Mismatch between theory and practice

Problem of determining base forms for Miyako verb

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Goal
- Reexamine the link between linguists' grammar and speakers' understanding
  - Descriptive framework; theoretical understanding of grammatical organization
  - Reality of linguistic practice; speakers' intuition
- Is theory directly applicable to teaching and revitalization?

Issue
- Difficulty in determining the ‘base form’ of a verb
  - What form is used as a representative form when a lexeme can take multiple forms (e.g. inflected forms)?
- Our experience in Miyako (Okinawa)

About the language
- Miyako, Ikema dialect (Ryukyuan, Japonic)
- Spoken in the southern Ryukyus (Okinawa, Japan)
- Endangered:
  - 2000-3000 fluent speakers
  - Active use in generations above 60-65 years old
  - Daily lives are dominated by Japanese especially for younger generations
  - No children are growing up speaking it
  - No writing tradition

About the language
- Taiwan
- Ryukyu Archipelago
- Northern Group
- Southern Group
- Miyako
- Okinawa
- Ryukyu Archipelago
Our work in Ikema Miyako

- **Speakers**
  - 50’s – 90’s

- **Our activities**
  - recording various spoken discourse
    - narratives, interviews, conversations, procedures
  - collecting vocabulary items
  - analyzing grammatical patterns & structure on the basis of the natural discourse data

Our work in Ikema

- **Our methodology**
  - Main focus on recording and analysis of natural discourse
  - Supplemented by elicitation during transcription/translation sessions

Ikema verb forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stand</th>
<th>Go Out</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NON-PAST</td>
<td>tats-i-Ø</td>
<td>idi-Ø</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>idi-gamata</td>
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<td>idi-ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIAL</td>
<td>tat-i-i</td>
<td>idi-i</td>
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‘Base form’

- **Natural representative form for a lexeme**
- Important for theory and description
  - Analysis and description are organized around it
    - Elicitation: data collection
    - Analysis: word formation
    - Organization of forms: dictionary
  - Equally appropriate & important for teaching/learning
    - because they are psychologically real and obvious to all speakers

How “base forms” are typically determined

- **Morphologically simple (not derived)**
- Syntactically neutral
  - Present tense
  - Affirmative
  - Independent
‘Base form’ for Ikema verbs?

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Our experience

When referring to a verb:
- Elicitation sessions
- Personal word lists
- **MEDIAL** form is most commonly used among the native speakers

‘Base’ form = representative form??

- Linguistic notion of “base form” is **NOT** necessarily a natural part of native speakers’ intuition, especially with regard to verbs
- Appropriate representative forms can be different for different people

Our experience

- Interestingly, researchers & trained speakers use the NON-PAST form
  - Dictionary / word lists by linguists and more academically inclined speakers
- Hirayama 1983
- Nevsky 2005
- (Nakama 1992-2001)

Representative forms for Ikema verb

- Ordinary (untrained) speakers: MEDIAL form
  - Possible factors affecting the choice
  - Frequency of use: by far the most frequently used verb form in actual discourse

Representative forms for Ikema verb

- Academically inclined: NON-PAST form
  - Possible factors affecting the choice
  - Practice in the majority language (Japanese)
  - Academic tradition / Theoretical framework
Choice of one representative form over the other is not a matter of correct or incorrect. Choice is arbitrary to a degree. No single universally valid, natural choice.

Implications

Appropriate representative forms can be different depending on the goal and audience.

For native Ikema speakers: the MEDIAL form, rather than the NON-PAST form, may make better sense as a representative verb form.

Implications

Potential danger of choosing a form that does not help or even hinder learning.

Organization of materials in LD should be informed by what speakers do as much as, if not more than, by what linguists do (or would like to see).

Implications

References


Thank you!