

Chûgoku Dialect Terms that Remain in Hawaii Creole English

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Abstract

This paper will focus on Chûgoku-ben, or the Hiroshima/Yamaguchi dialect, the language brought to Hawaii and used by the majority of the Japanese immigrants during the plantation period and its attrition rates among the Japanese Americans in Hawaii. Under the hypothesis that speakers' age influences the rates of attrition of Chûgoku-ben, a linguistic survey was conducted, based on our social contacts with local Japanese Americans, to study how much of Chûgoku-ben vocabulary has been retained in Hawaii today. We will first discuss the formation of Hawaiian Japanese, a common language spoken among the Japanese immigrants. Second, we will report a result of our survey on some Chûgoku-ben vocabulary. Based on our data collected from people of different generations (the second, third, and fourth generation Japanese immigrants) and ages (20 to 86), the attrition rates of the Chûgoku-ben terms are separated by the speakers' generation groups rather than their age groups. We will then introduce some of the terms that diffused into today's HCE (Hawaii Creole English) from Hawaiian Japanese. After that, possible reasons to account for the different attrition rates of the Hawaiian Japanese terms will be mentioned. Lastly, use of Japanese language in Hawaii today and the future of Hawaiian Japanese will be discussed. Our study will contribute to better understanding of Hawaii's unique sociolinguistic variations that were enhanced by the plantation immigrants, including a large group from Japan.

Key words : Hawaii Creole English, Hawaiian Japanese, Chûgoku-ben

0. Background of the study

In Sato's (1991:647) words, "Hawaii's cultural diversity is largely the result of massive labour importation, triggered by the development of sugar plantation by North Americans during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." Between 1885 and 1924, over 100,000 Japanese immigrated to Hawaii, mainly to work in the booming sugar industry. Many of the immigrants were from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi, adjoining coastal prefectures of the San'yô area of the Chûgoku region in the southwestern part of Honshu Island. The general dialect shared by these people is called 'Chûgoku-ben,' which is actually composed of very similar sub-dialects spoken in Hiroshima and Yamaguchi (Higa 1970: 125; Nagara 1972:16-17).

The largest number of the Japanese immigrants in Hawaii during this period came from Hiroshima prefecture, followed by people from neighboring Yamaguchi prefecture. In 1924, the last year of the wave of immigration from Japan, Hiroshima immigrants in Hawaii numbered 30,534, comprising 24.3% of the total Japanese population in Hawaii. The second largest group of Japanese immigrants was from Yamaguchi, numbering 25,878 and making up 20.6% of the total Japanese population in Hawaii (The United Japanese Society of Hawaii 1964:314-5, cited in Nagara 1972: 281-283, Odo and Shinoto 1985:50, Smith 1980:104). This means that nearly half of the total Hawaii Japanese population originated in the Chûgoku region and spoke the same dialect. As a result, this dialect played a major role in the common language that developed among Japanese immigrants and their descendants in Hawaii

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(Smith 1980:105). This common language, based on the Chûgoku dialect, is often regarded as Hawaiian Japanese (DeFrancis and Lincoln 1973:175, Higa 1985:72). Unlike languages spoken by other immigrants during the plantation days, Hawaiian Japanese became a major donor language of HCE along with the Hawaiian language at the lexical level.

1. Purpose

In this paper, we seek to demonstrate the retention of vocabulary that was introduced into HCE by the Chûgoku immigrants. As speakers of the Chûgoku dialect, one of the first things we recognized after moving to Hawaii was the resemblance between Hawaiian Japanese spoken by older Japanese Americans and our own dialect spoken back in Hiroshima. Moreover, we further noticed certain lexical items used in HCE that are from the Chûgoku dialect (Fukazawa and Hiramoto 2003). Therefore, we focused particularly on the attrition of the lexical items that originated in the Chûgoku dialect and were adopted into HCE. Our research questions for this study are:

Research Question 1: Are the lexical retention rates of the Chûgoku dialect higher among the older generations than among younger generations?

Research Question 2: Is there a gradual lexical attrition of the Chûgoku dialect from the older generation to the younger generation?

In the following section, we will report our findings from our research regarding the qualitative findings from the data, and further discuss the possible reasons for the study results from sociolinguistic points of view.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Our data was collected from 38 Hawaii-born Japanese Americans whose ancestors arrived in Hawaii before 1924, the last year of plantation immigration from Japan. All the informants were limited to local Japanese who were born and raised in Hawaii and are at least 50% or more ethnically Japanese with self-identification of being Japanese Americans. In addition, all the informants identified themselves as Japanese. Table 1 below shows the distribution of our informants.

