

## From ear-cleaning to asking how to say I love you: Metalinguistic discussions and positive affective stance on the “Hoisan Phrases 學講台山話 ” facebook site

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This research examines the language and cultural maintenance practices of a specific heritage of Chinese Americans: *Hoisan-wa* heritage people. *Hoisan-wa* is one of the languages linking nearly all early Chinese immigrants in the U.S., but this language background has not only been slowly erased by other Chinese' existence in the U.S. (e.g., Standard Cantonese and Mandarin), but it has also been perpetually omitted in research for the last 150 years. Much current metalinguistic and metapragmatic commentary about “Chinese” in scholarly and popular discourse, that is, the “talkings about” what “Chinese” is, having been reappropriated and changed over time, has both explicitly and implicitly propelled Mandarin over all other Chinesees. This directly impacts how varieties like *Hoisan-wa* are thought of and talked about. What little work is done on non-Mandarin language acquisition and maintenance in the U.S. hardly ever distinguishes Standard Cantonese from *Hoisan-wa*; as such, *Hoisan-wa* as a language background is muddled in the sense that people know the background exists (e.g., “in Chinatown”) but not much more.

While there are many negative ideologies attached to *Hoisan-wa*, including it being seen as a “rural” and “uneducated” language disrupting a future-oriented ideology of modernity and that it is “awkward” or “unnatural” to speak *Hoisan-wa* in a contemporary U.S. society that prizes fluency in English, this paper will focus solely on the online discourses of an online Facebook group called “Hoisan Phrases 學講台山話 ” and how this online forum is used to construct positive ideologies about *Hoisan-wa*. Using a multicompetence and symbolic competence frameworks, we view these online interactions as sites where *Hoisan-wa* speakers engage in the ability “to perform and construct various historicities in dialogue with others” (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 665) and how humor serves as a way of moving beyond mere caricatures and negative ideologies of *Hoisan-wa* and its speakers to a linguistic display of nuanced competencies.

Data for this project come from a corpus of two years' worth of posts (n=600 posts) from the top three posters and corresponding comments on the Facebook group. Using a discourse analytic lens, all posts went through an iterative process of open coding, initial memos, focused coding, and integrative memos. We double coded the data and discussed salient themes that emerged, including: metapragmatic commentary about appropriateness of *Hoisan-wa* standardization and Romanization (“It's been a babel's curse with everyone just doing their own version of romanization”) and the humorous commenting on intergenerational stereotypes about *Hoisan-wa* (“When hoisan people argue, it's all about death. Nei fai nai hui thei la ah! ”).

The data presented here demonstrate a re-envisioning of the way we view *Hoisan-wa* vis-à-vis online communication, expanding the domains of language use where *Hoisan-wa* is considered a resource. This is part of a positive, counter-hegemonic affective stance that pushes back against established negative ideologies about *Hoisan-wa*, serving as implementational spaces that can serve as wedges to pry open language ideologies (cf. Hornberger, 2005) and enable speakers to adopt a language-as-resource view (cf. Ruiz 1984) towards their heritage language.

### References:

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