

# Linguistic Stereotype toward Osakan Dialect Speaker in Fiction

(Images and Stereotypes toward Fictional Osakan Dialect Speaking Characters in Anime, Manga, Novel and Video Games)

Hardianto Rahardjo, S.Pd., M.Pd

Prodi Bahasa Jepang Universitas Widyatama

[hardianto.rahardjo@widyatama.ac.id](mailto:hardianto.rahardjo@widyatama.ac.id)

Abstract

*Linguistic Stereotype is an image that closely related to certain speakers of certain style of speaking, language and dialects or accents. This type of stereotype usually derived from the image where the language or accents came from. In Japanese fictions and stories such as anime and manga, the fictional characters often depicted as possessing characteristics and habits suitable to the stereotypes their speaking style and dialects carry. This article is written to describes and analyze the example of said phenomenon, in which Osakan dialect fictional speakers are often depicted with unique characteristics in accordance with the dialect they spoke with. This gives an image to non-native readers that the majority of Osakan people in real world Japan are really act and be the way they are depicted in the fiction.*

Kata kunci/Keyword: yakuwarigo; sosiolinguistik; stereotype/stereotip; manga; shousetsu

## 1. Introduction

The way an individual speaks are often used as a measuring tool for their characteristics, intelligence, education background, and even their reliability. This phenomenon is one example of linguistic stereotypes in daily lives. And a stereotype that has been crystalized in the mind of people for many years will eventually be believed as the truth by many. On the other hand, according to McGarty, Yzerbit dan Spears (2002), stereotype is also a tool of categorizing and recognizing characteristics in people based on similarities they have. In fictional stories, language stereotypes are often used to strengthen a character's personality trait and uniqueness, therefore, readers can emphasize and recognize said character much more easily to make the story more believable.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that similar to all stereotypes, most of the image depicted by said stereotypes toward some people are usually inaccurate or just purely mistaken compared to the reality.

Stereotypes toward certain dialects user in Japan can be seen by observing how fictional characters who speak with said dialects or accents are being depicted in manner of personality trait and characteristics.

This article will describe and analyze, by means of describing the characteristics and personality traits of fictional character who speak with Osakan dialects how linguistics stereotypes toward certain dialects speakers in Japan can be found in their fiction media such as manga, anime and video games, sometimes known also as visual novel.

## 2. Method

To write this article, descriptive analysis method will be utilized, i.e. selected data sample, which is various characters who speak mostly using Osakan or Kansai dialects from various fictional media such as manga, anime and video games or visual novel will be chosen using theories and result from previous research as a guideline. The sample characters' unique personal trait and characteristics will then be described, both based on how they are depicted through many of the dialogue in the story, or from official description written by the writers themselves. Similarities among the characters' unique personal trait will then be concluded as one of the example as how the Osakan dialect speakers are being stereotyped in Japanese fictional media.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1 The Definition of Hougen or Dialects

According to Sudjianto (2007), the difference in language is also determined by each of the speakers' geographic locations. Various dialects that is the result of this geographic difference is known as regional dialects. In Japanese, regional dialects are called *hougen*. Japan is divided into 47 prefectures, in which each prefecture possess their own unique regional dialects. Palter dan Horiuchi (1995) stated, before the advance of transportation and telecommunication technology, the ancient people of Japan were divided by their own country's geographic hurdles such as rivers too wide to cross, mountains too high to climb over, etc. This dividence had caused each settlement to develop their own style of Japanese languages, unique on each of their own areas. This is the reason why even in modern times, many Japanese people can be heard talking using their birthplace dialect in daily conversation. For example, we can find people in Tokyo who speak using Kansai Dialect instead of Tokyo dialect, because they were born in Kansai area. Along with the advance of telecommunication and transportation technology, and the decentralization of Tokyo as the capital of Japan, the Tokyo Dialect has been claimed as the standard dialect being taught for foreign people who study Japanese language. Nevertheless, the

regional dialects are still widely used by many people in Japan albeit the decrease in number of speakers this past few years. Children are still mimicking their parents and seniors in using local dialects in their daily conversation despite the fact that the Tokyo dialect is being taught at school as the standard dialect.

### 3.2 *Osaka-ben* or Osakan Dialect

The Osakan dialect is one among several dialects being used in Kinki region, known also as Kansai region in Japan. The dialect used in Kansai region is known as Kansai-ben or Kansa dialect. Kansai dialect. Kansai dialect covers the dialect being used or spoken in Hyogo, Kyoto, Osaka, Nara, Shiga and Wakayama prefectures.

