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### Kyoto Dialect

Communication has benefited humanity ever since the first recorded language back in 3200 B.C(Before Christ). Much like many things in life, language also evolves depending on the area it is in. Among the many languages, Japan is a country where many of its dialects are separated by geographical locations. Due to some locations becoming isolated due to terrain, these geographical reasons cause changes or shifts in the language's conjugation, morphology, lexicon and so on. One of these distinct varieties is Kyoto's dialect which is a part of kansai-ben belonging to the Kinki hougen, or Kinki dialect. Distinguishing itself from the other varieties within the Kinki dialect, Kyoto's dialect has its own culture, characteristics, and continuity.

Japan, much like many other places, has had a long history which shapes both the country and the language the people speak. Kyoto is merely one of the dialects spoken within the Kinki region. There is also the Osaka dialect which shares similarities in grammar and other characteristics. Despite these similarities, Osaka and Kyoto differ in geological locations and their history. While Osaka "shifted from a samurai-dominated 'castle town' to a merchant's city" as stated by Luke Roberts in his journal, *The Society for Japanese Studies*, Kyoto stayed as the true capital of Japan surrounded by royalty and people of the upper class. Specifically, Kyoto has had a rich political history due to the fact that it used to be the old capital of Japan back in 794 up

until 1868; Despite this, both cultures respected each other and business transactions were made between merchants and commoners.

This business culture ultimately involved a language barrier between the two. Even with this linguistic barrier, “they[merchants] had to persuade them[commoners] in a language both classes could follow” as written by Kiyoshi Umaba in the online article, *Kansai Dialect*.

Fundamentally, these business conversations influence the Kansai culture linguistically. Other than the business culture, Kyoto also had geiko, also known as geisha, who spoke very formally much like the people in Kyoto compared to the business-oriented city, Osaka. As a result, these cultural contributions made the Kyoto dialect similar to the Osaka dialect but also is the ultimate reason for how this variety became so different linguistically and culturally.

For instance, Kyoto has expressions in their culture that are only understood by people who live in Kyoto. One of these many expressions is “ぶぶ漬けでもどうですか”? This expression is loosely translated to, “Would you like some rice broth”. This expression may seem like a nice gesture of the host to their guest, but due to the indirectness of Kyoto people, this gesture has the opposite meaning. Rather than wanting their guest to stay for longer, this expression is used as a way of telling the guest that “it is time to take your leave”. Another infamous expression that is more used by the older generation in Kyoto is when someone praises another one’s watch, “良い時計してますなあ”. To one’s surprise, they are not actually praising your watch, but rather telling one that they have taken too much of their time. This indirectness and inside expressions of Kyoto might convince someone that Kyoto people are mean or even evil-minded, but on the contrary, the people of Kyoto and their dialect are known to be quite the

opposite. They have distinct characteristics used in everyday life that implies they are, surprisingly, very nice and polite.

Compared to the other dialects in the Kinki region, Kyoto has many linguistic differences. One of these distinctions is grammar such as the honorific grammar, *～はる*. In other dialects and standard Japanese, this honorific grammar, also known as *keigo*, is used to be formal. However, in Kyoto, the grammar is used so often that it lost its formality and became the norm within the dialect and the culture. In addition to changing *～なさる* into *～はる*, the preceding *～て* form is changed into the *～た* form. An example is *何を食べたはるの*, which means “what are you eating”. Another difference between this and other dialects is that *～はる* is known to be used primarily by females, but in Kyoto, it’s used by both females and males.

Another distinct grammar is the negation of verbs. Rather than negating verbs with *～ない*, Kyoto negates the verbs using *～へん*. In standard Japanese, people would negate *飲む* as *飲まない*; However, in Kyoto variety, *飲む* becomes *飲まへん*. Furthermore, there are also irregular verbs that are especially conjugated in the Kyoto dialect. *する* and *くる* become *しい* *ひん* and *きいひん*, respectively.

One more linguistic difference Kyoto has compared to standard Japanese is the usage of syllable repetition and onomatopoeia. In standard Japanese, people tend to use adverbs such as *～とても*, translated into very, as a way to emphasize adjectives or other things depending on the context. Alternatively, adjectives are often repeated twice in order to represent emphasis in the Kyoto dialect. An example of repetition is when someone mentions it is very cold translated into, *今日は寒い寒い*, instead of, *今日はとても寒いです*. Although these characteristics make Kyoto dialect different from the other dialects, it’s usually not heard unless one is traveling

through the kansai region; The dialect is also known for becoming modernized, causing the old Kyoto dialect to decline. Luckily, there are ongoing traditions where the Kyoto variety is growing and becoming a medium to preserve the dialect.

Despite the decline of the dialect due to modernization, geikos, geishas in Kyoto, continue to preserve the old Kyoto dialect. Geikos are professional entertainers who undergo special training for years. Before one becomes a geiko, they are an apprentice called maikos. Under this apprenticeship, maikos not only study traditional Japanese arts such as music and dancing, but they study the Kyoto dialect as well. This linguistic practice assists in increasing the number of people speaking in the Kyoto dialect, or at the very least preserve this diminishing variety. The geisha culture is only taught proper Kyoto dialect throughout their training, meaning there is no merging between Kyoto and other dialects. Similarly, there are also other mediums that serve to safeguard and spread the Kyoto dialect.

An alternative means where the Kyoto dialect is through it's stereotypical nature in society. Despite the fact that this might not be a good way for a variety to be known and remembered, this is still a method of informing and teaching people of its existence. Kyoto used to be the capital as previously mentioned, this created the stereotype of how Kyoto people are known to be polite and elegant. Due to their grammar, however, this dialect is more known to the public as a feminine dialect for males in Kyoto use certain words that are only used by females in other dialects. An example was of the honorific grammar, ~はる. Although this is not an incorrect stigma, the Kyoto dialect is portrayed as such in mediums outside of geikos and maikos such as the entertainment field.

Entertainment such as animation is popular among people of the world. Thanks to the usage of the kansai dialect in certain shows, dialects like the Kyoto variety would not have been as popular as it would if the dialect were to be only heard by the people and geishas of Kyoto. Since this variety is viewed by society to be feminine, entertainment programs such as animation scout for people who know Kyoto dialect to voice act feminine characters. Additionally given how the dialect's political history, television shows also choose to give high class and proper characters the Kyoto dialect. This is another way that the media strengthens the stereotype by continuing the trend. Nevertheless, this action by the media creates opportunities for the Kyoto dialect to be more known and resume without losing its roots.

The Kyoto variety is very distinct compared to other dialects within the Kinki region or even other regions of Japan in many ways. Kyoto has its own rich history, special characteristics, and continuity. In spite of the fact that the Kyoto dialect is slowly fading from its original old variety, the dialect is being carried on through entertainment and Kyoto traditions. This not only maintains the distinct linguistic differences it has with other dialects, but it shoulders on the political history of Kyoto bears. In conclusion, among all the Japanese varieties, the Kyoto variety manages to stand out as its own dialect even if there are some similarities among other dialects.

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