Approaches to Endangered Languages in Japan and Northeast Asia:
Description, Documentation and Revitalization, NINJAL (Tokyo)

**Ryukyuan Languages from a Typological Perspective: with a Special Focus on Marked Nominativity**
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**Marked Nominative alignment**
- The present talk aims to demonstrate the potential contribution of Ryukyuan languages by taking up the issue of Marked nominative.
- Marked NOM has hitherto been considered an "exception" in LT (e.g. Greenberg 1963, Dixon 1979, Handschuh 2014, König 2006, among others) but is widespread in Ryukyuan languages (Shimoji 2015, 2018).

**A brief overview of Marked NOM**

**Three major alignment patterns in the world’s languages**
- Standard NOM
- Standard ERG
- Neutral

**In all three major alignment types, S is not overtly marked (morphologically unmarked)**
- Standard NOM
- Standard ERG
- Neutral

Greenberg’s Universal 38
Where there is a case system, the only case which ever has only zero allomorphs is the one which includes among its meanings that of subject of the intransitive verb. [Greenberg 1963: 75]
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**Patterns which comply with Universal 38**

Greenberg's Universal 38

Where there is a case system, the only case which ever has only zero allomorphs is the one which includes among its meanings that of subject of the intransitive verb. (Greenberg 1963: 75)

**Marked NOM goes against Universal 38**

Greenberg's Universal 38

Where there is a case system, the only case which ever has only zero allomorphs is the one which includes among its meanings that of subject of the intransitive verb. (Greenberg 1963: 75)

### Some examples of Marked NOM:

**Oirata** (Timor; Donohue & Brown 1999: 66)

1. in-te ee asi
   - 1PL.EXCL-NOM 2SG.POL see
   - 'We saw you' [Transitive]

2. an-te ete na'a ippa
   - 1SG-NOM tree from fall
   - 'I fell out of the tree' [Intransitive]

**Jamul Tiipay** (Yuman; Miller 2001)

3. Juan-ch uusha.
   - Juan-NOM stab
   - 'Juan stabbed (him)' [Transitive]

4. peya-ch we-nalì-ə.
   - this one-NOM 3-fall-IRR-EMPH
   - 'This one is going to fall!' [Intransitive]

**Tennet** (Surmic; Randal 1998)

5. ökêt Lowór-ə yomá
   - PFV.spear Lowor-NOM 'Yoma
   - 'Lowor speared Yoma' [Transitive; V A P]

6. ök mányūdə-ə mginóattsì
gO.PFV squirrel-NOM there
   - 'Squirrel went there.' [Intransitive; V S]

Handschuh (2014: 13): Marked NOM is “geographically highly skewed”
Notice that Ryukyuan is out of issue in the typology

Marked NOM in Ryukyuan:

Marked NOM in Ryukyuan:

Marked NOM in Ryukyuan: Okinoerabu (NR; Amami, Yokoyama-Tokunaga 2017)

Marked NOM in Ryukyuan: Kudaka (NR; Okinawan, Shimoji 2015, Niinaga p.c.)

Marked NOM in Ryukyuan: Yonaguni (SR; Macro-Yaeyama; Shimoji 2016)

Yokoyama-Tokunaga (2017: 270-271) explicitly states that Okinoerabu is typologically interesting with the rare Marked NOM system.
General patterns
• Marked NOM distributes from the upper end of Animacy Hierarchy
• All languages being examined allow (or require) zero-marking for S at the lower end of AH. That is, Marked NOM pattern disappears at the lower end of AH.

Pronoun Human Animal Inanimate

• Why is it the way it is?

A case study of Yonaguni Ryukyuan

Yonaguni: alignment splits between Marked NOM and Split S (Shimoji 2016)

