Pragmatic function of low boundary tone in Puyuma: question intonation and beyond

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to investigate what conditions word order variation in verb-initial languages. The languages studied are Seediq, Bunun and Puyuma, all spoken in Taiwan. For Puyuma, the main finding is that word order variation reflects information structure, and new is placed before given. Intonation has two main functions, to mark prosodic and syntactic groups and to mark semantic status (autonomy or non-autonomy) of speech units.

Research questions
• What conditions word order in Formosan languages at clause level, at NP level and within relative clauses?
• How is information structure expressed in Formosan languages?
• This study: function of L% in Puyuma.

Formosan: 3 sample languages
Tgdaya Seediq (VOS)
Takituduh Bunun (VSO)
Puyuma (VOS)

SVO as alternate order

Functions of word order in Puyuma
Word order reflects information structure in Puyuma (Karlsson & Holmer 2011)

What happens? Answer: VOS (all new)
What is the woman eating? Answer: VOS (NEW - GIVEN)
Who is doing what? Answer: StopCVO (TOP [ all new ])
Who is eating the apple? Answer: SVO (NEW - GIVEN)

Data collection
Taiwan, June 2011. Nanwang village, Nanwang dialect.
Stimuli: pictures, movies, interaction tasks
Semispontaneous connected and elicited speech
Speakers: 3 women (aged 57-77), 1 man (age 78)
Tools: Praat and Elan

Analysis
• Informational status (topic-comment, new-given) and word order
• Informational status and tonal courses: measurements of max and min F0 values in each lexical word
• Identification of relevant tonal gestures
• Functional analysis of identified tonal gestures

Material
Word order
1) What happens?
2) What is the woman eating?
3) Who is eating the apple?
4) Who is doing what?

Results
1. Interaction between tonal course, word order and i-structure
2. Tonal contrast between declaratives and interrogatives
3. Distribution of H% vs L%

Conclusions
• Word order is the main device for expressing information structure in Puyuma
• Tonal courses reflect
1) Boundaries between SUBJECT and the rest (tonal turning points)
2) Semantic autonomy status: H% for autonomous and L% for non-autonomous units

References