

国立国語研究所学術情報リポジトリ

Project Overview

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1 Project Overview

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1 Purposes of the project

The ‘General Research for the Study and Conservation of Endangered Dialects in Japan’ project was started in 2009 as a core collaborative research project of the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics. The purposes of the project are as follows.

As globalization proceeds, minority languages around the world have become endangered. Among Japanese dialects, almost all of the dialects of Okinawa Prefecture, the Amami dialects of Kagoshima Prefecture, and the dialect of the island of Hachijōjima, part of Tokyo Metropolis, are classified as ‘endangered’ in a UNESCO report published in February 2009. Many of these endangered dialects retain features from Old Japanese that have already been lost in other dialects and have linguistic systems different from theirs. These dialects are therefore not only valuable for the dialectology of a particular area, but also for historical and general linguistics. Moreover, these dialects often differ from village to village, so the question of how this variation arose is also of interest.

In this project, a group of researchers from throughout Japan with a track record in fieldwork was brought together to study these endangered dialects and elucidate their characteristics, as well as to shed light on linguistic diversification processes and general properties of language. In addition, the endangered dialects are recorded, preserved, and promoted by recording and preserving video and audio data of them and making these available to the general public.

(from the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics website)

2 Research methods

Endangered dialect research is an urgent matter. It is therefore necessary to organize researchers from both inside and outside Japan with a track record in field research, in order to move their research forward efficiently. Additionally, in order to obtain high-quality data, dialect (or language) survey and description methodologies need to be made consistent, which they have not always been. Furthermore, it is necessary to train young researchers to be able to undertake future dialect (or language) research. In light of the above, this project is being carried out based on the following two kinds of research:

- (1) field research conducted by each of the collaborating researchers at their respective research sites, and
- (2) joint research conducted by the collaborating researchers in concert.

In the case of the former, each of the collaborating researchers conducts field research at their respective research sites and presents the results of this research at the project's collaborative research workshops, which provides them with an opportunity to develop their research further. Additionally, young researchers who are not part of the group of collaborating researchers are sometimes invited to give presentations, in order to support their research.

In the case of the latter, a survey site is decided upon and its dialects described comprehensively in terms of, among other things, their phonetics, accent, grammar, and basic vocabulary, as well as discourse. Not only the group of collaborating researchers, but also young researchers such as postdoctoral fellows, research fellows of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and graduate students participate in this research; the participants carry out the survey, organize the data, and produce a report collaboratively. Two surveys, on the Kikaijima dialects of Kagoshima Prefecture (September 2010) and on the Miyako dialects of Okinawa Prefecture (September 2011), have been conducted thus far.

3 Collaborative research workshops

In addition to field research, collaborative research workshops open to the public are held two or three times per year, at which researchers can exchange views. The following workshops were held in the academic year 2011–2012:

- First session, jointly with the 'Phonological Characteristics of the Japanese Lexicon' project

Date and time: Saturday, May 21 and Sunday, May 22, 2011

Location: Kobe University

Saturday, May 21: public symposium

'Principles and Emergence of N-Pattern Accent Systems'

1. Zendo UWANO

(professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo; invited professor at NINJAL)

'What are N-Pattern Accent Systems?'

2. Nobuko KIBE

(professor at the Department of Language Change and Variation at NINJAL)

'The Character of Kyushu Two-Pattern Accent Systems'

3. Haruo KUBOZONO

(professor at the Department of Linguistic Theory and Structure at NINJAL)

‘Accent Rules of the Koshikijima Dialect of Kagoshima Prefecture’

4. Akiko MATSUMORI

(professor at Japan Women’s University; invited professor at NINJAL)

‘Reinterpretation of the Three-Pattern Accent System of Okinoshima’

5. Tetsuo NITTA (professor at Kanazawa University; collaborating researcher at NINJAL)

‘The N-Pattern Accent System of the Fukui City Area’

Discussion

Chair: Wayne LAWRENCE

(University of Auckland, New Zealand; collaborating researcher at NINJAL)

