”

Interviewer: *Futsuu no nihonjin to chotto chigau desu ka.*

“A little different from regular Japanese people?”

Informant B: *Chigau desu. Yasashii nihongo desu.*

“It’s different. It’s easy Japanese.”

(23) *Sorede itsumo shien teki na supiiido de hanashimasu yo. Saisho wa nihongo ga wakaranakute mo, futsuu na koto nara to itte kuretara ii to omoimasu kedo.*

“They always speak with a supportive speed. Even if you don’t understand Japanese at first, I think it’s better if they say it regular.”

#### 4.4.3. Informant C and *easy Japanese*

In the following examples, Informant C naturally defines *easy Japanese* much like the other informants. Example (24) shows how Informant C notices the Japanese that is spoken to him by a Japanese native speaker is slower, and somewhat accepted it in his early Japanese language career as it was difficult for him to comprehend what people were saying at what a more normal speed. Example (25) refers specifically to easier wording being used with him often in his workplace environment. In example (26), Informant C is telling a story of going to the hospital and receiving medication. At the hospital, the doctor explained to him in very *easy Japanese* how to take the medicine.

(24) *Tabun, watashi ga gaikokujin to minna shitteru kara, watashi ni awasete yukku-ri hanasu, dakara. Sou ja nai to, sono hayasa ga kikitorenai.*

“Probably, everyone knows I am a foreigner, so they match me and speak slowly. If they didn’t do that, I cannot hear it at that speed.”

(25) *Tsukatte ru kotoba ga, kantan to iu ka, watashi to hanasu toki.*

“The words they use, they’re almost basic, when they speak to me.”

(26) *Mochiron gaikokujin to omotte ru kara, kantan na nihongo de hanashite kureta to omou. Soshite iroiro no kusuri no setsumei toka wa.*

“Of course, I think that because they think I am a foreigner, they spoke to me in easy Japanese. About different medicine instructions and such.”

#### 4.4.4. Informant D and *easy Japanese*

Much like Informant C in example (25) above, Informant D, in example (27), noted specific instances when she first arrived in Japan and her Japanese was not strong enough yet to support her in job duty explanations while working at a local restaurant. In this way, the restaurant workers training her would use *easy Japanese* to bridge her language gap. She describes the Japanese used as “easy-to-understand Japanese” instead of “deep Japanese.” While still new to the language, Informant D seems to appreciate this use of *easy Japanese*.

(27) Oh yeah, *sumimasen* [I’m sorry] and they would say it slowly or they would translate it into much easier word, because sometimes they would accidently use very, very deep Japanese, and I wouldn’t understand. And then after they would finish doing, I would ask, what does this word mean? And they would happily tell me what this means in a much more easy-to-understand Japanese.

### 4.5. *Dialect*

#### 4.5.1. Informant A and *dialect*

The last variety of Japanese language use identified is *dialect*, which is exemplified in example (28) and (29) below. Informant A has a lot of different thoughts on the use of *dialect*. First, Informant A thinks *dialect* should not be used in professional settings by workers towards customers, as shown in the following examples:

(28) *Nihongo no jugyuu ni wa nihongo benkyou suru kedo hougen toka sou iu koto wa zenzen shinai.*

“In Japanese class you study Japanese, but nothing like dialect.”

(29) *Tatoeba, (fukui shi ni aru suupaa de) kore wa doko ni arimasu ka to sou iu koto wo kiku toki wa nihonjin ga hanasu toki wa hougen dete kuru. De, okyakusan me no mae ni aru no ni nan de (hougen wo tsukau ka).*

“For example, (at a Fukui City supermarket) when you ask where this is dialect comes from the Japanese person. Why would you (use dialect) in front of the customers?”

The following examples will give further insight into Informant A’s beliefs about non-native Japanese speakers’ use of *dialect*.

