

**L2 Japanese learner awareness and attitudes towards dialectal variation:**

**A mixed-methods study**

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## Abstract

L2 learner attitudes towards dialectal variation in their target language often focuses on romance languages, specifically Spanish. This study investigates learners of Japanese and their awareness and attitudes towards dialectal variation in Japanese, specifically the Osaka dialect. Previous studies focused on Japanese learners have looked at their attitudes specifically in immersion or study abroad contexts. This study attempts to assess what kinds of awareness and attitudes classroom learners have, the interactions they have with Japanese that may lead to these attitudes, and whether teacher attitudes towards the dialect influence their students. This study gathered data from three, university-level Intermediate Japanese classes, using a combination of teacher interviews ( $n = 3$ ), student questionnaire participants ( $n = 19$ ), and student case studies ( $n = 3$ ).

The teachers interviewed included a non-dialect Japanese speaker, an Osaka dialect Japanese speaker, and a nonnative Japanese speaker. The non-dialect native Japanese instructor believed that students should master standard Japanese before learning a dialect, as she felt it would be too difficult for students. She also mentioned that she wouldn't feel comfortable teaching dialects as a non-dialect speaker. The dialect-speaking instructor, on the other hand, said that she would love to teach a dialect, and that she felt that learning a dialect was no harder than learning standard Japanese. The non-native instructor also "would love" to teach a dialect rather than the standard, but mentioned that, due to pedagogical constraints, there wasn't much time in the curriculum to teach dialects.

The questionnaire introduced students to the negation suffix *-hen* from the Osaka dialect and asked questions about it. Results showed that most students had little awareness of the variation or the dialect in general, despite numerous interactions with Japanese outside of the

classroom. These interactions included watching and listening to Japanese media and interacting with both native and nonnative speakers of Japanese. Additional comments mentioned that students did not learn casual Japanese in class, therefore they assumed this unknown variation was casual Japanese. Few students were aware that the variation was of the Osaka dialect and expressed an opinion on it, which was expanded on in the student case studies.

The case studies followed a student from Thailand (“Todd”), a student from Shanghai (“Ann”), and a student from Beijing (“Jake”), all of whom were aware of the Osaka dialect due to geographic origin. Todd said that he was “fascinated” by dialects, especially when considering how ethnically homogenous Japan is. Ann was also interested in learning dialects, as she herself is a speaker of the dialect of Chinese spoken in Shanghai. Jake, however, said that he no interest in learning a dialect, stating that it was probably due to him being a Mandarin speaker and not liking other variants of Chinese. The difference between Ann and Jake’s attitudes towards Japanese dialects suggests some transfer of dialectal beliefs from their L1 into their target language.

## **1. Introduction**

Many second-language acquisition (SLA) researchers are beginning to investigate the connection between sociolinguistic variation and L2 acquisition (e.g. Siegel, 2010; Nycz, 2019). As put by Bayley (2005): “To assess acquisition adequately, we must compare the pattern of variation in learner speech with the pattern of variation in the vernacular dialects with which learners are in contact” (p. 5). In other words, L2 learners are surrounded by variation and its influences within their target language and these influences must be studied along with other features of language learning. Mougeon and Dewaele (2004) note there are practical applications to studying the acquisition of target language patterns of variation, along with theoretical interest, as L2 learners, despite years of study and instruction, have difficulty developing a range of variation within their L2 and switching between variations when appropriate. The reasons for this are under-studied.

One area with little research is the intersection of L2 acquisition and dialects of Japanese. While Japan boasts linguistic homogeneity among its speakers, the reality is that Japan hosts a great amount of regional dialects, many of which differ in prosody and morphosyntax so extremely that a L2 Japanese learner may mistake them for different languages (Carroll, 2001; Shibatani, 1990). This paper will look at specifically L2 Japanese learner awareness and attitudes towards a Japanese dialect, specifically the Osaka dialect, including the learner’s interactions with and exposure to Japanese both inside and outside the classroom that may have led to such attitudes. This paper also explores the influence of the Japanese instructor’s attitudes on learner’s dialect acquisitions and development of their own attitudes.

Section 2 provides background on historical attitudes within Japan towards Japanese dialects (2.1), including the Osaka dialect (2.1.1), and a brief description of second dialect

acquisition (2.2). The following section is a summary of the gap in the literature for L2 learner attitudes towards Japanese variation (2.3). Additionally, a brief description of Japanese textbooks and their references towards these dialects and variations is included (2.4), as well as the dialect variation used in the current study (2.5). The results of the current study show that intermediate L2 Japanese students did not have a strong awareness of Japanese attitudes, not learning them in formal classrooms. The feelings towards the Osaka dialect of their professors, even if they were positive, did not seem to have an effect on students' awareness of the existence of dialects. However, the students that did have an awareness and some sort of attitude toward the Osaka dialect seem to have carried over their feelings of dialects in their L1 to their feelings of dialects in their L2, suggesting that perceptual dialectology in a learner's L1 can carry over into a learner's L2.

## **2. Background**

### *2.1. Historical attitudes towards Japanese dialects*

In order to accomplish their goal of catching up to the West near the end of the nineteenth century, Japan had to facilitate a mass education system and create a sense of national identity. This required a standardized language, as Japanese at the time was a collection of mostly mutually unintelligible dialects. The dialect spoken by the upper-middle class in Tokyo ultimately became the basis for standardized Japanese, as it had been functioning as the “common language” since Tokyo had become the capital (e.g. Shibatani, 1990; Carroll, 2001; Heinrich, 2012). As this new standard Japanese was gradually implemented into education systems throughout Japan in the beginning of the twentieth century, anti-dialectal attitudes began emerging as well (Sunaoshi, 2004). Though there were no explicit guidelines in the national

curriculum that suppressed dialects, dialect speakers faced an enormous pressure to adhere to standard Japanese due to discouragement and sometimes ridicule when they used their dialect. As a result, many developed a linguistic insecurity of their own dialect, which has been coined as a “dialect complex” (Maher, 1995; Carroll, 2001). Many dialect speakers, especially those from rural Japan, note that they almost completely abandoned their native dialect to adhere to standard Japanese. Due to this societal pressure, many regional dialects became diluted and became at risk of disappearing (Carroll, 2001).

Beginning in the 1970s, the general attitude towards Japanese dialects softened, and while standardized Japanese was still taught in elementary education, the expectation to adhere to the standard in everyday life ceased (Carroll, 2001). Many dialect communities, feeling that their dialect was at risk of extinction, began movements towards promotion of their dialects as part of local culture. One example of such movements is a local doctor publishing a grammar textbook in the Kesen dialect in 1986, as an attempt to restore the community’s pride in their native dialect (Carroll, 2001). Such movements were also due to communities feeling that their native dialect represented a part of their identity that needed to be preserved (see Bucholtz and Hall, 2005). However, despite a more positive social outlook on Japanese dialects, the emphasis was much more on tolerance than overall acceptance. The expectation was that children would continue to use their dialect outside of the classroom and in their community but would need to use standard Japanese in their education. Thus, an expectation of a bi-dialectal code-switching was born: Japanese children would need to acquire the pragmatic knowledge of when to use their dialect and when to use standard Japanese (Sunaoshi, 2004; Okamoto, 2008).

Today, this pragmatic distinction is still considered appropriate linguistic behavior, and there exists a much more positive attitude towards dialects in Japan. In 1990, NHK (*Nippon*

*Housou Kyoukai*, “Japanese Broadcasting Corporation”) asked Tokyo civilians to describe both the common, standard language and Japanese dialects. The most common words to describe the standard included “correct”, “beautiful”, “polite”, “formal”, “stiff”, “insipid”, and “bureaucratic.” Dialects on the other hand were described as “warm”, “expressive”, “of the common people”, “for among friends”, “having depth” and “gentle” (Carroll, 2001, p. 15). However, though the national curriculum has changed to reflect the overall tolerance of dialects, it is important to note that treatment and tolerance of Japanese dialects vary due to many factors. For example, many dialectal speakers of urban areas have historically faced less discrimination and pressure to adhere to the standard than those of rural areas, the expectation being that they would stay and work in their urban area where the dialect was spoken (Carroll, 2001). On the other hand, the Tohoku dialects, spoken in the northeastern regions of Japan, are generally the most negatively received and are often neglected (Miyake, 1995); many Japanese when asked to describe these dialects refer to them as “rough” and “difficult to comprehend” (Sunaoshi, 2004, p. 390).

### *2.1.1. Japanese attitudes towards the Osaka dialect*

The Osaka dialect is an urban dialect spoken in the Kansai region of Western Japan (see Figure 1) and is often considered to be the main rival for the Tokyo dialect and thus standard Japanese.

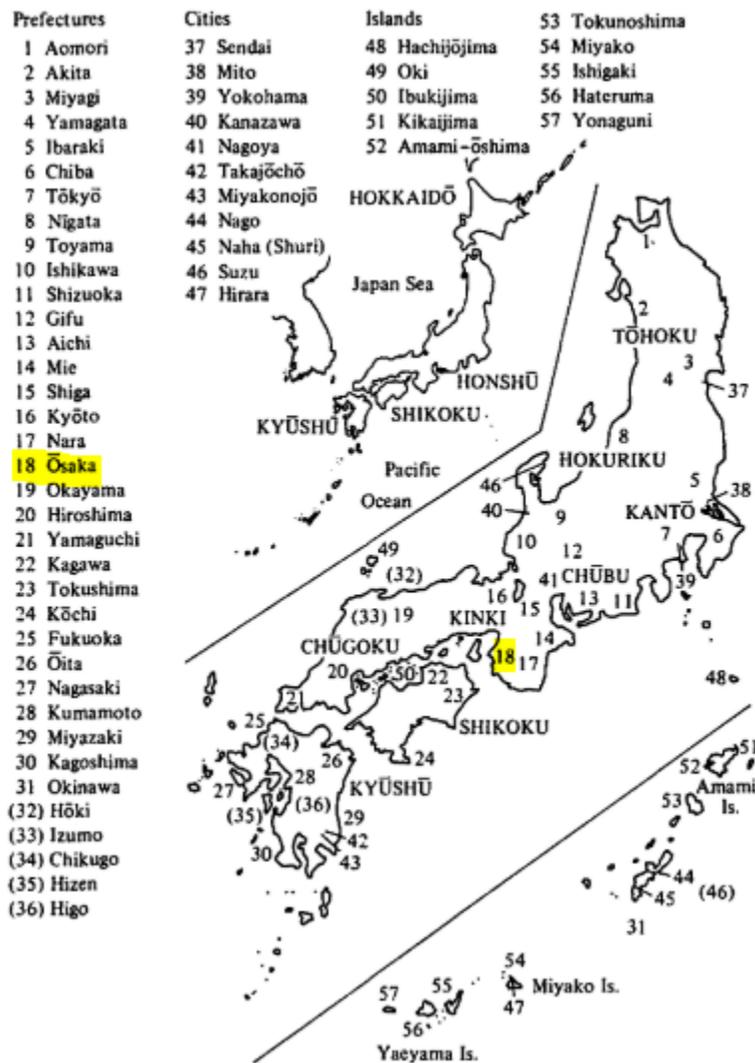


Figure 1: A map of Japan and its dialects (Shibatani 1990, p. 188).