Here are some unique trait and distinctive characteristics of Kansai dialects:

1) Some words in standard dialects are shortened in Kansai dialects. For example:

Standard	Kansai
よく	よう
面白い	おもしろい
違う	ちゃう
これは・それは	こら・そら

2) Some words in standard dialects are said differently in kansai dialects. For example:

Standard	Kansai
あたたかい	ぬくい
くすぐったい	こそばい
ころぶ	こける
すてる	ほかす

3) "S" are often spoken as "h" in Kansai dialect. For example:

Standard	Kansai
さん	はん
ません	まへん

ましよう	まひょう
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4) The copula です and だ become や in Kansai dialect.

Standard	Kansai
だ・だろ・だから	や・やろ・やから

5) Double vocals are often shortened. For example :

Standard	Kansai
行こう	行こ
しょう	しよ
そうだ	そや・せや

6) On the other hand, short vocals in the end of words are often lengthened. for example:

Standard	Kansai
手	手え
毛	毛え
木	木い

7) Double consonant in some words are often pronounced as a vocal. for example :

Standard	Kansai
使って	つこうて・つこて
買った	こうた
もらった	もろうた・もろた
言って	ゆうて・ゆて

. (Palter & Horiuchi, 1995:14)

Here are some unique characteristics of Osakan dialects:

- For first person, they use “ウチ” instead of “わたし” (me).
- They use the copula “や” instead of “です” atau “だ”, just as mentioned above in Kansai dialect’s characteristics.
- The words “いい”, “だめ”, “ほんとう” in standard Japanese are being replaced with “ええ”, “あかん”, “ほんま”.
- Similar to Kansai dialect’s characteristics, in some words “s” are pronounced as “h”, like “-さん” become “-はん”, and “-ません” become “-まへん”.
- Negative suffix “-ない” in standard dialects become “-へん” or simply “ん” in Osakan dialects.
- In many words’ pronunciation, Osakan speaker emphasized more on vocal more than consonants. For example, the word “はやく” is pronounced “はよう” in Osakan dialect, and “しまった” become “しもうた” etc.

### 3.3 Stereotype

Stereotyping is simplifying or generalizing one image towards certain community, ethnicity or group of people, implying that all members of the same group will possess certain similar characteristics or trait. Linguistic stereotype is when certain group of people are being judged based on their way of talking, language or accents. The word “*Stereotype*” itself is derived from the two Greek words *Stereos* (στερεός) which means “strong/solid”, and *Typos* (τύπος) which means “image”. And ths, “stereotypes” can be translated as “A strong/solid image towards and idea or thoughts” (Schneider, 2005).

Examples of linguistic stereotypes in fictions can be found in Hollywood’s movies, in which most of the time, any characters speaking in English accent (also known as the “Received Pronunciation”) are always depicted as classy, arrogant, and smart characters. (Anderssen, 2009). Stereotypes and depiction of a character’s trait and characteristics based on their native region can be found in many work of fiction from other countries as well. In Japanese work of fictions such as anime, manga, visual novel, etc., the depiction of Osakan dialect speaker is also one example of linguistic stereotypes. According to Kinsui (2011), Osakan people are identic with the image of being “loud, emotional, passionate about certain things they like”.

As Andersson (2009) stated, “How we say things can be as important as what we say. We tend to classify people based on the way they speak and there are some who feel that language differences serve as the single most reliable indication of social position in our society. We distinguish ourselves from others with language and we form a linguistic identity among our peers. Notions of differentness, identity, standards, power and prejudices are important here, as we divide people into different categories and ascribe features to them, based on their dialects and accents”.

McGarty, Yzerbit, Spears (2002) wrote about the three basic concepts of stereotypes, as aids to explanation, as energy saving device, and as shared group beliefs. Stereotypes can be useful as a tool to easily recognize the difference between one group of people with the other, by focusing on similar trait they have while ignoring smaller, specific details that tells the difference between one individual to another. In works of fictions, designing and depicting certain characters using certain stereotypes carried by the specific characters would help readers/viewers/players get to know the character’s personality more easily and empathize with them like they are a real individual.

### 3.4 Fictional Osakan Dialect Speaking Characters and Their Personalities

#### Ayumu Kasuga (Anime : Azumanga Daioh)

During Ayumu’s introduction in class, after her classmates knows she’s from Osaka, they expected her to act the way a stereotypical Osakan would, such as being loud when she speaks or disobeying traffic laws such as crossing the roads when the traffic light is green. Eventually, instead of calling her with her name, they call her “Osaka” as a nickname. But her personality trait is actually quite contrary to the stereotypical Osakan people. Ayumu is slow, an airhead, and often fell asleep during class. But what her friends thought about her at the beginning gave a clear evidence of the stereotypical image of Osakan majority.

#### Kyousuke Kawachi (Manga : Yakitate Japan)

A young Kansai man whose dream is to become a world class baker. Coming from a poor family, Kyousuke strive to be the best and will do anything to win despite not having any special talent at all. But later on in the story, once Kyousuke work as a team with his former rivals, his personality and role is shifted in the story from a once ambitious, diligence and smart man into a loud, laid back, silly man who become the center of most comedic

moment in the story. Kyousuke speaks in Osakan dialect and often depicted as loud, silly, emotional, and often being mocked by other characters for his ignorance.

