Speaking with an Accent in Northern Japan: Discrimination and Dialect Ideologies

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

by

Edwin Keely Everhart

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

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Professor Paul V Kroskrity, Chair

This dissertation investigates the practices by which local language activists and college students in the Touhoku (Tōhoku 東北) region reproduce and challenge stigma toward local language (“dialect,” “accent”). Touhoku has for decades been a source of labor and other resources for the national economy of Japan which favors the urban core, and language standardization reinscribes Touhoku speakers as belonging to a periphery. People of this region, subject to metropolitan cultural hegemony in the post-war period, often came to bear an inferiority complex about local culture due to linguistic discrimination and cultural marginalization. Registers of local language here tend to absorb weighty meaning from social relations of power, as emblems of shameful backwardness, tourist appeal, political resistance, and fashionable authenticity by turns. Following the last “dialect boom” (1980s-90s), local language activists (“dialect activists”) have pursued projects of language documentation, language valorization, and language revitalization in a spirit of renewal after the triple disasters of March 11, 2011. Meanwhile institutions like media and
schools, which the state set up to privilege national “standard” language (i.e. Tokyo-style language), have never been decolonized.

This dissertation is based on 16 months of ethnographic research primarily in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture, with college students at Iwate University, as well as with language activists, drawing on established approaches in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. It draws together a range of approaches to analyze language varieties as registers, that is, as products of enregisterment. Part of this dissertation addresses language activism e.g. in the case of Kesen and Yamáura Harutiği (Yamura Harutsugu). In addition to discussing such language activism (largely among elders), this study asks how young people in northern Touhoku experience local language: what are their language ideologies vis-à-vis local language, how do they express social identities using linguistic resources, and how is their agency to use language constrained? People in northern Touhoku are experiencing a form of language endangerment, but local language is by no means “extinct,” though commoditization and linguistic colonization are dominant forces. Analysis of life histories and everyday interaction demonstrate that speakers use local language as a resource for negotiating cultural authority.
The dissertation of Edwin Keely Everhart is approved.

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Norma Mendoza-Denton
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University of California, Los Angeles
2018
松本源蔵氏と、多くの北東北の方言活動家の皆さんに
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Personal names

Surnames come before given names in the body text of this dissertation. Whenever a new name consisting of one word appears, it is the surname. Whenever a new name consisting of multiple words appears, the reader should assume that the first of these words is the surname (i.e. family name). However, in some cases (including the author’s own name), the opposite is true: the surname comes last. For the sake of clarity, please note the following rule: On the first occasion that a person’s full name is used, if the surname comes last, the surname is written in all capital letters. For example, in the two names Paul KROSKRITY and Oono Makio, the surnames are Kroskrity and Oono.
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1.1 Linguistic colonization and Touhoku history.

This is a dissertation investigating the political economy of local language in present-day Touhoku 東北地方, specifically Iwate Prefecture 岩手県. Touhoku has historically been a frontier of the Japanese state: as a territorial frontier from the 8th to 14th centuries CE, and as a cultural frontier during the Meizi (Meiji) period at the turn of the 20th century, and as an economic frontier after 1945. The Meizi government’s effort to create a “modern nation” involved prioritizing national cultural homogeneity through means of education and military policy, and these institutions of the nation inscribed Touhoku as a backwater in a way that is still recognizable today (Long 2011). But the era most immediately relevant to this study is the period after 1945, in which a continued effort toward cultural standardization coincided with a new regime of capitalist accumulation. Since Japan had lost its overseas colonies as sources of labor and material capital, state policy turned inward and reinscribed the internal periphery as a quasi-colonial zone for resource extraction. The benefits of these systems redound to capitalist growth in urban centers. State policy of development relied on the inequality between urban and rural areas to underwrite national (but especially metropolitan) prosperity. Laborers from Touhoku supplied the factories in urban Kantou and elsewhere; in the 1960s and 1970s companies placed factories directly in Touhoku to take advantage of cheap labor there. But Touhoku would not only serve as a zone for resource extraction – it would also serve as a zone for isolating nuclear power plants and nuclear waste, and ultimately as a “national sacrifice zone” (Hopson 2013) when radiation exceeded the limits of the shoddy safety systems in place. As the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters of March 2011 demonstrated and continue to demonstrate, the structure of the Japanese state and economy (and nuclear energy industry especially) are predicated on the symbolic inequality of regions, and discriminatory policies toward
people who find themselves living at the margins of the nation. To understand linguistic inequality and linguistic discrimination in this region, we must begin with an awareness of state policy toward the livelihoods and lives of people in Touhoku. Bearing these deeply unequal economic and social conditions in mind, I will now turn to the character of the linguistic variation in this region.

1.1.1 History of linguistic difference.

The core concept for describing local linguistic registers in Touhoku, as elsewhere in Japan, is方言 hougen, which is often rendered in translation as “dialect.” The topic of speakers’ (ideological) evaluation of hougen will be addressed at length in this dissertation, but first I wish to attend to the implicit denotational meaning of this term. In sociolinguistics the product of this translation, “dialect,” refers to a member of an umbrella category, a sub-set of a “language,” with mutual intelligibility among the various other “dialect” members. But for the Anglophone reader, these implications of “dialect” fail to capture the scale of variation that hougen implies. On two or three occasions when I asked college students in Iwate Prefecture about hougen of their home towns, they replied by first saying that the language in their home town isn’t unintelligible enough to call it hougen:

E Syussinti no hougen ha, dou desu ka.
出身地の方言は、どうですか。
What’s the hougen like where you’re from?

S Ee, demo hougen to iu hodo wakaranai wake zyanai desu yo.
ええ、でも方言というほど分からないわけじゃないですよ。
Well, but it’s not so incomprehensible that you’d call it hougen.

The difference between each hougen is wide: if two codes are mutually intelligible, it doesn’t count as a difference in hougen. And there is extensive variation in pronunciation, grammar, and lexicon in northern Touhoku. In 1783 Furukawa Kosyouken came to visit Morioka on a shogunate inspection tour (Sibata 1999:184). Morioka is now the capital of Iwate; in 1783 it was the seat of the
lords of the Nanbu domain. Furukawa wrote:

... The language of both men and women was gibberish, with only two or three words out of ten being comprehensible. ...

This isn’t terribly surprising given that Furukawa came from what is present-day Okayama Prefecture. But Furukawa added:

... The lord of Morioka Castle gave us two interpreters... because the speech of this part of the Nanbu domain is notoriously incomprehensible. But even the interpreters could not understand what people say here...

In other words, local language escaped even the Morioka-based interpreters working at the Nanbu government headquarters. Since that time 235 years have passed, and like anywhere else, language has been changing in northern Touhoku. But in the past hundred years this change has moved unusually quickly, and unusually uniformly: to become significantly closer to Tokyo-based “standard” forms. I have asked a lot of people why this is, and most of my interlocutors give two reasons. First, many in northern Touhoku cite the omnipresent television, which constantly models talk in national “standard” language. Second, many point to the decline of multigenerational households where children can learn local language from their grandparents. Certainly television and changes in family structure are important factors, especially in the current neoliberal era, but they do not comprise a complete explanation.

1.1.2 Standardization debates.

Even before the Meizi revolution of the late 1860s, it seems, certain discourses of Japanese national identity and national language would have been circulating in northern Touhoku. These intensified into more and more urgent debates about national language policy in the 1880s, and by 1887 both the bureaucracy and the literati in the capital were producing a new national “standard” language in writing: a colloquial style based on upper-class Tokyo speech. And in northern Touhoku,
this national “standard” language first colonized the local wealthy classes. Where there had in the past been both lower-class and upper-class local language, by the end of the Meizi era (c. 1912), sounding local started to be a reliable sign of lower-class background. Soon it became an implicit national policy goal, and in places an explicit local policy goal, to fully replace local language with national “standard” language. The linguist Utima Naoto 内間直人 notes the start of **hougen bokumetu**, “local language eradication” policy in the Ryukyus in 1907. I have not identified the earliest mention of the **hougen bokumetu undou** or “movement to eradicate local language” in northern Touhoku; this term is used by local people today, but it may have been primarily applied retroactively as a description of past education policy. What is clear is that the struggle over whether to throw out or take pride in local language caught fire from the start of the twentieth century. Local people were not united behind either camp. Iwate authors wrote poetry in the languages of their hometowns, while Iwate school teachers drilled their students in Standard Japanese and punished the use of local words. It was a losing struggle for local language advocates, and it got worse after 1945. Infrastructure, public sentiment, and most institutions were on the pro-standardization side. The national sphere, where national “standard” language was paramount, drew closer to northern Touhoku with faster roads and rail, with more radio and television, with friends and relatives moving away to big cities. At the same time local language was reinforced as a symbol of the uneducated, the rural poor, with a backward, dirty, hard lifestyle. Speaking with a Touhoku accent – no matter the propositional content – would be sure to get the speaker ridiculed in big cities. The stereotype is neatly exemplified in Yosi Ikuzou’s song, 俺ら東京さ行ぐだ *I’m going to Tokyo*. Below I provide a translation of the first verse and chorus of this song. I have underlined segments that correspond to parts of the original text that are identifiable as local language. Some but not all of these tokens were also explicitly identified as local language by people from northern Touhoku, in interview contexts; some local phonetic features are not apparent in kana script.
Title:
俺ら東京さ行ぐだ

I'm going to Tokyo!

First verse:
テレビも無エ、ラジオも無エ
クルマもそれほど走って無エ
ピアノも無エ、バーも無エ
巡査（おまわり）毎日ぐーるぐる
朝起きて、牛連れで
二時間ちょっとの散歩道
電話も無エ、ガスも無エ
バスは一日一度来る

There's* no TV, there's no radio.
There aren't* so many cars either.
There are no* pianos, there are no bars,
The policeman walks the same circuit every day.
I wake up in the morning and take my cow,
Taking a walk for just over two hours.
There's no* telephone, no gas,**
The bus comes only once a day.

Chorus:
俺らこんな村いやだ、
東京へ出るだ
東京へ出だなら、銭コア貯めで
東京でベゴ飼うだ

I can’t stand this village, I can’t stand this village!
I'm going [out/away] to Tokyo!
When I get to Tokyo I'm going to save up my money,
And I'll raise a cow in Tokyo.

*Each instance of there’s no X, there aren’t X, etc., could also be rendered as we have no X.
**That is, natural gas (fossil fuel), for heating, cooking, etc.

This was first recorded in 1984. But though this image made (business) sense for Yosi Ikuzou, it was already out of date when the singer was born. It also reinforced hogen rettoukan, “local language inferiority complex.” As an image circulating in national media it was still a painful caricature in his native Tugaru, and the song met with opposition and protests there. It is not likely that people protested because of their pride and alignment with local language. Rather, Yosi’s caricature was probably protested because it was an unwanted portrayal of Tugaru as undeveloped,
both economically and linguistically. But at the same time, a trend of taking pride in the local had
gotten under way in the late 1970s, and by the mid-1980s local language activism was booming in
small groups across the Japanese archipelago. The scene of literature and community theater using
local language was growing, and activists were pushing the boundaries with conferences, television,
and radio programming.

In the 1980s activists were saying くたばれ標準語 Fuck Standard Japanese (according to
Inoue Fumio, this was the name of a radio program in Ooita Prefecture). Some even symbolically
declared their local language to be independent of “Japanese language,” rejecting the status of a mere
hougen. But in the last twenty years that fiery zeal has cooled. From the mid-1990s, the local
economy in northern Touhoku started coming apart again, and without employment many young
people could not afford to stay. Despite some improvements in the image of local language, it
remains unwelcome at school and at most workplaces, and only appears on television for novelty
value. Many people who participated in the boom of innovative local language activism in the 1980s
and 1990s have moved on to other things. Local language activism, such as it is, has transformed
into a nonthreatening pastime. Arguably, organized resistance to the hegemony of national
“standard” language ended in the early 2000s.

1.1.3 Linguistic colonization in the present.

In a few interviews with students I played them a music video of the Yosi Ikuzou song
mentioned above. Most took the abject peasant stereotype for a true description of Yosi Ikuzou’s
life back home, and most saw no malice in it. In other words this use of local language did not touch
a political nerve right away – it only raised superficial curiosity. Students tried to guess what place
Yosi Ikuzou was describing, and pointed out words in the song that they hadn’t understood. In one
group interview, a student from Aomori (T, below) jumped at the chance to earn credit as a local
language expert. (E represents Everhart; Y and A are other students.)

T  青森じゃん！
Hey, it’s Aomori!

E  ええ。
Yes.

Y  青森っす。
Aomori, huh.

T  いいね。
Nice.

Y  笑
(laugh)

T  銭っこ。だらっこって言うけど。
[He said] .yml (coins, money). We [also] say  yarakko (coins, money), though.

Y  だらっこ？
Darakko?

T  んん。小銭のことだらっこ。
M-hm. [We call] coins  darakko.

A  言わない。
I’ve never said that.

Y  ええ！
Wow!

T  だらちょんだい！
“Lend me a coin (dara)!”

A  ええ！
Whoa!

Y  ええ！だら？
Whoa!  Daru?

T  だら、だらっこって言う。
We say  dara or  darakko.

T wears local language as a badge of honor, and it pays off in moments like these with friends. But some of those same friends, at other times, have talked about local language in a way that sounds hard to be proud of. They describe the language of the Iwate coast and the Tugaru region as particularly  きつい harsh. They laugh nervously when they realize that they themselves
may speak with an identifiable accent. Even T’s own use of hougen feels like a transgression. Clearly, depending in part on social context, there is something to lose for speaking local language. But this is a loss which is hard to observe – since if speakers perceive a risk, they fall silent.

Language of northern Touhoku today has arrived at an ambiguous state. The hegemony of national “standard” language is nearly complete, the colonial project matured. Whether or not it was ever explicitly and coherently constituted as a movement, the “movement to eradicate local language” has faded, and a counter-movement to reëvaluate or restore local language has withered. But local language still matters, even to young people. They are navigating a landscape that was created by a process of linguistic colonization. As I argue above, Touhoku is an internal colony of the Japanese state; and relations between local language and national “standard” language parallel this unequal relation between region and nation. To provide two clear examples of this colonial relation: first, Touhoku produces linguistic wealth for the benefit of the metropolis – in terms of commoditized, alienated, stereotyped language (as we shall see in chapter 4). And second, people in Touhoku are excluded from positions of power and prestige in the metropolis and the state. There are individual exceptions to this second point, and it is less true today than it was a century ago; but even today language of Touhoku is certainly given this treatment: i.e., it is excluded from positions of power and prestige in the metropolis and the state. To access elite circles at the national level in Japan (as in many other places in the world), the speaker must expunge every linguistic trace of geographic origin, and adopt a super-local or trans-local elite register.

1.2 Theoretical approaches to linguistic discrimination in linguistic anthropology.

Many linguists see the distinction between “a language” and “a dialect” as purely political, and not worthy of study. Though sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have called attention to the ideological mediation of language boundaries (Irvine & Gal 2000) and highlighted the
connections between the relative valorization of speech and the marginalization of speakers (c.f. Labov 1973, Hill 1985, 1995, Rampton 2003), the experiences of dialect speakers have remained curiously unexplored within anthropology (but see Blom & Gumperz 1972 for an early exception). Indeed since the 1970s, many scholars, both in formal and anthropologically-oriented linguistics, have discarded both “language” and “dialect” in favor of the more general “language variety” (Hudson 1980:22,30). Yet the ideological distinctions between languages and dialects do matter. For this reason I primarily engage with “dialect” as understood and felt by local people, rather than in professional linguistic terms. Local ideological distinctions change the way that ideological processes unfold, including standardization or revitalization. The distinction, on the ground, between “language” and “dialect” may make the difference between the extinction and the continued existence of any language variety. Either result of this ideological distinction will be the consequence of material, social, and emotional effects on actual users of language.

This dissertation considers the relative status of national “standard” language, and regional local language, in Iwate Prefecture in terms of language ideologies (Silverstein 1979, 1985, Irvine 1989:255, Kroskrity 1998, 2009, 2010) and their consequences for language change and language shift (Kulick 1992, Dorian 1998, Meek 2007, Kroskrity 2012). In this section I argue, first, that differing ideological conceptions of what ‘counts’ as dialect among speakers in the Iwate prefecture of the Tohoku region of northeastern Japan is a major factor contributing to the endangerment of local varieties. My early ethnographic research concentrated on activities surrounding local language, and language ideologies. I argue that local language warrants greater scholarly attention, especially with regard to ideologically-inflected processes like language discrimination, endangerment, and valorization. Importantly, these processes are not limited to named, standardized national languages. They extend to myriad “dialect” and “accent” varieties as well. In her commentary on the politics of language endangerment, Jane HILL (2002) implies that the endangerment of “languages” is only one
part of a much wider system of linguistic marginalization, and leaves the door open to more work on dialect:

[T]he shift to the exclusive use of world and/or regional languages by [marginalized] populations has generally brought no gain in symbolic capital because the varieties of languages like English, Spanish, and Russian that are spoken in marginalized groups are in turn stigmatized, just as were the tongues that have been abandoned.

Hill 2002:130

Hill’s point is that people and communities experiencing language shift are often leaping out of the frying pan, and into the fire. If scholars of language endangerment fail to consider processes at the level of dialect, they study the frying pan while ignoring the fire. In studying language endangerment it is critical to pay attention to the political economic structures that are ultimately responsible for diminishing linguistic diversity, without prejudice as to how this variation has been enregistered. Violence, linguistic colonialism, and other forms of oppression can repress a register to the degree that no speakers can be found - this is what is meant by “sleeping languages” (Hinton 2001) or “dead languages” (Crystal 2000). Once this is achieved, the idea of the “dead language” is convenient for the colonizer, who might argue: Yes, this is a tragedy, but it will pass and everyone will be assimilated into the new national form. Under the hegemonic language, all will be unmarked and all will be equal. Hill and others tell us that it is not so simple. Registers of language, local or otherwise, always leave a trace. Linguistic features, and speakers themselves, do not disappear so easily or so quietly as capitalism or nationalism would have us believe. It is not realistic to assume that a more complete standardization will solve the social inequalities which are causes and consequences of linguistic discrimination. It will always be possible to construe local variation and other social variation in language, and the real concern must be for the discrimination which occurs on the basis of that variation - whether that variation is old or new, real or imagined.

1.2.1 Research in linguistic discrimination.

[F]or much of history.... the forces favoring localism and dispersal were, on the whole, just as strong as those that produce integration or domination of one location by another. ... What was absent were
massive, enduring differences between the expansionary potential of different peoples, of the kind which would cause the sustained expansion of a single, dominant language. Nettle & Romaine 2000:99-100

Linguistic difference has long served as the target for one kind of prejudice or another; psychologists have claimed that over evolutionary spans of time, humans may have developed an innate concern for linguistic difference (e.g. Kinzler et al. 2009, Gluszek & Dovidio 2010:214). The object of this section is to go beyond the notion of linguistic discrimination as “discrimination conveyed through language” (Baugh 1996:709), to incorporate relations of linguistic power and inequality of the kind that can “cause the sustained expansion of a single, dominant language” (Nettle & Romaine 2000:100). In the same way that racial discrimination is best understood in the context of centuries of European colonization, genocide, slavery, theft, mockery, and hegemonic domination on every conceivable level, linguistic discrimination is best understood in the context of wider systems of domination, which may be connected to linguistic forms directly or indirectly.

Although the prehistory of linguistic prejudice extends potentially as far back as language itself, linguistic discrimination in the sense of a system of domination has existed only since the development of what Nettle & Romaine term “metropolitan languages,” languages associated with centers of power (2000:129). “Since the emergence of what Immanuel Wallerstein calls ‘the world-system,’ the great process affecting languages has not been separation and diversification, but contact and reintegration” (Hymes 1996:211). The emergence of “the world-system” or “metropolitan languages” is not a single moment in history, but an ongoing process. This process has been growing in intensity: Nettle & Romaine distinguish between the “biological wave” and the later “economic wave” of linguistic domination, and within the “economic wave” this domination has been able to grow more intense through successive developments in media (the reproduction of language in text, and later in audio and video, for ever wider audiences) and in social structures (from colonization to neoliberalism).
Not surprisingly it was late in this process that linguists began to pay attention to elements of linguistic discrimination. When they did, they were reacting to a contemporary reality of linguistic domination (especially in the case of “salvage linguistics”), but their work did not necessarily question the hegemonic assumptions behind this domination. Bloomfield, for example, “did not hesitate to refer to ‘sub-standard dialects’ in contrast to more prestigious standard norms” (Bloomfield 1933, cited in Baugh 1996:711). In other words, early linguists considered stigma toward certain languages to be natural and not in need of analysis. This is why the first steps toward a study of linguistic discrimination involved looking at resistance to discrimination: why do people insist on speaking “sub-standard dialects”?

1.2.1.1 Value.

Since Labov’s 1962 study of sound change in Martha’s Vineyard and Trudgill’s 1972 work on working-class speech in Norwich, analysts of language in society have sought to codify the “hidden values associated with non-standard speech” (Trudgill 1972:183), in an effort to understand how speakers assign value to otherwise marginalized languages. Pride in the marginalized language, originally analyzed as “covert prestige” (Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972), was most profitably used to help explain urban class differentiation. In the industrial West of the 1960s, policy and language debates centered on the rationalization and standardization of language (O’Neil 1968), and even for sociolinguists who were relatively critical of power inequalities, pride in the non-standard was baffling: “In Norwich, at least, there appears to be a considerable number of young [working-class] men marching resolutely in the other direction”, namely, away from “the national norm.” (Trudgill 1972:194). Evidently there were certain contexts in which non-standard speech carried more value than the standard. As late as the mid-1990s, scholars like Edwards argued that bilingualism is typically an unstable state between periods of monolingualism (1994), and continued to bear an affect of surprise toward the feeling of pride in marginalized language: “[c]uriously enough, though, the
introjection of stigma heightens a sort of ‘internal’ prestige” (Edwards 1996:706, emphasis added).

Through the 1970s and 1980s this attitude remained typical of studies that dealt with linguistic discrimination: they were primarily aimed at explaining the continued existence of stigmatized languages, a view summarized neatly in the title “Why do low-prestige varieties persist?” (Ryan 1979). The typical answer, during what Eckert (2012) terms the “first wave” of variation study, was that a positive evaluation would be attached to “vernacular” codes. These studies also tended to focus on language phenomena at a community-wide scale, which precluded the analysis of discrimination as experienced on other levels, including interactionally or over the course of a person’s life. But the results were nonetheless compelling, and a number of programs of research developed during this period (Bucholtz & Hall 2008:401-402), including language attitudes and the ethnography of speaking.

Language attitudes research had started in the early 1960s with early uses of matched-guise tests (Lambert et al 1960) as an approach to study the social value of language on what continued to be a community-wide scale. Language attitudes researchers have also typically used short interviews and questionnaires to ask subjects for direct or indirect metalinguistic commentary, as well as a sort of discourse analysis that has been referred to as “societal treatment” (i.e. treatment of the code in question) (Garrett, Coupland & Williams 2003:14-18). In this field attitudes are conceived as primarily latent, background phenomena which may or may not be connected to linguistic (and other) behavior. Methods derived from work in language attitudes have been used to study linguistic discrimination, including with matched-guise tests (famously in Purnell et al 1999) and some “societal treatment” studies (Rickford & Traugott 1985, Lippi-Green 1997); Lippi-Green provides an excellent summary of a range of this research (1994:164).

As the name of the movement suggests, the ethnography of speaking (Gumperz & Hymes 1972, Hymes 1974) invited more focused attention to lived social (micro-)contexts, using ethnography to
discover locally relevant categories instead of relying exclusively on predetermined macro-social
categories. These contexts could be analyzed, for example, by attending to the changes in spoken
style between them (Coupland 1980). The realization that linguistic features can be deployed
stylistically provided an excellent approach to studying linguistic discrimination and domination, as
noted by Hill and Coombs:

The regularities of these stigmatized ‘mixed’ systems reflect the social side of language acquisition, an
active process in which, as Hymes (1974) pointed out, people ‘make something of’ the symbolic
resources available to them in the continuing project of the reconstruction of the social order. Once
this is clear, the stubborn resistance of people to abandoning stigmatized usages, documented by
generations of linguists, becomes intelligible. The lesson for the applied linguist is clear; they must
turn their attention increasingly to the role of language in the social order, and particularly to the
relationships of domination and subordination between social groups which are mediated through
language use, in which the presence of stigmatized forms and curious mutations of language function
may represent generations of investment by oppressed and oppressor alike.
Hill & Coombs 1982:232

1.2.1.2 Style.

Through ethnographic approaches, linguists found that “[i]t is not only isolated features of
grammar and pronunciation that are the bearers of social value. There is a sense in which the whole
linguistic system is value-charged” (Halliday 1978:156). What followed was an understanding that
social meaning is “an essential feature of language” (Eckert 2012:94). This period of research
demonstrated that linguistic style is a key element in the production of class difference, and that
these styles are not permanently set in childhood (Sankoff 2006) but serve as semiotic resources for
the construction of identities later in life. Another key development of this period of scholarship was
to link linguistic style to other semiotic resources for stylistic performance (e.g. clothing, makeup,
musical preferences) in a “broader stylistic complex” (Eckert 2012:92) that provides resources for
constructing identities, especially group identities (Cheshire 1982, Mendoza-Denton 2008).

Unlike Hill, whose research program was to use these analytical tools to understand social
power and inequality, most analysts of linguistic style were taken in a different direction by their
data. Scholars like Eckert have been primarily concerned with speakers’ agency to performatively construct identities:

The emphasis on stylistic practice... places speakers not as passive and stable carriers of dialect, but as stylistic agents, tailoring linguistic styles in ongoing and lifelong projects of self-construction and differentiation. It has become clear that patterns of variation do not simply unfold from the speaker’s structural position in a system of production, but are part of the active – stylistic – production of social differentiation.

Eckert 2012:97-98

Linguistic style provides some of the best tools for analyzing linguistic discrimination (especially in whiteness studies, e.g. Bucholtz 2010). But in order to address more forms of discrimination, the study of stylistic “projects of self-construction” must be paired with other approaches. One reason for this is because speakers are rarely (if ever) fully aware of, or able to control, all aspects of their linguistic production. A concept of linguistic discrimination should take into account the ways in which speakers are identified against their will and by features beyond their control. The stylistic approach should also be paired with other methods because, while the ethnography of speaking promises to employ locally-relevant categories, analysis should not be limited only to criteria that are relevant at the extremely local level, so a concept of linguistic discrimination should be able to link local categories with larger systems. In the following section I argue that some scholarship in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics has integrated these approaches in productive ways.

A focus on stylistic “projects of self-construction” alone can also miss the extent to which those projects are determined and limited by broader cultural formations, including linguistic and ideological formations. Indeed patterns of variation do not arise solely from speakers’ social positions. But speakers do make their (stylistic) choices from a set of options that are structurally constrained. Different social positions also mean that speakers experience different kinds of linguistic discrimination. Though all users of language have some agency to contribute to stylistic social differentiation, that agency is not distributed equally, and it must be considered in view of
social inequality. Ortner addresses these different qualities of agency in a system of gendered inequality, namely, the differences between Sherpa men opening a new monastery and Sherpa women opening a new nunnery:

At one level... these women's intentionalities... were not that much different from the men's. But to say that they shared men's motives is not to say that they lacked (independent) “agency,” in the sense of authorization to have one’s own point of view and desires. The point is rather that the two forms of agency are differently organized: women’s agency may be seen as bound into a contradiction that undermines its possibilities for enactment. Ortner 1996:17

If we wish to account for language users’ agency to create social differentiation, we must also account for the differences in the forms of agency available to them, and the social structures which are responsible for constraining and shaping their agency.

1.2.2 Toward a comprehensive concept of linguistic discrimination.

In addition to the approaches described above, a number of analytical tools have been developed to study stigma and discrimination, including notable approaches from linguistic anthropologists since the 1980s that are directly applicable to questions of linguistic discrimination.

Although his analysis is not directly targeted at indexicality in language, Erving GOFFMAN’s short book on stigma (1963) provides an excellent schema to begin a discussion of linguistic discrimination. Goffman sketches three broad types of stigma: first, “there are abominations of the body – the various physical deformities. Next there are blemishes of individual character.... Finally there are the tribal stigma of race, nation, and religion” (1963:4). Most of Goffman’s argument is centered on the first two types, including sex workers, “homosexuals,” people with disabilities, and people with physical disfigurements. Although the third “type” is hardly discussed at all, we can assume that it might also include linguistic variation and the linguistically marginalized, and that at least some of this scheme will be relevant with respect to language.

According to Goffman, society at large and interactional contexts in particular expect (or demand) certain categories of persons, with stereotyped characteristics for the persons in each category.
Stigma is the possession of the wrong characteristics for the category, and not only the wrong characteristics, but characteristics that are perceived as “worse” than the expected ones. Even so, stigma is context-dependent, such that an “attribute that stigmatizes one type of possessor can confirm the usualness of another” (1963:3). Stigma can also be separated into two types which are relevant in terms of linguistic indexicality: “does the stigmatized individual assume his differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot, or does he assume it is neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable by them? In the first case one deals with the plight of the discredited, in the second with that of the discreditable” (1963:4). Following Goffman, linguistic discrimination should be understood as partially context-bound, although it is necessary to reconcile this point with Goffman’s notion of the anxieties that plague “the discreditable,” in other words, the lurking fear of being found out, which is present regardless of context, though to different degrees. In contexts of the social indexicality of language, these anxieties may not seem at first to represent instances of stigmatizing or discriminatory action, but they are caused precisely by relations of linguistic domination, and a concept of linguistic discrimination should take them into account.

Goffman’s analysis of stigma has been taken up by a number of scholars of language, but there are surprisingly few adaptations of his criteria for linguistic discrimination per se. Far more frequently, stigma is discussed in the same terms Goffman used – that is, in reference to people with physical disabilities, people with disfiguring injuries, people with mental disorders, and certain other outcasts of the patriarchal order (LGBTQI people, people involved in sex work). Halliday refers to Goffman’s analysis of stigma when discussing anti-languages (1978:172), and Hill suggests that some Mexicano language practices might be techniques for managing stigma (1982:232); but there are apparently none who adapt Goffman’s scheme in theorizing other forms of discrimination, even when explicitly writing about stigma or discrimination with regard to linguistic indexicality (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 1995, Edwards 1996, Baugh 1996). Still, Goffman’s analysis will prove useful in
defining linguistic discrimination in this essay.

Einar HAUGEN is another scholar who produced analyses relevant to the topic of linguistic discrimination but who has not enjoyed very extensive citation on the topic. In 1962 Haugen coined the term “schizoglossia,” a condition in which a speaker feels that their “mother tongue” is inferior to another code. This notion implicitly suggests relations of power, and it helps to complicate Ferguson’s (1959) notion of diglossia by adding the sense of insecurity that reflects the experience of linguistically dominated. Schizoglossia effectively links linguistic discrimination to Goffman’s notion of stigma, as the experience of personal insecurity they describe are essentially the same. This was a timely notion, as the period from the 1940s to the 1960s in the global North seems to have been characterized by intense linguistic domination, facilitated by new (or newly-available-to-the-masses) media of communication as well as increased mobility, which helped to spread standardized languages and their concomitant standard language ideologies. This was certainly true in Pittsburgh (Johnstone 2006) and it was also true in northern Japan. Haugen seems to have crystallized an understanding of contemporary linguistic discrimination, addressing numerous facets of the topic (Haugen 1962, 1966, 1972, 1973).

Most of the recent scholarship pertaining to matters of linguistic discrimination has come out of the language ideologies movement, which today has grown into a field of research into a wide array of politically-interested beliefs and feelings about language. Aside from an essay by Michael SILVERSTEIN which has come to be seen as foundational in linguistic-ideological theory (1979), the earliest work in this movement was intended to provide an ethnographic counterpoint to Marxist theorists of language: Woolard (1985) responding to work on linguistic hegemony by Williams (1977) and Bourdieu (1977), and Hill (1985) combining the analyses of Bakhtin and Vološinov (1973 [1929] and 1980 [1935], and 1973 [1930]) with linguistic detail and attention to capitalist market forces. Both of these foundational writings can contribute to a theory of linguistic
discrimination.

Woolard builds on theorists of hegemony, including Gramsci (1930 [1991]) and his interpreters (especially Anderson), Williams, and Bourdieu to address the role of language in masking or creating class consciousness. Unlike the contexts that other scholars of hegemony discuss, she describes a Spanish society where the state does not have tight control of the economic sector. This allowed her to distinguish between “status” and “power”:

The vocabulary we have used has fluctuated between power, prestige, dominance, negative face, and status on the one hand, and covert prestige, positive face, and solidarity on the other. ... it is necessary to distinguish the symbolic authority of “status” from the coercive domination of “power.” ... Posited as social values articulated through and buttressed by linguistic choices, “status and solidarity” fall within the problem of ideology and consciousness, a persistent and predominant problem in Marxist theory. Woolard 1985:739

Although in the Japanese contexts of my research, the state plays a central role in the symbolic economy of “status” as well as the material and coercive domain of “power,” and it is counterintuitive to distinguish the two, Woolard’s separation of these categories is a helpful analytic and is a useful contribution to the understanding of linguistic discrimination. In a more Gramscian phrasing, we might wish to consider both of Woolard’s concepts under the heading of “power,” but representing a distinction between hegemony by consent (i.e. the pursuit of “status”) and hegemony by force (i.e. coercion). In any case it is also important to distinguish between domination by state forces and non-state forces. This is partly because such forces may be operating at cross-purposes:

All these findingss how that it is as important to produce the correct vernacular forms in the private, local arenas of the working-class neighborhoods or peasant communities as it is to produce the official form in formal domains. That there are significant social pressures toward the vernacular has been evidenced in three types of data: actual language behavior, spontaneous overt community censorship, and subjective reactions. All the researchers cited above have found vernacular linguistic norms that differ from standard norms. Woolard 1985:744

In this argument Woolard is hesitant to embrace a claim of total hegemony, and finds, together with Williams (1977:113), that there are always alternative or oppositional practices to the hegemonic norm. This is an important point but difficult to incorporate into a concept of linguistic
discrimination, since oppositional (and even alternative) language may not be possible in some relations of linguistic domination. In some cases linguistic domination has been so complete that stigmatized languages have been abandoned entirely. Hegemony is not static (Buci-Glucksman 1982), and linguistic domination will wax and wane, so that counterhegemonic activity may again emerge. Perhaps opposition to linguistic hegemony will take the form of language revitalization campaigns. But again, there may be unrecoverable losses in these cases; certainly the suffering of stigmatized speakers themselves is not easily undone. Revitalized language movements can, taking the form of a new hegemony, engender further linguistic discrimination. This has been argued in the case of Modern Hebrew (Spolsky 1999:166-169). Writing at another extremity of Spanish-language hegemony and at the same time as Woolard, Jane Hill started by recognizing a fundamental imbalance in the equation of value between Spanish and Mexicano:

[H]In the negotiation for peasant autonomy the balance has now tipped in favor of the capitalist sector, which has refunctionalized the community support of factory workers from a fund of rent into a wage supplement, such that these workers must be considered not a peasantry, but a rural proletariat that does not control a means of production. On the symbolic side, we might suggest that the Spanish-speaking capitalist sector has succeeded in refunctionalizing Mexicano purism, latent in Mexicano communities for hundreds of years... into a weapon through which the symbolic bulwark of peasant autonomy, the Mexicano language, can be attacked.

Hill 1985:728

Hill's analysis is intended to demonstrate that the use of particular linguistic forms facilitates Malinche peasants’ resistance to the domination of the capitalist market, and ideologies about language facilitate a range of forms of domination within local communities. In addition to the linguistic practices, language ideologies themselves in this account clearly serve the interests of particular groups and individuals. Language ideologies as conceived in this sense are central to a discussion of linguistic discrimination, because any linguistic discrimination is ultimately language-ideological. In her 1985 article Hill also introduces the concept of “voice” as used by Bakhtin and Vološinov, which may be as useful in categorizing types of linguistic discrimination as it is in describing kinds of utterances. The most provocative of the Bakhtinian categories of “voice” is the
“double-voiced word,” in which the author of a statement is somehow displaced from the performer of that statement. The double-voiced word can take three general forms: the author speaking through a character, layering two voices into one utterance; the use of parody or irony to encode double meanings; or the “active word.” In this last case,

... the word of the other “exerts influence from within” (Bakhtin 1973 [1929:164]. Examples of this type include genuinely dialogic relations between voices, in “hidden dialogue” and in polemic, in which words exhibit what Bakhtin calls a “sidelong glance” at the words of others. Here, the word of the other can resist and interrupt the authorial voice, and their relationship can be a struggle for dominance, with the embedded voice having a good chance at victory.  
Hill 1985:729

The other two types of “voice” are the “direct word,” in which a statement bears only referential and propositional value; and the “objectivized word,” in which a statement is ascribed to an actor other than the speaker. All of these types might be at play in different forms of linguistic discrimination. Among other things these analytical tools distinguish techniques of assigning authorship, and there are forms of linguistic discrimination that take each of these five forms of “voice,” and that might represent relations between different classes of “voice.”

After these early works by Woolard and Hill, the language ideologies movement grew rapidly (for an overview see Kroskrity 2016). Scholars in this movement have developed a wide array of analytic tools that might be used to study linguistic discrimination. Some of these will for the present purpose be categorized as general tools, while others have been developed in particular areas of research, namely into language maintenance and language shift, and linguistic racism.

