

# *Isshun yatta* – Revisiting the stance-dialect interface from an indexical perspective

Joseph Iseri (University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, Graduate Student)

## 1. Introduction

Research in recent years has shown that style is an important resource for constructing and maintaining interactional stance and identity. In Japanese, Kansai Dialect (KD) in particular has been associated with regionality, informality, stances of alterity, humor, and uchi-related talk. However, previous research on KD fails to address exactly how or why KD dialectal style is able to create such a diverse range of situations from a micro-analytical perspective. Furthermore, of the few dialectal studies analyzing actual conversation data, even fewer provide detailed analysis of dialectal style’s role in stancetaking.

Conducting a micro-analysis of five NS dyad’s conversations within the frame of macro-sociohistoric language ideologies, the present study investigates the indexical functions of Kansai Dialect (KD) use in conversations about the COVID-19 pandemic between Japanese native speakers (NS). Drawing on theories of indexicality (Silverstein, 2003), style, and stancetaking (DuBois, 2007), this paper proposes an indexical field (Eckert, 2008) for KD style use. Furthermore, it investigates how KD style is used to construct and co-construct various affective and epistemic stances and social identities in interaction. The study concludes with suggestions for further research perspectives and implications for understanding style as a socioculturally and ideologically mediated tool used by speakers for a variety of interactional goals.

## 2. Data and Methodology

This study examines data collected as a part of a larger effort to document and analyze how young adults in Japan talk about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 15 unacquainted dyads who were native speakers of Kansai Dialect were asked to discuss about their various pandemic experiences for roughly 20 minutes, and this paper takes up recorded excerpts of speech from 5 of these 15 pairs for further analysis. Basic ethnographic information of speakers is recorded in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Basic ethnographic information of participants

Pair	Name	Gender Orientation	Native Dialect	Place of Origin
JC01	T	Female	KD	Kansai-region
	K	Male	KD	Kansai-region
JC02	M	Male	KD	Ishikawa prefecture
	S	Male	Kanazawa Dialect	Kansai-region (Kyoto)
JC04	R	Female	KD	Kansai-region (Kyoto)
	Y	Male	KD	Kansai-region (Nara)
JC05	C	Female	KD	-
	D	Male	Hida Dialect; KD	0-18 y/o in Gifu; 18-25 y/o in Kyoto
JC07	H	Male	KD	Kansai-region (Kyoto)
	J	Female	KD? [unspecified]	Kansai-region (Osaka)

### 3. Data and Analysis

DuBois (2007) identifies three major aspects of stancetaking: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. These three seemingly distinct events are arranged in a *stance triangle*, in which speakers (stance takers) simultaneously *evaluate* and therefore *position* themselves in relation to some object (the stance object), thereby establishing a relation to the other speaker (*alignment*). Analysis reveals that participants use of KD style involving overt stancetaking events are typically mitigated through strategic footing shifts (Goffman, 1974) and grammar resources.

#### 3.1. Stancetaking in dialect

Participants engaged in stancetaking with both standard and dialectal forms, which varied in frequency with each speaker. While arguably any talk involves taking constructing stance, Excerpts 1 through 4 are examples of talk from various pairs that demonstrate overt stancetaking events involving KD style. Bold text indicated KD forms, underlined text indicates quoted speech.

Excerpts 1 and 2 demonstrate stancetaking events in which KD style is used. In Excerpt 1, both K (in lines 128 and 132) and T (in lines 129 and 133) use KD style that are framed as quoted speech using reduced utterance-final *mitai na* and epistemic verb *omou* ‘think’. In this way, the stance asserted is framed as the internal representation of other’s speech or of their internal thoughts. Both K and T demonstrate affiliative and align with each other’s stances. Excerpt 2 is also a prime example of the jointly constructed nature of stancetaking events, as K in line 312 produces a *mitai* embedded utterance projected as the internal thoughts of T based on the trajectory of her talk, which is then ratified by T herself in line 313. The only non-embedded KD in both excerpts is adverb *meccha* ‘really’.

