

**Attitudes of Japanese nationals resident in Scotland towards standard and non-standard varieties of Scottish English speech**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper investigates the perceptions of 32 Japanese nationals of two varieties of English speech; Scottish Standard English speech and Glasgow vernacular speech, and the influence of gender and place of residence on these perceptions. The experiment employed both direct and indirect techniques of language attitude measurement. The results obtained suggest a general tolerance for both the standard and non-standard varieties of Scottish English selected and indicate that both gender and place of residence are not significant variables in determining the language attitudes of the informants. The findings are discussed in relation to the pedagogical implications for the choice of linguistic model in English language teaching and in terms of the potential direction of future attitudinal research in this area.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Increasing numbers of Japanese nationals are living and working or studying overseas. A large population of Japanese nationals is currently resident in the UK. According to the most recent official Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs data (2002), there were 51,896 Japanese nationals registered with the Japanese Embassy in the UK resident for three months or more. Included in this official figure are 114 Japanese nationals resident in the Glasgow area (2002). Okita (2001) believes that these official Government figures underestimate the total number of Japanese residents in the UK as it is not compulsory for Japanese nationals to register with their Embassy when resident abroad. It is however, evident that there is a growing Japanese community in Glasgow and it is likely that the majority will both study the English language at some point and be exposed to standard and non-standard varieties of Scottish English speech in the city.

Glasgow itself is the largest city in Scotland, situated in the Clyde basin. Following a period of industrial decline in the 1970s and 1980s, Glasgow has undergone a period of regeneration since the early 1990s. A strong Glaswegian identity still exists, resulting in a characteristic Glaswegian vernacular, particularly in the spoken form. Menzies (1991) describes the Glasgow dialect as historically derived from West Mid Scots vernacular with subsequent influences from Standard English introduced in the eighteenth century, Highland English and Hibernian English. It is traditionally associated with the working class and afforded low status. This variety exists alongside Scottish Standard English (SSE), mainly associated with educated, middle class speakers. Aitken (1979) argues that both varieties form a linguistic continuum with the two varieties at opposite ends of the scale and speakers style shift and style drift according to the social context.

Language attitude studies on spoken varieties of English involving native speakers have indicated that females tend to be more favourable than males to standard varieties and males to be more positive than females towards non-standard varieties (Labov, 1972; Milroy, 1987; Menzies, 1991). It is the perceptions of native speakers which have been the subject of much of the language attitude research on varieties of Scottish English. McKenzie (1996) found both gender and age to be significant variables, with both females and older members of the sample more likely to hold negative attitudes to Glasgow vernacular speech. This finding was replicated by Menzies (1991), who

concluded that females were more likely than males to display negative attitudes to Glasgow speech amongst a sample of adolescents living in the east end of the city. Macafee (1994) conducted a major language attitude survey in working class areas in the east end of Glasgow and commented on the distinction made by a number of respondents between 'rough' and 'respectable' Glasgow speech.

With regard to Scottish English more generally, Sandred (1983) found social class to be significant amongst a sample of native speaker residents of Edinburgh. Williamson (1982, in Aitken 1994:15) found a 'Scottish' accent rated highly on friendliness and generosity and low on wealth, prestige and intelligence amongst Scottish teachers.

Previous research on the language attitudes of non-native speakers has tended to focus on the preferred learning variety of English. This has typically included investigating both local non-native varieties (e.g. Japanese English) and standard British and/or American English. In most cases a preference for the native variety has been demonstrated (Chiba et al, 1995; Flaitz, 1993, Benson, 1991).

Starks and Paltridge (1996) discovered that amongst a sample of Japanese tertiary level students studying in New Zealand females indicated a preference for standard British English speech and males for a local non-standard variety of New Zealand English. However, they stressed a need for English attitude studies involving non-native speakers to examine other variables such as gender, age and region.

With regard to the Japanese language itself, Carroll (2001) believes that attitudes amongst the Japanese towards urban non-standard varieties of Japanese are increasingly favourable. This appears to be the case for *Osaka-ben* (Osaka dialect) in particular, perhaps due to its commercial power and high level of use on radio and television. One recent newspaper article reports that the favourability to *Osaka-ben* varies according to both age and place of residence with younger Japanese and those born in western Japan (where Osaka is located) being generally more positive (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, 8 November 1993, cited in Carroll, 2001:194). It is not known whether the language attitudes that Japanese nationals hold to varieties of the Japanese language influence any attitudes they may hold to varieties of English.