1.2.2.1 General tools.

Briggs & Bauman adapt the notion of genre, which had been used in studies of performance not unlike the “stylistic” turn described above, to help explain relations of power. Referring to Labov (1972) among others, they argue that the role of genre in decontextualization and recontextualization of language can construct power relations (Briggs & Bauman 1992:164). Others (e.g. Bauman 2004, Kroskrity 2009) have discussed generic regimentation as a technique of power,
specifically as a way of policing tradition. A focus on genre (including the policing of genre) as constructive of power relations also directly illuminates a facet of Goffman’s concept of stigma. If stigma is a mismatch between, on the one hand, the demands of a certain social context, and on the other hand, the attributes of persons occupying that context, then genre and entextualization can be conceived as the structure that presents contextual demands in the first place. Ideologies of “standard language” (Milroy & Milroy 1999, Silverstein 1996) might all be described as a species of entextualization, reclassifying all other registers of language against expectations of standard norms.

With his concept of “narrative inequality,” Hymes (1996) provided a mechanism for studying linguistic discrimination of a different type: neither discrimination on the basis of linguistic variables, nor the use of discriminatory terms, but discrimination on the basis of discourse patterns. Inspired by research into cultural variation in narrative styles, Hymes coined this term to describe the pejoration of certain kinds of narratives, in other words, the ideology that certain forms of narrative are superior to others as judged by some purportedly objective measure. An awareness of discriminatory ideologies about narrative suggests a broader type of phenomenon for studies of linguistic discrimination: metalinguistic or paralinguistic discrimination, or discrimination pertaining to linguistic practice. In addition to narrative inequality, the analyst might add any number of kinds of inequalities of metalinguistic practice. Some of these could be language socialization inequality (which might include pedagogical routine inequality), orthographic and literacy practice inequality, media consumption inequality (e.g. print purism vs. digital zealotry), musical inequality, inequality of personal names or group/language nomenclature, inequality vis-à-vis problem-solving strategies in language, and multilingualism inequality (involving stigma or prestige toward multilingualism). The inequalities described in Heath (1982) include several of these suggested domains. Meanwhile Kroskrity (2012, 2013) has expanded on Hymes’ notion of narrative inequality, which he describes generally as “the simultaneity of aesthetic evaluation and the imposition of social hierarchies” and as a way in which “aesthetic and
socioeconomic evaluations often merge” (Kroskrity 2013:147), including in – and this is the target of Kroskrity’s analysis – academic discourse about metalinguistic practice. Kroskrity’s elaboration of narrative inequality also includes a caveat that must be mentioned in any essay that attempts to assemble a broad set of analytic tools:

While I do feel that the historical development of linguistic anthropology and adjacent fields has provided an increasing number of conceptual and analytical resources, I question whether linguistic scientists are consistently able to incorporate these cumulative advances into their actual scientific practice and into the kind of “mediative” resources that might be of use to actual speech communities.

Kroskrity 2013:146

In other words, a concept of linguistic discrimination should be circumspect enough to take account of strong analytical resources that have been developed in the past. It should also be made useful for non-academic audiences, especially people who are linguistically marginalized, and it should be prevented from becoming a technique of discursive discrimination itself.

Other theorists of language ideologies have focused on processes of indexicalization, which have been either designed to analyze linguistic discrimination in the first place, or which are easily adapted to the purpose. Irvine & Gal (2000) proposed a suite of terms to address core ideological processes which are deployed in practices of linguistic differentiation: iconization, wherein immediacy is ascribed to relatively contingent phenomena; fractal recursivity, in which a relation that exists at one scale is projected to another scale; and erasure, in which ideological simplification renders some perspective invisible. Silverstein (2003) describes a scheme of orders of indexicality, in which sociolinguistic variables bear an association with some group, after which that association is noticed, and serves as the basis for the development of ever more particular stereotypes. All of these tools have been used to study forms of linguistic discrimination (e.g. Collins 2012).

1.2.2.2 Language shift and maintenance.

One of the most productive areas of scholarship in linguistic discrimination has been the study of language shift and language maintenance (as per Fishman 1964), which is also referred to as
language endangerment and revitalization. These studies, especially those carried out by anthropologists, have demonstrated systemic domination and violence toward minority language speakers (Dorian 1998, Nettle & Romaine 2000) as well as the essentializing and discriminatory discourses behind some revitalization campaigns (Hill 2002, Moore 2006). On a personal level, they have described the pain and humiliation that speakers of marginalized languages experience, as well as the particular and local obstacles faced by many indigenous revitalization efforts (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer 1998, Kroskrity 2009, Loether 2009, McEwan-Fujita 2010, O’Rourke & Ramallo 2011, 2013). Taken together these studies are a powerful collection of language discrimination research, but they are still at risk of perpetuating certain discursive inequalities. For example, this field still places relatively little value on linguistic variation at the level of anything less than “a language,” although this may derive entirely from practical concerns and a lack of resources, as in the case of Loether 2009 who writes of the problem of dialect diversity in Shoshoni (but see the work of Wolfram & Schilling-Estes, e.g. 1995a, 1995b, 1999, for notable exceptions from outside of language ideologies research). These are very significant problems for many communities, where there are few speakers in the first place and to divide them further would impose a prohibitive burden for projects of e.g. language documentation. In some cases it may be productive to shift focus directly to linguistic discrimination itself, certainly in the case of local “dialect” variation. In the case of local language in Japan, each local register differs only partially from the national “standard” language. This makes local registers difficult to define, and a lack of clear definition can mean that there is no concrete variety that holds still long enough for effective valorization.

1.2.2.3 Linguistic racism.

The other most productive area of existing scholarship in linguistic discrimination is at the intersection of studies of language and race, around the topic of “linguistic racism.” One of the first proponents of a study of linguistic racism in the contemporary sense was Smitherman (1988) who
identified linguistic pejoration, including the use of “stilted, stereotypic formats” (1988:161) which might be called “mock” Black language, as forms of discrimination. These themes have been picked up in study of “Mock Spanish,” a pejorating set of linguistic practices and ideologies that simultaneously license white speakers’ errors in production of Spanish and heavily police Hispanic speakers’ use of English. Mock Spanish is perhaps the best-studied form of linguistic racism (cf. Hill 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2008, Zentella 2003, Barrett 2006, Roth-Gordon 2011). Other topics in this body of research have included whiteness studies (Hill 1998, 2008, Bucholtz & Trechter 2001), linguistic racism toward indigenous people in North America (Meek 2006, Kroskrity 2012, 2013), toward Asian-American people (Reyes & Lo 2009), and continued work on linguistic racism toward Black language/speakers (Ronkin & Karn 1999, Mallinson & Brewster 2005, Alim & Reyes 2011, Alim & Smitherman 2012). These studies of linguistic racism provide a number of useful analytic tools, especially the notion of “mock” language, and they also provide a set of diverse cases that would provide a good test for any would-be umbrella definition of linguistic discrimination.

1.2.3 Defining linguistic discrimination.


...ideologies and structures which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce unequal division of power and resources (both material and non-material) between groups which are defined on the basis of language.
Skutnabb-Kangas 1986:45

... discrimination conveyed through language.
Baugh 1996:709

... accent discrimination, referred to here more specifically as language-trait focused (LTF) discrimination...
Lippi-Green 1994:166

None of these definitions captures the full range of linguistic discrimination that this chapter
has set out to discuss. Skutnabb-Kangas does not engage with discrimination carried out through language, and also writes of the relevant linguistic category as the “mother tongue,” which rules out paralinguistic phenomena like literacy practices which are no less subject to linguistic discrimination. Baugh provides a definition only in passing, and Lippi-Green’s definition (like that of Skutnabb-Kangas) is limited to very particular targets of discrimination.

To give a fuller definition of linguistic discrimination it will be necessary to start with a number of dimensions of linguistic differentiation, and where possible to reconcile them. These dimensions can be conceived as a series of questions to be applied to a potential case of linguistic discrimination. Goffman’s work on stigma would inquire: what is the social context, and what are the expected linguistic attributes of participants? Is the discrimination active (as in the discredited stigmatized person) or potential (as in the discreditable stigmatized person)? Do discriminatory attitudes reside only outside of the marginalized speaker, or (as in Haugen’s schizoglossia) do they also reside within? How can the context of language domination be understood in terms of hegemony, and how complete is this hegemony? Have notions of authorship and genre been manipulated to create a new context of linguistic domination? Is linguistic discrimination supported by the state, including by provision of state resources and through state institutions like the school, or by state-affiliated ideologies like standard language ideology? At which levels does linguistic discrimination exist: phonetic, phonological, prosodic, morphemic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, discursive, ideological, paralinguistic, narrative (Hymes 1996), or other levels? What processes of indexicality are in play, and what are the symbolic relationships that they organize? Does this linguistic discrimination appear at a society-wide level, an individual level, or both? Whose interests are served by the discriminatory discourse, and who are its targets? What are the particular practices of pejoration, and how do they line up with other axes of social differentiation? How are particular affects used in discriminatory discourse — for example, are speakers of the marginalized language not
mature enough, or do they “take everything too seriously”? Are claims being made about ownership of the language, or appropriation? Finally, adding three dimensions of analysis suggested by Baugh (1996), are speakers aware of a prejudicial intent in their discourse, i.e. are they aware of the linguistic discrimination they are enacting? Are speakers doing anything to disguise their discriminatory objectives, i.e. is this an “overt” or a “covert” instance of discrimination? And who are the “senders” and “receivers” of discriminatory discourse (Hymes 1974, Baugh 1996)? With these questions in mind, it is possible to attempt a consolidated working definition of linguistic discrimination:

1.2.3.1 Proposed definition of linguistic discrimination.

Linguistic discrimination describes language ideologies, practices, or policies which serve the interest of securing more capital (of any type) for the dominant party, or more specifically:

(A) those language ideologies, practices, or policies,

(B) pertaining to features of language or to closely-related systems such as narrative culture, orthography, etc.,

(C) in communities of any scale where, taking into account contexts of local alternatives or oppositions, the distribution of social, economic, and political capital is nevertheless not equal, and which,

(D) regardless of their intention, serve the interest of securing more capital for the dominant parties in the community and maintaining inequality.

This definition should be applicable to a broad range of forms of linguistic discrimination that have already been identified by scholars in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. These include the discourse of the “language gap,” Mock Spanish and other mock language, racial and other epithets including racist names of professional sports mascots, linguistic profiling in the
housing and employment markets, the deprivation of state resources for minority language speakers, and the active persecution and punishment of speakers of minority languages. The above definition makes it clear that linguistic discrimination will exist as long as there are inequalities in any kind of capital. It is also a definition oriented for potential political applications, but the central concern with inequality does not disqualify this definition as a foundation for research. Hymes (1996:69) is one among many who have argued that language consists mostly of inequalities and differentiations in the first place, and that a search for universals in language is a much less interesting proposition than a search for non-universals, that is, inequalities.

1.2.4 Broader applications.

The social theorists who inspired some of the earliest work in language ideologies remain excellent sources for theoretical analysis of linguistic discrimination. Woolard’s attention in 1985 to Bourdieu, Williams, and Gramsci is still useful today. Bourdieu experienced “schizoglossia” in his own life and his writing on linguistic discrimination is particularly potent as to the potential for extreme linguistic inequalities, as described in part (C) of the definition provided above. In a situation of significant linguistic domination, “all linguistic practices are measured against the legitimate practices, i.e. the practices of those who are dominant.... the linguistic differences between people from different regions cease to be incommensurable particularisms” (1977:53-54). Meanwhile Althusser’s famous essay on state ideological apparatuses suggests that linguists should look for powerful forms of linguistic discrimination in numerous state, civic, and private institutions (1971:249). Althusser’s notion of interpellation, by which dominant ideologies call subjects into existance as particular kinds of malleable subjects, may be useful in elaborating on Briggs & Bauman’s discussion (1992) of the power of entextualization through genre. With an even more nuanced account of what Roland Robertson (1995) termed “glocalization,” Appadurai (1996) argues that (dominant) global economic forces and global cosmopolitanism also entail innumerable local
permutations and interpretations. Studies of linguistic discrimination must not become trapped by using pre-determined categories. In addition, although the definition above refers to “communities,” studies of linguistic discrimination should be conducted with the awareness that the boundaries and definitions of communities are usually contested and increasingly consist of deterritorialized groups and “translocalities” (Appadurai 1996:192). This is also in effect a call to extend the practice of linguistic discrimination studies beyond the confines of the same academic spheres (North American scholarship, or European scholarship, or Anglophone scholarship, etc.) that largely delimit many academic movements.

1.2.4.1 Potential usefulness of a comprehensive notion of linguistic discrimination.

Analysis of linguistic discrimination is an excellent way to link micro- and macro-phenomena. It allows the analyst to link extremely personal and particular experiences, which are normally invisible in a large-scale analysis, with wider societal systems of value. Linguistic discrimination research could unhelpfully reproduce the “suffering subject” as the object of anthropological analysis (Robbins 2013). But linguistic discrimination research also must go beyond suffering to address social systems. If focus remains on discrimination qua discrimination, the analyst will not lose sight of cultural particularities and will be able to avoid falling prey to the central weakness of “suffering subject” anthropology.

Relations of discrimination and domination are what mediate between broader social inequality and the kind of experiences that cause people to change their linguistic practice. Without a direct engagement with linguistic discrimination, interventions in language shift will remain extremely challenging. Following Bourdieu (1991:226-228) a study of linguistic discrimination might help linguistics to take a stand that is neutral vis-à-vis the revitalization of particular languages, but which brings attention to the forces that make revitalization necessary and difficult in the first place.

As many scholars have argued, the elements of linguistic discrimination are powerful social
forces, especially in terms of defining groups, groups which may be defined by any number of criteria beyond the linguistic. Linguistic discrimination analysis has been conducted with respect to language and race, but this analysis has eclipsed the analysis of other elements that are equally important. Future linguistic anthropological research could address linguistic discrimination pertaining to under-examined facets of race, gender, class, occupation, regional origin, sexuality, modality of communication, and other criteria, including the innumerable, unnameable, shifting particularities of locally-relevant social categories and identities.

1.2.5 Linguistic discrimination in Japan.

Research on linguistic differentiation and discrimination in Japanese contexts has involved a range of methodological approaches, including linguistic landscape studies, discourse analysis of print and broadcast media, “direct” and “indirect” measures of language attitudes (Garrett, Coupland & Williams 2003:16), and some ethnography. This research has investigated a range of topics, of which the national “standard” language occupies a central place: historical analyses of the development of national “standard” Japanese language, the provision or deprivation of resources for speakers of anything but national “standard” language, the expectations encoded in national “standard” language for politeness, or for “women’s language” which may not exist in other varieties; and questions about the assimilation of a range of minority groups to the national “standard” language. These may include people of the Ryukyu archipelago, Ainu people, immigrants such as Brazilian-Japanese people, and speakers of many forms of language identified as, in one way or another, “outside” the national “standard” language.

Some of this concern with national standardization is influenced by a tradition of national identity discourses comparing Japan with foreign Others, discourses that seek to draw contrasts between Japan and the West precisely in the context of ongoing Westernization (Befu 2001). One recent identity discourse designed for both distinction from and appeal to the West is what has been
termed the “Cool Japan ideology” (Miller 2011), which appeals to emblems of male-orientated popular culture in an attempt to attract tourists and build soft power, meanwhile performing erasure of women who fail to fit the “cute girl” slot. Ultimately this and other (auto)identity discourses dovetail with Orientalist discourse about the essential Japanese character, and this discourse may have inspired some of the Anglophone research focusing on state influence in Japan. Another reason for attending to national standardization so centrally is that state power in Japan very centralized on the national level. In this sense contemporary Japan is probably more similar to Althusser and Bourdieu’s France than to the contexts from which other authors I cite have come, like the United States, the United Kingdom, or Woolard’s post-Franco Spain. The state may not be in control of all cultural and economic resources, but Tokyo is the undisputed center of power in the cultural and economic markets, so that whatever linguistic practices benefit central business and capitalist interests are also typically supported by state bureaucrats and politicians from the big cities.

Curiously, however, there seems to be very little analysis of the monarchy in connection with language policy or language norms (except Azuma 1997). There is no direct parallel notion to “the King’s/Queen’s English” in Japanese, but it is clear that the Emperor’s linguistic production has been of value to state ideologies, whether his words are spoken (Azuma 1997) or written:

Although calligraphy was of only minor importance to a European prince, in Japan it was an indespensable element of the education of the aristocracy. A member of the imperial family was required to display his skill as a calligrapher on relatively few occasions, but it was essential that whenever he did write, his handwriting would be not merely acceptable but an imposing mirror of his character.
Keene 2002:46

Given the key role of national “standard” language ideologies in other studies of linguistic discrimination, and given that the Emperor system plays a key role in ideologies of Japanese nationalism, the relationship between the Emperor and language is a promising topic for future research that might better contextualize relations of linguistic inequality in Japan.

1.2.5.1 Language attitudes and language politics.
Although there has been a significant amount of research on linguistic differentiation in Japan, covering a range of topics that have been analyzed in terms of linguistic discrimination, there is relatively little overlap in theoretical approaches with the linguistic anthropological literature on linguistic discrimination. The ethnography of speaking movement did not take hold in the Japanese academic sphere, and only foreign (or foreign-trained) scholars seem to conduct ethnography of language in Japan (Ball 2004, Inoue 2006, Miller 2004, 2006, 2011, Heinrich 2005, Didi-Ogren 2011). Comparatively speaking this is the international norm, since in no tradition of national anthropology other than United States is there even a discipline of linguistic anthropology. Usually, the most similar work comes from sociology or sociolinguistics, and is inflected by the disciplinary interests of those fields. Without the ethnography of speaking, Japanese sociolinguists have approached linguistic discrimination using approaches that are more observational and less participatory: language-attitudes questionnaires are a dominant method, along with studies of linguistic landscape. There are studies of language politics and language movements, including advocates for Ainu (Siddle 1999, lewallen 2008, lewallen & Hudson 2014) and Ryukyuan languages (Siddle 2003, Fija, Brenzinger & Heinrich 2009), for the Deaf community (Kimura & Itida 1995, Kozima 2004, 2006), and for better inclusion and accommodation for recent immigrants (Maher 1997, 2005). Each of these political movements responds to a relation of linguistic inequality or domination, and these studies illustrate the scope of active language ideological debates (to borrow the notion from Blommaert 1999) in Japan.

1.2.5.2 Discrimination.

Taking into account the analysis of linguistic discrimination (above), it is appropriate to consider forms of linguistic discrimination along a number of dimensions: (A) what are the specific ideologies and practices involved? (B) To what level(s) of language or metalanguage do they pertain?
(C) How do they fit into a broader context of inequality? And (D) how do they support that inequality? What follows is a discussion of several forms of linguistic discrimination in Japan according to this scheme.

One of the best-studied forms of linguistic discrimination in Japanese contexts is the ideology of Japanese Women’s Language (Inoue 2006, Miller 2011, Okamoto 1995, Nakamura 2007, 2013). This has been described as a set of linguistic features or a part of linguistic structure, but which is more centrally “a network of cultural practices of objectifying femaleness/femininity and mapping a reified gender binary onto the sounds, figures, manners, and organizations of talk” (Inoue 2006:14). Note that Inoue’s definition of this ideology, though brief, already satisfies the most immediate criteria for understanding a structure of linguistic discrimination. The Japanese Women’s Language ideology is primarily concerned with sentence-final particles (e.g. dawa, noyo) but depending on the context may also entail expectations about politeness routines or any number of other levels of language and metalanguage. This is in a broader context of extreme gender inequalities in Japan in terms of career opportunities, income, political representation, and other domains; as well as the expectation that women perform only mundane, repetitive, reproductive labor, from child-rearing to pouring tea in the office. These gender inequalities are also linked to regional, class-based, and racial inequalities that further define the expectations for women’s speech. Japanese Women’s Language, as Inoue demonstrates, provides ideological support for the differentiation and alienation of women from mainstream economic and social activity.¹

Nanette GOTTLEIB’s (2006) analysis of discriminatory terms in Japanese can also be read as a study in linguistic discrimination. In this case linguistic discrimination takes the form of practice: the use of derogatory terms and slurs toward women, racial and sexual minorities, and numerous other social outcasts (e.g. people in the Buraku group). To be sure, an ideological element is also present, starting with the feeling that such terms are acceptable; but this kind of overt linguistic
discrimination is of a different kind than the ideology of Japanese Women’s Language (or, for example, Mock Spanish). Derogatory terms act on a metalinguistic or paralinguistic level of group nomenclature, and they rely on established stereotypes about groups that are already marginalized in other domains. They support such marginalization by their pejoration of targeted classes of people, implying that these classes of people deserve to be marginalized (or worse); and they also appear as direct attacks which intentionally or unintentionally other their marginalized recipients.

A number of linguists in Japan have studied what might be termed linguistic access, that is, the provision or denial of resources in certain languages. Some of these have studied linguistic landscape (Backhaus 2007, Inoue 2005, Tanaka et al 2007), and some have focused on education and other language-planning policy (Carroll 2001, Vaipae 2001, Furukawa 1991, and Kim 2008). This dissertation draws on this latter body of linguistic access research when discussing educational and other institutions, especially in chapters 2 and 3. More broadly, denial of linguistic access pertains to a number of levels of language and metalanguage: variation in linguistic form including orthographic form (e.g. use or non-use of Latin alphabet on road signs; availability of simplified vs. traditional Chinese characters), ideologies of multilingualism, and educational systems, among others. The broader context of social inequalities here is also complicated, and takes on a different form depending on the contexts of (would-be) language access. Providing signage in traditional Chinese, which would be comprehensible to wealthy tourists from Taiwan, is a different matter from providing linguistic resources for speakers of minority languages and labor migrants from mainland China (see also Nishijima 2017). As part of the structures that regulate transit, education, and the channels of navigating state bureaucracy, language access or the denial thereof has been shown to contribute to maintaining inequalities across linguistic communities in Japan.

There are numerous forms of linguistic discrimination that might be connected to the notion of dialect: the erasure and pejoration of local language found in standard language ideologies; the
distinction between classes of register (between language and dialect and accent); and the stigma or linguistic profiling that speakers of local language encounter: all of these are forms of local language-related linguistic discrimination. The second of these, identifying a certain way of speaking as a “mere dialect,” has long been a central part of the policy of linguistic domination in the Ryukyu archipelago, that is, the claim that Ryukyuan language consists of “dialects” or “a dialect of Japanese” (Heinrich 2004, Itani 2006). The same ideology has been used to pejorate regional language in the main Japanese islands. The fact that many linguists would consider the latter to be objective instances of dialect variation does not resolve the underlying social inequality. Ideologies of dialect have been used, in the same sense as ideologies of Japanese Women’s Language, to justify particular and exploitative divisions of labor, mapping a hierarchy of regional origin to a hierarchy of class positions. In combination with these hierarchies, the ideology of language standardization is sometimes able to remove all value from non-standard language, certainly in terms of economic value: if you speak local language, there is no speaking role for you in the economy. This is the case when, as often happens, local language speakers are directed to forms of labor that can be imagined to not involve language or their creative input at all. As with women’s labor, these are realized as menial tasks of reproduction, especially in agriculture (largely sugar in the Ryukyus, rice or timber in the rural mainland) and construction work. In each case, those who benefit from these ideologies are at the top of the region/class structure: the translocal upper classes, but especially the upper classes of metropolitan Tokyo.

1.2.5.3 Potential applications of linguistic discrimination research in Japanese contexts.

The largest gaps in scholarship of linguistic discrimination in Japan stem from a lack of ethnography, and this is illustrated by the comparative strength of ethnographic analyses into Japanese Women’s Language ideologies versus other forms of linguistic discrimination. Studies of language stigma in Japan have mostly been done at arm’s length, through discourse analyses or quantitative
survey analysis. While ethnography is not strictly necessary for studies of linguistic discrimination, it has certain advantages for this topic, especially in its capacity to illuminate categories that are locally relevant but not obvious to the non-co-present observer, or not immediately relevant at larger scales. (An exemplary case of such a category is Gal’s use of “peasantness of social network” (1978:8).) Since stigma entails a mismatch between the demands of a social context and the attributes of those present in that context (Goffman 1963:3), research on linguistic stigma should attend to particular contexts and their particular demands, especially because “we do not become aware that we have made these demands or aware of what they are until an active question arises as to whether or not they will be fulfilled” (ibid:2). Ethnographic participation will allow the scholar of linguistic discrimination to experience the particular moments in which such an “active question” can arise, in other words, as an interactional instantiation of linguistic discrimination.

Although all domains of linguistic differentiation in Japan deserve more ethnographic study, questions of power and social inequality are lacking mainly in studies of regional language variation (i.e. “dialect”). Some excellent language attitudes studies of dialect have been produced (e.g. Satou et al 1995, Satou 1996) but these engage with emotional affect almost independently from the social structures of inequality that produce them (structures of feeling, as per Williams 1977:132). Oono Makio, a linguist who has worked in both Ryukyuan and rural mainland contexts, has provided a combined approach, analyzing coastal dialect in Iwate as “endangered” (Oono et al 2013), but there remains more work to be done. In particular, there is a need to study the intersections of regional language variation with other social divisions such as sexuality, class, disability, age, gender, race, and so forth. An ethnographic approach would ideally determine the most locally-relevant categories for experiences of linguistic discrimination, whether they include any of those listed here, or some other variables.

Because linguistic discrimination as theorized above almost invariably entails an analysis of
language ideologies, the analysis of linguistic discrimination should always be accompanied by tools of analysis that have been developed to consider language ideologies, in view of Kroskrity’s five “layers of significance” (2004:501) of language ideologies. One of these “layers” is the multiplicity of language ideologies, namely, the fact that divisions in social groups are likely to produce “divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership” (ibid:503). With this point in mind, studies of linguistic discrimination in Japan should look beyond the national standard language ideology, which, to the extent that they represent power relations, are likely to generate distinct forms of linguistic discrimination.

Finally, because linguistic discrimination can potentially exist at any level of linguistic or metalinguistic analysis, scholars of language in Japan should seek potential forms of discrimination on new levels whenever possible. This approach should provide a way to reach beyond the primary forms of linguistic discrimination that have already been studied: especially issues of local language, “women’s language,” and “discriminatory terms” (i.e. derogatory epithets), which are already categories that enjoy a great deal of public attention. Linguists are aware of many levels of language and potential forms of linguistic inequality that exist within and beyond these phenomena, from phonetic variation to discourse patterns and metalinguistic practices; all of these levels should be open for analysis in terms of language stigma, language profiling, narrative inequality, or linguistic discrimination.

1.2.6 On variety and enregisterment.

Returning at last to the question of “language” and “dialect,” I wish to emphasize in this dissertation that these are entirely socially and ideologically constructed categories. This is somewhat different from certain other linguistic features such as consonants, intonation patterns, morphological structures, lexical items, discourse patterns, and orthographic systems. These latter items are only ever understood and bounded subjectively, but their existence across diverse language
users gives them a partial grounding in a kind of objective analysis. To privilege some set of features, and call them together under the heading of such-and-such language, or such-and-such dialect, is a language-ideological process. That is to say, it is a subjective practice which represents the understanding of, and serves the material interest of, some specific party, usually at the expense of another party. This point is made most clearly by the isogloss maps drawn by dialectologists. In a typical survey, five hundred people are polled on their language use, and their responses are charted on a map. For a given lexical item there are two local ways of saying it, X or Y: green dots for term X, red dots for term Y. The map lights up red and green, and the linguist draws a rough line where the dots switch from red to green. This line is the isogloss. But these isogloss lines are realized differently for each term, for each possible form of variation. For each item, the isogloss traces a line which is different – it may be slightly different, or massively different. Linguists know that the label of a “dialect” or a “language” is little more than a convenient analytical fiction; the isoglosses never perfectly match each other, nor do they obey political borders (municipal, provincial, or international).

The present argument is not that linguists (or linguistic anthropologists) ignore the ideological character of “languages” and “dialects” – rather, the point is simply that this ideological character must be emphasized far more. Johnstone addresses this same analytical matter, but we could apply even more emphasis:

> Languages and dialects, like localities, are “imagined,” to use Benedict Anderson’s (1991) term. They exist as useful, even necessary, ideas, not as things objectively observable by a sociocultural outsider. Associations between particular features of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, on one hand, and imagined “languages,” “dialects,” and “speech communities,” on the other, arise in local social and discursive practices that are enabled and constrained by larger-scale political and economic conditions. According to Silverstein (1993:408), “users of languages in essence construct culturally particular concepts of [linguistic] normativity that bind subsets of them into ‘language’-bearing groups.” That is to say that “languages” and “dialects” are cultural constructs, produced by a group of people using, orienting to, and/or talking about, a particular set of linguistic features, in a process that also constructs the group itself (Gal and Irvine 1995).

Johnstone 2010:13

> It is with this point in mind that I will seek to avoid the terms “variety” or “language variety” in the rest of this dissertation, since they suggest an uncritical approach to ideologically-produced
categories. The “variety” phrasing was first introduced as a way to escape the political difficulty of choosing “language” or “dialect,” and to focus on each as a kind of natural category. But the very existence of each “variety” is also the result of an ideological effort, one we should not erase. Scholars of human society have an obligation to engage with such ideological processes, rather than to simply mask them. For this reason I endeavor to use the term “register” as a general category. Helpfully, as a verb, “register” indirectly implies an agent who has done or is in the process of “doing registering.” The use of this term is also intended to borrow explicitly from Agha’s notion of enregisterment, i.e. the historical and ideological processes by which specific linguistic features come to be associated with social groups.

Another relevant parallel is between the notions of “a language” and “a culture.” Each has observable qualities in the world, qualities around which scholars can identify empirical patterns. Yet the way that each of these concepts has been reduced to a shorthand in scientific discourse can cause us to overlook the historical, constructed, and ideological nature of these phenomena. In some cases our own desire for a coherent object of study has contributed to the oversight. As with the drawing of isoglosses, linguists and linguistic anthropologists reach for languages and dialects to exist, the same way that cultural anthropologists can wish for cultures to be real even, though the evidence is thin on the ground. With the same breath, linguists often allow for the continued naturalization of these categories while hinting that they are constructed (see, for example, Comrie 1990:2-5). Rather than devoting energy to scaffolding the reality of these constructs, in this dissertation I endeavor to focus on the material, social, and emotional consequences of linguistic discrimination. Chapter 3 in particular expands on the argument that any “language” or “dialect” or “accent” ought to be considered a register by exploring how enregisterment unfolds, not only across historical time (as in Agha’s original work on the subject), but also as an everyday interactional process.
1.3 Metapragmatics of this dissertation.

1.3.1 Romanization.

At the request of several participants in my study, I do not default to the Hepburn style of romanization. Instead, I use the Nihon-siki (also known as Kunrei-siki or Tanakadate) style as a default. Also, following the example of participants in my study, I represent long vowels without using the macron diacritic (e.g. ii, uu, ou/oo instead of ī, ē, ō). For example, to represent 地方 (IPA tʃihoː), I do not write chibō – instead, I write tibou. Among the other reasons to use this style of romanization rather than the Hepburn style, it is in my opinion more faithful in preserving relevant linguistic information. Hepburn romanization is also troublingly Anglocentric, since it encodes allophones in a way that accommodates a novice speaker familiar with English orthography, rather than in a way that represents relevant phonological information. The effect is rather like eye-dialect; applying similar principles even minimally, the musical notation sotto voce would be rewritten sotto voche and the name Fibonacci would be rewritten Fibonachi. To elaborate on this point I will give voice to a linguist, Oomura:

パスポート表記（OMURA）は使いたくありません。OMURAでは「小村」さんと区別がつきません。OHMURAはもっと嫌です。...補助記号を用いるやり方も好ましく思いません。日本語においてローマ字表記は音声表記ではありません。仮名で体現される日本語の音韻表記を、近似のローマ字に翻字すればよいのだと思います。従って「おおむら」はOOMURAでよいと思います。理屈っぽくて済みません。パスポート表記には日本人として屈辱感を感じています。

I do not want to use the passport style [where my name is written OMURA]. If you write my name “OMURA,” it can’t be distinguished from Omura [小村]. OHMURA is even worse. ... I don’t particularly like the use of diacritics, either. The roman script used in Japanese is not a phonetic notation. I think it would be better to apply roman script in a way that approximates the phonemic notation of Japanese that is embodied in kana. Which means that おおむら [o o mu ra] should be OOMURA. I’m sorry to get so technical. As a Japanese person I feel that the passport notation is a kind of humiliation.

There are three exceptions to this rule of defaulting to Nihon-siki romanization. In the first exception, in the case of personal names (when I know the preference of the person), I use whatever
style that person prefers. In the second exception, for certain place names and terms that are commonly known outside of Japan, I may use Hepburn style. For example I represent 琉球 and 東京 as Ryukyu and Tokyo, respectively, rather than Ryuukyuu/Ryūkyū or Toukyou/Tōkyō. In the third exception, I use “fu” rather than “hu” for ふ/フ. Part of the reason is admittedly my own (perhaps irrational) discomfort with “hu”; for some reason I feel comfortable writing 福島 as Fukusima but not Hukusima. But there is another, potentially more substantial reason to maintain a distinction between ふ and は, which has to do with the large (and possibly growing) number of instances of ふe.g. fassyon, fookasu, fikusyon. In my experience in the Japanese archipelago these instances of the consonant are usually realized as a voiceless bilabial fricative, which is emically distinct from the glottal fricative は (which is in some contexts realized as a voiceless palatal fricative).

1.3.2 Preferred terms.

Earlier in this chapter I indicated that I will use the term register as the category which includes any of the ideologically-construed sets of linguistic features which are conventionally referred to as “languages,” “dialects,” “accents,” etc. Building on that platform, I will generally use “local language” to refer to the reified, enregistered subjects of linguistic documentation and activism in Touhoku. This is instead of certain other options including language, dialect, accent, lect, or language variety. Here I am taking inspiration from a naming convention used in scholarship on Black Language (e.g. Alim 2004). “Local language” carries the connection with place which tends to define these registers and linguistic practices, and it is this indexical connection which matters for the sake of this dissertation. This term is intended to remain neutral on the question of whether local language forms should be considered on their own terms, or under the framework of “Japanese,” be that framework academic-linguistic or nationalist – assuming the two can be distinguished. Claims of “language” (言語 gengo) status (i.e. political claims that local register(s) can stand alone independently
of Japanese) are not made by most local-language activists. While scholars may use “dialect” and “accent” without any ill intent, similar terms (方言, hougen and 訛り, namari) have a history as slurs in Tōhoku, and they often come across as othering and demeaning. “Lect” and “language variety” (方言変種, gengo benzui) are opaque to many audiences, and at any rate they focus too much on purportedly objective linguistic difference; the present study is directed at perceived difference and language ideologies. “Local language” (perhaps realizable as 地元の言葉, zimoto no kotoba or 場所の言葉, basyo no kotoba) preserves a productive ambiguity about the political and linguistic status of the registers in question, while still clearly conveying their defining feature: association with place.

Meanwhile I endeavor to use national “standard” language to refer to the hegemonic state-supported register (標準語, hyouzyungo or less frequently 共通語, kyoutuugo – among the non-linguist participants in my study, these terms are used interchangeably). By always using the term national “standard” language I hope to reaffirm that (1) this register is a nationalist idea, which invariably reaffirms the nation construct; and that (2) the notion of “standardness” must always be placed at arm’s length.

Here I hope to accomplish this by placing the word in another’s voice, i.e. between inverted commas. This distance is intended to prevent the reader from slipping into some patterns of thought which Milroy (2001) warns against, i.e. thinking of “standard” as an ideal form, or as the form against which all others must be measured. I am not certain that these intended effects will hold throughout the dissertation. But with these terms I hope that we will be less likely to lose sight of the power lurking behind the definition of each category, and to keep close to the surface those ideological forces at work in enregisterment. The table below serves to introduce my translation of certain other terms, as used throughout the dissertation. In many instances, especially when quoting study participants, I will translate their comments using the “conventional gloss” below; but in text which is my own analysis, I will use my preferred translation.
Table 1: Preferred terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Term in roman script</th>
<th>Conventional gloss</th>
<th>Translation in this dissertation</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>標準語・共通語</td>
<td>hyouzyungo / kyoutuugo</td>
<td>Standard Language / Common Language</td>
<td>national “standard” language</td>
<td>These two terms are functionally equivalent for most speakers in Tohoku.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>方言</td>
<td>hougen</td>
<td>dialect</td>
<td>local language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>なまり</td>
<td>namari</td>
<td>accent</td>
<td>local language</td>
<td>This term is often (though not always) strongly pejorative: it can suggest “corrupted” or “distorted” language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X 語</td>
<td>X go</td>
<td>[the] X language</td>
<td>X language</td>
<td>Alternatively this term (and the two below) might be rendered plural as in “X languages.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X 弁</td>
<td>X ben</td>
<td>[the] X dialect</td>
<td>X language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X なまり</td>
<td>X namari</td>
<td>[the] X accent</td>
<td>X language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4 Research methods.