(30) *Nihongo hougen wa mou tsuujiru no wa tsuujiru kedo, nihongo wa tsuujimasu kedo chotto gaikoku no hito ni to shite wa chotto wakaririkui. Chotto, imi ga wakatte mo nani itte ru kanatte zutto sukoshi kangaenai to ikenai mitai desu ne.*

“I can get Japanese dialects now. The Japanese comes across but as a foreigner it is a little hard to understand. Even if I understand the meaning it’s like I have to think a little about what is said.”

(31) *Chotto fukui ni nagai aida sumu hito tachi ni wa yoi to omoimasu kedo, chotto moshi fukui kara hikkoshi shite toukyou toka ni sumitai nara chotto toukyou toka sore wo manabanai hou ga ii to omoimasu.*

“I think a little that it would be good for people who live in Fukui for a long time, but supposing you were to move from Fukui and wanted to live somewhere like Tokyo then it’s better not to study that I think.”

Example (30) expresses the difficulties a non-native Japanese speaker faces when being spoken to in *dialect*. Example (31) provides conditions for when it is suitable for a non-native Japanese speaker to pursue fluency in a local Japanese *dialect*: when they plan on living in that area for a long amount of time. Informant A advises specifically against learning *dialect* if the person is in the area for a short-term stay.

#### 4.5.2. Informant B and *dialect*

In examples (32) and (33), Informant B exhibits a number of thoughts that she has on *dialect*. First, Informant B, talking about her work at a Japanese-style inn, highlighted times when not being able to understand *dialect* hindered her ability to perform her work. Guests would even become angry at her for not being to understand their way of speaking, leading to her having confidence issues with her own Japanese ability. Though she suggests that *dialect* is necessary in certain situations for non-Japanese res-

idents who are working in Japan, it is not always as evidenced in example (34), where she says in her current position that she does not encounter *dialect* and thus has no current need for understanding it. Finally, in these examples we can see that Informant B has a belief that *dialect* is a product of older Japanese, not younger Japanese.

- (32) *(Totsuzen hougen de hanasareta toki ni) okyakusan wa, watashi wa gaikokujin da to shitte nai okyakusan desu ne. Sore wa patto kite, paan to iimashita. Watashi wa, sonna koto hajimete, wakaranai. Kore wa saisho no kangae, zenzen wakaranai, doushiyou toka, sonna ni wakaranai to iu no wa, jibun no nouryoku kana to omoimashita kara, sou iu hougen no koto wa anmari kangaezu ni, watashi no nihongo nouryoku shiken wa hikui kana to omotte, komatte imashita dake.*

(When I was suddenly spoken to in dialect) the guest, it was a guest who didn't know I was a foreigner. He said it so abruptly and so much. That was my first time, so I didn't understand. At first, I thought I don't understand at all, "What should I do?" "If I don't understand this much, it must be my own ability," I thought. So I thought my Japanese ability must be low if I hardly thought about dialect. It was troublesome.

- (33) *Sore, ano hito no kotoba itte, watashi wa wakaranai nara okoraremashita. Sore wa hougen mo ooi desu ne. Toku ni nenpai no hito, ooi desu kara, sore de hontou ni 30 paasento gurai wakarimashita. Sore komarimashita.*

"On that, that person said what he said and I didn't understand so he got mad at me. That happens a lot with dialect, doesn't it. Particularly it happens a lot with older people, so I really only understood about 30 percent. That was troublesome.

- (34) *Ima wa amari hougen, kikarimasen kara hitsuyou ga nai to omoimasu.*

"Now I don't hear dialect that much, so I don't think I need it.

Examples (35) and (36) show Informant B's belief that *dialect* can be used to create feelings of closeness when used selectively. In her particular case, once leaving the Japanese-style inn, she has no need for it. However, she explains the case of a person she knows who married a native of Fukui Prefecture. She believes in this case *dialect* would be necessary.

