1. What are Dialects?

Among people born and raised in rural areas there are still many who misunderstand or have prejudices towards dialects. These include: (1) dialects are distinct languages that developed in rural areas; (2) compared to the common language they are only used in very limited situations, are not useful, and crude; (3) that they are spoken by the elderly and sound old-fashioned. However, although there are some dialecticisms that developed on their own in rural areas, most dialects originated from the Kinki region of Japan (particularly from the Kyoto dialect that was the central language for nearly 1000 years) and were transmitted to other areas where the language then underwent changes in pronunciation or in the meaning of words. Dialects must be thought of as artifacts of the history of the Japanese language.

2. The Formation of Ishikawa Dialect and Differences between Regions

The Kaga regional dialect with Kanazawa at its core originated in the Kyoto area passed through the area west of Lake Biwa and Fukui on its way to the Kaga region by overland transmission. In addition, since ties between Kanazawa and Kyoto flourished in the Edo period, some expressions from the Kyoto area spread like flying sparks from a fire to become part of the Kaga dialect without first passing through Fukui.

As for the Noto region, some Kyoto area dialectical features worked their way into the region by passing through the Kaga region, but some features were transmitted directly from Fukui through sea routes rather than fist passing through Kaga.

In an era without telephones, televisions, or the internet, dialectical features that originated in Kyoto spread from person to person basically like a game of telephone or Chinese whispers. Considering how much a message changes by the time it reaches the last of 10 people playing the telephone game, you can easily imagine that words and their meanings would also change after working their way up through the 250 kilometers between Kanazawa and Kyoto. As for the speed at which dialectal features spread in the past, researchers have calculated that it took about one year to be transmitted about one kilometer. Considering the 250 kilometers separating Kyoto and Kanazawa, it took about 250 years to transmit dialectal features.

The dialects of Japan are divided into two broad categories of the Ryukyu (Okinawan) dialect group and the Japanese mainland dialect group. The Japanese mainland dialect group is further divided into three groups: the eastern dialects that originated in the Chubu and Kanto regions and spread to the Tohoku region; the western dialects that originated in the Kinki region and spread to Shikoku and the Chugoku region; and the Kyushu dialects. The Hokuriku dialects are included in the group of western dialects. The range of Hokuriku dialects includes the Reihoku region of Fukui Prefecture throughout both Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures and to Sado Island in Niigata Prefecture. The Hokuriku dialect has long been influenced by the dialect that originated in the Kinki region.
Dialects within Ishikawa are largely divided between Noto and Kaga dialects. Noto dialects are further divided between the Kuchi-Noto dialects with Hakui City and Nanao City as cores and the Oku-Noto dialects where Wajima and Suzu are cores. The Oku-Noto dialects are then further divided between Uchiura dialects on the Toyama Bay side and the Sotoura dialects on the Sea of Japan side.

As for the Kaga dialects, they are divided into three groups. In the north with Kanazawa as the core we have the Kita-Kaga dialects, the Naka-Kaga dialects with Komatsu City as a core, and the Minami-Kaga dialects with Kaga City as the core.

Other dialects for which its surroundings and characteristics are quite different from others include the Wajima City Ama-machi dialect, the Notojima dialect, and the Shiramine dialect spoken in the foothills of Mount Haku.

3. History of the Kaga (Kanazawa) Dialect

3-1. From the Edo Period (1603 to 1868) to the Beginning of the Meiji Period (1868 to 1912)

In 1775 in the middle of the Edo period the *Butsurui Shoko* compilation of dialects from all over Japan included 57 words from the Kaga dialect and five words from the Noto dialect. Among them are dialecticisms used by some elderly people today. For example, the Kaga dialect word *otoroshii* (dreadful) is still being used by the elderly today and is a variation of the word *osoroshii*.

In 1813 near the end of the Edo period the *Katakoto-zukushi* collection of dialectics was completed and contains 253 examples of Kaga dialect. This particular collection contained variations in pronunciation rather than a collection of uncommon vocabulary. Dialectic features found in this collection also reflect language used by the elderly today.

The *Kaga Namari* collection of dialecticisms from the first year of the Meiji period includes 350 representative items from the Kaga dialect. Among them is the word *dayai* (lethargic), which is a variation of the word *darni* and is still often used by the elderly today.

From these records we know that the dialects recorded at the end of the Edo period through the beginning of the Meiji period have been handed down and are still being used by the elderly today.

3-2. From the Meiji Period Onwards

Under the strict feudal system of the Edo period the feudal lords restricted people's movement and regional differences between dialects grew as a result. Most ordinary people (mostly farmers) were unaware of the central language and it was a time when they held conversations with those around them using dialects as a matter of course.