This dissertation is primarily based on interviews and participant-observation in Iwate Prefecture, conducted over a total of sixteen months in 2012, 2013, 2015-16, and 2017. One year (from September 2015 to September 2016) as a visiting scholar at Iwate University in Morioka accounts for the bulk of this time; other visits were shorter, consisting of pilot research and debriefing interviews. I worked with two main populations of research participants: local language activists, and students at Iwate University 岩手大学. The local language activists who participated in this study represented projects or groups based in Morioka, Oofunato, Kamaisi, and Kitakami (Iwate Prefecture), as well as Hatinohe (Aomori) and Mikawa (Yamagata). As for Iwate University, I first made connections there through the linguist Oono Makio 大野眞男 who later facilitated much of the logistics of my long-term stay, including my official status as a visiting scholar. In pilot research I found that Iwate University would be an ideal site to study ideologies and practices of local language, because it is a major site of cross-register interactions, contact, and enregisterment.
Iwate University is the most academically elite university in the prefecture, and it is the alma mater for a significant number of the region’s public servants and economic elite. As a national university, it is also attractive for its comparatively low tuition. Students come from various regions of Japan: about half are from Iwate, a quarter are from elsewhere in Touhoku, and the remaining quarter are from outside of Touhoku, e.g. Kantou or Hokkaido. These students represent multiple regions within Iwate, bearing local language from those areas, varying realizations of national “standard” language, and diverse language ideologies. These latter points are also true of universities in Tokyo and other urban areas; future scholars might consider conducting a similar study at such a university, but they would do well to employ somewhat different methods. Since regional universities like Iwate University tend to prepare students for future careers in the same region, this study provides a partial view of the future of local language in Iwate. In more general terms, Iwate and Touhoku are an ideal area to study language shift, as they occupy an economically and culturally marginalized position in Japan, and as a result language shift is more pronounced in this region than in, for example, Kansai.
Figure 1: Map of Japan, annotated.

Hokkaido: 1
Touhoku Region: 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2
Aomori: 2
Iwate: 3
Miyagi: 4
Kantou Region: 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14
Northern Kantou: 8, 9, 10
Tokyo: 13
Kansai Region: 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30
Kyoto: 26
Osaka: 27
Ooasa (in Hirosima): 34
Ooita: 44
Kagoshima: 46
Ryukyu archipelago: 47

Japan, annotated. Original image by Lincun. Wikipedia, Creative Commons Share Alike license.
1.4.2 With language activists.

As noted elsewhere, my initial pilot research in Iwate involved interviewing local language activists, especially in Morioka. I have maintained most of those relationships and come to know more language activists with each period of research. Early on, I found language activists by joining open civic groups (for example, the Tonan Konsei Choir 都南混声合唱団) and, during down time, asking members who they would recommend I contact. Oono and his colleagues also introduced me
to some of the local language activists and groups with whom they were already collaborating on
documentation research. My own research with these groups began with observation (when
possible), then interviews, which were always designed to elicit expressions of language ideologies.
On a handful of occasions late in the 2015-16 period, some language activists provided the
opportunity to participate directly in their activities. For example, I joined rehearsal of Theatre
Kesen, reading the part of vile gangster character 銭っこ雑りに Giannico MUSSOLINI. Chapter 2
and chapter 5 of this dissertation both rely on data from research with language activists.

1.4.3 With university students.

My research program at Iwate University was somewhat more complex. During pilot
research I had conducted interviews (in groups and one-on-one) with Iwate University students, but
in the 2015-16 year I prioritized participant-observation, which I accomplished by joining existing
groups. Though it took a different amount of effort (sometimes minimal, sometimes leviathan) to be
accepted in each group, by the summer of 2016 I was a regular participant in three clubs, all
“cultural” clubs 文化系サークル, as opposed to the “athletic” 体育系 type, or the more informal
“friend group” 同好会 type of clubs. I was also a regular fixture in two more official university
groups, one of which was a seminar for first-year students. While participating in these groups, I
took notes on a broad range of social phenomena, but above all focused on linguistic practice and
language ideologies (whether explicit or implicit). On some occasions, with participants’ consent, I
created digital audio recordings of everyday interaction.

Beginning in January 2016, I conducted interviews with Iwate University students, almost
exclusively with students I knew through the groups mentioned above. Until June I organized most
interviews as group discussions around a set topic – topics which were selected to draw out
incidental comments about local language. Two of the most productive of these topics were
generational difference: “let’s talk about the differences between your generation, your parents’
generation, and your grandparents’ generation” – and home towns: “let’s talk about the differences
between your home town and Morioka.” Later in the study I introduced local language as a topic in
these interviews more directly. All of these interviews were also recorded as digital audio files.

Part of my initial research plan was to collect linguistic life histories of Iwate University
students. In March of 2016 I began to conduct one-on-one interviews with students I knew from
my various groups, focusing at first on their family backgrounds. Eventually I began to work more
intensively with a set of these students who represented a diverse range of regional backgrounds,
class backgrounds, language ideologies, and language practices. In the end I conducted three to eight
hours of interviews with each of eight students, including visits to the family homes of six. For the
results of this life history project, see chapter 4.

Over a dozen students also worked with me to produce a corpus of recordings called the
“audio time capsule” project. For this project I recruited first-year students who had just arrived at
university in April, largely but not exclusively through the groups I had joined. Their task was to
produce digital audio recordings of themselves talking, on five occasions from May to September
2016, roughly once per month. I held two orientation sessions in May where I instructed the
students in best practices for audio recording (e.g. “try to be find a quiet room”). When it came time
to make each recording, I sent the participants a set of five optional prompts by email. Each student
would use a personal computer, smartphone, or other device to produce a digital audio recording as
they extemporaneously reflected on their recent comings and goings, or (in the case of most
participants) simply answered each prompt in order. Some prompts were the same for each round,
e.g. “Talk about what you have been eating recently,” but others changed each time. As with the
group interview topics described above, some of these questions were designed to indirectly elicit
comment about local language. One initial goal of the “audio time capsule” project, of which
participants were not aware, was to permit sociophonetic analysis, i.e. to capture students’ linguistic production as it shifted over the course of their first months at university. I have not been able to conduct this analysis yet but may do so in the future. I have used this data in other ways, however (see chapter 4). Before returning to the United States in September 2016 I provided each “audio time capsule” participant with a personalized USB drive containing their own audio recording files (the eponymous “capsule”), as well as a stylish reusable water bottle as a thank-you present. 

In early 2016 I also hired Asanuma Kurumi 淺沼久瑠美, an Iwate University student, as a research assistant. Dr. Oono recommended Asanuma due to her interest in local language and linguistics, which proved vital to her participation. It is no exaggeration to say that she saved this overly ambitious and complicated dissertation project from collapsing under its own weight. After several sessions of training in interview methods and research ethics, Asanuma and I met once per week to discuss research goals and plan the immediate research schedule for the next few days. Soon I witnessed Asanuma in action as a formidable interviewer (with fellow Iwate University students, and also with some language activist groups), as she kept the conversation moving in a productive direction in a number of group interviews. She kept her own interview notes and some field notes, which I relied upon later. Asanuma also helped to check my writing in research instruments, for example in translations of consent forms or in drafting the “audio time capsule” prompts, to make sure that they would not come across as overly strange to a typical Iwate University student. In my original research plan I expected that I would need a research assistant and had included payments for such an assistant in funding requests. I paid Asanuma at a rate of 1800 yen per hour, hoping to err on the side of generosity.

1.4.4 Observer effects.
My presence as a foreign researcher, and my own positionality, strongly influenced the character of the observations I was able to make in many ways. I will touch on two of these effects here, the first of which pertains to language practices. I know that most speakers made an effort to speak national “standard” language with me. Local language registers are, as a rule, not taught to foreigners in Japanese language classes, and some of my interlocutors may have known this. Many of my interlocutors also considered local language to be obscure, known to few outsiders at all, and indeed only appropriate for use with established friends and acquaintances. In addition to these factors, under ideologies of national language, the relation between the local and the foreign is implicitly an indirect one, requiring mediation by the national. Overseas travel is regulated by national authorities and usually requires intermediate travel to a metropolitan center; international relations are likewise regulated from seats of metropolitan power. Following Sakai (1997), practices like translation are conceived as a site of inter-national contact, and so they (re)produce of national categories and national subjectivities. In a parallel structure, international visitors are best addressed in national “standard” language. For these reasons, and because some study participants told me so explicitly, I will give the caveat here that many probably avoided using local language around me, so my observations of local language practice were not as numerous as they might have been for another researcher.

The second effect of my own presence which I will discuss here pertains to the expression of language ideologies. To the extent that my role might be understood as a “dialect researcher,” the role alone implies a pro-local-language stance, in that I implicitly consider local language to be worthy of study. This stance in turn forecloses opportunities to observe certain kinds of metalinguistic commentary (pejorative comments especially). For this reason, at Iwate University, I began the study by characterizing my research interests very broadly: “I am studying how students adapt to college and make friends at Japanese universities,” or in the case of one of my letters of
introduction, “My dissertation topic is university students’ everyday conversation and the shape of club activities” 大学生の日常のやりとりそしてサークルのあり方が博士論文の研究のテーマになっております。This restriction did not apply to the language activist groups. To be clear, I do not claim to have even attempted to neutralize all of the biases in data collection. But it was necessary to provide most of the study participants with only a limited (though still true) description of the research goals. To ensure fully informed consent, in summer 2017 returned to Iwate to conduct debriefing interviews with all the study participants I could find. I explained my preliminary analyses, i.e. that I had decided to focus on local language. In these interviews I invited each participant to choose the degree to which they were represented in the dissertation. I lightly implied that the default option was to have each participant carefully anonymized, though I readily offered other options, including striking one’s participation entirely from the study, or requesting that I not anonymize the participant at all. Here I will not divulge the choices that participants made but I assure the reader that I followed the request of each participant.

1.5 Chapters of this dissertation.

Here I provide a brief outline of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

1.5.1 Introduction.

In the present introduction I have covered the history of the Tohoku region from the perspective of linguistic colonialism; reviewed the relevant literature on linguistic discrimination; addressed my own use of romanization conventions and certain terms; and provided an accounting of my own field research methods.

1.5.2 Local Language Activism in Tohoku: Revitalization Practices and Preservation Ideologies.

In the second chapter I explore several cases of local language activism in Iwate and
elsewhere in northern Tohoku. I provide additional historical context for these practices overall in terms of language policy, and I describe some of the details of these practices. I analyze certain common threads which are common to most local language preservation and revalorization projects, and I discuss the possible limitations of these forms of activism.

1.5.3 Metalinguistic Discourse Among Iwate University Students.

In this chapter I draw on interviews with and observation of a broad selection of students at Iwate University (and some others) to describe their language ideologies vis-à-vis local language. I investigate the enregisterment of “local language” as an interactional process. I also describe two ideological schema for understanding and socially engaging with linguistic difference: a distant and abstract orientalizing approach, and an ideology of immediate practicality.

1.5.4 Students’ Lingual Life Histories: Identity, Agency, Alienation.

In the fourth chapter I narrate the relevant details from life histories of four Iwate University students, each of whom approached local language (and their own linguistic identities) in a different way. These case studies lend important human color and detail to the otherwise abstract problem of linguistic discrimination, illustrating speakers’ agency in the face of linguistic inequality. In the process I also propose a notion of “linguistic alienation.”

1.5.5 Kesen, Independence, and Yamáura Harutíğu: A Final Case of Language Activism.

In this concluding chapter I return to the topic of local language activism to analyze the life history and activism of one particularly prolific activist, Yamáura Harutíğu, and his colleagues in a local language volunteer theater group. I explore some of the factors which have made Yamáura’s activism unique. In this case study I also argue for further scholarship on the most recent “local language boom,” i.e. the surge in local language activism of the 1980s and 1990s.
Chapter 2
Local Language Activism in Touhoku:
Revitalization Practices and Preservation Ideologies.

In this chapter I locate ideologies about local language in a broad contemporary social and political context, by examining the ways that people have committed to local language projects, focusing on individual and group case studies in Morioka, Kamaisi, and Hatiohe. I begin with a partial review of the linguistic diversity of the Touhoku region, and a partial history of language politics in the region, from the start of standardization policy to the contemporary situation. I then focus on the particularly illustrative issue of contemporary efforts at local language revitalization and revaluation, considering individual cases in view of their life histories, and then describing the activities of specific groups and their present-day activities. Analyzing a series of common themes across these activities, I identify certain factors which contrast them with other case of language revitalization activism, and I suggest possible limits to the possibilities of local language activism in the region.

2.1 Linguistic diversity and movement toward standardization.

Touhoku residents know that their region is linguistically diverse. Non-linguist residents variously argued that even within Iwate Prefecture there are two, three, or four dialect regions. Non-linguists may be aware of some of these academic categories but generally speakers expect local language to be noticeably different in each prefecture. But locally, registers are not defined at the level of the prefecture, which is considered too large and heterogenous to be a relevant unit of distinction, so that “Iwate dialect” (iwateben 岩手弁) is a term I only rarely encountered. And as we should expect, referring to the region writ large, “Touhoku dialect” (touhokuben 東北弁) is a term I have only heard from people who do not live in Touhoku. Since local differences are more relevant in everyday life, speakers identify more linguistic difference closer to home. When identifying their
own local language, speakers often describe dialects of the municipality e.g. Morika dialect (moriokaben 盛岡弁), or of the county (gun 群) e.g. Kesen dialect (kesemben 気仙弁). Among speakers in Morioka, some focused on variation within the city of Morioka itself, from one riverbank to the other. There are conventional names for the various larger dialect regions, but their boundaries are somewhat fluid and overlapping. At the same time, speakers from one area to the next, even within one prefecture, may experience local language forms as mutually unintelligible.

These claims about intelligibility may be rooted in ideologies of linguistic differentiation more than in sheer difference of features (see Irvine & Gal 2000:68-69 for similar examples in Macedonia). Intelligibility and unintelligibility is not only a matter of what might be considered the objective or actual difference in linguistic features. It is also a matter of subjective or perceived linguistic difference.

In Touhoku there is sufficient difference in linguistic forms, including lexicon, intonation contours, and verb morphology, that at least some of the attested unintelligibility can be accounted for in terms of “actual” difference; the degree and quality of those differences are questions that lie outside the scope of my own research, especially since they are so well documented by local dialectologists (Terai 1986, Satou 1996:158-161, Satou 2015, Kayoukai 2007, Kurosawa 2001, Nakaya 2010, Oono et al 2013). Because local language registers share many linguistic features, their mutual unintelligibility can be intermittent. In an interaction between speakers with different local language, intermittently a word or conjugation or pitch accent will be semantically opaque. The degree to which speakers say they can understand others’ local language was related in part to the frequency with which they had come into contact with those registers. Some study participants described experiences of second-local language or third-local language acquisition as adults. Typically they learned a new way of speaking after starting a new job, or moving to live with their spouse in a new town. But others claimed to be unable to understand local language, even after years of frequent exposure at the workplace. In any case, these barriers do not seem to be particularly new. Universal
compulsory education began in Japan in 1872 (Twine 1991:86). As Haugen (1966:53; see also Gottlieb 2008:14) suggests, language policy usually focuses on written forms of language, and this was also the case for language in Japanese educational policy. In effect, students learned a standardized written form, but the realization of speech forms was only lightly regulated (Twine 1991:87). However, in 1916, the government began officially requiring that all students learn a standard spoken register (Gottlieb 2008:17, Carroll 2001:55). This requirement was toothless in much of the country, as it was not enforceable outside of the upper class and major cities. While teachers had access to textbooks for national “standard” language, they had not themselves been trained in standard usage.

Even visitors who could claim to speak standard were relatively rare in Touhoku; in the 1930s it took some thirty hours to travel from Tokyo to Morioka, and few made the trip. But by that time the pressure of standardization was already strongly felt. Linguists and schoolteachers were compiling lists of local language terms (Kojima 2016), partly in order to know when to punish pupils who strayed from standard lexicon. Even as the state rolled out these first stages in its program of spoken language standardization, others organized in opposition. Both the Local Education Movement 郷土教育運動 and the more left-radical Northern Education Movement 北方教育運動 (Itabasi 2009, Okada 2007), organized among schoolteachers, emphasized valuing of local structures, including local language. In literary circles too, especially after the 1923 Great Kantou Earthquake forced authors to leave the capital for a time, local language came to embody the purity, authenticity, and color that was missing from the new spoken standard. Miyazawa Kenzi, although he was little known outside of Iwate at the time, embraced local linguistic forms alongside Esperanto as languages that hinted at utopia. The forces that characterize the tensions between spoken-language standardization and its opposition were already set in a familiar configuration by the mid-1930s. But the degree of that tension would rise after the war.
Before the end of the Second World War, most of Japan was still rural; even in 1945, “45% of all Japanese” were farmers (Bailey 1991:146). Ultimately, it was the forced mobility of Touhoku residents in the war effort, more than universal education, that properly began the ongoing process of language shift in the region. At the end of the war, surviving soldiers returned home to every corner of the country, bearing some competence in standard dialect, and the belief that their native language was inadequate. The physical movement of these speakers made their speech forms act as signs of place of origin (a process that was happening simultaneously among veterans in the United States; see Johnstone 2010:19). After the war Iwate and the rest of Touhoku began to experience a more enduring cycle of out-migration. With the wartime loss of Japan’s colonies as sources of materials and labor, and in the context of rapid economic growth shortly after the war, national governments recategorized Japan’s rural areas as sources of raw material and labor for urban industry. Tokyo especially grew rapidly, drawing hundreds of thousands of young people from Touhoku to work in new factories (Sibata 1999:192). These included the generation of 金の卵 golden eggs, middle-school graduates who were recruited en masse and sent to the capital by train. “Egg” refers to these workers’ youth and potential. New workers from Touhoku were especially valuable because, since the economy of their home region was so economically depressed and undeveloped, they had nothing to return to and, with no alternatives to whatever shop originally hired them, they would be unlikely to complain. This vulnerability made them open to another degree of exploitation, and hence made them particularly profitable to their bosses.

This kind of labor mobility was not particularly new, but its scale was unprecedented. Also after the war came an expansion of radio and television, replacing older in-person forms of entertainment. Television especially contributed to cementing the metropolis as the center of everything glamorous and desirable. The expansion of radio and television brought even the most rural places into regular contact with the national “standard” language practice and ideologies, which
facilitated a much more forceful regime of language standardization. Speakers who were rendered non-standard by this process became subject to direct judgments (in school, at work, and elsewhere) and indirect stigmatization (by observing the former, and through mediatized stereotypes). As they worked in manufacturing and construction in big cities, many migrant workers and golden eggs were mocked for their speech, typically in terms of its perceived ugliness, backwardness, or unintelligibility (Carroll 2001:191).

This period, in hindsight, has been called the movement to eradicate dialect 方言撲滅運動, which is now an emic concept widely shared in Touhoku. Although it was not explicitly part of state educational policy, local administrators and teachers worked vigorously to eliminate local language in local schools in Touhoku and elsewhere. Until at least the 1960s educators expected students to use local language in every context outside of the classroom. But the national “standard” language started to spill out of school and bureaucratic domains, so that local language ended up more and more restricted to home contexts. Surveying Iwate residents after 2012, it seems that the rapid post-war changes in Japan’s regional economy left a sharp line in the demographic strata, where a certain age range acts as a cut-off point. People older than this age are fluent in a more elaborated version of local language, and people younger than this age can speak with local features, but nothing like their elders. This particular age cut-off is different in different communities. In Morioka, it seems, adults who grew up in the 1950s and later are much less likely than their elders to consider themselves fully competent in local style (Moriokaben 盛岡弁). Although I did observe this difference as a steep gap, it is important to note that urban centers like Morioka went through earlier and more intense standardization than elsewhere, that the threshold of what counts as “Morioka dialect” has shifted over the years. Even speakers born after 1995 do make use of local language, as I will detail in chapters 3 and 4.

Throughout the post-war period, the Touhoku region continued to see a decline in
population, and the economy remained largely agricultural. Agriculture was a solid base of the economy as long as the government maintained favorable trade policies, subsidies, and exchange rates, and the economy in Iwate began to grow in the 1970s. In the 1980s, these arrangements started to unravel. International trade agreements in the mid-1980s made exchange rates unfavorable to Japanese farmers, and in 1990 the Bank of Japan began to raise interest rates, which made it even more difficult to earn a livelihood through agriculture (Rosenbluth & Thies 2010:90-91). This was a major setback for much of rural Japan, including Iwate, which has continued to lose population throughout the long recession since then. In March 2011, the Pacific coast of Tohoku was struck by a devastating earthquake and tsunami, which has only increased uncertainty about the region’s economic future. As summarized by the historical sociologist Oguma Eiji:

Amid economic globalization since the 1990s, Tohoku, as a supplier of primary parts and labor, has faced competition from other parts of Asia. This new trend has accelerated the shrinking and aging of the region’s population…. Manufacturers are expected to relocate their Tohoku plants overseas to prevent their operations from being affected by earthquakes and power shortages. Losing places to live in, threatened with the risk of radiation exposure and having no prospects for employment and safety, Tohoku residents will leave the region…. The Great East Japan Earthquake… has made it painfully clear that the regional gaps have become so wide in modern Japan that we cannot bring the regions together and generalize them as Nippon [Japan].
Oguma 2011:1-2

At the same time, local language was further commodified as an icon of rural/local authenticity. Local language in this sense means registers other than the national standard, which are collectively indexed to the rural, and which are in each case indexed to particular places. From the perspective of outsiders those places might be prefectures or entire regions like Tohoku. Again, from the perspective of those who claim speakerhood, local registers are typically indexed to places no larger than prefectures, sometimes associated with former feudal domains (e.g. the Nanbu domain in northern Iwate and eastern Aomori prefectures), and very often with counties, or municipalities 各市町村. In the national imagination local language writ large became an icon of the pure, primeval soul of the nation: stereotypes of backwardness are recycled into tourist goods and mediatized caricatures. So despite significant discrimination
against local language in northern Touhoku, it has always been acceptable in certain genres: traditional storytelling and folktales, memoirs, and printed on everything that tourists see, from welcome signs to souvenir towels. These practices did not necessarily challenge the hegemony of the standard dialect, but by the 1970s a new oppositional movement to valorize local language was taking shape. At this point, a generation into the postwar period of full-blown spoken-language standardization, a number of factors called for a reëvaluation.

2.2 Reaction to standardization: local language activism.

Here I will briefly describe four elements which shaped the reaction to the perceived success of language standardization policy in the 1960s and 1970s: (1) unexpected success, (2) metropolitan desire for the authentic periphery, (3) prestigious local language in some areas, and (4) bitter resistance to standardization in other areas.

2.2.1 Unexpected success of standardization.

At first, policymakers and educators had expected that school pupils would always learn local language at home or on the playground, but between parents wary of stigma, and long exposure to broadcast media, many young people were now unable to use local forms – at least not as much as their elders expected. Surprised by the effectiveness of standardization policy, and its partial metamorphosis into a local language eradication movement, the Ministry of Education made incremental adjustments to tolerate non-standard forms in school (Carroll 2001:186). By 1977 central education policy was to recognize the “good points about dialects.”

2.2.2 Metropolitan desire for the authentic periphery.

Events like the 1973 oil crisis contributed to disillusionment with promises of center-led economic splendor; as with the Great Kantou Earthquake fifty years earlier, a part of the urban
imagination turned to find hope in the perennial elsewhere of rural regions and rural hometowns. Within the unequal urban-rural scheme, even this kind of recognition from central audiences was inspiring for many in Touhoku. In 1970 the national railway company initiated a long-running tourism-promotion campaign called “Discover Japan,” locating national identity in rural traditions and sites that the city-dweller should visit. In interviews, Iwate residents doing local language work across a number of projects have told me that Discover Japan served as a starting point for their own reëvaluation.

2.2.3 Prestigious registers of local language.

Some local language forms other than the standard dialect had resisted standardization pressure better than others. In well-off regions in the west, especially in Kansai (the region that includes Osaka and Kyoto), local forms remained largely acceptable across contexts and class strata (Ball 2004, Sanada & Long 1997). As in Catalonia (Woolard 1985), Kansai language indexes the region’s relative wealth and prosperity. Some arguments valorizing Kansai language (Ball 2004, Sibatani 1995:110, Satou & Yoneda 2000(1999):169-172) draw on historical memory and literary record to claim aesthetic or political superiority for Kansai language over the national standard. Wealthier cities in to the west served as models for speakers in Touhoku: if people in Osaka can talk how they want, why not us? That question echoed louder in the 1960s as more Osaka language started to appear in broadcast media like television drama.

2.2.4 Resistance to standardization.

In this period there were people who rejected the stigma outright, and sought ways to fight it. In the late 1970s, they found the collaborators and audiences they needed, starting a boom in local-language activism that lasted through the 1990s. According to Inoue Fumio (2016, personal correspondence), there was a radio program from Ooita Prefecture in the 1980s called fuck standard
Taken together these four factors created a ripe environment for local practices of language valorization. Put another way, if we imagine the standard language project as a form of address which creates a public, then the processes of revaluation described above created a counterpublic (Warner 2002:73) and a loosely-connected, broad-based movement. Writers, amateur theater groups, local media companies, municipal governments, and others embraced local language. In the mid-1980s, Mikawa Village in Yamagata Prefecture organized a 全国方言大会 (zenkoku hougen taikai, National Local-Language Convention), which they continued to host annually for 17 years. National media started to use local language forms in more rounded, less stereotypical ways; in one prominent case, starting from the early 1970s, NHK placed the setting of their semiannual morning television serial drama in a range of locations around the country, often featuring local language. By the early 2000s some kind of local language activism had become, alongside local history studies, a near-universal practice among amateur scholars, so that in every municipality someone will have compiled a glossary of local terms (e.g. Kayoukai 2007). Locally-produced amateur material on local language is thick on the ground. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that in every social setting where I mentioned an interest in local language, people directed me to yet another amateur (or sometimes professional) scholar. This activity seems to have grown more intense from the late 1970s, until a decline beginning circa 2000. Writing near the end of this local language boom, Carroll notes that some of this warming attitude toward local language might have taken place at the expense of the provision of resources for other linguistic minorities. The popular focus on local language may have helped to obscure the needs of other communities, be they “long-standing linguistic minorities – the Ainu, the Okinawans, the Koreans and the Chinese – [or] more recent ones – the returnees and the migrant workers from Southeast Asia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Pakistan and the Middle East” (2001:203). This is not to say that these minority communities missed out on a wealth of public
resources, since little public support was devoted to local language. Official support for local language activities does not usually extend past slogans, tourism promotion, and cooperation with volunteer groups, but there are some extraordinary cases; Kagosima Prefecture offers a certification in local language fluency, the Kagosima Dialect Certification 鹿児島弁検定. In Touhoku, the enthusiasm for local language activism and scholarship waned from the late 1990s to 2011. This matched the loss of fervor behind the standardization movement, but it was also driven by the exhaustion of volunteers themselves, and the continued loss of young people in a region now marked by its aging population and economic decline. My own observations pick up in 2012, as local language activists renewed their efforts, hoping to build community solidarity and respond to the existential threat of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami disaster.

In the following sections I introduce particular cases of local language activism. Complementing the broad strokes of the above historical context, I begin with two individual cases, exploring the life histories and motivations of each. I then describe the activities of a set of contemporary language activist groups.

2.3 Local language activists: individuals.

In this section I introduce individual cases of two local language activists, both in Morioka: the broadcaster and storyteller Imoto, and the memoirist Osima.

2.3.1 Imoto.

Over forty years ago, when she was in high school, Imoto 井本 already wanted to be a news broadcaster. A study participant who said she was a classmate of Imoto’s remembers her avoiding local language and using as much national “standard” language as possible, hoping to earn a job on television. Fortunately, Imoto did get that job. A few years later, opportunities started to arise for
work involving local-language expertise. At this point, according to this same classmate, Imoto began to recast herself as an expert in local language. But she became an expert in a stylized form of the language, perceived as inaccessible to her former neighbors. Despite the fact that she now spoke “Morioka dialect” again, this speech was hearable as similar to the distinguished-sounding style of Kyoto, the old capital. The following is an excerpt from a group interview session conducted in 2012. Note that “kirei” (lines 14 and 19) can mean “clean,” “beautiful,” or both. There are two speakers; A is Imoto’s former classmate:

1. A 中学校の同級生なの。同じ学校なんです。 We were classmates in middle school. The same school.
2. B ほとんど一緒に喋ってるんだね。 They talk almost exactly the same.
3. A 彼女はね、あのう、ほら She, you know – you see, she became
4. [X X X X] のアナウンサーになったんで、最初 a [name of broadcasting company] announcer, so at first
5. 全然盛岡弁を喋なかったの。近所に行っても、 she never spoke Morioka dialect. Even if she went to the neighborhood,
6. 私と言う時も、喋なかったの。 talked with me, she didn’t speak it.
7. で、ある時期に、あのう、女優さんで、亡くなった、 At one point, she – um, that actress who passed away,
8. 年取って亡くなった、名前は… got old, passed away, what was her name –
9. B 長岡さん… Nagaoka –
10. A 長岡輝子さんは宮沢賢治のを話しして、 Nagaoka Teruko was reciting Miyazawa Kenji’s [poetry],
11. それを伝承するために and passing along that tradition [to Imoto], and in order to do that,
12. 彼女はまた逆に盛岡弁を話すようになった。 she [Imoto] instead began to speak Morioka dialect.
Imoto used her broadcasting career and claims at local language expertise to position herself for numerous roles as an ideal Iwate speaker. Recently she has served as announcer for local cultural events, trained nationally-known actors in local styles for their film roles, held leadership roles at local cultural institutions, run a storytelling group; and all the while continuing her work as a broadcaster, but with a focus on local programming. In an interview, Imoto expressed her sentiments on the aesthetic superiority of local language. For example:

I: And I’m always, you know, expressing the beauty of dialect, or expressing how cultural it is, always talking about that. First of all, the nasal consonants come across clearly. Second, the expressions are wonderfully rich. For example, when your heart is going 
\textit{doki-doki} [onomatopoetic heart-beating sound], you know, it’s quite, ah! You know? At those times, if you were saying it, what would you say?

E: I suppose it would be 
\textit{doki-doki}.

I: \textit{Doki-doki}, almost always, that’s it. People around here say \textit{hakka-hakka}. And so, isn’t \textit{hakka-hakka} a little more \textit{doki-doki}, than \textit{doki-doki}? And that level of, sort of, richness, is extremely high.

This aesthetic discourse is one of the techniques Imoto uses to continually qualify herself.
and secure recognition as an expert in local language. In making aesthetic claims like this she reaffirms the need for her own expertise, and guarantees her own trustworthiness as a source who loves local language. These aesthetic evaluations also appeal to a non-local point of view, promoting local language for reappraisal by locals as well as those who do not already have it. As described by her classmate, Imoto’s performance register speech can feel somehow distant. While it may be modeled on local polite language or a local high-status register, it sounds unconnected to contemporary, everyday local language. Considering these two points I suggest that an outsider perspective or outsider subjectivity may be implicitly embedded in Imoto’s valorization practices, and that they are conducted with an eye to the broader regional and national context. In some sense Imoto’s activism is the activism of a returnee, someone who left behind the local in pursuit of metropolitan desires, and having achieved that distance, saw their hometown culture in a different, more appealing light. In Imoto’s case this journey was partly literal and partly symbolic, but its effects were completely real. As I will illustrate, a similar journey which recontextualizes local language can be identified in the life histories of many other local language activists. In the following example of the memoirist Osima, this journey involved movement across space, as well as movement through the decades.

2.3.2 Osima.

Osima is retired from a successful career as a professional artist and arts equipment store owner in central Morioka. In his early life, he says, people in Morioka found national “standard” language so strange that they laughed at speakers visiting from Tokyo. Toward the end of the Second World War, Osima was drafted and served two years in military service, but without traveling to overseas combat zones. That experience forced him to think of himself as someone who spoke a dialect, and convinced him that the national “standard” language should be promoted more

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forcefully:

I came back from Tokyo to Morioka, I came back to Morioka and I went to talk to those groups, I took my opinion. My opinion was that before everyone would listen to us, they'd laugh; they'd say we talked funny and laugh. I said we should try to stop using Morioka dialect as much as possible, I said that to everyone a lot. And in front of everyone, or, when there was a chance to go and say your opinion in front of everyone, I'd say that we had to use Standard Japanese, or talk in a way that would get across to the whole country. I went around at full blast, telling everyone. And the people who listened to me told me they were very grateful.

Like other promoters of national “standard” language, Osima eventually found that local language forms were simply not being spoken anymore by younger generations – certainly not in the same way as in his own youth. In reaction to this and other perceived social changes, Osima wrote and published a multimedia memoir: a series of stories from his pre-war youth, written conventionally in national “standard” language, but with partial in-line local language translations. Aware that text alone would not capture the important and distinctive features he wanted to describe, Osima recorded an audio CD to accompany the book. The book was popular locally, especially in his own neighborhood of Morioka, and Osima is well-known in town because of it. At some point he also participated in a local language study club, an association in which older Morioka residents gathered to enjoy practicing local language, and which may have served some role in promoting its symbolic value in the general public. Osima claims that younger generations no longer speak Morioka dialect, a development which he does not particularly regret:

Well, I don’t necessarily think of it as unfortunate that the Morioka dialect will disappear. I don’t think so. I think it can’t be helped. That’s how I think, but I just feel like I want to leave behind the knowledge that in the past, this is how we talked. But I don’t want to hold back [the change]. So, in ten or twenty years, Morioka dialect will totally disappear, I think.

Like Imoto, Osima expresses an ideology of the value of language in aesthetic terms, but he also values local language for moral and ethical reasons, linking it to a nostalgic view of the past. In the following excerpt, Osima contrasts the past and the present, describing the altruism of the pre-war period as something that has disappeared along with Morioka dialect:

And another reason for writing at that time, not only that – more than trying to write down Morioka dialect, and all that – also the way of life at that time, I wanted to convey. Compared to the present situation, those days were far poorer. It was a very poor, impoverished world, but, however, there was
enough kindness to make up for that poverty. Mutual assistance, all those things were, compared to
now they were far stronger. You might say group awareness, or going and helping. That sort of
awareness was extremely strong. Now, proportionally, that sense of cooperation and charity,
compared to that time, seems to have fallen off a little bit. That thought was a reason for me to write.

Like the nostalgic Mexicano speakers described by Hill (1998), many local-language activists
regret the social changes that have accompanied language shift in the last half-century. They do not
necessarily regret language shift itself. Having suffered from the negative indexes of local language,
some would be happy to watch local language disappear, and (they imagine) the stigma with it. A
few local-language activists have drawn a distinction between linguistic practice and the stigma that
attaches to it, and they explicitly argue that the stigma itself is what should disappear. But more
commonly, local-language activists work in projects to preserve local language and pass it on to the
next generation in some form or another. This does not necessarily mean that they believe they will
succeed. This is one important difference between local language activism in Touhoku and some
other cases of language activism: while other case have been described as necessarily “hopeful” (e.g.
Debenport 2015:112, cf. Miyazaki 2000), I would argue that “hope” only characterizes some fraction
of Touhoku language activism. Certainly there are some cases where language activism is hopeful,
particularly those cases where activists work with local schools. But at the same time, it seems that
some of those writing glossaries of local language do not expect, or even imagine, a future in which
these resources are taken up by a transformed and healed community. Instead many of these
activities are oriented toward the past for its own sake: to give a decent and respectful burial to
culture which is now destroyed, and perhaps to find a place to commemorate that culture in
museum-like contexts or in academic literature. An oft-stated goal is simply “to leave something
behind” 何かを残す for future generations. All of these projects in their diversity reveal a great deal
about ideologies of local language in Touhoku, and they also have their own range of limitations and
contradictions. The following section addresses such projects, using examples of contemporary
groups carrying them out.

2.4 Local language activists: groups.

In this section I will describe the activities of a few local language activist groups, first by characterizing their regular activities, then by highlighting several distinctive features about local language activism: ambivalence about the value of local language, concern about the future of local language, the affect of activism, and the desire to make local language seem as distinct from national “standard” language as possible. I will begin by setting the scene with one of these groups: a local language activist circle in Kamaisi.

On the morning of Friday, August 19th, 2016, Dr. Oono Makio’s white Prius pulls up outside my apartment building in central Morioka. As Oono drives us south out of town, and then east through the Kitakami mountains, we talk about changes in the regional economy. By noon we have arrived in the city of Kamaisi, on the Pacific coast of Iwate, and we pull into the gravel parking lot across the street from the Local History Resource Center 郷土資料館, a multipurpose civic group meeting space and museum. The main hall of the building is full of exhibits, including taxidermy specimens (with a stuffed Asian Black Bear and Japanese Serow among others), and a reconstruction of the main hall in a traditional-style house’s main room, complete with sunken hearth 囲炉裏. On one side of the main hall, behind doors marked STAFF ONLY, a small group is setting out cups for tea on a table in the low-ceiling storage area. These half-dozen women in their fifties through eighties are the members of 伝え隊・漁火の会 (Tutaetai - Isaribi no Kai, Pass-It-On Corps: Fishing-Lamp Association). This is a regular monthly meeting, one of many that Oono and other linguists have attended. After a few minutes of jokes and catching up, the meeting proper begins with a discussion of upcoming events: where they have a performance scheduled, and who will be available to perform. Oono shows off the children’s book that his team has produced based
on the group’s storytelling. Then he takes notes on the next tasks assigned to him: contact the principal at such-and-such school, print the blown-up illustrations to accompany such-and-such folk tale. After that business is settled, and Oono has switched on his audio recorder, the regular members take turns running through the stories they are preparing to tell. The more senior members of the group have their stories memorized; others read from the pages they’ve printed, or from books of collected folktale. Though there are many kinds of narratives among the collected folktale, the stories rehearsed in today’s practice are heartwarming and funny. Attentive to Oono’s electronic audio recorder, and to each narrator’s concentration, the participants listen quietly during each story. Outside of the stories they laugh and comment extensively, calling out their favorite moments in the narrative, asking about unfamiliar lexical items, debating the best way to deliver a given line. The members fill the rest of the meeting’s two hours sharing more stories, taking up intermittent questions from me and Oono, and playing with language: “I have a good one. The other day this kid yelled out ‘Balls!’ so I said ‘Hey, don’t use dirty words like that!’ and then the kid says ‘OK—washed balls!’”