The attitudes that English language learners hold towards varieties of English are believed to be of pedagogical importance for a number of reasons. Gardner (1982) maintains that generally, there appears to be a positive correlation between a favourable attitude to a language and achievement in the acquisition of this language. He suggests that this is largely due to a tendency for students with positive attitudes to retain the motivation to study the target language for longer periods and to be more involved in lessons in the language classroom. Friedrich (2000) argues that educators should be aware of the language attitudes of their students towards varieties of English in order to fully address their needs and deal with the mixed feelings that English, as an international language provokes. Starks and Paltridge (loc. cit.) maintain that the choice of a model of English for teaching and learning is closely connected to students' attitudes towards English.

Language attitudes can be measured both directly and indirectly. Direct methods often involve subjects responding to questionnaires or interviews. Labov (1966) believes that direct questioning alone is of very little value and thus it is better used in conjunction with more indirect methods. The match-guise method is probably the most frequently employed indirect technique for measuring language attitudes. It was developed by Lambert in the 1960s with the aim of measuring attitudes indirectly under laboratory conditions. It is believed that this technique allows all variables to be controlled, other than the samples of speech which the subjects respond to. Respondents are required to rate a speaker on a number of traits on a Likert scale, based on his/her speech in a number of guises. Language attitude studies frequently involve a mixture of direct and indirect methods, with some factors of the experiments hidden from the subjects and others not.

The present study sought to investigate possible differences in attitude to varieties of Scottish English speech amongst Japanese students resident in Scotland. Specifically, it was hypothesised that the gender of the respondents would affect attitudes to both Glasgow vernacular speech and Standard Scottish English speech. This hypothesis was formulated due to evidence from previously mentioned studies detailing sex differentiation in attitudes. Moreover, it was hypothesised that the current place of residence in Scotland (i.e., living inside or outside Glasgow) would also affect the language attitudes to both varieties of Scottish English speech. In other words, it was considered that the amount of exposure to and familiarity with the language varieties would be a determinant of attitude.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The sample consisted of 32 Japanese nationals who had been resident in either Glasgow or Stirling for 3 months or more. All the informants were currently studying at either Glasgow University or Stirling University. The vast majority of the subjects were currently studying the English language in order to undertake future academic study or were currently undertaking academic study in their respective universities. All the respondents had studied English at some point in the previous 18 months. Both the 'Glasgow' and the 'Stirling' groups were made up of 8 male and 8 female informants. Stirling, an historic town approximately 30 miles from Glasgow was chosen because the variety of English spoken there was deemed to be clearly different from the Glasgow vernacular. Moreover, it was considered that the Stirling respondents would be unlikely to have had much contact with speakers of the Glasgow vernacular and would therefore not have formed any preconceptions about Glasgow vernacular speech and its speakers. However, it was clear that the Stirling based informants would have been exposed to Standard Scottish English speech, due to the fact that it is spoken throughout Scotland. It was assumed that those informants resident in Glasgow would be more familiar with the varieties of English spoken in the city. All of the subjects had received at least 6 years English language education at school in Japan and had attained at least an upper intermediate (IELTS 6.0 or above) level in English. It was hoped that the sample was generally representative of Japanese students at both Glasgow and Stirling University.

Two male speakers were recorded. Both were born in the traditionally working class Springburn area of Glasgow and had a Glaswegian accent. Both speakers were recorded using 'broad guise' Glasgow vernacular speech in their relaxed home environment. Speaker 2 was also recorded using 'formal guise' Standard Scottish English, situated in a University classroom with formal seating arrangements. The topic of discussion in all three recordings was the leisure time activities of the speaker.