However, after entering the Meiji period, a way of thinking emerged that it was necessary to
standardize the language in order to create a central government with the emperor at its core. With a goal of reviewing dialects and adopting a standardized language, in 1902 the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture created a Japanese language review board. They conducted the first review of dialects in Japan at the national level and created a report along with a distribution map. Based on these results, in the fifth decade of the Meiji period the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture created the first government-designated textbook and children across the country started to study using the same textbook. The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture then used that textbook to teach standard Japanese to children that were using regional dialects.

Although today it is unimaginable, at that time within the educational community the goal of ‘eradicate dialects, correct dialects’ was unabashedly rolled out and teachers taught students to not use dialects. A famous example is the ‘dialect tag’ used in Okinawa. The differences between the Okinawa dialect and the Japanese mainland were so large that people could not find work on the Japanese mainland if they spoke in dialect. In order to force students to use standard Japanese, teachers would make the students hang a dialect tag around their neck if they spoke in dialect in class. In this way, through education children across the country were instilled with a ‘dialect complex’ that dialects should not be used and are crude and useless.

The concept of ‘eradicate dialects, correct dialects’ continued for a while after the war. It is possible to divide movements on dialects into three broad phases. The first is the movement to eradicate dialects prior to the 1960s. Before and after Tokyo hosted the Olympics, people gathered in Tokyo, thought that the language spoken there was the proper language, and wanted to learn to use it. This was an era of the versatility of standard Japanese.

The second phase took place in the ’70s and ’80 when dialects were rediscovered. The provinces took another look at dialects and it was an era when regional and town development flourished across the country. Since this was a time when televisions became commonplace and dialects were in decline there was a sense of crisis and people began to take another look at dialects.

The third phase represents coexistence between dialects and the common language that emerged in the 1990s. This is a phase when many people finally realized the richness, different values, and roles of dialects. People also began to vary their use of dialects and the common language depending on the situation or to whom they were talking, and the idea became ingrained that even dialects need to be cherished. This is a time when there is room for dialects to be enjoyed.

To wrap up, since before the war and for some time after the common language was seen as the proper language. Dialects hid below the surface and were labeled as bad language. However, today dialects and the common language stand on equal ground in our consciousness and we have entered an era when the common language and dialects can coexist. In the 21st century it is perhaps ideal that will be able to continue to use dialects in their lives by proficiently switching between the common language and dialects depending on the time, situation, and the person to which they are
talking.

4. Introducing Characteristics of Kanazawa Dialect

4-1. Climate and Dialect

Although many dialectic features were basically transmitted from what used to be the center of Japan in Kyoto, that does not mean that there are not some regional peculiarities that developed to reflect the climate and customs of particular regions. Although it is not used much anymore, a word born from snow country and representative of the Kanazawa dialect is *kinkan-namanama*. It is used to describe when snow has been packed down by people walking on it and becomes slippery. It originates from comparing the slippery situation to the slippery surface of kumquats (*kinkan*), a citrus fruit. Comparing the slippery situation of snowy roads to kumquats is rare, even when looking at dialects all over Japan.

4-2. *Dara* (Idiot)

In Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures the word *dara* (idiot) is widely used in place of the common language word *baka*. Although many in the area think that this word is unique to Ishikawa and Toyama, the truth is that the word *dara* originated from a word used in the Kyoto area in the past that then spread to the Hokuriku region. From 1990 to 1991, a commercial television station conducted nationwide research on the distribution of regional variations the word for ‘idiot’ such as *baka* and *aho* as part of the ‘Detective! Night Scoop!’ television program. They also revealed the distribution of the use of the word *dara* for ‘idiot’ in Ishikawa and Toyama, *tarazu* in Tottori and Shimane prefectures in the San’in region, and *darazu* in parts of Niigata Prefecture and Kyushu. Taking this result into account, it is thought that the use of the word *tarazu* (lacking) from a different form of the verb in the phrase *chie ga tarinai* (lacking in wisdom) that originated centrally in Kyoto spread to the Hokuriku and San’in regions and morphed into *darazu* and also *dara*.

4-3. *Masshi* (Imperative Suffix)

With the exception of Kaga City, the sentence-ending suffix *masshi* is often used in tourism promotion catchphrases in the Kaga area. *Masshi* originates from the imperative form of the honorific auxiliary verb *masaru* (originally *massharu*). With the standardization of the honorifics in Japanese, conjugations other than *masshi* are mostly no longer used, but the imperative form has endured. For example, the dialectal phrase *shiitoberuto shime-masshi* (fasten your seat belt) is a softer imperative expression of encouragement of the standard Japanese phrase *shiitoberuto wo shime-nasai*.