Pronominal arguments: Marked NOM

Non-pronominal arguments: Transitive

Non-pronominal arguments: Intransitive
Non-pronominal arguments: **Intransitive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( S_1 ) (near-prototypical patient) align with P</th>
<th>( S_2 ) (a range of in-betweens) align with either A or P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BREAK</td>
<td>HIDE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khia*nga/Ø buri du buru.</td>
<td>agame nga/Ø khaaguru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>person break=FOC PRF</td>
<td>child=AGT hid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The branch of the tree has snapped.”</td>
<td>“The child hid (behind something).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FALL</td>
<td>GET TIRED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khigara naie*nga/Ø ulti buru.</td>
<td>ipa=Ø nga/buru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tree=from nut fall PROG</td>
<td>old man=AGT get.tired=FOC RSL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The nut fell from the tree.”</td>
<td>“The old man is tired.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sample of 38 intransitive verbs (Shimoji 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>( S_1 ) (in favor of nga)</th>
<th>( S_2 ) (in favor of Ø)</th>
<th>( S_3 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WALK</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAVE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUN</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALK, HIDE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAUGH, BARK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO ROUND</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLY, ROLL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO UNDERWATER</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUMP, FALL, FLUSH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIN, DRAWN, CRY, TWINKLE, FALL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASLEEP, QUAKE, EXIST, GET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SURPRISED, GET DRUNKEN, GET SUNNY, GET TIRED, DIE, SINK, OPEN, BLOOM, ROLL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPROUT CRACK BEND FALL BREAK</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case study (2): Okinawan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pron</th>
<th>Prop/Prp</th>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Endangered Languages Database of NINJAL
(http://kikigengo.ninjal.ac.jp/danwashiryo.html)

The total 106 tokens of A/S (non-topic)

Subject focus: 9
Adnominal C: 10
Fragment: 4
Thetic, etc: 83
Zero marking for S in Okinawan: some generalisations (Shimoji 2015, 2018)

- As compared with Yonaguni, zero-coding for S occurs with a much narrower range of predicates, with no clear split based on agentivity ($S_A$ and $S_P$).

- However, there is little descriptive work available in which zero-coding for S is noted and discussed in detail. We need more descriptive works (grammars) of Okinawan which explicitly state in which case S must be overtly marked and in which case it is optional (or even impossible, in the case of Yonaguni).

Zero marking for S in Okinawan: some generalisations (Shimoji 2015, 2018)

- Recurrent patterns of zero-coded S:
  - S of Phenomenal Sentence (i.e. sentence designating a weather or particular natural phenomenon)

  (28) Nago (NR; Northern Okinawan)
  Oh, rain has started falling
  “Oh, it’s raining!” (Shimabukuro 2006: 124-125)

  (27) Shuri (NR; Central-Southern Okinawan)
  Tida (tita/nu/Ø) agapoon.
  sun has risen.
  “The sun has risen.” [Chamberlain 1895]

Zero marking for S in Okinawan: some generalisations (Shimoji 2015, 2018)

- Recurrent patterns of zero-coded S (Shimoji 2018):
  - S of Phenomenal Sentence (i.e. sentence designating a weather)
  - S of Cognition verbs (verbs denoting the speaker’s initial cognition of the emergence/occurrence of an entity)
  - S of “Double Subject Construction” (where Inner S is almost always within the focus domain)

  (29) Yonabaru (NR; Central-Southern Okinawan)
  (wannee) [wata=nu/Ø] jamun
  Outer S Inner S
  “I have a stomachache.” (lit. As for me, (my) stomach aches.)

Marked NOM in Ryukyuan: summary

- Implicational generalization
  If a language has a Marked NOM pattern, then it is always found in the upper end of the Animacy Hierarchy

- S may be zero-coded at the lower end of AH.
  - Patitive and inanimate S ($S_3$ in Yonaguni)
  - S of Phenomenal Sentence (i.e sentence designating a weather/natural phenomenon)
  - S of Cognition verbs (verbs denoting the speaker’s initial cognition of the emergence/occurrence of an entity)
  - S of “Double Subject Construction”
Marked NOM: why “exceptional”? Or, is it exceptional?

Why does Marked NOM look “exceptional”?

- It is agreed in LT that Marked NOM is rare and exceptional (König 2008, Handschuh 2014).
- But rarity does not equate with exceptionality. Exception is something excluded or unexpected from a theory. (If there is no theory, there is no exception!)
- What makes Marked NOM exceptional: Overt Marking Hypothesis (a term used by Handschuh 2014) suggested by Comrie (1978), Dixon (1979), Aissen (2003), de Hoop and Malchukov (2008), etc.

Overt Marking Hypothesis

- Overt case-marking is motivated iff the distinction between A and P is necessary.
- Hence, overt S marking should be excluded from the theory.
- Thus, Marked NOM is viewed as a “weird” pattern, i.e. an exception.