Table 1: Distribution of the informants

Age	Male	Female	Total
20-29	3	2	5
30-39	4	1	5
40-49	4	5	9
50-59	1	6	7
60-69	1	3	4
70-79	2	3	5
80-	0	3	3
	15	23	38

2.2 Data collection instrument and procedure

In this study, we use the apparent-time approach originally suggested by Labov (1972:258). Trudgill (1988:33) defines this approach as follows: “the speech of older informants is compared with that of younger informants, and ... differences between the speech of older and younger subjects are interpreted as representing linguistic changes.” Starting with recognizing the resemblances between Hawaiian Japanese and the present day Chûgoku dialect, we were particularly interested in the language use of the local Japanese population in Hawaii. We made a list of sixteen words used in HCE from Chûgoku dialect (See Table 2). Our sources are mainly based on things we encountered in our ordinary lives such as conversation with the local people and the local mass media. After making the list, we took a survey among the local Japanese people in different age groups (20’s, 30’s, 40’s, 50’s, 60’s, and 80’s) to see the differences in their word usage and recognition. These groups are comprised of Japanese Americans who were of the

2nd, 3rd, and 4th generations (nisei, sansei, and yonsei, respectively). The data collection took place in Honolulu in April 2001. The informants were first asked to provide definitions of the terms, then, asked to make short sentences with them if they knew the meaning. Following the data collection, we processed the data for qualitative analysis.

3. Results

3.1 Words Well Adapted in HCE

There are some words that are particularly well adopted into HCE from Chugoku dialect. Among them, *habut* or *habuts* ‘to pout, to sulk’ from *habuteru* ‘to make a long face’ is the most noticeable one. Along with *habut* or *habuts*, *bocha* ‘to bathe, to shower,’ *menpachi* ‘squirrelfish,’ and *monku* or *monku-tare* ‘complaint or complainer’ were highly recognized by the participants of this study. Table 2 below shows the terms used in our survey in order of the most to least recognized by the informants.

Table 2: Recognition of Chugoku dialect terms in HCE (n = 38)

No	Word	Gloss	People
1	<i>bocha</i>	to bathe or shower	37
2	<i>habut</i>	to pout or sulk, messed up	36
3	<i>menpachi</i>	Squirrelfish	33
4	<i>monku</i> or <i>monku-tare</i>	complaint or complainer	33
5	<i>bobora</i> or <i>bobura</i>	pumpkin, FOB Japanese	29
6	<i>baban</i> or <i>obaban</i>	Grandmother	25
7	<i>komai</i>	Small	24
8	<i>hoito</i> or <i>hoitobo</i>	greedy person, pig	24
9	<i>chîto</i> or <i>chitto</i>	a little bit	23
10	<i>makina & tamana</i>	cabbage and won bok cabbage	23
11	<i>erai</i>	tiring, exhausting	22
12	<i>waya</i>	messy	11
13	<i>hasu</i>	lotus root	9
14	<i>deko</i> or <i>deko-san</i>	doll	9
15	<i>inage-na</i>	strange	8
16	<i>nigaru</i>	stomach (or tooth) pain	6

Most of the words that were recognized by 24 people or less are concentrated in nisei and sansei speakers who are over forty years old. In our data, the younger speakers (under 40) did not recognize more than half of the terms in the survey. In other words, many of the every day expressions of issei (the first generation) and nisei Japanese before World War II are disappearing in their children and grandchildren’s generations.

3.2 Qualitative Findings

In this section, we will report on the Chûgoku dialect terms from the survey that indicated some interesting word usage from the data.

3.2.1 Bobora or Bobura

A word *bobora* or *bobura* ‘pumpkin’ in Japanese is originally borrowed from Portuguese *abobora* ‘gourd’ (Carr 1972:113). In HCE, there is a different meaning than ‘pumpkin’ and it describes a Japanese person from Japan with derogatory connotation.

[Chûgoku dialect] = Pumpkin

- a. Ban no okazu ni bobora o taita. (‘I cooked a pumpkin for dinner.’)
 night GEN dish for pumpkin ACC cook-past

[HCE] = Pumpkin or a Japanese person from Japan (derogatory term)

- b. Obaban cooked bobora for dinner. (‘Grandmother cooked a pumpkin for dinner.’)
 c. Keiko is so bobora. (‘Keiko is a typical Japan Japanese (= FOB).’)