4-4. *Gen* (Explanatory Suffix)

A representative feature of modern Kanazawa dialect that is widely used among young
people is the explanatory suffix gen. Gen originates from a morphing of the dialecticism gaya, which is equivalent to the noda suffix in the common language. It is thought that gen originated in the Noto region and that the same kind of change also occurred later in Kanazawa. The use of gen became popular in the 60 and below age group and recently the pronunciation of suffixes containing gen have been further fused such that phrases like Ashita yuenchi iku-gen (The thing is, I'm going to the amusement park tomorrow) and Dame na gente (No, you can't) have become the fused forms Ashita yuenchi iken and Dame nente.

Students that I advised conducted research in and around Kanazawa on the generation differences in the use of the different forms of gaya, gen, and the further fused forms. They found that the use of the traditional form gaya was dominant in people in their 60s and 70s, whereas the use of gen was popular in younger generations. The use of the fused form was especially common among young men, whereas women generally use gen rather than the fused form.

4-5. Miscellany

I would like to introduce a few Kanazawa dialecticisms. Dame da (No way) is dachakan, iie (no) is naan, marumaru toshite kenko-soo (looking plump and healthy) is umasoi or umasona, ganmodoki (fried tofu mixed with vegetables) is hirozu, karada no guai ga warui (I don't feel good) is monoi, kawaii (cute) is ichakena, mesu no zuwaigani (female snow crab) is koobako, urayamashii (jealous) is kenarui, and mottainai (wasteful) is otomashii.

5. Generational Differences in Kaga (Kanazawa) Dialect

In 2007 and 2008 I conducted research on dialect use on four generations (people in their 10s, 30s, 50s, and 70s) living in communities around each Hokuriku main line train station between Kurikara and Daishoji stations in Ishikawa Prefecture and between Hosorogi and Imajo stations in Fukui Prefecture. Using glottograms I investigated generational and regional dialectical differences from the Kaga region to the Reihoku region of Fukui Prefecture.

I found that the dialecticism taruki for tsurara (icicle) is only used by a few people older than 70. Most people younger than 80 use the common language word tsurara. Traditional dialecticisms are vanishing.

In the Kaga region, a few people older than 60 use the dialecticisms shimbari or shimbare for shimoyake (frostbite), but younger generations use the common language word shimoyake.

The previously mentioned use of dara for baka (idiot) is prevalent across all generations. Although the use of abo (the Kansai regional variation of baka) has spread to the Reihoku region of Fukui Prefecture, it is not used much in the Kaga region. The use of dara in the Kaga region is integrated into daily life and it is likely that the common use of the word by older generations to describe the young has caused the word to be handed down to younger generations. However, even
in the Kaga region there is an increasing trend in the use of *abo* among people in their 10s. Without conducting follow-up investigations we cannot say for sure whether the use of *abo* will further increase among older generations or whether younger people will fall in line with those around them and start using *dara* as they grow older.

Dialecticisms for *uttōshī* (annoying) include *uzai*, *ijikurasō*, and *ijikkasō* (a variation of *ijikurasō*). Currently, the new dialecticism *uzai* that originated in Tokyo and has spread across the country is often used in Fukui Prefecture, but in the Kaga region the use of *ijikkasō* persists, stopping the incursion of *uzai*. However, among those in their 10s, the use of *uzai* in the Kaga region is slowly increasing due to the influence of mass media. Without conducting follow-up research it is not possible to know whether the use of *uzai* will expand or whether they will start using *ijikkasō*.

Dialecticisms such as *goboru*, *gaburu*, and *gaboru* are used to describe ones feet sinking deeply into snow. *Gaburu* is used in the southern portion of Fukui Prefecture’s Reihoku region, whereas *gaburu* is widely used by those 30 or older in the northern portion of Fukui Prefecture’s Reihoku region and in the Kaga region of Ishikawa Prefecture. However, those below 30 use *hamaru* in a broader meaning to describe falling into something regardless of whether it is snow. This change may be due to the fact that young people no longer experience stepping into deep snow due to either the installation of devices to melt snow or because less snow falling due to global warming. It is likely that the use of *hamaru* will increase in the future.

*Kudoi* is a dialecticism used from Fukui Prefecture’s Reihoku region to the Kaga region of Ishikawa Prefecture to describe food with a lot of salt. *Kudoi* is used by many people 40 and above, but most people below 40 use the common language term *shoppai*.