#### Excerpt 1 – Golf [JC01]

Line	Speaker	Utterance
128	K (M)	<i>Sō desu ne. <b>Utana, utana</b> mitai na:</i> Yes. (They’re like) ‘you have to get a shot, you have to get a shot’.
129	T (F) →	<i>Ee, sō desu ne. ...minna masuku shitenakute, de, kansei o wa: tte agetete:, e:?</i> <i><u>Wakuchin</u> uttara, <b>konna, honma ni motodōri ni naru n ka na</b> mitai na. Amerika tte daijyōbu? tte iu no wa omotte:</i> Yes, that’s right. Everyone didn’t have a mask on, and they were cheering loudly. I was like, “Huh? If you get the shot, is society really going to return to normal?”. I thought, “Is America okay?”
130	K	<i><b>Meccha</b> sono kōkei ni iwakan deshō ne.</i> That scene is really off-putting, isn’t it.
131	T	<i>Nanka, sō desu. Motomoto atarimae no kōkei janai desu ka. <b>Ya</b> no ni, ima mitara sugoi fuan ni narimashita.</i> Like, yeah. That’s just the previous normal, isn’t it. Although seeing it now, I became super anxious.
132	K →	<i>Yappari mukashi no dōga toka uchi de mite mo, <b>konna shiteta n ya, to meccha</b> omoimasu ne.</i> It figures that even looking at old videos and things, it makes me think “we were doing things like that”.
133	T →	<i>Omoimasu ne. <u>Masuku shitenai ya</u> n to omotte. <b>Sendē yokatta wa</b> mitai na tte iu no wa.</i> I think so too. “We’re not wearing masks”, I think. I’m like, “we didn’t have to wear masks”.
134	K	<i>Modotte hoshii desu yo ne.</i> I want (society) to return (back to normal).

#### Excerpt 2 – News fatigue [JC01]

Line	Speaker	Utterance
311	T	<i>Nanka mō, mainichi jyōhō ga zutto yatteru janai desu ka. ( ) kara, nanka ammari jibun mo nanka mō zutto, saisho no koro wa, uwa, korona no nyūsu tte kō, chūmoku shite miteta kedo, mainichi yattete, mō nanka na: ni natte kite=</i>

		Its like, every day their broadcasting information, right. ( ) so, I'm like, in the beginning, ugh, I was paying attention to the COVID news, but they were broadcasting it every day, and I just got=
312	K →	= <i>Mata yatteru [wa mitai na</i> = like “oh, they’re doing it again”
313	T →	[ <i>yatteru wa, mitai na katachi de, chanto ammari mitenakute, nanka nani ga ima, dōnatteru ka toka,</i> (0.1) [ <i>iketenai.</i> [again, and so I wasn’t watching carefully, and now its like, I don’t know what’s happening.
314	K →	[ <i>nanka, hyakunin koeta toki, e, hyakunin nan ya mitai na meccha sugoi shinken ni kangaeteta kedo,</i> <i>ima, hyakunin toka betsu ni futsū desu mon ne</i> When it passed 100 people, I was like “wow, 100 people” and taking it very seriously, but now 100 people isn’t really anything special.

Excerpts 3 and 4 feature non-embedded dialect. In Excerpt 3, C is discussing her experience as a second-year student who is going to in person to college for the first time. D first evaluates C’s epistemic state regarding a stance object *mawari no hito* ‘the people around (school)’, showing his empathetic alignment with C by using interactional particle *ne*. D’s use of *toka* indicates that the stance object is still up for negotiation, which C takes up to apply D’s evaluation to both the school and the school grounds in line 15 and indicates further projected talk through non-use of copula and prosodic cues. Excerpt 4 features J’s production of an imperative structure *Vte wa ikenai* ‘must not do V’ in KD as *Vtara akan* ‘must not do V’ in addition to dialectal form of epistemic hedge *kamoshirenai* as *kamoshirehen* (line 238).