The Fishing-Lamp Association is one of the volunteer groups that has collaborated with Oono and his colleagues, Dr. Kojima Satoko 小島聡子 and Dr. Takeda Kōko 竹田晃子, who are supporting revitalization efforts and documentation in typical fashion for “endangered languages” projects. For the linguists, folktale are the last standing domain of pre-standardization language. As the storyteller groups practice, research, perform, and even write their own folktale with some assistance from the academics, the academics record those narratives and solicit the storytellers’ linguistic intuitions. The public activities of the Fishing-Lamp Association all involve performing local language for a range of audiences. Their flagship annual event is storytelling at elementary schools. They also visit elder-care centers. There, instead of only telling folktale, they take their audience on virtual tours: narrating a visit to a hot spring, or narrating a bus tour, like a radio drama.
Another local language performance group linked to Iwate University linguists is based in Hatinohe, meeting at the Hatinohe Public Hall. Rather than a monthly meeting, the Hatinohe storytellers gather four times a year for intensive training. This is one of a handful of local-language projects organized in the area by Masaya Nobuo 柾谷伸夫 - teacher, actor, and director of the Hatinohe Public Hall. Masaya’s adult students, almost all women, practice telling folktales line by line, attending to every vowel and every turn of the intonational contour.

2.4.1 Nanbu summit.

Since 2013, Oono, Kojima, and Takeda have linked some of these groups into a common project through biannual “Nanbu dialect” events: Nanbu Dialect Day 南部弁の日 and the Nanbu Dialect Summit 南部弁サミット. These are public, all-day performance events, featuring storytellers from five or six places across Iwate and Aomori Prefectures. Masaya himself performs, along with some of his adult students. At Nanbu Dialect Day in Hatinohe, Masaya’s fourth-grade elementary school theater class performs a play (of substantial length) using markedly local language. Members of the Fishing-Lamp Association attend, performing a set of folktales. These events are also a site for experimentation with new domains, and for metalinguistic work. At the 2015 Nanbu Dialect Day, for example, two storytellers took to the stage to deliver a simulated trilingual news broadcast in NHK style speech (i.e. national “standard” language), southern-Nanbu-style speech, and Tugaru-style speech. Oono, Kojima, and Takeda also contribute to these events, either as MC’s with opening or closing remarks, or with brief academic-style presentations about the importance of the activities.

The linguists’ contributions to public events like these, rather than simply collecting data for academic projects, is a new development in Iwate. Oono has told me that seeing the destruction of coastal communities in the 2011 disaster, he felt a deep pang of guilt, having furthered his career
using data from these people, but providing them little to nothing in return. He suddenly felt that the mainstream of language documentation scholarship was like ‘a vulture, circling above someone dying in the desert, waiting to pick at the bones.’ Post-disaster, Oono and his colleagues started working on their current maintenance and revitalization projects, partly as a contribution to disaster recovery. Meanwhile, following the publication of the Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger (UNESCO 2009), the Agency for Cultural Affairs started its own program for researching and supporting endangered languages in Japan, beginning with a survey in 2010. Shortly afterward, following the triple disasters of March 11, 2011, this fledgeling program added local dialects of the disaster-affected areas to its portfolio, and since that time there has been some government support for revitalization efforts in designated critical areas. In practice these efforts involve the support of academic archival projects, and helping to facilitate of dialect events like Nanbu Dialect Day.

Groups like Masaya’s Nanbu Dialect class, the Fishing-Lamp Association, or the Oofunato group Stories Rolling On おはなしころりん all draw on a shared concept of folktales: old-time stories (mukasi-banasi 昔話). The key exemplar of the folktale for audiences today is the 1910 collection, Tales/Legends of Toono (Toono Monogatari 遠野物語), a volume of 119 narratives told by Toono-born writer Sasaki Kizen and publicized by Yanagita Kunio. Yanagita used these narratives to launch the field of Japanese folklore studies (Morse 1990), and now the collection of stories is far more widely known than the city of Toono itself: Toono Monogatari is the quintessence of the folktale genre. Toono (the city) makes the most of this association, appealing to tourists with museums including two (Toono Home Town Village 遠野ふるさと村 and Tradition Garden 伝承園) that feature reconstructions of traditional family homes, and performances of folktales in local language by local storytellers. Longer-term tourists can stay for training in Toono storytelling. But Toono is not the only place with folktales though it is likely the best-documented
place. Folktales are valued for several overlapping reasons, including as a piece of local heritage, as a
critical linguistic domain in which local language is normative, and as a clue to pre-industrial or even
pre-Japanese (i.e. Emisi, pre-Yamato) cultural sensibility. As old-time stories, folktales’ content
describes the past. Stories are set in an unspecified time imagined to be at least a century ago.
Folktales are delivered in local language, with all characters speaking in local styles, so the time they
index is also a time prior to national language standardization. The content of folktales revolves
around the same premodern chronotope: family dramas, romances, ghost stories, and never a
mention of automobiles or electronics. Storytellers carefully avoid anachronisms. But the old-time-
ness of these stories also applies to the way they are delivered today. From the way scholars and
performers talk about it, this genre feels like it is fading out of existence, and the performances
themselves index a bygone era. I have not systematically analyzed the values expressed in these
narratives but I did note a consistent contemporary imaginary of this bygone era across dozens of
conversations: folktales, told around the hearth of a farmhouse, were once the only form of
entertainment. And folktales were not restricted to professionals or hobbyists, but were told in every
household. Some tellers were more virtuosic in telling, and some tellers memorized many hundreds
of stories. The stories vary in length but many take between five and ten minutes to tell, and
memorizing the story involves memorizing this “script” and being able to perform it dramatically.

Performers (professionals in Toono, members of the Fishing-Lamp Association, Masaya,
hobbyists in Morioka) wear traditional clothing such as kimono and haori. Performers are middle-
aged or older, which reflects the struggle to recruit new storytellers, but may also reflect the
commonly-held picture of a grandparent telling stories around the hearth. Folktale performers often
supplement their narration with paper theatre (kamisibai 紙芝居), a series of colorful paper
illustrations displayed in sequence using a wooden frame. This technique aids in storytelling,
especially for child audiences, and it further situates the folktale as a nostalgic, obsolete, or perhaps
recovered genre. Kamisibai have a long history but they reached the height of their popularity in the 1930s, after which they were crowded out by the appearance of the “electric kamisibai”: television. How should we interpret these efforts to recreate a storytelling experience of the past? I suggest two possible answers: first, it may be that the past-ness of these stories is what is most interesting to contemporary audiences, so that by emphasizing a bygone era, storytellers deepen the intrigue of the entire enterprise. A second interpretation, not necessarily mutually exclusive with the first, is that storytellers are in some sense rejecting the trappings of urbanization, modernity, globalization, etc, and staking a claim to an alternative system of value.

2.4.2 Activists’ ideologies of local language.

Groups like the Fishing-Lamp Association and other amateur local language activists are motivated by a largely shared set of language ideologies. These beliefs include four which I will explore below: (1) a deep ambivalence about the value of local language, (2) a sense of foreboding about the disappearance of local traditions, (3) high standards for accuracy, along with a preference for informal contexts, and (4) a preference for those local language forms which seem most distinct from the national standard. I argue that these four patterns are distinctive features of local language activism in a context like Touhoku, where local registers and national “standard” language exist on the same fluid scale.

2.4.2.1 Ambivalent evaluation of local language.

Activists’ ambivalence about the value of local language reflects the broader context of linguistic colonization: local language is fun, and never expected to appear in an institutional context. Local language has its beauty, but that is never more than an alternative or perhaps insurgent beauty: as one member of a language activist group said (partly in jest), “the prettiness of dialect is an ugly prettiness.” Metropolitan outsiders have talked to me of feeling envious toward people who have
rich and distinctive local language, but these activists, many in their sixties and older, have lived through decades of slights directed at local language. In the course of their lives (as we shall see elsewhere), they may have arrived at a new appreciation for local language, but they are deeply aware of the scope of national “standard” language’s power, and they generally do not challenge it.

2.4.2.2 Mitigated foreboding.

Ideologies of “vanishing” local culture are ubiquitous in modern Japan (Ivy 1995) – ideologies which are expressed as an ever-resurfacing moral panic about the loss of tradition. These ideologies are certainly present today in Tohoku (where some of Ivy’s case studies were located), and they undergird the motivations of many local-language activists, whose work conveys a sense that local language is threatened with extinction. The sense of threat comes across both directly and indirectly.

I noticed one subtle expression of this sentiment in Masaya Nobuo’s facilitation style at the 2015 Nanbu Dialect Day 南部弁の日 event, mentioned earlier. In the airy atrium-lobby of Hacchi, the new museum and culture center in downtown Hatinohe, about 120 people gathered, filling every available seat, to hear folktales. Masaya’s introduction invited the largely gray-haired crowd to imagine themselves as linked in a Nanbu diaspora, with some attendees returning from as far as Hokkaido for Nanbu Dialect Day. As each storyteller took the stage to relate a folktale, I noticed some members of the audience, evidently reminded of phrases long in disuse, picking out pieces from the stream of talk and quietly repeating them. As master of ceremonies, Masaya spoke briefly between each story, and in a similar vein he also called out certain key phrases: “Well, ladies and gentlemen! What a great story, right? You don’t often hear such-and-such these days, do you?” The audience nodded, repeating the term, and Masaya exhorted, smiling: “Remember that one!” The alternative, that no one might remember these elements of local language, that they might be
forgotten, was palpable. Especially in light of this framing, the performances took on an air of something deeper than entertainment: a ritual pedagogical exercise, a communal exercise of membership and memory.

Despite activists’ sense of foreboding about local language, they do not approach their work with desperate urgency; the sense of the “vanishing” is mitigated by other phenomena. Among these is the sheer degree of linguistic colonization. The national standard is already so dominant, both in linguistic landscapes and in conventional systems of value, that local language has little ground to lose. The period of urgent resistance to the national standard ran from the 1970s to the 1990s, but it has now ended. The people who carried out that urgent resistance have retired from activism out of exhaustion, have lost their motivating social/political zeal, or passed away. Another key phenomenon that seems to mitigate local-language activists’ feelings of foreboding is what I call an ideology of the unshakeable home town. Localness is primarily conceived of on the scale of the municipality or county; the prefecture is often too large and abstract to really feel relevant to identity. The activists I met talked about the distinction between the outsider and the local as something innate and immutable. “People from here” (kōtī no hito こっとちの人), that is, people from this town, were described as sharing not only language and local knowledge but also personality traits or physical features. A person’s attachment to a home town cannot be shaken; if you move to another prefecture or even to Tokyo, you will still always be from your home town. In reality there are people who move to a metropolis or overseas, and who are very happy to cut all ties with their home towns. But crucially for local-language activists, the ideology of the unshakeable home town implies that all people carry the potential to return, to pick up local language practices that they had temporarily put aside. This is an instance of the furusato (故郷・古里 home town, old village) concept which has functioned as a core of Japanese national-identity discourse for decades (Befu 2001). But it is also an accurate report of the experience of locality for most of these activists. They
and many other people who left their home town in the twentieth century would have left behind extensive networks of kinship and other social ties, and they would have brought with them a range of markers of their origins, not the least of which was their language. Local language activists are overwhelmingly members of generations that experienced these dynamics, and it seems like common sense to say, as Masaya did:

In summary, local language advocates feel confident since they have little else to lose, and they believe that the home town itself cannot be lost.

But in a globalized society this sense that the home town cannot be lost, what I am calling the ideology of the unshakeable home town, leaves significant gaps. Connections with a home town may be gradually lost over the long term, especially in the context of a low birth rate; or disasters like the triple disaster of March 2011 may catastrophically sever those connections in a matter of days or weeks. Under the institutions of linguistic colonization, even those who never leave the home town may cease to consider themselves bound to local language, and these effects are likely compounded by practices of gender or class distinction. In addition to the above, furusato ideology (especially the notion of the unshakeable home town) overlooks newcomers, assuming that they will be unwilling or unable to learn local language. There have always been new arrivals in Tohoku, including large migrations to re-populate coastal areas after tsunami disasters. Today despite the overall decline in the region’s population, there are still new migrants in most towns, some of whom come from overseas. While the activists I met have welcomed newcomers as fellow practitioners and performers, it remains unclear whether new migrants are conceived of as a proper audience for local
language. In the Touhoku contexts I have studied, I am not aware of efforts to teach local language to newcomers as a technique of socialization (though I return to this topic at the end of chapter 4). Findings about such practices would add helpful insights to the study of local language revitalization work.

2.4.2.3 Seriousness and fun in language activism.

In telling folktales and through other efforts to raise the profile of local language, activists express a common approach to balancing seriousness and playfulness. First, they are serious about correct usage of local language. They strive to identify and use linguistic features according to those features’ specific place of origin, for example preferring not to use language that is specifically associated with Toono for a story set in Kamaisi. Metalinguistic talk, mostly about the history and geography of specific linguistic features, is very common in the margins of rehearsals and other events. Through this attention to local detail, local language activists seem to be actively resisting the ongoing trends of dialect levelling, homogenization, and mock language (Smitherman 1988, Hill 1995). Second, while they are serious about maintaining accuracy, local language activists prioritize having fun with their work, and inviting their audiences to have fun. Below I illustrate this dynamic in detail but first I should clarify that in this context “fun” captures two aspects of language activism. One aspect of “fun” is the tendency to get enjoyment out of the work: to take pleasure in linguistic difference. The other aspect of “fun” is that language activism is done for fun, as in, not for work. These two senses of fun consistently characterize local language activism, along with a certain seriousness which I will describe further below.

Together, the draw of having fun with local language and the threat of losing identity seem to be the primary motivations for local-language activists’ work. How do these motivations relate to the telling of folktales? Why folktales specifically? I suggest that part of the importance of folktales is that they create a thick and redundant connection to place: local folktales, told to local audiences,
using local language. For many of these activists the primary concern is local identity overall. Masaya talked about his work in Hatinohe as a project that could enrich the sense of local identity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of course the government does say that in school you should learn to love your home town, but I think it’s important to care about the people who live there, the language of the people who live there, not to love the pretty scenery. Up until now that part has been missing. It’s been about industry, literature, only about how Hatinohe developed. But, you know, we also have to care for Nanbu dialect, and we have to use it in children’s education. That’s what it really means to learn about your home town.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>学校で自分の故郷愛しましょうと国もいってるんだけど、綺麗な景色を愛しようでなくて、そこに住んでる人、住んでる人の使ってる言葉を大事にすることが故郷を大事にすることだ。今までそのことばが抜けている。工業がどうした、文献がどうした。八戸はこんな風に発展してきましたということがだけだった。そうではなくてやっぱり南部弁方言も大事にして子供たちに教育の中で使っていかなければならない。それが本当の意味の郷土に対する学習。</td>
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It is also possible that there is no viable context for using local language outside of the domain of the traditional folktale. In other domains local language might be simply too bereft of value, or too unexpected. Folktales are also often humorous, meeting the desire to have fun with local-language activism. In this context “fun” mostly means language play, including the delight of upturned expectations that comes from speaking in an unexpected way; and humor: jokes that are conveyed in, or rely on, local language. But some of the implications of “doing this for fun” extend beyond literal laughter. The local-language activist work I have observed is avocational, voluntary, and not for profit. It has the structure of a hobby: although in some sense it is political, it is neither partisan nor policy-oriented. Local language activists in Touhoku have some projects in which they work with grade-school students, and in some cases they are deeply connected with municipal government, especially in Mikawa, Yamagata Prefecture. But even in the case of Mikawa, no official institutional change was made. In Touhoku one distinctive element of this situation may be that these connections are not oriented toward any kind of institutional change; as mentioned above, the prefectural government in Kagosima (far to the southwest) facilitates a certification program in local language. In Iwate, activists talk about having fun with local language as the key to passing it on.

Under conditions of linguistic colonization, local language has a bitter taste of stigma that must be
sweetened with humor.

To better understand the dynamic of fun-and-serious local identity practices, consider a topic that I introduced in dialogic interviews in the summer of 2016, a topic that was first suggested by Yamáura Harutíğu: what if the audio announcements on trains and buses were delivered bilingually, in the national standard and in local language? Superexpress 新幹線 trains always play pre-recorded bilingual announcements (safety reminders and the name of each stop), in national “standard” Japanese and English registers. Local bus and train lines also play pre-recorded announcements for these purposes, but they only use national “standard” language. Why not, Yamáura argued, add an audio-recorded announcement using local language? Among other concerns, Yamáura pointed out that certain local place names are unrecognizable in these standardized:

| If you’re riding the bus or riding a train, there will be a broadcast of the name of the next station. Those are all in Standard Japanese, aren’t they? One time I was riding the Oofunato line and I was surprised to find myself not knowing where I was. It was because the [intonation] was totally different. Which is to say, we say *Hosoura* [rising throughout] but they said *Hosoura* [low on Ho, then falling from a high tone on se], and I thought, where am I? And we say *Sakari* [rising throughout] but I heard *Sakari* [falling throughout], which I didn’t understand – it doesn’t come to you straight away. | バスに乗っても、汽車に乗っても、次の駅の名前は放送があるでしょう。それは全部標準語ですよね。いつか大船渡線に乗ってびっくりしたのは、自分でどこだから分からないんです。なぜかというとアクセントが全然違うからです。というのは細浦*といっど、細浦*と言われたので、どこなのかと思った。それから盛り*と我々はいっど盛り*と言われたので、よく分からない、バッと来ないですね。※イントネーションがそれぞれ異なる。左側を参照。 |
---|

Yamáura has suggested, as a remedy, that local bus and train lines switch to bilingual announcements. I shared this idea with the local-language activist members of the Fishing-Lamp Association. Their immediate response was in line with Yamáura’s concern: each member had a story of a local place name rendered inaccurately in standardized road signs or in the names of train or bus stops. These inaccuracies raised the unsettling possibility of losing a range of local knowledge associated with places and place-names. In a place like Kamaisi, which experiences a devastating
tsunami every one or two generations, local knowledge is life-saving. According to the storytelling
group members, numerous place names reflect the history of tsunamis in the area; a notable example
is Tago (octopus), a location so named because a tsunami came all the way up the valley and
deposited an octopus there. For those with no personal memory of that tsunami, the place name
would indicate how far inland a tsunami could come. At some point a bus company or the
prefectural transit authority created a bus stop at Tago, using the characters 田郷 on the sign; these
characters are pronounced “Tago” but they mean “field village,” and the octopus’ warning can no
longer be perceived. Aside from the matter of accuracy and preserving historic place names,
members of the Fishing-Lamp Association did not immediately see any point to providing bilingual
announcements on trains and buses. They pointed out that since local people all understand the
national standard, there is no barrier to intelligibility; indeed the announcements on buses might be
more important for people from the city 都会 since they might be first-time visitors, and it was
people from the city who introduced buses in the first place. But although they argued against any
practical need for bilingual announcements, they derived a great deal of humor from this transgressive
idea, putting announcement texts into several forms of polite local language, texts like we apologize for
the delay, please be careful about the gap between the train and platform, please be sure to take all of your belongings
with you when you exit, etc. Some members also spoke of bilingual announcements as a way to add
local color that would appeal to tourists, and the group seemed to agree that this was an excellent
and possibly viable idea. One of the senior members of the group imagined a trend of local-language
bus announcements spreading inland from coastal Iwate to Itinoseki and beyond. Other members
imagined aloud a hypothetical trip to various parts of Tohoku, describing how they would enjoy
the local-language announcements on trains and buses. The bilingual announcement concept
seemed to appeal first of all as a fun idea, a new and unusual context for performance, and perhaps
as a way of raising the profile of local language and heritage. These are, of course, the overall goals
of the Fishing-Lamp Association. It is beyond the scope of their activities to suggest changes in language policy, or to push for changes in the public consciousness of local language. Although local-language activist groups in the 1980s and 1990s approached their work at least in part through a logic of justice, seeking redress for the excesses of language standardization, in recent years they have apparently not been able to sustain such ambitions. In 2016, the local-language activists I met were focused on building up a base of public appreciation locally, and they were happy to see almost any use of local language. While activists hope to extend the respectful use of local language, borrowings and code-switching that might seem to approach mock-language practices are often seen as the best available form of representation, and tend to be accepted.

2.4.2.4 Staying distinct from standard language.

Across every local language group I visited, members spoke a mixture of local language and national “standard” language forms during meetings. For their performances, however, they uniformly preferred the local language forms that were most distinct from the national “standard” language. Wherever a difference could be identified, they would use the form associated with the locality, at nearly every level of analysis: lexicon, morphology, segmental and suprasegmental (e.g. intonational) phonology. During the conversation described above about bilingual announcements on buses and trains, one of the members of the Fishing-Lamp Association provided a tidy example as she searched for the most Kamaisi-sounding way to say “please wait a moment.” In the simplified transcript below, items which are spoken in local style are underlined.

1 E mou syousyou omati kudasai
  more a bit wait please [how about] “please wait a little longer”?

2 F mou syousyou – rugi mo sukosh
  more a bit next a bit more
  a little more – coming up just a little more
3  mou  tobyakko  matte  kenansec
more  a bit  wait  please
please wait a little longer

4  tugi ni  hasidåsu
next  get moving
we will depart shortly

5  nan  da  be,
what  copula  volitional
what should it be, if I start with ‘tugi ni’ [shortly/next]

6  mamonaku  tte  tugi ni
next  quotative  next
‘next’ will be ‘tugi ni.’

Note that as speaker F progresses through line 2 to line 4, she uses progressively more locally-marked items, these items increase in length, and the speaker replaces more and more national “standard” language tokens with local ones, as she works to craft the perfectly local utterance. Moving further and further from the national standard seems to be appealing for a few reasons. First, for the speaker, there is the pleasure of demonstrating authority, via authoritative knowledge of local language. Second, as with much of the work done by local-language activists, more distinct features intensify the humor of transgression or of reversing expectations – in the case above, by crossing into an unexpected domain of institutional language which is strongly associated with national “standard” language. On numerous occasions across different contexts, local language activists and members of their audiences have reflected on these extremes of difference from the national standard by drawing a comparison to foreign (national) languages: “It sounds like French,” and “You might as well be speaking Dutch,” and “I guess this is English class now.” These comments refer to a very real intelligibility barrier, and they also refer to the physical, aural experience of hearing undecipherable speech. Some of these comments on perceived foreignness come from members of the local-language activist groups, these typically being younger members who came to the hobby relatively recently and are studying local language and folktales as a practice of heritage and identity. Talk about local language as “like a foreign language” hints at the possibility
of actually becoming a foreign language, a possibility of severing the subordinate relationship with the national language and rejecting the framing of “regional dialect” entirely. For almost all local language activists, such a move is not desirable; instead, these comments are usually given in jest, emphasizing how absurd it is for speech to sound so different despite still being nominally the same “Japanese” language. But in one region of southern coastal Iwate Prefecture, there is a group that did declare the local language independent: Theatre Kesen (gekidan Kesen 劇団ケセン). In chapter 5 I will briefly discuss the history, ideologies, and practices of this group specifically.

Having established these four common themes (ambivalence, foreboding, seriousness and fun, and the preference for highly distinct local language forms) I argue that they are distinctive characteristics of a context like Touhoku local language. While I do find it endlessly productive to analyze “dialect” difference with the same tools as “language” difference, these four themes indicate some ways in which nationalist language ideologies do circumscribe the possibilities for “dialect” revitalization. In other words several of these patterns are the result of the fact that linguistic hegemony places local language in Touhoku a subordinate position vis-à-vis national “standard” language. Some of the situations that will seem similar to Touhoku language will be found in Europe. But these will not be cases like Basque or Catalan or even Corsican. As Carroll suggests, in cases where small European languages have a long history including centuries of written record, the “comparison with Europe... needs to be taken further, since there are significant differences from the situation in Japan.” To suggest what might be missing: The mechanisms of consent operating on behalf of national “standard” language (discussed earlier in this chapter as well as in chapter 3) are in operation behind a great deal of activists’ ambivalence toward their own projects. Mechanisms of consent as well as coercion, meanwhile, are what have left these local language projects in a relatively hopeless state, hence the sense of foreboding. The balance between fun and seriousness described above is similar to other minority language projects (Woolard 2016:73), but the details of the
affective assemblage in Touhoku deserve more attention. Finally, mechanisms of linguistic differentiation are very well studied, but linguistic differentiation takes on an enormous, central role. For most language documentation projects in Touhoku, for example, the only items worth noting are those which do not occur in national “standard” language. In other words local language exists only in so far as it is not national “standard” language.

Having addressed a number of factors internal to local language activism, I will now turn to the external social context. In particular I will focus on the kinds of capital which are expended in conducting various forms of local language activism.

2.5 Limits to valorization.

Public metapragmatic activities like these exist partially as a consequence of their social context. That context in turn partially limits or qualifies the agency of activists to valorize (ascribe or attach value to) language. The motivations of particular local language activists, and the responses from their publics, help to determine the extent and limitations of the results of their activities. For example, no matter their goals or methods, activists broadly tend to be elites, a conclusion shared by local sociolinguists in Iwate. In this case I use the term “elite” to refer to people with unusually great reserves of economic and symbolic capital. In terms of economic capital, they can afford to retire from work (whether or not they have, in fact, retired). Even in this relatively poor region undergoing a long economic decline, the middle class of people who are able to retire includes quite a lot of people. For the sake of local language activists we should also bear in mind that many of the elder activists made their careers in the booming decades between 1960 and 1990, before the decline took hold. The fact that so many people are able to retire may help explain the apparent high density of dialect activism and publications about dialect, all of which fits into the popular pattern of amateur local scholarship in Japan on topics ranging from archaeology to dance.
Local-language activists tend to start out with a high level of economic capital, but even more dependably, they are able to earn further capital through their metalinguistic activity. Certain people have the capital to use local language in public contexts that open them to some risk of stigma, and others do not. This distinction has to do with specific types of capital, and specific identities. The relevant types of symbolic capital seem to include: high regard within the local community; high-status work; a direct or indirect association with the national standard language; free time; and a means of arranging for an audience. It is worth noting that local-language activists, in my experience, do not match the stereotypes about local identities in Touhoku. Johnstone (2010:22 and elsewhere) has described how registers can come to be iconically linked with stereotyped personae – for example, Pittburghese is imagined as prototypically coming out of the mouth of a working-class white sports-fanatic man. I do not have the necessary types of data to conjure this figure so clearly for local language in Touhoku, but regional stereotypes are clear enough. Certain stereotypical representations allude to uneducated farmers who have no interest in the wider world; but local language activists I met fit none of the elements of these stereotypes. In other words, they were highly educated, they were not rural, some had traveled very widely, and they were not farm workers; they break with national stereotypes of Touhoku residents. Perhaps because these activists do not bear non-linguistic associations with pejorated aspects of Touhoku identity, their use of Touhoku language puts them at lower risk of being viewed according to those stereotypes. Their partial freedom from being trapped in such stereotypes is one of the factors that permits them to use local language to diverse ends, and in diverse contexts. Through the publication opportunities deriving from amateur and semi-professional linguistics, through storytelling, through consultations for media portrayals of local language, among other venues, local language activists are positioned to turn a profit from their claims of expertise in local speech forms. In other words, they are in possession of semiotic resources, or non-economic capital, which creates opportunities to
access other resources, including economic ones. Possession of such symbolic capital is another part of what makes these activists elite. This capital comes in diverse forms: through high-status employment, e.g. as educators, physicians, broadcasters; through a strong reputation in the community; through age-mate friends or other willing audiences for amateur productions; through their own practice of a locally non-hegemonic religion (e.g. Christianity) or other non-hegemonic worldview; or through a belief that they are fully fluent in the national standard language. Temporal capital is particularly important, in the form of having a malleable schedule, or plenty of free time. Temporal capital is unequally distributed according to the gendered division of household labor, meaning that it largely accrues to those men who benefit from their wives’ constant domestic work. Retirement also opens up a great deal of free time, and it also frees the potential activist from the need to pursue practical economic activities. Often the local-language activists’ life histories support claims for authentic localness, mainly in terms of authenticating their claim to local geography. Each of these features serves as a resource to permit relatively public local-language activism. High status, or a strong personal reputation, give the would-be documentarian a surplus of semiotic capital (Bourdieu 1977) – capital to burn. High-status people are free to associate themselves with otherwise low-status speech forms, and in fact through their metapragmatic activities they enregister local language to a new context in which it conveys high prestige. Arguably only people with certain forms of symbolic capital can use local language in this high-prestige context. The production of high-prestige local speech does not automatically extend higher prestige to all speakers. In these cases, local language activists risk turning the object of their work into a boutique language, accessible to none but the connoisseurs (themselves). These speakers may be attaching value to local language using their own personal status, but it is less clear that this new value is then able to circulate along with the register.¹¹ Other symbolic resources and positionalities, like minority religion status, free time, and willing audiences for amateur production, serve to spur on counterhegemonic
language activism. Some Christians, for example, already see themselves as outside of the majority Japanese cultural order. My interviews with these activists suggest that in some cases they, already finding themselves in violation of certain norms, have fewer qualms about breaking other social boundaries, including in the matter of language.

It is important to note that these qualifications do not necessarily apply to all metalinguistic activities. A much broader array of speakers with less capital may engage in discourses and practices surrounding local language, but in more private settings or for more private reasons. For example, some study local speech out of a sense of personal longing due to perceived language shift within the family or the self. This sort of hobby of identity is similar to practices of heritage language learning in other contexts, including heritage language learning among diasporic populations (Avineri 2014). I expect that this activity somehow figures in the social performances of these people, but their public display does not involve the use of local language in expanded contexts. Private hobbyists typically claim to have little native competence, at least in their present stage of life. Lacking the excess capital to use up, and the proper positionalities to profitably deploy local language in public, these hobbyists’ activities stay under wraps and are unable to affect the overall standing of local speech forms in the community.

In this context, metalinguistic activity (of whatever sort) by local-language activists often ends up serving the activists themselves. By setting themselves up as experts and profiting from that reputation, activists may be encouraged to maximize their gains by diminishing the expertise of others. In other words, they benefit by rejecting the attempts of others to use marked local speech; they also have an incentive to exaggerate the threat to the local forms, and to construe the boundaries of “proper” local language as narrowly as possible. Meanwhile activists’ work with local language may heighten their attention to language change, which could also lead them to think of local language as highly threatened. Osima, for example, says he believes that the Morioka dialect
will disappear within two decades. As we will see in later chapters, contemporary college students do not share this perspective, and some are uncomfortable with the idea of their skill in local language being evaluated in the first place. Here I will quote an Iwate University student’s reflection on this question (from an interview in 2012, emphasis added):

I appreciate them using [local language], but you know, don’t force it. That’s why that IBC [Iwate Broadcasting Corporation, a local television and radio station] newscaster, he’s always just naturally speaking with that accent. So when he doesn’t try to correct it, that’s why it’s accepted, because it’s natural…. And, well, it’s no good to be thought of as “being good at dialect.” To think, “hey, you’re good at dialect.” Of course, if a Japanese person goes into the English-speaking world, if you’re told “your English is good, huh,” that sort of creates a barrier. If you’re just talking so normally that nobody would comment on how good you are, nobody considering how good or whatever you are, can’t we just have conversations like that? Once that sensation of “hey, you’re good, for a Japanese person” comes up, then a barrier appears. And I think it’s the same with dialect – forcing it out, “hey, you’re using dialect well” – it’s just obnoxious.

In talking about a “barrier,” this student describes having specifically perceived other speakers’ evaluations as enacting (and indirectly enforcing) a boundary between appropriate and inappropriate speakers of local language. Young people like this student are more or less explicitly located outside of the group of expected users of local language. Beyond rejecting any evaluation of local-language skill, these comments distinguish two ways of using local language in the public sphere: “forced” and “natural.” Many of the activist activities I describe might fall into the former category, as they are planned and highly intentional. But there are some contexts where local language is unselfconsciously used in public as prestigious, as in the student’s example of an IBC newscaster. This form of language activism is probably more effective at raising the status of the register, as it does not alienate speakers who are turned off by obvious mimicry. But this “natural” style is diffuse in its effects. Even in the few cases in which activists explicitly attempt to increase others’ competence in local language, new speakers are not recognized as experts; the authoritative word comes from the eldest members. Training new experts did not seem to be a priority in any of the groups I observed (although this may have changed since the time of my observations). This may be another effect of the hegemony of national “standard” language, given that language
education itself is so heavily indexed to the institutions of the state. There is also the matter of local language being iconic of the past, and of old age. Local language activists do recognize competent speakers besides themselves, but they tend to expect that these speakers are all very elderly. Local language activism and discourses of “dialect endangerment” create an expectation that any true or truly competent speakers will be elderly. This is not a phenomenon limited to local language in Touhoku. In the Yukon Territory the Canadian government has institutionalized similar generational expectations for indigenous languages, so that the government only certifies members of the oldest generations as Kaska language experts. This expectation then frames fluency as unattainable for younger speakers, who end up as mere spectators (Meek 2007). And as in numerous other circumstances of language endangerment (e.g. Meek 2007, 2009; Loether 2009), a narrow focus on supposedly “pure” language of the elders fails to recognize attempts to use the language by members of younger generations, and can even actively suppress young people’s efforts. This narrow focus is usually a priority of scholars, educators, and bureaucrats more than local activists. In the context of local language variation in Japan, activists themselves do sometimes focus on “pure” older language, but not exclusively. As mentioned earlier, typically activists are happy to see any use of local language at all. Unlike these other cases of language shift, variation in Touhoku is not a matter of clearly-defined codes of which a speaker might use either, both, or none. The range of linguistic features involved is narrower, and the differences (both perceived and actual) are slighter. It is possible that some speakers intend to express a dual or bivalent (Woolard 1998) identity associated with, or through their very use of, both national “standard” language and local language. Many speakers who lack competence in the valorized “proper” local language forms are still bearers of spoken shibboleths that make them targets for the same kind of dialect-targeting discrimination that destroyed the “proper” forms in the first place. These speakers may not “know the word for everything,” but their speech still marks geographical origins. They are trapped by a consonant here,
a particular intonation pattern there. Many in Iwate bear these shibboleths in their speech, but most local-language (re)valorization activities are restricted to arguably boutique contexts and do nothing to help raise the status of these features in domains of everyday use. Some unvalorized emblems of locality in speech have persisted through language shift and leveling, and they are frequent in the speech of the young people of the region. This implies that marginalization on the basis of language difference may continue unabated into the future, as valorization activities focus only on symbols that are already perceived as disappearing. The following two chapters will turn to young speakers’ language ideologies and practices.
Chapter 3
Metalinguistic Discourse Among University Students

This chapter describes how speakers conscript specific linguistic features to represent local language, in contrast to state-sponsored national “standard” Japanese language. Unlike the previous chapter which focused largely on cases of language-hobbyist groups, most of the data in this chapter is based on ethnographic observation and interviews with college students at Iwate University. In the first section I attend to the everyday interactional contexts in which people establish the localness of local language, by indexing uncertain referents (intentionally or not) to a particular code. In the next section I discuss the symbolic relations between the resulting registers (e.g. particular languages, dialects, accents). I then address two broad logics by which students and other speakers interpret the difference in registers: on the one hand, the idealized temporality of modernity and tradition; and on the other hand, a more immediate attention to practical needs and possibilities.

3.1 Uncertainty and enregisterment.

While speakers and many linguists approach ‘local dialect’ essentially as a naturally-occurring phenomenon (Bucholtz 2003, Kroskrity 2000:26), I address dialect as an ideological process of sorting linguistic production into moral categories, in the vein of other scholarship on ideologically motivated linguistic differentiation (Irvine & Gal 2000). In the twentieth century, state policies of language standardization unfolded so rapidly and effectively that local language seems to have disappeared below the threshold of relevant social concern. Looking back, some have referred to the mid-twentieth century as an era of ‘dialect eradication’ 方言撲滅 (Carroll 2001:183), a concept familiar to most of the middle-aged and elderly participants in my study. From the 1970s on, the linguistic landscape in Touhoku has been characterized by activities of local-language reëvaluation and revitalization, primarily in amateur spheres but also among academics and some other
professionals. This era of revitalization coincided with a cooling-off in standardization policy, and language has largely disappeared from the sphere of public debate. Local language is just another “vanishing” tradition (Ivy 1995). But even today, young people in Touhoku are keenly aware of the stigma attached to local language. This is especially true in first-time interactions between people with different regional or class backgrounds. These moments were salient to local people including students at Iwate University. In my field notes I attempted to mark every instance of metalinguistic commentary, and at least half of these comments had to do with encountering the linguistic other in this sense. Narratives of encounter with the linguistic other were also common. Although I did not find any particular genre conventions shared among these narratives, they did typically facilitate at least some stance-taking regarding the linguistic other being encountered. These narratives were common among students, describing both recent and distant memories. They were also common among other (older) participants in my study, sometimes recounting episodes from decades ago, e.g. of the first time the (Touhoku) speaker traveled to Tokyo.