The respondents were interviewed individually in late 2001 in either Glasgow or Stirling University. The interviewer was a speaker of New Zealand English; this choice was made in an attempt to prevent any possible interviewer bias. The questionnaire itself consisted of two parts. The first introductory section sought to examine language attitudes to spoken Glaswegian directly. The subjects were required to classify Glasgow speech (speaker 1) into 'good English', 'bad English' or 'don't know' and to give reasons for their choice. Part 2 aimed to examine language attitudes indirectly by employing Lambert's match-guise technique. Subjects were required to rate the speech of speaker 2 (in both broad and formal guises) for 9 cognitive and affective traits on a seven part semantic differential scale.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 below indicates that a large percentage of the respondents (50%) classified the speech of speaker 1 as 'bad English'. Subjects making this choice tended to focus on the lack of clarity, 'strangeness' or 'laziness' of the speech. One speaker (Glasgow male) commented on the '...grammatical mistakes and very simple sentences'. The 25% of the respondents who classified the speech as 'good English' remarked upon the ease of comprehensibility of the speech. Those respondents (25%) who marked the speech 'don't know' commented upon the informal nature or the lack of clarity of the speech and the difficulties this posed in terms of classification.

Figure 1 also demonstrates that a larger percentage of males (37.5%) than females (12.5%) categorised the speech as 'good English'. An equal amount of males and females (50%) viewed the speech unfavourably, classifying it as 'bad English', although a greater proportion of females (37.5%) than males (12.5%) were undecided in their choice, selecting the 'don't know' category. The higher proportion of females choosing this category may reflect a traditional cultural reluctance by Japanese females to give opinions directly for fear of appearing impolite or causing offence to others.

In relation to place of residence, figure 1 indicates that a greater number of informants resident in Glasgow (31.25%) viewed the speech of speaker 1 positively than those informants resident in Stirling. Moreover, a greater number of Glasgow residents classified the speech negatively (56.256% compared to 43.75%). The respondents resident in Stirling seemed much less clear in how to classify the speech, with 37.5% responding 'don't know' as opposed to only 12.5% for the Glasgow residents. This contrast in classification may point to a greater degree of confusion about how to classify

Glasgow speech by the Stirling based informants due to their likely lack of familiarity with the vernacular. It may also be that the speech may be more unintelligible for the Stirling based subjects.

Fig. 1 Classification of speech of speaker 1 according to the Total Sample and by Gender and Place of Residence (32 Subjects).

<u>Variable</u>		<u>Classification</u>		
		<u>Good English</u>	<u>Bad English</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
Total Sample (n=32)		8	16	8
Gender	Male (n=16)	6	8	2
	Female(n=16)	2	8	6
Place of Residence	Glasgow (n=16)	5	9	2
	Stirling (n=16)	3	7	6

Figure 2a below indicates that the sample in general responded more favourably to the formal guise than the broad guise with mean values of 3.191 and 3.422 respectively. However, as shown in Figure 2b the results of an independent *t* test indicate that the difference in the responses to the broad guise and formal guise was not significant, employing an  $\alpha = .05$  level of significance.

Moreover, Figure 2a demonstrates that males responded more positively to the broad guise speech than females with mean values of 3.362 and 3.481. However, males appeared to be less favourable towards the formal guise speech than the females with mean values of 3.362 and 3.018. Again, the independent *t* test shown in Figure 2b suggests that the differences in the responses to both the broad guise speech and the formal guise speech by males and females were not significant.

Fig. 2a. Means and Standard Deviations of attitudes to the speech of speaker 2 in Broad (B) and Formal (F) guises according to Gender.

Speaker Guise	Male(n=16)			Female(n=16)			Total(n=32)		
	Mean	SD	S.E	Mean	SD	S.E	Mean	SD	S.E
Broad	3.362	0.830	0.208	3.481	1.012	0.253	3.422	0.913	0.161

Standard	3.362	0.792	0.198	3.018	0.850	0.212	3.191	0.826	0.146
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Fig 2b T-test values for Gender

(B) Broad Guise (n=16)			(F) Formal Guise (n=16)		
<i>T-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>T-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>
-0.363	30	0.719	1.184	30	0.246

Figure 3a indicates that there were differences in the responses to the broad guise according to place of residence. The respondents residing in Glasgow were more favourable to both broad guise and formal guise speech than those based in Stirling with mean values of 3.388 to 3.456 and 3.081 to 3.330. Again, the independent *t* test shown in Figure 2b indicates that the differences in the responses to the broad guise and formal guise speech by the Japanese subjects resident in Glasgow and Stirling were not significant.