- (35) *Oosaka no hito nara, watashi wa ookini to ittara, jikka no kanji desu ne. Watashi*



*wa furusato no kankyou mitai na kanji ni naru, shinsetsu na kanji nareru to omoimasu yo.*

“If it is someone from Osaka, and I say ‘ookii ni’ [thank you], it feels like their hometown. It’s a feeling like being in a hometown environment, I think you can feel the kindness.”

- (36) *W-san no hou ga, tabun sonna koto wo yoku taiken dekita. Dannasan wa fukui no hito desu kara, goshuujin no ryoushin mo fukui no hito desu kara, tabun sonna koto wo yoku kikaremashita kana to omoimashita kedo, watashi wa, hotondo nai desu ne.*

“Ms. W, she probably could experience that sort of thing a lot. Her husband is from Fukui, and his parents are from Fukui, so she probably heard it quite a bit I think, but almost not at all for me.”

Informant B in the previous examples explained learning *dialect* as a practical feature. However, in example (37), she sees the ability to speak it as some proof of a higher Japanese ability, describing jealousy towards coworkers able to speak in *dialect* though she could not.

- (37) *Ano hito wa futsuu no nihongo ja nakute, hougen demo dekirun desu kedo, watashi to issho ni kite, issho no daigaku, issho no shigoto desu kedo hougen dekinai to iu no wa, watashi wa heta toka, ano hito no hou ga jouzu toka nara, zettai ningen, shitto suru kamo shiremasen.*

“That person doesn’t speak (just) regular Japanese, she can do dialect as well. But she came at the same time as me, from the same university, working the same job but me not being able to use dialect, if (that suggests) I’m poor (at Japanese), and she is so good, then of course humans may feel jealous.”

#### 4.5.3. Informant C and *dialect*

Informant C had many perceptions about *dialect*. In examples (38)-(40), he discusses the initial difficulties he had of working directly every day with a native Japanese speaker who had a strong Fukui dialect. In example (38), he points out directly the heavy dialect of the senior coworker, then, in example (39), he expounds how before his current employment he never had the experience of working with someone with such a

speech pattern. In example (40), he further explains the difficulty of comprehending the speech of this person, but has seemed to have become adjusted to it. This event in his life along with other informants exemplifies the difficulty especially non-native Japanese speakers can experience when dealing with Japanese language patterns such as dialect that are not taught in the classroom.

(38) *Senpai no nihongo wa chotto hougē ga tsuyoi to iu ka, sonna kanji ni. Fukui ben, yoku haitte kuru. Sono hanashi.*

“My superior’s Japanese has a bit of a strong dialect, I feel like. He often uses Fukui dialect in conversation.”

(39) *Sono mae wa daijōbu deshita. Sonna hougē tsuyoi hito, amari inakatta kara.*

“Before that it was ok. Because there was not really anyone with such a strong dialect.”

(40) Interviewer: *Narete kimashita?*

“Have you gotten used to it?”

Informant C: *Hai.*

“Yes”

Interviewer: *Saisho wa?*

“What about in the beginning?”

Informant C: *Saisho wa chotto kikitorenai node.*

“In the beginning I really couldn’t hear it so.”

Examples (41)-(43) show how Informant C views the use of *dialect* as an accommodation tool that foreigners could utilize in order to effectively integrate in a local community. In example (41), Informant C’s coworkers actually recommend for him to use Fukui dialect in the local community. Informant C expounds on reasons why it may be useful in example (42), in which he suggests local speakers of Fukui dialect would be happier to engage with a foreigner who spoke the dialect as well, and in example (43), in which he suggests that using the local dialect to relay ideas may be more effective than using standard Japanese.

(41) *Kono mae, shuushoku no junbi shitete, gakkou no hito to sono junbi ni tsuite, shigoto, shuushoku, intabyuu ni tsuite hanashite tara, ‘kono fukui ben de hanaseba iin ja nai desu ka’ tte itte ta. Jibun de wa fukui ben tte omowanakatta kedo, sono*

*hito wa fukui no hito ja nai kara, 'mou fukui ben, naratte ru ne. Kono fukui ben de hanashita hou ga iin ja nai?' tte.*

“Before this, when I was preparing for job hunting, a person at school about my preparation, they said about the job, job hunting, and the interview, ‘Wouldn’t it be good to talk in Fukui dialect?’ I had not thought about Fukui dialect, but that person, because they were not from Fukui, they said “You have learned Fukui dialect already, right? Isn’t it better to speak in Fukui dialect?”