In this chapter, turning to my data on college students, I find that they perceive a wholesale loss of unique local vocabulary. It is important to note that in a folk or vernacular sense, unique local vocabulary is usually what is meant by ‘dialect’ 方言. This loss, perceived and actual, has fuelled a moral panic, in response to which some students proudly identified themselves as authoritative ‘dialect’ speakers. In this context, the ability to wield ‘dialect’ tokens is something to be proud of. But at the same time, any local linguistic features besides vocabulary – a mere ‘accent’ or ‘being accented’ 訛り、訛っていること – still puts young people at risk of stigma. That is to say, there are at least two ways of recognizing local language: a conservative focus on distinctive features, largely those of lexicon; and, a broader attention to linguistic variation at any level which might act as a sign of regional or class identity. These are two contradictory different ways of reckoning ‘dialect,’ and they leave a space between them which I will investigate later in this chapter as well as
in chapter 4. But before moving on I wish to clarify what the latter category includes. The figure below lists some typical non-lexical features which may be perceived as indexing Touhoku, taken from speakers’ reports and from my own observations.

**Table 2: Sample features.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguishing features in Touhoku, from the perspective of national “standard” language</th>
<th>Gloss of an example</th>
<th>Touhoku-indexing form(s) in romanized script</th>
<th>National “standard” language form(s) in romanized script</th>
<th>National “standard” phonetic (kana) representation</th>
<th>Touhoku-style phonetic (kana) representation, if different</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus marker -kko</td>
<td>“tea” or “a (cup of) tea”</td>
<td>tyakko</td>
<td>tya</td>
<td>ちゃ</td>
<td>ちゃっこ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High vowel (i, u) merger (to ŭ) after alveolar consonants</td>
<td>“map”</td>
<td>ŭizi</td>
<td>tizu</td>
<td>ちず</td>
<td>n/a^{12}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intonational contour (determined by place of pitch accent)</td>
<td>[declarative] “not understand”</td>
<td>L HL wa ka ra na i</td>
<td>H L wa ka ra na i</td>
<td>わからない</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In intervocalic contexts (between vowels), voiceless alveolar &amp; velar stops (t, k) are voiced (d, g); and voiced consonants (b, d, z, g) are (pre)nasalized.</td>
<td>(1) “I”</td>
<td>(1) wadasi</td>
<td>(1) watasi</td>
<td>(1) わたし</td>
<td>(1) わたし</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2) “skin”</td>
<td>(2) handa/ ḥâda</td>
<td>(2) hada</td>
<td>(2) はだ</td>
<td>(2) はんだ^{12}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinctive syntactic use of otherwise common elements; in this example, sentence-final use of the term is marked</td>
<td>“you know?” or “that’s why…”</td>
<td>dakara</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>だから</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Following Goffman’s notion of the discredited person versus the discreditable person, in northeastern Japan, “the stigmatized individual assume[s that their own] differentness is… neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable,” (Goffman 1963:4) so that speakers always inhabit a precarious state of being *discreditable*. A few push back against this stigma in various ways; but most simply refuse to speak, refusing to give any evidence that might invite unwanted attention. In interviews with middle-aged residents, many reported that when visiting large cities they
would ‘fall silent’ 無口になる, wary of being mocked or perceived as inferior. I also observed this phenomenon among college students in 2016. There were students who, in formal contexts, would take as few turns at talk as possible; and when compelled to speak would stutter, rely heavily on formulaic polite phrases, and keep their utterances as brief as possible. These same students later reported having struggled due to the difficulty and unfamiliarity of the national “standard” language. I return to the story of one such student in the following chapter.

In addition to internalized stigma, the stigma toward local language also exists in stereotyped media representations (see Nakamura 2013) and mock-language discourses (Hill 2008). As in the North American contexts described by Hill and others, mock language occurs across numerous domains including everyday conversation but also mediated contexts like text on souvenir goods, as well as in literature, film, and television. I observed speakers using mock local language in a few cases, and it is important to note that mock discourse was not limited to outsiders but was also applied as a technique of distinction by people from Iwate. The transcript below, recorded during a group interview session, provides such an example of mock language discourse. This stretch of talk took place during an informal group interview with students. Several times per year, student clubs arrange intensive two- or three-day activity sessions: vacations and retreats, intensive practices and out-of-town performances. This group interview was conducted with a group of men during a stretch of relaxed late-night down-time at one of these sessions. In this interview, the topic began as “generational differences between yourselves and your parents,” and the participants arrived at the topic of local language through the course of their own conversation. Since I did not raise the topic of local language, participants were more free to take a range of stances toward local language.

Transcript: Namattenee

1 A tugaru no hito tte kotti no hito kara mitemo
津軽の人ってこっちの人から見ても
You know what’s funny is that even to someone from here,
people from Tugaru are accented.

3 Group mm んん。
Hmm. <indicates agreement>

4 B kitanee yo na [汚ねえよな。] It's so nasty. <overlaps with the following line>

5 A demo ore suki da [でも俺好きだ。] But I like it.

6 C ore namattenee gara sa 俺訛ってねえがらさ。
Hey, I don’t have an accent.

<This line is in mock Tugaru style: I noted a marked intonation contour, monophthongization of [nai] to [nee], and voicing of intervocalic stop [k] to [g]. The speaker is from central Iwate, not the Tugaru region.>

7 Group 笑 (laughs)

8 A sou sou sou ta[ppii そうそうそう 龍飛い？]
Yeah, yeah! Tappii?

9 B tappi [龍飛？ Tappii?

<Tappi is the northernmost point of the Tugaru peninsula and here stands in metonymically for the whole region. Speakers A and B are effectively saying, “So you’re from Tappi?”>

10 Group 笑 (laughs)

11 C ore zenzen namatte nee hou dayo kore de 俺全然訛ってねえ方だよこれで。
This is me not being accented at all!

<This line is possibly still mock-Tugaru style, but this line is less clear. See below for further elaboration.>

12 3.0s silence

13 A sugoi yo, ko, kotti kara mite mo namatteru mon ne すごいよ、こ、こっちから見ても訛ってるもんな。
You know it’s amazing, e- even from here (they/you) seem accented.

14 D dakara namari tte iu ka mou gaikokugo desu mon ne だから訛りって言うかもう外国語ですもんね。
Yeah, should we really say “accent” – it's just a foreign language.
Above I have labelled speaker C’s utterances (in lines 6 and 11) mock language or mock Tugaru style; they would come across as mock Touhoku style in, for example, Tokyo. In both lines speaker C is speaking through a Tugaru-styled persona, though in line 11 the relation of speaker to imagined persona is less clear. Here I invoke Goffman’s (1974) framework of the following three participant roles as a basis for these distinctions: the animator, who produces the utterance; the author, who selects the meaning to be conveyed as well as its form; and the principal, who is socially responsible for the utterance. Of course the forms of Tugaru language that are most unlike national “standard” language can be totally unintelligible to outsiders, with extensive distinct local lexicon, etc. In this relative sense, because lines 6 and 11 are intelligible, everyone in the room is aware that (as speaker C says) “this is... not being accented at all.” Is speaker C speaking on his own behalf, as principal, to mean that he is unable to produce a “complete” Tugaru style, assuring his audience that he is aware that this performance is not a perfect mimicry? Or, is speaker C animating his Tugaru character as having said these words? In the latter case the audience is invited to imagine a Tugaru speaker who sincerely believes that this style qualifies as national “standard” language: a Tugaru speaker who falsely believes they are competent to pass as a metropolitan speaker. This character, the unwittingly out-of-date and out-of-touch Tugaru man, is a pre-established type, established perhaps most notably as the protagonist in Yosi Ikuzou’s (1984) song, introduced in chapter 1: *I’m Going to Tokyo* 俺ら東京さ行ぐだ: “When I get to Tokyo I'll save up my money / In Tokyo I'll raise [a cow/cattle]” 東京へ出だなら銭コア貯めで / 東京で牛飼うだ.

These lines, and many others like them in other contexts, use local language styles as a form of language play, adding color to discourse by inhabiting a range of regional personae, in what Tanaka (2011) has called *dialect dress-up* 方言コスプレ. But these imitations and personae follow
“stilted, stereotypic formats” (Smitherman 1988:161). They do not approach Touhoku language with caution about making errors – rather, mock language discourse approaches local language itself as a series of errata, diversions, corruptions of the normalized national “standard” language. Throughout the interactions of college students that I observed, mock language appeared in the same contexts as intentional rule-breaking language play: in single-gender groups (necessarily only men in my observations), and during unprogrammed “down time” when no official activities could happen: riding a bus, eating dinner, waiting for someone to arrive. In many cases, since utterances pass by so quickly in the flow of conversation and usually escape comment, it can be impossible to tell whether a given use of a Touhoku style is a genuine attempt to affiliate with local language speakers, or if it is a mocking pejoration, or both, or neither. But some instances are clearly mocking, enough that they have some of the key effects of mock language discourse identified by Hill (1995): they simultaneously license outsiders’ errors in production of local language, and heavily police local speakers’ production of national “standard” language.

In the stretch of talk introduced above as in other instances, Tugaru language is the ultimate, the very essence of local language. Tugaru language stands in as the opposite pole of national “standard” language, taking on the role (at least in metapragmatic discourse) of anti-language or anti-standard (Halliday 1978, Romaine 2005). And the participants express a diverse set of stances: speaker A finds Tugaru speech distant but inoffensive (lines 1, 13), and possibly charming (line 5). Speaker B is much harsher (line 4, overlapping with speaker A in line 5). Speakers C and D have very different levels of familiarity with Tugaru language: speaker C knows enough to portray the Tugaru speaker, while speaker D, who is not from Touhoku, is unable to comment directly. But the successful conversational interventions of both speakers C and D (lines 6, 11; and 14, respectively) rely on drawing attention to the perceived distance of Tugaru language. In doing so they align with speaker A’s premise.
Also, note how speaker A locates speakers like himself (in this context, people from Iwate, or perhaps people from the Nanbu dialect region) in an intermediate position between the extremes of accentedness and non-accentedness: though we certainly are accented in Iwate, even to us, Tugaru sounds (more) accented. In this conversation, the national “standard” language takes on the default reference position for normal or unaccented speech. The speaker takes on an intermediate marginal identity – affiliating with Iwate language, and describing his own language as accented, i.e., not normal. I will return to this question of intermediate marginality later in this chapter.

Some students were supportive of local language and local language-speaking classmates, taking an interest in learning regional vocabulary from their peers especially. But even some of these students described having felt uncomfortable about accent: “Ugh, yeah, I felt like Iwate intonation was awful, at first.” “Oh yeah, you said.” 「いや私も岩手のイントネーション気持ち悪い気持ち、最初に。」「ああ言ったね。」 The proudest speakers of local language readily switched to national “standard” language if they felt there was a practical communicative need to do so. In domains dominated by national “standard” language, including classroom or work contexts, students perceived local language either as dialect or accent: dialect (lexicon) is to be preserved, accent (phonology) is to be corrected.

Yet in practice the boundaries between registers such as ‘national “standard” language’ and ‘dialect’ and ‘accent’ are subjective and porous, so that power lies in the act of naming the code, perhaps more than in speakers’ actual linguistic production or performance. I argue that the boundaries of ‘dialect’ and ‘accent’ are produced in everyday interaction, and that ‘dialect’ is a process which allows ideologies about language to order speakers and speech into a hierarchy of adequacy and deficiency. This hierarchy justifies and naturalizes unequal social relations, with implications for cultural and economic revitalization (cf. Love 2013) on a larger scale.
3.1.1 Terms for national “standard” language.

At this point I will take a detour to address local terms for national “standard” language. Among the non-linguist participants in this study, this register is called either ‘common language’ 共通語 or ‘standard language’ 標準語, interchangeably. This interchangeability was made explicitly clear in interviews with students. The term ‘standard language’ is older, already in use by 1912 (Ministry of Education 2006:12-13), whereas the term ‘common language’ was introduced by academic linguists in 1949 (Sanada 1987). The key difference seems to be that ‘common’ suggests a descriptive stance, i.e. “this is the common language that we share in addition to local language.” In contrast, ‘standard’ suggests a prescriptive stance, i.e. “this language should be the standard for all communication and replace local language wherever it would be more efficient.” But this difference is not widely recognized. In my observation the terms are in practice rarely differentiated by anyone other than linguists, educators, some bureaucrats, and students in the education division of Iwate University; these groups tend to prefer the term ‘common language.’ The distinction seems meant to mask the reality of the imbalance of power and access which characterize linguistic colonization and national “standard” language hegemony. But this distinction does not avoid doing harm by its existence alone. The difference may be too subtle and technical to matter, but at any rate a difference in these terms does not change the reality of power.

3.1.2 Enregisterment in interaction.

Across a range of settings, students at Iwate University perceive linguistic difference among themselves and those in their surroundings. Linguistic differences may be tied to any number of social meanings: generation or age, peer group, technical language of a given field of study, etc. As they encounter these differences, it is up to students to determine which of these differences will count as a difference in “dialect.” This is how registers of language are called together from discrete
variations on multiple levels of linguistic analysis. Sets of features “become enregistered in the give
and take of discourse, as hearers construe a relation between form and some aspect of the speaker in
the situation” (Eckert & Labov 2017:469). Is that construal by hearers a solitary or individual
process, or is it more dialogic? In Touhoku it is a discursive, dialogic process, not an interior,
individual one. Local language has for a century been the focus of public projects of destruction or
revitalization, of which speakers are aware; and so the “give and take of discourse” often takes the
form of explicit commentary.

Discourse about local language is not limited to questions of prestige and status – there is
also great uncertainty about the “factual” question of which variables should actually be placed into
the category of local language, as opposed to other categories like foreign loanwords or standard
language. In other words, speakers may feel that they lack the authority to categorize language. This
is partly due to the sheer complexity of local language, which differs across both geography and
time, escaping the awareness of any given speaker. In addition to the fundamental complexity of
variation, institutions of everyday linguistic life make it hard for non-specialists to develop even a
relatively complete or circumspect view of local language variation. Schools and broadcast media
expend great effort to exclude local language (see also Silverstein 1996:286). The resulting
uncertainty further contributes to the need for explicitly metalinguistic commentary – what Agha has
termed “reflexive processes” or “processes of reanalysis” (Agha 2007:134-141). In the course of
interaction these processes often begin with requests for clarification, along the lines of “Wait, what
did you just say?” or “Hey, where is that word from?” In the unfolding of these processes, which
paint the border of “dialect” onto everyday communication, students locate themselves inside or
outside, as speakers or non-speakers. They may also find themselves located by others (see Goffman
1963:4). Below I elaborate with further simplified transcripts in this chapter to illustrate this process
unfolding in students’ talk.
The following scene is the first of three I present in this chapter which take place in
Professor Kikuti’s class. Kikuti 菊池 is leading an instance of the first-year students’ mandatory
“college foundations” seminars. In these seminars instructors provide a theme; for this seminar,
Kikuti will be emphasizing Morioka’s great 20th-century literary figures: Isikawa [Ishikawa] Takuboku
石川啄木 and Miyazawa Kenzi [Kenji] 宮沢賢治. In some ways this is a challenging task for
Kikuti, who grew up half-way across the archipelago in the Tyuubu [Chūbu] region 中部地方 and
only moved to Morioka a few weeks ago (from Tokyo). On this day, the seminar is on a field trip to
the city museum. Kikuti (K, below) and some of the students are milling about in the gift shop,
waiting for stragglers to finish touring the exhibits. Kikuti and two students find themselves standing
in front of a display of collectible souvenir goods, each bearing a representative local term. Since
each of these terms is pre-(en)registered as an example of “dialect,” in recognizing an item, speakers
are located among “dialect” speakers. These local language souvenir goods form an unusually
concrete link, a first-order indexical, between speakers and register. Reading the text on each
souvenir, the students find themselves aligning with or against local language, quizzing each other on
the terms.

For ten minutes, Kikuti and the two students unhurriedly read the text on souvenirs. All
two interlocutors are by turns curious, breathless, and laughing. One student (S, below) seems
familiar with almost all of the “dialect” items presented as text on the souvenir objects. Some terms
draw out narratives (as with zukku in the transcript below).

Transcript: Zuku

1 K  na, zukku ha, kutu no koto dayone. desyo?
   な、すっくは、靴のことだよね。でしょ?
   So about “zukku,” it means “shoes,” right? Doesn’t it?

2 S  ano, kazoku to aini, a, zukku kaini iku tte ittara
   あの、家族と会いに、あ、ずっと買いに行くて言ったら
   Going to visit family, when I told them I was going to buy zukku <shoes>
ずっくってなあにみたいね、靴じゃないのお（笑）言われ、
they said, “Whaat is ‘zukku’? Isn’t it ‘kutu’”? <shoes> (laughs)

青森じゃん。あ、あなたはどこだっけ。
Isn’t that Aomori? Where are you from again?

あ、言わなくていいんだ。いいよ、[中部地方]で言うんだ（笑）
Oh, you don’t have to say. It’s okay, we say it in [Tyuubu]. (laughs)

ずっくで通する。やぁいいな、なまりいいぞ（2.0sec）（笑）
Huh, you can understand “zukku.” Ahh, yeah... dialect is cool (2.0sec) (laughs)

なかなか良いじゃん
It’s pretty neat, isn’t it?

Figure 3: Local language souvenirs.
in line 5, a self-repair, reveals another underlying concern with stigma toward the rural subject and the local-language speaker. Kikuti is quick to clarify that students don’t have to say where they come from. In other words, students should be free from being defined by their hometowns; asking a student “where are you from?” risks interpellating and stigmatizing them as rural. In contrast, in a classroom context, it is not quite as threatening to ask students where they are from, since everyone is obligated to name their home high school. But here at the museum gift shop, surrounded by tokens of regional cultural identity, tokens of non-modernity, non-standardness, place names lose their cartographic innocence and become linked with a hierarchy of status and prestige.

In the next example, Kikuti and his students are in the classroom. Kikuti and students are in the middle of a regular seminar session. An hour into seminar, students are reading out loud their own written comments about a recent off-campus event. As “student A” reads, Kikuti interrupts her to clarify the status of the term  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>local (?)</th>
<th>national (?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>past</td>
<td>tigakatta</td>
<td>違かった</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-past</td>
<td>tigakute</td>
<td>違くて</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Differed.

Transcript: Tigakatta.

1 A sanka siteta hito ga ookata desu kedo, sono hitori-hitokei keiken ga tigakatta no de, 参加してた人が多かったですけど、その一人一人経験が違かったので Though many people participated, for each person the experience differed, so -

2 K ne, tigakatta tte kotoba sa, hougen tte yuu ka tigakatta tte yuu hito? ね、違かったって言葉さ、方言っていうか、違かったっていう人？ Hey, the word “tigakatta” – is that dialect or – who says “tigakatta”? 

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In this stretch of talk, the ambiguous form “tigakatta” resists easy identification with a register. Student A produces the term, but neither Kikuti nor other students have the authority needed to locate it as dialect or otherwise. Kikuti hopes to create that authority by surveying the speakers present, so he asks the students for a show of hands in lines 2, 3, and 5. But the class is unable to provide a clear answer; students talk it over and try the word out in their own mouths. Ultimately, Kikuti advises the students to avoid using “tigakatta.” If it had been identified as dialect, Kikuti might have defended its legitimacy, at least along the lines of a limited, objectified legitimacy. But as these students later made clear in interviews, they generally try to avoid anything identified as dialect in their everyday talk, let alone in their college writing.

Despite this avoidance, students do not think of the difference between national “standard”
language and local language registers as a difference between strict opposites. As experienced by
speakers, this difference is best understood not as an objective binary, or even a subjective binary,
but as a subjective polarity, a subjective scale for practices of linguistic differentiation (Irvine & Gal
2000). And speakers make use of a range of subtle techniques to place themselves or others along
such scales.

3.2 Scale and imaginaries.

3.2.1 Emic concept categories.

In this section I will elaborate on the subjective scale that underpins the enregisterment
practices described above, beginning with a review of the available emic concept categories. Across
my study, speakers use a set of associated concepts to describe and enregister local speech forms.
Here I will briefly introduce the most frequently-occurring of these concepts: akusento, intoneesyon,
ningiri, namari, honnom, and gengo. These are not themselves names of particular registers (“language
names”), but some are scales of difference, classes of register. In parallel with Léglise & Migge’s
(2006) article on language naming conventions in which the authors suggest an “analysis of naming
conventions” and an “analysis of language attitudes using a discursive method,” (2006:336), I
attempt to introduce each concept category along with ideological context and implications.

Akusentoアクセント (a loan of accent) refers primarily to patterns of suprasegmental
intonational contour, as in “high accent” or “low accent,” which may exhibit regional variation in
their placement and realization. Akusento refers most strongly to the distinctive intonational contour
of lexical items, which is sufficient to distinguish between them (e.g. ha\textsuperscript{iH}si\textsubscript{i} versus ha\textsubscript{i}si\textsuperscript{ii}). The
existence of akusento is not marked on its own, so that speakers do not ‘have’ or ‘speak’ akusento;
but since its realization differs across regions it is possible to talk about having or speaking with
‘akusento which is different’違うアクセント. Unlike ‘accent’ in North American usage, e.g.
‘British accent,’ akusento is not used directly to describe as a class of register (although it does serve as an indirect index of some register). Since all speakers are considered to have some intonational patterns, in my experience akusento is used descriptively for narrower questions about particular utterances. Intoneesyon イントネーション (a loan of intonation) is also used as a homonym of akusento.

Nigori 濁り, the least-frequently-occurring of these terms, likewise does not refer to a class of register, but to a more narrow type of difference. Specifically, nigori refers to the characteristic Touhoku voicing of voiceless intervocalic obstruents, since 濁り can explicitly mean voicing of voiceless segments: voiced sounds are dakuon 濁音. Nigori is a verb (e.g. past/completed nigotta 濁った), so it can refer to sounds, or entire streams of speech, or even speakers, which have ‘become voiced.’ Another more common sense of nigori is the clouded, occluded, opaque, or dirty, as in muddy river water or unfiltered rice wine. Given the indeterminacy of the referents ‘voiced’ and ‘muddy,’ this term may imply that Touhoku language is symbolically polluted. Meanwhile, in syllabic phonetic representation, voiced consonants are extremely salient, since they are represented by adding a voicing diacritic to syllables which otherwise default to starting with voiceless consonants, e.g. ka か → ga が, ta た → da だ. The fact of this orthographic convention has powerful consequences for awareness of linguistic variation in Touhoku, giving non-expert speakers a ready frame to describe voicing contrast. Future research on local language ideologies would do well to explore these consequences directly. It would also be worthwhile to explore the possible implications for a racial logic of difference. The discourse of Emisi ethnicity in this region (Hopson 2014), which I have encountered repeatedly in interviews, suggests that there is a local consciousness of such a logic.

Unlike akusento and nigori, namari 訛り does refer to a class of register, very much like
‘accent’ in North American usage. For this reason I have tried to translate namari as ‘accent’ throughout my writing. However, namari is very often pejorative. It is similar to ‘corrupted’ in this sense – namari is language which is ill-formed, wrong, polluted. Though it is usually a mistake to over-interpret etymologies and orthography when analyzing largely spoken discourse, it is worth pointing out here that the character 訛 could be interpreted as encoding a sense of ‘corrupted language.’ Its constituent parts, 言 and 化, could be read as “word/speech” and “change/transform,” respectively. This term covers a broad range of variation across levels of linguistic analysis: intonational contour, vowel and consonant realization, morphological variation, and sometimes even lexical variation. Namari is itself a verb (e.g. past/completed namatta 訛った), and it is often used descriptively in the sense of speech or speakers who ‘are accented.’ Speakers may also notice themselves or others becoming accented. For example, one might ‘become accented’ when talking on the phone with family back home. Sometimes this happens over the long term of months or years, and sometimes it happens more immediately during the flow of speech. Note that all of the terms in this section are readily used to refer to long-term change or to immediate code-switching, but namari is the most common frame for metalinguistic comment. It is also the only one of these terms I have observed being used to describe unintentional code-switching: “I [slipped up and] got accented” 訛っちゃった. Like nigori, namari is used to describe marked forms – forms which are at variance with the expectations of national “standard” language. Since namari covers a broader range of linguistic levels, it can function very similarly to the concept of markedness qua markedness. Namari is also not a black and white condition: speech can be located along a continuum of more or less namari. At the end of this continuum farthest from national “standard” language, I observed some people describing the use of local language as ranbou 乱暴: violent, wild, rough, boorish. In chapter 4 I refer to a speaker who is described with this term.
Hougen方言 and gengo言語 also refer to classes of register, effectively equivalent to ‘dialect’ and ‘language.’ They also carry an almost one-to-one correspondence with the register labelling suffixes –ben弁 and –go語, respectively. Typically these suffixes attach to place names so that ‘Kesenese’ in the sense of ‘Kesen dialect’ is Kesemben, realized /kesemben/. Meanwhile ‘Kesenese’ in the sense of ‘Kesen language’ is Kesengo, realized more like /keseŋgo/ or /keseŋŋo/. Hougen and –ben do not fit each other perfectly, however. While –ben tends to refer to all levels of analysis, hougen only refers to all levels of analysis for scholars. In conventional usage hougen refers mostly to lexical variation, as opposed to phonology, morphology, etc. Perhaps this is because the word is easily parsed as referring to lexicon, for example as (implicitly) “regional words,” ところtango地方単語 (語 can be pronounced go or gen depending on context). Hougen is the object of collection (in方言集 dialect collections, or dialect glossaries) and can be offered by the handful: “Shall I teach you a few hougen?”方言をいくつか教えてあげますか. Hougen is the topic of a series of trivia card games (hougen karuta方言かるた), with one hougen item per card. In most circles to ask about hougen is to elicit a word list.15

Another key term used to talk about local language is naosu直す or 治す, a transitive verb (intransitive naoru直る・治る) which non-linguist speakers use to describe code-switching from local language into national “standard” language, on a short or long-term basis. For example one could translate 方言を直さない人hougen wo naosanai hito as “people who do not switch to national ‘standard’ language” or more literally, “people who don’t correct their dialect.” Though naosu is not a class of register like the other terms introduced in this section, it is critical to mention it here. The fact that naosu conventionally means something like ‘to correct something,’ ‘to fix something,’ or ‘to redo something’ is another indication of pejorating ideologies toward local language, since local language is framed as erroneous, faulty, and in need of “correction.” I should add a caveat here that
participants in this study did not, to my knowledge, talk about naosu being a troubling or discriminatory term. Also, in the sense of naosu as ‘to redo something,’ it might be taken as somewhat neutral vis-à-vis the status of the registers in question. However, it is just as possible that naosu expresses a pejorative meaning which tends to escape the awareness of speakers. Naosu is by far the dominant term for code-switching from local language into national “standard” language. Participants in this study did use alternative and more neutral ways of referring to code-switching in other contexts, for example using the postposition de で, as in a typical sentence like これは英語でなんと思いますか kore ba eigo de nan to iimasu ka “What do you call this in English?”

3.2.2 Scales.

In everyday conversation and in interviews, students at Iwate University typically described registers using a hierarchical arrangement of three of the concepts described above: gengo 言語, hougen 方言, and namari 訛り. I translate these emic terms as languages (gengo), dialects (hougen), and accents (namari). These are imperfect glosses; ‘namari’ is often used in a pejorative way that is not quite captured by ‘accent.’ Each class of register is conceived of as being differentiated by degree of mutual intelligibility between registers of the same class. Each register is also prototypically associated with a place or a kind of place, and bears a conventionally-understood level of prestige for its speakers.

According to these students’ emic conception of these scales of difference, language boundaries are the most prestigious, with zero mutual intelligibility; among the most commonly-given examples of “different languages” are English, French, and German. The national “standard” language is also counted as a language proper in this sense.

Dialect boundaries bring some unclear degree of prestige (but certainly less than that accorded to languages), in accordance with a lesser degree of mutual unintelligibility. The chief
example of “a dialect” is invariably given as Kansai style (including Kyoto, Osaka).

Boundaries between accents, and the mutual intelligibility of accents, is far less straightforward. While some students say that accents are always mutually intelligible with the “national standard,” others say that accents are always unintelligible. The question of intelligibility here is subjective. Speakers may not necessarily apply their categorization to an entire stream of speech or text - for many speakers the label of “language” or “dialect,” or “accent,” may only pertain to those linguistic features which are unknown to the hearer. But putting aside intelligibility for a moment, it is clear that “accents” are the least prestigious class of register. And the chief example of an “accent” is speech from Tugaru (mentioned above) – a relatively poor region at the periphery of the Japanese state, stereotypically considered culturally backward and economically undeveloped (cf. Nakamura 2013).

Notions of language, dialect, and accent are arranged, then, in a clear hierarchy, a hierarchy which is nominally arranged in terms of intelligibility and objective similarity of features. But it is also a hierarchy of status and prestige, and it maps more faithfully to questions of social value than to questions of linguistic similarity. One of those dimensions of social difference has to do with the question of regions’ relative wealth. Each register is differentiated as iconic of a place in the (regional) political economic structure, with the political economic structure determining the overall indexical order. Speakers are aware of this ordered hierarchy in terms of language, political power, and everyday material resources. Iwate University students’ home towns and present itineraries represent a diverse range of places in this hierarchy, and conversations with peers reveal regional economic inequality quite clearly. As a representative example, I will refer to the perspectives of students from three places: Miyagi (wealthier, more urban, larger population, physically closer to Tokyo), Tugaru (in Aomori; less wealthy, more rural, smaller population, physically farther from Tokyo) and the area of Iwate around Morioka city (intermediate between Miyagi and Tugaru in
every measure). In a group interview settings where I invited students to talk about their home towns and compare them to Morioka, Miyagi and Tugaru students’ comments were diametrically opposite. Students from around Morioka were not surprised by much coming to Iwate University. Students from Miyagi were surprised by the poor condition of the roads in Morioka (“I wish they would do some maintenance,” 整備して欲しい), infrequent and inconvenient public transit, small buildings, and few stores (e.g. clothing and book stores). Students from Tugaru were surprised by the excellent condition of the roads in Morioka (“I thought the roads were really really well maintained, so many white lines. Because the place where I live there aren’t many white lines” すごい道路整備されてるなって思った、白線はいっぱいあるなって思って。うち住んでいるところあまり白線ねえからさ), the frequent and convenient public transit, and the number and size of stores (“The [mall] in Morioka is too big – and the Aeon [Mall] in Aomori is like a toy” 盛岡が大きすぎて、青森にあるAEONがおもちゃみたい). In a discussion among students about the 2016 House of Councillors election, and whether or not they planned to vote, a student gave the following comment:

What [student R] said about the election changing the country, I don’t really see that happening. For me, coming from the provinces... there was some [recent] economic policy to increase salaries, wasn’t there? When you ask my parents if their salaries actually went up, no, they didn’t. There’s regional inequality... I don’t see it happening, that a person I choose is going to make the country act, I don’t really believe it. I do think for Tokyo they act right away. But in the provinces...

The hierarchy of status that these students experience expands ever upward and downward. Students in this study seem to perceive an arguably fractal hierarchy of status and wealth, in which Tokyo sits above Sendai, which sits above Morioka and Hirosaki, which sit above places like
Kamaisi and Takizawa, each of which sits in turn above places like Touni or Tago, etc, a hierarchy which is perceived in terms of wealth as well as linguistic difference. Since this hierarchy is experienced as a series of relations which are similar at different scales, I will apply Irvine and Gal’s (2000) notion of fractal recursivity here, especially since fractal recursivity does not necessarily require speakers to consciously draw a comparison across these different scales; speakers’ own metapragmatic awareness need not be involved at all (Kroskrity 2009). Unlike some other examples of fractally recursive semiotics of identity (e.g. Mendoza-Denton’s notion of hemispheric localism, 2008:104), the hierarchical relation of registers in Touhoku is paid little emic attention. I have not known local people to talk about the similarity between, on the one hand, the relation of accent/hinterland to dialect/region, and on the one hand, the relation of dialect/region to language/nation. But as I learned across my study and as exemplified in the above quotes, local people are keenly aware of the hierarchical relation. It is a relation which is conceived of in terms of a single gradient or vector: closer to the metropole, or farther from the metropole. Given that it operates like a directional vector, like this instance of fractal recursivity is similar to discourses of orientalism. My interpretation of orientalism as a sort of one-dimensional fractal recursivity borrows from Sakai:

“... the name Asia originated outside Asia, and... its heteronomous origin is indubitably inscribed in the concept of Asia...”
Sakai 2000:791

“Asia exists as a tool for European self-identification. Since ancient times ‘Asia’ was simply the external, eastern vector: a directional index... an open reference. ... For a long time Europeans did not expect Asians to call themselves Asians, or even to realize that they were Asians. ... Defeat [in war and colonization] creates identification and self-recognition as the other; an imposed Asianness. ... Nationalisms then take up the mantle, in some ways, of carrying on this legacy of colonialism [so that] now, Asians self-identify as Asians.”
Sakai 2017, emphasis added

Like “Asia,” Touhoku is also an external vector (literally, it means “northeast”); under the hegemony of language standardization, local language is also conceived of as an external vector (away from the national “standard” language). What Sakai identifies as an external directional index
in the inscription of Asia is similar to the process which has unfolded in the inscription of Touhoku. In fact, it is arguably the same process: Touhoku is Japan’s (perhaps internal) Asia. What should be added to Sakai’s formulation is Irvine and Gal’s recognition that the vectoral, directional index can operate recursively at many scales. If we were to ask, then, what is Touhoku’s Asia, we should readily find an answer. Depending on what perspective is taken to represent Touhoku, we might conclude that it is either the Tugaru region, or perhaps Ainu Mosir (as indigenous and non-Japanese, more than as settler-colony Hokkaido). And so on. This is because, as Sakai argues,

... [W]hat are mapped onto the chronology of maturity [i.e. the West-Asia relation] are consequences of violent transformative dynamics: military conquests, religio-educational civilizing processes, economic competitions and rivalries, and political struggles. Sakai 2000:799

The history of Touhoku, at least since the 1860s, is a series of exactly these violent transformative dynamics.

Hierarchical relationships among places and registers are also reflected in the population (both in absolute numbers and in diachronic trends) of each place: population which is growing in more wealthy places, and falling in less wealthy places. Wealth and status also accrete to the metropole out of proportion with population alone. And this fractal hierarchy is replicated in the symbolic status of registers which are associated with such places, partly in the labelling of those registers as either languages, dialects, or accents. In a short formula we might say that “a language is a dialect with an army and a navy” (Weinreich 1945:13); and a dialect is an accent with well-paved roads and fashionable shops. It is important to remember that these are not simply abstract relations – they exist as relationships between people in concrete interaction. To enregister dialect in interaction is to use linguistic production to affix specific people to a pre-existing framework of value.

3.3 Idealized temporality.
In addition to the question of regions’ relative wealth, another framework of social meaning that organizes ideologies about local language is a temporal logic, specifically a dichotomy of modernity and tradition. As a frame for interpreting time, it is important to note that logics (or discourses) of modernity and tradition are not necessarily contradictory; they implicate each other, coexisting and overlapping easily, as tools for creating meaning. In this dual scheme national “standard” language indexes modernity, and local language indexes the traditional. I should note that in this context both modernity and tradition might be interpreted as referring to epochs which are, in a literal sense, the past. While tradition here implies pre-standardization (in literal terms variously pre-1945 or pre-Meiizi), I take the specific modernity of national “standard” language to be the era of unbridled enthusiasm for national and corporate institutions, of brassy masculine confidence, characterized also by ideologies of progress (which might be dated pre-1990, or pre-2000, or pre-2011). This is the “before Fukushima” modernity of Jean-Luc NANCY (Nancy 2015, Takahashi 2018). The modernity linked to national “standard” language does not necessarily suggest the contemporary or the present. Although these implications lie outside the scope of this argument, I would suggest that the evolving present as an imagined time might be associated with neologisms, fashionable phrases, and other linguistic trends, which may be indexed more to digitally-mediated spaces like television and the internet than to the nation or the locality. I will focus on the former two pieces of the imagined temporal dichotomy, which align with much of Iwate University students’ discourse on local language. National “standard” language is to some extent associated with institutional contexts of government and education, but since it is also expected across most domains, it is largely left to local language to be marked and to be given secondary associations.

The primary index of local language I observed was generational, a connection to the elderly. In every group interview about generational differences, students would invariably talk about linguistic differences with their parents and grandparents, unprompted; in some interviews, language
was the first topic to come to mind. Other occasions of talk about local language also tended to include mentions of the elderly, especially when it came to reasons why one might want to use more local language: it might help municipal officials to better serve senior citizens, or it might make grandmas happy. The best example of this association comes from elsewhere in Iwate. In early 2016 I attended a Saturday performance by a local language theater group, after which I stayed around to help the venue staff put the tables and chairs back in order. When I mentioned that I was here doing research, a member of the staff (roughly in his forties) asked me when I became interested in studying the way old people talk お年寄りの言葉. After decades of shift and leveling, which seem to become more pronounced with each generation, local language is iconic of era, functioning as a chronolect. To my knowledge and in my observations, elders in fact use many linguistic styles, including a range of registers from the local to the national; but to younger people, even elders’ use of what they consider national “standard” language may bear so many local features that it sounds like local language. In many cases local language may be tied to era even more strongly than to place, functioning as chronolect even more than as topolect. In one of the debriefing interviews in which I asked students what they thought of local language as a topic, most students identified local language as a practice of their elders, and mostly as a concern of those elders and perhaps some scholars.