Kansai dialects, specifically those spoken in Kyoto and Osaka, are considered some of the few non-standard dialects to hold prestige within Japan (Miyake, 1995). This paper will focus specifically on the Osaka variant of the Kansai dialect; the Kyoto variant holds historical significance due to Kyoto being the original Japanese capital, and those who speak the Kyoto dialect are viewed as very different people in terms of personality and behavior than those who speak the Osaka dialect (Ball, 2004). Osaka historically has been a center of modern commerce,

entertainment and media, and even today commercial broadcasters will use the Osaka dialect due to the region's associations with entertainment (Loveday, 1986). One of the major promotions of the Osaka dialect was through its use in *manzai*, a specific type of comedy that became popular throughout Japan (Loveday, 1986).

Since its breakout, many non-Osaka dialect speakers, especially young speakers, have found appeal in the dialect. Young people in Tokyo (teens and those in their twenties) specifically have described the Osaka dialect as “lively”, “warm”, and “straightforward and frank” (Carroll, 2001, p. 18), which resembles the previous descriptors found the 1990 NHK survey (p. 15). This is also similar to Ball's (2004) findings, in which Osaka women that he interviewed stated that the Tokyo dialect (on which standard Japanese was based) was too indirect and distant for interpersonal relationships, and that speakers of the various Kansai dialects were much more direct and friendly. However, this view is not shared by older non-dialect speakers in Tokyo (thirties and above), who describe it as “over-familiar” and “pushy” or “intrusive” (Carroll, 2001, p. 18). Long's (1999) study on perceived characteristics of dialects by different dialect speakers also demonstrated the controversy of the Osaka dialect. Speakers of dialects within the Kanto region, which includes Tokyo, and speakers of other Kansai dialects rated the Osaka dialect as having more “negative characteristics” (p. 214) than they did the Kyoto dialect, despite the geographical and linguistic closeness between the two areas.

## 2.2. *Second dialect acquisition (SDA)*

While the term “second dialect acquisition” tends to focus on acquiring a dialect in a speaker's L1, it can also refer to gaining a dialect in a second or a foreign language (see Siegal, 2010). Since mutually intelligible dialects tend share grammar, phonology, and lexicon, non-

native speakers can usually interact with native dialect speakers with little conscious effort beyond learning a couple new words. Varonis and Gass (1985) refer to these types of interactions as “instances of non-understanding,” and learners use these instances to notice specific linguistic features that may be exclusive to certain dialectal situations. Most of the learning takes place implicitly rather than explicitly, in which learners gradually create associations between certain words and sounds with dialectal contact (Varonis & Gass, 1985). This is referred to as “accommodation” by sociolinguists or “convergence” by psycholinguists (Nycz, 2019).

Accommodation or convergence mostly happens in immersion contexts, such as long-term study abroad or permanent immigration, as it often requires consistent input in order for learners to gradually adapt and make the connections between words and dialects (Nycz, 2019). The more salient a feature is in a dialect, which is often lexical items, the easier it is for a learner or any other non-dialect speaker to adapt. According to Nycz, more complex features, such as prosodic differences or complex phonological or syntactic structures, take more time and is difficult for accommodation or convergence to occur with onetime exposure or otherwise infrequent input (Nycz, 2019). In connection with Japanese dialects, while many differ in lexical items and morphosyntactic patterns, several dialects do vary in their pitch accent or their prosody. According to Nycz, accommodation or convergence would need long-term exposure to one of the Japanese dialects in order for a L2 Japanese learner to adapt to the prosodic variation, though it may be possible for a learner to learn lexical items as a dialectal variation with brief exposure.

### 2.3. *Gap in the literature: L2 learner attitudes outside of Japan*

While the topic of speaker attitudes towards dialects and other variations of their native language are starting to receive academic attention in Japan, very few studies address L2 Japanese learner attitudes towards these variations. One of these few studies includes Siegal (1994) interviewing four women living abroad in Hiroshima and recording their interactions with the local dialects. One woman complained about her neighbor having a “very heavy” accent that she found “often incomprehensible” (p. 180). This suggests that she, and the other participants most likely, had no exposure to the dialect before moving to Hiroshima. Due to this lack of exposure, Siegal (1994) found that they used standard Japanese in pragmatically incorrect ways, and even their attempts at speaking the local dialects were incorrect. In another study, Takeuchi (2015) interviewed American language teachers living in Ehime, Japan about their attitudes and interactions with the local dialects. Many of the L2 learners had mostly positive comments regarding the dialects they encountered, some describing them as “friendly” and “unique” while others described them as “adding richness” to Japanese (Takeuchi, 2015, p. 233). However, some L2 learners felt as though dialect speakers in Ehime were “hicks” and “old people,” preferring the standard Japanese to the dialect (p. 234).

Both Siegal and Takeuchi’s studies addressed learner attitudes through the contexts of immersion situations, examining L2 learners fully immersed in Japan where interaction with dialects is likely. However, neither study addressed the gap in analyzing learner attitudes in formal education settings *outside* of Japan. Some studies have addressed this gap in other languages: Ringer-Hilfinger (2012) addressed L2 Spanish learners’ awareness, opinion, and usage of the phoneme [θ] in Spain’s Spanish. L2 learners were interviewed and assessed before, during, and after they had studied abroad for a semester in Spain to test the effect of study abroad

on L2 learner attitudes towards and usage of a sociolinguistic phenomenon. However, such a study for L2 Japanese learners is absent: many studies only follow participants during their immersion period. Therefore, the current study followed students that are not currently in an immersion context.

While immersion contexts provide L2 learners the ability to interact and form judgements with dialects, as well as create an ideal environment for accommodation or convergence to occur (Nycz, 2019), there is the question of whether L2 learners studying in non-immersion contexts are even exposed to the existence of dialects in their target language. Some may argue that the teaching of a standard language is more important than a dialect, as an adequate command of it will allow non-native speakers more opportunities within the native society. This could be the case with Japanese learners: because of the expectation of standard Japanese being used in formal situations such as the workforce, having a command of standard Japanese would allow for non-native speakers to enter Japanese society and its economy. However, due to the pragmatic expectations of bi-dialectal code-switching, Japanese learners will be expected to linguistically perform differently depending on different contexts. Therefore, having the proper knowledge to linguistically adapt to variation within their L2 will provide learners with the opportunity to be more communicatively competent (e.g. Canale & Swain, 1980).

Another large gap in the literature is the effect of teacher attitudes or biases towards dialects on their students' attitudes towards dialects, especially when the language teacher is a native speaker of a dialect. As demonstrated previously, perceptual dialectology within Japan vary depending on multiple factors, including the speaker's experiences with speaking dialects, the urban-rural classification of the dialect in question, and age. It is possible that language teachers carry these attitudes into the language classroom and thus affect their students'

perceptions of the dialects as a result. Therefore, this paper will also investigate the teacher's attitudes towards the variation in question.

#### *2.4. JFL textbooks and dialect variation*

While the details of teaching Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) are beyond the scope of this paper, it is imperative to assess the level of exposure L2 Japanese learners can be expected to have had to sociolinguistic variation within the classroom. Many L2 learners acquire their knowledge outside of Japan through formal education, in which language professionals (of any language) tend to rely on textbooks. Therefore, they must also rely on the choices made by authors and textbook creators, and often these choices reflect ideologies that they wish to convey to the learner (e.g. Clark, 2002; Cubillos, 2014).

In analyzing a collection of JFL textbooks, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003) found that all the textbooks they viewed used the standardized version of Japanese, but only one book referred to it as “standard” Japanese. None of the textbooks made any references to other regional dialects. The textbook that referred to the Japanese as “standard” stated that the Japanese used in it “is the language actually used by educated people and acceptable to Japanese everywhere regardless of age, sex, or occupation” (Matsumoto & Okamoto, 2003, p. 38). The same introduction stated that the dialogues used in the lessons were “based on actual conversations heard in the offices, homes and streets of Tokyo” (p. 40). Given the previous discussion on bidialectal code-switching being prevalent among dialectal Japanese speakers in different pragmatic environments (e.g. Miyake, 1995; Ball, 2004; Okamoto, 2008), it is expected that other variations of Japanese would be prevalent in conversations heard in Tokyo beyond standardized Japanese. It is also important to note that despite the Tokyo dialect being the basis

for standard Japanese, the two are not interchangeable; some variation would still be expected in conversations spoken in Tokyo. However, none of this was addressed in any of the textbooks that were analyzed by Matsumoto & Okamoto.

Heinrich (2005) performed a similar study analyzing a different set of JFL textbooks. Though he did not specifically search for mentions of dialectal variation, many ideological aspects associated with standard Japanese persist. For example, one textbook excluded any settings outside of cities and urban areas, and there were no mentions of rural Japanese (Heinrich, 2005). This is reminiscent of standard Japanese being based on a dialect of urban, upper-middle class Tokyo Japanese, as well as the harder pressures and discrimination towards rural Japanese communities and their dialects during the main era of standardization (Carroll, 2001). Another textbook stated that Japan was a homogenous society and speech community, built on generations “sharing the same values and being careful not to hurt others” (Heinrich, 2005, p. 224). Declaring that Japanese as a society and, more importantly, as a speech community was built on generations “being careful not to hurt others” implies that the standardized speech community emerged through cooperation, rather than smaller speech communities being forced to adhere to a standardized version of Japanese. Also, referring to Japan as a homogenous society ignores these smaller dialect communities and other minority language groups that exist in Japan.

