This dissertation discusses the contact of the Japanese dialects in the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands from the perspective of the “dialect contact theory.” Moreover, it looks at the psychological and social factors in the dialect contact situation, and aims at a theoretical development.

Part 1 surveys the theoretical background and the social background of this research, and the purpose of the research is established.

This research analyzes Japanese dialect contacts according to the dialect contact theory in order to consider the mechanism and the cause of language changes by dialect contact. Until now, research about dialect contact in Japan has been executed rather sporadically, and has often finished by explaining just that “there was a contact of dialects.” Therefore, this research applies the “dialect contact theory” which has been developed during research of dialect contact in other languages.

Moreover, this research focuses on the “intrapersonal” psychological and social conditions which have seldom been analyzed in research on Japanese dialect contact. Until now, the accommodation theory of social psychology has been regarded as important in the psychological aspects of the new-dialect formation. However, intrapersonal psychological conditions and social networks are also thought to be related to language changes in dialect contact. In order to discuss the relation between dialect consciousness, intrapersonal psychology, social networks, and language use, a multivariate analysis is applied to the results of a questionnaire.

The research field, the Bonin (Ogasawara) Islands, is geographically isolated from the mainland. Therefore, it has not received much information from the mass media, which has led to little contact with the standard language. Historically, social stability has not been preserved long. Some European and American whalers and Hawaiian women first settled on one of the islands in 1830. In 1876, immigrants
from Hachijo Island had begun to settle there, and after that immigrants flowed in from all over Japan and lived there till the end of World War II, and dialects had contact with each other there. However, after the end of the war, the islands belonged to the territory of the US Navy. In this period, only the descendants of the first settlers (hereafter called “Westerners”) were allowed to live there, and the other islanders, who had evacuated to mainland Japan at the end of the war (hereafter called “Old Islanders”), were forced to stay on the mainland. After the reversion of the Ogasawara Islands to Japan in 1968, the Old Islanders were allowed to return to the island, now forming a society with the Westerners and newly-come immigrants (hereafter called “New Islanders”). There is now another dialect contact situation. While linguistic research in Ogasawara has treated the linguistic phenomena of the Westerners, this research will pay attention to the dialect contacts which occurred there twice concerning not only the Westerners, but also the Old and New Islanders. It means that this research has a wider scope than ever.

Part 2 examines the actual condition of Japanese dialect contact, which happened twice in the Bonin Islands, according to the dialect contact theory.

First, Chapter 5 examines a vocabulary of 227 words found in the first dialect contact. Consequently, it turns out that most of the names of plants, animals, and traditional dishes are unique to Ogasawara, and there are some words originating from the dialect of Hachijo Island, Kanto, Tokai, and Kyushu areas. Moreover, analyzing general nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and interjections, there are many words mainly used in the area of East Japan, such as Hachijo Island, Kanto, Ko-shin-etsu, Tokai, and Tohoku. Such a fact demonstrates that dialect mixing had occurred there. Moreover, the words of the Hachijo Island dialect occupy about 45% of the vocabulary, which is considered to be the result of “levelling”, the loss of the minority’s variants. On the other hand, changes which are believed to be standardization are also found. The conjugational suffixes of verbs (/-owa/) and adjectives (/-kyu/) peculiar to the Hachijo Island dialect have been lost, and the conjugational suffixes of the standard variety, and interdialectal forms were seen.

Chapter 6 examines in detail the vocabulary dealing with plants. The discussion concludes that before Japanese people had settled there, the vocabulary with a non-Japanese origin was generated in an expansion process from the pidgin in Ogasawara to a creole. While this creole had contact with Japanese dialects, some words were translated to Japanese, and some were replaced by the Japanese origin words in a dialect contact situation.

Chapter 7 considers the imperative form of the verbs with vowel-final root. Though the imperative form of verbs with vowel-final root in standard Japanese and Hachijo Island dialect ends with the form “-ro”, the form “-re” is found there. It is concluded that the form “-re” in the vowel-final root brings regularity to the conjugational system of the verbs with vowel-final root by eliminating the marked form “-ro”. It is the result of “unmarking”, the elimination of a marked feature. A questionnaire for current junior and senior high school students showed that some use the form “-re”, even though this is found in the first dialect contact before the end of the World War II. It is concluded that, since there was no dialect which should be acquired by children in the dialect contact situation, they are assumed to have acquired the fossilized
variants of the dialect. Such a condition is called “colonial lag.”