The identification of local language with older generations also connects with the notion of local language speakers as metaphorically not caught up 遅れてる, a sense which also applies to the place of many rural areas along a ladder of economic development. This is the second sense in which local language is not modern, in that it is connected with falling behind economically, with people in economic classes who have less access to conventional educational capital and who are less mobile. For students at Iwate University these indexes were often represented in the figure of imagined personae: after the Tugaru speaker, the two most common figures associated with local language are the elderly person and the yankii ヤンキー. Yankii (cf. Miller 2004:231) are usually
imagined as young, rebellious, and noisy people known for riding motorcycles, whose norm-breaking is understood to result from extreme disaffection and loss of faith in institutions. They are people for whom the promises of modernity are not working out, and as a result, the people who have the least interest in adopting the modernist prestige code of the national “standard” language. The idea that disaffected yankii speak local language is widely shared, though this is not an index emphasized by local language activists.

To be clear, no students I met at Iwate University should really be identified as yankii (although I have come to know some former yankii elsewhere); these are figures drawn from students’ narratives, both abstract and concrete. What I mean to suggest is that for students at Iwate University, adopting local language as part of their linguistic identity meant affiliating with the past, and/or affiliating with alternative schemes of value and prestige outside of the institutional norm. Affiliating with the past might mean sounding obsolete, or it might mean sounding respectful and intellectually curious. Affiliating with alternative value might mean sounding lower-class; or it might mean sounding cool and self-possessed. These interpretations largely depend on actual contexts of use, including the life histories and positionalities of language users and their audiences. I return to this theme in chapter 4.

Another important result of the underlying imaginary of modernity/tradition is the frequent theme of local language as something missing in the metropole, and as something desired (for this reason) by the city dweller. Below is a representative exchange from a group interview:

Transcript: Zibuntati Nai

Y tokai no hitotati ni hougen wo baka ni sareru toka...
都会の人達に方言をばかにされるとか...
When people from the city make fun of [your] dialect...

W iya, tokai no hito suki da yo, hougen, zibuntati nai kara.
いや、都會の人好きだよ、方言、自分たちないから。
Nah, people from the city like dialect, since they don’t have it themselves.
Well I guess so, but when they look at you like [makes a surprised face] I hate it.

Here two students report metropolitan desire for or ridicule of local language, and moments like these were not uncommon. I did observe some direct evaluations and expressions of desire toward local language along these lines by students voicing a metropolitan viewpoint, especially students from Sendai and Tokyo, who would say that they found local language fun or interesting since they did not have any themselves. Again this attitude reflects ideologies of linguistic difference more than sociolinguistic facts.

Sendai and Tokyo are not without local features, so there are at least four questions which complicate the assertion that these urban young speakers are without local language. First, do they have access to local features? Second, what is their awareness of these features? Third, do they consider these features to index localness (as per Preston 1996)? And fourth, do they possess the agency and desire to control their linguistic production in relevant social contexts, i.e. do they let it be known that they have local features? Indeed I knew some students from very large cities who identified those home cities as places with distinctive local language, and who simultaneously described their own attraction to local language in Iwate. These cases further demonstrate that metropolitan desire for rural local language is not simply a function of the lack of local language in the city, but as I argue, it is instead a function of the modernity/tradition ideological frame through which the metropolitan and the peripheral are often interpreted. As a discursive frame, it creates its own very real effects in the social world.

Each piece of this modern-versus-traditional framing of national “standard” language-versus-local language is also bound by another common element: a gaze from the outside, i.e. an othering gaze. National “standard” language is implicitly associated with the speaker’s subject position, and local language is implicitly identified by association with (generational, class) others, or
by its very objectification in the eyes of the metropolitan subject. Within this framing, even those who identify as (and speak from the position of) local language speakers must attend to their evaluation by metropolitan outsiders. Though I am describing an outsider perspective, note that this perspective can be taken on by local people. Sometimes this is done in a speculative, imaginary sense, as in the three lines of conversation quoted above. The outsider perspective can also be adopted in a deeper and more literal sense by returnees or immigrants e.g. in the much-discussed phenomenon of U-turn, I-turn, and J-turn migrants (Littlejohn 2018).

The modernity/tradition frame I have discussed so far is nicely illustrated by an exchange that took place in the first provisional meeting of Kikuti’s college foundations seminar. This exchange will also help to illustrate a final point about the modernity/tradition framing of national “standard” language and local language: that efforts to valorize local language in this frame are limited, and rely on explicit claims about the status of registers.

The new academic year is getting started and it’s new student orientation day. This is a provisional or introductory session for Kikuti’s seminar, before the first official meeting of the class. Roughly twenty-five students are taking turns introducing themselves: name, high school, one or two other things. Only two students mention local language in their introductions. Both are students from Tugaru, known for having the ‘strongest accent’ in the Tohoku region. In hindsight, since Tugaru carries such a tight iconic link with accentedness, the mention of local language by these students is predictable. These students’ comments function to anticipate and cut off awkwardness or discriminatory comments. Note that the phrase ‘yorosiku onegai simasu’ is a customary polite ending which I might translate literally as ‘please be kind to me.’ Idiomatically it might be given as ‘nice to meet you,’ or ‘thank you for your consideration,’ but the phrase still bears a sense of supplication.
After these comments, Kikuti interrupts, immediately intervening to valorize local language:

方言は文化, “dialect is culture.” Kikuti’s intervention suggests the underlying tension: a real and present risk of stigmatizing these students for their speech. Also, whether or not Kikuti is paying attention to this factor, he has brought the flow of conversation to a halt by interrupting the sequence of introductions. If either of these two students were trying to avoid standing out or being marked as unusual, it’s now too late. The underlying stigma around local language (particularly namari) is now front and center. But in this context, Kikuti has limited means to address this stigma. He is unable to authenticate local language as normal and expected, given his own position as an outsider, and given the formal distance of the setting. Instead, in a move that is common for both outsiders and local people, Kikuti moves to interrupt the stigma toward speakers through an explicit
evaluation of the status of local language: saying positive things about the register.

Table 4: Authentication and Status Evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authentication model</th>
<th>Explicit status evaluation model</th>
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<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>“of course we talk like this”</td>
<td>“local language is good”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“this is the normal way to talk”</td>
<td>“local language is more expressive”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“this is how it’s said here”</td>
<td>“local language is an important scientific topic”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kikuti’s intervention, 方言は文化 “dialect is culture,” is similar in spirit to saying “it belongs in the company of great literature” or “it belongs in a museum.” So the effect of this “culture” claim is ambiguous: on the one hand, it attempts to place ‘dialect’ alongside universally-valued ‘high culture,’ namely, the celebrated local literature that this class will address. On the other hand, it raises a problematic of modernity. Following Rosaldo (1998:78), the label of ‘culture’ 文化 marks ‘dialect’ as the province of the still-cultural, those who are not yet modern or mobile enough to have lost their traditional culture. We might ask, is this a practice which “erase[s] the ‘self’ only to highlight the ‘other’?”

After this “dialect is culture” comment, Kikuti goes on to mention the academic work of the dialectologists among the Iwate University faculty. This is a move to legitimize local language as an object of study, and it is another ambiguous claim: it associates local language with the prestigious sphere of academic work, but places local language under an objectifying lens which the “national standard” escapes. This is part of the power behind ideological doxa of “standard language” which Milroy (2001) highlights: for both academics and non-academics, the terms of analysis have already framed our consideration of what kinds of analysis will be legitimate. Since local language can be identified (enregistered) as “culture,” it is only appropriate for a certain type of objectified, arm’s-length respect. Again, referring to Sakai (2000:797):
The putative unity of the West is barely sustained because they deliberately avoid submitting Western and Asian things to the same field of analysis. How perspectives are organized according to this distinction thus prescribes and presages where the West is imagined to be located and who is entitled to feel modern.

Applying this argument to Touhoku, the unity of the nation and the national “standard” language are dependent upon an unequal analysis of the ‘culture’ of the peripheral regions as opposed to putatively ‘national’ histories and traditions. Of course, local language is indeed cultural; but the move to recognize and gaze upon local language as culture is also a move that draws focus away from the national standard, and in doing so it naturalizes ideas of ‘standardness.’ Those who consider themselves speakers of standard language, or perhaps those who live in Tokyo, are not living under different sociolinguistic conditions or ideologies of language: they are living under exactly the same conditions of standard language hegemony as are experienced in Touhoku.

Under such conditions, what kind of intervention can be applied against stigma? Kikuti, for his part, is left with little choice but to (re)objectify local language. Following the intervention discussed earlier that “dialect is culture,” Kikuti wraps up with a call to action: 方言を大事にしよう ‘Let’s take dialect seriously,’ or more likely ‘Let’s care for dialect.’ Students continue their self-introductions, and no one else mentions language.

In some ways the logics I will have discussed in the next two sections parallel Woolard’s (2016) scheme of ideologies of linguistic authority: idealized temporality might seem to correspond to the anonymous, and immediate practicality might seem to correspond to the authentic. But as I intend to illustrate, these paradigms are not duplicates of one another, but rather they cross-cut each other. Logics of anonymity and authenticity can both be identified within the framework of idealized temporality, as well as within the framework of immediate practicality, and so forth.

3.4 Immediate practicality.

As I have suggested above, the modernity/tradition frame discussed above is not the only
frame used to understand local language by students at Iwate University and other participants in my study. There are a series of other ideological patterns in discourse about local language which escape an idealized temporal scheme, patterns which I suggest might be collected under an umbrella of immediate practicality: emphasizing interactional immediacy rather than distant chronotope, and emphasizing practical necessity rather than ideological abstraction.

The most common element of practicality is an instrumentalist or utilitarian (Kroskrity 2009:192-194) language ideology, implicitly conceiving of language as an impartial tool, and emphasizing intelligibility and efficiency of communication. In all discussions of local language students raised the question of intelligibility, regardless of their other stances toward local language. In many cases intelligibility and the efficiency of communication were discussed as the only questions that should matter. These were sometimes statements skeptical of local language revitalization activities: “if everyone can understand, there’s no further need for intervention.” Other times the same utilitarian logic was used to support revitalization: “we need these programs to make sure people can communicate with the elderly and within communities.” In several group interviews, the student(s) who introduced a point about intelligibility kept returning to it, over and over, as a response to other students’ suggestions. I interpret this insistence as a rejection of other language ideologies – so that for some students the utilitarian view means not only that language is a tool, but also that language must not be thought of as anything other than a tool.

Apart from utilitarian language ideologies, speakers do use linguistic difference to create and perceive social boundaries, especially linguistic difference that contributes to barriers to intelligibility. Unintelligibility itself is a resource for some speakers, as it can be appealing to have a code that is not accessible to outsiders. The other side of this same point is that to outsiders, local language can seem exclusive. Many Morioka residents who moved from elsewhere in the archipelago, including
students at Iwate University, have described a feeling of resigned alienation on this point. They fear they may never be truly accepted by local people. (Unintelligibility as a communicative resource, and the trouble of linguistic alienation, are both addressed again in chapter 4.) This is a kind of alienation that results from the particular conditions of each speaker and their interlocutors, and I do not mean to argue that it is universally the case. But it is perhaps to be expected in a sociolinguistic situation where local language is reserved solely for linguistic domains of traditional activities, family, and old friends, and where local language is also largely excluded from educational institutions, and not normally taught at all to new speakers.

Another common theme that escapes the modernity/tradition frame is speakers’ use of local language for differentiation and identity-formation, whether this is active and agentive stylistic differentiation by the user (Eckert 2012:97-98), or identification by those other than the speaker, as with Goffman’s *discreditable person* (1963:4). Style-shifting (as discussed earlier in this chapter) is an important tool for students at Iwate University to keep conversation interesting and to show off their own linguistic chops, and for some it is an important tool for crafting their social identities (cf. Giddens 1991).

Students are very aware of these functions of linguistic difference; in interviews many described the great benefit of local language in giving the speaker the ability to stand out socially. In these cases speakers perceived linguistic difference as a sort of costumed performance of the self. But at the same time these speakers considered linguistic difference (and local language in particular) to be evidence of a vulnerable, authentic, inner self. For example, two men talking about what they would want in a romantic partner agreed that it would be appealing if their partner sometimes were to “get accented,” either when not paying attention, or in a fit of emotion. “When you see how they really talk, it’s as though they’ve let you into a kind of private mental zone. And that can help you to get closer, I think.”
For the speaker who does feel a risk of being found out as accented, these are indeed moments of vulnerability, linguistic land mines, which many speakers expend great energy to avoid. It is hard to directly observe such avoidance, at least with the methods used in the present study. I did observe a few slip-ups; students would say something that they thought sounded non-“standard,” and then add “damn, I got accented there” 訛っちゃった.

Returning to the question of techniques for combating stigma raised in the previous section, it may be clear by now that the “authentication model” should be understood as aligning not with a logic of modernity/tradition, but with the present provisional notion of immediate practicality. Authentication discourse places local language as the obvious choice in front of the speaker’s face, setting aside the unwinnable game of larger-scale prestige. In this sense it can function like the social and labor organizing technique of soliciting personal stories, as in Kamper’s (2003) “organizing moments” or Thorne’s “real lived experiences” (2013:13). Finally, this mode of discourse does not rely on or privilege the outsider or metropolitan perspective; if anything it privileges the local perspective.

Below I have reproduced a stretch of talk which subtly captures several elements of immediate-practicality discourse unfolding: a form of local language is experienced as unintelligible, identified, explained, and taught as normal. This moment comes from a regular practice session of a traditional art (geidou 芸道) club. An experienced instructor, Mr. N, and a half-dozen students are present, including F and J. Three key terms have been rendered abstract for the sake of anonymity; the discussion below revolves around the second of these, “term2.” This is a term which N first taught to the students in earlier sessions, but here the term comes up as a topic of discussion in its own right.
Transcript: Oboete Oite

1 N  [term1]
[用語1]。
[Don’t forget to do] [term1].

先生、[お用語2]ですか、[ご用語2]ですか。
Mr. N, does [term2] start with “o” or “go”?

3 N  [o-term2] nan da kedo.
[お用語2]なんだけど。
It’s [o-term2].

4 F  o?
お？
O?

5 N  o.
お。
O.

(5 second pause)

6 N  tihou ni yotte samazama aru no de, hm, itiou [term2] to oboete oite.
地方によって様々あるので、ふむ、一応[用語2]と覚えておいて。
There are many [ways to say it] in different regions, so, um, at any rate just remember [term2].

7 J  [term2] ha, iiwake ga aru tokoro de tukau desu ka, sore tomo morioka tihou desu ka.
[用語2]は、言い訳があるところで使うですか、それとも盛岡地方ですか。
Do you use [term2] for a certain reason, or is it the Morioka region?

8 N  anou daitai [term3] yatteru tokoro ha [term2] to iu n desu.
あのうだいたい[用語3]やってるところは[用語2]と言うんです。
Well, generally you say [term2] any time you’re doing [term3].

9 J  betu no iikata ha nani ga aru n desu ka.
別の言い方は何があるんですか。
What other ways to say it are there?

10 N  hm, amari omoi tukanai. sou desu ka, kiita koto nai?
ふむ、あまり思いつかない。そうですか、聞いたことない？
Hmm, nothing really comes to mind. So you’ve never heard it before, then?

11 J  iya. hh
いや。 (笑)
No. (laughs)

N, the instructor, introduces [term2] as perfectly normal and normative for this context, and
suggests that [term2] is local to this region, and it is what students should use, since they are here,
after all. J, a student, expresses some hesitancy at the idea of learning only the term associated with
this region, but N does not demonstrate such a concern, and does not orient to J’s expression of that concern. After this segment the instructor continues explaining [term2] by specifying the characters used to write the term, and its original meaning in this traditional artistic context. Another important fact to note about this setting in general is that this instructor’s speech typically includes numerous features which to my ears are iconic of Morioka style, especially in phonology, morphology, and prosody/intonational phonology. In the stretch of talk above, the instructor maintains this same consistent attitude of normalizing regional language forms.

3.5 Ideologies of local language: additional considerations.

In considering the two contrasting ideological frames described above I should add that it is not simply a matter of immediate practicality being a “good” or “bad” frame for local language or stigmatized local language speakers. Neither of the frames introduced here implies a moral stance toward national “standard” language or local language. I have demonstrated that it is possible to valorize or pejorat local language within the dichotomous temporal frame of modernity/tradition. It is possible to justify the eradication of local language within the frame of immediate practicality. And while I do intend to associate each of these frames with a particular perspective (in short, outsider and insider perspectives), they are modes of discourse, and either mode of discourse can be adopted by any speaker, including speakers whose linguistic identities may be local, metropolitan, uncertain, complex, etc.

Observing the ways that students at Iwate University enact registers in everyday life, what is clear is that even as certain forms of local language are praised, legitimated, and valorized, these pre-existing frameworks of inequality persist. This is because, for these speakers, the distinction between “real dialect” and “mere accent” functions as a division between local language which is desirable and proper, and local language which is neither desirable nor proper. As stigma toward local
language persists, the current generation of young speakers in Touhoku continues to respond in the best ways available to them – largely by falling silent.
Chapter 4
Students’ Lingual Life Histories: Identity, Agency, Alienation

In this chapter I outline the perspectives and “lingual life histories” (Kroskrity 1993) of four Iwate University students – Sawada, Narita, Kumagai, and Hatori – to demonstrate how young people craft linguistic identities based on the particular circumstances of their own families, life histories, and imagined futures. These were among the students I initially recruited for long, multi-session interviews and visits to their family homes. I conducted such in-depth work with eight students, including six family visits. The four cases selected here represent a range of regional and class backgrounds, and a range of different social identities at Iwate University. Each of these cases will serve to illustrate a different aspect of students’ agency as users of language to control their own linguistic production, and attempt to control how their interlocutors react to their linguistic production. Each case will demonstrate a different language-ideological perspective and mode of engaging with linguistic localness, which I describe in terms of linguistic discrimination, colonization, and alienation. After introducing these cases I reflect on how linguistic identities are consequential for the future social role of local language registers, and speakers themselves. The first case is Sawada, an aggressive proponent of her own local language.

4.1 Sawada.

When I first met her, Sawada 潤田 was a first-year student at Iwate University, and immediately stood out as one of the only students whose use of local language was not accidental. Sawada used local intonation, local vowel and consonant phonology, and some local lexicon. Among these features the most marked was Sawada’s use of local first-person singular pronouns ora おら and wa わ, and local first-person plural pronouns orando おらんど and wando わんど. These items
stand in stark contrast with national “standard” language first-person singular pronouns like *watasi* 私, and first-person plural pronouns like *watasitati* 私たち or *watasira* 私ら. In the popular messaging mobile application LINE, Sawada used a set of digital sticker decals that featured local language (see screen-captured image below).

Figure 4: Digital stickers.

Screen captured image of a segment of group chat in a group that included Sawada. In this stretch of digital interaction the participants were celebrating a successful day of their group’s activities. Sawada’s sticker (the white cat-like figure) is at the top, accompanied by dark text reading *nda んだ*. In addition to its propositional meaning, *nda* is a salient icon of Touhoku speech, roughly in the vein of Ocracoke “high tide” pronounced with [ɔy] (Wolfram & Schilling-Estes 1995), or Pittsburgh “yinz” (Johnstone 2010). Chat participants’ usernames and avatars have been anonymized. Screen captured image by the author.

Sawada identified as a local language expert: “If you want to know anything about dialect, just ask me!” She sometimes ‘reminded’ her own parents of local language features that they had forgotten, especially lexical items, like *zyokko* (じょっこ goldfish) and *kaguzi* (かぐじ rear garden). To this extent she seems to have effectively reversed generational language shift. At Iwate University, Sawada’s linguistic identity took on a frequent and significant role in helping to define her persona.
among friends and in other contexts. How did this come about? Iwate University in 2016 was a place where few students claimed to know much local language at all. Why did Sawada not only make claims to expertise in lexicon, but also use less-valorized local forms of phonological localness? I wish to suggest that in home and school contexts, Sawada experienced a partially decolonized relation of local language and national “standard” language, in which the hegemony of language standardization was partially limited, and local language was consistently rendered valuable and viable. As with Western Mono elder and language activist Rosalie Bethel (Kroskrity 2009), the particular course of Sawada’s life history set the groundwork for her exceptional (if not unique) role among Iwate University students.

4.1.1 Sawada: home town and family.

Sawada comes from a small Tugaru town. Both of her parents’ families are from the Tugaru region; her father was born near Hirosaki. Growing up Sawada lived with her maternal grandparents, mother, father, and elder sister in one house, and with two maternal aunts living close by. Sawada’s mother, the youngest of three sisters, used to be a librarian and worked on a museum staff before switching to teaching in a local preschool. Working at the museum especially, Sawada’s mother encountered a large number of visitors from outside Tugaru, and felt a practical need to use national “standard” language with them. Sawada’s father, the oldest of four siblings, is a truck and bus driver, who did not feel a similar “need” for changing how he spoke in his professional life.

There are certainly more remote places in Tugaru (and elsewhere in Touhoku) than Sawada’s home town, but it is far from metropolitan. The town is well beyond the northern terminus of the Tugaru Railway 津軽鉄道. Sawada’s house, like many others in the area, has room for a large garden, as well as pieces of nearby forest designated for household use. Wild herons fly past, visible from inside the kitchen. According to Sawada’s aunt, this is a part of the country where (some decades
ago) no companies paid to run advertisements on television – during breaks in programming, a silent caption asked local viewers to “please wait.” In terms of language, the family described Sawada’s late grandfather as having been *rambou* (乱暴 rough, violent, wild); Sawada’s parents proudly identified with the Tugaru region but described themselves as “more controlled” speakers.

Sawada had a particularly close relationship with her grandmother and with her father. She credits her grandmother more than anyone else with teaching her local language. On one occasion Sawada said that having frequent contact with grandmothers (specifically “grandmothers” お祖母さん, not “grandparents” 祖父母 or “grandfathers” お祖父さん) was the most important contributing factor to maintain local language in the face of language shift. This certainly seems true for young women, given some grandfathers’ sexist favoritism toward male grandchildren. In interviews with other Iwate University students, a number of women described grandfathers who ignored them, but showed great interest in a brother. Other grandfathers were not as dismissive, but still seemed forbidding: “As a child... I thought my grandfather’s... face was scary, he was tall, he talked like he was always angry. (laughs) But my grandma was always a kind person.”

Sawada’s father, Sawada Masasi 澤田真志, seems to have supported her growth as a proud speaker of local language. Masasi used to drive long-haul truck journeys, including as far as Kagosima. On these trips, Masasi said that he picked up a few localisms along the way, but still spoke with Tugaru language, which was broadly accepted by interlocutors. Some years ago Masasi took Sawada along on one of these trips along the archipelago. This experience would have likely proven by example that Tugaru speakers need not fall silent, or switch entirely to national “standard” language, in order to be accepted elsewhere. Masasi also seems to have generally supported Sawada’s
relatively unconstrained and confident personality. In another driving example, Masasi said that he sometimes takes Sawada along for a drive on the Tugaru plan – where they would peel out and hit top speeds around 240 kph (150 mph).

4.1.2 Sawada: at school.

As Sawada and her parents described it, her preschool and elementary school were domains of local language; all the teachers and students were “accented,” and comfortably so. As Sawada tells it, local children knew they were accented for two reasons: first, linguistic difference was made obvious in television and other media; and second, teachers mandated a change to national “standard” language was in certain domains, particularly when reading aloud (音読 ondoku). It was during these years that Sawada had the first really defining experiences which set her on a path toward her later linguistic identity. The most important of these moments might have been a broader contextualization of language around her:

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When I was in elementary school I heard something about how accents are disappearing, so I thought hey, that’s true, and we have to pass them on, so I got accented. (laughs) I’m maintaining the accent! Also I like accent(s). And it’s just a hassle! (laughs) It’s such a hassle to correct [everything into national “standard” language]. (laughs)
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I do not contend that this moment alone, i.e. learning that “accents are disappearing" なまりが無くなってる, would have turned Sawada into a local language activist. It was simply a matter of introducing a framing of risk or endangerment: local language is not simply rare, but in danger of disappearing. The idea that local language is endangered is certainly common in mainstream discourse.
But this discourse (which I am calling for now the *endangerment frame*) has at least five noteworthy effects. First, it places everyday linguistic variation (synchronic difference) within a historical narrative. The historical narrative of language endangerment sets up a moral framework, though it is a narrative which is left largely implicit in most tellings, nevertheless carries its own normativity (as per Bruner 1991:15-16). The moral framework of the endangerment frame privileges and invites the hearer to affiliate with disappearing form(s). Even in the brief selection above this moral stance is clear: “we have to pass them on,” なまりを残していかなくちゃ. Second, the endangerment frame characterizes language change as important (or at minimum, worth discussing), consequential, and terminal. Language is not simply changing in a cyclical, or mundane, or light manner. A crisis of permanent, irreversible loss of cultural heritage is unfolding. Third, as a historical narrative, the endangerment frame de-naturalizes language change and language shift, making it apparent that they are the result of human action (whether this is intentional action or not). Fourth, the endangerment frame is not only a narrative of the past, but it is also an interpretation of ongoing events, and an augury of a dark future without local language. But this is only a potential future. In this sense the endangerment frame suggests that it might be possible to intervene to stop certain futures from coming about, highlighting potential action and agency of speakers. The frame of language endangerment, then, offers an invitation to act – an invitation which Sawada ultimately accepted. Finally, while the endangerment frame can be unhelpful and discouraging to would-be revitalization activists (Hill 2002), it does valorize the register in question, since even before arguments are made to assert value, endangered forms are framed as worthy of concern. In some contexts the endangerment frame might even serve to inoculate speakers against pejorative discourse.

Specific activities in school were also important for Sawada in developing her approach to local language. Toward the end of Sawada’s time in elementary school, her supervising teacher acted as a linguistic role model.
In addition to serving as an example of everyday language practice, this teacher organized a school play using Tugaru language, a play in which Sawada participated. In doing so the teacher valorized local language both personally and institutionally, and in doing so seems to have approached local language through an authenticating frame (as described in the previous chapter).

Although Sawada knew about language difference – she knew that she had an accent\(^\text{23}\) – from a very early age, it was in high school that she first had sustained contact with the linguistic other. This is because for high school she commuted to Gosyogawara, meeting classmates from across the Tugaru region, who represented a cross-section of class, language, and locality within the region. Many of Sawada’s fellow students were from more metropolitan backgrounds, so here Sawada found herself identified as the accented speaker. She found herself placed into a linguistic and implicitly moral hierarchy of types of speakers, or always potentially placed into this hierarchy, with linguistic features that other speakers could at any time enregister as “accent.” As discussed in earlier chapters, these moments are important turning points for many speakers – in a lingual life history they are often catalysts for “turnings” or moments of transformation, where identities as users of language are formed.\(^\text{24}\) For many in Touhoku, significant or sustained experiences in which others identify them as “accented” have been a motivation to abandon local language, and try to sound like an unmarked speaker of national “standard” language.
In Sawada’s case, instead of changing her linguistic production, she kept using local language, and her later linguistic identity began to come together. Sawada described this as a choice between two strategies for Tugaru speakers, one of which is to be naoru ba (治る派 correcters), i.e. choosing to accommodate interlocutors from other regions by adopting national “standard” language, or the local language of wherever they are. The other strategy is to be naoranai ba (治らない派 non-correcters), i.e. refusing to change linguistic production, or changing as little as possible. Sawada has stood firmly among the naoranai ba since entering high school.

Coming into a place of potential linguistic othering, her high school in Gosyogawara, Sawada was thoroughly guarded against linguistic stigma. She had taken a moral stance opposing language shift, valuing local language. This moral scheme might have helped to resist the imposition of external frameworks of value that lead many speakers to reject local language. During her time in high school, Sawada was also strongly connected to local language in everyday life, as she was living at home with her parents and grandmother. And in her high school, Sawada was not unique as an “accented” speaker. Maintaining local (Tugaru) linguistic features was a viable option for other students as well, but it was not a universal strategy either in high school or afterward. Again, speakers tend to fall into either naoru ba (治る派 correcters) or naoranai ba (治らない派 non-correcters). Although I will introduce another example of the naoru ba among Iwate University students, Sawada’s older sister, Sawada Arisa 澤田亜里沙, also offers a clear contrast. According to her immediate family, Arisa has now largely abandoned Tugaru language in favor of national “standard” language. I cannot present a complete explanation here, but I will introduce some relevant facts. First, Arisa was described as “a person who worries,” unlike her (self-)confident sister. In other words Arisa’s personality might have led her to be particularly reactive to language stigma. And Arisa’s educational trajectory was quite different than Sawada’s: Arisa went to high school
much closer to home, in a town only a fifth the size of Gosyogawara. This was a high school where much less national “standard” language was spoken. After high school, Arisa moved to Kantou for college, and is still living there. Arisa may have changed her linguistic production in response to linguistic discrimination, or to affiliate with cosmopolitan capital, metropolitan lifestyle, trans-local elite culture, and/or her new neighbors in Kantou. She may have also changed her linguistic production because she was not socialized to resist language inequality in the same way that Sawada was. Moving from a small Tugaru high school directly to Kantou may have been a major shock. While Sawada was gradually exposed to greater and greater linguistic diversity, first at high school in Gosyogawara, then at Iwate University, practicing her role as the “accented” speaker, Arisa did not experience any intermediate steps or everyday exposure to speakers of national “standard” language. Her first significant, sustained encounters with the linguistic other may have unfolded in Kantou, with few or no other Tugaru speakers nearby, and without other means of support such as the ability to commute home. While Sawada experienced a kind of inoculation against linguistic othering, her sister Arisa did not; and that contributed to a major difference in their linguistic production.

As mentioned above, at Iwate University, Sawada was one of the very few students who claimed speakerhood of local language (of any region). Unlike her high school, where a large number of classmates could claim to speak Tugaru language, Iwate University had only a few students from Tugaru, joined by students from many other places. It is in this context that Tugaru stood out as a special region, i.e. as the prototypically most accented place in Touhoku. I observed a broad consensus among students and other non-linguists in Morioka that Tugaru is a region of special linguistic difference: that Tugaru language sounds like Korean, or French; that Tugaru speakers do not adjust their language to accommodate outsiders. As with other ideas about local language difference, these notions are only partly based on an awareness of sociolinguistic variation. They are also rooted in tropes that figure Tugaru as the epitome of the rural, undeveloped, traditional, distant,
and recalcitrant. As long as the image of Tugaru as an extremity is believed, it acts as a double-edged sword in terms of linguistic practice. On the one hand, it dramatically frames Tugaru speakers as deviant and in need of significant correction. On the other hand, it facilitates a claim of notable and potentially valuable linguistic distance from national “standard” language. For the same reason that local language activists in Iwate strive to produce the most distinctive forms possible (i.e. to create maximum distance from national “standard” language), Tugaru’s purported linguistic specialness and opacity licenses a claim of cultural independence. And as with local language activists I met elsewhere, Sawada’s family talked about unintelligibility as an interactional resource, e.g. to avoid being understood while talking on trains.

Sawada brought Tugaru’s notorious linguistic distinctiveness to her life at Iwate University, which, coupled with her language ideology of valorizing local language, facilitated her role as a language expert among her peers. Other students did take her up on the offer to answer questions about local language, and not only matters of translation. Sawada also demonstrated authority in explaining the linguistic differences among the regions of northern Touhoku, for example between Nambu and Tugaru. But Sawada did more than simply demonstrate her own knowledge. She made Tugaru language seem valuable, and shared Tugaru language with her peers. Although Sawada said that she felt she had lost some of her Tugaru language features after coming to Iwate University, she certainly had not given up on it. On the contrary, Sawada had taught Tugaru language to her friends. In interviews, two of Sawada’s close friends, Sasaki 佐々木 and Fuzii 藤井, each said that their parents told them that they had become more accented recently 最近なまってきた. In other words Sasaki and Fuzii, both of whom came from large urban centers outside of Iwate, had come to college and, instead of moving toward national “standard” language, had shifted toward a kind of Touhoku local language style. This change is just the most prominent example of a much broader accomplishment of Sawada’s persistent Tugaru style: to teach fellow students and even some
university authorities enough of her language so that there would be no barrier to intelligibility, and
to get them to accept and even value her linguistic performance. Those interlocutors in turn made
the necessary effort to understand Sawada (this is in parallel to e.g. Lindemann’s 2010 analysis of
accent discrimination). Sawada cultivated her own community as one tolerant and accepting of her
linguistic practice.

Still, speakers’ capacity to make themselves accepted by others around them is not unlimited,
and is constrained differently for different individual speakers. Sawada herself described these limits
on numerous occasions. I have provided one exemplary moment below, from a group interview
with Sawada and her friend Sasaki, which will afford an opportunity to discuss gender and local
language. In this excerpt, Sasaki and Sawada discuss the ability to be accented when experiencing
pressure to switch to national “standard” language. Before and after this section they discuss the
linguistic demands of various careers, workplaces, and regions (e.g. Tokyo).

1 Sawada 　hituyousei ga nai kara ora ha namatte
必要性がないからおらはなまって。
I'm [still] accented because I don’t have a need [to change].

2 Sasaki 　あ，だいがくで？
Um, at college?

3 Sawada 　sou.
そう。
Yeah.

4 Sasaki 　(笑)
laughs

5 Sawada 　[a certain man who is a fellow student] toka ha nanka hituyousei ga attan zyanai desu ka.
（男の学生）とかはなんか必要性があったんじゃないですか。
People like [a certain man who is a fellow student] did have a need, though.

6 Sasaki 　yappa otoko ga ki ni surun zyanai？
やっぱ男が気にするんじゃないか？
Men really care about it, don’t they?
In this interaction, Sawada and Sasaki (both women) illustrate their view that language standardization pressure falls unevenly on different people, and Sasaki argues that men are more susceptible to this pressure (lines 5 and 6). Note that, although I did consistently observe and ask about ideas and phenomena of language and gender, this was one of only a handful of moments where participants in my study connected local language to gender ideologies. Although this topic deserves more careful study, I would tentatively argue that most people in Iwate think of local language and national “standard” language in only secondarily gendered terms. But as outlined in Ochs (1992), this is typical, since gender usually appears in language by way of indirect indexicality. Local language indexes gender via some other, more primary, meaning. Based on the few examples at my disposal I suggest that this primary meaning may be the very alterity, marginality, and vulnerability which are ascribed to local language. Local language in Touhoku is generally understood as disappearing, and as pertaining to marginalized places and economic classes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, local language is also perceived as more authentic and interior, revealing of the speaker’s true emotions, in contrast with national “standard” language which is perceived as relatively distant, polite, and artificial. Meanwhile, though gender ideologies are always changing, Touhoku (not to mention the Japanese archipelago, and much of the rest of the world) is characterized by a hegemonic patriarchy: women’s roles are restricted and men are overrepresented in positions of power. We might expect that local language could be perceived as feminine by
metaphorical extension; this may be the case for some speakers, though I have not observed such an ideology in action. But it is also important to note that in conventional discourse about romantic relationships in this part of the world, women’s vulnerability is seen as a key feature of their attractiveness. Women are encouraged to be “pure” ナイーブ, and men sing romantic ballads of how they “want to protect” 守りたい their lovers. With this dynamic in mind, the local language speaking woman, the “accented” woman, is doubly vulnerable, and (to some) doubly attractive. She has revealed her interior mental state; and, she has revealed her marginal regional origin or class position.27

Speakers are in some way aware of these tropes as they perform their gendered identities. And for this reason at least some women will find it more viable to use local language since it helps them to perform a conventionally attractive femininity. At least as far as I have observed, local language is not viable in conventional settings for performances of a desirable or attractive masculinity. Here I should also note the possible combined effect of, on the one hand, women being (sometimes) more licensed to use local language; and, on the other hand, women being (sometimes) shut out of interaction with their grandparents due to a sexist favoritism toward grandsons (as mentioned above). From a language maintenance point of view, these two dynamics could be disastrous when combined: young men have the time spent with elders that is necessary to learn older forms of local language, but they have no way to use this language with peers later in life. Young women do not have as much time spent with elders, though it is these young women who are (in some cases) licensed to use local language with peers.

In the next section I introduce the case of another Iwate University student from Tugaru, this time a man, who did not experience the same (partially) decolonized relation of local language and national “standard” language.
4.2 Narita.

I first met Narita at an introductory meeting for my “audio time capsule” program (see chapter 1). He signed up to participate in the program, and recorded a series of audio diary entries over the first five months of his first semester at Iwate University. I also came to know Narita through the weekly meetings of an organization on campus, and through a series of interviews. Like the other audio time capsule participants, Narita was a first-year student, and like Sawada he was from the Tugaru region of Aomori Prefecture. In this section I introduce a few relevant details of Narita’s background, followed by my own observations of his linguistic practice, and some of Narita’s own reflections.

Narita’s home town is a small, fairly rural municipality; his commute to elementary school was a ten-minute walk through apple orchards and a residential neighborhood. He attended high school in Hirosaki, the largest city in Tugaru, where he became deeply involved in the school’s soccer team. Before coming to university, Narita did not take a firm stance on local language in the same way that Sawada did. It may be that he did not experience the same kinds of language-ideological socialization, like an elementary school teacher organizing a stage production using local language. Or Narita may have had some of these experiences but they did not stick for other reasons. In any case he described himself as trying to “speak Standard Language, basically” 普通に標準語を喋ってる, that is, he did not identify as a regular user of local language while at college. Rather, Narita used local language unintentionally, perhaps even unwittingly. On a number of occasions he described himself as “accented.” He came to this realization, and came to terms with it, in the course of coming to Iwate University. Again unlike Sawada, who encountered the linguistic other (and encountered herself as a linguistic other) gradually and in a series of stages, Narita experienced linguistic othering in a concentrated period of time at the start of his time at university.
4.2.1 Narita: observations.