To describe something sharp like that of a sharpened pencil lead, all generations in Fukui Prefecture say *tsuntsun*. In the Kaga region, people above the age of 40 say *kenken*, but people below 40 increasingly say *pinpin*. It is thought that this is an example of the Kansai region dialecticism *pinpin* passing through Fukui and being taken up by younger generations in the Kaga region. The use of a mimetic to describe a sharpened pencil lead is limited to the Kansai region, the three prefectures of the Hokuriku region (Fukui, Ishikawa, and Toyama), Aichi Prefecture, and Gifu Prefecture. Other regions instead only say *togatteiru* (sharp) or the variation *toggattoru*.

Although the use of the dialecticism *koota* (bought) is still prevalent, younger generations have started using the common language word *katta*. Back when only the Tokaido Shinkansen was in operation, the language spoken in Tokyo tended to come into the Hokuriku region by entering Fukui first, passing through Ishikawa, and finally moving on to Toyama. Therefore, Toyama tended to be the last to have their language shift towards the common language. However, our research showed that the spread of the use of *katta* started in Toyama and then in turn spread into Ishikawa and Fukui. The completion of transportation networks such as the Joetsu Shinkansen and Hokuriku Expressway means that, among the three prefectures in the Hokuriku region, perhaps Toyama is now the closest to
Tokyo psychologically and in terms of travel time. With the opening of the Hokuriku Shinkansen it is possible that the shift towards the common language will accelerate.

Finally, although a feature of the Hokuriku dialect was the inclusion of a nasal sound in the syllables of ga, gi, gu, ge, or go when in the middle of a word, an increasing number of people under 30 can no longer pronounce this nasal sound. The pronunciation of this nasal sound is on the decline even in areas where it used to be prevalent, and most people in Tokyo below the age of 70 cannot pronounce it. We predict that this nasal sound feature of the Hokuriku dialect will eventually disappear.

6. The Value and Roles of Dialects in the Modern World

At the present, people are taking another look at dialects. On the one hand, in this modern world it may be that it cannot be helped that there are fewer and fewer opportunities for people to use dialects in their daily lives. However, if dialects are reevaluated and the idea that they also have value takes hold then the decline of dialects will likely slow. In addition, the use of dialects would probably increase if they are used for such purposes as tourism rather than just being used in people's daily lives.

The value and roles of dialects in the modern world are listed below:

(1) As has been said for some time, dialects are important aspects of regional culture. This way of thinking will likely become more widely appreciated in the future.

(2) Dialects are symbols of regionalism. Regionalisms are becoming less and less common across the country and dialects as a symbol can become one of the last bastions of regionalism. When you go to the provinces, rather than hearing standard Japanese, if you hear dialects you will get a feeling for the region. That is why it is thought that dialects can also be vital resources for tourism.

(3) Dialects can be a source of consolation and solace. People who have left their hometowns and have moved to a different area have probably felt a sense of relief when they once again hear and use their native dialect.

(4) Dialects provide a sense of belonging. When people are aware that they use dialects, they can get a sense of where they come from and also feel a sense of belonging and linguistic identity. This is also an extremely important role of dialects.

(5) Dialects are difficult to replace with a common language. I think it is important to understand that, no matter the extent to which the common language becomes commonplace, it is not possible to replace the ability to describe the world and put into words the feelings that can only be expressed through dialects.

(6) Dialects are a way to speak one's mind. This is connected to the fact that dialects can be a source of consolation and solace. Since they are not intelligible everywhere in the country, dialect use has less value than using the common language. However, that is precisely why a dialect is a person's own language that is shared with relatives, those close to them, and their in-group.
(7) Dialects are one choice among the different varieties of Japanese. Although a person can use the common language or standard Japanese, I have a feeling that there are increasing numbers of young people who are aware that using a dialect is a choice and consciously choose to use dialects when it is appropriate.

(8) Dialects are a part of one's individuality. There was a time when people who went to Tokyo and spoke in dialect would be laughed at for being country bumpkins. However, due to the recent spread of the common language we have entered an era when people are now admired for being able to use a dialect. Dialects are a way to call attention to one's individuality and now some Tokyoites are jealous of people who can speak a dialect.

(9) Dialects are a source of entertainment. Since young people today have been brought up listening to the common language on television and from other sources they are basically able to speak the common language without having to be taught how to do so in school. Since one is able to speak the common language they are able to think that it is conversely acceptable to use a dialect and hence feel there is leeway to use that dialect. That is why there is a movement to recognize dialects as entertainment. For example, lyrics of songs are being rewritten in dialect, and dialects are also sources of questions posed to contestants on television quiz shows. People are enjoying dialects as purely fun languages.

I hope that a fresh awareness of the value and roles of dialects in the modern world has provided you with an opportunity to dwell up on your prejudices towards, misunderstandings of, or psychological complexes regarding dialects.