

# Acquisition of English interrogative intonation by Japanese Speakers ---in view of emotional intonation---

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This study aims to explore the interrogative intonation acquisition process of Japanese EFLs by observing their performance in emotional speech perception.

The mainstream L2 Intonation Learning theory (LILt) asserts that L1 influences L2 on both phonological and phonetic levels. Most previous studies about adult intonation acquisition show that compared with phonetic skills, most phonological skills develop together with their overall L2 level, such as phonological abilities as, tonicity (Maeda 2005), Reset phrase (Nagano 2015). However the ability of parsing intonation's emotional meaning which is also supposed to be phonological, might be an exception. The emotion aspect of intonation seems to receive more profound influence from L1 than other aspects, so it doesn't progress with L2 abilities (Zięba 2013). Therefore, this empirical study attempts to explore intonation acquisition process from the perspective of emotion to further discuss the emotional intonation development process in adult L2 acquisition.

In order to cover both emotional and non-emotional phonological features for comparison, four interrogative intonation patterns are used: 1) Yes / No question's unmarked rising nucleus tone; 2) Yes / No question's marked falling tone signifying "strictness"; 3) WH question's unmarked falling nucleus tone; 4) WH question's marked rising tone signifying "gentleness". The unmarked pitch patterns convey non-emotional information that if the speech is a polar Yes / No question or lexical WH question. The marked patterns convey emotional information (Halliday, 2008). Therefore participants' abilities of distinguishing sentence type and emotional meanings are observable at the same time.

For now 60 Japanese EFLs of 4 English levels and 16 English native participants took part in this perception experiment. Minimal-paired interrogative sentences like "Where is my **book**↗" and "Where is my **book**↘" (the bold *book* is the nucleus, ↗ ↘ stands for rising and falling tone.) are used as stimuli. The participants heard all the sentences and determine that does the intonation sound strict, neutral (defined to be unmarked) or gentle. There are 160 tokens in total read by male and female English native readers.

The tentative analysis of the data gathered so far suggests that Japanese EFLs only show progress of identifying the negative emotion of falling toned Yes/No questions rather than the positive emotion of WH questions. It seems that emotional intonation development is possibly depends on emotion type or sentence type.

## References

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