Both Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003) and Heinrich (2005) showed that JFL textbooks often ignore Japanese dialects and barely mention the concept of a “standard” Japanese. Beyond this, these textbooks showcase a pro-standardized ideology, discounting smaller speech communities and rural Japanese in favor of a standardized, homogenous community based in urban areas of Japan. Most likely, L2 Japanese learners in formal education settings outside of

Japan would use a textbook similar to these. If this were the case, and the L2 learner received no other informal interaction with Japanese, it is assumed that they would have little to no knowledge, let alone exposure, to any dialect variation in Japanese.

### 2.5 Studied variation

The current study used a specific morpheme variation in the student questionnaire. In Japanese, verb negation is done through the usage of a negation morpheme, added to the end of the base verb. An example of a base verb is shown in (1).

- (1). *wakaru*  
understand  
“understands” (Ball, 2004, p. 361)

However, this morpheme can vary based on the dialect. In standard Japanese, this morpheme is *nai* (2a) and in the Osaka dialect, this morpheme is *hen* (2b).

- (2a). *wakara-nai*  
understand-NEG  
“doesn’t understand” [Standard]  
(2b). *wakara-hen*  
understand-NEG  
“doesn’t understand” [Osaka] (Ball, 2004, p. 361)

Due to the existence of other post-verbal morphemes, it is unlikely that a Japanese learner without proper knowledge of this variation would be able to assume its meaning simply due to its syntactic position. It is important to note that *hen* has a common homophone in Japanese; separate from the studied variation, *hen* (変) is an adjectival noun often translated as “unusual” or “strange.” This homophone is a lexical item and cannot be attached to verb, meaning that it

does pattern differently than the studied variation, but it is possible for a learner to mistake the variation as the free lexical item.

### **3. Research questions**

This paper will attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What awareness or attitudes do L2 Japanese learners have towards dialectal variation in Osaka?
2. What kinds of interactions with Japanese do L2 Japanese learners have, both inside and outside the classroom, that may make them aware of dialectal variations?
3. Do native-speaking Japanese teacher attitudes towards dialectal variation have an effect on their students' attitudes?

### **4. Participants**

#### *4.1. Teachers*

The participants for Part 1 were three Japanese language instructors from three separate United States universities, each teaching Intermediate Japanese courses at the time of data collection. The teacher of Class 1 is a native speaker of Japanese, originally born in Japan. While she was born in the Kanegawa area, she at some point moved to the Chiba area right outside of Tokyo, where she stayed until moving to the United States. The teacher of Class 2 is also a native speaker of Japanese, though she was born in Tawanishi, a small suburb near Osaka, where she lived most of her life. The teacher of Class 3 is a non-native speaker of Japanese, as he was born and lived in the state of Georgia.

#### 4.2. Students

Nineteen university students who were enrolled in three separate Intermediate Japanese courses (taught by the same professors from American universities in Part 1) were recruited for the Part 2 study. Class 1 contained seven students (four female, three male), Class 2 contained seven students (five female, one male, one non-binary student), and Class 3 contained five students (one female, four male) for a total of  $N = 19$  students. All students were pursuing an undergraduate degree, with the exception of one graduate student. Nine of these students were born in the United States, while the other ten originated from different countries: China ( $n = 4$ ), South Korea ( $n = 2$ ), Mexico ( $n = 1$ ), Colombia ( $n = 1$ ), France ( $n = 1$ ), and Thailand ( $n = 1$ ). A majority of students listed English as their L1 ( $n = 15$ ), though  $n = 7$  students said they were bilingual in another language ( $n = 2$  Spanish;  $n = 1$  Mandarin Chinese;  $n = 1$  Korean;  $n = 1$  French;  $n = 1$  Japanese;  $n = 1$  Thai). The remaining four students listed their L1s as Mandarin Chinese ( $n = 3$ ) and Korean ( $n = 1$ ).

Three students (one female, two male) were recruited for short, follow-up interviews based on their responses to the student questionnaire in Part 2. These students had knowledge of the target variation as a dialectal variation and expressed some sort of opinion, whether it be negative or positive, on it when asked whether they were interested in speaking like the Japanese speakers in the provided audio clips. The first student (given the pseudonym “Todd”) originated from Thailand, while the second student (pseudonym “Ann”) and the third student (pseudonym “Jake”) were both from China, though Ann was from Shanghai while Jake was from Beijing.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	L1(s)	Country of origin	University year	Years of formal study
Todd	Male	18	English, Thai	Thailand	Undergraduate, 1st year	1 year of coursework, informal study through travel and media
Ann	Female	19	Mandarin Chinese	China (Shanghai)	Undergraduate, 2nd year	2 years of coursework, informal study through media
Jake	Male	19	English, Mandarin Chinese	China (Beijing)	Undergraduate, 2nd year	2 years of coursework, informal study through travel and media

**Table 1:** Information on each student chosen for the follow-up interview.

## 5. Instruments and procedures

### 5.1. Part 1 – Teacher interviews

A semi-structured interview was performed with each teacher. Questions included a background on their lives before becoming teachers, including where they grew up and, for the native Japanese-speaking instructors, if they considered themselves dialect speaker. Each was also asked about their teaching history, their thoughts on the Osaka dialect in general, and thoughts on the standard Japanese that they teach. At the end of the interview, the teachers were asked whether they would be comfortable with teaching a particular dialect of Japanese rather than the standard variant. The interviews were conducted entirely in English, though each teacher was informed that if they were more comfortable switching to Japanese, the interview would proceed in Japanese. No teacher, however, never felt the need to switch to Japanese.

## 5.2. Part 2 – Student questionnaire

Students were asked to complete an online questionnaire, the format of which was adapted from Ringer-Hilfinger (2012) (see Appendix 2). Before the questionnaire began, two audio clips between 10-15 seconds in length were presented to participants. Both clips were from radio shows recorded in Osaka that demonstrated both natural speech and the variation morpheme *hen*. One clip had only male speakers and the other had only female speakers to limit assumptions of *hen* being a gender-specific variation.<sup>1</sup> Students were told that each clip contained “the suffix *hen*” but were not told any further information. Students were permitted to play each clip multiple times to familiarize themselves with the suffix before proceeding to the questions.

Five questions using 5-point Likert scales were asked about the audio clips the students heard. These five questions included familiarity with the suffix, comfort with using the suffix, frequency of suffix usage within class, frequency of suffix usage outside of class, and perceived formality of suffix usage. Each question included a space where students could put additional thoughts on the question. Following these were open-ended questions asking about situations in which the student had specifically heard the suffix used and asking about the student’s possible desires to learn the suffix and to speak like the Japanese speakers in the audio clips. Information on how each student interacted with Japanese outside of university classes was then collected (e.g. study abroad, non-university language programs, social media, etc.). Participants were compensated with \$5 Amazon gift cards for their participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Japanese often has variations depending on the gender of the speaker, in that some lexical items and morphemes are more often used by one gender over the other. Therefore, it is possible for an inexperienced Japanese speaker to assume that a variation is occurring simply due to the gender of the speaker. For more information on this topic, see Loveday’s (1986) section on gender identity markers (p. 298-302).

#### *4.3. Part 3 – Student case studies*

On the student questionnaire, each participant indicated that they would be interested to participate in a follow-up interview, and they each provided an email address with which to contact them. Each student was given the option to answer questions over email or in person, though no participant chose to answer in person. The students were asked to provide further explanation supporting their answer to the question “Would you want to speak like the Japanese speakers in the audio clips that you heard?” on the questionnaire. Students were also asked whether they had a personal interest in taking a separate class on the Osaka dialect or learning more about the dialect in their standard classroom.

#### *4.4. Analysis*

For Part 1, all interview data was transcribed and coded for teacher background, their overall opinions on the dialect, their teaching and classroom, and opinions on teaching the dialect. Part 3’s email text data was coded similarly for student opinions on the dialect and their opinions on learning the dialect in the classroom. For the survey data in Part 2, descriptive statistics were run on every Likert-scale question, and the open-ended questions were coded similarly to the text data in Part 3. For the question in which students selected how they interacted with Japanese outside the classroom, all activities were quantified, and descriptive statistics were run.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Part 1 – Teacher interviews

#### 5.1.1. Class 1

The professor said that she did not speak with a dialect, saying that she only can speak standard Japanese. However, she told a story about how a Japanese app had been able to guess that she was raised in Kanegawa, based on the way that she spoke:

“There was this app in Japanese that guessed where you’re from, answering some questions, and I do have, I think, distinct— there must be some vocabulary I had that makes them realize I grew up in Kanegawa.”

Her other experiences with dialectal speakers while growing up in Japan were limited, due to her family living right outside of Tokyo and thus being exposed to mostly the standard and Tokyo dialects. The professor mentioned that her mother, who was originally born in Shizuoka, seemed to have a dialect while speaking with her siblings but otherwise spoke standard Japanese. When asked about her experiences with the Osaka dialect, she brought up that the only input that she had was from comedians in *manzai* and variety shows originally from Osaka. She noted that due to this limited input, she finds it strange when she hears them discuss serious topics:

“...traditionally comedians, all comedians were trained in Osaka area, so they all spoke in Kansai dialect so all the variety show and comedies that I watched: they all spoke *Kansai-ben*. For me, even if there are (...) sometimes they’re speaking, say, talking about economics but in the Kansai dialect, it makes me kinda think that it’s a little bit funny, because (...) my connection with the Kansai dialect being the comedians’ speech.”

Otherwise, she noted, she believes that people who speak the Osaka dialect and other Kansai dialects are more “emotional,” “warm,” and “direct” than those in the Tokyo region.

In terms of the Japanese that she teaches in the classroom, the professor said that she “definitely” would say that she only teaches standard Japanese. When asked about whether she believes her students should have an awareness for Japanese dialects, she responded that, in regard to Kansai dialects, she assumes that many are already aware of them due to their exposures to Japanese outside of the classroom:

“I think they all know because (...) anyone who takes Japanese nowadays, they have – not really anyone nowadays come to Level 1 [beginner Japanese] without ever watching anime, or the Japanese drama, or listen to J-pop and listen (sic) to the people so I think they’re pretty aware...”