(42) Informant C: (*Komyunitii ni*) *Fukui ben de hanashita hou ga hairiyasui to omou.*

“I think it might be easier to enter (the community) by speaking Fukui dialect.”

Interviewer: *Sore wa naze deshou ne.*

“Why is that?”

Informant C: *Tatoeba sono jimoto no hito tachi wa, jibun no koto, shitte ru no wa ureshii kimochi ni narun ja nai desu ka. 'sono kotoba, shitte run desu ne' mitai ni.*

“For example, the people around that area, won’t they have happy feelings if you know about them? They may say something like ‘You know that word, do you?’”

(43) *Hougen demo. Jibun no kangaekata ga aite ni arawasu noga daiji da kara. Zettai, hyoujungo to muri shinai hou ga ii.*

“Even if it’s dialect. It is important to express your idea to them. Absolutely it is better not to force standard language.”

In the final examples from Informant C, examples (44)-(47), he expresses his disinterest in actively learning the Fukui dialect. Specifically, examples (44) and (45) express this mood. However, this lack of interest does not necessarily mean Informant C is against speaking the Fukui dialect. His affinity towards it has already been demonstrated in the examples above. In examples (46) and (47), he states that just by being in Fukui Prefecture one will naturally acquire Fukui dialect most likely. In the context of this conversation, Informant C did not seem to express displeasure at this prospect, but merely suggested he did not want to spend time actively pursuing fluency in the *dialect*.

(44) *Anmari sou iu hougen naraitaku nai na.*

“I don’t really want to learn dialect.”

(45) *Wazato shitai to wa omowanai desu ne.*

“I don’t think I purposely want to do it.”

(46) *Demo fukui ni iru kara, doushite mo naratte shimau mitai.*

“But I am in Fukui, so I think I will learn it no matter what I do.”

(47) *Jibun de hanashitai ja nakute, fukui ni iru kara, sore de mou fukui ben de ima mo hanashite ru to omou. Jibun de wakaranai.*

“I don’t think I want to speak it, but since I am in Fukui, I think I am already speaking Fukui dialect even now. I am not aware of it.”

#### 4.5.4. Informant D and *dialect*

Informant D identifies *dialect*, but is much more active in using it because of her work and family situation. She worked at a local restaurant where it was an everyday part of the environment and she recently married someone from Fukui who speaks in the dialect, and so she more actively uses it. Informant B in example (36) explained that she might be more active in using dialect herself if she were in a situation like Informant D’s one. In fact, Informant D describes Fukui dialect as a “god” in example (48) and seems to suggest that Fukui dialect is not a dialect, but just normal Japanese to her in example (49), so she clearly has a different relationship with the *dialect* compared to the other informants of this study. This strong relationship she has with Fukui dialect is further expressed in the following examples:

(48) I don’t know, I feel more comfortable listening to Fukui-ben [dialect]. I hear it from [my first part-time job], that was the dialect I already hear from the very start so when they talk in Fukui-ben, it’s like my god, it’s very lively.

(49) Interviewer: Back to just the kitchen thing, it’s interesting because you worked with the older people, was there a lot of Fukui dialect going on there?

Informant D: Yeah, *nani nani akan* [blah blah no good], that’s only Fukui, *ya*, Fukui dialect a lot. And then if I talk to my husband, Fukui dialect also.

(50) Interviewer: Is there any dialect in your workplace?

Informant D: None, just Fukui-ben [dialect].