Even before talking with Narita about his use of language, in listening to him talk I wondered if he might be experiencing a kind of linguistic alienation. Narita did not use the most salient lexical items marked as Touhoku or Tugaru regional forms; a good example can be found in how Narita referred to himself. He avoided the Tugaru first-person singular pronouns *ora おら* and *wa わ*, and rarely used the informal masculine first-person singular pronoun *ore おれ* as well. Instead he used *zibun 自分*, a more region-neutral, youthful (perhaps sporty), and polite first-person singular pronoun. But despite this avoidance of lexical localness, I did notice a high frequency of intervocalic voicing of voiceless stop consonants (see Table 2, in chapter 3). For example, Narita often produced the Touhoku-style *nanga んが* (“or something”) and *dagara だがら* (“because”), which in national “standard” language would be nanka and dakara, respectively. Though Narita was trying to come across as a speaker of unmarked national “standard” language, this feature either escaped his awareness, or it escaped his conscious control. This is entirely consistent with linguistic anthropological literature on speakers’ metalinguistic awareness (see e.g. Silverstein 1981), which suggests that it is almost always easier for speakers to consciously control their lexicon than their phonology.

But though Narita was perhaps unable to perfectly control his speech to match normative national “standard” language, he certainly seemed perfectly aware of this fact. As mentioned in chapter 3, one common strategy of people who wish to avoid being marginalized for their language is to withhold evidence of linguistic difference: in short, to fall silent 無口になる. Before beginning dissertation research I had heard stories about “falling silent” in this way from a dozen or more Iwate residents, but in the case of Narita, I observed it unfolding contemporaneously. At this point I should mention the seeming methodological impossibility of watching someone fall silent: to show
that someone has *not* spoken, it seems that the researcher will have to prove a negative. How do you distinguish between someone choosing to avoid speaking, and someone who has nothing to say? Many students at Iwate University are not particularly loquacious anyway. The quick answer to this conundrum is to say that in interviews (especially in a debriefing interview in 2017), I was able to ask Narita directly whether he had indeed fallen silent as I had suspected. I report his answer in the following section. The other answers to this conundrum are that human communication involves a great deal more than speech qua speech; and that when Narita did speak, a number of features suggested that he would rather not be speaking. In settings with more than a half-dozen participants, or any degree of formality, Narita would take as few turns at talk as possible. He would defer to others’ opinions, or use nonverbal gestures (e.g. nodding) to obviate the need to talk, whenever possible. When Narita had no choice but to talk, for example when a group leader called on him by name, I noted a consistent four-part pattern. Each piece of this pattern demonstrates a degree of linguistic distress, but also demonstrates Narita’s immense intellectual and creative effort to fit into domains dominated by national “standard” language. First, he would stutter at the beginning of the utterance, which I took as evidence that he was nervous, concerned about giving linguistic evidence that might be commented upon. Second, he would pause frequently while speaking, frequently taking pauses of as much as three or four seconds, which gave the distinct impression that he was fully composing and checking each phrase in his head before speaking it. These pauses seemed to suggest a written composition. Indeed before coming to Iwate University, Narita probably produced a great deal of national “standard” language as a written register, including as a written register to be read out loud, but probably produced very little of it as an improvised spoken register. Third, he would construct spoken utterances thick with prefabricated polite formulae and technical terms (e.g. “if one were to feel that there had been a breakdown of society” 社会故障が感じられるようであれば), leaving as little room as possible for improvisation or informality. Fourth, Narita’s utterances in
these contexts were always brief, and after he finished speaking, he would avoid explaining his point or engaging in lengthy dialogues.

4.2.2 Narita: in his own words.

Here I reproduce and give some background for three of Narita’s own commentaries reflecting on his arrival at Iwate University. After this section I place Narita’s linguistic identity in the broader context of his emerging social identity in this period of his life.

The first two comments here are taken from audio time capsule recordings, which participants (including Narita) produced themselves. In these recordings I provided participants with lists of five optional topics to prompt their reflection; most participants took advantage of these lists and simply replied to each topic in order. This first comment is taken from Narita’s first audio time capsule recording, which he recorded on the night of Sunday, 1 May 2016. In this section Narita is responding to the following written prompt: 大学に入ってからで多くの人に会っているだろう。あなたはどのような人だと思われていると思いますか。Since entering university, you’ve met a lot of people. What kind of person do you think they think you are?

I’m not in a club right now, so I don’t really talk to a lot of people, so I think people around me think I’m probably a dark person. And I’m not that great at talking, so I think they think I’m gloomy. Really I can make myself come across as more upbeat, but it’s not working very well. I’ll try harder.

サークル今入ってないので、あまり多くの人と喋ってないんですけど、だから周りの人には多分暗い人だなと思われてると思います。でもあとは、あまり話すのが得意じゃないので、根暗だと思われてると思います。本当はもっといくる、明るく振る舞えるんですけどちょっと上手く行ってません。これから頑張ります。

I will return to the fact that Narita is “not in a club right now,” which is an important factor for understanding his overall emotional state in this period. But note that at this point Narita describes himself as “not that great at talking,” which might be interpreted to mean that Narita feels he is not great at talking in national “standard” language specifically.
This next comment also comes from one of Narita’s audio time capsule recordings. This is from the fifth and final recording, which Narita made at his family home during summer vacation, on Saturday, 4 September 2016. In this comment he is responding to the following written prompt:

大学に入ってから４ヶ月経ちました。入学当初の自分と現在の自分とでは、何か変化はありますか。それは具体的にどのようなことですか。Since you entered university, 4 months have passed. Are there any changes between the you who entered university to the you of the present? What are those changes specifically?

At first I didn’t have any friends at all so I was a bit depressed. I still only have a few now, but I do have some friends, so I think I’m able to express myself better than at the start. 最初は友達が全然いなかったのでちょっと塞ぎ込んでるんですけど、で今はまだまだ少ないけど友達がいるので当初よりは自分を出せていると思います。

This comment was a surprise to me as an observer. Despite Narita’s reticence, I had the impression that he got along quite well with the other students in the weekly group. With the distance of four months, Narita diagnosed his past emotional state (shortly after entering university) as having been “depressed” 塞ぎ込むでる。In a different audio time capsule recording, Narita talked about the first time that he went out to dinner with university friends; this was in mid-July, fully three months after the start of classes. Fortunately by the time of this September recording, Narita had some friends at university, though “still only... a few” まだまだ少ない。It seems that those first three months especially were a period of intense isolation, but a question remains as to how much of that isolation was related to the linguistic stigma. The next comment from Narita will address this question more directly. In a debriefing interview in July 2017, I asked Narita whether he felt that, when arriving at Iwate University, he had “fallen silent” 無口になる due to concerns about his own linguistic production. He responded:
When I came to Iwate, I was totally accented. At first, like with introductions, I thought, you know, what am I going to do? But then [another student] was accented so I thought alright, it's okay for me to be accented. But you know, I was pretty accented. For that first while, I couldn't just spit out Standard Language on the spot right away. So I guess I might not have been able to talk very much.

自分も岩手来た時は全然なまってたんで最初は自己紹介とかは、どうしようかなと普通に思って。ま、でも（他の学生）はなまってたらから、自分は別になまっていいからって思って、その時は普通になまってたけど。その最初の頃はそういうのは、標準語ってすぐにパッとできないから、だからやっぱりあまり話せなかったかもしれないのです。

In this comment, Narita elaborated on both his awareness of, and anxiety surrounding, his own linguistic performance. The line “I couldn’t just spit out Standard Language on the spot right away” stands out, reflecting an experience familiar to anyone who is learning a new register. This line also corroborates my guess that what I had observed as Narita’s halting speech had been a practice of pausing to mentally compose every phrase in full before speaking. To be able to “spit out Standard Language on the spot” would mean speaking fluently and beginning each utterance without hesitation. But beyond that point I would like to highlight Narita’s concern about first impressions: “with introductions, I thought, you know, what am I going to do?” This is the affect of linguistic colonization: to know that decades of stereotypes have suspended a sword of linguistic othering perilously above one’s head. Speakers like Narita are keenly aware of the stereotypes about local language, so that some become deeply anxious about speaking at all. Note, too, that in all this discussion of Narita’s case, I have not presented evidence of a single incident of discriminatory behavior directed specifically at him. This is certainly not to say that Narita never experienced direct and explicit marginalization (e.g. outright mocking) for his language. Instead it is critical to point out that explicit practices of marginalization are not the only way by which speakers can be forced into silence. Ambient discourses which naturalize regional language inequality,
institutional structures of language standardization, and everyday microaggressions, over a lifetime, are more than enough to get speakers to police their own language use.

I am doubtful about the extent to which Narita was in fact reassured by the other student who “was accented so I thought alright, it’s okay for me to be accented” なまってからじゃ、自分は別になまっていいからって思って. Narita met this “accented” student within his first two weeks at Iwate University. My observations, and his own audio time capsule reflections, suggest that Narita was still deeply uncomfortable about his own speech well beyond this time, for at least three months. Instead, I would suggest that in this July 2017 comment, Narita could have been putting his mid-2016 experience into words for the first time, exploring a range of possibilities. He had considered national “standard” language and local language as abstract phenomena on the scale of society at large, but he may not have had an occasion before this interview to place himself as a speaker with respect to these registers. Since Narita is placing himself into a linguistic identity, the terms of identification also matter. Narita described himself as “accented” なまった rather than as a speaker of “dialect” 方言, which (as I suggested in chapter 3) typically indexes a difference in prestige, where those registers classed as “accents” are less prestigious, as they are associated with marginality and material conditions of relative poverty.

But I should pause here before I reduce Narita to an abstracted avatar of dialect victimhood. Like others who struggle with linguistic colonization he is a real person and his range of experiences and motivations are far more complex than this single issue. In the next short section I will complicate Narita’s story with the goal of understanding how language fit into the social isolation of his first months at university.

4.2.3 Narita: a fuller picture.
Narita was on his high school soccer team, and his network of close friends at home in Tugaru included a number of fellow soccer players. He had initially imagined that he would join the official Iwate University soccer team, but ultimately he did not, nor did he join any of the more informal clubs on campus during his first term. Narita did want to play on the soccer team, but he found the practice schedule to be extremely demanding, and now that he was in university and felt the need to develop as a professional to compete in the challenging job market, he wasn’t sure if he could dedicate so many hours to sports. The reason Narita did not join any other clubs seems to have had to do with these mixed feelings about soccer — having given up a long-held dream and part of his identity, it might not have been easy to simply switch to another hobby. On one level, then, it is possible that Narita’s social alienation was largely a result of a bitter decision to let go of soccer.

On another level of analysis, I would suggest that soccer meant more than soccer. For Narita, soccer was part of his identity at home, in high school, before university. Soccer indexed the chronotope of his high school days, the social circle of high school friends, and the kind of person he could be and become in that context. At Iwate University, long hours of soccer practice stood in the way of academic study, and may have seemed to stand in the way of developing a new, professional identity. Like others, Narita experienced the pressure of language standardization as a need to prove his competence in metropolitan culture. If soccer was an index of life back home in Tugaru, it would not have worked as a way to orient himself to metropolitan culture. Likewise, dedicating a great deal of time to soccer could have felt like a failure to craft a new persona.

Moving beyond the murky and uncertain connection between local language and Narita’s participation in extracurricular groups, there is a broader and clearer point to be made about the consequences of language stigma and the effects of falling silent. As Narita said in his contemporaneous comments, not making friends was not only about not joining clubs — it was also about not talking very much. Falling silent prevents marginalized speakers from making social
connections, including connections through which they might find validation for their linguistic practice and escape (at least partially) from stigma. Between April and July of 2016, Sawada was able to make these connections, and Narita was not. The resulting isolation had its own consequences in terms of Narita’s emotional state and self-image, as he himself described them.  

It might seem unusual to spill so much ink, in a chapter ostensibly focused on Iwate University students, discussing people from Tugaru. I can almost hear the reader asking, why not just move the study to Tugaru entirely and be done with it? Linguistic colonization does reach that region as well, but Tugaru language is more expected in Tugaru. More importantly, the cases of Sawada and Narita can function as book-ends, brackets for the extremes that I observed of local language pride and local language stigma. As mentioned above, conventional language ideologies in Touhoku regard Tugaru language as particularly distant from other local language registers. This means that Tugaru people are noticed for their talk, whether they maintain local style (like Sawada) or work to adopt national “standard” language (like Narita). Differentiation of Tugaru language and other language is a strongly charged social distinction, and so it is no surprise that speakers from Tugaru respond with strong language practices, to one end or another. In this sense the social status of local language in Tugaru may provide parallels to the social status of local language across Touhoku in late 20th century, during the wave of aggressive local language activism. Although Tugaru is the prototypical marginal and rural region, it is not the only area in Touhoku with local language considered to be particularly distinct. The Iwate coast, for example, is also known as a place where “the accent is intense” なまりがかきつい. In the next section I will take up the case of a student from a coastal town whose relationship with local language is nevertheless far more ambiguous than Sawada or Narita’s.
4.3 Kumagai.

I met Kumagai 熊谷 through one of the clubs I joined, where as a second-year student in November 2015, he was already on his way to a semi-formal position of leadership. I came to know him as a sincere and kind man, though laconic, and very seriously committed to his school work and his performance in the club. In his approach to language, Kumagai is representative of many of the students I knew at Iwate University. He had an ambivalent relationship with local language, on the one hand unable or unwilling to claim full speakerhood, and on the other hand finding his linguistic identity constructed for him by forces outside his control, including interlocutors at university. He is one of the students who learned that they “had dialect” upon coming to university. Kumagai’s case will be particularly useful for exploring young speakers’ language ideologies as they relate to concerns for their own economic futures, and it will also serve as the first step in examining how young speakers’ everyday sociolinguistic reality interfaces with institutional forms of local language revalorization and commodification.

As I hinted earlier, Kumagai grew up in a town on the Iwate coast. On different occasions he described the area as “just forests and fields” 森と田んぼだけ, as “rural” 田舎, and even (partly in jest) “the hinterland” 僻地. Having visited Kumagai’s family home I can attest that it is surrounded by rice fields, though the center of town is less than thirty minutes away by car. Kumagai’s grandparents and parents grew up in nearby parts of Iwate, but not in this town. As a child he had frequent but not constant contact with his grandparents, aunts, and uncle. His parents describe him as a diligent child who would take care of himself and not need very much 手かかる子ではなかった. For a few years in middle school and high school, Kumagai got involved in baseball, but by the end of high school he had given up baseball, focusing instead on the performance-oriented activity of the club where I met him. He has one younger sibling, who had moved to attend school in Tokyo.
as of mid-2016. This left Kumagai as the sibling who had stayed in Iwate. He was not particularly attracted to big city life. Throughout the time I spent with him, Kumagai consistently expressed a desire to live permanently in his home town. Kumagai was well aware of the declining population of rural Japan, the continued economic struggle since the 1990s, and the difficulty young people face in finding reasonable employment. Kumagai’s dream job was above all a stable and reliable 安定した position, probably in the public sector. This was a common theme among Kumagai’s peers, who talked about hopes for careers as police, train conductors, teachers, prefectural or municipal government workers, or service experts in agriculture.

4.3.1 Kumagai: being accented.

As with Narita, I will preface Kumagai’s own reflections on his linguistic identity with what I observed. Kumagai’s home town was one of those places in Touhoku that had decided to extract some economic value from local language, as a way to appeal to tourists and create branded tourist goods. Some of the linguistic features recruited to represent the town in this industry are items associated exclusively with the immediate area, especially certain lexicon and utterance-final morphology. Items from across Iwate and the rest of Touhoku also appear in the tourist-promotional register of local language in this town. But I never observed Kumagai using any of these particular famous items of local language, in any domain. Two other members of the club commented about Kumagai’s language use, in each case saying that he “sometimes gets accented” 時々なまる. Neither of these instances was accompanied by a particularly clear contextual reason for the comment, but it the comments are significant in themselves, since unsolicited comments about other speakers’ language were vanishingly rare among Iwate University students. I could not determine how, if at all, these comments from peers were evaluative of Kumagai as a speaker; they did not seem pejorative in the moment. In my own interactions with Kumagai I observed him using
linguistic features which might be enregistered as local language, some of which were in utterance-final morphology, but most of which were in vowel, consonant, or intonational phonology.

One context where I noticed these features in Kumagai’s speech was during a warm-up routine for the club. On occasion this club would start its practice meetings with a set of stretches and light calisthenics, with the members marking time by taking turns counting in a steady rhythm from one to eight. Most other members of the club would pronounce these numbers in a conventional national “standard” language style. Kumagai’s pronunciation bore two key features that I considered to be indexes of Touhoku: after alveolar or palatal consonants, high vowels merge (i and u both become ï); and, between vowels, voiceless stops become voiced (t and k become d and g, respectively). For Kumagai and for many in Touhoku, the count from one to eight is izï, nï, san, sï, go, rogu, sizï, hazï, while for many of the other members of the club the count was iti, ni, san, si, go, roku, siti, huti. In a one-on-one interview, after thirty-five minutes of discussing other matters, seated across the table from Kumagai, I mentioned this perceived difference. Kumagai’s face flushed red, and he turned his gaze downward to the table, his expression a pained smile. Below I provide a detailed (though not exhaustive) transcript of how that moment unfolded, and how we both dug ourselves out of the ensuing awkwardness.

1 E soko ni tyotto yappa waamingu appu to iun desu ka,
そこにちょっとやっぱワーミングアップというんですか、
So also you know, I guess you’d call it the warm-up,

2 waamingu appu no toki ni anou, tyotto kiduita no ha
ワーミングアップの時にあのう、ちょっと気付いたのは
so during the warm-up time, one thing I noticed,

3 K hai
はい。
Yeah.

4 E anou, yoku kazoe ru n zyanai desu ka, suuzi wo.
あのう、よく数えるんじゃないですか、数字を。
Um, we count off, right, numbers.
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5 K  hai.
はい。
Yeah.

6 E  soko ni iti, ni, san, si tte, de,
そこに一、二、三、四って、で、
So it's like “one, two, three, four,” [iti, ni, san, si] and

7  kore ha kumagai san da to idi, ni, san, si tte
これは熊谷さんだと一、二、三、四って
then it's pronounced “one, two, three, four” [idi, ni, san, si]

8  hatuon suru n desu yo ne.
発音するんですねよね。
when you're counting.

9 K  (laugh) mazi ssu? ssou nattemasita...
笑 まじっす?っそうなってました...
(laugh) Really? Was I like that...

10 E  nankai ka, sono,
何回か、その、
A couple times, the,

11 K  a, sou nattemasu
あ、そうなってます
Was it like that...

12 E  nankai ka sou natteru n desu kedo,
何回かそうなってるんですけど、
It was like that a couple times, but,

13  de, kore ha nan desu ka? (laugh)
で、それはなんですか？笑
like, what is that? (laugh)

14 K  aa demo tabun kazu no kazoe kara ha,
ああでも多分数の数え方は、
Ah so probably that way of counting off numbers –

15 E  hai
はい。
Yeah.

16 K  anou, tyuugakkou no toki, yakyuu yattemasu kedo,
あのう、中学校の時、野球やってますけど、
Um, in middle school I played baseball, and

17 E  aa, hai.
ああ、はい。
Ah, yeah.

18 K  (laugh) sono, sono yakyuu no toki ni nanka,
笑 その、その野球の時になんか、
(laugh) Um, so in baseball, um,
ああいう声の出し方 笑をしてたんで、
that was how we used to (laugh) talk.

はあ。
Oh.

なんかそれが癖、癖っていうか癖になってて、
Uh I guess that became a bad habit, or just like a habit,

(poly) and probably even now (laugh) I think I still have it.

ああ。野球の世界のことだあ。
Ah, so it's sort of a baseball thing,

笑 そうですか。いや、こう、
(laugh) Is it? Or um,

比較的短く、切って、音を出すみたいな、
you just kind of cut, the sound relatively short.

ああ
Ah.

いやそういう声の出し方をしてたんで、
Yeah because we would just talk like that.

ふむ。
I see.

それが (laugh) 多分今も癖なってたですね。
And that (laugh) is probably a habit I still have.

ああ、はい。 (2sec pause)
Ah, yeah.

だから、こういうのは分からないから、
Because, I just don’t understand this stuff.
あ、発音随分違うなってもって。
I just thought, “oh, that’s a rather different pronunciation.”

はい。笑 そうでした。
Yeah. (laugh) Did you.

ええ、まあ、ん、だから悪いか良いとか
(laugh) Yeah, well, um, but I’m not saying it’s good or bad

ああ、はい。
Ah, yeah.

言ってるじゃないですよ、もちろん。
or anything like that, of course.

笑 っていうのは、意味があるかな、と思って。
(laugh) Which is to say, I wondered if it meant something.

ああ、笑 でもま、僕としてなんか普通に
Ah, (laugh) but yeah, for me I’m just trying to talk

ふむ。
I see.

言ってるつもりですけど。
in a regular way.

ああ、はい。
Ah, yeah.

はい。
Yeah.

ええ、まあ。
Yeah, well.

ふむ。笑
Yeah... (laugh)

そうですね。
So you are.
At no point did Kumagai or I describe the linguistic features in question as having to do with regional language variation. Kumagai explained this pronunciation as coming from baseball practice, and as being an effect of “cutting the sound short,” a sort of “clipped” speaking style. I take this interpretation to be valid, but incomplete, since I suspect that Kumagai did immediately recognize the style I illustrated as “accented.” In view of the way he reacted from lines 7-9, blushing and turning his gaze downward, and from the awkward laughter peppered throughout the rest of this stretch of talk, I would argue that this was an especially uncomfortable topic, even compared to other occasions of having to answer for one’s linguistic production. I exaggerated my usual foreigner’s ignorance on this topic and accepted Kumagai’s explanation about baseball-related pronunciation (e.g. in lines 13, 23, 31, and 38). Before this interview, I had not (that I know of) given Kumagai any hint that I was interested in or even aware of local language. But I cannot be sure what Kumagai thought about my ideologies or awareness of local language, if anything – he may have been treating me as he would treat any other interlocutor, including peers. Meanwhile, I would not dispute that this pronunciation difference is part of baseball culture in this region, but I doubt that Touhoku-style pronunciation is common in the warm-up routines of, say, Kyoto baseball teams.

At other times talking with Kumagai, including at a debriefing interview in 2017, he indicated that though his peers sometimes enregister his speech as “accented,” he was not sure whether or not he would make such a claim. At one point he said, “When I talk to people from Morioka they often notice a difference in accent, and I guess we all have differences.” On another occasion, during a one-on-one interview, Kumagai framed this ambiguity in terms of the difficulty of self-awareness:
ふむ、例えばそのなまりは（出身地）なまりみたい、自分でも分からないんですけどね。青森の人、青森は、みたいな感じだよね。語尾は上げるんですよ。それはすごく自分でも分かるんですけど、自分のなまりってなると、自覚できないんですよ。

それはだいたい岩大に来てから言われてるわけですか。

そうですね、（出身地）の時には一回も言われたことはない。

そうですか、なるほど。

Not too long ago, M said that you are sometimes “namatteru” [“accented”].

Yeah. Accent – but I can’t tell, myself. But from time to time people say I’m accented. Do you know what that is, Everhart?

This is something having to do with language, I think?

Hmm, for example an accent might be [my hometown’s] accent – but I can’t tell, though. Or people from Aomori, it will be something like “Aomori-ha” [marked intonation\(^{34}\)], you know? They raise up the end of the word. And I can definitely recognize that, but I can’t be so self-aware about my own accent.

So is that something you’ve been told more or less after coming to Iwate University?

Yes, in [my hometown] nobody ever told me that.

Oh, I see, alright.

It seems that Kumagai experienced a practical difficulty in constructing a working awareness of his own local language features, due in part to the subtlety of difference with national “standard” language. We should expect that in cases of language levelling, as locally distinct features become fewer across the generations, at least in some cases these distinctions will be harder for speakers to recognize. There are two sides to this process, since we also expect that when there are fewer recognized diacritics of group identity, each diacritic will take on more meaning (Barth 1969),\(^{35}\) so that the smaller set of features can still be used to effectively mark group boundaries. So in general we might expect an equilibrium state where linguistic localness is maintained despite broader levelling. But in contexts of linguistic colonization, differences in power preclude such a state of equilibrium, and they must not be ignored. As national “standard” language takes over more and more domains, the relevance of local language for certain kinds of group identification diminishes overall. In the interaction reported above, Kumagai illustrated how most of his own local language features seem to have passed below the threshold of conscious awareness. Yet, Kumagai was aware that he bore some local language features, and they were to some degree socially relevant for him, since they merited comment by his peers. He was also readily able to describe perceived linguistic
difference between himself and his peers from Aomori (which may be a synecdochic reference to the Tugaru region). In this discussion one key point I hope to make clear is that while Kumagai did not claim a usable degree of control of local language – it did not belong to him – still, he had to answer for his own local language features, which were mentioned by his peers and which became part of his image among his friends.

4.3.2 Kumagai: alienation.

So far I have demonstrated Kumagai’s ambivalence toward local language, and I will sharpen this point with one more topic: matiokosi (町興し town revitalization, or local economic development). Speaking generally about local language, Kumagai came to the topic of matiokosi, where he talked about local government authorities’ initiatives involving local language. Kumagai said that although some people think local language is “uncool” 格好良くない, perhaps it could be thought of as a kind of culture to value; though it is not much noticed in day-to-day life, local language is being used to attract tourists. In this discussion Kumagai described local language in distant, impersonal terms: as something rarely noticed, as a chronolect of a bygone age, as a tool for promoting tourism. There is an implicit critique here of local language advocacy as distant, overlooking real social meaning, and caught up in games of marketing and entrepreneurship.

To give the best example of this critique we will briefly step outside of Kumagai’s case to address a term from Kuzi, in northern coastal Iwate: the surprise interjection ぞれ. This sound is part of a pattern of such interjections (notably including ば and ぞや elsewhere in Iwate) which indicate surprise, and which are often repeated three or more times in a row. According to linguists (and students from Kuzi), ぞれ was traditionally used only in a small part of the city, and only by people involved in a certain sub-sector of the fishing industry. But as part of Kuzi’s matiokosi efforts, ぞれ has appeared in a wide variety of tourist-oriented goods and media, and the interjection gained
national notoriety when it was heavily featured in an NHK daily morning drama series in 2013 (Kurube & Kasi 2013). As a consequence of this mediatized discourse, people from Kuzi have found themselves expected to use ぞれ, though most of them had never used this interjection before 2013. In effect a single linguistic feature was highlighted and popularized by government and private interests despite its narrow range of use, after which local speakers had to deal with the fact that their linguistic identity had been established for them by outsiders.

Kumagai was not from Kuzi but his experience was very much in the same pattern. Though he had some access to local language features, circumstances did not allow him to claim that his use of local features was authoritative. He was never quite sure whether he could claim speakerhood of local language. I suggest that this phenomenon might be described in terms of alienation: younger speakers were alienated from those features which were recognized as ‘true’ local language. The idea that the authoritative version of local language is the oldest possible version achieved a significant part of this alienation. The mediatized valorization and commercialization of linguistic features which are not in everyday use also leaves out speakers like Kumagai. If town officials and businesses decide what items to promote as attractive examples of local language, most speakers are left with less authority to enregister their own speech, in ways that they control and in ways that might benefit them.

In the next section I will further explore this topic of linguistic alienation by turning to the case of one last student. This final, shorter case will also provide an opportunity to describe the perspective of a student from outside of Iwate.

4.4 Hatori.

Hatori 羽鳥 was a third-year student in the agriculture school who came from a city in northern Kantou. In some respects his case is representative of other students who came to Iwate
University from outside of Touhoku. His case will also help to illuminate the linguistic alienation discussed in the previous section on Kumagai. Hatori and I came to know each other through a club activity and by the summer of 2016 he had become one of my closest friends at Iwate University. He was always ready for absurd comedy and experiences that were “outside of the everyday”；he was also very quick-witted and had an astoundingly clear and detailed memory. For example he would often quote minor things I had said, word for word, several weeks or months after the fact. Though Hatori had a number of consistent intellectual interests as a child, as school became more intense from middle school to high school, he became disenchanted with the conventional competitive race for success. He threw his energy into extracurricular pursuits rather than exam preparation. In an interview with his parents they suggested that he might have gotten into a more elite university if he had tried harder, and joked that he was probably looking for a bureaucratic job because the mandatory retirement age of 60 was the earliest possible. Ultimately, Hatori and his family were happy with Iwate University because of its long-established agriculture school, and because Morioka was far enough north that there is less danger there from post-2011 radioactive elements than in northern Kantou.

One of Hatori’s hobbies was genealogy, tracing his own family’s history. Both of his parents’ families came from parts of this same northern Kantou prefecture. In grade school Hatori created a massive chart on about two square meters of paper, tracing his ancestors to the early 1800s. As much or more than any other student I met, Hatori’s family carried a powerful sense of this family history and family as cross-generational organization. Hatori’s immediate family lived in a house built by Hatori’s grandparents, and Hatori’s parents ran a small family business that had been started several generations earlier. All of Hatori’s male relatives had graduated from the same distinguished high school. Hatori and his parents expressed a concern for this heritage in a number of ways, including regional and national identity discourses. Some of this concern was expressed intellectually,
as Hatori and his father were both ready and eager to tell any number of local histories. Hatori’s father expressed concern about losing local traditions, and losing local language, and in this context found the presence of immigrants from overseas to be disconcerting. Hatori himself was somewhat more dispassionate, at least about local language. Below I reproduce some of his comments on this topic. He made these remarks during a group interview with other members of the club at Iwate University. In this interview I had asked the group directly about local language. As one prompt for discussion I had shown the participants a video news report about the Kagosima Dialect Certification (Kagosimaben kentei 鹿児島弁 検定), mentioned in chapter 2. One student said that local language programs like this were encouraging – and then that student left the room for another appointment, at which point Hatori gave the following rather candid response. Since the whole comment is relevant I quote in full:

I think it’s the complete opposite of that... Until about fifteen years ago none of the regions was as run-down as they are now - actually the overconcentration of Tokyo has just continued in the present era. For example I do think there is a certain movement to say let’s reevaluate dialects, or dialects are cute, or dialects are interesting. But at any rate dialects are declining. I think this reevaluation is also being done for tourism reasons as well. Real native speakers are quickly disappearing, aren’t they?... Everywhere in my home prefecture XX, there’s a certain local food item. So just now I was saying that there are always local differences, and as it happens in the western part of my home prefecture...
this food is called [W]. And in the eastern part it’s called [E]. It’s totally different, the noun, the name the thing is called, it’s entirely different. But recently there’s this idea that, okay, we’re going to reevaluate dialect, so the prefectural [government] and local newspapers are calling it [W], so, they went and defined it as the thing it’s called in the western part. It would have been much better if they could put parentheses around that, or include [E] as well, or write it with both terms or something, but they’ve ended up rewriting the dialect. It becomes something entirely different than the dialect that originally existed. When they try to popularize it by force, I feel like it’s kind of wrong. Where I’m from the prefectural [government] did that, and so you had this trouble where people from the eastern part of the prefecture were saying hey, that’s not right. So I think it’s alright to do this kind of thing but I feel like it should be done carefully.

Part of Hatori’s concern here was for historical authenticity of local language. But Hatori also described a structure of what I am calling linguistic alienation. Authority over local language has been taken out of the mouths of speakers and placed under the control of institutions like prefectural governments and newspapers. In comparison with many other instances of local language revitalization around the world, this is remarkable since here the institutional appropriation of local language seems to preëmpt any use of local forms as counterhegemonic or authentic. A project which is in principle working to valorize local language, popularizing the name of a certain food item, ends up “rewriting” local language into something unrecognizable. This intervention at the level of the prefecture ignores more narrow local differences, and as a result no actual people feel connected to the version of local language which is promoted by authorities. In one sense, then, Hatori’s comment reveals two diverging ideologies of local language; two competing ideas of what counts as local language; two conflicting enregisterments of local language. One register is crafted by state-aligned institutions, superimposed on preexisting ideas of what counted as local language. This example shows that the particular ways in which speakers and institutions enregister local language will have particular effects. In Iwate and in Hatori’s home prefecture in northern Kantou, the prevailing enregisterment of local language follows a number of particular patterns. Three of these patterns are as follows:

- **Elder language**: iconicity of local language with elders, and/or local language as a chronolect associated with past generations.
• *Weird words*: local language identified with only those features most dissimilar to national “standard” language, e.g. distinct lexicon. Local language is processed through the gaze of national society and national “standard” language.

• *Bite-sized tokens*: emphasis on local language features which are easily decontextualized, mediatized, and commercialized, as with *yme* (described in the section on Kumagai in this chapter).

These three patterns together work to alienate local language from young speakers. Young speakers are implicitly not valid producers of *elder language*, nor do many wish to be; and their use of local language may be extensive, but it may not include *weird words* or the particular *bite-sized tokens* which have been singled out for commercial recirculation. In Hatori’s telling, the desire to popularize particular tokens “by force” 無理 に can also distort the original meaning and regional range of the token in question.

Here I would also like to suggest that these constraints on local language being taken up by young speakers also apply to other newcomers as well, i.e. migrants from other parts of the archipelago and other parts of the world. As a student at Iwate University, Hatori said that he only rarely encountered local language, but that sometimes local Iwate language seemed to act as a barrier between him and local people. Other students reported exactly the same dynamic: local people using local language as a resource for maintaining boundaries with outsiders and (presumably) maintaining internal solidarity (very much along the lines of Trudgill 1972), whether or not those boundaries relied on unintelligibility. In my observation, most students from outside of northern Touhoku at Iwate University had little or no interest in local language. Local students’ ideologies about local language were much more clearly expressed, and in some cases students from outside the region seemed to pick up ideologies of local language from their local peers. This is all to say that students from Kantou and Hokkaido and elsewhere were not active in promoting or stigmatizing local language. But the presence of these students did matter, partly because of their effect on how local
speakers imagined their audience. In an interview, Yamáura Harutíğu described a version of this same effect which he observed in the 1990s:

Some years ago I was a guest lecturer at Iwate University. At that time, I distributed a survey to students. I had them write their answers to a lot of different questions, and I believe I had a question that asked, what do you think of your own dialect? The thing that really angered me was that really a lot of students – and this is about twenty years ago, it’s not that far in the past – they said that they took great pains to hide the fact that they’re a person from Iwate. It’s a university so there are people from Tokyo, Kantou, Kansai, and if you so much as speak a word of Iwate dialect, bam, the feeling in the room is totally different (場の雰囲気がサッと変わる).

One interesting contradiction here is that while many local students work to hide local language from outsiders, for fear of being stigmatized, there are also many outsiders who feel that local language mainly functions to exclude them. These are certainly not universal concerns but they are not uncommon. An approach like Sawada’s, in which speakers of local language teach some of that language to their peers from other regions, might help to resolve both concerns: local speakers themselves take a degree of control in enregistering and characterizing their own talk; and newcomers are able to gain both social access and familiarity with local linguistic forms. Hatori suggested an approach along these lines as well. In an interview in late summer of 2016, we returned to the topic of Hatori’s father’s discomfort with migrants from overseas. Hatori said that these migrants were even more likely than prefectural governments to overlook local distinctions, and that a society made up of immigrants would risk losing touch with past generations – a heritage in which Hatori was deeply invested. The ideal solution, he argued, would be to actively teach local history and language to newcomers, whether they came from overseas or not. Hatori did not expect such an intervention to be implemented any time soon.

4.5 Lingual life histories and linguistic personae.

In each of the four cases described above, students’ backgrounds in terms of family, education, and region have an immense influence on their ideologies and use of language in the university setting. Each speaker’s linguistic identity determined, to a greater or lesser degree, their
interactions with and relationships with peers, their experience of Morioka and Iwate University as social spaces, and their imagined futures. To clarify briefly about this last item, I wish to argue that students exercised some agency in their linguistic performance in view of the kind of person they wished to be, not only in the present, but in the futures they imagined after university. Sawada imagined living and working in northern Tohoku or possibly Sendai, but always maintaining Tugaru style for contexts where there was no “need” for national “standard” language. Narita was carrying out a project of transforming himself into a competitive professional, a future identity he imagined in which it would be necessary to speak, at least sometimes, without a trace of Tugaru language. For Kumagai and Hatori, local language was a concept with no authentic future, reduced to a self-conscious diacritic of commercialized locality. Kumagai and Hatori both imagined future selves with no particular connection to local language, except as a topic around which one might have an opinion.

When I initially set out to recruit students for in-depth interviews and family visits, I primarily wanted to capture a diversity of home regions and other demographic factors. But in the end, in addition to covering a certain diversity among students, each of these cases has also introduced a different scheme of relating to local language. As suggested above, Kumagai and Hatori each reveal a facet of speakers experiencing linguistic alienation: speakers who have access to certain features, but are prevented from claiming the authority to enregister or define those features. Narita’s case is a clear example of linguistic colonization, or linguistic hegemony. In at least one potential analysis, Narita’s linguistic behavior, hiding his accentedness, functions to maintain and facilitate his own subordination. Hegemony requires consent (Gramsci 2011), but that consent need not be consciously given, then Narita’s case represents linguistic colonization by consent. Finally, Sawada’s case represents at least a partial reversal of Narita’s case. In most contexts, Sawada does
not consent to linguistic subordination; she refuses to switch entirely to national “standard”
language except in times of immediate practical need. Sawada is the (partially) decolonized speaker.
Chapter 5  
Kesen, Independence, and Yamáura Harutígu:  
A Final Case of Language Activism.