Sunday, May 22: collaborative research workshop

1. Hirotake MATSUMOTO (‘Endangered Languages’ project collaborating researcher)

‘Outline of the *-Ari/-Ri*-System of the Kikaijima Dialects of Amami’

2. Yasunori TAKAHASHI (research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

‘The Pitch Drop Phenomenon in Shanghainese Tone Sandhi’

• Second session, jointly with the ‘Phonological Characteristics of the Japanese Lexicon’ project

Date and time: Saturday, July 16 and Sunday, July 17, 2011

Location: National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics

Saturday, July 16

1. Hayato AOI (research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

‘Phonetic Description of Vowels with Tongue Blade Stricture: A Case Study of the Tarama Dialect of Miyako’

2. Satomi MATAYOSHI (Shigakukan University)

‘Sentence-Final Particles in the Tsukenjima Dialect of Okinawa’

Sunday, July 17

3. Yuto NIINAGA (research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at the University of Tokyo), Shinji OGAWA (NINJAL)

‘The Accent System of the Northern Ryukyuan Yuwan Dialect of Amami’

4. Yosuke IGARASHI (Hiroshima University), Yukinori TAKUBO (Kyoto University; invited professor at NINJAL), Yuka HAYASHI (part-time lecturer at Kyoto University), Tomoyuki KUBO (Kyushu University)

‘The Three-Pattern Accent System of the Ikema Dialect of the Ryukyuan Language of Miyako’

- Third session, titled ‘Dialectology and Text—Present and Future’

Date and time: Saturday, February 18 and Sunday, February 19, 2012

Location: National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics

Saturday, February 18

1. Mizuho HIDAKA (Kansai University)

‘“Narration Patterns” in Fairy Tales and Their Regional Differences’

2. Tetsuo NITTA (Kanazawa University)

‘Dialect Texts as Historical Language Materials of Japanese’

3. Chie TAKAGI (Osaka University)

‘Decline and Retention of -*U*-Conjugation Forms of -*W*-Stem Quintigrade Verbs in Kansai Dialect Natural Discourse’

Sunday, February 19

Panel discussion

1. Tomoyo OTSUKI (senior undergraduate student at the University of Tokyo)

‘Usage of the Inferential Form *Byon* in the Tsugaru Dialect’

2. Reiko ASO (research fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

‘Analyzing Verb Inflection and Derivation in the Hateruma Dialect of Yaeyama through Texts’

3. Rihito SHIRATA (graduate student at Kyoto University)

‘The Dialects of Kikaijima—Problems of Verb Morphology as Seen through Texts’

Plenary discussion

Commentators: Toshihide NAKAYAMA (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

Shinjiro KAZAMA (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

Nobuko KIBE (NINJAL)

4 Collaborating researchers

As of April 1, 2012, this project is being carried out by the following collaborating researchers (in alphabetical order):

Chris DAVIS (University of the Ryukyus), Akihiro KANEDA (Chiba University), Shigehisa KARIMATA (University of the Ryukyus; invited professor at NINJAL), Tomoyuki KUBO (Kyushu University), Haruo KUBOZONO (NINJAL), Wayne LAWRENCE (University of Auckland), Daniel LONG (Tokyo Metropolitan University), Hiromitsu MACHI (Hiroshima University), Satomi MATAYOSHI (Okayama University), Akiko MATSUMORI (Japan Women's University; invited professor at NINJAL), Hirotake MATSUMOTO (Beppu University), Harumi MITSUI (NINJAL), Jo NAKAHARA (University of the Ryukyus), Yumi NAKAJIMA (Hitotsubashi University), Satoshi NISHIOKA (Okinawa International University), Tetsuo NITTA (Kanazawa University), Takuichiro ONISHI (NINJAL), Thomas PELLARD (French National Center for Scientific Research), Kayoko SHIMOJI (Okinawa International University), Michinori SHIMOJI (Kyushu University; invited associate professor at NINJAL), Koko TAKEDA (part-time project research fellow at NINJAL), Yukinori TAKUBO (Kyoto University; invited professor at NINJAL), Zendo UWANO (invited professor at NINJAL).