In terms of learning dialects, she believes that it is difficult for non-native students to learn dialects, specifically Kansai dialects, saying that she believes that they need to master standard Japanese beforehand:

“I think [my students] are interest (sic) in learning *Kansai-ben*, I think, but it’s not something you do, or you can do, when you’re Level 1 or Level 2 [intermediate], even Level 3 [advanced] is a little bit difficult. I think you have to be a little bit more advanced, you gotta get the basic down before you go to the dialects.”

She also said that she thinks, after learning standard Japanese, if her students want to learn a dialect, they can “always do it once they get [to Japan].” She also stated that she would not want to teach a class that specialized in a dialect, saying that she would not “be able to naturally speak the language.” She said that one of her colleagues would be the one to teach a class about the Kansai dialect, as her colleague is originally from Osaka.

### 5.1.2. Class 2

Since she originated from a suburb outside of Osaka, the professor spoke the Kansai dialect. Her parents also were Kansai dialect speakers, though her father was not a native speaker of the dialect:

“My mother was born in Osaka where the Kansai dialect is pretty heavy. My dad was born in Fukui prefecture, and we always made fun of his Kansai dialect because it wasn’t perfect. He was trained to be sort of an announcer in his college days, so he spoke closer to us than the [standard] Japanese.”

She also mentioned that she always spoke the dialect in school, along with the other teachers and students. Despite being surrounded by the dialect, she noted that there was always exposure to standard Japanese, as all television and news programs used the standard. She admitted that, to her, the Kansai dialect “sounds more casual” than standard Japanese and that the dialect is “the dialect of comedians.”

In terms of the Japanese taught in her classroom, the professor said that she only teaches the standard. When asked if she believed that the language taught in class was comparable to the Japanese spoken in Japan, she said that it was “to some extent:”

“(…) it depends on the situation, [the standard is] the language that they would hear among the formal situations. We start with the formal language and then we move onto casual speech, but it’s not necessarily the language that they hear from their peers.”

The curriculum of her Japanese department does not offer any opportunities for students to learn dialects in their courses. She said that students are taught that different dialects exist in their third year of coursework, though the students “don’t necessarily learn them.” Her students are aware that the professor speaks a dialect, and often asks her questions about it when in class:

“Sometimes my students ask me to give them a phrase, like ‘how do you say this in Osaka dialect?’ and I tell them.”

When asked about whether or not she believed learning a dialect would be more difficult than the standard for Japanese learners, she replied that she didn’t believe it would be, as “it’s just a language.” However, she noted that it would really depend on the students’ objectives with learning the language in the first place:

“If they are placed, say for example, through the JET [Japanese Exchange and Teaching] program in the rural area where a particular dialect is spoken. I mean, they’ll pick it up there, but it is of course important for them to learn. But there’s so many different varieties, and I think it’s good for them to be aware of the variety of languages like English speakers should be aware of different English dialects. That would enrich their cultural understandings when they read a book or a movie, they would get more meaningful experience from those.”

While she would be perfectly comfortable teaching a dialect in a class, she also stated that, at least in her university program, there was not much room to “dedicate a large amount of time” to teaching dialects along with the standard. If there were, there would also be an issue of deciding which dialect should be taught. Ultimately, she thought it was essential for students to learn standard Japanese, as it acts as a “lingua franca” between different Japanese dialects.

The professor also added that she noticed that there has historically been a strong aversion to teaching dialects in classrooms among Japanese teachers. For example, the Osaka dialect has different conjugation patterns for certain adjectives that differ from the patterns used in the standard. If a drill instructor or another Japanese teacher used those dialectal conjugations, many other teachers would find them “unqualified” to teach. This professor disagrees with this view, and would not besmirch any instructor for using dialectal Japanese:

“It’s a dialect, it is a language, and it’s important for the teacher to know that there are different dialects and offer ‘this is not the only way [to say this]’ [to students].”

### 5.1.3. Class 3

As a non-native speaker of Japanese, the professor learned most of his Japanese through both informal and formal instruction. Still, he notes that he had plenty of personal relationships with native Kansai speakers while living in Japan, though he only lived in the Tokyo area:

“I was definitely influenced by *Kansai-ben* early on, and I still have some slight influence in my slang [and] pronunciation.”

He also noted that he had friends in Japan from different regions who spoke dialects natively, including Hokkaido, Okinawa, Fukushima, and Kyushu, though he himself only used the standard while interacting with them. He told an anecdote about his time working for the Japan Management Association in Tokyo, where his fellow employees from the Kansai region “were dissuaded from using the Kansai dialect at work,” being told that the dialect was vulgar and inappropriate for work, perhaps because of “comedy and television” in Japan. In his experience, non-native speakers and foreigners tended to find the Kansai dialect more “interesting” and “flavorful,” while native speakers found it more “abrupt” and “loud.”

“I found it surprising when I went to Kansai actually and heard (...) female speakers using Kansai dialect, because it can feel very abrupt and abrasive a little bit if you’re from Kanto [Tokyo]. I mean, for me as a linguist, it’s totally acceptable and it’s just another dialect, but I’ve been influenced, of course, by work and etcetera.”

In terms of teaching, he only teaches the standard, though he admitted that he tries to “introduce things from various dialects” when he has a chance. His university has a relationship

with an institution in Kyoto and students often study abroad there, so he tries to introduce Kansai variations of standard Japanese that students would hear while in Kyoto. More commonly, students will ask him about dialectal variations that they may have come across while interacting with Japanese media. When asked if he thinks the Japanese learned in his classroom is comparable to the Japanese students may interact with while in Japan, he said it depends completely on “where they are going,” though even if they used standard Japanese in a region with a heavy dialect, they “will be understandable.”

“The thing about [the students] being foreign, if they are recognizably foreign (...), is that people will use standard Japanese with them as much as they can (...) until they get to know them.”

Because of the vast amount of variation in Japan, he stated that it would be difficult to prepare students for the possible dialects they may encounter, so teaching the standard “will have to suffice.” However, he actively encourages his students to seek out Japanese media such as television to introduce them to more casual speech, slang, and dialects that they would not otherwise learn in a classroom.

When asked if he would be willing to teach a class on a Japanese dialect, he said that he “would love to do that.” He didn’t believe that learning a dialect would be “any more difficult” than learning standard Japanese, though native speakers may find it strange if a non-native speaker could use a dialect.

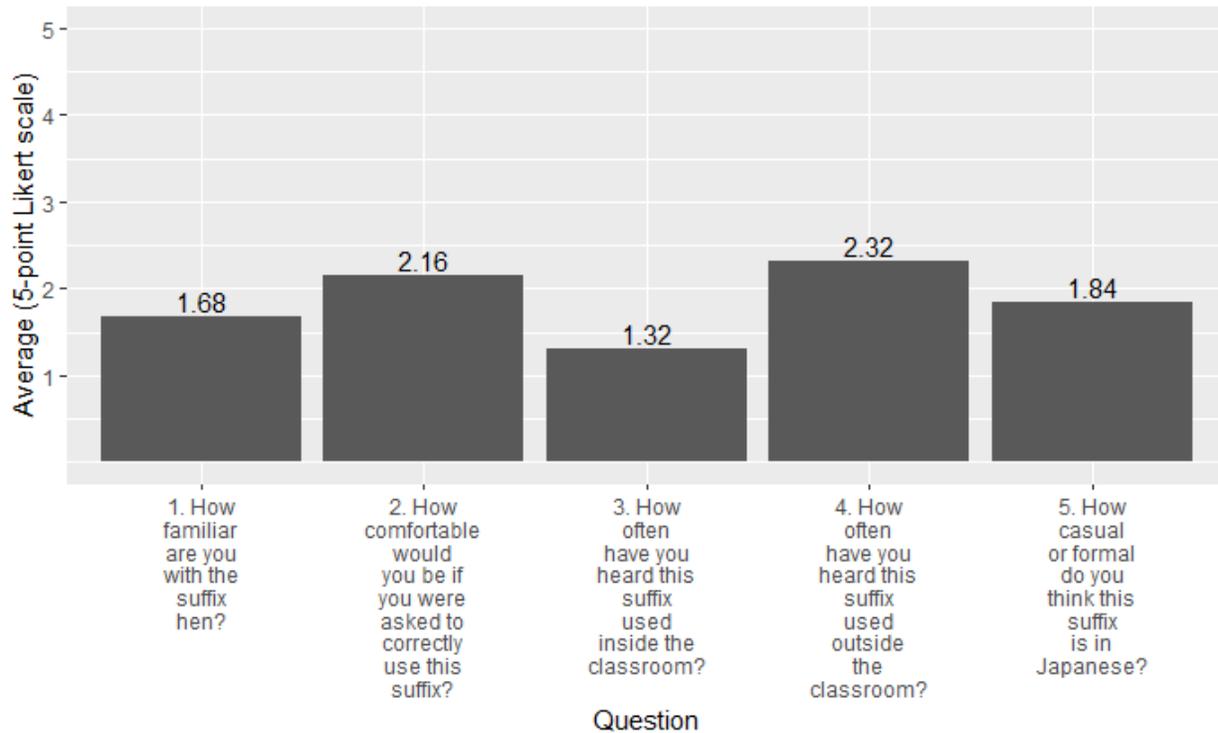
“I think a lot of native Japanese speakers would have a lot of difficulty identifying [the students’] backgrounds and why they were speaking in some specific dialect. It just seems too specific for someone who’s not a native speaker.”

He thinks it's important for students to know that Japanese learners have an awareness about dialects, but he admitted that it would be difficult to find time to teach students anything besides the standard, as they are tasked with trying to teach students a lot of language in a minimum amount of time. Standardized testing, such as the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT), requires knowledge of only standard Japanese, which the professor noted as another issue.

## *5.2. Part 2 – Student questionnaire*

### *5.2.1. Overall*

Across all three classes (results shown in Table 2), students marked their familiarity with the dialectal suffix *hen* between “not familiar” and “somewhat familiar,” averaging 1.68 the 5-point Likert scale. All students said they would at least be “uncomfortable” with using the suffix with an average score of 2.16. In terms of how frequently they heard the suffix being used, it seems students had heard *hen* used more outside the classroom, marking at least “rarely” with an average of 2.32, than they heard the suffix being used inside the classroom, marking between “never” and rarely” with an average of 1.32. All students assumed the suffix was casual in nature, marking between “very casual” and “casual” with an average of 1.84.