Beyond Overt Marking Hypothesis: the Ryukyuan perspective

A new hypothesis: Topicality-driven Overt Marking Hypothesis

- Topicality: the likelihood for A/S to occur as a topic.
- For example:
  - 彼は宿務に上がった。He has left.
  - 達は台風に襲われた。The clock has broken.
- AH is a hierarchy of topicality (“Topic-worthiness Hierarchy” Payne 1997). Pronouns are most topic-worthy.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
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<td>A/S</td>
<td>More Topic-worthy</td>
<td>Less Topic-Worthy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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A new hypothesis: Topicality-driven Overt Marking Hypothesis

- Topicality: the likelihood for A/S to occur as a topic
- AH is a hierarchy of topicality (“Topic-worthiness Hierarchy” Payne 1997). Pronouns are most topic-worthy.
- Given’s (1994) Generic Topic Hierarchy: Human > Non-human, Agent > Patient

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<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
A new hypothesis: Topicality-driven Overt Marking Hypothesis

- Nominative marking occurs only when A/S is not a topic.
- Nominative marking is **anti-topic marking**, whereby the NP in question is explicitly marked as non-topic.
- Thus, nominative marking is more likely to occur if the NP in question is more topic worthy, as the non-topic function is unexpected.

<table>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Least Topic-Worthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pronominal A/S are most topic-worthy. Hence, they are most likely to be marked if it is not a topic.

Zero-marking for S revisited:

- S may be zero-coded in the following environments:
  - Patientive S (S3 in Yonaguni)
  - S of Phenomenal Sentence (i.e. sentence designating a weather/natural phenomenon)
  - S of Cognition verbs (verbs denoting the speaker’s initial cognition of the emergence/occurrence of an entity)
  - S of "Double Subject Construction" (where Inner S is almost always within the focus domain)
- S of these environments are arguably less topic-worthy: they are less likely to occur as a topic of the sentence than agentive/animate S and A

Agentive S is more topic-worthy than Patientive S: Split S is a result of anti-topic marking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Proper</th>
<th>Human</th>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>Inanimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3(S3)</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2(S2)</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1(S1)</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S0(S0)</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
<td>GØ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unmarked

Overt Marking

When a non-topic-worthy S (S0) occurs as a non-topic S

When a topic-worthy NP (S1) occurs as a non-topic S

Marked NOM

Split S
Approaches to Endangered Languages in Japan and Northeast Asia: Description, Documentation and Revitalization, NINJAL (Tokyo) Aug 6, 2018

Summary:
- Nominative marking in the Marked NOM languages of Ryukyuan functions to mark A/S as non-topic.
- Hence:
  - There is a motivation for overt marking for S, as long as it is topic-worthy (e.g. a pronoun, agent, etc). We do not need to view overt S marking as "weird" anymore.
  - On the other hand, S may be left unmarked if it is less topic-worthy, by its patientive feature (Sp), or by its occurrence in phenomenal sentences, all-new cognition sentences, etc.

Concluding remarks

In conclusion
- **Topicality-driven Overt Marking Hypothesis**, as opposed to the currently influential GR (grammatical relation)-driven Overt Marking Hypothesis, seeks for the motivation for overt case-marking without referring to the distinction between A and P.
- **T-OMH** is still a working hypothesis which aims to explain Marked NOM in Ryukyuan, but it might be extendable to other Marked NOM languages, especially to those languages where Marked NOM occurs only in information-structurally special environments (Marked NOM of "emphatic subject": Handschuh 2014).

Waskia (PNG; Ross 1978: 37, 13)

(35) Subject focus: Marked NOM pattern (S/A marked by ke)

- 3SG NOM policeman
- "He is a policeman (i.e. not someone else)"

(36) Topic: Neutral pattern (S/A unmarked)

- 3SG my brother policeman
- "my brother is a policeman." (topic-comment)

This subject marking only in the "emphatic" context is common especially in the Pacific region (Handschuh 2014: 124)
In conclusion

• Thus, a detailed look at Marked NOM in Ryukyuan provides a new perspective from which Marked NOM can be viewed, and it will have implications for the cross-linguistic typology of Marked NOM.

References

• Chamberlain, Basil Hall. 1895 [2005] "― “