

From Building Vocabulary to Talking about Family Traditions Together: Discussions on the Facebook Group “Hoisan Phrases 學講台山話”

Genevieve Leung & Melissa Chen

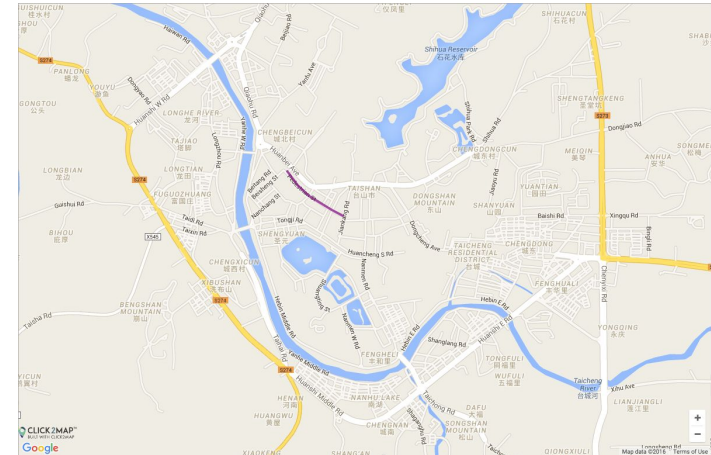
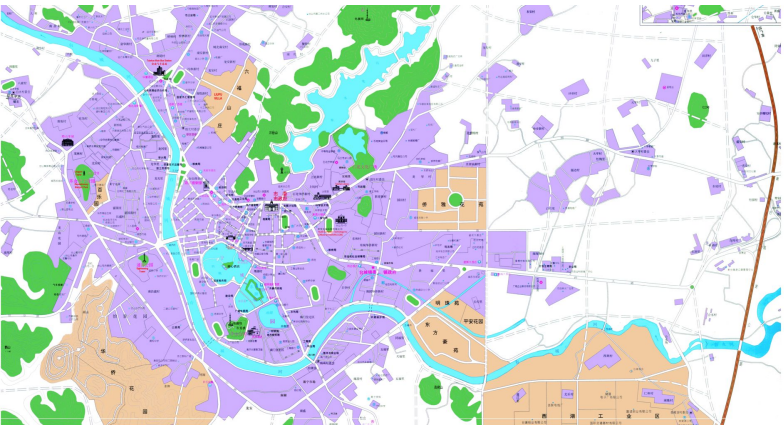
University of San Francisco

WICL-3, OSU

March 13-14, 2016

Background

- Hoisan-wa (台山話): links nearly all early Chinese immigrants to the U.S.
- Perpetually omitted in research
- Shifts in metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary about “Chinese”
- Negative ideologies indexing “rural” or “uneducated”



Theoretical Frameworks

- Multicompetence and Symbolic Competencies (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008)
- Language-as-resource (Ruiz, 1984)
- Citizen sociolinguistics: “traces the way citizens, more so than trained sociolinguists, understand the world of language around them” (Rymes & Leone, p. 25)
 - Drawing upon folk ontologies (“common sense” explanations)
 - Metalinguistic commentary (“talk about talk”)

Some Previous Studies

Social media as platform to strengthen marginalized communities (Johnson & Callahan, 2013; Lewin-Jones, 2015)

Diaspora Communities: the use of ethnic media as means of transnational connection for diasporic members (Shi, 2005)

For Chinese Americans, English as buffer to stylize language and identity (Lam, 2004)

Methodology

- Examined a Facebook group called “Hoisan Phrases 學講台山話”

 - Both researchers are members of this group

- Corpus of 628 posts with 2+ posts from November 2013 to February 2016

 - Average # of comments per post: 11

- Each post was iteratively double coded for themes (Emerson, Shaw & Fretz, 1995)

Hoisan Phrases 學講台山話: Some highlights



John Seto

April 7, 2015

Long sam = ?

Like Comment



Alan Chin long as in fierce or a wolf 狼 or as in wave 浪? But then what is your second character? Or as in, to hang clothes up 晾衫 ...i'll go with that. Jyutping: long saam, pinyin: liang shan

April 7, 2015 at 1:05pm · Like · 1



Peony Nancy Long Sam, I think it should be "long thim". It means wolf heart, which means fierce aka the heart of a wolf. ✕

April 7, 2015 at 2:36pm · Like



Alan Chin I thought of that, but "sam" for heart is Cantonese, not Toishanese. The only other Toishanese pronunciation for "sam" I can think of is: 三, (the number 3). (Other than for clothes, that is.)

April 7, 2015 at 2:41pm · Like



Wai Hom Clothes is "sahm" in Hoisan wah... When I saw this post earlier, I was thinking "Long sam" is "Hang (up) clothes". Heart/3/clothes are totally different sounds in hoisan wah, well, at least the way we pronounce them.... thleam, thlom, sahm.

