

Ryukyuan intonation with reference to modality, syntax, focus, and emotion

Yasuko Nagano-Madsen* & Shigehisa Karimata**

University of Gothenburg

University of Ryukyus

The Ryukyuan languages are spoken in the Ryukyu Islands in Japan. Together with the mainland Japanese dialect, the Ryukyuan (or the Ryukyu dialect) constitutes the Japanese language. Since the loss of the Ryukyuan kingdom, and because of the language policy of the Japanese Government, the Ryukyuan has been severely suppressed in school education resulting in its rapid loss in everyday life. Today, the vast majority of the population in the Ryukyu Islands is monolingual in Japanese.

Considerable amount of linguistic documentation and analysis have been carried out for the Ryukyuan during the last two decades (cf. Uemura, Yukio, and Wayne P. Lawrence. 2003. *The Ryukyuan language*. Endangered Languages of the Pacific Rim (Series), A4-018. Osaka, Japan: ELPR), systematic phonetic documentation and analysis of their intonation has hitherto been largely missing. In this paper, we report the first attempt to describe the intonation of the four major dialects of Ryukyuan (Shuri, Nago, Miyako, Ishigaki) with reference to modality (statement vs. question), syntax, focus, and emotion. A native speaker of each dialect first translated the sentence in question to the respective dialect. Thereafter, recordings were made for each dialect (one representative speaker) and the material was analysed acoustically by using PRAAT.

Out of the four parameters, the most consistent relationship was found between focus parameter and intonation, the manifestation of intonation contour being similar to those of Tokyo Japanese. The syntax parameter was also found to be fairly consistent in its relation to intonation, their characteristics being basically the same as those of Tokyo and other dialects of mainland Japanese. On the other hand, the mapping between modality (statement vs. question) and emotion with intonation contour varied considerably across the four dialects. The fact that Ryukyuan is rich in the sentence final expression might have affected the results for modality since the intonation characteristics is more likely to appear as sentence final intonation. As for emotion, the use of voice quality might have interfered the intonation.