

Accent Neutralizations in the Tarama Variety of Miyako Ryukyuan

In this study, I describe conditions that cause accent neutralizations in Tarama, one of the varieties of Miyako Ryukyuan, focusing on particles following a noun.

Tarama has a three-patterned accent system, where three accent classes, Type A, B and C, are lexically distinguished (Matsumori 2010). Type A is a level tone, and Type B and C are falling tones. These two falling types are distinguished from each other as to whether a falling pitch appears on a particle (Type B) or a noun (Type C). It is noted that the three types of accent can be specified when a polymoraic particle (e.g., =*mai* ‘too’) is followed. On the other hand, as Matsumori (2010) mentioned, when a nominative case marker =*nu* and a focus marker =*du* is followed, Type C realizes as Type B, where a falling pitch appears on =*du*, not on a noun.

This study examines which patterns of particles affect the accent neutralization. New findings are: (1) Type B and C are neutralized when =*du* follows the monomoraic particle other than =*nu*, e.g., =*n* (dative) or =*tu* (comitative); (2) Type B and C are neutralized also when a topic marker =*ja* follows the monomoraic particle; (3) when the monomoraic particle follows without the topic or focus marker, however, Type B and A are neutralized. The question is why the neutralized pair in (3) is different from (1) and (2). I argue that the notion of foot with two or three morae plays a key role, as in the prosodic systems in other Miyako Ryukyuan variations (Shimoji 2009; Igarashi et al. 2012).

In conclusion, I propose three points related to the accent system in Tarama: (4) it is necessary to distinguish a particle and a noun to describe the accent, that is, it is not adequate to consider the accent unit (*bunsetsu*); (5) Type C + one or two monomoraic particle(s) behave as an ‘expanded’ noun as a whole since a monomoraic particle cannot commence a foot; and (6) the importance of the foot structure might be a common prosodic feature of the Miyako Ryukyuan languages.

References

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