Informant D is suggesting in examples (51) to (53) that there was a degree of difficulty in learning how to communicate in Fukui Prefecture because of the *dialect*. In example (51), she says she does not want to ever leave the Fukui area to go to some other part of Japan because that would mean having to cope with a new *dialect*. In example (52), she directly describes the difficulty of Fukui dialect compared to standard Japanese that she learned in Japanese language school. In example (53), like example (51), she almost is suggesting that Fukui dialect is her native mode of speech when speaking Japanese, and can actually relate to people better through listening to and using the *dialect*. This connection with the local *dialect* is in major contrast with Informant A and Informant B in their current situations, but, in actuality, both Informant A and Informant B also suggest that if they were in a similar situation as Informant D, they may have a different attitude towards learning the *dialect* as a non-native speaker of Japanese.

- (51) And when you go to other prefectures there's like hougen [dialect], there is dialect, and I don't want to adjust again so let's just continue our life in Fukui, so that's why I looked for a job here.
- (52) Sometimes I cannot understand it, especially the words, the Fukui dialect, and then it's very fast.
- (53) I feel more comfortable to talking someone in Fukui because I've been here from the start so that's the dialect I've been hearing. And if for example, I watch a Japanese, Osaka, drama, oh it's different. Even the pronunciation, the intonation is different, I'm not comfortable. Let's stick to Fukui-ben [dialect], let's stick to the dialect of Fukui, so yeah.

## 5. Discussion – Theoretical concept: Situational properties and uses of Japanese varieties

In this section, the researcher will attempt to integrate the categories outlined above into a theoretical concept. As mentioned above, a main goal of using GTA is to create theoretical concept, described by Glaser (1978) as “how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory” (p. 72). Above, the researcher outlined the informants' perceptions on situational Japanese usage. These perceptions that foreign workers in Fukui have towards the use of different forms of the Japanese language – either by them or towards them – can be defined and

given properties based on the above analyzed data, then connected together to create a theoretical concept.

To reiterate, the categories that are agreed upon by all informants through the above data analysis are (1) *polite Japanese*, (2) *regular Japanese*, (3) *easy Japanese*, and (4) *dialect*. Also, as outlined above, other than *easy Japanese*, which is not actively used by non-native Japanese speakers, each one of these forms of Japanese appear to be mostly complementary in their use among the informants and the circumstances which allows the non-native speaker to use them, though what specific forms of the language are included in each perceived variety may differ (for example, Informants A and D overtly included humble Japanese in their perceptions of polite Japanese, which may be true for the others, but it is not confirmed in this set of data). With the data presented here, though, the summary of all of these categories with their defined properties can be amalgamated into the following theoretical concept: *Situational Properties and Uses of Japanese Varieties by non-native Japanese speakers in regional areas*. This concept can be utilized for identifying how foreign workers in a regional area of Japan perceive (and through this perception attempt to control) the uses of Japanese language interactions in their daily life, as shown in Table 4:

Table 4 *Theoretical Concept based on data analysis – Situational Properties and Uses of Japanese Varieties by non-native Japanese speakers in regional areas*

Variety of Japanese	Characteristics	Situational Context of Use and Effects
<i>polite Japanese</i>	polite Japanese (not necessarily honorific Japanese or humble Japanese); = <i>des-</i> , <i>-mas-</i> form	for professional situations towards anyone – coworkers or customers – in the public areas of the workplace; for unfamiliar people
<i>regular Japanese</i>	dictionary form; not = <i>des-</i> , <i>-mas-</i> form	for situations outside of work duties or close coworker friends; considered impolite in most work situations
<i>easy Japanese</i>	purposeful slow tempo of speech and/or easy-to-understand words	for use only with beginning-level Japanese speakers to ease comprehension; not actively used by non-native speakers
<i>dialect</i>	the particular way of speaking in a certain area (grammar, pronunciation, accent)	for locals or (probable) long-term foreign residents of the dialect area; not for active use in most professional settings; the speech pattern of older people; for creating closer relationship with local native speakers