#### Naomi Tachibana (Game : Alternative Girls 2)

One of a main heroine of the mobile phone video games titled “Alternative Girls 2”. She speaks with Osakan dialect and always depicted as a cheerful, lively girl who love sports. The in-game short character description also mentioned her as a “fresh, lively girls who become the mood maker among her friends”.

#### Loki (Novel : *Danjon ni Deai o Motomeru no wa Machigatteiru Darō ka (Danmachi)*)

Loki is the name of the Norse’s mythology God of trickery. Despite being a male god in the original mythology, the character Loki in *Danmachi* novel is depicted as a female (goddess) character. Loki in this novel is another example of Osakan dialect speaker stereotypes. Because, despite not being an Osakan, not even a Japanese, since the settings for the story is in an alternate fantasy world, Loki always speaks in Kansai dialect and act just like a stereotypical Osakan. She is loud, cheerful, loves to make pranks and jokes, and sometimes emotional.

#### Cerberus / Kero-chan (Anime : Cardcaptor Sakura)

A non-human characters and not an Osakan, Cerberus or later on best known as Kero-chan, speaks in Osakan dialect because he lived for years there before he met the story’s main protagonist. On the official website about the manga itself, Cerberus is depicted as a bossy, funny characters who love sweets and the manga writers also describe Cerberus as a “lively characters who will be sad when left alone”.

#### Heiji Hattori (Manga : Meitantei CONAN)

Similar with the main protagonist of the manga, Heiji is also a teenage detective whose bright deductive ability helps solve many cases. Heiji is depicted as a talkative, humorous young man with positive attitude who especially proud about being an Osakan and everything Osakan. He is a skilled Kendo athlete, and at some part of the story can be seen as an impulsive, harsh young men who often act without consideration, despite of him knowing that a calm, deductive thinking is what’s more important as a detective,

#### Kohlan-Li (Game : Sakura Taisen)

Another characters who is not from Osaka, but always speak in Osakan dialect, Kohlan Li is one of the video games' main female protagonist. Depicted in the game dialogue and cinematic as a cheerful, good spirited woman who love tinkering with machine and build many strange tools, Kohlan Li is described as a Beijing girl who come to Japan to join the The Imperial Assault Force. Kohlan's failed invention and tools often create some problem among her friends.

#### Toji Suzuhara (Manga : Shinseiki EVANGELION)

A classmate of the main protagonist, Toji first appeared as an angry teenager who is impulsive and emotional. But later on the story, he became friend with Shinji, the main protagonist of the story. Toji also depicted as an honest and open person, and a loyal friend. He speaks Osakan dialect almost all the time.

#### Nanako Kuroi (Anime : Lucky Star)

Kuroi Nanako is a home room teacher at the main protagonist's school. Depicted as a grumpy but friendly teacher, Nanako has a lax and relaxed personality. She plays online game with her student, and drink beer a lot. In some dialogue, Nanako seems to concern about her single life and occasionally feel lonely spending holidays like Christmas alone.

### *3.5 The Images Depicted from the Osakan Dialect Fictional Speaker Characteristics*

Based on the personality and unique trait description of the fictional characters above, Osakan dialect speakers are often depicted with the following personalities:

1. Good spirited.
2. Silly.
3. Occasionally seems stupid or harsh.
4. Loud.
5. Honest, especially to their own feelings and passion.
6. Proud and confident.

Nevertheless, just as most, if not all stereotypes goes, not everyone who speak Osakan dialect would possess similar traits or personality, not even fictional characters. But apparently, many of them are depicted as such, to make their personality and charatcers much more easily recognizeable, just as the function of stereotypes described by McGarty, Yzerbit, Spears (2002),

in which stereotypes is an energy saving tools to distinguish an individual or group of people from another based on their specific traits or unique characteristics.

In spite of the similarities they have, this article specifically focused on Osakan dialect, and not other Kansai dialect such as Kyoto, Nara and Hyogo dialects. The reason is because other Kansai dialect speakers in Japanese work of fiction possess different stereotypes and images, e.g. the Kyoto dialect speakers who often depicted as classy, smart, and cunning.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the description in data presentation above, it is clear that the stereotypes concerning Osakan dialect's speaker has been crystallized strongly in the mind of many Japanese people, even non Osakan or even Japanese characters who speaks Osakan dialects are often depicted according to the Osakan people stereotypes. Which means, even if they are not Osakan people, if they speak like one, they will act like one. This kind of stereotype makes fictional characters' personality much more easily recognizable and familiar in the mind of reader/viewer/player.

More historical background concerning the origin of regional dialect stereotypes is necessary, so we can understand how these stereotypes started, grow and implemented.

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