On the status of the ‘p-initial emphatic verbs’ in Shizuoka Japanese

I. Emphatic verbs in Shizuoka Japanese

This study attempts to offer a unified explanation for an interesting distribution of what is usually referred to as a group of ‘emphatic forms’ of verbs in the Shizuoka dialect of Japanese. In Shizuoka Japanese, verbs whose initial segment is [h] have a derived emphatic form which has [p] word-initially instead of [h]. Alternatively, the verbs are emphasized with a prefix [çi+µ]. ([µ] indicates an abstract mora which, in this case, assimilates to the following verb-initial [h], surfacing as [p]; Japanese exhibits a morphophonemic alternation between [h] and [p].) Thus, Shizuoka Japanese has two emphatic verb forms as in (1).

(1)  hagasu ‘peel off’ ~ pagasu ‘peel off strongly’ ~ çippagasu ‘peel off strongly’
     hakaru ‘measure’~pakaru ‘measure earnestly’~ çippakaru ‘measure earnestly’
     hineru ‘twist’ ~ pineru ‘twist hard’ ~ çippineru ‘twist hard’

Previous studies agree that the p-initial form has diachronically developed with the [çip] dropping from the base (Mase 1961, Nakajo 1982, etc.). However, synchronic analysis of the two emphatic forms (and their distribution) has seldom, if ever, been presented thus far.

II. Morphophonological analysis of ‘p-initial’ verbs

In this study, I postulate that the derivation of the p-initial form has been triggered by the devoicing and deletion of the vowel [i] in [çi], based on certain phonetic factors which are widely observed in the dialect. As a result, the prefix-initial [ç], unable to stand alone without the syllable nucleus, is also dropped. Given that the initial [p] of the p-form phonetically surfaces as a preglottalized [p] or a geminate [p], the underlying representation of the p-form ‘pagasu’ is posited here as in (2), which still retains the coda of the original prefix.

(2) /p+pagasu/

This case is very interesting because it violates a constraint highly ranked in Japanese which prohibits geminates in syllable onset position.
III. Sociolinguistic motivation

The above hypothesis is supported by sociolinguistic evidence; the p-form is always used in a casual style of speech, while the prefixed form is used in a formal style, both within and across speakers. It is well-known that in a casual style of speech, phonological processes including assimilation and deletion tend to take place more easily and frequently. In conclusion, the ‘p-initial emphatic verbs’ in Shizuoka Japanese are not merely a residue of a diachronic change, but they exhibit a synchronic morphological process working in a productive fashion. Their distribution reflects sociolinguistic motivations among the speakers of the dialect.

References