Having analyzed a set of language ideologies pertaining to local language of students at Iwate University, in this shorter chapter I return to the topic of local language activism. Specifically I examine the remarkable case of Dr. Yamáura Harutígu 山浦玄嗣 and his colleagues in the Theatre Kesen (gekidan Kesen 劇団ケセン) group. This group is based in Kesen, a county in southern coastal Iwate, and conducts most of its rehearsals and other activities in the Yamáura’s neighborhood Sakari 盛 in Oofunato City 大船渡市. Kesen is a small area of mountains and rugged coast, with a population amounting to roughly 100,000 between several towns. This chapter is based on numerous visits with Yamáura (b. 1940), a physician and local language activist, and other language activists in Kesen, from 2012 to 2017. I participated in several rehearsals and observed performances of Theatre Kesen, and conducted long interviews with most of the group members, including over a dozen hours of interviews with Yamáura. Yamáura’s case stands out as an extreme example of local language activism, since (as mentioned in chapter 2) the Theatre Kesen group frames their local language register as an independent language. Although the Kesen case deserves a much longer treatment, in this short chapter I will focus on a few important aspects of Yamáura’s life history, his specific language activism activities, and how these activities represent global forces at work on the local level.

Global discourses, global power relations, and global flows of human, cultural, and material capital have a homogenizing effect, but they also set the stage for local differentiation (Hall 1991). In fact as Roland Robertson has pointed out, “what is called local is in large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis” (Robertson 1995:26). I seek to demonstrate how one phase of globalizing forces led Yamáura to create a discourse of local identity, and then how a second phase
of globalizing forces led him to repurpose this discourse for trans-local and global audiences.\textsuperscript{36}

5.1 Yamáura: early life.

Since national “standard” language was constructed historically partly in response to contemporary mobility of people and discourses (Blommaert 2010), I suggest that it language standardization might be considered in tandem with globalization – as part of the first “phase” of globalizing forces mentioned above. In his early life, Yamáura suffered from some consequences of national language standardization. In elementary school, students were asked to write essays freely in their own words. He found that the writing system of the national “standard” language did not have any way to express certain sounds that appear in Kesen. Among other features, the high mid vowel (which I express here using $i$ with two dots: \textipa{$\ddot{i}$}) are not represented in traditional five-vowel kana syllabaries; and nasalized velar stop consonants are not represented in kana syllabaries, since these typically only distinguish voiceless and voiced consonants. As a result of restrictions like these Yamáura felt that he was unable to write in his native tongue.

Yamáura’s mother was a physician, and after Yamáura’s father died early on, she supported her children alone. Though his family had very little money, Yamáura still had access to certain exclusive forms of material capital as a child. One classmate remembered this difference in terms of ice skates: while all the other children’s skates were made of wood, Yamáura had metal skates. And with his parents’ (especially his mother’s) education came the cultural capital of national “standard” language, with which Yamáura became familiar early on, though perhaps he was not yet able to pass as an unmarked speaker. In the mid-1950s he went to high school in Tokyo, where he was mocked for his rural accent. On at least some occasions Yamáura was also excluded by his peers at home as a member of the tiny Catholic minority; some evidently blamed Christians’ lack of commitment to the national religion for Japan losing the war. Yamáura wanted to be able to communicate the gospel in
Kesen language. And because the only translations of the Bible were into unintelligible, stuffy language (i.e. classical or very formal styles), he felt unable to explain his faith to his Kesen peers. Yamáura wanted to be able to, as he puts it, introduce his friend Jesus to the other children he knew: to make his religion seem less alien, more immediate and familiar.

These experiences of linguistic and cultural marginalization were deeply troubling, but Yamáura was unable to take any action until he finished his medical training at Touhoku University (in Sendai). As a young physician he was put on rotation in northern Touhoku, assigned to one clinic after another, and in each new town he consciously worked to gain at least passive understanding of the local language.

5.2 Possible inspirations.

Here I will mention two things which might have inspired Yamáura’s language activism, and which will help to contextualize it. The first is the novel Kirikirizin 吉里吉里人 (Inoue 1985). This was Inoue Hisasi’s political fiction about a village in this region declaring independence from Japan; among other story devices, the village of Kirikiri designates the local language as its new national standard. This novel was a comprehensive satire of social life in contemporary Japan, but it became known for the idea of village political autonomy. This idea gave a straightforward expression to the growing tensions of regional inequality, and the novel was a massive hit.

The second development which contributed to Yamáura’s language activism came during a visit to the United States in this same period. Yamáura describes having absorbed globalized anti-Black racist discourse throughout his youth in Japan. He expected that Black people would be grotesquely physically ugly. But when he arrived in Chicago for a medical conference and met real Black people, he was struck with the utter făleshhood of that discourse, and immediately appreciated the slogan: Black is Beautiful. Of course real Black people broke every stereotype he had learned; and
Yamáura was also impressed with what he perceived as Black people’s own self-confidence and ready dismissal of those stereotypes. He took this as a direct lesson for his own marginalized region back home: if *Black is Beautiful*, then Kesen can proclaim that it is beautiful, too.

5.3 Projects based in Kesen.

Soon after, Yamáura moved back to his home town, opened his own clinic, and took up projects of local identity. One of his long-standing projects has been a campaign to elaborate a discourse of Kesen or Touhoku ethnic identity. Like many in the region (cf. Hopson 2014), Yamáura takes an interest in the history of the Emisi, a term which describes the indigenous people of the Touhoku region who were conquered by the Japanese state in the 8th and 9th centuries CE. Yamáura is an active proponent of a discourse of historically continuous Emisi ethnic identity, and he has written extensively about these ancient people (Yamáura 1991, Yamáura 2016). He also enlists a notion of Emisi ethnicity to imagine Kesen as its own country, along with a number of other techniques of distinction, including framing Japan as an external place, where one might “study abroad”:

ケセン人は概して大変親日的な感情を持っていて、多くの青少年は日本に留学するのを大きな夢としています。

Kesenese people generally feel a strong affinity toward Japan, and many of our young people dream of studying abroad there.
Yamáura 1985 (with translation by the author)

But most of Yamáura’s efforts in Kesen identity formation went into language. In 1985 he published a comprehensive descriptive grammar of the local language of Kesen. With this first major work, especially through its long introductory chapter, Yamáura outlines his new discourse of Kesen identity. He consciously severs the unequal relationship between Kesen and Japan, right from the title, *An Introduction to the Kesen Language* ケセン語入門. In one interview I asked him about this choice in naming, and he replied as follows:
... And so I gave it the name “Kesen Language.” I did not say “Kesen Dialect.” If I had called it “dialect,” well, “Kesen Language” and “Kesen Dialect” is not a meaningful distinction in linguistics. However, politically, it has meaning. And it means that the Kesen Language is on an equal footing with the Japanese Language.

When writing the place name Kesen, Yamáura avoids the conventional representation 気仙, and instead uses katakana, the phonetic characters normally reserved for representing foreign words. Incidentally the reader may have noticed that the spelling of Yamáura’s name in this dissertation also does not follow the conventional romanization system. Instead I have borrowed a system of Yamáura’s own invention for writing Kesen language in roman characters – hence the pitch-accent-marking diacritics over vowels, and the ğ representing a nasal velar stop consonant. Yamáura’s script uses a tilde (~) over the g for this purpose, but it is not always possible to use that character in electronic documents (including in this dissertation), so here I follow Yamáura’s example in borrowing ğ.

In the 1980s, stigma against local language was still a powerful social force in Japan, especially in Touhoku. As Yamáura produced his grammar and subsequent works including a two-volume dictionary, and started to make appearances on regional and Japanese national television, he received strong negative reactions. These reactions included letters to the editor and even a few pieces of hate mail. Yamáura shared one particularly angry postcard with me:
Figure 5: Hate mail.

A postcard in Yamáura’s collection. The text reads as follows (photo and translation by the author):

Skipping the pleasantries –
To the [shameless] frog,
I understand wanting to make Kesen famous within Iwate Prefecture, but I think
that sickening, shit-awful dialect is the worst culture. Do not go around spreading
the shame of Iwate. (You make me think of an idiot woman going around naked.)

But Yamáura’s activism also garnered tremendous support. His initial run of *An Introduction
to the Kesen Language* quickly sold out. Yamáura has produced a wide variety of documentation to
legitimize Kesen language (or as he would say it, Kesenese): a two-volume dictionary, a thorough
grammar, handbooks for use in classroom instruction. The educational texts have never been put to
use in local schools, but they stand ready. Yamáura talks about English as first becoming
internationally respectable through the work of Shakespeare, and early in the Kesen language project
he began working on his own Kesen literature. This has included translating portions of the New
Testament into Kesen language from the original Greek, and writing a series of poems and plays.
Outside of Yamáura’s own writings, these plays became the core of Kesen language activism.

The first performance of Kesen language theater came out of an interdenominational
Christmas pageant in the late 1980s. This group continued to put on plays once a year in Oofunato for some time; after several years the church-based activity came to a close and the group was reorganized into Theatre Kesen. At the height of their activity in the 1990s, the troupe had about 150 members, and in their performances in Kesen and elsewhere in Iwate, they reached audiences of many thousands.

By this point it was the mid-1990s, and it seemed that Yamáura and his colleagues were making progress in resisting the globalizing force of national standardization. This was also a period of intense local language activism around Touhoku and the rest of the archipelago. As in Kesen and the cases described in chapter 2, the 1980s and 1990s were a time when a generation who had experienced aggressive language standardization in their youth were now in power in local communities, and they began projects to valorize local language.³⁷

5.4 Economic decline and new strategies.

But another round of globalizing changes was already under way. Beginning in the 1980s, the central government in Japan instituted neoliberal reforms in fiscal and farm policy that made the rural economy harder and harder to sustain. By the end of the 1990s people in Kesen were under strain, and energetic young people were leaving to find work in larger cities. Audiences and collaborators for Yamáura’s language activism were slowly evaporating. Since that time, the economy has remained fairly weak, and it was this weakened area that the March 2011 tsunami struck, bringing devastation on an entirely different scale. Much of Kesen lies on the Pacific coast and was hard-hit by the disaster; Yamáura’s home and clinic were damaged but not destroyed, with flood waters reaching the first floor of each.

In 2013, officials I interviewed in local schools and government offices seem to consider Yamáura as more of a curiosity than as a representative of an important social force. Like many
younger people who have shifted toward using Standard Japanese, Yamáura’s own adult children are not proficient speakers of Kesen language. Today only a very few have time for Kesen language activism or Emisi heritage discourse.

Yamáura has adapted by repackaging his discourse of Kesen language and identity for other audiences – audiences that are increasingly global. For Yamáura, the best place to start was in church. Now in the 1990s, with the accomplishments of Kesenese linguistics and Theatre Kesen under his belt, Yamáura began to translate all four of the Christian gospels directly from the Greek into a relatable modern idiom, with the sayings of Jesus spoken in Kesen language. These translations and other works of Christian reflection, e.g. “home town Jesus” ふるさとのイエス (Yamáura 2005), have won Yamáura fame in the trans-local sphere of Christianity in Japan, especially among fellow Catholics.

And even in the immediate area of Kesen, the church is arguably the most multilingual and global place. For generations, the priests at Oofunato’s small Stella Maris church were Europeans, largely Germans. As part of the trend of overseas women coming to marry rural farmers in the last few decades (cf. Faier 2009), there has been an influx of Filipina parishioners. The resident priest in 2013 was from Indonesia. Meanwhile each parish remain small, and so the Catholic community is also constituted through highly trans-local practices, at least among clergy and elite lay members who frequently travel to joint events and other churches. Yamáura certainly had a global audience in mind with his gospel translations, and they have earned him recognition on a global level. In 2004, he received a special blessing from the Vatican for these translated gospels. In 2013, he was awarded the highest honor for a layman in the Catholic church, the medal Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice. This success with the gospel translations has also reinforced his honored status at the hyper-local level in his own church, where, following the gospel reading in Japanese by the officiating priest, Yamáura stands at the lectern and delivers a reading of the gospel in Kesen language.
In the section above I have described one phase of globalizing forces which allowed Yamáura to create a discourse of local identity, and a second phase of globalizing forces which led him to repurpose this discourse for trans-local and global audiences. These two phases of globalization look different – one involves national standardization, one involves neoliberal economics. And Yamáura’s responses to each phase were also very different, and seem hyper-local in each instance. But in both cases the problems Yamáura faced, and his responses to them, were defined by global forces.

5.5 Theatre Kesen after 2015.

Since the heyday of Theatre Kesen, twenty years have passed. With a shrinking regional economy, young people drained away, and the original company members grew tired. In around 2003 the theater company disbanded. In 2015 it started up again, in defiance of the 2011 tsunami disaster. In my observations the group has remained small: in 2016 typically only six or seven members came to weekly practice.

After more than thirty years of the Kesen language project, one of its effects has remained clearly established: to situate Yamáura himself as the icon of local language. The flyers and other literature of the reborn Theatre Kesen bear Yamáura’s name in larger font than the name of the theater company. And Yamáura authenticates the public use of Kesenese, in the theater company or elsewhere, by checking it for accuracy. He lent local legitimacy in the form of his own voice to a tourism promotion video commissioned by the city government, and he wrote the local-language text for an Oofunato version of the “radio exercise” program. In the practice sessions of Theatre Kesen, legitimate Kesen language is to a degree negotiated and co-defined by participants around the table, but Yamáura has the highest authority, and he issues corrections to his colleagues.

In this representative sequence from May 2016, members are editing the script for a
performance, and they discuss the proper local term for a certain rank of Buddhist priest: ossama or ossan. YH indicates Yamáura; the other speakers are regular group members.

1 YH osyousama denakute ossama de ii be. ossama, oss – tagada no hou de ossan tte iun da yo
和尚様でなくておっさまでいいべ。おっさま、おっ、高田の方でおっさんっていうんだよ
Not osyousama, ossama will be fine. Ossama, oss... in Tagadá they say ossan.

2 anda mo ossan ka. kotti de ossama tte iu.
あんだもおっさんか。こっちでおっさまっていう。
Is it ossan for you? Here we say ossama.

3 R ossama ha nee ore, konogoroha. konogoro ossan (laugh)
おっさまはねえ俺、この頃は。この頃おっさん 笑
It’s not ossama for me, lately. Lately it’s ossan (laugh)

4 YH Tagada no hou de ha, atti no hou de ossan tte iu. ossama do kozousan
高田の方では、あっちのほうでおっさんっていう。おっさまと小僧さん
In Tagadá, over there they say ossan. Ossama and kozousan (apprentice monk)

5 R itusite zutto maeni –
いつしてずっと前に
At some point a long time ago...

6 YH nda yo ne, onazi ni sita hou ga ii ne. ossama desitara –
んだよね、同じにしたほうがいいね。おっさまでしたら
Right, we should make them consistent. If it was ossama...

7 M ora, ora mo ossan da na
おら、おらもおっさんだな
I, I say ossan too.

8 YH de, a sou ka minami sanriku ha ossan (laugh) kottiha ossama
で、あ、そうか南三陸はおっさん 笑 こっちはおっさま
So... oh, you say ossan in Minami-Sanriku, (laugh) here we say ossama.

9 M (laugh)
笑

In this stretch of talk as elsewhere, while the group collaborates to consider options, it is ultimately Yamáura’s version which is authoritative. In this example both of the other group members prefer the term ossan (lines 3 and 7), but Yamáura concludes the discussion with his version: “here we say ossama” (line 8). Meanwhile the other principal effect of the Kesen language project, namely to claim the independence of Kesen language, has faded to the background. The harsh discrimination against local language that characterized the mid-twentieth century has
diminished, and even activists like Yamáura himself have transitioned to a more hobbyist mode of language maintenance.

Today the term Kesen language, Kesengo, remains, but it has lost its revolutionary novelty. Local people in Kesen use Kesengo ケセン語 interchangeably with “Kesen dialect,” 気仙弁. I have mentioned Kesen language using the term Kesengo to people elsewhere, both in and outside of Iwate, and their first reaction is to imagine that Kesen language must be radically different than other Japanese languages, perhaps related to Ainu language. In other words they assume that the -go suffix must be justified by a chasm of ethnic or linguistic difference. The original brilliance of Yamáura’s idea, that language users in any village or town or county could call their local language “a language,” and raise it to equal footing with national “standard” language, is obscured. This kind of shift parallels the indifference that Woolard has described in Catalonia:

[T]he loss of a sense of linguistic conflict [has been taken as a sign] that Catalan will die because young speakers simply do not care enough to defend it. Within an ideology of authenticity, it is true that such indifference would signal atrophy. ... [A] breakdown of the anxieties of authenticity is necessary if there is to be a significant expansion of the Catalan-speaking public.

Woolard 2005:16-17; see also Woolard 2016

The “anxieties of authenticity” of Kesen language remain powerful. Local language in Kesen is tied to its iconic representative, Yamáura himself. Theatre Kesen, through which Yamáura has lately begun to share authority with other members, remains an uncertain site of authentication. Younger members are now writing their own material; but Yamáura’s documentary work and authoritative voice still determine what counts as Kesen language. In Kesen and elsewhere in northern Touhoku, local language indexes a Syouwa (Shōwa) Era 昭和時代 chronotope, and old age, more than anything else. The enregisterment of local features as local language lags behind generational language change, and as a result, young people’s speech is often disqualified: people under forty simply do not count as Kesenese speakers anymore. Yamáura Harutíğu and his colleagues in Kesen effectively created a fractal copy of the institutions of the national standardizing ideologies.
It remains to be seen what aspects of their efforts will be most durable over the coming years, and what younger generations in northern Tohoku make of this linguistic inheritance.

Here I would like to call for further research into local language activism of the early period of Yamáura and Theatre Kesen’s activism, the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the exciting potential of this era seems to have disappeared, but linguistic inequality will remain, and it will be important to understand the motivations and limitations of this generation of activists. Local language is worth studying on its own merits, but it is also worth studying precisely because local language is what the march of nationalist and capitalist “progress” deem useless. In the words of queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman:

At one point ... I thought the point of queer was to be always ahead of actually existing social possibilities. ... Now I think the point may be to trail behind actually existing possibilities: to be interested in the tail end of things, willing to be bathed in the fading light of whatever has been declared useless. Freeman 2010:xiii

5.6 Conclusion.

To conclude this chapter and the dissertation as a whole I will return to two themes raised in chapter 1: first, linguistic discrimination; and second, an emphasis on registers as formations which are socially constructed and ideologically inflected.

5.6.1 Analyzing linguistic discrimination.

I proposed a framework to broadly define linguistic discrimination as follows: ideologies, practices, and policies pertaining to language which, in a context of inequality, secure more capital for the dominant party. Throughout this dissertation I have described a number of phenomena which fall under this definition. Language standardization and the hegemony of national “standard” language represent the most notable form of linguistic discrimination here. Regional linguistic and cultural inequality existed before standardization, and to a certain degree standardization may have
masked class differences, making some kinds of linguistic discrimination harder to express. But standardization also created new forms of regional linguistic and cultural inequality, and continues to exacerbate those inequalities, despite the purported “disappearance” of local language. In the case of standardization, those who have the regional, class, and/or educational background to speak unmarked national “standard” language are the dominant party to whom capital accrues.

Mock language (discussed in chapter 3) is also a form of linguistic discrimination, in that speakers use it as a resource to craft various personae, at the expense of people who are indexed by the linguistic forms being mimicked. Romantic partner choice (discussed in chapter 4) is another venue for linguistic discrimination, where ideologies of what kind of speaker is “cute” can foreclose the range of potential romantic partners for certain speakers, while expanding that range for others. Mediatization of local language (also discussed in chapter 4, in the second two cases) can also bring capital to certain elites, at the expense of people who are not able to control the framing of their own linguistic features.

As with mediatization of local language, one risk of local language activism (as described in chapter 2 and in this chapter) is that it can be realized as a form of linguistic discrimination. Here the relation of dominated and dominant users of language should be thought of not as a dichotomy but as a more complex relation, where people who have been subject to marginalization (e.g. due to national standardization) can in turn exclude others, and gain prestige or symbolic or material capital, at the expense of those others. This is the risk involved in valorizing a narrowly-defined register, which is not available to a broad range of people. As demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4, that broader population may still be subject to linguistic marginalization. It is important to note that the language activists described in chapter 2 and this chapter do not wish to exclude this broader set of speakers. Though the texts of their performances are restricted to those linguistic forms which are as far as possible from national “standard” language, they view their activities as valorizing local
language in every form. I expect that they have had this effect to some degree, but without the data for a more complete diachronic analysis it will be impossible to make a strong claim about how language activism has changed public discourse. This is another reason for future scholars to study the “dialect boom” period of the 1980s and 1990s.

Falling silent 無口になる (see chapters 2 and 4, especially the section on Narita) can also be described in terms of linguistic discrimination. Speakers who refuse to speak as a way of avoiding ridicule are ceding interactional time and speaking agency to interlocutors who are not troubled by such anxieties, especially speakers who confidently produce national “standard” language. But those who fall silent are also taking control over how they are perceived by those interlocutors, and in doing so they are protecting or even seizing capital for themselves (i.e. in terms of their reputation). In such cases, where speakers consent to the hegemony of national “standard” language, the analyst must address that hegemony, since that hegemony is what structured the relevant relation of inequality. For this reason, when considering speakers who fall silent, linguistic discrimination properly describes those social relations which have caused the speaker to fall silent in the first place.

5.6.1 On varieties, registers, ideologies, and users of language.

In addressing linguistic discrimination it is important to recognize that registers (whether they are classed as “styles,” “accents,” “dialects,” “languages,” or otherwise) are always socially constructed and ideologically inflected. Feminist or anti-racist work would look very different if scholars and activists believed “genders” or “races” were natural phenomena; and cultural anthropology is best when it addresses “cultures” as socially real, but also internally diverse, overlapping, historical, contingent, constructed, contradictory, negotiated, and ideological. In this dissertation I have addressed the social construction of registers (especially in chapter 3), and here I will reflect on their ideological character. If registers are ideological, they are certainly worth
discussing as *language ideologies*. For Kroskrity (2010), language ideologies are “beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language structure and use which often index the political economic interests” of various parties. Language ideologies should be expected to represent particular subjective points of view, and registers are both defined and applied subjectively in interaction (as described in chapter 3). Language ideologies should consist of particular beliefs and feelings and conceptions of language; the belief that certain things are or are not to be considered part of a given register is one such belief. This chapter, as well as chapters 2 and 4, demonstrate how registers, as social realities, are made up of such beliefs and feelings. Enregisterment of certain features also serves the political economic interests of certain parties. Those may be the parties who are able to claim to be unmarked speakers of the register, as described with national language standardization, or possibly in certain cases of local language activism. The parties who benefit from particular practices of enregisterment may not claim to be speakers, instead gaining through other means: through the commercialization of a register (as described in chapter 4), or through scholarly description of a register which brings prestige and perhaps career advancement to the scholar.40

If registers are always constructed and ideological, how should we talk about linguistic difference and diversity – what can be described as “real”? It would be unfortunate to simply avoid referring to registers, since they represent important social realities. Instead, it is imperative that scholars of language attend to registers as social realities in the first place, and not brush aside the inequality that is implicit in the construction of registers. Beyond registers, specific linguistic features have a more objective (though not perfectly objective) reality, partly because they can be separately measured and compared across instances and across speakers. *Language users* themselves are also real and worthy of scholarly concern, and so is the linguistic discrimination which troubles them.
CHAPTER 1

1. The case of Japanese Women’s Language demonstrates how the construal of registers is an ideological process. Chapter 3 in this dissertation will make a similar point vis-à-vis local language in Iwate. Ideologies of gender specifically are briefly addressed in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2

2. This is discrimination that might arise in daily interactions, through institutions, or through mediatized representations; refer to previous chapters for further detail on the history of linguistic colonization.

3. This group collaboratively published another similar book in 2017 (Isaribi no Kai 2017).

4. Some concrete examples of folktale topics are illustrated by the following synopses. A young woman and a monk get into a farting competition. A married couple have an argument but end up together on a small boat - seen from far away, the boat’s rocking is described suggestively. People spend the night in the mountain forests and overhear supernatural beings reporting that they assisted a childbirth; upon returning to town the people find a child has indeed been born safely. Four butterflies of different colors are rejected by others and die of exposure, but ascend to heaven because they refused to betray each other. More humorous stories include local-language adaptations of classic rakugo tales, and the slapstick
shenanigans of apprentice monks who take too many shortcuts.

5. After the triple disasters more linguists did start working directly with the affected populations and designing projects to be more accessible and accountable to local speakers. I should note, however, that this was not the first time that dialectologists in Japan engaged in such community-oriented research. The linguist Sato Ryoichi 佐藤亮一, for example, contributed heavily to local language activist projects in Mikawa, Yamagata, including by bringing students to collaborate on projects with local speakers.

6. In later chapters we will see how students at Iwate University reacted to ideas of language activists, like this idea of adding bilingual local/standard announcements on public transit.

7. Tago is at 39°20'17.7"N 141°51'25.4"E in Unozumai (鵜住居), northern Kamaisi City.

8. In numerous locations on the Iwate coast people have marked the high water mark of past tsunamis. A prime example is the small stone monument in Aneyosi which says “Build no houses below this point.” The monument is over 20 meters above sea level.

9. I will address mock-language practices in the next chapter. These practices are sometimes used in relation to local languages in Touhoku, but they are rare, and far more contentious than the ambiguous intentions behind appropriation implied by “accessorization.”

10. As mentioned in chapter 1, when interacting with me, local language activists and other interlocutors usually accommodated me by switching to a version of national “standard”
language.

11. Elite language activism is one of many activities which in effect metabolize social crises and suffering into prestige, using an investment of capital on a scale which is only available to elites. The language activism I observed was did have this effect, but it was also carried out in good faith and produced prestige as a secondary afterthought. Scholars of similar projects should, however, question this dynamic.

CHAPTER 3

12. Two writing systems for Kesen language created by Yamáura Harutáğu do allow for the representation (or clearer representation) of the mid-high vowel, nasalized stops, and other features that cannot be represented in national “standard” orthography. The older system (Yamáura 1985) is an adaptation of segmental, alphabetical romanized script, Kesen-mozi or Kesen-siki-roomazi. Some years later Yamáura also created a syllabic kana script, Kesen-gana (cf. Yamáura 2003).

13. One example of this intentional rule-breaking language play is the exchange of /s/ for /p/ in adjectives of emotional state, e.g. “happy” uresii 嬉しい becomes urepii 嬉ぴい, or “sad” kanasii 悲しい becomes kanapii 悲ぴい.

14. Many forms and registers might overlap with local language, including Ainu language, foreign loanwords, and national “standard” language. It is not for the analyst to draw exclusive boundaries here; but emically, among non-experts, local language is perceived as
indigenous, not innovative, and having a long history. Scholars of Japanese sociolinguistics, on the other hand, do consider local language to consist of living registers, porous and changing, and one of their major concerns is tracking “new dialect” 新方言 (Inoue 2008). But the idea of “new dialect” is surprising to non-experts. In other words, local language is often understood as particular linguistic features associated with particular places for (long) periods of historical time. Newness violates this understanding since that historical time is missing, and since new linguistic difference implies an agentively constructed (rather than natural) origin of features.

15. The topic of hougen karuta deserves its own chapter, but I will give a brief introduction here. There are numerous iterations of hougen karuta games produced by diverse organizations; Iwate examples include Hokui 1991, Moriokaben 2000, Miyagoben 2007, Iya 2009, Hondou 2009, and Hondou 2011. I am most familiar with the versions edited by Hondou (2009 and 2011). In these cases, a single company (Osyaberi Karuta オシャベリカルタ) produced local editions of this game on a prefecture-by-prefecture basis, working with linguists and local media personalities. The cards typically present a single local lexical item or verb form, with a gloss in national “standard” language and an example of use in a sentence. The example sentence is illustrated in a cartoon on one side of the card. The cards come in a set that also includes an audio CD as a pronunciation guide. In the case of Iwate, each item – each hougen – is also identified with its particular place of origin. I knew several families who owned a set of these cards, including the families of at least two students at Iwate University.

16. The case of one such student is elaborated in chapter 4.
17. Here it would be appropriate to elaborate further on the notion of “culture” which Kikuti is expressing, but I am limited by the detail I was able to capture in field notes, since in this case I did not have an audio recording of the interaction. I distinctly recall Kikuti emphasizing the word “culture” 文化 with a tone that invited aesthetic appreciation, and I would argue that he did mean to refer to “high” culture. However, since local language is not really accessible to Kikuti, it ends up as suitable only for spectation in this case, and not participation. Some ambiguity then derives from the fact that local language is also conventionally considered a species of past tradition suitable only for spectation anyway.

CHAPTER 4

18. Here I mean the paths which students followed to arrive at their present language ideologies and practices, including expressions of identity. Woolard (2016:257-297) traces speakers’ paths in this sense over longer periods of time, describing “linguistic itineraries” (2016:261) as “a record of a route actually taken, a journey with all its twists and turns, not the well-plotted plan with which an optimistic traveler might set out.” Although this chapter is based on extensive interviews and observations, the core data is still limited to a sort of snapshot, in that I only knew each student for five to ten months during 2015-16 field research (though longer since then). As a result of this limitation I am obligated to rely on the reports of students themselves, and their families, about past language ideologies and practices. Here I use “histories” rather than “itineraries,” since “histories” implies the presence of a narrator. In the future, however, it may be possible to gather the data necessary to describe “linguistic itineraries.”
19. This was reported in a collaborative stretch of talk by Sawada, her parents, and her aunt.

20. Hill notes a series of troubling tropes in scholarship and public discourse surrounding “endangered” languages. Among these are (1) enumerating the remaining languages or speakers can be counterproductive, since small or dwindling numbers are shown to be intimidating to activists; and (2) talking about “endangered” languages as treasure, or as the common heritage of all humanity, deprives local speakers of their ownership of local language, in a way which is very familiar to small groups and indigenous peoples who have experienced a long history of being deprived of control of local resources. Hill is concerned that representations which may win attention from a reading public (a public not necessarily suffering linguistic discrimination) may be offensive to Indigenous and small language communities for a variety of reasons. Hill instead calls for rhetoric about language shift and revitalization based on human rights, focusing on the individual and collective needs that people express, and highlighting the political-economic inequalities which lead to language “endangerment” in the first place. Whiteley (2003) cautions that a discourse of rights, applied uniformly, will be at odds with the needs and desires of many communities. In view of these perspectives, one goal in this dissertation (which I may or may not meet) is to both foreground the human consequences and political-economic factors involved in language shift, without resorting to analyses that will be alien or unwelcome to the people whose situation I am describing.

21. This teacher’s use of local language parallels Masaya Nobuo’s language activism in Hatinohe (see chapter 2).
“Familiar” here is my rendering of 親近感, “a sense of intimacy,” “closeness,” or (translated by brute-force method) “a feeling of familial closeness.”

Sawada described herself as accented なまっている. She described her speech as different from national “standard” language in terms of voiced intervocalic stop consonants (see the section on nigori in chapter 3; Sawada spoke with “a lot of voiced consonants” 濁音が多い) and intonational phonology (see the section on akusento in chapter 3). Sawada also talked about her lexical differences with national “standard” language. See also chapter 2, Table 2: Sample features.

Woolard (2016), following Pujolar and others (e.g. Pujolar & Puigdevall 2015), suggests the Catalan term muda (molt, move) to describe the resulting “potentially reversible change in linguistic repertoire across an individual’s life.”

By “the imposition of external frameworks of value,” I mean the process of enregisterment, as it delimits and identifies linguistic forms, and thus speakers, in a hierarchical relation to one another.

Although I heard a great deal about Arisa from Sawada’s immediate family, I did not meet or interview Arisa.
27. This topic calls for further research by capable scholars. One specific lead which I have not been able to follow is a sub-genre of media (especially, it seems, video), the larger and older part of which is called hougen kanozyo (方言彼女 dialect girlfriend); a smaller and newer body of this work called hougen karesi (方言彼氏 dialect boyfriend). Each work invites the viewer to imagine having a romantic partner who speaks local language.

28. Technically, this voicing pattern should refer to intersonorant contexts (i.e. between sonorant segments), not intervocalic contexts (i.e. between vowels). But since the only relevant non-vowel sonorant segment is the moraic nasal /n/, I have elected to take the simpler and less confusing strategy of using the “intervocalic” label.

29. I do not mean to suggest that Narita stuttered intentionally or even consciously. His stuttering could have been related to a neurolinguistic condition of some kind. But I did observe that in other, less formal contexts, he did not stutter in the same way at all. Each of the four features of Narita’s speech described in this passage (stuttering, pauses, polite formulae, and brief utterances) applies only to his speech in somewhat formal contexts, and in front of larger groups of listeners.

30. Although there has been research on the results of this kind of isolation since the initial work on microaggression (Pierce 1970), future scholars would do well to study social isolation in cases of linguistic marginalization, and to study linguistic marginalization as a causal factor in these cases. I expect that there are numerous deleterious consequences for the speaker who feels unable to speak in any domain, for example in terms of future life
course or health outcomes. One difficulty lies in the fact that these are people who are by
definition hard to identify, since they are working to avoid being identified in the first place.

31. This wave of activism was discussed in chapter 2, and I return to it briefly in the following
chapter as well.

32. These efforts are not always limited to local language – they can be directed at any piece of
local historical fact or cultural significance, rolling up every distinctive feature whether it is
nailed down or not. For a more thorough critique of this phenomenon than I can manage
here, see Love 2013. For a thorough treatment of the commercialization of local language,
including a documentation of tourist goods local language, see Inoue et al 2013.

33. Here as elsewhere I am representing the high mid vowel using the letter \( i \) with two dots, \( \ddot{i} \). In
Hepburn romanization, Kumagai’s style was \( iz\ddot{i}, n\ddot{i}, san, s\ddot{i}, go, rogu, s\ddot{iz\ddot{i}}, ba\ddot{z}\ddot{i} \), whereas the other
students’ style was \( ich\ddot{i}, n\ddot{i}, san, s\ddot{bi}, go, roku, s\ddot{bi}\ddot{bi}, hachi \). For an example of a pronunciation
similar to Kumagai’s style (but perhaps exaggerated), I recommend the September 2011
video おらほのラジオ体操 orabo no razio taisou, Our Radio Exercise, which was produced
as a message of support and solidarity for post-tsunami reconstruction in Isinomaki, Miyagi.

34. Kumagai pronounced this place name and topic marker with LHL-final intonational
contour. Each pitch pertains to one mora. Here, the accent phrase “aomori ha” begins low,
with a low pitch on “mo,” a high pitch on “ri,” and an accent-phrase terminal low pitch on
“ha” (pronounced \( \text{wa} \)). I have come to think of this LHL contour (informally) as “the
Nambu declarative” since speakers tend to use it at the end of simple declarative accent phrases, including at the end of each item in a list. This contour can be particularly striking to an Anglophone listener like myself when speakers use it in lists of people’s names ending in a title, i.e. “-san.” In this context it sounds very much as though the speaker is emphasizing the title of each person by placing a H accent on the “sa” mora.

35. This pattern should apply not to all conceivably noticeable differences, but rather those which are noticed by members and which are indexed to identity.

CHAPTER 5

36. From a certain point of view translocality and elite status in Japan are very deeply connected. Between corporate and government tenkin (転勤 job reassignment rotation) and sankin koutai (参勤交代 the Edo-period practice whereby daimyou would regularly commute back and forth to the military capital), elite status might even be called paradigmatically, foundationally translocal.

37. On a very broad scale, I would argue that the 1980s and 1990s constituted a “dialect boom” i.e. a broad revaluation, and a significant increase in activity and interest surrounding local language. This was arguably the second “boom,” with the first happening in the 1920s and early 1930s in response to early efforts at language standardization, and a “rediscovery” of local language. But the period of activism in the 1920s seems to have been more limited to elites than the second period in the 1980s-90s. Part of my analysis of this latter “dialect boom” comes from pilot research on the history of local language activism in
Mikawa, Yamagata, where town residents and officials worked nights and weekends to organize an annual “national dialect conference” 全国方言大会 for over 15 years. The Mikawa case and the “dialect boom” as a topic both lie beyond the scope of this dissertation.

38. This video promotes Oofunato as a general tourist destination but specifically as a site for weddings. The video is titled Bababa Wedding March ぽぽば結婚行進曲 (Promotion Oofunato 2016).

39. As discussed in earlier chapters, despite the decreased mocking of local language speakers, only national “standard” language is privileged in institutional contexts today.

40. Further analysis of registers as language-ideological formations might address registers in terms of “the situated, partial, and interested character of” registers (Errington 2001:110) as well as “(1) group or individual interests, (2) multiplicity of ideologies, (3) awareness of speakers, (4) mediating functions of ideologies, and (5) role of language ideology in identity construction” (Kroskrity 2004:501; Kroskrity 2016:98-102). In particular I would like to emphasize Kroskrity’s notion of the multiplicity of language ideologies: “language ideologies are profitably conceived as multiple because of the plurality of meaningful social divisions... within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group membership. ... Viewing language ideologies as ‘normally’ (or unmarkedly) multiple within a population focuses attention on their potential conflict and contention in social space and on the elaborate formulations that contestation can encourage” (2004:503). Since registers should themselves be considered ideological formations, they might also best be referred to in “default plural” terms, e.g. as ‘Japanese languages’ or
‘Nanbu dialects’ instead of ‘Japanese language’ or ‘Nanbu dialect.’ This is already a trend in some quarters of the academy but the present ideological justification for it is distinctive.

Rather than describing registers as default plural because of the fractal diversity of ‘naturally-occurring’ varieties (and features), an ideological perspective would focus on the numerous social differences and positionalities which are involved in processes of enregisterment.
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