

Accentuation pattern in a highly isolated sociolinguistic setting:
a case of Sakhalin Japanese in Russia

This paper examines an accentuation pattern of Japanese spoken in an isolated society, Sakhalin, and shows that it has become highly idiosyncratic. Sakhalin Japanese was formulated amongst Japanese immigrants during 1905 and 1945. Evacuation of the Japanese immigrants at the end of the 1940s resulted in a loss of the Sakhalin Japanese speakers. Whereas Sakhalin Japanese has been in use until today, sociolinguistic settings over Sakhalin Japanese vary to its great from one speaker to another.

In order to examine directions of a change in the accentuation pattern, this paper raises Teruo Hirayama's data collected in 1938. Same survey format was employed to a survey design of the current study so as to examine to what extent the accentuation pattern changed for the seventy years' period. Wordlist (consisted of 82 survey words, which consist of nouns, verbs, and adjectives) is prepared, and each of the 8 informants was asked to read the wordlist three times. All the utterances were recorded in the IC recorder (Roland R-09). All the data was edited in praat (version 5.1.43) to make judgements of the accentuation patterns. Analysis was made primarily on the two-mora nouns word for the analysis.

Results showed that each speaker demonstrated his/her accentuation patterns in such a different ways from one speaker to another. Moreover, some speakers even employed different accentuation patterns in one survey word. This highly diverse situation makes it next to impossible to make any generalisations on the direction of the linguistic change. This paper will claim, based on this result, that this was a result of a sociolinguistic setting of the society. This society does not form any stable communities, each speaker lives in different places without any close contacts, any linguistic norms does not exist amongst the speakers.

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Language investigated: a Japanese dialect in Japanese Diaspora

Location: Sakhalin in Russia

Speakers: Ethnically Japanese who remained in the island after the WWII when most Japanese residents needed to evacuate from the island.