

Abstract 65

Brief Study on the Practical Use, Importance and Specific Variations of the Kansai Dialect in Contemporary Japanese Language

Dr. Asanka Pallewatta

Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Computing and Technology, University of Kelaniya
asanka@kln.ac.lk

When considering Japanese language as a second language, all textbooks and educational tools generally focus only on the standard Japanese language which is also known as the language spoken in Tokyo. Therefore, non-Japanese people encounter various confusions and difficulties due to the dialectal complications found in the regional varieties when communicating in many cities, towns and villages located farther from Tokyo. Among the major Japanese dialects, Kansai dialect can be considered as one of the most popular dialects widely spoken in the specific Japanese speech communities. Compared to the NHK (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*) – the only national public broadcasting organization in Japan, where most of the public broadcasters play a major role in preserving the standard Japanese language, many other broadcasting channels boldly use Kansai dialect especially in their talk shows and comedy-based entertainment. Kansai dialect is irreplaceable in some cases due to its unique liveliness and the strong connection to the culture with its typical sense of humour. Therefore, such forms of entertainment also have been nourished by the exclusive qualities of this dialect. Consequently, the unfamiliarity with the Kansai dialect would limit the social cohesion and the forms of entertainment, leaving non-Japanese people helpless in certain situations. In order to understand the Kansai dialect, this study aims to identify the key variations of the typical patterns found in Kansai dialect, by comparing it with the standard Japanese language, while considering its sub-dialects such as Ōsaka dialect, Kyōto dialect, Gifu dialect, etc. Main features and pragmatic patterns of these regional dialects are identified through the differences in conjugations, lexical features, euphonic changes, etc. These usages in Japan have been observed for more than 10 years, while adapting a linguistic anthropological research approach. As an extension of this study, these findings could be practically applied in many relevant prefectures for training programs catering to the need of many who visit Japan for both short and long-terms, in order to make their life in Japan more productive in many aspects.

Key words: Communication Difficulties, Japanese as a Second Language, Japanese Humour, Kansai Dialect, Linguistic Variations