3.2.2 Hoito

Hoito means a beggar in the Chûgoku region and it originates from the Standard Japanese word *hoto-mono* ‘a person who does not like to work but to travel around and supports his living by begging others’ (Muroyama

2000:79-86). As a child, we remember seeing a traveling hermit called hoito-san, going to house to house for food or money; however, they are no longer around in Japan. In HCE, it means a greedy person (especially for food).

[Chûgoku dialect] = Beggar

- a. Hoito-san ga kichatta. ('Mr. Beggar came.')
- Mr. Beggar TOP come-polite-past

[HCE] = Greedy or a greedy person

- b. Don't be so hoito! ('Don't be such a pig.')

3.2.3 Monku and Monku-tare

Monku means 'complaint' and a bimorphemic expression monku-tare means a complainer. There is no apparent semantic/lexical change concerning this word in HCE from the original Chûgoku dialect; nonetheless, HCE shows some interesting examples of expressions in our data. In HCE, the speakers would often use triplication when uttering the word monku in their speech, whereas this usage never occurs in the original Chûgoku dialect.

[Chûgoku dialect] = Complaint and complainer

- a. Yûji wa honmani monku ga ôi. ('Yûji has many complaints.')
- Yûji NOM really complain TOP many
- b. Yûji wa honmani monku-tare ja. ('Yûji is a real complainer.')
- Yûji NOM really complainer particle

[HCE] = Complaint and a grumbler

- c. Mr. Matsumoto's so monku-monku-monku. ('Mr. Matsumoto complains much.')
- d. Mr. Matsumoto's so monku-tare. ('Mr. Matsumoto is such a grumbler.')

The repetition of the word monku may be a transfer from English expressions in a similar pattern of word use such as 'nag-nag-nag,' 'blah-blah-blah,' 'et cetera-et cetera-et cetera,' and so on.

3.3 Summary of the Findings

As Machida (2001:140-146) claims, meanings of words are most easily adapted and changed in language contact situations. Thus, the types of semantic/lexical changes observed in the examples above in HCE from the Chûgoku dialect Japanese (via Hawaiian Japanese) are not rare. There are more examples of such semantic/lexical changes from other languages in HCE, especially in terms that describe types of people.

4. Discussion: Shift from Hawaiian Japanese to HCE

4.1 Language Standardization in Japan

Around the same time as the Japanese emigration started, a language standardization movement began under the Meiji Government. It is often noted that Japanese dialects before Meiji were so diverse and distinct that many of them were mutually unintelligible (cf. Kindaichi 1978; Shibatani 1990). This new Standard Japanese policy penetrated into the general public at a slow but steady pace. The use of regional dialects was severely discouraged, especially in official settings such as public schools, and particularly in rural areas (Komori 2000:128-129; Satoh and Yoneda 1999:75-82). Because of the timing and situation, the language standardization process had not yet influenced most of the plantation immigrants who moved to Hawaii. As a result, the common language on Hawaiian plantations among Japanese did not become similar to today's Standard Japanese.

This also explains diachronic changes of Chûgoku dialect itself in Japan from the time of the immigration and now. Out of the sixteen terms used in our survey, we can easily tell that more than half of them are hardly used by today's speakers; in fact, they are used exclusively by senior citizens. In any case, today's Chugoku dialect has been much more standardized compared to the same dialect that was spoken about a century ago.

4.2 Ethnic Terms

In HCE, there are many terms that characterize different ethnicities of people and many of them are derogatory. As seen in the previous section, a newly arrived Japanese is distinguished from a local Japanese and called bobora or bobura. A Japanese from the mainland US is called kotonk and also differentiated from a local Japanese (Carr 1972:93). Ogawa (1973:16) states, “The most obvious cultural differences [between the mainland Japanese Americans and Hawaii Japanese Americans] are exposed in the language of the two groups.” He quotes a comment of one Japanese American of Hawaii on the mainland Japanese.

[The kotonks] think they speak so much better than locals. They think they speak good Standard American English. They think they have good pronunciation, enunciation and articulation. The Kotonks also think they have such a distinguished haole vocabulary...if a Hawaii Japanese American talked about having a good time, he would say, “terrific, yeah,” whereas the Kotonk would say, “yes, it was marvelous” (Ogawa 1973:16).

The local Japanese in Hawaii are known as Buddha-head and this word is also commonly used in HCE (Carr 1972:93).

HCE has many other ethnic terms to describe different people from different languages. It is understandable that people needed to utilize these terms to refer to different types of ethnicity in multi-cultural communities such as those on the Hawaiian plantations.

