South Ryukyuan "second accusative": a P-demotion strategy?

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In this presentation I will discuss whether the "second accusative" of South Ryukyuan languages (Japonic) can be considered a P-demotion strategy.

The "second accusative" marking is homophonous with the topic marker (cf. Jarosz 2024). It has been described for a range of South Ryukyuan topolects (Koloskova 2007; Shimoji 2016; Topping 2019; Jarosz 2024), mostly from the Miyako language. It is in paradigmatic relationship and complementary distribution with the default accusative marker, with free variation occasionally permitted, e.g. *urj-uː/urj-aː ʑʑi* MES-ACC/ACC2 insert.MDF 'putting it in and...' (Kurima; author's fieldwork, 2019).

The occurence of the "second accusative" marker is not attributable to any single specific parameter, whether syntactic or semantic, although there is a quantifiable preference of the marker to choose non-specific, indefinite referents (73% occurrences of the marker in Kurima-Miyako), non-finite clauses (74%) and atelic predicates (65%; Jarosz 2024). While Hopper and Thompson's (1980) "reduced object prototypicality" may be a factor supporting the choice of the second accusative, it is neither necessary nor sufficient. Therefore, and contra Shimoji (2016) or Koloskova (2007), I relate this differential object marking not with transitivity or affectedness, but with information structure, and specifically to defocusing when P is of reduced information value. This explains the frequent correlation of such marking with non-specific referents (cf. Erteschik-Shir 2013), especially with nominal predicates, as well as with non-finite clauses, as these tend to provide background information complement to the main clause (cf. Komagata 2003). The category is therefore labeled as the "accusative of background information", or "adumbrative" (cf. Jarosz 2024). The Miyako adumbrative patrially corresponds to the notion of "secondary topic" as employed by Nikolaeva (2001).

Although adumbrative marking is not strictly a P-demotion operation, as it does not alter the voice nor the valency of the clause, it can be considered an example of pragmatic demotion of P. It is prototypically found on generic, non-individuated nouns governed by converbs: *mittɕ-a num-i* water-ADU drink-CVB 'drinking water and...'; *sɨmuttɕ-a jum-i* book-ADU read-CVB 'reading books and...' (Kurima). Many of its occurrences (49% in Kurima) are with nominal predicates, which can be considered a form of noun incorporation (Mithun's 1984 Type I); despite retaining their case marking, such P's take on adverbial modification, e.g. *kantɕi* 'like this' => *kantɕi jozz-a ɕ-i*: like.this celebration-ADU LV-CVB 'celebrating like this' (Kurima; author's fieldwork 2019). They may also merge with the light verb to form a phonological word while still keeping their

case marking: padzɨmi 'start' => *padzɨmj-aː-ɕiː* start-ADU-LV-CVB 'beginning with…' (Kawamitsu; Kawamitsu 2022: 16). Moreover, while left dislocation of the usual accusative-marked P is not uncommon in Miyako (basic order SOV), it has so far only been found in two instances of adumbrative-marked P. This seems to confirm the syntactically close-knit, quasi-incorporated status of such P's.

Thus, while Miyako adumbrative can be discussed predominantly in terms of pragmatic P-demotion, it also shows signs of syntactic demotion.

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	CVB	converb
ACC2	second accusative – cf. adumbrative	LV	light verb
		MDF	modifier
ADU	adumbrative	MES	mesial

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