**Table 2:** Results of all Likert-scale questions from the survey across all classes.

Students were able to select several different activities to indicate the different ways that they interact with Japanese outside of a formal classroom. The most common activity across all three classes was “watching shows/movies/anime in Japanese,” in 16 out of 19 students noted that they interact with Japanese in this way. The next most popular method was “listening to Japanese music” with 13 students listening it as an activity, followed by “speaking to native Japanese speaker(s) in Japanese” with 11 students. “Short-term stay in Japan (e.g. vacation, tourism)” and “reading books/manga in Japanese” were tied with 9 students listing them as activities, and 8 students listed “social media in Japanese” as a method. The least popular method of interacting with Japanese was “non-university language classes/programs” with only 1 student selecting it as an activity, followed by “study abroad/other extended time in Japan” which only 2

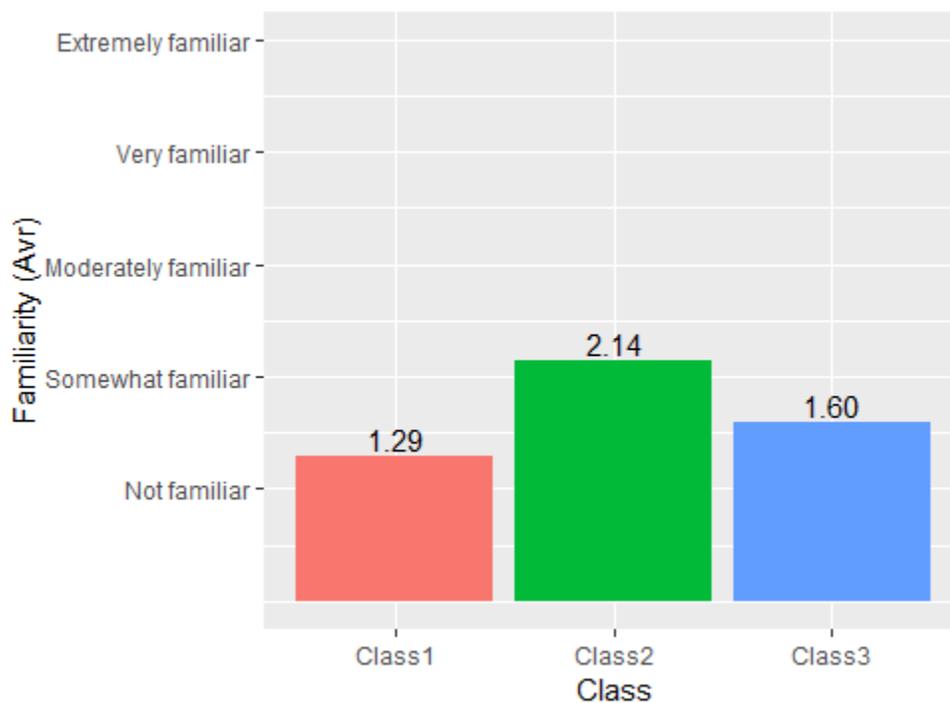
students selected. A breakdown of the activities most and least popular in each class can be seen in Table 3.

Class	Most popular method(s)	Least popular method(s)	Min.	Max.	Mode
Class 1 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	watching shows/movies/anime in Japanese ( <i>n</i> = 6)	studying independently, study abroad/extended time in Japan, social media in Japanese (all <i>n</i> = 1)	1 activity	7 activities	4 activities
Class 2 ( <i>n</i> = 7)	listening to Japanese music, watching shows/movies/anime in Japanese (all <i>n</i> = 6)	Non-university language classes/programs ( <i>n</i> = 1)	3 activities	7 activities	3 and 4 activities
Class 3 ( <i>n</i> = 5)	watching shows/movies/anime in Japanese ( <i>n</i> = 6)	studying independently, study abroad/extended time in Japan, speaking to non-native Japanese speaker (s) (all <i>n</i> = 1)	2 activities	8 activities	4 activities

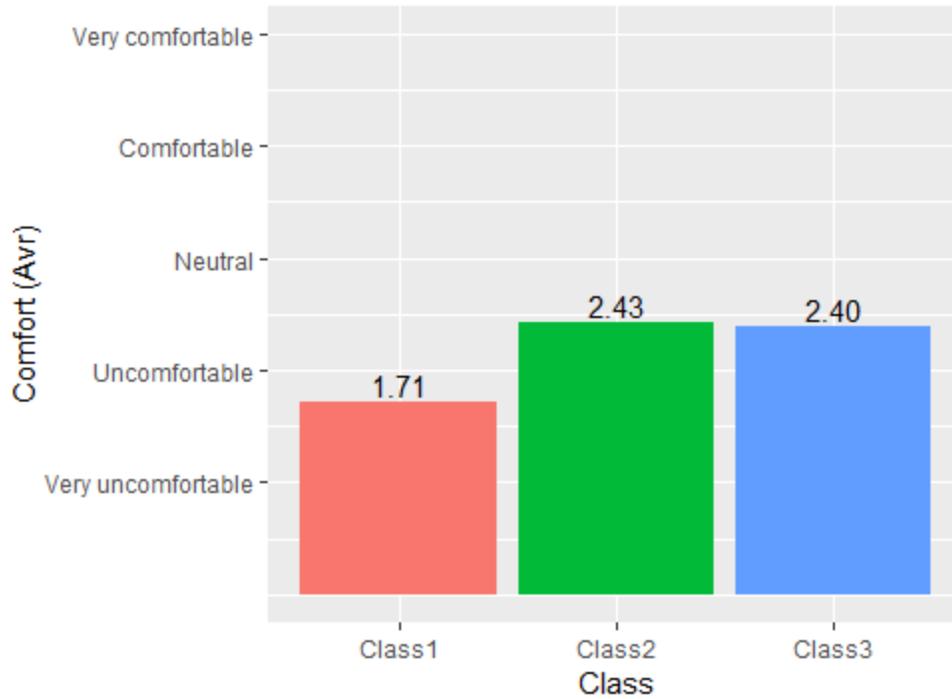
**Table 3:** Breakdown of the activities done by each class, including the most/least popular, the ranges, and the modes.

Of the three classes, Class 2 seemed to be the most familiar with the dialectal suffix *hen* (see Table 4), most rating at least “somewhat familiar” on average (2.14 on the 5-point Likert scale), while Class 1 was the least familiar of the three (1.29 on the scale). In terms of students comfort levels with the suffix (see Table 5), Class 2 and Class 3 rated a similar level of comfort on average between “uncomfortable” and “neutral” (2.43 and 2.40, respectively), only being

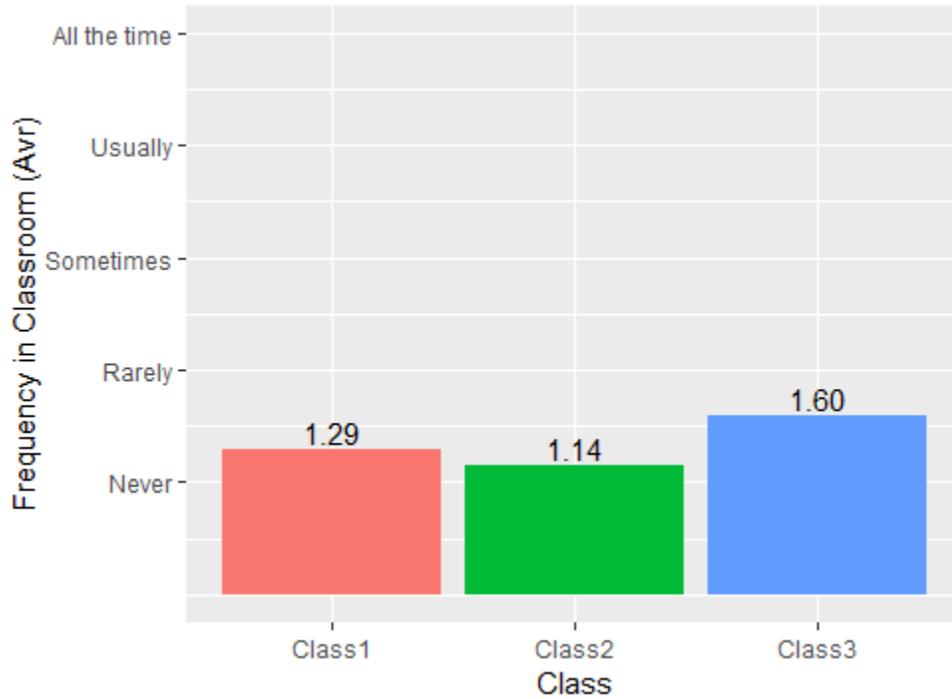
slightly more comfortable than Class 1, which on average rated 1.71, which is between “very uncomfortable” and “uncomfortable.” All classes indicated that they very rarely heard the suffix being used in class, all rating between “never” and “rarely” with average ratings of 1.29 for Class 1, 1.14 for Class 2, and 1.60 for Class 3 (see Table 6). Class 3 noted the highest frequency of hearing the suffix *hen* outside of the classroom (see Table 7), with an average score of 2.80 on the scale. Class 1, on the other hand, had the least exposure to the suffix out of the classroom compared to the other two classes, with an average rating of 1.86. Finally, in terms of perceived formality (see Table 8), all classes found it to be more casual in usage, though Class 3 rated it between “casual” and “neutral” (2.40 on the scale), while Class 1 and Class 2 rated it lower (1.57 and 1.71, respectively).