Fig. 3a. Means and Standard Deviations of attitudes to the speech of speaker 2 in Broad (B) Formal (F) guises according to Place of Residence.

Speaker Guise	Glasgow (n=16)			Stirling (n=16)		
	Mean	SD	S.E.	Mean	SD	S.E.
Broad	3.388	1.015	0.254	3.456	0.829	0.207
Formal	3.081	0.905	0.226	3.330	0.753	0.188

Fig 3b. T-test values for Place of Residence

Broad Guise (B)			Formal Guise (S)		
<i>T-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>T-value</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>
-0.210	30	0.835	-0.743	30	0.463

Overall, figure 2 and figure 3 appear to indicate that the informants generally held positive attitudes to both the broad guise and formal guise speech when questioned indirectly employing the match-guise technique. Moreover, statistical analysis suggests that there were no significant differences between the responses to the broad guise speech and formal guise speech according to gender or place of residence.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The results from the more detailed Part 2 of the questionnaire, through indirect testing employing the match guise technique, suggest that the Japanese informants were generally tolerant towards non-standard Glasgow vernacular speech. This appears to be consistent with the previously mentioned research, which demonstrated favourable attitudes towards non-standard varieties of Japanese. This apparent tolerance towards both standard and non-standard varieties of English speech may have pedagogical implications for the choice of linguistic model employed in English language teaching,

particularly in areas where non-standard urban English vernaculars are widely spoken. It could be that exposing English language learners to both local standard and non-standard varieties of English speech would not significantly reduce their motivation for acquiring the language, whilst at the same time familiarising them with local varieties of English which they are likely to hear outside of the classroom.

However, the hypothesis that gender would affect the language attitudes towards Glasgow vernacular speech and Scottish Standard English speech was not supported by the data, as there was a generally favourable response towards both varieties of speech. For the same reason, the hypothesis that current place of residence would be a significant factor in determining language attitudes was rejected in this case. Thus, the amount of previous exposure to the Glasgow vernacular speech did not seem to be a significant variable.

However, the conflicting results of Part 1 of the questionnaire where a large number the Japanese subjects classified the Glasgow vernacular speech as 'Bad English' suggests that there appears to be a degree of confusion amongst the informants. Therefore, it may be profitable for further attitudinal research to be conducted to determine the validity of the results obtained in this study. Further research might also be required to determine whether other variables such as age, educational background, social class and language level could account for variations in attitude to standard and non-standard varieties of English speech.

## NOTES

1. The questionnaire and the speech recordings used in this survey are available from the author.
2. I am grateful to Mr. Douglas Graham, EFL Unit, University of Glasgow; Mr. Sayed Mohsen Hosseini, Dept. of Statistics, University of Glasgow; Ms. Esther Dunbar, Dept. of English Language, University of Kuwait and the staff at The Consulate General of Japan, Edinburgh for their invaluable help.

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## **APPENDIX**

### QUESTIONNAIRE.

This questionnaire is part of a survey on varieties of English. The information received will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used for no other purpose.

#### Personal Details

Initials \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_ Length of Time Studying English \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality \_\_\_\_\_ Native Language \_\_\_\_\_

Area/Town currently Residing \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you lived there? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Part 1 -Speaker 1.

1. Listen to the speaker and classify the speech (one answer only).

a) Good English                       b) Bad English                       c) Other

Why did you make this choice?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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Part 2a - Speaker 2

Listen to the tape and circle where you would put the speaker on the following scale.  
Example, 1=very intelligent, 7= very unintelligent.

intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unintelligent
educated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	uneducated
not honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	honest
unclear	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	clear
friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unfriendly
unlikeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	likeable
high status job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	low status job
ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not ambitious
confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not confident
not fluent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	fluent

Part 2b Speaker 3

Listen to the tape and circle where you would put the speaker on the following scale.  
Example, 1=very intelligent, 7= very unintelligent.

intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unintelligent
educated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	uneducated
not honest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	honest
unclear	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	clear
friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unfriendly
unlikeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	likeable
high status job	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	low status job
ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not ambitious
confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not confident

not fluent      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      fluent