

Ryukyu Uchinaguchi Language Revitalization Project: Connecting the Past with AI

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Abstract

This presentation proposes a framework for the reconstruction and revitalization of Uchināguchi, one of the Indigenous languages of the Ryukyu Islands, through the combined use of artificial intelligence and archived media. Situating language within broader dynamics of discourse and power, the project understands linguistic loss not as a natural process but as the outcome of political forces. Uchināguchi usage has sharply declined due to forced cultural and linguistic assimilation following the incorporation of the Ryukyu Kingdom into modern Japan, where dominant language ideologies positioned Japanese as legitimate, while Ryukyuan languages were stigmatized, suppressed, and rendered invisible.

Drawing on critical discourse theory, this presentation argues that language functions as an instrument of power: the erosion of Uchināguchi disrupted intergenerational knowledge transmission and weakened cultural autonomy. At the same time, revitalization offers a means of resistance, enabling communities to reclaim epistemologies, histories, and identities embedded in linguistic practice. The project proposes leveraging AI tools—such as speech recognition, language modeling, and generative systems—trained on archived audio recordings, written texts, and ethnographic materials to reconstruct grammatical patterns, lexicon, and pragmatic usage. These technologies can support the creation of accessible learning resources, interactive tools, and community-driven platforms for language use.

Ultimately, the revitalization of Uchināguchi is framed not merely as linguistic preservation but as an act of empowerment. Retaining and revitalizing language affirms cultural identity, restores agency over representation, and disrupts dominant narratives that have historically marginalized Ryukyuan voices.

In the presentation, the speaker will demonstrate how media and AI can be utilized.

Keywords

Archived media, artificial intelligence, cultural identity, language reconstruction, linguistic preservation.