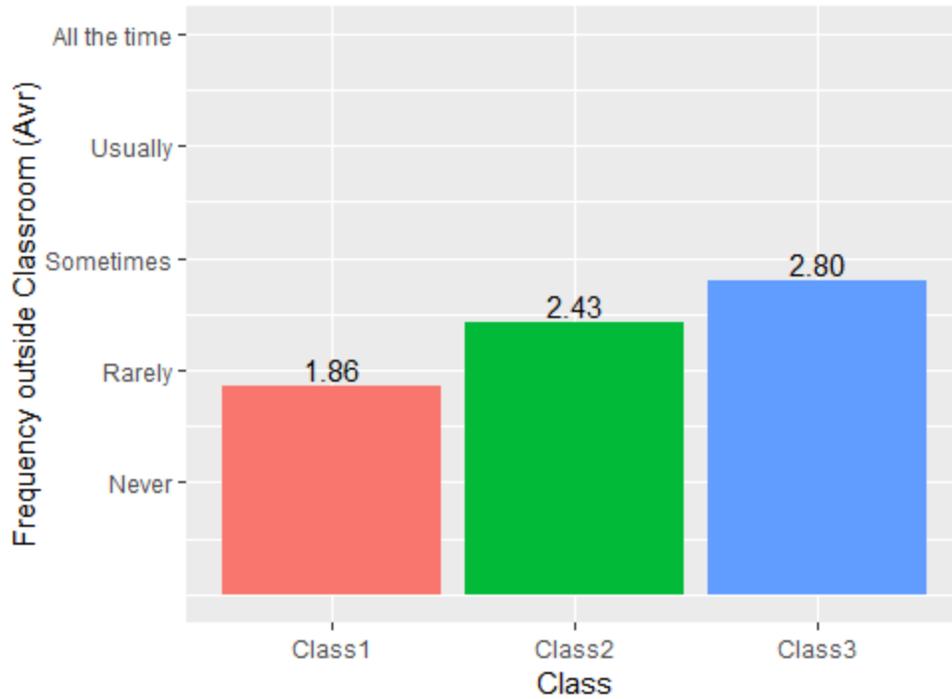
**Table 4:** Results of familiarity with the suffix *hen* (5-point Likert scale) for each class.



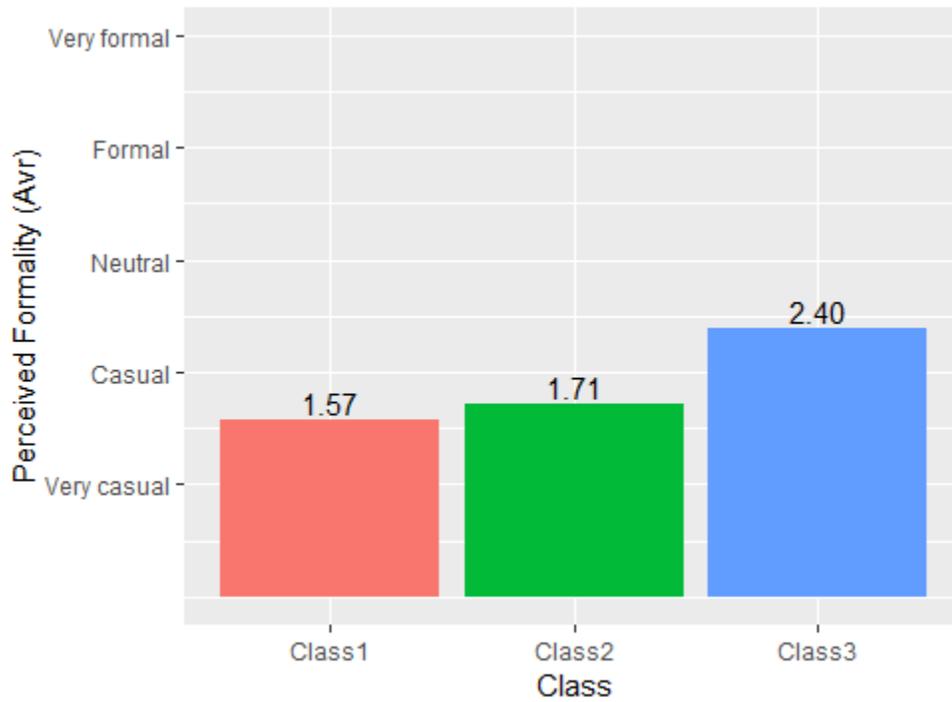
**Table 5:** Results of comfort with using the suffix *hen* (5-point Likert scale) for each class.



**Table 6:** Results of frequency of the suffix *hen* inside the classroom (5-point Likert scale) for each class.



**Table 7:** Results of frequency of the suffix *hen* outside the classroom (5-point Likert scale) for each class.



**Table 8:** Results of formality assumptions of the suffix *hen* (5-point Likert scale) for each class.

### 5.2.2. Class 1

Of the seven students in Class 1 (having the non-dialect native speaker of Japanese for a teacher), six were completely unfamiliar with the Osaka variant *hen*. One participant noted that they were “familiar with the word *hen* which is used to describe something as weird” but was unsure how it was used as a suffix. The same six students indicated that they would feel some sort of discomfort if they were asked to produce it, one student indicating, “I’m not sure where or how it’s used.” All students indicated that they did not frequently hear the suffix used in the classroom. Two students indicated that they “rarely” heard *hen* used in class, but one later in the survey admitted to having never heard the suffix and the other stating that the teacher “may use it occasionally” but they were not certain. Outside of the classroom, two students answered that they have “sometimes” heard the suffix used, one saying they had heard it “in anime,” two students answered that they “rarely” heard the suffix used, and the remaining two answered that they had “never” heard the suffix used. All seven indicated that they assumed the suffix to be casual, one participant noting that the audio clips took place in a casual setting and thus they assumed that the variant *hen* was also casual.

In the open-ended questions, five of the seven students indicated that there were no situations in which they were sure that they’ve heard the suffix, though one participant assumed that they had heard *hen* being used in anime that they have watched. All students stated that they would like to learn how to use *hen* correctly for similar reasons: two students assumed that *hen* was used in normal conversation and thus would like to know how to use it in their speech. One participant said that they wanted to learn *hen* because in order to learn Japanese fluently, they need to “to use all tools available.” The remaining said they wished to learn the variant out of curiosity. Five students said they wanted to speak like the native Japanese speakers presented in

the audio clips, all stating that the speakers sounded “natural” or “fluent:” “[the speakers sound] like how I would talk to my friends in English and I’d want to be able to do that in Japanese.” Another student wrote that, because they had no knowledge of it, they assumed the speakers in the audio clips were using a dialect or some speech pattern that they had not learned, and they would like to at least have an awareness of it if they ever heard it while abroad. However, the remaining student did not wish to sound like the speakers, writing:

“I would not want to speak like that because I am not aiming to be completely fluent at Japanese. It seems as though they are speaking casually and quickly. Speaking like that myself kind of intimidates me.”

### 5.2.3. Class 2

Three of the seven students in Class 2 stated that they were “moderately familiar” with the suffix, correctly identifying it as being part of the Osaka dialect. Two students marked that they were “somewhat familiar” with the suffix, one adding as a comment that they had heard the suffix “in dramas or TV programs as a colloquial dialect-ish grammar.” The remaining students stated that they were “not familiar” with the suffix. In terms of their own comfort in using *hen*, two students said they would be “very uncomfortable,” one adding that they did not feel “competent enough” in their Japanese language skills to use the suffix properly. One student marked said they would be “uncomfortable,” three students marked their comfort as “neutral,” one student said that they would “comfortable.”

All but one student said that they “never” heard the form being used in class, and one student said that they “rarely” heard it in class and often heard it in dramas that may be shown in class. One student wrote, “the teacher is always formal in the classroom,” while another said that they had “never learnt [the suffix] before.” Outside of the classroom, three students said that they

“rarely” heard *hen* being used, saying that they hear it in “movies” and “anime.” Two students said they “sometimes” heard the suffix outside of the classroom, and one student said they “usually” heard it, saying they often listened to radio shows or watched television programs from the Kansai region. The remaining student said that they “never” heard it outside the classroom. The same student stated that, because they didn’t have any prior knowledge of the suffix, they did not know what formality and simply guessed it was “formal.” Four other students guessed it was “very casual,” and the remaining two students answered that they thought the suffix was “casual,” one admitting that it was a guess based on just the context provided in the audio clips.

In the free answer questions, two students noted that they were unfamiliar enough with the suffix *hen* to remember any contexts that they may have heard it, while the rest of the students noted that they had heard it in television shows and anime. When asked if they would like to learn to use the suffix properly, five students stated that they would because they “wanted to learn everything about the Japanese language” that they could or because they want to become “a more natural speaker.” The other two students also wanted to learn to use *hen*, though they explained that it would be “cute to say things in another accent” and that “dialects are really fun.” All students said that they would like to speak like the Japanese speakers presented in the audio clips, citing desires like wanting to sound more “fluent” or “natural” when they speak Japanese.

#### 5.2.4. Class 3

Three of the five students in Class 3 said they were “not familiar” with the dialectal suffix *hen*, mistaking it for the homophone meaning “strange” or saying that if they had heard it before, they didn’t remember. One student marked that they were “somewhat familiar,” saying that they

had family from Tokyo and was aware but “generally unfamiliar with rural styles” of Japanese, and the remaining student marked “moderately familiar” with no additional comment. Three students said that they would be “uncomfortable” if they were asked to use *hen*, the one student with family from Tokyo saying that they did not feel as though it fit with their “family background. The other two students answered that would feel “neutral,” one student saying:

“Being asked to do something I don't know how to do wouldn't make me uncomfortable, I just wouldn't be able to do it.”

Three students said that they “never” heard *hen* being used within the classroom, while the other two students marked “sometimes” and “rarely,” though in their comments, they made it clear that they mistook it for the homophone meaning “unusual.” In terms of hearing the suffix outside the class, two students said they “sometimes” heard it, two students said they “rarely” heard it, and one student said they “usually” heard it. No student provided further comments on this question. Two students believed that the suffix was casual in its formality, saying they believe it to be “casual” and “very casual,” while the remaining three marked the suffix’s perceived formality as “neutral,” two students commenting that they marked it as such simply because they did not know.

In the open-ended questions, two students said that they had no experience hearing the suffix *hen* and thus could not comment on the situations in which they may have heard it being used. Two students said that they had family members from Japan and thus had been able to pinpoint the suffix as being from the Kansai region, and the remaining student said that they heard it in casual speech, “as well as in some kinds of Japanese programming and in radio stations and such.” Three students said they wanted to properly learn how to use the suffix, citing reasons of wanting to gain “a deeper understanding of the colloquialisms of the Japanese

language” as well as just learning “all parts” of the Japanese language. One student said that they only wished to learn the suffix if were “necessary” for speaking, while the remaining student said that they would find it “awkward” to learn a “regional slang style” of speaking. Four of the students wished to speak like the Japanese speakers in the audio, wanting to sound more “authentic” and “fluent” as well as wanting to speak casually “with friends,” but one student said that they did not want to speak the Japanese heard in the clips:

“(…) it might come across as inauthentic or awkward to speak a regional dialect without having any connection there.”