4.3 From Hawaiian Japanese to HCE

During the early contacts among the plantation workers of different origins, Hawaii Pidgin adopted some Japanese vocabulary while some non-Japanese words diffused into Hawaiian Japanese (Higa 1970). Later, during the course of language shift, Hawaiian Japanese terms were transferred into HCE (Nagara 1972). We believe this is how the Chûgoku dialect terms came into use in HCE by both Japanese and non-Japanese locals in Hawaii.

Most of the sansei and yonsei speakers we meet do not know Hawaiian Japanese compared to the nisei Japanese. This accounts for the changes in the use of Chûgoku dialect terms between the generations. Figures 1 and 2 below show a steady decline of the Chûgoku dialect retention rates by the speakers of the different ages.

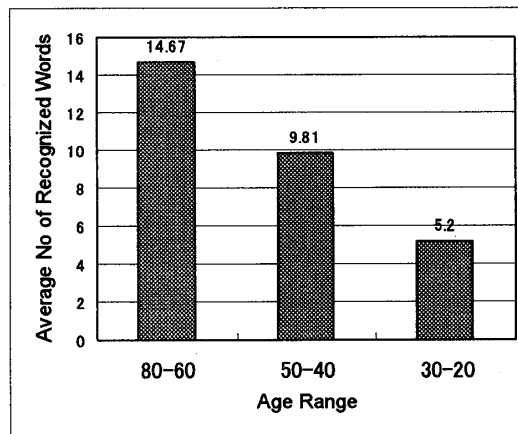


Figure 1: Shifts in retention of Chugokû dialect terms by age

Based on the data, we can predict that the use of Chûgoku dialect terms will keep declining as the generations of Japanese Americans continue to be born in Hawaii.

4.3.1 Identity Change from Issei to Nisei Japanese

Hawaiian Japanese was actively used by isseis and niseis until it was banned in 1941. Majority of the issei Japanese wished to return home after finishing their contracts in Hawaii. In reality, however, accumulating enough wealth to go home was much more difficult than the hard-working isseis originally imagined (Hawaii Hochi 2001:51-55, Tasaka 1985:26-27). Instead of marrying the local females, many of isseis brought picture brides from their hometowns in Japan (c.f. Chinen and Hiura 1997, Hawaii Hochi 2001:61-62, Okihiro 1991:104, Tasaka 1985:176-177), which resulted in language conservation of that generation. Many issei parents raised their children in Japanese and emphasized their Japanese language education by sending them to Japanese schools or even schools

in their hometowns in Japan (Hawaii Hochi 2001:67). In addition, knowing that education will help their children's chances of social advancement in the future, isseis encouraged niseis' education in American school systems (Hawaii Hochi 2001:71-72). At the same time, the official Americanization process was taking place in the American education system, and the niseis could not help becoming more Americanized than their parents (Hawaii Hochi 2001:71).

Yamamoto (1974:39) describes that niseis were "poised between the strong influence of their Japanese parents and the call of equality through assimilation into the American society." Towards World War II, Japanese became "the largest and most conspicuous Asian group" (Tamura 2001:49), and the US government officially prohibited use of Japanese within the country during the war; thus, all the Japanese schools in Hawaii were forced to close down. Some unpreferred and suspicious Japanese individuals, including the language teachers and religious leaders, were seized and sent to interment camps. Although isseis were torn between the two countries, many niseis tried to show loyalty towards the US (c.f. Chinen and Hiura 1997, Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board 1998, Okihiro 1991:272). Niseis fought in the war for the US and built a legacy in American history (Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board 1998, Tasaka 1985:188). "The psychosocial urgency" (Yamamoto 1974:42) of World War II gave strong influence on nisei's self-identity. They asserted their Americanness while keeping their Japanese cultural values (Yamamoto 1974:42). However, according to our nisei informants, after shifting their language from Japanese to English during the time of the war, many of them kept English as their main language over Japanese.

4.3.2 Identity Change from Nisei to Sansei Japanese

Our nisei informants mentioned that Japanese Americans tried not to speak Japanese even after the war. They report this was in order to avoid discriminations by other ethnic groups, especially in public. They were psychologically constrained from using Japanese language during that time. Simultaneously, adult nisei after the war complained that there was a "lack of opportunities for advancement" in plantation work (Nomura 1987:104). The nisei Japanese plantation workers wished to move "beyond the curtain of cane" (Okihiro 1991: 151) even before the war. So, niseis increased their education and English skills in order to get better jobs. They also encouraged their sansei children's English and American-style education over the Japanese language education.