April 7, 2015 at 2:59pm · Like



Alan Chin Three and clothes are same sound, sam or saam, different tones. Heart is different sound, with i not a..

April 7, 2015 at 3:02pm · Like



John Seto Hanging clothes was what I had in mind, but happy to see the engendered discussions. I like Peony's 狼心 also, hard/cruel-hearted.

April 7, 2015 at 3:31pm · Like · 1



Peony Nancy LOL, sometimes the romanization of toishanese can be misinterpreted. I am sure when one is talking, there is no problem understanding what the other person is saying.

April 7, 2015 at 4:26pm · Like · 2



Leland LW Wong changed the group privacy setting from

Public to Closed.

September 25, 2013

Like Comment



Leland LW Wong because we're gonna swear so much... iukekgama... ✕



John Tam

January 15, 2015

In Hoisanwa, many of the words we use to describe noises or sounds are unique. For example, when you swallow or gulp something down (usually liquid), the noise you make is "guoot" as in "guoot ko hoon ah kui" (swallow it with a gulping sound". When you slam a door or there's a crash or someone fires a gun, it is said to sound like "bahng". What are some other examples of noises we Hoisan ngin make that are unique?

Like Comment

3 people like this.



Leland LW Wong boht....fong pei.

January 15, 2015 at 1:26pm · Like



Leland LW Wong gu dohk gu dohk.....the sound of biting, chewing, eating... siang nghit toh ah oh kei gu dohk gu dohk.

January 15, 2015 at 1:28pm · Like · 1



Kenny Mar Paat Paat for slip on slippers cuz they go paat paat paat when you walk in them

January 15, 2015 at 1:34pm · Like

Hoisan Phrases: Highlights cont'd



Keith Chang

December 24, 2013

Cahk Hau Hahm - hock a loogie

[See Translation](#)

12 Comments



Like



Comment



Arvin Chan then you "loo hahm"

December 24, 2013 at 8:11am · Like · 1



John Tam lui hahm- to spit out phegm

December 24, 2013 at 10:19am · Like



Arvin Chan lui means to pick

December 24, 2013 at 12:32pm · Like



Arvin Chan like "lui ngee see"

December 24, 2013 at 12:32pm · Like



Wai Hom Liu. We say "Kell" to pick... "ABC, Kell bay see" ha ha

December 24, 2013 at 1:01pm · Like



John Tam Either "Kow" or "Wot"...nasty sounding words. LOL

December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm · Like



Arvin Chan we are not talking about the nose "Gill bay see"

December 24, 2013 at 2:52pm · Like



Arvin Chan liu ngee see is pick at earwax

December 24, 2013 at 2:52pm · Like



John Tam I can see how some people from the village may not have a second thought about doing some of this stuff we're talking about out in public. It's less taboo in the Hoisan culture than in mainstream American culture. Launching a nasal projectile out of a nostril while pressing the other one shut isn't that big a deal when you talk openly about stuff like this at the dinner table.

December 24, 2013 at 5:18pm · Edited · Like



Keith Chang Might wanna talk about it "after" Christmas dinner

December 24, 2013 at 5:23pm · Like · 1



Kevin Lee

August 19, 2014

Hook bow = Cry baby



Like



Comment

2 people like this.



Susana Lee

October 11, 2015



John Seto Cry bag

August 20, 2014 at 8:49am · Like

How do you say I love you in toisan?



2

27 Comments



Like



Comment



Nancy Hom Ishikata hahaha....no such thing!

Like · Reply · 1 · October 12, 2015 at 1:25am



Leland LW Wong nei fai nai hui thlei la ah....

[See Translation](#)

Like · Reply · 2 · October 12, 2015 at 7:03am



Susana Lee This sounds bad lol.

Like · Reply · October 12, 2015 at 8:23am



Leland LW Wong nei hiek ah mei ah...

Like · Reply · 1 · October 12, 2015 at 7:55pm

Highlight: haircut and ear cleaning (ep 2 hoisan panda)



liao ngi sih

Themes that emerged:

	Example
Vocab building	Some more Toisan vocab... Ai mi si - squirrel (literally: big tail rat) La ka chong - bunk bed Lok sui - rain (as opposed to Cantonese "lok yue") Yell - to scoop (as in "yell hong" - scoop soup or "yell faan" - scoop rice) Nung juk - burnt rice porridge (Cantonese "faan jiu") Sui hau - water hose Hoh gaa - expensive
Stumper (+solutions)	Gou Lou hai Hei--Ai Doi mun pei Solution: The gist: people in higher positions have it good. People in the lower positions have it bad
How do you say	what does "iu" sound like? In another thread, it was established that "haai" sounds like "hi" and there's no "a" sound, correct?
My family does	Yeah suiboo dialect is different sounding. I speak my grandma's 5-10 (4-9) dialect and my grandpa was from Suiboo, and he would say "nay ga thlee" for "your business" whereas Paw Paw said "nay ga thloo". Also Paw Paw is Paw Paw and in Suiboo she's "Poe Poe".
Nostalgia	Reading all this brings me back to when I was a 5 year-old ABC having a one-sided conversation with my grandmother

Themes cont'd

“Folk” Explanation	In standard Cantonese, the word "Nung" (燻) is strictly an adjective that describes the state something is in after it has been burnt or scorched. We Hoisan Ngin also use it as a noun to mean the slightly-burnt, crispy crust that forms on the bottom of a pot of cooked rice. A tonal variation is used to differentiate the the two.
Inquiring from collective	U mentioned a toisan language manual created years ago . Is there a way I can get a hold of it? Or a link I can tell my friends about and people learning toisan. (Yes there are pple who want to learn toisan and cantonese:.) once u offer it itll bring up interest and people will come:)
Lamenting	one of our major problems with this forum is the romanization. everyone has their own way of romanizing hoisan words. I tried to get the Yale system as our standard but it's hard for people to understand and use it.
Praise	Wah! Nee ho lek doy!
Jest	My friend use to ask me if I wanted to "hai hay" whereupon she would blow out her breath in the cold air. LOL 看氣!

Themes cont'd

Media



thlahm goi loupohna -- yiht goi hui.

三個老婆娜 一個墟

3 loupohna's produce enough chatter to make up a marketplace.

[See Translation](#)

— in [Taishan, Guangdong, China](#).

[Like](#) [Comment](#) [Share](#)

[9](#)



Leland LW Wong ji ji jah jah

August 7, 2014 at 6:27pm · [Like](#)



Wai Hom jop bay jop bay

[See Translation](#)

August 8, 2014 at 4:47am · [Like](#)



Jason J. Yuen ohh I know the term jah bee

September 20, 2014 at 7:10am · [Like](#) · [1](#)



John Tam When I lived in New York Chinatown, my mother used to refer to a certain gossipy and long-winded neighbor as "Jah Bee Mo" and I learned never to make eye contact when passing by lest she should try to engage me in some drawn-out trivial conversation in Hoisanwa.



Write a comment...



Main Findings: Descriptive Statistics

	n	%
“Folk” Explanation	253	40%
Vocab building	130	20%
My family does	102	16%
Stumper (+solutions)	72	11%
How do you say	37	6%

Main Findings: Qualitative

- 90%+ of posts were positive affective positioning

- Folk Explanation: users demonstrating own expertise/experiences, deploying citizen sociolinguistics/phonology to understand language around them

- Not relying on Chinese characters, creation of own romanization

- Safe space for creativity, humor, praise/positive assessment of Hoisan speakers/heritage

 - Reclaiming a counter-hegemonic stance

Implications

- Re-envisioning how *Hoisan-wa* is viewed online, expanding domains of use where *Hoisan-wa* users adopt language-as-resource view (cf. Ruiz, 1984) towards their heritage language
- Using existing tropes (ear cleaning, how to say I love you) to harness critical awareness of unique linguistic and communicative repertoires
- “Hoisan Phrases 學講台山話” as implementational space that can serve as wedge to pry open language ideologies (cf. Hornberger, 2005)
- Illustrates the importance of public participation in sociolinguistic inquiry, thereby generating and circulating new social values

References

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hornberger, N. (2005). Opening and filling up implementational and ideological spaces in heritage language education. *Modern Language Journal* 89(4). 605-612.

Johnson, J. L. & Callahan, J. (2013). Minority Cultures and Social Media: Magnifying Garifuna. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 42 (4). 319-339.

Kramsch, C., & Whiteside, A. (2008). Language ecology in multilingual settings: Toward a theory of symbolic competence. *Applied Linguistics* 29(4). 645–671.

Lam, W.-S. E. (2004). Second Language Socialization in a Bilingual Chat Room: Global and Local Considerations. *Language Learning & Technology* 8(3). 44-65.

Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal* 8. 15-34.

Rymes, B., & Leone, A. (2014). Citizen sociolinguistics: A new media methodology for understanding language and social life. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 29(2). 25-43.

Shi, Y. (2005). Identity Construction of the Chinese Diaspora, Ethnic Media Use, Community Formation, and the Possibility of Social Activism. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 19(1). 55-72.

Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

gleung2@usfca.edu

mchen57@usfca.edu



UNIVERSITY OF
SAN FRANCISCO