### 5.3. Part 3 – Student case studies

#### 5.3.1. Todd

Of the students of Class 1, Todd was the only one to be familiar with the Osaka variant *hen* and its meaning: he marked “moderately familiar,” saying:

“It's definitely something from the Kansai accent, probably a shortening of - *imasen* [the formal form of *nai*] or something of that sort.”

Todd noted that he had spent a significant time traveling with friends throughout the Kansai region, the Hokkaido region, and Tokyo, and at one point studied abroad in Kanazawa, a city in the Chubu region (directly between the Kansai and the Kanto regions). He also said that he has many Japanese and Japanese-speaking Korean friends that he “regularly communicated with on and off social media.” During those interactions with other Japanese speakers, Todd indicated that he often used casual Japanese and slang, though he had not specifically used the “slang” of the suffix *hen*. In terms of Todd’s own usage, he marked that he would feel “neutral” if he had to properly use it, due to him not being completely sure how to use it:

“I’d be neutral in the sense that I know and understand that it is at the end of the sentence and is used to negate something.”

Todd also indicated that he “never” heard the Osaka variant *hen* being used inside the classroom, writing “We do not learn casual Japanese in our classroom setting.”

In his answers, Todd wrote that he wanted to learn the suffix *hen* because he was “fascinated by dialects,” and in a follow-up discussion, he was asked why he was fascinated by dialects. Todd answered:

“I find the amount of dialectic diversity in Japanese strikingly curious especially considering how ethnically homogenous the country is as a whole. I’ve spent a lot of time traveling around Japan and the quantity of different accents that I’ve heard spoken is frankly unbelievable.”

He also noted that he had a prior interest in *manzai* and was interested in how they used their dialect as a part of their character: “(...) characters use dialect to express themselves and I think that understanding [that] language (...) would make me better at Japanese.” Todd believed that this notion of becoming better at Japanese through learning a dialect would apply to his classmates as well:

“I’d wager that understanding and learning to speak in dialect would make my classmates not only better (sic) adept at communicating with those who speak these languages on a daily basis but also be able to deepen their cultural understanding of the Japanese people—their practices, traditions and ways of thinking.”

However, he admitted that during his time in Japan, he noted that “everything formal is done through standard Japanese,” which he believes is “reflective of wider partially governmental and cultural push to homogenize the Japanese language under the Tokyo dialect.” He believed that

this is most likely one of the main reasons that so few classrooms in the United States “care or even acknowledge” the existence of dialects, but he also believes that a reason is because “learning dialect is about the subtle differences which are sometimes hard to distinguish.”

### 5.3.2. Ann

Ann was one of two students in Class 2 to recognize *hen* as a dialectal variant. She selected “moderately familiar” when asked how familiar she was with the suffix, adding:

“I heard *hen* mostly in *Kansai-ben*, people in Kyoto and Osaka use it a lot.”

In terms of how comfortable she would be with using it, she selected that she would be “comfortable,” saying that she found Japanese dialects “really cute” and that she liked them a lot. She noted that she had “never” heard it used inside the classroom, writing that they are “required to learn standard Japanese” and there is “no time” to learn dialects. When asked if she would want to learn to use the suffix properly, she said she would because she finds dialects to be “really fun.”

In the follow up discussion, Ann was asked to explain her interest in dialects a bit further.

She replied:

“For *Kansai-ben*, I like the way it sounds; it's not flat, and each sound of the words are so bounded, which makes it vivid and give people a feeling that ‘Kansai people are easy to approach!’”

Ann is originally from Shanghai, which has its own dialect; the neighborhood where her family live mostly consists of elders who only speak using the Shanghai dialect and “don’t know how to use standardized Mandarin.” She noted that she has to often use the

dialect to communicate with them, making her bidialectal in Mandarin and the Shanghai dialect. She noted that dialects like hers “are the connections between the last generation and us,” which she feels would be lost if they only spoke standardized languages. She believes that this connection exists in other languages as well, including Japanese.

When asked if she would be personally interested in taking a course on Japanese dialects, she said that she would love to take such a course. In the survey, she expressed a desire to be “integrated into [native Japanese people’s] lives” and she believed learning dialects would be a way to do so. In the follow-up discussion, she elaborated:

“My goal is to travel all the parts of Japan; if I have learned the dialects, I can use them without making mistakes and mingle with the local people, feel their life.”

### 5.3.3. Jake

Along with Ann, Jake was the other student in Class 2 who recognized the suffix *hen* as dialectal variation. In the student questionnaire, he marked his familiarity as moderately familiar, noting that it was “a suffix usually used in Kansai.” He later added that he “usually” heard it outside of the classroom as he watched and listened to several television and radio shows from the Kansai region in his free time. However, when asked about his own comfort with using the suffix himself, he marked “neutral,” commenting that he was “not really into *Kansai-ben*,” and he later said that he would only find it helpful for someone who would “hosting a radio show.”

In the follow-up discussion, Jake was asked to elaborate more on his comments of not being “really into *Kansai-ben*.” He replied that ultimately, he felt more comfortable “hearing and speaking the official (Tokyo) version than hearing the Kansai dialect,” relating it to his experiences with traveling within the Tokyo area and the friends he made in the Kanto region.

He also mentioned that his own personal background of being a Mandarin speaker from Beijing may play a role in his view:

“(…) I am from Beijing, and growing up I always find (sic) myself proud of speaking the most official, dialect-less version of Chinese and I’m definitely not a fan of any other Chinese dialects; this might not seem related but I think this probably generated my resistance towards dialects.”

Jake made it clear that in terms of learning Japanese, he would prefer to learn it “in the most official way” by learning the standard, due to his own comfort levels and also because he felt the standard would be more useful.

In terms of whether he would like to take a course on Japanese dialects, he said he would be okay with dedicating a small section of class to learning about dialects, thinking that it would be “cute” and would be more helpful for students who did not already have an awareness of dialects. He noted that students natively from the United States probably would not have as many opportunities as a student from China to travel to Japan, so their knowledge of Japanese dialects may be more limited. However, he would prefer not to take a full course dedicated to one dialect:

“For me, I would probably enjoy a few classes, but learning more than a week or two? I could feel that frustration by even just imagining it now.”

Once again, Jake attributed this preference back to his feelings towards dialects in his native language.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. RQ1

*What awareness or attitudes do L2 Japanese learners have towards dialectal variation in Osaka?*

The results of the student questionnaire indicated that students are not learning the studied variant of the Osaka dialect during class. They all believed the variation to be casual in its usage, which could suggest that the students only believed that it is casual simply *because* they are not learning it in class. This suggestion was supported by Todd's comments about them not learning "casual Japanese" in their classroom setting, as well as the multiple comments made by the survey takers about wanting to learn the studied variation in order to speak casually with their friends. There did not appear to be any evidence that this assumption of casualness is a result of prior knowledge of the Osaka dialect's reputation within Japan. However, both Ann and Jake had specific attitudes towards the dialect based on their own experiences with dialects in their native language; Ann was a bidialectal speaker of Mandarin Chinese and connected her positive attitude towards Japanese dialects to her own experiences of knowing the Shanghai dialect, but Jake was not a dialectal speaker of Mandarin and did not like other dialects in China and, as a result, had no real interest in learning Japanese dialects.

### 6.2. RQ2

*What kinds of interactions with Japanese do L2 Japanese learners have, both inside and outside the classroom, that may make them aware of dialectal variations?*

Despite multiple interactions with Japanese outside of the classroom, the majority of the students still were unaware of that *hen* is a dialectal variation, even when they have heard the

suffix from Japanese media. This finding seems to be in opposition to the Class 1 professor's intuitions of them being aware of dialects before starting Japanese. This result could be due to the students simply not interacting with Japanese media or speakers that use the Osaka dialect. However, in the student case studies, Todd, Ann, and Jake had been exposed to the variant *hen* and the concept of dialects before due to a high frequency of exposure to natural Japanese and yet still were not completely confident in using *hen*. Todd showed that he still has not learned the variation properly despite spending a large amount of time in Japan, despite the professors' statements about how students could learn Japanese dialects by going to Japan. These results suggest that the students may not be aware of any exposure that they are having to the Osaka dialect or any other variation, despite possibly knowing that dialects exist in Japanese, and they may continue to be unaware without either a high frequency of exposure or explicit instruction of what the variation is.

It is difficult to judge the attitudes of the L2 Japanese students who participated due to their overall lack of awareness. It is clear that they believed the suffix *hen* to be casual, possibly due to casual Japanese not being taught explicitly in class. However, their attitudes did not go any deeper, despite numerous interactions with Japanese outside of the classroom with Japanese media and Japanese speakers. Due to participants noting that they had heard the dialectal variant *hen* in anime and Japanese films that they had watched, it is possible that the interactions the students are having with Japanese may have contained this variation and other variations from different dialects. However, if this were the case, it seems that the students were not noticing these variations or were at least not recognizing that the variations are indicative of different dialects. Therefore, these exposures to Japanese did not seem to be having an effect on the attitudes of the learners or their overall awareness of Japanese dialects.

### 6.3. RQ3

*Do native-speaking Japanese teacher attitudes towards dialectal variation have an effect on their students' attitudes?*

In terms of the final research question of any effect of teacher attitudes on their students, it seems as though the all the professors, regardless of their relationship with the dialect, associated the Osaka dialect with a comedic, casual context, noting that it was “funny” hearing it used to discuss a serious topic. It could be that, because of this association, the Class 1 professor did not believe it is necessary to teach it in class, and Class 2’s professor mentioned that there have historically been anti-dialect attitudes in Japanese teaching. However, it seems more likely that the Class 1 professor viewed the Kansai dialects as too difficult for her students and did not teach dialects for that reason. Her belief that she did not naturally speak a dialect and thus was uncomfortable with the thought of teaching a dialect-specific class was another reason for not teaching it as well. The teacher’s perceived difficulty of teaching these dialects seemed to be the leading factor that affected her students. It is also important to note that the professor focused on Kansai dialects, which as previously discussed have more prestige in Japan than other dialects. It is unknown whether her perception of teaching difficulty applies to all Japanese dialects, though it is possible that she still would believe the difficulty to be too higher, especially since other dialects have much less publicity and thus would be harder to expose students to them.