Furthermore, Chapter 8 examined the sounds, especially the accent. In the first dialect contact, the results of “leveling”, the loss of the minority’s variant, are found. The “no accent”, which is a feature of the Hachijo Island dialect, is found in Ogasawara. In the second contact, which continues up to the present, phenomena which can be explained as levelling, unmarking, and interdialecct development are seen in the contact with the “Tokyo accent”, or “Kansai accent”. Moreover, an interdialectal form, which has the phonological system of the “Tokyo accent” and the acoustic features of the “no accent”, is found in the data about the native high school students.

Part 3 analyzed the psychological and social situation of the people in dialect contact. The discussion focuses on the “intrapersonal” psychology and the social network. In this part, the answers to the questionnaire are analyzed via the results of the multivariate analysis.

In Chapter 10, the relations between “the dialect consciousnesses in Ogasawara”, “use of new-dialect forms, peer group expressions, and buzzwords”, and “islanders’ contact with the mass media” are discussed. Both in Ogasawara and Nerima, the use of buzzwords and Tokyo new-dialect forms were correlated with long-time television watching and the understanding of the features of one’s own language. It means that the media brings information about others and functions as a mirror to show one’s own differences. Furthermore, in Nerima, there is a group of those who like the Kansai area. This group has a tendency to watch television longer. It is surmised that the media lets it know about others and conveys a certain evaluation of these others to it. The group has no tendency to use peer-group expressions originating from Kansai area, even though he/she likes them. It seems that they only learn about others via the media. On the other hand, in Ogasawara most of the informants answered that they like Tokyo. However, this does not result in them knowing about others. This result reflects how little contact there is with information, and the scarcity of the media in modern Ogasawara.

Moreover, in Chapter 11, the relations between the use of traditional dialect forms and psychological and social factors are discussed. It turns out that there are psychological factors such as “the like or dislike of an area”, “the like or dislike of a language”, “recognition of differences in language”, and social factors, such as “relations with the local area or Tokyo” and “exchange within and without the local area”. By analyzing the relation between these extralinguistic factors and the use of a traditional dialect form, four groups such as “dialect cognition”, “dialect underestimation”, “dialect disregard”, and “dialect ignorance” are found.

Furthermore, the result of the listening comprehension test about the accent of the Tokyo dialect is utilized to analyze the relation between the percentage of the correct answers and the extralinguistic factors. It is turned out that both in Ogasawara and in the metropolitan area, the attribute “interlopers” raises the percentage, and the attribute “insiders” lowers the percentage. The psychological factors do not have any influence on the raising and lowering of the percentage. This result leads to the conclusion that the social factors are more important than the psychological ones in determining the percentage of the correct answers. The psychological difference probably functions as a difference marker between members in a
homogeneous society, and it seems that the social attribute is more important in a dialect contact society like Ogasawara or a metropolitan area in which members from various social backgrounds have gathered.

Finally, Part 4 summarizes the dialect formation which has occurred twice in Ogasawara, and considers the future of the dialect.

In the first dialect contact, the element from various varieties in the individual’s variety, and the various combinations of the various variants were seen in each person’s variety. New dialect contact always took place when new-comers showed up in the community, and contact between the standard variety and various dialects had taken place. In the second contact, convergence has occurred to some extent. However, the extent of the convergence may differ according to the language elements. It is thought that it is much more difficult for vocabulary to converge than for the accent to, because vocabulary has so many more varieties than the accent.

As mentioned above, firstly, if the number of the varieties in contact is big, it will be hard to converge, and if there is little variety, it will be easy to converge, considering the future of dialect formation in Ogasawara. The ease of convergence differs according to the language elements.

Moreover, when considering the social factors in the dialect contact situation, it turns out that the extent of the promotion of the contact depends on the roughness and fineness of the exchanges in the social network. It means that not all people participate in contact homogeneously. In Ogasawara, the interlopers, who have many exchanges in a loose-knit network, are promoting contact. Insiders and interlopers with few exchanges belong to a close-knit network. If the mobility of the population decreases, since the frequency of exchange and the density of a network are stabilized, it is thought that it becomes easy to converge.

Furthermore, when analyzing the psychological factors, junior and senior high school students from Ogasawara have increased opportunities to have access to buzzwords and Tokyo new-dialect forms because of the media, especially information from television has increased. It turns out that those who think that a feature of the local language is in his/her language tend to use it. However, the tendency of positive receipt of information seems to be developing. When opportunities for contact with a different dialect through the media increase from now on, it will be necessary to pay attention to the difference and the sameness of his/her language with others’ language, and to establish an identity. Even if the dialects spoken in Ogasawara are mutually intelligible, “cross-cultural communication” for cross-cultural understanding is required in an immigrants’ society such as that of Ogasawara. When enough of such an understanding is achieved, the “local identity” of Ogasawara will be born. And when the convergence has been completed in such a society, a “dialect identity” will probably emerge in Ogasawara.