

Case in Japanese dialects

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Japanese dialects have developed several case forms not found in Classical Japanese literature, through the grammaticalization of other grammatical categories such as noun and verb. Thanks to this diachronic development, some traditional dialects exhibit richer case distinctions than Standard Japanese. However, case is a fragile element in the recent history of Japanese dialects, compared to the other grammatical categories. All the Japanese dialects have been undergoing massive influence from Standard Japanese and many grammatical forms characteristic to the regional varieties are in the process of being replaced by the Standard Japanese forms. Verbal categories such as aspect and negation tend to survive standardization, preserving the traditional forms or developing neo-dialectal forms. Sasaki (2011) reported, using data collected through a questionnaire research from junior high school students in Joso city, that verbal categories such as inference and negative inference in the traditional dialect were used and understood by the students much more than nominal categories such as case.

This presentation will provide an overview of the variation of case in Japanese dialects and related problems. The variation of case is classified into three types: (i) variation of items (case forms specific to certain regions), (ii) variation of usage (usage of case specific to certain regions) and (iii) variation of case systems. Variation of items resulted through grammaticalization from nouns or verbs or the combination of case enclitics. Some diachronic accounts for the emergence of case enclitics such as the allative enclitic =*sa* and the accusative enclitic =*koto* will be introduced. Variation of usage is a product of the preservation of archaic usage such as the adnominal use of =*ga* and areal development such as the ablative enclitic =*kara* for passive agent marker. Variation of case systems is found in case alignment of core arguments and in the distinction of oblique elements. Concerning case alignment, most of the Japanese dialects are regarded as accusative type despite of variation of case forms, but dialects such as Kumamoto are reported to exhibit split intransitivity (Sakai 2013). Oblique experiencer and indirect object are case-marked differently in dialects spoken in Chiba, south-eastern

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Saitama and south-western Ibaraki. The syntactic status of the NP case-marked with the experiencer-specific case enclitic =*gani* is in controversy. Harada (2016) argues that NP=*gani* is ergative, while Sasaki (2004) argues that it is an oblique subject.