Despite the professors of Class 2 and Class 3 not sharing this idea that it would be difficult to teach students about dialects in class, they each admitted that the curriculum in the Japanese program did not allow for much time to teach dialects. Regardless, they each tried to incorporate small interjections of dialect teaching in their classes, such as Class 2’s professor answering student questions about what a phrase or word would be in the Osaka dialect, or Class

3's professor including the dialect equivalent of common words for students that will study abroad in Kyoto. While the students in these classes seemed to have a slightly higher familiarity with the studied dialectal variation, it did not seem as though their professors' efforts have had a large effect on the students' comfort with possibly using *hen* or their ability to recognize it as being part of a dialect.

In the case studies, both Ann and Todd expressed their desires to learn a dialect to better their communicative competence. Todd believed that both himself and his classmates would be better at communicating with different Japanese speakers more effectively if they had a better understanding of dialects and the way that bi-dialectal Japanese speakers use them, even though he recognized that formal situations call for standard Japanese. His reasoning demonstrates that Todd understood the pragmatic usages of both dialects and standard Japanese, and while one could argue that Todd could be considered more advanced than his classmates due to his extended experiences in Japan, Todd was still able to grasp this concept as an intermediate student. Todd showed that it is possible to for even intermediate learners to acquire pragmatic knowledge of dialects in Japanese, despite his professor believing that teaching dialects would be too difficult at that level. It is possible that if Todd had more exposure to the suffix *hen* or had been explicitly instructed on its usage, he would be able to understand the variation and possibly produce it himself while speaking Japanese.

Ann herself was a bidialectal speaker of Mandarin Chinese and the Shanghai dialect of Chinese, and she believed that knowing the Shanghai dialect has allowed her to connect with the older generations of Chinese speakers in Shanghai that may not know the standard Mandarin. She stated in the follow-up discussion that she felt like there is something "lost" if everyone were to just use the standard versions of languages, and she felt like she would be able to better

connect with certain native Japanese speakers if she could speak a dialect as well as the standard. It is possible that as she continues to interact with native Japanese dialect speakers, she will pick up the dialects more, as all three professors assumed. With her experience already being able to switch between dialects in her native language, it is also possible that she would have an easier time switching between a Japanese dialect and standard Japanese.

## **7. Limitations**

One limitation of this study could be the two audio clips that were used in the student questionnaire. While both were of natural speech and both had natural usage of *hen*, they were both from radio shows, which can be interpreted as ‘casual media.’ It would have likely been more effective to use an audio clip from a different form of media, but as stated previously in Section 2, standard Japanese is expected in formal media. Therefore, it is unlikely that I would have been able to find natural, dialectal speech from formal media, such as news reports. This limitation is also due to the lack of access to Japanese media, as this study took place in the United States, and only audio clips from online, public resources could be used, which were frequently radio shows and podcasts.

Methodologically, the current study had a small sample size that only reflected the attitudes of a limited number of L2 Japanese learners and Japanese teachers, and therefore their results may not be generalizable to every Japanese learner nor to every Japanese teacher. This small sample size also prevented the survey results from reliably showing any differences between classes. The survey also focused on perception data and relied on student memories, which may have been inaccurate. Students were at the intermediate level learning Japanese in

American universities with a majority speaking English as their L1, which may have produced different results than students of other proficiency levels, L1s, and cultural backgrounds.

The current study could have been improved by including classroom observations in the methodology. The teachers of Class 2 and Class 3 mentioned that they occasionally talk about dialects in class, whether it be due to their own interjections or due to student questions, and observations as a supplement may have verified this. Observations could have also verified survey results of students' memories of the dialectal variation being used or mentioned in the classroom. Another improvement would have been having multiple teachers with similar language backgrounds, such as multiple teachers that natively spoke the Osaka dialect, which would have allowed for direct comparisons between their interviews and their classes from the survey results.

## **8. Further research**

Beyond the scope of this project, the gaps in the literature warrant multiple possible follow-ups. One professor in this study commented that dialects would be too difficult for lower-level students, and as more students gain advanced proficiency in Japanese, and possibly have more interactions with dialectal Japanese through study abroad and interactions with native speakers, it is possible that dialects are integrated into the curriculum in at least a minor sense. It would be interesting to see if at any point in formal L2 Japanese education information about dialects is integrated into the classroom. Two of the three professors created their own textbooks for their classes, so another possibility would be to do a study on the pedagogical practices within the classroom, either by doing a textbook review or through classroom observations, to see how often variations to standard Japanese are even discussed. The case studies in this study,

specifically Ann's and Jake's, suggest that there could be a transfer of dialectal attitudes from their first language to their second, as Ann had more positive views of Japanese dialects due to her positive views of dialects in her native language while Jake had negative views of dialects in both Japanese and his native language. It would be interesting to see if this is a common phenomenon for speakers of languages with various dialects, such as Chinese or Spanish.

## 9. Conclusion

Intermediate students of Japanese in the current study lacked awareness of the Osaka variant *hen* and thus did not seem to have attitudes towards it beyond the assumption of it being casual. This finding is despite interactions with Japanese outside of the classroom that may include the variation, suggesting that awareness can only be achieved through high frequency of exposure or explicit instruction. Even in the cases of awareness through high frequency, such as Todd, Ann, and Jake, a higher frequency does not seem to be correlated with a higher comfort level in one's own usage, which is despite the students' professors believing that their students could always go to Japan to learn dialects rather than learning dialects in the classroom. Regardless of awareness, students assume the dialectal variation to be casual in its usage not necessarily because of their awareness of the dialect's reputation within Japan but because it is not taught within the classroom, which seems to focus mainly on formal, standard Japanese. It is unlikely that these students will learn any dialectal variation in their classroom, regardless of their professors' personal views on the dialect or their comfort level with teaching a dialect, simply due to program curricula not allowing for much time to dedicate to teaching anything but standard Japanese.

Based on the results of Jake and Ann, it seems as though their feelings towards dialects in Japanese have carried over from their L1, Chinese; Ann has a positive attitude towards dialects in her L1 and, as a result, has a positive attitude towards dialects in her L2, while Jake had negative feelings towards dialects in both of his L1 and L2. Both students noted that their dialect feelings in Chinese affected their feelings towards dialects in their L2, suggesting that perceptual dialectology can carry over from a learner's L1 into their L2, regardless of the languages.

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## 11. Appendix

### 11.1. Questionnaire questions

**Below are two, short audio clips that use the grammatical suffix *hen*. Both clips are from two radio shows in Japan Listen to both of them before moving on to the next page. Headphones are recommended. Feel free to listen to these clips as much as you'd like before moving on.**

[Clip 1]

[Clip 2]

**Based on the previous audio clips, answer the following questions. There are spaces underneath each question to explain your answer or add any thoughts if you would like to elaborate.**

1. How familiar are you with the suffix *hen*?

- 1 – Not familiar
- 2 – Somewhat familiar
- 3 – Moderately familiar
- 4 – Very familiar
- 5 – Extremely familiar

2. How comfortable would you be if you were asked to correctly use this suffix?

- 1 – Very uncomfortable
- 2 – Uncomfortable
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Comfortable
- 5 – Very comfortable

3. How often have you heard this suffix used inside the classroom?

- 1 – Never
- 2 – Rarely
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Usually
- 5 – All the time

4. How often have you heard this suffix used outside the classroom?

- 1 – Never
- 2 – Rarely
- 3 – Sometimes
- 4 – Usually
- 5 – All the time

5. How casual or formal do you think this suffix is in Japanese?

- 1 – Very formal

- 2 – Formal
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Casual
- 5 – Very casual

6. What sort of situations have you heard the suffix *hen* in? If you are completely unfamiliar, please write that below.

7. Would you want to learn this suffix to use it properly? Explain your reasoning.

8. Would you want to speak like the Japanese speakers in the audio clips that you heard? Explain your reasoning.

9. How do you interact with Japanese outside of university classes? Check all that apply.

- Reading books/manga in Japanese
- Watching shows/movies/anime in Japanese
- Study abroad/other extended time in Japan
- Short-term stay in Japan (e.g. vacation, tourism)
- Listening to Japanese music
- Speaking to native Japanese speaker(s) in Japanese
- Speaking to non-native Japanese speaker(s) in Japanese
- Non-university language classes/program
- Social media in Japanese
- Studying independently (not including class homework)
- Other

10. Please provide details on your interactions with Japanese outside the classroom that you indicated in the previous question (e.g. where you studied abroad, names of books that you've read, social media sites, etc.)

### *11.2. Interview questions*

1. Where did you grow up (in Japan)?

2. Do you think that you spoke a dialect at any point?

3. Did you have experiences with people who spoke certain dialects of Japanese?

4. What do you think of the Osaka dialect of Japanese?

5. In what kind of situations do you hear the Osaka dialect?

6. How long have you been teaching Japanese?

7. Where have you taught Japanese?

8. Do you think that the Japanese you're teaching is comparable to the Japanese in Japan?
9. Would you want to teach a Japanese dialect to your class? Why or why not?
10. Do you think your class should know about the Osaka dialect? Why or why not?

### *11.3. Case study follow-up questions*

#### **Todd:**

1. You mentioned that you were fascinated with Japanese dialects and you'd like to know more about them. What about dialects are fascinating to you? Why do you want to learn more about them?
2. How would you feel if, rather than the Japanese you are currently learning, you were learning a dialect, such as the Kansai dialect? Would you want to learn a dialect version of Japanese in class?

#### **Ann:**

1. You mentioned that you were liked Japanese dialects and thought they were "cute" and "fun." What about dialects are fascinating to you? Why do you think they're cute?
2. How would you feel if, rather than the Japanese you are currently learning, you were learning a dialect, such as the Kansai dialect? Would you want to learn a dialect version of Japanese in class?

#### **Jake:**

1. You mentioned that you weren't very interested in the Kansai dialect. What about the Kansai dialect doesn't interest you? Is there any dialect of Japanese that interests you?
2. How would you feel if, rather than the Japanese you are currently learning, you were learning a dialect, such as the Kansai dialect? Would you want to learn a dialect version of Japanese in class?