

Sentence-final interrogative intonation in the dialect of Iheya, Okinawa

CARLINO, Salvatore

Hitotsubashi University / NINJAL

In this study the author describes the sentence-final interrogative intonation of the dialect of the village of Iheya. Iheya is located north of Okinawa and it consists of two islands, Iheyajima and Nohojima. There are five districts: Dana, Maedomari, Gakiya, Shimajiri and Noho. The Iheyan dialect is a local variety of the Okinawan language. Dialect differences among the five districts are limited to a few vocabulary items. The Iheyan dialect has been shown to have a 3-pattern accent (Carlino, 2018). Compared to accent research, intonation research about Japanese languages and dialects is a relatively new field. Kibe (2013) developed a model to categorize dialects by the presence of rising or falling intonation in questions, depending on the presence of question marking words. Among these categories, the Iheyan dialect is most like the rising/falling model, where the final pitch rises when a question marking word is absent and falls when this is present. Intonation research in Iheya is limited to an early report (Carlino, 2018). The data used here was collected between March and May 2018 in Shimajiri from two male speakers. The informants translated text from standard Japanese to the Iheyan dialect, and the recording was analyzed with Praat. Statements, y/n questions with verbs, nouns of different accent pattern in final position or isolated, and wh-questions were included in the experiment. Standard Japanese included phrases with and without question marking words. As a result, the informants pronounced questions containing a question marking words with either a falling or flat intonation, both in y/n and in wh-questions (The absence of arrows marks a flat intonation).

a) arija garasa:rur-i↓ Is that a crow?

that-TOP crow-FOC-Q

b) nu:ga ujo:??↓ What is there?

what-SBJ exist-Q

c) nunum-i? (Do you) drink?

drink-Q

When question markers were absent, a rising pitch was observed, but in phrases like d) speakers described it as uncommon. No rising pitch was observed in wh-questions. In the case of a verb phrase like e), the informant described it as being used more often to intimate speakers compared to c). Also, according to informants, in a phrase like f) a rising pitch could be used to express strong doubt. However, it is still unclear if and how much rising pitch is really used in natural conversation, as an informant described the non-rising pitch as more “Island-like”.

d) arija garasa: ?↑ is that a crow?

that-TOP crow

e) nunum?↑ (Do you) drink?

drink

f) garasa:??↑ a crow?

crow

In conclusion, it can be said that the Iheyan dialect usually expresses questions by using question marking words, without a rising pitch, which appears only in rare cases like echo questions or to preserve contrast with statements. Further research is also needed to decide how to categorize flat/falling pitch, either separately or as one “non-rising” category.

Bibliography

Carlino, Salvatore (2018) “Okinawa Iheya hōgenno akusentoni tsuite” *Kokusai Okinawa kenkyūjo kyōdō kenkyū: tōshokanno gengo seshokuno jittai kaimeini muketeno kisoteki kenkyū seika hōkoku oyobi kanren kenkyū happyōkai*. 2018/02/21.

Carlino, Salvatore (2018) “Iheya hōgen no gimonbun no bunmatsu intoneeshon ni tsuite no shoki hōkoku” *Onsei gakkai dai337kaikenkyūreikai*. 2018/06/16.

Kibe, Nobuko (2013) *Soudattanda! Nihongo: Jadde hougen-na omoshitoka* Tōkyō : Iwanami Shoten.