Excerpt 3 – First time at school [JC05]

Line	Speaker	Utterance
13	C (F)	<i>Dakara, mō, shinichinensei ga iru kedo, jibun mo shinichinensei mitai na: kibun de,</i> So, there are new first years, but I also feel like a new first year myself
14	D (M)	<i>Shiranai ssu mon ne, mawari no hito toka.</i> You don’t know the people around you and things, after all
15	C →	<i>Gakkō mo wakaran, kōsha mo wakarahen shi,</i> I don’t know the school, I don’t know the school grounds,
16	D	<i>Sōdesu yo ne.</i> That’s right

Excerpt 4 – Stay at home [JC07]

Line	Speaker	Utterance
237	H	<i>Hai, yappa, minna uttehoshii desune. Utanai hito toka zenzen iru n desu kedo, utte hoshii, minna.</i> Yes, I guess, I want everyone to get a vaccine. There are a lot of people who haven’t, but I want everyone to get a vaccine.
238	J →	<i>Sō ne. Uttara ne anshin dekiru shi, ma:, ammari detara akan kamoshirehen kedo, soto ni dekiyasuku wa naru yo ne. Nanka kimochiteki ni raku ni naru kara:.</i> Yeah. If (everyone) got a shot, (we) can relax, and well, I know we shouldn’t go out too much, but it becomes easier to. Like, in terms of feeling relaxed.
239	H	<i>Iya, sō sō sō. Demo, orimpikku ga atta n de, ...</i> Yeah, exactly. But, there’s the Olympics...

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

Based on speaker's usage of KD style, I propose that the indexical meaning of KD style in stancetaking events is one of the 'inner voice', which in turn can index contextually relevant social acts, identities, and stances. By this I mean that KD style can accentuate the internality or *uchi*-ness of an evaluation. For example, in Excerpts 1 and 2, the use of KD style signals a footing shift from narrating to narrated frames (Dunn, 2020) in addition to highlighting the subjective (and intersubjective) nature of the stance taken. Excerpts 3 and 4 suggest that KD style can also be used to represent a speaker's stance that is 'overheard' by the other interlocutor, such as when it used in ambiguously self-directed speech (Excerpt 3) or in epistemic hedges (Excerpt 4). This internality or *uchi*-ness then can become a resource for alignment on a parallel plane<sup>1</sup> by speakers who intersubjectively construct a frame of talk in which KD style is a shared resource. This relationship is represented in Figure 1, which is a partial view of the indexical field of KD style.

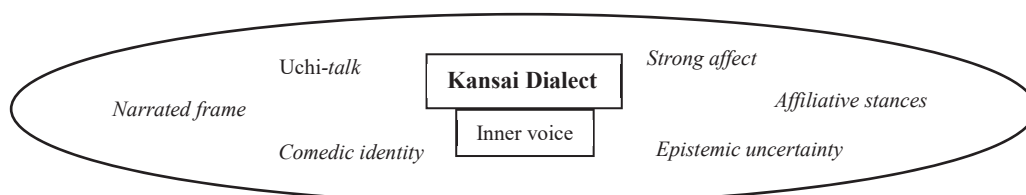


Figure 1 - Indexical field of Kansai Dialect in stancetaking

This interpretation of KD style's indexical meaning is also supported by virtue of speaker's use of mitigation techniques. As KD is located within linguistic ideologies of informality and therefore potentially impoliteness, grammatical structures such as reduced utterance final *mitai na*, and *X to yuu Y* are means by which speakers may avoid producing 'raw' utterances in KD.

The use of KD style shown above contribute to its indexical value(s), in which speakers view KD as resource for emphasizing the emphatic or affective nature of an assessment while simultaneously strengthening their aligned positioned by constructing an intersubjectivity that shares not only evaluation of a stance object, but also a set of knowledge that encompasses KD style and its sociolinguistic associations.

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<sup>1</sup> By the term 'parallel plane,' I am referring to alignment that is occurring on a level separate than that of each speaker's positioning and evaluation of a stance object. So while two speakers may disagree on something, it is likely that mutual use of KD style to disagree still shows alignment to a frame in which KD is a resource for *uchi* talk.