

Object markers in Japanese dialects: focusing on the factor of adjacency to verbs

Izumi Konishi

Hiroshima University

In this presentation, we analyze the variation in accusative case markers in Japanese dialects using corpus-based quantitative methods. Some researchers, for example, Matsuda (2000), Konishi (2015), and Kibe (2015), have pointed out that objects can be used either with accusative particles like *-o* or without any particle (that is, a zero form) in some dialects, and that the adjacency between predicate verbs and object noun phrases is one of the most significant intra-linguistic factors to determine which option is used. We focus on this factor and consider how it works in various dialects. We point out the following:

First, the frequencies of zero markers differ among dialects. Dialects in the Tohoku and Hokuriku areas have high frequencies of zero markers, which are found with around 80% of all objects. On the other hand, some dialects in the Chugoku and Kyushu areas have low frequencies of zero markers, around 10%. The Tokyo and Osaka dialects show middle frequencies within this range.

Second, the factor of adjacency strongly affects all of the dialects, regardless of the differences in frequencies of zero markers: 80% of zero markers are used just before the verb, whereas 50% to 60% of accusative particles are used in the same environment.

Finally, as the logical result of these two points, the dialects that have high frequencies of zero markers have high frequencies of objects in the position just before the predicate verb. This indicates that these dialects have a tendency to mark objects not by case markers, but by the relative word order of the predicate. These dialects have high frequencies of zero markers for subject noun phrases, too, which is collateral evidence to support the idea that word orders are significant to determine the roles of noun phrases in sentences in certain dialects.