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

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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 =?

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 睇衫 ... I'll go with that. Jyutping: long sam, pinyin: liang shan
April 7, 2015 at 1:05pm · Like · Comment

Peony Nancy Long Sam, I think it should be "long thin". 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 Hon Clothes is "sannm" in Hoisan wai... When I saw this post earlier, I was thinking "long sam" is "Heng (up) clothes". Heart/3/clothes are totally different sounds in hoisan wai. well, at least the way we pronounce them.... thleam, thiom, sannm.
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 禮心 also, hard/cruel-hearted.
April 7, 2015 at 3:31pm · Like · Comment

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 · Comment

Leland LW Wong changed the group privacy setting from Public to Closed.
September 25, 2013

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

John Tam
January 15, 2015
In Hoisnwa, 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 "guoct" as in "guoct ko hoon ah ku" (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 "baehe". What are some other examples of noises we Hoisan ngn make that are unique?

3 people like this.

Leland LW Wong bcht...long pei.
January 15, 2015 at 1:28pm · Like

Leland LW Wong gu dohk gu dohk.....the sound of biing, chewing, eating... siang nght th ah oh kel gu dohk gu dohk.
January 15, 2015 at 1:28pm · Like · Comment

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 - shook a loogie
See Translation

Arvin Chan
December 24, 2013 at 12:32pm
Then you "toe hahm"

John Tam
December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm
Lui hahm: to spit out phlegm

Arvin Chan
December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm
Lui ngay soo: pick

Wai Hon Liu
December 24, 2013 at 1:01pm
We say "Kell" to pick... "ABC, Kell bay see" ha ha

John Tam
December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm
Either "Kow" or "Wot"...nasty sounding words. LOL

Arvin Chan
December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm
We are not talking about the nose "Gill bay see"

Arvin Chan
December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm
Lui ngay soo is pick of ear wax

John Tam
December 24, 2013 at 2:50pm
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.

Keith Chang
December 24, 2013 at 5:20pm
Might wanna talk about it, "after" Christmas dinner

Kevin Lee  
August 19, 2014
Hook bow = Cry baby

Susana Lee  
October 11, 2015
How do you say I love you in toisan?

2 people like this.

Nancy Hom Ishikata
October 12, 2015 at 1:25am
Hahaha...no such thing!

Like · Reply · 1

Leland LW Wong
October 12, 2015 at 7:03am
Nei nai hui thlei la ah....

See Translation

Like · Reply · 2

Susana Lee
October 12, 2015 at 8:23am
This sounds bad lol.

Like · Reply · 1

Leland LW Wong
October 12, 2015 at 7:55pm
Nei hiek ah mei ah ah....
Highlight: haircut and ear cleaning (ep 2 hoisan panda)

liao ngi sih
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes that emerged:</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **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 |
### “Folk” Explanation

In standard Cantonese, the word "Nung" (爛) 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 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 it'll 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

thlahm goi louphon -- yiht goi hui.
三個佬婆嫂 一個墟
3 louphon’s produce enough chatter to make up a marketplace.

Soo Translation
— in Taishan, Guangdong, China.
# Main Findings: Descriptive Statistics

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Folk” Explanation</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocab building</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family does</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stumper (+solutions)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you say</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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


Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

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