In general, the language change from Hawaiian Japanese to HCE in the Japanese community was encouraged by some strong motivations. Compared to niseis, who integrated both aspects of their American rights and Japanese traditional values (Yamamoto 1974:42), sanseis and yonseis seem to have developed a different identity from their parents and grandparents' generations. The younger Japanese Americans in Hawaii "have little desire or intention to identify with Japan Japanese or American Americans" (Ogawa 1973:13-14). Rather, they identify themselves as 'locals' based on "the interrelationship of cultures in Hawaii" (Ogawa 1973:20). 'Local' identity is the mechanism to integrate aspects of traditional community, different cultures, and a commitment to Hawaii (Yamamoto 1974:121), and use of HCE represents this 'Island identity'.

4.4 Change of Japanese from Japan

From the 1970 and after the post-war economic recovery, Japan started to bring dramatic investments and tourism into Hawaii's markets (Okamura 1992; Yamamoto 1974:67). With this booming of business, the Japanese language once again became important in Hawaii. This time, however, it was Standard Japanese that received increased recognition, rather than the plantation immigrants' country dialects or the local variety of Hawaiian Japanese. The post-war Japanese immigrants are now labeled as shin-issei (Matsumoto and Kurebayashi 1992, Nakatomi 1991) or Japan Japanese (Ogawa 1973:14, Yamamoto 1974:67-69) and distinguished from the pre-war local Japanese in Hawaii.

The preferred type of Japanese used in Hawaii changed from Hawaiian Japanese to Standard Japanese. Fewer Japanese Americans were brought up speaking the Japanese language at home after the war, but Japanese language education became important once again in Hawaii with the wave of new Japanese immigrants. Soon, Japanese became one of the most popular foreign languages taught in schools in Hawaii, but, this time, people started acquiring Standard Japanese rather than Hawaiian Japanese. We encountered countless situations where local

Japanese themselves are differentiating pre- and post-war Japanese variety. For example, we hear young local Japanese students at the University of Hawai'i criticizing their grandparents' or great-grandparents' Japanese as being 'not good,' 'vulgar,' or 'impolite.' Similarly, a number of nisei informants described to us that their Japanese is 'improper,' 'country-like,' or 'Pidgin Japanese' as compared to their younger family members' 'proper' Japanese.

5. Conclusion

As expected, the data collected for this study suggest positive answers to both of our research questions regarding a gradual attrition of the Chûgoku dialect over generations. The results of the descriptive statistics revealed a bigger drop of the Chugoku dialect word recognition between the nisei and sansei transition than the sansei and yonsei transition. The changes seem to have been caused by sociopsychological factors in Japanese Americans of Hawaii, in other words, the changes of social dynamics regarding Japanese Americans from the time of World War II and afterwards. Many niseis and sanseis shifted their main language from Hawaiian Japanese to HCE, thus, the following generations became unfamiliar to the Chûgoku dialect. Although there are some lexical items adopted from the Chûgoku dialect in today's HCE such as *habuteru* or *habu* 'to pout or sulk,' *menpachi* 'squirrelfish,' *bocha* 'to bathe or shower,' and *monku* or *monku-tare* 'complaint or complainer', our findings seem to tell us that the uses of general Chûgoku dialect terms are decreasing steadily as the speakers' generation becomes younger. We can predict that most of the Chûgoku dialect terms in HCE, adopted as a remnant of the plantation period, will soon disappear in Hawaii, except for some words that gained recognition as HCE vocabulary. It is imperative to fully examine Hawaii's unique sociolinguistic variations regarding the the Chûgoku dialect terms before they cease to exist.

Appendix A (A word list used in this study)

Following are a list of Chûgoku dialect terms in HCE selected for this study. Due to a paucity of space, examples of each category in Standard Japanese, Chûgoku dialect, and Hawaii Creole English were omitted. The gloss of each word is given earlier in Table 2.

Food items	7. <i>Inage-na</i>	13. <i>Habuteru, Habute, or Habut</i>
1. <i>Bobora or Bobura</i>	8. <i>Komai</i>	People-related words
2. <i>Hasu</i>	9. <i>Waya</i>	14. <i>Hoito or Hoito-bo</i>
3. <i>Menpachi</i>	Physical expressions	15. <i>Monku or Monku-tare</i>
4. <i>Makina</i>	10. <i>Erai</i>	16. <i>Obaban or Baban</i>
5. <i>Tamana</i>	11. <i>Nigaru</i>	Others
Descriptive words	Actions	17. <i>Deko or Deko-san</i>
6. <i>Chito or Chitto</i>	12. <i>Bocha or Bocha-bocha</i>	

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