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 衫 ... I'll go with that. Jyutping: long saam, pinyin: liang shan.
April 7, 2015 at 1:05pm | Like | Comment

Peony Nancy Long Sam. I think it should be "long thing". 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 "sann" in Hoisan wa... 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, thom, sann.
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 me not a... 3 people like this.
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 衝心 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 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 "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 "bahng". What are some other examples of noises we Hoisan ngn make that are unique?

Leland LW Wong bch...long pei.
January 15, 2015 at 1:26pm | Like

Leland LW Wong gu dohk gu dohk.....the sound of bling, chewing, eating... siang nghit toh 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 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

Like Comment

Arvin Chan then you “too hahm”
December 24, 2013 at 8:11am · Like · 1

John Tam lu hahm = to spit out phlegm
December 24, 2013 at 16:19am · Like

Arvin Chan lu means to pick
December 24, 2013 at 12:32pm · Like

Arvin Chan lu “ngie soo”
December 24, 2013 at 12:32pm · Like

Wai Hom Liu: We say “Kel” to pick... “AAB, Kel 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 lu ngie soo 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 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 5:20pm · Like · 1

Kevin Lee
August 19, 2014

Hook bow = Cry baby

Like Comment

Susana Lee
October 11, 2015

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 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)
Themes that emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocab building</th>
<th>Example</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some more Toisan vocab...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ai mi si - squirrel (literally: big tail rat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>La ka chong - bunk bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lok sui - rain (as opposed to Cantonese &quot;lok yue&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yell - to scoop (as in &quot;yell hong&quot; - scoop soup or &quot;yell faan&quot; - scoop rice)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nung juk - burnt rice porridge (Cantonese &quot;faan jiu&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sui hau - water hose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoh gaa - expensive</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| 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". |

<p>| Nostalgia | Reading all this brings me back to when I was a 5 year-old ABC having a one-sided conversation with my grandmother |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Themes cont’d</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Folk” Explanation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inquiring from collective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lamenting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praise</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Jest</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Themes cont’d

thlarn goi loupohna -- yiht goi hui.
三個佬婆娜 一個墟
3 loupohna’s produce enough chatter to make up a marketplace.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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 a 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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