Though from a theoretical standpoint, the information collected in this table is interesting to see how foreign workers in regional areas of Japan conceptualize the different varieties of Japanese, this information has practical value in that it can guide language policy and Japanese language instruction in regional areas of Japan by indicating what the perceived language needs of the Japanese language students in those areas are, particularly areas with a strong *dialect* component incorporated into the everyday spoken language. Though the information in the table is based on perceptions, Preston (1999) rightly points out the need for nonspecialists' perceptions of language to be considered in order to "find a more intelligent approach" to overall instruction and materials (p. xxv). Therefore, this knowledge can have progressive and positive effects on teaching instruction and materials that are specific to different areas of Japan transitioning from a "one-for-all" nationwide method of Japanese language instruction to a more customized regionalized one.

## 6. Conclusion

The main purpose of this paper was two-fold. First, the researcher aimed to identify how foreign workers in a regional area of Japan perceive the varieties of Japanese language interactions in their daily life. Second, the researcher attempted to apply new qualitative research methods to the field of language regard in order to more fully understand the perceptions that foreign workers have of Japanese language situational use of these different varieties in their everyday life in Japan. The researcher believes there is success with regards to both goals.

Through this qualitative analysis using GTA, the researcher was able to deeply analyze foreign worker informant interviews in a way that more traditional data gathering methods and analysis would not allow in the field of language regard. The researcher was then able to develop a somewhat generalized theoretical concept that can be of use in implementing overall Japanese language education policy planning in order to create the "foreigners as ordinary citizens" that recent government policy has called for, such as in the case of the Specified Skilled Worker visa program and newcomers coming through this scheme to even community Japanese education class planning in order to further understand the needs of Japanese language students who come to

Japan with the intention of working in regional areas. Understanding the perceptions of varieties of the Japanese language that foreign workers have can help to improve resources used in teaching future generations of foreign workers. Particularly, based on the strong *dialect* awareness component displayed in the analysis, transition from a unified Japanese language education policy to a more specialized one for different regions of the country through local municipalities could help ensure a smoother transition for foreign workers into their regional workplaces and communities.

Limitations in the research do exist, though. As noted above, a large number of codes were generated that did not match across informants, mostly likely due to the different employment and personal backgrounds of the informants. This difference created a large amount of codes that could be elevated to higher theoretical concept levels if the backgrounds shared more in common (for example, if there were just a focus on foreign care workers or factory employees). Also, the fact that in most cases both the informants and the researcher's native language were not the interview language may have resulted in lack of ability for both sides to convey their meaning with full accuracy.

In addition, future data collection and analysis may unveil an even more complicated structure of Japanese language variety perception among the informants. For example, in example (37), Informant B's use of the term "regular Japanese" may actually include *regular Japanese* defined in this paper as well as *polite Japanese*; in other words, any Japanese that is not *dialect*. This statement may be a clue into a deeper level of analysis that could include a type of hierarchical leveling with the different forms of perceived varieties of Japanese presented here plus other forms. For example, future data analysis may show a perceived framework of Japanese language perceptions with a parent branch of *school Japanese language* (Japanese learned at language school), with child branches of *polite Japanese* and *regular Japanese* nested underneath, then a different parent branch of regional Japanese, with child branches of *easy Japanese* and *dialect*. The researcher hopes to follow up on this idea in the future.

Limitations aside, the researcher believes there is proof of concept through this study in applying Grounded Theory Approach analytic methods to the fields of language regard, perceptual dialectology, and language attitude studies to create deeper and richer data and analysis. From this point, the researcher will continue to pursue the direction of this research by first revising the research tools, such as the interview



guide, based on the experiences from this initial pilot study and finding informants with more similar working backgrounds, as mentioned above, to cast a net that will, in essence, “catch” more meaningful and comparable data for further analysis in understanding how foreign workers in regional areas perceive and react to the use of the Japanese language surrounding them in their everyday lives.

#### Notes

- 1) Quotations from Informants A, B, and C are originally in Japanese and have been translated into English by the researcher.

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