

# Microvariation of vowel lengthening in monomoraic nouns across Japanese Dialects

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This study aims to describe and typologize the environments in which vowel lengthening (hereinafter, VL) occurs in monomoraic nouns across various Japanese dialects. In many Japanese dialects, monomoraic nouns exist. In some environments, they undergo VL to satisfy minimal word constraint (McCarthy and Prince 1995: 323), transforming into two-mora forms (Fujiwara 1956: Fig 15, McCarthy 1998: 132-133, among many others). In the other environments, this lengthening does not occur. For example, in Yanagawa (Fukuoka Japanese), VL is observed in cases (1) and (3), but not in case (2).

Yanagawa (Fukuoka Japanese)

|     |                  |     |              |     |                |
|-----|------------------|-----|--------------|-----|----------------|
| (1) | {*me/mee}=yatta. | (2) | {me/*mee}=ni | (3) | {*me/mee}=kara |
|     | “It was eyes.”   |     | “to eyes”    |     | “from eyes”    |

VL of monomoraic nouns is a phenomenon observed in many dialects, and the patterns of occurrence vary. Below are examples from Omae ((4)~(6), Miyazaki Japanese). VL does not occur in (6), whereas in similar environments, VL occurs in Yanagawa (3).

Omae (Miyazaki Japanese)

|     |                  |     |              |     |                |
|-----|------------------|-----|--------------|-----|----------------|
| (4) | {me/mee}=zyatta. | (5) | {me/*mee}=ni | (6) | {me/*mee}=kara |
|     | “It was eyes.”   |     | “to eyes”    |     | “from eyes”    |

This study involves collecting primary data and examines the occurrence of vowel lengthening (VL) in one-mora nouns across eight Japanese dialects, including Ena (Gifu), Kishiwada (Osaka), Otsu (Shiga), Etajima (Hiroshima), Ozu (Ehime), Yanagawa (Fukuoka), Nagasaki city (Nagasaki), and Omae (Miyazaki) dialects. The data collection included one or two participants for each dialect, with a total of about 40 items recorded. This study demonstrates that the occurrence is influenced by the type of clitics and the number of morae of clitics following the monomoraic nouns (e.g., me=ni “eye=DAT”). This study

demonstrates that the occurrence is influenced by the type of clitics and the number of morae of clitics following the monomoraic nouns (e.g., *me=ni* “eye=DAT”). Furthermore, this study typologizes these dialects and shows that there are hierarchies in the environments where VL occurs. These hierarchies show that if VL occurs at a certain point in the hierarchy in a dialect, then it will invariably occur to the left of that point.

(7) copula, sentence final particles > limiter particles > case particles

(8) 2 morae > 1 mora

The typology of environments leading to the two-mora transformation has not been extensively studied in the context of minimal word constraints (cf. Gordon 2016: Ch. 8). This presentation fills this gap by examining microvariations in Japanese dialects, shedding light on the previously overlooked phenomenon of two-mora formations in the study of minimal word constraints.

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